

## SECTION 2 - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In developing a Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Commission was responsible for determining the needs and desires of the citizens of the Town. The Comprehensive Plan was then developed to represent the expressed needs and desires as visions and goals for the future of the town.

### 2.1 S.W.O.T. Summary

The Zoning Commission’s first action was to hold a public workshop on May 20, 2003. This workshop was a “brain-storming” exercise called a S.W.O.T. analysis. Participants were asked to express any thoughts, concerns, or interests for each of four categories, as they pertained to the town: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (S.W.O.T.). Each response was written on a poster, under a category. After all thoughts were exhausted, each participant was asked to choose the three most important issues for the town. The chart below and on the following page shows the results of this exercise. The issues that were considered most important are listed first under each category. This exercise provided the Zoning Commission with a solid list of issues, which were then used as the basis for the creation of the Public Survey.

STRENGTHS
rural character
open space
privacy
people
state land (High Tor)
good air quality
wildlife
night skies (stars)
lack of crime
relaxed lifestyle
valley store
golf course
Finger Lakes Trail
gullies
Canandaigua Lake/other waterways
Alcoholics Anonymous
low population density
Kamp Kiononia
forest land
good schools
good roads and snow removal
affordable property
three churches

WEAKNESSES
high taxes for limited services
lack of zoning
low tax base
nothing for children
no community programs
lack of businesses
lack of employment opportunity
weak property values
unpaved roads
no medical or emergency services of our own
no place to shop
poor development
lack of public communication

<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>
outdoor recreation
privacy
playground
wind energy
solar energy
land
hang-gliding
motorcycle and bicycle traffic
scenic vistas
family place
identity
crafts people and artists
officials easy to talk to
major trails throughout the area
golf course
at threshold of local gov't involvement/planning
maple syrup producers
small farms
historical value

<b>THREATS</b>
lack of zoning
lack of community involvement
zoning
lack of a master/Comprehensive Plan
windmills
loss of pipeline for tax purposes
funding cuts
increasing traffic
paved roads
losing valley store
unpaved roads
landfill
towers

## **2.2 The Zoning Commission Survey**

A survey was developed in late 2003 and mailed to every property owner and registered voter in the town in early 2004. Recipients were encouraged to make additional copies of the survey for members of their household. Copies of the survey were also made available at the Italy Town Hall and at other locations throughout the Town to encourage input from all members of the Town, especially renters who are typically underrepresented in surveys such as this. The survey addressed a range of issues facing the Town of Italy. 1432 surveys were distributed and 467 surveys were returned. The response to the Zoning Commission's survey, at 32.6%, was well above what is considered a 'statistically significant' return rate for such mailings. Often, survey responses indicated a unified voice on many issues. The following is a written general summary of the survey results. More specific results can be obtained by contacting the Town of Italy Zoning Commission.

The Zoning Commission Survey included 23 questions that addressed issues that will have a direct impact on the Town's decision making over the next ten years (please see the appendix for a copy of the survey form). The goal of the survey was to assist the community in formulating a clear vision and direction for our town's future. Members of the town also had the opportunity to offer opinions on specific issues that face them personally.

## **2.3 The Zoning Commission Survey Summary**

### *Property Ownership*

Roots in Italy go deep. The average resident/landowner has been in Italy 17.5 years. The survey respondents indicated that they had owned land in Italy ranging from less than a year to 72 years. Those that were seasonal residents have owned property in Italy for up to 50 years.

The most striking result of the survey is an overwhelming agreement on the importance of Italy's natural and scenic attributes. According to the survey, the most popular reasons for people choosing Italy as their residence were: its rural character, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities. These were consistently listed as the finest attributes of the town. 66% cited rural character and privacy to be among their top reasons. 55% noted the unspoiled scenic vistas. The price of real estate was important to 45%, while 43% highly valued the recreational resources such as High Tor, state forestland, and the Finger Lakes Trail.

### *Development*

Most of the respondents (92%) felt that it was in the town's best interests to preserve and protect the natural and scenic attributes, as well as the rural nature of the community. 87% valued agriculture. 59% of respondents felt that tourism should be encouraged in Italy, and 69% felt that the proximity and accessibility to natural public land resources should be promoted. A majority of 78% felt that the town should support and encourage home-based businesses, while an even greater majority felt that home-based businesses should be permitted in residential areas, as long as they met certain requirements. Only 35% agreed that they would support commercial or industrial growth.

### *Land Use Control*

A significant majority of town residents felt that development which affects neighbors/the town should be subject to some form of municipal oversight (questions 7,8,10,11). 80% disagreed when asked if a landowner should be allowed to use their property in any way, regardless of how it affected the quality of life, or property value of their neighbors. 73% of respondents felt that structure heights should be addressed in the town, and over half (53%) felt that their property's value was vulnerable due to the lack of zoning in the town.

### *Historical and Recreational Resources*

An overwhelming majority (78%) of respondents felt the need to preserve and protect historic sites within the town. Included with those historic sites, respondents listed many natural features and vistas they desired to be protected. These included the old town hall, one-room schoolhouses, churches, cemeteries, and sites of early settlers' residences. A little less than half (47%) felt that the town should purchase land as it becomes available for specific uses such as a town square, park, or garden.

### *Views*

The survey asked respondents to list their favorite view and least favorite view in the town of Italy. 65% of respondents listed areas of natural or scenic beauty as their favorite view. 11% listed their own property as a favorite view. In response to the least favorite view, 19% wrote “trashed properties” within the town, 13% old vehicles in yards, 5% specified illegal landfills, with 5% each to cell towers, run-down buildings, and mobile homes.

### *Most and Least Liked Attributes of the Town*

When asked what they liked most about the town of Italy, the top responses were the rural/small town character, the people, peace and quiet, unspoiled land, air, and water, and the scenic views. Responses to what they liked the least about the town included high taxes, trashed properties, lack of zoning, and poor road maintenance. The last question on the survey asked for respondents to list any areas of concern that were not mentioned in the survey. Wind Turbines was at the top of the list. Zoning was second, followed by the tax rate, road-work, and unkempt properties.

### *Conclusion*

Both the number of responses and the often significant agreement of responses has given direction and clarity to the Town of Italy Zoning Commission in the formulation of this Comprehensive Plan.