

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

J A N U A R Y 2 0 0 3

THE TOWN OF SOMERSET PLANNING BOARD

AND THE TOWN OF SOMERSET TOWN BOARD

IN ASSOCIATION WITH WENDEL DUCHSCHERER



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Section I

Introduction

Purposes of Planning

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Somerset was first prepared in 1972. There have been updates and revisions to the original report over the past thirty years, but none of these changes have been formally adopted. This document integrates previous planning efforts along with more current planning concepts in order to develop a single document that can serve as a modern, implementable Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Somerset.

The revised Comprehensive Plan is a graphic and written report that provides general direction to guide future growth and development in the Town of Somerset. It provides an update of information and data affecting the Town of Somerset and establishes goals and policies based on this updated material to assist town officials charged with the responsibility of making decisions affecting land use. The revised Comprehensive Plan should be viewed as a summary of the desires and policies of the people of the community at this time. The plan and its policies should be continually reconsidered and amended as necessary to reflect change as the community grows and as conditions change at regional, state and national levels. In general, the Goals and Objectives are expected to remain relevant for the foreseeable future, but specific recommendations and policies may need revision as conditions change.

Implementation of the revised comprehensive plan is the responsibility of elected officials and appointed boards serving the Town of Somerset. It is the Town Board that must take the final actions in carrying out the municipality's comprehensive plan through the enactment of land uses controls and economic development programs based on the recommendations of the planning document. In order to guide growth and realize the goals of the plan, the following means are available to the Town of Somerset:

1. Zoning Ordinance - formal regulations regarding the use, buildable space per lot, bulk regulations and the control of the density of land use within established land use districts.
2. Subdivision Regulations - the establishment of regulations to require a uniform quality and type of land development.
3. Other Local Ordinances and Codes - may include housing, building, property maintenance and other mechanical codes.
4. Capital Improvements Program - fiscal planning for the financial implementation of major public facilities, elements of the comprehensive plan (i.e., roads, utilities, schools and parks).
5. State and Federal Programs - housing, highways, community facilities as well as other administrative and financial aids complementing local, county, and regional planning and development activities.
6. Economic Development Actions - Programs, policies and actions to support existing businesses and to provide appropriate development in the designated areas of the Town.
7. Goals and Policies - The establishment of goals and policies provides direction to all boards and committees within the Town on decisions and actions needed to be taken by these groups.

This document is a guidebook for achieving the community's visions. All actions discussed in the "Comprehensive Plan" section, and the "Implementation Plan" section are suggestions for the Town to consider in reaching their Goals and Objectives. As suggested in the Plan, the document should be reviewed annually to determine which actions may or may not be applicable for implementation.

PURPOSES OF PLANNING

A municipality may be thought of as being comprised of people, land and a certain community spirit that is manifested as the people and land develops in harmony. But, people may be mobile, and as they come and go, so may community spirit change. The municipality, however, is fixed to the land. A municipality's only inherent possession is land, and the well-being and prosperity of the community is dependent upon the manner in which this land is utilized.

The utility and value of a parcel of land, even in rural areas, is dependent to a great degree upon the manner in which neighboring parcels are managed and on the governmental services and facilities that are available. The availability of water supply and sewage disposal facilities, for example, can be of great importance in determining use of property. Access to transportation is also an important factor in determining land use. The offensive use of one parcel of land can reduce the value of neighboring lands. Each landowner within the community is at the mercy of his neighbors, and all must cooperate in the common interest if they are to enjoy maximum social and economic benefits from their respective properties. It is, therefore, not only important but imperative that the use of land be intelligently planned for the maximum benefit of the Town of Somerset and its residents.

In order to reach the end product, a meaningful comprehensive plan, many sources of background information must be provided to help local legislative and administrative boards determine where growth should take place and how it should be phased. These background elements comprise an updated inventory of planning data and include:

1. Gathering of current data and preparation of a base map of appropriate identifications of the community to be used throughout the planning program.
2. Land use surveys, mapping and analysis of the community.
3. Natural features such as topography, floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, farmlands and other emphasis on the physical characteristics of the community.
4. Housing conditions, needs and population trends and projections for the community.
5. Community facilities and services, analysis of utilities, transportation, schools, parks, libraries and public facilities within the community.

Based upon the findings of these basic elements, a composite of goals and policies are offered to guide future development so as to avoid problems and to meet the needs of the people of Somerset. From these goals and policy statements, specific land use recommendations are made that provide the basis for the creation of a Vision Plan (Map 11). The Vision Plan does **not** represent proposed land use patterns or zoning, but is intended to visually depict a vision for the community. It illustrates the general principles that should guide growth and development in the town.

The revised Comprehensive Plan is the community's message to its residents, to developers, to industry, and to other levels of government, that the Town of Somerset has given consideration to its environs and has proposed a program of development based upon sound planning principles and direction, with public input and support. It is important for the town to have such a statement of policy, with supporting documentation that led to that policy. This ensures that the town's interests are clearly stated, and provides guidance for the town in evaluating proposals that come before it. Adoption of a Comprehensive Plan also lends weight to the town's position when conflicts arise, because this position is based on sound planning and has public consensus behind its findings.

Policies, plans and capital improvement programs instituted by higher levels of government (at the national, state, regional and county levels) often play a significant role in shaping the future of local communities. In order to accomplish consistency with these higher government programs and thus provide opportunities for future growth consistent with local desires and market forces, the revised

comprehensive plan builds upon existing land use patterns, the current distribution of water and sewer services and transportation facilities.

Further, existing natural resources - prime agricultural areas and soils, wetlands, flood plains and steep slopes - have been analyzed to ensure their protection from the effects of future development. Although only the local municipality has direct land use powers, the other levels of government cited above can influence development activities within the community. Local officials and board members must be cognizant of plans and policies defined by these agencies to ensure that programs at each level of government reinforce rather than contradict local development policies. The diagram on the next page describes the interrelationships necessary to maintain and implement a meaningful comprehensive plan for the community.

Business and industrial firms and, to some extent, individual homeowners are all engaged in looking into the future from time to time in order to provide some direction to their day-to-day activities. Most business and industrial firms, for instance, project their anticipated needs and goals for at least a five-year period. A community likewise must have some direction to its day-to-day activities. This direction should be provided by a glance into the future also, except that the community should think ahead fifteen to twenty years because of its size, complexity, enduring qualities, and limited flexibility. A comprehensive plan can provide insight and direction for the future of the community.

A comprehensive plan can help guide continuing planning activities in the following ways:

- By dealing with minor problems so that they do not become major problems in the long-range future.
- By limiting the impact of changes which can be foreseen and which will occur in the future.
- By shaping new development to the community's needs.
- By guiding both public and private action to save money, time and effort.
- By providing continuity of future programs for community improvement especially between the Town of Somerset and the Village of Barker.
- By providing a unifying focal point for the efforts of all community interests.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Read and discuss this plan with your neighbors. Additional information is available from your Planning Board members relating to the background of decision-making for the plan.
2. If you are in agreement with the plan, lend it your support and the support of your organization in backing the actions of the town aimed at plan realization.
3. Keep informed of the work and progress of your Planning Board and other agencies that are working toward a better community.

Section II

Background Analyses/Existing Conditions

SECTION II

BACKGROUND ANALYSES/EXISTING CONDITIONS

THE REGIONAL SETTING

The future welfare of the Town of Somerset is linked to that of the metropolitan area, and the prospects for future development in the Town of Somerset can be understood only by considering the place of the town within its metropolitan region. Somerset is a rural town located at the outer limits of the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area. (See Map 1: General Location Map and Map 2: USGS Location Map) Much of the town's labor force works outside of Somerset but within the two-county metropolitan area. As such, local development policies must recognize Somerset's dependence on the metropolitan economy and transportation networks.

The metropolitan area, which consists of Erie and Niagara Counties, has experienced a decline in population during the past decades. Between 1970 and 2000, the total population of the two county region decreased from 1,349,211 to 1,170,111, a drop of 13.3 percent over the past thirty years. Much of the decline resulted from losses in Erie County, which lost 14.7 percent of its population, compared to Niagara County, which lost 6.7 percent. The rate of decline in both counties has slowed, and in Niagara County, population loss has stabilized. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Niagara County remained nearly constant, with a decrease of just 0.4 percent. Population projections prepared for transportation planning purposes in a report by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee (now known as Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council)¹ suggest that population declines may be reversing, although the projections were prepared before the release of the 2000 Census, and may be optimistic. The projections indicate that Niagara County will increase in population to 239,000 by the year 2025, an increase of 8.7 percent, or approximately 19,000 persons.

As the Town of Somerset is within a metropolitan area which itself is expected to experience very limited growth, and because the town is relatively remote from the major employment centers of the metropolitan area, it is expected that the town will remain predominantly rural during the foreseeable future. A concept plan prepared for the region a number of years ago by the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board called for very limited development within the Town of Somerset, with most of this development concentrated along the lakeshore. Actual development in the area has generally been consistent with that plan. The more recent trend report for the NFTC/GBNRTC cited above categorizes projected land use in Somerset as "Rural Residential/Agricultural Protection" with the Village of Barker identified as a hamlet residential area within the town. This emphasis on limited development and rural preservation is consistent with the town's vision for its own future.

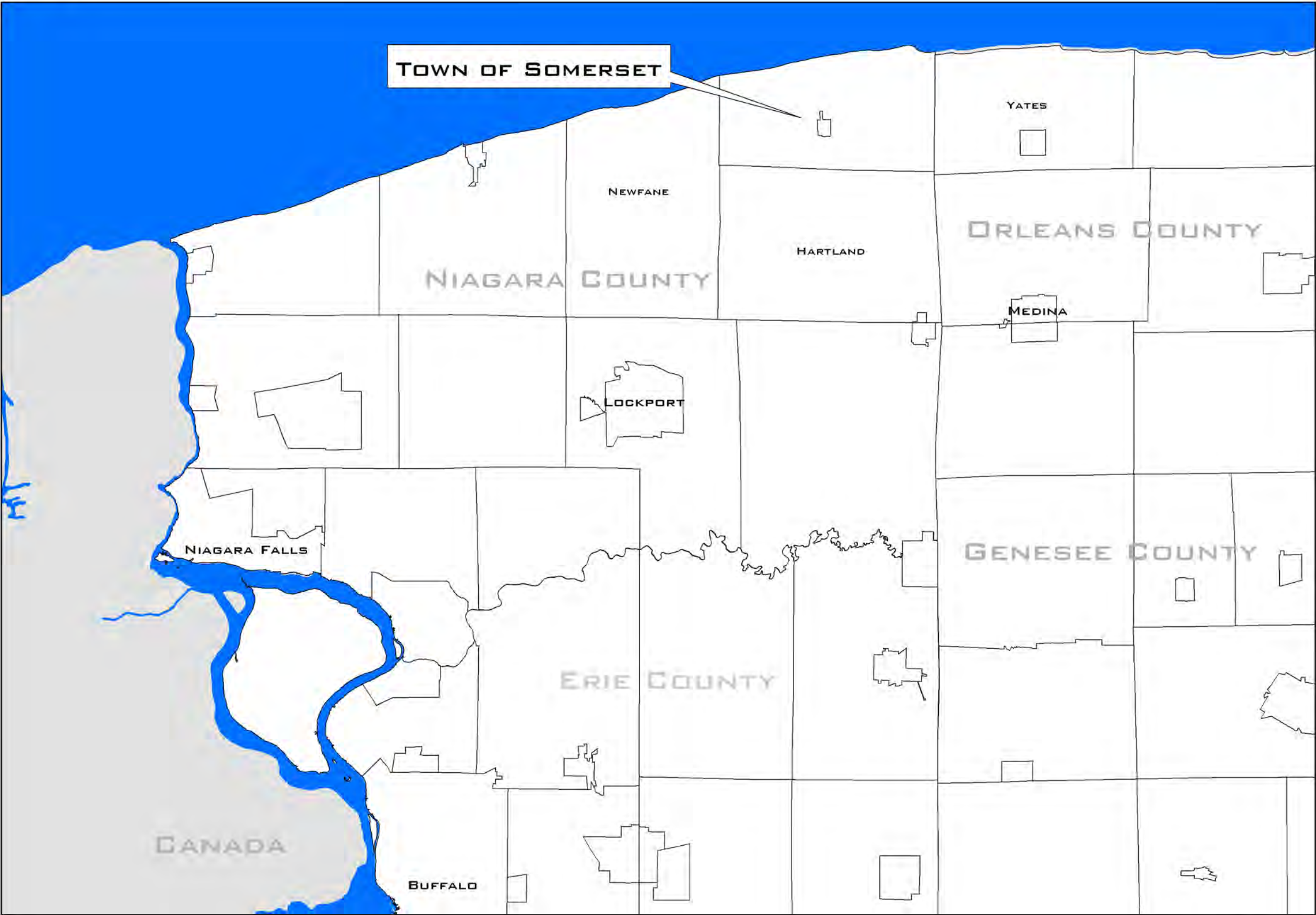
THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town of Somerset is made up of two environments: a natural environment (or physical characteristics) and a cultural (or man-made) environment. The important features of each environment must be recognized. This section of the plan considers the natural environment, focusing on the sensitive environmental features that require some degree of protection from development. The next section will discuss the cultural environment.

¹ *Phase 2 Economic/Demographic Overview Study: Final Report*, September 1997

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

REGIONAL SETTING



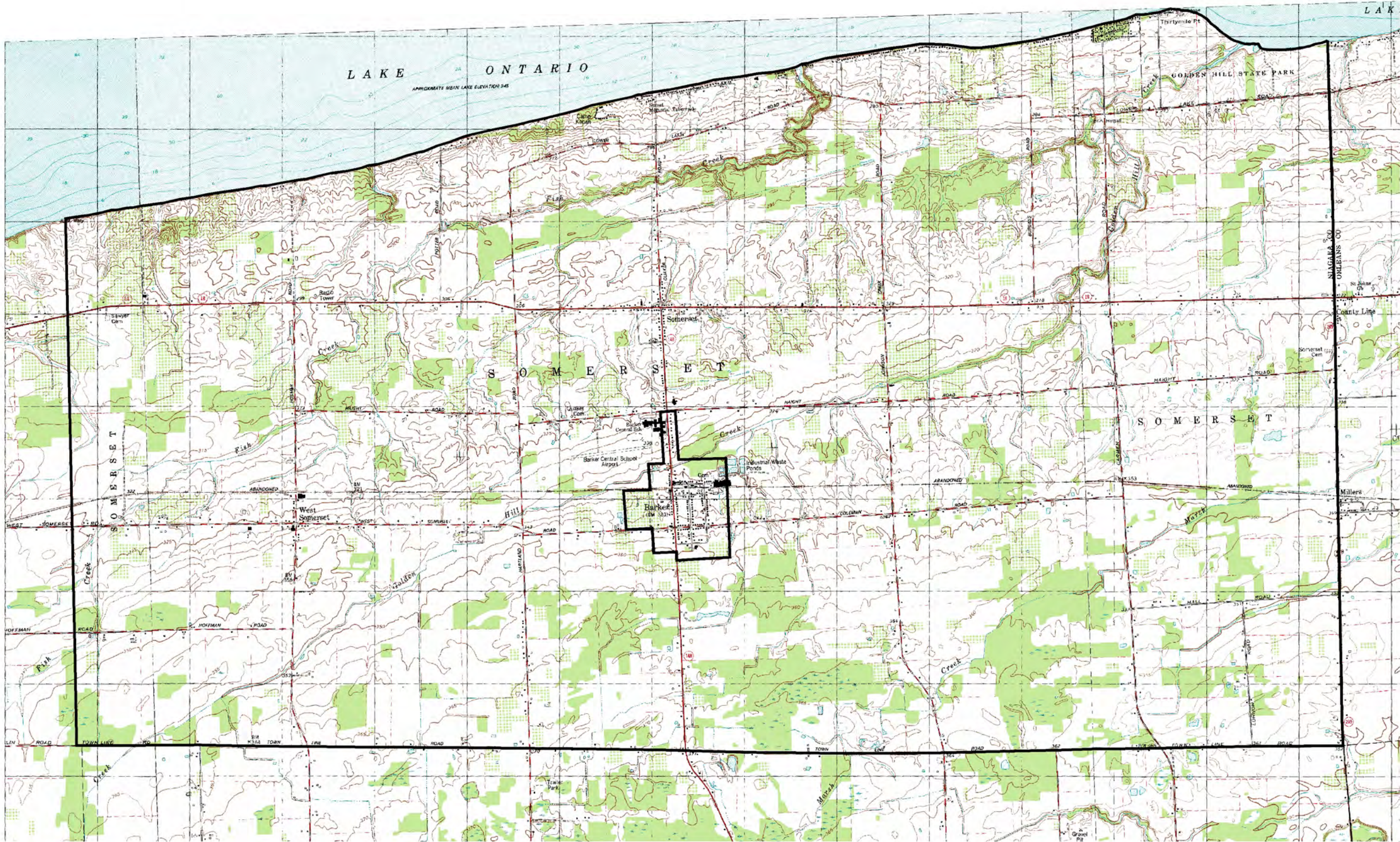
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TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

USGS LOCATION MAP

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Topographic Features - Steep Slopes

Topography is one of the prime physical characteristics determining an area's development potential. Relief and grade levels often dictate the extent and character of land development. Land, which is nearly flat or has gentle slopes (0-5 percent), lends itself more advantageously to development than land of another topographic character. The Town's of Somerset has only very limited areas which are not of gently sloping topography. The protection of steep slopes from the adverse effects of development, therefore, is generally not a major concern within the town's, and topography sets very few limits to the prospective pattern of development in the town's. The exceptions are the steep slopes along the Lake Ontario shoreline. These slopes present some serious problems, which must be addressed through planning policy. The problems will be discussed later in the section on the coastal zone.

Somerset is typical of towns found within the Iroquois Plain, which extends from the south shore of Lake Ontario, southerly to the Niagara Escarpment. The Escarpment traverses, in an east-west direction, the Towns of Lewiston, Cambria, Lockport, and the northern part of Royalton. South of the Escarpment, elevations of 500-600 feet are typical. North of the Escarpment elevations of below 500 feet are most common. Lake Ontario itself is at an elevation of approximately 250 feet above sea level. The Town's of Somerset, which lies between the Escarpment and the Lake, ranges in elevation from a high of approximately 370 feet above sea level at the south town line, near Johnson Creek Road, to a low of 250 feet at lake level, a drop of 120 feet.

The town, overall, has an elevation difference of approximately one-foot per thousand feet (0.1 percent) throughout its north-south length, to approximately Lower Lake Road. From Lower Lake Road northward, topography recedes toward the Lake at a rate of 50 feet per 1000 feet, or 5 percent slope. Areas to the west of Quaker Road have steeper topography up to 6 to 8 percent slopes on the northern extension of Hartland Road and Lower Lake Road. Immediately adjacent to the Lake, there are bluffs of 20 to 40 feet for approximately 80 percent of the town's lakefront, which, in the past, has inhibited greater lakefront development. The majority of lakefront residential and recreational development has encroached on the lakefront bluffs north of Lakeview Drive in an area from Quaker Road, easterly to the west edge of Golden Hill State Park.

Natural Drainage

A second characteristic that should be reviewed in any analysis of the area's natural features is that of the natural drainage system serving the town. An understanding of the natural drainage system is important in that it acts as a natural service area in the design and development of constructed sanitary sewer and natural storm water run-off systems.

Topographically, the entire northeastern part of Niagara County is drained toward Lake Ontario by several major drainage courses including Johnson and Marsh Creeks, which extend easterly into Orleans County, as well as Fish and Golden Hill Creeks, and their tributaries. (See Map 3: Environmental Features)

Natural drainage within the Town of Somerset is provided by two separate drainage basins: the Golden Hill Creek basin and the Johnson Creek basin. The Golden Hill Creek divides the town in half, running from the extreme southwest corner of the town to the northeast corner through Golden Hill State Park. All land south of Golden Hill Creek and land for a parallel distance of approximately 1,000 feet north drains toward Golden Hill Creek. All land lying generally north of a line 1,000 feet north of Golden Hill Creek, and below an elevation of 330 feet, drains to the north into Fish Creek, or one of its tributaries, or a small west branch of Golden Hill Creek. There are two small exceptions. A small area on the AES Somerset property drains directly into Lake Ontario, and a major portion of the southeast corner of the town drained by Marsh Creek lies within the Johnson Creek basin. The upstream area of the Johnson Creek basin lies in the Town of Hartland, and its downstream basin area is in Orleans County.

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

MAP 3

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

BROWNFIELDS

ROADS

STREAMS

FLOODPLAINS

100 YEAR FLOODPLAINS WITH NO BASE ELEVATIONS

100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN WITH ELEVATIONS

500 YEAR FLOODPLAIN

NYSDEC WETLANDS

FEDERAL WETLANDS

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DATA SOURCES: TOWN OF SOMERSET, NIAGARA COUNTY

The map displays the Town of Somerset with its municipal boundary. Key roads shown include Lake Rd, Lower Lake Rd, Quaker Rd, Lovers Ln, Johnson Creek Rd, Burgess Rd, Haight Rd, W Somerset Rd, Coleman Rd, Hall Rd, Lannon Rd, Town Line Rd, and County Line Rd. Streams depicted are Johnson Creek and Lovers Ln. Floodplains are indicated by various hatching patterns: red diagonal lines for 100-year floodplains with elevations, green diagonal lines for 100-year floodplains with no base elevations, and blue diagonal lines for 500-year floodplains. Wetlands are shown as stippled areas, with NYSDEC wetlands in light green and federal wetlands in light blue. Brownfields are marked with red dots. A north arrow is located on the right side of the map.

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As the Town of Somerset shares its drainage basins with other towns, it does not have complete control over its drainage problems. The town itself may develop and put into effect sound policies to prevent drainage problems, only to have such problems arise through inappropriate regulation by upstream towns. The importance of this situation is such that it should be the basic policy of the town to coordinate its drainage system planning efforts with those of other towns which share its drainage basins.

As noted above, the Town of Somerset is crossed by a number of creeks, the most significant one being Golden Hill Creek. These creeks not only serve an important drainage function, but also provide attractive natural settings and offer opportunities for recreation. Golden Hill Creek and Fish Creek have experienced some salmon runs, and may have the potential to become an attraction for sport fishing. The goals and policies section of the comprehensive plan suggests specific policies to guide local decision making in order to protect the creek from the adverse effects of development. The implementation of these policies would allow these waterways to maintain their important natural purposes, their environmental attractiveness, and their recreational potential.

On February 3, 1982, the Federal Emergency Management Agency released the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for the Town of Somerset. The FIRM map delineates the final flood hazard boundaries which provides the basis for the implementation of the regular program phase of the National Flood Insurance Program within the town. The flood hazard areas (100 year floodplains) are depicted in general form on Map 3 and include the Lake Ontario shoreline, much of the land along Golden Hill Creek and land near the outlet of Fish Creek. Map 3 should be used only for planning purposes. Persons interested in determining the exact locations of the flood hazard boundary areas should refer to the official map on file at the Town Clerk's office.

In order for property owners to take advantage of the National Flood Insurance Program, the Town Board is required to adopt federally approved floodplain management regulations to manage land use and development within the designated flood hazard areas. Flood hazard regulations were developed as part of the town's Coastal Energy Impact Program and incorporated into the town's zoning ordinance. Had the town failed to enact such provisions, property owners within designated flood hazard areas would lose their eligibility to receive federal flood insurance. No federally insured mortgage money would be available to buyers within the town and federal funds would be withheld.

Under the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act, DEC has prepared a wetlands map for Niagara County. A wetlands map for the Town of Somerset is on file and the town has adopted a wetlands law. The largest wetland areas in the town are located in the southern portion of the town near the Town of Hartland. (See Map 3) All state-regulated wetlands are in the southern part of Somerset. Wetlands of approximately 923 acres are presently under the regulatory jurisdiction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Additional wetlands of approximately 1,834 acres under federal jurisdiction are located throughout the town, as shown on Map 3. (The quantity of these wetlands may be affected by recent litigation and the resulting loss of jurisdiction of the Army Corps on isolated wetlands.)

This Comprehensive Plan sets basic town policies for protecting the town's important drainage features: the creeks, the floodplains and the wetlands. The policies, carried out through effective regulation, are intended to protect the public interest from the adverse effects of development that disregards the drainage system. Such development not only runs the risk of incurring serious flood damages, but may also destroy wildlife habitat and the natural beauty of drainage features, and may increase flood hazards in downstream areas. Too often the public at large bears the cost of development which disregards the drainage system by having to pay for engineering and public works measures to reduce the risk of flood damages. These costs and potential damages can be minimized by establishing proper natural resource policies to guide local development actions. These policies may best be utilized by providing the basis for establishing a master plan for drainage.

Generalized Soil Characteristics

The study of soil characteristics constitutes another important determinant of future development potentials. In the future, as pressures for development become more intense, the ability of local soils to sustain such development will assume a greater importance. Basically, soils affect development in three ways:

1. Of primary importance is the ability of soils to facilitate surface water runoff. To an extent, this capability is related to and dependent upon local topographic conditions. As the difficulty of surface water drainage increases in more level areas, soil composition must accommodate a greater percentage of this surface water through seepage, or the cost of storm water drainage becomes extremely expensive.
2. In areas where septic tanks are utilized, it is necessary that residential development is kept at a density that permits the proper percolation of septic tank effluent. The ability of soils to accept sanitary sewage effluent is very important if an area is to remain free from health problems.
3. The majority of land within the Town of Somerset will continue to be utilized for agriculturally productive purposes over the next 20 years. Therefore, the land's suitability for agricultural use is of continuing and perhaps increased importance. As other areas are consumed for development, fewer areas remain for agricultural production. Any area that is well suited to food production from a soil, climatic, and available land standpoint, should be considered as much for its inherent agricultural qualities as for its capability to support what may be unnecessary urban sprawl.

The primary source of information for soil data is the publication "Uses of Soils for Community Development and Recreation Use," prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at the Niagara County Soil Conservation Service. The soil types within Somerset and Barker have been grouped into categories and simplified for presentation purposes. The basis for these classifications is drainage conditions and topography. It should be understood that the soil description which follows is general in nature, and if any questions arise for a specific area, a more detailed on-site soil survey would be required. Table 1 summarizes this information on soils in Somerset. In addition, Map 4, Generalized Soils, provides information on the soil types within the town.

Soils within the town vary greatly because of their initial creation as glacial drift deposits mixed with alluvium from the prehistoric recession of Lake Ontario. Although deposits of gravel are common in glacial formations, most of the soils in Somerset are alluvial deposits of silt and are heavy textured. Silts in particular have a soil composition in which moisture cannot be retained and a tight structure through which water cannot pass. This impervious soil structure, which inhibits the absorption of moisture, can be found in many areas of the town, but is particularly evident in the swampy area in the southeast section, in the vicinity of Carmen, Johnson Creek and the Hartland-Somerset Town Line Roads.

The majority of soils in the town can be productive if they have good natural drainage or can be mechanically drained by tile lines or ditches. With adequate drainage, only one of the numerous soil types found within the town is of limited agricultural value. High soil suitability for grain crops, fruits, and some vegetables coupled with late springs and long falls (typical along Lake Ontario) combine to provide better growing conditions than in most other areas within the state. These two natural phenomena help to explain the relative stability that farming has had in the Town of Somerset. According to the U.S. Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in operation in the town (14012 zip code) remained essentially stable between 1992 and 1997, the most recent year available. The number of farms in Niagara County over the same time period decreased by 8.2 percent, from 749 farms to 687. Approximately 81 percent of the farms in the 14012 zip code are in the 50 to 999 acre size range, compared to 64 percent in this size range in 1992. It is felt to be fortunate for the farmers and landowners in Somerset that they have a natural resource and unique climatic conditions which are

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

GENERALIZED SOILS

KEY TO FEATURES

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

ROADS

APPLETON-KENDAIA-HILTON

DARIEN-CAZENOVIA-NUNDA

HONEOYE-ONTARIO-LIMA

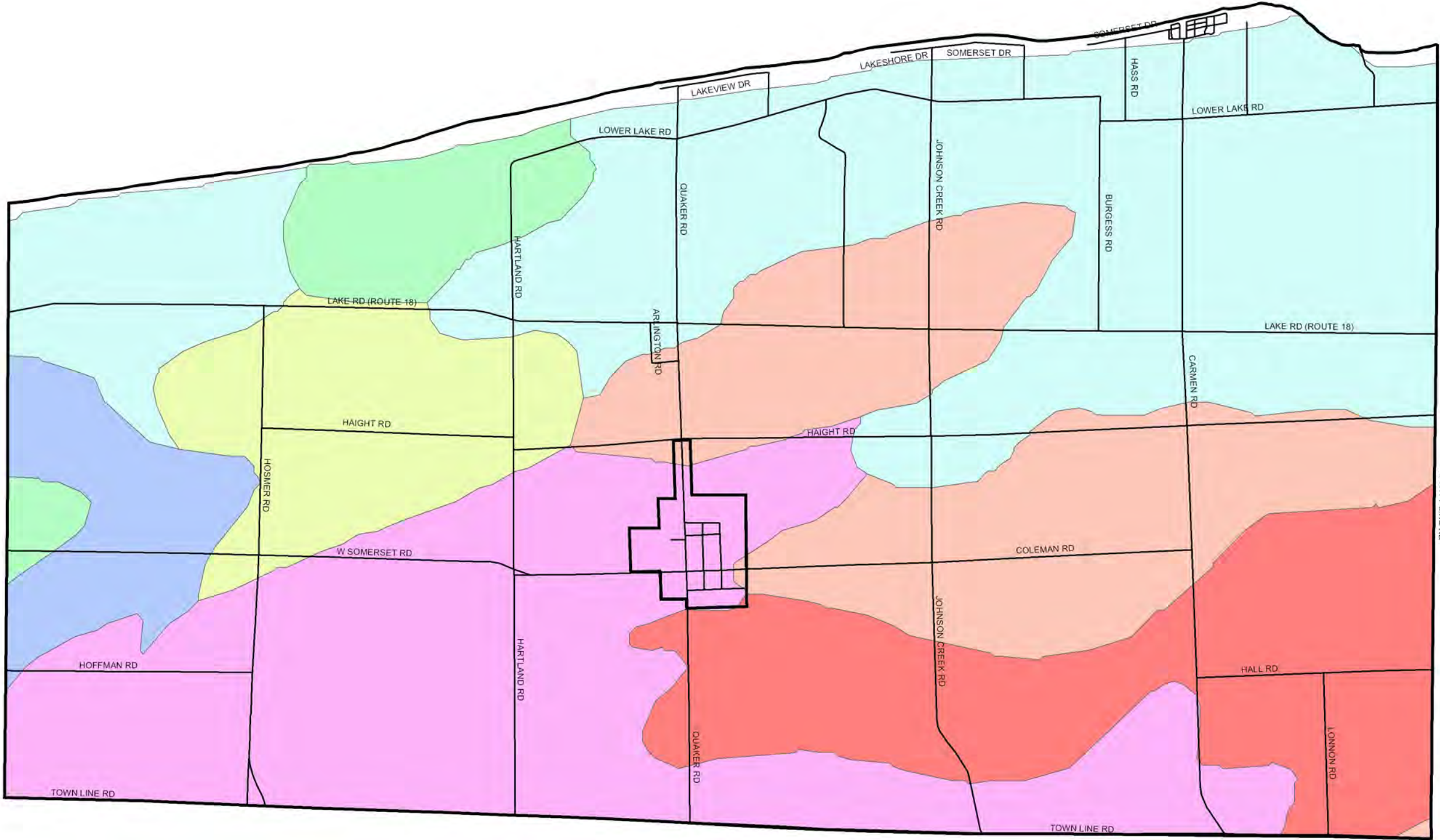
HUDSON-RHINEBECK-COLLAMER

MINDA-ARKPORT-LAMSON

PALMYRA-ALTON-HOWARD

WASSAIC-FARMINGTON-LAIRDSVILLE

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 DATA SOURCES: TOWN OF SOMERSET



advantageous and should help to sustain farming as an integral element within the town and region's economic development.

As can be seen in Table 1, most of the soils in the town will not readily accept dense urban development patterns without the extensions of water and sewer lines, because of high water tables and impermeable soils. The existing sewer-served areas of the village and town contain sufficient capacity to more than accommodate the needs for future urban growth during the next ten to twenty years. Urban growth will benefit the public investments (sewer and water lines costs) if it is concentrated within the existing sewer and water district areas, in the following ways:

1. Permit less costly district charges and maintenance costs for landowners.
2. Promote a sense of community and neighborhood ties that cannot be created by scattered sprawl development along major highways.
3. Indirectly stabilize and enhance the area's agricultural-economy by reducing the potential of scattered residential development throughout the farming areas.

Table 1
Generalized Soil Limitations
Town of Somerset, Niagara County, NY

Predominant Soil Types	Slope	Erosion	Capabilities for Septic	Capabilities for Home Sites	Capability for Agricultural Production
Total Town Area					
Type 44	0-2% 2-6%	Little to none Slight	Severe- a, d	Moderate- a	Highly suitable with drainage
Type 86	0-2%	Little to none	Severe- d	Moderate- a	Suitable, most crops
Type 46	A	Little to none	Severe- a, d	Severe- a	Suitable with drainage
Type 93	0-2% 2-6%	Little to none Slight	Severe- a, d	Severe- a	Suitable with drainage
Type 85	0-2%	Little to none	Severe- d	Moderate- a	Suitable, most crops
Type 71	0-2% 2-6%	Little to none Slight	Moderate- a, b	Moderate- a	Highly suitable, most crops
Type 112	0-2%	Little to none	Severe- a, c, d	Severe- a, c	Limited suitability
Type 88	0-2%	Little to none	Severe- a, d	Severe- a	
Lakeshore Area					
Type 93	0-2% 2-6%	Little to none Slight	See Above		
Type 44	2-6%	Slight			
Type 86	2-6%	Slight			
Type 63	0-2%	Little to none	Severe- a, d	Severe- a	Suitability, with drainage
Along Creeks					
Type 2	0-2%	Little to none			Highly suitable, most crops

NOTES:

- a. Seasonal high water table, generally 1½ to 2 feet below the surface
- b. Severe pollution hazard
- c. Shallow bedrock: 1 to 3 feet
- d. Slow permeability at depths of 8" to 2 feet

Source: *Uses of Soils for Community Development of Recreational Use, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Niagara County, NY—taken from Comprehensive Plan-Town of Somerset and Village of Barker, 1972.*

Woodlands

Woodlands are among the important environmental features of the Town of Somerset which call for some degree of protection from development. Woodlands provide attractive natural settings and offer important habitats for wildlife.

According to an inventory by the Niagara County Environmental Management Council (EMC), the Town of Somerset had 6,091 acres of woodlands in 1978, covering about one-fourth of the total land areas of the town. Some 4,400 of these acres were in brushland, while the remaining acres were in mature woodland. Much of the brushland will eventually mature, adding to the forest resources of the town. A comparison of the EMC inventory with a comparable inventory by the State of New York in 1968 indicates that the area of brushland in the town increased by about 1,200 acres between 1968 and 1978. This trend could be due to the retirement of land from farm production, or may be due to differences in methodologies. The 1978 inventory of woodland has never been updated, and the current status of woodlots in the town must be estimated. Based on aerial photographs of the town, it is estimated that the amount of land coverage in woodlands has decreased since 1978, to an estimated 15 to 20 percent of the town. Map 5: Digital Orthoimagery is an aerial photograph of the Town of Somerset. Wooded areas can be seen as dark green on this map.

Coastal Zone

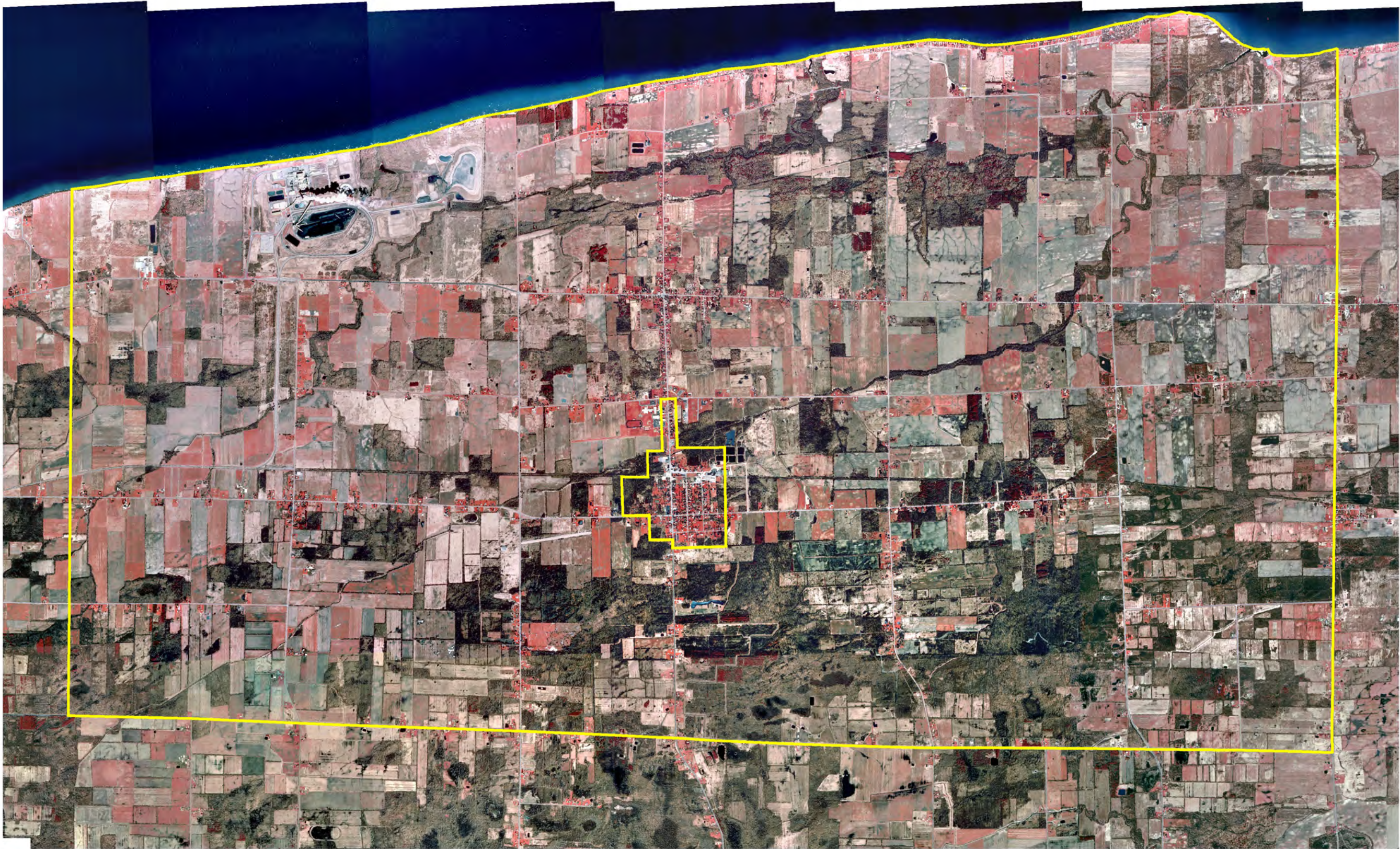
One of the most important environmental features in the Town of Somerset is its coastal zone, the Lake Ontario shoreline. This area has been given considerable attention in recent years through the New York State Coastal Zone Management Program. The Coastal Zone Management Program has identified a number of problems within the coastal zone which need to be addressed through planning policy and the adoption of appropriate regulations. Some significant problems identified in the past, as they apply to the Town of Somerset, are as follows:

1. The problem of shoreline erosion. Steep bluffs which are highly susceptible to erosion predominate along the Somerset shoreline. Development which disregards the erosion potential of the shoreline not only poses a threat to itself but also could result in pressures on the town to bear the cost of providing shoreline protection structures. The problem is significant and one that the town needs to address as part of its planning policy and regulatory control program.
2. The problem of providing adequate public access to Lake Ontario. The demand for such access may be expected to increase with the growth in the salmon industry and with continued improvement in the water quality of Lake Ontario and its tributaries within the town. At present, general public access to Lake Ontario within the town is limited to Golden Hill State Park and a small village park at the end of Quaker Road. The question of whether existing access will be sufficient to meet future needs must be addressed. On the other hand, the desire to provide accessibility to a regional recreation asset should not sacrifice sound local planning objectives.
3. The problem of adequately controlling private development along the shoreline. The regional concept plan prepared by the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board suggests that there will be a considerable demand for residential development along the Somerset shoreline. Appropriate policies and regulations will have to be adopted to assure that such development will be consistent with the need for protecting the coastal zone as a natural resource and for preventing a demand for costly utility extensions.
4. The problem of extending the sewer district along the shoreline east of the sewer plant to alleviate pollution potential from the more densely populated residential lake shore area.

In an earlier planning effort, as part of the Coastal Energy Impact Program, the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board prepared a multiple use plan for the development of recreation improvements on a portion of the Somerset Power Plant site. A summary of the plan, including a phased development program is attached herein as Appendix A to the revised comprehensive plan.

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DIGITAL ORTHOIMAGERY



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The development program includes a variety of recreation activities (i.e., active play areas, picnic grounds, water based recreation, a nature trail, etc.) designed to take advantage of the lakefront, its scenic vistas and associated resources. The development of the multiple use concepts would make the shoreline more accessible to many more local residents than is the case today. Although there are no immediate plans to implement this multiple use plan, it is retained in this plan for eventual future development.

The coastal zone is a unique environmental resource within the Town of Somerset that requires special attention in the preparation of development policies and regulations. To this end, the Town of Somerset is planning to prepare a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) to study its coastal zone more intensively. The LWRP will provide a complete inventory of the coastal zone and its assets, and develop local policies and programs to guide development in this important area.

THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The cultural environment of the Town of Somerset is made up of its people, its land uses, and its public facilities. The cultural environment has undergone changes since the 1972 comprehensive plan was prepared, and these changes require some consideration in the updating of the plan.

Population and Housing

Population trends for the Town of Somerset are depicted in Figure 1 and Table 2. Since the 1970 comprehensive plan, the town's population increased by 188 people, from 2,677 to 2865, or 7.0 percent. The past decade (1990 to 2000) saw the strongest growth in the town since the 1950's. Somerset's population grew by 210 persons over the past ten years, an increase of 7.9 percent. Much of the growth was in the town outside the Village of Barker. While the Village's population increased by about 1.4 percent over the past decade, the portion of the town outside the village saw an increase of 9.7 percent over the same time period.

Municipal level demographic projections were prepared for the NFTC as part of the Phase 2 Economic/Demographic Overview Study. According to demographic projections in that report, the Town of Somerset was projected to continue to grow over the next decades. By 2025, the town's population (including the Village) is projected to total 3,000 persons, an increase of 135 persons. These projections were prepared prior to the release of the 2000 Census figures. Given recent trends, they may be conservatively low.

Average household size has for some time been declining throughout the country. The decline has been due to a reduction in the birth rate, combined with an increase in single person households, separations, and divorces. The effect of this trend has been to create a demand for new housing in communities that have experienced a stable population or even a moderate population decline. In the Town of Somerset, this trend has not been dramatic. The average population per household in the town declined by 9.1 percent or from 2.89 persons per unit in 1970 to 2.65 in 1980, but recovered in subsequent years. Average household size remained relatively stable between 1990 and 2000, increasing from 2.84 persons per household to 2.85 persons. Much of this is due to increases in the average size of households within the Village of Barker, which increased from 2.62 persons in 1990 to 2.85 persons in 2000. Outside of the Village, average household size in the Town of Somerset decreased slightly, from 2.9 persons to 2.88 persons.

There have been increases in the number of households in the Town of Somerset over the past 10 years. There are currently 1000 households in the town, compared to 940 in 1990. This represents an increase of 6.4 percent over the past decade. All of the growth in households has occurred in the town outside the village. The number of households within the Village of Barker actually fell from 218 to 211 between

1990 and 2000. In addition, the number of housing units has been steadily increasing. In 1970, there were 927 housing units in the town. By 2000, the number had increased to 1,132, a growth of 22.1 percent over the past thirty years. This is partly due to increased numbers of second homes, and a larger proportion of unoccupied units in the town.

Table 2
Population Trends

Population	Town of Somerset		Village of Barker		Town outside Village	
1940	2,041		410		1,631	
1950	2,227		532		1,695	
1960	2,489		528		1,961	
1970	2,677		567		2,110	
1980	2,701		535		2,166	
1990	2,655		569		2,086	
2000	2,865		577		2,288	
Change/Trends:						
	Town of Somerset		Village of Barker		Town outside Village	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1940-1950	186	9.1%	122	29.8%	64	3.9%
1950-1960	262	11.8%	-4	-0.8%	266	15.7%
1960-1970	188	7.6%	39	7.4%	149	7.6%
1970-1980	24	0.9%	-32	-5.6%	56	2.7%
1980-1990	-46	-1.7%	34	6.4%	-80	-3.7%
1990-2000	210	7.9%	8	1.4%	202	9.7%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

	1990	2000	Change	
Households				
Somerset (all)	940	1,000	+60	6.4%
Barker	218	211	-7	-3.2%
Somerset (part)	722	789	+67	9.3%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Still another concern of the town's planning program is the condition of housing within the town. The 1972 comprehensive plan, which gave considerable attention to housing conditions, indicated that in 1970, 2.2 percent of the housing units in the Village of Barker and 5 percent of the housing units in the town outside the village were substandard. The only source of information on housing condition is a housing survey based on direct observation, which is outside the scope of this document. However, although the number of substandard units may have declined since 1970, it is apparent from a visual survey of the town that substandard housing remains a problem.

Existing Land Use Analysis

The study and analysis of existing land uses within a community is one of the fundamental elements in a comprehensive planning program. Through an initial understanding of the manner in which development has take place in the past, future land use can be properly determined. For a comprehensive plan to be truly comprehensive, it must have its foundation in the patterns and relationships of existing land use, for upon these bases, future growth takes place. It is, therefore, a necessity that the existing land use types, patterns, densities and distribution be identified and the inherent problems of land development be studied.

Land use can be classified into several generalized categories. The categories include:

Residential- Land containing one or more dwelling units, including seasonal housing and mobile homes. (A dwelling unit is a group of rooms in which a family lives, independent of any other unit.) Residential land use can be further categorized as single family, multi-family, multiple residential (e.g. institutions), or rural residential (very low density).

Commercial/Business - Land where goods or services are offered for sale to the public. Examples include grocery stores, offices, gasoline stations, etc.

Industrial - Land where a product is manufactured, fabricated, constructed, stored or assembled, or any combination of industrial activities including product or material handling, storage or treatment including the extraction of natural resources from their parent site, and research related activities that lead to the development or refinement of industrial products.

Government/Public Facilities - Land with or without structures, which is used or maintained by a governmental or institutional organization for the benefit of the residents of the community. Included are schools, churches, fire stations and libraries.

Parks/Outdoor Recreation - Land with or without structures, which is used for both active and passive recreational purposes by the public. Included are state and local parklands and boat launch sites.

Agricultural/Active Farmland - Land which is currently under cultivation or producing a crop directly related to sustaining farming operations. Included are pasture land, hay fields, field crops (wheat, oats, etc.), wood lots, and associated lands that are part of an active operation.

Vacant/ Inactive Farmland and Other Underdeveloped Land - Land which is currently not being used or is not suitable for active farming operations. Included are wooded areas, freshwater wetlands, forests, outlands and water bodies.

There have been some changes in land use in the Town of Somerset over the past decades. Land use surveys conducted during previous planning efforts can be used to track these changes. Because these previous surveys were conducted independently of each other, it must be emphasized that some of the differences between the surveys are the result of variations in the methodologies used to generate the information, and do not accurately reflect actual changes. Differences in interpretation regarding land use categories can also affect the results. For example, wooded areas can be categorized as agricultural or vacant, depending upon the context. Whether the information was collected by field surveys, estimated through aerial photographs, or derived by other means also affects the outcome. In a field or aerial survey, a large residential parcel may be categorized as partially vacant, but which lands to include in the residential use category is subjective. The most recent survey (2002) was conducted through GIS technology, and is based on the town's assessment records. In one sense, it is less subjective than earlier methods. However, because the data is parcel-based (each parcel is assigned one and only one land use category), it tends to overestimate certain land uses, particularly residential uses. There are parcels in Somerset approaching 100 acres that are categorized as single-family residential use, although the vast majority of the lot is actually undeveloped or vacant. Because of these methodological issues, the data are only indicative of the types of changes that have been occurring, and can not be directly compared. However, these surveys do give an order of magnitude sense of how land use is changing in the Town of Somerset.

Land use data for 1968 was derived from a New York State Land Use and Natural Resource (LUNR) inventory. The 1978 data was compiled by the Niagara County Environmental Management Council (EMC). Both those years include the Village of Barker in the totals. The 2002 figures were estimated using assessment data codes. In contrast to the earlier surveys, the 2002 figures exclude the Village of Barker.

Table 3
Land Use Acreage Trends

	1968	1978	2002	Chg- '68-78	Chg- '78-02
Residential	306	509	1,014	+203	+505
Commercial	17	67	165	+50	+98
Industrial	47	72	1,177	+25	+1,105
Public Facilities	80	104	443	+24	+339
Outdoor Recreation	346	469	374	+123	-95
Active Farmland	12,540	9,425	9,537	-3,115	+102
Orchards, Vineyards	1,494	1,238	na	-256	na
Other Active Farms	11,046	8,187	na	-2,859	na
Undeveloped*	12,169	14,733	10,198	+2,564	-4,535

*includes inactive farmland

Source: Comprehensive Plan Update, Town of Somerset, Preliminary Draft, 1980, and Wendel Duchscherer GIS files 2002.

These figures indicate that Somerset has remained a rural town, dominated by agriculture and undeveloped land. Even though the town remains rural, the figures show that the town has experienced an increase in urbanization since 1968. There have been significant increases in the amount of land dedicated to residential, commercial and industrial uses. In regard to the increases in the amount of land in residential use, the 2002 figures overstate the increase, due to the methodology used, as noted above. The residential development that has occurred has been at a relatively low density. Development at an urban density has been generally restricted to the Village of Barker, the hamlet of Somerset and certain areas along the lakeshore. Certain streets, such as Quaker Road between the Village of Barker and the Hamlet of Somerset, have experienced a considerable amount of strip frontage development for residential uses. Elsewhere, residential development is scattered at a fairly low density along the frontage of highways. The increase in property classified as commercial land is primarily due to classification systems. The 2002 figures for commercial land include two parcels totaling approximately 123 acres that are campgrounds that were most likely not included in the earlier totals. If these two parcels are subtracted from the total, there has been a decrease in the amount of commercial land. Since the 2002 figures exclude the Village of Barker, where much of the town's commercial property is concentrated, this is to be expected. The dramatic increase in the amount of industrial acreage can be attributed to the development of the AES power plant. Nearly 1,100 acres of land is occupied by the power plant, representing the vast majority of industrial land in the town.

While it appears that the amount of parkland has decreased in the town, part of that decrease is because the 1978 survey included lands as parkland that was actually undeveloped. The parcel of power station property designated the multi-use area was categorized by the 1978 survey as outdoor recreation land. This parcel remains a long-term location for potential future park development, but cannot currently be coded as parkland. The earlier surveys also included parkland located within the Village of Barker, which are not included in the 2002 totals.

The decline of farmland evident between 1968 and 1978 has appeared to stabilize. The amount of acreage in active farm production increased between 1978 and 2002 by about 100 acres. Much of the Town of Somerset is included in a state-designated agricultural district. The agricultural district boundary is set by the Niagara County Legislature and the State Department of Agriculture and Markets

pursuant to the provisions of Article 25 AA of the State Agriculture and Markets Law, and represents lands that consist primarily of viable farming soils. By being located within a designated agricultural district these lands receive an extra layer of protection from development. The district was created as a means of stabilizing farming in the county, to protect agricultural investments and to encourage expansion of farmland wherever possible. Local land use policies should complement the objectives of the agricultural districting program in order to support farmland preservation. Current land uses based on assessment data are shown on Map 6: Existing Land Use.

Land Use Controls

Two of the major tools in controlling land use in a community are zoning and subdivision regulations. The Town of Somerset has regulations for both; Chapter 171 - Subdivision of Land, and Chapter 205 - Zoning. Both are found in the Code of the Town of Somerset, which have been codified with all the codes of the Town.

Subdivision Regulations

The Town's subdivision regulations are fairly standard regulations, with procedures for both minor subdivisions (4 or less lots, not involving public infrastructure improvements or extensions), and major subdivisions (more than 4 lots). A minor subdivision approval is a two step process: sketch plan and minor subdivision plat review. A major subdivision requires three steps: sketch plan, preliminary plan review, and final plat review.

The remainder of the code establishes, plan specifications, development standards, required improvements and penalties. The regulations do not include any creative subdivision techniques such as rural cluster development (see zoning code for cluster development regulations) or other rural development regulations.

Zoning

The zoning code of the Town is also a fairly standard code, including sections on the following: nonconforming uses, the zoning districts, supplemental regulations (including cluster developments and planned unit developments), parking regulations, site plan review, administration and enforcement, and Board of Appeals.

Zoning in the Town includes four residential categories (agricultural, single-family, single and two family, and a lake shore residential district), one business, two industrial zones (industrial and general industrial), and a mixed use floating zone, PUD. It should be noted that the R-2 district allows medical centers or clinics by special use permit, and the "planned business areas" of the code encourages PUD's in the R-2 district.

Through the continuous efforts of comprehensive planning over the past fifteen years, the Town has kept its zoning map in general conformance with the goals and objectives of the community. In 2001, several zoning revisions were enacted in keeping with this vision. These zoning map amendments included the following:


- Making all lands within 500' of the high bank of Lake Ontario either "residential lake shore" or agricultural (excluding the power plant site).
- Removal of some isolated commercial zonings in the areas no longer commercial in nature.
- Removal of some industrial zoning in areas that are agricultural in nature, and making them agricultural zoning. Adding consistency in the industrial zoned areas by adding some "railroad" property back into the industrial zone.

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN


EXISTING LANDUSE (RPS-TAX INFORMATION)


MAP 6


KEY TO FEATURES


 MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY


LANDUSE CLASSIFICATIONS


 AGRICULTURAL


 SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL


 MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL


 MULTIPLE RESIDENTIAL


 VACANT


 PARKS

 COMMERCIAL

 INDUSTRIAL

 GOVERNMENT/PUBLIC

 UTILITIES/INFRASTRUCTURE

 MISSING DATA

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- Adding a PUD designation over the entire AES power plant site, acknowledging the present uses on the property. The PUD allows many types of uses, but any changes to the property would require a zoning amendment (new PUD designation).

A copy of the Town's zoning map is included in this report as Map 7: Zoning Classifications.

In general the Town's zoning map represents that land use vision of the community, and the code only needs minor updates to provide better direction to developers in the Town. The code was updated in 2000 with improvements made to the "I" and "GI" districts, site plan review regulations, parking regulations, and the PUD category.

Other Codes

Other codes in the Town of Somerset that affect land use in the Town are as follows: "Bed and Breakfast establishments", "Campgrounds and Vehicle Parks", "Environmental Quality Review", "Excavations", and "Mobile/Manufactured Homes".

- "Bed and Breakfast establishments" are allowed by special use permits throughout the Town.
- "Campgrounds and Vehicle Parks" establishes a yearly permit requirement for these uses that are allowed in an agricultural district by special use permit.
- "Environmental Quality Review" is the SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review) requirement for all development projects in the Town (this code is outdated).
- "Excavations" regulates excavation activities in the Town.
- "Mobile/Manufactured Homes" establishes standards for these types of uses which are allowed by special use permit in agricultural districts (controlled by yearly license).

Transportation

As a predominantly rural town, the Town of Somerset has a relatively simple roadway system. Route 18 is the principal east-west route in the town, and Route 148 is the main north-south route. Both are state highways, as is County Line Road south of Route 18. All other roadways in Somerset are under local or county jurisdiction. Primary east-west roadways include Lower Lake Road, Haight Road, West Somerset/Coleman Roads and Town Line Road. North-south routes include Hosmer Road, Hartland Road, Quaker Road, Johnson Creek Road and Carmen Road.

Traffic counts indicate that Route 18 (Lake Road) and Hartland Road generate the most traffic. According to statistics provided by the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), the average daily traffic along these routes is in the range of 1,400 to 1,500 vehicles. Other roadways for which there are traffic counts average between 500 to 700 vehicles per day.

An active rail line runs through the western end of the town, with a spur to the AES power plant. The railroad right-of-way continues eastward through the Town, but this portion of the rail line is in private ownership and is not in operation. There is no public transportation service in Somerset. According to the 1998 Bicycle Master Plan prepared by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee, there are no existing designated bicycle routes in the Town of Somerset. That plan recommends establishing a bike route along the Lake Ontario shore for the length of Niagara County, including Somerset. In Somerset, the route is shown along Lake Road to Quaker, along Quaker to Lower Lake Road, and continuing east to the County line.

Major transportation features, including available traffic counts, are shown on Map 8. The AADT figures on the major roadways of this map show the average annual daily traffic, or the typical number of vehicles using these roadways on a daily basis. The year that each traffic count was taken, which ranges from 1993 to 2001, is also shown on the map.

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

PARCEL BOUNDARIES

ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

AGRICULTURAL

BUSINESS

INDUSTRIAL

PUD

R-1

R-2

RLS - RESIDENTIAL LAKE SHORE

STATE PARK

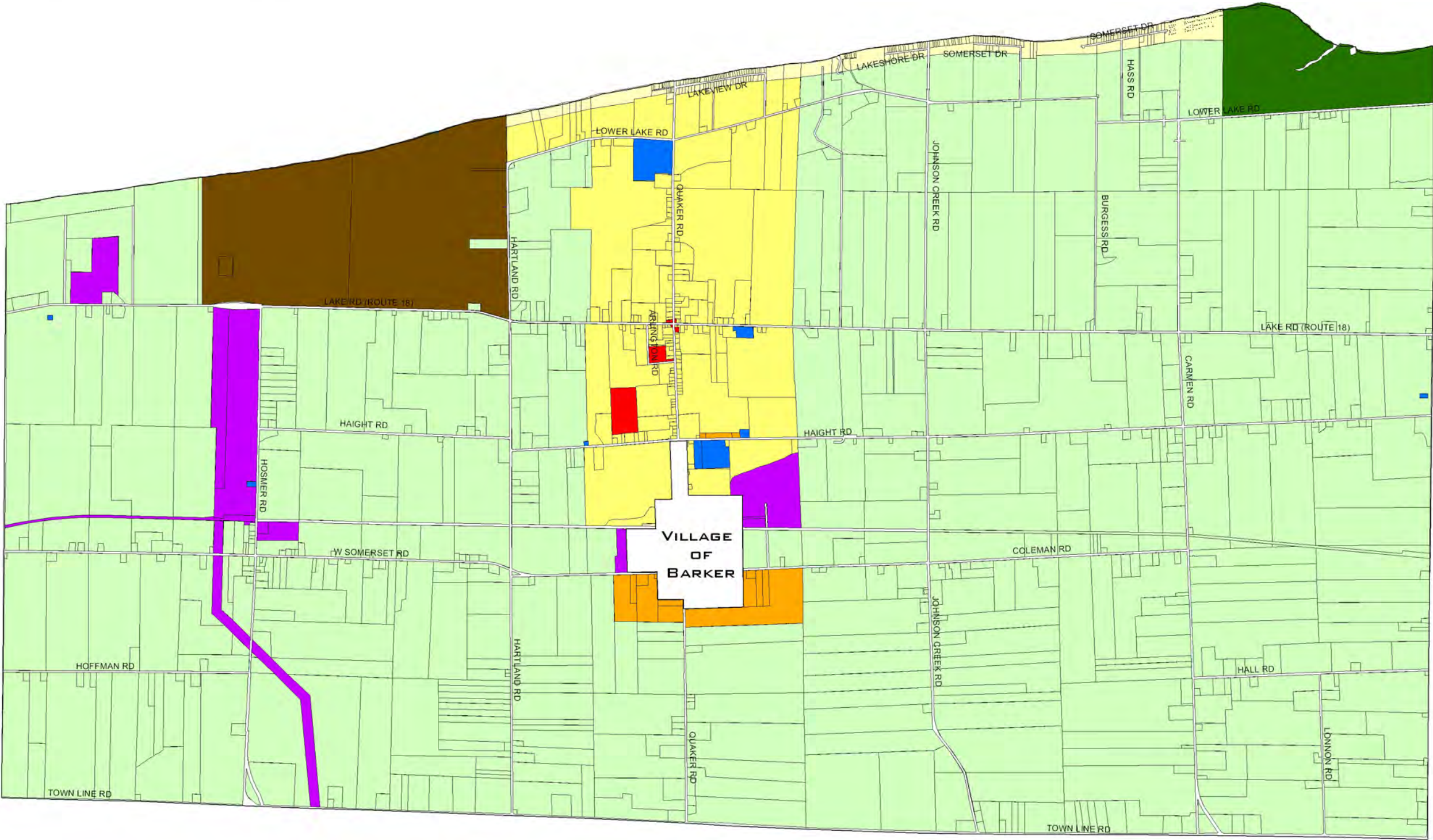
TOWN OWNED/RECREATIONAL

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TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN


TRANSPORTATION


KEY TO FEATURES


 MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

ROAD CATEGORIES

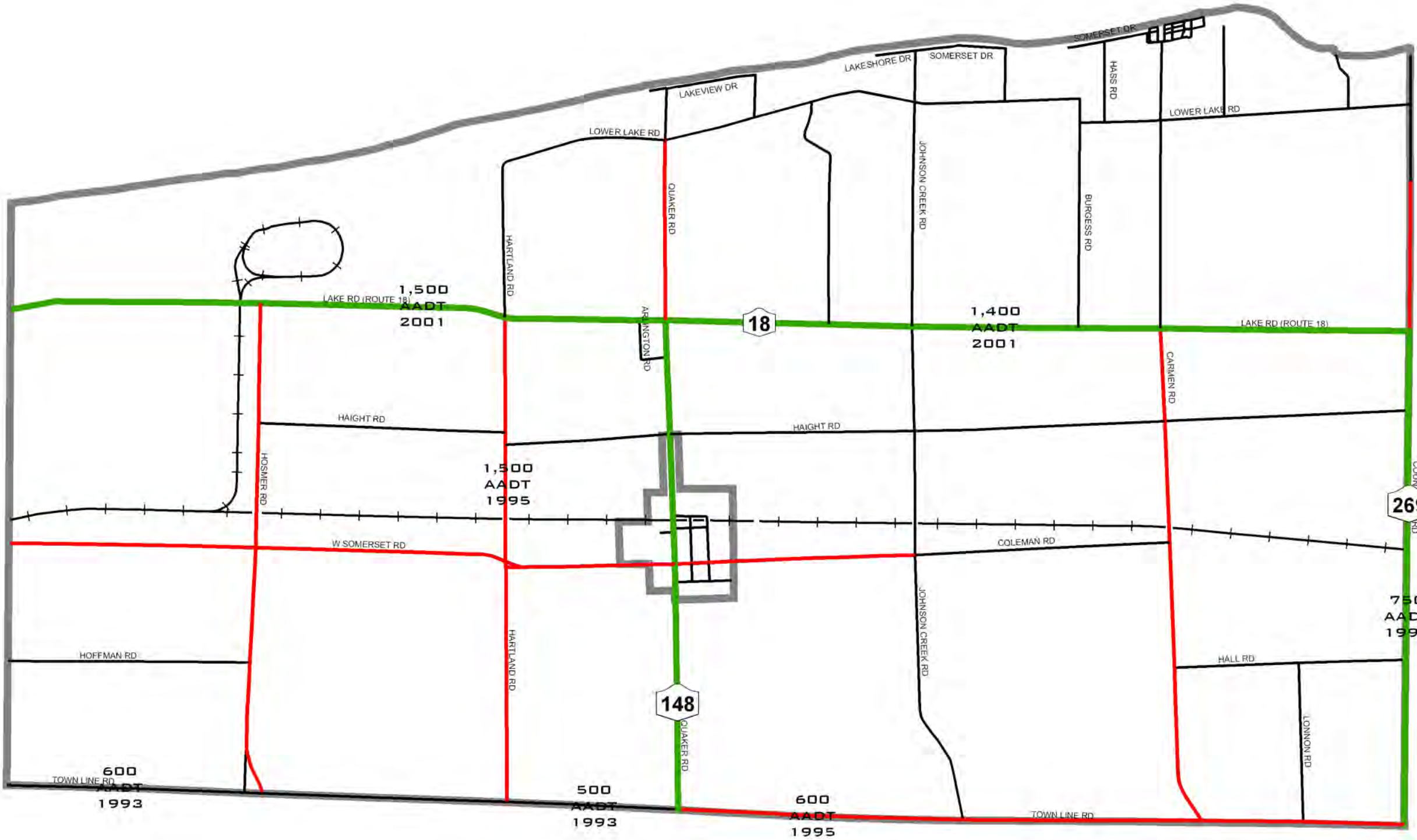
 LOCAL ROAD

 COUNTY ROAD

 NEW YORK STATE ROUTE

 RAILROADS

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DATA SOURCES: TOWN OF SOMERSET, GBNRTC



Community Facilities

The availability of efficient municipal services is an essential component for the successful development of a growing community. Municipal services and community facilities determine to a great degree the quality of growth that the community will receive in such diverse areas as physical structure and community pride. The level of governmental services and facilities continually molds resident response and reaction, which ultimately shapes governmental legislation.

The ability of governmental services to respond to population increases and resident demands for services must be measured in terms of existing facilities and improvements in order to initiate study regarding additional facilities which will be required to serve anticipated increases in population over the next ten to twenty years. This portion of the revised comprehensive plan analyzes the existing facilities and their physical condition to determine what deficiencies may exist. The following facilities and services were studied:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Parks and Recreation | 6. Educational Facilities |
| 2. Fire Protection | 7. Water Supply & Distribution |
| 3. Police Protection | 8. Sanitary Sewerage System |
| 4. Administrative Facilities | 9. Storm Water |
| 5. Public Library | 10. Refuse Disposal System |

These features are illustrated on Map 9: Community Features, and Map 10: Utilities and Infrastructure.

Recreation

The need for recreation space remains one of the essential components of any community. Space for people of all age levels to enjoy recreational pursuits is acknowledged as an important part of our daily life. The Town of Somerset has a number of recreational lands within its borders.

There is one town-owned park and recreation facility in the Town of Somerset, located on the town hall and town highway garage complex at 8700 Haight Road. The site contains 17.5 acres of land, with approximately 15 acres in active recreation use. The park has softball diamonds, playground equipment areas, a basketball court, volleyball court, shuffleboard court, a horseshoe court and a multi-purpose building with a lunch stand and rest rooms used primarily for the baseball events on the site. There are also some nature trails.

The largest park facility in the town is the Golden Hill State Park. This park is a 511-acre state-owned facility that contains a campground, nature trails, picnic areas and shelters, and playgrounds. The park is located on the Lake Ontario shoreline. The park's facilities include a state-operated boat launch, and the park offers public access to the lake for fishing, boating and other water-related recreational uses. A unique feature of this park is the Thirty-Mile Point Lighthouse, a historic lighthouse built in 1875. The lighthouse, which is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, is a popular tourist attraction, and was featured on a US Postal Service postage stamp in 1995 as the representative for Lake Ontario in a series of lighthouse stamps. Excellent views of the Lake Ontario shoreline are available from this site.

The town also has provisions for potential future park facilities. As part of the approval of the Siting Board in the mid-1970's granting NYSEG permission to build what is now known as the AES Somerset power plant, the power company was directed to work with local officials to prepare a multiple use plan for the site. The intent of the multiple use plan was to provide for the recreational needs of the community and to replace land previously designated by the town for future recreation use. Under the leadership of the staff of the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board, a multiple use plan for the power plant site was prepared and adopted by the Town Board, the power company, and various

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COMMUNITY FEATURES

MAP 9

KEY TO FEATURES

 MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

 ROADS

 STREAMS

PUBLIC FACILITIES

 STATE PARK

 TOWN OWNED/RECREATIONAL

 SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

 BOAT LAUNCH

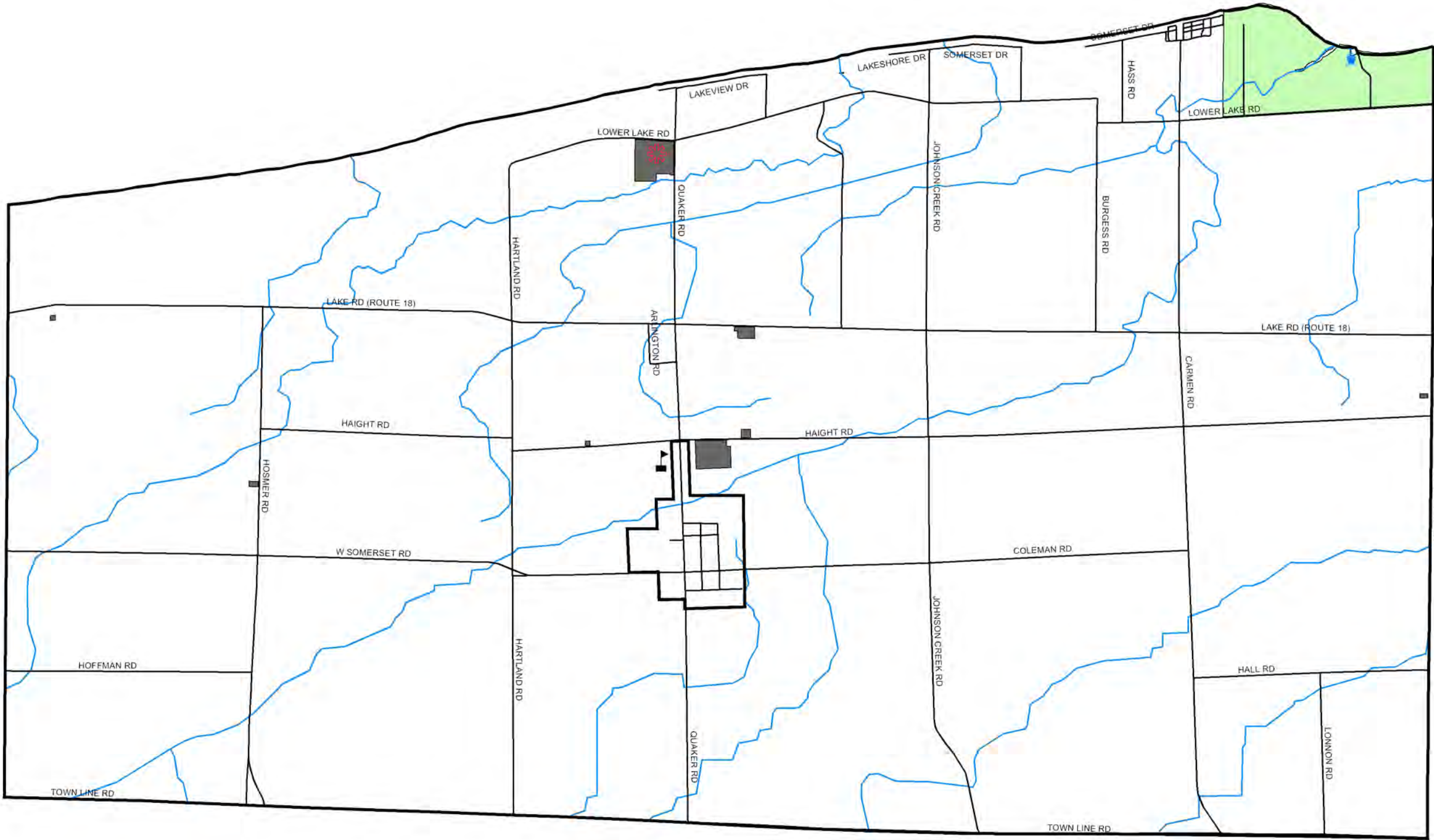
 BARKER CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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regulatory agencies. The plan provides for continued access to the lake and a combination of active and passive recreation uses to be implemented over a long term period. The multiple use plan was also approved by the Town Planning Board, and it reflects the policy of the Planning Board relative to the proposed future use of that portion of the power plant site (approximately 30 acres). While there are no current plans to implement the multiple use plan, the town wishes to retain its rights for the future by incorporating it into this comprehensive plan. A summary of the plan is presented as an appendix to this comprehensive plan. It is expected that the upcoming Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) will address this issue in more detail.

The Village of Barker owns two park sites of approximately one acre at the intersection of Quaker Road and Main Street and north end of Quaker Road. The sites are used primarily for passive recreation purposes, but include a seasonal use ice skating rink. Also partially within the village, the Barker Central School facilities provide active recreational lands and playground facilities, used extensively for school sport programs and are available to the residents of the entire community.

Fire Protection

The town and village are served by one volunteer Fire Company, the Barker Fire Department, which is comprised of approximately 40 active volunteer firemen. One fire station serves the town and village. This station is located on Quaker Road in the village of Barker, generally equidistant to all portions of the town and conveniently accessible to the major population centers. It is especially well located in relation to the central business area of the village.

As with most fire departments throughout the state, the Barker Fire Department is part of a countywide mutual aid fire protection plan. Under the mutual aid system other outside fire departments can be called in to fight fires in Barker and Somerset or cover for the Barker Fire Department, from throughout Niagara County. At present time, Olcott in Niagara County and Lyndonville in Orleans County are the most immediately available fire companies to provide equipment with travel times of approximately fifteen minutes to the village.

The entire community is adequately covered for fire defense; the village and all town roads have a public water system adequate for sustained fire defense. Other areas are protected by water available in farm ponds and creeks or by the fire department's pumper trucks and tank truck. Their combined water carrying capacity approximates 4,750 gallons, an increase of 26 percent over the 1972 findings.

Although fire protection is considered adequate, a problem area does exist in the town. The Buffalo-Genesee Free Methodist campground and surrounding private cottages create the most significant fire hazard. This area is particularly hazardous in winter since many cottages are on private roadways which are not plowed in the winter. Within an area of less than five acres, there are at least one hundred wood frame cottages separated by minimal side yards and well within the range of windblown fire spread, thus creating a fire hazard. The combination of limited accessibility, remoteness from the fire station and highly susceptible construction continue to create a fire hazard to property and life in this area.

The following table summarizes the equipment owned by the Barker Fire Department.

Table 4
Barker Fire Department Equipment

Equipment	Age/Make	Pumping Capacity
Pumpers	1985 E- One	1500 gallon/minute
	1988 E- One	1500 gallon/minute
Tanker	1984 Ford	2500 Gallon Tank
Grass Fire Truck	1993 Hummer	NA
Ambulance	1987 Wheel Coach	NA
	1995 Horton	
Equipment/Rescue Truck	1998 E- One	NA

Source: President, Barker Fire Department, 2002

Fire Department Standards: Personnel

The National Board of Fire Underwriter's formula for fire protection levels is based on population within the community. For municipalities of less than 50,000 people, the number of fire companies is based on the formula: $C (\text{number of companies}) = 0.85 + 0.12 P (\text{population in units of 1,000})$. A fire company is defined as a unit including one major piece of fire defense equipment and at least fifteen men. Utilizing this formula, the village and town should presently have 1.2 fire companies available at all times.

The number of fire companies formulated is a minimal quantity of protection based on a relatively dense population pattern and therefore a relatively short run. In the Town of Somerset where frame construction is not uncommon and fire runs may be long, mutual aid combined with major motorized fire fighting equipment is highly desirable. The last recommendation, based on the fire underwriters' formula, is that the town and village should not have to add equipment at this time to maintain the desired coverage.

Firehouse Locations

Requirements established by the National Board of Fire Underwriters pertain to firehouse locations as well as equipment and personnel. These standards are based on the premise that the business or high property value district should be within one mile of a fire station; single family residential neighborhoods should be within two and one-half miles from the station and still be in an acceptable range.

Within this concept, the Town of Somerset and the Village of Barker are well protected by the single centrally located station on Quaker Road. Major business and residential concentrations are immediately adjacent and the sparsely settled outlying areas, to the edges of the town are within the four-mile radius of the Barker Fire Department station.

The ideal location for a fire station is where barriers to emergency traffic are minimal. Occasionally congested streets, particularly in the central business area are hazardous and time consuming for maneuvering fire equipment. Fire stations should, therefore be located on streets close to or readily accessible to major streets, and should be built well back from the street to permit equipment servicing and good driver view of traffic before entering the street or crossing the sidewalk.

The fire station facility built in 1974 on Quaker Road, and expanded in 1992; has significantly improved the deficiencies cited in the 1972 plan by increasing the size of the fire apparatus bay storage areas, enlarging the fire station apron area, increasing storage space for miscellaneous fire fighting equipment and clothing, etc., and improving the driveway serving this facility. Another important improvement has been the recreation hall and meeting room addition, which is used for a variety of community functions.

Fire Rating

The New York Fire Insurance Rating Organization, through its Grading Schedule for Municipal Fire Protection, classifies community physical structural conditions and municipal fire defenses for the establishment of fire insurance rates. The examination of a community's fire defense system includes diverse elements such as fire fighting motorized equipment, fire apparatus, departmental personnel, the emergency communications system, the municipal water supply and distribution for fire flow, coordination with the police department, fire prevention programming and other local characteristics affecting fire defense. Each factor is weighted in importance and classified for development of a numerical deficiency point system. The total deficiencies are analyzed to establish an overall community rating. The Barker Fire Department, Inc. was rated by the New York Fire Insurance Rating Organization in October 1992 at which time an Overall Community Grading of National Board, Class B was given.

Police Protection

Police protection for the town is contracted for on a part-time basis from the Village of Barker. A police chief and four part-time officers fulfill the contractual obligation. No police station has been created for their use other than available space in the Town Hall and Village offices, since their activities are intermittent. Additional police patrols within the town and village are provided on a twenty-four hour basis by the Niagara County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police, either by routine road patrol or by telephoned requests from residents of the community. The levels of police protection from these law enforcement agencies have been adequate and should continue to remain such during the revised comprehensive plan period.

Administrative Facilities

The Town of Somerset Office Complex at 8700 Haight Road was opened in 1978 and enlarged in 1986. It is located on 17.5 acres of land, which also contains the Town's Highway Garage and Town Park facilities described earlier. The site is centrally located in the town and represents a strong commitment by the town to provide improved governmental services to its residents.

The village's offices are located in the former railroad station with the Barker Library, on Main Street in the village. The building is sound, the interior lighting and space is adequate and the patron parking immediately accessible. The building also houses other village functions. The renovation has been tastefully designed and is a tribute to the residents of the village and town.

Library

The provision of adequate library facilities is frequently one of the most overlooked municipal services. In recent years, however, the increase in leisure time has provided more reading time for both pleasure and informal education. The community library is thus becoming more important as a convenient center for reference, information and general knowledge.

The Barker Free Library is located on Main Street, sharing the former railroad station with the Village offices since 1969. A new addition to the building was constructed in 1990 to house the library's expanding collection. The addition of a children's library, completed in 2001, has further expanded the available space for the library and made it possible to offer a wider range of programming, including children's programs. In addition to books, the library provides reference materials, books-on-tape, magazines, videos, and public internet access. It also houses a local history collection. The Friends of the Barker Free Library sponsors events, such as a new book sale and Sunday in the Park in August.

In addition to its own collection, the Barker Free Library offers access to interlibrary service to all libraries in the Nioga Library System. The Nioga Library system includes all public libraries in Niagara, Orleans,

and Genesee Counties, and has access to other reference data throughout the state. Although the time involved in procuring a book from outside the Barker Free Library is increased, the Nioga Library system decreases the need for large independent local library system and volumes collection.

Educational Facilities

Barker Central School, located at the intersection of Haight and Quaker Roads, provides public school facilities for the children in the Towns of Somerset, Hartland, Yates, Ridgeway, and a portion of the Town of Newfane. The school originally covered less than one-quarter its present physical plant size, and considerably less than the present site. Current enrollment is approximately 1,200 students.

The Central School, originally conceived as a single-purpose school, has been redesigned into a central campus school, with all grades, K-12, attending at one location. With recent additions, space has been adequately provided. The school site presently extends from Haight Road southward to the Penn Central railroad right-of-way then easterly to Golden Hill Creek and the rear property of houses facing Quaker Road. The site includes the old Trade School Airport.

The site, as previously mentioned, is more than adequate for expansion needs within the foreseeable future. Building expansion has generally kept pace with school plant needs. According to projections prepared by the Genesee-Niagara Regional Transportation Council, minimal growth is predicted for the town over the next twenty-five years. According to these projections, Somerset's population in 2025 will be approximately 3,000, an increase of 135 persons. Growth in the other communities served by the Barker Central School District is expected to be similarly modest. It is anticipated that any increase in enrollment of school students from Somerset and adjacent areas that is likely to occur over the next two decades can be assimilated into the existing facilities without major renovations or new construction. Current enrollments are below the district's rated capacity.

Water Supply And Distribution

At the present time, 100 percent of the Village of Barker and approximately 98 percent of the Town of Somerset is served by public water from the Niagara County Water District. Service is provided to Barker through a 10-inch line located on Quaker Road, which connects to a 24-inch line coming easterly on NYS Route 31 from the direction of Lockport. There are also two 10-inch water mains located along Route 18 and West Somerset Road that tie into the Town of Newfane, which are part of the Niagara County Water District. The system bypasses the City of Lockport to the east and south and then follows Lockport Road to Walmore Road. The source of water is the west branch of the Niagara River. An 8-inch line also extends easterly from Wilson, along Lake Road. An additional 8-inch waterline is located on Haight Road with 10-inch lines on Coleman and Johnson Creek Roads. The areas west of Golden Hill State Park on Lower Lake and Somerset Roads are served by 8-inch lines with a 10 inch line on Carmen Road. In general, the Town is well interconnected to the Towns of Newfane and Hartland, and the water system is fairly up-to-date and in good condition. Areas of the town served by public water lines are depicted in Map 10: Utilities and Infrastructure.

At present, the combined water system serving Niagara County is rated at 48 MGD. Currently, the village water requirements are averaging 100,000 gallons per day, for domestic and industrial use, while the town requires 340,000 gallons per day. According to the county's Comprehensive Public Water Study, this usage was forecast to increase to .83 MGD and 1.66 MGD for the village and town by 1990. A forecast which has not been realized through 1995.

Sanitary Sewer Service

The Somerset-Barker Sewer District was created in 1977, with construction commencing in 1978. The system, serving the central area of Somerset and the entirety of the Village of Barker, extends north to

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

MAP 10

KEY TO FEATURES

 MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY

 RAILROADS

 WATERLINES

 SEWERLINES

 SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

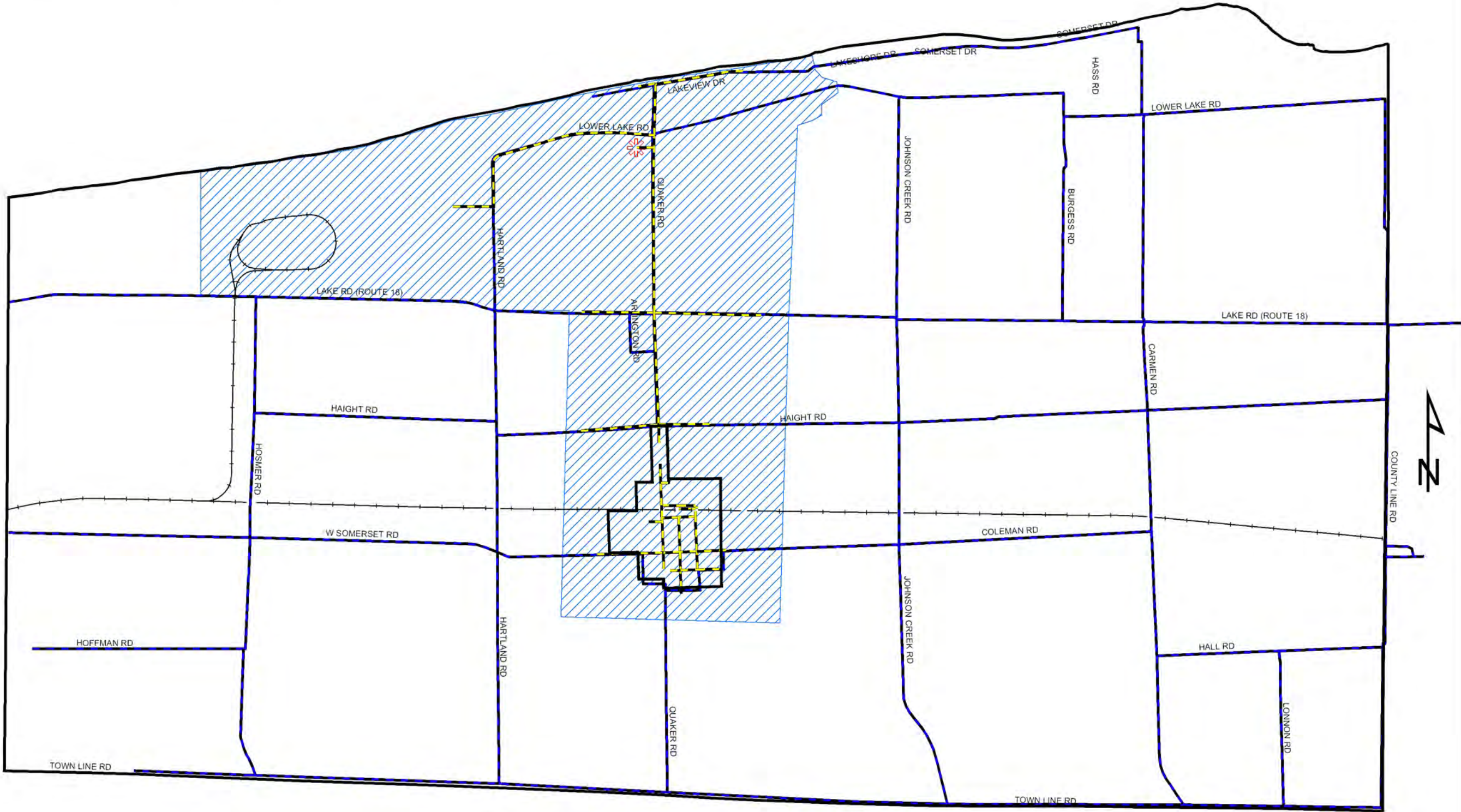
 SEWER DISTRICT

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SHALL ASSUME NO LIABILITY FOR:

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2. ANY DECISION MADE OR ACTION TAKEN OR NOT TAKEN BY THE READER IN RELIANCE UPON ANY INFORMATION OR DATA FURNISHED HEREUNDER

DATA SOURCES: TOWN OF SOMERSET



Lake Ontario and west, north of the Lake Road as depicted in Map 10: Utilities and Infrastructure. The Sewer District was extended around 1980 to provide domestic sewerage treatment to the power plant.

The sewage treatment system has sufficient surplus capacity to meet the projected population growth through the year 2025. The sewage treatment plant located on a 40-acre tract of land in the southwest corner of the intersection of Lower Lake Road and Quaker Road provides treatment with its outfall into Lake Ontario being east of Camp Kenan. Future development within the town should be encouraged to occur along this sewer corridor to maximize the public's investments that have been made to this public utility service. Recent policy direction from both the federal and state levels indicates that these funding sources for extensions of public utilities (such as sewer and water) will only be considered where such extensions would correct a cited health problem. Therefore, as growth continues to occur in Somerset during the planning program, the community must constantly keep in mind the potential of leapfrog development creating the need for sewer extensions at some future date to serve these isolated development areas. These extensions would most likely have to be borne solely by local district costs.

Storm Sewers

The Village of Barker, storm water sewer system contains four independent tile systems, which deliver the surface water to open drainage ways and then to Golden Hill Creek, or directly to the creek.

The major tile system begins just south of High Street and serves the area north along Quaker Road with lateral tiles collecting water from parts of Main Street, Church Street and Pallister Avenue. This system then empties into Golden Hill Creek. A single tile serves Woodward Avenue from east to west and empties into an open drainage ditch which flows northward to Golden Hill Creek. The third system originates near the intersection of High Street and Pallister Avenue, proceeding north and east to serve parts of Coleman Road and East Avenue. This tile continues north and east for some distance to an open drainage ditch near the village boundary.

The last system originates near the intersection of East Avenue and Church Street and proceeds northward to Golden Hill Creek, being joined by a tile starting at Main and Pallister and serving in an easterly direction. Although the village system has been well maintained and operational since its inception in the early 1900's, areas that have more recently been developed or are adjacent to the village have not yet been included in the village's storm drainage system.

There is no public mechanical drainage system in the Town of Somerset. However, storm runoff has not become a major problem because of proper highway construction and an annual program to maintain and clean ditches. This program has successfully minimized flood conditions and has helped to maintain the viability of active farmland.

Efforts must be continued to keep roadside ditches and culverts open and free from growth and debris. Further, drainage considerations must be included in all development proposals.

Refuse Collection And Disposal

Reduced to its simplest terms, refuse collection and disposal consists of the collection at each household, business property, or industry of the solid waste that results from processes of urban life, the transportation of such material to disposal sites, and the processing and disposal of the collected refuse so that nuisances are not created. The entire process must be carried out in such a manner that the public health of the community is protected, that the extent and character of the service is in accord with the desires of the people, and that the operation is conducted effectively and economically.

For a collection and disposal service to be entirely free from nuisances and menace to public health, the material must be stored so that odors cannot escape, so that insects and animals cannot have access to

the material, and so that no unsightly appearance or disagreeable odor occurs in transit. The disposal must also be carried out so that flies and insects cannot feed on the refuse, and dust and papers are not thrown about.

The Town is a member of the Niagara County Solid Waste Consortium which provides options to bid refuse collection and disposal services jointly with other Towns. American Refuel - garbage disposal contracted until 2008. The Town currently arranges for an annual curbside tire pickup by Town work forces and disposal by contract. Other current contractual arrangements provide for garbage collection and disposal, recycled material collection and disposal, and disposal of large items and white goods on a weekly basis.

Both the town and village residents use contractual services of private solid waste haulers as opposed to providing municipal service. Both the Village of Barker and the Town of Somerset contract with haulers through separate community contracts.

The costs of operation of a properly developed refuse disposal system would be economically prohibitive for the town or village. Therefore, the town will continue to dispose of its solid wastes through contractual arrangements.

Agrilink Comstock Michigan Fruit and Mayer Bros. are large producers of solid waste material in the town and village. They are able to dispose of their own organic waste on site, in a manner frequently monitored by and approved under State Health Department regulations. The AES generating station also produces large amounts of solid waste material which are stockpiled on site in a regulated manner.

Section III

Goals and Policies

SECTION III

GOALS AND POLICIES

Business and industrial firms and, to some extent, individual homeowners, are all engaged in looking into the future from time to time in order to provide direction to their day-to-day activities. Due to its size, complexity and limited flexibility, the town should think as far as feasible into the future. The comprehensive plan provides the necessary insight and direction toward helping the community look into the future and provide a basis for action.

The comprehensive plan for the town can provide the necessary insight and direction to guide day-to-day activities in the following ways:

- By dealing with minor problems such as scattered strip commercial activities along Quaker and Lake Roads so that they do not become major problems in the future.
- By limiting any detrimental impact of changes which can be foreseen and which may occur in the near future in conjunction with new which could generate increased traffic or demands for services.
- By taking advantage of the recognized opportunities for a better community in the years ahead, particularly of physical and environmental resources.
- By concentrating new development within the sewer district to reduce operating costs for each homeowner and reducing development pressures in rural/agricultural areas.
- By shaping new development and redevelopment in light of the area's future needs.
- By stabilizing public and private investment values in land for future years.
- By coordinating and providing continuity of public and private actions for community development to the benefit of both.

A DIRECTION FOR PLANNING

The comprehensive plan provides the necessary insight and direction toward helping the community look into the future and provide a basis for action. Although the Town of Somerset is expected to remain largely rural, it is important that the community properly plans for and controls future growth. Improper planning could result in increased public services costs, damage to the environment and other problems that may be difficult and costly to correct.

This section of the updated plan specifies the goals and policies deemed necessary to properly guide future growth so as to avoid development problems and best meet the needs of the people of Somerset. These goals and policies were based on past planning efforts (goals and policies from past comprehensive planning efforts), and then modified or reinforced by public input during this effort (see public meeting minutes in appendix). The goals and policies, together with the Vision Plan, are intended to guide public decisions concerning the future development of the town. They are intended in particular to provide a framework for decisions related to amending existing zoning regulations, investing in public improvements, developing new control measures and reviewing private development proposals. In such decisions the town will be guided by the following goals and policies:

Maintain the Rural and Agricultural Character of the Town

- Foster agriculture through the adoption of land use regulations which do not curtail farming operations within the town's agricultural areas.
- Concentrate future development within the existing sewer district to reduce per unit costs for debt service, operation and maintenance. Confine small lot single family homes, multi-family housing, industrial development to the existing sewer district.
- Within the existing sewer district, encourage development to locate in those areas which are presently served by sewer lines so long as there remains substantial vacant land in such areas.
- Strive to protect important features, such as woodlots, wetlands and important views that contribute to the rural character and visual appeal of the town.

Achieve a Pattern of Development which Minimizes Travel Time to Meet Daily Needs and which Meets a High Standard of Design and Construction

- Locate major residential development in areas that are highly accessible to employment opportunities, commercial services, and the Barker Central School.
- Concentrate commercial and industrial development within well-defined nodes in areas that are highly accessible to the population, and require adequate off-street parking for such development.
- Restrict the conversion of residential uses to commercial uses to those areas which have been specifically designated for commercial development, and require a high standard of design and construction for such conversions.
- Support efforts to improve and utilize the commercial center of Barker where feasible.
- Minimize, to the extent feasible, the number of individual access drives to highways in order to maintain their safety and traffic carrying capacity by requiring the use of such measures as:
 - a) Parallel access roads;
 - b) Shared entranceways for neighboring commercial uses;
 - c) Reverse frontage, whereby lots front on an internal subdivision street rather than on the highway.

Particular emphasis should be given to applying this policy to development along Lake and Quaker Roads.

- Require adequate landscape screening and separation between residential areas and commercial and industrial areas so as to minimize land use conflicts and achieve high visual appeal.
- Achieve a high quality of design in residential subdivisions through such measures as cluster development to protect natural features, conserve energy and reduce public service costs. Streets should be designed so as to offer a variety of visual experiences and to discourage through-traffic.
- Residents of Somerset should have a variety of goods, services and facilities readily accessible. These elements of the total environment become accessible only if they are logically placed in proper relationship to the present and future development of the surrounding area.
- Incompatible land uses and the unplanned mixing of activities will serve not only to cause deterioration and lower property values, but also may prevent the concentration of goods and services, which would greatly benefit all town residents as well as strengthen the economy of the

entire area. Poorly located industry, businesses and residences can greatly and adversely affect one another's proper function.

Meet the Housing Needs of the Community by providing for a Variety of Choices in New Housing and by Encouraging the Improvement of Existing Housing

- Provide sufficient land area to meet the prospective demand for an appropriate variety of housing styles, including garden apartments and townhouses. Such development should be located in areas which provide active settings for such uses and be required to meet high standards of design and construction.
- Encourage developers to take advantage of federal and state housing assistance programs, including programs which provide assistance for the construction of new single family and multi-family housing and rental assistance programs for existing housing.
- Maintain the integrity of residential areas by allowing only those uses which are compatible with the nature and intensity of neighboring residential use.
- As a means of maintaining the quality of the residential environment, consider the adoption of a housing and property maintenance code.
- As a means of encouraging improvements to existing housing prepare a statement and publicize those repairs/ improvements that could be made without increasing assessments.

Protect Important Environmental Resources from Adverse Effects

- The Town of Somerset encompasses a shoreline on Lake Ontario of unique natural beauty. Wherever feasible the shoreline should be preserved for the benefit of all town residents, present and future. Where public preservation is not practical, private development must be carefully controlled.
- Coordinate drainage planning efforts with those of neighboring towns that include the same drainage basins as the Town of Somerset, and carefully evaluate the effects on drainage of all proposals for development.
- Require developers to dedicate easements along creeks and other major drainage ways to allow for their maintenance and to reduce the risk of flood damages.
- Require, as a condition for the approval of development proposals, the application of effective measures to minimize erosion, sedimentation and drainage problems both during and after construction.
- Maintain wetland areas in their natural state by prohibiting draining, filling, and development in these areas, unless it is demonstrated that each of the following two conditions is met:
 - a) The wetland area has a very low biological productivity, and
 - b) The wetland area does not serve an important hydrological function of controlling flooding problems or purifying water.
- Regulate development within flood hazard areas so that:
 - a) It meets the requirements of the Federal Flood Insurance Program
 - b) It will be resistant to flood damages
 - c) It will not restrict the flow of flood waters
 - d) It will not increase flood hazards to other properties.

- Require, as a condition for the approval of development in woodland areas, the submission of plans to minimize adverse effects on the natural pattern of vegetation.
- Regulate development in the coastal zone so as to minimize potential property damage from shoreline erosion and to afford increased public access to the shoreline.
- Protect the environment from industrial pollution by carefully controlling waste disposal policies.

Provide High Quality Community Facilities and Services at an Acceptable Cost to the Local Taxpayer

- Establish a program for capital improvements which will allow for needed improvements to be undertaken without significant increases or fluctuations in the town tax rate.
- Provide for adequate maintenance, repair and replacement of existing town facilities, including sewer and waterlines, roads and drainage facilities.
- Expand the opportunities for recreation on the Lake Ontario shoreline.
- Existing town recreation facilities adjacent to the Town Hall should be improved and expanded consistent with local needs and demands.
- Address drainage needs in the town through the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive drainage plan.
- Work closely with county and state officials to bring local concerns into their decisions which affect the town, particularly decisions concerning improvements to Golden Hill State Park and county and state highways within the town.

Provide for the Future Movement of Traffic through the Town in a Safe and Efficient Manner

- The town should provide for a "Review and Upgrade" of the existing highway system to consider if there is a need for corrections to any hazardous curves or misaligned intersections.
- It is important to discourage "strip" development that hinders the smooth flow of traffic.
- Support safe alternatives to vehicular traffic by encouraging the development of facilities and trails for pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly in the vicinity of the village and along the lakefront.

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals, objectives, and policies delineated here represent a written statement of the manner in which the town desires to see development directed. The statements present a clear and concise picture of the standards and criteria the town will use in considering the merits of development proposals. In such a way, the position of the community is clear at the outset and the role of the Planning Board and the Town Board is to effectively apply these objectives. In addition to assisting in the review of private development proposals, the statements provide a blueprint for the investment of public dollars for community facilities and services.

In future years, as projections and estimates concerning the future become realities, it may become desirable to modify these objectives to conform to the situation as it then exists. Should this occur, the comprehensive plan would also require re-examination and revision as necessary to reflect such new

objectives. It is the responsibility of the Town Planning Board to recognize approaching problems of development that would require revision of the plan and of the control ordinances and report such needs to the Town Board.

Section IV
The Comprehensive Plan

SECTION IV

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

FINDINGS

The comprehensive plan for the Town of Somerset is based on general principles that were used in the formulation of the various community development policies. These principles are summarized as follows:

- Maintain Somerset as a desirable place in which to live, work, shop, and play by utilizing high standards to guide future and existing development, providing a full range of facilities and services, and at the same time, keeping the town on a sound fiscal basis.
- Encourage new development to locate within, and contiguous to, existing centers of development, creating a compact area of development that will allow the logical and most economical extension and expansion of community services, streets, and utilities, and create a greater degree of community cohesiveness.
- Encourage the creation of identifiable and unifying focal points by encouraging the development of a well organized central commercial business district on Haight, Quaker, Route 18 and in the village. Establish dense residential development located near the intersection of major traffic routes and populated areas; discourage the development of strip or ribbon business growth along the major highways.
- Recognize that there is a physical and economic connection between the Village of Barker and the Town of Somerset with surrounding communities and the entire Buffalo Metropolitan area and through that recognition, maintain a coordinated planning atmosphere with Niagara County.
- Relate the town and village road systems to the proposed regional system and provide good access to the regional routes.
- Formulate land development policies that require new development to bear their fair share of the costs for necessary increases of public improvements.

Within the context of these general principles, more specific recommendations and findings have been devised to guide the formulation of the comprehensive plan and thus, the continuing development of the town. Within the stated goals and objectives summarized in the previous section should lie the future direction of the town.

The following discussion addresses recommendations for different types of land uses and development in the Town of Somerset.

Light Industrial Uses

Light industrial uses should be located within the sewer district. This includes lands adjacent to the village, and lands surrounding the AES power station. Lands adjacent to the village along West Somerset and Coleman Roads have good highway access, and potential rail access. There is existing industry in the area (Agrilink Comstock Michigan Fruit). This plan recommends that the town focus economic development efforts on the development of light industrial or agri-industrial uses which involves the processing, assembly or packaging of previously prepared or refined materials. Examples of the types of industrial uses which would be appropriate in Somerset include: manufacture of small

machine parts; fabrication of metal, paper and wood products; food processing; warehousing; administrative offices; small research facilities; and, similar light industrial uses.

Proper controls should be enacted and/or maintained as part of the zoning ordinance to ensure that such uses do not exert any objectionable (i.e., noise, fumes, air or water pollution, etc.) impacts upon adjacent properties. Controls can be implemented through the regulation of a special use permit for certain uses or performance standards for industrial uses. Further, efforts must be maintained to ensure that public services such as water, sewer and transportation are adequate to accommodate proposed industrial uses.

As industrial development occurs in the Town of Somerset, it is important that such uses be well screened from the neighboring areas designated for residential development. As part of its development review process, the town must make certain that industrial uses are adequately set back from the periphery of the industrial area and that they are appropriately screened and landscaped from neighboring residential areas. The protection of the Golden Hill Creek floodplain from development will provide natural screening between the industrial area and the residential area to the north. In order to conform with stated goals and policies, the town must strive to concentrate industrial development in appropriate locations. Industrial growth in other portions of the town would be contrary to local objectives to achieve compact development patterns.

As the power plant is a major source of tax revenue and for jobs for the Town, Somerset will not be under the same pressures as most municipalities to find new industry as a means of minimizing the tax burden on local property owners. The community will thus have an opportunity to develop and implement land use policies without overriding financial considerations exerting a major influence on land use decisions.

Power Plant

The electrical generating plant is currently operated by AES Somerset. The plant is the single largest taxpayer in the community and reduces total taxes required to be collected from homeowners. The power plant site is zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD)¹. The site is remote from the remainder of the town, and as such, the plant has had reduced impacts (i.e., noise, traffic, visual effects, etc.) upon the community.

Plans and concepts for the proposed multiple use area located at the northeasterly portion of the site are reaffirmed in this document, with the understanding that there are no plans to develop this site in the immediate future. The town hereby asserts its right to implement those plans in the future should the need for additional recreational space arise. The development of this area will increase public access to the shore and provide additional recreational resources to serve the needs of the area's population.

Business Uses

It is recommended that business development occur in existing areas of denser development, such as the Village of Barker and the hamlet of Somerset. The hamlet of Somerset area was designated for business uses in the 1972 Comprehensive Plan. This update recommends that any business in the hamlet area should be very limited, concentrating on convenience business and service uses to serve the adjacent residential properties. As Lake and Quaker Roads within the hamlet are already lined with homes, the opportunities for additional business development within the hamlet are quite limited. The

¹Although the Town's PUD zoning district allows a range of uses, the current PUD designation for the Power Plant only allows those uses presently taking place at the site. Any change in use or building addition (not relating to the current use) would require the rezoning to a new PUD. This rezoning would have to include a "plan" that meets the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan.

conversion of residential to business uses in the town should be restricted to the hamlet and required to meet a high standard of design and construction. New business uses in this area should be approved only if proposals conform with locally established site design standards that control access, set back, buffering, circulation and other design considerations.

The central business district of the Village of Barker currently serves as the business center of the town and should remain so. One of the basic planning policies of the town should be to support efforts by the village to strengthen its business center. In this regard, the town should adopt policies that would minimize conflicts between uses, and that would discourage development of competing uses with characteristics and densities similar to those which currently exist in the village.

One of the principal considerations of this plan is the recognition of the importance of the village to the entire Barker-Somerset community. As such, the retention and strengthening of the village as the center of town activities is a policy which underlines the entire plan concept. In support of this concept, specific policies have been oriented to the achievement of this objective.

Governmental units and agencies, as well as private citizens, should be encouraged to take those actions that will improve the overall economic and social quality of life within and adjacent to the village. We recommend that the town initiate a coordinated effort with the village to ensure that future development within Barker is consistent with the basic character of existing uses. In addition, new business development further out in the town that would diminish the status of the village as a healthy and functional business center should be discouraged. By encouraging business opportunities to occur in the village center, the town would:

- a) Serve the needs of the majority of its population
- b) Help retain its rural-agricultural atmosphere
- c) Limit costly utility extensions
- d) Reinforce efforts to preserve the village.

Residential Uses

In general, residential development throughout most of the town should be at a low density. Medium density residential development should occur within the town's sewer district. Any residential development along the lakeshore in the town should have additional controls because of the unique environmental features of the coastal zone. In the more rural portions of town, residential development should be of very low density in order to conform with the goals and policies of the plan. In the agricultural areas, farm uses should take priority and non-farm uses, including housing not associated with farming, should be restricted.

Cluster residential or density control development is recommended in low and medium density residential areas of the town to reduce construction and maintenance costs and to ensure that residences are properly located in relation to the physical character of the site. Appendix B describes the potential benefits of implementing cluster development control in Somerset.

Lower density residential development is recommended for the area served by the sewer district between Haight and Lower Lake Roads (except for the southwest quadrant). This area is planned to consist of single family homes at a density of not more than one dwelling unit per acre. Medium density residential development is recommended for the area adjacent to the Village of Barker and south of West Somerset and Coleman Roads. The area is served by water and sewer facilities and readily accessible to the village center and other public services. Medium density areas are planned to consist of single and two-family homes at densities of not more than two dwelling units per acre.

The desirability of both the low and medium residential areas depends upon how effective the town is in regulating the design of residential subdivisions. Through such regulation, the town should discourage a proliferation of access drives to such major arteries as Haight, Quaker, West Somerset and Coleman Roads and should promote residential street designs which discourage through traffic and offer variety and visual appeal.

The residential area along Quaker Road between Haight and Lake Roads is a particularly attractive location for new construction as it is accessible to many of the facilities and services needed to support residential development. Features serving to attract new growth to this area include: the location of the Barker Central School, the village center, the town hall, the town recreation center, good transportation access, water and sewer service, and potential employment opportunities in the industrial area.

Relative to any development proposals, efforts should be made to protect important environmental features. The town has several streams and woodlands which need to be protected as part of the development review process. This is not to suggest that residential development should not occur in these areas, but only that the Planning Board should carefully review such proposals and impose regulations that would minimize the disruption of the natural environment.

Appropriately located and moderately sized multi-family projects (i.e., garden apartments and/or townhouses) would be consistent with the town's overall land use objectives. In addition, such development would assist the town in meeting future demand for additional rental housing and a more diverse housing stock to accommodate changing demographics. The density of such development would normally not exceed six to eight dwelling units per acre. Ideally, any such development should be located in or adjacent to the village, within easy access to the facilities and services such as Barker Central School, the commercial center of the Village of Barker, the town hall and other village services. This type of development should be limited to areas within the sewer district. As there are currently no areas zoned to allow such uses, permits could only be issued following the approval of a proposal for the rezoning of a particular site for such use. In order to provide opportunities for such housing without sacrificing the town's interests for sound planning, it is recommended that the town adopt minimum site development standards, which would provide the basis for any rezoning and govern the construction of such projects. In this regard, consideration must be given to such factors as density, accessibility to water and sewer services, transportation, parking, landscaping, and buffering. The area along Haight Road appears to have particular merits for potential multi-family development, as it is well served by utilities, and is adjacent to town and village facilities. It is essential that garden apartments, townhouses and other similar forms of multi-family housing are considered permanent residential uses. As such, these uses must be required to meet high standards of development in order to ensure that they will be long-term assets to the community. As rental housing has often been permitted to develop in rural communities without effective controls, they have often left a legacy of problems. If properly regulated, however, to require a high standard of design and construction, such housing can be an asset, as many communities will testify.

Coastal Development

Portions of the Lake Ontario shoreline outside the sewer district have already been developed for single family homes at a relatively high density. In the future, however, development along the shoreline outside the sewer district should be kept at a low density to avoid the need for costly sewer extensions. For this reason, the plan recommends that the areas of the coastal zone outside the sewer district be considered for designation to rural uses.

The unique features of the coastal zone suggest the following guidelines for development in the coastal zone within the sewer district:

1. Development should be set back an adequate distance from the shoreline to protect residences and improvements from the potential hazards of shoreline erosion and flooding.
2. In order to improve public access to the shoreline, water oriented recreational uses should be permitted in this area as long as they are compatible with neighboring residential uses.
3. Residential subdivision designs which would maximize the number of homes with access to the shoreline should be encouraged. This could be achieved, for example, by providing common access to the shoreline for the homes within a subdivision rather than limiting access to only those homes with immediate shoreline frontage.
4. Design standards should take into consideration the views afforded to the lake from adjacent properties. Guidelines and requirements for building siting and heights, and types, location and size of accessory structures should be established.

If the above guidelines are followed, the coastal zone may be developed into an attractive residential community which is safe from the natural hazards of coastal location. At the same time wider public access may be offered to the coastline through appropriate subdivision design and through the development of water oriented recreational uses which are compatible with residential uses.

The forthcoming Local Waterfront Revitalization Program will provide more extensive recommendations for this area of the town.

Agricultural Land Use

Farming in New York State has changed considerably during this century, increasing its productive capacity by more than one-third since 1900. From simple beginnings, modern farming has become the product of a complex technology created by mechanization, improved strains of livestock and crop varieties, and intensive, enlightened management. The average New York farmer has more than doubled the size of his farm since 1900 while his average capital investment has increased more than tenfold.

The fertile areas of the Town of Somerset should be preserved and developed as fully as possible as a prime agricultural resource. The spread of urban population cuts further into farm areas each year. It, therefore, becomes necessary to clarify the town's policy concerning its future best interests in light of the likelihood of the continuing loss of prime agriculturally productive land in the future. The loss of farmland must be balanced against the demand for developable land. While tax revenue may initially appear to be increased with the sale of each small parcel of land, unrestricted scattered development may well tend to increase municipal costs. In general, agricultural land consumes the least in municipal services relative to other land uses, and despite lower tax rates, is often the most fiscally advantageous land use for the town. Particularly important agriculture lands should be identified, and it should be the policy of the town to encourage their continued use as agricultural land use. To accomplish this, it must be understood that farming is a business and not a land use. For a business to remain operating it must be economically viable, and have someone to operate the business.

The Vision Plan for the town designates a major portion of the town as agricultural or rural. This includes land that is either in production or in other farm use as well as rural non-farm uses. While single family residences should be allowed in the planned agricultural area, such uses should be kept at very low densities. The character of the area is rural-agricultural and town planning policies should be directed to maintain this atmosphere. In order to achieve this objective, the existing minimum lot size governing residential uses in this area of 60,000 square feet per residence is appropriate and should be maintained. This requirement is directed not only to discourage "suburban-type subdivision developments" in these areas, but also to help channel the bulk of new housing construction to the

sewer district. Also to reinforce this rural agrarian nature, the Town should consider rural development guidelines for developing in this area.

A substantial segment of the planned agricultural area is contained within agricultural districts established under Article 25AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law. These agricultural districts should be continued when they reach the eight-year renewal date. Assessments on both farmland and open non-farm areas should be kept low enough to preserve the continuation of farming and to discourage speculation and the conversion of land for development. In addition to the need to preserve agricultural production for the country at large, but especially for the Somerset families who want to continue farming, there is a need to avoid the intermixing of incompatible uses in all districts. This aspect of land use is noted here, however, because the majority of mixed land uses generally occurs in areas of traditional least control of land use. The mixing of commercial and industrial land uses with agricultural is sometimes tolerated. The mixing of residential dwellings, housing people newly arrived from metropolitan areas, with vigorous agricultural activities frequently creates animosity toward the agricultural activity. Wherever possible, a separation of urban and rural uses of land is recommended. The importance of a strong local planning effort designed to minimize land use conflicts cannot be overemphasized.

Community Facilities

The inventory section indicated that community facilities in the Town of Somerset are fairly well developed as a result of the large investments that have been made in such facilities in recent years. With the exception of the possible need for more variety, present facilities appear to be sufficient to meet local needs over the next twenty years. As a condition of the approval of the license for the power plant in the 1970's, a multi-use plan was prepared for the site. Implementation of the plan would provide town residents additional recreational opportunities in the coastal area. Although there are no immediate plans to implement this proposal, potential recreational uses at the site include picnic grounds, active play areas, swimming, a boat launching area, sledding, cross-country skiing, hiking and bicycle trails, and scenic vistas.

Transportation

The existing roadway system is generally sufficient for the Town of Somerset under current conditions. Roadway volumes are low, and level of service (capacity) is high. As the town is projected to undergo modest population growth over the next twenty years, the existing roadway system should be adequate for the foreseeable future. The emphasis in highway improvements should not be on increasing the capacity of the highways, but rather on undertaking improvements such as resurfacing, the provision of shoulders, and increased attention to the non-vehicular (pedestrian and bicycle) transportation network.

The major factor potentially affecting transportation issues in the Town is the proposal for a high-speed ferry across Lake Ontario to Canada. Somerset has been identified in initial planning stages as one of the sites being considered for the U.S. port. If this proposal moves forward, the potential impacts of such a facility on the transportation system should be extensively studied, because it is unlikely that the existing circulation system would be adequate to accommodate the increase in traffic that would be generated.

The highways in the Town of Somerset are included in five different functional classes. They range from minor arterials, where the primary function is to carry relatively high volumes of through-traffic, to local roads, where the primary function is to provide access to abutting land uses. The five functional classes are as follows:

1. Minor Arterial- The only highway in the town within this class is Lake Road (Route 18). Minor arterials in rural areas include those highways that carry through-traffic on relatively long trips.

2. Major Rural Collector- This class includes Hartland, Quaker and Countyline Roads. Major rural collectors serve shorter trips and lower traffic volumes than minor arterials. Their function is to connect the more remote rural areas with higher order trafficways.
3. Urban Collector- The roadway within this class in the town is Lower Lake Road. The function of highways in this class is to collect traffic from local streets and channel such traffic to higher order trafficways. Lower Lake Road is included within this class because the 1990 Trafficways Classification System considered the lakeshore area as part of the urban area of the Erie-Niagara region.
4. Minor Rural Collector- This class includes Carmen, Hosmer & Johnson Creek Roads. Minor rural collectors serve adjacent development in sparsely settled areas and collect traffic from a limited number of local roads, connecting these roads to higher order trafficways.
5. Local Roads- The remainder of the highways in the town are classified as local roads. These roads serve shorter trips and lower traffic volumes than the higher order trafficways. Their major function is to provide access to adjacent land rather than to carry major through-traffic.

It was pointed out in the inventory section that the existing highway system in the town has sufficient capacity to handle the relatively low level of population growth projected for the next twenty-five years. The focus of investments in the future, therefore, should not be on increasing highway capacity, but rather on undertaking relatively minor improvements such as the resurfacing of highways, the provision of shoulders and the installation of traffic control devices.

The 1972 comprehensive plan included the proposed Lake Ontario State Parkway extension through the Town of Somerset. The proposed parkway extension currently has been deleted from state transportation plans, and is not likely to ever be built. As such the revised comprehensive plan has deleted this proposed improvement.

In general, there is no need for new roads in the Town of Somerset. The exception would be the future need for an access road from Hartland Road to the potential multiple use recreation facility at the eastern extremity of the power plant site. The construction of this road by the owners of the power plant is part of an agreement with the town to provide compensation for the vacating of Hosmer and Potter Roads north of Lake Road. The construction of the power plant required the cutting of these two local roads at Lake Road. The elimination of these two roadways from the local system served to reduce public access to the shoreline for local and area residents. The establishment of fair compensation for this loss included the construction of the access road to the multiple use site. Such a road would be under local jurisdiction, and the responsibility of the town to maintain.

Control of Development Along Highways

The degree to which access drives should be controlled along highways depends on their functional class. The higher the functional class of the highway, the greater the restrictions that should be placed on access to the highway in order to maintain the safety and capacity of the highway. Of particular concern are the segments of Lake and Quaker Roads within the sewer district. These highways serve an important traffic-carrying function, yet they are more likely to be under additional pressure arising from future development within this area. The town should enforce the highway access policies set forth previously along these highways, to minimize potential increased safety hazards and traffic congestion.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

An important tool for implementing local comprehensive plans is a capital improvements program. A capital improvements program is essentially a listing of capital projects (such as highway improvements and waterline extensions) which the community intends to undertake each year over a specified period of time. Most capital improvements programs cover a six-year period and include estimates of the cost of each capital project to be undertaken during this period. A capital improvement program may also include an analysis of the effect of the capital projects on debt service, the operating budget, and the tax rate.

The purpose of this section is to provide the initial basis for the development of a capital improvement program for the Town of Somerset. By carrying out the specific projects listed herein the town will create a procedure to implement the major capital projects proposed in the master plan. In this way the community will be able to achieve its goals to provide public services at a consistently high level and should serve to reinforce its land use and development goals. As part of the capital program, projects should be prioritized according to need, ability to pay, and potential benefits. The projected source of revenue to pay for proposed projects is an integral part of any coordinated capital improvements program.

Potential Capital Projects

The inventory section of this report suggested that the Town of Somerset already has the major public facilities needed to support the modest growth projected for the town during the next twenty years. The town should recognize the importance of its existing public facilities and devote a portion of its improved tax base to achieving a high standard for the maintenance and repair of these facilities.

Although the major public facilities to support future growth are already in place within the town, additional capital projects will be needed. The purpose of this section is to identify those projects that have the potential to be undertaken during the next six to ten years.

Comprehensive Drainage Study

A comprehensive drainage study may be needed not only to identify solutions to existing drainage problems in the town, but also to provide a framework for regulating future development to prevent drainage problems from arising. The immediate benefits resulting from the implementation of proposed drainage improvements would be expanded agricultural production, improved development potential and a healthier financial base for the community. The costs of the study are very small compared with the potential costs, both private and public, resulting from development which does not make adequate provision for drainage. The town should undertake the comprehensive drainage study jointly with the Towns of Hartland and Newfane, which include the upstream areas of the town's drainage basins. If agreement cannot be reached to undertake a joint study, then the town should undertake the study independently.

Facilities at the Town Hall Recreation Site

The Town should continue to evaluate the recreational needs of the community, and gaps could be filled with the construction of facilities at the Town Hall recreation site.

Multi-Use Facility at the AES Power Plant

This project includes the recreational facilities proposed to be developed at the power plant site by the Erie-Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board in the report Somerset Power Plant Multi-Use Plan (November 1979). The facilities are those proposed to be undertaken through 1997 as part of the first

phase of a three-phase program. Projected facilities include a parking area, trails, and various support facilities. The Town should continue to monitor the need for this facility.

Multi-Use Facility Access Road

If the multi-use project is undertaken, the owners of the power plant will also need to construct an access road to this site.

Sewer Improvements/Extension

The Town should continue to maintain and upgrade their sewer and sewage treatment systems. Sewer system improvements could include renovations to pump stations. Extensions could be considered on the lakefront, east of the sewer district.

Other Capital Projects

As future growth occurs in the Town of Somerset, additional capital projects will be needed. Although these improvements cannot be specifically identified at this time, a partial listing will likely include: continued upgrades to the sewerage treatment plant and sewers, upgrade of Town facilities such as the Highway garage maintenance facilities, water system improvements such as a new waste storage tank, continued improvements to the Town's computer systems including GIS, and cemetery maintenance issues.

The above listing should be used by the community as an initial basis for defining specific capital projects to be undertaken during the next six to ten years. The listing is not intended to suggest that all of the projects should be undertaken within the ten-year period. Some of the projects will depend on development patterns that may not emerge until much later into the future. On the other hand, projects that are not currently on the list will emerge and require attention. Therefore, it is important that the Town Board establishes a procedure whereby the need for capital projects are evaluated on a regular and continuing basis. Only in such a manner can the capital programming process be a useful guide for planning the investment of public dollars and the realization of local development goals. It should also be pointed out that local taxpayers may not need to feel the full brunt of undertaking these projects. In many instances, state and/or federal assistance may be available to offset a considerable portion of these costs. Various state and federal agencies administer aid programs which can help finance one or more of the capital projects which have been identified herein. Although the town should select projects based upon local need, the availability of outside aid must be acknowledged in the establishment of implementation priorities.

ADDITIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This revision of the Somerset Comprehensive Plan represents the continuation of the town's planning program initiated in the early 1970's. The plan must be publicized, explained, examined upon its completion, and revised when and as necessary. It should be kept up-to-date, and not be allowed to "gather dust", and thereby eventually bear no resemblance to the current situation in the town and village.

Implementation involves various measures available to the town to affect realization of the plan. These involve both legal and informal actions. The informal activities would include methods of informing the public and governmental officials responsible for the periodic decisions that affect land development. The legal devices, which form the backbone of controls, include the legal requirements of the plan itself, zoning, subdivision regulations, building and housing codes, and the like. Additional aids for plan implementation in the form of capital improvements programming have already been described.

As previously stated, the revision of the plan and the publication of this report does not signify the end of the planning program. Planning must be a continuing process carried out through time to a community alert to its changing needs. There must be a periodic review of the plan and of the data supporting the plan, with the necessary updating of its various proposals or provisions. Data of the kind used in the planning process becomes invalid or obsolete as time passes. New data, therefore, must be acquired, analyzed, and interpreted into a revised plan as conditions change.

A community needs an aggressive, positive policy for improvements. This policy must operate at three levels: the level of the individual citizen; the level of the various businesses and developers who are responsible for major improvement activities; and finally, at the public level of elected, appointed and employed officials who are also responsible for various development activities. Technical assistance may be required if the town is to achieve desirable ends with any economy of effort. The cost of the professional planning, engineering and/or legal help is minimal, relative to the cost of allowing unplanned development. The community is encouraged to continue strong ties and open communication with the Niagara County Department of Planning and Development and other public agencies involved in land use and planning issues.

Adoption of the Revised Comprehensive Plan

Upon review of the revisions contained within the revised comprehensive plan, the Town Board should consider formal adoption of the plan, with appropriate changes, as provided for in Section 272-a of Town Law.

The Planning Board should establish procedures that would require a periodic evaluation of the plan's recommendations. This evaluation should be summarized in a memorandum and submitted to the Town Board. In such a way the town will be certain that the comprehensive plan reflects the current desires of the community and that its recommendations and proposals are based upon the most up-to-date information.

Codes and Ordinances

Every community that seeks orderly growth and improvement must have and effectively administer controls that provide minimum standards of health, safety, and welfare for the homes of its inhabitants and for the structures of its industrial, commercial, and other enterprises. Such controls as embodied in local laws - the codes and ordinances - are enforced through police powers vested in the town by the State of New York. Code standards and requirements represent the base below which no property in the town would be allowed to go, as well as the starting point from which higher standards of livability may be developed for use in related programs for community development and improvement.

An up-to-date system of codes and an effective system of coordinated enforcement are essential elements of any comprehensive planning program. They are potent and effective preventive tools, and used in combination with other local actions, can make a major contribution toward the development of an attractive, highly livable environment.

The town may need to adopt a series of codes and ordinances designed to achieve the recommendations for the comprehensive plan. The adoption of such codes must be supported by a systematic process of review and enforcement. Through the enforcement of its codes and ordinances, the town can prevent development of undesirable construction while upgrading existing development. Whenever possible, it is recommended that the town and village coordinate their enforcement systems to: (a) obtain uniform enforcement; and, (b) to enable the two municipalities to provide greater funding for enforcement. The principal elements of the town's land development implementation program should include the following:

Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance has been designed to permit, prohibit, regulate or restrict uses of land; the size, height, location and use of structures; the density of population and intensity of land uses; and to prevent overcrowding of land, traffic congestion and loss of life or property from fire, floods or other dangers. Comprehensive revisions to this ordinance have been prepared based upon the revised goals of the comprehensive plan and many have been adopted. This plan suggests some additional revisions to help better guide the community (see implementation).

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision regulations are intended to ensure that residential and non-residential development within the town is properly designed, with adequate provisions made for needed public improvements within proposed development areas. Subdivision regulations:

- a) Provide for a systematic processing of plats
- b) Ensure that new subdivisions conform to the comprehensive plan with regard to new streets, easements, drainage, public land and flood hazards
- c) Govern standards for streets, drainage, facilities and other improvements on subdivided land
- d) Encourage economy in layout design of subdivisions and other land development

Subdivision design and construction standards have been prepared as part of the planning process and have been adopted.

Housing Code

A housing code establishes standards for existing housing and governs occupancy, minimum facilities, and maintenance of existing structures used for habitable purposes. Occupancy refers to space requirements, such a minimum dwelling unit space, minimum ceiling height, minimum sleeping units space, regulation of use of basements and cellars and both natural light and ventilation requirements. In this way, houses that are still basically sound can be prevented from deteriorating to the point where deterioration would exist. The degree of detail for housing codes is dependent upon the density and diversity of development.

Other Codes

Other commonly found municipal codes deal with plumbing, heating, health, sanitation, electricity, and fire protection. The Planning Board should be concerned that the town be protected by modern, up-to-date codes which deal with these mechanics. The adoption by reference of the NYS Fire Prevention and Building Code as part of the Somerset Code assures that up to date standards are in place with respect to these areas.

Citizen Initiative

It is apparent that much of the success of the planning process within the town depends on the future initiative, imagination, and creative character of all citizens. Officials should actively seek to develop and foster cooperation, education, and community interest and spirit among the residents. As an important step in creating a climate for continuous planning in Somerset, the elected and appointed boards as well as the residents of the town through the Planning Board, should become aware of the various tools which are available to implement and effectuate the comprehensive plan.

VISION PLAN

The Vision Plan for the Town of Somerset is shown in Map 11. The Vision Plan, together with the goals and policies described previously, is intended to guide decisions which affect the future development of the town. It is a graphic representation of the general future development of the town, and can be considered a visual depiction of the goals and policies for the town. The Vision Plan does not directly represent land uses (or zoning), and various development patterns may be consistent with the ideals it portrays. However, the town should strive to ensure that development is consistent with the spirit and the intent of the vision portrayed in the map.

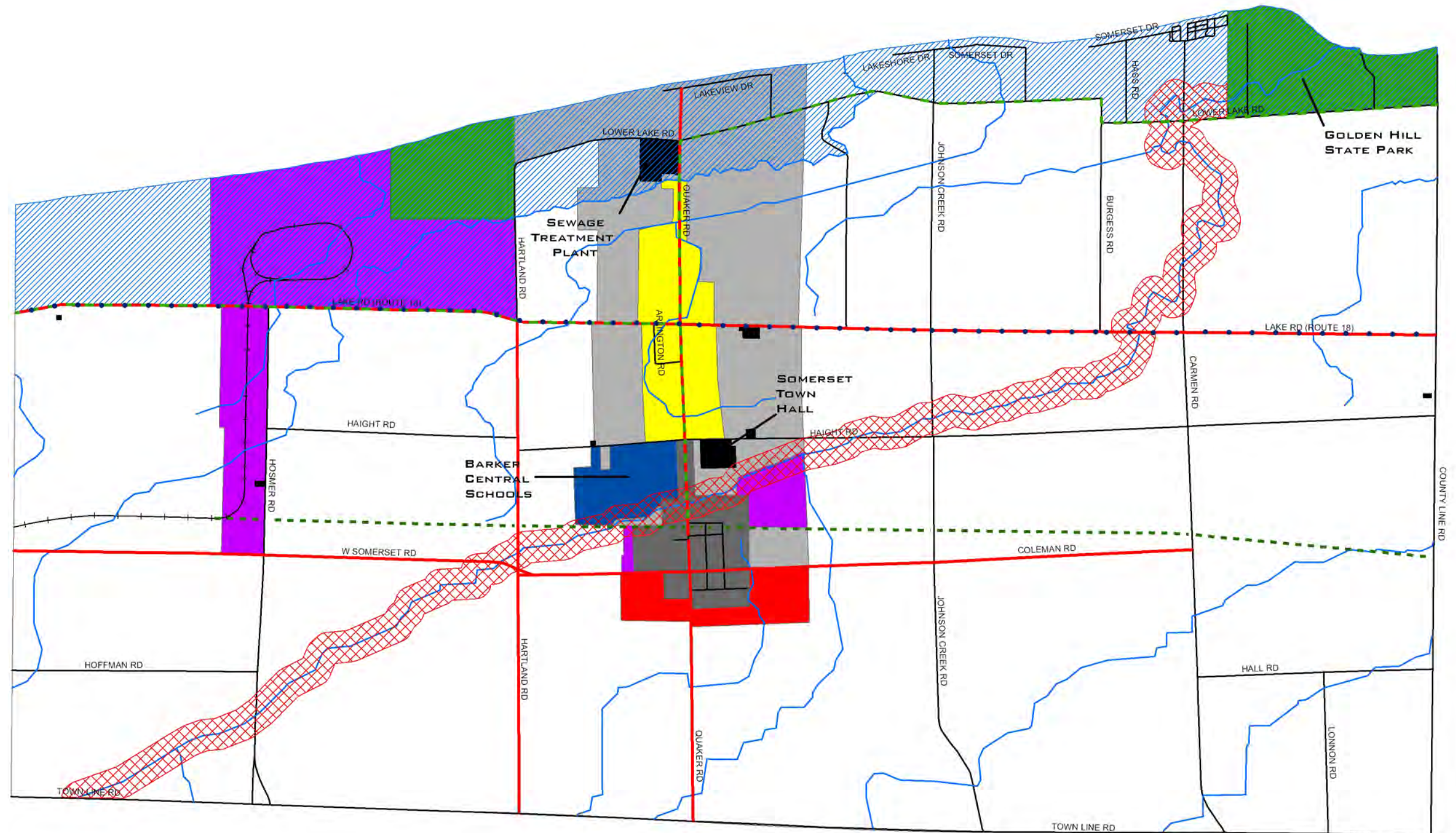
Given development patterns and trends in the Town of Somerset, it is expected that there will be considerably more land in the town available for various types of land uses than will be required for such uses by the year 2010. The plan provides flexibility in the actual location of areas designated for development. Therefore, it is even more important that the town directs future development to occur within areas where growth is appropriate, and discourage intensive development in areas identified for a more rural character. If development is allowed to disperse beyond the identified growth areas, it would be contrary not only to the town's vision, but also to the goals and policies which direct the plan. The recommendations portrayed on the Vision Plan map are based upon an analysis of the existing land use patterns and roadway system, economic conditions and environmental resources and constraints, in conjunction with the issues and opportunities identified by the public. This map is not future land use maps or zoning maps. The Vision Plan is a guidance tool that represents overall vision for the region and can help with the recommendations outlined in the plan. It should not be interpreted as a zoning or land use map, and should not be used independently of the Comprehensive Plan.

The following concepts were used as the basis for the Vision Plan:

- Encourage the majority of the land area of the town to remain in agricultural use, at least through the planning period.
- Encourage the growth of residential development within the village and sewer district.
- Concentrate business activities within the Haight, Quaker, Route 18 section augmented by the commercial activities in the Village of Barker.
- Capitalize upon Lake Ontario and its recreation resource potential, and provide for expanded public access to the lake.
- Concentrate areas of industrial development in locations adjacent to the village where services and transportation are available, and around the power plant site and railroad.
- Encourage conservation of areas immediately adjacent to the many streams flowing through the town and the lakefront area.

TOWN OF SOMERSET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION

MAP 11

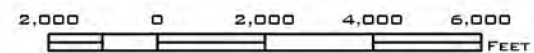


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DATA SOURCES: TOWN OF SOMERSET, NIAGARA COUNTY



NOTE: THIS MAP CANNOT BE USED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING DOCUMENT. IT DOES NOT REPRESENT ZONING OR LANDUSE BUT IS A VISUALIZATION OF CONCEPTS IN THE PLAN.

Section V

Implementation Plan

SECTION V

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The following section summarizes and expands upon the Findings and Recommendations section of the plan. It first provides a general methodology for implementing the plan and then provides specific steps for implementing each of the goals and policies established by the community. These steps or actions were generated throughout the process by referring to previous efforts, through committee and public input, and from general planning principles.

It must be clearly understood that this plan is a guidebook for the community, and that the recommendations/actions that are given are suggested methodologies for achieving the Town's goals. Although given priorities, it shall be up to the Town Board to determine the applicability and/or timing of these actions. These actions are to be considered a "toolbox" to be utilized by the Town in achieving vision and responding to changes in the community. Each year, the Town Board (with recommendations from others) will decide on the need for any implementation actions, and address any updates to the plan.

GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

1. **Comprehensive Plan Adoption:** The Town Board, after holding the appropriate public hearing(s) and completing the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process, should adopt the comprehensive plan.
2. **Form a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee:** The Town Board should form a comprehensive plan implementation committee by resolution. This committee could be chaired by Town Board members and have representation of the Planning Board and others as necessary. This committee would meet at scheduled times throughout the year (2-4 times per year in the first couple of years after adoption and possibly reducing to 1-2 times per year thereafter). Their responsibility would be to help ensure that the plan is being implemented, evaluate results of actions, re-prioritize implementation actions as necessary, and suggest modifications to the plan as required.
3. **Provide copies of the plan:** The Town should provide copies of the plan to the Town's boards, departments and committees. When providing these plans, a meeting should be scheduled to explain the plan, and how it should be utilized.
4. **Budget money and seek grants for implementation:** The comprehensive plan implementation committee each year will provide an approximate budget needed for the coming year's implementation actions, to the Town Board (at budget time). The committee will also provide assistance to the Town Board in identifying and seeking grants for these actions. The Town Board will then budget for these actions and/or apply for grants.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS PER GOALS OF THE TOWN

A. Maintain the rural and agricultural character of the Town.

1. Review town zoning ordinances and modify as necessary to ensure that agriculture and its related activities are not restricted or hindered by the zoning law.

Priority: Low Responsibility: Planning Board could review and recommend revisions to the Town Board. Revisions would be adopted by local law.

Costs: Minimal: reproduction and mailing costs.

2. Entertain no requests for rezoning in agricultural districts for higher density residential development.

Priority: High Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: None

3. Consider adoption of a local right-to-farm law.

Priority: Low Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: Minimal: samples can be obtained from NYSDOS and others. Costs are for local law adoption.

4. Provide incentives for development in sewerred areas: expedited reviews, density bonuses, and prioritized public services.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board, Planning Board, Building Inspector

Costs: None

5. Establish and adopt rural development guidelines: these guidelines would be referenced in the zoning and subdivision regulations, and would be required in the agricultural zoning district.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: Minimal: obtain samples, revise and adopt through local procedures.

6. Investigate agricultural preservation programs - the Town should evaluate transfer of development rights (TDR) and purchase of development rights (PDR) programs, and other programs that may be available (such as PACE [purchase of agricultural conservation easements], farm assistance programs, etc.).

Priority: Low

Responsibility: Town Board through a committee

Costs: Minimal: this is an investigation not implementation. (Implementation would be expensive.)

7. Maintain State agricultural districts.

Priority: High

Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: None

8. Locate industrial and commercial in specified areas of the sewer district.

Light industry and agri-industrial uses should be located in targeted areas adjacent to the Village and the power station. In creating these industrial areas, proper controls must be put in place to regulate objectionable impacts (noise, fumes, water pollution, etc.). Industrial uses are more compatible with agricultural uses than residential uses and therefore regulations should include certain buffer and/or setback requirements.

Priority: High Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: Minimal for creating regulations

9. Limit retail growth outside the Village to assist in the viability of the Barker Central Business District.

Consideration of zoning changes around the Village should consider the limitation of competing retail uses to the Barker Central Business District.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: Minimal

- B. Achieve a pattern of development which minimizes travel time to meet daily needs and which meets a high standard of design and construction.

1. Modify the Town's zoning map to match the recommendations in this plan.

Priority: High Responsibility: Town Board through the Planning Board or committee
Costs: \$1,000 - \$2,000. Costs for amending map and adoption process.

2. Create an Access Management ordinance and assign to identified roads within the Town.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board through a committee (assistance from NYDOT)
Costs: Minimal - \$3,000. The NYSDOT has a sample Access management ordinance. It may need to be modified and then taken through an adoption process.

3. Create a rural development cluster development ordinance: this ordinance would apply to sewerred areas and to non-sewerred areas.

Priority: High

Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: \$1,000 - \$2,000. Obtain samples and work with a consultant to modify.

4. Create landscaping and buffering standards - amend code to include and add appropriate references.

Priority: Medium

Responsibility: Town Board through committee

Costs: Minimal - \$1,000. May need help of consultant.

- C. Meet the housing needs of the community by providing a variety of choices in new housing and by encouraging the improvement of existing housing.

1. Investigate a housing and property maintenance code: form a committee to research examples of these codes and how they are applied, and where and if they should be applied.

Priority: Low

Responsibility: Town Board through a committee

Costs: Minimal

2. Publicize programs for Federal and State housing assistance programs, and programs for façade improvements and tax assessment issues.

Priority: Low

Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: Minimal - \$1,000

3. Amend the zoning of the Town to match the vision of the plan in locating denser housing in the sewerred areas.

Priority: High

Responsibility: Town Board through the Planning Board or committee

Costs: \$1,000 - \$2,000. Costs for amending map and adoption process.

D. Protect important environmental resources from adverse effects.

1. Expand upon the work done in the Comprehensive Plan by identifying, quantifying and prioritizing important environmental resources in the Town: (the comprehensive plan and this resource would be referenced in the Town's codes).

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board through a committee
Costs: \$1,000 - \$3,000. With volunteer and consultant assistance.

2. Create a lakeshore overlay district to provide additional requirements to developing in the lakeshore area. Requirements could include limitations on pole barns, height and location of structures, setbacks, etc. One of the important objectives would be to preserve views. This effort should be coordinated with the LWRP.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: Associated with the LWRP creation.

3. Create and adopt updated stormwater and erosion control standards.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: Minimal - \$1,000. Acquire NYSDEC sample stormwater regulations.

4. Working with applicable adjoining communities, study the watersheds within the community for ways of protecting and improving water quality. Look into working with the Soil and Conservation service and their CEM (Community Environmental Management) program.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: Minimal - \$5,000. If acquire CEM assistance, costs could be minimal.

5. Consider a wetlands ordinance that would complement State and Federal laws. This ordinance could regulate (not completely restrict) development in and around non-regulated Federal wetlands (isolated).

Priority: Low Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: \$1,000

6. Update/revise the zoning and subdivision regulations to require preservation/incorporation of important natural resources to any development proposal.

Priority: High Responsibility: Town Board through the Planning Board
Costs: \$1,000

7. Addition of stream protection overlay areas: for identified streams (especially Golden Hill Creek), a stream protection overlay should be created. This zoning overlay would require development within its boundaries to meet structure regulations for setbacks from the creek, drainage and erosion control, and other issues such as viewshed protection.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: \$1,000 - \$2,000 for overlay creation

E. Provide high quality community facilities and services at an acceptable cost to the local taxpayer.

1. Complete a Capital Improvements Plan: each Town department, board and committee should create a listing of improvements, needs, etc. for now and for the future (reasonable time period established).

Priority: Medium Responsibility: All departments, boards and committees
Costs: Minimal

2. Create a grants plan for the prioritized capital improvements list.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board
Costs: \$3,000 - \$5,000. If consultant is necessary.

3. Monitor recreation needs in the Town: based on continued monitoring of these needs, the Town will determine when additional facilities/plans such as the multiple use plan should be implemented.

Priority: Low Responsibility: Town Board and Recreation Committee
Costs: Minimal

4. Based on watershed studies and possible assistance under a CEM program, determine those areas of the Town that need detailed drainage studies. A drainage committee could keep track of drainage problems and recommend studies/improvements to the Town Board. Assistance could also be sought through SEMO (State Energy Management Office) and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency).

Priority: Low Responsibility: Town Board and Drainage Committee
Costs: Minimal through thousands of dollars.

5. Meet yearly with State Park officials to discuss Golden Hill State Park; their plans and the needs of the community.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: None

F. Provide for the future movement of traffic through the Town in a safe and efficient manner.

1. Focus should be on improving the existing highway system and not on constructing any new roads. Working with the NYSDOT and the County, the Town should identify areas for improvement.

Priority: Medium Responsibility: Town Board and Highway Superintendent

Costs: Minimal

2. Build upon the Access Management ordinance identified in B.2., by completing an access management plan. This plan would help in resolving some existing problems in the Town.

Priority: Low Responsibility: Town Board (working with the Access Management division of the NYSDOT)

Costs: Minimal

3. Provide input to the GBNRTC on future transportation needs, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Provide a copy of the Town's plan and attend yearly meetings with the GBNRTC.

Priority: High Responsibility: Town Board

Costs: Minimal (reproduction of plan and attendance at meetings)

Section VI

Environmental Analysis

SECTION VI

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Typically, the potential environmental impacts of a comprehensive plan are evaluated through a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). To meet this requirement, the comprehensive plan itself can be set up to represent the GEIS (see §272-a.8 of Town Law). This format enables the reviewers, the Lead Agency, all involved and interested agencies, and the public to review one comprehensive document that outlines plans for the future and the potential environmental implications of these plans. Although the Plan, to date, has not resulted in a Positive Declaration, this format is being used to help in the environmental evaluation.

A GEIS, like an environmental impact statement, includes a section on environmental setting. Section III of this comprehensive plan provides a review and analysis of the environmental settings of the Town as they exist now. Section III includes information on the following: the natural environment and the cultural environment.

Potential Significant Adverse Environmental Impacts

The underlying purpose and a major goal of a Comprehensive Plan is to promote appropriate land use and avoid significant adverse environment impacts in the community that it covers. However, it is important here to acknowledge and discuss potential adverse impacts.

Short term/long term and cumulative impacts

Based on the environmental setting of the Town of Somerset, the following potentially significant adverse environmental impacts could occur if the community does not plan adequately and provide the proper tools for the management of growth and development. The comprehensive plan is designed to properly guide growth in the Town to lessen the negative impacts of land use and development decisions.

A. Impacts on Land (see environmental features, topographic map, steep slopes, US Department of Agriculture prime soils and hydric soils maps)

- The Town of Somerset is rural in nature, a characteristic that is valued by area residents. Inappropriate planning and development actions could negatively impact the character of the Town.
- The Town of Somerset has areas of hydric soil, and some wetlands and floodplains. There are also some areas in the Town with slopes greater than 15 percent. Improper development of these areas could result in drainage, flooding and/or erosion problems within the Town and in downstream areas.
- There are large areas in Somerset where the soils are categorized as prime farmland, or prime farmland when drained and extensive agricultural districts and farms. Development of these areas could displace irreplaceable resources.
- Some locations in the Town of Somerset contain significant areas of mature woodland. Inappropriate development of these areas could have a negative impact on the rural character of the Town and important open space.

B. Impacts on Water (See Environmental Features Map)

- Fish Creek, Golden Hill Creek, and Marsh Creek and tributaries of these waterways run through the Town of Somerset. Floodplains surround portions of these waterways. Inappropriate development could lead to flooding or drainage problems, and hazards to public safety. These creeks are also important for environmental protection, open space preservation, drainage, wildlife habitat and aesthetics.
- Much of the Town's development is on municipal water and is not dependent upon groundwater resources for their water supply. Many residences in the Town use groundwater for the discharge of sanitary waste (septic systems). Only a portion of the Town has public sewers.
- There are areas of wetlands and hydric soils. Inappropriate development in these areas could lead to flooding and drainage problems, and adversely impact groundwater resources.
- The waterfront area of the Town has floodplains, wetlands and is an important environmental feature of the community. Inappropriate development in this area could cause many problems.

C. Impacts on Flora and Fauna

- The Town's expansive areas of open meadows, fields and woodlands, waterfront areas as well as the wetlands and creek corridors, support many non-threatened and non-endangered plant, avian and animal species. These areas provide important habitat for many resident and migrating species, and are an important element of the rural character of the Town. Over-development and poor site planning decisions could adversely impact these resources.
- Some of the streams are considered to be Class A streams.

D. Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources

- Most of the Town is located in a State designated agricultural district. The predominant land use and economic activity in the Town is agricultural, and most of the Town is zoned agricultural.
- Agricultural uses have been slowly declining over the past decade, and appear to be continuing this trend.

E. Impacts on Aesthetic Resources

- The aesthetic resources of the Town of Somerset include significant views (especially in the waterfront region of the town), open spaces, parks, historic buildings and creeks. These resources contribute to the atmosphere and character of the Town, and could be negatively affected by inappropriate development.
- Agricultural uses represent an important rural aesthetic resource of the Town.

F. Impact on Open Space, Parks and Recreation

- Parks and recreation resources in the Town of Somerset are identified in Section III.
- The Town also has important open space resources, with large portions of the Town including undeveloped woodlands and meadows.
- Inappropriate development, including increased demands caused by population increases, could have an adverse effect upon these resources. Present population statistics show a large number of seniors, and children under the age of 18 compared to county averages.

G. Impact on Critical Environmental Area

- There are no designated critical environmental areas in the Town.

H. Impact on Transportation

- The transportation system in the Town of Somerset is heavily based upon roadways and automobiles. Public transportation is very limited, and the rail line is used for very limited commercial and freight uses only. No passenger rail is available.
- The major roadway corridors in the Town are described in Section III.
- Travel for pedestrians and bicyclists can be difficult in the Town.
- Additional development in the Town has the potential to adversely impact the transportation network. In particular, more intensive development may aggravate areas where traffic congestion is a problem, or result in new areas of congestion. Development within the Town also affects the traffic in the Village. Development in the surrounding communities may also have impacts on the Town's transportation system.
- More intensive development may also increase potential conflicts between automotive and non-automotive modes of transportation.

I. Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood

- The population of the Town of Somerset outside the Village grew by about 10% between 1990 and 2000. Projections suggest continued growth over the next decades at a similar pace.
- The rate of new households being generated in Somerset outside the Village since 1990 has been about 7 households per year on average.
- The Town's Goals and Objectives clearly indicate support for directing growth toward the areas of Town in or adjacent to the Village and north of the Village along Quaker Road, and controlling the rate of growth in areas without sewers, or along rural road frontages in order to protect community character.
- The Village of Barker serves as the central business district and service center for the Town of Somerset. The Town recognizes the importance of the Village and wishes to provide support for these businesses. The Town though does have a moderate commercial and industrial growth rate and sees continued growth in the designated areas of the Town.
- Present growth rates have not shown a significant increase in population numbers in the Town, but how that development takes place may cause problems or affect the vision of the community. Fluctuations in this growth rate may also cause problems and could be anticipated due to growth pressures from surrounding communities.

Adverse Environmental Impacts that Cannot be Avoided

With or without the adoption and implementation of a Comprehensive Plan, the region will continue to have new development that will impact the environment. The adoption of this plan and implementation of the suggested actions will allow the Town to better manage growth and development, and reduce potential environmental impacts. All development actions taking place after the completion of this study will still be subject to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process on a site specific basis. This plan, though, will assist with the review of development actions. In the instance of a rezoning request, the plan will have a much greater impact on that decision and the SEQR process.

Growth Inducing Aspects of the Plan

Most of the implementation actions outlined in this study will help to control and moderate growth within the Town. Certain actions may act to encourage development in specific areas of the Town. Specifically, redevelopment in and around the Village of Barker will be encouraged. This area has been deemed to be the most appropriate areas for development. Development in the more rural areas of the Town will be discouraged.

Mitigation Measures

It is the objective of any comprehensive plan to help to reduce the potential impacts that could be caused by the present development trends in the planning community. This can be accomplished by providing techniques for changing the development trends of a community, such as amending zoning or other development regulations, or by providing tools to help mitigate the possible impacts of those development trends (improved infrastructure, increased/improved standards for development, etc.). A good comprehensive plan will supply techniques for modifying or clarifying the direction of the community, and the tools for reducing the impacts of development that themselves do not create other adverse environmental impacts. The following section discusses the study's recommendations and the logic as to why and how they help mitigate the potential impacts of future growth.

A. Impacts on Land

- To protect the rural character of the community and its environmental resources, this plan recommends zoning revisions, aesthetic regulations, infrastructure limitations, new development regulations and guidelines, and protection and preservation of important features.
- Agricultural lands in the Town will be protected. In some cases the land could be preserved through various techniques:
 - The Town will also continue its support of agriculture and investigate the possible use of a PACE (purchase of agricultural conservation easements) or a PDR (purchase of development rights) programs.
 - The certified agricultural district in the Town will be maintained.

B. Impacts on Water

Surface Water

- The plan also attempts to direct development away from the designated stream corridors.
- Increased drainage standards, and avoidance of poor soil areas will also reduce impacts to surface waters from development.
- New drainage and erosion control laws will also help to protect these resources.

Groundwater

- Directing growth to areas with public infrastructure will help in the protection of groundwater resources in the Town of Somerset.
- Possible expansion of the sewer system to areas along the waterfront could help to reduce problems.

C. Impacts on Plants and Animals

- As discussed previously, the Somerset community will be taking efforts to protect and preserve the stream corridors and open spaces in the community. By targeting these important habitats for protection, the Town is minimizing impacts to the flora and fauna of the region.
- The plan also identifies important features like floodplains, wetlands and unique environmental features, so that they can be incorporated into designs and/or preserved.

D. Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources

- As previously discussed, the Town will be coordinating activities to protect and preserve agricultural land and agricultural operations. Farmland protection planning will be followed up by different approaches to protecting and preserving land (zoning changes, overlays, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) and Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs, etc.).

- Other programs and ideas will be attempted as needed to try and assist farmers to stay in business. If the economics of farming can be helped, farming may continue which will assist with the agricultural land preservation.

E. Impacts on Aesthetic Resources

- The preservation of community character is one of the major goals of this study. Community character includes the aesthetic resources of the community such as significant views, open spaces, farmland, important structures and the Towns' overall rural characters. The community has identified these resources and the plan identifies actions to be taken by the community to proactively and reactively (in response to development) protect and preserve these features. Development guidelines help to maintain the rural character of this community.

F. Impacts on Open Space, Parks and Recreation

- The plan identifies the features and provides methodologies to protect and preserve these resources during development.
- The Town can plan these features, to ensure that open space features are protected to the maximum extent possible, recreational needs are efficiently provided, and parks are connected and considered in development scenarios.
- Major features are incorporated into the vision map and will be considered an integral part of the Town's future.

G. Impacts on Critical Environmental Areas

- There are no CEA's in the Somerset community.

H. Impacts on Transportation

- Transportation in the community is heavily based on roadways and automobiles. There are localized problems within the community along these roadways that have been caused by some increases in traffic in the region. A major recommendation of this plan is to work with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (which is the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council) to study these traffic patterns and provide suitable solutions to these problems. Growth rates within Somerset itself and those proposed for the future may not be the only part of the problem (and are being controlled). Traffic problems may be related to development around the region, social changes and the routes people take to get to their destinations.
- To avoid sprawl, growth is being targeted around the Village and existing growth areas (within the Sewer District). This helps in preserving the character and environmental features of the community but can cause localized traffic problems. Actions such as access management plans are being suggested to minimize these impacts.
- One of the other issues of transportation relates to the region's accommodation of pedestrians and bicycles. The plan recommends continuing to improve pedestrian and bicycle access around the Village. In the Town, these access issues are focused on or near important features. On-street accommodations may be made in the more rural areas, to keep the rural character.
- Public transportation in the region is minimal and Somerset will continue to work with the County and Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority in trying to improve public transportation.
- The railroad running through Somerset is an important asset to the region. The community has planned around this feature (continuing access to industrial areas and preventing encroachment of incompatible uses), and is strongly interested in the railroad being improved and remaining active.

I. Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood

- The growth rate in the Town of Somerset is not excessive, and for the planning future, it is not expected to change drastically. The plan accommodates this growth within appropriate areas, without impacting resources or the character of the community.
- It is clear in the Goals and Objectives that there is interest in protecting the character of the community by controlling growth. Many of the plan's recommendations are designed to achieve this goal. These actions are not excessive or overly protective since development pressures are moderate at this time.

Evaluation of Alternatives

Throughout the planning process, alternatives for helping the Town achieve its Goals and Objectives were evaluated. These recommendations and implementation alternatives were evaluated for not only their desired results, but also their impact to the environment, the needs of local residents and private property rights, and the vitality of the community.

It must be noted that long term recommendations were not thoroughly evaluated in this section since these actions are only to be considered in extenuating circumstances where the Town is seeing greater levels of growth pressure or where short term recommendations are not achieving the desired results.

Under the present growth conditions in the Town, the "No Action" alternative was considered. However, to enable the Town to properly plan for its chosen future, to prepare for potential development activity over the next 15 years, and to better direct and manage such growth and development, this alternative was deemed inappropriate. Furthermore, the chosen action plan will provide greater protection to the environment than the present course of action.

Appendix A
Recommended Multiple Use Alternative

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDED MULTIPLE USE ALTERNATIVE

In the late 1970's, the Erie-Niagara Regional Planning Board conducted a multiple use study for lands associated with the AES Somerset power generating station, owned at that time by New York State Gas & Electric (NYSEG). While these plans were never implemented, the Town of Somerset is appending the recommendations to the updated comprehensive plan in the event that circumstances warrant their development at some point in the future. The following discussion is excerpted from the Regional Planning Board's study. Their cost estimates are included to give a general idea of the cost of implementation. Because there are no immediate plans to implement this proposal, newer cost estimates are not warranted. It is emphasized that these figures were generated in 1979 and are outdated. Current costs would be significantly higher.

A. BACKGROUND

As mentioned in the preceding section (i.e. Section VIII, Multiple Use Alternatives), the Multiple Use Subcommittee directed the Regional Planning Board staff to develop a Recommended Multiple Use Alternative which would combine the most desirable elements of Alternatives A and B. While the Subcommittee's recommendation provided some degree of flexibility in the development of a Recommended Multiple Use Alternative, it was evident that the Subcommittee wanted three elements incorporated into the final Plan. These included the following factors:

- (1) Utilization of the northeast section of the power plant site for recreation activities and concurrent recommendations regarding access to that area.
- (2) The development of the shoreline in the northeast section of the power plant site for immediate passive recreational use.
- (3) Development of long-range plans for public access and use of those portions of the NYSEG property which will become available throughout the life of the plant (e.g. Solid Waste Disposal Sites).

As stated previously in Section VII (i.e. General Site Analysis), a refined site analysis was performed for those sub-areas where multiple use development was determined to be most feasible. This included an examination of the soil characteristics for the eastern half of the NYSEG property which incorporated sub-areas A through G. Locations of the sub-areas are shown in Figure 4 (i.e. Somerset Power Plant Site Sub-Areas) on page 56. The data contained in the Soil Survey of Niagara County, New York (October, 1972). U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service was used as the major reference source. The soil analysis concentrated on those areas that would not be disturbed by solid waste disposal operations, in particular sub-areas B, E, and F.

Soil characteristics were examined to determine the feasibility of each sub-area to accommodate various recreation opportunities and support activities such as camping, access roads, storage building, and picnicking. The results of the soil analysis showed that only the portion of sub-area F east of Potter Road and sub-area E would accommodate intensive development which included low buildings, parking areas, and roads. However, most of the other sub-areas examined would

accommodate trails, picnicking, wildlife refuge, and athletic sports. In addition to a soil analysis, the Regional Planning Board staff examined the appropriate sub-areas in light of their relationship with the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation plans for landscaping/revegetation, as part of the utility company's application to the New York State Board on Electric Generation Siting and Environment for a permit to construct a power generating facility. Examination of the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation's plans indicated that existing and proposed vegetation would provide excellent wildlife habitats as well as adequate buffers from power plant operations.

The above mentioned analysis was supplemented with numerous site visits and discussions with technical personnel from government agencies. These included Mr. Brian Doyle, New York State Sea Grant Specialist; Mr. Martin Cummings, New York State Department of Public Service; and Mr. Robert Resil, Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission. It was determined that a boat launch ramp in the power plant site would cost approximately \$2,000,000. The high cost was mainly due to the steep slope present at the site, which would necessitate extensive engineering work prior to construction.

In addition, the present existence of public boat launch ramps at the Wilson-Tuscarora State Park in the Town of Wilson, New York and Olcott Harbor in the Town of Newfane, New York, as well as recently allocated state funds for a boat launch ramp at Golden Hill State Park in the Town of Somerset indicate that an additional ramp at the Somerset Power Plant would not likely receive funding assistance from New York State or the federal government. This information was relayed to the ENCRPB staff from discussions with the Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission. Given the elements requested for inclusion in the plan by the Multiple Use Subcommittee and the findings of the refined site analysis, a Recommended Multiple Use Alternative was developed.

B. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDED MULTIPLE USE-ALTERNATIVE

The Recommended Multiple Use Alternative is a long-range plan which calls for the development of a Municipal Park by the Town of Somerset over three distinct time periods or phases. Except for an access road to the multiple use area, development would be confined to New York State Electric and Gas property with the more intensive recreational development concentrated in a 30-acre area in the northeast corner of the site. The Park would be oriented toward passive recreation activities such as picnicking, hiking, and nature study, although accommodations for slightly more active activities such as swimming and sledding are included. The Recommended Multiple Use Alternative utilizes the two most distinctive site characteristics of the New York State Electric and Gas property. These include: (1) the Lake Ontario shoreline; and (2) the artificial hills which will eventually be created by solid waste disposal operations of the power plant.

C. PHASE I - 1981-1997

Phase I, shown in Figure 9 on page A-4, proposes development along the Lake Ontario shoreline east of Potter Road. This area would be available around 1981 and could be developed over a 16-year period. An important aspect of Phase I is the provision of shoreline access as well as visual access to Lake Ontario. This would replace access lost by the removal of Potter and Hosmer Roads north of Route 18. Development in this area is contingent upon the Town of Somerset acquiring an access road right-of-way from the junction of Hartland Road and Lower Lake Road to the NYSEG property.

D. PHASE II - 1997-2015

Phase II, shown in Figure 10 on page A-5, proposed expansion of the facilities developed in Phase I to include the area encompassed by Solid Waste Disposal Area I. The development of this area would not begin until the completion of scheduled solid waste disposal operations and subsequent revegetation of the land fill by NYSEG. Based on Utility Company projections, this would occur around 1997. Activities proposed for this phase would utilize the topography of the artificial hill created by the solid waste disposal operations, and include sledding, cross-country skiing and a scenic viewpoint.

E. PHASE III - 2015-2020

Phase III, shown in Figure 11 on page A-6, proposes expansion of the trail system throughout the eastern portion of the NYSEG property, as well as the development of an additional sledding hill and a wildlife management area. Proposed development would occur following completion of all solid waste disposal operations in the eastern portion of the property and subsequent revegetation of Solid Waste Disposal Areas II and III. This would approximately occur in the year 2015.

F. ACCESS

Access to the Phase I and Phase II areas will be accomplished via a new road running due west from Hartland Road (near Lower Lake Road). The Multiple Use Plan recommends that the utility company purchase and construct the above-mentioned road with subsequent transfer of ownership to the Town of Somerset. This recommendation was identified in Section I of this report. Access to the Phase III Area will be accomplished via Lake Road/NYS Route 18.

G. ESTIMATED COST OF RECOMMENDED MULTIPLE USE ALTERNATIVE

Estimated cost figures (in 1979 dollars) were developed for the Recommended Multiple Use Alternative. These estimates are provided in a high-low range format and are intended to serve as a general guide. Attachment 1 to this report includes data regarding the determination of estimated costs for the recommended alternative. More precise figures would have to be based on detailed design and engineering data, which are not developed for the recommended alternative.

	HIGH		LOW
Phase I	\$ 942,100		\$ 299,200 *
Phase II	12,100		7,700
Phase III	77,000 *		26,400 *
Total	\$1,031,800 *		\$ 333,300 *

*A major portion of the costs are for access, parking, and maintenance facilities, and the difference in the HIGH and LOW ESTIMATES are largely due to reductions in those facilities. Reference should be made to Attachment 1 for more detail regarding cost determination.

The estimated cost figures were developed with the assistance of several sources. These included estimates produced by technical staff from the Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission, Krehbiel Associates, Inc. and material available in the Regional Planning Board's files.

H. PUBLIC REVIEW

The major elements developed for the recommended Multiple Use Alternative were reviewed by the Multiple Use Subcommittee and Somerset Power Plant Committee at their July 31, 1979 meeting. The organization approved the multiple use approach developed by the Regional Planning Board staff and as reflected in Figures 9, 10, and 11 of this report. The multiple use approach was also forwarded to several state and local agencies for their review and comment. Included among these were the New York State Department of Public Service, the New York State Department of State, the Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Niagara County Economic Development and Planning Department. In general, the comments received from these agencies were favorable and supportive of the efforts to provide multiple use development at the Somerset Station site.

(INSERT FIGURES 9, 10, 11: MULTIUSE PLANS—are they still available? Recommend reference, rather than actually printing and including in this plan)
(note: Section on funding sources was deleted, because several of the programs no longer are available)

ATTACHMENT 1-ESTIMATED COST DETERMINATIONS

For the purpose of determining estimated cost each phase of the Recommended Multiple Use Alternative was broken down into component activities. These component activities correspond to the major elements of the Recommended Multiple Use Alternative as depicted in the Multiple Use Plan maps, Phase I, II, and III.

The estimated costs were derived by averaging the costs obtained from several sources. They are based upon gross assumptions as to the final content and design of the component activities. The sources used for the cost estimates were:

- (1) Technical personnel from the Niagara Frontier State Parks and Recreation Commission;
- (2) Mr. Timothy Frank, Director of Development Planning, Krehbiel Associates, Inc.;
- (3) An Open Space Preservation Notebook compiled by Regional Planning Board staff during previous recreation and open space preservation studies; and
- (4) Mr. Stanley Ralph, Supervisor, Town of Somerset.

The costs were broken down by phases and by component activities, as shown in the chart on the succeeding pages. A high and low range is shown for each component. This was done to demonstrate the degree of flexibility possible within the Recommended Multiple Use Alternative.

The Multiple Use Plan recommends that NYSEG make the land available to the Town of Somerset at a low cost. Final determination of the land cost is subject to negotiations between New York State Electric and Gas Corporation, and the Town Somerset or whomever else assumes park sponsorship. Rather than trying to estimate land cost, such figures were omitted from the estimated cost figure.

ESTIMATED COSTS			
PHASE I	HIGH	LOW	
1. Access Road	\$36,000	\$9,000	/1
2. Parking Area	130,000	250,000	/1
3. Swimming Areas	4,000	4,000	
4. Picnic Area	40,000	40,000	
5. Active Play Fields	42,000	14,000	/2
6. Children's Play Area	3,000	3,000	
7. Trails (.5 mile)	2,000	2,000	
8. Support Facilities	600,000	175,000	/3
Maintenance,/Storage, Toilets, Bathhouse, Utilities			
Subtotal	\$857,000	\$272,000	
Engineering and Design (10%)	85,700	27,200	
PHASE I TOTAL	\$ 942,700	\$ 299,200	/3
PHASE II	HIGH	LOW	
1. Snow Play Area	\$ 6,000	\$2,000	/4
2. Scenic Vista	2,000	2,000	
3. Trails (.75 miles)	3,000	3,000	
Sub-total	\$11,000	\$7,000	
Engineering and Design (10%)	1,100	700	
PHASE II TOTAL	\$121,100	\$7,700	
PHASE III	HIGH	LOW	
1. Snow Play Area	\$6,000	\$2,000	/4
2. Parking	52,000	10,000	/5
3. Trails (3 miles)	12,000	12,000	
Sub-total	\$70,000	\$24,000	
Engineering and Design (10%)	7,000	2,400	
PHASE III TOTAL	\$77,000	\$26,400	
TOTAL THREE PHASES	\$1,031,800	\$333,300	

1. Cost differences between high and low figures for access road and parking reflect difference between improved (high) and unimproved (low) road and parking.
2. Cost difference between high and low figures for active playfield reflect inclusion of baseball diamond for high figure.
3. Cost difference between high and low figures for support facilities reflect difference between substantial structure with locker room, work shop and offices (high room) and moderate structure for storage, toilets and utilities only.
4. Cost difference between high and low figures for snow play areas reflect substantial fill and grading (high) as opposed to equipment (e.g. snow fence) only (low). The low figure assumes that New York State Electric and Gas will construct disposal mound to accommodate snow play.
5. Cost difference between high and low figures for parking reflect difference between paving and preparation (high) and unimproved gravel (low).

Appendix B

Residential Development Concepts

APPENDIX B

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

CLUSTER RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The comprehensive plan recommends that the Town of Somerset consider the adoption of a policy whereby cluster residential or density control development would be permitted in the town's low and medium density residential areas. This alternative concept can offer several exciting advantages when compared with the typical lotting pattern in most conventional subdivision layouts. The clustering of homes in a compact service area permits the retention of large contiguous areas in their natural state. In addition, the developer has more flexibility in locating individual homesites, landscaping and vistas.

Under a cluster or development control concept the developer would be permitted to reduce the size of the building lot below the minimum zoning requirements provided that the number of homes in the subdivision is not increased and the overall density is maintained. Cluster residential development could have the following advantages for the Town of Somerset:

1. Cluster development emphasizes the preservation of open space and the development of park and recreation facilities. In this way, much of the natural vegetation and tree growth can be preserved and the town will be in a position to develop a complete park system which is functional to the town's population, and at little cost to the municipality.
2. Cluster development encourages new development schemes, which are exciting and aesthetically pleasing. It helps provide visual relief to the monotony of rows of dwellings lined up along residential streets. This could be an extremely important consideration in view of the fact that the majority of the land area within the town is level with very little relief.
3. Well designed cluster subdivisions can reduce the costs of construction and annual maintenance expenses by minimizing the lengths of streets, curbing, sewerage lines, storm drains, waterlines and other utilities. Thus the developer, the homeowner and the entire community should benefit from cluster development.
4. The clustering of homes permits significant latitude in preserving natural drainageways and special open spaces. This should serve to reduce the amount of surface runoff, to a level considerably below that which might be generated from typical subdivision developments; as well as encourage preservation of natural features.
5. Cluster development offers the long-range advantage of maintaining property values, which is a fundamental purpose of planning and zoning.

Attached examples (in Appendix D) indicate how a typical site can be developed under both conventional and density control systems. The more obvious advantages of cluster development include open space, easements and parklands, quiet residential streets and the provision of buffer areas between the cluster development and other adjacent uses of land. Though the required lot size is reduced under cluster requirements, the overall density of the entire tract would remain the same as the density prescribed under normal zoning requirements for the district in which the cluster is developed.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The concept of planned unit development is perhaps the most modern, forward-looking land development technique to be implemented in recent years. Instead of planning for the individual lot, planned unit development is a means of establishing a complete self-contained neighborhood or

community unit. The planned unit development concept includes the provision of various forms of housing (ranging from single-family dwellings to garden apartments) within the same site, as well as the provision of shopping areas and in cases of larger sites, industrial parks and necessary community facilities.

Planned unit developments, differing from the typical subdivision plan, fixes land use relationships between buildings, allocation of open space, provisions for off-street parking and many other details which may or may not include such typical zoning regulations as setback, frontage and minimum lot size. Under the planned unit concept the yardstick for residential development is generally a density of dwelling units per acre rather than lot size specifications. It is a technique which gives the developer considerable flexibility in the design of the total site.

The institution of a planned unit development ordinance could require the developer to provide the following capital needs:

1. Water and sanitary sewerage systems which would connect into the public systems serving the area. If this is not feasible, the developer would be required to provide an individual system adequate to serve the planned unit development, which would be totally acceptable and approved by the County and State Health Department.
2. A certain percentage of the total land area to be retained for permanent open space. This could be dedicated to the town or maintained by a homeowner's association.
3. Land for elementary school sites at standards to be set by the school district in cooperation with the Town of Somerset. (this is very unlikely—school is adequate to absorb likely development)
4. Fire prevention sites to serve the projected planned unit development at standards to be set by the town. (ditto—more likely to require payment to existing fire department)
5. A street system which is adequate to serve the needs of the development, including the improvement of any existing highways which may serve the development.
6. A storm drainage system of sufficient size and design to carry off and dispose of all predictable surface water runoff within the development.

Each of the improvements listed above as well as the site design of the proposed development would be subject to approval by the Planning Board, the town engineer and the Town Board. A proposal for a planned unit development should also have the benefit of review of the County as well as that of a professional planner retained by the Planning Board, at the expense of the petitioner to review and analyze the proposal in relation to the town's development regulations.

Appendix C

Land Use Conflicts

APPENDIX C

LAND USE CONFLICTS

The plan recommends that large areas of Somerset should remain as rural or in agricultural use during the planning program. Farmland and agricultural land uses contribute significantly to the economic well being of the town as well as the county and the region. These areas serve to maintain economic stability, are a desirable scenic element in the local environment and help maintain an ecological balance. It is important that farming in Somerset be supported, so as to enhance the prime agricultural soils in the community and the micro-climatic conditions in this area of the state. It is also important that these soils which have been determined to be highly valuable for agricultural production be protected for such use. Once farmland has been taken out of production for residential or other types of development, the potential for reversion of the soil for agricultural purposes is generally lost forever.

Nationwide, a major cause for the decline in farming has been residential development "leapfrogging" throughout the rural farmland areas of every community. Although residential development has actually displaced relatively little farmland in Somerset, it has established a pattern of frontage development that could have potential conflicts with farming operations in the future. The most common types of conflicts with residents that tend to curb farming operations include aerial spraying of crops, nighttime harvesting operations and increased vandalism to field crops.

Strong support of local farming and agri-business activities cannot be over emphasized. This is due to the importance of agriculture as an income generator and employer and to its role in maintaining the rural character of Somerset. Pressures on viable farmland resulting from residential sprawl should be relieved and prevented through the establishment of development regulations that support farming. Similarly, public services and other capital improvements which would induce major non-farm development in productive farm areas should not be implemented. As part of the overall program to improve the maintenance and expansion of agricultural activities, favorable taxation and assessment policies should be continued through renewal of the state's Agricultural District program.

Permitted uses in designated agricultural areas should be limited to agricultural and related uses. Non-farm residential uses should be allowed in farming areas but maintained at low densities as recommended in the comprehensive plan. Further, permits to build in such areas should be carefully reviewed to plan the locations of dwellings to minimize the disruption of agricultural operations. Developers and homebuilders within areas designated for agricultural use should be made aware that farming will have priority consideration in such areas and that non-farm residents will be expected to make adjustments to live in harmony with adjacent farm users.