

Project 2015

Syracuse/Onondaga County
PLANNING AGENCY

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PLANNING AGENCY

INTRODUCTION: INTERNAL SCAN

The Planning Department implements and updates the County's 2010 Development Guide (hereafter, the 2010 Plan) – a document adopted by the County Legislature that encourages municipal and County officials to think of the larger community interest in making land use and economic development plans. The purpose of the 2010 Plan is to guide and protect investments by the county, city, towns and villages in its highways, water and wastewater treatment systems, parks, schools, libraries and municipal buildings.

The Onondaga County Settlement Plan encourages the development of mixed use, mixed income, walkable neighborhoods. About one-third of the population in the County does not drive or have access to a vehicle due to age (under 16), physical or economic limitations. As people age, many can walk beyond the time they can drive.

The Onondaga County Planning Board makes recommendations to the towns and villages regarding the inter-community impact of certain proposed developments. The County Planning Board also reviews the County's Capital Improvement Program based on conformance with the policies to the 2010 Plan. In both of these functions, the changing demographic profile will impact the decisions issued from this department.

Demographic Trends

The aging of the County's population and the increased diversity in family structure led to the creation of more, but smaller households which has had a direct impact on the development patterns throughout the County. The rise in the population age 65 and older increases the demand for new housing types for several niche markets: empty nesters, senior communities, assisted living, etc. These uses tend to require smaller housing units on smaller lots to reduce the level of maintenance. Proximity to public transportation, sidewalks and community areas becomes more important as the ability to drive decreases. Both housing within walking distance of stores and services and higher density land uses for an effective transit system increase mobility.

The housing and transportation needs of seniors will continue to be addressed in the 2005 update of the 2010 Plan. The 2010 Plan serves as a foundation for town and village comprehensive plans. The goals and principles of these municipal comprehensive plans are translated into zoning ordinances that prescribe how and where various land uses such as senior housing should be developed.

The County Planning Board reviews proposals for housing types specifically designed for seniors under state law that allows for clustering of units in exchange for the provision of commonly used open space. The Board consistently presses municipalities to ensure that these developments are designed properly and that green space is designed to be usable by the residents. The Settlement Plan encourages "granny flats" and other housing types desirable for senior housing market needs.

Constituency

The nineteen towns and fifteen villages in Onondaga County plus the City of Syracuse are this department's direct constituency. The County population as a whole benefit from a system of local planning bodies, and makes up the department's indirect constituency. Changes in the housing market for seniors and to the transportation network are concerns reflected in policies and plans for each municipality.

Overarching Policies

A major policy outlined in the 2010 Plan is to encourage investment in existing communities. This policy, borne out of fiscal constraints, also supports senior housing markets for walkable neighborhoods and traditional villages. Because the fiscal reasons for investing in communities complements the demographic reasons for doing so, this department foresees this policy remaining in effect for at least the next five to ten years.

Program Considerations

It is an ongoing responsibility of this department to identify population, housing and transportation trends throughout the community. The first adopted 2010 Plan in 1992 identified the demographic changes of an aging baby boom population and has assisted its constituencies in planning for these changes through their investment and development decisions. This is a role that the department will continue to provide as these changes occur.

Management Issues

The County Planning Board will tailor its recommendations to the towns and village planning boards with the needs of emerging cohort addressed. Also, the update of the County's 2010 Plan will focus on the aging of the population and the implications that it has on the physical environment including housing and transportation as well as the economic impacts of an older workforce and the increased burden faced by the younger employees new to the labor force.

The department will provide an ongoing review of housing trends, market demand and current needs for housing and transportation. The department will press for the funding on a national level for the American Community Survey which will conduct semi-annual updates to census data to accurately identify shifts in population, housing and transportation trends. The department will continue to provide mapping services to county departments and to local government so that they too can accurately plan for anticipated demographic changes.

PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS

Policy Issues: Housing and transportation needs of seniors as well as employment patterns and trends of an older workforce are several of the primary policy issues this Department will address in this year's update of the County's 2010 Development Guide. These policy issues are part of a larger policy of encouraging investment, both public and private, in existing communities. Status: Ongoing

Direction: SOCPA will continue to encourage the towns and villages as well as the City of Syracuse to address the new local markets within the housing sector brought about by the growth of the County's elderly population. These include empty nesters, senior communities and assisted living arrangements. Desirable housing will require smaller units on smaller lots to reduce the need for property maintenance. Proximity to public transportation, sidewalks and

community areas is important in keeping this segment of the population active in our community. Status: Ongoing

Programs: The two programs through which SOCPA is able implement these policies are the 2010 Development Guide update and the Onondaga County Planning Board. The process for updating the 2010 Plan will commence in 2005 and serves as a foundation for town, village and city comprehensive plans. The goals and policies within each municipality's comprehensive plan are implemented in part through their zoning ordinances that put specific limitations on the development of land throughout the municipality. The Board meets every three weeks to make recommendations on land use and zoning referrals throughout the County and therefore offer real-time guidance on the development proposals countywide. Status: Ongoing

Management Issues: Tailoring the recommendations of the County Planning Board to address the needs of the emerging elderly cohort is an ongoing effort. The update of the County's 2010 Plan will begin in 2005 with the aim that it be adopted by the County Legislature by the end of 2006.

ACTIONS AND RESULTS

Action: The Planning Department will continue to keep records and analyze demographic trends relative to the changing population in Onondaga County. These trends will be summarized in a bi-annual demographics report, and analyzed in scheduled updates to the County's 2010 Development Guide.

Result: Onondaga County will have a ready resource for use by County officials, local municipalities, and the general public for demographic information. Through use of this information, municipalities will be able to adjust physical infrastructure investments and social programming to reflect changing needs.

Action: The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency is responsible for regularly preparing and updating a long-term vision for land use management in Onondaga County.

Result: The goals and principles set forth in the Plan shall be influenced by the needs of an aging population and other demographic trends. Municipalities are strongly encouraged to follow the goals, policies, and recommendations set forth in the 2010 plan when making land use and economic development decisions. For example, the current *2010 Development Guide* encourages density, mixed land uses, and pedestrian amenities within urban centers and hamlets, in part to accommodate the transportation needs of the elderly population.

Action: The Planning Agency will continue to promote the *Onondaga County Settlement Plan* as a means for municipalities to update land use regulations such as zoning ordinances, to foster well-planned, sustainable communities.

Result: Municipalities will utilize recommendations from the Settlement Plan to update their land use regulations. Settlement Plan recommendations include several beneficial concepts to make life easier for those without use of an automobile, in addition to promoting a healthier,

more active lifestyle. By designing for smaller residential lots and varied housing types, and designing local streets with pedestrian scale and amenities, both walking and mass transportation become more feasible and economical. By encouraging mixed-use neighborhoods, the elderly do not have to travel long distances for shopping, appointments, or social visits. It also becomes more feasible for a person to remain in the same community throughout their lives, despite changes in their housing accommodations and income levels. A variety of housing types, including smaller unit and apartment living are encouraged to supplement single-family homes.

Action: The Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency will assist municipalities, upon request, in completing and updating their respective Comprehensive Plans and land use plans. SOCPA will work to ensure the goals, policies and recommendations from Onondaga County's 2010 Plan are reflected in local municipal plans.

Result: Coordination and consistency among municipal plans will help to ensure a well-planned and interconnected land use and infrastructure network that will address the needs of all segments of the population.

Action: The Onondaga County Planning Board will continue to review certain land use actions to assess the inter-community impacts on infrastructure and the County's long-range land use vision. The Board shall also review and recommend changes, if necessary, to Onondaga County's annual Capital Improvement Plan.

Result: The Planning Board will act as a direct influence on private development activity within the County, acting to ensure conformance with the *2010 Development Guide* principles. A more balanced development environment - one that considers the needs of various population cohorts - shall result. Review of the County's Capital Improvement Plan shall also take the infrastructure needs of the elderly population into consideration and ensure compatibility with the *2010 Development Guide*.

Action: The Planning Agency will continue to advocate for the reinforcement of existing urban centers.

Result: Strong, dense economic centers and neighborhoods foster the existence of mass transit and pedestrian activity, nearby access to goods and services, shorter trips, and a variety of housing types – all benefiting less mobile populations. Concentration of infrastructure in existing centers, and prevention of unnecessary expansion of infrastructure in undeveloped locations saves tax dollars.