

SPRING 2018



Village of Menands, New York

REPORT ON OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

MRP Studio



UNIVERSITY^{AT} ALBANY
State University of New York

The 48-credit, two-year Master in Urban and Regional Planning (MRP) degree program at the University at Albany was established in 1982 and is fully accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board, the sole national accrediting body for planning. The MRP program is interdisciplinary, student-centered and participative, emphasizing the importance of creativity, public involvement, social justice, professional ethics, and environmental sustainability. With a strong orientation towards professional practice, an MRP provides a thorough foundation in land use planning, a range of technical skills and internship opportunities, and the opportunity to specialize in one of three alternative fields:

- Environmental and Land Use Planning
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Alumni of the MRP program include university faculty, professional consultants, PhD students, and planners practicing in several regions of the United States and many foreign countries. Near the end of the degree program, students participate in the MRP Planning Studio, which provides them with an opportunity, working as a collaborative team, to apply the skills and knowledge obtained during their degree program to a real-world project.

The fall 2017 and the spring 2018 MRP Planning Studios supported the development of a comprehensive plan for the Village of Menands, NY. The fall Studio conducted initial public engagement and background research on the community. The spring 2018 Studio worked closely with Village of Menands officials and other stakeholders to complete a public engagement process and opportunity analysis, which can be used for the development of the future comprehensive plan. The spring 2018 MRP Planning Studio included:

Students: Linda Allen, Nasibah Elmi, Bradley Hershenson, Daniel Johnson, Timothy Kennedy, Tanya McGee, Samuel Morreale, Michelle Rogat, Jon Thompson

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Introduction

Open houses are often used to gather public input to inform the development of a comprehensive plan. To support development of the Village of Menands Comprehensive Plan, the University at Albany conducted two open houses, on April 2 and 11, 2018, at the Village Hall and The Lofts, respectively. A total of forty-six (46) persons attended the Open Houses; twenty-one (21) persons on April 2 and twenty-five (25) persons on April 11. Overall, attendees identified specific areas within the Village where improvements were desired for sidewalks and landscape beautification, and potential re-use of commercial buildings as well as locations for new community amenities, such as picnic areas and dog parks. Additionally, attendees voiced concerns over construction of additional apartments and the lack of a grocery store in the Village while also highlighting the unrealized potential that exists in the Village and the sense of community and charm that residents love about living in Menands.

This *Report on Open House Public Input* documents and analyzes the public input obtained during these two events and is organized as follows: the next



section discusses the methodology to gather public input used during the Open Houses, followed by a detailed discussion and analysis of the public input obtained, and then a summary with conclusions and recommendations. The data obtained during the Open Houses were incorporated into the opportunity analysis for the Comprehensive Plan.

Methodologies

The primary focus of the Village of Menands Comprehensive Plan Open Houses was to gather input from the public on various planning topics that may be covered in the Comprehensive Plan. The following methods were used to gather and analyze this public input:

1. Base maps paired with questions on seven specific planning topics. A mapping exercise was conducted that consisted of displaying base maps of the Village around the room and attendees were asked to place a dot identifying a single location that best responded to seven specific planning questions. The topics for the planning questions were identified based on a preliminary review of the responses from the Village of Menands Community Survey administered in March 2018. During the second Open House, additional notes were taken at each mapping station to confirm the specific location of the dots that were being placed on the maps by the attendees. The data gathered from the base mapping exercise were analyzed for spatial distribution and basic statistics such as frequency distribution.
2. Word clouds inquiries. Word clouds are “graphical representations of word frequency that give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in a source text” (Better Evaluation, n.d.). Each attendee was asked to identify one word that best describes the Village of Menands today and in the future, which were then displayed using **WordItOut®**.
3. One-on-one discussions. University of Albany representatives conducted informal one-on-one discussions with attendees during the Open Houses. Handwritten notes were taken of these discussions and comments were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis and then were aggregated into specific categories that captured the central themes of the content (e.g. infrastructure, housing, services). These categories were developed in conjunction with the analysis of other qualitative data from handwritten comments.
4. Attendee handwritten comments. Attendees were provided an opportunity to submit handwritten comments anonymously during the Open Houses. These comments were compiled and analyzed qualitatively using content analysis and then were aggregated into specific categories that capture the central themes of the content, as noted above.

Attendees were requested to sign-in at the Open Houses, but all public input and comments was provided anonymously.

Public Outreach for Open Houses

The week prior to each Open House, a press release and media advisory were issued by the Village to the major media outlets and offices of local elected officials in the Capital Region (see Appendix A, which also includes announcement in the *Times Union*), an announcement was

placed on the Village website (see Appendix B) and in the Menands Activities Newsletter, and a flyer was distributed to organizations and venues throughout the Village (see Appendix C). A television news clip of the April 11 Open House by Spectrum News is available but cannot be embedded into this Report.

Analysis of Open House Public Input

Mapping exercise: The base mapping exercise was the principle method used to gather data and it was intended to solicit from the public specific geographic locations for seven planning topics covered in the Community Surveys. Appendix D includes photos of the actual maps with both locations identified by attendees during the Open Houses. The questions poised to the attendees and the number of attendees that responded to each question are summarized in Table 1.



Table 1: Questions for Mapping Exercise

Map Question	Number of Respondents Open House 1	Number of Respondents Open House 2	Total Number of Respondents
1. Where do you think the center of the village should be?	16	19	35
2. Which vacant commercial building is your highest priority for re-use?	17	26	43
3. Which location is your highest priority for landscape beautification projects, programs, and investment?	16	24	40
4. Where would you like to see improvements in sidewalk infrastructure?	17	16	33
5. Where do you think a dog park could be located?	13	17	30
6. Where do you think a community garden could be located?	16	13	29
7. Where do you think a picnic area could be located?	14	19	33

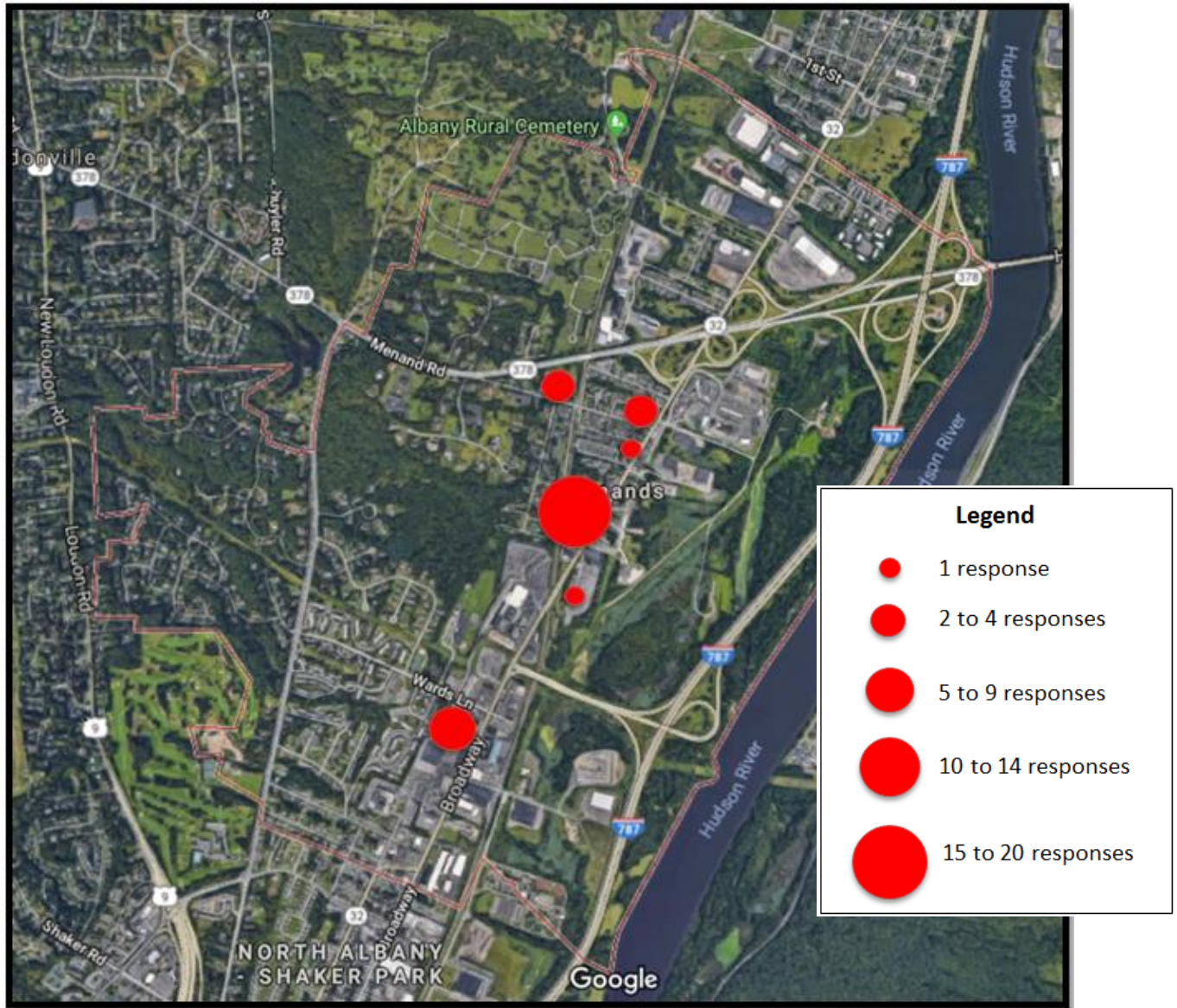
As is shown in Table 1, the total number of attendees that responded to each question for the base mapping exercise varied. The following sections provide a more detailed discussion of the responses as well as a spatial display of their distribution on the base map. Summary statistics for the responses are also provided. Please note that the size of the locational marker shown in the figures below is proportional to the number of responses, and the accompanying legend to the maps provides the proportionality scale.

Question 1 – Center of Village

Question 1 solicited the attendee’s opinion on where the hypothetical center of the Village should be located. A total of 35 attendees responded to this question and Figure 1 shows the spatial distribution of the responses for this question. Nineteen (19) attendees selected the Village Hall at 250 Broadway as the center of the Village, while nine (9) attendees selected Mid-City Shopping Center near the intersection of Broadway and Wards Lane where the vacant Ideal Food Basket and NYS Workers Compensation Board buildings are located. Three (3) attendees selected the Ganser-Smith Memorial Park and two (2) attendees selected the corner of Menands Road and Broadway as the center of the Village. One (1) attendee selected the Village Office at 280 Broadway, while one (1) attendee selected another location along Broadway. Table 2 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 1, and Figure 2 show the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

As the distribution of responses indicates, the attendees identified two principle locations that they felt should be the center of the Village, with a majority (54 percent) selecting the Village Hall and 26 percent selecting Mid-City Shopping Center near the intersection of Wards Lane and Broadway. While the attendees were not asked the reason why they selected the particular location that they did, in general, the center of a community could be a place of historical significance, or a place where key activities occur, such as commercial activities in a central business district or public administration at a municipal government complex, or a place where major infrastructure is located, such as an intersection of principle thoroughfares.

Figure 1: Location of Center of Village (n=35)



The Village Hall at 250 Broadway is where the Fire and Police Departments, and Village Court are located, as well as the location used for the Village Board meetings and other public activities. Adjacent to this location, at 280 Broadway, is the Village Office where the Mayor and Clerk are located, which was identified by one (1) attendee as the center of the Village. If these two sites were considered together, then almost 60 percent of the attendees identify them collectively as the Village center. Overall, the center of the Village identified by the majority of the attendees coincides with the center of major public services or public administration for the Village.

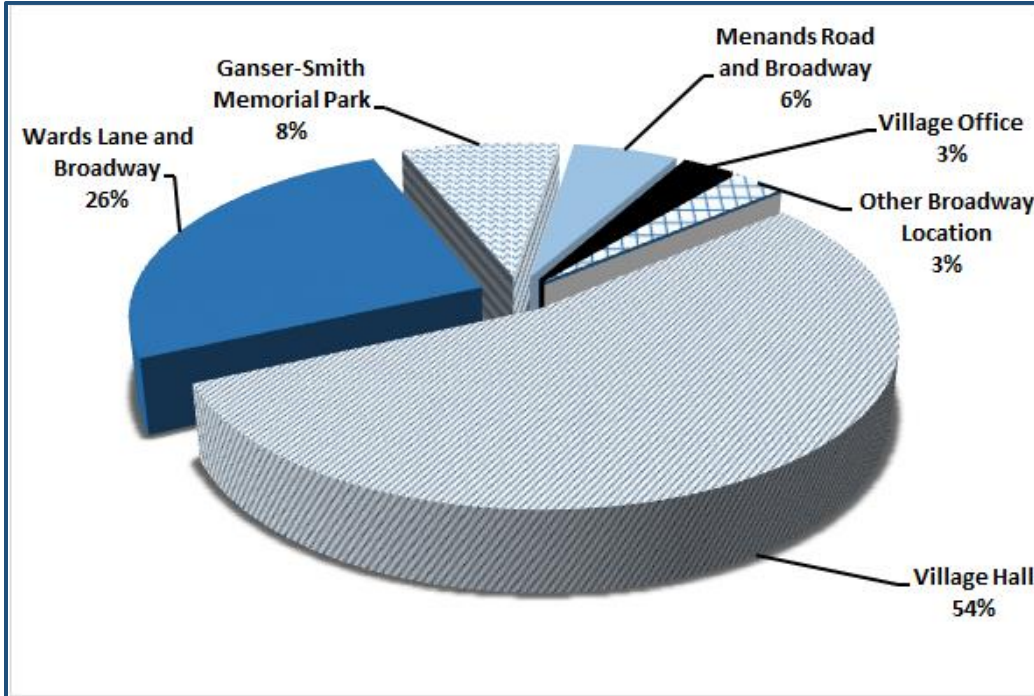
Given the selection of the Village Hall as a hypothetical center of the community, the Village might consider establishing other features at or near this location to strengthen its identity as the Village center. For example, the Village could place a large interpretative sign in the immediate vicinity that provides the history of the Menands as well as a map of key attractions throughout the Village. The Village could also consider sponsoring an annual event at this location, such as an annual plant sale or gardening fair, which would pay homage to community’s history as a center for horticulture and reinforce the perception of the Village Hall area as the Village center.

The Mid-City Shopping Center at 100 Broadway appears to be more of a center for commercial activities, and although at present most of the commercial space in this mall is vacant, it is located in the heart of the Broadway Business District (BBD) (Village of Menands, 2016). Thus, its selection as a center of the Village by some attendees indicates that the BBD is perceived as another core area of the community. However, given the limited amount of commercial activity that is currently occurring at this location, as is discussed further under Question 2, and the drab appearance of the site, as discussed further under Question 3, transforming this strip mall into a thriving central business district will likely require a long-term strategy.

Table 2: Number of Responses and Percentages for Location of Village Center

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Village Hall at 250 Broadway	19	54
Wards Lane and Broadway	9	26
Ganser-Smith Memorial Park	3	8
Menands Road and Broadway	2	6
Village Office at 280 Broadway	1	3
Other Broadway Location	1	3
Total	35	100%

Figure 2: Distribution of Responses for Location of Village Center (n = 35)



Question 2 – Vacant Commercial Buildings for Re-Use

Question 2 asked attendees to identify vacant commercial buildings that would be the highest priority for re-use. Overall, the Village of Menands had approximately 100 vacant properties as of 2017, of which about 60 were residential properties and 40 were commercial properties (Village of Menands, 2017). During the Open Houses, forty-three (43) attendees identified six (6) vacant commercial buildings in the Village that were their highest priority for re-use. Figure 3 shows the location of these buildings. Sixteen (16) attendees selected the Ideal Food Basket building and New York State Worker's Compensation Board building co-located in the Mid-City Shopping Center at 100 Broadway as their highest priority for re-use while thirteen (13) attendees identified the Williams Press building at the intersection of Broadway and the I-787 Exit 6 ramp as their highest priority. Eight (8) attendees selected the former Price Chopper building at the end of I-787 Exit 7 ramp to Broadway, while three (3) attendees selected the former Broadway Diner as their highest priority. One (1) attendee each selected: a brick building at around 175 Broadway, the carwash at 228 Broadway, and a vacant lot on Private Road C. Except for the vacant lot on Private Road C, all other locations identified were on Broadway, the main thor-

oughfare in the Village which has the greatest visibility within the community. The Private Road C site does not have a vacant commercial building, so it is not discussed further in this analysis.

The Mid-City Shopping Center at 100 Broadway has several large vacant commercial buildings. The 19,000 square-foot former Ideal Food Basket building opened in 2013 and closed in 2015 (O'Brien, 2013; Nearing, 2015), and has been vacant since then. Directly adjacent to this space is another vacant building where the Family Dollar store was located before moving to a new building at 22 Broadway in 2015. Also located in the shopping center is the 21,000 square-foot former New York State Worker's Compensation Board building, which has been vacant since 2015 (DeMasi, 2015). These three vacant buildings are fronted on Broadway by large surface parking lots, one of which is currently used during the daytime as park and ride lots by commuters to downtown Albany. There is also a separate building at the northeast corner of the shopping center where several small active commercial establishments are located, but the majority of commercial space within the shopping center is in the larger vacant buildings.

The State Worker's Compensation Board building is owned by British American and is currently on the market for \$4.5 million (Pyramid Brokerage Company, n.d.). The former Ideal Food Basket and Family Dollar buildings and the building with active businesses are separate from the Worker's Compensation Board building and were purchased last year by the developer that also owns the Riverview Center. The developer has made some improvements to the site, such as cleaning up the area, installing new LED lighting in the parking lots, and patrolling the parking lots to reduce overnight truck parking, but the developer does not have any specific plans at present for re-using the existing vacant space (Burtman, 2018).

The Williams Press Building, located on 6.5 acres, is a historic building situated at a major intersection in Menands. The 283,000 square-foot building was constructed in 1929 and housed a major "press operation that printed magazines, catalogs, books and other large-format material" (Flickr, n.d.; DeMasi, 2018). The building has not been used for many years, but was sold to U-Haul in January 2018 (DeMasi, 2018). According to the president of U-Haul Co. of Eastern New York, "At this point, we are unsure of our future plans for the building, but our main focus is to bring the building back from its dilapidated state The building has been vacant for many years and there are numerous repairs that need to take place. As we continue to learn more about this building, we will be able to develop a plan for use" (as quoted in DeMasi, 2018).

Figure 3: Vacant Commercial Building with Highest Potential for Re-Use (n=43)

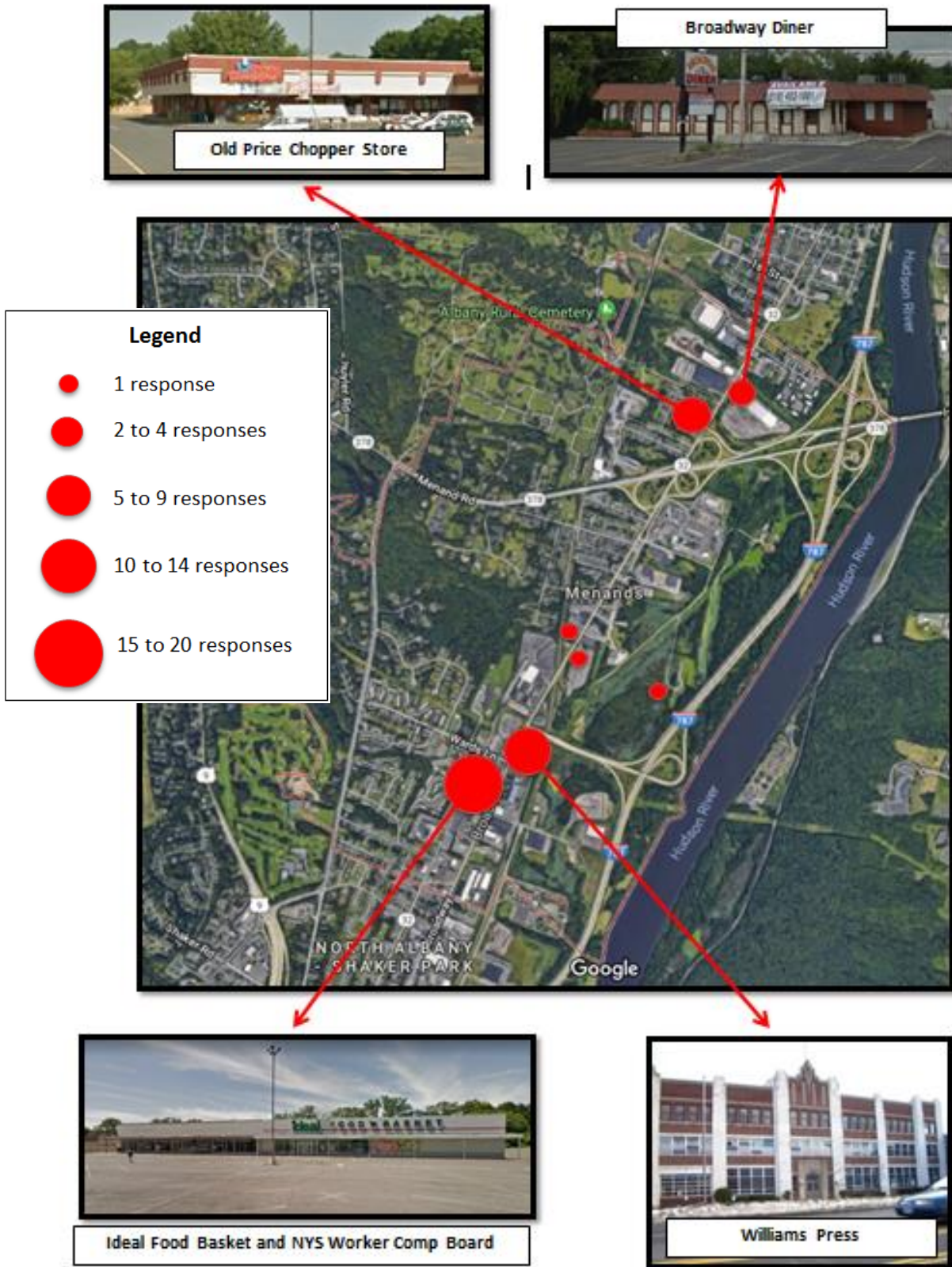


Table 3 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 2, and Figure 4 show the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

Table 3: Number of Responses and Percentages for Vacant Commercial Buildings

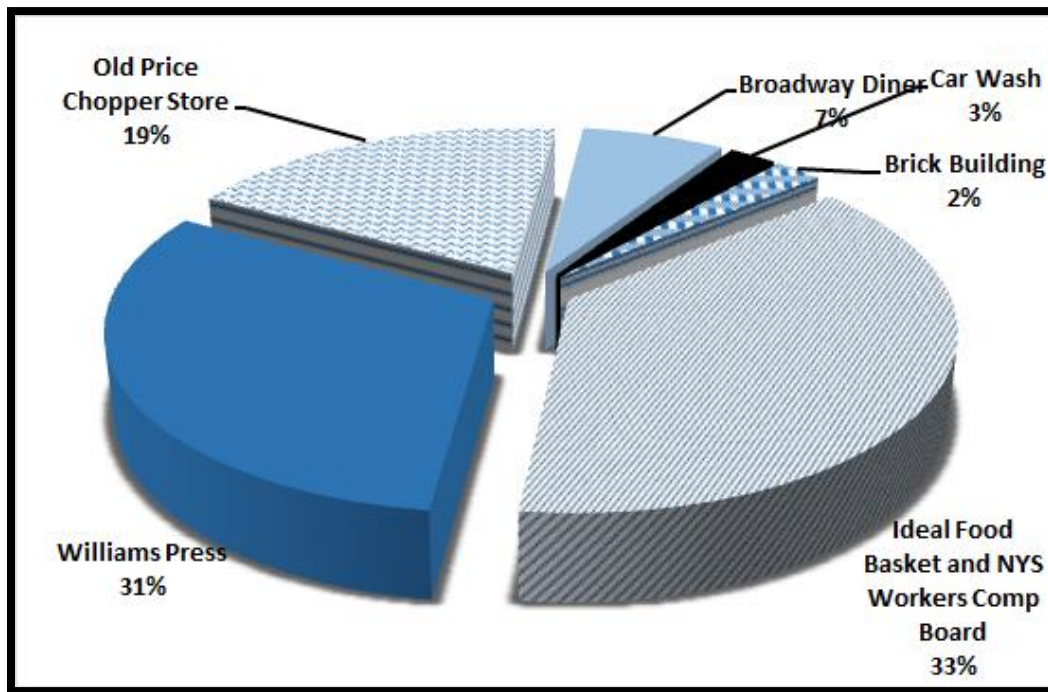
Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Ideal Food Basket and NYS Workers Compensation Board	16	33
Williams Press	13	31
Former Price Chopper Store	8	19
Broadway Diner	3	7
Car Wash	1	3
Brick Building	1	3
Total	42	100%

The former Price Chopper store, a 34,000 square-foot facility located at 444 Broadway, closed in early 2017, leaving the Village of Menands without a grocery store located within its municipality (Liberatore, 2017). The store was one of the smallest and oldest Price Choppers in the grocery chain, and according to the Golub Corporation, the rationale for closing the store was because “[a] good deal of our business has gone to our sister stores in the area [including] in Latham and the Watervliet and Shaker Road [stores] (as quoted in Liberatore, 2017). The other vacant commercial buildings identified for re-use were the former Broadway Diner at 563 Broadway, a car wash at 228 Broadway and a brick building at around 175 Broadway. Although these three building are not significant structures in terms of size, they are located in an area with more active businesses, and thus they may stand out more in the community due to their vacancy.

Overall, the Open House attendees focused overwhelming on vacant commercial buildings on Broadway as priorities for re-use, perhaps because of their high visibility along this main thoroughfare. The highest priority for re-use, the Ideal Food Basket and New York State Worker's Compensation Board buildings, located in the Mid-City Shopping Center, could be the focus of the community’s efforts in the near future to transform the area into a thriving central business district. Some of this vacant space has been recently purchased, but some of it is currently on the market. Given the size and potential cost for the purchase and upgrading of these buildings, it is likely that a large developer or corporation would need to be involved in this effort. The second

highest priority vacant commercial building, Williams Press, was recently purchased by U-Haul, although its specific plans for re-use are not known at present. The next highest priority, the former Price Chopper store near the I-787 Exit 7 ramp, has not been vacant for very long, only about one year, but the prioritization of this site to the community may be due more to the fact that it was the sole grocery store within the Village until it closed in 2017 and a desire within the community for a replacement store.

Figure 4: Distribution of Responses for Vacant Commercial Buildings (n = 42)

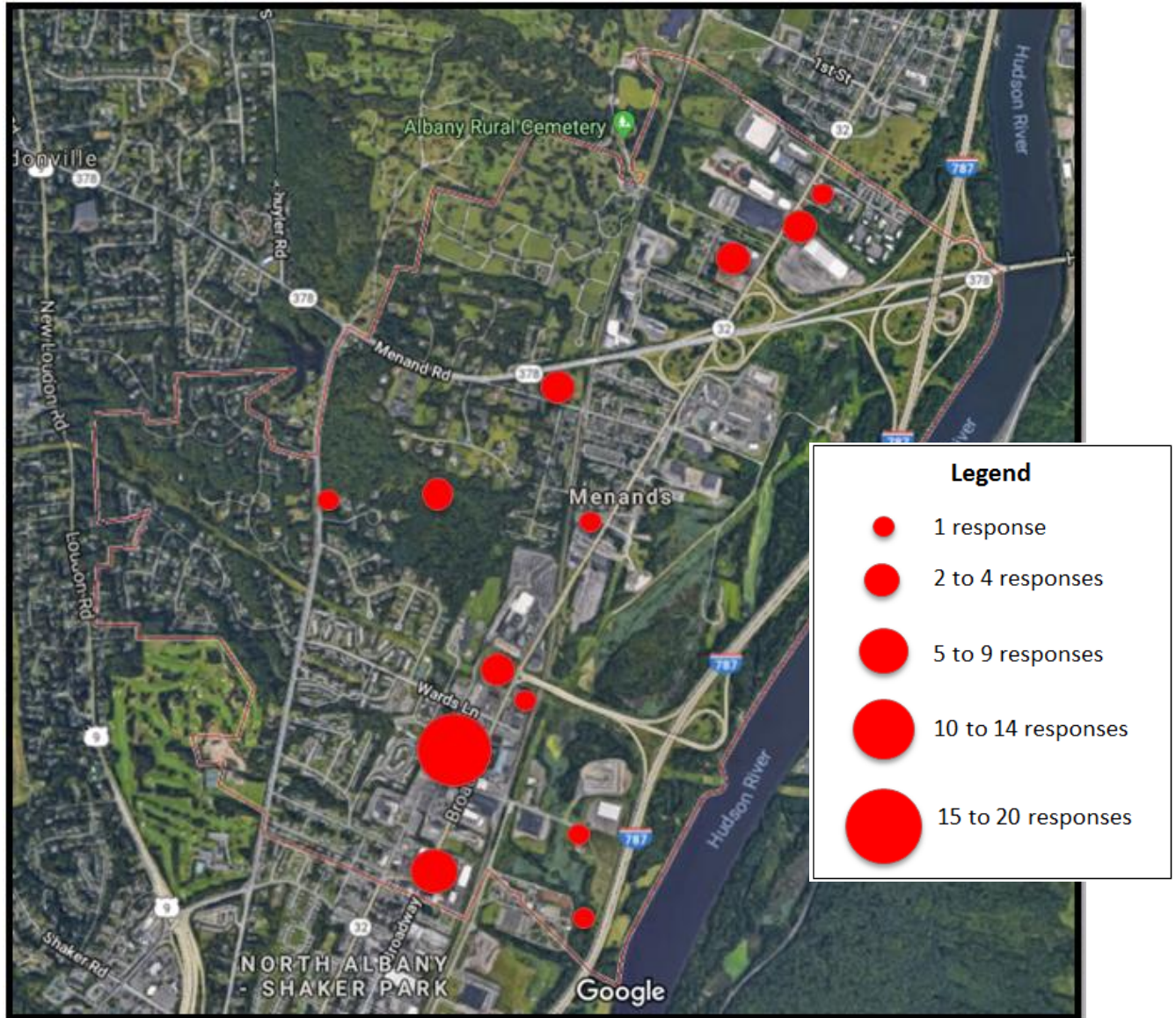


Question 3 – Landscape Beautification

For Question 3, attendees were asked to identify locations within the Village that were their highest priority for landscape beautification projects, programs, and investments and Figure 5 shows the locations selected. Out of forty (40) attendees that responded to this question, eighteen (18) selected the Mid-City Shopping Center where the Ideal Food Basket and New York State Worker’s Compensation Board buildings and parking lots are located. Five (5) attendees selected an area near The Lofts at One Broadway, three (3) attendees selected the former Coca Cola bottling site and Price Chopper store at the foot of the I-787 Exit 7 ramp, two (2) attendees each selected the Ganser-Smith Memorial Park, former Broadway Diner, National Grid substation at the

foot of the I-787 Exit 6 ramp, and a wooded area near Upland Roads. Six (6) attendees each selected single locations elsewhere in the Village.

Figure 5: Location of Highest Priority for Landscape Beautification (n=40)



Two general conclusions may be drawn from Figure 5. First, the most apparent eyesore in the Village is the Mid-City Shopping Center at the intersection of Broadway and Wards Lane, which has two large vacant buildings and extensive surface parking lots. Attendees also identified the vacant buildings at this location as a priority for re-use for Question 2, thus any plans that may be made in the future to re-use or redevelop this site should include landscape beautification as a priority as well. Second, there was limited clustering of the remaining responses and considera-

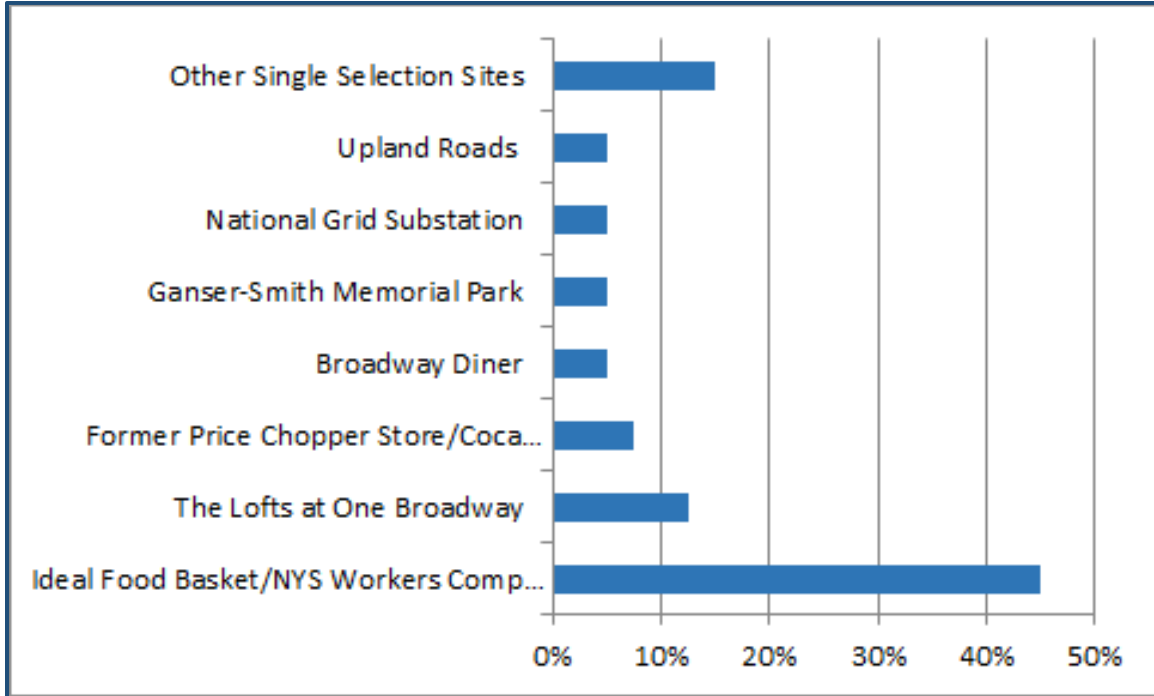
ble spatial variation, perhaps indicating a broader need for landscape beautification within the Village. Past studies, such as the *Village of Menands Broadway Corridor Study* (The Saratoga Associates, 2002) and the *Village of Menands Broadway Corridor Study: Economic Development Initiative* (Schwenzfeier, 2009), have already identified a definite need for landscaping along Broadway corridor. Thus, the general findings from the mapping exercise are consistent with the earlier studies and provide an initial prioritization of the areas that warrant attention, which can be undertaken as part of other development or infrastructure programs, such as a transportation project, or independent of them.

Table 4 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 2 and Figure 6 show the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

Table 4: Number of Responses and Percentages for Landscape Beautification

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Ideal Food Basket and NYS Workers Compensation Board (Mid-City Shopping Center)	18	45
The Lofts at One Broadway	5	13
Former Price Chopper Store/Coca Cola Bottling	3	8
Broadway Diner	2	5
Ganser-Smith Memorial Park	2	2
National Grid Substation	2	2
Upland Roads	2	2
Other Single Selection Sites	6	15
Total	40	100%

Figure 6: Distribution of Responses for Landscape Beautification (n = 40)



Question 4 – Sidewalk Improvements

Thirty-three (33) attendees identified locations for sidewalk improvements for Question 4. As is illustrated in Figure 7, attendees identified locations throughout the Village, in both residential areas and the business district along Broadway, as well as areas with existing sidewalks that needed improvement and areas without sidewalks, during this mapping exercise. However, as a caveat, when attendees selected a location, it was sometimes specific to a well-defined sidewalk segment while at other times it was associated with sidewalks along a particular stretch of road or in a general area. Thus, for this particular mapping exercise, it was difficult to delineate the actual extent of the selected areas using markers at a single location on the maps, so this limitation should be kept in mind when reviewing the results presented on Figure 7.

In general, sidewalks along two major roadways received most of the attention from the attendees. Ten (10) attendees selected sidewalks along Wards Lane as the highest priority, while eleven (11) attendees identified various stretches of sidewalk along Broadway. The other twelve (12) attendees selected individual locations elsewhere in the Village, indicating that preferences

for sidewalk improvements are likely to be specific to individuals. Past studies of transportation related infrastructure, such as the CDTC (2008) *Transportation Access and Land Use Improvement Study*, also highlighted the need for improvements in sidewalks at particular locations. Thus, there appears to be a well-documented need for sidewalk improvements in certain areas but given the spatial distribution of the responses, a more detailed study is warranted to identify overall priorities for the sidewalk improvements within the Village.

Figure 7: Locations for Sidewalk Improvements (n=33)

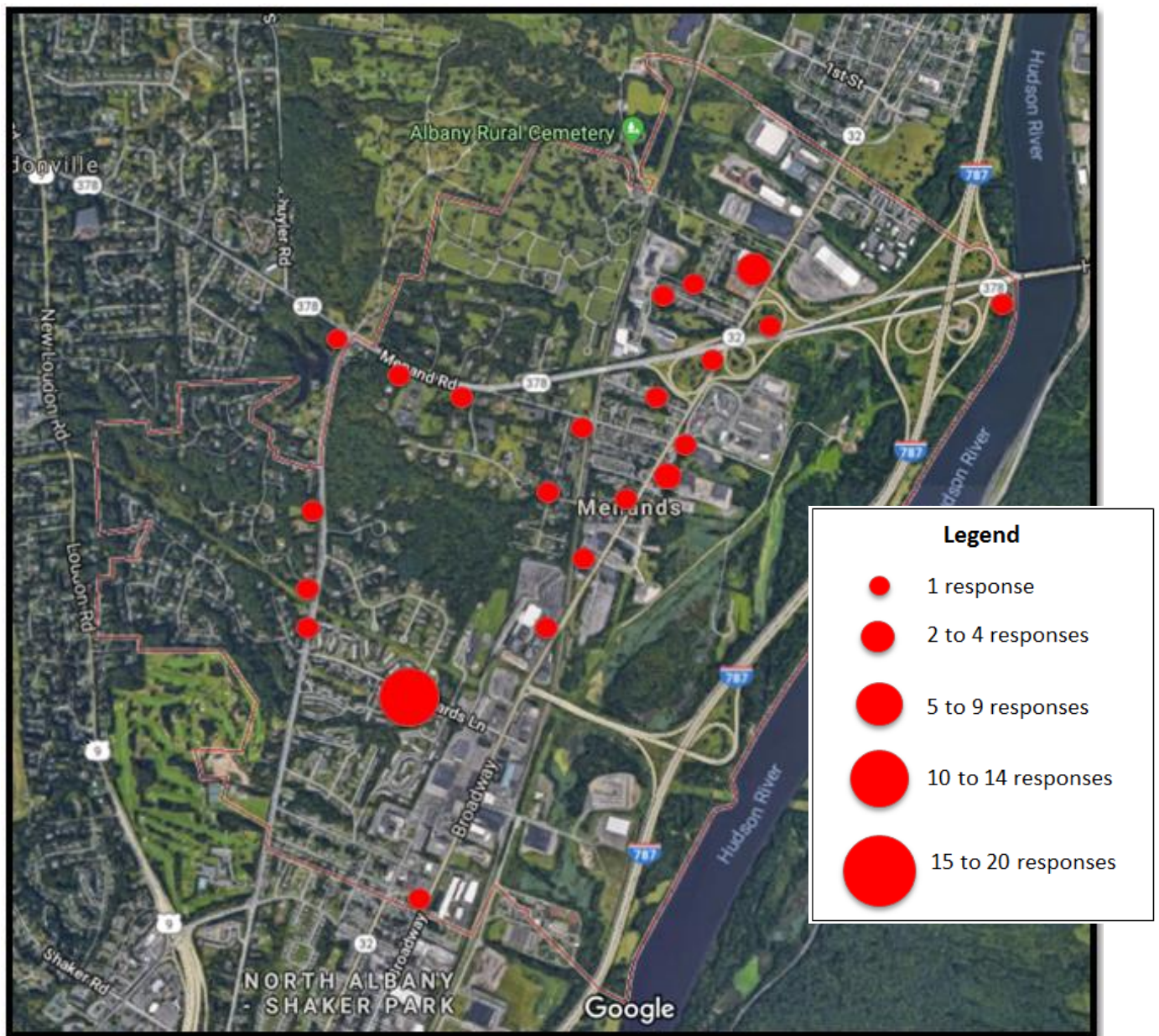


Table 5 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses for Question 4. Given the broad spatial distribution of responses across single sites, a graphical representation of the distribution is not provided for the responses for this question.

Table 5: Number of Responses and Percentages for Sidewalk Improvements

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Broadway	11	33
Wards Lane	10	30
Van Rensselaer Boulevard	4	12
Single Site Locations	8	24
Total	33	100%

Question 5 – Dog Park

For Question 5, attendees were asked to identify locations for a dog park and their responses are shown on Figure 8. A total of thirty (30) attendees responded to this question, and the most widely selected site was Capital District K9 Memorial Park by eight (8) attendees. Five (5) attendees each selected the green space or pocket park between the vacant bowling alley and Glenwood Road, and an area located near Amsterdam Avenue and Park Lane East. Four (4) attendees selected a location on the northeast side of the I-787 Exit 6 ramp and two (2) attendees each identified a location at the end of Private Road C, an area near the Farmers Market, and an undeveloped area north of Simmons Lane. The remaining two (2) attendees selected individual locations elsewhere in the Village.

According to the Town of Colonie (Handerhan, 2018), there are 142 dog licenses issued for the Village of Menands. However, additional information on the number and location of existing dog parks within Menands was not readily available to determine if there is unmet demand for this type of amenity. However, based on the responses provided, it appears that there is definitely an interest in the Village for dog parks, and the locations identified during this mapping exercise should be further studied to determine their size, current land use, availability (e.g. ownership), accessibility, and suitability for this use. For example, the location identified northeast of the I-

787 Exit 6 ramp appears to have plenty of space available, and is publicly owned land (New York State), thus it could be a site for a dog park, but it is currently not accessible due to I-787.

Figure 8: Locations for Dog Park (n=30)

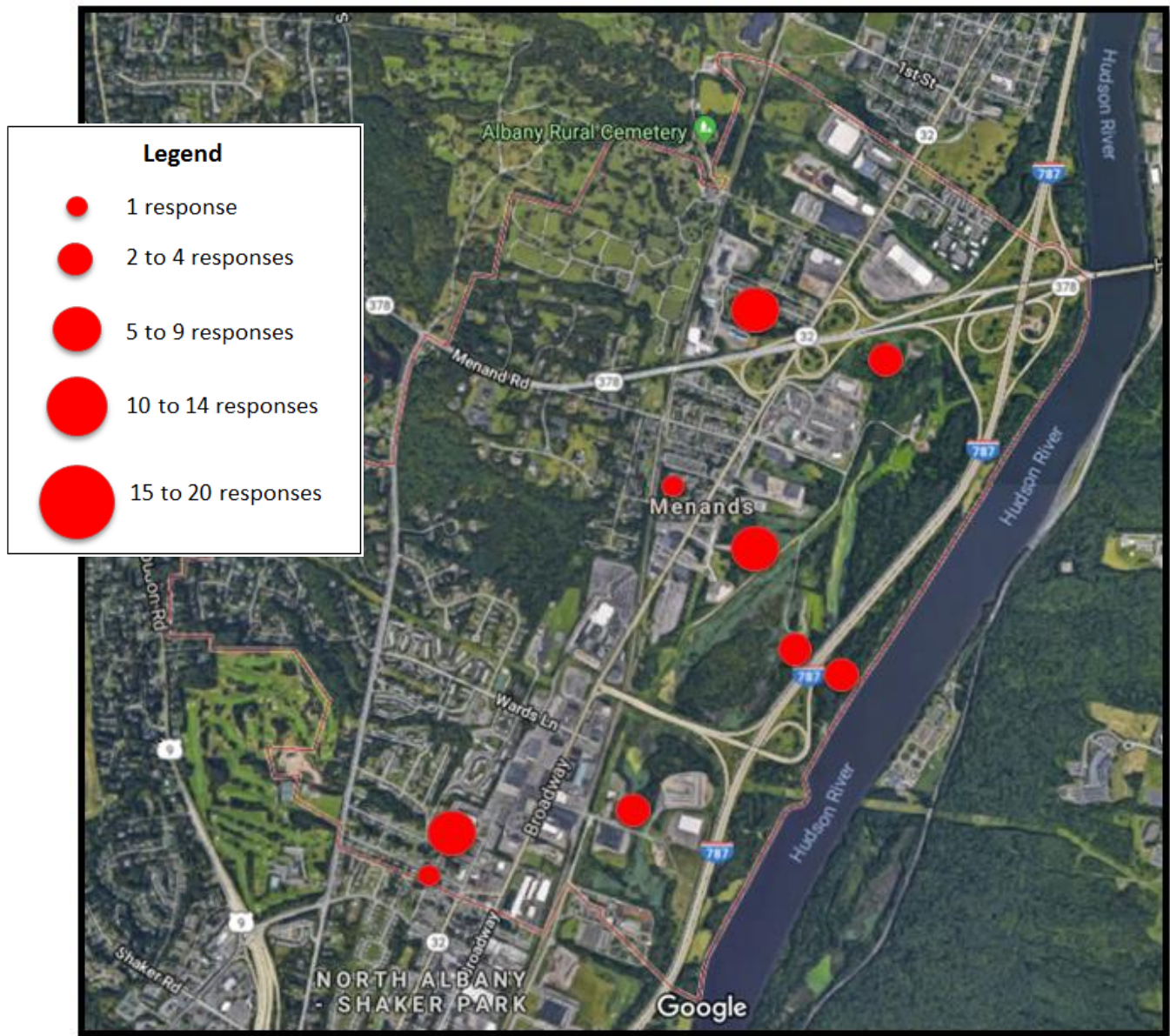
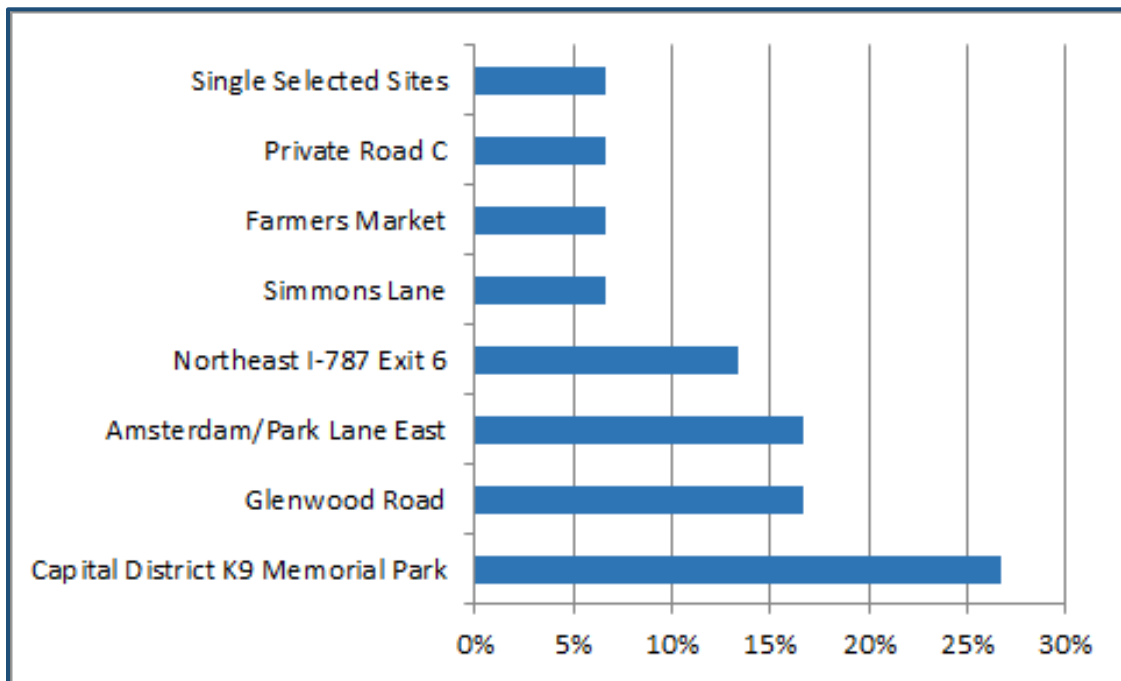


Table 6 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 5 and Figure 9 shows the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

Table 5: Number of Responses and Percentages for Dog Park

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Capital District K9 Memorial Park	8	27
Glenwood Road	5	17
Amsterdam/Park Lane East	5	17
Northeast I-787 Exit 6	4	13
Simmons Lane	2	7
Farmers Market	2	7
Private Road C	2	7
Single Selected Sites	2	7
Total	30	100%

Figure 9: Distribution of Responses for Dog Park (n = 30)



Question 6 – Community Garden

Attendees were asked to identify potential locations for a community garden, and Figure 10 shows the locations identified. Of the twenty-nine (29) attendees that responded to this question, six (6) selected an area near the Farmers Market as the preferred location for a community gar-

den, while four (4) identified an area near the Capital District K9 Memorial Park, four (4) attendees identified Ganser-Smith Memorial Park, and three (3) attendees identified an area between Amsterdam Avenue and Park Lane East. Two (2) attendees each selected areas near the Menands School, on the northeast side of the I-787 Exit 6 ramp, near River Hill Avenue, Village Hall, and The Lofts. Two (2) other attendees each identified a single location elsewhere in the Village. The responses indicate sincere interest in establishing this type of amenity in the Village; however, the locations identified should be further studied to determine their size, current land use, availability (e.g. ownership), accessibility, and suitability for this use.

Figure 10: Locations for Community Garden (n=29)

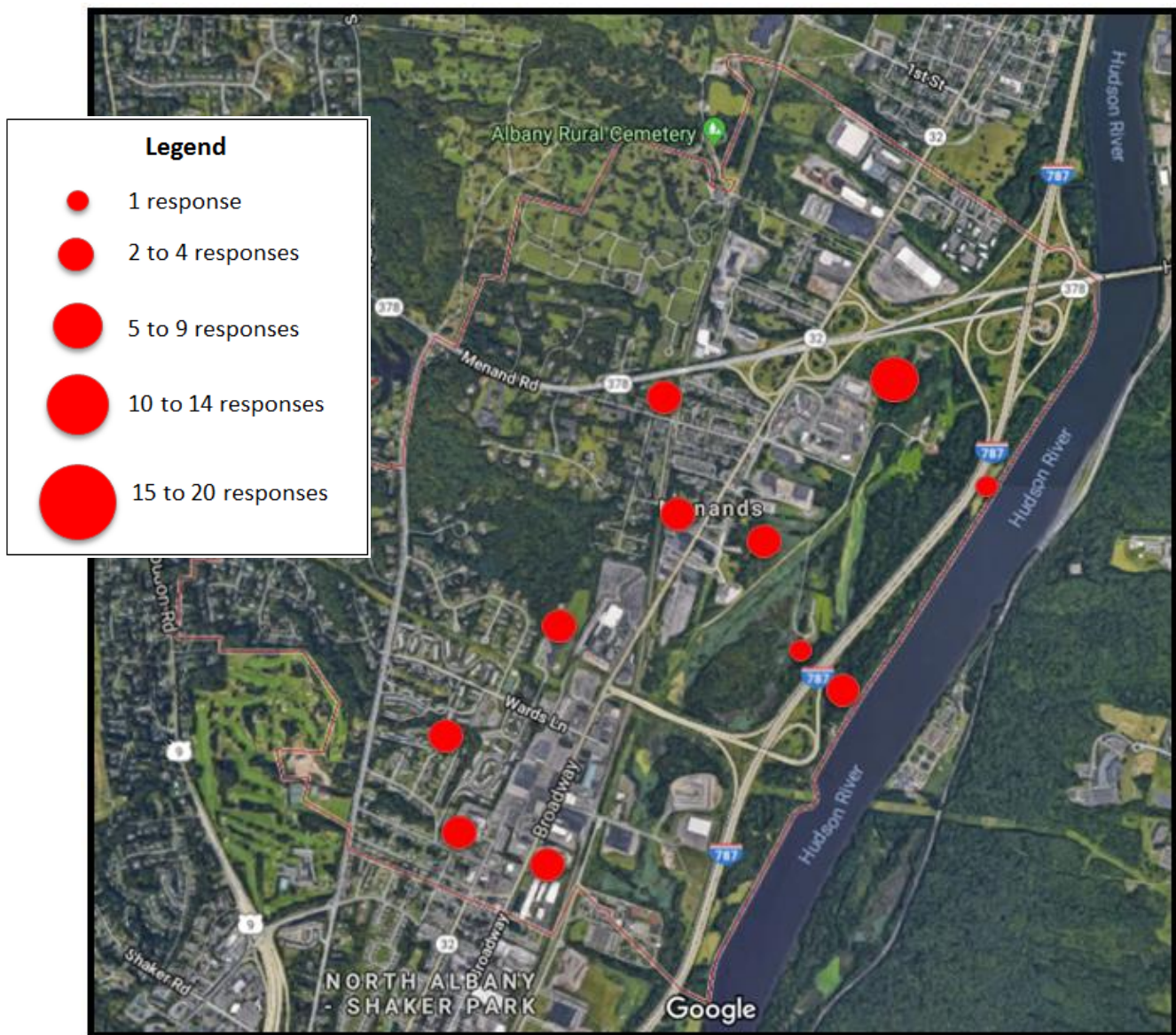
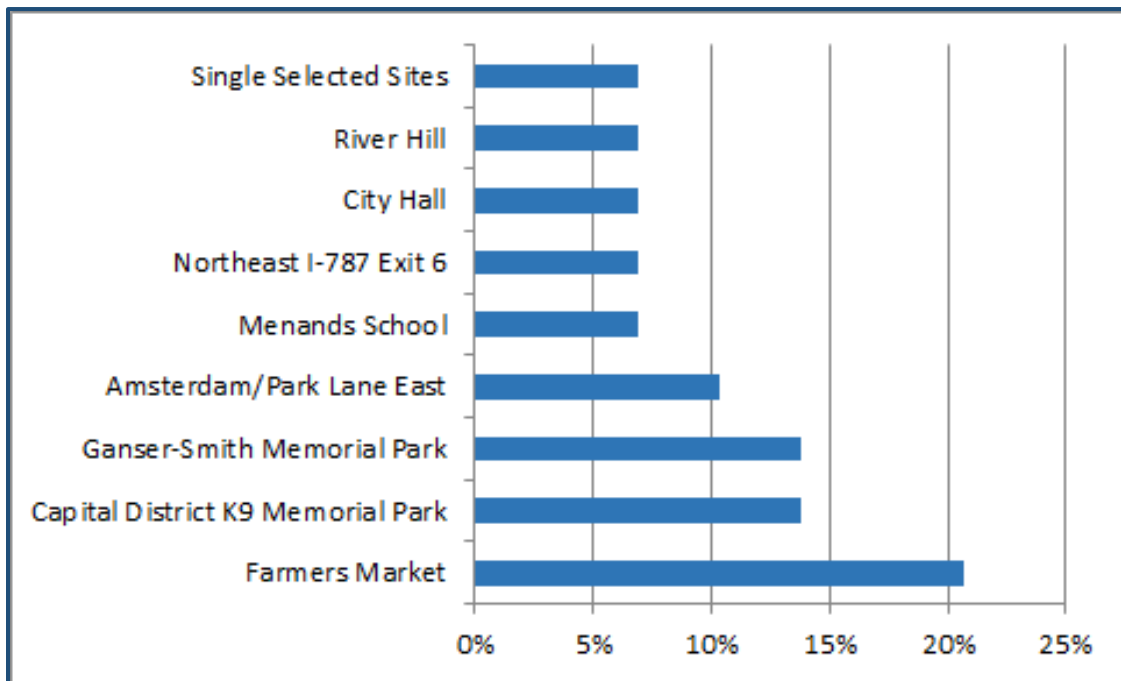


Table 6 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 6 and Figure 11 shows the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

Table 6: Number of Responses and Percentages for Community Garden

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Farmers Market	6	21
Capital District K9 Memorial Park	4	14
Ganser-Smith Memorial Park	4	14
Amsterdam/Park Lane East	3	10
Menands School	2	7
Northeast of I-787 Exit 6	2	7
Village Hall	2	7
River Hill	2	7
Single Selected Sites	2	7
Total	29	100%

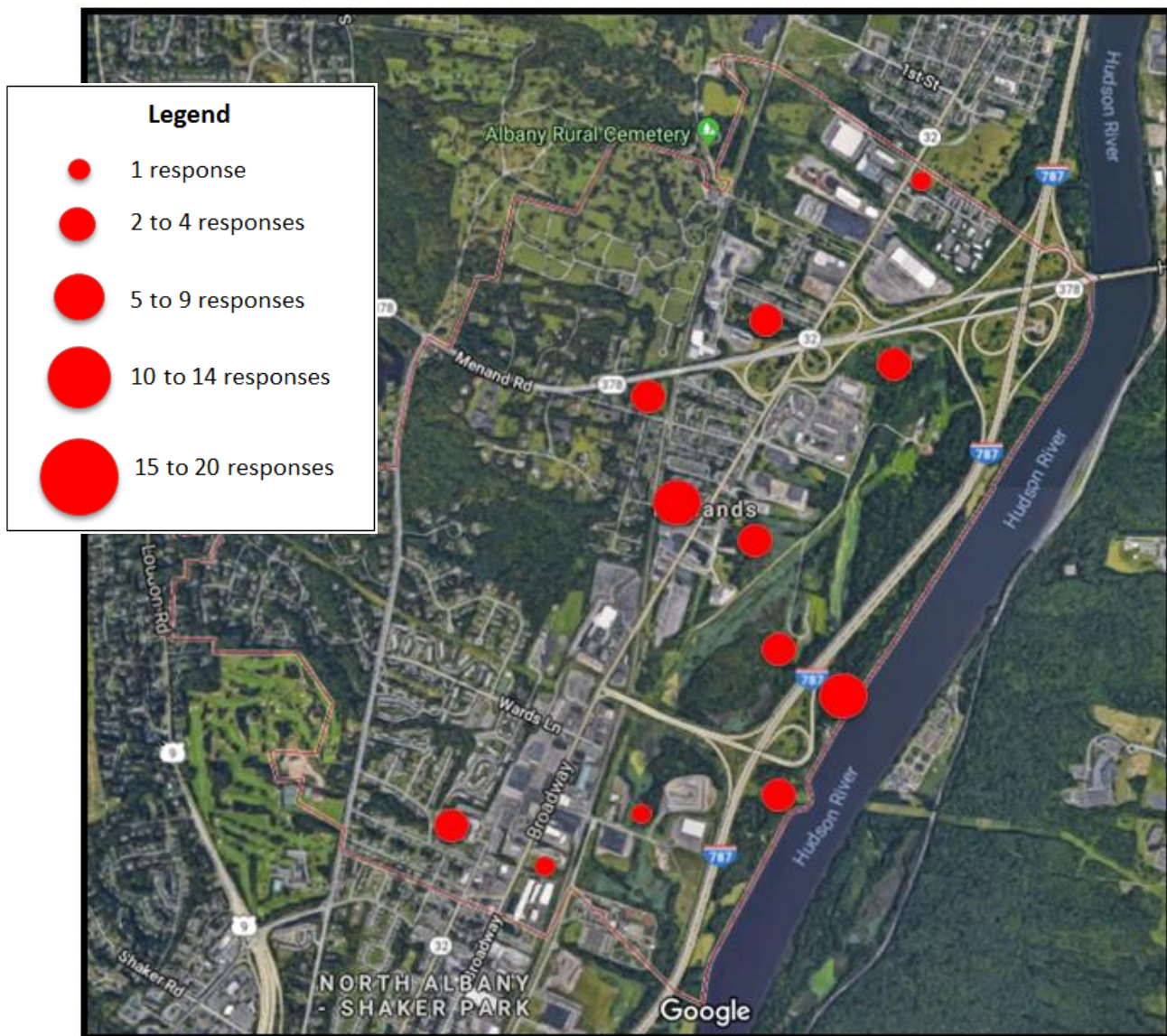
Figure 11: Distribution of Responses for Community Garden (n = 29)



Question 7 – Picnic Area

For Question 7, attendees were asked to identify locations for picnic areas, and the responses from thirty-three (33) attendees are shown in Figure 12. Eight (8) attendees selected an area on the east side of the I-787 Exit 6 ramp, while five (5) attendees identified a location behind Village Hall. Four (4) attendees selected the Ganser-Smith Memorial Park, and three (3) attendees each identified an area at the end of Private Road C, the pocket park between the vacant bowling alley and Glenwood Road, and the Capital District K9 Memorial Park. Two (2) attendees each identified areas near Amsterdam Avenue and Park Lane East and the Farmers Market, while the remaining three (3) attendees identified individual sites elsewhere in the Village.

Figure 12: Locations for Picnic Area (n=33)

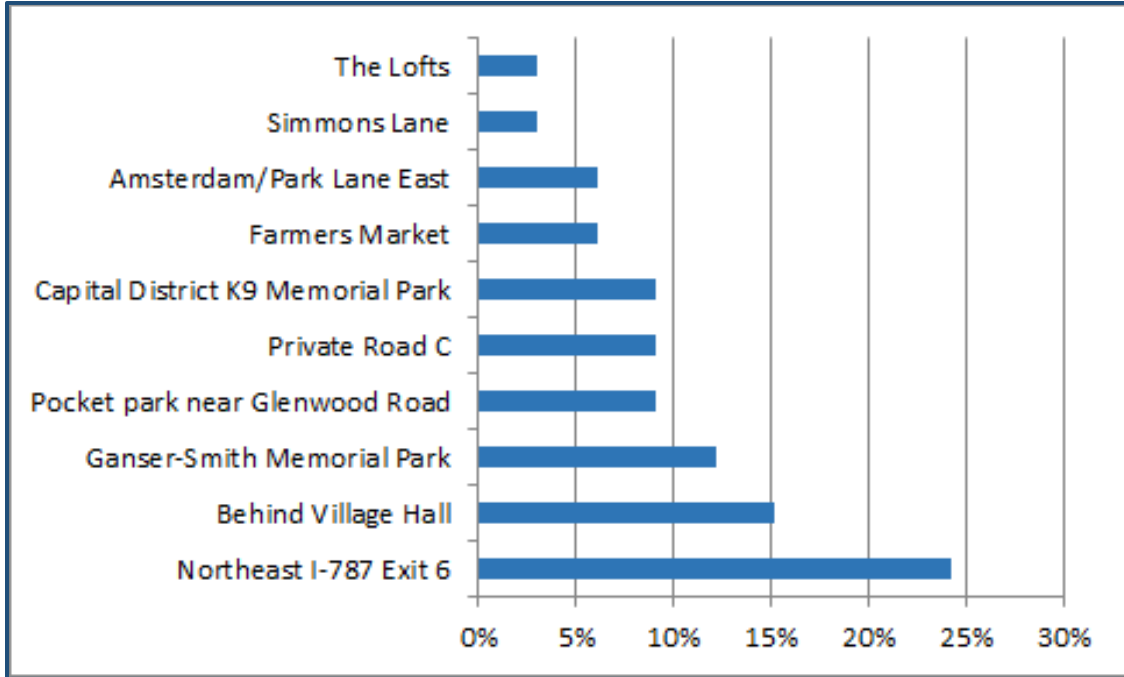


Similar to the responses for the location of the dog park, detailed data on the presence of picnic areas within the Village is not readily available at present, however, the responses indicate a strong interest in more picnic areas within the community. Thus, the locations identified should be further studied to determine their size, current land use, availability (e.g. ownership), accessibility, and suitability for this use. Table 7 summarizes the location of the responses, the number of responses, and percent of total responses for Question 7 and Figure 13 show the same breakdown of the responses graphically.

Table 7: Number of Responses and Percentages for Picnic Area

Location	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total Responses
Northeast I-787 Exit 6	8	24
Behind Village Hall	5	15
Ganser-Smith Memorial Park	4	12
Pocket Park near Glenwood Road	3	9
Private Road C	3	9
Capital District K9 Memorial Park	3	9
Farmers Market	2	6
Amsterdam/Park Lane East	2	6
Single Selected Sites	3	9
Total	33	100%

Figure 13: Distribution of Responses for Picnic Area (n = 33)



Word Clouds

Attendees were asked to provide one word to describe the Village of Menands today and another word to describe the Village in the future. The responses were grouped using word clouds, or tag clouds, to visually represent the one-word descriptions, but with the most frequently tagged words appearing using the largest font. In general, these word clouds are used to highlight the attendees' perception of the Village. The word clouds generated from the activity at both Open Houses are shown in Figures 14 and 15.

Figure 14: Word Cloud – Menands Today (n=35)

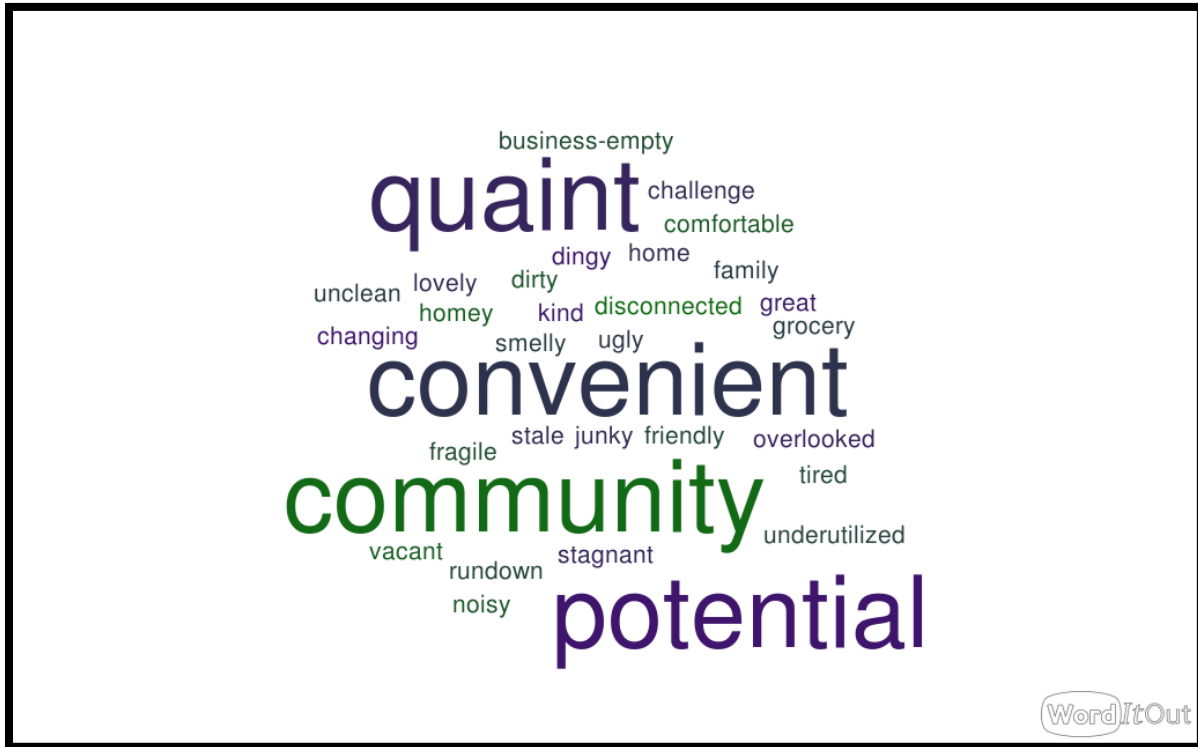
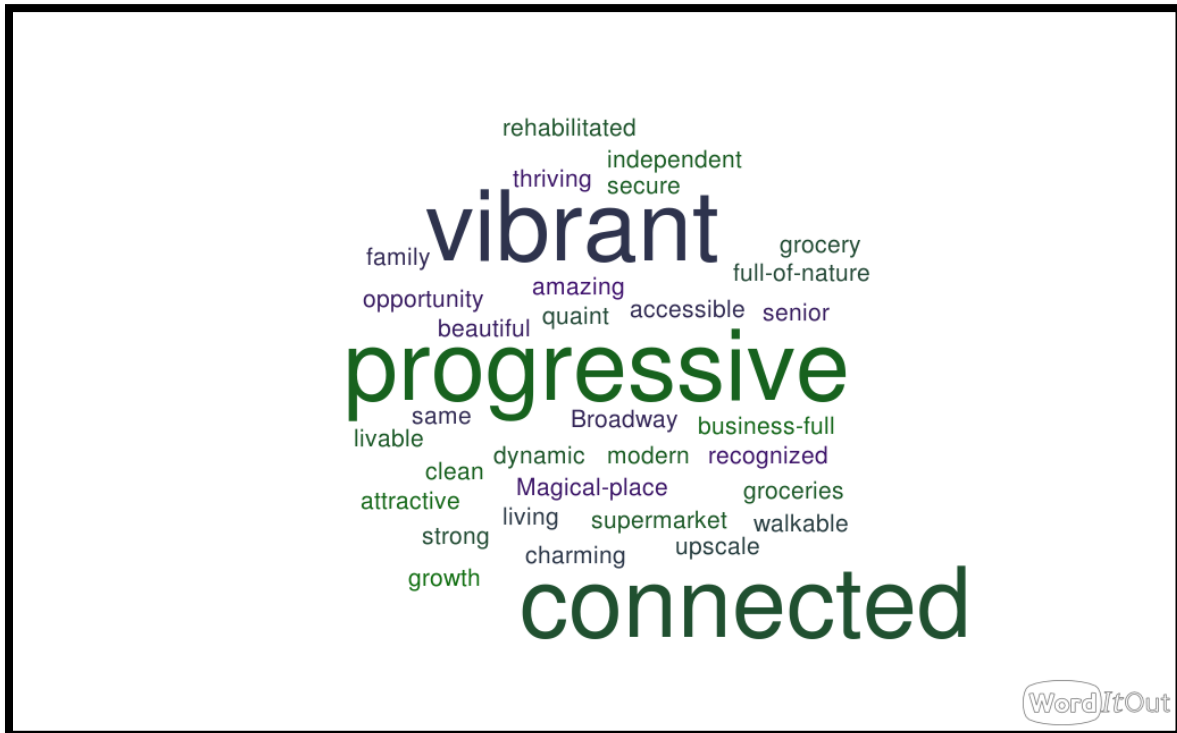


Figure 15: Word Cloud – Menands in the Future (n=35)



Attendee Comments

One-on-One Discussions and Handwritten Comments: During the Open Houses, attendees provided additional oral or handwritten comments and Appendix E includes a summary of these comments. A preliminary qualitative analysis of these comments was completed using content analysis and Table 8 summarizes the general content and frequency of the comments.

Table 8: Categorization of Verbal and Written Comments

Category	Number of Comments	Central Topic(s)
Housing	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opposition to new apartments - Need for senior citizen housing
Infrastructure	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to improve or upgrade sidewalks - Need to re-use vacant buildings - Better access from Menands Road to cemetery and Glenwood pocket park - Better access to waterfront
Traffic	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heavy truck traffic on Railroad Avenue - Motorcycle drag racing on Broadway - Train traffic
Services/Amenities	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need a grocery store - Need a dog park - Would like to see Farmer's Market increase in size - Lack of entertainment and amenities in Village - Snow removal on Broadway - More cafes and amenities - More entertainment and amenities
Aesthetics	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for beautification - Better code enforcement to cleanup rundown properties

Summary and Conclusions

Two Open Houses were conducted in April 2018 to gather public input that will be used to inform the development of a Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Menands, N.Y. at some point in the future. Overall, a total of forty-six (46) persons attended the events and shared their views on a range of planning topics, from identifying areas for landscape beautification and sidewalk improvements to prioritizing vacant commercial buildings for re-use and identifying the center of the Village. The principle method for gathering the public input was a mapping exercise and

based on a detailed review of the responses received, the results indicate that attendees were in general agreement on responses for some but not all the questions.

The highest degree of consensus was associated with the identification of the center of the Village, with fifty-four (54) percent of the attendees indicating that the Village Hall should be the center of the Village. The second most preferred center of the Village, selected by twenty-six (26) percent of the attendees, was the Mid-City Shopping Center. Conceptually, residents may associate the center of a community with a place of historical significance, or a place where key activities occur, such as commercial activities in a central business district or public administration at a municipal government complex. In the case of Menands, the center of the Village selected by the majority of the attendees coincides with the existing center of key public services and public administration for the Village. Given the selection of the Village Hall as the center of the community, the Village might consider establishing other features at or near this location to strengthen its identity as the Village center. For example, the Village could place a large interpretative sign in the immediate vicinity that provides the history of the Menands as well as a map of key attractions throughout the Village. As another example, the Village could consider sponsoring an annual event at this location, such as an annual plant sale or gardening fair, which would pay homage to community's history as a center for horticulture and reinforce the perception of the Village Hall area as the Village center. The Mid-City Shopping Center was also identified as a center of the Village and given its location within in the heart of the Broadway Business District, this mall has the potential to become a center for commercial activities. However, at present most of the commercial space in this shopping center is vacant, thus transforming this location into a thriving central business district will likely require a long-term strategy

Other questions where there appeared to be a high degree of consensus were associated with the prioritization of vacant commercial buildings for re-use and locations for landscape beautification. Coincidentally, attendees identified the Mid-City Shopping Center, where the vacant former Ideal Food Basket and NYS Worker's Compensation Board buildings are located, as the highest priorities for vacant commercial building re-use (33 percent) as well as landscape beautification (45 percent). Clearly, revitalizing and improving the aesthetics of this site is a major concern for the Village residents and is needed to transform the site into the commercial center of the Village. In addition to the Mid-City Shopping Center, there were others areas in the Village identi-

fied by attendees as needing attention, and the list of sites developed from the Open Houses can serve as a basis for prioritizing community efforts to return these properties to beneficial use.

Sidewalks were an important topic of discussion during the Open Houses and attendees identified two major roadways, Wards Land and Broadway, where sidewalk improvements are needed. These results, coupled with past transportation related studies, can be used to make an initial list of priorities areas for sidewalks improvements. However, given the variability in the attendees' responses, a broader study of the sidewalk conditions is warranted.

Attendees also identified numerous locations and showed strong support for the establishment of dog parks, community gardens, and picnic areas within the Village, however, the relatively low level of clustering of their responses indicates less consensus for particular sites and further study of the locations identified should be pursued to determine their size, current land use, availability (e.g. ownership), accessibility, and feasibility for these uses.

Word clouds were used to graphically represent how the attendees would describe the Village of Menands today and in the future. Overall, the range of words provided by the attendees reflected both negative perceptions as well as positive perceptions of the Village, indicating that the community has some shortcomings but it has many positive aspects as well. Overall, however, the positive perceptions appeared to prevail. Lastly, a limited number of oral and written comments were gathered during the Open Houses and a preliminary content analysis of these comments indicates that there are several common themes or topics that capture the gist of the concerns, with the primary themes being housing, infrastructure, traffic, aesthetics, and services / amenities. Some of the major concerns identified in these comments were the need for a grocery store as well as other services and amenities in the Village, the need for sidewalk improvements to improve walkability of the Village, and the need for community beautification.

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Village of Menands

MAYOR
Megan Grenier
VILLAGE CLERK
Don Henderhan



TRUSTEES
Steve C. Boulet
Diane L. Foley
Seth Harris
Aileen L. Nicoll

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 28, 2018**

Village of Menands Announces Open Houses for Comprehensive Plan

Menands, NY – The Village of Menands has announced that the first Open House for the Village’s Comprehensive Plan will be held on Monday, April 2, 2018 at Village Hall, 250 Broadway from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. During the Open House, the Village, in partnership with students from the Master’s Program in Regional Planning at the University at Albany, will solicit public input on topics such as current land uses, economic development, housing, recreation and transportation, which will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Menands Mayor Megan Grenier said, “The graduate students are providing tremendous assistance to the village as we reach out to listen to those who live and work here to learn what they would like the future of the village to be. We encourage everyone to attend.” Light refreshments will be available.

A second open house is scheduled for April 11, 2018 from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm and will be held in the community room at The Albany Lofts at One Broadway, in Menands.

Tel: (518) 434-2922
Fax: (518) 427-7303

Municipal Building
280 Broadway, Menands, NY 12204

www.villageofmenands.com

A comprehensive plan is a blueprint for guiding future development and growth in the village. The University at Albany graduate students have structured a two-part public engagement process. A public survey was distributed and collected in March to gain input from those who live and work in the village. The Open Houses on April 2 and April 11 will cover different topics than those covered in the community survey. Results of the public engagement process will be compiled by the students and presented to the village in late April. Information gathered through the public engagement process will be used to shape the recommendations and priorities in the comprehensive plan.

This project is funded, in part, by a grant the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The event is open to the public and is accessible to the handicapped. For additional information, see the Village of Menands web site at <http://villageofmenands.com/>.

Contact:
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MAYOR
Megan Grenier
VILLAGE CLERK
Don Handohan



TRUSTEES
Steve C. Boulet
Diane Foley
Beth Harris
Aileen L. Nicoll

Village of Menands

250 Broadway
Menands, NY 12204
(518) 434-2922
Fax (518) 427-7303

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 6, 2018

Second Open House for Menands Comprehensive Plan

Menands, NY – The Village of Menands extends an invitation to the second public Open House for the Village's Comprehensive Plan on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 in the community room at the Albany Lofts at One Broadway. People may stop by anytime between 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Remarks by local public officials will begin at 5:30 pm.

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in interactive mapping exercise with graduate students from the University at Albany Master's Program in Regional Planning on topics such as housing, current land uses, economic development, transportation and recreation, which will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Menands Mayor Megan Grenier said, "We encourage everyone who lives and works in Menands to attend to provide their comments. The UAlbany students are gathering all of the public input and will present us with a report at the end of April. We will use this information as we move forward with future planning."

A comprehensive plan is a blueprint for guiding future development and growth in the village. The University at Albany graduate students have structured a two-part public engagement process to help the village. A community survey was distributed in March to gain input from those who live and work in the village. The Open House on April 11 will cover different topics than those included in the community survey. Results of the public engagement process will be compiled by the students and presented to the village in late April. Information gathered through the public engagement process will be used to shape the recommendations and priorities in the comprehensive plan. For further information on the comprehensive plan, go to the Village of Menands web site at: <http://villageofmenands.com/>.

Funding for this project is provided, in part, by a grant from the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The event is open to the public and is accessible to the handicapped. Light refreshments will be available.

The Albany Lofts at One Broadway is located at 1 Broadway in Menands, NY (the former Albany International building). For information on the meeting location, see:

<https://www.1broadwayalbanv.com/>

Contact:
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Village of Menands

MAYOR
Megan Grenier

VILLAGE CLERK
Don Handerman



TRUSTEES
Steve C. Boulet
Diana L. Foley
Seth Harris
Aileen L. Nicoll

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 28, 2018

Contact:

Marcia Kees
(518) 813-2166
mkees@albany.edu

******* MEDIA ADVISORY *******

WHO: Village of Menands, Menands, NY
WHAT: Open House for Village Comprehensive Plan
WHEN: Monday, April 2, 2018 – 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm
WHERE: Village Hall
250 Broadway
Menands, NY 12204

The Village of Menands announces that the first Open House for the Village's Comprehensive Plan will be held on Monday, April 2, 2018 at Village Hall, 250 Broadway from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. The Comprehensive Plan will be a blueprint for guiding future development and growth in the village. Students from the Master's Program in Regional Planning at the University at Albany, will be on hand to ask for input on topics such as current land uses, economic development, housing, recreation, and transportation, which will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

This project is funded, in part, by a grant the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

The event is open to the public and is accessible to the handicapped. Light refreshments will be available.

Tel. (518) 434-2922
Fax: (518) 427-7303

Municipal Building
280 Broadway, Menands, NY 12204

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Village of Menands

230 Broadway
Menands, NY 12204
(518) 434-2922
Fax (518) 427-7303

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: April 6, 2018

Contact:
Marcia Kees
(518) 813-2166
mkees@albany.edu

***** MEDIA ADVISORY *****

WHO: Village of Menands, Menands, NY
WHAT: Open House for Village Comprehensive Plan
WHEN: Wednesday, April 11, 2018 - 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. Remarks at 5:30 pm.
WHERE: Albany Lofts at One Broadway
Community Room
1 Broadway
Menands, NY 12204

The Village of Menands announces that the second public Open House for the Village's Comprehensive Plan will be held on Wednesday, April 11, 2018 at the community room at the Albany Lofts at One Broadway. Remarks by local officials and representatives from the University at Albany will be presented at 5:30 pm.

The Comprehensive Plan will be a blueprint for guiding future development and growth in the village. Students from the Master's Program in Regional Planning at the University at Albany,

will be on hand to ask for input on topics such as current land uses, economic development, housing, recreation, and transportation, which will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. People may stop by anytime between 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm to work on interactive mapping exercises with the graduate students.

Funding for this project is provided, in part, by a grant from the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The event is open to the public and is accessible to the handicapped. Light refreshments will be available.

For further information on the comprehensive plan, go to the Village of Menands web site at: <http://villageofmenands.com/>

The Albany Lofts at One Broadway is located at 1 Broadway in Menands, NY (the former Albany International building). For meeting location, see: <https://www.1broadwayalbany.com/>

Times Union, April 1, 2018, retrieved from
<https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/community-Briefs-12796553.php>

Open houses to address Menands planning

MENANDS – Two open houses are scheduled this month in Menands as part of an interactive workshop led by University at Albany master of regional planning program graduate students.

The public workshops follow up an community survey taken by about 300 respondents, distributed to residents and businesses. Many respondents place priority on implementing a dog park, picnic area, community garden, sidewalks, and re-use of vacant buildings.

Open houses will be at 4:30 p.m. Monday at Village Hall and at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 12 at Albany Lofts, One Broadway (Community Room).

PAST EVENTS

Community Open House on Comprehensive Plan at the Albany Lofts – April 11th, 2018

Community Open House on Comprehensive Plan at the Village Hall – April 2nd, 2018





VILLAGE VISION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN Open House



**April 2, 2018
4:30 pm to 7:00 pm
Village Hall
280 Broadway, Menands, NY**

The Village of Menands, in coordination with the University at Albany, is working on its first ever Comprehensive Plan, which will be a blueprint to guide its future growth and development.

The Village is hosting an Open House on April 2 to present information on the Comprehensive Plan and learn about your vision for the future of the community. Please come share your thoughts with us!

For more information on the Comprehensive Plan, visit the Village website at:

<http://villageofmenands.com>



VILLAGE VISION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN Open House



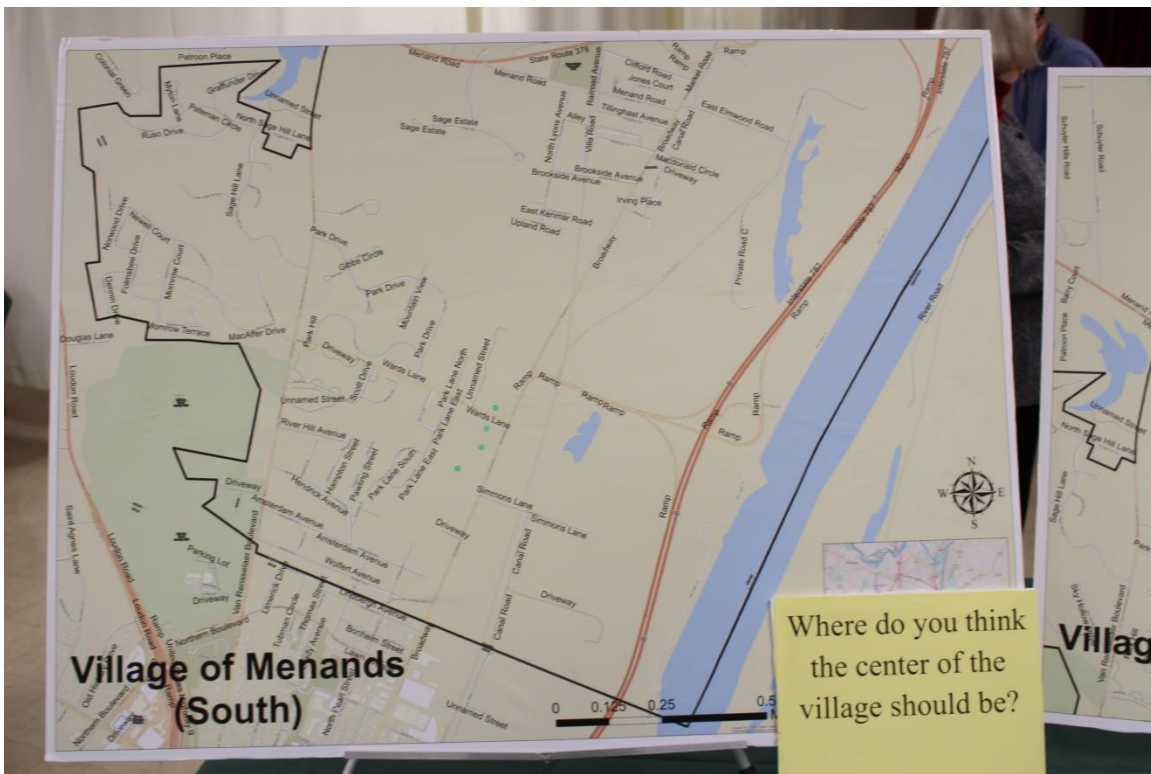
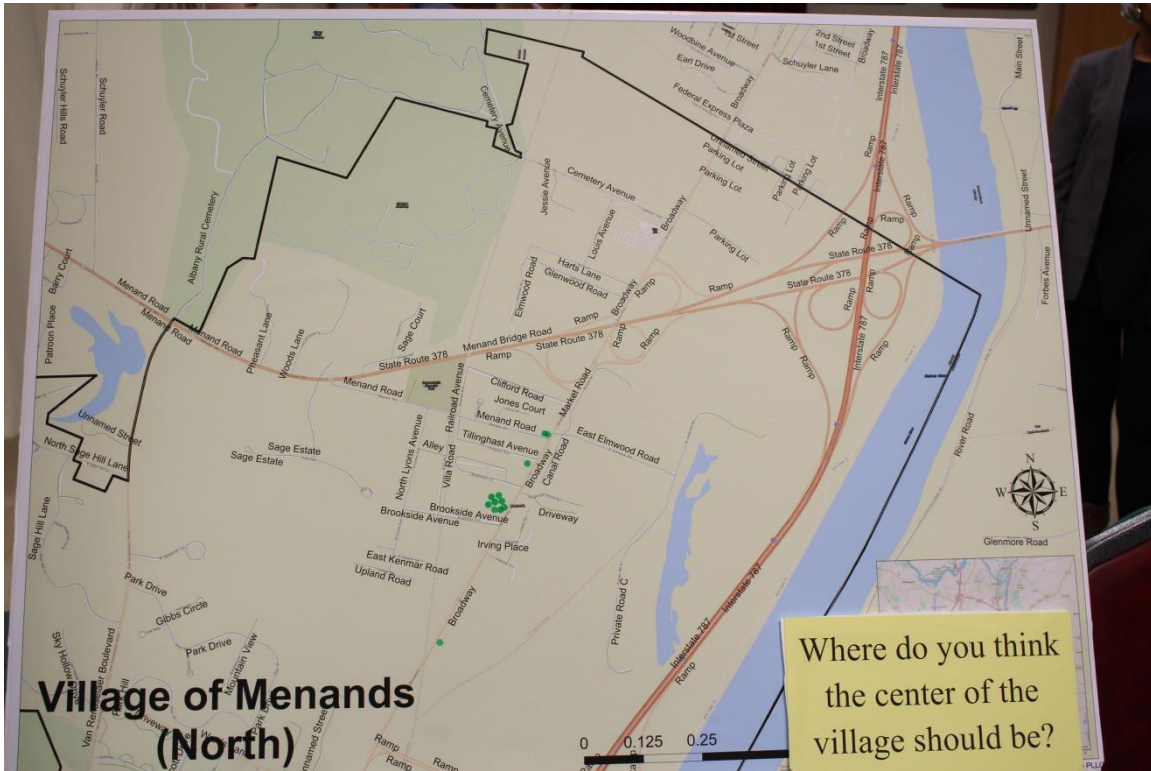
**Wednesday, April 11, 2018
4:30 pm to 7:00 pm
Albany Lofts at One Broadway
“The Lounge” Community Room
One Broadway, Menands, NY**

The Village of Menands, in coordination with the University at Albany, is working on its first ever Comprehensive Plan, which will be a blueprint to guide its future growth and development.

Please come share your thoughts with us!
Light refreshments will be available.

For more information on the Comprehensive Plan,
visit the Village website at:
<http://villageofmenands.com>

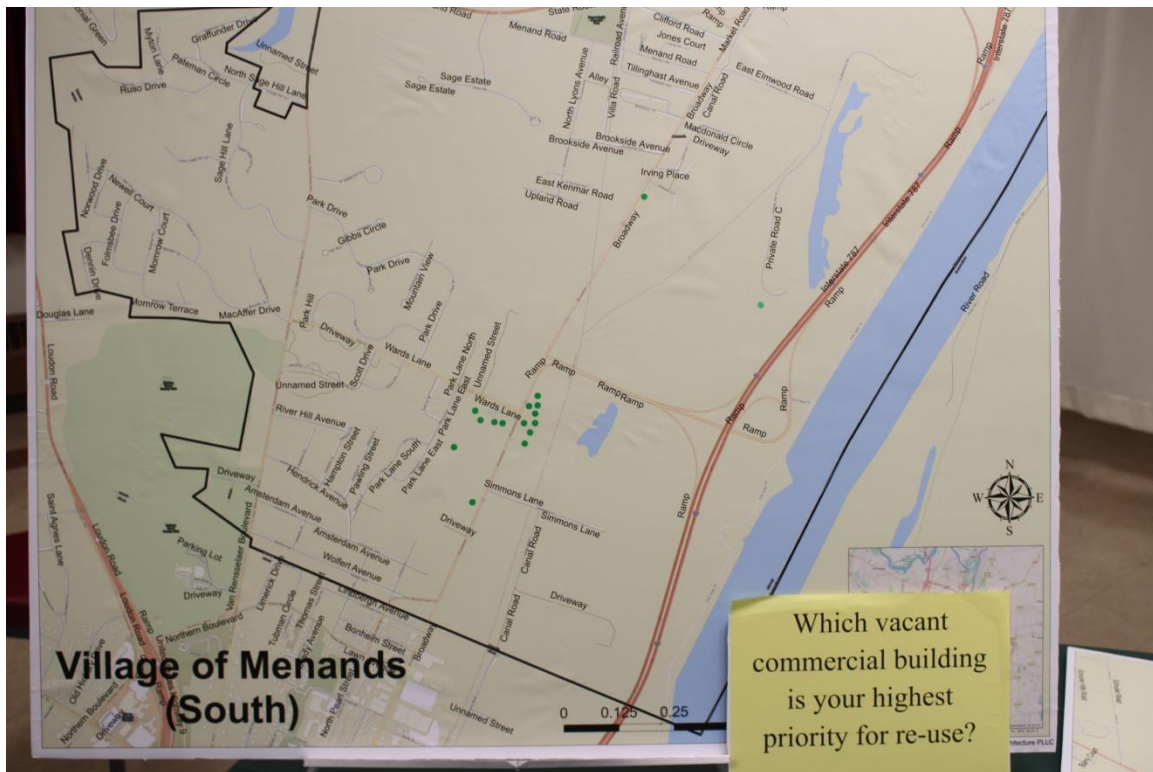
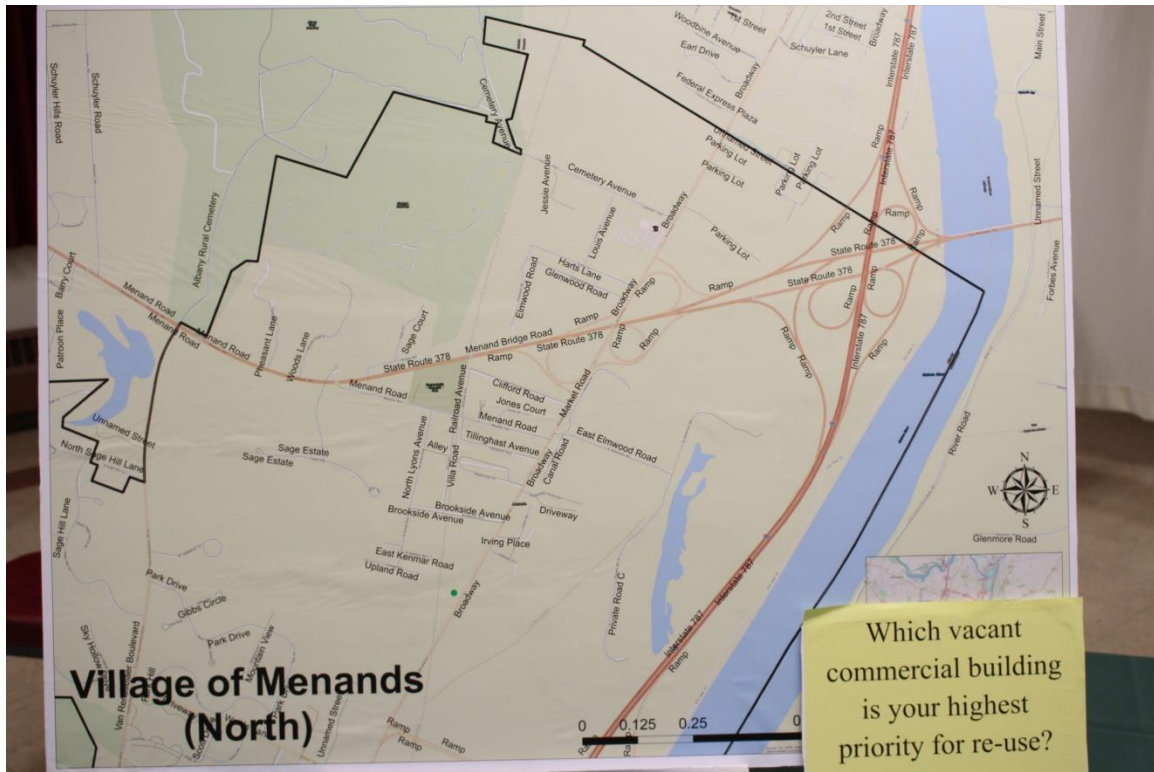
Appendix D – Photos of Mapping Exercise



Open House 1: Location of Village center



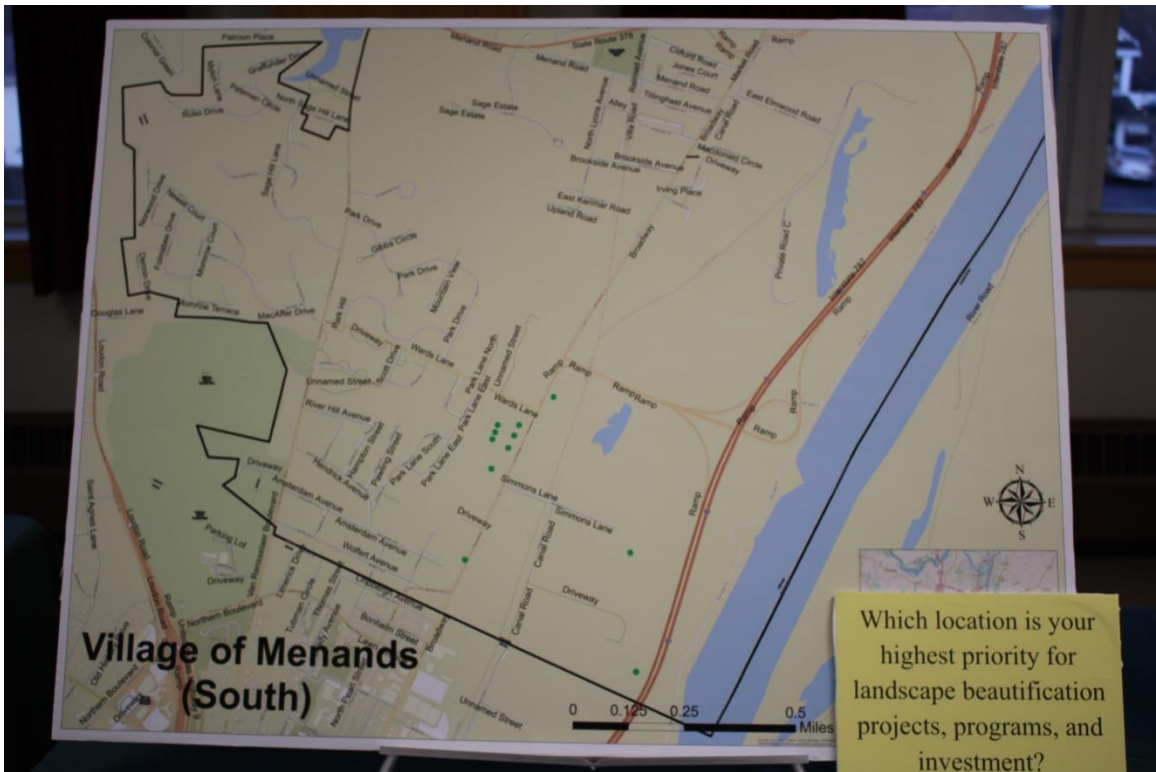
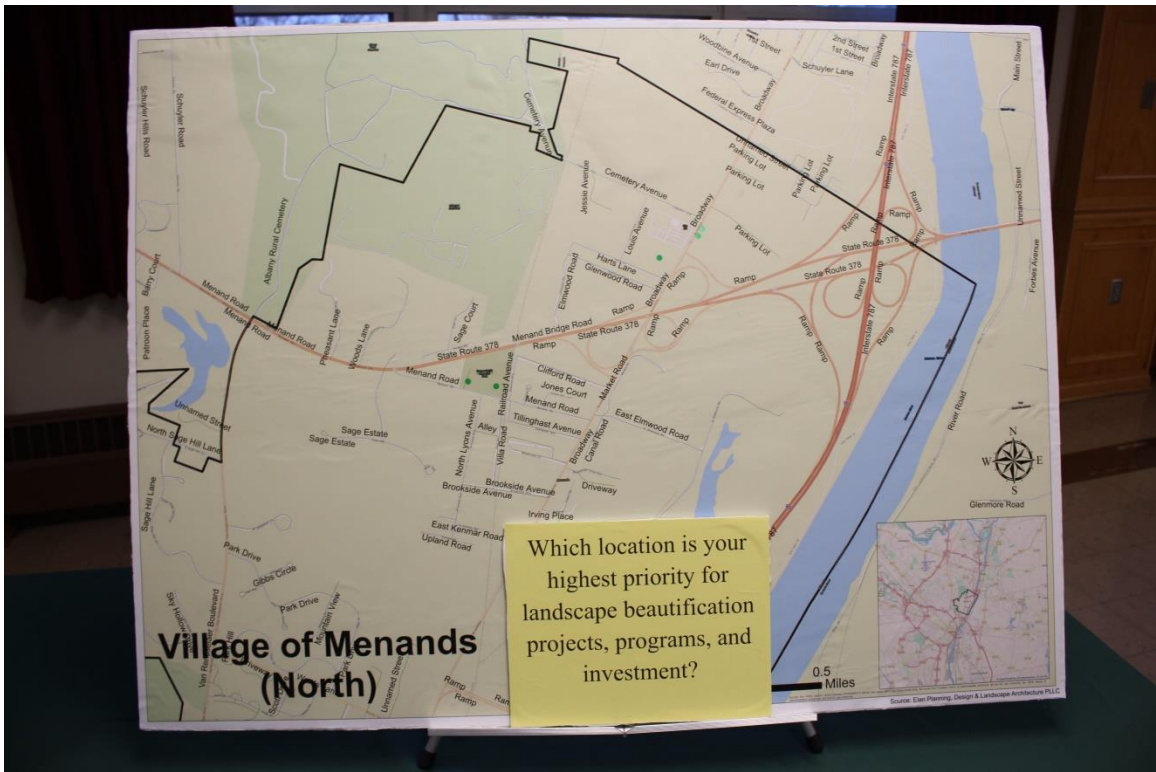
Open House 2: Location of Village center



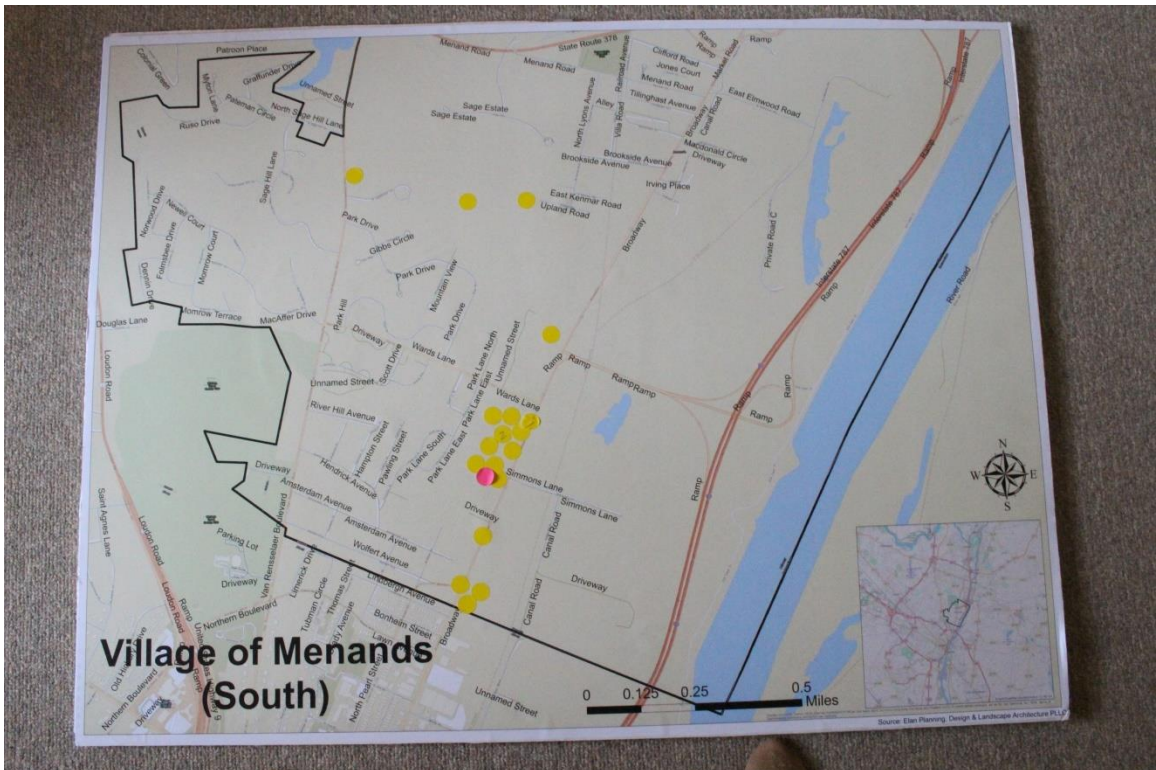
Open House 1: Highest priority vacant commercial building for re-use.



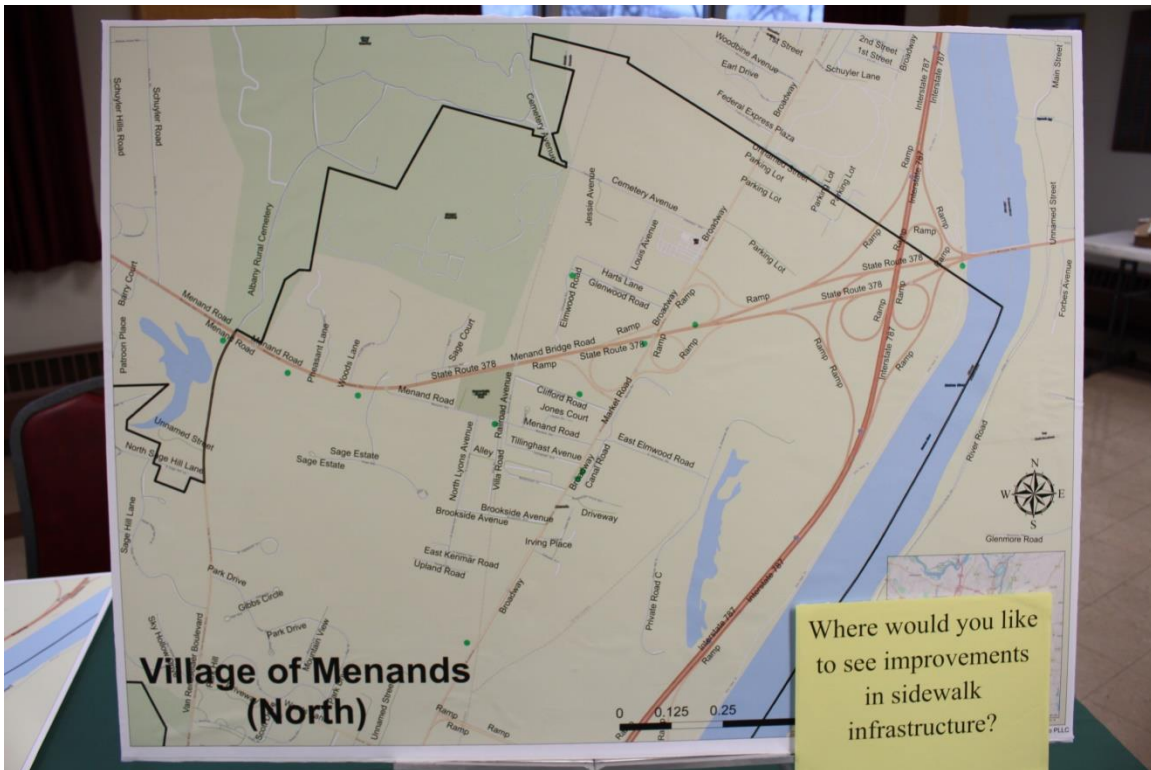
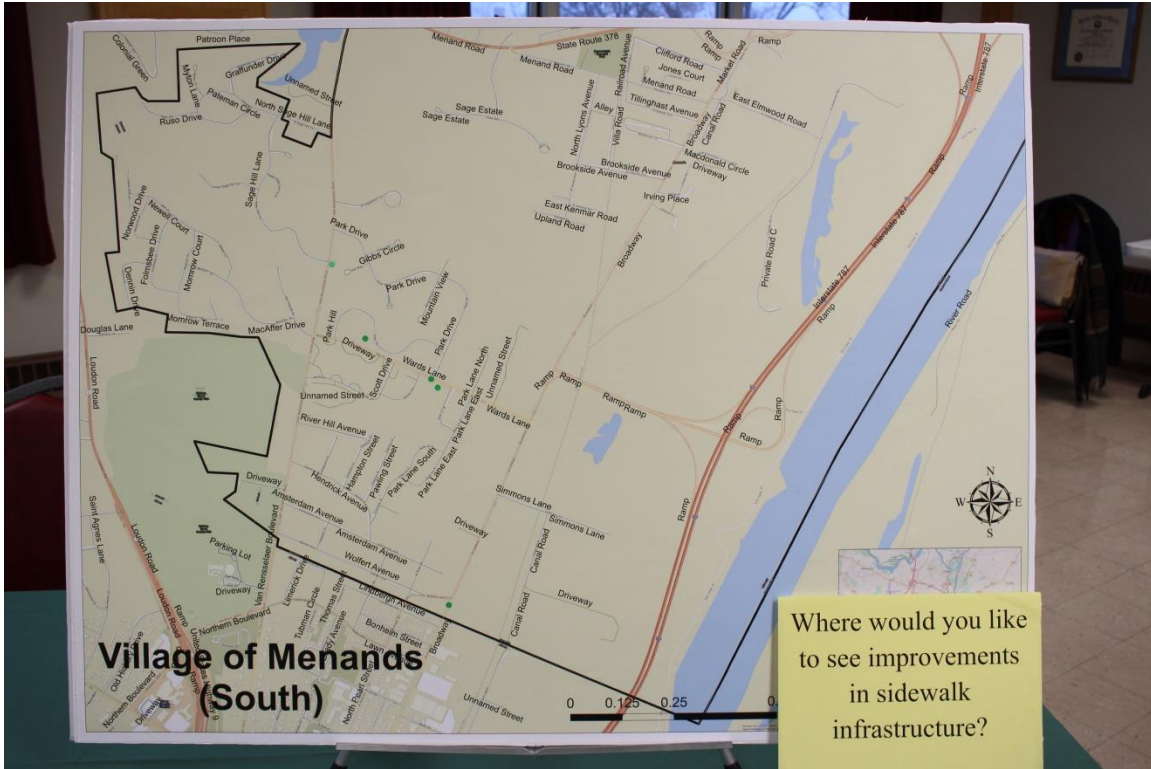
Open House 2: Highest priority vacant commercial building for re-use.



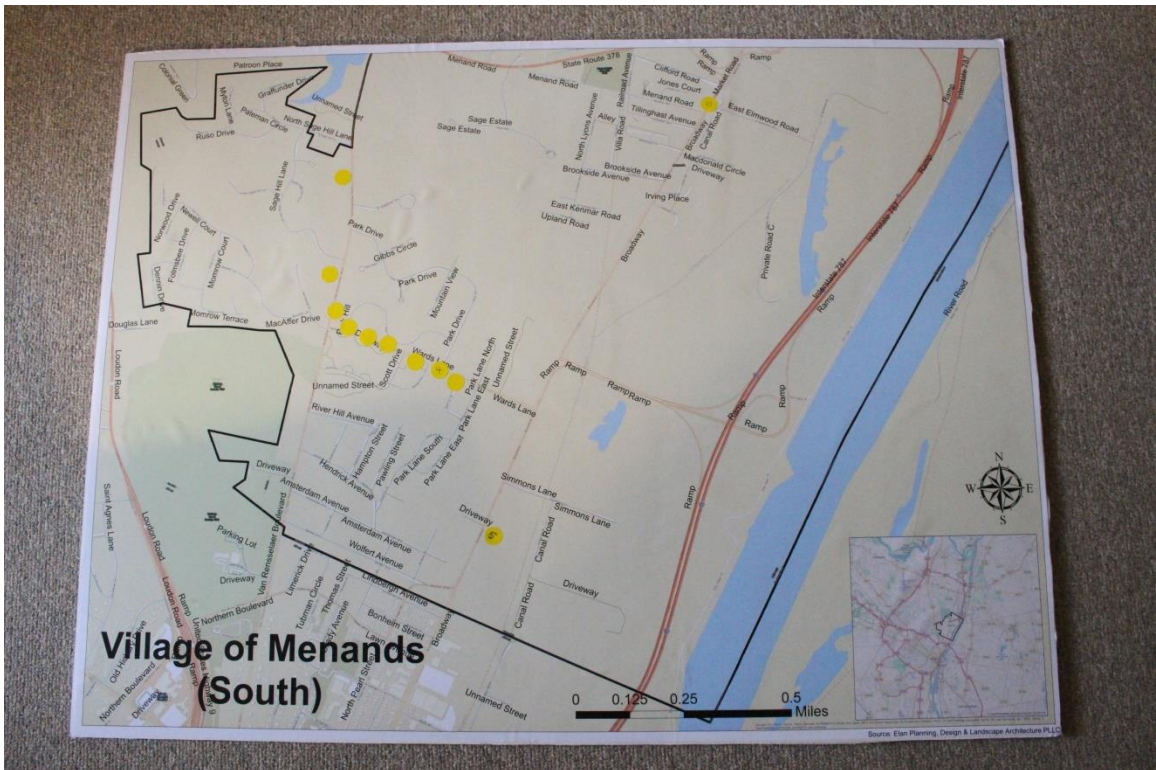
Open House 1: Location of highest priority for landscape beautification.



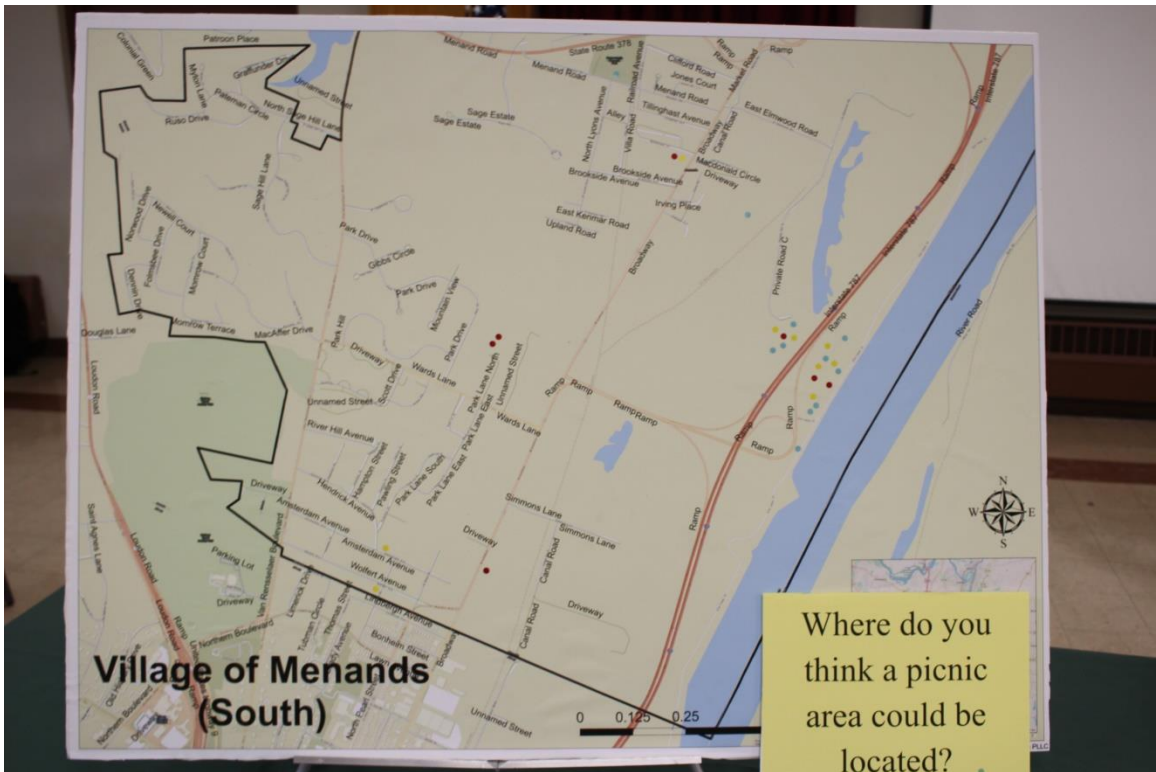
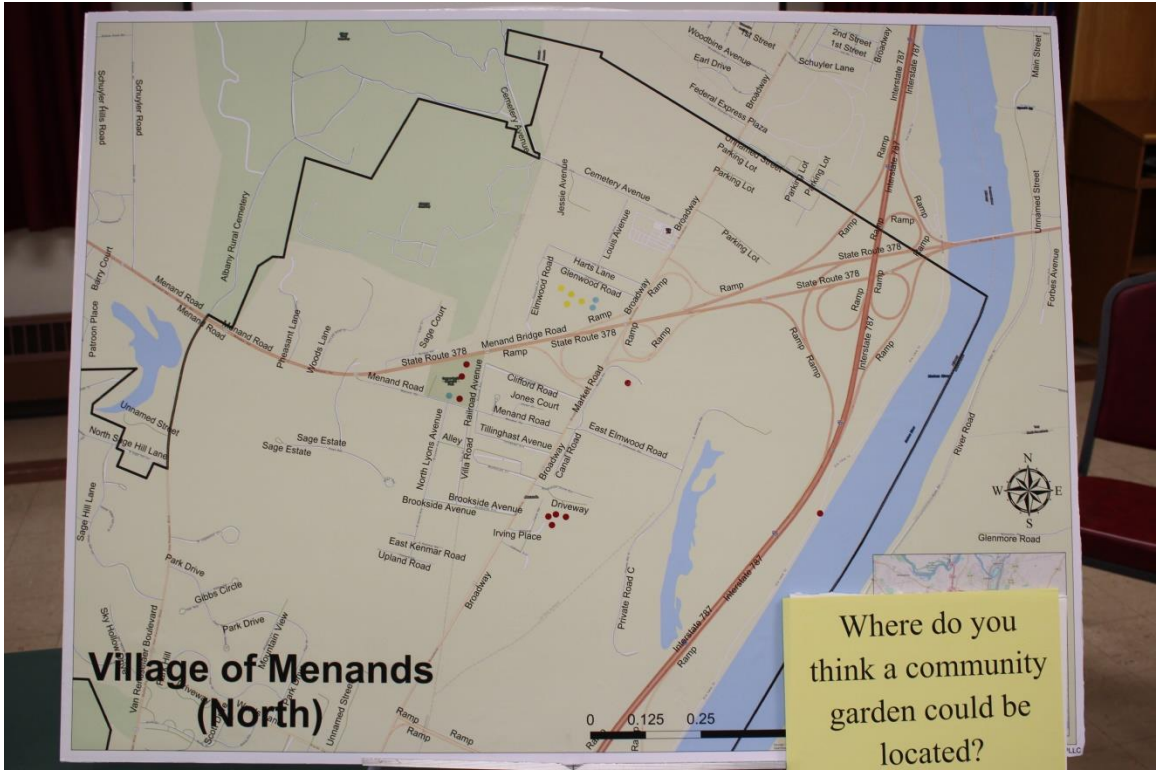
Open House 2: Location of highest priority for landscape beautification.



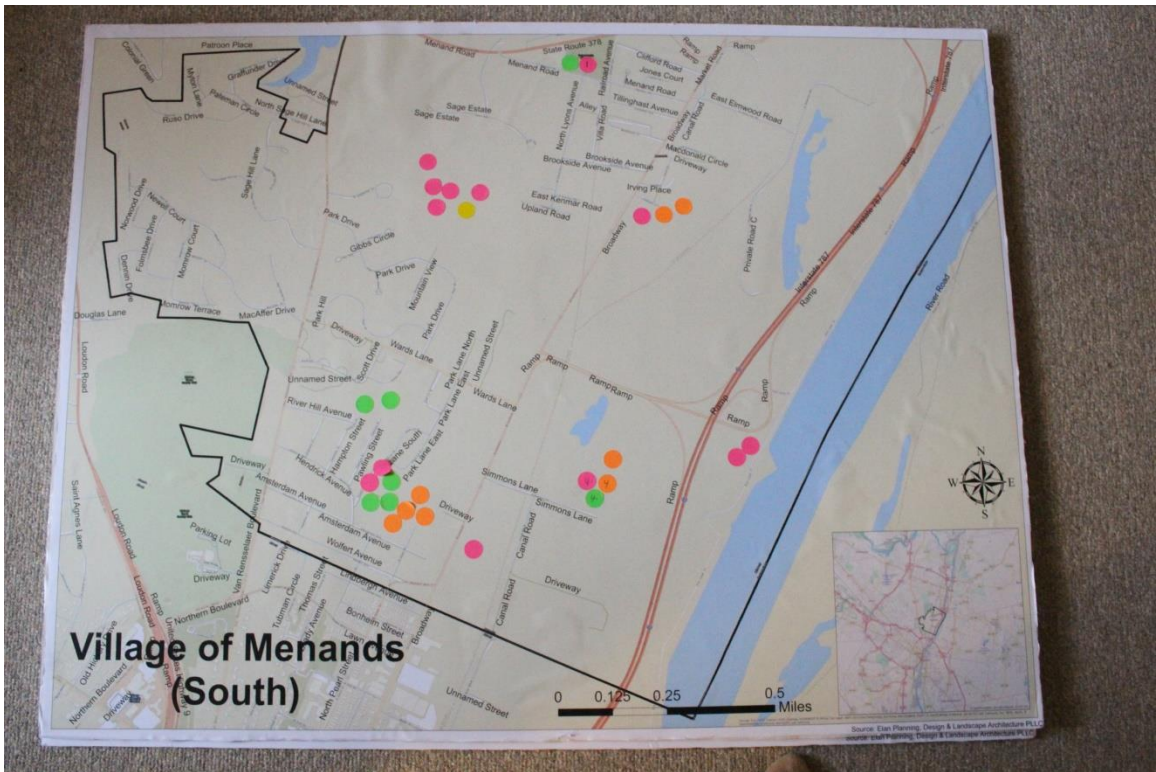
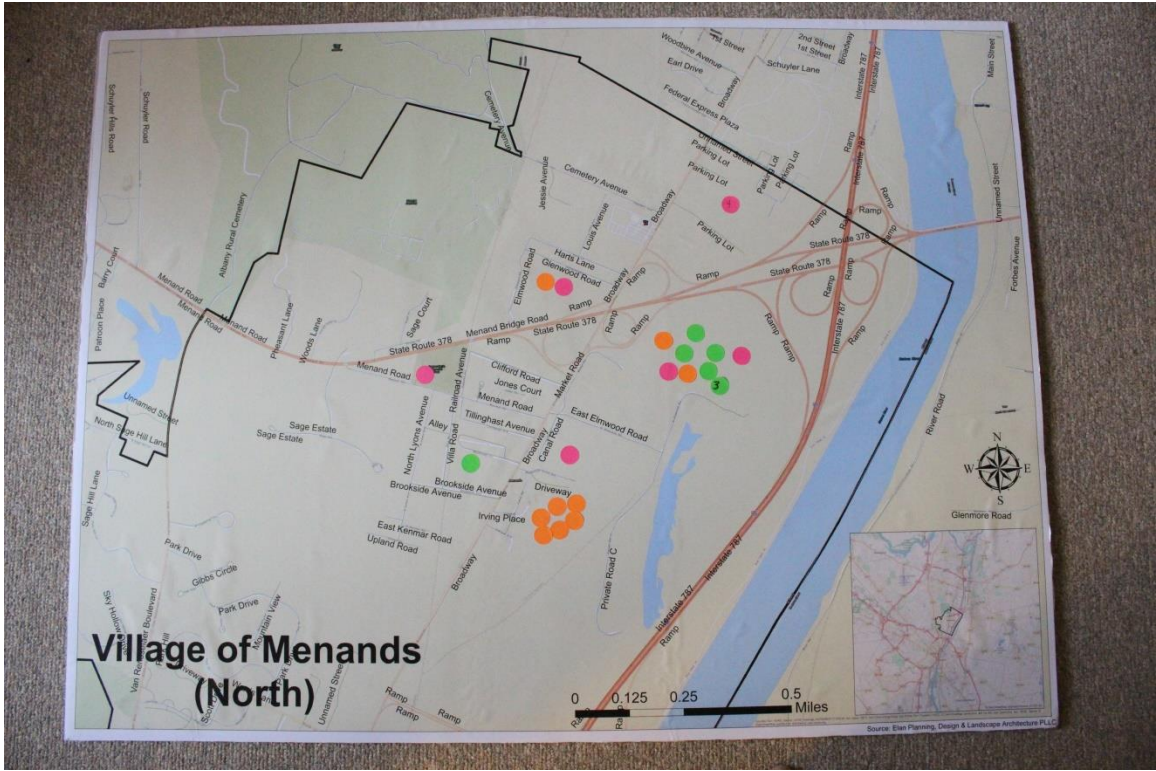
Open House 1: Location of highest priority for sidewalk improvements.



Open House 2: Location of highest priority for sidewalk improvements.



Open House 1: Location of dog parks (yellow), community gardens (red), picnic areas (blue).



Open House 1: Location of dog parks (orange), community gardens (green), picnic areas (pink).

Appendix E – Oral and Handwritten Comments

The following is a summary of paraphrased verbal comments provided by Open House attendees.

1. An elderly woman stated that it's important to consider the comments of the older generations. She was born and raised in the Village of Menands and said that she has seen it change and it "hasn't been for the better". She made an additional comment in regard to her disfavor of the surplus of apartment units. She was particularly upset at the fact that the Village gave the green light to transform the bowling alley into additional units.
2. Another attendee, who came to originally look at apartment units, explained her discontent with tears, of having to take two buses to Latham, NY to grocery shop. She came with her daughter, who had special needs. I believe she completed a survey during the event.
3. From both open houses it appears that Village Hall is firmly the center of the village, or at least what the center of the village is perceived to be.
4. Sidewalks have been a popular topic of discussion, especially along Broadway and Wards Lane.
5. A popular site for rehab and re-use seems to be the building across from KFC that U-Haul just purchased.
6. People really seem to love the community. Some people are recent transplants to Menands from surrounding communities and expressed how much they love the village.
7. Multiple people mentioned a north/south divide in the village. Looking at the map there are two clusters of population that correspond to the north and south ends of the village and people identify themselves with one of the two.
8. There seems to be a desire to develop the 100 Broadway park and ride into something other than just a surface lot. There is also a desire to redevelop the buildings that are a part of that site.
9. One individual expressed concern for sidewalks and indicated the need to upgrade sidewalks in Menands. Most people indicated that they believed that landscape beautification projects and programs were a priority for Main Street (South Menands).
10. Several people stated that the land near the I-787 ramp and the riverfront would be ideal for all three public amenities for dog park, picnic area, and community garden.
11. Many people mentioned they liked Menands for the small-town character. Residents at both meetings called for more walkable streets with better accessible parks and trails. The attendees chose many points of interest in public parks to indicate that investment is needed to realize full potential of recreational amenities. There are amazing parks and trails throughout the village that are hardly known about rather than celebrated. Some attendees asked for picnic areas along the nature trails to help enhance the experience.
12. Several residents were disappointed in the lack of investment in landscape beautification improvements at Albany Lofts, especially along the Broadway frontage. The Albany Lofts are touted as above market rate luxury apartments but the exterior appearance is sub-par.
13. The signage at the 378 eastbound exit to Broadway needs to clearly indicate that the exit is for Broadway south, not north. Cars exit and then need to pull into Clifford Avenue to turn-around.
14. Too much heavy truck traffic on Railroad Avenue.

15. Property owners along Broadway are not taking care of their property and the entire road is a disgrace. There is very limited upkeep, the properties, even if occupied, look rundown, with garbage, limited landscaping, and vacant buildings. Village to enforce code if it exists or create new code.
16. Attendee doesn't support the construction of more apartments.
17. The Village needs a senior citizen home.
18. Would like to see the Farmer's market increase in size, it used to be much bigger, now it is only two businesses.
19. Sidewalks need to be shoveled and cleared of snow in the winter, poor clearance is a major problem for the elderly and handicapped.
20. Need a dog park for small dogs and a dog park for large dogs.
21. Large groups of motorcycles appear to drag race in the evening up and down Broadway, making a lot of noise late at night that disturbs residents that live close to the road.
22. Would like to see more business to employment in Menands, but also other businesses that provide services or other amenities for residents.
23. **Aggravation among village residents since there is no longer a grocer within walking distance.** Many of the residents are elderly – walking to a grocer or a super market became a daily routine. They were allowed to see many familiar faces and continue to foster a sense of community. Without a grocery store, the village is at risk of being a food-desert.
24. **Lack of entertainment and amenities available in the village.** Residents and visitors consistently complained about the lack of entertainment and amenities available in the village. With the closing of the bowling alley combined with the fact that many of the residents have lived in the Village over 10 years, residents and visitors are finding themselves having to travel out of the Village in order to enjoy themselves. There is not a live, work, play atmosphere for the residents. Thus adding to fear that the Village will become a transient village.
25. **Amount of apartment complexes being developed in the Village has brought tension between residents who live in these apartment complexes and residents who live in single family homes.** The rise in apartment complexes in the Village has been viewed overall as an asset because apartment complexes attract younger people to the Village. Since the majority of the residents in the village are empty-nesters they recognize that in order to move forward the Village must attract younger generations, but at the same time, they also recognize that the Village does not have much to offer in amenities and entertainment to bridge apartment renters into residents. This is a growing concern that there is too much apartment complexes that are coming to the Village and when the trend shifts from people wanting to live in urban areas, many of the complexes will become deserted and dilapidated.
26. **The rich history of the village is viewed as a Village asset and should be expanded upon.** The history of the Village adds great value to the sense of community, charm, and ultimately the care the residents have for the Village. Hence, many of the single-family homeowners have lived in the village for over a decade and chose to remain in the Village rather than to move to Colonie or other neighborhoods. In particular the Albany Rural Cemetery is a place where many residents walk around for exercise.

The following is a summary of written comments submitted by attendees during the Open Houses.

1. What is the status of FIOS?
2. What consideration is being given regarding the railroad situation?
 - a. Multiple trains/day
 - b. Cargo?
3. Dog park with artificial grass, no mud
4. "sidewalks all along Broadway"
5. Try to get Wegmans to come and build a grocery store
6. Cycling/running access to waterfront trail
7. Love the diversity!
8. Need better access from Menand Road to cemetery and Glenwood Pocket Park
9. Snow removal on Broadway in front of 1 Broadway.
10. I feel that the web presence could be more accurate and timely.
11. I emailed someone about snow removal. I got an answer, then sent another question and never got an answer. Better communication would be nice.
12. Grocery store needed ASAP.
13. Retail spots cleaned up and filled ASAP.
 - a. Past-worker comp bldg
 - b. Old PC bldg
14. More cafes and activities
15. A puppy park and a GameStop on top of the hill at Village One
16. A huge pond with lily pads and fireflies! Maybe a whole park dedicated to love, life and family :)