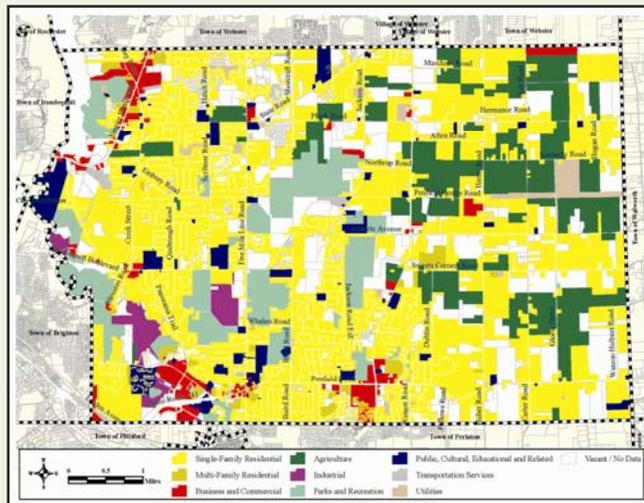


Spring 2010 Land Use Decision Making Training Program

Introduction to Comprehensive Planning



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What is **Comprehensive Plan** and
why is one needed?

a **Comprehensive Plan** outlines a community's vision and provides a conceptual road map for how to achieve it.

What is a comprehensive plan?

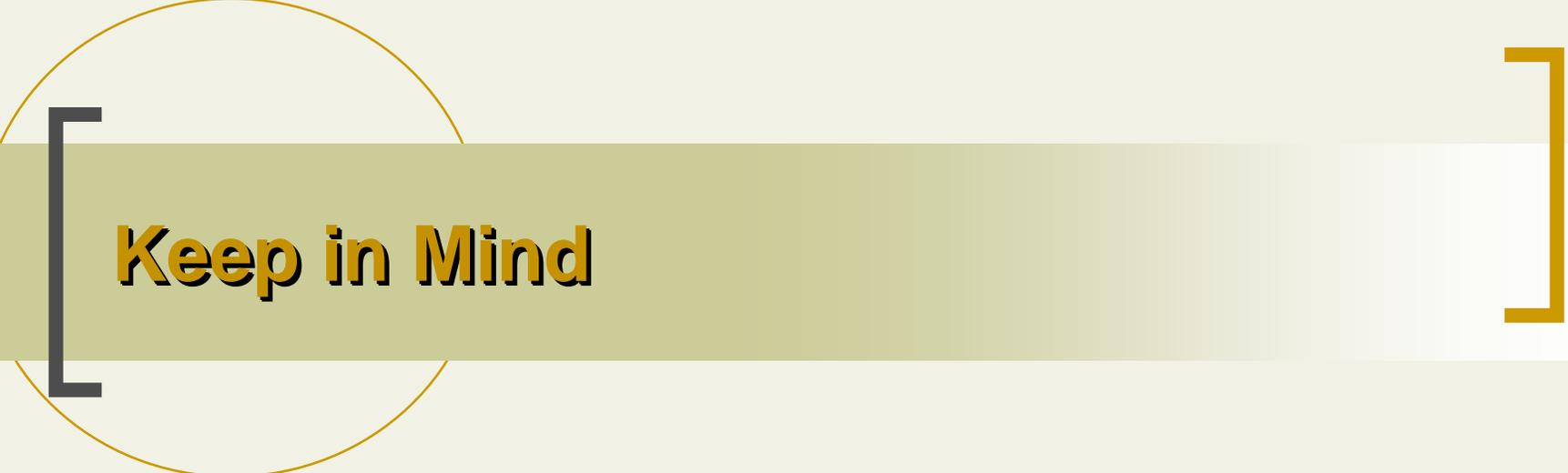
- The state statutes define a comprehensive plan as “the materials, written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other 148 NYS Department of State descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development” of the municipality

(General City Law section 28a(3)(a); Town Law section 272-a(2)(a); Village Law section 7-722(2)(a)).

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Legal Authority to Plan

- **State Level** - Police power is the power that government has to provide for public order, peace, health, safety, morals and general welfare.
- **Local Level** - When exercised, the power to control land use is governed by the state enabling statutes which have granted the power to local governments: the General City Law, the Town Law, the Village Law, the General Municipal Law, and the Municipal Home Rule Law and its companion Statute of Local Governments.

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Keep in Mind

A comprehensive plan is “comprehensive” in its scope, not its detail. It is intended to integrate many related issues so that their connections are clear and understandable. The community should have realistic expectations of what a plan can and cannot accomplish. It can guide the future but cannot determine it. It can recommend actions but cannot ensure they will occur. The success of any comprehensive plan depends on the citizens of a municipality to work together and see that it happens.

~ NYPF Article

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Why a comprehensive plan?

- Provides a process for developing community resources, long range community goals, and commonly held goals.
- Provides a process to develop community consensus
- Provides the legal basis for Zoning, Architectural Review, etc.
- Can add a level of certainty and preparedness , especially during economic and political change.
- Sends a clear indication to citizens and developers of the desired direction (vision) for the community.

Who develops a comprehensive plan?

- Board has the primary responsibility.
 - Power to develop a Special Board or committee that includes a member of the planning board.
- Community participation is required not just encouraged.
 - Hearings - one or more during preparation, one or more prior to adoption
 - Informal surveys, workshops, etc. are encouraged
- It's the community's plan – ask them for their input.
- Steering Committee should be representative of the community and include 12 to 15 members
- Planning staff and/or a professional planning consultant
 - A professional planner certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) is recommended

How often should a comprehensive plan be updated and/or reviewed?

- Typically updated every 10 years
 - Good idea to structure cycle around the release of the US Census
- Good idea to review every 5 years, more frequently if needed
 - By Planning Board or other small committee
- It should be proactive and not reactive
 - Anticipate and prepare

How long does it take to complete?

- Typically between 12 to 14 months
 - No required time period except for public hearing and SEQRA
 - Could take less time if it's a true update
- A process timeline/schedule should be developed to start the process
- The key is to be productive with every Steering Committee meeting
 - Take the time to prepare an agenda

Content of a comprehensive plan

Typical Topics to Address

- **General statements of goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards for immediate and long-range enhancement, growth and development of the municipality.**
 - Plans from adjacent municipalities
 - Land use distribution and intensity
 - Historic, cultural and environmental resources
 - Demographic characteristics
 - Transportation facilities
 - Infrastructure and utilities
 - Housing
 - Public facilities
 - Parks, recreation and open space
 - Commercial and business development
 - Community character and design

Policy, Goal, Objective....Say What?

- There are many ways to structure the plan so try not to get caught up with semantics too much.
 - Create a framework that makes sense.

Example:

Vision - A vision is big picture; it is the end state of the planning horizon once the goals, objectives, and recommendations are accomplished.

Goal - Similar to a vision, a goal is a “broad-brushed” statement that is more narrowly defined to a specific topic.

Objective - A narrowly defined statement with the purpose of implementing or accomplishing goals. They are often measurable.

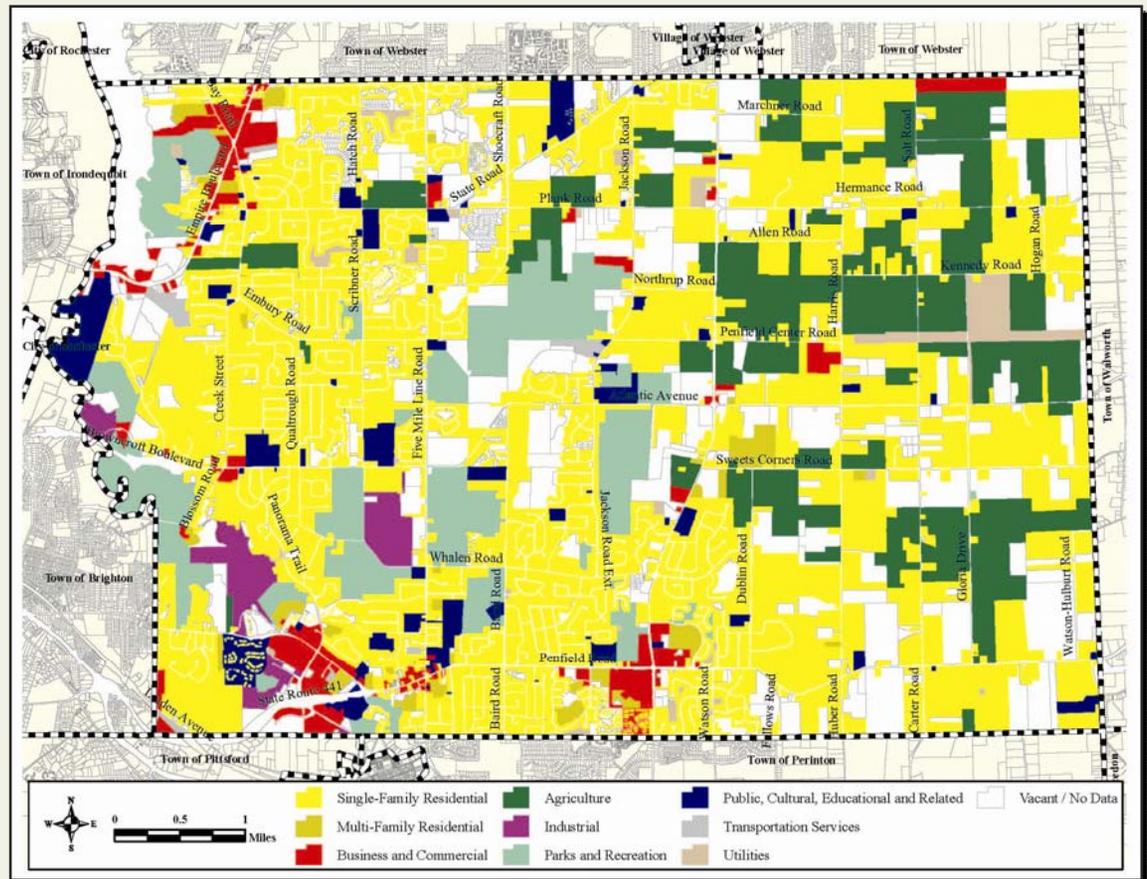
Recommendation - A specific action or activity such as project or program to implement an objective.

Plans From Adjacent Municipalities

- Comprehensive plans and land use plans
- Corridor plans
- Infrastructure
- Environmental concerns
- Other

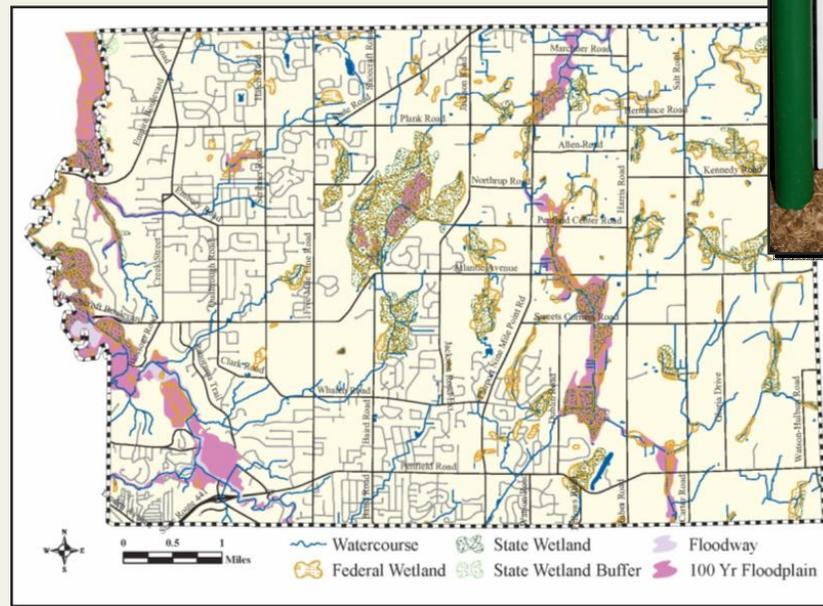
Land Use

- Existing land use distribution (map)
- Future land use distribution (map)
 - To be used as a general guide
 - Typically do not include parcel lines



Historic, Cultural & Environmental Resources

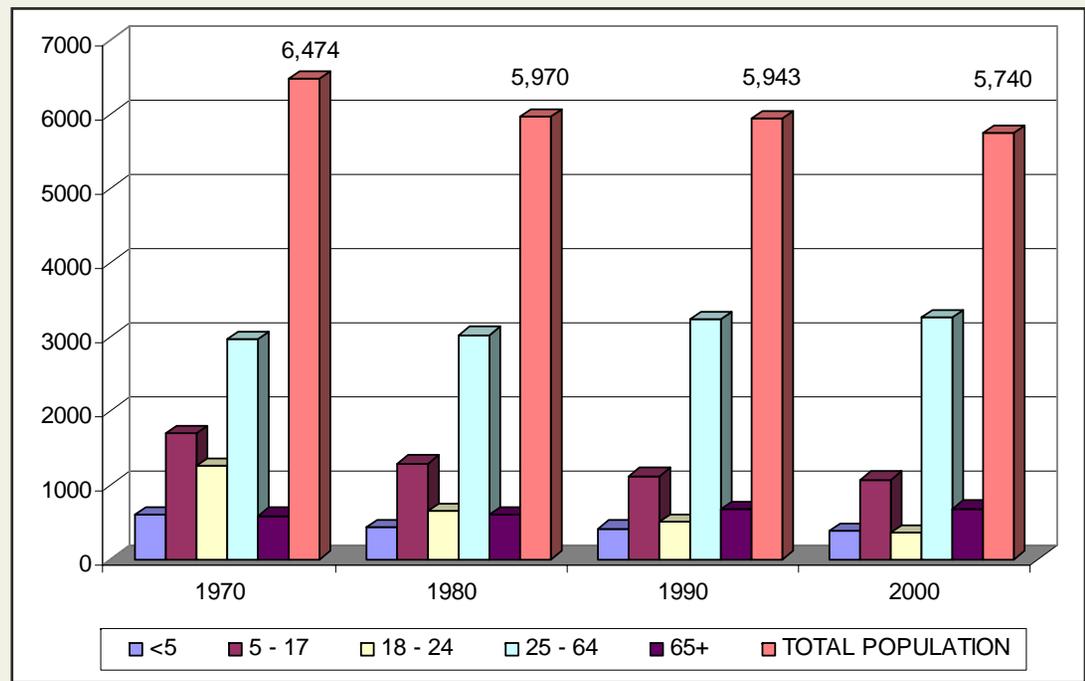
- General history of municipality
- Historic sites
- Wetlands
- Steep slopes
- Woodlots
- Water bodies
- Flood areas
- Other



Demographic Characteristics

- Population
- Employment
- Income
- Occupations
- Mobility
- Other

Population By Age Group 1970-2000



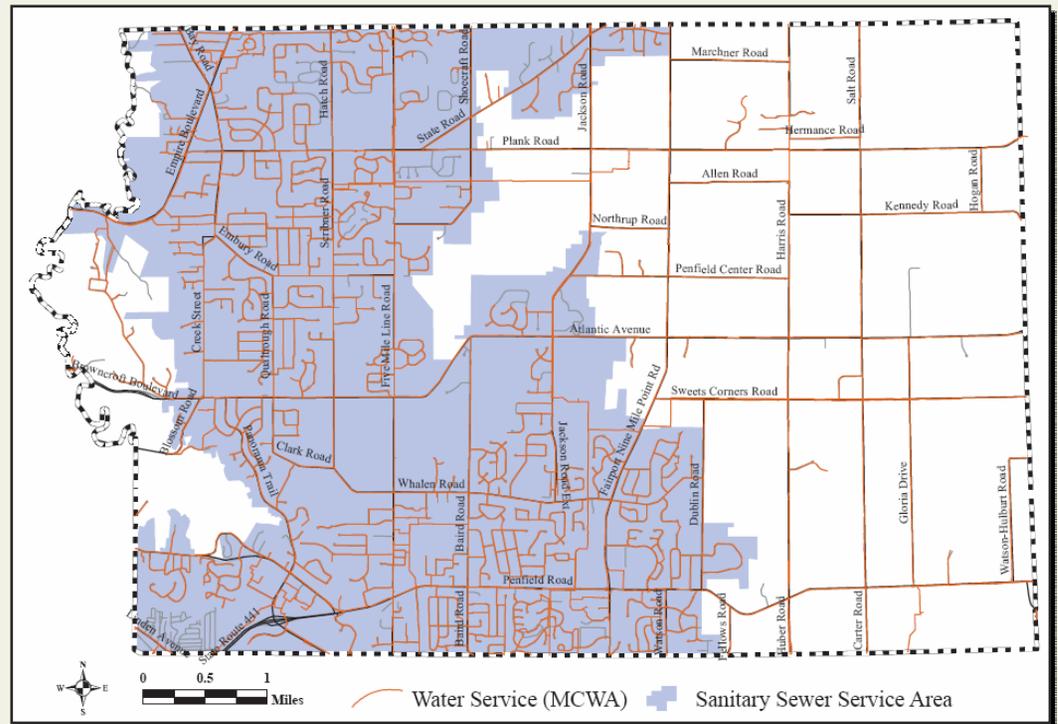
Transportation

- Place of work
- Means of transportation to work
- Classifications of roads
- Bicycle facilities
- Parking
- Sidewalks
- Public transportation
- Other



Infrastructure & Utilities

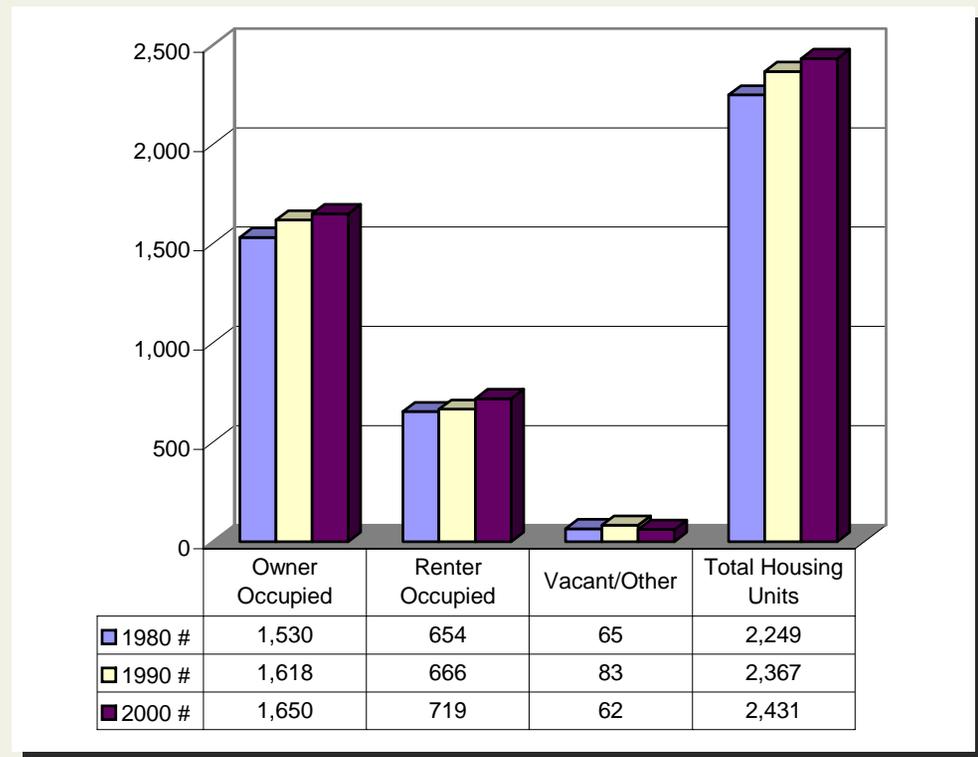
- Sewers
- Stormwater systems
- Public facilities (e.g. water towers, substations, etc.)
- Other



Housing

- Housing Units
- Tenure
- Vacancy
- Home assessment and sales
- Single-family and multi-family
- Affordability
- Other

Tenure & Vacancy Status 1980 – 2000



Public Facilities

- Government administration facilities
- School districts
- Location of schools
- Colleges
- Emergency services
- Health facilities
- Other



Parks, Recreation & Open Space

- Parks
- Trails
- Private recreational facilities (e.g. golf courses, YMCA, etc.)
- Community Center
- Other



Commercial & Business Development

- Commercial districts
- Industrial areas
- Types and number of businesses
- Other



recent **Trends** to
consider when developing a
comprehensive plan

Community Character & Design

In this world of “sameness” many communities are looking to protect /enhance and sometimes develop their own character or image.

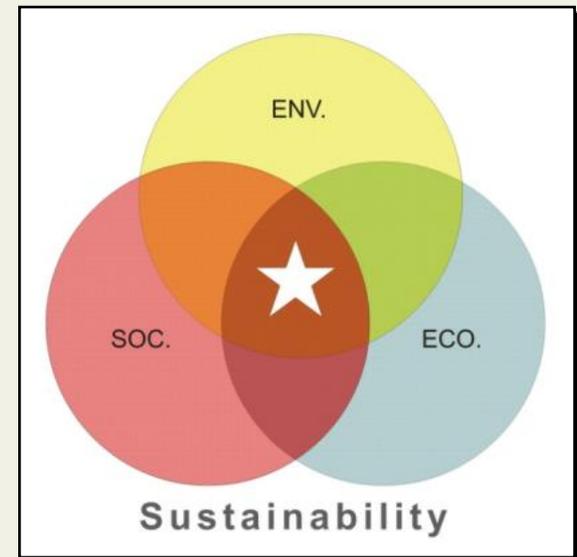
- Ask citizens to identify unique characteristics
- What does the community value?
 - Open space, rural character, urban character, etc.
- Develop policies, goals, etc. to address what the community values
- Remember, character and design is not just architecture.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been defined many ways.

.....meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

- More than going “green”.
- Look to develop choices
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Recreation
- Opportunities for mixed-use development
 - Not just for urban areas
 - Typically nodal



How Can Sustainability Fit In?

- Make it a common thread throughout the plan
 - Integrate into every category
 - Community Services and Facilities
 - Transportation
 - Community Character / Design
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Future Land Use
- Or make it a stand alone section with own goals, policies, recommendations, etc.
 - Still have to address all categories

Sustainability - Continued

Public Health

Walkability is a Key Ingredient in Creating an Active Community!

- People are more active in traditional walkable communities than in typical suburban communities.
- Place-making design principles do impact walkability
 - sidewalks, lighting, street trees and landscaping, etc.
- Walkability is not just urban
- Connections to and from destinations are critical



Sustainability - Continued

- **Objectives / Strategies**
- Look for inter-municipal cooperation to save resources
- Review government practices
- Develop at higher densities in areas
- Develop residential areas within close proximity to stores, jobs, schools, and recreation areas
- Promote 1st floor uses that foster activity on the street in higher density neighborhood centers
- Develop convenient recreational opportunities for all ages

Aging-in-Place

- By 2030, nearly one in five Americans (71.5 million people) will be over age 65.
- Within the next decade, some local communities could have seniors make up 20% to 25% of their population.



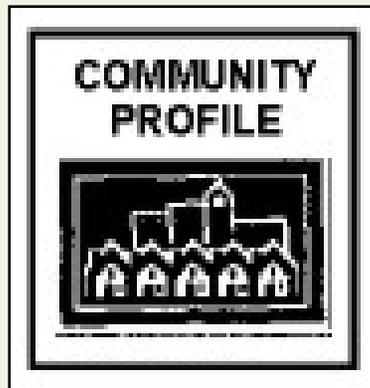
Aging-in-Place - Continued

- Things to consider in the comprehensive plan:
 - zoning recommendations that will enable older residents to remain in their community as their housing needs change by allowing multi-family and accessory dwelling units (ADU), such as garage apartments and “in-law suites” in residential areas.
 - Locate senior housing in close proximity to services
 - Shopping, banks, health facilities, etc.
 - Design considerations such as lighting levels, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, strategically placed benches, etc.
 - For more information go to www.aginginplaceinitiative.org or Google aging-in-place

Process of a comprehensive plan

Planning Process

1. Where are we now?



2. Where do we want to go?



3. How do we get there?



Planning Process

Where are we now?



Plan Initiation & Community Profile

Task 1: Planning Process Initiation



Task 2: Data Collection & Analysis

Where do we want to go?



Community Vision

Task 3: Community Visioning & Outreach



Task 4: Issues & Opportunities

How do we get there?



Plan Preparation

Task 5: Goals, Objective and/or Policy Framework



Task 6: Recommendations / Actions



Task 7: Implementation

useful **Tools** for
assisting with the development a
comprehensive plan

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Surveys

- Mailed
 - Consider scanning answer sheets
- Online surveys
 - Survey Monkey, etc.
- Image preference surveys
 - Can be done online or at workshops

Social Media

- Web Sites
- Face Book
- Twitter





Geographic Information System

Data available at local, regional and state levels

- Aerial photography
 - NYS ortho photos (updated every 5 years)
- Environmental data
 - Wetlands, soils, habitats, etc.
- Property information data
 - Parcel data with land use classifications typically available from County

Community Workshops & Meetings

The format for each community meeting in the process must be well thought out. A Public Input Plan (PIP) helps to define the format for all community meeting and the tools to be used for the entire planning process.

- Informational meetings
- Land use & design workshops
 - Could include a SWOT analysis
- Open houses



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Keys to Success

- Develop a committee that is representative of your community.
- Involve the public throughout the process.
- Have reasonable expectations.
- Be committed to the process.
- Share the completed comprehensive plan with residents. It can be a community marketing piece and a sense of pride.
- Follow-up the comprehensive plan with implementation (e.g. zoning, site plan, subdivision regulations, etc.)

Thank you!

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