

Part Three

Redevelopment Strategies



Most hamlets in the Adirondack Park are located along and shaped by waterfronts.

Objectives

The following eight sections illustrate sketch plans and discuss options for redeveloping Adirondack hamlets. The material is intended to suggest directions rather than present completed proposals. Users of the manual can draw from these ideas in addressing problems in their individual communities. Local initiatives, community networking and organization are vitally important to ensure that future development and change occurs.

The eight areas defined as redevelopment strategies are:

WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION
RECREATION AND TOURISM
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
HISTORIC RESOURCES
INFILL SITES
PUBLIC SPACES
WATER AND SEWER
HUMAN RESOURCES

Redevelopment Strategy One:

Waterfront Revitalization

An exhibit at the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake notes that “the mountains and forests lend glory to the Adirondacks, but abundant and diverse water gives the region a distinction nearly unique to the American landscape.” Waterfronts are a pervasive and critical resource in most Adirondack hamlets, yet the hamlets for the most part have not taken full advantage of this resource as an open space amenity for attracting investment. Strategies for making good use of waterfront features are the topic of this section.

Waterfronts occur in many shapes and forms in the Adirondacks; in fact, the great variety is itself worthy of note. These range from the many trout streams which slice through the core of hamlets to the placid waters of small lakes that provide interesting settings for hamlets in the Park. Community use of water features can also vary from recreation to power generation, to a source for both water supply and sewage disposal.

Some typical problems involving waterfronts and their potential development in many Adirondack hamlets were identified by the consultant team working with the county planners and local residents. Recognizing and understanding these problems represent steps toward developing realistic solutions.

Waterfront Issues

In this study, six major waterfront problems in the hamlets emerged:

Water Quality and Sewage Disposal

This is a critical problem in almost all hamlets near waterways. Surface water in the Adirondacks generally needs to be processed for drinking. A major problem, however, is that numerous communities dump raw, untreated sewage directly into rivers. A similar issue is the location of septic tanks and leach fields in low-lying areas near lakes. Willsboro is a good example of a small community desperately in need of an inexpensive community sewer system.

Flooding

Flooding and its control is another waterfront problem in many communities. A specific example is Ausable Forks. In this community, problems come not so much from heavy rains as from ice jams on the Ausable River in early spring. The movement of ice on the river can create rapid and unpredictable flooding of low-lying hamlet areas.

Access

Three types of access become important in utilizing waterfront areas as a valuable hamlet resource. These are:

- **Vehicular**—Is it possible for boats and trailers to easily get to the waterfront if that is an appropriate use? Are there places for parking and overnight storage of vehicles and equipment for extended water trips?
- **Pedestrian**—Are there specific areas for pedestrians to stroll along and enjoy the waterfront, including beach and parking facilities? Are these connected to parks or other green spaces in the community? Are there areas for parking and other necessary facilities?
- **Visual**—Can the water be seen and enjoyed by visitors passing through the community? Are there opportunities for long views and vistas across water as well as shorter views within the hamlet? This is an issue of particular importance in the hamlet of Star Lake.

Shorefront Land Ownership

How much of the waterfront is privately owned in a community and how much is available for public use? Large areas of privately-owned land generally limit access and create problems for future development.



Waterfront Revitalization

"Different types of waterfronts can generate different kinds of activities and development possibilities."

Federal and State Regulations

Governmental regulations concerning waterfronts are often perceived as problems in a community's development potential. What are the specific regulations and how will these aid in attracting certain types of desirable development to a hamlet's waterfront?

Use of Released Waterfront Sites

Many old industrial sites or tourist hotels which historically occupied prime locations along waterfronts have been removed in recent years offering outstanding sites for possible waterfront development in hamlets. Such a situation occurred in Keeseville with the burning of the old Prescott Mill building in 1968. Through community efforts, the site was transformed into a public park overlooking the Ausable River. A similar area exists in Port Henry along the shoreline on lands once occupied by Republic Steel.

These six problems will be addressed in this section of the manual as we look at development and revitalization possibilities for waterfronts.



Hamlets dot the Lake Champlain waterfront forming the eastern edge of the Adirondack Park.

Waterfront Types

There are several waterfront types found in Adirondack hamlets. To assist hamlets in identifying waterfront characteristics, these types are listed below with assets described for each.

Riverfront

Flow Through—These waterfront areas are along rivers flowing unimpeded through hamlets, such as in Bloomingdale or Ausable Forks. Often they are acknowledged only at bridge crossings and perhaps go unnoticed by visitors. While closely tied physically to the hamlet form, visually they are often ignored. Recreational activities such as fishing and canoeing may occur along these riverfronts, although problems of pollution may deter such activities.

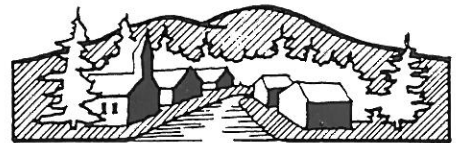
Dammed River—Rivers dammed by old hydropower or industrial structures offer a more accessible opportunity to communities, both as a visual amenity within the hamlet and as an area for increased recreational activity. The visibility and aesthetic quality of such waterfronts can be experienced both in Willsboro and Wilmington. One problem is that of maintenance both of the dam structure and of debris and sediment which collect behind the dam.

Wilderness Shoreline

Rugged Shoreline—This waterfront found in some of the Wilderness Outpost hamlets can occur along either rivers or lakes. The rocky, rugged, and often steep shoreline creates numerous problems of access and use. The visual quality of such areas is generally outstanding and should be maximized as a tourist amenity.

Bog, Swampy—Such waterfronts are not very common in hamlets but do exist in some of them, such as Indian Lake. A high water table, wetland vegetation, and a complex ecosystem suggest such areas are best left undisturbed as natural areas that contribute to the wilderness qualities of a community.

"Waterfronts are a pervasive and critical resource in most Adirondack hamlets."



Waterfront Revitalization



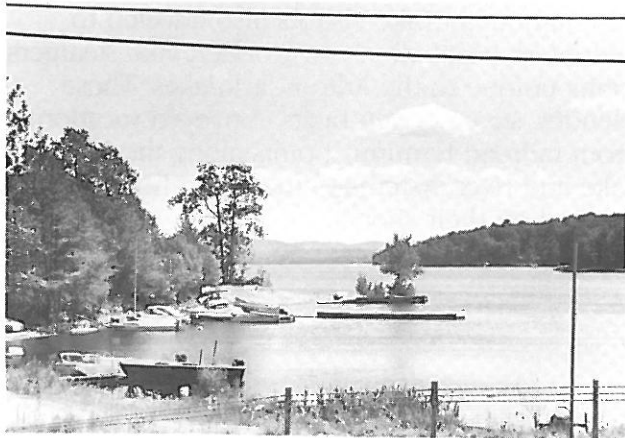
Riverfront

A typical riverfront scene in Ausable Forks.



Wilderness Shoreline

Many Adirondack hamlets are sited on wilderness shorelines such as here at Long Lake.



Lakefront

Cranberry Lake offers the characteristic qualities of the many Adirondack hamlet lakefronts.

Lakefronts

Small Lakes—Waterfronts on small, maintained lakes offer some of the most intimate and picturesque shoreline locations in the Adirondacks. Because these were sought-after locations for summer home vacationers at the turn of the century, many such waterfronts are often almost entirely privately owned, offering little opportunity for tourist access or expanded recreational use today. Star Lake is a good example of this situation. Some unusually small water bodies create the effect of a "lake within a hamlet" offering opportunities for park development such as at Wanakena or in the hamlet of Brant Lake in Warren County.

Large Lakes—Hamlets on large lakes generally acknowledge waterfrontage as the outstanding amenity in the village. A great variety of recreational opportunities is available and should be marketed, including a large beach for swimming and water skiing. The scenery is often beautiful and the setting outstanding for hamlets on these waterfronts. Cranberry Lake and Long Lake are good examples of such communities.

Lake Champlain—Waterfronts along the shores of Lake Champlain have a much different character and offer different opportunities than those along inland lakes. The openness and vast spaces across the lake are in sharp contrast to the intimate spatial quality of the other lakes. Communities are usually much farther from the lake shore, often sitting high on a bluff overlooking the lake, as at Port Henry. The large size of Lake Champlain and its significant recreational boat traffic present many possibilities for marinas and seasonal home developments in, or near, the lakefront hamlets.



Waterfront Revitalization

"Waterfronts have played a major role in most of the historical and cultural development of the Adirondacks."

Historic Importance of Waterfronts

As water has always had a unique meaning and character in the Adirondacks, so have the many waterfronts been the arenas of much of the human history which has taken place in this area over the last two hundred years. Understanding this history helps explain not only the physical forms of hamlet evolution, but also offers clues for redevelopment and revitalization of historic areas and activities along waterfronts.

Following many years of conflict in the late 18th century, settlements began appearing along Adirondack waterfronts. This occurred not only along Lake Champlain, but also inland throughout the vast wilderness. Early settlers invariably located along rivers or lake shores, not for the scenic quality of these sites, but to use the water for power and transportation. The common practice of settling along rivers and lake shores was a major element in the physical forms which these communities took as they evolved through time. River hamlets often became linear settlements straddling a waterway as it cut through the river valley.

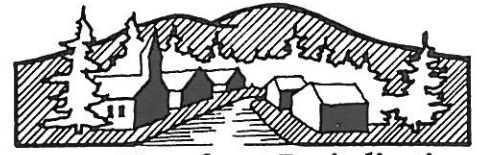
This was not true of lake shore settlements, however. Because the earliest pioneers in the Adirondacks were generally farmers or land speculators, they occupied the higher and more fertile ground away from lake locations. Flat, tillable land was considered more valuable than the sandy, rocky soil often present along lake shores. It was only with the coming of summer vacationers and the concept of water bodies as a scenic resource that the concentric lake communities that we see today began to form.

The industrial enterprises which arrived in the Adirondacks in the mid-19th century greatly increased development along waterfronts. Mills needed water for power as well as for industrial operations such as iron forging and paper making. The rivers became important transportation routes for moving the millions of logs felled in Adirondack forests to mills further down the rivers.

Many of the lakes and rivers of the Adirondack Region were altered during this period as man attempted to adapt waterways to his needs. Rivers such as the Boquet, Ausable and LaChute had scores of dams constructed across them as each industrial site attempted to take best advantage of the river's power. On the Oswegatchie River a major dam was constructed by the State of New York in the 1860's to enable lumbering operations to send logs down the river more easily and throughout the entire year. The great lake created, and on which the hamlets of Cranberry Lake and Wanakena are located, attest to man's involvement in the changing of Adirondack waterways.

Waterfronts were critical to generating the businesses which continue to be the major economic activity in the Adirondacks—tourism and recreation. In the 1850's and 60's early hunters and sportsmen began making treks to the area to indulge in various sports and camp along lakes and rivers. From this activity came the great camps, known for their beautiful and dramatic use of lakefront sites, and the grand and lavish hotels which generally had a lake or riverfront location. The Prospect House, built at Blue Mountain Lake in 1885, had a grand view of the lake from its rocky knoll above the lake.

Blue Mountain Lake visitors also traveled to mountain destinations on wooden lake steamers, crafts unique to the Adirondack lakes. These slender, steam-driven boats conveyed vacationers from railroad terminus points along the intricate lake and river systems to the grand hotels located on their shores.



Waterfront Revitalization

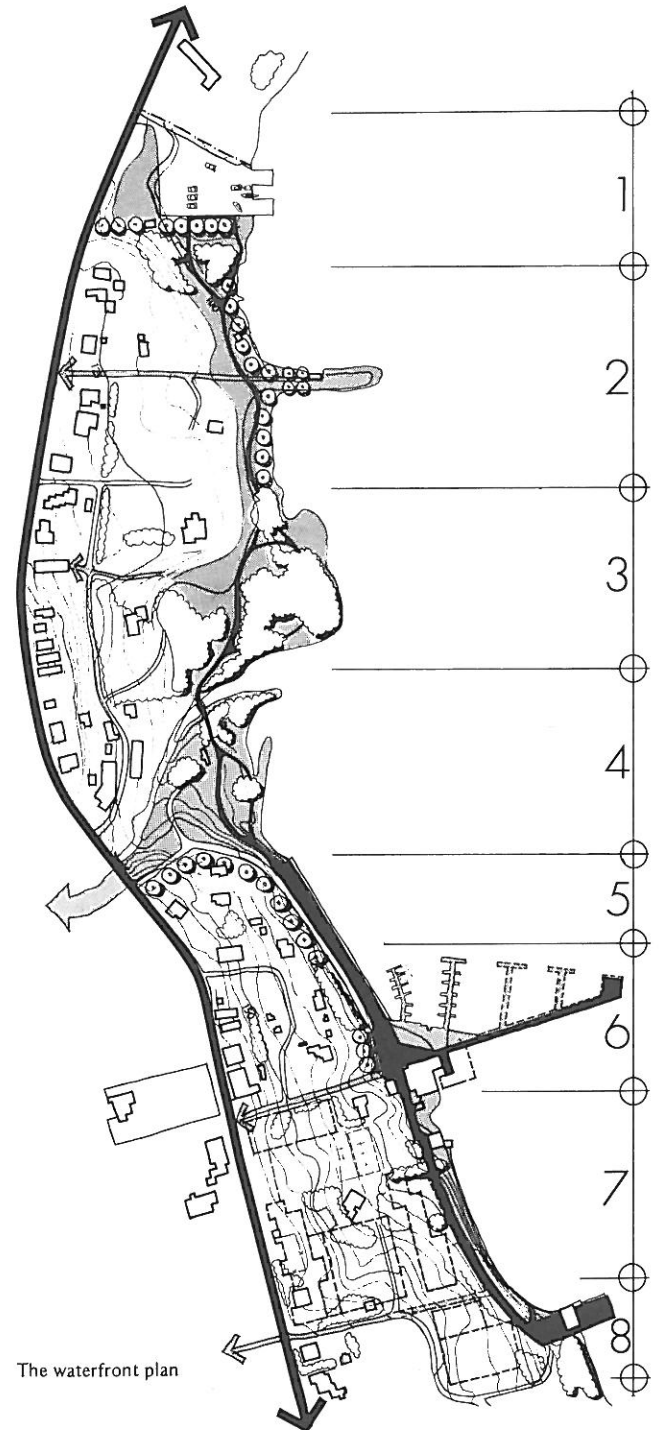
Waterfront Plans

Having identified major problems associated with waterfronts, described generic types, and discussed their historical importance, we can now begin to look at plans which suggest ways to undertake revitalization of specific waterfronts within Adirondack communities. Six examples are described in which communities either have already generated, or are anticipating waterfront revitalization programs. These programs are intended to improve not only the economic value and utilization of land, but the visual and physical quality of the water's edge as well. The six examples are: river trails, beach development, water power, water themes, commercial marinas and waterfront parks.

The Westport waterfront plan is shown here as an example of a community which developed a comprehensive scheme for revitalizing its waterfront in 1977.

The Action Plan and its Parts

1. **Boat Launch** — Owned and operated by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Negotiate for pedestrian link, shared parking facilities and landscape improvements.
2. **Old Wharf** — Acquire property presently for sale and improve. Negotiate pedestrian easement through adjoining private properties.
3. **Village Park** (Village owned) — Screen treatment plant and seek federal grant for developing park, recreation activities program and link up to WADA teen center and community facility.
4. **Village Beach** (Village owned) — Seek grant for improving beach and water quality.
5. **Mill Street** — Acquire easement through private property at water's edge and develop pedestrian promenade with a public improvement grant.
6. **Marina** — Secure improvements loan to expand marina-docking facilities and renovate or construct new utility building(s); provide for additional parking spaces and landscape the area.
7. **Inn Property** — Acquire property presently for sale and request developer proposals with special district zoning conditions and guidelines; eventually re-sell property for development in whole or in parts.
8. **Yacht Club** — Secure developer to acquire property for renovation into restaurant/outdoor cafe, parking and landscape improvements. (The development corporation could also acquire this property and dispose of it as in 7. above.





Waterfront Revitalization

River Trails

Rivers as Interpretive Trails: The Boquet

We should recognize that many waterways are corridors which link several hamlets and serve to create subregional groupings along waterway systems. Because of the history and industrial development associated with these systems, an interpretive trail highlighting this history offers one opportunity for utilizing the riverfront resources found in many Adirondack communities. While an interpretive trail along a river can be organized within a single community and take advantage of local resources, a more diversified trail could be created by linking several hamlets. Such a possibility exists along the Boquet River in northeastern Essex County. Connecting these hamlets by an interpretive trail would not only enhance the public space within the hamlets, but would also encourage visitors to the Park to spend time in these communities.

The movement along such an interpretive trail from hamlet to hamlet could be accomplished in several ways. One would be the creation of canoe trails along the river. In each community, a small park or open space would allow canoeists to stop, use the facilities, wander through the hamlet and read over the interpretive brochures or plaques in the park. Another strategy would be bike trails, either along the river or along existing roads with identifiable stops in the hamlets.



The hamlet of Whallonsburg could be one of several stops along an interpretive trail featuring the Boquet River.



The proposed plan for the Boquet River interpretive trail system.

In such a group, one could organize a trail which would be unique in each hamlet and yet illustrate a cultural and historical interpretation of the entire region. In the Boquet group, the trail could begin in Elizabethtown with a discussion of community government and the early history of the river valley. Wadham's could demonstrate the role of water power in the industrial history of the area with a possible tour of the restored hydro plant in the hamlet. Whallonsburg would illustrate the role of agriculture in the Champlain Valley region, with its nearby farms and its farm-service businesses as contemporary examples. A stop at the Boquet schoolhouse and a short trip into Essex could highlight the cultural and social history of the area with its beautifully restored shops and homes. A final stop in Willsboro could relate both the historic significance of the hamlet and its emerging role as a recreation center on Lake Champlain.

Beaches



Waterfront Revitalization



The beach at Long Lake offers spectacular views to the Adirondack wilderness beyond.

Beaches as Summer Recreation Centers

Developing a waterfront area as a major public beach is a common redevelopment theme and can be an outstanding use of such a location if the beach is properly designed and utilized. A beachfront generally contains a large public area for sun bathers and swimmers. Bathhouses and rest rooms are necessary as well as maintenance staff and lifeguards. The location of a beachfront within a hamlet can create a significant visual and recreational amenity but at the same time can cause problems of access, circulation and parking. The hamlet of Long Lake illustrates such a situation where a narrow beach area along the lake is at a major entrance to the community. The beach is an important activity generator and "image-maker" in the hamlet, but in planning for increased usage in the future, beach parking and safe pedestrian access must be provided.

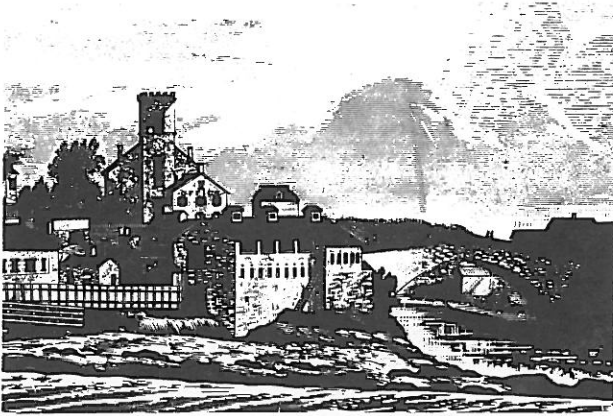
Expanding the use of such an amenity to include other functions increases the activity and utilization of such a beachfront. At Long Lake the beach is the arrival and departure point of Helm's Aero Service, a seaplane company, which offers additional activity and visual interest. An important pedestrian link could be improved between the beach/hotel area and the retail stores, post office and bank located to the immediate south. Year-round functions could also be investigated to increase the use of the beachfront. Long Lake's "100," an annual snowmobile rally held every March, and Saranac Lake's well-known Winter Carnival illustrate such innovative year-round use.



Waterfront Revitalization

Water Power

Rivers as Generators of Power: Keeseville and Ticonderoga

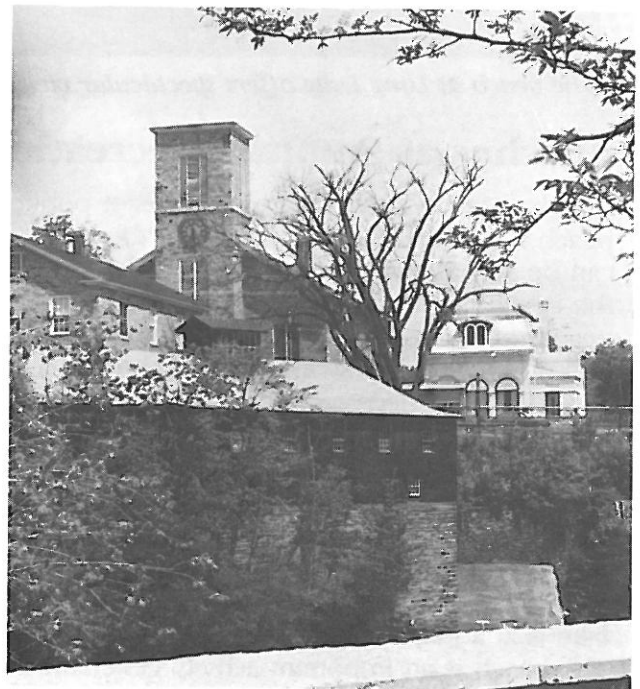


In the early 1800's, the mills along the Ausable River in Keeseville were effectively serviced by water power.

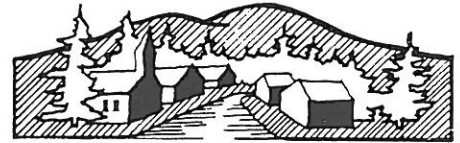
Rivers as a source of power have been a major theme throughout the history of Adirondack hamlets. Water power was an early drawing card to industry in the region and remained so until early in this century. At that time, water power became important in the generation of electricity. Since techniques were not available for insulating long-range transmission lines, communities such as Ticonderoga, Port Henry, Willsboro, Wilmington, Wadhams, Lake Placid, and Keeseville produced their own electricity locally. It is with the remnants of these mills—dams at well-chosen sites, power houses, generating equipment and penstocks in various stages of disrepair—that hydroelectric generation can now be redeveloped at a reasonable cost.

Encouraged by State legislation, the reuse of such water power sites and facilities creates opportunities for redevelopment in numerous Adirondack communities. In Keeseville, this approach is being promoted by the Friends of Keeseville. The site of the hydroplant is the old Prescott Mill buildings constructed in 1835 of Ausable River sandstone. Although the large mill structure was destroyed by fire in 1968, remnants of the water system still exist and will be utilized in the new operations.

To date, the community has spent approximately seventy thousand dollars in predevelopment costs, while the estimated capital cost of the facility is 2.7 million. The Village has filed an application of exemption from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and is waiting for acceptance of the filing. The money generated from revenues will be split two or three ways—Friends of Keeseville and the Village will take a share, and possibly a third will go to a limited partnership syndication. In order to have a financially feasible project, the community needs to borrow the 2.7 million for forty years at 5% interest. Because this is unlikely, Friends of Keeseville has applied for a one million dollar grant in order to write down the capital investment. If this grant is received, financing from conventional sources will enable the hydro plant to proceed. The hydro plant will produce one megawatt of power.



The mill structures in Keeseville that remain today remind us of the historic importance of water power.



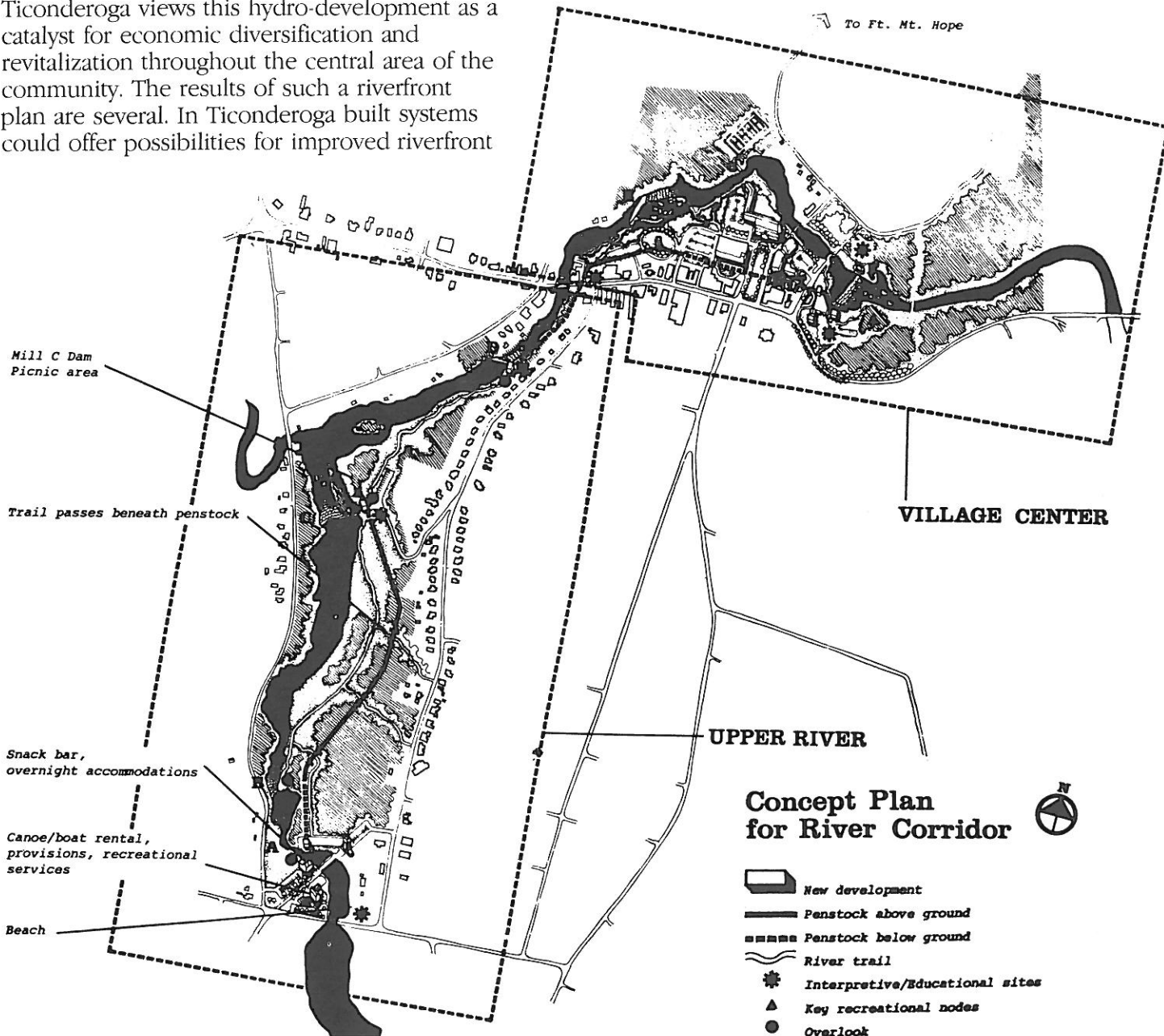
Waterfront Revitalization

A similar opportunity for developing hydropower occurs along the LaChute River in the village of Ticonderoga. Here the spectacular waterway drops over 212 feet through a series of six magnificent waterfalls within the boundaries of the community.

While both Keeseville and Ticonderoga anticipate income from the sale of electricity, Ticonderoga views this hydro-development as a catalyst for economic diversification and revitalization throughout the central area of the community. The results of such a riverfront plan are several. In Ticonderoga built systems could offer possibilities for improved riverfront

parks and open spaces, serve as an interpretive or educational resource for an energy-conscious society, and provide a limited source of income for the community from the sale of the electrical power.

A hydro-park plan for the village of Ticonderoga.





Waterfront Revitalization

Watersport Themes

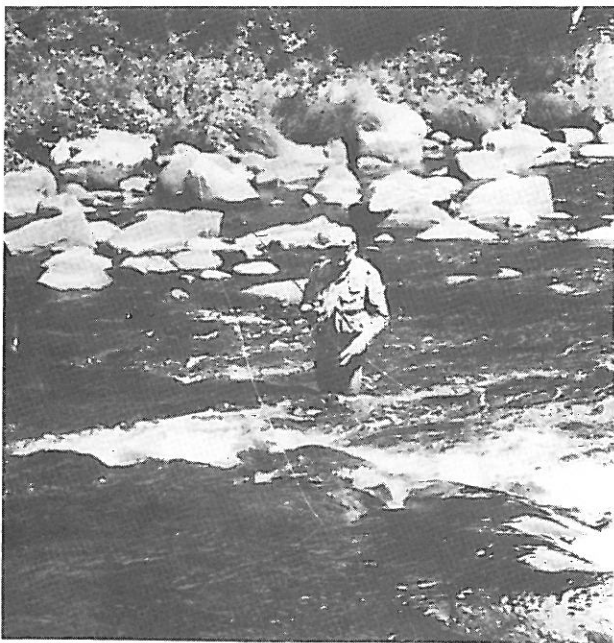
Indian Lake: White Water Rafting



The excitement of rafting near Indian Lake.

A unique recreational opportunity offers a hamlet the chance to revitalize its waterfront by capitalizing on watersport activities. In Indian Lake, white water rafting is taking on such a role. The Hudson River in late spring presents outstanding opportunities for rafting between Indian Lake and communities down-river, including an important terminus at North Creek. Guides, equipment stores, and other outfitters promote economic activity within the hamlet and visitors for restaurants, motels, and other tourist services. This program for development requires cooperation among communities along the river. Starting points and end points must be located, identified and publicized, and facilities must be available to participants.

Wilmington: Trout Fishing Capital



Trout fishing on the Ausable River near Wilmington.

The Ausable River near the hamlet of Wilmington is known as one of the best trout fishing streams in the nation—a reputation which offers a major theme for possible redevelopment. The beauty of trout fishing is that it generates large numbers of visitors and fishermen to a hamlet with minimal levels of investment by the community. The fishermen are drawn by word-of-mouth and other methods of free publicity. Facilities to accommodate such activities, however, need to be developed and made available to visitors. In Wilmington the shop of Francis Betters, well-known fishing authority and author, becomes a landmark which enhances the waterfront theme of the village as a trout fishing capital. Restaurants such as the Hungry Trout serve travelers to Wilmington and also take advantage of recreation activities along the waterfront.

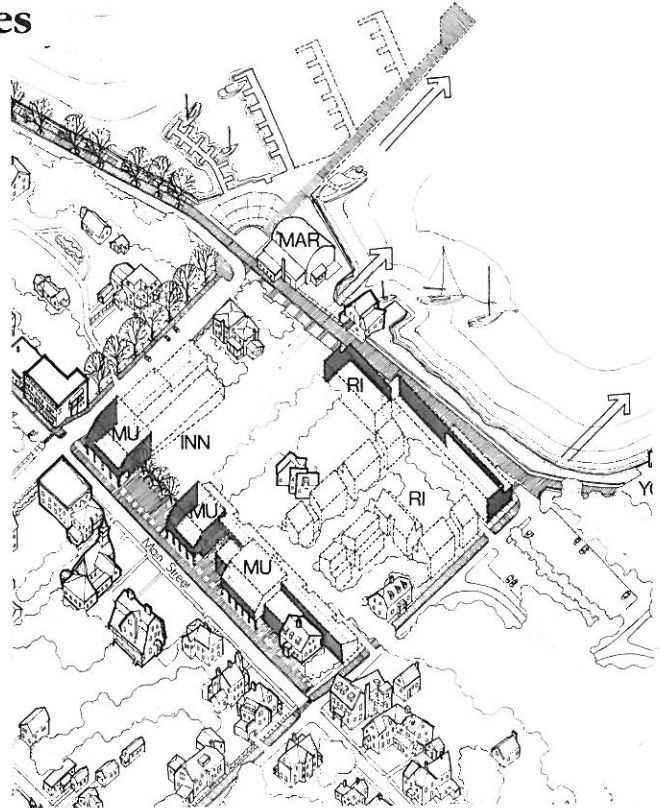
Commercial Marinas



Marinas as Waterfront Opportunities

A growing need for boat and waterfront facilities on Lake Champlain and several large Adirondack lakes suggests the development of marinas and associated activities as a possible waterfront approach for some hamlets. These should be developed at the scale and level of complexity appropriate to the size of the lake and demands of the public. Lake Champlain, in particular, is experiencing a large increase in the number of private pleasure crafts on the lake and is in need of such facilities. Responding to this growing demand is the small hamlet of Westport in Essex County. Although a marina has been located in this community for many years, its current modernization in response to consumer needs is an outstanding example of an effective use of a waterfront resource.

Related development in Westport has included the replication of the old yacht club on the waterfront which now serves as a social center and dining spot for residents and visitors. The new two-story structure revives the style and charm of the old building, which burned in 1982, while functioning as a contemporary facility and income-generator for the hamlet. One potential problem not yet addressed is the acquisition of property or easements to connect the marina, the boat launch, the village beach,



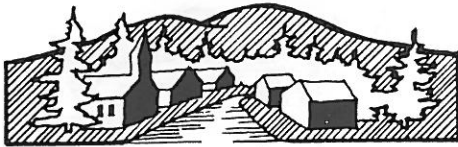
Improving waterfront access is necessary to marina development.

and the yacht club by a pedestrian walkway.

Local grassroots efforts have also promoted waterfront improvement. In 1984, Westport residents concerned with the visual decline of some of the beach areas initiated a major program for beautification with the support of other villagers and funding from the town board. Community commitment has already brought about physical improvement of Lee Park, including the construction of modern playground equipment. Such improvements not only enhance a community's appearance, but contribute to future business and employment conditions.



Rediscovering a village waterfront by intensifying the uses along it.



Waterfront Revitalization

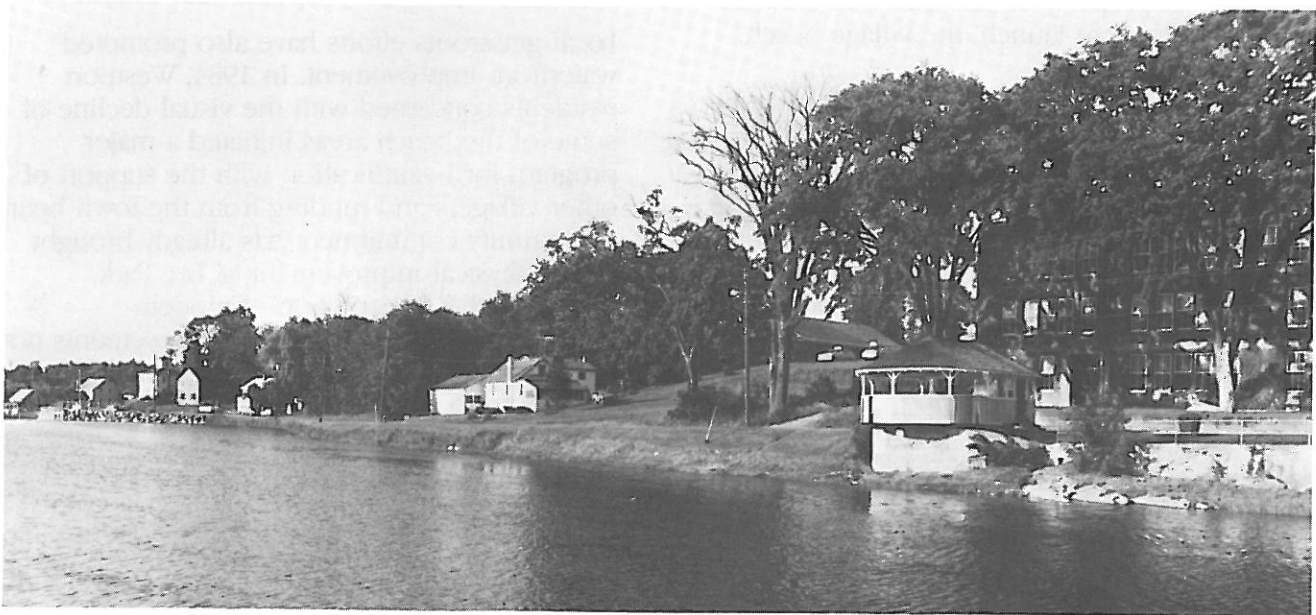
Waterfront Parks

Waterfront Parks as Community Open Space

One possible function of a waterfront within a community is to provide a park or open space. The park may either follow a river or lake edge through a community or be developed at critical locations within the village. Such an open space can enhance the visual characteristics and create activities which would improve the waterfront area around it. The area can give the hamlet a sense of place and serve as the central arrival point for visitors. A tourist or visitor center within the park would allow visitors to enjoy the scenic beauty of the waterfront location while informing them of activities and events occurring in the hamlet and surrounding area. Others might use the park for passive activities such as sitting or strolling along the waterfront. Historic or unique structures, or sites near the park could be identified and emphasized through the design and circulation patterns created within the area. Special events and community activities of all seasons could take place in such a park, generating activity in the old central core of the hamlet.

The hamlet of Willsboro offers a fine example of a community where a waterfront park can create

many of the elements listed. The strength of the old historic hamlet core is being diminished with the removal of government buildings to the community's edge. A waterfront park on the Boquet River would re-emphasize the importance of the older area and offer an inviting physical amenity to both residents and visitors of the hamlet. The linear park should incorporate the new Fish Ladder, the historic mill building, fishing access points, and a future marine park site with small boat launch and possibly camping facilities. The park could feature an interpretive waterfront exhibit of historic mill sites along the river referring to remnant foundations which can still be seen today.



Willsboro's central waterfront park - an outstanding community resource.

Redevelopment Strategy Two:

Recreation and Tourism

Recreation and Tourism

It is hard to overemphasize the importance of recreation and tourism as the major industries of the Adirondack Park. Estimates are that recreational and tourist activities constitute well over 50% of the region's economic base. The very name "park" suggests a wide variety of activities and opportunities which the region offers visitors and residents. These opportunities have historically been one of the reasons for the region's attractiveness to visitors.

The growth of the recreational industry has evolved since its first appearance in the mid-19th century as hunting and camping expeditions, through a period of major hotel and resort destinations, to its current status as a paradise with year-round offerings known the world over. The economic viability of the entire region is inseparably tied to this industry, a fact which creates both problems and opportunities. In looking at recreation and tourism as a redevelopment strategy in hamlets, we must first understand what is meant by these two terms.

RECREATION represents the great range of activities which people do for sport and/or relaxation—primarily outdoors. Skiing, swimming, boating, hiking and snowmobiling are only a few of the recreational offerings of the Adirondacks. Generally these activities require a certain type of location, such as a beach or snowy mountainside; they usually need some preparation or organization of a site, such as a ski lift or a boat dock; and they often demand special equipment, such as skis, canoes, fishing reels or snowmobiles.

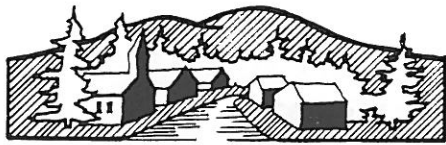
TOURISM is a much broader concept and one more difficult to illustrate by listing specific attractions, functions, events, and services which draw visitors to the Adirondacks and enable them to enjoy their stay. In addition to outdoor recreation activities, tourism includes experiences such as theaters, theme parks, and museums. Scenic drives through the park, tours of small villages, and stops at antique shops are part of tourism. This is the industry which

can be seen in the form of motels, restaurants, camping sites, fast food establishments, and amusement parks throughout the Adirondacks. Requirements are as many and varied as the activities themselves. Some are site specific, such as an auto tour of the High Peaks region; others are much more widespread and oriented to people and activities, such as the location of a sporting goods store or gas station.

To utilize recreation and tourism as a concept for redevelopment, we should look at some of the problems they can and do create.

Both are highly susceptible to the quirks of nature—particularly those of weather. A warm winter, rainy Fourth of July, or cold Labor Day can cause real problems in a local economy based on tourism. It has also been suggested that these local economies have merely been early and inevitable victims of inflation and gas shortages. However, the argument can be made that the relative proximity of the Adirondack Park to major urban areas will make it more attractive, not less, to future gas-conscious travelers.

There are other problems specifically related to the Adirondack Park. Because it is labelled a "park," visitors often arrive expecting a cohesive, interconnected experience. This does not happen. Instead they find fragmented information about attractions, facilities, and accommodations. A lack of Park *identity* is emphasized by a lack of programs interpreting natural and cultural resources of the region. Another problem becomes one of the image of services offered to travelers. "Ma and Pa" camping sites, bed and breakfast inns, and quaint restaurants are giving way to large chain hotels and eating establishments with which the smaller, locally-owned facilities cannot compete. If the character of the Park is to remain unique, measures should be taken to preserve small, local businesses.



Recreation and Tourism

"The physical setting and landscape characteristics determine to a great extent what a hamlet can offer in developing recreation and tourism."

Recreation and Tourism: Types and Seasons

The Adirondack region is well-known for the exceptional variety of recreational and tourist opportunities it offers. Separating these into characteristic groups will lead to an understanding of the best ways of encouraging these activities by providing a clearer picture of alternatives available to local governments. Recreational and tourist activities have been grouped under three basic classifications: Wilderness types; Domestic Outdoor types; and Vehicle/Commercial related.

Domestic Outdoor Types

Such activities are often site-specific with certain preparation of the location required, such as a beach or golf course.

Vehicle/Commercial Related

These activities vary from passive auto tours of fall leaf color to the active involvement of visitors in one of the many theme or amusement parks. Activity can be specific to site, or encompass a wide geographic area.

Individual hamlets can capitalize on the different types of recreation and tourism by consciously offering necessary support facilities, including accommodations, food, gasoline and other services.



One of the many camping opportunities throughout the Park.

Wilderness Types

Wilderness activities occur in the most rugged areas of the Park and are generally equipment-oriented rather than specific to a given site. Backpacks, tents, cross-country skis and climbing equipment are necessary in order to partake in wilderness recreation.



Golfing in the Adirondacks.

Park-wide Strategies



Recreation and Tourism



The challenge of mid-winter ski touring.

The Park-wide Approach

Having reviewed recreation and tourism in a broad sense, we will now suggest some specific development ideas for hamlets. These will be offered at three levels. The first will look at parkwide developments which can take advantage of the unique assets offered by the Park as a whole. The second will examine subregional programs applicable to clusters of hamlets. The third will describe guidelines for individual hamlets and the ways these might be applied.

The leadership and financing of a parkwide approach to tourism and recreational development, including capital investment in visitor and information centers, should come from New York State. A regional organization should devise and implement a program which could accomplish several objectives. First, it could create a unified image which presently does not exist for a visitor to the Park. It could coordinate events and activities and make these known to visitors, and provide a camper's guide which would locate and describe camping opportunities throughout the region. Similar guides could be done for beaches, theaters, arts and crafts shops, bus tours, etc. A parkwide program could also undertake interpretive programs of the cultural and historical resources of the entire area, a project critical to the evolving identity of the Adirondack Park as a place.

Three parkwide strategies are essential for the development of a tourism and recreation concept plan:

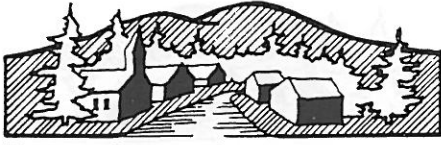
- LOCATION OF TOURIST INFORMATION CENTERS
- IDENTIFICATION OF AMENITY AREAS
- DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM ROUTES

A series of maps describing a comprehensive tourism and recreation program for the Adirondacks in a descriptive folder should be made available to the public.

Tourist Information Centers

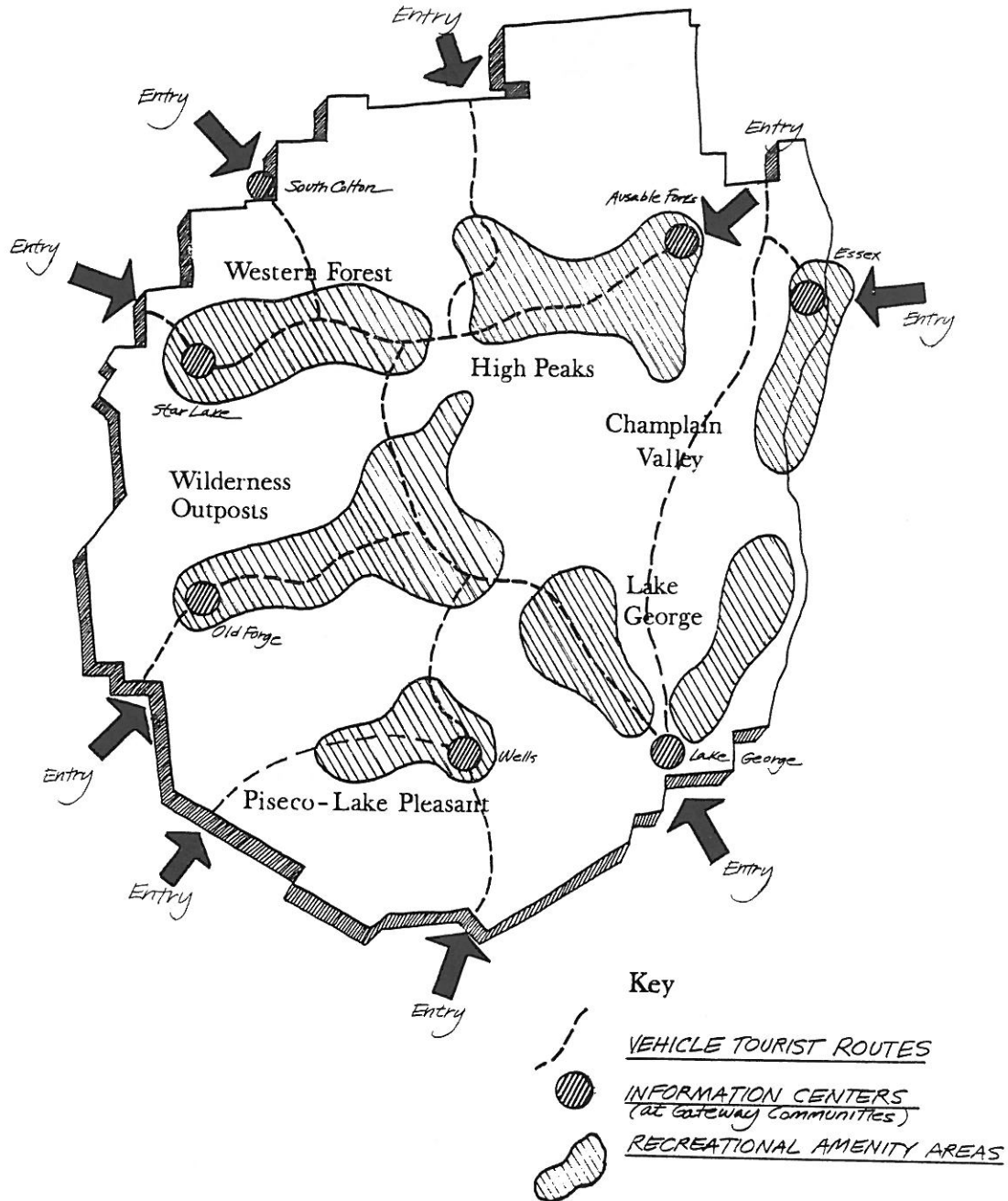
A visitor center network would add greatly to the understanding and appreciation of the Adirondack Park in obvious ways. Such a network should occur at three levels. The first should be a major regional facility near the center of the Park which would become a destination point for visitors. This center would highlight the culture and history of the region and serve as a major information dissemination point. Special events, plays, historical pageants, interpretive slide shows, and other similar activities could be held here regularly.

At the intermediate level would be eight or ten gateway buildings in strategic communities. These would inform visitors of arrival at the Park and offer a variety of information on events, activities, and their locations. Small information booths in numerous Adirondack hamlets throughout the Park would be the local level of tourist centers. These would identify local, hamlet-related facilities available to visitors including travel routes and tours, camping sites and scenic highlights. An information booth in a hamlet would become an important point of interest which would encourage tourists to stop, tour the community on foot, and enjoy local shops and restaurants. Such a coordinated group of information centers would also create a sense of park unity for the traveler visiting different areas of the region.

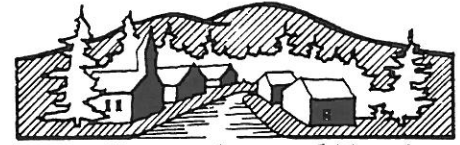


Recreation and Tourism

"A total recreational development plan for the Adirondack Park should be prepared for the year 2000."



Concept Plan for Future Recreation and Tourism



Recreation and Tourism

Amenity Areas

What are the major recreational amenities which attract visitors to the Adirondack Park? Identifying these and grouping similar types by geographic locations and seasonal importance suggest another park-wide strategy. For example, if one or two regions within the Park are major ski regions (Whiteface and Gore Mountain), these would be identified as a major amenity area. This concept, discussed under "Amenity Frontage Concept" in the Phase I publication, page 56, encourages hamlets within or adjacent to such areas to use this classification in their own marketing and development programs. Another area might be identified as a major hiking, camping or wilderness experience area. Again, hamlets in this region would emphasize proximity to trails and campsites, encourage bed and breakfast inns, and develop other services appropriate to these activities. Numerous amenity areas could be identified throughout the Park, not only strengthening and clarifying its image as a major recreational and sports destination, but also giving a clearer focus to hamlets as they develop local marketing information.

Tourism Routes

Tourism routes could offer unique experiences to visitors moving through the Adirondack Park. Whether such tours are made by individuals on foot, on bicycles or in cars, or enjoyed as an organized bus tour, carefully designed routes through the area would extend a visitor's enjoyment and opportunities while in the Park. Due to its large size, the Adirondack Park is usually not experienced in its entirety by any one visitor on a single trip. Interesting and informative tours would encourage more travel, additional sightseeing by travelers, and create longer average stays by visitors to the Park. The local hamlets could be logical stops along a tourism route and could benefit significantly from such a comprehensive system.

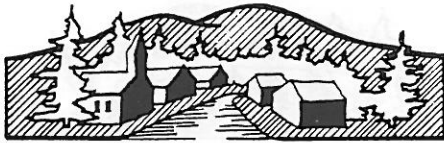


Beach activities are a major utilization of hamlet waterfronts.

Subregional Approaches

Subregional groupings developed in Phase I of this study offer an invaluable opportunity for clusters of Adirondack communities to collectively display their shared geographic assets and to expand their local attractiveness to Park visitors. This **sharing of resources** in relation to tourism and recreation development allows individual hamlets to identify and embellish their own outstanding offerings while at the same time supporting the activities based in adjoining communities. An increased interaction among hamlets would eliminate the repetition of similar activities while allowing individual activities to be more fully developed within a single hamlet. With the subregional formula, the population needed to support certain recreational facilities is expanded, including increased cooperation and the potential for shared advertising.

Two examples of how the subregional grouping concept could enhance recreation and tourism development are elaborated for the **Western Forest Hamlets** and the **Wilderness Outpost Hamlets**.



Recreation and Tourism

Subregional Plans

Western Forest Hamlets Strategy

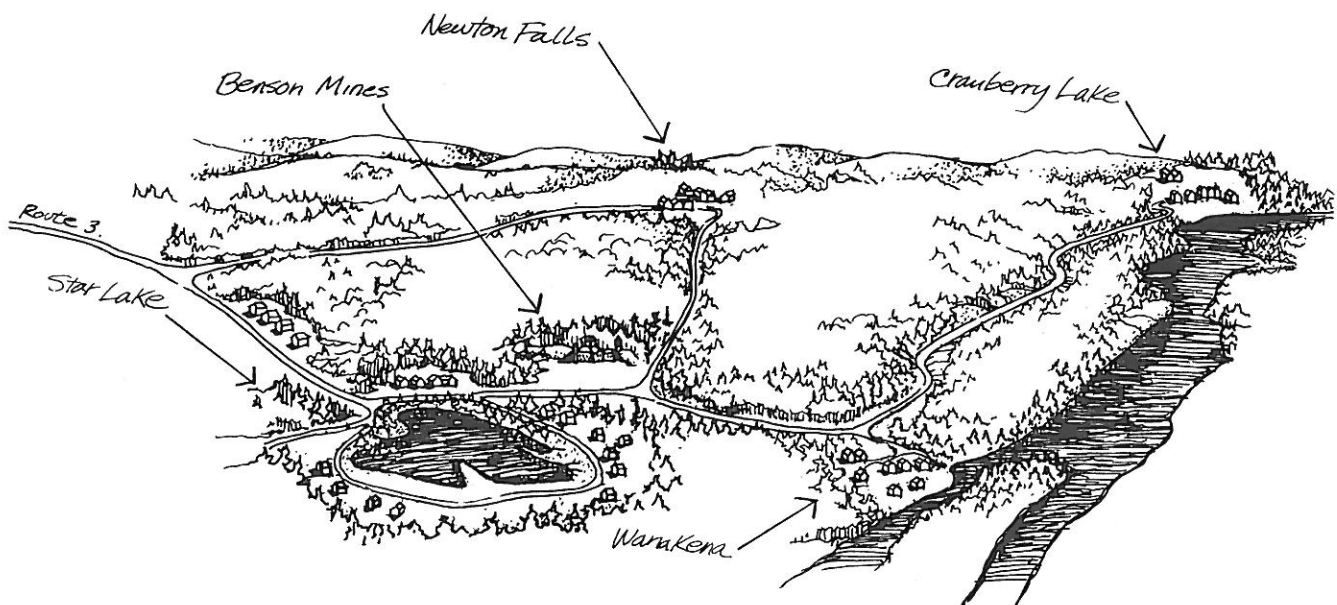
In looking at the Western Forest Hamlets as a subregional group for the development of recreation and tourism, Star Lake emerges as both the geographic and perceived core. The hamlet becomes a *gateway* both into this recreational/tourist district and as an entry point to the Adirondack Park itself. This pivotal role suggests facilities and opportunities the hamlet should offer visitors at this critical location. The community already functions as a major subregional service center. Those services which would be of interest to Adirondack visitors should be emphasized and made inviting to motorists. These would include food markets, gas stations, a post office and banks. As a recreation center, Star Lake would also offer shops or stores selling sports equipment and repair services.

Most important is the need for the hamlet to announce or publicize its key role to Park visitors. Signs and an information center are critical to attracting the attention of motorists driving through the community. Equally important is a place in the hamlet core for the



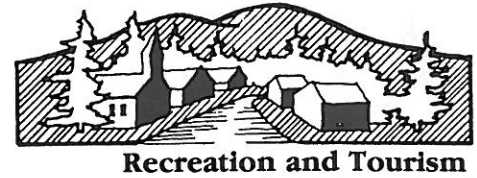
Wanakona offers an important trailhead for recreational tours.

visitor to stop and relax. A major public rest area and visitor center near the lake along Route 3 would be such a location. An information center with a regional map would outline activities and events in the area as well as identify recreation, overnight camping, restaurants and other tourist-related services. Brochures with directional maps would highlight the other hamlets of this group and draw attention to their particular areas of emphasis. Suggested stays of

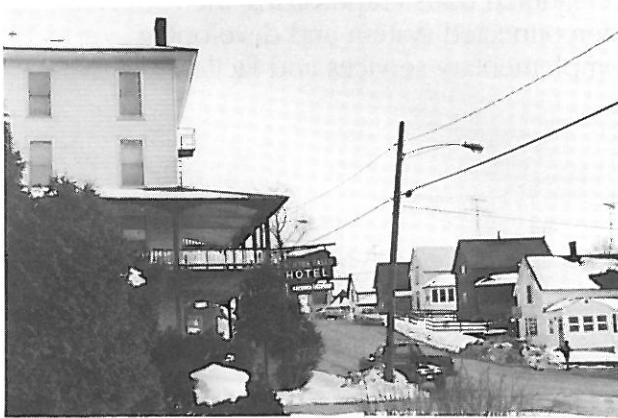


The Western Forest Hamlets - a subregional development group.

"The sharing of resources among hamlets is a key element in the subregional approach to tourism."



one night to one week in the area could be outlined with schedules of activities and things to do. Star Lake could expand its services by offering improved eating and overnight accommodations for visitors interested in staying and taking advantage of the recreation offerings in the hamlet group.

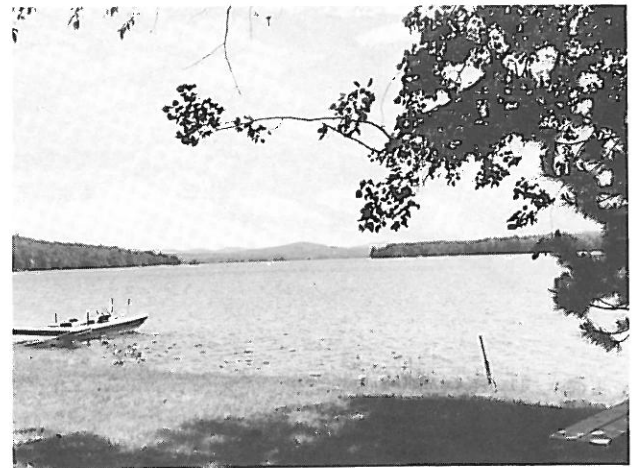


Newton Falls Center and Hotel offers the potential site for a paper products museum.

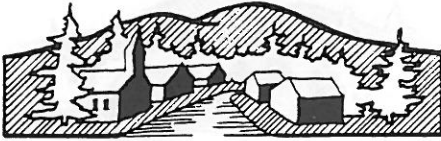
Newton Falls has the special characteristics of an Adirondack pulp mill company town, and would serve as an interpretive and historical destination in the Western Forest Hamlets group. A visitors' parking area in front of the Newton Falls Hotel would allow tourists to pass along the main street of the hamlet, observing the repetitive workers' housing and then arriving at the village open space directly between the mill and company hotel. Here two visitor-related activities could occur. One would be a tour of the working mill illustrating how wood products are manufactured today. The tour could be guided or indicated by well-marked walkways along which a visitor could move unattended. The second activity would be the conversion of the lower portion of the hotel into a lumbering museum illustrating the historical importance of the timber industry in the area and graphically illustrating the growth and evolution of the industry over the last one hundred years.

Cranberry Lake becomes the water sports center of the Western Forest Hamlets group. This function arises from the hamlet's outstanding location on the shores of Cranberry Lake and the lack of opportunities for public water-related activities at either Star Lake or Newton Falls. Swimming, waterskiing, boating and canoeing would all be available to the visitor in this hamlet. The increased use of the lakeshore would require improvement and expansion of beachfront facilities, including parking and a bathhouse for visitors. Weekend events such as organized races or sailing regattas would attract visitors and encourage tourists to stay overnight.

Wanakena is not only an exceptionally scenic community to visit, but offers some unusual opportunities. Tours around the scenic hamlet and along Cranberry Lake are highlighted by a walk across the historic wooden footbridge. Another event is a visit to the State Ranger School, a branch of the New York State College of Environmental Science and Forestry, located just a mile and a half from the hamlet.



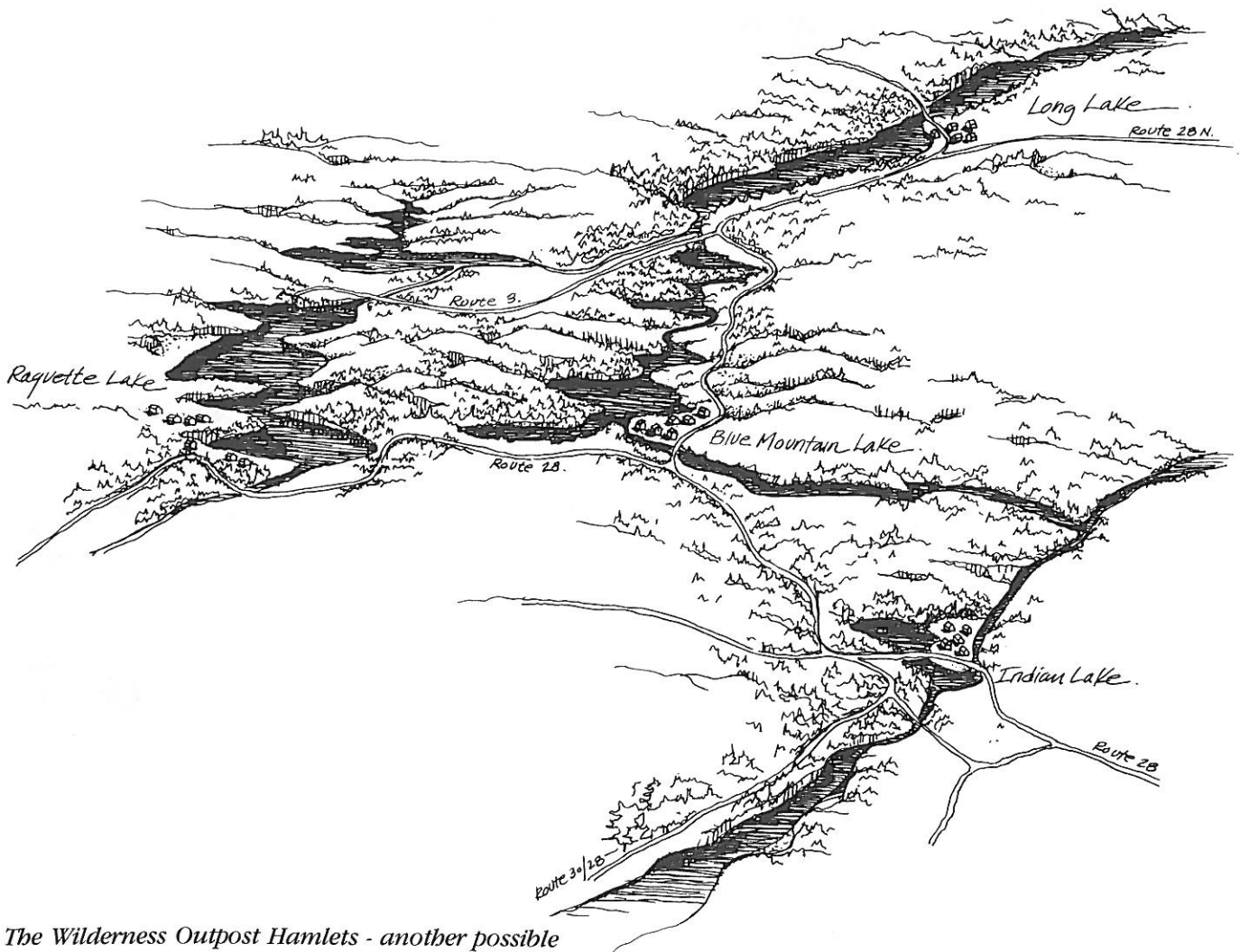
Cranberry offers its lakefront and beaches for the development of watersports.



Wilderness Outpost Hamlets Strategy

The Wilderness Outpost Hamlets offer the perfect setting and activities so often envisioned by the visitor to the Adirondacks. The communities of Indian Lake, Blue Mountain Lake, Long Lake and Raquette Lake have a special opportunity to pool their unique resources into an expanded and extraordinary recreational experience. Many of the activities and their necessary facilities are already present in these hamlets. The key, however, is to see this group as a whole which can expand individual opportunities to create a major recreational area.

The resources and activities to be emphasized are those characteristic of the Adirondack wilderness: hiking, camping, canoeing, swimming and, in winter, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling. The major concept is to develop these hamlets as stops along recreational trails emphasizing the interconnected system and developing complementary services and facilities.



The Wilderness Outpost Hamlets - another possible subregional development group.

"It is important for a hamlet to announce or publicize its key role in a subregional group to Park visitors."



Recreation and Tourism



The settlement at Raquette Lake provides access to a system of wilderness trails.

Hiking trails are the most obvious forms of pedestrian systems, with several existing in the area. The Northville-Lake Placid Trail is a major hiking route bisecting the region, while numerous public trails such as Cascade Lake Trail and Owl's Head have been developed in specific areas. This scheme would expand the connections of the individual trails and identify accommodations by both location and type. A guide or brochure could identify these for the hiker and list services offered. Such a study would also pinpoint areas where services are lacking or where repeated facilities exist. This information would allow for the development of a major hiking area between the outpost hamlets, rather than isolated trails and uncoordinated services in individual communities.

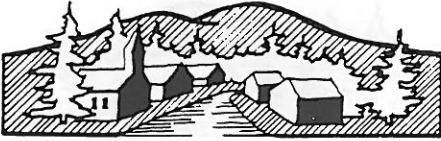
An identical strategy would be used in interconnecting canoe trails, cross-country ski trails, white water rafting trips, etc. If the outpost communities acted in concert, a much more desirable system of canoe routes and service facilities would result, rather than individual offerings in each hamlet.

The recreational opportunities would also be publicized as the offerings of a group of hamlets rather than an individual community.

Within this interconnected group of recreational activities, each hamlet could highlight its unique attractions to visitors. Long Lake has spectacular views and a fine beach which travelers to this hamlet can enjoy. It also has one of the few sea plane services in and out of the Adirondack Park. The Raquette Lake area is renowned as the home of some of William Durant's great camps, including Pine Knot, Sagamore, and Kamp Kill Kare. These are regularly open for tours and would offer tourists a unique Adirondack experience. Indian Lake has a fine beach and a municipal golf course. Adirondack Lake is known for its floating bog islands, an unusual natural phenomenon. As the central hamlet in the group, Blue Mountain Lake holds a special position among Park hamlets as the home of the Adirondack Museum. One of the nation's outstanding regional museums, the facility's grand setting overlooking the lake and creative interpretation of Adirondack history affords travelers a stimulating visit. Arts and crafts shops and a local craft guild, in addition to the museum, make Blue Mountain Lake a cultural center in the central Adirondacks as well as a critical element in the Wilderness Outpost recreational and tourism subgroup.



A system of wilderness lakes interconnects the outpost hamlets.



Recreation and Tourism

Local Approaches

Local approaches in developing recreation and tourism are often the easiest to conceptualize and most difficult to implement. A concerted effort by the people in the hamlet is necessary for them to be successful, both operationally and financially.

The first step in establishing such a concept is understanding the negative and positive points of the hamlet in terms of recreational offerings. Does the hamlet have a beachfront, ski area, good fishing river or other amenity? The physical setting and landscape characteristics and features will determine to a great extent what a particular hamlet can offer.

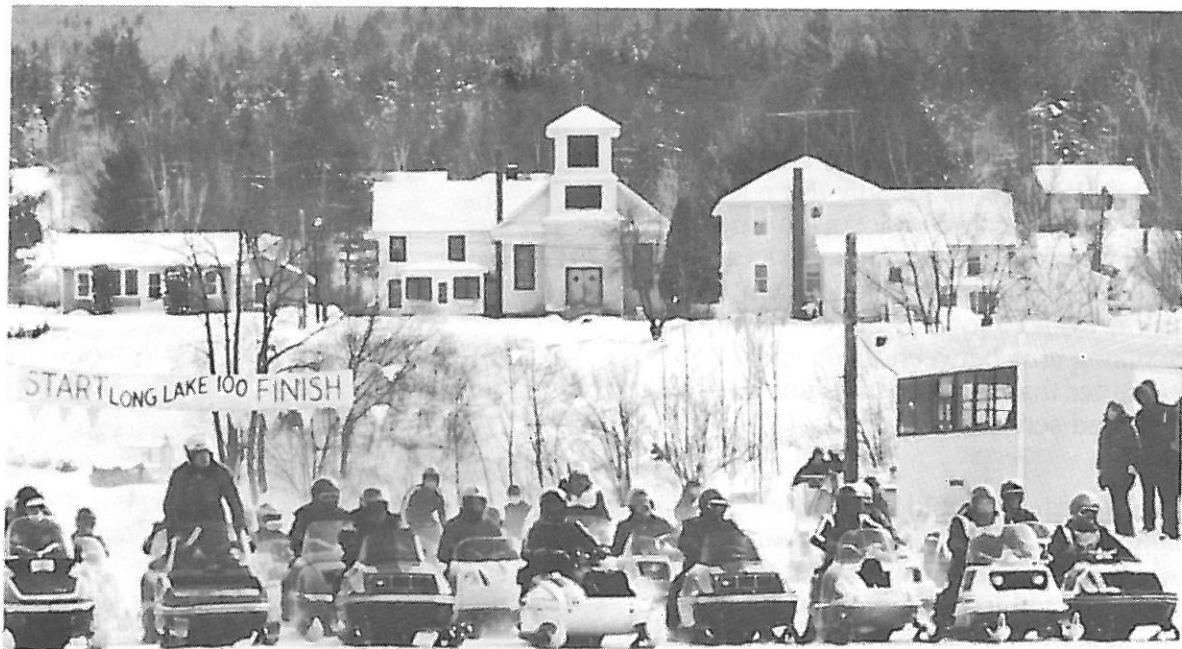
An individual hamlet should be viewed in terms of the parkwide and subregional approaches just discussed. Is the hamlet located within a group of hamlets that together could create a strong

recreational amenity group? Or does a nearby hamlet have a strong recreational or tourism emphasis which could be complemented or enlarged upon?

Some of these questions will be answered by determining the way in which a hamlet functions for tourists in the Park. Three general classifications of hamlets with regard to local recreation and tourist attributes are defined below:

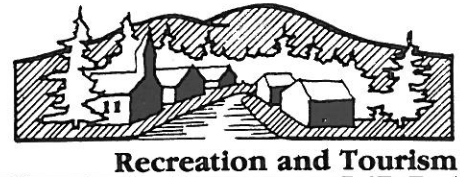
Gateway Communities

Hamlets located on important transportation routes on the edge of the Park announcing a visitor's arrival can be thought of as *gateway* communities. Though not now clearly identified or developed, these hamlets should become major entry and information points with the Park. South Colton and Ausable Forks are good examples of gateway communities.



Winter recreation in the Adirondacks is becoming as popular as summer activity.

"Seasonal variations are critical in developing recreation and tourism."



Ausable Forks, a gateway community, should work at trying to benefit from visitor traffic.

Destination Resorts

Such communities and attractions are the places travelers head for in the Park. Lake Placid, with its Olympic facilities and nearby skiing areas, is a well-known destination resort community. So, too, is the Adirondack Museum in Blue Mountain Lake and the Camp-in-the-Woods religious retreat in Speculator. Outstanding natural amenities and theme parks become destinations as well. Santa's Workshop greets many summer visitors as does High Falls Gorge between Wilmington and Lake Placid. Visits to the great camps entice others to head for Raquette Lake or Enchanted Forest in nearby Old Forge. These communities all have some special feature which people come to see or experience and which usually establishes a tourist market of its own.

Flow-through

These communities are generally along major transportation routes and serve neither as gateways nor destinations but are "market-following" places. They are hamlets which travelers drive through on their way to other destinations in the Park. Often the form of such hamlets reflects clearly this pass-through function—long, linear settlements lacking a central core while offering numerous highway

services. This pattern of development is rather common in Adirondack hamlets. Wilmington illustrates this type of community perfectly. Strung out along Route 86, the village has no identifiable core, no clear edges, and an overabundance of underused motels and abandoned gas stations.

Local tourist and recreation attributes determine what kinds of redevelopment approaches should be considered a hamlet. A gateway community needs to work at acquiring a Park visitors' center around which a public open space for visitors can be created—located as close to the center of the community as possible. Improving the appearance of the area would encourage travelers to stroll through the core area and would create the need for shops and restaurants.

Destination resorts need to address two issues. Both the drawing feature of the hamlet and the hamlet itself must be made as attractive to the tourist as possible. Again, this would suggest improving the visual quality of the area. In terms of a unique amenity, such as a large beach or amusement park, this might suggest improving or updating facilities, including access. Destination resorts also need to market the unique features that attract visitors.

Flow-through hamlets have a more difficult task, having no direct attraction for tourists. They should attempt to give the community an identifiable core by encouraging centralized development rather than allowing sprawl to occur at the hamlet edges. An attractive public space in the central area of the village would also encourage visitors to stop. A small park with an information booth, restroom facilities and perhaps a scenic view would be such an amenity. Highway services should also be improved to promote more activity in the community.