

## Stakeholder Meetings Summary #1

The Town of Canton and Villages of Canton and Rensselaer Falls, as part of the public engagement component of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update process, held a series Stakeholder meetings on Wednesday, November 15 – Friday, November 17 at the Municipal Building at 60 Main Street, Canton. The purpose of these meetings was to speak with leaders and key stakeholders of the community on a variety of topic areas to help establish the vision and understand needs and opportunities for the communities over the next 5, 10 or 20 years. In some cases, a phone call or separate meeting was held to accommodate schedules of the participants.

The Canton Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) assisted the project team to identify key stakeholders and topic areas. All stakeholder groups were also encouraged to participate in the ongoing planning process and help spread the word about public engagement opportunities.

The following topic areas were identified:

1. History and Culture
2. Education
3. Open Space and Recreation
4. Economic Development
5. Building, Development and Housing
6. Agriculture
7. Infrastructure, Mobility and Transportation

Along with these stakeholder groups, comments and ideas were gathered at meetings with the Canton Sustainability Committee, the Economic Development Consortium and the Economic Development Committee.

The following summary represents comments and input received.

### **HISTORY AND CULTURE**

*Participants: St. Lawrence County Historical Association, Town/Village of Canton Historian, St. Lawrence University Gallery, TAUNY*

- Past planning efforts have been piecemeal/segmented.
  - Grasse River Charette

- LWRP
- Other Docs
- Historic tours throughout hamlets – to draw attention to hamlets as well as villages.
- Two historic buildings that should be saved: Sheriffs building and Jail Cells (County Owned).
- Jim Thorpe Prison Site is good example of historic preservation and reuse. Prison sites are a draw throughout the U.S.
- Highlight the history of Adirondack boat builder John Henry Rushton, who was based out of Canton, NY.
- Frederick Remington would also be a good historical figure to highlight.
- Biking tours throughout the town.
- There is a need for a tourism plan that focuses on how to get people to Canton.
- Lack of staff resources was noted as being a barrier to getting these ideas and plans implemented.
- TAUNY
  - More of these types of community gathering spaces are needed.
  - ADA Accessible
  - Celebrates folk arts in the North Country across 14 counties.
  - Have a retail operation, demonstration kitchen, music, experiences, share local culture.
  - Host a series of community events.
- Lack of restaurants, retail and lodging downtown
  - Canton could be a great destination for Road Scholar programs but there is a lack of food and lodging choices.
  - A need for more small shops and cafes, women’s clothing stores.
  - Main reasons why there aren’t a lot of restaurants/businesses here.
    - Historically, not the best relationship between Colleges and Town.
    - Layout of the downtown is challenging. Side streets should be utilized more to create downtown center.
    - Being the County Seat, there are people around during the day, but the nighttime population drops off.
    - Most just travel through without stopping.
    - Current zoning might make it difficult to start new businesses.
  - A restaurant on Willow Island could be a great destination.
- There is a need for business training.
- Barn quilts tour to bring people from outside the region in
- Colleges present a good opportunity to bring tourists into the downtown.
- Comments regarding involvement by younger population?
  - No hangout for high school age kids.
  - There is some interest with community involvement in the universities.
  - Library has a vibrant youth program.
  - There is a new children’s museum in Potsdam.
  - Lack of extra curriculums like a dance studio.

- Lack of Daycare
- Municipal building is deteriorating and not ADA compliant. Presents a potential opportunity to rebuild. Can be rebuilt into a municipal building/community and event space. If municipal functions are centralized in one building it might bring more people downtown.
- St. Lawrence Gallery
  - University is eager to have more community attendance but parking and wayfinding are challenges.
  - Very open to community participation.
  - Generally under resourced and understaffed.
  - Schools don't do K-12 tours anymore.
- Community center, shops, restaurants, etc. would bring in the population living outside the Villages?
- Approach on Rt. 11 gateway is not good coming from Gouverneur
- Lack of Nightlife in Canton/activity.
- Bypass? Challenge with trucks and traffic downtown. Noise and vibration an problem.
- Make downtown more friendly and pedestrian focused.
- Cultural plaza near old BOCES building.

## EDUCATION

*Participants: SUNY Canton, Deep Root Center, St. Lawrence University & ACSLV, Canton Central School District, Little River Community School*

- Challenges
  - Poverty
    - Free and reduced lunch rate went from 32% to 52%
    - Very low FAFSA rates, only 50% being completed
  - Aren't many students downtown from colleges.
    - Not taking advantage of students that can spend money downtown.
    - Nothing downtown for diverse community at SUNY Canton (70% students of color). The challenge is how to get students to downtown.
    - Rethink students as hospitality and tourism drivers.
    - Many deterrents for students of color.
    - Student Centered businesses are important.
    - St. Lawrence University (SLU): Students don't have reason to leave campus.
    - People go to Potsdam because there is more retail and restaurants.
  - Bus loop idea
  - Village should be a magnet for students and create vibrant experiences.
  - Shortage of nightlife
  - Movie theater needs a renovation.
  - Safety deterrents for some students

- SLU – bookstore, pub, etc.
- Gaming store in town is one of the few community spaces for kids.
- Teacher shortage
  - Special Ed, Science
  - Open positions are going unfilled
  - Low pay and unappealing to young professionals wanting to settle down.
- Collaborations among institutions include?
  - Potsdam, SLU and BOCES
  - Students can get AP credits at SUNY Schools
  - 20-25 high school students take SLU courses.
- There has been a decrease in student population in Canton Central School. 2000 students in late 2000's, now down to 1300. Need at least 1500 students to offer AP courses.
- Deep Root Center
  - Alternative to traditional education
  - Home school- helps home schooled students meet NYS certification standards.
  - Allows students to learn at their own pace
- There are no real places for kids to hang out downtown.
- Little River School
  - Alternative school
  - K-12, 40 students
  - Provides volunteer opportunities for college students and retired teachers.
  - Involved in the community
  - There is a need for more sports and sporting opportunities in town that is not offered through school.
  - There are no good spaces for music venues. Like a Java Barn for high school students.
  - General Needs
    - More internship and volunteer opportunities
    - Teacher shortage
    - More sporting opportunities.
      - Good programs for young kids, not for older.
      - Pool, track, climbing wall.
- SLU
  - Students engaged in volunteer and experiential learning opportunities.
  - SLU Public Interest Corps.
  - Keeping faculty and recruitment is an issue.
  - Lack of decent housing stock for incoming employees. Most want higher end, move-in ready, short term housing.
  - Experiential learning opportunities.
  - There needs to be more educational opportunities outside of school.
  - No Childcare in St. Lawrence County

- No pediatrician and limited primary care
- Attractiveness of community needs to improve to attract people to want to live here.
- SLU owns 12 houses that new faculty can rent for one year but there isn't any bridge housing available.
- Transportation is tough in Canton.
  - Bus
- Be like Cambridge
  - 4 colleges in 10 mile radius
  - Tap potential.
- Institutional collaboration: Associated Colleges of St. Lawrence County. [Associatedcolleges.org](http://Associatedcolleges.org).
  - Support faculty
  - Academic, admin services, HR diversity.
  - Student Services.
- Not a lot of opportunities for college or high school internships in town.
- Not a lot of opportunities for teens to get jobs.
- St. Lawrence County Poverty initiative
- Conversations on Poverty
  - People project
  - Church Community project

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

*Participants: YesEleven, Town/Village of Canton, St. Lawrence Land Trust, Indian Creek Nature Center, Friend of Canton Trails*

- Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) connects Rensselaer Falls to Canton Village. This creates opportunities for connector trails to connect different parts of the town.
- There are not many sensible equestrian friendly trails to recreate on.
- A need for responsible trail development that would connect the town and villages and hamlet centers with the upper and lower lakes WMA.
- Snow mobile trails along Rt. 14
- Horses
  - The County has had some significant developments recently with regard to equine trails.
  - Equine structures are popping up primarily on old dairy farms.
- Thoughts on loss of agricultural land in Town.
  - Big agriculture utilizes a large portion of prime farmland in the Town.
  - Increase in Amish population is saving much of the smaller scale farmland.
  - Small scale family farms are probably not going to make a comeback.
- St. Lawrence Land Trust
  - County-wide but not within the blueline.

- Grasse River corridor is a focus area for the Land Trust. Protecting land around river corridors/water quality is the focus of the Land Trust at this time.
- Not a big demand for voluntary land conservation.
- New hospital complex – potential conservation easement?
- Rt. 11 Corridor
  - An important conversation to have given the development pressures along the route.
  - The viewshed of the corridor is being threatened.
  - Whole corridor is zoned commercial and is a concern.
  - Build greenspace into development projects here.
  - Yes11 land use plan.
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - Spread growth and development along the corridor.
- Town Recreation
  - Town tennis courts
    - Town owed tennis courts
    - Underutilized; most don't realize they are here.
    - There is a need for an upgrade to these courts.
    - People have traditionally used college facilities however, use is primarily for students and faculty.
    - Headstart uses courts during the day, but after school hours they are open to the public.
    - This area presents a good opportunity for a community recreation space/ community garden
    - Concern from neighbors abutting property. Sensitive to noise and use of this area.
  - Trails
    - Many people run the loop at Bend in the River Park, but it is only 1/3 mile. Could be improved and extended to Willow Island.
- A need for a recreation/community center in town.
  - Something with multi-use courts, indoor/outdoor fields; Something more than just ice rink.
  - It is getting increasingly difficult to use college facilities.
  - Pittsford has a good example of a recreation center.
  - There is just not a lot for kids to do in town.
  - Need something like a YMCA
- Indian Creek Nature Center
  - Facilities are very underused – a need for higher profile.
  - Need electricity and bathrooms (composting toilet?)
  - There is a pavilion and shed.
  - Trails are great for recreation like snowshoeing, x-country skiing, nature walks, etc.
  - DEC does some maintenance like mowing.

- No hunting; site was developed specifically for passive recreation and educational purposes.
- St. Lawrence Co. is rich in bird life. This can be a draw for bird tourism. Birders like good food and cheap hotels.
- There is a lack of signage and access.
- Need new trail signs.
- Taylor Park: opportunity for municipally run camp ground
- A need for downtown recreation opportunities besides sports. Things like bowling alley, music venue, theater, etc. Not enough for kids to do.
- County trails map in progress
- Bend In River Park
  - Signage and access issues.
- Market the resources available internally and externally.
- New town website.
- Chamber doesn't have website.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM**

*Participants: St. Lawrence University, SUNY Canton, Canton Central School, Village of Canton, United Helpers/Sparx*

- County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) just got their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) approved by legislature.
- It would be good to be good to look at CEDS to see which issues are on the front burner for the County.
- New York Power Authority (NYPA) report for region: came up with four initiatives.
  - Environmental Networking
  - Agriculture
  - Community
  - Advanced Materials Processing
- There is a need for a North Country branding for agriculture.
- North Country Regional Economic Development Council (REDC); take a look at their language and initiatives.
- St. Lawrence County has unique problem in that it has no real population center. No central location where population radiates out from.
- A low population county.
- Canton is a good both for its central location and as the county seat, to be the population center of the County.
- It is expensive to move goods in and out of County.
- Issues related to NAFTA make it more expensive to transfer goods in and out of Canada which has an economic impact on the region.
- There are opportunities to retain students once they graduate.

- Proximity to Fort Drum: opportunity to attract soldiers transitioning out of military if there were job opportunities.
- From the homeowners perspective:
  - Three most important things to consider
    - Good schools
    - Great recreation
    - Security
  - There is a lot of core blight that must be addressed.
- If we get the economic development aspect of Canton right, the rest will follow. Develop strong core.
- We are currently living in the Paradigm of the 1940s and 50s. Outdated. Challenge not to dilute economic development across County.
- In 5-years
  - No empty storefronts.
  - Address cosmetics of downtown.
  - Diversified economy.
- Population – Need people
  - Countywide effort to recruit people.
  - Healthcare providers – 5 hospitals.
  - Recruitment of retirees.
- Health Care:
  - We lose a lot of money annually because people have to go elsewhere for services.
  - Canton should be hub and spoke. Now we are just spoke with no hub.
  - Community should be more proactive about having better healthcare.
  - Like Burlington or Syracuse.
  - Big economic generation/job creation.
- This is our opportunity to have big bold ideas and not just play it safe.
- New county marketing: St. Lawrence – Undiscovered
- Many small businesses don't know each other.
  - "Sparks" 50 people
  - Consistent communication w/ businesses
- You can have it all here:
  - Access to all
  - Low cost living
  - Great place to raise family
- Because of technology, challenge of distance is no longer an issue. Need the infrastructure to support this.
- SUNY Canton has relevant degrees for technology that could take advantage of Toronto and Montreal market.
- Fundamental needs



- Jobs
- Canadian connection
- Golf packages (Best Western)
- Used to manufacture everything
- People want high quality goods
  - Artisans, cottage industries

## **BUILDING, DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING**

**TBD**

## **AGRICULTURE**

*Participants: Canton Farmers Market, Garden Share, St. Lawrence University Sustainability Program, Town of Canton*

- Farmers market
  - Connecting local food with local businesses
  - County Chamber has been working on a cuisine trail
  - 42 vendors, 60-70% farmers
  - St. Lawrence County
    - Most successful in County
    - There's an audience for local food. College influenced.
    - Location is key.
    - Possible winter market?
  - Needs egg vendor
- Big agriculture has been here forever and will continue. Opportunity to focus more on helping smaller scale farm operations succeed.
- Assist small scale farming be more productive:
  - State compliance issues
  - Zoning should be different for small vs. large scale farms.
- Farmers market location is very centrally located
- Community supported agriculture (CSA) market quite large in the area.
- New meat vendors in the county. Want to sell in winter.
- Garden Share
  - Helps low income community get healthy good quality food.
  - Allows people to use credit cards as well as to take SNAP benefits. Raises money privately to leverage SNAP benefits.
- SLU Sustainability Program
  - Veggies, bees, goats
  - Would like to engage more with community.
  - Would like to provide produce to dining hall.
  - Don't do local food anymore.
  - 9 students in program
  - 2 interns
- Barriers for agriculture in Canton
  - Start-up costs
  - Access to land
  - Market access
- Farm to School
  - Barriers for schools- budget and need for specific quantities.
  - Check out the Jefferson County Food Hub Study

- Opportunity to work with Co-op.
- Amish Community
  - Mostly roadside stands
- BOCES Agricultural Program
  - Runs out of the Cornell Cooperative Extension. A program for high school seniors.
- SUNY Canton has an agriculture business program.
- Farmers are aging out
- Ag Plans
  - Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (Ag plan for County)
  - Local Food Local Places Food Plan (USDA)
- Large agricultural capacity available for reuse
- Need for small to mid-sized distributors for supplies. Bigger than home garden, smaller than large scale farm operation. Most small-scale farmers buy supplies online.
- Need for small scale, value-added specialty items like cheese and yogurt.
- Need a mechanism to bring people here.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension has put in a Commercial Kitchen that can be used for value added type operations and master preserver program.
- Hard to get into dairy in the Canton region today. Distribution and market are tough barriers.
- Discussion about a meat processing facility in Canton?

## **INFRASTRUCTURE, MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION**

*Participants: YesEleven, Complete Streets, Village of Canton*

- YesEleven
  - Advocates for improving and upgrading US-11 corridor
  - Canton-Potsdam region has been a major focus.
  - Preparing a Rt. 11 Playbook
  - Looking at problem areas of Rt. 11
  - Potsdam is a sister community
- Rt. 11 corridor from Potsdam to Canton is the most heavily traveled corridor along Rt. 11
- There was at one time talks of building a 4-lane interstate along Rt. 11 Corridor
- There is a hope that the Comp Plan will help get complete streets codified.
- Pedestrian Infrastructure
  - No safe access across Rt. 11 around the Price chopper and new Rite Aid.
  - Canton Connector Trail: links residential to commercial and enhances connectivity for bicyclists and pedestrians.
  - Accessibility for bicyclists and pedestrians.
  -
- HDR study with DOT (bypass study)- ongoing
- Zoning Improvements are needed.

- Bypass needed but not the one that was proposed.
- YesEleven has proposed a different bypass that's more conservative. Supportive of bypass, but not the one originally proposed.
- Welcome to Canton rest area with dog park on Rt. 11.
- Market to parents of college students.
- Land Use Planning along Rt. 11 should be a top priority in the Comp Plan.
  - Zoning – commercial growth, curb cuts
- Canton needs a tree master plan.
- Industrial energy development
  - Solar/wind farms.
  - NY Solar has great templates local laws.

### **SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING (VILLAGE OF CANTON)**

*Participants: Village of Canton, Town of Canton, St. Lawrence University, SLU Sustainability Semester, UU Church Environmental Action Committee, Local Food Advisory Group, Complete Streets, Little Grasse Foodworks, Canton Central School*

- Should be a clean energy component in the plan.
- Should include Town and two Villages for Climate Smart Communities grant.
- The vision for sustainability on the Canton Community:
  - Joint planning process with Potsdam.
  - Walkable community with vibrant downtown (services in Village core).
  - Access to goods and services have been drifting away from Village
- Expansion of low income population with no expansion in low income housing.
- Bicycle infrastructure: improve bike safety options.
- Adaptation and resiliency: in terms of the economy, environment and public health.
- Connection with economic development and sustainability issues.
- Mixed-use zoning in downtown for non-nuisance uses.
- Changes to zoning that reflect uses that make sense for area. Aligning zoning with current needs. (ex. Allowing chickens in Village but not a mile outside of Village)
- Current home occupation regulation in zoning are very narrow. This could be changed to allow more of a variety of home occupations.
- Increased shared Commercial Space
  - CCE Kitchen (local food)
  - Commercial Kitchen
- Enhanced use of Riverfront
- Access to highspeed Broadband
- Affordable recreation opportunities (hiking, public skating, etc.)

- Shared buggy/bike trail to be used by bicyclists and Amish; Safer mode of transportation for buggies from Ogdensburg to Potsdam.
- Joint planning approach for Rt. 11 Corridor.
- Master Trail Plan is underway
- Parking lots – too much asphalt
  - Zoning changes to encourage more green infrastructure.
- Planning process in the past has been more about permitting and less about planning.
- Need to enforce training requirements for planning and zoning board members.
- Town/village not currently using best practices for salt and sand storage along river.
- Consider a shared service approach for salt/sand storage. (Shared fuel, salt/sand and building)
- Too many trucks on Main Street (trucks produce noise and pollution)
- Public Transit
- Bypass Study is important
- Infrastructure: sewer/water projects should be in comp plan.
- Agriculture needs to be looked at more closely.
  - Zoning for agriculture is out of date. Should move more towards local food production instead of large scale. There is only one set of language in current code for agriculture. Nothing for local food production.
  - A need for commodity ag.
- There is a need for public transportation.
  - Shared system amongst colleges.
  - NYSARC is currently running some kind of bus service.
- Weatherization and energy efficiency training.
- Linkage study from Michael Schuman.
- Housing
  - Allow for creative approach (zoning)
  - Eco village
  - More options (tiny house)
  - Affordable – cooperative
- Support Local Biz
  - NC-RDC
  - Highest rate of biz startups

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STEERING COMMITTEE**

*Participants: Village/Town Economic Development Committee, Economic Development Office, Canton Central School, Grasse River Heritage Development Corp., St. Lawrence Health System, St. Lawrence University, SUNY Canton*

- Vision for Housing
  - There is an aging housing stock.
  - Need housing for younger people and those of retirement age.

- New move in ready housing stock.
- Not much equity in the housing market/no return on investment.
- Developers are afraid to build on spec. Hard to recoup costs. High tax burden in village.
- Bad investment to buy homes in town/village. Not much return on investment.
- Not many housing options for low income families and individuals.
- There are many homes in disrepair. There is also a fear that making home improvements will lead to tax increase.
- Tax burden vs. income: big part of decision making
  - Some people live in trailers to avoid paying taxes.
- 67% of buildings in Village are tax exempt
- Low income communities
  - Balance to not drive up housing costs.
- Local Chamber new director
  - Riverside Drive Corridor
  - Plaza downtown
- Ways to revitalize downtown and Riverside Drive
  - Jubilee Plaza
    - Strategies to treat properties differently from a codes perspective?
    - Eminent domain option?
    - Vision for that space:
      - Center of economic development.
      - Incubator
      - Community market
      - Municipal offices
- Shared Services/Consolidate
  - County property
  - Road Facilities – Combined
- Opportune piece of property between Village and SLU to develop.
- Marketing
  - Internal and external (attractions for residents and tourists?)
  - People within the community doesn't always see what's here and available.
  - Military installation: should market Canton to military families.
- Canadian tourism fluctuates with the dollar.
- Recreational use of natural resources.
  - Blueway Plan in LWRP
  - Trails
- We should be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to where development happens.
  - There is a concern about sprawl and pulling out of the downtown.
  - Zoning doesn't reflect current desires.
- Rt. 11 between Canton and Potsdam
  - Businesses are growing closer together. Transportation planning is needed for the Rt. 11 corridor.
  - No turnoff lanes.
- Bypass
  - DOT corridor study: where are they in this process?
  - Looking at alternatives.

- University relationships with town.
  - Students generally feel uncomfortable venturing into town (SUNY Canton students primarily)
  - SUNY Canton is 75% diverse in a town that is 2% diverse.
  - Basic needs are not being met in town for minority students.
  - SUNY Canton is making efforts to be part of the community.
  - There seems to be a conflict between students at SUNY Canton and SLU because of differences in demographics.
- Many people in the community telecommute for work.
  - This presents a great opportunity but need the technological infrastructure to do so.
  - The Town has desirable traits to draw people here and has intellectual capital.
- Need to build tech-infrastructure
- Consider collaborating with Potsdam?

***Note: This above information is a summary of input gathered during stakeholder group discussions. It is not intended to be a verbatim account.***

**List of stakeholder group participants:**

- |                        |                                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Ben Dixon           | 15. Klaus Proemm                    |
| 2. Caitlin Boreyko     | 16. Leigh Rodriguez                 |
| 3. Carol Pynchon       | 17. Linda Casserly                  |
| 4. Catherine Tedford   | 18. Maria Corse                     |
| 5. Chase Villene       | 19. Marybeth Warburton              |
| 6. Dakota Casserly     | 20. Richard Grover                  |
| 7. Doug Scheidt        | 21. Sam Joseph                      |
| 8. Emily Anderson      | 22. Steve Molnar                    |
| 9. Gloria McAdam       | 23. Sue Longshore                   |
| 10. Jennifer Whittaker | 24. Toby Irven                      |
| 11. Jill Brevit        | 25. Economic Development Committee  |
| 12. John Casserly      | 26. Economic Development Consortium |
| 13. Jim Smith          | 27. Sustainability Committee        |
| 14. Jon Ignatowski     |                                     |

**Stakeholder meetings to be scheduled:**

- Building, Housing and Development
- Health and Human Services
- Business Community
- Agriculture