



# CANTON

## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS SUMMARY

<b>Purpose:</b>	Stakeholder Meetings
<b>Date and Time:</b>	May 30, 2024, 1:00 – 3:30 PM
<b>Location:</b>	Canton Justice Court Room, 60 Main Street, Canton, NY 13617

**Stakeholder Group #1 – Municipal Staff**

**Discussion**

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

- Village Green
  - The area currently faces many maintenance challenges
  - Improvements such as electric, painting, outlets, and new lights around the perimeter is needed
  - There have been some improvements such as new furniture and relining of the fountain
  - More replacement furniture is needed
  - Pathways are currently rough and need improvements
  - Other ideas: an informational board on the corner that can be seen from a car; a mobile stage area or bandstand
- Downtown Buildings and Business
  - In the past there was more retail Downtown
  - There are some vacancies, but new tenants will be occupying some of these spaces
  - Renovations must follow NYS building code
  - Buildings on Main Street are attached, they must have proper fire separations
  - NY Main Street projects are requiring more money for things such as new sprinkler systems
  - Dilapidated building owned by the Village and occupied by Head Start is not in the proposed study area, but could be a “catalyst” project

## Stakeholder Group #1 – Municipal Staff

### Discussion

- Small Projects Fund for projects with a total cost below \$75,000 could help with smaller improvements; Village can apply and set its own criteria
- Potsdam has a very successful commercial rental assistance program (funded through DRI), but activity is no longer eligible
- Housing
  - Very little non-student rental housing and housing for young professionals
  - Rental units are needed by employees of the colleges, the County, Corning, etc.
  - Some apartments have been renovated with NY Main Street funding, but they get rented very quickly
  - There are few opportunities for seniors to downsize – e.g., units with low to no maintenance, one-story
  - Currently renovating some spaces along Main Street for residential use, but have steep stairs not suitable for seniors
  - A developer is proposing 6 units outside of the NY Forward study area
- Other Needs
  - Signage is needed for parking behind Main Street, but would need NYS DOT approval since Main Street is a state route
  - Village plans to use NY Main Street funding to transfer the alley into an “Arts Alley” with an archway, tables, and chairs
  - Many Main Street buildings do not have numbers on them
  - Consider consistent signage and numbers for commercial buildings. This could be included in the Marketing and Branding, Streetscape Program, or Small Projects Fund
  - A consistent look with hanging signs would make a big difference
  - There is a need for a business directory on a kiosk
  - There is a need for updated trail signage and maps

### Attendance

- Sally Noble
- Leigh Rodriguez
- Tim Nolan
- Tim Bacon

## Stakeholder Group #2 – Parks & Recreation

### Discussion

This discussion focused on the needs of parks and recreation within the Downtown. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

- Connectivity
  - Bike lanes throughout the downtown to connect park area (Village Green and Willow Island).
  - Enhanced pedestrian connectivity between Willow Island Park and Canton Island Park.

## Stakeholder Group #2 – Parks & Recreation

### Discussion

- A green alley between Village Green and the Riverfront area or Willow Island.
- Village Green
  - Consider updated pathways and sidewalks in the Village Green.
  - Consider diverse types of spaces within Village Green (café seating, yoga space, etc.).
  - Consider greenscaping along the roads as screening for Village Green.
- Other
  - Signage and wayfinding are needed throughout the Village for parking lots, parks and various other amenities.
  - Performance space would be a good addition to the Canton Island Park.
  - Canoe races on the river could be a potential draw for the Village.
  - Canton Island Park streambank stabilization should happen soon.

### Attendance

- Barbara Beekman
- Michael Dalton

## Stakeholder Group #3 – Community Organizations

### Discussion

This discussion focused on the needs of community organizations in Downtown. It began with a description of the NY Forward program and project selection process. Other topics and issues that came up include the following:

- St Lawrence University
  - A major draw and employer
  - Attract visitors for alumni and parents' weekend, graduation, and student tours
  - Would like to see restaurants, entertainment, façade improvements, and modernization within the Downtown
  - Believe that SUNY Canton would feel similar
  - The Canton community is very connected to St. Lawrence University – they use their amenities such as the bookstore, café, and trails
- Historical Society (Center for History and Culture)
  - Would like to see greater streetside presence
  - Crosswalks tend to be confusing and take a long time to change
  - There is a need for wayfinding, signage, and gateway/entrance improvements
  - Beautification of property is difficult and expensive for non-profit organizations
  - The Brown Bear Ramble has been a successful draw
  - Most of the visitors are from New York State but there are some out-of-staters and Canadians
  - Downtown visitors will park in the private lot and go elsewhere
- Canton Free Library
  - Serves young children, needs pedestrian safety improvements
  - There should be flashing lights on crosswalks to the Village Green
  - Would like to see limitations on development sprawl through infill development
  - They have the only other accessible restroom in Downtown aside from Village Hall

## Stakeholder Group #3 – Community Organizations

### Discussion

- Riverside Drive should be a more inviting entryway onto Main Street
- Enhances connections between Downtown and the colleges to parks with improved programming signage, and aesthetics
- Students currently are not enjoying Downtown, they go to a single location and leave. There needs to be reasons for them to stay in the area
- Other
  - There is a need to bring the art and cultural base and energy into Downtown as well as arts and cultural projects to connect organizations
  - Attracting and promoting food trucks would help
  - The redevelopment of the Midtown Plaza should include community/outdoor space, not just parking
  - There is a need for bike paths, streetscapes, bike racks, benches, and public performance spaces
  - The branding and wayfinding of Downtown needs to be improved
  - Need for summer attractions to bring tourists from elsewhere
  - Canadians come for the golf courses and trails but do not visit Downtown
  - All organizations need to start working together to make things happen (festivals, shows, events, etc.)
  - Need for an overarching entity to coordinate efforts since no single organization can run events on their own
  - Community organizations contribute strongly to local economy and add to development
  - There is a need for more homeless and mental health services
  - The buses only come once a day, many would like to see a local circulating trolley
  - Route 11 needs to be more palatable to make outdoor events more pleasant
  - Street lighting needs to be uniform and uplift the area
  - Arts walks and share spaces
    - Window displays in vacant storefronts
    - Shared studios

### Attendance

- Paul Redfern
- Cheryl H. Shenkle-O'Neill
- Carlene Bermann
- Jon Duraj
- Emily Hastings
- Jodi Canfield
- Joshua Vink

## Stakeholder Group #4 – Business & Housing

### Discussion

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

- Midtown Plaza Project
  - Drivers/needs for the project have not changed
  - Will be transformative to have mixed-use space
  - There is a need for middle-income rental housing
- Housing
  - Housing is an issue for recruitment at St. Lawrence Health and University Workforce
  - There is a need for quality rental housing for businesses
  - The housing stock in Canton is 1950s and older
  - Properties need renovations; not in move-in condition
  - There is very little new construction
- Business Challenges
  - Summer is challenging for restaurants and retailers; faculty as well as students leave town, and nights in July are quiet
  - Finding workers is also a challenge – this is a national issue
- Restaurants
  - There are not enough dining options, but people do not adequately support new restaurants, thus they close early
  - It is very hard to open a restaurant and be successful
  - A brewpub is planned outside the NY Forward boundary, west of the Cascade Inn
  - 1844 House near Potsdam is popular – many people travel to go out to eat
  - A food hall or incubator could be part of the entrepreneurship center proposed for Midtown Plaza
  - All 3 BOCES tech centers in St. Lawrence County have culinary programs as well as Paul Smith's College
  - There is no space for an indoor farmers' market
  - A common space with infrastructure and equipment at Midtown Plaza for a food hall was suggested
- Short-term Rentals
  - Currently this does not pose an issue, but may in the future
  - Demand is limited to college graduations
- Colleges and University Challenges
  - Enrollment cliff – fewer graduating high school seniors
  - Fewer people can afford college
  - Both Canton and Potsdam are highly dependent on colleges
  - Beautification along Route 11 from the South would attract students and appeal to parents
- Downtown Activities Needed
  - There is a need for places and activities to draw students downtown, the campus provides many amenities already
  - A gym is proposed on Riverside Drive and may possible serve people doing shift work
  - People residents are unaware of activities happening Downtown

## Stakeholder Group #4 – Business & Housing

### Discussion

- Community Center Concept/Need
  - There is a need for community space in Canton that could include a senior center, youth center, or gathering space
  - Town/Village also needs more space for municipal offices
- Need for Office Space
  - There is no office space in Canton, so office uses are filling empty retail storefronts
  - There is no co-working space, but this could be proposed for Midtown Plaza

### Attendance

- Bob Ahlfeld
- Leigh Rodriguez
- Ben Dixon

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:  
Grace Sherburne, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.

cc: Consultant Team, State Team, Local Planning Committee