

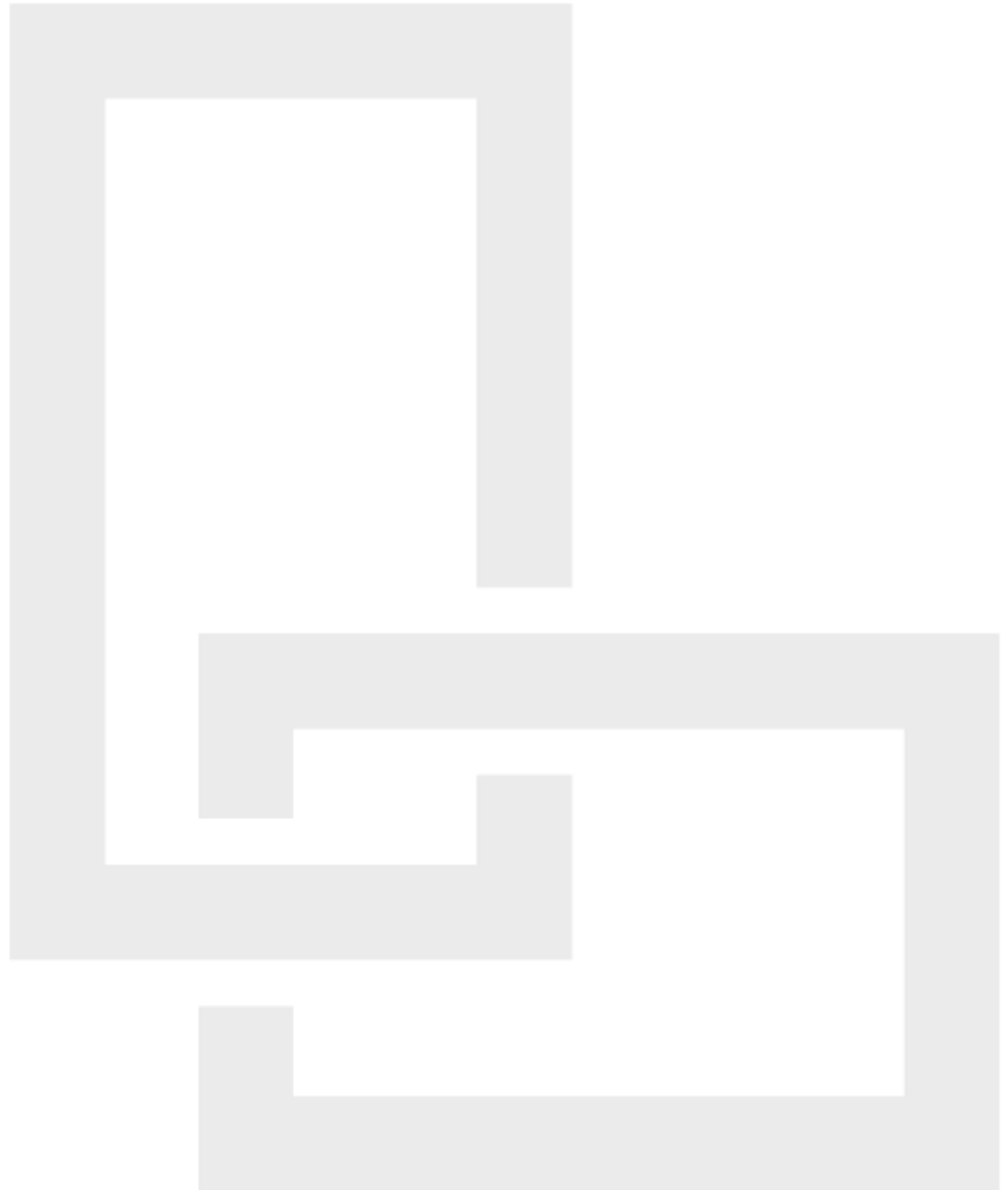
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Task 8 Draft: Review of Existing Local and Regional Planning Efforts and Ongoing Initiatives

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REVIEW OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS AND ONGOING INTIATIVES

A successful planning process is built on the foundation of past planning efforts and consensus building on future initiatives. Existing planning documents along with the current issues and opportunities for the Town of Schroon have been identified by community leaders and are listed below. The status of past projects will also be reviewed to help develop and prioritize future recommendations. Following the summary chart below, organized from the most recent initiatives, provides a description of each document and how they are related to the Town of Schroon 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

	LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS	YEAR
1	Management Plan and State of The Lake Report for Paradox Lake	2022
2	Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan Addendum	2010 2019
3	Schroon Townwide Revitalization Strategy	2018
4	Destination Master Plan for Schroon Lake	2009
5	Schroon Lake Route 9N Corridor Study	1989
6	Schroon Lake Village Main Street Revitalization	1980
7	Town of Schroon Master Plan	1977
8	Town of Schroon Zoning Ordinance	1971
9	Town of Schroon Reclassification Process for a Residential Smart Growth Affordable Housing Initiative and Schroon Reclassification Revisited for Affordable Housing	2016 2022
10	Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Complex Unit Management Plan Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan Hoffman Notch Wilderness Unit Management Plan Hammond Pond Wild Forest Unit Management Plan	1992 2008 2012 2019

1. Management Plan and State of The Lake Report for Paradox Lake

Description

This plan, prepared in 2022, provides a long-term plan for the sustainable management of Paradox Lake. The identified purpose of the Paradox Lake Association is *“to preserve and protect Paradox Lake and its surroundings, to enhance the water quality, fishery, boating safety, and aesthetic values of Paradox Lake, as a public recreational facility for today and for future generations.”* Informed by the 2017 stakeholder survey and subsequent discussion with board members, the plan focuses on in-lake and watershed alternatives that can be used or explored further to help achieve this goal.

Findings and Recommendations

The primary management concern of lake stakeholders in recent years is spread of Eurasian watermilfoil. Initially documented in the upper basin of the lake, the species has been actively managed since 2008. The management plan that follows was developed to include objectives and alternatives for ongoing Eurasian watermilfoil management, continued water quality monitoring, and public use and safety on the lake. Recommendations are based on stakeholder surveys and feedback, characteristics of the lake and surrounding watershed, analysis of long-term water-quality monitoring data, compilation of available plant monitoring and management data, and evaluation of recreational fisheries. Each of these efforts details the lake’s existing conditions in a “state of the lake” report. The report considers management history, management alternatives for invasive species, water quality, public use and access, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

This report concentrates on describing the existing conditions of Paradox Lake. It sets up alternatives for management but does not contain specific recommendations. It will be useful for the inventory and analysis of 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

Implementation Progress

Progress on implementation will be summarized in a memo and added to the plan as an appendix.

2. Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan and Addendum

Description

The Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan was created with a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) grant from the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) awarded to the Town of Chester. Completed and published in 2010, the Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan is a comprehensive review of the state of Schroon Lake and its immediate watershed. The overarching goal of the plan is to identify issues affecting the water quality and ecology of Schroon Lake and to set forth specific recommendations to protect the lake for the future. The Plan identified key recommendations and strategies to address issues of concern around the lake. Recommendations of the 2010 plan included stormwater runoff mitigation,

invasive species management and prevention, highway maintenance, and homeowner outreach and education. Since the publication of the plan, numerous strategies have been implemented by the municipalities and lake associations.

As each project was completed, new projects and issues within the lake and watershed emerged. An Addendum, funded by the Lake Champlain – Lake George Regional Planning Board through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, was prepared in 2019 to identify new issues and provide actionable recommendations and implementation strategies. In recognition of the intrinsic tie that waterbodies have with one another, the study area for this Addendum has been expanded beyond the boundaries of Schroon Lake itself to include the upper and lower Schroon River and Paradox Lake. New issues that emerged included terrestrial invasive species monitoring, fisheries management, and lake water level.

Findings and Recommendations

Specific and detailed recommendations were made for Schroon Lake, Paradox Lake, and the watershed on the topics of stormwater management, erosion, invasive species, water quality monitoring, fisheries management, wastewater, municipal operations, water level, and stewardship.

Implementation Progress

Over the past 9 years, the Towns of Chester, Horicon and Schroon, the Schroon Lake Association (SLA), the East Shore Schroon Lake Association (ESSLA), and numerous other partners have been working diligently to implement the recommendations of the plan. Through these efforts several stormwater infrastructure projects have been implemented within the Towns of Horicon and Schroon. Additionally, programming such as aquatic invasive species identification, management and surveillance, lakeshore homeowners septic pump-out days, and several other educational initiatives have been implemented since the publication of the plan.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

The recommendations are extremely applicable to the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. They should be fully incorporated into the inventory, analysis, and recommendations sections.

3. Schroon Townwide Revitalization Strategy 2018

Description

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Strategy is a comprehensive plan that was funded through the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) which is a potential source of future funding for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan. The Strategy combines new opportunities and outlines a roadmap for achieving the Town’s vision that focuses on the water assets of the Town and incorporates them into a plan that created an economic development strategy with actionable recommendations.

Findings and Recommendations

1. Tourism Branding and Marketing Plan

- Work with the five communities of the *Upper Hudson Recreation Hub*, especially Schroon's neighbor, Town of North Hudson, with whom the town already shares significant cooperation.
 - Expand participation in a group of local chambers that will work on regionally cooperative tourism initiatives and cooperative events. Include: Tri-Lakes Business Alliance, North Warren Chamber, Gore Mountain Regional Chamber and Ticonderoga Area Chamber.
 - Identify how the Town can effectively participate in the *Hamlet to Hut Destination-Based Trail System*.
 - Expand the set of Schroon Lake signature events such as the Hobie Cat Sailing Regatta, Adirondack Marathon and Distance Festival, Ice Fishing Derby and Cycle Adirondacks.
- 2. Arts, Culture and Heritage Marketing Plan**
- Develop a marketing plan for the creative economy that blends outdoor pursuits with the fine arts and performing arts venues in the community.
 - Expand visitor information, interpretive displays and materials, and the number of historical markers.
- 3. Reactivate the Schroon Lake Tourism Council**
- The Town Board and Chamber of Commerce should reactivate the Tourism Council.
 - Prepare a long-term grant strategy that would outline and prioritize the projects the Town wants to implement in the next five years.
 - Recruit a vendor that would contract with the Town to provide kayak/paddleboard rentals at the Town Beach.
- 4. Town/State-Owned Facility Improvements**
- Address the bank erosion north of the Town beach.
 - Assign a formal canoe/kayak/SUP launch area on the south side of the Boathouse. Remove rocks and debris. Install signage and a kayak storage locker to encourage users to visit the downtown.
 - Upgrade public skating rink to a covered, multi-purpose outdoor pavilion with a smaller rink area that would enable the site to have all-season use and reduce maintenance.
 - Continue to improve public access to the town beach, launch and docks. Provide handicap access to the pier by improving the gravel surface between the parking area and pier.
 - Explore the feasibility of developing a fitness path on town-owned lands.
 - Develop a formal dog park on Town-owned lands at the beach area west of the Boathouse. Post appropriate signage and waste bags.
 - Create a hiking trail on old town roadbed near Hollow Road and Thilo Roads.
 - Designate formal kayak launch area away from paved boat launch and provide kayak locker racks and bicycle racks. Provide public information about new boat inspection and wash station at the north end of Schroon Lake.
 - Collaborate with the Town of Chester and New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide marked bike lanes on both sides of the Route 9 shoulders with signage.
- 5. Improve Downtown Aesthetics**
- Make physical improvements in the downtown streetscape including adding street trees and improving building facades.
 - Continue to upgrade public spaces for their attractiveness and functionality.
- 6. Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Experience**
- Continue to improve walkability by adding accessible crosswalks, benches, and shade trees throughout the hamlet.
 - Place bike racks at key locations throughout the hamlet.
 - Make wheelchair accommodation improvements at the Town Park.
- Place more digital speed signs on Route 9, particularly on the curve south of the business district.

7. Create Informational and Heritage Signage

- Develop distinctive gateway entrances at Northway Exits 27 and 28. Consolidate random signage to single signage boards.
- Provide signage to indicate the location of the beach and launch from Main Street.
- Develop new signs for restroom locations, an historic sign at the Leland Hotel, and a large historical interpretive sign or mural on the Boathouse.

8. Affordable Housing

- Renew the effort to have the APA reclassify the area of two contiguous properties from Low Intensity to Hamlet as outlined in the Town of Schroon's Smart Growth Hamlet Expansion Plan.

Implementation Progress

Progress on implementation will be summarized in a memo and added to the plan as an appendix.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

Recommendations are recent. Those still relevant and not yet addressed should be included in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

4. Destination Master Plan for Schroon Lake

Description

In 2009 ROOST spearheaded a destination master planning process that resulted in the development of economic development strategy for Saranac Lake, Schroon Lake, Moriah, Ticonderoga, Wilmington and Lake Placid. Each of the communities now has a destination master plan that identifies unique challenges and strategies specific to their needs and in an appropriate scale. Schroon's vision is to recapture its status as an Adirondack Lakeside Destination by becoming a base camp for Adirondack adventures, expanding and upgrading its selection of lodging and dining, improving its curb appeal, building new outdoor experience products, increasing visitor opportunities to access and view the lake, and improving visitor experiences. The goal is to increase jobs and business opportunities and generate new year-round revenue. This level of planning detail enables the Town to have access to additional financing programs to receive Priority Project status for Consolidated Funding Applications(CFA) submitted for consideration by the North Country Regional Economic Development Council (REDC).

Findings and Recommendations

1. Establish an ongoing "Schroon Lake Tourism Council" under the Schroon Lake Chamber of Commerce to oversee the execution of this Plan and to meet annually to "renew" this Plan.
2. Evolve lodging product to be more current and competitive.
3. Improve curb appeal.
4. Establish online, constantly updated list of visitor experiences that can be achieved from a Schroon Lake base camp, tied to calendar. Package lodging with experiences.
5. Establish base line of visitor data and track change.
6. Build and expand on tourism products and experiences that relate to the outdoors and are close or within the range of a day trip of Schroon Lake.
7. Bring dining, lodging, activities and tourism to the Lakeshore.

8. Create incentives for new lodging development.
9. Attract new tourism investment and incubate new tourism businesses.
10. Participate in County Wide Hospitality Training Program.
11. Expand equipment rentals (bikes, power boats, kayaks, canoes, snowshoes, etc.).
12. Strengthen destination appeal using architectural standards.
13. Strengthen destination appeal using music and arts.
14. Build a closer relationship between the destination and Word of Life.
15. Make better use of state land.
16. Increase outdoor events year-round (especially off peak) and make them profitable for Schroon Lake.

Implementation Status

Progress on implementation will be summarized in a memo and added to the plan as an appendix.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

Many concepts and projects remain relevant and should be included in the new plan.

5. Schroon Lake Route 9 Corridor Study

Description

This 1989 study resulted in a Town appointed special committee to respond to the development opportunities and concerns in the Town of Schroon. The committee identified the Route 9 Corridor between Exit 27 and 28 of Interstate 87 as the focus of this study to (1) define the town's inherent social, economic and cultural resources; (2) analyze the physical assets of the study area to determine the best use for tourist-oriented businesses; and (3) establish a public-private partnership which will effectively evaluate and implement the recommendations of the study. The study focuses on three areas of concern: (1) economic growth; (2) land use and site development; and (3) maintenance and enhancement of architectural integrity.

Findings and Recommendations

The following goals were prepared based on the issues raised from the scoping meeting, the analysis of the town, and the overall scope of the study:

1. Manage "economic" growth a manner which preserves the natural and social quality of life of Schroon Lake.
2. Develop criteria for development which protects community resources.
3. Develop a land use plan that will encourage economic growth in appropriate locations and protect the quality of Schroon Lake and other natural features.
4. Protect air and water quality and manage solid waste in a manner which protects the town's natural resources.
5. Monitor and limit boat launching to protect Schroon Lake from large numbers of larger, faster boats.
6. Provide services and activities for residents, second home owners, and tourists to improve the overall economic health of the community.
7. Develop year-round employment opportunities to secure a future for youth within the Schroon Lake community.

8. Control/manage vehicular pedestrian traffic in a manner which maintains the small-town character.
9. Develop a program to improve the built environment to promote the concept of a small-town Adirondack community.
10. Provide recreation activities for tourist and resident/youth.

Specific actions were recommended for business opportunities, land use, design guidelines for site plan review, a sign ordinance, zoning regulations, architectural guidelines, and long-term parking solutions.

Implementation Progress

Progress on implementation will be summarized in a memo and added to the plan as an appendix.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

There are many good ideas that may still be relevant and should be considered as part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan.

6. Schroon Lake Village Main Street Revitalization Plan

Description

Under a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, a review of the existing conditions and possible solutions for the Schroon Lake Main Street was prepared for the Essex County Division of Community Planning and Development. Completed in August 1980, the revitalization plan included an initial analysis of Main Street with general and specific recommendations tied to an implementation strategy.

Findings and Recommendations

Primary functional problems were identified, and potential solutions were considered including rerouting commercial buses, designating off-street or on-street parking areas; enforcing off street employee parking, constructing new municipal lots or reorganizing the existing municipal lot; reducing safety hazards at the curve over Roger's Brook by installing traffic signals or removing sight line barriers. Specific recommendations were made regarding architectural preservation, commercial development and redevelopment at Brookfield and Main, parking, signage, streetscape, and parks.

Implementation Progress

Progress on implementation will be summarized in a memo and added to the plan as an appendix.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

This plan is over 40 years old, and many areas recommended for improvement have changed substantially. Some of the illustrations may be useful in determining solutions for parking and architectural standards.

7. Town of Schroon Master Plan 1977

Description

The current Master Plan is 46 years old and was adopted by the Town of Schroon in 2019. The Master Plan outlines the existing land use pattern illustrating the value for determining what has taken place in the past, how the current settlement patterns give a strong indication of how the town may develop in the future. In analyzing the existing land use pattern and preparing a proposed land use plan, the Plan acknowledges certain aspects that have and will have a direct bearing on the Town. Some of these factors include the building of the interstate which resulted in less through traffic on Route 9 and resulted in less business in the downtown and Route 9 corridor. Another influence that will have an effect on the land use pattern with the Northway is the increasing importance of Route 74 as an access to the Northway from Ticonderoga. Another concern for the town is the expansion of state-owned land. The notable decline of agriculture has been taking place over the past several decades. The continued attraction of shorefront properties for second homes is increasing with many converting to year-round use.

Findings and Recommendations

Many of the goals and objectives outlined 40 years ago are still valid:

Economic Development

- Encourage selective industrial development by creating an industrial park and other industrial sites and actively encourage utilization of this land by prospects, especially those expanding southward from Canada.
- Make provisions for the continued growth of commercial recreation by such means as taking steps to extend the recreational season by providing other activities and encouraging a major chain to locate a motel in Schroon.
- Provide for some additional second homes.

State Property

The Town of Schroon should work with and encourage the State of New York to utilize this state property to the benefit of the community by:

- Better utilizing the four miles of waterfront owned by the state.
- Making use of the former summer hotel and boys camp that the state purchased in recent years, so that they may add to the economy of not only the town, but the region as well.
- Encouraging the state to provide better access and to clearly mark the access to the back lands owned by the state so that hunters may use this land.

Community Facilities and Programs

- Construct a community center providing space for town offices, a youth center, a center for the elderly, and a library.
- Expand the youth program in cooperation with the school to better meet the apparent need, especially during the winter months.
- Install the facilities for the ski slope which is already in the planning stage.
- Consider the construction of a fishing pier at the municipal park.
- Start planning for the expansion of the golf course to 18 holes.

Housing

- Expand the service areas for public water and sewer so that more building lots may be served by these utilities.
- Revise the zoning ordinance so that residential building is encouraged in areas that can best support it at an acceptable intensity.
- Encourage the development of small apartment complexes to increase the availability of rental units.

Land Use Controls

- A revised zoning ordinance based on a land use plan to provide areas for industrial growth, expanded commercial recreation growth, some new second home development and provisions for the necessary public facilities.
- The necessary sanitary code to help alleviate pollution problems.
- A building code that will assure minimum building construction standards.
- Provide for the regulations of signs so as to protect the attractiveness of the area and its major economic asset, the recreational business.
- Regulations for mobile homes and mobile home parks so that this form of low-income housing is available in an acceptable manner to the community and that the occupants of mobile home parks can be protected by the establishment of minimum park standards.

Implementation Progress

Many, if not most of the recommendations have been implemented.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

Many of the issues that were significant continue to be relevant issues of today. To give proper context to the present planning effort, a thorough review of those issues and recommended solutions should be undertaken.

8. Town of Schroon Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations

Description

The Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1971, and amended in 1980, 1986, 1988, 1989, 2002, 2011, 2017, and 2022. This ordinance regulates and restricts the location, construction and use of buildings, structures, and the use of land in the Town of Schroon, and for said purposes dividing the Town into districts. It is written for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the Town of Schroon, to regulate and restrict the height, number of stories and size of yards, courts and other open spaces, the density of population and the location and use of buildings, structures and land for trade, industry, residence and other purposes throughout the Town of Schroon. The Town is divided into 10 districts or zones: Shorefront Residential (SR-20); Rural Residential (R-80) and (R-40) and (40A); General Residential (R-20) and (R-10); Resort Business (B-2) and (B-2A); and General Business (B-1) and (I-1).

The Subdivision Regulations were adopted on April 29, 1971 pursuant to the provisions of Article 16 of the Town Law of the State of New York, the Planning Board of the Town of Schroon is authorized and empowered to approve Plats showing lots, blocks or sites, with or without streets

or highways, to approve the development of entirely or partially undeveloped plats already filed in the office of the Clerk of the County and to conditionally approve preliminary plats, within the Town of Schroon. The policy of the planning Board is to consider Land Subdivision Plats as part of a plan for the orderly, efficient and economical development of the Town of Schroon including:

- Land to be subdivided shall be of such character that it can be used safely for the building purposes without danger to health, or peril from fire, flood or other menace.
- Proper provision shall be made for water supply, drainage, sewerage and other needed public improvements and utilities.
- Proposed streets shall compose a convenient system conforming to the Official Map (where, or as may be, approved) and Development Plan.
- Streets shall be of such width, grade and location as to accommodate present and prospective traffic and shall comply with Section 171 of the Highway Law as a minimum.
- All development shall facilitate adequate fire protection and provide access for firefighting equipment and other emergency equipment.
- Open space for parks, playgrounds and green areas of suitable location, size and character shall be provided whenever appropriate.
- The proposed development shall be esthetically compatible with the existing development and character of the Town.

Findings, Recommendations and Implementation

Both sets of regulations have been revised a number of times since their development. They continue to evolve based on land use and zoning issues that occur over time.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

Existing zoning and subdivision regulations will be evaluated as part of the comprehensive plan update, and potential adjustments will be considered consistent with the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan.

9. Town of Schroon Reclassification Process for a Residential Smart Growth Affordable Housing Initiative and Update

Description

The focus of this 2016 grant application is hamlet expansion in the Town of Schroon and the need for an Adirondack Park Agency (APA) reclassification permit. The Town of Schroon's hamlet expansion plan applies and implements many of the Smart Growth recommendations and principles discussed in the "Hamlets 3" report. The report looked for potential housing development sites that are generally level with soils compatible with septic systems, available Town water, R-20 zoning (20,000 square feet for a single-family dwelling) and features a Smart Growth concept for residential development. Future required actions include having the Adirondack Park Agency reclassify the land from Low Intensity to Hamlet and bring sewer to the area. The Town of Schroon desires moderate growth and economic development and therefore needs to make provisions for housing to sustain this growth. The Smart Growth model in which areas in proximity to existing infrastructure and the community's core should be the focus for

future growth. It should be noted that in a 1977 Comprehensive Plan done by ENVICO and the Town of Schroon Planning Board it was recommended that the Adirondack Park Agency's Land Use and Development Plan in which this area is located-- the "Low Intensity area between the Hamlet area and the Northway" -- be changed to Hamlet.

Findings and Recommendations

The prerequisite of bringing municipal sewer to this area is way beyond cost prohibitive. The current plan for implementing this initiative is to have the APA reclassify the area of these two contiguous properties from Low Intensity to Hamlet without extending municipal sewer to this area. In the past, the owners of these properties have agreed that in exchange for increased densities (Low Intensity to Hamlet), that at a minimum 20% of all created future lots will be allocated for affordable workforce housing that will be in the framework of a community land trust. The affordable housing initiative should attract mostly (but not limited to) younger families ranging from school teachers, Town of Schroon and county employees, employees of new businesses as they might develop in the area and families that are looking for a quality community and are prepared to commute to work.

Implementation Progress

A Smart Growth application for hamlet expansion with an affordable housing component was completed in 2011. It was not awarded for funding and did not move forward at that time. Feedback from the APA indicated that the Town needs to prove the target area (60+/- acres) has hamlet characteristics. This property adjoins the Town's hamlet on 3 sides and there is one small subdivision (in hamlet) that adjoins this property. The property is level, will be serviced by Town water, and includes some "hamlet" type soils.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan should continue to pursue opportunities to increase opportunities for more housing options, including, but not limited to APA Land Use Reclassification requests and Town Zoning density increases, where feasible.

10. Unit Management Plans for Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Complex, Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, Hoffman Notch Wilderness and Hammond Pond Wild Forest

Description

There are parts of four state wild forest and wilderness units within the Town of Schroon. UMPs are required by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan for each unit of State land in the Adirondack Park. The plans integrate the goals and objectives of the State Land Master Plan, related legislation, and resource and visitor use information into a single document. All these units have unit management plans (UMPs) prepared that assess the natural and physical resources present within a unit of state-owned land. They also identify opportunities for public use and recreation that are consistent with the classifications of these lands and consider the ability of the resources and ecosystems to accommodate such use. These unit management plans

and updates include a history of the site and an inventory of natural resources and manmade facilities. They focus on encouraging land acquisition to enhance public access and protect open land as well as the development of trails and other associated resources such as campsites and cabins. Proposed future uses and management practices for various areas are outlined.

The *Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area* is located in the Towns of Schroon and Ticonderoga in Essex County and in the Towns of Horicon and Hague in Warren County. The 46,283-acre wilderness was expanded in 1979 by the reclassification of the Crane Pond Primitive Area, with the exception of the Crane Pond Road, to wilderness. A snowmobile trail, 3.5 miles in length leading from Route 74 to the Crane Pond Road, was closed in 1975, making this reclassification possible. The Crane Pond Road was then classified to a primitive corridor.

Following an assessment of public use trends and their resource impacts in the northwest portion of the wilderness, including Crane -3- Pond, the Adirondack Park Agency reclassified the Crane Pond Road from primitive to wilderness and added it to the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness in 1986. This action was approved by Governor Cuomo in November of 1987 as part of the five-year revision of the Adirondack State Land Master Plan. According to the Master Plan, the Crane Pond Road was listed as a "non-conforming use" and, scheduled for closure no later than the end of the third year following wilderness classification. The road was officially closed to motor vehicle use in December 1989.

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP includes the 6,060-acre MacIntyre East Tract purchased by the State of New York in 2015. The following year, the State acquired the 20,430-acre Boreas Ponds Tract. These two parcels were the final pieces of a multi-phased acquisition from The Nature Conservancy of 65,000 acres of former Finch-Pruyn lands. As both the largest and final parcel to come into public ownership, and because of the allure of the property's namesake, the Boreas Ponds Tract has garnered significant attention from local government, interest groups and the public alike.

To accommodate this public interest in a manner that continued to protect the property's natural resources, the Department provided limited public access to the tract soon after it was acquired by the State. This included parking in several locations, bicycle and equestrian opportunities on a limited number of existing roads, and informal camping, hiking and paddling throughout the tract. In February 2018, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) recommended, and the following month Governor Andrew Cuomo approved, a land classification package that added portions of the Boreas Ponds and MacIntyre East tracts—totaling over 10,000 acres—to the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest.

The purpose of this Unit Management Plan (UMP) amendment is to propose additional recreational opportunities and facilities within and adjacent to the recently classified wild forest and primitive lands of the Boreas Ponds and MacIntyre East Tracts in a manner that maximizes enjoyment and appreciation of the Forest Preserve while continuing to preserve and protect its natural resources. An amendment to the High Peaks Wilderness Area UMP will more specifically

address the type and extent of recreational facilities in the High Peaks Wilderness Area, including those related to the Boreas Ponds. Both the Vanderwhacker Mountain and High Peaks UMP amendments discuss the Boreas Ponds Primitive Area to highlight the interface between the units, however authorizations for management actions within the Boreas Ponds Primitive Area will occur in this Vanderwhacker Mountain UMP amendment. Eight smaller tracts have also been recently added to the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, and this amendment proposes minor access-related improvements to several of them.

The *Hoffman Notch Wilderness* consists of 38,500 acres of forest preserve lands in the Towns of North Hudson, Minerva and Schroon Lake in southern Essex County. The unit is generally bounded on the north by the Boreas Road, on the east by the Adirondack Northway, on the south by Hoffman Road, and on the west by the boundary of Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest. The UMP was last approved in 2012.

The *Hammond Pond Wild Forest* (HPWF) is an Adirondack Forest Preserve unit steeped in history, occupying a significant transitional zone between the sharp terrain of the High Peaks region and the fertile Lake Champlain valley. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the HPWF was adopted in 1988 and updated in 2019. Since that time, land area has been added to the unit and recreational trends have evolved. Much of the unit lies within relatively close proximity to the Northway (I-87), giving potentially easy access to large numbers of visitors. On the other hand, the unit is home to a spectacular variety of significant ecological resources, which warrant care and protection. The Hammond Pond Wild Forest (HPWF) is comprised of a collection of State land parcels categorized as Forest Preserve. The unit contains 56 parcels totaling approximately 45,619 acres classified as wild forest, wholly contained within Essex County.

Findings and Recommendations

The *Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Complex UMP* is 30 years old and in need of updating. Recommendations are long outdated, and many are not likely feasible at this point.

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP was developed 2005 and amended in 2018. The following management actions are proposed:

- Establishing mountain bike, equestrian, hiking and skiing opportunities within the tracts;
- Designating routes for public motor vehicle access, including parking;
- Selecting a preferred alternative for the community connection discussed in the 2015 Community Connector Trail Plan for the multiple-use trail that connects North Hudson and Newcomb;
- Maintaining 9.0 miles of Forest Preserve Road for motor vehicle access opportunities;
- Maintaining 3.4 miles of additional Forest Preserve roads for seasonal access and camping during big game hunting season;
- Providing access for persons with disabilities to hand-carry launches, equestrian facilities, and designated tent sites along several roads;
- Enhancing paddling opportunities, including providing a hand-carry launch on LaBier Flow and along the Hudson River;

- Designation of various camping opportunities throughout the tract including roadside, primitive, and water access;
- A proposal to maintain the historic cabin at the Four Corners and evaluate potential future administrative uses until a final disposition for the structure is determined; and
- Designating singletrack mountain bike networks.

Hoffman Notch Wilderness Unit Management Plan was developed in 2012. Its management goals include the following:

- Officially designating the path south of Big Pond as a DEC trail that connects to the Big Pond Trail, creating a hiking and cross-country skiing loop trail system between Hoffman Road and Loch Muller Road;
- Constructing foot bridges over Hoffman Notch Brook near north end of Hoffman Notch Trail and over East Branch on the Big Pond Trail;
- Rerouting 1/4-mile portion of Hoffman Notch Trail north of Big Marsh to west side of Hoffman Notch Brook;
- Constructing an approximately 4-mile section of trail on eastern portion of unit connecting Hoffman Road with Route 9 which may also serve as part of the North Country National Scenic Trail.
- Constructing an improved parking area along the Blue Ridge Road to serve as the northern trailhead for the Hoffman Notch Trail;
- Constructing an improved parking area with signs and trail register along west side of Route 9;
- Designating two primitive tent sites on Big Pond and one primitive tent site on North Pond;
- Improving the accessibility of trails to Bailey Pond and a portion of the Big Pond trail.

Hammond Pond Wild Forest UMP was developed in 2019. Its management goals include the following:

- Protect the natural resources and spectacular ecological value of the HPWF landscapes. Identify and respect sensitive areas.
- Recognize that choosing where to create recreational facilities is just as important as choosing where not to create recreational facilities.
- The Forest Preserve's intrinsic values are a large part of what defines it. People who have never visited (and may never visit) the region hold high value in knowing that pristine natural landscapes exist, both now and for future generations.
- Strategically connect and extend existing linear trails to create loops and interesting longer distance opportunities. This may attract some use from the more heavily used adjacent Forest Preserve units.
- Design trail configurations thoughtfully, so they are complemented by nearby facilities, adjacent Forest Preserve units, and private lands.
- Enhance existing facilities and create new facilities for high quality, universally accessible recreational opportunities.
- Contribute to the completion of the 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail by providing a route connection across the HPWF.

Implementation Progress

This will require significant input from DEC representatives.

Relevance to the Comprehensive Plan

These plans can be useful in developing the inventory and analysis for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations in these unit management plans should be reviewed in conjunction with improvements desired by the Schroon community. Relevant recommendations can be conveyed by letter to the regional forester so they can be considered in amendments and updates of the unit management plans.