

2017 Comprehensive Plan Public Comments via website email

- 1. Many thanks for initiating community involvement. My initial off-the-cuff stab at priorities are here repeated from the COMMENTS slip left there.
 1. A casual Canton social center is needed to replace the successive losses of McDonald's, Canton Bakery, Canton Diner, etc.
 2. Canton's Main Street congestion must be relieved. A second Grasse River bridge is needed, providing a necessary ingredient. Crossing at the Kraft Plant seems the most expedient location.
 3. Greater pedestrian access to goods and services would improve sense of community in Canton Village. (Groceries, clothing, sundries, etc.) College students would especially appreciate that.Considering the views of others is eagerly anticipated. *Comment 11/17/17*
- My students and I were discussing the Canton Comprehensive Plan and the dearth of opportunities for young people to be engaged with the community in an active setting. Massena and Ogdensburg both have a Boys and Girls club. We would suggest that Canton have something similar, possibly a YMCA. *Comment 11/28/17*
- The Open House November 16, was a great event for involving the community. Last night I submitted some ideas based around child care and today I would like to expand upon them.

First some statistics: According to the 2010 census there were 1250 children birth through 12 yrs old in the town of Canton. Since then we have experienced multiple Baby Booms! This has lead to a significant shortage of child care slots within the town of Canton.

As of November 16, 2017, there are:

-6 OCFS Registered Family Child Care Programs with a potential for 12 Infant slots, 24 Preschool slots, and 12 School Age slots.

-2 OCFS Registered Family Child Care Programs in Rensselaer Falls with a potential for 4 Infant slots, 8 Preschool slots, and 4 School Age slots.

-3 OCFS Licensed Group Family Child Care Programs with a potential for 12 Infant slots, 24 Preschool slots, and 12 School Age slots. (There were 8 programs in 2016!)

-1 OCFS Licensed Day Care Center - Canton Day Care Center with 8 slots for 6 wks to 12 months, 8 slots for 12 months - 18 months, 24 slots for 18 months - 36 months, and 18 slots for preschoolers.

- 2 OCFS Registered School Age Programs Canton Day Care Center's Kid Power Program currently (and temporarily) housed at Canton Central Schools - 44 slots.

-Northwind After School - Cornell Cooperative Extension - 30 slots. This is a total of 220 Child Care Slots available in the Canton area.

There is a great need for more Child Care in the area!

Anecdotally, and through some employee surveys, we know that Recruitment and Retention of employees at the larger area employers (such as Saint Lawrence University, and Canton Potsdam Hospital) has been impacted by this. I heard last night of a Father that quit his job to stay home with his three children when one of those Group Family Providers retired!

Your own data shows that the greatest population growth is the 20 - 34 year olds. This is the prime age group for parents of young children. Child Care is a necessity for this age group!

Canton Day Care Center is currently conducting a Capital Campaign in order to build out the upstairs of their facility which would provide stable space for Kid Power (the School Age Program), and double the number of slots available.

The St. Lawrence Child Care Council is continuously recruiting Family and Group Family Providers.

Quality, Available, Affordable Child Care is necessary for future economic development.

Quality child care has a ripple effect upon the School District: Children are better prepared to succeed, the educational outcomes of the district are improved, the need for special interventions is reduced, and an increase in economic development with an increase in employees leads to an increase in the number of students which leads to increased viability of the district.

Quality child care that supports the safety, health and development of young children allows parents to work, and benefits the entire community! *Comment 11/17/17*

- -add an overnight camping area to Taylor Park
-encourage the auto parts stores and Canton Tire to move their stores to allow for development of the area along the river.
-offer incentive for someone to open a nice family restaurant in the former McDonalds.
-take another look at the idea of closing off Miner Street and rerouting the traffic for a four way stop from Family Dollar.
-Encourage the feed store to move outside the village. *Comment 11/17/17*
- Canton trades training program

The Problem: Towns all over the North Country have watched their populations shrink for many years. There are multiple reasons for this: agricultural consolidation, the building of the Seaway, the closing of the plants in Massena, long driving times to access urban life and family, This has left us here asking how we are going to have a

prosperous future with what we have? There is a limit to what people will pay in property taxes before they start looking for another place to live. If we examine Potsdam as an example, we see a high school with half the students they had 30 years ago, yet the town's population is stable. This can only indicate an aging population. The questions we all must face now is how can we get more people to live here, more young people in particular, and where will they live if we do?

A Related Problem Stiff penalties are built into the NYS criminal justice system that have built a large prison population. Many in this population have been convicted of multiple minor crimes. This has led to long sentences for many people. As taxpayers move out of the state, prisons are claiming an increasing share of a shrinking tax base. As tax rates rise it becomes an upward curve. NYS currently leads the country in the largest number of people, as a percentage of the total population, who move away.

Another Related Problem Black and Latino people make up approximately 80% of the prison population. Once a person is released from prison they have a very hard time getting a job for this reason alone. Compound this assertion with race and it's not a surprise that many people reoffend after they are released. Social programs that are aimed at relieving the poverty that underpins non violent crime are suffering budget cuts, making the problem still worse.

A Solution: I propose we start a program in SLC that gives a soft landing for newly released prisoners, particularly prisoners from racial and ethnic minorities, through training in the building trades. Not just skills with tools but business skills as well. They graduate ready to be self employed. We use the huge number of abandoned houses in Canton and the surrounding towns as a training platform. We would start with a board composed of people who themselves have a minority status to build trust and interest with students, and credibility with the prison system.

A Downside

This is a program that will positively affect the lives of everyone who gets involved in it. The problem is that it won't have much impact on the social problems identified nationally, the problems are huge. There are a lot of people in prison. It will take time to grow this program to full scale and when we do we will exhaust the available housing stock. *Comment 11/16/17*

- I would be happy to meet either in person or by phone w the consultant to talk about some of the critical ag assets that are operating in the town and village of canton, and share digital mapping files that identify prime soils and soils suitable for cultivation purposes if it would be useful. *Comment 11/17/17*

- We have decided that we want to live and spend our retirement here and there are a lot of factors in our decision to choose a community to live in. What I will do below is list them and define what we as potential long term residents are looking for.

Convenience: As we get older, we are looking at things that are nearby such as grocery stores downtown, drug stores downtown, fast food places (bring back McDonald's, Taco Bell, Something that is not the terrible Burger King) department store other than Dollar General, Dollar Tree and Family Dollar (yes, we know there is a Walmart in Potsdam, but sometimes you don't want to drive all the way there.)

Commuting, Driving: A better solution to traffic, We all know that morning and afternoon drive times in Canton are horrible. Sometimes I have found that it takes 20 mins or so to go from one end of town to the other. Perhaps this is an opportunity to develop a better bus system for the area or make a deal with the current railroad and begin a commuter train service and then begin expanding it one community at a time further than Canton.

Activities and things to do: Performance spaces, Band shell, Bring the county fair back to Canton. Develop a fairgrounds where we can have all these things like concerts, family movie nights, weekly music performances in the summer, flea markets, Move the Farmer's Market to the fairgrounds where there would be adequate parking and downtown is not choked by traffic. Host music festivals like a summer jazz fest, blue grass festival. Develop and design a local community play house. We have some local theater groups that would flourish with this opportunity.

These are just a few things that we have discussed when choosing a community to live in. Also there are some of the observations I have made from living here over the years. While we can't get back the Canton that I grew up with in the 70s and 80s We can certainly develop new opportunities that fit with the 21st century. *Comment 11/17/17*

- 1.) An organized summer camp for children. Trips to Taylor Park, Bend in the River, Heritage Park, and other local attractions. One full time head counselor and a few part time counselors (high school or college students that are home for the summer.) The group could visit local businesses, engage in volunteer opportunities, and have movie days on rainy days.
2.) Explore the idea of a bypass in order to make downtown more accessible and business friendly. This could help make Cantons downtown/Main street be more like a mini Burlington/Church Street.
3.) A summer concert series. Using any of the parks and possibly constructing a small amphitheater. Get local businesses on board and offer local business discounts with proof of ticket stub. Get performances that appeal to all ages and cover a wide variety of genres.

4.) Improve on current assets such as the outdoor rink. Constructing a roof would help promote a quicker freeze and ensure longer lasting ice by protecting the surface from the sun and other elements.

5.) Develop a recreation center for kids. Making sure that kids have a place to go “hang out” in a monitored environment is very important for the community. A center could include a sport court, arcade/video games, bowling, a small theatre. Input from local kids and parents would help determine what might go into such a center.

6.) Find ways to keep young people in Canton. This requires an emphasis on tech. improvements and increased public transportation. Market the community to young people and make certain that young people’s opinions are valued. *Comment 11/20/17*

- I did have one concern that I hope is being addresses. That concern is the abysmal state of internet and cellular connectivity in the business district of the Village of Canton. I am a Verizon customer and it amazes me that I frequently cannot find a strong enough cellular signal to use the intent capability of my iPhone. There is spotty wifi available, depending which building you are in and whether there is secure wifi or not. I think it would be in everyone’s interests to have very robust internet and cellular access in the business district, if not the entire village. *Comment 11/17/17*
- I just wanted to send a quick note because I was doing some reading about rural community development and came across a big study done by UNC. I was particularly impressed by the analysis presented in “Case Study III: Small towns with or adjacent to a college campus.” Here is a link to the document. I don’t know anything really about rural development, but I thought we would be remiss not to look at these case studies. Each case study includes lessons from the story and a strategy section as well so it is a pretty easy way to see how other similar communities have succeeded. *Comment 12/4/17*
- On October 2, 2017 I received an email (responding to my inquiry) from DOTs Michael Flick informing me that the results of the 2.8 million Route 11 Canton/Potsdam corridor study would be released in the “next few months”. It seems as though the information and recommendations contained within this study would have a huge impact on Cantons comprehensive plan. Is the planning committee aware of the content of the study or of the release date? *Comment 11/15/17*