



TOWN OF EDEN

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

FINAL DRAFT FEBRUARY 26, 2018



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Section I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

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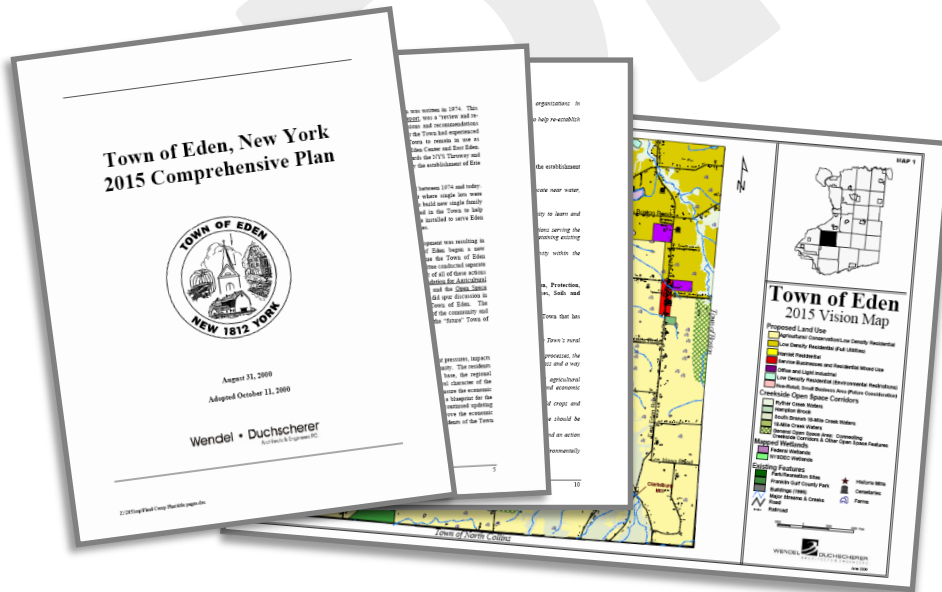
/ˈkəl-tə-, vāt/

Verb

1. To prepare or prepare and use (land) for raising of crops
2. To foster the growth of
3. Further, encourage
4. To seek the society of

Why Plan? Why now?

The Town of Eden's previous comprehensive plan was completed in 2000 with a 15-year planning horizon (2015). While still valuable, that planning effort was a seven-year long process that began in 1993



and referenced data that was becoming less pertinent as time grew on. The Town and the community members of Eden have become more eager to “cultivate” Eden’s potential, looking to build upon existing and future opportunities and creating new target projects for completion.

This desire to update the vision for the future is further bolstered with the completion of several key studies and plans that seek to identify and capitalize on assets in the Town including:

- ♦ Open Space Index (1999)
- ♦ Sowing the Seeds for Southtowns Agribusiness – An Assessment of Farms and a Plan for the Future (2009)
- ♦ Town of Eden Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2009)
- ♦ Natural Resources Inventory (2012)
- ♦ Renewing the Town of Eden – Four Corners Revitalization Report (2017)

The Comprehensive Plan update will provide a new vision for the Town, incorporating the goals from these other plans and insuring farming remains a major aspect of the Town, retaining the rural character that residents and visitors associate with Eden. But, while agriculture has always been the predominant industry in the Town and the main economic driver, it is recognized that the community needs to diversify and strengthen other elements in the community to help maintain and grow a strong economy.

Bolstering Main Street in Eden Center through business improvement and growth and developing a vision for the hamlet of East Eden are two critical components of that diversity that the community have readily identified through the planning process. This update will focus on those elements, among others, while referencing and incorporating the recommendations and policies noted in the other aforementioned plans. It is with this updated planning effort, reaching out to a variety of stakeholders in the Town, that a new vision will be “cultivated” for Eden to successfully guide it for the next 10-15 years.

Plan Intent & Purpose

A Comprehensive Plan has a number of important purposes for a community, perhaps the most important being the foundation for zoning and local land use regulations, as reflected in New York State Town Law. In fact, State law requires that zoning laws be adopted in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan. By law, this is defined as:

“...the materials, written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other 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 town...”

- NYS Town Law §272-a(2)(a)

However, it also provides other important benefits, including:

- ♦ **Guidance:** Not only to Eden’s elected leaders, but also to appointed Board members (Planning and Zoning) and special committees, made up of appointed residents and volunteers that help to inform decision-making.
- ♦ **Collaboration:** It gives the community an opportunity to work together, discuss ideas, and establish a collective vision for the future.
- ♦ **Marketing/Education:** The plan can act as a marketing and educational tool for the Town, outlining the assets found in the community and the opportunities that can be utilized to grow Eden in the future.
- ♦ **Grants:** With a collective vision and strategy for moving forward, the Town is more likely to be successful in obtaining State and Federal funding for future projects than communities that do not have a plan.
- ♦ **Budgeting/Capital Improvements:** The plan can be used as a tool during these efforts to identify programs and projects in the Town and ensure that community priorities are being incorporated.

The typical timeframe for a Comprehensive Plan is 10-15 years with a regular review every 2-3 years as a best practice, ensuring that the community is on the right track and works to address priority actions. As previously noted, the Town of Eden’s last Plan was finalized in 2000. Since then, many factors have changed, including

leadership and community priorities. This requires a more in-depth review of the overall vision as well as other, more specific elements in the community to keep the Plan up-to-date and relevant.

“Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens.”

- NYS Town Law

Proactive planning keeps the Town “ahead of the game” rather than being reactive to issues or opportunities. In addition, there are several action items contained within the former plan that either were completed, out-of-date, or simply irrelevant to today’s standards. The update gives the Town and community an opportunity to revisit the Plan with a fresh set of eyes in an age in which the available resources seem to be ever changing as technology evolves.

The Process



The Town’s Comprehensive Plan update was directed and managed by a volunteer Steering Committee made up of a cross section of the community that included elected officials, Town staff, Board representatives, residents, business owners, youth, the School District, and other committee and local group representatives. The Steering Committee’s role is to provide direction and feedback to the Town’s planning consultant tasked with developing the plan itself. The Committee met monthly from February 2017 through March 2018.

Overall, the planning process involves several key steps beginning with gathering of necessary data on the physical aspects of the Town as well as feedback from residents, business owners, and other local stakeholders. From there, a future community vision is developed, goals are identified, future land uses are mapped out, and an action plan is developed.

The draft plan is anticipated to be ready by the beginning of 2018 with the necessary environmental review (SEQRA) shortly thereafter. The final plan would be ready for Town adoption sometime in early Spring 2018.

Community Outreach

An important component of the planning process is community engagement. This was achieved by various means, some traditional and some not, in order to gather ample feedback from residents to determine their desires and note concerns. A full summary of the feedback obtained is located in **Appendix A**.

- ♦ **Steering Committee visioning** - During the steering committee kickoff meeting, an interactive exercise has held to brainstorm what Eden is now and what Eden wants to be in the future.
- ♦ **Community Kickoff** - In May of 2017 a public kickoff meeting was held to introduce the community to the project, educate them on the process, share some of the information collected to date, and, most importantly, gather initial feedback from those in attendance. Approximately 80 residents were in attendance, including students and youth. A brainstorming exercise was given to identify core past, current, and future values from residents. As there was a good youth turnout, a separate exercise was held for them in a similar fashion, albeit on a simpler level, to determine what the anchors of the Town were and what could be in its future.



- ♦ **Youth/School workshop** - Also in May of 2017, three youth workshops were held at the Eden Senior High School during regular classes. The workshop provided students the opportunity to share their thoughts in a similar manner as during the community kickoff meeting, identifying what they valued in the Town now and what it needed in the future. The workshop also provided students a chance to discuss what their overall perception of the Town was. Their thoughts and ideas are equally as important as adults since the values they hold and the amenities they seek are similar to those of young families with youth, seeking places to raise them and thereby invest in the community. Attracting families are key to a sustainable future for Eden.
- ♦ **Corn Festival** - During the annual Corn Festival in August 2017, the Town set up a dedicated booth in the community tent to advertise the plan and process as well as invite residents, and visitors alike, to participate in a survey for additional ideas.



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