

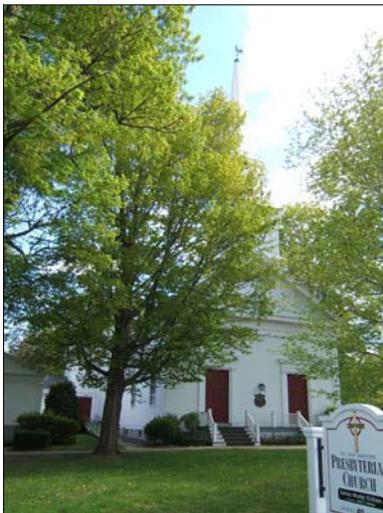
Introduction

1.0 Background

New Hartford is a stable and prominent town in New York's Mohawk Valley. The largest of the suburbs of the City of Utica, it was first settled by a family named Kellogg who arrived from Hartford, Connecticut in 1772. They named their new home New Hartford. In 1788, Jedediah Sanger arrived. Though virtually penniless and in debt, the 37-year-old Sanger bought up 1,000 acres of New Hartford for \$0.50 an acre – an investment of less than \$5,550 in 2005 dollars¹.



**Jedediah
Sanger**



*Historic First
Presbyterian Church in
the Village of New
Hartford*

New Hartford was then located within the Town of Whitestown. It existed for 42 years without its own governmental structure until 1827 when it was formally formed.

Sanger built the Town's first mills on the Sauquoit Creek, first a sawmill and later a grist mill. He doubled his money on 600 acres of his land, selling it for \$1 an acre to Joseph Higbee. Sanger retained 400 acres of what would later become the Village of New Hartford.

Sanger's name has been lent to the Town's signature shopping center, Sangertown Square. But his legacy includes having contributed the land for the first Presbyterian Church in the United States, founded as the First Religious Society of Whitestown in 1791. The church building still stands at 45 Genesee Street in the Village of New Hartford. The image of the church building is the visitor's first sight of the Town and Village approaching from the west and forms a pretty picture of small town life.

Some other important milestones celebrated in New Hartford include the first "ingrain" or flat weave loom, first cut nails manufactured from wine and spirits cask hoops and second cotton mill in New York State. And among many educational and sports achievements, New Hartford is also home to the 2004 Varsity Boys Soccer NYS Class A Co-Champion Team and 2003 New York State Field Band Conference Champion New Hartford Spartans Marching Band. Both the 2004 boys soccer and football teams were Class A academic champions and the girls swimming team has dominated girls swimming statewide for seven consecutive years.

¹ Calculated from 1800 to 2005 constant dollars, with 1800 as the earliest dollar value available at <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>.

2.0 Summary of the Plan

New Hartford is more than a suburban community. Its settlements have accommodated the dramatic topography of the town, with the denser settlements forming around the available water on the Sauquoit and the higher elevations dedicated to farming and now to less dense settlements and subdivisions.

In an age of high-speed communications, long-haul commutes and cell phone ubiquity, New Hartford remains a quiet community with family activities revolving around schools and churches. New Hartford residents like to stick close to home if they can, and while 24 percent of the working population of the Town works in New Hartford³, 90 percent travel fewer than 30 minutes to work.⁴ New Hartford is also the commercial and retail center of the Mohawk River Valley, and an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people visit each day to shop to as many as 100,000 or more during the holiday season.⁵

The Comprehensive Plan Update for New Hartford emphasizes this quality of the Town: that it is first and foremost home, a desired place of residence and is still a good place to live, work and raise a family. This quality does not sustain itself; witness Commercial Drive during the annual holiday shopping frenzy and realize that New Hartford needs more planning, not less. So the plan emphasizes preserving the New Hartford of neighbors and neighborliness.

The Goals and Objectives for the Plan lay a foundation for preserving and enhancing the character of the Town. The Goals and Objectives are the lens through which the future of New Hartford is imagined. The Policies for the plan are informed by the Goals and Objectives. The policies are the filter through which the future of the built environment is directed and through which new development proposals and new directions are evaluated.



Dramatic topography characterizes the south side of the Town

³ peter j. smith & company survey for this Plan; results in the Public Input chapter

⁴ US Bureau of the Census

⁵ Police Chief Ray Philo interview

3.0 The Plan Defined

New York State provides procedures for municipalities to prepare and adopt, by local ordinance or law, a comprehensive or master plan. New York State statutes define a comprehensive plan 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 ... The town comprehensive plan ... shall ... serve as a basis for land use regulation, infrastructure development, public and private investment and any plans which may detail one or more topics of a town comprehensive plan."

Town Law, under Section 272-a defines the need for a comprehensive plan for communities with the following findings.

(a) Significant decisions and actions affecting the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the state and its communities are made by local governments.

(b) 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.

(c) The development and enactment by the town government of a town comprehensive plan which can be readily identified, and is available for use by the public, is in the best interest of the people of each town.

(d) The great diversity of resources and conditions that exist within and among the towns of the state compels the consideration of such diversity in the development of each town comprehensive plan.

(e) The participation of citizens in an open, responsible and flexible planning process is essential to the designing of the optimum town comprehensive plan.

(f) The town comprehensive plan is a means to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of the town and to give due consideration to the needs of the people of the region of which the town is a part.

(g) The comprehensive plan fosters cooperation among governmental agencies planning and implementing capital projects and municipalities that may be directly affected thereby.



The Plan process helps the Town craft its vision of the preferred future

(h) It is the intent of the legislature to encourage, but not to require, the preparation and adoption of a comprehensive plan pursuant to this section. Nothing herein shall be deemed to affect the status or validity of existing master plans, comprehensive plans, or land use plans⁶

Town Law defines two important impacts of adopting a comprehensive plan:

- "All town land use regulations must be in accordance with a comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to town law.
- All plans for capital projects of another governmental agency on land included in the town comprehensive plan ... shall take such plan into consideration."⁷

Generally, the comprehensive plan is a, "means to promote the health, safety and general welfare of Town residents and offer consideration to the needs of those in the region of which the Town is a part."⁸ In general, the plan will:

- " Provide a process for identifying community resources, long range community needs and commonly held goals.
- "Provide a process for community consensus.
- "Provide a blueprint for future government actions."⁹

3.1 Why Do A Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan Update for the Town of New Hartford provides a snapshot of the Town at the present moment in the context of the historical development of the community. The Town uses this information to help craft a vision of a preferred future. In this way the Comprehensive Plan can:

- Document local characteristics and trends regarding resident population composition, land use, the natural environment, economic development and service provision;
- Provide a benchmark for evaluating the compatibility of individual development proposals with the long range development objectives of the community;
- Reveal future service needs and explore the potential for regional cooperation, including land acquisition and the construction of public improvements;

⁶ Town Law Section 272-a.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ New York State Department of State. Local Government Handbook: Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. Albany: Department of State. 2000. p. 204.

⁹ Ibid. p. 210.

- Serve as a comprehensive source of current information that can be used by the Town in its efforts to secure state and federal funding and marketing the area to potential developers;
- Provide leverage for obtaining state and federal funding;
- Promote open space conservation designed to preserve the rural heritage of the community and enhance the overall quality of life;
- Attract potential developers to the Town through the identification of community goals and objectives for the next 20 years;
- Lay the foundation for future cooperative efforts between the Town of New Hartford and its neighboring towns, villages, city and Oneida County as a whole.

3.2 Implementing the Plan

The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is a commitment to a coordinated vision for the future. The Plan's success is measured through committed use by elected officials, municipal employees and residents.

Elected officials will use the plan to learn about their residents' vision of the community's future and adopt local codes and ordinances to support those goals. The Plan's extensive analyses and policy statements provide both background information and leverage as elected officials negotiate inter-governmental agreements or dedicate financial and administrative support for identified Plan objectives.

Zoning and planning boards will measure the desirability of development applications by their conformity with plan goals and objectives. In addition, they should adopt policies and procedures that actively assist those projects that comply with Plan's goals and objectives to discourage those projects that fail to honor the community's vision. Working closely with developers, local Boards will target investment to projects that promote plan objectives, reduce the need for excessive variance hearings and create detrimental development patterns.

Municipal employees will use the plan when interpreting legislative mandates, making administrative decisions, enforcing development related codes and prioritizing work efforts. Employees will understand the vision set out by the elected officials to meet the goals of the people; municipal staff will have a greater buy-in to these goals through every day decisions that are made based on the plan.

Finally, local residents will use the plan as a reference when making residential location choices, evaluating the effectiveness of local government, lobbying for financial or legislative support and when choosing political representatives. This comprehensive plan illustrates to all residents of the Town the vision set out by the officials they have elected to maintain their quality of life.

The Comprehensive Plan clearly reveals the vision for the Town of New Hartford and, therefore, sets the stage for future growth in the Town.

3.3 Adopting the Plan

Regulations regarding the adoption of a comprehensive plan are found in Town Law Section 272-a. Specific steps to be followed for adoption are:

- Referral of the draft Comprehensive Plan to the Oneida County Department of Planning in accordance with General Municipal Law Section 239-l and -m;
- One or more public hearings held by the Town Planning Board;
- One or more public hearings held by the Town Board;
- Adoption of the plan by resolution of the Town Board.

Town Law Section 272-a-10 provides for periodic review of the comprehensive plan, as follows:

"The Town Board shall provide, as a component of such proposed comprehensive plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed."

The Plan should be reviewed every five (5) years to make sure it reflects current conditions and the direction the communities wish to follow. For amending the Comprehensive Plan, the procedures are the same as those required for initial adoption of the Plan.

3.4 Preparation of the Plan

The Plan represents the collaborative effort of Town officials, Oneida County Department of Planning, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and residents. The Plan is a collection of inventory and policies prepared to guide the Town over the next 10 to 20 years. This section outlines the tasks completed in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Steering Committee Meetings

A series of meetings were held with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Committee consisted of elected and appointed Town officials, citizens and a representative of the Oneida County Planning Department. The Committee met periodically with the consultant to discuss and direct the preparation of the plan. The Committee reviewed documentation and mapping, provided contacts and helped determine representatives to participate in a series of focus group sessions. There was a visioning session held with the Committee to develop initial goals and objectives and to help define the future of the Town of New Hartford.



Public workshop participants set priorities and consider change

Inventory

A data collection process was completed for the Plan. The information contained in the Plan was supplemented by data from various governmental and private agencies, to help ensure the accuracy of the document. With the help of the various agencies, information was obtained regarding local laws and ordinances, land use, the environment, population, community services, housing, municipal services and economic development. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data was provided by Oneida County to create maps and illustrate land uses, environmental conditions and the location of community services and transportation corridors.

Focus Group Sessions & Telephone Interviews

A series of telephone interviews were conducted to obtain additional information. Many public and private sector individuals and organizations contributed data and assisted in updating previous Plan elements. There were three focus groups held on transportation and business and economic development. In addition, Town Board members and the Supervisor were interviewed.

Public Meetings/Hearings

Two interactive public meetings were conducted. The public was invited to hear about the plan and provide comments. The public meetings were held during late fall 2005 and spring 2006. These sessions helped provide the consultant and elected officials with valuable feedback on the plan and future of the Town.

Community Survey

A random survey was distributed to both homeowners and renters in the Town. The survey was designed to determine the opinions of residents on a variety of topics, including community image, recreation, transportation, housing and community services.

Implementation

Goals, policies and actions were developed for the Town of New Hartford to help guide decisions over the next 20 years. The goals, policies and actions were developed based upon the visioning session, the results of the community survey and public and community input. These goals, objectives and policies and are intended to lead to the overall improvement of the two communities and a better quality of life for all residents.