

Summary of 8-11-2009 Focus Group with Realtors

Realtors (and bankers) present were Nancy Rutter, branch manager for Key Bank; Lindsay LeBrecht, Copake Lake Realty; Al Fair, Hillsdale County Realty; Peggy Rose, Copake Lake Realty; Marilyn Burch, Coldwell Banker Properties; John Avenia, Beach and Bartolo; Ron Morales, First Niagara Bank; Donna Peck, Copake Realty.

Residential Properties

People are looking for properties in Copake; few foreclosures

Potential second-home owners have cash. Waterfront properties and second homes remain popular.

People (60-95%) shop for property from home: internet. They call realtors to ask questions about internet properties. Weekenders want large properties, not in town. Single women want to be in town.

\$150-200,000 is now a drawing card. First time buyers now have \$8000 tax credit and government backed mortgages. Taconic Shores homes are very sellable.

Down town Copake has no draw, no center. Nothing to do at night here. Camphill Village and summer campers miss Langdonhurst, Random Harvest and a general store. Second home owners want a place with coffee, pie, bread and WIFI.

Needs include organic food business, arts organization, range of missing amenities.

Appraisals and assessments are too high. During the housing bubble, these went up; now difficult to bring down. Some thought Great Barrington's nearness was helpful; others thought many people wanted services and entertainment here so that driving was reduced.

Some thought cluster housing a bad idea; that the Planning Board was too controlling. "Stop the Housing Project signs" are very off-putting. High taxes are a big problem. Connecticut and Massachusetts are better, regarding taxes. Sellers are leaving because they are retiring, cannot find jobs and the absence of entertainment.

Commercial Properties

Little inventory in either commercial or investment properties. A buyer of property on Empire Rd. was claimed to have spent two years with the Planning Board and still needed a road and utilities.

The cost of business here is too high: utilities, taxes and employees.

Consider business consortia.

Offer seminars and consultants to help with business plans and development.

Lawn care, property maintenance and catering should be good Copake businesses.

TARP money is available, but not being applied for.

Businesses need tax breaks locally as well as from State and Federal Governments.

"Green building and Energy" should be a good business here.

Cannot compete with immigrant labor.

Niche farming, Farm tours, alternative energy

slow food movement

Areas of Concern for the Future

Are second home owners' needs being accounted for?

Bury utility lines

establish a water and sewage system district in town; central sewage district at Copake Lake.

improve cell phone service, increase wifi availability, decrease taxes, mixed housing

need a re-evaluation of all properties, use THCS for concerts and events, assisted living facilities would be helpful, seniors need local shopping

Copake's advantages are its water, beauty of the land, golf, sportsmanship - fishing, hunting, etc. use these.