

## 6. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 6.1 ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Recommendations in this Plan are comprehensive and complex, and are made with the understanding that the Town of Webb is committed to long term planning.

The “Town of Webb” refers both to the public and private sectors, not just to the elected officials. While Plan adoption and initiation is the prerogative of the Town Board, the recommendations are explicit that **the Board is not expected to “make it happen” based upon its own efforts.** There are Plan Recommendations that are so complex that they call for “master plans” of their own. Some of the Recommendations could be initiated quickly, with early results.

The Plan must be considered dynamic with the need **to set priorities, commit requisite resources,** and to **be responsive to changes** in:

- citizen priorities
- citizen demand for services
- current economic conditions
- the ability to finance such elements of the Plan

**While calling for Board leadership, the essential need is for community members and organizations to step forward to share the leadership, commitment, and participation. Thus, the recommendations are made with the full understanding that the future health and welfare of the Town of Webb is dependent upon a willing, enthusiastic, open, and positive collaboration of all segments of the community.**

Important to many recommendations is Webb’s relative remoteness; it is situated at the far edge of key jurisdictions including Herkimer County and the regional districts of several State agencies, and is at the western edge of the Adirondack Park. This raises the question of how to gain a louder, more influential voice in the competition for services and support from the County, from the Park Agency, and from other public agencies.

## **6.2 TOWN GOVERNMENT**

### **6.2.1 Management Policy**

- ❖ **Background:** Webb is the largest town in area in New York State, a multi-million dollar enterprise, with vast economic, social, cultural, and natural resources. It is the hub of economic and recreational activity in the Route 28 corridor. Management of the town and its assets demands current business management practices and policies.
- ❖ **Recommendations:** Implement a series of management policies reflecting the multi-million dollar nature of the town's activities.

Important actions include:

- Support and budget for continuing training of staff employees, elected officials, and appointees
- Develop formal plans for all departments.
- Support the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, to gain professional assistance and training, and to develop a consistent, inter-board, working relationship.
- Prepare handbooks and fact sheets for the public to better understand the work of various departments and boards.
- Employ economic evaluation techniques to assist in financial planning and decision planning, e.g. cost/benefit analysis relating to vehicle maintenance/purchase/lease replacement strategies, cost/benefit analysis of marketing/advertising programs.
- Consider engaging a professional planner, initially on a part-time basis, to provide process guidance and technical skills as required.
- Maintain a readily available and easily referenced set of Town local laws and ordinances, resolutions, minutes.

## **6.2.2 TOWN GOVERNMENT - Management of the Real Property Tax Base**

- ❖ **Background:** In order to provide adequate Property Tax Income for future community operations and development, it is critical that the Tax Base (Taxable Real Property Assessed Value) be aggressively managed. The Tax Base must be protected from decline, and perceived to be a model of fairness, equity and growth. To this end, the State of New York provides financial incentives that could contribute as much as \$47,000 (\$7.00 for each parcel, as of 2001) for the Town of Webb (TOW). *Such incentive, along with additions to the tax base, should more than cover any costs relating to the expenses of the TOW Assessors Office operations.*<sup>21</sup> This would assist in rationalizing the necessary investment in this most important TOW function.

Additional benefits may be derived by contributions from other taxing jurisdictions, which would benefit by aggressive tax base management, i.e. Herkimer County and Town of Webb Union Free School District.

❖ **Recommendations.**<sup>22</sup>

- Employ a professional and New York State Certified Assessor directly or through Herkimer County
- Comply with all New York State scheduled assessment reviews.
- Conduct Town -wide complete reassessment, including a visit to each improved property every 6 years.
- Maintain a Building Permit Policy, Process and Procedure so that all real property, improvements may be reviewed and considered for revaluation.
- Maintain all real property files with the latest version of the RPS Program.
- Establish a plan and do annual reassessment per NYS Office of Real Property's standards.
- Maintain New York State-approved Property Valuation Records.
- Submit, in a timely manner, all requests for New York State Funding that supports an approved Real Property Valuation program.
- Maintain Real Property Valuation at 100% Market Value.
- Encourage other Taxing jurisdictions (County and School District) to share in the expenses of the assessment office operation.

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<sup>21</sup> A cost/benefit analysis would project the expenses and revenue streams from such aggressive management.

<sup>22</sup> Recommendations are based upon guidelines of the New York State Real Property Tax Office.

### **6.2.3 TOWN GOVERNMENT – Intermunicipal Planning and Sharing**

- ❖ **Background:** Webb already cooperates with other Towns to help provide emergency services and health care, to name but a few of many examples. Leading issues for intermunicipal planning and sharing include: police, health, and emergency services, recreation and trail facilities, and business park development.

New York State has long advocated the use of intermunicipal cooperation to meet an ever-increasing demand for services in the face of limited resources and growing competition. Indeed, the New York State Comptroller and Department of State have documented the benefits of sharing services or cooperation amongst local governments.

Article 5-g of New York State General Municipal Law grants municipalities broad authority to cooperate in the joint delivery of services and programs. Using this authority, Towns have cooperated in joint purchasing, in cooperative planning and zoning work, and in a host of other efforts.

- ❖ **Recommendations:** The Town should initiate an intermunicipal planning and sharing process with the Towns of Inlet and Forestport. The objective is to develop and implement a strategy to identify areas of shared or consolidated services with particular focus on presenting a unified perspective to such organizations as the New York State Department of Transportation, the Adirondack Park Agency, and public utility companies.

Consideration should be given to engaging a professional planner modeled after similar work in Essex County and in the Tupper Lake / Town of Altamont region, to provide technical assistance in planning, grant writing, and infrastructure assessment for Town officials.

## **6.2.4 TOWN GOVERNMENT – Economic Development**

- ❖ **Background:** For many years, the Town has made significant investments in the development and growth of Webb’s primary industry, tourism. In the future, complementary, enhanced, and balanced economic development will require a formalized, planned approach.
- ❖ **Recommendations:** Appoint a committee from the Town Board to partner with the business community of the Town of Webb to develop a formal process for economic development.<sup>23</sup>

Topics to consider:

- Maintaining existing businesses.
- Completing an inventory of “developable” and vacant sites including vacant and underutilized buildings for top priority new economic development and help advance efforts to remediate the two existing contaminated sites in Town for redevelopment.
- Using accurate, reliable and current data on the economic impact of tourism.
- Cooperating on the assessment of affordable housing needs for workers.
- Analyzing efforts to diversify the local economy beyond the current reliance on tourism and local government employment.
- Developing small “shovel ready” business sites serving a group of towns in the region.
- Planning for long-range infrastructure needs and investment in roads, an airfield facility, energy, sewer and water, and telecommunications.
- Initiating discussions with business and large landowners to discuss plans, requirements and obstacles to growth.

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<sup>23</sup> The Economic Development Committee of the Central Adirondack Association (CAA), has outlined a plan whereby CAA would have its TOW members form a sub-committee to focus on TOW economic development. This sub-committee would have the support of the CAA and interface or partner with Town Board in addressing opportunities specifically for the Town of Webb.

## **6.2.5 TOWN GOVERNMENT – Planning and Zoning Boards**

- ❖ **Background:** As part of the Master Plan Advisory Committee work, New York Planning Federation performed an audit of the Town’s land use regulations and zoning. That audit, along with comments and recommendations from the Town Enforcement Officer, the Town Planning Board (PB) and Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) conclude there is a clear need to update these regulations.
  
- ❖ **Recommendations:** The Planning Board, with input from the Zoning Board of Appeals, should initiate the review and update the land use plans and zoning regulations.
  - Engage professional assistance in order to have access to the most current aspects of modern case law and state/federal requirements, and progressive planning and land use management.
  - Particular attention should be given to defining “design guidelines” for new development along the corridor of Route 28, historic areas of hamlets, and around lakeshores. Options might include voluntary guidelines published in booklet form and backed up by key provisions in Town zoning.
  - Non-governmental organizations such as CAP-21 or CAA should also partner with the Town to provide assistance to business and property owners about quality design.
  - Recognize the wants and needs of the distinct neighborhoods of the Town of Webb, (Old Forge, Thendara, McKeever, Eagle Bay, and the various shoreline communities of Rondaxe, Big Moose, Beaver River, Stillwater, Okara, and the Fulton Chain) and differing, versus common, concerns regarding zoning. Request active participation of these neighborhoods in the review/update process.

## **6.2.6 TOWN GOVERNMENT – Control of Watercraft**

- ❖ **Background:** Personal watercraft, commonly known as “jet skis”™, have been identified by some as acute sources of noise pollution and unnecessary sources of water and air pollution. Their small size, shallow draft, and maneuverability also allow their use in close, and sometimes conflicting, proximity to beaches, swimming areas, shorelines, and shallow water habitats. While personal watercraft makes up only about 8% of all vessels in New York State waters, a great concern is that they are involved in nearly 30% of boating accidents. According to the Webb Police records, this accident rate has not been the experience in Webb. Of more concern has been the general need for enforcement of existing rules and regulations that apply to all watercraft.<sup>24</sup>

New York State Chapter 415 of the Laws of 2000 allows towns the ability to regulate personal watercraft use in municipal waters up to 1,500 feet from the shoreline. Additionally, there are several petitions circulating that ask for the banning of such watercraft on specific water bodies. More conservative requests are for increased enforcement of existing regulations pertaining to all watercraft.

- ❖ **Recommendation:** The Town should explore additional ways of ensuring enforcement of current laws regulating the use of all motorized watercraft on area waterways. This may involve hiring additional qualified personnel for this seasonal work. Education programs covering such issues as safety, courtesy, and sensitive natural habitats should also be initiated. Any action relating to the Chain of Lakes should be in cooperation with the Town of Inlet.

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<sup>24</sup> See the interview of Police Chief Dibble in the appendices.

## **6.3 ENVIRONMENT**

### **6.3.1 Acid Rain, Mercury Poisoning, and Eurasian Milfoil Invasion**

- ❖ **Background:** The invasion of acid rain, mercury poisoning, and Eurasian Milfoil (along with other invasive non-native plant species) are very serious threats to Adirondack ecosystems and the health of its citizens.<sup>25</sup> Acid rain has decimated the once-rich game fishing of many bodies of water in Webb. As well, our forests are exposed to very high levels of pollution.

The primary sources of acid rain in the Adirondacks today – the coal-fired power plants of the Midwest – are also the source of mercury pollution. A contaminant-research project involving loons on 43 Adirondack lakes reports that 1 in 6 loons sampled had high levels of mercury in its blood. “The highest-mercury blood samples came from loons on the western Adirondack waters where acid rain is heaviest.”<sup>26</sup>

The 1998 National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program: Biennial Report To Congress maintained that “despite important progress in reducing air pollution, acid rain remains a serious problem in the Adirondacks”<sup>27</sup> There is legislative action currently in Congress, as well as legal action being pursued by the Attorney General’s Office of New York State.

Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) kills native aquatic plants, creating thick mats out to 20-30 foot depths, and eventually threatens fish life. Although there have been no reports of EWM in Webb waters, it is flourishing close-by in Lake Colby, Lake Flower, Kiwassa, Oseetah, Middle and Upper Saranac Lakes, Fish Creek Ponds, Floodwood Pond and Copperas Pond. In 1999, the Upper Saranac Lake Shore Owners Association spent \$50,000 trying to control EWM. The Lake George Association spends \$1 million per year trying to control the EWM that has invaded almost every bay. EWM is gaining footholds in other areas.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For a quick introduction to these threats, see Adirondack Life, December 2001, “Blowing Smoke”, Adirondack Life, Collectors Issue 2001, “Mercury Rising”, and Adirondac, May/June 2001, “Fending Off the Invaders”

<sup>26</sup> Adirondack Life, December 2001, “Blowing Smoke”, p. 7

<sup>27</sup> Adirondack Life, p 62. The NAPA report projected that by 2040 about half the Park’s 2,800 lakes and ponds will be too acidic to sustain a healthy ecosystem.

<sup>28</sup> Adirondac, op.cit., p 18.

- ❖ **Recommendation:** The Town Board should commit to support regional efforts to track the status and effects of acid rain, mercury poisoning and EWM pollution in the Town of Webb and to support legislative and legal proposals to address the problem. Such commitment could be implemented by appointing a citizen-liaison committee to:
  - represent the Town in Acid Rain forums,
  - recommend public education programs, and
  - propose Board resolutions and communications relating to pending legislation and legal action

### **6.3.2 ENVIRONMENT – Land and Well Contamination Risks**

- ❖ **Background:** The continued build-out of construction in already high-density areas, such as Hollywood Hills, Joy Tract and Eagle Bay, poses significant health and contamination risks.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** The Town Board should engage professional septic system designers/soil engineers to evaluate and make recommendations relating to continued build-out in high density areas not served by water districts.

### **6.3.3 ENVIRONMENT – Lake/Pond and River Quality and Safety**

- ❖ **Background:** Water bodies and watersheds are natural resource foundations of the economy and quality of life wealth of the Town of Webb. As such, it is of paramount importance to systematically and continually monitor and take steps to ensure water quality and water safety. Currently, the Town directly manages the water quality within the Old Forge/Thendara water districts. Additionally, the Town supports the water quality and safety programs carried out by the Fulton Chain of Lakes Association. While individual water quality programs are in effect in other areas, none are integrated or coordinated with the Town.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** Develop a town-wide water quality program. The Town should meet with all existing groups doing any water quality monitoring and engage their support to create a town-wide system/program to assure high water quality of lakes, ponds and streams, and also wells. Such a program should enlist the support of appropriate State resources, such as the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Park Agency, to protect the watersheds that affect the various lakes, rivers, and ponds.

## **6.4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **6.4.1 Tourism**

- ❖ **Background:** Tourism is the principal business in the Town of Webb. The Town annually spends significant funds on tourism. We currently have no accurate assessment of the economic impact of tourism on the local economy.
- ❖ **Recommendations:**
  - In partnership with the business community, assess the economic impact of tourism on the Town.
  - Develop a strategic plan for marketing the Town of Webb.

- Consider additional uses, consistent with the desired character of the community, of McCauley Mountain, the Town Forest, and other Town properties.

#### **6.4.2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Affordable Housing**

- ❖ **Background:** There is a very little, if any, affordable housing for the current local work force, and there is expected to be an increasing need for such housing as the demand for year-round local work force grows. *Affordable* typically means housing costs of no more than 30% - 35% of total family household income.
- ❖ **Recommendations:**
  - Engage in an intermunicipal study to assess and make recommendations to address the affordable housing needs of the Towns of Webb, Inlet, and Forestport.<sup>29</sup>
  - Review land use regulations to ensure that there are no exclusionary elements and consider incentives for multiple dwelling, smaller lot residences, and other forms of affordable housing.
  - Work with local employers to define and assess seasonal and year round housing needs - matching needs to job opportunities.
  - Inventory possible sites and existing buildings for new affordable housing.
  - Consider availability of Town property to help meet housing needs.
  - Seek partnerships with a regional profit or non-profit developer and with State agencies to help secure additional support.

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<sup>29</sup> CMaPP (Communities Master Plan Project) is a Quality Communities Demonstration Project grant of NY State Department of State to the combined towns of Webb, Forestport, and Inlet, to obtain shared services and resources in the development of common elements relating to the individual towns' Town Comprehensive Planning. As of this writing, CMaPP has engaged professional services to define the initial steps to address this issue.

### **6.4.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Redevelopment Sites**

- ❖ **Background:** Changing patterns of commercial use have resulted in an increase in the number of vacant buildings in the traditional "downtown" commercial areas of the hamlets. This pattern is particularly acute in the hamlets of Old Forge and Eagle Bay. A number of commercial buildings are unoccupied or on the market at the same time as undeveloped areas on the fringes of the hamlets are being developed for commercial uses. 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.

Although the core of the hamlets may not be suitable for all types of commercial uses, these vacant structures provide an opportunity for the establishment of a variety of businesses, including shops, offices and cafés. Encouraging the adaptive reuse of these structures is critical for the maintenance of healthy hamlets and will be important in historic preservation efforts. This may require both public and private efforts.

❖ **Recommendations:**

- Inventory and maintain list of commercial structures in the core of the hamlets.
- Review uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance to determine if a sufficient range of uses is permitted in core hamlet areas.<sup>30</sup>
- Work with area realtors to market unused structures.
- Inventory available parking in and adjacent to core hamlet areas. If required, develop unused areas for shared parking.
- Provide signage to direct traffic to parking areas.
- Consider tax incentives within the core area to encourage commercial reuse of existing structures.
- Develop a plan for facade improvements within the core hamlet area.<sup>31</sup>
- Work with the New York State Department of Transportation on the development of traffic and streetscape improvements within the core hamlet areas.

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<sup>30</sup> Consider modifications to permit and encourage apartment-use of second floors in commercial structures.

<sup>31</sup> See Town Government-Planning & Zoning. Provide design guidelines. Offer visual or architectural renditions.

## **6.5 INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **6.5.1 High Speed Internet Communications**

- ❖ **Background:** High-speed telecommunications is a prerequisite for attracting environmentally friendly, information-dependent companies and individuals interested in telecommuting capabilities. Such services are also required by existing small business, residences, medical service providers, schools and others throughout the Town who work using today's information technology.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** The Town should appoint a committee or request an existing organization to take the lead in organizing a regional effort to obtain high-speed telecommunication services. Such an entity should be encouraged to work with other organizations within the Adirondacks focusing on this issue.

### **6.5.2 INFRASTRUCTURE – Cable Television**

- ❖ **Background:** Cable television is not available to many of the populated areas in the Town of Webb including parts of the Fulton Chain of Lakes and Big Moose region to Beaver River. Use of antennas in many of these areas is unsatisfactory.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** Webb Town Government should negotiate its cable television franchise to include an expanded coverage area.

### **6.5.3 INFRASTRUCTURE-Route 28**

- ❖ **Background:** New York State Route 28 is the primary access to Webb, traversing some 21 miles and forming the main street of the hamlets of Old Forge, Eagle Bay, and Thendara. At Thendara, average daily traffic counts by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) over the past decade show that this location is the third busiest Herkimer County location on Route 28.<sup>32</sup> Efficient, effective, and safe traffic flow between the Towns of Forestport, Webb and Inlet is severely hampered because of narrow and crumbling shoulders and lack of adequate passing lanes. Within the hamlets, traffic flow is further hampered by inadequate parking spaces. Additionally, an important transportation issue that has long been the subject of studies, reports and public discussion, but without solution: Other than using one's own private vehicle, there are no alternative (inter-modal) conveyance or transportation facilities for visitors and residents alike – throughout Webb and between Webb and neighboring towns.<sup>33</sup> Optimizing traffic flow, transportation options, adequate parking, and safe pedestrian walkways are essential for the economy and quality of life of the community.
  
- ❖ **Recommendation:** Establish a continuing partnership with NYS DOT.

The partnership should focus on:

- Need to improve traffic flow between and within towns.
- In cooperation with the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), address the design standards and planning related to Route 28 as a New York State Scenic Byway.<sup>34</sup>
- Review improvements needed for safety of bicyclists, snowmobilers, pedestrians, and driveway access near trails, in hamlet areas, and at intersections and bridges.
- Integrate non-State project plans (e.g. street lighting, landscaping) into DOT plans to take advantage of the “by-product” opportunities to implement such plans.
- Explore opportunities for providing conveyance/transportation options as alternatives to using one's own private vehicle.

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<sup>32</sup> NYS DOT 2000 Traffic Volume Report, Traffic Monitoring Unit, Highway Data Services Bureau, Albany.

<sup>33</sup> See page 27 referencing 1997 Mail Survey

<sup>34</sup> ANCA is the official administrator of the New York State Scenic Byway system within the Adirondack region.

#### **6.5.4 INFRASTRUCTURE – County Roads**

- ❖ **Background:** Herkimer County roads within the Town also are a major component of the road infrastructure, connecting the main thoroughfare of Route 28 with other areas of the Town, i.e. South Shore and Big Moose. While the traffic volume is less than on Route 28, nonetheless the same concerns for safety, traffic flow and coordination with other road-related projects pertain.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** Partner with Herkimer County Highway Department to make sure Webb's priorities are considered and enlist the County's support of Webb's priorities relating to State Highway 28.

#### **6.5.5 INFRASTRUCTURE – Sewer and Water**

- ❖ **Background:** Interviews with Town officials emphasize the need to manage and control the “build out” occurring in Hollywood Hills, Joy Tract, and Eagle Bay Park. Increasing density of new construction and conversion of seasonal to fulltime use for many residences also raises issues about the capacity of the areas to sustain safe wells and risk of septic contamination to surrounding property and lakes.

Current land use plans permit new development along Route 28, and at the same time raise the question of needs and capacity of water and sewer systems to support such development.

- ❖ **Recommendations:** The Town should review options to ensure protection of the public water supply sources, including wellhead protection measures and setback requirements in Town land use codes.<sup>35</sup>

The Town should plan for the water and sewer service required to support desirable new business growth and affordable housing development.

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<sup>35</sup> The section on Environment- Lake/Pond and River Quality and Safety addresses watershed protection, which is critical to the water districts.

### **6.5.6 INFRASTRUCTURE– Snowmobile Trails**

- ❖ **Background:** Snowmobiling, the main winter visitor attraction, is a significant contributor to the local economy. Snowmobilers require access to the snowmobile trail system as well as access to local services such as motels, restaurants, and fuel. Heavy snowmobile traffic in the hamlet areas has led to concerns with regard to noise and vehicular and pedestrian safety. These problems are particularly acute along the Route 28 corridor in Thendara, at the bridge between Thendara and Old Forge, South Shore, and Big Moose Roads.
  
- ❖ **Recommendations:** Improve the system of snowmobile routes within the hamlets. These routes should connect the snowmobile trail system with area motels and snowmobile-related facilities such as restaurants, stores, and gas stations. In the development of these routes, special attention should be given to:
  - Establishing a uniform set of directional signs indicating routes and facilities.
  - Minimizing conflicts by separating vehicles, pedestrians and snowmobiles.
  - Providing snowmobile access to necessary services (motels, restaurants, fuel, and supplies).
  - Providing alternative crossings of the Moose River in Old Forge and McKeever.
  - Providing safe crossings of area streets, particularly Route 28.
  - Minimizing conflicts with residents by providing routes away from residential areas wherever possible.
  - Providing alternate snowmobile routes along South Shore Road and Big Moose Road.
  - Coordinating among the Snowmobile Trails Department of the Town of Webb, the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
  - Explore the development of a visitor friendly snowmobile services hub on North Street. This facility, with ready access to the snowmobile trail system, could provide vehicle parking, snowmobile trailer parking, information, and fuel.

### **6.5.7 INFRASTRUCTURE - Air Field**

- ❖ **Background**: The airstrip on North Street was shut down in the mid-1980s. Up to that time, it was an important facility for access and departure from Webb. The need for such a facility has been cited over the years, and was most recently highlighted in the Communities 2000 Vision Report of 1999 as being essential for future access to and from Webb and serving all segments of the Webb and neighboring towns.
  
- ❖ **Recommendation**: Develop and implement a plan to build an airport facility serving the Town of Webb and neighboring communities. The plan should be predicated on a positive cost/benefits analysis of such an undertaking; and should enthusiastically seek Federal, County and State support for implementation.

## **6.6 EMERGENCY AND HEALTH SERVICES**

- ❖ **Background:** The Town of Webb depends upon a variety of public, private and not-for-profit services to provide for the health and safety of its citizens. These include the Town of Webb Professional Offices,<sup>36</sup> The Town of Webb and State Police and County Sheriff's Department,<sup>37</sup> The Town of Webb Fire Commissioners, the fire and ambulance services in the Town of Webb Fire District and Inlet, The Department of Conservation (DEC), Public Health Nurses, The Red Cross, Home Aide Services of the Central Adirondacks (HASCA), and Community Transportation Services (CTS).

Interviews with officials and professionals responsible for emergency and health services and data provided by them indicate that services are at near capacity. One common theme is a shortage of personnel, particularly volunteers who serve the not-for-profit organizations. Services are stressed by ever-increasing State-mandated programs, administrative work, and training requirements. Recruitment of paid professional personnel does not seem to present a problem at this time, but the workload upon current professionals is stretched beyond capacity particularly during peak seasons. One example of this is the lack of capacity to schedule emergency volunteers and town employees for annual physicals, necessitating consideration to engage outside services.

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<sup>36</sup> Medical services at the TOW Professional Office include family practice physicians, a full time dentist, full time public health nursing service, part time cardiologist, part time dermatologist, part time physical therapist, the Home Aide Service of the Central Adirondacks (HASCA), Centrex Laboratory, and a loan closet for medical equipment such as crutches, walkers, commodes, canes, wheelchairs, etc.

<sup>37</sup> The County Sheriff provides services only as relates to the lakes.

❖ **Recommendations:**

- The Town Board should take the initiative to meet regularly with officials and professional service providers to facilitate long-range emergency services planning. That planning should reflect the Board's commitment to, and allocate the resources for, protecting citizens against acts of terror, unlawful behavior, and enforcement of laws that protect our environment. These issues are key to the economic survival and emotional well being of our community.
- A task force should be formed of emergency and health service, and law enforcement professionals to develop an integrated, inter-municipal disaster response plan (Mass Casualty Incident Plan [MCI]). The plan should address formal mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities.
- Service providers should continue to pursue resources that can assist in the assessment/study of relevant issues and grants to facilitate implementation of the recommendations.<sup>38</sup>
- The Fire Commissioners, in conjunction with the Town Board, should be encouraged to hire a full-time District Fire Chief, responsible for management of fire and EMS activities, such as: administration, training programs, scheduling, recruitment, retention of volunteers, and the development of standardized operating procedures across fire departments and ambulance services. This individual could assist the Town by documenting commercial building layouts, and provide certification for fire code inspection and enforcement.
- The Town Board should oversee a public education program supporting the above strategies and plans. This program should first include leadership from business groups towards better communication between the organizations responsible for the health and safety of the people in the township and those businesses and organizations planning additional tourist events and large-scale gatherings.
- The Town Board, along with the Town of Webb Fire Commissioners and Chiefs, should meet with officials of Niagara Mohawk to discuss solutions to overly-long utility crew response times.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Note: reference Police Study 1997 of Towns of Inlet and Webb.

<sup>39</sup> Inlet officials have echoed comments about unsatisfactory response times.

## **6.7 PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION**

- ❖ **BACKGROUND:** The Town of Webb is unique among other towns of New York State in that it has large land holdings that support tourism and provide significant recreational facilities for year-round and seasonal residents. Among the facilities in the town are a public downhill and cross-country ski facility (McCauley Mountain) also used as the venue for snowmobile events, summer chairlift rides, Winter Carnival, musical events, wedding receptions, and a variety of community celebrations/parties, a public beach, a multi-use pavilion also used as an ice rink, playgrounds, athletic fields, extensive snowmobile trails, tennis courts, hiking trails, bicycle trails and several thousand acres of heretofore little utilized forest land (Town Forest)<sup>40</sup> which includes six lakes and ponds. This is in addition to traditional Adirondack sports such as hunting fishing and boating.

Complementing the town-owned facilities is:

- Abundant private recreation enterprises including a theme park, flat and fast water outfitters, lake cruises, RV campgrounds, and a scenic railroad to name a few.
- Thousands of acres of state-owned lands, including ten (10) DEC/APA designated Management Units each defined by Unit Management Plans.<sup>41</sup> Nicks Lake State Park, and numerous maintained trails.
- Cultural programs offered by not-for-profit organizations including the Arts Center/Old Forge, the Old Forge Library, and the Town of Webb Historical Association.

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<sup>40</sup> "There are two studies of the Town of Webb forest that define a blueprint for enhancing the use of that asset. The first study (1975), Master Development Plan for the Old Forge-Town of Webb Trail Park, was prepared by Duryea and Wilhelmi, Professional Corporation at the request of the Town Board. The Board was made up of Supervisor John Boylan, and councilpersons Diane Bowes, Lawrence Gaudin, George Hildebrandt, and Arthur Baker. "This Master Development Plan is intended to serve as a long-range guide for the planning and development of the Old Forge, 'Trail Park' ". In detail, it describes and maps bicycle, equestrian, interpretive, canoe, hiking/backpacking, dogsled, snowmobile, x-country, snowshoe trails, and facilities such as campsites, shelters, overlooks, and privies. The second, more recent, study (Fall, 2000) Management Guidelines for the Town of Webb Forest, prepared by Integrated Resources Management Class, SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry School. It suggests enhanced uses of the forest, while focusing on aspects of forestry management."

<sup>41</sup> Unit Management Plans either exist and are in the process of update or are being developed for the first time. The areas of UMP are: Pepperbox, Pidgeon Lake, Aldrich Pond, Black River, Five Ponds, Fulton Chain, Haderondah, Independence River, Moose River Plains and Watson's East.

❖ **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Implement a series of actions that will provide enhanced opportunities for expanded recreation opportunities and complementary private development:
  - a. Negotiate a trade of a parcel of the Town Forest to the Nature Conservancy or the State for the interior portion of the parcel between the North and Middle Branch of the Moose River commonly referred to as the “flatiron”. The acquired land would be used for expanded public recreational and cultural purposes.<sup>42</sup>

There are two existing proposals for facilities in the Town of Webb. To the extent that the sites being considered for those proposals do not come to fruition, this acquired land might be a suitable alternative to complement development of low impact multipurpose trails for skiing, bicycles and walking while preserving all aspects of the river including sight and noise barriers.

1) A multi-purpose cultural/nature interpretation facility (Snowflake).<sup>43</sup>

2) A recreation center facility recommended by a citizens group.<sup>44</sup>

- b. Privately held land adjacent to the above parcel holds the key to expansion of commercial business on the extension of North Street. Working with landowners and developers, provide the necessary planning and infrastructure to meet the primary objectives of economic development, continuing education and affordable housing while maintaining the natural integrity of the area as a whole. The area should be planned as a whole before any development to assure all desired objectives could be met.

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<sup>42</sup> The land is currently outside the hamlet and under APA moderate intensity use classification. The objectives can be met under APA regulations.

<sup>43</sup> The Snowflake Project of the Central Adirondacks, conceived by Miriam Kashiwa, envisions an ecological and cultural complex in the shape of a snowflake to include an ecological learning center where scientific research would be carried out, an Adirondack heritage institute and gallery, a lodge for Elderhostel programs and eventually a concert hall and theater.

<sup>44</sup> *The McCauley Mountain Ski Center Development Project*, by Littlepage Hannah, envisions developing McCauley Mountain into year-round facility with a full athletic park including a fitness center, indoor pool, running track, aerobics studio, indoor soccer area, ice rink courts. The existing chalet would be renovated. A Nordic Center is currently planned. This facility would serve the entire community and be a regional training and competition facility.

c. Provide places in the town for tourist based events.

- 1) Design and utilize the North Street site primarily for tourist-based events that exceed the capacity of other existing venues.
  - 2) Incorporate athletic fields into a recreation center plan so that the North Street site can be used primarily for tourist events.
  - 3) Any Parks & Recreation plan should incorporate the continued, compatible use of McCauley Mountain as a venue for large tourist/visitor events.
- Identify all of the Town program functions that fall under the categories of parks, recreation, and possibly tourism and consider reorganization into a single governmental department with a direct chain of command structure that allows for more planning, efficiency and cooperation among these functions.
  - Develop a long-range plan for a multiuse trail <sup>45</sup>system connecting Eagle Bay, Old Forge, Big Moose, McKeever etc. with circular trail connections where resources permit and merit. Provide access, parking and restroom facilities at appropriate locations.<sup>46</sup> The TOBIE Trail plan provides an example that can be expanded upon. Where cost effective, continue to expand and enhance all types of trails whether for hiking, skiing, boating, snowmobiling, bicycling, horseback riding or other types not mentioned. Sound environmental stewardship should be the overriding consideration in all planning and implementation.
  - Implement a Forest Management Plan for the Town Forest This begins with a Timber Management Plan.<sup>47</sup> The timber inventory step of this plan will produce revenue for the Town while protecting trail corridors, watersheds and

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<sup>45</sup> 'Trail' is used in the broadest sense. Thus, the waterways of Webb, especially the Moose River that offers a wide variety of canoeing/kayaking experiences, are integral to such a "system".

<sup>46</sup> McMahon (previously cited), and Jeff Olson (transportation consultant from Saratoga Springs, NY) stressed that walking is the #1 recreational activity in the United States. Webb is rich in the resources to support an extensive walking (and other) trails system. Mr. Olson, working with MPAC and several Town officials familiar with Webb Forest and State trail systems, created a list of action items to be addressed by a trails system plan. He outlined a strategy and proposed a plan to create a multi-use system over a 24 month period.

<sup>47</sup> See proposal for a Timber Management Plan, prepared by Dr. Steven Bick, Consulting Forester, 2000, in the appendix. Also, see ESF Study referred in footnote on p. 56.

other critical natural areas. Further, the process of doing the inventory will identify critical areas for future protection and provide other important information for further forest management planning.

- Establish a committee with the mission of assessing and recommending actions for the NYS Unit Management Plan (UMP) that involve State lands in and contiguous to the Town of Webb. (See Map) The information generated from the timber management plan for the Town Forest would also enable this committee to treat the Town Forest as an additional management unit to help coordinate actions between the Town and DEC/APA.
- There are several recreation resources in need of protection. Two are in need of protection in the immediate future.
  - a The North Branch of the Moose River between Rondaxe Lake and the hamlet of Old Forge is one of the most heavily used recreational canoe routes in the Adirondacks. Critical to the continued use of this route is the canoe carry at Indian Rapids adjacent to the Thendara Golf Course. The Town of Webb should ensure that this carry is protected by easement or by public acquisition. A plan should be developed for repair or replacement of the bridge should it become necessary.
  - b The fire tower on Bald (Rondaxe) Mountain is no longer manned and is in a state of disrepair. This tower represents considerable historic and interpretive value to the community. A restored tower could become a centerpiece of interpretive activity on this heavily used mountain. The town should recognize these values and communicate its interest in preserving the tower to responsible officials in the Department of Environmental Conservation. Minimally, the plan should ask that no state action regarding removal of the tower be undertaken without consultation with the town and with the public.

A more positive and specific recommendation is to designate this site as a state and national historic monument.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Some Adirondack and Catskill Fire Towers are now on the National Register of Historic Places. In October 2001, ten fire observation towers in the Adirondack and Catskill State Parks were officially placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This multiple property nomination, Fire Towers of the New York State Forest Preserve, was prepared by Wes Haynes for Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) in 1999. The nomination was funded through a grant to AARCH from the Preserve New York Grant Program. The towers in the Adirondacks include: Azure Mountain, Blue Mountain, Hadley Mountain, Kane Mountain, Mt. Arab, Poke-O-Moonshine Mountain, Snowy Mountain. In the winter of 2002, the Rochester Adirondack Mountain Club expressed an interest in restoring the Bald Mountain tower, and is looking for local sponsorship. See <http://www.aarch.org/> fire towers (March 2002).

## **6.8 ARCHITECTURE and HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

### **❖ Background:**

Historic architecture links us culturally to the past and gives people a sense of place. Destruction of trees, buildings, and scenic vistas creates a sense of loss that such change inevitably brings.<sup>49</sup> A community that works to identify and preserve historic sites and shares its rich, unique history has economic as well as cultural value.<sup>50</sup> The fragile balance between development and preservation takes planning and commitment.

The historic architecture in Webb, particularly along the Route 28 corridor, was built during the 1890's and early 1900's. Most of the dwellings can be classified as Victorian "vernacular" style, with steep gabled-roofs, built of locally milled wood-framed construction upon hand-dug stone foundations. Some structures, such as the "Homecoming" and the Goodsell Memorial House on Main Street in Old Forge, still retain their original decorative porches and shady front lawn setbacks. A few "commercial" style buildings were constructed of brick or wood with parapet roof facades, such as the former Berkowitz store and the Woodmaker, typical of commercial buildings found in larger cities in the Mohawk Valley.

The hamlets in Webb still retain the small-town Adirondack-style appeal that has drawn tourists to the region for over one hundred years. Adaptive reuse of historic structures by the private sector such as the Adirondack Bank, Gallery North, and The Express Building, to name but a few examples, have helped to preserve the historic character of community. However, the commercially zoned Route 28 corridor continues to undergo significant changes, particularly with new construction. Within the hamlet of Old Forge, for example, fewer than 20% of the properties along Main Street remain strictly residential. The majority of the historic buildings have been converted to residential businesses or demolished completely to make way for commercial buildings.<sup>51</sup>

Communities interested in historic preservation typically begin with an inventory of historic sites. "In order to have the greatest impact on planning decisions within a community, surveys of historic resources should have the official endorsement of the local government, although historical societies, professional groups, and interested individuals

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<sup>49</sup> Notes from Ed McMahon - Webb, Inlet, and Forestport Master Planning Meeting, May 5, 2001

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mary Hotaling of Historic Saranac, (2001)

<sup>51</sup> Commercial Property Survey in 1998 by TOW Historical Association.

can help compile the documentation."<sup>52</sup> Local funding for a professional survey could be supplemented by a variety of Federal, State and non-governmental programs.

❖ **Recommendations:**

- Conduct an inventory of historic sites.
- Involve the public in the earliest stages of survey planning to help identify valuable local resources.
- New construction and renovation projects should complement the existing architectural character of the hamlets identified in the survey.
- Development or redevelopment should strive to preserve the natural environment (green spaces, trees and scenic vistas) whenever possible.<sup>53</sup>
- Interpretation of existing codes should be consistent and fairly applied throughout the Town. Training for planning and zoning board members is an integral part of the process in community planning and helps establish priorities and set high standards for development.<sup>54</sup>
- Town government should lead the business community's efforts to rehabilitate dilapidated structures and otherwise improve the hamlets' main street storefronts. Grants and creative incentives should be pursued to support such efforts.
- Town government departments, in conjunction with groups such as the Historical Association, CAP-21, and the CAA Economic Development Committee, need to develop a long-range plan that includes additional projects that will promote our unique heritage and render greater economic and aesthetic appeal for the region.

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<sup>52</sup> "Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning", National Registration Bulletin #24, US Dept. of the Interior, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Communities 2000 Visions Database, p. 6, vision #295

<sup>54</sup> See recommendation on Management Policies.

## **6.9 YOUTH SERVICES**

- ❖ **Background:** Various public and private organizations in the town are involved with meeting the needs of area youth, among them, the Youth Advisory Board, the Polar Board Ski Club, the Town of Webb Schools, Central Adirondack Kiwanis Club, the Central Adirondack Partnership for the 21st Century and the Town of Webb. Examples of organized activities for young people include the sports programs operated by the Youth Advisory Board and Polar Bear Ski Club, the Town of Webb's Summer Youth Program and the year-old Youth Connections Mentoring program sponsored by the Central Adirondack Kiwanis in collaboration with the Herkimer County Prevention Council of Catholic Charities<sup>55</sup>, Hamilton County Community Services and the Town of Webb Schools. Groups seeking to identify and address issues and opportunities relating to young people include CAP 21 and Kiwanis. In October 2001, Kiwanis and Communities 2000 (predecessor to CAP 21) sponsored a Youth Forum to discuss current services and opportunities and to identify needed improvements. The report that resulted from this forum was provided to the Master Plan Advisory Committee. In addition, Communities 2000 conducted a brainstorming session with Town of Webb Schools freshmen in 1998, seeking to identify their concerns and suggestions.

There is a consensus that the youth programs are strong. The community is very supportive and generous in its concern for and involvement with youth. Webb has an excellent education system, youth sports programs, and opportunities for youth employment. As a matter of fact, the working youth of Webb are an essential asset to the economy of Webb.

There are, however, some characteristics of the community and economy that are causes of stress to young people (and their families), limit opportunity, or expression.

- The tourism-based economy, with seasonally demanding schedules, often requires many parents and youth to work long hours. Working youth find it difficult to share the recreational activities enjoyed by visitors.
- Long-term and professional employment opportunities are limited by the short tourism season.

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<sup>55</sup> The Mentoring Program is sponsored by Central Adirondack Kiwanis in collaboration with the Herkimer County Prevention Council of Catholic Charities, Hamilton County Community Services, and the Town of Webb School District. It was initiated in 2001 and according to a recent Adirondack Express article since "November the number of mentors has more than doubled to 16 . . . "

- Limited employment opportunities, modest pay scales, modest or no employee benefits, and tight housing availability hinder young adults from settling in the community.
- The lack of public transportation lends to a sense of isolation in the high school population. It is difficult for Town of Webb students to interact with non-district students when school is not in session. “Getting out of Town” is difficult for high school students.
- Young people are not given adequate opportunity to enjoy outdoor recreational experiences such as canoeing, hiking, climbing and camping.
- There is a need for an out-of-school gathering place for young people.
- The advice “listen to youth” is not followed consistently.
- There are unspoken or quietly spoken concerns about the use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol.

- ❖ **Recommendations:** Support, promote and build on existing programs and initiatives, including:
- The Town of Webb Youth Advisory Board: this group, as the town's agent, should be empowered to partner with organizations involved in youth activities to develop, maintain and enhance youth programs. Since these concerns are shared with Inlet and Forestport,, such efforts could be facilitated by Central Adirondack Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (CAP-21).
  - Encourage and support youth participation in planning processes.
  - Appoint a Town of Webb representative to the Herkimer County Integrated Planning Program. Herkimer County is engaged in development of an integrated plan for the provision of social services. The Town of Webb should have formal representation on this group, as County services are not now appropriately delivered to the Town.
  - Continue to cooperate with Catholic Charities of Herkimer County. Catholic Charities provides a number of services to Webb, Inlet and Forestport, including referrals and food programs. The Town should maintain this connection.
  - Support the Youth Connections Mentoring Program.
  - Cooperate with other groups and organizations concerned with the provision of social services to the community. These groups include the Central Adirondack Social Services Committee, a group that meets on a continuing basis to discuss need and opportunities; local churches; and service groups such as AARP and Kiwanis.
  - Strive to obtain additional input from the community, especially youth, regarding social services issues.
  - Clearly define issues and develop recommendations relating to youth:
    - Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
    - Childcare
    - Employment

## **6.10 SENIOR CITIZENS**

❖ **Background:** There are a number of excellent public and private programs or activities serving the senior population of Webb. These include:

- Senior housing at the Town of Webb Lakeside Terrace property in Old Forge
- Free skiing for seniors (over 62) at McCauley Mountain.
- A local chapter of AARP.
- Community Transportation Services (CTS).
- Organizations such as the VFW and American Legion<sup>56</sup>
- Various church groups<sup>57</sup>
- Over-55 Drivers' Classes

However, some concerns or needs have been raised regarding seniors<sup>58</sup>, but have not been specifically addressed by the Plan.

- With the increasing population of senior citizens, will there be an unmet demand for nursing home facilities within a satisfactory (e.g. 60-mile) radius of Webb?
- Are the housing facilities for seniors adequate for the next 5-10 years?<sup>59</sup>
- Are the medical services available to seniors adequate for the next 5-10 years?
- When will Webb have a Senior Center?

❖ **Recommendation:** The Town Board should immediately appoint and fund an advisory committee to study and propose a plan for addressing the above concerns relating to Senior citizens. The tasking of this effort should result in an addendum to this Comprehensive Plan. Since Senior Citizen issues are shared with Inlet and Forestport, it would be advisable to request CAP-21 to provide facilitation resources.

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<sup>56</sup> These organizations are not explicitly or solely for "seniors", they do predominate the membership.

<sup>57</sup> Likewise church groups, e.g. "Women's Guild" populations tend to be predominately seniors.

<sup>58</sup> The concerns were raised in an MPAC discussion with AARP and outlined in the Communities 2000 Visioning Report of 1999.

<sup>59</sup> A question asked regarding home affordability is are there seniors who are "house rich" but income poor and need to avail themselves of HUD guaranteed reverse mortgages?

## **6.11 PLAN MANAGEMENT AND REVIEW – NEXT STEPS**

- ❖ **Background:** New York State law requires that upon adoption of a Comprehensive Plan the Town Board must set a period for review and updating of the Plan. Experience has shown that implementation of a Plan along with a review of implementation progress, and any new trends or challenges facing the Town are best done through a collaborative public process. That process should involve Town officials, citizens, business owners, professionals, and others representing a wide range of interest in Webb.
  
- ❖ **Recommendations:**
  - Every three (3) years appoint a committee to do a formal review of the Plan and make recommendations regarding updates to the Plan. Designate the Chair of the Planning Board to oversee the Plan review and report to the Town Board.
  
  - Ask the Planning Board to make an annual report to the Town Board on progress implementing the Plan recommendations.