



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

Location: HSB 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Large Conference Room

Date: August 23, 2023

Time: 10:00AM

	Name	Organization/Role
Attendees:	Ethan Gaddy	Warren County Planning
	Wayne LaMothe	Warren County Planning
	Tammy 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
	Brady Stark	Town of Queensbury ZBA & Planning Board
	Joshua Westfall	Town of Bolton, Planning & Zoning Director
	Sara Frankenfeld	Warren County Planning
	Norabelle Greenberger	LaBella Associates
	Chris Round	LaBella Associates
	Devin Bulger	LaBella Associates

Note: Patrick Dowd, representing the City of Glens Falls, is a PAG member, but was not able to be present at this meeting.

Meeting Summary:



## 1. Introductions

- a. Introductions from PAG members – members introduced themselves, where in the County they live, and what association they have with the County, either personally or professionally.
- b. Introductions from public: Six members of the public attended representing organizations or attending as interested members of the public.
- c. Committee members were invited to share their goals for the planning process. There was a lot of agreement and overlap between members' goals. Goals included:
  - i. To have the plan identify who we are and a clear direction for where we want to go, take a look at issues holistically, and key strategic planning elements that can have impact on County residents' quality of life.
  - ii. To bridge the perception or experience of there being two counties: up-County and down-County. A hope that the plan will lead to an understanding of who we are, what brings us together, and how we bridge needs between different communities in the County. While different, there is more in common between up-County and down-County communities and more opportunity to leverage each community's strengths for the greater good.
  - iii. To have the plan organize and relate the many supporting plans that have come before or are in process. How do you tie those together to gain efficiencies, so that plans aren't at cross purposes.
  - iv. To have the plan be a primer for people that are new to the County or new to County government, either employees or elected officials.
  - v. To address misconceptions around where County resources flow, align needs and resources, and dispel the scarcity model.
  - vi. To have a County plan that Towns can reference and align with their community planning. Towns will drive their individual visions and related planning, but knowing what the County is planning and how the County can support their vision and goals will help.
  - vii. For the process to begin a two-way conversation between County and residents and to sustain that engagement with the public beyond the plan.

## 2. PAG Overview

- a. Background on the Comprehensive Plan was provided. There is not a standard to County Plans. It is not a land use and zoning document in the same way that it is for cities, towns, and villages. Following guidance from the RFP and initial conversations with the working group, the general scope of the plan is to serve as an internal and external reference document that informs readers about County operations today and charts a course towards a consensus future vision. The original scope of work organizes those efforts into the focus areas of: Natural Resources, Tourism and Recreation, Infrastructure, Housing, Resiliency and Sustainability, and the Economy. These are a starting point but expect that the plan will evolve based on feedback received through the process.



### 3. Background Material/Other Planning Efforts

- a. Demographic Information: Warren County is experiencing stagnating population growth, which is not unique to upstate NYS or rural America. Of the growth that is occurring within the County, most is happening in the more urbanized communities of Glens Falls and Queensbury. It was noted that every community within Warren County will have different visions and goals for how they want to develop over the next 20 years.

Warren County is the 4<sup>th</sup> oldest County in the state and within the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile in the US. There are benefits to having Warren County be a place that people want to age in community or to relocate to for retirement. Seniors maintain community knowledge and support volunteerism. However, maintaining a healthy balance with working age residents is necessary to maintain services and tax base.

County wide – poverty has been decreasing. There were questions from the PAG about the accuracy of the data. While there were challenges to facilitating the 2020 Census, the statistics that were gathered from the Census in Warren County are reliable. Chester has the largest undercount, but it was not statistically significant.

The plan website will host the community profile information, so it will serve as a reliable source of information to either confirm or dispel certain perceptions that people might have about County demographic changes. Public engagement will also help learn what people are feeling and what their perceptions are; the quantitative and qualitative data must both be considered.

Other than alongside the Lake, Warren County housing is more affordable than many other locales in NYS. On average, Warren County residents are spending 25% percent of their income on housing, which is under the 30% threshold that begins to be considered unaffordable. However, County residents are spending 25% of their household income on transportation, which is much higher than other areas within the state.

- b. County operations: The Center for Governmental Research (CGR), one of the sub-consultants on the project, led interviews with all department heads at the County. They are currently compiling summaries of those interviews and comparing those findings and select statistics to comparison counties. This document organizes and summarizes the County's roles and functions, creating a helpful reference document for employees, new supervisors, and the general public. The comparison to similar Counties will help identify variances in operations or spending that may warrant further examination. One issue related to County operations was noted. There is a disconnect between County Fire and Code and Warren County municipalities, which is challenging because those are important services to Warren County towns.
- c. Relevant plans: As stated in the SOW and expressed in the committee goals, the Comprehensive Plan will organize and relate relevant plans, both by incorporating their



data and findings in the Plan and outlining the relationship that they have to one another. To that end, an inventory of existing plans has been undertaken and key findings from the recently completed Housing Study as well as the Recreational Economy plan that is just about to kick-off will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

#### 4. Public Engagement Approach

- a. The public engagement approach will be extensive and multifaceted. Details around specific approaches will be developed, but will include, at minimum:
  - i. PAG meetings. These will occur every 2 -3 months. They will always be open to the public. They will serve as working meetings to deep dive into focus areas and workshop ideas.
  - ii. A public survey designed to surface issues, opportunities, and vision from all County residents. The survey efforts will be undertaken collaboratively with the Recreational Economy study to create one comprehensive survey, maximize promotional efforts, and avoid survey fatigue.
  - iii. 2 Public Meetings – the first meeting will encompass project introduction, survey results, the initial SWOT analysis, and gather issues, opportunities, and priorities from attendees. The second will share draft recommendations and gather public feedback to those recommendations.
  - iv. Stakeholder meetings will be held throughout the process. Currently, a first cohort of County stakeholders are being interviewed. These are stakeholders that collaborate with the County on specific governmental services. As the process dives deeper into the focus areas, additional stakeholders that operate within those focus areas will be interviewed. The committee suggested some additional stakeholders to consider adding to the interview list, either as part of the initial round of interviews or withing the focus areas: HHHN, ORDA – Gore, DEC, Department of State (DOS), SUNY ADK, and superintendents and principals of schools. Committee members are encouraged to direct other stakeholder considerations to LaBella via e-mail.
  - v. Focus Area deep dives: Focus groups and individual calls with key stakeholders

#### 5. Issues & Opportunities Discussion

- a. What makes Warren County unique?
  - i. Beauty of the County
  - ii. Adirondacks – the Land Use structure is unique. The APA and development restrictions is an element that other counties don't have to deal with. It creates challenges, but it also preserves unique outdoor/recreational character in the County.
  - iii. Warren County is a gateway to the Adirondacks.
  - iv. Lake George
  - v. First Wilderness - Hudson River side of the County.



- vi. Vibrant arts community – Glens Falls in particular – smallest city with a professional symphony, Hyde Museum, LARAC, murals project, Shirt Factory makers spaces.
  - vii. Philanthropic spirit and community support of arts and culture
  - viii. Historical museums and general appreciation for County and community history.
  - ix. Warren County has a great balance of the urban and cultural with rural and recreational. You can have your amenities, shopping, food, culture and then thirty minutes later be out in the wilderness.
  - x. Concentration of natural resources and recreation activities – other counties have lakes, rivers, hiking trails, but not the sheer number and variety of outdoor opportunities, the topography adds mountains and white water rafting to its offerings which are differentiators to neighboring counties.
  - xi. Very accessible – with interstate 87, everything is 20 minutes east or west; good access to amenities; you can choose how close or far from population centers you want to live without being completely inconvenienced. Only an hour and half from international airport.
  - xii. A strong legacy of multi-generational families, which gives communities a strong sense of place, history, community spirit. Statistics on multi-generational families are not specifically captured through Census questionnaires – Warren County Planning will spend some time determining whether she can uncover some statistics related to the topic.
  - xiii. The Northern Forest geography presents unique recreational, commercial, and industrial opportunities. For example, Chester has one of the largest log-sorting yards in the state. Interest in looking across that geography for models of community revitalization, modernizing economies, and leveraging resources.
  - xiv. Advanced medical device cluster – good high paying jobs in a stable industry.
  - xv. Warren County makes stuff. While the outside perception of Warren County centers around recreation, County tax receipts are in industry and manufacturing.
- b. What improvements could be made?
- i. Housing supply – the housing is still relatively affordable, but there is not enough on the market.
  - ii. Affordable rental housing – inventory, especially up-County, is older and scares people away.
  - iii. Internet access and cellphone service – barriers to people coming here full-time, limits remote working opportunities and entrepreneurship.
  - iv. Bigger houses are being built because that is where the profit margins are, but they are not affordable workforce housing.
  - v. Zoning challenges – older laws; question of whether the current zoning attracts the types of housing that the communities need.
  - vi. Johnsburg and other up-County communities have a lack of services or experienced barriers to accessing services. Small populations dispersed over a large geography. The lack of concentration of employees or consumers means that industry is less likely to come, healthcare access is a challenge, and



transportation is a challenge. Is there a way to centralize certain services, at least bring them as far as hamlets to close the distance and reduce the barriers to accessing services?

- vii. Lack of skills within the workforce.
  - viii. Negative social trends, such as juvenile delinquency, homelessness, and substance abuse are rising.
  - ix. County could increase the role that they play in providing technical assistance, financial services, and other back-end shared services that could reduce costs and increase efficiencies for Towns. Examples of this could include supplying grant matches for Town grant applications, rotating loan funds, land banks, land trusts, developing model ordinances, RFPs, and demonstration projects.
  - x. The County could support Towns by serving as the central clearinghouse for tracking and understanding funding programs and resource opportunities.
  - xi. Training and skill building for EMS and Fire. Help facilitate trainings, reduce costs, and ensure that volunteers have training in relevant skills such as de-escalation and trauma informed care since those skills are central to the types of calls they are often responding to.
- c. Accountability and Implementation
- i. A conversation related to the plan's overall structure and mechanisms for establishing accountability for plan implementation and follow-through arose.
  - ii. Structure: It was noted that organizing the plan in such a way that the recommendations map to committee responsibilities since those committees are ultimately where follow-up actions will occur. With a consensus vision and key priorities identified, the plan can help speed up County decision making. The structure will inform and facilitate usability.
  - iii. Accountability: How will County leadership be held accountable to the recommendations and findings of the plan?
    - 1. The development of the plan and the plan's implementation is directly accountable to the Economic Development Committee. Once the plan is completed, implementation action items will be assigned to appropriate committees.
    - 2. With strong public engagement and awareness of the Plan, the community will help hold the Supervisors and County accountable.
- d. There was not time to get into a conversation around trends, but those can be identified within subsequent Focus Area conversations.
- e. Next meeting
- i. October/November
    - 1. Anna Bowers noted that the school year will be underway so she will not be available until after 3:05. This could be as an opportunity to hold the meeting in another location within the County. LaBella will communicate around date, time, and location via e-mail.
  - ii. Ideas or input from PAG members can be sent to LaBella via e-mail.



6. Public Comments

- a. Tyler Whitney, Executive Director of SAIL, addressed the PAG. He outlined the extensive services that SAIL offers to its 17-county service area, many of which connect to issues and opportunities the committee discussed, like closing the transportation gap and aging in place. He noted the lack of accessible housing in the community, which is a further challenge to the general lack of housing. He commended the substance of the conversation and encouraged the group to continue keeping accessibility and equity top of mind throughout the planning process, noting that “you aren't thinking about it unless you're living it.”

ITEM	ACTION ITEM	OWNER
1	Send Forward Together Link to PAG	LaBella
2	Research multi-generational statistics	Warren County
3	Set next meeting date, time, and location	LaBella
4	Draft survey questions and share with PAG	LaBella
5	Share County Operations document with PAG	LaBella

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