

TECHNICAL PAPER SERIES

Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

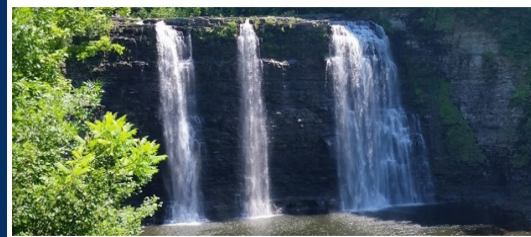
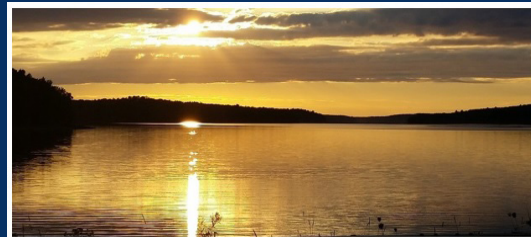
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NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

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The Tug Hill Commission Technical and Issue Paper Series are designed to help local officials and citizens in the Tug Hill region and other rural parts of New York State. The Technical Paper Series provides guidance on procedures based on questions frequently received by the Commission. The Issue Paper Series provides background on key issues facing the region without taking advocacy positions. Other papers in each series are available from the Tug Hill Commission. Please call us or visit our website for more information.



Comprehensive Plan

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Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?

The New York State zoning enabling legislation provides a definition of a comprehensive plan and a process for adopting one (Town Law Section 272-a and Village Law Section 7-722). Towns and villages would benefit from taking advantage of these statutes by preparing a formal comprehensive plan. Several reasons are outlined below.

The plan provides for citizen involvement in a shared vision for the future of the community.

The planning process provides an opportunity for a wide spectrum of the community to be involved with shaping the community's physical and economic future. Opportunities for involvement often come through public opinion surveys, public information meetings and hearings, and attendance at committee meetings. A planning process may also involve activities such as design charrettes, which provide opportunities for more interactive involvement of key citizens with special expertise.

The plan provides a legal foundation for, and coordinates land use regulatory activities.

There are numerous discretionary decisions made by the local boards and officials during the zoning implementation and administration process. For example, the town or village board is responsible for rezonings and text amendments consistent with the overall vision which the law is carrying out; the planning board may be responsible for the administration of site plan reviews, special permits and subdivision reviews; the zoning board of appeals is responsible for variances and interpretations of the law. These discretionary decisions all require some knowledge of a greater vision of the community. A written comprehensive plan offers a way to coordinate these decisions amongst local boards and officials and ensure that they are in concert with a common vision for the community.

The plan coordinates capital projects carried out by the community.

The community owns and controls various physical infrastructure improvements. These may include roads; streets; sidewalks; street trees; utilities such as water, sewer and lighting; community buildings, parks, and other meeting places; and police, fire and other public safety facilities. A written plan provides a means of coordinating the construction, expansion, contraction, or decommissioning of these facilities in a coordinated fashion, taking into account the overall goals and vision of the community. A plan also aids a community in assessing the impacts of potential community facilities on development patterns and the local economy.

The plan positions the community advantageously for loans/grants.

There are many organizations that can provide loans and grants to communities for specific projects. The availability of these funds often depends on there being a larger vision or program into which the intended project is a part. A written comprehensive plan can often provide evidence that a particular project is part such a program, and may involve other funding stages in the future.

The plan informs other agencies and levels of government of community desires.

The NY statutes require that all plans for capital projects of other governmental agencies take a local comprehensive plan into consideration. A written plan serves as notice to other levels of government and other governmental agencies what the community wants, needs, and expects of them.

The plan streamlines State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR).

A comprehensive plan may be designed to serve as a generic environmental impact statement. If done so, development projects which are in conformance with the comprehensive plan have no further need to comply with the SEQR process, speeding up development approvals.

The plan acts as a tool for promoting an appropriate image of the community.

A well-prepared plan can act as a community marketing tool, encouraging appropriate private and public investment. By providing a positive current image and an optimistic vision, the plan can act as a catalyst for both local and outside resources to be marshaled to best benefit the future considered most desirable to the residents.

The plan can provide concrete strategies for implementation.

While a comprehensive plan provides an excellent vehicle to articulate a long-range vision of the future, there are numerous steps to be taken to get there. A plan can include strategies and programs to help achieve it. Such an element can set forth specific action items or tasks, their relative priority, the schedule for carrying them out, and the persons or organizations responsible for either carrying them out or tracking their progress.

SAMPLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE RESOLUTION FOR TOWNS

WHEREAS, the town of _____ is embarking on the development of a comprehensive plan to provide guidance for the immediate and long-range protection and enhancement of community assets, as well as to provide for orderly growth and development of the community;

WHEREAS, the town of _____ is authorized to appoint a special board to prepare a draft comprehensive plan by Town Law Section 272a;

WHEREAS, the following residents of the town of _____ have agreed to serve on a special board:
_____;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the town of _____ hereby creates a comprehensive plan committee consisting of the above named residents and charges such committee with the preparation of a draft comprehensive plan.

SAMPLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE RESOLUTION FOR VILLAGES

WHEREAS, the village of _____ is embarking on the development of a comprehensive plan to provide guidance for the immediate and long-range protection and enhancement of community assets, as well as to provide for orderly growth and development of the community;

WHEREAS, the village of _____ is authorized to appoint a special board to prepare a draft comprehensive plan by Village Law Section 7-722;

WHEREAS, the following residents of the village of _____ have agreed to serve on a special board:
_____;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the village of _____ hereby creates a comprehensive plan committee consisting of the above named residents and charges such committee with the preparation of a draft comprehensive plan.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TOWNS

TOWN OF _____ TOWN BOARD

RESOLUTION # _____

_____ (Date)

WHEREAS, the _____ Town Board charged the _____ Plan Committee/Planning Board with the development of a comprehensive plan (to be known as the Town of _____ Comprehensive Plan); and the _____ Plan Committee/Planning Board developed such plan; held a public hearing on such plan _____ (Date) and recommended such plan to the Town Board;

WHEREAS, the _____ Town Board submitted the Comprehensive Plan to the _____ County Planning Board for review under General Municipal Law Section 239-m; the _____ County Planning Board approved the Comprehensive Plan with modifications; the _____ TownBoard incorporated all of the modifications suggested by the _____ County Planning Board into the Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, the _____ Town Board held a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan _____ (Date);

WHEREAS, the _____ Town Board established itself as lead agency under the State Environmental Quality Review Act, and declared that the Comprehensive Plan will not have a significant negative effect on the environment;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to Town Law Section 272-a, the _____ Town Board hereby adopts the Town of _____ Comprehensive Plan.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR VILLAGES

VILLAGE OF _____ VILLAGE BOARD

RESOLUTION # _____

_____ (Date)

WHEREAS, the _____ Village Board charged the _____ Plan Committee/Planning Board with the development of a comprehensive plan; and the _____ Plan Committee/Planning Board developed such plan; held a public hearing on such plan _____ (Date); and recommended such plan to the Village Board;

WHEREAS, the _____ Village Board submitted the Comprehensive Plan to the _____ County Planning Board for review under General Municipal Law Section 239-m; the _____ County Planning Board approved the Comprehensive Plan with modifications; the _____ Village Board incorporated all of the modifications suggested by the _____ County Planning Board into the Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, the _____ Village Board held a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan _____ (Date);

WHEREAS, the _____ Village Board established itself as lead agency under the State Environmental Quality Review Act, and declared that the Comprehensive Plan will not have a significant negative effect on the environment;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, pursuant to Village Law Section 7-722, the _____ Village Board hereby adopts the _____ Comprehensive Plan.