

City of Watervliet Visioning Workshop

City of Watervliet Comprehensive Plan

September 10th 7:00 PM

Mayor Mike Manning provided a general introduction to the workshop. He emphasized the need for the comprehensive plan and the importance of having continued citizen participation throughout the planning process.

Margaret Irwin from River Street Planning & Development (City's consultant) went through the agenda for the meeting and asked members of the Advisory Committee to raise their hands. Most members of the committee were in attendance. Margaret then proceeded with a PowerPoint presentation of the current information developed for the comprehensive plan and facilitated the Visioning Workshop. A summary of the Workshop highlights follows:

- Where do you live? As people were signing in, they were asked to place a dot sticker on the map of Watervliet to indicate where they lived or worked in the City. There was mostly a good distribution of participants representing various areas of the City with perhaps the exception of a small area along 15th Street.
- Presentation provided a description of the Advisory Committee's responsibilities
- And provided reasons why the City is preparing a Comprehensive Plan
- Described the steps in the Comprehensive Plan process
 - A full copy of the PowerPoint presentation will be placed on the City's website
- Review of the Community Profile
 - one of the issues is that the census is dated (in terms of demographics, housing and local economy)! Consultants used Claritas estimates and projections to augment 2000 census data
 - Key issues:
 - Growth management The city is essentially "built out" and must look for reinvestment and redevelopment opportunities for future growth
 - Balance business and residential uses/demand
 - Regional planning and living (opportunities for collaboration)
 - Protecting natural resources (Hudson River, etc.,)
 - Protect historic resources and neighborhood character
 - Infrastructure is old – need to plan for upgrades
 - Schools are an asset-Important to look at the School District's long range plans
 - Public Services (fire, police and rescue and public works) also considered an asset
 - Additional commercial development is needed
- Housing and Demographics: City is losing population-but growing more diverse; increasing # of residents with advanced degrees (an asset)
- Economy: Albany County Empire Zone / Partnership at Arsenal; two-thirds of the population is low and moderate income
- Parks, Recreation and Preservation: there are several parks located within the City and four sites listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places
- Transportation: cost of street maintenance has increased over the past years; 19th Street project and earlier Third Avenue project is funded through State monies
- Infrastructure: City is served by Municipal Water and Sewer systems; Joint study with the Town of Guilderland was recently funded by the State.
- Waterfront: Shoreline separated from the city by I-787; 2005 LWRP-adopted

Visioning Exercise

- Participants were asked: How many live in the City? How many work here? How many work for the City? None of the above? Then participants were asked how long they have lived here – less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 10 to 15 years, 15 to 20, more than 20, etc. There was good representation across the years but not too many "newcomers" (i.e. less than 5 years)
- Then the group was asked - when you look back to 20 years ago, is this the future you imagined for the City? The response seemed to be generally “no”.
- The Key to this project is Public Involvement
- We are looking for commonalities and agreement and to finding great ideas and creating a plan-graphically and as narrative.
- The presentation showed pictures of Watervliet Today
- Changes take time – showed a photo simulation of a municipality in Virginia – 1st photo showed infrastructure improvements, 2nd photo shows new infill development, 3rd photo shows tree plantings, 4th photo shows more traffic and utilization of the area (pedestrians/bicyclists) and the last photo shows all plus public transportation. The second photo simulation was shown of an industrial corridor. 1st photo shows infrastructure improvements/pedestrian connections; 2nd photo shows façade changes, 3rd photo shows infill development, 4th photo shows trees planted. The whole characteristic of the community changes over time.
- What can we do to stimulate change? Slide on the 19th St Study with images from Laberge - Infrastructure Improvements are underway along 19th Street
- Visioning: Participants were first asked to write down 3 words/phrases of how they would like the City to be described in 5 to 10 years. The general categories identified by the participants included the following:
 - Historic Preservation
 - Small Businesses
 - Enhanced Schools
 - Green Space / Recreation
 - Utilize Strategic Location
 - Code Enforcement
 - Excellent Public Services
 - Safe
 - Housing
 - Waterfront
 - Streets / Streetscapes
 - Community Retail / Businesses
- Participants were then asked to answer the question - What I love about Watervliet. Responses included the following:
 - St Patrick's Church
 - St. Brigid's School
 - Family owned restaurants
 - Watervliet High School
 - Small Town Charm but (located) near Major Metropolitan Area
 - Bury wiring (things like to change)
 - Security from police /fire departments -very kind to Seniors
 - the People-10,000 of my closest friends
 - Central Location
 - Easy Access to everything

- Strive to Maintain Identity in the larger region (ongoing struggle)
 - River
 - Parks
 - Arsenal
 - Taps from Arsenal
 - Library
 - Senior Citizen Center
 - Different Programs/Events
 - Neighborhoods
 - Access to Regional Hospitals
 - Great Place to Raise Children because of recreation programs, sports and High School
 - Community Pride
 - Little League Field
 - Low Crime Rate
- Question # 2 What would you like to change?
 - underground wiring
 - nothing-love the city!
 - greenery along Broadway to buffer 787
 - control over signage-too much clutter-(i.e. fence at St Patrick's Church)
 - absentee landlords-more owner occupied housing
 - access to 787 - hides Watervliet - need more points of access
 - more reasons for people to Stop and not just drive through to Troy
 - better street lighting-especially as you move away from (major) corridors
 - better code enforcement/zoning
 - too many renters-need more owners/less low/mod and less transients; lack of landlord accountability
 - Better security around big buildings, especially churches and industrial buildings (vacant buildings and underutilized buildings)
 - Improve commercial facades along all main corridors
 - grant funding and low interest funding for homeowner assistance and incentives for owner occupancy
 - school 9-deteriorating structure
 - churches that are for sale (need to determine plans) - one resident heard St. Patrick's would be torn down
 - Better zoning-all residential -appropriate zoning
 - face lift for Price Chopper
 - Canal Areas emphasized
 - pedestrian + Bike Access
 - The Dome-more programs / events
 - centralize youth programs-perhaps @ the Dome
 - Renovate the Dome
 - Inner city transportation
 - Better senior transportation
 - too many dogs
 - enforcement of " Poop" law
 - alternate side parking in winter
 - community gardens
 - nowhere to go if walking
 - Uneven Sidewalks
 - Watervliet is 99% full (no developable land)

- Roads with curb cuts
 - Businesses cleaned up
 - people who work for the city should live in the city
 - plowing snow-doesn't get done, nowhere to put the snow
 - Parking for Businesses
- Question # 3-when we've protected the things we love and change or improve the things we don't -what will Watervliet look like? Vision for Watervliet
 - more green space-clean-light
 - still community-minded
 - civic pride
 - sidewalks are level
 - inviting / wholesome environment
 - "Saratoga"-like -vibrant / well-maintained
 - places to go and have coffee
 - mish/mash of Storefronts
 - beautiful buildings-places to go
 - lot of litter in City - clean /litter free
 - outdoor-businesses-to eat
 - identity as community-based small town
 - blue-collar
 - hard working
 - encourage more young people to remain
 - promotion / marketing
 - centralized information Booth-like welcome center (to attract people to city)
 - 'define a downtown'
 - 19th St-not Main Street (rebuild 19th Street)
 - Centralized Business District
 - think Bigger
 - need destination / attraction -concept-make people want to stop and explore
 - north Side of Bridge-Riverfront-any limitations
 - revitalize Price Chopper Plaza -Beautiful, comfortable area
 - doesn't have attractiveness of years ago
 - capitalize on Identity
 - will Arsenal allow people who live here to work there? are there future opportunities?
 - housing incentives for employees?
 - Schools-Big hub – community
 - Small theater like the Spectrum
 - people want to come to schools
 - last major change - developed Single Family housing
 - Brush factory taken down for residential development
 - should have been Apartments,-park for youth, attractive housing
 - Design Standards
 - more historical markers
 - 15 other vacant church Buildings in Watervliet (Are any sites appropriate for Commercial development?)
 - what would you want to see happen
 - need more tax base In the city
 - mix of commercial and residential in the city
 - residential areas should be residential
 - infiltration of non-conforming uses should be eliminated

- need something that's attractive
 - with "attraction" get jobs and with jobs get more taxes
 - need parking
 - empty dilapidated buildings - parking
 - turn Arsenal into a Museum
 - need more vision – better design standards for commercial buildings (i.e. facades)
- Next steps:
 - Stay involved
 - Community Profile will be posted on the City's website
 - Action Plan Workshop will be scheduled for the Spring