

Natural Environment Focus Group Summary

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As part of an effort to gather information for the development of the Village of Celoron Waterfront Revitalization Plan, a focus group regarding the natural environment 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.

The Lake

- Lakefront is the main focal point
- Lake access with free boat launches
- Recreational boating port on Chautauqua Lake
- Known for boating with Summer Wind, Boatworks, Holiday Harbor, etc.
- Strong nautical theme or component
- Waterfowl center on Chautauqua Lake

The Park

- A beautiful park
- Great park that's well kept
- Good parking at the park
- Park has outstanding amenities including a ball park, clean restrooms, lighthouse and its waterfront location
- Events at the park including concerts and Ribfest
- During Ribfest the park is full; great asset that has the potential for more
- Park is underutilized
- Park should be a destination but it needs work

The History

- Historic foot of the Chautauqua Lake
- Part of the history of Lucille Ball and the Lake history
- Historical waterfront community

- Steeped in its history of its access and relationship to the waterfront
- Rich history of amusement/waterfront transportation
- Summer cottages now year-round homes reflect history but have become a weakness

The Community

- Unequivocally good people
- Diamond in the rough
- Mayor and Board are great to work with, open to talking about new ideas
- New energy, a resurgence and a new vision that's brought about by this group
- Village is creating a new atmosphere with more cooperation and positive thinking
- Unrealized resource
- Ellicott Shores
- Electric rates

The Perception

- The Village is undefined physically
- There is no real physical center
- The Village is out of the way and unconnected
- Acts as a pass through bedroom community to other nearby centers today
- When you drive into Celoron it doesn't distinguish itself

Discussion Question 2:

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

Money & Implementation

- Funding
- Question of who is going to put money in it and why
- Cost of old amusement property and developing it
- Low socioeconomic community
- Number of local residents who can afford to invest a lot in their house is limited
- Strategies for implementation
- Human capital for implementation
- Getting started/Creating a Plan
- Zoning

Infrastructure

- Redeveloping complete streets – streets for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation and vehicles alike
- Old amusement park property is lacking infrastructure
- Creating shovel ready property – (environmental, infrastructure, ownership, etc.) set the table for potential developers
- Providing certain public amenities that make a community attractive (walkable communities)
- Identify what Celoron needs to make public investments in so as to create that critical mass
- Investing in the community to spur development

Appearance

- Poor physical character of the community
- No main street
- No central focus
- There is no village context here, not high enough density

Market

- Competing against Fairmount Avenue for commercial development opportunities
- Market, what drives potential development
- Marketing/investors
- Market demand
- Area has low demand for housing

Condition of the Lake

- If the Lake is inundated with weeds or has a bad algae bloom it will impact potential development interest

Attracting People to the Community

- Celoron doesn't have a critical mass
- Lack of other destinations – no draw besides the lake, no restaurants or retail
- Seasonality of boating population
- Branding, who is Celoron and how do they set themselves apart
- Getting people to come here
- Identification of the area
- Difficult to draw traffic off 394
- Need to change the perception of the village
- Need to start creating a public image
- Leveraging history to create a new vision that capitalizes on the same resources

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 environmental features in Celoron that add to or enhance the region's existing outdoor destinations and attractions?

Chautauqua Lake and Celoron's Natural Resources

- Physical and visual access to the Lake
 - Lakefront, lakefront, lakefront
 - Water
 - Rich history related to water
 - Linear access to Chautauqua Lake/undeveloped land
- Preserve and promote natural resources
 - Potential for an institute for environmental studies, museum, education facility
- Strong nautical theme

Outdoor Activities, Recreation & Services

- Park/Park Space
- Outdoor active recreation with amenities that cater to these interests such as greenways, rentals, restaurants, etc.
 - Water activities, walkability, birding
- Local recreational activities, including paddling, bicycling, boating, birding
- With people coming for paddling, boating, birding and trail use, there may be the potential to open a diner here in the village

Boating, Paddling & Birding Opportunities

- Celoron is a port, hundreds of boaters here
- A popular paddling area
- The water stays open (ice-free) almost the entire year making for outstanding birding and paddling opportunities year-round
- Potential to link to the Roger Tory Peterson Institute
- Junction between the motor boating & sailing on the lake and paddling Chadakoin River
- Kayak or canoe launch

Trails

- Greenway/riverwalk/boardwalking
- Potential for a nice paved trail all along the lakefront
- In-line skating opportunities
- A destination for people to bring their families to use a path system for walking, strollers, bikes, etc.
- Transportation and recreation linkages around the Lake
- Potential to connect to Lakewood and Jamestown with a pedestrian/bicycle path

Existing Visitor Group

- Summer Wind brings in 20,000 people a year; people need a place to go; we operate seven days a week
- Need places in walking distance to send visitors to, for example boat rentals, Holiday Harbor antique boats, camping, etc.
- Bus traffic, tour groups stopping in Celoron

Housing

- Modestly priced housing with dock access
- Moderate priced housing
- Providing boating access to entice middle class persons to purchase residential properties
- If you have people with means they can turn a little cottage into something nice
- Still a strong second home development demand from Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo markets

Other Opportunities

- Dunham/Main Street
- Road identification signs
- Connection to the Lucille Ball theme
- Potential to raise the hype and get people to believe in redevelopment potential, over time it will build out into the rest of the community

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?

Recreation Destination

- Potential for swimming area in Celoron
- Beach
- Focus on recreation, swimming, bicycling
- If you could get people to come here and walk it sure is more fun than walking in the mall
- Waterfront trail, public docks
- Increase access to the lake with swimming, more fishing (public dock) and public docking
- Add trails along the lake shore and allow biking and roller skating along the shoreline
- Develop paved trail along nicely landscaped lakefront from park to Ellicott Apartments on point of lake to spur other development on northwest bank parcel
- Waterfront outdoor winter skating rink in park
- Waterfront paddle craft rentals: kayaks, canoes, paddleboats
- Availability of gear rentals to support activities like paddling, fishing, biking
- Tennis courts
- Expand public lakefront use onto the old amusement park
- Rail with trail connecting Stoneman Industrial Park (Southern Tier Brewing), Cummins, Lakewood, Celoron and Jamestown with spurs (on-road) connecting the trail with village centers and parks

Environmental Destination

- Potential for an Institute for Aquatic and Environmental Studies?
- Feature environmental aspects of Celoron, with displays showing muskie, the impact of runoff, etc.

Tourism Development

- Support the private sector by providing the infrastructure, including the tourism infrastructure, through the public sector
- Need to go electronic with marketing; advertise your public utilities
- Need to build on the Summer Wind
- Define Image
- Identifying Celoron as something unique in the region could go back to the water activities; the brand is a key
- Increase nautical branding
- Create “Weird Attraction” – Huge slide, zip line – something that people get a “buzz” about

Physical Improvements

- Encourage visual upgrades of boat warehouses and existing commercial facades
- Entrance ways
- Main street revitalization

Development Potentials

- Some shops
- A restaurant
- Celoron would have a small but attractive “Main Street” (across from park) with services and retail/restaurant improved sidewalk/pedestrian access in core of village and connecting to the lake.
- Mixed use: middle-high income condos with 1st floor shops. Must be almost self supporting with capacity for expansion
- High end RV park, we have one Chautauqua campgrounds, a mixture of camp sites and RV, where’s the market and can you tie it in with the nautical theme and the lake