

ELMIRA DRI STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Stakeholder interviews began October 7th, and each interview ran approximately 30-45 minutes. Stakeholders were selected randomly as well as through reference from local officials. Additional interviews are on-going. The following summary provides key highlights from each of the interviews.

Interviewees:

John Maio, New York Sport & Fitness

Mike Wayne, Chemung Canal Trust

DR. Richard Terry, LECOM

Karen Cromer, Clemens Center

Nancy O'Dacre, Arnot Health

Emily Marino, Three Rivers Corporation

Adam Bunce, Turtle Leaf Café

Anita Lewis, VP at EOP a CAP agency

Lynne Rusinko, President Community Arts of Elmira

Joe Caparulo, Community Arts of Elmira

Jennifer Herrick, Exec Dir. Elmira Downtown

Comments

Comments are grouped according to topic. Respondents cited topics of Housing, Commercial Business, Character, Education, Cultural and Recreational activities, and Administration.

Housing

We want [the City] to provide the housing. My hope is that most will live here in walking distance to Elmira College. They can really help with revitalization. Right now they are living in new multifamily near mall and restaurants.

Improved housing will help us. Before and after shows activity is what we need.

If you built some cool lofts here, who wouldn't want to live here?

A lot live in Horseheads.

Commercial Business

The garage is dirty, bad reputation, homeless hang out there. Hasn't been taken care of. People will park at the bank but not at the garage. So my main concern is that no matter what the city does, my customers won't park there.

The one thing I don't understand is why they aren't using the garage for the new project instead of the parking lot.

There are many businesses that come and go.

I think people want to see more in downtown. But the only retail that works is with places with their own parking. The banks, Round at Third, PT.

Now I have more members paying more. Now I have 300 in the higher paying packages. I think people pay to not have the problems associated with cheaper places.

We need more business. We need a more diverse economic base from an employment standpoint.

We struggle attracting senior level people here. It just has no pizzazz compared to Boston, Rochester, even Albany. We do struggle on this end. We hire a lot of clerical right out of high school and community college.

We are not growing, and there are not significant opportunities.

Innovation Corridor? Yes, I do think this will help because it reminds them of how accessible we are. There is so much undeveloped land in the 86 corridor.

We are still struggling because we are just simply overtaxed.

City Club or Country Club is where I take clients. But really, there are just not a lot of destination centers.

Parking is, apparently, an issue. Really, we have a parking convenience problem.

Arnot Mall down the road is where we go to shop.

No one has ever talked about starting businesses here.

We can't get millennials to move here.

I have always been drawn to Mom and Pops. Turtle Leaf is like the face of Elmira. There are a lot of up and comers who are really taking the chances, making changes.

I think a high end hotel would be great. Niche destination. I would love to see, once things start changing, more boutique-y type shops.

They aren't going to let just anyone open up in their space. "We don't need any more failures."

Farmers market is a great event. From 200-600 people every week, depending on weather.

My average customer is a woman 35-45. 70%w and 30%m.

Hardest thing is to attract new business to Downtown

I don't think NYS does a good job at supporting small business.

We need more restaurants, etc.

The Live after 5 events have been very successful. The adjacent stores that stayed open showed increased business

I think there are many people working out of the homes.

Many people trying to start businesses, but need support with business planning

NY Main Street Loan Program and Façade program help small business

Businesses don't stay open late enough to serve people looking for dining or entertainment after work or after the theater lets out.

We used to have big stores like Penny's, but lost them when the malls started to open.

People from here will travel to Corning for entertainment and dinner

Elmira Overall

Over 11 years, we had the gas industry which gave us a big bump. Other than that, society in general is getting more physically healthy. But they also have a lot more options now. They focus on training.

I am a lifelong resident. And other than 6 months, have never lived anywhere else. I've always been involved with the community. No plans to leave. My philosophy is I don't need to start over in Florida.

We've got lots of problems in Elmira, but we have just as many good things. I like the small town.

Personally, I think Downtown is a viable location.

Elmira seems to miss opportunities. No risk, no reward. And it seems like they are fractured. I don't think it's a lack of money. I think it is more a lack of leadership. People feel burned out, inability to make anything happen.

Drugs are a problem here.

Making more socio-economic opportunities will be big.

My staff talks well of Elmira.

Corning was underwater in 1972. They look great now. You can't use that as an excuse.

In summertime many people leave on weekends to go to the Fingerlakes

Character of Downtown

I think we have a tremendous opportunity to clean up with what we've got and start new with what we don't want anymore. This building looks great. You can take an old building and make them look great. But we have so much deferred maintenance

We have a great parking garage, but it's filthy and poorly lit.

I have never in 36 years, eaten dinner and stayed for a show downtown.

My priorities are Water Street, Church Street, and everything in between with Columbia and viaduct. Pathway between Clemens and Arena is huge. There are very few places where you can sit outside. And even if they do, it wouldn't be clean.

Housing and downtown social life is lacking. No Starbucks. In Erie, LECOM bought a coffee place just to have a place for students to hang out and study.

There are safety issues. For a city of this size we have a lot of pockets of just badness. One of my residents has been robbed three times.

"Very Grey" city

It's how students react getting to downtown. It's just not safe. It's the same road where the bar got shot up not that long ago. College St is the way everyone walks.

Students will only go to downtown if they are in groups of 5 or 6.

If we are going to clean up this block, we need to clean up the garage.

The one thing I don't hear a lot is a worry about crime. But I also don't interact with them daily.

They've done a nice job revitalizing along the river. I love the history and culture of Elmira. It's much longer than Corning.

Nobody is going downtown right now. Unless it's for an event.

The Neighborhoods adjacent to downtown are important and might be targeted for a series of smaller projects.

Could use streetscape projects in a few strategic locations

Cultural & Recreational Activities

The arena is a great facility. Once we figure out management, it will make big difference.

My staff is young. They all love being here, but they all want more stuff to do. Even with the college here, there just aren't places to things like dance, be cultural, etc. No, I don't believe that college students are coming downtown.

The summer event series was successful (they had great weather). Usually got 300-400. Adding another near arena in two weeks. Farmers market on Thursday is big draw.

Clemons Center: 180,000 people are coming through the doors a year. Working to expand outside our wall as much as we can.

Elmira Downtown is a great partner. We would like to tie in with them on the street painting event. Face painting. It could be a little bonus for us with concessions.

We don't go to First Arena very often. It's dirty. I feel like I need a shower when I leave. Actually, it's been a debacle. And that should be one of the biggest draws to downtown.

Elmira Street Painting Festival attracts 5000 visitors

It's a great place for running. The Lackawanna trail is something they could approve.

Would like a public square, at Clemens Square, as a gathering space for daily use

The Arena isn't working. They don't have concerts there. They play hockey. But all the kids coming out of there are white. They are not doing more diverse programming.

"We have Clemensed ourselves to Death"

The arena is a great facility. Once we figure out management, it will make big difference.

Waterfront park improvements would be great, need activities and greenery

Need arts and culture, its part of our history including vaudeville, writing, poetry, and more. Support the creative economy as part of Elmira.

The Arena was a public war, required demolition of good buildings, didn't have the impact promised

Could use working space for artists

Shortage of Entertainment here

The Arena was full on opening night of Hockey

Education

Three Rs: Reading, 'Righting' and 'Arithmetic'. They just don't have the same educations that we did. It's a little disappointing.

Elmira is 1,180 students, but they are completely silo'ed.

School kids were redistricted. Some people fought this. Now better.

Administrative, Implementation

I know there are incentives for new business, but they go away.

People just aren't willing to pay these kinds of taxes. Hard to emphasize how big of a deal this is. The more that we expand the property tax base, maybe they will go down for all of us.