

SECTION 1.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction and Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan represents the culmination of a joint planning effort undertaken by the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama and the Village of Oakfield. These three rural communities recognized the importance of such cooperation and joined together to formulate a common vision for managing future growth and development. This Plan was prepared in conformance with NYS Town Law Section 272-a and NYS Village Law Section 7-722 and is designed to be consistent with the principles of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan.

The Genesee County Smart Growth Plan outlines a strategy for managing and controlling the extension of water service throughout Genesee County. As a way of minimizing the potential impacts of additional growth and development, which would otherwise occur as a result of the extension of water service, this plan sets forth objectives aimed at ensuring that water extensions do not result in additional development that is inconsistent with the principles of "smart growth". The Plan designates "development areas" within which development and redevelopment would be encouraged and access to the County-funded portions of the County's water system would not be restricted. The "development areas" were delineated based on a certain set of criteria, and include areas with significant potential for economic development, as well as areas that are already relatively densely developed with residential, commercial or industrial uses.

The Smart Growth Plan establishes guidelines for implementing an approval process for water hook-ups, which calls for the creation of a County-level administrative review committee. However, the County Legislature may choose to delegate the authority to approve water hook-ups to individual municipalities that have adopted a comprehensive plan consistent with the principles of the Smart Growth Plan.

Although the Smart Growth Plan and the potential ability to receive public water was the driving force behind the effort to create this document, there were other issues that warranted the preparation of this Plan by the three partnering communities. The Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan sets forth a strategy for addressing important issues and for guiding future growth and development, protecting agricultural uses and rural community character, and improving the quality of life in each community. The three communities have designed this plan to acknowledge existing conditions in each community, to establish their vision for the future, and to outline how they intend to achieve their goals and objectives for managing growth. This Plan is intended to serve as a framework wherein each community can evaluate future land use and development issues and decisions. The goals and objectives, recommendations, and implementation strategy outlined in this Plan are designed to address the individual concerns of each community, and reflect their unique and distinctive vision for the future.

Each municipality will individually adopt the Plan, and will be responsible for implementing the action items that pertain to their respective communities. It is hoped that in implementing this Comprehensive Plan, the communities will continue to work together, especially on those issues and actions that center around their common goals, have regional significance, and/or relate to the County's Smart Growth Plan. Once adopted, the Towns and Village should begin to implement this Plan by amending their land use regulations to better

follow the recommendations contained herein, and to consider the plan in all of their future land use decisions (site plans, subdivisions, and zoning actions).

1.2 Regional and Local Setting

The study area includes the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield and the Village of Oakfield, and is located in northwestern Genesee County. The communities are approximately 25 miles east of Buffalo, 35 miles west of Rochester and 10 miles north of the City of Batavia. The three-community study area is predominantly a rural, agricultural region with small pockets of denser residential and commercial development located in hamlets and the Village of Oakfield. The rural landscape is dominated by gently rolling hills, farm fields, pockets of woodland and rural homes, interrupted only by the hamlets and Village where small stores, churches, and denser residential development exists.

1.3 Public Input

The three communities recognized public input as a critical element in the planning process. Therefore, a variety of methods were utilized to gather input from local residents, including two public information meetings, written comment forms, a public opinion survey, individual meetings with government officials, an internet website, and press releases. In addition, the entire process was closely overseen by the Advisory Committee, which was comprised of representatives from each community. This Committee met on a regular basis to provide guidance and insight on the development of the plan, ensuring that the concerns of each community were being effectively addressed.

1.4 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives represent the broad, general values and vision for the communities. With the assistance of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, the goals and objectives were devised by utilizing the communities' original rationale for preparing the comprehensive plan, data from the inventory and analysis, and input gathered from residents at public meetings, from written comments, and through a public opinion survey.

The goals focus on the major issues and concerns of the residents in the three communities. They are aimed at helping to guide future growth and development in the Towns and Village. They represent a consensus of the community's values and vision for guiding future land use decisions that could impact overall quality of life. The major goals for the three communities are listed below.

Town of Alabama

- Protect, promote and preserve agriculture
- Maintain and enhance community character
- Provide potable water to appropriate areas of the Town
- Protect the environmental features and resources
- Provide for economic development
- Maintain and promote efficiency of government
- Encourage a diversity of housing types

Town of Oakfield

- Promote the expansion public water to appropriate areas in the Town
- Provide for economic development
- Protect and preserve agriculture
- Maintain and enhance community character
- Protect the environmental features and resources of the community
- Encourage a diversity of housing types in the Town
- Maintain and promote efficiency of government

Village of Oakfield

- Promote and encourage investment and economic development in the Village
- Preserve the traditional neighborhood character of the Village
- Maintain and Promote efficiency of government

1.5 Existing Conditions

Section 4.0 of the Comprehensive Plan summarizes information on the existing conditions and trends in each of the three communities. It contains information land use and land use regulations, the natural environment, demographics and socioeconomic conditions, transportation, public infrastructure and utilities and community facilities. This information provides a useful assessment of where the communities have been and where they are now in terms of growth and development. Furthermore, it is useful for identifying important issues and opportunities in each of the communities, as well as commonalties, and establishes the framework for planning recommendations. The general content of each subsection in Section 4.0 is described below.

Existing Land Use

This section outlines land use patterns throughout the region. Because farming has traditionally been an important component of land use in Genesee County, a subsection is provided that discusses agricultural activity in each community.

Land Use Regulations

This section summarizes the land use controls that govern how land may be used and developed in each municipality. It describes the various zoning districts and the types of uses allowed in each district. It summarizes supplemental zoning regulations that control particular uses such as home occupations, adult uses, and communications towers.

Natural Environment

This section provides information about the environmental setting of the three communities. It provides information about the topography, hydric soils, stream corridors by watershed, areas of flooding and wetlands, natural habitat and scenic resources. The final subsection describes the State and Federal wildlife conservation areas, which play a significant role in defining the character of the area.

Demographics and Socioeconomic Factors

This section provides information about population trends, the age characteristics of area residents, and statistics on employment and income. It also provides an overview of the housing stock of the region.

□ Transportation

This section describes the transportation network serving the communities, including roadways, traffic volumes, public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle routes.

□ Utilities

This section provides information about the local infrastructure, including water (public water supply and wells), wastewater disposal (sewers and septic) and solid waste management.

□ Community Facilities

This section identifies the community facilities available for the use of the residents of the Towns and Village. These include area parks and recreational facilities, schools, emergency services (police and fire), governmental facilities and cultural resources (historic buildings and important archaeological sites).

1.6 Findings and Recommendations

The Findings and Recommendations are provided for each community as they relate to the major Goals and Objectives in Section 3.0. Findings, opportunities and constraints for each goal were identified using the existing conditions information found in Section 4.0, as well as public input received throughout the process. Based on the determined opportunities and constraints, general findings for each community were established. Findings are listed for each community under the following categories.

- Existing Land Use
- Agriculture and Farmland
- Natural Environment and Constraints
- Demographics and Social-Economic Characteristics
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Community and Government Facilities
- Zoning

Recommendations for achieving the opportunities or addressing constraints were formulated for each community utilizing the goals and objectives outlined in Section 3.0. For each community, each goal is discussed and then followed by a series of recommendations. The recommendations are further developed in Section 6.0 (Implementation).

1.7 Implementation

The Implementation section of the Comprehensive Plan outlines strategies for achieving the goals objectives outlined in Section 3.0, and for accomplishing many of the recommendations set forth in Section 5.0. The implementation strategy includes a step by step approach with established priorities. This Plan is an active document and over time, as local situations change, so may the priorities of each community. Therefore, upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, one of the first priority actions is for each community to designate an Implementation Advisory Committee to be responsible for the active implementation of this document.

Section 6.0 is broken into subsections for each participating community. Each implementation strategy for each community sets forth a prioritized, step-by-step approach. Priority 1 and 2 actions have been organized under four categories: Agriculture; Public Water/Smart Growth Plan; Zoning and other Land Use Regulations; and Other Actions. Priority 1 actions are those tasks that should be completed in the immediate term (one to two years). Priority 2 actions are those actions that should be undertaken over the short term (three to five years out). Priority 3 Actions are also included, which are either longer-term activities or alternative actions that may or may not be necessary depending on the outcome of Priority 1 and 2 actions. Key implementation strategies for each municipality are as follows.

Town of Alabama

- Revise the Agricultural–Residential zoning district to build upon the intent that agricultural uses are primary uses in the district.
- Work with Genesee County to more specifically expand the designated “development areas” in the 2005 Update of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan.
- Outside of the identified growth areas, review and update the list of non-agricultural land uses allowed by Special Use Permit.
- Establish zoning overlay districts for hamlet areas (within long-term growth boundaries on the Vision Map).
- Adopt regulations for the review and approval of the major and minor subdivision of land, separate from the Zoning Ordinance, as per Section 276 of the NYS Town Law.
- Draft a set of rural development guidelines that provide written standards and graphic examples to ensure that the vision for growth and development set forth in this document is achieved.
- During future reviews of the County’s Agricultural District, recommend to Genesee County that non-agricultural lands be removed from the district. This is primarily the case in Basom and South Alabama.
- Investigate residents’ requests/needs for public water due to public health and safety concerns.
- Relocate Town Hall, along with other Town facilities, to the Alabama hamlet.
- Work with Genesee County and the Town of Oakfield to investigate the feasibility and potential funding for a rails-to-trails project on the abandoned Penn Central rail corridor.

Town of Oakfield

- Revise the schedule of permitted uses for the Residential Agricultural zoning district (R&A) to build upon the intent that agricultural uses are primary uses in this district.
- Work with Genesee County to expand the designated “development areas” in the 2005 Update of the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan.
- Identify a new growth area in the East Oakfield crossroads area of Lockport Road and Fisher Road for both public water and as a residential development area.
- Expand water from the Village of Oakfield to the growth area surrounding the Village. Lateral restrictions should be implemented along Fisher Road north to East Oakfield.
- Adopt regulations for the review and approval of the **major** and minor subdivision of land, separate from the Zoning Ordinance, as per Section 276 of the NYS Town Law.
- Revise zoning to include provisions for cluster residential subdivisions as per Section 278 of the NYS Town Law, with proper reference made in the **Town's Subdivisions regulations**.
- Establish a zoning overlay district for East Oakfield hamlet (within long-term growth boundaries on the Vision Map).

- During future reviews of the County’s Agricultural District recommend to the Genesee County that non-agricultural lands be removed from the district.
- Investigate residents’ requests/needs for public water due to health and safety concerns.
- Adopt Site Plan Review regulations.
- Adopt a new zoning district (separate from R&A) that would focus on protecting important agricultural lands and prime soils from intrusive or incompatible uses or ill-designed subdivision layouts.
- Develop a strategy for the U.S. Gypsum facilities in the event they become available for redevelopment.
- Work with the Village of Oakfield to create a long-range plan for expanding sewer service into the Town within the identified growth areas.
- Work with Genesee County and the Town of Alabama to investigate the feasibility and potential funding for a rails-to-trails project on the abandoned Penn Central rail corridor.

Village of Oakfield

- Support the Towns of Oakfield and Alabama in their efforts to modify the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan to reflect the long-term growth boundaries shown on the Vision Map.
- Develop a long-range water plan depicting where water may be expanded outside the Village.
- Establish a zoning overlay district for the Central Business District, with architectural design guidelines, landscaping standards, signage requirements and parking standards.
- Amend zoning to allow multi-family housing in the commercial districts with a special use permit.
- As an incentive for reinvestment, adopt a local law allowing the Village to participate in the Real Property Tax Law Section 485-b program.
- Establish a Business Improvement District.
- Establish landscape standards in the zoning code as part of site plan review.
- Work with the New York State Department of Transportation as the Village implements streetscape improvements along Main Street.

1.8 Environmental Review

Section 7 provides a mechanism for the environmental review of the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan has been developed to serve as a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), as allowed by §272-a.8 of NYS Town Law and §7-722.8 of NYS Village Law. This format enables the Lead Agency, Involved Agencies and the public to review one comprehensive document that contains a plan for managing future growth, and evaluates the potential environmental implications of adopting the plan.

A GEIS must include a section on Environmental Setting. Section 4 (Existing Conditions) of this Comprehensive Plan provides a review and analysis of the environmental setting of the Towns and Village, as they exist now. The underlying purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide future growth and development by promoting appropriate land use in suitable areas, thereby avoiding potential significant adverse impacts. For this multi-jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan, the impacts specific to each community are outlined individually, facilitating review of the document by all involved and interested parties. Section 5 (Findings and Recommendations) provides the necessary evaluation of existing conditions in order to establish the importance and nature of potential impacts.

Adverse environmental impacts that cannot be avoided are put into perspective by the fact that with or without the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, there will continue to be limited new development, some reuse, and pressures to sell-off building lots in agricultural areas. Adoption of this Plan will allow the Towns and Village to better manage growth and development, reducing potential environmental impacts. The Plan provides techniques for controlling growth, along with mitigation measures, such as lateral restrictions on water hook-ups and overlay districts that minimize impacts to a level that do not create significant adverse environmental impacts. The Environmental Review section of the Plan also assesses the No-Action alternative (not adopting the Plan).

1.9 Annual Review

In an effort to keep the Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan relevant as conditions change and to reflect the results of the implementation actions, a process for the regular review of the Plan should be established. Section 8 (Annual Review) recommends that each community conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that it remains a dynamic and useful document. This review will also measure the accomplishments of each community, individually and in partnership, for implementing and achieving the goals and objectives of the Plan. The Planning Board or a designated review committee, as authorized by the municipality's legislative board, would conduct this review.

By undertaking this review on a yearly basis, the communities can evaluate their achievements for implementing the Oakfield Alabama Comprehensive Plan. This is important in order to keep the implementation process moving forward and to make adjustments to the implementation strategy, as required.