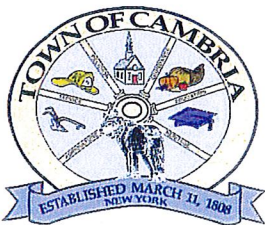
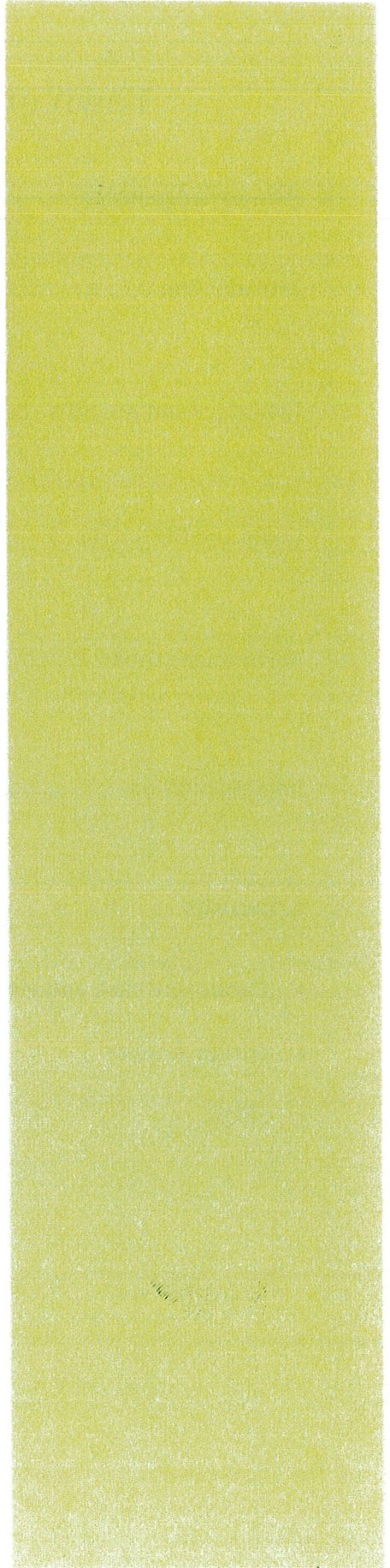


TOWN OF CAMBRIA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Adopted February 12, 2015



Town of Cambria Comprehensive Plan

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Cambria Town Board recognized the need to update the 1997 Comprehensive Plan and appointed a committee to accomplish the task. Building on a strong response, 20%, to a Town-Wide survey, the Committee worked diligently over an eighteen-month period to achieve its goal. Successful completion of the update was made possible through the efforts of the following individuals:

Cambria Comprehensive Plan Committee

Wright H. Ellis, Supervisor

Joseph Ohol, Councilman

William J. Amacher, Planning Board Chairman

John W. Phillips, Planning Board member

Michael D. Sieczkowski, Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman

James P. McCann, Building Inspector

Cambria Town Board

Wright H. Ellis - Supervisor

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Special Thanks for Their Valuable Contributions

Cambria Planning Board

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And the Citizens and Public Officials of the Town of Cambria

INTRODUCTION

Reasons for Preparing a Comprehensive Plan

New York State Town Law §272-a authorizes Towns to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Plan. The legislation notes:

“Among the most important powers and duties granted . . . to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens.”

The legislation acknowledges the importance of local governments in the enhancement, growth and development of the state. It notes that each municipality has its own resources and conditions to be considered, and highlights the importance of public input in developing the “optimum town comprehensive plan.” The legislation further notes “The development and enactment by the town government of a town comprehensive plan which can be readily identified, and is available for use by the public, is in the best interest of the people of each town.”

The Town of Cambria had adopted a comprehensive plan in 1965. In 1997, recognizing that conditions had changed over the past 30 years, the Town prepared an Update to the 1965 Plan. The purpose of the 1997 Plan was explicitly to:

- “Update, though not rewrite” the earlier document.
- “Respond to planning problems” facing the community, and
- “Provide new insight, ideas and planning techniques for resolving changes in the use of land, zoning problems and shifts in values and attitudes toward the environment in general.”

In 2013, the Town decided to revisit its Comprehensive Plan. The Town was interested in coordinating its activities more with regional planning trends, particularly after the establishment of the State’s Regional Economic Development Councils. The Town also recognized that new issues had emerged that were not necessarily addressed in the existing comprehensive plan. Accordingly, this update is intended to take a fresh look at issues relating to rural character,

growth and economic development opportunities for the Town. Prepared cooperatively with input from the citizens of the community, it is designed to guide the Town of Cambria into the future.

There are many concrete benefits of a Comprehensive Plan. Municipalities are given the power to regulate land uses through zoning, but these decisions should be based on sound planning principles and a rational basis. The process of developing a Comprehensive Plan helps establish a consensus on what the community's vision for the future is, which helps guide decisions on how to regulate growth and development.

A Comprehensive Plan also establishes goals and objectives that provide guidance for other types of decision making. Local officials can evaluate policies, projects and practices based on whether they are consistent with the stated goals of the Town. The Plan also communicates the Town's preferences and priorities to other levels of government. All County, State or Federal governmental agencies that propose capital projects that would affect lands in the Town must take the Comprehensive Plan into consideration as part of their own decision-making processes. Having a clear statement of local vision strengthens the local input into these decisions, particularly after the passage of the New York State Smart Growth Act, which sets general policy guidelines that may or may not fit the local conditions.

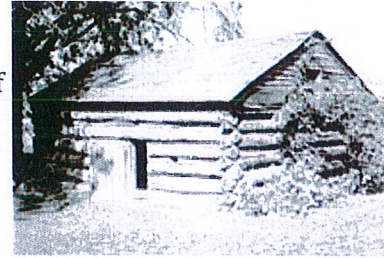
The Comprehensive Plan, developed with the support and input from both municipal officials and the general public, helps build consensus toward a shared vision for the Town's future. It helps ensure that the Town's decisions are made with an awareness of how they help achieve that future. As expressly intended by the State enabling legislation, a plan is a valuable tool in shaping land use policies and zoning. However, its influence can be much greater, also affecting any Town, County, State and federal decisions on capital spending, infrastructure, grants, and intermunicipal cooperation that occur within the Town of Cambria.

Regional and Local Setting

The Town of Cambria is located near the center of Niagara County, New York. The Town is bordered by the Town of Lewiston to the west, the Town of Lockport to the east, the Town of Wilson to the north and the Towns of Pendleton and Wheatfield to the south. The Town, which is 39.9 square miles in area, falls within the Western New York region. The government of the Town consists of a Town Board, with a Supervisor and four Councilmen. Cambria is a rural community, characterized by farms, orchards and vineyards, and its citizens value the rural character of their town.

Town History¹

The Town of Cambria was officially established on March 11, 1808. It was the first Town in what was to become Niagara County, and its boundaries incorporated the entire geography of present day Niagara County. At that time, Erie County encompassed both Erie and Niagara Counties, and Niagara County was not established as a separate county until 1821, meaning the Town of Cambria preceded Niagara County by 13 years.



An authentic log cabin, one of the earliest homes of Cambria's first settlers

One of the first pioneers in the Town was Philip Beach, who carried the mail on horseback from Canandaigua, through Cambria en route to Fort Niagara. He saw the potential of the area and purchased a homesite on what is now Ridge Road in the Town of Cambria in 1801. Additional family members moved to Cambria. In 1806, he sold his original log cabin to Joseph Hewitt, who became the first Supervisor of the Town. This property, located along the swiftly moving 12-Mile Creek also became the site of the Town's first sawmill. The property passed to William Howell, who built the Town's first clapboard house in 1808. This property was operated as Howell's Tavern. The Greek Revival home still stands on Ridge Road in the Town.



The former Howell's Tavern on Ridge Road

The hamlets of Warren's Corners, Molyneaux and Streeters Corner, named after early settlers of the community, grew around early taverns or inns. In the case of Molyneaux, a large hotel was located at the intersection of Ridge and North Ridge Roads from 1826 for nearly 100 years, when it burned in 1923. Molyneaux was also the site of the first post office in Cambria. By 1867, there were five post offices within the Town. Ironically, there is no post office in the Town today.



The Molyneaux Hotel at Molyneaux Corners



The Former Laffer General Store on North Ridge Road

¹ Based on **The Evolution of Niagara County** by Vernetta Genter, former Town of Cambria Historian (from Town of Cambria website)

The division of the Town of Cambria began in 1812, when the eastern half of the Town was established as Hartland. The western portion of the Town was divided into three municipalities, with Porter to the north, Schlosser (later Niagara) to the south, and Cambria occupying the central portion. The Town was further divided in 1818 to create Lewiston to the west. In 1824, the Town of Lockport was formed from the eastern portion of Cambria and the western portion of Royalton, resulting in the current geographic configuration of the town.

Using the Comprehensive Plan

There is no designated format for a comprehensive plan in New York State. Each plan is developed to fit the needs of the community. However, nearly all comprehensive plans contain certain common elements. These can be summarized by three questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we *want* to be?
- How do we get there?

The first question is addressed by an assessment of the town's existing conditions, which is included in the Inventory and Analysis section of this document. This section provides a description of the Town, including land use, demographics, environmental features, utilities, transportation and other features.

The second question is probably the most important part of a Comprehensive Plan. The section on Goals sets forth a clear vision for the municipality and its desired future. This section helps serve as a benchmark for decision-making in the community. For the Town of Cambria Comprehensive Plan, the chapter on goals also includes a discussion on the future vision for the town. A discussion of public input and how it contributed to establishing the vision for the town is also included.

The final question is addressed by the Recommendations section, as well as the Implementation section. The Recommendations section establishes a plan of action that the community can take to achieve its stated vision. It highlights specific actions, legislation or other steps the Town could undertake. The implementation section reviews the recommendations to suggest timing, level of effort and prioritization. These sections are not meant to represent all possible actions, nor is it necessary that the Town try to accomplish every single recommendation. It is up to the Town, with its citizens, to determine which activities to prioritize, depending on the circumstances facing the Town. As circumstances change, certain actions may become more compelling, while others may lose significance.

In the end, the main purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to articulate what is important to the Town of Cambria and its residents. The intent is to help decision-makers move toward a future that protects the essential character of the community and enhances local quality of life.

In the immediate term, the plan is best implemented by making sure the Town's land use regulations do not conflict with the Town's stated vision. The Plan should be referred to and used as a benchmark when evaluating decisions, such as site plan approvals and rezoning. The Town should evaluate capital budgeting decisions with an eye toward whether it furthers the stated goals of the community. The Town should consider this document a useful tool, a resource and a guide to help achieve a better Cambria for all citizens.

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