
5. Goals, Objectives, and Action Plans

The formulation of goals and objectives is an important part of the planning process. Along with the investigation of physical, social and economic elements, the goals of the community provide further directions for change. The end result is a comprehensive plan which can be implemented through a variety of administrative legal programs. As values and circumstances change, so do community goals. Thus, goal forming, planning and town action are a continuing process, adapting to changing needs and aspirations.

Town of Meredith Comprehensive Plan, 1985

The goals and objectives presented in this section, along with an action plan for achieving them, will help Meredith become the place residents hoped for in 1985, what they desire in 2005, and how they envision Meredith in the future.

In the most general sense, the Town should attempt to maintain or improve the overall quality of life for all citizens of Meredith and promote sustainable development, encourage a stable and enduring economic base, provide for the public's health and safety, and preserve the natural, cultural, and historic assets of the area. More specifically, individual areas of concern need to be addressed by creating concrete action plans that set forth a timeline for implementation, who is responsible for implementation, and the potential human and financial resources available to aid in that implementation.

To ensure that implementation occurs, it is critical that all municipal officials review the Comprehensive Plan and use it as the basis for future decision-making in Meredith.

It is also important to remember that New York is a strong home rule state. That means it is largely up to individual municipalities to regulate and manage themselves. This arrangement works effectively because local decision-makers are held directly accountable for their decisions by local residents. However, regional decision-making is on the rise. Agencies like the New York City DEP and similar organizations in the Susquehanna watershed desire increased regional management and as a result the responsibilities of managing local issues are being passed up and out of the area. Therefore, it is critical that Meredith act quickly and in the strongest ways possible to manage and protect itself by adopting regulations appropriate to guiding its future development.

5.1 – Land Use

Goal: Preserve the rural, scenic and natural resources of the community

1. Revise Meredith's subdivision regulations

Meredith's subdivision regulations, adopted in 1985, are now being revised to reflect changes in state legislation and current land use realities. Several areas to be addressed include: definitions, simple subdivisions, boundary line adjustments, driveway access standards, survey requirements, soil test requirements, the fee schedule, options for conservation subdivisions, and stormwater requirements. The Planning Board, with the Delaware County Planning Department, will provide the Town Board with revised subdivision regulations for consideration and adoption.

2. Adopt a site plan review local law

In order to maintain the rural character of the town, Meredith should consider adopting a Site Plan review local law for commercial and industrial development. A site plan is a drawing prepared to planning specifications and containing the elements set forth in the local law, which shows the arrangement, layout and design of the proposed use of a single parcel of land. Site plan review would exist independent of the current subdivision regulations and would allow the Planning Board to ensure that Meredith's rural qualities are not degraded by inappropriately designed commercial and industrial development. The Planning Board would work with the Delaware County Planning Department to apply for a Department of State Master Planning and Zoning Initiative grant to hire a consultant to prepare a draft local law. The Planning Board, with the assistance of the County Planning Department, would review the law and then present it to the Town Board for adoption.

3. Perform a natural and scenic resource inventory and analysis

An inventory of natural resources will help the Town of Meredith plan for and protect important natural features. The inventory can be comprehensive, looking at land, water, air, plants, animals, etc., or it can focus on a few important resources in the community. This information would be used by town decision-makers when reviewing subdivisions or similar projects. The plan could also serve as the basis for the next comprehensive plan update. The Planning Board, with the assistance of the County Planning Department, would look to hire and work with a consultant experienced in the preparation of these inventories to ensure that the document properly addressed issues of concern to the Town. The Town Board would adopt the Plan on its completion.

4. Establish critical environmental areas within Meredith

The Town should consider adopting critical environmental areas (CEAs) as they are described by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to better protect the area's natural resources. Development is not entirely prohibited within these critical environmental areas; rather, such delineation indicates that the Planning Board must look even harder at applications falling within these districts during the environmental review process. According to the DEC's website:

Local agencies may designate specific geographic areas within their boundaries as "Critical Environmental Areas" (CEAs). To be designated as a CEA, an area must have an exceptional or unique character with respect to one or more of the following:

- a benefit or threat to human health;
- a natural setting (e.g., fish and wildlife habitat, forest and vegetation, open space and areas of important aesthetic or scenic quality);
- agricultural, social, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, or educational values; or
- an inherent ecological, geological or hydrological sensitivity to change that may be adversely affected by any change.

Following designation, the potential impact of any Type I or Unlisted Action on the environmental characteristics of the CEA is a relevant area of environmental concern and must be evaluated in the determination of significance prepared pursuant to Section 617.7 of SEQR.

The Planning Board, in concert with the County Planning Department, would work with the Town Board and the DEC to designate critical environmental areas within Meredith.

Land Use	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Revise Subdivision Regulations	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2006	Dept. of State
Enact Site Plan Review Law	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	By 2007	Dept. of State, consultant
Perform Natural and Scenic Resource Inventory and Analysis	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2007	Dept. of State, consultant
Establish critical environmental areas	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	By 2008	Dept. of Environmental Conservation

5.2 – Infrastructure

Goal: Investigate improvements to the community infrastructure

1. Enhance code enforcement in Meredith

Code enforcement is one of the most important tools available to preserve the character of Meredith while simultaneously ensuring that the health and safety of the public are maintained. Buildings or sites that are hastily constructed out of shoddy materials often look unappealing and can also be unsafe. The code enforcement officer is the first line of defense in this process.

While anecdotal evidence suggests that code enforcement in Meredith is better than it has been in years, the Town should review its current policies regarding the CEO position and consider: new requirements for permit reporting, regular Town and Planning Board meeting attendance, offer increased funding for the position to maintain continuing educational requirements, etc.

In fact, the Town Board should consider updating Meredith's building inspector/code enforcement officer enabling legislation. The Town's current law was adopted in 1983 and amended in 1985 and does not reflect recent changes in state law.

2. Develop a Highway Management Plan

Expenditures on the 82 miles of town roads in Meredith make up by far the largest portion of the Town's annual budget. To minimize these costs, Meredith should develop a Highway Management Plan (HMP). The elements within this plan would allow better management of road expenditures and improve the quality of the water in local watersheds. The HMP process will involve the County Planning Department, the Department of Public Works and the Meredith Highway Supervisor. The following is a brief outline of the HMP process:

- a. All roads and stormwater structures within the Town are inventoried and mapped using Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools to include location, surrounding land uses, and adjacent watercourses.
- b. The condition of the road and accompanying structures is also assessed and evaluated using the following standards:
 - Driving surface - Delaware County Pavement Management/Cornell Local Roads process
 - Stormwater conveyance – Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) ratings for ditches and County Department of Public Works (DPW) ratings for basins and culverts

-
- Sight distance, signage and intersections - NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) standards
 - c. The HMP is drafted and incorporates comprehensive plan elements for a 10 year plan for local infrastructure including:
 - A prioritized list of roads to be remediated and recommendations as to how best address any substandard conditions
 - Recommends appropriate stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) for individual sites
 - Includes draft budget for implementing BMPs and addressing priority areas
 - Improve procedures for roadside maintenance

3. Develop a driveway access permit process

In order to ensure that all lots have adequate access to town roads, the Town should develop a driveway access permit to be issued by the Town Highway Superintendent. The permit and regulations for design standards for access to new and existing lots can be incorporated into a stand-alone town law and be referenced in Meredith's other land use regulations. This process will ensure all lots are safely accessible, driveways are built to specification, and culverts are properly sized to handle runoff. The Town Board and Highway Superintendent, working with both the County Planning and Public Works Departments, would be able to effectively implement such a process.

4. Update road abandonment/take-over procedures

The Town Board adopted a road policy for new roads in 1992. It establishes requirements that all newly constructed private roads and bridges meet AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) and "Donovan Plan" standards and a threshold for assessed value to trigger municipal takeover. (The Donovan Plan is a New York State Department of Transportation document describing construction of rural roads.) Land and buildings accessed and abutted by a proposed road must generate sufficient taxes to support the costs of maintaining that road.

The Town should update this regulation for several reasons. First, while the policy provides requirements for new roads, it may be better to establish threshold standards for any road takeover, new or existing. The Town might want to impose different standards for existing takeovers as opposed to new subdivision roads. Second, the Town reserves the right to require verified core samples or other testing measures to prove the road's compliance during construction and at the time of takeover. However, there are no requirements for inspections or for bonding of the construction. Third, the policy does not address road abandonment or what happens when changes in maintenance levels are needed. Finally, the policy and any changes that are made, needs to be reformulated into a local law to be most effective. The Town Board and

Highway Superintendent, working with both the County Planning and Public Works Departments, would be able to effectively implement such a law.

5. Wind tower local law

Wind towers offer a clean, efficient and increasingly cost-effective means of producing electricity, both on individual parcels and at large wind farms. In fact, according to a study of New York's wind resources funded by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the wind resource in Meredith is similar to that in areas of central New York where several large wind farms have recently been sited. As this technology becomes more widely adopted, Meredith's residents may discover that there are potentially negative impacts to wind tower placement, just as there are with cell towers. To minimize the impacts of cell towers, Meredith enacted a local law to regulate their placement in 2002. The Town should consider the same for wind towers to ensure that their siting is considerate of the health and safety of the public and local property owners. The Planning Board will work with the County Planning Department and the Department of State to prepare a draft local wind tower law for consideration by the Town Board.

6. Develop a wastewater management plan throughout the Town

Wastewater management in Meredith needs to be improved, not only in the hamlets but town-wide. As noted previously, testing has demonstrated that untreated sewage is flowing into the Ouleout Creek in Meridale. By extension, it is easy to imagine that nearby wells could also be contaminated, leading to more direct public health concerns. Given the similar small lot sizes in both East Meredith and Meredith, and the age of many septic systems throughout the town, wastewater disposal needs to be improved town-wide.

The Town should review previous work done in Meridale by the Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Department of Health-Oneonta and develop a plan for treatment systems in Meridale, East Meredith and Meredith. In 1999, the Town and SWCD applied for a mini-grant to examine potential wastewater solutions for Meridale. While that grant was not funded, such past efforts will serve as a basis for future work to determine what solutions could be feasible within Meridale, whether an onsite management solution or some sort of public treatment system.

A public treatment system does not have to be a full-fledged wastewater treatment plant. Such a system would be far too costly for the residents of the Town of Meredith: more feasible would be a package plant, a community septic system, or clustered septic systems. For the less-developed areas of the Town, there are other wastewater management alternatives which the Town should investigate. For example, the establishment of some type of town-wide septic district could allow the Town to track

the condition of the individual systems, conduct regular inspections, and ensure regular maintenance and pump-outs are performed.

Unfortunately, the solutions to wastewater problems are usually neither quick nor easy. The Town Board will have to take the lead in educating residents about the problems related to poorly treated wastewater and about the solutions that exist. The County Planning Department and Soil and Water Conservation District would be able to assist the Town in accessing both information and funding to pursue wastewater improvements in Meredith. Included in the Appendices are references to two important publications from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) pertaining to onsite wastewater management.

Infrastructure	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Update Town's code enforcement officer enabling legislation	Town Board, County Planning, Code Enforcement Officer	2006	Department of State (DOS)
Enact wind tower local law	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	2006	DOS
Develop a driveway access permit process	Town Board, Town Highway Dept., County Planning and Public Works	By 2007	
Update road abandonment and takeover policy	Town Board, Town Highway Dept., County Planning and Public Works	By 2007	
Develop a Highway Management Plan	Town Board & Highway Dept., County Public Works & County Planning	By 2008	Department of State (DOS), Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC)
Develop wastewater management plan	Town Board, County Planning, Soil & Water Conservation District	By 2015	CWC, DOS, EPA, DEC, NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

5.3 – Education and Outreach

Goal: Develop Town website

Besides local newspapers, one of the most effective tools for education and outreach to the public is the Internet. Cities and towns across the country have established a web presence in the past few years to inform residents on numerous topics of local interest. The beauty of the Internet is that it makes information available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Also, it is immediately available to people living elsewhere who have interests in Meredith including second homeowners and seasonal residents.

The website should include information such as:

- Names of Town employees and volunteers
- Contact information for pertinent officials
- Historical information about Meredith
- Town regulations and forms that are used on a regular basis
- Meeting minutes – Town Board and Planning Board
- Calendar of events, contact information, meetings, happenings
- Links to:
 - ◆ Agricultural information – Dairy Fest, 4-H
 - ◆ Environmental resources/watershed topics
 - ◆ Businesses and local tourist activities
 - ◆ Census/demographic information about the Town and its residents
 - ◆ County and other government websites

The Town Board and Planning Board will have the greatest level of responsibility in implementing the website idea. County Planning can offer assistance in finding grants to make the website a reality, probably through the use of a web design consultant.

Education and Outreach	Responsible Parties	Timeline	How-To/Funding Sources
Develop and maintain Town website	Town & Planning Boards, County Planning	By 2007	DOS, O'Connor Foundation grant, web consultant