



# Village of Saranac Lake

**Arts and Cultural Master Plan**

**Phase I Report**

**Situation Analysis**

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AMS Planning & Research Corp.



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## Introduction

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AMS Planning & Research was engaged by the Village of Saranac Lake to work in partnership with the Village's Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee to develop an Arts and Cultural Master Plan. Participating committee members can be found in the appendix to this report.

## Approach

AMS's approach includes a three-phase work plan, as outlined below.

By design, it is an inclusive process that provides an opportunity to receive input from a variety of community stakeholders, with points designed throughout the process to revisit and confirm (or make adjustments to) the cultural planning approach. Wide-ranging engagement embraces varied viewpoints regarding how the plan can best serve the community, and it results in the voices of those the plan is intended to serve playing an important role in the plan's development.

### Phase I: Situation Analysis

- Background Review
- Kickoff Meeting
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Phase I Report

### Phase II: Listening and Understanding the Market <sup>1</sup>

- Market Analysis
- Patron Analysis
- Community Survey
- Visioning Workshop/Defining Success
- Update Report

### Phase III

- Draft Recommendations
- Community Meeting
- Deliverable: Village of Saranac Lake Arts and Cultural Master Plan

This Phase I report shares our findings from the background review, as well as observations from the kick-off meeting and the stakeholder interviews.

## Project Objectives

Four key objectives have been identified for the arts and cultural planning project.

**Market research** will explore the demand for arts and cultural products and activities in the region. The market research includes a regional market analysis, a patron file analysis, and a community survey. This is supplemented by stakeholder interviews, at least one

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<sup>1</sup> The means by which a Facility Analysis will be conducted, and the possible addition of a Community Meeting were being determined at the publishing of this report, the results of which will be shared at the conclusion of Phase II.

community meeting, and a visioning session with the Village of Saranac Lake Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee.

An **inventory and assessment** of existing cultural assets and how they might work collaboratively together to enhance arts and cultural experiences will be conducted.

With data/information from the aforementioned tasks complete, **cultural plan recommended actions** will be created and prioritized.

Ultimately, an Arts and Cultural Master Plan will be developed and will include **implementation strategies** with actionable outcomes, including an understanding of likely investments, to strengthen the arts and cultural sector and bolster the local economy.

## Background Review

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In order to gain a full understanding of arts and culture in the Village of Saranac Lake area, as well as the economic and political climate and local and state goals, AMS undertook a thorough review of documents pertinent to our areas of inquiry. AMS examined previous studies and documents, as well as other recent planning initiatives. This research provided AMS with information that will be considered during the planning process, and will align with the outcome of the cultural plan. In total, AMS studied nearly 40 documents; a list of these documents can be found in the appendix.

Particular attention was given to documents that specifically noted arts and culture, be it by way of goals, strategies, or recommendations made to support the arts and cultural sector. This information was shared at the project's kick-off meeting, where participants made note of the degree to which some of the goals/recommendations had been addressed. This information,

reported below, will provide insight as the arts and cultural master plan is designed. Successful efforts will be noted and suggested action that has not yet been realized may find a role in the new plan.

### **NYSCA's Regional Economic Development Council Arts and Culture Initiatives (2017)**

Through NYSCA's Regional Economic Development Council program, **arts and cultural projects focused on economic and community development will:**

- Develop the arts and culture workforce
- Engage new audiences
- Revitalize neighborhoods
- Generate collaborative projects among non-profit organizations, for-profit entities, artists and municipal and local government
- Drive and support tourism through events that serve as destinations for regional, national and international visitors
- Enhance resources for communities experiencing poverty, geographic isolation or other barriers to participation in or access to arts and cultural activities

### **Adirondack Economic Development Strategy (2014)**

The local arts, cultural, and heritage sites and programs are a largely untapped economic driver that can operate year-round.

- **More focus on arts, cultural, heritage, foods** and other forms of non-sports tourism

- Build on existing recreational trails such as snowmobile and cycling routes, water trails, and localized hiking trails while overlaying the thematic trails such **as arts and culture, heritage**, food and drink
- Develop, refine and implement the Adirondack Trail Towns Initiative strengthening visitor amenities across the Park and addressing **entertainment and recreation related to the arts, culture, historic preservation, hamlet revitalization, local food**, agriculture, and many other interests

### Village of Saranac Lake Comprehensive Plan (2013)

The community of artists and the associated variety – visual (drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture and video) performing (dance, music, and theatre), applied arts (crafts and design), healing, and literary arts are growing in number and scope. Goals include:

- **Artisan support and expansion, and improved and expanded recreation and arts facilities**
- The existence incorporation of a **thriving and growing arts and cultural community** in the Marketing Strategy
- Outreach effort to establish a regular dialogue regarding the **conditions within the business and arts and culture communities**
- Consideration of the **existing resources and facilities and their available capacities and current conditions; voids in the programs and facilities** as they are compared to the interests of the public
- A **variety of arts-oriented activities for children** and youth
- The Village as a **center for healing arts**

### Saranac Lake Destination Master Plan (2009)

There is a strong local interest in **wellness and arts**; the presence of a **vibrant arts community** will add balance to the developing sense of destination.

- To further enhance Saranac Lake's active arts and crafts community, base the Saranac Lake brand on Adirondack outdoor recreation, wellness, history and **arts**.
- The Village of Saranac Lake offers **arts and culture** experiences and products that contribute to a sense of destination.

### Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Advisory committee vision statement includes the region **offering arts, entertainment and cultural venues**.

- Invest in **existing arts, historic, culture and entertainment attractions**
- Establish a clear and distinctive **destination for arts, history, and culture travelers**
- Develop and implement a signage plan to improve signage for Visitor Venues including **arts, culture** and outdoor attractions

## Kick-Off Meeting

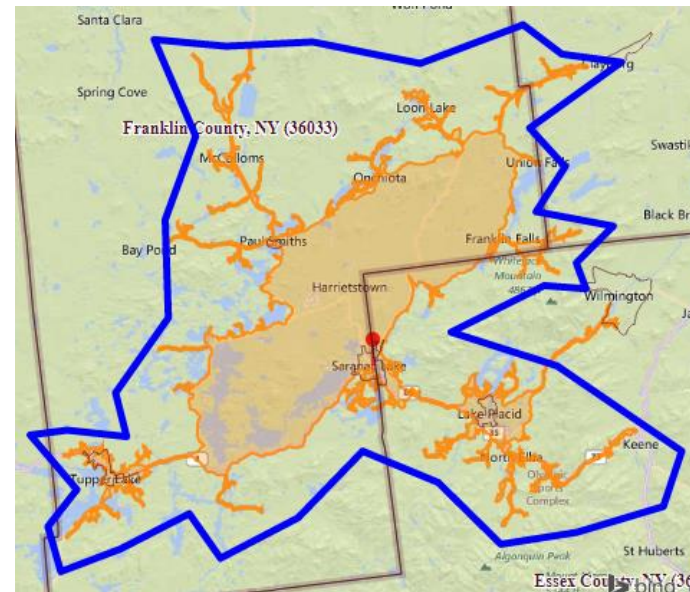
AMS facilitated a kick-off meeting with the Village's Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee. During this meeting, the group discussed the project objectives, scope of work, and components needed to position the plan for success.

A detailed discussion took place concerning the stakeholder interviews, the market research tasks, and the facility analysis.

## Market Research Discussion

AMS's preliminary definition of the market area was shared during the kick-off meeting. This market area was identified by way of a map in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report, which was included in the AMS background review. AMS used this map as a point of reference, and then layered on the 30-minute drive time (the orange jagged lines seen on the map).

The map's boundaries encompass the areas located within a 30 minute drive of Saranac Lake, as well as the "pull" from shopping areas in the City of Plattsburgh. The trade area captures the Village of Tupper Lake, the Village of Lake Placid, and the Town of Keene Valley. AMS may refine boundaries of this area if the patron file analysis reveals adjustments which should be made.



## Facility Analysis Discussion

During the kick-off meeting, the Village's Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee began to discuss the facility analysis task, which will be included in Phase II of the planning process. The committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of hiring a sub-consultant for the facility analysis, or performing the facility analysis in-house and allocating the money toward an additional community meeting. The Village's Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee will continue this discussion and inform AMS of its final decision.

## Stakeholder Interviews

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AMS conducted stakeholder interviews in the Village of Saranac Lake on July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The AMS team interviewed 28 individuals, including Saranac Lake artists, business owners, arts patrons, arts organization owners and leaders, and municipal employees.

During these interviews, stakeholders expressed pride in the Village of Saranac Lake's authentic, welcoming community and its active arts and culture scene. A number of challenges were also shared; limited lodging and parking options, a shortage of funding opportunities, seasonality of arts and culture offerings, and facility limitations all affect the success of arts and culture in Saranac Lake. Stakeholders generally believe that a successful arts and cultural marketplace could increase downtown vibrancy, stimulate economic growth, unify the community, and attract diverse new visitors and residents.

Through the stakeholder interviews, AMS identified seven common themes. These themes will be considered in the development of the Arts and Culture Master Plan, being refined as deemed beneficial, and will play a role in informing Phase II of our research. As the creation of the plan progresses, AMS may include additional themes. To date, the themes are:

### **I. Partnerships between arts organizations and local organizations, businesses, and people.**

Stakeholders discussed a range of partnerships which could advance the success of arts and culture in Saranac Lake. These include partnerships between arts organizations and schools, social organizations, recreational organizations, restaurants, volunteers, neighboring towns, and funding

sources, as well as partnerships amongst arts organizations themselves.

### **2. Support for individual artists.**

Many of the interviewed artists expressed a desire to receive support in areas which would help them create, promote, and sell their work. Main areas of support include business training, grant writing, internet usage skill development, publicity, and live/work space.

### **3. Funding opportunities for individual artists, arts facilities, and arts organizations.**

Saranac Lake artists and arts organizations utilize many funding resources. Stakeholders discussed a need to locate and acquire additional funds to support the work of individual artists, the upkeep of arts facilities, and the staffing and operations of arts organizations.

### **4. Optimization of existing arts and cultural facilities.**

While stakeholders considered the number of arts and culture facilities in Saranac Lake to be sufficient, they discussed opportunities for optimizing the existing facilities. This could include improving the quality of existing facilities, relocating certain arts activities, and reimagining new uses for existing arts spaces.

### **5. Community engagement through the arts.**

Stakeholders communicated a desire to advance community engagement efforts in three areas: increased participation by diverse communities, increased engagement of underserved communities, and increased educational activities and resources for youth.

## **6. Tourism opportunities and experiences.**

While stakeholders defined Saranac Lake as a true year-round community, they also acknowledged the economic benefits of tourism. Stakeholders believe arts and culture can act as drivers for increased tourism, and a unified arts and culture brand may increase Saranac Lake's marketability.

## **7. Arts and cultural offerings during the winter months.**

Stakeholders noted Saranac Lake's reduced arts and cultural offerings during the winter, due to inclement weather and transportation issues. Many described a desire for year-round programming, while setting realistic goals and expectations for the winter season.

## **Summary**

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Phase I of the Village of Saranac Lake Arts and Cultural Master Plan, Situation Analysis, provides a solid foundation as planning moves into the next phase. The background review, kick-off meeting, and stakeholder interviews have resulted in a considerable amount of information, creating initial themes to help guide the development of the master plan. The quantitative research that will be undertaken in Phase II, Listening and Understanding the Market, will provide additional data that will help inform the components of the arts and cultural plan as the process advances.

The Village of Saranac Lake and its community members have demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing the already vibrant arts and cultural climate of the area, and it is anticipated that this attitude and collective engagement will continue to make a positive contribution to the arts and cultural planning effort moving forward.



## Appendices

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### A. Kick-Off Meeting PowerPoint

### B. List of Background Materials

- 2017: Regional Economic Development Councils – Available CFA Resources NYSCA Arts and Cultural Initiatives
- 2017: Saranac Lake Area Tourism Council/Saranac Lake Brand Letter
- 2016: Development Code
- 2015: Letter of Map Revision
- 2014: Development Code
- 2014: PUDD Local Law 17-2014
- 2014: Article on Tourism, Brian
- 2014: Lake Flower Beach Feasibility Study
- 2014: Lake Flower Beach Feasibility Study Map
- 2014: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2014-2019
- 2014: Franklin County CEDS
- 2014: Adirondack Economic Development Strategy
- 2013/2014: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
- 2013: Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Master Plan
- 2012: Lake Placid to Tupper Lake Trail Development Final
- 2012: Adirondack Park Recreational Strategy
- 2011: North County Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan
- 2011: Scenic Railroad Economic Impact Analysis
- 2010: Tri Lakes Housing Needs Assessment
- 2010: Government restructuring

- 2010: Statewide Trails Plan
- 2010: Perspectives on the Adirondack
- 2009: Adirondack Park Regional Assessment Project
- 2009: Saranac Lake Destination Master Plan
- 2007: Saranac Lake Vision Concepts
- 2005: Zoning Districts Map
- 2005: Parking Study
- 2004: Olympic Scenic Byway
- 2002: Land Use Code
- 2001: Subdivisions Regulations
- 1996: Five Year Strategic Plan for Downtown Revitalization for 1996-2001
- 1992: The Saranac River Walk
- 1989: Long Term Rec Plan
- 1982: Historic Saranac Lake Housing Survey
- 1978: Downtown Saranac Lake Technical Report
- Adirondack Great Walks
- Planned Unit Development Guide
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

### C. Arts and Cultural Master Plan Committee Members

- John Sweeney: Village Manager
- Paul VanCott: Village Trustee
- Jamie Konkoski: Community Development Director, Village of Saranac Lake
- Tim Fortune: Artist, heads downtown advisory board, member of SL ArtWorks, owner Small Fortune Studio
- Holly Wolff: Board member, Pendragon Theater
- Sandra Hildreth: Artist, Saranac Lake ArtWorks,
- Jim Hotaling: Retired architect, former chair of BluSeed board

- Jake Vennie-Vollrath: Reginal Advocacy Coordinator, Adirondack North Country Association
- Aurora Wheeler: Oral History Coordinator, Historic Saranac Lake (HSL)
- Mark Kurtz, photographer: Saranac Lake ArtWorks
- Nathalie Thill: Executive Director, Adirondack Center for Writing,
- Helen Demong: Choral Director, Retired Educator
- Johnny Muldowney: Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce
- Tara Palen: Producing Director, Pendragon Theatre
- Kelly Brunette: Saranac Lake Regional Marketing Manager, ROOST
- Amy Catania: Executive Director, Historic Saranac Lake
- Carol Vossler: Founder and Artist, BluSeed Studios
- Brittany Christiansen: Executive Director, ADKAction.org
- Keith Wells: Local Development Corporation

#### **D. Names/Affiliation of Interviewees**

- Jeremy Evans; CEO of County of Franklin Industrial Development Agency
- Shelly Maggs; Resident Arts Patron
- Anne Schoff; Resident Arts Patron, former Pendragon Board Member
- Mark Coleman; Music Store Owner
- Keen Riley; Rock and Jewelry Store Owner
- Mark Kurtz; Photographer, Photography Studio Owner
- Johnny Williams; Restaurant Owner
- John Faden; Native American Museum Owner
- Harry & Christa Gordon; Architect, Pendragon Board Member
- Jim Hotaling; Retired Architect, Former Chair of BluSeed board Carol Vossler; Co-Owner of BluSeed
- Paul Van Cott; Village Trustee
- Jim McKenna; CEO of ROOST
- Kelly Brunette; Saranac Lake Regional Marketing Manager, ROOST
- Tim Fortune; Artist, Studio Owner
- Helen Demong; Director of Northern Lights Choir
- Kiki Sarko; The Waterhole
- Eric Munley; The Waterhole
- Kathy Ford; Graphic Designer
- Lonnie Ford; Actor and Singer
- Allison Studdiford; Director and Actor
- Georgeann Gaffney; Artist, Construction, BluSeed Board
- Susan Whiteman; Artist
- Amy Catania; Executive Director of Historic Saranac Lake
- Tara Palen; Managing Director of Pendragon
- Sandra Hildreth; Artist
- Brittany Christiansen; Executive Director of ADK Action
- Kate Fish; Executive Director of Adirondack North Country Association
- Joe Dockery; Former Pendragon Board Member, musician
- Ernest E. (Lee) and Nancy Keet, Philanthropists