

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan has identified numerous issues and challenges facing the community. Additionally, the plan has described the community's perception and opinion in regard to what the community should be like during the next century and beyond. In light of the plan's extensive inventory and analysis, community survey, and the needs of City departments, an extensive series of goals statements and objectives to implement said goals has been identified in the plan. However, it should be understood that a comprehensive plan should be flexible and must change with changing circumstances. Therefore, the recommendations, goals and objectives and visions may be altered over time to reflect a change in perceptions and/or situations in the City.

The following briefly recaps the major highlights of the planning document.

### INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The City of Oneonta has lost population since 1970. The population of the City has decreased by 13 percent. This decline has been across all age groups. The population has also become much more racially and ethnically diverse since 1970.

The composition of the City's labor force has changed. There has been an increase in various sectors of the labor force including managerial/professional; technical, sales and administration; service occupations and operators, fabricators and assemblers. This increase is primarily related to the growth the City has experienced in the educational, medical and general support professions.

The economic base has a predominance of service based industries due primarily to the college campuses and the medical community. However, the City does maintain a diverse commercial and industrial base also.

Growth in income for City residents has been much slower than that of New York State, Otsego County and the Town of Oneonta.

Land use and zoning patterns seem to be adequate to meet the current needs of the City. Residents feel current zoning patterns do not infringe on the residential areas nor do they excessively restrict and hinder business and commercial growth.

The City is currently experiencing a need for a first time homeownership program. There are a number of residents in the City who could afford to purchase a home if there was some type of assistance to help cover downpayment and closing costs. The quality of the housing stock has generally stayed the same or improved in many areas while the appearance of the downtown has decreased somewhat according to residents responding to the community survey.

The numerous services offered by the City are adequate to meet current needs. Residents are quite satisfied with the level and quality of services provided.

The City is rich in cultural, historic and archeological resources. The community has a well maintained inventory of historic structures. The environmental resources in and around the community are numerous and well protected.

The City's inventory of parks and recreational areas is one of the most important and heavily utilized resources in the City. This was substantiated by the community survey.

The current government apparatus is adequate to meet the needs of the City. Many residents have expressed support for current efforts to induce cooperation between the Town and City of Oneonta.

#### DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

The City of Oneonta, through various public and private partnerships, has taken proactive steps to ensure the continued viability of its downtown business district. These activities combined with the Strategic Plan as set forth by DOIT will serve as a solid base for future downtown improvement/enhancement. Obviously, downtown businesses simply cannot compete with the Wal-Marts or K-Marts and the other numerous discount type stores. Downtown Oneonta must become a home of "niche" markets, offering merchandise and services to consumers that the malls and discount stores cannot offer. Past and current actions taken by the City and community based groups such as DOIT will ensure that Downtown Oneonta will continue to thrive economically and remain the centerpiece of the City's retail and service activity.

#### VISIONS, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

City residents have offered numerous opinions and perceptions on the current state of the City of Oneonta via the community survey. Based on the inventory and analysis and the community survey, the comprehensive plan set forth various visions for the City. These visions were 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.*

Because cultural and lifestyle 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 and 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.

## 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.*

The cultural and recreational opportunities are extensive, but these opportunities must be 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.

## 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.*

The City of Oneonta is recognized as an economic regional hub for a variety of diverse 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.

## 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.*

## 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, innovative cooperative agreements to more closely link the two communities together will have been developed and existing linkages will have been*

*strengthened.*

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 be sensitive to the dynamics of the community.

#### Housing 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.*

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.

#### 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.*

High quality infrastructure and services 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.

#### 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.*

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.

#### IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

The efforts of local government boards and commissions, the business community, private citizens and organizations will impact the implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Also, the plan identifies numerous federal, state, local and private funding sources which can facilitate the implementation of many of the goals and objectives set forth in the planning document.

#### THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND THE FUTURE

The City's Comprehensive Plan has been written based upon current trends and circumstances impacting the City of Oneonta. The success and proper implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will be contingent on the foresight of future government leaders and citizens to ensure that the plan is kept updated. As with this great nation's constitution, the comprehensive plan should be thought of as a living document, not set in stone or inflexible. As with the Constitution, the comprehensive plan can change and be amended to meet the needs of the citizens at a particular point of reference. However, future leaders must be diligent to not change the percepts of the plan to the point that it defeats its original purpose. This purpose is to guide the City into the third millennium. Care must be taken to not allow the plan to become obsolete and be relegated to someone's dusty shelf. Finally, City government must ensure citizen participation in the implementation of the plan. The citizens of the City of Oneonta will continue to control the actions of its government. Citizen participation must always be part of the implementation process in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the plan are being properly met and administered.