

## II. An Overview of Glenville

### Four communities in one

The Town of Glenville encompasses 50 square miles, or over 31,000 acres. *The Town of Glenville Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 1990, notes that Glenville is really a story of four interconnecting communities; a “Suburban Residential Town,” “Rural Town of Hills and Hamlets,” “River Town,” and “Commercial and Industrial Town.” These are the hallmarks that define the character and heart of Glenville, a very livable community of diverse appeal and opportunity.

Glenville’s *Rural “Town” of Hills and Hamlets* character, generally represented west of Sacandaga Road, is found in its expansive open fields, meadows, woodlands and hedgerows, a landscape held in high esteem by residents of Glenville. Yet the countryside is in jeopardy of being lost as low density sprawl erases the beauty of Glenville’s pastoral settings. Open space gets consumed by numerous, large residential lots, with the result being a hodge-podge appearance that is dictated by the size, location, orientation, and style of home and the individual treatment of the landscape. Over time, if unchecked, the landscape will look no different than any other place in American suburbia, which is to say, nowhere in particular.

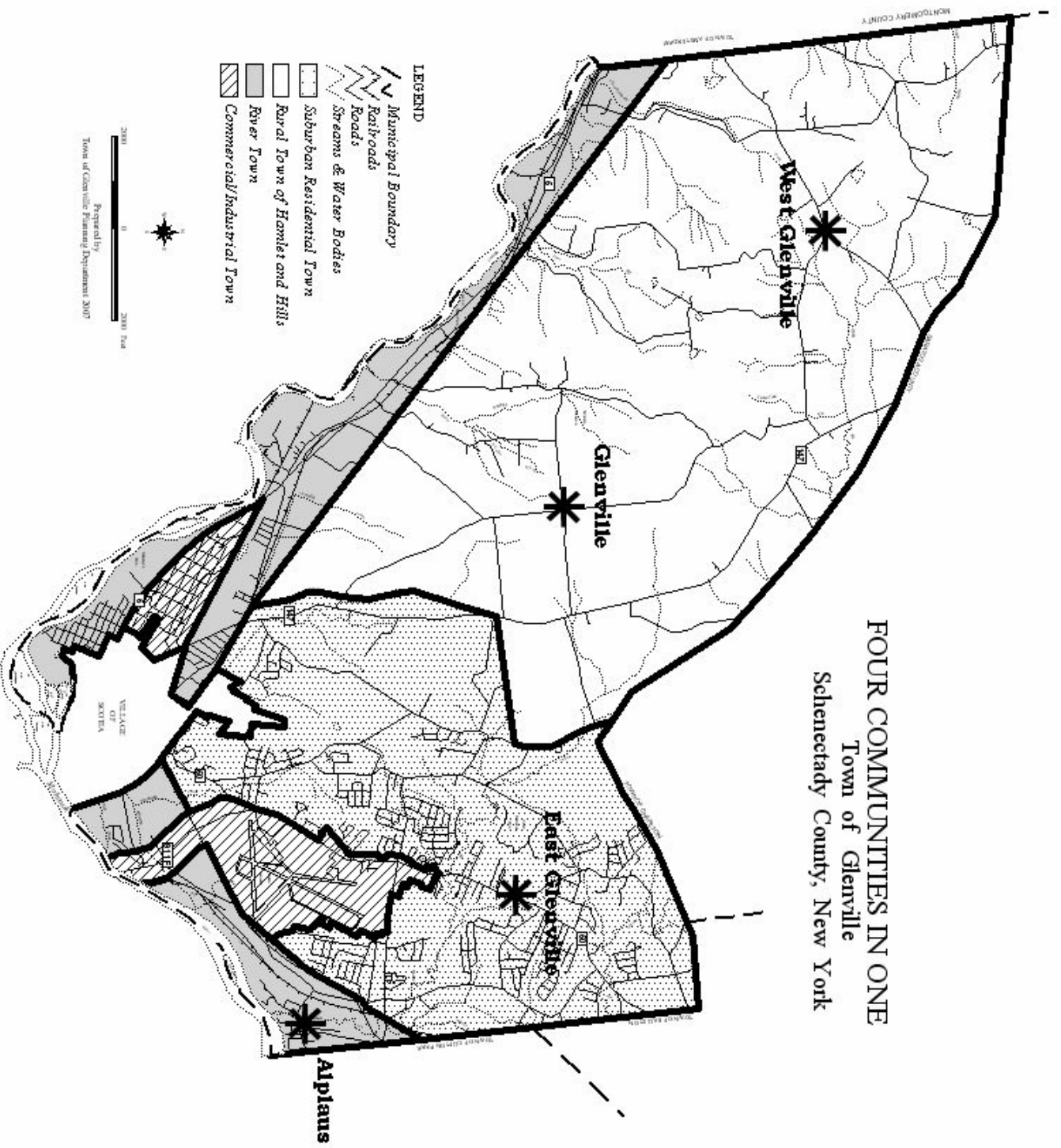
Our *Suburban Residential “Town,”* generally east of Sacandaga Road, became suburbanized between 1950 and 1970 when the number of housing units more than doubled. Yet today important vestiges of open space remain as cultivated fields, working orchards, woodlots and wetlands. These pockets of working lands and natural areas aesthetically punctuate an otherwise suburban landscape. Protecting these open lands is important to the community’s scenic attributes and quality of life. This is proving difficult, however, as in-fill suburban growth nibbles away at these remaining open spaces.

The *River “Town”* aspect of Glenville includes 14 miles of frontage along the Mohawk River, contributing significantly to the beauty and diversity of Glenville’s open spaces. The Mohawk River includes not only its islands and the riverbanks, but its expansive floodplains and multiple tributaries. The River defines Glenville’s lowest elevation of approximately 200 feet, while the Town’s highest elevations reach over 1,000 feet, a topography that has created an abundance of pristine streams. These streams have cut through the countryside to the Mohawk, shaping ravines and waterfalls. Collectively, Glenville’s watercourses are irreplaceable attributes that warrant greater consideration as integral to the Town’s distinctiveness.

Our *Commercial and Industrial “Town”* is the economic engine of the larger community. The Route 50 and Freemans Bridge Road corridors comprise much of our commercial town, while the industrial park complex off of Route 5 serves as our industrial town. Too

often, though, open space considerations are lost to the narrow focusing on footprints and parking lots. If economic development efforts were broadened to include not only commercial and industrial land uses, but their impact on open space values, opportunities could be created for neighboring land areas to significantly enhance civic space. The area encompassing big box stores, for example, could be improved with the aesthetic use of open space if this kind of land use objective was considered during the blueprint phase. Vest-pocket parks or linear walkways along adjacent streams would greatly contribute to the physical setting without significant costs to the developer.

# FOUR COMMUNITIES IN ONE Town of Glenville Schenectady County, New York



## Sprawl verses open space

Since 1960, Glenville's population has hovered between 28,000 and 29,000. Yet, in the past few years Glenville's population has begun to increase, mirroring the robust housing market that until very recently has characterized much of the country over the last eight or nine years.

With its good schools and accessibility, Glenville will likely remain reasonably attractive for growth. Water lines are extending beyond the suburban fringe to support this development, and commercial space is expanding somewhat to meet the demands of the increasing population. As time goes by, development demands will continue to gobble up farms, fields and woods. Recognizing this, Glenville needs a comprehensive and coordinated action plan to protect significant open spaces that will help serve to keep the distinctive and interconnecting communities intact and to keep sprawl and the higher taxes that come with infrastructure expansion in check.

Were western Glenville built out to its allowed density of 3 acres, school and property taxes would increase significantly to cover the expenses of new services and education. In contrast, farmlands, forests, and wetlands require little in maintenance costs and no costly infrastructure.

Appendix D (Cost Comparisons for Servicing Development vs. Open Space) offers numerous municipal examples of the cost of development and the property tax implications of growth, based on several studies which covered a number of municipalities in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Jersey. These studies and others have consistently shown that single-family residential development is a tax drain. This is particularly true of low to moderate density residential development that one most associates with suburban communities. It costs more to service residential growth than can be derived in property tax revenue.

For example, of the dozens of municipalities highlighted in Appendix D, the revenue-to-expenditure ratio in dollars for residential development ranged from a low of 1: 1.02 to a high of 1: 1.88. The average of all communities examined was 1: 1.15. In other words, on average, for every dollar derived in property tax revenue from residential growth, \$1.15 is spent servicing the residential development.

Conversely, industrial/manufacturing growth and various types of commercial development have a *positive* financial impact on the community. The revenue-to-expenditure ratio in dollars for industrial and commercial growth ranged from 1: 0.12 to 1: 0.83. The average was 1: 0.29, meaning for every dollar derived in property tax revenue from industrial and commercial growth, \$0.29 was spend servicing this growth. This is a tax positive ratio of nearly 4 to 1.

Open space also exhibits a positive revenue/expenditure ratio. The revenue-to-expenditure rate for farm/forest/open land ranged from 1: 0.16 to 1: 0.86, with an average of 1: 0.37. Admittedly open space does not generate a great deal of tax revenue, but the preservation of open space doesn't place a financial burden on communities either, unlike single-family residential development.

Optimally, Glenville needs to strive to develop a positive tax base through a good mix and balance of land uses. Working to protect significant open spaces can greatly foster and promote positive environments for residential, commercial and industrial development. It has been said that quality development follows quality development. Glenville has the opportunity to represent this maxim.