

## 4. ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Today, Webb is influenced by several assets and challenges unique to the Town, or as part of a larger environmental region and economic marketplace known as the Adirondack Park and Mohawk Valley region. These include:

### ASSETS

- Modest year round and seasonal residential growth as people continue to seek the relative affordability and high quality of location found here. Unlike nearby Mohawk Valley locations experiencing flat or declining growth, Webb's population grew by 16.8 % from 1990 to 2000 to resident population of 1,912. Real estate activity and seasonal building improvements also suggest that the 25,000 to 35,000 estimated summer residents are still here and growing.
- A local economy with seasonal strengths unique in a larger region and county, where many communities have been struggling to redefine how they might prosper in the new economies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.
- Continued success and growth of tourism as visitors, primarily traveling a day or less, consistently return, or newly discover the region, with its variety and quality of summer, fall and winter attractions.
- Assured environmental quality given the dominance of State land ownership, the unique protections afforded by the NYS constitutional provisions in the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve, and the consistent high sensitivity of the resident and visiting populations.
- One of the finest parks and recreational settings in the Adirondack that offers outstanding year-round natural, educational, cultural, and entertainment experiences.
- Overall high quality of life and pride in community as evidenced by the consistent attitudes of most local residents, the emerging trend of long time visitors retiring to the area, and the long-standing tradition of residents returning

after living elsewhere.

- Strong entrepreneurial spirit and local ownership in business, representing a welcome relief from the dominance of outside ownership and large scale development in most of New York and elsewhere.
- Wealth of natural resources, which are the prime attraction for residents and visitors and are the foundation for the other assets listed above.

## CHALLENGES

- Emerging conflicts between neighborhood activities and land uses, notably along Route 28 in the hamlets of Thendara, Old Forge, Eagle Bay and along the shorelines of the lakes and rivers. Many residents want assurance for quality Town review and design standards for new development at three key locations: on lake shores, along the “gateway” corridor of Route 28, in commercial area of Old Forge, Thendara, and Eagle Bay.
- Dependency on local government and tourism to provide employment, suggesting a need to attract more diversity in the economy.
- Public policy and assistance problems due to the Town’s remote location from county, state and federal services. Webb is not only relatively remote; it also is situated at the far edge of key jurisdictions including Herkimer County and the regional districts of several State agencies. The Town is the farthest from the “county seat” and at the western edge of the Adirondack Park. This raises the question of how to gain a louder, more influential voice in competition for services and support from the County, from the Park Agency, and from other public agencies.
- Decreasing availability of developable land that might be used to attract business diversity, affordable housing, and new or expanded tourism attractions complementing those already here.
- Labor market limits challenged by the seasonal nature of many jobs. This is most obvious when talk turns to housing. With the increasing difficulty in finding affordable housing, particularly in summer months, support staff often has to rely on relatively long automobile commutes to and from jobs.

- Harnessing the talents and time of year-round and seasonal residents to help attain community goals towards maintaining an historical, cultural, environmental, neighborhood, main street “sense of place” (*image*) that ensures Webb remains a community to live, to raise a family, to work, to grow up, to recreate.
- Opportunities exist to redesign the commercial centers of Old Forge and Eagle Bay due to the significant number of unoccupied buildings at both locations. This situation is particularly acute in the downtown “busy corner” section of Old Forge and in the heart of Eagle Bay. Redevelopment of the hearts of these two hamlets can be left to chance, or we can seize this once in a lifetime opportunity to engage professional assistance to guide town government, non-governmental organizations and private property owners to redevelop these sites for their most beneficial uses.