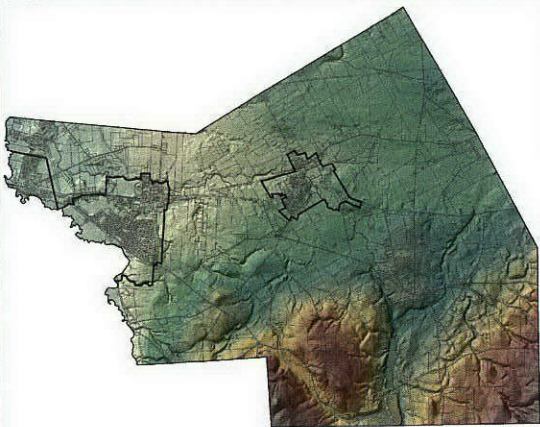
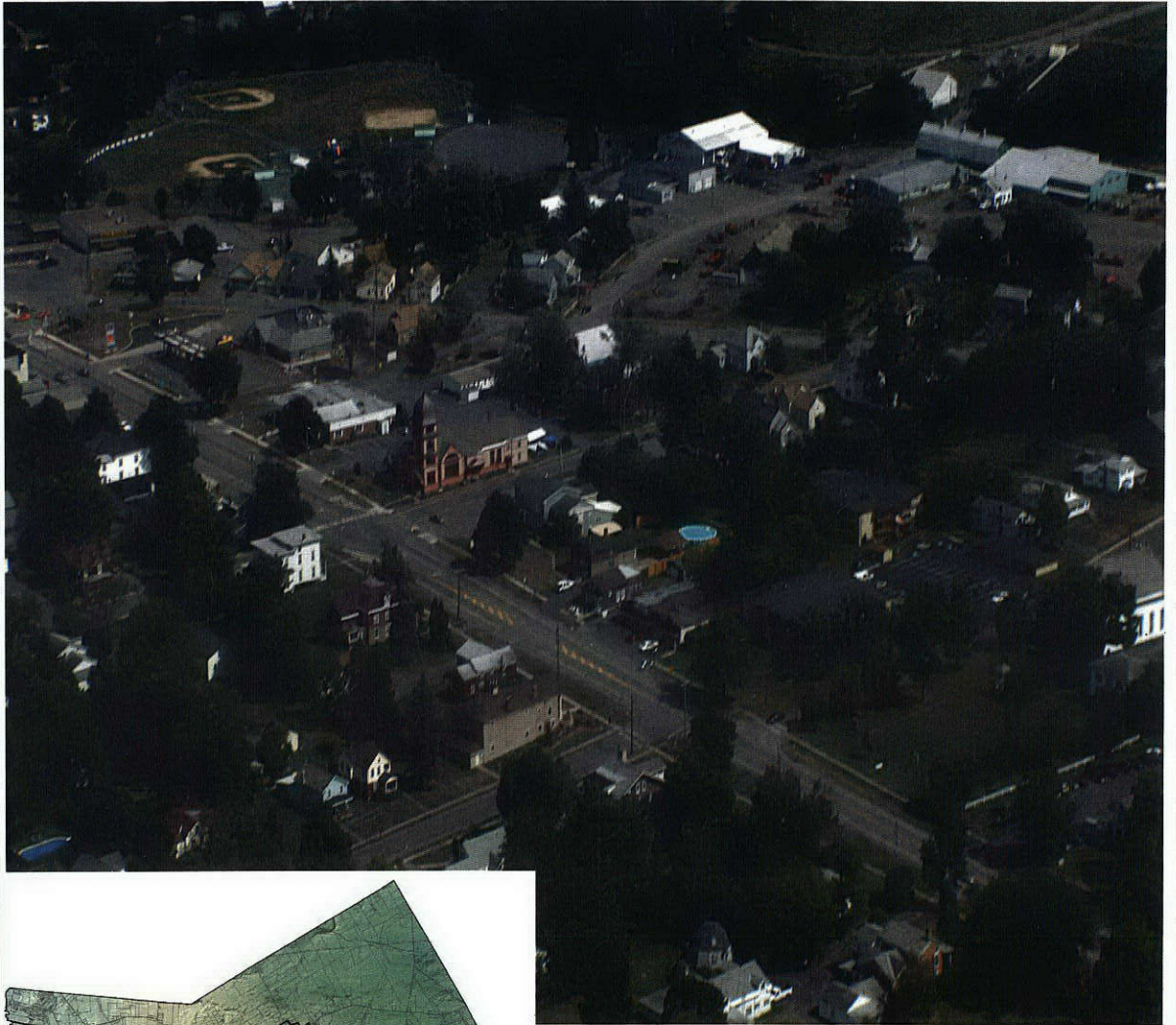


COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

VOLUME I

Comprehensive Plan Report



Town of Vernon
Oneida County, New York

September 2005

Barton
& **L**oguidice, P.C.

Engineers • Environmental Scientists • Planners • Landscape Designers

Town of Vernon

**The Town of Vernon
Community Comprehensive Plan**

Draft

September 2005



Engineers • Environmental Scientists • Planners • Landscape Designers

**290 Elwood Davis Road
Box 3107
Syracuse, New York 13220**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Authorization

On April 5, 2004, Vernon Town Board authorized Barton & Loguidice, P.C. to undertake the preparation of a Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) pursuant to, and in accordance with section 272-a of New York State Town Law. Upon adoption of this resolution, the Town Board authorized the formation of a Special Board (AD-HOC Committee) consisting of one or more Town Planning Board members appointed by the Town Board to assist B&L in developing a vision for the future of the community.

1.2 Purpose

The primary purpose of the Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan is to provide guidance to local officials and residents as they work to accommodate future physical growth and development of the community. The Plan addresses areas within the Town including the Village of Vernon, the Village of Oneida Castle, the Hamlet of Vernon Center and the City of Sherrill. The Plan provides community goals and objectives derived from four public visioning sessions and a series of public workshops and includes policies that are based upon a comprehensive inventory and analysis pursuant to citizen input. The Plan provides guidance to at least three levels of community interest.

First, the Plan serves as a guide to Town officials but provides insight to all four of the municipalities as they engage in a coordinated approach to planning for the future. Secondly, the Plan provides guidance to Local, State and County agencies for the development and maintenance of facilities within the Town. Third, the Plan will guide public agencies, private business, not for profit agencies and citizens in working toward a collective vision for the Town of Vernon. The Plan recognizes the Town as part of a larger region, and acknowledges that the interests of the Town of Vernon are important in the context of surrounding communities, Oneida County and Central New York.

The Town of
Vernon
Comprehensive
Plan is authorized
by section 272-a
of N.Y.S.
Town Law

The Vernon Town Board has pursued this effort with knowledge that the act of governance is the art of balancing limited resources with unlimited demands. During periods of limited public resources, Comprehensive Planning serves as a tool to strategically guide the public and private sectors to a sustainable future. This guidance is necessary to provide effective and efficient expenditures of public funds for the maintenance and development of critical infrastructure and facilities. Once adopted, the Plan will help the Town of Vernon achieve its vision for the next generation and promote a sound and reasoned approach to public and private investment.

1.3 An Overview of the Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan addresses four major subject areas with 9 sub components based upon New York State Legislation defining a Town Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately, sections of the Plan address; Natural Resources, Historic Resources, Cultural Resources, Transportation, Infrastructure, housing, community facilities including parks recreation and open space, economic development in the context of local land claims and issues with respect to community design. Each section of the Plan parallels a profile and inventory of existing conditions, a discussion of trends relevant to the Town, and an analysis of local issues, opportunities, and constraints for each of the four major sections of the Plan. This information is contained within Volume I of the report. Volume one of the Plan establishes community goals, objectives and strategies relating to each element. This volume contains the essence of the Plan and actions to guide local policy toward achieving the future vision of the community.

An element of the final plan will include implementation strategies and describe how progress in achieving the goals of the community can be measured and monitored. The plan will also identify resources available to the community to facilitate and support community strategies. The key to the success of the Plan lies within the Community Goals, Objectives, Recommendations and Strategies that are established to achieve a vision for the next generation of residents.

They are defined as follows:

Goal – A community Goal is a broad statement that represents a long-term goal of the community for each component of the Plan. The combination of Goals sets the framework for the future long-term vision of the community and is based upon extensive public input.

Objective – Objectives are more specific steps toward achieving long-term goals but will take a period of time to accomplish. Objectives may require a periodic review and may be adjusted to changes in the regulatory landscape or unanticipated issues that may arise out of unforeseen trends.

Recommendations - Recommendations are general guidelines for policy changes to set direction for each planning component. They provide direction toward the ideal approach in areas where alternatives are considered. Recommendations assist the decision-making process of Town Officials based upon the analysis and evaluation of best available alternatives suggested by panel guests, participating agencies and the planning consultant.

Implementation Strategy – Implementation Strategies are specific, short-term policy-oriented actions that should be initiated within a 1 to 5 year time-frame. The success of short-term strategies should be reviewed every 5 years and updated as they are implemented. For example, development of the Town Park is a local objective, but the Town may target funding to complete the first and second phase of the park within three years.

1.3.1 Plan Contents

The Environmental, Historic and Cultural Resources describe the natural resource base of the area. This is organized in NRI (Natural Resources Inventory) format and is designed to satisfy the natural resource inventory under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). It recommends measures to enhance and conserve the many values of local natural resources through cooperative management and public and private stewardship. Historic and Cultural Resources explore the ways in which local history and historic preservation efforts can become part of the community revitalization process, particularly in the City, Villages and hamlets. Historic and archeological resources enhance the understanding of how the local community developed over time and can assist in projecting the direction of current trends.

Water and wastewater utility planning addresses the basic needs of the community and provide for public health. Existing Water and sewer systems are described, demands on the resources are identified and challenges occurring in the way these services are provided are addressed. This is important in approaching the needs of the community in a cost effective and efficient manner.

The Transportation planning portion of the Plan is intended to help facilitate the logical growth of the street network while preserving highway function and maximizing efficiency. In addition, the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the community will be addressed. The presence of Bike Route 5 through the community provides a number of recreational and tourism opportunities for the Town. The importance of maintaining a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system are explained, and related to current Federal and State D.O.T. initiatives.

The Vernon
Comprehensive
Plan was
developed with
public input from 4
Visioning
Sessions and 5
Public Workshops

The Land Use portion of the Plan pulls together all of the previous planning elements in a manner that helps determine the most appropriate land use decisions in order to achieve the Goals and objectives of the Plan. In essence, the land use portion will address issues with respect to housing, commercial development, community facilities (i.e., libraries, public safety services etc.), agriculture and other forms of land use within the Town. In-addition, it addresses community design alternatives relative to density of development, layout, logical extensions of growth and strategic locations. The land use portion of the Plan will address current land use patterns and trends as the basis for making predictions as to the future impacts of land use within the Town, City and Villages.

1.3.2 The Planning Process

Plan development to approximately 18 months and utilizes a public visioning process. These visioning sessions are designed to maximize public input regarding the issues outlined above. The process involved four visioning sessions during the summer and fall of 2004 and solicits public concerns regarding the Plan's subject areas. Workshops were scheduled in advance of Visioning sessions to prepare for the public input components of the Plan.

1.3.3 Funding Potential

Proposed project Goals, Objectives and Recommendations listed in this Plan may require funding through current and future grant sources. Some of these sources including the Quality Communities Program, The New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund place emphasis on the use of funds in accordance with a Town Comprehensive Plan or other regional planning initiatives. This will become an important component of future phases of implementation. A list of funding programs is included in the appendix of this Plan to provide information for funding future projects. In-kind services are

Comprehensive Plans are encouraged by New York State and are important for acquiring community grant funds.

welcomed by most of these grant programs and cooperative efforts between local citizens and interest groups can be used as matching sources. This approach will help the Town in achieving the future goals and objectives of the Plan by maximizing the availability of grant funds.

In addition, inter-municipal cooperation ranks very high with many available funding programs. Through addressing the Comprehensive Plan issues in cooperation with the City and the Villages the Town will be well served through available funding programs in the future.

1.3.4 Public Visioning

As an integral component of the Comprehensive Planning process, the Town of Vernon Ad-Hoc Committee held four Visioning Sessions. Each session provided for extensive public outreach and interaction with State and local officials and local residents. The sessions were designed to provide substantial opportunity for both verbal and written input into the planning process. Each Visioning Session was publicized through local newspapers, radio and television media. Each Visioning Session was followed by a meeting summary and a white paper evaluation of the issues raised at the public Visioning Sessions. These white papers were combined to formulate the final plan Goals, Objectives, Recommendations and Strategies. Expanded Visioning summaries and meeting minutes are contained in Volume III, Appendix B of this Comprehensive Plan.

The sessions were attended by several agencies and organizations including the Herkimer Oneida Comprehensive Planning Program. A brief inventory of the sessions is as follows:



1.3.4.1 Visioning Session No. 1

On July 22, 2004 the Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (Ad-Hoc Committee) held a public visioning workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input and generate ideas from local residents relating to Environmental and Cultural resources of the Town including:

- Natural Resources
- Parks Recreation and Open Space
- Historic Resources
- Archeological Resources

Residents of Sherrill, Oneida Castle and Vernon were present. The meeting began with a brief presentation by Steven Miller of Cornell Cooperative Extension. Steve discussed the difference between Agricultural Zoning Districts and Agricultural Taxing Districts. Steve then answered a few questions.

Brian Madigan of Barton & Loguidice, P.C. (B&L), introduced the topic of discussion. He explained how natural resources are applicable to town planning and produced an example of the relationship of prime agricultural soils to agricultural taxing districts and the implications for residential land use.

1.3.4.2 Visioning Session No. 2

On September 16, 2004 the Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (Ad-Hoc Committee) held a second public visioning workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input and generate ideas from local residents relating to the Water and Wastewater infrastructure of the Town including:



"Oneida County prefers more than one water source for redundancy in the system in the event of a disaster or terrorism"

- Oneida County Health Department Official -

- Potential Water Sources
- Need for Water Infrastructure Improvements
- Wastewater Extension Potential
- Need for Wastewater Infrastructure Extensions
- Role of Water and Sewer With Respect To Growth Potential and Water Quality.

Residents of Sherrill, Oneida Castle and Vernon were present.

Brian Madigan of Barton & Loguidice, P.C. (B&L), introduced the topic of discussion. He explained how water and wastewater issues are important to the Town and introduced a panel of experts with respect to current issues including:

Panel Guests:

Nicholas DeRosa; Oneida County Health Department
 Joseph Robertaccio; Oneida County Health Department
 Patrick Becher; Mohawk Valley Water Authority
 Jeffery Rowe; Barton & Loguidice, P.C.

1.3.4.3 Visioning Session No. 3

On November 18, 2004 the Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (Ad-Hoc Committee) held a third public visioning workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input and generate ideas from local residents relating to the Transportation Infrastructure of the Town including:

- Highway function
- Trends with respect to transportation planning
- Potential impacts to the highway system
- Planning approach to address transportation issues



"DOT can only control issues in the State Right of Way and the discussion you are having now is important to maintaining safe and functional highways in the future"

- New York State Department of Transportation, Region 2 Official -

The meeting began with introductions by Dick Sheeran Co-Chair of the Ad-Hoc Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. He briefly discussed the previous Water and Wastewater Planning workshop held on September 16th 2004. He welcomed Brian Madigan from Barton and Loguidice who began the session with a 30-minute presentation regarding Transportation issues in the Town of Vernon.

The presentation began with a discussion of the primary function of Local Roads, Collector Roads and Arterial Highways. It was noted that local roads provide greater access to adjacent land while collector roads are designed to carry higher volumes of traffic between neighborhoods or to arterial routes. Arterial highways are designed to carry traffic as their primary function and access to adjacent land is a secondary consideration. The discussion with respect to highway function ended with an overview of how the hierarchy of the highway system is impacted by adjacent land use and the importance in land use planning in maintaining the function of the highway system.

The discussion covered current trends with respect to highway and transportation planning. Trends identified that will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Linking Transportation planning with Land Use
- Highway Corridor Management
- Highway Access Management
- Multi-modal Transportation approach
- Making Bicycle and pedestrian connections

The session was attended by officials from New York State Department of Transportation, Region 2 who applauded the Town for their planning efforts.

1.3.4.4 Visioning Session No. 4

On March 17, 2005 the Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (Ad-Hoc Committee) held a fourth public visioning workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to solicit input and generate ideas from local residents relating to Land Use in the Town particularly with respect to:

- Agricultural Land Use
- Residential Land Use
- Other types of Land Use

The meeting began with introductions by Dick Sheeran Co-Chair of the Ad-Hoc Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. He welcomed approximately 100 people and introduced Brian Madigan from Barton and Loguidice who began the session with a 20 minute presentation regarding current land use and potential impacts to open space in the Town of Vernon.

The presentation began with a brief review of information from previous meetings. The discussion then turned to Housing related facts and the impact of unplanned residential development on agriculture, and current trends with respect to land use planning. Trends identified that will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Land Use Trends in the Town
- Land Use Trends in Commercial / Industrial Development
- Land Use Trends in Residential Development
- Conflicts between Agricultural and Residential Land Use

"Farmland Protection has to be a big part of this plan"

- Resident attending a Visioning Session -

The presentation went on to elaborate on some of the planning techniques employed at the local level to address Land Use and farmland protection.

1.3.5 Ad-Hoc Committee Public Workshops

Throughout the planning process the Town Ad-Hoc Committee held monthly meetings beginning in April of 2004. These meetings were designed to review the information from the inventory and to discuss potential issues to seed discussion at each Visioning Session. Workshops that followed a Visioning Session were designed to discuss the issues raised by officials and local residents as a road map toward developing Town Goals and Objectives. Subsequent meetings were designed to report on the progress of the Plan and to develop consensus among Ad-Hoc Committee members as to the appropriate strategies to achieve the long-term planning goals of the Plan. Minutes of these meetings are provided in Volume III, Appendix B of the Comprehensive Plan.

1.4 **History of Settlement**

The following is a summary discussion of the historical development of the Town. A more detailed historical inventory is contained within Volume II, Plan Inventory. The history of the Vernon area can briefly be described as follows:

Prior to European settlement, the natural resources in the Vernon area provided generous hunting, fishing and agricultural opportunity to the Oneida people. The land provided an abundance of resources necessary to sustain the native population and support their culture. Upon the arrival of European settlers, Vernon's growth became attributed to local industry relating to the forestry, farming and rural manufacturing that grew out of the local natural resource base. Oneida Creek and Sconodoa Creek became a major factor in the development of the Town by providing the water and power necessary for mills, farming and rural manufacturing.

The Village of Oneida Castle was incorporated in 1815

As transportation improved and opened up new trade routes, dairy farms became more profitable and abundant within the Town. As industry and manufacturing grew in Utica and Oneida during the first part of the 20th Century, Vernon continued to provide agricultural support to nearby urbanizing areas and farming continued to be a major source of livelihood for the Town, first in providing dairy and agricultural products to the region and then to markets throughout the northeast. New industries relating to agriculture began to emerge. Companies like Dairylea Milk Company, Uebler Milking Machines Company and Burton Livestock Exchange developed as the result of the local farming operations while new industry like GAF and Oneida container were added to the local economy.

Today, as Vernon enters the 21st Century, new opportunities exist as the economy continues to become more service oriented. While agriculture dominates the character of the community, equestrian farms, tourism development and retail establishments present new economically viable pursuits. Today, farming requires more acreage and mechanization to be profitable and many of the smaller farms are struggling to compete. It is important that an agricultural presence continues in the area. Dairy as a whole is experiencing difficulty in maintaining a profitable level of viability and protection of the agricultural heritage of the Town is likely to continue to be a regional issue. Local manufacturing operations including Oneida Limited remain. However, the twilight of the manufacturing and industrial past is beginning to take a toll on the local economy. As the local economy continues to become more service oriented and the impact of gaming facilities provides opportunity to tourism and hospitality it is likely that manufacturing related employment will either remain in the greater Syracuse, Utica, Rome and Oneida markets or continue to decline in the absence of a shift in recent economic trends. Upon the advent of the Turning Stone Casino and Oneida Nation endeavors the local economy continues to become more attractive to tourism and visitors from other parts of the northeast and beyond. Turning Stone Casino, Vernon Downs and associated spin-off development provides a likely catalyst for future economic development over the next 20 to 25 years. The Oneida Nation recently announced the opening of a PGA level golf course in the Northern portion of the Town of Vernon that will bring

Vernon Downs has been the location of community gatherings for over 100 years

Population in the Town of Vernon is projected to increase less than 1 percent. However, residential development on large lots is on the rise.

more potential for economic activity and tourism related enterprises. This growth may serve to benefit all parties if it is anticipated and planned for in a cooperative manner.

1.5 Demographic Profile

Many planning decisions rely on the demographic profile of a community. Demographics provide a basis to recognizing growth or non-growth population trends, the ethnic profile of the community and economic potential of the local work force. It is also helpful in establishing human patterns. For example, the location of employment opportunities may be evident by establishing how many people are employed locally as compared to the number of individuals who commute to other employment centers. Another example may be identifying a trend that may result in school expansion, development of senior assisted housing or the need for affordable housing, or evaluation of the median income of the local population to give some insight into the health of the local economy.

Overall figures for Oneida County reflect a 7.4 percent decrease in population in the ten years between 1990 and 2000. Year 2000 Census figures for the Town of Vernon include statistics for the Villages of Vernon and Oneida Castle as well as the Hamlet of Vernon Center. These sections of the Comprehensive Plan will breakdown the population characteristics for each municipality and make some general comparisons to adjacent Towns.

1.5.1 Town of Vernon

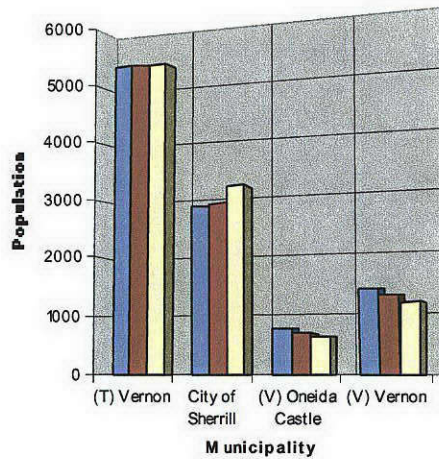
As of the 2000 Census, the population of the Town of Vernon is approximately 5,335. There are 2,112 households and 1,484 “traditional families.” Traditional families include two legally married parents and children less than 18 years of age.

The racial makeup of the Town is 97.94 percent Caucasian; .43 percent African American; .41 percent Native American and .39 percent Asian. Hispanic or Latino citizens account for .69 percent with the remaining residents listed as Pacific Islander, from other races or listed as two or more races.

The average size of a family in the Town is 2.98 individuals including 54.6 percent of whom are married couples living in the same household. Of the estimated 2,112 households, 32.9 percent contain children less than 18 years of age. According to Census statistics, 29.7 percent of households are “non-families” and 8.3 percent contain an individual 65 years or older living alone.

The median age in the Town, including the Villages, is 38 years of age. Local population density is 139.9 individuals per square mile.

Twenty Year Population Trend

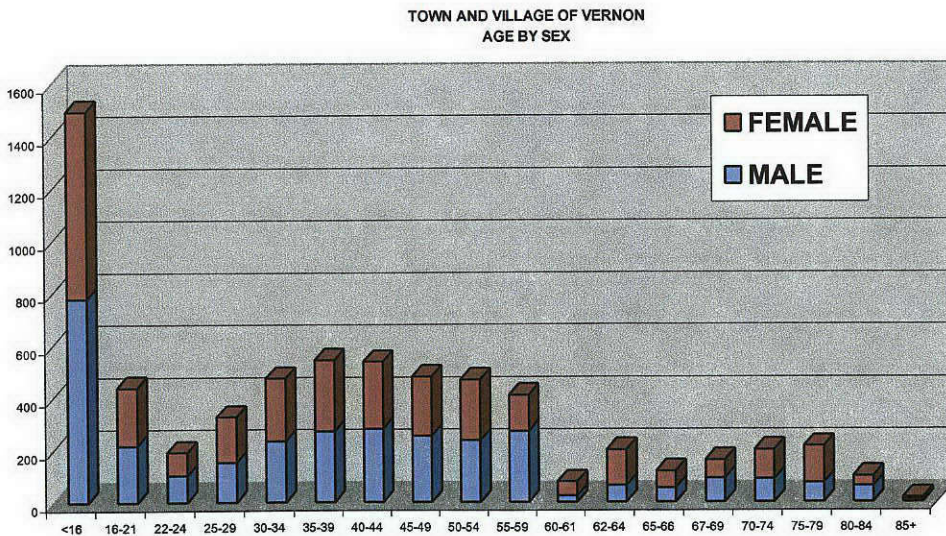


	(T) Vernon	City of Sherrill	(V) Oneida Castle	(V) Vernon
■ 1980	5354	2830	751	1373
■ 1990	5338	2864	671	1274
□ 2000	5335	3147	627	1155

Population projections for the Town (including the two villages) prepared by the Herkimer-Oneida Comprehensive Planning Program estimate the Town and village population to remain relatively steady with less than a 1 percent population increase by 2030.

1.5.2 Village of Vernon

Of the total number of individuals residing in the Town, 1,155 people live within the Village of Vernon. The Village contains approximately 499 households and 314 families with 31 percent of households having children less than 18 years of age. “Traditional” households account for 44.9 percent, including two parents with one or more children. Households containing an individual 65 years of age or older, account for 9.6 percent of residential units in the Village. The average size of a family in the Village is 2.85 individuals and the Median age is 37 years. Population density within Village limits is 1,264.5 individuals per square mile.



1.5.3 Village of Oneida Castle

The 2000 Census indicates that Oneida Castle has a population of 627 individuals in 264 households and 178 "traditional" families. Eleven percent of all households contain an individual 65 years or older who lives alone. Of the 264 households, 26.0 percent contain children under the age of 18 and 56.8 percent are considered "traditional" families.

The average family size in the Village is 2.87 and the median age is 41 years. Population density of the Village of Oneida Castle is 1,201 people per square mile.

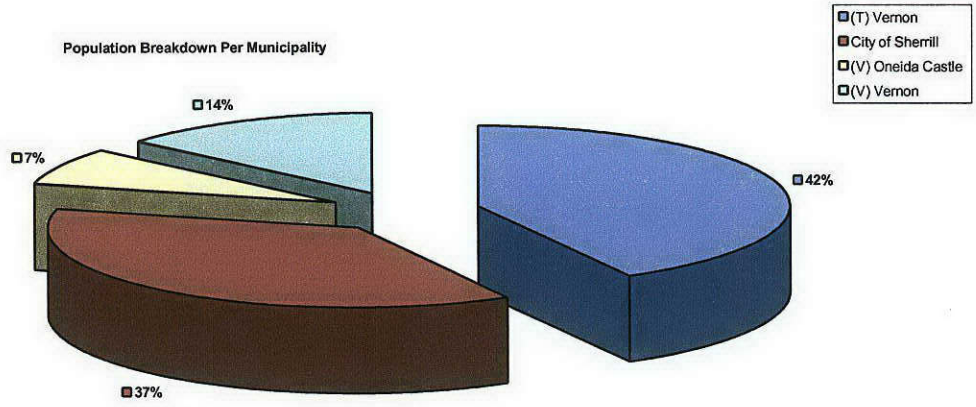
1.5.4 City of Sherrill

As of 2000, there were 3,147 people living in the City of Sherrill, including 1,262 households and 879 families. The racial makeup of the City is 98 percent Caucasian, .22 percent Afro-American, .60 percent Native American and .83 percent Hispanic or Latino.

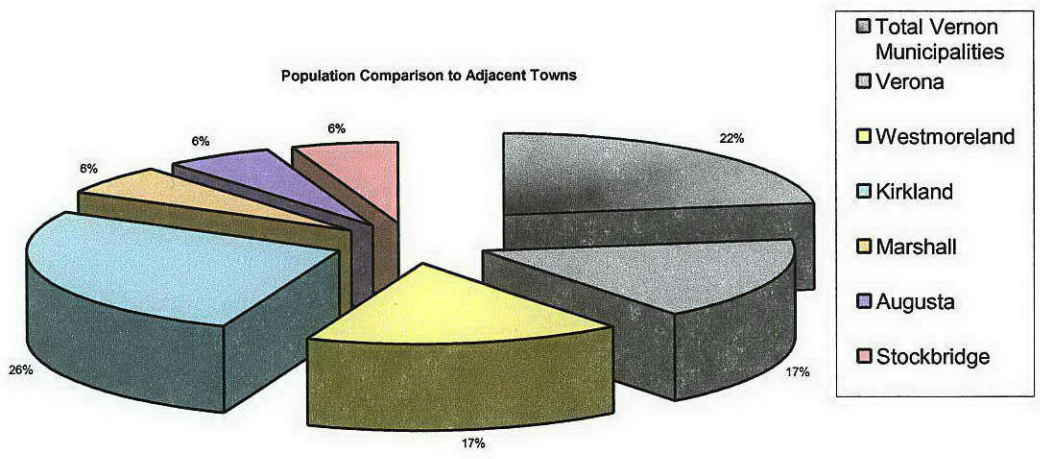
Of the 1,262 households in the City, 33.6 percent have children under the age of 18 living with them and 59 percent are "traditional" families. The average family size in the City is 3.03 and households containing one individual who is 65 years of age or older amounts to 15.9 percent of all households.

Based upon 2000 Census data the population density for the City of Sherrill as of the year 2000 is 1,554.6 individuals per square mile.

The City of Sherrill is considered the "smallest city in New York State"



The Town of Vernon is relatively large in population compared to the surrounding municipalities. It is the second largest Town (including City of Sherrill) in the immediate region and is comprised of 22 percent of the population of the surrounding communities.



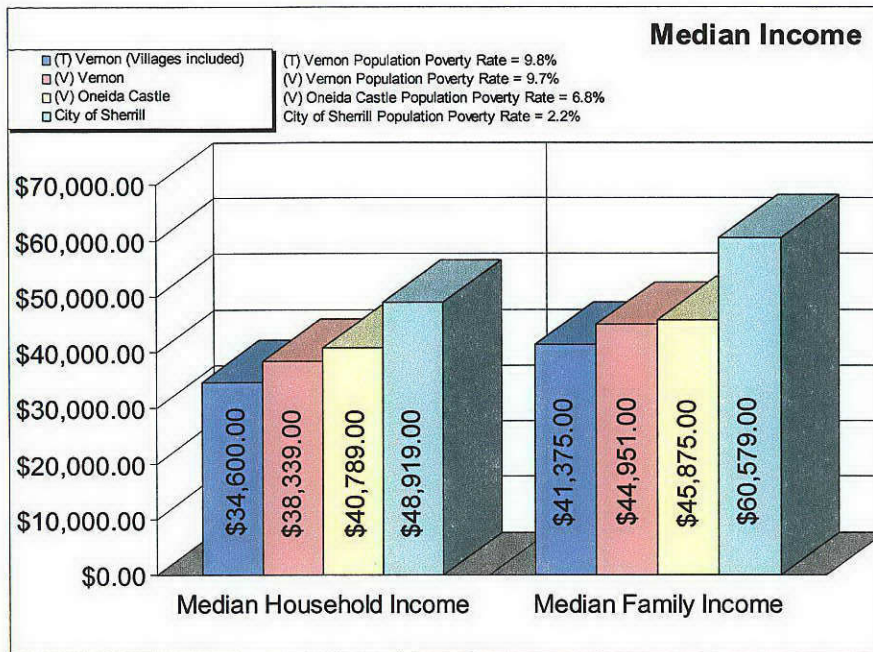
Population change over the past 30 years reflects a net population loss in the Town of .4 percent. This includes a 30-year loss in the population of the Village of 15.9 percent. The overall total net loss within the town has been minimal. However a 15.9 percent loss of population in the Village of Vernon represents a likely shift from the Village to the Town, outside the village. The thirty-year population loss to the Village and Town is not typical in the City. The City of Sherrill is the only municipality that is experiencing modest growth in population. According to the 2000 Census the City population has increased by approximately 317 individuals. This amounts to a net population gain of 11.2 percent since 1980.

1.6 Employment and Education

1.6.1 Local Estimated Income

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, out of the total population 1,027 males and 898 females held jobs in 1999 for a total of 1,925 individuals employed. Of those employed a total of 883 men and 599 women held positions at full time status. Full time status for the purposes of the U.S. census is considered to be a workweek of 35 hours or more.

Of the total remaining population 117 males and 245 females worked part time from 15 to 34 hours per week. The remaining part time workers worked any where from 1 to 14 hours per week including 45 males and 54 females.



Median income level for the residents of each community is illustrated in the chart shown above. The chart reveals that residents with the highest incomes reside in the City of Sherrill. The income of Village residents follows and the lowest income portion of the population resides in the Town. While the median household income is fairly consistent among the four municipalities the median family income in the City is higher than the Town and Villages.

1.6.2 Location of Resident Employment

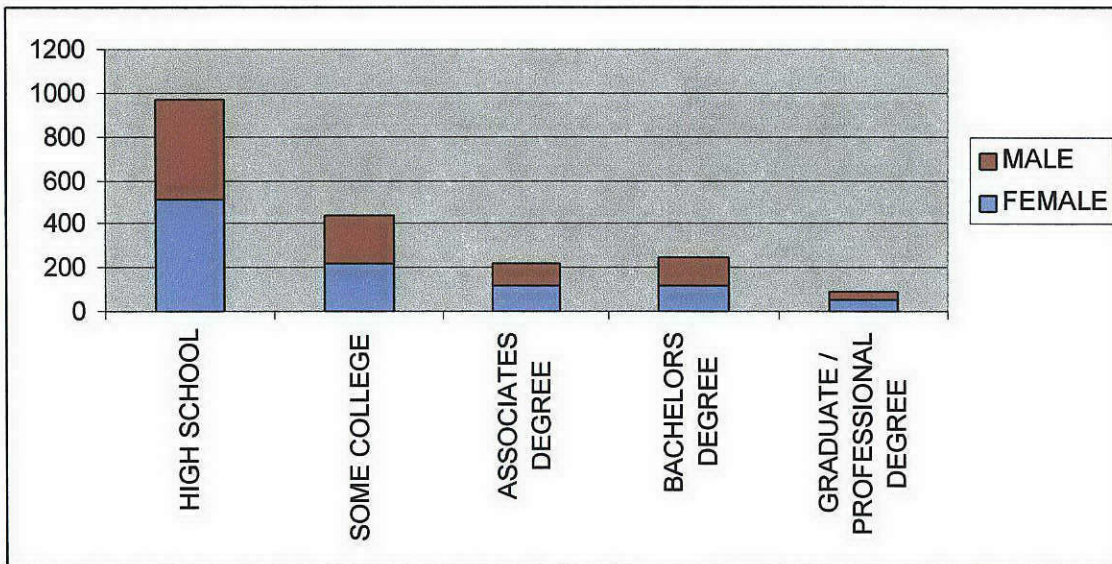
Of the total number of workers in the Town of Vernon 1059 individuals worked within the local Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This means that over half of the local residents work within a short distance of the Town. It is likely that the close proximity of local employment is a function of the Town's proximity to the Turning Stone

Casino and the City of Oneida. The remaining population worked outside of the local area either outside of the local MSA, in another county, or in another state. Of the total employed 622 individuals worked in another county while 21 people worked outside of New York State.

1.6.3 Local Educational Profile

The Town of Vernon has a relatively well-educated population compared to many rural communities. Of the total population more than 82 percent of males and 86 percent of females hold High School Diplomas and more than 400 individuals, male and female, have at least some college education.

Over 80 percent of the people in Vernon have a high school diploma or some college experience



Highest Level of Education Attained by Local Population

Additionally, out of just under 1,000 individuals more than 400 individuals hold an Associates Degree or a Bachelors Degree from a college or university. This level of education provides a number of opportunities to present new concepts to the local population that may enhance the ability of the local community in establishing future planning goals and objectives for the area. It also suggests that there is an adequately trained workforce available to local businesses and entrepreneurs.

2.0 Planning Component No. 1

2.1 Natural Resources and Open Space Preservation

Maintaining the quality of the environment is an important component of any Comprehensive Plan. As the Town of Vernon harbors many important natural resources and scenic views it is necessary to establish project goals, recommendations, and implementation strategies that will maintain the quality of those resources for future generations.

In its history, opportunities, and quality of life, Vernon is a special place. It has been shaped in the traditional New England style of development pattern where small towns are surrounded by farms and great expanses of forests. Its landscape is varied and beautiful, and its natural resource base is plentiful. Vernon's traditional land uses are undergoing fundamental and permanent change. Farmland is beginning to be cleared, and in some cases overgrown. Single family developments are springing up throughout the rural fields. For many people, income is derived from their land only when it changes hands in the real estate market. The accelerating onrush of land use conversion indicates that there will never again be as many planning options as there are today.

The goals and objectives outlined in this section should be viewed in terms of serving several generations, and thus, should be considered by the Town well beyond the horizon of this Plan. By immediately addressing issues regarding sustainable development practices within the Town, there is potential to establish an extensive, long-term vision for the quality of natural resources and scenic quality of the area. The primary recommended Goal and subsequent Objectives are outlined below.



Sconondoa Creek has a high level of dissolved minerals due to the presence of shale, salt and limestone in the southern hills of the Town.

2.1.1 Goal

To promote the conservation, protection and sound management of the natural resource base as a means to sustain the open space scenic quality and visual character of the Town.

2.1.2 Objectives

- Protect the quality and quantity of surface and ground water throughout the Town of Vernon.
- Encourage cooperative planning, resource allocation and program implementation of watershed management and land use planning by local government.
- Work with adjoining communities in the Oneida Lake Watershed and municipalities within the Town to establish common goals with respect to growth patterns and the protection of quality local surface and groundwater resources.
- Establish Land Use Policy that will protect the quality of groundwater serving individual wells.
- Consider the water quality of the Oneida Lake and Mohawk Valley watershed when addressing future sustainable land use issues throughout the Town.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas and stream corridors within the Town.
- Develop a growth management strategy to protect agriculture and open space, particularly south of Route 5.



Vernon lies within a transition zone between the Great Lakes Plain and the foothills of the Appalachian Plateau.

- Maintain a viable amount of open space to preserve the rural small town character of the community that residents currently enjoy.
- Encourage land use policy that will maintain a viable agricultural presence in the Town of Vernon for the benefit of future populations.
- Continue to work with the local farmland protection board to ensure practices will help protect local surface and ground water quality.

2.2 Recommendations

2.2.1 Educate and Encourage Smart Growth Practices to Achieve Sustainable Developments that Preserve Valuable Natural Resources and Open Space

A core goal of Smart Growth practices is to encourage and attract investment into existing communities (i.e., Villages and City of Sherrill), and to ensure that residents in those communities have access to valuable open spaces and natural resource areas for their enjoyment.

In the process, Smart Growth preserves working lands and natural areas by decreasing the pressure to develop there. Also, the establishment of programs that work to preserve natural areas can aid in efforts to support rural economies and direct growth to existing communities, protect the environment and make communities more desirable to live in.

The concept of sustainability involves the appropriate placement of buildings and infrastructure and the integration of natural process into the physical development of a site, location or community.

2.2.2 Link Natural Resource Protection with Future Residential Development

Currently, residential development is the primary threat to Vernon's rural landscape. It fragments its forests, watersheds, and habitat; creates pollution from automobiles, septic systems and surface runoff; and encroaches on land that supports fragile resource-based economies.

In many rural communities like Vernon new housing development is a fact of life. Where housing demands cannot be met by increasing housing density in existing communities, conservation design can minimize the impacts new residential development have on environmental health, wildlife habitat, recreational land, aesthetic values, agriculture, and forestry.

A concept popularized by Randall Arendt of the Natural Land Trust, effective clustering provisions promote conservation designs for new development on a portion of a parcel so that the remainder can be preserved as natural open space. Under his approach, land conservation is the primary factor upon which development lots and roads are strategically and sensitively designed in order to preserve at least half the land areas of that particular parcel. In addition to wetlands, flood plains and steep slopes that are already encouraged to be protected under the current Town Codes.

2.3 Implementation Strategies

The following implementation strategies focus on Smart Growth practices that are meant for the Town's review boards to encourage more sustainable design procedures for future proposals to help preserve the nature resource areas and open space.

2.3.1 Establish a Critical Mass of Committed Citizens Determined to Enhance the Community's Growth and Quality of Life

Forming a group of committed citizens, whether they are made up of elected officials, business leaders, or motivated residents, is an essential aspect to foster desired growth. Even well-drawn plans and strategic procedures cannot succeed without people who will raise funds, organize constituencies, promote collaboration, and demand change.

2.3.2 Leverage Financial and Technical Support

In comparison to a lot of other Upstate New York communities, Vernon has a small tax base for lack of various big businesses and large populations. As such, limited resources could leave the Town with unwanted growth – weather in the form of commercial strip development, or a residential subdivision. The creation and implementation of this Comprehensive Plan is a key step in a process that is forever in need of evolution and updating. Vernon should continue to seek necessary planning and legal expertise to help carry out its vision for growth and strengthen its zoning codes as unforeseen trends in development happen in the future. This type of support is typically found beyond the immediate community.

2.3.3 Establish Priority-Setting Criteria for Natural Resource and Open Space Acquisition

Communities often pass bond referendums and other financial measures as a reactive response to “save the last wetland” or “save the last farm”. While a reactive preservation strategy can preserve critical lands, it often does so in a piece meal manner. Small, disconnected fragments of conserved lands have less ecological value as wildlife habitat, are less accessible to the public, and have reduced value in

directing growth than larger parcels connected by a green infrastructure of corridors. Vernon will be more financially stable by being strategic about which lands they acquire – especially in the face of limited funding.

To ensure that conservation efforts proactively enhance green infrastructure, Vernon should establish priority-setting criteria. This Comprehensive Plan has helped established an inventory of regional resources and conservation goals. To build off of this Plan and implement some of the goals outline above, a prioritization scheme can help preserve land in a cost-effective way. It can be tailored to preserve endangered wildlife and native habitats, or focus on more elusive elements, such as sense of place.

3.0 Planning Component No. 2

3.1 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

One of the most critical components in maintaining and enhancing a community's quality of life is its system of parks, recreation, and open space. The strategic location of parks, open space, and areas of natural resource preservation should complement existing development, and can be a useful tool in guiding development in a logical, orderly and environmentally sensitive manner. In addition to recreational and aesthetic benefits, open space provides a framework for various land uses. Properly located, they become boundaries and buffers between conflicting uses of land, as well as a nucleus for building neighborhood areas. Natural features can be preserved as valuable scenic and environmental attributes of the Town. A park system and recreational program can also go a long way toward resolving the problem of a community offering nothing for young people "to do".

The following Goals and Objectives are intended to guide the state of Vernon's parks and recreation system and propose methods by which it could be improved.

3.1.1 Goal

To provide a diverse and coordinated system of parks and open space that meets the recreational needs of the community and is accessible to an active, health conscious population.

3.1.2 Objectives

- Build upon the quality of existing recreational facilities by ensuring that future parks provide unique recreational opportunities that do not duplicate existing facilities.



The "Green" in Vernon Center is a historic gathering space and recreation area.



The Village of Vernon Park was improved with the assistance of the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

- Encourage greater private sector participation in the acquisition, development, and stewardship of open space and parklands. The private sector can and should assist the Town in preserving natural resources, acquiring land for open space, and providing stewardship or maintenance.
- Complete a phased build-out of the proposed Town Park facility and promote connectivity from this site to current and future growth areas of the Town.
- Work with local educational institutions and vocational programs to develop the New Town Park and future recreational facilities as working outdoor classrooms.
- Coordinate the development of the Town Park as an outdoor classroom in an effort to support full build-out of the park facility.
- Develop a cooperative and coordinated system in order to ensure that all populated areas of Vernon are equitably served with parks and that a variety of recreational opportunities are available.
- Establish a pedestrian circulation network that provides connectivity to all park facilities and school facilities within the Town, linking recreational facilities to population centers as well as natural resource areas.
- Work with Oneida County in coordinating Town and County Park Planning and potential grant funding to eliminate unnecessary duplication of services.

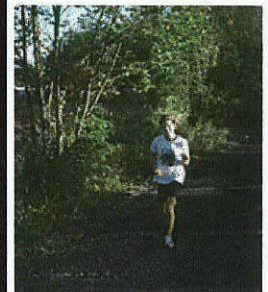
The City of Sherrill maintains approximately 36 acres of parkland and recreational facilities.

- Establish or refine, if necessary, a policy of requiring usable park/open space during development review and approval within the Town.
- Improve the availability of recreational opportunities for teenagers and youths.
- Improve recreational opportunities for seniors and special groups.
- Develop a cooperative parks and recreation Master Plan and Facilities Management Plan inclusive of all of the existing recreational facilities in the Town, City and Villages.
- Establish school-park partnerships and clearly define roles and responsibilities as well as a sound and equitable financial plan for future parks on school properties.
- Seek new and innovative methods of using any private sector funding sources such as land donations, donation of easements and other rights, and labor donations.
- Encourage and employ open space planning techniques for the future subdivision of land in the Town, particularly residential subdivisions.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 Engage in Environmental Education and Interpretation Through a Coordinated Parks System

As Vernon moves forward with planning strategically for future growth it is important that the parks and recreation system be designed to adapt to ever-changing community needs and regional/national recreation



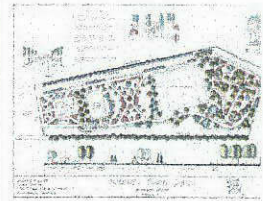
Greenways and pedestrian routes provide opportunity for outdoor recreation and fitness activities for an active lifestyle.

trends. Being conscious of providing environmental education and interpretation through a coordinated parks system is one way of achieving such. Engaging in wildlife conservation, establishing greenways, multi-modal trails, and transportation routes to enhance connectivity is an important aspect of any quality community.

Based on the Goals and Objectives set forth in this section, and as a result of those issues raised by Town officials and public residents, the following recommendations have been developed to guide the future growth and enhancement of Vernon's parks, recreation and open space system.

3.2.2 Implement Pedestrian/Recreation Greenways

Pedestrian greenways in the form of bicycling and walking trails provide travel modes and integral components to the larger transportation network, as well as establish connectivity to a Town-wide parks and recreation system. The ability to walk or bike creates attractive facilities for pedestrians of all ages. It is recommended that all existing pedestrian and bicycle routes or paths be integrated with future ones to form a network of recreation facilities that connect existing and future parks. It is also recommended that the physical layout of Sconodoa Creek be explored, as it provides an excellent opportunity to establish a pedestrian greenway that could link Vernon Center, Vernon Downs, the Village Park and Village of Vernon to a larger network within the Town and region. The Town should also explore any recreational trail opportunities along the old railroad bed that runs through the Town to be implemented into the larger proposed greenway system. At the local level, a Recreational Greenway Plan should be established to layout a means by which these pedestrian greenways could tie into the local transportation network by identifying practical connections to sidewalks and bicycle routes, thus, minimizing vehicle miles traveled when possible and conserving energy.



The Town developed a conceptual plan for a new Town Park facility with the assistance of a SUNY Morrisville Landscape Architecture student.

With respect to tying into the pedestrian network, it is also recommended and supported by the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that the Town coordinates state and county planned road projects with local bike and pedestrian investments. This coordination between state and county transportation projects with local bicycle and pedestrian facilities could significantly reduce project costs and project completion time.

3.2.3 Develop New Town Park

Land adjacent to the New Town Hall has been targeted for the development of a New Town Park. A conceptual site plan, developed by Amanda Wilson of Vernon (a former Landscape Architecture student at SUNY Morrisville) is already underway. Various amenities outlined in the introduction of this section that are to be implemented in this Park Plan indicate that users of all age groups will have amenities to suit their recreational needs once the park experiences full build-out.

It is recommended that the New Town Park be designed to be able to incorporate the opportunity for local educational programs to utilize the park as an “outdoor classroom” environment while providing the public with recreational needs unique to this park. Proper coordination and progressive development of the Town Park as an “outdoor classroom” for educational programs should be used as a mechanism to ensure full build-out occurs as resources become available. Upon full build-out of the park facility, the Town should consider continuing the outdoor classroom concept to promote conservation education to students at the elementary school, and to provide outdoor activity for individuals with special needs.

It is also recommended that the Town Park be incorporated into, and be accessible by both pedestrian and vehicular circulation networks. This will provide an important link between the Town and Village parks. By incorporating pedestrian paths into the design of this site, it would allow

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It is also recommended that the Town Park be incorporated into, and be accessible by both pedestrian and vehicular circulation networks. This will provide an important link between the Town and Village parks. By incorporating pedestrian paths into the design of this site, it would allow

for a more diverse and accessible pedestrian transportation network throughout the Town. Ultimately, the proposed Town Park along with the establishment of pedestrian greenways and bicycle routes connecting existing and future parks, would help develop a system of open spaces for recreational use that are multifunctional in nature. The secondary benefits will include providing neighborhood recreational space, and a secondary circulation system for pedestrians and bicycles linked with other recreational and open space areas.

3.2.4 Establish Multi-Municipal Committee

It is recommended that a multi-municipal committee be established to help coordinate and program for parks, recreation and open space throughout the Town. This committee should consist of officials, local business leaders and residents from the County, Town, the Village, Sherrill and Oneida Castle; that would oversee programming and planning initiatives for recreation facilities and natural resource preservation efforts.

A multi-municipal committee would enhance cooperation among municipalities, streamline any future land acquisition processes, and share in the management and stewardship of open spaces, resource areas and parks. This will help establish more cost-effective and viable maintenance practices for the betterment of the Town and County as a whole.

3.3 **Implementation Strategies**

To facilitate the implementation of said Goal and Objectives, and the Recommendations set forth, the Town of Vernon should engage in the following implementation strategies.



There are several buildings in the community representative of classical styles in American architecture.

3.3.1 Engage in Programming for Improvements to Sconondoa Creek

Establishing a greenway identity for Sconondoa Creek by planning for recreational improvements to the creek corridor will help establish and enhance multi-modal alternatives as well as provide for more recreational opportunities for all who live and visit the Town. Figure 3-1 shows a conceptual GIS trail map that links the City of Sherrill, Village of Vernon, Vernon Downs, and Vernon Center together via pedestrian and recreational improvements to Sconondoa Creek.

3.3.2 Seek Grant Funding to Facilitate Future Improvements and New Construction to Park Facilities

Actively pursuing alternative funding sources can greatly enhance the Town's monetary resources as well as help streamline quality community projects from the planning and design phase through implementation that might have otherwise been shelved due to the lack of funding. Assistance for funding applications can be found at many local agencies and/or through private consulting services.

Below are a few among many general funding resources in New York State that could help Vernon facilitate future parks, recreation and open space projects:

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

The CDBG is a program facilitated through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that funds towns that are trying to implement projects with community-wide benefits.

Greenways trails and parks can qualify for CDBG money,

especially those with economic, cultural and historic aspects. More information on CDBG grants is available through local government offices such as the Mayor's office or the local planning or community development office.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The LWCF is a federal matching funds program, which has been a major source of acquisition, development and improvement funds for recreation facilities, including greenway trails.

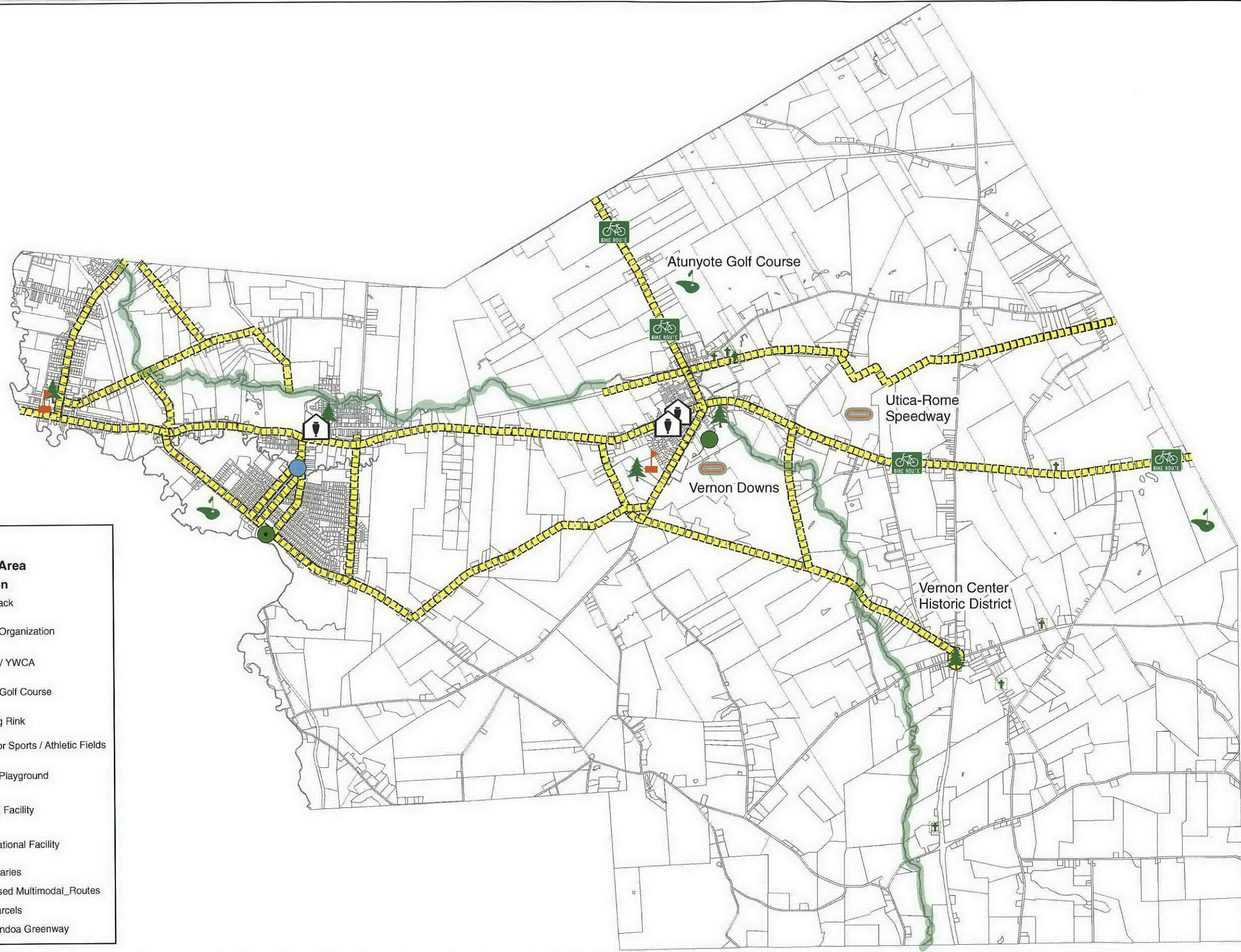
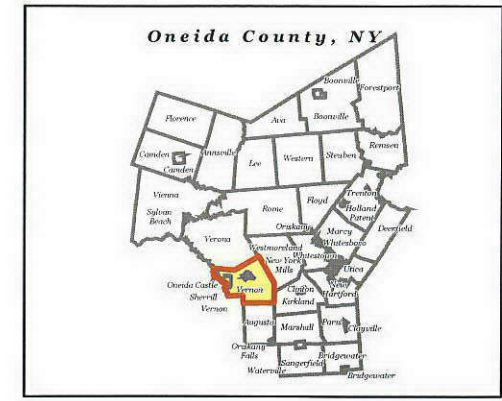
New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The NYS EPF provides mechanisms for open space conservation and land acquisition. It provides funds for local governments to purchase park lands or historic resources and to develop and preserve such resources.

3.3.3 Develop a Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in cooperation with the City of Sherrill, Oneida Castle, and the Village of Vernon will set forth a basis from which all decisions pertaining to parks, recreation, greenways, open space and environmental protection can be based upon.

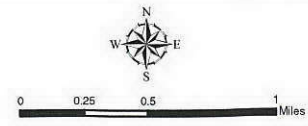
Properly managing acquisition of land and design and development of these elements could provide the Town with a unique green infrastructure network interlinked with local schools, community facilities, existing center of activity, and natural resources. A Parks and Recreation Master Plan would help plan for and implement such projects in a timely and feasible manner.



Legend

Recreation Area Classification

- Racetrack
- Social Organization
- YMCA / YWCA
- Public Golf Course
- Skating Rink
- Outdoor Sports / Athletic Fields
- Park / Playground
- School Facility
- Recreational Facility
- Cemetaries
- Proposed Multimodal_Routes
- Tax Parcels
- Sconondoa Greenway



4.0 Planning Component No. 3

4.1 Historic and Cultural Resources

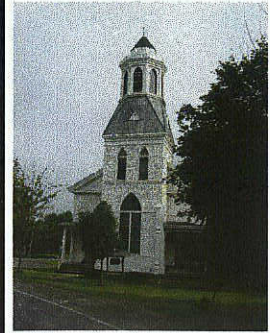
Historic and cultural resource planning and preservation represents a responsibility of the present generation to maintain unique and significant structures and areas established in the past for the use, edification and enjoyment of future generations. Vernon, because of its settlement history and rural heritage, has a particularly handsome endowment to protect and retain. This Historic and Cultural Resources element seeks to identify and protect areas, sites and structures having architectural, historical or cultural significance and to reaffirm their continuing value as a resource contributing to the vitality and diversity of the present and future. To ensure that the concerns of this element not be isolated from the concerns of other elements to which it is so clearly related to design, neighborhood enhancement, circulation, zoning, land use, conservation – and to eliminate the possibility of conflict and contradiction among the various elements, issues, opportunities, and recommendations, shall be cross-referenced to pertinent sections of the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

4.1.1 Goal

To preserve and enhance cultural and historic buildings, streets and districts not merely as subtle reminders of the past but also as relevant and unique alternatives for the present and future – a source of community identity , social, ecological and economic vitality.

4.1.2 Objectives

- Develop an interpretive program for local parks and natural areas of cultural and historical significance.



Vernon Center is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Historic District.

- Maintain the status of historic structures, districts and areas of cultural importance.
- Support the concept of designating Oneida Castle as a historic district.
- Develop a plan for Route 5 and 31 to provide local information and interpretation to motorists and visitors to the area.
- Relate new development to existing environments in scale, material and character so that Vernon's inherent human scale, visual and functional diversity may be maintained and enhanced.



Vernon Methodist Church is a prominent symbol of local history central to the Village of Vernon.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Establish and Institute a Historic Preservation Ordinance to Protect Current or Potentially Eligible Landmarks and/or Districts

Vernon's historical buildings provide the community with a sense of place and a visible link to an area's history. Properly managing these properties helps preserve the Town's heritage and identity. It is recommended that the Town institute a preservation ordinance, which serves to protect individual landmarks and/or districts. It is with the intent that such an ordinance regulates changes to existing historic buildings and makes sure new buildings are compatible with their older neighbors.

4.2.2 Establish a Historic Preservation Design Manual

Another way to promote the importance of historic and cultural preservation is through the establishment of a historic preservation design guide. This guide can be developed with the assistance of the Herkimer-Oneida Comprehensive Planning Program, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and local historians. Such a

document would use illustrations and clear language to explain to owners of historic property how to maintain the historic integrity of their properties. The Town may also provide tax incentives to businesses and individuals for the cost of preservation of historic architecture that is privately owned.

4.2.3 Engage in the Certified Local Governments Program.

Another option to enhance historic preservation in a community is for municipalities to participate in the Certified Local Governments Program, which is administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. This program could provide technical assistance to the Town of Vernon to improve and support local historic preservation efforts.

4.3 Implementation Strategies

4.3.1 Develop an Inventory of Properties and Structures That May Be Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

Establishing properties and structures that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places would put the Town in a position to be a part of a national program to help coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect its historic and archeological resources. Assistance with this task can be provided by designated local historians.

In addition, by identifying potentially eligible sites, awareness of the Town's unique history can be promoted through local events and can incorporate historical interpretation into local parks and recreation facilities.

4.3.2 Allow for Flexibility in the Town's Site Review Requirements

The Town's zoning codes should be amended to allow for flexibility when reviewing site plans and issuing building permits for instances where adaptive reuse of historic sites and structures, or those potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are proposed. This would encourage developers to use existing older structures for uses more compatible with the surrounding community, creating an environment more appealing to Town residents and visitors.

4.3.3 Coordinate Local Historical and Cultural Events with Other Events of Surrounding Communities

The Town is encouraged to coordinate any future local and cultural events with other events located at Vernon Downs, Turning Stone Casino, the Golf Course, Oneida Shores, and Utica-Rome Speedway. Local promotion and tourism officials can work with local historians to achieve this strategy. This would allow for residents and visitors passing through to partake in any events throughout the Town and to display to a wider audience the Town's unique historical significance.

5.0 Planning Component No. 4

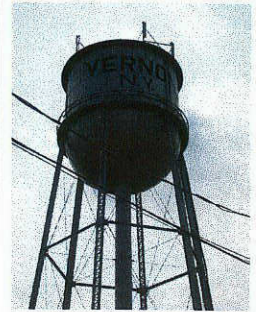
5.1 Water Supply

The purpose of this section is to develop strategic actions that address the Water and Wastewater Utility Planning portion of the Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations that follow are the result of lengthy discussions with experts in the field, members of the Ad-Hoc Committee and local residents during the September 16, 2005 Visioning Workshop. Several agencies participated in the workshop including the Oneida County Health Department, the Oneida County Planning Department, Mohawk Valley Water Authority, and Staff from Barton & Loguidice, P.C.

Based upon the inventory, it is apparent that the Town of Vernon may be at a turning point in its history. The Community has a major need for improvements to its aging water and sewer infrastructure. A water infrastructure project currently underway in Verona may provide great opportunities for Vernon to tap into and update and expand its existing water capacities. However, the fact that the Town has no municipal water service will require close cooperation with the Village and City as well as several levels of State and local government. While the potential of this project is enormous, the lack of progress in the project is becoming a source of contention among local residents and officials.

The Town of Vernon is excited about the growth potential that a new water source will bring. However, there is a need to adjust land use policy in order to achieve many of the Plan objectives. It is also critical to address the lack of wastewater infrastructure to ensure any future growth does not exacerbate problems associated with surface and groundwater contamination in the Sconodoo and Oneida Creek Basin.

Based upon the concepts and concerns raised through the Comprehensive Planning process, some of the issues facing the Town of Vernon are as follows



The storage tank in the Village of Vernon holds 200,000 gallons of potable water.

In the year 2000, the Village of Vernon consumed 124,367,000 gallons of water.

- The availability of water and sewer infrastructure will attract younger people and improve the economic development potential of the Town.
- The availability of water and sewer infrastructure is critical to address current and future needs of the community.
- Implementation of the proposed Verona water line extension provides an opportunity for a new reliable water source that will have a positive economic impact within the Town and region.
- Hinckley Reservoir is an excellent opportunity for the Town; however, permitting issues with the State Canal are impeding progress.
- Hinckley Reservoir is capable of yielding 5 times the amount of water to the canal system because the canal was designed to accommodate 10 million tons of annual commercial traffic.
- Low levels in the reservoir are sometimes due to licensing for water power by NY Power Authority. This occurs due the allowed levels under their FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) licensing. Spring time highs are also normal and result from melt off within the Hinckley watershed. It has nothing to do with MVWA's ability to supply water; it is the Canal permit that limits the supply level.
- Based upon conditions in the year 2004 all data suggests that Hinckley Reservoir is fully capable of providing enough water to service Vernon - Verona.
- The increased flow rate of surface water over land makes more areas more prone to flooding. As such, minimizing impervious surfaces in future developments is critical.

"Vernon's water infrastructure is a major issue and the system loses a substantial amount of water due to leaks"
 -Oneida County Department of Health-

- Concern with security and terrorism and impacts to water supply are now a major issue throughout the country as well as Oneida County.
- Groundwater supplies are perceived to be safe but we are finding that they are becoming more prone to pollution from surface water and poor land use management. As a result, health officials are seeing increases in illness from groundwater sources due to poor land use policy, stormwater management and wastewater disposal.
- New regulations to take effect in 2009 will make it difficult for smaller water systems and municipal groundwater systems to keep up with the requirements.
- New regulations for testing and approving municipal groundwater are going to increase costs to local municipalities for testing and compliance. However, exploration of a municipal ground water supply may still be an option for the Town due to the limited amount of current demand.
- Oneida County has a first class treatment system and there is no problem with water treatment. The area simply needs a new, more reliable source of water.
- The County has identified problems with the water tower in the Village. As of 8 years ago, it was in need of repairs. If the tower fails, it affects the Town and the Village and many people could be out of business.
- It is important to address the aging infrastructure of the Town and it should be approached in a comprehensive manner.

Based upon the issues listed above and public input provided to date the following goals and objectives have been established:

"I am concerned that if we don't have a vision, people fifty years from now will ask 'what the heck did they do?'"

- Resident attending a public workshop

5.1.1 Water Infrastructure Goal

To provide an abundant supply of potable public water in the Town of Vernon to accommodate future growth of commercial, industrial and residential land use within close proximity to the Village of Vernon and the City of Sherrill.

5.1.2 Objectives

- Work with appropriate public and private interests to replace aging water lines and improve the quality of water service.
- Cooperate with the Village of Vernon and City of Sherrill to facilitate the expansion/improvement of existing water infrastructure to residents.
- Vernon will work in concert with adjacent municipalities to plan for water infrastructure improvements that will minimize future maintenance costs while maximizing sustainable growth potential.
- Cooperate with adjacent municipalities to increase availability of water services to improve local firefighting capabilities.
- Encourage the improvement of local water service in a manner that mitigates impacts to the continuation of field agriculture in the Town.
- Establish intermunicipal land use planning efforts to implement infrastructure extensions on a schedule matching the potential rate of development.

"The Ad-Hoc Committee looked at the potential for a municipal groundwater supply but determined that new EPA requirements for testing and approving public groundwater supplies will not be cost effective for small communities."
- Ad-Hoc Committee member -

- Adjust land use policy to target infrastructure improvements with projected growth areas and away from agricultural areas with large lots that actively engage in productive agricultural operations.
- Vernon's infrastructure is a major issue and upgrades to local storage capacity and the distribution system are necessary to better serve businesses and residents that are in close proximity to the Village of Vernon and the City of Sherrill.
- Cooperate with adjacent municipalities to pursue funding for the replacement of existing water infrastructure.

5.2 Recommendations

Based upon the above goal and objectives, and to ensure they are achieved, the following recommendations regarding Vernon's water supply are offered.

5.2.1 Work Towards Implementing a New Water Supply and Making Improvements to Existing Infrastructure

One recommendation involves taking the necessary steps to work toward developing a new water supply from the Hinckley Reservoir or some other reliable source as part of a multi-municipal effort. The reservoir was designed to provide five times the current water supply because Interstate Route 81 was originally slated to run through the Utica Rome area. Currently, Mohawk Valley Water Authority serves 130,000 people and provides 20 million gallons of water per day. However, due to permitting issues and legal agreements the amount of available supply is restricted to near current levels. While this represents a hurdle to the Town, it is not an insurmountable task if local officials develop a united front.

If the Hinckley option can not be achieved, other source options may include water supply from the City of Rome, Onondaga County Water Authority, or reallocation of supply from the City of Oneida. If an appropriate ground water source can be identified with the adequate quantity and quality of water, this option should be considered.

This option is the recommended approach to addressing the Towns future water needs and the needs of surrounding communities in Oneida County. It is also the best, most cost effective approach to achieve the Towns water supply goals and objectives listed above and to facilitate economic growth of the Town. This is supported by a market study undertaken by the SUNY Institute of Technology. The study looked at nine key industries in the State of Texas and identified approximately 1,400 companies that could save 1 million dollars per year by relocating to Upstate New York (based on water use alone; without including State incentives). This supports the local theory that a new water supply could bring economic momentum to the area that will facilitate various types of commercial growth.

To further support this option, it is understood that, Oneida County prefers and additional source in the water system in the event of a disaster or terrorism. This creates redundancy in the system that provides a secure backup of municipal water supply. This approach is part of a growing national effort to protect our public water supplies in the wake of the 9-11 terrorist attack. Oneida County believes that redundancy in the water supply system is an important component of the Hinckley water supply project comparing it to spinning a web between Utica and Rome. This can provide mutual support if there is a disaster or if there is a major problem with a section of the system that could potentially bring down a large service area. It is similar to an electric grid with a backup supply power source. Essentially, in the event of an emergency, local municipalities can draw water from either the City of Oneida or Hinckley (or some other appropriate water source) at any given time.

Unfortunately, due to the permitting issue the Oneida Nation no longer wants to finance the Verona water project. This project would provide a great opportunity to the Town of Vernon. Without a joint agreement with the Oneida Nation, Verona is not likely to have the financing to build the pipeline with costs exceeding 15 million dollars. Current delays alone may have driven the cost of piping up 1 million dollars.

If the Town of Vernon plans to continue to pursue this opportunity it will be necessary to provide a united front through cooperation with other communities including the Town of Verona and Oneida County to achieve the long term goal in the most efficient manner. Collaborating with the Oneidas could be mutually beneficial to the Nation and the local community. Verona is taking this approach in that they are looking at the long-term benefits as a means to mitigate the impact of land claims. However, the situation continues to change in light of recent Supreme Court decisions. If the Town works in a cooperative manner and works within a regional context the permit requirements can be resolved to the benefit of the local population.

5.2.2 Utilize Existing Water Infrastructure Based on Substantial Improvements

An alternative approach is for the Town to utilize the existing City of Oneida water supply for as long as possible. This option will require the Town to recognize the fact that the City has sufficient capacity to continue to service the Village in the short term and that future growth of the Town will be constrained by the storage and distribution limitations of the existing system unless storage capacity can be enlarged. This approach will also require ongoing cooperation between the Town and Village as well as the City of Oneida and the Town of Verona.

This alternative will require the Town to focus upon improvement and/or replacement of the water storage capacity either in the Village or in a new location in the Town and improvements to the distribution system in close proximity to the Village. This scenario will require the Town to maximize the use and efficiency of the existing water source to allow for a small increase in capacity. This will be necessary to improve service to the current users in the Town and allow for some additional commercial growth within the existing service area.

If the Town chooses this approach, there should be emphasis upon providing sufficient capacity to service existing commercial enterprise and meet the fire fighting needs within the service area.

5.2.3 Continue to Maintain Existing Infrastructure at Current Levels

This alternative involves the continuation of current maintenance of existing water infrastructure on an as-needed basis. This will likely limit additional growth within the existing service area and will require an ongoing increase in maintenance responsibility. If this alternative is selected it is recommended that the Town work with Sherrill, Village and County officials to undergo a detailed inventory of existing water supply lines and storage facilities and to determine the most problematic locations in the system.

This alternative is not recommended for the following reasons:

- The system will become less reliable over time.
- The system will become more costly to maintain over time.
- There will be a major constraint on future growth potential in the Town, particularly with respect to commercial development.
- This approach will limit the Town's ability to achieve Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives.

5.3 Implementation Strategies

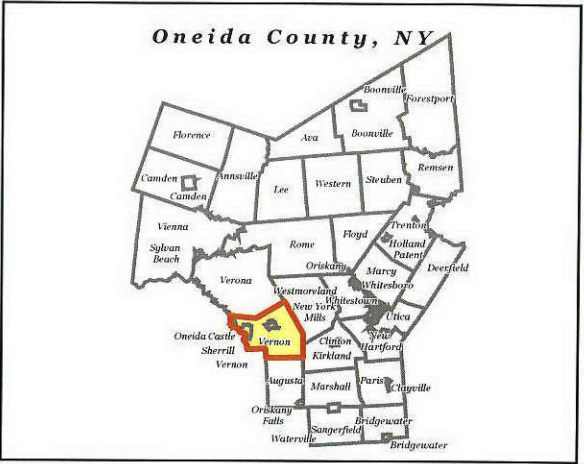
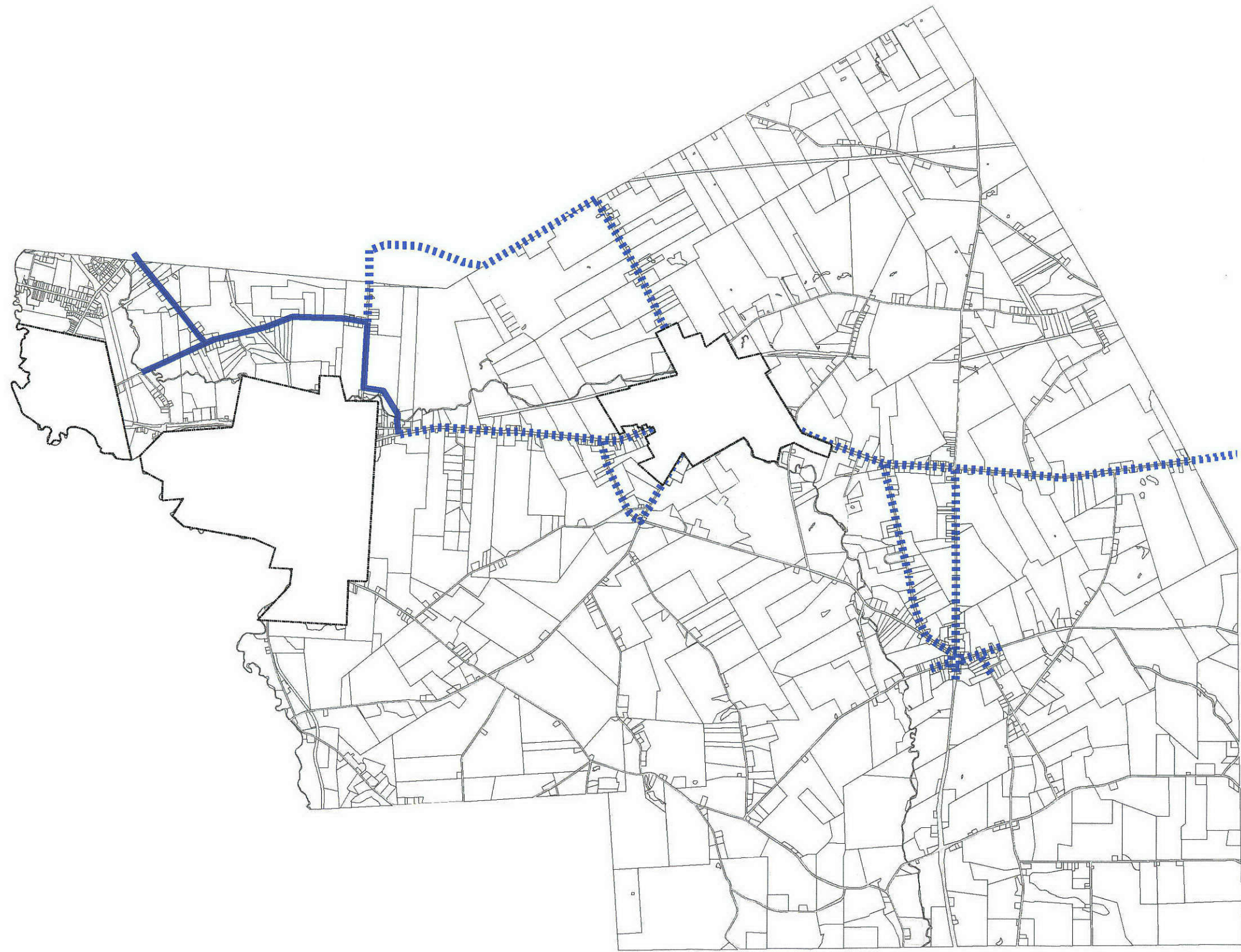
The following strategies for the Town of Vernon will address the potential for expanded water service in close proximity to existing infrastructure should recommended improvements take place. However, it is important to note that the Town currently has no water infrastructure in place and that the majority of the Town will rely on groundwater resources into the foreseeable future. Therefore, the Town should consider the following strategies in planning for improvements to water infrastructure as well as protecting groundwater resources throughout the Town.

5.3.1 Establish Target Areas for Future Public Water

Public water infrastructure can help the Town focus and concentrate development in areas best suited for higher density land uses. It should be noted that areas considered for future public water infrastructure, should also be evaluated to simultaneously extend public sewer as well. This would eliminate possible groundwater or surface water contamination and increase the potential for substantial economic development.

5.3.2 Explore the Potential for a Municipal Groundwater Supply

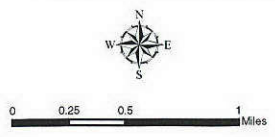
While groundwater resources in the Town may not yield ideal results, it may be an option to resolve some of the Town's immediate problems. By undertaking a feasibility study to determine if groundwater potential exists, the Town may discover a new option for municipal water supply. If it is determined that groundwater can not serve the community's immediate needs, a feasibility study can help the Town in eliminating the option to pursue a municipal groundwater source.



Legend

- Tax Parcel Boundary
- Municipal Boundary
- Road Centerline
- Existing
- Future Potential

DATA SOURCES: ONEIDA COUNTY REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICE AGENCY;
ONEIDA CREEK WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE



6.0 Planning Component No. 5

6.1 Wastewater

It is clear that sewage treatment and surface water quality of the Town is a problem, particularly in the Sconodoo / Oneida Creek watershed. This fact is an important component of the recommendations of Oneida Creek Sub Basin Watershed Study. The study identified several issues that are responsible for the water quality problems in the Oneida Creek / Sconodoo Creek basin and included an analysis of the impacts of failing on-site septic systems.

During the planning process, the following issues with respect to wastewater in the Town of Vernon are set forth:

- Sewage treatment and failing septic systems create dead zones in the creeks due to untreated sewage overflowing into surface water, creating hazardous oxygen levels.
- The higher the level of sewage treatment and non-point source pollution protection that is employed up stream, the better the conditions for protecting the water quality of the creek.
- A plan for this system was developed in the 1940s and it is still applicable today. Only the materials to be used would have to be updated.
- Clustered residential developments should be considered outside of planned sewer service areas.
- Clustered commercial land uses have also been used in rural areas for certain industrial applications, and should be considered in Vernon.



The Village of Vernon's Wastewater Treatment plant was built in 1972 and can treat an estimated 500,000 gallons of effluent per day.

- South of the Village of Vernon, septic systems and leach fields are an issue due to archeological sensitive sites and steep slopes.
- Lot size is an issue because you need approximately two acres for individual treatment systems to limit impacts to groundwater supplies.
- One issue that can be addressed is a combination of a regional collection system where there is the current need and where we want to grow and the use of this clustering concept in areas where sewer extensions are not likely in the future.

Based upon these issues, discussed in detail at several public meetings, the Town of Vernon has established the following goal and objectives relating to wastewater infrastructure:

6.1.1 Wastewater Infrastructure Goal

To assure the necessary safeguards affording the community a clean, safe environment and conserve the surface and groundwater resources of the major watersheds in the Town.

6.1.2 Objectives

- Plan to implement a regional collection system as recommended in the 2003 Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation with treatment at the City of Oneida WWTP.
- Develop a joint agreement with the Village of Vernon to undertake a full system evaluation of the Village WWTP and determine if reallocation or expansion will allow for short-term sewer extensions.

"The availability of water and sewer infrastructure will attract younger people and improve the economic development potential of the Town"
 - Resident participating in a Visioning Session

- Develop facility master plan for sewer infrastructure improvements in a phased and coordinated manner relative to anticipated or desired growth.
- Work with the Oneida Creek Water Quality Improvement Task Force to improve the water quality of Sconodda Creek and tributaries that contribute to the Oneida Creek watershed.
- Expand the current Village of Vernon WWTP capabilities to improve service to the Town through an expanded and cooperative agreement with the Village.
- Work with the City of Sherrill to determine if any of lands adjacent to the City can be served with municipal sewers.
- Improve sewer service in a manner that minimizes future maintenance costs, or facilitates unplanned growth into in agricultural zoning and taxing districts.

"A regional collection system routed to the City of Oneida is the best alternative"

- Oneida River Task Force -

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Implement a Regional Wastewater Collection System

A regional wastewater collection system routed to the City of Oneida plant is the best alternative. The plant has sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to accommodate this approach. However, allocation issues must be coordinated with City officials to determine availability to the Town. According to the Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation, this approach provides the most cost effective method of addressing the Towns long-term point and non-point pollution problems.

Therefore, in order to achieve the Towns Planning goals and objectives it is recommended that the Town work toward the development of a regional wastewater collection system with treatment at the City of Oneida and program the Option C recommendations of the Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation into the Town Comprehensive Plan.

6.2.2 Coordinate Efforts with the Village of Vernon to Provide Adequate Service within the Village and Western Portions of the Town

An alternative primary recommendation listed above is for the Town of Vernon to consider working the Village of Vernon to service wastewater needs within the Village as well portions of the Town in close proximity to existing infrastructure. This may be accomplished by determining if reallocation of capacity may serve to protect problem areas of the Town within close proximity to the Village. While this option would limit the Towns ability to meet the long-term goals and objectives established in this Plan it may provide service to the Town for at least the next 15 years. This option was listed as Option D of the Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation involves the development of a package wastewater treatment plant in the Village of Oneida Castle. This package plant would service all of the study area in east of Oneida Creek and would be located in the Village of Oneida Castle.

This would require the financing and development of a package wastewater treatment plant within the Village of Oneida Castle and will require inter-municipal cooperation and financing.

6.2.3 Provide for Reallocation within the Village to Service Immediate Needs of the Town

The status quo alternative involves providing for reallocation within the Village in order to service the immediate needs of the Town. This would allow service to units within close proximity to the Village and would

require residents to continue to utilize On-Site wastewater Treatment Systems (OSWTs). According to the Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation, this option is not acceptable due to the age and ineffectiveness of existing OSWTs. The report states, "No action is not an option since the majority of the OSWT systems within the study area no longer provide sufficient disposal/treatment". More importantly, the report goes on to state that a No Action alternative will "present a threat to public health from contaminants in human waste such as pathogens, nitrogen compounds, phosphorus, and biochemical oxygen demand."

Therefore, the Status Quo alternative should not be considered and is contrary to the goals and objectives established in this Plan. This is particularly important to the Town in achieving the project goals listed in this section and the primary goal of the Natural Resources planning component.

6.3 Implementation Strategies

6.3.1 Establish Lot Size Requirements

For areas within the Town that are not to be considered for the implementation of future public water and sewer infrastructure, it is critical that strategic mechanisms are set forth to best protect those areas groundwater resources for maximum quality and quantity of water.

From a land planning perspective, simply requiring larger lots sizes on lands not serviced by public sewer will preserve groundwater resources; however, will not put the Town in a position to absorb the costs associated with future extensions. In this case, if extensions are ever considered to areas that are not in close proximity to the Towns existing population centers (i.e., southwestern portion of the Town), lot sizes should be re-evaluated and potentially reduced to help better absorb costs associated with such extensions and to prevent future sprawl.

6.3.2 Develop Infrastructure Improvement Plan

As a means to jump start planning and development of future infrastructure improvements within the Town, it is recommended the Town develop an infrastructure improvement plan to determine the amount of infrastructure that can be enhanced or replaced within the next 5-10 years to develop a short term strategic approach.

6.3.3 Engage in Inter-municipal Collaboration to Determine Capacity

The Town should work with officials from the City of Oneida and the City of Sherrill to undertake a feasibility study to determine if the wastewater treatment plant in the City has the capacity and necessary configuration to handle wastewater to meet the some of the Towns needs. This is an essential task to gain knowledge and maximize potential capacities already in place to serve the community before other investments are pursued.

The Town should also work with the City of Sherrill to determine if current wastewater capacity can be allocated as assistance to the portion of the Town in close proximity to the City.

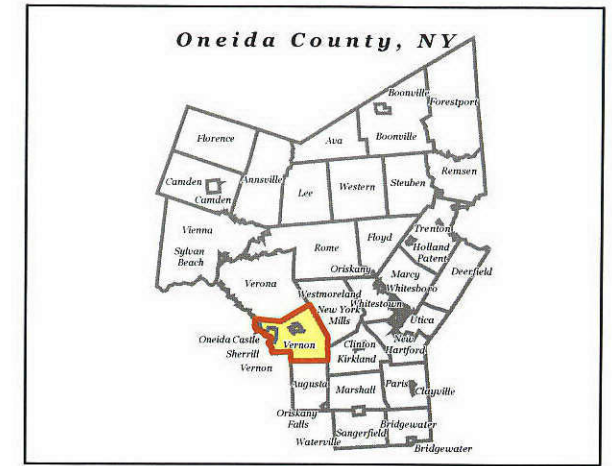
In addition, the Town should work in concert with the Village of Vernon to initiate an evaluation of the Village Wastewater Treatment Plant to determine if an agreement on a reallocation of wastewater treatment can be developed to increase availability to other portions of the Town in need and in close proximity to activity centers.

6.3.4 Overview of On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems in the Town

According to information obtained from the Town for the year 2004, the highest percentage of building permits issued was for septic systems. This indicates that a large percentage of residential units currently being

constructed in the Town are in areas not serviced by public sewer. This trend suggests that residential growth in the Town will likely continue to impact surface and groundwater resources in the Town without the implementation of a regional wastewater treatment system as recommended by the Oneida Creek Sub-Basin Sewer System Evaluation.

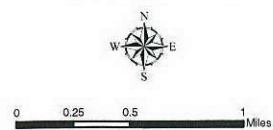
As such, the Town of Vernon should consider adopting a soil based lot size model for land areas that are not currently serviced by water and wastewater infrastructure or to be considered within the scope of a regional collection system. The minimum lot size should be based upon the land area necessary to reduce nitrate loading of the groundwater supply. Therefore, a minimum 80,000-s.f. lot size should be proposed for all parcels located outside of existing or proposed water and sewer service areas in order to achieve planning goals with respect to surface and groundwater quality. This should not be construed as the ideal lot size throughout the Town; however, it should be the minimum requirement outside of areas with little or no potential for water and sewer extensions within a ten year period. This is necessary to protect local groundwater resources and primary aquifers that provide for private water supplies.



Legend

-  Municipal Boundary
-  Recommended Regional Wastewater System Expansion
-  Tax Parcel Boundary
-  Road Centerline

DATA SOURCES: ONEIDA COUNTY REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICE AGENCY;
ONEIDA CREEK WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE



Town of Vernon	4/21/05	Figure 6-1
Potential Long-Range Sewer Extensions		Project No. 859.005
Oneida County	New York	

7.0 Planning Component No. 6

7.1 Transportation and Infrastructure

Meeting mobility needs, supporting the economy, protecting the environment, and maintaining a sound quality of life – all while managing investment in times of fiscal constraint – are challenges local municipalities face as they deal with economic growth. Transportation plays a significant role in determining how communities grow and function, and is an essential part of most comprehensive plans.

Transportation recommendations follow a public Visioning Workshop designed to scope public opinion of transportation and infrastructure issues within the Town. They are also based upon several discussions with involved agencies during the Vision Planning process.

The Town of Vernon zoning law provides for a certain amount of land use control throughout the Town. However, review of potential issues facing the Town and issues raised at public workshops should be addressed by updating and amending the Town's approach to land use along state highways and collector roads. This is important considering the potential for commercial growth along the Route 31 corridor resulting from expansion of the Oneida Nation Casino and golf course facilities.

Based upon the information gathered to date, our understanding of the transportation issues in the Town are as follows:

- Potential for spin-off commercial development exists along the northern portion of Route 31 and along Route 5 in the Town.
- There is potential for long-term reduction in highway function along State Route 31 & 5 without adequate land use policies in place.



The intersection of State Route 5 and State Route 31 in the Village is an important central crossroads to the community.



State Route 5 provides the primary access to the City of Sherrill.

- There is limited control of access along major collector roads in the Town.
- Lot frontage requirements on collectors are minimally addressed by local zoning.
- There is minimum control of commercial development through current Site Plan Review.
- There is minimum control of commercial development through current Subdivision Review.
- There is a perceived problem associated with trucks negotiating the intersection of Route 5 and 31 in the Village of Vernon.
- Village parking in close proximity to the Route 5 and 31 complicates negotiation of the intersection.
- Congestion occurs during events at Vernon Downs between Route 5 and the track facility.
- Traffic issues tend to revolve around events at Vernon Downs and the speedway.
- There is limited safety on Route 5 and 31 with respect to bicycle and pedestrian uses.
- There is limited consideration for back lots when lots along roads are subdivided. This is contributing to the configuration of new flag lots throughout the Town.

The average travel time to work for a resident of Vernon is 19.5 minutes.



Business on commercial strips can lose potential customers during peak traffic hours.

- Local fire safety officials believe the timing of signals near fire stations or the incorporation of remote actuated signals is necessary.
- Stuhlman and Youngs roads are experiencing higher speed traffic and are being used as a shortcut to the City of Sherrill for through traffic.
- Site distance at Youngs and Stuhlman roads is fueling additional concern for traffic safety.

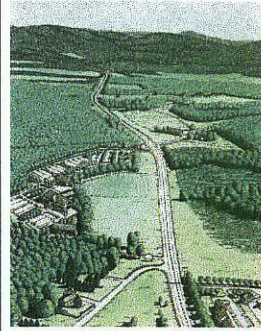
These issues identified during the public visioning process lead to the development of strategic project goals and objectives for future transportation planning programs in the Town of Vernon, and are discussed below.

7.1.1 Goal

To integrate land use and transportation planning to facilitate future growth and development while ensuring traffic safety and maintaining functional capacity of the highway network throughout the Town.

7.1.2 Objectives

- Encourage commercial development within planned infrastructure capabilities and avoid the typical strip form of commercial growth, particularly along State Routes 5 and 31.
- Encourage land use activities that are compatible with the functional capacity of adjacent roads.
- Reflect the practice of sound corridor management through local land use policy.



The Town prefers concentrated entrances to commercial areas and subdivisions as a means to preserve highway function, safety and efficiency.

- Encourage sound access management and promote good design with respect to commercial, industrial and major subdivision development.
- Encourage concentrated access points to the highway system from commercial centers and major subdivisions particularly along collector roads.
- Facilitate the development of a multimodal transportation network that links New York State Bike Route 5 to public parks, recreation areas, schools, population centers and commercial areas.

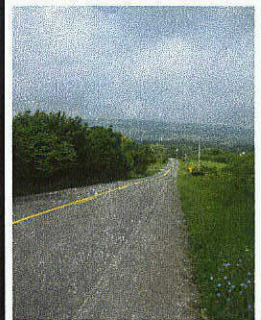
7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Establish and Implement Highway Overlay Zones

It is recommended the Town develop a highway overlay zone along State Route 31 and Route 5. The purpose of such an overlay zone is to help manage Routes 5 and 31 and their development and access. The highway overlay zone would build on the underlying zoning, by establishing different standards and criteria along these defined transportation corridors. In Vernon's case, standards that may be addressed in the highway overlay zones are building setback, parking setback, minimum lot widths, and vehicular access.

7.2.2 Develop Site Plan Review Requirements

The Town should update and amend the current zoning law to improve Site Plan Review Requirements and Subdivision Regulations to govern development of individual parcels of land, particularly along major collectors. Site plan review requirements can be adopted in a stand-alone regulation, or can be incorporated into a zoning ordinance.



The Town prefers to protect the scenic quality of the Town maintain highway safety by discouraging residential strip development along collector roads.

Since site plan reviews are concerned with how a parcel or group of parcels are developed, what a development will look like after it is completed, and how it will impact its neighbors, required site plan elements (to be defined by the Town in its local law), should include the following: parking, site access (for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles), screening, signs, landscaping, architectural features, location and dimensions of structures, adjacent land uses, and physical features meant to protect adjacent land uses and the community as a whole.

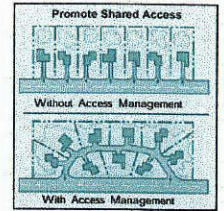
7.2.3 Develop a Multimodal Transportation Improvement Plan and Map

The Town should develop a map that shows the location of potential multimodal routes and neighborhoods to determine needed areas of pedestrian and bicycle improvements. This map and plan could be developed with the assistance of State, County and local highway officials.

The Inter-modal surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the 1997 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) emphasized the incorporation of multimodal transportation into the communities highways systems. Multimodal transportation planning is a multi-faceted approach which considers all modal options and is characterized by input and participation from the public.

The concept recognized the fact that efficient movement of goods and people is accomplished through a system of transportation and land use planning and also that the concerns and needs of all users of the system should be considered.

Multimodal transportation planning should identify specific transportation issues and service investments that need to be so that improvements to the transportation network in the Town can keep pace



Access management is important to protect the integrity of rural roads and to reduce congestion caused by cars entering and exiting the highway



The Town prefers to provide safe multi-modal connections for pedestrians and bicyclists.

with future development. Four primary modes of transportation that should be of focus are: the automobile, public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle.

7.2.4 Work with Individual Municipalities within the Town to Develop Corridor Plans for Routes 5 and 31

Although future development projects along Routes 5 and 31 may be reviewed and considered by the Town and its municipalities individually based on priorities and resources, considering each potential development as part of a greater community and regional corridor will enable the Town to maximize opportunities for smart growth, creativity, safety, and mobility. The development of Corridor Plans for Routes 5 and 31 will ensure that projects serve complimentary, and not competitive, purposes. This approach to future growth will greatly expand cooperation not only between the Town and its separate municipalities and activity centers, but also between regional communities and the County, which will understand more than ever that their success is interlinked.

In addition, the establishment of strategic Corridor Plans will also enable the Town to consider a variety of commercial land uses from a regional perspective by relating them to the transportation infrastructure that will support them – that infrastructure being Routes 5 and 31.

7.3 **Implementation Strategies**

7.3.1 Amend the Zoning Law to Create a Commercial PDD in Close Proximity to the Atunyote Golf Course on New York State Route 31 North

The establishment of the PGA-level golf course is considered a successful commercial/recreational development, and the creation of a PDD adjacent or within close proximity to the course would encourage suitable

types and densities of development that would maximize any infrastructure investments and build on existing community assets. The golf course is anticipated to spur potential for additional economic activity and tourism related enterprises and feed off of already booming tourism from the north. In establishing a PD, adequate review requirements and standards will be in place to direct and control how future developments are implemented and secondary impacts to highway function can be evaluated.

Not only will this affect how development is put into place, but also better control highway function and access management along Route 31 north of the Village.

7.3.2 The Town Should Amend Its Zoning to Increase the Front Yard Set Back Requirements for All C-I, C-M Land Uses Along Collector Roads

An immediate measure recommended to be implemented by the Town is a zoning amendment to increase front yard setback requirements in all zoning districts in which commercial and manufacturing uses are permitted.

A minimum setback of seventy five feet (75') from the road line is recommended to ensure adequate roadway frontage is available to allow for landscaping, proper access movements, pedestrian circulation routes, and necessary roadway and infrastructure improvements. By not allowing adequate roadway frontage, (especially along state and county highways) safety and mobility can be compromised. In the event necessary highway improvements become an issue, it can be costly when existing development is too close to the roadway and in the path of such improvements.

7.3.3 Incorporate Distance Requirements for Driveways of New Developments on State, County, and Local Collector Roads

A minimum driveway spacing requirement of two hundred and fifty feet (250') from intersections of any state, county or local collector road is recommended to be incorporated into the Town's zoning law.

This strategy holds true particularly for commercial or industrial uses that tend to generate high volumes of traffic. Poor corridor and access management will hinder the success of any investments in commercial or industrial uses in ways unforeseen until problems become too costly to mitigate. It is important to recognize that growth of any kind generates traffic. Most traffic generated in the Town of Vernon will utilize primary transportation corridors as a means to travel safely and efficiently. If growth occurs unchecked, much of that subsequent increase in traffic will require random stop signs and traffic signals at the intersections of some of these primary routes, thus reducing highway efficiency and function.

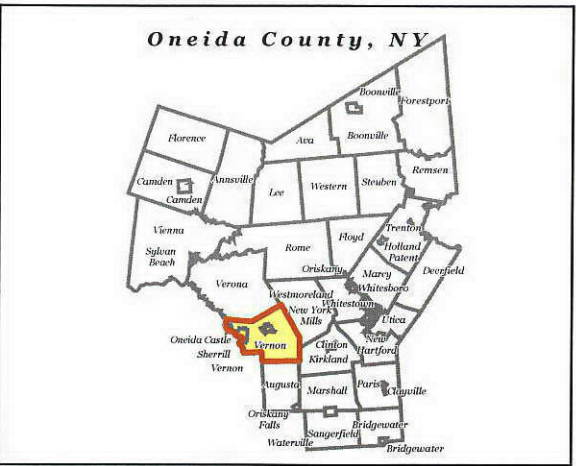
In an effort to maximize mobility, safety, and driver satisfaction, and to limit accidents and traffic delays, preventing driveway cuts for housing, commercial, and manufacturing land uses from locating within close proximity to major intersections is necessary and prudent.

7.4 **Additional Infrastructure**

Project scoping during Visioning Sessions and public workshops did not reveal any local issues with respect to other infrastructure. Vernon has additional growth capabilities with respect to electricity, utilities and communications. Additionally, it is recognized that growth in wireless technology is likely to preclude further local investment in fiber optic or cable communications services, particularly in the most rural parts of the Town.

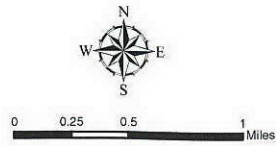


The Town of Vernon prefers to avoid the type of costly congestion and deterioration of quality of life that results from typical strip commercial development.



Municipal Boundary
 Tax Parcel Boundaries
Highway Overlay Jurisdiction
 County Highway Overlay
 State Highway Overlay
LEVEL
 Local road
 County Highway
 State Highway

Sources: NYSDOT, Oneida County



However, during several public sessions, citizens stated that the potential for wind generation in the southern hills of the Vernon is evident in the success of the wind farm in Fenner, New York. The Town Ad-Hoc Committee believes that this potential is real and should be an allowed use in appropriate portions of the Town as long as the location of wind turbines does not affect active agriculture.

7.4.1 Wind Generating Facilities

Wind turbines may be used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes and may affect several zoning districts. However, in the Town of Vernon, the most feasible location for wind generators is in the southern portion of the Town where the elevation is high enough to capture wind energy from the Oneida Valley and Lake Ontario. During the planning process, the group consulted the NYSERA wind potential map and decided to include language that will address the use of wind farms in the Town.

The Town must consider several factors when reviewing potential wind energy projects. Some of the factors that must be addressed during Site Plan Review include:

1. Noise levels - Including noise associated with generators and the blades of the turbine.
2. Setback and operation - Including consideration for the potential for failure of turbine blades, or structural integrity.
3. Agriculture - Including the loss of tillable acreage, pastureland or access to viable farmland.
4. Natural Resources - Including recent concerns with FAA lighting requirements and wildlife migration patterns.



"If someone comes in and wants to develop [wind turbines] we should be able to tell them where and how to do it"

- Ad-Hoc Committee Member -

5. Interference - Including interference with both cable and wireless broadcast transmission and emergency service communications.
6. Municipal Boundaries - Including proximity to adjoining municipalities where wind turbines are restricted.

Based upon the issues listed above and the overriding theme of farmland protection throughout the planning process, the Following Goals and Objectives are set forth with respect to wind based power generation.

7.4.2 Clean Energy Goal (Wind Generating Facilities)

The Town of Vernon will encourage clean energy technology that is compatible with agricultural operations in the most appropriate areas of the Town.

7.4.3 Objectives

- The Town will plan for commercial wind generators in the upper elevations located in the Southern area of the Town.
- The Town will direct wind technology that enhances agricultural viability and profitability within Vernon's' agricultural zoning district.
- The Town will encourage the location of wind generators away from active farmland or toward the edge of fields and tillable acreage.
- The Town will discourage the subdivision of farmland into smaller lots to accommodate wind generation projects.
- The Town will encourage wind technology projects that will financially benefit local and regional residents.



"Windmills have a life span of about 20 years but will likely be upgraded during their operation to increase efficiency and life expectancy"

- Cornell Cooperative Extension -

- The Town will discourage commercial and industrial wind generators near population centers and residential areas.
- The Town will discourage wind generators to be visible from designated historic buildings and districts.

7.4.4 Recommendation

7.4.4.1 Require Wind Generation Projects to Meet Minimum Standards Developed by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Based upon a review of wind generator operations in the Central New York Region it is recommended that the Town of Vernon adopt Guidelines for Agricultural Mitigation for Wind Power Projects, developed by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag. and Markets) as the standard for reviewing wind power projects throughout the Town. The Town should coordinate any planned wind generation projects with Ag. and Markets and should pursue clean energy opportunities as long as they do not impair or impede active farming. Due to the rural nature of the southern portion of Vernon and the wind potential of higher elevations, local officials should direct any commercial or industrial proposals regarding wind generation to that portion of the Town. Wind turbines for residential purposes should be discouraged in higher density residential areas but should be permitted on residential parcels containing a minimum of 5 acres in area or for self sufficiency purposes on land in the Towns agricultural zoning district.

7.4.5 Implementation Strategies

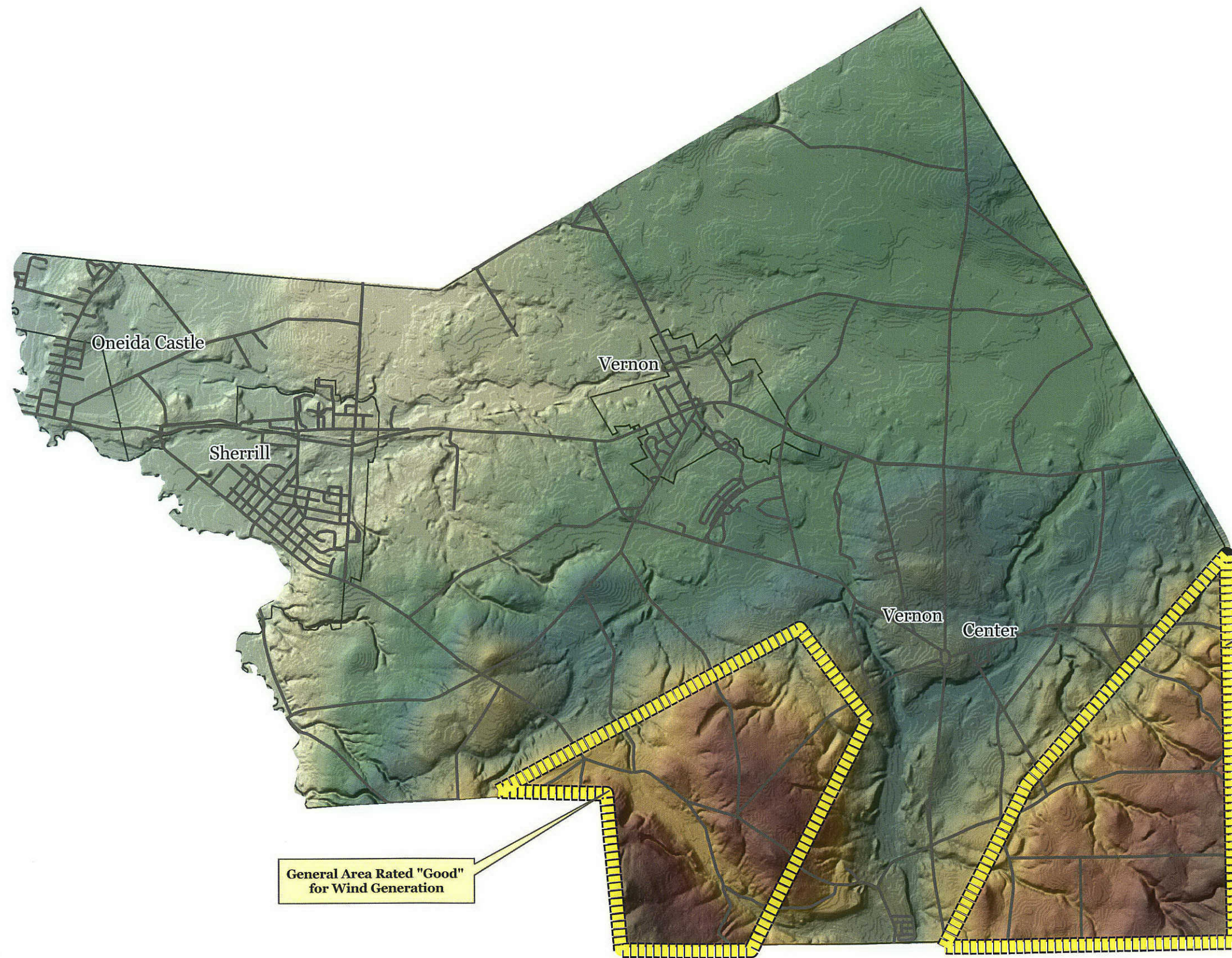
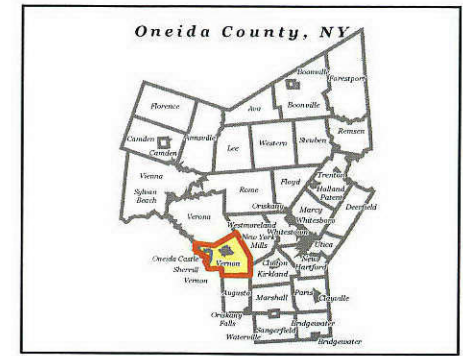
7.4.5.1 Coordinate Future Project Reviews With NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

It is recommended that the Town direct any project sponsor to coordinate wind generation projects with the NYS Ag and Markets prior to the submission of an application for site plan review. This procedure will ensure that the Town utilizes professionals with adequate expertise to minimize the impacts of wind turbines on active agricultural operations.

In addition, this coordination will ensure aesthetic considerations in an effort to reduce the visual impact of wind turbines on the rural character of the Town.

7.4.5.2 Address Wind Energy Systems in Local Zoning Ordinance

It is recommended that the Town amend the current zoning ordinance to address projects specific to wind energy systems and develop permitting requirements for wind generation projects to be used for residential, commercial and industrial uses. As the use of alternative sources of energy is becoming an increasingly popular practice among local governments and developers, it would be beneficial to the Town to be prepared for such proposals by taking a proactive approach to wind energy potential.



General Area Rated "Good" for Wind Generation

General Area Rated "Good" for Wind Generation

Elevation (Meters)
Value

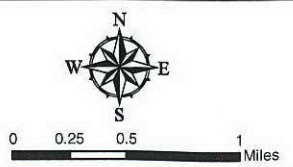
High : 593

Low : 111

Highways

Note: This map shows a general areas rated as "good" for wind generation by NYSERDA - On-site investigation is required.

Sources: Digital Elevation Model ; CUGIR, N.Y.S. Dept. of Transportation, True-Wind Solutions, L.L.C. (2003), NYSERDA



Town of Vernon	3/17/05	Figure 7-2
Areas with Wind Generation Potential		Project No. 859.005
Oneida County	New York	

I:\Projects\859.005\Projects\Wind_Gen

8.0 Planning Component No. 7

8.1 Land Use

The Land Use section serves to tie together all of the previous planning components with three overarching themes. The Vernon Town Board should consider these themes when adjusting land use policy throughout the Town.

The first theme is recognizing the connectivity or interrelationships between different land use decisions and different visions. What, for example, is the difference between traffic safety and pedestrian safety or, why is surface water quality important to protect groundwater? Each section of this Plan that has been described throughout contains recommendations that are examples of interrelationships between issues that should be considered as part of the land use decision-making process.

The second theme is assuring that the Comprehensive Plan and all local ordinances are integrated and consistent to one another. The Comprehensive Plan should reflect the community's vision of itself with respect to the present, and the future. Local ordinances are tools that help achieve that vision but the discretionary review by the Planning Board and Zoning Board are also important. To achieve the community's vision, ordinances must be consistent with each other and with the Comprehensive Plan, and reflect the deliberate, often difficult choices a community makes in preparing for the future. Thus, whenever an ordinance or Comprehensive Plan is updated, the other should be evaluated as well. This is the kind of changing and dynamic decision-making needed in a dynamic environment such as the Town of Vernon.

The third theme is sustainability. Many recommended actions described in this Plan represent incremental progress in achieving a more sustainable future for the Town and for the region. Based upon public input to date, the loss of viable agricultural land as it is being converted to single family residential lots and small subdivisions, is perhaps the most important sustainability issue for local residents.

Input and ideas were solicited from local residents at various public vision planning workshops held by the Town's Ad-Hoc Committee, and facilitated by Barton & Loguidice, P.C. A brief summary of issues and ideas as they pertain to this land use section are outlined below:

- There is concern about the impact on well water and increased runoff because of increases in residential development.
- Residential development in the form of sprawl should be addressed to minimize its impacts on local infrastructure, agricultural operations, transportation, and open space.
- The affects that Native American land claims will have on this Plan are ever changing and may not represent a constraint to local officials if they can find ways for Nation operations to compliment planning at the local level.
- There is concern about the capacity of updated water and sewer infrastructure to help increase business and industrial activity in the Town.
- There is a desire among residents to see Vernon evolve in a manner that allows for controlled residential development, and "country living" on lots with an abundance of open space.
- There is consensus among residents that farms should be incorporated into the future growth of the Town and be recognized as an integral component of the local economic base, to ensure they remain as part of the community.
- Concerns regarding the lack of adequate infrastructure within and adjacent to the Villages and the City of Sherrill is limiting the success of commercial enterprise in the Town.

Agriculture occupies 55 percent of the land area in the Town of Vernon.

"Any plan that the Town develops should consider the City of Sherrill and the Villages"

- Resident attending Visioning Session No. 4 -

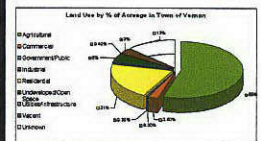
Many communities feel that all development will result in a net increase in revenues generated for the community. However, recent studies indicate that farmland preservation provides substantial economic benefit to communities because farms and open land contribute more in tax revenues than they receive in public services (i.e., schools, fire and police protection, infrastructure and road maintenance). For example, a study of two Michigan communities by the American Farmland Trust found that for every \$1 in tax revenue generated by farms and open land, only 27 cents was required for associated necessary services. In comparison, for every \$1 in tax revenue generated by residential development, \$1.47 was required in public services.

Recommendations pertaining to land use outlined in this section focus on various pressing issues Vernon must address to ensure quality, sustainable development practices in the future. Planning recommendations presented herein will address the following:

- Housing and Rural Residential Development;
- Agriculture and Agribusiness;
- Commercial and industrial activity;
- Entertainment and tourism;
- Zoning and subdivision regulations.

8.1.1 Housing and Rural - Residential Development

In many Upstate New York communities residential development is one of the primary land uses. New development is both necessary and desirable to maintain and improve the quality of life of the people who currently live in the community as well as for those who will live there in the future. Residents of Vernon recognize what is unique, beautiful and desirable about the Towns natural and cultural environment. New development that is compatible with the natural and cultural heritage of the



Agriculture occupies 55 percent of the land area in the Town of Vernon.

Town is an important consideration of those who live in Vernon. A thorough review during the inventory and analysis of this Plan suggests that the proliferation of single-family units on agricultural lands is perhaps the Towns greatest sustainability issue.

In essence, farming and residential development tend to compete for the same space. From the perspective of a developer, farmland provides an ideal location for development lots. Prime farmland soils are most suitable for residential development because they are well drained, have adequate soil bearing capacity and they are associated with rolling topography that provides the visual amenities homeowners prefer (i.e., views, streams, rolling woodlands and open space). As with any property, agricultural lands can sustain a higher yield in residential density with the availability of adequate water and sewer infrastructure.

Homebuyers also perceive the presence of agriculture as an important component of rural living and quality of life that people generally prefer. Farming represents heritage value to people, even though they do not actively participate in an agricultural way of life. Farms and farm buildings represent a strong community spirit and history. Americans in general tend to view local farms as a symbol of stability, freedom and strong ties to the landscape.

The unfortunate consequence of suburban development upon farmland is the resulting loss of viable farms. As land is subdivided, residential development slowly erodes the viability of farmland acreage and operations. Some of the ways in which this occurs includes:

- Loss of overall tillable acreage and prime farmland soils.
- Loss of large single parcels with adequate acreage or the proper physical characteristics (i.e., topography) to make agriculture economically viable.

- Fragmentation of acreage that creates remnant parcels and reduces efficiency for establishing maintaining field crops.
- Loss of agricultural infrastructure (i.e., drainage tiles, farming support, feed stores, equipment sale and repair, etc.).
- Disruption of access to farm operations (farm infrastructure) due to the increase in public roads, traffic and neighborhood development.

Agriculture is an area intensive land use. It requires substantial acreage to be profitable and the easier it is to till, the more efficient the farming operation can be. Although there are numerous factors that determine the viability of an agricultural operation, soils and topography are very important. Obviously, level topography and gentle sloping land tend to have deeper, more productive soils. As slope increases, it becomes more difficult for a sufficient run parallel to the contours so that land can be tilled. This standard farming practice is important for efficiency and erosion control.

Residential development is also land intensive and the potential for large lot residential subdivisions is evident east of Oneida and in the southern hills of the Town. While many believe that population losses from the Utica-Rome area are not likely to bring residential growth any time soon, population patterns and changes to the traditional structure of the family are driving growth in rural fringe areas. In fact, some communities throughout the U.S are growing at a rate of 4 to 15 times the rate of local population growth. Ironically, many of these residential growth areas are actually experiencing population losses within their respective Metropolitan Statistical Area (Source: New York Planning Federation).

Several other conflicts arise when residential development encroaches upon active farms. These conflicts include:

- Use of agricultural fertilizers and pesticides.
- Noise associated with farm implementation and irrigation.
- Dust or odors associated with fertilizer and livestock.
- Farm equipment access from public roads.

While all of these conditions exist in rural areas, new local roads and neighborhoods, over time, will interrupt agricultural operations. This can affect the farmer's efficiency over time, resulting in a net loss of the economic viability of a farming operation. This is particularly hard on small farms or operations where fields are not concentrated on single or adjacent parcels of land.

Based upon a cursory review of similar rural communities, the following general trends require consideration by the Town of Vernon over the planning horizon:

- Large Lot Subdivisions tend to leap frog and follow in the wake of and in proximity to commercial growth areas.
- Americans are finding that real estate is a safer investment that will bring a greater return in the end, as a response to the decline in the stock market since 2000.
- Home mortgage interest rates are at record lows making larger homes on larger lots more affordable.
- The local population is moving from cities and older suburbs into new homes in newer suburbs. These newer suburbs tend to sprawl into important agricultural areas.

As discussed during the Transportation and Infrastructure Session, long-term maintenance of poorly planned infrastructure extensions becomes a burden on State and Local funding sources. For example, the extension of water and sewer infrastructure to service a new development may not appear to impact viable farmland. However, if that extension brings water and sewer availability adjacent to active farmland the owner of that acreage may be faced with an offer for his property that he cannot refuse. By making this infrastructure available to a developer without proper planning the potential for a major subdivision proposal becomes more likely. Without a method for requiring the developer to pay for costly infrastructure improvements, the Town may be forced to accommodate the developer at taxpayer expense. This is the primary reason for requiring new development that is driving the demand for services to bear the costs of making improvements to those services.

It is quite possible that the Town of Vernon is at the threshold of change. If the anticipated residential growth pattern in the area continues in an unchecked fashion the Town may face a classic example of the forces that are eliminating prime farmlands near former agricultural centers throughout the country. This is not to say that it is too late to address the issue or that the anticipated growth will be swift or widespread. However, there is the opportunity to address these issues before they become a burden to the community.

Vernon is similar to many rural communities in that the Town is characterized by the presence of agriculture in close proximity to a small urban area. As a result, the preservation of agriculture in the community is likely to become an important issue over the next 20 to 30 years and the importance of linking program goals and objectives to the preservation of agricultural resources is key to the successful implementation of the Plan.

The protection of active farmland should become one of the primary land use issues for future planning purposes. Thus, the Towns Comprehensive Plan provides an excellent opportunity for public education and outreach in a coordinated manner. The process of developing the Plan reveals conditions that affect the viability of farming that are not readily understood by the public or developers and the benefits of farming to the public realm.

In addressing farmland protection, a major component of this planning process is to capture the community's vision of how it wants to shape and integrate residential neighborhoods into the future development scheme, and the desired type, design, quantity, and location for residential development. Based upon this vision the following goal and objectives are set forth:

8.1.2 Housing and Rural Residential Development Goal

To encourage residential development that maximizes existing and planned infrastructure capacities within close proximity to population centers, that is compatible with the countryside, protects natural resources, maintains rural character and preserves open space.

8.1.3 Objectives

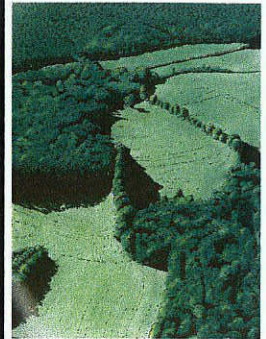
This section presents specific objectives and tools intended to help better manage residential developments, which are outlined below:

- Encourage a variety of living experiences, including rural, suburban, small villages, and urban, each with its own distinct style and character.
- Protect consumers' housing options throughout the Town by allowing for a mix of choices (i.e., location, accessibility, housing types, and neighborhood character).



Vernon prefers to discourage "leap frog" development that will consume important farmland, scenic quality and the rural character of the community.

- Utilize open space or cluster subdivisions to help protect the rural character of the Town and to maintain tillable acreage in agricultural areas.
- Encourage the preservation of open space throughout the Town with Planned Unit Developments (PUD) or within the Planned Development District.
- Consider and encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND) for infill, adaptive re-use or new developments within and adjacent to existing centers of activity, particularly the Village of Vernon and the City of Sherrill.
- Discourage residential areas from encroaching into existing or planned agricultural and industrial areas. Industrial uses should be buffered from residential areas with retail, commercial, and open space.
- Encourage the maintenance and development of a quality housing stock.
- Consider the housing needs of seniors, special needs populations and first time homebuyers in the community.
- Provide a local climate that will improve opportunity for home ownership in the community.
- Encourage residential development that provides for a mix of housing that includes affordable housing.



Vernon prefers that new housing does not reduce the scenic quality of the Town and blends into the country side.

8.1.4 Recommendations

8.1.4.1 Practice Smart Growth and Sustainability by Encouraging Large Residential Developments to Locate Near Infrastructure Extensions within Close Proximity of Existing Centers

The excessive extension of public utilities beyond a reasonable distance of the Villages and the City of Sherrill should be discouraged in an effort to minimize the cost burden on the Town. This will enhance existing neighborhoods in Town centers and contain future residential sprawl.

Encouraging clustering provisions on lands within close proximity to existing centers will minimize encroachment upon agricultural areas and critical environmental features, prevent sprawling into the countryside, and will also help maximize returns on infrastructure investments, as discussed in section 2.2.2.

8.1.4.2 Encourage and Incorporate The Preservation and Mixing of Open Space and a Variety of Uses in New Large Scale Subdivisions Throughout the Town by Enhancing Its Planned Development (P-D) District

Currently, the Town of Vernon has an established Planned Development (P-D and PDET) District in its zoning that calls for “large-scale, new and innovative projects where one or more uses may be within a single project”. It is recommended that the Town’s zoning be amended to enhance the procedural review components of this district in order to better facilitate and promote unique, sustainable, and exciting mixed-use developments.

"We need to think about Senior Citizens in this Plan. Where will they live?"

- Resident attending a Visioning Session

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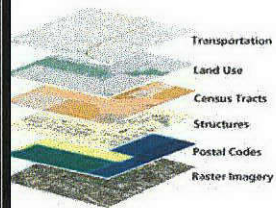
By enhancing the review procedures of the P-D district, the Town should then strongly promote developments that have creative site designs and a mix of uses by incorporating flexibility into its ordinance, especially with regard to use, setbacks, and minimum lots sizes.

It is within this district that unique developments can be built that could include housing needs for seniors and first-time homebuyers, as well as commercial and office uses, and that could also realize maximum returns on any future investments in infrastructure improvements as long as these developments are located within close proximity to existing population or activity centers.

8.1.5 Implementation Strategies

8.1.5.1 Provide Flexibility for Developers Who Encourage Implementation of Low Impact and Smart Growth Approaches to Residential Subdivisions

Developers who seek to invest in the Town of Vernon should be encouraged to incorporate innovative methods of development into local projects. It is recommended that local zoning and subdivision regulations be adjusted to show flexibility toward those developers who show interests in low impact and smart growth practices in design and development of project proposals.



A community GIS system will reduce duplication of services between the City, Town Village and County.

8.1.5.2 Conduct Density Analyses Targeting Areas Within and Immediately Adjacent to the Towns Population Centers to Better Prepare for Existing and Future Infrastructure Capacities

In order to realize maximum returns on any future infrastructure improvements and to ensure adequate capacities are in place to support growth, it is recommended analyses of future residential units and other potential land uses required to realize the best returns and usage be conducted to better target appropriate areas and densities for development. This approach will help prepare the Town for logical phased growth and save public costs by directing new development to places contiguous to existing development where sewer, water, roads, and other necessary services already exist, or are planned as part of the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate projected growth.

8.1.5.3 Develop an Open Space Plan That Links Residential Neighborhoods With Trails, Parks and Other Pedestrian Amenities

Trails, parks, greenways and other open spaces are important ingredients in appeal and livability of a neighborhood and Town. Building off of recommendations in section 2.2.2, engaging in a process that inventories the Town's open spaces to plan for an interconnected system of parks, trails, and greenways that would link all existing and projected residential neighborhoods with Vernon Downs, Sconodoa Creek, the Towns populations centers, and other amenities throughout will help create unique places and experiences for residents and visitors. In addition, an open space plan will also cater to minimizing vehicle miles traveled by providing residents an alternative means of transportation to places within close proximity of their homes.

8.2 Agricultural Land Use

Based upon the previous discussions throughout this Comprehensive Plan, it is concluded that farmland protection should become a major component of Vernon's future vision. Agriculture should be viewed as a viable way of life for local residents and farming should continue as a profitable commercial enterprise in the community. Therefore, the following sections of the Vernon Comprehensive Plan reflect this overriding theme.

8.2.1 Agricultural and Open Space Goal

To support agriculture and viable farming as the primary economic activity in preserving the rural character and open space qualities of the community.

8.2.2 Objectives

Based upon local public concern, existing conditions and subsequent necessary improvements, the following objectives are offered:

- Encourage agriculture to continue as the primary economic activity in the Town for an indefinite period or for as long as necessary to ensure that the farmer's economic health is sustained.
- Strive to maintain the most productive agricultural land for future generations.
- Encourage cooperation between local members of the agricultural community and County/State agricultural agencies to assist individual farmers in securing funding for:
 - Nutrient management
 - Sound farming practices

"A major portion of this Plan should focus on farmland protection"

- Resident attending a March 2005 Status Report Session -

- Natural resource protection
 - Organic farming
 - Open space protection
- The Town should advocate for farming concerns when working with federal, state and local elected officials.
 - Reduce potential future development pressures on protected farmlands, prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance, through current site plan review and subdivision regulations.
 - Discourage fragmentation of currently active and potentially active farmland for other land uses, through Site Plan Review and Subdivision Review.
 - Encourage the use agricultural lands to provide future open space networks with areas for stormwater infiltration and groundwater recharge.
 - Encourage the use of PUD and clustering techniques to preserve tillable acreage and viable farmland within the Town.
 - Provide a climate where business, particularly locally owned operations, can flourish by enhancing the Town's agricultural heritage, arts, culture, and vital neighborhoods.
 - Discourage commercial or industrial activity that does not compliment agricultural infrastructure or operations from locating in agricultural zone districts and encourage that activity in close proximity to the City and Village.



"Farmland is a major component of the scenic quality of the Town; Vernon prefers that development occurs in a way that keeps farming viable in the community."

- Ad-Hoc
Committee
Member -

- Foster an economic climate that supports and promotes the expansion of agri-tourism within the Town.
- Encourage the development of specialty farms, hobby farms and self sufficiency farms.

8.2.3 Recommendations

8.2.3.1 Discourage Public Infrastructure Extensions into Agricultural Taxing Districts

It is recommended that the Town discourage types of development that will require public infrastructure extensions into agricultural districts and, instead, encourage such extensions near existing population centers to encumber future high-density residential subdivision development in agricultural areas.

It was made clear throughout the public visioning sessions and subsequent workshops with the Town Ad-Hoc Committee that maintaining viable agricultural operations and preserving agricultural lands was important to residents, especially farmers. By allowing the extension of public water and sewer into those areas, the Town would essentially open the gates for sprawl development that would essentially leave farmers no choice but to terminate operations due to service and maintenance costs from the added infrastructure. In addition, hundreds of acres of scenic, rolling topography that currently exists in the Town would be lost to sprawl.

8.2.3.2 Incorporate the Town's Agricultural Lands as Part of an Interconnected Network of Trails, Greenways, Parks, and Open Space

It is recommended that the Town use portions of underutilized agricultural lands as part of a Town-wide trail and greenway system linking neighborhoods, parks, and open space. This would help preserve the Town's rural character while creating a unique amenity to be used by residents and visitors alike.

8.2.3.3 Encourage Agriculture as a Commercial Enterprise

The Town of Vernon recognizes that Agriculture is an important part of the community. A primary recommendation of this Plan is that agriculture and agricultural support services should be treated as a commercial enterprise. Agriculture is a business that is tied to many other industries including transportation, manufacturing, retail and service sectors of the economy. In the face of declining public interest in farming and agriculture, the Town should highlight agriculture as a viable business in the Town and a way of life that is consistent with maintaining Vernon as a quality and sustainable community. Therefore, the following short-term strategies should be considered to work toward achieving the economic objectives of the Comprehensive Plan

8.2.4 Implementation Strategies

8.2.4.1 Encourage Right to Farm Laws by Adjusting the Towns Zoning Laws

It is recommended that in order to effectively preserve an agricultural presence outside of existing population centers, the Town adjust its zoning to clearly identify agriculture as the only

primary principle use in the (A) Agricultural District. Other uses currently permitted as primary uses would be more suitable in this District as permitted under site plan review.

8.2.4.2 Encourage Farmers to participate in Conservation Easements, Transfer of Development Rights, and Acquiring Tax Incentives on a Voluntary Basis

To help agricultural operations and farmers stay in business, the Town should encourage a high level of cooperation with the County to help farmers utilize strategic practices such as conservation easements, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR / TDR), and acquiring taxes in lieu of alternatives to subdivision developments outside of areas immediately adjacent to existing centers of development.

8.2.4.3 Implement Percentage Requirements for the Subdivision of Large Lots with Vast Expanses of Road Frontage

The Town of Vernon has many parcels that have large portions of road frontage. To prevent fragmentation of agricultural lands that create landlocked pieces of property, and thus, reducing viable farmland or development property, it is recommended the Town establish policy that requires rear lot access on large lots containing 5 acres or more of road frontage. Once 30 percent of the road frontage of a lot is developed, an easement should be granted by the purchaser of the development lot, based upon local road standards of the Town. This will prevent typical residential strip development and allow rear access to the lot for farm access or future local road connections between development parcels. This approach will also prevent land locking and fragmentation that



The Town recognizes that agriculture is a business. It is a commercial activity to be encouraged by Town officials.

will impact future farming operations. Through the Subdivision Review process, the landowner of the original parcel should be required to provide sketch plan showing future build-out of the original parcel before more than 30 percent of the land can be subdivided along a highway/road.

This approach, among other recommendations in this section will help limit the amount and type of development that disrupts or fragments land areas containing prime farmland soils or soils of statewide importance and will allow for the orderly subdivision of land with a rational approach to the future local road network

8.2.4.4 Work with the Farmland Protection Board Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Soil & Water Conservation District to Promote Farming as a Critical Component of the Commercial Enterprise in the Town

To encourage agriculture as a viable commercial enterprise in the Town there are several short term strategies that can be employed. If agriculture is to survive in the Town, real estate interests must be persuaded that the sale of land from one farmer to another is just as important as selling land for residential development. Therefore the Town should encourage the County Farmland Protection Board to work with local real estate agents to promote and advertise active farms and agribusiness to farming interests who may want to locate in the area. This can become part of ongoing public outreach that through several public outlets. For example, during several visioning sessions residents addressed the need for involving youth in agriculture and working farms. One strategy to accomplish this is to

The Town of Vernon prefers that retail, commercial and industrial activity be located in the Village of Vernon and the City of Sherrill but should encourage them near their respective boundaries.

encourage local School Districts to improve appreciation for farming as an important industry. Field trips and educational interaction between farmers and local students is an excellent way to educate the youth as to the importance of farming.

Other ways to assist in preserving agriculture as part of the local economy is to promote local products in local venues. This can be accomplished by encouraging Oneida County to bring farmers and consumers together through contact with regional supermarkets, farmers markets, local product promotion, and U-pick operations. Local farmers and the County Farmland Protection Board can also work with the Oneida Nation, Vernon Downs, Utica Speedway and other venues in the area to promote and utilize local agricultural products.

8.3 Commercial, Industrial, and Economic Activities

The development and growth of a community's commercial and industrial economy is influenced by several factors. Among these factors are:

- Regional location;
- Characteristics of the community population;
- Existing commercial / industrial development patterns;
- Availability of adequate sites, and
- The existing transportation system.

All of these factors were introduced in the Land Use Inventory portion of this Plan, and were analyzed to better understand forces driving current economic conditions, and how these conditions can be maintained and enhanced through strategic land use planning.



"Horse farming and boarding is a major opportunity that fits with the rural character of the community."
-Ad-Hoc Committee Member -

Small retail operations and light to moderate industrial companies all have various criteria when making their own location decisions. The Town also must consider a number of elements pertaining to commercial and industrial development decisions, including:

- The type of development that it wants to attract in light of community goals;
- How much land should be planned to accommodate future population;
- Where such development should be located in light of existing and planned public infrastructure improvements; and
- The development's physical qualities.

Upon determining the character of the desired development, the Town must develop a means for carrying them forth. This section, based on inventory and analysis of existing conditions and public concerns and interests, presents recommended objectives and tools that the Town should use to manage commercial and industrial development. These objectives are outlined below:

8.3.1 Commercial/Industrial Goal

To plan for service based commercial and industrial growth in, and around the major population centers to be better supported and to support the need for sound improvements to local water and sewer infrastructure.

8.3.2 Objectives

- Encourage the appropriate types, scale, and character of desired commercial and industrial developments.

- Support the development of employment sites that are compatible with existing land use and in areas with the best potential for future infrastructure improvements.
- Encourage businesses that compliment existing economic activity or that can provide for an underserved economic demand in the area.
- Concentrate compatible mixed land uses onto relatively small lots, in close proximity to housing and consumers, in existing areas supported by water and wastewater facilities. The Village of Vernon and the City of Sherrill are concentrated areas particularly primed for this type of future development.
- Support economic development that employs local workers, provides family-supporting wages and benefits, and offers affordable goods and services.

8.3.3 Recommendations

8.3.3.1 Encourage Appropriate Infill Development in the Town's Villages, Hamlet and City to Enhance Existing Older Neighborhoods

Recognizing the importance and positive impact infill development can have on existing older neighborhoods such as the City of Sherrill, the Villages of Oneida Castle and Vernon, and Vernon Center can play a large role in revitalization efforts and quality of life throughout the entire Town.

Understanding that building on underutilized sites in existing business and population centers can pose a number of problems to developers in comparison with construction activities on open lands (i.e., possible environmental contamination, meeting requirements for architectural standards and design conformity, etc.), the Town can identify priority sites for redevelopment and provide necessary background research on those sites to assist in their development. For example, by identifying the characteristics of a particular site such as proximity to a public transportation stop, tax liens, available open space, and other information on blighted or abandoned properties that have been identified through an abandoned land inventory, the Town can assist developers and community groups in their infill development or revitalization efforts. This is a proactive approach for the Town to target key properties in its population centers to help enhance quality of life and overall resident and visitor satisfaction.

There are also administrative efforts that can be used to encourage infill development in the Town. Streamlining the permitting process and even waiving requirements that sometimes make infill development difficult for developers could help leverage such efforts. For example, the Town could waive some road frontage requirements on a particular project in order to allow site access with shared driveways.

Finally, the Town can also purchase underutilized land to be redeveloped and used in more attractive ways for community buildings, commercial or office space, affordable housing, or other needed community services. Redeveloping lots in existing older neighborhoods in positive ways to revitalize areas plagued by abandoned storefronts, houses, and vacant land will help make these areas and the entire Town more attractive to new investors.

Retail activity should take place near residential population centers to encourage a safe and walkable community.

8.3.3.2 Establish Inter-Municipal Relationships with the Village and the City When Planning for Economic Development

Identifying key aspects and areas for economic development through inter-municipal collaboration between the Town and its individual municipalities will help establish development strategies that will compliment one another and not compete with each other, thus, benefiting the Town and the region as a whole.

8.3.4 Implementation Strategies

8.3.4.1 Develop a Capital Improvement Plan Identifying Where Major, Non-recurring Facilities Will be Provided

Having a Plan that identifies major investments in future facilities such as public buildings, water facilities, sewage systems, and parks will help strategically program the Town's fiscal expenditures while coordinating public investment with adopted plans and policies to properly manage long-term investments.

8.3.4.2 Identify Land Areas in Close Proximity to the City of Sherrill and the Village of Vernon That Can Reasonably be Facilitated by Future Infrastructure Improvements

When planning for future infrastructure improvements, it is recommended that the Town focus their efforts on studying lands adjacent to the City of Sherrill and Village of Vernon that can be feasibly serviced by public water and sewer. By limiting potential water and sewer extensions to areas within close proximity to these existing population and business centers, the Town's agricultural and open space areas will be preserved, economic investments in those serviced areas will likely increase, and maintenance and improvement costs will be minimized. Extending



Vernon recognizes the quality of local schools as an important quality of life asset to the community and believes that the school system should be high-lighted to attract more young people to the area.

water and sewer to lands outside of immediate areas of activity will be much more costly and the Town will likely not realize any return on its infrastructure investments.

8.3.4.3 Develop a GIS Database and Cooperative Community Inventory of Potential Future Commercial / Industrial Sites in Cooperation within the Herkimer-Oneida Comprehensive Planning Program

- Good access to major collector roads
- Within or in close proximity to the City and Village
- Are adequately serviced by utilities and infrastructure or are within a reasonable distance of potential infrastructure extensions.

8.3.4.4 Establish a Local Strategic Planning Committee

It is recommended the Town promote the establishment of a voluntary strategic planning committee consisting of dedicated local business owners, citizens and officials to focus their efforts toward on-going issues and economic development strategies. This strategic planning committee should include representatives from the City of Sherrill and the villages and should interact with Oneida County and adjacent communities. Having a group that is continually engaged in the promotion of the Town and its individual municipalities will allow Vernon to be ready and knowledgeable about future trends and growth management practices affecting its land and economy.

8.4 Entertainment and Tourism

8.4.1 Entertainment and Tourism Goal

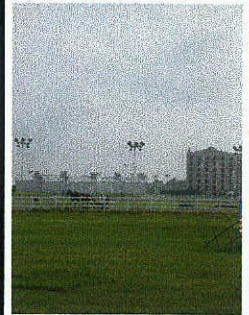
To support Vernon Downs, Utica Speedway, the ongoing industry at the Oneida Limited Site and the Oneida Nation Golf Course as primary regional attractions that will bring visitors and tourists to the area for the betterment of the local economy.

8.4.2 Objectives

- Recognize the importance of economic opportunities that can result by encouraging commercial and retail activity within a pedestrian (walking) proximity to Vernon Downs, Utica Speedway, and local commercial centers in the Village and City.
- Support tourism in the area by encouraging local businesses and facilities to better plan, coordinate, and expand tourism-related activities.
- Encourage and target economic development, entertainment and tourist based opportunities that are linked to and will bolster existing enterprise, including agriculture.
- Encourage the development of ties between local farms and the visitor potential of Vernon Downs and Oneida Nation enterprises, through local tourism and economic development support services.

8.4.3 Recommendation

The Town of Vernon should consider ways to enhance the current level of entertainment and tourism opportunities in the area and create new opportunity associated with the Oneida Nation Golf Course and existing venues in the Town. This could be accomplished by expanding the P-D



Tourism and support services that are generated by Vernon Downs are compatible with local agriculture and the transition from dairy farming to horse farming is not a major leap in land use or community compatibility.

zoning district north of the Village of Vernon to accommodate additional commercial development opportunities associated with Atunyote Golf and Country Club. The P-D (Planned Development District) will allow the Planning Board to review future projects in a way that does not degrade the rural quality of the Town and Village and compliment the visitor use of the golf course.

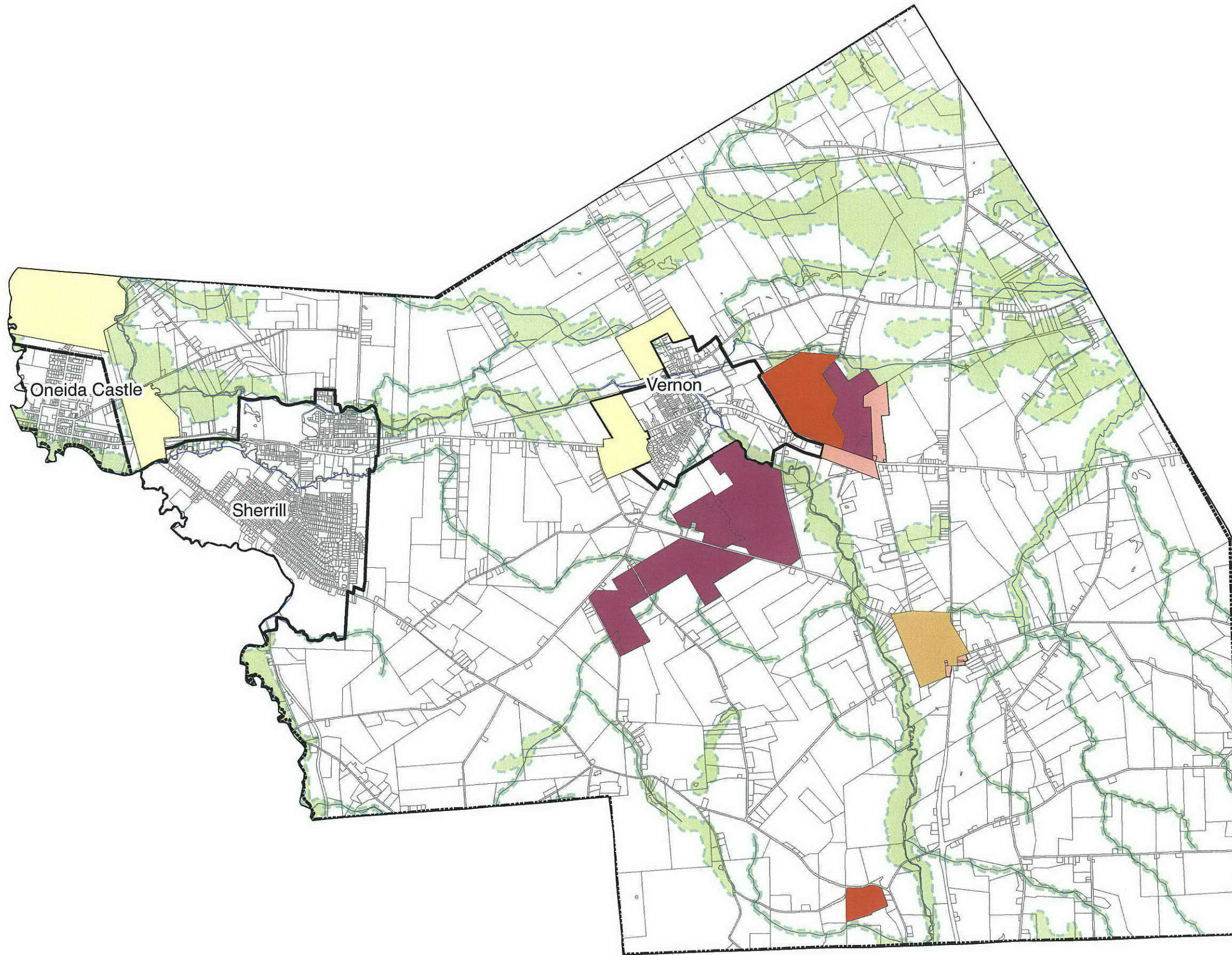
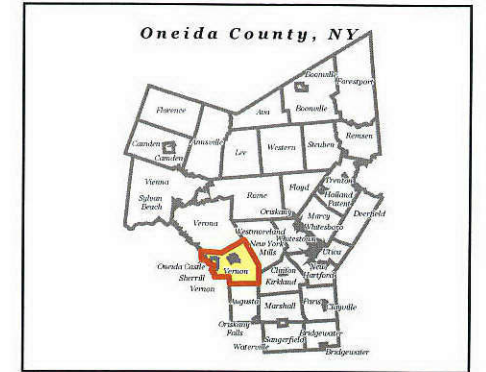
This area is also one of the most logical locations for future water and sewer extensions if there is success with the goals and objectives of the water and wastewater infrastructure portion of the Plan. A P-D will protect highway function by requiring new development to consider the secondary impacts of existing and future development in the area to avoid typical strip growth and environmental degradation along State Route 31.

8.4.4 Implementation Strategies for Tourism and Entertainment










Strategies that Vernon should pursue to improve the economic viability of local tourism include:

8.4.4.1 Assist Appropriate Groups and Agencies in Coordinating and Promoting Local Events on a Regional Scale

Vernon officials should work with local communities and interest groups to coordinate local events and festivals around events Vernon Downs, Utica-Rome Speedway, Turning Stone Casino and Atunyote Golf Course and other local venues. By working with the Oneida County Farm Bureau and Cornell Cooperative Extension to promote agri-tourism associated with Vernon Downs local farms, and events related to agriculture the Town can expose more visitors to other venues in the area. Additionally, the Town should coordinate the promotion of local tourism and entertainment with adjoining

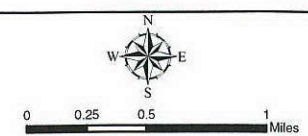


Legend

-  Stream
- Current Zoning Districts**
-  (A) Agricultural
-  (C-1) Commercial
-  (C-M) Commercial-Manufacturing
-  (P-D) Planned Development
-  (R-1) Residence
-  (R-H) Rural-Hamlet
-  Land Conservation Overlay District
-  Tax Parcel Boundary

Conservation Overlay District: 100 buffer around streams, floodplains & NYS DEC wetlands

NOTE: DISCREPANCY IDENTIFIED
 DATA SOURCES: ONEIDA COUNTY REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICE,
 NYS DEC, FEMA, CUGIR, TOWN OF VERNON



Town of Vernon		4/21/05
Current Zoning Map		
Oneida County	New York	Figure 8-1 Project No. 859.005

communities, the City of Sherrill, the Villages and the Oneida Nation by allowing shared use of web-based advertisement and other promotional outlets. The Town and adjoining communities should also promote the Oneida Community as an opportunity for tourism and local education regardless of future ownership or operations at the facility.

8.4.4.2 Support Small Business Development Programs for Local Tourism Related Businesses

The Town should support small business development programs targeted to local tourism and entertainment businesses in appropriate areas of Vernon. This can be accomplished by forming a Business Improvement District or by working with the local Chamber of Commerce or the Small Business Association to find start-up funding for small business. The Town should coordinate with the City of Sherrill and the Villages provide public access to this information at all local municipal buildings.

8.4.4.3 Provide Flexibility for Creative Entertainment in the Town

Vernon should review local zoning to provide flexibility for creatively designed tourism support facilities and businesses in and around existing commercial centers. This can be accomplished through the Planned Development Review process and through standard Site Plan Review. However, Planning Board officials should use care in ensuring that projects related to Tourism and Entertainment do not conflict with the local rural character or impact the quality of life in the community.

8.5 Community Services and Facilities

8.5.1 Community Services and Facilities Goal

To provide a high standard of progressive government and emergency services to town property owners and residents while containing service costs to control tax impacts.

8.5.2 Objectives

- Develop community wide GIS capabilities in concert with the County's GIS services that are available to the Town, City and Villages to be utilized and accessed by local officials in coordinating planning activities as well as day-to-day government operations and services.
- Promote the Town of Vernon as a quality community based upon the success of Vernon-Verona-Sherrill Schools and promote the district as a major component of the quality of life afforded in the Vernon area.
- Facilitate the availability of infrastructure necessary for local emergency services to maximize their ability to provide for public health and safety.
- Incorporate the New Town Hall, Vernon Elementary and Town Park by promoting public accessibility and shared use of facilities and coordinating events by developing the site in a manner that meets the needs of the Town, the School, residents of the Town and Village and visitors to the Vernon Downs facility.

- Work with State officials to maximize safe and efficient egress from local emergency services facilities to major collectors.

8.5.3 Recommendation

In 2003, the Town of Vernon completed a new Town Hall facility and a cursory review of community facilities reveals that they are adequate to meet community needs. However, it is important for the Town to evaluate the impact of future projects (particularly residential development) on local community facilities. This is especially important with respect to local schools and life safety services. Therefore, if large scale projects are presented to the Planning Board for review, they should be evaluated to determine the impact to local facilities and services.

8.5.4 Implementation Strategies

8.5.4.1 Include Local Emergency Services in the Permitting Process as a Safety Valve During Site Plan / Subdivision Review

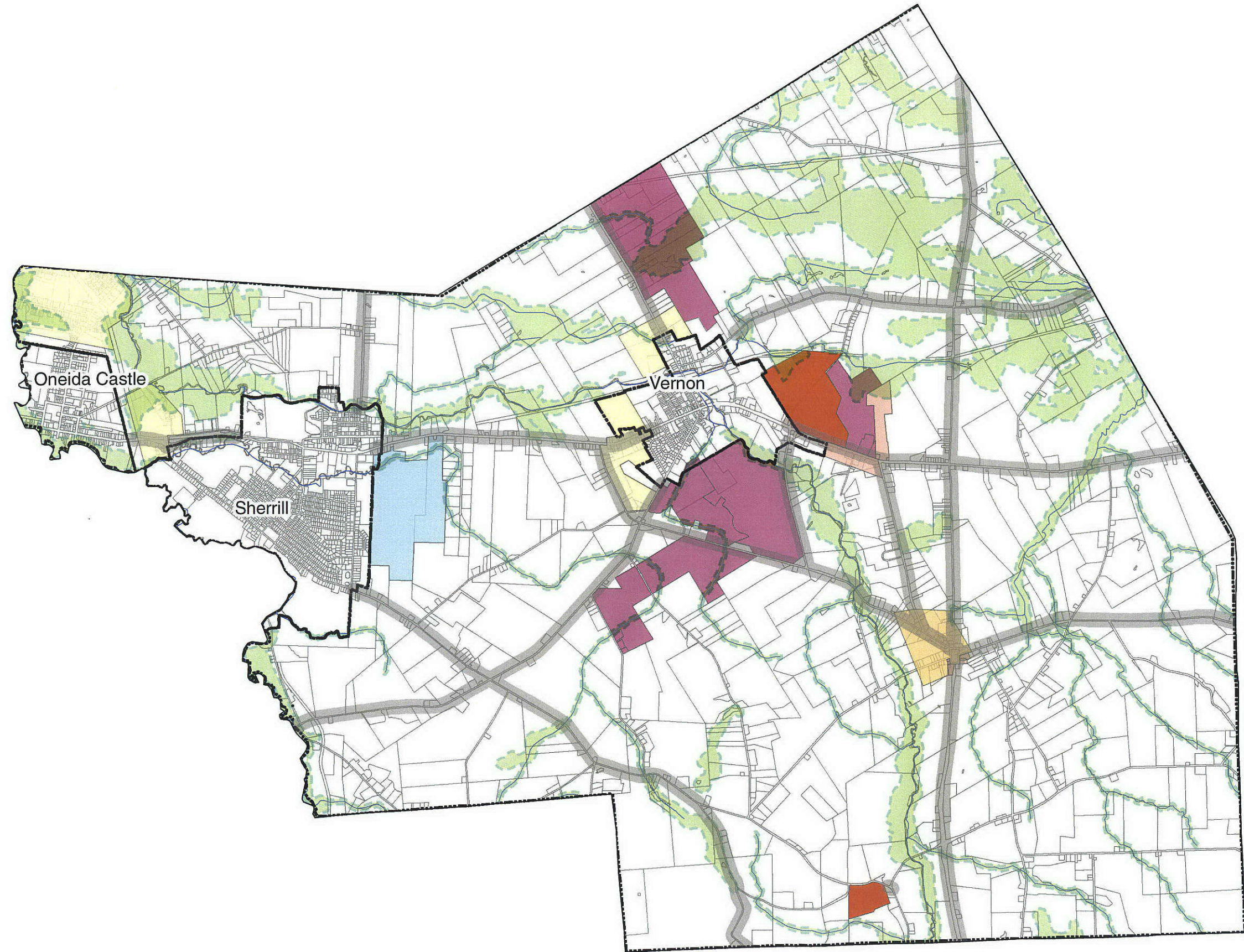
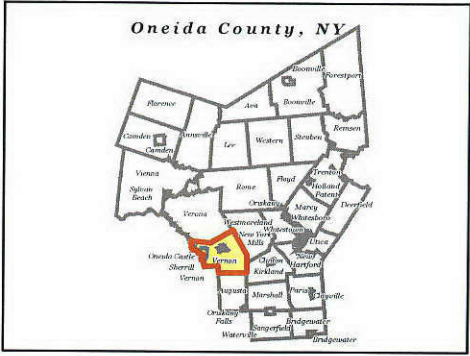
During site plan review of commercial, industrial and large-scale residential projects, the Town Planning Board should request input from local fire and emergency services. For example, if a large retail store decides to locate in the Town and requests an area variance for build to 40 feet in height, the local fire department should be notified to determine if they have the proper apparatus to reach the roof of the building. To present another example, if a major subdivision is proposed in a remote area of the Town, the availability of water may limit fire-fighting capability. Therefore, it would be in the Town's best interests to keep local life safety officials abreast of pending project proposals during Planning Board review.

8.5.4.2 Ensure that Local School Officials are Aware of Major Residential Subdivisions or Multi-Family Projects

At this time there is limited demand for residential units in the Town due to infrastructure limitations. However, availability of infrastructure or new technology in the future may facilitate residential growth in the area. As stated earlier in this section, residential development uses more in local services than it pays into the tax base. Therefore, if major subdivisions or multi-family proposals are set forth in the future, local school officials should be contacted to ensure that the local school system has adequate facilities to support additional students. This will serve as a safety valve to ensure that the school system is not faced with an overcrowding situation or lack of facilities in the future and will allow the school district to plan for any unanticipated increase in students.

8.5.4.3 Work to Increase Public Exposure to Local Schools

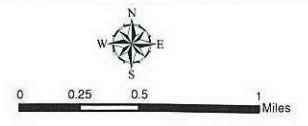
One way to promote the local school system as a quality community asset is to encourage the use of school facilities for other community purposes. This can be achieved by holding public education and outreach events at the school so that area residents are exposed to the staff and facilities at the schools. In addition, encouraging the incorporation of school recreational facilities in the Town's future recreational planning will help to reduce future expenditures by the school district and the Town for maintenance and development. For example, the shared use of the new town park with Vernon Elementary School provides opportunity for shared parking, athletic facilities and outdoor education programs. Through this approach, the Town and the local school district may discover ways to reduce liability, maintenance and development costs while exposing residents to activities at public facilities.



Legend

- Stream
 - Zoning Districts**
 - (A) Agricultural
 - (C-1) Commercial
 - (C-M) Commercial-Manufacturing
 - (P-D) Planned Commercial / Entertainment Development
 - (PUD) Planned Residential Development
 - (R-1) Residential
 - (R-H) Rural-Hamlet
 - Land Conservation Overlay District
 - Tax Parcel Boundary
 - County Highway Overlay
 - State Highway Overlay
- Conservation Overlay District: 100 buffer around streams, floodplains & NYS DEC wetlands

DATA SOURCES: ONEIDA COUNTY REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICE, NYS DEC, FEMA, CUGIR, TOWN OF VERNON, BARTON AND LOGUIDICE, P.C.



DRAFT

Town of Vernon	4/21/05	Figure 8-2
Recommended Land Use Map		Project No. 859.005
Oneida County	New York	

9.0 Plan Conclusions

The Town of Vernon Comprehensive Plan is designed to guide Town officials in the application of sound land use policy for each of the major Planning Components. Future implementation policy, including adjustments to local zoning, should be driven by planning Goals, Objectives, Recommendations and Strategies, including alternate courses as warranted in this planning document. The Plan is based upon extensive public outreach and participation and the overriding Goals were formulated in conjunction with public opinion.

With the passing of time, trends will change and the Plan will require review and reevaluation in the future. Therefore, the Town should adopt the Plan as a living document to be reviewed every 5 to 7 years and adjusted to meet the needs of the future population. Vernon officials must keep abreast of regional issues and establish a sound and cooperative relationship with neighboring communities including State and County agencies.

This Plan is a blueprint to guide future development and provides the foundation for future policy and land use decisions. Local zoning, subdivision regulations, site plan review and overall fiscal policy are important to the implementation of the Plan.

Throughout the planning process, the issues with respect to impacts of the Comprehensive Plan on adjoining communities and the local environment were scoped, evaluated and considered. Many of the measures recommended will reduce future impacts to the environment and are intended to mitigate the effects of uncontrolled growth, suburban sprawl and impacts to agriculture. Many recommendations will likely succeed and progress Vernon as a Quality Community.

Many of the recommendations in the Vernon Comprehensive Plan relate to the protection of open space and the environment and will improve the quality of local natural resources over time. For example, implementation of a regional wastewater system will mitigate current impacts to surface water quality. Therefore, the Vernon

Comprehensive Planning Committee reviewed many alternatives based upon the four public visioning sessions and has arrived at sound environmental and land use policy. All environmental impacts, as proposed, can be mitigated through quality site plan and subdivision review and the Town's local land use policy will provide the necessary implementation tools.

Therefore, the adoption of Town of Vernon Comprehensive will have no large scale, adverse environmental impacts to the region, the Town or the adjoining communities. If the Plan is implemented as proposed, it may significantly improve the local environment and quality of life for current and future residents. The Plan also sets forth the appropriate approach to infrastructure planning and the protection of agriculture and open-space that is consistent protecting the environment of the Town and the watersheds of Oneida and Oriskany Creek.