

Planning for Pittsford’s Future

Pittsford is a Town whose quality of life is second to none. A wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. This didn't happen by accident. It was the result of careful planning and engaged residents. Since taking on the duties of Town Supervisor in 2014, never far from my mind or my attention is our community’s future. A future guided by the principles of good government, strong neighborhoods, and an ever brighter future for all Pittsford residents.

Setting the Standard: Greenprint Plan

For a sense of where we’re going, it’s important to remember where we’ve been. The "Greenprint for Pittsford's Future" – adopted in 1996 – is recognized as a nationwide model for land preservation. As a Town Councilman at the time, I was proud to play a leading role in the Town’s adoption of this forward-thinking plan. Together as a Town, we successfully preserved two-thirds of the then-remaining farmland from development. Our goals were two-fold:

- 1) to balance development with preservation of open countryside;
- 2) to mitigate the growth of property taxes.

We all continue to benefit from the Greenprint’s preservation and protection of over 2,000 acres of open space. It defines an aesthetic, a sense of place, that contributes so much to our quality of life. So much of what makes Pittsford feel like Pittsford.

Without it, land that’s now preserved would have been developed. That in turn would have increased demand for municipal services and required more places in our schools for more children, driving increased expenditure across the board. The Center for Governmental Research has estimated that the average Pittsford household today avoids having to pay at least several hundred dollars per year more in both Town and school taxes because no building took place on the Greenprint lands whose development rights the Town acquired.

Comprehensive Plan Update

A Comprehensive Plan defines a shared vision for a community’s future. With the last update of Pittsford’s plan in 2009 and an expectation that updates be completed every ten years, the Town will complete its latest update process before the end of this year.

With the advice of our professional consultants on this matter, Bergmann Associates, we assembled a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee comprised of citizens from many different walks of life. Next came several well attended and heavily advertised planning workshops for members of the public, to solicit our residents’ visions of all aspects of Pittsford’s future. The Steering Committee in turn used the results of those public sessions as a basis for drafting a plan and subsequently refining it. With ten Steering Committee meetings behind us and two more planned to finalize a draft for public presentation, we will hold another public workshop before

sending the draft Plan to the Town Board for approval. There will then be two public hearings on the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan Update will help guide Pittsford over the next ten years. The public involvement we've had to date, the work of the citizen Steering committee and the public workshops and hearings to come, will help ensure a Plan that reflects our shared values and vision for the future of the community.

Joint Town-Village Active Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Active Transportation Plan is to improve access, opportunity and safety for human-powered – not just motorized – transportation. Expanded opportunities for safe walking and biking enhance the quality of life we enjoy in Pittsford.

It's a joint undertaking with the Village of Pittsford. As with our Comprehensive Plan. A citizens committee was assembled consisting of Pittsford residents from the Village and the Town, and the process began with several well-attended public workshops and visioning sessions. The Town finished its portion of the Active Transportation Plan in September 2017. The Town recommendations suggest 19 sidewalk and trail improvements. These are aimed at connecting existing networks of sidewalks and trails, and safety improvements, including improved pedestrian crosswalks. For example, connections are suggested that, once completed, would make it possible to walk or bike safely from the Northeast corner of Pittsford, at the Brighton town line, to the Southeast corner into Mendon. Additional recommendations include wider sidewalks where possible and flashing beacons on either side of pedestrian crosswalks.

As I write this, the Town's and Village's consultant on the Active Transportation Plan has just furnished to Mayor Corby and me the final draft, comprising all recommendations for both Town and Village. The joint Village-Town citizens' committee will review it and hold another public workshop.

Long-Term Property Tax Stability

Building upon the legacy of the Greenprint Plan, the Town is looking toward the future with protecting taxpayers in mind. I have been working with the Center for Governmental Research, the same firm that assisted the Town with the Greenprint Plan over 20 years ago, to develop a fiscal model to help evaluate future land use decisions.

The model would help us plan in such a way as to mitigate or avoid additional public expense that could drive up taxes as a result of future development projects. By looking at both the revenue related to proposed development and the fiscal consequences for Town government, we can make informed decisions to help provide for long-term property tax stability.

Planning for Pittsford's future is one of my most important responsibilities as Town Supervisor. Decisions made today can resonate for generations to come. Today, Pittsford residents justifiably describe our Town with words such as vibrant, welcoming, scenic and spacious. In planning for the future, all of us should consider the terms our grandchildren will use – and the ones we hope

they'll be able to use. May our legacy be one that ensures a future for all Pittsford residents even better than what we enjoy today.

Should you have any comments about this or any other topic, as always you may reach me directly by phone at 248-6220 or by email at bsmith@townofpittsford.org.