

Town of Bovina Delaware County, NY

Comprehensive Plan



Prepared by:

**Town of Bovina Planning Board
Town of Bovina Town Board**

With assistance from:

**Delaware County Planning Department
and Shepstone Management Company**

Town of Bovina, Delaware County, New York Comprehensive Plan - 2002

Foreword

This Plan was prepared by the Town of Bovina Comprehensive Planning Committee with the support of the Town of Bovina's Town Board and Planning Board. We also received tremendous help from the 244 individuals who took the time to return our planning survey.

Funding for this project was made available through the New York State Department of State Master Planning and Zoning Incentive Award Program. The generous support of the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation has also been invaluable to the project.

This Comprehensive Plan looks forward 10-20 years with policy framework for the Town of Bovina. The Town is small, but growing recently at a pace well ahead of the State and region. The Town population, in fact, was up 20.7% in 2000 over 1990 although it still far fewer people than it had in 1820.

Second-home construction and conversions of those dwellings to first-homes are big contributors to the recent gains. Taking a long range view of this activity as it impacts upon Bovina is a major purpose of this Plan. Other challenges it addresses include sustaining a vital agricultural industry and developing tourism opportunities.

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1.0 The Keys to Success

This Comprehensive Plan sets forth a combination of strategies to deal with the growth and future needs of the Town of Bovina. These strategies are largely based upon a "Town of Bovina Planning Survey" conducted in 2002. The survey results (see Appendix H) indicate that the vast majority of residents choose to live in Bovina for its rural atmosphere and farmland character. Most have relocated in Bovina from outside the Town and County.

Most residents (some 87%) also state that the Town has either improved for the better or not changed in its desirability as a place to live. Their dislikes are largely limited to the costs of services and taxes and the impact of the New York City watershed regulations. They strongly support environmental protection, however, and local land use regulations to achieve this. They also welcome most new development (mobile home parks, mini-storage warehouses and commercial junkyards excepted) but want to see much of it subjected to site plan review by the Town. Many either already have or desire to establish home occupations. They endorse using their tax money to provide fire protection, take care of the roads, maintain the library and establish a sewage maintenance district for Bovina Center. They give high marks to nearly all public and semi-public services excepting for overall code enforcement (about which they have mixed feelings).

Residents want to see cellular towers, junk vehicles and mobile home parks regulated. They support local laws protecting the right to farm and right to timber using sound management practices. They also support limiting property taxes on farms, helping farmers with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) and watershed regulation compliance and Agricultural District development. They are, however, quite cynical about the ability to free up the area for economic development through phosphorous reduction efforts. They are, too, strongly supportive of Bovina Center sidewalk improvements, help with historic preservation and restoration, help with commercial building facade improvements, housing rehabilitation loans and grants and a new central Post Office.

When residents were asked to describe how they wanted to see in Bovina in the next 10-20 years, "development of the tourism industry" ranked highest, followed by "a thriving timber industry," "profitable farms and farmland preservation," "a clean and green environment," and "preservation of historical heritage." Bringing these dreams to life involves several keys to success. These include the following:

- The Town cannot afford to tip the scales too far in the direction of either development or preservation - balance is essential. Both can be accommodated with careful planning and enforcement of land use regulations. Balance among agricultural, commercial, industrial, residential and open space uses is also key to maintaining a working landscape, assuring

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economic opportunity and growing the tax base relative to service demands.

- The Town is evolving from a cultural perspective. It now represents a combination of residents who have lived in Bovina their entire lives and seek economic gains and those from urban areas who have already made their economic gains and have sought out the Town for non-economic reasons. This has the potential to produce conflicts regarding development policy. This can lead to conflicts regarding development policy. Nevertheless, such conflicts are unnecessary. Good design and planning can provide for both jobs and environmental protection where residents work together to find the correct solutions. This can be encouraged by ensuring that both groups are involved on boards and committees responsible for the Town's future. Inviting the County, the State and other groups to Bovina to do regular planning educational sessions within the Town is another useful technique employed by other towns.

- Survey results indicate that residents want practical and responsible land use regulation. They wish to allow for a wide variety of activities, subject to reasonable review and attachment of conditions. This demands a flexible Zoning Law of the type the Town now has. It needs to be regularly updated, however. Moreover, the Town Board must ensure that enforcement of its provisions is both comprehensive and fair. A Zoning Law that is not enforced is worse than none at all. Conversely, zoning enforced without regard to common sense and practicality will quickly lead to disrespect for the Zoning Law. This, too, will make future enforcement all that more difficult. A balanced approach is essential.

- Change is inevitable and, more often than not, desirable. The Town can influence change positively if it stays actively involved in issues such as phosphorous reduction and historic preservation. Benign neglect, by contrast, will only lead to some other entity controlling the Town's destiny. This is because all change produces some winners and losers who will, absent Town leadership, form into special interests lobbying whoever will listen to adopt their point of view. If the Town doesn't listen, some other entity will, usurping the Town's ability to deal with the matter. Active involvement and leadership by Town officials in issues of importance both locally and regionally is, therefore, also key.

No Town is guaranteed success in wrestling with the issues of the day but this Comprehensive Plan is intended to set out a practical framework for Bovina to grow and develop. Its success will be measured in largely intangible qualities of life that the above "keys to success" help frame.