
1. Introduction

The following excerpt is from the Introduction to the Town of Meredith's original Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1985.

Whether we realize it or not . . . planning is all around us. . . . In our complex social structure, [planning] is necessary and even desirable if we are to preserve our resources and assets and avoid ever greater chaos in the future.

Within Meredith, planning can establish logical patterns of land use which are based upon the needs and desires of the community. Attractive, carefully developed, orderly communities have inherently sound economic foundations. When we permit haphazard, disorganized and unattractive development, we allow the destruction of the very essence of sound community life. In effect we require those people who take pride in their property to subsidize the exploitation of their community by the few entrepreneurs whose sole interest is in securing a maximum profit from real estate development.

Protecting the rural, small-town character of the community is a primary planning goal. An individual landowner's decision to alter the use of this land by selling subdivided lots to prospective home builders or to a land speculator/developer is based on many factors. In most cases the decision to change the land use is made only after careful consideration has been given to the effects that the change will have on the environment and community. Sometimes land use decisions are not made in the best interest of the community and are not compatible with the environment. [Such] land use decisions may lead to increases in town taxes, a decline in agricultural activity, substandard housing, deterioration of the countryside scenery and generally contribute to haphazard and inefficient uses of the land.

Change is inevitable. The town does not exist in a vacuum apart from the rest of the world. It is up to local people working together to make sure the future is a pleasant and prosperous reality and not [a dream of] something that might have been.

Twenty years ago, Meredith residents saw challenges to the rural character of the town including a decrease in the number of farms, subdivision of old farms into smaller lots, and second home construction. To avoid unseemly development and to preserve the character of the town, residents turned their visions of Meredith into a concrete document – the Comprehensive Plan. One important result of the original comprehensive planning process was the enactment of subdivision regulations in 1985. These regulations guaranteed Meredith residents some voice in how their land would be used and set forth guidelines as to that use.

In the subsequent two decades, many changes have taken place. Not all of these changes are directly visible on the landscape of Meredith but many can have impacts on the quality of life of Meredith's residents. For example, new technologies have been developed in communications and computing. Will increasing numbers of people live in Meredith and 'telecommute' to jobs downstate? State and local budgets, robust in the

1990s, have taken a downward turn in the past several years. How will these changes affect Meredith? Will funding be sufficient to maintain Meredith's roads in the next ten years or will taxes need to be raised to pay for that purpose? Will the quantity and quality of drinking water in the Town stay the same or decrease in the next decade? How can we ensure efficient and cost-effective wastewater disposal, now and in the future?

This document is an update of Meredith's original Comprehensive Plan. It examines new data about the Town and its inhabitants and uses new technologies to do so. It also reflects changes in state laws that emphasize the importance of comprehensive planning. In 1995, Section 272-a of New York Town Law was rewritten to state:

Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning. The development and enactment by the town government of a town comprehensive plan which can be readily identified, and is available for use by the public, is in the best interest of the people of each town.

Similar statutes tie funding for various local projects to the adoption of a comprehensive town plan. Therefore, this updated plan is vital to guide Meredith's development and ensure continued funding for needed projects.



Photo 2. Spring Lake

Meredith's Vision:

To preserve and maintain the Town of Meredith's historic, agricultural and rural character; to guide development to meet the economic, social and recreational needs of all its residents; and to foster a unified community while maintaining the unique ambiance of the small rural town that is Meredith.