

# ADVANCE Seneca Falls 2040



Comprehensive Plan

Draft August 2023

# Acknowledgments

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The ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan is the result of a highly collaborative community-driven process. To the many residents, business leaders, non-profit partners, artists and photographers, and political representatives, that assisted with the comprehensive plan, we thank you.

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Photo Source: LaBella Associates (left & right)



# OUR VISION FOR SENECA FALLS



Photo Source: Jacqueline Cangro



Photo Source: LaBella Associates (left & right)



**ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040**, at its core, is a guide for the Town's planning efforts and decision-making over the next 20 years. Here is our vision for Seneca Falls in the year 2040....

*The Town of Seneca Falls recognizes the universal value of every human being and seeks to promote genuine connections where we care for our neighbors and our community. Seneca Falls is a vibrant community with an abundance of culture and history, thriving natural landscapes and waterways, a flourishing downtown, and a high quality of life for all individuals, families, and businesses. As the historical and cultural center of the Finger Lakes, we cherish our diverse heritage and strive to preserve our natural resources. We cultivate innovative economic development that promotes resiliency and sustainability to support the needs of our residents and businesses and protects our economic security.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ADVANCE: to accelerate; to bring forward; to become. The ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan is a document that will lead the Town of Seneca Falls to its future.

Driven by the community for the community, the ASF2040 plan outlines a vision for the future, guiding planning principles, priority policy areas, and an implementation plan to transform the Seneca Falls of today into the Seneca Falls of tomorrow.

As a foundational community planning document, this plan overviews the current conditions of the Town and lays forth a path to address present and future issues that impact all residents, businesses, and visitors who come to Seneca Falls.

The focal point of the plan targets solidifying the Town's position as the historical and cultural center of the Finger Lakes Region through quality-of-life initiatives organized around the following four priority policy areas:

- Resident Retention & Attraction
- Economic Development & Fiscal Security
- Preservation & Enhancement of the Built & Natural Environment
- Curation of Arts, Culture, and Placemaking

These four priority policy areas contain goals, objectives, and action items to illuminate a path to the future. With a diversity of needs and resources, this plan creates the opportunity to unite behind a unified vision for the future of Seneca Falls. A vision that seeks to celebrate and enhance the diverse historical, cultural, and environmental assets of the community.

Through thoughtful intentionality from the Town's elected leadership and an unwavering commitment from the public, the goals, policies, and action items within this document can become a reality as time moves towards 2040. Written for the community, this plan is a call to action. A call to ADVANCE.

# 01 | INTRODUCTION

## ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040

Our Town. Our Future.

The Seneca Falls of 2023 – a historic location in the Finger Lakes Region of New York, known internationally as a destination for the discussion and celebration of Women’s Rights – has the opportunity to catalyze its historical and cultural assets for the benefit of the community through the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

At its core, this plan is a foundation document that lays forth a path for the future of Seneca Falls. This plan – a pragmatic decision-making guide – will help Seneca Falls government officials, residents, and business stakeholders make informed decisions when faced with opportunities and choices in the years ahead.

Through continued commitment and support of Town leadership and the community, Seneca Falls will ADVANCE towards its 2040 vision.



## What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a document and a process of defining a community's vision and planning principles, priority policy areas, desired future land uses, and built environment characteristics. Through the process of creating a comprehensive plan, stakeholders define a vision for the community and agree on a set of guiding planning principles to ground future policy. The vision and planning principles build a decision-making framework for Town leadership and residents to create new policies and implement the plan.

The comprehensive plan is not a law, nor is it legally binding. Rather, the implementation of the plan hinges on the ability and the will of the Town's elected and appointed bodies to translate the plan's vision into policies, zoning ordinances, budgets, and decisions that reflect the community's desired future.

The implementation of a comprehensive plan occurs when the plan is reflected in the following:

*Land Use & Zoning Code* – Following the adoption of a comprehensive plan, updates to the zoning and development regulations may be needed to ensure what gets built and where is consistent with the new plan. A comprehensive plan's action plan will include recommendations on how to update these regulations.

*Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)* – The comprehensive plan will provide direction on how local governments should prioritize big budget items like improvements to Town facilities, equipment, and infrastructure. The annual allocation of resources through the Town's budget should be consistent with the vision and values outlined in the plan.

*Tourism & Economic Development* – Activities to promote economic development, such as job creation, building the tax base, providing town services, and tapping into tourism opportunities, should be reflective of the conditions and goals described in the plan.

*Transportation and Infrastructure* – The comprehensive plan is an essential document for obtaining federal, state, and local funding to undertake extensive infrastructure projects to improve the condition, capacity, and use of the Town’s infrastructure.

*Housing Policy* – Goals to advance housing creation can be addressed in the plan through zoning and development code recommendations. A comprehensive plan can have an extensive impact on future housing development by outlining existing housing conditions and providing action steps to build more housing and enhance existing neighborhoods.

*Parks and Recreation* – The vision and values outlined in the plan provide guidelines for the Capital Improvement Plan, general fund, and zoning codes to support parks, green spaces, and recreational opportunities to enhance quality of life and land management goals.

## How to use the Comprehensive Plan?

Implementing the ASF2040 plan is not a one-time instance, nor is it a sporadic or impulsive process. Rather, the implementation requires a commitment to the process by which local officials and residents fully embrace the vision, planning principles, and priority policy areas embedded in the plan and actively consider these elements during decision-making processes. The plan only remains relevant when those with political and decision-making power uphold the community’s vision for the future of Seneca Falls through the active and enthusiastic implementation of the plan. As such, the vision of Seneca Falls in 2040 will remain within reach as long as Town staff, elected and appointed officials, community partners (public & private), and residents share a commitment to the same vision for the Town.



## Past Planning Efforts

Prior planning efforts at the local, county, and regional level provide stepping stones for the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan to guide the Town and community toward the future.

### Local Plans

The Town of Seneca Falls *Comprehensive Plan (2006)*, while not officially adopted by the former Village and Town Boards, provides a community vision and themes that remain relevant today. The vision statement outlined in the 2006 plan describes a thriving community within the former Village and Town. The plan envisions Seneca Falls as a leader in economic diversification, education, historic preservation, the arts, civic life, and environmental quality. The vision statement emphasizes strong business opportunities and meaningful employment as central to the community's thriving downtown district. Additionally, the vision cites the canal, lakefront, and wine trails as central to enabling Seneca Falls to be both a tourism destination and a great place to live.

The following six topics are the central themes of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan:

- Economic Security
- Social Well-being and Community Services
- Natural Resources, Open Space, and Agriculture
- Parks, Recreation, and Culture
- Community Character and Historic Preservation
- Housing and Neighborhoods

Building on the prior comprehensive plan, the Town of Seneca Fall's most recent community planning effort is the *2020 Downtown Revitalization Initiative Strategic Investment Plan (DRI)*. This plan provides the following vision statement: "Downtown Seneca Falls will be a vibrant community leveraging and celebrating its unique heritage to

support a revitalized and welcoming year-round destination where living, business, recreation, and the arts converge to attract the next generation of residents and workers.” The DRI Plan outlines the following four goals as the pillars to achieve the Town’s downtown vision:

- Leverage and promote the area’s heritage, culture, and character
- Attract and incubate jobs and investment
- Invite new residents downtown
- Improve the downtown’s quality of life

While the goals of the DRI plan center on downtown Seneca Falls, the extent of their reach will go beyond the DRI boundary to spur investment and quality of life for residents and visitors throughout the Town.

In recent years, the Town has also undertaken additional planning and economic development plans intended to guide the future of the community. The *Town of Seneca Falls Strategic Plan for Economic Development (2018)* and the *Seneca Falls Economic Development Strategy and Commercial Revitalization Plan (2017)* provide updates to the 2007 *Economic Development Plan* intended to foster economic investment and revitalization throughout the community. These plans outline strategies to guide economic development by focusing on the unique history of Seneca Falls and leveraging the Town’s strategic position in the Finger Lakes Region to enhance tourism.

Additionally, the Town completed the *Downtown Seneca Falls Parking Improvement Study (2016)*, which created an actionable plan to enhance connectivity and wayfinding throughout the downtown area. The parking study provided great insight into areas of improvement for the Town’s economic development plans and DRI.

## County Plans

Located in Seneca County, the Town of Seneca Falls seeks to leverage broader regional plans and economic development strategies to realize the community's vision and goals.

Agriculture continues to be a driving force behind Seneca County's economy, rural character, and quality of life. The *Seneca County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (2007)* outlines the following five goals to support the economic prosperity of the agricultural sector in the Region:

- Enhance the economic climate for agriculture
- Increase awareness of the economic and social importance of agriculture
- Provide ongoing community education programs for the public
- Acknowledge and enhance environmental stewardship of agricultural businesses
- Preserve prime agricultural land

Building on the prior plan, the *Seneca County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement Plan (2022)* provides updated strategies to enhance the economic success of agriculture and land preservation in the County. The Plan outlines four goals as the focal points for farmland preservation and enhancement:

- Expand opportunities for agritourism and agriculture-related events
- Protect farmland utilizing local, state, and national programs
- Promote environmental sustainability of farms, especially related to solar development, climate change, and water quality
- Promote farm-friendly local regulations and smart growth initiatives

Rising concerns regarding environmental conservation and climate change, loss of farmland, aging populations, rising labor and production costs, and encroaching

development on fertile farmland pose potential challenges for farmland conservation for Towns throughout the County.

The *Housing Between the Lakes: A Housing Needs Assessment for Seneca County, NY* (2023) surveys housing trends and market conditions in Seneca County. The report identifies some key trends including 1) rising demand for housing and rising housing costs, 2) a growing age gap between the County's 65 & older and 17 & younger populations; 3) rising income disparity, and 4) uneven patterns of job and population growth. Aspects of these County-wide housing trends are visible in Seneca Falls and pose significant challenges for the Town to address in the coming years.

## Regional Plans

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) aims to strengthen economic development by forging connections and providing resources to support growth and development opportunities throughout the Finger Lakes. The FLREDC's *Strategic Plan (2011)* outlines a framework to guide business and economic development, the advancement of tourism, downtown revitalization and placemaking, natural resource protection, and the preservation of quality of life for residents and visitors to the region.

The *Finger Lakes Forward – Upstate Revitalization Plan (2015)* builds on the 2011 plan to outline the economic development priority investment areas to spur revitalization throughout the region. This plan centers around three industry clusters: 1) optics, photonics, and imaging, 2) agriculture and food production, and 3) next generation manufacturing and technology. By focusing on these industry clusters, the plan aims to advance 1) workforce development and poverty reduction, 2) entrepreneurship and development, and 3) higher education and research as the long-term development goals for the region.

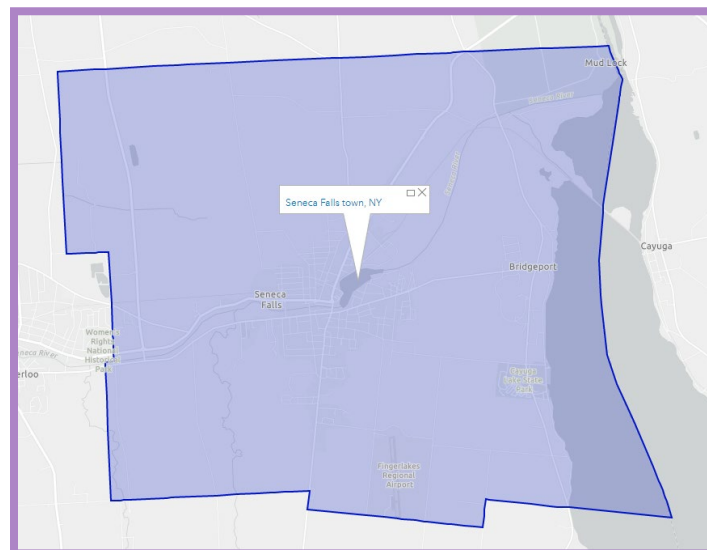
The Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council's (GFRPC) *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2021-2025)* is a guide for the region's physical, economic, and social health over a four-year period. This plan focuses on the retention and expansion of existing industries, small businesses, and the region's workforce; encouraging sustainable development practices; enhancing regional coordination and collaboration; and improving infrastructure and promoting revitalization and tourism.

## 02 | Current Conditions

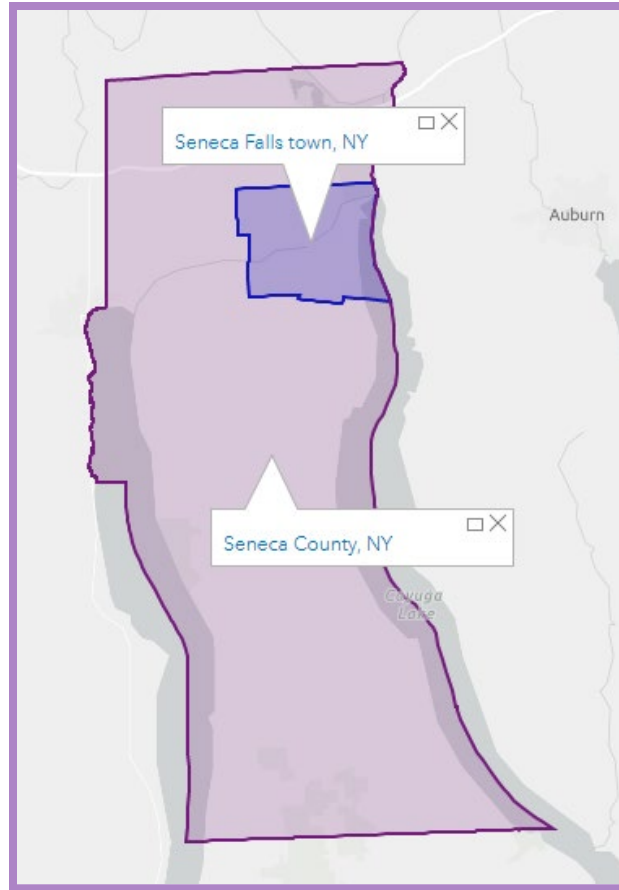
### Demographic and Economic Analysis

To build off prior local and regional planning efforts, the Town of Seneca Falls must ground the comprehensive plan in data to create realistic and actionable recommendations for the community. The following section provides information on the history, demographic trends, and an overview of historical, cultural, social, and natural amenities in the Town. Data for this section is sourced from 2010 and 2020 US Censuses, five-year estimates from the American Community Survey, Esri Business Analyst, and Lightcast Industry Analysis.

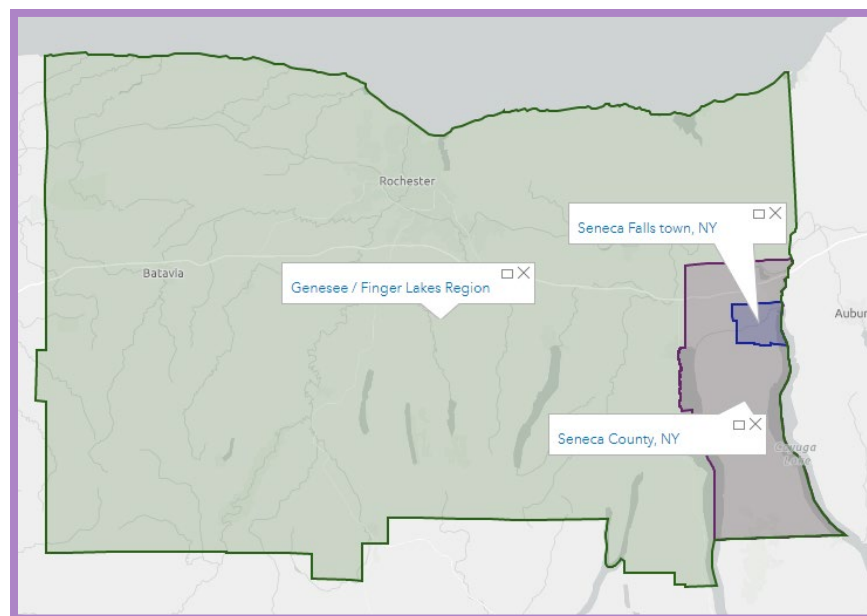
The following geographies are used in this analysis: 1) Town of Seneca Falls 2) Seneca County, and 3) the Genesee/Finger Lakes Region as defined by Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming, Monroe, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne, Yates, and Seneca Counties. We include these geographies in our analysis to identify unique trends in the Town within the context of the regional economic and market conditions.



Town of Seneca Falls, NY



Seneca County, NY (Purple)



Genesee/Finger Lakes Region (Green) – Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming, Monroe, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne, Yates, and Seneca Counties



## Geography

The Town of Seneca Falls is located near the northern tip of Cayuga Lake in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. The Town comprises 25.3 square miles and is home to approximately a third of Seneca County's population.

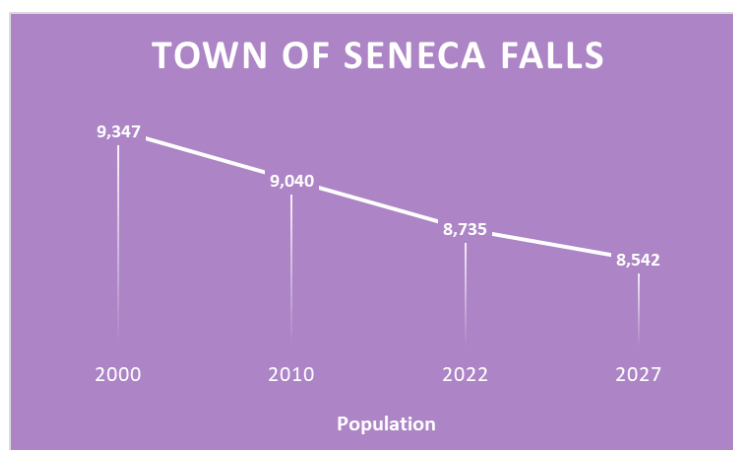
The Cayuga-Seneca Canal flows right through the heart of Downtown Seneca Falls and connects Seneca and Cayuga Lakes.

## History

Seneca Falls is regionally known as the Birthplace of the Women's Rights Movement because it hosted the first Women's Rights Convention in 1848. The hamlet of Seneca Falls was an incorporated village from 1831 until 2011 when it was officially dissolved into the Town of Seneca Falls. Portions of present-day Seneca Falls are within the boundaries of the Cayuga Nation Reservation.<sup>1</sup>

## Key Demographic Data

In 2022, nearly 8,500 residents live in Seneca Falls with an estimated 3,848 households. Since 2000, the Town's population has declined by 6.5%, with projections estimating a continued decline through 2027.



<sup>1</sup> See page 101 for more information.

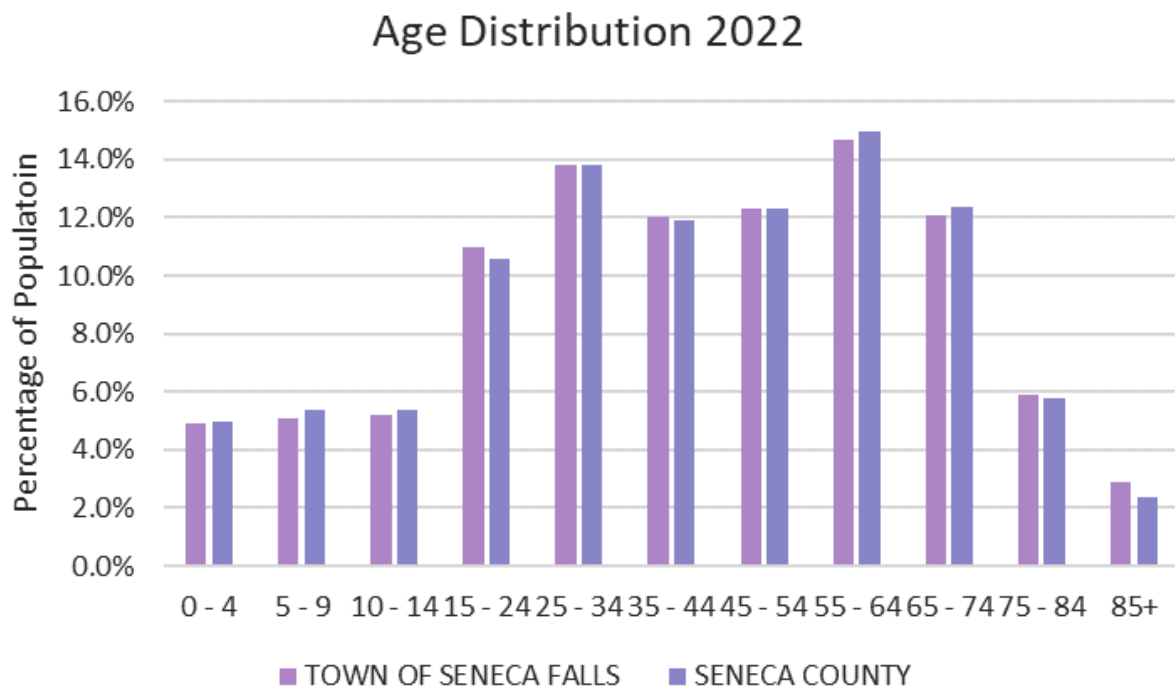
Population decline in the Town follows a similar trend throughout Seneca County and the greater Finger Lakes Region. The average household size in Seneca Falls is also declining. In 2010, the average household size was 2.28 persons compared to 2.19 in 2022, and estimates suggest continued decline to 2.17 by 2027.

	Households		
	2010	2022	2027
Seneca Falls	3,874	3,909	3,848
Seneca County	13,393	13,246	13,149

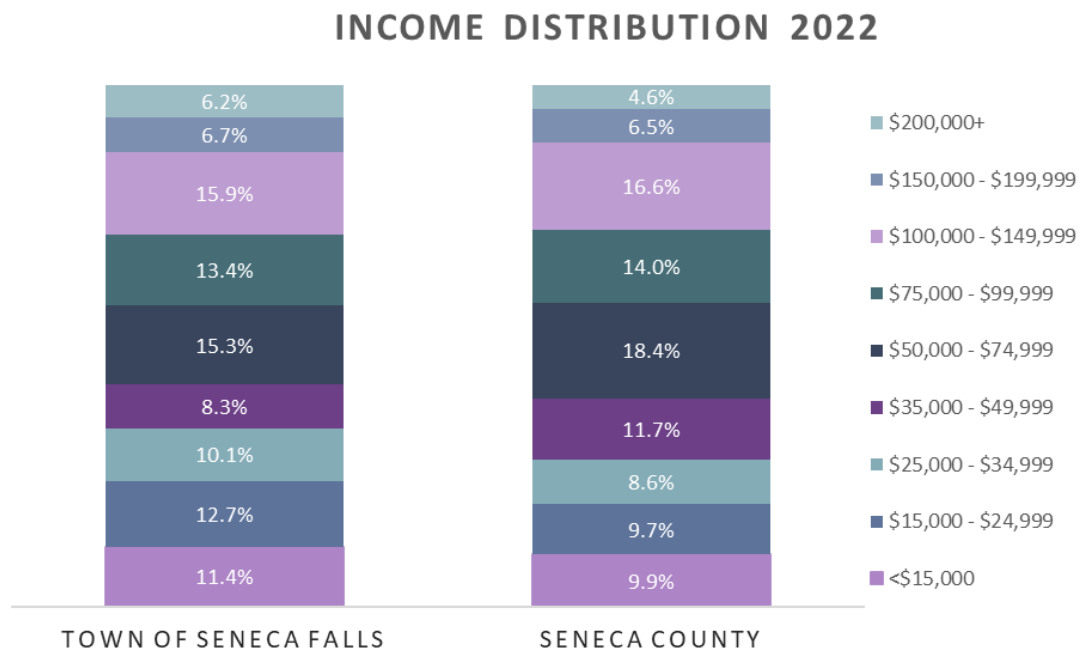
  

	Median Age		
	2010	2022	2027
Seneca Falls	41.5	43.2	43.8
Seneca County	41	43.1	43.7

The Town's population is aging, with approximately 35.6% of residents over the age of 55. By 2027, the median age in the Town is projected to increase by over 5% from 41.5 to 43.3. The Town's age distribution and median age are relatively similar to that of Seneca County.



The median household income (MHI) in the Town is \$60,189 which is slightly lower than the MHI in the County at \$61,329. However, per capita income is more than \$5,000 higher in the Town at \$38,959 compared to \$33,816 in the County. The Town of Seneca Falls has a greater percentage of households living below the poverty line at 14.0% compared to County households at 12.7%, and Region households at 12.0%.

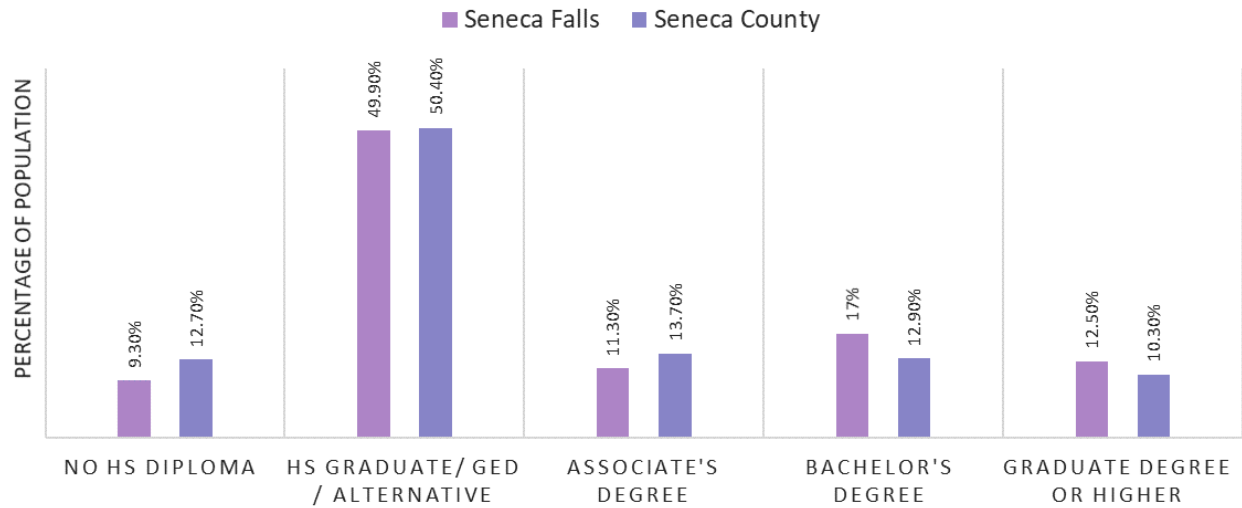


## Education

Residents in Seneca Falls are overall more educated compared to Seneca County. Of Town residents, 29.5% have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 23.2% of County residents.

The Seneca Falls Central School District contains four schools ranging from K – 12. The Frank Night Elementary School contains grades k-2, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Elementary School contains grades 3-5, the Seneca Falls Middle School contains grades 6-8, and the Mynderse Academy Senior High School contains grades 9-12.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2022



Finger Lakes Community College has four campuses within 25 miles of the Town including the Geneva, Newark, Cayuga, and Canandaigua Campuses. The area also has several nursing and health programs including the Northeast College of Health and Sciences, the Finger Lakes College of Nursing & Health Sciences, the Marion S. Whelan School of Nursing at the Geneva General Hospital, and the Cayuga Onondaga BOCES Practical Nursing Program. The nearby private colleges include Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Keuka College, and Wells College. There are also nearby vocational and trade institutions including the National Tractor Trailer School and the Finger Lakes Technical and Career Center.



## Employment and Industry Analysis

In 2022, the zip code 13148 (used as an approximation for the Town of Seneca Falls) contained an estimated 3,845 jobs. The area's largest industries include the following:

- Manufacturing - 1,045 jobs
- Accommodation and Food Service – 1,034
- Government – 327
- Retail Trade – 315
- Educational Services – 278
- Health Care and Social Assistance – 167
- Wholesale Trade – 106
- Finance and Insurance – 104
- Construction - 100

The two largest industries by job count were manufacturing with 1,045 jobs and accommodation and food service with 1,034. For 2022, these two industries made up 54% of all jobs in the zip code. Between 2012-2022, the Town had the most jobs in 2017 at approximately 4,793 compared to the 2022 job count of 3,845. Part of this decline can likely be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic: Seneca Falls lost roughly 900 jobs between 2019-2022, most of which were in the accommodation and food service industry, two of the hardest-hit industries during the pandemic.

The table on the next page shows the projected industry job change between 2022-2032. Looking ahead, the industry estimates suggest that the accommodation and food service industry will gain 372 jobs. However, this increase will still not bring this industry's job counts back to pre-pandemic levels.

Industry Composition						
NAICS	Industry	Town of Seneca Falls				
		2022 Jobs	2032 Jobs	2022-2032 Change (#)	2022-2032 Change (%)	Average Annual Earnings per Job
31	Manufacturing	1,045	968	(77)	(7%)	\$117,609
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1,034	1,406	372	36%	\$42,942
90	Government	327	175	(152)	(47%)	\$112,329
44	Retail Trade	315	319	4	1%	\$48,047
61	Educational Services	278	229	(49)	(18%)	\$48,387
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	167	149	(18)	(11%)	\$45,702
42	Wholesale Trade	106	126	20	19%	\$86,311
52	Finance and Insurance	104	87	(16)	(16%)	\$63,923
23	Construction	99	115	16	16%	\$55,770
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	81	69	(13)	(15%)	\$52,119
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	56	36	(19)	(35%)	\$18,689
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	53	<10	Insf. Data	Insf. Data	\$121,384
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	42	56	14	33%	\$76,936
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	41	48	7	18%	\$35,916
48	Transportation and Warehousing	24	38	14	57%	\$65,740
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	24	38	14	58%	\$61,716
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	20	14	(5)	(27%)	\$48,952
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14	14	(1)	(4%)	\$42,810
51	Information	12	15	4	30%	\$26,647
99	Unclassified Industry	<10	<10	Insf. Data	Insf. Data	Insf. Data
22	Utilities	0	0	0	0%	\$0
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,845</b>	<b>3,913</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>\$73,623</b>

Source: Lightcast

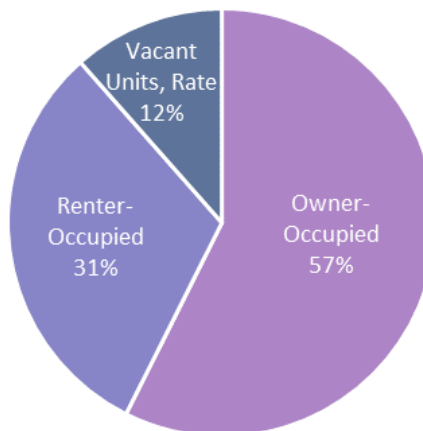
## Housing

### *Housing Tenure*

The majority of housing units in Seneca Falls are single-family detached homes, making up approximately 61% of the Town's housing stock. This is a lower percentage of single-family homes compared to the County (67.7%) and the Finger Lakes Region (66.1%). The Town's next largest share of the housing stock is two-unit structures at 15.4%, which is double the percentage for the County and the Region. In 2022, the Town had approximately 4,418 housing units, making up 27% of Seneca County's housing stock.

The Town's housing tenure is divided between owner-occupied, renter-occupied, and vacant housing units. Compared to Seneca County, the Town has a larger percentage of renter-occupied housing at 31% compared to 22%. Additionally, Seneca Falls has a lower percentage of vacant units at 12% compared to the County at 18%.

### HOUSING TENURE 2022

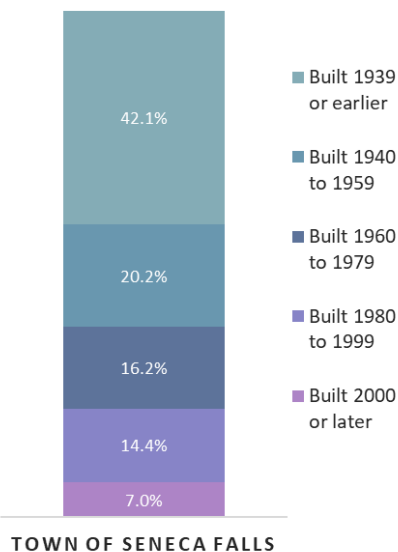




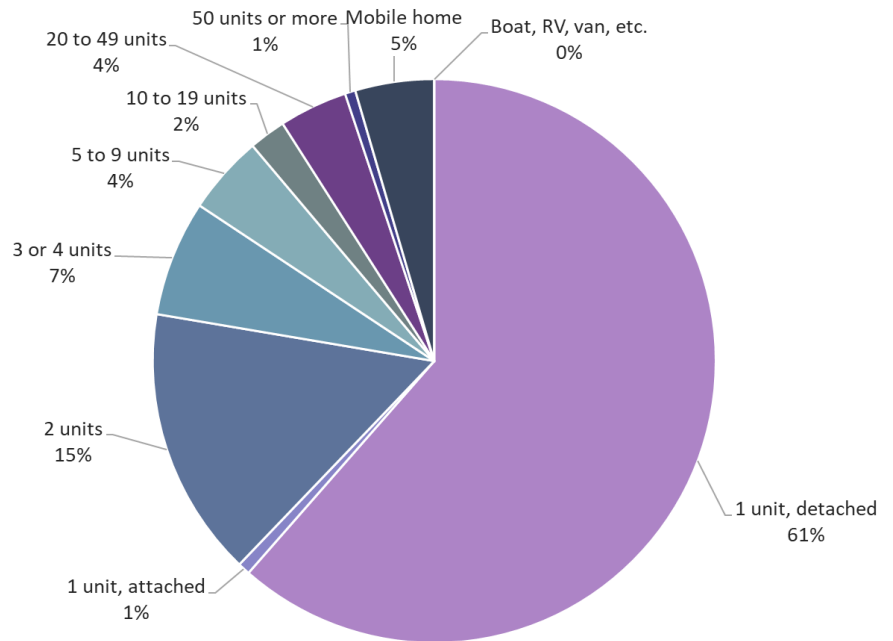
### *Housing Stock*

Seneca Fall's housing stock is relatively old. Over 42% of the Town's housing stock was built prior to 1939, and only 7% of units were built after 2000. The age of the housing stock can partially be attributed to the Town's extensive number of historic homes in the two Historic Districts, which intend to maintain the architectural character and heritage of the area. Older homes can be an asset since the quality of building materials is generally higher compared to new builds. However, historic homes can also require specialized maintenance and upgrades, consequently, placing financial and maintenance burdens on homeowners.

**HOUSING UNITS BY YEAR  
STRUCTURE BUILT 2022**



**HOUSING UNITS BY UNITS IN STRUCTURE 2022**



### *Housing Affordability*

Housing in the Town is relatively affordable for the majority of residents, evidenced by the many residents who make above the minimum household income required to avoid burdensome housing. To calculate the threshold for burdensome housing, the rule of thumb is that a household should not have to spend more than 30% of income on housing costs.

Owner-occupied housing accounts for 57% of the Town's housing stock, and the household income threshold for burdensome housing is estimated at \$42,640. Just over 60% of Town households earn above the owner-occupied housing threshold displayed below indicating relative affordability.

<b>Housing Affordability - Owner-Occupied Housing, 2022</b>			
	Town of Seneca Falls	Seneca County	G / FL Region
Median Home Value - 2022	\$131,317	\$138,316	\$181,378
10% Down Payment	\$13,132	\$13,832	\$18,138
Remaining Balance	\$118,185	\$124,484	\$163,240
Average Mortgage @7% for 30 Years	\$786	\$828	\$1,086
Estimated Additional Costs*	\$280	\$289	\$347
Estimated Monthly Mortgage Costs	\$1,066	\$1,118	\$1,433
Household Income Threshold	\$42,640	\$44,720	\$57,320

\*Include zillow estimated insurance, PMI, and taxes

Source: Esri; Zillow Mortgage Calculator; MRB Group

<b>Housing Affordability - Renter-Occupied Housing 2022</b>			
	Town of Seneca Falls	Seneca County	G / FL Region
Median Contract Rent	\$663	\$662	\$785
Household Income Threshold	\$26,520	\$26,480	\$31,400

Source: Esri; MRB Group

The rental units make up approximately 31% of the Town's housing stock. The calculated household income threshold for renter-occupied housing is an annual income of approximately \$26,520. Just over 72% of the Town's households earn an income more than the renter-occupied income threshold listed above.

While the data suggests that, on the whole, Seneca Fall's housing stock is relatively affordable, 14% of the Town's households are living below the poverty line. In addition, concerns about the quality of the Town's rental stock were a reoccurring theme throughout the planning process. While the Town has a larger rental housing stock than many of its neighbors, blighted and deteriorating properties pose a significant health risk to their inhabitants and do not uphold the values to care for human life that create the basis of this plan. Consequently, ensuring affordable quality housing stock is an essential piece of addressing quality of life for all who live in the Town.

## At-Risk Populations

To ensure the Town meets the needs of all residents, it's important to look at data concerning the community's at-risk populations. At-risk populations include a range such as people with developmental and physical disabilities, people experiencing economic vulnerability, and the elderly. These populations are considered at-risk as they may require additional support or resources in times of crisis such as extreme weather events, disasters, or economic disruptions.

<b>At-Risk Populations, 2022</b>			
	Town of Seneca Falls	Seneca County	G / FL Region
Households with Disability	26.7%	31.5%	25.9%
Population 65+	20.9%	20.6%	19.4%
Households without a Vehicle	12.9%	8.8%	9.7%

Source: Esri

The Town's at-risk population statistics mirror those of the County and are relatively similar to the Region. One in every four households (approximately 26.7%) in the Town has a resident with a disability. This suggests a continued need for healthcare and other services to be accessible to households in the community. The Town has the County's highest share of residents over the age of 65 at 20.9% compared to 20.6% for the County, and 19.4% for the Region. An increasing elderly population requires additional services that the Town must consider in plans for the coming decades.

In the Town, approximately 14% of households live below the poverty line (585 households), which is a higher percentage of households compared to the County and the Region. Additionally, 12% of the Town's households lack access to a personal vehicle which poses significant mobility barriers due to the limited public transportation infrastructure in the Town and County. Fostering a walkable community that is accessible to people of all ages and abilities will help to improve mobility equity. The Town and County should also seek to improve the economic conditions for residents to create better living conditions for the Region's workforce.

<b>Poverty Statistics, 2022</b>			
	Town of Seneca Falls	Seneca County	G / FL Region
Households Below the Poverty Level (%)	14.0%	12.7%	12.0%
Households Below the Poverty Level (#)	585	1,678	60,523

Source: Esri

## Infrastructure

Infrastructure provides the foundation for communities. Roads, water, sewer, and broadband are all essential to ensuring individuals and whole communities are healthy, connected, mobile, and have a high quality of life.

*Water:* The Town of Seneca Falls' water system contains over 70 miles of pipeline and serves approximately 9,000 people. The Town's water infrastructure is concentrated within the former village boundaries with watermain connecting sections along the southeastern and southwestern town lines. Residents and businesses not connected to the watermain receive water from private wells. The Town's water treatment plant is aging and rising concerns over water quality are leading the Town to explore funding opportunities for necessary improvements to ensure water quality and environmental protection for residents and surrounding watersheds.

*Sewer:* Similar to the Town's water infrastructure, Seneca Falls' sanitary sewer infrastructure is concentrated within the former village boundaries. Residents outside of the existing sewer district rely on septic tanks. Rising environmental concerns, increasing costs, and the growing burden on residents are raising the priority of improving sewer infrastructure throughout the Town.

*Broadband:* The Town of Seneca Falls is considered well-served for broadband with approximately 97.4% of the Town considered served. The Town's connectivity levels are on par with the State and greater than that of Seneca County at 95.3%. The main broadband area providers include Upstate Fiber Networks, Spectrum, First Light Fiber, ViaSat, Hughesnet, and Verizon. Broadband technology in the Town includes Fiber, COAX, Satellite, and DSL. However, while the Town is considered "served", residents report substantial differences in data and internet speeds depending on location. Residents living

in the former Village boundaries have great connectivity compared to residents living in the Town.

## Transportation

The Town of Seneca Falls is easily accessible by car and bus and has a walkable downtown for residents and visitors inclined to explore on foot. The main state roads running through the downtown are Route 20 going east to west and Route 414 going north to south. The Town's Highway Department maintains the local roads and sidewalks, while Seneca County and New York State are responsible for their respective transportation infrastructure.

The Regional Transit System (RTS) runs bus Routes 281 and 282 between the Towns of Seneca Falls, Waterloo, and the City of Geneva. RTS services are limited to weekdays, with additional Dial-A-Ride services available in select locations during the week.

There are two small regional airports in proximity to Seneca Falls. The Finger Lakes Air Pirates Field is a small private airfield where members can fly or learn to fly electric and nitro planes as well as helicopters. There is also the Finger Lakes Regional Airport, which is a public-use airport owned by Seneca County. Additionally, Seneca Falls is located between the two major international airports. The Syracuse Hancock International Airport is located 49 miles to the east and the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport is located 59 miles to the west.

The region is also served by train travel. Amtrak's Empire Corridor Service runs from Buffalo, NY eastward through Rochester and Syracuse to Albany, where passengers can go north to Montreal or south to New York City. Additionally, Finger Lakes Railway (FGLK) is a short line railroad operating 167 miles of track across six counties in the Finger Lakes region. The FGLK connects with the CSX, Norfolk Southern, and New York Susquehanna and Western Railroads.

also runs a service that connects the rail lines between Victor going east through Geneva and Seneca Falls to Solvay.

## Commuting Patterns

The Town's commuting patterns provide insights into the links between the community and the greater Finger Lakes Region. Seneca Falls has a net-in commuting population meaning more people migrate into the Town during the day for work than residents who leave to work elsewhere. Data from the 2019 U.S. Census Inflow/Outflow OnTheMap Analysis estimate that approximately 3,824 people commute into the Town for work, whereas 2,985 Town residents are commuting out for work, and 933 residents live and work in Seneca Falls.



Commuting data in conjunction with industry data can help to identify more live and work opportunities to attract residents or employers to Seneca Falls.

## Municipal Resources

The Town of Seneca Falls has a variety of municipal services, as well as other organizations that provide needed resources to the community. Seneca Falls Municipal Building is located on Ovid Street. The Town government consists of the Town Supervisor and four Town Councilors to comprise a five-person Town Board. In addition to the Town Board,



Seneca Falls has an active citizenry that participates in a variety of community boards and commissions including:

- Board of Assessment Review
- Cemetery Commission
- Heritage Area Commission
- Heritage Preservation Commission
- Seneca Falls Community Center & Parks Commission
- Town Planning Board
- Town Zoning Board of Appeals
- Waste Management Advisory Committee

The Town provides municipal services through the following departments:

- Assessor Office
- Cemeteries
- Zoning
- Fire Department (Volunteer)
- Highway
- Parks & Recreation
- Police
- Recycling
- Tax Receiver
- Town Clerk
- Town Court
- Trash Collection
- Water & Sewer

In addition to the Town's municipal services, the Seneca-Ontario Community Services (SOCS) Counseling Center, operated by Seneca County, is located in Seneca Falls and provides counseling, healthcare, and other services for Town residents and nearby communities.

## Historic Preservation

The historic hamlet of Seneca Falls is part of a Historic District officially recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. The Town's Historic District dates back to 1980 when the first Seneca Falls Historic Ordinance was passed by the former Village Board of Trustees. Districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places are recognized geographic areas possessing significant concentrations and linkages of buildings, structures, and objects united by historic events, architectural design, or physical development. The Fall Street-Trinity Lane District and the Town of Seneca Falls Historic District are comprised of buildings and neighborhoods dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century with historically significant ties to the first Women's Rights Convention of 1848, the Industrial Revolution, and the legacies of early manufacturing in the area.



The Town of Seneca Falls is within the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor and is designated as a New York State Heritage Area, a designation that incorporates the area's natural, cultural, historic, and recreational areas in addition to the Town's built environment. The Town is also a Local Historic District, meaning the Town has established local laws and ordinances to ensure the highest level of preservation for Seneca Falls' historic assets. In 2016, the Town became a Certified Local Government (CLG) after participating in the Certified Local Government Program (CLG) to develop an action plan for historic

## Historical and Cultural Amenities

The Town's heritage related to the Women's Rights Movement and Industrial Revolution has made it home to several local and nationally recognized historical and cultural organizations and museums that provide invaluable educational and social opportunities for residents and visitors to learn about the Town's history and its international significance.

Women's Rights National Historical Park tells the story of the first Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York on July 19-20, 1848. It is a story of struggles for civil rights, human rights, and equality and the universal message that all people must be accepted as equals.



The *Seneca Falls Historical Society & Museum* is located along Cayuga Street in a historic Victorian mansion and is home to an extensive research library with local history, genealogical information, periodicals, and microfilms.

Located in the heart of the downtown, the *Seneca Falls Heritage & Tourism Center* serves as an orientation point for locals and visitors, providing information on the natural, cultural, and historical resources within the Town and surrounding area. The *Seneca Museum of Waterways & Industry* first opened in 1998 and is home to the Heritage & Tourism Center. This museum showcases Seneca Falls' rich industrial and waterways history. The museum is also home to the *Heritage Area Commission*, which consists of a five-member board that operates the Seneca Falls Heritage and Tourism Center and aims to celebrate Seneca Falls' unique history in New York State as a designated National Heritage Area.

The *National Women's Hall of Fame* (NWHF) is dedicated to "Showcasing great women that are Inspiring all! The first and oldest nonprofit organization and museum dedicated to celebrating the achievements of American Women in the United States. Dating back to 1968, the NWHF inducted its first class in 1973 and continues to honor the achievements of women today. In 2020, the NWHF moved from its location at the former Seneca Falls Savings Bank to the Seneca Knitting Mill along the bank of the canal.



Additionally, the Town is also home to the *It's A Wonderful Life Museum*, which opened in 2010 and is located in the historic Seneca Theater, build in 1913 by Charles Fornesi, the first Italian to permanently settle in Seneca Falls. This museum celebrates the iconic film "It's a Wonderful Life." Its timeless message about the equal importance and value of each individual connects to Seneca Falls' heritage as a destination for the celebration of Women's Rights and Human Rights more broadly.





## Open Space and Recreational Activities

Seneca Falls' position between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes encourages residents and visitors to experience the beauty of the Finger Lakes Region. Within walking distance of the downtown, are a number of parks including the *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Playground* located on Chapin Street, the *People's Park* on Water Street, *Academy Square Park* on Cayuga Street, and the *Elizabeth Cady Stanton Park* and *Suffrage Park* located on Fall Street. These parks offer inviting green spaces to enjoy the outdoors in historic Seneca Falls. A unique recreational feature celebrating the Town's history is the *Ludovico Sculpture Trail*, which runs along the southern bank of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal.



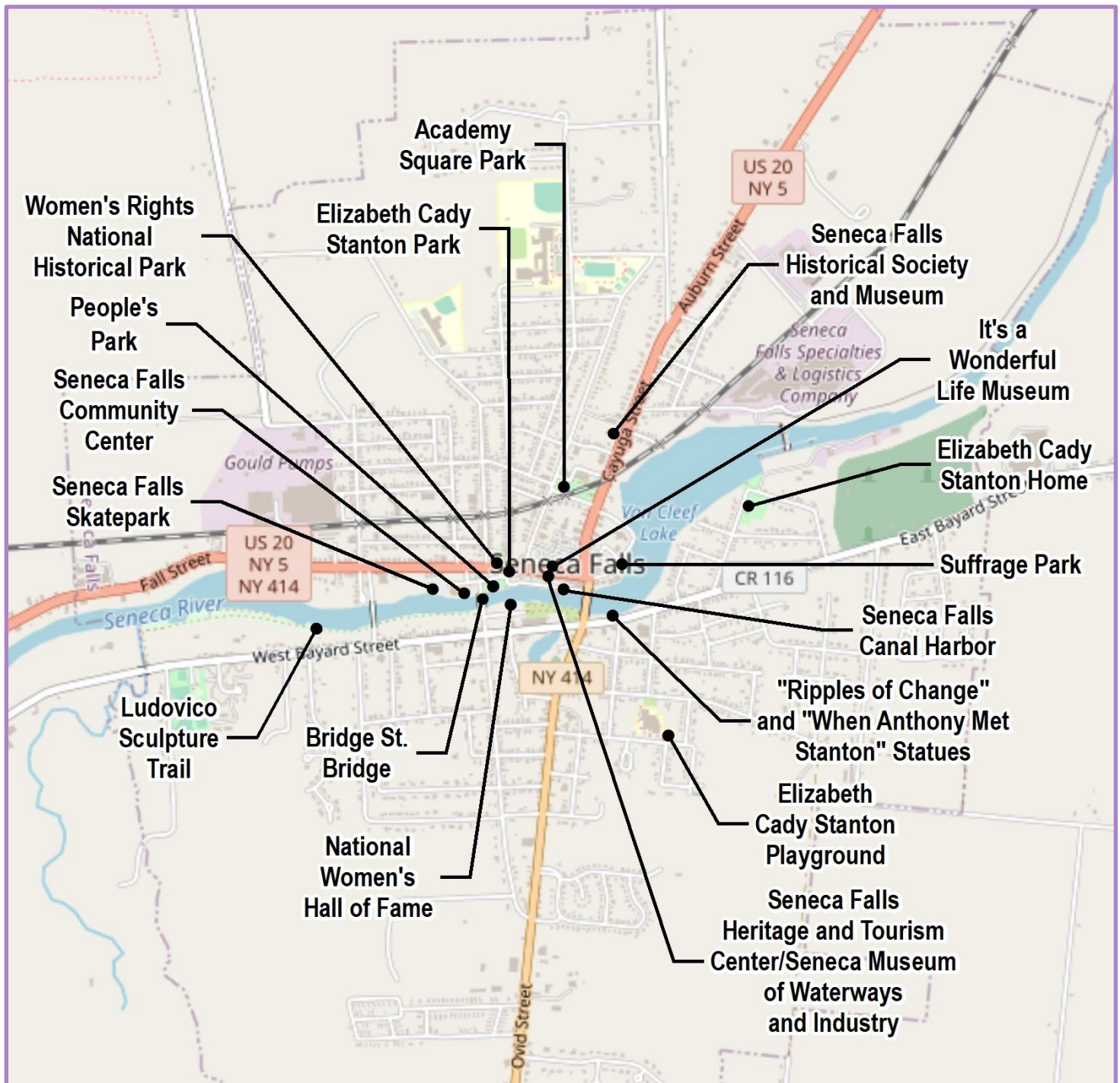
Nearby the Town, the *Cayuga Lake State Park* offers walking trails, camping, BBQ pits, and beautiful views of Cayuga Lake. Just north of the Town is the *Montezuma Wildlife Refuge*, which protects the area's



marshes, grasslands, wetlands, forests, and wildlife. The Refuge is open to visitors in the summer and offers walking trails, observation towers and decks, a 3-mile driving route.

For those more inclined to sporting activities, Seneca Falls is home to the *Seneca Falls Country Club*, *Rumseyville Sportsmans Club*, the *Finger Lakes Athletic Club*, as well as the *Seneca Falls Community Center*. These athletic clubs and the community center provide needed spaces for residents of all ages to engage in recreation and social activities.

## Key Arts, Cultural, Heritage, and Recreational Amenities





## Community Amenities

The *Seneca Falls Library* serves the community's educational, informational, and social needs. Located on Cayuga Street, the library is easily accessible on foot or by vehicle.

Seneca Falls also has a number of institutions that provide needed resources for the community. The *Child & Family Resource, Inc.* provides affordable and accessible healthcare and other programs to support families, caregivers, and childcare providers. Additionally, the *Drop In Center* and **MOZAIC** (formerly Arc of Seneca-Cayuga) are two other organizations providing healthcare and mental health services in the area.

In addition to the social services, the Town has multiple religious institutions that offer faith-based social activities and other community services. Religious institutions in Seneca Falls include the *St. Patrick Catholic Church*, *Methodist Church*, *Wesleyan Methodist Chapel*, *The First Presbyterian Church of Seneca Falls*, *Trinity Episcopal Church*, *Artemus Christian Church*, *Finger Lakes Christian Fellowship*, and the *Calvary Chapel Seneca Falls*.

## Tourism

Downtown Seneca Falls has a historic business district with a variety of local shops, businesses, and restaurants that make the Town a great place to visit no matter the time of year.

Seneca Falls is the home of three nationally and internationally recognized visitor attractions that promote year-round tourism: the Women's Rights National Historic



Park, the National Women's Hall of Fame, and the It's a Wonderful Life Museum.

The Town also hosts a variety of seasonal festivals and celebrations. In the winter, the It's a Wonderful Life Museum, the It's a Wonderful Life Festival Committee, the It's a Wonderful 5k Run, and the Town host the *"It's a Wonderful Life" Festival*. Members of the original cast and others associated with the film participate in a three-day festival that is attended by people from around the U.S., Canada, and U.K. *Conventions Days*, held in July, commemorate the first Women's Rights Convention of 1848 and attracts people from around the county.

*Canal Fest* also occurs in the summer and is a 3-day event that brings in people from across the Region to experience fireworks, rides, vendors, and music along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal. The Societa di Mutuo Soccorso (SMS) hosts the *SMS Italian Festival* in September to celebrate the heritage of Seneca Falls' Italian community.

Located in the center of the Finger Lakes, Seneca Falls is an easy drive to some of the region's best wineries and breweries. The Town is located near the *Cayuga Lake Wine Trail*, which is the oldest wine trail in the United States. The Cayuga Lake Wine Trail has 12-member wineries including *Montezuma Winery* located just outside of Seneca Falls.

The Canal Harbor situated along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal in downtown Seneca Falls is a great area for pedestrians to stroll along the shaded path and watch boaters experience the Town's waterways. The canal begins at the north end of Seneca Lake and connects to Van Cleef Lake which eventually leads to the northwest corner of Cayuga Lake.





During the summer and early fall months, the Seneca Falls Farmers' Market hosts vendors from local farms and businesses in the Town and region at the People's Park.

The combination of municipal and community services, open space and parks, and proximity to the greater Finger Lakes Region position Seneca Falls to be a great place for residents to live, as well as a great place for visitors to experience the arts, culture and history heritage of the Town. With extensive investment to preserve the Town's history and foster community development, the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan will enable the Town to build upon decades of investment to achieve the community's vision.

## Zoning and Land Use

The Town of Seneca Falls' most recent full Town zoning ordinance was adopted in 2013 following the dissolution of the Village in 2011. This ordinance follows a conventional zoning model in which there are defined use and density restrictions. Each use is represented by a district that has its own characteristics and requirements for development.

The Town is defined by the following districts:

- A-1 Agricultural
- A-2 Agricultural
- C-2 Highway Commercial
- LC-Land Conservation
- M-1 Industrial
- M-2 Refuse Disposal
- R-1 Residential
- R-2 Two-Family and Multi-Family Residential
- MR Multi-Family Apartment Building
- MP Mobile Home Park

The bulk of the Town's land use outside of the former village is primarily zoned agricultural, with sections for residential uses along the lakefront and highway commercial uses along the main arterial roads.

Within the boundaries of the former Village, there are the following zoning classifications:

- R-1 One-Family Residential
- R-2 Two-Family Residential
- R-3 Three Family Residential
- M-R Multi-family Residential
- M-P Mobile Home Park
- C-1 Local Retail
- C-2 Highway Commercial
- M-1 Industrial
- L-C Land Conservation

The core of downtown Seneca Falls consists of zones for local retail, with industrial and highway uses along the outskirts of the hamlet boundary. Single-Family residential comprises the majority of land uses with clusters of multi-family closer to downtown.

Increasing vibrancy in downtown Seneca Falls was a central theme throughout the planning process. Addressing downtown storefront vacancy and encouraging mixed-use development, recently permitted through zoning code updates, will help to enhance vitality of the downtown.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See page 130 in the appendix for the Town's most recent zoning maps

## 03 | THE PLANNING PROCESS

Over the course of 2023, a multi-pronged approach, led by the Steering Committee and augmented by additional public engagement, guided the planning process to ensure the ADANCE Seneca Falls Comprehensive Plan 2040 is a reflection of community-vetted values and priorities.

### *The Steering Committee*

A Steering Committee of 17 individuals representing the residents, businesses, visitor attractions, and organizations in Seneca Falls, worked closely with the Town staff and consultant team to create the comprehensive plan. The Steering Committee provided insights into the community from their personal experiences of Seneca Falls and acted as representatives for various constituent groups regarding their hopes and priorities for the future of the Town. Monthly Steering Committee meetings guided the planning process and formed the foundation for all other public engagement.

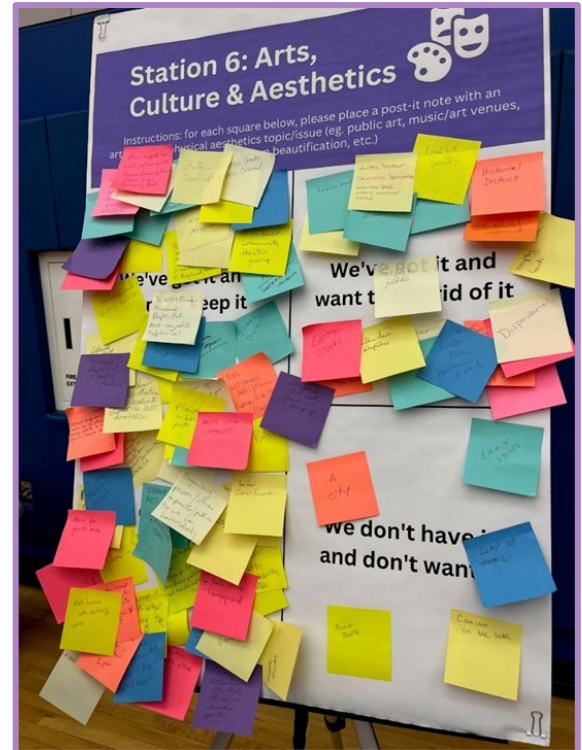
### *The Subcommittees*

Made up of Steering Committee members, engaged residents, and community stakeholders, the comprehensive plan subcommittees provided opportunities for groups to conduct a SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis of the Town, draft priority area policy, and brainstorm action items based on the plan's priority policy areas. The planning process had the following four subcommittees: 1) Family Life, 2) Economic Development & Security, 3) Protection & Enhancement of the Built Environment, and 4) Arts, Culture, & Aesthetics. Each of the four subcommittees met three times. The first session focused on conducting a SWOT analysis to better understand existing conditions and opportunities in Seneca Falls. The second session included a prioritization of the SWOT results of the first session. Session three focused on refining the

subcommittee policy recommendations and brainstorming potential action steps to advance the priority policy areas.

### *Public Engagement*

To supplement the Steering Committee and subcommittee efforts, in-person, interactive community engagement sessions took place at the Seneca Falls Community Center in June and September of 2023 to provide opportunities for the public to engage in the planning process. The June public forum focused on gathering feedback to shape Seneca Falls's 2040 vision and priority policy areas. In September, the Town held a Public Hearing to allow the public to comment on the draft plan.



### *Planning Phases*

With a finalized steering committee, the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 comprehensive planning process kicked off in the spring of 2023 and progressed through the following four phases:

#### *Phase I: Discovery and Existing Conditions Assessment*

The first phase of the planning process started with gathering economic and demographic data to understand past and future trends in Seneca Falls. The consultant team conducted research, gathering data from Esri, the U.S. Census, and the American Community Survey, to create an economic base report and community resilience report that explored demographic trends, industry analyses, Town operations, infrastructure conditions, and an

overview of community amenities and resources. The Steering Committee calibrated these initial reports with their knowledge of the Town. During this phase, the Town staff began recruiting community members to join the subcommittees and began planning the first public forum.

### *Phase II: Vision and Strategy Development*

The second phase of the process focused on developing a vision for the future of Seneca Falls and determining the planning principles to guide decision-making. The Steering Committee completed vision and values exercises to delve into why they choose to live in Seneca Falls and discuss what aspects of the Town they want to preserve or enhance over the next 20 years.

Following these exercises, draft vision statements and planning principles were prepared and presented to the public for review at the first public forum.

During phase II, the subcommittees began meeting in April of 2023. Town leadership created the subcommittee to maximize public engagement and empower residents to become more involved in shaping the priority policy areas of the plan. After completing the subcommittee process, draft policy statements were presented to the Steering Committee for review and implemented into the plan.

Following the drafting of the initial vision, planning principles, and priority policy areas, the first public forum in June provided the opportunity for the Steering Committee to gather feedback from the public. The public forum enabled residents to partake in similar exercises as the Steering Committee to uncover the key aspects of the Town people love, areas that need improvement, and high priority issue areas facing the community. Feedback from the first public forum and subcommittee process enabled the Steering

Committee and consultant team to refine the vision statement and governing principles, review the priority policy areas and develop an initial strategic priorities framework to guide the comprehensive plan.

### ***Phase III: Action Planning & Plan Development***

The third phase of the planning process focused on taking the vision, governing principles, and priority policy areas to create an action plan. This action plan creates a guide for decision-making in Seneca Falls for the next five years. The Steering Committee thought through key issues and accompanying strategies which they determined might have the greatest impact on advancing the future of Seneca Falls and would adhere to the community's vision and values.

The Steering Committee identified the following four priority policy areas as the focal points of the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

***Policy Area #1 Economic Development & Financial Security.*** Leverage our unique assets in our heritage, our downtown, and our legacy of industry to create a business environment that is attractive to commercial and industrial operations who align with our governing principles and that have the opportunity to create financial security for our neighbors.

***Policy Area #2 Resident Retention & Attraction.*** Create a holistic sense of community ownership for our residents and a quality of life that results in recognition that Seneca Falls is a community of choice for an engaged citizenry.

***Policy Area #3 Protection & Enhancement of the Built Environment.*** Invest in infrastructure that strengthens resiliency and promotes sustainability of our assets and reinforces our connections throughout the community.

***Policy Area #4 Arts & Culture.*** Capitalize on our history, heritage, culture, and artistic assets to strengthen the influence of arts and culture on our community; create a sense of pride and ownership of Seneca Falls' unique place in history as a center of women's rights and home of a timeless inspirational film, agricultural innovation, and passion for the arts.

Informed from the subcommittee process and public forum 1, the Steering Committee created an action plan to implement the priority policy area goals from the subcommittee process. The Steering Committee and consultant team worked together to create an implementation matrix of short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions to implement the comprehensive plan.

#### ***Phase IV: Public Review, SEQR, & Adoption***

Once the draft comprehensive plan was created, the Steering Committee shared it with the public for review. Feedback was refined and incorporated into the final version of the plan. The Steering Committee presented the comprehensive plan to the Town Board. Upon approval, the Town Board initiated the State Quality Environmental Review (SEQR) process required to formally adopt the plan. Following the public hearing and any additional revisions, the comprehensive plan was referred to the Seneca County Planning Board for additional comments. Once all County comments were addressed, the Town Board took action to adopt the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

## 04 | Our Vision & Planning Principles

Town Staff, elected officials, appointed bodies, and residents make decisions every day that impact the future of Seneca Falls. This comprehensive plan outlines Seneca Falls' agreed-upon vision and planning principles that will enable consistency in decision-making in an ever-changing environment. The vision and planning principles act as enduring guideposts to aid the evaluation of how policies and actions align with the community's beliefs and desired future for the Town.

### *VISION*

Our vision is our shared hope for the future of Seneca Falls. This vision is the foundation of what we love about our community and the basis of our intentions behind the comprehensive planning process. Our vision statement defines our aspirations for the future of Seneca Falls, what we hope to preserve, and what we hope to create over the next 20 years. This vision statement serves as the starting point for future planning efforts.

Our VISION...

The Town of Seneca Falls recognizes the universal value of every human being and seeks to promote genuine connections where we care for our neighbors and our community. Seneca Falls is a vibrant community with an abundance of culture and history, thriving natural landscapes and waterways, a flourishing downtown, and a high quality of life for all individuals, families, and businesses. As the historical and cultural center of the Finger Lakes, we cherish our diverse heritage and strive to preserve our natural resources. We



cultivate innovative economic development that promotes resiliency and sustainability to support the needs of our residents and businesses and protect our economic security.

### ***PLANNING PRINCIPLES***

Our planning principles determine whether a decision aligns with our community vision. Effective decision-making oftentimes requires extensive consideration regarding the cost and benefits for the community. Without guiding values, it can be hard to weigh opportunities against potential consequences. By deciding upon a set of planning principles, the comprehensive plan empowers the Town of Seneca Falls to evaluate opportunities based on our shared vision. These governing principles provide the rules to help the Town translate our community vision into action.

When evaluating opportunities to invest or allocate effort and resources, our community leaders will work to strike a balance between three critical planning principles:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** We will allocate resources and effort to those projects and investments that enhance both the natural and manmade environments of the community. We will refrain from engaging in any activity that is detrimental to the natural environment. We will adopt policies and practices that protect our environmental resources and enhance our infrastructure.

*Ask: Will this decision protect the short and long-term viability of our natural resources?*

- **Financial Resilience:** In order to continue to attract and retain thriving households, the Town must be financially strong and resilient. Town leadership will take steps to ensure a financial position that will support continued investment in projects, programs, and services that create a strong quality of life for residents, and a competitive business environment. Moreover, we will seek out opportunities that

will strengthen the financial capacity of our residents and ensure that they have the resources necessary to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives of consequence.

*Ask: Does this decision consider both the short-term and long-term financial needs of the Town and its residents? Are we promoting short-term financial gain over long-term fiscal stability?*

- Inclusion and Empowerment: We believe in the inherent value of every individual. We will actively promote opportunities that are inclusive and will engage every resident and constituency in our community. When developing projects, programs, or services, we will seek out and mitigate barriers to participation, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or physical ability. We will identify opportunities to empower our residents to participate in and shape our government and community.

*Ask: Do our actions and policies help us to support individual and collective well-being? How does this decision align with our values and history?*

## 06 | Priority Policy Area Implementation

### Our Call for Plan Implementation

As a prelude to the following Priority Policy section of the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan, we want to front-load the overarching strategy for implementing the goals, policies, and actions items that will be expanded on below.

In prior sections, this plan outlined the future vision for Seneca Falls and the planning principles that will guide decision-making over the next decade. This planning foundation sets the stage for the priority policy areas outlined in this section of the plan. The following four priority policy areas were identified throughout the planning process and the goals and objectives outlined in each section are intended to create a web of interlocking strategies to help the Town take incremental steps to achieve the vision outlined in this plan. However, this incremental process will only happen if Town officials, boards, commissions, and the general public do the work to put this plan into action.

To advance Seneca Falls into 2040, the Steering Committee of this planning process calls for the creation of a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee (CPIC). The CPIC will be a group of stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the plan to ensure it is not forgotten on a shelf but rather adopted into the daily functioning of the Town and utilized by the numerous organizations operating in Seneca Falls.

The CPIC will lead the charge and oversee the implementation of this plan and the strategies outlined within it. The CPIC should be made up of stakeholders that represent the diversity of Seneca Falls, who can lend their experiences and knowledge to guide the advancement of this plan for the betterment of the community. The CPIC will consist of five to eight members and meet monthly. Additionally, the CPIC will coordinate with the

Town Board to conduct a yearly review of the comprehensive plan implementation progress. It is through a collective understanding among the CPIC, the Town Board, community organizations, and the general public of the importance of this plan. Only through a unified understanding and commitment to the utilization of this plan we will ADVANCE Seneca Falls into 2040.

Through the planning process, the Steering Committee identified key challenges facing the Seneca Falls community that were organized into thematic sections to create the following four Priority Policy Areas of the plan.

1. Resident Retention and Attraction
2. Economic Development and Fiscal Security
3. Preservation and Enhancement of the Built & Natural Environment
4. Curation of Arts, Culture, & Placemaking

Each of these priority policy areas includes an overarching goal, a list of objectives, and an implementation matrix of action items to be mobilized over the next one to five years. Comprehensive planning best practices advise that communities review their comprehensive plans every five years to assess potential adjustments as priorities and resources change.

The following Priority Policy Areas and accompanying implementation matrixes provide the implementation framework to action the ADVANCE SENECA FALLS 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

## Action Plan Key

<b>Key</b>		
<b><i>Funding</i></b>	<b><i>Time Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Partners &amp; Resources</i></b>
S = Minimal to No Funds	Ongoing = currently in progress	Town = Town of Seneca Falls
SS = Moderate Funds	Immediate = ASAP	CIC = Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee
SSS = Significant Funds	Near-term = priority in 1-2 years	HC = Housing Committee
	Long-term = 3-4 years	FLRLB = Finger Lakes Regional Land Bank
		FSCSD = Seneca Falls Central School District
		FLCC = Finger Lakes Community College
		NCHS = Northeastern College of Health Sciences
		SFCC = Seneca Falls Community Center
		SFPD = Seneca Falls Police Department
		SFFD = Seneca Falls Fire Department
		SFCCPC = Seneca Falls Community Center & Parks Commission
		CSCTA = Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail Association
		SFBA = Seneca Falls Business Association
		SCCC = Seneca County Chamber of Commerce
		SFHPC = Seneca Falls Historic Preservation Commission
		HAC = Heritage Area Commission
		SFCCWG = Seneca Falls Community Collaboration Working Group
		SFDC = Seneca Falls Development Corporation
		ESF = Empire State Development
		SCIDA = Seneca County IDA
		SFHC = Seneca Falls Historical Society
		NYSEG = New York State Electric & Gas
		SCPCD = Seneca County Planning & Community Development Department
		FLREDC = Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Corporation
		SFHTC = Seneca Falls Heritage & Tourism Center
		ACCC = Arts and Creative Community Committee
		WILL - Women's Institute for Leadership and Learning
		SFL = Seneca Falls Library
		SFLX = Sustainable Finger Lakes

## Policy Area 1: Resident Retention and Attraction

*Goal: Create physical, economic, spiritual, and emotional health for all persons*

Quality of life is an important factor in determining whether to live in a community. Since 2010, the Town has experienced a minimal population decline of just under 1%. While population change in Seneca Falls has been less volatile compared to neighboring communities, in order to retain the current population and attract new residents, the Town will need to continue to address key quality of life issues.

*Objective 1: Pursue opportunities that provide diverse and affordable housing options.*

Housing is essential to ensuring a high quality of life for residents. Our houses are where we live, raise our families, and see our friends. Housing uncertainty, whether it be due to issues with affordability, accessibility, quality, or other environmental factors, creates barriers to quality of life as, without a stable place to live, all other needs become more difficult to address.

Throughout the planning process, the following key housing issues became clear through analyzing the data and public engagement:

- Aging Housing Stock → over 42% of the Town's housing stock was built prior to 1939 and less than 1% of the housing stock has been built since 2014. Rising demand for housing in Seneca Falls and throughout the Finger Lakes Region necessitates taking a proactive approach to increasing housing stock in the Town through rehabilitation of existing structures as well as strategic infill and new housing development.
- Quality of Housing Stock → The Town has a 12% vacancy rate which is on par with neighboring municipalities. However, feedback from the Steering Committee, the Public Forum, and Planning Board members indicates a need for additional mechanisms to address vacant and blighted properties, particularly along the

western entrance to the Town. Additionally, the need for quality rental housing that is both affordable and in livable condition continues to be a priority.

- Senior Housing → Almost 30% of the Town's population is over the age of 55. The ability for residents to age in place without needing to leave the community to find single-story houses or assisted living facilities will be an essential component in limiting population decline and retaining the Town's elderly residents. In addition, as residents age, their ability to undertake and finance needed housing maintenance projects typically diminishes. As such, the Town will need to explore innovative strategies to encourage property maintenance and spur senior housing opportunities.
- Diverse Affordable and Quality Housing Options → Just under 30% of Town households can't afford to rent a dwelling based on the area's median contract rent. This statistic, coupled with the Town's aging population with fixed incomes, suggests that the Town will need to address a spectrum of housing needs now and in the future. Efforts to increase the housing stock will need to weigh creating a range of housing options that are affordable for a range of income levels and life stages.



ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 1</i>	<i>Pursue opportunities that provide diverse and affordable housing options</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	1.1.1 Establish a Housing Committee to examine the Town's housing stock and conduct a housing inventory, particularly regarding lower and upper-income and senior housing stock.	Immediate	Town, CPIC, HC, Realtors	\$
	1.1.2 Identify vacant, municipally owned, land for housing development	Immediate	Town, HC, Consultants	\$
	1.1.3 Promote mixed-use development and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, HC, CPIC	\$
	1.1.4 Conduct a zoning review and update zoning code as necessary to encourage housing development, adaptive reuse, and rehabilitation	Currently in progress, on-going	Town, Zoning Board	\$\$\$
	1.1.5 Work with the Finger Lakes Regional Land Bank to pursue a remediation strategy to address deteriorating and blighted properties	Near-term	Town, HC, Planning Board, FLRLB	\$
	1.6 Build public/private partnerships for projects that encourage housing development for diverse incomes and ages	Immediate	Town, HC, CPIC	\$
	1.7 Foster retention of existing housing stock through initiatives to encourage property maintenance (e.g. establish a revolving loan fund for home improvements for homeowners)	Near-term	Town, HC, CPIC	\$\$
	1.8 Consider developing a Town-level incentive program for homebuyers and promote to local employers	Long-term	Town, HC, CPIC, Local Employers	\$\$\$
	1.9 Charge the Housing Committee to review the Town's historic preservation regulations/guidelines and their impacts on the Town's housing stock, homeowners, and prospective residents	Immediate	HC, HPC, HAC	\$

### *Objective 2: Prioritize education and lifelong learning*

Education is a key component to quality of life as it is directly linked to individual outcomes and the health of whole communities. Seneca Falls is fortunate to have a strong school district with four public schools teaching grades K-12, as well as a number of museums and other resources to support lifelong learning opportunities for residents and visitors. The planning process revealed the following key areas to support education and lifelong learning in Seneca Falls:

- The Seneca Falls Central School District → In 2021, the Seneca Falls Central School District (CSD) had 1,173 public school students in grades K-12 and a 4-year high

school graduation rate of 90%. The Town will need to continue to invest in the CSD to ensure the school district is able to retain quality teachers and provide essential educational programs to foster education, health, and well-being for the community's youth.

- **Support Community Resources** → The Seneca Falls community center and library are two anchor institutions in the Town that provide essential community spaces, programs, and events for people of all ages and abilities. The community center and library need to be adequately funded to maintain and expand current programming for residents. Additionally, public engagement sessions also indicated support to expand public recreation space, including creating an indoor winter recreation space to increase accessibility to community spaces for residents.
- **Life Long Learning** → Learning takes place in many forms and encouraging educational opportunities for people of all ages is an important aspect of community building. Between the Seneca Fall CDS, museums, higher education institutions, and community organizations, the Town has the resources and community partners to foster lifelong education for its residents.

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 2</i>	<i>Prioritize education and lifelong learning</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	1.2.1 Sustain investment in the school district and encourage district efforts to provide a high standard of education	Ongoing	Town, SFCSD	\$\$\$
	1.2.2 Collaborate with the Finger Lakes Community College, the Northeast College of Health Sciences, the Women's Institute for Leadership and Learning, and other SUNY assets to identify opportunities for youth and adult education	Near-term	Town, FLCC, NCHS, SUNY, WILL	\$
	1.2.3 Explore opportunities to provide education sessions for residents to learn more about the community (e.g. session on the Town's history, sustainability initiatives, historic preservation opportunities, etc.)	Near-term	Town, CPIC, SFCC, SF Library	\$\$
	1.2.4 Continue to invest in the Seneca Falls Library and Community Center to support programming, staffing, maintenance, and other needs	Ongoing	Town, SFCC, SF Library	\$\$\$
	1.2.5 Work with community partners to create opportunities for public education, community building, and youth programming	Immediate	Town, SFCC, SF Library	\$\$

*Objective 3: Ensure all people have access to life-enhancing amenities and resources*

Thriving communities require resources and amenities that meet the economic, social, physical, and spiritual needs of their residents. If an essential resource is missing, it will be impossible for a community to be at peak health. It's important to acknowledge that every individual will have different needs and that a Town will not be able to meet 100% of residents' needs 100% of the time. However, aiming to provide as many resources as possible and support the work of community organizations is an essential part of fostering healthy communities.

The Town will need to continue to support its existing community amenities and look to increase additional capacity and resources to ensure the community can thrive.

Town Resources → There are certain areas within the Town's control that are essential to ensuring the quality of life for residents. Maintaining and advancing infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, electric, and internet, through planning and funding projects will be a key part of ensuring the built environment meets the needs of current and future residents. Additionally, public safety is a huge factor for community health. From fire and police to emergency medical services to code enforcement, the Town is responsible for ensuring these essential Town services are responsibly funded and efficiently managed.



Health & Child Care → Access to quality healthcare and affordable childcare are key ingredients to thriving communities. Without access to a range of affordable healthcare facilities, such as emergency medical services, urgent care centers, and primary care physicians, the residents in Seneca Falls face barriers to receiving quality healthcare. To address this healthcare deficit, the Town aims to bolster existing relationships with community partners, such as the Northeast College of Health Sciences, as well as larger regional organizations to expand critical healthcare access for residents. In addition, healthy communities also require affordable childcare. Expanding affordable childcare opportunities was a key theme during the subcommittee engagement process.

Recreation & Public Spaces → Having places for people of all ages to go during all months of the year is essential to fostering social interaction and healthy lifestyles. The Town aims to enhance existing recreation and community spaces and seeks opportunities to activate underutilized spaces to enhance community well-being.

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>Ensure all people have access to life-enhancing amenities and resources</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	1.3.1 Ensure that core services and Town infrastructure are appropriately funded, with a focus on sustainability, value, and accessibility	Ongoing	Town, Town Board	\$\$\$
	1.3.2 Ensure continued support for the Town's public safety resources including the Fire Department, Police Department, and EMS Services	Ongoing	Town, SFPD, SFFD	\$\$\$
	1.3.3 Convene local and regional healthcare stakeholders to examine barriers and opportunities to expand healthcare access for residents in Seneca Falls	Near-term	Town, SOCS, NCHS	\$
	1.3.4 Enhance access to internet/broadband to address equity gaps in education and employment opportunities	Long-term	Town, ESDBPO	\$\$\$
	1.3.5 Explore opportunities to expand year-round recreation spaces and programming (e.g. winter sports complex)	Near-term	Town, SFCC	\$\$
	1.3.6 Work with community partners to activate underutilized properties for community spaces	Near-term	Town, CPIC, SFCC	\$\$
	1.3.7 Convene local employers and community organizations to examine and increase childcare affordability and accessibility	Near-term	Town, CPIC, Community Partners	\$



#### Objective 4: Safeguard the Town's natural resources and greenspaces

Located in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State, the Town is in a prime location to benefit from the abundant natural resources in the Region. From the Cayuga-Seneca Canal to Cayuga Lake to the rural agricultural landscape, residents in Seneca Falls have their pick of activities to enjoy the outdoors. However, the looming threats of climate change and pollution pose challenges to the conservation of these vital natural resources.

In order to protect the Town's natural resources and greenspaces, the planning process revealed three key focus areas:

Natural Resources → Preserving the Town's water and agricultural land will become increasingly important as development pressures and climate change threaten the viability of natural resources throughout New York State. Situated along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal and nearby Cayuga Lake, the Town will need to prioritize natural resource conservation development and policy practices to preserve these resources now and into the future.



**Greenspaces & Recreation** → Access to parks and greenspaces is important to enable residents of all ages to enjoy the outdoors and engage in healthy lifestyles. With multiple existing parks, trails, playgrounds, and open spaces, Seneca Falls has the opportunity to expand its existing greenspaces and tap into regional trail networks to greatly expand recreation and recreation-based tourism for residents and visitors.

**Sustainable Infrastructure** → In the past decade, green infrastructure and sustainable community design have become increasingly popular strategies to mitigate negative human impacts on the natural environment. As Seneca Falls seeks to increase its housing stock, foster community spaces, and spur downtown revitalization, utilizing sustainable design principles that maximize environmental conservation and community well-being will be a key part of planning for the future.

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 4</i>	<i>Safeguard the Town's natural resources and greenspaces</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	1.4.1 Preserve, protect, enhance, and connect the public to parks, greenspaces, trails, scenic vistas, recreation amenities, and water resources. Allocate an annual budget to ensure greenspace maintenance and enhancement	Immediate	Town, CPIC, SFCCPC, CSCTA,	\$\$\$
	1.4.2 Utilize the Seneca Falls Community Center & Parks Commission to ensure the Town adheres to the sustainability and natural resource conservation goals outlined in the plan	Near-term	SFCCPC	\$\$
	1.4.3 Coordinate efforts with local and regional organizations working on natural resource conservation in the Finger Lakes	Long-term	CPIC, SFCCPC, SFLX	\$
	1.4.4 Work with local trail groups to obtain grants for the creation of new trails and connections to existing trails (e.g. Ludovico Trail)	Near-term	Town, CPIC, CSCTA	\$\$
	1.4.5 Encourage sustainability initiatives to protect the Town's land and water from environmental contaminants and pollution (e.g. recycling education and composting programs, etc.)	Immediate	Town, CPIC, SFCCPC, Planning Board	\$\$\$
	1.4.6 Advocate for design, development, and landscaping that protects and enhances environmental conservation (e.g. tree canopy, waterfront landscaping, etc.)	Ongoing	SFCCPC, Planning Board	\$

## Policy Area 2: Economic Development and Fiscal Security

*Goal: Pursue economic development opportunities that strengthen the economic viability of our Town and its residents*

The importance of a cohesive economic development strategy to position the Town to address quality of life concerns for residents, as well as create opportunities to advance itself as a destination within the broader Finger Lakes Region cannot be overstated. To this point, the Town and a variety of community organizations have engaged in sporadic and inconsistent economic development strategies. Through the comprehensive planning process, it became clear that the Town needs to align existing resources to create a unified vision for Seneca Falls and implement a comprehensive economic development plan. A key part of this strategy will be implementing a fiscal resilience plan to enable the Town to fully understand its financial footing and plan for the future. This fiscal resilience plan will be the catalyst to advancing quality of life in Seneca Falls and coalescing economic development opportunities in the short and long term.

### **Objective 1: Foster development and tourism opportunities to position Seneca Falls as a year-round destination**

Located in the heart of the Finger Lakes Region, Seneca Falls is in a prime position to benefit from more targeted efforts to create year-round economic development opportunities that will benefit both residents and visitors. As the birthplace of the Women's Rights Movement, Seneca Falls is home to a number of historical and cultural organizations that feature the Town's historic prominence. Yet, the Town currently lacks hospitality establishments, both in terms of lodging and food/beverage offerings, that would enable the Town to capitalize on these historic resources. The seasonality of life in Upstate New York is another factor that the Town needs to address in order to attract



visitors throughout the year, as well as provide spaces and opportunities for its year-round residents.

To be a year-round destination, the Town will need to take a multi-pronged approach that includes 1) curating a cohesive Town-wide marketing strategy that promotes a unified brand of Seneca Falls, 2) fostering development and community events that enhance the Town's unique heritage and cultural assets, 3) tapping into local and regional partners to maximize efficiencies and celebrate commonalities within the diversity of Seneca Falls.

ACTION PLAN				
Objective 1	Foster development and tourism opportunities to position Seneca Falls as a year-round destination	Timeframe	Partners	Relative Cost
Action Items	2.1.1 Engage a marketing consultant to work with local stakeholders to develop a cohesive Town-wide marketing strategy that promotes Seneca Falls' historical, cultural, natural, and recreational assets	Near-term	Town, Consultants, CPIC	\$\$\$
	2.1.2 Encourage the development and promotion of distinctive community events and experiences (e.g. IAWL Festival, Canal Fest, etc.)	Ongoing	CPIC, Community Organizations	\$
	2.1.3 Work with local and regional partners to enhance year-round tourism activities, particularly in the winter months (e.g. Indoor winter Farmers Market)	Immediate	CPIC, SFHTC, SFCCWG, SFBA, FLREDC, Finger Lakes Visitor Connection	\$\$
	2.1.4 Engage monthly with the Seneca Falls Development Corporation, the Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, and Empire State Development to promote Seneca Falls as a destination for those industry sectors targeted by the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, which overlap with the Town's priorities	Near-term	Town, SFDC, SCCC, ESD	\$
	2.1.5 Work with the Cayuga Nation to develop and support a Cultural Center devoted to the Nation's role in the Region's history	Near-term	Town, Cayuga Nation	\$\$

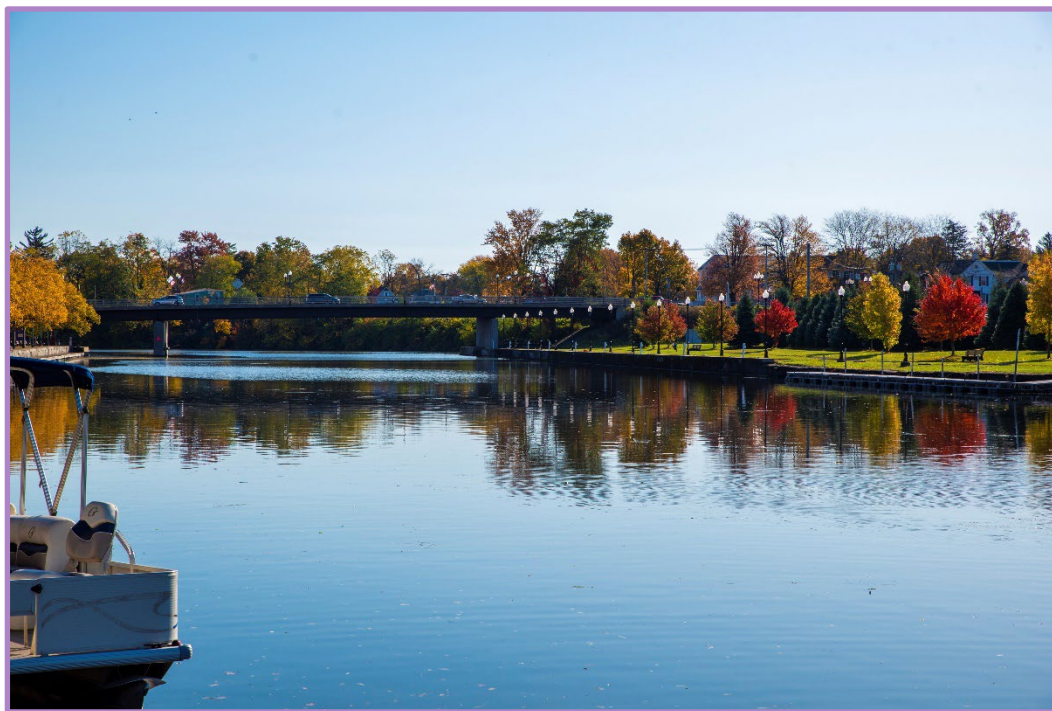
## **Objective 2: Create a thriving downtown that attracts and retain diverse businesses and provide inclusive public spaces**

Part and parcel of becoming a year-round destination and enhancing quality of life is creating an environment in downtown Seneca Falls that enables businesses to thrive and creating spaces where people want to go. Downtown revitalization necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses the economic, built environment, and social aspects of community development.

- Step 1 – The first step to creating a thriving downtown necessitates envisioning and creating a plan to guide the Town’s economic development efforts. The past few decades show that ad hoc strategies which lack cohesion and follow-through do not maximize resources nor produce desired outcomes. Having recently won a Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant (DRI) and a Local Waterfront Revitalization Planning (LWRP) grant, the Town is in an ideal position to create an economic development strategic plan to align these efforts and create a unified approach to pursue future opportunities. A strategic economic development plan will create the basis for outlining what types of businesses and industries align with the Town’s vision, identifying partners and developing capacities, attracting investment into the downtown, and fostering small and local business development.
- Step 2 – To make the plan effective, the Town will need to gather local, county, and regional stakeholders to ensure the Town’s existing resources and organizations are aligned on the community vision and working together to maximize capacities and resources. The Seneca Falls Development Corporation, Seneca Falls Heritage and Tourism Center, Seneca County Industrial Development Agency, Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, as well as other organizations, will be key players in supporting economic development in Seneca Falls. The duplication of programs and services amongst these organizations create silos of information and

unnecessary costs. Thus, the Town should seek to maximize cooperation with regional and local partners to advance the economic development strategic plan.

- Step 3 – Intermingled with steps 1 and 2, the CPIC, along with the Town’s economic development stakeholders, needs to acknowledge the importance of creating spaces where people enjoy being for a thriving downtown. Seneca Falls is fortunate to have a historic downtown that has retained its urban form to be walkable and visually stimulating. Enhancing the walkability, community character, as well as availability of public space in the downtown and waterfront will be an essential intertwining strategy to merge the built environment with economic development opportunities (see Priority Policy Area 3 for additional information).



ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 2</i>	<i>Create a thriving downtown that attracts and retains diverse businesses and provides inclusive public space</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	2.2.1 Create an economic development strategic plan that advances the Town's goals to create a thriving environment for residents and business owners	Immediate	Town, Consultants	\$\$\$
	2.2.2 As part of 2.1, conduct a market analysis to identify strategic industry attraction targets that align with available sites, infrastructure, and regional supply chain opportunities	Immediate	Town, Consultants	\$\$
	2.2.3 As part of 2.1, convene existing and potential small business owners to determine threats and opportunities for business development and growth. Incorporate a small business retention strategy as part of the Town's economic development strategic plan	Immediate	Town, Consultants, SFBA	\$
	2.2.4 Meet monthly with the Seneca Falls Development Corporation, the Seneca County Planning Department, the Seneca County Industrial Development Agency, the Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, and Empire State Development to ensure adequate business retention and expansion efforts	Near-term	SFDC, SCCC, SCIDA, SCCC, ESD	\$\$
	2.2.5 Support initiatives that promote and strengthen local businesses and align with the Town's economic development strategy (e.g. New York State Microenterprise Assistance Program grants)	Ongoing	Town, SFBA, SCCC, SFDC	\$\$
	2.2.6 Connect small businesses and entrepreneurs to local and regional partners that provide educational and business development support (e.g. micro-loan programs, incubator opportunities, education sessions at the library, Seneca County Chamber of Commerce Business Programs, etc.)	Near-term	Town, Library, SCCC	\$
	2.2.7 Assess and re-establish a working model for the Seneca Falls Business Association to support existing opportunities and spearhead business development efforts in the downtown	Near-term	Town, CPIC, SFBA	\$
	2.2.8 Pursue opportunities to enhance connectivity and walkability between the downtown and the waterfront to support business retention and positive user experience	Ongoing	Town, CPIC, Planning Board, Zoning Board	\$\$\$

### Objective 3: Strengthen economic return on heritage assets

The Town of Seneca Falls has a rich and diverse cultural heritage that has yet to be fully uncovered. While the Town is most well known for being the birthplace of the Women's Right Movement, other heritage assets such as its partnership with the Cayuga Nation, its deep Italian American roots, its ties to the movie "It's A Wonderful Life", as well as its waterways of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal and Cayuga Lake, create a variety of opportunities to highlight the history and culture of the Town and the broader Finger Lakes Region.



The Town's heritage assets not only create a vibrant civic culture but also immense economic opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors. The Finger Lakes Region is a national destination for its scenic natural landscape and growing agritourism sector, and Seneca Falls has the opportunity to tap into the Region's growing tourism industries. The Town's museums and historic buildings and location along the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor provide a unique combination of cultural and recreational tourism activities for visitors and locals alike. However, it's important to recognize that this economic

opportunity hinges on the preservation and cultivation of these assets. This will entail the continued support of existing organizations, building new partnerships, and promoting natural resource conservation.

The location and historic prominence of Seneca Falls is not only a tourism opportunity but an essential feature of the quality of life for Town residents who live in a place with centuries of history. The planning process revealed a gap in local knowledge and understanding regarding the Town's history and the ways residents and businesses can maximize the individual and community benefits of preserving this history. Strengthening economic returns on heritage assets starts with community learning and education regarding the unique features of Seneca Falls.

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>Strengthen economic return on heritage assets</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	2.3.1 Support the efforts of the Town's Historic Districts, Historic Preservation Commission, Heritage Area Commission, and other historic preservation organizations	Ongoing	Town, HPC, HAC, SFHS	\$\$
	2.3.2 Encourage public, private, and governmental entities to explore historic preservation grant opportunities to preserve Town aesthetics and community character	Immediate	Town, HPC, HAC, SFHS	\$\$
	2.3.3 Foster tourism efforts that highlight the Town's history and heritage	Ongoing	CPIC, SFHTC, SFHC, Finger Lakes Visitor Connection	\$\$
	2.3.4 Coordinate with historic preservation organizations and local realtors to ensure organization members, current residents, business owners, and prospective homebuyers, business owners, and developers are aware of the benefits, rules, regulations, and guidelines associated with the Town's Historic Districts and Heritage Area	Immediate	Town, HPC, HAC, SFHS	\$



#### **Objective 4: Expand policies that promote fiscal resilience through attraction of investments, capture of local markets, and meaningful employment for all residents**

Growing concerns regarding quality of life require the Town to take a deep look at how it can foster fiscal resilience to support residents' well-being. Fiscal resilience is the ability of an individual, group, or entity to thrive amidst economic challenges. Concerns over the rising cost of living, housing shortages, market volatility, and climate change pose significant threats to quality of life and will disproportionately impact at-risk communities in Seneca Falls.

The Town should seek to leverage its capacity to foster quality of life for residents through economic development initiatives and smart municipal finance strategies. One of the three planning principles identified in this plan is financial resilience. To uphold this principle, the CPIC and Town Board must weigh the short- and long-term financial needs of the Town and its residents. Making short-sighted decisions for short-term financial gain over long-term fiscal stability will only increase financial instability of the Town, and by extension place undue economic hardship on residents.

Recognizing the immediate need for long-term financial planning, the Town should develop a fiscal resilience plan to review the current financial status of the Town and lay out a path towards self-sufficiency independent of revenue generated from the Seneca Meadows Landfill (see page 85 for more detail). In conjunction with developing a fiscal resilience plan, the Town needs a reserve fund policy to determine how additional funds should be allocated. This reserve policy will help to guide the Town to make long-term financial decisions that will advance action items identified in this plan, as well as complete identified capital improvement projects and other Town projects.

The overall fiscal resilience of Town residents is tied to the overall economic and living conditions cultivated in Seneca Falls. It will be important for the Town to not lose sight of the need to support its year-round residents amidst efforts to capture regional tourism

markets and attract seasonal visitors. As such, the Town should work with existing employers, as well as pursue future development opportunities to enhance live-work opportunities for residents.

The Town's community amenities, cultural assets, and strategic location between major urban hubs in Upstate New York, create untapped potential to support economic development opportunities to support a variety of quality-of-life strategies for residents. The planning process emphasized the need for the Town to collaborate with local and regional partners to maximize capacity and resources. An essential partner in these efforts will be the Cayuga Nation. The Town and the Nation have many areas of mutual interest and will greatly benefit from harnessing collective resources to enhance quality of life for all who live in Seneca Falls (see more information on page 79).

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 4</i>	<i>Expand policies that promote fiscal and environmental resilience through attraction of investments, the capture of local market, and meaningful employment for all residents</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	2.4.1 Develop a fiscal resilience plan to enable the Town to be financially independent of the landfill	Immediate	Town, CPIC	\$\$
	2.4.2 As part of 2.4.1, ensure the fiscal resilience plan outlines how the Town will cover current operating costs with current revenues generated outside of any monies received through present or future host community agreements with Seneca Meadows Inc. (i.e. the Town should make financial decisions based on the long-term fiscal sustainability)	Near-term	Town, CPIC	\$
	2.4.3 As part of 2.4.1, establish a reserve policy for the Town and ensure the Town Board allocates funding accordingly	Ongoing	Town, CPIC	\$
	2.4.4 As part 4.1 and 4.3, earmark funding for the implementation of the comprehensive plan and associated action items	Immediate	Town, CPIC	\$\$\$
	2.4.5 As part of 4.1, ensure the Town's economic development strategic plan advances opportunities to allow for more residents to live and work within the Town. Convene major employers to discuss barriers, brainstorm solutions, and implement projects to enhance live-work housing opportunities	Long-term	Town, CPIC, Local Employers	\$
	2.4.6 Pursue efforts to advance mutually beneficial economic development opportunities between the Town and Cayuga Nation	Immediate	Town, Cayuga Nation	\$



## Policy Area 3: Preservation and Enhancement of the Built & Natural Environments

*Goal: Improve and expand infrastructure and pursue planning opportunities to promote the resilience, sustainability, and vibrancy of the Town*

Thriving communities understand the need to place human and nature-centered approaches to development at the forefront of planning. The Town of Seneca Falls should seek to support infrastructure development and community planning that preserves its existing resources and proactively plans for the future. Exciting advances in community design approaches and building technologies are foregrounding the integration of the built and natural environment to promote long-term sustainability for both humans and nature. The Town will need to examine the long-term environmental, social, and economic impacts of development to foster resiliency and sustainability for its residents.



## Objective 1: Maintain and pursue infrastructure upgrades to ensure the viability of current and future infrastructure

Infrastructure is the backbone of municipal governments as it provides essential community services. Whether it be water, sanitary, sewer, roads, or broadband, these infrastructural resources are necessary for the long-term health and well-being of the Seneca Falls community. Throughout the planning process, the Town's existing infrastructure capacity was a reoccurring theme, whether it be stormwater systems to manage flooding, sanitary sewers to replace septic tanks, or enhancing broadband access to address educational and informational inequalities. Recognizing the importance of infrastructure for the well-being of its community members, the Town should continue to prioritize the maintenance and enhancement of its existing infrastructure to support quality of life for all who live, work, or visit Seneca Falls.

Enhancing this aspect of the building environment will include strategies that:

- Prioritize infrastructure development that maximizes existing resources and promotes the long-term fiscal and social sustainability of development projects
- Seek funding opportunities to finance infrastructure improvements such as through grant programs or the creation of reserve funds
- Examine sustainable expansion of existing infrastructure to underserve or unserved areas of the Town
- Encourage the integration of the renewable energy and other sustainability initiatives to promote natural resource conservation
- Work with County and regional partners to improve infrastructure capacity and resource synergies

Action Plan				
Objective 1	Maintain and pursue infrastructure upgrades to ensure the viability of current and future infrastructure	Timeframe	Partners	Relative Cost
Action Items	3.1.1 Develop and maintain a capital improvement plan (CIP) to adequately prepare for, fund, and implement infrastructure and other capital improvement projects	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.1.2 Plan for and undertake phased improvements to the Town's water and sewer systems	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$\$\$
	3.1.3 As part of 3.1.2, build out water and sewer infrastructure to unserved areas within the Town (including areas with existing wells and septic tanks)	Long-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$\$\$
	3.1.4 Evaluate all new development for impact on water and sewer service to existing development and adjacent parcels	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.1.5 Identify and encourage opportunities to integrate renewable energy sources onto existing properties and new developments in accordance with the Town's Zoning Code	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.1.6 Work with NYSEG to assess the Town's electrical infrastructure and advocate for updates where needed, particularly to support future waterfront development and event opportunities	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, NYSEG	\$\$
	3.1.7 Explore opportunities to enhance local, County, and regional partnerships to maximize infrastructure capacity and resources	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.1.8 Identify and support opportunities to improve pedestrian infrastructure in the Town (e.g. sidewalk improvements and other walkability enhancements, etc.)	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$\$\$
	3.1.9 Pursue grant and other funding opportunities to increase the Town's fiscal capacity to carry out infrastructure projects	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC, Consultants	\$

## Objective 2: Enhance connectivity and accessibility between existing parks, trails, greenspaces, waterways, and residential neighborhoods

Throughout the planning process, enhancing the connectivity between the Town's built and natural environment was a prominent theme in multiple sub-committee meetings as well as the public forum. Access to outdoor greenspace is essential for quality of life as it has immense impacts on individual and collective physical and social health.

Seneca Falls is fortunate to have multiple parks and trails (including a U.S. National Historic Park), a beautiful waterfront, and historic neighborhoods, yet these various resources are not necessary easily accessible by means other than a car. There is substantial room to improve connectivity between the Town's greenspaces and neighborhoods, as well as create new spaces to expand access to underserved areas.



Instituting a Complete Streets Policy will be a key strategy to improve overall access and safety to greenspaces and resources throughout Seneca Falls. As part of this policy, the Town should examine areas to encourage active and multi-modal transportation opportunities. Strategies like creating bicycle boulevards to designate specific routes for bikers, or sidewalk repairs to promote neighborhood walkability are essential first steps in encouraging human-centered design for the creation of safe and vibrant communities (see page 96 for more information). In addition, tapping into broader regional discussions on transportation initiatives will enable the Town to be a more active advocate for public transportation access and broader regional connectivity.

The importance of enhancing overall walkability and connectivity between the Town's existing and future resources will create a positive feedback loop with the Town's economic development strategies. The built environment is intrinsically tied to economic and social well-being. Recognizing this connection is important to enable the multi-pronged economic development and built environment strategies to work together to improve quality of life in Seneca Falls.



ACTION PLAN				
Objective 2	<i>Enhance connectivity and accessibility between existing parks, trails, greenspaces, waterways, and residential neighborhoods</i>	Timeframe	Partners	Relative Cost
Action Items	3.2.1 Develop a parks and recreation master plan to inventory existing green space, identify potential areas for improvement, and create strategies to ensure adequate access to parks and related recreational spaces, with a focus on serving neighborhoods outside a 1/4-mile walking radius of existing amenities	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants,	\$\$\$
	3.2.2 As part of 3.2.1, identify parcels to be converted into parks, playgrounds, trail links, and/or greenspaces in areas where deficits have been identified	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants,	\$
	3.2.3 Maintain and improve the safety, accessibility, and cleanliness of existing and future parks and greenspaces	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC	\$\$\$
	3.2.4 Pursue opportunities to expand the Ludovico Trail to connect to the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail	Near-term	Town, CSCTA, SFCCPC	\$\$\$
	3.2.5 Actively participate in regional parks/recreation and transportation decision-making through coordination with local and regional partners	Long-term	SFCCPC	\$
	3.2.6 Create and adopt a Complete Streets policy to enhance the Town's overall walkability through balancing the needs of different modes of transportation, pedestrian safety, user age and ability, and land use	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants,	\$\$\$
	3.2.7 As part of the 3.2.6, examine the existing pedestrian network and identify areas that need repairs and enhancements to improve usability, safety, and enjoyment	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants,	\$\$
	3.2.8 As part of 3.2.6, Create bicycle boulevards also known as "neighborhood greenways" along Mynderse St, Porter St, Clinton St, Bridge St, W Bayard St, Garden St, and Ovid St to encourage active transportation routes and promote road safety	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants,	\$\$
	3.2.9 Explore opportunities to enhance local public transportation options (e.g. a community shuttle service, etc.)	Long-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants, CPIC	\$

### Objective 3: Preserve and restore the historic character of the downtown and residential neighborhoods

Seneca Falls has a rich cultural legacy that is visible in its historic buildings and architectural styles prominent throughout the Town. For those who call Seneca Falls home, life is characterized by one of the most historically rich communities in Upstate New York. However, vacant and blighted properties erode the community character necessitating the Town Planning and Zoning Boards as well as the Code Enforcement Officers to pursue efforts to address blighted and deteriorating properties; however, more progress is needed. As such, preserving the community character of the Town will entail continued support of the Town and historic organizations, as well as creating policies and guidelines to create a directed approach to historic preservation.



The Town has some of the oldest housing stock in the Finger Lakes Region with over 40% of housing units built prior to 1940. The Town's two Historic Districts are first steps in preserving the character of these neighborhoods, but more can be done to encourage the preservation of community character throughout the downtown and residential areas. To foster architectural cohesion between the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, the Town should consider establishing design guidelines to create consistent regulations for building rehabilitation and new construction. When used in conjunction with local preservation ordinances and project review by local planning and historic commissions, design guidelines help to ensure that historic properties are protected, and that new construction adheres to the historic character of the Town. Form-Based Codes would be an additional step the Town could take to create a more formal regulatory process to preserve community character.

Recognizing the need to foster community support and learning regarding the importance of historic preservation, the Town should seek to foster existing partnerships and build new partnerships with historic preservation organizations. These relationships will be essential to connect businesses and homeowners to historic preservation professionals who can help guide historic preservation projects, as well as obtain grant funding to finance historic preservation efforts.



ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>Preserve and restore the historic character of the downtown and residential neighborhoods</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	3.3.1 Create design guidelines to preserve the community character of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods (e.g. Form Based Codes). Promote and encourage adherence to the downtown design guidelines	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Consultants, CPIC	\$\$\$
	3.3.2 Examine and pursue appropriate measures to enforce the Town Code to address blighted and deteriorating properties	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$
	3.3.3 Promote a mix of residential types and densities that meet the needs of residents while maintaining healthy neighborhoods	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Developers	\$
	3.3.4 Focus new development density on underdeveloped downtown sites and prioritize adaptive reuse over demolition/new construction to maintain the Town's community character (e.g. GTE Sylvania plant)	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Developers	\$
	3.3.5 Ensure the continued support of the Town's Historic Districts, Historic Preservation Commission, Heritage Area Commission, and other historic preservation organizations	Ongoing	Town, HPC, HAC, SFHS	\$\$
	3.3.6 Encourage property owners to consult with the Landmark Society of Western New York, the Seneca Falls Historical Society, the Seneca Fall Historic Commission, the Heritage Area Commission, and other historic organizations to advise on historically compatible renovations and additions	Long-term	Town, HPC, HAC, SFHS	\$
	3.3.7 Pursue Community Development Block Grants, NYS Home Funds, NYS Rural Area Revitalization Program Funds, and other funding sources for housing and building rehabilitation	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Consultants,	\$\$

#### **Objective 4: Identify and implement strategic planning opportunities to maximize canal, lakefront, and downtown development**

A key feature of the Town's economic development strategy hinges on the connectivity between the Town's main public spaces in the downtown and the canal front areas. Having recently won a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) grant and a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) grant, Seneca Falls can capitalize on these funding opportunities to pursue extensive revitalization in the downtown and along the canal.

Creating vibrant mixed-use spaces should be a priority for these areas. The rise of mixed-use development to foster revitalization stems from the economic and social benefits it engenders. Mixed-use development spurs economic opportunity as the coupling of typical first-floor retail with upper-story residential creates new spaces for businesses and residential units that create the foot traffic to sustain those businesses. In addition, mixed-use development encourages walkability and alternative modes of transportation as people are able to live, work, and play within the downtown district or nearby neighborhood.

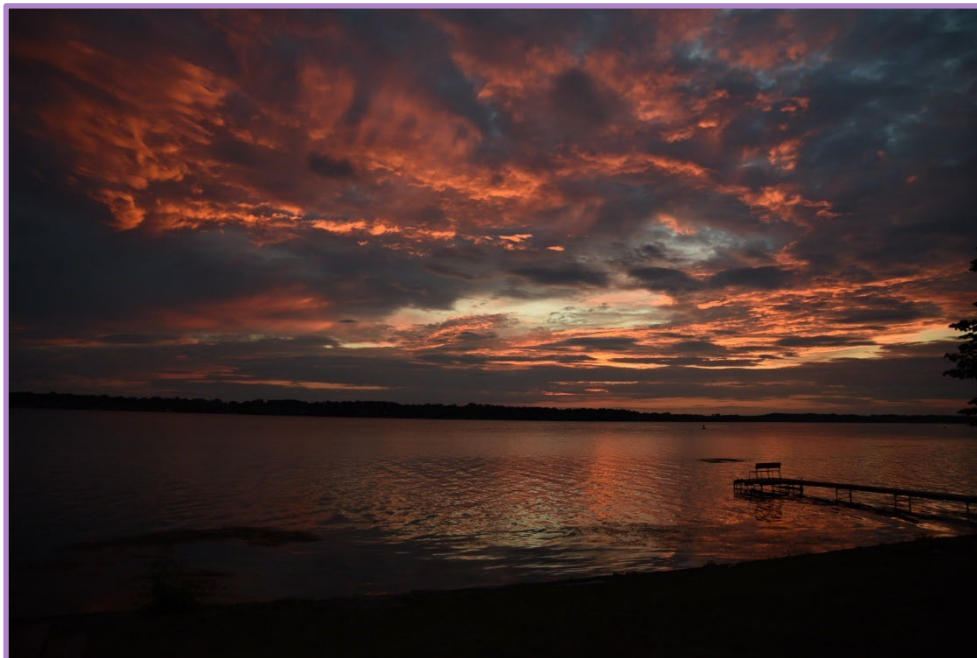
With substantial funding from the DRI and LWRP to catalyze long-term investment in the downtown and along the canal, the Town will need to prioritize the long-term development goals of these spaces to maximize existing resources and create thriving spaces where businesses and people want to locate (see more information on page 96).

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 4</i>	<i>Identify and implement strategic planning opportunities to maximize canal, lakefront, and downtown development</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	3.4.1 Promote mixed-use development to ensure an appropriate balance of residential and other uses to enhance the vitality and walkability of the downtown, canal, and surrounding neighborhoods	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Developers	\$
	3.4.2 Pursue grant opportunities and other funding sources to support rehabilitation and new development opportunities in the downtown and the waterfront	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, Consultants	\$
	3.4.3 Support wayfinding efforts (e.g. gateway features, signage, etc.) to improve resident's and visitor's experience of Seneca Falls, enabling people to navigate pedestrian and vehicular direction, parking, and locate key destinations	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$
	3.4.4 Encourage adherence to the design guidelines to promote waterfront and downtown vibrancy through best practices in urban design, site design, and architecture	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.4.5 Ensure the Town's Downtown Revitalization Initiative and Waterfront Revitalization Plan align with the policies and strategies outlined in this plan	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.4.6 Encourage and incentivize water dependent & water enhanced uses along the canal to improve boater and pedestrian experiences	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CPIC	\$
	3.4.7 Maintain and enhance visual and physical public access to and along the waterfront	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, CSCTA	\$
	3.4.8 Offer flexible parking regulations and promote shared parking opportunities to maximize downtown and waterfront spaces for public use	Long-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$

**Objective 5: Pursue sustainability initiatives and enforce design/development regulations to prevent environmental degradation and enhance natural resource conservation**

The preservation of the Town's natural resources through sustainability initiatives and green design will be necessary steps to ensure the long-term resilience of the community. Taking a long-term approach to sustainability means that the Town should pursue opportunities to reduce the consumption of non-renewable resources, minimize the production of waste, and create healthy, productive environments for those who live and work in Seneca Falls.

Community design will be an essential component of this approach as encouraging walkability through a Complete Streets Policy and promoting mixed-use development, helps to promote healthy lifestyles (physically and socially) through the built environment. In addition, the Town should take a proactive stance to natural resource conservation by being a leader in sustainable design and construction through encouraging the use of the latest green building features and technologies.



Throughout the planning process, a number of sustainability initiatives were identified to enhance environmental conservation; however, the most immediate initiative to address the controversial issue of the Seneca Meadows Landfill, is the creation of a municipal composting program to lessen the production of solid waste for all in the Town. This will be a first step in empowering the Town to live by the values of sustainability laid out in this plan as the community wrestles with long-term decisions regarding the Landfill. As a part of this initiative, the Town should cultivate local and regional partnerships to create a coalition of municipalities and counties that are committed to reducing the production of solid waste across New York State. Education will be an important piece of these efforts, and the Town should turn to community partners to create education programming for the public (see page 85 for more information).

ACTION PLAN				
<i>Objective 5</i>	<i>Pursue sustainability initiatives and enforce design/development regulations to prevent environmental degradation and enhance natural resource conservation</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Relative Cost</i>
Action Items	3.5.1 Protect the Town's natural resources through pursuing green urbanism and sustainable design practices such as encouraging walkability, sustainable landscaping, tree planting, and greenspace enhancements, etc.	Ongoing	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$\$
	3.5.2 Require that all public and private infrastructure upgrades, building rehabilitation efforts, and new development projects maximize sustainability features	Long-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$
	3.5.3 Enforce local code regarding the Town's preferences for the siting of renewable energy assets, including solar installations. Work with the Town's Code Enforcement Officers as well as local, county, and regional partners to promote sustainability upgrades and other projects	Immediate	Town, Planning/Zoning Board	\$\$
	3.5.4 Identify feasible Town-led initiatives and work with community partners to reduce Town, resident, and local business environmental impacts (e.g. community composting, promotion of efficient building upgrades, sustainable landscaping, etc.)	Near-term	Town, Planning/Zoning Board, SFCCPC, Consultants	\$\$\$
	3.5.5 As part of 3.5.4, in partnership with community organizations, design and execute a municipal composting program for residents and businesses to reduce the Town's production of solid waste and reliance on solid waste management facilities (e.g. the landfill)	Near-term	Town, CPIC, Community Organizations	\$\$\$
	3.5.6 As part of 3.5.4, coordinate with community partners and local environmental justice organizations to conduct educational programming to support local sustainability initiatives including education and events highlighting farming and agricultural practices (e.g. 4H programs, community events like Empire Farm Day, etc.)	Long-term	Town, CPIC, Community Organizations	\$\$

## Policy Area 4: Curation of Arts, Culture, & Placemaking

*Goal: Build on and promote the Town's heritage, culture, and community character*

Vibrant communities are those that bring people together and create opportunities for civic engagement and social interaction. Places and spaces that engender organic social interaction cultivate a “sense of place” that attracts people and opportunity. For Seneca Falls to be a vibrant community, it needs to lean into its unique characteristics that set it apart from neighboring communities. The primary of which is cultivating the Town’s historic legacy as the birthplace of women’s rights to grow an organic community identity as a historic Town with a thriving arts and cultural scene; this will enable the Town to utilize its existing assets to attract people, whether it be long-term residents or seasonal visitors, who are drawn to the Town’s unique community character and contribute to the Town’s “sense of place.”

Cultivating a “sense of place” around the Town’s arts, cultural, and historic amenities mean tapping into policies, strategies, and tactics that shape the built and social environments in the Town. A key piece of this will be harnessing the power of placemaking. As a concept, placemaking is an approach to community planning that strengthens the connectivity between people and the places they share. It is a human-centered planning approach that foregrounds community participation in shaping the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place. To maximize





existing relationships and resources, the Town of Seneca Falls will want to embrace placemaking strategies to advance its heritage, culture, and community character to create vibrant places and enhance quality of life (see more information on page 96).

**Objective 1: Encourage partnerships and collaborative opportunities between the Town's historic, cultural, and community partners**

For a small town, Seneca Falls bursts with local and national organizations that celebrate the Town's historic and cultural assets. From the Women's Rights National Historical Park and the National Women's Hall of Fame to Historic Districts and the Heritage and Tourism Center and the Seneca Falls Historical Society to the It's a Wonderful Life Museum, residents and visitors alike have their pick of museums and historic sites. However, with a variety of national and local organizations comes the need for communication and collaboration to ensure all of the entities in Seneca Falls work together on promoting common objectives.



The planning process revealed a need for a more formal working group to gather stakeholders from the Town's predominant historical and cultural institutions to break down information silos and establish collaborative initiatives. In particular, improving educational programming regarding the Town's history and its local, national, and international significance, was a prominent theme throughout the public engagement. While Seneca Falls is known for its role as the birthplace of women's rights, there are a plethora of opportunities to learn more about the Town and the Region at places like the Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry, the Seneca Falls Historical Society, the It's a Wonderful Life Museum, or the future Cayuga Nation Cultural Center.

Taking steps to ensure the Town's arts, cultural, and heritage organizations are all working towards a united goal of establishing Seneca Falls as the arts and culture destination in the Region will bolster the Town's economic development strategy and create events and programs to make Seneca Falls an even better place to live. Through a unified approach, the heritage and culture of Seneca Falls is something that can be enjoyed by all.

Action Plan				
Objective 1	<i>Encourage partnerships and collaborative opportunities between the Town's historic, cultural, and community partners</i>	Timeframe	Partners	Relative Cost
Action Items	4.2.1 Enhance coordination among the Town's critical institutions through convening a Seneca Falls Community Collaboration Working Group	Immediate	Town, CIC, SFCCWG	\$
	4.2.2 Charge the above working group with developing and implementing collaborative initiatives that build on the synergies among the Town's critical institutions	Near-term	CIC, SFCCWG	\$
	4.2.3 As part of 2.1 and 2.2, the SFCCWG should seek opportunities to enhance local and regional partnerships between historical and cultural organizations	Long-term	Town, Cayuga Nation, SFCCWG	\$
	4.1.2 Seek opportunities to engender pride in Seneca Falls' historic prominence through community learning and engagement	Near-term	CIC, Community Organizations	\$
	4.1.3 Work with community partners to develop and promote educational events and resources that celebrate Seneca Falls' heritage and promote them through in-person events, workshops, and online (e.g. a virtual historical walking tour)	Long-term	CIC, Community Organizations, SFCC, SF Library, SFHS	\$
	4.2.4 Foster collaboration and continued engagement between the Town and the Cayuga Nation	Immediate	Town, Cayuga Nation, SFCCWG	\$

## Objective 2: Encourage create placemaking to enhance the Town's arts, culture, aesthetics, and sense of place

Part and parcel of organizing the Town's arts, cultural, and heritage organizations requires undertaking policies and strategies that lean into the Town's branding as the arts, cultural, and heritage destination in Seneca Falls. Placemaking to create spaces where people want to be doesn't happen on its own. Rather, individuals and groups need to intentionally implement placemaking strategies to shape the public realm. Creative placemaking is particular type of placemaking used by diverse partners and stakeholders to improve the physical environment, promote social change, and spur economic development through the use of arts and culture.

Establishing an Arts and Creative Community Commission (ACCC) is step one in organizing a group of local stakeholders to oversee creative placemaking in Seneca Falls. Through a variety of strategies and tactics, placemaking cultivates a "sense of place" within the Town's built environment and encourages social interaction to build bonds between residents. From organizing public art contests and murals to creating student art days to organizing pop up events, the ACCC will be the leading organization in Seneca Falls advancing the Town's commitment to arts, culture, and heritage.

Action Plan				
Objective 2	Encourage creative placemaking to enhance the Town's arts, culture, and aesthetics	Timeframe	Partners	Relative Cost
Action Items	4.3.1 Create an Arts and Creative Community Committee to spearhead the implementation of Policy Area 4	Immediate	CPIP, ACCC	\$
	4.1.1 Utilize the Town's marketing campaign to highlight the history and heritage of Seneca Falls	Near-term	CIC, Community Organizations	\$
	4.3.2 Explore opportunities to support local artists in Seneca Falls (e.g. local art festival, Canal Fest, etc.)	Near-term	CIC, SFCCWG, SFBA	\$
	4.1.4 Support the development of a Performing Arts Center to enhance performing and cultural arts in Seneca Falls	Long-term	Town, CIC	\$\$
	4.3.3 Work with community partners to determine the viability of creating artists and/or other studio space downtown	Long-term	CIC, SFCCWG, Community Organizations	\$
	4.1.4 Encourage and promote "local tourism" events for residents (e.g. promotion of the Town's event calendar app, etc.)	Near-term	Town, CIC, SFHTC	\$
	4.3.4 Enhance public art through creating a program to commission downtown murals, sculptures, art installations, etc.	Near-term	CIC, SFCCWG	\$
	4.3.5 Coordinate with community partners to ensure the continuation of the Music in the Park series	Ongoing	SFCCWG, SFHTC	\$

## Additional Considerations

The Priority Policy Areas outline the plan's comprehensive strategy to advance Seneca Falls toward its 2040 vision. The Action Plan matrices are intended to provide guidance for the CPIC over the next one-five years until it is time to update the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive plans cover a range of topics but are limited in their ability to go into great depth for any one topic due to their breadth. To that end, it is important to recognize that the utility of this plan hinges on its uses identified at the beginning of this document, foremost of which is its role as a guiding policy document that the community can build on.

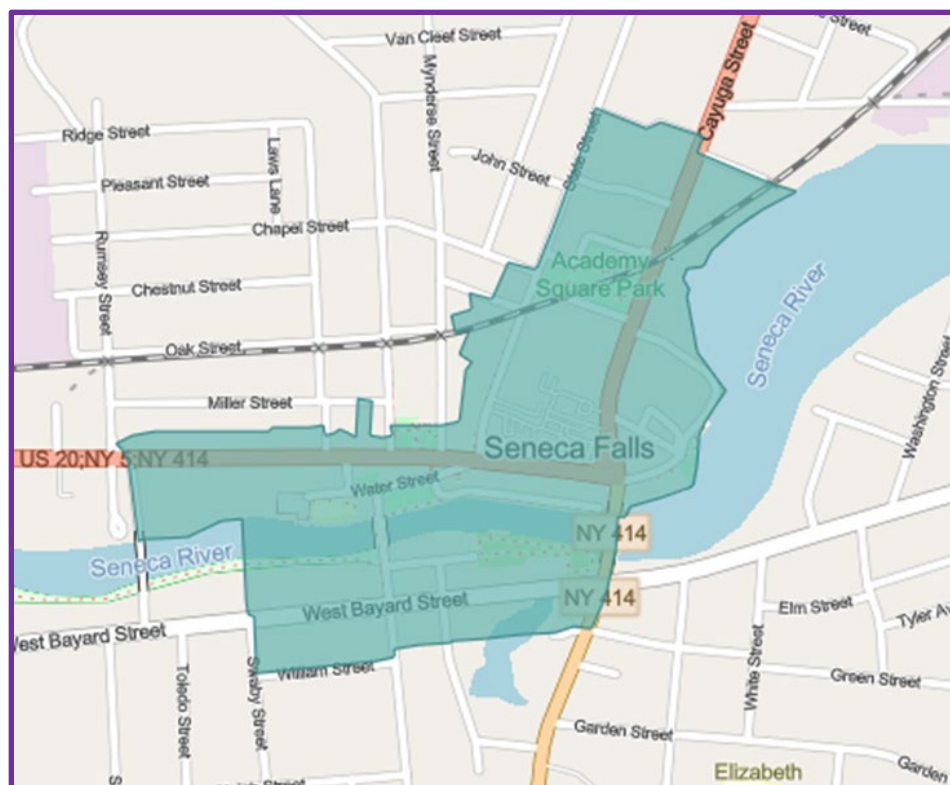
However, the ADVANCE Seneca Falls 2040 planning process illuminated the following special topics that require additional detail.

- Curating Community Vibrancy – Placemaking & Complete Streets
- Rebuilding Relationships between the Town & the Cayuga Nation
- Resilient Financing for the Present & the Future
- The Seneca Meadows Landfill – Now and Into the Future

## Curating Community Vibrancy – Complete Streets & Creative Placemaking

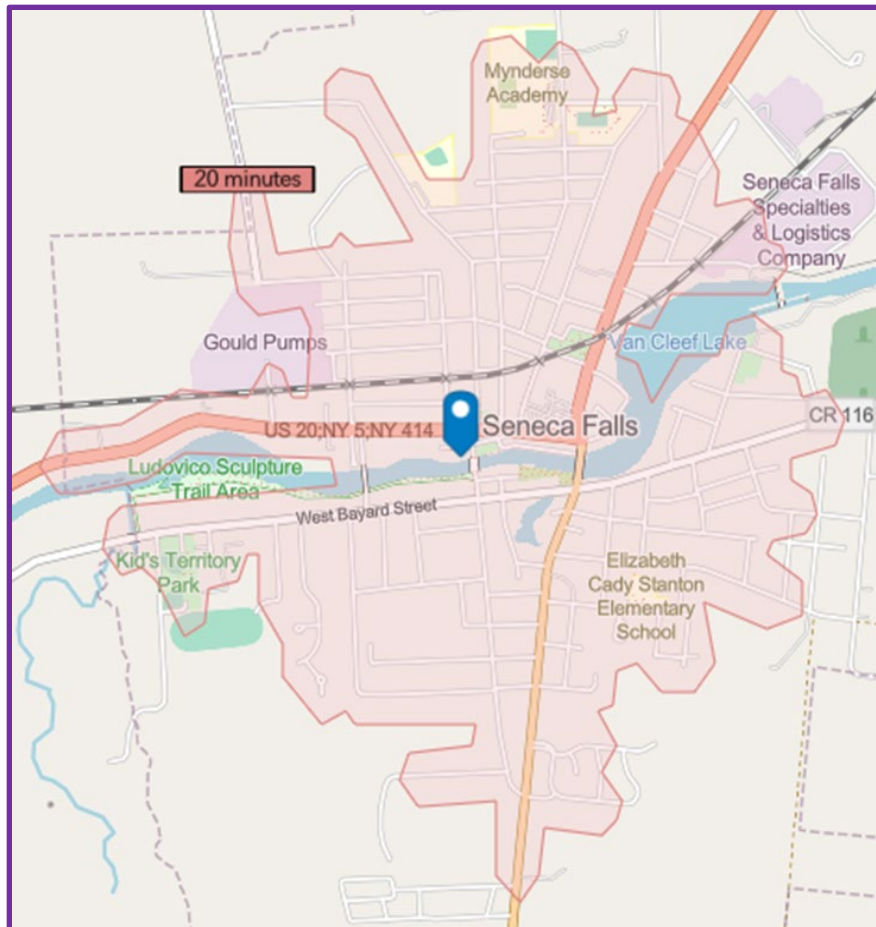
To provide additional context regarding the plan’s downtown revitalization strategies, this section outlines information and best practices that the Town can pursue to increase community vibrancy.

The Town of Seneca Falls is at a crossroads regarding its future. Poised to be the major arts, cultural, and heritage destination in Upstate New York, the Town will need to make strategic choices over the next few years to shape the long-term trajectory of the community. The comprehensive planning process revealed the desire for Seneca Falls to create a cohesive community brand centered around its heritage as the birthplace of the Women’s Rights Movement and the belief in the value of each person. A double down on investment will create a thriving downtown and waterfront that celebrates this history through artistic and cultural expression.



DRI & LWRP District Boundary

Recent funding awarded through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) provides catalytic investment that will have a tremendous impact on the built environment and by extension the social and cultural fabric of the Town. The projects in these grant programs will not happen overnight but will create incremental progress that will compound investment throughout the downtown, waterfront, and the Town's residential districts.



The map above displays the district boundary for the DRI and LWRP that is concentrated in the downtown core. This is the target area for investment through these grant programs, as well as accompanying private sector investment to spur economic development opportunities and urban revitalization. Through capital investment to key anchor institutions like the National Women's Hall of Fame and the It's a Wonderful Life Museum, street-scaping improvements, and other enhancements to the built environment, the DRI



will transform downtown Seneca Falls into a vibrant place for residents and visitors alike. Similarly, the LWRP, while still in the beginning stages, will create a plan to compound investment from the DRI to activate the canal front.

While the investment of these grants is centralized in the downtown core, the impacts will expand into the surrounding residential neighborhoods through targeted strategies to improve walkability and connectivity. The map to the right displays a 20-minute walking boundary for everything within 20 minutes of the Seneca Falls community center. This walking boundary encapsulates significant portions of residential neighborhoods in Seneca Falls to demonstrate how strategic investment in pedestrian and multi-modal transportation infrastructure will connect the Town's residential areas to the DRI and LWRP investment areas.

It's important to recognize that these grant programs alone will not sustain the change necessary to transform Seneca Falls into a thriving arts, cultural, and heritage destination. The Town will need to take a comprehensive approach to community planning that addresses the physical, economic, and social factors at play to create a place where people want to live and visit.

As mentioned in Priority Policy Area 4, to curate this brand as a historical, artistic, and cultural hub, the Town should embrace placemaking as a strategic approach to shaping the built and social environment. Placemaking coupled with adopting a Complete Streets Policy (Priority Policy Area 3) will empower Seneca Falls to become the thriving arts, cultural, and heritage destination described in this plan's vision statement.

## Placemaking

To achieve the desired revitalization outcomes of the DRI and LWRP, placemaking will be an essential approach to transforming public space into quality spaces where people want to live. *Placemaking is the art of creating quality places, both in terms of aesthetics and their*

**functionality.** Good placemaking creates bonds between people and the places where they live, work, and play. Seneca Falls intends to lean into its arts, culture, and heritage as the backbone of revitalization. The Town should seek to incorporate creative placemaking strategies to improve downtown aesthetics, enhance connectivity, and create vibrant spaces.<sup>3</sup>

Placemaking takes a variety of shapes and tactics, but all center around shaping spaces that create and invite social interaction and community building. Examples of placemaking tactics include:

- ***Streetscaping*** – this tactic intends to improve the general quality, usability, design, and appearance of a street to manage traffic, enhance safety, improve sidewalk conditions and accessibility, improve usability through signage and wayfinding, and create opportunities for social interaction through the installation of visually engaging and other interactive elements.
  - Enhancing streetscaping and, by extension, the usability of the street, create an improved pedestrian experience. Designing streets where people want to go is essential for creating foot traffic – the key element for supporting downtown businesses. Coupling streetscaping with a Complete Streets Policy (see the later section) makes it easier for people to live, shop, work, and play in downtown Seneca Falls.
- ***Public Gathering Places*** – public spaces where people can gather outside of their homes or their places of work without needing to purchase something are key elements to fostering social interaction. Most cities lack accessible and vibrant public spaces that provide places for people of all ages to gather safely and comfortably. In the United States, libraries are among some of the last public spaces people can go where they do not need to purchase anything to use the space. As

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<sup>3</sup> Learn more about placemaking at Project of Public Spaces: <https://www.pps.org/>.

such, the Town of Seneca Falls should be cognizant of fostering public spaces in the downtown and along the waterfront to facilitate social interaction and community belonging through creating accessible public spaces.

- Public spaces can range in size and location such as downtown plazas and squares to public parks to pop-up community spaces. The essential theme of vibrant public spaces is that they must be accessible, include an activity or visual appeal to draw people, and be designed to invite people to congregate (e.g. seating and shade).



Source: K. Peinhardt, Project for Public Spaces, 2019

- **Gateway Improvements and Wayfinding**– placemaking typically signals entry points to a space whether it be a downtown or neighborhood through creating a “sense of place” or a “feeling of arrival” through the built environment. Placemaking helps to create distinctions between different spheres of space and helps to signal the areas for social interaction. Vibrant public spaces have a variety of anchor institutions that generate foot traffic at different times of the day. This helps to create a steady stream of foot traffic to make a place feel used and safe, as well as support nearby businesses. Wayfinding and signage are essential components of allowing pedestrians to easily navigate between anchor institutions and enjoy being in the public realm.
  - For example, once the DRI and LWRP projects are complete, downtown Seneca Falls will have a mix of public institutions, museums, residents, and trails that will foster downtown vibrancy throughout the day.



Source: MapQuest, Seneca Falls, 2023



- **Public Art**– Making the public realm aesthetically pleasing is a key component of shaping spaces where people want to be. Public arts create vibrancy, creativity, and imagination to give life to a space.
  - Public art can take many forms such as sculptures, murals, paintings, creative signage, pavement designs, street furniture, temporary installations, all designed to engender interest and encourage people to interact with the public space and each other. The Ludovico Sculpture Trail is an important example of public art in downtown Seneca Falls.



Source: M. Alchemy, Ludovico Sculpture Trail, 2020

- **Landscaping and Design Standards**– Despite what it might seem like, placemaking does not necessarily mean free reign to splash paint on the sidewalk. Rather, placemaking should be incredibly intentional on how creativity is used to shape public space. Design standards are key pieces of intentional and cohesive

placemaking as they ensure the preservation of community character into the built environment.

Many of the objective and action items outlined in the Priority Policy Area section of the plan incorporate a placemaking approach to enhance revitalization and social cohesion through the built environment. As outlined in Priority Policy Area 4, the Arts and Creative Community Commission (ACCC) will be tasked with coordinating community partners to pursue placemaking approaches to enhance Seneca Falls as a vibrant community.

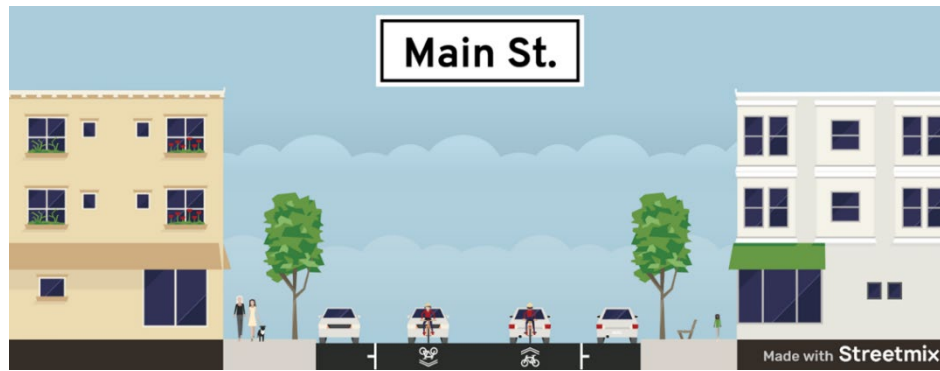
### Complete Streets

The placemaking tactics above are only useful if downtown Seneca Falls and the surrounding neighborhoods are safely and easily accessible to residents and visitors. *The concept of “Complete Streets” is an approach to planning, designing, and building streets that enhances access and safety for users regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.* Like placemaking, there is no singular approach to implementing a Complete Street. Rather a Complete Street approach is designed to be adaptable to specific community settings, understanding that different streets will require different tactics.

A Complete Street can include features such as sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crosswalks, median islands, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, among other tactics.

The image below provides a visual of what Main Street in Seneca Falls could look like with multiple Complete Street elements. It shows wide sidewalks with tree cover for shade and benches that allow pedestrians to comfortably use the street. Active storefronts create a stimulating environment and invite people to explore the downtown. Designated bicycle boulevards indicate multi-modal street use and encourage speed reduction to improve road safety. Street parking allows residents and visitors who aren't able to walk or bike downtown to access the Town's various amenities.





The utility of a Complete Streets approach is that it can be scaled up or down depending on the needs of the street as well as the financial and resource capacity available to implement the tactics.

Full-scale streetscaping that includes curb extension, sidewalk improvements, and road repaving can be expensive and time consuming. As an alternative, many of the Complete Street tactics are intended to be affordable and easy to implement with a couple of invested people and some creativity.

Priority Policy Area 3 calls for the Town to implement a Complete Street Policy as forthcoming investment through the DRI and LWRP, as well as the economic development strategies outlined in this plan hinge on creating a downtown that people can access and enjoy. To enhance accessibility throughout Seneca Falls, the Town could implement the following strategies:

**Bicycle Boulevards** – Bicycle boulevards are streets with low motorized traffic volumes and speeds that are designed and designated to give bicycle travel priority. Through the use of signs, pavement markings, and volume and speed measures to discourage motor vehicle traffic, bicycle boulevards are intended to create safe and convenient bike routes that limit the need for cyclists to use busy arterial streets.

- Bicycle boulevards are a good tactic to implement as they are fairly low cost compared to other types

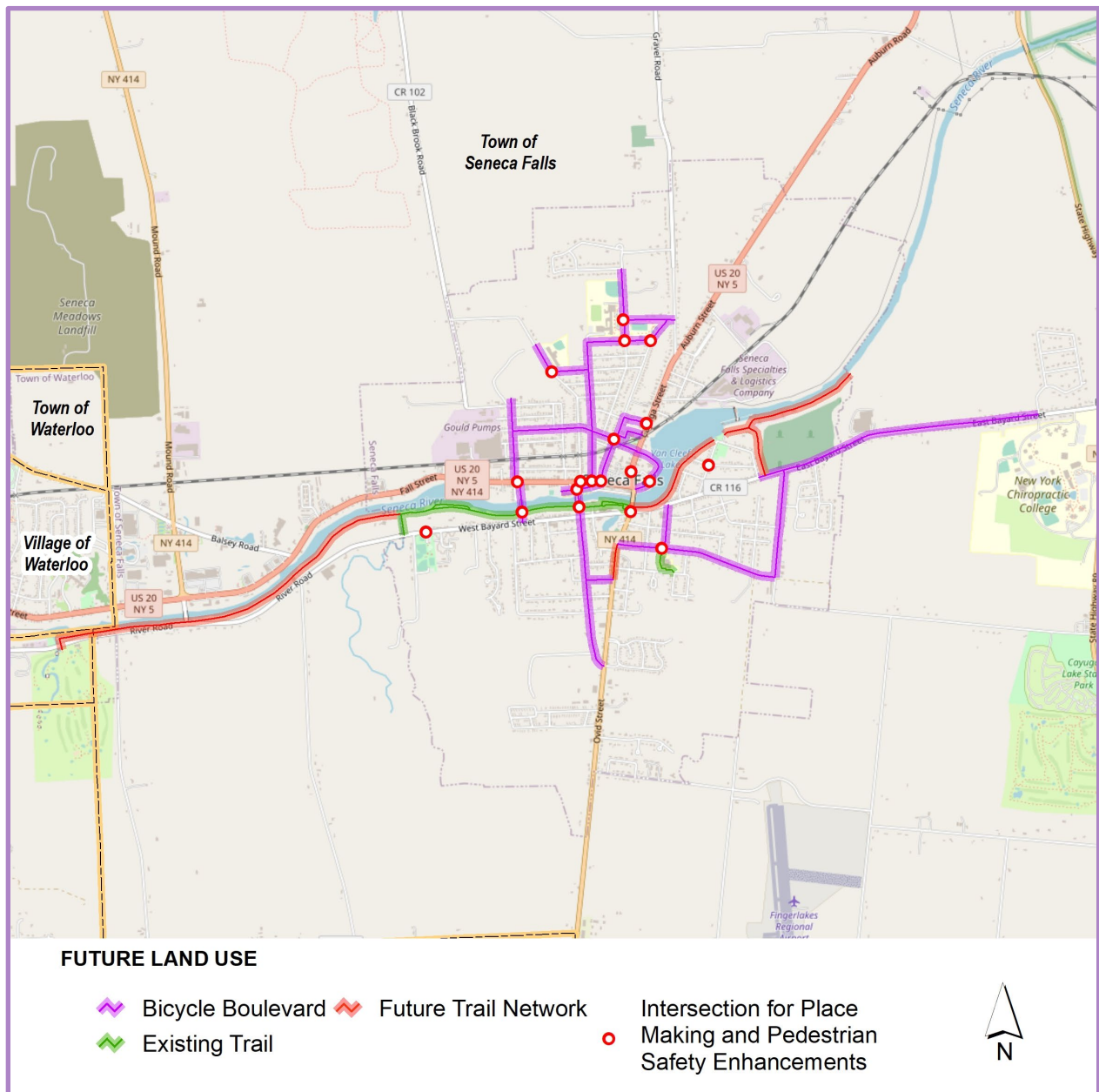


Source: Bicycle Path by spcbrass (CC BY-SA 2.0)

of bike infrastructure (particularly protected bike lanes) and primarily require cosmetic upgrades to the road through pavement markings and signage.

- The map below provides a visual of suggested streets to implement bicycle boulevards in the Town's future Complete Streets Policy. The designated streets in the map focus on routes that have lower traffic volumes, yet still connect the Town's major anchor institutions.

### Example Complete Street Implementation Map



**Trail Connectivity** – The Ludovico Sculpture Trail is a unique cultural asset and public greenspace in downtown Seneca Falls. When paired with designated bicycle boulevards, the Sculpture Trail has immense potential to provide safe travel routes for non-motorized vehicle users.

- Using existing trails and expanding new trails are great ways to encourage active recreation and create alternate transportation routes that enable bikers and pedestrians to get to their destinations without needing to go on busy roads.
- The map below illustrates the potential for the eastern and western expansion of the Ludovico Sculpture Trail. Future trail expansion should focus on expanding the Sculpture Trail to the west to connect to the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail. The missing link is just under three miles, and once complete, residents and visitors will be able to travel from downtown Seneca Falls through Waterloo all the way to the Seneca Lakes State Park in Geneva (about seven miles). Building this trail connection will help to spur recreational tourism opportunities and improve greenspace accessibility for Town residents.



Source: [Trail Link, Cayuga-Seneca Trail](#)



**Road Safety Through Public Art** – Coupling placemaking and public art is a great way to enhance road safety and encourage “sense of place” through creating inviting public spaces. Crosswalks are an important part of providing visual cues to indicate pedestrian activity and signal for vehicles to slow down.

- Art crosswalks are a great way of combining complete streets and placemaking to enhance road safety and encourage creative expression through the built environment. Public art creates a visually stimulating public realm, and when implemented with safety measures it can enhance pedestrian visibility and lead to traffic calming.
- The map on the previous page indicates potential intersections to feature public art crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety and encourage creative placemaking. An ideal location for an art crosswalk could be at the intersection of Bridge Street and Canal Street. This intersection has the potential to be a high pedestrian traffic area as it has the entrance to the Ludovico Sculpture Trail, the entrance to the National Women’s Hall of Fame, and is just beyond the Bridge Street Bridge that provides an important connection with the film “It’s a Wonderful Life”. The culmination of these community assets coupled with a public art crosswalk could make this intersection a key placemaking spot downtown.



Source: Mrkent 5780 (CC BY-SA 4.0) Melrose Promenade Public Art Community Crosswalk

The combination of these Complete Streets tactics is a great starting point for the Town to encourage downtown walkability and creative placemaking. In addition to the DRI/LWRP District Boundary, the bulk of the Complete Streets and placemaking tactics should be concentrated within the boundary visualized below in order to maximize resources and overall impact.

Advancing Seneca Falls towards the vision outlined in this plan will require an intentional and consistent commitment to creating public spaces that promote social interaction and cultural exchange. The transformative power of placemaking will enhance Seneca Falls as a vibrant arts, cultural, and heritage destination that will create a vibrant community for all.

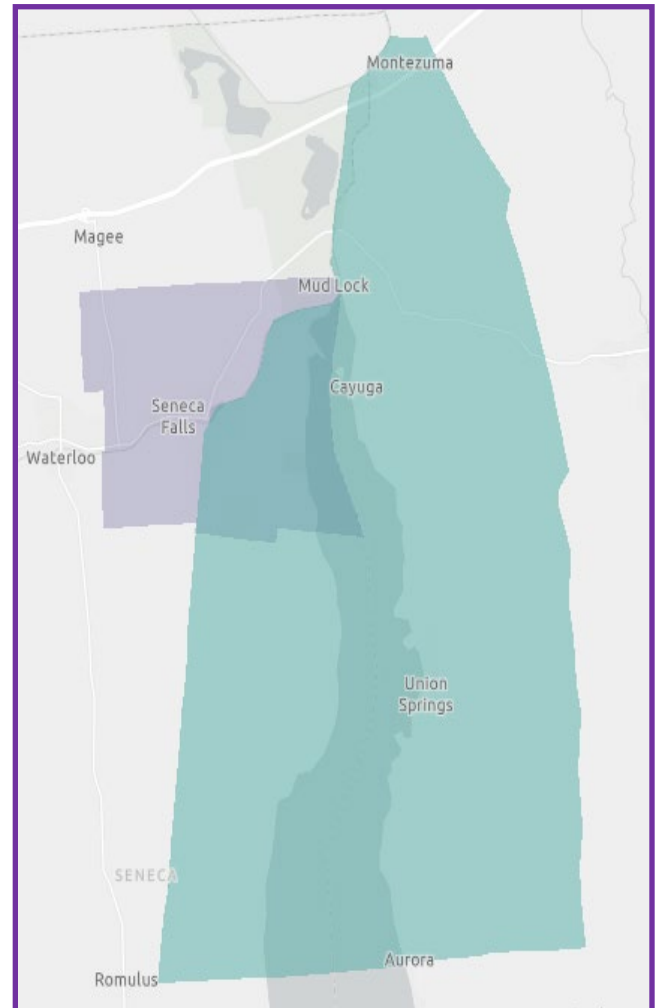


Complete Streets + Placemaking Target Area

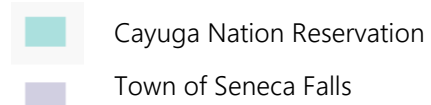
## Rebuilding Relationships between the Town & The Cayuga Nation

This comprehensive planning process has been an essential step in rebuilding the relationship between the Town of Seneca Falls and the Cayuga Nation. The Steering Committee recognizes the importance of sharing information learned throughout the planning process with the public and has included this section of the plan to provide background on how they came to the strategies outlined in this document.

The following section provides a brief history of the Town's Relationship with the Cayuga Nation and outlines targeted strategies to advance areas of mutual interest in the coming years.



A portion of the Town of Seneca Falls (see inset map) is situated on land designated by the 1794 Treaty of



Canandaigua as a reservation for the Cayuga Nation. In 1795 and 1805, New York purported to purchase the entirety of the Cayuga Reservation, despite federal law that forbid such purchases at the time. As a result of those purported sales, permanent non-Indian settlements, including those portions of the Town of Seneca Falls, were established, and took root within Cayuga lands.

Disclaimer: This map is solely to provide a visual representation of the Cayuga Nation Reservation created by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua. The above map is an approximate outline of the 64,015-acre Reservation. It is not a map of the Cayuga Nation's federal trust lands, nor the 1,200 acres of land owned by the Cayuga Nation.



Throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a series of legal challenges between the Cayuga Nation, the State of New York, and Seneca County were fought. The ultimate result of these actions was that the United States recognizes the continued existence of the Cayuga Reservation, but it has determined that the Nation lost aboriginal fee title to its lands and thus is unable to exercise full jurisdiction over them.

Indian lands are a complicated subject defined by federal law. Today, there are two types of Cayuga Nation “Indian lands.” First, there are reservation lands, which federal law defines as any lands (1) set aside under federal protection for the residence or use of tribal Indians and (2) not subsequently disestablished or diminished by Congress. Second, there are trust lands, which are lands that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs holds in trust for Indian tribes. Reservation status and trust status are different concepts. Under federal law, reservation lands include trust lands and non-trust lands – even non-trust lands owned by non-Indians—so long as the lands fall within reservation boundaries that have not been disestablished by Congress. Reservation status and trust status carry different implications for state, tribal, and federal authority.

The United States and both federal and state courts recognize that under the Treaty of Canandaigua, the Cayuga Reservation persists and consists of just over 64,000 acres across Seneca County and Cayuga County. In total, the Cayuga Nation has purchased fee simple ownership of just under 1,200 acres within the reservation footprint. Of that, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs has taken just over 100 acres into trust, making those 100 acres subject to the exclusive civil regulatory jurisdiction of the United States and the Nation.

Throughout the course of this comprehensive planning effort, representatives of the Town and the Comprehensive Plan team met with the leadership of the Cayuga Nation to

determine the best path forward for a mutually beneficial relationship. Town and Nation leadership identified several areas of mutual interest, including:

- Conservation of the Natural Environment
- Youth Education
- Economic Revitalization
- Community Development

As the foundation for a productive partnership, it is critical for Town leadership to recognize the impact of culture, heritage, and tradition on the legal and institutional issues of the Cayuga Nation and its citizens for the past two centuries; and in particular, of the last 50 years. As the birthplace of women's rights and this message of individual and collective value this history supports, the Town has a responsibility to support and reinforce the protection of the heritage of the Cayuga Nation.

*Action Items:*

- Town leadership should take affirmative action to recognize the legal status of the Cayuga Nation's sovereignty. In order to launch a renewed spirit of partnership and collaboration, the Town Board should formally adopt a policy of recognition. A sample policy statement is below:

*"The Town of Seneca Falls affirms the United States Supreme Court's recognition of the validity of elements of the Treaty of Canandaigua, which confers certain rights on the Cayuga Nation with respect to the designation of a Federal reservation of Cayuga homelands. Town leadership recognizes the right of the Cayuga Nation to select its own leaders, and to acquire property via purchase with the intent of placing said*

*property into Federal Trust for the benefit of the Cayuga Nation; and that lands placed into Trust are sovereign territories, governed by the Cayuga people.*

*It is the intent of the Town of Seneca Falls to facilitate and enable the 'perpetual peace' described in the Treaty of Canandaigua and to work alongside the Cayuga Nation citizens and their leaders in creating an environmental, social, and financially sustainable community in Seneca Falls.*

- The Town Board should work with the Cayuga Nation to establish a formal inter-municipal committee, focusing on community revitalization, land use, and economic development.

One of the most significant impediments to progress in the relationship between the Town and the Cayuga Nation is a lack of formal communication. It was noted during this effort that the meetings taking place between the Town and Cayuga leaders were the first in anyone's memory or in formal record.

A Joint Committee on Economic and Community Development should be formed, comprised of two members of the Town Board, two members of the Cayuga Nation leadership, and two members of the general public. The committee should meet quarterly, at a minimum, to advance shared economic and community development efforts, and to ensure open lines of communication on matters affecting the Town/Nation relationship. This committee will also be responsible for determining land use and zoning processes and regulations between the Town and the Nation.

- Establish a Cayuga Nation Cultural Center.

A common pattern emerging from the work of subcommittees, the Steering Committee, and the discussions among Town and Nation leaders was a lack of understanding and celebration among community members and visitors surrounding the history, culture, and traditions of the Cayuga people.

Town leaders will support the Cayuga Nation leadership in the establishment of a Cayuga Nation Cultural Center. This cultural center will be a venue in which the Cayuga Nation can share their culture, traditions, and history.

## Resilient Financing for the Present & the Future

Regarding the action items calling to increase the fiscal resilience of the Town, this section provides information and an explanation to foreground how the Town can begin to create a resilient future for the community.

At the core of every local government's charge is the necessity to care for the local population. Providing a safe, healthy community in which to live and raise a family is among the strongest elements when considering how to stabilize and grow the population. Quality of life amenities like great schools, parks and open space, and a vibrant downtown all depend upon one root aspect of local government operation – financial health, resilience, and sustainability.

In New York State, local governments are limited with respect to producing revenue. New York State law is prescriptive as to how local governments may generate property tax, sales tax, and other critical revenue sources. Additionally, New York constrains the ways in which municipalities may expend funds; generally charging local governments with efficient delivery of core services.

With respect to general, Townwide operation, in 2021, from an order of magnitude perspective, Seneca Falls raised approximately \$8.7 million in revenue (Source – 2023 Town Budget document). This was comprised of:

- Property Tax - \$3.8 million (44%)
- Charges for Services (primarily landfill) - \$3.0 million (34%)
- State Aid / Grants - \$1.7 million (20%)
- All Other Funds - \$200,000 (2%)

### *Property Tax*

Particularly in New York State, it is not uncommon for the most significant source of revenue to be property taxes. It is the mechanism over which local governments have the greatest level of control (though not unlimited control).

Property tax revenue is calculated in a relatively simple formula which includes the taxable value of property in the community (as determined by market values and confirmed by the Property Tax Assessor), and the tax rate (as set by the Town Board).



$$\text{Assessed Value} \times \text{Tax Rate} = \text{Tax Levy}$$

As a result of largely local control, property taxes are also the revenues most subject to political winds. Property owners are vigilant to ensure that the tax levy is set at the absolute minimum necessary to address their characterization of community need.

A particular challenge for the Town of Seneca Falls is the modest rate by which the Town's property values have grown. While a recent (2023) property tax reassessment occurred, flaring tempers associated with newly determined values, regional data demonstrates that Seneca Falls lags most communities in the region relative to increases in market values of property. Growth rates between 2013 and 2022 for selected communities include:

- Town of Seneca Falls – 15%
- Seneca County – 37%
- Aurelius – 27%
- Springport – 33%



- Fayette – 13%
- Waterloo – 38%

A rising tide of property values can mean spreading the cost-of-service delivery across a larger base – resulting in lower tax rates, and most often, in a lower total cost to property taxpayers.

### ***Department Charges***

The Town Budget allocates items such as Clerk fees, permits, and charges for certain facilities to the Departmental Income category. In 2021, the total collections in this category were \$3 million; of which all except approximately \$13,000 can be attributed to payments from Seneca Meadows Landfill. Historically, the Town has worked to divert much of the Landfill revenue to reserves, capital projects, and other infrequent project/program expenses.

Irrespective of the use of the revenue, it is difficult to ignore the fact that nearly 34% of all general Town revenue is attributed to a single operation. With respect to financial sustainability and resilience, this is a challenging indicator.

### ***State Aid / Grants***

In principle, the State of New York allocates revenue to a municipality under the premise of reducing property tax burden on local residents. These Aid and Incentives to Municipalities funds are generally unrestricted as to use, and in recent years have been stable and predictable (although stagnant). In addition to general aid, Seneca Falls is eligible and competitive for a number of State and Federal grant programs and continues to receive funds associated with an incentive for Village dissolution.

In 2021, State Aid accounted for \$1.7 million in State transfers. It should be noted that nearly \$700,000 was attributable to an infrastructure grant award and nearly \$600,000 is associated with an incentive for Village dissolution, which is a year-to-year State


government budget consideration. While there is no apparent, imminent threat to these funds, there is no guarantee as to their life span. The Town must ensure that one-time or volatile revenues play less of a, if any, role in day-to-day operations.

### *Other Revenues*

As noted, items like interest on Town accounts, donations, sales of surplus equipment, and other smaller items amount to only 2% of total Town wide revenues.

### *Resilience and Sustainability*

In order for the Town to continue to reliably provide a strong level of service to its residents and stakeholders, and to project a clean, safe, healthy community image, financial growth and resilience must be prioritized. As is noted above, the formula for total Town resources is fairly straightforward.



The icons above the formula are: a house (property), a tax form (taxes), a hand holding a coin (revenue), and a gear with a dollar sign (resources).

$$\left( \left( \text{Property Value} \times \text{Tax Rate} \right) + \text{All Other Revenue} = \text{Expendable Resources} \right)$$

If the Town seeks to continue to spend at current or enhanced levels, and to sustain this effort over time, the following considerations must be contemplated:

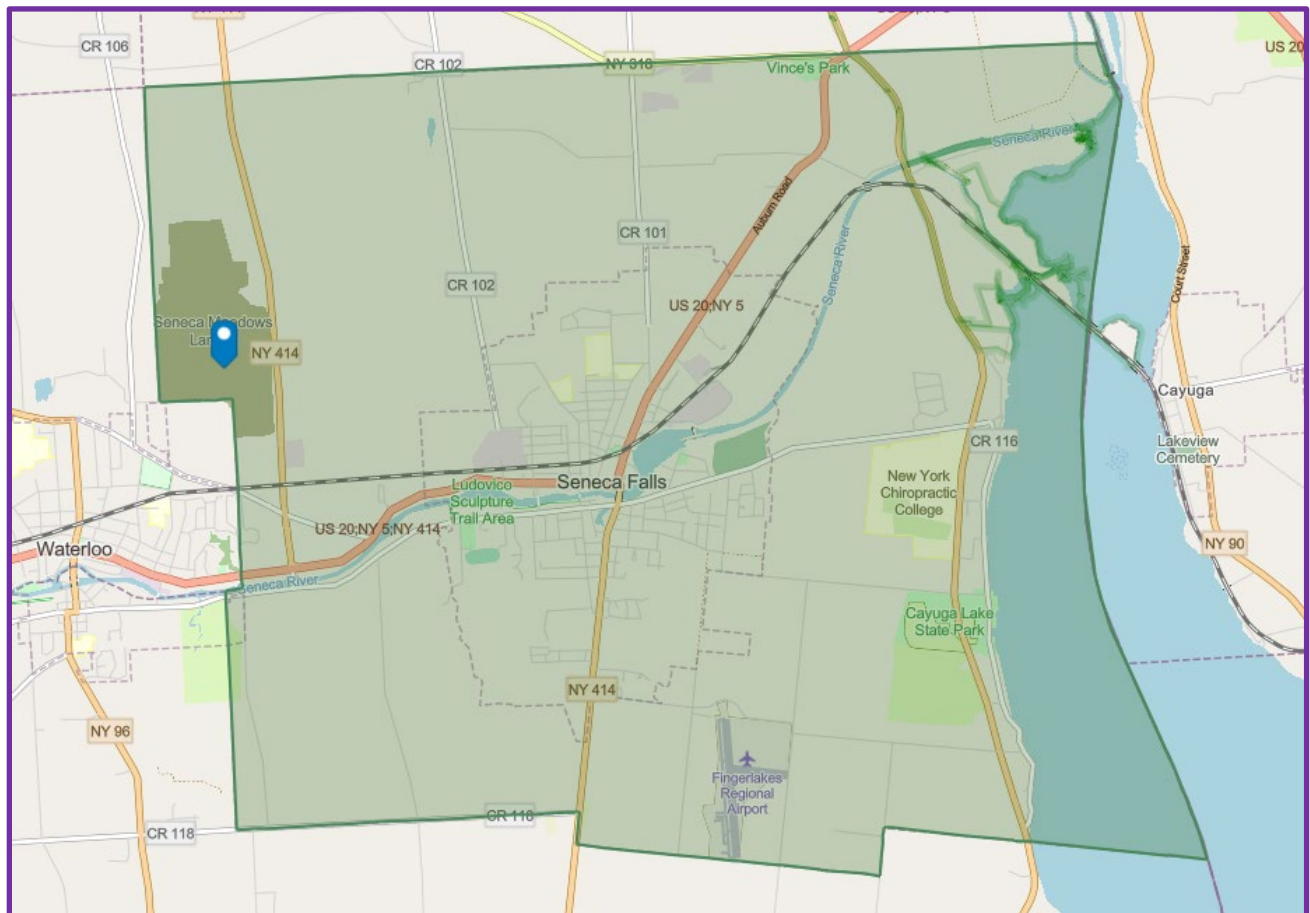
- Expand economic development efforts with a clear focus on increasing the taxable assessed value through the addition of new investments and a stronger market growth performance by existing properties
- Allocation of one-time or short-term (i.e. year-to-year or less than 20 years of guaranteed performance) revenues toward capital expenses or programs/services for which the duration of expense is short

- In accordance with the above, resist the temptation to reduce tax rates when presented with revenue opportunities that are not sustainable, or which are tied to single entities or properties
- Seek out opportunities to generate new revenues or glean other value to taxpayers via public-private partnerships which align with the Town's vision and governing principles
- Modify the annual budget process to ensure that expenditures are prioritized according to the framework of this plan. If the proposed expense cannot be justified as mandated by the State or Federal government, or advancing the principles, initiatives, or priorities of this plan, it should be relegated to a much lower consideration.

## The Seneca Meadows Landfill – Now and Into the Future

The Seneca Meadows Landfill continues to be a controversial subject in Seneca Falls. It was a reoccurring topic throughout the public engagement process and a key discussion topic for the Steering Committee.

A central theme of this comprehensive plan focuses on the long-term sustainability of the Town and necessitates that the community evaluate present and future opportunities for their impacts on the natural environment. The following section provides information to outline the Steering Committee's point of orientation regarding the landfill to set the Town down a path that prioritizes long-term stability.



Seneca Meadows Landfill



Town of Seneca Falls Boundary

The Seneca Meadows Landfill, a nearly 400-acre landfill situated on 2,300 acres in the Town, represents the largest active landfill site in New York State. According to its annual report for operating year 2020, the landfill processed over 2 million tons of solid waste, originating from eight states and Canada. The 2020 Annual Report forecasts that, under its current permitted tonnage, and with available permitted space, the landfill could continue operating into 2025.

The Landfill operates under multiple permits and agreements, including several environmental permits from New York State, an operating permit from the Town of Seneca Falls, and a Host Community Agreement, between the Town and the Landfill's operator. The Town's ability to regulate landfill operations is largely embedded in its local zoning ordinance, the tenets of the operating permit, and the parameters of the Host Community Agreement.

In 2016 the Town Board adopted Local Law #3, prohibiting the operation of landfills within the Town limits beyond 2025; the expiration of its permit in force at the time of adoption. In the ensuing years, several legal challenges have emerged to Local Law #3, in which the most recent (as of the time of this writing) determined that the Town Board committed procedural errors relating to the State Environmental Quality Review Act, which effectively invalidates the Local Law.

The Landfill has generated much debate in the community. The largest disagreements centered on the negative impacts on our environmental resources, quality of life concerns, and tourism and business development.

Proponents of the Landfill argue that the economic benefits to the community are substantial when managed appropriately. In 2021, the Center for Governmental Research, a Rochester-based non-profit think tank, produced a report (on commission of Seneca Meadows Inc.), which documented direct and indirect economic benefits. Direct, quantifiable benefits to the Town, as put forward by the report, include:

- Employment / Payroll – At the time of the report’s publication, Seneca Meadows employed 68 employees with an annual payroll of \$4.8 million.
- Host-Community Agreement – The report notes an HCA Contribution for 2020 of \$3.2 million.
- Property Tax Payments – In 2020, the Seneca Meadows site generated \$112,000 in property tax revenue to the Town of Seneca Falls, with another \$31,000 to the Seneca Falls School District, and \$71,000 to Seneca County.

The report calls out additional economic benefits, indirectly generated by the landfill, but whose financial impacts on Town operations are difficult to delineate.

In 2023, Seneca Meadows announced that it would seek an extension to its permit, authorizing continued operation through 2040. As part of that application, the landfill operator proposed an enhanced Host Community Agreement. The suggested terms for the agreement included:

- Independent, third-party odor complaint monitoring
- Mitigation efforts to address odors and landfill gas impacts
- Measures to eliminate or reduce hauler traffic through downtown Seneca Falls
- Continued no-cost waste disposal for Town residents
- One-time payments totaling \$3 million to the Town based on milestones associated with permit extension
- Increase in tonnage payments to \$4/ton, estimated at \$10 million per year
- Annual payments to the Town to offset engineering and wastewater costs, estimated at \$250,000 per year

The challenge presented by landfill operations with respect to the comprehensive planning process is that the continued operation of the landfill is only moderately controlled by the Town. State regulators have ultimate decision-making power in the landfill permitting



process. Even in cases where the Town has withheld operating permits for a period of time, the landfill continued to operate.

Town leadership must make a judgment call as to whether expending limited Town resources on legal opposition to landfill expansion will yield the desired result.

In any case, what is clear is that the Town is facing the ultimate closure of the landfill. Whether this occurs in the short term (2025) or on a longer horizon, the Town must plan for the economic impacts associated with Landfill operations and the quality-of-life impacts placed on the community.

### *Action Items*

- Town leadership must develop a fiscal sustainability plan which ensures that any revenues generated from one-time or temporary sources be used for catalytic, one-time investments, and not for operational needs.

Recent audits by the New York State Office of the State Comptroller have called into question revenue and expense recognition in the Town's annual budgets. Historically, Town leadership has struggled to develop and affect a firm policy on use of landfill revenues. To date, it is unclear as to whether, or how much landfill revenue is attributed to ongoing Town operations.

Town leadership should work quickly to isolate any current use of landfill revenues for ongoing operations and work to create a multi-year plan that replaces those revenues with either long-term revenue or reductions in cost. Recognizing that closure could be as soon as 2025, this plan should be expedited.

Unequivocally – moving forward, the Town leadership should not use landfill or other temporary revenue sources to directly offset the property tax rate or support any ongoing operations. Doing so would only temporarily reduce taxes and result in a gap

in future years that will require either a reduction in services or an increase in the tax rate.

- The Town leadership should establish a series of reserve funds, capitalized with revenue generated by Seneca Meadows, targeted at reinforcing infrastructure and fostering economic and community development.

This plan identifies multiple economic and community development initiatives that will require significant, creative funding mechanisms to realize results on the planning horizon. Landfill and other temporary revenues should be allocated to a series of reserve funds or strategic partnerships targeted to these purposes. Recommended uses include:

- Waste Diversion Strategy
- Small Business Assistance
- Workforce and Market Rate Housing Development
- Parks and Open Space Development
- Stormwater and Flood Mitigation
- Water and Sewer System Rehabilitation / Capacity Enhancements
- Cultural amenities
- Esthetic Improvements
- The Town leadership should form a committee to discuss the eventual closure of the Landfill and the impacts on the community.

A Decommission Plan must be developed to assure there is a responsible path forward after the Landfill closes. Committee members should include representatives from the Town Board, the Town Manager, and SMI.

- The Town leadership should work with community partners to create a waste diversion strategy to lessen the Town's production of solid waste.

This plan emphasizes the need to protect the Town's natural resources and support initiatives that enhance sustainability and environmental conservation in Seneca Falls. As part of the waste diversion strategy, the Town should work with County partners to expand capacity and increase sustainability initiatives on a County-wide level.

The Town endeavors to be a leader in environmental sustainability and live the environmental principles reinforced in this plan through creating a waste diversion strategy that addresses:

- Municipal composting
- Recycling
- Solid waste reduction
- Town, County, and regional solid waste

## 07 | Future Land Use

The Town of Seneca Falls, particularly the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, are largely developed with limited opportunities for “greenfield” development expansion. Future land use changes will focus on infill development in areas currently vacant or targeted for future growth, or parcels and structures identified for adaptive reuse.

To make the best use of existing infrastructure, the Town should prioritize infill development within the former boundaries of the village to prevent suburban sprawl and maintain the rural character of the outer boundaries of the Town.

The Land Use recommendations in this document are intended to be a conceptual guide to realize the Town's broad land-use priorities. These recommendations are not a zoning document, nor do they provide an exhaustive list of areas prime for development or create regulation of specific parcels. Rather this document intends to guide future land use decisions.

This section, just like this document, is not intended to remain static for the next 20 years. Rather, this section weaves the vision and values of the community into land use recommendations that remain at a conceptual level to guide longer-term development decisions amidst changing conditions to allow for flexibility regarding zoning boundaries, permitted uses, dimensions and performance standards, and form and design guidelines.

This section contains two components:

- **Character Areas:** Character areas are packages of potential land uses assigned to specific geographies in the Town. These suggested uses are meant to conceptualize a high-level description of typical potential development within allocated geography. Character areas will guide future zoning updates and development regulations to advance the goals outlined in the comprehensive plan.

- **Future Land Use Map:** The Future Land Use Map is a visual representation of the geographic allocation of the character areas. This map is not intended to be substituted for a zoning map, but instead be a reference to guide future updates to the Town's zoning map and code.

## Future Land Use Character Areas

### Downtown Core

Land uses within this character area provide for a diversity of residential, commercial, and civic uses to foster community connectivity and a vibrant downtown atmosphere. There should be a variety of residential offerings mixed with vibrant local businesses and community anchor institutions. Pedestrian and active transportation connectivity should be prioritized with auto-oriented uses avoided whenever possible. To maintain the historic community character of the downtown, the Town should adopt design standards to guide adaptive reuse, infill development, and beautification efforts. These design standards will allow encourage a cohesive urban form that is consistent with the existing structures.

Compatible Uses include:

- Mixed-use developments featuring higher density (attached) residential, retail, and services uses
- Attached multi-family residential (generally upper-story residential units)
- Retail, office, and service-oriented uses (excluding "big box" development)
- Community service and medical uses
- Education and cultural uses
- Parks, recreation, natural areas, and associated services (public or private)
- Lodging, tourism, and entertainment related uses

This character area covers the central core of downtown Seneca Falls. Land uses in this area should focus on a thriving downtown district that enables people to live, work, and play, all without needing to use a car. Future development should focus on infill and adaptive reuse of vacant space, as well as mixed-use commercial and residential opportunities to have a threefold impact of addressing blight, increasing the housing stock, and encouraging space for economic development. Additionally, future development should prioritize activating the canal front both in terms of encouraging mixed-use development of existing structures as well as the preservation of recreational uses directly adjacent to the waterfront.

### **Traditional Neighborhood Residential**

Future development within character areas should reinforce community connectivity through neighborhood scale infrastructure. Vibrant neighborhoods should offer a mixture of housing types and small-scale mixed-use developments coupled with greenspaces/community services to promote social connectivity. Non-residential areas are intended to serve the residents and build the social fabric of the neighborhoods.

Compatible uses include:

- All free standing residential with lots less than one acre
- Attached residential (townhomes, patio homes, and apartments)
- Small-scale mixed-use (first floor retail with upper story residential)
- In-home businesses
- Community services (Government, Health, Education, Civic, and Religious)
- Cultural uses
- Parks, natural areas, recreation, and associated services (public or private)

The primary geographies of this growth area include the residential neighborhoods along the periphery of the Downtown Core within the urban growth boundary, as well as along



the shoreline of Cayuga Lake. These areas present the most significant opportunities for development as they are primarily where there is existing infrastructure and decent connectivity to community resources. Future development in these areas should be carefully considered to ensure they align with existing uses and add to the general character and vitality of the neighborhoods.

### **Rural Residential**

Outside of the Downtown Core and the Traditional Neighborhood Residential areas, the majority of land in the Town should be preserved as rural residential. The Town should consider creating an agricultural overlay district to conserve existing agricultural land while providing the opportunity for vacant land to be either residential or agricultural uses. Rural residential housing will feature larger lot sizes and additional development regulations to preserve the rural feel and prevent suburban sprawl.

Compatible uses include:

- Low-density residential (1 acre lots or greater)
- Traditional and modern farm operations
- Farm-related industries, including processing, storage, logistics, and associated operations
- Other operations that are dependent upon agriculture
- Parks, recreation, and associated services (public or private)
- Lodging and tourism uses dependent upon agriculture or open space provisions (agritourism)

## Corridor Suburban

The transitional corridor along Route 20 heading southwest towards the Downtown Core is the target geographic area for land uses constituting a combination of existing commercial, retail, and industrial uses, with nearby higher density residential housing. Unlike the Downtown Core or Traditional Neighborhood Residential areas, this Corridor Suburban transect designates an area where for larger retail establishments and/or commercial and industrial centers that require more space but still want to be in proximity to downtown Seneca Falls.

Compatible uses include:

- Mixed-use developments featuring higher density (attached) residential, retail, and service uses
- Retail, office/commercial, and service-oriented uses
- Manufacturing, research, and warehousing, and associated uses
- Multi-family residential development including townhomes, condominiums, and apartment buildings, and other densely developed housing (exclusive of single-family housing)
- Medical and community service uses
- Lodging, entertainment, and tourism uses
- Educational and cultural uses
- Parks, natural areas, recreation, and associated uses (public or private)

The creation of community design guidelines will be an essential component of encouraging visually appealing as well as community design-oriented development along the Route 20 corridor.

## Recreation & Green Space

This character area is defined by scenic greenspace designed to enhance access to outdoor recreational amenities. Future land uses in these geographies should focus on public access to the natural environment and encourage active recreation. The geographic target area for this character area is along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal in order to ensure this space remains available for future trail development.

Compatible uses include:

- Multi-use trails and associated uses
- Parks, greenspaces, and other recreational uses
- Education and cultural uses
- Low-impact agricultural-based tourism uses

## Industrial

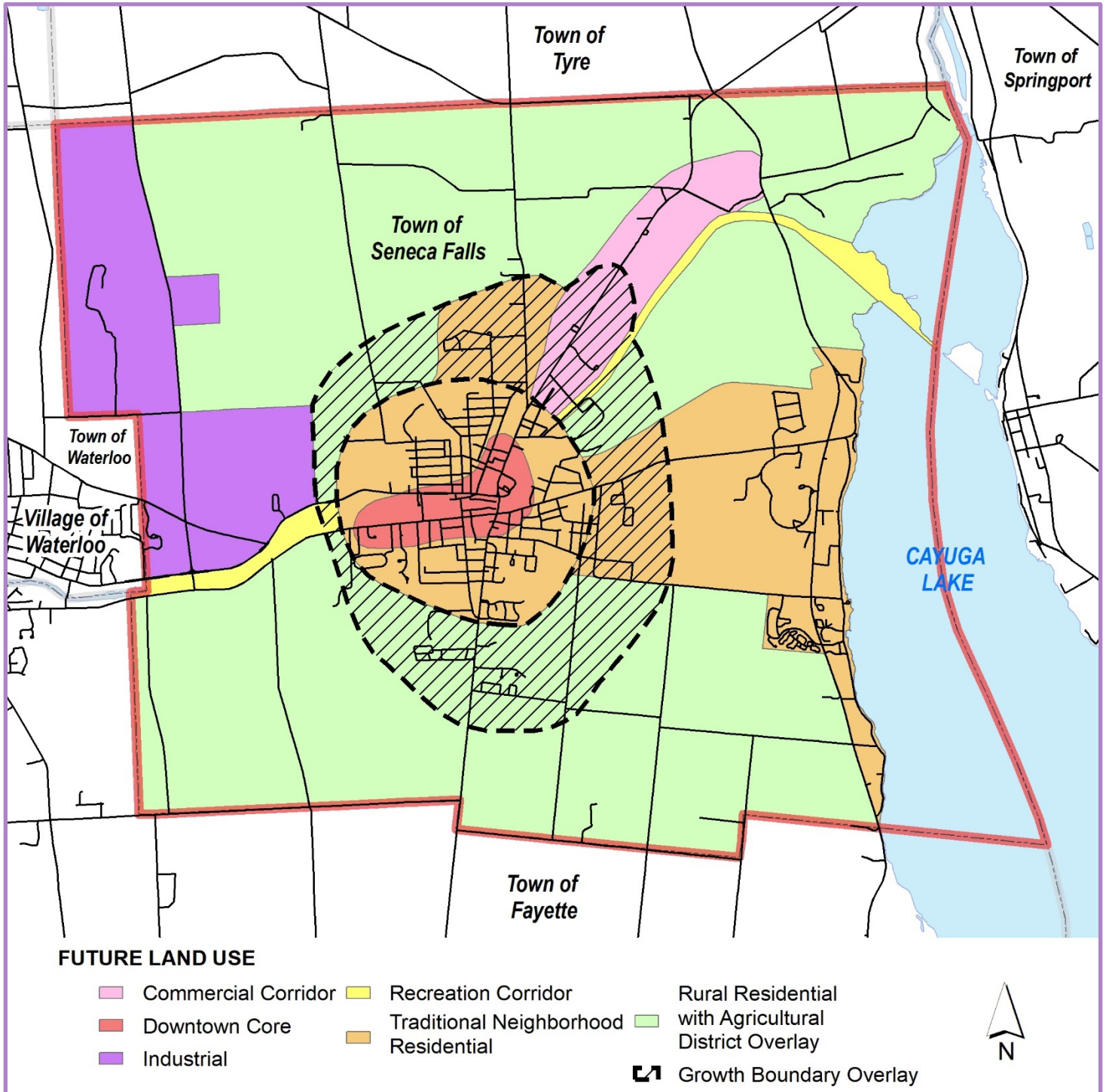
This character area encompasses the Town's existing industrial space and designates future space for the manufacturing of industrial products, factories, power plants, warehouses, and other additional activities associated with light and heavy industrial land use. The target area for this land use is on the western side of the Town above the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, going north toward the northern Town line.

Compatible uses include:

- Manufacturing and enclosed warehousing uses
- Wholesale commercial uses
- Transportation uses
- Essential services
- Farm-related industries, including processing, storage, logistics, and associated operations

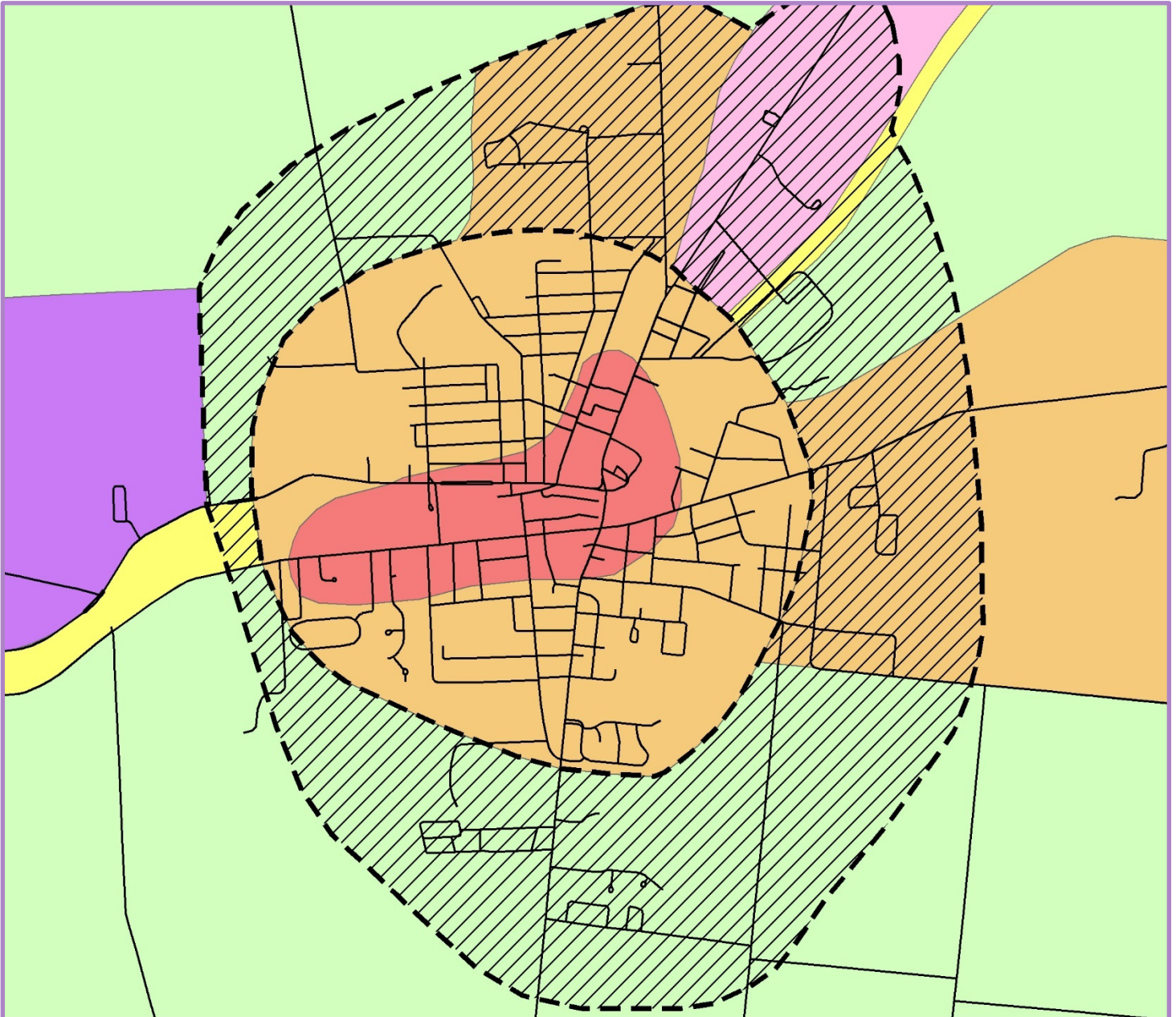
# Future Land Use Map

Map 1: Town





Map 2: Downtown

**FUTURE LAND USE**

- |                     |                                      |  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Commercial Corridor | Recreation Corridor                  | Rural Residential with Agricultural District Overlay |
| Downtown Core       | Traditional Neighborhood Residential | Growth Boundary Overlay                              |
| Industrial          |                                      |  |



## 08 | Appendix

### Glossary

**Accessible/Accessibility.** Easy for persons of all abilities to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity; for example, a site, facility, work environment, service, or program may be accessible.

**Adaptive Reuse.** Converting vacant or underutilized land or structures from their original or most recent use to a new use.

**Action Item.** A specific, intermediate end that is achievable and marks progress towards a goal. An action. An action item should be achievable, and where possible, should be measurable and time specific.

**Active Recreation.** Physical activity that is done primarily for the purpose of moving from one destination to another, usually by walking or bicycling.

**Adverse Impact.** A negative consequence, demonstrated through evidence, to the physical, social, or economic environment resulting from an action or development.

**Aging in Place.** Being able to remain and live independently in one's community as one grows older and as one's needs change.

**American Community Survey (ACS).** An annual demographics survey program conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that gathers information from U.S. Census data pertaining to population, housing, education, employment, demographic, and other characteristics.

**Best Practice.** A program, policy, activity, or strategy that has evidence of impact in multiple settings, is based on objective data, has been successfully replicated, and has been research validated or field tested.

**Blight.** A condition of a site, structure, or area that results from delayed maintenance or abandonment that may cause nearby buildings or areas to decline in attractiveness or utility.

**Brownfield.** Abandoned, idle, or underused industrial sites where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contaminants.

**Built Environment.** Settings designed, created, modified, and maintained by human efforts such as homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, parks, roadways, transit systems, etc.

**Capital Improvement.** Physical assets constructed or purchased to provide, improve, or replace a public facility and that are large in scale and high in cost. The cost of a capital improvement is generally non-recurring and may require multi-year financing.



**Capital Improvement Plan.** A multi-year (usually five) schedule of capital improvement projects, including cost estimates and priorities budgeted to fit financial resources. The CIP is generally reviewed annually for conformance to and consistency with the comprehensive plan.

**Community Character.** The image of a community or area as defined by factors such as the built environment, architectural style, natural features, type of housing, etc.

**Community Development Block Grant(s)(CDBG).** A federal grant program offered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support community development activities to build strong and more resilient communities.

**Community/Public Engagement.** A process that involves engaging members of a community in activities that affect them, including identifying local problems or projects and requesting their input into decisions about those problems and projects.

**Community Resilience.** The capability of a community to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of turbulent change.

**Complete Streets.** Streets designed and operated so that all users, including pedestrians, bicycles, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities can safely move along and across the street.

**Composting.** The process where biodegradable materials such as food waste, yard scrapes, and other organic materials decompose and are transformed into a mixture used for soil fertilizer.

**Comprehensive Plan.** An official document adopted by a local government that served as a guide for making land-use changes, preparing capital improvement programs, and other community development activities.

**Connectivity.** The directness or ease of travel on sidewalks, paths, and streets between town points; an essential component of walkability.

**Design Guidelines.** Guidelines intended to create a coordinated and consistent design process and promote a more thoughtful and holistic approach to community design. Design guidelines explain the desired design elements, features, and qualities of the built environment. They typically include best design practices from architecture, planning, and landscape architecture.

**Density.** The number of people, jobs, or dwelling units per unit area.

**Development.** Generally, a man-made change to existing or proposed use of real property such as land divisions, lot line adjustments, construction or alteration of structures, construction of roads, establishing utilities, etc.

**Economic Development.** The process, strategy, and actions of improving the economic, political, and social well-being of communities and their inhabitants.

**Enhance.** To improve existing conditions by increasing the quality or quantity of beneficial uses.

**Environmental Conservation.** The practice of protecting the natural environment for current and future generations by individuals, groups, governments, and other entities. Environmental Conservation includes the protection, preservation, management, and restoration of natural environments and the ecological communities that inhabit them.

**Environmental Health.** Aspects of human health, disease, and injury determined or influenced by environmental factors, including the direct pathological effects of various chemical, physical, and biological agents, and the health effects of the broad physical and social environments, such as housing, urban development, land use, and transportation.

**Esri.** An American multinational geographic information systems software company for modeling and spatial mapping.

**Feasibility.** Capable of being done, executive, or managed successfully from the standpoint of physical, financial, or time abilities of the implementors.

**Fiscal Resilience.** The ability of an individual, group, or entity/organization to withstand events that impacts their income and assets and thrive amidst economic challenges.

**Form-Based Zoning.** Zoning that focuses on required features and performance of buildings rather than on prohibitions and specifications of land uses (also known as Form-Base Codes).

**Goal.** A general, long-term aim or end towards which programs or activities are ultimately directed.

**Greenspace.** Undeveloped space designated for parks and natural areas, or land set aside to protect undeveloped landscapes.

**Health Disparities.** Differences among specific population groups in their burden of adverse health conditions and their access to health protective factors.

**Healthy Housing.** Housing sites, designed, built, renovated, and maintained to support the physical and mental health of residents.

**Historic Buildings/Structures.** Areas, districts, or sites containing properties listed on the Town's List of Historic Properties, or the State Historic Preservation Office, of the National Register of Historic Places.

**Historic Preservation.** The preservation of historically significant structures and neighborhoods to facilitate restoration and rehabilitation of the building(s) to a former condition.

**Housing Affordability.** The availability of housing such that no more than 30 percent (an index derived from federal, state, and local housing agencies) of the monthly income of the household needs to be spent on shelter (Metro Regional Framework Plan definition).

**Housing Code.** Federal, State, and local government ordinances that set minimum standards of safety, sanitation, and habitability for existing residential buildings, as opposed to building codes that govern new construction.

**Inclusionary Zoning.** A method of incorporating affordable housing into development projects by requiring developers to build some affordable units or contribute to a trust fund devoted to affordable housing construction.

**Infill Development.** Building in existing developed areas on vacant lots and underutilized parcels.

**Infrastructure.** Components of functioning, orderly urban fabric, such as roads, water systems, sewage systems, systems for stormwater and drainage, telecommunications and energy transmission systems, bridges, transportation facilities, housing, parks, public facilities, etc.

**Land Use.** The manner in which portions of land and/or the structures on them are used, such as commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, recreational uses, etc.

**Livable Communities.** Well-designed communities, where housing, schools, jobs, and parks are within easy walking distance and user-friendly transportation options linking residents to food, clothing, health, and supportive services are available.

**Mixed-Income Development.** A development comprising housing units which have different levels of affordability, typically including a mixture of market-rate and below-market-rate housing.

**Mixed-Land Use.** Co-location of diverse land uses, such as residential, commercial, recreational, and retail.

**Multi-modal.** Transportation facilities or programs designed to serve many or all methods of travel including motor vehicles, public transportation, bicycles, and walking.

**Municipal Code.** A set of ordinances enabled by local government.

**Open Space.** Publicly or privately-owned areas of land, including parks, natural areas, and areas of very low-density development.

**Planning Principles.** The values and fundamental rules that will guide the comprehensive plan policies, goals, objectives, and action items.

**Quality of Life.** An individual's perception of his or her position in life in that context of the culture and value system where the individual lives and in relations to his or her goals, expectations, standards, and concerns. Quality of life is essentially the standard of happiness, comfort, and health experienced by an individual or group.

**Resilience.** A capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, the economy, and the environment (EPA).

**Sense of Place.** Characteristics or perceptions of such characteristics of a place that make it special to people.

**State Quality Environmental Review (SEQR).** New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requires all state and local government agencies to consider environmental impacts

equally with social and economic factors during discretionary decision-making. SEQR is enforced by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

**Smart Growth.** An urban planning approach that aims to manage the growth and land use of a community so as to minimize damage to the environment, reduce sprawl, and build livable, walkable, and mixed-use communities.

**Social Resilience.** The ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political, and environmental change.

**Solid Waste Management.** Refers to the collection, transportation, treatment, analysis, and disposal of solid waste.

**Sustainability.** The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Sustainable Landscaping.** A landscaping practice that utilizes multiple design techniques to create functional landscapes that benefit the environment. For example, native landscaping is a type of sustainable landscaping that uses native plants as they are adapted to local climate and social conditions to support the local ecological systems.

**Traffic Calming.** A term that describes the purpose of strategies, such as speed humps and roundabouts, that reduce traffic speeds, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.














**Vacant.** Land or buildings that are not actively used for any purpose.

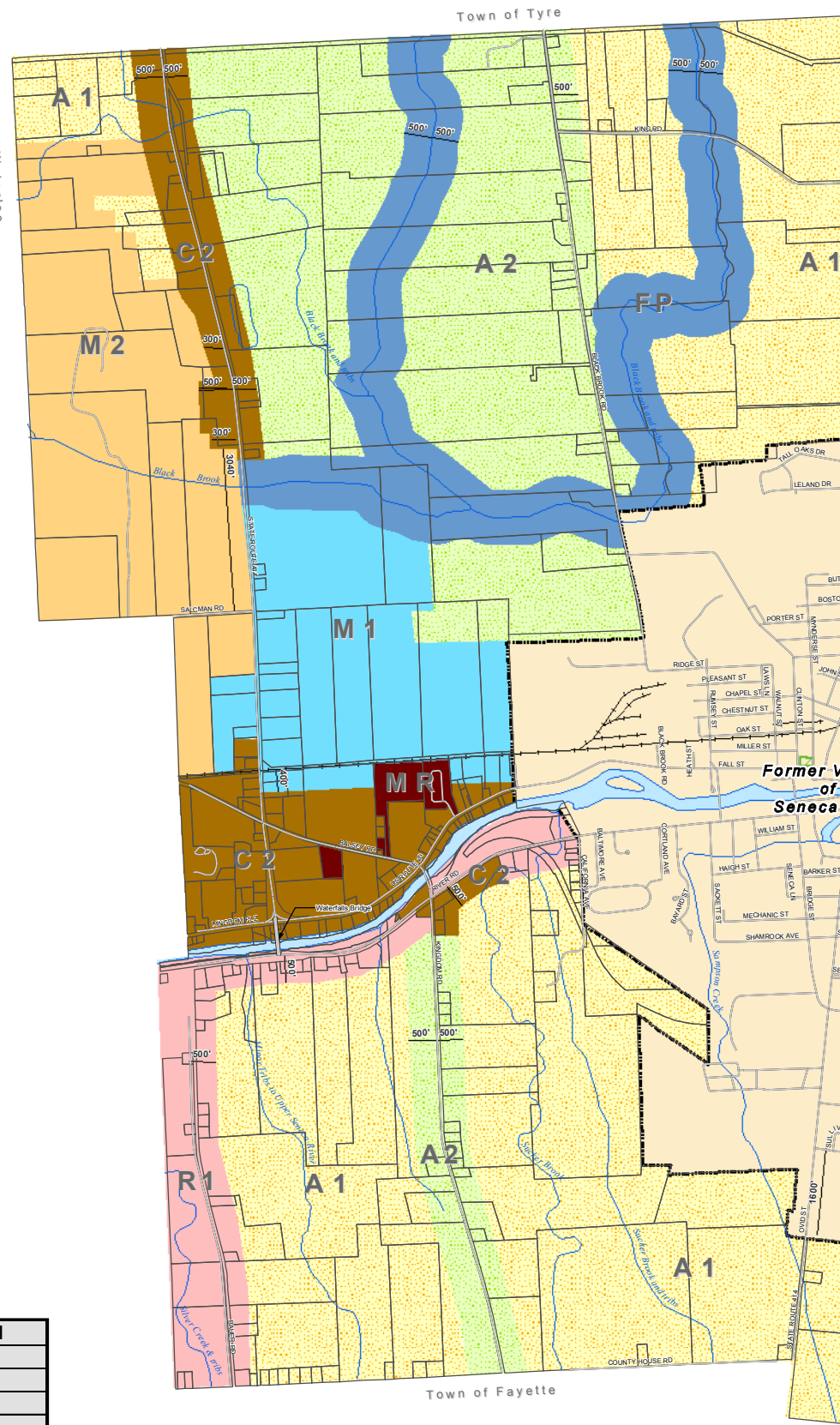
## Current Zoning Maps

### Town Zoning Map

### Legend

**Zoning Districts**

-  A-1 Agricultural
-  A-2 Agricultural
-  C-2 Highway Commercial
-  FP - Flood Plain
-  LC - Land Conservation
-  M-1 Industrial
-  M-2 Refuse Disposal
-  R-1 Residential
-  R-2 Two-Family and Multi-Family Residential
-  MR Multi-Family Apartment Building
-  MP Mobile Home Park
-  NY State Parks
-  Railroad
-  Tax Parcel Boundary



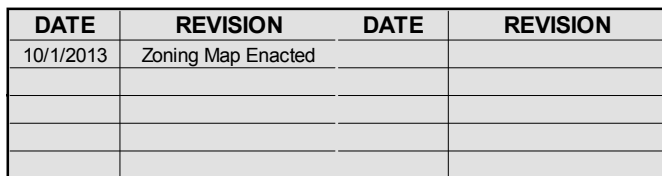
DATE	REVISION	DATE	REVISION
10/1/2013	Zoning Map Enacted		

Sources: Zoning Designations - Town of Seneca Falls;  
Parcel Data - Seneca County





## Former Village Zoning Map



**B**arton  
& **L**oguidice, P.C.

Former Villa

**Zon**

Oc