Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
Regional Engagement Sub-Regional Forum

November 5, 2014

Seneca County Breakout Session

Session led by Greg Albert
Notes by Razy Kased

Attendees:
Bonnie Hosford, Village of Waterloo
Bob Aronson, Seneca County IDA
Jim Armstrong, Seneca Count IDA
Jeffrey Bennet, Waterloo Redevelopment & Restoration
Chris Baer, New York State Department of State
Bob Pass, NYSEG
Ben Murphy, Hillside Family of Agencies
Steve Bregande, HP Neun
Cindy Lerenzett, Seneca County Board of Supervisors
August Sinicropi, Seneca Falls Planning Board
Menzo Case, Generations Bank
Chris Iverson, Chrisantha, Inc.
Chris Woods, HP Neun
Bruce Habberfield, Finger Lakes Railway
MaryAnn Young, The Young Agency
Neil Teague, Seneca Falls Machine
Peter Brown, Seneca County Planning & Building Code Enforcement
Jim King, Generations Bank
Bill Bordeau, Seneca County Planning and Community Development
Ted Cupp, Thirsty Owl Wine
Jane Shaffer, Sessler Co.
Harriet Haynes, Seneca County Planning and Community Development
Jeff Shipley, Seneca County Chamber
John Vrabel, Seneca County Workforce Development
Don Northrup, Village of Waterloo
Mark Benjamin, Seneca Meadows Landfill
JaMone Turner, Empire State Development
Michael Scaglione, Bank of the Finger Lakes

Brownfields

- Blighted property located at Routes 5/20 in Waterloo (Georges Grocery Store)
- State can play a role in developing regulations that would help limit liability concerns

Economic Distress

- State business climate a concern
- Sewer infrastructure and water/water pressure improvements needed for attraction/retention of businesses
- Quality of life needs to be a focus in order to attract workers to the area including recreation and tourism
- #1 issue is infrastructure especially along the 318 corridor
- Traffic a concern along 318 corridor as well near outlet mall and with trucks from the landfill
- Businesses need to know that infrastructure is in place and that capacity is there (no surprises)
- Unified economic development approach is needed
- Identify and target specific industry clusters
- Align all agencies towards common goals
- Attracting businesses will help attract spin-off housing development as new residents locate within the County
- Growing industry tax base a goal
- Job retention should be just as important as job attraction
- High quality jobs are needed
- In order to attract and expand business in the Town of Seneca Falls it is important to have assets such as infrastructure and educated workforce. Limited infrastructure availability is turning companies away.
- Businesses are the drive for investment in infrastructure and in creating jobs, not government
- Need successful economic development projects to contribute to the tax base

Downtowns

- Key downtown areas within the County include: Villages of Ovid; Lodi; Interlaken; along with Seneca Falls and Waterloo
- Development of Greater Rochester Health Fund, a citizen led program designed to improve physical health; economic health; and social health. Program is in place in Galen; Savannah; Clyde; Dundee; Lodi, and Ovid

Tourism and Recreation

- Three key strengths for county: water, wineries, women's heritage museum;

- Key tourism assets include Montezuma Wildlife refuge; three state parks; and women's heritage sites
- Being the "gateway to the finger lakes" helps to attract visitors and could be utilized to attract more
- National Memorial Day Museum (2016 is 150th anniversary)
- "Celebrate/commemorate"; thousands of visitors, held memorial day weekend with car show and 5K race;
- CFA application for multi-county wastewater facility to help the wineries of 3-brothers; fox run; and Anthony Road. (wineries struggling to meet wastewater treatment needs)
- Need representatives from tourism community as part of this project
- Study previously completed to move tourists between sites along the canal and connecting the businesses districts of Waterloo and Seneca Falls. Never was completed do to the lower than expected visitor numbers.
- Connections between economic development and tourism can be stronger. An example is the landfill wetland development which has attracted bird populations and visitors.

Waterfronts

- Blueway trail
- Communities have great waterfronts; need better public access
- Ovid working on Sheldrake park development
- Many gems located along the lakeshore in the County
- Waterloo has oak island- provide an area to boat to and near Canal locks
- Hotel development needed to attract tourists
- Ensure quality of life along the lakefronts as well as retain the identity of the Seneca Lakes for the residents
- Emphasize the Canal as a strength

Natural resources/Energy

- There are capacity limitations related to energy
- Need to harness the lakes energy in Seneca County to utilize resources
- NYSEG is making strides to increasing energy capacity
- Renewal resource park located across from the landfill producing electricity and natural gas

Land Use

- Connection with Cornell is key for agriculture community
- Need to speed up the permitting process (reduce bureaucracy)
- Canal Core took five years to align necessary permits with DOT

Buildings/Housing

- Need housing for employees with median-incomes
- Facing same challenges of Yates County with large number of high-income rental properties
- "workforce housing" should be the focus; target rents and costs for middle-income workers
- Need to refurbish existing housing
- Rental properties needed to attract employees
- Need to enforce zoning/building codes to reduce blight of homes in various municipalities
- State needs to take the lead to help reduce blight
- Need to align resources, such as bank loans, into targeted areas
- Housing stock is deteriorating
- Increase in blight along routes 5/20 as you drive further south
- Pockets of City of Geneva also blighted
- Interlaken successfully developed Senior housing with the use of federal, state, and local funds
- Need to identify additional ways to secure grant funding for housing
- How can we make housing development profitable for developers while also meeting the needs of the community (middle income housing)
- Geography is strength as Seneca County is 45 minutes to Rochester and Syracuse.
- Rental pressures in Seneca Falls with the colleges located close by
- Local people are being priced out of the housing along Seneca/Cayuga lakes with many houses being rented out to visitors impacting the quality of life of neighbors
- Property taxes are high as a % of housing value; limiting the development of higher priced homes as the cost of property maintenance and property taxes are unaffordable

Infrastructure

- Transportation infrastructure needs to be a focus including freight networks of railroads and trucks; and bridges.
- Trucks are being routed by GPS through villages, is there a way to prevent this?
- Traffic along 414 due to trucks from the landfill
- 318 Corridor traffic
- Water infrastructure is in place, but no sewer
- What are the infrastructure capacities? Unknown capacity is limiting investors and businesses
- Capacity of water in? Water out? Energy capacity? Current infrastructure locations and capability?

- Infrastructure inventory needed, what funding is available?
- High speed internet infrastructure needed
- Rural access to internet needs to be improved
- Rail needed to attract large companies
- Seneca County Airport a key asset; extension of runway is planned over next 3-4 years with $4 Million in capital improvement; going from 4,700 feet to 5,500 feet. This will allow for more flights and the ability to land in poor weather.
- Outlet mall is hitting infrastructure capacity
- Traffic bottlenecks at 414 and 5/20
- Funding limitations has prevented expansion of infrastructure in this area
- Waterloo has water capacity for Seneca County and stores water for emergencies. Being downhill from lake is a strength as they do not need to pump the water
- Processing station is needed to utilize water
- Seneca Falls water plant partners with Waterloo with both Seneca and Cayuga lakes
- Infrastructure needed at former Seneca Army Depot

Other Plans

- Climate is favorable for attracting business/workers
- Smart workforce in the area
- Strengthen connections within the county amongst various organizations
- Need to be ahead of the curve, a 10-year strategic plan is not appropriate as the needs are prevalent today
- Vision needed for recovery and growth
- Private sector/businesses should be at the table and have their voices heard
- Three priorities should be identified to help stay focused
- Need to partner with private sector to get more dollars up front and strengthen CFA applications
- Should reach out to scoring committee on CFA projects to educate them on the key aspects and importance of each application
- Improve scoring on CFA applications by emphasizing job creation and private dollar leveraging.