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# TOWN OF COLONIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

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TOWN OF COLONIE  
ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPAC)  
**COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016**



To: Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)  
From: Michael Welti, AICP, Senior Land Use Planner - Barton & Loguidice, D.P.C.  
Katie Crawford, Land Use Planner I – Barton & Loguidice, D.P.C.  
Re: Summary of Community Workshop  
Date: December 16, 2016

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## Summary Notes

Five (5) community workshops were held at locations throughout the Town in November and December of 2016. The dates, times, and locations for these “issues identification” workshops were:

- Thursday, November 10, 2016 - 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. @ Forts Ferry Elementary Auditorium
- Tuesday, November 29, 2016 - 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. @ Loudonville Elementary Auditorium
- Thursday, December 1, 2016 - 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. @ Shaker Junior High Auditorium
- Wednesday, December 7, 2016 - 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. @ Lishakill Middle School Auditorium
- Wednesday, December 14, 2016 - 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. @ The Crossings Main Meeting Room

In addition, a meeting was held with seniors at the Beltrone Living Center on Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 to 1:30 P.M. The primary purpose of these meetings was to inform the community about the comprehensive plan update process and to identify issues of concern that the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) should consider as it begins to update the Town's 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

Each meeting began with a brief presentation that introduced the Town of Colonie's team for the Comprehensive Plan Update project, explained what a comprehensive plan is, and described the process that the Town is currently undertaking to review and update its 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Following the short presentation, the Town's planning consultant for this project (from Barton & Loguidice) facilitated a discussion with attendees. Participants were asked to identify the things that they like about living and working in Colonie (things that should be protected or enhanced). They were also asked what problems and concerns should be addressed through the plan in order to improve life in Colonie.

Complete notes from each meeting were prepared and have been made available to the committee and the public via the Comprehensive Plan webpage. This summary document attempts to synthesize the findings of the series of meetings; identifying the top 10 -12 items (likes and concerns) that were mentioned in one way or another at all of the meetings as well as a few that were unique to each particular meeting.

**What do you like about living/working in Colonie? What is working, and should be protected or enhanced?**

The most common responses fell into the following broad categories:

- Quality of municipal services
  - Emergency services (Police, Fire, Ambulance)
  - DPW services – roads, water and sewer
  - Programming for youth, seniors, etc.
  - Library
- Diversity of the tax base – mix of commercial and residential keeps tax rates relatively low
  - “low taxes” often cited in comparison to the quality services (as listed above) – good value
- Recreational resources
  - Diversity of recreation opportunities – active and passive recreation
  - Bike/hike path
  - Great (and varied) parks – The Crossings, Town Pool, Golf Course, Sports Complexes, Schuyler Flatts, smaller neighborhood “pocket” parks, etc.
- Great public schools (neighborhood based schools) and good school districts – also area colleges and universities
- Historic and Cultural resources
  - Pruyn House
  - Shaker Society
- Convenient location – close to everything (work, shopping, entertainment, outdoors)
- Remaining open/green space, farms, mature trees, nature, the Pine Bush, fresh air, etc.
- Safety and Community feel (for a large town it retains some of its small town feel)
- Variety of housing options (types, price points, etc.)
- Transportation options – public transportation, sidewalks (where they exist they are appreciated). Airport, train station nearby.

**What problems/concerns should be addressed through the plan? What can be done to improve life in Colonie?**

The most common responses fell into the following broad categories

- Traffic – in general, the relationship of new development to increasing traffic
  - Many specific roadways/intersections mentioned
  - Desire for more comprehensive/town-wide study and solutions
  - Maintenance of existing roads
  - Coordination with Albany County and New York State
- Better transportation alternatives –
  - More sidewalks – safer and more pleasant pedestrian environments – especially near schools and integrated with public transportation
  - Public transportation – better stops (shelters), better sidewalk connections
  - Bicycling options – trail connections for recreational riders and bike lanes and related infrastructure for commuters and serious riders
  - Complete Streets
- Open Space Conservation – desire for the Town to take a more pro-active role

- What is protected now? What is vulnerable? What are the opportunities? What tools / funding mechanisms can we employ? The 2005 Plan includes many ideas but implementation has been lacking.
- More control over the impact of development on the environment
  - review existing laws for adequacy
  - make sure resources are available for enforcement
  - prevent clear-cutting – especially of mature trees
  - promote more “low impact” development practices
- More emphasis on design – higher standards but predictable
  - Design review
  - Sign regulations
  - Enforcement – make sure adequate resources available
- Infrastructure – relationship of new development to infrastructure needs
  - Ensure that service can keep up with development
  - Maintenance of existing infrastructure (especially older infrastructure)
- Neighborhoods - more emphasis on protecting the character of existing neighborhoods
  - Transition areas/buffers between commercial areas and higher density residential areas and these existing neighborhoods are needed
  - Visual impacts, quality of life impacts, cut through traffic, etc.
- Density and character of residential development is a problem – some concern that the Town is becoming too urbanized – some recent development considered not appealing (examples: Parkside at The Crossings and Maxwell Road project)
  - Concern about the way PDD's are being used – it appears that developers take advantage of these regulations without better outcomes (benefits) for the town
- Housing – still a lack of housing for people with special needs, lack of affordable housing
  - Includes lack of rental housing and housing for the working class – most of the new multi-family housing is high-end.
- Communication – desire for more communication between the Town and residents
  - Earlier notice related to development proposals
  - Use of additional media – television, social media, etc.
- Public Facilities – invest in maintenance and upgrades to well-used public facilities – especially the Library, Town Hall, etc.

In addition to getting around Town for this initial series of community workshops in order to encourage participation and make people aware of the comprehensive plan update process that is now underway, another goal of having multiple “issues identification” workshops at different locations was to solicit responses that might be more localized in nature. Though participants generally responded with a broad perspective, specific issues (some neighborhood-based) did come up at each of the meetings. Some of these are listed below.

#### **Forts Ferry Elementary Workshop (November 11, 2016)**

- Traffic issues along Albany Shaker Road and Vly Road
- Loss of rural areas such as farms
- Density has become too high in this area
- Looking for more local stores rather than commercial chains
- Connectivity is lacking for bike/ped

### **Loudonville Elementary Workshop (November 30, 2016)**

- New development is not cohesive with existing community character
  - Maxwell Road – Maxwell Village
- Mill Road and Sparrowbush has experienced significant increase in traffic congestion
- Community based design standards should be implemented
  - 2005 Comp. Plan recommendation for “Architectural Review Board”

### **Shaker Junior High Workshop (December 1, 2016)**

- Aging infrastructure has created the need for frequent repairs on water and sewer lines
- Lack of bike routes
- Former Tobin First Prize packing plant site is a blight on the Town

### **Lishakill Middle School Workshop (December 7, 2016)**

- Pine Bush preserve is disappearing
- Accelerating loss of suburban feel
- Disappearing wildlife
- Troy-Schenectady Road is experiencing higher than usual traffic volumes
- Update Airport Areas GEIS

### **Beltrone Living Center Workshop (December 14, 2016)**

- Density of housing in Wolf Road area has become too high
- Library needs updating
- Sites are being clear cut too frequently
- Light pollution has become a problem due to excessive lighting
- When connector from Aviation Rd. / Winners Circle to Maxwell Road is constructed, increased traffic on Aviation Rd. / Winners Circle will be a problem – concern for drivers and for pedestrians
- Parking requirements for commercial development are excessive (too much parking)

### **The Crossings Workshop (December 14, 2016)**

- Issues related to public transportation access - lack of coordination with CDTA has left a lack of pedestrian amenities near bus stops
- Increase of “cut through” traffic to/from higher volume roads has impacted quality of life in some neighborhoods
- Signage has become a problem (examples: Pioneer Bank, Church)
- Lack of connectivity between/within hamlets
- Mohawk River waterfront opportunities