

Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) (DRAFT) Public Participation Plan (PPP)

July 2025

This project seeks funding, in part, from a New York State Department of State Office of Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure Environmental Protection Fund Smart Growth Community Planning Program Grant (<https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/07/revised-25-opdsg-11-rfa.pdf>).

In keeping with best practice standards, Caroga's comprehensive planning aims to "include a strong public participation process to develop public consensus on a vision for the future through community visioning, public meetings and workshops, focus groups, [collaborative design] charrettes," and so on.

Phase 1: Preliminary Research & Engagement (2024-2025)

Phase 1 planning focuses on establishing the foundational background and structure necessary for a successful outcome. Essentially, this process builds both basic information and public participation.

- On the one hand, basic information includes identifying, creating, collecting, summarizing, and presenting the data needed for an effective collaborative planning and design process.
- In addition, the public participation component aims to identify and engage stakeholders and community members in order to achieve a feasible and widely supported outcome.

In the *Caroga Process*, robust public outreach is at the heart of effective planning. In the summer of 2024, the Caroga Town Board created a Comprehensive Plan Committee and appointed a representative group of local volunteers. In late 2024 and throughout 2025, the Committee has been working together to build basic information and to engage broad public participation, beginning with:

- monthly open meetings (plus minutes and documents posted to the Committee's website) and
- public pre-visioning (with a community survey, focused interviews, and written summaries).

Phase 1 planning started by building collaborative capacities within the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

- Each Committee member has roles and responsibilities to engage and advance the public process.
- The Committee's Chair and Vice-Chair schedule and facilitate meetings and a survey process.
- The Committee Chair is lead liaison to communicate with county planners and elected officials.
- The Town Board Liaison to the Committee provides additional collaborative input in the process.
- The Committee Vice-Chair is the primary webmaster and survey master for the planning process.
- The Committee Secretary drafts documents (minutes, grant, survey, invitation, announcements).
- Each Committee member contributes to group discussions and reviews written drafts of information.

The Phase 1 public engagement process includes multiple specific efforts, approaches, and steps.

- Public emails are always welcome (bdeluca@caroga.town, ComprehensivePlan@TownOfCaroga.com).
- Monthly meetings are announced and open to the public, and written minutes are posted online.
- Information is shared on Town of Caroga & Committee websites and a townwide email newsletter.
- All information is at <https://Caroga.Town> and <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com>.
- A *Community Survey* included invitations delivered by mail to property owners or in person to others.
- A summary report will be posted for results from the more than 500 *Community Survey* responses.

THE CAROGA PROCESS

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Notably, Comprehensive Plan Committee members are committed to leading an engaging, inclusive, and collaborative public planning process that considers the input, needs, and character of the community.

- Committee members have experience engaging decision makers (e.g., town, regional, business, and community stakeholders) as well as local residents, including adapting for hard-to-reach groups (e.g., veterans, seniors, families, minorities, and people with limited incomes or mobility barriers).
- For example, specific attention and adaptation ensured wide access to the survey and invitation (e.g., approachable questions about strengths, weaknesses, and priorities; options to use *SurveyMonkey* or complete a paper survey; survey invitations distributed via US Mail, businesses, or personal delivery).
- Committee members have fielded questions and discussions across community groups and venues. Ongoing efforts, strategic approaches, and specific steps seek to reach the most representative people possible and to sustain such public engagement in order to clarify and address community needs.

Key stakeholders in the *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Planning Process* ("Caroga Process") include:

- the Town of Caroga as project sponsor (e.g., Comprehensive Plan Committee, Town Board, Planning Board, Highway Superintendent, Municipal Department Heads, etc.);
- regional partners (e.g., NYS Department of State, Regional Public Officials, Fulton County Planning, FC Center for Regional Growth, Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council, etc.);
- economic partners (e.g., locally-owned business owners, local land developers, investors, donors);
- community organization partners (e.g., 5 Lake Associations, Caroga Arts, Wheelerville School, Snowmobile Club, Golf Clubs, Mountain Bike Clubs, Fish & Game Clubs, Senior Club, Youth Program, Churches, Museum & Historical Association); and
- residents, workers, & visitors (e.g., land owners and other residents, workforce members, visitors, including outreach efforts to adapt for barriers of the aforementioned hard-to-reach groups).

The participation of some key stakeholders is shown in 2025 support letters for the CFA grant proposal (see https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/caroga_2025sgcp_final.pdf). Additional contacts were also made beyond those in the 40 support letters provided, with some local residents and business people voicing support and opting simply to complete the *Community Survey*. The process of getting support letters: identified core stakeholders, distributed information, referenced the CPC website document repository, encouraged Community Survey participation, summarized preliminary progress, and established verified contact lists for ongoing participation, communication, input, and collaboration.

In addition, in the summer of 2025, initial contacts were made with local planners to review the basic proposal, preliminary budget, and scope of work. This included a productive meeting with a regional MWBE planning group dedicated to sustainable, multidisciplinary, collaborative, and engaging solutions. They have a record of delivering outstanding Smart Growth planning results for other local municipalities.

Based on 2025 meetings, input, and SGCP grant efforts, Phase 1 planning is identifying guiding themes.

- **Caroga's enduring Adirondack wild character, irreplaceable outdoor recreation, and central infrastructure revitalization are essential themes for the town's vibrant community experience, natural environment, built environment, and economic opportunities.**

Phase 1 deliverables include: the CFA grant proposal & consultant Request For Proposal (RFP) and **DRAFTS** of Public Participation Plan (PPP), Survey Report, Profile & Inventories, and Vision & Priorities.

Phase 2: Collaborative Meetings, Strategy Workshops, & Plan Delivery (2026-2027)

In Phase 2, volunteers will work with professional planners, engineers, stakeholders, and the public.

Collaborative Committee Meetings (January—April 2026)

If the 2025 SGCP grant is awarded, Caroga aims for an efficiently executed contract agreement, based on a clear RFP. Initial work will be fueled by the preliminary Phase 1 planning and setup completed in 2025.

- In early 2026, monthly *Comprehensive Committee Meetings* will continue (as they did in Phase 1).
- In early 2026, professional consultations will focus on the Committee's Phase 1 document **DRAFTS**.
- Deliverables include revising Committee preliminary draft *Public Participation Plan, Community Survey & Stakeholder Interview Report, Community Profile & Inventories, and Vision & Priorities*.

Grounded in the task to *Review Local & Regional Planning Efforts*, the team will clarify the process of revising, extending, and finalizing specified tasks and deliverables, including public participation efforts that are timed during summer months when the Caroga population swells to its highest numbers.

Public Strategy Workshops (May—September 2026)

Ideally, the team will be setup to promote and deliver a series of robust *Public Strategy Workshops* in mid-2026. These accessible *Public Strategy Workshops* will aim to: (a) collaborate with stakeholders, (b) inform the public about planning process findings, (c) discuss the integration of Smart Growth principles into Town planning and decision-making processes, (d) identify Smart Growth solutions to current issues and future growth, and (e) solicit input from collaborators, stakeholders, and community members.

As noted above, Phase 1 planning provided,

Caroga's enduring Adirondack wild character, irreplaceable outdoor recreation, and central infrastructure revitalization are essential themes for the town's vibrant community experience, natural environment, built environment, and economic opportunities.

This summary offers a basic outline for delivering a series of widely-promoted *Strategy Workshops*:

- Workshop 1: Introduction & Caroga Experience
- Workshop 2: Our Natural Environment
- Workshop 3: Our Built Environment
- Workshop 4: Our Economy
- Workshop 5: Vision, Priorities, Strategies & Implementation

Draft Plan (September 2026—March 2027)

Inspired and informed by these summer *Public Strategy Workshops*, the team could tour sites, create images, and redevelop the core 4-chapter middle section of the *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan*, grounded in Smart Growth principles. **This task delivers initial chapters of the *Draft Comprehensive Plan* in late 2026 and invites input by the Committee, Town Board, & Planning Board.**

In addition, a distinctive component of the proposed project invests in the forward-looking work task:
Strategies for Hamlet Infrastructure, Outdoor Recreation, & Economic Development.

This could be the final section of the redeveloped *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan*, that aims to:

- develop strategic actions and integrate cost estimates to deliver major priority infrastructure projects, in collaboration with current engineering consultants;
- Develop outdoor recreation strategies, in collaboration with the Comprehensive Plan Committee; and
- Summarize economic development strategies, including targeted sectors, local/regional workforce characteristics, seasonal recreation issues, macroeconomic trends, and quality of life factors.

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This forward-focused component informs locally-tailored Smart Growth development goals by prioritizing impactful action strategies to advance infrastructure investments and outdoor recreation assets aimed to achieve year-round economic growth while at the same time also maintaining Caroga's unique natural environmental integrity and sustaining the community's essential character and quality of life.

- Ideally, preliminary customized Strategic Plans could setup additional longer-term grant projects, such as a *Downtown Revitalization Initiative*, *Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan*, and *Economic Development Strategic Plan* in the Town of Caroga on the Mohawk Valley's northern frontier.

Current project deliverables include preliminary *Strategic Plans for Infrastructure Revitalization, Outdoor Recreation, and Economic Development* to serve as the penultimate chapter of the Plan.

Appropriate *SEQRA* documents will also be prepared, as needed, including a possible *Environmental Impact Statement* for a *Comprehensive Plan* Type 1 action.

The core deliverable here is the complete redeveloped draft *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan*.

Official Reviews & Plan Delivery (April—August 2027)

With a complete Draft Comprehensive Plan delivered in March 2027, the final components of the Phase 2 *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Planning Process* include coordinated participation with key stakeholders and the public at large. Specifically, work tasks include:

- *Caroga Town Board Review* per NYS TWN § 272-a (April 2027)
- SEQRA (possible Type 1 EIS) per APA Act 9 CRR-NY 586 & *Public Hearing* (April—May 2027)
- *Adirondack Park Agency Review* per APA Act for ALLUP 9 CRR-NY 582.5 (May—June 2027)
- *Fulton County Planning Board Review* per NYS GLM § 239-m (May—June 2027)
- *Final Comprehensive Plan Submission* with revisions based on comments (July 2027)
- *Public Hearing & Town Board Official Resolution of Adoption* per NYS TWN § 272-a (August 2027)

Summary of Public Participation Plan

In short, the Comprehensive Plan Committee, appointed by the Caroga Town Board, will be the primary group guiding the Town of Caroga Comprehensive Planning Process. If grant funding is awarded, a professional planning consultant will also actively collaborate with the Committee and engage the public. Plus, current engineering planners will be included to help address project planning questions, specify priority infrastructure projects, and give cost estimates for delivery.

This *Public Participation Plan* calls for the following community outreach initiatives:

- Monthly open meetings with documents posted and email contacts on the Committee's website.
- One online Community Survey (with a paper option and mailed postcard Survey Invitations).
- Key stakeholder contacts, interviews, and presentations to explore and detail major planning themes.
- Community focus groups to get input on the proposed structure, themes, vision, and priorities.
- Five Public Strategy Workshops focused on locally-tailored Smart Growth components and principles.
- Two Public Hearings to solicit community comments on the draft redeveloped Comprehensive Plan.
- The final redeveloped Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan adoption is targeted for August 2027.

Throughout the planning process, efforts will be made to adapt and connect with hard-to-reach people. The guiding principle is broad public engagement that achieves feasible and widely supported outcomes.