

# III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

## AGRICULTURE

The Town of Sennett was founded as a farming community, and this agricultural legacy remains an important force in defining its character even though the impact of agriculture has decreased. Currently, agricultural land accounts for more than 52% of all land uses in the Town, which is about 27% greater than the next major land use - residential. Residential accounts for 24.9% of land use in the Town. The majority of farming activity, in terms of volume of land usage, occurs in the northern half of the Town, although agricultural uses are present throughout almost all areas of Sennett.

Farmland is not “vacant” land, but it is developed and invested in by a farmer who has an agricultural business where the land is contributing to productivity. The definition of “agriculture” or “farm operation” per NYS Agriculture and Markets Law (AML) §308 is the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise.

Agriculture is a form of economic development in that it provides jobs, incomes, and a tax base for a community and its residents. There are other community benefits in a town that contains active farms and farmland. Working agricultural landscapes provide environmental benefits that include wildlife habitats, groundwater recharge areas, air pollution and carbon dioxide absorption, and aesthetic views of “open space”. Farms are also sources of soil erosion and water pollution. These variables depend on how the landowner and employees manage their farming resources. Good management of soil, water, manure, pesticides, or other chemicals can improve quality and productivity of the landscape and environment.



There is no definitive data maintained on the number of active farms in the community. Those knowledgeable of the local farming climate estimate that four to five larger farms (primarily locally owned) are operating in the Town. There is a greater number of smaller farms and agricultural related businesses. Dairy and crop farming account for most agricultural operations, although there are also apple orchards and various other farm types. Agriculture also supports local agri-business, including suppliers, farm stands, farmers markets, and other similar functions.

Areas along North Street Road, County House Road, Parcel Road, Center Street Road, Franklin Street Road, East Genesee Street Road, Broadway Road, O’Neil Road, the southern side of Depot Road, and the eastern portion of Miller Road all have areas that include prime farmland.

Prime farmland has highly productive soils, a slope of 8% or less, adequate rainfall or irrigation, and requires less fertilizer and erosion control than non-prime farmland. Food is produced on prime farmland more efficiently and with less soil erosion, resulting in less pollution from sediment, nutrients and pesticides. The soils map, found on page 64, indicates that the northwest segment of the Town, between Weedsport Sennett Road and North Street Road, is an area where soils are not conducive to farming. More information regarding agricultural soils is included under “Natural Resources”.

According to community surveys and public input completed as part of the comprehensive planning process, Sennett’s rural character, largely defined by its agriculture, is highly valued in the Town. The highest overall rated image in the photographic preference survey (see Appendix III on page 109 for visual survey results) was of a working agricultural landscape with crop fields and farm businesses. The highest rated “residential” photo included a rural residence surrounded by agricultural fields with few or no neighbors in sight. An Opinion Survey (see Appendix I on page 86 for resident survey and results) that was mailed to all Town residents further reinforces agriculture’s importance to the community. In response to the question, “What do you like about living in Sennett?” 57.6% of respondents stated that it is “quiet and relaxing with a rural country atmosphere”. In rating important reasons for living in Sennett, residents ranked “natural surroundings” second only to “a low crime rate”. Regarding a question on agriculture, 64.5% of respondents agreed with the statement, “Agriculture is important to the Town for a variety of reasons, both economic and non-economic.” Regarding the types of development residents would like to encourage, agri-business ranked only behind single-family housing development. Additionally, 42.6% of respondents indicated that “farmland protection” should be better regulated, falling only behind junkyards (53.8%) and mobile homes (49.1%). Clearly, the community desires to protect its open space and agricultural character.

Despite the desire to protect its agricultural areas, according to local and County agricultural experts Sennett appears to be nearing a threshold where any further significant loss of agricultural lands/activity will tip the balance from rural and agricultural to that of a residential bedroom community. The decline in farming, in both the number of farms and the acreage farmed, is a regional and national trend. As detailed in Section III, Housing, the apparent desirability of Sennett as a place to live is resulting in the conversion of agricultural land to residential use. The current Agricultural-Residential Zoning District allows for the creation of too many lots with 1- or 2-acre minimum lot sizes. It appears that the current development trends of the community are contrary to the residents’ desires for the future of their community, and that current zoning is inadequate to preserve the rural character of the Town.

Because additional residential development is inevitable, the Town should take aggressive action to protect prime soils and agriculture. Combining the knowledge and resources of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, local agricultural extension offices, and local agricultural interests, a map could be created that identifies both prime soils and significant areas of agricultural production within the Town. These areas could be targeted for protection through a variety of means as discussed below.

Another way to support local agricultural interests is to create and support a local Farmer's Market. Farmer's Markets enable residents to purchase fresh, local produce and like products, which not only supports farmers and farming, but also contributes to a healthy lifestyle. A Farmer's Market must be conveniently located with ample parking to draw shoppers. In some areas, the Farmer's Market includes entertainment and food vendors thereby creating a destination that encourages socializing and community cohesiveness. In some cases various zoning restrictions must be relaxed to accommodate the market, but because the market is seasonal and supports community goals, this should not be an impediment.

Continued residential growth will likely result in more conflict between uses, as more expensive single family homes try to co-exist with the noise, smells, and activity of operating farms. Right-to-farm laws are designed to mitigate such conflicts and accomplish one or both of the following: (1) to strengthen the legal position of farmers when neighbors sue them for private nuisance; and (2) to protect farmers from anti-nuisance ordinances and unreasonable controls on farming operations. The Town of Sennett has not adopted a local right-to-farm law that would help ensure the rights of farmers in such conflicts.

Large areas of the Town are located in designated Agricultural Districts. Article 25-AA of the New York Agriculture and Markets Law authorizes the creation of local agricultural districts pursuant to landowner initiative, preliminary County review, State certification, and County adoption. The purpose of agricultural districts is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Included in these benefits are preferential real property tax treatment (agricultural assessment and special benefit assessment), and protections against overly restrictive local laws, government funded acquisition or construction projects, and private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices. The Ag Districts in Sennett are generally located in a large crescent stretching from the north of the Town to the east and south, as depicted on the Agricultural Districts map on page 16.

New York State also provides for the "Purchase of Development Rights" (PDR's), also known as the "Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements" (PACE). A PDR is a voluntary approach to farmland protection that pays landowners for protecting their land for agriculture in perpetuity, basically extinguishing their rights to develop their land for a non-agricultural use. Other ownership rights remain, and the property remains on the tax rolls. Funding for PDR's is available through New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program. This program is generally accessed through the County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, and the County may submit up to three requests per year as part of an annual funding round. Although a number of farms in the Town have indicated an interest in participating in the program, due to Cayuga County's scoring system for pre-applications, farms in Sennett have not competed well. As a result, no development rights have been purchased in Sennett. Municipalities with a local farmland protection plan may apply for funding directly. A "local farmland protection plan" may include a town's comprehensive plan as defined in the town law if such plan includes an element which considers agricultural uses and

needs; an open space plan adopted by the municipality which presents strategies for the preservation of viable agricultural land; or any other formal agricultural and farmland protection planning document.

Mention should be made of Factory Farming and its potential to bolster farming in the Town. Factory Farming is not farming in the traditional sense, but rather an intensive industrial use of land that produces significant air and water pollution, generates tremendous waste, and depletes natural resources such as ground and surface water, top soil, and forests by raising hundreds, even thousands, of animals in closely confined quarters for high yield food production. Factory Farming is controversial not only because of the toll on valuable natural resources, but also because of moral considerations relating to animal welfare. These “farms” threaten rural communities with pollution, disease, unsanitary conditions, and noxious odors. Although accepted and encouraged in some communities, Factory Farming is inconsistent with the vision and community goals that residents of Sennett have articulated through the comprehensive planning process.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

In order for farming to continue as part of the Town’s economic base, and to protect the agricultural landscape that residents desire, the Town needs to support farming and not limit or prohibit possibilities for the agricultural industry. As people continue to look to live in suburban and rural areas, farmland is under increasing pressures from both commercial and residential development. When farmland is subdivided and developed, the local landscape becomes more fragmented, and other farmers in the area have an increasingly difficult time finding land to rent, buy to sustain, or expand their farming business. Property taxes can increase due to development because of demands for utilities, infrastructure, and services. It is important for the Town to achieve a balance of preserving valuable farmland to support agriculture within the community and to allow for development that seeks to minimize negative impacts on the agricultural community.

The Town of Sennett received a municipal agriculture planning grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets in 2003. The funds can be used to explore the potential for using other tools to protect agriculture in Sennett. The potential tools could include conservation zoning and cluster development. The grant funds can also be used to facilitate changes to the current zoning ordinance to make it consistent with the Agricultural recommendations in the Comprehensive plan, once adopted.



## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 1.1 Maintain the rural character of farmland, woodland, fields and residential areas.
  - 1.1.1 Where necessary, adjust zoning district boundaries and supplement the zoning code with policies to preserve and maintain valuable agricultural lands and working landscapes.
  - 1.1.2 Through zoning, minimize conflicts between residential or commercial development and future agricultural activities.
- 1.2 Continue to value active agricultural lands and working landscapes as important land uses in the Town.
  - 1.2.1 Work with the Cayuga County Ag and Farmland Protection Board to generate awareness regarding Cayuga County's Farmland Protection Program.
  - 1.2.2 Encourage willing agricultural land owners to participate in the Farmland Protection Program.
  - 1.2.3 Using the NYS Agriculture and Markets Planning Grant, explore the potential of other tools to protect agricultural lands.
- 1.3 Protect prime farmland from over-development.
  - 1.3.1 Using soil maps, agricultural extension offices, and other agricultural interests, identify and map locations of prime agricultural soils within the Town.
  - 1.3.2 Adjust zoning district boundaries to separate prime agricultural land from future growth of residential and commercial areas.
  - 1.3.3 Designate a rural residential zone that requires 3- to 5-acre lots. Consider establishing district boundaries in areas where prime agricultural soils are not present, and in areas where farming is not likely to expand.
  - 1.3.4 Create an Agricultural Zoning District to protect high-quality, prime agricultural soils.
- 1.4 Promote development of individual farming businesses, and the growth of a local agricultural industry.
  - 1.4.1 Through zoning, encourage farm stands in active agricultural areas, and within proximity of population centers.
  - 1.4.2 Allow farm stands to sell produce and goods purchased or grown elsewhere, not just on the farm where the farm stands are located.
  - 1.4.3 Encourage the development of a Farmers Market in the Town Office, Fire Department, and Park area or other areas deemed more suitable.
  - 1.4.4 Prohibit the development of Factory Farms. Factory Farming is a practice of raising farm animals in confinement at high stocking density.



## HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

### Historic Resources

A community's architecture, perhaps more than any other single trait, defines its character, tells the story of its history, reflects its socioeconomic standing, and demonstrates its values. The maintenance and preservation of Sennett's older architecture is important in communicating a positive image of the community to residents and visitors alike.

Many architectural styles dating from all eras of Sennett's history are represented in the Town, including Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Craftsman, Colonial Revival and Modern. Unfortunately, a relatively significant amount of the Town's historic architecture and character appears to have been lost due to inappropriate renovations and lack of building maintenance.



The Town of Sennett retains a number of older, potentially historic properties, although only one property in the Town is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places: the Sennett Federated Church on the corner of the Weedsport Sennett Road and Turnpike Road. A number of other properties have been determined eligible for listing on the State or National Registers by the New York State Historic Preservation Officer, but have not been nominated for listing. These include:

- Sennett Rural Cemetery
- Potter Farmstead between Cherry Road and NYS Route 5
- 8181 NY Route 5 (and archaeological sites)
- 8187 NYS Route 5 (and archaeological sites)
- Weedsport-Sennett Road Structure #5

It should be noted that in order to be listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places, a structure must be nominated and undergo a formal listing process. The relative scarcity of listed properties in the Town does not necessarily mean that no historic structures are present, but that a complete inventory of historic resources, and the subsequent listing process, had not been undertaken.

In addition to historic structures, much of the Town has areas determined to be archaeologically sensitive. Due to the Town's history and topography, it is likely that the entire Town has the potential to be archaeologically sensitive.

Adoption of a local historic preservation ordinance would provide maximum protection to the Town's historic and archaeological resources. Short of adopting a local ordinance, however, a strong preservation philosophy/program can be integrated into the land development process by strengthening site plan review and development review

procedures. Through these review mechanisms, historic and archeological resources can be identified in the early phases of development and appropriate preservation measures recommended or required.

## **Cultural and Educational Resources**

The Town of Sennett generally relies on neighboring communities to provide educational and cultural resources. The Town is divided among four separate school districts in the neighboring communities - Auburn, Weedsport, Jordan-Elbridge, and Skaneateles - and does not have a “Town” school district. Not one of the four school districts serving the Town has a school located within Sennett. There is a residential development trend whereby single-family housing is being built in the portion of the Town that is covered by the Skaneateles School District. It is assumed this is occurring due to the presumed quality of the Skaneateles schools.

Cayuga Community College is located on the border of the City of Auburn and the Town, and serves local and regional residents.

The Town does not have its own public library, but utilizes the Seymour Public Library in Auburn and partially funds it via a special taxing district. Other nearby libraries are available for use by community residents, as well.

Other cultural resources are available to Town residents in the nearby City of Auburn to the west, the Village of Skaneateles to the east, and larger, regional urban centers.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Historic, cultural, and educational resources help to define a community and are most often yardsticks which one uses to rate a community’s quality of life. The community’s commitment to preserving such resources, and their quality, is often a major reason an individual or family stays in a community, relocates into a community, or moves elsewhere. Therefore, it is incumbent on the Town of Sennett to assist in whatever manner it can to both preserve the resources it has and cultivate new. This is not solely a Town government responsibility but a community responsibility as well.

## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 2.1 Recognize that historic architecture defines a community's character and contributes to the Town's sense of place. Strive to preserve and celebrate its historic buildings and structures.
  - 2.1.1 Complete a Cultural Resources Survey to identify its historic resources and provide a foundation of knowledge for acknowledging, promoting, and preserving such resources.
- 2.2 Preserve and enhance cultural and educational resources by working with community groups and school officials to provide quality resources available to all Town residents.
  - 2.2.1 Encourage community groups, not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions to continue to advance quality cultural events, resources, and educational opportunities that benefit the citizens of the Sennett community.
  - 2.2.2 Support community programs that promote the Town's historic past.
- 2.3 Integrate the preservation of historic resources into the land development process.
  - 2.3.1 Amend local zoning and/or strengthen its power of site plan review so that the preservation of its historic structures is integral to the development review process.
  - 2.3.2 Evaluate development and infrastructure projects to determine their impact on archaeological resources.
  - 2.3.3 Address archaeological resources as part of the SEQRA process.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

As a result of the community visioning process, Sennett residents and stakeholders noted the need for planned, concentrated growth without sprawl, maintaining large-lot requirements for residential uses; creating a stronger community identity; maintaining a quiet, pristine environment; well-planned commercial development; and utilizing green energy practices for development as desired Town characteristics. According to the mail survey responses, it is important for the Town to protect or enhance drinking and stream water quality, air quality, wetlands, woodlands, scenic views, visual appearance of residential and commercial areas, active farmland, and open space. The second highest reason people leave Sennett is over development. Respondents also felt that the Route 5 area was the most appropriate location for economic and commercial development. Most survey respondents felt that site and building design guidelines should be in place for future developments.

### Percentage of Land Use

There are approximately 18,445 acres, or 28.82 square miles, of land in the Town of Sennett according to the U.S. Census. There are only 12.8 acres of water area within Sennett, equaling 0.02 square miles. The Town's environment is made up of three generalized land uses: (1) natural areas that include wetlands, water supplies,



wilderness areas, and habitats for wildlife; (2) working landscapes such as farms, forests, mines, and recreation areas; and (3) the built environment. Natural areas are critical to the public health, economy, and well being of the community. Working landscapes contribute to the economy and provide opportunities for employment. The built environment includes the site and design of buildings, transportation and utility infrastructure, and built public spaces. Land use planning involves making decisions about how these different land uses

will interact with one another. The Town of Sennett is in a position to make choices about how this interaction will affect the function and appearance of the built and natural environment.

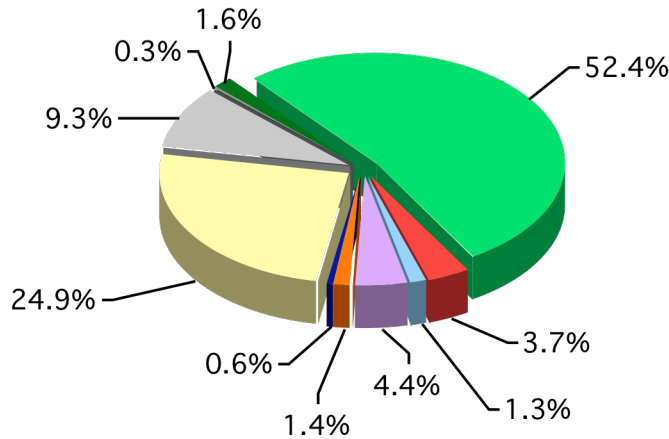
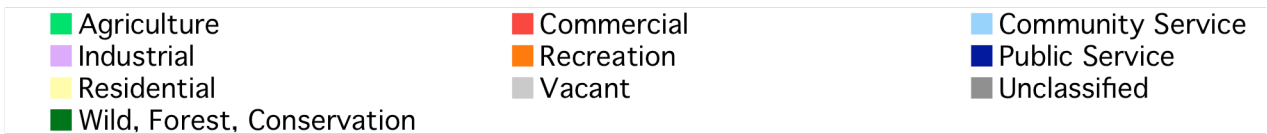
Each parcel of land in the Town has been classified by its principal use. Agricultural land is the dominant use within the Town of Sennett. There are 9,418 acres of classified agricultural land, which accounts for 52% of all classified land use. Residential land accounts for about 25% of the Town's usage, and is the second most prevalent land use. Residential usage has increased dramatically since the 1970's when only 5% of the land was classified as residential.

Current land uses, as determined by mapping tax parcel categories, are shown on the Land Use map on page 30. Each tax parcel is assigned a code that represents the type of land use. In this map, the entire tax parcel is coded as a single use, although there may be circumstances where a single parcel has more than one. For example, there may be a residence with vacant acreage, forestland, or other ancillary use, but the primary use is indicated as a residence. Furthermore, this map does not show the separation of single-family, two-family, or three-family residential uses, nor differences in the types of commercial properties. Therefore, this land use map should be considered a general approximation of land use activities in the Town. Table 5 and the accompanying graph provide a comparison between land uses and the percentage of each found in the Town of Sennett.

**Table 5: Comparison of Land Use**

Land Use	Acreage	Percentage of Total Land Use	Number of Parcels
Agriculture	9,418	52.4%	175
Commercial	660	3.7%	87
Community Service	233	1.3%	19
Industrial	792	4.4%	16
Recreation	244	1.4%	6
Public Service	113	0.6%	20
Residential	4,479	24.9%	1,120
Vacant	1,675	9.3%	258
Wild, Forest, Conservation	283	1.6%	9
Unclassified	61	0.3%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,958*</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>1,716</b>

\* Total derived from 2005 Real Property Services Tax Data, which differs from the total land area of 18,445 reported by the Census.



Agricultural land uses are scattered throughout the entire area of the Town, but it is the eastern portion of Sennett that is most rural and has the least amount of nearby commercial and industrial activity. The larger agricultural properties help to maintain the rural, undeveloped atmosphere. However, the Town has not yet taken steps to help legally preserve these areas.

Residential and vacant land is also scattered throughout the Town. The greatest concentration of commercial activity is situated along Route 5, just northeast of the City of Auburn. Route 34 also includes denser commercial and industrial activity. Current land use classifications are generally reflective of how the Town has zoned its land.

## Town Planning Board Applications

The Town Planning Board reviews subdivision applications, and there has been significant subdivision activity in recent years. Reviewing subdivision applications is important so that lot layouts, road construction, sewage disposal, drinking water supplies, and stormwater drainage techniques are consistent with local goals, development/preservation objectives, and public health and safety of the community. Since 2000, there have been a total of 65 subdivision applications filed for review by the local Planning Board. The following table illustrates the demand for subdivision activity since 2000.



**Table 6: Subdivision Applications Filed Since 2000**

Year	4 Lots or less	More than 4 lots	Total subdivision applications filed
2000	10	0	10
2001	6	0	6
2002	9	0	9
2003	13	0	13
2004	6	0	6
2005	8	1	9
2006	9	2	11
2007	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>65</b>

The Planning Board has also been involved with reviewing 30 site plans, six cell tower applications, and two zoning change requests since 2000. The two zoning district boundary changes involved establishing a Planned Development District at the corner of Center Street Road and Parcel Road, as well as incorporating commercial and light industrial on Route 5 near County House Road and Healy Road.

### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

The Zoning Board of Appeals in Sennett has been active in recent years, considering appeals for interpretations, use variances, and area variances. The following table illustrates the number of cases that have been filed since 2000.

**Table 7: Zoning Board of Appeals Cases Filed Since 2000**

Year	Interpretations	Use Variances	Area Variances	Total Cases Filed
2000	1	2	3	6
2001	0	3	9	12
2002	0	4	7	11
2003	0	1	1	2
2004	0	0	12	12
2005	0	1	5	6
2006	0	1	5	6
2007	0	0	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>62</b>

Based on these trends, the Town should be mindful that, generally speaking, zoning changes should benefit the public and promote the overall plan for the Town rather than enrich an individual landowner with certain rights and benefits.

## **Review of Existing Land Use Regulations**

The Town of Sennett has adopted three types of land use regulations. The first regulation adopted by the Town Board in 1958, was the subdivision regulation. There has been one amendment to this regulation, adopted in 1992. The second adopted regulation was the zoning ordinance in 1990. There have been several amendments to the regulation, but the zoning map has only been changed twice since it was first adopted. In 2008, changes to the zoning ordinance were made including a new zoning map.

## **Subdivision Regulations**

There are several language inconsistencies in the current subdivision regulations. The regulation utilizes the term plat and plan interchangeably, which may be confusing for an applicant to follow. There are also inconsistencies between the Town regulation and the State statutes, namely Town Law Section 276, Subdivision review; approval of plats; development of filed plats. For example, the Town's regulation does not take into consideration the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requirements. Time frames for filing, holding public hearings, and acting upon applications are also inconsistent.

The legislative authority section of the subdivision regulations (1.3) designates the Town Planning Board as the local body authorized to review and approve subdivision plats. Therefore, the Planning Board has jurisdiction over such matters, but Section 3.2.3.6, Recording of Final Plat, indicates that after the Planning Board has given its final approval, such plat needs to be submitted to the Town Board for approval. This is inconsistent with Section 1.3, Legislative Authority.

## **Zoning Ordinance**

The Town zoning ordinance includes a zoning map containing 10 different zoning district classifications, and accompanying regulatory language. These include the Agricultural-Residential, Residential, Commercial Light Industrial, Industrial, Special Development, and the Route 34 zoning districts. The Zoning map depicting the Town's current zoning and suggested changes to the zoning can be found on page 31.

The Agricultural-Residential zoning district classification covers the largest area of the Town. This is one of the more restrictive districts, in that larger lot sizes are required for development and a fairly limited number of uses are allowed compared to other zoning districts. The zone was designed to accommodate residential uses in rural areas dominated by surrounding agricultural uses.

The Residential zoning district is the next largest in the Town and is the most restrictive. This area is designed to ensure safe and healthy residential occupancy. The regulations state that the Residential area(s) is or will someday be served by public water and sewer.

The Commercial-Light Industrial, Industrial, Special Development, and the Route 34 specialized zoning districts are somewhat similar in geographic size. These districts encompass the western portion of the Town of Sennett. The Commercial-Light Industrial District is focused on the southern portion of the Grant Avenue/New York State Route 34 corridor. It is noted in the purpose of the Commercial-Light Industrial zone that some allowable uses could cause harm to adjacent or nearby activities and uses, so performance standards and site design criteria may be required. Causing harm to adjacent activities and uses is a very important issue to consider. The Town's existing regulations, however, provide no other indications of when site plan review is required, or what standards need to be met in order to minimize negative development impacts.

The Planned Development District requires a site plan to be submitted and such site plan is required to show various elements for development. There are no design standards, material preferences, or concepts that are used as tools to achieve the desired form and function desired by the Town. Thus, design and layout is left to the developer to produce with minimal guidance from the Planning Board.

The development needs of commercial areas are different from other rural areas of the Town. The site plan review policy should accommodate the different needs of both commercial development and neighborhood preservation. The Town should better define when site plan review is required and require a site plan in more circumstances.

Incentive zoning is a flexible tool that allows developers to exceed the dimensional, density, or some other limitation of the zoning ordinance; however, in order to receive that consideration, the developer must return a benefit to the municipality. For example, a developer may be allowed to create a subdivision with greater housing density than the zoning allows, but only if the developer provides a community benefit. Clustered housing is sometimes used to increase density without expanding the overall development footprint.

For the Town of Sennett specifically, use of incentive zoning as a planning tool may be more effective in a location where both public sewer and water infrastructure are readily available. Without this infrastructure, lot sizes would need to meet minimum size guidelines for installing well and septic systems. The benefit of incentive zoning for the Town is that less money would be spent on extending or providing infrastructure, roads, and lighting in developments where homes are built closer together. In order to preserve the Town's rural character, this practice should only be located in a Residential zoning district and not in the rural parts of the Town.

Minimum lot sizes vary by zoning district, and much of the Town's zoning districts require a minimum lot size of one or two acres. These requirements are predominant in

the rural areas of the Town. The minimum lot sizes are based on the Town's desire to maintain a rural character.

Clustering subdivisions or clustering housing units within a larger development parcel is an innovative planning tool that allows developers to maximize density while preserving prime farmland and other natural resources. The concept of clustering housing units in close proximity to one another within the development envelope, allows for efficient infrastructure patterns and minimal disruption to surrounding natural resources by reducing the overall development footprint. Clustered subdivisions often include nature trails or conservation areas on undeveloped land within the development. Thus, although individual lot sizes are smaller, the subdivision will have significant open space that acts as a large lot shared by all residents. Appropriate changes to the zoning ordinance would be required to implement any clustering scheme, but clustering is a flexible planning tool that may serve the Town's vision of preserving the rural nature of Sennett while accommodating the desire for new housing development with open space.

## **Sign Regulations**

Signs are vital for communication, and are also important to community character. Poorly located, improperly constructed, too large, or numerous signs can be detrimental to a community's character, reduce the effectiveness of communication, and cause traffic safety issues. Conversely, a well-designed sign regulation can result in the creation of positive images of the community once the regulation is put into place and it is followed.

Sign controls generally seek to limit the size and shape of signs. However, local governments sometimes extend its regulations to include the content of a sign. For example, a municipality placing a time restriction on how long a political sign can be displayed would be considered a content-based sign regulation. Much of the regulatory sign language in the Town of Sennett Zoning Ordinance is content-based. The U.S. Supreme Court has examined the constitutionality concerning freedom of speech with respect to sign regulation, and has placed limits on the authority of a municipality to control sign content. Regulating based on content can be argued as a violation of the First and Fourteenth amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

A content-neutral regulation applies to any sign regardless of the message conveyed or the identity of the messenger, focusing only on the time, place, and/or manner in which the sign is displayed. These regulations generally classify signs by type including, for example, freestanding, projecting, wall, or roof signs. Lastly, content-neutral sign regulations address physical or dimensional characteristics such as height, face size, and location.

## **Non-Conforming Use**

The purpose of zoning regulations is to separate incompatible uses and create neighborhoods that contain unique characteristics. A land use that lawfully existed prior to, and after, the effective date of the enactment of a zoning ordinance or local law, and does not comply with use restrictions applicable to the area in which it is situated, is commonly referred to as a “non-conforming use”. A non-conforming use is an inevitable byproduct of zoning regulations developed to implement a community’s comprehensive plan. However, nonconforming uses are disruptive to an overall scheme for orderly growth and can negatively influence development patterns when individual parcels do not conform to the use, scale, or aesthetics of surrounding properties.

A use that is present in a particular district that does not conform to the allowable uses in the district, but for which the property owner obtained a use variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, is not considered a non-conforming use. Such a use is conforming because the property owner sought relief from the provisions of the zoning law and a use variance was issued for that particular property.

In general, zoning laws protect the rights of owners of non-conforming use properties. Municipalities, however, have the ability to impose a wide variety of limitations upon non-conforming uses, prioritizing the preservation of neighborhoods. This can be done, for example, by requiring the non-conforming use to operate indoors, or by requiring that the use must be conducted in a manner in which it is screened from public view by landscaping or other similar buffers.

Another option the Town may also consider is not allowing the expansion of existing non-conforming uses or placing restrictions on a change in use. For example, the Town could require that when a property changes use from a non-conforming use, it must change to a use that conforms to the zoning law. Under a provision such as this, one non-conforming use may not be substituted for another non-conforming use. The Town could also limit the expansion of a non-conforming use.

A change in ownership of a parcel of land that is considered to be a non-conforming use does not affect the right to continue such use. This is because zoning regulations are a form of land use regulations and not land ownership. The Town, however, may enact a vacancy requirement whereby the rights of non-conforming use cease if the use does not continue for a specified time period; typically one year.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Considering the development pressures in the Town of Sennett, the Town’s land use regulations need to be updated. Updating regulations will help better manage the coordination between development and planning goals that are in the public interest. A number of new and revised tools can be incorporated into the existing zoning ordinance to achieve a better quality built and natural environment.

## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 3.1 Review new development projects to assure they are compatible with the environment and Town's vision statement.
  - 3.1.1 Create design standards for future development in the commercial corridor. Create design standards for new developments that require site plan submission, and for alterations of existing development. Standards should include provisions for overall site design, use of landscaping materials, building orientation and form, signage, parking, lighting, fencing/screening, and public spaces.
  - 3.1.2 Incorporate environmental factors such as floodplains, wetlands, woodlands into determining the appropriate areas to classify as agricultural, commercial, industrial, or residential for zoning purposes.
- 3.2 Amend land use regulations to help guide development in accordance with the Town's vision statement.
  - 3.2.1 Change zoning district boundaries, when necessary and appropriate, to benefit the public interest and general welfare.
  - 3.2.2 Guard against approval of development applications that request zoning changes, which do not benefit the public interest and general welfare.
  - 3.2.3 Convert the Special Development Zone to Commercial-Light Industrial zone.
- 3.3 Ensure that all properties, residential, non-residential and public, meet the standards of the NYS Property maintenance code.
  - 3.3.1 Revise the site plan review component of the local zoning law.
  - 3.3.2 Require a site plan review when the physical attributes of a parcel of land change, or when vehicular or pedestrian traffic, or site ingress or egress is changed.
  - 3.3.3 Make sure that changes to site plan review standards reflect the community's goals as put forth in the Comprehensive Plan.
- 3.4 Ensure that local officials who administer local planning initiatives are properly trained.
  - 3.4.1 Encourage and fund educational opportunities for new Planning and Zoning Board members in accordance with New York State's training standards for planning and zoning board members.
- 3.5 Promote development designed to complement the existing built and natural environment.
  - 3.5.1 Propose revisions of zoning code to allow incentive zoning in the Town.
  - 3.5.2 Propose revisions of zoning code to allow cluster subdivisions in the Town.

- 3.6 Maintain the aesthetic and rural character of the Town.
  - 3.6.1 Develop sign requirements and standards that reflect local community desires and character. New sign regulations should regulate design, size, shape, height, materials, and number of signs, rather than content.
  - 3.6.2 Require the replacement of nonconforming signs by implementing an amortization schedule. This amortization should allow the owner of the sign to realize a return on the investment. As an example, signs with an appraised value of less than \$1,000 must come into conformance within three years of adoption of new sign regulations. Signs with an appraised value of \$1,000 but less than \$5,000 must come into conformance within five years, and signs with an appraised value of \$5,000 and over must come into conformance within seven years. The time periods and the relation to monetary values can be tailored uniquely to fit the community's needs.
  - 3.6.3 Require that over time all buildings and sites that do not comply with design standards are altered to comply with design standards.
- 3.7 Reduce the number of properties that are non-conforming zoning uses in the Town.
  - 3.7.1 Develop a program including an incentive package to encourage the reduction and/or relocation of non-conforming uses.







## HOUSING

The Town of Sennett is similar to other upstate New York communities that surround or are adjacent to a small city. As the cities expand, rural agricultural communities such as Sennett, which is adjacent to the City of Auburn, experience suburbanization pressures. The development of housing in the community is a major Town concern.

Beginning in the 1960's and continuing today, there is a growing segment of the population that prefers to live in housing developments outside of cities or in more rural areas where a house can be found or constructed on building lots that provide acreage in a country setting. Results of the Town of Sennett Residents Survey indicate that many have settled or remained in the Town for just that reason.

According to the 2000 Census, 1,117 housing units exist in the Town, with 97.1% occupied. The percentage of owner-occupied units is 90.5%, with the percentage of income property units at 9.5%. By comparison, the nearby City of Auburn's percentage of owner-occupied units is 51.9% and 48.1% for income property units. A large percentage of the housing in the Town of Sennett, 90.8%, is single unit detached structures. Only 5.6% of the residential structures in the Town contain two (2) or more units. Other notable statistics related to housing and occupants are listed following:

- 79.9% of the households, 865, are considered family households.
- 36.5% of family households have children under the age of 18.
- 749 households include a married couple; 32.3% of those include children under the age of 18.
- 28.7% of Sennett's households include a person over the age of 65 years.
- Claritas data indicates that between 2000 and 2007, the number of households in the Town has grown from 1,085 to 1,252 (+15.4%) and predicts over the next five years it will grow by 5.5%.
- Claritas data notes that the typical household in the Town in 2007 is a two-person household, which is 36.5% of all households in the Town; the next most common household is a four-person household, which is 19.17% of Sennett's households.
- Claritas states that 50.39% of the Town's employed population commutes less than 15 minutes to work.
- The Claritas Report indicates that 28.18% of the Town's housing was built before 1939; and 27.65% of the housing was built after 1990. In the adjacent City of Auburn, 60% of the housing was built before 1939.



A windshield survey of the condition of the existing housing in the Town of Sennett was conducted in July 2007. The Town's housing is overwhelmingly residential and consists mostly of single-family residences. There are a variety of settings for these homes, from older farm houses located on active farms, to homes located in grid patterns next to the City of Auburn, to hamlet settings, to scattered site housing, and newer subdivisions.

According to the Cayuga County Association of Realtors, in 2006, 13 existing, single-family homes in the Town were sold. This does not include homes that were sold "by owner" or otherwise not represented in the multiple listing service. The 13 homes represent approximately 1% of all the housing units in the Town. As of August 2007, only three single-family homes had been sold. This appears to be a significant decrease from 2006, despite the fact that four months remain in the year. Sixteen homes were on the market as of August 30, 2007. The median price of homes sold in the Town also dropped, from \$154,900 in 2006 to \$129,000 as of August 2007. Additionally, the average sale price dropped from \$173,353 to \$145,933. It should be noted that, due to the low number of homes sold as of August 2007, the median and average sale prices could vary significantly when end of the year sales are taken into account. Despite the appearance of dropping home prices, sale prices in the Town significantly exceed those for Cayuga County as a whole. In 2006, the median sales price of homes in Sennett (\$154,900) was more than 65% higher than the County's median sales price of \$93,500.



According to Profiles of New York State 2005/2006 Greyhouse report, as of 2004, Sennett had the highest median home value (\$137,117) of any municipality in the County. Only the towns of Aurora, Fleming, and Owasco had values over \$130,000, and the remaining had values under \$100,000. The high housing values are representative of the higher socioeconomic status of the Town in relation to the balance of the County.

The construction of new homes far exceeds the sale of existing homes. A discussion with the Town's Code Enforcement Officer indicates that in the last 10 years, the Town has averaged 21 new single-family homes being built each year. For that same 10-year period, 64 commercial structures were built in total. Single-family home construction is outpacing new commercial construction by a ratio of more than 3:1. During this same period, no multifamily rental housing (greater than four units) was constructed. Many of the newer homes being constructed in the Town are significantly larger, with greater square footage, than homes built in the past. This would suggest that the average income of new homeowners in the Town is rising. These new homes are located on a scattered site basis and in several new housing developments. The typical new construction site is former agricultural land.

One of the questions included in the Town of Sennett's Residents Survey (August 2007) was, "What do you like about living in Sennett?" The three most common answers include the following:

- Sennett is quiet and relaxing with a rural country atmosphere – 57.6% of respondents
- Sennett is close to work, shopping, and services – 31.5%
- School districts – 5%

In spite of a preference among survey respondents to support development of single-family homes, in any community there is also a need for multifamily housing units. Ninety percent of the housing units in Sennett are single-family homes. Young professionals and unmarried persons who do not wish to buy a home do not have opportunities for new housing in the Sennett market. Likewise, Town residents who wish to age-in-place have extremely limited housing options. According to the most recent U.S. Census, there are 101 renter-occupied housing units in Sennett and 65 of those units are single-family homes. There is a shortage of multifamily units in the Town. Attractive cluster developments, including townhouses, could serve the needs of Sennett residents seeking an alternative to a single-family home. With sensitive planning and site plan review, these developments could be located in areas already served by public water and sewer rather than consuming additional agricultural land for this purpose.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Survey respondents indicated they would support single-family residential development over any other form of development. Minimum lot sizes did not appear to be a major concern for survey respondents. The Steering Committee strongly felt that the much desired rural character of the Town is enhanced by the development of housing on large parcels of land. Cluster subdivisions and creating interconnected sidewalks between housing developments was not a high priority.

## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 4.1 Maintain and encourage year-round single-family residential neighborhoods that contain safe and standard housing and provide healthy living options.
  - 4.1.1 Require rehabilitation of housing units that are substandard with respect to code and other deficiencies.
  - 4.1.2 Seek grant funds to assist lower income homeowners in rehabilitating substandard housing units.
- 4.2 Provide opportunities for a variety of housing opportunities and choices to serve the diverse needs of the Town's population.
  - 4.2.1 Require that any subdivision activity generating more than 4 residential building lots provide some form of protected open space or other accommodations for recreational opportunities within the Town.
  - 4.2.2 Seek grant funds for handicap accessibility and adaptability of housing units.
  - 4.2.3 Allow cluster housing developments, which may be controlled by a homeowner's association that contain single-family and attached single-family units (no more than two units attached) in areas with public water/sewer.
  - 4.2.4 Encourage the development of multifamily housing developments in areas of the residential zone that are served by public water and sewer.

## **OPEN SPACE AND PARKS**

### **Existing Facilities, Condition, and Use**

There are no State, county, or town owned parks at the time of this writing in the Town of Sennett. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends an allocation of 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 people living in the community. Since 1995, a new view of this standard has emerged which attempts to tailor the allocation of parkland based on actual needs and facility requirements. Even with this new standard, Sennett falls far short of the recommended amount of parkland.

In 2003, Sennett acquired a 25-acre parcel from the State of New York for the development of a Town park. The site is located on the south side of Franklin Street Road just east of the Sennett Fire Department. The property had formerly been a part of the State-owned land on which the Office of Children and Family Services facilities is located. The land was unused and somewhat remotely located from the facility. Realizing that the Town of Sennett lacked any of its own parkland, the Town decided to purchase the site and ultimately develop it into a Town Park. The site provides unique natural areas (wetlands), gentle rolling topography, and open spaces suitable for playing fields. A Conceptual Site Plan was prepared in 2005. The Town subsequently submitted an application for funding to the New York State Environmental Protection Fund to develop the initial phase, but the application was not approved. A follow-up application was submitted and again the funding was not approved. Nevertheless, the acquisition of the aforementioned 25-acre parcel is a significant step forward in providing parkland. A conceptual design of the proposed park can be found on page 39.

As detailed previously, there are no school facilities located within Sennett's borders. Consequently, local residents do not have the opportunity to use open recreational spaces and playing fields typically found on school grounds. Even more unique is the fact that the Town is served by four distinct school districts. This has the consequence of dividing the identity of the school age population and their families, among the school districts. The inability to share school-associated recreational and sports opportunities with other Sennett residents impacts the social cohesiveness of the community.

There are indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities that are owned and operated by the private sector that are located in Sennett and are available to the general public. The largest and most visible is the Highland Golf Club located on Franklin Street just east of Auburn. Another is the Arnold Palmer Golf driving range on Gates Road, just east of Route 5. There is also a private sports and recreation club, Champions for Life Sports Center on Route 5, just south of the Chestnut Ridge Road intersection. This facility provides a wide range of activities, camps, and related programs. The only other identifiable recreational opportunity within the Town is the network of snowmobile trails that are primarily located within the eastern half of the Town through more rural and undeveloped areas. These trails are operated and maintained by local snowmobiling clubs through agreements in place with landowners. They are not within the jurisdiction of any governmental agency.

Although the Town does not own or operate any parks and playgrounds, it is located directly between two municipalities that provide a variety of recreational facilities. The City of Auburn, to the west, has numerous parks and a wide range of facilities and programs. The Village of Skaneateles also provides facilities, but to a more limited degree. One other important facility is the Cayuga County Emerson Park, which is located on the north end of Owasco Lake. This serves a large segment of the population in the northern portion of the County, including Sennett. In addition, and as mentioned earlier, four different school districts that serve the Town provide an array of facilities, although they all require some travel to access.

As the Town considers efforts to develop a Town park at the aforementioned 25-acre site on Franklin Street Road there are several key factors that must be addressed as part of any comprehensive planning effort. Some of the key issues include: (1) municipal governing parameters; (2) maintenance and preservation; (3) present and future use; and (4) relationship/connectivity with other community and regional assets and activities. These are detailed below:

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Governing Parameters - With no prior experience or mechanisms in place to develop, own, and operate a park facility, the Town must devote sufficient consideration to a variety of issues including: whether a recreation district needs to be created, will a Recreation Commission be needed to oversee the operation, which Town department will have jurisdiction, how will programming be done, etc. Creating the proper governmental structure under which the park will function will insure a sustainable facility.

Maintenance & Preservation - It is essential that any recreational facility be well maintained. Maintaining and continually improving facilities and their amenities ensures that facilities will be available for future residents and that their true potential can be realized. It is fully recognized that all of these efforts require funding. A variety of possibilities should be pursued to that end including: private and public agency funding programs, foundation grants, private donations, local fund raisers, community volunteerism, etc.

Present and Future Use - With the development of a park facility, the Town will have the opportunity to direct the types of uses that can be available at the site. As consideration is given to this concept, it is important to remember that the goal of providing recreational opportunities and/or hosting any event or activity at the park is to provide both the user and the community with a positive experience that benefits both. Good planning is essential.

Connectivity to Other Assets and Activities - This aspect of open space and parkland focuses on the broader view of the interrelationship between the various recreational spaces and the activities that take place within a given area. Attention should be paid to the potential natural links to nearby or surrounding other recreational facilities. This is an example of the type of thinking that can, and should, take place as the Town envisions

its future in providing both outdoor recreational space, and also opportunities to participate in pleasurable leisure activities.

With a 2000 census population of over 3,200, the Town should be allocating 32 acres of parkland for its residents. While there are many active and passive leisure activity opportunities that can be found within the general vicinity of Sennett, few are available within the Town. It remains critical to the quality of life of any community to provide high-level recreational facilities and programs with easy access for residents. As the Town continues to grow, existence of recreational facilities can serve as an important facet of community identity. The possibility of providing a new public open space/park area that can bring the entire Sennett community together should be seriously considered an integral part of any town planning discussions.

## **Goals and Implementation Measures**

- 5.1 Create a new Town park with recreational facilities and amenities for all Town residents.
  - 5.1.1 Investigate potential funding sources and secure funding for a Town park. The overall park development should be designed, and development undertaken in pre-determined phases over time and as funding allows.
  - 5.1.2 Consider use of incentive zoning to fund development of parks and recreation facilities.
- 5.2 Develop trail connections within the Town to nearby county and regional trails.
  - 5.2.1 Work with Cayuga County and NYS DOT to incorporate bike lanes/trails as part of roadway reconstruction projects.





## COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The Town of Sennett has three main highway corridors, NYS Routes 5, 20, and 34. All three corridors border surrounding commercial areas.

Route 5, also known as Grant Avenue, is located in the northwest portion of Sennett, traveling from the City of Auburn northeasterly to the Village of Elbridge, and eventually to Syracuse and its suburbs. The Route 5 Corridor contains the vast majority of the commercial development in the Town; and the bulk of the Town's commercial, industrial and special development zoning is located along this corridor. This commercial development is a continuation of similar development within the City of Auburn. Water and sewer is provided in the whole commercial area. Development includes big box



retailers, including Lowe's Home Improvement, and BJ's Wholesale Club; restaurants; car dealers; and other retail and service establishments. Development extends approximately two miles from the City line to Miller Road. Approximately 90% of the road frontage along Route 5 from the City line to Peach Tree Circle is developed. Approximately 50% of the road frontage is developed from Peach Tree Circle to Miller Road. The area of Route 5 north of the highway commercial area is primarily bordered by low-density residential

development and agricultural uses. For the most part, commercial properties were developed without design guidelines or significant input from the Town. The result is that there are a number of individual properties along Route 5 with numerous traffic entry points; varying amounts and quality of landscaping; and no plans for pedestrian access. The map on page 43 is an example of what the Route 5 Corridor could look like with design guidelines.

Route 34 is in the westernmost section of the Town, connecting the City of Auburn to the Town of Brutus and the Village of Weedsport. Route 34 is the primary connecting route between Auburn and to the New York State Thruway. The corridor is typified by small-scale commercial development nearest Auburn, with less-intensive use northward. The Town's zoning ordinance identifies five zoning classifications along the Route 34 Corridor. The area immediately adjacent to the City of Auburn is designed as the "Route 34 industrial zone". In this zone there are five properties: Auburn Metal Processing, Auburn Glass, two auto businesses, and a vacant commercial building. The next zoning classification to the north is the "Route 34 Industrial Transition Zone" and then the "Route 34 Agricultural Transition Zone". This is followed by "Highway Business District" which contains several businesses. The northernmost zoning district is a "Rural Zone". In addition to the businesses along the corridor, there are a significant number of residential properties, most of which are single-family homes. The Route 34 Corridor north of the Town is basically farms and low-density residential.

Route 20 is located in the southern portion of the Town and runs east and west from the City of Auburn to the Village of Skaneateles. The Route 20 Corridor has little commercial development. There are only seven non-residential or agricultural properties located on Route 20. Four of these are motels located at the eastern edge of the Town of Sennett close to the Village of Skaneateles. There is a significant amount of open space and agricultural land with a number of single-family homes. On the north side of Route 20 is one of the Town's newer residential developments. This development contains residential properties along Swamp Road, Carrie Court, and Mandy Rue. There are approximately 50 homes built on large lots. Public water and sewer is not available to this area.

The quality of commercial development along its commercial corridors and elsewhere in the community is a concern for the Town. The Town will need to determine if water and sewer will be extended along the Routes 34 and 20 corridors. If water and sewer infrastructure is provided, it is highly likely that commercial development will follow if restrictions are not in place. If the Town encourages commercial development along these corridors, it will need to address the same design and development issues existing along Route 5.

Since there are already several hospitality establishments along the Route 20 corridor, it is likely that the Town will receive applications for construction of additional motels or hotels. Because of restrictions in other jurisdictions, the Town may face pressure to approve development of large-scale hotels. One planning tool the Town could use to control the pace, scale, and aesthetic character of future growth along Route 20 is creation of an overlay zoning district. Consistent with existing development, a Hospitality and Lodging Overlay zoning district could direct the use, scale, and aesthetics of growth along this corridor. The provisions of the overlay district sit over the underlying zoning district allowing for flexibility but also additional restrictions if desired. The Hotel Overlay map, which depicts the boundary of a possible hotel overlay district, can be found on page 44.

The Steering Committee expressed interest in clustering future business/commercial development. Respondents to the community survey feel that economic and commercial development should be concentrated in the Route 5/Grant Avenue area where development already exists, as opposed to developing in other areas of the Town. The community survey also revealed that Town residents generally feel that open space should be protected or enhanced, and overdevelopment would force some to consider leaving the Town because of a presumed change in Town character.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

The uncontrolled growth of commercial businesses along the Town's major corridors could threaten the desired character of the community. Therefore there is a need to concentrate business and commercial development in specific areas of the Town and not let it spread into more rural areas. The Town should restrict medium and large-scale commercial/retail development to the Route 5 Corridor and work to ensure

that development in this area is well planned and promotes the community's desired sense of place.

## **Goals and Implementation Measures**

- 6.1 Encourage development of businesses and industries along Route 5/Grant Avenue Commercial Corridor within close proximity to the City of Auburn.
  - 6.1.1 Limit further expansion of highway commercial (strip development) outside of the Route 5/Grant Avenue commercial-light industrial zone.
  - 6.1.2 Encourage the retention and maximum utilization of existing commercial sites and land within the Town, particularly within the Route 5/Grant Avenue commercial-light industrial zone.
- 6.2 Encourage development models other than strip development along Route 5/Grant Avenue Commercial Corridor road frontage.
  - 6.2.1 Create, adopt, and implement design standards for parking lots, including curbing, greenspace, trees, lighting, and pedestrian conveniences.
  - 6.2.2 Formalize and adopt architectural, and signage design guidelines to be used in tandem with local site plan review policies.
  - 6.2.3 Stipulate that new commercial development, and the redevelopment of existing sites, includes trees, landscaping, signage, site layout, and building design will enhance the physical character of the Town.
  - 6.2.4 Incorporate pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, etc., in site-plan reviews and public improvements.
  - 6.2.5 Encourage clustered commercial development within or near the Route 5/Grant Avenue Commercial Corridor.
  - 6.2.6 Develop vehicular parking requirements for individual land uses that meet about 85% of expected peak accumulation of vehicles.
- 6.3 Encourage the development and expansion of hospitality and lodging businesses in the eastern most area of the Town along Route 20.
  - 6.3.1 Create a Hospitality and Lodging Overlay Zoning District along Route 20 from Mandy Rue to County Line Road. Encourage the development and expansion of existing lodging businesses that have a low impact and maintain the historic character of Route 20 with limited accessory uses that emphasize agribusiness to include winery stores, restaurants, and gift shops as well as lodging establishments.

**The following map (Route 5 Area) has been submitted unformatted and will be resubmitted in the near future, once completed.**



## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation-related elements within the Town include roads, railroad, trails, and sidewalks. The development or maintenance of these elements depends on which entity has jurisdiction: County, State, Town government, or private. It is important to note whether use is private or public. These elements must be evaluated according to their condition and their ability to address the transportation needs of the community.

### Streets and Roads

Within the Town of Sennett there is full network of roads with jurisdiction belonging to three levels of government, Town, County, and State. There are three primary State highways through the Town. Two of these, Routes 34 and 5, run north and south. The other is U.S. Route 20, which travels east and west through the southern portion of the Town and links Auburn and Skaneateles. Route 5 is the most heavily traveled. It not only connects to Syracuse but is also the most heavily developed commercial area within the Town.

All of the other roads within the Town of Sennett are under the jurisdiction of either the Town of Sennett or Cayuga County. All roadways are public. In general, County roads are those that serve as primary transportation routes, such as Franklin, Throop Turnpike, Weedsport-Sennett, County House, Depot, etc. and have heavier traffic loads. The Town roadways experience the lowest level of traffic. A base map depicting the Town and its entire roadway system can be found on page 49.

The roadway infrastructure appears to sufficiently meet the demands placed upon it. The overall condition of all roadways is satisfactory with no obvious problems, except as noted below. Routine upgrades and maintenance, such as milling and resurfacing, new shoulders, etc. are undertaken as individual roadways deteriorate. Every attempt is made to also include other infrastructure improvements in conjunction with roadway work, including water main replacement, etc.



There have been several recent improvements concerning various local roads in the Town that warrant discussion. In 2007, both Pine Ridge Road and Franklin Street Road (between Auburn and Chestnut Ridge Road) were improved, including widening, storm water upgrades, etc., culminating in new asphalt pavement surfaces. The Town Highway Department also completed the full restoration of Parcell Road between Miller and Depot Roads. Prior to this work, only the northern portion of the road was maintained for year-round use, whereas now, the full extent of the road is open year-round.

One particular intersection that has been a concern, and has been discussed for many years, is at the eastern boundary of the Town where Franklin Street Road meets County Line Road and Franklin Street Extension. This five-way intersection has limited sight distances and a confusing alignment. Discussions are underway with various towns and counties to remedy the problem.

One road that has seen the greatest level of improvements and reconstruction over the past 15 to 20 years has been the Route 5 (Grant Avenue) corridor from the Auburn City line heading north to the vicinity of the Sennett-Weedsport Road intersection. The primary focus of these improvements has been to significantly improve traffic flow by widening the road and creating left turn lanes, etc. The Route 5 improvements have included significant upgrading of the storm water collection system by improving the functionality of buried pipes, catch basin grates, etc. Over the years as these improvements have taken place, the Town has also taken the opportunity to replace and upgrade both the sanitary sewer and public water infrastructure along the route.

## **Public Transportation**

The Town of Sennett is partially served by a public bus transportation system that provides bus service from the Auburn area to neighboring communities. The system is operated through Centro of Cayuga, which is part of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority based in the City of Syracuse. The Centro bus service has a regular stop at the Grant Avenue Plaza on Route 5 for commuters or shoppers who need to get to Auburn. There are also regular routes that travel both Routes 20 and 5 that ultimately arrive in Syracuse. For these two routes, even though there is no designated stop in the Town of Sennett, Centro drivers will stop to pick up riders along the route as long as there is a safe pull-off area.

In addition to Centro, Cayuga County provides on-call public transportation for seniors and handicapped individuals. The “SCAT” vehicles are equipped with wheelchair lifts and are available to provide transportation to people 60 and over throughout Cayuga County. Outside the City of Auburn, passengers over 60 may use the service for any personal business. Two days notice for pickup is requested and payment for service is by donation. The “CAM Van” is for persons needing medical transportation from Auburn to Syracuse. User may arrange a ride by providing a one-week advance notice. Outside of the City of Auburn, connections with SCAT van will provide access to the Cam van. As with the SCAT van, payment for transportation is by donation unless the passenger is eligible for Medicaid.

## **Railways**

The rail lines of the Finger Lakes Railway Company bisect the Town southwest to northeast and roughly parallel Route 5. The rail company purchased 118 miles of track from Conrail in 1995 and has continued to increase its services since that



time. While the bulk of rail traffic focuses on freight services, beginning in 2000, the company began to offer limited passenger service. This passenger service is geared towards tourism rather than everyday transportation needs. The majority of these public excursions are offered on weekends, are seasonally-oriented, and include locations and events related to historic areas, Halloween, and Christmas. In the event that passenger service is expanded to include commuter transit, a commuter railroad station would be an essential convenience to encourage ridership.

Amtrak passenger service is available at the Regional Transportation Center in Syracuse.

## **Pedestrian and Bicycle**

The only other “transportation” element serving the community is for people on foot or bicycles. This includes sidewalks provided at various locations within the Town and any designated recreational bicycle routes or trails. The vast majority of the Town’s highways, roads, and streets do not have sidewalks. The exception is the portion of the Town just north and south of Genesee Street (Route 20) east of the City of Auburn. This is the most concentrated residential area within the Town; and sidewalks are appropriate. Despite this fact, it is estimated that only 25% of those streets have sidewalks. The only other areas served by sidewalks include some very limited frontages along Grant Avenue (Route 5) and a very small area of the Sennett hamlet along the Sennett-Weedsport Road. The overall condition of sidewalks is satisfactory, and to date there has been little concern or emphasis placed on the limited access to sidewalks throughout the Town. There are no known designated bike routes or multi-use recreational trails that pass through the Town.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

The greatest concern relative to the transportation system in and around the Town of Sennett is the anticipated increase in the volume of vehicular traffic. The existing Town and County roads serving the area have no particular needs at this time other than the usual routine maintenance. If, however, commercial/industrial projects and residential developments continue to be proposed along the network of roads, it is strongly recommended that these projects should also evaluate and consider improvements to the drainage, width, shoulders, etc. of the roadways to be impacted.

## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 7.1 Ensure that streets, sidewalks, and other transportation infrastructure are well maintained, safe and aesthetically pleasing.
  - 7.1.1 Include adequate drainage designs for new road development, including adequate shoulder width for pedestrians, bicyclists, and potential bike routes/lanes.
  - 7.1.2 Study, design, and implement improvements for the five-way intersection at Franklin Street Road, County Line Road, and Franklin Street Extension. The project should be undertaken in concert with other local and regional governments.
  - 7.1.3 Seek grant funding for urban forestry and streetscape projects.
- 7.2 Provide bicycle and snowmobile routes throughout the Town that connect with regional and County routes.
  - 7.2.1 Work with Cayuga County and NYS DOT to identify and mark bike routes, lanes, and paths.
  - 7.2.2 Ensure that the goals of the Comprehensive Plan are incorporated into Cayuga County and NYS DOT construction projects.
- 7.3 Provide for the future development of a commuter railroad station in the Town.
  - 7.3.1 Work with Cayuga County, City of Auburn, and regional partners to develop a viable commuter rail service between Auburn and Syracuse.



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

There is a wide variety of infrastructure elements that play a significant role in a community. Infrastructure elements have been categorized into five primary groups: water supply, wastewater disposal, fuel sources, storm water management and electricity/telephone/TV. In 2008, an inventory of the Town's infrastructure was completed as a separate project from this Comprehensive Plan. A discussion of each follows.

### Water Supply

The Town of Sennett provides public water in selected locations in the Town where there is a concentration of residents and/or businesses or there is a unique circumstance that prompted the delivery of the water to that particular location. Nearly all of the water distributed in the Town is purchased from and provided by the City of Auburn, which draws water from Owasco Lake. Within the limits of its municipal boundaries the Town has created and serves six (6) distinct Water Districts (No.'s 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7). It also provides water to the Village of Weedsport located to the north in the Town of Brutus via Water Districts 1 and 3. Water Districts 1, 2, 3, and 6 are the major service areas within the Town. Water District 5 serves only three (3) homes just outside the northeast corner of the City. Water District 7 serves nine (9) homes at the eastern end of Depot Road. It was created as a result of a groundwater contamination issue. The Town of Skaneateles now provides potable water. In addition to the Water Districts, there are "out-of-district" users that are located within the Town. In one instance water is provided by Water District 6 to several homes, the Town offices, the fire station, and a business along Franklin Street Road just east of Chestnut Ridge Road. In the past there has been discussion of investigating the development of one or several Town groundwater sources but there is no evidence of an adequate aquifer in the area to provide sufficient water. A map depicting the Town's water and sewer infrastructure can be found on page 55.



The average daily usage in each of the districts range significantly with the lowest usage being Water District 5 and the largest being Water Districts 1, 2, and 3. Noted below is a tabulation of key data for each district. Please note that in reviewing the data below, each district is composed of both residential users and, in some cases, a large number of commercial properties. Also, the volumes shown represent the amount of water that has been billed to the customers and not the average amount purchased from Auburn.

District	Number of Services	Average Daily Use (GPD)	Static Pressure Range
1	67	45,000	70 to 80 psi
2	294	40,000	85 to 90 psi
3	194	52,000	80 to 95 psi
3	(Jericho Rd. area on separate pressure zone)		65 to 75 psi
5	3	700	45 to 55 psi
6	143	19,000	60 to 95 psi
7	9	900	65 to 75 psi

The Town has two water storage tanks, each serving a particular user group. There is a new (2006) 385,000 gallon glass-lined steel tank located just east of Pine Ridge Road, which serves both Water District 6 (where it is located) and Water District 2. The water for these two districts is provided by Auburn at the Franklin Street Road pump house. The water is pumped into both distribution systems and the tank simultaneously. The other tank is a 250,000 gallon steel tank (erected in 1963) located just off of Route 5 in Water District #3 which serves the very limited population living primarily along Jericho Road. This tank operates on an independent pressure zone from the Auburn supply and also serves as an emergency source of water for all of Water Districts 1 and 3 if the Auburn supply becomes unavailable. Due to the continuing deterioration of this tank and the recent water quality issues of the area (Stage 2 testing), a decision has been made to replace the tank and modify the system so that all these issues can be corrected.

The size of the piping network throughout the Town varies significantly from 4-inches to 12-inches. Over the past 20 years a significant number of the original water mains and services have been replaced (primarily in Water Districts 1 and 3) and the vast majority of Water District 6 is either new or installed fairly recently. While there are portions of these districts that need to be addressed at some point, the overall distribution piping in Water District 2 (Route 20 area just east of Auburn) is of greatest concern. A significant portion of the network of pipes in Water District No. 2 is old, made of cast or ductile iron (susceptible to corrosion) and undersized (4-inches and 6-inches).

In general, the vast majority of the water systems in the Town have adequate fire flow capability. However, over the past few years, the piping has continued to fail as evidenced by numerous breaks in the mains and the undersized pipes along certain streets clearly reduces the fire fighting capability of the system. In summary, critical to any community is a reliable and safe water supply. The Town of Sennett continues to address those portions of the overall system that are antiquated and/or nearing the end of their useful life. While the existing system is clearly adequate and well maintained, there are several facilities and systems, as detailed previously, that need to be addressed in order to ensure the system continues to meet current and future demand.

Over recent years, a comprehensive tabulation, inventorying, and mapping of all the existing water districts has been underway. This effort should provide the Town with a clear, concise picture of its water system assets, which will aid in all future planning efforts.

## **Wastewater Disposal**

As in the case of the municipal water, the Town of Sennett is served by the City of Auburn for wastewater treatment. There are two distinct Sewer Districts that collect wastewater in the two most developed areas of the Town. These are Sewer District 1 in the Route 20 vicinity and Sewer District 2 along Route 5. See the Infrastructure map on page 55. In both locations the collected wastewater is transported to the Auburn City line via a network of collection mains and pump stations, metered, and then carried to the Auburn Sewage Treatment Plant.

In Sewer District 1, which generally mirrors Water District 2 (except for the recently expanded area including the Quincy Hills subdivision) the oldest portion of the infrastructure dates from the 1930's. This is located in the Ross Street and Eastern Parkway area and consists of both 8-inch and 10-inch diameter clay tile sewer mains. The vast majority of the collection system was constructed in 1970 with 8-inch and 12-inch transite pipe, with other expansions occurring in the Golf-Vu (Phase I), Greensward, Golf-Vu (Phase II) and Quincy Hill subdivisions in 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2007, respectively. There are two pump stations in the district, one serving the Golf-Vu subdivision on Butera Drive and the other the recently completed facility at the Route 20 entry drive to the Quincy Hill property.

Sewer District 2 was created in 1996 and consequently contains relatively new facilities and equipment. The gravity piping is all PVC and ranges in size from 6-inch to 8-inch mains. Due to the topography of the area there are two pump stations. The largest is located on the east side of Route 5 in the vicinity of the Pizza Hut restaurant and it collects sewage from both the north and south and then pumps it nearly 4000 LF to a manhole in the vicinity of the Staples driveway. The other pump station is a small package unit located on Mutton Hill Road.

For the most part, the sewage collection systems sufficiently meet the demands placed upon them. As in any sewer system, the primary concern is to minimize the inflow and infiltration (I&I) that enters the piping network to reduce the metered flow entering the City of Auburn. The most immediate concern is the condition of the old clay tile pipe in the neighborhood north of Route 20. One small portion of that network was replaced in the summer of 2008 but a more complete program for replacement is needed to eliminate what is likely substantial I&I.

## **Fuel Sources**

A network of natural gas piping provided by NYSEG serves most of the developed portions of the Town of Sennett. The three primary areas that are served include the Route 34 and Route 5 corridors as well as the Route 20/Franklin Street Road area. The area with the least natural gas service is the northeastern portion of the Town, which is primarily rural, open space. In areas not served by natural gas, residents rely on a combination of fuel oil, propane gas, coal and/or wood as the primary source of fuel

energy. With natural gas already available in the most developed areas, there is no immediate concern. However, it is important that NYSEG be included in any discussions concerning expanded service areas for either sewer or water so that the efforts of all can be coordinated and completed as efficiently as possible.

## **Storm Water Management**

Storm water management in the Town of Sennett is not currently under the jurisdiction of the Town, but there have been discussions to change that. The Town follows the recently revised and updated NYSDEC SPDES General Permit for Stormwater Discharges from Construction Activities and its own recently adopted Local Law (Stormwater and Erosion Control) to enforce the requirements outlined in both. There has been a long history of concern regarding this issue due to flooding and increased erosion that has resulted from the construction of new developments and facilities. To date the Town does not own or control any storm water facilities and there are no formalized “Drainage Districts”. This status may change with the recently completed Quincy Hills subdivision along Route 20.

While there is no imminent threat or major concern, it would be wise for the Town to consider storm water management through the creation of drainage districts. Once the precedent is established then all future projects will fall within the policy, thus avoiding the creation of future mismanaged or inadequate facilities.

## **Electricity, Telephone, Cable TV, and Broadband Service**

The Town of Sennett is served with electricity, telephone, and cable TV by NYSEG, Verizon and Elantic Telecom, and Time Warner, respectively. The entire Town is adequately serviced by electric and telephone service. Nearly all the Town is serviced by cable TV and broadband service, with only a few exceptions. At present there are



four cell towers located within the Town (two along Route 20, one on Miller Road, and one near Chestnut Ridge Road). These provide adequate mobile phone service throughout the Town, although the possibility of small areas with no or weak signals remains. At present, there do not appear to be any unique problems or particular issues with any of the existing towers.

As various communication technologies rapidly evolve, more and more individuals and businesses are utilizing wireless and satellite systems for their telephone, television, and Internet services. This trend will likely continue. The most immediate issue this creates for the Town is the potential need for additional cell or other wireless towers. In 1999 the Town adopted a specific ordinance regulating the erection of new towers. Nevertheless, the Town must be cognizant of the impact of infrastructure for emerging

telecommunications technology. The term "Wi-Fi" is often used by the public as a synonym for wireless Internet (W-LAN), although not every wireless Internet product has a Wi-Fi certification. This may be due to certification costs that must be paid for each certified device type. Wi-Fi certification is provided for technology used in home networks, mobile phones, video games and other devices that require wireless networking. Wi-Fi is supported by most personal computers operating systems, many game consoles, laptops, smartphones, printers and other peripherals.

## **Goals and Implementation Measures**

- 8.1 Maintain and improve the municipal water system as needed to ensure adequate, safe water supplies for water district users.
  - 8.1.1 Complete the proposed improvements to the Water District 3 Route 5 storage tank and altitude valve.
  - 8.1.2 Undertake systematic replacement of the old and undersized water mains located in Water District 2.
  - 8.1.3 Encourage the development of regional water system.
- 8.2 Maintain and improve the municipal wastewater collection and treatment system as needed to ensure adequate disposal and to minimize environmental impacts.
  - 8.2.1 Define needs, and replace the very old portion of Sewer District 1 system, particularly specific collection mains along Ross Street, Eastern Parkway and a few of the adjoining small access corridors. This will result in a significant reduction in inflow and infiltration, which decrease Town costs.
- 8.3 Coordinate extension of natural gas service with future development of new water and/or sewer extensions.
  - 8.3.1 Evaluate the need for public water related to impacts of the rapid growth the Town is experiencing, particularly in the area along the eastern end of the Route 20 and Franklin Street Road corridors.
  - 8.3.2 Complete the asset mapping and tabulation project. In conjunction with this effort should also be an attempt to simplify and consolidate the present situation of having numerous districts, each with various levels of debt and different mechanisms by which O&M fees are assessed.
  - 8.3.3 Coordinate expansion of municipal infrastructure with NYSEG to expand natural gas service where it is currently unavailable.
- 8.4 Minimize the negative visual impact of above ground electric and/or telecommunications lines.
  - 8.4.1 Work with power, phone and cable companies to bury lines in new developments, where feasible.
  - 8.4.2 Work with internet providers to provide a "WiFi" internet contract in parts or all of the Town.





## EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Town of Sennett's emergency services include the Town of Sennett Fire Department. While police protection is important in any community, the Town of Sennett does not have its own police department and therefore relies on the Cayuga County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police.

### Fire District

The fire department in the Town of Sennett is organized as a "fire district". It is an all-volunteer fire department with 40 to 45 total members, 25 to 30 of who actively respond to fire calls. The main fire department building was constructed circa 1993, and is located on Franklin Street Road near the Town offices. It includes facilities that are used by the public for meetings, weddings, reunions, benefits, etc. Depending on the use, there may be a fee associated with renting the facilities. The second fire station was constructed in 1963, and is located in the Sennett hamlet on Turnpike Road.

The newer fire station is more modern and better equipped to handle the size of today's firefighting vehicles than the smaller station. Other than routine maintenance, there is no short-term need for facility improvements. The fire equipment for the entire district meets NFPA standards. Since the fire district is funded by a fire tax, the taxes collected to maintain equipment and facilities are generally adequate for the needs of the department. A fire committee manages equipment purchases and debt service.

The 1963 hamlet fire station cannot accommodate newer firefighting vehicles, as the bays and doors are not properly sized. The fire district purchased the house and lot adjacent to the hamlet station and is presently using the house for training purposes. Eventually the house will be demolished, paving the way for the fire district to expand the building, and house vehicles at either station.

The other issue facing all-volunteer departments, and no less an issue in Sennett, is recruitment and retention of volunteers. Therefore, recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing effort. Realizing that recruitment is an issue, the fire district has made a concerted effort to purchase trucks that can perform a multitude of functions, thus reducing the manpower needs.

It should be noted that across New York State, and particularly in upstate New York, significant issues are arising with respect to fire departments and districts. For example, many volunteer organizations are experiencing manpower shortages, as noted above. Career departments, more often found in cities, are typically facing financial constraints with respect to new facilities and equipment. Small communities, with a limited tax base, also struggle financially with respect to fire protection. A combined lack of volunteerism, and the fact that many firefighters commute to jobs outside of the Town, often results a situation where there are not enough volunteer firefighters to respond, particularly in the daytime. This may result in career fire departments being the first responders. They are typically not compensated for being first responders.

The Town of Sennett, with a growing population and land development, is very fortunate to have relatively modern fire equipment and facilities. At this time, it is financially sound. The Town should be prepared, however, to deal with the ongoing discussion of consolidation within a region or compensation for career departments. It is highly likely that during the next 20 years there will be a major change in the operation of local fire departments/districts. Sennett should be prepared for this inevitability and may want to consider being proactive in what it wants in the future rather than being reactive.

## **EMS Services**

There are a number of private and volunteer ambulances that provide services to the Town of Sennett. Given the size of the Town, the various EMS services cover specific areas of the Town. The volunteer ambulance corps send a bill for services but do not undertake a serious effort to collect the fees. On the other hand, the private services expect payment and bill accordingly. While the EMS services are adequate, a conflict is presented in that some areas of the Town receive the services for free while others have to pay.

## **Goals and Implementation Measures**

- 9.1 Provide emergency services to its citizens so that they can live peacefully, healthfully, and safely in the community.
  - 9.1.1 Work cooperatively with the fire district so that adequate fire facilities and equipment are maintained and available.
  - 9.1.2 Work with the fire district to promote volunteerism.
  - 9.1.3 Ensure that adequate ambulance and other emergency services continue to be available to all parts of the Town.
  - 9.1.4 Be proactive in any discussions related to a change in the operation of the fire district.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The Town of Sennett is characterized by diverse natural features and resources, including slopes, topographic changes, wetlands, water bodies, floodplains, geologic features, forests, and wildlife. Natural resources are important to the character and economy of a community, and communities must consider the preservation, maintenance, and responsible uses of natural resources as part of their planning process. The following issues were observed regarding the Town of Sennett's natural resources.

### Slope and Topography

Slope and topography describe the shape and relief of the land. Topography describes the elevation and changes in elevation, while slope is a measurement of the percentage change in elevation over a particular distance.

The Town of Sennett is composed of rolling hills, including both relatively flat areas and sloped terrain. The highest elevations in the Town are about 1,040 feet above sea level in the southeast corner. Most of the land in the Town is between 600 and 850 feet above sea level. The northwest tends to have lower elevations between approximately 550 and 650 feet, while the southeast has elevations in the 900 to 1,000 foot range. Areas with steep slopes occur intermittently, with hillier terrain more prevalent in the central and northeastern areas of the Town.

Topography and slope have significant impacts on the siting and design of new development site plans for any construction or development project. Slope is important as it pertains to reducing construction costs, minimizing risks from natural hazards such as flooding and landslides, and minimizing the impacts of proposed development on natural resources such as soils, vegetation, and water systems.

### Soils

Soil characteristics affect a variety of human activities, from land use patterns, to transportation routes, to the installation of other necessary community infrastructure needs. For example, soil characteristics help determine the productivity and viability of agriculture or suitable areas for development.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Soil Conservation Service has mapped and classified important farmlands and soils. Farmland is classified as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland other than Prime, and Additional Farmland of Statewide Importance. According to Title 190, the *National Environmental Compliance Handbook*, Subpart F, section 610.94, these farmland/soil classifications are defined as follows:

*Prime Farmland* is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural

crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Prime farmland includes land that possesses the above characteristics but is being used currently to produce livestock and timber. It does not include land already in, or committed to, urban development or water storage.

*Unique Farmland other than prime farmland* is land that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the Secretary. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high quality or high yields of specific crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Examples of such crops include citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruits, and vegetables.

*Additional Farmland of Statewide importance*, other than prime or unique farmland, is land that is of Statewide or local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, or oilseed crops, as determined by the appropriate State or unit of local government agency or agencies, and that the Secretary of Agriculture determines should be considered the same as prime or unique farmland for the purposes of this evaluation.

Large areas of the Town are classified as Prime Farmland, and this land is found in all areas of the Town. Additional areas are classified as Prime Farmland “if drained”. Smaller but significant areas are classified as Farmland of Statewide Importance. The largest concentration of these lands is in the central area of the Town. Much of the “Not Prime Farmland” is in wetland areas. Since agriculture is an important component of Sennett’s character, the Town should remain cognizant of development’s impact on agricultural lands and soils. The soils map on page 64 depicts soils and prime farmland in the Town.

Not all areas with prime soils are best suited for agricultural production due to steep slopes, encroaching development, and even the growth plans of neighboring jurisdictions. A suitability analysis using Geographic Information Systems will identify those areas in the Town most suitable for development (or for protection) by analyzing a variety of factors that make particular locations desirable and appropriate for agricultural production or development.

In addition to being evaluated in terms of agricultural viability, soil types throughout Cayuga County have been inventoried and assessed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Soil Conservation Service in terms of their suitability for other types of development. Soil characteristics are assessed for type of soil, depth to seasonal high water table, depth to bedrock, flood potential, and permeability. These issues may affect both building foundation and septic system siting. Soil types are grouped according the “associations” that include over-arching characteristics and origins.

There are three primary soil types in two associations that cover most areas of the Town. It is important to note, however, that this is a broad overview, and additional soil types are likely to be present. It is most likely that soils in the same association as the two dominate soil types detailed below will be found within the Town. The two

dominate soil types are in an association that is dominated by high-lime soils developed on glacial till. These soils, located throughout the Town, are:

*Cazenovia-Ovid-Ontario, moderately shallow* – These are deep, well-drained to somewhat poorly-drained soils that have a moderately-to-fine textured subsoil, and moderately shallow, well-drained soils that have a medium-textured subsoil over limestone bedrock.

*Honeoye-Lima* – Deep, well drained and somewhat poorly drained soils that have a medium-textured subsoil.

The third major soil type is Arkport-Colonie. This soil type is in an association dominated by soils developed on glacial lake sediments. Arkport-Colonie is typified by deep, well drained to excessively drained, medium-lime and low-lime soils that have a moderately coarse texture or coarse texture subsoil over sand. This soil type is located in a defined area in the southern portion of the Town, approximately in the area of Town Hall Road and Beach Road, and stretching northward to just south of Center Street Road.

## **Water Bodies**

Water bodies are critical to the public health, economic, and environmental well being of a community. The Town of Sennett does not have any significant water bodies within its borders, although it lies only a short distance north of Skaneateles and Owasco Lakes. The outlets for each of these Finger Lakes run east and west of the Town, respectively. The Town does have a number of small streams and creeks that typically flow in a northwesterly direction. There are also only a handful of small ponds, including farm ponds.

## **Wetlands/Floodplains**

Wetlands are areas that contain soils and are saturated by surface or groundwater. Often times, the saturated conditions allow for growth of vegetation that is well suited for these wet conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, wet meadows, and other similar areas. Wetlands perform numerous functions, such as removing and recycling nutrients from the water that flows through them. These functions, in turn, provide benefits to the environment and the community. For example, the benefit derived from nutrient removal is improved water quality. This water purification function is valuable for a number of reasons. Such reasons include clean drinking water, safe recreation, and secure fish and wildlife habitats. Another benefit of wetlands is that they store floodwaters and reduce the magnitude of flooding. Wetlands also provide a valuable habitat for a diverse flora and fauna, including many rare, threatened, or endangered species.

There are two types of wetlands in the Town. These include National Wetland Inventory (NWI) sites, (sites greater than 0.5 acre), and DEC regulated wetlands, which

are sites that are 12.4 acres (5 hectares) or larger. A map depicting wetlands within the Town can be found on page 65.

There are at least six DEC wetlands in the southeast area of the Town. The two largest of these are located southeast of the intersection of Franklin Street and Swamp Roads and southeast of the intersection of Route 20 and Beech Road. Other DEC wetlands are located in the north end of the Town, with the largest located northwest of Turnpike and Weedsport Sennett Roads. NWI wetlands are located throughout the Town, but are most prevalent in the southeast and northwest. The central area of the Town contains the fewest wetlands.

The terms "100-year flood" and "100-year flood plain" can be misleading. A 100-year flood is not a flood event that can be expected to occur once every 100 years. Rather, it is a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in a given year. Thus, a 100-year flood could occur more than once in a relatively short period of time. The 100-year floodplain is the geographic area designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that would be submerged during a 100-year flood event. There are a number of classifications of 100-year flood plains depending on water depth and flow.

A number of areas of the Town are located within the 100-year flood plain. Many of these overlay the aforementioned wetlands. There are also flood plains located adjacent to a stream in the northeast corner of the Town, and larger areas northwest of Turnpike Road. The flood plains within the Town can be viewed on the map on page 65.

Areas of the flood plain remain undeveloped, but are zoned for potential residential growth, and commercial and industrial activity. This is not prudent for public safety and potential loss of property due to flooding. Development within the 100-year flood plain should be discouraged due to the strong potential for loss of property and for hazards to occupants. If flood plain areas are developed, structures should be raised above anticipated flood levels.

## **Unique Natural Areas (UNA) and Critical Environmental Areas (CEA)**

Unique Natural Areas (UNAs) are locally designated sites that have outstanding environmental qualities that are deserving of special attention for preservation and protection. UNAs include such natural features as woods, swamps, fens, cliffs, and streams. Under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, local agencies may designate specific geographic areas within its boundaries as Critical Environmental Areas (CEA). The designation of a CEA provides some regulatory protection for a site and functions as an indicator to developers, local officials, and other governmental agencies that the site is of significant environmental value. There are no designated Unique Natural Areas or Critical Environmental Areas in the Town of Sennett.

## **Underground Resources and Mining**

Sand and gravel in the Town of Sennett are being mined in several locations. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, a total of five companies operate eight different sand/gravel mines in the Town. Mines contain a finite amount of resources and, at some point in the future, will be exhausted. It is important that closed mines be reacquainted to limit future safety and environmental problems and to ensure future use of the site. While this typically falls under the purview of the NYS DEC, the Town should be active in ensuring that local goals are met.

Much of the Finger Lakes/Central New York Region lies over a large natural gas deposit, known as the Trenton / Black River Production Area. Exploration for natural gas has increased substantially in recent years, as has natural gas production in the region. There are already at least six (6) natural gas wellheads in the Town. It is likely that, for communities such as Sennett, this will be a growing issue in the future.

## **Threatened and Endangered Plant and Animal Species**

The preservation of rare or endangered plants or animals is important as part of a community's need to protect the environment. The NYS DEC maintains a database of rare or State-listed animals and plants, significant natural communities, or other significant habitats deserving protection

According to NYS DEC database, the Town of Sennett does not have any rare or State-listed plant species, or significant natural communities. A protected species of bird, the Clay-colored Sparrow, has been spotted within the Town. It is important to note that the DEC database is not definitive because comprehensive field surveys have not been completed for most sites. Since the database is routinely updated, new development in the Town should confer with the NYS DEC's New York Natural Heritage Program during the planning stage.

## **Sustainability**

Growth is both inevitable and desirable for a healthy community. The way a community manages its growth directly impacts not only the built environment but also all natural resources within the local jurisdiction and beyond. Some respondents to the community survey indicated that their desire to live in Sennett is based, in part, on the rural setting and natural beauty of the Town. Through planning and land use regulations, the Town will be successful in encouraging appropriate development while maintaining valued natural resources. Still, residents must be cognizant of the fact that what happens in Sennett has an environmental impact elsewhere.

Utilization of green building techniques, alternative energy sources, and interior home appointments that promote energy efficiency and conservation will make Sennett a better place to live. The Town has an opportunity take a leadership role in such an initiative by modeling sustainable construction and business practices. Taken together these actions will have not only a local, but also a global impact.



## Summary and Recommendations

The Town of Sennett has numerous natural resources that are significant to both the character and environmental health of the community. It is important that natural areas be delineated to ensure that planning and development decisions do not diminish the environmental health of the Town. The Town should restrict uses in the 100-year flood plain to agriculture, open space, forestry, and recreation to promote environmental protection. Furthermore, this will help ensure public safety and minimize potential loss of property.

## Goals and Implementation Measures

- 10.1 Conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas including air, water, and land through conscientious development.
  - 10.1.1 Review and amend land use regulations to protect and enhance natural resources of the community.
  - 10.1.2 Comply with SEQRA for projects that require such review to ensure protection of natural resources.
  - 10.1.3 Amend land use regulation to limit and control development in the 100-year flood plain.
  - 10.1.4 Encourage the development of conservation trusts in appropriate locations.
- 10.2 Assure that future development within the Town will complement the natural environment.
  - 10.2.1 Utilize the Planning Board, elected officials, zoning officer, and developers, and resources such as, soils maps, flood maps, and wetlands maps to identify areas suitable for development of homes, industry, agriculture, and recreation.
  - 10.2.2 Prohibit development in wetlands. Development proposals adjacent to wetlands should be scrutinized and carefully planned to minimize impacts on wetlands.
  - 10.2.3 Consider funding a suitability analysis to identify areas most suitable for various types of development and for conservation.
  - 10.2.4 Control mining in the Town to the full extent of the law.
- 10.3 Encourage energy conservation and efficiencies and the use of alternative energy sources.
  - 10.3.1 Promote energy efficiency for new or existing structures such as green build standards, alternative energy sources, and/or new energy saving technologies. Energy saving or alternative energy appliances, technology, materials, or other apparatus shall be of such a nature that it will not interfere with any neighboring properties and/or will not negatively impact the Town environment and quality of life.
  - 10.3.2 Promote the development and the use of energy source such as wind, geothermal, and solar in all town building projects.





