

## Hamlets and Town Center – Goals and Recommendations

### Comprehensive Plan Update

Hamlets – Background and Description: First settled in the 1790's, the Lansing area has a long agricultural history, and for a significant period leading into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, could claim that it was a temperance area. Churches proliferated. At one time there were over 20 churches in the Lansing area. Most hamlets had their own schools, and many had their own post offices until 1902. Early hamlets in the town included Lake Ridge, South Lansing, Lansingville (also known as Teetertown), North Lansing (also known as Beardsley's Corners), East Lansing, Ludlowville, Myers, and Libertyville.

There were many businesses, including several mills (flax mill, saw mill, grist mill, cider mill), hotels, race tracks, show shops, blacksmith shops, general stores, a cooper's shop, brickyard, creamery, and the salt mine. At one time, the hamlet of Ludlowville was one of the more important commercial centers in Tompkins County. A ferry ran between the west side of Cayuga lake from Taughannock and docked at Lansing Station on the east side of the Lake. Ferries also docked at Portland Point. The Rogue's Harbor Inn was built in 1830 and was an important stage coach stop on the route between Ithaca and Auburn. A rail line also ran between Ithaca and Auburn and stopped in what was then known as Libertyville and Asbury. Another rail line ran along the Lake stopping where the current Cargill mine is now located, at Lansing Station and at Lake Ridge.

In today's Lansing, most of the businesses are scattered. There are three public schools serving the community, and about a half dozen churches. The areas described as the emerging Town Center (see section below) contains many of the small businesses and community facilities that serve the public. Many community events are held at Myers Park. With the exception of Ludlowville, most of the hamlets have disappeared and their names now more or less identify geographic areas of the town, but not centers of development.

The importance of agriculture and the salt mine remain today, but most of the businesses that supported the hamlets of the past have disappeared, and residents now shop in Ithaca and the malls in the Village of Lansing. There, however, is still a diverse and broadly distributed range of local businesses within Lansing. These are described in the section of the Plan dealing with the Town's economy and businesses.

In addition to the area of the emerging Town Center in what used to be known as Libertyville, the two hamlets that remain in the town as identifiable centers of development include Myers and Ludlowville. The strength of these communities seems to be the natural features and

historical landmarks that exist today. Ludlowville has a town park and a waterfall with a swimming hole. It has a unique historical character and an active community association. Based on an informal survey of its residents, the consensus at this time seems to be to maintain its identity as a small creative community and preserve its reputation as a safe neighborhood. Myers was an International Salt Company town. Starting as an employee neighborhood with several stores, a post office, and train station, the area now includes mostly houses and the Town's Myers Park and marina. The area also is adjacent to and has access to the Salmon Creek natural area. The elementary school, middle school and high school are nearby on Route 34B.

**Hamlets – Goal: Preserve, maintain and enhance the small neighborhood, historical and natural character of the existing hamlets in the town.**

**Hamlets – Recommendations:**

- Conduct an inventory/survey of historical structures in the hamlets. Preserve and restore the significant historical resources.
- Develop safe pathways between the hamlets, the schools and the emerging Town Center. Add sidewalks in appropriate areas of the hamlets.
- Improve access to public transportation in the hamlets.
- Preserve and improve Myers Park in ways that enhance the park experience while retaining its natural beauty and minimizing impacts on the Myers neighborhood.

Town Center - Background and Description: The Town of Lansing 2006 Comprehensive Plan highlighted the proposed Town Center from several perspectives. On the one hand, the Plan focused on the need for clearly defined commercial focal points located in the Town Center (and other specific areas) to concentrate commercial development and to minimize strip development to help grow the Town's local tax base. In addition, previous Town of Lansing plans and the 2006 Comprehensive Plan recommended the creation of a physical and visual community center that would be important to the future identity and character of the Lansing community.

In 2010, the Town commissioned HOLT Architects and Trowbridge and Wolf Landscape Architects to conduct a study of the proposed Town Center. This included an extensive public participation process to better define how the Town Center should develop and to identify public goals and concerns relating to the proposal. This study resulted in the "Lansing Town Center Planning Guidelines" report (May 2010), which includes recommendations and guidelines for how the Town Center could grow and become a focal point for the Town in the years ahead.

The area currently defined as the Town Center is focused in the south central part of the Town around Auburn Road (Route 34/34B) between the intersections of East Shore Drive on the west and North Triphammer Road on the east. It is defined on the Town's Zoning Map as the B1 Commercial Mixed Use Zone. Looking back at the history of settlement of Lansing, this area was originally known as Libertyville, sometimes also referred to as "The Harbor". It was a small hamlet in the central part of town and included the large hotel built in 1830, now known as "Rogue's Harbor". It was a major stagecoach stop between Ithaca and Auburn and also had a blacksmith shop, grocery store and post office.

In recent years, the area defined as the Town Center has evolved with a mix of commercial, residential and community uses, including the new Town Hall and recreational fields, a library (in the renovated former Town Hall), a Community Center building (in the former Grange building), the historic Rogue's Harbor restaurant and inn on the west, the new Lansing Market grocery store and a new gas mart on the east, a senior housing development to the south, and several small-scale businesses and restaurants throughout the area.

Benefits of Concentrating Growth around the Town Center: Many benefits can be associated with focusing new development in and around the evolving Town Center. The concept is similar to, and has been supported by, the Tompkins County Planning Department, as outlined in its report, "Building Vibrant Communities in Tompkins County – a Development Focus Area Strategy", October 2012. As outlined in that report, mixed-use, compact development within a Development Focus Area will help to:

- "Meet the demand for more housing in a denser setting within walking distance of employment, services and activities;
- Provide more affordable housing options, as the cost of development is reduced as densities increase and where public water and sewer are available;
- Promote the use of bicycles and walking as viable forms of transportation;
- Reduce the pressure to develop prime agricultural land, important natural features and forest lands;
- Reduce the need to drive everywhere, helping to decrease our energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Make possible the development of some alternative energy systems, such as combined heat and power systems;
- Facilitate the creation and maintenance of an efficient network for pedestrians;

- Improve transportation options for access to employment, schools, shopping, health facilities, and community services;
- Strengthen and enhance the City of Ithaca and the villages and hamlets as vital service and community centers; and
- Optimize the value of community investment in water and wastewater systems.”

Development of the Town Center becomes even more important in light of the desire to preserve the small-scale, neighborhood character of the two remaining hamlets described above.

**Town Center – Goal: Encourage further development and enhancement of a Town Center in the South Lansing area that will be important to the future identity and character of the Lansing community, will create new jobs, increase the tax base, and support investment in the Town of Lansing, and will become a concentrated, mixed-use, pedestrian and transit-oriented community that includes places to live, work, shop, play, and obtain community services. The Town Center should include a mix of housing types, densities, and price ranges, small-scale neighborhood oriented commercial retail and service uses, and community and institutional uses and amenities, including open space and recreational resources.**

**Town Center - Recommendations:**

- Prepare an integrated development plan for the Town Center, including the 150 acre Town-owned land, which proposes an optimal mix of uses, possible locations of uses and desired relationships between uses.
- Prepare a manual of design guidelines that will be applied to all development in the Town Center to ensure consistent and high quality design of buildings and site. This should include guidelines for building design, pedestrian-friendly orientation including sidewalks and trails, parking at rear or sides of buildings, landscaping, street trees, site furniture, parks, plazas, open space, lighting, etc.
- Consider adoption of a Planned Development Area (PDA) or overlay zone as a zoning mechanism to specify development options and parameters for the Town Center. The design guidelines referenced above can be incorporated into such a zone.
- Implement the “main street” concept on Route 34 (Auburn Road) and the entrance road to the Town land, as described in the HOLT Architects/Trowbridge & Wolf 2010 Lansing Town Center – Planning Guidelines report. This should include a sidewalk, street trees, lighting, safe crosswalks on Auburn Road, and other pedestrian amenities.

- The Town sent out a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2013 to solicit ideas and realistic proposals for development of the Town land in the Town Center. Several proposals have been submitted to the Town either in response to the RFP or separately. These proposals should be reviewed and evaluated, and appropriate proposals should be selected by the Town. The Town should work with selected developers through developer agreements to make clear what the Town expects of developers when and if the Town agrees to sell land to developers.
- Preserve the old railroad bed. Incorporate the railroad bed into a core pedestrian-bicycle path in conjunction with any development plans for the Town Center.
- Provide central sewage disposal facilities that are necessary to allow and sustain a Town Center with the desired mix and densities of uses.
- Consider the possibility of a community center, perhaps focusing on the arts and/or performing arts, in conjunction with a “town green” for public gathering, as recommended in the HOLT/Trowbridge & Wolf Town Center report.
- The Town Center should be a sustainable development that includes green building techniques with energy efficient buildings and site features, green infrastructure, such as green roofs, porous pavement and water gardens, and could include a district energy system to serve the heating and cooling needs of all buildings on the site.