

Chapter 2: Community Participation

Prior to developing the Comprehensive Plan, the Barrington Planning Board sought to determine the needs and desires of the Town's citizens with regards to land use issues. The Board accomplished this by developing, distributing, collecting, and compiling the results of a survey of the Town's residents. The survey results informed the Board's approach to developing the Comprehensive Plan was then developed to represent the expressed needs and desires as visions and goals for the future of the town. This chapter discusses the survey and its results, and provides additional information on the five Focus Groups formed from interested residents

Section 2.1: The Planning Board Survey*

The Planning Board established nine criteria which were critical to the success of the survey and used them during the survey development process. These criteria were:

1. Reach a significant portion of households within the community.
2. Provide useful demographic information.
3. Address land use, services, current and future issues and preservation.
4. Take approximately 10 minutes or less to complete.
5. Provide an easy way to express agreement, neutrality or disagreement with the factors.
6. Provide for verbatim input.
7. Provide for prioritization.
8. Easy to return to the planning board.
9. Easy to reduce and analyze the data.

The following paragraphs describe how the Planning Board addressed each of the above criteria:

1. Reach a significant portion of households within the community:

After discussion and review of the previous attempt to distribute a survey at the town's clean up day and the resulting failure to obtain sufficient input the board decided a direct mailing to all town residents would be the best way to obtain input. Additionally, the process was "advertised" in the town newsletter prior to distribution of the survey in hopes that it would encourage participation. Several other methods of distribution, such as enlisting a local Boy Scout Troop to distribute the surveys, were discussed but the consensus feeling was that the direct mail approach would insure wide spread distribution.

2. Provide useful demographic information:

The board discussed multiple demographic factors and arrived at the conclusion that most of them added little or no value or were overly intrusive and in fact added little or no real value. The board settled on two key questions which were in what zoning district do you reside and are you a year round or seasonal resident. Some of the other questions discussed were: age, length of residence, how long the participant intended to live in the town, economic factors, education levels, occupations, etc.

3. Address land use, services, current and future issues and preservation:

The board reviewed the survey that had previously been developed and benchmarked surveys used by other “local” towns. After discussion the board agreed to divide the survey into sections dealing with current land use, services, issues which are currently being discussed either within the town or in the area, potential future issues and preservation.

4. Take approximately 10 minutes or less to complete:

The board agreed that they had all taken surveys which were much too long. The consensus was that if the survey took too long to complete participants would either not complete it and throw it away or just proceed to check off boxes without thinking about the questions. The board piloted the survey and found that it took approximately 10 minutes to complete and that the time required was reasonable.

5. Provide an easy way to express agreement, neutrality or disagreement with the factors:

The board attempted to balance the ease of completion and data reduction with getting an adequate level of input. The board also felt it was necessary to include a “neutral” answer so that we wouldn’t force respondents into a category if they really had no feeling one way or another. AS a result most of the questions were developed so they elicited either an agree, neutral or disagree response.

6. Provide for verbatim input:

Previous experience has shown that it is important to allow survey respondents to verbalize their thoughts and comment on specific topics as well as provide any general input they desire. Experience has shown that in many cases this provides critical input that cannot be captured by the survey questions alone.

7. Provide for prioritization:

The board agreed that in addition to the questions that they also needed to get a sense of the priority the respondent attached to the various topics. This was accomplished by asking the respondent to identify the subject within each of the general sections that they felt was most important. The board had considered requesting the respondents to rank the topics 1 to n but concluded that would add significantly to the time required to complete the survey and probably would not provide that much incremental value.

8. Easy to return to the planning board:

The survey was designed and printed as a tabloid document which could be tri folded. Using this document format we were able to put the name and address on one surface so that it could be mailed to the populace and it would then allow the respondent to refold the document so that the town hall address, which was preprinted on the document, could be used to mail it back. The instructions indicated that the completed form could be mailed, brought to the town hall or given to any planning board member. Unfortunately, in an effort to minimize the cost of the survey we did not provide return postage, which may have limited the response.

9. Easy to reduce and analyze the data:

The survey was structured so that the data could be easily entered into an excel spreadsheet for tabulation and summarization inclusive of graphical display of the results. Once the surveys were sent out and returned an individual entered the data for each survey into an Excel spreadsheet where it was subsequently analyzed and the results graphically displayed. The data was set up in a way that made it very easy to cut and display by the various demographic segments such as seasonal vs. year round or lake residential vs. agricultural residential.

Section 2.2: Survey Results – Next Steps*

Having reviewed the data to the first order there are several things that are critical next steps. Since the response rate was approximately evenly divided between the lake residential and agricultural populations it appears on the surface to be a balanced response, or at least until one realizes that the populace itself is not evenly split along those lines. More to the point the response rate for the lake residential is unbalanced, to the high end, with respect to the general population since they make up a lower fraction of the overall population. Additionally, since a substantial portion of the agricultural population are Mennonites, who more likely than not, did not participate in the survey some effort must be taken to first substantiate the results and conclusions with the general population and proactively seek input from the Mennonite population.

Having done that and found no significant sampling errors the next logical step would be to prioritize the responses using AHP (Analytical Hierarchical Process) which paired comparisons to construct an overall priority rating scheme for the survey results. That should then be followed up by something like QFD (Quality Functional Deployment) to construct a prioritized set of community goals which address the input from the community as a whole. Even though both of the previously referenced analytical tools have had wide spread use in the technology sector they have applicability to the social environment as well.

Section 2.3: Survey Results Summary*

There were approximately 950 surveys sent out. Approximately 25 were returned by the Postal Service for incorrect addresses or were undeliverable. There were approximately 238 respondents for a response rate of 26%.

The survey had relatively equal response between the major segments of the town's population: year round, seasonal, lake residential and agricultural residential.

- **Natural Resources and Recreation:**
Noise limits on the lake needs to be enforced all the time.
- **Land Use:**
A solid majority believe that the town should maintain its rural character and there was general agreement is that all areas should be preserved with overwhelming priority given to areas near the lake. Preventing sprawl was also indicated as a priority.
- **Population and Housing:**
A majority support the regulation of development of all types of residential dwellings. A

significant number of respondents indicated that there is a need for the Town to regulate the location of junkyards, lakefront development, adult entertainment businesses, and oversee rental properties with respect to occupancy levels, noise, pets, vehicles, and septic system impact.

- **Transportation:**
Improving town road conditions were given a high priority regarding services.
- **Services and Infrastructure:**
There was no strong support for public water or sewer service.
- **Community Organizations, Institutions and Government:**
There is a need to strictly enforce the zoning codes that are currently in place. Many respondents also commented on taxes.
- **Economy:**
Employment opportunities need to be provided and there was support for light industrial, commercial and agricultural development. There was very little support for heavy industrial development.

*Thanks to David Wilcox for providing the commentary in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.



Figure 2.1: The results of the Planning Board's 2005 survey indicate strong community support for the retention of rural and agrarian landscapes such as Crystal Valley, shown in the above image.

Section 2.4: Citizen Focus Groups

Widespread interest among many Town residents in the comprehensive planning process led the Planning Board to organize five Focus Groups consisting of interested citizens in May 2007. These Focus Groups provided residents with an official forum for voicing their concerns about land use issues in the Town and participating in the development of the Plan document by providing their concerns, ideas, and suggestions to G/FLRPC staffers. The five Focus Groups were:

1. Natural Resources

This Focus Group looked at a variety of issues and topics broadly related to natural resource protection and enhancement, including water quality issues, the protection and preservation of steep slopes, glens, woodlots; preservation of vistas; land use and environmental issues along the lakefront; wildlife preservation and hunting, and recreational uses of open spaces such as trails.

2. Economic and Commercial Development

This Focus Group looked at land uses along the Rt. 14 A corridor, alternate energy promotion, winery promotion, housing issues, road and infrastructure maintenance and development, adult entertainment issues, home-based businesses, and general tourism promotion.

3. Community Services

This Focus Group profiled public services provided by the Town and organizations currently active in the community. It also identified ways of improving service delivery and supporting grass roots community activities aimed at fostering a greater sense of community in the Town.

4. Agriculture

This Focus Group looked at the preservation of working agricultural land and vineyards as well as techniques for ensuring that such lands can remain open space after active agriculture and viniculture ceases.

5. General Land Use Issues and Historic Preservation Issues

This Focus Group concentrated on formulating a general policy for land use development in the Town and identifying specific components of the zoning code that need revision. It also discussed historic preservation, a critical issue for preserving the town's current rural character.

Each focus group was provided with a series of excerpts from other town comprehensive plans that assisted the members with conceptualizing and organizing their thoughts. The focus group met on several occasions separately from regular Planning Board meetings to discuss their issues and ideas. The Focus Groups used these excerpts as a guide for compiling their own notes, which were returned to G/FLRPC staff. G/FLRPC staff reviewed the Focus Groups' notes and integrated them into the Plan document along with standard best planning practices for rural/agrarian towns like Barrington. There was a considerable degree of overlap among the topics covered by these five focus groups, which was partially intentional in that is allowed for broad community consensus to emerge on key issues.

Please see the "Acknowledgements" page at the beginning of this plan (page v.) for a list of the members of each focus group.

Section 2.5: Review of Plans, Reports, and Studies

The following plans, reports, and studies were reviewed by G/FLRPC staff to provide additional background information for the Barrington Comprehensive Plan. Good comprehensive plans should integrate, where applicable, a range of concepts and policies from related documents such as earlier comprehensive plans, county-wide and region-wide studies, corridor plans, watershed management and land use plans, and other documents that offer insights for consideration in the municipal comprehensive planning process.

Title: Town of Barrington Comprehensive Development Plan.

Year: 1976.

Barrington's former Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the Town Planning Board in 1975-1976. This modest Plan includes an inventory of existing demographic and land use conditions, commentary on taxation and public services, and six key goals that inform a list of policy statements. The six goals are:

1. Support Viable Agriculture.
2. Adequate and Decent Housing.
3. Safe and Efficient Transportation System.
4. Protect Unique and Valuable Natural Resources.
5. Provide Recreational Facilities to Meet Public Needs.
6. Support Industrial, Business and Commercial Growth, Consistent with a Well-Planned Community.

The plan's policy statements are designed to realize these six goals. The policy statements are organized into a series of categories known as "systems," which are labeled as Residential, Commercial, Agriculture/Residential, Agriculture/Conservation/Recreation, Utilities and Refuse Disposal, Other Public Facilities, and Town Government. Each one of these categories has policy statements assigned to it that are aimed at improving local conditions with regard to the specific categories; however, key information such as responsible parties, timeframes, and funding sources, are not always identified.

This Plan recognized many of the issues that the Town is addressing in its new Plan. Topics such as the protection and support of working agricultural land, the preservation of natural and cultural resources, the encouragement of small commercial operations, the protection of the lakefront's residential characteristics, and the improvement of public roads are all briefly commented upon in the 1976 Plan. The new Plan expands and elaborates on these, and many more, topics and provides more concrete information on how the Town can effectively address these issues in the planning process.

Title: Yates County Looking Ahead: A Planning and Design Guide.

Year: 1990.

This report, sometimes known as the "Trancik Report" after its author, Roger Trancik, is a comprehensive county-wide study of Yates County's scenic and aesthetic resources. This report was developed to provide municipal officials with a guidebook for preparing municipal land use planning documents. Essentially, this report argues that the County and its municipalities should strive for carefully considered, well planned growth in order to preserve their rich array of natural resources.

This valuable study includes background information on the geologic and human history of the County, an explanation of the impacts of human activities on natural resources, a detailed "scenic

resources inventory” for each town that identifies natural and cultural resources such as scenic viewsheds, steep slopes, wooded areas, and historic sites that are worthy of protection through local land use regulations; extensive commentary on proper growth management practices and how to ensure new development fits within and conforms to the predominately rural and agricultural characteristics of the area; and information on how to realize such rural design principles through municipal planning and zoning practices and public outreach activities.

Title: Yates County Agricultural Development and Farmland Enhancement Plan.

Year: 2004.

This plan was prepared by the Yates County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board with the assistance of the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County, the Yates County Department of Planning, the Yates County Soil & Water Conservation District, and Shepstone Management Company.

This plan identifies the many critical contributions that working agricultural operations make to Yates County, including the preservation of rural land and wooded areas, the limiting of “urban sprawl” and reinforcement of rural character, the provision of year-round business and employment for area residents, and the reduction in cost and demand for public services such as water and sewer.

The Plan consists of a detailed profile of the economics of Yates County agriculture, including dairying, grape production, and forestry; a review of the legal techniques available to preserve working agricultural land; commentary and analysis of surveys done of agricultural producers, agribusiness, and non-farm residents, and lastly a detailed listing of specific policies and actions that can be undertaken by County agencies, municipalities, farmers, and private landowners to reinforce, protect, and encourage agricultural activities in the County. Key policies include protecting agricultural land through zoning codes and the enactment of strong right-to-farm laws in each town.

Where appropriate, material from this study has been integrated into the Barrington Comprehensive Plan, especially with regards to the Plan’s recommendations on preserving working agricultural land and natural resources.

Title: Route 14A Corridor Study: Yates County, New York.

Year: 2006.

The Route 14A Corridor Study was prepared by the Route 14A advisory committee, which consisted of a range of officials from Yates County towns, villages, departments and agencies. Other involved agencies included the Yates County Legislature, the Yates County Chamber of Commerce, New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT), Genesee Transportation Council (GTC), and outside consultants.

This study was prepared to improve the safety and efficiency of the Route 14A corridor, which is about 23 miles long and passes through Yates County from the Yates-Ontario County line south through the towns of Benton, Milo, Barrington and Starkey as well as the villages of Penn Yan and Dundee to the Yates-Schuyler County line. The study inventories current land uses, transportation conditions, and economic development opportunities along the corridor; identifies potential improvements to land use regulations, safety and efficiency conditions, transportation conditions, and economic development activities; and includes specific comments and recommendations regarding Barrington (as well as all other towns and villages within the corridor) which have been integrated, where applicable, into this Comprehensive Plan.

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