TOWN OF HUNTER, VILLAGE OF TANNERSVILLE, VILLAGE OF HUNTER
SMART GROWTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES: April 21, 2026
DRAFT 4/21/26

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting for the Smart Growth Comprehensive Plan Committee was held on April 21, 2026, at Hunter Town Hall. It began at 6:00 pm and was presided over by Marc Czermerys.

ATTENDANCE

Town at Large
Marc Czermerys, Chair
David Kukle
Trent Poole
Sarah Slutzky
Ismael Villafane
Daryl Mercer
Neal Chernin
Aleksandra Smith
Robert Johnson
Harout Dermenjian
Kevin McArdle (online)

Village of Hunter
Paul Slutzky

Village of Tannersville
George Kelly
Kody Leach
Serhiy Yevtushkenko

DOS Representative
Gina DaBiere-Gibbs (online)

Planning Consultants
Margaret Irwin
Christina Snyder (online)

Public Participants
Sean Mahoney
Donna Haines-Wiliams
Susan Copley
Nathan Smith
Allison Curran
Rebecca Fitting
Michelle Yost

AGENDA ITEMS

Marc welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Review of Materials from meeting #1

- The Committee had no questions about the introductory packet of materials.
- River Street has started a list of communities with comparable Comp Plans to share.
- Minutes from March and April will be reviewed and shared shortly for approval at May meeting.

Comp Plan Survey Draft

- The survey draft is currently fairly long as it needs to gather information about 3 communities. It would be ideal to have a few volunteers – someone from each municipality - to review the survey and discuss the best way to package it for residents.
    - Village of Hunter: Paul Slutzky
    - Village of Tannersville: George Kelly
    - Town of Hunter: Sasha Smith
    - Marc Czermerys, Co-Chair
    - Margaret Irwin, River Street
- River Street and Marc will share dates for the survey reviewers to return their comments.

Review of Work Underway

- Town of Hunter experiencing a lot of development pressure and needs tools to approach this. Zoning ordinance protects property values and identifies community standards.
- Nearing completion of demographic analysis of 3 communities.
- Town was successful in two funding applications – one to NYS DOS Smart Growth Program and one to NYS DEC Catskill Smart Growth Planning Program. Other funding sources (LGE and NBRC) have awarded funds to support the development of the new Town of Hunter municipal complex.
- Both programs focus on Smart Growth principles related to equity, economy, environmental stewardship and energy/climate including climate resilience and walkable communities.

- **Q: Equity. Hunter is a unique area. Common DOS theme seems to be quasi-mandated opt-in to smart growth principles. Mountaintop is already a very fair, equitable place.** Margaret noted that the Comp Plan will only address in depth those issues that the community feels are relevant and some issues may be less applicable. For example, there may be a good set of environmental stewardship practices already in place. The State is not trying to dictate which of these principles are centered in the Plan. **Gina (DOS) noted via chat that the Committee can address the Smart Growth Principles however they are best reflected in each particular community.**

SWOT ANALYSIS - SUMMARY

At the first Comp Plan Review Meeting, Margaret shared a sample Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats diagram, which offers a tool for Committee Members to assess where the communities currently stand. A summary that came from the current Town comprehensive plan is included in the packet for reference. The Committee discussed their SWOT analyses for the Town and Villages as summarized and detailed below.

Participants discussed various community strengths including natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, strong emergency services, and recent development efforts, while identifying key weaknesses such as lack of affordable housing and well-paying jobs, limited family-friendly indoor activities, and challenges with housing market turnover. The group explored opportunities around tourism development, housing creation, and better utilization of natural attractions, while highlighting threats including potential DEC visitor use management restrictions at Kaaterskill Falls and ongoing flood risks. The discussion also touched on the importance of creating a cohesive community identity and the need for better year-round amenities to attract and retain residents, particularly young families and workers who currently commute from outside the area.

SWOT BY AREA

STRENGTHS (Internal and Positive – Determine ways to use strengths to reduce vulnerability to external threats).

RECREATION AMENITIES

- Tannersville's Rip Van Winkle Lake Park
- Outdoor recreation
- Hunter Mountain!
- Tourism economy allows Hunter to help other communities.
- Hunter Regional Trail will create nice ways to connect across the Town. Community is willing to put effort into these types of initiatives.

WALKABILITY & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

- Off road connectivity and sidewalks. DRI project of Railroad Ave. sidewalk completion using affordable approach will begin as of today.
- Strong walking communities in the Villages. (Weakness: Not walkable outside the Villages.)

ARTS & CULTURE

- Arts and cultural activities are very strong for rural community

PUBLIC SERVICES & COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

- **Public services and amenities:** Supermarket, primary care doctors, ambulance, Fire and EMS in Town of Hunter, Town police force with good people who care about our community.
- Intermunicipal cooperation
- Collaborative efforts at fund raising/grant writing
- Knowledgeable, effective, strong, interested government officials and leaders making good choices on behalf of communities who collaborate and work well together towards common cause. And have fun doing it!
- Taxes are low, which could draw people in. (Also a Weakness – need services to keep people here as well).

SPIRIT OF INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Strong recent development and growth that shows renewed energy in the area. Strength because it shows willingness of people to invest in the area. (*We may need to determine whether we have controls and tools in place to make sure community remains high quality in face of growth*).
- Praise expressed for residents and Committee members who are entrepreneurs that relocate their businesses and are investing in the Town and Villages to help retain the local quality of life.

WEAKNESSES (Internal and Negative – Overcome weaknesses to pursue)

HOUSING

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Housing shortage in general and lack of housing choice. Housing turnover (churn) is needed (gaps in life-cycle housing approach – being born here and finding housing through different life stages). (*Margaret noted that the team will work with Liz Kormos on any data needed relative to housing. Housing will be discussed a lot during this process and we will have an extensive housing analysis.*)

JOBS

- Lack of well-paying jobs.
- Unique situation jobwise. Although we lack well-paying year-round jobs, tourist- based economy doesn't have enough workers for service-based jobs.

ATTRACTING YOUNG FAMILIES (Activities, Housing, Jobs)

- **Family-friendly activities:** Lack of indoor family-friendly year-round activities. Lack of activities for young children discourages young families from raising their children here.
- **Tourism:** Margaret noted the region is also not drawing tourists for overnights.
- **Housing and commutes:** Workforce commutes out of the Mountaintop, which some consider reasonable.
    - With all the short-term rental properties, we don't have housing to allow residents situated within community participating in community life and adding to the school population. Concern for schools on the Mountaintop.
    - Some families may not have time to participate in life on the mountain due to their commute. To keep families closer, we need to provide housing for 30% who commute in, opportunity to be housed here. And provide families opportunities to participate in activities within the community.
- New families having fewer children now. On the other hand, make up of schools reflects families that move to be closer to their relatives. May be an exception to the rule on the Mountaintop.
- Do we provide or let people provide for themselves?
- To build the comprehensive plan we have to discuss what we want in the community. This drives the conversation and directs how our Planning Boards encourage and help projects through the process for the right fit with our communities. We need to have an understanding of what we want to promote (e.g., better paying jobs in the area).
- General affordability (not just housing). Feel inflation in pronounced way here. Young families here pay high premium to live here (housing costs, labor and material costs).
- People who came because of the pandemic may not stay here – but homes with investment will come in higher than initial investments.

OTHER

- Not walkable outside the Villages.
- Low taxes makes it harder to provide local services (also a strength).

OPPORTUNITIES (External and Positive. Pursue Opportunities that Capitalize on Strengths)

- Expand year-round indoor activities that attract young families to the area (provides local amenities, draws tourism, supports ongoing projects like Rip Van Winkle Lake and Festival Grounds).

- Watershed
- Individual investment can and is spurring growth.

SCHOOL DISTRICT

- **Small school district** – We can create an agile school system responsible to needs of the times. We are privileged to be small enough to try exciting approaches. Magnet school doing experimental methodologies and attracting teacher talent can be a magnet for young families.
  - Space to grow the school as well.
  - High school offers opportunity for students to obtain Assoc Degree by the time they graduate.
  - Some will take lower salary to live in area but can't find housing (loss of teachers). Need to RETAIN existing teachers.
  - Regionalization – combining districts. Other districts are not as health financially as ours and need to consolidate. We need to work on what we can do now to face this in the future. Plan should reflect support for school implementation/needs.
  - "**Schools build communities."** Good schools = strong communities. Teachers in the district mean families are in the district and become figures within the community. In the past we had free tuition for teacher's children. But they need to be able to live in the community too.

"RESORT COMMUNITIES"

- Vail Corporation needs to think long term to grow. Are they looking for more activities or other ways to infiltrate marketplaces? How can we be part of this growth they are looking for?
- Feels like a resort community here (Breckenridge, Keystone, Aspen). Best relationships in resort communities are when community and resort complex work closely together.
- Must be able to find a place to live to work at Mountaintop resorts or else they just become "commuters."

JOB CREATION

- Hikers that come here then leave. Margaret – We will have interesting data on this from a report on the Mountaintop based on cell usage that shows where people frequented (minimal overnight stays).
- Business opportunities – Year-round businesses in general that people coming to hike would visit. What would encourage people to stay overnight (e.g., affordable lodging)?

RECREATION

- Major opportunity driven by Hunter Mountain, Kaaterskill Falls, hiking – We are unique in our wide range of comprehensive outdoor recreational opportunities within the Town. At both Hunter Mountain and Kaaterskill Falls/North/South Lake – there is a great diversity of people that represents a great opportunity ("typical NYC scenario"). (Also a weakness. We have great quantity and diversity of visitors but we could tell this story in a more effective way.)

HOUSING & ZONING

- 90 housing units close to being approved; another 90 may be finding funding – Opportunity as we move into zoning to discuss how we make sure there is some availability for people who are part of the community.
- Zoning meant to influence community's choices.

BRANDING & VISIBILITY

- As we build for future, how are we presenting ourselves? What is the "sense of place" in Hunter?
- The Town Hall Complex represents an opportunity as a gateway/arrival piece.
- **Visitors Use Management Plan** – Completed. Town of Hunter begins at bottom of mountain (national park feeling) and should have a feeling of arrival at the top.
- Innovation in businesses.

- **Rip Van Winkle –** Theme that helps to market the place. **Build stories and attractions for every business that ties together (e.g., hiking trail quests).**
- Margaret noted the Thomas Dambo Trolls and their ability to create a destination/attraction.
- **Photo Opps:** Were going to buy largest RVW lake sculpture in the world for photo opportunities – still negotiating.
- **Community Spirit.** Us v Tourists, Long term v short term. Maybe branding experience unites us as full- and short-time residents, solidify our relationships.

- **Opportunity –** CFA – shuttle system Palenville to Tannersville. Margaret noted that the Committee will want to look at ideas not moving forward from the Tannersville DRI to see if they should be incorporated into the Comp Plan.

THREATS (External and Negative. Establish a defensive plan to prevent weaknesses from being susceptible to external threat)

- **CLIMATE** – Effects of climate change, ongoing flooding and associated damage is a great threat here. Devastation of Tropical Storm Lee was intense. Mindful of flood damage prevention law and how it is implemented in communities to minimize threats that will arrive.
    - Margaret – We need to figure out which areas are most at risk.
    - Associated Strength – significant amount of funding comes to the watershed for flood mitigation.

- Visitor Use Management Plan– DEC commissioned a study from a third-party firm on visitor use management framework. Used in national parks and wanted to apply to Kaaterskill Clove and Falls and high peaks in ADK. Tried to provide on ground suggestions for how to improve this to deal with issues. Result of framework is that they recommended a permit system and visitor restrictions for Kaaterskill Falls, which feels like an extreme approach and should be last resort. Other strategies have not been tried yet. Permitting is a threat to people coming to town and enjoying our natural resources. **Opportunity for us to identify as a threat and bring other safety measures into the plan.** Had meeting with DEC re North/South Lake campground, which is an intensive use area and most visited campground in the entire State with capacity for more (strength). KF top natural destination in Catskills (strength). We want funding to manage the problem and expand management tools.

- Loss of Youth and Young Families from Community

NEXT MEETING

Next Committee Meeting is set for: May 19, 2026, from 6:00-7:30 pm at Hunter Town Hall.

Prior to next meeting:

- Committee members should **review Smart Growth Assessment** from DOS and answer those questions. Send to River Street or bring to next meeting.
- Take the **Smart Growth Training** online.
- **Survey** subcommittee will review draft survey and make recommendations.
- River Street will send **SWOT** out to everyone to add to and review.
- **Website** will be shared with the Committee.
- **Housing report** will be available.
- Committee will discuss when the first public meeting should take place.