

II. SETTING THE SCENE

HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF SENNETT

The Town of Sennett is located in Cayuga County, in the Central part of New York State. It is in the Finger Lakes Region, bordering the City of Auburn, and not far from Owasco and Skaneateles Lakes. It is one of the best and most prosperous agricultural sections of the State. Archaeological evidence found in the Finger Lakes Region can be traced to the Stone Age; however, detailed records of the settlement of Cayuga County are not found until the 17th Century.

The first inhabitants of the area were the Cayuga Indians, from which the County got its name. The Cayuga Indians were part of the larger Iroquois Confederation, who were forced to surrender their land during the Revolutionary War. At the end of the American Revolution, the New York State Legislature set aside a two million acre military tract to be divided into lots and paid to surviving veterans for their service. Many of those who were awarded land in what is now the Town of Sennett sold it to others and settled elsewhere. It was not until 1794 that permanent settlements were made in the area.

The Town of Sennett was formed on March 19, 1827 by combining the northern part of Brutus and the southern part of Aurelius. The Town was named after Judge Daniel Sennett who settled in the area in 1795. In 1859, part of the Town of Sennett was taken to form the Town of Throop, and in 1871 a portion was also annexed to Auburn.

The Town of Sennett was founded as a farming community, and these agricultural roots are still a defining characteristic of the Town today. The four corners area of the Town was the hub of the community for many years, with a post office and several small grocery stores located there. In 1838, the railroad began operating in the region, which helped the farming community by carrying carloads of farm produce to city markets. An electric trolley also ran for a short time in the early 20th century, but was not as successful and stopped operating in 1930. After World War II, the railroad was no longer as vital to the community as the automobile became more popular and was the main source of transportation for goods and people.

Several local businesses in the 19th and 20th centuries revolved around the dairy and agricultural roots of the community. The Sennett Cheese Manufacturing Company was incorporated on October 21, 1869, and at the height of its production could produce up to 240 pounds of cheese per day. In 1893, the Sennett Creamery, a creamery and butter factory, was started. The creamery remained in business into the early 1900's. Other kinds of businesses related to agriculture thrived in the area throughout the 1900's, such as farm supply and equipment stores, as well as Sennett Sales, where farm animals and livestock were auctioned off. Feed stores, such as Barski Brothers Farm Supplies, also filled a need in the community and have done so for several years.

Many smaller farms in the area ceased operation in the latter half of the 20th century, often times selling to neighboring farms, making for fewer yet larger farms. Many residents in the Town commute to either Auburn or Skaneateles for work, although some may go as far as Syracuse. There are a few large employers in the area, such as Welch Allyn, which has been in the area since the early 1900's. The Auburn Memorial Hospital, which first opened in 1880, and the Auburn Correctional Facility, which opened in 1817, are other examples of longtime area employers. The Town of Sennett has seen more commercial growth in recent years, particularly in the area closest to Auburn. Those who wish to live in a rural setting but work in a city find Sennett to be an ideal location.

As the Town of Sennett prepares itself for the next 25 years, it is faced with several issues related to agriculture, zoning, housing, infrastructure concerns, commercial development, and economic and community development. Its plan for the future will build on its considerable assets, past successes, and strong sense of community to create the needed tools for new growth and development.

POPULATION and DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2000 Census, 3,244 residents live in the Town of Sennett. The population density for the Town is approximately 112 persons per square mile. A total of 1,085 households exist in the Town with an average household size of 2.68 persons.

Population Changes and Growth

The population of Sennett has increased over the last 30 years, particularly during the 1990 to 2000 decade. During the same time, the Cayuga County population has decreased. Table 1, following, details these population changes.

TABLE 1: POPULATION CHANGES FROM 1980 TO 2000

Area	1980	1990	2000	% Change (1990-2000)
United States	226,542,199	248,710,000	281,421,906	+13.1%
New York State	17,558,200	17,990,455	18,976,457	+5.5%
Cayuga County	79,894	82,313	81,963	-0.4%
Town of Sennett	2,561	2,913	3,244	+11.4%
City of Auburn	32,549	31,258	28,574	-8.6%

Source: United States Census Bureau

According to the Census, in 2000 about 24% of the Town of Sennett's population was school aged, and 5.3% were under age five. There was approximately a 13% increase in the number of children under five from 1990 to 2000, corresponding to the overall increase in population. During the same time, the number of young adults, aged 20-34, decreased by 16%. The population group aged 35-59 is the age cohort that grew the largest; by 28%. Finally, the 60 and over age group grew by about 7%.

TABLE 2: AGE TRENDS FROM 1990 TO 2000

Age	1990	2000	% Change (1990-2000)
Under 5	153	173	+13.1%
5-19	676	768	+13.6%
20-34	549	461	-16.0%
35-59	928	1,192	+28.4%
60+	607	650	+7.1%

Source: United States Census Bureau

The Town should be mindful that its population growth is in the older age segments. According to Claritas data, the percentage of older citizens, age 65 years and older is greater than 16% in the Town in 2007. Based on the growth rate in the 35-59 year segment noted in Table 2 above, the percentage of older citizens in the Town will continue to escalate. Older citizens will need services and amenities to serve their needs in the future, such as housing modifications and maintenance assistance, alternate housing choices, transportation, and increased medical services, to name a few.

Projections of future population and households in the Town of Sennett are presented in Table 3 below. The Cayuga County population is estimated to have decreased by 237 people in 2006, according to U.S. Census estimates. The Town's population is estimated to have grown by more than 10% from 2000 to 2007 and is projected to increase by more than 5% from 2007 to 2012.

**TABLE 3: TOWN OF SENNETT
ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS**

	2000	2007	% Change	2012	% Change
Population	3,244	3,582	+10.4%	3,789	+5.7%
Households	1,085	1,252	+15.4%	1,349	+7.74%

Source: Claritas

In summary, Table 3 projects a growth in population of 545 persons between 2000 and 2012, or almost 17% of the 2000 Census population. The growth in households is projected to increase by 264 households, or more than 24% of the 2000 estimate. This is an indication of the desirability of the Town as a place to live and the housing development issues facing the Town.

Minorities

There is an extremely small minority population in the Town of Sennett, according to the 2000 Census. Caucasian accounts for nearly 96% of the total population, while the remaining 4% account for other races, including Black/African American, American Indian, Asian, Chinese, and Korean. 0.5% of the Town's population is classified as two or more races.

Town of Sennett Household/Population Quick Facts (2007 Estimates)

- ◆ 19% of the Town's population is aged 16 and under.
- ◆ 539 persons, or 16.1% of the Town population is aged 65 or older.
- ◆ The median age in the Town is 41.5 years.
- ◆ 95.7% of persons in the Town are Caucasian.
- ◆ 84% of the Town population over the age of 25 are high school graduates.
- ◆ 24.5% of the Town population over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- ◆ 79.5% of households are families.
- ◆ The average household income is \$64,347.
- ◆ The estimated per capita income is \$23,076.
- ◆ 4.1% of families are below the poverty level.
- ◆ 7.4% of households are female headed.
- ◆ 90.5% of housing units are owner-occupied.
- ◆ Median value of an owner-occupied home is \$123,239
- ◆ 90.7% of housing units are single family.
- ◆ Median year built of housing units is 1966.

LOCAL ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Since July 2006, jobs in New York State have increased by more than 95,000, even though there has been a decrease in manufacturing jobs of over 14,000. Despite new job creation, unemployment has increased from 4.9% in July 2006, to 5% in July 2007.

In the Central New York region, in which Cayuga County is located, private sector jobs are at their highest numbers since 2001. The largest increase has been in educational and health related occupations, with losses in utilities and manufacturing. Unemployment in the region has decreased from 4.7% in July 2006, to 4.4% in July 2007. For July 2007, the unemployment rate in Cayuga County was 4.6%, which is lower than the annual average for every year since 1990, with the exception of 2000 and 2001.

The latest employment data available for the Town of Sennett was from the 2000 U.S. Census, which showed an unemployment rate of 4.6%. At that time, Sennett's unemployment rate was 10% below the Cayuga County unemployment rate. Using the same percentage difference, and extrapolating the 4.6% unemployment percentage for

the County in July 2007, suggests a July 2007 unemployment rate for the Town of 4.1%. Based upon the above information, it appears that the economic climate in Sennett is typically favorable when compared to the County and the State.

Per the 2000 Census, and as illustrated in Table 4 below, the Town of Sennett and Cayuga County workforce is employed in the following occupations:

TABLE 4
TOWN OF SENNETT/CAYUGA COUNTY OCCUPATIONS

OCCUPATION	Town of Sennett		Cayuga County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing occupations	8	0.1	617	1.6
Construction	154	10.2	3,731	9.9
Production	227	14.8	7,376	19.7
Professional, management, administrative	543	35.5	10,435	27.8
Services	216	14.5	6,727	17.9
Sales	382	24.9	8,666	23.1

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

The Town's last Comprehensive Plan was completed in the 1970's. The Plan included a community synopsis of conditions at the time and provided few recommendations regarding potential actions to manage future growth. Below are highlights of the plan.

- Population: 2,553 (1970)
- Town land classification:
 - 45% cropland
 - 23% woodland
 - 21% pasture
 - 5% residential
 - 6% commercial, industrial, transportation, and public use
- There is an abundance of well-drained soils suitable for farming, but high clay content limits effectiveness of on-site sewage for residential development.
- Future population increases will be due to developing vacant land by installing water, sewer, and community facilities.
- The majority of the working population in Sennett works in Auburn.

- Penn Central railroad was the only railroad in Town and was used only for freight.
- Most houses in the Town are single-family.
- 17% of all housing units in the Town are substandard.
- 1950-1960 experienced a surge in housing development – producing 30% of housing.
- Residential development is taking on the form of long, narrow strips along major highways.
- The City of Auburn provides water to all three water districts. The newest district was formed in 1963, carrying water to the hamlet of Sennett.
- Except immediately adjacent to Auburn, no sewage facilities exist.

Despite the brevity of the Plan, it is clear that many of the issues facing Sennett in the 1970's are relevant issues in the community today. Such issues include the negative impact of highway commercial development, residential encroachment, the importance of agriculture in defining the Town's character, and lack of recreational opportunities. Specific issues/recommendations in the Town's previous Comprehensive Plan include the following:

- The Route 5 commercial strip was found to have a blighting effect on homes due to noise, traffic, advertising, and lighting. A goal of the Plan was to reduce strip commercial development while instituting design standards.
- The separation of land uses was emphasized. Residential development was urged immediately east of Auburn, on Route 20 and Franklin Street Road. Proposed industrial areas were to be located adjacent to the northern industrial sector in Auburn. The Plan recommended that future growth occur in a concentrated fashion and at densities that are economical for the provision of urban services.
- The provision of space for agriculture and residences was highly valued. The Plan also highlighted potential conflicts between residential development and active agricultural activities.
- The Town lacked recreational areas. The plan recommended that an area north of Beach Road be utilized for woodlands, wildlife, and recreation. This area could serve as a buffer between agricultural uses and residential areas.
- Lands adjacent to brooks and streams should be left undeveloped.