

WESTFIELD/RIPLEY LAKEFRONT OPPORTUNITY PLAN

Summary of 2.28 Public Meeting

A. Top Threats/Weaknesses and Strengths/Opportunities

The following is a summary of Threats/Weaknesses and Strengths/Opportunities that were identified by workshop participants in a group discussion:

Top Threats & Weaknesses

- Lack of Public Water (and Sewer) Limits Economic Development
- Economy, Lack of Good Jobs and Opportunities
- Safety Issues on Route 5 (Speeding, Heavy Truck Traffic, Bicycle and Pedestrian “unfriendly”).
- Lack of “Critical Mass,” especially at Barcelona Harbor (restaurants, activities, atmosphere)
- Barcelona Harbor does not provide amenities that boaters are looking for, including a navigable harbor.
- Public Access to the Waterfront and Beaches is Limited.
- Lack of amenities and attractions to serve tourists and visitors, such as overnight accommodations.

Top Strengths & Opportunities

- The area’s agricultural and open space character, a defining feature of Route 5.
- The Lake, Barcelona Harbor and Barcelona Hamlet
- Wineries, Fruit Farms and Agri-Tourism
- Recreational opportunities based around the area’s natural environment: Fishing, Gorges, Trails, Bicycling, Swimming, Boating.
- The beauty of the area’s natural environment, including the gorges.
- Opportunities presented by location along the Thruway and Thruway exit.
- The overall high “Quality of Life”

B. Major Issues and Opportunities Identified in Breakout Groups

Workshop participants divided into breakout groups to discuss issues and opportunities associated with specific waterfront areas or resources in the Towns of Ripley and Westfield. The results of these breakout group discussions have been organized

under broad themes that emerged in the course of these discussions:

Route 5 Corridor

- Maintain agricultural, natural and open space character, while encouraging development in appropriate areas, such as Barcelona Harbor.
- Development and growth should occur in nodes, with significant open space and less developed areas in between. Uniform “sprawl” along the corridor should be avoided.
- Significant agricultural activity directly abutting the lakeshore is a defining characteristic of the area and is nationally “unique”.
- Safety issues along Route 5 should be addressed: truck traffic, speeding, bicycle and pedestrian “unfriendly”.
- Public water is needed to facilitate growth and economic development; however, such development should be in focused “activity nodes” and should occur in a manner that maintains and enhances community value and character.
- Threats to water quality are posed by providing public water without public sewer.
- Signage along Route 5 should be attractive, consistent and reinforce the character and identity of the area.

- Utilities (cable, overhead wires, etc.) should be provided in an unobtrusive manner.

Barcelona and Barcelona Harbor

- Dredging the harbor and keeping it silt-free and accessible to boaters is critical.
- Providing boater amenities, such as fueling stations, boating equipment and services, as well as overnight lodging, would draw more boaters to the harbor and the community.
- The lighthouse is a defining icon for the harbor and the community.
- Barcelona Harbor should be a focal point for more activity, including shopping, musical events, festivals and recreation, such as swimming. Ideas include a farmers market and a covered pavilion for concerts.
- Patchwork of public/private ownership in the harbor area is confusing to visitors. Where feasible and appropriate, more public access should be provided.
- Better connections could be made between Barcelona and Westfield, along Portage – perhaps in the form of a trail or path. As well as the Ripley lakeshore and the Hamlet of Ripley.

- Proximity to the Thruway exit should be taken advantage of in an appropriate manner.
- Improvements to public water and sewer facilities would support existing and future businesses.
- Barcelona Harbor should be a destination and place with a distinct identity.
- Public beach access and public swimming should be enhanced/provided.
- Development in Barcelona Harbor should enhance and support the character and quality of life in Barcelona Hamlet.
- It is important to look to other successful waterfront/harbor communities for examples and inspiration.
- Changes to the rubble wall and additional breakwalls to the east would help with erosion and turbulence issues.
- More parking is needed.

Gorges (Chautauqua Creek and 20-Mile Creek)

- Dramatic, unique features that should be preserved and celebrated.

- Make connections between these resources and the lakeshore.
- Recreational opportunities should be supported and encouraged. Perhaps similar to gorges and trails in and around Ithaca. Opportunities for whitewater rafting should also be explored.
- The creeks offer world-class fishing. Improvements and services to support sports fishermen/women should be provided. For example, improved/additional parking could be provided at the following locations:
 - Route 5 near Moose Beach
 - Old Bridge at North Gale
 - Old Pump Station on Hawley
 - Water Street – Old Roric Bridge
 - South Gale Bridge
- Better, more visible access to the gorges should be provided.
- Significant publicly owned land surrounds upland areas of the gorge and may present opportunities.
- Create an “environmental” center, like “Audubon has in Jamestown”.

- Gorges should be kept pristine as a source of drinking water and as an asset for recreational activities, such as fishing and swimming.

Beaches (Ripley Beach, Ottaway Park, Others?)

- Ripley and Westfield lack public beaches and access to the waterfront.
- Beaches are currently hidden from view and underutilized.
- Better access to the beachfront in the form of stairs should be provided.
- Both parks/beaches should be more low-key than Barcelona Harbor. Ottaway Park – more active park. Ripley Beach – stress on preserving natural features and low-key experience.
- Beaches should be manned by lifeguards to provide for swimming opportunities.
- A nature center could be provided at Ripley Beach as an added attraction.
- Beach houses for changing and restrooms should be provided.
- Plans for beaches should take into account long-term maintenance costs.

- Both beach areas, Ripley in particular, offer access to views of lake and dramatic cliffs. The cliffs are a unique, dramatic resource that is underappreciated and even unknown to both residents and visitors. Access to the lake and the views should be provided and celebrated.
- Hours of operation for Ottaway Park are insufficient. Park is closed most of the time and functions more as an extension of the KOA campground, than a community park. Improvements to facilities at Ottaway Park should be made, such as the children's playground.
- Ripley Beach, in particular, presents opportunities for nature trails and wildlife viewing.
- Both Ripley Beach and Ottaway Park present opportunities for winter recreational activities, such as cross-country skiing, though proximity to the lake can compromise snow quality.

Marketing, Tourism and Economic Development

- Eco-Tourism is a big opportunity.
- Promote year-round activities.
- Economic opportunities need to be provided for the young people of Westfield and Ripley, so that they can stay.

- Provide infrastructure and amenities for visitors (overnight accommodation, fish cleaning stations for fishermen, boating facilities for boaters, bathhouses for beach-goers, etc.)
- Coordinate with other marketing/tourism efforts, such as the Seaway Trail and the Concord Grape Belt Heritage Area.
- Encourage signage with unifying themes that create cohesion and identity for the waterfront.
- Provide information and wayfinding resources for visitors and residents alike.
- Attractive gateways and orientation signage should be provided at town gateways, including Thruway exit.
- The towns should take advantage of large amount of traffic that passes through on Thruway.
- Start by capitalizing on the waterfront's (lakeshore and gorge) unique assets and qualities, the things that make it special and different.
- Cooperate and coordinate with tourist attractions in the area (Chautauqua, Mayville, etc.)