

## April 24, 2025 Meeting Minutes

### Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC)

CPC Chair Chris Foss led this monthly meeting at Caroga Town Hall from 6:00 to 7:15 PM.

Committee members present were: Chris Foss, Rachel Simonds, Anita Long, Jim Hale, and Kim Walker. Doug Purcell, Jeremy Manning, and Dave Cummings were unable to attend.

#### 1. Prior Meeting Minutes

- The committee waived reading and accepted 03/27/2025 monthly meeting minutes.

#### 2. Update on Recent Town Board Actions

- On April 16, 2025, the Town Board gave approval for the Comprehensive Plan Committee to spend up to \$2,000.00 to print and mail postcards inviting public input with the 2025 Community Survey.
- On April 9, 2025, the Town Board endorsed New York State's planning and incentives supporting housing growth by passing the "Pro-Housing Community Resolution" (see <https://hcr.ny.gov/phc>). Supervisor Palcovic is leading the process for state certification. Certification is required to apply to key discretionary funding programs in New York State (e.g., *Downtown Revitalization Initiative*, etc.) This statement of values has implications for the Town's Smart Growth, Zoning, and Planning work.

#### 3. 2025 Public Survey & Postcard Invitation

- The Community Survey is now live at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6YKGPTZ> with additional links from <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com> and <https://caroga.town>.
- Also available is cpc\_survey1\_final.PDF, and paper copies were made available for the Town Clerk to distribute upon request, if people prefer to complete a paper survey (rather than SurveyMonkey).
- Chris Foss will work with Fulton County Printing Office to complete the final postcard print job, and he will then mail the postcards to each distinct private land-owner address in the Town of Caroga.
- Lake Associations are welcome to print postcard invitation information in their 2025 newsletters.
- The public should complete the Survey before August 15, 2025 (when Survey input will be closed).

#### 4. 2011 Comprehensive Plan Review

- The Committee continued discussing the 2011 Comprehensive Plan.
- Chris Foss said, "To get started, let's focus on the first 4 pages, especially on the Vision Statement. Do we start with a Vision Statement (either rewording the 2011 Vision or coming up with our own) and keep that in mind, as we go through and talk about the 'downtown' and all the other things? The section 'Where we want to be in 2025' is quite a bit off now. Maybe focus there first, and rewrite it. So, everybody take a look. See if you can come up with something. We'll talk about that next month."

#### **Vision Statement**

- "The 2011 Vision put a lot of chips on Town Center." It created a new Zoning District. Let's read it...  
*"In 2025, the Town of Caroga will continue to be a small, rural town where everyone knows everyone. Residents and visitors will have available various year round outdoor recreational opportunities, year round...accommodations, diverse restaurants and a strong commercial center ...known as Town Center...located near and around the former Sherman's Amusement Park... [with] walkable, integrated open-air, multiuse development...streetscapes and landscapes... recreational and residential uses...[Town Center will] be the most diverse area of the Town."*

# THE CAROGA PROCESS

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

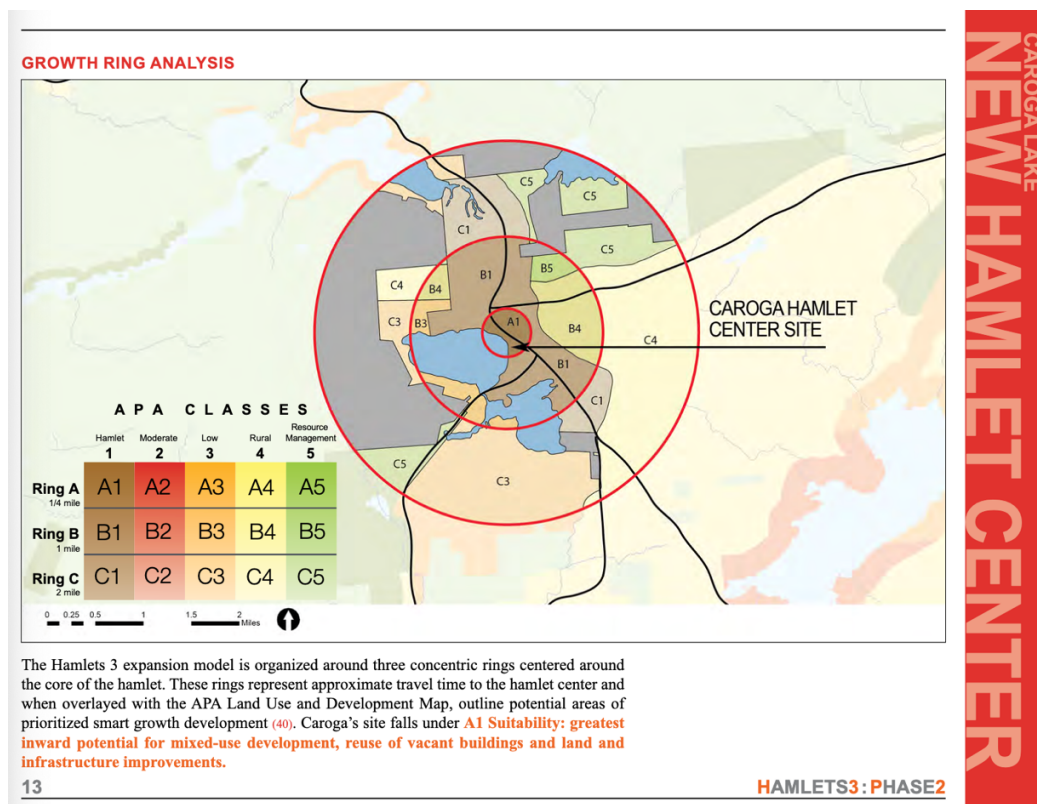
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- The 2011 Vision also emphasized the Town's enduring beauty, history, and recreation as integral to the vibrant local community experience, built environment, natural environment, and economy:  
*"The Town will be recognized for its natural beauty, rich history...and year round outdoor recreation opportunities" to restore "attractiveness as a place to live and raise a family... [with a] variety of housing types..., excellent water quality..., [and] a strong tourism-based economy."*
- Our task now is to go through the existing plan together: to talk about it, rewrite sections, or eliminate/add sections, starting with Town Center, featured in the 2011 Vision. If we start by revising a working draft Vision to guide us, we can then revise again at the end of the current planning process.

### Town Center

- Chris Foss said, "At the heart of it, Town Center was a good idea, but let's rework and modernize it."
- Chris Foss pointed out that the 2011 Plan came before the Caroga Lake Music Festival, the Caroga Arts Collective 501(c)3, and reopening Sherman's Park. It's still the Town Center anchor, but not specifically the envisioned "commercial center featuring unique shops and boutiques, arts and crafts stores and related retail and commercial businesses." So, those details need to be revised.
- Anita Long noted discussion last time about how little of the Town Center vision was implemented. Yet, since then (after the 2011 Plan), the Town actually got a Smart Growth planning grant for Town Center called "*Hamlets of the Adirondacks*." Caroga was an example Town, and Sherman's was the focus. Professional planners and architects from Cornell introduced principled frameworks and helped to do brainstorming sketches. The sketches are not accurate now, but they sparked a decade-long process of "reimagining" that community gathering place as the heart of Caroga's growth rings:

[https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive\\_plan/3-caroga-lake-h3p2-book.pdf](https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/3-caroga-lake-h3p2-book.pdf)



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- In 2013-2014, “*Hamlets of the Adirondacks*” (H3P2) discussed implementation. Recommendations were for the Town: (1) to work closely with the principal landowner/donor to advance the project and (2) to create a 501(c)3 Community Organization to take the lead with redeveloping Sherman’s Park, hosting special programming, leading grant writing, and doing a fundraising campaign.  
[https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive\\_plan/h3p2\\_discussion\\_memo.pdf](https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/h3p2_discussion_memo.pdf)
- That’s what happened in the past decade. The Town Board worked with the Abdella family to clarify the donation vision, and Caroga Arts created a 501(c)3 to advance collaborative community projects. This historic team planning story—about the Town Center hub or anchor at Sherman’s Park—is important to tell. Essentially, many people in the community have pulled together to get things done, and there is more to plan and do. “The 2011 Plan introduced the new idea of Town Center with Sherman’s Park as the main anchor, and now we have a great community resource. The work at Sherman’s has moved forward the prior plans, themes, and concepts, in ways that show growth.”  
[https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive\\_plan/04\\_07\\_25-reimagining-campaign-prospectus.pdf](https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/04_07_25-reimagining-campaign-prospectus.pdf)
- The Committee also discussed several other Town Center features and business properties. Those specific existing businesses and development sites are also essential within the Town Center district.
- For example, Kim Walker and Jim Hale noted the Lake View Store, Vrooman’s and the properties near them. Development there will be important going forward for the central district in Town Center.

### Hamlet Center

- Anita Long said that the core Town Center area remains valuable. In addition, municipal development has shifted, in ways not detailed in the 2011 Plan. Further north in the Hamlet / Wheelerville area, the Golf Clubhouse, Highway Garage, and Town Hall are all major building projects that need to be included, described, and prioritized more now in this revised Plan, especially to pursue financing or grant funding to see those project to completion. So, maybe also include Hamlet Center too?
- This also relates to questions about how the Comprehensive Plan’s Zoning Map will define “Town Center”, “Hamlet”, and other nearby zoning district boundaries. The 2011 Plan focused on “Town Center” but Hamlet Center got lost, along with key Town facility development in Wheelerville.
- For example, maybe centered “Growth Rings” could possibly be an organizing principle (see above)? Details changed, but principles carry forward. In Caroga, “Town Center” is the core “Ring A”, and the Town’s “Hamlet Center” is the next “Ring B”. Maybe we could include this graph (or something like it), and then prioritize smart growth development areas in both “Town Center” and “Hamlet Center”?
- Jim Hale discussed examples in the Hamlet neighborhood between West and East Caroga Lakes down to the School, noting redevelopment at the restaurant that was Slate (formerly The Outlet). “It will never be a bar and restaurant again. Some business and land owners just cut their losses and leave.”
- Anita Long added, “That part of Town is changing in several ways. Just down Route 10, with the new Royal View Pub and Campground, across from Newkirk Road. That was just approved this year.”
- Chris Foss said, “There also was a project taking land from the Outlet back up to Seven Oaks Rd and subdividing it into lots. There are wetlands near the water in the outlet, but the land itself, going back, is nice. No rush, but it is another possibility that may be in the works for development.” (Caroga LF 2.5 Acre District; APA Low Intensity Use Area 3.2 Acre Average).
- Chris Foss noted that zoning details (e.g., lot size) matter if we want more development in the Town.

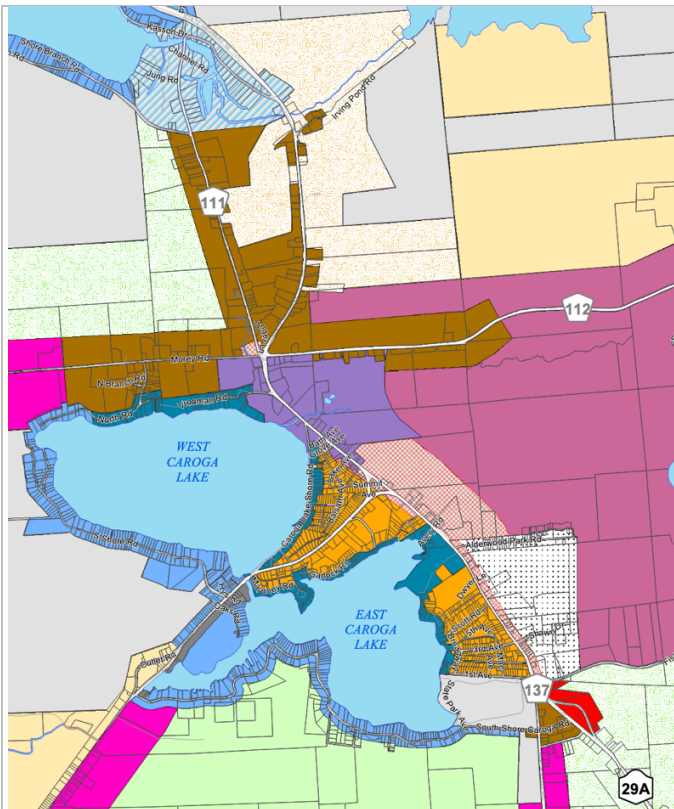
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- Anita Long pointed to targeted areas of Town. Referring to Town-APA maps, the development intensity (average lot size) varies (1) by Caroga zoning districts and (2) by APA land classifications. Both matter as we make changes (see Table below). Basically, Caroga's 2018 Zoning District Map is an overlay on the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map. At a local level, Caroga has maximum flexibility for development within APA-hamlet (i.e., along Route 29A from the State campground to the Town highway garage). Focusing growth in that area fits with principles about centering and clustering development. So, if we want to pursue smart growth and pro-housing goals and grants, then the APA-hamlet area seems like a good place to review and streamline the Vision and the Zoning (e.g., min lot size, subdivisions, accessory dwellings, zoning district definitions, etc.).

[https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive\\_plan/cpc\\_2024\\_prior\\_vision\\_and\\_maps.pdf](https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/cpc_2024_prior_vision_and_maps.pdf)



**From 2018 Town of Caroga Zoning Map**

**25,000 SqFt**—Purple: Town Center; Brown: Caroga Hamlet;  
Orange: Resort; Blue-Green: LFA Residential  
**1 to 3 Acres**—Red Check: Highway Commercial 1; Blue-White:  
Lakefront Residential 1; White Dots: Residential 1.5;  
White/Yellow: Conservation 2; Light Blue: Lakefront 2.5; Hot  
Pink: Residential 3  
**8 to 42 Acres**—Red: Highway Commercial 8.5; Green Speckle:  
Residential 8.5; Light Green: Residential 10; Light Green:  
Residential 10; Mauve: Residential 15; Yellow: Open  
Development Area 42  
**NYS Land**—Gray: Campground & Forest Preserve



**From APA Land Use & Development Map**

The ALLUP Caroga Zoning Map (left) is an overlay of the above APA Map. Both guide local new construction standards with allowed/disallowed uses and minimum lot sizes (i.e., intensity per principal building)

### Land Use Area Intensity Guide (Average Lot Size in Acres)

Brown: Hamlet no min  
Orange: Low Intensity 3.2  
Yellow: Rural 8.5  
Medium Green: Resource Management 42.7  
Forest Green & Light Green: Campground & Forest Preserve



### Guiding Themes

- Discussion explored some guiding themes related to the Comprehensive Plan Vision and Contents.
- One guiding theme involved the Town of Caroga as a **“four-season recreation community.”**
- One thing that we all seem to agree about is the idea of Caroga as a “recreation community.”
- During the past half century, all Caroga comprehensive planning work has centered on this focus.
  - Based on a 1975 Residents’ Survey and several local studies, Caroga’s first Plan in 1978 aimed *“to provide for orderly growth...to maintain the ‘recreational community’ character of the area.”*
  - Revised Plans in 2002 and 2011 both featured Caroga’s character as a *“recreational community.”*
- Other particulars of the 2011 Vision Statement and Town Center Map have changed, and Committee members made several specific points to consider for revising the Vision and Contents.

### Caroga Experience, Economy, & Recreation Community

- Kim Walker noted the value of themed events (such as fairs, festivals, and sports) as part of the Caroga recreation experience, noting that those special events are the “great times” in Caroga. “South Glens Falls and Gloversville also have a food truck rally, with crafters and food trucks once a week. To get the community involved, you could give vouchers to people for food discounts.”
- Anita Long added that such experience themes fit with ideas of Caroga as a recreation community. That was further specified by the Parks & Recreation “Tourism Committee” that the Town Board created in 2020 to implement a recommendation of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Plan carried that from the Vision into lists, such as local associations/clubs, community facilities, local businesses, and natural resources, lake inventory, etc. Such lists could be included in Appendices, particular leaders could participate, and the Plan itself might focus on a few as featured examples of Caroga’s “Recreational Experience.” Wheelerville Trails is an example of a new development project.
- Chris Foss said that such inventories can be done in collaboration with Fulton County Planning. In addition, people like Jake Tennis at Royal Mountain, Kim Walker at Paradise Ranch Rodeo, Kyle Price at Sherman’s Park, and a number of other people are willing to be involved in the planning process.
- Anita Long noted that the Survey results will be useful to summarize strengths, weakness, and priorities. Engaging with business/organization leaders will help to get more specific about how they see the Town’s strengths, weaknesses, and priorities in relation to their particular goals and needs.
- Kim Walker noted, “I wish it was not still so seasonal. After the summer season, this place is quiet.”
- Chris Foss said, “It’s changing. We have more year-round residents...I see that on my street...More building is happening with renovations and new houses...Businesses—such as Pine Lake Lodge—are changing how they operate in different seasons.”
- Jim Hale gave the Winter Carnival example to show more activity in seasons other than summer.
- Anita Long said that we have a number of examples to show prior weaknesses changing to strengths. That illustrates how Caroga is growing into more of a four-season community in the Adirondacks.
- Jim Hale said, “We can put all the planning we want into it, but sometimes it’s weather dependent. Last year, winter events had to be cancelled, because there was no snow. This year, we had snow.”
- Chris Foss said that is especially true for snowmobile recreation and its economic drivers.
- The theme of Caroga as a recreation community also carries into summaries of the Caroga Economy.

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### Built Environment: Residential Housing

- Jim Hale said, "Since 2011, Caroga has changed leaps and bounds, since then...Take business changes, like the Lake View Store, for example. Plus, the cost of properties, in general, have exploded.
- Chris Foss added, "It used to be that houses on Caroga Lake were affordable, and people came from Johnstown, Gloversville, Herkimer, Little Falls. Now, people tear down to rebuild for year-round use."
- Anita Long said, "That gets to the issue of housing. It's not affordable for most families to move to parts of Caroga. There's some undeveloped open land, like on Fisher and Alderwood, for example. It would be interesting to have numbers, like maybe a table or graph to show housing trends. The numbers we got from Fulton County in the fall were missing some of that information."
- Chris Foss replied, "Caroga's Code Officer might have some of those building numbers too."
- Anita Long said, "The numbers that were available compared towns across Fulton County, and Caroga had more seasonal houses than other towns. So, those changes with redevelopment are important."

### Wastewater Infrastructure

- Jim Hale emphasized, "The residential septic requirements throw a curve ball to every piece of property potentially developed. State septic requirements are not what they were 20 years ago."
- Chris Foss replied, "Caroga has had issues with all the old septic systems, especially for old camps. Some of them just have tanks, and that will not pass for new year-round residential use. That's part of the development. It's about \$20,000 for just a septic system. You once could build a house for that."
- Anita Long added, "The revision will need to summarize the wastewater issues, history and plans."
- Jim Hale replied, "I don't think you would ever get a public sewer system to pass, when people know what they would have to pay up here. Hands down, it would get voted down. Do people want to pay \$4,000-5,000 extra for 20 years? No." We had a vote for a public sewer system. It did not pass.
- Anita Long added, "We now have multiple planning tools. For example, the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation has programs for water infrastructure funding and community assistance (see <https://efc.ny.gov> ; <https://www.townofcaroga.com/notes/efc-program-guide-10252024-interactive.pdf> ). Wastewater projects must be on the annual Intended Use Plan before a Town can apply for funding for building systems or doing engineering planning grants. EFC also has a separate program called the "Septic Replacement Fund". Neither Fulton County nor Caroga is now on EFC's list for this program. We need to figure out and summarize feasibility of a public sewer district vs. private septic systems. There's been a lot of talk in Caroga, but people have not made the moves to make things happen."
- Jim Hale said, "Yes. The Supervisor is working on that septic program. But the sewer system is big. Just look at what Mayfield and Northville are going through right now. Mayfield is hooked into the Gloversville Sewer System, with that project down Route 349. Now they don't have the money. They got the money to do the system, but part of the contract was that any repair work within the City of Gloversville is also the responsibility of everyone, including people in Mayfield. They're doing smoke tests in Gloversville, and when smoke comes out where it is not supposed to, then everyone pays to fix it. Right now, they're at a standstill, because Mayfield says, 'We can't afford that.' Nobody read the fine print in the contracts. The sewer line made it to Mayfield, but now can't afford repair costs."
- Anita Long said, "As an alternative, I think that the EFC Septic Replacement Fund helps individuals, but the Town and County need to collaborate at the State level if that is going to apply in Caroga."
- Jim Hale said, "Yes. I'd like to see that septic program go through in Caroga." Kim Walker agreed.

### Content Outline & Chapters

- Rachel Simonds suggested, “I think we should start with an outline...What is the Table of Contents? That way we have a task at hand and get to what we want and need.”
- Anita Long agreed, “I think we need to think about how to break this into chapters. There are different ways to do that. One way is to bring in state-wide themes and apply them in Caroga. For example, State laws and grants now require Smart Growth planning principles. That mostly took off after the 2011 Plan. Now, other Towns are organizing with broad strokes to balance the community *experience, environment, and economy (Smart Growth’s 3 Es)*. I’ve seen some with contents such as: Introduction, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Community Experience, History, etc.
- In addition, Caroga has a recreation community character, and that cuts across chapters. Recreation includes the events as well as outdoor activities and assets. It’s also part of the economy. It’s tied into the beautiful natural environment with the lakes and mountains and Forest Preserve. Planning goes deep into the Built Environment, including road systems, public facilities, private housing, septic wastewater systems, broadband systems, energy options, and so on. I’d like to see organizing themes like that here. It makes it more readable and sets up priority areas and projects for funding. A lot of what’s in the 2011 Plan can be moved to Appendices. If we have more clear themes, then we can translate better from the Vision into specified goals. It needs to be cleaned up and streamlined.”
- Chris Foss agreed, “How do we want to put this together, and then work that through? I’ve gone through this, but in Johnstown, we had someone from the Planning Department who helped say, ‘This is where we need to go. This is what we need to do.’ Now, we’re doing general discussion.”
- Anita Long supported involving the APA and/or Fulton County Planners to help review what needs to be in the Plan to advance the process and what is required to cite for project grant applications. “We now have urgent projects for Town facilities that cannot be fully funded with taxpayer financing. The challenge is making the revised Plan distinctively our own, but also hitting some of the points and boxes that need to be addressed with comprehensive planning for grant-funded projects.”

### 5. Collaborations & Partnerships

- Chris Foss emphasized aims to engage with local leaders and business owners in the Town of Caroga.
- Consulting with Fulton County Planning and APA Planning Staff might also be helpful as we proceed.
- As a Town with an Adirondack Park Agency-Approved Land Use Plan (ALLUP), should we check in with APA staff and perhaps invite them to a meeting to help frame the basic planning and zoning process?  
<https://apa.ny.gov/planning/local-government.html>

### 6. Action Items

- Chris Foss will oversee postcard printing/mailing. He also will talk with Fulton County Planning people (about Profile data, etc) and APA staff (about Caroga’s Agency-Approved Local Land Use Plan, ALLUP).
- This coming month, each Committee member will generate specific ideas and wording for a revised:  
(1) **Vision Statement** and (2) **Table of Contents**.
- We aim to develop a revised **Vision** and **Table of Contents** to guide work, and then revise again later.

### 7. Next Meeting

**The next meeting at Town Hall will be after Memorial Day on Thursday, May 29, 2025 at 6:00 PM.**

Respectfully submitted, Anita McMartin Long, CPC Member and Secretary