

Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan Update

Community Forum Summary

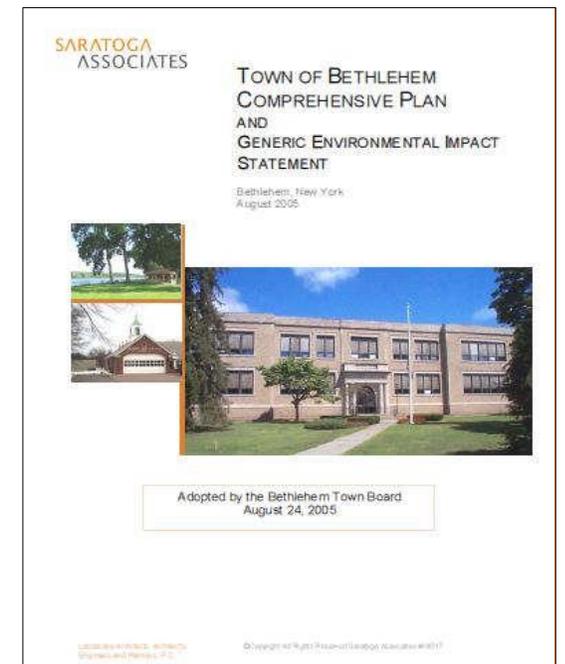
Prepared by: Department of Economic
Development and Planning



Presented at: Town Board Meeting
July 10, 2019

Comprehensive Plan Update

- Current Plan adopted in 2005
- Established a vision for Town's future until 2020
- Community faced with new/continuing challenges and opportunities
- Requires community discussion
 - Current state of the town
 - Community's values and aspirations for the future



Phase 1 – Community Forums

- Seven meetings and included 250 participants overall
 - Slingerlands, November 29, 2018 (38)
 - Selkirk, December 13, 2018 (17)
 - South Bethlehem, January 10, 2019 (60)
 - Delmar, January 30, 2019 (51)
 - Glenmont, March 7, 2019 (42)
 - North Bethlehem, March 14, 2019 (17)
 - Elsmere, March 21, 2019 (29)

(##) - participants
- Facilitated by Planning Department Staff and Planning Board members



Group Discussion

- What do you like about your Hamlet? What do you like about Bethlehem?
- What is your vision for your Hamlet twenty years from now?
- What are your concerns about your Hamlet?
- What are the opportunities for your Hamlet?



What did residents say? - Themes

- Neighborhoods
- Aging and Housing
- Transportation
- Environment
- Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Government



Neighborhoods

- OUR LOCATION IS AN ASSET
- WELL SERVED BY SCHOOLS
- THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF BETHLEHEM IS PART OF THE COMMUNITY IDENTITY
- THE TYPE AND SCALE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
- A VISION FOR COMMUNITY GATHERING SPOTS

OUR LOCATION IS AN ASSET

- Close proximity to the City of Albany
- Located near ADK, Boston, NYC...yet
- Country, rural feeling and undeveloped lands
- **Delmar, Slingerlands, and Elsmere** -Albany County Rail Trail
- **Selkirk** –Henry Hudson Park
- **Glenmont** –rural undeveloped lands

THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF BETHLEHEM IS PART OF THE COMMUNITY

- Historic buildings, architecture
- Trees (community forest)
- Quaint, comfortable, intimate, charming
- Proud of small town, village, or rural feel of the community
- **Slingerlands** – Preservation of historic homes/buildings
- **Glenmont** and **Delmar** – Retention of neighborhood character
- **South Bethlehem** – Benefits from low development pressure due to lack of public water/sewer

TYPE AND SCALE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Development to be sensitive to its context
- Concern of multi-family units – compatible with surrounding context
- **Glenmont** – concerned the Town is experiencing “over development”
- **Glenmont, Delmar, and Slingerlands** – current density for multi-family may be too high
- Desire unique small-scale commercial development in appropriate areas
- Pursue commercial development or industrial zoning in the context of balancing the Town’s tax base.

TYPE AND SCALE OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Sites/Buildings:

- **Slingerlands** and **North Bethlehem** – vacant Picotte building
- **Glenmont** – vacant land near Walmart (commercial/community uses)
- **Glenmont** – Jericho Drive-In should it close
- **Elsmere** - Normanside Country Club should it close
- **Elsmere** and **Delmar** – improve Delaware Plaza
- **North Bethlehem** and **Slingerlands** – Vista Tech Park
- **North Bethlehem** – future of Mosall’s Grove property

VISION FOR COMMUNITY GATHERING SPOTS

- Interest for destinations to meet others/experience a sense of community
- **North Bethlehem** – New Scotland Road hamlet area as a future mixed use/commercial/community area
- **South Bethlehem** – opportunity for a combined commercial use with the Post Office
- **Delmar** – enjoy Four Corners area local businesses, and Rail Trail
- **Elsmere** – envision beautification improvements to Delaware Plaza

Aging and Housing

- AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND VARIED HOUSING PREFERENCES
- AGING IN BETHLEHEM

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND VARIED HOUSING OPTIONS

- Concern for availability of affordable housing, especially for seniors
- Lack of diversity in the town - presence of younger adults, the elderly, and minority groups would enhance the community
- Those who desire to live or stay may not be able to due to housing cost.
- Mix of affordable single family homes and multifamily properties that respect the surrounding context.
- Concern of density and size of multi-family buildings

AGING IN BETHLEHEM

- Concerned for ability for seniors to age in place
- Targeted plans/initiatives to address aging in place, affordable housing options, and more transportation options for seniors
- Desire accessory apartments and universal design for new homes
- **Delmar** and **Elsmere** –affordable senior housing in the vicinity of the Four Corners area and other core residential areas

Transportation

- TRAFFIC SAFETY – SPEEDING, CUT-THROUGH, STREET CONNECTIONS, TRUCKS
- BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- Speeding
- Cut-Through Traffic
- Interest in traffic calming solutions
- Street connections (oppose and support)
- Truck Traffic – **South Bethlehem, Selkirk, Glenmont**

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

- Residents value existing bike and pedestrian facilities and want more
- Connect to nearby destinations, parks, commercial centers
- Desire more facilities such as bike lanes, crosswalks, speed radar signs, rapid flashing beacons, signage, and lighting
- New or improved sidewalks:
 - Feura Bush Road in **Glenmont**
 - Kenwood Avenue in **Elsmere**
 - Bridge Street in **South Bethlehem**
 - Thatcher Street in **Selkirk**
 - Blessing Road in **North Bethlehem**
 - New Scotland Road in **Slingerlands**

Environment

- SUSTAINABILITY
- AGRICULTURE, OPEN SPACE, AND UNDEVELOPED LAND

SUSTAINABILITY

- Future Bethlehem becoming a leader in sustainable communities
- Vision for an energy efficient Bethlehem powered by renewable energy
- Strategies:
 - Economic incentives for green development
 - By-right allowances for ground mounted solar PV
 - Renewable energy powered street lighting
 - EV charging stations
 - Adding and replacing greenery and trees
 - Multimodal network that safely connects destinations
 - Protected wetlands
 - Funding programs for acquiring and preserving farms and forests
 - Town-wide stormwater management plan

AGRICULTURE, OPEN SPACE, AND UNDEVELOPED LAND

- Like the proximity to the rural countryside, farms, forests, and parks and scenic areas in the less populated parts of town
- Concerned about the prospect of future development changing rural agrarian character
- Strategies:
 - Protection of small wooded lots
 - Rewarding property owners for keeping open space
 - Purchase of development rights
 - Identification and prioritization of open space areas

Parks and Recreation

- A DESIRE FOR ADDITIONAL RECREATION AREAS

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- Access to nearby streams and greenways with walking trails
- Amenities: dog parks, recreation fields and facilities, better lighting in parks, picnic areas, and community gardens.
- **South Bethlehem** – construct trail on an abandoned rail bed
- **Elsmere** – construct trail on Albany Waterline
- **Glenmont, Elsmere, Slingerlands** – new pocket parks with playgrounds in their area

Economic Development

- AN APPRECIATION FOR SMALL BUSINESS

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- Small businesses are part of our character, integral to the community
- Interest in additional small businesses, such as micro-breweries, upscale groceries, coffee shops, and unique retail stores
- Expand the tax base – commercial and industrial
- More employment options for youth and young professionals
- **South Bethlehem** – concern for MED zoning district regulations
- **Slingerlands** and **Elsmere** – Economic development strategy based on the Albany County Rail Trail

Government

- TOWN SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION ARE IMPORTANT

TOWN SERVICES/COMMUNICATION ARE IMPORTANT

- Residents place high value on Town services
 - Emergency Services, Library, Senior Services
- Desire more communication between the Town and residents to provide a better understanding of what's happening around Town

Comprehensive Plan Update – Next Steps

- Themes are consistent with American Planning Association's Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans -
 - Livable Built Environment
 - Harmony with Nature
 - Resilient Economy
 - Interwoven Equity
 - Healthy Community
 - Responsible Regionalism



Comprehensive Plan Update – Next Steps

Phase 2:

- Establish Comprehensive Plan Update Advisory Committee
- Retain Consultant to assist with Plan
- Develop Community Engagement Plan
 - Surveys, Social Media, Tent/Table at Community Events/Locations
 - Age groups – families, seniors, kids and teens
- Additional Community Meetings on topics
- Completion by mid to end of 2020



Thank You

