

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 policy document for decision making regarding land use issues in cities, towns, and villages. 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 Torrey’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 Torrey 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 basis 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. Thus, for clarity and convenience in developing, interpreting, and maintaining a zoning code, it is crucial for a municipality to develop and maintain a sound comprehensive plan.

The Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Torrey 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 interested residents and land owners. The Plan’s contents are driven, first and foremost, by the voices of its citizens. This document is meant to reflect those voices.

Section 1.2: The Planning Process: Background

The Town of Torrey has identified the following reasons for undertaking the development of a new Comprehensive Plan:

1. The Town’s current Comprehensive Plan was prepared in the 1970s and has not been updated

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

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since then. A new Plan is needed to address land use issues that have arisen over the past thirty years. In addition, a new Plan will offer the Town a clear and concise document for use as a guide for future land use decisions.

2. The Town's Zoning Code is in need of a major overhaul to clarify various regulatory issues and strengthen the Town's ability to oversee land uses. As explained on the previous page, comprehensive plans are considered the primary justification for the provisions of municipal zoning regulations. A new Comprehensive Plan will provide a sound foundation for an updated Zoning Code.
3. Town boards, officials, and citizens recognize that the protection and preservation of the current state of the Town's lakefront area is of critical importance to retaining a high quality of life; safeguarding the local environment, especially the water quality of Seneca Lake; and maintaining a stable municipal tax base. One of Torrey's greatest assets is its lakefront area, and the Town wishes to see future development in this area that is both environmentally friendly and in keeping with the scale of current development.
4. Town boards, officials, and citizens recognize that land uses and abuses can directly contribute to the degradation of water quality in local water bodies such as the Keuka Outlet and Seneca Lake. A new Comprehensive Plan will help the Town address its environmental concerns through land use policies and recommendations.
5. Town boards, officials, and citizens recognize that increased development pressures are a potential threat to the continued viability of local agricultural operations, including vineyards, wineries, farm-based businesses, and any working farm lands in general. One of Torrey's greatest assets is its prime farm land, and the Town is interested in using land use regulations to support working agriculture.
6. Town boards, officials, and citizens recognize that carefully considered new development is desirable and will add to the stability and viability of the community and local economy. A new Comprehensive Plan will provide the basis for future private development and public investment in the Town and ensure that future growth and development is in line with contemporary rural and agrarian conditions.
7. Several other Yates County municipalities have recently updated or are currently revising their Comprehensive Plans. Town officials want to ensure Torrey's land use plans and regulations are in-step with nearby municipalities, many of which are addressing issues similar to those facing Torrey. Torrey is in a position to learn from and capitalize on the experiences of other towns in the area.
8. The process of developing a new Comprehensive Plan will afford the Town opportunity to collect citizen input on land use issues that affect the entire community. Citizen input is a critical aspect of the planning process and enriches the result of that process, i.e. the Comprehensive Plan.
9. As the 2007 Town-wide survey results indicate, there is strong support among Torrey's residents and land owners for protecting and preserving the Town's rural and agrarian character. This character, evident in the Town's landscape of farms, fields, and forests, as well as its many scenic vistas looking out over Seneca Lake, its unique natural resources such as the Keuka Outlet Trail, and its heavily built-up shoreline of both year-round and seasonal residences, is a draw for tourists and residents alike. A new Comprehensive Plan will provide the Town with the direction and policies needed to ensure this rural and agrarian character remains intact in the years to come.