

Business & Recreation Focus Group Summary

“This document was prepared for the New York State Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.”

November 3, 2011

As part of an effort to gather information for the development of the Village of Celoron Waterfront Revitalization Plan, a focus group regarding business and recreation was conducted with local and regional stakeholders and experts. The following details the key points of the focus group discussion.

Discussion Question 1:

What makes the Village of Celoron unique? In a phrase or a sentence, describe the character of the village.

Lakefront Community

- Lakefront access
- Uniquely positioned lakeside spot
- Known as a boating access point to Chautauqua Lake recreation
- Gateway to the Lake
- Narrow crossing in terms of lake width, people come back and forth across the Lake

Lucille Ball

- Lucille Ball’s childhood home
- Arguably the most famous woman in the world and most iconic American entertainer of all time was from here
- Proximity to a related attraction that brings 30,000 Lucy fans each year

History

- Historical in nature
- Once an extremely significant source of recreation for the area

Regional Context

- Well situated community regionally positioned in close proximity to cultural, economic and environmental positives

The Community

- Small town feel, community and the people
- Close knit community
- Small community with a great location
- Lower income remnant of Rust Belt communities

Other

- There’s an island

Discussion Question 2:

What are the three biggest challenges facing revitalization of the Village of Celoron? What is preventing revitalization of the village?

Appearance & Perception

- Perception
- How it looks, Village does not look like tidy neighborhoods
- Disinvestment in real estate in this area
- The perception that it's closed
- Self-perception and attitude
- Change of image, visually and mentally

Needs to Offer Attractions/Activities

- On its own, Celoron does not have major resources from which to revitalize, no critical mass like Jamestown or homeowners like in Lakewood or Bemus Point
- Need to do something as a village in the commercial district, don't have a true business district
- Don't have anything to offer people who are coming through either on bus or bike
- Lack of activity/recreation besides park venues, particularly when most of the year is cold

Economic Competition

- Competition with commercial area along Fairmount Avenue
- No need to pass through, drive through Celoron
- Celoron has lower income levels as compared to nearby Lakewood

Housing

- Existing housing stock
- Large proportion of rental properties

- How to get landlords to aesthetically upgrade rental properties
- Age and condition of existing housing stock

Funding & Investment

- Lack of local money
- Funding for growth or improvement projects
- Lack of investment, capital and social investment
- Overall disinvestment in the immediate region
- Development, at least in part, needs to be in cooperation with some other efforts going on in the area
- Investment – lack of
- Private investment (opportunity)
- Declining population
- Financial structure of the people who own it
- Make them want to come to the area, without those seeds, hard to get started

Planning & Implementation

- Understand potential (vision), sense of direction
- Clearly defined long term plan to direct public and private development
- Knowledgeable experts to guide development
- Community involvement

Lake Water Quality

- Lake quality an issue/condition of the Lake water
- The weeds concentrate on this end of the Lake

Discussion Questions 3 & 4:

What are the three biggest opportunities for revitalization of the Village of Celoron? What can it capitalize upon for success? What are the unique features in Celoron that add to or enhance the region's existing destinations and attractions?

Boating, Fishing, Recreation & Learning

- Boat recreation hub on the Lake (tackle, license, boat/canoe launch, fishing classes)
- Significant number of marinas and boat services and lakefront access
- Tie into the learning experience
- Classes and activities in the park
- Fishing as a year-round activity
- Bass fishing tournament
- Dock space for fisherman
- All weather opportunities – i.e. snowmobiles
- Bike rental
- Provide a really nice playground
- Promote the area to younger demographic with cycling

Walking

- People are looking for ways to avoid driving, Celoron is particularly suited for walking since it's so flat
- Promote walking as the “event” in Celoron with a promenade along the water

Chautauqua Lake

- Promote the Lake to residents, Jamestown has no access to the Lake
- Swimming in the Lake
- Waterfront and connectivity
- Lakefront location development
- More contiguous access along the Lake
- Natural attraction (lake, outlet, etc.)
- Preserve public access to the Lake

Connection with Region

- Reach out and work with government and nonprofits
- Connect to waterfront and walkway opportunities in Jamestown and Lakewood
- Build on its location as anchored by Chautauqua and Jamestown
- At one point Celoron was a stopping point, nothing has changed in its proximity to the Lake and surrounding communities
- Connect to the Chautauqua Institution which has more than 170,000 visitors each summer

Empty-nesters/Baby Boomers Opportunities

- Provide independent living options for empty nesters/baby boomers wanting to retire
- For people who aren't able to move around well, the Village is very flat/accessible and provides waterfront access
- If you provide shopping, people will want to develop a home here and feel comfortable living here because everything is in walking distance
- It has a rural feel near services

Nature Preserve Opportunity

- Opportunity with Jamestown and the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy to canoe the Chadakoin River which has a variety of nature viewing opportunities
- Work with Jamestown and Chautauqua Water Conservancy on nature preserve development

Housing & Workforce Development Opportunities

- Clean affordable housing to draw new residents to support new businesses and newly developed recreational opportunities
- Housing revitalization
- The Resource Center– 200 TRC employees
- Potential for workforce housing
- Utilize income levels to attract investments

Lucille Ball

- Connect to the Lucy-Desi Center, which has about 30,000 visitors each year
- Lucy tourists already visiting Celoron, want unique Celoron-related Lucy experience
- Celoron is already part of the five-day Lucy Fest
- Potential to give non-Lucy family members something to do

Shopping/Activities

- Develop a “main street” business area with unique, small businesses/shops (Niagara-on-the-Lake is an example)
- Ice cream cones
- Souvenir shops
- Concerts/bands
- Build storefronts and keep them developable
- Main Street Program
- Seems to be a new growing trend toward local businesses and downtown revitalization
- Communities are buying smaller, provide a farmers market

Development Opportunities

- Economic development, particularly the property on northwest bank (former Celoron Amusement Park site)
- Flat buildable land
- Celoron is a “clean piece of paper” (don’t have to tear down buildings for space) – it can be developed and grow in many directions
- Condominiums
- Mixed use public access space
- Smart streets
- Smart growth
- Consider incentives to bring in businesses to center activities around
- Traffic is good if it’s at a low speed limit
- Provide a marketable brochure that would say what property is available for development in the Village
- Better use for Lucille Ball Park
- Diverge away from seasonal traffic

Community/School District/Utilities/Taxes

- Celoron has maintained its rural feel, consider that an asset, play on its greenness
- Small town feel
- Good school district, people specifically request housing in the district
- Jamestown utilities and taxes are pretty good here

Other

- Market the Village as Chautauqua 2, but promoted to a different level of income
- History
- Environment

Discussion Question 5:

Imagine no barriers including time or money: How should the Village of Celoron be promoted as a destination? What features should be developed as part of this destination? Where should destination features be located?

- Trolley car/train from Jamestown to Mayville
- Offer something for families to do that's not a big cost commitment
- Walkable, rideable, connected, community
- The capital for baby boomer retirements
- Tied in with the World's Learning Center
- Lucy designation
- Promote the historical value of Celoron – for example there could be a search for the lead plate Celoron de Blainville buried here to claim the land after his exploratory trip down the lake
- Improve how rental properties are handled/maintained
- Housing rehabilitation
- Affordable housing with convenience to amenities
- Short term vacation rentals
- Promote Celoron as a part of the regional destination to be more attractive
- Lakefront recreation and boating access point/hub for Chautauqua Lake with launch/parking expansion, outdoor recreation shops (canoe/kayak, equipment provisions, rentals), dining (beverage, ice cream) and entertainment
- Physical linkages to Chautauqua Lake and Chadakoin River, boardwalk, swimming, playground, nature preserve
- Lakefront development
- Economic development – small retail