

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Section 1.1: What is a Comprehensive Plan?

New York State Law (Article 16, Section 272-a) defines 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 located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city.”

Thus, a comprehensive plan is simply a document that uses text, maps, and graphics to describe a municipality’s current and desired future land use patterns.

Comprehensive plans serve as the guiding document for decision making regarding land use issues in a city, town or village. They provide the framework for future public and private investment and policy development. Many disparate forces influence land uses in a municipality: the local and regional economy; county, state and federal agencies and regulations; local laws; developers; and the actions of individual property owners. By clearly articulating the Town of Barrington’s land use policies, this Comprehensive Plan will assist municipal officials in guiding these influences and shaping their community’s future.

According to State Law, a town can prepare a comprehensive plan which then is reviewed by the public and adopted by the Town Board. This approval process does not prevent future review and amendment. The visions, goals, and policy statements set forth in this document should be viewed as flexible. As the Town and the needs of its residents change, so should the Comprehensive Plan. This Plan is intended to guide land use decisions in the Town of Barrington over the next ten years. It will be regularly maintained as described in the Plan’s update process (please see Chapter 7).

Comprehensive plans provide the justification for a municipality’s Zoning Law, which is the legal foundation of municipal land use regulations. New York State Law (Article 16, Section 263) states that “[zoning] regulations shall be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan.” If no comprehensive plan is available for use as the basis for a municipality’s zoning law, then municipal “officials *must* refer to the extensive body of case law”¹ to justify their zoning districts. Furthermore, if a municipal zoning law faces a legal challenge and no Comprehensive Plan is available to assist the court in determining the reasonableness of that zoning, then the courts are empowered to create such a plan for the town. Thus, for clarity and convenience in developing, interpreting, and maintaining a zoning law, and to ensure all stakeholders have a say in local land use issues, it is crucial for a municipality to develop and maintain a sound comprehensive plan.

The Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Barrington is designed to reflect a shared vision of the Town’s future. The Plan has been prepared in accordance with professional standards and integrates the ideas and concerns of a broad spectrum of residents and land owners. The Plan’s contents are driven, first and foremost, by the voices of the Town’s citizens. This document is meant to reflect those voices.

Section 1.2: The Planning Process: Background.

¹ *Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan*. James A. Coon Technical Series, New York State Department of State, Division of Local Government Services. December 1999.

Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Barrington

The Barrington Planning Board has identified the following nine reasons for undertaking the development of a new Comprehensive Plan:

1. The Town's current plan was prepared in 1976 and has not been updated since then. Discussions on updating the Comprehensive Plan have been going on informally among Town officials and residents since the mid 1990s, which indicates that the Town's need for an up-to-date Plan has been recognized since then.
2. The Town's Zoning Code is in need of a major overhaul to clarify various land use and regulatory issues, protect the Town from poorly designed development that could harm its environment and landscape, and strengthen the Town's ability to regulate land use development through the enactment of subdivision regulations and zoning overlay districts. A new Comprehensive Plan will provide a sound basis for an updated Zoning Code.
3. The Route 14A corridor, which passes through the northeast part of the town, is currently undergoing increased development pressure. The Town's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) requested that the Town Board work on making zoning changes to alleviate the increased need for the ZBA to issue variances. In addition, a new Plan will provide for the systematic development of this rural business corridor that will accommodate new commercial enterprises while retaining the rural/agricultural character of the Barrington stretch of the corridor.
4. The Town currently has no planning recommendations in place for several contemporary land use issues, such as the location of wind mills, wind farms, cellular phone towers, and adult entertainment businesses. A new Plan can include commentary and recommendations on these issues.
5. The Town wants to improve its oversight of water resources to ensure pesticides, fertilizers, and other potential pollutants do not degrade water quality in Keuka and Seneca Lakes. The decline of water quality in the Lakes' will damage their value as a scenic and recreational resource and endanger lives due to their role as regional drinking water sources. Recommendations on issues such as stormwater management and erosion control in a new Plan will provide the basis for improved municipal oversight of critical water quality issues.
6. A new Plan is needed to counter the potential threat of new development in environmentally sensitive areas of the Town.
7. Other towns around Keuka Lake, including Jerusalem and Milo, are currently preparing new Comprehensive Plans. A new Plan for Barrington, developed in accordance with the land use policies of its neighboring towns, will ensure that all three Yates County towns along the lake have up-to-date and compatible Comprehensive Plans.
8. An up-to-date Comprehensive Plan is needed as a prerequisite for certain state grant programs.
9. The Town should work to protect and preserve the rural/agricultural character that makes it a draw for tourists and a special place for its residents to live.