

**Town of
Columbus
Comprehensive
Plan**

2007

1. ENACTMENT, TITLE, AND PURPOSE

1.1 Enactment: The Town Board of the Town of Columbus in the County of Chenango on this 8th day of February 2007 under the authority of Section 272a of Article 16 of Chapter 62 of the Consolidated Laws of the State of New York, hereby adopts the following Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Columbus.

1.2 Title: This document shall be known as the *Town of Columbus Comprehensive Plan*.

1.3b As a result of the responses from our citizens generated by the Town Survey of November 2004 and compiled by the Planning Board, several challenges lay ahead. Therefore this document serves to update the Town of Columbus Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town Board in 1996. Some change is inevitable! As the town's population grows new needs develop and must be met keeping in mind our goals. As one example, the potential for development seems to be a near term reality and we need to be ready to handle it with an orderly plan which must include the enactment of land use laws.

1.3c The Town has established a website to enable citizens to have access to local information: <columbusny.us>

2. INTRODUCTION

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2.1 The primary industry of Columbus has always been dairy agriculture. As the number of working dairies declines, it is necessary to attract other kinds of agricultural pursuits to maintain the rural character. It may also be desirable to attract environmentally friendly light manufacturing and small businesses

that would support this growth. There are many professional businesses such as computer support, process design, graphic arts, and others who might wish to relocate to this unhurried and serene area.

2.2 The enactment of land use laws (commonly known as zoning) and regulations should be a goal of the Town in the near future. This is necessary to protect the residents, the Town, its tax base and environment. Without effective locally controlled regulation of land use, growth will occur in an indiscriminate and haphazard manner, marring natural beauty, diminishing historical character, straining local resources and/or polluting the environment. As growth occurs, measures must be taken to maintain air, water and soil quality; to ensure proper waste disposal; to minimize traffic hazards; and to protect the historic, aesthetic and economic values of the Town and its citizens.

Laws and regulations must be clearly written and understandable, able to stand up in a court of law when contested, and provide local control without unduly restricting the rights of citizens to pursue personal and/or economic goals.

3. LAND USE POLICY

3.1 A major objective of the Town of Columbus is to maintain the rural character and natural environment so that it may be used and enjoyed by all the citizens of the Town.

3.2 The Town should develop land use regulations that are based on the suitability of soil types to support proposed usage. Erosion and siltation damage farmland and destroy habitats for fish and game. Land use policies should encourage practices designed to minimize runoff and erosion and discourage practices contrary to these goals such as building on slopes and/or clear cutting wood lands.

3.3 The Town should adopt land use policies to promote the health of the watershed through the preservation and management of wetlands, forest, and open spaces.

3.4 Local ordinances should be retained and enforced to prohibit the pollution of water, air or soil by toxic and/or noxious materials or conditions. Enforcement and penalties should be local as well as state and federal responsibilities. The costs of preventing pollution should be borne by the individuals, businesses, and institutions which generate it. The costs of restoring a resource to a usable condition should not become the burden of the taxpayers.

4. PRESERVATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDS

4.1 The Town should encourage and protect the two agricultural districts which currently exist. Participation in the districts encourages the land owners to preserve their agricultural land, which in turn maintains the rural atmosphere people desire. As land values rise, the impact of the agricultural districts becomes of greater importance to the economic viability of agricultural businesses.

4.2 The Town should maintain and promote agriculture as a major land use. The Right to Farm Law should be retained so that those people actively engaged in farming are not restricted from performing necessary activities and operations. Residential development should not require changing traditional farming practices.

4.3 The Town should promote and protect their agricultural enterprises: livestock operations, horticultural operations, and the various agri-businesses which accompany them. As the number of working dairy farms decreases, people should be encouraged to participate in alternative agricultural operations. The Town should support, whenever possible, organizations that promote agriculture.

The Town should encourage participation in these organizations in an effort to maintain a healthy agricultural economy.

5. RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Wherever possible, existing patterns of land use in the hamlet and rural areas should be respected to preserve the integrity of the Town. Land removed from agricultural use or woodland cannot easily be returned to such use.

5.2 The Town should continue to monitor and enforce the existing Subdivision Regulations, Building Code, and Sanitary Regulations to continue to promote orderly development.

5.3 It will be necessary in the future to create land use regulations to insure orderly development and growth, to avoid the destruction of the environment and to prevent future liabilities for the Town.

5.4 Strip development along the major arteries of the Town, in addition to creating traffic hazards and congestion, could seriously diminish the attractiveness of the Town. Clustering commercial developments, interspersed with low density residential, agricultural and/or conservations areas may help maintain the rural atmosphere.

5.5 Regulations should be based on the suitability of native soil types to proposed usages and on compatibility with current usages. Land use ordinances must define lot sizes that are sufficient, given the soil types, to provide sewage treatment and water supply for the proposed use in question, without adversely impacting neighboring properties. Poorly drained and impervious soils in some areas of the Town may require larger lot sizes than would be necessary in a location with more favorable soil conditions.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 ROADS

6.1a The Town of Columbus is presently served by a network of state, county and town roads appropriate to its geography and population density. These roads provide access to all areas of the Town. The network, if suitably maintained and improved, should be adequate for the needs of the Town for the foreseeable future. New town roads would require a major investment and would have such impact on local tax rates that the Town should give due consideration to avoiding any such additions without substantial compensation.

6.1b Some town roads are of limited suitability for handling the traffic flows associated with intensive development. Low population densities should be maintained in areas served by roads of limited capacity to minimize traffic congestion and hazardous driving conditions.

6.1c Road conditions are the main concern expressed by the town residents in the survey. Improvements made to many of the town roads will reduce the need for recurring repairs. Curing maintenance problems saves labor expense in the long run. Water run-off, rebuilding poor roads, potholes, and dust control were among the concerns expressed. Long-range plans to improve all the roads of the town would be desirable. These and other possible future considerations would add to the desirability of our town and improve the safety of those that use our roads.

6.2 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The disparity between technologies available in urban areas relative to rural areas can be an economic disadvantage for rural towns. To

increase its desirability as a place of business and residence, the Town must be able to offer “state of the art” telecommunications and adequate municipal infrastructure. Columbus must offer services that are at least equal to those found in other central New York communities.

Columbus must encourage its telecommunication providers to offer the Internet and cell phone services that have become commonplace in other regions. Until greater cellular service is available Columbus should work to ensure reliable landline phone service at a cost lower income households can afford. Columbus should develop a Communication Tower Regulation to promote cellular service while preserving the visual aesthetics of our rural community. Locations can be identified that also protect the scenic views that are a part of our everyday enjoyment of the rural landscape.

6.2a High speed internet connections have been available in parts of Columbus for several years, but many areas are still not connected. Frontier is working on installing DSL service but reports that it will take several years to complete. Cable internet service is available on a limited basis in some parts of the Town.

7. TOWN GOVERNMENT

7.1 Town government should be open handed and accessible to all our citizens.

7.2 Town government should work to provide local services with the least cost to our taxpayers. The property tax is the only tax that the Town Board levies and the only one that can be controlled locally.

7.3 Town government should work to insure that citizens get their fair share of services from the county, state and federal government

without relinquishing local control. Since county, state and federal funds are moneys that come from our citizens, town government should work to access these funds and return them to our community whenever possible.

7.4 Town government must set an example for the treatment of the environment both for maintaining our health and the natural beauty of our town. It must ensure the enforcement of local sanitary and dumping ordinances and be aware of county, state, and federal laws that will help protect our citizens and environment.

8. ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING REGULATIONS

8.1 The Town must enforce existing laws and regulations especially the Anti-Dump and Junk Car ordinances. The consequence of non-enforcement is esthetically and physically damaging our rural environment.

8.2 Local laws in effect:

- Junk Car (Local Law 1966)
- Building Code (Local Law #1 1987)
- Anti-dumping (Local Law #1 1989)
- Amendments to Flood Law of 1987 (Local Law #2 1989)
- Right to Farm (Local Law #2 1990)
- Subdivision Regulations (Local Law #1 2001)
- Sanitary Regulations (Local Law #2 1993)

Copies of these regulations are available in the Town Clerk's office and on the web at <www.columbusny.us>.

9. MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND HISTORIC MONUMENTS

9.1 The Town shall maintain the Town Hall and Town Offices so that they can continue to be used by the community and local government.

9.2 The Town shall maintain and preserve town cemeteries and historic monuments.

10. ATTRACTING SMALL BUSINESS AND ALTERNATE AGRICULTURE

10.1 The Town should work to promote the advantages of Columbus as a place to do business: our location between two major north/south highways, our multi-talented workforce, and our rural environment. If the Town can maintain the growth of small business and agriculture in balance with residential development, its tax base can expand to meet the demands of the future.

10.2 The Town should maintain its commitment to regional agricultural and business development and support active participation in organizations whose mission is to develop a sustainable economic plan which will enhance the character and well-being of our regional community.

11. RECREATION

11.1 The Town shall promote and protect the State Lands and Unadilla River as important natural and recreational assets within the Town of Columbus.

11.2a The Town shall promote and protect other natural and recreational lands in Columbus for the enjoyment of all our residents.

11.2b The Town shall promote and protect Norton Park. The land for Norton Park was donated to the Town of Columbus by Barrett and Phyllis Welch in 1999 for the purpose of creating a park for the citizens of Columbus. It was named in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Norton, who originally owned the property as a part of their operating dairy farm. It has been developed by volunteers and the Town to serve as a multi-use facility with pavilions, nature trails, jogging track, and areas for playing baseball, basketball, volleyball and horse shoes. It also contains a tractor-pull track used by area tractor-pull clubs. It shall be maintained and its natural assets preserved for the enjoyment of the community

11.3 The Town shall support groups of citizens who wish to establish recreational activities within Columbus for the enjoyment of all our residents.

12. Future Town Surveys

The Town shall take into consideration the wishes and expressions of the citizens of Columbus as found in the Town Surveys.

13. REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

13.1 The Comprehensive Plan document shall be reviewed at least every 10 years. Surveys are a useful tool in the review process. The comprehensive plan may be amended by the Planning Board upon approval of the Town Board.