

THE CAROGA PROCESS

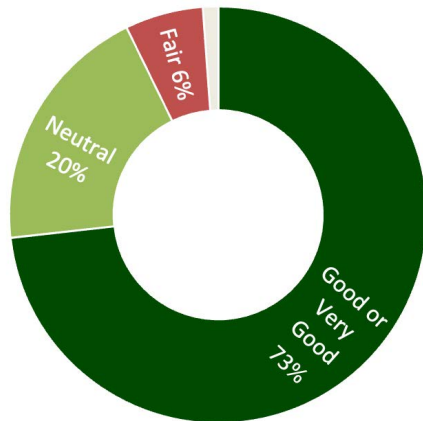
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

TOWN OF CAROGA
Fulton County, New York

2025 Community Survey Overview

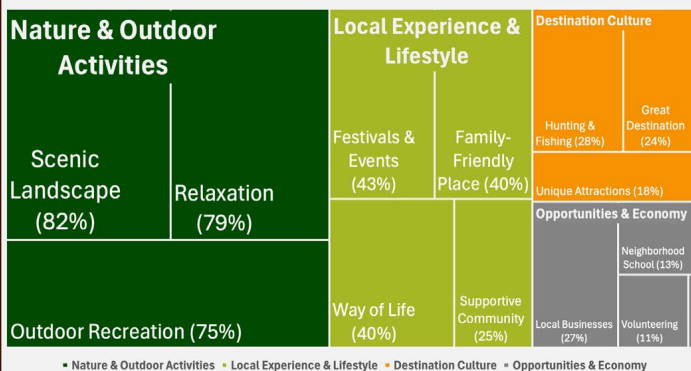
565 people shared input about Caroga's strengths, weaknesses, services, and priorities.

Caroga 2025 Community Survey: Quality of Life

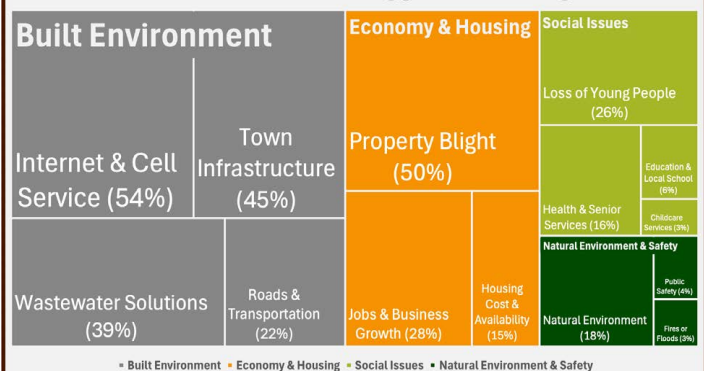


Essentially, Caroga's 2025 Community Survey showed that people see Caroga as a vibrant Town, deeply connected to nature and rich with opportunities to be part of family-friendly experiences. Residents and visitors alike appreciate Caroga's scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, and local charms. A variety of local community events and gathering places bring people together, offering an engaging yet laid-back way of life for all to enjoy.

What do you love most about the Town of Caroga?

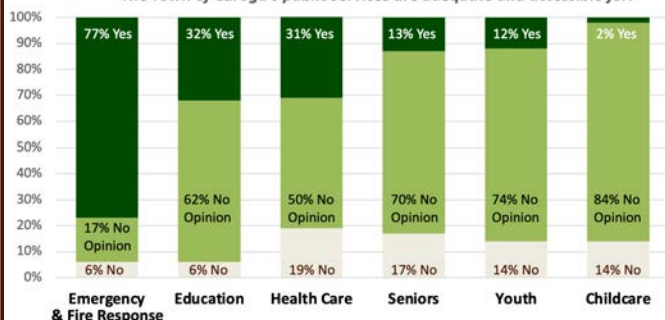


What are the Town's biggest challenges?

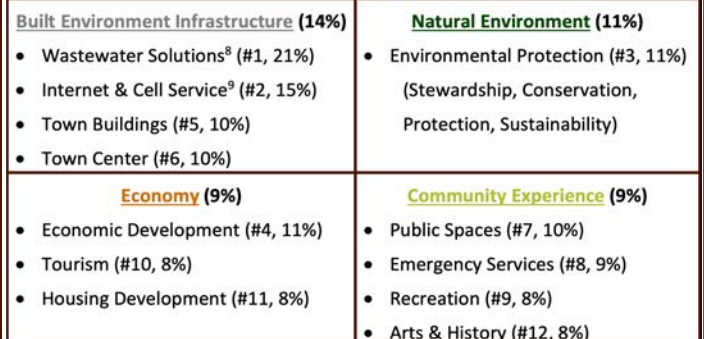


2025 Caroga Community Survey: Public Services

"The Town of Caroga's public services are adequate and accessible for:"



Themes & Priorities for Caroga's Future



As we look ahead together, we are committed to redeveloping the *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan* — grounded in community input and Smart Growth strategic principles — to help revitalize the heart of Caroga. Our shared goal is to create vibrant, welcoming spaces that attract sustainable investments and growth while honoring the Town's unique natural character and identity. Please join us as we continue to hold public meetings and gather more input to plan Caroga's future.

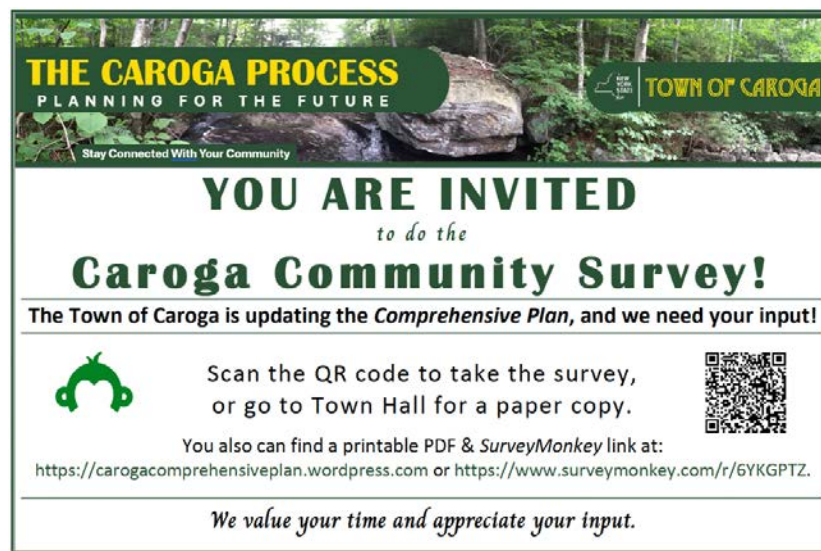
2025 Community Survey Summary

Introduction

The Town of Caroga is redeveloping its *Comprehensive Plan*. 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.

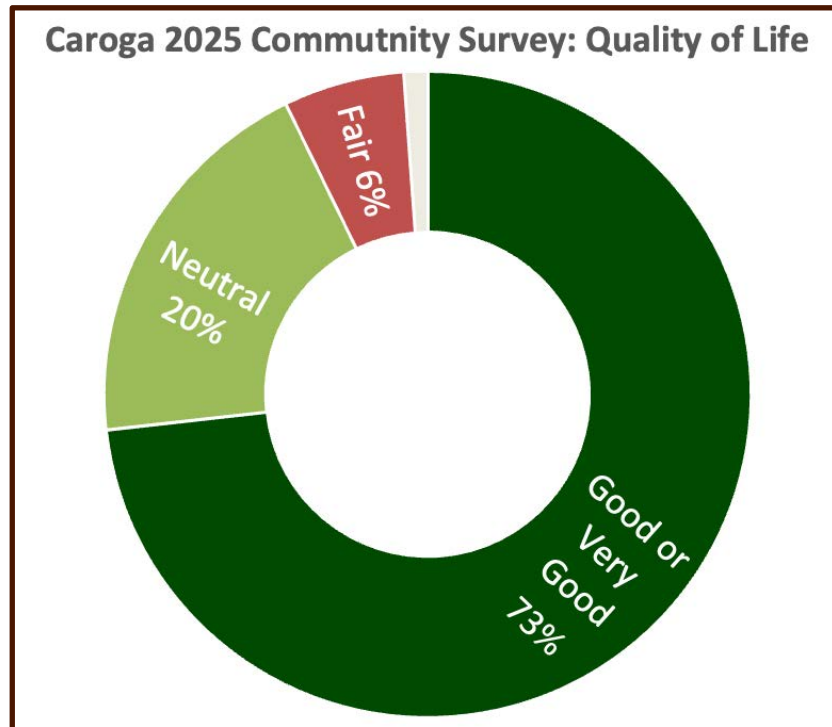
- After preliminary work in late 2024, a two-phased local collaborative approach is underway in 2025 and 2026, and the revised *Comprehensive Plan* is expected in 2027 (see <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/comprehensive-plan-estimated-project-timeline.pdf>).
- In July 2025, the Comprehensive Plan Committee applied for a Smart Growth Community Planning Grant from the New York State Department of State Office of Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure Environmental Protection Fund (see <https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/07/revised-25-opdsg-11-rfa.pdf>).
- The process is grounded in more than 50 years of community-centered planning (see <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/the-caroga-process-nvpf-planning-news-vol.-44-no.-4-july-august-1980.pdf>).
- Current planning aims to enhance the Town's strengths, address challenges, and grow opportunities with robust public engagement and Smart Growth strategic principles (see <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/draft-public-participation-plan.pdf>).

In Caroga, we start with the principle that every voice matters. We value time to listen, learn, and understand each other. We honor differences, and we believe we are stronger when we find ways to come together to speak and act as one. Therefore, we begin the Town's current planning process with the 2025 Community Survey¹, summarized here.



What We Believe

Most people in Caroga are generally happy with local life. The *Community Survey* showed positive views about the Town's current overall quality of life. In general, most response patterns were similar among both full-time and part-time residents. Among the 565 survey respondents, more than 73% rated Caroga's quality of life as "good" or "very good".



"Absolutely love it!"

"I love Caroga because it's an unspoiled gem."

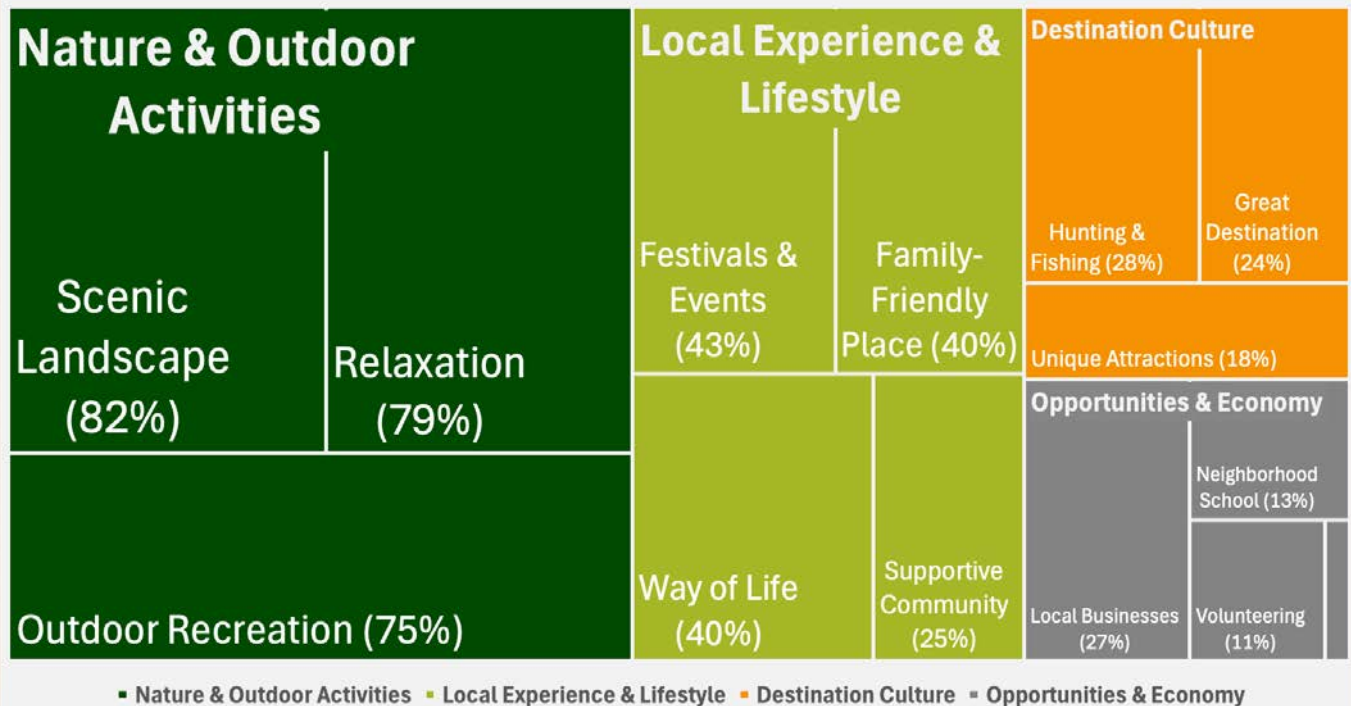
"Caroga is a beautiful place that can be reinvigorated."



Why People Love Caroga

The great majority of people value Caroga's natural scenic beauty and outdoor recreation. When asked, "What do you love most about the Town of Caroga?", top answers were: "Scenic Landscape" (82%), "Relaxation" (79%), and "Outdoor Recreation" (75%).

What do you love most about the Town of Caroga?



Sizeable minorities endorsed: "Festivals and Events" (43%), "Family-Friendly Place" (40%), and "Way of Life" (40%). About a quarter of people noted "Great Destination" or related features. Few people saw "Work Opportunities" as a strength. Yet, a number of people valued the "Local Businesses", "Neighborhood School", and "Volunteer Experiences."²

<u>Nature & Outdoor Activities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic Landscape (82%) Relaxation (79%) Outdoor Recreation (75%) 	<u>Local Experience & Lifestyle</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Festivals & Events (43%) Family-Friendly Place (40%) Way of Life (40%) Supportive Community (25%)
<u>Destination Culture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunting & Fishing (28%) Great Destination (24%) Unique Attractions (18%) 	<u>Opportunities & Economy</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Businesses (27%) Neighborhood School (13%) Volunteer Experiences (11%) Work Opportunities (2%)

Why People Stay in Caroga

"The Town of Caroga is a special place; it has natural beauty and great people."



"I've been many places in the country, and Caroga is one of the most quiet beautiful serene towns."



"Love Caroga. Been here my whole life and it helped shape me as a youth and appreciate the outdoors."

"Caroga has been part of my family for over 100 years ... I feel incredibly blessed to be part of a wonderful community."

Why Part-Time Residents and Visitors Come to Caroga

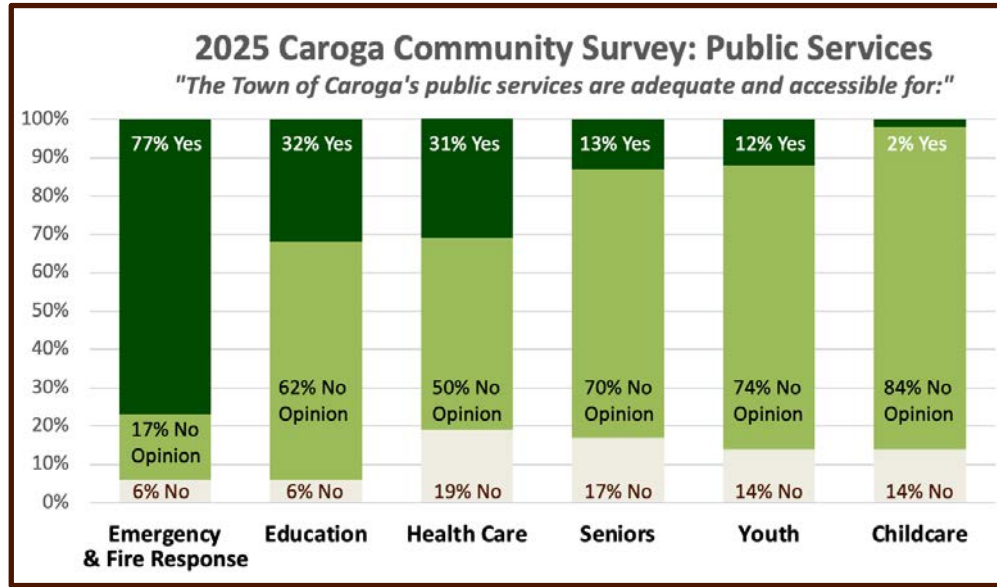
When seasonal residents and visitors were asked, "Why do you come to Caroga?", the most frequent answer was "Relaxation" (98%). Additional reasons people come are: "Recreation" (75%), "Events" (40%), and "Attractions" (32%).

When asked, "Have you ever considered moving full time to Caroga?", 43% said, "Yes" and 45% said, "No" while 13% had "No Opinion" and 20% noted a "Purposeful Choice" about where to live year-round or seasonally. The most frequently cited barriers to moving to Caroga full time were "Winter Weather" (60%) and "Work" (28%). Relatively few cited barriers with Caroga's "Amenities" (15%), "Housing" (11%), "Costs" (6%), or "School" (4%).



How Caroga Serves

The *Survey* asked about public services, and results are summarized in the graph below.



The strengths of Caroga's public services are exemplified by the Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company.

The great majority of people reported, "Yes" Caroga has adequate and accessible "Emergency & Fire Response" (77%) while only 6% reported "No" for this item. The high favorability for emergency and fire services adds to the Town's positive way of life.



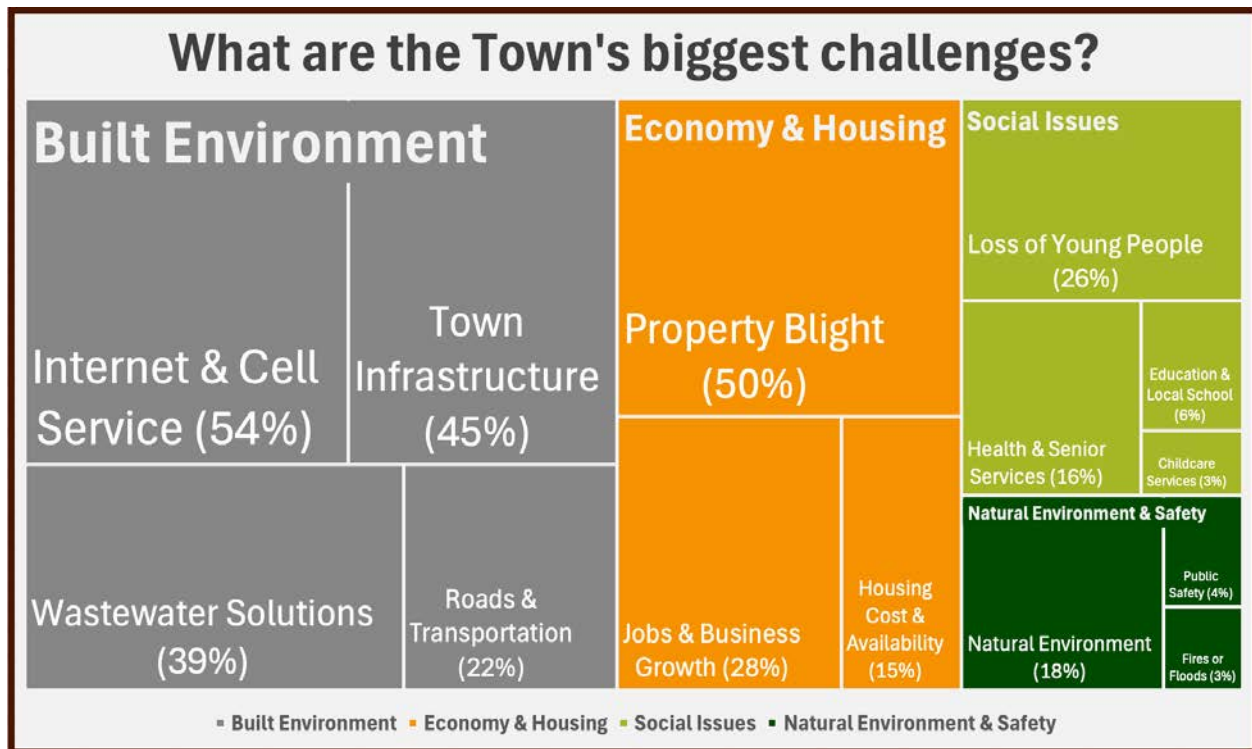
Sizeable groups said "Yes" for Educational Services (32%) and Health Care Services (31%).



Whereas, only 6% were negative about Education, and 19% were negative about Health Care. Most were currently neutral about local educational (62%) and health (50%) services. In contrast, people reported unmet needs for local Senior, Youth, and Childcare Services. Questions remain about strategies to address such needs, such as by joining New York's AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities Program.³ Such efforts could enhance key public services and amenities while maintaining strong small-town volunteer services.

What Challenges We Face

People reported a mixed sense of the Town's current challenges. The most consensus was with Caroga's current **Built Environment**. Specifically, when asked, "What are the Town's biggest challenges?", many people pointed out challenges with commercial "Internet & Cell Service" (54%) along with private and public "Property Blight" (50%) and "Town Infrastructure" (45%). Overall, a guiding theme involved local infrastructure challenges.



Built Environment (40%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Infrastructure (45%) Internet & Cell Service (54%) Wastewater Solutions (39%) Roads & Transportation (22%) 	Economy & Housing (31%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property Blight (50%) Jobs & Business Growth (28%) Housing Cost & Availability (15%) [Property Assessment & Taxation]⁴
Social Issues (13%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of Young People (26%) Health & Senior Services (16%) Education & Local School (6%) Childcare Services (3%) 	Natural Environment & Safety (9%)⁵ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Protection (18%) Fires or Floods (3%) Public Safety (4%)

Essentially, development and infrastructure present key challenges in Caroga.⁶ Questions remain about how to address these challenges and pursue opportunities strategically in ways that advance realistic and affordable improvements to benefit the whole community.

What We Prioritize for the Future

When asked, “*What are the top priorities for Caroga’s future?*” people’s current responses varied notably across all ranked items. No single item receiving top rankings by more than 21% of people. Taken together, priorities appear to be, “*All of the Above.*”⁷

Essentially, priorities cluster into four major areas: *Built Environment Infrastructure* (14%), *Natural Environment* (11%), *Economy* (9%), and *Community Experience* (9%).

Themes & Priorities for Caroga’s Future

Built Environment Infrastructure (14%)

- Wastewater Solutions⁸ (#1, 21%)
- Internet & Cell Service⁹ (#2, 15%)
- Town Buildings (#5, 10%)
- Town Center (#6, 10%)

Natural Environment (11%)

- Environmental Protection (#3, 11%)
(Stewardship, Conservation, Protection, Sustainability)

Economy (9%)

- Economic Development (#4, 11%)
- Tourism (#10, 8%)
- Housing Development (#11, 8%)

Community Experience (9%)

- Public Spaces (#7, 10%)
- Emergency Services (#8, 9%)
- Recreation (#9, 8%)
- Arts & History (#12, 8%)

12 Priorities for Caroga’s Future

1	Wastewater Solutions	21%
2	Internet & Cell Service	15%
3	Environmental Protection	11%
4	Economic Development	11%
5	Town Buildings	10%
6	Town Center	10%
7	Public Spaces	10%
8	Emergency Services	9%
9	Recreation	8%
10	Tourism	8%
11	Housing Development	8%
12	Arts & History	8%

Comprehensive Smart Growth strategies are needed to advance projects and priorities.

Summary

For good reasons, community planning takes time. A longer timeline allows for deeper and broader engagement with residents, neighborhoods, community partners, and regional stakeholders. Navigating different perspectives and challenges is rarely quick or easy, and the early stages of planning can be especially slow and complex. Yet, with broad input and intentional collaboration, we have seen the value of investing that time. Building trust and aligning around shared goals lead to more impactful, community-driven outcomes.

To put people first, ongoing efforts, strategies, and steps in Caroga's public participation plan seek to reach the most representative public input possible — and to sustain the public engagement — in order to clarify and address community needs, goals, and plans.

Essentially, Caroga's 2025 Community Survey showed that people see Caroga as a vibrant Town, deeply connected to nature and rich with opportunities to be part of family-friendly experiences. Residents and visitors alike appreciate Caroga's scenic beauty, outdoor recreation, and local charms. A variety of local community events and gathering places bring people together, offering an engaging yet laid-back way of life for all to enjoy.

The Survey and other preliminary planning point to Caroga's enduring Adirondack wild character, irreplaceable outdoor recreation, and central infrastructure revitalization as guiding themes for the Town's vibrant community experience, natural environment, built environment, and economic opportunities for the future.

Top priorities emphasize Caroga's built environment infrastructure (Wastewater Systems, Internet & Cell Service, Town Buildings, Town Center) along with programs and projects that enhance and sustain the natural environment (Stewardship, Conservation, Protection, Sustainability), economy (Economic Development, Tourism, Housing Development), and community experience (Public Spaces, Emergency Services, Recreation, Arts & History).

As we look ahead together, we are committed to redeveloping the *Town of Caroga Comprehensive Plan* — grounded in community input and Smart Growth strategic principles — to help revitalize the heart of Caroga. Our shared goal is to create vibrant, welcoming spaces that attract sustainable investments and growth while honoring the Town's unique natural character and identity. Please join us as we continue to hold public meetings and gather input to plan Caroga's future.



Endnotes

¹ Caroga's 2025 Community Survey was designed by the Comprehensive Plan Committee to invite broad public input about community strengths, weaknesses, services, and priorities. The 15 questions included multiple choice, ratings, rankings, and open-ended formats. The *Community Survey* included basic demographics, but did not ask for names. Instructions noted that responses were anonymous.

Multiple survey outreach strategies aimed to engage people, including adapting for hard-to-reach groups.

- Invitation cards with instructions and a QR link to *SurveyMonkey* were mailed to 1642 families with addresses from the Town of Caroga property tax roll list.
- Invitation cards returned by the US Postal Service were personally delivered to current households.
- Stacks of invitations were placed throughout the community at the Town Hall, Post Office, local businesses, and public venues.
- Invitation cards and emails were also personally delivered to members of the Wheelerville School community and the local seniors club.
- In addition, the invitation image and information were printed in multiple newsletters of community groups and organizations in the Town of Caroga.
- Conversations and emails to local and regional group leaders also helped to get the word out to the most people possible.
- Survey links were posted on websites of the Committee, Town, and local community organizations.
- Specific clarification questions were addressed via email or face-to-face with people in the community.

The survey was open for 4 months from April to August 15, 2025. Most people responded by connecting online through *SurveyMonkey*. Some responses were entered from paper surveys available by request or from the Town Clerk (see https://www.townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/cpc_survey1_final.pdf)

565 people responded to the Town of Caroga's 2025 Community Survey.

- Age groups ranged across the adult lifespan, clustered in 3 age groups: 25 to 44 (10%), 45-64 (39%), and 65 and over (51%). The 65+ group was the largest for both year-round and part-time residents.
- Of the 565 respondents, people had a range of life experiences, with 51.3% retired and 48% in the home-local-regional workforce (i.e., 11.3% working from home, 6.4% working in Caroga, 30.0% working outside of Caroga, and 1% unemployed or no response). Full- and part-time residents were similar.
- Residency also varied among year-round residents (32%), part-time residents (59%), and visitors (9%). Among year-round residents, 51% have lived in Caroga more than 20 years. Among part-time residents, 64% have lived in the Town more than 20 years.
- *Community Survey* percentages for full-time and part-time residents generally reflected land records from the NYS Office of Real Property Tax Service (ORPTS) for Caroga's residential land parcels (N=1442) showing 53% seasonal residences (Property Class 260, N=764) and 47% one-family year-round residences (Property Class 210, N=678; see <https://adkreports.org/protect/census/3603512573.htm>).

Endnotes (continued)

²Overall, responses to “What do you love most about the Town of Caroga?” were similar for full-time and part-time residents. For both groups, the top responses were clearly for **Nature & Outdoor Activities** (*Scenic Landscape, Outdoor Recreation, Relaxation*). Secondary strengths similarly emphasized the **Local Experience & Lifestyle** with both groups valuing Caroga as a *Family-Friendly Place*, but with a higher relative percentage of year-round residents endorsing *Way of Life* and more part-time residents noting *Festivals & Events* and *Great Destination*. In addition, year-round residents also gave slightly more weight to the Town’s important secondary assets involving *Local Businesses* and *Volunteer Experiences*.

³ Responses flag current barriers to accessing local senior, youth, and childcare services. Result support the value of a new initiative to align the Town of Caroga with New York State priorities with grant incentives to participate in the **AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities**. This program:

“serves as a catalyst to educate local leaders (both elected officials and engaged residents) and encourage them to implement the types of changes that make communities more livable for people of all ages...The network provides cities, towns, counties, and states with the resources to become more age-friendly by tapping into national and global research, planning models and best practices. Membership...means that a community’s elected leadership has made a commitment to actively work with residents and local advocates to make their town...an age-friendly place to live.”

(see <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/age-friendly-network-introduction.html>).

⁴ The top 5 themes from write-in responses included requests to improve: **Municipal Infrastructure** (N=28, 10%; Highway Garage, Roads), **Property Blight & Maintenance** (N=24, 8%; Deteriorated, Temporary, & Nonprimary Structures; Code Enforcement), **Economic Development & Business** (N=21, 7%; Locally-Owned Businesses), **Property Assessment & Taxation** (N=20, 7%; Affordability; Consistent Policy Specifications — Not Opinion), and **Environmental Conservation** (N=20, 7%; Keep Lakes Clean).

⁵ Most people did not identify *Environmental Protection* as a weakness in the Town of Caroga. In another question about the community’s strengths, most people clearly valued Caroga’s scenic natural landscape as the Town’s most treasured asset. Notably, the Town currently maintains strong programs for environmental lake stewardship, trail stewardship, and fire prevention, along with an enduring history of partnerships and engagement among the Town government, local lake associations, recreational clubs, and other nonprofit volunteer groups. Indeed, the Town’s current environmental quality, public safety, and emergency services underscore the valuable successes of multiple current ongoing programs and services in this area. As such, Caroga’s environmental protection and natural sustainability are not viewed as local weaknesses, but rather as distinctive community strengths and valued assets.

⁶ Overall, responses to, “What are the Town of Caroga’s biggest challenges?” were similar for full-time and part-time residents. For both groups, top responses were clearly related to Caroga’s **Built Environment** (*Internet & Cell Service, Town Infrastructure*). Secondary concerns converged on other Built Environment Issues (*Wastewater Solutions, Roads & Transportation*) as well as **Economy & Housing** (*Property Blight, Jobs & Business Growth*). Notably, **Social Challenges** with *Loss of Young People* were emphasized more by year-round residents (N=71, 42%) than part-time residents (N=55, 18%).

THE CAROGA PROCESS

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

TOWN OF CAROGA
Fulton County, New York

Endnotes (continued)

⁷ Overall, mixed responses to, “What are the top priorities for Caroga’s future?” suggested an “All of the Above” pattern for both full-time and part-time residents. When ranked separately, the order was slightly different for the two groups. Forty-six people skipped this question. Responses were ranked as follows:

Year-Round Residents’ 12 Priorities	
1	Internet & Cell Service
2	Town Buildings
3	Environmental Protection
4	Wastewater Solutions
5	Economic Development
6	Emergency Services
7	Recreation
8	Town Center
9	Public Spaces
10	Tourism
11	Housing Development
12	Arts & History

Part-Time Residents’ 12 Priorities	
1	Wastewater Solutions
2	Environmental Protection
3	Internet & Cell Service
4	Economic Development
5	Town Buildings
6	Town Center
7	Emergency Services
8	Recreation
9	Public Spaces
10	Tourism
11	Arts & History
12	Housing Development

Caution is due about priority projects, given the notable variability in rankings. In the whole sample and those above, no priority was ranked #1 by more than 21% of respondents, and most were less than that. At the same time, *Community Survey* results supported convergence around thematic priorities with Caroga’s *Built Environment Infrastructure*, *Natural Environment*, *Economy*, and *Community Experience*.

⁸ Regarding priorities for wastewater solutions, preliminary planning has reviewed prior planning work. Discussion is underway about a phased approach to collaborate with the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC). First, Town officials have begun working with the Fulton County Planning Department to explore participation in the NYS EFC *Septic System Replacement Fund* for grants to fund private local wastewater septic projects. Second, prior engineering planning and public input for a public sewer have identified multiple issues, challenges, and barriers to address. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach is required to answer questions about location, costs, feasibility, and public support prior to submitting any plans for the EFC *Intended Use Plan Clean Water Revolving Fund* for a public wastewater sewer system (see <https://townofcaroga.com/notes/efc-program-guide-10252024-interactive.pdf>).

⁹ Both cell service and fast broadband internet service are currently being expanded in Caroga. In September 2025, Frontier Communications (recently acquired by Verizon, with merger pending) installed fiber optic cables throughout the Town of Caroga. Thus, high speed FiOS is available or will be coming soon (see <https://frontier.com/local/new-york/caroga> and <https://www.verizon.com/home/internet/>).

