

Town and Village of Seneca Falls

Youth Visioning Workshop Summary

The Town and Village of Seneca Falls Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee hosted a visioning workshop for about 120 youth in October. It was held at the Mynderse High School where six senior classes participated. Given the time constraints, the visioning workshop concentrated on understanding youths attitudes toward Seneca Falls and what they feel would be desirable for its future. Groups of students worked together to articulate their vision for the future. In addition to the workshop, all students also completed a homework assignment that asked students to identify issues of importance to the community. The overall goal of involving youth was the same as with adults: The development of a shared vision statement is important for the long-term success of Seneca Falls' Comprehensive Plan because the vision statement is necessary to judge future policies, programs and actions. It also acts as a "consistency test" for decisions made at the local level.

Visioning by Students

Students were asked to identify specific characteristics of a "perfect" Seneca Falls in the future. Each student worked alone to identify the specific elements that made up their vision, and then worked together to mesh these ideas together into one statement. This process included: sharing each persons vision elements, organizing similar thoughts together into categories, naming each category, and writing a summary statement that reflects the major direction and emphasis of the topics. Overall, the students were focused in on two main areas they feel need improvement: recreational activities appropriate for teens, and provision of good paying jobs for the future. During the discussion portion of the workshop, many students expressed their concern that there was nothing in Seneca Falls that made it an attractive place for them to want to stay. In terms of recreational activities, a movie theater located in Seneca Falls topped this list. Many expressed boredom and felt the lack of teen oriented activities is what is leading some students into trouble with drugs. Several voiced serious concerns over their perceptions of over-regulation on the part of the Historic District Commission. Overall, there appeared to be a very negative attitude about Seneca Falls from the majority of students who participated.

This process resulted in a series of vision topics and elements identified as important for the future of Seneca Falls by the students as follows:

Library

A library with books/ More books & the library

Retail Needs

Super Wal-Mart center/ a mall/ strip malls/ More shopping downtown/ Closer mall/ Good mall/ Music store/ Book store/ Sporting store/ No empty storefronts or buildings/ No more women made product stores/ More input from teens/ More thrift stores/ Computer store/ A real downtown/ Hotel or resort/ Casino/ International airport

Employment

More industry/ More jobs/ More companies/ Higher paying jobs/ Better jobs/ Less taxes/ Employment/ Successful businesses/ More jobs available/ Canal tours/ Better paying jobs/ More industry/ More jobs for kids

Gas

Cheaper gas

Restaurants

All night diner/ More restaurants/ Less restaurants/ Chain restaurants/ Denny's/ Starbucks/Chuck E Cheese/ Little Caesar's/ Friendly's/ Arby's/ Attractive shops & restaurants/ More fancy restaurants/ More restaurants/ Applebee's/ Papa John's/ Fewer fast food restaurants/ Olive Garden/ Wendy's

Recreation and Activities

Better campgrounds/ Ice rink/ Roller rink/ Youth recreation/ Clubs/ YMCA/ Community activities for youth/Performing arts center/ rock climbing/ Sports center with bowling alley/ More things at the recreation center/ Laser tag facility/ Pool hall/ Arcade/ Town basketball courts/ Concerts/ Roller skating rink/ Movie theater/ Improved family/Bowling alley/ Under 21 club/ Zoo & theme park/ Mall/ Shopping/ Movie theater/ Gymnastics facility/ Boat tours on lake/ Late night activities/ Amusement park/ Water park/ Bigger bands to play concerts/ More recreational activities/ Stadium/ Arcade/ Starbucks/ Fun center for kids/ Roller hockey/ Pool hall/ Movie theater/ Community pool recreation center/More lake activities/ Indoor tennis & volleyball courts/ Speed boat & jet ski rentals/ Community activities/ Sledding resort/ Indoor zoo/ Ice skating rink/ Higher quality swimming pool/ Boxing ring/ Ski resort/ Bowling alley/ New park/ Recreation center for kids/ Roller rink / Break dancing lesson/ Arcade/ Art galleries/ Water park/better beaches/ A fun, entertaining museum that has hands on educational exhibits for the family/Teen Clubs (include: Places for teens to go/ Nightclub/ Teen club/ Karaoke kids bar/ Oxygen bars/ Disco club/ Block party/ Village party)/ More for tourists/ Spa/ Horse ranch/ Paintball field/ Ski hill/ Better ice rink/ Industrial technology club/

Education

Bigger school with pool & more sports/ Better school/ A new school building with funding to provide opportunities/ A library that is open late and has books!/Better schools/ Funding for schools/ Technologically advanced school system/ Active sports programs/ DELL computers in school

Environment

Cleaner lake/ Cleaner surroundings/ Green power (wind farm)/ Clean up the landfill, it smells/Seneca Falls should actually have a falls/ Cleaner streets/ A clean canal/ Create waterfalls

Community Improvement

More community service projects/ Larger, more diverse population/Cheaper housing/More stores/ Hotels/ New schools/ Indoor mall/ Home for troubled youth/

Affordable housing/More flowers, tress, benches and parks/ Better sidewalks and roads/
Better snow removal/ Fix ghettos/ Fix railroad crossings/ More tourists/ Women's rights/
Improving riff raff/ Retake of drivers test after certain age/ No drugs or alcohol/ Ban
smoking/ No school dress code/ Repave roads/ No dump/ Clean yards/ Clean streets/
Clean houses & properties/ Programs curbing amount of garbage in landfill/ Tourism/
Littering fines/ Non-violence/ Drug free town/ More housing/ More money to schools/
Trolley/ Train station/ Less emphasis on women's rights/ Laser tag/ Hershey's factory/
More trees & animals/ Clean water/ No taxes/ Better lake front/ Beautification

Items that Need Removal

Get rid of park cops/ Less cops busting people/ No more women's rights/ Cross out the
historical society/ Women's rights/ Gangsters/ Take ghetto bench out of downtown

Historic

Less historic stuff/ No historical district/ Historical society less strict

Appearance

Less empty buildings/ Modern architecture/ Decorations downtown/ Make town
attractive

Transportation

Mass transit/ Better road conditions/ Lower gas prices/ Metro system/ Regional busing/
Trolley downtown/45mph on 96 thru Waterloo/ 55mph on River Road/Better roads/ Fix
railroad/ Fix railroad tracks/ New sidewalks throughout village/ Flat roads

Sanitation

Better sanitation/ Landfill situation/ No landfill/ No dump

Cars

Race park/ Infinite auto/ Drag strip/ Advanced auto

Better Citizenship

Smiling children/ Nicer neighbors/ More people

Population

Increase population/ Larger tax base

Land claim

No reservations/ No Indian land claim /Leave the Indians alone/ Make Indians pay taxes/
Police more tolerant/No Indians/ Settle Indian land claim - let us keep our land and
houses

Safety

Enforce curfew/ Less alcoholics/ Less potheads/ Enforce traffic regulations/ Safe
Peterman apartments for all families/ Safe bus drivers

Non-biased Community
Community bonding

Bigger Town
City growth/ Bigger town

Vision Statements

Time did not allow for detailed development of vision statements at the youth workshop. However, many student groups did formulate more specific vision sentences. These include the following:

- Well-developed business district to serve the local community.
- Higher paying jobs for those with education will be available
- There will be an abundance of restaurants and shopping opportunities.
- Better canal and lakefront in an attractive town, including well-maintained streets throughout.
- Recreation and entertainment opportunities will include: a YMCA; a roller rink; a movie theater; more town activities for youth and a 21 and under club.
- Schools will offer a swimming pool and more sports; better library.
- No dump
- Low crime rate.
- Culturally rich community with a diverse population.
- Funding for new schools
- Safe on the streets and safe environmentally.
- There would be no worries; everything will be perfect.
- A large company will help improve the economy and jobs for teenagers as well as shopping opportunities.
- Recreational opportunities at the lake will be expanded.
- Less emphasis on our historical aspects and more emphasis on recreational opportunities.
- A variety of housing options to meet the diverse needs of the population.
- Our town and village will be aesthetically pleasing
- Public transportation will be available to help keep it clean.
- There will be a variety of restaurants, a mall, a music store, and a bookstore.
Recreational and cultural opportunities include: an ice-skating rink, an arcade, art galleries, and a water park.
- More flowers and trees, benches and parks.
- Sidewalks and road conditions will be improved upon.
- Seneca Falls will offer a great variety of restaurants, shopping, and entertainment, including a movie theater.
- Seneca Falls will offer more community service projects and recreational activity, including indoor tennis and volleyball courts and rentals for boats and jet skis.
- “We need to change the focus of our town attract more tourists and show people that there is more to Seneca Falls than women’s rights. More jobs and lower taxes are evident in the future. Our streets will be safe and citizens will act in a respectful manner. Our

roadways and properties will be clean and in good condition and there will be no historic district as people should be able to do what they want with their property. Entertainment opportunities will include more town functions, malls, movie theaters, an ice and roller rink and an amusement park.”

-“In 2015, Seneca Falls will be a non-violent, drug free place with more tourists, better jobs, more housing and a better infrastructure. There will be more opportunities for teens and citizens in general, including a movie theater, entertainment stores and a mall; as well as more programs that meet individual interests.”

-Seneca Falls will have clean water and air and clean surroundings without an expanded landfill. Big businesses will be present, bringing in tax revenue and higher paying jobs. - Less poverty and more people will have jobs.

-We will have a mall, a pet store, and even a zoo.

-Minors will be kept off the street after hours.

-Seneca Falls will have clean streets and canals.

-The police more lenient of teen parties if there is no destruction of property involved. Seneca Falls will be bigger.

-Taxes will be lower and there will be more jobs.

-The land claim will no longer be an issue.

-Money will be spent on improving the environment around us to ensure clean water and air quality.

-Seneca Falls will offer a clean environment with no landfill, and will be a safe, nice place to live fifteen years from now.

-Job opportunities are available for all and tourism is encouraged.

-Entertainment offered will help to keep teens safe and out of trouble as well as to provide citizens of Seneca Falls with more restaurants, shopping and recreational opportunities. Mass transit will be available for both residents and tourists.

-“Seneca Falls needs to be more independent. This can be accomplished by recognizing personal and community strengths, goals and dreams. We should look to other successful communities for examples. People should no longer feel ashamed of their ideas and problems and should be encouraged to fill their requests by any means possible. Our community will be aesthetically pleasing. Mass transit and entertainment opportunities will be available.”

-“We would like Seneca Falls to offer more recreational activities so that there is more to do right here where we live. We hope that the town will get bigger so that there is more of a city atmosphere. We would like there to also be some waterfalls in the future. We need higher educational opportunities to enhance citizens’ minds. We need mass transit and access to big cities. We need more opportunities that will craft young peoples interests and head them in the right direction. We should step away from the emphasis on women’s rights and the canal and focus more on bigger business downtown, a big city atmosphere, and mass transit.

Homework assignment – 68 were analyzed and summarized below:

The homework assignment was “**As a resident of Seneca Falls, you should be aware of the current issues facing the village. With this in mind, begin thinking about a comprehensive plan for the community, a road map that will be used to guide the**

community's decisions concerning its future growth and development over the next ten – fifteen years. Write a paragraph in which you identify an issue facing Seneca Falls (land use, agriculture, historic and cultural resources, environmental resources, etc.). In this paragraph develop a vision statement that relates the issue to a comprehensive plan. Then, develop a set of goals intended to help the community fulfill the comprehensive plan.

Issues Identified

- 19 – Loss of business & industry/ Job opportunity
- 18 – Landfill
- 17 – Movie theatre (10)/ Entertainment needed
- 8 – Historical concerns (relating to what is perceived as over-regulation of historic district)
- 3 – Indian land claim
- 2 – Better roadways and signage
- 2 – Large restaurant or coffee house needed
- 2 – Land use
- 2 – Merger of Seneca Falls & Waterloo school districts
- 1 – Affordable housing
- 1 – Safety – drugs & violence

A Youth Perspective: The following is a summary of the students thoughts:

A movie theater would bring in revenue and bring people to Seneca Falls. A movie theater would give teens something to do and help keep them off the streets. It would also provide jobs. Seneca Falls needs some entertainment, like a movie theater or an ice skating rink, to give kids something when there is no school. If there is some place for teens to call their own such as an arcade or some nightlife, they will not be getting into trouble. The Coca Cola plant was suggested as a possible location for entertainment.

Big business is needed to keep the town alive. Gould's Pumps needs to stay open, as Seneca Falls needs this industry. There is concern that there are no job opportunities here. If Goulds were to leave, students feel a lot of jobs would be lost, lowering incomes and damaging Seneca Falls' economy further. Families would leave the area. Increased job opportunities by encouraging big business will help to rejuvenate Seneca Falls. Some suggested that there is a need to advertise Seneca Falls to bring in investors, outside businesses and industry. Some mentioned that a large chain restaurant would help to bring jobs and tourists' dollars. Several suggested turning one side of downtown into a large mall to attract people and bring in more business.

The landfill was mentioned frequently and some thought that its expansion may be affecting the environment and the health of our citizens. Some student discussed the smell of the landfill and expressed concern about air and water being polluted from the landfill.

There were mixed thoughts about the role of history and specifically the Women's Rights Museum. Some felt that there was a need to increase the size of the Women's Rights related activities and facilities and encourage related tourism. They indicated that they felt these are unexploited areas and more needed to be done to show that the peoples of Seneca Falls are interesting culturally and historically. Historic markers to draw in tourism were suggested. On the other hand, others feel that the Historical Society should have less control and influence in town.

Better roadways and signage were felt to be needed to decrease accidents and to help tourists' have an easier time locating destinations, such as Cayuga Lake State Park.

The Indian Land Claim was also on their minds. Some wanted to raise awareness about the Indian land claim and the treatment of the tribe. These students want to establish the Indians as equals. The more prevailing opinion was negative because they felt that the Indians are trying to take land and also do not have to pay taxes. These students want to eliminate unfair competition.

Some students felt that there should not be so much unused land due to environmental constraints and that the town should become more industrial. Others felt that there is less space for housing now and that there should be restrictions in place.

Several students mentioned that a merger of the Seneca Falls & Waterloo school districts would provide more opportunities for the schools and that the two towns should work together for financial gain.

Apartments and houses were felt to be over-priced. Students see people moving out of Seneca Falls and discussed the loss of business and tourism and felt that it relates to the decline of the community.

Several students wrote about how kids are hanging out on the street and there has been an increase in drug use and violence.

Many students offered solutions to the above problems. These solutions include (in their own words):

Goulds Pumps: A solution to the closure of Gould's Pumps is to create more job opportunities elsewhere. The community could fund to keep Gould's up and running. Give the company tax breaks and check over their employee health insurance plans. Be sure that the plant is operating efficiently.

Revitalization: Create a Visitor Center in the old sock factory; provide a café there and offer entertainment to help increase tourism and provide job opportunities. Find investors to help turn one side of downtown into a large mall. Donations and loans should be used also to fund the project. Move existing businesses and allow the mall businesses to have a view of the canal. People would be able to shop in our own town, keeping the investment here. Obtain fairly low prices for building renovations or construction, as this will be a

community service project. Place historic markers by the lake and advertise them to help increase tourism.

Recreation: If there is no money to put in a movie theater or ice skating rink, start fundraising or pursuing donation of a building; connect with volunteers and get a plan approved by the town board. Another option is that the fireman's field could be used on which to construct a theater building. Find a location with plenty of parking and accessibility, preferably an empty building, in which to house a movie theater. The Knitting Mill is one possibility.

Landfill: A solution to the continuation of landfill expansion would be more recycling and lessening the amount of garbage that is allowed to enter the landfill. The landfill brings in money to the community, so it should not be closed. Instead, reduce the amount of trash being dumped by recycling more materials. Also, consider burning trash or reducing the number of places that trash is accepted from. Make a plan to clean up the landfill. Find an alternative site for a new landfill. Limit the amount of garbage allowed in the present landfill, and slowly phase it out. Develop a committee to oversee and regulate landfill expansion. Possibly use the covered compost at the landfill to expand building or living settlements, if it compacts and settles at the same rate. People could use trash compactors so that less space is needed at the landfill.

Land Claim: To deal with the Indian land claim, areas need to be set that are under their control. There also needs to be regulations on what and when they can buy anything. The Indians should follow the same rules and pay the same taxes that we do. Remove reservations and grant them land as citizens.

Canal: The canal side area of the Seneca Museum of Waterways could be made more attractive. Sides depicting canal stories could be placed here. ZuZu's could place tables along the waterfront and provide service outside. Canal boat rides providing historical information would help the economy of our town and others along a canal tour route. It would also be nice to create a new museum, one that does not emphasize women. An expansion of the Women's Rights Historical Park could include: a multi media wax museum, highlighting the history of Seneca Falls; an interactive website exploring the role of women in today's society; and the building of a convention center which could be used to conduct seminars on women's and other civil rights issues.

Housing: To deal with affordable housing, an undeveloped area could be used to build an affordable housing project on. A plan proposal would be submitted to the board; building plans would be completed; fundraising could be done; a contractor would be hired; and the community could help build the housing project.

Drugs: To deal with the increase of drug use and violence among Seneca Falls' younger population, a curfew should be established and enforced by the police.