

Town of Jay

Au Sable Forks Downtown Revitalization Plan



December 2005

Barton
& **L**oguidice, P.C.

Engineers • Environmental Scientists • Planners • Landscape Designers

Town of Jay

Au Sable Forks Downtown Revitalization Plan

The Revitalization Committee

The Au Sable Forks Revitalization Plan would not have been possible without the assistance of the following individuals:

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Special thanks to Randy Douglas, Sharron Hewston, and Alan Hipps initiating the first Phase and acquiring the necessary technical assistance grant.

Also to Debbie McDonald, Economic Development Director, Saranac Lake, for her travels to Jay challenging community members to be proactive in their efforts to form a Revitalization Committee that could lead the way.

Special thanks to Susan Pulitzer for her initiative in leading the organization and production of meetings. With her leadership, the Committee was always informed and ready to work strategically with the Consultant, Barton & Loguidice, P.C.

The townspeople of Jay are indebted to our Committee members for their time and passion, and are encouraged to now join us in bringing this Plan to reality.

Many individuals who have contributed valuable time and information throughout this process may have been missed on this list, but are certainly not forgotten.

Thank you all.

Sincerely,
Town of Jay Residents and Town Board

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I. Introduction

The Town of Jay and Hamlet of Au Sable Forks have retained Barton & Loguidice, P.C. (B&L), to develop a conceptual plan for the revitalization of the Au Sable Forks Downtown. Working in concert with the Revitalization Committee, elected officials, and involved partners and stakeholders, B&L has developed this Revitalization Plan which translates their vision into a graphic design and accompanying narrative.

The resultant Downtown Revitalization Plan will assist the Hamlet of Au Sable Forks and the Town of Jay in the development of an appropriate Streetscape and Pedestrian Plan for Main Street (County Route 9N), the design, accessing, and enhancements to the existing Riverside Park, the design of a multi-modal linkage to the waterfront, and an economic vision for the Downtown. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of identifying potential partnerships and stakeholders, and provides a base document to seek implementation funding under various Federal, State, and private programs.

I.A. Revitalization Committee

Essential to the solicitation of public opinion and providing direction was the formation of the Town of Jay Revitalization Committee. Comprised of community leaders, business owners, and interested and involved citizens and stakeholders; the Committee helped foster an integrated, comprehensive approach to this effort in order to establish a vision for the physical, economic, and cultural revitalization of the commercial downtown. The Committee was the logical group representing the Town and Au Sable Forks in their efforts to convey the Hamlet's desires and needs, tradition and heritage, as well as important values necessary for the community to remain viable and unique within the context of the Adirondack region.

I.B. Community Setting and History

The Town of Jay and Hamlet of Au Sable Forks are sited at the confluence of the east and west branches of the Au Sable River within the northeast quadrant of the Adirondack Park. The communities of Jay and Au Sable Forks serve as the northeast gateway to the Park and the Olympic Region; linking Montreal and Quebec, Canada and the upper Lake Champlain Region to Whiteface Mountain, Lake Placid, and Saranac Lake.

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Au Sable Forks and the Towns of Jay and Black Brook share a rich history. Initially linked to agriculture and the forest product and iron ore industries, the Town was established in 1798, when it separated from the Town of Willisborough. Named after General John Jay, then Governor of New York State, it was one of the four original towns of Essex County. The first iron forge was built by John Purmont in 1798, and in 1809 the forge and mill complexes were extensively enlarged, contributing to the development and prosperity of the area. In 1856 and 1857, fall freshets destroyed most of the industries adjacent to the Au Sable River. Although rebuilt, by 1864 the Purmont's industries were suffering economically. They were subsequently purchased by James and John Rogers, founders of the J&J Rogers Iron Company, one of the largest industrial firms in New York State.

Before 1825, only three families resided at the Forks. A sawmill was built in that year and in 1828 the first iron forge began to process ore mined at Palmer Hill, several miles north of the settlement. However, it was not until 1837 when the J&J Rogers Company purchased the Sable Iron Company, that the community of Au Sable Forks began to grow, becoming one of the most prominent industrial centers in the Adirondack Region.

The J&J Rogers Company was a classic vertical business enterprise which stressed self-sufficiency. In addition to the forges and brick yards, the firm operated the Palmer Hill Iron Mine; various timber interests; charcoal kilns; grist; lath shingle; and saw mills; retail stores; and 30 miles of plank road. Houses were constructed for their workers with timber; bricks, fittings, and shingles the company produced.

As the late 19th and early 20th Century technology and economy evolved, the J&J Rogers Company established a paper mill which became the Towns' principal employer. Its demise essentially changed Au Sable Forks from a thriving mill town to a bedroom community.

Remnants of these 19th Century industries, along with the workers' and owners' residences, remain within the hamlets of Au Sable Forks, Black Brook, and Jay to this day.

The single defining event which shaped Au Sable Forks, as we know it today, was the fire of 1925. That conflagration destroyed the entire community center, to include the 19th Century businesses and architecture. While quickly restored, the replacement

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structures were universally constructed of brick, stone, and concrete in an effort to preclude a similar catastrophe. Despite construction within a limited period of time and a commonality of construction materials, there exists a variety of architectural styles and detail.

Similarly, land use varies within and adjacent to the Main Street corridor. While commercial development is dominant, residential, institutional, recreational, and governmental nodes are present. Each of these land uses contribute to the vitality, character, and quality of the Main Street and larger community.

As the 20th Century progressed, the local and regional economy transitioned from an agricultural/industrial base to a tourism/service oriented base; the transportation system from a mover of goods and products, to a mover of people; and, the Au Sable River from an energy provider to a recreational resource. In some senses, this transition has been slow and painful, and the economy has suffered in the short term. However, community leaders and concerned citizens have decided to take a proactive approach in shaping the future. By seeking a grant from the Governor's Office of Small Cities, and by organizing a Main Street Revitalization Committee, an important initiative has been undertaken to identify a community vision and develop a plan for the preservation, enhancement, and development of the Main Street corridor and the Au Sable Forks Downtown.

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Au Sable Forks Downtown Revitalization Plan

II. Au Sable Forks Revitalization Plan

II.A Physical Plan

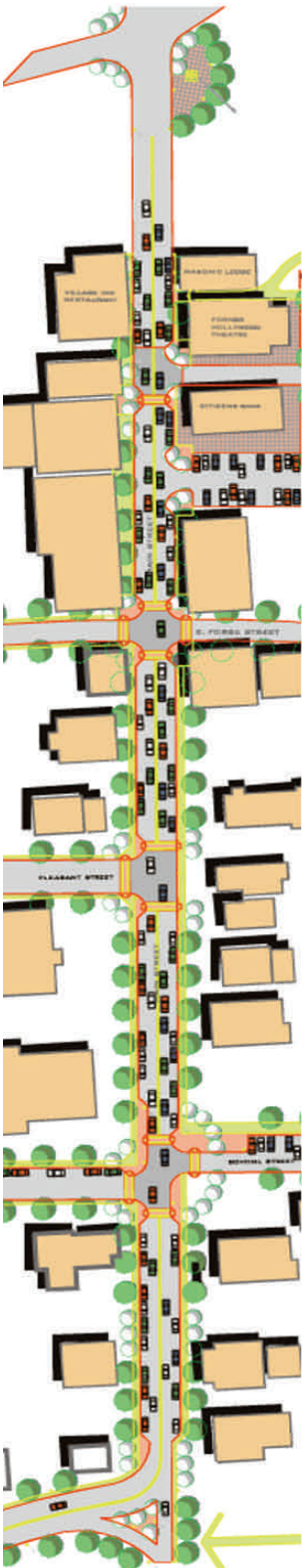
In many respects a community's downtown or Main Street acts as the most visible indicator of its social, cultural, and economic well being. This Downtown Revitalization Plan provides a meaningful, implementable basis for the economic, physical, and aesthetic redevelopment and revitalization of Au Sable Forks' Main Street and adjacent neighborhoods. It provides a framework to implement appropriate design guidelines and to establish beneficial economic, preservation, and development strategies consistent with the community's vision. Additionally, it will serve as a vehicle to seek grants and funding and to guide the future development, preservation, and enhancement of existing infrastructure and resources.

II.A.1 Main Street Approach

The Downtown Revitalization Plan takes guidance from the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's four-point Main Street Approach. The underlying premise of this approach is to encourage economic development and strategic physical design within the context of historic preservation through the Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization of elements that address the needs of downtown Au Sable Forks.

This approach utilizes a community-driven process to revitalize older, traditional business districts. By tailoring this approach, the Downtown Revitalization Plan will guide the community's return to self reliance and local empowerment; and provide a basis for the enhancement of the downtown by focusing on unique assets such as its distinctive architecture and proximity to the Au Sable River and Olympic Region. Discussed below are the four primary principles to the National Center's Main Street Approach:

- 1) **Organization:** Involves encouraging and assembling interested residents, business owners, and public officials, as well as financial resources to implement a strategic revitalization plan such as this.



Enhanced Au Sable River Corridor Pedestrian Access

- Provide Direct Pedestrian Access to Waterfront
- Increase Recreational Opportunities for Au Sable River Corridor
- Reorganize Parking Lot for Safety & Efficiency
- Introduce Pedestrian Orientated Signage

Community Catalyst Projects

- Encourage Rehabilitation & Adaptive Reuse of Tahawus Lodge (Tahawus Lodge is one of the Signature Buildings Architecturally & Historically within the Community Center)
- Promote the Redevelopment of the Existing Community Theater
- Establish Cultural or Business Anchors to Encourage Downtown Revitalization

Enhanced Gateway Image

- Provide Gateway Elements at Both Approaches to District
- Establish Sense of Arrival to Residents & Visitors
- Incorporate Pedestrian & Vehicular Oriented Signage
- Encourage Traffic Calming

Retain Architectural Character of Corridor

- Retain Sense of Place & Community Character
- Establish Historic District
- Develop Plan to Preserve/Rehabilitate Key Structures
- Maintain Character Through Facade Improvements
- Develop Design Guidelines/Standards for District
- Encourage Upper Floor Utilization to Increase Economic Development Opportunities

Enhanced Parking System

- Reorganized Parking for Efficiency
- Parking "Bump-Outs" for Pedestrian Safety
- Uniform Street Tree Implementation
- Parking Lot Buffers/Screening
- Traffic Calming

Proposed Streetscape Enhancements

- Decorative Pavement Treatments
- Enhanced Pedestrian Environment
- Uniform Street Tree & Ornamental Plantings
- Pedestrian Scaled Ornamental Lighting
- Enhanced Pedestrian Oriented Signage
- Parking Lot Buffers/Screenings
- Extend Pedestrian Facilities to Adjacent Community Resources (i.e. Au Sable Forks Post Office, Library, & Town Office Complex)

Parking Lot Buffer & Screen

- Provide Ornamental Fence or Low Walls to Extend Building Line & Screen Parking Area
- Incorporate Access Management Techniques



Enhanced Gateway Image

- Provide Gateway Elements at Both Approaches to District
- Establish Sense of Arrival to Residents & Visitors
- Incorporate Pedestrian & Vehicular Oriented Signage
- Encourage Traffic Calming

Enhanced Au Sable River Corridor Pedestrian Access

- Provide Direct Pedestrian Access to Waterfront
- Increase Recreational Opportunities for Au Sable River Corridor
- Extend Existing Riverwalk & Provide Connection to Southern Community Gateway
- Interpret Industrial History

Legend

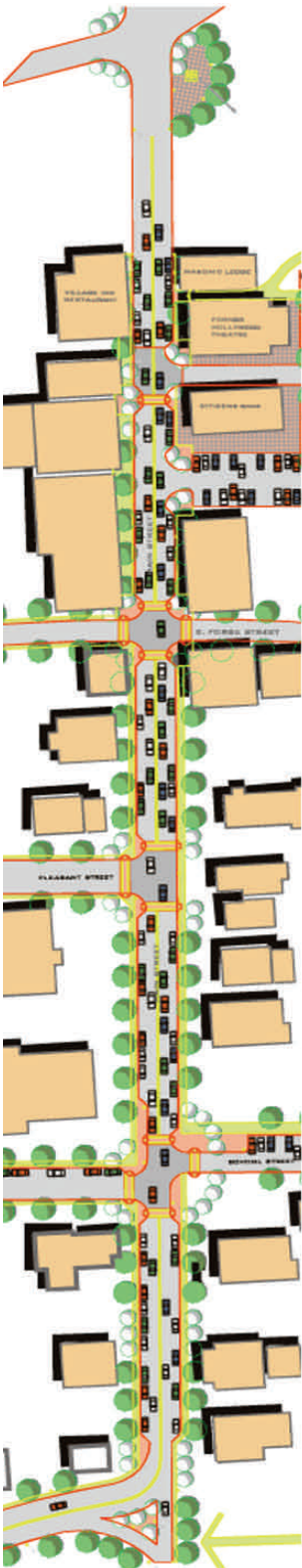
- Commercial Buildings
- Institutional Buildings
- Residential Buildings
- Vacant Buildings (Community Catalyst Projects)



Au Sable Forks Business District Improvement Plan Town of Jay, New York

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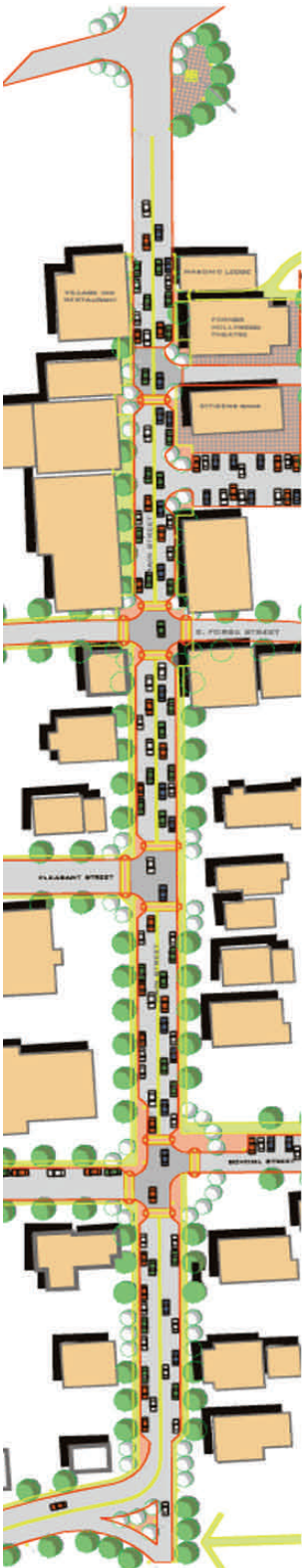
- 2) **Promotion:** Helps identify and promote a positive image of the community's downtown and encourages consumers and investors to relocate, shop, play and invest in the hamlet's downtown.
- 3) **Economic Restructuring:** Focuses on elements that strengthen the Forks' assets, while seeking to expand and diversify its economic base. The recruitment of new, compatible businesses while promoting healthy competition downtown builds a district that responds to today's consumer market.
- 4) **Design:** Enhancing the Forks' physical appearance and functionality by focusing on the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures, encouraging appropriate new construction, promoting pedestrianization, and developing long range plans aids in the process of capitalizing on the community's strengths.

Integral to the Main Street Approach is the establishment and enfranchisement of the Main Street Revitalization Committee to serve as an effective partner in the development of this community-based, grassroots revitalization plan. As such, portions of the four primary principles discussed are already in place. Additionally, many elements inherent in the four principles will be discussed throughout this Plan as a means to outline a vision and implementation strategy for the future of Au Sable Forks.

The forging of partnerships, both public and private, is also encouraged by the National Trust. The community of Au Sable Forks should explore the opportunities to work proactively with the adjacent community of Black Brook, as they share a similar economic, cultural, and environmental history. Establishing inter-municipal partnerships with Black Brook would help revitalization efforts accommodate both communities and the greater Olympic Region. Additionally, establishing an open dialogue with organizations such as NYSDOT and NYSDEC may help with partnering in the implementation of future projects. Due to both Au Sable Forks and Black Brook's location, highway projects from NYSDOT Regions 1 and 7 may have impacts on Main Street (County Route 9N), functionally and

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aesthetically. Maintaining communications with the Department's Regional offices will ensure that future programs and projects are compatible with the community's vision and revitalization strategy. For example, Route 9N reconstruction projects may incorporate appropriate Streetscaping and Pedestrianization design elements, while NYSDEC fish stocking and fishing access programs will enhance the development of a sport fishing industry.

II.A.2 Main Street Corridor

State Route 9N serves as the hamlet's Main Street accessing the Downtown Business District. The community's economic, cultural, educational, governmental, and recreational institutions and resources are sited along or adjacent to the corridor. Establishing the Main Street corridor as a visually cohesive, economically viable, and socially vibrant community resource and destination will restore and enhance the Forks prominence as the Town of Jay's commercial center and downtown district.

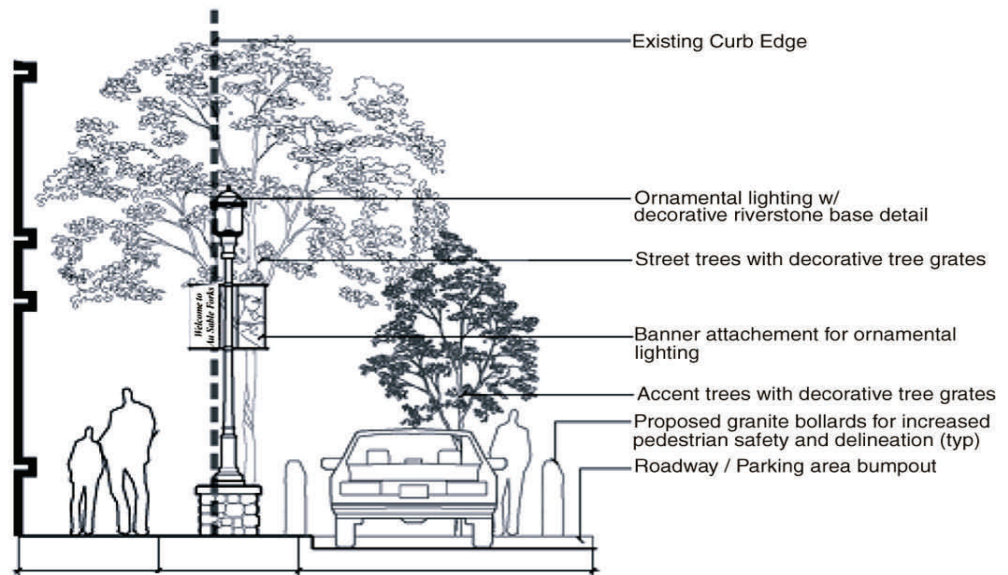
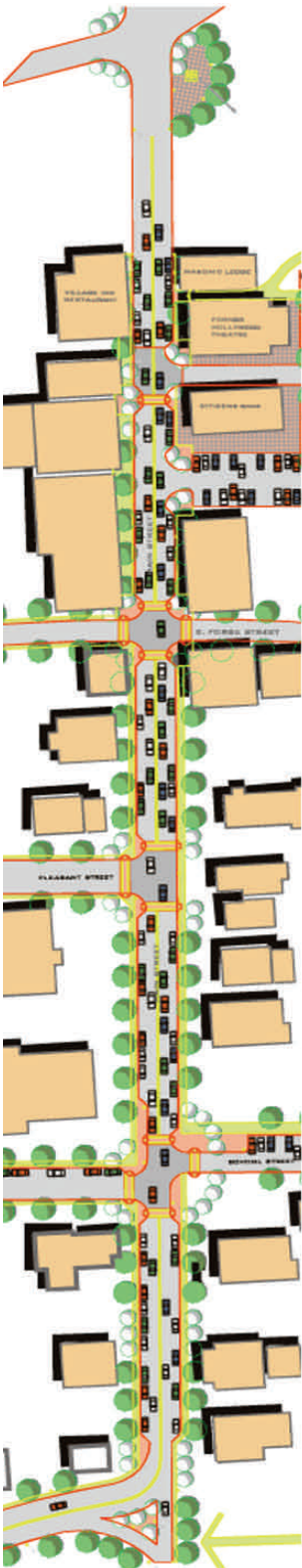
II.A.3 Gateway Image

There exists an opportunity to provide welcoming gateways at both approaches to Main Street in Au Sable Forks. This would create a visual sense of arrival and welcome the visitor and resident to the community and region. The incorporation of the clock tower plaza with decorative pavement treatments opposite Stewart's Shop adjacent to the west branch of the Au Sable River is an excellent enhancement to build on. Design elements could be additional landscape detail around the clock tower plaza, and a landscaped plaza at the intersection of Main Street, 9N and 9R adjacent to the east branch of the River.

Included in these plazas could be informational kiosks complementing the informative and interpretive signage along Main Street and the River walk linear park system.

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A - Main Street Typical Sidewalk Section

The gateway treatments will introduce many of the common design elements proposed within the Main Street corridor streetscape. In addition, such elements will aid in traffic calming measures to help slow and make travelers aware of the enhanced pedestrian environment upon entrance into Au Sable Forks. We suggest the North Gateway design elements be extended into the Town of Black Brook.

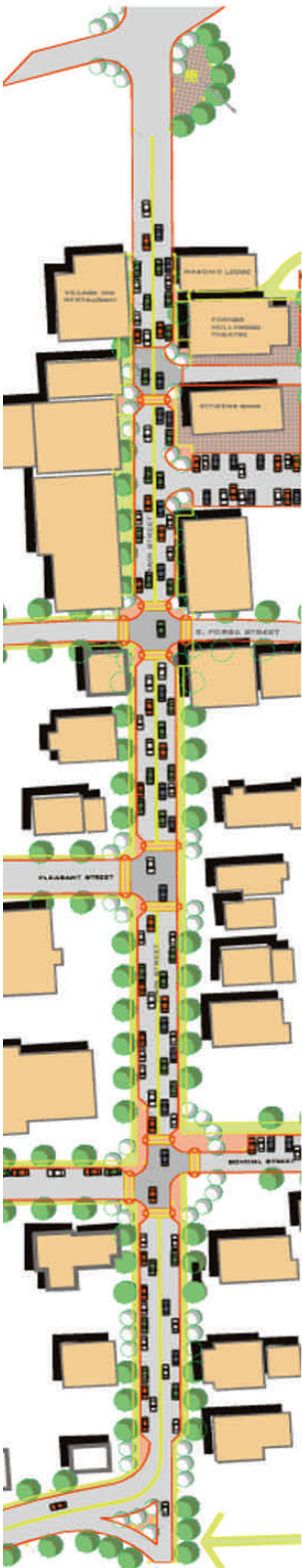
II.A.4 Architecture

The two and three story structures which border and define the Hamlet Downtown are irreplaceable resources which provide a sense of place, remind us of our history, and establish visually and physically the street and community center boundaries. This identity must be retained if the downtown revitalization is to succeed.

As mentioned previously, many of the existing structures replaced the original fabric of Au Sable's Downtown after the fire of 1925. As a result, many of the facades along Main Street exhibit various detailed styles of brick, stone and concrete intended to prevent a similar disaster. The Village Inn block, Masonic (Tahawus) Lodge, and 20 Main Tavern are the three remaining structures that

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predate the fire of 1925. The architectural scale, style, and detail of these structures should be complemented (emulated) in any new construction or rehabilitation projects.

It is our recommendation that a **Historic District** be created and appropriate **Zoning Controls** and **Design Guidelines** established in order to preserve and enhance the fabric of the Au Sable Fork's Main Street. Historically, funding has been available for the revitalization of our Main Street communities through New York State's Main Street Program, the ISTE/TEA-21 Enhancement Program, and a variety of historic preservation programs.

II.A.5 Streetscape

The design and implementation of an aesthetic, functional streetscape within the Au Sable Forks downtown provides economic, operational, safety, and social benefits. The creation of a pedestrian friendly environment encouraging slower, convenient access to storefronts and commercial and governmental institutions that are sited along and adjacent to Main Street will bolster the Forks' economy. A key element to revitalizing our Main Street communities is the rediscovery of underutilized space left vacant and that which is allocated to the automobile.

Specific design proposals include the introduction of traffic calming and access management elements, provisions for on and off-street parking, decorative pavement treatments, street tree and ornamental plantings, pedestrian scaled period lighting and information signage, and the extension of these pedestrian facilities to adjacent community resources such as the Town Office complex, Post Office, Public Library, and the Au Sable Riverside Park.

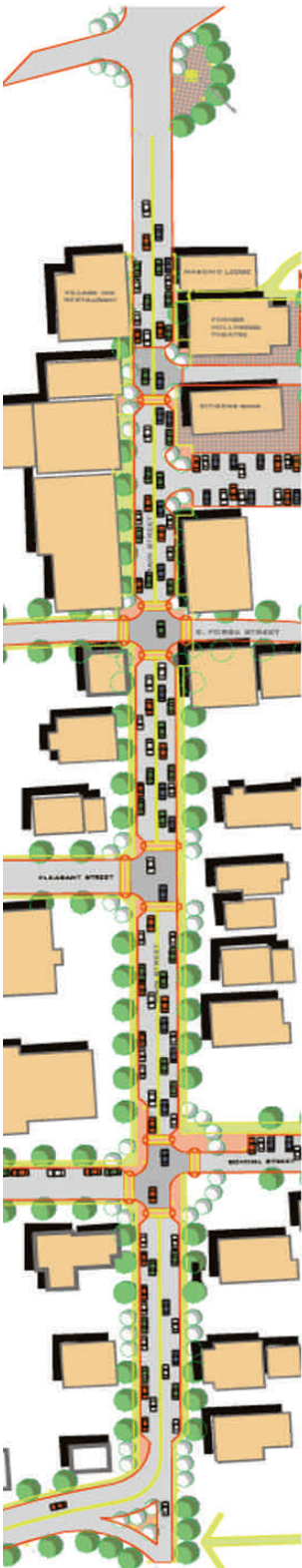
Integral to the success of these design proposals is the provision of adequate complementary informational signage to aid in the effective linkage of Main Street to the various community resources. A clear, pedestrian-scaled signage system will enhance the streetscape for residents and visitors.

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One area identified by the Revitalization Committee and community at large as worthy of consideration is the undergrounding of utilities. The following visualization illustrates the aesthetic benefits of undergrounding; however, its accomplishment will require a commitment of will and resources by the community.

The utility companies will resist; however, it is doable as evidenced by the successes in the Village of Rouses Point and Town of Queensbury.





Proposed Streetscape Improvements



Existing Conditions



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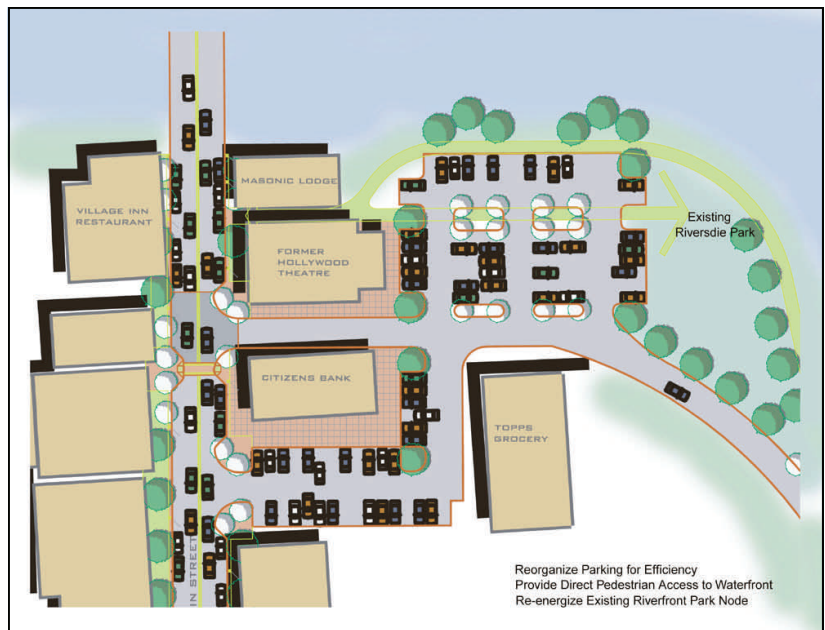
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II.A.6 Parking

The provision of safe, convenient parking is key in the revitalization of the Au Sable Forks downtown. Currently, the Forks provides ample parking; however, the lack of a cohesive, comprehensive pedestrian system with common design elements, signage, and linkages connecting the adjacent streets and the on and off-street parking facilities minimizes the visibility, efficiency, and effectiveness of the overall parking system.

This Plan addresses these issues by suggesting the redesign of existing parking areas, particularly behind the former Hollywood Theater, adjacent to Tops and Riverside Park. It is recommended that the parking facility behind the Theater be enhanced to accommodate users of the Park as well as those visiting Main Street. In addition, the parking stalls should be reoriented to maximize utilization and efficiency with regards to turning movements and access, and it is suggested that this facility be combined and shared with the Tops parking facility in order to provide a unified pedestrian oriented parking system.

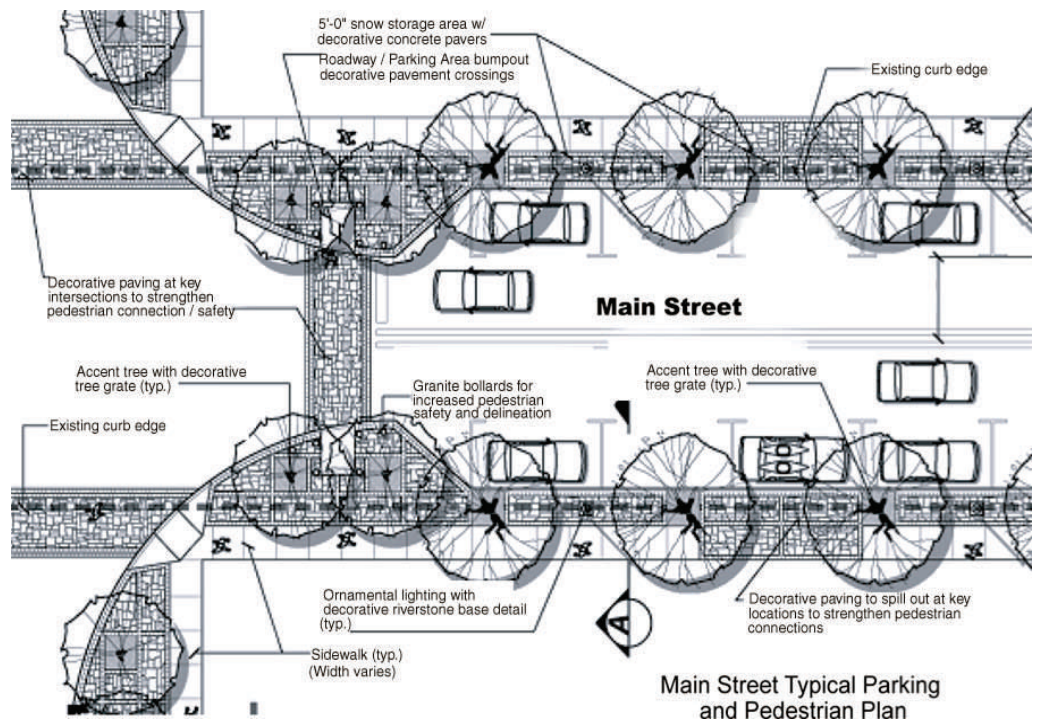
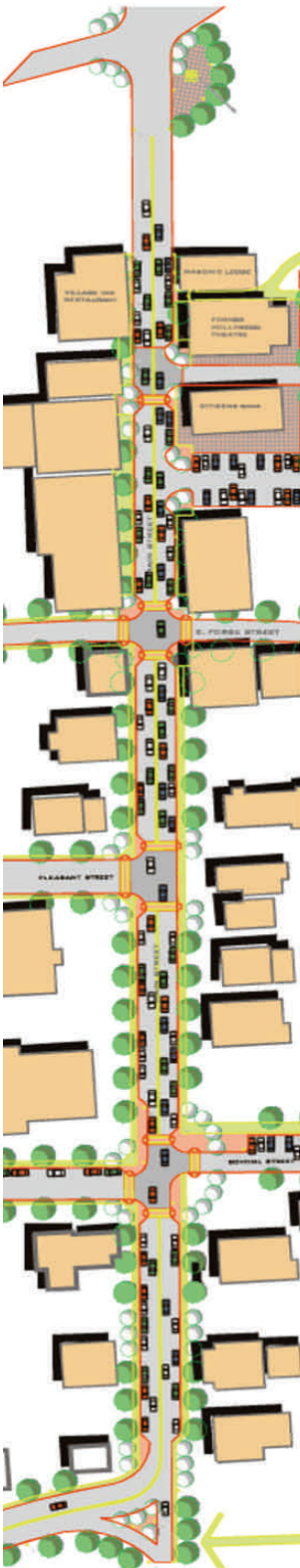
The introduction of architectural elements and landscape treatments will integrate the parking facilities into the community visually and environmentally; while, the provision of safe, direct pedestrian linkages will encourage and facilitate access to the Downtown and River Corridor.



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We also suggest the introduction of on-street parking improvements such as bulb-outs, street trees, bollards, lighting, and signage for pedestrian safety, accessibility, and orientation. The implementation of the proposed Streetscape, Pedestrianization, and Linkage Plans will encourage the Downtown visitor to park along or adjacent to Main Street and will provide convenient access to the community's businesses, restaurants, service, and governmental locations.



II.A.7 Pedestrian Linkages

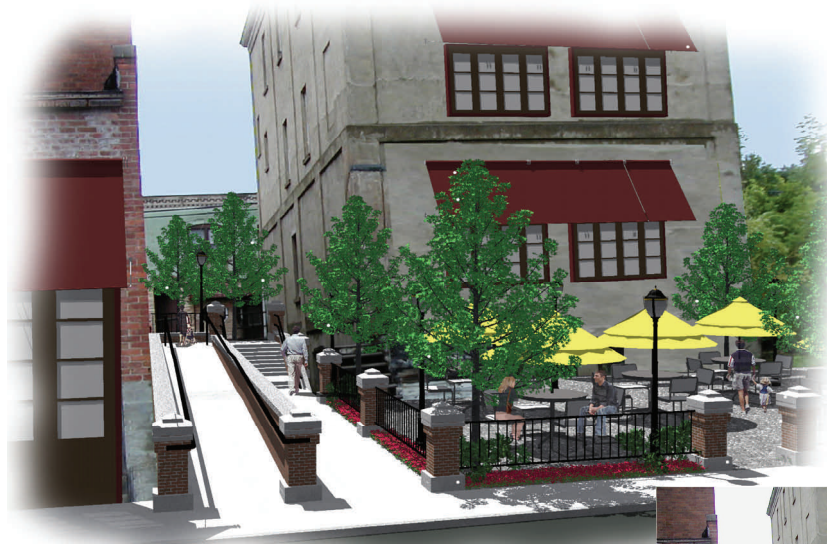
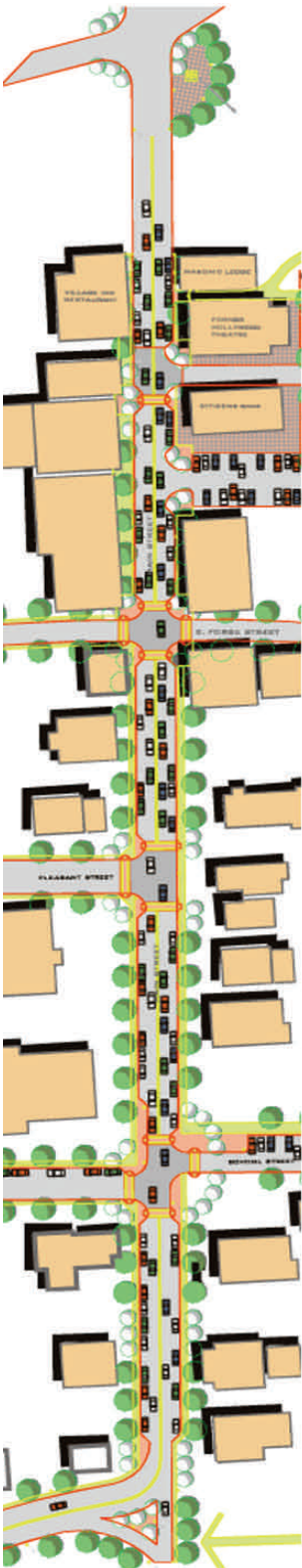
It is imperative that downtown Au Sable Forks be linked physically and informationally to the commercial, cultural, educational, and recreational resources within the hamlet and region. A truly multi-modal transportation system is essential to the economic health and convenient, safe accessing of the Main Street corridor.

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Sited at the confluence of the East and West Branches of the Au Sable River, the hamlet of Au Sable Forks has historically served as the industrial, commercial, recreational, and residential center of the Towns of Jay and the Black River Brook and the northeastern Adirondack Region. Accordingly, a key recommendation of the Downtown Revitalization Plan is the Pedestrianization of the Main Street and Au Sable River corridors and the multi-modal linkage of the residential neighborhoods to the Downtown and Riverfront.

Specific recommendations include providing direct, handicapped accessible linkage to the waterfront; enhancing the recreational opportunities within the Au Sable River corridor, extending the existing Riverwalk to provide a linear waterfront park and connection to the West Gateway, and the interpretation of the Fork's industrial heritage through informational and interpretive signage. This comprehensive multi-modal transportation system will incorporate a system of sidewalks, trails, and where necessary, stabilized street and highway shoulders accommodating the handicapped, pedestrian, bicyclist, skateboarder, and cross country skier.



PROPOSED INFILL DEVELOPMENT AND
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION TO
MAIN STREET CORRIDOR



EXISTING

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II.B Strategic Economic Plan

II.B.1 Introduction and Approach



The Downtown Revitalization Plan incorporates a strategy designed to address a host of economic factors the Forks is facing and to establish an economic vision for the future. Most of the strategies identified in this Plan were formulated through the use of two basic qualitative methods. The first is the utilization of recognized, traditional strategic planning techniques and the second is the use of the National Trust's Main Street Approach.

To gain a thorough understanding of the current economic environment within the Hamlet of Au Sable Forks, a SWOT analysis was conducted. A SWOT analysis analyzes the Hamlet's **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. Working in concert with the Revitalization Committee, the community's baseline was gathered and analyzed. The resultant data revealed several key recurring themes:



Strengths

- Proximity/gateway to Olympic and High Peaks Regions;
- Natural and recreational resources;
- Traditional Main Street architecture;
- Rich history;
- People/proactive community base; and
- Au Sable River.

Weaknesses

- Lodging: accommodations for visitors and tourists;
- Vacancies: storefronts, theater, Masonic Lodge
- Au Sable River access;
- Hours of operation; and
- Absence of events.



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- Stores along Main Street currently do not have uniform hours of operation; and
- Empty storefronts exude a “tired” visual appearance.



Opportunities

- Opportunity to capitalize commercially on its small town ambience;
- Opportunity to provide family friendliness—a place where there is not only evening entertainment, but also recreational opportunities for children;
- Stores should engage in cross promotion to benefit each other separately and uniformly;
- Opportunities to link Main Street with the Riverside Park; and
- Façade improvements may help slow passer-by's to stop and look around if the services are there.

Threats

- Proximity to Lake Placid, Plattsburg, and Lake George should force a creative approach in identifying a market “niche” to provide unique tourism-based services.



Although there is much concern regarding the economic future of Au Sable Forks, business owners and residents were almost unanimous in proclaiming that the downtown commercial district has great potential. The need for physical improvements and for additional shopping, entertainment and recreational opportunities are of utmost priority.



A market analysis was also completed utilizing census data to quantitatively define the socio-economic environment in the Forks. This analysis revealed that Au Sable Forks experienced a one percent decline in population, but an increase in total households between 1990 and 2005. At the same time the population and number of households in the Town of Jay increased by 10 and 17 percent, respectively. In addition, median household income in Au Sable Forks is less than both the Town of Jay and Essex County; however, the Town's median income level is higher than that of the County. This indicates that while residents in the Fork's have less disposable income than County residents; businesses within the hamlet will still have access to town and regional residents with more disposable

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income, and those of visitors passing through on their way to Lake Placid or to the I-87 Northway. This fact clearly illustrates the importance of establishing and ensuring Au Sable Forks is and remains the physical, economic, recreational, and cultural center of the Town of Jay.



Lastly, the National Trust's National Main Street Center provides a proven template to be utilized as an additional method for identifying revitalization strategies. The "Main Street Approach" was designed specifically to address many of the current issues the Fork's is facing. In addition to the four principles outlined in the Physical Plan, it cites historic preservation as an integral part of the revitalization process. These ideas were all considered as guiding principles in the development of this economic strategy for Au Sable Forks.

II.B.2 Main Street Approach

Economic decline is a problem that small communities are experiencing across the country. This Plan parallel's the National Trust's Main Street Approach in response to the Au Sable Forks community recognizing the need for a Revitalization Plan. This approach has proven to be an appropriate mechanism to spur commercial downtown revitalization.



The four principles outlined in the Physical Plan; Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring; should be used as guiding principles and objectives for the Au Sable Forks revitalization. Much of this work has already begun. It is recommended that the Revitalization Committee remain intact throughout all phases of the revitalization process and be an active participant in the design and review process for future projects in the downtown district. Furthermore, this document will serve as part of a concentrated, directed effort to market and promote the Forks, as well as provide the foundation for an economic restructuring process.



Au Sable Forks should utilize this four point approach to capitalize on the unique "sense of place" present in the community and greater Adirondack region. The Forks' identity is very much linked to the community's historic and cultural heritage, Adirondack setting, and economic climate. This approach will stimulate reinvestment in the community, help attract and retain businesses, and stimulate

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commercial and recreational activity. Furthermore, identifying links between historic preservation and economic development is very much encouraged by the National Trust and is an integral part of revitalizing the Main Street corridor. Establishing this link will serve as a primary strategy for the Au Sable Forks community.



II.B.3 Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is the founding component to any downtown revitalization effort, and can often be viewed as a linear progression from disinvestment, to reinvestment and community revitalization. The rehabilitation of historic structures can have a catalytic economic impact; in that the restoration of one architecturally significant building can lead to investment in and restoration of others. As more properties become rehabilitated, adjacent property values rise and lending institutions tend to extend further financial assistance, thus aiding in the overall effort of revitalizing a community.



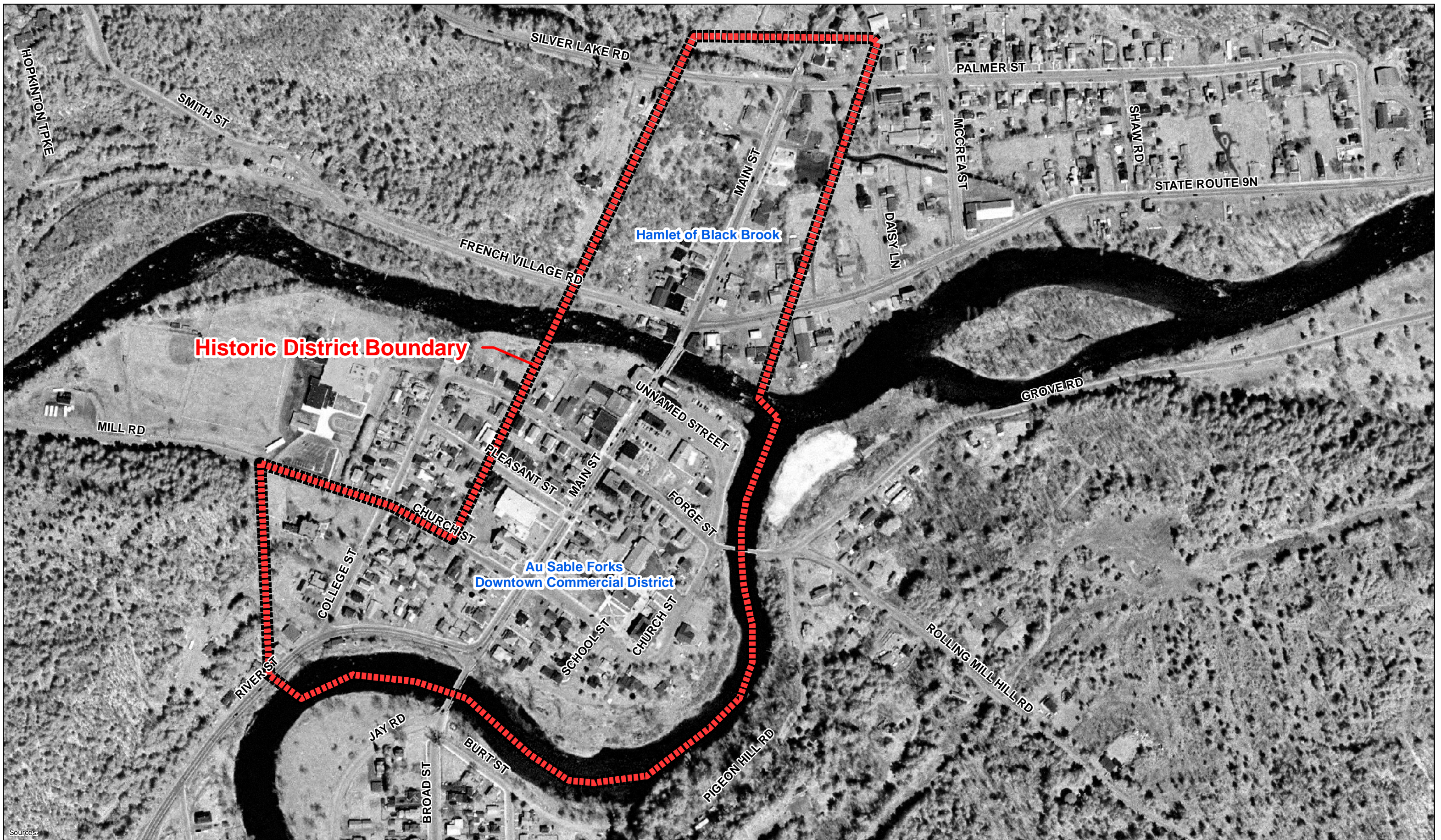
Historic preservation efforts will also aid in the revitalization of the Au Sable Forks downtown in the following ways:

1. Preserve irreplaceable historic resources.
2. Increase property values and the local tax base.
3. Increase small business investment.
4. Enhance the Downtown as a residential alternative.
5. Increase business for local construction companies and their suppliers.
6. Minimize cost of new construction.

We strongly support the creation of a Historic District encompassing the Main Street corridor and irreplaceable resources within the Forks.



The strongest reminders of Au Sable Fork's heritage as an industrial and commercial center are the Main Street and the homes of the managers and mill workers of the J&J Rogers Company. Because the downtown was virtually destroyed and reconstructed following the fire of 1925, the present Main Street is a cohesive, representative example of 1920's commercial block architecture. Of particular interest is the universal utilization of brick, stone, and block in an attempt to "fireproof" the community.



Sources:



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While some remnants of the forges and mills remain, the houses and tenements that line every street bear the strongest testament to Au Sables history as a mill town. The grandest homes were erected by the owners and directors of the Rogers Company; however, the humbler homes of the mill workers are equally noteworthy. The company houses reflect two distinct architectural styles, Victorian and Colonial Revival. While modest in scale, they nonetheless reflect a variety of architectural detailing common to these periods.

Co-founder James Rogers erected a Second Empire mansard-roofed residence on Main Street in 1874. Not to be outdone, his son-in-law Henry Graves built a veritable palace at the corner of Church and College - albeit with embezzled funds.



In 2002, Jessica Smith, Ann Cousins, and Steven Engelhart authored a survey of Au Sables' historic resources. Their work provides a basis for more intensive survey and the nomination of a National Register Historic District. Shannon Hewston, chairwoman of the Town of Jay Planning Board has continued this effort. We recommend that consultations be initiated with the NYS Historic Preservation Office; specifically, Linda Garofalini, Survey and Registration Program Representative (518) 237-8643, to pursue this effort.



While some concern has been expressed related to restrictions placed upon property owners within a District, most are unfounded. Quoting from a pamphlet from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation: "Listing on the National Register in no way interferes with a property owner's right to remodel, alter, manage, sell or even demolish a property when using private funds for projects that do not require state or federal permits or (environmental quality) reviews".

Conversely, a number of benefits accrue. Specifically, financial:

- New York State has a matching fund for the renovation of historic buildings in public ownership or owned by nonprofit organizations;

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- A 20 percent investment tax credit is offered by the federal government for the renovation of historic commercial buildings;
- The Sacred Sites Funds provides grants for renovating historic religious structures; and
- Legislation has been proposed to make tax credits available to residential property owners. Even absent this incentive, historic properties often sell more readily at a higher price than properties outside a District.

Once a Historic District is established, an aggressive marketing campaign should be undertaken tailored to the trend in Historic Tourism. Concurrently, a Historic Walking Tour should be created and promoted similar to the one under development by B&L for the Hamlet of Jay.



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In February 2004, the Tahawus Lodge #790 submitted an application through Senator Little to secure funding for the stabilization and repair of the historic Masonic Hall. While no commitment of funds has been made to date, it is reasonable to assume that the creation of a Historic District and the adoption of the Downtown Revitalization Plan will have a positive impact upon the allocation of the requested funding.



We also recommend the establishment of local zoning controls and design guidelines. (See Sections II.B.7.1 and 7.2.) These should be consistent with historic preservation objectives.

II.B.4 Infill as a Revitalization Strategy

Underutilized or underdeveloped space within the Main Street corridor in downtown Au Sable Forks presents a signal opportunity to reinvigorate the community by enhancing its character, viability, and function through the adoption of an **Infill Revitalization Strategy**. Infill can contribute to unmet commercial, economic, housing, and civic needs, while conserving the community's financial resources by utilizing the existing infrastructure. In addition, it preserves the Fork's



REHABILITATION INFILL TO DOUGLAS BLOCK

EXISTING

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history and cultural heritage, encourages walkability by contributing to a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, and creates new opportunities for this mixed use neighborhood to reinforce Au Sable Fork's "sense of place".



Infill takes two basic forms: the rehabilitation or conversion of existing buildings or floor space; or, the construction of new buildings which fill gaps within the existing community structure.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee identified a number of infill opportunities based upon an inventory of the Downtown neighborhood. A comprehensive list of the commercial and residential spaces (occupied and vacant) is contained within Appendix B of this Plan. Filling these vacancies (both residential and commercial) will enhance the existing mixed-use retail, office, and residential Downtown neighborhood and extend business and social activity into the evening hours.



One of the key areas for potential growth within the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods is residential infill and development. The Revitalization Committee and local realtors have identified a need for housing within four specific demographic populations. **Senior Citizens, Young Couples, Seasonal Residents and Students.** Because the Town of Jay and Hamlet of Au Sable Forks are sited wholly within the Adirondack Park, new development in rural areas is restricted, subject to densities set forth within the particular Adirondack Park Master plan Land Use Classification. Approximately 45 percent of all lands within the Park are contained within the Forest Preserve, lands Constitutionally precluding development. Therefore, the Park's villages and hamlets (typically classified Hamlet, the least restrictive of the land classifications) are increasingly attractive to people seeking the rural Adirondack environment. This is particularly true as villages such as Lake Placid, Lake George, and Old Forge approach their build-out capacity.



Therefore, communities such as Au Sable Forks are well positioned to provide affordable, attractive housing within and convenient to the Downtown.

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As with many communities within the Park, Jay and the Fork's contain a significant population of Senior Citizens. An opportunity exists to create housing for this group through the conversion of existing buildings such as vacant or underutilized buildings - conversion of abandoned school buildings, the Tahawus Lodge 22 - or the construction of new Senior Citizen residential complexes. Because mobility may be a constraint, upper level apartments, unless serviced by an elevator, may not be a desirable option. However, these spaces may be suitable or sought after by students or young couples seeking an alternative lifestyle to our metropolitan urban centers. Perhaps a marketing effort within the Montreal, New York City, Plattsburgh, and Burlington areas would intrigue residents and developers.

Similarly, infill efforts should concentrate in the commercial and service areas.



The Village Inn Block on the easterly end of Main Street across from the Tahawus Lodge is identified as containing historic anchor buildings. At street level these buildings currently contain a tanning salon, hair salon, as well as two vacant units; while the upstairs is fully utilized as rented apartments. Due to its identification as a block containing historic anchor buildings, we recommend the rehabilitation of vacant units for economic infill, particularly for those at street level. These efforts would allow the reorganization of existing vacant space for commercial or office use at a critical location in the commercial downtown area.

Other locations that should be considered for infill development as identified through collaborative efforts with the Downtown Revitalization Committee are:



- Residential or office redevelopment for currently untenable space above 20 Main Street Tavern.
- Residential and/or office infill for two untenable units above Feek's Pharmacy and Adirondack Wine and Spirits.
- Two rear units above Manning Law Offices and D&D Video for residential infill.
- Upper residential or office infill on the southerly side of the street at mid-block between Grove Road and School Lane.

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Additionally, the Masonic Lodge (Tahawus Lodge), a four story historical anchor building at the easterly end of Main Street, and the former Hollywood Theatre, have been vacant for years. These buildings, historically and architecturally significant, should be of priority in any redevelopment plans to take place in the Forks' commercial downtown.



Either of these sites may be suitable for a Museum linked to the Town's industrial history, or perhaps as a center for the Arts or Performing Arts. Presently, the Village of Tupper Lake is nearing completion of the Adirondack Museum of Natural History and the Kirkland Center for the Arts in Clinton, New York hosts important art shows and exhibits, and Nationally known performers in its 125 seat venue.

II.B.5 Local Business Development

The physical enhancements outlined as part of this Revitalization Plan focus on the visual function and multi-modal access within the Main Street Downtown and Au Sable River corridors. Equally important is the commitment to attract new businesses and retain those currently in place.



Downtown revitalization efforts should be tailored to strengthen the local business community and help existing businesses thrive and expand. Attracting additional, complementary businesses to the Hamlet Downtown will better serve the local and regional market and support the current range of existing businesses.

Existing businesses are the building blocks of the Au Sable Forks Downtown. If current businesses are struggling and no efforts to strengthen them are put into place, then customer loyalty may dwindle, as the credibility of the Forks' Downtown as a viable market for new businesses. Outlined below are several key procedures that can be taken by Au Sable Forks officials to ensure an adequate market, space, and support facilities are in place to help the local business environment in the Forks:



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- Keep an inventory of local commercial lease expiration dates. When a lease is coming up, contact businesses ahead of lease termination to address owner concerns, possibly preventing any potential business losses.
- Communicate with existing business owners to identify any issues as well as determine the type of businesses they would like to see filling vacancies.
- Apply for state and federal funding as a revenue source for upgrades to existing businesses.
- Consider implementing a Business Retention and Expansion Program. Such a program interviews local businesses to help identify their needs and resolve business-specific problems.



As the principal commercial center within the Au Sable River Valleys, the Forks has a niche in the regional economy. Presently, people travel to Lake Placid or Plattsburgh for the goods and services not available in the Hamlet. Identified needs include a full service supermarket with a delicatessen and bakery, high end restaurant, specialty shops geared to the tourist and recreationist, and lodging (Bed and Breakfast, Adirondack Inn) alternatives. One issue not often broached, but critically important, is a commitment by the community to patronize the local businesses, ensuring their viability and vitality.

II.B.6 Identify Existing Niches/Tourism-Related Opportunities



Au Sable Forks' location at the confluence of the east and west branches of the Au Sable River provides an opportunity for the community to incorporate the established reputation of the River as a trout fishing mecca as part of its community identity. The challenge for the Forks is to improve access and visibility with regards to this regional asset and to establish a unique market niche that will create tourism-related economic and recreational opportunities.

Again, partnerships between the Town or community groups from Au Sable Forks and organizations such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) are encouraged to help initiate the implementation of tourism related activities and events within the commercial downtown area.

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As an economic development tool, we recommend the Town and/or downtown community groups maximize its market niche by establishing an open dialogue with the NYSDEC and organizing information into a comprehensive promotional and marketing campaign to improve community and regional awareness and visibility, particularly in regards to the river's trout habitat. It is recommended, through collaboration with the DEC, that the Forks consider the benefits of environmental and recreational programs such as fish stocking and habitat creation for local fishing resources. As mentioned in the Physical Plan, the Town is encouraged to provide handicapped fishing access to the Au Sable River in proximity to the commercial downtown area.



This Plan has also identified various regional tourism related activities that would benefit the Forks in efforts to revitalize and stimulate physical and economic growth. Outdoor recreational activities such as kayaking and canoeing are becoming extremely popular draws for those seeking adventures beyond what their communities can provide. The City of Watertown, for example, has utilized its proximity to the Black River, establishing itself as a center for white water rafting tours and national and international kayaking competitions throughout the warmer months. Au Sable Forks is encouraged to consider similar ventures for canoeing and kayaking tours and competitions which would supplement similar activities in Saranac Lake and Au Sable Chasm. Promoting the abundance of trails and scenic resources in Jay, Au Sable Forks, and Black Brook for cross country skiing in the winter months should also be considered. Also, working with Black Brook to promote the local nine hole Golf Course and accommodate its users is encouraged.



Additionally, the Town of Jay and Au Sable Forks downtown groups should consolidate efforts to strategically publicize and proactively schedule events and cater them to the different seasons the Adirondack community experiences. These actions will not only spur recreation and tourism, but could also provide opportunities for the establishment of additional businesses such as bait and tackle shops, recreational equipment rental shops, eateries, guide services, and other specialty shops and services.

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II.B.7 Town of Jay Ministerial Powers

II.B.7.1 Zoning Controls



The Town of Jay and the Hamlet of Au Sable Forks currently do not have zoning controls in place to help shape development patterns. The purpose of zoning is to help regulate land use, density, and site development. It is a local regulatory tool enabling the community to implement its economic vision consistent with its cultural heritage and established values.

Many communities are now looking beyond the traditional single use zoning ordinances to controls which encourage mixed-use developments that are accessible to pedestrian and bicycle networks. Au Sable Forks can benefit from the adoption of **Strategic Zoning Controls** to help build on its existing resources and infrastructure, while implementing the community's vision.



The proposed zoning regulations should be drafted to support infill and provide a clear articulation of their intent. They should encourage the rehabilitation of existing structures within the Main Street corridor and Historic District and promote infill on specific vacant or underutilized parcels. They should also require connectivity of infill with adjacent buildings and intersecting streets, allow a mix of housing types, and maintain or increase existing densities.

II.B.7.2 Site Plan Review Procedures

As development proposals are presented to the Town of Jay, the concepts suggested in this Revitalization Plan should be used to provide information and guidance to developers, the Town, and Au Sable Forks community. As new construction or redevelopment projects are proposed,



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there may exist opportunities to reconsider access, circulation, parking configuration, building setback, street trees, screens and buffers, site walls and other amenities. The design and development of these projects in concert with the concepts outlined in this Revitalization Plan will provide the framework and set appropriate examples for the future development of the Forks' commercial downtown.

It is highly recommended, as a mechanism to ensure orderly and manageable development, that the Town of Jay not only establish and adopt zoning controls, but also adopt **Site Plan Review** provisions and incorporate them into the zoning ordinance. The Town Planning Board should be granted review discretion for the purposes of evaluating and approving desired aesthetics, design standards and technical submission requirements. This would allow members of the Planning Board to act as a review panel to address issues of design, egress/ingress, buffering and SEQR compliance on behalf of the Town and Au Sable Forks.



II.B.7.3 Design Guidelines

In many cases, the review of development proposals can become centered more upon procedural issues than on substantive issues of design form and quality. The adoption of **Design Guidelines** will provide the Town of Jay and Au Sable Forks illustrative and written guidance for the form and appearance of development consistent with the character and scale of the community; while establishing a degree of uniformity for architectural design, enhancing the value of property within the community downtown and protecting the investment of current business owners.



The Main Street corridor contains a mix of commercial, civic, and residential buildings, many of which are rich in architectural character and history. In order to ensure that future architectural improvements are integrated into the context of the hamlet downtown, the proposed Design Guidelines should conform to established standards of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

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It is recommended that Jay officials consider adopting, along with zoning controls and a site plan review procedure, **Design Guidelines** that will provide a blueprint to help further guide future development and improvements within the Town and Au Sable Forks.



Following is a Design Review Check List which may be useful in drafting appropriate Guidelines:

Guidelines For The Preservation and Renovation of Local Landmarks, Individually Significant, Contributing, and Contributing Restorable Buildings

Preserve original facades and facade materials

Align architectural features and establish patterns with neighboring buildings

Maintain the original historic line of the building setback

Maintain the original size, shape and proportion of store front facades and openings to retain the historic scale and character

Maintain traditional recessed entries where they exist

Maintain the kick plate below display windows

Preserve the transom and clerestory if it exists

Preserve the shape, materials and spacing of upper story windows

Awnings may be used to provide visual depth to the facade and shade

Distinguish additions to historic buildings

Select building colors appropriate to the historic character of the building and area

Minimize the visibility of HVAC units and other mechanical, structural, or electrical appurtenances



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Guidelines for New Construction and Remodeling Non-contributing Buildings in the Downtown Historic District



Incorporate traditional design elements in new designs

Align architectural features with the patterns of neighboring buildings

Maintain the line of storefronts at the sidewalk edge and orient main entrances to open toward the street

Do not construct half-level or split-level first floors that extend both above and below grade

Consider the height, mass, and scale of buildings

Maintain a human building scale

Maintain the proportions of storefront windows, doors and the established pattern of upper story windows

Maintain the rhythm established by the repetition of the traditional facade widths

Use building materials that have a texture, pattern and scale similar to those in the district

Improve rear or side alley elevations to enhance public access from parking lots and alleys

Parking Facilities

Locate surface parking on appropriate sites

Reduce the visual impact of surface parking lots

Security and pedestrian circulation should be priorities

Commercial Signs

Signs should be designed as an integral part of the overall building design

Use simple signs to clearly convey a message. Symbols as signs are easily read and enhance pedestrian quality

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Streetscape Improvements



Use the existing street hierarchy as a basis for designing the streetscape

Use a basic sidewalk design to unify the visual image of downtown

Use a basic intersection design to unify the visual image of downtown

Design extensions into the public right-of-way that are visually and functionally appropriate to the street

Use innovative railing designs to define outdoor spaces, such as cafes, from pedestrian movement areas

Create comfortable and attractive sitting areas, plazas and small open spaces with a focus on views and sunshine

Select street trees that are appropriate to their location and function

Select ground level plants that suit their location and function

Create gateway elements at important downtown entrance ways

Establish pedestrian scale street lights along street frontages

Handicapped access should be appropriately designed, visible from the main entranceway, and in general, use the same access routes as those used by non-handicapped users where possible

Install street furnishing that create a unified visual appearance in downtown

When feasible, create through-block pedestrian corridors between buildings

Enrich the downtown with public art

II.B.7.4 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan/Program

Many of New York State's communities and a wide variety of cultural and economic activities are concentrated along their water resources. Au Sable Forks is blessed to be sited at the confluence of the east and west branches of the Au Sable River. The Forks' waterfront is rich in history and in natural resources—with an abundance of fish and wildlife and nearby forests and mountains.

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More and more communities are recognizing the value of their waterfronts as a way to create new life and energy. We strongly recommend the Town of Jay and Au Sable Forks, in partnership with the Town of Black Brook, initiate an effort to prepare and implement a **Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan/Program (LWRP)**.

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program is both a plan and a program. The LWRP should complement this Revitalization Plan, be comprehensive in nature, addressing all issues that affect the communities waterfronts.

This proposed inter-municipal cooperation effort is also encouraged to partner with the New York State Division of Coastal Resources to develop consensus regarding the future of the Au Sable River waterfront. Once completed and approved by the New York Secretary of State, the LWRP serves to coordinate State and federal actions to assist the community in achieving its vision.



II.B.7.5 Empire Zone

On September 6, 2005, the Essex County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution 237 creating an Empire Zone within several Towns, including the Town of Jay. Offered by Supervisor Douglas and upon the recommendation of the Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Committee, with the approval of the Ways and Means Committee, the proposed Empire Zone includes an area within the Hamlet of Au Sable Forks roughly coinciding with the boundaries of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.



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II.B.8 Summary

This Au Sable Forks Downtown Revitalization Plan will serve as the base document to guide the redevelopment of Jay's Downtown, to develop direct multi-modal connections between the enhanced Main Street (CR 9N) corridor and the improved existing waterfront park, and to help coalesce the Forks into a unique destination area for commercial, recreational, and cultural activities. Adherence to its tenets and design elements will provide economic, aesthetic, social and cultural benefits to the community and its visitors passing through the Olympic Region. In addition, the Plan provides a framework to base design and funding negotiations with the NYSDOT and NYSDEC as the Town progresses efforts to apply and qualify for public and private implementation funding to improve the physical and economic conditions of its commercial downtown. To summarize, this Downtown Revitalization Plan recommends the following actions be pursued by the Town of Jay and associated community organizations within Au Sable Forks:



- Explore opportunities to work proactively with the adjacent community of Black Brook to maximize strategic downtown development potential.
- Keep an open dialogue with organizations such as the NYSDOT and NYSDEC to aid in implementation efforts of future projects and initiatives.
- Consider design opportunities for welcoming gateway elements at each end of Main Street to welcome visitors and residents.
- Develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan/Program (LWRP) to aid in maximizing returns on the community's economic, aesthetic, environmental and recreational programs.
- Develop an inventory of historic structures to determine the condition and viability of existing buildings in Au Sable Forks, and develop a Plan for the preservation and rehabilitation of any key community structures; including facade restoration.
- Incorporate design elements outlined in the Physical Plan as development proposals within the Main Street corridor are presented to the Town in the future. Such design elements include:
 - information signage
 - traffic calming and access management elements

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- street tree and ornamental plantings
- pedestrian scaled period lighting
- the physical extension of these elements to include adjacent community resources

- Pursue strategic private and public partnerships to aid in the funding of future enhancement projects within and adjacent to the Main Street corridor.
- Zoning controls, site plan review procedures and accompanying Design Guidelines should all be considered as integral tools to help the Town and the Forks establish, implement and sustain its vision for the future.
- Develop an implementation plan for LWRP, in coordination with DOS

The Town of Jay and Hamlet of Au Sable Forks are well positioned to determine their future physical and economic environment, while preserving their cultural and historic heritage. This Downtown Revitalization Plan lays out a clear vision to preserve and enhance the Forks' place as an important, viable, attractive Adirondack community.



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II.C Potential Funding Sources

The following is a summary of existing state and federal grant programs designed to assist Main Street communities in initiating, designing, and implementing community revitalization projects:

II.C.1 Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP)

Administered by the New York State Department of Transportation, with the oversight of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), this program is designed to help implement the federal program established within the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and continued in the Transportation Efficiency Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21). The federal government provides reimbursement funds for “non-traditional” transportation projects that have a positive impact on communities and the environment.

The TEP provides funds for projects that enhance the cultural, environmental, historic, and aesthetic elements of our transportation networks. It is designed to encourage significant outreach to an array of advocacy groups and municipalities that may have needs and project proposals that fall within the twelve broad eligibility categories.

For more information, visit the following website:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/>

II.C.2 New York Main Streets Program

The New York State Main Streets Program is intended to stimulate downtown revitalization in communities across the State by providing funding for building renovations, streetscape enhancements, and downtown business or cultural anchors.

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Administered by the Housing Trust Fund Corporation and the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, this program provides grants to encourage reinvestment in properties located within mixed-use business districts located in urban, small town, and rural areas.

For more information, visit the following website:

<http://www.nymainstreet.org/>

II.C.3 New York State Quality Communities Program

These funds are intended to assist local municipalities with planning efforts to encourage community growth, improve community centers, promote partnerships through intermunicipal growth, and enhance Adirondack communities such as the Town of Jay and Au Sable Forks to preserve open space.

For more information, visit the following website:

<http://www.qualitycommunities.org/index.asp>

II.C.4 Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The Department of Housing and Urban Development strives to strengthen communities, and economic development. The creation of jobs is of vital importance in HUD's efforts to improve economic development initiatives for our Country's communities. Equally important is providing opportunities to incorporate affordable housing. Conversion and upper floor restoration for housing is strongly encouraged through HUD, and should be explored as an alternative funding source when considering such actions.

For more information, visit the following website:

<http://www.hud.gov/economicdevelopment/index.cfm>

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II.C.5 Member Item Funding

The utilization of “**Member Item**” funds to implement specific components of the Downtown Revitalization Plan and/or to provide required matching funding can be an important component of the implementation strategy. Establishing and maintaining an open dialogue with elected Senators and Assemblymen related to retain community goals and the strategies and opportunities contained within the Plan can secure political and financial support. A pro-active, mutually supportive partnership between the Towns of Jay and Black Brook and Essex and Clinton Counties will enhance the prospects for securing Member Item funding.

II.C.6 Private Funding Sources

Similar to the use of public transportation funding for projects such as bicycle and pedestrian networks, private sector funding has become a very viable option as well. Projects such as this Downtown Revitalization Plan that encourage physical and economic improvement within a community to help spur growth and job creation have spawned a widespread movement of local non-profit organizations, many of whom have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the planning and construction of trails, parks, façade improvement programs, etc. In recent years, local corporations and businesses from particular industries have joined in financial support of local projects programs. The Town of Jay and Au Sable Forks are encouraged to identify any potential private funding sources in efforts to implement future planning and construction projects.

Typically elected officials, economic and community development agencies, and consulting firms receive notification of the availability of funds within the above listed public programs. The Au Sable Forks Revitalization Plan will serve as the base document to pursue and qualify for these funds. With the notification of a particular solicitation for projects, materials will be provided by the funding agency relative to application deadlines, \$ amounts and matching percentages, points and matching percentages, points of contact, and submission content. Barton & Loguidice routinely screens these solicitations, consults with our client base, and provides assistance in preparing and submitting the grant applications. With the adoption of this Plan, the Town of Jay will be well positioned to complete for available public funds successfully.