

Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan

Regional Plan Consortium, 2013

Report access: <http://uploads.oneregionforward.org/content/uploads/2013/06/Western-New-York-Regional-Sustainability-Plan.pdf>

EDA's CEDS Guidelines indicate that the Strategic Direction / Action Plan contained in the CEDS should flow from the SWOT analysis and should be consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans. With this in mind, it is important that other state/regional/local plans be considered as primary foundational bases for the development of the Strategic Direction / Action Plan component of the CEDS. This document summarizes relevant information from the original source document, which can be found online at the above URL. The summarization is provided to provide planning participants a shorter concise statement of the strategic content of the original source document. However, interested participants are encouraged to examine the original source document. Text included here is excerpted from or paraphrased from the original source document.

The **Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan** (2013) was developed by the Regional Plan Consortium for the five western New York counties and is intended as a guide for integrated, sustainable solutions to improve quality of life in the five county region. These solutions include ideas for regional decision-making on land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, energy, and environmental practices. The plan should lead to the implementation of projects that support and implement the regional sustainability goals identified in the plan. The plan's goals and strategies were developed with consideration given to economic development, governance, and the impacts of climate change on the region. The plan's goals and strategies include the following themes:

- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- Enhancement of the regional economy
- Government policy and programs
- Consideration of diverse land uses in urban, suburban, and rural communities
- Conservation of natural resources
- Education and promotion of increased public awareness of sustainability issues
- Revitalization of main streets and downtown / community centers
- Supporting the economic viability of the agricultural industry and protecting the region's agricultural and forestry resources
- Building energy efficiency programs and energy infrastructure for the public and private use of alternative fuels to catalyze diverse forms of energy production within the region and encourage sustainable energy use
- Improve and enhance air quality through the reduction of fossil fuel energy generation and fuel use
- Smart growth, including the focusing of development within existing corridors and the conservation of open space

The Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan fully embraces the principles of **Smart Growth** and **HUD Livability Principles**. The intent of the document is to establish a framework for measuring progress toward a more sustainable region. This is done through sustainability indicators and targets that allow for quantifiable benchmarks to measure results over time, which will help gauge success.

The plan identifies the following six focus areas as being critical to attaining sustainability in the five county WNY region: Energy, Land Use and Livable Communities, Transportation, Agriculture and Forestry, Water Resources, and Waste Management. Additionally, linking to the WNY REDC's plan, "**A Strategy for Prosperity in WNY**," the

plan also includes Economic Development as a focus area that overlaps the other six focus areas, insuring that the priorities of the WNY REDC strategic are addressed in the plan.

The regional sustainability goals developed for WNY are as follows:

Energy Goals

1. Promote energy efficiency and conservation efforts throughout WNY in the most environmentally sound and cost-effective way, which provides access to such efforts for all incomes and business sizes and results in a real reduction of GHG emissions.
2. Increase renewable energy generation in the region, including technologies listed in the NYS Renewable Portfolio Standard. Applications would include solar water heating, photovoltaic, landfill gas, wind, biomass, hydroelectric, fuel cells, anaerobic digestion, tidal energy, wave energy, ocean thermal, ethanol, methanol, biodiesel, and fuel cells using renewable fuel; and geothermal.
3. Upgrade the existing conventional energy infrastructure in the region in an economically and environmentally sustainable way.
4. Support innovative energy projects that are consistent with the sustainability goals of the region and that encourage economic development.

Land Use and Livable Communities Goals

1. Increase the number of local municipalities that are developing, adopting, and implementing “smart growth” policies.
2. Develop a mechanism for regional land use planning assistance and collaboration.
3. Encourage and focus development in areas served by existing infrastructure.
4. Encourage the expansion of location-efficient housing that increases access to employment centers and transportation options.
5. Preserve, protect, and enhance the viability of agriculture, including agricultural lands and urban agriculture.
6. Encourage, enhance, and coordinate regional park, greenway, and waterfront planning to connect the public with the region’s natural resources and promote economic development and recreational opportunities.

Transportation Goals

1. Increase and improve alternatives to driving alone (public transit, car/vanpool, park and ride, bicycle, walking) through interagency partnerships and cooperative efforts, especially in serving transportation disadvantaged populations.
2. Improve regional fuel efficiency, especially in public and commercial fleets and through public and private investment in infrastructure and planning to increase the use of alternative fuels.
3. Prioritize transportation infrastructure projects in line with regional smart growth efforts in existing communities and corridors, especially through projects that exemplify “Complete Streets” principles.

Agriculture and Forestry Goals

1. Strengthen the economic viability of agriculture and forestry enterprises.
2. Achieve more efficient uses of energy inputs and maximize use of agriculture and forestry byproducts for energy production.
3. Increase support from government officials and the public for the protection of farmland, continued use of farmland for agricultural purposes, and for strengthening the business climate for agriculture and forestry in the region.
4. Promote environmentally sustainable management systems for the agriculture and forestry sector.

Water Management Goals

1. Improve regional water quality through a focus on the identification and management of pollution sources and protection of healthy watersheds.
2. Improve regional water management systems and increase efficiency of infrastructure.
3. Address regional water quantity concerns through a focus on flooding, storm water/runoff, infiltration, and regional water use.
4. Ensure better coordination of water management with land use and conservation planning and decisions regarding where future development occurs, including public access to water resources.

Waste Management Goals

1. Reduce the amount of municipal solid waste (MSW) that is disposed of (via landfills or incineration) by reducing waste generation and/or increasing recycling.
2. Maximize the diversion of organic waste from disposal facilities (landfills and incinerators) and the beneficial reuse of the organic material.
3. Reduce the amount of construction and demolition (C&D) waste that is disposed of by reducing waste generation and/or increasing recycling.
4. Increase the number of waste transport vehicles that use alternative fuels.

The sustainability strategies identified in the plan include:

Energy

1. Promote clear and simplified access, navigation, and implementation of energy efficiency funding programs and education on energy conservation options through one-stop websites or other public outreach tools.
2. Conduct focused outreach to mid-sized businesses and industries and mid-income families that inform them on existing funding opportunities for energy efficiencies upgrades.
3. Encourage municipalities to implement energy efficiency programs, energy conservation practices and renewable energy within municipal operations through the promotion of programs such as NY's Climate Smart Communities and considering regulations and incentives that stimulate such programs in the community.
4. Promote energy efficiency programs in business and industry through establishment of the Green Business Roundtable.
5. Promote distributed power and the eco-industrial business model of co-locating symbiotic industrial processes and other methods.
6. Complete a feasibility analysis to inform the potential development of an implementation-ready, written, regional feed-in-tariff (FIT) program to spur renewable energy development and job creation, using successful programs in Germany, Ontario, and Long Island as models.
7. Promote the use and development of renewable energy through demonstration projects that integrate public education.
8. Encourage the installation of renewable energy such as solar, wind and geothermal in new and existing developments.
9. Ensure fuel diversity in our region and promote GHG reductions through the support of co-firing biomass technology as well as conversion to other less expensive and GHG-intensive fuel sources at existing coal-fired generating plants while considering other environmental factors.
10. Enhance existing programs that support the development of sustainable advanced manufacturing enterprises as well as innovative projects for alternative energy generation within the region.

Land Use

1. Develop municipal and county level land use planning tools for use within the region such as a technical assistance handbook for smart growth.
2. Provide technical assistance and identify sustainable funding and partnership opportunities to build regional planning capacity, through the support and coordination of the REDC Smart Growth Work Group's proposed "Smart Growth Coordinating Council."
3. Revitalize main streets and community centers through redevelopment and adaptive reuse of abandoned, underutilized, or historic buildings and brownfield sites by providing municipalities with funding, technical assistance, and/or streamlining the review/approval process.
4. Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock and siting of new housing developments in mixed-use development that are served by existing sewer and water infrastructure.
5. Improve existing transportation infrastructure to better connect people to employment centers, schools, shopping, and transportation options.
6. Update existing farmland protection plans that include protection of timberland at the county level, with the leadership from the cooperative extensions and farm bureaus, encourage plan development at the local level, and support implementation of plans where they already exist.
7. Develop and implement Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans (LWRPs) in all eligible municipalities that include consideration of public access to regional waterfronts for recreation to promote economic development associated with tourism.
8. Connect recreational trails across municipal boundaries through enhanced multi-jurisdictional coordination.

Transportation

1. Develop new alternative transportation programs through strategic partnerships, particularly programs that increase options for under-served populations.
2. Educate the public on existing transportation options through on-line resources, including regularly updated maps of all regional transportation options.
3. Implement projects such as fueling and charging stations that would increase the number of CNG and electric powered vehicles through private and public programs.
4. Implement traffic efficiency and optimization projects while encouraging walking and biking.
5. Prioritize transportation infrastructure within main streets and along important corridors.
6. Implement Complete Streets projects throughout the region by providing technical assistance to create or modify comprehensive plans and zoning codes that integrate bike and pedestrian traffic into transportation infrastructure plans and projects by, for example, developing a "Complete Streets" zoning template.

Agriculture and Forestry

1. Establish a WNY Food Hub or Agricultural Processing Facility.
2. Develop a mechanism to continue to advocate activities that will help achieve these sustainability goals on a long-term basis. One possible solution would be to create a regional Agriculture Council.
3. Connect local farmers with markets in new or more effective ways that increase farmers' profit margins through higher prices, value added products, specialty products in demand by consumers, meeting demand in food deserts, etc., through the establishment of local farmers' and cooperative markets within the region.
4. Provide farmers with resources and training for sustainable and energy efficient agriculture production, processing and distribution. One possible solution would be to create a community food training center.
5. Implement energy generation projects that use agriculture and forestry by-products as fuel sources.

6. Update existing farmland protection plans that include protection of timberland at the county level, with the leadership from the cooperative extensions and farm bureaus, encourage plan development at the local level, and support implementation of plans where they already exist.
7. Educate the general public, youth, and public officials on the importance of local agriculture including promoting farmer markets and purchasing local produce.
8. Promote and preserve agricultural enterprises through farmer recruitment programs and innovation and entrepreneurship programs for small farms.
9. Facilitate adoption by large and small farms of variable rate application technologies that can reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers without reducing production.

Water Resources

1. Educate the public on the ways that they impact and/or improve the health of local watersheds, reduce stress on water management infrastructure, and promote water conservation through public education programs and demonstration projects.
2. Implement targeted sewer infrastructure improvements for pollution sources known to impact impaired waterbodies in the WNY region.
3. Identify and implement green infrastructure practices (i.e. permeable pavement, rain gardens or bioretention ponds) that reduce excessive storm water flows and runoff, which are a leading source of non-point source pollution.
4. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of water management infrastructure through implementation of system upgrades and consolidation of existing water systems.
5. Assess and seek to remove regulatory and administrative barriers to green infrastructure projects posed by local codes and permitting processes.
6. Promote the preservation and restoration of land and natural systems that can be used to naturally manage storm water and runoff.
7. Develop and implement Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans (LWRPs) in all eligible municipalities that include consideration of public access to regional waterfronts for recreation to promote economic development associated with tourism.
8. Develop and maintain links between water quantity and quality infrastructure and local land use planning (i.e. future development and land conservation), as well as the GLRI and Great Lakes Compact.

Waste Management

1. Educate the public, government, businesses, and institutions regarding waste management regulations and requirements, the benefits of reduce/reuse/recycle, how to effectively reduce/reuse/ recycle, and the costs associated with waste management.
2. Institute more Pay-as-You-Throw programs and every-other-week trash pickup, which incentivize waste reduction and recycling.
3. Increase MSW recycling operations (collection, recovery, and processing) in WNY and the use of recycled MSW materials in goods produced in the region.
4. Encourage product stewardship that considers the life-cycle of the product for goods produced in WNY. As necessary, enact related legislation.
5. Improve the infrastructure for effectively recycling organic material (commercial, institutional, and residential) in WNY.

6. Increase C&D recycling operations (collection, recovery, and processing) in WNY and the use of recycled C&D materials in goods produced in, and processes conducted in, WNY.
7. Encourage building deconstruction and subsequent material reuse and recycling, as opposed to building demolition.
8. Encourage the conversion of waste transport vehicles, both municipal and private, to alternative fuels, such as CNG.
9. Implement projects such as fueling and charging stations that would increase the number of CNG and electric-powered vehicles through private and public programs.

The plan also establishes a set of sustainability indicators (“targets”) for measuring progress toward a more sustainable region, as follows:

Energy.

1. The region’s target is to increase renewable energy generation to 75% by 2025.
2. The region’s target is to increase the implementation of NYSERDA-funded energy efficiency projects by 34%, or to 250,000 MMBtu by 2015.
3. The region’s target is to double the number of Climate Smart Communities (18 communities) in WNY by 2015.
4. The region’s target is to reduce the total regional GHG emissions from a 2010 baseline by 30% by 2020 of 17.5 million MTCO_{2e}.

Land Use

1. The region’s target is to keep the developed land per capita constant through 2017 from the 2011 baseline.
2. The region’s target is to have five municipalities per year (one per county) update their comprehensive plan and/or zoning code to incorporate smart growth principles over the next five years.
3. The region’s target is to reduce the proportion of median income spent on transportation and housing to 50% by 2020 and 45% by 2035.

Transportation

1. The region’s target is to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) by 3% through 2020.

Agriculture and Forestry

1. The region’s target for acres of harvested cropland is to keep the acreage constant through 2017 from the 2007 baseline.

Water Resources

1. The region’s target is to reduce storm water flow and frequency of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) by 40% over a period of 20 years.
2. The region’s target is to reduce the total miles of impaired streams by 20% (156 miles) to 625 miles 2035.

Waste Management

1. The region’s target for Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposed of per capita is to reduce disposal to 0.11 tons per person per year (0.6 pounds per person per day) by 2030.

The plan also contains a summary of all the sustainability projects identified in the planning process leading to the creation of the plan. The plan indicates that implementation of the plan fits squarely within the core strategies of the WNY REDC’s plan to implement smart growth, which includes assistance in implementing not only the NYS Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act but also the sustainability plan.