

## **Community Visioning Session Summary** **prepared by Ellen Wayne, facilitator**

The following summary represents community input from a public visioning session held on Saturday, November 10, 2018, at the Richmond Town Hall. The session was held from 9:00 am-noon, and 42 individuals participated during the course of the morning. Community members considered both internal and external factors that would contribute to shaping the vision of the Town of Richmond.

### **Strengths**

The most significant strengths identified:

- The natural beauty of the area
- The school district
- The availability of year-round outdoor seasonal recreation

With regard to each of the strengths, additional aspects were recognized for each:

- Regarding natural beauty: the lake was recognized as an asset, however, the community expressed the presence of nature overall and the calm and peaceful quality of the community as strengths. Community participants agreed the town is not over-developed, which preserves the natural beauty and the scenery of the area. The rural character of the community, indicated by pleasant and polite people, a community that works together, small-town values/ties, lack of congestion/traffic, and space to roam, was also a strength.
- Regarding the school: the quality and accessibility of the facility was also recognized as a strength, as well as those activities open to the community (school plays).
- Regarding the availability of year-round seasonal recreation: a significant number of activities were identified as strengths in our community. While some were specific to the lake (fishing, boating), others capitalized on land-based activities, including hiking and snowmobiling trails, nearby skiing, hunting, and indoor activities such as recreational volleyball and softball. Amenities such as craft clubs/guilds, garden clubs, gun clubs, and the dance studio rounded out strengths identified as year-round recreational activities.
- Other community strengths included diverse and active faith communities and the varied talents that community residents possess.

Additional strengths\*include:

- Restaurants
- Small size of local government
- Services of the town brush pit
- Many deer
- Proximity to Wegmans/Rochester
- Bristol Valley Theater

### **Challenges**

The group identified internal challenges that might hinder moving toward the desired vision. Those challenges considered to be the most significant included:

- The ability to attract younger families
- Limited efforts to attract and encourage tourism

- Business opportunities and employment (including addressing zoning laws)

The following were recognized as contributing to those challenges:

- Regarding attracting younger families: lack of recreational activities for children ages 5-12, lack of activities for teens, limited/lacking universal PreK and child care, after-hours medical and dental services, limited utilities such as public water and internet, and lack of affordable housing were identified as contributing challenges.
- Regarding efforts to attract and encourage tourism: safe locations for biking and hiking, the need for trail improvements, lack of walkable lake roads, the need for more restaurants, and limited email communication of events were identified as internal challenges. The quality of the lake water was also recognized as an impediment to tourism.
- Regarding business opportunities and employment: limited utility infrastructure (internet, water), lack of public transportation, lack of a functioning Chamber of Commerce, limited municipal parking, and the political environment (Albany) were seen as obstacles to addressing the business environment.

Additional challenges\* included:

- The outsider complex/small town
- Traffic at Allen's Hill Road and Main Street
- More police presence
- Signage
- Dwindling school population
- Lack of trees on Main Street
- December/times of shut down for Main Street

### **Opportunities**

The group identified external opportunities that could be harnessed to advance a common vision for the community. The following were identified as significant opportunities:

- Capitalize on the lake
- Expand/develop existing festivals (wine, holidays, and parades)
- Educate about local history and culture (Native American, agriculture, etc.)
- Magnifying the town signs (history and trails)
- Creation of multi-purpose community gathering center and year-round amenities to attract visitors from summer season through snowmobiling season

Additional opportunities\* include:

- increasing renewable energy
- increasing community involvement
- taking advantage of grants

### **Threats**

The following were identified as significant external threats to advancing a common vision for the town:

- The tax base (growing vs. shrinking)
- Funding streams going to other municipalities/equitable or questionable distribution of state funds
- Polluted/unusable lake

- Decentralized Main Street

Community members identified the following concerns:

- With regard to the tax base: cost of infrastructure upkeep, declining school and general population, lack of locals patronizing local businesses, and lack of jobs
- With regard to funding streams being diverted elsewhere: complicated state regulations, the complicated process to qualify and get grants, the general distribution of state and local funds, the competition for available funds, the local government only being part-time, and the lack of volunteers/grant writers
- With regard to the lake: no concrete reason why the lake is dying, the contamination and HABS, and the infrastructure/ability to keep access from other areas, school consolidation, climate change

### **Initial Thoughts on the Strategic Visioning**

In my initial meeting with the committee members, there was considerable belief that the lake would dominate the process, and that there was little recognition that the strategy/vision of the community would focus much beyond the lake. While the lake did present in many of the groups and with common themes around the quality of the lake water, there were certainly substantial thoughts generated beyond the lake. The visioning itself, as indicated in the following statements, suggests that the participants see opportunity well beyond the lake.

### **Draft Vision Statements**

The group drafted the following initial vision statements:

*We believe the Town of Richmond can be a tourist destination while preserving the peace and quiet/small town feel, by leveraging parks, and planning opportunities to mitigate/overcome Main Street appearance.*

*We believe the town can be a town that is vibrant year-round, by prioritizing our opportunities and infrastructure to provide affordable housing for all through taking advantage of available funding streams.*

*We believe the Town of Richmond is a beautiful, natural setting, and can remain so by increasing recreational activities and events which requires overcoming our current challenges (lake quality, etc.).*

*We believe the Town of Richmond can be a town that is a viable Finger Lakes town that is attractive to families through the expansion of economic development and by enhancing town resources.*

\*indicates ideas identified by a single group and with no additional participants identifying or indicating agreement