

Notes from Business/Farm/Tourism Focus Group

17 participants represented this topic. See sign in sheet.

What are the benefits of having your business in Durham?

- Rural, it is a nice place to live
- When I started my business, I was the only one doing that kind of work here so it was very good.
- Beautiful, peaceful, love the intact history – all are enormous draw for tourism. People need to understand the value of that.
- Scenery, rural, slower pace of life, the outdoors.
- Great place to be, active community and land that is good for farming
- Great place to raise kids, it is a beautiful place to be
- Everyone has deep roots here – born and raised here
- Beautiful
- We offer things that are very different from so many other places. We need to market that better.
- Family farm – sustainability.
- People don't realize what we have here – going outdoors, in the woods, little things that give us freedom and independence – those are special and those are things people want to come here for.
- Family heritage keeps me here
- Centrally located – not far from NYC – 2 hours to everything
- Nature is here – people come here for our outdoors and nature
- People want to go to craft stores, farm stores, local stores – nature oriented. Take advantage of these.
- Openness of landscape – open space – beautiful
- Love the scenery, family roots, people respect others here
- Topography, beautiful, it's a manageable size to get to know people.
- We meet people from all over – know more people here than we did in a more densely populated area. Community is the most important thing. Diverse community is important. Attract people with the scenery.
- Know everyone
- Scenery and there are things to do here that you can't do anywhere else.
- E. Durham lives on in people's memories and that is what brings people back here.
- Is a tight knit community that takes care of each other and we are surrounded by friends and family. We protect each other.

What are the challenges of having your business in Durham?

- Have to figure out how farms can make a living
- Different hamlets and fragmentation of community is issue.
- With school closed, it has fragmented everyone. How to bring this back? We need a hub.
- Need a critical mass of stores so that there is a reason to attract and keep people to visit.
- Need to look at the whole, and not the 'silos'.
- Expand on homesteading, crafting, local foods

- Not enough attention given Durham from the County government. At state level it is a hinderance due to their requirements (labor laws, workers compensation, auditors, sales tax, etc.), but County ignores Town. County needs to help.
- Traffic not safe in Oak Hill. It hinders pedestrians and with no sidewalks, can't have people wander and explore from store to store. Need to address traffic and enhance pedestrian safety in Oak Hill.
- Use old school for a community center as a benefit to all.
- Each hamlet has its own needs, but tends to be separate from others – not a lot of togetherness
- Loss of school a terrible blow.
- Kids leave and don't come back.
- Not much comes up on TripAdvisor for Durham. Need to link events, have a unified calendar, more formalized way of networking.
- There is a shortage of labor in Durham – hard to find good help (this was noted as a serious issue). Farms especially have a hard time finding employees.
- Lack of hospitality training (see ideas)
- Greene County Tourism doesn't bring much help locally.
- Chamber of Commerce is trying but not as effective as it could be.
- Liability insurance is an issue that prevents many new operations from starting.

Businesses that are missing but should/could be here?

- No dairy farms left
- A wood pellet mill that could take advantage of that abundant resource.
- Emergency care/urgent care
- Bank
- Trout fishing-oriented businesses. We are working to restore streams and world class trout fishing could be an area to take advantage of for new small businesses. (noted that there is need for pool digger to help create new habitat for Trout).
- School needs a doctor.
- Use farmland for glamping
- Bars
- Mountain biking on unused farmland.

Ideas to improve businesses, tourism and farming?

- Revitalize tourism is the key opportunity. Guests like scenery, rural landscape. Strive to keep natural landscape so people can take advantage of the scenery.
- Economic development must take advantage of the natural resources and beauty.
- List of events and places to go – more information that is coordinated is needed.
- Advocate for change for NYS rules and regulations
- Need a business liaison to organize businesses events.
- Need more linking and promotion on the internet all together as a group, not as one single business or place. Need positive marketing.
- Expand the E. Durham Events and Happenings Facebook page. (Note discussion was on whether using E. Durham was limiting or whether it needed to be broader. Discussed the Catskills North efforts going on.) People agreed that the outside world had to think of the Town as one, all together, and not just the hamlet.
- Need a marketing agent.

- Get vacant buildings back to use.
- Need to have hospitality training for employees such as at Stewarts so that they understand where and what is going on and can be better ambassadors for Durham.
- Have a tourism kiosk – to bring all places and events together as a whole.
- Need an umbrella identify to tie all hamlets and organizations together in Town.
- Map of all events and recreational places would help.
- There needs to be a physical meeting place for the community.
- There is need to keep dollars local in Town...the more local businesses there are the better. Large corporate businesses here do not keep money here. Need to encourage more small businesses (Noted that GSK is not considered a player locally in supporting the community)
- Find out where people are staying and concentrate marketing efforts there.
- Need to have more ag-tourism so that people can come here and make a day of visiting farms. There is need for more of a critical mass of farm and farm related businesses to attract people staying at Hunter, Windham and other places. Focus on these places and market and promote Durham in those locations.
- Address liability insurance issues.
- Build relationships – we have something people need and want here and we have to provide that (i.e. local farm products) and the we will have the opportunity to tell our story. People are craving roots and connections and simple life. What we do here is what people want. We must work together to do this. People want experiences and ‘we’ve got experience in spades.’