



**Warren County 2040**  
**Public Advisory Group Meeting Summary**  
Project Number: 2231014

Location:           Warrensburg Fire House  
  
Date:                December 13, 2023  
Time:                3:30PM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Ethan Gaddy	Warren County Planning
	Sarah Brugger	Warren County Planning
	Tammie DeLorenzo	Warren County Administrator's Office
	Connie Bosse	City of Glens Falls
	Anna Bowers	Town of North Creek Business Owner
	Paul Cummings	Town of Queensbury resident
	Ryan Hutton	Town of Chester, Theater owner
	Craig Leggett	Town of Chester Supervisor
	Scott Sopczyk	Glens Falls Transit Transportation Director
	Sara Frankenfeld	Warren County Planning
	Molly McCarthy	Revolution Rail Co. General Manager
	Patrick Dowd	City of Glens Falls Community Development Director
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Chris Round	LaBella Associates
	Devin Bulger	LaBella Associates

11 members of the general public were also in attendance.

**Meeting Summary:**

1. Meeting Review
  - Norabelle opened the meeting with a recap of the previous meeting, progress that had been made since the last meeting, goals of the current meeting, and a preview of the January public meeting.
2. Engagement Updates
  - LaBella gave a presentation to the Economic Growth and Development Committee on 11/21/2023 regarding the scope the Warren County 2040 plan, progress that has been made on the plan, key



findings to date, and next steps. The presentation was well received. The committee emphasized the need for strong public engagement throughout the planning process.

- Sara reviewed the public survey responses. 542 responses have been received, to date – 85% from full time residents, 5% from season residents, and 10% from non-residents. Sara identified some key early responses: 70% of respondents say that their quality of life is good or very good, there is a strong correlation between the importance of walkability and a respondent living in Glens Falls or Lake George, and there is a strong sense of community spirit. The responses are mostly proportionate to communities percentage of the County population – focused outreach in Lake Luzerne, Warrensburg, and Queensbury needs to occur to bring those community responses into proportion. More focused outreach needs to occur to increase responses from 18 – 24-year-olds. The group agreed that 1,000 responses is a good goal given the County's population, but commented that 542 responses is already a strong response rate and the quality of the responses – both in the percentage of residents and the geographical distribution of the responses – are strong.
  - A discussion ensued regarding strategies to drive further engagement. The survey will be left open through the public workshop and will be supported by a round of press that publicizes the current results. PAG members also suggested several actions:
    - Continue outreach to K-12 schools, including leveraging Parents Square or school newsletters with a QR code.
    - Push the survey to major employers: Glens Falls Hospital, HHHN, AHI, Gore Mountain.
    - Send survey materials to Pat Dowd for circulation to the Cool Insuring Arena and other Glens Falls high-traffic businesses.
    - Ensure that Towns have circulated through their respective communication channels and posted at Town Halls.
    - Post flyers in high traffic sites, such as Stewart's Shops and libraries.
3. The Built Environment Discussion
- Housing
    - The discussion began with a review of the County's housing program and the decision to discontinue that program. While the program was successful in rehabilitating homes and providing resources to first time home buyers, a reduction in the amount of administrative costs eligible for reimbursement made the program unsustainable.
    - The group discussed approaches to addressing housing affordability within different communities in the County. It was noted that affordable housing projects need to build 40 – 70 units to be eligible for tax credits and be financially viable for developers. Anecdotally, in other parts of the State and in Vermont when these developments are completed, the demand for them is strong with applications for housing units generally far exceeding available units. However, despite the need for affordable housing and potential demand, large scale development projects are challenging. For small communities, that scale and density isn't feasible and would completely alter the community's character. For larger communities like Glens Falls and Queensbury, there are also limits to where those types of developments could be located due to build-out constraints and local resistance. Smaller scale projects can be made more attractive through community investments in infrastructure, low-cost sale prices, and local tax incentives, so that the net per unit construction prices are reduced and smaller developments are feasible.
    - Many communities' housing issues are complicated by seasonal patterns. The majority of seasonal homeowners occupy their homes during the summer season, which is also when housing for seasonal workers is most needed. J1 Visa workers and other seasonal workers also don't have the same housing needs as year-round residents. Lake George and other summer



tourism communities have explored dormitories as a larger scale solution to this problem, along with smaller conversions of homes and motels.

- Short-term rentals (STRs) were discussed. The group acknowledged the positive role that they play in providing additional income for year-round residents and providing beds for tourists, especially as more "mom and pop" motels are not passed down to a next generation management. However, the supply and pricing pressure STRs place on the housing market were also acknowledged. The group didn't think that a one-size-fits-all approach to STR regulations would work for Warren County given the diverse dynamics at play within individual communities. The STR laws that Living ADK helped the Town of Webb develop were pointed to as a model approach that Warren County communities can reference.
- The Ulster County Housing Smart Communities Initiative, which is case study shared in the Built Environment Memo, is an ideal approach in many ways. It provides a tailored approach for communities to follow on an "a la cart basis," so that they can they can choose actions that are appropriate for their goals. It would also be a lighter lift for the County, keeping them in the technical assistance role that is more in line with their current staffing levels and core competencies.
- The group identified some direct actions that the County can take in supporting housing initiatives at the local level:
  - Provide build-out analysis and housing inventories to help identify how many housing units are needed in each community and where those units can be located. This work is already underway in Queensbury and Bolton and can be undertaken for all Warren County communities. Identifying locations – with community buy-in – where housing could be supported and encouraged could also help address community pushback to housing projects.
  - Continue to inventory recommendations from Comprehensive Plans and other local housing plans to identify trends, opportunities to provide technical assistance, and opportunities to combine efforts or share resources in pursuit of housing solutions. The Comprehensive Plans will also inform community's goals for balancing growth, quality of life, and the types of housing that they are interested in pursuing.
- Infrastructure
  - The infrastructure discussion began by highlighting the Lewis County case study. Lewis County supports local infrastructure initiatives by inventorying infrastructure needs and providing engineering technical assistance for funding applications and project implementation. Essex County uses a similar approach. Warren County is currently inventorying the County's water and sewer resources, which can be a resource to local communities and offers a view of areas where expanded infrastructure would maximize community impact.
  - It was noted that several recent sewer projects have received significant community pushback and have been costly to construct and expensive per user costs. In North Creek, the Town was able to raise half the project funds. They formed the district before construction to be more competitive for funding.
  - The group then discussed broadband and cell coverage. The County is now 90% covered, with an estimated 1,600 remaining households without coverage. Those households are predictably in the most remote areas of the County, making the logistics and economics of closing coverage gaps challenging. It was noted that access to reliable internet is critical for remote work and, for many people who purchased homes in the County during the pandemic and have shifted to remote work, they may only be using their homes seasonally because of the unreliable service. Addressing this need could potentially help convert the homes' seasonal occupancy to year-



round. LGLCRPB, with County support, has played a lead role in mapping coverage, challenging the FCC mapping, and setting the region up for funding. However, it is expected that available funding will be short of statewide needs and other Counties in the area may have less coverage and higher needs, which might make additional funding difficult to secure. Regarding cell coverage, APA restrictions make siting cell towers difficult, which has slowed progress in filling coverage gaps. It was noted that 5G speeds are sufficient for streaming and work from home uses, so cell could be the last mile solution to fill broadband gaps.

- Transportation
  - The transportation discussion began by updating the group on a recent proposal the County submitted to A/GFTC to develop a Complete Streets plan for all County controlled roadways. This planning process will help prioritize projects the County can implement to improve multi-modal transportation, safety, and community quality of life and set standards for Complete Streets guidelines when future repairs or construction to County roadways are made. In preparation for this work, the County has already been inventorying its road assets to understand what percentage of their roads currently have sidewalks and which don't. The group acknowledged that ongoing maintenance and repair responsibilities need to be considered when adding features to existing roads. In some cases, just widening the shoulder on County roads would help make biking and walking safer.
  - The group next discussed the CDTA merger. It was acknowledged that CDTA won't be a silver bullet and that it will take some time for them to integrate GGFT's existing transit network into their operations. Some of the micro-transit and on-demand services that they offer in other comparable counties like Montgomery and Saratoga hold promise for Warren County's more rural communities.
  - It was noted that many ADA accessibility improvements are also improvements that make the streetscape more accessible for an aging population, for moms with strollers, and generally promote safety and walkability in communities.
- The discussion of the built environment concluded with an acknowledgement that many of these issues overlap, impacting the County's most vulnerable. The County's more rural communities are often the places that are under the most seasonal/STR housing pressures, that do not have adequate infrastructure, and that do not have access to alternative transportation options.
- Public Workshop
  - SUNY Adirondack has made one of their conference spaces available for the public workshop. After considering the week of 1/15/2024, the group felt that the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and a shortened week would negatively impact attendance. The group landed on **Monday, 1/22 at 6 p.m.**
  - Norabelle reviewed the workshop approach. It will open with a presentation outlining the scope of the plan, the progress made to date, key findings, and instructions on the break-out session. The presentation will be followed by a break-out session, which will invite attendees to circulate to stations representing each of the topic areas. It was suggested that some type of format that has participants do a priority ranking of existing recommendations and new ideas for recommended approaches would be a useful exercise for beginning to identify plan priorities.
  - The public workshop will not lend itself to a hybrid virtual experience. Options to include residents unable to attend the in-person workshop were discussed. The opening workshop presentation can be recorded and a virtual version of the break-out sessions can be developed online. This virtual workshop options can be promoted through press, social media, and advertised at libraries throughout the County.
- Public Comments



- A question regarding what happens to public comments made in the comment box on the Warren County 2040 website was asked. Ethan noted that the responses are reviewed, catalogued, and included in Plan elements where appropriate. Twelve submissions to the comment box have been made to date.
- It was noted that members of the general public did not have copies of the Built Environment Memo, which was the focus of most of the meeting discussion. The memo, agenda, and other meeting resources were added to the Warren County 2040 website in advance of the meeting. Future meeting publicity should emphasize the meeting resources and provide a link to the webpage where they are uploaded.
- The group was encouraged to have a presence at Town Board meetings and to share plan updates and information during these meetings to promote local awareness and inclusion.
- A community member inquired whether offsets for residents using Starlink have been considered as an approach to filling broadband gaps. Starlink is more expensive than traditional broadband. The County should consider a program to help offset these higher costs.
- A conversation regarding the current use of occupancy taxes ensued. Currently, the occupancy tax has been restricted to events or initiatives that are directly related to tourism, which has excluded investments in infrastructure or other community priorities. Other counties take different approaches. Ulster County uses a portion of their occupancy taxes to fund the Housing Smart Communities Initiative incentives; Essex County pools a portion of their occupancy taxes to serve as local matches for grant applications. Warren County could consider formally expanding the range of acceptable uses of occupancy taxes to allow for investments in infrastructure and other community priorities, recognizing that these investments indirectly support tourism. The County could also review the occupancy tax application to consider what it emphasizes. Small communities that aren't as event-driven should understand what other options they have using occupancy tax funds.

The preceding minutes represent the author's understanding of the matters discussed and decisions reached. If there are any corrections, clarifications, or additions to be made to these minutes, please contact the sender at [dbulger@labellapc.com](mailto:dbulger@labellapc.com) within five business days of issuance.

Respectfully submitted,  
LABELLA ASSOCIATES, D.P.C.

*Devin Bulger*

Cc: All Attendees