

Background

In January 2021, the Caroline Town Board adopted an updated Caroline Comprehensive Plan, which identified the need for the town to consider stronger land use regulations given the prospect of increasing development pressures. A town-appointed task force endorsed the Caroline Comprehensive Plan's recommendation of zoning as a tool to guide the pattern and type of town development.

In the spring of 2021, the Caroline Town Board formed the Caroline Zoning Commission to write a draft zoning law. For two years, this commission has worked hard to research, listen to all points of view, and write a draft law that promotes a positive vision for Caroline benefiting all of our diverse neighbors. In early 2023, the commission will submit its draft law to the town board, who will review it, consider changes, hold a public hearing, and vote on whether to pass it into law.

The draft Caroline Zoning Law will help to guide future development in Caroline. It includes specifications for where certain land uses and housing density can occur, commercial design standards, and an overlay that maps Caroline's flood zones and critical water resources.

Get Involved

Join our email list! Want updates and info about zoning in Caroline and answers to FAQs? Want a "Support Responsible Zoning" yard sign? Want to get involved?

For any of the above, email us at:
CarolineForResponsibleZoning@gmail.com

Visit us on the web and find us on Facebook:
carolineforresponsiblezoning.com

Caroline For Responsible Zoning
PO Box 167
Brooktondale, NY 14817



Dear Caroline Neighbor,

Zoning is about the future of Caroline. The draft Caroline Zoning Law includes sensible rules that ensure our town grows in agreement with the Caroline Comprehensive Plan. If passed, the draft Caroline Zoning Law will guide future development in our town, including specifications for where certain land uses and housing density can occur, commercial design standards, and an overlay that maps Caroline's flood zones and critical water resources. Zoning is the only legally robust tool that Caroline has to ensure that future development is consistent with the Caroline Comprehensive Plan. The draft Caroline Zoning Law will protect Caroline's rural character, businesses, natural resources, and agriculture.

Visit the Caroline Zoning Commission website to read the draft Caroline Zoning Law:
<http://www.townofcaroline.org/zoning-commission1.html>

This information is sponsored by the group Caroline for Responsible Zoning:
carolineforresponsiblezoning.com

The Draft Caroline Zoning Law:

Is moderate – the law’s goal is to allow maximum flexibility, while establishing reasonable protections to ensure someone’s land use does not negatively impact a resident’s property or the environment • incorrect are rumors that the law regulates home or yard appearance, discriminates, doesn’t preserve rural land, requires public trails on private residential lots, or stifles local businesses • consult the Caroline Town Board or the Zoning Commission

Is tailored to Caroline – many towns have unique zoning laws customized for the specific needs of their residents • Caroline’s law preserves its rural character, promotes the town as a desirable place to live, and protects its natural resources

Supports farmers – nearly all agriculture uses are allowed in all districts, including keeping farm animals • there are no new controls on farm operations • the Ag/Rural District 3-acre average density rule allows farmers to sell off small lots (even lots smaller than 3 acres) • Ag-related businesses are promoted

Supports local businesses – each district permits some types of commercial use • major/minor home businesses are allowed in all districts, including bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals • formula businesses (Dunkin’ Donuts, Dollar General) are allowed in some districts • small commercial uses require minimal review

Supports socioeconomic diversity – there is no minimum lot size in any district: any lot is allowed that obtains county water/septic approval • many housing types (single/two-family, townhouses, multi-family apartments, manufactured homes, accessory apartments) are allowed in all districts, most “by right” with no review • single/double-wide manufactured homes can be accessory apartments and don’t contribute to density limits • incentives exist for senior and affordable housing

Avoids suburbia – the law allows the types of land subdivision that have historically occurred in Caroline • suburbia (uniform lots with architecturally designed cookie cutter houses) is avoided in the Ag/Rural District with a 3-acre average density rule, which allows varying lot sizes and does not require placing homes on large lots • there are no design standards for single/two-family homes or townhouses in any district • residential design diversity is encouraged

Protects property values – without zoning, any use can go anywhere (a gas station in a residential area) • by preventing adjacent incompatible uses, the law ensures that property values will be protected and residents will feel secure investing in homes and businesses in Caroline

Protects water quality – the Water Resources and Flooding Overlay District maps Caroline’s critical water resources (wetlands and streams) and flood zones • modest stream buffers are established to protect water quality and aquatic life, while still allowing development • this overlay helps protect drinking water and minimizes flood risk

Adds flexibility – without zoning, prohibiting a use in one area requires that it be prohibited everywhere in town • the law establishes districts, which enables uses to be allowed in some areas, but prohibited in others where they could be incompatible with existing nearby uses (convenience stores are allowed in certain hamlets, but not in a farm field)

Preserves rural character – stressed in the Caroline Comprehensive Plan is the preservation of Caroline’s rural character and open spaces • the law specifies the density and type of development that can occur in the Ag/Rural District, while allowing flexibility for land subdivision • conservation subdivisions required for major developments in the Ag/Rural District incentivize preserving open space • commercial design standards require that commercial outdoor lighting and signage conform to dark sky lighting standards

Caroline Resident Testimonials

Things have changed in Caroline. Dairy farms are gone, and billionaires and corporations have accumulated massive wealth that is being invested in real estate worldwide, including Tompkins County and Caroline. Unchecked, their profit motive will change Caroline. I support the draft Caroline Zoning Law, which captures where we are today and provides structures to keep Caroline as it is.

– Don Barber

Farmer (RoseBarb Farm), builder, former Town Supervisor

The zoning process is not an infringement, but rather an opportunity, a chance for residents to make a real, lasting impact and give Caroline the tools necessary to withstand the pressures of outside money interests and the effects of our rapidly changing climate.

– Rose

Resident

I support responsible zoning that helps to protect large blocks of natural habitat, riparian corridors, and small family-owned farms. These are necessary for thriving wildlife populations and for preserving the rural nature of Caroline.

– Stephen Kress, Ph.D

Author of *The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds*

I welcome zoning as an opportunity to preserve our irreplaceable farmland. Rather than rejecting zoning as restrictions designed to “kill dreams,” I think we can use it as a tool to responsibly manage inevitable development in order to protect the land, beauty, and character of Caroline and to enable farmers now and in the future to make a decent living from their land.

– Anna Gibson

Farmer (Wild Apple Farm)