

DRYDEN 2045 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC COMMENT

Congratulations to the individuals who did the editing, writing, typesetting, data analysis and graphics for the Draft Dryden 2045 Comprehensive Plan report. The Town of Dryden, Residents, Consultants, and those who contributed did an excellent job in the planning and preparation of this report. The report is very professional and informative. Thank you for publishing this report for Public Comment and Transparency.

The following are specific comments, suggestions and questions by Page Number.

Page 23 and 24 were well written, but none of the issues or solutions were prioritized or sequenced. For example, without an established infrastructure many of the other goals are not attainable.

Page 28 what are 2020 census numbers? Median household income? Highest income, lowest income, how many current residents are in poverty? How many renters? Need more demographics to accurately describe the existing population.

Page 30 states about 17% of the town acreage is tax exempt. Figure 2 is an excellent graphic of a pie chart.

Page 31 is an excellent map that shows the Assessors characterization of the real estate parcels in the town. Has an analysis or audit been done of the assessor property codes? It seems there are more apartments in the town than have been classified as such. How many multi-family, apartments in residential and farms, and multi-use properties?

Pages 32 and 33

The Town is primarily funded by real Property taxes (87%). Taxpayers need an in-depth detailed analysis of the tax revenues by assessor's codes. How much and what percentage of town taxes are paid by each property classification Agricultural, Apartment, Commercial, Industrial, Residential, Rural Residential, etc. Please add this analysis to the report so we can see who is paying the bills.

The Town has explored grants for the Dryden Rail Trail but needs to identify more grants and sources of funding for infrastructure and operations to help offset the heavy tax burden on individual tax payers.

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The percentage of Minor Children living in poverty in the Town is disturbing. We also need data on Seniors living in poverty. These two groups of residents are the most vulnerable in society and we should protect and support them.

Please include data and charts on Senior housing and seniors living in poverty. What definition of a Senior does the Town of Dryden use? Each NYS agency has a different definition of a senior, NYS Real Property Tax says 65 years or older, NYS Senate says 62 years and older, NYS DHCR says 62 or older for renters, and NYS office of aging does not publish a specific age.

The Majority of current town residents are single family homeowners and are the revenue base for the town. When the mature, long-term, residential tax base is gone how is this plan sustainable? Where is the future revenue base to keep the town sustainable? Affordable Housing, Developers, and PILOT programs do not pay the bills. They consume resources and do not contribute to the quality of life for existing town residents.

There is no existing infrastructure to support this plan. Clean, renewable WATER sources are non-existent in the Town. Persistent drought has caused Dryden Lake to dry up and unchecked development will cause run-off and flooding in already swampy, flood-prone environmentally sensitive areas.

Will the developers of affordable housing be required to install and extend the water and sewer systems prior to any development approvals?

It was evident from listening to the workshops that some residents want to put any proposed affordable housing in Etna. How many residents from each area of the town are on the various committees and planning boards? Is each geographical area of the community equitably represented?

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The town should not be in the broadband business but encourage private corporations to provide reasonably priced high speed broadband to all areas of the Town. If competition and enforcement do not work, then the Town should provide high speed fiber to all not just in the high density nodes. Some Towns and communities in NYS have their own electric and water utilities because private industry was not cooperative. Perhaps the Town should join with or

create a Municipal water authority to provide water and sewer to all. Another option is to encourage HOA developments where the HOA provides the basic infrastructure and all amenities.

Public Workshops

The Town held public workshops via Zoom that were very helpful and useful.

From listening to the workshop participants several important points were made:

1. Taxes are too high in the Town and Dryden School District. Something must be done to reduce the property tax burden. All property owners and entities need to pay their fair share of the property tax. For example, why should a dairy farm pay more than a horse farm? We need to reduce the number of tax exempt properties, there are too many freebies for a select few. Tax exempt properties should pay large annual user fees to support our Town. They are using our roads and services. Farms and corporations also need to pay more to reduce the burden on struggling households.
2. The majority of the current tax-paying residents want to keep Dryden as a right to farm community with a rural character.
3. The Town is split into two geographic and philosophical areas. East Dryden residents want affordable housing to be located in West Dryden or vis-a-vis. Affordable housing should be addressed in a planning board or zoning hearing.
4. Everyone agrees that recreational trails and access to outdoor amenities are positive for the Town and Tourism. The actual details of the trails should be addressed by the Highway Department and the State DOT.

CONCLUSION

As one of the small minority of Town property owners classified as an apartment who bear the highest tax rates, this proposed plan has no benefit or positive impacts. My property is outside of the proposed water and sewer expansion area and new affordable housing developments will negatively impact my occupancy

rate. Additionally, the COVID situation has unfairly financially punished small, private landlords. Most landlords are large corporations or state agencies.

Is this the future Town leaders envision for Dryden -- more corporate and state owned housing complexes? It is probably not the best solution to the issues facing Dryden.

The quality of life has been good for the past twenty years with no significant population growth and a quiet rural character. Residents can easily shop in Ithaca, Lansing or Cortland. The Town has accomplished a lot environmentally by stopping fracking and limiting heavy industrial manufacturing that pollutes the air and water.

The Town needs to prioritize property tax reduction and tax equity. Reduce the tax burden on households by distributing the burden more equitably through use fees and modifications to the property tax assessment process. Infrastructure should be the second highest priority as the Town focuses on long-term growth and development. To be successful we need access to plentiful, clean drinking water and HIGH speed fiber internet connections. The future of the Town is bright with excellent, thoughtful leadership and stewardship of the current green, peaceful, pastoral environment.