

Seneca County Comprehensive Plan

Introduction



Contents

Planning for Change	3
Public Input and Guiding Principles	4
Agriculture	4
Housing	4
Economic Development	4
Environmental Conservation	5
The Importance of Regional Cooperation	6

List of Tables

Table 1. Comprehensive Plan Public Input Process	5
Table 2. Selected Regional Configurations of Counties	7

Photo Credits

All photos courtesy of the Seneca County Industrial Development Agency.

Planning for Change

Seneca County faces change whether we like it or not. The only question is how we will manage the inevitable transformations of the places in which we live.

Our new comprehensive plan will help us anticipate and manage change. The plan embodies the values held by the vast majority of County residents. These values inform the plan's goals and strategies so the County can have the look and feel that residents seek. In other words, the comprehensive plan is a framework for achieving outcomes that are desired by the entire community. It is our guide to a preferred future based on the common good.

The County's previous comprehensive plan was adopted in 1995. Since that time, the use of cell phones and internet applications has become widespread, such as GPS which is used to track farm animals as well as personal vehicles. Many responsibilities for implementing the federal Clean Water Act have been downloaded to the County, and the Seneca Army Depot has completely closed as a permanent military base. Since 1995, green energy, organic farming, and the offshoring of manufacturing jobs have become commonplace. We now debate hydrofracking, casino gambling, and climate change, and our County is older and ethnically more diverse.

In other words, change has crept up on us. Our attitudes and perceptions have changed, and thus we must adjust the County's course based on current aspirations and realities.

Our new comprehensive plan will influence the decisions of the County's elected officials and staff about budget, land use, asset management, and workforce planning, so that County government can deliver services consistent with the performance that residents want and need for many years to come.

The plan contains specific strategies devoted to agriculture, housing, economic development, and environmental conservation. These strategies were developed as stand-alone chapters to make it easier to periodically update as conditions change and new information becomes available.

Despite the chapter-book format, the plan recognizes the interdependence of all of the elements to protect the County's unique assets and improve the quality of life of all residents.



The comprehensive plan is our guide to a preferred future based on the common good.

Public Input and Guiding Principles

Through a combination of a community survey, public meeting, focus groups, steering committees, and other community exercises, residents and other stakeholders articulated a set of principles to guide the County's decision making in four key areas that impact our future:

Agriculture

- Recognize the diversity of agriculture within the County.
- Support local production, processing, and marketing of agricultural products.
- Support the preservation of prime farmland.
- Encourage environmental stewardship.
- Promote the education about and awareness of the value of agriculture in Seneca County.

Housing

- Promote and encourage involvement in State, Federal, and local programs aimed at improving housing quality for all Seneca County residents.
- Promote and encourage opportunities for Seneca County residents to participate in energy efficiency improvement programs.
- Promote and encourage safe, decent, and affordable housing options for all Seneca County residents.
- Promote and encourage a wide variety of housing options and quality living experiences for all Seneca County residents.

Economic Development

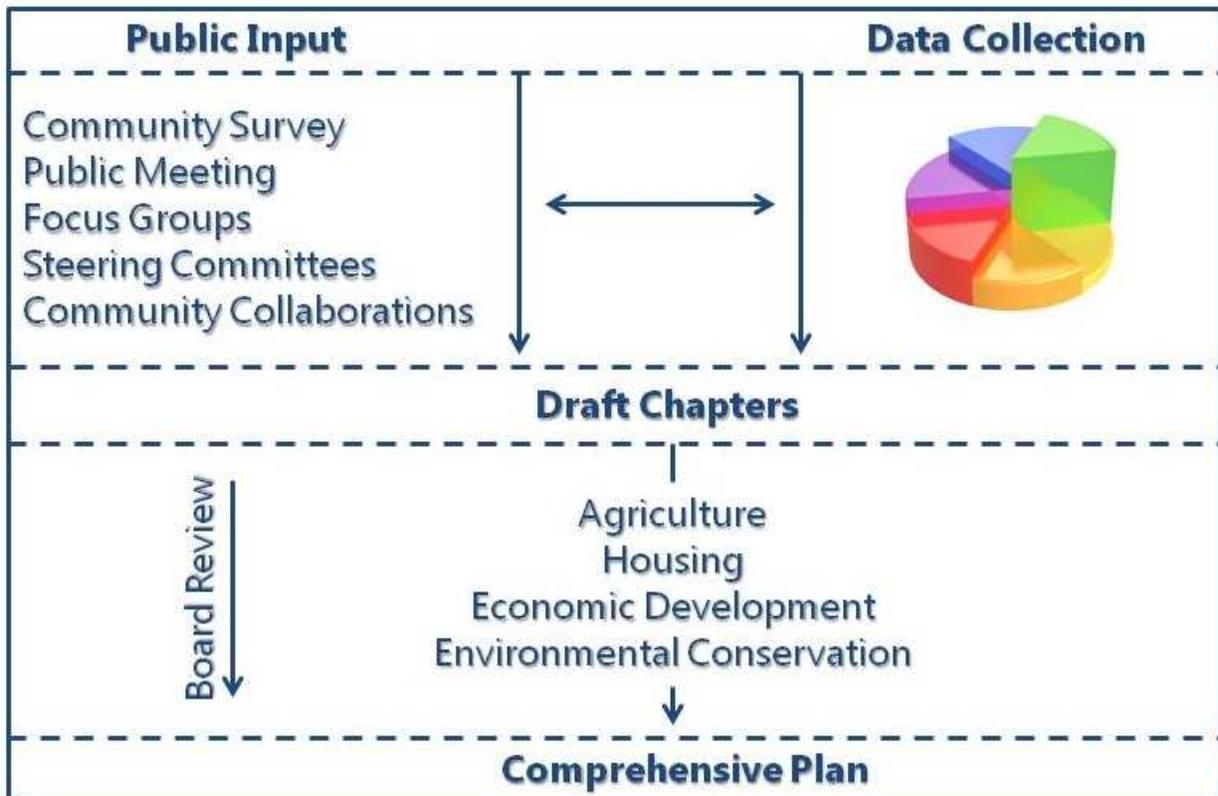
- Develop a strong, growing, diversified economy.
- Integrate both short- and long-term economic, environmental, and social considerations into decision making.
- Allow for broad community involvement on decisions and actions that affect them.
- Avoid serious or irreversible damage to the environment.
- Assess the risk-weighted consequences of various options.
- Make those who generate pollution, waste, and damage bear the costs of containment, avoidance, abatement, or repair.
- Build these principals into regulatory approaches.

Environmental Conservation

- Protect and enhance the integrity and economic viability of Seneca County’s natural resources for current and future residents.
- Ensure the long-term preservation of surface and groundwater resources in Seneca County.
- Promote sustainable waste management.
- Continue to identify and promote the preservation of cultural, historic, and scenic resources that celebrate Seneca County’s heritage.

In accordance with public input and the guiding principles, draft chapters of the comprehensive plan were developed. Each chapter was reviewed for content, accuracy, and style by a steering committee and/or community groups with expertise and experience in the topic covered by the chapter. The draft chapters were revised and presented to the County Board of Supervisors for their comment. Adoption-ready final chapters were then prepared.

Table 1. Comprehensive Plan Public Input Process



The Importance of Regional Cooperation

There are no regional governments in New York State, nor do regions have any special powers under State law. Yet regions are very important to Seneca County, and the County is committed to collaborating with other governmental agencies to improve the effectiveness of public planning and development on issues and projects of mutual benefit.

As we travel across the State, we notice an enormous variation in local economies, environments, and communities. At the regional scale, however, these variations become more defined. We can see, for example, patterns in how people commute to and from work, or how surface waters flow. Most often, these patterns do not follow county boundaries. People live in one county and work in another. Polluted storm water runoff may originate in one county and empty into a lake in another. Thus, many issues outlined in this plan are beyond the full control of local government, including County government. Examples include natural resource management, transportation, affordable housing, workforce development, and public health.



Regions are a useful scale to plan for many economic and environmental activities, and New York State increasingly plans and allocates resources by region. Most state agencies divide the state into regions. The boundaries of these regions do not always coincide, and Seneca County finds itself in several different regional configurations of counties.

Sometimes planning is accomplished through one regional agency, but funding comes from another. Always, there is a certain level of competition between counties in the same region for State and Federal funds. It is, therefore, extremely important for Seneca County to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with neighboring counties and with State and Federal agencies. Seneca County has an admirable record of initiating partnerships with adjacent counties for specific projects, such as developing multi-use trails and studying more ways for people to get to where they need to go without a personal motor vehicle. County government is also committed to encouraging and establishing partnerships with our towns, villages, and school districts on important issues, while at the same time respecting the local identities so vital to the implementation of any policy.

The table on the following page lists some of the regions of which Seneca County is a part. These regions deal with environmental, transportation, and economic issues. The list is by no means complete. There are also regions for tourism, food, wine, emergency management, and other purposes.

Table 2. Selected Regional Configurations of Counties

Selected Regions		
ENVIRONMENT		
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation—Region 8	SLAP-5 (Seneca Lake Area Partners in 5 Counties) Region	Finger Lakes Regional Sustainability Plan Region
Chemung Genesee Livingston Monroe Ontario Orleans Schuyler Seneca Steuben Wayne Yates	Chemung Ontario Seneca Schuyler Yates	Genesee Livingston Monroe Ontario Orleans Seneca Wayne Wyoming Yates
TRANSPORTATION		
NYS Department of Transportation – Region 3	Genesee Transportation Council Region	Regional Transportation Planning Coalition Region
Cayuga Cortland Onondaga Oswego Seneca Tompkins	Genesee Livingston Monroe Ontario Orleans Seneca Wayne Wyoming Yates	Cayuga Chemung Cortland Schuyler Seneca Tioga Tompkins
ECONOMY		
Empire State Development Region	Finger Lakes Workforce Investment Board Region	Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Region
Genesee Livingston Monroe Ontario Orleans Seneca Wayne Wyoming Yates	Ontario Seneca Wayne Yates	Genesee Livingston Monroe Ontario Orleans Seneca Wayne Wyoming Yates