



## Wilmington may ask APA to allow expansion

Land use code nearly complete

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**Email: "Wilmington may ask APA to allow expansion"**

RAY BROOK — Wilmington's new proposed land-use code is almost ready, and the town will probably ask the state Adirondack Park Agency to expand its hamlet area in less than a year.

***There are inconsistencies between the town's zoning maps, which it is working to revise, and its APA land classifications, Lisa Nagle from Saratoga's Elan Planning and Design told the APA Board of Commissioners Thursday morning. For example, an area around state Route 86 that is classified as "village center" on town zoning maps is classified for moderate-intensity use by the APA, not the less restrictive hamlet designation.***

The new land-use code will be unveiled on July 28, town Supervisor Randy Preston told the board. He said he thinks the current land-use code has hurt the town. For example, it requires hamlet development to have a minimum 1-acre parcel in the hamlet, which he said might have made sense years ago but isn't necessary with modern septic systems.

Preston spoke to the board as part of the agency's ongoing "Community Spotlight" series, in which a supervisor talks to them about his or her town. He was accompanied by Nagle and Andy Labruzzo from the state Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources, who gave a presentation about the town's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. Approved in April, it is the third in the Park to be finished. Preston talked about some of the changes he has seen in the town over his lifetime. There were five gas stations in Wilmington in the 1960s compared to one now, for example.

"Wilmington people don't want to see development to the magnitude of Lake Placid," Preston said, but he added that the town needs to encourage some development. "We're really proud of our town, but we're really anxious to make it better," Preston said.

Preston said the town needs to encourage development in the "village center" and find ways to make it more pedestrian-friendly, such as connecting the currently unconnected sidewalks, which was in the town's 2001 Revitalization Plan but never done, and is also recommended in the waterfront revitalization plan.

"I don't plan on letting these studies sit on the shelf and collect dust like all the previous ones have," Preston said.

There is some development happening now. The APA recently approved a 12-condominium development on the site of an old motel without much controversy. Far more controversial was the town's recent approval of 27 townhouses next to the town beach. Preston said he thinks this project is good for the town, but many local people disagreed.

The committee that worked on the waterfront revitalization plan consisted of town staff, guides, business owners and other residents, plus AuSable River Association and Adirondack Sustainable Community representatives. The group first met in 2006 and held several well-attended public meetings while drafting the plan. More than 75 people attended some sessions, Nagle said.

***The plan is focused on protecting the water quality and ecology of the West Branch of the AuSable River and its tributaries and allowing development in ways that preserve the waterways, Nagle said. Implementing the plan will require the town to pass several new laws, including a stormwater management law to control sediment running into the water and a waterfront consistency law to establish project review procedures consistent with the plan.***

The plan contains a number of other recommendations, such as expanding a network of bicycle paths and hiking trails, improving fishing access and taking steps to improve sediment control. One of the bigger projects, estimated to cost \$210,000, would be improvements in the Flume waterfall swimming area, such as enhancing the walkways, installing a protected walkway along the bridge and improving parking.

Preston also said the town, the Essex County Planning Office and the AuSable River Association are gathering canoes, kayaks, paddles and life vests for a "community paddling project," in which they would rent these out for a nominal fee. They hope to start that next year, Preston said.

The state Environmental Protection Fund gave about \$700,000 in grants related to developing the plan. Some of these grants also had other purposes, such as \$250,000 for a High Peaks Intermunicipal Revitalization Strategy, which also involves the towns of Jay, North Elba and Keene and the village of Lake Placid. A draft plan for that strategy will be released soon, Labruzzo said.