

## Intro to Regulatory Tools

### Comprehensive Planning

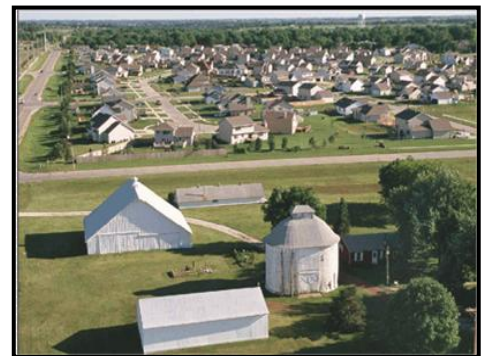
A municipality's comprehensive plan provides the framework and policy direction for land use decisions. The comprehensive plan sets the community's goals and recommended actions for sustaining and improving its citizens' quality of life through land use. The comprehensive plan is the basis for the community's zoning and other land use ordinances. Therefore development and adoption of the comprehensive plan should precede the adoption of land use regulations. The comprehensive plan also serves as the foundation for open-space planning and goal setting.



An excellent resource for communities undertaking comprehensive planning is *A Practical Guide to Comprehensive Planning* written by Cori Fay Traub and David Church and published by The New York Planning Federation ([www.nypf.org](http://www.nypf.org)).

### Land Use Regulations and Zoning

NYS General Municipal Law gives municipalities the power to regulate land use through zoning. The intent of zoning is to protect the character, harmony and stability of residential and business areas. Zoning separates incompatible types of land uses geographically, allowing certain types of uses and development and prohibiting others. Zoning divides the municipality into districts and regulates: type of buildings and structures, density and land use for each area.



Traditional zoning ordinances are necessary but alone are not sufficient for protecting sensitive areas. Zoning is limited as a means to encourage development patterns that are beneficial or desirable to the community. Further, zoning regulations may not always result in the desired outcome. For example, lowering housing density through increased lot size may do little to stem the loss of valuable agricultural, scenic, forested and other lands. The following fact sheets explain special zoning tools that provide additional protection of sensitive areas.