

Town of Burlington

Comprehensive Plan

(Pending Approval of Town of Burlington Board)



Prepared by
Town of Burlington, Comprehensive Plan Committee

Members

James Deuvall, Chairman
Dr. Michael Powers
Robert Benjamin
Frank Tamburello
Kathy Fistrowicz, emeritus

Table of Contents

Declaration	3
Definition	4
Importance of the Plan	4
The Planning Process	5
Burlington History	7
Burlington Today <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Location ➤ Land and Population Density ➤ Scenic Beauty ➤ Water Resources ➤ Forest resources ➤ Natural Gas Resources ➤ Government Structure ➤ Revenue and Tax Base ➤ Transportation and Roads ➤ Public Water and Waste ➤ Utilities ➤ Police, Fire and Other Emergency Services ➤ Health, Education and Social Services ➤ Recreational Services ➤ Basic Demographics ➤ Education, Economic and Employment Characteristics ➤ Current Issues 	9
Public Opinion	18
Vision Statement	26
Statement of Goals, Issues and Strategies	27
Recommended Actions	30
Exhibits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Survey and survey results (bar charts) B) Resident Comments C) Town of Burlington 2009 Budget D) 2000 Census and other tables, charts and graphs E) Natural Gas Expansion F) Tax Valuation History by Category 	

Declaration

We, the members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, submit the enclosed Comprehensive Plan after careful and conscientious consideration of the desires and concerns of the Town's residents for the prosperous future of the Town of Burlington.

We attach our signatures in declaration and witness thereof.

James Deuvall, Chairman

Dr. Michael Powers

Frank Tamburello

Robert Benjamin

Definition

A comprehensive plan consists of 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 municipality.

New York State Chapter 418 of the Laws of 1995 amending Town Law § 272-a.

Importance of the Plan

Why have a plan? First, all towns in New York State are obliged to have an up-to-date plan as the legal foundation for any subdivision, zoning and/or land use regulations. More importantly, a thoughtful plan, based on public input and a positive perspective for the future, can help set the priorities for coordinated action by Town officials, staff and volunteers. This plan also offers guidance to anyone interested in the Town of Burlington, including: town residents, property owners, local businesses, organizations and prospective businesses or investors, about our history, our current conditions, and what we prefer as a future. In summary, the leading reasons to enact the Town of Burlington's plan are:

- ❖ To help attract the desired future and to help avoid an undesirable future.
- ❖ To establish a contemporary, positive community vision.
- ❖ To identify actions to ensure economic stability and protect valuable natural, cultural and historic resources.
- ❖ To provide guidance and direction to other agencies and interests.
- ❖ To help avoid surprises by understanding the Town's assets and liabilities.
- ❖ To improve access to government and non-government assistance through clarity of vision.
- ❖ To provide a legal and technical foundation for land use policies and tools.

The Planning Process

This plan builds on an original, but never enacted, 1973 “Town of Burlington Master Plan”, along with a 1993 update of that document. Those plans recognized the need to maintain the important and historic role of agriculture in Burlington, as well as the important but declining role of summer/weekend tourism. A steady increase of residential construction and the need to maintain a high quality and mix of housing types were also leading themes, along with a desire to encourage concentrated development near Burlington Flats and other hamlets as “focal points of the Town.”

The Town Planning Board has met regularly for several years prior to the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, with responsibilities limited to plat approval within the narrow definitions of the town’s subdivision law. Aside from the enacted Mobile Home Park restrictions, the subdivision regulations are the only protective tools the town has enacted. Due to the changing time demands upon the board, real property expansion concerns and a turnover in leadership; new minimum attendance, ethics, conduct and anti-nepotism rules were adopted. The new board immediately recognized the community’s exposure to unlimited and unregulated development within the town’s boundaries having “fielded” several inquiries from commercial developers and experiencing the public’s reaction to recent major subdivisions. Upon unanimous resolution, the Planning Board recommended to the town’s governing board, to conduct all necessary surveys, workshops and public meetings to produce a unified recommendation of land-use, site-plan review and, if necessary, zoning ordinances.

In June of 2008, the existing Planning Board was appointed as the Comprehensive Plan Committee and charged with an overall goal to provide leadership and advice towards creating an enact-able comprehensive plan. As noted in the Committee’s early direction from the Burlington Town Board, the overall goal of an updated plan should be to preserve the past, plan for the present, and prepare for the Town’s future development in a manner that would require a high standard of quality for all development as well as promote orderly growth and balanced use of land. Additionally, the plan should identify other goals to support the community, along with determining what problems need to be addressed and planned for; such as what types of development would the Town and its residents like to see and what are our needs as a community?

To preserve the intent of public participation as enumerated within Town Law 272-a, the Comprehensive Plan Committee maintained an “arm’s length” relationship to other public agencies, within the Town, County and State, throughout the development of the plan. The mere appearance of any department, board or agency dictating the contents and recommendations of the plan would undermine the public’s support and assurance of their input.

In late July, 2008, the Committee agreed to rely upon a community wide survey of resident attitudes about the provision of services, residential and commercial growth and the overall quality of life found in the Town of Burlington. That work included the completion and analysis of an “all household” survey of some 934 Town households.

This Comprehensive Plan builds on the work of the Committee members and on the assistance of our professional partners. Certain other documents and studies also were key references. Most important were:

- ❖ Town of Burlington Resident Survey 2008, prepared by the Town of Burlington Planning Board
- ❖ Numerous planning board model documents, prepared by the Otsego County Planning Board.
- ❖ Model plans, sponsored by the New York Planning Federation
- ❖ Planning and Zoning workshops, sponsored by New York Association of Towns
- ❖ Town of Burlington Master Plan Draft, prepared by Town of Burlington Town Board
- ❖ Enacted Plans, from neighboring communities

Finally, the Town Board further asked that the following categories be considered in the preparation of this Plan. They were:

- ✓ Economic development
- ✓ Residential development
- ✓ Recreation
- ✓ Agriculture
- ✓ Infrastructure (water, aquifers)
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Commercial development
- ✓ Government services
- ✓ Capital improvements
- ✓ Cultural/historical resources
- ✓ Sensitive environmental areas
- ✓ Utilities
- ✓ Zoning
- ✓ Land Use
- ✓ Site Plan Review

Burlington History

Formed from the Town of Otsego on April 10, 1792, the Town of Burlington at that time consisted of the area encompassing the current Towns of Burlington, Edmeston, Pittsfield and New Lisbon. In 1797, the Town of Pittsfield was removed. (The land area that was the Town of Pittsfield included the Town of New Lisbon, subsequently removed.) In 1808, the Town of Edmeston was removed. Today, the Towns of Exeter and Plainfield bound the Town of Burlington on the north, on the east by Exeter, Otsego, and Hartwick, on the south by Hartwick and New Lisbon, and the west by Edmeston.

Although there are no incorporated villages within the Town, there are three hamlets: West Burlington settled in 1790 and Burlington Flats and Burlington Green, each settled in 1792.

Early land transportation routes were the East-West Turnpike that went from Cooperstown to Sherburne, the Skaneateles Turnpike from Cooperstown to Skaneateles, along today's State Route 80, and a stagecoach line that operated service from Unadilla to Utica through Burlington Flats, similar to today's State Route 51. County Route 16 ran north-south through the Butternuts Valley from Garrettsville to Schuyler Lake.

The Town's agricultural base and the Wharton and Butternuts Creek supported many forms of early commerce, including a tannery, distillery, blacksmith's shop, hat shops, boot and shoe shops, potasheries, a cotton factory and woolen mill. The Otsego Mutual Insurance Company, started in 1897, still has its main office in Burlington Flats. [A hotel in Burlington Green along [the old Skaneateles Turnpike] State Route 80, served passengers traveling west from Cooperstown.]

Churches were established early within the Town. In 1793, the First Baptist Church was founded in Burlington Green. A few years later in 1797, the First Baptist Church of North Burlington was founded in Burlington Flats. In 1871, a Methodist Church also was established in Burlington Flats. The Episcopal Church of West Burlington was begun in 1868, and the St. John's Lutheran Church was founded as recently as 1955, with the exception of the Episcopal Church. All these historic churches continue to provide services within the Town.

The town is the birthplace of many doctors, politicians, teachers, judges, ministers, inventors and businessmen. Jedediah Peck represented the county in the state legislature from 1799-1804. While a member of the legislature he was the author of the bill establishing the public school system of the state. Benjamin Franklin Angel was an ambassador of the United States. He was ambassador to Hawaii, China, Norway and Sweden from 1853-1857. William Hulbert born in Burlington in 1832, moved to Chicago IL and became a businessman and president of the Chicago White Stockings baseball team. He was one of the founders of the National Baseball League and was inducted into The Baseball Hall of Fame in 1995. Paul Talbot served as a member of the State Assembly from 1944-1965.

Many of the town's young men have responded to the call of their country, and have fought in all the major wars. While no precise records exist, many women served in numerous and indispensable positions during wartime. To date, service veterans from the Town of Burlington count as follows:

- 31 Revolutionary War
- 13 War of 1812
- 41 Civil War
- 2 Spanish American War
- 16 WWI
- 96 WWII
- 1 Korean War
- 4 Vietnam War
- 3 Desert Storm
- 2 Operation Iraqi Freedom

Two Veterans Memorial Parks, one in Burlington Flats and one in West Burlington, have been established to honor those who survived and those that did not.

The Town celebrated its Bicentennial on July 11, 1992.

Burlington Today

Location

The Town of Burlington is located in the northwestern part of Otsego County. The Town includes the three hamlets of Burlington Flats, Burlington Green and West Burlington.

Land and Population Density

The Town has a total land area of approximately 45 square miles. Most of the Town is hilly uplands, with ridges running north to south. The land is relatively sparsely populated, with a population density of only 24 persons and 11 housing units per square mile. This population density, while among the lowest in New York State, is comparable to that of the neighboring Towns of Edmeston (18.4), Exeter (16.9), and New Lisbon (13.2), but significantly below that of the neighboring Town of Otsego (40.5).

Water Resources

Few square miles of the Town are within a water area. The main watersheds are the Wharton Creek and Butternuts Creek. Butternut Creek flows south along the east side of County Route 16 and then State Route 51 on its way to the Unadilla River. Wharton Creeks also flow through the Town on its way south to join the Unadilla River. These Creeks and the numerous smaller creeks that flow into them wind through farmlands and hamlets, down hillsides, through rocky stream beds and willow-choked marsh lands as part of the Susquehanna Watershed. Numerous fishing spots dot these Creeks, including several established, but few maintained, by the DEC. Basswood Pond is maintained by the NYS DEC as part of the Basswood Pond State Forest. Only one of two picnic areas remain within the park. Numerous farm ponds and wetlands on private property also dot the landscape, providing water for farming, recreation and wildlife.

Forest Resources

The NYS DEC maintains the 708 acre Basswood State Forest located in the northern section of the Township, the 280 acre Hartwick State Forest to the west, the 110 acre Plainfield State Forest to the northwest and the 280 acre Cranberry Bog centrally located in the Town. Except for one seasonal access road through the Basswood State Forest, the forest is closed to all motor vehicles, including snowmobiles and ATV's. The State Forest trails provide Town residents and others with all-season recreational opportunities, including fishing, hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, and equine trail riding. In addition to use by local residents, local chapters of the National Audubon Society, hiking clubs and other conservation groups make regular use of the State Forest. In recent years, however, the picnic areas have been decreased in size and residents have noticed a decline in trail maintenance. Recent clear-cut logging within the forest and the opening of extensive logging roads within the forest also have been subjects of concern among Town residents. Basswood Pond, downhill and adjacent to the clear-cutting area, has been heavily silted and the logging roads invite unauthorized use by ATV and other vehicles.

Increased demand for wood for heating and wood products has resulted in increased logging by area residents on private land. A number of wooded tracts recently sold for development were logged just prior or after sale.

Natural Gas Resources

Otsego County lies in the northeastern edge of the vast Marcellus Shale deposit, which spreads below ground across the entire southern tier of New York State from the Great Lakes and Pennsylvania border on the west to the Hudson Valley on the east. During the past [decade][few decades], numerous test and/or production wells have been drilled in the western part of the deposit. Recent wells (2007 production) now operate in Steuben, Schuyler and Broome Counties. According to geologists, Otsego County also is potentially rich in gas deposited in the Marcellus Shale formation and exploration has continued to move eastward into our County.

In fall 2008, the Otsego County Conservation Association reported that nearly 9% of land in the County was leased for natural gas drilling, up from the 7% previously reported. OCCA noted that over 200 new parcels, totaling 12,200 acres, were added during 2008, raising the total number of parcels under lease contract to 839, covering nearly 54,500 acres. OCCA estimated that these 50,000 leased acres could translate to 13,000 wells. Test wells several thousand feet deep have already been drilled in Springfield and Cherry Valley in the eastern part of the County. OCCA also has mapped properties where owners have signed leases for natural gas drilling with gas and oil companies, based on data available at the Otsego County Real Property Tax Office.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is responsible for regulating the development and production of oil and gas resources in the State, including drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale formation, and reports an overall increase in the total number of drilling applications filed in 2008. During [2008], DEC received 25 applications for horizontal drilling wells from Delaware and Chenango Counties, neighbors of Otsego County. The DEC requires that proposed [leases] [drilling] be reviewed under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). DEC is working on promulgating a Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement to update the initial GEIS (1992) to address advances in technology, including in horizontal drilling. The SGEIS also would address other concerns, including the effectiveness of other states' regulatory efforts for high-volume hydraulic fracturing; setbacks for multi-well sites and high-volume hydraulic fracturing operations from buildings, water bodies, domestic water supplies; potential requirements for private water well sampling, testing and monitoring by gas well operators; feasibility of requiring the use of green or non-chemical fracturing technology; mechanisms to require notification, review and DEC approval of re-fracturing operations; specific air quality topics; and evaluation of permitting alternatives.

The Otsego County Board of Representatives has been asked by concerned local residents and advocate groups to take necessary regulatory actions to, among other issues, ensure that gas drilling does not ruin water supplies, review potential health risks from chemicals used, protect other properties from noise and air pollution, and limit the impact of trucking wastewater from proposed drilling sites. Local environmentalists have been actively educating the public about the practice of hydro-fracking, which requires pumping water into the ground under high pressure to fracture rock and

release gas, and its associated risks, including the seepage of toxic chemicals from deep underground into local aquifers.

The Town of Burlington survey responses indicate that Town residents share these County-wide concerns about unregulated natural gas exploration and drilling and look to the Town for appropriate planning and local regulation.

Government Structure

Town government is headed by a Supervisor and a Board composed of four members. Elections are held every two years. The Town also has a Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent, one Town Justice and three Town Assessors, also elected for [two] year terms. The Town Board has appointed a five-member Planning Board. Unless otherwise posted, Town Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month and Planning Committee meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The Town has adopted local regulations for Subdivisions and Mobile Homes only and rely on the Otsego County Code Enforcement Officer for enforcement of New York State Fire and Building Codes.

Revenues and Tax Base

The Town of Burlington is heavily dependent on its local real property tax base to finance the Town's budget. According to assessed value figures provided by the Otsego County Office of Real Property, Exhibit F, the overall value of property within the Town increased from \$39,950,803 in 2001 to \$44,859,116 in 2008, or 12.3%. However, growth occurred in three sectors only: residential (\$6,492,386), mobile homes (\$561,500), and vacant land (\$387,500). Declines in value were reported for agricultural land (-\$1,143,900), commercial (-\$468,800), recreation (-\$205,800), public service (-\$86,200), community use (-\$52,500) and wild/forested/conservation (-\$14,400). Industrial land (valued at \$516,000) showed no change during the period.

The Town's 2008 budget, Exhibit C, was based on approximately \$746,500 in estimated revenues. Of this amount, 72% came from local real property taxes, 16.5% from state aid (primarily to the Town's highway department), 9.5% from a share of Otsego County's sales tax, and the balance (2%) from miscellaneous sources including interest. The Town's actual 2008 budget totaled nearly \$761,000. Approximately 73% of the 2008 budget was allocated to the Highway Department for both personal services (including benefits) and highway services (repairs, improvements, machinery and snow removal). Another 23% was allocated for General Town wide services, including general government support, public health and safety, culture and recreation, and home & community services, but exclusive of transportation/highways. The largest line item allocations within this General Town wide category were for buildings (\$45,400), refuse and garbage contracts for residents' use of shared municipal transfer stations (\$35,000), and assessors and a reserve for a town wide revaluation (\$25,100). The Town, which has no local police force, spent only 0.5% of the budget (or \$3825) on public health and safety in 2008, primarily for dog control and licensing. Less than 1% of budget (\$5750) was available for culture and recreation services. The remaining 4%

of the 2008 budget appropriation went for contracted services for fire protection and hamlet street lighting.

The Town Budget for 2009, Exhibit C, is \$852,705. Of this amount, 68% is projected to come from local real property taxes, 17% from state aid (primarily to the Town's highway department), 8.2% from a share of Otsego County's sales tax, and the balance (7%) from miscellaneous sources including interest and an inter-fund transfer. On the proposed expenditure side, approximately 75% of the 2009 Town budget is appropriated to the Highway Department for both personal services (including benefits) and highway services (repairs, improvements, machinery and snow removal). Another 20.5% is allocated for General Town wide services, including general government support, public health and safety, culture and recreation, and home & community services, but exclusive of transportation/highways. The largest non-highway line item allocations within this General Town wide category remain for Town buildings, refuse and garbage contracts, and assessments and assessors. The Town's very limited appropriations available for local public health and safety continue at only 0.5% of the budget (\$3300) and at less than 1% of budget (\$5750) for culture and recreation services. The budget amount for contracted services for fire protection and street lighting in the three hamlets remains at approximately 4% of total budget (\$32,000).

The total assessed value of property within the Town has grown by \$4,908,286 or 12% from \$39,950,830 in 2001 to \$44,859,116 in 2008.

Transportation and Roads

Historic transportation arteries traverse the Town. State Route 51 runs north-south through the heart of the Town, while State Route 80 runs east-west. The Town lies approximately 10 miles south of US Route 20 and 25 miles south of the New York State Thruway (US Interstate 90).

County Route 16, another historic route, travels north along the upper reaches of the Butternut Creek on the east side of the Township to join State Route 28.

There are approximately 65 miles of Town roads, including 21 miles of unpaved or gravel roads. There are a half dozen seasonal roads, maintained by the Town from April to November. In recent years the number of private roads serving subdivisions has increased.

There is very limited public transportation serving the Town. The Otsego Express operates Monday through Friday and consists of a van bus with routes transversing each hamlet with destinations in Cooperstown, Oneonta, Richfield Springs, West Winfield and Edmeston.

The nearest airports are in Albany (85 miles), Syracuse (80 miles) and Binghamton (83 miles). The nearest Amtrak train station is in Utica (35 miles).

Public Water and Waste

No public water or sewer service is provided by the Town. Households must provide their own water supply from private wells. The dependence of the Town's residents on private wells is cited as a fundamental reason for environmental protection of these water resources. Potential or actual disruption or contamination from harmful or unplanned industrial, commercial or residential development is a major concern of the Town residents.

Households also must provide for their own on-site sewage disposal. Many older homes still rely on dry wells. New construction, major renovations and homeowner activities to repair septic problems all serve to increase the number of homes with code-compliant tanks and leach fields. However, one theme emerging from the respondents' survey comments was the need in the Town for stricter and more uniform enforcement of building codes, including those for septic systems.

The Town residents have access to a transfer station for recycling and disposal of household waste by a contractual agreement with the neighboring town of Pittsfield. This agreement has recently come under Town scrutiny as only a small percentage of Town residents (approximately 130) utilize the transfer station. A second issue is that the transfer station is paid through the general fund, thus residents with higher assessed values pay a larger share of the cost regardless if they use the station or not.

Utilities

No public companies produce or generate electricity within the Town.. Transmission lines owned and operated by NYSEG and Otsego Electric Cooperative pass through the Town in a North-South direction. Other utility easements traverse the Town along existing roads. Major retailers of electricity include NYSEG and the Otsego Electric Cooperative. Recently, a significant threat was averted from a Canadian power company (NYREI) who wished to run a series of transmission lines through the Town.

Cell towers owned by Verizon, ATT & MCI are located on Clock Hill and on Route 80. These towers have improved cell reception throughout most of the Town, and rent from these towers provides an important source of tax revenue for Town residents on whose land they reside. The tax assessment for these towers also provide additional revenues.

The Town lacks comprehensive cable coverage for high speed internet access, a drawback cited by several respondents in their survey comments. Many residents utilize satellite services or dial –up. However, the age of existing local hard-wire telephone equipment and technology and the continuing existence of party lines places Burlington at risk of not crossing the “digital divide” and of being unable to attract or support desirable, potential home-based and commercial businesses that may be dependent on fast, cheap and reliable internet services.

Police, Fire and Other Emergency Services

The Town has no police, fire or emergency service employees. Police protection is provided by the County Sheriff Department in Cooperstown and by the New York State Police. The nearest State Trooper base is located in Richfield Springs, 15 miles from the Town. Officers from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation also provide regular patrols and services to the Town by enforcing hunting, fishing and certain land use laws.

Fire protection and emergency services are provided for Town residents under contract with Edmeston Fire Department. The logistical difficulty in providing such services on seasonal and private roads is a major concern of the Town governance and residents. The unregulated potential development on seasonal roads places a significant financial burden on the Town.

Health, Education and Social Services

Bassett Healthcare operates a rural primary care clinic serving Burlington and Edmeston residents just across the Town line in Edmeston. There are no private medical or dental practices located in the Town.

Burlington is in the Edmeston Central School District. School-age children attending public school are bussed to the centralized school located in the neighboring town of Edmeston. Residents of the Town have noted an increase in the number of home-schooled children. Local realtors confirm that more families are looking to move from urban and suburban areas into rural areas like Burlington in search of home-schooling and family farming opportunities. A Christian, non-profit, certified pre-school is currently located in the church at Burlington Flats.

A senior meal site operated for many years at the Town Hall. Meals were delivered onsite and for home-delivery by volunteers. The site was closed in summer 2008 by program organizers who advised that attendance was too low to support continued operation. Frozen meals continue to be delivered weekly to home-bound elderly by local volunteers. The closing of the senior meal and activity site is an example of what residents do not want to happen in the Town. More services and funding for the Town's poor elderly is one of the few areas where Town residents look to the government for a greater role.

Recreational Services

Public lands, including the Basswood and Hartwick State Forests, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation within the Town, including hiking, fishing, bird-watching, hunting, horse trails, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing and other non-motorized activities. The State Forest paths (other than the main access road into Basswood Pond) are closed to motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles and ATV's, and the Town's residents and local use groups place high value on maintaining this "quiet enjoyment" of the Park. In recent years, trail maintenance in these public lands has declined and clear-cut logging has raised additional concerns about state forest logging practices, management, and

sustainability.. New logging access roads into the forest invite off-road vehicle use in violation of existing state rules and regulations.

The Wharton and Butternuts Creek watersheds, Basswood Pond and wetlands, and the smaller creeks and rills throughout the Town offer numerous opportunities for fishing and bird-watching.

The rural nature of the Town permits many landowners to enjoy recreational opportunities on their own land. Because of this, there is little support for using Town tax revenues or resources to preserve and/or expand recreation opportunities or for encouraging recreation-related tourism.

Basic Demographics

The 2000 U.S. Census recorded a total population of 1,085 in the Town of Burlington. Compared to the US as a whole, the Town has a smaller percentage of population under the age of 5 (5.5% vs. 6.8%) and a larger percentage of population 65 or older (13.9% vs. 12.4%). The Town's median age of 38 is higher than the US [and New York State] medians. Of the Town's total population, 73.5% were 18 years of age and older, 18.4% 60 or older, and 13.9% 65 and older. Although the town is slightly older on average than the US population, the Town has a slightly younger population than the County overall.

Of the Town's population in 2000, 97% were white, only 1.4% were foreign-born, and only 2.8% spoke a language other than English at home. A higher percentage of the Town's population were civilian veterans (15.5%) compared to the national percentage. The percentage of the Town's population on disability status (20.1%) also slightly exceeded the US percentage. Two-thirds (67%) of the Town's population reported living in the same house for the last 5 years (1995-2000), compared to only 55% in the County. Most of the Town's residents have lived in the same house for far longer than the past 5-year period reported in the 2000 CUS Census. This deep-rooted connection to the Town by many residents is complemented by the strong and positive attachment to place expressed by many "new-comers". Both groups cite as the Town's best features and/or their reasons for moving here the Town's natural beauty and its quiet and rural character.

There were 392 households in 2000, of which three-quarters (76.8%) were families and nearly one-quarter (23.2%) were classed as non-families. Approximately two-thirds (65%) of all households were married couples and just over one-third of all households (36.2%) included children under 18 years of age. Less than 8% of homesteads were headed by single females. The average family size was 3 people. Nearly one-fifth (18.6%) of all households were a householder living alone, with 8.2% of all households being a householder 65 years old or older living alone. Compared to the County of Otsego, the Town has a higher percentage of family households, households with children under the age of 18, and married couple households. The Town has a smaller percentage of householders living alone, especially among the elderly.

In 2000, the Town included 500 housing units, representing an average of just 11 units per square mile. Of these units, only 392 (78.4%) were occupied year-round, compared to a national occupancy rate of 91%. Nearly 10% of the housing units were vacant and/

or abandoned and 12% were seasonal or other occasional use. The percentage of owner-occupied units in the Town (87%) far exceeds the national average of 66.2%. Median home value in 2000 was \$65,900, compared to \$119,600 nationally. Over 40% of the housing stock was built before 1940. Nearly two-thirds of the homes are heated with fuel oil or kerosene, but 17% heat with wood and another 11% use LP gas. The high percentage of homes heated with wood supports the concern voiced in residents' survey comments for regulation of outdoor wood furnaces. Almost one-quarter of the Town's housing units (24.1%) are mobile or manufactured homes, compared to 16% for the County as a whole. No multiple dwellings with more than 2 units were in use in the Town.

Education, Economic and Employment Characteristics

Compared to the total US population, the Town has a slightly lower percentage of persons who are high school graduates (78.8% vs. 80.4% for the US) and a significantly lower percentage of persons with a Bachelor's Degree or higher (14.8% vs. 24.4% for the US).

The percentage of individuals and families below the federal poverty level is slightly below the US average. However, in 1999 the Town's per capita income, median household income, and median family income were all \$5000 to \$8000 less than the comparable federal income level.

The percentage of Town residents in the labor force is higher than nationally (67.5% vs. 63.9%). Nearly three-fourths (72.8%) of employed persons in the Town were private wage and salary employees, 12% were government workers, and 14% were self-employed. Nearly 90% of families with children less than 6 years of age have both parents in the labor force. Nine percent (9%) of employed Town residents worked at home, 71% commuted alone, 15% car-pooled, and only 2.3% used public transportation. Town residents reported an average travel time to work approximately 5 minutes longer than the national average.

Describing their occupations in the 2000 Census, the Town's 559 employed residents reported 37.2% employed in sales, service and office occupations, 35.8% engaged in management or professional positions, 25.5% in construction, extraction, production, transportation, maintenance and moving occupations, and only 1.4% in farming, fishing and forestry. Town residents were employed in a wide range of industries, including education, health and social services (21.8%), finance, insurance, real estate (17.9%), manufacturing (13.1%), wholesale and retail trade (10%), agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (8.1%), and construction (7.7%).

Although the farm employment percentage is "small" in absolute terms, the 8% of Town population engaged in agriculture and forestry is twice the percentage so engaged within the County as a whole (4.4%) and far greater than the national percentage engaged in this sector of the economy. The relatively small percentage of Town population engaged in the farming industry is offset by several factors—the large percentage of land within the Town dedicated to farming, the recent growth in hobby farms not reflected in Census employment figures, and the significant contribution made by Burlington's farms to the working landscape and rural character of the Town. The impact of these factors exceeds the relatively small percentage of Town population engaged directly in farming and explains the strong local support for ensuring farm-

friendly and right-to-farm regulations on a scale compatible with increasing rural residential development.

Current Issues

- 1) Road Resurfacing and Repair – Due to reductions in state funding, the high cost of petroleum products and the public’s resistance to higher taxes, the Town is constantly faced with significant limitations to long-term road repair programs. The current method of meeting weather-induced damage to the road system is for the highway superintendent to identify those segments requiring the most attention and gain Town Board approval for “stone & oil” coverage. Approximately only 2 miles are resurfaced with asphalt annually and no “dirt” roads are scheduled for surfacing. Asphalt resurfacing is largely financed through State CHIPS funding.
- 2) Pittsfield Trash Transfer Station – For several years, the town has partnered with the Town of Pittsfield to provide the residents of Burlington access to the trash transfer station located in Pittsfield. The station is open one day per week and residents must transport their refuse to the facility individually. An authorization stamp is provided to each taxpayer within the town. Considerable controversy has developed over time concerning two areas: a) the appropriateness of the town providing this a service and, b) the fairest means to tax residents. It has been estimated that less than 20% of Burlington residents frequent the station weekly and due to limited accessibility is simply not available to a majority of the residents. The cost of the station has increased yearly by 17 to 20% and constitutes roughly 8% of taxes raised from residents. Tax revenues required for the transfer station are currently based on property values (Ad Valorem) rather than a special district fee. This arrangement requires some residents to pay hundreds of dollars more annually, in taxes, while others pay virtually nothing.
- 3) Property Re-valuation – The town’s last property re-valuation occurred in the 1993. The chief assessor believes there is a fairly large disparity in property values between residents and market value due to recent increases in residential property values. Residents almost unanimously hold reservations regarding the need and process of re-valuation. These concerns run the gambit of belief that the Town is incapable of internally operating a “fair and impartial” valuation to increasing already “too high” taxes to the potential increasing of school taxes. Currently the Town is reserving money annually for the inevitable re-valuation cost, estimated at \$50-70,000. The tax assessors’ office is in the process of digitizing their records, including the inclusion of photos of each property.

Public Opinion

Survey Instrument and Process

Immediately following the June 2008 Town Board resolution charging the Planning Committee with developing a comprehensive plan, the Committee researched neighboring and “model” local comprehensive planning initiatives and compiled a resident survey that included questions typical of those used in other local planning processes to gather information about community concerns and preferences. The survey included 55 questions, the first 9 of which solicited only descriptive respondent information and no comments. Forty-six (46) questions offered a range of response choices (strongly agree to strongly disagree) and provided space for comments on each question. One question was an open-ended, free-response. A copy of the resident survey form is included in the appendices.

In late June 2008, the 4 page survey questionnaire, Exhibit A, was sent to each of the 934 taxpayers on the Town’s records. The response period was closed at the end of September and the results were tabulated. Although several of the returned surveys were disqualified due to missing information or obvious duplication, 430 valid questionnaires were received and analyzed. Of these 430 responses, nearly 200 included hand-written comments, often extensive in scope and detail. In addition, several respondents elected to write letters of comment, either in place of or to supplement their survey response. Survey responses were analyzed and displayed in chart form. Written comments on each question were extracted verbatim and collated for public review, along with a summary of comments, Exhibit B.

Respondents

The high response rate (46%) and profile of respondents, which reflects the Town’s general population characteristics, underscore the reliability of the survey results. Nearly 75% of the respondents are full-time residents in the Town, with 10% residing part-time and 10% residing outside of the Town. (Percentages may not sum to 100 if all respondents did not answer the question.) Sixty percent (60%) of respondents were 50 years of age or older, with 24% over age 65. Sixty percent (60%) of respondents live in the rural areas of the Town outside of the three hamlets. While 65% of respondents indicated they worked in non-farm employment, 18% described themselves as hobby farmers and 5% made their living as farmers. Describing where they worked, 51% of respondents indicated they worked out of town, 23% were retired or not working, 9% worked locally, and 7% worked from home. One-third (33%) of respondents stated they were on fixed incomes.

Survey Results

Charts providing a statistical analysis of responses to each question are included in the appendices, along with a complete compilation of comments returned with the survey.

The Planning Committee considered all resident survey responses and comments in formulating the comprehensive plan. It also looked carefully at the responses and comments to particular questions that evidenced overwhelming or strong community support for or, in some cases, against an action or exercise of local regulatory power. Finally, the Planning Committee identified several general themes that emerged from

the pattern of responses and comments. These core themes and concerns are summarized below.

1. The Town should adopt comprehensive local [land use] regulations to the extent necessary and appropriate to plan for and achieve community goals in the public interest.

The survey captured both the Town's past as a basically unregulated landscape and the majority's support for enactment of stronger residential and commercial regulations to preserve and protect the Town's best features for the future. Two of every three respondents (68%) agree that the Town should regulate commercial development, and over half (56%) of the respondents support the Town's involvement in regulating residential development. Looking just at respondents who held "strong" views, less than 10% "strongly" disagree with the need for broader regulations, while 37% "strongly" favor broader commercial regulation and 26% "strongly" support increased residential regulation. Although several questions elicited comments expressing a once traditional view that a landowner had a right to do whatever he wished on his private property, many more comments expressed the need to plan for and put in place a more solid, comprehensive, reasonable, regulatory foundation for the future. By giving a voice and vote to all residents, the survey proved essential for accurately assessing the present broad base of community support for comprehensive planning and regulation.

2. The Town should preserve and protect its rural, community character to benefit current residents, to enhance the Town's growth potential as an attractive place to live and work, and ultimately to grow the tax base to ensure a healthy, caring community.

The strongest consensus theme is the need to preserve and enhance the Town's rural character and natural environment as its greatest assets for current and future generations, coupled with the view that regulated residential and commercial growth consistent with this character is both possible and desirable.

Nearly 45% of respondents, when asked to select the Town's best quality, chose the Town's "rural setting." An additional 27% of respondents chose the Town's "natural beauty" as the best quality. Many respondents' comments identified the Town's rural character, its' quietness and natural beauty as their reasons for moving to the area. Protecting and enhancing this rural character and our natural environment are seen as inter-related goals to attract future residential growth consistent with this character and to help grow the tax base.

Another theme is that residential and commercial growth should be managed so as not to result in new taxes or a higher tax burden on landowners. More precisely, new growth should not result in the need for local public expenditures greater than the likely tax revenues generated by the growth. Examples of concern ranged from residential development on seasonal roads or in subdivisions to the location of new industrial businesses. These developments would require increases in the Town's road expenditures, expansion of the Town's emergency, fire and safety responsibilities now provided under contract by neighboring towns, or otherwise increase the tax burden. The experience of other localities warns that the public "cost" of some types of

residential or commercial growth may result in an increased net tax burden on local landowners.

The community's concern about the potential "growth" of local government obligations, the Town budget and tax burden is expressed clearly in the survey. When asked to select or rank order the Town's worst quality, nearly 55% of the survey respondents selected "High Taxes", although nearly 25% selected "Too few or poor services". Respondents look to comprehensive planning to preserve and protect the best aspects of Town life; to plan for, promote and manage small-scale residential and commercial growth consistent with other community goals; and to contribute to the Town's net economic well-being so as to enhance the Town's ability to serve its residents.

Half of all survey respondents oppose or strongly oppose any property re-assessment initiative, while less than 20% support or strongly support such an initiative. The question soliciting views about a Town-wide re-assessment of property values produced over 50 specific comments, which provided valuable information and insight into residents' concerns. Nearly half of the commentators opposed a Town-wide re-assessment on grounds that taxes were already too high and/or that re-assessments always resulted in higher taxes. A second group of respondents cited concerns about the fairness of the process and/or "favoritism" of local assessors. Several respondents queried whether periodic re-assessment was required by State law in any event. Consequently, any re-assessment initiative, whether mandatory to comply with State law or voluntary by the Town Board, must address local concerns about the need for such action, the fairness of the process and result, the impact on school taxes, and potential distribution or re-distribution of the tax burden across Burlington's residents.

3. The Town should take necessary actions, including expanding local regulations and enforcement efforts, to better control junk and household debris from accumulating on private property.

Several other survey questions yielded overwhelming support for further local regulation and/or enforcement in specific areas that also impact the Town's best rural features. These related themes, discussed below, include such matters as the need for tougher "junk yard" and property maintenance regulations and enforcement and the need to protect against commercial development. These issues specifically threaten the natural beauty and environment of the Town and/or adversely impact its progress towards other community goals.

More than three of every four survey respondents (78%) want the Town to take more action to control junk and debris accumulating on private properties. More than half of the respondents (58%) *strongly agree* that this is required. No other question produced such a consensus and intensity of opinion. Similarly, nearly 70% of respondents agree that the Town should require visual barriers to help mitigate the adverse visual impact of junk. Comments convey respondents' concerns that accumulation of junk on private property negatively impacts all property values and the Town's tax base, despoils public view-spaces and creates visual blight along public roads, and invites an adverse "dumping ground" view of the Town by potential investors.

4. The Town should preserve and protect its natural environment and resources to help ensure continuation of the Town's rural character and attractiveness as a place to live, as well as to support traditional farming and encourage emerging forms of small-scale agribusiness and hobby farming.

The vast majority of respondents agree that the Town should be involved in preserving its natural surroundings (72%) and open lands and views (67%). More than one-fourth of all respondents (27%) believe that the Town's natural beauty is its single best quality. A number of respondents cited the Town's natural beauty and associated rural character as their reasons for having moved into the Town, providing support for this goal as a selling point for attracting further residential growth. Comments throughout the survey and on a variety of issues provide articulate evidence of the importance that residents place on living within this high-quality natural environment and of their support for preserving and protecting this environment in the midst of compatible growth.

Comments also make clear, however, that respondents support, value and wish to protect and preserve the Town's existing "working landscape" of family farms and small-scale agricultural, equine and animal husbandry enterprises. Although environmental protection and certain agricultural land uses can be in conflict, comprehensive planning for the Town's future must seek to integrate eco-friendly and agri-friendly growth as inter-twined paths towards achievement of common, compatible goals.

Respondents generally do not support Town involvement in expanding public recreation activities or tourism. Respondents report ample opportunity for outdoor recreation on their own or neighboring land or by using the various New York State parks and forests within the local area. The Basswood Pond State Forest, within the Town, is enjoyed by local residents, sportsman from Otsego and neighboring counties and area chapters of outdoor clubs such as the Adirondack Hiking Club and National Audubon Society. The Forest's limited size and narrow configuration, however, cannot support significant out-of-area use or a change in use (e.g., current prohibition on motorized vehicle use within the Forest) without adversely impacting the Town's best features and the "quiet enjoyment" of neighboring properties. Out-of-area/out-of-state hunters, in particular, drew negative comments from respondents.

Respondents are cautious about supporting Town involvement in restricting logging practices on private land, reflecting the importance of logging revenues for many local residents, including many retired dairy farmers. Large-scale clear-cutting, including within the State forest, raised concerns about both short-term environmental impacts and long-term sustainability that may need to be addressed through non-regulatory means, including expanded dialogue with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as to the management and reforestation of the Basswood Pond State Forest in the heart of the Town.

5. The Town should plan for, promote and manage future residential development that is consistent with the Town's rural community character, in terms of both housing structure and housing density.

The survey supports preservation of the Town's existing residential profile of small hamlets with clustered populations and dispersed farmsteads, of small-scale and low-density residential units and of housing opportunities for all income levels.

Conversely, the survey identified concerns and/or objections to uncharacteristically "dense" residential development, citing preservation of the Town's residential and natural character. Such uncharacteristically dense residential development includes large multiple dwellings or multi-unit complexes, mobile home parks, and very small lot sizes, although the continued need for smaller lot sizes in hamlets was agreed. Higher residential density is not only out of character with the area, but raises public health and safety issues because of the lack of municipal services, including water, sewer, police, fire, and emergency responses services.

Seventy percent (70%) of respondents agree that the Town should restrict mobile home parks of 3 or more units and comments convey concerns about the economic and visual impacts of clusters of such housing units that historically have proven difficult to regulate. Citing the importance of singlewide units as affordable local housing, however, residents do not support banning such units on individual plots, provided necessary and appropriate regulations are in place. Nearly half of respondents (49%) agree that the Town should "ban" multiple building apartment complexes as out of scale and character with the Town due to the lack of public infrastructure to support such concentrations, including public water, sewer and other municipal services. However, 44% of respondents did not oppose small apartment buildings or multiple dwellings, especially for the elderly, subject to necessary and appropriate regulation.

In keeping with the low-density theme, respondents showed strong support (78%) for prohibiting more than one residence per lot, although the comments suggested several exceptions due to lot size or family relationship. Respondents agree with the use of standard regulatory tools to achieve the residential planning and development goals, including rules for minimum setbacks (68%), minimum lot sizes (57%), and minimum road frontages (57%).

The survey also assisted in identifying other important local issues affecting residential planning and regulation. Examples include outdoor wood furnaces, Town roads, and a farm-friendly environment. Approximately 15% of respondents reported using wood as their primary heating fuel and 25% as a secondary fuel within an outdoor furnace. Such a high percentage of wood and/or outdoor furnace use raise air quality issues that local regulations will need to address.

Although State Routes 80 and 51 and a few county roads traverse the Town, it is the smaller Town roads that mesh together the dispersed homesteads, crossroad corners, and hamlets and contribute to the Town's character. Many of these local, Town roads are unpaved, narrow, rutted, windy, hilly, and full of surprises—from slow-moving farm machinery to beautiful hillcrest views to children darting across from house to barnyard. Respondents are aware of and expressed appreciation for the significant Town investment made in local road maintenance, but also expressed several concerns—for

improving safety, for limiting the expansion of new Town roads, and for limiting the adverse impact on Town roads from commercial and, in particular, heavy construction or industrial development. Preserving this network of rural roads which contributes to the Town's character without over-extending and, literally, over-taxing the Town's ability to maintain such roads will require thoughtful planning and land use regulation.

6. The Town should plan for, promote and manage future commercial development, economic growth and local job opportunities, such as small-scale, family-based agricultural and commercial businesses, which are consistent with and enhance the Town's rural community character and its underlying dependence on quality natural resources to attract residential growth.

Although most large-scale dairy farms have ceased operation during recent years and only a small percentage of the Town's population supports itself by farming alone, small family farms, hobby farms, and niche farms (e.g. organics, equine) continue to start up within the Town. This farming past and the potential for future, emerging small-scale agribusiness opportunities enjoy the Town's consensus support and encouragement.

The survey identified strong support for locating small-scale convenience services within the Town, including a gas station, convenience grocery store and ATM branch, subject to necessary and appropriate regulation governing such matters as location, scale/size, lighting, signage, and impact on natural and residential environment. Citing the economic realities of the times, 50% of respondents disagreed that chain stores should be prohibited, but comments indicate a preference for family-based businesses.

Although less than 10% of survey respondents reported operating a home-based business, survey questions and comments indicate broad support for these small-scale, family-based businesses as consistent with the Town's character and as a potential source of Town growth.

Large-scale commercial and industrial businesses evoked a different response from Town residents. The vast majority of respondents favored "banning" strip malls (70%) and theme parks (60%) and a slight majority favored restricting hotels (58%), office complexes (53%), and manufacturing businesses (52%). Such commercial concentrations of buildings, people and demands for services (e.g., water, sewer, police, fire and emergency) are viewed as having an adverse impact on the Town's other goals, including enhancing the natural environment and the Town's rural character as a place to live, while minimizing the need to expand the provision of public infrastructure services. Effective planning for and regulation of big businesses requires a proportionately larger local government capability in fiscal, legal, and human resources, moving the Town farther away from its goals.

The survey identified two commercial activities, logging and heavy construction, where there is no clear consensus of opinion. For logging, 48% of respondents agree with the need for local restrictions and 37% disagree. Logging is an important source of income for some local families, including older retired farmers, and selective cutting has been the common practice by individual landowners. Comments clustered on three points: enforce compliance with existing state rules and regulations and issued permits,

discouraging larger-scale clear-cutting practices, and encouraging sustainable forestry practices.

For heavy construction, 44% of respondents agree with the need for local restrictions and 36% disagree. However, comments include queries as to whether farm machinery is heavy construction or what examples of heavy construction might be, indicating the need for further public discussion of this land use. Also, responses to two other survey questions show very strong or overwhelming support for restricting two factors related to heavy construction usages. Approximately 60% of respondents agree with the need to set weight limits on Town roads and 90% of respondents agree with the need to restrict “inherently noisy or pollution generating businesses”.

The Town’s involvement in certain other potential economic activities received little support, including the promotion of tourism, investment in public running paths and parks or active preservation of cultural or historic structures. However, although 85% of respondents report that they would use public bus service only “infrequently” or “never”, a number of respondents identified the near- absence of public transportation serving the Town as a key economic barrier to employment. The absence of such public services prevents residential settlement by people and families who rely on public transportation for job commutes or who will move out of Town closer to places of employment as rising gasoline prices increase the cost of commuting.

7. The Town should restrict gas exploration, but should cautiously consider opportunities to support development of appropriate wind power generation that is consistent in scale and technology with the Town’s other goals, including environmental, landscape and rural character preservation, residential growth, and small-scale commercial and agribusiness growth.

Approximately 60% of survey respondents disagreed when asked if the Town should be involved in “restricting energy solutions (large windmills, gas exploration)”. Written comments and other survey questions clarify residents’ views about the need for local regulatory standards necessary and appropriate for the *specific* types of energy resources. Residents clearly differentiate between energy resources and the survey identified several points of concern about each potential resource. Over 80 comments were provided on the topic of energy development and fell generally into three groups: (1) prohibiting or restricting natural gas exploration/development, (2) not prohibiting or restricting windmill development (including residential, auto-generation and (3) the need for further careful study and strong local regulations to regulate wind power and other energy development, provided that such development can be undertaken consistent with the Town’s other goals.

Residents expressed considerable concern and opposition to natural gas exploration. Nearly half (48%) of the survey respondents agree that the Town should restrict/control gas exploration, and only 12% disagree. In their comments, respondents cited a variety of reasons that the Town should not support gas exploration on property within the Town. These reasons include the known and potential adverse impacts of such activity on both the natural and human character of the Town; the risk of water, soil and air pollution and disturbance; the physical infrastructure burden; the regulatory/legal burden; public health and safety risks; the adverse impacts on rural character and

emerging small-scale agri-businesses; and risk of industrial noise, light, visual and other despoilment of the landscape.

Regarding windmills, respondents remain open to the concept of supporting this alternative energy resource. However many respondents voiced the need for more public education and information on wind power generation and for strong regulation to protect against adverse impacts on the Town's other goals; the protection of the natural environment, landscape, rural character, and residential attractiveness of the Town. Achieving these twin goals of supporting wind power while enhancing the Town's rural character and residential attractiveness may enable small-scale and residential, auto-generation windmills, while prohibiting large-scale, industrial wind farm projects on the Town's rustic horizons.

Vision Statement

We, the citizens of the Town of Burlington,

Cherish and protect our rural and natural landscape. We wish to assure that plentiful, accessible open spaces continue to exist. We see agriculture as a historic and important component of the Town's character. We respect our traditions and history and desire to preserve its character. We wish to encourage new development to honor the way our hamlets and rural areas have looked through their long history. Hence, we promote careful design and placement of new buildings to complement and harmonize with those already here.

We foresee the future Town of Burlington as continuing to have a clean environment, beautiful landscapes and a rural character. We envision carefully managed growth and development, maintaining access of our natural areas. We foresee a place of safety for our families.

We desire added economic growth, with more diverse year-round businesses that serve the residents. We desire environmentally low-impact, family-owned small businesses to flourish in ways that do not distract from the character and natural beauty of the area. We wish that the development of these businesses and their related jobs will draw and sustain young families.

We want residential development concentrated in and around the existing hamlets, to strengthen our neighborhood, economic draw and sense of community. We foresee hamlet amenities like street lighting, sidewalks and tree-lined streets adding to its desirability. We foresee development within the hamlets to be highly sensitive to the charm and natural beauty of the surroundings. Beyond the hamlets, we foresee a mix of current size homes surrounded by open land and farms. We foresee all homes and neighborhoods safe, well maintained and not representing a distraction to the natural beauty of the Town.

We wish roads to be well built, maintained and reflective of our rural and historic heritage. We want traffic volume, flow and speed controlled to harmonize with the Town as a residential community.

We foresee a Town government that is responsive to the residents. We foresee support for high-quality schools through fair and equitable valuation of property. We foresee all legislative and supporting agencies strictly controlling costs to maintain reasonable taxes.

We foresee the Town working cooperatively with other towns, cities and villages within the Wharton Valley and surrounding communities, promoting their good and ours.

We, the citizens, are committed to involvement in the Town of Burlington's future and are proud of our strong community identity and historic past.

This is our vision, the touchstone for our shared future.

Statement of Goals, Issues and Strategies

With the vision statement developed, it is possible to identify goals which are confirmed by public input and required to meet the future conditions of the Town of Burlington.

Goal #1: Preservation of Community Character and Tax Base. Maintain and enhance the unique rural and hamlet features of the community that make Burlington a quality place to live and work.

Issue: While perhaps intangible, residents highly value the area's scenic, historic and rural/small town character. Studies overwhelmingly show that real estate values remain stable in communities with high quality open spaces, protected scenic view-sheds and intact historic resources. In fact, open space, beautiful views, the absence of visual blight and remnants of our collective history increase the attractiveness and value of adjacent properties, which in turn increases the tax base. Preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental resources is one of the basic principles of smart growth because it attracts high quality residential and business development. Overwhelmingly, residents desire that new growth be consistent with the character of the area.

Objectives and Strategies: Achieving the goal of preserving the Town's character and protecting the tax base and property values requires that:

- Land use regulations and site plan review in small communities must use common sense to balance the right to reasonable use of one's property, the right of adjacent property owners to co-exist without undue negative impacts, and the right of the Town to expect that new development will enhance the community, especially visually, and will not have hazardous impacts.
- Some land uses should be prohibited in certain areas in order to maintain the area's scenic and historical character. Landscape and lot area, height and yard regulations will be necessary for permitted uses. These regulations should determine such matters as lot size, principal buildings per lot, minimum yard widths, road frontage, setbacks, obstruction of vision on corner lots, and building heights in order to preserve open spaces and maintain beautiful views.
- Accumulation of junk on private properties be obscured from public view and/or removed from such properties

Goal #2: Preservation of Natural and Infrastructure Resources. Maintain and enhance the quality and value of the Town's geology, environment and other public structures.

Issue: Residents uniformly support the premise that the Town's natural resources, ranging from its various streams, brooks, wetlands, bogs, ponds and aquifers to the forest covered hillsides, rich agricultural soils, quiet wildlife habitats and even the unobscured star-laden night sky must be protected. In addition, there is overwhelming support from residents that elements of the town's infrastructure, including roads, bridges, power lines, communication towers and energy solutions should be constructed and maintained in ways that are in keeping with protecting these natural resources.

Objectives and Strategies: Performance standards and land use regulations should take into consideration the natural resources of the Town.

- All NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regulations and sound environmental practices should be considered.
- Mining, drilling, and timber harvesting in combination with agricultural land and residential areas will have to exist in an ever-changing order of governmental and environmental policies.
- The Town's current and future infrastructure should be protected from the vibration of heavy equipment and drilling apparatus.
- In order to keep our air clean, the ill effects of smoke and other pollutants, whether it is industrial or from domestic heating units, should be addressed.
- Communication towers, windmills and wind farms, electrical transmission lines, natural gas wells and pipelines have adverse conditions that the Town should consider.
- Health and safety issues, such as fire and explosive hazards, glare from improperly installed lighting, water, garbage and sewage disposal and noise, are other factors to be considered.

Goal #3: Economic Development. Maintain the socio-political, legal and eco-friendly atmosphere within the community that supports small business development.

Issue: The Town of Burlington's economic future holds promise in the form of retaining, to the extent possible, existing agricultural businesses, exploring alternative agriculture practices, managing its forests, attracting small-scale eco-friendly industries, encouraging family-owned retail and service businesses and developing and promoting home-based businesses. While economic development is a serious concern within the community, most residents believe their personal wealth is closely associated with the value of their homes and real property. To this end, the Town should actively promote and engage practices that protect property values through sound fiscal and Ad Valorem policies.

Objectives and strategies: Support and development of small-scale, eco-friendly businesses will require regulations as set forth by the Town, as well as New York State and Otsego County agencies, and will need to be supported by the residents of the Town.

- Regulations regarding economic development should establish districts that permit a wide variety of uses but subject them to performance standards that would govern the issuance of permits by planning or zoning boards. This would encourage a variety of small-scale uses consistent with the rural character of the community, provided such uses have a minimal impact on the surrounding areas.
- Types and sizes of businesses will have to be reviewed by the Town's Planning Board, with definite and precise plans submitted by the developer.
- Small retail locations will need direction from the Town in order to function and flourish. Loading zones, required paving and sizing parking lots and locations for commercial businesses will have to be determined in advance and with proper pre-planning.
- Recreational theme parks, outdoor concerts, motor sports parks, restaurants, and other ventures will require necessary permits and will need to follow strict health and safety rules.
- All of which is necessary to keep the value of homes, properties and businesses in a manner that benefits the residents of the Town of Burlington.

Recommended Actions

- 1) Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Board shall commission the Town Planning Board to recommend specific site plan and land use regulations for Town Board review and adoption.
- 2) Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Board shall commission the Town Planning Board to recommend specific regulations to control junk and debris on private property for Town Board review and adoption.
- 3) Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Board shall adopt a policy statement regarding the development of year round residences on seasonal roads.
- 4) The Town Board shall adopt a comprehensive “Infrastructure Maintenance and Upgrade” plan to prepare for road, bridge and other infra-structural contingencies.
- 5) The Town Board shall adopt a policy whereby all accessory services shall be identified within the Town Budget under a special district heading.
- 6) The Town Board shall contract the town attorney or other qualified agency to recommend appropriate actions to protect the goals contained within the Comprehensive Plan in regards to expanding gas exploration, electrical transmission lines and large windmill farms.
- 7) The Town shall develop a local website that is specific to the needs of the residents of the Town of Burlington.
- 8) The Town shall erect an announcement board in front of the Town Municipal Building for the purpose of informing the public of events and notices.
- 9) The Town Board shall express the Town’s desire to identify individuals interested in opening small businesses (convenience store, gas station, etc) within the town limits. The town shall work cooperatively with local realtors and county agencies as part of this expression.
- 10) The Town Board shall establish and maintain contact with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation regarding future plans and commitments for Basswood Pond as a recreational facility and land use.