

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update

No. 2655.1

SECTION II: VISIONING AND GOALS

This section of the Comprehensive Plan Update presents the Vision, Goals and Objectives that have been developed for the Town of Tonawanda, with the assistance of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The goals and objectives have been influenced by data from the inventory and analysis and input gathered from stakeholders and the public at meetings that were conducted throughout the planning process, as noted in Section 2.3.

The vision and the goals and objectives are focused on major issues and opportunities identified by the Steering Committee and the public. They are designed to help guide future growth and development in the Town. The recommendations that are included in Section IV of this Plan include more specific actions that can be implemented to achieve the community's vision for the future.

2.1 COMMUNITY VISION

A vision statement for the Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update was created using input from the public, stakeholders and Steering Committee. The action strategies included in this Plan are designed to achieve the following:

“To improve quality of life and create a vibrant and sustainable community in which the environmental, social, economic, built and human capital collectively make the Town one of the most attractive suburbs in Erie County and New York State, through strategic improvements to natural resources, neighborhoods and housing, commercial and industrial buildings and sites, and essential infrastructure, services and amenities”.

This vision is founded on the following themes, which inform the goals and objectives:

Physical Environment

- Environmental protection and sustainability
- Environmental restoration and enhancement
- Locations for economic development
- Locations for public access to waterfront resources and recreation
- Improvement connectivity to businesses, highways and shoreline recreational amenities

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Maintaining and enhancing quality of life and sense of place
- Revitalization through strategic investment
- Strong, diverse, market-rate housing stock to address the needs of younger and older residents
- Community pride and investment

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

- Public safety
- Strong schools

Economic Development

- Ensuring goods, services and jobs for residents
- Maintaining a healthy, sustainable tax base
- Revitalization of local business districts and neighborhood shopping areas with mixed uses
- Strong regional shopping destinations
- Growth and investment in well planned commercial development
- Improving aesthetics to enhance the overall image of commercial areas and corridors
- Supporting sustainable commercial and industrial retention and new development
- Sufficient utility services to support business development

Traffic, Transportation and Connectivity

- Reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality
- Managing roadway access to improve traffic safety and efficiency
- Improving pedestrian travel and accessibility
- Creating/improving multi-modal connections and access to services and amenities
- Creating complete streets and improving the aesthetics of local roadways

Essential Services and Amenities

- High quality, cost effective public facilities and systems
- A variety of high quality public services and amenities, particularly for youth and older residents
- Intermunicipal and interagency cooperation and coordination

2.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives represent a framework for the Town of Tonawanda's vision for the future. They establish guidance for the development of recommendations and action strategies aimed at achieving this vision. The goals and objectives have been devised using input from the general public, stakeholders and Town representatives, combined with the findings of an analysis of the inventory and analysis of existing conditions. The goals are general in nature so that they can be utilized to guide decision making in the Town across a broad range of issues. The recommendations and implementation strategies found in Sections IV and V include more specific actions that the Town can undertake to achieve the intent of these goals and objectives. The Town has identified seven goals, as follows.

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

The motto of the Town of Tonawanda is “A Great Place to Live, Work and Play”. Natural resources, residential and economic activity, transportation and public services are all key elements for building a strong, vibrant community, as envisioned in this motto, and for improving quality of life.

Goal 1 – Maintain the safety, high quality of life, public health and sustainability of our community

Objectives:

Physical Environment

- Maintain high standards of service and maintenance at neighborhood parks and other public facilities.
- Encourage the maintenance and upkeep of privately owned property.
- Improve strategies and policies for managing and maintaining open and public spaces.
- Improve connectivity throughout the Town, particularly to and along the waterfront.
- Improve public access to waterfront assets.

Public Services

- Maintain the high quality of Town services, including highways, waste management, water delivery, recreational amenities and programs, senior and youth services, police protection, libraries and other public services.
- Integrate quality of life issues consciously in Town decision-making actions, looking at potential impacts on local residents and businesses, as well as on the built and natural environment.
- Promote regular coordination with school districts to keep abreast of changes and to help maintain the high quality of the educational system and local schools.
- Encourage the continued use of schools as neighborhood centers and a source of community identity and pride.

Citizen Participation

- Promote the continuance of volunteer citizen support activities and public involvement with quality of life issues, the planning of public projects and the establishment of broad public goals.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Natural resources contribute to the character of the Town and provide important environmental benefits. The creeks, river and riverfront, parks and other open space areas and natural

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

features merit protection as irreplaceable and essential assets. The remediation of contaminated lands is also vital to community revitalization and environmental quality.

Goal 2 – Support the preservation of environmental features and the continued remediation of former waste sites

Objectives:

Preservation of Natural Resources

- Provide for the preservation of waterways in the Town, including the Niagara River, Ellicott Creek, Tonawanda Creek, Two Mile Creek and Rattlesnake Creek, and maintain and undertake actions to improve their water quality and habitat.
- Recognize the value of remaining open space, including wetlands and floodplains, as wildlife habitat and a community resource.
- Provide attractive public parks, trails, streetscapes, linear parks and waterfront facilities that take advantage of the environmental features in the Town, and improve public access to these assets.

Reduce Impacts to Natural Resources

- Support and encourage continued progress with the remediation of brownfields and former waste sites, and their appropriate reuse.
- Promote efforts that recognize the importance and benefits of environmental protection and sustainability, such as recycling and re-use, clean energy, reduced emissions, etc.
- Continue to incorporate sustainable practices into Town government and services.

HOW WE LIVE

The high quality neighborhoods in Tonawanda contribute to community character and quality of life for residents. The housing stock is generally in good condition and offers opportunities for individuals, young families and empty nesters.

Goal 3 – Maintain and enhance the vitality of neighborhoods and neighborhood centers, and retain a diverse stock of residential properties that meets the needs of all residents

Objectives:

Housing Stock

- Encourage investment and reinvestment in the existing homes, buildings and neighborhoods to maintain their value and quality.

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

- Promote redevelopment and infill development that provides a variety of housing types, styles and sizes.
- Ensure the availability of housing that addresses the needs of seniors and empty nesters.
- Encourage the establishment of programs to plan and finance the revitalization, sustainability and redevelopment of residential and business properties.
- Promote walkability and connectivity between neighborhoods and economic centers.

Neighborhood Services

- Guide commercial redevelopment to support neighborhoods in mix and scale.
- Encourage activities and actions that make neighborhood shops attractive and accessible places for local residents.
- Guide commercial investment to improve aesthetics with enhanced landscaping and exterior design.
- Establish tax incentive districts to help revitalize distressed commercial properties, i.e., façade improvements, landscaping, maintenance/repairs, etc.
- Support private and public actions to improve the function and appearance of the Town through investment in landscaping and infrastructure, such as sidewalks, utilities, drainage and roadways.

WHERE WE WORK

Economic development is important to meet the needs of residents for goods and services, offer a range of employment opportunities, generate tax revenues to support public services and otherwise contribute to a prosperous, vibrant and sustainable community. The Town has a large supply of available land for light industrial and commercial development and redevelopment. Ensuring that existing developed areas remain attractive places to do business is also a Town priority.

Goal 4 – Promote smart, sustainable and well-planned economic development opportunities.

Objectives:

Physical Environment

- Identify and promote investment in key geographic areas for targeted business activities (e.g., neighborhood nodes, retail and commercial corridors, office and industrial parks).
- Encourage a supply of real estate options (e.g., vacant land, existing building) to meet the physical needs of target businesses.
- Encourage the productive re-use of challenged real estate (e.g., functionally obsolete or abandoned lands and brownfields).

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

- Encourage high design standards to ensure that business areas remain safe and attractive places.
- Ensure that land use controls and infrastructure are consistent with requirements of target companies, and that review processes are clear, responsive and streamlined.
- Ensure that target businesses have convenient access for employees and access to raw materials and markets through multiple modes of transportation.
- Keep neighborhood business districts vital, active and attractive locations for shopping and leisure.

Public Services

- Ensure that the Town's tax structure and rate is sustainable for desired and required services (e.g., police protection, highway, water resources, etc.).
- Encourage public transportation and pedestrian connections to increase the ability of residents to access goods and services and employment opportunities throughout the community.

HOW WE MOVE

Transportation issues impact economic development, quality of life and community revitalization. Transportation improvements are needed in certain locations to alleviate traffic congestion or unsafe conditions. There is also support for alternatives to automobile travel, including walking, bicycling and improved public transit opportunities.

Goal 5 – Promote a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system

Objectives:

Character of Streets

- Promote “complete streets” policies when undertaking public improvement capital projects and other transportation improvements.
- Address the need for pedestrian safety improvements at critical locations.

Connectivity

- Promote connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial centers, including pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.
- Support sidewalk maintenance and fill gaps in the sidewalk network in the Town.
- Enhance existing levels of public transportation service and expand transit opportunities, where feasible.

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update No. 2655.1

Access Management

- Institute access management techniques, where appropriate, to improve traffic flow and public safety.
- Support traffic improvements that reduce congestion and promote efficiency, mobility and safety.

Planning

- Coordinate transportation improvements with surrounding communities, Erie County, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the New York State Thruway Authority (NYSTA), the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC).
- Continue roadway maintenance programs, including pavement rehabilitation, curbs, sidewalks and stormwater management systems, where necessary, to ensure the quality and efficacy of the highway system.

SERVICES WE NEED TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

Public facilities and infrastructure enable life-dependent services in the community that require continued investment and maintenance to remain effective. Excellent facilities and services have been a hallmark of the Town and one reason why it remains a desirable location to live, work and play.

Goal 6 – Ensure coordinated, high quality, well-maintained and cost effective facilities and services that are required by residents and businesses in a sustainable community

Objectives:

Water Resources

- Maintain and revitalize infrastructure, including systems and facilities for water treatment and distribution, wastewater recovery and stormwater management.
- Ensure new water and sewer lines and treatment facilities and incorporate provisions for future expansion to support increased economic development in appropriate locations.
- Improve coordination and planning between public service providers in the Town.

Public Safety

- Maintain an enabled police force that is capable of reacting and responding to known and unknown concerns.
- Promote public involvement and awareness.
- Promote and maintain fire and paramedic response capabilities to ensure efficient and dependable services.
- Continue to balance quality of life and safety initiatives.

Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update

No. 2655.1

PUBLIC POLICIES

Intermunicipal and regional coordination and cooperation is becoming increasingly more important. There are public policies that are common to all goals and objectives, including best management practices for efficient and effective outcomes for economic development, transportation, housing, environmental protection and community services. The Town influences, and is influenced by, other communities and their actions and planning, as well as those of school districts and other governmental agencies. The Town's interrelationship with these entities is constrained at times, but there are opportunities for improved planning and cooperation.

Goal 7 – Institute best management practices to enhance the efficiency and efficacy of Town government and planning, and strive to improve interaction with other communities and agencies.

Objectives:

Holistic Planning

- Identify policies and adopt best practices to engender a holistic approach to building and maintaining a safe, prosperous and sustainable community.
- Address infrastructure construction projects in a holistic manner rather than one utility at a time on a given street.
- Make provisions for strategic and cost effective maintenance and replacement of facilities and equipment.
- Install systems and programs that support public health and welfare.
- Keep abreast of, and be responsive to, Federal and State regulations and grant opportunities.
- Recognize and promote regional influence and participate in regional planning efforts to ensure that Town goals and objectives recognize and reflect regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Intermunicipal and Governmental Planning and Coordination

- Continue shared facility usage and investigate areas where shared services and/or costs between two or more communities are appropriate to encourage joint efforts in these areas.
- Explore the potential for joint public service activities (with Village of Kenmore), and participate where benefits would result.
- Work with State and County agencies on economic development efforts to increase opportunities in the Town.
- Maintain a high level of collaboration and coordination of efforts with the school districts, adjacent communities and other levels of government.
- Stay involved in regional planning efforts, working with local, state and federal agencies on issues such as the Niagara River.

***Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update
No. 2655.1***

2.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

The Town of Tonawanda is committed to the idea that a critical element of the planning process is effective public participation. The Comprehensive Plan Update was prepared with and influenced by public input. A variety of methods were utilized to solicit input, including three public meetings, stakeholders' meetings with representatives from agencies and organizations, comment forms for the submittal of written comments, an internet website, and news articles and press releases. In addition, the entire planning process was closely overseen by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, which was established by the Town Board and comprised of Town representatives with a range of interests in the community. The Committee met on a regular basis to provide guidance and insight to ensure that the views and concerns of the community were effectively addressed. Meeting summaries from all public, stakeholders' and Steering Committee meetings are contained in Appendix B.

A. Stakeholders' Focus Meetings

The Town conducted a series of three focus meetings with stakeholders that were centered around economic development, transportation and community facilities. These meetings were held on November 12, 2013 to gather input from State and local agencies and community representatives to help advance the Comprehensive Plan Update. Meeting participants used workbooks that were designed to identify issues and opportunities, as well as ways for the Town to improve cooperation and coordination with these agencies and organizations to improve quality of life and strengthen its position in the region.

B. Public Information Meeting

At the onset of the project, a public information meeting was held at the Braunshidle VFW Post on November 26, 2013. This meeting was held to introduce the public to the planning consultants (Project Team), the Steering Committee and the project. A brief overview of the project, the reasoning behind it, and understanding of how the Plan would be developed, was provided. This was followed by breakout discussions on important issues and opportunities designed to generate input. Meeting participants utilized workbooks to discuss and analyze priority issues. The goals of this meeting was to gather as much public input as possible regarding concerns and key opportunities for improving the Town and their quality of life. Based on the input gathered at this meeting, a preliminary draft of the goals and objectives was developed. The summary ideas and mapping from this meeting was posted on the Town's website.

**Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan Update
No. 2655.1**

C. Public Focus Meeting

A second meeting was held with public on April 22, 2014 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 review and clarification of the draft recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan Update. The draft recommendations and a Vision Map for the community, which were developed by the Project Team and the Steering Committee, were presented for comments and critique. Citizens were divided into smaller groups to confirm 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. The results of this meeting were posted on the Town's website.

D. Public Hearing

A public hearing was conducted on **, 2014 to provide a final opportunity for the public to review the final draft Comprehensive Plan Update and offer additional input and comments prior to Town Board consideration of the Plan for adoption. This hearing also satisfied SEQR review requirements.

DRAFT