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Summary of issues, problems, policy options and recommendations for future planning: Town of Lake Placid, Florida

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SUMMARY OF ISSUES, PROBLEMS, POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING

TOWN OF LAKE PLACID, FLORIDA



**FLORIDA CENTER
for Urban Design & Research**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUES,
PROBLEMS, POLICY OPTIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR FUTURE PLANNING**

PREPARED FOR:

THE TOWN OF LAKE PLACID, FLORIDA

PREPARED BY:

**FLORIDA CENTER FOR URBAN DESIGN & RESEARCH
TAMPA, FLORIDA**

OCTOBER, 1988

TOWN OF LAKE PLACID, FLORIDA

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INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

This document satisfies the requirements for Task 2.0 and Task 3.0 in the scope of Services of the contract between the FLORIDA CENTER for Urban Design & Research and the Town of Lake Placid.

This document defines a framework of Issues and preliminary policy options and recommendations which are based on the findings of Task 1.0 of the contract in the context of the FLORIDA CENTER's professional staff's overall view and experience in defining growth management, community development, urban quality, and public sector fiscal concerns.

This document provides a basis for two important upcoming tasks:

1. Completion of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report, as well as other upcoming comprehensive Plan update requirements.
2. The consideration by Town staff and elected officials of the important aspects of growth management, community development, and public sector fiscal posture that must be addressed in the future if Lake Placid is to remain a pleasant and attractive place to live.

This document is organized into eight (8) sections. Sections A and B provide an introduction and some key findings regarding the pattern of urbanization in the Town which are germane to the discussion of issues and policy options relative to the Town's future.

Housing is discussed in Section C; Community Facilities and Services are discussed in Section D. Section E covers Public Infrastructure, including roads and utilities. Section F addresses environmental concerns related to both the natural environment as well as issues of urban and visual quality in the Town. Fiscal and governmental matters are covered in Section G.

Section H provides a summary of key points with emphasis on the benefits of positive actions and policies for the Town.

In an analysis such as is presented in this summary report, key issues often cut across the several topics covered in Sections C through G. As a result the discussion presented in one section will often reverberate in others. This is especially true of the fiscal implications of certain policies and programs.

OVERVIEW OF THE LAKE PLACID CONTEXT

B. OVERVIEW OF THE LAKE PLACID CONTEXT

There are several key characteristics which may or may not be unique to the Town of Lake Placid; but are none-the-less significant with respect to its future.

Lake Placid is a small town in both population and physical area. The economic base within the corporate limits is also small. As a result, the Town government has limited fiscal resources at its disposal for 'investment' in capital facilities and operating budgets on a yearly basis. Tax rates are low, a fact which in part makes Lake Placid an attractive place in which to live. It is likely that the citizenry, and therefore the elected officials, would opt to keep tax rates stable as a municipal priority, which is perfectly understandable. As a consequence, future government expenditures for facilities and services would have to be kept 'in-line' with this implied policy. Major new expenditures solely from the Town's budget are not likely, or appropriate in this context. Additionally, the cost of additional or expanded government facilities and services will have to be borne by any new development which occurs within the corporate limits and by assistance from larger units of government such as the County and State.

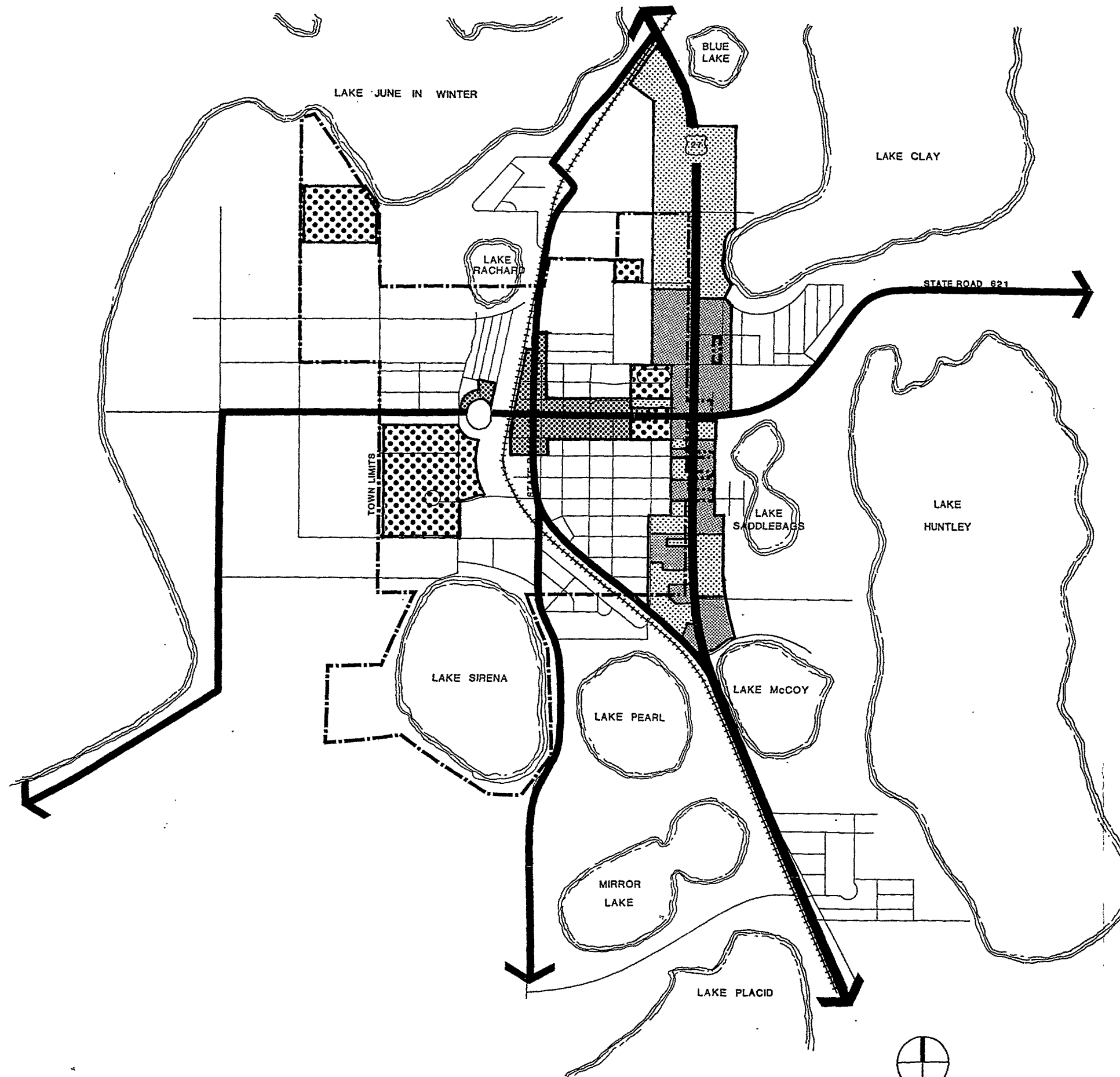
A second key aspect is that the Town of Lake Placid is the urban 'focus' of the larger regional area comprising roughly the southern 50% of Highlands County. Residents in the unincorporated area look to Lake Placid for certain municipal services, and for a substantial amount of commercial services such as those located along U.S. Highway 27.

A third, related point is that the south half of Highlands County continues to grow at a brisk pace. This growth, which is almost entirely residential, will continue to place increasing demands for community facilities, both municipal and private. The result of this is likely to be that Lake Placid will face pressures for expanding certain municipal services, and will continue to be the context for ongoing expansion of commercial services provided by private sector retailers along US 27.




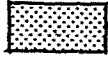
This prospect is likely to be a two-edged sword for the Town government: some additional private development (especially of commercial facilities) will occur, to benefit the tax base and increase ad valorem tax revenues; but the collateral growth in residential uses will likely put some pressure on the Town to make additional expenditures for expanded municipal services, facilities, and perhaps even programs to meet needs. It should be noted here that Highlands County will likely bear the largest burden for many of these additional services, but the point is that a relatively significant amount of this burden may fall to the Town of Lake Placid and its taxpayers based on established precedents.

A final point of significance is that Lake Placid contains a significant amount of land area within its current corporate limits that is either undeveloped (e.g. agricultural land) or partially developed (e.g. platted but not fully developed subdivisions). This means that there is an existing 'capacity' to accommodate new housing development as well as commercial development within the corporate limits. This can have significant implications for urban services, urban quality, and fiscal concerns of the Town.

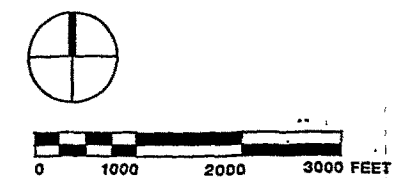
The following two maps graphically represents the essential characteristics of the urban pattern and structure of Lake Placid. Of particular importance is the US 27 corridor and the vacant developable commercial property within it; the Interlake Drive/Main Street commercial district; and the amount (and location) of Town limits for residential use.

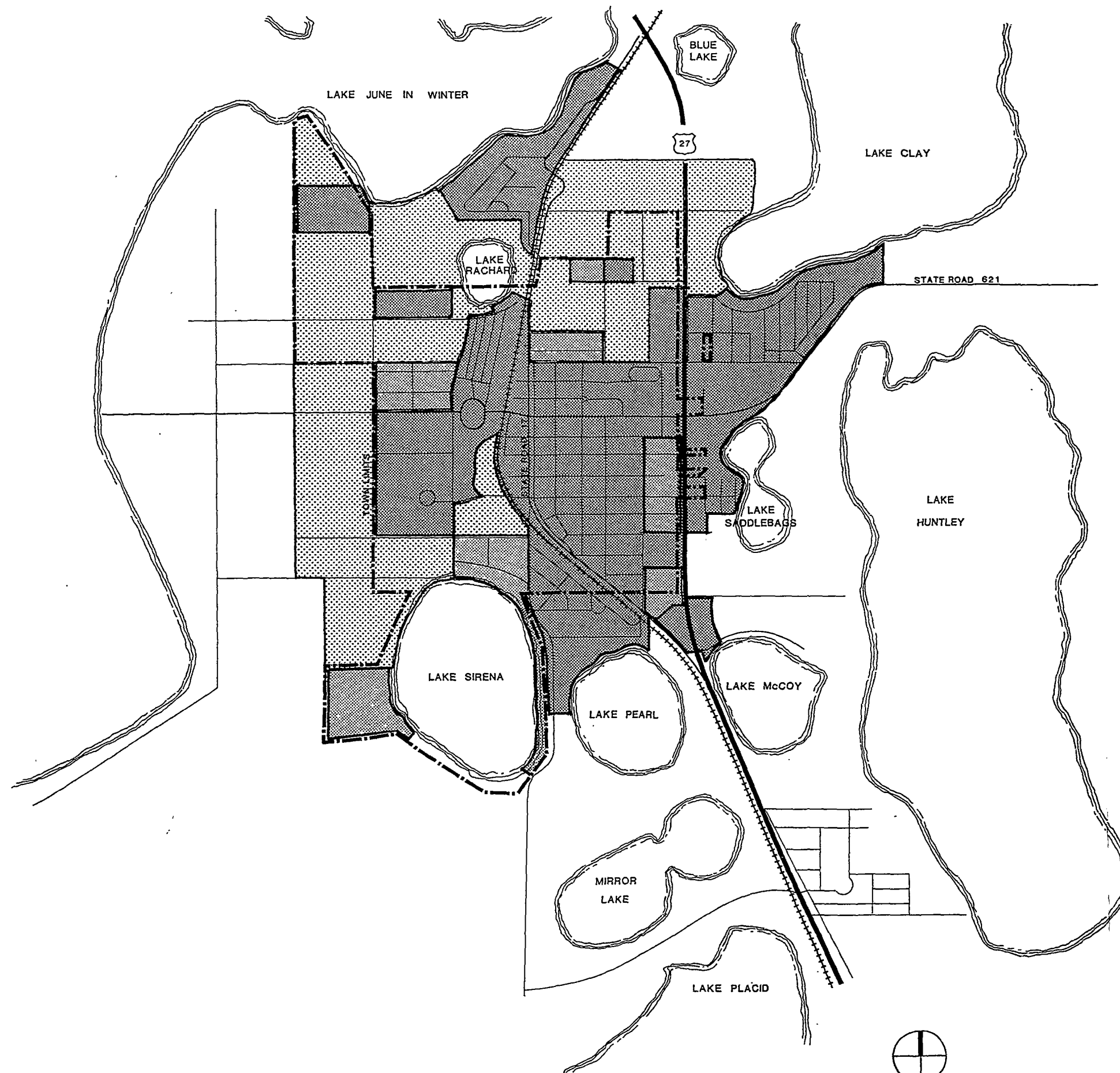


LEGEND



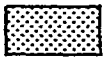
-  PUBLIC FACILITIES
-  TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
-  EXISTING REGIONAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
-  UNDEVELOPED LAND WITHIN THE REGIONAL COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR (US 27)

LAKE PLACID: URBAN STRUCTURE

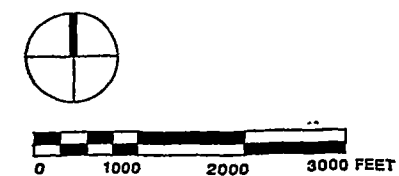




LEGEND

-  URBANIZED AREAS
-  PARTIALLY DEVELOPED AREAS
-  UNDEVELOPED AREAS

LAKE PLACID: PATTERN OF URBANIZATION



HOUSING

C. HOUSING

Section C encompasses a broad range of concerns relative to new as well as existing housing stock in the Town.

At present it appears that the housing market is stable, especially with respect to demand and supply. As documented in the Data Base Update, new construction (as measured by new building permits issued) has ranged from 10 to 20 units per year. By field observation, it is likely that most of this in the last three years has been for new townhouse and similar unit types for moderate income households, on a rental basis. Only a few typical single family detached (SFD) units have been built.

In terms of existing housing, field surveys indicate that a vast majority of the units and structures are in standard condition. Of the total units in the Town, 54 units (or 11%) evidence minor problems; 21 units (4%) evidence some significant deterioration; and 6 units (or 1%) are dilapidated; 399 units or 84% of the total are in sound (or better) condition. As a result, the overall housing stock is in very good shape, with only modest efforts needed to improve those units which evidence deterioration. Of the total, only 6 units are judged to be dilapidated beyond the point of cost-effective rehabilitation.

*from
Field
surveys?*

The conclusion from these findings is that there are not significant issues relative to the existing housing stock. The following is recommended however with respect to the small number of deteriorated and dilapidated visits. *structures.*

- o Owners of the 6 dilapidated units should be encouraged to raze the units, and replace them with new units on the same site, if appropriate. The Town may consider a program of building code enforcement as leverage with these owners.
- o Owners of the 75 units which evidence some deterioration should be encouraged to undertake home/property improvement efforts. Local lending institutions should be strongly encouraged to give favorable consideration to home improvement loans for such owners who can qualify.

↳ or a "neighborhood watch" type program?

With respect to new housing development, it is likely that the conventional marketplace can continue to meet needs for new housing construction. Due to the budget limitations outlined previously, it is unlikely that the Town government can provide tangible (e.g. fiscal) incentives to developers interested in providing affordable (or assisted) housing to low and moderate income households. However, the Town can (and should) play a passive but potentially significant role in the provision of such housing by taking action to facilitate and encourage development on existing underdeveloped parcels within the corporate limits.

↑

is there evidence of a few ad hoc such housing?

Additionally, it could take a more active role^w encouraging both conventional and affordable housing by giving priority to extending water and sanitary sewer services to undeveloped parcels within the corporate limits, thus making such parcels more attractive to developers. As a policy, the Town government should consider whether it is appropriate to extend utilities services in advance of any future development proposals for vacant land; or whether such extensions can be programmed (and constructed) once a specific development proposal for any vacant land is well along in the approval and permitting process.

presumably
inside the
existing city
limits?

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

D. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

"Community Facilities" includes those provided by the public sector (such as protective services, schools, parks and recreation, solid waste disposal, and the like) as well as privately provided facilities such as retail, personal and professional services. In certain cases, most notably medical services, there is a close interdependent relationship between private and public sectors in the provision of facilities and services.

1. Commercial Services

These include retail, personal and professional services provided in the marketplace by the private sector. In general, the marketplace directs and controls the types and extent of such services through 'demand.' Those who can adequately meet service demands will survive and thrive. Seldom are such services over-provided because the excess will not be supported by patronage and will disappear. conversely, under-provision of such services is also rare when demand is adequate to support them, since keen-eyed entrepreneurs and professionals will identify the potential 'market' and, if the market is sufficient, move to put in place retail or service outlets in response.

From a planning and development standpoint, it is important that there be an adequate amount of land in appropriate locations for new development (and rehabilitation/reuse of existing structures) to occur which will house retail and service providers needed to meet anticipated future growth and the consequent demands.

? *more accessible
? or
suburban style
demand, etc*
In the Town of Lake Placid, commercial services are making a natural shift away from Interlake Drive and Main Street toward vacant, developable parcels along US 27. This process is understandable and predictable given the amount of growth (both recent and anticipated for the future) in new housing in unincorporated areas in proximity to the Lake Placid/US 27 corridor. This process will continue, and US 27 will continue to see new growth in shopping centers and the like since there is a significant amount of vacant but easily developable land in the US 27 corridor.

While development in the US 27 corridor is dominated by retail uses, it is certainly likely that other services, especially professional, can continue to exist along Interlake Drive and Main Street. As the traditional 'Town Streets' of Lake Placid, there is a historical precedent for this continuation, and a positive rationale for it. It is important that Interlake and Main not be abandoned as Lake Placid's traditional mercantile focus. This cannot be

achieved unless the two streets remain competitive with US 27 as locations for such activities.

The issue of keeping competitive is a difficult one. The Town cannot support a major rehabilitation effort with substantial financial participation from the government. The only real option seems to be strong lobbying directed toward key entrepreneurs and professionals to help maintain and increase private investment in existing and new facilities. This could be coupled with the provision of water and sewer services to the Interlake Drive corridor to encourage investment/reinvestment; and with a modest cost program of environmental improvements such as street furniture and landscaping to enhance appearances and create a more unique, attractive quality in the area. Put simply, business owners and land owners will be more likely to make beneficial investments when they feel that the Town and citizenry think it is important, and demonstrate support and commitment in a tangible way. This issue is discussed further in Section F.

not already there!

2. Public Facilities

While there is a significant array of publicly provided community facilities and associated services, especially those related to social programs, provided by other units of government such as Highlands County and the State, the following discussion is focused on those specific items which are broad in scope or present important issues to the Town.

Health Care. As mentioned previously, public facilities and services such as hospitals and clinics are closely interrelated with collateral services provided by the private sector (e.g. professional services) such as physicians, dentists, optometrists, et al.

The portion of services privately provided are controlled by the marketplace as outlined in Part 1 of this Section.

In general, ~~of~~ those publicly provided facilities and services originate ~~of~~ the county, regional and state levels, and not with the Town of Lake Placid. As a result, the Town is part of a larger county-wide service context which it does not directly ~~affect~~ affect for the most part. By all accounts, the citizens of Lake Placid are currently well served by health facilities provided by other governmental units. Any expansion of such services will likely be accommodated in other urban areas of Highlands County, most notably, Sebring. Any major health care issues related to growth must be identified as part of the ongoing planning process of the County, regional and state levels.

distance? emergency service?

Educational Facilities. The Town of Lake Placid is the home of public school facilities at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels that serve the educational needs in the southern half of the county. Since schools are provided by a county-wide district, the situation for educational facilities and services is similar to that for health care.

Growth in the south county area is reflected in the recently completed high school and the new junior high school which is under construction. These facilities will likely meet future needs of the levels for the south county, including Lake Placid. Similarly, the elementary school should meet anticipated needs in the near future, but may require significant expansion (or even replacement) at some point. The citizens of Lake Placid are fortunate that these schools are located within the Town limits since access is convenient, and the public (school district) investment in new facilities is positive for the Town in both economic and visual terms.

Parks and Recreation Facilities. As documented in the Data Base Update, the Town is currently well-served in terms of park acreage and major recreation facilities, given its small size. This is especially true in light of the fact that two of these park facilities provide public access to the area's major water recreation resource: Lake-June-in-Winter.

In this context, three key points arise however. First, it is important that recreational facilities at the schools remain available for use during certain non-school hours. Second, it is important that existing park facilities be expanded as need is identified. Third, there is a need for at least one (and perhaps two) small neighborhood parks in the large extensive residential area south of Interlake Drive. This need has been identified in previous plans, but has not been addressed as yet.

Protective Services. Municipally provided protective services, consisting of police and fire services, are an issue of significance in terms of future growth in areas outside the Town's corporate limits.

By intergovernmental agreement, Lake Placid provides police protection to residents outside its boundaries. Similarly, fire protection is also provided when needed by the local volunteer fire department through mutual aid agreements with other departments serving outlying areas. At present it appears that citizens both inside and outside the town limits are well-served, but this situation may not continue in the face of new growth. Clearly, the volunteer fire department may be required to increase both capital and operating expenditures for additional facilities, more personal, and support service staff should service needs

increase. This is likely not an issue in the next few years, but may become important later. Again, services and facilities growth must be evaluated in terms of the towns limited tax base and ad valorem revenues.

Solid Waste Disposal. As documented in the Data Bases Update, solid waste disposal services are jointly provided by the Town and Highlands County. In general, the level of service and facilities provided by Lake Placid, which include collection and one of the two transfer sites, seems adequate. It is likely that current services will be adequate to meet anticipated future needs resulting from any new growth in housing or non-residential uses within the town limits.

At the large scale, the portion of services provided by Highlands County will be expanded based on future demand increases in unincorporated areas of the County as well as its various municipalities. Service increases that may be provided on a county-wide basis should be more than adequate to meet future needs generated by growth within Lake Placid.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

E. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

'Infrastructure' is a broad term which includes public streets and roads as well as municipal utilities services, especially water and sanitary sewer. These facilities are, as a group, the most important and typically the most expensive systems which support new growth in urbanized areas. New growth is fundamentally influenced by street and utility availability, particularly in light of Florida's increasingly comprehensive growth management legislation. Conversely, attitudes toward the prospect of future development should be reflected in any municipality's posture toward the extension of utility services and the improvements to road networks. This is an important issue even for a small town like Lake Placid.

1. Streets and Roads. The Town of Lake Placid has a typical, well-developed road and street network serving its urbanized area. This network also includes important transportation links to outlying urbanized areas and to the larger region as a whole.

Aside from periodic major maintenance required for all roads and streets, relatively little future capital investment will be needed to accommodate growth within the current corporate limits. Local-serving streets for such new development can be ^{locally} implemented by developers, with street construction to existing county standards; and R.O.W. dedication to the public for ongoing maintenance.

While Lake Placid receives only a small share of funds from the county's Local Option Gas Tax, it is likely that these funds will meet future capital investment needs within the current corporate limits. It is important that the current protocol with Highlands County, whereby the County provides the ongoing maintenance of roads and bridges within the Town be continued. A shift in fiscal responsibility for maintenance to the town could place severe demands on its limited yearly resources.

New growth outside the corporate limits will likely require additional capital investment in roads on the part of the public sector. Again, developers can construct local streets, but the County will likely have the responsibility as it now stands for providing road linkages into the existing network. This burden may, in whole or in part, fall to the Town if development occurs in rural areas annexed in the future. This would represent a significant fiscal burden on the Town.

2. Water and Sanitary Sewer Utilities. Issues related to utilities services and new growth are the most important faced by the Town of Lake Placid. Similarly important

collateral issues revolve around the provision of water and sewer services within the corporate limits.

Recently the Town has adopted a policy favorable, by inference, toward new growth by extending water services to the US 27 commercial corridor. Similarly, service extensions into unincorporated but developed areas indicate a desire to 'capture' growth within the network of urban services provided by the Town.

*Don't charge users
125000/70?*

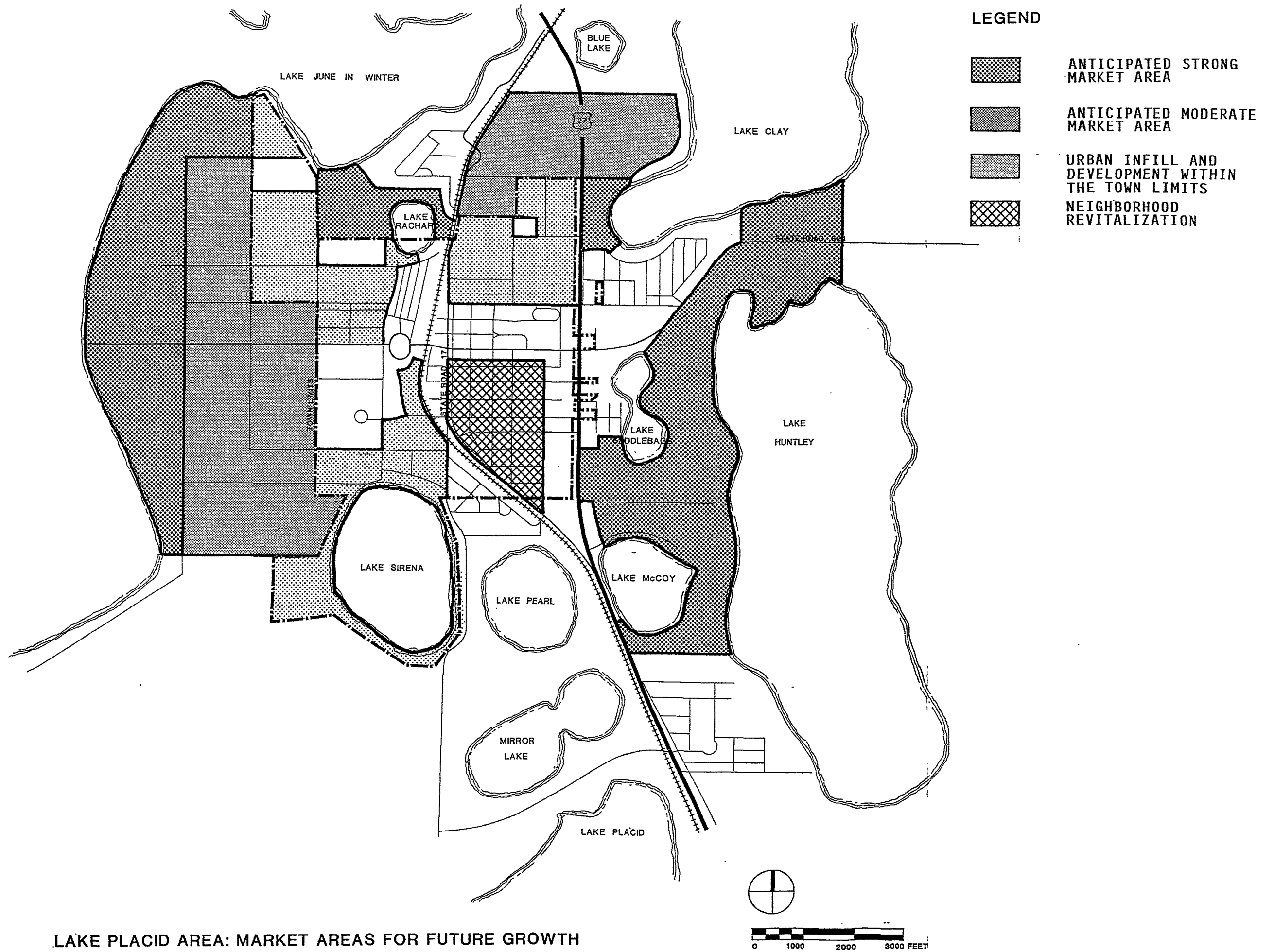
A policy regarding the extent and timing of water and sewer line extensions can only be evaluated in terms of the 'cost/benefit' to the Town. Continued service extensions are not feasible unless the fiscal benefits to the Town warrant the expenditures. The Town can recoup capital costs in part through monthly user fees and one-time-only connection fees. Typically such charges cover little more than system maintenance needs for the mains, treatment plants, wells, pumping stations and lift stations which comprise the water and sanitary sewer systems. A more effective way of capturing benefits is for the Town to systematically annex service users which are currently outside the corporate limits. In this way the users pay not only monthly charges, but also contribute to the Town's General Fund through valorem tax revenues.

The issue of cost/benefits and whether or not selected or comprehensive service extensions are fiscally appropriate depend on many factors. These include:

- Capacities of wells, treatment plants, pumping stations and the like, and the cost of expanding capacity to serve additional users.
- The topographic characteristics of areas where extensions are being considered, especially as related to the need for new lift stations and pumping stations.
- The length of trunk lines and mains required.
- The number of new dwelling units (or commercial buildings) to be served by the various system extensions.

An analysis of these factors should be undertaken before any service extension policy is formalized. It is important to note however, that a systematic program of service extensions to currently unincorporated areas only make sense under the following two conditions:

- Areas to be served should have strong market potential (as identified in the following map) to insure that a large enough number of units (or other buildings) will be served by any given system extension.



LAKE PLACID AREA: MARKET AREAS FOR FUTURE GROWTH

- The areas to be served by system extensions must be subject to annexation by Lake Placid so that the Town can maximize the fiscal benefits of making the expenditure.

As mentioned, a related issue is the provision of water and sanitary sewer services to areas within the Town limits. Under present state regulations the Town is not required to provide services to each and every structure within the Town. This fact relieves what would be a potentially backbreaking fiscal burden on the Town.

From a policy standpoint, the Town can encourage new development on vacant land within the boundaries by selective utilities extensions into these areas. This may be sensible, especially if development commitments, or at least substantial interest can be determined in a specific area prior to the Town's implementing service extensions into it.

Similarly, the Town could facilitate private reinvestment and revitalization in the Interlake Drive/Main Street commercial area by extending services to existing properties. This point is discussed in greater depth in the next section.

In summary, the leadership of Lake Placid must address the need for a coherent and well-reasoned utilities extension policy with respect to new growth and revitalization needs. Policy decisions cannot be made without an adequate analysis of costs and the resulting fiscal benefits from tax revenue increases and user fees that would accrue to the Town.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Areas of good quality should be maintained through public/private cooperative efforts involving modest investments by the Town, residents and building owners in landscaping and maintenance. Essentially maintaining quality areas is simply a matter of attentive 'house-keeping.'

Beyond this, it is important that these cooperative efforts be extended to take advantage of opportunities to create and reinforce pleasant public environments, and positive images. Of particular concern is the traditional commercial corridor along Interlake Drive and Main Street in proximity to Interlake. This area contains several older buildings with distinct architectural qualities. These can become major contributors to the appearance in the commercial area through reinvestment in rehabilitation and reuse.

The key to facilitating this sort of private sector reinvestment is, in part, clear public support for this effort. Lake Placid cannot fund a major downtown revitalization effort, but it could indicate support and encourage some reinvestment through a program of clean up, code enforcement, and modest public R.O.W. improvements to fix sidewalks and add landscaping and street furniture (benches and the like). A modest public improvement program in the Main/Interlake area should be undertaken within budget constraints. A more comprehensive program should be implemented if there is a clear, tangible interest in the part of area businesses and property owners to support the effort with some additional investment on their own. Lending institutions should encourage investment by taking a positive posture towards rehabilitation loans to building owners. Beyond this, if the effort gains momentum, the Town could provide substantial additional support by providing water and sanitary sewer services to the area. This would likely make the rehabilitation of the several architecturally significant but currently vacant or abandoned buildings more feasible. Such rehabilitation efforts, coupled with the construction of new buildings of similar architectural character and scale, should be a priority in a serious revitalization effort.

Additional design efforts should be focussed on DeVane Park at the west end of Interlake. This is a key civic open space; and is, in many ways, the symbolic civic 'heart' of Lake Placid. As such, it should be given priority for public investment which, while modest, can have a significant positive visual impact. Emphasis should be on additional landscaping, especially to create shaded spaces within the park which will be attractive during hot days.

The visual quality of residential neighborhoods is as important as the quality of commercial areas and civic spaces. Much of a neighborhood's quality and appeal stems

F. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

This section addresses two disparate aspects: issues of quality in the natural environment and ecological system; and issues of urban quality related to the visual image and amenities within the Town.

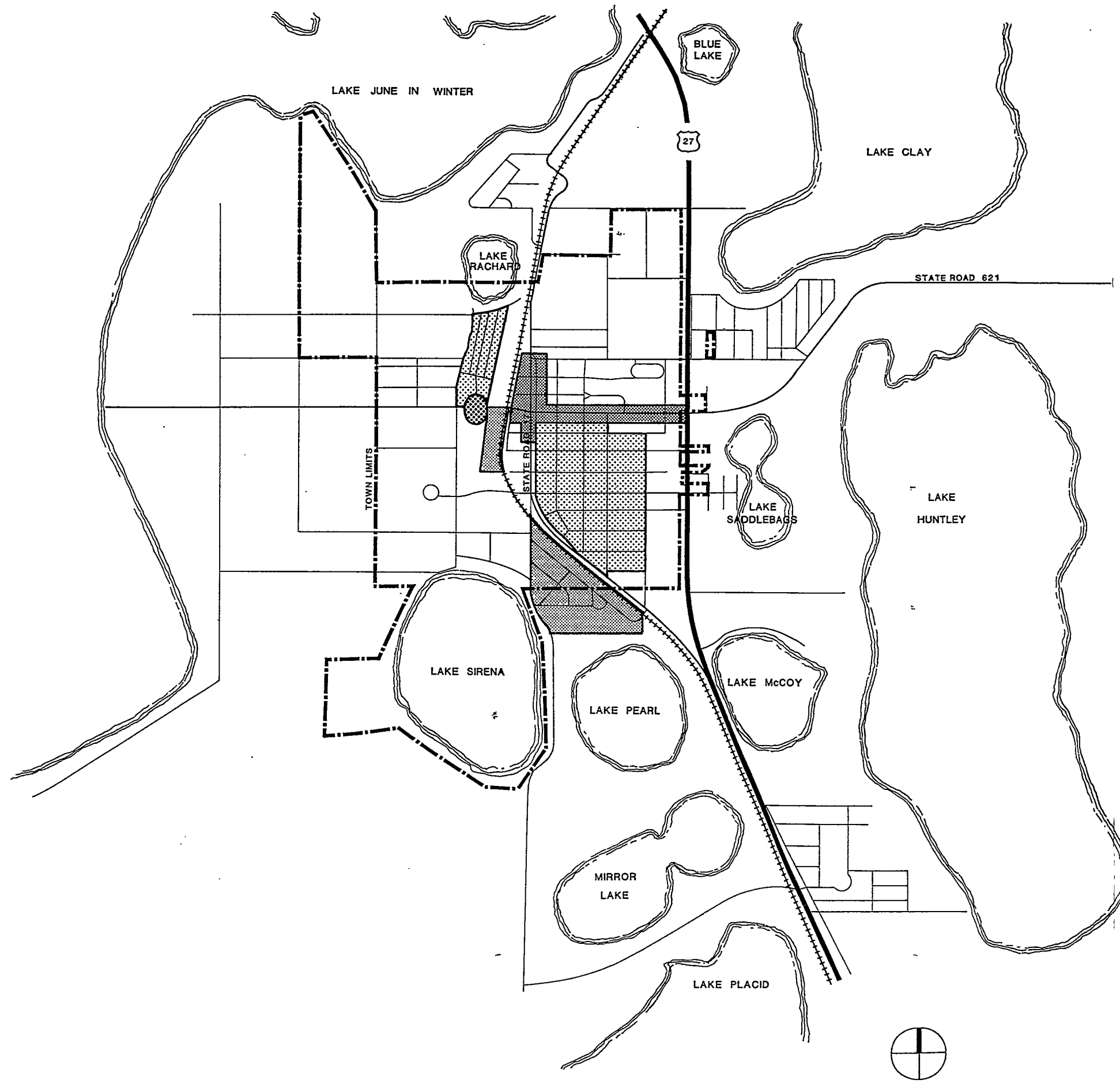
1. Natural Environmental Quality. In the usual sense, concerns of the natural environment revolve around air quality and water quality. The Town of Lake Placid is fortunate in both respects. The current quality of air and water is quite good in the town by all accounts. Additionally, it is unlikely that any future problems of importance will arise, even if a relatively large amount of new growth occurs. Put simply, Lake Placid and the surrounding, largely agricultural region are blessed with unpolluted air, clean water, and an ecological system which has a very substantial capacity to handle the environmental by-products of urbanization. Certainly this ecological capacity far exceeds the negative environmental effects produced by the small amount of growth that the Lake Placid region is likely to experience in the foreseeable future.





Despite this, concentrated urbanization may have some localized adverse effects, especially on the small lakes in the area. Given this, it is important to continue monitoring activity, especially related to water quality and related issues to identify any problems that may be evidenced in the future.

2. Urban Quality. The term 'urban quality' encompasses a broad array of concerns related to visual character and quality. It includes the appearance (and amenity) of public rights-of-way, architectural quality and appearance of buildings--both public and private, the quality and character of civic spaces and places, as well as facilities such as parks, and the general appearance of residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the like.

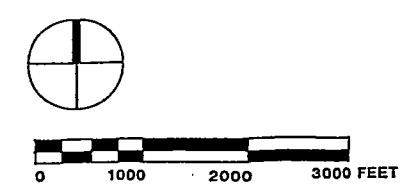
All urban areas, both large and small, have characteristics such as these. Positive characteristics provide a positive image to citizens and visitors, and instill pride. Negative characteristics generate the opposite. Positive characteristics arise through good architectural and urban design, sensitive landscaping, provision of amenities, street lighting and the like, coupled with ongoing maintenance of the public and private realms to support urban and architectural qualities.

Lake Placid is typical of many small towns. It has areas which are attractive, pleasant and well-maintained. Other areas are less attractive, with evidence of deterioration, inadequate maintenance and a general lack of visual appeal.



- LEGEND**
-  DEVANE PARK
 -  INTERLAKE BLVD./MAIN STREET COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
 -  AREAS OF DETERIORATION AND LAND USE CONFLICTS BETWEEN INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND RESIDENTIAL USES
 -  NEIGHBORHOODS IN NEED OF AMENITY IMPROVEMENTS AND "HOUSEKEEPING"

LAKE PLACID: URBAN QUALITY ISSUES



from the character of its houses. While a modest home cannot be transformed into a mansion, it is possible for a neighborhood of modest homes to be very attractive. To achieve this, the houses must be well maintained, and the neighborhood streets should be well landscaped and maintained. Residential areas in Lake Placid can be made more attractive if home owners maintain the homes, and if the Town makes a series of modest investments in landscaping and increased R.O.W. maintenance where needed. Once again, relatively small investments over a period of years will yield positive results.

FISCAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CONCERNS

G. FISCAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CONCERNS

The analysis presented in the previous four sections regarding housing, community facilities, public infrastructure and environmental concerns has considerable implications for the Town's fiscal posture and on its cooperative relationship with larger units of government.

As a small town with limited public resources, Lake Placid must carefully structure policies and implement programs relative to the broad issues of growth management and community development.

In the foregoing discussion, it is clear that water and sanitary sewer service extensions, whether within or beyond the current Town limits will require substantial dollars to meet the capital costs involved. An aggressive policy toward future service extensions can only be implemented within fiscal constraints if there is some funding assistance from the County, State or even Federal governments. Without this support, major extensions would only be possible through General Obligation (G.O.) Bonding or perhaps Revenue Bonding. In both cases, the floating of bonds could be difficult given the fact the Town does not have current precedents for such activities. Additionally, it is likely that tax increases and impact fees, together with increased user fees would be needed to support the bonded indebtedness. Such increases would not likely find support in the community.

Additionally, new growth that would be supported by an aggressive policy toward utility extensions would likely result in the need for additional or expanded community services such as police protection and recreation and open space. This, in turn, would place additional fiscal demands on the Town.

Conversely, the Town can make additional expenditures for the broad array of municipal services in support of new growth if substantial assistance from other units of government is available. As a result, it is important for Town officials to survey programs and funding sources that are currently available; and actively pursue funds from these sources for activities necessary in the Town.

At a minimum, Lake Placid must continue to receive assistance for its activities through interlocal agreements from Highlands County. State sources should also be pursued, especially related to community development program funding.

Additionally, the Town leadership, both public and business interests, should pursue a joint "public-private" cooperative partnership can formulate and implement tangible responses to needs for revitalization, rehabilitation, and reuse of existing buildings, fostering a healthy business climate in the downtown area, capturing the benefits of new growth along U.S. 27, and making badly needed landscaping improvements in both residential

and commercial areas of the Town. The key to achieving a successful cooperative partnership is that both public and private sector interests must realize that mutual cooperation (financial and otherwise) can yield qualitative and quantitative benefits for all.

While the focus of the foregoing discussion has been on capital and related maintenance expenditures, it is important to note that even with modest growth, there will likely be needs to expand the current administrative staff of the Town.. A scenario of extensive growth (both commercial and residential) with major service extension and annexation of additional areas will certainly require substantial staff increases in order to properly manage day-to-day activities. Although staffing levels cannot be determined as yet, this need should be kept in mind and analyzed at the appropriate time to determine specific personnel needs an the resulting fiscal impacts on the Town's yearly operating budget.

CONCLUSION: BENIFITS TO THE TOWN

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In the final analysis, public decision-making must meet two fundamental objectives:

- o Provide for the well-being of the Town and its citizens, principally through the provision of needed services and facilities, and also through the proper encouragements for ongoing private sector investment and reinvestment; and
- o Insure that municipal expenditures for services and facilities are cost-effective and are within the available fiscal resources of the Town.

In this context, it is important that the Town's elected officials give careful consideration, and obtain the best available information, regarding the benefits and potential liabilities of new growth; and needs for preservation, revitalization, and amenity improvements within the currently developed residential and non-residential areas of Lake Placid.

Even a Town as small as Lake Placid can benefit in the short- and long-term from strong leadership and intelligent decision-making on the part of the elected officials. This is especially true in light of the anticipated growth in the area immediately surrounding the Town. Clearly, Lake Placid must position itself with respect to this new growth. This should include policies relative to the extension of municipal water and sewer services, and to annexation of unincorporated areas.

Additionally, the Town will benefit from successful and well-conceived cooperative efforts on the part of the public and private sectors to initiate and implement an array of relatively modest cost civic improvements. This should occur in conjunction with encouragements for reinvestment in the Town's existing facilities to promote the revitalization and preservation of existing residential neighborhoods and commercial areas of the Town.

All of these efforts are in addition to the usual array of day-to-day responsibilities of the Town's elected officials and staff. The FLORIDA CENTER believes that these additional efforts are important in terms of the charting of a knowledgeable and well-conceived course for the Town in the future.