

City of Saratoga Springs

2014 Comprehensive Plan

May 2015 DRAFT



In May 2013, the City Council initiated an update to the City's Comprehensive Plan and associated maps.

On December 18, 2014, following 19 months of much dialogue and discussion including 19 public meetings, four public workshops, a 2-day open house and numerous focus groups, the Saratoga Springs Comprehensive Plan Committee voted to send to the City Council its "final work product" consisting of the November 2014 version of the Draft Comprehensive Plan and a list of 53 possible amendments to this draft.

The City Council discussed this work product and the list of possible amendments over the course of four City Council workshops, occurring on February 24, March 24, March 31, and April 14, 2015. At its last workshop, the City Council confirmed preliminary consensus on the desired language to be included in this Draft Plan. Changes from the November 2014 Draft Comprehensive Plan are indicated as follows: deletions are shown in colored text strikeouts, and additions are shown in colored text underlined.

This draft document represents the most current desired language as indicated by the City Council and will be subject to a Public Hearing by the City Council and an advisory opinion by the Saratoga County Planning Board prior to adoption by the City Council.

Acknowledgements

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Mayor Joanne D. Yepsen

City Council Members

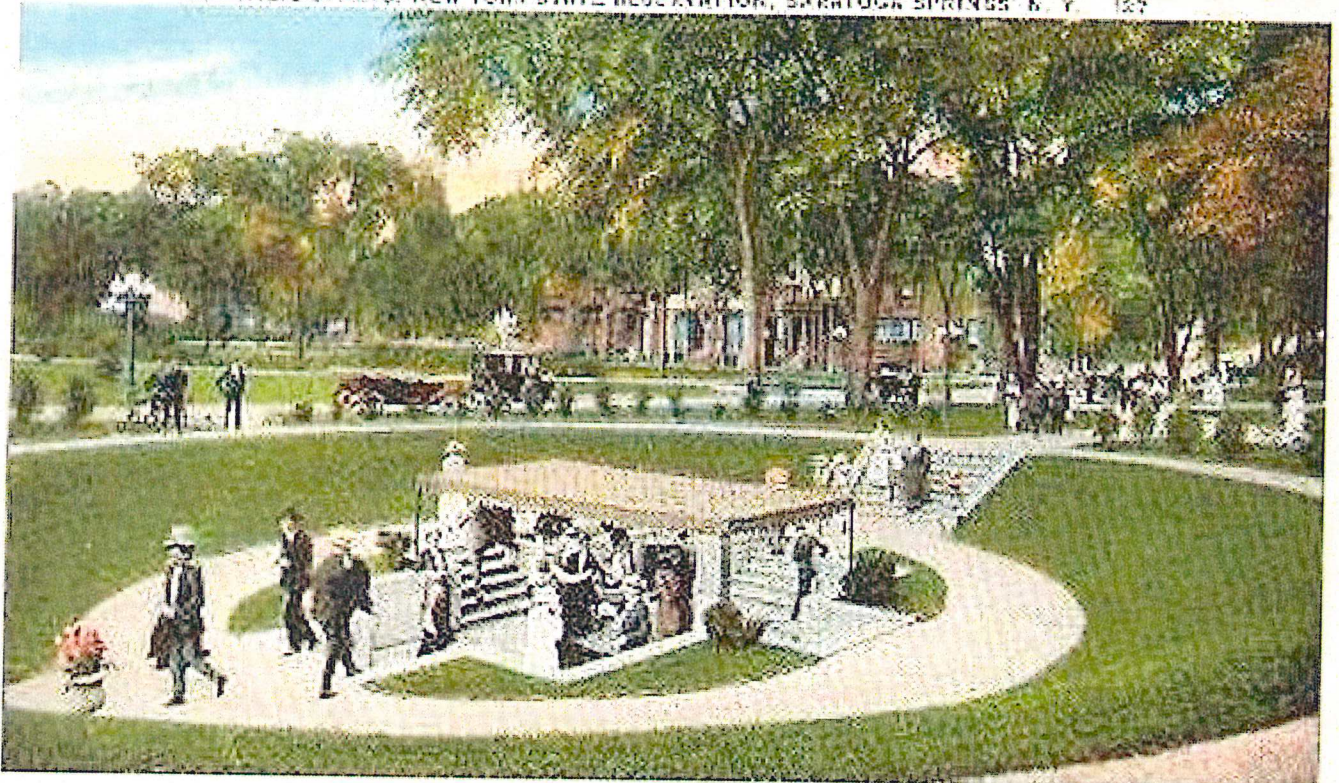
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- Chris Mathiesen, Commissioner of Public Safety
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- Charles Wait
- Janice White (5/13-4/14)

- This document was prepared with assistance from MJ Engineering & Surveying PC and the staff of the City's Office of Planning and Economic Development.



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Greetings from



NEW YORK

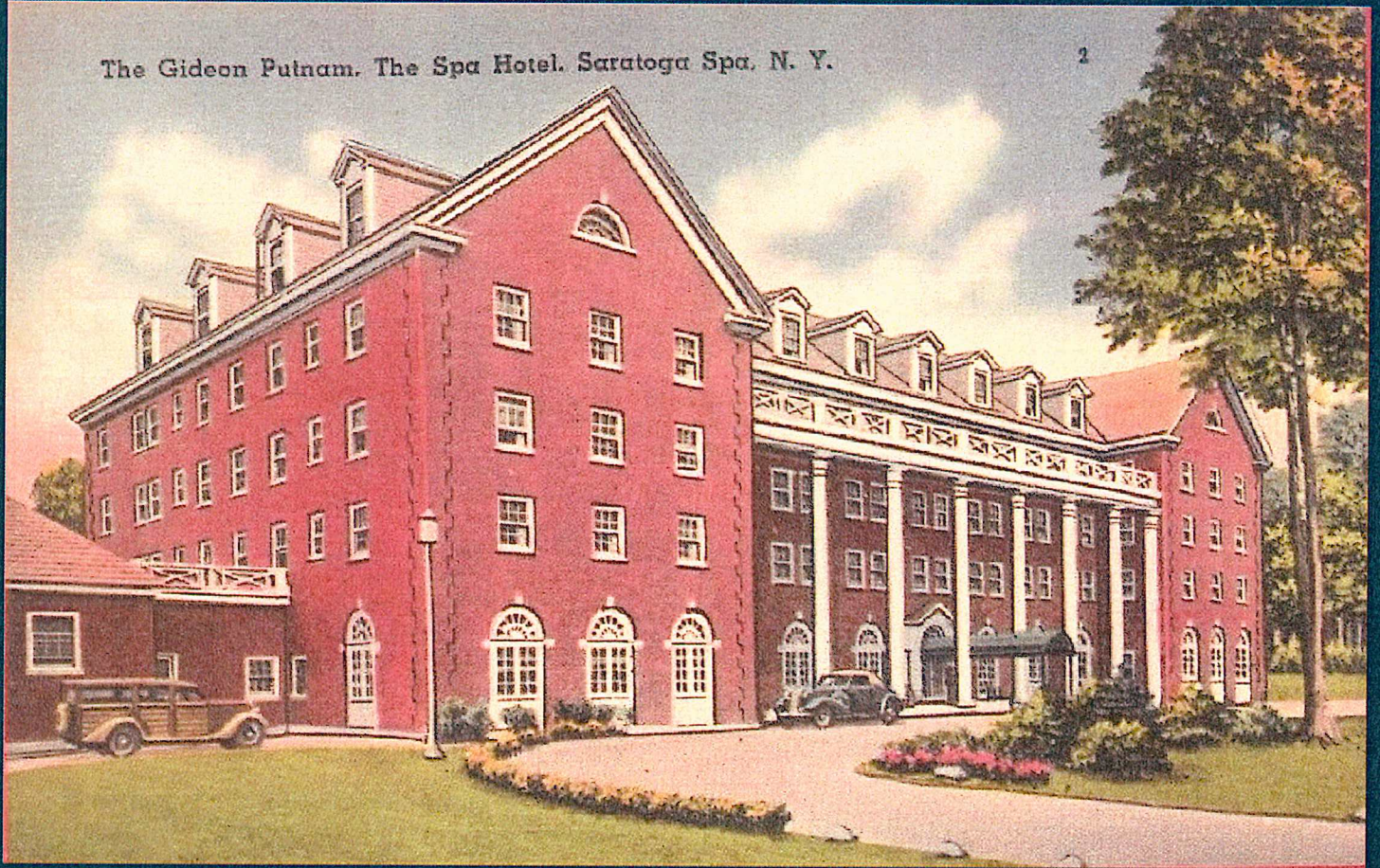
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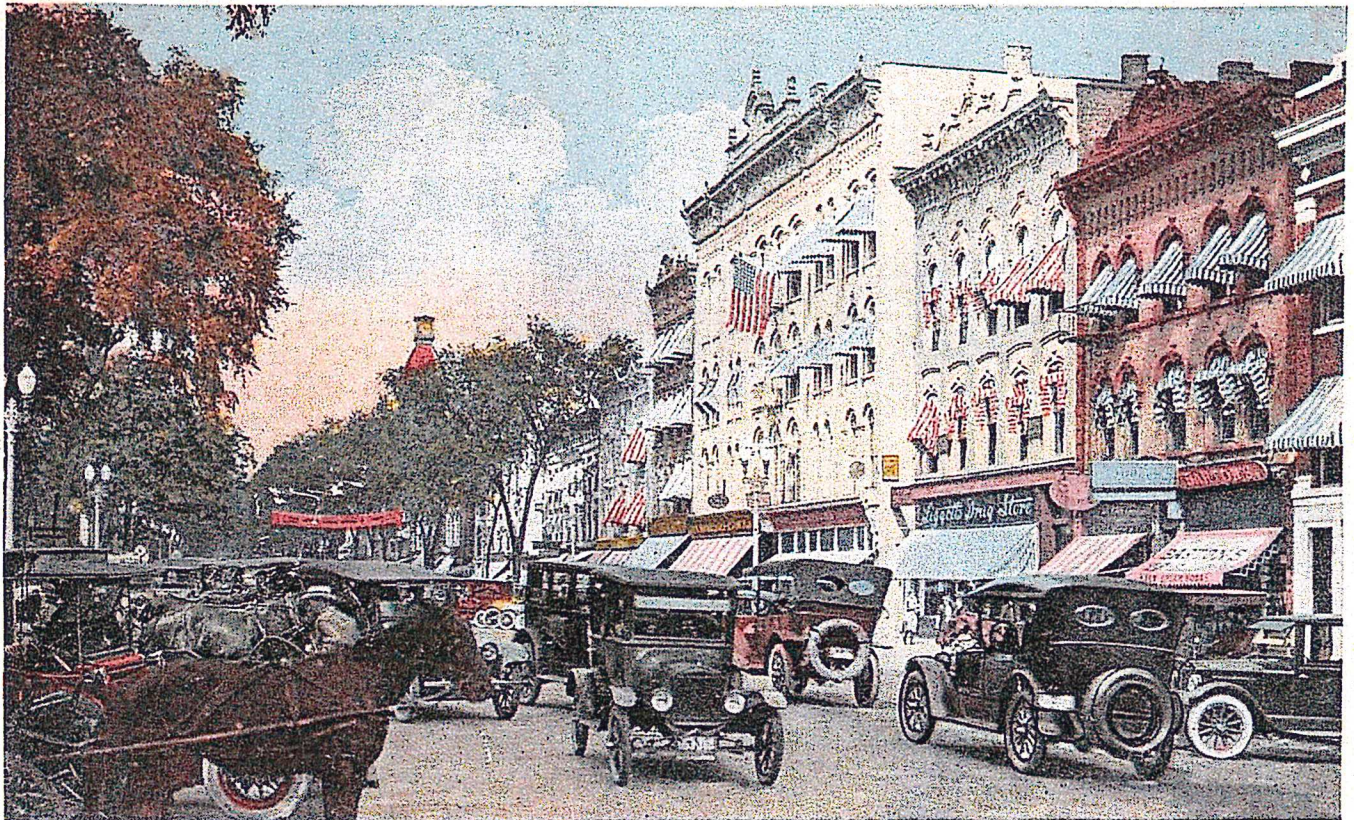
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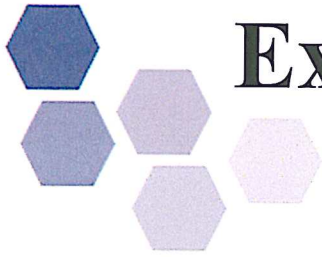


The Gideon Putnam. The Spa Hotel. Saratoga Spa. N. Y.



BUSINESS CENTER, BROADWAY, SARATOGA SPRINGS, N. Y.





Executive Summary

~~DISCLAIMER: THE FOLLOWING IS A DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE FINAL AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.~~

This Comprehensive Plan is a unified set of policies that will guide the future development of the City of Saratoga Springs. The Plan consists of nearly 250 recommended actions and a Future Land Use map that indicates the desired location, uses, and intensity of development.

This Plan sets forth the following vision for the community:

Saratoga Springs is the "City -in -the -Country." This concept reflects a city with an intensively developed urban core and an economically vibrant central business district, with well-defined urban edges and an outlying area of rural character, comprised of agriculture, open lands, natural and diverse environmental resources, and low density development.

The overriding philosophy that will guide future development of our "City in the Country" will be sustainability. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development makes investments that yield long-term benefits for our community. Sustainable development enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting the human and natural resources, upon which the future of our economy and our community depend.

Recognized for its commitment to history, health, and horses, the City is a small, livable community with a strong sense of pride, family, and volunteerism. The City's vibrant, walkable core, stable neighborhoods, and high level of mobility support regional economic growth and ensure its position as a world class destination for entertainment, education, and cultural activities.

This Plan updates the community's 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The process for updating the prior Plan had the following objectives:

- Community/economic sustainability
- Preservation/enhancement of historic qualities
- Strengthening of individual and collective "City" and "Country" components
- Strategic positioning for future opportunities
- Public-Private cost sharing

This new Plan has the key following objectives that have been a core part of our community for more than a decade.

- Promote a broader mixture of uses in selected areas to encourage social, business, and residential interaction and diversity.
- Implement land use and design policies to enhance our quality of life.
- Balance the cost of municipal services with revenue.
- Protect sensitive environmental resources.
- Preserve traditional community character.
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle access, transit services, and transitional neighborhood design to reduce dependence on the automobile.
- Continue investing in the amenities that contribute to our community's success.
- Support the City's sense of history and the "City in the Country" by preserving the quality of, and linkages, among, cultural and open space resources.
- Encourage and increase housing diversity and affordability as well as neighborhood vitality.
- Maintain a compact downtown with adequate parking and supporting infrastructure, as is essential to businesses.
- Protect open space resources that constitute a vital economic component and a valuable environmental, aesthetic, and recreational amenity. It is this unique open space character that creates the inherent value of the "City in the Country".
- Strive to provide for adequate revenue sources to maintain and enhance services.
- Maintain, Continue enhancing and investing in the social, cultural and recreational amenities that are essential to the City's economic and social dynamic.

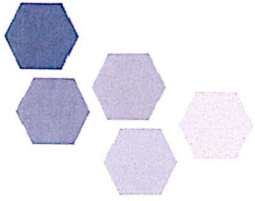
This new Plan is very similar to mirrors the 2001 Plan in the following ways: 1) the mission statement is almost identical; 2) many of the recommended action are similar; and 3) the location of future land uses and their intensities are almost identical.

However, this new Plan is also improves upon the prior plan. It addresses changes in the community that arose during the past decade and it anticipates new values and interest. These include complete streets policies, energy conservation, recycling, climate change, resiliency, and greater protection for the community's natural resources. The new Plan is also a "whole-community" plan in that it sets forth and relies on actions that can be undertaken by the public, non-profit, and private sectors. This Plan does not burden the government with the sole responsibility for its implementing this plan implementation.

The Plan's 250 recommended actions are built around four guiding principles: 1) Economic Strength and Stability; 2) Environmental Health and Resiliency; 3) Transportation and Mobility; and 4) Community Character.

This Plan is ambitious and comprehensive. It recommends actions that are educational, investigative, and regulatory. Some will cost a great deal of energy and money; some very little. Its implementation relies on opportunities and individual determination.

This Plan lays down the vision for our future and frames the challenges.



Introduction

DISCLAIMER: THE FOLLOWING IS A DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO BE FINAL AND MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

The following is an update to the City of Saratoga Springs' 2001 adopted comprehensive plan. The City Charter requires that the City Council review the comprehensive plan every five years to ensure it is reflective of the community's current and future needs. This update is a snapshot in time that outlines existing local and regional trends impacting the City as well as the City's long-term vision for the future.

Many elements from the 2001 comprehensive plan continue to be valid today. Those elements have been incorporated throughout this update. There are, however, new concepts and ideas introduced in this update that will help address the current and future needs of the community.

1.1 Saratoga Springs – A Great American Place

Saratoga Springs is nationally recognized as a great place to live and a great place to visit. The qualities that have brought Saratoga Springs such acclaim are no accident. The City's attractions are the direct result of its land use policies, most readily captured in the—"City in the Country" concept, as well as the passion and commitment of residents and business owners in the community since, at least, the early 1970s. The key planning principles that have guided the City's successful trajectory include historic preservation, concentrated development in a vibrant downtown, conservation of the natural and scenic resources in our rural greenbelt, and to support for the cultural and natural amenities that enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

This heritage combines with the community's excellent quality of life and strong sense of place to create a balance of physical, economic, and social assets.

- Saratoga Springs is a safe community with world-class recreational and tourism attractions

Accolades

Broadway named one of the **Ten Great Streets** in America by American Planning Association (2012)

Broadway named one of **the** America's Greatest Main Streets by Travel + Leisure Magazine (2012)

#75 in CNN Money's list of America's **Best Places to Live** (2011)

#1 Fan Favorite in the poll of CNN Money's 2011 List of America's **Best Places to Live**

Named as one of the **Top 10 Winter Cities** by Livability.com (2011)

Named as one of America's **Dozen Distinctive Destinations** by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2002)

Named one of 50 "**Super Cool**" cities in the world by TravelOrMove.com

The Saratoga Scoop

The Potato Chip was invented in Saratoga in 1853 at Moon's Lake House by George Crum.

The Saratoga area has over 18 mineral springs. The cold water springs are naturally carbonated.

Caffe Lena is the oldest continually operating coffee house in the country.

Don McLean first wrote the lyrics to American Pie while at a local bar in Saratoga Springs.

Over 2,000 horses are present in Saratoga during the peak of racing season.

The Battle of Saratoga featured heroics from none other than Benedict Arnold.

The club sandwich was invented at the Saratoga Club (Canfield Casino) in Saratoga Springs in the 19th century.

Source: Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce

- Saratoga Springs combines an industrial, retail, office, and entertainment center with architectural beauty and historic charm
- Saratoga Springs is host to respected institutions of higher education
- Saratoga Springs has an award-winning downtown
- Saratoga Springs has unique and abundant open spaces, ~~from~~ including recreational fields, ~~to the~~ Saratoga Spa State Park, ~~to~~ Yaddo, and farmlands, which the City has worked hard to protect.
- Saratoga Springs has an enthusiastic citizenry that actively participates in a multitude of community, service, and governmental activities

It is this diversity and balance of economic, sociological, and ecological assets that makes Saratoga Springs an attractive global destination for entertainment with an active, year-round residential and business community.

Saratoga Springs originally gained fame during Colonial times as word spread of the springs and curative waters found in the community. This natural occurrence, and subsequent resort attraction, initiated the construction and development of what is now the valued downtown area. The advent and prosperity of the horse racing and wagering industries not only provided the City with a colorful historic legacy, but also reinforced the concentrated and compact form that is the key to the success of our downtown. Indeed, horse-related industries including thoroughbred and standardbred racing, polo and dressage events, horse sales, and equine services remain important contributors to the economic, cultural, and social makeup of our community as well as the region. Saratoga Springs' thoroughbred racetrack, for example, is the oldest continuously operated racetrack in the country and is part of the Union Avenue National Historic District. These unique assets have reinforced the City's centralized business district and developed urban core ~~since dating back to the 1800s, that~~ 1800s, and are ~~is~~ the key to the success of our downtown.

Following a period of deterioration ~~in the 1950s and 1960s~~, Saratoga Springs rebuilt itself into an award-winning community and celebrated resort destination. While most cities have experienced serious decline,



Saratoga Springs has maintained, and even increased its momentum as a vibrant community.

The 1915 incorporation of the City, in 1915 joined the urbanized area of the former village with an expansive and largely undeveloped countryside. While the City actively protects its surrounding green space, it is a continual challenge to balance the natural environment with the built environment, growth, development, preservation, and sustainability.

The City's open space resources provide a multitude of benefits to the City and the surrounding area including, active and passive recreation opportunities, the preservation of water quality and ecological habitats, and tourist and economic attractions. These critical resources are maintained through a combination of public and private ownership. Institutional examples include Yaddo and Skidmore College; the City offers Congress Park, several neighborhood parks and multi-use trails; State and private-sector holdings include more than 2,000 acres at Saratoga Spa State Park, the equine polo fields, harness and thoroughbred tracks, and golf courses. These public and privately owned open space resources are complemented by three lakes and an abundance of state and federally regulated wetlands. The preservation of these open space resources is a key component in the City's commitment to sustainability.

The City's population in the 2010 Census was 26,586. During the last century, the City had a slow population increase, with a growth rate near 1.5%. There was a large increase in population from 1970-1980, at almost 27%, but the rate leveled off between 1980-1990 and 1990-2000 at just under 5%. Within the City, the largest population group is 50-59 years. Every age group over 55 years is growing, and all but one age group below 55 years is decreasing. Subsequently, it is important to plan for the aging population as well as attracting younger citizens and families.

1.2 The Planning Process and Public Engagement

The Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is a unified set of principles for guiding the City's goals for future land use, design, and enhancement to protect the unique character of the community. It also provides the justification for planning and regulatory policies that encourage efficient growth patterns to maximize the City's social and economic potential. It is a plan

that shall be taken into account by all City legislative, administrative, and regulatory bodies.

The update of this Plan began in May 2013, with the appointment of an 18 member Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) by the City Council. The CPC held 18 committee meetings over the course of 18 months, working closely with the community and relying on the assistance of the planning staff and consultant team. This Plan represents the CPC's effort to synthesize the diverse opinions it heard, and respond to the issues facing the City.

This update was a community-driven process that included public engagement efforts. Highlights of the public engagement strategy are outlined below. Summaries of public input received during the development of the update are presented in **Appendix A**.

- **Public Workshops, Meetings and Open House**

- o A Kick-off Workshop (Public Workshop #1) was held on May 29, 2013, at the City Center. This first workshop introduced the planning process and schedule to the public. Over 30 residents, business owners, property owners, and other stakeholders participated. Small group sessions were facilitated by the consultant team where participants were asked what elements make Saratoga Springs unique today, how do you envision Saratoga Springs in 10 years, what challenges do you anticipate in achieving that vision, and what opportunities do you see.
- o A 2-day Idea Workshop and Open House was held at the Universal Preservation Hall on June 26-27, 2013. Over 60 residents, business owners, property owners, and other stakeholders participated in the workshop and attended the open house. Participants were encouraged to provide input at one or more of the 11 interactive stations.
- o Focus Group Meetings were conducted concurrent to the Open House. Over 34 representatives from key stakeholder groups met during the Idea Workshop to discuss needs and opportunities for the City. The focus groups covered the following topic areas: green and smart energy, history and culture, development and housing, tourism, open space and



Participants in a facilitated table discussion at the Kick-off Meeting

recreation, neighborhoods, economic growth, health and human services, transportation and mobility, and education.



Attendees at Public Workshop #2

- o Public Workshop #2 was held on July 11, 2013, at Universal Preservation Hall to share with the public the information gathered from the Open House and Focus Group Meetings. Additional input was obtained from over 60 participants.
- o Public Workshop #3 was held on September 30, 2013, at the Saratoga Springs Public Library. This workshop was a “listening session,” providing an opportunity for the public to share thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. Over 100 residents, business owners, and other stakeholders attended the workshop.
- o A CPC Public Hearing was conducted on December 9, 2014.

- Interactive Website – The CPC created an interactive website called Engage Saratoga. This website was an important way to reach an expanded audience within the community. A series of questions were posed and participants could add their ideas, photos and comment on other posted ideas.
- City Website – Draft documents and information/materials for each meeting were posted to the City’s website for easy public access.
- CPC Meetings – The CPC held monthly and sometimes weekly meetings at the City Recreation Center. While these were intended to be working sessions of the CPC, there were opportunities for public comment at each meeting.
- Project Binder – A project binder including printed materials developed throughout the process (meeting summaries, ~~powerpoint~~PowerPoint presentations, etc.) was prepared and available for public viewing in the City’s Office of Planning and Economic Development.



CPC members at a committee meeting

- Report Card – An early step in the CPC’s process was to review the 2001 Comprehensive Plan through a “report card” ~~process~~ process, which evaluated the existing comprehensive plan against today’s Saratoga. Each CPC member conducted an on-line survey to evaluate the 2001 Comprehensive Plan’s major policy



Public comments on a map during the Idea Workshop and Open House

