

4.0 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENTS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes the results of the city resident survey administered during the month of October 1994. Additionally, based on the results of the survey, the Inventory and Analysis and other research related to the Comprehensive Plan a intensive series of goals and objectives are highlighted in this chapter. Based on these goals and objectives, the City's Comprehensive Planning Vision Statements are provided at the end of this chapter premised upon predominant themes that emerged during the planning process. These themes will serve as the strategic planning mechanism for the City of Oneonta into the next century.

4.1 Community Survey Results

In order to assist in establishing goals and objectives for the City of Oneonta, a survey was developed. Questions were grouped by the following categories: General Planning; Visual, Cultural and Environmental; Housing and Neighborhood Quality; Land Use and Zoning; Transportation, Government Services and Utilities; Open Space and Recreation; Economic and Demographics; Sense of Community; and Government Organization. During the month of October, 1994 a sample of approximately 380 residents was chosen to receive the survey. The sample was developed with the assistance of Marilyn Nouri, a professor of Sociology and the director of the Center for Life Course Studies at the State University College at Oneonta.

Public opinion polling is based on random selection of respondents. Given the high cost of survey research, an actual census of all individual population members is prohibitive. The responses of a randomly selected sample of population members provides the survey researcher with very accurate estimates of the responses of the entire population, provided that the sample is unbiased and that an adequate share of the sample responds to the survey instrument.

Sampling Procedure

The goal of the City of Oneonta Resident Survey was to utilize a personal interview approach. The survey was administered by students from two Sociology classes from SUNY Oneonta. A systematic random sample of households stratified by ward was selected for distribution of the survey. The final obtained sample was 381 respondents. 547 households were approached for the purposes of sampling. At 62 households, no one was at home (with up to four visits), and 114 households refused to complete the interview or fill out the questionnaire or the interview was incomplete. Therefore, of the total households contacted, 68 percent resulted in completed interviews. At ten households, two interviews were done because four or more adults resided in said households. Quota sampling was used to attempt to obtain an equal number of male and female respondents. College students were given a modified form of the questionnaire since many of the questions were about issues with which they would be unfamiliar.

The survey was designed with the goal of allowing the respondent a certain amount of flexibility in their response. In many instances, the respondent was accorded the opportunity to make preferences from 1

to 5, with a "1" representing the choice with which they most strongly agreed and a "5" representing the choice with which they most strongly disagree. Selection of a "5" does not necessarily denote a negative response but simply represents a lesser degree of importance on the part of the respondent.

Characteristics of the Sample

The sample was basically divided among college students and permanent residents. College students made up 23 percent of the sample (86 persons) and were concentrated in wards 3, 4, and 8. Students residing in the residence halls on either campus were excluded from the sample. College students included in the sample were those residing off campus but within the limits of the City. The discussion of the findings are generally divided according to college students and permanent residents. Some findings do not include the student population, because a particular question may not have been of interest to them.

Thirty-nine percent of the respondents were male and 61 percent were female. The highest number of respondents were between the ages of 18 - 24. Most of the respondents listed "some college" or "Bachelors or higher" as the highest level of education attained. Permanent residents have resided in their homes for a median of 9.3 years and have lived in Oneonta for a median of 22 years. 36 percent of the sampled college students are currently employed, while 54 percent of the permanent residents sampled are currently employed. Of the employed persons, 63 percent are employed in the City, 16 percent are employed in the Town and 21 percent are employed in another community. Approximately, 23 percent of the sample had an income between \$30,000 and \$45,000.

Generally, most of the distribution of the characteristics in the sample is representative of the known characteristics in the overall population in the City. Females are somewhat oversampled. In Oneonta, women make up 57 percent of the population whereas, 61 percent were sampled. On many issues, a cross tabulation was done to analyze gender differences. There did not seem to be a gender factor in the survey findings. The sample has a larger percent of homeowners than is found in the City. The income, education, and age distributions match fairly evenly.

The report analyzing the survey results is included in its entirety in Comprehensive Plan Appendix C. A general discussion of the results are discussed in the ensuing pages.

General Planning

Reasons for Living in Oneonta

College students stated that the most important reason for choosing to live in Oneonta was due to the

presence of the colleges. Two other factors were also important to students. These include the City's natural beauty and access to public transportation. Permanent residents cited the City's natural beauty the highest. Other reasons also were prevalent including the presence of the colleges, the quality of the public school system, access to health care facilities, and the availability of recreational activities.

Most Important Issues Facing the City

City residents were asked to name the top three issues facing the City over the next ten years. The top three answers given were crime/violence, employment, and economic decline/loss of business/need for economic development. Other issues cited were colleges/community relations, taxes, the revitalization of downtown and affordable housing, among others.

Visual, Cultural and Environmental

General Appearance of the Business District

Residents who have lived in the City long enough to rate the general appearance of the downtown area as compared to five years ago stated that the appearance of the business district has declined.

Cultural Activities

The highest percent of residents (49 percent) feel the cultural activities provided in the City are adequate, while 29 percent and 22 percent think the City should offer more and the City already has more than enough, respectively. Of those who felt there should be more cultural activities, there was support for improved or expanded theatrical or dance productions (33 percent), a desire for more musical/concert productions (37 percent), and more exhibition areas for aspiring artists (31 percent). Residents were asked to elicit responses not provided on the survey. The two most often cited were affordable activities for children and more culturally diverse activities. Most respondents did not offer specific recommendations.

Housing and Neighborhood Quality

General Appearance of Residential Areas

Residents who have lived in the City long enough were asked to compare the appearance of residential areas to five years ago. A majority of respondents felt that said areas were about the same or have improved.

Housing Needs

Permanent residents were asked which types of housing most needed to be built in the City. Strongest support is given to low cost senior housing and for the conversion of apartments to one-family homes. Low income, one family housing is next in priority primarily supported by households earning less than \$30,000. Support for senior housing was supported by all age groups.

Neighborhood Watch

Fifty seven percent of those responding to this question stated they would be willing to participate in a neighborhood watch program.

Education

Permanent residents indicated a strong preference for being able to vote on the school district budget. They are somewhat less certain about changing the funding method from the property tax to an income tax. However, when analyzed separately, homeowners supported shifting the current method of property tax funding one focused on an income tax. Pre- and after-school day care was rated as a high priority.

Land Use and Zoning

Land Use and Zoning

Generally, residents are satisfied with current zoning patterns. 71 percent think businesses are not allowed to infringe on residential properties. 78 percent do not think current zoning patterns excessively restrict business growth and development. Many respondents stated that Main Street, Chestnut Street and South Side were problem areas.

Use of Empty Parcels

Ninety-eight percent of those responding to this question felt that available vacant land should be developed with tax generating uses. Many were surprised to hear that there was vacant land available in the City for development.

Transportation, Government Services and Utilities

Quality of Public Services

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of services provided in the City. They also were asked whether or not they had used the service. The analysis has been broken down into those who have used the service and those who have not. In terms of fire protection, public transportation, and ambulance service, the ratings were higher by those who had used the services than those who had not. The differences are significant. There was no significant difference in terms of police protection

between those who have used the service and those who have not. Other services such as water/sewer services, snow removal and roadway maintenance were also analyzed. Water/sewer services and snow removal were rated high and roadway maintenance was rated somewhat lower. This may be due in part to the roadway reconstruction during the summer of 1994.

Telecommunications

Fifty-six percent of the respondents use or have access to personal computers, 39 percent use or have access to a fax machine, and 12 percent use or have access to a cellular phone. Most respondents felt telecommunications were adequate in the region.

Oneonta Municipal Airport

Most respondents did not have a significant difference of opinion on the Airport.

Open Space and Recreation

City Parks

Residents indicated that the natural beauty of the area and access to recreational activities are important. 60 percent of those responding stated they have used park resources. Respondents were in favor of increasing fees to pay for increased services (57 percent).

Other Recreational Development

Respondents expressed considerable support for the preservation of Oneonta's historic structures. The majority of residents responding to this question were opposed to the idea of smaller, neighborhood parks.

Government Organization

There is considerable support for the independent commission that has been established to examine different possibilities for sharing services and/or creating a new, innovative form of government organization between the City and Town of Oneonta. Respondents were neutral when asked about the reapportionment of city wards due to the difference in population between the largest and the smallest ward.

General Quality of Life

Residents were asked what it meant to have a "sense of community". Having a sense of community was

important to both college students and permanent residents. However, college students did not feel the City did enough to foster a sense of community nor do they feel as much a part of the community as did permanent residents. Alternatively, permanent residents felt very much a part of the community.

Respondents were also asked to rank the strengths and weaknesses of Oneonta as a community. Permanent residents felt the City's small town atmosphere is the strongest feature, followed by the colleges, and by recreational and cultural activities. College students ranked the colleges first, followed by the small town atmosphere, and by the recreational and cultural activities. College students felt college/community relations was the characteristic which most diminished Oneonta as a community. The decline of the downtown area and violence/crime tied for second on their list. Permanent residents did not differ significantly from the college students. Permanent residents felt colleges/community relations was first, violence and crime second, alcohol and drug problems third, and the decline of the downtown was fourth.

Economic and Demographic

Survey results included the most important issues facing the City over the next ten years. After crime and violence, the two most important issues facing the City were employment and economic decline, loss of business, and the need for economic development.

The need for employment and economic development are the basis for programs directed at retaining and expanding local businesses and attracting new investment. Direct loan, training, and tax abatement programs are necessary to assist local businesses because new jobs are needed to supplement the expected job losses in the educational and medical sectors.

Needs and Interests of 18-24 Year Olds

Responses of both permanent residents and college students were very similar. The 18 to 24 year olds were slightly more in favor of keeping the parks open later than the older residents. Older residents were more supportive of holding a series of park dances during the summer months. The proposals which got the most support favored by both groups was to encourage more community/campus activities, and encourage the development of retail and other commercial activities catering to youth.

Taxing Authorities

This question regarding the effectiveness of taxing authorities to control spending and property taxes was only asked of permanent residents. When responses were correlated, there was a strong association between all three taxing authorities. It was found that if a person felt one authority was

effective that person seemed to feel the other two were also. This would suggest that this question was not measuring the effectiveness of each of the taxing authorities but rather the opinion respondents had about how well taxing authorities were doing in general in controlling spending and property taxes.

Suggestions For Downtown

Respondents were asked what the downtown area lacks, that if available, would get them to shop downtown. The top five responses given were better parking, retail department stores, clothing stores, stores, stores under one roof. Other responses given which ranked high were a wider variety of stores, and up-scale stores.

Future Size of Oneonta

Forty-seven percent of those responding to this question stated that they had a preference for the City to either stay the same or less, 39 percent thought it should grow to 14,000 - 20,000, 9 percent would like to see it grow to 20,000 - 25,000 and the remaining 5 percent would prefer it to grow beyond 25,000.

General Summary of Survey Results

There are a number of trends which can be extrapolated from the overall survey results. These include the following:

How to Improve Oneonta

College students and permanent residents expressed similar opinion on how Oneonta might be improved. Both groups would like to see better college/community relations, and more college/community events. However, respondents were unclear on how to achieve this end.

Small Town Atmosphere

There is a strong preference to maintain Oneonta's small town atmosphere. There is little desire to see the City grow. Its friendliness, its being a good place to raise children, its safety, beauty, quality of public schools and its availability of recreational and cultural activities are common themes among both college students and permanent residents and are related to the small town ambiance. The presence of two colleges and access to health care services enhances these also.

Concerns Over Present and Future

Residents have many of the same concerns about the present and future of the City as do citizens all over the country. They worry about crime, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and the associated problems. There is concern about the economic future of the City as well as lack of employment opportunities. Residents do not see the downtown area as being as healthy as it was five years ago.

Sense of Community

Sense of community is oriented around the small town friendly atmosphere and community is valued. Effective communities are built on three components: citizens and the city government effectively carrying out their responsibilities; a qualitative sense of pleasure that community generates for its citizens, and a collective pulling together to work for the mutual well-being of all of the citizenry. For Oneonta to solve its common challenges and preserve its strengths, it will take a willingness on the part of the citizenry to see community as both a comfortable, friendly and safe place, but also one that works together in a concerted, collective effort that will preserve what residents value but adapt to the demands that a new century will most assuredly bring.

4.2 Comprehensive Plan Themes and Vision Statements

In order to better understand present and future trends impacting the City of Oneonta, one must first look at forces shaping rural communities throughout the country in general. Mr. Joseph Coates, President of Coates and Jarratt, Incorporated, has identified several key forces shaping many rural towns, cities and counties across America. Coates and Jarratt is a research firm specializing in the study of the future, based in Washington, D.C. Coates has written many notable works for the Office of Technology Assessment and serves on the editorial board of the Journal of Urban Technology.

The trends Mr. Coates has identified are those which are also impacting the City of Oneonta. The City is situated in a predominantly rural portion of upstate New York and the trends identified below can be considered applicable to Oneonta.

Rural America is in Crisis

Throughout Rural America, many communities are losing population. Many young persons upon graduating from high school, leave the communities in which they grew up. In many instances, a bright young person may get their high school diploma or graduate from a local college then leaves the community due to the lack of job opportunities. As population statistics depict, the population of the City of Oneonta has decreased 13 percent since 1970. This decrease in population has been across all age categories.

Furthermore, according to Coates, the analysis of a community's economic base is very important. There are a number of small communities which will most likely be immune from serious economic or other trends. These include area trade centers, county government seats, retirement communities, suburbs of larger cities, college or university towns, communities that provide recreational opportunities drawing visitors, and those places that are resource important (e.g., coal mines, etc.)

The City of Oneonta is fast establishing itself as the type of community which will possess a degree of resilience against adverse trends. The City is the home of two colleges. It is becoming the "hub" of the three county area (e.g., Otsego, Delaware, Schoharie Counties). Oneonta also offers an abundance of recreational opportunities which do indeed draw many visitors from outside the area.

Information Technology Holds the Promise of Being the Single Most Important New Development in Revitalizing Rural America.

Coates states that " as traditional occupational bases shrink, it will become increasingly important for smaller communities to be electronically tied into metropolitan and global business centers. The Information Highway can bring jobs to thousands of communities, which would otherwise wither and die." He continues, "Adequate telecommunications capabilities (such as having fiber optics linkages) are just as important a part of a modern community's basic infrastructure as are roads, water and sewer systems - and planning for telecommunications should be just as much of a priority."

Since the City of Oneonta possesses two colleges, a business college, and numerous school districts, it is an ideal location to establish a "node" for the Internet System. The City of Oneonta could become much more competitive and appealing for many light industrial, and educational and medical enterprises if able to access the system without having to pay high long distance charges.

Within Metropolitan Areas, New Growth Hubs are Continuing to Emerge

Coates states that "center cities are increasingly being surrounded by dense hubs of (edge cities). These hubs generally have all the functions of the center city except for the cultural and governmental activities...Communities that are outside the center city must plan not only in relation to the older center city, but with these newer hubs in mind".

The City of Oneonta is not yet in a position where there are hubs resembling the so called "edge cities" to which Coates refers. However, the City of Oneonta is being impacted by intense development at its borders which may at some point in the future resemble or come to represent the "edge cities". It is becoming fast apparent that developments outside of the City of Oneonta, particularly at its borders with neighboring municipalities, are impacting transportation and work patterns, and business locational decisions.

The Globalization of the American Economy Offers Opportunities for Many Communities

Coates states in his article that "...planners should seek to position their communities to take advantage of the opportunities that a more global economy provides. Communities are increasingly competing to host foreign manufacturers and businesses. Foreign manufacturers, not surprisingly, seek a qualified, educated, and trainable workforce. Local planners can help ensure that their community is an attractive competitor for the location of one of these firms by, in particular, seeking to strengthen local educational facilities, from elementary and high school levels right through community college".

The City of Oneonta can be considered "ahead of the game" due to the excellent educational facilities located in the area. This educational infrastructure is important in retaining and attracting industry and commerce. Continued coordination with educational and other training agencies is important in creating a competitive labor force into the next century.

The County of Otsego Industrial Development Agency (COIDA) and the Community Development Office have initiated a basic marketing plan to attract international investment to Oneonta and to assist local businesses in the global economy. These trends are evident in the attraction of Sanyo of America, the first far eastern textile company to locate in the United States. Siemens USA, a German company, has a cooperative relationship with Medical Coaches in the industrial park. Seeley's Ceramics has expanded its world markets into Europe and Mexico recently. All companies mentioned have been assisted by the City and COIDA in a variety of different ways including a low interest loan program, tax abatement, training programs, infrastructure improvements, and assistance in developing new industrial and commercial sites.

To conclude, Coates states that "Communities which are thriving today also tend to be those which pay attention to environmental and cultural amenities. Air and water quality are important not just to a community's physical health, but to its economic health as well. Cultural amenities are also important in drawing new business to a town."

The City of Oneonta is very cognizant of its environmental resources and has acted in a prudent manner to preserve and protect said resources. The City also abounds with cultural and other recreational activities which could serve as a much more highly utilized marketing tool to attract people and businesses to the community.

Coates continues by stating, "Finally, as our nation continues to become more racially diverse -25 percent of the population is not of European stock - communities, if they are to be economically successful, must roll out the welcome mat in a way that is truly appealing to Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks, who should be important assets to America's communities".

As the Comprehensive Plan's Inventory and Analysis Chapter has depicted, the City of Oneonta has become, since 1970, a more racially and ethnically diverse community. The future vision for the City of Oneonta will need to recognize the concerns of the many diverse peoples coming to the area. The vision must also seek to integrate this diversity into the hearts and minds of all citizens in the City of Oneonta so we can truly become a united community. A united community can more effectively work toward the betterment of peoples lives and create a respect for the diversity which has made the United States the beacon of hope for all peoples of the world.

General Vision for the City of Oneonta

The vision to be implemented by the Comprehensive Plan is that of the City of Oneonta as a complete city which has accommodated growth while preserving open space and creating sufficient recreational opportunities for its population. A complete city provides its citizens with a variety of housing types, opportunities for employment and business, public facilities of all kinds, and places for relaxation,

recreation and enjoyment. A beneficial quality of life contributes a sense of friendliness, safety, caring and the ability of the residents to personally influence their city and its environment.

The City of Oneonta can be considered a complete city. The comprehensive plan theme statements and visions that follow build on this reality and reinforce it. The plan's goals and objectives have been developed to provide a commonly agreed upon basis for decision making in the various subject areas addressed by the plan and should facilitate implementation of the vision for the City of Oneonta.

The goals and vision statements are considered "end states" which the plan is intended to achieve. The objectives following each of the aforementioned goals and for the following vision statements are a series of actions or conditions required to realize the effectiveness of the City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan.

Furthermore, Ernest Boyer, in a book entitled, Campus Life, In Search of Community, reflects upon the challenge of building a sense of community on the college campus. Boyer states that higher education is "currently faced with an unusual opportunity for American colleges and universities to return to their roots and to consider not more regulations, but the enduring values of a true learning community." He continues, "I am convinced that the challenge of building community reaches far beyond the campus, as well. Higher education has an important obligation not only to celebrate diversity but also to define larger, more inspired goals, and in so doing serve as a model for the nation and the world."

In his book, Boyer identifies six principles which he feels can provide an effective formula for day-to-day decision making on campus, and, which if considered together, can define the kind of community every college and university should strive to be. For the purpose of the City of Oneonta's Comprehensive Plan, Boyer's principles are defined below in terms of creating community within the larger context of the City of Oneonta. These principles can serve as guidelines by which to judge whether the goals and objectives identified later in this chapter assist in the creation and enhancement of community in the City of Oneonta.

Purposeful: A community could be considered as a purposeful community if residents share in common goals and work together to strengthen understanding of one another and are able to learn from each other.

Open: A community could be considered as an open community if freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

Just: A community could be considered as a just community if the sacredness of the person is honored and diversity is aggressively pursued.

Caring: A community could be considered as a caring community if the well being of each member is sensitively supported and where service to others is encouraged.

Celebrative: A community could be considered as a celebrative community if the heritage of the locality is remembered and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

Disciplined: A community could be considered as a disciplined community if individuals accept their obligation to the entire community and when well defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

4.3 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statements, Goals and Objectives

As a result of the City Resident Survey, discussions/interviews with City officials and other decisionmakers, the following visions were developed accompanied with community goals and objectives to guide policymaking for the City of Oneonta into the next century. While the visions, goals and objectives provide policy direction, they are not meant to "bind the hands" of the City leadership. The City's Comprehensive Plan must be flexible in order to accommodate changing circumstances. The visions, goals and objectives that follow are grouped according to the following categories: Community; Cultural and Recreational Opportunities; Economic Development; Environmental Protection; Government; Housing; Infrastructure; and Land Use and Zoning.

Community Vision

The City of Oneonta will have maintained its small town atmosphere and sustained the "sense of community" residents feel the City possesses. City government will have worked toward balancing the economic and social needs of future growth as desired by the residents to maintain the City's small town ambiance.

Reflection and Summary

According to the Community Survey, Oneonta's small town atmosphere was a very major positive attribute which must be preserved. Residents often cited as a definition of "community" the sense of belonging and neighborliness. One respondent described Oneonta as a friendly small town atmosphere, with "lots of things to do." Another respondent described the City's strongest feature as its friendliness and sense of "everyone knowing everyone." Finally, another respondent stated, "The community is family oriented, which promotes a strong sense of community."

The inventory and analysis component of the Comprehensive Plan, and the strategic sessions held by the Downtown Oneonta Improvement Task Force (DOIT), found that there are gaps in this overall positive perception. However, the sense of community, as described by Carolyn R. Schaffer and Kristen Anudsen, in Creating Community Anywhere, must be nurtured and enhanced. Pride and diligence by critical stakeholders (e.g., property owners, the schools, public officials and employees, financial

institutions, etc.) is necessary to maintain a positive perception about neighborliness and cross-cultural orientations.

Because cultural and life-style differences are so important to the vitality of the Oneonta community, the City recognizes that more must be done to insure expanded opportunities for citizens who may feel disenfranchised from the "small town" image. In addition, care must be taken to craft community events in such a way as to be inclusive, rather than exclusive. College/community relations must remain active and positive. Finally, a sense of civic responsibility must be promoted in order to continue to possess a strongly cohesive view of the community.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oneonta identifies the goal and objectives for the City as it relates to its small town atmosphere and sense of community, and are stated as follows:

Community Goal

Seek to promote a sense of community in order to help people feel comfortable with their surroundings in the City. Recognize the concerns of the many diverse peoples coming to and residing in the area. Facilitate the integration of this diversity so as to foster a truly united community working toward common goals and the social betterment of all people's lives.

Objectives

1. Increase college/community activities in order to induce active participation and a sense of belonging by college students in the affairs of the community.
2. Encourage the involvement of local citizens in neighborhood support programs and other similar activities which build cohesion among residents in a particular neighborhood.
3. Encourage community events which facilitate the interaction of all citizens which can create understanding and acceptance of peoples of differing cultures and backgrounds. Coordinate campus, business and cultural events so that they are inclusive and celebratory of the Oneonta community.
4. Reach out to those who, because of their economic or social circumstances, have not been able to experience a sense of belonging or the neighborliness characteristic of the City.
5. Discourage attempts by any group to use public space in a way that is damaging to any member of the Oneonta community.
6. Establish as policy a sense of just and responsible behavior on the part of officials, employees and residents.
7. Maintain through code enforcement the health, safety and welfare of citizens in neighborhoods and downtown.

8. Promote educational opportunities for all members of the community throughout the entire age spectrum in cooperation with existing educational institutions.
9. Encourage the retention of neighborhood schools that foster a sense of community.
10. Provide walking patrols, especially in the downtown and center city neighborhoods, to give citizens a sense of safety and familiarity with the Police Department.
11. Increase community relation efforts by the Police Department so that citizens know members of the Police Department.

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities Vision

The City will continue to serve as a regional hub; to provide a nurturing environment that will encourage growth and development of cultural and recreational activities. Both students and residents will derive mutual benefit resulting from both active and passive participation in these activities.

Reflection and Summary

A community's identity is determined to a large extent by its visual qualities such as its architecture and public space. The richness of its life is determined by the opportunities to experience the fine arts and to savor the outdoors. According to the Community Survey, Oneonta residents felt that cultural activities provided in the City were adequate. There was also support for improved or expanded theatrical or dance productions, more musical/concert productions, and more exhibition areas for aspiring artists. The survey also indicated access to and the natural beauty of the City's recreational resources are important as well as the preservation of the City's historic structures.

The results of the Inventory and Analysis indicated that Oneonta is particularly enriched with cultural and recreational resources. The City is located on the Susquehanna River, with striking views from hillside vistas. It also possesses a well preserved downtown, a nearby historic district, and other significant historical resources. The community is a place of significant beauty and appreciation.

The cultural and recreational opportunities are extensive, but these opportunities must be carefully monitored so that during challenging as well as healthy economic conditions, they will be maintained. The City possesses extensive open space and recreational resources which draw local residents as well as visitors. Special concern is noted for opportunities for young adults.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oneonta identifies the goal and objectives for the City as it relates to its cultural and recreational opportunities, and are stated as follows:

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities Goal

Provide cultural and recreational facilities in the City of Oneonta that are readily available to all residents. Preserve and enhance permanent open space that protects significant scenic and environmentally important areas. Promote a greater diversity of theatrical and other cultural activities.

Objectives

1. Increase the usage of all the City's recreational facilities through promotion of multi-use and multi-seasonal activities.
2. Encourage the development of diverse recreational facilities, including parks, playing fields, playgrounds, community center and other facilities that meet the recreational and educational needs of all members of the community. Encourage the development of a system of cultural and

recreational program funding whereby City residents can benefit.

3. Encourage the development of and initiation of programs which appeal to the youth of our community.
4. Encourage the development of theater and dance performance space.
5. Encourage the school system to become more of an integral part of the cultural and recreational community, making its resources available to the entire community and challenging each community member to act as both learner and teacher.
6. Develop, in response to community requests, alternative recreational facilities and opportunities.
7. Since Oneonta will continue to have a high proportion of its population under 25 years old, create positive recreational opportunities for young people, especially teens.

Economic Development Vision

The City of Oneonta will have strengthened its capacity to respond to marketplace shifts and changes, seize new economic development opportunities, and sustain its local and regional vitality. Furthermore, the City will have assured its basic services, attracted new investment which enhances the quality of life of its residents, communicated its improved image through a well defined public relations campaign, and generated support from citizens, government leaders, and other institutions for making the community hospitable and enthusiastic about attracting new companies, investment and visitors to the community.

Reflection and Summary

According to the Community Survey, residents expressed their feelings as to the most important issues which will impact the community over the next ten years. The top three issues primarily dealt with crime and economic issues. Residents felt there was a definite need for more and better employment opportunities. They also were concerned about economic decline, generally, and about the loss of business in the City.

The Inventory and Analysis section showed Oneonta as having a predominance of service industries, associated with health care, higher education and social services, as well as a diverse commercial and industrial base. Several internationally recognized manufacturers are located in the City. It has very stable economies because of this diversity.

It was also determined that tourism is also an important element of the economic life of the community. Historic resources, colleges, and sports bring visitors from around the nation and world. Downtown Oneonta remains the focus of the commercial activity, but many professionals and service organizations share downtown with retailing. The Downtown Oneonta Improvement Task Force is an active group representing Main Street.

The City is recognized as a regional economic hub for a variety of activities. These activities draw participants from a broad area to work, shop, meet, worship and visit. The labor force is well trained, and opportunities exist in many educational settings for advancement in job-related training.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oneonta identifies the goal and objectives for Oneonta as it relates to the economic development of the City and is stated as follows:

Economic Development Goal

Promote an encouraging economic climate in the City of Oneonta and its surrounding communities. Analyze current economic and demographic conditions and trends for the purpose of identifying the needs of the community so as to assure basic services, improve the quality of life, translate an improved image to the public, and create enthusiasm for attracting new investment and visitors to the community.

Objectives

1. Continue to promote the Central Business District on Main Street as the primary retail and commercial center of the City of Oneonta and encourage the implementation of the Downtown Oneonta Improvement Task Force's (DOIT) Strategic Plan for Downtown Oneonta.
2. Enhance tourism activities in the City of Oneonta through recreational, especially baseball and soccer facilities, cultural, educational and other events which bring visitors to Oneonta, especially the downtown business district.
3. Continue to coordinate economic development activities with area and regional agencies and organizations, including intergovernmental cooperation with COIDA and the Town of Oneonta. Encourage the development of countywide strategic marketing plan which includes the City.
4. Continue to attract new industrial and business uses to the City, as well as mixed office/medical research/education facilities in order to provide employment opportunities for local residents, to diversify the economy and to expand the City's property tax base.
5. Strongly encourage all employers in the area to recruit and to provide employment opportunities to local job applicants. By utilizing available resources, develop an incentive program to induce employers to give preference to local job applicants before hiring applicants from outside the region or state.
6. Periodically review and assess loan programs and current tax abatement policies to assess impacts on development and tax revenues as related to new and existing businesses.
7. Recruit businesses to the downtown area which are not currently represented on Main Street and for which there is currently a consumer demand.
8. Work closely with educational, medical, not-for-profit service and recreational agencies to coordinate delivery of services to those using Oneonta as a regional hub.
9. Promote and encourage life long educational and training opportunities enabling this community to provide a good source of well trained and educated employees.
10. Promote and encourage the development of an affordable day care system for adult, pre- and after-school needs in a safe, nurturing environment which supports employment.
11. Continue to improve the City's infrastructure for future economic development projects.

Environmental Protection Vision

The City of Oneonta has and will continue to successfully utilize the options and resources available to it to effectively maintain and preserve its visually and environmentally sensitive resources, and its historically and architecturally significant buildings and structures. The City will seek to protect the environmental integrity of its natural resources as well as the overall health and safety of the community. Aesthetic improvements like the Tree City Program will continue to improve the environmental quality of the City.

Reflection and Summary

Comprehensive planning can be a vehicle to enhance the environmental quality of life in a community. The result would be a clean, safe, attractive and healthy place to live and work. The City of Oneonta recognizes its responsibility to consider this quality of life as it moves into the next century. As stated in the Community Survey results, residents cited the City's natural beauty as the primary reason why they liked living in Oneonta. The environmental amenities have been recognized as an important attribute of the community as reflected in the survey instrument. Residents also rated the preservation of historic structures in the City as a high priority.

The Inventory and Analysis Chapter of the comprehensive plan identified environmentally and historically sensitive public areas and services in the City such as its green space and park areas, the exemplary tree maintenance/tree city programs, state of the art water and sewer treatment facilities, waste management, and the expansive inventory of historic resources. The Inventory and Analysis Chapter also recognizes the existence of federal and state regulations and guidelines which serve to protect the environment and promote historic preservation.

A sense of stewardship over the resources available in the community is prevalent. A positive public dialogue exists in the community which promotes the environment for a healthy city. Other public enhancements like band concerts, flower planting, community festivals and public meeting space promote the public welfare.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oneonta identifies the goal and objectives for the City as it relates to visual and environmental quality and is stated as follows:

Environmental Protection Goal

Identify and preserve the visual, cultural and environmental resources of the City of Oneonta through the preservation of significant artifacts, records, landscapes, structures and sites. Increase local awareness of all visual, cultural and environmental resources. Encourage environmentally conscious public services. Provide green space throughout the City where residents are able to enjoy the City's natural beauty. Implement responsible environmental protection initiatives as per applicable state and federal guidelines.

Objectives

1. Develop a method to ensure the preservation of scenic vistas of the City of Oneonta from the hillsides. In instances where the hillside is under the jurisdiction of an adjoining municipality, attempt to preserve the scenic vistas in cooperation with each respective municipality.
2. Identify city entryways which need visual improvement and maintain them through landscaping, site plan review and, as appropriate, through enactment of local laws. Create a standard entryway design which represents the City's "turn of the century" character.
3. Maintain the historic character of the City of Oneonta in those areas which possess such historic significance, especially those which are currently on the National and State Register of Historic Places.
4. Encourage the development of harmonious signage, landscaping, street furnishing, lighting and pavement materials in new developments and in older areas when improvements occur.
5. Encourage the proper upkeep of existing structures through appropriate code enforcement activities in order to maintain a pleasant visual environment. Work with downtown merchants to maintain and enhance storefronts and "turn of the century" look.
6. Encourage the enhancement of City parking areas through appropriate maintenance and landscaping methods.
7. Encourage and support, where appropriate, the preservation and adaptive reuse or relocation of historic properties throughout the City of Oneonta.
8. Preserve open space and green space, especially in the public right-of-way. Maintain the City's policy on green space (e.g., Tree City USA).
9. Continue to utilize the procedures outlined in the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) in order to evaluate and address the impacts of activities on the environment.
10. Closely monitor the viability of historic structures.
11. Maintain environmentally sensitive public services including public and alternative transportation systems, water and air quality, and waste management.
12. Support the school's efforts to educate citizens in the need to balance our environmental responsibilities with economic development needs.

Government Vision

The City will continue to provide basic services efficiently and innovatively. The City and Town of Oneonta will have fostered a greater willingness to work together to benefit the Greater Oneonta Area. New cooperative agreements to more closely link the two communities together will have been developed and existing linkages will have been strengthened.

Reflection and Summary

The City recognizes that its future depends upon looking at its organization with innovation and creativity. Relations with neighboring municipalities are important for the future. In the Community Survey, residents expressed strong support of the task force established to examine the relationship between the City and Town in terms of sharing services and increasing cooperation between the two municipalities. Furthermore, residents stated that they were very satisfied with the level and quality of public services offered in the City.

The Inventory and Analysis component found that the City must make itself "user friendly" so that citizens and taxpayers may be assured that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. Further, the Inventory and Analysis has identified areas where city government may be duplicating services or where state and federal mandates restrict volunteer boards.

Government must be able to provide basic services efficiently and innovatively. The City of Oneonta must maintain efficient and easily accessible services for its citizens. City government must sensitive to the dynamics of the community.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Oneonta identifies the goal and objectives for the City as it relates to shared services and governmental organization and is stated as follows:

Government Goal

Analyze the current governmental structure and services of the City of Oneonta in order to determine if it is meeting the community's current and future needs. Reform the Municipal Code in order to make it compatible with current practices. Promote and encourage increased intergovernmental cooperation between the City and Town of Oneonta.

Objectives

1. Encourage the continuation of discussions between the City and Town of Oneonta to examine the extent and level of cooperation and shared services which could possibly occur at some future time.
2. Review and revise the City of Oneonta Municipal Code in order to reflect current governmental policy making procedures and to eliminate outdated roles and functions of citizen commissions,

committees, boards and various departmental functions.

3. Work toward development of innovative funding mechanisms in order to equitably provide services to its citizens without creating an undue hardship on one particular segment of the City's population.
4. Streamline permit applications to ease the burden of bureaucracy on those seeking to make improvements to their property or expand businesses in the community.
5. Consider undertaking a reapportionment of the City wards.
6. Develop intergovernmental activities to avoid duplication of service.
7. Encourage regular updates of the County Emergency Services Plan to insure that the City of Oneonta is planning regionally.
8. Encourage closer cooperative efforts between the City and Town of Oneonta governments and the governing bodies of our schools to deal with funding and types of educational programs.

Housing and Neighborhood Quality Vision

Oneonta will have a stock of affordable and well maintained housing for all of its citizens. The City will have economic and culturally integrated neighborhoods.

Reflection and Summary

The City of Oneonta recognizes that a strong community is one where its people have a full range of opportunities for living space. The Community Survey found that most respondents felt that the appearance of the City's neighborhoods and housing stock was about the same or has improved. The survey also found support for the construction of low cost senior housing, for the conversion of multi-family apartment buildings to one-family homes, and for low income, one family housing. Assisted living ownership arrangements for disabled and older citizens was also important.

According to the Inventory and Analysis, the City has been able to maintain very definable neighborhoods which are meeting different needs and lifestyles. The majority of current housing stock dates from pre-1940. However, the character of dwelling units range from historic to modern. The inventory and analysis has found that creative rental spaces have been developed from formerly commercial space near the center city. There is significant difference among the neighborhoods in density, structure size and general character.

The City of Oneonta has been able to maintain good, quality housing stock for its citizens. There is a need to enhance homeownership through first time homebuyer programs and incentives. Overall the City has exerted a great deal of effort to provide and help maintain the supply of housing opportunities for its citizens at a reasonable cost to the homeowner and potential homeowner.

Therefore, the City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan identifies the goal and objectives for the City as they relate to housing and are stated as follows:

Housing and Neighborhood Quality Goal

The City of Oneonta will continue to maintain and improve housing quality standards and conditions for both homeowners and renters through code enforcement activities. The City will continue to work toward the development of a first time homeownership program in order to promote neighborhood quality.

Objectives

1. Provide for an appropriate range of housing types, densities and price ranges to accommodate all residents of the City.
2. Increase the availability, quality and affordability of housing for senior citizens and handicapped persons, especially assisted living.

3. Continue to utilize federal and state housing programs to rehabilitate existing housing structures and induce home ownership by low and moderate income persons in the City.
4. Encourage and develop programs which induce the reversion of multi-family structures to single family residences in order to create neighborhood stability and community.
5. Undertake a comprehensive City wide housing affordability study.
6. Develop a comprehensive housing strategy.
7. Ensure that housing affordability is maintained through a provision for housing code flexibility.
8. Encourage safe and secure alternatives for school age youngsters in need of supervision and care.

Infrastructure Vision

The City of Oneonta will maintain its physical infrastructure and public services at the highest level through modern, innovative technology and it will expand and improve these services to meet any future needs of its citizens.

Reflection and Summary

Historically, Oneonta's development has been largely due to its geographical location and topographical features. Equally important has been the commitment on the part of civic leaders to develop high quality infrastructure services. The Community Survey reflected this in that respondents stated they were satisfied with the quality of the City's infrastructure and services offered. Respondents were even more positive regarding City services if they had an opportunity to utilize the service (e.g., fire, police, transit system, etc.)

The Inventory and Analysis has shown that these investments in infrastructure have contributed to the City's quality of life and to its economic success. Interstate 88, completed in the early 1980's, has made the area more accessible for development. The railroad continues to provide freight services to the region. The airport provides air services beneficial to area residents and according to a 1990 New York State Department of Transportation Survey, serves as a demonstrable, regional economic stimulus. Bus and limousine services also serve the city and its environs. The City has undertaken sidewalk and other improvements over the years. Water and waste water plants have undergone recent improvements, thereby increasing future capacity for development. Telecommunications services and linkages have begun to positively impact the City and region.

High quality infrastructure and services, including up-to-date streets, sidewalks, water and wastewater facilities and stormwater management, are an asset to the upscale demands of residents seeking a locale that reflects the lifestyle sought in beautiful rural cities like Oneonta. Additionally, the infusion of elements like telecommunication improvements and technology advancements will influence Oneonta, and Main Street, as a regional hub.

Therefore, the City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan identifies the goal and objectives for the City as they relate to infrastructure and are stated as follows:

Infrastructure Goal

Ensure that future improvements are beneficial in developing the infrastructure of the City. Promote the development, maintenance, and enhancement of government services and community facilities to meet the needs of the residents of the City in the most cost effective manner practicable. Promote public and private road transportation services to accommodate an increased ridership. Encourage the revitalization of the railroad as a significant part of the economy. Maintain the Municipal Airport as a major player in the service and economic development of the region. Foster cooperation with local businesses, medical and educational institutions to integrate Oneonta into the global information/communications network.

Objectives

1. Maintain and enhance the existing roadways and sidewalks in the City. Provide or cause to be provided adequate landscaping and pedestrian improvements in conjunction with major roadway projects.
2. Require handicapped accessible sidewalks when undertaking major roadway projects or when sidewalks throughout the City are replaced/reconstructed.
3. Encourage the development of a regional airport. Encourage new uses at the airport facility which will directly enhance the economic health and well being of the City and surrounding area.
4. Continue to maintain, enhance and upgrade the water, sewer and stormwater systems in the City of Oneonta.
5. Develop a comprehensive strategy to address improvements to the City wide stormwater system.
6. Continue to examine the possibility of coordinating, consolidating and centralizing public works activities, especially with the Town of Oneonta.
7. Encourage the use of all community buildings, land and structures as potential learning resources.
8. Develop a global communications link.
9. Upgrade vehicle maintenance facilities, so that economies can continue to be found through regular maintenance and in-house diagnostics.

LAND USE AND ZONING VISION

The City will achieve a harmonious mix of residential, commercial and public land appropriate and supportive of a well planned, dynamic community that values family life, education, work and recreation.

Reflection and Summary

The Community Survey found that residents were generally satisfied with current zoning and land use patterns. Respondents stated that businesses were not unduly infringing on the residential areas nor did they feel current zoning patterns were excessively restricting business growth and development. Most felt that the remaining vacant land in the City should be developed with tax generating uses.

The Inventory and Analysis has shown that the City of Oneonta has a healthy mix of residential, commercial and public land, although changes and future needs cannot be predicted. While the current zoning code appears to be adequate to meet the needs in the foreseeable future, changes in demographics and technology may create opportunities for innovation. The City recognizes that its structure must remain flexible for these eventualities.

The City recognizes that it must encourage the economic vitality of the community, while being careful to protect features which make Oneonta the kind of community it is. The City recognizes that its unique geophysical features create complexities in zoning and in protection of the environment, but that a healthy community provides opportunities for growth and creative use of the land available.

Therefore, the City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan identifies the goal and objectives for the City as they relate to land use and zoning and are stated as follows:

Land Use and Zoning Goal

Carefully promote uses, patterns and densities while at the same time protecting important land resources. Encourage positive investment in the form of new enterprises as well as in the construction of new facilities, and the restoration and improvement of existing structures.

Objectives

1. Encourage the development of tax generating uses on currently vacant parcels of land.
2. Through zoning, protect business and residential neighborhoods from potentially adverse effects of more intensive land uses.
3. Promote uses of wetland areas to protect important vistas, vegetation and wildlife habitats, while providing public access where possible.

4. Utilize the comprehensive plan as the basis for continuous decisionmaking in conjunction with the City's zoning code, official map, capital improvement program and subdivision regulations and other appropriate mechanisms which regulate land uses in the City of Oneonta.
5. Manage commercial and retail development throughout the City, especially in the residential areas, so as to provide opportunities for home based business opportunities which do not adversely impact the character of the City's neighborhoods.
6. Create regulations that are sensitive to but not overly burdensome to the economic and social vitality of the community.
7. Allow sufficient opportunity for industrial land uses in designated areas of the City and which do not adversely impact the environment.
8. Continue to aggressively enforce the City's zoning ordinance in order to preserve the intent of the code with respect to the development of the City. Revise and delete sections of the code which are no longer adequate to meet the needs of the City at any particular point in time.
9. Create an atmosphere where expansion and use for educational and training purposes will be encouraged in appropriate settings.
10. Encourage tax exempt organizations to make payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to cover the cost of services provided by the City of Oneonta.