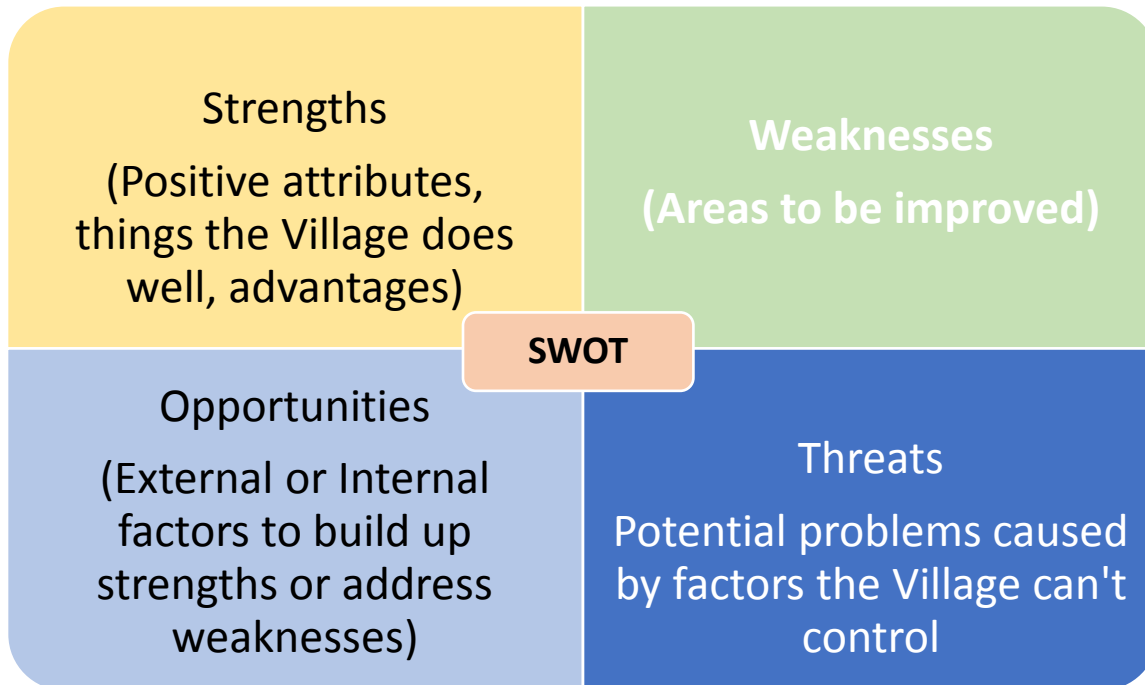


**Town of Durham  
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis v2 February 2019**

The following was compiled from the public workshop, the Joint Committee and Town Board/Staff meeting, and with information from the five focus groups. The focus groups included:

- Business, farm and tourism;
- Community character and public services;
- Part time and new full time residents;
- Senior citizens; and
- Youth and Young Adults.

Add survey later when completed.



**Strengths**

The following summarizes features that have been identified by Town residents at the public workshop, joint meeting, and from the focus groups, as community strengths. These are features desired to be maintained or protected. (Not listed in any priority order.)

| Summary of Publicly Identified Strengths   |
|--|
| Rural (open space, landscape), natural beauty and scenery (mountains, views, creeks, trees)  |
| Agriculture, pastoral  |
| Relaxed pace/ simplicity of life/ peace and quiet/ privacy/ personal freedom   |
| Safe environment   |
| Local restaurants/ friendly shop owners, small local businesses  |
| Task force has family-oriented activities year-round/ summer recreation program for children   |
| Local police dept/ Local ambulance   |
| Strong sense of community (nice people/neighbors helping others)/ creates a sense of community/ active community/ great place to be, active community/ great place to raise kids, family oriented, close knit, we look out for each other) |
| A community working on improving our homes   |
| Within reach of NYC & Albany, centrally located – not far from NYC – 2 hours to everything   |
| Community supports local fundraisers – fire depts  |
| Small town/ home town character – we have deep roots and heritage  |
| Land that is good for farming/ family farm – sustainability  |
| Access to recreational venues, the outdoors/ hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, skiing  |
| Second home-owners are an asset  |
| Historic character, history of the place, historic structures and districts  |
| Town roads are in good shape   |
| Resorts  |
| Durham offers visitors a pace of life and natural features that other places do not  |

**Weaknesses**

The following summarizes features that have been identified by the public workshop, joint meeting, and from the focus groups as weaknesses, issues or concerns in the community. These are those features that could be enhanced, improved, or otherwise alleviated as a negative. (Not listed in any priority order.)

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Weaknesses</b>   |
|--|
| Durham was a farming community – now farmers can’t farm profitably - farms have a hard time finding employees/ people have to work 2-3 jobs to keep farming/ Need to be more supportive of family farms  |
| There is lack of sustainable revenue from something other than single family residences. High taxes may drive people out of their homes  |
| Elementary school was functioning in 2008 when first plan was done. School was center of community - loss of sense of community/ it is a challenge to attract people to live here with no elementary school locally/ loss of community events and community gathering place.   |
| Tourism industry has decreased/ Greene County Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce are not as effective as they could be  |
| We don’t get the kind of attention from County here that is needed   |
| Blight of properties is a big problem. Houses lack of property maintenance. This detracts from Durham as an attractive place for new residents/ aesthetics and property maintenance are poor/ abandoned cars on properties/ code enforcement needed for clean-up/ there are a lot of conversions to Section 8 housing, adversely affecting Town, some are not maintained well/it is a barrier to increasing visitation |
| Lack of broadband and cellular technology. Poor cell network. This affects employment opportunities and business development. Lack of communication technology limits home based businesses and those that want to telecommute. Issue is both accessibility and affordability  |
| No infrastructure – is a problem for attracting business. Lack of water and sewer plays part in business development. Areas along the Creek are also difficult as they are poor places for septic system use   |
| Lack of a regional view – we need to become more involved in regional groups and efforts. There is need to do more with Greene County agencies and organizations, especially in funding requests/ we are too far from larger population areas (Albany) - makes it hard to attract business and industry/ not enough attention given Durham from the County government  |
| Lack of town-wide togetherness – hamlets are ‘silos’ and often do not connect well with the broader town   |
| There is no doctor office in Durham or any urgent care/ no health care close-by/ mental health support needed  |
| Budget and funding in general, funding for ambulance in particular   |
| Seniors - services and housing needed – lack of programs for aging in place  |
| Lack of communication/lack of knowledge about existing services and programs (especially senior services)/lack of unified community calendar/ Lack of unified communication about news, events, and activities in Town   |
| Lack of public transportation  |
| Need to address traffic and enhance pedestrian safety in Oak Hill  |

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Weaknesses</b>  |
|---|
| Employment opportunities needed/ keep people (age 30-50) in the area/ jobs for youth needed/ hard to find good help/farmers especially have a hard time finding help  |
| Fragmentation of community is issue/ clash of cultures between long-term residents and newcomers – at least a perceived problem. This decreases sense of community– cooperation needed/ hard to make connections between different groups – Irish, Fire Company, Grange, Hamlets  |
| Not enough volunteers/ Volunteer Fire Department has no junior members anymore/ Develop volunteer job descriptions showing what, when, how and time needed. That might help recruit more volunteers   |
| Lack of recreation - swimming hole loss / walking trail needed/ Brandow Park is not upgraded – parks are underused  |
| There is no sports team anymore in Durham (no little league for example)  |
| Need to be business friendly/ Need a critical mass of stores to attract visitors and keep residents/ More signage for business districts needed/ need restaurants (not chains)/ Improve parking for businesses needed/ Sidewalks & street lamps needed/ Traffic not safe in Oak Hill. It hinders pedestrians and with no sidewalks. Need to address traffic and enhance pedestrian safety/ Liability insurance prevents many new operations from starting |
| Ongoing issue related to dirt roads. To pave or not to pave/ Weight limits on roads - tractor trailers disobey/ Motorcycle noise/ Speeding through town/ Snow plowing – on property, drifting/ Road crews - tarmac on roads & lawns   |
| Need to recognize town has changed  |
| Challenge to maintain rural and small-town feel   |
| Drug use problem  |

### **Opportunities**

The community came up with numerous opportunities and ideas for programs, projects, policies, or other actions that could be implemented over time to maintain the strengths or address the weaknesses identified above. (Not listed in any priority order.)

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Opportunities</b>   |
|---|
| Implementation of goals from 2008; There is need for a strong action plan and the need to engage community more. Town Board needs an annual work plan to implement the recommendations in the Plan. Make the plan relevant. |
| Issues in the hamlets may be different from those in the whole town. The plan needs to address this and be flexible to identify different issues in different places.   |
| Improve quality of public services  |
| Increase awareness of existing services and programs  |
| Bring back our swimming holes, restore water recreation/ safe and legal access to Catskill  |

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Opportunities</b>  |
|--|
| Creek/ parks and recreation needs/ trails needed/ trout fishing-oriented businesses  |
| Support efforts to improve Catskill Creek for trout – turn this into economic opportunities  |
| Youth programs for summer, day camp/ more activities for our children and young adults – these programs could be extended to year round even if once a week program  |
| Encourage more small businesses/ encourage ‘green’ business/ be business friendly/ advocate for change for NYS rules and regulations   |
| Improve parking for businesses/ more signage for business districts  |
| Attract restaurants (not chains) and shops/ bring in health care, urgent care, doctors/ expand on homesteading, crafting, local foods/ a wood pellet mill that could take advantage of that abundant resource/ a bank is needed/ bars  |
| Encourage businesses that can afford to provide infrastructure   |
| Economic business development (Route 145 – Oak Hill and East Durham)   |
| Market our town better. We need a unified and aggressive marketing campaign/ need a business liaison to organize businesses events and economic programs/ more linking and promotion on the internet all together as a group, not as one single business or place/ get the outside world had to think of the Town as one, all together   |
| Improve town communication to residents/ expand town website with more local info/ need to link events, have a unified calendar, more formalized way of networking/ once a year send newsletter to second homeowners with info (re: elected officials)/ Town quarterly newsletter/ local government working with community   |
| Revitalize tourism – build on our strengths/modernize our tourist infrastructure but attract people here with what we have most of – natural resources/outdoor, etc. Have more ag-tourism/ have a tourism kiosk, map recreational places, events / highlight business district/ encourage new residents to move here/ eco-tourism/ need to have hospitality training for employees, such as at Stewarts, so that they understand where and what is going on and can be better ambassadors for Durham |
| Blight - dilapidated properties & businesses - code enforcement needed; impose fines; enforce existing laws (properties w/ multiple non-registered vehicles, blight, tall unkept yards, buildings in various states of construction)/ get vacant buildings back to use/ offer garbage pick-up spring and fall at town barn   |
| Create job opportunities/ increase broadband for telecommuters/ attract industry that can afford water & sewer infrastructure/ better communications infrastructure is needed - Invite Mid-Hudson cable to help research and gather information about this topic/ start a job shadow program   |
| Loss of elementary school can be opportunity to reuse building as community center. The building could serve the community well, needs a dedicated staff person even if part time to coordinate/organize/make that happen. Better use of elementary school (Community center, fitness classes, after school care, seniors, trade school for teens)/ financial support to maintain expenses for elementary school recreation activities   |
| Create mentoring program that links seniors and people with experience/skills with young people  |
| Grant writing to help fund these projects  |
| Expand senior housing, include assisted living/ provide senior services – grocery & pharmacy delivery, transportation service, meals on wheels   |
| Too much public housing (Section 8 housing) coming in; zoning or other land use programs to  |

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Opportunities</b>  |
|--|
| control; good legal team, a moratorium on building or limiting certain types of housing  |
| Encourage farming opportunities/ use farmland for glamping/ mountain biking on unused farmland   |
| Encourage companies like GSK to be more involved with the community  |
| Address industrial waste dumped into creek   |
| More control of development/ use creative legislation – our people have a say, not just the people coming in to make a venue or building   |
| New developments that have guidelines that promote our aesthetic character   |
| Enhance visual presence of hamlets (expand sidewalks, add street lights)   |
| Implement Durham revitalization plan (sidewalks, aesthetic improvements)   |
| Establish more of a sense of place; have a community fair with a BBQ, with all organizations in town there to show what they are doing/ Build ‘esprit de corps’ first as the important step; greater involvement and volunteerism; have a community wide event that offers food/ talk to the school to develop program where kids can get credit for volunteering in community |
| Concentrate on projects that improve the quality of life/ be more inclusionary/ revitalize churches/ get rid of drug problem   |
| Laws & regulation to preserve home rule  |
| There is need for a central place for people to use computers with internet (old school);  |
| Town webpage needs to be rebranded   |
| Need to expand use of website and social media.  |
| Enhance website to not only provide information on Town businesses, but on events, community news, businesses.   |
| Create a phone app for Durham events and activities;   |
| Need more public transportation for jobs and to Columbia Greene College;   |

**Threats**

Threats are potential issues or problems caused by factors the community cannot often control – usually because they are regional, state, or national issues, or because they are larger environmental or economic trends that affect areas beyond the Town. The following threats have been identified by the public. (Not listed in any priority order.)

| <b>Summary of Publicly Identified Threats</b>   |
|---|
| Effects of growth and how can we keep our community values and character in the face of growth. The fear was expressed that the Town will lose what it is in the face of the growth they need/want. |
| Public assisted housing (labeled Section 8) – too much coming in  |
| Loss of sense of community  |
| Loss of individual property rights  |
| Industrial waste dumped into creek  |
| Loss of young families and young adults here/youth leaving for other places   |