

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In its simplest form, long-range planning includes three key activities: understanding the present condition, identifying the desired end state, and determining the best methods for achieving it. To achieve this, the Town and Village Planning Boards acted as the steering committee to guide the development of the plan and coordinating efforts between the two communities.

The information contained in the Comprehensive Plan builds upon and updates the previous planning documents, where still pertinent to the environment and character of the community today. Through the planning process this initial information was confirmed, refined and expanded upon via quantitative and qualitative information collection, steering committee participation, public meetings and workshops, community surveys, and a public hearing (to be conducted after the draft plan is reviewed and finalized). Through each phase of the process, the Town & Village worked to gather information and ideas, confirm observations and findings and determine an action plan for future progress and success.

A Comprehensive Plan addresses a number of questions related to land-use and related social issues in a community such as...

Land use patterns...are they economically compatible, environmentally sensitive? Do they protect agricultural land? Do they allow for development of efficient transportation systems?

Are adequate protections in place for employment choice and housing diversity?

Are property ownership rights a priority within any chosen regulatory framework?

Do officials see that all local actions, incentives, tax policies, regulations impose costs on all residents?

Do all the policies adopted and actions taken reflect the values and culture of the community served and not the few in decision making positions?

Comprehensive Plans & Land Use Law

As noted, the Comprehensive Plan serves as a basis for "...land-use regulation, infrastructure development, and public and private investment... ." Any municipal action taken by the Town or Village Board that involves planning, zoning, conservation, preservation, enhancement, resource protection (including historic or cultural), wetlands, or transportation should be reflected in and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. It exists to ensure that land

development activities undertaken are equitable, economical, and environmentally appropriate for the community. As the Plan is a community-based document, it outlines goals and action items that are generally accepted within the framework of the Plan and not just reflecting the values and priorities of the current administration.

Community Outreach - Castile Planning Surveys

In preparation for updating the Castile Comprehensive Plan that was developed and adopted in 1969 and updated in 1984, it was determined that the values, thoughts, and attitudes of Castile residents needed to be described and considered. Three significant groups of residents were asked to respond to the questionnaires that the planning boards developed. In the Village of Castile, opinions were sought about what the residents liked and what they would see as needed or at least useful changes. In the Town, rural and agricultural residents completed one and lake district residents completed a similar one. The response number was very significant in each group. The Village residents submitted hundreds of comments among their 97 completed surveys. The receipt of 150 completed questionnaires from the rural group and 120 completed questionnaires from the lake district give the planning board a confidence that what matters to each group is significantly represented in the results.

Village survey results are most helpful in their observations of the unique features and benefits of living within relatively close proximity to services as well as to each other. In general, those services are valued when cost effectively provided. Municipal electric, water, and sewer are well maintained and affordable to most residents. Other services, like parks, recreation, libraries, schools, etc., that support quality of life are also valued and found in Castile. Castile has many other village amenities that appeal to its residents and impact attitudes about change. Residents find the housing affordable, the location convenient to work places and the small “everyone-knows-everyone” size comforting. They also share a view that it would be helpful to have more retail business, perhaps more job opportunities in local industry, and even some growth in resident numbers and housing options. Respondents in the Village are in strong agreement that preservation of what exists is important as are protections of the natural environment and improvements in quality of life by appropriate regulation of unsafe and nuisance situations.

The rural/agricultural survey revealed several common threads of thought on the nature of community feelings about their area of residence. The respondents seemed to agree or strongly agree that:

- a) The agricultural character of the Town be maintained. Agricultural diversity is to be encouraged.
- b) There is great concern about the environment, as the quality of life declines if there is pollution of water, air, vistas, noise, and light.
- c) Maintenance of property and preservation of historic sites and buildings is important.
- d) Roads are important and must be improved and maintained.
- e) Property taxes are a great concern and a significant burden. Their increase is strongly opposed.
- f) Residential and commercial development should be concentrated in hamlet areas and villages. Neighborhood appropriate Home based businesses are acceptable.
- g) Basic Town services and facilities are felt to be adequate.

The lake district survey offers several themes as well that can be summarized as follows:

- a) There seems to be concern about recreational opportunities. Is it quality or quantity of access, or variety of opportunities that raises that concern?
- b) The only energy generation acceptable around the lake is for solar, with concerns about views, visibility, and proximity to residents.
- c) They value the rural/agricultural character of the Town but continue to have some reservations about some farming activities too close to the lake proper.
- d) Eminent domain is viewed as unpopular and inappropriate to advance common public activities.
- e) Property rights are important to protect with a limited, consistent enforcement of zoning seen as sufficient.
- f) Pollution of water, air, with noise or with light are concerns.
- g) Residential and commercial development are to be kept in well defined areas.
- h) There is a feeling of being over taxed by a regressive and significant property tax.
- i) Access to lake services and facilities is adequate and new is unwanted.

These survey generalizations show a surprising consistency between the three groups of respondents. These groups who are historically at odds on many issues are very similar in

terms of their values and expectations of their Town of residence. They each favor the protection of natural features and resources, the preservation of historic properties, maintaining scenic views, and approving appearances of existing developments and property improvements. General thoughts prevail about having rural-appropriate businesses, protecting of property rights and minimizing infringements of each group upon the other, protecting against government intervention beyond the local level, keeping a rural character, fostering appropriate tax base increases to minimize property tax impacts, and supporting better communications access.

Some commentary about the conclusions drawn and outlined above: Comments are only of items where 50% consensus was determined among the respondents, and demographic analysis is generally overlooked. More precisely scientific correlations and significant causalities cannot be obtained without much more complex analysis tools. The planning board is sufficiently guided with its less complicated review of responses.

Document Review

A thorough review of all past planning documents was completed by the Town & Village Planning Boards at their monthly meetings in 2014 and 2015. The ideas expressed in each of the documents were considered, with some chosen for retention, some for revision, and some for elimination. It is the Planning Board's expectation and intent that these, as reviewed, will be incorporated as applicable to frame new statements of policy and action in the newly updated plan.

Community Profile

One of the most important factors to be considered in the development of a comprehensive plan is the physical characteristics, both built and natural, of the community. This includes an analysis of local topography, soils, water features, roads and other infrastructure, land use patterns, community facilities, and cultural resources among others. In addition, the social characteristics - the demographics that make up our population (age groups, income, education levels, number of households, etc.) - also give a snapshot of our community and generally where we are heading from a social aspect. This information shows us what we have to work with, where we are limited in what we can do, opportunities available, where resources and efforts should be focused, what level of services our community may generally desire, and how we may change in the future.

Existing conditions were obtained from available records in the Town, Village, and County, through outside consultants, the U.S. Census, regional planning organizations, and discussions with other municipal departments and agencies that define Castile today. This data consists of charts, graphs, maps and narrative and provides the base information to the Planning Board in their analysis of appropriate policies and is included in the appendix.

VISION AND POLICIES

Effective policies that will guide community investment and decision making in the Town & Village of Castile over the next decade often require a multi-level approach. A good comprehensive plan builds upon a framework that ties broad ideas and specific activities together, identifying the community's short- and long-term needs. The plan's framework is very much like the blueprint of a building. All of the components - from the largest to the smallest - must be fit together in a logical way for the building to stand and continue doing so for years to come.

This plan has several key elements, which are described below.

VISION - A general statement about the future condition or state of the community; it is the end toward which all actions are aimed (sometimes also referred to as a mission statement in business).

POLICY - Similar to a vision in that it is an end towards which actions are aimed, policies are more narrow in scope and tend to target a specific area or topic. Imagine what the community should "have" or "be."

STRATEGY - A statement of measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of the policy, which is reasonably attainable. Consider broad actions or aspirations, such as "increase," "develop," or "preserve."

ACTION ITEM - A specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing an objective, which usually takes the form of a plan, activity, project or program.

How Do The Elements Fit Together?

A non-planning example for how the elements fit together...

Vision Statement: I value the importance of family and will strive to improve their well-being so that they may have a positive influence on themselves and others.

Policy: To have a well educated child.

Strategy: Increase my child's vocabulary.

Action Item: Introduce one new word per week, repeating it three to five times a day.

The Vision Statement Is Our Community's Window to the Future...

VISION



OUR COMMUNITY'S SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF CASTILE

Castile envisions itself a community that values and preserves its natural resources, scenic vistas, and environmentally sensitive areas, protects its agricultural heritage and future, and sustains a rural residential character.

Community members and visitors will enjoy a wide range of recreational and cultural activities and attractions that capitalize on, without exploiting, the area's valuable open space, farmland and water resources. The Town will support the development of our villages and expand development within the Lake area consistent with that community's economic and social needs.

Commercial and residential development will occur at a rate and density that is suitable for existing and future infrastructure and will be designed in a way that supports the town's agricultural and rural residential and cultural heritage.

POLICY AND TARGET NEEDS

Effective policies will guide community investment and decision making in the Town of Castile over the next decade or more, meeting needs and targets with varying degrees of certainty and viability. A comprehensive plan serves to connect broad policy recommendations with more specific strategies and action items.

Farmland

It will be the policy of the Town of Castile to support and maintain its rural heritage and protect farmland, timberland, water resources, and open space. It will be accepted and encouraged that intensive agricultural activities will predominate to retain a strong agricultural industry. All residents shall be the beneficiaries of the aesthetic beauty preserved as well as the tax base enhanced by a strong agriculture. The Town will support regulations and actions that protect prime farmland and open spaces from encroachment of any significant development. Landowners will not be hindered in developing their farm businesses to enhance profitability and viability for the mutual benefit of all residents.



Strategies:

1. Ensure zoning regulations protect existing agricultural lands and resources and minimize the impact on/to residential or commercial development.
2. Encourage agricultural-related and supported opportunities for existing and new farming operations.
3. Reduce potential future conflicts between farm and non-farm uses and activities through education, communication, and proper site development.
4. Preserve contiguous agricultural lands for continued farming or open space uses which will maintain the rural character of the Town, minimize conflicts, and encourage continued agricultural use.



Open Space and Natural Assets

Conservation of the major features of our natural environment will continue to be a priority and all stewardship will be enhanced by the tools of the Town of Castile. Watershed management will continue to be implemented that is consistent with the continued prosperity of residents and businesses.

Strategies:

1. Ensure standards with any County, State, or Federal regulations and/or guidelines pertaining to environmental conservation/preservation are complied with.
2. Review existing zoning and land development standards for level of protection of local resources such as, but not including, woodlands/forests, Silver Lake watershed, streams, wetlands, prime agricultural soils, and steep slopes.
3. Identify avenues and partnerships for protection/conservation of critical environmental lands.
4. Encourage local community involvement in the preservation and protection of local resources through.

Residential Neighborhoods

The Town and Village will support a choice of residential opportunities. In the Village, a variety of housing needs will be met with appropriate densities and services consistent with small, rural village needs. In the Town, all new housing options will be made while preserving undeveloped open space and farmland. Lake District and lakeside areas will be developed in full consideration of its impact on the lake and on neighboring open space. A variety of housing options are appropriate in the Lake District and in areas contiguous to our two villages. Complementary and compatible businesses are appropriate within some residential neighborhoods.



Strategies:

1. Ensure residential development at appropriate densities within the Town taking into account the rural character and the importance of maintaining agricultural lands.
2. Promote Village living by maintaining and improving existing building stock.
3. Improve accessibility within the Village through complete pedestrian connections and public spaces.
4. Provide an appropriate amount of affordable housing.
5. Encourage infill development within the Village where feasible and appropriate.
6. Maintain and improve existing infrastructure in the Village and Town to promote it's use. Provide new infrastructure where affordable, or a needed amenity to enhance quality of life.

Economic Viability and Tourism

Viable agricultural businesses and agricultural support businesses are essential to maintaining a strong tax base. Taxes will be minimized to provide only the basic services and amenities that are needed and desired by our residents but cannot be provided by private entities.

Infrastructure shall be maintained and improved to the extent that they allow for a vibrant economy with sufficient strength that such infrastructure can pay its way without

undue hardships on Town and Village residents or businesses. Our preservation of open space, beautiful vistas, lake resources and viable businesses will attract a significant tourist trade.

Agricultural tourism, recreational tourism, and business tourism will be supported to build an economy with enough strength to contribute to lower tax impacts per property.



Strategies:

1. Encourage reuse of vacant and/or underutilized buildings and properties in Castile.
2. Examine existing zoning codes to ensure the appropriate types of commercial development are allowed in the Town and Village.
3. Encourage new development or redevelopment to work with the existing landscape and environmental features.
4. Establish partnerships to promote our area within the region.

Recreation

Castile will actively support access to the numerous recreation and park facilities that are locally abundant and singularly unique. Silver Lake, with its hundreds of private residences as well as its public access is a valuable community asset. Boating and fishing opportunities are attractive to all. Letchworth State Park, of huge significance as a tourist destination, will be valuable in enhancing local businesses opportunities.

Water access is provided to residents and visitors at Silver Lake Park. Beautiful vistas will be preserved to be enjoyed by everyone, from walkers to bikers, to those traveling by car or bus. Castile policy will be to protect access to both vistas and waterfront, and update facilities that need attention.

Strategies:

1. Identify and expand recreational opportunities where possible.
2. Ensure accessibility to existing and new recreational facilities for all users.
3. Increase public access to Silver Lake, whether active (docks, beaches) or passive (overlooks).
4. Build and expand local partnerships with recreational and open space groups / agencies to ensure the community's needs are met and other opportunities are considered.

Heritage and Culture

Quality of life in Castile is defined as well by the history and culture of the area. Outside of the Lake District, much is provided in the villages of Castile and Perry that provides value to Town residents and tourists alike. Museums, galleries, and other local venues will be protected, preserved and enhanced for the benefit of all. Historic buildings will be preserved and maintained for the benefit of the community as their historical significance suggests is appropriate.



Strategies:

1. Promote the local history and culture of Castile through educational, promotional, and marketing efforts.
2. Work with appropriate groups to identify and protect local historical and cultural assets.
3. Ensure local zoning regulations protect cultural resources; utilize adaptive reuse where feasible.
4. Develop relationships among local, regional, and State organizations and institutions to capitalize on Village and Town heritage.

Community Assets - Government and Non-profit

Castile has a wealth of public and private assets and organizations that are important to the quality of its character. Great educational and cultural facilities and programs are located within easy access to all residents. Town & Village infrastructure is and will continue to be well maintained and improved as resident and business needs evolve. Non-profit organizations serve as



important resources that tie into our social fabric and support our community facilities. Town & Village government will support and not inhibit those activities that the general population benefits from.

Strategies:

1. Maintain and improve current infrastructure and facilities and utilize appropriate long-range planning is to maximize investment.
2. Encourage good communication between government and non-profit organizations.
3. Support a high quality of life in the Town and Village with a variety of community resources where appropriate.
4. Ensure local officials and board members maintain knowledge in matters related to land development, Town/Village law, ethics, etc. where necessary and required by law.

Borders and Inter-municipal Relationships

It is a strength and a policy of the Town & Village to work closely with neighboring jurisdictions in all aspects of land use planning. Villages are typically of importance for services and sales to support Town residents and businesses. Fire and police support, as well as other amenities such as water, sewer, and other utilities originate in the villages or in greater regional entities. Town & Village policy



will be to support those efforts to the extent that it benefits its residents. Future development will depend to a degree on the success experienced by our neighbors. The Town of Castile will sustain a different, but compatible living and working experience as contrast and as alternative to the amenities of our villages. Providing that variety can minimize duplication and yield efficiencies and benefits in the provision of services.

Strategies:

1. Continue the joint partnership between the Town and Villages to ensure adequate long range planning, sound fiscal decisions, and the needs of the community are met.
2. Identify opportunities for additional municipal cooperation and ventures.
3. Coordinate local efforts with the County to ensure they are not in gross conflict with adjacent communities.
4. Maintain positive communication with the County and other governmental officials to continue to build and establish new relationships.