

Town of Cicero, Onondaga County

Cicero is located in Onondaga County, along the southwest shoreline of Oneida Lake. The town encompasses 48 square miles of land area and 68% of the municipality lies within the Oneida Lake watershed. Cicero has approximately 8 miles of shoreline on Oneida Lake. According to the US Census, Cicero's population was 27,982 people in 2000. The town experienced a 9.5% population increase between 1990 and 2000. The current population is 29,304. The median age in 2000 was 36 years and the average household size was 2.6 persons. Median household income is currently estimated at \$57,531. There were 10,694 housing units in the town in 2000, 4.4% of which had been built between 1990 and 2000.

The Town of Cicero relies primarily on Lake Ontario for its water supply. The Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA) provides retail water service and, when needed, the supply is augmented with water from the Metropolitan Water Board. OCWA is the principal source of retail water service for Onondaga County outside of the City of Syracuse. Within the Oneida Lake watershed OCWA's wholesale and retail service area includes the Town of Cicero.

Cicero is more developed than the rural farm and forested areas found in other parts of Onondaga County. It remains the fastest-growing town in Central New York and has led Onondaga County in new home construction for several years. The town budget in recent years has allocated funds to promote economic and commercial development.

The town drains to Oneida Lake through the Chittenango Creek subwatershed. The Chittenango Creek subwatershed is approximately 99,249 acres and can be divided into two groups: the Lake Ontario Plain (Lake Plain) Region, which is where Cicero is located, and the Appalachian Uplands located in the southern portion of the County. An escarpment located just south of the Village of Chittenango divides the two areas. Chittenango Creek contributes approximately 18 percent of the total surface water inflow to Oneida Lake.

Assessment Results

Regional Planning Boards and SWCDs are working with the NYS DEC to implement the Phase II Stormwater Permit Program in Cicero, including the development of land use and regulatory controls to reduce erosion and sedimentation. The Cicero code enforcement department serves as the Phase II Stormwater Program enforcement agency. In addition to standard building permits, each project proposal must be accompanied by a Siltation and Erosion Control plan, which is used to hold the developer/construction company responsible for implementing proper erosion and sedimentation control measures. The Town of Cicero's most effective means of enforcement is through stop-work orders. Citations or violations are rarely issued and 99% of compliance is achieved voluntarily. The Onondaga County SWCD works with Cicero and the NYS DEC to prevent runoff from construction sites.

The Madison County Water Quality Strategy ranked the Chittenango Creek as a high priority subwatershed because of flooding problems, loss of wetlands habitat, a high concentration of agriculture, and development pressure. Streambank erosion is also a concern. The Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) researched the causes of flooding in Cicero and the Lower Chittenango Creek subwatershed following extensive flooding in January 1996. In 1997, a program was initiated to correct the problem by removing logjams from the

Creek. Since 1997 Madison County SWCD has had an agreement with the Towns of Sullivan, Manlius, and Cicero to remove logjams from the Creek in order to reduce flooding.

The USGS has data for discontinued surface water discharge and water quality stations on Chittenango Creek and peak stages and flows on Negro Brook near Bridgeport. CNY RPDB, Project Watershed CNY, and the NYS DEC have done additional water quality monitoring, biological monitoring, and erosion surveys on Chittenango Creek.

Many Cicero homeowners are members of the Oneida Lake Association (OLA) that was founded in 1945 to protect, restore and preserve the natural resources of the lake and its surrounding ecosystem. Community leaders in Cicero also took a leading role in developing recommendations for the “Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and its Watershed”. The municipality is represented on the Oneida Lake Watershed Advisory Council, which is working with the CNY RPDB on water resource protection and improvement issues.

The Town has a Comprehensive Plan, a Planning Board, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and site plan review laws. Cicero recently upgraded their Comprehensive Plan, with a greater focus on land use and the Route 11 and Route 31 corridors. Development continues at a steady pace, and since the municipality is bordered on the north by Oneida Lake and on the east by Chittenango Creek, emphasis is placed on water resource protection, land use planning, and the reduction of nonpoint source pollution. Cicero has worked with several other municipalities (Clay, Van Buren, DeWitt, and Manlius) to adopt a similar building permit fee structure. There is currently no required certification of on-site wastewater septic systems for property transfers or building expansions.

Town of Cicero	Full or Partial Implementation	Not Applicable
1. Development - total	35 of 42 (83%)	1
1a. Existing	15 of 20 (75%)	0
1b. New and substantial redevelopment	20 of 22 (91%)	0
2. Forestry / Agriculture - total	2 of 12 (17%)	9
2a. Forestry	1 of 10 (10%)	9
2b. Agriculture	1 of 2 (50%)	0
3. Waterways / Wetlands - total	16 of 16 (100%)	0
3a. Modified waterways	10 of 10 (100%)	0
3b. Wetlands and Riparian Area Mgmt/Restoration	6 of 6 (100%)	0
4. Marinas - total	9 of 48 (19%)	0
4a. Existing Marinas	7 of 20 (35%)	0
4b. New Marinas	2 of 18 (11%)	0
4c. Existing and New Marinas	0 of 10 (0%)	0
5. Roads and Bridges - total	24 of 26 (92%)	1
5a. New Roads and Bridges	6 of 6 (100%)	0
5b. Existing Roads and Bridges	12 of 13 (92%)	0
5c. New & Existing Roads & Bridges	6 of 7 (86%)	1
OWTS	7 of 7 (100%)	0

Summary and Recommendations

Current municipal codes (revised in 2000 and 2001) adequately address erosion, sedimentation and other issues. A perceived lack of DEC enforcement in response to state water quality violations is believed to result in non-compliance with environmental regulations. Cicero officials routinely respond to enforcement of local laws and address issues such as stormwater catch basins, turbidity in the local creeks/streams, swale fences not working properly, and drainage easements. Although only a small percentage of the town is on septic, many of these areas are having problems with seepage. There is no required certification for on-site wastewater septic systems for property transfers or building expansion and most people do not get their tanks pumped on a regular basis – only when there is a problem.

Because of the limited number of problem areas, the Town feels a blanket regulation for onsite septic maintenance and inspections is unnecessary. Based on the assessment process, the CNY RPDB recommends that the town adopt an overlay district, which is a zoning tool that identifies certain areas of a municipality based on criteria such as soils and wetlands. An overlay district for these areas would have specific regulations that are different from the rest of the zoning law. As the name suggest, these districts overlay the current zoning designation (such as commercial, residential, etc.). The underlying zoning and all of its regulations remain in place and the overlay district adds another set of regulation processes to help protect these sensitive areas. An example of an environmental protection overly district is found in Appendix G.

Municipalities have authority and primary responsibility for local roadway, bridge, and drainage maintenance. The CNY RPDB recommends that municipalities continue to implement stormwater controls and provide educational opportunities to update highway and public works department staff on current road, bridge, and drainage BMPs. Additional recommendations are found in a section titled “Road, Drainage Way, and Bridge Recommendations” (IV B) of the introductory narrative.

Municipal Contacts

- Jay Seitz, Code Enforcement Officer
- Chris Woznico, Superintendent of Highways
- John Bower
- Jennifer Granzow, Esq.

Local Laws Reviewed

- Town of Cicero Law including zoning, site plan reviews, and floodplain zones to protect Oneida Lake and its tributaries
- Zoning map, Town of Cicero
- Subdivision Regulations
- Minimum standards for residential street construction (1992)
- Minimum standards for sanitary sewer and drainage facilities (1992) – including detention basins and storm sewers
- Taft Road and Northern Boulevard Study by SMTC, 2001 with references to zoning and land use.