

TOWN OF CAROGA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011

Prepared by: Town Planning Board

I. VISION STATEMENT:

A Comprehensive Plan is a community's vision of how it wants to look in the future. A community's Vision is often expressed in a Vision Statement. The Town of Caroga's Vision Statement reads as follows:

In 2025, the Town of Caroga will continue to be a small, rural town where everyone knows everyone. Residents and visitors will have available various year round outdoor recreational opportunities, year round hotel accommodations, diverse restaurants and a strong commercial center featuring unique shops and boutiques, arts and crafts stores and related retail and commercial businesses. This commercial center will be known as Town Center. Town Center will be located near and around the former Sherman's Amusement Park. Town Center will be a walkable, integrated open-air, multiuse development where residents and visitors will be able to gather, socialize, eat, live, drink, recreate, shop, visit, exercise and enjoy its attractive streetscapes and landscapes. It will be anchored by retail, dining, and leisure uses, as well as by recreational and residential uses and be the most diverse area of the Town.

The Town will be recognized for its natural beauty, rich history and heritage and year round outdoor recreational opportunities which will have restored the Town of Caroga's attractiveness as a place to live and raise a family. The variety of housing types available, including housing in Town Center, will be an attraction. The Town's strong and aggressive water quality program will have created excellent water quality in all of the Town's lakes. The Town's tax base will have stabilized by the development in Town Center, new housing developments and the increase in sales tax revenues coming from a strong tourism-based economy.

The implementation of the concept of a Town Center will re-establish the magnet that the Town needs to restore its ability to attract residents and tourists of equal importance will be the need to maintain, develop and market the Town's recreational assets and natural resources.

II. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY:

1. Town Center:

The key component of the Town of Caroga's Comprehensive Plan is the development of a new Town Center. Town Center would be an area comprising approximately 166+/- acres of land. It would include properties physically bordering both sides of NYS Route 29A/10 from May Avenue to CR112.

As stated in the Town's Vision Statement,

The Town of Caroga will, in 2025, have a strong commercial center featuring unique shops and boutiques, auto and craft stores and related retail and commercial businesses. This commercial center will be known as Town Center. Town Center will be located near and around the former Sherman's Amusement Park. Town Center will be a walkable, integrated open-air, multiuse development where residents and visitors will be able to gather, socialize, eat, live, drink, recreate,

shop, visit, exercise and enjoy its streetscapes and landscapes. It will be anchored by retail, dining, and leisure uses, as well as by recreational and residential uses and be the most diverse area of the Town.

Like Sherman's Amusement Park used to be, Town Center would become the primary attraction point for the Town of Caroga. Its design, location and diversity of activities would be a major tourist attraction. Residents, visitors and tourists of all ages and walks of life would be able to gather, meet, socialize, shop, eat or recreate in Town Center.

Some of the specific features that would be included with Town Center shall include:

1. Town Hall including a Visitor/Tourist Information Center and Public Restrooms.
2. Public Park/Multi-Purpose Recreational Center.
3. A 2.0+/- mile Foot/Bike Path that traverses from the shore of West Caroga Lake around the proposed Multi-Purpose Recreational Center.
4. Convenience store/gas station.
5. Retail stores.
6. Restaurants.
7. Hotel/Motel/Bed and Breakfast.
8. Housing: Single-family homes and apartments.
9. Public boat launch on West Caroga Lake.
10. Public Parking.
11. A link to the snowmobile trail referred to as the C-8 Corridor Trail maintained by the Nick Stoner Trail Club.
12. Kayaking/Canoeing/Paddle Boating on Mead Creek.
13. Primary Care Clinic.
14. Public Sewer System.

A key element of Town Center would be to make road improvements:

- 1) Abandon a section of E. Shore Road along the former Sherman's property and have traffic directed onto Bath Avenue. Bath Avenue would be reconfigured into a "T" intersection with NYS Route 29A/10.
- 2) Widen NYS Route 29A/10 through Town Center to include sidewalks, bike lanes, landscaping, trees and street lights.

As stated above, the Comprehensive Plan calls for Town Hall to be located in Town Center. Constructing a new Town Hall in this location would serve a catalyst for the development of Town Center.

Design standards should be developed and incorporated into the Town's Zoning Ordinance to address issues such as building setbacks, landscaping, ingress and egress, site lighting, off-street parking, signage and building materials. These standards would be critical to achieving the vision for what Town Center would look like.

Town Center would be the primary location in the Town where residents, visitors and tourists would stop to shop, eat and look for information about recreational sites and tourist attractions in the Town. It would also serve as the center of government with Town Hall's location in Town Center. Town Center would include, both at the Visitor/Tourist Center and in the public parking lots, kiosks and interpretive signage to inform visitors/tourists of and give them direction to the various recreational, shopping and tourist attractions in the Town. NYSDOT should also be encouraged to install interpretative signage on NYS Routes 10/29A advising motorists of where recreational and tourist sites are located.

While Town Center would be the primary focus of the Town, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that other “Centers” of importance would exist in the Town. These “centers” include:

Center	Distance to Town Center
East Caroga Lake	0.5 miles south
State Campsite	1.1 miles south
Royal Mountain	4.6 miles south
Nick Stoner Golf Course	0.9 miles north
Canada/Green Lakes	2.6 miles north
West Lake	4.0 miles north
Pine Lake	4.6 miles north
Stoner Lakes	7.3 miles north

Due to its importance as a tourist destination and its close proximity to Town Center, the State campsite on NYS Route 29A should be linked to Town Center. This linkage would be accomplished by:

1. Designating a bike lane on NYS Route 29A from the State campsite to Town Center.
2. Installation of informational and directional signage at both the State Campsite and Town Center.

A key component to creating Town Center would be for the Town of Caroga to construct and operate a public sewer collection and treatment system. The Town of Caroga should pursue creating such a system for the area in and around Town Center. A public sewer system would help encourage and support the type of development envisioned for Town Center.

2. Recreational/Natural Resources:

The numerous lakes in the Town of Caroga comprise its most important and attractive recreation/natural resource. It is critically important for the Town of Caroga to protect and preserve its lakes and the water quality in them so that they can continue to represent a recreational asset that attracts tourists and visitors. The biggest threat to the Town’s lakes is water quality. The high density of shoreline development coupled with aging septic systems represents a threat to water quality in the Town’s lakes. The Town of Caroga must recognize this threat and take proactive actions to ensure that a high water quality in its lakes is maintained. To do so, the Comprehensive Plan recommends several initiatives for the Town of Caroga to implement. One is an Annual Water Quality Testing Program. This Program would annually monitor water quality in the Town’s lakes to identify trends as well as potential problems that may be developed.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan recommends that the Town prepare Watershed Management Plans for its key lakes. These Plans would identify the watersheds around each lake, the types of development that currently exists and the source and quantity of nutrient loadings in each lake. These Plans would help the Town better understand the capacities of its lakes to handle nutrient loadings coming from shoreline development. These Plans would set the stage for the Town to determine what additional development and nutrient loadings each of these lakes can safely handle. By knowing what the capacity of each lake is and current loadings entering each lake from existing development, the Town would be able to determine how to best control and regulate future development around each of its lakes.

Data from the US Census and local knowledge confirms that seasonal shoreline dwelling units are being converted to year round use. While such conversions create certain benefits, they also create an increased threat to water quality by potentially increasing the nutrient loadings into the lakes. The Town of Caroga should review and approve all proposed

conversions of seasonal housing units to year round housing units to ensure that the existing septic systems are sized adequately and operate effectively in order to ensure that there is no increased impact on water quality in the Town's lakes.

Given the importance of recreation to the Town of Caroga's economy, the Comprehensive Plan recommends the establishment of a Recreational Advisory Committee. A Recreational Advisory Committee would meet on a regular basis and focus solely on promoting, protecting and preserving the Town of Caroga's recreational/natural resources. The existence of such a committee would create a better focus on the issue of recreation/natural resources in the Town of Caroga.

In order to maximize its attractiveness for residents and tourists, the Town of Caroga should pursue the development of a multi-purpose recreational area in Town Center. This multi-purpose recreational area would include numerous recreation facilities such as: a park, soccer field, baseball field, tennis court, basketball court, skateboard park, ice skating rink. Such a facility, located within Town Center, would represent a major attraction for both Town residents and visitors.

Royal Mountain is an important recreational asset to the Town of Caroga. To support this asset, the Comprehensive Plan proposes creating a Residential/Commercial area around Royal Mountain. This Plan envisions providing opportunities for restaurants, retail, repair or related businesses to be located near and adjacent to Royal Mountain to support its existence.

The Land Use Plan identifies areas around Canada/Green, Pine and Stoner Lakes for local commercial development to support the residential developments around those lakes. The commercial areas are not intended to compete with the commercial development proposed for Town Center but more to provide areas for small, commercial/retail opportunities conveniently located around these lakes.

3. Economy:

The Town of Caroga has a tourism-based economy. There are no major industries in the Town. The largest employers are the Wheelerville School District and the Town of Caroga. The Town's population is declining and its tax base is stagnant. As the costs of running the Town increases, the economy must grow in order to keep local tax rates stable.

The Comprehensive Plan envisions having the Town of Caroga still having a 4-season, tourism based economy. However, in order for a tourism-based economy to grow, the Town needs to more actively promote its recreational/natural resources. This will require an annual investment into publishing promotional brochures, advertising and other forms of marketing with the Fulton County Chamber of Commerce and other marketing organizations.

To assist in improving on the Town's tourism-based economy, the Comprehensive Plan envisions having the area in and around Town Center to feature unique shops and boutiques, arts and crafts stores and related retail and commercial businesses. The development of a concentration of these types of retail businesses would certainly serve as an attraction for the Town of Caroga. To accomplish this, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the creation of new commercial spaces in Town Center for these shops and boutiques to locate in. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan also recommends that existing residential properties in and around the East and West Caroga Lakes, as well as other areas, be allowed to have home occupations, which would include these types of boutique shops and stores. In time, a large concentration of these types of retail stores would create a major tourist attraction and help expand the Town's tourism-based economy.

Another important component to the Town of Caroga's economy is agriculture. Agriculture includes the production of crops, raising animals, including horses and specialty products. There currently exists in the Town small agricultural operations like the raising of horses and growing of blueberries. The Comprehensive Plan visions providing property owners with opportunities for these and other types of agricultural uses to continue and grow. To that end, the Comprehensive Plan includes having agricultural uses located:

- Along County Road 137/Beech Ridge Road from Mussey Road to NYS Route 29A.
- Along NYS Route 10 from Royal Mountain to South Shore Road.
- Along County Road 111.

4. Housing:

There currently exists a lack of diversity in the Town's existing housing stock. The predominant form of housing is a single-family dwelling units. Few, if any, apartment buildings, townhouses, condominiums and other types of housing options found in other communities currently exist in the Town of Caroga. In order for the Town of Caroga to be an attractive place to live for persons of all ages, the Town needs to diversify its housing stock. To do so, the Town should promote areas within Town Center for these types of alternate housing types by having these sites appropriately zoned and by having a public sewer system available.

III. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS:

History of the Town of Caroga:

- A. Develop safe, self-guided trails of the Wheelerville Tannery Site and provide brochure describing its history.**
- B. Expand the Caroga Museum to include early settlers and industry.**
- C. Promote the preservation and use of all areas of historical significance including Nick Stoner Inn, Sherman's, and the Kane Mountain Fire Tower.**
- D. Promote the Town's architectural heritage, identify historical buildings and significant "little great camps," and use that heritage to establish a visual image of the Town that can be encouraged in all its buildings.**
- E. Encourage volunteers to present workshops on our natural history including geology, forest, wildlife, flowering plants, etc.**

Town Government:

- A. The Town of Caroga should retain the services of a Professional Engineer to prepare a plan to construct and operate a public sewer collection and treatment system for area in and around Town Center. Upon completion of this plan, the Town Board should seek funding to implement the Plan.**
- B. The Town of Caroga should create a full-time Code Enforcement Officer position to better enforce the NYS Uniform Fire Prevention Code and the Town of Caroga's land use laws and regulations that are important to implementing the Vision contained in this Comprehensive Plan.**
- C. The Town of Caroga should provide an increased law enforcement presence in the Town to make the Town of Caroga a safer place to live and do business.**

Economy:

- A. The Town Board should amend the Town Zoning Ordinance to allow home occupations in residential properties around East and West Caroga, Canada and Pine Lakes to allow for boutique and small retail shops to be created.**
- B. The Town should create a Town Center to help create a strong tourism based economy.**
- C. The Town of Caroga should promote and strengthen its tourism-based economy by providing the following:**
 - Town of Caroga Public Beach**
 - Public Parking Area(s)**
 - Public Restroom(s)**
 - Overnight Accommodations/Lodging**
 - Cross Country Ski Trails**

Recreational/Natural Resources:

A. Water Quality:

- 1) The Town Board should develop and implement an Annual Water Quality Testing Program. The program should include testing the water quality in the lakes the Town develops Watershed Management Plans for. Parameters to be tested for should, at a minimum, include: temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, turbidity, total suspended solids and fecal coliform bacteria. The annual test results would allow the Town to monitor and track water quality in these lakes and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Watershed Management Plans.**
- 2) The Town Board should hire a professional engineer to work with the Town to prepare and adopt Watershed Management Plans for each of the following lakes:**
 - a. E. Caroga Lake**
 - b. W. Caroga Lake**
 - c. Canada Lake**
 - d. Green Lake**
 - e. Pine Lake**
 - f. E. Stoner Lake**
 - g. W. Stoner Lake**
- 3) Each Watershed Management Plan should, at a minimum, include and address the following issues:**
 - a. Define watershed.**
 - b. Identify existing developing in each watershed.**
 - c. Identify sources of nutrient, sedimentation and pollution.**
 - d. Calculate current amounts of nutrients, pollutants, sedimentation flowing into each lake.**
 - e. Calculate maximum amounts each lake should be receiving.**
 - f. Develop plan for managing future flows into each lake.**
 - g. Other.**
- 4) The Town Board should put into place a mechanism that provides the Town Code Enforcement Officer with the authority to review and approve all proposed conversions of seasonal dwelling units into permanent units.**

B. Recreation:

1) Recreational Advisory Committee:

- a) **The Town Board should establish a Recreational Advisory Committee consisting of Town Board members and the public.**
- b) **The Recreation Committee should meet on a regular basis to review and discuss recreational issues, needs and opportunities and provide recommendations and policy guidance to the Town Board regarding recreational resources in the Town of Caroga.**

2) Develop the following new recreational facilities:

- a) **Town of Caroga Visitor Center located in Town Center.**
- b) **Town of Caroga Multi-Purpose Recreational Area located in Town Center. The Multi-Purpose Recreational Area should include:**

- **Park**
- **Soccer Field**
- **Baseball Field**
- **Tennis Court**
- **Basketball Court**
- **Skateboard Park**
- **Ice Skating Rink**
- **Picnic Area**

- c) **Town of Caroga Boat Launch on West Caroga Lake in Town Center.**
- d) **Town of Caroga Public Beach.**
- e) **Kayaking/Canoeing/Paddle Boating on Mead Creek.**

3) Promote the Town's existing recreational/natural resources to attract permanent residents and tourists by:

- a) **Annually publish a brochure describing the Town's Recreational/Natural Resources including the many opportunities for fishing in its lakes.**
- b) **Annually publish a Special Events brochure identifying the number and type of special events that will be held in the Town during a year.**
- c) **Continue to promote and support the Glenn H. Harris Park and Pavilion.**
- d) **Work with the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Unit Management Planning (UMP) to develop snowmobile trails that avoid roads and open water.**
- e) **Work with DEC's UMP to create new hiking and cross country ski trails.**
- f) **Work with DEC's UMP to designate biking trails.**
- g) **Work with DEC to promote the stocking of fish in the Town's lakes.**
- h) **The Town of Caroga should designate certain Town roads as bike trails.**
- i) **The Town of Caroga should undertake a project to dredge, deepen and maintain a deep enough channel between East and West Caroga Lakes to provide safe boat access between both Lakes.**

Housing:

- A. **The Town should encourage the development of housing in the Town Center to support the growth and development of the Town Center.**
- B. **The Town should promote and encourage the development of diverse housing to meet the diverse needs of existing residents and to encourage others to move to the Town.**