

Association of Towns of The State of New York Annual Meeting & Conference



Comprehensive Plans and Your Bottom Line

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MRB Group

Why a Comprehensive Plan?



*"If you fail to plan,
you are planning to fail."*

-Benjamin Franklin



Why a Comprehensive Plan?



"Know thyself."

-Socrates



Why a Comprehensive Plan?



"As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it."



- Antoine de Saint Exupery

Why a Comprehensive Plan?



Comprehensive plans:

Just a lot of talk?

Many benefits -

- To planners
- To governing boards
- To community members
- To businesses
- To State

Comprehensive Plan



Defined by NYS statute:

“An expression of a municipality’s goals and recommended actions to achieve those goals; a document which focuses on intermediate and long-term protection, enhancement, growth and development of a municipality; an outline for orderly growth, providing continued guidance for decision making...”

Local Planners / Boards



The role of local planning / Planning Board is generally focused on land use

Day to day considerations:

1. Site Plan reviews – keeping local government on track
 - ✓ Is it ready for review?
 - ✓ Fees submitted
 - ✓ Elements in local code met
 - ✓ If a hearing is required when does it need to be held?
 - ✓ Action needs to be taken 62 days after submission if no hearing held
 - ✓ Is County Referral required? (County has 30 days to respond)

Local Planners / Boards



Typical considerations:

- ✓ Legal data (tax map #, owner name, date, north arrow, scale)
- ✓ Environmental impact: drainage, soil, archaeological, natural features
- ✓ Parking configuration
- ✓ Circulation: ingress and egress
- ✓ Screening and landscaping
- ✓ Signs
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Snow storage
- ✓ Location/dimension of buildings
- ✓ Adjacent land uses and features

Local Planners / Boards



Seeing the trees vs. the forest!

Comprehensive Plans force
consideration of “the bigger
picture” ...

...over time.

Existing Comp Plan makes local
planning decisions easier!
(the litmus test)

Comprehensive Plan

From a planner's point of view...



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Tool containing data that’s useful for day-to-day planning recommendations

Governing Boards



Special Use Permit: “The authorization of a particular land use that is permitted in a zoning law (is) subject to specific requirements that are imposed to assure that the proposed use is in harmony with the immediate neighborhood and will not adversely affect surrounding properties”

Variances: grant relief from strict adherence of local codes (based on hardship, inability to conform...)

Requirement -- result will not alter essential character of neighborhood

Governing Boards



Codes often provide a laundry list:

- ✓ Minimum lot sizes, lot coverage & setbacks
- ✓ Buffering to address lighting, noise, odor etc.
- ✓ Traffic impacts (parking, access, etc.)

What happens when codes don't adequately address the issues?

...or members argue about "the character of the neighborhood"?

Decision Making



The goal:

- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Ability to withstand challenge

The first two *weigh heavily* on the third!

Decision Making



When there is no precedent...

Land use decisions should ***always*** support the general welfare of the people (the community).

Comprehensive Plan



A comprehensive plan adds fire-power to a legal defense for decision making.

State law says:
Zoning and planning must be legislated and enforced "... in accordance with the comprehensive plan."

Comprehensive Plan

From a governing board's point of view...



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Point of comparison (litmus test) to justify and defend decisions.

Community residents



There is no better tool to determine the best interests of a community and its residents than a community-created comprehensive plan.

- Public education
- Public survey
- Workshops
- Public Hearings

Comprehensive Plan



Planning process is a vehicle for improved communication.

Finished product is the voice of residents in the community, reflecting what they want and need.

Greater chance of seeing goals implemented if the community "owns" them

Community ownership means goals "outlive" tenure of boards / members.

Comprehensive Plan

From a resident's point of view...



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They’re finally listening to me!

Economic Development



Comp Plan is a vision for the future of the community – can justify substantial investment.

- The Gould Hotel - \$7 Mil infusion
- Bonadent – quality of life translated into \$\$\$\$
- Restore New York - \$2.5 Mil from the State

Economic Development



Plan goals often result in improved policies:

- ✓ Land use regulations
- ✓ Adoption of new laws guiding development, such as design guidelines, capital improvement budgets, and economic development activities

Developers / investors appreciate a clear path, with less opposition!

Economic Development



Business owners are often community members, too!

Non-resident business owners become invested “community members.”

The networking forms bonds!

Comprehensive Plan

From a business owner's point of view...



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Business development strategies / investments align with community goals (sustainability!)

State of New York



Current “State of the State”:

- Tax Freeze Era
- Shared Services / Regionalism
- Sustainability

State of New York



Current “State of the State”:

- Creation of REDCs
- CFA process

Comprehensive Plan

From the State's point of view...



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Comprehensive Plan

Context: the State's interest in regionalization



Conveys to the State that community planning and goals recognize regional plans.

If the Comp Plan is in alignment with the REDC's strategic plan, then a project that supports the Comp Plan supports the regional plan.

Having a Comp Plan can strengthen a funding application.

Practical Outcomes

From your perspective!



Services: What do residents really value/want?

Land uses: Are there issues? Are there tools to support development? Does zoning support economic sustainability?

Shared Services: Only with an understanding of needs/weaknesses can we have a viable target for shared services.

Direction: What will the community support?

The End Result



A Comprehensive Plan can:

- ✓ Strengthen planning boards by providing a vehicle for influence on long-term community plans
- ✓ Serve as a foundation for planning board / governing board decision making
- ✓ Provide legal justification / defense for land use decisions

The End Result



A Comprehensive Plan can:

- ✓ Improve communication from and to residents
- ✓ Promote regional approaches to local challenges
- ✓ Improve opportunities for external funding

The End Result



A Comprehensive Plan can:

- ✓ Improve local codes / policies to clarify development processes
- ✓ Generate interest in private investment
- ✓ Save taxpayer dollars

Reduction in:

Staff hours – data gathering, resident education, resident assistance, processing applications, etc

Legal expenses (lawsuits can still come, but defense has some weighty credibility)

Increase in:

Opportunities for funding

Potential for shared services, identified compatibility

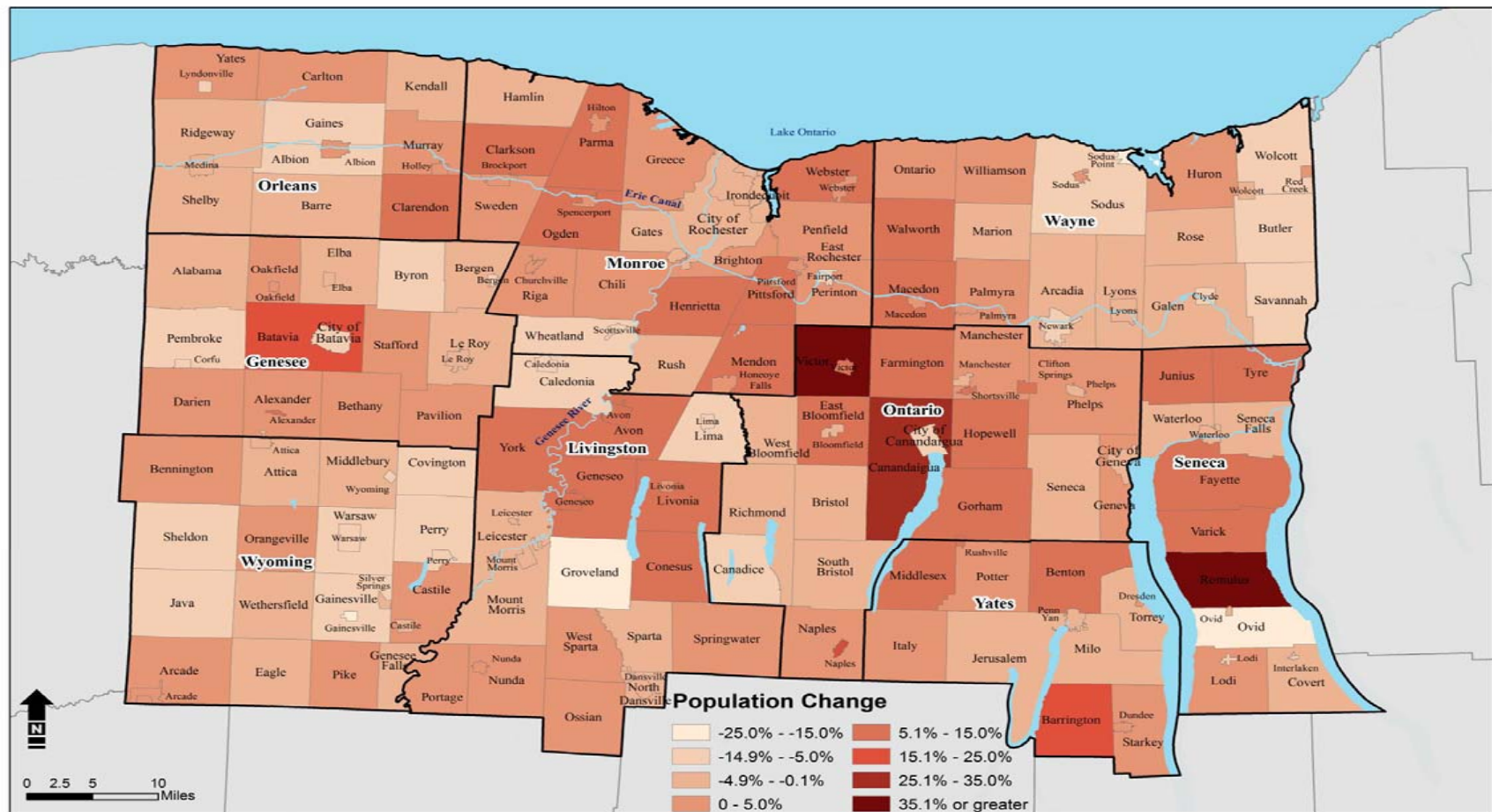
The End Result

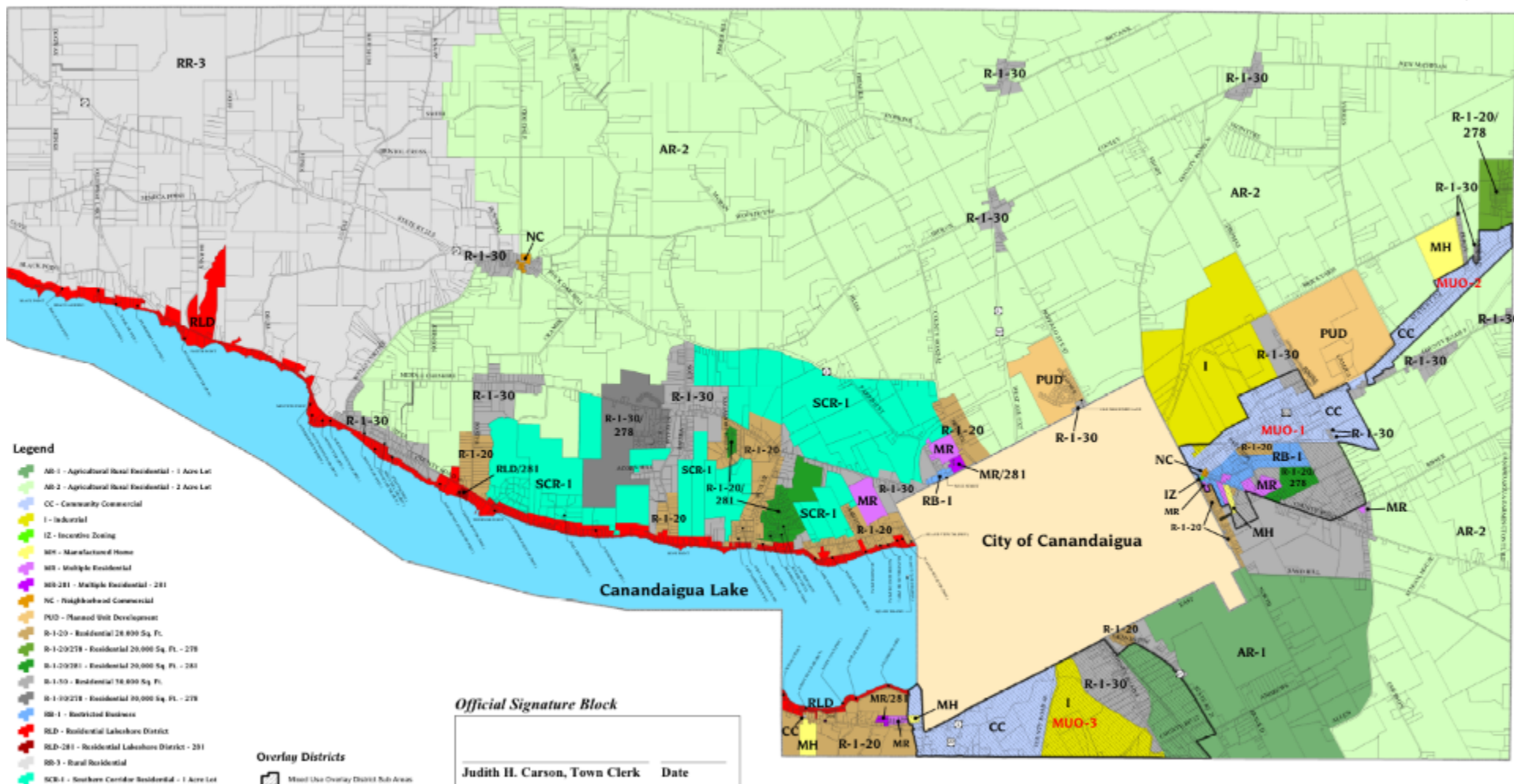


A Comprehensive Plan can:

- ✓ Improve local codes / policies to clarify development processes
- ✓ Generate interest in private investment
- ✓ Save taxpayer dollars***
- ✓ Strengthen the community!

Population Change: 2000-2010





MIXED USE OVERLAY (MUO) DISTRICT SUB AREAS

TOWN OF CANANDAIGUA
ONTARIO COUNTY, NY



MRB Project #030009
Date: 1/10/2007

0 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000
1"=200' When Printed @ 24" x 36"

Mapping Prepared By
MRB group
Engineering, Architecture, Surveying, P.C.
2400 Greenway Boulevard
Buffalo, NY 14221
716.441.0700
www.mrbgroup.com

Best Practices



MRB | group

Jefferson County



Tools & Resources



MRB | group



Town of Canandaigua

5440 Routes 5 & 20 West
Canandaigua, NY 14424
(585) 394-1120 / Fax: (585) 394-9476

NOTICE TO ALL PLANNING BOARD APPLICANTS FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL ONE STAGE (Preliminary/Final Combined)

The applicant is responsible for the completeness of all forms for the application to be processed. All completed applications are subject to the rules and regulations as established by State of New York and the Town of Canandaigua. The Development Office cannot guarantee any board approvals for completed applications.

It is important that the applicant completes all of the information requested in this packet. Doing so will facilitate the review process by the Planning Board at a public meeting and will not cause unnecessary delays to either you or other applicants.

****Please Note:** In addition to this packet, please check with the Zoning Officer regarding which building permit application(s) must be submitted with these forms. **

m:\development office\forms\planning board\site plan applications\one stage\prelim final\site plan review packet\application packet cover sheet.doc 1/26/13

Town of Canandaigua

5440 Routes 5 & 20 West
Canandaigua, NY 14424
Phone: (585) 394-1120 / Fax: (585) 394-9476

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS AREA VARIANCE APPLICATION

NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:

The ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS reviews submitted applications on a first-come-first-served basis. The number of applications scheduled for review will vary depending upon the number and complexity of the applications received. The goal of the ZBA is to process all applications in a timely and efficient manner.

Applicant must see that all forms are filled out completely and accurately before the application can be processed. All completed applications are subject to the rules and regulations as established by the Town of Canandaigua and the State of NY. This department does not guarantee any board approvals for completed applications.

Form: M:\Development Office\Forms\Z-001 Area Variance\cover sheet.doc

10/7/10

Comprehensive Planning



The usual deterrent:
Affordability.



An Innovative Approach



*Give a man a fish and you feed him
for a day; teach a man to fish and
you feed him for a lifetime.*

- Ancient Proverb

An Innovative Approach



Grant request from NYSERDA:

- Four Allegany County communities –
 - Town of Alfred
 - Village of Alfred
 - Town of Wellsville
 - Village of Wellsville

Outcome:

- Four Planning Processes: Two Joint Comprehensive Plans

Our Approach



Worked with Kier towards project goals:

- Address individual questions / concerns
- Provide admin / process guidance
- Give guidance on content / reg. requirements
- Convey “lessons learned” from experience
- Individualized planning support

Our Approach



Project deliverables:

- Project website:
www.alleganycompplanschool.com

Our Approach



Welcome to the Official Site of the Allegany County Comprehensive Plan School Project

This website has been provided by MRB Group to serve as an online resource for project participants. For more information about the project, please contact County Planner Kier Dirlam at (585) 268-7472 or dirlamk@gmail.com.

Participant Portal to Class Materials and Resources



An Innovative Project, Funded by NYSERDA

Often, Comprehensive Plans are lengthy, process-oriented projects. The time commitment alone can be daunting to community leaders who see its value, but aren't sure how to proceed.

To address the need for affordable planning and to promote best-practices in the process, Allegany County Planner Kier Dirlam proposed a unique approach to providing planning and development services to local municipal governments by launching a "Comprehensive Planning School."

This project will provide participating municipalities an opportunity to engage in this critical planning process by attending classes and utilizing resources provided by the County Planner and MRB Group, consultants selected to assist with the training.

The program began in March, 2015, with four local communities committed to a series of classroom activities and meetings. Each is designed to provide them the knowledge and tools needed to direct their own comprehensive planning process. The objective is to encourage community planning, give focus to Smart Growth principles and sustainability, and allow four Allegany County communities an opportunity they might not have been able to afford on their own.

The project received funding from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), which recognized the innovative approach to enhancing efforts in multiple communities with

Our Approach



Project deliverables:

- Project website:
www.alleganycompplanschool.com
- 15 classes (lecture, discussion, Q&A)
- Administrative tools
- Planning tools
- Resources
- Focused expertise on LEED-ND / sustainability
- Local analysis, demographic data, maps

Process Tools



Quick start tools included:

- The Gantt Chart
- Public participation-level cost analysis
- Sample Community Survey
- LEED-ND checklist
- Sample Focus Group questions
- Infrastructure assessment worksheet
- The Conversation Map

Process Tools



Included in the training:

- Sample marketing / announcement cards
- Visioning/participation tools (external resource)
- Implementation Matrix
- Sample plan outlines
- PESTLE Exercise

Process Tools



Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix Sample

| Goal: | Objective: | Strategy: | Timeline: | Benchmark: | Responsibility: |
|--|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| To improve experience of visitors to community | Improve gateway appearance | Establish a committee of volunteers to adopt and care for gateway | Immediate | Committee Plan Development | T/V |
| | | To provide funding for materials | May 2016 | Town / Village Board Resolution | T/V |
| | Improve downtown sidewalks | Establish budget reserve account / program | Immediate (2016-2017 Budget) | Village Board Resolution | V |
| | Improve wayfinding (signage) | Apply for a DOT TEP grant | 2016 | Village Board Resolution | V |
| | | | | Grant Application | V |
| | | Establish reserve account for grant match or self-funding | 2016-2017 Budget | Village Board Resolution | V |
| Goal 2 | Objective 1 | Strategy 1 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | | Strategy 2 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | Objective 2 | Strategy 1 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | Objective 3 | Strategy 1 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | | | | Benchmark | Resp |
| | | Strategy 2 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | Objective 1 | Strategy 1 | Date | Benchmark | Resp |
| | | | | | |

Beyond the Classes...



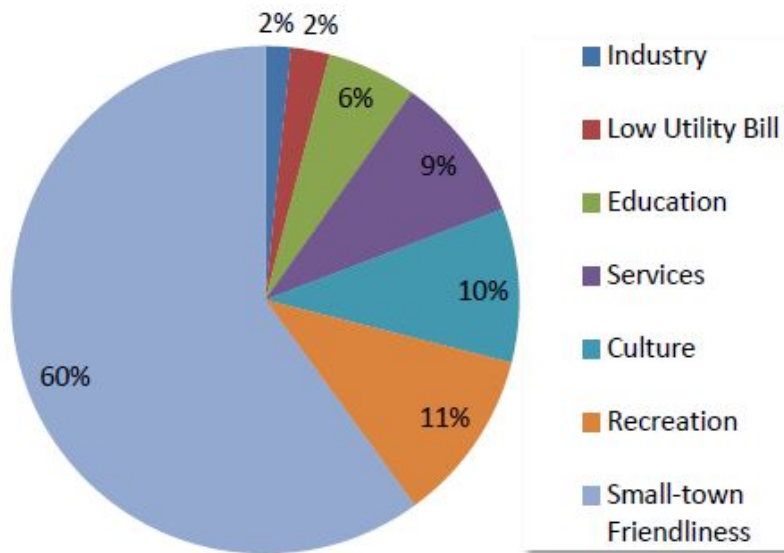
Included in the training:

- One-on-one guidance
- Direct support
- As needed analysis / support
 - Survey result compilation
 - Infrastructure assessment review
- Assistance with documentation

Beyond the Classes...



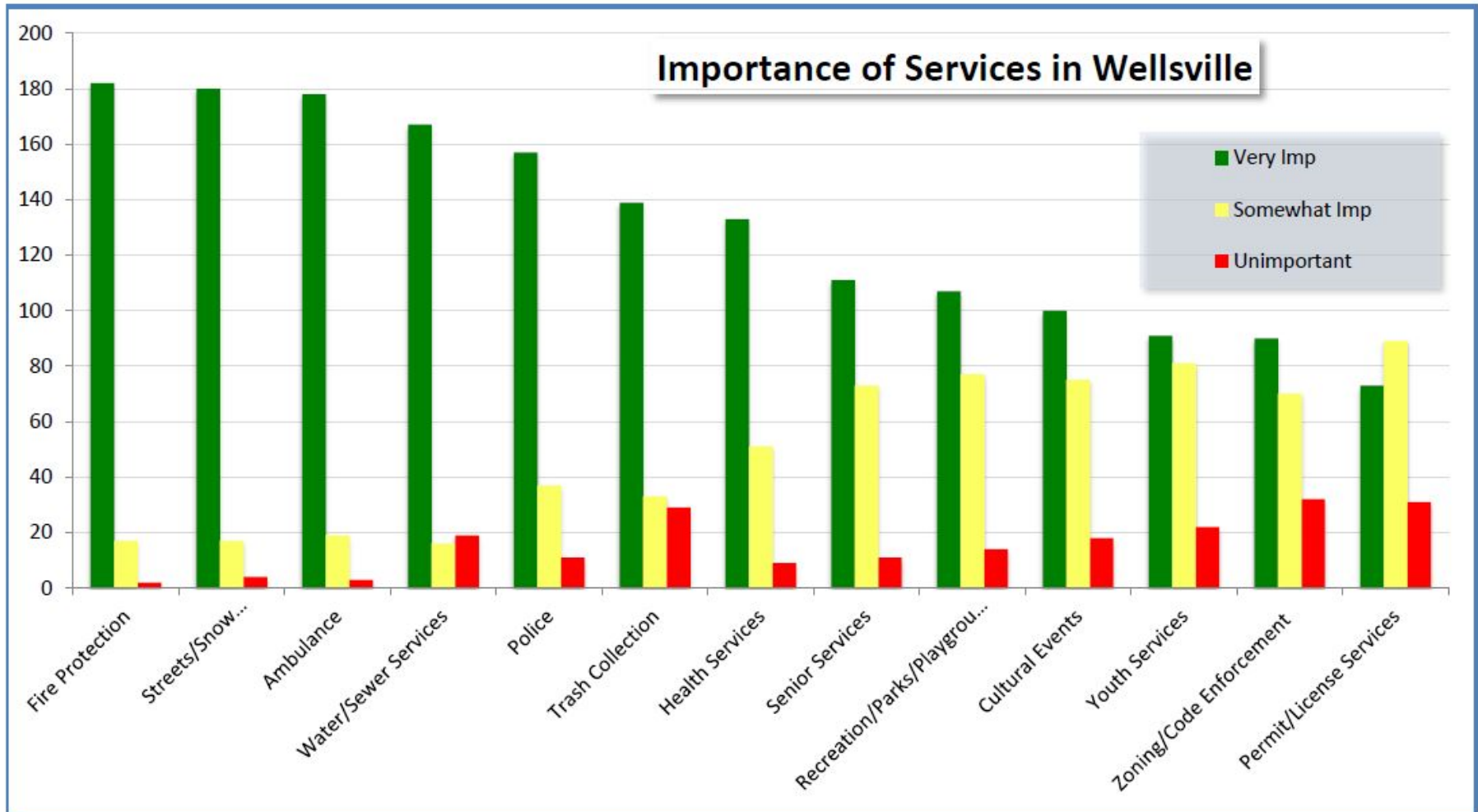
The Most Important Values of Wellsville



Question 1 - Most Important Values

| Suggested Changes | Suggestions | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Small-town Friendliness | 147 | 60 |
| Recreation | 27 | 11 |
| Culture | 24 | 10 |
| Services | 23 | 9 |
| Education | 14 | 6 |
| Low Utility Bill | 6 | 2 |
| Industry | 4 | 2 |
| Total | 245 | 100 |

Beyond the Classes...



Benefits of Approach



There are several benefits associated with Kier's innovative approach:

- Less costly for each municipality
- Makes planning possible
- Communities utilize each others' experience
- Communities support each others' efforts
- Friendly competition inspires achievement
- Bonding experience both within and between communities
- Self-directed process allows communities to set the time-table

Detriments of Approach



Negatives associated with approach:

- Self-directed process allows communities to set the time-table!!



In Conclusion



We've seen some other (indirect) benefits:

- Participants mentioned utilizing tools in other public meetings – have commented on success and usefulness
- Each community has “found” new volunteers, resources
- An increased appreciation for what planning can reveal

In Conclusion



- Understanding of character of the community
- Builds consensus
- Develops vision for future
- Legal justification for zoning / land use decisions
- Positions community for investment

In Conclusion



The comprehensive plan process
is a step towards

Self-analysis...

....municipal efficiency

Proactive planning...

...creating a future of
your own making

Generating investment...

...improving your
community's bottom line!

Contact Info



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