



December 13th, 2017 Public Workshop - Greenfield Community Center

CHAPTER 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

To gather input from the public, the project team used a three-pronged approach:

-  Host an initial public workshop, presenting information and soliciting feedback
-  Survey workshop participants, as well as supporters of Saratoga PLAN
-  Conduct confidential interviews with land owners and managers, public officials and interest group leaders

Key findings from the community engagement efforts are:

- Most participants are not very familiar with the name, "Palmertown"
- The area is one best suited to conservation and recreation, with unanimous support from interviewees
- There is strong support for the creation of a network of connected trails
- Participants overwhelmingly favor muscle-powered over motor-powered activities, as well as indicate a need to accommodate different users
- These stakeholders are not very keen on hunting or snowmobiling, expressing mixed, and often very strong views on the appropriateness of including those activities
- Participants are most interested in enhancing their quality of life
- A nonprofit organization or public-private partnership is best suited to lead implementation of the plan



PUBLIC WORKSHOP

A public workshop was held at the Town of Greenfield Community Center on the evening of December 13th, 2017. A total of 34 people were in attendance. The public workshop started with a presentation introducing the project and describing the existing conditions throughout the study area. Following the presentation, attendees were invited to stay for an interactive session to share local knowledge of existing resources and identify future opportunities for recreation, conservation, and economic development in the region. The information collected during the public workshop was summarized into the following goals, needs, constraints, and opportunities.

GOALS

- Conserve habitat because Palmertown is a critical area for wildlife
- Preserve open space and small compatible economic uses within the study area
- Concentrate intensive commercial/residential uses outside of the study area and limit sprawl and large developments
- Preserve Native American heritage and culture



**PUBLIC
WORKSHOP
ATTENDEES**

NEEDS

- Mountain bike trails that serve beginner and intermediate riders (most trails in study area only serve experienced/expert riders)
- Camping along Palmertown Range
- Additional and improved parking and trailheads; specifically, significant improvements to Daniels Road State Forest entrance
- Local waterway protection
- Address ATV use and the economic contributions ATV users could bring to the area, if permitted
- Connect the snowmobile trail from the Greenfield Town line to Wells Road in Corinth
- Loop trails rather than out and back trails

CONSTRAINTS

- Rail line between Skidmore College and Daniels Road is a barrier to connectivity between the North Woods and Daniels Road trail systems
- National Grid power line bisects county lands to the northeast of Moreau Lake State Park, creating fragmented open space and disconnected trails



Interactive Sessions

Public workshop attendees were invited to participate in an interactive session to share their local knowledge about the region.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Lincoln Mountain State Forest is a major opportunity for trail development, including loop trails for hikers, equine trails, and mountain bike trails for various skill levels
- Logging roads/old abandoned roads provide access to adjacent communities and between open space areas
- Rail line between Saratoga and Corinth (and farther north) could be transformed into a rail trail or a rail with trail and serve as a multimodal regional connector
- Development of a rail trail that connects the Zim Smith Trail to Wilton and north
- Expand conservation lands
- Connections to the proposed Big Boom Trail and Lake George
- Connections to Hudson Point Trail
- Boat launch in the northeast corner of the study area
- Conversion of McGregor Correctional Facility to an economic generator
- Economic development that focuses on recreation and ecotourism
- Shuttle from Corinth to hiking, biking, and tourist destinations
- Native American cultural interpretive/educational center

SURVEY

A survey was created to gather information and insights from the public. Designed to take just 5 minutes on either a computer or mobile device, the survey asked respondents to indicate their current interests and preferences in relation to the study area. The survey also posed questions to gather thoughts on how best to proceed in the future.

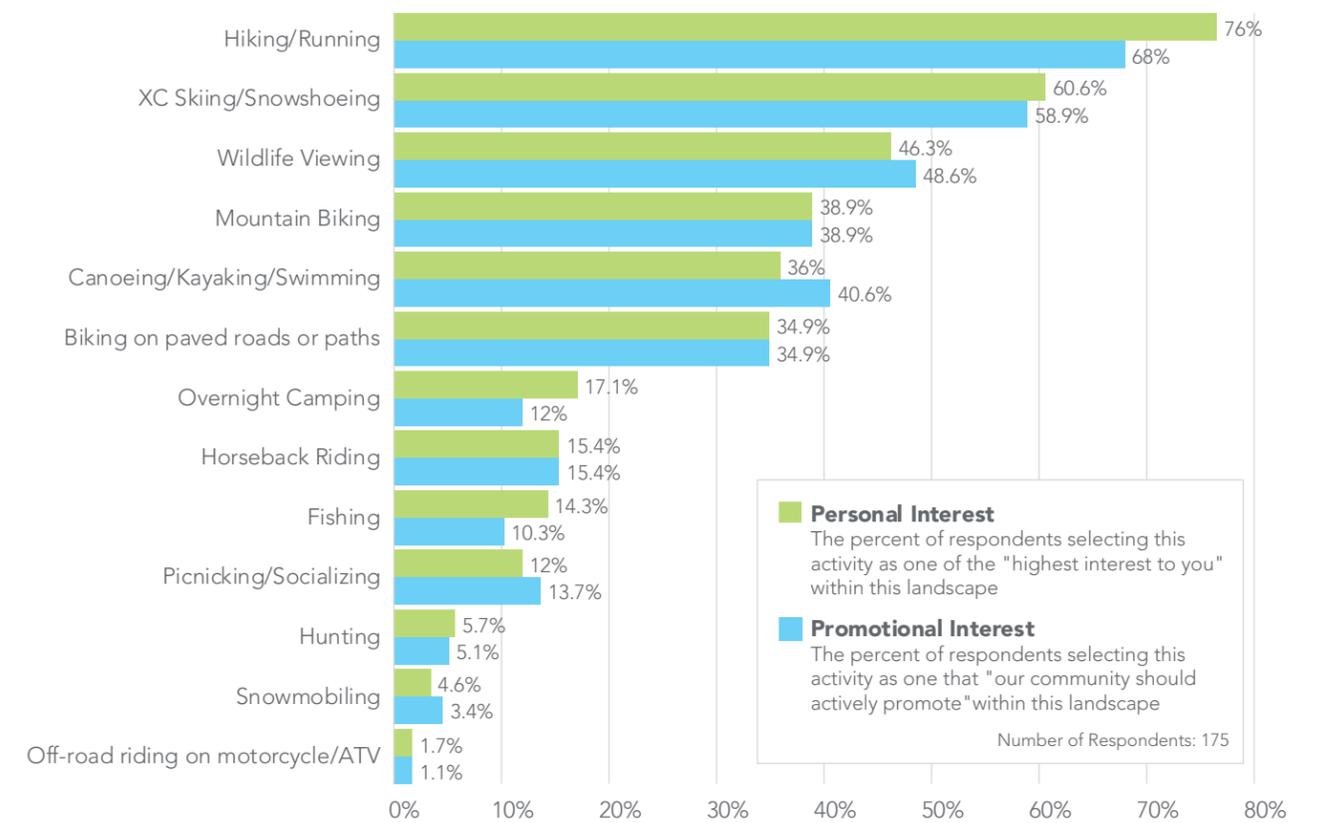
Alta Planning + Design distributed the survey as part of the workshop, and Saratoga PLAN sent the link to its network of contacts through two email blasts. Additionally, an article about the project with reference to the survey was published in a local newspaper, The Saratogian. In total, there were 175 survey responses, including 27 workshop attendees, 131 from the survey link provided by PLAN and 17 from the article in The Saratogian. In sum, the survey generated a solid, albeit self-selecting, sample of interested individuals, with a very consistent response overall.

A more detailed description of all survey questions and responses can be found in the appendix.

KEY FINDINGS

- Survey respondents expressed a **strong interest in the future of the area**, but do not yet see it as a connected landscape nor using the chosen name, "Palmertown."
- Survey respondents had the **highest interest in conservation and recreation**, with relatively lower interests in economic development.
- Survey respondents had a **strong preference for trail-based and muscle-powered pursuits** over motorized activities, with some suggestion of a self-interested response for promotion of the same activity. See the "Existing and Future Recreational Activity Preferences" graphic on the adjacent page.
- Survey respondents **prefer an implementation approach led by a nonprofit organization or a public-private partnership**.
- Survey respondents consider the planning process to be very helpful, if not essential for the area, and approximately **half of all survey respondents would like to receive updates** regarding the project.

Existing and Future Recreational Activity Preferences



"...KEEP AS MUCH AS YOU CAN NATURAL AND PROTECT ALL NATURAL RESOURCES..."

"...THE TOWN HAS BEEN CHANGED SO MUCH BY DEVELOPMENT...PLEASE PROTECT OPEN SPACE SO PEOPLE HAVE A PLACE TO ENJOY NATURE IN ITS NATURAL STATE..."

"...THIS AREA IS SO IMPORTANT AND KNOWING THERE IS EFFORT TO CONSERVE IT WITH FORETHOUGHT IS WONDERFUL..."

"... ALLOW FOR CONSERVATION AND RECREATIONAL BENEFIT WHICH WILL IN TURN ATTRACT MORE TOURISM AND ECONOMIC GROWTH..."

Quotes from Survey Respondents

175 SURVEY RESPONSES



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Twelve key stakeholders were identified by Saratoga PLAN and OSI and were invited to do an in-depth interview to more fully share their local knowledge about the study area and further illuminate the priorities and needs of stakeholders in the region. To encourage candor, Alta Planning + Design conducted these 15-30 minute conversations in confidence.

More information about the interviews, including an extensive set of quotes, can be found in the appendix.



Those interviewed included interested group leaders, land owners and managers, and public officials from the following organizations:

- Town of Greenfield
- Town of Moreau
- Moreau Lake State Park
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
- Private Landowners (2)
- Saratoga Back Country Horsemen Of New York
- Saratoga Mountain Bike Association
- Skidmore College
- Snook Kill Hunt Club
- Southern Adirondack Chapter of the Audubon Society
- Town of Wilton

KEY FINDINGS

- Interviewees were **more familiar with the concept of a connected landscape and the chosen name (Palmertown)** than survey respondents. They often associated the connected landscape with a ridgeline trail and traced the “Palmertown” name back to Saratoga PLAN.
- Interviewees were united in their **emphasis on conservation and recreation**, but **rarely connected those concepts with economic opportunity**.
- Interviewees were **eco-oriented when asked about activities other than parks and trails**, with a few adding that **land owners may still want to keep their options open** to other development or sale opportunities.
- Interviewees also **emphasized trail-based and muscle-powered pursuits, with most speaking in terms of multi-use trails and community interests**. Some expressed **mixed views on hunting, guns, and snowmobiles**. Some also flagged a need for **better access points to recreation opportunities** throughout the study area.
- Interviewees were more likely than survey respondents to stress an **implementation approach led by a nonprofit organization**. Some questioned the public sector’s willingness or ability to engage in implementation of the Plan recommendations.
- Interviewees also **see the need for, and value in, a planning process** and would like the planning team to share information or engage interviewees as advisors.

“...RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF ANY KIND WOULD BE BENEFICIAL (WITH) CONTINUED PROTECTION SO PEOPLE CAN CONTINUE TO ENJOY AND GAIN KNOWLEDGE...”

“...MULTI-USE TRAILS ALLOWING FOR HIKERS, BIKERS, EQUESTRIANS, CROSS COUNTRY SKIING, JOGGING, RIVER ACCESS...”

“...ON THE WHOLE I’D LIKE THERE TO BE LESS DEVELOPMENT... AVOID SUBURBAN, RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT...”

“...AN INTER-MUNICIPAL AGREEMENT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL...”

Quotes from Stakeholder Interviews

12 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

FINAL SUMMARY

An analysis of the responses, questions, and comments submitted during the three public engagement strategies resulted in the following key findings and recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

- These stakeholders are **not very familiar with the name, "Palmertown,"** even with the provided prompts, with some interviewees adding that it does not resonate with them, or raises more questions than answers.
- These stakeholders **agree that the area is one best suited to conservation and recreation,** with unanimous support from interviewees, many adding that they previously had heard of linking the lands with a ridgeline trail.
- These stakeholders **strongly support the creation of a network of connected trails,** but some interviewees expressed confusion or concern about a more comprehensive plan for a connected landscape.
- These stakeholders **overwhelmingly favor muscle-powered over motor-powered activities,** with interviewees also seeing a need to accommodate different users and provide better access points.
- These stakeholders are **not very keen on hunting or snowmobiling,** while interviewees nonetheless expressed mixed, and often very strong views on the appropriateness of including those activities.



December 13th, 2017 Public Workshop

- These stakeholders are **most interested in enhancing their quality of life,** with interviewees indicating that they are more interested, but often unconvinced, about the potential for economic impact.
- These stakeholders **want a nonprofit organization or public-private partnership to lead implementation of the plan,** while some interviewees caution that the public role should be, or is likely to be, limited.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider **altering or augmenting the name to better resonate with local residents,** noting nonetheless the future need for marketing.
- Emphasize the **creation of a network of connected trails,** as that is likely to be more easily understood and more widely supported than the concept of a comprehensive plan for a connected landscape.
- **Recognize the existing support for conservation and recreation,** and tout the **accepted benefits to local quality of life,** while **making the case for the impact on the local economy.**
- **Prioritize muscle-powered pursuits, and consider ways to accommodate different user groups, as well as different abilities,** while improving access points throughout the study area.
- Ensure that vocal interests are not overrepresented, nor quiet interests underrepresented, by **consulting demographic data and reaching out to others with an interest in the outdoors** but no direct connection to PLAN.
- Continue to **engage stakeholder groups, as well as local landowners,** with a focus on going to them, rather than expecting them to come to you.
- Be prepared to **lead not only the development but the implementation of the plan.**



NEXT STEPS

Moving forward, this document and future planning efforts will work to incorporate the key findings and recommendations resulting from the public engagement strategies. Ongoing community engagement strategies should be a high priority to ensure the outcomes and implementation of this Plan align with community needs and desires.

Additionally, this effort could benefit from an advisory committee to ensure the planning process is well integrated with other related efforts and to guide the implementation of the plan. The committee should be composed of stakeholders representing land owners/managers, special interest groups, and political leaders.