



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

North Country Leaders Peer Into the Future at Psych Center

PATTY RITCHIE June 5, 2014

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Ritchie's Land Transfer Plan Focus of Multiagency Tour

State Senator Patty Ritchie, Ogdensburg city and St. Lawrence County officials Thursday toured a 45-acre parcel at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center that is at the center of a plan to transform the unused property for economic and job growth.

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Representatives from the state Mental Health, Corrections and Economic Development agencies were on hand for the tour, which also featured a presentation by Ogdensburg's city manager and city planner of a broad vision to redevelop the unused land, which is being made available to the city as a result of special legislation that Senator Ritchie was able to include in the State Budget.

“The North Country has an opportunity to turn an underused eyesore, including vacant, long-abandoned buildings and unneeded surplus land, into an asset that can be used to help create jobs and revitalize our region’s economy,” Senator Ritchie said.

“There's increasing excitement about this plan, and today's tour gave state leaders and the community a chance to see the potential and how important this project is to our future.”

"I am grateful to OMH and our state leaders for the attention they are giving this initiative. Working together, we are showing that we can make positive change, build a brighter future for the North Country and strengthen and protect the Psych Center's mission."

The land is situated along Route 37, close to the international Ogdensburg-Prescott Bridge. It is one of four parcels at the Psych Center that the state has previously identified as surplus, and under Senator Ritchie’s plan, would be immediately available to developers once the final transfer from state to city control is complete.

In addition to discussing the 45-acre parcel, the leaders also explored opportunities to develop other unused land at the Psych Center, as well as the future of an onsite energy plant, waterfront parcels and the need for new housing at the site to be used by facility staff.

“Today’s tour gave city and other local representatives a chance to make our case to the state agencies about this very well designed plan, win their support, and hopefully speed the transfer of this property so that we can get North Country residents to work building out future,” Senator Ritchie said.

The idea for the land transfer came last year, when Senator Ritchie recognized the potential of using strong community support that had grown up around efforts to preserve mental health care services at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and redirect that energy to seek a new purpose for the underused lands. Ogdensburg city leaders, led by Mayor Bill Nelson, City Manager John Pinketon and City Planner Andrea Smith, jumped at the proposal and devised a comprehensive plan for future development of the parcels, which would be returned to the city's tax rolls for the first time in 100 years.

She was able to convince Albany leaders to include the transfer in the State Budget.