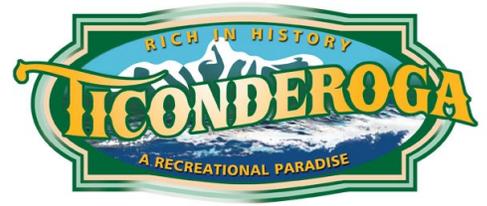


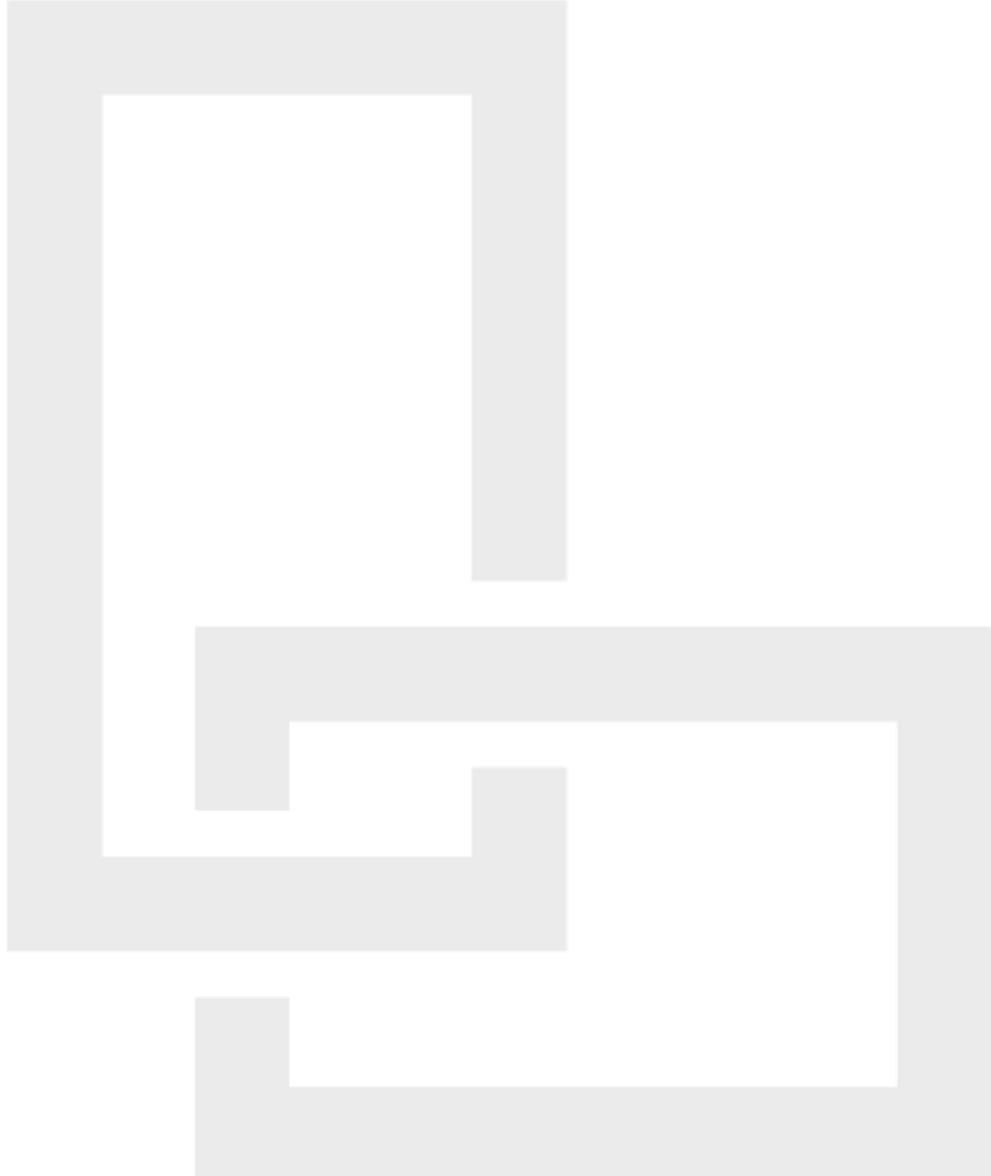
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## Summary of Stakeholder & Focus Group Meetings

**JANUARY 2026**

**PROJECT NO. 2252970**



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# Ticonderoga Comprehensive Plan Update

## Summary of Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

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## Introduction

As part of the Town of Ticonderoga Comprehensive Plan Update, the consulting team conducted stakeholder interviews and facilitated focus group meetings between November and December 2025. These engagement activities were designed to gather critical input from local leaders, service providers, and community organizations to inform the vision, goals, and recommendations of the Plan.

## Stakeholder Interviews

The consulting team interviewed key municipal staff and regional partners who provide essential services to the community and have firsthand knowledge of current conditions, challenges, and opportunities in Ticonderoga. Input was collected through in-person interviews, phone calls, and email correspondence with representatives from:

- Code Enforcement Office
- Planning and Zoning Boards
- Department of Public Works/Highway Department
- Water and Wastewater Operations
- New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
- Fire Departments
- Police Department
- School District

These interviews provided valuable technical insight into infrastructure needs, regulatory challenges, public safety considerations, and development trends within the Town.

## Focus Group Meetings

Three virtual focus group meetings were held to explore key topic areas in greater depth: Economic Development, Housing, and Arts, Culture, Recreation & Youth. The Comprehensive Plan Committee identified 36 individuals representing diverse sectors of the community who were invited to participate based on their expertise and involvement in these areas. Committee members attended each meeting to facilitate discussion and ensure continuity with the broader planning process.

The focus groups provided a forum for collaborative dialogue about Ticonderoga's strengths, challenges, and aspirations. Participants shared their perspectives on what is working well in the community, where gaps exist, and what opportunities should be prioritized moving forward.

## Purpose and Use

The information gathered through stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings represents a critical component of the community engagement process. This input, combined with feedback from the community survey, public workshops, and Committee discussions, will be synthesized to develop a comprehensive vision for Ticonderoga's future and establish actionable goals and recommendations that reflect community priorities and values.

## Meeting Summaries

### Stakeholder Interview: Code Enforcement & Planning/Zoning Board

#### **Participants:**

David Burrows, Code Enforcement Officer

Doug McTyier, Chair of Planning & Zoning Board

#### **Overview**

- The Ticonderoga Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) is responsible for enforcing the Building Code, Property Maintenance Code, and the Zoning Law. The CEO also serves as administrator for the Planning and Zoning Board.
- The most common applications to the Planning & Zoning Board have been for reconstruction of commercial buildings, which is driven by the DRI. In previous years the most common applications were for solar projects. Most applications are approved.
- Most common requests for variances are area variances for minimum lot size and setbacks near the lakeshore. Most are granted. Use variances used to be more common but are less so now.
- Most building permits are issued for residential renovations.
- Most common citations for code violations relate to fire safety.
- Town has regulations for subdivision of five lots or more and re-subdivision, which require site plan review. The regulations are in Article VI (Site Plan Review), section 6.12(1)(c) of the Zoning Law. Minor subdivisions and lot line adjustments are reviewed by the Code Enforcement Officer to verify that they follow the bulk requirements of the Zoning Law.

## Issues and Priorities

- Stormwater – the zoning law does not include stormwater regulations, but the Planning & Zoning board does consider potential stormwater impacts within 500 feet of the Lake George shoreline. Criteria for managing stormwater impacts could be added to the law.
- Short-Term Rentals: there is no local registration for short-term rentals (STR) but all STRs are required to register with Essex County and pay occupancy tax. The Zoning Law does not include regulations that are specific to STRs but the Law does include Tourist Accommodations so that is how the Planning & Zoning Board has been classifying STRs. The Zoning Law allows Tourist Accommodations in Rural Residential and Medium Residential zoning districts with a special use permit. Most applications for STRs have been for properties along the lakeshore where Tourist Accommodations are allowed. The Town could consider adding STRs to the Zoning Law as a separate use with a clear definition. Get public input about STRs during the comprehensive planning process.
- The Zoning Law does not allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) per section 4.20. The Town could consider adding ADUs to the Law with Site Plan Review required. The definition for ADU should clarify that recreational vehicles are not ADUs.
- Cannabis Uses: Ticonderoga opted not to allow retail sales or on-site consumption of cannabis products. Definitions and supplemental standards for other cannabis uses, including processing and growing, that are allowed per NYS law should be added to the Zoning Law.
- Solar: the Town did amend the zoning Law to include regulations for commercial-scale solar, but the law does not account for all impacts of battery energy storage. There is some concern about the capacity of the local fire department to respond to battery-related fires. There are six approved commercial-scale solar facilities in the Town. Of those five are producing electricity and one is in the construction phase. The community has expressed concerns about the visual impacts of commercial solar facilities and the Zoning Law does include screening requirements.
- There is some concern about campers/travel trailers being used for long-term housing. There is no concern about short-term use of recreational vehicles to accommodate quests or long-term storage of campers/travel trailers.
- The regulations for signage need improvement. Some signs for commercial uses require site plan review if they are over a certain size. There are some signage standards that need to be incorporated into the Zoning Law. The requirements for signage generally need to be streamlined and consolidated.

- The regulations for mobile home parks and travel trailer parks is missing a date (there is a blank in the Zoning Law) which makes enforcement a challenge. The date should be added.
- Regulations for lighting around buildings and signage are needed.
- An emerging issue in the community concerns backyard chickens and some other animals within the hamlet. Regulations about keeping chickens in the hamlet could be added to code, including the keeping of roosters. The Town Attorney is working on a local law that may address these issues.
- Parking in Commercial District: the Zoning Law includes minimum parking requirements for uses within the downtown area. A variance is required for uses that can't meet the minimum requirements which increases the cost and length of time for approvals. A potential solution is to add language to the Zoning Law that describes criteria for when the Planning & Zoning Board can reduce or modify that parking requirements rather than requiring a variance. The number of parking spaces required for each use should be reviewed and potentially amended.
- Zoning Districts:
  - Much of the properties zoned for light industrial uses are now occupied by commercial solar. The Town should evaluate other areas that may be suitable for non-solar light industrial uses, such as manufacturing. In the Agricultural District 50% of the lot must be reserved for agricultural uses.
  - Not all of the zoning district boundaries follow lot lines. Most have a straight line through lots. The Town did complete a zoning amendment about two years ago. There was a zoning boundary that cut through multiple parcels along Montcalm Street that required correction for the implementation of DRI projects. The other boundaries were not addressed at that time.

## Stakeholder Interview: Highway Department/DPW

### Participants:

Sal Barnao, Highway Superintendent

### Overview

- Department includes Superintendent, 6 employees for highway, 3 employees at landfill, 2 full time employees plus 2 seasonal for lawn & garden. Short 1 person at highway; recently hired new employee who is starting after the new year. 1 seasonal employee returning but need to hire for the 2<sup>nd</sup> season position.

- Fleet is in excellent condition. Town has a schedule for replacing vehicles. Town has been using more smaller plow trucks, which do not require CDL to operate. Finding employees with CDL has become challenging.

### **Issues & Challenges**

- There are some roads in the village that need to be resurfaced
- Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges. Regional shortage of labor causes competition with neighboring communities which leads to higher costs in terms of wages or overtime.
- A few culverts will be replaced due to deterioration. Town is replacing all metal culverts with poly. All culverts are being enlarged when they are replaced.
- Water crosses some roads during large rain events, but this is caused by beaver dams. No other known ponding issues that need to be addressed. Town has only two dirt roads that are not prone to flooding issues.

### **Planned Capital Projects**

- Resurfacing some roads
- Rerouting and changing catch basins to resolve stormwater issue at one location
- Superintendent is retiring in October 2026 so capital project schedule may be updated by new superintendent.
- No capital projects planned for parks at this time, but there is a lawn and garden committee that makes recommendations. Town does park projects or upgrades as funding becomes available, usually through grants or community fundraising.

### **Priorities and Recommendations**

- Need to upgrade the highway building. Engineers provided a structural analysis and the major structural issues have been addressed. Town has made repairs to the building, but the department has outgrown the current space. Need to expand the building or add more storage for equipment.
- There is a stormwater issue next to the community building where some infrastructure was recently installed. The system is not working during storms so there may be an issue with the design.
- Town has been addressing road maintenance needs and that will continue to be a priority.
- Town should continue to maintain and upgrade sidewalks each year.
- There is sufficient staff for park maintenance with the two seasonal plus two full-time employees, so retention is a priority.

## Stakeholder Input: Water and Wastewater Operator

In addition to the stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings conducted with community members and organizations, a comprehensive utility evaluation was completed by Suozzo, Doty & Associates Professional Engineering (SDA) in September 2025. SDA interviewed the Town's water and wastewater operators and conducted technical assessments of the existing water, wastewater, and stormwater systems. This evaluation provides critical context for understanding the Town's infrastructure capacity, condition, and future needs.

### Key Issues and Challenges

The utility evaluation identified several critical infrastructure challenges facing Ticonderoga:

- **Water System Constraints:** The distribution system, particularly in the southern portion of the former Village, contains aging water mains (some over 120 years old) that are prone to failure. The system operates within a very narrow pressure window, and slight changes can cause water main breaks. Many areas lack adequate fire hydrants and gate valves.
- **Hard Water Concerns:** The Street Road Well System produces water classified as "very hard," which while safe for consumption, is considered undesirable by many customers and can affect household plumbing and appliances.
- **Chilson & Eagle Lake Water Service:** Approximately 107 water users in the Chilson/Eagle Lake area remain connected to the former Gooseneck Pond source through an aging 100-year-old transmission main. The Town is under an EPA Consent Decree to provide a compliant water source to these customers.
- **Combined Sewer System:** The wastewater collection system combines sanitary sewer and stormwater in many areas, which can result in overflow events during large storms. While significant progress has been made in separating these systems, additional work is needed.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Many sewer mains predate the 1970s and are past their useful life. Collection system pipes, manholes, and pump stations require ongoing maintenance, repair, and replacement.

- **Treatment Plant Capacity:** While the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) can handle significant flow fluctuations, actual spare capacity for future growth is limited and requires formal analysis.

### **Opportunities and Priorities**

The utility evaluation highlighted several opportunities to improve infrastructure and support community development:

- **Water System Improvements:** Priority areas for water main replacement include Amherst Avenue, Woody Lane, Morehouse Drive, Mount Hope Avenue, and Highland Street. These improvements would reduce main breaks, improve fire protection, and enhance system reliability.
- **EPA Compliance Project:** The Town is actively pursuing a new well source for Chilson and Eagle Lake customers, which will bring these residents into compliance with federal water quality standards while upgrading aging infrastructure.
- **Stormwater Separation:** Ongoing projects to separate combined sewers will reduce overflow events and improve water quality in the LaChute River and Lake Champlain. Current work focuses on the Lake George Avenue, Amherst Avenue, and Champlain Avenue areas.
- **Pump Station Upgrades:** Planned improvements to wastewater pump stations throughout the Town will add backup generators, valve vaults, and updated controls to improve reliability and emergency response capability.
- **Future Service Area Expansion:** Several areas have been identified as potential candidates for future water and wastewater service expansion, including Route 9N South (commercial corridor), Sagamore Drive (failing septic systems), and potential housing development sites.

### **Emerging Recommendations**

Based on the utility evaluation, several recommendations emerge to support the Town's comprehensive planning goals:

1. **Prioritize Infrastructure Replacement:** Continue systematic replacement of aging water and sewer mains in the oldest portions of the system, focusing on areas with frequent failures and inadequate fire protection.
2. **Complete Water Metering:** Install water meters as mandated by NYSDEC to better understand water usage patterns, detect leaks, and support equitable billing.

3. **Conduct Capacity Analysis:** Complete a formal capacity analysis of the WPCP to determine available capacity for growth within existing sewer districts and evaluate ability to serve potential future development.
4. **Support EPA Compliance:** Complete the Chilson/Eagle Lake water system project to eliminate the last non-compliant water source and provide reliable service to out-of-district customers.
5. **Continue Sewer Separation:** Advance additional stormwater separation projects identified in the Long-Term Control Plan to further reduce combined sewer overflow events and improve environmental quality.
6. **Evaluate Service Extensions:** Study the feasibility and priority of extending water and wastewater service to areas with documented need, including commercial corridors and residential areas with failing septic systems.
7. **Plan for Long-Term Needs:** Develop a capital improvement plan that addresses the 5-10 year needs for water storage tank replacement, Lake George treatment plant upgrades, distribution system improvements, and WPCP equipment replacement.

The utility infrastructure assessment confirms that while significant progress has been made in recent years through grant-funded projects, ongoing investment in water and wastewater systems will be essential to support the Town's economic development goals, protect public health and environmental quality, and maintain service reliability for residents and businesses.

## Stakeholder Input: Ticonderoga Fire Department

### Issues & Challenges:

- The main issue is the failing fire house, due to the life expectancy of the building. Funding is the main solution to this problem. Support from the community is something that would also greatly improve the outcome.
- The second issue facing the fire department would be the failing infrastructure of the hydrant system.

### Priorities:

- Short-term:
  - Construction of a new fire house.

- Passing a referendum on the fire house project. (The referendum was voted down in October 2025).
- Long-term:
  - Continue to build the fire department infrastructure to better serve the taxpayers.

## Stakeholder Input: Chilson Fire Department

### Issues & Challenges:

- Water - In the Chilson Fire district there are only 4 Hydrants, 0 operating dry hydrants and 2 boat launches that can be used for water during spring ,summer and fall – not winter. The Hydrants are barley useable without compromising the towns water supply, so filling a fire truck is a challenge during and after a fire.

### Priorities:

- Improve water access. Identify a more substantial water supply from the hydrants, the dry-or a fire water holding tank/reservoir in the middle of the district.
- The department is considering an addition on the existing building to improve egress for fire apparatus and more room to store the required gear and equipment.
- Comply with local, state, and federal regulations.

## Stakeholder Input: Ticonderoga Police Department

### Issues & Challenges:

- Narcotics Issues - Illegal narcotics are a significant concern. We have a recurring problem with narcotics being trafficked into the community from outside jurisdictions.
- Violent Incidents - The town of Ticonderoga may be small, but it is not immune to serious violent crimes. In 2025, the Ticonderoga Police department investigated an attempted Homicide case and a Homicide case. Both cases took tremendous amounts of manpower and resources to close.
- Staffing shortages– Currently the department has 8 full time officers. 1 full time member has been on long term light duty assignment due to an on-duty injury. With only 8 full-time officers, lengthy investigations strain coverage and resources.

### Needs to address the issues and challenges:

- Additional funding to pay for personnel overtime, narcotics purchases, and equipment for narcotics identification (TruNarc).
  - Personnel Overtime is needed for Narcotics Enforcement Operations (NEU). Each NEU operation involves at least 4 Officers. Most of whom are on overtime. Certain NEU operations involve stationary observation of residences suspected of selling narcotics. This is accomplished by utilizing plain clothes officers in unmarked vehicles using overtime funding.
  - Additional funding is needed to purchase a TruNarc Handheld Narcotics Analyzer. Ticonderoga's drug problem is increasing, with trafficking of methamphetamines, heroin, and emerging threats like fentanyl and carfentanil impacting communities worldwide. Law enforcement officials need to quickly identify suspected narcotics in the field to help keep drugs, and drug dealers, off the streets.
- An Investigator position withing the Ticonderoga Police Department. An investigator position will reduce the strain on patrol from lengthy in-depth investigations. Investigations like child sex abuse, identity theft, fraud, sexual assaults and major assaults.

### Priorities:

- Short-term:
  - Get the New Police Station completed and functioning. This involves the renovation of the existing structure at 102 Race Track Road. The ground floor is nearing completion as the new home for the police department. This should be completed by January 2026. The upper floor will be used for the Town's municipal court, town meeting space, and record storage. The upper floor renovation is not yet scheduled.
  - Get the Department to full staff.
- Long-term:
  - Hire 3 Additional Patrol Officers to be able to Establish a Narcotics Enforcement Unit and an Investigations division within the Ticonderoga Police Department.
  - Increase community policing programs within the department that strengthen trust, reduce crime, and build long-term partnerships.

## Stakeholder Input: NYS Department of Transportation

### Overview:

Throughout Essex County, NYSDOT deals with many issues on the state highway system:

- Maintaining pavements, bridges & culverts, drainage systems (open ditch or closed systems), guide rails, signage, pavement markings, and roadside vegetation
- Snow and ice removal on the state highways
- Permitting utility work in the state right of way or permitting non-utility work such as new entrances to state highways.
- The Regional Office is supported by DOT main office in Albany (as well as federal & state funding for our maintenance budget and also capital improvement or maintenance projects). Support is provided by some Town Highway departments (including the Town of Ticonderoga) who plow some state highways under municipal snow and ice contracts.

### Priorities:

- General maintenance of the state highways. Each year DOT plans to address any routine maintenance needs on state highways (pavement, drainage, etc).
- Pavement overlay, Route 9N/22 from Route 74 to Shore Airport Rd (Ti 2026)
- Large culvert replacement / rehab CIN C120027, RM 9N-1203-1014 (Ti 2027)
- Pavement overlay, Route 9N/22 from Shore Airport Rd to Sugar Hill Rd (Ti 2027/2028/2029?)
- Pavement overlay, Route 22 from Ferry Rd to Route 9N (Ti 2027/2028/2029?)

### State infrastructure that is at risk of flooding or storm damage:

All state infrastructure can be at some risk of flooding or storm damage. Bridges are designed to handle the largest storms, then large culverts, then roadside drainage for the smallest storms. Depending on where and what intensity hits, state infrastructure can be damaged. In-house DOT maintenance staff are the first line of defense for repairing any damaged infrastructure but can be elevated to the use of DOT emergency contractors if the damage is bad enough.

## Stakeholder Input: Ticonderoga School District Superintendent

### Overview & Priorities:

School District enrollment has been declining. The number of homeschool students fluctuates throughout the year but on average there are 30 homeschool students per year.

School Year	Student Enrollment
2025-2026	686
2024-2025	688
2023-2024	727
2022-2023	722
2021-2022	732

The top issues/challenges for the district include lack of sufficient state funding, which makes it difficult to maintain current programming based on the needs of our students. The state continues to mandate things while at the same time not increasing our funding for the mandates. It is anticipated that a capital project will be put out for a vote in the next 4-6 years. The priorities for the next 5-10 years will be to continue to educate students to prepare them for life outside of the school building walls and their futures. NYS is changing graduate requirements and final guidance will be handed down from the state in August of 2027. The district will need to adjust based on these requirements. There is also a priority to replace several staff members due to retirement, and as always maintaining the buildings and grounds will be a priority.

## Focus Group: Economic Development

### **Participants**

Scott Hearburg, Committee Member

Margaret Lauman, Committee Member

Brian Ledger, Committee Member

Joe Vilardo, Committee Member

Matthew Courtright, Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce

James (Jim) O'Brian, Marianella Meats (Town Supervisor-elect)

Maria Beuerlein, Branch Manager of Community Bank

Bob Porter, Business Owner

Alicia Vilardo, Circle Court Motel

Dan Kelleher, ROOST

## What is going well in the Ticonderoga economy?

- **Downtown Growth:** There is life being brought back into the heart of the community (downtown). It had been years since there has been any growth in the downtown, especially for businesses – development at 4 corners had a lot to do with pulling activity from the downtown.
  - Starting to see investment. Over the last 10-12 years, there's been significant economic growth and business development. DRI has accelerated this.
  - A general observation is that if a business is leaving or closing, it's likely not due to profit or revenue, but a personal issue; very few have closed due to lack of economic viability.
  - New businesses and development on Montcalm
- **Economic Development Programs:** Supporting economic development programs and initiatives offered through the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC), including business planning, business development, services for transitioning businesses and supporting those that are for sale; strong relationships with regional economic development initiatives.
  - Chamber has partnered with the Town and Essex County IDA to offer micro-grant programs that are funded through occupancy tax revenues.
  - Small Towns, Big Opportunities (more info on TACC website)
- New buildings being constructed.
- Strong tourism in summer months.

## Issues and Challenges

- **Housing:** lack of workforce housing is a challenge for growing the economy.
  - Young people have the hardest time finding housing, especially for those that are used to a certain range of amenities and services that aren't currently offered in Ti; couldn't find quality housing and issues with affordability.
  - Some workers opt to live in Glens Falls, Queensbury or Vermont.
  - Sylvamo has a difficult time recruiting engineers who want to live and stay in Ti (only 20% live in Ti).
  - To have economic development, you need to have homes, particularly move-in ready homes that don't need significant repairs.
- **Spaces available for businesses** are limited and often in need of rehabilitation.
  - Most common types of new businesses include small-scale office, retail, and restaurants
  - The Chamber will sometimes reach out to larger companies to fill big spaces.

- Shortage of workers at Sylvamo
  - Struggle with finding (and keeping) engineers; also experiencing just a general shortage of workers and a highly mobile workforce
- Transportation is an issue; not enough taxi services, no Uber or Lyft, lack of a general transportation company (only private rentals right now, mostly demand from weddings and other events) and transportation to and from the train station and airport, and within the town itself.
- Shortage of lodging during peak weekends. Some owners of lodging businesses would like to expand but have difficulty affording it on their own and would benefit from grant funding. DRI did not fund any lodging projects.
- Need for economic development during the winter months.
- Need for dental services in Ti; everyone leaves the town to get this service
- Limited accessible parking in the downtown
- Very limited restaurant options
- Former Lowe's Property:
  - There has been some interest in the property, but the owners have either not responded or are not willing to sell. Interested parties have included small manufacturing, larger retailers, the fire department, and community members have talked about a potential youth center there.
  - Barriers to redevelopment include multiple owners, leases, and unexpired tax incentives so the owners are not motivated to sell. The lease ends in 2029 which may lead to more interest in selling the property. The property is of 17 sites across the country that are sitting vacant.
- Zoning outside of the hamlet is an issue especially in relation to attracting population and business
  - Need to expand commercial and industrial zones, especially for attracting manufacturing businesses (and manufacturing jobs)
- Water issue in Chilson.
- Some business owners do not feel supported in Ti right now because the DRI is supporting too many public projects and not enough private projects.
- Declining school enrollment.

## **Assets**

- Lake George and Lake Champlain
  - Fishing tournaments are a huge draw; 32-45 fishing tournaments run May through October instead of just in summer months

- Boating is also a draw
  - Lakefront STRs are a draw
- Historic sites
  - How to leverage those that are working to support local history/historic sites? Fort Ticonderoga, Mount Defiance,
- Natural beauty
- Access to Health Care – Hospital, Clinics & Life Net
  - Asset for community members and local economy; good healthcare brings investment to the area;
  - Services have improved in quality, services have been expanded, and clinics have been added
  - Staffing is challenging but is being managed well
  - Property is part of the UVM network and campus is shared with Hudson Headwaters for primary care services to provide emergency/hospital services and clinics on the same campus
- Star Trek
- Municipal airport
- North Country Community College
  - TACC hosts business courses/seminars there, coordinate a job and career fair, work together on program/class development; developing a workforce development program (with DOL)
  - Nursing program is the strongest program (CRNAs and RNs)
  - Recently created a wastewater treatment program to meet regional demand for individuals with these skills
  - Currently, no dorm housing associated with the school; has been an ongoing discussion, could complement their expanded business programs; school is aware the community needs more housing, especially for young people, and open to it as long as state ed is on board

### **Opportunities & Recommendations**

- Supervisor-elect will explore creation of a business council for Ti, which would be partnership between businesses and Town officials and TACC. The purpose would be to share issues and support each other.
- Attract small manufacturing businesses.
  - Some concern that there isn't enough room in existing industrial parks, so very interested in the potential reuse of the Lowe's property or the industrial park or identifying additional locations that are suitable for industrial development.

- Leverage local history; people are interested in reconnecting with the deep roots of the town to American history
- There is a potential project to develop housing just south of the college in the old woodyard area. There was a site plan approved for this area years ago that led to homes being developed on the perimeter of the area. A private developer has purchased the site and submitted a site plan application.
- Golf Course: there is interest in making the golf course more community oriented. July-August is the busiest season and the shoulder seasons are challenging.
  - The golf course has a significant impact on the region; people are always interested in activities there and have great experiences; acts as a draw from outside the region, especially in the summer.
  - Many board members are not year-round residents so there is limited local influence.
  - The septic system is insufficient as a larger structure was built after the club house was destroyed by a fire. Managing the septic system is the biggest issue facing the golf course as it is a strain on the budget. Finding a solution to this issue would unlock the potential to do more during the shoulder seasons.
  - Golf course is used for rehearsal dinners, school events, birthday parties; there's a large kitchen space on site that's being underutilized due to septic issues.
- Explore feasibility of expanding the hamlet to increase density and allow more housing development. Focus on areas directly adjacent to the hamlet where there is potential to expand municipal water and sewer services.
- Potential sewer district expansion.
  - Expanding the hamlet area and increasing local control/reducing development barriers would help business development. Key to expanding the hamlet area is expanding municipal infrastructure.
  - Potential for sewer expansion along Hague Road. Might be a group of property owners that would be willing to match infrastructure expansion costs if the hamlet area was expanded. There are questions around who takes the lead on this, especially if the cost is shared by multiple users/potential users.
- Attract complementary businesses and operations to support Sylvamo, which may include forestry, manufacturing or sales.
- Attract tourists to the town in the winter to support local businesses. Expand winter activities such as cross-country skiing and snowmobile trails. Country club might

be a good fit for these activities. Snowmobiling is a high-revenue activity that Ti is not currently taking advantage of but could potentially connect to the VAST system in Vermont. NYS had plans for east/west and north/south corridor. A regional approach to trail development and connections could be explored.

- Conduct a feasibility or market study for a transportation company; demonstrate the need and demand
  - Town's economic development committee has been discussing developing a plan or study to determine the need for a transportation agency/service
- Diversity lodging options
  - Smaller boutique hotel/B&B might be good to increase the diversity of offerings
  - Housing and lodging study is being completed by ROOST. Housing study is complete and lodging study will be completed within a few months. Review recommendations for Ti.
  - Potential for conference center that could bring people to town during shoulder seasons.
- Identify state funding to expand or improve existing lodging facilities.
- Consider potential for bike share, especially e-bikes.
- Promote public boat launches and expand parking areas.
  - Boat launches aren't necessarily underutilized, there may be an opportunity to expand the parking at the launches and increase usage.
- Ferry is not used for commuting because it is unreliable. If there was a live app for the ferry more people may use it.

## Focus Group: Arts, Culture, Recreation & Youth Focus Group Summary

### Participants

Ash Alexander, Committee Member

June Curtis, Ti Cultural Arts Initiative, Farmers Market

Kristy Mason, Ti Youth Football Program/Little League

### What's going well with arts, culture, and recreation in Ticonderoga?

- Ti arts gallery is a strong organization that does many things: events, children's activities, classes for children and adults, full-fledged gallery on Montcalm St. with regular artist showing

- Public Arts Committee formed, which organized the mural festival. Committee will continue this work with festivals, other public art, and other events.
- Town received public art grants for murals and sculptures.
- Little league program has grown over the years. They have improved equipment and fields, and programs. Added girls flag football program last year.
- Strong support for youth sports from businesses and community, especially considering the size of the town.
- Disc golf course developed on town land.
- New ice rink.
- Armory used for pickleball and early-season baseball training.
- Volunteers provide a lot of help with maintenance and basic improvements, which are mostly funded by grants or volunteers or businesses.
- Town does a great job of mowing and weeding town parks.
- The town budget includes \$3,500 for cultural arts in Ticonderoga. The Cultural Arts Initiative of Ticonderoga, a volunteer committee administers the funds. The monies are distributed via a simple re-grants program with awards providing project support to between 8 and 10 local organizations annually. It is a successful program, highly valued by those who benefit, and open to all organizations that provide public cultural arts activities to residents.
- The Ticonderoga Area farmers Market had their highest attendance record this past summer, 2024. (The market structure has been in existence since 2014.)

### **Issues and Challenges**

- Fewer sports offered through the school, partially due to declining enrollment. Also shifting interests away from football. More mandates for safety make it harder to maintain programs.
- For many sports programs, kids can play when they're young (elementary school) but the options become more limited in middle and high school, partially due to declining enrollment.
- Not a lot of options for adult recreation. Most recreation opportunities are focused on youth and lake recreation. Pickle ball has been popular, but the programs are limited to 55 and older. Fewer opportunities for middle-aged adults.
- Need a welcome/visitor center downtown with restrooms facility downtown.
  - Public restroom at Heritage Museum during summer but limited hours.

- Farmers Market has a porta potty but it is only unlocked during markets.
- Bathroom in the building at Field 1 owned by Little League; there's an issue with the sewer line.
- There are 2 porta-potties at the rec fields.
- Lack of parent volunteers and coaches is a challenge for sports programs
- Parking is mainly on-street which is a challenge during events; limited public parking lots.
- Parking at the rec fields is limited during events. Parking is on grass and on street.
- Limited restaurants so there are some days when they are all closed.
- Maintenance: the rec field (except mowing) maintenance falls on the Little League program volunteers and coaches; town did just put in new bleachers
- Town has not invested in recreation improvements. Mostly grant funded or funds raised by volunteers.
- Strong support for traditions, but some resistance to change and trying new things. Can be hard to implement new ideas. There has not been much turnover of leadership and people like to keep things consistent.
- Same people are doing everything. Need more diversity on committees.

### **Opportunities & Recommendations**

- Develop mountain bike trails for all ages
- Organize group bike rides for kids
- Safe Routes to School – make sure there are sidewalk routes with crosswalks and no gaps in the network.
- Town has some unused land. Some land is restricted due to environmental constraints.
- Vacant buildings present business/economic development opportunities for arts, culture, recreation and youth.
  - Knights of Columbus building is being renovated and there's also interest in developing an arts center in town.
- No designated soccer but lots of baseball fields so there may be an opportunity to repurpose some fields.
- Armory is underutilized. It is being renovated – potential opportunity to use more space. Town runs after-school program at the Armory, but there's a lot of space there that goes unused.
  - Silver Bay Teen Center on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

- Used for pickleball for seniors and early season baseball training
- Picnic tables on town property, especially for farmers market. Concrete pads for the tables would eliminate the need to mow around them.
- Storage shed for farmer's market. Currently a nearby merchant stores stuff in their basement; it would be easier to have a shed on-site. This might be part of a DRI project.
  - The larger picture for the farmer's market is an open-air structure, a pavilion providing shelter for vendors and shoppers, including storage. There needs to be ample space for booths, allowing vehicles to back into spaces, to work out of their trucks, for example. Electricity/lighting and water are essential. Added features like restrooms, event stages and kitchens are considerations to develop the market from seasonal to a year-round community hub.
  - The Ticonderoga Farmers Market is sponsored by the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce. With the proper commitment from town residents, the market might benefit by becoming its own non-profit organization, a 501 c3.
- Cross country skiing trails (groomed) would be a great opportunity, potentially at the golf course since they have the space and the buildings to store things.
- More winter activities – there used to be more activities but becoming less common due to changing weather patterns.
- Support for incremental change that fits the culture and expectations of the community – archery, ax throwing, snowmobiling, running events (have been well attended when offered).
- Town-owned Museum needs improvements - if the work was done, could be all season but right now, it's only three seasons.
- Hancock House needs repairs.

## Focus Group: Housing

### Participants

Scott Hearburg, Committee Member

Margaret Lauman, Committee Member

Brian Ledger, Committee Meeting

Colleen Nelson, LGLCRPB

Nicole Justice-Green, North Country Rural Development, Essex County Land Bank

Lyne Reale, Fox and Fern owner, Landlord

Caitlin Wargo, Adirondack Roots

### Issues & Challenges

- No ADUs allowed per the zoning code, which is a concern because there are multiple benefits of adding ADUs in the community. There are ADUs in the Town, but they're not legal and therefore not subject to the building code or annual inspections. Ti also has municipal water/sewer which makes the cost of development for ADUs more affordable. NCRDC has grant funding to develop ADUs but the funds cannot be use in Ti.
- Limited rental homes and apartments. available apartments don't meet the needs of the population in terms of size, quality and affordability.
- Shortage of entry level apartments or homes due to low inventory and high prices. Price of housing compared to quality is mismatched.
  - Price compared to the quality of housing is very disproportionate; FHA and USDA will not pre-approve loans for homes that are not code compliant. Homes need too much work so the homes do not qualify for federal mortgage programs.
  - Middle income individuals and families can't afford code compliant homes.
- Rents are also high. Monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is usually \$800 per month plus first and last months rent.
- Utility costs are high.
- Many homeowners do not want to move because current mortgage rates are higher and they prefer to keep their lower rates. This contributes to the lack of inventory.
- Section 8 housing in Ti:
  - Housing Choice Vouchers are administered by Adirondack Roots.
  - There are currently 70 Housing Choice Vouchers in Ti which is the highest number within Essex County communities.

- There are also project-based vouchers that stay with the unit at Mountain Meadows.
  - Vouchers are not getting reissued due to issues at the federal level. There are 120 fewer vouchers in Essex County.
- Property owners also sometimes charge lower rents than market rate. There are other units that are charging above market rate in the Montcalm Corridor.
- There are no Ticonderoga homes in the Adirondack Community Housing Trust.
  - There is less funding available from the Trust which has slowed the addition of new homes into the Trust.
- There are also grants through the HOME program that offer down payment assistance or rehabilitation assistance, but they're restricted to up to 80% AMI (federal funding, so the income requirement is strict).
- Few new grant programs have been created to support existing homeowners, especially middle-income households.
- Some financial institutions offer support for downpayments and closing costs.
- Cost of land is a barrier to constructing affordable housing.
- Wastewater capacity is an issue for new construction.
- Land Bank is building housing and has some homes in Ti, but there is a shortage of land and infrastructure capacity (wastewater) that limits new construction.

### **Housing Projects**

- New housing project proposed at Fireman's Field behind Walmart; ~60 units if approved. Applying for LIHTC (2<sup>nd</sup> attempt) to create some units with supportive services.
- Housing project near North Country Community College which is deed-restricted to senior housing.
- New building on Montcalm Street across from the fire house. New build after a fire will include 3-4 market rate units.

### **Opportunities & Recommendations**

- Review the Essex County market rate housing study and ROOST studies dealing with housing and lodging.
- Encourage both rehabilitation of existing housing and new housing construction. Both are needed in Ti.
- Improve the approval and permitting process to attract more private developers and contractors.

- Address downtown parking requirements in the zoning code – almost every downtown development needs to get a parking variance which increases the cost and timeline for getting approvals.
- Zoning applications need to be improved.
- Review requirements for engineered stamped plans to ensure that this does not create an unnecessary barrier to housing development.
- Amend zoning code to allow for more diversity of housing within the hamlet, especially higher density housing and ADUs.
- Present a visual preference survey for housing at public workshop to gauge public support for infill/higher density development (missing middle housing).
- Regional Planning Board is completing a blight inventory for the entire County. Work is underway with hamlet areas as priority.
- Identify a way to manage or regulate STRs that balances the need for economic development with the need for affordable housing.