

Rural Smart Growth

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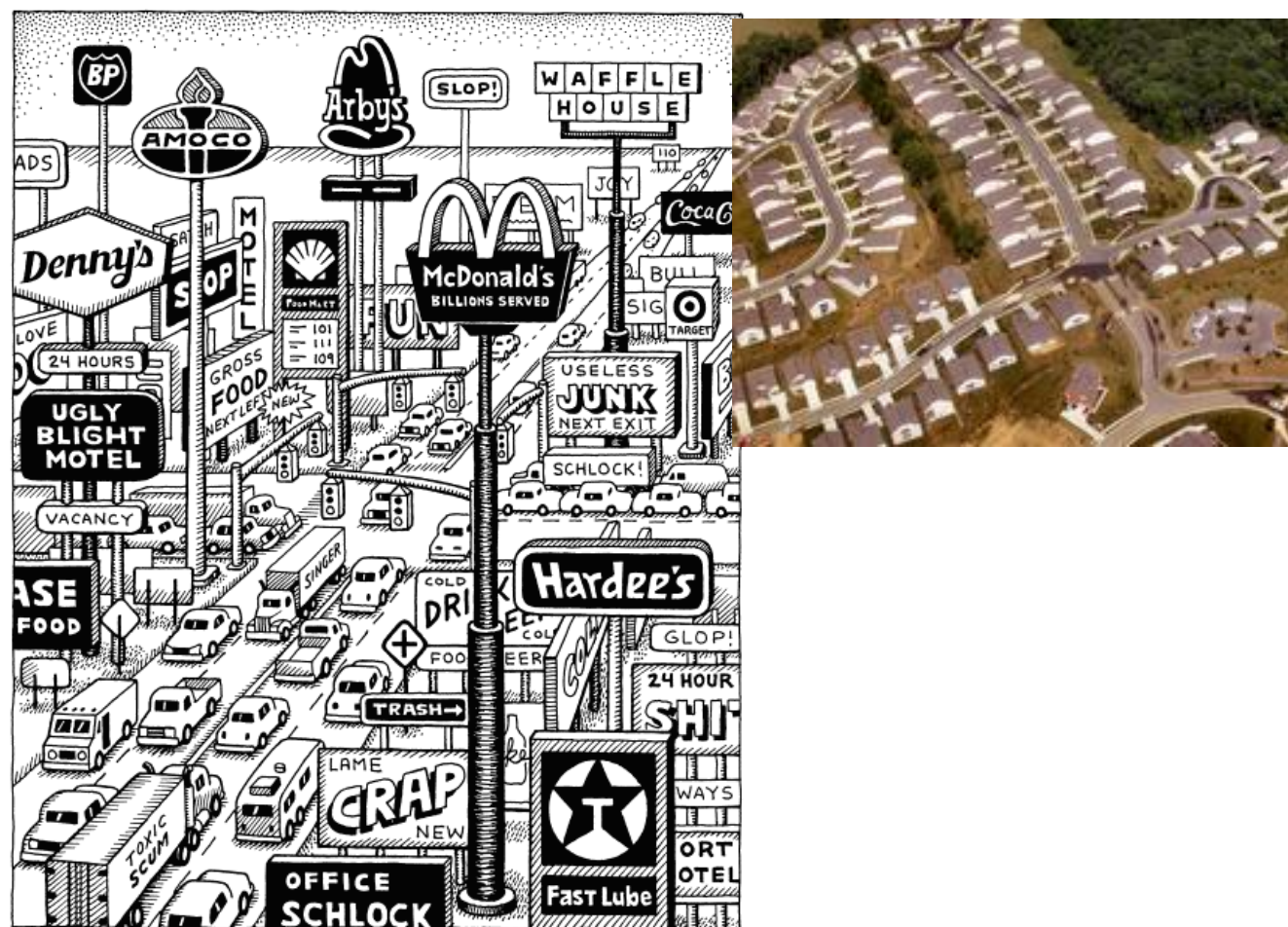
What does “Smart Growth” mean?

- Define ‘Smart’: Not dumb. Well-planned?
Sustainable?
 - Truly a subjective term.
- Define ‘Growth’: Expansion in size, activity and/or viability.
 - Is growth the goal when sustainability is such a challenge?
 - Not linear, but subject to trends.

What is Smart Growth?

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost-effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Is there such a thing as Stupid Growth?



Conventional Development Patterns



What Are the Causes of Rural Sprawl?

There are several factors that combine to create rural sprawl. Sprawl doesn't just happen. It is the result of thousands of individual decisions that are made within a framework of local government land controls and local, state, and federal tax policies and spending programs.

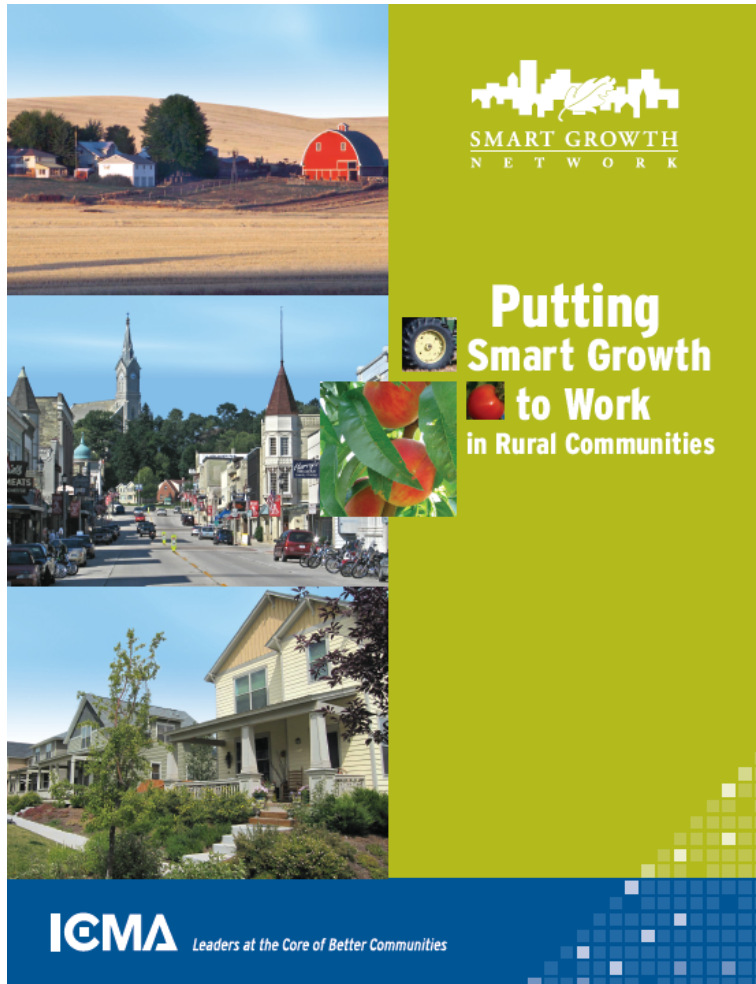
- Individual Tastes and Preferences
- Federal Mortgage Interest Deduction
- Weak Local Planning and Zoning
- State Subdivision Control Acts
- State and Federal Highway Programs
- Population Growth

What Does Smart Growth Mean for Small Communities?

- Economy, culture, transportation have changed
- Some communities growing rapidly; others are declining
- Fewer farms and farmers
- Loss of forest and other natural and productive lands
- Limited planning capacity
- Need economic diversity and an expanded set of options for where to live, where to work, and how to get around



Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities



- Lays out a framework for rural communities and small towns seeking to implement smart growth
- Set of tools, case studies, and resources

Three Broad Goals

1. Support the rural landscape
2. Help existing places thrive
3. Create great new places



1. Support the Rural Landscape

- Create an economic climate that enhances the viability of working lands and conserves natural lands is the first step
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include:
 - Right to farm policies
 - Agricultural zoning
 - Renewable energy development



2. Help Existing Places Thrive



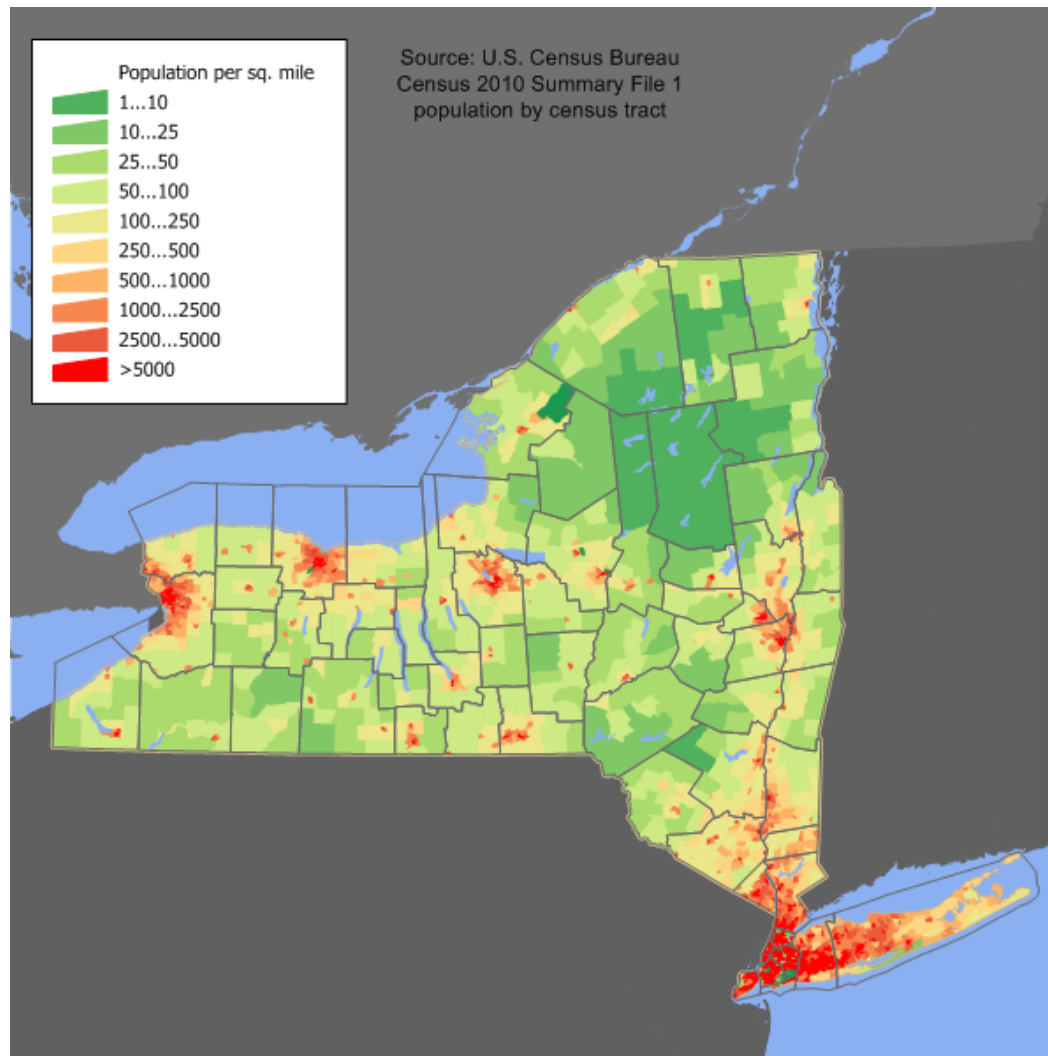
- Take care of assets and investments such as downtowns, Main streets, existing infrastructure, and places that the community values
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include
 - Fix-it-first policies
 - Rehabilitating existing structures, e.g., schools
 - Incentives to encourage infill and brownfield redevelopment
 - Updated zoning ordinances and development codes that support compact, walkable development

3. Create Great New Places

- Build vibrant, enduring neighborhoods and communities that people, especially young people, don't want to leave
- Strategies, tools, and policies that support this goal include
 - Community visioning and planning alignment
 - Designating growth areas and areas for preservation
 - Recognizing developers that build great places



Upstate New York is #1!



New York by the Numbers

- For every \$1 in tax a resident pays, they ask for or receive \$1.25 in services
- Western NY is a net importer of tax dollars...at the tune of 1 billion dollars per year!
- **Upstate New York led the nation in sprawl**
 - The total amount of urbanized land in Upstate grew by 30% between 1982 and 1997, while its population grew by only 2.6 percent, reducing the density of the built environment by 21 percent.
- **Central New York has no growth management strategy**
 - From 1982 to 1997, urbanized more than 100,000 acres even though it lost 6,500 residents, resulting in a 32% decline in development density (Brookings).

Seeing

SPRAWL

The federal Natural Resources Inventory tracks how much farm, forest and open space acreage gets developed.



INCREASE IN DEVELOPED LAND
(Thousands of acres within selected areas)

1992-1997

50 or more 25 to 50 15 to 25 15 OR LESS

Preserving Community Character



Preserving Community Character?





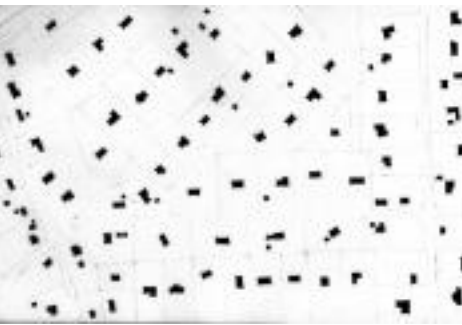
The Rural Ideal



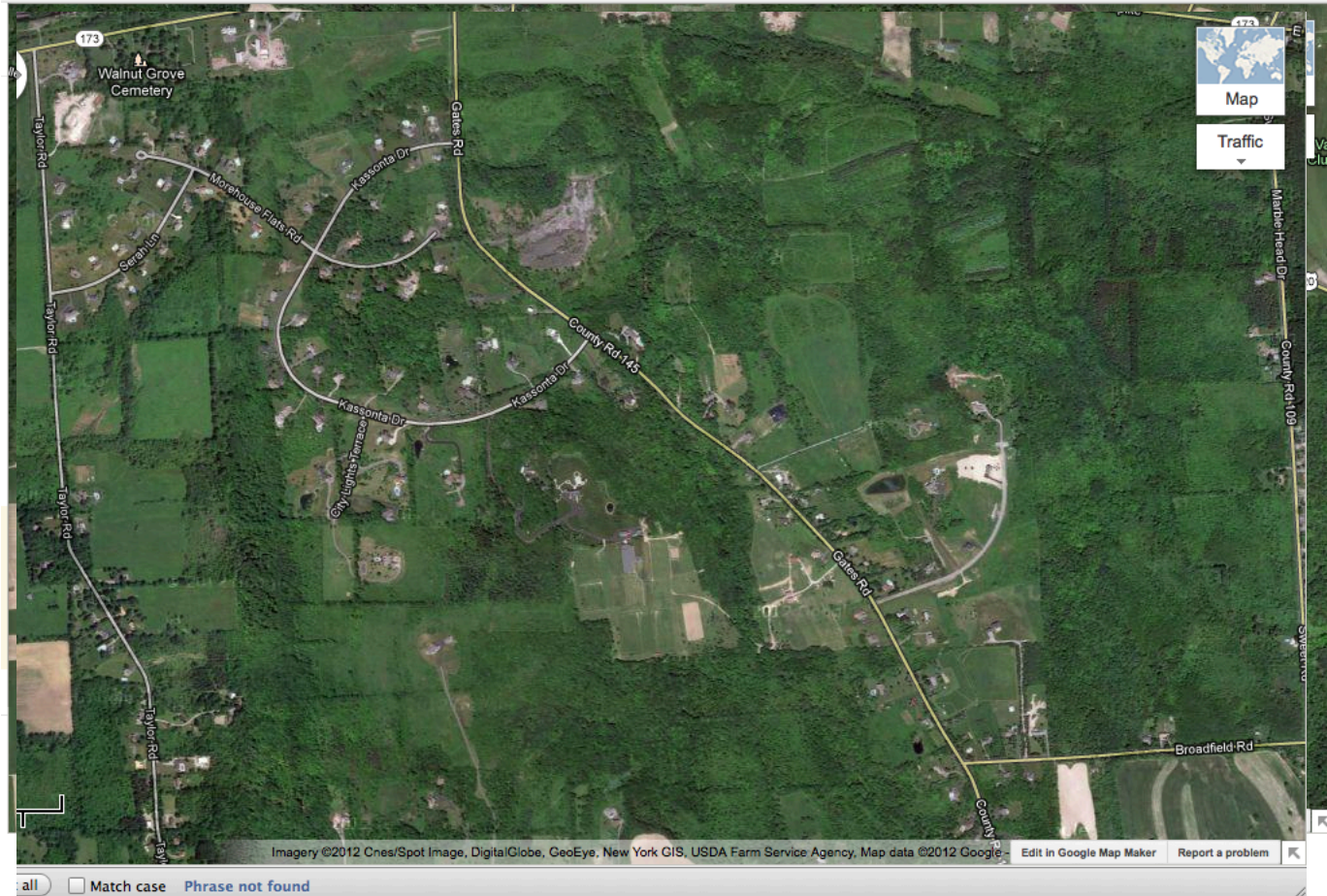
Existing Growth



Potential Growth in Sprawl

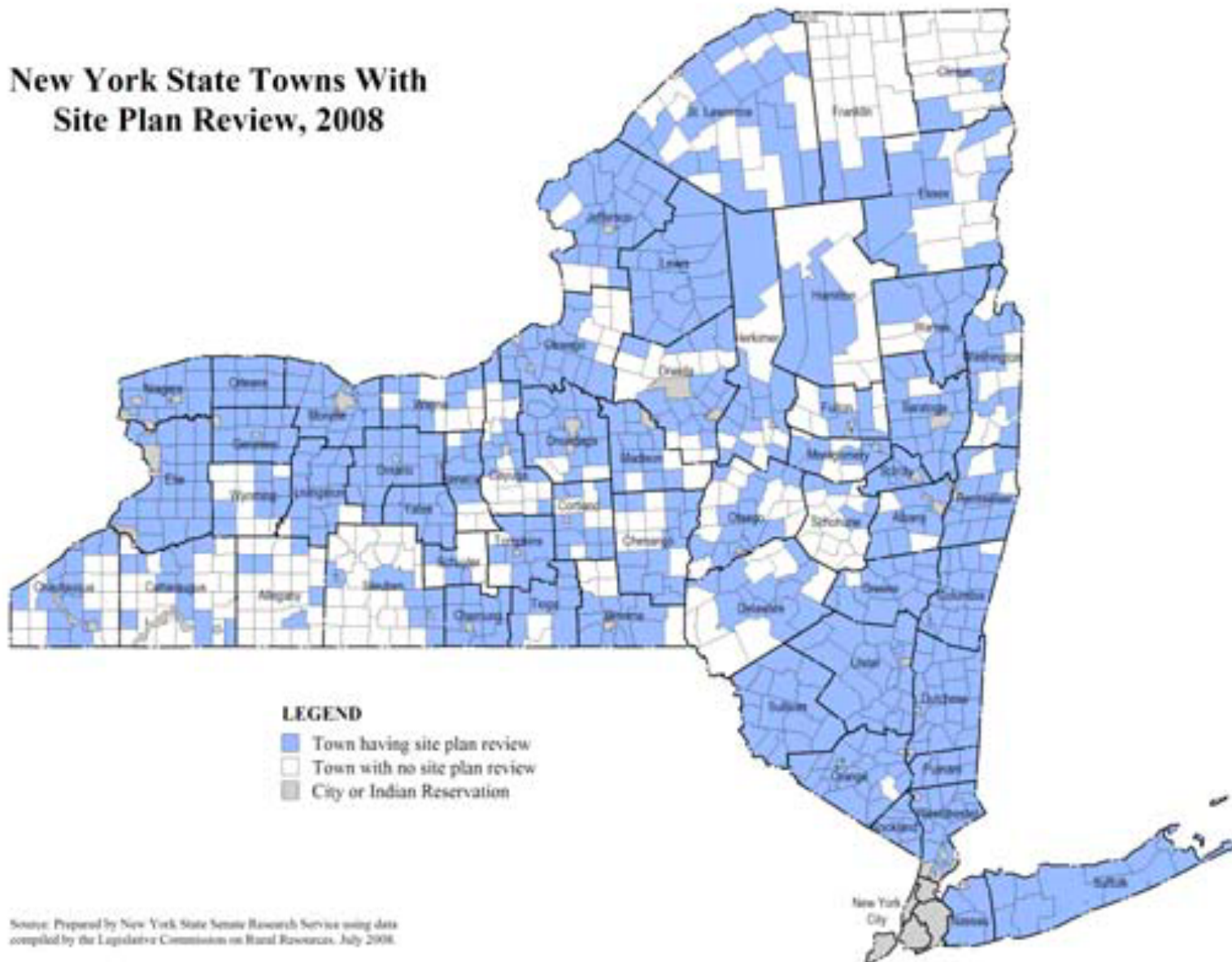


So, What is Rural Character?



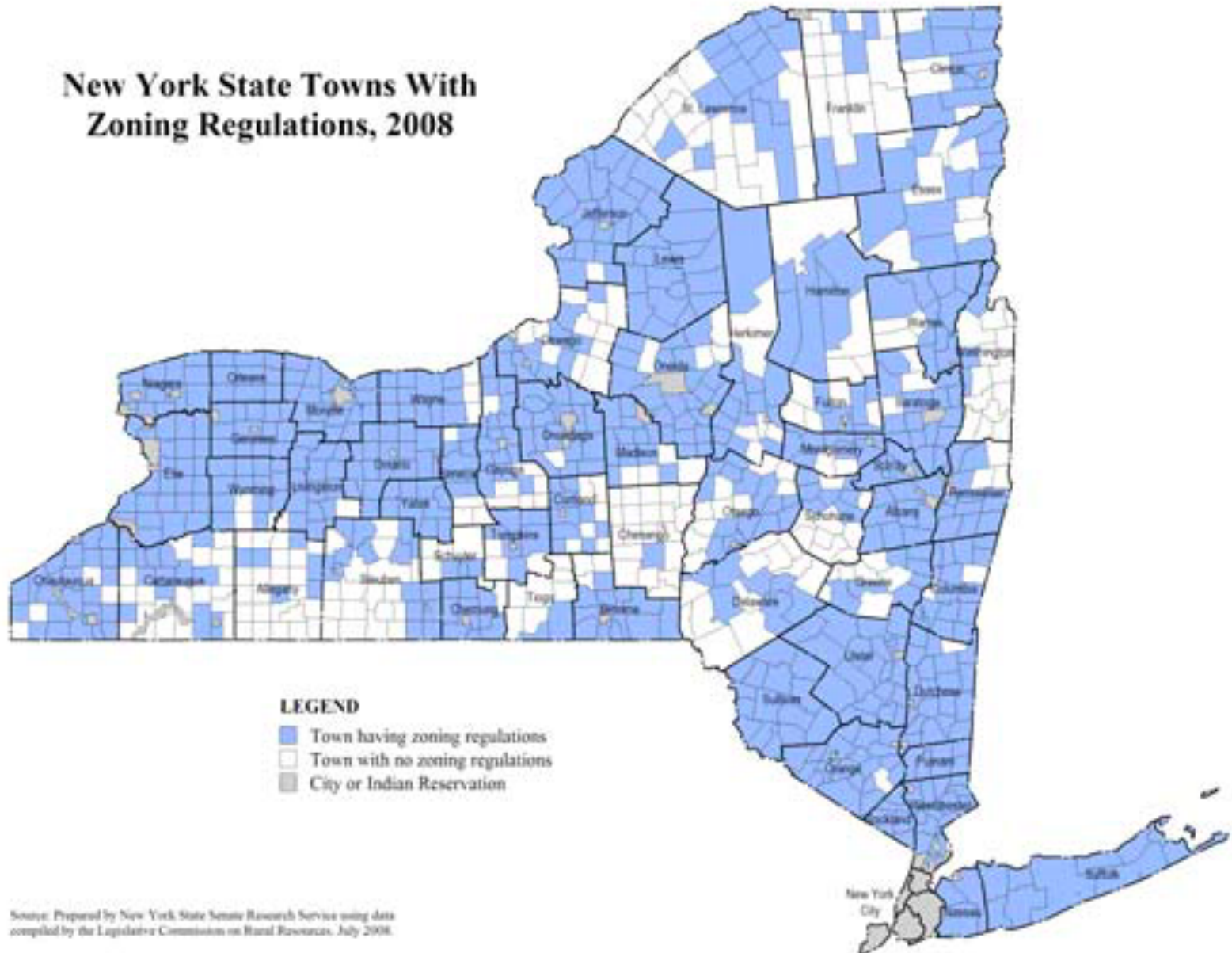
From a 2010 Plan by Notre Dame graduate Urban Design Studio for the village/town of Skaneateles

New York State Towns With Site Plan Review, 2008



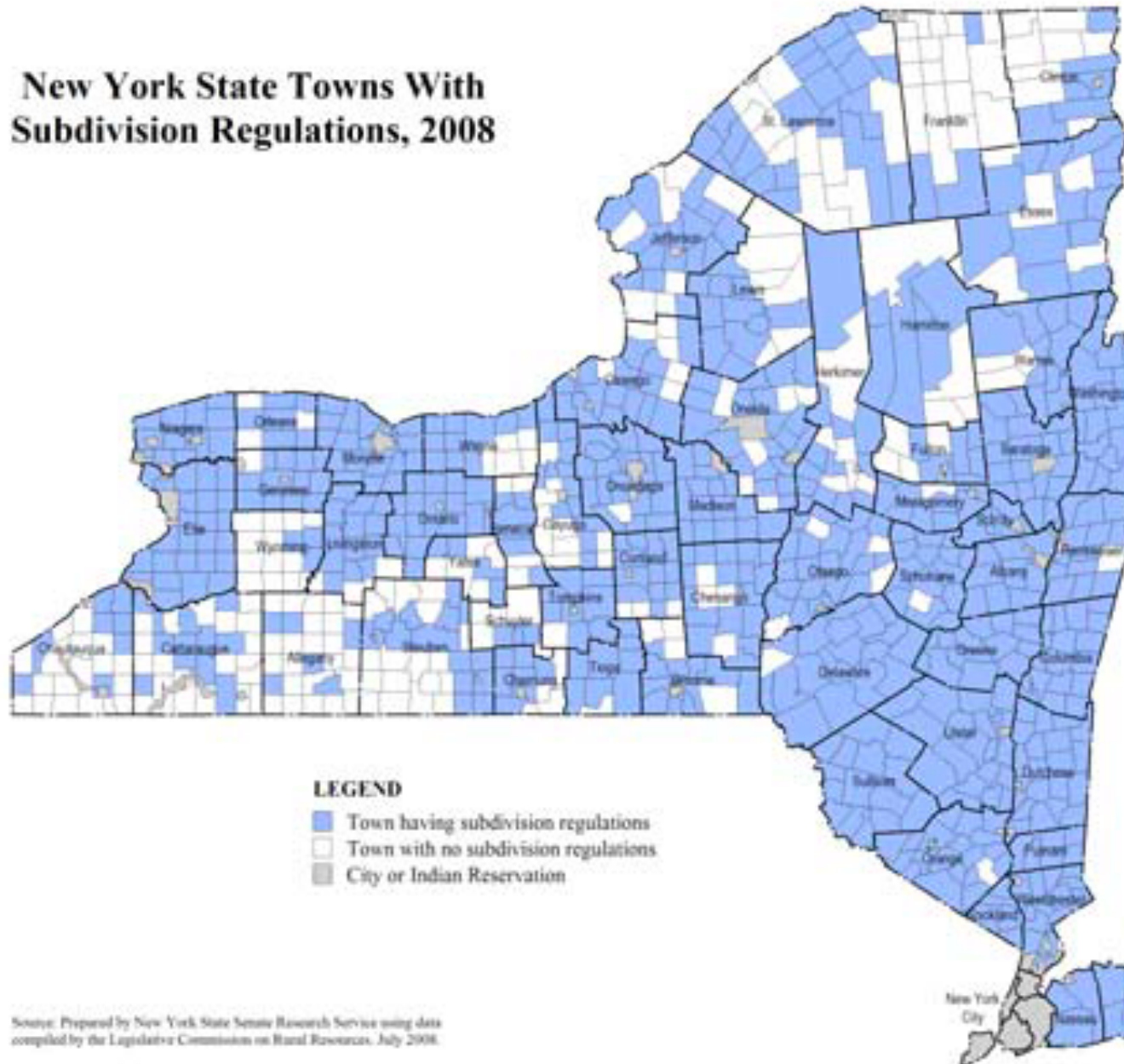
Source: Prepared by New York State Senate Research Service using data compiled by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, July 2008.

New York State Towns With Zoning Regulations, 2008



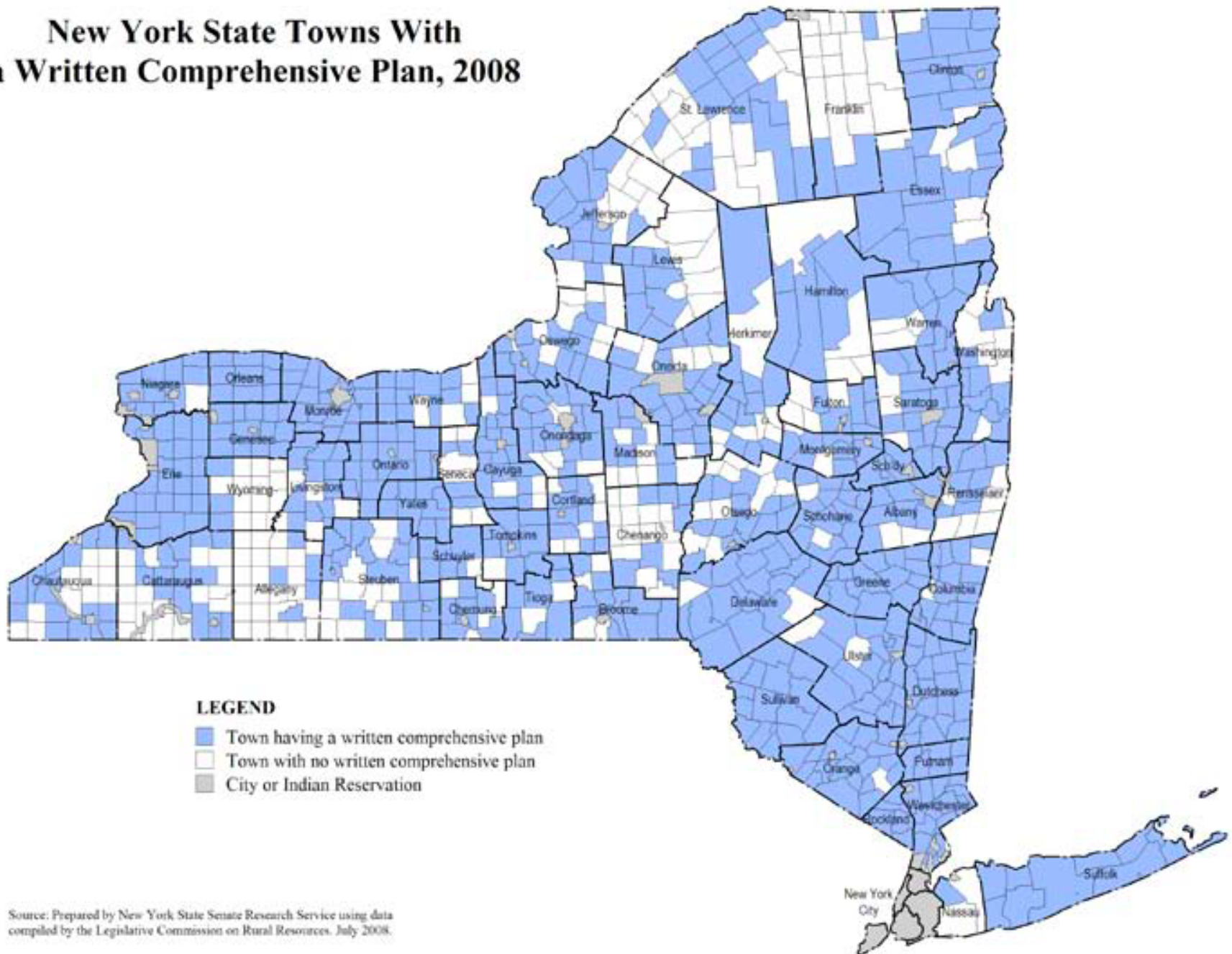
Source: Prepared by New York State Senate Research Service using data compiled by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, July 2008.

New York State Towns With Subdivision Regulations, 2008



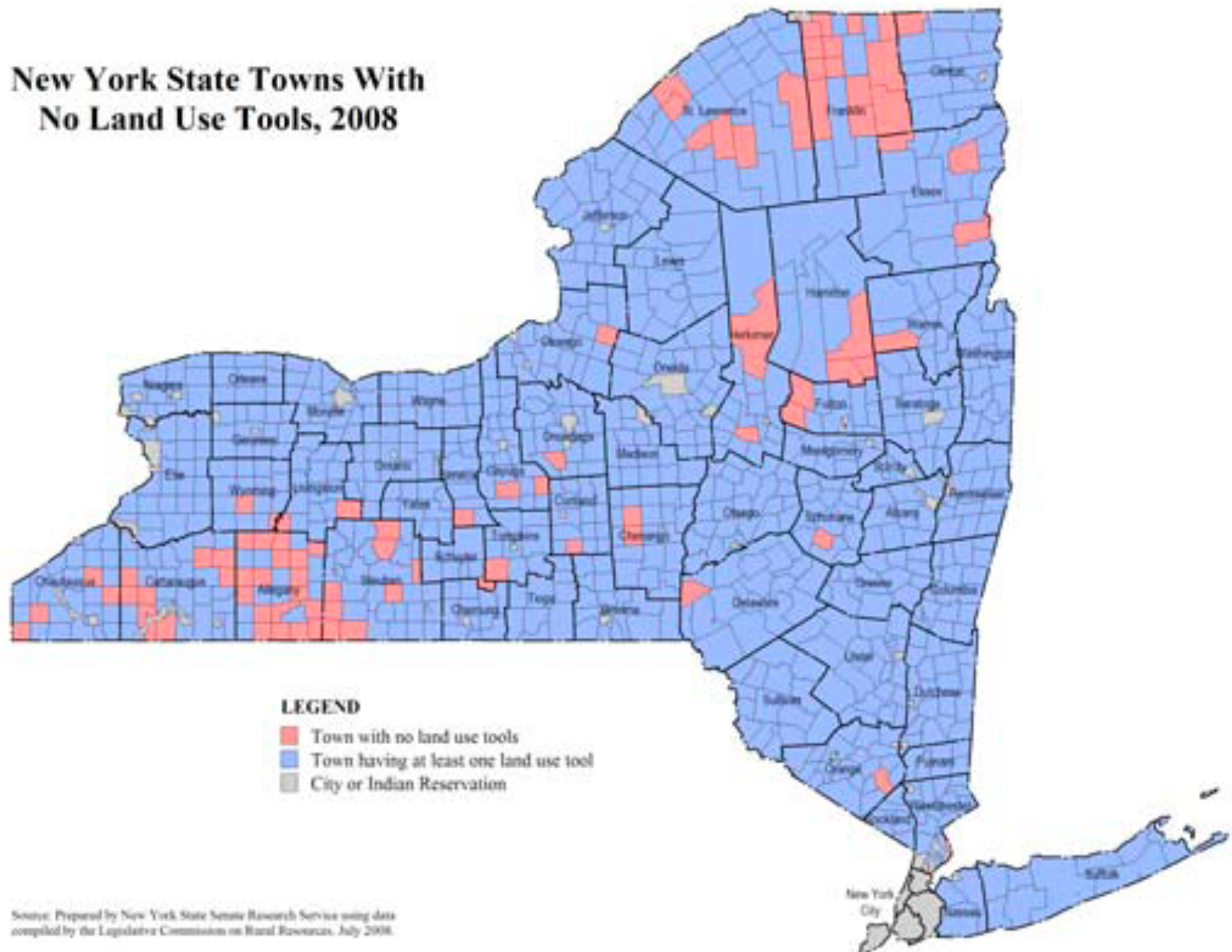
Taxpayers often favor subdivision regulations when they realize the regulations can require new developments to Provide improvements, such as roads, streets, water and sewer infrastructure, parkland, open space and even schools and other public facilities, which otherwise would be paid for by all community taxpayers.

New York State Towns With a Written Comprehensive Plan, 2008



Source: Prepared by New York State Senate Research Service using data compiled by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, July 2008.

New York State Towns With No Land Use Tools, 2008



What can you do?

- Do you have a Written Comprehensive Plan?
- Site Plan Review?
- Subdivision/zoning regulations?
- Planning/zoning Board or Commission?
- Farmland Protection Board? Plan?
- Right-to-Farm Community?





Does your community have a voice in who buys this and what they do with it? Have you given them the tools?



All of these tools!

- — Empire Zones
- — business improvement districts
- — incentive zoning
- — overlay zoning
- — cluster development
- — planned unit development
- — transfer of development rights
- — purchase of development rights
- — conservation overlay districts
- — historic review/overlay
- — landmark preservation
- — architectural review
- — sign ordinances
- — design review
- — flood plain restrictions
- — erosion control
- — solid waste management
- — tree preservation
- — water and sewer ordinances
- — campsite regulations
- — landscape preservation
- — wetlands preservation
- — scenic easements
- — conservation easements
- — adult entertainment
- — local waterfront revitalization program
- — harbor overlay district

And more tools!

- — open space regulations
- — mobile home park ordinances
- — junkyard ordinances
- — telecommunications regulations
- — wind farm ordinances
- — watershed protections
- — performance zoning
- — right-to-farm ordinances
- — mining regulations
- — mixed use (planned) development
- — highway access permits
- — affordable housing development
- — tax increment financing

IN the 5-county CNY region?

Call Jean Gleisner at
CNYRPDB: 472-8276
x212

jgleisner@cnyrpdb.org

The major components of a Comprehensive Plan include:

- An inventory and assessment of community history, cultural and environmental resources, and trends in population, housing, economics, land use, and regional influences;
- The identification of the community's vision for the future;
- A listing of goals and recommendations for achieving the community's vision for housing, public facilities, education, public safety, cultural and recreational resources, economic development, and environmental protection
- A section on Adopting and Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

A Peek Inside a Comprehensive Plan

- **Introduction**
- **Public Participation**
- **Plan Structure**
- **Chapter 1 – Goals and Recommendations**
- Community Vision Statement
- Agriculture and Open Space
- Land Use Regulation
- Environmental Stewardship and Water Quality Protection
- Public Utilities and Community Services
- Economic Development and Cultural Heritage
- Recreation and Tourism
- **Chapter 2 – Adopting and Implementing the Plan**
- Adopting the Comprehensive Plan
- Review and Maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan
- Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

A quick view of Comprehensive Planning Process

- Planning Board set-up a Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) comprised of volunteer community members
- CPC trained by county planning, regional planning board or consultant on comprehensive planning
- CPC meets regularly (monthly, bi-monthly)
- Host a series of community visioning meetings to garner support but also to better understand community desires and interests. This is what shapes the plan!
- Often a 3-5 year process

New York Public Infrastructure Policy Act

- Enacted in August 2010
- requires state infrastructure funding to be consistent with smart growth principles, with priority given to existing infrastructure and projects which are consistent with local governments' plans for development.
- We're seeing this in CFA application requirements

Land Bank Act

- In 2011, The NYS Land Banks Act was passed allowing for the creation of 10 land banks in NYS. The law allows tax foreclosing governmental units the option to create an entity with proven tools to deal with vacant and abandoned
- Land Banks have the ability to clear titles and forgive back taxes, expediting the process of bringing properties in New York back to market. Properties can be held and combined into larger tracts to make development more attractive for investors.
- Giving more control to local governments means that strategies can be tailored to meet the needs of communities with different conditions, needs and goals.

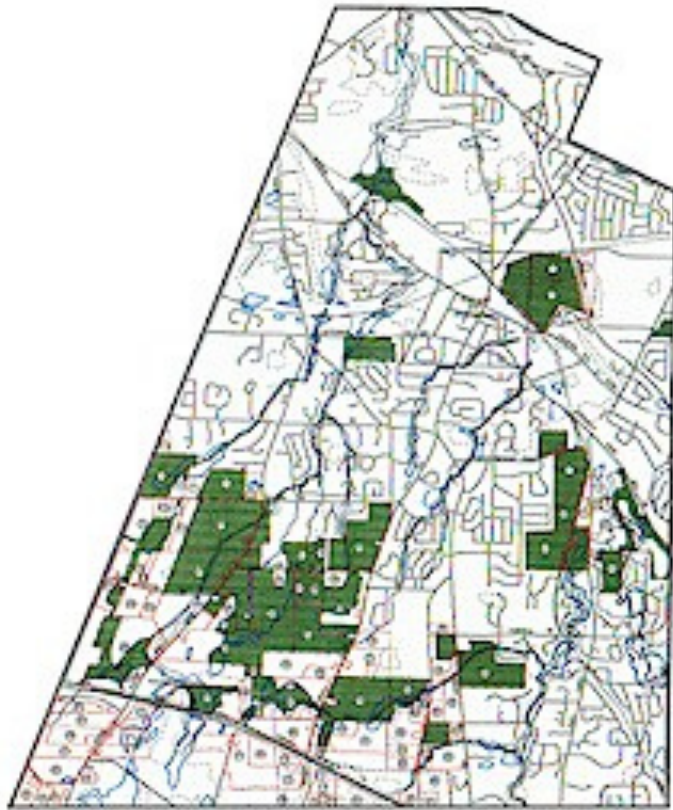
Complete Streets Act

- Significant support from AARP, NYS Office of the Aging, etc.
- The NYS Office for the Aging has an initiative called *LivableNY*... “to advance the efforts of the State's communities to implement model housing, transit, and mobility alternatives, and to institute new and innovative building and community designs, energy ideas, and creative planning and zoning strategies.”
- Furthermore, “The products and activities of *Livable New York* are intended to help local leaders, residents, officials, and organizations come together to create neighborhoods that reflect the evolving needs and preferences of all their residents.”
- Local Complete Streets work in: Buffalo, Erie County, Alfred, Angelica, Cuba, Gowanda, Hinsdale, Kingston, Malone, Portville, Salamanca, Savannah, Syracuse, Fort Edward, Lake George and in Rochester.

Under Article 25-AAA of the state Agriculture and Markets Law, the Commissioner is authorized to administer two matching grant programs focused on farmland protection.

- One assists county governments in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans to maintain the economic viability of the State's agricultural industry and its supporting land base;
- the other assists local governments in implementing their farmland protection plans and has focused on preserving the land base by purchasing the development rights on farms using a legal document called a conservation easement. The purchase of development rights (PDR) option is especially helpful in areas that have experienced greatly increased land values because of suburbanization or other factors.
- State farmland protection planning assistance grants up to \$50,000 each are awarded on a rolling basis each year to counties that formally apply. Since its inception, over \$2 million has been awarded to 48 counties across the state. Nearly \$80 million has been allocated under the PDR program to protect approximately 36,000 acres on 200 farms in 18 counties.

Town of Pittsford



This "best practice" involved Pittsford buying development right on key parcels of working farmland and open space remaining in the town. To justify the taxpayer-funded project, the Town did a fiscal impact analysis to show that preserving the land would save the taxpayers significant sums of money over time.

The Great Cul De Sac Conundrum

Virginia expects to relieve its strained infrastructure budget: through streets are more efficient and cheaper to maintain, and they take pressure off arterial roads that otherwise need to be widened. “It’s about connecting land-use and transportation planning and restricting wasteful and unplanned development.” –Virginia Gov. Kaine (2009)















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30

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Further information

- <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>
- www.epa.gov/smartgrowth
 - Melissa Kramer
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 - Kramer.Melissa@epamail.epa.gov
- <http://smartgrowth.org/>
- <http://smartgrowthny.org>
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