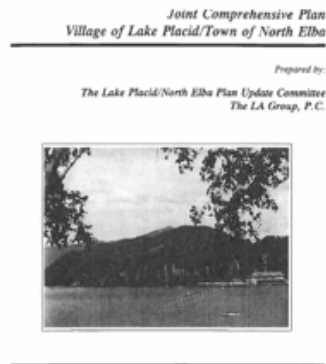


Introduction

Background

The 1980 Winter Olympics were a watershed moment for the Village of Lake Placid and the Town of North Elba. A new arena, ski jump, bobsled run, and speed skating oval were built, while the skiing facilities at Whiteface Mountain and Van Hoevenberg were expanded. A wave of new residents flooded the community and visitors flocked to see where the "Miracle on Ice" had just occurred. The community also faced an 11 million dollar debt and the question of how to continue using those new facilities.

In the face of these challenges a grass roots community organization began to ask the question, "What do we do now that the Olympics are over?" The group took the name S.T.E.P.S. (Solutions Through Elba-Placid Planning) and created a prototype of a Comprehensive Plan. The immediate challenge was how to maintain economic growth. The STEPPS report called for "shoulder season" activities such as conventions, concerts and special events to create a more solid economic base. It also recommended the expansion of recreational opportunities, preservation of open space, and coordination between the existing government structures and the newly created Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA).



The development of the region continued. Many residents were now concerned that the community was losing its unique character. At the same time the State of New York provided funding and incentives for communities to develop comprehensive plans. In 1995 the Town of North Elba and the Village of Lake Placid took advantage of the opportunity and appointed a joint steering committee to create the first Comprehensive Plan. They also provided funding for a consultant.

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan adopted many of the initiatives of the STEPPS document. The basic philosophy was not to limit the quantity of development but to insure quality development. It suggested changes in the Land Use Code that included architectural review, storm water management, visual overlays, and sign regulations as a way of working toward that goal. It also called for the consolidation of the Village and Town Review Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeal. A new Land Use Code that incorporated these suggestions was adopted in 2000.

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The 2000 Land Use Code also created a Joint Planning Commission charged with monitoring community development. Eventually that Commission decided to revise the 2000 Code. The goal was to create a document that integrated the old Village and Town regulations a bit more, recognized that the municipal boundaries were blurred, and also addressed a few new issues such as the proliferation of larger homes, lack of income-based housing, and development encroaching upon ridgelines.

The Joint Code Revision Process started in 2006 and the new, revised Land Use Code was adopted in January of 2011. That code eliminated the Joint Planning Commission and created a new Community Development Board. The mission of the Community Development Board is to coordinate and spearhead community development initiatives and also serve as a resource for the Town and Village Boards. In 2011 the Community Development Board decided that their first action would be to write a new Comprehensive Plan.

The existing Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1997. Since then, many of the proposals from that document have been put into practice. One focus of the Revision Project was to identify and re-examine the goals from the 1997 Plan that remain unrealized. These would include parking and vehicular circulation issues along with a chronic shortage of worker housing and a diversification of economic activities available in the area.

The inventory and statistics associated with the 1997 Plan are also somewhat outdated and may not reflect new challenges facing the community. These involve the creation of a new conference center, marketing of the region, the escalation of land values, and recognition of the emerging role of historic and ecological preservation in sustainable economic development. Other new challenges include the expansion of broadband for commercial use, demographic changes, and a rise of vacation rentals.



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Community Planning Process

The North Elba - Lake Placid Community Development Board, consisting of 10 volunteers appointed jointly by the Village of Lake Placid and the Town of North Elba, initiated a project designed to renew and revise the existing Joint Comprehensive Plan for the Town of North Elba and Lake Placid Village. The initiative was completed in 3 phases spread over approximately 30 months.

During the first phase of the initiative the Community Development Board created volunteer committees that examined development issues, met with key informants, and drafted subcommittee reports. A Public Forum was held in September of 2011 to create an inventory of issues facing the community and to recruit volunteers. This was followed up by an Orientation meeting in February of 2012 that organized those volunteers into 7 subcommittees. Each subcommittee was charged with developing a report on a different area. All reports included a summary of existing conditions along with goals and implementation measures designed to incorporate the vision of the community that emerged from the Public Forum. Approximately 70 individuals were involved either as working members of a subcommittee or as key informants. The Community Development Board acted as a steering committee. The subcommittee reports were completed in the fall of 2012.

The Community Development Board along with the Town of North Elba and the Village of Lake Placid also contracted with Elan Planning, Design & Landscape Architecture, PLLC, of Saratoga Springs. Some funding was supplied through New York State Department of State, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund. Elan was charged with collating and editing the seven subcommittee reports to create one document. They reviewed the subcommittee reports, requested additional information, and developed a rough draft of the Comprehensive Plan. This was presented to the Community Development Board in the spring of 2013.

The Cornell School of Public Affairs was also involved. Three graduate students were assigned to work with the Community Development Board as part of their master's degree program. The students teleconferenced with the Development Board and focused their work upon areas of mutual concern and interest. The students investigated the issues of invasive species, rental permit systems for vacation rentals, and transportation. They also agreed to develop GIS map files that would be useful in future planning initiatives. In order to accomplish these tasks the students visited Lake Placid in January of 2013 and met with key informants. They presented their report to a Public Forum in May of 2013.

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In 2014 a second group of students worked with the Community Development Board on creating a GIS geo-database. This database included North Elba and APA Zoning Maps along with environmental features such as watersheds, steep slopes, wetlands, vegetation and soil composition. These maps will be posted on the North Elba Building Office website for public access.

Information from these Cornell initiatives will be used in the implementation phase of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Community Development Board reviewed the draft created by Elan Planning, did some further editing, and produced the Public Review Draft of the new Comprehensive Plan. That draft was the focus of a series of Public Informational Hearing held in September of 2013. Input from those hearings was utilized to create a Comment Draft. The Comment Draft was submitted to the Essex County Community Development Office, the Adirondack Park Agency, and the New York State Department of State. The Community development Board reviewed those suggestions and created the final Comprehensive Plan Update Draft.

That Plan Update was presented to the Town and Village Boards in February, 2014 who then scheduled a joint Public Hearing. As a result of those hearings the Boards passed a negative declaration of SEQR and adopted the new Comprehensive Plan on .

The Community Development Board will continue to exist. They will become the lead agency for implementing the Plan and also be responsible for proposing amendments as needed.

Resources Referenced

To gain a better understanding of the existing conditions in Lake Placid/North Elba, the project team conducted an inventory and analysis of the existing land use tools, local and regional planning studies. This analysis, combined with input from the Steering Committee, helped to shape the Lake Placid/North Elba Comprehensive Plan in a manner that meets the community's long-term vision and goals.

Existing Resources

As part of the planning process, the following local and regional planning studies were reviewed. All of these reports are available on the Development Board website or in other locations.

- 21st Century Local Government Report
- Aging in Place Action Plan (Adirondack Mercy Care -2010)
- AIG Report: Part 1 and Part 2 (GIS Study- 200
- Common Ground Alliance- ADK Workshop Report (2011)
- High Peaks Revitalization Strategy (2010)

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- Lake Placid/North Elba Community Development Board Memorandum from Cornell Student Consulting Group (2013)
- LGEC Report of the New York State Commissioner
- Local Government Efficiency and Competitions
- North Elba Statistics
- Solutions to Main Street: Conceptual Study
- Traffic Data
- Parking Garage Data
- Parking Garage Image
- STEPPS: Lake Placid/North Elba Planning Project
- Village of Lake Placid/Town of North Elba Shared Services Study

Comprehensive Plan Contents

The next section of the Plan includes chapters prepared by the following volunteer sub-committees:

1. *Government Structure and Function*
2. *Economy and Tourism*
3. *Community Facilities and Services*
4. *Mobility*
5. *Environment and Natural Resources*
6. *Housing*
7. *Land Use and Design*

Each subcommittee provided relevant background information regarding their topic area, a vision statement, and the goals, objectives and implementation measures that the Village and Town should undertake to achieve that vision.