

Town of Durham Public Workshop
August 18, 2005
Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
(SWOT)

Strengths are resources or capabilities that will help the Town fulfill its vision, weaknesses are deficiencies in resources and capabilities that will hinder Durham in fulfilling its vision, opportunities are factors or situations that can affect the town favorably and can help us meet our goals. Threats or challenges are factors or situations that can affect Durham negatively and prevent the town from reaching its goals. The SWOT analysis provides many valuable clues about potential effective strategies, since every successful strategy builds on strengths and takes advantage of opportunities, while it overcomes or minimizes the effects of weaknesses and threats. These elements, both positive and negative, have a powerful impact on community development. The following outlines Durham's identified strengths and weaknesses as expressed by the public at the August 18, 2005 workshop.

Perceived Negative Elements

- Conducting hearings and other important town business off-season when some seasonal residents are not in town.
- There is a trend toward large boarding houses being bought by non-profit organizations and receiving a waiver of taxes. This creates more of a tax burden on other residents and businesses.
- Increased levels of light pollution.
- Junk cars on properties not being addressed.
- Poor property maintenance in some locations (derelict houses).
- Lack of recreational activities for children, especially the very young.
- Lack of services and activities for senior citizens.
- Economic decline of East Durham
- Lack of enforcement of properties on Route 145.
- Lack of water and sewer systems inhibit business development in E. Durham.
- E. Durham is in need of improved aesthetics and cleaning.
- Lack of sidewalks in E. Durham.
- Lack of money to fix the Becker situation.
- Decreasing sense of community and character as businesses are lost in villages and Route 145 has more strip commercial development. We must maintain our villages as centers of our community.
- Traffic and speeding along Route 81, Stone Bridge Road, Route 22.
- Billboards along Route 145 are not pretty.
- Assessments seem to penalize people for improving their properties because taxes rise immediately after improvements are made. People are afraid of fixing things up due to the potential tax increase.

- Lack of a large item/chemical trash pick up (paint cans, washing machines, etc.).
- Lack of garbage pickup at homes provided by town.
- Lack of communication between the local government and residents. There is no central place for sharing of information.
- Dirt road of Allen Teator Road is in poor shape and other dirt roads need better maintenance.
- Lack of zoning to control growth and development.
- Lack of streetscape elements in E. Durham such as streetlamps, sidewalks, flowers, etc. Wants it to look more like Cooperstown.
- Too much salt used on roads in winter is killing street side trees and going into our water.
- Poor to no cell service.
- Ugly signs are used.
- Lack of high-speed internet connections and cable.
- There are limited site distances along Route 23 near Deans Hill Road.
- Lack of enforcement.
- Lack of positive programs and incentives to help encourage people to fix up and tidy up their properties.
- E. Durham should be an Irish village, not just hold a museum of one.
- Concerned that elderly may not be able to stay in homes and in Durham because of taxes.
- Ancestral root of community is changing as more development comes in.
- Durham needs more attention from the County related to economic development.

Perceived Positive Elements

- Town has a fine highway department (except for Allen Teator Road).
- Town Board is hard working and involved.
- We have a good school district.
- Wonderful views of the mountains.
- Gorgeous landscape and views.
- Catskill Creek is a great resource.
- The people of Durham – there is lots of camaraderie.
- Existing farms and open space.
- Lots of stone walls remain (with note that people have to start taking better care of them).
- There is great history to the place.
- Real estate values have gone up.
- It is a safe community and place.
- Durham has efficient police, fire, ambulance and highway departments.
- There are many businesses that do take care of their properties.
- New church in E. Durham is finest in the world.
- Lots of cultural activities, especially the cultural festival and Irish week.
- Intact rural character.
- Wildlife and habitats remain.
- Larger businesses like Zoom Flume bring dollars in.

- Antique shops in Oak Hill have given this hamlet a new life and is a destination for tourists.
- Oak Hill Kitchen/Bob's/Wayside Restaurant are positives.
- Population level as it is now is good.
- Strong ancestral roots.

What Do Residents Want Durham to be in the Future?

Identified Elements of that Vision:

- There are sidewalks with lightposts in E. Durham.
- The community is safe for walking.
- The population has increased somewhat but there is lots of forests and open spaces left.
- There are activities for kids such as the Greene County Youth Fair and volunteers commit to helping so that there is a sense of the community coming together.
- It is a community where neighbors help neighbors.
- We have land banks that produce food so we can keep our farms.
- There are more local job opportunities for youth.
- Durham still celebrates its rural character.
- There is more historic preservation.
- There is a right mix of rural, business, and residences.
- Businesses are thriving.
- Our farms are working and preserved.
- Durham has greenways and access to the creeks.
- The community is vibrant with youth taking advantage of a youth center.
- The feral cat population is controlled.
- Durham is a community that preserves personal freedoms.
- Our Town Board is good and gets things done.
- Town Board meetings have good civic participation.
- Town Board meetings allow real community input and minutes that reflect that input.
- Senior citizens are taken care of and have buses to take them shopping and to other locations.
- Durham has preserved small businesses that make us unique. There are no large franchises and we have kept our culture and character and uniqueness.
- There are no more storage sheds built.
- There is no poverty in Durham.
- Durham takes care of its sick, elderly, and poor.
- There are senior citizen housing opportunities in the villages so the elderly can walk to stores or the post office and contribute to the high levels of activity in the villages.
- We have a medical facility that is closer than Hudson.
- Durham has preserved its open spaces and use incentives to keep land open.
- Durham has preserved its stone arch bridges.
- Durham has many alternate farming operations like Black Walnut Farm.