

Town of Ghent

Visioning Workshop Summary

The Town of Ghent hosted 2 visioning workshops in **April** and **May** 2007. The development of a shared vision statement is important for the long-term success of Ghent's Comprehensive Plan. A vision statement is necessary to judge future policies, programs, and actions. It also acts as a “consistency test” for decisions made at the local level. Visioning is a strategic tool that will help Ghent:

- Develop a greater sense of community consensus
- Establish long-term direction for the community
- Initiate effective and creative problem solving
- Build commitment to implement the vision and plan
- Develop priorities for the comprehensive plan

At the workshops held in **April** and **May**, ?? participants worked through a visioning process to develop a vision for the future of the town. Small groups worked together to identify specific elements of their vision and to devise a statement that characterizes that vision. The first step was to identify both negative and positive elements of the Town. These elements, or factors, were recorded, and then ranked by the individual groups by placing a "priority" sticker next to the factor each group member felt was the most significant. The following two tables categorize all of the negative and positive factors identified along with the number of priority stickers each category received at this first stage of the visioning process.

Negative Factors Identified by the Workshop Participants:

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Category	Negative Factors Identified
Planning/Zoning	20	21		
			Control of Development	Lack of control of development – present laws allow too much Development: increase population Haphazard development/subdivisions
			Lot Size	5 acre zoning too large Average density zoning not prevalent enough Lot sizes too large Cluster development 5/3 acres too large to care for
			Open Space and Agriculture	Not proactive enough on open space planning and preservation including encouraging agriculture No environmental plan No mechanism for saving open space
			Enforcement	Enforcement of site plans for commercial, certificate of occupancy Failure to enforce zoning code
			Design	Sub-development layout haphazard Site plans in the hamlet of Ghent and entire Town – no architectural standards Zoning: lack of direction for signage, lighting, 1 acre, aesthetics
			Commercial	9-H needs restrictions – becoming too much of a commercial zone, zoning of looks Too much commercially zoned land
			Historic	Would like to establish historic district – loss of historic structures
			Property Rights	Choice of doing with land that you own is what you want to
Housing/Land Prices	13	14		
			Housing	Lack of housing on smaller parcels of land – smaller lots Lack of affordable housing Inability for young to afford land/housing Land price affordability for next generation Affordability of housing Lack of senior housing No housing for young

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Category	Negative Factors Identified
				Lack of quality apartments for rentals Affordable living (assessments)
			Control of Development	Housing Development?? Land speculation
			Design	Cluster housing
			Infrastructure	Septic costs for new houses
Taxes/Tax Base	13	9		
			Taxes	High taxes Accelerating taxes High taxes Disparity in taxation Property and School tax Property taxes Inconsistent tax rate, lopsided Higher assessments for improvements Inequitable tax system No notion of what is getting taxed
			Commerce Park	Commerce Park no helping tax base Lack of \$ return on Commerce Park – too many tax breaks, not enough return on development
			Infrastructure	Too much tax \$ to Highway Dept.- Water St & W. Ghent Rec need attention
Rail Trail/Recreation	13	9		
			Yes Rail Trail	More recreational land use such as Rail Trail Not enough walking trails available to the public Lack of biking/walking trail
			No Rail Trail	Against Rail Trail, divides property, road turns into tourist attraction No Rail Trails wanted
			Other Recreation	No public land in the Town for recreation No Community Events Board Lack of recreational opportunities Recreation areas lacking in equipment and upkeep Water St. parking for rec field Upgrade recreational facilities Lack of nature-based recreation Snowmobiles
Community Appearance	14	7		
			Vistas	View shed protected, National historic sites should be sacred Turning to suburbia Hill topping

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Category	Negative Factors Identified
				Ridge-line housing is undesirable Houses on hills – hill topping Clear cutting on top of hills View shed housing on top of hills
			Town Appearance	Dairy Queen too modern Town Garage and downtown areas ugly Ugly center of town (Xtra Mart, car wash) Ugly Hamlet – Water St. & Rt. 66/Stone Store Rd. Noise from Dairy Queen White lighting Vacant buildings
Agriculture	5	7		
			Agriculture	Decline of farming Lack of farms Distressed by decline of agriculture Lack of farming, agriculture Decrease in farmed land
Business	9	5		
			Location	Locate business in business district Location of new businesses in the town is very difficult or impossible Additional Industrial Park needed – lack of land for commercial development,
			Types	Too many similar businesses – bank, auto No commercial base
			Appearance	Cleanliness of Commerce Park businesses
			Attitude	Developers that don't invest in the community Anti-business attitude Encourage farmers/landholders to sell development rights to the State
Speed Enforcement	10	4		
			Speed Enforcement	Speed on 21C Speeding on roads Road speed, maintenance – Fowler (sp?) Lake Road Speed limit enforcement Speed limits unmarked, assumed to be 55 Enforcement of Town speed limit (safety) Town should have control of speed and load limits on Town Roads

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Category	Negative Factors Identified
Roads/Traffic	12	3		Speed/weather related accidents (4) on 21C CR 9 speed 55 to 45 Local road speed enforcement
			Maintenance	Road maintenance – Ostrander, Carpenter Rd Road maintenance, speed Road maintenance
			Traffic	Arnold Mills Road traffic Route 66 traffic Traffic on Arch Bridge Road, urbanization of area causing problem quantity Traffic issue on CR 22 Too much traffic on Route 66 and 9H Large truck traffic
			Specific Problems	Flooding in tunnel of Arch Bridge causing inability to gain access or egress Non-road road behind Xtra Mart & car wash On state highway, but no barriers, sidewalk cleaning (clearing?)
Water/Sewer	6	3	Water and Sewer	Water supply, sewage in Hamlet insufficient Old water lines in Hamlet Lack of public water system Sewer system No water/sewage in Village Public water & sewer around Hamlet & perhaps extending border
Job Opportunities	3	3	Job Opportunities	Lack of employment for young people No job opportunities Lack of jobs
Infrastructure/Services	14	2		
			Public Transportation	Public transportation Lack of public transportation
			Trash	Service, trash, recycling
			Snow Removal	Snow removal on sidewalks in the hamlet
			Emergency Services	Fire coverage in West Ghent (Philmont covers) Volunteers – Fire Co., Rescue Squad, Little League
			Other	Lack of infrastructure

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Category	Negative Factors Identified
				Noise Ordinance (truck traffic increase) Services for seniors Loss of electrical service Better policing of land Stronger library system (no library in Ghent), but better coordination of programming Lack of County involvement in Town
Environment	4	1		
			Ticks	Increased tick population Columbia Co. Extension – ticks, Lyme disease education
			Mining	Mining of land Gravel Mine off Rt 9 – safety on bridge
Community	3	1		
			Community	Too many city people who take over No identity of Town Foster more community involvement
Government	8	0		
			Land Use	No adult entertainment law No laws regarding adult entertainment Not allowed to put land into conservancy
Town Center	4	0	Open Government	Town Hall is not identifiable More transparency in local government: website Televising Town meetings Stronger Town leadership Weak leadership
			Town Center	No Town center, trees for buffer, colors don't blend in No clearly identified center Lack of central Town, no place for social interaction No identifiable Town center
Internet	4	0		
			Infrastructure	No Internet service High speed internet No high speed internet in rural areas Internet access poor
Airport	2	0		
			Airport	Not an asset to Town – touch and go No restriction on airport
Posted Signs	1	0		
			Posted Signs	Posted signs

Positive Factors Identified by the Workshop Participants:

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Categories	Positive Factors Identified
Rural/Community Character	26	32		
			Rural	Rural Setting Rural Character (smart growth) Rural character without being distant from services Rural feel east of Village towards open fields Rural aspects Rural feeling in Town Rural nature – sights, sounds, & smells
			Farm	Rural character & farmland that is active
			Quite	Quiet, peaceful area Quiet overall, rural living but near to essentials, peaceful
			Small	Small town nature Small town feeling
			Density	Not crowded
			Space	Rural area, space, local services good
			Community	Good Community organizations, churches Character of community – charm Community character Diversity People
			Architecture	Greek Revival Houses – architectural beauty Beautiful barns, buildings & residences which are part of rural nature Distinct residential use
			Crime	Lack of crime Safeness, feel safe
			Atmosphere	Hawthorne Valley atmosphere
			Lifestyle	Simplistic lifestyle
Scenic Beauty	19	24		
			Space	Rural look and open spaces Open space, open land Large amount of open space, non-developed land Openness, rolling hills, beautiful landscape Open space, diversity Beautiful open and unspoiled land Open land, views Lots of nice open space, fields, and forests Open space Maintain rural land, open space

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Categories	Positive Factors Identified
			Rural	Rural quality, Beautiful Scenic beauty, rural setting
			Woods	Woods/undeveloped land are common, views
			Views	Scenic overview on the Taconic View sheds of the Town Scenic beauty
			Roads	Still have good number of nice back roads
			Homes	Homes along Route 66
			Topography	Physical features
People/Sense of Community	22	13		
			Small	Small town feel and sense of community Small community
			People	People, sense of community Know your neighbor People Diverse population demographics & cultural mix Wholesomeness of the people People that live here Neighborliness, small town feeling Friendliness of people Neighborly
			Civic	Community support – “Ghent takes care of its own” Solid Town – Ghent takes care of its own Civic Pride Steadiness of the Town Town spirit Level of volunteerism
			Community	Feeling of community Quality of life Nature of community Community Diverse smaller communities (need cohesion)
Infrastructure	11	5		
			Fire	Emergency fire services Volunteer Fire Company Ghent Volunteer Fire Co.
			Multiple	Fire Co., VFW, Ghent Band Strong community organization – Fire Co., VFW, Ghent Band, Ghent R & G Fire Co., VFW, Churches
			Other	Public School System – all 3 Churches Judges Security

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Categories	Positive Factors Identified
Location	9	3	Location	Food Pantry Location Regional location Close in proximity to other areas that offer commercial establishments so no need to bring them to Ghent Close proximity to needs Presence of Taconic Parkway – convenient access to more urban areas Central to train and major shopping areas – Hudson, Albany, Poughkeepsie, and Berkshires Centrally positioned to cultural and historical venues Central location Accessibility to other metro and recreation
Business	5	3	Businesses	Receptive to small business owners Local businesses Commerce Park Wally the Welder Lack of strip mall
Historic Sites	5	3	Historic Sites	Recognize and maintain historic sites Kept most of Town’s history Historic buildings Bartlett House History
Environment	7	2	Habitat	Wildlife and wetlands Wetland areas Crickets and foliage
			Views	View sheds
			Air	Clean air
			Climate	Climate
			Other?	Posted areas
Zoning	2	2	Zoning	Prevent development on lots under 5 acres Lack of subdivisions
Agriculture	9	1	Agriculture	Existing agriculture Agricultural exemptions Farms Some up tick in agriculture Smell of cow manure Love hearing cattle lowing at Gallagher’s Horse farms

Category	Number of Responses in Category	Number of Priority Stickers for this category	Sub-Categories	Positive Factors Identified
				Active farms Agriculture
Taxes	3	1	Taxes	Reasonable taxes Relatively low tax rate because of farms and limited number of residents Reasonably low taxes
Government	2	1	Government	Good, solid Town leadership over last 30 years Open forum/meetings (such as this workshop), open gov't.
Recreation/Cultural	12	0	Art Omi, etc.	Cultural Institutions - Art Omi, MacHayden Art Omi Art Omi Art Omi
			Other	Summer rec. program good and could be better Ghent Playhouse Ghent Band Community Day Arts Cultural Assets
Roads/Transportation	8	0	Roads	Highway Dept. Job of road crews Good Highway Dept. Lack of traffic lights Snow removal on Town roads Public transportation Lack of traffic Good snow removal

Solutions To Negatives

- Decline of farming:
 - Owners should avail themselves of Ag District Tax reductions
 - Encourage CSA farms/organic
- More control over development:
 - Town should tend to zone for larger lot sizes – keeps more open space and reduces septic and well problems. Reduce strain on School/Fire/Police/Roads, etc.
- Town needs to post speed limits on unposted roads and enforce. No petition. Apply logic as 1 year is too long
- Lot size issue needs addressing!
- Move toward smaller lots based on affordability of housing.
- Expand SR Zone – identify needs: Public Water, Public Sewers
- Work with other communities to fill gaps in identified needs that are too expensive or unable to be accommodated on the identified lands.
- Preclude mining from being allowed in Town. The depreciation of property values outweighs the benefits of getting the gravel.
- Study the areas in the Town, particularly around the hamlets where these smaller lots would be applicable.
- Create senior housing.
- Study and identify specific areas in the Town that deserve protection from significant development.
- Consider higher zoning density requirements in some areas.
- Provision for smaller lots in certain areas/apartments/cluster housing/smaller units.
- Move school tax from property to other taxes – sales/income
- Average density zoning.
- Taxes: Share services with others, broader tax base, support services for small business.
- Affordable housing: opportunity for smaller parcels in denser parts of the Town.
- More cohesive approach to steering subdivision/density.
- Tax advantages to areas being used for agriculture and disadvantage if open, unused.
- Expand program to encourage economic incentives for agriculture.
- Map open space as part of master plan and consider which most valuable and how to protect and preserve.
- More tasteful design – incentives to get existing businesses to tone it down/bring business owners in to hear discussion.
- Noise ordinance.
- Revert back to old zoning – infill (?) Ghent/Hurleyville.
- Keep hurdles for large developments; allow smaller parcels for modest houses.
- Allow smaller parcels.
- Rail Trail: only use Harlem Valley Rail Trail; No motorized vehicles, strictly enforced; Do not advance B & A.
- Create buffers on roads, etc. as solution to haphazard development.
- Tie compliance with Site Plan to certificate of occupancy.

Solutions To Positives:

- Historic Sites:
 - Town intervention – purchase surrounding lands..
 - Offer lands to conservation groups or other interested conservation parties.
- Affordable housing for all.
- Updated infrastructure to meet greater population..
- Allow and encourage small business, larger confined to Commerce Park.
- Increased recreational facilities for greater population for everyone.
- Not let residential and commercial areas merge...sprawl??
- Zoning requirements for commercial setbacks/ landscape/no junkiness.
- Maintain economic diversity.
- Keep the Town available for attracting agricultural enterprises such as the new winery.
- Continue good government, common sense planning and active involvement of Ghent's citizenry!
- Planning Board to address variable density to maintain rural character.
- Look to other communities for ideas of community development.
- Provide incentives for agriculture.
- Zoning ordinance/site plan reviews.
- Conscious effort to maintain open space in larger developments.
- Work to maintain agriculture through continuing ag exemptions.
- Larger development bonus for developers who work within the conservation subdivision.
- Fashion master plan and positive zoning code that helps protect, preserve and encourage smart/compatible growth.
- Same vehicle for connecting all the community/volunteer organizations in Town. Community bulletin board for events/organization activities, churches, fire co.
- Effective zoning.
- Zoning enforcement.
- Government grants.
- All more land conservancy.
- Research similar townships and how they've done it.
- Encourage farming and forestry by whatever Town can do.
- Rampant subdivision can be controlled by Town Zoning Regs.
- Small town feeling will continue if population growth is limited by Town Regs.
- Average density/cluster zoning.
- Establish/purchase park land.
- Zone agriculture for agriculture (v. residential)
- Scenic easements (purchase).
- Real estate transfer tax to buy open space.