

What threats do you see Pine Plains facing in the future?

Collated by Matt Finley. Last revision: July 18, 2019

Items in **bold** received at least five responses. Items **bold and underlined** received at least ten.

Cultural

Locals have separate goals from developers, part-time, seasonal residents

Businesses do not cater to locals

Nothing to do in Pine Plains

Not enough preservation of historic buildings

Increasing political divisions cause inaction

Need more services for weekenders

Demographic

Declining school-age population, school district enrollment

Too many part-time residents, second home owners, commuters

Young people leave town

Lack of senior housing

Stagnation; lack of growth

Economic

Too little economic activity

Possibility of over development or wrong kind of development

High housing and other costs; gentrification

Few job opportunities

Development makes town unaffordable

Death of family farms

Local businesses fail

Not enough environmental energy development

Properties not maintained / zombie properties

What opportunities do you see for Pine Plains in the future?

Collated by Rory Chase. Last revision July 24, 2019

Items in **bold** received at least five responses.

Items **bold and underlined** received at least ten.

Items **bold and underlined and** in **large font** received at least fifteen.

Items **bold and underlined and** in **very large font** received at least twenty.

Items **bold and underlined and** in **super large font** received at least twenty.

Cultural

To preserve what we have (lovely small town w/ independent biz) (17)

For the Stissing Center to be a Cultural growth driver (3)

For the promotion of the performing arts (3)

Demographic

To promote and attract Pine Plains to younger families (5)

Recreation/Tourism Nexus

To engage in 'Smart Growth' (protect assets, build on strengths) (28)

To promote Pine Plains as a destination for recreational opportunities as a driver of economic activity (24)

To promote Trails and Walkability as a growth driver (20)

To promote more recreational opportunities (16)

To promote Growth (8)

To Promote Agritourism (6)

Economic

To support more local, independent businesses (22)

To see more Retail Businesses in town (18)

To increase job opportunities (10)

To attract entrepreneurs (9)

Stissing Center as a positive (growth driver) (8)

To welcome a hardware store (7)

To attract new businesses (6)

To attract weekenders/shoppers (4)

For Town to remain commercially functional/viable (4)

To work with the Durst Org (4)

To get a gym (3)

To attract light manufacturing (2)

Land Management

To improve the Town Center/M.S.D (24)

To promote and secure ag/farm activities (8)

To support infrastructure development as a growth driver (8)

To utilize empty/abandoned properties (5)

To improve the Rec Area (5)

To promote center septic (4)

To improve lake quality (4)

To improve the Town Beach (3)

To have a Drs office/Health Center (3)

To create a Town Pool (3)

To create a dog park (2)

To create a playground (2)

Political

Opportunity for implementation of existing plans (6)

To put the Town Hall in the Town Center (2)

Regulatory

To promote a clean attractive town (7)

To create and enforce appearance standards for 'in Town' properties (3)

To create more 'flexible' zoning codes (4)

For the Town to have a more 'positive' attitude towards business and development (3)

To create a Noise Ordinance (2)

To make the Zoning clearer (1)

Social

To promote more Affordable Housing opportunities (9)

To create Senior Housing (7)

To promote farmworker housing (1)

To create more activities for kids/teens (8)

To create activities for adults (6)

To create more reasons for folks to come to Pine Plains (4)

To improve our schools (2)

To show gratitude to locals (1)

To reject the wants of 'weekenders' (1)

Miscellaneous (wildcard)

Opportunity to reject Growth entirely (5)

To reject corporate business from Town (3)

To promote 2nd home ownership (3)

To invite in corporate businesses, ie: CVS, McDonalds (2)

To promote habitat expansion/wild areas in Town (1)

To stop Durst (1)

Findings from Pine Plains Comprehensive Plan Survey written remarks,

collated by committee members, R. Chase and M. Finley.

Where do we go from here?

Opportunities and Threats questions. Perhaps the ideas here will spark a conversation that leads the committee toward what we want to see as a summary in the final report.

Frequency of Update. The 2019 Pine Plains Comprehensive Plan Update Committee had the task of updating the current Comprehensive Plan, written in 2004. New York State requires that towns complete this process but does not specify when, so it will be important to look at this process again in another fifteen years, or earlier if circumstances in town change enough to warrant it.

Setting and completing Goals. The value of a comprehensive plan can clearly be seen in the list of goals from 2004 that have already been completed. Our committee's task in this Update, aided by our planning consultants, is to catalog that success and to reaffirm, to the extent we can, that the town of Pine Plains is moving in a direction that we want. Most of the questions on the survey received answers of substantial agreement and in some cases overwhelming agreement, to support the current direction the town is taking. These answers will provide guidance to elected town officials and boards for the near future. Even in questions that some might regard as more controversial, the prevailing opinion was clear. As the town and other boards weigh their options, we can expect they will give greater weight to accommodating the preferences expressed by the large majority in this survey.

Survey Methodology. In addition to the computerized survey questions that can easily be tallied, the committee chose to include two open-ended questions at the end. These questions, about opportunities for Pine Plains and possible threats to Pine Plains, allow for individual subjective comments that can be creative and spontaneous. As such, they are hard to summarize, but we made an attempt to. First, the complete unedited comments are available in spreadsheet form for anyone to read in an appendix to this report. Second, in collating the comments, the committee grouped responses by frequency that a topic was mentioned, realizing that in a small sample it is unwise to draw much distinction between something that received two responses versus four. We were looking for trends and we found them in several groups of responses, Last, although it would be possible to correlate comments with the responses that identify where the person completing the survey lives, we made no attempt to do that. In every case, the perspective of the person commenting seemed clear enough. It would be possible, if someone wanted to undertake a painstaking analysis, to cross-correlate some of the various questions and comments but we felt that was not needed here.

About the Respondents. Those who completed the survey were from what first appears to be several disparate groups. You could label them locals, or else a grouping that includes weekenders, summer people, and perhaps other things. It is easy to read the total written comments and at first see a schism

between some of the answers by locals versus all others. We would urge that everyone resist this approach and instead realize that the process works best that helps everyone.

Opportunities and Threats. There were 266 responses to the survey. The two final questions, about Opportunities and Threats, received 123 and 147 individual written responses, respectively, although some gave multiple responses and others gave none. The committee notes that there was more unanimity among those who offered comments on Opportunities than on Threats, with the frequency of many items cited being twice as high in the opportunities section as in Threats section. Threats and Opportunities often reveal two sides of the same issue. For example, the threat of development can be viewed as an opportunity to conduct and regulate that development in a controlled positive way. Having the two different questions gave people the chance to express themselves as they preferred; positively or negatively as it occurred to them thinking about an individual issue. Since Opportunities came first, perhaps more respondents felt they had already expressed themselves on a topic by the time they reached the last question on Threats. The individual comments about Opportunities and Threats allow us to draw some obvious conclusions that cannot be discerned from the more objective questions in the survey. While there was notable dissent on a number of social, cultural and economic issues and observations, some broader points of consensus clearly emerged on both the Opportunities and Threats side of a question.

On the Opportunities side, the greatest consensus pointed towards the opportunity for growth with the largest number of respondents citing “smart growth”, roughly interpreted as growth through the protection of assets and the building upon of strengths. Respondents cited the intersections of “Recreation” and “Tourism” relative to smart growth, with the plurality reporting particular opportunities for growth in improving the Town Center and the expansion of local “independent” businesses, especially retail in the Town Center, while preserving what we have (a lovely small town in a rural and agricultural setting).

On the Threats side, the greatest consensus pointed towards the fear of the “wrong type of development” (too fast, too far, too corporate) (“dumb growth”). Many cited the Durst development of the rural Carvel property on one hand, and corporate retail, though recognizing the dual threat of further lost businesses and too little growth in the Town Center. In addition, there is notable concern over a declining school population and the potential for a population decline in general; a lack of jobs and opportunity; the “pricing out” of “locals”, a continued decline in community reinvestment; and a concerning sense of alienation between perceived classes (wealthy vs not wealthy).

Conclusion. The responses generated a wide range of often creative suggestions that will serve the leaders of Pine Plains well as they are considered in the short term and in the future. They also provided values that will serve the town leaders as a moral compass. A topic that bears watching is that these questions revealed what might appear to be a disturbing cultural issue of how locals feel about the weekenders, second homeowners, commuters, developers and in general what they fear as “rich folk from the city”. These concerns came through quite strongly, even though no individual question

would have elicited this. The committee prefers to think of it as a challenge to town leaders to communicate even more successfully with all the members of this community. We all share a love of Pine Plains and want it to succeed, so what unites us is far stronger than any divisions. Excellent communication is something that will pose an increasing challenge in a community with no local newspaper, to generate consensus in an interested population that will be increasingly geographically spread, and to educate everyone to accept the realities of sensible change.

Points of interest and discussion from 8/26/19 Comprehensive Plan Review meeting

Demographics of population:

Of those responding to the survey, the majority were 55 and older, with the largest number of respondents being 65 and older

Possible reasons:

Worldwide population is decreasing

Naturally occurring retirement population

Older people more involved (more time)

Younger people priced out of housing market

Lack of jobs

In general, the county is younger than Pine Plains. How do we embrace the fact that our population is on the older side? What services are needed? What opportunities does that present? Could jobs be created to assist this population?

Discussion of school enrollment:

900 students currently

Room for 600 more

A question was asked about the demographics of surrounding towns that make up the school system— Is it just the town of Pine Plains that is on the elderly side, or is that consistent throughout the school district? How can townspeople use the school more?

New Business in town:

Do we need more population to sustain current businesses? Do we need more business to increase commerce/spending?

How do we keep business here? Do people shop out of town because of convenience –pick up groceries on their way home from work, discount shopping, more selection? Do we need more experiential business?