Redevelopment Strategy Six:

Public Spaces

The Village Green

Attractive public spaces in a hamlet enhance local community pride providing an incentive and a raised level of expectation for individuals to improve and maintain their properties. A hamlet with an attractive environment is also much more marketable to prospective industrial developers and employees searching for a new home. Improving public spaces represents one of several ways of reversing the tide of economic decline in Adirondack hamlets.

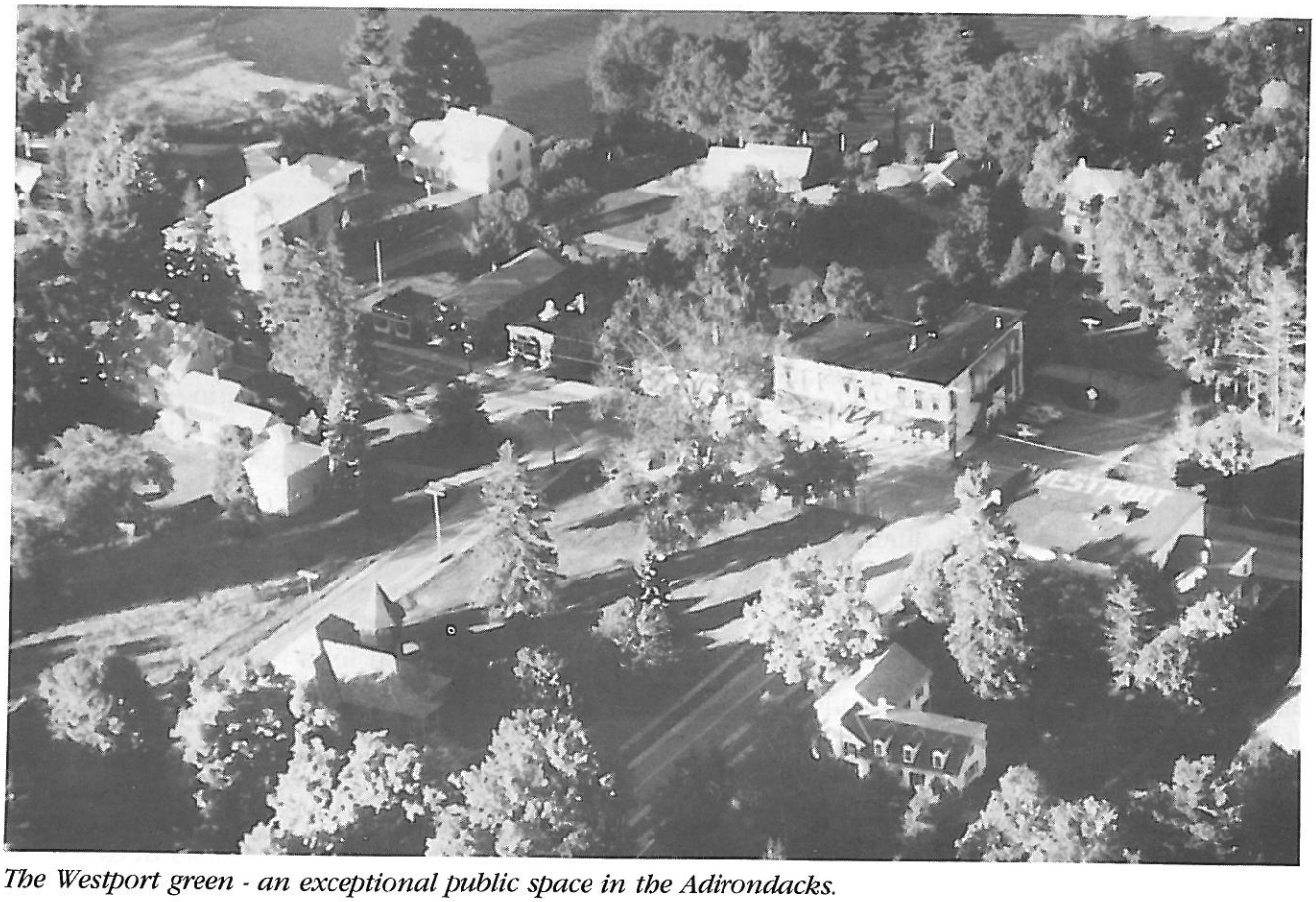
Every Adirondacker carries in mind an image of the type of place he or she calls home. The Adirondack hamlet is tied closely to nature and everywhere human activity intermingles with natural resources. However close they are to nature, most communities lack the appearance and public spaces which would complement the beautiful setting. Few have quality public spaces for pedestrian activities, off-street parking, parks, village squares, picnic areas or places to rest, get information, and "take in the town." The informal arrangement of most hamlets makes them unique but at the same time has made them more vulnerable to change and adaptation over time. New England, by comparison, boasts many small villages centered around the *common* or village green—a piece of public space set aside by the earliest founders of the town for public meetings, military drills and social gatherings. Around these commons, the New England town grew with a pattern of closely knit buildings, stores and public landmarks. Unlike New England, the Adirondack hamlets experienced distinctly different settlement patterns as a result of their remote wilderness location and the military and industrial purposes for which they were established. The boundaries of Adirondack hamlets are informal and almost "frontier-like" in character. This lack of physical edge has proven, in many cases, to be a handicap because of the smallness of the hamlets. Often people have trouble knowing when they've actually arrived at a hamlet—a factor which leads to a lowered image of the hamlet as a physical place. The lack of interior spatial definition makes matters worse—holes and gaps remain where buildings once stood and the hamlet appears to be falling apart.

The "common" in Pittsfield, Massachusetts - exemplary of a New England public space tradition.

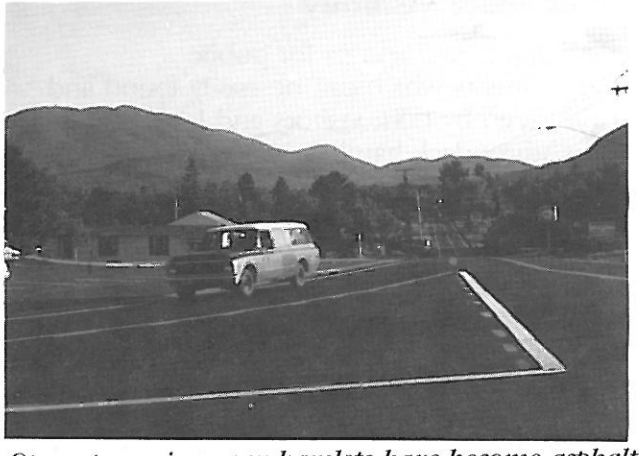
Negative Factors

Several other factors have contributed to the lack of quality public space in Adirondack hamlets. Many hamlets have been bisected by state highway routes and auto-oriented highway standards of curb cuts, road shoulders and speed zones have been given precedence over pedestrian zones. In order to bring a hamlet back to the people, so to speak, many hamlets may find themselves in negotiation with the New York State Department of Transportation in the future. A second cause of diminished public space has to do with unhindered growth and haphazard development, which has continued to foster a pattern of sprawl in the hamlets (refer to previous Section on Infill Development). This is compounded by the empty lots between buildings which create discomfort in walking from place to place. Thirdly, lack of interest in community beautification and revitalization hampers many hamlets. A lack of cooperative effort and enthusiasm has left dead trees standing or not replaced, allowed landscaped

"Few Adirondack communities have high quality public spaces for pedestrian activities."



The Westport green - an exceptional public space in the Adirondacks.



Open spaces in many hamlets have become asphalt-covered traffic areas.

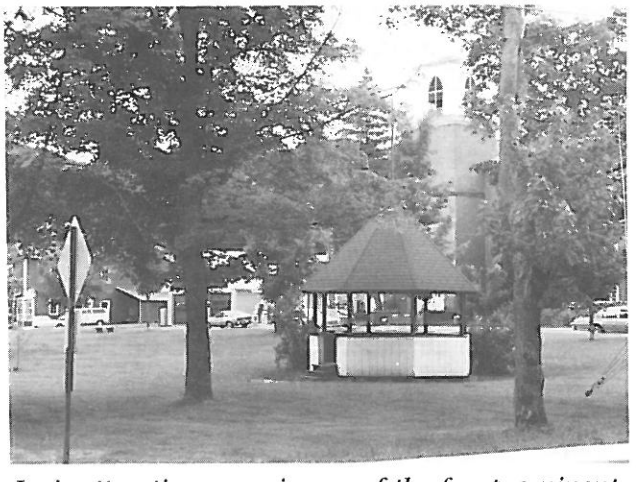
areas to be paved over, and discouraged the addition or maintenance of sidewalks, benches and park areas. Adirondack hamlets have fallen victim to many or all of these problems and have remained unaware of how to revitalize or develop the amenities which they do have. The following pages will illustrate what exactly constitutes good public space at a scale appropriate for an Adirondack hamlet. Guidelines and suggestions regarding the tools which would upgrade and improve public spaces in the hamlet are illustrated, and in seven Sample Communities these tools are applied as a result of analyses conducted in the hamlet during this Phase II study.

Components of Good Public Space

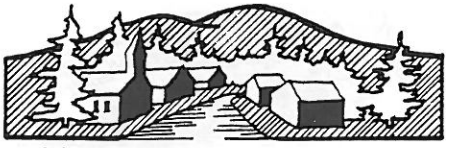
What are the components of quality public spaces? In other words, what are the things that a hamlet should keep in mind when designing—or responding to the suggestions of a designer—regarding the maintenance or creation of open spaces, streets, sidewalks, public parks, parking or information areas in the hamlet? The following list elaborates the components of good public space.

Spatial Definition

Spatial definition means that the visitor or resident senses upon entering the hamlet that he has *arrived* at a place which has distinct edges or boundaries holding it together. Buildings, for example, create an edge on the main street and a feeling of enclosure to the street for the pedestrian. When buildings are torn down or not replaced, these gaps in the street wall detract from the feeling of enclosure. Similarly, a park setting, like a street's spatial enclosure, would be defined by trees or buildings which line its edge. Street trees give a pedestrian or automobile driver the feeling that he is under a canopy of vegetation and along a transparent wall created by the tree trunks.



Jay's attractive green is one of the few prominent spaces in hamlets of the Adirondacks.



"Good public spaces enhance local community pride and encourage investment."

Quality Materials

The selection of materials is critical to the design and construction of quality public spaces which fit into their location, last over time, and improve the visual quality of a place. Often the initial cost of materials may be high, but in the long run durability and permanence will far outweigh the initial investment. The severity of the Adirondack winter demands solid and long-lasting materials. Furthermore, a careful selection of uniform materials will help beautify a hamlet. For example, stone pavers and granite curbing in a hamlet center would delineate pedestrian sidewalks and enhance an otherwise undistinguished streetscape.

Appropriate Size of Public Spaces

Strive for compatibility of public spaces with their uses and users by appropriate decisions on *scale* and size. For example, the scale of parking lots in small hamlet centers is often unnessarily large. Dispersed, small-scale parking lots or spaces should be favored in a hamlet, rather than the large-scale "sea of asphalt" solution usually chosen in urban or suburban mall situations.

Active Public Spaces

Consider the variety and mixture of uses and bring activity and animation into public spaces. Even the most beautifully designed urban square needs the imagination and assistance of people to develop programs and events that will enliven and activate it. Nothing could be less inviting than an empty park, street or public square. Think of ways to increase and vary the use of public spaces. For example, a "vest-pocket" park in the middle of a hamlet could be designed with a pavilion for summertime entertainment and allow adjacent stores to spill out into the park for open air sales. It could also be the setting for craft fairs, farmers' markets, demonstrations or food booths.

Public Space Visibility

Select places and spaces for public improvements which can be easily found and readily seen by both visitors and local people. In many Adirondack hamlets, the sequence of arrival occurs by rounding a bend, turning a corner or dropping into a valley. Inevitably there is the glimpse of the key spot, property or landmark which becomes the first thing seen on arrival. Places like this are highly significant—they may be the key location for a public space improvement and a prospective future development. Select such places carefully because they may become your greatest asset.

Proper Location for Key Public Spaces

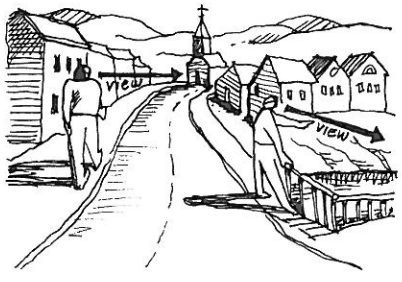
It is important that a hamlet carefully select for improvement the location best serving the hamlet as a whole and generating the best return on investment. The budgeting of financial resources for public space improvements can also be phased over time, according to the hamlet's priorities. For example, a hamlet which is centered at a major crossroads should look immediately at the potential for public space improvements there. This type of targeting of both existing and anticipated activity areas will increase the hamlet's potential for development in the present and the future.

Selecting Forms Which Fit The Purpose

The physical form of the public space should be carefully developed according to the purpose it will serve. For example, a public park which is developed for passive activities should be appropriately designed with benches for sitting, paths for strolling, trees for shade and enclosure, and grass or flower beds to enhance and soften the area. On the other hand, if the park is to be designed for more active uses such as public events, flea markets, etc., then the park might include stage or band shells, outdoor lighting and appropriate paving materials.

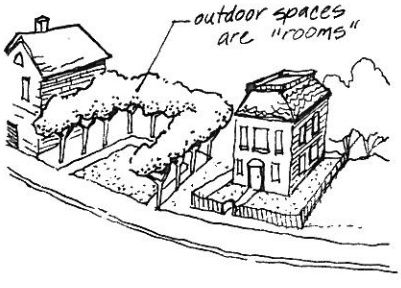
Principles of Public Space Design

Look at a hamlet as a whole and consider principles of design which make all the parts fit together. Inevitably, whenever an action is undertaken in a hamlet the impact is felt in many ways. Public improvements, development and the current character of the hamlet must all be thought of as interrelated. Any modification in the hamlet represents a move which should be considered carefully. The following design principles are used by professional landscape architects and urban designers when they suggest proposals for the design or redevelopment of public townscape areas. These principles include:



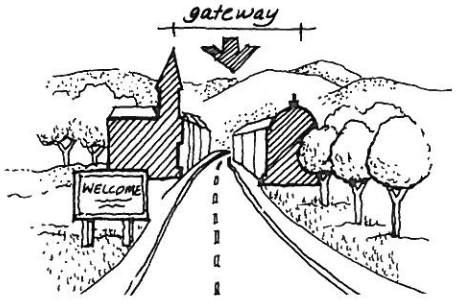
Views:

Consider how to preserve, enhance or create views to important buildings, natural features or landmark destinations.



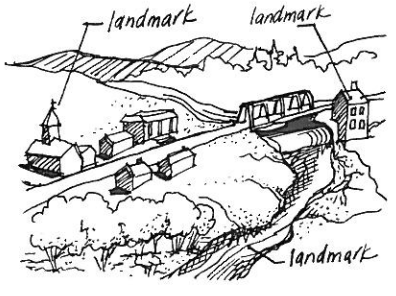
Edges:

Consider how to contain outdoor spaces with edges and encourage activity within them.



Gateways:

Develop and enhance the major exit and entrance points in the hamlet so that it is obvious where it begins and ends.



Landmarks:

Historic buildings, architecturally distinct structures (clock towers, church spires, public buildings) and natural features (rivers, village greens) are a hamlet's unique landmarks. If they don't exist, create them!

Building form:

Strive for consistency of size and materials whenever a building goes up. Don't put a one-story building in a three-story block or a concrete-sided building on a street of wooden-sided buildings!

Public Space Design Tools

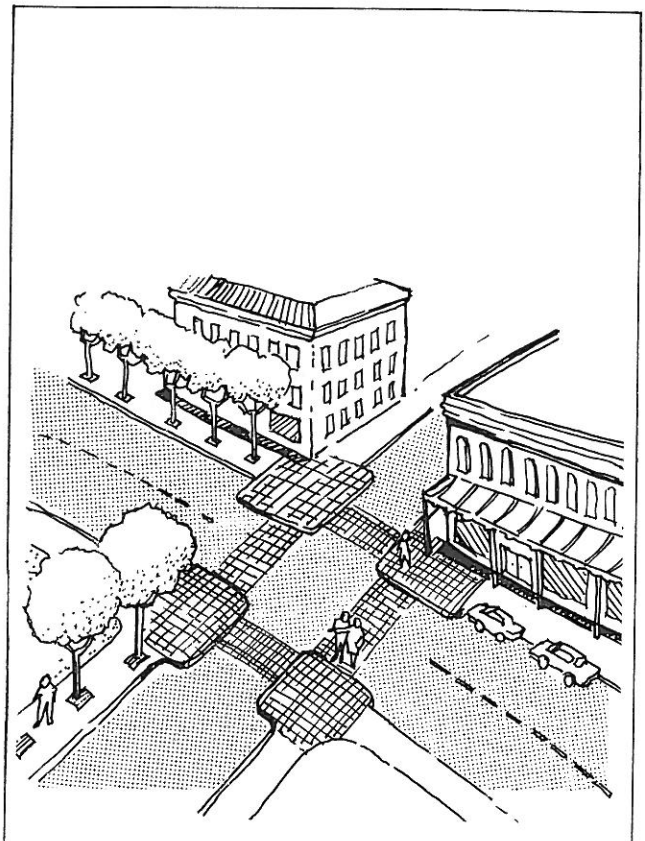
The design tools discussed in this section offer several easy-to-implement strategies for renovating the public spaces in hamlets. The intention is for a hamlet to be able to draw from this set of tools and combine them in ways that are appropriate to a particular situation. The design illustrations that follow on pages 98-111 provide case studies of their application to site-specific conditions.

Pedestrian Crossings

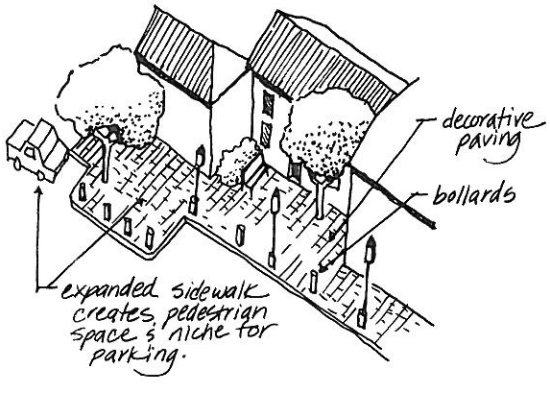
A pedestrian crossing is an expanded sidewalk at an intersection which reduces the crossing distance between opposite sides of the street. While reducing the size of the auto intersection, it increases the size of pedestrian precincts and creates pockets for gathering and activity on the sidewalk. The benefit of a pedestrian crossing is that it improves the looks of the intersection or crossroads and can be further improved with decorative paving or treeplanting areas.

Expanded Sidewalks

Increasing the width of the sidewalk can have many benefits for a hamlet center. It enables the streetscape to take on a parklike quality. Expanded sidewalks can reduce unnecessarily wide roads which pass through the hamlet, creating a more intimate pedestrian-oriented feeling. The increased width provides room for tree plantings, benches, lighting and outdoor activity which spills out from adjacent shops. In general, the treatment of the sidewalk as a landscaped public use area creates a unified view of the hamlet and improves the appearance of stores and buildings facing the street.



Pedestrian Crossings



Expanded Sidewalks

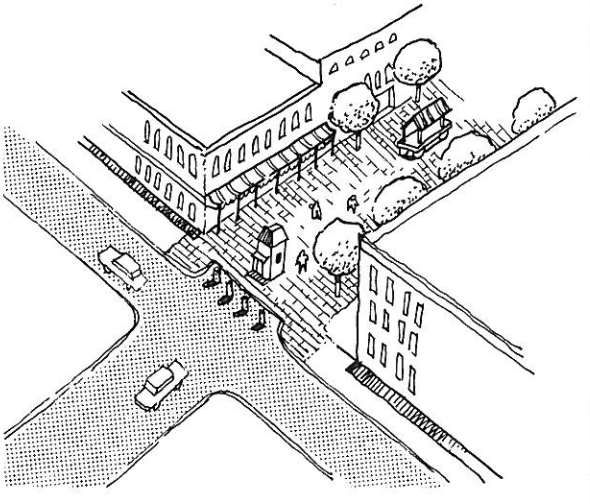
Vest Pocket Parks

A vest pocket park is a small park in the hamlet center which is generally located in the commercial district. It may be developed on a permanent site or as a temporary use for an empty site which is designated for future development. A vest pocket park functions as a small landscaped oasis and a resting or socializing spot for local, elderly or tourist populations. The proximity of the vest pocket park to bordering stores creates opportunities for side openings which would allow, for example, outdoor cafes and shopping stalls to spill over into the park. The vest pocket park should contain plant materials—moveable or inground—places to sit, and possibly tables and chairs. A water fountain or feature, provisions for shade and sunlit areas could add to the comfort and attractiveness of the space.

Vest Pocket Parks

Street Closings

Street closings are most commonly used to create pedestrian malls. The limitation or removal of traffic should be considered in areas where concentrated shopping and pedestrian outdoor activities take place. Street closings could also be only temporary, for holidays or special events. In addition, changing the circulation pattern in the hamlet by closing streets, creating limited access roads or one-way streets may be considered as a way to control and organize auto movement.



Street Closings

Curbside Parking

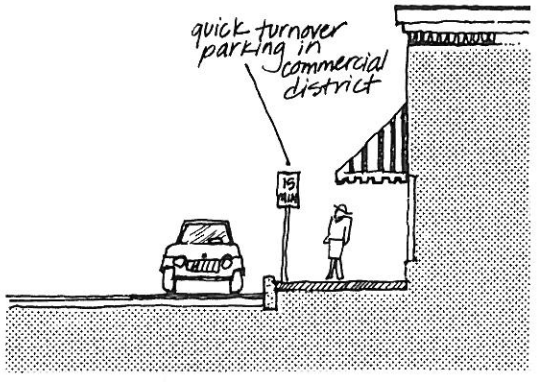
Curbside parking in the hamlet center should be structured so that parking spaces are clearly defined. Programming the spaces for quick-turnover will enable people to come and go more conveniently. Clearly separate pedestrian sidewalk areas and parking spaces with curbs and paving treatment. Explore the many options for curbside parking—front-in, parallel or diagonal stalls. When curbside parking is used with sidewalk widening consider strips of tree planting lawns to screen the parking as well as shade it.

Facade Improvements

The architectural detailing of building facades makes an important contribution to the visual character of a hamlet. Too often, historically significant commercial facades on Main Street have been covered up by recent modification or are in a state of disrepair. These facades can be cleaned up and restored to their original state with minimal effort and cost. Not only does this add visual consistency when several adjoining facades are restored, but it also displays the richness of a hamlet's heritage. The proper use of color, well-designed storefront signs and on-going maintenance are all critical to the success of a facade improvement program.

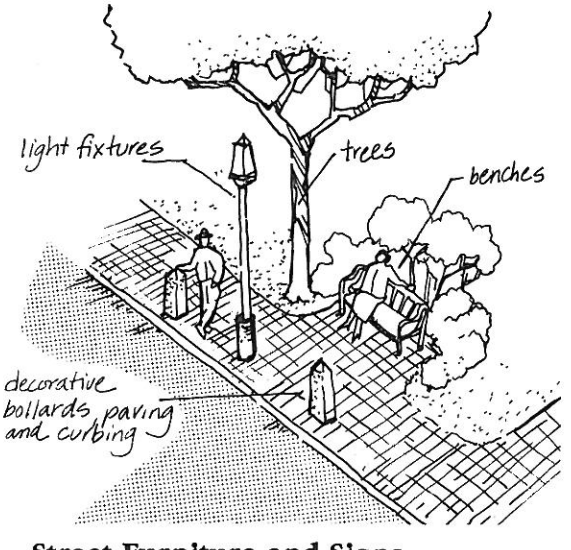
Street Furniture and Signs

Street furnishings and signs enliven a space while at the same time accommodating the people who use it. They should be carefully selected for style, compatibility, materials, color and durability. There are many options available for types and styles of furnishings and signs, including bike racks, trash receptacles, benches, bollards, light fixtures, planters (moveable), tree grates, drinking fountains, water features, fences, railings, awnings, vendor stalls, telephone booths and information boards. When choosing street furnishings or signs, look at architectural styles and existing or historic furnishings in the hamlet for ideas.



Curbside Parking

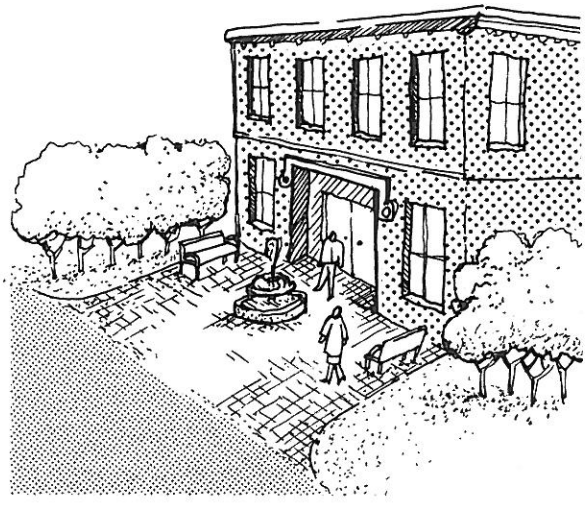
Facade Improvements



Street Furniture and Signs

Pedestrian Square

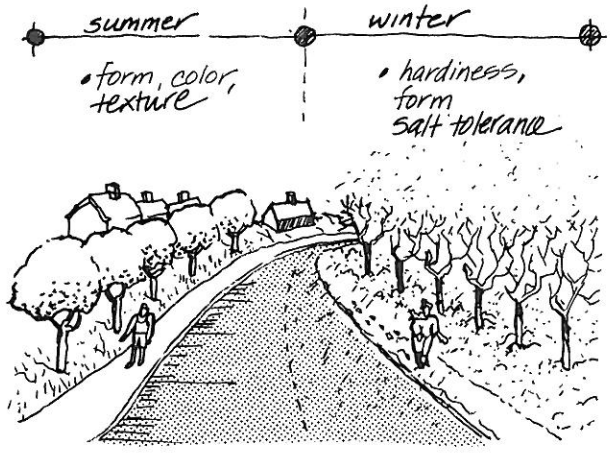
Pedestrian squares are larger-scale hard-surface areas. Usually a square is defined on one side by a building (the threshold to a bank, town hall, church) or is enclosed on more than one side by a number of buildings. Paving is used in the square in a decorative manner allowing it to function like an outdoor carpet which calls attention to the special significance of the place. A heavily used pedestrian area may be the prime place for a pedestrian square where meetings, demonstrations or ceremonial activities could take place. A fountain, sculpture, flagpole, or plaque is commonly used to accent the importance of the space.



Pedestrian Squares

Plant Materials

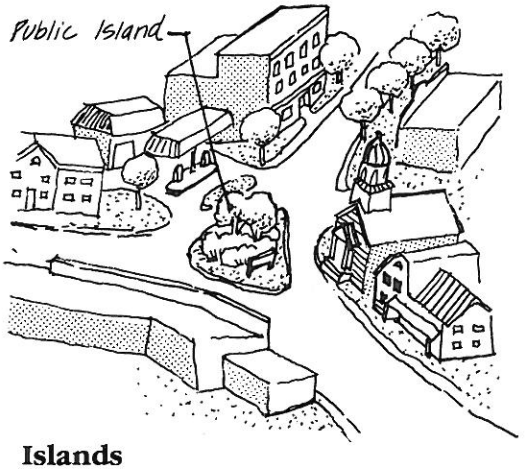
The careful selection of plant materials will not only improve the appearance of public landscape areas and the hamlet's streetscape, but will ensure that seasonal variety, maintenance and plant hardiness issues are addressed. The suitability of trees for their intended uses should be considered. For example, a high canopied, deciduous, salt-tolerant tree with outstanding fall color might be selected for street tree plantings. Similarly, appropriate ground cover, shrubs and woody evergreen or deciduous plants should be selected for their beauty and function. Explore local initiatives such as a hamlet beautification or tree planting program which encourage these improvements on an ongoing basis.



Plant Materials

Islands

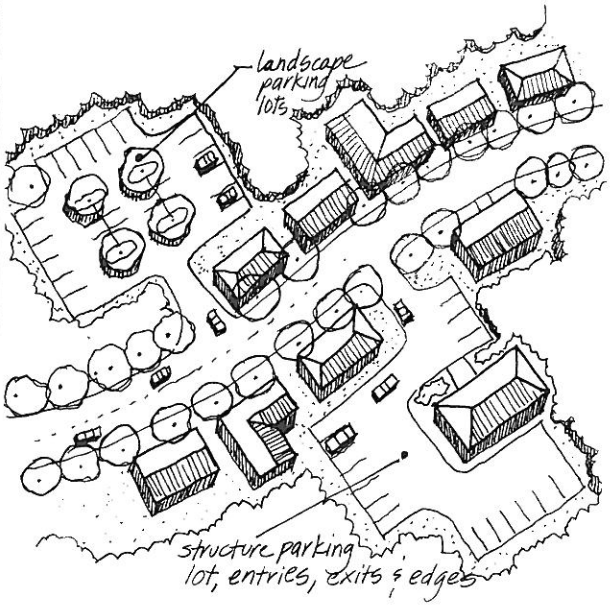
A traffic island or circle occurs at the entrance into the hamlet or at a central focal point within it. Islands have the potential to reduce the road width, slow down traffic and channel it through the hamlet center. While the island serves practical needs, it creates an attractive area for landscape features, a hamlet "welcome" sign, information booth, monument or seasonal display. The visibility and location of the island can make it a major identity area in the hamlet.



Islands

Parking Lots

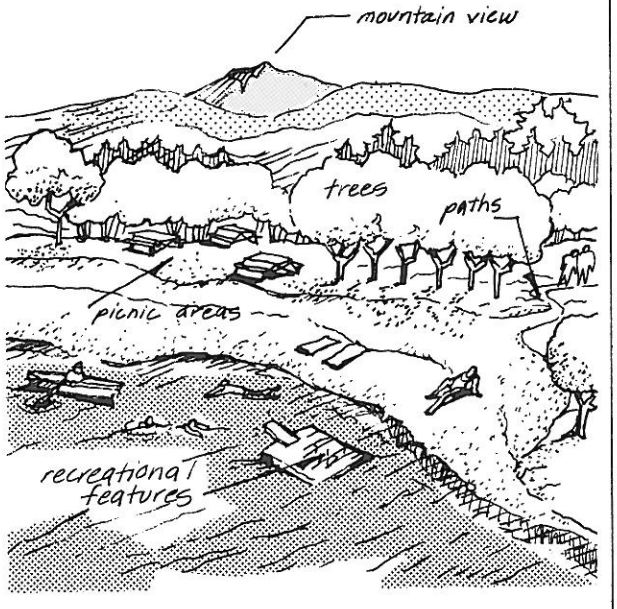
Parking lots could be called "car gardens" because they require the same careful design and development that a park or backyard does. When developing a parking lot in the hamlet, consider breaking up vast areas of asphalt with trees. Carefully select surface materials which fit the surrounding context, the proposed life span, and the maintenance requirements of the lot. Avoid oversized or overscaled parking lots and program parking requirements by understanding how, why and when the facilities adjacent to them are used. Carefully select appropriate locations for parking and avoid allocating prime development land to parking only. Structure efficient circulation and stall/space design to maximize the use of the lot and adhere to technical requirements concerning turning radii, grading, drainage, planting strips, sight lines and access and egress. Consider parking lot design which accommodates efficient snow removal. Combine public and private joint-use parking lots to make more efficient use of space.



Parking Lots

Landscaped Parks

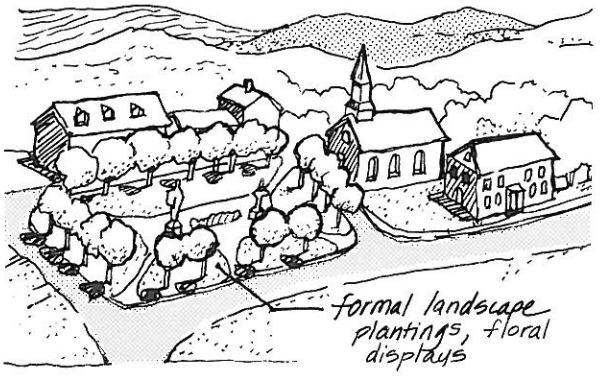
Landscaped parks can be designed for major community recreational use or for more passive activities such as sitting and strolling. Relate parks to natural features in the hamlet—lakes, riverfronts, mountain views, overlooks, slopes, or nature preserves. Design spaces within the park which build upon these features, including trees, shrubs, grasses, paths and trails. Develop a maintenance program for parks (and all public spaces) to ensure continued use and care. Consider how the landscaped park can improve the desirability of properties next to it for development. Select a local or historic name for the park and program special community events there throughout the year.



Landscaped Parks

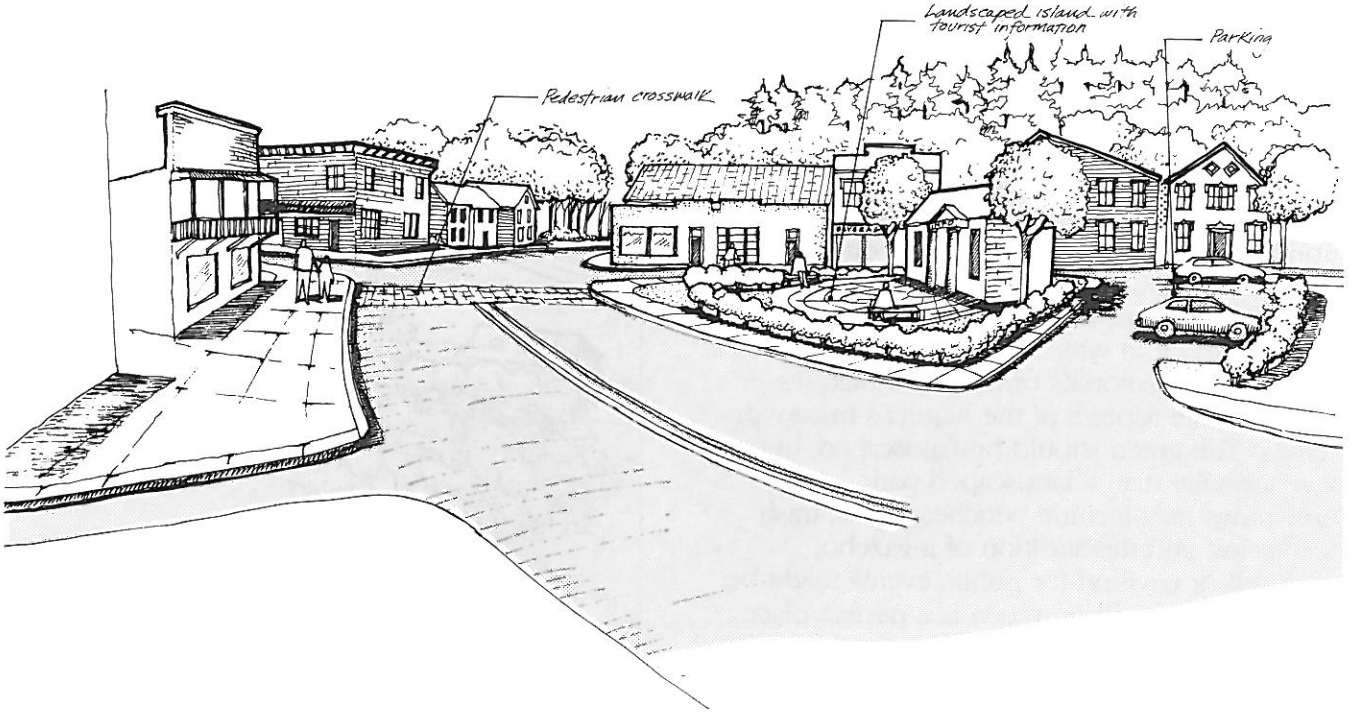
Village Green

A village green conserves or creates a centralized village space for public use. Commercial or public buildings usually face inward on the space (town hall, church, post office) and the green becomes known as a community gathering space in which the placement of monuments, memorials or historical plaques commemorate aspects of the hamlet's history or identity. The green should be landscaped, but more formally than a landscaped park. Furnishings may include benches, lights, trash receptacles, and the addition of a gazebo, bandshell or pavilion for public events might be considered. The village green is a perfect place for horiticultural displays and flower gardens. Its central location and community value should be preserved and enhanced on a continuing basis.



Village Greens

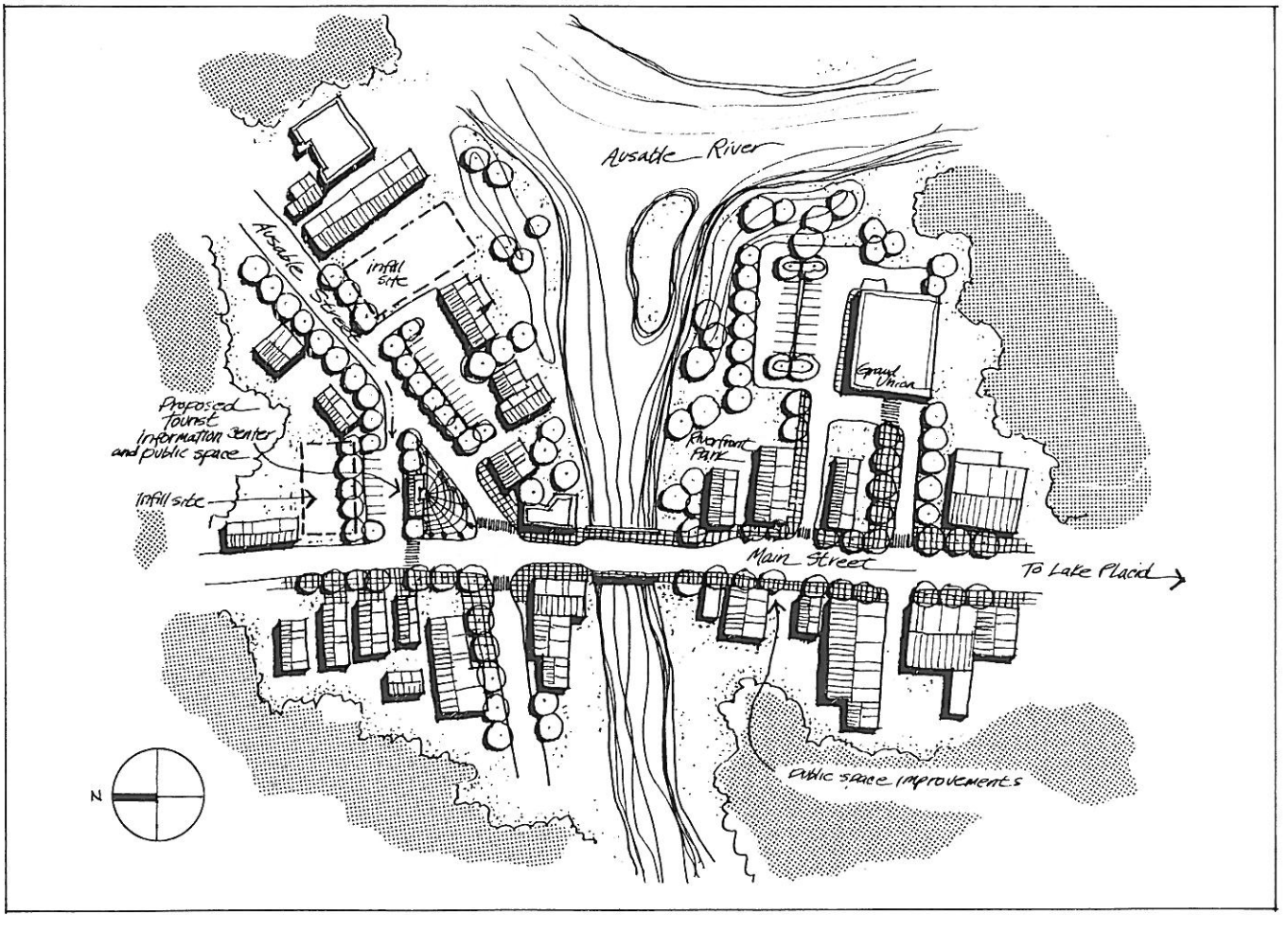
Existing Conditions: The intersection at Main and Ausable offers an ideal site of the proposed tourist information booth and public square.

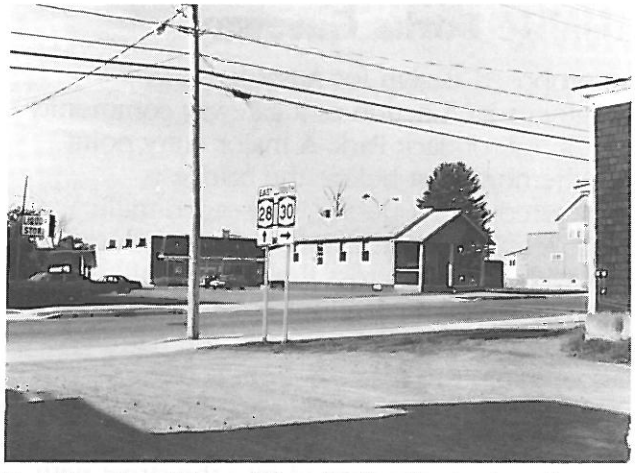


Proposed: The improved visual quality of the Ausable Forks bridge area can provide incentives for renovation and reuse of the buildings.

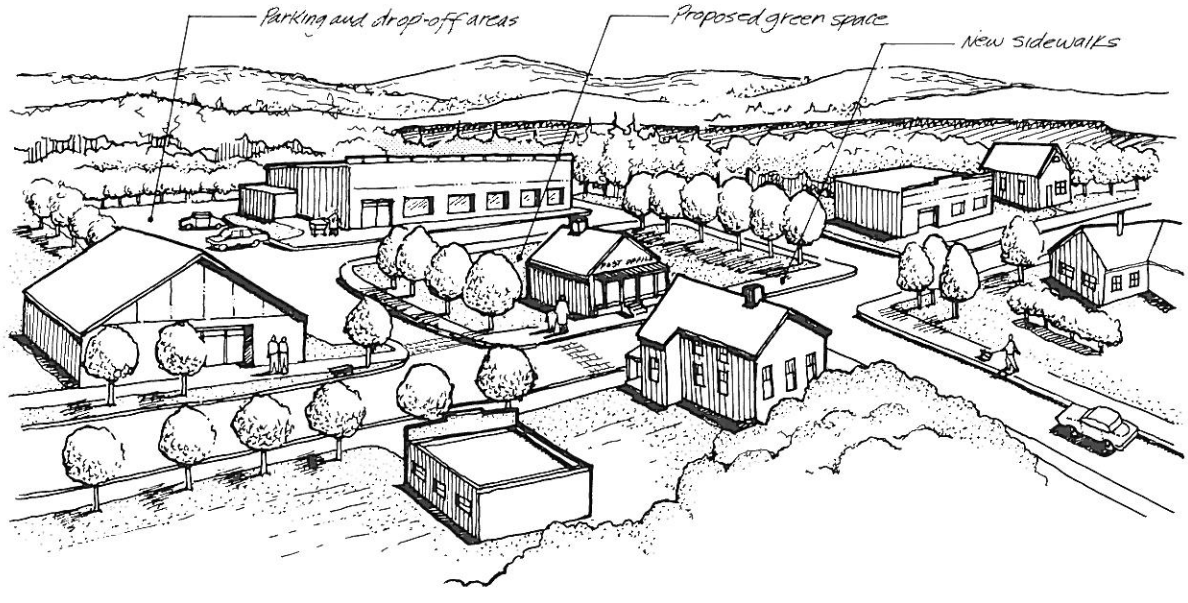
Ausable Forks Gateway

The proposed design for Ausable Forks strengthens its function as a gateway community into the Adirondack Park. A major entry point from the north just before the bridge is restructured with a public landscaped traffic island. A tourist information building is located there with parking across the street. Traffic is forked around the island for ease of circulation. Tree planting, decorative paving and narrowed curb cuts into the roadway from surrounding buildings reinforce the landscaped character and enclosure at this major gateway intersection. Decorative paving is carried into the street with crosswalks and sidewalk improvements which channel pedestrian flow over the bridge and into the hamlet's central shopping area. This type of landscape improvement provides the incentive for renovation and reuse of the buildings which surround it. In the design, a riverfront park to the east of the bridge and accessible via Main Street is developed in order to generate activity at the hamlet's major natural amenity area. The parking lot and commercial buildings which currently exist would be redeveloped to make the riverfront more accessible and visually pleasing. Vacant buildings could be renovated for uses that would capitalize on their new relationship to the riverfront park.





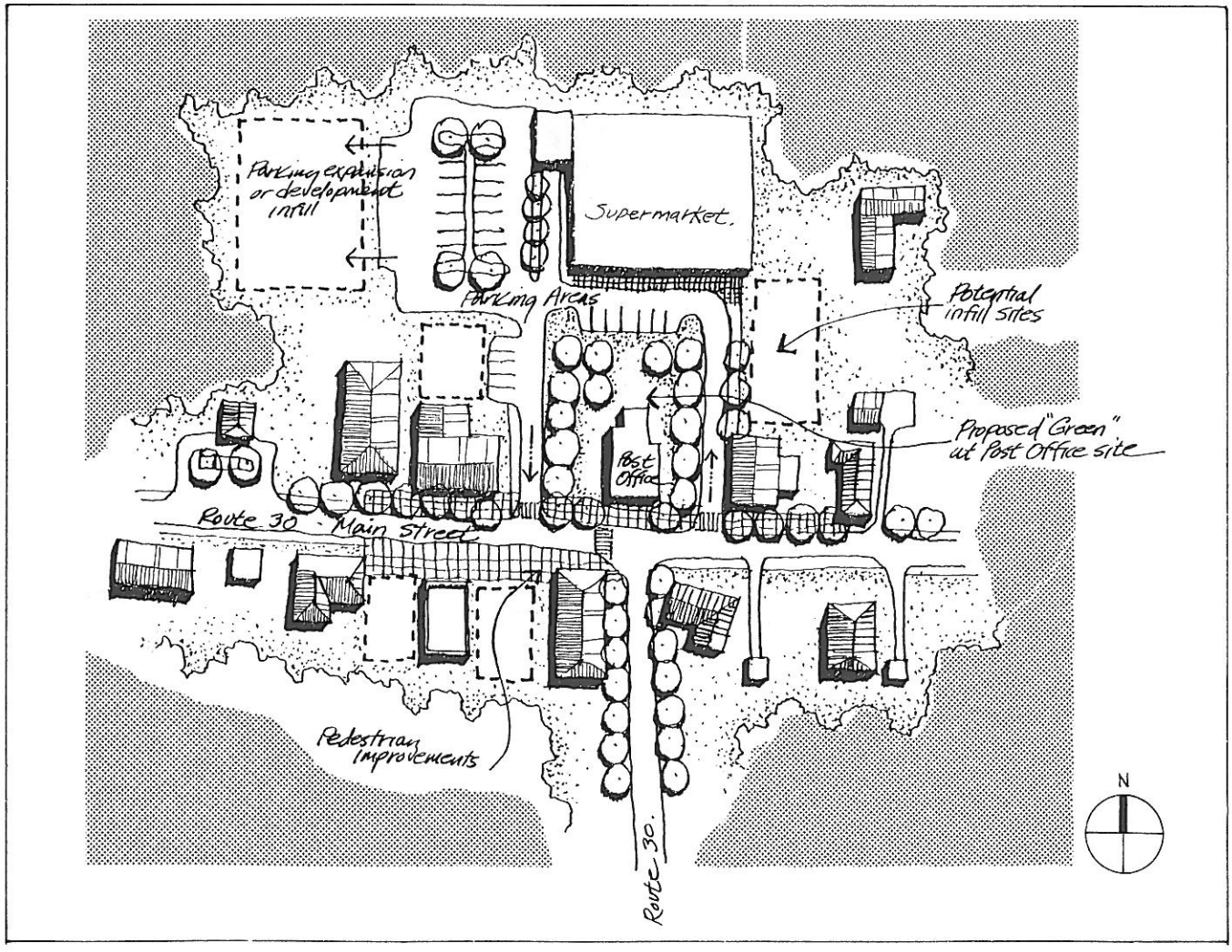
Existing Conditions: The site for the proposed green space is highly visible to residents and visitors of Indian Lake.

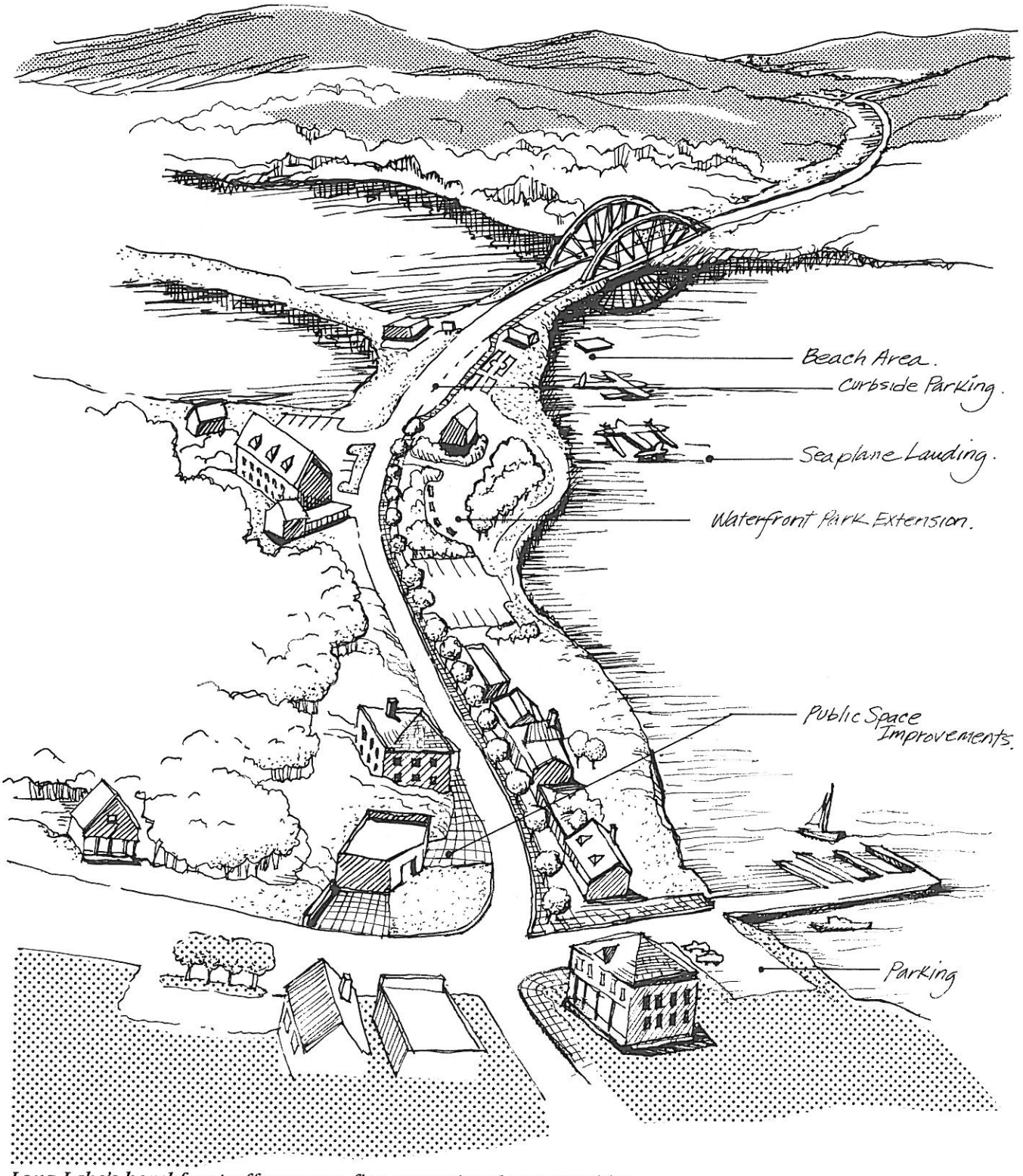


Proposed: Major buildings surrounding the proposed central village green would provide activity and support use of the space.

Indian Lake "T"

Indian Lake has the capacity to develop a village green in the center of the hamlet at the main "T" intersection. Both existing and developable commercial sites and public buildings surrounding the "T" would provide activity and support for the public space improvement. The post office, which currently functions as the focal point upon entering the hamlet from the south, would become the *building on the village green.* Asphalt and parking, which today surround the building, are removed and tucked behind the main street area and to the side of the Grand Union Supermarket. This creates a structured sequence of entry and exit ways circulating around the green and provides needed parking spaces. Major tree planting is carried from the green onto Main Street tieing these two areas together. Decorative paving and furnishings would also relate the surrounding stores to the green. Architectural renovations are suggested for the post office building to enhance its prominence, and facade treatments are suggested for other commercial buildings in the hamlet.

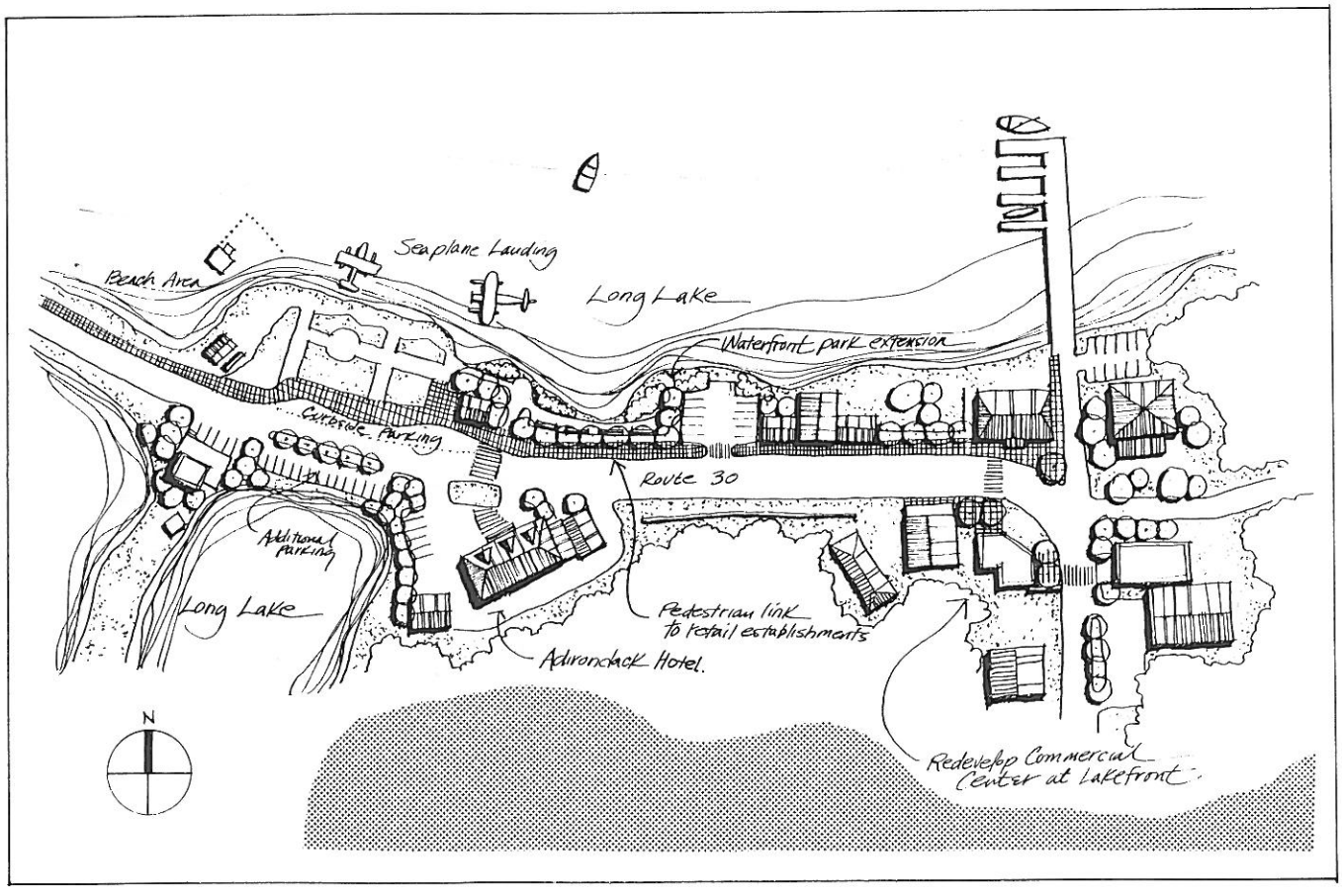




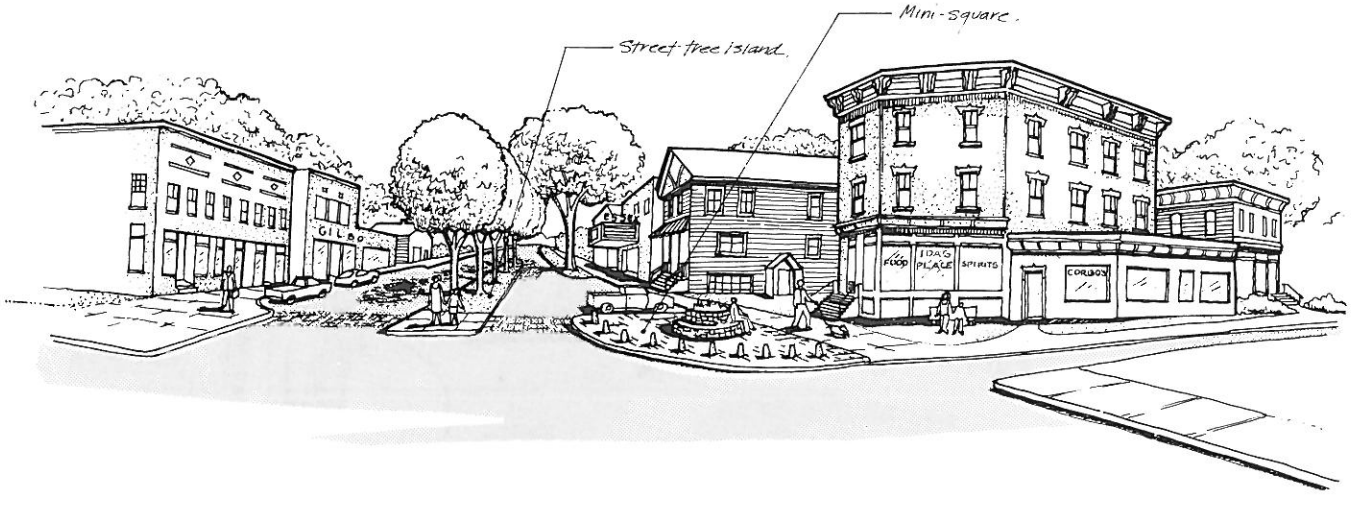
Long Lake's beachfront offers many fine recreational opportunities.

Long Lake Beach Area

Long Lake's beachfront and adjacent main street area are directly related to the lake shore. The area is defined by the steel trestle bridge to the north and the 90° intersection to the south. These fortuitous edge conditions automatically force visitors by car to slow down at this important center in Long Lake. Design suggestions enhance this relationship by attempting to minimize the conflict between functional parking and circulation requirements and magnificent lake views and locations. Parking in front of the beach is removed and pocketed in areas along the main street closer to the commercial district. Parking spaces are broken up with landscaped areas and an overall street tree enhancement program unifies, shades and softens the linear progression through the hamlet. Suggestions are made for developing and strengthening the number and mix of facilities in the commercial district. A vest pocket park with views to the lake is located along the line of stores and could be programmed for outdoor cafe activities. The hamlet's major intersection from the south acts as a gateway and offers prime commercial development potential at the sites of the gas station and old theater.



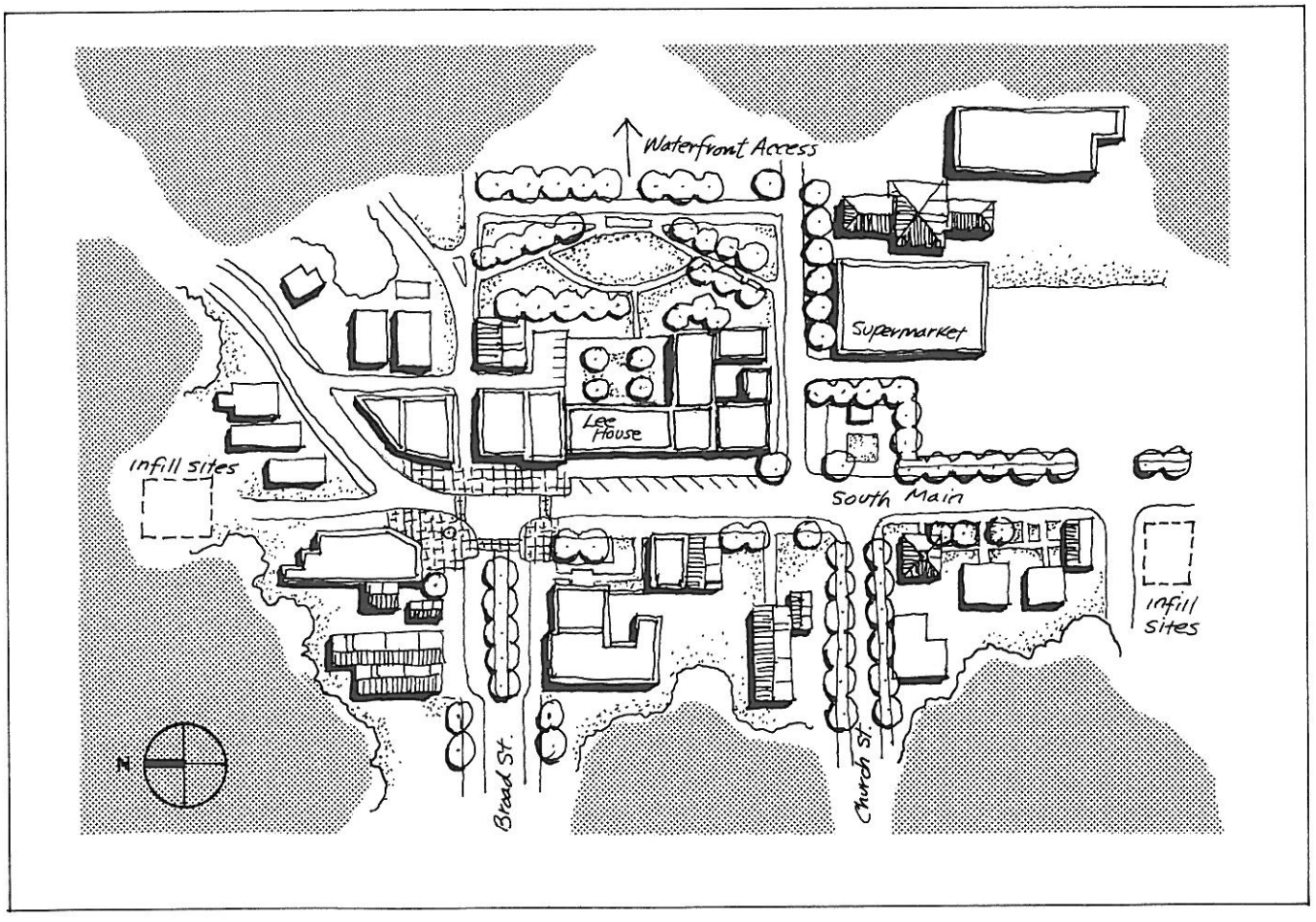
Existing Conditions: View toward the antique shop at the corner of Broad Street and Main in Port Henry.

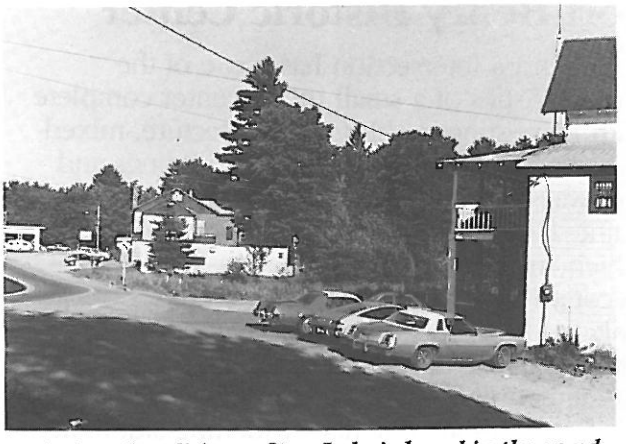


Proposed: The design proposal refocuses Port Henry on its historic center.

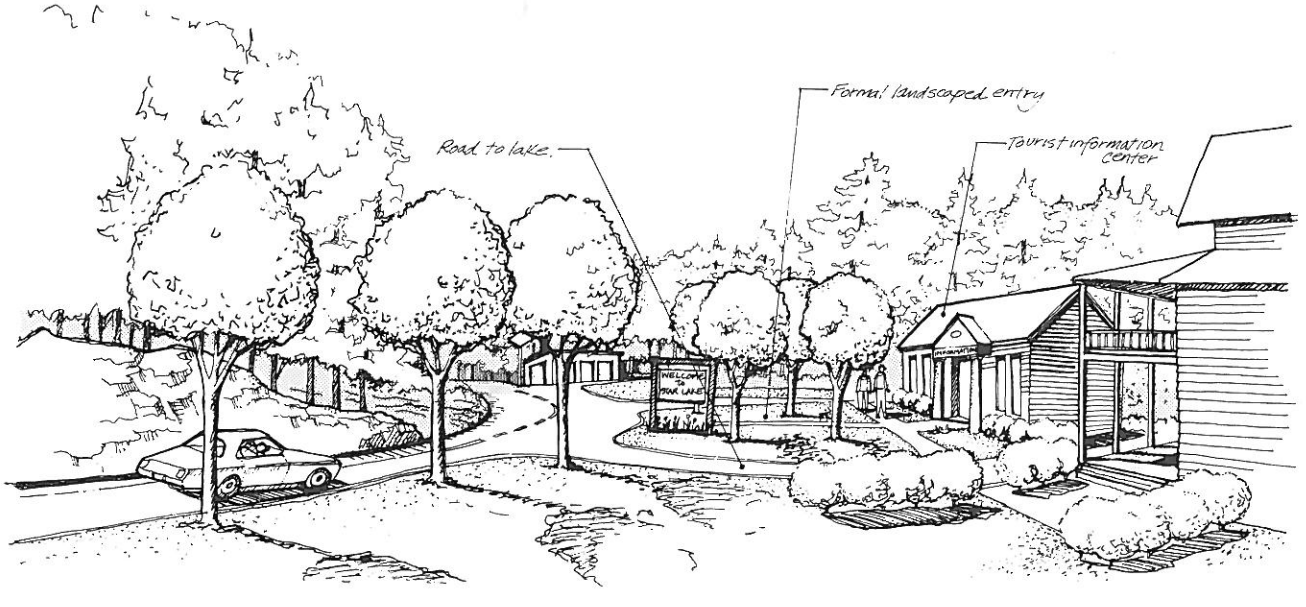
Port Henry Historic Center

Port Henry's intersection has some of the characteristics of a small urban center complete with interesting multi-story architecture, mixed-use commercial and residential buildings and roadways devoted to parking and automobile traffic. However, it lacks the pedestrian features which successful urban centers usually have—decorative paving, generous sidewalks, obvious linkages to districts and important areas. Therefore, the design illustration suggests a strengthening of the core's identity with *urban* landscape improvements—widening sidewalks into "mini-squares" of decorative paving, providing benches, lights, trash receptacles, cohesive signage, bollards at the corners of the intersection, the location of monuments, fountains or important historic markers. Clustered parking areas and street trees are recommended in certain areas where they can be incorporated into the paved streetscape. A major link to the waterfront is encouraged in order to promote the use and revitalization of Port Henry's unique site on Lake Champlain.





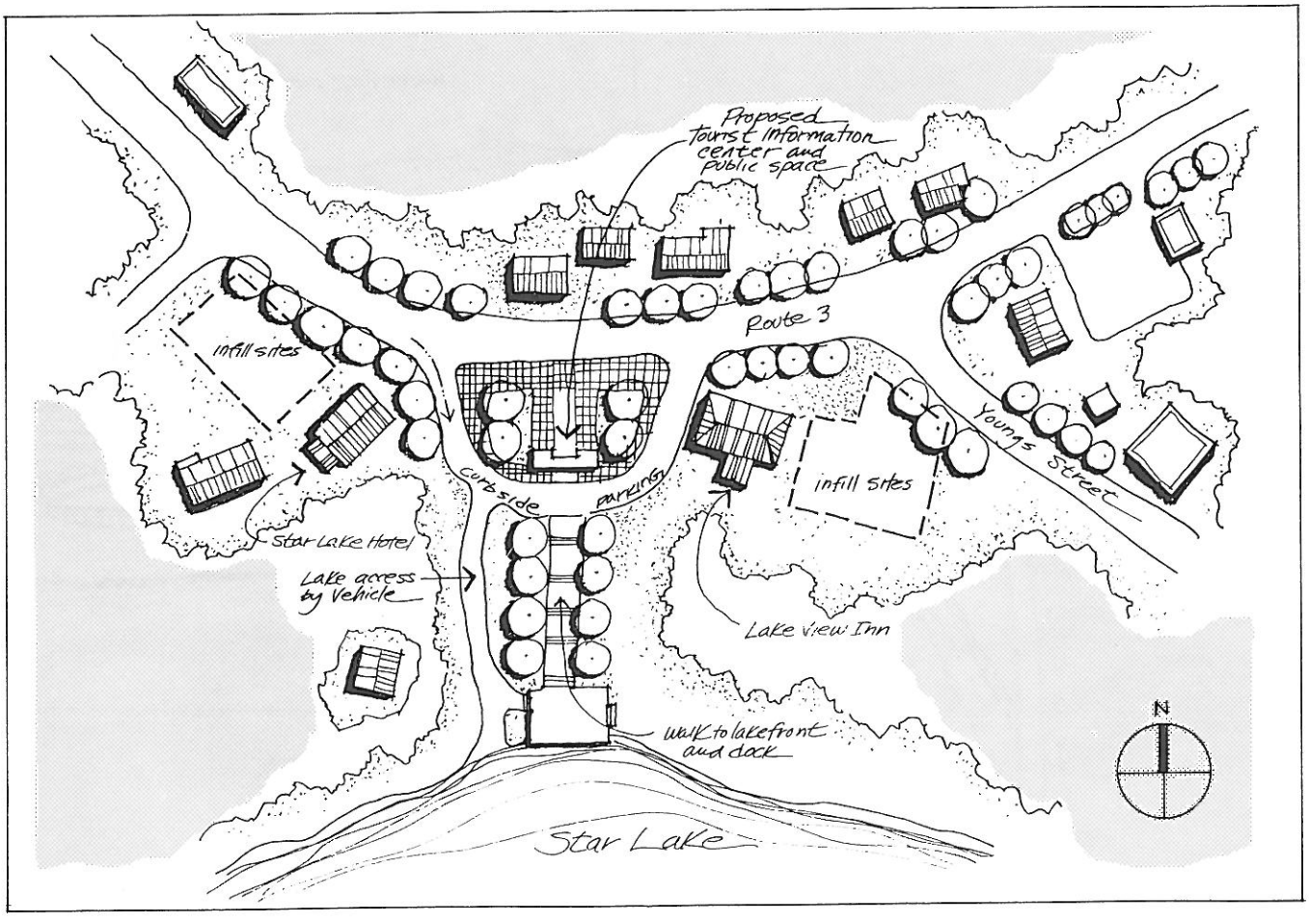
Existing Conditions: Star Lake's bend-in-the-road would make an ideal spot for a public information facility.

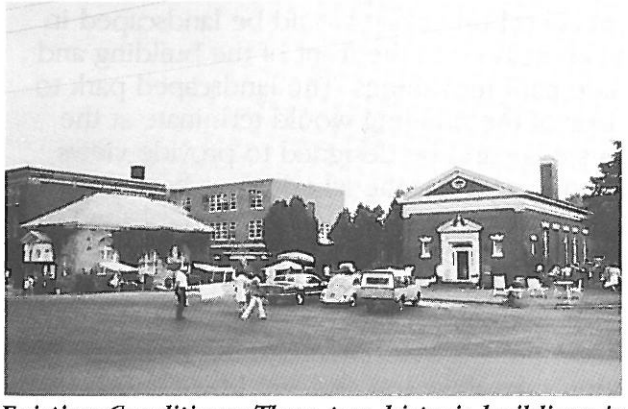


Proposed: Open space development in Star Lake would improve the hamlet center and sense of identity.

Star Lake Information Center

Star Lake's lack of recognizable hamlet identity is the result of two factors—first, the sparse scattering of buildings along Route 3, and second, the lack of visual connection to the lake, its major natural feature. The design proposal for the hamlet of Star Lake involves the creation of an information center in the bend of the highway where, at the present, an empty lot intervenes between the Star Lake Hotel and Lake View Inn. This property is a focal point on the approach to the hamlet from either direction, a location which reinforces its attractiveness for redevelopment. This center is also a primary access point to the lakeshore for both pedestrians and vehicles. As proposed, the center would be encircled by a loop road accommodating parking and a small tourist information building. It would be landscaped in a formal manner to the front of the building and include park furnishings. The landscaped park to the rear of the building would terminate at the water's edge and be designed to provide views and sitting areas. At the lakeshore, a boat launch, beach or rental business could be established. The proposed center and connection to the water would strenghthen the core of the hamlet while helping to promote commercial activity and economic development around it. The existing Lake View Inn and Star Lake Hotel would be the first benefactors of this open space improvement.

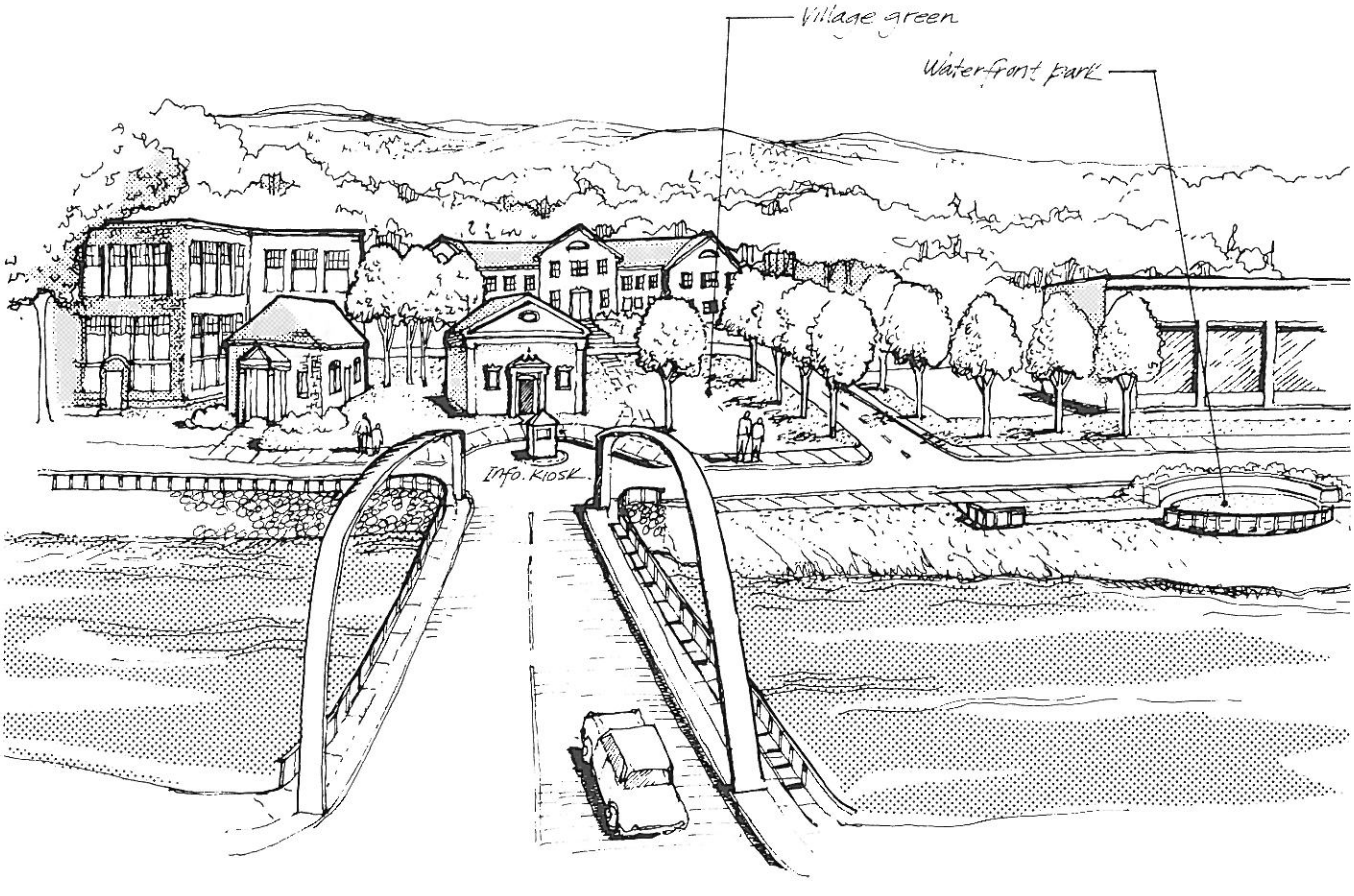




Existing Conditions: These two historic buildings in Willsboro would benefit from more of a park-like setting.

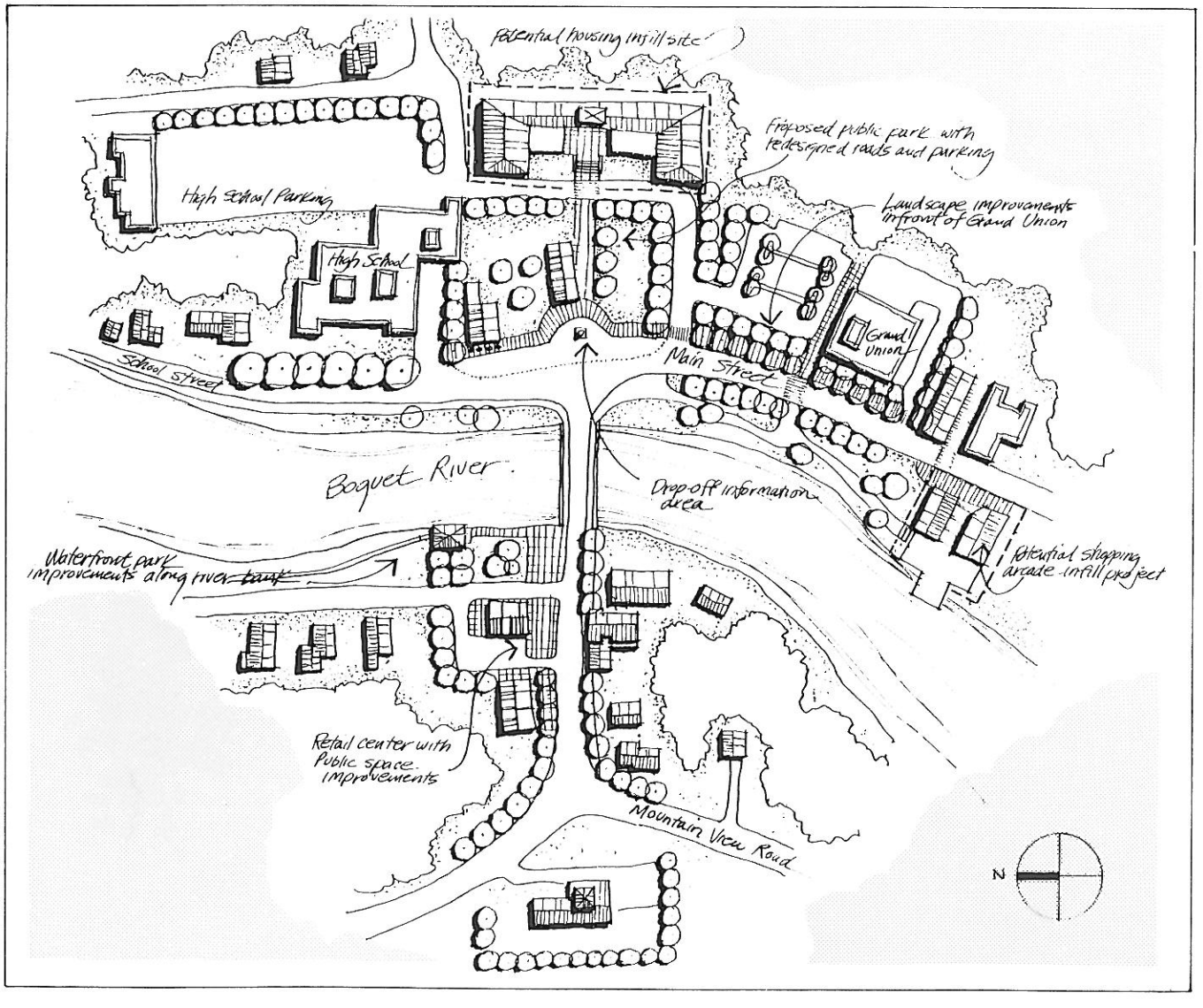
Willsboro "Green"

In the hamlet of Willsboro, sprawl and strip development have occurred at great cost to the historic hamlet core. Design recommendations, therefore, involve a consolidation of existing public, commercial, and residential buildings, as well as natural and historic features (river, hydro, fish ladder). A proposed *village green* recalls attention to the hamlet center at a critical intersection where public historic buildings, the water's edge, beautiful views and commercial activity meet. Library Street is realigned to widen the greenspace on which the library and historic



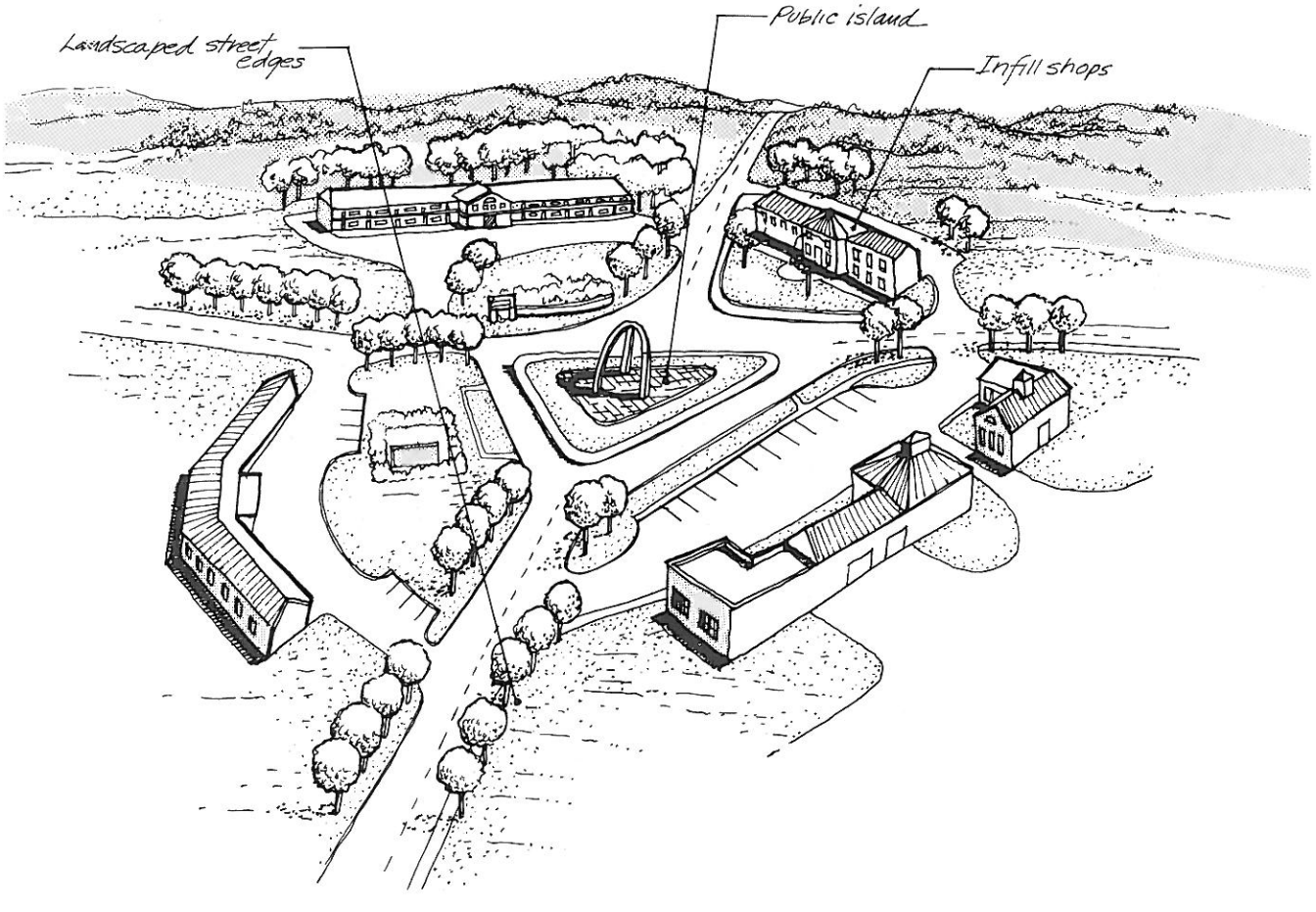
Proposed: Willsboro's green could draw attention back to the hamlet center at a critical intersection.

school annex building sit. An arrival information kiosk could be placed in front of the village green. The formation of the green opens up land for development to the east. The Grand Union Supermarket parking lot is restructured for access from the realigned Library Street, but at the same time is expanded to the north to accommodate increased usage. Concurrently, the Main Street frontage becomes a landscaped park which includes a war memorial and reconnects pedestrian circulation to the rest of the core. The commercial area on the west bank of the bridge is redesigned as a unified space by the installation of decorative paving and furnishings. River edge landscape improvements are suggested in order to create easier access and to enhance the overall character of the water's edge. Walkways to the historic mill, fish ladder and fishing sites downstream is also suggested.



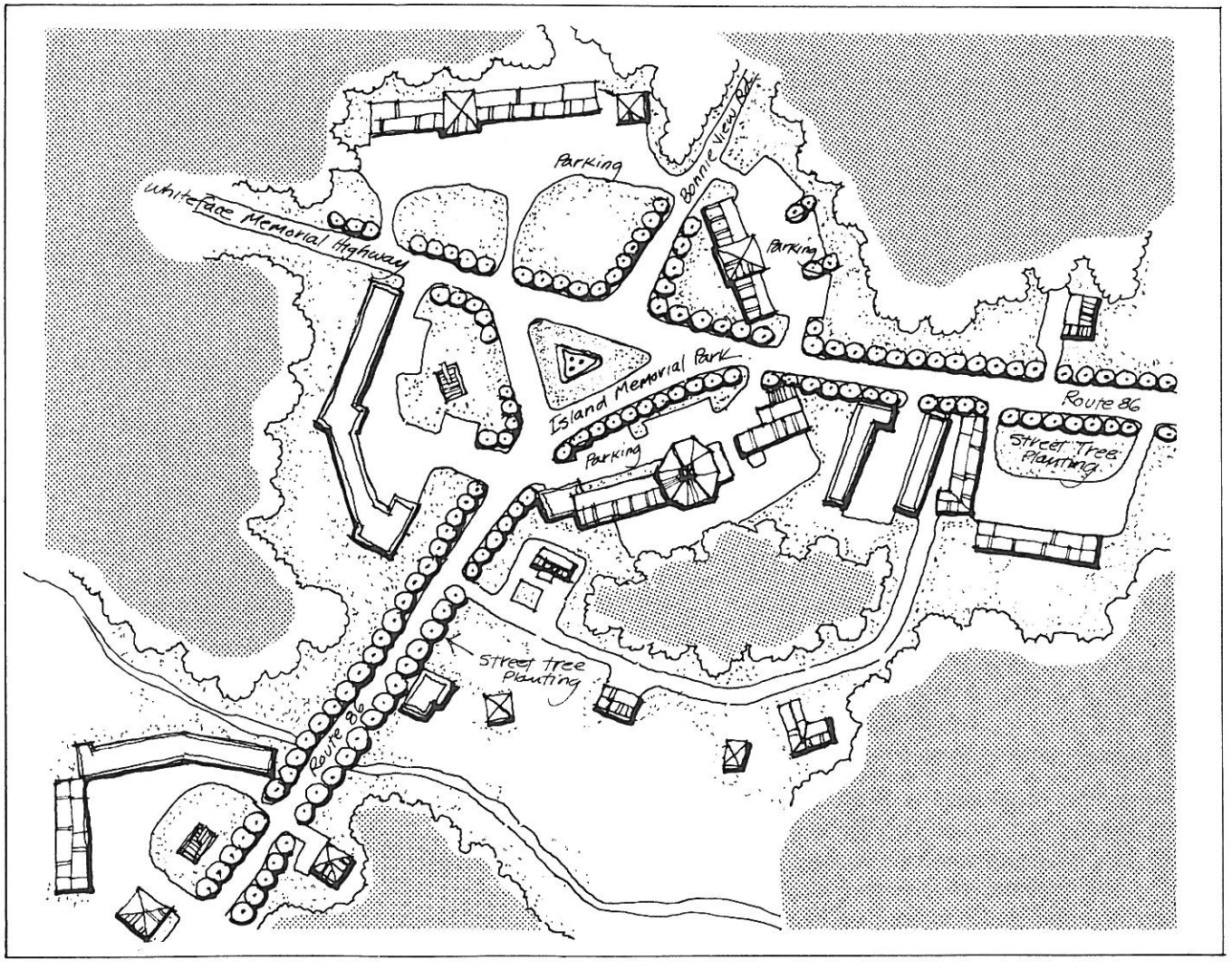
Wilmington Island

The hamlet of Wilmington has two distinct districts—a commercial district and a residential/mixed use district. These have both the requirements of independent development and definition as well as connection to one another. Design features are proposed for each district. In the commercial district at the



The pedestrian character in the commercial district of Wilmington badly needs to be restored.

intersection of Route 86 and The Veterans Memorial Highway (illustrated below) a public island is created to accommodate a monument open grass panel and a "Welcome to Wilmington" sign. Street tree planting is encouraged along the highway to soften the commercial "strip" character of the current road. Sidewalk improvements and consolidated curb cuts are suggested to restore a more pedestrian character to the area, especially on the stretch between the commercial and residential/mixed use district. In this district dense tree planting is suggested along the street. It is also recommended that a major community building on the site of a vacant gas station be considered and that the site be developed as a town green. The building on the site could serve as a tourist information facility and might feature a clock tower to articulate its central and focal position at this major community intersection. Waterfront park improvements are suggested along the Ausable River to encourage the historic interpretation and appreciation of this area as a formerly active hydro/mill site.



Redevelopment Strategy Seven:

Water and Sewer

Adirondack Water Systems

The Adirondack Park evokes images of an abundance of fresh, clean water. The Park's sparse settlement pattern and low-intensity land uses contribute to the perception of clean, pure and abundant water free from chemical and bacterial contamination. In fact, this image is far from reality.

Adirondack hamlets are quickly approaching a critical point in their management of water resources. Developing environmentally sound and affordable solutions to the dumping of raw sewage into the rivers is essential to abate the pollution which is threatening both the public drinking supply and the recreational activities on Adirondack waters.

Water resource planning has an impact on hamlet growth and economic development. The size and configuration of a water main, or the capacity of a sewage treatment facility can invite, regulate or discourage growth. Wastewater and water systems can also influence the physical form of the community, leading to a dense pattern or contributing to sprawl. Hamlets interested in economic development, whether through industrial development or increased recreation and tourism, will have to address the issues of water supply and wastewater management.

Adirondack Public Water Systems

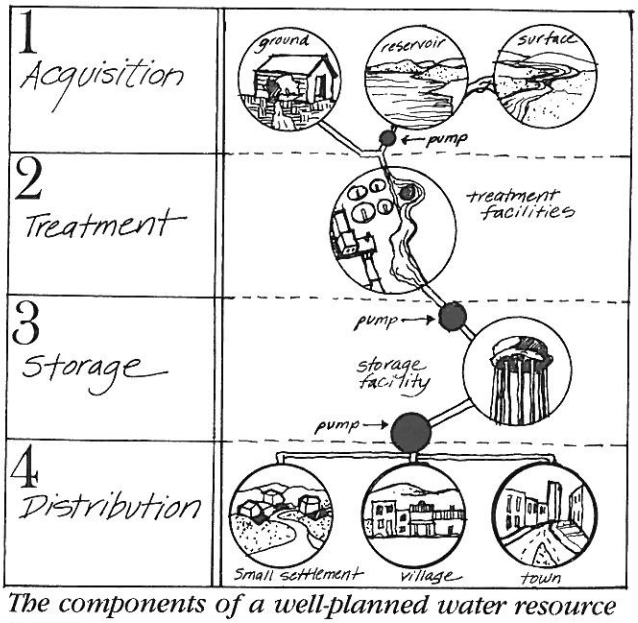
Public water systems are used extensively in the settled areas of the Adirondack Park, supplying water to 102,000 year-round and seasonal residents—nearly one-half of the total population of the region. In general, community water systems are more reliable than individual systems, and have a lower initial investment and annual maintenance cost per house.

The design and organization of a community water system is determined by the quality, quantity and availability of raw source water. Water quality determines the type and extent of treatment needed while water quality and availability influence the type of extraction and distribution system, the storage facilities and plant layout. Increasingly complex system operations and declining sources of capital investment funds for system renovation and construction compound the problem of providing an ample and clean water supply.

The Problems

The purpose of a public water system is to supply safe, clean water in sufficient quantity. Most Adirondack public water systems fall short of this mission:

- One-third of public systems cannot meet demand;
- A majority have inadequate storage for fire protection
- More than one-half are at 75%-100% of their design capacity, limiting their ability to expand;
- 40% experienced breakdowns resulting in loss of service to users;
- Most do not meet NYS Department of Health requirements for water quality monitoring and testing;
- Two-thirds exceeded maximum coliform levels (Frances, 1983).



The components of a well-planned water resource system.

"Many Adirondack hamlets are directly discharging raw and partially treated wastewater into rivers and lakes."

The Typical Adirondack System

Adirondack public water supply systems are very old by engineering design standards. Eighty percent were built before 1940 and not one has been constructed within the last 20 years! Some other interesting statistics are worthy of note:

- 80% use surface water as their primary raw water source, which is generally of a lower quality than ground water sources;
- Two-fifths use gravity pressure systems for distribution which results in uneven water pressure depending on location;
- Four-fifths of the staff who maintain the community water systems are part-time, with one-third lacking Department of Health certification (Frances, 1983).

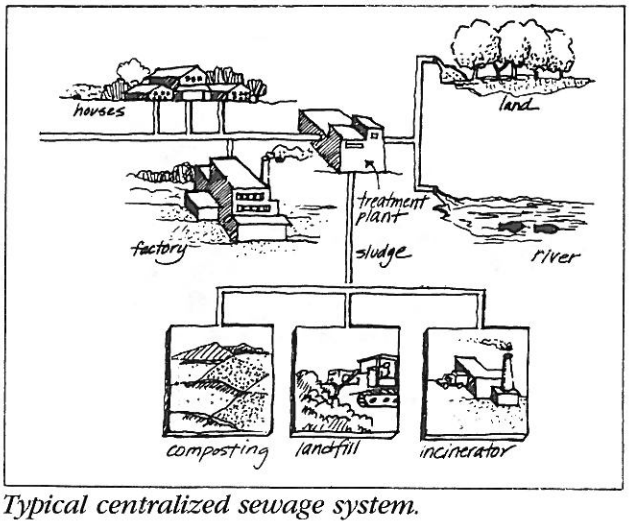
Guidelines for Water System Management

The following guidelines are important for the effective management of public water systems in Adirondack hamlets:

- Protect and preserve source water through local land-use planning tools and careful monitoring;
- Plan for the development of new water sources, focusing on ground water sources which are typically of higher quality than surface waters;
- Require local staff members responsible for system monitoring and equipment maintenance to be certified, full-time employees;
- Insist that equipment be routinely maintained;

- Explore cooperative arrangements with neighboring towns and hamlets in developing and managing a public water system.

A hamlet's economic viability and growth capability is, in part, dependent on its ability to provide an adequate supply of high quality water. Studies suggest that within the next 10 years, three-fourths of the public water supply systems in the Adirondacks will have to undergo major renovation and construction (Frances, 1983). It is, therefore, important for the hamlets to be well-informed about water system installation and management.



Typical centralized sewage system.

Wastewater Management

Central or Decentralized Systems?

Many Adirondack hamlets directly discharge raw and partially treated wastewater into their rivers and lakes. This, in combination with malfunctioning septic systems and acid rain, threatens the water quality of the entire region, particularly in and around the hamlet areas. Selecting the appropriate wastewater management system of a community depends on the proposed system's compatibility with the proposed site and its affordability. Centralized sewage treatment is a very complex technology which can cause problems in small communities with limited technical expertise. Some communities may need a centralized sewage system to solve their pollution problems. Most hamlets, however, have a viable and more affordable alternative to a centralized sewage treatment system—small-scale, decentralized systems.

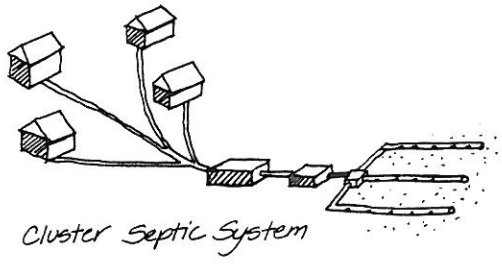
Centralized Wastewater Treatment Systems

The traditional remedy to water pollution problems in towns and cities is a centralized wastewater collection and treatment system. In such systems, wastewater treatment usually occurs at two levels: primary treatment, which removes 50% of the solid matter through screening and settling; and secondary treatment, which further cleans wastewater through a complex bacterial process that removes 85% of the solid matter and over half of the toxic substances. Most communities are required to operate both primary and secondary treatment facilities, though in special cases only primary treatment will be required. Sludge, the solid waste removed during treatment, can be disposed of in three different ways as indicated in the accompanying diagram: landfill, incineration and land application after composting.

While centralized systems have been the traditional remedy for a community's pollution problem, they have also been a nightmare in some small towns which could not afford the expense and did not have the technical ability to properly maintain the equipment. The hamlet of Bloomingdale in Essex County is one such example. Decentralized, on-site wastewater treatment systems are being used successfully in rural areas and small towns throughout the country and offer a viable alternative to centralized systems.

Small Decentralized Wastewater Systems

Small decentralized wastewater systems are now widely accepted and encouraged as an environmentally sound, cost-effective and permanent alternative to conventional and central treatment of sewage. In fact, federal legislation mandates that a community preparing wastewater facilities plans look at the use of innovative and alternative wastewater management processes along with conventional sewage disposal methods. Financial incentives also exist for a community to construct a small decentralized system. Decentralized wastewater systems operate the same as standard on-site treatment facilities with septic tanks and leaching fields. The only difference is that they are larger in capacity, serving clusters of buildings rather than individual units. There are several environmental and cost advantages in utiliziung such systems in Adirondack hamlets. The case of Willsboro offers a good illustration of these advantages.



On-site sewer system alternatives.

Case Study: Willsboro Hamlet

An environmental engineering firm has recently completed an evaluation of wastewater management alternatives in the Town of Willsboro with a focus on the hamlet area. This study, published in 1983, acknowledges the Boquet River pollution problem created by direct discharge of raw wastewater into the river, and assesses the recommendations made in an earlier report completed for the community in 1982. The 1982 report recommended the installation of a centralized treatment facility in the vicinity of an ash cinder pile to the north of the hamlet center. This scheme was rejected in the 1983 critique because of its incompatibility with the site chosen for the facility (the subsurface material is inadequate for proper drainage). The firm further determined that the facility proposed by the 1982 report was not the system of lowest cost to the users in Willsboro. The firm's alternative is a phased decentralized wastewater management approach that recommends multiple treatment facilities consisting of either individual on-site systems or small cluster communal systems.

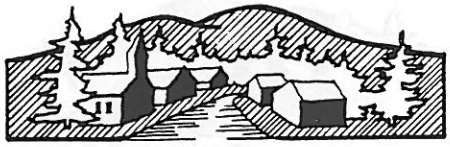
The report cites three advantages to the decentralized small systems approach for Willsboro:

- **It offers phased implementation;**
- **It provides a framework for an emphasis on existing problems;**
- **It allows for an initial focus on problems of greatest significance.**

The study also recommends that the town begin identifying "target sites" for small wastewater disposal facilities in the hamlet. These target sites should be coordinated with the planning and development recommendations proposed in the report. The important connection between the firm's recommendations and those outlined in this study is the common emphasis on *clustering* and infill development strategies for the hamlet. The process offered by the report for developing a long-term wastewater management plan is as follows:

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION: Gather full and complete documentation of all specific problems in the hamlet area. Compile, verify and record information on a lot-by-lot basis to produce a map of the present status of the hamlet's wastewater disposal system;

SETTING PRIORITIES: Select and act on major problems first;

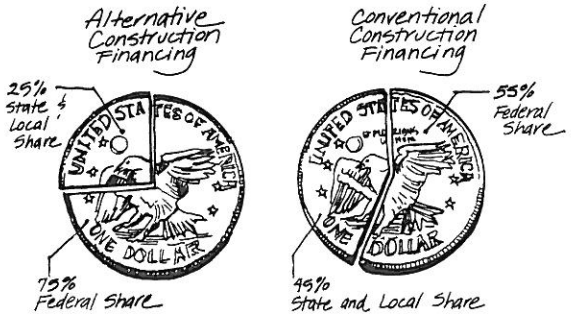


"Adirondack hamlets are quickly approaching a critical point in their management of water resources."

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A SPECIFIC SOLUTION: Select a feasible project (high priority) and do it—to cultivate citizen interest and enthusiasm for the overall program/plan;

DEVELOP A LONG RANGE PLAN: In conjunction with developing a feasible project, the hamlet should develop an overall wastewater management plan with an implementation strategy and schedule. The plan would consist of the following:

- An identification of specific solutions (location and system type) for the whole hamlet area;
- An identification of target sites for future development of small wastewater disposal facilities;
- The development of institutional structures to implement the plan;
- The review and revision of wastewater disposal regulations to lay the groundwork for plan implementation (look at town zoning regulations);
- The pursuit of outside financing sources (Farmer's Home Administration, CDBG) and the creation of funds through a long-term capital improvement program.



Hamlets should develop an understanding of funding possibilities for water and sewer improvements.

How to be a Good Client

Planning for Water Resource Development

The most difficult and important step in planning for a community's water and sewer system is to translate the general goals and objectives for a community's viability and future growth into specific physical improvements in a town's water and sewer system. Water and wastewater system configuration and capacity can be used to limit, regulate, or invite growth by determining where growth and development will occur.

When considering a centralized sewer system, a community should get answers to the following questions:

- What level of treatment is best?
- Should the plant discharge into the river or onto land?
- What will be done with sludge left over from the treatment process?
- Is the recommended site compatible with the requirements of a treatment facility?
- What is the projected cost and can the community afford and maintain a centralized system?
- What type of sewer system is the most appropriate and affordable?
- What are the effects on future physical settlement patterns? Or will a decentralized system encourage decentralized growth in the form of urban sprawl?

After answering these questions, it is likely that the typical Adirondack hamlet will choose a consolidated decentralized sewer system since this allows for a phased implementation plan, emphasizes existing problems, and allows for an initial focus on the problems of greater significance.

Redevelopment Strategy Eight:

Human Resources

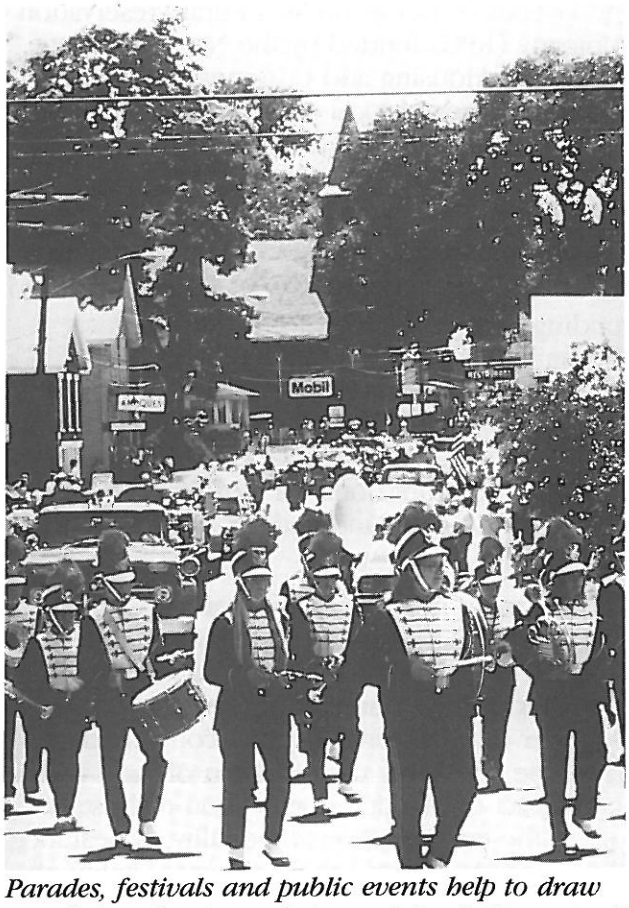
Information and Education Programs

During one of the Sample Communities Workshops, an Adirondack citizen stated that there are two kinds of problems, "money solveable problems and incentive solveable problems." These problems are interconnected. When it comes to money, Adirondack communities often lack the experience or know-how to compete effectively for Federal and State dollars. Another problem is that many of these govenment programs are not appropriate for Adirondack hamlets. When it comes to incentives, many Adirondack residents are not enthusiastic about any changes that might occur within their hamlets, be they good or bad. Changes that do occur often take place without the input of residents, leaving local citizens feeling powerless about any government or other outside involvement in their hamlet. Many others, like the gentleman quoted above, admit that, "people who live in this town, including myself, aren't doing what they should to solve problems!"

It takes three things to reverse a pattern of frustration and helplessness about how to get things done—MOTIVATION, MOBILIZATION and COMMUNICATION. **Motivation** is...getting excited enough, frustrated enough or interested enough to take or follow the lead to get things done. **Mobilization** is...creating a structure into which you devote time and energy for laying out a strategy to accomplish goals—start a group, give it a name, define goals, designate leadership roles, start planning ahead—get moving! **Communication** and **Action** is...getting the message across, changing the way other people think, influencing decisions—using the press, the community meeting, the living room, the classroom as the arena.

Why is it worth getting organized? All too often *planning* and involvement, when they occur in the Adirondacks and small communities throughout the United States, takes place in reaction to a crisis. **Crisis planning** takes place with people unprepared and scrambling to get themselves together, often after it's too late. **Long-term planning**, on the other hand, gives people the opportunity to get together before the crisis occurs. It enables a community to take a leadership role, anticipate problems and develop solutions all at the same time. It allows the community to direct the course of events and to exercise control over the future of the hamlet.

The Village of Keeseville took such an approach three years ago when the community-based organization called the Friends of Keeseville was formed. Operating with increasing success, the



Parades, festivals and public events help to draw people together to work toward developing a positive community image.

mission of the Friends of Keeseville is to guide and implement the non-regulatory planning proposals made by the Planning and Village Boards and to develop a local capacity to deal with community problems. The Friends of Keeseville devote their energy to other aspects of community revitalization, including housing rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements and Main Street revitalization. Because the Friends of Keeseville know that it is increasingly difficult for small communities to secure outside financing, they have devoted much of their effort toward stimulating local funding through a proposed hydro project which would act as a revenue generating enterprise for the Village.

Rural Preservation Companies

The Friends of Keeseville is a Rural Preservation Company (RPC) funded by the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal with supplemental local and state support. Other RPCs in the Adirondack Park Region include the Essex Community Heritage Organization (ECHO-Town of Essex), Historic Saranac Lake, the Housing Assistance Program of Essex County (HAPECO) and PRIDE in Ticonderoga.

Funding for an RPC is targeted for staff costs. The staff, in turn, can develop programs and projects. RPC funds can also be used for architectural analyses of buildings and feasibility studies for projects. These funds cannot be used for the actual work done on a project. This is where private, State and Federal monies must be secured.

Ticonderoga's new Rural Preservation Company was formed as a result of the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce with the assistance of the Essex County Planning Office. Ticonderoga's Chamber of Commerce became concerned about the economic deterioration of their village and impact of this deterioration on real estate values, the tax base, housing quality, appearance of the community and the economic vitality of the Main Street business area. Recognizing these conditions, Chamber members then tried to determine why these problems were occurring. The lack of money for public and private investment and renewal was leading to the aging and decay of the business center and the relocation of the International Paper Company—a major taxpayer and activity generator in the Village.

The Chamber of Commerce at the same time recognized the community's substantial assets, which include historic resources, tourism, the LaChute River Corridor, attractive lands for recreational and commercial development, a potential for hydropower development and the possibility of combined public/private partnerships for community revitalization in cooperation with the International Paper Company, which is still located in the town. The allocated funds for the RPC Program have been used to hire a program director and staff to oversee development proposals and to help the town and village leaders find and apply for funds for housing rehabilitation, public works renovation and new developments.

Organizing Human Resources

There are many reasons why active community groups such as Friends of Keeseville are successful. The reasons outlined below may assist a community in determining a workable direction for organizing and accomplishing a local program.

- Aim to SOLVE PROBLEMS and create POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS—start with a small but highly visible project.
- ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP ROLES—Involve a variety of individuals from the community in the group and on the Board of Directors.
- Create a CLEAR STRATEGY to attain GOALS—be specific, realistic and action-oriented.
- DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY—to individuals who are committed to following through.
- Create INCENTIVES AND REWARDS—appoint positions and establish funding for staff members.
- Create SUPPORTING GROUPS—use one project to generate other projects.
- PERFORM CONSTANT OUTREACH and COMMUNICATION—make full use of papers, television and radio.
- SPONSOR PROGRAMS which BUILD COMMUNITY IMAGE—through adult, youth and other community-based organizations.
- Don't be afraid to ASK QUESTIONS—seek technical assistance from a broad range of resources.
- Select BOARD MEMBERS involved in other community organizations—daily communication and information exchange are critical.
- STRIVE for NON-PROFIT STATUS, INCORPORATION and a FORMAL DESIGNATION as a group—establish a sense of security and longevity in the organization.

The Willsboro Fair—displaying local talents and human resources from the hamlet.

An example of such a group is the recently organized Boquet River Association formed by community leaders with support from the Essex County Planning Office. The purpose of the group is to promote tourism through hiking and canoe trips along the Boquet River. The group's organization follows a recent study on the river corridor undertaken by the National Park Service.

Another good example of organizing human resources to achieve physical results is the Saranac Lake Village Improvement Society which is actively engaged in the revitalization of their open space system originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1909.

No organization is without its problems. The Friends of Keeseville stated in their 1982-1983 Annual Report that "the Friends of Keeseville have a big job ahead of them to reach all of their goals. Historically the community at large has not participated fully...It is imperative that the general public do more than make comments and criticisms. It is their right, privilege and responsibility to become involved with their community" (p. 3 *Friends of Keeseville Annual Report*). Community support and involvement remain the key. Without them the future of Adirondack hamlets will remain uncertain.

"All too often 'planning' in the Adirondacks takes place in reaction to a crisis."

Model Action Programs

More often than not planning begins in response to a crisis. People simply make decisions when they are forced to. Ultimately every place is shaped by the decisions of individuals or groups. However, some decisions leave satisfying results, while others leave the majority sorry that they were made. The worst decisions are those that are not only inherently bad but spread the bad news around. They are like a dangerous illness—the worse things become the harder it is to reverse the situation.

Planning and design may help to structure decisions so that the hamlet is carefully shaped and enhanced over time. This process never works as smoothly as textbooks might suggest because each hamlet is so uniquely different. What might work for one would not necessarily work for all. In a small community or hamlet the "problem-based approach" rather than the "general plan" is the best place to start. This is called TROUBLESHOOTING—zeroing in on the most pressing problem of your hamlet and your hamlet alone. Troubleshoot first and plan for the long range later. Solving the first problem may open the floodgate for redevelopment opportunities and options. It may not be the ideal textbook approach to planning, but it gives a meaningful starting place which seems to work best in Adirondack hamlets.