

City of Plattsburgh - Common Council



*Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion
September 3, 2020*

Plattsburgh Common Council Members

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Malana Tamer, City Planner for the City of Plattsburgh, provided opening remarks. The city is in the process of updating its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), updating its Comprehensive Plan, and soon will be updating the zoning. While the LWRP work is nearing completion, the Comprehensive Plan work is only just beginning, and is being headed by a Public Advisory Committee. This meeting with the Common Council is intended as a preliminary discussion to identify big picture issues, goals and considerations as we move forward into public meetings about the future vision of the city. We anticipate additional meetings with other city boards, staff and the general public in the weeks and months to come.

Existing Comprehensive Plan. *When looking to update the existing comprehensive plan, it is important to reflect on what portions of the older plan may still be viable, and what portions are no longer relevant.*

- Previous Comp Plan was very heavy on specific zoning recommendations. Since this project will include zoning updates, do not think it is necessary to repeat that format. The new Comp Plan should be more vision and goals-based - similar to format/style of latest Burlington plan.*
- Can take all of the "development" stuff out of the old Comp Plan - we don't need this. Should look at core areas of general land use instead.*

Land Use Flexibility / Zoning Approach. *The city would very much like to provide more flexibility in land use and zoning so that neighborhoods can adapt to the way we want to live.*

- *Fewer Special Permits*. Too many uses now require a special permit. For example Recreation/Health Gym fits with the code but requires many provisions under spatial permit. Need to make it less burdensome.
- *"15 minute Neighborhood"* - Would like to see neighborhoods where people are always within a short walk of local neighborhood shops and services.
- *Eli's Market on Saily Ave* is an example of this - this is not permitted under zoning but it should be. Provide for some mixed uses.
- *Walkability is the key to success*. If we had 15-Minute neighborhoods it would help solve the parking problem and the traffic problems.
- *There is a movement away from older "Euclidian" style zoning and more toward a "Form-based" code* which emphasizes building form more heavily than types of allowed uses.
- *Too many restrictions in the current zoning*.
- *Only larger companies can afford to develop in city - individuals and families do not do this anymore*.
- *Should provide some incentive zoning provisions to try and encourage more affordable housing options*.
- *Form based codes could help provide flexibility*.
- *Zoning is limited to 1 principal building per lot - this is a limitation we need to change*.

Residential Conversions

- *There is a housing shortage*. City cannot grow "outward" - needs to "densify inward" where it can.
- *City needs to expand housing stock and variety*.
- *City only has a 2.2% vacancy rate, residential real estate market is moving fast*.
- *Tighten up control of residential conversions in/around college area for college housing to reduce impacts of student housing on surrounding homes*. Hummingbird House gave up due to pressure around it - it is now a 2-family.
- *Provide more flexibility for single family homes in certain areas to be modified to accommodate in-law apartments, accessory dwelling units or two-family so that the city can adapt and grow more organically*.
- *Single family homes - should we allow these to evolve into a duplex in certain situations?*
- *Explore "Land-Value Taxation" as an alternative approach*.
- *Smaller scale housing / tiny houses movement*.

- *Diversify for different ages, aging in place.*
- *Need to keep the city affordable. If too many new people come in it could raise price of living and make the city unaffordable.*

Parking

- *More people walking means less people needing to drive and park.*
- *What does the city really need for parking? Recent survey shows only 63% of residents own 1 vehicle, 20% have no vehicle.*
- *Current parking requirements are a impediment to development.*
- *Parking requirements are too strict, and based on random square footage requirements that often make no sense. Parking minimums may be too strict.*
- *Actual parking requirements should be based on real-life use, such as actual number of seats and employees in the restaurant, number of patients a doctors' office can see, etc.*

Streets

- *Would like to see fewer One-Way streets.*
- *Streets need to be more pedestrian-friendly (and less commuter-friendly) for travel and socialization.*
- *Goal had always been to get vehicles through the city quickly and easily, and now we want to keep people here and give them a reason to stay, walk around.*
- *City does not have a lot of public transport. Need to partner with Clinton County on how to develop this better.*
- *Coordinate between city and town on primary corridors - improve these passageways, provide for bike and pedestrian improvements such as complete streets. These are Gateways to the city which need improvement.*

Economy / Tourism

- *This is the only city within 100 miles - people in the surrounding area rely on us.*
- *City is the cultural hub of the region.*
- *SUNY Campus needs the city to be in good shape just as much as we rely on them - it is a two way street - this is a partnership.*
- *Declining population in the region overall, in the state. Need to attract and retain people.*
- *Even with new commercial/industrial growth out near former AFB, there is lack of local workforce to fill those jobs.*

- *Very small percentage of students stay in the region after graduating.*
- *The Community Development Office is great - this needs to be expanded, increased budget and increased staff to go out and proactively solicit local small business and help them grow.*
- *There are many 3rd floor unfinished in downtown - the economics of the return on investment apparently did not support the work involved - this is a large untapped potential. This would have been downtown residential property, but never realized. Especially around Clinton/Margaret area.*
- *Should do an inventory of underutilized/vacant properties within the city. This list is currently updated every 2 or 3 years.*
- *Most people don't even know Sailors Beach even exists - 3 to 4 miles of waterfront underutilized - how to take advantage of this and attract people to this destination.*

Parks & Activities

- *Burlington - if you are parked by King Street, they have activities for people, dog park, activity stations, etc.*
- *Identify need for Recreation Master Plan - our current parks do not meet the needs of the elderly or handicapped.*
- *Do not have a park or a dog park in downtown.*
- *Downtown needs to be an event destination.*
- *Local restaurants are a thriving draw for people, but retail is suffering. There is lots of vacant commercial space.*
- *What can be done with former city dump property?*
- *"Museum in the Streets" city walking tour of important historic sites, with information boards, planned routes.*

Public Outreach

- *Need to connect with local students and the elderly as part of the public meetings.*

Big Themes:

- *Neighborhood Flexibility*
- *Economic Growth*
- *Maintenance of Public Realm*