

# Oxford Vision Planning

Oxford, New York

In the summer of 2012 residents of the Town and Village of Oxford participated in a Community Visioning Process facilitated by the SUNY ESF Center for Community Design Research (CCDR). Through workshop activities and dialogue residents contributed to the development of a vision statement, goals and action strategies. The vision statement is a broad statement that represents the collective view for Oxford's future and the goals support and describe the Vision Statement's components in more detail. The Action Strategies are ways to accomplish the goals and came from participant and CCDR recommendations. Each Action Strategy will need an Action Plan to guide it through completion, including individuals and organizations that will be involved, resources needed, tasks to be accomplished and a schedule. A series of design principles were developed and illustrated, focusing on the relationship of the vision to physical assets including the Rt. 12 corridor, the Chenango River and the Downtown core. The project process and results are documented in a Project Report.

## Major Findings

*The rural countryside and the denser village are integrally related. What happens in one impacts the other. While understood by many, how this relationship is respected and decisions made will determine the future of both.*

*Economic issues are driving many aspects of the community view of the present and future. Loss of a range of jobs in local manufacturing and loss of small/family farms has resulted in unemployment, population loss, fewer opportunities for young adults and decline in local business activity.*

*"Sense of Community" is weakening and needs to be reinvigorated and strengthened. There are many community organizations but not as many people volunteering or participating.*

## Goal 1: Strengthen the long tradition of community engagement and sense of community to guide Oxford's future

1. Develop a method for Oxford organizations to communicate and network more effectively with each other and community members as a way of exploring the potential for shared resources and projects.
2. Utilize Town and Village websites more effectively to communicate with Town and Village residents.
3. Share the Vision Plan broadly throughout community so that everyone is aware of its goals and has the opportunity to contribute to its implementation.
4. Encourage the Town and Village Boards to adopt the Vision Plan.
5. Explore traditional and contemporary ideas of a community "message board" to post events and activities.
6. Plan and organize activities and events that engage residents in coming together in celebration, commemoration and lending a hand.
7. Organize regular meetings between the Town and Village governments to discuss and coordinate issues that cross municipal boundaries.
8. Continue and strengthen the Welcome Wagon to welcome and introduce new Oxford residents to the community

## Vision Statement

Oxford is a thriving community of engaged and caring residents who support creative local initiatives towards economic self-sufficiency. We welcome new residents, businesses and visitors to share our rural character and small town quality of life and stewardship of our rich historic and natural resources.

## Goals and Action Strategies:

### Goal 2: Establish a locally based economy that is creative, diverse and sustainable and provides employment opportunities for a range of skill and education levels

1. Commence a transparent and respectful process of facilitated community dialogue about hydraulic fracturing as part of the economic development plan for the Town.
2. Establish a working group to explore options and prepare recommendations for a non-traditional grocery in Oxford, including suggestions that came from vision process participants.
3. Conduct a market and feasibility study to determine types of new businesses that would complement existing businesses and fit the character and scale of the community, giving strong consideration to ideas that emerged from the vision planning process.
4. Investigate and prepare options for senior housing and other residential choices in Oxford focusing on the village for walkable access and connection to daily living.
5. Collaborate at the county and regional level to prepare a regional economic development plan that includes, for Oxford, the sustainable use of its natural, agricultural and historical resources.
6. Continue to explore the potential future use of the rail corridor as part of the overall economic development plan.
7. Prepare a study and set of guidelines for locating businesses and manufacturing that utilizes the preliminary analysis from the Vision Plan and is based on preserving the rural character, the visual quality and environmental health of the community.
8. Explore grant opportunities such as the Brownfield Opportunity Area program for funding assistance for planning, marketing and feasibility studies.
9. Conduct a survey of vacant and underutilized buildings to better understand condition and reuse potential.

### Goal 3: Promote care and maintenance of public and private properties

1. Establish a program to match volunteers (individuals, clubs/organizations, contractors, school programs) with people who need help to maintain their homes and yards.
2. Research what other communities have done to address issues related to absentee landlords, the division of single family homes, and the poor condition of rental properties; and utilize findings to assess and improve policies and regulations.
3. Create regular community clean up days and amnesty days at the dump.
4. Develop a program to collaborate with owners of vacant buildings in the Village core to help them appear less vacant, including regular maintenance, window cleaning and repairs.
5. Sponsor community contests to encourage and incentivize renovations, restorations, seasonal displays and maintenance that model the type and level of care desired in the community.
6. Develop a tenant education program to provide information on tenant rights, code requirements, and Village/Town expectations.
7. Work with a housing services organization such as Quaranta Housing Services to determine needed services such as low interest loans, homeownership and maintenance education, and integrated affordable housing.



**Goal 4: Reinforce the village as the pedestrian civic, social, historic and retail heart of the Oxford community**

1. Develop a downtown core marketing strategy focused on visiting, shopping, and living in the village.
2. Plan to create pedestrian and bicycle connections within village and to rural areas including a riverwalk and connections to Boname Park.
3. Prepare a sidewalk assessment survey to determine existing conditions and prioritize improvements.
4. Work with the Department of Transportation to redesign Route 12 to calm and slow vehicular traffic to permit safe pedestrian activity approaching and in the Village.
5. Redesign Lafayette Park to be more welcoming and to better accommodate its role as a central and historic community gathering space.
6. Develop a plan and set of illustrated guidelines to guide decisions related to new and renovated buildings, parking, sidewalks, signage and related improvements to establish a strong pedestrian environment.
7. Create walking tours of historical sites and scenic views, exploring the use of traditional methods such as annotated maps and contemporary methods such as mobile phone applications.



**Goal 5: Cultivate the talent, energy and ideas of Oxford's youth and young adults as essential to Oxford's present and future**

1. Establish a small business development office or agricultural business incubator and seek assistance from the Small Business Administration, the Whitman School at Syracuse University, or other agencies or universities.
2. Create an inter-generational committee to explore options to create indoor and outdoor spaces for youth to gather and socialize.
3. Develop a mentoring program to connect youth with older community residents including local business owners, farmers, and local government officials.
4. Establish youth and young adult positions on organization boards.
5. Develop a year round program for teens focusing on outdoor recreation activities that take advantage of the rich natural environment.
6. Collaborate with schools and local farmers to develop a farming apprenticeship program.
7. Work with a housing services organization such as Quaranta Housing Services to explore and establish first-time home buyer incentive programs



**Goal 6: Promote sustainable use of the natural and cultural resources that will contribute to the long term economic, social and environmental health of the community**

1. Seek assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a flood mitigation strategy that addresses the impact of development practices and to the extent possible relies on green infrastructure.
2. Collaborate with other communities in the Chenango River watershed to create a river restoration and management plan in consultation with the Department of Environmental Conservation and other agencies.
3. Develop an historical resource management plan to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to protect historic buildings, sites, and structures.
4. Develop a local curriculum that introduces children to the natural and cultural resources of the Village, Town and region.
5. Create a parks and trails master development plan to identify desired and needed recreation and conservation actions and priorities.
6. Identify best practices for the sustainable and responsible use of Oxford's natural resources such as woodlands.
7. Investigate approaches for conservation of agricultural land to determine appropriate polices to guide future development in Oxford.
8. Explore asset mapping strategies in order to continue to identify and map community strengths and resources.



The Vision Plan process and preparation facilitated by:  
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The full project process and results are documented in a Project Report. For more information contact:  
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**Major Findings**

*The Oxford community cares deeply about providing opportunities for children and youth. Many of the youth are leaving and taking with them their energy, optimism and talents, and the investment of the community.*

*The lack of care and unmaintained appearance of some properties are shared concerns and may be signs of other issues. The poor condition of some historic properties is especially disturbing to community members.*

*There are built and natural systems and places that are concerns but may be opportunities that can contribute positively to the future of Oxford:*

- Route 12 • Chenango River
- Railroad • Boname Park
- Village core • Historic structures



**Community Member and Stakeholder participants in workshops, focus groups and meetings:**

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