

FINAL DRAFT 12/30/08

Town of Alden Comprehensive Plan

SECTION 2.0 GOALS AND VISIONING

This section of the Comprehensive Plan presents the Goals and Objectives that were developed for the Town of Alden with the assistance of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee. The goals and objectives have been influenced by data from the inventory and analysis and input gathered from residents at public meetings and from written comments.

The goals and objectives focus on the major issues and opportunities identified by the Committee and residents. They are aimed at helping to guide future growth and development in the Town. The recommendations that are outlined in Section of this Plan include more specific actions that can be implemented to achieve the community's vision for the future.

2.1 Public Input

The Town of Alden was committed to the idea that a critical element of the planning process is effective public participation. This Comprehensive Plan was prepared with extensive public input. A variety of mechanisms were utilized to solicit input, including three public meetings, comment forms for the submittal of written comments, public opinion surveys, meetings with government officials and organizations, an internet website and press releases. In addition, the entire process was closely overseen by the Advisory Committee, which was comprised of residents and others from around the community who represented a variety of interests. The Committee met on a regular basis to provide guidance and insight into the planning process to ensure that the views and concerns of the community were effectively addressed.

A. Public Information Meeting

At the onset of the project, a public information meeting was held in the Alden Village Hall on July 29, 2008. This meeting was held to introduce the public to the planning consultants, the Advisory Committee and the project. A brief overview of the project, the reasoning behind it and an understanding of how the plan would be developed was provided. This was followed by an open discussion of important issues and opportunities designed to generate public comments. An important goal of this meeting was to gather as much public input as possible regarding what features residents liked about their community, where they had concerns and what they saw as key opportunities for improving their quality of life. Brainstorming encouraged those in attendance to articulate their vision for the Town. In addition, a short public opinion survey was presented to the attendees to reinforce what was heard. Based on the input gathered at this meeting, a preliminary draft of the goals and objectives was developed.

B. Public Focus Meeting

A second meeting with the public was held on November 18, 2008 to present the draft goals and objectives and take the opportunity to reconfirm what was heard at the first meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to make sure the thoughts and concerns of the public were "heard" and that the planning process was heading in the right direction. The center point of this meeting was a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of key issues that were identified at the public information meeting and through continued discussion with the Advisory Committee. In addition, a second public opinion survey was presented to strengthen the input gathered through the SWOT analysis.

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C. Public Charrette Meeting

A third meeting was held with the public on ** in the form of a design charrette. The purpose of this highly interactive meeting was to allow residents and others to actively participate in the development and clarification of the recommendations for the Plan. The draft recommendations and a Vision Map for the community, which were developed by the planning consultants and the Advisory Committee, were presented for comments and critique. Citizens were divided into smaller groups to discuss the vision and specific recommendations in greater detail. The input from this meeting was used to strengthen and finalize the recommendations and vision for the Plan.

2.2 Goals and Objectives

The Goals and Objectives of a Comprehensive Plan set forth a shared vision for the Town's future. They represent the values and priorities of the community and serve as a guide for evaluating future land use and planning decisions. The shared vision articulated in the community's goals also provides guidance for decision makers at the local, County and State levels. The goals in the Comprehensive Plan are general in nature, so they can remain relevant over the long-term. These goals also form the foundation for the community's vision for the future, as well as the recommendations and specific actions that the Town will implement to achieve it.

A. Preserve and Promote the Rural Character and Quality of Life in the Town

The Town of Alden is mainly a rural community with several hamlets scattered throughout the countryside. Elements of the community that contribute to this rural character include low density residential development, open fields, forested lands and lands used for agriculture. The small town character promotes a diversity of social interaction that adds to the quality of the community. The following objectives support the protection of the quality of life and rural character of the Town:

- ◆ Manage growth in the Town to ensure that development occurs at an appropriate scale, style, and pace, and in locations that are suitable for the type of development being proposed.
- ◆ Ensure new development is reasonably compatible with adjacent land uses.
- ◆ New development should be located in a manner that does not sacrifice viable and valuable farmland and farm soils.
- ◆ Maintain and protect the existing high quality of life and small-town identity of the community.
- ◆ Encourage non-traditional styles of development, such as cluster development and conservation subdivisions, in order to foster efficient use of land and transportation facilities.
- ◆ Promote walkability and reasonable connections to the Village of Alden.
- ◆ Support and enhance the community as an attractive destination.
- ◆ Protect and control the aesthetic character of Broadway (US 20) with appropriate architectural, landscaping and setback standards and limit the size and scale of commercial development.
- ◆ Encourage commercial growth in areas closer to the Village to promote walkability and connectivity.
- ◆ Support the adaptive reuse and redevelopment of existing vacant buildings.
- ◆ Connect the recreational uses and green spaces in the Town and Village.

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- ◆ Promote sustainable land use practices and energy efficient development and redevelopment.
- ◆ Promote and support the maintenance of the existing transportation system and infrastructure in the Town.
- ◆ Protect, promote and create community gatherings, social interaction and areas that bring people together.
- ◆ Critical areas of the Town, including gateways such as the Millgrove area of Town should be revitalized to add to the image of the community.

B. Protect important Cultural and Environmental Resources of the Town

The Town of Alden consists of several cultural and historic resources that are deemed important to the community and should be protected. The Town consists of several natural habitat areas and other environmental resources that contribute to the rural character and beauty of the community. Additionally, there are a number of creeks and streams, wetlands and floodplain areas that are vital environmental resources in the community. The following objectives support the protection of natural habitats and other environmental resources throughout the Town.

- ◆ Educate the public on the importance of preserving the Town's culture and heritage.
- ◆ Promote cooperation with the Village of Alden to protect the quality of the groundwater and the groundwater aquifer to ensure continued viability of private wells.
- ◆ Participate in watershed protection programs that affect the resources in the Town.
- ◆ Identify Ellicott and Cayuga Creeks as parts of stream corridors of regional significance and work with the County to identify means to preserve and enhance these resources.
- ◆ Protect and enhance the Joe Panza Nature Trail as an important recreational and environmental resource in the Town Park.
- ◆ Promote the preservation of the archaeologically-significant Slate Banks area of Ellicott Creek.
- ◆ Protect and promote the preservation important prime farmland soils in the community.
- ◆ Promote conservation farming to reduce the impact on natural habitats and environmental resources.
- ◆ Evaluate the agricultural resource value of the soils and lands along Broadway and devise appropriate ways to balance development interests in that area of the Town.
- ◆ Encourage public education to promote septic system maintenance.
- ◆ Promote the protection of natural drainage and stream corridors and watersheds.
- ◆ Promote the protection of floodplains and environmentally significant (protected) wetland areas, and limit the amount of development that occurs in these areas.
- ◆ Minimize the negative impacts of erosion, sedimentation and storm drainage on natural resources.
- ◆ Support and promote the collection of household hazardous wastes.
- ◆ Consider scenic resources as an important natural element and minimize the negative visual impacts of development so as to preserve these resources.
- ◆ Research and consider a plan to capitalize on the history of the Blackwater Baths that were an important element of the Town in the early 20th century.
- ◆ Support the efforts of the Alden Historic Society and protect and promote the benefits of the Historic Museum.

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C. *Encourage a Diversity of Economic Development Activity throughout the Town*

Economic development should be promoted to diversify the Town's economy, provide jobs, and increase the Town's tax base. Local businesses should be supported and protected. Agricultural operations are also an important part of the economy of the Town. The Town should encourage further economic development through the following objectives.

- ◆ Protect and support the existing economic base of the Town and viability of existing businesses.
- ◆ Target areas for new businesses and industries along major transportation corridors and in areas with adequate infrastructure.
- ◆ To the greatest extent possible, encourage development of new businesses that are compatible with neighboring uses and are in character with the surrounding area.
- ◆ Increase the diversity of industry and commerce in the community.
- ◆ Encourage the development of retail and commercial uses along US 20, adjacent to the Village of Alden, and in appropriate locations along Route 33 and Walden Avenue.
- ◆ Promote cooperative programs that provide area youth with opportunities to learn and offer businesses improved manpower resources.
- ◆ Work cooperatively with, and support the goals of, the Alden Chamber of Commerce and the Alden Economic Development Committee to secure and expand business opportunities in appropriate locations in the Town.
- ◆ Engage regional economic development agencies to promote adequate and stable employment opportunities.
- ◆ Support home occupation uses that are not disruptive to the surrounding community.
- ◆ Encourage growth patterns, land use policies and conservation measures that are respectful of agricultural operations and productive farmland.
- ◆ Build public support for the community's farms and farmers and promote, protect and assist agriculture as a functional sector of the local economy.
- ◆ Promote agri-tourism as a means of enhancing the economic vitality of agriculture.
- ◆ Encourage and allow farm related business as a secondary interest and support service to farming.
- ◆ Support organic farming and other appropriate methods as a viable form of sustainable agriculture.
- ◆ Continue to work with Erie County and the State of New York officials to ensure that State and County owned lands are properly maintained and contribute to the local economy.

D. *Encourage a Diversity of Housing Types*

As the population of the Town changes over time and the economic conditions vary, the housing stock should be diversified to accommodate the changing needs of the community. The following objectives encourage a diversity of housing types throughout the Town:

- ◆ Maintain the high quality of the existing housing stock.

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- ◆ Encourage the provision of a greater variety of housing styles and types to accommodate a wider range of housing preferences, income levels, and household types.
- ◆ Recognize the needs of senior citizens to help them remain in the community.
- ◆ Maintain and protect residential property values.
- ◆ Encourage the development of housing in a manner that discourages sprawl and enables residents to use existing services and infrastructure efficiently.

E. Provide Potable Water to Areas of the Town that are in need

Potable water is a quality of life issue that can become tainted if the viability of private wells diminishes or if the quality of groundwater diminishes. The Town supports providing public water to appropriate areas of the Town, where feasible, in order to address the needs of its residents. The following objectives support providing potable water to appropriate areas of the Town:

- ◆ Continue to work with the Erie County Water Authority to further outline and identify what additional areas of the Town should receive public water.
- ◆ Provide public water to areas where the quality or quantity of potable water resources threatens public health.
- ◆ Provide public water in appropriate areas to help guide where development should occur.
- ◆ Help to protect groundwater and surface water resources from contamination from failing septic systems and other sources of pollution.
- ◆ Promote the provision of assistance for improving farming practices to protect the quality of groundwater and the environment.

F. Maintain and Promote Efficiency and Cooperation in Government

The Town of Alden should strive to offer the highest quality and most cost-effective services possible. The following objectives support the efficiency of government in the Town:

- ◆ Maintain and enhance the strong collaboration between the Town and the Village of Alden.
- ◆ Promote the consolidation and sharing of services, equipment, and personnel, to the extent practicable, with the Village and other municipalities to cut costs and to maintain a high level of service.
- ◆ Maintain and enhance the strong collaboration between the community and the school district.
- ◆ Advocate effective zoning, land use and development regulations and enforcement.
- ◆ Manage long-term growth and development in the Town through a comprehensive planning process and through all aspects of government.
- ◆ Plan for and foster a balance and diversity of uses within the Town to control the costs of, and need for, public services and future service upgrades.
- ◆ Evaluate and potentially implement creative concepts for reducing costs within the community (energy, delivery of services, etc.).
- ◆ Address ownership issues of large tracts of undeveloped land under the jurisdiction of the County and State.
- ◆ Maintain and improve infrastructure systems in the Town.

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- ◆ Work with the County on their implementation of the “Framework for Regional Growth” to ensure that the County’s policies and actions support the needs of the Town and its residents.