

Onondaga County

New York



Location: Onondaga County, New York
Type: Regional Plan
Year Design: 1999
Status: Under Permitting
Size: 512,000 Acres
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The goal of creating an effective regional plan for the County presented a distinct challenge: to control the growth of an area in which political leadership is almost entirely decentralized to local governments. Recognizing that the County could do little to enforce a large-scale plan, the decision was made to focus instead on creating a kit of tools that individual municipalities could use at their own discretion, tools that would sell themselves on their own merits.



These tools can be grouped into 3 categories: educating tools, regulating tools, and design tools. The educating tools include a Traditional Neighborhood Development Guideline and a County Transportation Policy, both of which instruct municipalities on the distinctions between current practice and healthy neighborhood planning principles. The regulating tools focus upon the Traditional Neighborhood Development Ordinance, which individual governments can pass as an optional but incentivized alternative to their conventional land-use regulations. The design tools consist of a series of case studies – “pilot projects” – representing the typical growth challenges facing the County’s municipalities. These include the revitalization of an urban neighborhood, the development of a brownfield, the expansion of a village, the growth of a hamlet, the reconstruction of a defunct shopping mall into a town center, the redesign of a strip shopping center, and the healing of a village damaged by highway traffic. In each of these projects, a strategy is proposed that could be applied to the site under study or to any number of similar sites within the County.



A final pilot project, perhaps most important, is a regional plan for the town of Camillus, showing how through the transfer of development rights, the town could focus its growth and preserve its farms and viewsheds. This model provides a simple technique that each of the County’s eighteen towns can use to complete its own such plan. Many have expressed a desire to do so.