

SENECA COUNTY, NEW YORK

2011 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

HOUSING PLAN

Version 1.0, adopted 11 January 2011



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Data Collection

This chapter has been developed through analysis of three sources: available public records such as the US Census 2000 and the Seneca County Office of Real Property Tax Services; from 2009 interviews and surveys with the human service and economic development agencies that serve Seneca County; and from the 2010 Seneca County Comprehensive Plan Survey that generated 267 responses from the residents of the County.

The data available to Seneca County agencies and non-profit organizations is fairly limited. US Census information is now eleven years old, and the 2006-2008 Census estimates are generally regarded as inaccurate. Real Property data is useful, is updated annually, and housing condition criteria mirrors that of the State and Federal program housing condition criteria. However, it tells of very little of the actual use of the property, and without a GIS system to help create spatial maps of the data, we are unable to easily tease out the rental properties, seasonal properties, and what – if any – housing burden exists on those living in the housing unit.

Agency Surveys. In 2009, the Seneca County Department of Planning and Community Development sent out surveys to the over thirty human services and economic development agencies serving Seneca County that had an interest in housing issues, encouraging them to describe what they perceived as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to housing in Seneca County. Eighteen agencies responded, clearly saying that all Seneca County residents needed access to safe, decent, and affordable housing, and that more financial assistance from State and Federal agencies was necessary to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

Most Important Housing Issues

Agencies	Issue
14	Opportunity To Live In Safe Decent Affordable Housing
12	Sufficient Emergency/Transitional/Permanent Housing

Source: 2009 Seneca County Housing Coalition Agency Survey

Top Weaknesses in Seneca County's Housing Situation

Agencies	Issue
5	Affordability
5	Lack of public understanding of Special Needs & LMI household housing problems
5	Lack of safe, affordable, decent housing
4	Lack of Emergency & Transitional Housing - Single/Single Family
4	Lack of multi-family Low-Moderate Income rental properties
3	Housing Maintenance/Repair needs
3	Lack of recognition that housing issues are integral to community/economic development
3	Lack of broad public support for housing plan and housing agenda

Source: 2009 Seneca County Housing Coalition Agency Survey

These responses reflect the most important issues by the responding agencies. The full list of survey responses is shown in the Appendix, Tables 13 and 14. The list of responding agencies is included as Table 15.

Resident Surveys. During the Spring of 2010, the Seneca County Department of Planning and Community Development conducted a survey of residents to understand what they thought was important for the future of the County. The Department received 267 responses from a wide range of residents from across the entire county and across the income levels. Among the questions asked in the survey, respondents were asked to rate what they felt were the key priority issues related to housing. Results were collated and analyzed to produce a priority ranking of the answers for the County as a whole, but also subdivided by region: North County (Fayette and north to Junius and Tyre), South County (Varick south to Lodi and Covert), Villages (Interlaken, Lodi, Ovid, Waterloo and Seneca Falls Villages) and Rural (all towns, excluding village responses).

2010 Comp Plan Survey Question: What is most important to our Neighborhoods

Top Four Results (of 9 Choices)	Countywide	North County	South County	Rural County	Villagers
Protecting Property Investment	1	1	1	1	3
High Neighborhood Quality Of Life	2	2	3	2	1
Properties Well Maintained	3	3	2	3	2
Opportunity To Live In Safe, Decent, Affordable Housing	4	5	5	5	4
Reducing Property Taxes	5	6	4	4	7
<i>Total Number of Responses</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Notes: Number is the ranking of that issue, based upon the respondent's selection, and the number of responses for that selection. 1,2,3... means that the #1 issue had more "most importants" than any other issue.</i>					
<i>Source: Appendix, Table 4.</i>					

Top Five Housing Issues that Government Should Concentrate On in Your Community

(18 Choices)	Countywide	North County	South County	Rural County	Villagers
Main Street Incentive Programs	1	1	2	2	1
Reducing Property Taxes	2	2	1	1	5
Ensuring Safe Decent Affordable Housing	3	3	7	3	4
Energy Efficiency Programs	4	4	3	4	2
Expand Utility Access	5	6	5	5	10
Home Repairs For Low-Moderate Income	6	8	4	6	6
Home Repair Programs for All	7	5	11	8	3
<i>Total Number of Responses</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Notes: Number is the ranking of that issue, based upon the respondent's selection, and the number of responses for that selection. 1,2,3... means that the #1 issue had more "most importants" than any other issue.</i>					
<i>Source: Appendix, Table 5.</i>					

Top Four Housing Development Strategies

	Countywide	North County	South County	Rural County	Villagers
Energy Efficiency Programs	1	1	1	1	1
Increasing Code Enforcement	2	2	2	2	3
Improve Quality and Attract Middle Income Families	3	3	4	3	2
Targeting Eyesores	4	4	3	4	4
<i>Total Number of Responses</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Notes: Number is the ranking of that issue, based upon the respondent's selection, and the number of responses for that selection. 1,2,3... means that the #1 issue had more "most important" than any other issue.</i>					
<i>Source: Appendix, Table 6.</i>					

Again, the number represents the ranking of importance of each issue, based upon the survey responses collected.

Existing Housing Stock

According to data from the Seneca County Real Property Tax Office and the 2000 U.S. Census, Seneca County has 14,262 housing units; 9,322 (65.4%) owner-occupied homes, 2,956 rental units (20.7%), and 1,984 manufactured homes (13.9%). 27.3% of Mobile Homes are located in the County's eight Manufactured Home parks, the remaining 1,443 are on their own land. Roughly 17.3% of all Seneca County housing stock is either vacant or seasonal.

Like many communities throughout Upstate New York, a large portion of Seneca County's housing stock is aging. 57% of the County's housing is over 50 years old, and 41% is over 70 years old, with the 1953 as the median year built (Table 1). Older homes require more maintenance and upkeep, usually requiring complete replacements of vital systems (roof, electrical, and furnace) every twenty-five years to keep up with Building Codes and remain safe. Older homes interiors usually used lead-based paint, which creates a hazard especially for young children, and can be very expensive to fully remove. Villages tend to have even older median age homes, particularly with rental properties.

Community	Number of Housing Units	Median Age (2010)	Median Year Built
Interlaken Village	184	108	1902
Lodi Village	112	122	1888
Ovid Village	165	99	1911
Seneca Falls Village	1884	89	1921
Waterloo Village	1440	92	1918

The degree of deferred maintenance by homeowners and landlords is difficult to measure accurately, but there is some indirect evidence that homeowners are having difficulty keeping up with repairs.

One method to "ball-park" the condition of housing stock within the County is through the visual inspections conducted by Town Assessors. Town Assessors rate homes as

"Poor", "Fair", "Good", "Very Good", and "Excellent," with Poor and Fair classifications indicating definite signs of deferred maintenance. As of Spring 2010, Town Assessors classified 15.7% of occupied homes of any type as in "Poor" or "Fair" condition. Table 3 shows the breakdown by each community.

Building Condition by Property Class

BUILDING CONDITION BY PROPERTY CLASS						Total		
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent		Poor/Fair	Good +
Single Family	91	1,099	6,945	455	9	8,599	14%	86%
Two-Family	6	101	274	12	-	393	27%	73%
Three-Family	-	16	47	2	-	65	25%	75%
Farmstead w/ 10+ Acres	18	94	421	26	1	560	20%	80%
Seasonal	12	162	579	9	-	762	23%	77%
Multiple residences	8	61	212	4	-	285	24%	76%

Source: Seneca County Real Property Tax Office, 2010

Median Age of Property Class, by Building Condition

MEDIAN AGE BY PROPERTY CLASS	Poor	Fair	Good	VG	Excl	Average
Single Family	109.0	109.0	58.0	38.0	21.0	67.0
Two-Family	109.0	113.0	109.0	89.0	0.0	105.0
Three-Family	0.0	131.5	129.0	149.0	0.0	136.5
Farmstead w/ 10+ Acres	149.0	129.0	87.0	29.5	17.0	82.3
Seasonal	63.5	69.0	59.0	48.0	0.0	59.9
Multiple residences	109.0	89.0	62.0	19.5	0.0	69.9

Source: Seneca County Real Property Tax Office, 2010

Data on the full extent of the need for home repair programs is almost non-existent. Many counties have one or more housing authorities and/or home rehabilitation/repair programs with home rehabilitation assistance waiting lists documenting the repair needs of very low and low income households. In Seneca County, the Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation periodically runs New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal repair programs, and Seneca County Weatherization performs minor home repairs for senior citizens. Overall, however, the County lacks local resources to assist homeowners with home rehabilitation.

The problems associated with deferred maintenance extend beyond the homeowner. As homes decline, both the cost of repair and the likelihood of further deferral increases sharply. When housing becomes visibly dilapidated, the desirability of neighborhoods and local character is negatively impacted, and property values suffer. Severely dilapidated properties encourage further blight, perhaps ultimately ending in demolition and fragmentation of neighborhood appearance. In many communities, this exacerbates housing shortage conditions, but in Seneca County the deterioration of housing leads to unsafe conditions for their occupants as well as negatively affecting the neighborhood and character.

These issues have been clearly articulated by both the agencies of the Seneca County Housing Coalition, and by the residents who participated in the Seneca County Comprehensive Plan Survey.

Housing Affordability

In addition to the cost of deferred maintenance, housing affordability in Seneca County has two other principal dimensions – Homes Sales and Property Value, and the housing cost of living. These factors are further complicated by the three general types of housing consumer – manufactured homes, stick-built homes, rental properties, and high-end lakeshore homes.

In general, the sale prices of manufactured and stick built homes, whether existing or new is comparable to surrounding counties.

Comparative Home Values (Median Home Values).

	Seneca	Cayuga	Ontario	Wayne	Tompkins	Schuyler	Yates
2000	72,400	75,300	94,100	85,700	101,000	68,400	75,600
2008	88,800	97,300	129,300	105,300	158,500		112,900

Monthly Housing Costs for Homeowners (Incl. utilities).

	Seneca	Cayuga	Ontario	Wayne	Tompkins	Schuyler	Yates
2000 w/ Mortgage	892	921	1,076	1,020	1,094	850	831
w/ No mortgage	367	375	393	378	434	316	344
2008 w/ Mortgage	1,179	1,146	1,345	1,275	1,466	no data	1,155
w/ No mortgage	481	495	533	513	579	no data	476

Monthly Housing Costs for Renters.

	Seneca	Cayuga	Ontario	Wayne	Tompkins	Schuyler	Yates
2000	521	482	564	527	611	466	467
2008	659	623	6878	652	844		578

Comparative Housing Unit Vacancy rates (2008)

	Seneca	Cayuga	Ontario	Wayne	Tompkins	Schuyler	Yates
Home-owner vacancy	3.9%	1.9%	1.5%	1.9%	0.3%		2.7%
Rental unit vacancy	8.4%	7.2%	3.8%	4.7%	2.5%		6.3%

Home-ownership has been traditionally regarded as an effective way for Americans to build wealth. Despite the recent collapse of the national housing market, Seneca County still has one of the higher home-ownership rates in the region. While the increase in home values acts as investment for families, it inadvertently encourages property tax inflation, which places an increased burden on households with lower or fixed incomes.

Affordable Housing. Affordable housing is commonly defined as the situation where the cost of living in a home or apartment (rent, mortgage, taxes, and utilities) does not exceed 30% of the household's gross annual income. In Seneca County in 2010, roughly one-quarter of households that own their house fail to meet this condition, and roughly half of renters fail to meet this condition. The number of home-owners no longer for which home-ownership is no longer "affordable" has nearly doubled to 35% since 2000. This appears to be primarily because of the sharp increase value of homes above the median home value.

Number of Homes within Home Value Ranges 2000-2008

Home Values	2000	2008	% Change
Less than \$50,000	1,226 (18.8%)	1,375 (14.8%)	- 4.0 %
\$50,000 - \$ 99,999	3,897 (59.8%)	3,996 (42.9%)	- 16.9%
\$ 100,000 - \$ 149,999	962 (14.8%)	1,885 (20.2%)	+5.4 %
\$ 150,000	428 (6.6%)	2,066 (22.1%)	-15.5 %
<i>Median Home Value</i>	<i>\$ 72,400</i>	<i>\$ 88,880</i>	<i>+ 18.5 %</i>

Source: U.S. Census

Median Household Income (inflation-adjusted dollars)

County	2000	2008	% Change
Cayuga	\$ 37,487	\$ 48,991	+ 30.7 %
Ontario	\$ 44,579	\$ 55, 692	+ 24.9 %
Seneca	\$ 37,140	\$ 45,018	+ 21.2 %
Wayne	\$ 44,157	\$ 53,517	+ 21.2 %

Source: U.S. Census

Monthly Housing Cost for Homeowners with a Mortgage

Housing Cost Range	2000	2008	% Change
Less than \$ 700	879 (21.0%)	553 (10.2%)	- 10.8 %
\$ 700 - \$ 999	1,788 (42.9%)	1,335 (24.5%)	- 16.9 %
\$ 1,000 - \$ 1,499	1,189 (25.5%)	2,049 (37.5%)	+ 12.0 %
\$ 1,500	315 (7.6%)	1,520 (28.8%)	+ 21.2 %
<i>Median Monthly Housing Cost</i>	<i>\$ 892</i>	<i>\$ 1,179</i>	<i>+ 32.2 %</i>

Source: U.S. Census

Number of Household spending more than 35% of Income on Housing

Housing Cost Range	2000	2008	% Change
Household w/ mortgage	846 (13%)	1,442 (26.4%)	+13.4%
Household, no mortgage	no data	529 (13.7%)	
Rental Household	1,045 (32.8%)	942 (35.5%)	+ 2.7%

Source: U.S. Census

In general the impact on the renters, traditionally filling the low-moderate income population, has been unchanged. Roughly one-third experience significant housing burden. The important trend is the homeowners are shouldering a larger and larger housing burden, as home values – and thus property taxes – increase at a higher rate than income.

While these trends may force some homeowners to reassess their situations and make decisions about their housing choices, one thing that is likely to continue is deferred maintenance by the homeowner as income that would have traditionally been saved for upkeep is shifted toward housing costs.

Special Needs Populations

Special Needs is a catch-all for various subgroups within Seneca County that have special housing needs. In general, these can be grouped into individuals and families needing assisted living aid (seniors, for example), emergency housing (homeless victims of domestic violence, catastrophic events such as fires or natural disasters, and other events), transitional and supportive housing for individuals returning to independent living arrangements, and permanent supportive housing for individuals who are capable of semi-dependent living but still need supportive services (assisted senior living, or single-room occupancy (SRO) community residence for mental illness clients).

Seniors. A large portion of the County's Low-to-Moderate Income population is comprised of Seniors living on fixed incomes. Many of them no longer have a mortgage and want to stay in their homes as long as they can. While their housing costs are generally lower, health care costs consume a substantial portion of their incomes, and they are generally less mobile and less capable of maintaining their homes, either physically or financially. As a result, this deferred maintenance adds to the declining housing stock condition problem. In 2009-2010, Seneca Housing, Inc. assisted 19 seniors with home repairs funded by a New York State Housing and Community Renewal (NYS HCR) RESTORE grant, and the Seneca County Weatherization assisted 30 senior households with energy efficiency repairs. Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation also provides senior-targeted home repair programs in Seneca County, also funded by NYS HCR.

One issue looming on the horizon is the "graying of Seneca County." Survey results and anecdotal evidence asserts that there will be boom in the number the seniors living in Seneca County on fixed incomes. The Census data since 1970 certainly supports this contention as the median age has steadily increase since 1980, and following the Baby Boomer cohort, it is clear that the number of seniors will increase over the next two decades. This boom will necessarily put additional pressure not only on human services for the elderly, but also on the condition of Seneca County housing stock as senior homeowners have less resources to maintain their homes.

**Seneca County Population by Age Cohort by Decade,
including projections for 2010-2030**

Cohort Trends	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020**	2030**
Under 20	12,627	10,637	9,674	8,955	6,635	4,609	3,530
20 to 34	6,198	7,823	7,319	6,118	5,662	5,344	3,446
35 to 54	8,113	7,293	8,521	10,027	9,598	8,287	8,096
55 to 64	3,723	3,582	3,172	3,192	4,465	4,998	4,426
65 and over	4,422	4,445	4,997	5,050	5,497	7,330	9,657
Total Population	35,083	33,780	33,683	33,342	31,857	30,569	29,155

Source: U.S. Census

* *U.S. Census estimates, updated December 2010.*

** *2020 and 2030 Projections based upon cohort attrition trends over time.*

Comparative Sizes of Age Cohorts by Decade, including projections for 2010-2030

Cohort Trends	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020**	2030**
Under 20	36.0%	31.5%	28.7%	26.9%	20.8%	15.1%	12.1%
20 to 34	17.7%	23.2%	21.7%	18.3%	17.8%	17.5%	11.8%
35 to 54	23.1%	21.6%	25.3%	30.1%	30.1%	27.1%	27.8%
55 to 64	10.6%	10.6%	9.4%	9.6%	14.0%	16.4%	15.2%
65 and over	12.6%	13.2%	14.8%	15.1%	17.3%	24.0%	33.1%

Source: U.S. Census

* U.S. Census estimates, updated December 2010.

** 2020 and 2030 Projections based upon cohort attrition trends over time.

Homeless. Since 2005, Seneca County Housing Coalition has been conducting annual "point in time" homeless surveys to quantify the degree of homelessness. These surveys are conducted during the month of January, from a dozen agencies that place low income families in emergency shelter, and are done for the purpose of informing grant applications to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. These surveys show that on average, 18 individuals and 14 families are homeless each year, most of them families. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number is much higher, particularly in the rural South County area where services are not accessible, and it is easier to not be counted. In many cases, Seneca County's homeless tend to move around from location to location, sometimes at a friend's home, other times at a relative's home, and often at campgrounds during the summer.

Homeless in Seneca County are overwhelmingly younger people, in the 20-44 age range with children, and some are unaccompanied youth in the late teens. Most are not continuously homeless, and a third are on some sort of public assistance, or have part-time employment. The most common causes of homelessness in Seneca County are from evictions from rental properties or from their friends and families, often accompanied by job loss. Since many rental locations require an upfront cost equivalent to two months rent (median ~ \$1,300) it is very difficult for families with children surviving only on public assistance or part-time employment to find an apartment they can afford. Most Seneca County homeless need emergency housing assistance, or assistance with the damage deposits to lease an apartment permanently.

Other Groups. Hard data on needs and uses of housing units by these groups is non-existent at this time, but anecdotal evidence from the regional and local non-profit service organizations indicate that safe, decent, and affordable housing options in emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing categories are lacking within Seneca County. Lakeview Mental Health is finishing construction of a 26-unit supportive and community apartment building on Balsley Road in Seneca Falls to replace the units they lease on Kingdom Road, and at the Mews in Seneca Falls.

In addition, anecdotal information from Seneca County Division of Human Services, Cayuga-Seneca Community Action Agency, and Catholic Charities stress the lack of safe and decent large family and moderate family apartments for very low income households.

Fair Housing. The 1968 Civil Rights Act, as amended, prohibits discriminating against any person because of his race, color, religion, gender, disability, national origin, or if the family has children in the sale of a home or rental or an apartment. With regard to State and Federal programs for that provide subsidies and grants for housing rehabilitation, renovation, or construction, strict adherence to this law is an absolute requirement.

The Seneca County Policy Manual Section 403.100 commits the County to non-discrimination and equal housing opportunities in accordance with the Fair Housing provisions within the 1968 Federal Civil Rights Act. Any housing renovation subsidy program administered by Seneca County must comply with State and Federal equal opportunity and fair housing requirements, including provisions regarding age discrimination and equal employment opportunity in accordance with 24 CFR §92.350 and 24 CFR §5.105 (a). To this end, all Seneca County housing program advertising and marketing materials must prominently display the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity logos, all printed materials and paid advertising promoting a subsidized program must contain appropriate wording to encourage inquiries and applications from individuals regardless of race, religion, color, national origin or ethnic identification, gender, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or any other consideration prohibited by law or regulation.

Policies

It is the policy of Seneca County to:

- *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.*

Action Items

Short-term activities that Seneca County government, local governments, and community partnerships can take to implement the long-term policies:

- *Develop local and/or countywide income eligible housing rehabilitation needs assessments.*

Most State and Federal housing rehabilitation programs require in-depth surveys of housing conditions within the proposed program area. In order for municipal and community non-profit organizations to compete successfully for housing rehabilitation and homeownership grant programs, detailed housing rehabilitation needs assessments are critical. Among other things, this may include parcel-level analysis of current housing stock condition, occupancy, resident income level, and local interest in participating in a project. In addition, successful projects will need to blend a variety of funding sources and leverage considerable public interest and private business support in order to be competitive. Needs assessments will need to be a variety of formal reports, generated by existing resources, and utilizing professional specialists where appropriate and practical.

In addition to housing stock assessments, local capacity assessments are also needed, not only to determine the local capacity to administrate a program, but also the capacity of local construction businesses to implement the program, as well as local capacity to provide services to disadvantaged populations that may be assisted, in order to ensure success of the program over the long term. Research and consulting with regional housing agencies for help developing "best practices" and to utilize innovative strategies is also assumed as part of the needs assessments.

- *Develop local and/or countywide energy efficiency needs assessments.*

Housing rehabilitation projects for lower income families are often followed by the unintended consequence of increased property value and therefore increased tax burden, making continued maintenance less likely. One strategy to deal with this dynamic is to find ways to make older homes more energy efficient, thereby offsetting increases in property taxes with a decrease in energy costs. In many cases, this is a net reduction in total housing costs for the property owner.

As in housing rehabilitation programs, most State and Federal energy efficiency programs require in-depth surveys of energy usage and cost within the proposed program area. In order for municipal and community non-profit organizations to compete successfully for these types of grant programs, detailed energy needs assessments are critical. Energy needs assessments will entail many of the same factors as housing needs assessments, and will also include energy usage, cost, and the development of the capacity to local businesses to provide energy efficiency products,

and in turn create the environment that will allow program success with an even greater local benefit.

- *Ensure that when Seneca County agencies provide housing subsidy assistance or place families into emergency housing, only housing units that pass the Seneca County Building Code Enforcement safety inspection are eligible for use.*

The most vulnerable segments of Seneca County's population are often low income renters being assisted by state or federal subsidies being placed into, or being provided assistance in the oldest, lowest quality apartments. Steps should be taken to improve the quality of this housing stock through a combination of housing renovation programs, and Building Code Enforcement safety inspections.

By requiring apartments to pass safety inspections prior to placement of housing subsidy assisted families, the County can ensure that these families are in safe, decent affordable housing, and quality housing stock that will continue to be maintained and available for decades to come. Code Enforcement is a vital tool in ensuring a quality community, especially when combined with local zoning enforcement and rental renovation assistance programs.

- *Develop plans to meet the housing needs of segments of the population that require supportive services, including seniors, independent (or at-risk) youth, and those at risk of homelessness, or who are homeless.*

In order to maximize the impact of the limited funds available to Seneca County Division of Human Services and the human service non-profits that serve Seneca County's special needs populations, these agencies need assistance to be more competitive in securing funding. One very helpful strategy for them will be to develop the special needs housing plans to assist them in obtaining funding, and developing projects that meet the needs of Seneca County residents and communities. Programs that balance the service needs of these populations with the needs of the communities in which they are located need to be explored, developed, and leveraged with community development programs to provide a holistic approach to this issue.

In addition, a Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) should be investigated in order for the County to share information with local and regional HUD-funded service providers. In addition to providing clear and up-to-date information of this population and its use of resources, New York State will be requiring the use of State-approved HMIS systems as an eligibility requirement for future housing-related grant and subsidy programs.

- * *Develop plans and programs to meet the housing needs of people interested in higher end homes and rental units.*

In order to ensure maximum housing choice to current and future Seneca County residents, some effort must be made to determine the extent of demand for high quality, above-market-rate homes and apartments. Healthy communities have a wide range of property types, from low cost urban housing stock to high quality housing stock for residents interested in higher quality services. This issue should be investigated to determine the demand, the impact, and what strategies can be developed to promote higher end housing stock in appropriate areas of the county, from suburban-rural single family homes to high end village apartments.

- *Provide education and training programs for elected officials, board members, community leaders, developers and builders, and the general public on the need for and benefits of affordable and income-eligible housing programs.*

Housing issues are intricate and overlap with many facets of the private and public sectors. In many cases, government and non-profit agencies work at cross purposes when trying to solve their housing issues, and funding for community development and human services is extremely limited. The general public in particular has limited access to information on housing choices, home ownership, home renovation, rent-to-own, housing development projects, and other housing related programs. In order to better inform the public, and to inform and advise municipal and community leaders on the options and strategies available to them, as well as to provide innovative "best practices" opportunities, educational materials should be developed to help the public and community leaders more easily understand local housing issues.

These materials may be developed inhouse or with consultants. However, the Seneca County Housing Coalition represents a wealth of housing knowledge across the entire private-non-profit-public housing spectrum, and should be encouraged to assist in this project.

- * *Encourage county and regional housing coalitions to promote collaboration by all community, municipal, private business, and private non-profit actors on housing issues.*

With the limited funding available, solutions to housing issues must be holistic, cutting across many disciplines and agencies. Federal and State grant funding is becoming so competitive that regional partnerships are necessary components of successful projects. Partnerships between non-profit, private business, community groups, and municipal agencies can often mitigate unintended consequences caused by single programs.

Seneca County should continue to encourage regional partnerships such as the Seneca County Housing Coalition and Finger Lakes Housing

Consortium in order to promote healthy collaboration between the coalition members that provide services benefiting Seneca County residents and businesses. In addition, the membership of these coalitions should be analyzed for community gaps, such as lack of representation by private business, geographic location, and the faith community, and the coalitions encouraged to solicit membership from those groups.

- *Gather additional parcel-level data to fill gaps, particularly those relevant to State and Federal housing funding agencies.*

Seneca County should be proactive in collecting parcel-level data on housing and community development needs, being sensitive to individual privacy concerns, in order to best position the County, its member Towns and Villages, and non-profit agencies for competitive grants. While many of these grants are released annually, some grants are one-time opportunities that the County must be ready for in advance in order to have any chance of winning them.

This data gathering should be conducted in concert with the housing needs assessments, and can be done piecemeal, with interested municipalities or geographic focused on first. Data gathered should be collated, filtered and aggregated to preserve individual homeowner and renter privacy, and made available to the public, municipalities, agencies, and non-profits via the Seneca County website.

- ** Encourage the Seneca County Housing Coalition to develop working relationships with Cayuga, Tompkins, and Schuyler County Housing Coalitions.*

Traditionally, Seneca County agencies have not looked beyond the County line for collaborative partnerships, or for innovative programs that can be replicated locally to benefit Seneca County communities. When Seneca County agencies have looked outside for partners, they have tended to focus on Ontario, Wayne, and Yates Counties organizations. However, Seneca County communities share similar characteristics with Cayuga, Schuyler, and Tompkins Counties, and efforts should be made to develop relationships in these counties as well.

- ** Investigate use of Three Bears for potential use as local non-profit organization satellite office and community coalition meeting space.*

By the same token Seneca County municipal and not-for-profit agencies have traditionally focused their efforts on the more populous northern end of Seneca County. These agencies should be encouraged to find ways to improve their services in the southern end of Seneca County, and one strategy to do this is the development of South County satellite offices. This possibility and its feasibility should be investigated, perhaps at the Three Bears complex, or in other available space in the southern half of the County.

- * *Develop income-eligible housing fund clearinghouse to better connect the public with State and Federal subsidy programs administered by the County and by local and regional non-profit organizations.*

State and Federal housing programs in Seneca County currently are provided by several different agencies, and it's often confusing for the public and for agency staff to know which agency has funds for what type of project, and who is eligible for assistance, especially when funding is not available on a regular annual basis. This has made it very difficult for agencies to utilize grant funding efficiently and effectively, and reduces their chances for future funding. It is also very difficult for eligible residents to apply to these programs, or to be referred to them, despite the great improvements in inter-agency communication facilitated by the Seneca County Housing Coalition.

The development of an income-eligible public assistance clearinghouse connecting the public to available services, and informing the agencies with resources or referrals of what programs are operating within Seneca County and relative available funding would go a long way toward improving service to the public. In addition, such a system would be able to collate the data needed for grant-writing, and make Seneca County agencies and non-profit organizations more competitive in the future.

- * *Develop procedures to implement and update Seneca County's Fair Housing Policy.*

Seneca County complies with the Fair Housing standards of the 1968 Civil Rights Act as required by the Act and by its previous participation in Community Development Block Grant and New York State HOME grant programs, but has as yet not fully implemented its Fair Housing policy. With recent lawsuits against New York counties (Westchester County, 2008) operating HUD-funded housing programs, it would be prudent to update the Seneca County Fair Housing Policy, and develop the implementation procedures in the event Seneca County administers its own HUD-funded housing program in the future.

* Action items suggested by organizations, planning board members, agencies at the 2010 Finger Lakes Housing Summit, or that meet specific grant requirements of New York State and Federal agencies. These were not included in the original 11 October 2010 draft.

Revision History

REV	DATE	NOTES
1.00	11 JAN 2011	Adopted by resolution by the Seneca County Board of Supervisors.
0.03	5-JAN 2011	Final Draft presented to Board for adoption on January 11, 2011. Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Added County Population Data in Seniors Section, Pg. 8-9 ○ Added Fair Housing Statements, Pg. 10 ○ Added Narratives to Action items, Pg. 13- ○ Additional Action Items marked with asterisk (*). These items suggested by comments from public, as well as from agencies from the 2010 Finger Lakes Housing Summit Break-out Session.
0.02	9-NOV 2010	Corrected minor grammar and typographical errors only.
0.01	11-OCT 2010	First Draft presented to Board of Supervisors.