

TOWN OF ONEONTA  
2014 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

This document is the recommended Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Oneonta as proposed by the ad hoc Comprehensive Planning Committee commissioned by the Town Board in August 2012. Historically, the comprehensive plans were approved in 1998, 1973 and 1965. During the past fifteen years since the plan was last updated the town has seen growth in different areas, changes in population, industry, and potential for commercial and industrial development, all of which will be discussed in further detail within this document.

This Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a strategic plan for the vision of the community's goals and aspirations in terms of development. According to Anderson, Larz (1995) Guidelines for Preparing Urban Plans Chicago: APA Planners Press "To be relevant, the planning process must identify and address not only contemporary issues of concern to residents, workers, property owners, and business people, but also the emerging issues that will be important in the future." The main purpose for this Comprehensive Plan is to guide the Town of Oneonta to govern with a visionary approach.

As time passes, communities evolve, technologies change, industries advance, such as the utilization of horizontal hydraulic fracturing for natural gas by oil and gas companies. This activity brought many local residents to the Town Board voicing a variety of opinions. This issue, along with many others, such as, public safety, economic development, city/town merger, and the age of the previous Plan, prompted the Board to approve a town-wide survey including all registered voters, business and property owners. From this survey the Town requested an updated Comprehensive Plan.

Zogby Analytics was commissioned by the Town of Oneonta to conduct a mail survey. The Town provided Zogby with mailing addresses for all registered voters within the community, as well as mailing addresses from tax payer rolls for individual and companies that owned land in the town, but did not exist on the voter registration rolls. The survey was mailed to all unique addresses from these lists, including households where more than one occupant resided. Each mailed survey gave the option to complete the survey by 1) filling out the survey form and returning it in the self-addressed envelope to Zogby Analytics for data processing, or, 2) use a website with a web address and password ensuring secure control and no duplication.

A total of thirty-eight hundred surveys were mailed resulting in 986 collected surveys. According to Zogby Analytics, the response rate of greater than 25% was more than double the normal return rate with mailed survey. Of the 986 collected surveys, 69 were completed using the website and 917 were mailed to Zogby Analytics and manually entered into the survey software. Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 986 is +/- 2.7 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100. Subsets of data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set.

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The summary report from Zogby Analytics is located in Appendix #1 and the subset data reports are included in Appendix #2. The following is a brief summary of the complete survey:

*It is clear the public spoke emphatically on a number of issues including a city/town merger rating services, availability of parks and other recreations, whether or not to move forward with gas drilling and fracking, commercial and industrial development and other topics such as the city airport, and the National Soccer Hall of Fame. Gauging support and opposition was a little less clear when dealing with issues such as a proposed road use agreement, affordable housing, and the expansion or reduction of mobile homes.*

- A) *With regard to the idea of a city/town merger, a solid majority (56%) of respondents oppose the idea*
- B) *62% surveyed said no to the idea of the town providing financial assistance to the City of Oneonta Airport*
- C) *58% said yes to the Town and City partnering to protect the reservoir*
- D) *50% said no to the idea of the Town funding the use of the National Soccer Hall of Fame fields*
- E) *There was clear support among residents for recreation resources being expanded or further developed, especially walking paths, bike trails, and hiking trails.*
- F) *Seven in ten residents said that commercial development in the town should be expanded*
- G) *59% said industrial development should be expanded*
- H) *Overwhelming majorities felt the Town should encourage commercial development and industrial development, 77% and 64% respectively.*
- I) *67% of respondents were opposed to gas drilling. This was across the board in regard to sub-groups – 72% saying gas drilling should not be allowed in any zone type*
- J) *Six in ten said yes to the idea of stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of drinking water.*
- K) *While majorities of residents would like to see commercial and industrial development, along with the development of wind, bio-fuel and solar energy, they also want their land and water to remain safe from pollution.*
- L) *There was no clear opinion on the road use law issue. 43% were not sure, while one-third supported the idea.*
- M) *Overall the town residents were most satisfied with the fire protection (85%), snow removal (84%), law enforcement (72%), quality of drinking water (71%) and road maintenance (68%).*
- N) *Less than half surveyed were satisfied with environmental protection (49%), availability of affordable housing (40%), and economic development (31%).*

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The conclusion of the Zogby Analytics Summary states:

*Overall, residents were happy to be living in the Town of Oneonta. They are generally happy with the quality of services provided and with town governance, but there was frustration surrounding the assessment process, increasing taxes, and a feeling that the Town Board is going to vote in favor of fracking/gas drilling and a merger with the City, though it is clear that the majority of residents are opposed to those latter two initiatives.*

*Town residents understand the need for development – many calling for increasing retail and light industrial businesses around the town (especially a grocery store in the West End). They would like development to occur in many of the abandoned buildings and lots around the Town, with special emphasis on the former Ames Plaza. However, they also want to protect their quality of life and the reasons they moved to the town in the first place – hundreds said they like the small town atmosphere of living in the Town of Oneonta, the open spaces and beautiful scenery, the quiet and peaceful quality of life they have come to expect from living there. The challenge for the board members is to address the concern for jobs and growing the economy with the people’s desire to live in quiet, peaceful, environmentally-sound communities.*

It is with the results of the survey that the Comprehensive Planning Committee approached the development of this Plan. The committee was divided into four sub-committees; Planning, Zoning & Economic Development; Infrastructure, Roads, Water & Sewer; Community Services, Public Safety & Library; and Parks & Environmental Concerns. Each committee was given the task of reviewing the previous comprehensive plan, study the survey results, and make recommendations to the full committee. These presentations were discussed at publicly held meetings at Town Hall on the following dates:

08/08/2012	12/19/2012	05/29/2013	08/20/2013	11/05/2013
09/05/2012	01/05/2013	06/05/2013	08/27/2013	11/12/2013
09/19/2012	01/15/2013	06/11/2013	09/05/2013	12/02/2013
10/10/2012	01/29/2013	06/18/2013	09/10/2013	12/16/2013
10/17/2012	02/18/2013	07/02/2013	09/16/2013	
10/25/2012	03/06/2013	07/08/2013	09/24/2013	
11/06/2012	04/02/2013	07/16/2013	10/01/2013	
11/13/2012	04/22/2013	07/24/2013	10/08/2013	
11/28/2012	05/13/2013	08/06/2013	10/15/2013	
12/05/2012	05/20/2013	08/13/2013	10/29/2013	

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To aid the committee in different topics, input was sought from the following people:

- a) Albert Colone – Greater Oneonta Economic Development Council
- b) Roger France – retired from the NY State Department of Health
- c) Jim Hurtibise – Town of Oneonta Highway Superintendent
- d) Michael Long – City of Oneonta, City Manager
- e) Richard Maxwell – Town of Oneonta Assessor
- f) David Rowley - former Interim Oneonta School Superintendent – author of the Physical and Demographic Characteristics chapter of this plan
- g) Michael Schmidt – West Oneonta Fire Department
- h) Walter Schmidt – West Oneonta Fire Department
- i) William Shue – Greater Oneonta Economic Development Council
- j) Karen Sullivan – Otsego County Planning Board
- k) Ronald Tiderencel – Otsego County Highway (phone discussion)
- l) Wayne Treffersen – River Corporation
- m) Louie Vagliardo – D&H Rail
- n) Fred Volpe – Chairman of the Town of Oneonta Fire Commissioners

In addition, Hartwick College provided the following student interns:

- 1) Tanae Alicia Beatrice Adderley, Bahamas
- 2) Taylor Jaquays, Waterville, NY
- 3) Joshua D. Johnson, Trumbell, CT

Carlena K. Cochi Ficano, PHD, Professor of Economics was the students advisor as they updated data from the past two Census Summaries with respect to the Town and City population, age range, type of households, household incomes, household sizes, housing units, structure of housing units, vacant housing units, rental ranges, gross rents, type of heating fuel by home and educational attainment. A copy of their report can be seen in Appendix 9.

Although the Plan represents a statement or instrument of Town policy, it is not meant as a rigid set of restrictions. The adopted Town Zoning Map and Town Code together serve the purpose of defining the restriction the Town wishes to place on itself. Decisions which meet the requirements of the Town Code and Zoning Map but do not align precisely with the stated goals or policies in the Comprehensive Plan are not precluded as long as all legal requirements have been met.

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The Comprehensive Planning Committee members:

1) Carol Blazina	District 4	Planning Board Member
2) Edward Bordinger	District 3	
3) Doug Cannistra	District 1	Zoning Board of Appeals-Chairman
4) Aileen Fargo	District 4	
5) Robert Harlem, Jr.	District 3	Comprehensive Planning Committee Chairman
6) Brett Holleran	District 1	Planning Board Member
7) Virginia Lee	District 4	
8) Maria McMullen	District 3	
9) William Mirabito	District 1	Town Board Member
10) Katherine O'Donnell	District 4	
11) Kellie Place	District 2	Planning Board member-Chairperson
12) Robert Wood	District 2	Town Supervisor

2013 Town Board Members:

Robert Wood	Town Supervisor
Scott Gravelin	
David Jones	
William Mirabito	
Janet Hurley-Quakenbush	

2014 Town Board Members:

Robert Wood	Town Supervisor
David Jones	
Patricia Jacob	
Andrew Stammel	
Patricia Riddell-Kent	

## **TOWN OF ONEONTA'S PHYSICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

**Please refer to the Demographic Data-Appendix 4, Maps-Appendix 5 and Census Update-Appendix 9**

### **Physical Features**

The Town of Oneonta, located in southern Otsego County, surrounds the City of Oneonta on the Susquehanna River. The Town, about midway between Albany and Binghamton, is situated northwest of the Catskill Mountains and contains within its borders a variety of landforms and topographic features. Its highest hills include Franklin Mountain with its associated range of hills having peak altitudes around 2180 feet above sea level, Gifford Hill at 1870 feet and Winney Hill at 1890. On the other hand, the Susquehanna River and Otego Creek flow through valleys as low as 1050. There are numerous steeply sloped hillsides between these extremes.

There are approximately 20,000 acres of land in the Town of Oneonta. According to 2013 data supplied by the Otsego County Planning Department, there are a total of 2,574 separate parcels. This is an increase of 143 parcels (5.9%) from the 2,431 recorded in 2003 and an increase of 290 (12.7%) over the total of 2,284 in 1996. By comparison, from 1996 to 2013, there was an 8.9% increase in total parcels in Otsego County (34,536 to 37,600). Of the 2,574 parcels in the Town of Oneonta, 1,666 or 65% are classified as residential and this is an increase of 105 residential parcels between 2003 and 2013. Of the 105 new parcels, 78 are classified as single family homes. The number of commercial parcels increased slightly from 185 to 191 (3%) over the last 10 years while parcels classified as industrial decreased from 14 to 7 (50%). There are no parcels larger than 500 acres and the total acreage comprising rural parcels with greater than 10 acres has declined by 724 acres or 20% over the last decade. During the same time period, agricultural parcels have decreased from 28 to 8 (71.4%) with a corresponding decline in total acres from 1234 to 334 (900 acres or 73%). The combined reduction of acreage in these two categories is 1,624 acres or 33.4%. This data clearly indicates that the trend in the Town continues to be the subdivision of moderately large parcels into smaller parcels with a population density somewhat higher than the other towns in Otsego County.

### **Geology (adapted from Geological Resource Inventory for the city of Oneonta, NY by P. Jay Fleisher, 1981)**

Two sedimentary rock formations constitute the bedrock geology in the Oneonta area. Each formation consists of interbedded layers of sandstone, siltstone and shale. The Oneonta formation forms the upper 200 to 300 feet of all hilltops and is typically exposed in gray conglomeratic sandstone cliffs and ledges. The Oneonta formation lies directly upon the Gilboa formation, a sequence of rocks similar to those above, but with less sandstone and more siltstone and shale of reddish color. It is typically covered by glacial deposits on the hilltops and buried by hundreds of feet of glacial meltwater sand and gravel on the valley floors.

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Surficial geology includes all geologic material that covers the bedrock and is typically referred to as overburden. Practically all of the bedrock in the Oneonta area is covered by overburden of various types. The hillsides and hilltops have overburden of glacial till whose thickness varies up to tens of feet and may offer considerable resistance to excavation. On the steeper slopes the glacial till may be less than 2-3 feet thick or completely absent where bedrock outcrops. Much of the City of Oneonta, but also part of the Town, has overburden composed of glacial meltwater outwash of sand and/or gravel. These are sand and gravel layers deposited by glacial meltwaters to form terraces along the valley sides. These layers vary widely in thickness, and it may be hundreds of feet from the surface to the underlying bedrock. A significant area around the Susquehanna River consists of modern flood plain alluvium, generally silt up to 25 feet thick, settled out of flood waters that have overflowed from the Susquehanna River channel on both modern and prehistoric times. In general, building on glacial till is difficult due to the proximity of bedrock. However, sand and gravel do offer good drainage for septic systems although the percolation into these soils can be so fast that special systems are needed to slow down the drainage. Silt and clay do not offer good sites for standard septic systems and may need raised beds or other special arrangements prior to development. Of course, the availability of public sewage disposal mitigates these issues.

For private development, where access to public water supplies is not available, wells must supply water. There is a municipal water system in the Town that serves the Morningside Heights and the Angel Heights neighborhoods (the Woodland Water District). This utilizes well water as the water source. Another system, at The Plains, uses water from the City of Oneonta. The Town is currently in the process of applying for funds to develop the infrastructure for a Southside Water District which would also use well water. In general, water wells supplying large numbers of people need to be drilled into productive water-bearing rock. Oneonta's river valleys are associated with such high-yield sources.

## **Climate**

Oneonta's climate is classified in the Koeppen System as Temperate continental which is generally characterized by cold winters and mild summers. Precipitation tends to be evenly distributed throughout the year with slight peaks in June and October. Oneonta averages approximately 41.6 inches of precipitation per year. That figure includes an average of nearly 80 inches of snow. There is a tendency towards rainfall maximums in summer due to thunderstorms. Over the past 20 years flooding has been a significant problem with major flooding events in January 1996, August 1996, June 2006, September 2011 and July 2013. Serious infrastructure damage occurred in all 5 events, but particularly in 2006 and 2011. There was also damage to private property including homes and businesses. In both 2006 and 2011, the scale of the destruction resulted in FEMA intervention.

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Measurable snowfall has been known to occur in seven months of the year, from October to April. This limits the availability for road building and maintenance. Snowfall is caused by coastal storms, lake effect and low pressure systems moving easterly. Snow removal requires a major commitment of manpower, equipment and materials. This is particularly true with major snow storms. Oneonta received 31 inches of snow during a March storm in 1993 and close 50 inches of snow from storms that struck the area during the Christmas-New Year's holiday season, 2002/03. The latter storms broke a record set in 1887/88 and so depleted the snow removal funds in Otsego County that FEMA assistance was awarded. On Valentine's Day in 2007, Oneonta received 25 inches of snow.

In the spring, melting of the ice under the road surface can cause the pavement to break up, requiring extensive pothole filling and general road repair. The average date of the last spring frost is May 20<sup>th</sup>. The period from the last spring freezing temperature to the average date of the first autumn frost, around September 20<sup>th</sup>, is approximately 120 days. Thus, the growing season is relatively short for annual plants such as corn and other vegetables and yields fewer hay cuttings for dairy cows than warmer climates. Summers are generally mild with only a few days where the temperature reaches 90 degrees. Tourism is aided by the weather during the pleasant summers, especially since people from downstate New York and New York City perceive this area to be a vacation and second home region.

### **Demographic Assessment**

As of the 2010 census, the Town's population was 5,229 persons. Between 1990 and 2010, the population increase was 268 persons or 5.4%. During the same period, the population of the City of Oneonta decreased by 53 persons - from 13,954 to 13,901. This indicates a very slow or nearly stagnate growth pattern within the greater Oneonta community. However, the population distribution trends over the past 20 years suggest an evolution in the Town of Oneonta and surrounding area. From 1990 to 2010, the population of those 65 and over increased 33.8% while the percentage of children 9 years or younger decreased from 13% to 9%. Within the 10 to 19 year old age bracket, the decrease was 11.1% and the number of persons between 20 and 39 years of age dropped by 18.4%. The population of residents 50 and older was 2,194 or 42% in 2010 compared to 1,480 or 29.8% in 1990. For those 19 and under, the 2010 count was 1,232 or 23.6% while in 1990 the census identified 1,483 or 29.8%. In the 20-49 age bracket, the 2010 census showed 1,803 residents or 34.5% versus 2,000 or 40% in 1990.

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During the same period, corresponding shifts occurred in the size of households. The number of 1 person households increased by 53.1% and the total of 2 person households grew by 30.7%. This was coupled with a decline of 15.1% in the households of 3 or more persons. The enrollment figures for the Oneonta City School District reflect a corresponding trend. Between the 1990-91 and 2012-13 school years, enrollment declined in the Oneonta City School District from 2,048 to 1,807 students. This was a net decrease of 241 students or 11.8% of enrollment. During this same time period, in the other 18 school districts that comprise the Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES, enrollments dropped by 24% - from 9,395 to 7,140 students. It is clear that the Town and the greater Oneonta area are witnessing an aging of the populace at a pace that statistically exceeds the New York State average.

Educational Attainment Data (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2007-2011) indicates no significant increase, between 2000 and 2011, in the number of residents 25 and over with at least a high school diploma. In 1990 the figure was 82%; in 2000 it had climbed to 90.6% and 91% in 2011. By comparison, the 2011 figure for Otsego County is 88.3% and for New York State 84.6%. In 1960, only 24.4% of Town residents attained a high school diploma. The percentage of those with a Bachelor's degree or higher was 24.1% in 1990, 28.5% in 2000 and 36.3% in 2011. In Otsego County it was 26.2% and for all of New York it was 32.5%. Only 6.6% of the Town's population over 25 years of age had completed four or more years of college in 1960.

From 2007-2011, the average population of those 16 years and over was 4,351 in the Town of Oneonta. Of those, 62.1% or 2,704 were in the labor force with 2,498 or 92.4% employed and 7.6% unemployed. Residents working in the occupational areas of education, health care and social assistance comprised 40.6% (1,013 workers) of the active labor force. This is an increase from 1990 when the figure was 38.8%. In 2011 the County average was 35.2% with the State at 27%. The next largest segment of the labor force was engaged in retail and wholesale trade with 404 (16.2%) workers. The average for New York was 13.3% and for Otsego County it was 14.8%. Manufacturing positions have shown a steady decline over the past 50 years. In 1960 there were 237 (17.5%) workers in manufacturing, 173 (7.8%) in 1990 and 158 (6.3%) in 2011. The County and State figures for 2011 were 7.6% and 7.1%. From 1960 to 2011, the percentage of workers in agriculture decreased from 6.8% (92 workers) in 1960, to 0.1% (23 workers) and in 2011, no workers were identified as being employed in agriculture. Thus, in the decades after 1960, the classic blue collar factory occupations declined sharply, farm workers became non-existent and service and professional occupations continued to make up the largest segment of the work force.

From 1989 to 2011, median household income in the Town increased from \$27,198 to \$55,347 and per capita income went from \$13,427 to \$25,948. By comparison, the County median household income was \$45,334 with per capita income at \$23,176. Of the 1,853 households in the Town, 227 (12.3%) had incomes from \$100,000 to \$149,000, 106 (5.7%) had incomes from \$150,000 to \$199,999 and 73 (3.9%) had incomes of \$200,000 or more. In 1989, 15.5% of all individuals in the Town of Oneonta lived below the poverty level. By 2011, that number had increased to 21.2% which was above the County figure of 16.4%. 35.8% of residents under the age of 18 live below the poverty level and, consequently, this is the group most affected by low household incomes.

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## ZONING

### Please refer to Zoning Map-Appendix 3

The Town currently has the following zoning districts:

1. R-80 Residence-Agricultural
2. RA-40 Residence-Agricultural
3. R-20 Residential
4. R-10 Residential-Moderate-Density
5. B-1 Neighborhood Business
6. B-2 General Business
7. ID Industrial
8. ID-2 Industrial and Residential
9. HDD Highway Development District
10. MHD Mobile Home District
11. PDD-R Planned Development District-Residential
12. PDD-ID Planned Development District-Industrial
13. PDD-B Planned Development District-Business & Industrial

A Special Use Permit allows other uses in R-80 and RA-40 zones, such as; golf courses, campgrounds, kennel, riding stables, nursing homes and public/semi-public activities (churches, community centers, hospitals, etc.) RA-40 and R-80 zones require lot sizes of 43,560 and 80,000 square feet respectively (approximately one and two acre lots).

According to the following survey results there is strong support for both commercial and industrial development:

- a) 70% support expanding commercial development
- b) 59% support expanding industrial development
- c) 77% supports the town to encourage commercial development within the zoned areas
- d) 64% supports the town to encourage industrial development within the zoned areas

Also, the following survey results pertain to housing within the town:

- 46% support expanding single family development, while 37% support no change
- 23% support multiple family residential development, while 50% support no change
- 40% are overall satisfied with the availability of affordable housing, while 34% are not
- 5% support expanding mobile home districts, while 40% support reducing and 45% support no change

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According to the Town's Code Enforcement Officer, Paul Neske, the following is a history of the permits issued:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Permits</u>	<u>Building Permits</u>
2008	338	193
2009	283	179
2010	298	198
2011	336	252
2012	419	223
As of 11/7/13	311	179

Building permit numbers do not include permits for signs, vehicles, operating, flood hazards and non-owner occupied manufactured homes. Also, not included in these numbers are planning and zoning review/permits, or fire inspections.

In order for more consistent zoning and to allow for future development the committee recommends the following:

**Recommended zoning changes to the Town's current Zoning map: (Please refer to Appendix #3 showing the highlighted areas):**

- 1) The B-2 General Business district along Route 23 on Southside be re-zoned to HDD Highway Development District. This will make this entire stretch of Route 23 all HDD.
- 2) Change the MHD-Mobile Home District along Oneida Street (closest to Chestnut St) to B-1 General Business.
- 3) The area along Rt. 7 from the MHD Mobile Home District to the B-1 Neighborhood Business zone - change from RA-40 Residence-Agricultural to B-1 Neighborhood Business to the Town line.
- 4) Establish PDD zones to allow for the development of Townhouses and/or Condominiums. Possible areas are: County Rt. 8 from NYSEG going west to West Oneonta, Old Southside Drive (parallel to Rt. 23), Rt. 7 past the Oneida St intersection going west to the Town line, Route 7 in the east end from Brooks heading east toward the Town line, the Hemlock Road area, County RT 48 by the Hamilton Farm Road, Rt 205 & 23 by West Oneonta, and East Street where the Town and City lines meet Bugbee Road.

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- 5) A possible future site for an industrial park would be the left side of Hemlock Road, from Riverstone Road to the Milford line. This would require a zone change to ID Industrial or PDD-ID Planned Development District-Industrial.
  
- 6) Grandfathered uses be extended for a period of 12 months rather than 6 months in the event that a property becomes vacant.
  
- 7) Require "buffers" to adjoining properties be done prior to the construction of the project. The intent is to insure that "Buffers" are completed not only upon completion but prior to construction in order to minimize the impact on the surrounding properties.
  
- 8) Update the Zoning Map to report current zones and accurate boundaries
- 9) Take into consideration the Otsego County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (as it may be amended from time to time) to strengthen and expand economic development in the Town through new opportunities in farming, agri-business and agri-tourism.

Note that in this, and in all areas recommended for rezoning, the Town should avoid wherever possible drawing zoning district lines which cut across parcels. In the initial zoning code, there were a number of instances in which lots were placed in more than one district. This has proven to be awkward for both the landowners involved and the Town. If possible, it is recommended that zoning district lines follow existing parcel boundaries and/or natural boundaries such as roads and rivers.

## ROAD USE AGREEMENT

Whenever there is commercial/industrial development, concerns will arise regarding the preservation and maintenance of the roads. The results of the survey indicated that 33% support a local road use law, while 24% did not and 43% were not sure. In order to protect the Town's roads, the Town should consider adopting a local road use law. Further, when opportunities arise for development, the developer can be held responsible for the roads. Provisions can be made when going through the permit/approval process by requiring the owner/developer to have either a performance bond or an irrevocable letter of credit insuring that the roads are protected.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As the survey results indicate, the town residents clearly want economic development. Also, as indicated by the survey results, 51% support increasing services with the City of Oneonta or other municipalities.

### Recommendations:

- 1) The Town and City work together whenever it is in the best interest of both municipalities. Areas where this is possible are:
  - a. Southside Water District: This could be done by either working with the City to provide water or by developing a standalone district. The need for a water district on Southside is critical in order to facilitate future development along this corridor.
  - b. The following areas have a need for water and sewer services for the existing residents and for future development:
    - i. West Oneonta Water District
    - ii. West Oneonta Sewer District
    - iii. East End
  - c. The railroad yards have potential commercial development; and the owners, River Corporation, have been working with Cornell and Go-Edu to develop a plan. It is recommended that the Town participate in this plan.
  - d. Coordination with the County and the City of Oneonta to establish an Economic Development Group that will work to promote manufacturing and industry along the I-88 corridor keeping in mind that the Town residents "*made it clear of the need to protect the environment.*"
  - e. Coordination with the County and City in writing grant applications concentrating on growing existing businesses and encouraging new types of industry and manufacturing to locate in Oneonta, again keeping in mind the residents "*want to protect their quality of life.*"

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## ENERGY & WATER

One major issue the Town of Oneonta residents are concerned about deals with energy, specifically the issue of hydraulic fracturing and natural gas drilling. The survey included a number of questions that addressed this topic resulting with consistent percentages. The intent of the survey was to determine the pulse of the community with respect to energy use and development.

It is important to document what types of fuel sources are being used and to what extent. According to American Factfinder-2007-2011 (found on the U.S. Census site):

Town residents heating fuel sources:

- 1) 39% utility gas
- 2) 38.3% fuel oil, kerosene, etc.
- 3) 12.3% bottled, tank or LP gas
- 4) 5.5% electricity
- 5) 4% wood
- 6) There was a few who used coal and other sources.

City residents heating fuel sources:

- 1) 44.3% utility gas
- 2) 25.5% fuel oil or kerosene
- 3) 15.8% electricity
- 4) 8.4% bottled gas
- 5) 6% having other sources

The results of the survey are as follows:

- 1) 67% do not want gas drilling within the Town, 20% do.
- 2) 72% do not want gas drilling allowed in any zone
- 3) 70% support commercial development, with 77% supporting the Town to encourage commercial development within the zoned areas,
- 4) 59% support industrial development, with 64% supporting the Town to encourage industrial development within the zoned areas.
- 5) 60% support stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of drinking water
- 6) 58% support the Town partnering with the City to enforce restrictions and help cover the costs to protect the reservoir.
- 7) 40% support the Town compensating the town landowners if watershed restrictions limit land use.

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The survey results also indicate a desire to *"live in a quiet, peaceful, environmentally-sound community"*, while encouraging both commercial and industrial development. When looking at development it is necessary to address the type of energy that will be required to meet the needs of the community.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The Town should modify the zoning code to prohibit gas drilling within the town limits.
- 2) Every precaution should be taken to protect the watershed.
- 3) An inter-municipal agreement be considered regarding the Town partnering with the City to enforce restrictions, help cover the costs to protect the reservoir.
- 4) The Town should continue protection of the reservoir and all water sources.
- 5) Given the public's overwhelming desire to protect our water resources, and environment, combined with the Town's proximity to major water sources (see Maps-Appendix 5) for list of rivers, streams, aquifers), the Comprehensive Planning Committee urges the Town to reinforce the State's DEC laws and municipal regulations regarding safeguards for local water. Water for households, agriculture and recreation uses should be protected and given the highest priority. In addition, water sources should be protected from potential pollution from hydraulic fracturing related industrial sources.
- 6) Given the strong local public stance against gas drilling activities within the Town of Oneonta, it is recommended that the Town protect the citizens and the environment against potential threats associated with toxic wastes and byproducts from gas drilling, such as, wastewater storage, transport, treatment (sewage), and utilization in agricultural contexts and on local roads.

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**Alternative Energies:**

The survey results for supporting or opposing alternative energies are as follows:

- 1) Commercial solar energy - 72% support 13% oppose
- 2) Commercial wind energy - 70% support 15% oppose
- 3) Commercial bio-fuel energy - 53% support 19% oppose.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The town codes should be modified to encourage all three forms of energy with particular attention given to locations for commercial development of these energy sources.
  - a. Solar power: Codes should be developed to address commercial and residential development of solar power. The Town should consider adapting NYS law that allows for a tax exemption for the value of solar energy improvements.
  - b. Wind Power: Codes should be developed to address development of commercial wind power, taking into consideration the surrounding properties of the development. It is recommended that the Town investigate the possibility of distributing the wind power through the Otsego Rural Co Op.
  - c. Bio-Fuel: Codes should be developed to address the commercial production of bio-fuel and residential use of bio-fuels. It is the committee's belief that a commercial bio-fuel facility would need to be sited within close proximity of a major highway or have rail capabilities. Based on these requirements the locations that initially come to mind are: The Industrial Park, The Railroad yards, Route 7(by the Pony Farm) and Route 7 past Emmons on the right. The best location appears to be the rail yards if access can be provided. This is an opportunity for the Town and City to cooperate on a joint project that would benefit the entire area.

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**Transportation**

As in the previous comprehensive plans, transportation is of great importance to the Town of Oneonta. James Hurtubise, Superintendent of Highways for the Town of Oneonta, stated that the highway service is the greatest single tax dollar investment for the town residents. This statement was confirmed by Robert Wood, Town Supervisor.

There are four overall traffic concerns: local circulation, regional access, bicycle and pedestrian needs.

Oneonta is fortunate to have three major transportation systems, Interstate-88, rail and an airport.

- Interstate 88 provides connection with I-81 in Binghamton with I-87 and I-90 in Albany. It also provides great mobility for Oneontans, and for visitors coming to the area. Nevertheless, access is mainly from points east and west. Major upstate and downstate population/businesses need to traverse the Catskill Mountains using two-lane roads or travel many miles around them.
- The rail services provide delivery of bulk/heavy product and there is great potential for expanding rail services, which in turn, provides potential to expand local industry.
- The airport provides for quick delivery service and is a great asset for future development.

The survey included many questions regarding transportation and the detailed results can be reviewed on Appendix #2. The following is a brief summary of the results:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
• Is there a need for new roads?	13%	49%	38%
• Are there dangerous intersections?	33%	21%	46%
• Should sidewalks be developed?	31%	44%	25%
• Are there areas that need street lighting?	14%	33%	53%
• Should the Town provide financial assistance for the City airport?	17%	62%	21%
• Do you want a local road use law?	33%	24%	43%
• Do you support a road use agreement for commercial/industrial development	46%	23%	31%
• Do you utilize public transportation	8%	90%	1%
• Overall 68% of those surveyed are satisfied with road maintenance			
• Overall 84% of those surveyed are satisfied with snow removal			

Local traffic has improved greatly due to rebuilding and proper maintenance of the Town's roads by the Town Highway Department. However, the Town's steep topography (see Maps-Appendix 5) has severely limited road location, especially in the northern and extreme southern parts. According to the Mr. Hurtubise, the damage from natural disasters, overuse and misuse are the greatest causes for the required rebuilding and maintenance expenses. He stated that most development will be on NYS and

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county roads and since NYS has different construction standards from those of the County, he suggested contacting the County regarding the Road Use Permit Program.

The existing road network is shown in Maps-Appendix 5. Appendix #7 lists each of the Town roads by name, along with their physical characteristics.

The State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the County Highway Department count traffic at various important intersections every few years.

The NYSDOT Traffic Volume report dated 09/25/2012 reports the Average Annual Daily Totals (AADT) for Otsego County Region 9 Route I88 as follows:

	Est		Est		Est		Est	
	<u>AADT</u>	<u>YR</u>	<u>AADT</u>	<u>YR</u>	<u>AADT</u>	<u>YR</u>	<u>AADT</u>	<u>YR</u>
• ACC RT 7 Otego (Exit 12)	12,510	11	11,430	09	11,450	08	11,760	07
• RT 205 Oneonta CL (Exit 13)	12,720	**	12,590	10	15,440	05	11,990	99
• ACC Main St (Exit 14)	19,940	**	19,420	09	21,980	06	22,360	03
• RMP MRG - Start 28 OLAP (Exit 15)	14,530	**	14,150	09	13,690	01	13,550	99
• CR 47 Emmons ACC RT 7 (Exit 16)	17,920	**	17,450	09	19,570	05	14,960	99
• Route 28 Overlap Ends	13,570	**	13,430	10	13,060	07	12,400	00
• ACC RT 7 Schenevus (Exit 18)	9,790	**	9,590	09	9,940	02	9,420	99
• South Hill Rd CR 39	8,780	**	8,600	09	8,510	06	9,300	03
• Schoharie CO LN	9,740	11	9,390	07	8,380	00	8,120	97

Please refer to NYSDOT Traffic Volume Report-Appendix #8 and Maps-Appendix 5.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) Priority should be taken on a continuing basis regarding the improvements and maintenance to the town roads based on Superintendent of Highway's annual reports.
- 2) As stated in the Zoning Chapter: Whenever there is commercial/industrial development, concerns will arise regarding the preservation and maintenance of the roads. The results of the survey indicated that 33% support a local road use law, while 24% did not and 43% were not sure. In consideration of these results, the committee recommends that when opportunities arise for development, the developer can be held responsible for the roads. Provisions can be made when going through the permit/approval process to require the owner/developer to have either a performance bond or an irrevocable letter of credit insuring that the roads are protected.

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- 3) Based on #2, when development proposals involving new roads are made, the developer may be required to build the road and lay sewer and water lines before any other construction takes place. Water and sewer plans and recommendations given within this Plan should be referenced by the Planning Board when deciding if developers need to include the utility lines on site plans and construct them.
  
- 4) However, it is conceivable for the Town to be involved in building and financing sewer, water, and roads, which would in turn encourage further private investment/development.
  
- 5) The Town should make a recommendation to the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) that State Routes (SR) 28, 23, 7, and 8 be realigned and improved. Residents have expressed a strong desire for reducing the congestion, and the Town should ask that SR 23 be widened. During that construction, if pipes for a public water system do not exist, plans should be made based on recommendations made in the utility section of this Plan. SR 8 from Sidney to Utica, while not in the immediate Oneonta vicinity, is the general area's most direct north-south route connecting SR 17 with the Thruway. Its improvement would make this area more attractive to business and industry and should be recommended to NYSDOT.
  
- 6) The 1997 survey cited unsafe intersections most frequently as those located at SR 205 and SR 23 near West Oneonta. After the 1997 survey was completed, federal aid to address transportation problems, specifically including that intersection, was announced for 1999-2000 and construction ensued to widen the SR 205 and SR 23. The 2013 survey respondents continue to list SR 205 and all of its feeder roads as dangerous. The most cited intersections include:
  - a. 205/23, 205/I-88 ingress/egress (Exit 13)
  - b. 205/Chestnut, 205/Baseball Camp
  - c. 205/Oneida, 205/Country Club
  - d. 205/Rt. 7
  - e. Various intersections involving CR 23 were also listed by respondents as particularly dangerous. These include the following intersections:
    - f. 23/Rt.205
    - g. 23/Rt. 8, 23/205
    - h. 23/Main St
    - i. 23/Rt. 28
    - j. In addition, I-88 exit 13(westbound) traffic is backed up during various times during the day, and I-88 exit 16 (eastbound) has limited sight when turning onto the overpass. It is recommended that these issues be further studied by NYSDOT and, if possible, addressed.

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- 7) There are a variety of locations within the Town where only one road is available for ingress/egress. Two locations of great concern are Greater Plains School and the Oneonta High School. If the access road is blocked for any reason, vehicles would be prevented from entering/exiting. This is a potentially dangerous situation. The 1997 comprehensive plan recommended that the Town should insist a new road to Greater Plains School be built on adjacent parcels west or northwest of the school if development occurred. Development of the Winney Hill Commons took place in 2002 and no ingress/egress roads were constructed. Therefore, it is recommended:
- a. the Town consider constructing a gated right-of-way located at the Greater Plains school to be used only as an emergency access road.
  - b. the Town/City consider constructing a second gated access road for the Oneonta High school to be used only as an emergency access road
  - c. Any other roads within the Town that have only one ingress/egress should be studied to determine if or where a second could occur.
- 8) Currently, the Town contracts with the City for bus service, as do other businesses located within the Town. The County also provides bus service with no contractual agreement. Considering the benefits to the populace, the Town should continue its present contract with the City for bus service. Successful public transit will depend on the continued cooperation of all parties.
- 9) The airport is owned and operated by the City of Oneonta. It is currently used for general aviation, which means all uses not associated with scheduled airlines. This includes recreational flying, charter service, flight school, mechanical aircraft repair, refueling, and MediVac flights. The Town should consider the Oneonta Municipal Airport a valuable asset. It is recommended that efforts to publicize the facility be continued.
- 10) As a result of the survey, many felt it would be beneficial to have sidewalks in the Southside business and shopping areas. It is recommended that the Town pursue the idea of sidewalks for the Southside area when NYSDOT is reviewing upgrades for the area.
- 11) Most commonly listed as areas for more lighting are the Southside area and Exit 13 on I-88. It is recommended that lighting improvements accompany sidewalk and water district developments.

## UTILITIES

Please refer to Maps-Appendix 5 and Natural Resource Inventory-Appendix 6

### Public Water Supplies

The availability of well water is influenced by surficial geology but ultimately must be obtained from ground water supplies. Ground water occupies all available openings and spaces at some depth beneath the surface. It originates as falling rain and melting snow that soaks into the ground and penetrates downward. As the water accumulates and all pores are filled, the host material (rock or overburden) becomes saturated. The top of the saturated zone is known as the water table. The water table is normally very near the surface beneath the floor of the valley.

Water yield from wells in bedrock is generally very low at about 7-8 gallons per minute (GPM). When situated on hillsides and hilltops, bedrock yield seldom exceeds 5 GPM. A well that penetrates sand and gravel before entering bedrock typically produces about 20 GPM but in some places in the Town (notably Southside), observed rates have been much higher. Saturated fine sand and silt appear to be capable of lower yields than sand and gravel, in the range of 10 GPM. Thus, where the overburden is generally silt, wells must be drilled deeply to find the high yield aquifers.

An aquifer is a zone of saturated material that can be drilled from above and pumped as a source of water. On the Southside, well logs show two layers of gravel separated by silt. Wells drilled for private homeowners in that area are usually shallow so they are in the upper aquifer, while the wells drilled for large commercial users such as Wal-Mart and Hannaford have gone deeper, namely into the deep aquifer. In the Otego Creek valley the "West Oneonta aquifer" is located in glacial outwash overlain by flood plain alluvium, which is highly permeable. Wells in the vicinity of West Oneonta generally reach 100-200 feet into the outwash sand and silt layer and have yields between 5-20 GPM. The water table is also quite close to the surface in the Otego Creek valley.

The Town presently has the following five areas with municipal water:

1. West End
2. A small part of West Street
3. East Main Street (3/10 of mile east of City line)
4. Woodland Water District which serves the Angel Heights/Morningside Heights area
5. Parish of Plains

In addition, in the Town there are in excess of thirty (30) privately owned public water supplies relying on wells that are permitted by the Department of Health and regulated under federal and state rules.

## Public Sewage Treatment

Within the Town, there are three areas with public sewer systems:

1. West End
2. Southside
3. West Street – 6/10 mile from City line

All three of these systems lead to the City of Oneonta Sewage Treatment Plant, where the effluent is treated.

The Town has a contract with the City for sewage treatment allowing the Town 550,000 gallons per day to be input. This capacity is currently adequate to service the existing Town sewer system. However, if the system is expanded, the Town may need to negotiate for a new contract with higher limits.

Most of the Town is outside the public sewer districts. When no public sewage disposal is available, septic systems are required. Large commercial developments in this situation rely on sophisticated systems which must have sufficient land having suitable percolation rates. Since most of the land requiring private systems has no public water supply, there is nearly always controversy concerning the sewage generated by large developments and their effect on the private wells of nearby landowners. There is also general concern among homeowners about the effect of sewage from their own systems leaching into their wells.

Any proposed municipal water or sewage collection must be carefully evaluated for its affordability by potential users. No public system should be a financial burden on homeowners or business owners; however, the safety of the citizens should be the first concern. Therefore, a balanced approach should be utilized for any proposed municipal water or sewer system; the plan should be carefully scrutinized for its financial impact on users and its improved safety to the citizens and environment.

The 1997 Survey showed that one of the highest concerns of citizens was the quality of drinking water. This concern was duplicated in the 2013 Survey, which is shown as follows;

- 44% believe the Town should expand public water and sewer service areas
- 32% think the current service areas are adequate and should remain unchanged
- 23% are not sure
- 60% support stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of drinking water

Previous plans made recommendations as to areas expected to be in need of public utilities. In part, systems currently in place were a result of those recommendations. However, several other areas were targeted due to their population and soil characteristics, including the East End and West Oneonta; to date these needs have not been addressed. The previous recommendations included developing public water and sewer systems in the East End, farther south on Oneida Street than they currently exist, and also in West Oneonta. In addition, a water district for the Southside area was recommended due to the high population and protection from the traffic activity.

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While both the 1997 and 2013 surveys recommend the same areas, the locations for priority have changed slightly. Public water systems are the best means for guaranteeing safe drinking water, and it would be beneficial for the Town to have an education plan in place to help residents in densely populated areas understand the risks involved in not moving toward a public water system.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The highest priority is to set up a new system along State Highway 23 and Southside Drive. In the past 15 years there has been tremendous expansion on Southside and along State Highway 23. These commercial expansions have further stressed the existence of two aquifers in that area. The large businesses now obtain their water from the deeper aquifer, but small businesses and most homes use the shallow aquifer. Since State Highway 23 has become a well-traveled road frequented by many large trucks, protection from potential toxic spills is essential. Also, operation of the existing onsite water systems in compliance with complex federal and state regulations can be difficult and expensive for many businesses that rely on their own wells. A municipal water system would be more efficient in providing reliable safe water; therefore, the Town should consider establishing a water district.
  
- 2) It is recommended that a new water system be developed in the hamlet of West Oneonta. Drainage in the Otego Creek Valley is rapid in porous soils from glacial deposits, so leachate from septic systems can intersect with the same water-bearing strata used by the private wells. With a number of small lots in close proximity to each other, there can be insufficient room for wells to be located at safe distances from leach fields. The distance from the West End system and the existing City main at the Country Club well should be studied to develop a plan to provide a municipal water system to West Oneonta.
  
- 3) A public water system in the East End was the highest priority in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan; it is again recommended in this plan. The system would extend from the City of Oneonta line along East Main Street to County Route 47, with future expansion eastward to the Town line. This recommendation is based on the current density of houses and business uses and the potential for significant growth in the future. Also, there is currently no public sewer in that area. This area has several small businesses operating onsite water systems in compliance with federal and state regulations. Some of these wells are known to have naturally occurring problem characteristics such as sulfur and/or bacterial contamination.

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- 4) When questioned about the need for stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of the drinking water residents responded with a clear majority (60%) saying yes. When asked if the Town should partner with the City to enforce restrictions and help cover the costs to protect the reservoir, the majority (58%) replied in the affirmative. While a majority support protecting the reservoir with stronger regulations and restrictions, 40% believe that landowners impacted by watershed restrictions should be compensated by the Town. It is recommended that a close study be conducted to determine the benefits of a partnership with the City in protecting the reservoir. Also, the Town should consider ways to protect the wells that supply the Woodland Water District and the numerous regulated small business wells.

As stated in the Energy/Water section:

- 5) Given the public's overwhelming desire to protect our water resources, and environment, combined with the Town's proximity to major water sources, the Comprehensive Planning Committee urges the Town to reinforce the State's DEC laws and municipal regulations regarding safeguards for local water. Water for households, agriculture and recreation uses should be protected and given the highest priority. In addition, water sources should be protected from potential pollution from industrial sources.
- 6) Given the strong local public stance against gas drilling activities within the Town of Oneonta, it is recommended that the Town protect the citizens and the environment against potential threats associated with toxic wastes and byproducts from gas drilling, such as, wastewater storage, transport, treatment (sewage), and utilization in agricultural contexts/products, and on local roads.
- 7) Investigate the need and feasibility of building a sewer system in the West Oneonta area. The need for a public sewer system in West Oneonta is based on the rapidly draining soils in the area, the need to protect the Otego Creek from pollution and the need to protect the current water sources.
- 8) Investigate the need and feasibility of extending the West Street sewer line northward to the Town line.

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## COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Fire Protection and Ambulance Service:

The Town's fire protection is provided by the City of Oneonta (City) and by a volunteer force based in West Oneonta. A majority of the Town is protected pursuant a contract with the City for services received from the City's Fire Department. In 2013 the Town paid the City \$934,000 for fire protection. The total budget for the Town of Oneonta Fire District was \$941,130. The contract amount is determined by a formula utilizing the actual costs to operate the department and apportions them by comparing the full assessed value of the City to the full assessed value of the Town. Ambulance service by the City's Fire Department is handled through a separate contract.

In 2012, according to the Annual Report submitted by the Oneonta Fire Department, they responded to 1,023 calls in the Town out of 3,117 responses by the department. Those are broken down as follows:

- Town calls/total
  - EMS 796/2383
  - MVA 69/122
  - Fires 28/88
  - Other (Hazards, Service, Good Intent, False, Server Weather) 130/654

As of October 23, 2013 the Oneonta Fire Department has responded to 904 calls within the Town; 779 for EMS and 125 for fire calls.

The West Oneonta Volunteer Fire Department ( Department) protects the area around West Oneonta, including SR205, the former Soccer Hall of Fame parcel, the Peaceful Flats Mobile Home District, The Plains at Parish Homestead and part of the Industrial Park (see Maps-Appendix 5). In 2013 the Department's expenditures were approximately \$116,458, which includes \$67,200 for operations (heat, lights, gas, insurance, fuel and maintenance) and approximately \$20,000 for the bond on the equipment. Since the area it serves has no public water system, the equipment must include tanker trucks as well as fire fighting vehicles. The tankers are kept full prior to fire calls using water from the Susquehanna River and the Otego Creek.

The Department has not answered the committee's request to provided statistics for the number of responses preformed.

In general, the Survey showed that Town citizens were either satisfied or very satisfied with their fire protection, as those categories combined for 85% of the total response. No effort was made to separate City from Town fire department evaluations in the Survey.

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**Recommendations:**

- 1) Continue the current fire protection arrangement with the City. The Town receives services from a professional firefighting unit at a justifiable cost. Even though the cost of this service has increased substantially since the new cost based contract was instituted, residents report this service as the most satisfactory service provided to town residents. However it should be noted that 57% support a town wide volunteer fire department(s), 22% oppose and 21% were not sure.
- 2) The 1965 Comprehensive Plan recommended satellite stations in West Oneonta, on the east side of Town and on the south side, but only the West Oneonta station was implemented. Currently, fire response times from the City's main station are quite good. From January 1, 2013 through October 23, 2013 the City's overall average response time to all calls (emergency and non-emergency) was 6 minutes and 5 seconds (6:05). Should the City of Oneonta decide to expand fire protection, they may consider building and staffing eastern and southern satellite fire stations. The Town should cooperate with the City in that venture if and when it occurs.
- 3) The availability of water for firefighting in built-up areas would be increased with public water supplies on the east and south sides as recommended elsewhere in this Plan.
- 4) Mutual cooperative efforts with the City should be made to conduct regular, periodic reviews of the Greater Oneonta area's fire protection and emergency ambulance service. The reports should be used to maintain the strong level of protection currently enjoyed by all residents. In these times when municipal funds are in short supply, every effort should be made to consolidate training opportunities and reduce the expenses of that training by sharing. Improving communications and relationships between the departments would benefit all.
- 5) In light of the substantial cost of the current contract between the City of Oneonta and the Town of Oneonta Fire District, we recommend that the contract be examined carefully to see if the provisions have proven to be fair to both parties. Other options that need to be discussed are: can the colleges and other non-profit agencies pay a fee for service? If the department had a volunteer component, would there be a significant positive financial impact without compromising safety, service and development?

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**POLICE PROTECTION**

The Town is protected by three agencies: State Police, County Sheriff's Office, and a Town Constable. The Constable budget, excluding a vehicle purchase, in 2013 was approximately \$85,000. The State Police and County Sheriff personnel have larger areas to cover but are available at any time for emergencies.

Currently, the Town Constable's duties include protection of the court, writing parking tickets and general road patrol in the town parks and on the town streets. These are services that the NYS Police and Otsego County Sheriff are typically unable to provide the town residents. State Police and Sheriffs do the vast majority of criminal investigation. The Town has recently received proposals from the Otsego County Sheriff and City of Oneonta Police Department for police services. The proposal from the City represented a substantial increase in cost and the current board felt it was too expensive.

When asked what services should be funded through the town budget, the survey results were as follows:

- Constable services 38%
- Police Services 33%
- Sheriff service 33%
- None of the above 33%

This split may indicate either people do not understand the differences in law enforcement capabilities or that they are relatively satisfied with what is currently offered. The latter is supported by the survey results reporting 72% are satisfied with the law enforcement services.

**Recommendation:**

- 1) While continuing to explore the use of the City Police department, the apparent satisfaction with the existing services indicates that the Town Board should institute a study of the constable's duties and determine if the current duties align with the needs of the town.

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**LIBRARY**

The Town does not have its own library, but library services are available to Town residents at the Huntington Memorial Library in the City. The Huntington Memorial Library and is a member of the Four County Library System. As of December 2012, 1625 Town residents (33%) had cards at the library, an excellent indication of the high educational level of Town residents noted in the demographics section. That figure represents 17% of the registered borrowers at the library. The library is required by law to serve the local four-county area and provide free service to anyone residing in that area.

The library is funded through city taxes, a contribution from the Town, state aid, various library fees, distributions from the Henry E. Huntington Foundation and Huntington Memorial Library Foundation. The former foundation has legal restrictions that prevent the library from changing the capital. The latter foundation was initiated for fund-raising, and the capital can be increased. The library draws on the interest of both funds and gets support from both City and Town governments. However, the Henry E. Huntington's will and deed restricts the library from moving to a different location than the Huntington mansion where it now resides.

**Recommendation:**

- 1) Based on the survey results stating that 73% agree *that the Town should continue to provide financial assistance to the Huntington Memorial Library*, it is recommended that the Town sustain its support to the library.

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## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

The Town of Oneonta residents have always been consistent in their support and interest for vibrant parks and recreational resources to be expanded and maintained. In the most recent survey when asked what resources they would like to see expanded or further developed 73% of respondents said walking paths, followed by bike trails (67%), and cross country trails (56%). There was clear support among residents for recreation associated with nature and walking, hiking, and biking trails.

At the time of submission of this Comprehensive Plan, outdoor recreational facilities which are being or may be used by all Town of Oneonta residents consist of the following:

- The Town swimming pool and tennis courts, located near the Greater Plains Elementary School. There are also playing fields and playground equipment at the school.
- West Oneonta Playground -A small park with playground equipment near the old Town Hall in West Oneonta , located on School Street, open all year
- Our smallest community playground nook is on School Street in the town's hamlet of West Oneonta. Walking distance from West Oneonta residences, it features swings and play equipment on a soft base and is open to the public
- Wilber Park in the City of Oneonta, approximately 56 acres with the City swimming pool.
- Neahwa Park in the City of Oneonta, approximately 65 acres with ball fields and a small outdoor ice skating pond.
- Catella Park, east and adjacent to Neahwa Park in the City of Oneonta, approximately 9 acres with ball fields.
- Huntington Park in the City of Oneonta, approximately 5 acres, undeveloped but maintained.
- Hemstreet Memorial Forest, approximately 7 acres owned by Town, partially developed but not maintained and currently open to the public.
- Two lots designated as “greenspace” in the Angel Heights development on County Rt 47
- Fortin Park - The town's 91 acre park includes trails, water, wooded groves and fields. The town's largest park offers multiple uses that include picnics, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, softball, walking, soccer, and playground fun for the children. Located just off of County Route 47 on Youngs Road in the town's east end, the park provides low impact recreation in a quiet setting for the whole family. It is bordered by the Susquehanna River and Charlotte Creeks, which offer tremendous fishing opportunities for the avid angler. The park is popular as a location to watch the annual General Clinton Canoe Regatta on Memorial Day.
- Playing fields, formally known as the Soccer Hall of Fame Soccer Fields, located on Route 205 and Brown Street
- The Swart-Wilcox House and surrounding maintained land in the City of Oneonta. The 1807 Swart-Wilcox House is the oldest house in the City of Oneonta. This community house museum, chartered by the State of New York, is open every Sunday during the summer for informal tours provides programs focusing on topics of local interest.

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- The Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway (also called the OSG) is a proposed bicycle and pedestrian trail which will follow the Susquehanna River for approximately six miles in the city and town of Oneonta, New York. It will run from the Susquehanna River Park in the West End of Oneonta, through the city of Oneonta, and out to Fortin Park in the East End of Oneonta. There are many recreational possibilities for the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway. During the warmer months, people will be able to walk, jog, bicycle and rollerblade along the river. During the winter months, cross country skiers and snowshoers can enjoy the stillness of the winter river. Please see link: [www.oneonta.ny.us/sidebar-nav/parks-and-recreation/other-programs/](http://www.oneonta.ny.us/sidebar-nav/parks-and-recreation/other-programs/)
  
- Susquehanna River Park located at the end of Silas Lane, near I-88 exit 13, Susquehanna River Park is home to soccer fields used by the Oneonta Soccer club in the spring and the Oneonta Youth Soccer Association in the fall
  
- Oneonta Family YMCA located on Ford Avenue in the City of Oneonta. The Y is a diverse organization of men, women, and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility.
  
- The Oneonta Boys and Girls Club located on River Street in the City of Oneonta. The Club operates from September through July, six days a week during boys' and girls' leisure hours. During the month of July, they hold girls softball, day sports camps; basketball, football, and archery, as well as, arts & crafts camps. They take educational outdoor trips that include: fishing, canoeing, camping, and hiking
  
- The Oneonta Teen Center located at Academy Street within the City of Oneonta
  
- Please visit this link to explore golf courses, sports parks, bowling, roller skating, snowmobiling, and so much more: <http://www.oneonta.ny.us/index.php/welcome/what-to-do/>

### **Fishing/Boating**

Those who enjoy angling and boating will find opportunities to fish or launch watercraft at several locations in the town. All launches accommodate car-top watercraft only (no hard surface ramps) and provide no trash disposal – all sites are “carry-in carry-out.”

- The Susquehanna River, Charlotte Creek, Wilber Lake (city reservoir) and the Otego Creek offer fishing possibilities in the Town of Oneonta.
  
- Otego Creek Access Site (former Hemstreet Park): County Route 9 (Glens Bridge Road) between Route 7 and Country Club Road. The creek contains native trout.

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- State access sites: The state operates two boat launch and fishing access sites on the Susquehanna River at I-88 Exits 13 and 16.
  
- Fortin Park: Anglers can fish the Charlotte Creek and Susquehanna River for trout, bass and walleye. The park is popular among fishermen in April when New York's trout season opens.
  
- Wilber Lake (City of Oneonta Reservoir): Fishing is permitted at the city reservoir located between East Street and Wilber Lake Road in the town. No boating is allowed. Contact the City Clerk at 432-6450 for information.

The City of Oneonta currently operates most of the public park areas used by Town residents. The LA Group of Saratoga Springs, NY was retained to update the City of Oneonta's Parks Master Plan, originally completed in 1996. The current effort is focused on Neahwa Park/Catella Park and the Market Street entrance. The LA Group did a number of site visits to review existing conditions, including built projects and planned improvements. Using current available aerial photography, field review findings, as-built plans, and input from the city on master plan design changes and or current design planning documents, the LA Group revised/updated the original master plan drawing done in 1996. See this link for detailed information [www.oneonta.ny.us/parks-master-plan-update](http://www.oneonta.ny.us/parks-master-plan-update)

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan recommended that land be acquired to develop a Town Park even though that report did not show that a need existed for public recreation. Since then the Town has developed Fortin Park; the Town's largest park. As described above, the 91 acre park consists of trails, water, wooded groves and fields. It offers multiple uses such as; picnics, hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, softball, walking, soccer, and playground fun. Also the Town took ownership of the Hemstreet Park.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) It is recommended that a Town-City recreation commission be created. Area parks and recreation facilities are used freely by all residents and people appear to make no distinction between town facilities and those of the city. It is this committee's position that it would be more effective if decisions on new parks and recreational areas were made as if the system were unified. If successfully implemented, the commission would foster increased cooperation between the two municipalities, resulting in improved recreation opportunities for all of their people.
  - a. Currently, the Town board has a Town of Oneonta Recreation Committee. All activities of the commission would be discussed with the Recreation Committee (it may inevitably occur that one or more members of the Recreation Committee also be commission members). The Recreation Committee has the primary responsibility for bringing the

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commission's initiatives to the Town Board for approval and expenditure of funds, if the situation warrants.

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- 2) Where land is available and some use is indicated, the Town should consider or mark bicycle and/or walking paths where local residents are agreeable. This could be done, for example, when roads are repaved, assuming they are wide enough to accommodate some extra space for the paths on the sides (or only on one side, depending on conditions). Mixing bicycles and automobiles without bike lanes creates dangerous situations which should be avoided whenever possible.
- 3) It is recommended that the Town encourage, and cooperate with the City, in the continued development of the Susquehanna Greenway trails and playing fields.
- 4) When asked which should be most responsible for the cost of expanding or developing recreation resources within the Town, 64% responded that both the Town and private businesses should be responsible. Based on this result, it is recommended that the Town attempt to locate sources of outside funds such as State grants. There is currently a modest amount of money in Town accounts set aside for parks, mainly from fees collected from subdivision projects in lieu of open space (Town Code section 88-19). While this money is insufficient for parkland acquisition or development, it could be used as seed money, either for grant proposal writing or for matching funds.
- 5) Cross Country Skiing Trails development might be extended by discussions with existing resources that are only active during the summer months such as golf courses and summer camp property.

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## **Environmental Safeguards**

The issue of natural gas drilling was the primary impetus for the update of the 1998 comprehensive plan. In 1998, this issue of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas was not on anyone's radar. Recent technology that allows for the extraction of natural gas from shale formations has caused widespread discussion about the safety of the process and whether communities can determine if they would allow this activity to happen within its boundaries. While this issue is still being litigated in our county, it has moved through the first two of three levels of court actions at the NY state level. The first two courts have upheld the community's right to determine if it wants gas drilling within the town and the cases are currently at the Court of Appeals level.

In 2004, the Town Board amended Section 55 of the zoning code to update local code to conform to state law that regulated soil mines (gravel pits). NYS Department of Environmental Conservation took control of mining operations and procedures in soil mines to ensure they were done safely. Municipalities were allowed to determine where such activities would be allowed within their boundaries through zoning regulations. This local law did not anticipate natural gas exploration within the town.

The 2013 survey results indicated that 67% of residents did not want natural gas drilling in the town, 20% did and 13% were not sure. When asked where residents would allow natural gas drilling 72% said nowhere, 26% in industrial districts, 21% in commercial districts, and 20% said in agricultural districts.

Given the public's overwhelming desire to protect our water resources, and the town's proximity to major water sources (such as rivers, streams and aquifers), the planning committee urges the town to enforce the state's DEC laws and municipal regulations regarding safeguards for local water. Water for households, agriculture, and recreation uses should be protected and given the highest priority. In addition, water sources should be protected from potential pollution from industrial sources. Given the strong local stance against gas drilling (67%), it is in the best interest of the Town to protect the citizens and the environment against potential threats associated with hydraulic fracturing (fracking) such as waste products, transport, treatment (sewage), utilization in agricultural contexts/products, and on local roads.

In addition to the gas drilling issue the town residents are concerned about the reservoir located within the town. The Wilber Lake reservoir provides drinking water to the greater Oneonta area which includes both the City and many areas of the Town. The City sends water bills to 718 properties within the town. Of these, approximately 100 are town businesses that rely on the water supply. These include four trailer parks and the Plains at Parish Homestead which includes 39 homes and 108 apartments. In addition parts of SUNY, Job Corps, and Stericycle are billed monthly because of the high volume of water use.

When asked about protecting the Wilber Lake Reservoir, 60% said the Town should have stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of the drinking water. 22% said we should not and

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18% were not sure. 58% said the Town should partner with the City of Oneonta to enforce restrictions and help cover the costs. 28% said no, we should not partner and 14% were not sure.

The survey asked about whether property owners should be compensated for restrictions on their property; 40% said yes, 29% said no, and 30% were not sure.

While the quality of water has been excellent, surface water supplies are always at risk. Instituting regulations that will help to ensure excellent quality are prudent. Threats are present from many sources including, but not limited to, new development, pesticides and fertilizers, petroleum products and their storage, and impervious surfaces. Addressing these issues is proactive and much less expensive than correcting a situation after a problem has occurred.

While the idea of compensation for property owners has some support, funding the compensation and determining how to administer and quantify damages would be a daunting task.

The Town has environmental regulations which are stronger than SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) in that they are more specific and do not allow mitigating factors. Section 103-72 of the Town Code prohibits a number of polluting actions, including but not limited to the following: (Note: letters A, C, F, etc. refer to paragraphs in section 103-72)

- A. "Any use which may be noxious or offensive by reason of the emission of odor, fumes, smoke, dust, gas, vibration or noise..."
- C. "...to permit or cause to escape such quantities of soot, cinders or fly ash as to exceed three-tenths (0.3) grain per cubic foot of flue gases..."
- F. "... emission of sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, photochemical oxidants, hydrocarbons (non-methane), nitrogen dioxide, fluorides, hydrogen sulfide and beryllium ...(not within)... the air quality standards of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation."
- H. "...emission of such quantities of radioactive material...as to be unsafe..."
- K. "...to kindle or maintain any bonfire, rubbish fire, grass fire or any other outdoor fire except a barbecue fire or a fire for the cooking of food...(in)...all R-10, R-20, business, commercial and industrial areas unless a burning permit is issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation."
- L. "...pollution of surface water drainage or of groundwater in any manner that renders it less usable in quality and quantity for irrigation, swimming, drinking, visual attractiveness or whatever lawful uses may be made of water resources to persons downstream."

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Paragraph L, in particular, specifically safeguards both surface and underground water supplies. It also carries an ordinance which states: "The specifications and standards of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation with respect to floating solids, settleable solids, oil, sludge deposits, effluent, pH, dissolved oxygen, toxic wastes, deleterious substances and colored or other wastes or heated liquids (by stream classification) shall govern the contaminant levels within which any and all uses must perform." It is strongly suggested that Planning Board and Town Board personnel review section 103-72 and apply it to all development proposals. Even with such stringent protective standards in place, the Town Board has been drafting a new watershed protection district overlay. This overlay district would ensure that new development within the watershed would be minimized and help to ensure the overall safety of the drinking water supply.

Residents were split on whether the Town was providing sufficient environmental controls. 49% were satisfied, 29% were not, and 22% were not sure. Combined with the previous survey it seems clear that people are concerned about the environment and want the town to protect our natural beauty and resources.

**Recommendation:**

- 1) The town residents want to ensure a balance between economic development and environment protection in order to protect the high quality of life we enjoy in our beautiful, natural surroundings. Measures should be taken to ensure compatibility with the environment before development occurs. Safeguarding our quality of life, water, and other natural resources should be of paramount importance in future development plans.

## **SWOT Analysis**

### **Strengths:**

- Colleges
- Good public school system
- Hospitals
- Natural Resources - land, water and good air quality
- Location - accessible to Albany, Binghamton, Utica, NYC & Northeast corridor
- I-88 and Multiple Exits
- Railroad access
- Airport- Limited
- Proximity to Cooperstown
- Strong Retail - Big Box and small businesses
- Industrial Parks Development Zones
- Financial sound position
- Parks, Attractions, camps, entertainment, restaurants
- Public transportation

### **Weaknesses:**

- Cost of doing business in NY
- Population level and aging
- Limited entry level, highly educated and skilled work force job opportunities
- Water and sewer growth meeting demands
- Uncoordinated response to business trends and small manufacturing
- No real growth in new or affordable housing
- Limited broadband
- Lack of shovel-ready sites and incentives

## **SWOT Analysis continued**

### **Opportunities**

Water resources available for development

The potential for industrial and commercial development growth throughout the town, such as airport, rail yards

Alliances with the City and regional communities along the I-88 Corridor

Colleges and educational systems providing interns and educated skilled work force

Development of potential agricultural products for regional, state and national markets, i.e. hops, organic products

Redevelopment of rail transportation

### **Threats:**

NY State and Federal regulations, mandates and taxes

Lack of Economic Development Plan in place for county

Further declining pre K-12 enrollment

Potential increases in health care, energy and taxes

Potential increase in costs of infrastructure development and maintenance

Loss of agricultural zones and development

Climatic and natural disasters

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**SUMMARY:**

The Comprehensive Planning Committee concludes that the Town of Oneonta benefits from a well-written Comprehensive Plan. This Plan has attempted to address the results of the 2013 Zogby Survey of the town residents and taxpayers. This Plan is expected to serve as a general guide for the Town; however, in order to continue to look at the needs of the people and the community, this Plan should be an evolving document. As stated in the introduction, the committee endorses a visionary approach and provides the following suggestions:

- 1) A committee should be appointed to periodically review the plan and update the Board on the progress of the Plan's recommendations.
- 2) The Planning Board and Zoning Board should constantly review the Plan and report to the Board any needed changes and/or additions/deletions.
- 3) Any completed recommendations should be documented and attached to the Plan for reference.
- 4) On an annual basis, an updated report should be produced on the Plan's progress for public review.

The maximum interval for the review of this Comprehensive Plan shall be 7 years.

**The following is a summary of the recommendations included in this Plan:**

**Zoning:**

- 1) The B-2 General Business district along Route 23 on Southside be re-zoned to HDD Highway Development District. This will make this entire stretch of Route 23 all HDD.
- 2) Change the MHD-Mobile Home District along Oneida Street (closest to Chestnut St) to B-1 General Business.
- 3) The area along Rt. 7 from the MHD Mobile Home District to the B-1 Neighborhood Business zone - change from RA-40 Residence-Agricultural to B-1 Neighborhood Business to the Town line.
- 4) Establish PDD zones to allow for the development of Townhouses and/or Condominiums. Possible areas are: County Rt. 8 from NYSEG going west to West Oneonta, Old Southside Drive (parallel to Rt. 23), Rt. 7 past the Oneida St intersection going west to the Town line, Route 7 in the east end from Brooks heading east toward the Town line, the Hemlock Road area, County RT 48 by the Hamilton Farm Road, Rt 205 & 23 by West Oneonta, and East Street where the Town and City lines meet Bugbee Road.

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- 5) A possible future site for an industrial park would be the left side of Hemlock Road, from Riverstone Road to the Milford line. This would require a zone change to ID Industrial or PDD-ID Planned Development District-Industrial.
- 6) Grandfathered uses be extended for a period of 12 months rather than 6 months in the event that a property becomes vacant.
- 7) Require "buffers" to adjoining properties be done prior to the construction of the project. The intent is to insure that "Buffers" are completed not only upon completion but prior to construction in order to minimize the impact on the surrounding properties.
- 8) Update the Zoning Map to report current zones and accurate boundaries
- 9) If possible, zoning district lines should follow existing parcel boundaries and/or natural boundaries such as road and rivers.
- 10) Take into consideration the Otsego County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (as it may be amended from time to time) to strengthen and expand economic development in the Town through new opportunities in farming, agri-business and agri-tourism.

### **ROAD USE AGREEMENT**

- 1) In order to protect the Town's roads, the Town should consider adopting a local road use law. Further, when opportunities arise for development, the developer can be held responsible for the roads. Provisions can be made when going through the permit/approval process by requiring the owner/developer to have either a performance bond or an irrevocable letter of credit insuring that the roads are protected.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- 1) The Town and City work together whenever it is in the best interest of both municipalities. Areas where this is possible are:
  - a. Southside Water District: This could be done by either working with the City to provide water or by developing a standalone district. The need for a water district on Southside is critical in order to facilitate future development along this corridor.
  - b. The following areas have a need for water and sewer services for the existing residents and for future development:
    - i. West Oneonta Water District
    - ii. West Oneonta Sewer District
    - iii. East End
  - c. The railroad yards have potential commercial development; and the owners, River Corporation, have been working with Cornell and Go-Edu to develop a plan. It is recommended that the Town participate in this plan.
  - d. Coordination with the County and the City of Oneonta to establish an Economic Development Group that will work to promote manufacturing and industry along the I-88 corridor keeping in mind that the Town residents "*made it clear of the need to protect the environment.*"

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- e. Coordination with the County and City in writing grant applications concentrating on growing existing businesses and encouraging new types of industry and manufacturing to locate in Oneonta, again keeping in mind the residents *“want to protect their quality of life.”*

**ENERGY/WATER:**

- 1) The Town should modify the zoning code to prohibit gas drilling within the town limits.
- 2) Every precaution should be taken to protect the watershed.
- 3) An inter-municipal agreement be considered regarding the Town partnering with the City to enforce restrictions, help cover the costs to protect the reservoir.
- 4) The Town should continue protection of the reservoir and all water sources.
- 5) Given the public’s overwhelming desire to protect our water resources, and environment, combined with the Town’s proximity to major water sources (see Maps-Appendix 5) for list of rivers, streams, aquifers), the Comprehensive Planning Committee urges the Town to reinforce the State’s DEC laws and municipal regulations regarding safeguards for local water. Water for households, agriculture and recreation uses should be protected and given the highest priority. In addition, water sources should be protected from potential pollution from hydraulic fracturing related industrial sources.
- 6) Given the strong local public stance against gas drilling activities within the Town of Oneonta, it is recommended that the Town protect the citizens and the environment against potential threats associated with toxic wastes and byproducts from gas drilling, such as, wastewater storage, transport, treatment (sewage), and utilization in agricultural contexts and on local roads.

**ALTERNATIVE ENERGIES:**

- 1) The town codes should be modified to encourage all three forms of energy with particular attention given to locations for commercial development of these energy sources.
  - a. Solar power: Codes should be developed to address commercial and residential development of solar power. The Town should consider adapting NYS law that allows for a tax exemption for the value of solar energy improvements.
  - b. Wind Power: Codes should be developed to address development of commercial wind power, taking into consideration the surrounding properties of the development. It is recommended that the Town investigate the possibility of distributing the wind power through the Otsego Rural Co Op.
  - c. Bio-Fuel: Codes should be developed to address the commercial production of bio-fuel and residential use of bio-fuels. It is the committee’s belief that a commercial bio-fuel facility would need to be sited within close proximity of a major highway or have rail

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capabilities. Based on these requirements the locations that initially come to mind are: The Industrial Park, The Railroad yards, Route 7(by the Pony Farm) and Route 7 past Emmons on the right. The best location appears to be the rail yards if access can be provided. This is an opportunity for the Town and City to cooperate on a joint project that would benefit the entire area.

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**TRANSPORTATION:**

- 1) Priority should be taken on a continuing basis regarding the improvements and maintenance to the town roads based on Superintendent of Highway's annual reports.
- 2) As stated in the Zoning Chapter: Whenever there is commercial/industrial development, concerns will arise regarding the preservation and maintenance of the roads. The results of the survey indicated that 33% support a local road use law, while 24% did not and 43% were not sure. In order to protect the Town's roads, the Town should consider adopting a local road use law. Further, when opportunities arise for development, the developer can be held responsible for the roads. Provisions can be made when going through the permit/approval process to require the owner/developer to have either a performance bond or an irrevocable letter of credit insuring that the roads are protected.
- 3) Based on #2, when development proposals involving new roads are made, the developer may be required to build the road and lay sewer and water lines before any other construction takes place. Water and sewer plans and recommendations given within this Plan should be referenced by the Planning Board when deciding if developers need to include the utility lines on site plans and construct them.
- 4) However, it is conceivable for the Town to be involved in building and financing sewer, water, and roads, which would in turn encourage further private investment/development.
- 5) The Town should make a recommendation to the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) that State Routes (SR) 28, 23, 7, and 8 be realigned and improved. Residents have expressed a strong desire for reducing the congestion, and the Town should ask that SR 23 be widened. During that construction, if pipes for a public water system do not exist, plans should be made based on recommendations made in the utility section of this Plan. SR 8 from Sidney to Utica, while not in the immediate Oneonta vicinity, is the general area's most direct north-south route connecting SR 17 with the Thruway. Its improvement would make this area more attractive to business and industry and should be recommended to NYSDOT.
- 6) The 1997 survey cited unsafe intersections most frequently as those located at SR 205 and SR 23 near West Oneonta. After the 1997 survey was completed, federal aid to address transportation problems, specifically including that intersection, was announced for 1999-2000 and construction ensued to widen the SR 205 and SR 23. The 2013 survey respondents continue to list SR 205 and all of its feeder roads as dangerous. The most cited intersections include:
  - a. 205/23, 205/I-88 ingress/egress (Exit 13)
  - b. 205/Chestnut, 205/Baseball Camp
  - c. 205/Oneida, 205/Country Club
  - d. 205/Rt. 7
  - e. Various intersections involving CR 23 were also listed by respondents as particularly dangerous. These include the following intersections:
    - f. 23/Rt.205
    - g. 23/Rt. 8, 23/205
    - h. 23/Main St
    - i. 23/Rt. 28
    - j. In addition, I-88 exit 13(westbound) traffic is backed up during various times during the day, and I-88 exit 16 (eastbound) has limited sight when turning onto the overpass. It is recommended that these issues be further studied by NYSDOT and, if possible, addressed.

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- 7) There are a variety of locations within the Town where only one road is available for ingress/egress. Two locations of great concern are Greater Plains School and the Oneonta High School. If the access road is blocked for any reason, vehicles would be prevented from entering/exiting. This is a potentially dangerous situation. The 1997 comprehensive plan recommended that the Town should insist a new road to Greater Plains School be built on adjacent parcels west or northwest of the school if development occurred. Development of the Winney Hill Commons took place in 2002 and no ingress/egress roads were constructed. Therefore, it is recommended:
- a. the Town consider constructing a gated right-of-way located at the Greater Plains school to be used only as an emergency access road.
  - b. the Town/City consider constructing a second gated access road for the Oneonta High school to be used only as an emergency access road
  - c. Any other roads within the Town that have only one ingress/egress should be studied to determine if or where a second could occur.
- 8) Currently, the Town contracts with the City for bus service, as do other businesses located within the Town. The County also provides bus service with no contractual agreement. Considering the benefits to the populace, the Town should continue its present contract with the City for bus service. Successful public transit will depend on the continued cooperation of all parties.
- 9) The airport is owned and operated by the City of Oneonta. It is currently used for general aviation, which means all uses not associated with scheduled airlines. This includes recreational flying, charter service, flight school, mechanical aircraft repair, refueling, and MediVac flights. The Town should consider the Oneonta Municipal Airport a valuable asset. It is recommended that efforts to publicize the facility be continued.
- 10) As a result of the survey, many felt it would be beneficial to have sidewalks in the Southside business and shopping areas. It is recommended that the Town pursue the idea of sidewalks for the Southside area when NYSDOT is reviewing upgrades for the area.
- 11) Most commonly listed as areas for more lighting are the Southside area and Exit 13 on I-88. It is recommended that lighting improvements accompany sidewalk and water district developments.

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**UTILITIES:**

- 1) The highest priority is to set up a new system along State Highway 23 and Southside Drive. In the past 15 years there has been tremendous expansion on Southside and along State Highway 23. These commercial expansions have further stressed the existence of two aquifers in that area. The large businesses now obtain their water from the deeper aquifer, but small businesses and most homes use the shallow aquifer. Since State Highway 23 has become a well-traveled road frequented by many large trucks, protection from potential toxic spills is essential. Also, operation of the existing onsite water systems in compliance with complex federal and state regulations can be difficult and expensive for many businesses that rely on their own wells. A municipal water system would be more efficient in providing reliable safe water; therefore, the Town should provide a water district.
- 2) It is recommended that a new water system be developed in the hamlet of West Oneonta. Drainage in the Otego Creek Valley is rapid in porous soils from glacial deposits, so leachate from septic systems can intersect with the same water-bearing strata used by the private wells. With a number of small lots in close proximity to each other, there can be insufficient room for wells to be located at safe distances from leach fields. The distance from the West End system and the existing City main at the Country Club well should be studied to develop a plan to provide a municipal water system to West Oneonta.
- 3) A public water system in the East End was the highest priority in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan; it is again recommended in this plan. The system would extend from the City of Oneonta line along East Main Street to County Route 47, with future expansion eastward to the Town line. This recommendation is based on the current density of houses and business uses and the potential for significant growth in the future. Also, there is currently no public sewer in that area. This area has several small businesses operating onsite water systems in compliance with federal and state regulations. Some of these wells are known to have naturally occurring problem characteristics such as sulfur and/or bacterial contamination. When questioned about the need for stronger regulations to protect the reservoir and the quality of the drinking water residents responded with a clear majority (60%) saying yes. When asked if the Town should partner with the City to enforce restrictions and help cover the costs to protect the reservoir, the majority (58%) replied in the affirmative. While a majority support protecting the reservoir with stronger regulations and restrictions, 40% believe that landowners impacted by watershed restrictions should be compensated by the Town. It is recommended that a close study be conducted to determine the benefits of a partnership with the City in protecting the reservoir. Also, the Town should consider ways to protect the wells that supply the Woodland Water District and the numerous regulated small business wells.
- 4) Given the public's overwhelming desire to protect our water resources, and environment, combined with the Town's proximity to major water sources, the Comprehensive Planning Committee urges the Town to reinforce the State's DEC laws and municipal regulations regarding safeguards for local water. Water for households, agriculture and recreation uses should be protected and given the highest priority. In addition, water sources should be protected from potential pollution from industrial sources.

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- 5) Given the strong local public stance against gas drilling activities within the Town of Oneonta, it is recommended that the Town protect the citizens and the environment against potential threats associated with toxic wastes and byproducts from gas drilling, such as, wastewater storage, transport, treatment (sewage), and utilization in agricultural contexts/products, and on local roads.
- 6) Investigate the need and feasibility of building a sewer system in the West Oneonta area. The need for a public sewer system in West Oneonta is based on the rapidly draining soils in the area, the need to protect the Otego Creek from pollution and the need to protect the current water sources.
- 7) Investigate the need and feasibility of extending the West Street sewer line northward to the Town line.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES:**

### **Fire and Ambulance:**

- 1) Continue the current fire protection arrangement with the City. The Town receives services from a professional firefighting unit at a justifiable cost. Even though the cost of this service has increased substantially since the new cost based contract was instituted, residents report this service as the most satisfactory service provided to town residents. However it should be noted that 57% support a town wide volunteer fire department(s), 22% oppose and 21% were not sure.
- 2) The 1965 Comprehensive Plan recommended satellite stations in West Oneonta, on the east side of Town and on the south side, but only the West Oneonta station was implemented. Currently, fire response times from the City's main station are quite good. From January 1, 2013 through October 23, 2013 the City's overall average response time to all calls (emergency and non-emergency) was 6 minutes and 5 seconds (6:05). Should the City of Oneonta decide to expand fire protection, they may consider building and staffing eastern and southern satellite fire stations. The Town should cooperate with the City in that venture if and when it occurs.
- 3) The availability of water for firefighting in built-up areas would be increased with public water supplies on the east and south sides as recommended elsewhere in this Plan.
- 4) Mutual cooperative efforts with the City should be made to conduct regular, periodic reviews of the Greater Oneonta area's fire protection and emergency ambulance service. The reports should be used to maintain the strong level of protection currently enjoyed by all residents. In these times when municipal funds are in short supply, every effort should be made to consolidate training opportunities and reduce the expenses of that training by sharing. Improving communications and relationships between the departments would benefit all.
- 5) In light of the substantial cost of the current contract between the City of Oneonta and the Town of Oneonta Fire District, we recommend that the contract be examined carefully to see if the provisions have proven to be fair to both parties. Other options that need to be discussed are: can the colleges and other non-profit agencies pay a fee for service? If the department had a volunteer component, would there be a significant positive financial impact without compromising safety, service and development?

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**Police:**

- 1) While continuing to explore the use of the City Police department, the apparent satisfaction with the existing services indicates that the Town Board should institute a study of the constable's duties and determine if the current duties align with the needs of the town.

**Library:**

- 1) Based on the survey results stating that 73% agree *that the Town should continue to provide financial assistance to the Huntington Memorial Library*, it is recommended that the Town sustain its support to the library.

**PARKS AND RECREATION:**

- 1) It is recommended that a Town-City recreation commission be created. Area parks and recreation facilities are used freely by all residents and people appear to make no distinction between town facilities and those of the city. It is this committee's position that it would be more effective if decisions on new parks and recreational areas were made as if the system were unified. If successfully implemented, the commission would foster increased cooperation between the two municipalities, resulting in improved recreation opportunities for all of their people.  
Currently, the Town board has a Town of Oneonta Recreation Committee. All activities of the commission would be discussed with the Recreation Committee (it may inevitably occur that one or more members of the Recreation Committee also be commission members). The Recreation Committee has the primary responsibility for bringing the commission's initiatives to the Town Board for approval and expenditure of funds, if the situation warrants.
- 2) Where land is available and some use is indicated, the Town should consider or mark bicycle and/or walking paths where local residents are agreeable. This could be done, for example, when roads are repaved, assuming they are wide enough to accommodate some extra space for the paths on the sides (or only on one side, depending on conditions). Mixing bicycles and automobiles without bike lanes creates dangerous situations which should be avoided whenever possible.
- 3) It is recommended that the Town encourage, and cooperate with the City, in the continued development of the Susquehanna Greenway trails and playing fields.

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- 4) When asked which should be most responsible for the cost of expanding or developing recreation resources within the Town, 64% responded that both the Town and private businesses should be responsible. Based on this result, it is recommended that the Town attempt to locate sources of outside funds such as State grants. There is currently a modest amount of money in Town accounts set aside for parks, mainly from fees collected from subdivision projects in lieu of open space (Town Code section 88-19). While this money is insufficient for parkland acquisition or development, it could be used as seed money, either for grant proposal writing or for matching funds.
- 5) Cross Country Skiing Trails development might be extended by discussions with existing resources that are only active during the summer months such as golf courses and summer camp property.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS:**

- 1) The town residents want to ensure a balance between economic development and environment protection in order to protect the high quality of life we enjoy in our beautiful, natural surroundings. Measures should be taken to ensure compatibility with the environment before development occurs. Safeguarding our quality of life, water, and other natural resources should be of paramount importance in future development plans.