

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
BEDFORD, NEW YORK**

**Draft Compiled for
Town Board Review and
SEQR Process**

**Planning Consultants
Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart, Inc.**

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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TOWN OF BEDFORD, NEW YORK

John R. Dinin, Supervisor
Town of Bedford

Jeffrey Osterman, Director of Planning,
Building and Related Services

Comprehensive Plan Committee:

Liz Bailey
Christopher Burdick
Don Coe
John Fry
Abby Gosnell
Joe Graham
Oliver Hazard
Alexia Jurschak

Richard Lawrence
Drew Marchiano
Brian McCabe
Lee Roberts
Lisa Spano
Muriel D. Ten Dyke
Betty Wamsley
Peter Wolle

Other Participants:

Susan Allport, Deirdre Courtney-Batson, Donovan Craven, Peter Ehrlich, John Friedler, Ann McDuffie, Hugh McMillan, Peter Michaelis, Jane Schewior, Simon Skolnik, Shelley Smith, Dewee Yaeger and other members of Bedford's boards, public, and press.

Buckhurst Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. (BFJ)

Planning Consultants:

Frank Fish, FAICP, Partner-in-Charge

Georges Jacquemart, PE, Principal, Transportation

Harlan Sexton, AICP, Associate, Project Manager

Alissa Black and Martina Hoppe, Planners

Martin B. Torre, Designer

Photography: Harlan Sexton, Martina Hoppe, Richard Ten Dyke

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Chapter 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Background

Planning Process

In May 1999, Bedford began updating its 1988 Town Development Plan with a 16-member volunteer Comprehensive Plan Committee working with the town's director of planning. The committee members represented all quarters of the town, the three hamlets, the Town Board, and the Planning Board. Within a year, the committee had produced drafts of the open space and residential development chapters, in response to the greatest community concerns about development and conservation in the town. In July 2000, the planning firm Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart, Inc. began work with the committee, the town supervisor, and director of planning to complete the plan. Over the next two years, the group met on a nearly monthly basis, in meetings that were open to the public and the press, and were the subject of published Public Notices. Over the course of the planning process, the meetings were attended by members of the general public and representatives of the Bedford Coalition, Blue Mountain Housing Group, volunteer fire companies, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Board, town attorney Joel Sachs, planning consultant and professor John Nolon, and the town assessor and former supervisor. The planning process also involved interviews with key people in the community, the school districts superintendents, one public workshop (held at the West Patent Elementary School), and two public hearings.

Legal Requirements

State law governing planning and zoning in towns does not require that a town prepare a comprehensive plan, although this is encouraged. If a town chooses to write a comprehensive plan, the Town Board can prepare the document and manage the planning process, as it is the board that adopts the plan by resolution, or can assign this role to the Planning Board or a special board or committee. Bedford chose to have a specially created Comprehensive Plan Committee prepare the plan. Under state law, this committee held a public hearing on the plan before discharging the plan to the Town Board for its action. Before the Town Board adopted the comprehensive plan, the plan was reviewed under State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEORA) requirements and was the subject of a second public hearing. The public hearing held by the Town Board served both SEOR and town law requirements for a public hearing on a municipal comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan was the subject of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), with the Town Board as lead agency. The GEIS that found that implementation of the plan would not create adverse environmental impacts.

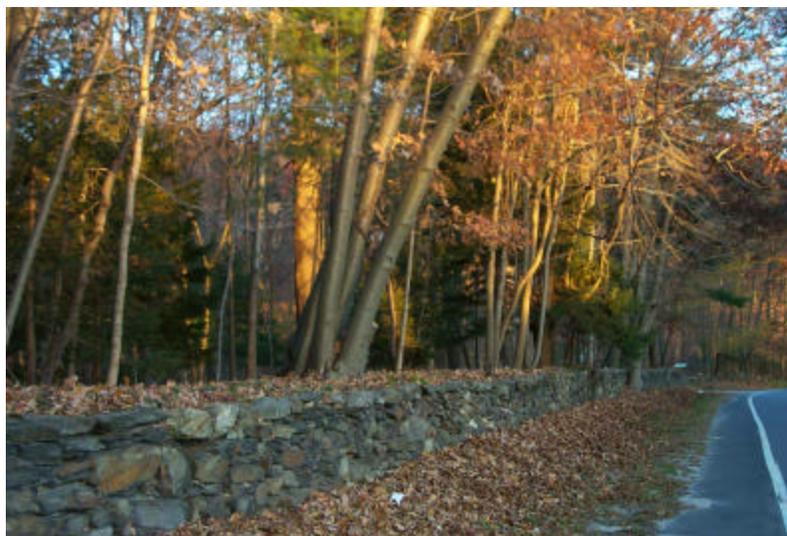
Finally, state law makes three other requirements of towns with regard to comprehensive planning. First, Bedford referred the proposed comprehensive plan to the County Planning Board for its review and recommendation, under Section 239-m of General Municipal Law. Second, Bedford intends to conform to the requirement in Section 272-a.11 of Town Law that if a town

has an adopted comprehensive plan, all town land use regulations must be in accordance with the plan and all capital projects plans undertaken by other governmental agencies must take the plan into consideration. Finally, state law (Section 272-1.10 of Town Law) requires that the comprehensive plan provide the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed: Bedford intends to review and update its plan every ten years.

1.2 Purpose of the Plan

The Town of Bedford has had a long history of planning for its future. As early as 1949, the town joined with Pound Ridge, Lewisboro, North Castle, Somers and Mount Kisco in a joint planning program. In 1960, the Planning Board adopted Bedford's first full-scale comprehensive plan. That document established the general density patterns that have shaped the town's growth since. The original comprehensive plan was completely revised in 1972. Although the basic land use patterns remained from the 1960 plan, many specific changes were made to land use policies. The dramatic population increases predicted earlier did not occur, but the town has faced other planning concerns beginning in the 1980s. The 1988 plan addressed loss of rural character, decreased vitality in the hamlets, increased housing values, traffic congestion, and the need for public investment in infrastructure. While many of the 1988 recommendations were implemented, continued growth in population and housing has kept these issues unresolved.

So that Bedford may continue to plan for changing land use issues and community needs, the town has again updated and revised its municipal development and conservation guide with this Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this plan is to provide the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and all others concerned with Bedford with a basic framework for the use and protection of land, population distribution, traffic circulation, and capital investment within Bedford. The plan is not a rigid blueprint, but a general guide to town growth and the preservation of those elements that constitute Bedford's character. Such a document must be open to refinement and improvement where and when necessary, to reflect new conditions and problems, or take account of changing goals and objectives. However, the plan should be modified only after thorough study indicates that such changes are in Bedford's long range interest.



It is important to recognize that, by itself, the comprehensive plan will accomplish nothing. It is similar to a road map: it must be followed carefully and intelligently in order to reach the desired mileposts of accomplishment, such as the construction of affordable housing units, amended zoning, acquisition of open space parcels, the construction of public sewer systems, and the improvement of congested roads. Bedford's future character will be the composite result of individual actions by the Town Board, Planning Board, other town agencies and officials, the local boards of education, and New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Westchester County, New York State and federal agencies, as well as actions by private individuals and organizations. To the extent that these activities follow the recommendations of this comprehensive plan, the most desirable development of Bedford as now foreseen will take place.

1.3 Planning Principles

The land use planning principles guiding this plan and its recommendations are listed below. These principles protect the good relationship between Bedford's quality of life and its development patterns. Bedford intends to direct development pressures into the existing discrete geographic areas that have the infrastructure to support development; these are the hamlets of Katonah, Bedford Hills, and Bedford Village. The hamlets are the locus for compact, mixed, and integrated land uses supported by public utilities and transportation. The houses are on small lots compared to the outlying areas. The hamlets are walkable and thereby reduce the need for car travel for all household needs, and have businesses, libraries, and community facilities such as the Memorial Parks in close proximity to the many residences. Outside the hamlets, Bedford has rural and low density housing that is interspersed with a growing acreage of land under conservation. These areas outside the hamlets will remain at low development densities with designated areas for open space conservation, recreation, and environmental protection.

Open Space and Natural Environment. Permanent preservation of the natural environment shall receive the highest priority in the overall planning of future development in Bedford. Special attention shall be given to establishing the greenbelt system, an interconnected walking trail system, and walking and horseback riding paths. There are four primary methods for creating open space. New subdivision development and the development of lots with environmentally sensitive lands will be expected to yield additional protected or preserved land. Property owners will continue to be encouraged to place development restrictions or conservation easements on their land. Over the next years, Bedford will preserve open space using the funds raised by the 2000 Special Levy. Further, Bedford will continue to emphasize the protection of its natural environment, including surface and ground water, hillsides and ridgelines, and wetlands, through strict regulations and the construction of public sewers.

Residential Development. Bedford shall continue as a predominantly residential community of unique character with significant areas of open space, a range of housing densities based on its established settlement pattern, and a limited amount of lower cost housing types, including accessory apartments, multi-family housing, and affordable housing. Bedford is committed to providing a range of housing that creates housing opportunities and choices for various household types, sizes, and incomes. New housing shall fit the scale of its surroundings, through new floor area ratio controls and/or an architectural review board.

Business Development. The existing business districts in the hamlets of Katonah, Bedford Hills, and Bedford Village shall be walkable, function efficiently and attractively within their existing boundaries, and shall benefit from the creation of public sewer systems. No new centers will be created. However, additional retail development on infill lots on Route 117 and Route 22 is expected within the existing commercial district boundaries, and will be subject to strict appearance and access controls. Major research and executive office uses are not allowed in Bedford. Light industrial, storage, and warehousing uses shall continue to be permitted in the existing relevant districts and subject to stringent aquifer protection regulations.

Community Services and Facilities. Water supply and sewage disposal systems should be created to solve existing pollution problems in the hamlets and meet the needs of the town's existing and future population, based on existing zoning. With regard to community services such as fire protection, the town shall act at the earliest possible opportunity when expansion is required, in order to minimize acquisition costs and ensure the selection of the best available sites.

Transportation. The existing system of through, collector, and local roads shall be made to function as efficiently as possible and without the construction of new through roads. Safety, speed, and congestion improvements shall be made as necessary and with regard for community appearance and character. New local roads shall be coordinated with the through and collector road system in such a manner as to provide both for the convenient circulation of local traffic and to discourage use by through traffic. Residential lots shall front on and have access to local roads wherever possible to minimize unnecessary driveway entrances on through and collector roads. The town shall cooperate with property owners on dirt, fragile, and scenic roads to protect the historic character of these roads.

Community Appearance and Historic Preservation. Much of Bedford's beauty derives from its history: its hamlets that anchor rural outlying areas, its dirt roads and stone walls, and its acclaimed historic structures and more modest reminders of a farming past. While absorbing continued population and housing growth, Bedford must continue to shape this growth so that its attractiveness remains deep-rooted and community-wide, rather than reduced to remnants. Thus, in addition to maintaining the basic land use pattern of walkable hamlets surrounded by low density development, the town will strengthen or create local laws on historic and special character districts, landmarks, demolition, and stone walls.