

I. INTRODUCTION

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Background

This Comprehensive Plan is a guide to promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the Town of Sennett. Comprehensive planning forms the basis of all efforts by the community to logically guide the development of its governmental structure, as well as its natural and built environment. Significant decisions and actions affecting the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth, and development of the Town can be influenced by the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures stated in the Comprehensive Plan. The completed Plan not only serves the Town as a guide in addressing key issues facing the community today, it will also assist the Town in responding to new opportunities and challenges in the future. This long-range document provides recommendations for future action and helps prioritize choices for the allocation of resources.

A comprehensive plan also serves as the foundation for land use regulations and any amendments made to such regulations. A comprehensive plan is not a regulatory document itself, although land use management and policy changes could be a result of implementation of the plan. A sound plan will serve as a legal defense of a community's land use management policies and decisions.

Community involvement in creating the Town of Sennett Comprehensive Plan was critical. Community members were involved in the planning process by participating on a Steering Committee, speaking at a public hearing, writing a letter, attending planning workshops, and/or participating in a community survey. Public participation ensured the Plan addresses the needs of the community. The public participation components of Sennett's planning process are described in Section IV.

New York State Statutes

Components of a comprehensive plan are suggested by New York State statutes that authorize local governments to prepare a comprehensive plan. The State recognizes that significant decisions and actions affecting communities are made at the local level. One of the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to local government is the authority and responsibility to undertake comprehensive planning. New York State's definition of a comprehensive plan, the suggested elements that it may contain, as well as procedural requirements for development and adoption, are found in Town Law §272-a (Town comprehensive plan). The adoption of a comprehensive plan under these statutes is voluntary.

New York statutes require that all land use regulations be in conformance with a comprehensive plan. Adopting land use regulations that conform to an up-to-date comprehensive plan provides significant legal protection for such regulations. Land use regulations are not limited to zoning that separates the community into zoning districts and specifies land uses, building dimensions, and yard requirements in each zone; but may also include regulations that protect trees, slopes, historic districts, and viewsheds, to name a few. Land use regulations can be adopted to implement the plan's vision, protect the locality's natural resources, and encourage economic development where desired.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The *Goals* identified in the Town of Sennett Comprehensive Plan are the result of significant deliberation and input provided by the Town's appointed Steering Committee and the public at large. These goals are broad statements that reflect the ideal future conditions desired by the Town. The *Implementation Measures* herein are a series of action steps or strategies that the Town can implement to achieve each goal in the Comprehensive Plan.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Town of Sennett Steering Committee, created by the local governing body, was composed of political representatives and non-elected community members. It designed the Comprehensive Plan, in part, by guiding the process through consultation, participation, public outreach, discussing and articulating possibilities, and serving as a setting for developing the common objectives and strategies that were ultimately placed in the Comprehensive Plan. Membership of the Town of Sennett Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee follows:

David Sikora, Town Supervisor, Chair

Jerry Sankey

Bill Rizzieri

Pete Montross

Bob Edmunds

Jerry Patience

Paul Weiman

Jerry Eades

Sylvia Wilson

James Lent

Susan Foster

Nancy Pennypacker

Deborah French, Secretary

PLAN PREPARATION

Thoma Development Consultants (Thoma) was hired by the Town of Sennett through a competitive procurement process to assist in the development of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Founded in 1980, Thoma is a community development consulting firm based in Cortland, New York. Thoma partners with municipalities and private customers to offer specialized services in planning, economic market analyses, grant preparation, and program implementation in the areas of housing, economic development, infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and community facilities.

In addition to analyzing the information gathered through public meetings, surveys, Steering Committee meetings, etc., Thoma also referenced pertinent U.S. Census data in preparing the Plan. Also, Census projections and other relevant demographic information were obtained from Claritas, Inc., a reputable third party marketing research firm. Thoma provided input into the Plan based on the experience and expertise of its staff. This information is referenced throughout the Plan and so noted.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY

Reason for Preparing the Plan

This comprehensive planning process is the result of the desire of the Town of Sennett to become more proactive in guiding the changing conditions in the Town. Sennett's comprehensive planning process evolved over many months, beginning in February 2007. This plan is based upon the values, concerns, and feelings of Town residents and landowners. Public participation was a significant component of the planning process. It allowed the Steering Committee and consultant to better understand the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and critical issues in Sennett.

In every community, various public agencies, private organizations, and individuals are continuously undertaking numerous planning activities and making decisions. Individually and cumulatively, these activities and decisions can affect a community's future and impact the quality of life for those who are a part of the community. It is prudent to periodically review the big picture to evaluate the impact of emerging trends; deal with land use issues; ascertain the concerns of citizens and stakeholders; and, ultimately, decide whether policy changes are needed to chart the future course of the community. These policies, or visions, should be articulated in a comprehensive plan such as the one developed by the Town of Sennett. In the future, public agencies, private organizations, and individuals can each implement the Town's vision by being faithful to the goals and recommendations contained in the Plan.

The Town hopes to maintain a rural agricultural and residential atmosphere at a time when there is a significant demand for residential growth. This Plan will serve as a blueprint for future action by the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as the community as a whole, as it deals with growth and change.

Planning Process Milestones

The following events took place from the time of project initiation for the development and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Regular meetings of Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
- Town resident mail survey (April 2007)
- Town Visioning / Goal Sessions (May 2007)
- Visual Preference Survey (July 2007)
- Review of draft plan by Steering Committee
- Public Presentation/Open House for public review of Comprehensive Plan
- Recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan to the Town Board
- Review of Comprehensive Plan by Cayuga County Planning Department and County Planning Board
- Final Public Hearing
- SEQRA Determination
- Adoption of Comprehensive Plan by Town Board