



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie, City Hall Unveil Plan to Create Jobs and Opportunity at Psych Center Campus

PATTY RITCHIE February 21, 2014

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### **'Land Transfer' Bill Aims to Get Unused Land Back on the Tax Rolls, Help Community Grow**

State Senator Patty Ritchie announced she will be introducing legislation next week to transfer 160 vacant acres of surplus land at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center to the City of Ogdensburg as part of a long-term comprehensive program to redevelop the campus.

Senator Ritchie has been working with Ogdensburg Mayor William Nelson and City Manager John Pinkerton over the past two months to develop a plan to transform blighted properties at the 125-year-old Psychiatric Center into economic development assets to create opportunities for new jobs and growth.

[\*\*CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION ON THE SLPC CAMPUS PLAN\*\*](#)

The proposal was endorsed by the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center Task Force on Thursday. The Ogdensburg City Council will consider a proposal to endorse the plan Monday.

Senator Ritchie will present the legislation to members of State Assembly and State Senate delegation representing St. Lawrence County in the state legislature on Wednesday to seek their support. Assemblywoman Addie J. Russell has announced her support for the plan.

Members of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center Task Force who endorsed the plan Monday included: Chair Charles W. Kelly, Public Employee Federation President Virginia Davey, St. Lawrence County Legislator Joseph Lightfoot, Mayor Nelson, St. Lawrence County Sheriff Kevin Wells, NYSCOPBA representative Greg Tarbox, former Binghamton Psychiatric Center Deputy Director John Burke, City Manager John Pinkerton, St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency Director Patrick Kelly, Laura Ashley, Jaime Weber, Rena Mee and Greg Sharland.

“Two months ago, Governor Cuomo promised to preserve vital jobs and mental health services at the campus. Now we have an opportunity to work with the Governor again to take the blighted properties and empty buildings at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and transform them into an asset to help create new jobs and opportunities for the people of the North Country,” said Senator Ritchie.

“It won’t happen overnight. But over the past two months I have been working with the City of Ogdensburg and the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency to develop a comprehensive approach to redeveloping the properties.”

“By transferring some of the vacant properties to the City, we can begin a pilot program to show the entire state how a community can transform underutilized assets into a transformational opportunity for the region,” Senator Ritchie said.

“The City of Ogdensburg has agreed to use the proceeds from the sale of the parcels to develop a revolving fund that would allow the community to redevelop other properties and buildings.”

The St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center campus covers more than 400 acres. Senator Ritchie is proposing to take four parcels, comprising 160 acres that the Office of Mental Health has already declared surplus properties, and transfer them to local control.

Ogdensburg currently has the distinction of having the second most tax exempt land in the state which creates a strain on local taxpayers to support vital services.

The four parcels provide opportunities for redevelopment, including:

- Waterfront housing
- Public access to the river
- Land for industry
- Retail
- Recreation

“This plan is a more sensible, phased approach than past efforts,” Senator Ritchie said. “Getting one or two of these parcels developed will make a notable improvement in our local economy. Our ultimate goal

should be to get every piece of surplus land on to the tax rolls."

The Senator's plan excludes most of the abandoned buildings on the property, and aims its focus on largely vacant, available parcels. It is believed that the condition of the aging buildings may have scared off potential developers in the past.