

TOWN OF AUSTERLITZ COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REPORT SUPPLEMENTS: PART 4 Public Input **March 2024**

PART 4 – PUBLIC INPUT

Multiple opportunities for public engagement were offered as part of the planning process for this Plan. These included a series of interviews, four focus groups, a town-wide survey and two public hearings, one by the Town Board.

Town-Wide Survey Results

1. Roughly 40% of households (341 responses out of 850 mailed to households from the Columbia County Real Property mailing list) took the survey. This is not exact as there could have been more than one response from a household, so this is an approximation.
2. Almost all (97%) of responders are homeowners, 56% have been here for > 20 years, 83% are full time residents and a majority of responders were > 50 years old, and about 20% have a home-based business.
3. There was wide agreement that the major strengths of the town pertain to our rural character, natural beauty, low density, gravel roads, clean air, historical, friendly people, and a quiet place.
4. Most common weaknesses noted are a lack of housing affordability, short-term rentals, a need for better town communication, lack of diversity, high taxes, a lack of a community space, few services. Some are noted as weaknesses that were also noted as strengths like taxes and road maintenance. Other weaknesses included planning board/zoning, housing affordability, internet, lack of small stores/ general store/restaurant – need to drive to Chatham or Great Barrington, road conditions/maintenance, services for seniors, and traffic/speeding.
5. A lot of opportunities noted were to continue or correct strengths and weaknesses. Acting on climate change was also often noted.
6. Common challenges and threats noted include an aging population, short-term rentals, climate change, increased traffic, over development, lack of affordable housing, high taxes, a lack of diversity and a lack of community.
7. A large majority (81%) feels the vision statement is still valid. There were many comments offered for words or phrases which could improve it.
8. Vast majority felt goals remain valid with support for each at approximately 90% (some slightly below). More emphasis on climate change, provision of high speed internet, less growth to protect rural character, more government transparency, more senior services, and incentivize younger generations to stay were comments made related to the vision statement. Three were supported a little less and one was supported by only a little more than half:
 - a. To better meet the needs of an aging population, including such serve needs as transportation, housing, and improved accessibility. Support 82%
 - b. To welcome affordable housing for all town residents, families, and workforce. Support 75%
 - c. To provide for better enforcement of existing Town Laws. Support 58%
9. Participants felt it was extremely important to important to focus on environmental considerations. 3.3% said it was not important at all.
10. Types of businesses desired in town were by far oriented to grocery, country store, small restaurant, as well as home-based businesses and small, independent businesses.
11. Types of businesses not desired in town were by far, anything perceived to be large, such as big box retail, and chain/franchise/big box stores, auto repair stores, fast food, franchise, gas

station, hotels/lodging, large commercial businesses, noisemaking/late open places, large parking lots,

12. There were mixed feelings about whether there should be a designated district for commercial growth. 44% said no, 36% said yes, and 21% had no opinion.
13. There were mixed feelings about whether the Town does enough to support agriculture, but most people had no opinion: 16% said yes, 19% said no, and 66% said no opinion. Zoning policies and tax improvements to protect farmland, and a farmers' market were mentioned. A lot of comments were from people who don't know what the Town does for agriculture.
14. 40% said there were essential services lacking for senior citizens, while 10% said no, and 50% said no opinion. Specific services that were lacking include a town newsletter, transportation, an exercise location, a community center, and representation at Office for Aging.
15. There were mixed opinions about whether the town has a need for designated senior living. 30% said no, 34% said yes, and 35% said no opinion.
16. There were mixed opinions about whether the Town should be proactive to facilitate development of senior housing. 42% said yes, 30% said no, and 28% said no opinion.
17. Clearly, most participants agree that there is not enough housing that is affordable: 69% said that there is not enough, 6% said there is, and 27% said no opinion.
18. Concerns related to affordable housing in Austerlitz included both recognition of the need for affordable housing and how it would help the town and help maintain young families here, along with concerns that it would be negative by bringing in crime, that it would bring in too much density, built in ways not consistent with the Town, promote too much development. The general concern was that it needs to be compatible with the character of Austerlitz.
19. 52% said the Town should be proactive to facilitate development of affordable housing, while 25% said the Town should not, and 22% had no opinion. Locations included along 203 or 22, near hamlets, or in Fox campground.
20. When asked about the different types of affordable housing that could be in Town, people favored smaller options such as two family homes, small apartment complexes and a development with smaller homes. Townhouse development and especially large apartment complexes having 10+ units were not favored (83%).
21. 70% of participants think that short-term rentals need to be regulated, while 24% said they should not, and 6% had no opinion.
22. When asked to rate emergency services, participants felt that fire services were excellent (69%) while ambulance and police were still good to excellent, but not as strong as fire (46% said excellent ambulance and 41% said excellent police. Both were generally highly rated though with less than 3% saying any of the emergency services were poor.
23. Adequacy of town owned and managed gravel roads was rated by more in the middle with 37% giving it a 2 (scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being excellent) and 23% giving it a 3. Maintenance of town-owned and managed paved roads was felt to be better with 28% saying they were excellent (1), 45% giving it a 2, and 19% giving it a 3. 10% said gravel roads were poor, and 3% said paved roads were poor.
24. 75% of participants felt the Town should have a long-term road plan. 2% said no, and 24% said they had no opinion.
25. Communication between the town board and the residents got variable rating, but more people gave it a 3 on the 1-5 scale (34%), with 16% saying it was excellent, and 10% saying it was poor.

26. Almost all participants felt that it was extremely important to important (1 and 2 on the scale) for the Town to consider rural character in future policy and development.
27. When asked what three words describe the rural character of the Town, the most prevalent terms used include: Beautiful, Bucolic, Charming, Forested/Forests/Wooded, Historic/historical, Terms related to low density, low population, no sprawl, not busy, uncrowded, etc., pastoral, peaceful, quaint, quiet, rural, scenic and unspoiled.
28. The Town's Harry Beuchert Park was rated as excellent by 20%, 35% as a 2, and 32% as a 3, with 2% saying it was poor. Improvements suggested included a pool, benches, more active recreational opportunities like tennis, pickle ball, basketball court, better lighting, bathroom, and updated equipment.
29. The Town's park in the Hamlet of Austerlitz was also rated in the middle by more people with 9% saying it is excellent, 24% giving it a 2 and 39% giving it a 3 on the 1-5 scale, and 11% saying it is poor. Most of the comments related to this park were that people didn't know it was there or where it was.
30. Participants felt it was extremely important to important to focus on youth in the Town, with 50% saying it is extremely important, and 28% giving it a 2, and 18% giving it a 3. 2% said it was not important. Comments provided for this question were varied with quite a few people saying the Town should ask the parents about activities. A very common response was to continue the summer program and continue funding that program, while others offered ideas such as a gym, active clubs, activities at the Spencertown Academy, improve parks, and offer more activities.
31. There were mixed feelings about whether it is important or not for the Town government to sponsor community events. 36% said it was extremely important, and 36% gave it a 2 on the 1-5 scale, and 22% gave it a 3. 4% said it was not important.
32. Other Comments. A wide variety of other comments were offered (92 comments).

Notes from Focus Groups and Interviews

Notes Taken by Nan Stolzenburg, FAICP CEP

Included From November and December 2022 Efforts:

1. Planning Board (Focus Group)
2. Seniors (interview)
3. Historical Resources (interview)
4. Businesses and Farming (Focus Group)
5. Non-profit organizations in Town (Focus Group)
6. Youth (Interview)
7. Fire and Emergency Services (Notes from Meeting)

Planning Board

Types of Work they Get

1. Majority of the applications are minor subdivisions (less than 5 new lots created) that are 10-15 acres.
2. No major subdivisions recently
3. 60% are families looking to create parcels for other family members.
4. They get a fair number of boundary line adjustments.

Issues

1. Uses are narrowly drawn and don't always fit what is proposed.
2. Glamping not addressed in zoning.
3. Never sure they are stretching the uses.
4. Some Special Use Permit (SUP) uses don't fit: mining for example – worth looking at SUP to see if they are valid.
5. Wide berth for clearcutting – 4 acres, and that might be too big.
6. Ridgeline protection is non-existent. It is a vague statement, and nobody knows what to do with it. Needs more prescriptive standards. Felt subdivision law prescribes suburbia.
7. Some gentler version of that having more rural standards is needed.
8. Short term rentals – there are lots here. We shouldn't make it difficult to rent occasionally but mitigate impacts. Building inspector is part time and can't do all this inspection work of STR.
9. Accessory Dwelling Units – what do we allow. There is a regional effort to look at affordable housing going on.
10. Overlays – wants to advocate for them for affordable and senior housing.
11. Rethink lot sizes – 2 acres outside the hamlet are too small for rural character to be maintained. Density is an issue.
12. Hamlet districts may be too big in size.
13. Can we have pockets of undeveloped land in between denser land?
14. Climate consequences – should be considered such as related to streams, wetlands and riparian areas.
15. Need info on SEQR and mapping.
16. Road and driveway laws – are inconsistent. Roads are required to be paved. Adding width is very arbitrary and creates too wide roads and curb cuts. Not happy with width and paving requirements.
17. Shared maintenance agreements needed for shared driveways.
18. More traffic in area – lots of second homeowners,
19. Too many Short term rentals and it is starting to feel like a vacation town, and it is changing the community. Too many transients here.

Process

1. Zoning and subdivision processes are good. Attorney comes to PB meetings. Planning Board did new forms and does good training.

Needs

1. Look into addressing special event venues in zoning.
2. Look into whether they limit square footage of commercial buildings.
3. Talked about commercial growth and design standards. Expand area near highway garage for a commercial district. Ask in survey about design standards.
4. Maps – they need to understand natural resource maps and reading those maps, along with how to use those maps and how to interpret things. Both digital and large scale printed maps are needed.
5. History of a parcel is hard to get at and the PB needs more on this topic.
6. Use GIS and move the Town into the modern age.
7. There is a challenge to get/keep a part time Planning Board Clerk

Seniors – interview

1. There are two programs running that are geared to seniors throughout the county. First, Meals on Wheels, offered by the Office for the Aging. When I first was involved, there were about 10 recipients; that has declined to four in the last year or so; all are senior citizens. (others moved or passed away.) The program is largely underutilized, but we have not figured out how to get more people involved. I know some view it as a "handout", which they don't want. Others have dietary needs that the program does not accommodate (e.g., celiac disease, diabetes). There is no income limit, so recipients can have means.
2. When COVID hit, we did enlist the help of more drivers, so we have a good group of people willing to deliver, now we just need people who want the service.
3. A few years back, the woman then serving on the Office for the Aging advisory committee for the town worked to get a meal delivered to the church (downtown Spencertown) once a month. The point was to create a focus for get-togethers and sociability among recipients. It fizzled out after about a year. Unsure why, I wasn't involved then.
4. In the meantime, Recovery Kitchen was founded to help people during COVID with food insecurity issues. At first it was only in Hudson, but I've read that meals are now delivered elsewhere, too. I am not aware whether anyone in Austerlitz participates in that program. I believe it is free of charge. Unsure what the overlap is with Meals on Wheels.
5. Also, when COVID hit, I had recommended that the Town work to identify where our seniors were living (maybe even map them, as another Town does), so that we might drive them for vaccines or to get them groceries or medicine, for example. To my knowledge, no progress was made. I vaguely recall the Town issuing a memo/email to the effect that people should keep an eye out for their neighbors and help in any way they could. Unsure how that worked or not.
6. There is an organization called Neighbors of Northern Columbia County, which is a not for profit that provides services similar to those offered by the Office of the Aging (minus meals). They take people to medical appointments or help with minor household repairs. Other than know they exist, I am not aware how many Town residents are aware of, or take advantage of, their services.
7. Another difficulty in reaching the senior community is that many are not online. Internet service in town has been bad in some areas, although that should improve with the new broadband contract just entered into. The town has only a handful (a few hundred) residents signed up to

receive their e-blasts. There is no town newspaper. Getting the word out on any topic is a challenge.

8. As you know from the demographic work you've done, our town's population is aging. Figuring out how best to serve the needs of this population is a challenge. The town may have some role, but unlikely can address all problems of this group.
9. St. Peter's Church has for decades been a hub for community activity, but as the church-going population declines it is not the magnet it once was. They are considering instituting monthly get-togethers for people of all ages to be sociable - coffee hours, games, crafts, etc. Given the Church's location, it would be a nice place for community outreach. We'll see how that plays out.
10. I would be curious to learn whether the County has done analysis of the COVID-era issues and whether some towns fared better than others. When I briefly served on the Advisory Committee for the Office of the Aging, it was clear that some communities have advanced in their thinking about senior needs. Some "aging at home" programs might be useful for us. Caring for households, most of which are multi-story, is an issue for many seniors. To the extent that many senior homeowners are widows, it may be that they are not as familiar with making minor repairs themselves, or whom to call to get help. Costs/expenses are also an issue.
11. Given the geography of our town, many homes are far-flung. No other homes are within reasonable walking distance. Lovely views, but residents can face isolation. The lack of any "local" restaurant to get a coffee limits sociability somewhat. The diner is open only 5 days a week and has very limited seating.)
12. Finally, the lack of senior-friendly housing is great. Almost no apartments are available. Almost no homes are on a single floor. Don't see that changing too soon.

Historical Resources – Interview

1. Structures have been preserved because people have wanted them to. The historic preservation ordinance was done when historic preservation districts were formed although it is voluntary only. The previous Comprehensive Plan recommended formation of a Historic District Commission which was never activated upon. Doesn't know if it is worth activating and if so, would mean the initiation of the commission. A mandatory law is controversial and not needed in his opinion.
2. Very few of the houses have been lost. 88% of historic homes from 1880s are still here.
3. The historical character is important to attract people here.
4. The buildings here give feeling you can transport back to 19th century – roads and houses are the same. Public buildings are the same – feeling of an old New England place. Very quiet. It perpetuates itself and that is very appealing.
5. The Town historian is paid. They support the building and have a budget for the museum. The Town Board leaves the museum to Tom but there is an informal advisory committee.
6. Building has been used as art show for St. Peters, but not much. They have special events but a trickle of visitors to the museum. It is on the Town website (<https://www.austerlitzny.com/>) and noticed in area attractions. There could be a Facebook presence and that could be an area of growth for the museum.
7. Book – they raised \$20K to finance book.

8. The Town Historian recommended the following:
 - a. There are 3 old cemeteries, 2 abandoned and he would like to see Town fix and maintain. Mapping graves is important.
 - b. Walking tour with a brochure for Spencertown and Austerlitz.
 - c. Digitizing Old Chatham Courier (not done after 1966)
 - d. Working on inventory of historic records, example school reports from 1814 to 1900, and similar for grange and St. Peters. He wants to make them more accessible.

Businesses and Farming - Focus Group

Farming

1. Limited in Town- Town is not a good area for farming. Was a good grazing area for grass based operations, but now mostly forested. No dairy, a few grass based beef, some vegetables and field crops. Soils are not great.
2. Find a way to make sure farming can stay – we don't want it too restrictive so that people can't start or expand farm. No real challenges that they know of now, but don't want to see too many regulations on farms.
3. Perhaps an ag overlay to preserve open lands?
4. Farmers can stay due to increased land values that make it easier to borrow money.
5. Doyle – is a farm with an easement.
6. Vraylys – a farm stand and there are a few other farm stands but are seasonal and low key.
7. Eggs – occasionally and some pop ups.
8. Land values are so high but feel there is an opportunity: there is a great deal of wealth in the community and farm to table is highly valued. An example is Kinderhook Farm – shows how farmers are coming into area.
9. Can we ID areas of Town good for farming? Let's keep those.

Other businesses

1. Potter – wants to support artisanal producers. There is a good market in Chatham. No barriers known to do this.
2. Wants to attract new artisans via tax incentives, craft guild(s), and use Town Hall for meetings.
3. Look to see if there are any restrictions on home businesses but address larger home based businesses with signage and parking rules.
4. Wants to encourage sustainable economic development, artisanal businesses.
5. Landscape on Dugway...has lots of plants outside house.
6. Others include excavation, lawn care, gardening/landscaping, overhead door, painting, contractors, Spencertown Inn (Lodging), pottery, glass blower, woodworking, small engine repair, real estate, snow removal, upholstery, and other home service occupations.
7. There is some pushback on larger businesses. They are afraid larger businesses will pop up in all places. Maybe need a business district. People will feel better if it is controlled or restricted. Feels most people would prevent or want to severely restrict large businesses.
8. There is a fear for a gas station/convenience store and feels that would interfere with ability to get general store back in operation.
9. Check zoning to see how it addresses where businesses go and how.

- a. What are steps for someone to start a business here?
 - b. Does every small business have to get a permit?
 - c. Can we regulate home movie business>
 - d. Zoning leaves a lot of discretion to the Planning Board....maybe zoning needs more guidance and to be more proscriptive.
10. How do we get right businesses in the right places?
 11. Use overlay districts to shape direction of development on forested areas.
 12. Require buffers around farms and direct new houses to edges of fields.
 13. No franchise businesses.
 14. Regulate short term rentals because we don't want Town to be a vacation town. There are lots here but how do we regulate those?
 15. Affordable housing is a huge issue.
 16. Is there any way for a landowner to restrict use of land?

Non-Profit Organizations in Town - Focus Group

Austerlitz Historical Society

Spencertown Academy

Friends of St. Peters

Millay School

1. Millay Society (Steepletop) – noted that it is having financial difficulties, and they are working with the State on an easement for the property. Steepletop has multiple buildings where Edna St. Vincent Millay lived.
2. The Millay Colony, which is a separate organization, is still active.
3. Austerlitz Historical Society (AHS)– they have 10 buildings they maintain and many programs.
4. Past few years has changed how people participate. It is getting harder to get people to serve on committees. They have 300 members which is a large base of members/friends.
5. They do programs on local town history and others that have regional appeal.
6. AHS owns its buildings and have Robert Heron Trust.
7. Has put on Blueberry Festiva, where 1,000s of people attend. They still do holiday and other events (such as blacksmith shop)
8. Spencertown Academy – from 1740. Was a school until 1972 and now the area is in the Chatham CSD. It was in real disrepair and was deeded to the town when it joined CSD. Towns people formed the Spencertown Academy Society to save and use the building. Is now an arts center. Originally, the Town gave them a 10 year lease, but the SAS had to do everything. In order to get grants, they have had to have long term control of building and now have a 99 year lease. They have completely restored it via private funding.
9. They have robust programming in the arts including gallery shows, music performances, garden tour, garden market, lectures, cocktail party, festival of books.
10. They have 1 part time paid staff and use outside contractors, a strong Board of Directors with lots of attention and dedication. They do lots of grants/ fundraising and hire grant writers.
11. The area is very supportive in terms of coordination between Hudson Valley, Berkshires, and Capital Region, but it was not always like this.

Issues

1. Parking lot at Academy is Spencertown Park. Town would plow snow and take care of lighting. Maintenance of this by the town is very important. Continued availability of parking from Town is important.
2. The Academy has events where people walk to the green. Traffic is high speed and dangerous for pedestrians. There needs to be a sidewalk on the street from park driveway and Gables to Town Hall to Elm Street. Also, Route 203 to Dugway is a walking area that needs attention. No lighting in the green is bad, especially since there are lots of activities there. Pedestrian challenges were a primary point made.
3. Rt 22 in Austerlitz is not pedestrian friendly. And needs to have lower speed limits. There have been lots of accidents on that stretch of the road – very dangerous and this is of great concern to the SAS. They want to see sidewalks and speed limits lowered through hamlets.
4. Other challenges are that no young people seem involved to be the next generation of stewards. Both boards are trying to expand to younger people, but it is really hard to recruit new people.
5. They have goal of being family friendly and to build young families. Have thought about a welcome wagon.
6. Both the Spencertown Academy and the Austerlitz Historical Society are reaching out to the Berkshires. But the state line is a barrier in terms of it being ‘different’ and people don’t know what the resources are here. The area is a growing area for arts and culture and there are a lot of things being promoted.
7. New Shaker Museum in Chatham will change Chatham a lot. It will also impact Austerlitz. The Hudson to Massachusetts is ‘happening’ and things will grow.
8. Route 203 is a big corridor where people exit the Taconic and drive through town – it is a big thoroughfare.

Comments on Hamlets

1. Noted that there was some competition between Austerlitz and Spencertown. The Society has made effort to include both but doesn’t always feel the Town does this.
2. Route 203/22 looks terrible. There is no focus there. Would like to see Town pay more attention to Austerlitz Hamlet. There is not enough funding being spent there. Some effort is being made for Town Park there, but not enough. Needs to have more work to bring it together and it needs more beautification, especially with landscaping. Need to instill pride more.
3. There is a chunk of undeveloped land between the hamlets, and it would be sad if it were developed. The open space there should be preserved. It would disrupt the character of the Town if that area were built on.
4. Need a restaurant and store as there is no place for people to go out to eat around here.
5. Thought a broader “Austerlitz” branding with website and links to organizations in town would be helpful.

Youth Programs - Interview

About the Program

1. About 35 kids in program (there used to be 100), but 50 would be good. It is a summer program from 9-3 that includes activities at the Town Park with games, then lunch, bus to Fox Hill and back. It is a 6 week program in July.
2. Raising the price of the summer program may make it unaffordable to some. The Program Direction is trying to get child sponsorships so everyone who wants to can attend. Keeping the program going has been more of a struggle the past few years.

Issues

1. Costs include the lifeguard, lifeguard manager and 2 counselors. An issue is that the costs for lifeguard training are very high (\$500 for County required training). Feels funding is an issue.
2. Would like more people to see the program in action to build support.
3. There used to be a committee, but it was not easy to sustain. One idea could be to restart the committee structure again.
4. The website needs updating, and they primarily get marketed via word of mouth.
5. More communication among groups in Town would help the program and involve more youth. Maybe work more with Academy, Church, Fire Department, and others in the community to get more support and more people involved.
6. They may benefit from grants, but this requires grant writing and research.

Fire and Emergency Services – Meeting Notes

1. For ambulance, the Town contracts with Chatham Rescue. They are county-wide with paid staff. Mutual aid is available.
2. There have been a few younger volunteers, but in general the volunteers are aging and that is a problem. Volunteers have to be mostly within the district.
Statewide/County/Local concerns with recruitment & retention of young volunteer firefighters. NYS training is a barrier to be an interior firefighter. The lack of younger volunteers is tied to lack of affordable housing in the area.
3. The District does not feel it is at the point needing to hire people yet.
4. Austerlitz Fire District – doesn't have funding for their retirement fund.
5. Training in Columbia County is very good.
6. Explore ways the Town can support fire companies more.
7. Consider ways the Town could give highway employees a bonus to take fire training as they are around during the day.
8. Ensuring the Fire Chief/Fire District has fire protection input in the planning approval process for developments re; Dry hydrant and apparatus access/turnaround locations, etc.
9. During the planning/permit process, the town encourages owners/builders planning to build homes or other buildings with very long driveways to have fire suppression systems (sprinklers).
10. Ensuring the Fire Chief/Fire District has input on new or changing design, construction and technology trends that may effect fire suppression efforts (ex; currently Solar Farms - fire suppression knowledge & training has not advanced with the technology - countywide & statewide).

11. Fire Department input on solar fields is needed.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing Austerlitz

From the above efforts, a full listing of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats was compiled. A summary of this is in Part I. Follows is information from the Survey, Interviews, Focus Groups, Climate Smart Action Plan, and Kick Off Meeting with Town Board on 5/3/22.

Strengths Identified in the Town	Weaknesses Identified in the Town
Beauty/natural beauty/Attractive	Lack of affordability/affordable houses/lack of senior housing
People/friendly/neighbors	Airbnb, short-term rentals
Quiet and peaceful	Town Communication
Rural, rural character, small town feel, historic character	Dirt roads/road conditions/potholes/lack of road maintenance (2:1 over good roads)
Good roads in general	Few services
Low density of housing/not too many people	High taxes
History, historical society, historic character, preservation of historic resources	Lack of internet and high speed broadband
Sense of community/community spirit	Lack of store/food/country store/restaurant
Good location and proximity to places and events	Speeding
Open spaces	Lack of community space/gathering space
Safe	Lack of diversity
Spencertown Academy and other community organizations	Lack of community cohesion/ competition between hamlets
Clean air and climate	Loss of volunteers for emergency services
Cultural activities available	Fragmentation of forests
Low taxes	Loss of Agriculture
Upgrades to Town infrastructure (park, town hall, historic center, fire company buildings, new bridges, etc.)	Aging community, lack of outreach and services for seniors
Climate Smart efforts	Lack of public transportation
Recreational opportunities (bike paths and trails)	Zoning upgrades needed to match vision and goals of Town and to address new uses such as short term rentals, solar, glamping, special events, and address commercial growth and commercial design standards
Artisanal producers	High land values
Existing youth program	Lack of sidewalks and safe pedestrian access in Spencertown hamlet, and along Route 203 to Dugway
Quality environment/environmental resources/biodiversity/important forest areas and natural areas/areas that are climate resilient	Lack of lighting in green
	Loss of aesthetic character along Route 203/22/more attention needed in Austerlitz hamlet
	Parks not well recognized
	Lack of necessary funding for summer youth program/costs for running program/needs to improve marketing of program

Town of Austerlitz Comprehensive Plan – Draft March 18 2024

	Widespread, low density residential development throughout town
Opportunities Identified	Threats Facing Town
More affordable housing	An aging population
Better roads/better gravel roads/better road maintenance/keep up with needed capital improvements	Airbnb, short-term rentals
More communication and outreach	Climate change
Store/restaurant	Lack of housing that is affordable
High speed internet	Creeping commercialization
Inform/educate about property taxes, specifically what is within town's control, how much of owner's property taxes are for the town, how much town property taxes funds town operations	Development/overdevelopment/increased population/sprawl/large or chain business development
More or better information/notices by town of community or recreational events	Increased traffic
Action on climate change	High taxes
Formal Long Term Road Plans	Growth of urban population moving in
More activities for senior citizens and others	Lack of diversity
Support for Climate Committee	Lack of sense of community
Communication and improvement of parks, including improving awareness of Austerlitz Park	Solar farms
Help aging population with needed services	
Improve town owned land in Austerlitz hamlet for park and make needed upgrades to Spencertown Park	
Attract new artisans	
Update zoning and land use regulations to better address rural character and environmental protection	
Continued town maintenance of now plowing and lighting for Spencertown Academy	
Sidewalks in Spencertown hamlet	
Lower speed limits in hamlets	
Cultivate young people and young families in volunteering, engagement, and in organizations	
Have a welcome wagon	
Upgrade town parks	
Develop an Austerlitz brand	
Maintain open spaces between the two hamlets	
Expand organizations in town involved in summer youth program	
Grant writing to support town needs	
New ways Town can support fire companies more (incentives)	
Involve fire district in planning approval process to ensure adequate emergency access	