



GOUVERNEUR

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS SUMMARY

Purpose:	Stakeholder Meetings
Date and Time:	June 16, 1:00 – 2:00 PM
Location:	Gouverneur Community Center, 4673 NY-58, Gouverneur, NY Gouverneur Village Offices, Court Room, 33 Clinton St., Gouverneur, NY

Stakeholder Group #1 – Community, Non-Profit, & Economic Development Organizations

Discussion

This discussion focused on the needs of downtown from the perspective of community and non-profit organizations that are located or operate in the Village, as well organizations involved in local and regional economic development initiatives. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

- Main Street streetscape is intact on the north side, but the 2nd and 3rd floors of buildings are mostly vacant, and housing would be a good option
- A Complete Streets Initiative was completed by Clark University students a few years ago, but pedestrian access from the [East Side] elementary school to downtown should be improved
- The elementary school is about 5 blocks from downtown; the high school is about 3 blocks away
- The Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) has administered a home repair program for owner-occupied housing in the Village, but downtown/Village could use market rate housing developed with Low Income Housing Tax Credits to get the upper floors of downtown buildings into shape
- A need for more housing downtown
- Downtown can feel empty and new businesses need to fill vacancies, which would give people a reason to come there
- The library holds events, but more people and organizations should get involved in developing activities to make downtown more vibrant – they don't necessarily need to be formal (i.e. local musicians, dancing, exercise, etc.)
- The Gouverneur Chamber of Commerce organizes many events, such as the cancer walk, Christmas and Flag Day parades, and Antiques in the Park
- Comments about the park downtown
 - A farmers' market is held there, but it's the least attended of all the farmers' markets in the County
 - Add art to the park

Stakeholder Group #1 – Community, Non-Profit, & Economic Development Organizations

Discussion

- New gazebo is more of a meeting place than a place where someone can speak because it is ground-level/no stage
- Relocate the Life Savers sign to a safer and more visible location; people who want to take selfies with it must stand in the street
- Reduce sign clutter around park
- Consider expanding the park by closing Church Street, either temporarily or permanently, to accommodate more events
- There are no restrooms in the park
- Comments about businesses and economic development needs downtown
 - It's hard to get investment downtown; Massena and Potsdam have faced similar challenges
 - Should we focus on bringing employees downtown to generate more demand?
 - The Court and the Rec Center bring people downtown
 - Lots of pizza and subs, but we no longer have "destination restaurants" downtown
 - A cannabis dispensary replaced the coffee shop
 - It's complicated to open a business and too many people can't get past the hurdles
 - There's a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Canton
 - Look at what Potsdam has done: it created several funds as part of the DRI, including a commercial rental assistance program that helps to attract businesses downtown and a façade improvement program
 - Gouverneur Community Center is great, but it's not downtown
 - The Wellness Center, which provides mental health resources is relocating to the Industrial Park from a location downtown
- Comments on parking
 - The large public parking lot behind Main Street is an asset but it is shared by many properties, including a nearby funeral home which can fill the lot
 - There is a perception that there is a lack of parking because the public parking lot feels disconnected and inaccessible from downtown
 - Streetscape projects can enhance walkability of downtown and improve connectivity between destinations.
- Activities for all generations are needed, but especially kids and teens:
 - Can't get them into the library
 - Gouverneur Rec Center [owned by the Village] is invaluable
 - Gouverneur School District has a great relationship with the Rec Center, but the building needs work
 - Need to make the Rec Center more welcoming to teens
 - There are few places downtown for seniors to go – they currently use the library, but something related/attached to the Rec Center could also serve seniors and provide activities/resources downtown.
- Local Foundations that provide support to the community:
 - Gouverneur Foundation is mainly for education
 - Kinney Drugs has a foundation focused on health care
 - Northern Credit Union has been very supportive
- Cives Steel is doing some work on their headquarters building
- Local BOCES Career & Technical Education program works with local businesses

Stakeholder Group #1 – Community, Non-Profit, & Economic Development Organizations

Discussion

Attendance

Jacquelyn Kelly, Gouverneur School District
Alison Connely, Gouverneur School District
Mike Tersmette, Gouverneur Library
Jason Pfothenhauer, St Lawrence County Planning
Paul Kelly, St Lawrence County IDA
Judy Poticher, Gouverneur Library
Michael Hammond, Gouverneur School District
Michelle Capone, DANC

Stakeholder Group #2 – Municipal Staff

Discussion

This discussion focused on the needs of downtown from a Municipal standpoint. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

Main Street

- Sidewalk and curb improvements needed
- Benches and trash receptacles needed
- Street lighting needed - electrical upgrades required
- NYS plows Main Street
- Street tree roots are intruding into buildings and damaging sidewalks
- Street parking prevents street sweeping

Village Park

- Generally well maintained and many investments have been made
- The fountain needs repairs
- Sidewalk and curb improvements around park are needed
- Picnic tables and flag poles are desired
- Too much traffic on Church Street to permanently close road. Village does temporary road closure for some events held in the park.

Downtown – general

- Sidewalk and curb improvements needed, including the bridge
- Village desires a dog park

Village Office

- Accessibility to municipal building is an issue
- Municipal building parking lot and pedestrian access is currently needed

Stakeholder Group #2 – Municipal Staff	
Discussion	
Attendance	
Hon. Ronald McDougall, Village of Gouverneur Kristina Ayen, Village of Gouverneur Barbara Finnie, Village of Gouverneur Thomas Haynes, DANC/ Village of Gouverneur Casey Cannell, Village of Gouverneur TJ Simmons, Village of Gouverneur Hon. Dave Spilman Jr., Town of Gouverneur	

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:

Jen Ceponis, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.

cc: Consultant Team, State Team, Local Planning Committee

