

6.2 Incorporate Smart Growth Principles into Land-use Policies and Regulations

Relevant Policies:

Village of Saranac Lake Development Code: <https://ecode360.com/31625703>

Village of Saranac Lake Local Waterfront Revitalization Program:

[https://saranaclakeny.gov/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/Local Waterfront Revitalization Program2_498.pdf](https://saranaclakeny.gov/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/Local_Waterfront_Revitalization_Program2_498.pdf)

Summary Statement:

The Village of Saranac Lake adopted a new Development Code in 2016. The revised Development Code incorporates smart growth principles into the land use policies in a variety of ways. The Village adopted a Local waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 2002. The LWRP also incorporates smart growth principles. All proposed development projects are required to be reviewed for consistency with the LWRP. All eight of the smart growth principles identified for this CSC action are embodied in either the Development Code and/or the LWRP.

1. *Mix land uses*

The Village explored the feasibility of a form-based code, but due mainly to budget constraints settled on a hybrid code. As a result, a wide variety of land uses are permitted in most districts as long as they conform with dimensional, design and supplemental standards which are intended to regulate the form of development with less emphasis on use. There are no districts that are limited to a single type of land use. The Village did not have use-based zoning for many decades. The 1988 zoning code allowed a mix of uses in most districts. The 2016 code expanded the allowed uses in all districts. See [Use Table](#)¹

2. *Promote compact building design and cluster development*

The promotion of compact development is evidenced in the [Dimensional Standards](#)². There is a two-story minimum height requirement and no maximum height limit for the central business district (District E). There is a build-to line/no setbacks in established commercial districts. There are no minimum parking requirements anywhere in the village, including business districts. The minimum lot size is established during site plan review for established commercial districts, some traditional residential neighborhoods and districts with undeveloped lands. Other traditional neighborhoods have minimum lot size requirements as low as 5,000. Mixed-use buildings only require an Administrative Permit in all districts where commercial uses are dominant (see [Use Table](#)¹).

[§106-45](#)³ of the Development Code permits the approval of a cluster development in order to promote the most appropriate use of land and to preserve open space. [§106-46](#)⁴ of the Code allows the Development Board to use incentive zoning to accomplish land use goals that promote smart growth principles (e.g. clustering, preserve open space) in exchange for density and lot coverage bonuses.

3. *Diversity of housing opportunities and choices*

¹ <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106a%20Use%20Table.pdf>

² <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106b%20Schedule%202.pdf>

³ <https://ecode360.com/31626442#31626442>

⁴ <https://ecode360.com/31626448?highlight=incentive%20zoning,incentives,zoning,zoning%20incentives&searchId=7991390828026962>

The Development Code encourages a diversity of housing options. The [Use Table¹](#) includes a variety of housing types which are permitted in varying combinations across all districts:

Two-family dwellings are listed as a separate use and have their own set of design standards. Two-family dwellings are allowed in most districts and in all but three of those districts it requires Administrative Permit (not site plan review) so it is easier to do. Multi-family dwellings are allowed in a significant number of neighborhoods. Secondary dwelling units (accessory dwelling units) are allowed by right in all residential areas, subject to design standards. The [Use Table¹](#) states: *“For All Districts and Sub-Districts: Allowed accessory uses are those uses that are customarily subordinate and incidental to allowed principal uses.”*

4. Walkable neighborhoods

Creating a walkable community has been a key planning goal for the Village of Saranac Lake for many years and the Development Code was created with that goal at the forefront. In fact, Saranac Lake is a designated [Walk](#)

Village of Saranac Lake - Unified Development Code:																																				
Schedule #1 - Allowed Uses																																				
[Amended 7-9-2018 by L.L. No. 2-2018]																																				
Land Use Type:	Districts:																																			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	
	District A-1	District A-2	District A-3	District A-4	District A-5	District B-1	District B-2	District B-3	District B-4	District C-1	District C-2	District C-3	District C-4	District D-1	District D-2	District D-3	District E-1	District E-2	District E-3	District F-1	District F-2	District G	District H-1	District H-2	District H-3	District I	District J-1	District J-2	District K-1	District K-2	District K-3	District K-4	District L-1	District L-2	District L-3	
Residential																																				
1 Community House																																				
2 Dwelling, Manufactured Home	A																																			
3 Dwelling, Multi-Family					SP	SP	SP																													
4 Dwelling, Single Family	P	P	P	P	P																															
5 Dwelling, Townhouse	SP	SP	SP		SP	SP	SP																													
6 Dwelling, Two Family	A	A	A		A	A	A	A																												
7 Group Home	P	P	P	P	P																															
8 Manufactured Home Community	SP																																			
9 Rooming House					SP	SP																														

[Friendly Community⁵](#) at the Silver Level. The emphasis on walkability in the Development Code helped the village earn this distinction. This is best reflected in the Design Standards, specifically the [Architectural design standards⁶](#). One of the design objectives for the architectural design standards is: *“Encourage the construction of buildings that promote walkability and reinforce the Village’s historical pedestrian-scaled design and layout.”* There are design standards that address building scale, variation of facades, massing that restricts box-like structures, and fenestration – all for the purpose of promoting a walkable built environment. There are additional design standards that apply to the Downtown District E. These include standards for massing and proportions, building configuration, minimum glass requirements for storefronts, and use of architectural features. In addition, residential use is prohibited on first floors in District E.

There are no minimum parking requirements within the village, including commercial districts. However, [§ 106-81⁷](#) addresses parking and circulation standards. The design objectives for this set of standards includes: *“Emphasize the importance of site accessibility from a variety of modes of transportation wherever appropriate, including pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and any current or potential future transit service.”* [§ 106-81](#) also includes standards for bicycle and pedestrian facility design to ensure that all development projects consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. There are also standards for design of parking spaces, which includes requirements for landscaping and screening that promotes walkability.

⁵ <http://walkfriendly.org/communities/saranac-lake-ny/>
⁶ <https://ecode360.com/31626881>
⁷ <https://ecode360.com/31626764>

[§106-62](#)⁸ Criteria for site plan review requires the Development Board to ensure: “*The adequacy and arrangement of access and circulation, including but not limited to road widths, grade, alignment, sight distance, elements of "complete streets," location, surfaces, traffic control, walkways and pedestrian/bicycle trail connectivity, and the extent that these elements meet the goals and objectives of the Village's 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Master Plan;*”

[§106-51](#)⁹ Standards for PUDD approval also require designs to incorporate to the extent possible pedestrian, bicycle and trail improvements as described in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Master Plan.

One of the amenities listed as a benefit for which incentive zoning can be provided is the provision of trails, pathways and sidewalks, especially those that provide connections to existing trails and bicycle and pedestrian networks.

5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place

The Development Code exemplifies this principle in several ways as demonstrated in the [Design Standards](#)¹⁰. The objective of the architectural design standards is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Downtown and other historic neighborhoods and establish community character and improve the appearance of commercial areas. The architectural design standards address appropriate scale, massing, proportion, fenestration, materials and color to facilitate the construction of appropriate new buildings that fit with the character of the community. In addition, since there are three National Register historic districts in the village the code includes historic preservation standards. The objectives for these standards are to a) set forth guidelines for the Village's historic districts that are intended to preserve and enhance the features among existing buildings and structures; and b) encourage development of new buildings or restoration of existing buildings that complements rather than overwhelms traditional areas in the Village. There are also provisions in the code that are intended to expand choices in housing and transportation as discussed above.

The access, parking and circulation standards emphasize the importance of site accessibility from a variety of transportation modes, including walking and bicycling. The landscape standards ensure that new development and redevelopment projects in the Village respond to the existing natural landscape and preserve woodlands and healthy areas of vegetation. The lighting standards protect night skies, which is a unique characteristic of Adirondack communities, and emphasize pedestrian-scale lighting.

The [Zoning Map](#)¹¹ further exemplifies how the Village Development Code is guided by a vision of how and where to grow so that the community is able to identify and utilize opportunities to make new development conform to local standards of distinctiveness and beauty. Rather than taking a traditional zoning approach based on uses, the district boundaries are based on neighborhood characteristics and most districts are also divided into subdistricts. Each subdistrict has specific [Dimensional Standards](#)¹² and a unique set of [Allowable Uses](#)¹³ based on the neighborhood characteristics and goals for the neighborhood.

The Local Waterfront Revitalization (LWRP) includes General Policy 1: “*foster a pattern of development in the Saranac Lake coastal area that enhances community character, preserves open space, makes efficient use of*

⁸ <https://ecode360.com/31626699>

⁹ <https://ecode360.com/31626495>

¹⁰ <https://ecode360.com/31626760>

¹¹ <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106c%20Zoning%20Map.pdf>

¹² <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106b%20Schedule%202.pdf>

¹³ <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106a%20Use%20Table.pdf>

infrastructure, makes beneficial use of a coastal location, and minimizes adverse effects of development” (Section III-2). The LWRP contains a series of sub-policies and policy standards relating to Policy 1. Those items include the concentration of development around downtown waterfronts, reuse of existing historic buildings, links to regional trails, enhancement and expansion of water-dependent uses, preservation of natural areas, protection of parkland, and protection of the stable residential areas surrounding the downtown waterfront areas. All of these standards help to maintain the unique character of an urban village surrounded by mountains and waterbodies.

6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and important natural areas

This principle is incorporated into the Development Code in several ways. The subdivision regulations have open space requirements. The Development Board is empowered to approve cluster development for the purpose of preserving the natural and scenic qualities of open lands. The Development Board is also empowered to provide a system of incentive zoning in order to preserve open space and/or preserve access to lakes, rivers, streams and ponds; scenic view sheds; forests; geologic features; environmentally sensitive areas; significant plant and animal habitats; and important ecological resources.

[§106-82](#)¹⁰ Landscape standards include design objectives to a) ensure that new development and redevelopment projects in the Village respond to the existing natural landscape and preserve woodlands and healthy areas of vegetation; and b) retain and reinforce scenic quality and aesthetic values important to the Village. [§106-84](#)¹⁰ Architectural design standards includes a design objective to encourage high-quality architecture that complements adjacent and nearby structures, improves the appearance of the neighborhood, and does not intrude upon or overwhelm the natural environment.

There are several neighborhoods on Mount Pisgah, but the area within district H-2 includes some significant slopes. Therefore [§106-104.1](#)¹⁴ of the Supplemental Standards outlines steep slope standards for District H-2 for the stated purpose of conserving existing woodlands for air quality, water quality and ecological benefits. An additional purpose is to permit land uses by right that are compatible with protection of steep slope areas, and encourage the use of steep slope areas for open space and conservation uses.

Saranac Lake is surrounded by waterbodies, which prompted the adoption of a [Local Waterfront Revitalization Program](#)¹⁵ (LWRP) in 2002. The purpose of a LWRP is to promote economic development and revitalization of the Village’s waterfront area while assuring the protection and beneficial use of waterfront resources. One of the goals of the LWRP is to protect and enhance natural resources. The waterfront revitalization policies and their associated standards are used to guide appropriate development and actions for the Village of Saranac Lake. [Article XV](#)¹⁶ of the Development Code requires that the Development Board evaluates all proposed projects for consistency with the goals and objectives of the LWRP, which are further explained and described in Section III of the LWRP. All actions to be reviewed for consistency shall be consistent with the goals and objectives of the LWRP, including the following:

- Protect the natural working landscape of Saranac Lake.
- Protect and restore ecological resources including significant fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, and rare ecological communities.

¹⁴ <https://ecode360.com/33542034>

¹⁵ https://saranaclakeny.gov/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/Local_Waterfront_Revitalization_Program2_498.pdf

¹⁶ <https://ecode360.com/31627379>

- Protect and improve water resources.
- Minimize loss of life, structures, and natural resources from flooding and erosion.
- Enhance visual quality and protect outstanding scenic resources throughout the community.
- Conserve and protect agricultural lands.
- Protect freshwater wetlands.

The criteria for site plan review, special use permits, subdivision regulation, and the PUDD application process all require that the Development Board ensure the proposed project conforms with the goals and objectives of the LWRP, a document that truly embodies this Smart Growth Principle.

7. *Strengthen and direct development toward existing community centers, hamlets or urban areas*

All growth is directed within the village boundary because Saranac Lake is within the Adirondack Park. The village boundary is also the hamlet boundary, so all development within the village is exempt from regulation by the Adirondack Park Agency. The Village has a local law requiring all developments that request municipal water and sewer services to either be located within the village boundary or be eligible for annexation into the village. This helps to direct development toward the hamlet.

8. *Promote density that facilitates non-car transportation options*

Increasing density was an intended outcome of the 2016 revision of the Development Code. Some of the strategies for achieving that goal are mentioned above, including:

- [Dimensional Standards](#)¹⁷ for District E that require a 2-story minimum for all buildings and no maximum height
- Listing of Two-family Dwellings as a separate use in the [Use Table](#) and permitting that use in almost all districts with only an Administrative Permit required (no site plan review)
- Expanding the number of districts that permit Multi-family Dwellings
- Allow Accessory Dwellings/Secondary Dwellings in all districts
- Incentive zoning that permits the Development Board to grant residential density bonus or increases in lot coverage
- Subdivision regulations that allow for a density bonus in exchange for land identified in the open space, recreation and pathways plan as valuable open space

¹⁷ <https://ecode360.com/attachment/SA0109/SA0109-106b%20Schedule%202.pdf>