

TOWN OF BALLSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE



Welcome to
TOWN OF BALLSTON
A Farms First Community

MEETING SUMMARY

Purpose: Comprehensive Plan Update – Mobile Visioning Workshops

Date, Time and Locations: October 1, 2020, 5:00-7:00 PM, Living Hope Christian Church, 978 Saratoga Road, Ballston Lake

October 3, 2020, 9:00-11:00 AM, Anchor Diamond Park, Middleline Road, Ballston Lake

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Mobile Workshop Overview</p>	<p>The Town is initiating a targeted update to its 2006 Comprehensive Plan to reflect the needs of today and identify a vision for the future. The Comprehensive Plan provides a future framework for a range of topics such as land use, economic development, infrastructure, transportation, neighborhoods, the environment and housing. The Comprehensive Plan is being developed by the Town of Ballston and a consultant team led by MJ Engineering and Land Surveying.</p> <p>Public engagement is critical to shaping the vision for the future for the Town. The Comprehensive Plan Update includes a robust public engagement approach to learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing the Town. The input gathered will be used to help inform the overall Comprehensive Plan Update.</p> <p>As part of the public engagement approach, two Mobile Visioning Workshops were held at different locations in the Town to provide information about the project and gather input to help shape the targeted plan update and community vision. Social distancing guidelines due to COVID-19 remained in place at both events and were held outdoors in the parking areas of each location. Each event included the same presentation of materials and activities but occurred at different times and locations to provide the greatest opportunity for community participation. The date and time of each event follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile Visioning Workshop Day 1 – October 1, 5:00PM-7:00PM, Living Hope Christian Church, 978 Saratoga Road, Ballston Lake • Mobile Visioning Workshop Day 2 – October 3, 9:00AM-11:00AM, Anchor Diamond Park, Middle Line Road, Ballston Lake <p>The mobile workshops included several activity stations to provide an opportunity for participants to learn about the project and offer comments and feedback on various topics, including land use and a vision for the future of the Town. The activity stations were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Station • Activity Station One: Online Community Survey • Activity Station Two: Character Areas • Activity Station Three: Visioning Poll
Welcome Station	<p>The Mobile Visioning Workshop began with a Welcome Station board with information to get participants acquainted with the plan update project and a participant guide with information about each of the activity station.</p>
Activity Station One: Online Community Survey	<p>Activity Station One included the Online Community Survey. A tablet was set up for participants to take the survey in-person, and survey information cards were available for participants to take and complete the survey on their own time.</p> <p>The purpose of the survey was to gather input from residents, business owners and other stakeholders about Ballston. This information will help inform the future vision, goals and recommendations for the Town and guide the Comprehensive Plan update.</p> <p>The online survey was available on the project website at www.EnvisionBallston.com.</p>
Activity Station Two: Character Areas	<p>Activity Station Two provided an opportunity for participants to share thoughts and ideas related to land uses for the different character areas of Town. For the purposes of this exercise the Town was divided into four character areas, including Rural, Hamlet, Ballston Lake and the Route 50 Corridor. For each character area, participants were asked a series of questions to help understand the types of land uses community members support or do not support. Responses were collected on comment sheets or submitted online via the project website. Following is a description of each of the character areas identified and a summary of responses received to the questions asked for each.</p>

Character Area: Rural

The rural area of Ballston is characterized by farmland and open spaces, with single family residential development along the road frontage and occasional small-scale commercial establishments. For the purposes of this exercise, this area is located primarily west of Route 50.

Participant Questions:

What types of land uses would you support in the rural areas of Town? (i.e. agricultural, residential, commercial, etc.)

- Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Those mentioned and recreation
- Agricultural and underdeveloped
- All if planned well. Everyone should have a right to sell or develop their land if need be with planning and smart growth
- All, with a balance
- Agriculture
- Agricultural, very limited residential (as in 4-acre+ lot sizes, no exceptions)
- 1) Agricultural; 2) Solar “farms” but only if hidden from public view; 3) more passive parks
- Agricultural mostly
- Primarily agriculture – some residential, very limited commercial (if at all), farm related
- Agricultural. Also, community solar, but not unlimited. Biking/walking trails, farm stands and farm stores
- Agricultural, some residential
- Agricultural. Walking trails
- Farming, agricultural, horseback riding, farmer’s markets, pick your own, 5 acres minimum to build single family home in rural area

Would you support conservation of undeveloped areas?

- Yes, to support wildlife habitat
- Yes, to a limit
- Yes, to keep the character of our Town
- People still have the right to sell or develop land. We need the tax base
- Yes, if possible because we are losing more and more open space
- Absolutely! The desirability of our town hinges on vast swaths of rural charm. It is why many of us chose to make Ballston our home
- Yes, because Ballston then keeps its greenspace. Don’t let Ballston lose its greenspace.
- Yes. I want to see less traffic and more wildlife
- Absolutely. Conserving land – it’s what makes our area beautiful, peaceful. Farming, passive parkland, hiking trails should be considered.
- Yes
- Yes, we need open land for wildlife
- Yes, clean air, healthy recreation

- I support Saratoga PLAN. I do not understand why TDR was not used for all the development that has happened since 2005

Describe your vision for the rural area of Ballston in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.

- Existing farms will expand and add value added products. Fallow land reclaimed for farming. Young farmers encouraged to locate here.
- Very much the same – Keep farms and natural areas – smart growth – Route 50 going towards Ballston Spa has no style – green area, etc. spinney project would serve hi-end seniors to keep us from moving away.
- No more developments! Quiet streets. No more apartments!!!
- We should have sewer along Route 50 and keep commercial along there
- Sewer, more commercial development
- Farms, single family houses
- An expanded and more vibrant farming community. Ballston’s leaders must actively and fervently support this!
- Driving through and seeing lots of greenspace and low traffic.
- Not overpopulated but look homey
- Farms with crops and livestock. Farms with businesses. Family activities
- Farms, a couple solar farms, public parks, bike and walking trails
- Very little change
- A public shuttle bus making loop around nature areas and residential areas for easier public access to nature areas for all
- I would like to see a farmer’s market at Town Hall. No more development build

Character Area: Route 50 Corridor

New York State Route 50 (Route 50) extends through the entire Town, from the Village of Ballston Spa to the Town of Glenville in Schenectady County. The corridor is primarily characterized by auto-dependent commercial uses, agriculture, medium- to high-density residential uses near hamlet areas, and low-density residential uses between the major commercial areas.

Participant Questions:

What land uses would you like to see more of in the corridor?

- Agricultural related and to scale commercial. No more housing or apartments
- Golf course!
- Small businesses, more farming, orchards
- We can still keep large farms, but we need more commercial to help with taxes. People want to live here
- Commercial
- Commercial, but small businesses. No big box
- Please preserve the current agricultural areas with large buffers. Building adjacent to them would spoil their tranquility. No more apartments. Limited small commercial is good.

- More passive parks; small commercial buildings less than 5,000 square feet for small businesses; agriculture; no more residential!
- Agricultural
- I think we're maxed out on commercial. Already have several of everything. Perhaps more residential and agricultural if folks care to locate there.
- Mixed-use, ability to walk and bike
- Agricultural
- Parks, small businesses; No big-box stores, no more gas stations; no more apartment buildings

Would you support a more consistent look and feel along the Route 50 corridor? Why or why not?

- Consistent with what? Agriculture? Then yes!
- In my dreams – yes!
- Need more explanation of what this is
- Yes. It takes a lot of people to make the change. Again, we probably need sewer to get people to spend the money
- No, I like individuals choosing their own looks
- Of course, symmetry is pleasing to the eye. Ordinances must be in place going forward that dictate buildings that blend in with the rural feel of our town.
- Yes, because it has always been a hodge podge of commercial making it look unplanned, unattractive, not a desirable area to live near.
- Yes, make it look inviting.
- Yes, there should be minimum standards for aesthetics – i.e. New England types building styles (the newest CVS is the ugliest!)
- Yes, assuring this is an attractive, people-friendly look.
- Avoid over population.
- Should not all look the same – height and set-backs from road should vary for a more organic look
- Not if you are leading to strip stores, malls, etc. One of the unique things about our Town is its small town feel on Route 50. Maybe lower the speed limit.

Share your vision for the Route 50 Corridor in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.

- Not Wolf Road! Not Route 146 in Clifton Park! Not strip malls!
- Appropriate growth, light industry, small hotel, medical facilities, sports complex, restaurants, high-end condos
- No more developments, quiet streets, no more apartments
- Clean up all the run-down motels and buildings at corner of Lakehill Road and 146A but we need sewer to allow builders to do this. It will never clean up.
- Sewer; more commercial land
- Less abandoned buildings mix of small business and houses. No apartments
- If I were king for a day, I would decree the area from Larkin Drive to Outlet Road off limits to any major commercial development. Minus a couple exceptions, this stretch is a treasure to be preserved

- 1) Small Starbucks with Wi-Fi for locals to enjoy walking to on connecting sidewalks; 2) Small- to medium-sized homestyle restaurant (not a chain restaurant) that can walk to on sidewalks; 3) Small specialty food store like olive oil store, tea shop, etc. that can be walked to on sidewalks; 4) Regulate the number of barbers (there's too many and it looks strange); 5) ice cream shops; 6) candy shop, etc.
- Not overpopulated and more inviting
- Signs should have similar look to Burnt Hills businesses. That's what attracts people.
- Key Considerations
 - Protect the people who live on or use this corridor from having commercial development infringing on their quality of life and their quality.
 - Ensure setbacks, buffers, minimize light and noise pollution, minimize traffic (especially overflow that goes through neighborhoods)
 - Small-scale, locally owned businesses
- Have places of open land for wildlife
- Open space: I want it to still feel like a family-friendly, small town, rural area

Character Area: Hamlet

Hamlet areas primarily include Burnt Hills and the area immediately adjacent to the Village of Ballston Spa (near Route 67 and Route 50). The hamlet areas are characterized by mixed-use cores with a variety of small businesses, shops, residences and civic uses. These areas contribute to the small-town feel and identity of the community.

Participant Questions:

Do you support enhanced walkability in the hamlet areas? Why or why not?

- Yes – convenience
- Yes – health! Build camaraderie
- Some
- Just on busy roads. Otherwise it takes away people's land
- Yes! Bikability and walkability with safety in mind
- Absolutely. Make the hamlet have a quaint small-town feel. A town hamlet you can walk about in and enjoy food, beverages, specialty shops to browse in. A lovely day-trip getaway when people visit Saratoga. A "small", quaint, walkable town
- Absolutely. A lot of history to look at
- Burnt Hills-Is there a need besides the Stewarts, hardware store, school? Would people use sidewalks? Lakehill sidewalks little used now. Perhaps in Ballston Spa
- Yes, absolutely
- Yes, sidewalks for safety
- Yes, to lower need of car use

- What does enhanced mean? Lighting? No. Sidewalks near schools and stores

Would you support a more consistent look and feel in the hamlet areas of Town? Why or why not?

- Again, consistent with what? It consistent with historic feel, then yes. 1800s rural village
- Not cookie cutter
- Parks, farming
- No, I like variety
- Is this a rhetorical question? No cluster subdivisions. Two stories max.
- Yes. It needs to look planned, not haphazard business growth that doesn't fit together. We've lived with this unplanned commercial look for too long. Must eliminate the Crawford property demolition site and the Lakehill and Route 50 gas station
- Keep the history
- Burnt Hills hamlet is ideal! Not Ballston Spa so much. Consistency needed outside of the downtown (which is lovely)
- Keep the historic, traditional look. Build on that. Don't create a new look.
- Avoid a lot of commercial development
- Leave beautiful old buildings. Especially Village Hall.
- I would like to see code enforcement. I do not like cluster subdivisions. Preserve the historic areas, create a code to prevent building "out of place" structures

Share your vision for the hamlet areas in the next 5, 10 or 20 years?

- Ballston Lake Main Street has great potential for a little commercial area. It should be a hamlet.
- Not much different than it is now.
- It looks like a quaint country
- It looks like a quaint country vacation town with connecting sidewalks and quaint small businesses, outdoor cafes and eateries with adult beverages would be great. Must be well planned. If you need sewer don't bother the residents with this! Make the contractors pay for sewer along 50.
- Keep the history
- Keep it cozy and cute, historic (Burnt Hills). We are minutes from any sort of business. Let's keep it residential
- Single family homes, small scale business, walk and bike friendly, quiet, limited car traffic
- Moderate growth, single family homes
- More independent shops, i.e. hardware store
- Lower speed limits. Enforce codes. No more developments. Keep small Town feel

Character Area: Ballston Lake

This character area includes the area surrounding Ballston Lake and extends to the Town’s eastern border. Ballston Lake is approximately 3.5 miles long and 750 feet wide. The Ballston Lake watershed encompasses over 8,500 acres, primarily in the Town of Ballston. Uses surrounding the lake area are primarily residential, agricultural and undeveloped.

Participant Questions:

Would you support increased public access to the lake?

- Not where the Town incurs the cost. No lifeguard beach. More fishing and non-motorized boats.
- With proper restrictions, boat wash, speed limit. Volunteers can’t do it all
- Yes
- A better boat launch for sure. A beach with pavilion and restrooms is a no brainer
- Yes! It feels so wrong to live next to the lake for years but not have a public beach for town residents. Strongly support the town buying a property that is for sale and turning it into a public beach. Sell Fireman’s Grove to get money for this purchase as an idea. Or line item a tax called “Public Beach” for entire town.
- No, it’s a very small lake. Not for boating. But walking and swimming, yes
- Yes! Perhaps share a property or expand outlet Road access for better carry-in boat area/picnic area?
- Yes, definitely
- No!
- Yes!
- A beach would be nice for the kids. No big boats, a better kayak launch. No motorboats on such a small lake

What land uses would you support in this character area?

- Ban all professional and private use of lawn fertilizer
- Recreation – extend bike path, etc.
- Houses, small restaurants
- Not sure. No more commercial. No multi units
- 1) Public beach; 2) Public boat launch; 3) Public park for picnicking/grilling like in Saratoga State Park
- More places to visit
- Residential, agriculture and undeveloped or passive public space. Limit development. Size of homes blocking each other’s views
- Non-motor boating, walking, biking
- Better public entrance to lake
- More parks/kayak and canoe put ins
- One-acre minimum for houses. Only residential. No businesses on lake. No multi-unit dwellings

	<p>Share your vision for the Ballston Lake area in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All motorized vehicles off the lake by 2022 • No more apartments! They are overbearing and cold. Want Ballston to stay a small town with character • The fishing pier area is very dangerous. I would like that redone for better public access. • The north end is quite beautiful. Please no more building here, or at least have strict limits. Maybe the town or county can buy and preserve this area • Public access for Ballston residents with a public beach, a building with restrooms and changing rooms, a snack bar on the public beach offering hot dogs, chips, fries, soda, etc. A picnic area on the property with picnic tables and small grills like Saratoga State Park. Canoe rentals and paddle boat rentals for Ballston residents. Ballston residents live next to the lake and should have really nice access to it. • Protect the wildlife; safer lake; cleaner lake; less boat population • Hopefully CPK residents will connect to sewer so it becomes cleaner. Can't really ass much. Have never gotten in to see it! • Clear lake with better public access. A better public boat launch for canoes. Better access/easier to use • Public shuttle bus to beach or other recreational areas • No motor boats. No lawns to shoreline. No homes visible from shoreline would be nice. No building within 500 feet of shore. One-acre minimum for new houses.
<p>Activity Station Three: Live Visioning Poll</p>	<p>Activity Station Three provided an opportunity for participants to take part in a live poll to share their vision for the future of Ballston. The polling utilized Poll Everywhere, an online polling platform to provide real-time input and feedback. The software allows participant to enter in their answers to poll questions on their mobile device. The answers were then displayed on two television screens. The following includes the two questions that were asked of participants with the responses received.</p> <p>In one word, describe what you like best about the Town of Ballston?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural surroundings • Small town feel • Rural • Rural • Rural • Family-oriented • Quaint • Historic! • Scenic • History, agriculture, wildlife

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural • The lake and community • scenery <p>Describe your vision for the Town in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An enforced noise ordinance for loud vehicles • Keep small town rural, quiet • A quieter soundscape • Keep it small & quaint! • The amount of traffic doesn't <u>increase</u> beyond how much it has recently ballooned, Rt 50 south of Lakehill is cleaned up with the addition of small-town <u>quaint commercial</u> like a coffee shop with WiFi, specialty food <u>restaurant</u> with <u>outdoor patio</u> seating, tea shop, etc., sidewalks connecting the shops along Rt. 50. Contractors doing this work pay for <u>sewer</u> if <u>sewer is needed</u>, <u>residents</u> are NOT included in any <u>sewer plans</u> for this <u>Rt. 50 corridor</u> update. It <u>becomes</u> a lovely small-town walkable commercial area that is surrounded by RURAL area • A beautiful mixture of rural, residential, and commercial • Awesome • Not <u>overpopulated</u>, <u>safer roads</u>, <u>more wildlife</u> • Some <u>sewer</u> and <u>more development</u> • Growing <u>but rustic charm</u> • Community
<p>General Comments</p>	<p>General comment sheets were also provided for participants to share additional input. A summary of general responses follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it a small town • Keep it rural • No more apartments • No more industrial • No more development on Route 50 • Increase minimum lot size • No building on less than 5 acres in rural • No sewers • Consider zoom seminars for future meetings • Keep us small and country • Why do we have to get any bigger? Why do we need more businesses? Many come here for the quaint old houses, churches, etc. Do not need any more apartments or condos. (no jobs to support them anyway)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of “green strategies” should be required in the granting of permits to developers – i.e. using pervious paving for parking lots. It feels like area is turning into being covered with black impervious paving which raises summer heat.
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This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and agreements reached at this meeting. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by:
Andrew Gillcrist

cc: Project File, Town Board

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