

## **Lake Luzerne Comprehensive Plan Update**

### **Summary Meeting Notes from Public Open House 2.7.23**

1. Welcome and Introductions: Attended by approximately 28 persons including those participating on Zoom. Warren County was thanked for their development of the 7 maps for the Comprehensive Plan through the GIS department.
  
2. A PowerPoint presentation was made to present the project and the main recommendations in the plan. The description outlined the following points:
  - Town Advisory Committee from a cross-section of the community guiding the development of a new Town Comprehensive Plan.
  - Plan builds on the findings of the 2010 Waterfront Revitalization Strategy and Comprehensive Plan.
  - Since May held 7 committee meetings, a field walk downtown, conducted a public survey, and held 2 public meetings.
  - Developed a profile of the community that included identifying community issues and attitudes, locating notable features in the town, and assessing the socioeconomic conditions and trends in the community and region.
  - Identified the issues and opportunities for growing the population, improving tourism, housing, land use, and recreation, and addressing water, wastewater, roads, internet, and cell service issues.
  
3. Some of the positive and exciting new businesses and projects were outlined including the construction of a New Program Building at the Adirondack Folk School; many improvements including a new Museum and Recital Hall at the Luzerne Music Center; Huttopia, a new Overnight Destination; and Nettle Meadow Artisan Cheese and Hitching Post Pub.
  
4. The Community Vision and project goals were outlined:

Build a sustainable year-round economy from Luzerne's small-town atmosphere, high quality of life, exceptional assets, and strong sense of community. Weave the community's assets into a strategy that supports a year-round destination for recreation and heritage tourism that supports and builds on the successful businesses and facilities in Lake Luzerne. The success of this marketing approach depends on the Town being able to attract a destination business on Main Street that is a blend of a shopping and restaurant experience such as Crossroads in Chestertown or Hoss's Country Corner in Long Lake.

Goal 1: Stimulate Business Development

Goal 2: Modernize Zoning Code and Remove Obstacles to Growth

Goal 3: Encourage Young Families to Become Residents

Goal 4: Improve Overall Infrastructure

Goal 5: Build a Distinctive and Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Goal 6: Meet the Recreational Needs of Residents and Visitors

Goal 7: Preserve and Protect the Historic and Cultural Resources

Goal 8: Improve the Condition of the Lakes, Streams, Rivers, and Forests

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5. The primary recommended projects were described. They include:
  - Prepare a detailed Hamlet Revitalization Strategy that includes a business attraction and retention plan. Include market analysis that will illustrate goods and services that are in demand and complement community goals for future developments.
  - Conduct an update of the Town's Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map, and Subdivision Regulations.
  - Conduct a Community Housing Needs Assessment to assess the condition of the town's housing stock and identify the need for a housing rehabilitation program.
  - Develop a comprehensive corridor study for the Route 9N corridor that identifies transportation needs or deficiencies and addresses improvements for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and snowmobilers.
  - Develop a comprehensive branding and marketing plan that weaves together the arts, culture, entertainment, and outdoor resources of Lake Luzerne into a distinctive brand that attracts new businesses, residents, and visitors.
  - Design and build a new community playground in Bicentennial Park. A "destination playground" offers creative equipment that is aimed to be a fun, challenging, and accessible facility intended to attract families on a repeat basis.
  - Develop a Historic and Cultural Interpretive Plan that ties the museums, landmarks, and other special places together into a cohesive, distinctive interpretive story.
  - Prepare and submit an application to the Adirondack Park Agency and NYSDEC for permits to use the herbicide ProcellaCor® to treat Eurasian watermilfoil in Lake Luzerne in 2023.
  
6. Next steps to complete and approve the plan were outlined:
  - Final Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 28th at 6pm.
  - Advisory Committee meets to address public comments.
  - Public comments are applied to the Draft Plan.
  - Town Advisory Committee presents the Final Plan to the Town Board.
  - Town Board holds a Public Hearing on the Final Plan and SEQR Forms are approved.
  - Town Board appoints a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee.
  - Town Board selects the first priority project to begin implementation.
  
7. Public Comments received through the survey, at the public meetings and immediately after the meeting via email:

#### **PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND PROJECTS**

- My review of the 2010 Plan was interesting. I think the majority of that plan are still what's important to the Town today for the new Plan with some minor tweaking. I would suggest you may want to go back and do edits to that plan instead of a bottoms-up review and rewrite of a new Plan. If the document is to provide the guiding principles to the town, it

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should be a living document and an actionable plan should be in place. As a summer resident, I follow many of the goings on of the different department meetings online and the “big picture” isn’t always evident when incremental issues are being discussed.

- Request that estimated costs be added to priority projects.

#### **DEMOGRAPHICS AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

- An overwhelming majority of respondents believe that Lake Luzerne is a good place to live, it is friendly, affordable, and distinctive with a strong sense of place. It has adequate emergency, senior, and education services. However, there are questions about how welcoming residents are to new residents or visitors, as well as what is described as “cultural decay” owing to a lack of identity and community culture.
- Fewer children per family. Yes, birth rates dropped nationwide from 4.1 mill to 3.7 mill from 1990 to 2019, and then again reduced by 4% from 2019 to 2020. This is not a “problem” exclusive to our Town.
- During COVID and as a result of the current poor economy, let’s be sure not to dwell on the past couple years. Lake George, for instance, is feeling the same effect. Can we adjust demographically and stay true to character? Yes, if done focusing on tourism and remaining quaint.
- I disagree with the affirmative mumblings that we are not inclusive or diverse. No, we do not necessarily have a very diverse population normally, but the summer visitors and business patrons we welcome are immensely diverse. Welcoming them, by default, makes us inclusive of them.
- Luzerne is a wonderful place to live and if we asked around, most would tell you they live here because it is the way it is now.

#### **JOBS, TOURISM, AND LOCAL ECONOMY**

- Most survey respondents do not believe that the local economy is currently stable. They cite a lack of business, fewer jobs, and -most notably- a lack of local restaurants, which is a prevalent theme through all the comments.
- Responses are deeply divided over the role of tourism in the local economy. There seems to be a majority of respondents feel that the local economy depends on tourism and that tourism facilities and services could be updated, but concerns remain about the manner in which tourism impacts the quality of life and environment for year-round residents.
- We really need a new restaurant in town. Losing the Waterhouse, Upriver, and Saratoga Rose (Hadley) have really hurt the town. I hope the new Cheese/Tavern is doing well.
- The two houses downtown should be bought by the town or somehow developed. I understand the septic issues and the limitations this poses but that would change the look of downtown. Attracting a destination facility like you mentioned would be a huge plus.
- I know that the old Town Court is not in use but that would make a nice restaurant with lots of parking.
- The Catholic Church is for sale. That again is a large parcel with lots of parking. A Hotel, Bed and Breakfast or a restaurant would be nice additions if someone could be attracted to buy the property.

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- People of all ages and family types enjoy coming to Luzerne for rafting, hiking, snowmobiling, Christmas activities, etc. From working in a retail establishment this summer, I can tell you we are very welcoming. However, the majority of residents AND business owners still exhale a sign of relief after Labor Day. Visitors may stay longer if we had more room options; not Airbnb's, but motels. Not everyone wants to stay a whole week like many house rentals require or can afford it.
- What will keep people here is a place to stay and places to get something to eat besides pizza or subs. For dinner, we have the new Rockwell Diner, Nettle Meadow, Painted Pony Rodeo BBQ, and Painted Pony Kitchen. However, Nettle Meadow is not open every day, and the Painted Pony options are seasonal. The options need to have a menu and pricing that will be supported during the off season by residents. There are several breakfast/lunch options, don't need more of those.
- Some ideas to draw visitors to the Town – attach to the ever-growing arts community in Lake George. They have art shows, music fest quartets practicing, and kids crafts available to all in the library, jazz fest, concerts, children's theatre, farmers market, street fair, craft fairs, food trucks, etc. These are all things that can be done in spots around town and especially at the pavilion.
- Has anyone looked at tourism grants? Check out [ESD.NY.gov](http://ESD.NY.gov).
- Summer workforce availability is a problem everywhere currently. J1's are an option but come with their own set of problems as they need a sponsor and a sponsor approved place to live. There is a reputable organization that places primarily students around the world in temporary "work for board" environments. I can't remember the name of it but could find out.
- The center of Town is always buzzing when I am there. Businesses would be more attracted, even if they are only seasonal, if we had more to keep people here at least for the day such as music, arts, dining options, etc. The businesses we have provide necessities but need more browsing type stores.
- Double H reports 80,000 campers have attended over their 30-year history. Most of them are from out of town. If it doesn't exist already, we should team with them to provide what tourist resources are available to the families when they drop off their kids at this wonderful neighboring resource.
- The streetscape and walkability seem fine to me. Access for physically challenged could be improved.
- Improve the flower displays in the downtown area. Go back to hanging flower displays in the summer. Lake George and some other local towns have beautiful displays. The conversion to planters in whiskey barrels this year look cheap and underwhelming. We should want to make a positive impression and it doesn't cost much more to accomplish it.

#### **ROUTE 9N CORRIDOR**

- In terms of corridor plans, assuming there is a transportation focus to the scope, A/GFTC would consider an application the Town made could provide assistance through our Annual Work Program solicitation, which is usually sent out in late October or November. Solicitation announcements are sent directly to the Town Supervisor for that program.

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There is a match component but it is usually fulfilled by in-kind services, i.e. participation by Town officials in the process, rather than a cash match.

- The town of Luzerne has two entrance corridors. The northern one spans from Ciro's to the Hitching Post, and the southern one from the fire house to Stewart's. I'm writing to suggest that these two areas become official entrance corridors with design guidelines for buildings and signage.
- The northern corridor speaks for itself regarding architecture guidelines: maximum of two story, rustic, wood clapboard/wood clapboard-look, log cabin-style architecture. Signage steers toward limited height (think Hitching Post), wood, with exterior lighting.
- The southern corridor has the potential for new construction on the large piece of land currently for sale in that area—Waterhouse's Restaurant combined with the trailer park. And, because Stewart's recently renovated, it's possible that Cumberland Farms considers doing the same. The opportunity is ripe for the town to create design guidelines that would encompass these large parcels which are major contributors to the look of the southern corridor. Luzerne is very fortunate that Stewart's is a responsible steward locally and did a beautiful job designing a thoughtful, Adirondack-appropriate design for their recently renovated property. Not every developer will have the community in mind, especially when given a blank slate.
- The southern corridor architecture could be maxed at two stories. Most existing buildings are more vernacular in style, so allowing for a mix of styles could be appropriate here, such as Adirondack, rustic, "modern farmhouse", log cabin. High style is not necessary.
- Preferable materials could include wood/wood-look shingle and clapboard, river rock, stone, logs, slate. Signage is a bit taller through this corridor than in the north, but guidelines could be focused toward lowering to match the north. Exterior lit signage. Locating signage directly on the buildings could also be appropriate here.
- Parking lot guidelines in this corridor would help to alleviate future additional congestion from vehicles backing up onto 9N. Requiring side or rear parking for new construction would be ideal if there is not ample space to fully turn around in the front of a planned business.
- There are a number of businesses in the southern corridor that are currently in serious need of building repair. To prevent any design guidelines from being cost-prohibitive to existing business owners, it could be prudent to add the clause that owners of existing structures have the option of simply replacing materials in kind when doing repairs. All new construction would adhere to the design guidelines.

#### **LAND USE AND ZONING REGULATIONS**

- Concern was raised about commercial growth in the Lake Vanare "historic hamlet", and they hoped that this would be addressed through zoning updates. Response: There was no consensus to move forward on this issue to recommend a change to the zoning west of Lake Vanare. There are several areas in the community that may benefit from a broader look at district changes, and it was decided to include it into the zoning update recommendation.
- Survey respondents were equally divided on the role of zoning in their community. They were mostly split on whether zoning responds to changing conditions, and if zoning needs

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to be revised to encourage commercial or residential development. A majority did feel that revised zoning should be directed to certain areas along Route 9N.

- We cannot expect to stabilize neighborhoods AND attract young families to buy in Hamlet-Residential neighborhoods, if short-term-rental are allowed in these same neighborhoods. This has been proven in countless communities throughout the country where Airbnb and VRBO has been operating. That said, we should certainly allow STRs in all other zones which will indeed encourage tourism and commerce. *I would hope that the Comprehensive Plan Committee will recommend this plan to allow STRs in all zones except Hamlet-Residential.*
- The Town character needs to be considered. Commercial development zoning could be positive, but only if we don't end up with a string of horrid retail stores that ruin the visual lines of the Town for the entire length of 9N, from Lake George on through, not just in the Town Center.
- I encourage you to listen to the You Tube recording of a public hearing held on 4/19/22 ("Town of Lake Luzerne's APA Map Amendment Meeting..."). This will help you understand how residents feel about an attempt at having an APA application submitted to change APA classification from 8.5 acres per home to 1.3 acres per home. There are 11,243 acres of rural use land within both the Town and APA, or 53.68% of the total acreage. Targeting this type of land for reclassification opens the door to massive development, totally out of character to the Town. At the time of the meeting, it was mentioned there were no houses available for sale so basically (paraphrase) we need more. I don't remember the exact number of homes for sale, but I looked it up on-line and there may have been 20. Not 100% sure, but that is pretty close.
- I think the discussion regarding short term rentals is related to tourism as well as zoning. My wife and I spend all summer in the Heights and daily walk our dogs in the area. Many of the camps in the area are only inhabited a week or two over the summer or sporadic weekends. With rules that control unacceptable behavior, we should welcome families here with short term rentals. Sitting around a campfire enjoying our natural beauty will leave a lasting impression and may influence tourists to return. I listen to some of the discussions online and the punitive nature of some of the comments will not help establish a workable solution.
- Mobile home parks also make an impression. Replacement of old structures and or tasteful screening of the existing parks should be explored.
- Property maintenance codes for neighborhoods should be investigated. I live in the Heights and the first two properties on Village View are an example of unacceptable yards.
- Enthusiastic about zoning updates, but skeptical about the availability of public funding to assist in the process.
- I listened to the discussion regarding the two eyesore houses / buildings downtown. Someone should inquire what the owners are thinking for those structures. If it's not a positive response something should be done to make them to clean them up, sell, or let the town take them over.

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- A push to increase restaurants here should be prioritized. When moved here 4 years ago and mentioned Lake Luzerne to anyone, they usually had been here to eat at Up River Cafe. A destination restaurant or two would be an attractive draw to the area.
- Programs that would fund improvements and or replacement of the mobile home parks should be part of the Plan. Just as the town signs are meant to welcome visitors to our town, the view of the dated.

#### **HOUSING**

- Housing was another area of dispute among respondents. While some cite the exodus of young people and few attainable housing options for young families, others are reluctant to see new housing developments. However, there is a consensus that there is a need to improve existing housing stock through housing rehabilitation and/or mobile and manufactured home replacement.
- I would love to see a program to help homeowners with improvements, which may even improve resident retention. Some sort of housing for seniors would be nice but only if they had access to Town Center or transportation to same. Yes, short-term rentals do impact availability of permanent housing.

#### **COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Health care adequacy? We are no different than any other small Adirondack town. It would be difficult to find a health center to set up shop when there are two (?) doctors in Corinth, plus the Corinth Community Health Center. Hudson Headwater mobile unit is at Town Hall twice a month, and 20-30 minutes away are Glens Falls Hospital, Saratoga Hospital, and a growing conglomerate of Hudson Headwaters facilities.
- EMS and Fire staff are amazing. They cover a huge area and, personally, I have had wonderful experience with them when called for my family.
- I think Barb Mitchell does a great job with Senior Services. Although transportation is always a struggle for seniors in any rural town.
- Youth services are provided by church groups and there are many after school activities. The school district covers such a vast geographic area, I am not sure where a youth activity center would go, or how children would easily get there.
- Childcare – has anyone looked into the “Invest in New York – Child Care Deserts Grant for New Providers”?
- Education opportunities have changed over the past couple years. Most colleges offer full curriculums remotely. SUNY Adirondack is close by with an outpost in Saratoga and have on-line classes as well.

#### **ARTS, HISTORY AND ENTERTAINMENT**

- Consider developing a community theatre that would support a performance stage in Butler Park.
- The music camp is being totally renovated. It is not being used most of the year. I don't know how that could be incorporated into any activities, but it is a great facility. Even during the summer, the amount of people that attend the free concerts is small. It just

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seems that it is such a gem and the talent that goes there during the summer is really quite something.

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- The survey did not reveal significant needs for infrastructure improvements other than improved roadways and cellular and internet service. A majority of respondents did not feel that the municipality needed improved water, sewer, or stormwater collection.
- I would like to suggest a project to improve our overall infrastructure. It is long past time to repave School Street. Almost everyone who lives in Luzerne visits the Post Office. There are potholes in front of the building and places on the pavement that just are no longer there a bit up the hill.
- There are few new businesses/restaurants through downtown Luzerne because of the lack of a public sewer system. Most of downtown is located on bedrock which would make this option for new businesses near impossible. This is likely the reason that the two beautiful historic buildings across from the Market remain unused, among others.
- Protection of natural resources and open spaces is not strong enough. These should be protected to keep the character of the Town intact and can also be used for hiking and x-country ski trails potentially. The lake water quality is being monitored very well by a team that has been very active this year.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

- A majority of respondents did feel that protection of natural resources and open space is strong enough and did not feel that flooding issues related to climate change need to be addressed. The majority felt that Lake Luzerne water quality is exceptional or adequate, but additional measures are needed to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Resident is concerned that he is seeing no mussels in the lake. He said he always remembers seeing lots of them (his family has been coming here since 1948) and he is worried something is wrong with the lake. He said he remembers seeing lots of mussels last year and noted that he has seen some open shells this year and thinks a muskrat might be eating them.
- While I am encouraged that we are aiming for the ProcellaCOR application, I would look forward to our making certain that all shareholders will be aware of other important actions that will be necessary to maintain a healthy lake....boat washing, eliminating erosion, restricting new lakefront construction, and enforcing APA regulations around our already overburdened lake. I was glad to see you mentioning that the waterfront property owners need to be especially involved in order to understand their key role in protecting our lake, and an informational campaign targeting this particular audience will be critical. I look forward to voluntarily working on this with the Lake Luzerne Association.
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- Septic system monitoring and improvements for lakeside and riverside properties should be implemented. There's enough effort in the neighboring areas should provide enough information to come up with a plan. Researching programs for funding should be a priority.

#### **PARKS AND RECREATION**

- The group was very enthusiastic about installing a playground as a top priority. Volunteers will be sought to build the playground.
- We discussed a trail map of all of the available trails in town. I think this would be an inexpensive but appreciated addition.
- Use tourism funding to work on a water connection between Lake Luzerne and Fourth Lake.
- Recreation, History, Culture: What we do offer are age-friendly; rafting, rodeo, hiking, swimming, museums. To be a more year-round destination, market us as a stay over point for bus companies on fall foliage tours, create x-country ski trails (they used to run near the snowmobile trails), and we need a visitor center sign out on 9N. The playground idea is great, but I think it needs to be near the Pavilion. Imagine spending a day in Town at the beach, then a BBQ, and completing the day at a playground you don't have to drive to. It would be easily accessible for summer youth programs also.
- Having a trail along the river in town should be explored more. The land behind what was Up River Cafe should be exploited for tourists and towns people. It would make a great picnic area as well. The usage of the tennis courts should be reviewed. If they are underutilized, they could be converted to pickle ball, which seems too very popular now.
- Invest in a new year-round pavilion at Butler Park that could be used as a farmers' market or for public performances.
- Trails are underutilized for horseback riding, snowmobiling, and walking/hiking. They are under advertised. They could draw more tourist as well as provide benefits for our local people.
- A sidewalk that ran along 9N from Lake Luzerne to Lake George would be nice. However, that would also be very expensive. I have attached to this email a map of some alternative "paths" (marked in red) for cyclists/pedestrians. The majority of these "paths" are already back roads. However, there is a major trail connection at the top of Hall Hill Road that would need to be made going through the Upper Hudson Woodlands ATP parcels connecting 2 major sections of state-owned parcels that would need unpaved trails to be made.

