

Joint Implementable Comprehensive Plan Town of Chautauqua and Village of Mayville

Business Forum – Tues., January 28, 2025, 6:30 pm
Carlson Center/Zoom

Notes

WELCOME AND PURPOSE

Members of the Chautauqua and Mayville business community were invited to attend a business forum to provide targeted feedback on topics related to economic development as part of the joint Comprehensive Plan. Nichola Ostrander, a member of the consultant team, presented a brief overview of the comprehensive planning process, which will establish a shared vision for the community's future, grounded in its values and priorities. The plan will outline specific strategies and action steps for elected officials to implement in the next decade.

Economic Vitality emerged as one of the Plan's Key Issues. While the business forum will help directly shape recommendations for the Economic Vitality chapter, it will also help inform the other three chapters, Land Use and Development, Community Livability and Housing, and Mobility and Access. Insights from the forum will guide further research into challenges and opportunities, guiding the development of solutions. As ideas evolve, the consultant team will keep forum participants up to date.

DISCUSSION

Economic vitality is about creating a thriving, sustainable economy that benefits all members of the community. It involves a combination of strong businesses, good jobs, and a high quality of life. Participants were asked to consider the following topics that the chapter will address:

- Developing and promoting place branding
- Main Street enhancements and lakefront connections
- Supporting and attracting new local businesses
- Strengthening recreation and tourism economy and local partnerships
- Resilient community strategies

Developing and Promoting Place Branding

The group was asked to discuss questions related to Identity and Perception and Marketing and Promotion.

- How do you currently perceive the brand identity of our town/city?
- What unique characteristics or strengths should we highlight in our place branding efforts?
- How can local businesses collaborate to create a cohesive and attractive brand image?

The following is a summary of the discussion:

- Mayville is an intersection between many villages and is the County seat.
- Chautauqua Institution and the lake are major assets, with efforts to extend the Institution’s season beyond nine weeks by winterizing homes and businesses.
- Improved signage is needed to direct visitors to the lake, retail businesses, and the Historic Mayville district.
- The historic depot could be repurposed as a welcome center. The depot area could be developed into a hub for wharf recreation, an active visitor’s bureau, and historic reconstruction.
- Focus areas for Mayville’s identity include recreation, arts, and history. It is already popular with outdoor enthusiasts. Branding suggestions include:
 - *“Always in Season”* to emphasize year-round appeal.
 - *“Chautauqua on the Lake”* to position Mayville similarly to Niagara-on-the-Lake, highlighting small-town charm.
 - *“Top of the Lake”* and *“Gateway to CHQ Lake”* to reflect its prime lakefront location and recreational opportunities.
- Enhancing curb appeal is a priority, with potential improvements such as streetscape updates, better maintenance, bistro tables, bright umbrellas, and upgraded lamp posts.
- Chautauqua Institute is a big driver for base economics. Opportunities for collaboration with the Chautauqua Institute to support shoulder season tourism and expand the summer season.
- Signs (gateway signage, wayfinding, etc.) should include branding for the lake, grocery store, local shops.
- Mayville’s past reputation for golf courses could be leveraged for branding. The community recently lost the Pt. Pt. Chautauqua golf course. Woodcrest Golf course was short lived and is now permanently closed. Chautauqua Institution is considering converting one of their 18 holes into housing. There will still be another 18-hole available for use. The other golf course is Willow Run, a 9 hole.
- Expanding and improving lake access is a key focus.

Main Street Enhancements and Lake Connections

The group was asked to discuss questions related to Infrastructure and Aesthetics and Accessibility and Amenities.

- What improvements would you like to see on Main Street to enhance its appeal and functionality?
- How can we better connect Main Street with our lakefront to create a seamless and attractive experience for visitors
- Are there any specific amenities or services that you believe would attract more visitors to Main Street and the lake area?

The following is a summary of the discussion:

- A visual appeal is needed. Enhancements such as murals, curb appeal upgrades, and streetscape improvements, including bistro tables, bright umbrellas, and lamp posts, are necessary to eliminate the current "tunnel vision" approach. Increased focus on maintenance and creating a "wow" factor to encourage people to stop and explore.
- Need to invest in curb appeal to promote and change perceptions of the community.
- Improved (better, more, more obvious) lake access is essential. The existing parks are beautiful. The public docks need improvement to become more inviting and better serve the community.
- Activate the trolley to help people move around during the summer season, specifically Thursday through Saturday.
- Revitalizing the "corner green" areas to create a "town square" feel and attract more businesses, potentially with features like string lights.
- There are concerns with code regulations that need addressing to improve community aesthetics and functionality.
- Encourage more cottage-style businesses along Erie Street to promote walking and engagement.
- Effective wayfinding signage is needed to guide visitors and locals. There should also be parking wayfinding to help visitors and residents find parking in the business districts.
- Strengthening communication efforts to foster community pride and involvement.
- Promote mixed-use development in residential areas between the village and lake, with vendors along Main Street and clear signage to connect the two districts.
- Ideas for events and community spaces include a Sea Plane Rally and developing a pier area for fishing, shops, and concerts.

Support and Attract New Local Businesses

The group was asked to discuss questions related to the Business Environment and Collaboration and Networking.

- What challenges do new businesses face when trying to establish themselves in our community?
- What incentives or support programs would be most effective in attracting and retaining new local businesses?
- What networking opportunities or events would help foster a supportive business community?

The following is a summary of the discussion:

- Attract skilled trades to support local businesses and create methods for funding.
- Provide assistance with technical grants to help business owners promote their business online. Educate business owners on loans and grants available for improving their business.

- Foster a “how can we help” approach to code enforcement and work with businesses to address challenges.
- Encourage the creation of a local development corporation, similar to those in other communities, to support economic growth. Jamestown Community College (JCC) has a small business development center to assist with seeking loans and grants.
- Utilize county funds and resources to assist businesses and raise awareness of available opportunities.
- Host networking events and business open houses, both for the public and as off-season tours for business owners to connect.
- Encourage cooperative advertising among businesses to reduce costs and promote together.
- Develop a creative, artsy business map (inspired by Savannah, GA) that showcases businesses and attractions.
- Address the need for workforce development by attracting younger and seasonal workers and creating long-term job opportunities. Support trade and work with agencies to improve workforce availability across the County.
- Involve Chautauqua Lake Central School in the conversation about workforce development.
- Assist businesses with website development to extend their sales season and enhance their online presence.
- Consider creating a business/visitor-oriented website to further promote the area and businesses.
- Service jobs are vital to both the Town/Village businesses and Chautauqua Institution especially after school resumes.

Strengthening Recreation and Tourism Economy and Local Partnerships

The group was asked to discuss questions related to Tourism Development and Partnerships and Collaboration.

- What recreational activities or attractions do you think would draw more tourists to our area?
- How can we leverage our natural and cultural assets to boost tourism?
- What partnerships between businesses, local government, and community organizations would strengthen our recreation and tourism economy?

The following is a summary of the discussion:

- Leverage local assets and events by marketing attractions such as the airport, flea market, and golf courses more effectively. Capitalize on natural and cultural assets like the culinary scene, wine industry, and collaboration with Chautauqua Institution for larger community events.
- Plan larger-scale events like the Mayville Winter Festival, such as fishing competitions, triathlons, golf tournaments, bike/motorcycle events, water-skiing camps, and culinary/wine festivals to draw visitors, like “A Taste of Mayville”.

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- Establish weekly summer events, such as music festivals like Elmira's Alive After 5, to attract more people to the Town.
- Some believe that zoning and development regulations are used to prevent or create barriers for development and expansion of existing businesses, such as what happened with the Chautauqua Bell.
- Concerns over large-scale local developments nearby.
- Resistance from some residents to outside participation in community activities, such as the snowmobile club's stance on outsiders using local trails.
- There is a need for more restaurants with extended hours (open later in the day).
- There is also a need for a multi-use path connecting Chautauqua Institution to Mayville.