

Town of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan

Public Meeting #2 Summary

April 6, 2021



HIGHLAND PLANNING

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OVERVIEW

On Tuesday, March 23, 2021, the Town of Bethlehem hosted a virtual public meeting from 6:00—8:00 PM to support the development of the Comprehensive Plan that will guide development and community-related decisions toward the community’s vision for years to come. The Town’s current Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005, has provided the Town’s elected and appointed officials with valuable context and guidance for development-related decisions and capital investment. It established a vision for the community’s future, articulated guiding principles and goals, and recommended specific actions or strategies that would move the Town toward the community vision. Updating the comprehensive plan requires a thorough and inclusive community discussion about the current state of the town, the community’s values and aspirations for the future, and the strategies that should be used or actions that should be taken to achieve the community’s vision for the future.

By Fall 2021, the Town of Bethlehem Board will adopt an update to its Comprehensive Plan to establish a shared community vision for the future and an action plan to achieve it.

To inform and engage the members of the general public in the development of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town hosted the second public meeting to review the project scope, summarize work to date, provide a high-level overview of existing conditions and survey responses, and conduct visioning exercises.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting was held virtually using Zoom and also livestreamed on the Bethlehem Forward Facebook page and the project website. To reach out to people who do not have access to the internet or computer, the option to join the meeting by phone was also provided.

One hundred twenty-eight (128) people attended the virtual public meeting, in addition to 25 participants who watched the livestream via Facebook and project website. The meeting recording is accessible at <https://fb.watch/4rKtFf2UM/> and a list of attendees is included as Appendix A.

INTRODUCTIONS & MEETING INSTRUCTIONS

The virtual public meeting was convened by David VanLuven, Town Supervisor, who welcomed and thanked the attendees for participating. Reiterating the purpose of the meeting, Nancy Raca, Highland Planning, informed the attendees about Zoom meeting controls. Bill Price, SWBR, reviewed the meeting agenda (see Appendix B), which included:

- Welcome & introductions
- Project Presentation
 - Visioning
 - What We’ve Heard – Public Survey #1 Summary

- Review 2005 Vision Statement
- Review Value Statements
- Issues to Understand
- Q&A Session
- Wrap-up & Next Steps

Bill introduced the project team including the Town representatives, the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) members, and the consultant team members from SWBR, Highland Planning, Fisher Associates, and Kevin Dwarka, LLC.

To gather an understanding about geographic representation, the team asked attendees to participate in a poll and select one of the hamlets in the Town of Bethlehem they live in. The polling results¹ tabulated below illustrate that majority of attendees represented Delmar (53%), followed by Elsmere (17%) and Slingerlands (14%). There was no representation in the poll from North Bethlehem and South Bethlehem residents.

Poll 1: Where are you calling in from?

Hamlet	Response
Delmar	(38) 53%
Elsmere	(12) 17%
Glenmont	(6) 8%
North Bethlehem	(0) 0%
Selkirk	(4) 6%
Slingerlands	(10) 14%
South Bethlehem	(0) 0%
Other	(2) 3%

Bill reminded the participants that the public survey summary document and the community profile video presentation can be accessed on the project website.

¹ A total of 72 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 1.

WHAT WE HEARD: PUBLIC SURVEY SUMMARY

Bill noted that the community assessment and profile phases of the project have been completed and we are currently in the visioning phase to understand where the community wants to be in the future. Bill mentioned that a series of engagement activities were conducted to gather feedback on issues and opportunities perceived by the community, and further summarized results of the public survey.

- Major reasons to live/visit in the Town as noted by survey respondents:
 - Schools
 - Safety/ low crime
 - Walkability
 - Neighborhood/ local
- Preferred future development:
 - Restaurants
 - Low-density residential development of single-family housing
 - Sidewalks & bicycle facilities
- Words chosen by survey respondents to describe the town in the future were categorized into key themes: safe, friendly, diverse, inclusive, walkable, sustainable, and affordable.
- The major issues and challenges identified by the respondents:
 - Property taxes
 - Traffic congestion
 - Preservation of rural character & active farmland
 - Affordable housing
 - Neighborhood connectivity & walkability
 - Property owner rights

To gather further feedback on the public survey results, the team asked attendees to participate in a polling question. The poll results² tabulated below illustrate that majority of attendees (58%) were not surprised by the survey summary.

Poll 2: Did anything in the survey summary (opportunities & issues) surprise you?

Yes	(31) 36%
No	(49) 58%
I'm not sure	(5) 6%

² A total of 85 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 2.

The feedback received from the participants on the survey summary has been categorized and included below:

- **HOUSING**

- There's some inconsistency in the results. There's a desire for affordable housing but the development that's desired was of low-density individual homes. They're on either end of the spectrum. Also, walkability is challenged when we continue the type of development that we have seen over the decades.
- Inconsistency in results. Affordable housing but development of low-density individual homes
- Better facilitation is required to communicate how multi-family housing will be introduced and how the design will be consistent with the existing neighborhood character to help achieve population densities to get good street activity and support local business.
- Affordable housing vs. single-family low-density housing
- It was listed as an "opportunity" to have more single-family housing. It was previously discussed that we need build more dense development than single family housing.
- Low density residential development. After hearing recent town development theories, it seems higher density preserves open spaces.
- What is meant by low-density single-family housing?
- What do people mean by low density residential? Does that mean the sprawl of Orchards is acceptable?
- Also, there is perhaps a disconnect between wanting inclusivity and also prioritizing low-density, single family housing.
- The emphasis on low density residential seems contrary to affordability and housing diversity.
- How do the low-density housing goals line up with low density or open spaces?
- Low-density residential sounds like exactly the opposite of what the last Comprehensive Plan promoted. Very disappointing. That takes us in the wrong direction.
- Low density housing is not senior friendly or walkable

- **TRANSPORTATION**

- Traffic congestion seems surprising.
- Surprised that traffic congestion was an issue. I'm wondering in what part of Bethlehem. Delmar not an issue.
- Coming from a big city, I find it hard to believe that "traffic congestion" is perceived as an issue here.
- Aside from some key spots at commuter time, I'm surprised that traffic congestion is an issue.

- Walkability came up as high which is important. How did bicycling fit into that?
- Also, higher density encourages walkability and sense of connected community
- Our public transportation is still dismal. This would address the traffic issues and permit more foot and bicycle traffic.
- **ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY**
 - There were no water or air concerns. No noise
 - I was surprised the issue of overdevelopment/loss of open spaces, and huge influx of rental property development wasn't a problem for residents
 - That sustainability wasn't more important to more people
 - Given the climate crisis we are in, I am surprised that sustainability was so low.
 - also disconnect with preserving farmland and low-density housing which is on farmland
 - Less green areas, runaway commercial like the Stewart's. Junctions like 4 corners are an eyesore. Truck pollution in residential areas elm and cherry avenues.
- **QUALITY OF LIFE**
 - Very surprised that "safe" was first. And that a healthy safe environment was not near the top.
 - Safe was the top-quality people wanted
 - Safety
 - I was pleasantly surprised to see inclusivity be a big priority for so many people.
 - Safety also can include safety while walking and biking. Feeling as though my kids are safe navigating town.
- **PROPERTY OWNER RIGHTS**
 - Property owner rights surprised me
 - Can Bill also clarify what "Property owner rights" actually means? Is the ability to subdivide, build more outbuildings, or rent?
- **OTHER**
 - That most of what are important issues are the opposite of what seems to be going on with development within the town.
 - I thought from last time developments like those off Wemple Road was exactly what we didn't want.
 - If we want more open spaces and we want affordability...then we need to allow for some greater density.
 - Surprised senior issues didn't surface. Affordability and age in place are issues.
 - I am concerned by continued big box and strip mall development and would rather see retail integrates into the village commercial districts to create a village like feel.
 - I see another disconnect with "safety" and a desire for diversity and development. I think if people are very comfortable with their existing and "safe" community and neighborhood, then adding new residents through increased residential development, especially if the new community members bring diversity to

Bethlehem, there's bound to be change and maybe discomfort that doesn't feel as "safe".

REVIEW 2005 COMP PLAN VISION STATEMENT & 2035 VALUE STATEMENTS

Bill reviewed the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement focusing on key aspects (e.g., exceptional quality of life, attractive residential neighborhoods, etc.) and explained that the survey results illustrated how 2005 Comprehensive Plan was able to achieve the same. For instance, the majority of survey respondents rated the quality of life in Bethlehem to be either good or excellent.

For 2035 Comprehensive Plan, Bill noted that the value statements were developed in conjunction with the town and the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee. They were then classified into five categories: community, public services, environment & sustainability, land use, and transportation. Overall, a majority of the meeting participants believed that the value statements aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

The feedback received for each of the value statement categories is included below.

COMMUNITY

Bill reviewed the six value statements for the community category, included below.

- C1: Our **sense of community** with socially conscious citizens and business owners who engage in improving the quality of life.
- C2: Our **diverse age cohorts** and multiple generations of families that choose to live in the town.
- C3: The **qualities of rural land**, supporting the landowners' ability to access its economic value in a manner compatible with sustaining a rural-agricultural livelihood.
- C4: **Racial, ethnic, economic** and **gender** diversity and inclusion for all who want to live, work and visit the town.
- C5: **Small / locally owned businesses** and desire to create the conditions that encourage more business enterprises.
- C6: **Preservation** of our historic architecture, cultural sites, neighborhoods and districts.

The review was followed by a poll and discussion to gather feedback from the participants. The poll results³ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (70%) were in agreement and felt that the value statements for community aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

³ A total of 77 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 3.

Poll 3: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?

Yes	(54) 70%
No	(11) 14%
Yes, if my comments are addressed	(12) 16%

The comments and questions received from the participants on the value statements for the community category are included below:

- One social value, that COVID has emphasized, is the need for social interaction. Creating opportunities for more civic, social and cultural interaction should be included.
- Environment sustainability of the community is important as well as our natural areas.
- I think it would be great to utilize the wisdom of our senior citizens and come up with a program whereby they interact regularly with younger people - school aged - of various ages. Maybe even a requirement under a community service segment of HS.
- Bethlehem is an aging community.
- C3 should refer to undeveloped land in general as well, including parkland etc.
- C3: Rural lands. As a landowner, it would be nice to know that it's possible to develop land. It was not purchased with the idea of farming it. And thoughtful sustainable development is what's desired.
- Quality of all lands, not just rural
- Concerns about environmental and natural areas
- Need to consider environmental sustainability
- C4 disability inclusion
- C4 will be more authentically achieved and support the present qualities of Bethlehem when homes and apartments are “purchased” by persons who can truly afford them themselves.
- I'm sure that many people in 2005 believed that C4 sounded good on paper, but I think there are issues with how that has manifested today. I'd caution against putting it in the next plan without considering the specifics of HOW to make that happen in Bethlehem.
- We recently raised the issue of accessibility, which we would like to see specifically addressed in the update (Friends of Bethlehem Parks and Recreation)
- I would add the value that we also see ourselves as part of the global community - global warming role, support of human rights.
- I realize I may have misunderstood the term “low-density.” I think of Old Delmar as low density, and that Old Delmar’s level of density is very desirable and makes for a stronger community. Some of our new developments by comparison are too low!
- Lovely statements - nicely put. Thank you for all this work!

PUBLIC SERVICES

Bill reviewed the five value statements for the public services category, included below.

P1: Our **public-school systems** that provide the highest level of education, athletics, arts and cultural programs.

P2: **Public services** provided by the dedicated employees of the town.

P3: **Public safety and emergency response** services provided by dedicated town employees and volunteer first responders.

P4: **Senior service programs** that enable residents to live in their homes and remain active community members.

P5: Our **park system and recreation programs**, private preserves and seek to expand facilities with diverse activities and programs for all age groups.

The review was followed by a poll and discussion to gather feedback from the participants. The poll results⁴ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (81%) were in agreement and felt that the value statements for public services aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

Poll 4: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?

Yes	(66) 81%
No	(3) 4%
Yes, if my comments are addressed	(12) 15%

The comments and questions received from the participants on the value statements for the public services category are included below:

- P1: What does “highest level of education” - for example, for whom? “Highest level of athletics” - for example, winning titles or increasing participation? These are bromides and really not actionable. ***Focus here would be on education-academics.***
- The major thing that drew us to the area was walkability and the school system. I have been amazed at how friendly and welcoming the community were when we first came after living overseas.
- Which school district is the "highest" as we have three schools and they can't all be the highest? Also, if we say we are the highest, what is there to strive for. Perhaps we are districts of excellence or striving to be schools of excellence.

⁴ A total of 81 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 4.

- Nancy Neff, your understanding of English is appreciated. How can we have three school systems in town with the highest level of education. Indeed! As I asked in the Q&A, these are bromides. We need to define these phrases so that they are actionable for town government officials.
- How is the balance of new arrivals to the school system, who only stay in town for the benefit of the schools, balanced with lifelong residents and families who have hundreds of years of tenure?
- RCS is an excellent school district
- Re: our public school. I believe it is important for our school program to remember not to place over emphasis on academic achievement being pushed down too severely into kindergarten and First and Second Grade. It is so important for our youngest children to have time for constructive play indoors and out.
- Regarding P1, if you search a house on Realtor.com and check out ratings of our schools, you will see that 2 or 3 elementary schools are rated by Great Schools as 5 out of 10. Schools are rated by national tests and colleges seniors are accepted. Regarding P2, as for public services, the supervisor should be held accountable for his expenditures.
- There needs to be a mention of social/mental health services as part of P3.
- There is nothing here about providing services to the disabled including the seniors
- P5 “private preserves” should be restated to make it clear that it means preserves owned by other organizations that are open to the public. “Private” sounds exclusive or closed.
- The public employees need also to understand that they have a responsibility to neighbors as far as noise and interruption of daily activities.
- More than 50% of Bethlehem residents do not attend Bethlehem CSD
- I agree that accessibility should be an important part of the value statements.
- I am concerned that some areas of town are not viewed as equal importance in parkland and development reviews
- I would add a value about health and open space for recreation services.
- I would include renewable energy options as part of public service.
- I agree with the value statements but would like to see infrastructure emphasized and detailed.

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Bill reviewed the three value statements for the environment and sustainability category, included below.

E1: Our vast **natural resource systems**, their habitat, ecosystem services, to provide clean air and water.

E2: Being on the **forefront of sustainability** by addressing climate change through renewable energy, energy efficiency, a just transition off fossil fuels, electrification, waste reduction and prevention of greenhouse gas emissions.

E3: **Productive agricultural** land; ‘farmlands for farmers’ and rural character.

The review was followed by a poll and discussion to gather feedback from the participants. The poll results⁵ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (68%) were in agreement and felt that the value statements for environment and sustainability aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

Poll 5: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?

Yes	(48) 68%
No	(7) 10%
Yes, if my comments are addressed	(16) 23%

The comments and questions received from the participants on the value statements for the environment and sustainability category are included below:

- E1 goes beyond what it directly provides to us (in terms of clean air and water). Focus on a cohesive plan to connect green space throughout the town to create wildlife corridors to better promote a sustainable environment.
- Also, not sure if we mentioned Hudson River in natural areas, but it is a big natural resource, along with the shoreline that should be recognized
- Agree with resilience. A strong climate action plan is of value. E2 could address the need to impact efficiency of buildings, transportation and infrastructure. Besides electrification renewable energy and energy efficiency along with carbon sequestration are measures I’d like the town to value
- There must be a dedicated effort to recycle organic waste by composting. I also believe specific mention needs to be made regarding the river front and enhancing its quality.
- How can we make residential areas more environmentally friendly through decreased use of pesticides and increase biodiversity in private and public areas?
- Please expand on what is meant by “just transition”? I know what it means to those who live EJ communities, but not sure what the Bethlehem definition would be.
- What is a just transition? Who is it being just to?
- I would love to see “that provide climate mitigation” and “preservation of scenic lands”
- The Town has a great deal of diesel-powered machinery that routinely affect neighbors and increases the effects of climate change. This needs to stop.

⁵ A total of 71 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 5.

- No issue with value, but we need to include concerns over resiliency to changing climate. The community can make great strides on sustainability but still be susceptible to hazards associated with changes not within its control.
- Climate change is cyclical.
- Agree with that last comment on resilience, natural areas provide protection against flooding and drought and ecosystem services
- Promotion of renewable energy use and potential means of recycling gray water. Also, could it be possible to provide for linked rural areas to allow for animals and plants to move between patches of habitat (and address invasive plant and animal issues along the way).
- Regarding E3, I don't know what "farmlands for farmers" means and don't know that productive agricultural land is meaningful in this context. Regarding E2, if want to be comprehensive then wording should change. Regarding E1, need to add soil to air and water.
- E3: Also mentions farmland for farms only. If we want to have affordable housing, and clean solar panels, and meet some of the other goals...it seems out of sync to assume that there will be a lot of "farming" happening.
- How is "productive agriculture land" defined? *An open space study was completed in 2018 that documents different criteria, including soils having local or statewide significance, and mapped as to where those most productive lands are. One can also look at the different conservation easement programs that the town has to help define the productivity of agriculture lands.*
- I'm concerned about the word productive with regard to ag land. Leaves room for inappropriate interpretations and judgement
- The climate change resilience is missing. It's important to recognize that our natural environment does a lot of services for us without knowing that it's working for us like the wetlands in our stream buffers etc. etc. so it's not just the natural resource systems to provide habitat and clean water but also to protect us from the effects of climate change.
- Environmental value statement comment: No mention of building efficiency standards (which are maybe outside the scope of Town jurisdiction). The Town can certainly influence land use to "shepherd" people into smaller areas and carbon de-intensification efforts.
- I would like to see the elimination of the use of pesticides and herbicides on town property and give incentives to homeowners to eliminate the use of these chemicals.
- The town needs to set the challenge to 2030 to align with the state and others.
- As this plan brings us to 2035, aligning with the state's goals in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act is key as well.
- Excessive tree cutting is becoming a serious problem and there seems to be some incorrect interpretations of what is and is not allowable
- People should stop cutting down trees for no reason.
- I agree, but I hope we will add reducing lawns for pollinator plant development.

- Lawns are monoculture and not "diverse". Encourage native plantings, less lawns, and no chemicals on lawns because these chemicals are toxic. Also, gas-powered leaf blowers create air pollution, noise pollution, and destroy the soil's natural microbes which support insect species vital to our ecosystems.
- We value living in harmony with nature.
- Can you tell us how you will address those environmental values with the comprehensive plan and regulations?

LAND USE

Bill reviewed the two value statements for the land use category, included below.

L1: A **diversity of land uses** to balance the tax base, provide jobs, complement our hamlets and residential zoning districts and sustain fiscal policy objectives.

L2: **Diverse housing options** that are affordable, fit the needs of different lifestyles, and allow residents to prosper and age in place.

The review was followed by a poll and discussion to gather feedback from the participants. The poll results⁶ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (59%) were in agreement and felt that the value statements for land use aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

Poll 6: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?

Yes	(43) 59%
No	(11) 15%
Yes, if my comments are addressed	(19) 26%

The comments and questions received from the participants on the value statements for the land use category are included below:

- L1: Please provide clarification on diversity of land use. *When the town adopted zoning in early 20th century, different zones were established, and land uses were separated. Diversity of land uses would mean getting back to where we were zoning ourselves into these low-density separated areas by allowing more uses within certain districts taking into account environmental and traffic impacts. Allowing a diverse mix of land uses, for instance introducing residential into highly commercial areas or allowing more commercial into highly developed residential areas, will be an effort to create a vibrancy of the street.*

⁶ A total of 73 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 6.

- Land use section should be tied to environment and sustainability.
- L1 is very vague as a value statement.
- I think a big missing point on the land use slide is the preservation of open spaces. Not necessarily for environmental/sustainability reasons, but for the reason that the preservation of the character of the town depends on keeping some of the undeveloped land as it is.
- How the diversity of land use and housing is addressed is very important and needs to have detailed review based on the actual areas of the town and not just by color blocks on an existing map.
- Please define "balance the tax base"; with that definition, the types and quantities of land uses can still be diverse but more strategically induced by the Town
- L1 should be clarified to encompass the idea of a single piece of land supporting mixed-uses.
- L2: What is it meant by diverse housing options?
- You mentioned low density housing is desired.
- I realize I may have misunderstood the term "low-density." I think of Old Delmar as low-density. Old Delmar's level of density is very desirable and makes for a stronger community. Some of our new developments are too low! Too spread out and not walkable.
- Affordable housing seems to be such a hot button issue here. I'm not sure how this gets included as a value in Bethlehem as I don't think it generally has that much support.
- I am concerned with options for our seniors. It seems like many of the townhome developments are higher end. We need housing for senior that don't want to move into an apartment. When we talk about affordable housing, it seems like many people think of high-density apartment complexes. What about zoning that allows smaller homes on small lots, much of what Old Delmar is like. Single lot zoning shouldn't mean large lot. Many people want a home without a huge yard and as long as they are near a park-don't mind not having one. We zone out small lots, but it is exactly what we love about Delmar and how it looks.
- If you look at the old Delmar lots, they are suburban tracts, but they are on deep lots or double lots. Also nowadays we let anyone meeting the requirements do a lot division and just toss any old infill house there... all you have to do is look at the UFO house that landed on Maple Ave off Elsmere in the middle of early 20th Century homes When the Groesbeck/Leonard properties were razed. We need some better design guidelines for infill in addition to the density considerations.
- In 2005 the town's values included land preservation/ and farm preservation yet since I moved here in 2013, I have witnessed the Glenmont area farmland being erased by low density housing. And it looks like there is more development on Wemple road. So how do these stated "values" actually work so that the community vision is achieved?
- The value statements for land use should recognize the value of natural spaces in town.

- I think more effort needs to be made to enhance the villages and hamlets and limit any more big-box and strip mall development.
- I agree regarding the limiting of strip malls/big box stores
- How about more gardens and less lawn? We could have a community pick up for any excess food.

TRANSPORTATION

Bill reviewed the two value statements for the transportation category, included below.

T1: The **transportation infrastructure** which provides equal access / priority to all modes of travel (pedestrian, bicycles, transit and vehicles).

T2: The **walkable** areas of the town and desire to expand connectivity across the town to schools, neighborhoods, recreation facilities and commercial districts.

The review was followed by a poll and discussion to gather feedback from the participants. The poll results⁷ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (76%) were in agreement and felt that the value statements for transportation aligned with their vision for the town in 2035.

Poll 7: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?

Yes	(55) 76%
No	(3) 4%
Yes, if my comments are addressed	(14) 19%

The comments and questions received from the participants on the value statements for the transportation category are included below:

- Regarding T1, how do you determine what is feasible and prudent transportation solutions?
- Sidewalk infrastructure needs to be increased and sidewalk maintenance needs to be increased as well
- Regarding T1, how do we have priority to all modes of travel? Not everything can be first. There needs to be more precise use of language.
- I appreciate that we have encouragement with signs for bicycles to bike in the lane on Camwood Avenue. It really helps the traffic and guides the drivers about where bicyclists are going. However, as a bicyclist, I still find biking on Camwood Avenue a little dangerous

⁷ A total of 72 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 7.

because the sidewalk is so choppy in places. The signs are great, but we can continue to improve the bikeability of the town.

- Higher density allows for more walkability
- Please specifically mention safe bike lanes and sidewalks and hiking paths.
- I'm concerned about road diet that supports biking, but we have a bike trail people can use
- May want to add electric vehicles to transportation infrastructure
- The Rail Trail is an excellent walkable/bicyclist connector now but there is plenty of room for improvement to connect to Delaware/Kenwood etc.
- I am in agreement with T1 and T2 but would like the close to road sidewalk along Kenwood made safer.
- T2 (walkability) is not aggressive enough. I value walkability, period. I want the Town to pursue a multi-pronged strategy to increase walkability and cycle-ability broadly.
- Support bikeability and walkability!
- Part of making a walkable community is a sidewalk maintenance plan which our town does not currently have.
- Walking on Kenwood is equally as dangerous. I am concerned as development continues to grow off of Kenwood.
- Connectivity can be a complex term. As I've mentioned in previous meetings, most people who attended the 7 comprehensive plan community forums held previously spoke to connectivity being for walking, biking to connect the community and neighborhoods not vehicular traffic. Even as Nate answered a question earlier and Bill also implied vehicular connectivity as desirable. That is not the case in many situations. Connecting neighborhoods for vehicular traffic degrades the character and quality metrics of an existing neighborhood, and sadly the cars do not drive slowly and 30mph isn't even desirable. And most newer neighborhoods do not have sidewalks and it is not safe to walk and bike. The further away from the driver's residence the more likely they speed up to accomplish their route connection vs preserving the character of the community they just drive through. Thank you for thinking about this as we work on metrics and quantitative metrics for new designs and future connectivity plans.
- I agree that connectivity is complex. I would like the town to think about connectivity for all road users, not only cars. I agree with @Oliver Homes about the tremendous need for sidewalk infrastructure and sidewalk maintenance. These items need to be included in the annual budget for the town. We are very behind in maintaining our current sidewalks, let alone building new ones that town residents desire.
- Biking on Murray Ave is very dangerous for our kids heading to Hamagrael Elementary, for example. But with no traffic calming and no sidewalks on Murray, it's hard to get around on Murray - despite the fact this is a designated bike pathway.
- I discourage use of cars.
- Need to employ traffic calming measures to increase the visual desirability of our streets while making them safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.

- Traffic coming off the bypass onto Murray often barely slows down. We regularly see cars traveling at 40mph+ which is dangerous for bicyclists trying to make a left on Murray onto Parkwyn.
- Kenwood is dangerous for bicyclists as well.
- Is anything being done to encourage that high tech grown in the Slingerlands vista blvd. area, for which it was originally built?
- What is Selkirk bypass?

ISSUES TO UNDERSTAND

Bill explained how public survey was used to identify issues faced by the community. Because a majority of survey respondents found property taxes to be a challenge, he provided an overview of tax rates in comparable communities within the capital region as well as across the state that have high functioning and highly rated school systems. He noted that, in Bethlehem, residential properties make up 77% of the total assessed value of land and pay the largest amount of tax burden, which is much higher than the statewide average.

To gather further feedback from the participants on the identified issues, the team asked attendees to participate in a series of polling questions, followed by a discussion for the respective poll. The comments and questions received from the participants following each of the polls are summarized in the sub-sections below.

PROPERTY TAXES

The team asked attendees to participate in two polls to gather insights about why property taxes are a challenge and how to achieve a fiscal balance.

Poll 8: Why are property taxes a challenge in next 10 years?

Affordability (economic factor in decision to stay in Bethlehem)	(23) 29%
Value of services (School, Town, County) don't align with cost	(17) 22%
Residential burden too high (need for diverse uses to share burden)	(27) 34%
Other	(7) 9%
Taxes not a challenge	(28) 35%

The above poll results⁸ illustrate that for many of the attendees either “taxes are not a challenge” (35%) or “residential burden is too high” (34%). The comments and questions received from the participants are included below:

- NYS taxes are high.
- I would suggest that “fiscal policy objectives” should include long term fiscal planning and the true cost of environmental degradation, loss of land, etc. The value of natural resources is often left out of the equation unless it is how it can be exploited.
- An apartment building in will bring taxpayers and a limited footprint. Keep the open spaces, put a moratorium on new home builds for five years.
- You would’ve been better off sorting these left to right by overall tax rate, ascending
- What is not represented is the services received for those taxes. We pay for many things on a household level that may be included in the taxes of other communities.
- School property taxes is the largest portion of their annual property taxes. This gets to my point about how to frame questions.
- Niskayuna does not have rural farm communities.
- If we had more business and less residential property, we would lower our taxes and provide some of the businesses that we want in town.
- We value intergovernmental and interagency cooperation to enhance efficiency and to contain costs in the delivery of services.
- Could you give some specifics of services other towns receive that we do not for comparable taxes?
- We live here for the schools, services, and green spaces.
- Did project team look at the services that the county and the town were providing to residents and not just the cost? Because there are communities whose taxes may be a little higher but are also providing services that the town of Bethlehem does not provide. **No, the team just looked at the combined tax rates in comparable school districts.**
- The underlying tax issue is the overdependence on residential taxpayers; the community needs to decide what level of quality commercial development it needs to balance its quiet enjoyment of the Town. How much are residents willing to pay to maintain the character of the Town? COVID is resulting in changes to how some (many?) will work in the future; this could be an opportunity for TOB because of its quality of life.
- If you look at your local property tax bill, the town share is very small.
- I personally am ignorant on the value of the county tax. It is most of the cost of property tax. Excluding school tax.
- The tax burden on agricultural land is unsustainable. Both town and school. It is difficult to continue farming when you know a substantial part of your sales goes directly to supporting the residential tax base.

⁸ A total of 79 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 8.

- We pay the same amount of property taxes. Yet people dump their garbage behind our property. In spite of complains to the town, nothing was done. Is that area zoned junkyard?
- Meaning, what do those dollars fund- and how much does the town of Bethlehem receive for those dollars provided.
- Taxes are not a challenge right now but could be when I am retired. The other issues are more important to me at this time.
- For the amount of taxes we pay, the town does not even pick up barge.
- Inflation will also make my retirement income worthless. The dollar amount will not change.

Poll 9: Knowing Single Family Residential costs exceed the tax revenues generated, what land uses are acceptable to achieve a fiscal balance?

Light Industrial / Manufacturing in designated districts	(29) 47%
Context sensitive senior, workforce and infill housing	(33) 53%
Greater diversity of commercial / retail / office uses in hamlets & along commercial corridors	(44) 71%
Uses that support agriculture and farming operations	(40) 65%
None of the above	(1) 2%

The above poll results⁹ illustrate that the majority of attendees (71%) prefer “greater diversity of commercial / retail / office uses in hamlets & along commercial corridors,” followed by “land uses that support agriculture and farming operations” (65%). The comments and questions received from the participants are included below:

- Infill in general should not about the many small streams in Old Delmar. Keep these stream adjacent properties undeveloped. When mapping these stream corridors, don't use NYSDEC maps. They need to be defined based on elevation data and many technical advances to locate these drainage paths.
- Is the tax rate a bit misleading? Aren't actual taxes paid a function of the rate and the home value? So, our actual taxes could be higher with a lower tax rate, correct?
- Taxes never go down and it doesn't matter which tax. They all add up, NY is just a high tax state. The problem is when retired, will I be able to afford the taxes and the unknown increases that will come.

⁹ A total of 62 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 9.

- I was surprised to find out the low percentage of our total taxes that the town is able to run on. I think we get a lot for our money. Let’s hope some inflation stabilizes the taxes.
- What is infill housing? *Infill housing is the insertion of additional housing units into an already-approved subdivision or neighborhood. They can be provided as additional units built on the same lot, by dividing existing homes into multiple units, or by creating new residential lots by further subdivision or lot line adjustments.*
- Maybe use the word variety vs diversity when that is what you are getting at.
- Why are the panelists assuming residential costs more than business? This is not necessarily true. Refer to Washington, Kent CT, or other towns in Dutchess County. With respect to business, I did the analysis on Walmart, breakeven on property tax, but county benefit with sales tax.
- Why is all industrial in Selkirk, even within residential areas?
- Hamlets need to be removed from commercial corridors. They are tearing down wooded areas to build across from historic homes in Selkirk.
- I don't think commercial and industrial entities locate here based on direct expenditures compared to taxes paid. The same is probably true for residential. The value of the location to the taxpayer involves many other factors. The direct services is only one factor so I disagree that this model is valid. Value to the taxpayer is more than direct cost.

RURAL PROPERTY OPTIONS

The team asked attendees to participate in a poll and select one or more activities that could support a rural-agricultural livelihood. The poll results¹⁰ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (91%) prefer “farm stand / retail outlet / country store / dairy,” followed by “green houses” (84%) and “wedding / seasonal event venues” (73%).

Poll 10: What activities could support a rural-agricultural livelihood?

Barns / machine shops / equipment storage	(36) 65%
Wedding / seasonal event venues	(40) 73%
B&B / Agritourism	(35) 64%
Farm stand / retail outlet / country store / dairy	(50) 91%
Greenhouses	(46) 84%
Barndominium	(16) 29%
Forest product processing	(23) 42%

¹⁰ A total of 55 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 10.

Food processing	(30) 55%
Other	(10) 18%

The comments and questions received from the participants about rural property options are included below:

- Another rural property option is to host solar energy generation that co-exists with crops.
- The additional rural uses need to be taxable and not fall under the agricultural exemption.
- They are tearing down trees along Delaware and elm/ cherry Ave.
- How can solar exist with crops? Crops need sun, solar shades the earth under it.
- Is wind possible on Bethlehem farms? ***There is not much wind resource in the Albany area.***
- Why should solar be in farm areas? It is ugly, needs to be fenced.
- I would echo the opportunities for local solar power generation. Also, locally produced food that could be supported by more farmer's market choices.
- I support solar farms
- This "exercise" just makes it more obvious about the disconnect between suburban and rural lives.
- Solar collectors on farmland? I grow hay. Grass is the original solar collector and grass also does a couple of things that solar collectors cannot. 1) It stores its energy and solar panels do not; 2) It captures carbon and solar does not; 3) It is the beginning of our food chain and you cannot eat solar panels. The reason companies want to put panels on farmland is because we have already done the work to clear the land and because of this they can make more profit. I would rather have food to eat than a charged electric car or smart phone.
- Solar panels should go on houses when possible.

HOUSING ALTERNATIVES

Bill noted that survey respondents mostly encouraged single-family detached housing and multi-family housing was mostly discouraged. Bill further detailed what multi-family housing means. To better understand why there is a lack of support for multi-family housing, the team asked attendees to participate in a poll. The poll results¹¹ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (63%) support multi-family (duplex and higher) housing.

Poll 11: Why did many respondents indicate lack of support for multi-family housing?

Aesthetics / visual appearance of multifamily housing seen in Town of Bethlehem	(14) 19%
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¹¹ A total of 72 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 11.

Perception of scale and size (density)	(15) 21%
Perceived impact of property values of adjacent properties	(17) 24%
Perceive ‘renters’ don’t care about property maintenance & adjacent properties	(18) 25%
Other	(12) 17%
I support multi-family (duplex and higher) housing	(45) 63%

The comments and questions received from the participants about housing alternatives are included below:

- ADUs (rentable) can be a nice way to increase the availability of lower-cost housing
- The single family is the size of older single-family homes and well out of reach of most family incomes.
- Hamdon Woods proposal made a mess of the cluster concept.
- Seniors aging in Bethlehem cannot all afford \$350,000 townhouses. Accessory dwelling units can provide intergenerational housing opportunities. Many communities are now implementing this action.
- Build for people, not for cars. Mixed use makes sense to me.
- The pictured mixed-use New Scotland development is nice if it weren’t stranded out on the end of New Scotland Rd.
- Absentee ownership is the fear. Otherwise it is great.
- Maybe residents just don't like multi family.
- I support multi-family housing. We moved here from Seattle and saw lots of amazing multi-family options. But I am 100% positive that all the other responses that show a lack of support for family housing are widely held by residents here.
- What about small mixed units? Is it maybe about 10 families with a courtyard in the middle?
- One concern that we tend not to think about is the long-term fiscal implications of the density question. Down the road, more compact development will have less sidewalks to repair/replace and fewer miles of road and water/sewer pipes to replace/repair.
- NIMBYism is the usual reason for opposing multi-unit housing
- Building development is “semi-permanent”. We should not allow it to be built all over the place (sprawl). We should strategically place it to build a critical mass that supports subsequent retail/commercial development.

- How did the mansions of Delmar get past zoning process? The home builders had to build a barn and landscape along Fisher. The mansions look horrible with the parking lot out front, garbage cans out front, absolutely no landscaping. Totally disgraceful!
- It would not be a good idea to have mixed use multifamily everywhere!

MANUFACTURING

Bill noted that industrial was a land use discouraged by survey respondents. He further presented some alternatives, including craftsman industrial, warehousing and distribution, green manufacturing or clean industry, and advanced manufacturing. To better understand why light industrial and manufacturing was discouraged, the team asked attendees to participate in a poll. The poll results¹² tabulated below illustrate that many of the attendees either had concerns “related truck traffic on town roads” (44%) or are “not that concerned” (44%).

Poll 12: Why ‘Discourage’ Light Industrial / Manufacturing?

Location near residential uses	(24) 35%
Perceived environmental impacts	(27) 40%
Concern for property values	(11) 16%
Related truck traffic on town roads	(30) 44%
Other	(4) 6%
Not that concerned	(30) 44%

The comments and questions received from the participants about manufacturing are included below:

- Craftsman Industrial would be nice in the old Blue Cross Blue Shield Building. That property has been vacant for decades.
- I have never really thought about industrial being this type of industry.
- It could be a great place for a lot of uses but it doesn’t seem that the owner is that open to ideas.
- Why did SWBR use the word “perceived environmental impacts?”
- Istanbul park is hardly developed, and we have the partly constructed building there. If have more Industrial would Vista be a priority for location
- Let's not add light industrial, let's use what we have.

¹² A total of 68 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 12.

- I thought it needed mitigation and repair. Those can be costly. The other question is if there are business that would come?
- Light industry is often unattractive and often takes up large tracks of open space.
- I believe that there is something toxic at that site.
- My assumption is there would be a negative environmental impact.
- I’m not that concerned regarding light industrial/manufacturing
- I was/am actually in favor of industrial/manufacturing, but just voted for the truck traffic, because this needs to be considered seriously when siting industry.
- I don't agree with "perceived". Historically, there has been environmental impact with industrial development.
- Relatively strict NYS environmental regulations should mitigate most environmental concerns of light industry (i.e., air & water/sewer discharges).
- There are several options as to why one might hold that opinion then an option reading 'not that concerned' forcing individuals to remain neutral rather than being able to offer limited encouragement or any other opinion. The available options are skewed to one side of the issue rather than seeking an unbiased result.
- Local towns, village, and cities all compete to encourage light industrial/manufacturing to help pay for their own community services. How much unused, vacant commercial space is there in Bethlehem and elsewhere. Any planning for this kind of development needs to be evaluated based on the amount of existing land use zoning elsewhere for this purpose. If there's already enough capacity regionally, don't commit zoning for this as well. Zone for other types of land use.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The team asked attendees to participate in a poll to gather insights about what traffic congestion means for the community. The poll results¹³ tabulated below illustrate that the majority of attendees (55%) selected “congestion at certain intersections during commute times,” followed by “Bethlehem doesn’t have a significant traffic issue” (37%) and “speed of vehicles” (36%).

Poll 13: What does traffic congestion mean?

Bumper to bumper road travel	(12) 16%
Congestion at certain intersections during commute times	(40) 55%
Speed of vehicles	(26) 36%
Truck traffic on town streets	(22) 30%
Bethlehem doesn’t have a significant traffic issue.	(27) 37%

¹³ A total of 73 Zoom meeting attendees participated in the Poll 13.

The comments and questions received from the participants about traffic congestion are included below:

- The town needs to lower the speed limit on residential streets. Google maps has altered usage patterns that adversely affect pedestrian safety in residential areas
- West Sand Lake suffers terribly from excess truck traffic. Makes the small local roads noisy and dangerous.
- We just don't want to become what Troy Rd has become in East Greenbush!
- Noise is a traffic issue, but it is not included here.
- I've forgotten what commuting is since the pandemic.
- Traffic congestion is a concern that we need to address in regard to multifamily housing development. It is an issue that can be handled but should not be ignored.
- People should carpool to the soccer games!
- A concern with traffic congestion links up with a desire to avoid multifamily housing development. It is a concern that can be addressed with proper planning.
- If people can work near where they live, then they don't need to drive.
- The traffic congestion is mailing in Glenmont and Delmar and would be a high topic for Delmar residents who wouldn't see the truck traffic in the southern areas
- I am in favor of multifamily development. I think to get more support for it, we need to deal with the issue of traffic congestion.
- Usually it is only me in my truck, but I don't complain about traffic either.
- Personally, I don't think we currently have many traffic problems in Bethlehem. What concerns many of us is the fear of us becoming like other areas such as the Northway corridor, Colonie and Western Ave in Guilderland, where traffic has grown and some of that is not just during rush hour.
- Glenmont has a major traffic problem during work commutes on Rt 9W, but hopefully this will be addressed with the circle going in at corner of Feura Bush Rd.
- T1 I assume to mean future transit? There is no transit where I live at present. ***All modes of travel are considered.***

Q&A SESSION

The project presentation and the interactive polling activity was followed by a question and answer (Q&A) session to gather further feedback from the meeting participants. The question and comments received from the attendees have been categorized and summarized below.

HOUSING

- Who is building these “affordable housing?” Private individuals or the Town of Bethlehem? And where would we be putting these structures? Olde Delmar, neighborhoods off Feura Bush /Murray Rd. or Seklirk/Glenmont? And is “affordable” subjective?
- Affordability and single-family preference seem to be in some conflict.
- I do like the values, but I am concerned about extensive housing development across previously undeveloped land.
- With regards to housing, I assume we are not precluding less affordable housing. Many new homes now over \$500. ***Providing housing for all income levels is considered.***
- There needs to be a way to provide lower cost (less than \$300K) houses that don't need to be subsidized. They may be smaller, have smaller lots, less high-end kitchens etc. but affordable as a starter home or senior home.
- How many residential properties vs. commercial properties? Isn't there 10X residential? ***Yes, dominant land use is residential.***

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

- "You may address this later but what do you mean by sustainable? Does that include being aware of the impact of climate change? Does the town plan to include sustainable actions to slow climate change in the town? ***The Town currently has some measures for mitigating climate change such as the Sustainable Bethlehem Initiative, Complete Streets Resolution, and it is considered in many other planning efforts such as the Street Tree Management Plan and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. We've already heard from residents that sustainability and climate action are important things that should be included in the Comprehensive Plan Update!***
- What makes an environment sustainable? The word sustainable and suburbia do not rally go together.
- We need to examine our resources. Water is at a premium.
- The town of Bethlehem has very limited water resources of its own and rely on many different municipalities to get water. So, whether it's industrial, residential, or agricultural development, it will affect the amount of water that we're using. In addition, we have not mentioned air quality. Depending on where you live in the town, the air quality can be very poor. For instance, I live in the center near town hall and the air quality is very poor. ***The community profile details the water and sewer capacity of the town. The town has about two thirds available capacity for in the water plant and about one-third available capacity for sewer treatment plant. So, the town has available balance in both systems. The project team can look into why the air quality is poor particularly in near town hall.***
- How does town hall affect air quality?
- Regarding “downtown” air quality, perhaps tailpipe emissions from cars on Delaware and Kenwood Ave.

- There is the climate leadership and community protection act that was passed in 2019 and is now being implemented at the state level that requires towns like Bethlehem to undergo a comprehensive overhaul of how we live work and play.
- I would like the climate action plan to be incorporated that addresses building transportation and infrastructure and considers strategies like electrification, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and carbon sequestration. We have the climate law and being able to align the 2035 comp plan with that would be fantastic.
- Trees have a life span, sometimes they die and need to be taken down, sometimes they are nearing the end and can be used for wood, sometimes they get in the way and need to be taken down.
- Trees are also sometimes diseased and can spread disease. Moderation and thoughtful removal are not always a bad thing.
- Not everyone wants trees near their house.
- Can we look to invasive species (such as bittersweet) in preserving trees in long term thinking? Trees are being killed by these. what folks think of as deforestation is actually removal of dead trees from invasive species. I personally removed a ton from a yard in Glenmont today.
- Deer overpopulation is also decimating the saplings.
- We can all agree to what we want this town to look like, but the big developers are still able to sweep in, take over large swaths of open space (ie Kleinke Farm) and despite our best efforts on the last CP, we were still unable to prevent a great loss of open space in the past 10 - 20 years.
- No mention of sustainable energy or focus on native habitat/wildlife/plant diversity and connectivity.
- More street trees along Delaware Avenue.
- The climate action plans have to be included in the comprehensive plan and I'm a real advocate for the farmland.
- It is important to retaining the highest number of trees possible in this community because they are being taken down by the thousands on monthly basis.

LAND USE

- Why do you assume that comment applies only to large landholdings? For example, what about the ability of building the type of fence you want in town.
- It would seem that it is vital to support our small farm owners so that their land does not have to be sold for housing developments.

TRANSPORTATION

- There was no adequate public transportation in the year 2005 in Bethlehem.
- This doesn't need to be addressed tonight but I am concerned about speed on Delaware Ave and would like to see commercial development restricted in number/character going

forward so as to not exacerbate traffic issues on the stretch between Four Corners and headed toward Albany.

- Is the town really walkable? *There are areas of town that are more walkable than others. The walkable areas are mainly limited to hamlet areas. Residential neighborhoods with low/slow traffic, while they may not have sidewalks, can also be considered walkable.*
- I have lived in Delmar since 1997, on the Glenmont side of the bypass. I have been asking for sidewalks for years. We still have no sidewalks going down Feura Bush Rd or Elm Ave going to the Town Park or going to 335, from where we could get sidewalks to Old Delmar or down to the Glenmont center. Also, public transportation is sorely lacking. *The town has undertaken preliminary plans in laying out a sidewalk on Feura Bush Road from Elsmere Ave to Murray Avenue. The location requires easement and land acquisition from some property owners, which has taken some time to achieve, and remains in progress.*
- Going to Murray is nice, but not far enough. It should go to Elm. *Agreed, that would be a 3rd phase, and then ultimately up Elm Avenue to Town Park.*
- What's happening with the old train station on the rail trail in Dungeons? Seems like a great place to build community. *This is the former train depot building. Albany County owns the building and land but have not announced plans for its future.*
- Neighborhood connectivity does not require that needs to always be vehicle connectivity can be just walking.

COMMUNITY

- If we are a community that celebrates diversity, why do we want to develop "like minded" neighborhoods? *Those two don't really match up completely. I think a diverse community will also have a variety of different perspectives and voices.*
- Surprised that survey results indicated that people liked that the Town is Diverse. How was diversity defined? *The "diverse" term was used to describe the town in the future and not as a reflection of our current state.*
- As it relates to the issues reported, has there been any data correlation / inquiry as to what has drawn folks to live in Bethlehem to start, and how this relates to the issue list? My thinking here is that some are brought in principally by the reputation of the school district, whereas longstanding residents may have different perspectives.
- What does "socially conscious" mean? When you do these surveys, you cannot use jargon. Also, what does valuing "gender diversity" mean? Are we saying that the town is currently not diverse as to gender? *It refers to gender identity.*
- With respect to some of the various types of buildings that are desired with potential outcome economically or otherwise for the community, it seems as if design review and the materiality of those buildings would be important and could add or subtract to the overall feeling of the community.
- My concerns about the present and the near-term future include maintaining a community with good schools, clean air, clean water, responsive and responsible government that

works for the town residents. I want my community to be inclusive and welcoming for all people. I want policing to be public safety designed primarily to protect human rights including protection of community and private property. I am concerned about the increasing footprint of heavy industry and transportation within the town and nearby vicinity. For example, there appears to me to higher volumes of heavy trucks and seemingly constant rail traffic through the Selkirk Yards. I am concerned about the pollution in the Hudson River. I believe we must strengthen county and regional coordination to maintain and improve our conditions.

PROPERTY TAXES

- As someone who moved from Seattle, the tax rates here are very high. I used to only pay 1% of my property value in taxes in the City of Seattle. So, this is significantly higher here.
- We are so much higher than almost all other states. people don't realize how much higher.
- Why do you assume “residential burden too high (need diverse uses ...)? I can show you town after town where your statement is not true. What you are looking for is development, residential or business, that produces tax revenue over cost. ***Commercial and industrial land uses help to balance the tax base - compared to residential uses.***
- BCSD does not get the fiscal scrutiny that Town government does and perhaps should.
- You are making a conclusory statement that is not necessarily true. Compare the tax burden of senior housing vs. cost to community vs. Wal-Mart’s extra demand on police services. I did the math with Walmart. Breakeven on property tax; large benefit to sales tax. Here is a great example of how I wish you would facilitate as facilitators. “Bethlehem, you say you want small businesses, not big box stores. Big Box stores produce more tax revenue per square foot than small business. HOW CAN WE MAKE SMALL BUSINESSES MORE PROFITABLE SUCH THAT THEY CAN PAY MORE TAX. As one woman wrote, “How can we make government more efficient?” ***A diversity of businesses in any community helps to provide a balanced tax base.***

OTHER

- Not enough time and the zoom format unworkable. Can I comment on a written draft? ***Comments and questions can be submitted on the project website or via email to bethlehemforward@townofbethlehem.org.***
- Where did property rights go within the value statements? ***It's found in qualities of rural land, ability to access economic value.***
- How many years out are we talking for the Murray phase and then the 3rd phase? ***Likely in the next 5 years.***
- Did the committee develop these value statements? ***Bill Price from SWBR developed the value statements based on input received to date. The CPUC committee and town staff reviewed and refined them.***

- Are the public-school districts represented on this committee? *The Committee does not include a representative from the school district. They have been contacted for discussion and are aware the Update is underway.*
- Has the town ever explored burying power lines along Delaware Ave and other areas of the town? *This was looked at during the Delaware Avenue Streetscape project a few years ago and cost was in the millions without grant funds available.*
- Is this a future vision for the town? Glad to hear your thoughts on how best achieve this balance. Yes, the town has become increasingly geared to the wealthy transient resident who vacates when their children graduate. They have very different desires for the long-term values of the town than do generational long-term residents. Both should certainly be balanced.
- Are key values just based on input from the residents or there are also standards that are applied by the committee and the planners? Friends at Bethlehem Park recently wrote a letter explaining our concern about accessibility and the inclusion of people with disabilities. We believe the town could be more proactive in terms of its policies and practices in this area. *There's nothing standard about the value statements and they aren't derived from the American Planning Association (APA) or any other national planning body. These are all unique to Bethlehem and resulted from the feedback received from the community through multiple engagement efforts including surveys and public meetings.*
- I think the key is to make progress toward goals. Unfortunately, many of the ideas will cost a fortune and the main reason folks want to leave NY is the property taxes.
- Hamlets is a legacy of the previous Comp Plan and in retrospect it was an overrated value (goal?), which resulted in the carve out of what are now questionable hamlets (ex. Feura Bush and Elsmere Ave; Slingerland Vista Park). Do we need more of these iffy hamlets? Are they really walkable, mixed use, 'attractive' places?
- The decision to use polls as the primary method to learn the responses of community members is limiting and preventing individuals from providing their full input on current or future ideals. Responses are already scripted and left vague enough that the interpretation of the individual submitting their opinion and the meaning assigned to it when compiling results may differ entirely. There is no opportunity for discussion or exchanging ideas, no way to express support or concerns with specific aspects, responses are reduced to sentences that have already been decided or what can be conveyed through a few lines of text.
- Good session. Thank you
- Thank you, Bill. This issue was looked at over 11 years ago and independence for Bethlehem was looked at.
- Thank you for facilitating this discussion. Have a good evening.
- We need to ensure parks are ADA compliant. Looking at the ADA as the floor, not the ceiling, in terms of planning to make all resources accessible.
- Big thanks to all of our town officials and employees for hosting these meetings!

- Thank you for the efficiency and timely running of this meeting.

WRAP-UP & NEXT STEPS

The project team reviewed the next steps:

- Virtual meeting recording is available on the project website and Facebook page
- Project presentation can be accessed on the project website at www.bethlehemforward.com/Customer/File/Full/28732720-d249-4d25-8275-98efd5c34105.
- Review and comment on Public Survey Summary and Community Profile Video Presentation
- CPUC will prepare 2035 Vision Statement informed by tonight's discussion
- Submit your vision ideas and comments by Friday, April 2, 2021 via:
 - Email: bethlehemforward@townofbethlehem.org
 - Comment on the website: www.BethlehemForward.com
 - Comment on social media:
 - Facebook.com/BethlehemForward
 - Twitter @BethlehemNY
- Next CPUC Meeting: April 13, 2021 from 6:00—8:00 pm
- Public Meeting #3: Late Summer

APPENDIX A: LIST OF PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDEES

PROJECT TEAM:

David VanLuven, Town of Bethlehem
Rob Leslie, Town of Bethlehem
Nate Owens, Town of Bethlehem
Leslie Lombardo, Town of Bethlehem
Karen Shaw, Town of Bethlehem
Bill Price, SWBR
Tanya Zwahlen, Highland Planning
Nancy Raca, Highland Planning
Charvi Gupta, Highland Planning

COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Rad Anderson	Brian Gyory
Aferdita Bardhi	Rebecca Hathaway
David Barnett	Nancy Heinzen
Karen Beck	Seanan Herrick
Pattie Beeler	John Hillmann
Anne Benware	Julia Hoffman
Paul Beyer	Debra Hoffmann
Gregg Biche	Oliver Holmes
Alejandra Bronfman	Chris Horn
Greg Brown	Peter Iwanowicz
David Burtis	Linda J.
Bruce Bushart	Roberta Jeracka
Ray Cardona	Ryan Keller
Donna Clark	Bill Ketzer
Stephen Cleary	Dr. Michael And Maria Kiely
Ann Cohan	Jared King
Barbara Collura	Edward Kleinke
Nicole Correia	Donald Klime
Maureen Cunningham	Kate Kloss
Susan Debronsky	Jill Kobayashi
Judi Doody	Richard Kotlow
Rose Duhan	Mary Lyn Koval
Steven Fein	Kurt Krumperman
Judith Fetterley	Cindy Kruzinski
Georgia Fishburn	Christine Lennard
Jim Foster	George Leveille
Rusty Gallagher	Jane Lyman
Jim Garry	Bill Mafriaci
Joan Gavrilik	Nadeem Mann
James Giacone	Kathleen Mannix
Thomas Goodfellow	Catherine Mcglynn
David Gordon	Maureen Mcguinness
Christian Grieco	Homi Mistry

Mary Monaco
Anne Moore
Peter Moran
Andy Morse
Nancy Neff
Ken Neff
Kelsey Neff
Carole Nemore
Kathleen Newkirk
Barbara Nussbaum
James Peattie
Debra Pitkin
Katie Potestio
Ellie Prakken
Steve Redler
Neal Regels
Nathaniel Reichman
Aric Rider
Kathleen Roark
John Saintcross
Mark Sargent
Michael Sattinger
Dana Scalere
Melanie Schoen
Mindy Scott
Harriet Seeley
Rachel Seymour

Paul Shatsoff
Ben Shaw
Peggy Sherman
Jan Silverman-Pollow
Pamela Skripak
John Smolinsky
Jeremy Snyder
Erin Svare
Joyce Thomas
Kelly Vadney
David Vanluven
Joanne Vogel
Giles Wagoner
Michael Waldenmaier
Marsha Walton
Dean Watkins
Matt Watson
Matt Watson
Kirstie Weimee
Connie Wilbur
Mary Willmott
Katie Yezzi
Maria Zimmerman
Margery Zucker
Richard
Theresa

APPENDIX B: PUBLIC MEETING #2 ANNOTATED AGENDA

Date: Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Format: Zoom Webinar

Meeting Registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_noj5TONOTTSRQhmrWBvFWA

Objectives: The public meeting will review the project scope, summarize work to date, provide a high-level overview of existing conditions and survey responses, and conduct visioning exercises.

Participants:

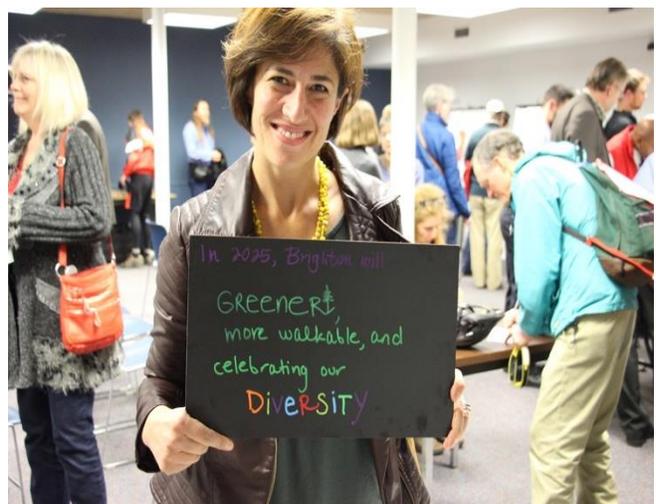
- (1) Members of the general public
- (2) Members of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC)
- (3) Project Team

Format: The Town is hosting a two-hour virtual public webinar using Zoom.

Invitation & Promotion: The meeting will be promoted by the Town and the CPUC via the following.

- Press release
- Project website and Town website
- Town E-blast/newsletter
- Town Social media
- Template for Social Media Vision Statement Exercise

Pre-Meeting Activity: *Between March 10-20, 2021 we will invite participants to post virtual vision board statements to the Bethlehem Forward Facebook page or Instagram. Highland Planning will provide a template with the prompt: "In 2035, Bethlehem will be _____." We will encourage people to fill in this statement and post a photo of themselves holding up the piece of paper. (Participants may also use their own blank piece of paper.) We will incorporate some of these posts in the PowerPoint presentation on March 23, 2021. Here is a sample image from the Town of Brighton, New York.*



Dry Run: A dry run with the team and Town representatives will be conducted within one week prior to the meeting.

Meeting Agenda:

Time	Activity	Description	Role
5:45 pm	Meeting Set-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zoom meeting set-up ▪ Assign co-hosts/panelists 	Highland Planning
6:00 pm (5 minutes)	Convene & Welcome	Begin recording. Convene the group and introduce Town and project team	SWBR/Town
6:05 pm (5 minutes)	Online Meeting Instructions & Agenda Review	<p>Explain logistics of online participation (provide virtual meeting instructions about “virtual hand-raising,” Q&A, chat-box, etc.) and review meeting purpose and agenda.</p> <p>Poll #1: Where are you calling in from?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delmar ▪ Elsmere ▪ Glenmont ▪ North Bethlehem ▪ Selkirk ▪ Slingerlands ▪ South Bethlehem ▪ Other 	Highland Planning
6:10 (15 minutes)	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project overview ▪ What we’ve heard – Community Profile (reference pre-recorded video) ▪ What we’ve heard – Public Meeting #1 ▪ What we’ve heard – Survey #1 	SWBR

<p>6:25 (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Q&A</p>	<p>Poll #2: Did anything in the community profile or survey summary surprise you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes ○ No ○ I'm not sure <p>Participants can submit clarifying questions in writing via Zoom. Questions can be answered in writing during the webinar or addressed live by the team. People can also raise their hands and unmute to provide a comment or ask a question.</p>	<p>Highland Planning</p>
<p>6:35 (30 minutes)</p>	<p>Values Statement Review</p>	<p>Review chalkboard vision statements, review 2005 vision statement, review value statements.</p> <p>We Value.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Community:</u></p> <p>C1: Our sense of community with socially conscious citizens and business owners who engage in improving the quality of life.</p> <p>C2: Our diverse age cohorts and multiple generations of families that choose to live in the town.</p> <p>C3: The qualities of rural land, supporting the landowners' ability to access its economic value in a manner compatible with sustaining a rural-agricultural livelihood.</p> <p>C4: Racial, ethnic, economic and gender diversity and inclusion for all who want to live, work and visit the town.</p>	<p>SWBR/Highland Planning</p>

		<p>C5: Small / locally owned businesses and desire to create the conditions that encourage more business enterprises.</p> <p>C6: Preservation of our historic architecture, cultural sites, neighborhoods and districts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Public Services:</u></p> <p>P1: Our public-school systems that provide the highest level of education, athletics, arts and cultural programs.</p> <p>P2: Public services provided by the dedicated employees of the town.</p> <p>P3: Public safety and emergency response services provided by dedicated town employees and volunteer first responders.</p> <p>P4: Senior service programs that enable residents to live in their homes and remain active community members.</p> <p>P5: Our park system and recreation programs, private preserves and seek to expand facilities with diverse activities and programs for all age groups.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Environment / Sustainability:</u></p> <p>E1: Our vast natural resource systems, their habitat, ecosystem services, to provide clean air and water.</p> <p>E2: Being on the forefront of sustainability by addressing climate change through renewable energy, energy efficiency, a just transition off fossil fuels, electrification, waste reduction and prevention of greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	
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		<p>E3: Productive agricultural land; ‘farmlands for farmers’ and rural character.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Land Uses:</u></p> <p>L1: A diversity of land uses to balance the tax base, provide jobs, complement our hamlets and residential zoning districts and sustain fiscal policy objectives.</p> <p>L2: Diverse housing options that are affordable, fit the needs of different lifestyles, and allow residents to prosper and age in place.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Transportation:</u></p> <p>T1: The transportation infrastructure which provides equal access / priority to all modes of travel (pedestrian, bicycles, transit and vehicles).</p> <p>T2: The walkable areas of the town and desire to expand connectivity across the town to schools, neighborhoods, recreation facilities and commercial districts.</p> <p>Poll #3 - #7: Do these value statements align with your vision for the Town of Bethlehem in 2035?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Yes</i> ○ <i>No</i> ○ <i>Yes, if my comments are addressed.</i> <p>Polling questions for each block of value statement category.</p>	
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		Comments can come through the chat or by unmuting participants with raised hands.	
7:05 (30 minutes)	Topics for Deeper Discussion	Introduce topics that came up in the survey that require additional discussion: property taxes, land uses, housing, transportation, industrial land use. With each topic, polls will ask participants to weigh in on preferences.	SWBR/Highland Planning
7:35 (20 minutes)	Comments/Q&A	Participants can submit questions in writing via Zoom Q&A feature or “raise hands” virtually to comment/ask questions.	Highland Planning
7:55 (5 minutes)	Wrap-up and adjourn	Discuss next steps, future engagement opportunities	SWBR

Online Live Stream

- Meeting will be livestreamed via Facebook Live (and the project website) to provide an option to the public to view the presentation without pre-registering on Zoom (a Facebook login may still be required).
- SWBR and Highland Planning staff will monitor comments and questions

Meeting Recording and Comment Period: At conclusion of the meeting, the project team will share the link to the recorded meeting through the project website to allow community members to offer additional input. All comments received within the period of two weeks will be included in the final document. This will allow the members of the public (including those who were unable to participate in the live virtual meeting) to provide detailed feedback.