

Village of Port Henry Comprehensive Plan

Port Henry is a unique village settled in the beautiful and stunning Champlain Valley. Nestled between the Green Mountains of Vermont and the majestic Adirondack Peaks of New York, the village evolved on a hillside during the Industrial Revolution. Commerce bustled and the village of Port Henry blossomed into a centralized community hosting a wealth of downtown shops, parks, and churches. By the late 19th century the village was one of the most prosperous villages in New York and featured many “High Style” architectural buildings that still exist today. With the decline of the demand for iron ore, the area went through a period of quick decline and has eventually bottomed out.



Today the village of Port Henry still remains the business and community center for the Town of Moriah area. Organized efforts have taken place to draw and attract other companies to the area with the help of the Essex County IDA and other regional agencies. While this has helped the area somewhat, it has become increasingly evident that a major industry or corporation is not going to relocate to our community and revitalize our economy overnight as it did in the late 1800's.

Moving Forward

Realizing that growth and sustainability will need happen by a concentrated effort from all who live, work, and represent the area, the Village of Port Henry will plan to capitalize on the strengths and assets of our community, and identify areas of concerns that need improvement in order for Port Henry to become a destination that will draw people to visit, relocate, and stay. By strategizing locally with area organizations to incorporate amenities, services, and attractions for the area, Port Henry will become a prosperous community that capitalizes on the breathtaking scenic nature that living in the Adirondacks provides.



A plan shows that a community is active in its future, and knows where it is going. A plan attracts sound investment and wins support for community projects and interests.

Areas of Focus

In New York State, the comprehensive plan is the policy foundation upon which communities are built. It is a long-term “roadmap” for growth—a guide for decisions and actions by local government officials in shaping the future of their municipality. A comprehensive plan identifies needs and recommends goals, objectives, and strategies to improve the community for the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents.

With this in mind, it is logical to begin moving forward with focus on the following areas:

- *Housing and Neighborhoods.*
- *Waterfront and Natural Resources.*
- *Downtown District and Historical Aesthetics.*
- *Economic development.*
- *Infrastructure.*
- *Quality of Life and Sustainability.*

Housing and Neighborhoods

The Village should:

- *Attract more residents by providing higher end housing options for the middle and working class.*
- *Allow for affordable housing options by zoning.*
- *Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing.*
- *Collaborate with code enforcement officer to stay up to date with codes and standards on historic homes.*
- *Encourage mix use by zoning first floor storefronts retail and upper floor residential in designated areas.*
- *Have a demolition inventory and schedule when buildings endanger the character and safety of a neighborhood.*
- *Maintain and restore historic character of residential areas.*
- *Provide and maintain recreational areas and amenities for all ages.*

Waterfront and Natural Resources

The Village should:

- *Encourage a proper balance of water-oriented uses including access to and enjoyment of the waterfront area that will be compatible with other waterfront uses and objectives, and will promote the overall revitalization of downtown and Port Henry as a residential community. These uses include marinas, boat storage, ship repair, kayak/canoe rentals, and water-oriented restaurants and retail (e.g., fish tackle stores, campsites, beaches).*
- *Discourage industrial uses, especially those uses that are responsible for pollution and/or interfere with public enjoyment of the waterfront area.*
- *Promote carefully designed and orderly development for the waterfront area including the village beach.*
- *Scenic resources are important in defining a community. These resources can be seriously threatened by unchecked development. High priority should be placed on protecting specific views and viewpoints, as well as on the general quality and maintenance of the landscape.*
- *Build a community pavilion at village beach to be used as a venue to host community events and private parties, adding more value and tax revenue to the area.*
- *Protect the quality of the natural environment and the small village appeal.*
- *Encourage public use and enjoyment of the area by encouraging four season use of the area and attractions.*
- *Work on moving towards the possibility of leasing out the village beach to become more of a resort camping experience to increase profit while freeing up village resources of time and manpower.*
- *Work closely with local and county organizations to promote the natural wonders found throughout the area.*

Downtown and Historical Aesthetics

The Village should:

- *Support the local organizations that promote and enhance the downtown amenities.*
- *Ensure there is adequate night-lighting, in addition to the current standards.*
- *Create a pedestrian and business-friendly environment that encourages foot traffic, focusing on pedestrian routes to and around major destinations in the Village, such as the library, the train station, the waterfront area, and parks as well as the public school.*
- *Connect the downtown efficiently to the waterfront area.*
- *Despite the short distance use signage to direct visitors to the waterfront from the downtown area and vice versa from the waterfront to uptown.*
- *Consider having access to shuttle service between the waterfront and downtown during high tourist seasons and events.*
- *Lake Champlain is Port Henry's most important natural resource and one of its primary identifying characteristics. Maintaining and improving visual connections to the lake from the downtown area will help remind visitors of the waterfront connection and encourage them to explore further.*
- *Develop convenient opportunities for parking, and address lack of local employee parking.*
- *Highlight and promote Port Henry's significant and historical architecture through walking tours and promotional advertising.*

Economic Development

The Village should:

- *Continue its commitment to beautifying Port Henry's streetscapes and parks to provide an attractive vibrant community ready to welcome new businesses and visitors.*
- *Continue its commitment to pursue grant monies and regional opportunities to update and improve infrastructure that will attract new business to the area as well as sustain and support our existing businesses.*
- *Continue to work closely with local groups, organizations, and area governments; concentrating our efforts to ensure that all aspects recreation, tourism, cultural venues, and area improvements are working in unison to promote and encourage business growth.*
- *Make certain zoning regulations are carefully constructed so they will help carry out municipal immediate and long-range planning goals that encourage growth that is thoughtful, understandable, and predictable and enhance the quality of life for all residents of the village.*
- *Streamline the permitting approval processes for businesses looking to locate in the downtown.*
- *Protect and encourage the use of existing buildings in the downtown district to aid sustainability, foot commerce, and concentrated retail use.*

Infrastructure

The Village should:

- *Measure programs, devices, and instruments intended to implement the goals and objectives of the various topics within the comprehensive plan against its existing infrastructure in order to maintain the best quality of service possible to its residents and businesses.*
- *Be aware demographic and socioeconomic trends and projections that may negatively or positively impact the uses of village infrastructure.*
- *Recognize and monitor existing and proposed educational, historical, cultural, recreational agencies and determine whether the actions they directly undertake, fund or approve may have a significant impact on the environment, and, if it is determined that the action may have a significant adverse impact, prepare or request an environmental impact statement as mandated by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).*
- *Employ a parking management strategy for downtown employers that will create less wear and tear on village streets while freeing up valuable public parking. The long-term goal is to make sure that the most convenient spaces are available to shoppers (e.g., merchants don't park in front of their stores), and that the less convenient spaces are used by people who park all day (merchants, workers, and even upstairs residents).*
- *Improve pedestrian used sidewalks to promote foot commerce and pedestrian circulation, especially between the waterfront, train station, and the downtown along with the villages adjoining higher-density neighborhoods.*
- *Improve public and local transit to make Port Henry more environmentally sustainable and better able to offer its residents alternatives to a car-dependent lifestyle.*
- *Provide safe, attractive, well-lit, and landscaped walkways throughout the area. Sidewalks and walkways are particularly important to connect to village destinations. Shade trees and pedestrian-oriented lighting should be provided along with benches.*

Quality of Life and Sustainability

The Village should:

- *Recognize that Port Henry has significant historical and cultural resources that enhance our character and livability. These resources also provide economic benefits, as businesses are attracted by livable communities and tourists come to explore a municipality's heritage. We must seek to protect and enhance these resources.*
- *Acknowledge part of Port Henry's charm is a small village atmosphere that has evolved over time. During this time the village has acquired many unique influences and traditions that must not be discouraged or discounted.*
- *Endeavor to have a simple set of Zoning Regulations, with a minimum number of additional restrictions as practical. This will both acceptably serve the citizens of Port Henry, and preserve the individuality of our village.*
- *Diligently recognize that our comprehensive plan is our governing body's process of careful consideration and forethought. Amendments and zoning ordinances must be periodically reviewed to serve the community's interest and use, along with protecting the welfare of our natural resources and environment.*

Implementing Priorities

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Term (years)</u>
1	Implement adequate Zoning Regulations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the physical and visual environment, public health and welfare of the community.	1-2
2	Improve parking availability for daily and evening trips to the village business district by acquiring available land when available and establishing parking ordinances	1-3
3	Implement alternative transportation routes to promote healthy lifestyles, reduce carbon footprints and decrease village congestion; walking, biking, hiking, bus transit, carpool, train, etc.	5-10
4	Enhance the waterfront park and beach to establish a destination experience to increase local and visitor use and overall enjoyment	2-5
5	Establish downtown continuity and quality by improving village lighting, storefronts, aesthetics and walkability to promote downtown amenities and attract downtown users	2-5
6	Attract a critical mass of residents by offering a range of housing types, park and recreation space and ensure safe and attractive neighborhoods	2-10

Focus Area	Priority #	Strategy for Implementation	Resources
Waterfront and Natural Resources	1 & 4, 5	<p>Adopt Zoning regulations</p> <p>Adopt Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan</p> <p>Hire firm to evaluate waterfront use</p> <p>Decrease stormwater overflows by upgrading infrastructure</p> <p>Market waterfront assets</p> <p>Inventory/assess & promote scenic vistas</p>	<p>NYS DOS</p> <p>ROOST</p> <p>NYS OPRHP</p> <p>NYS DEC</p> <p>CVHN</p> <p>Essex County</p>
Downtown and Historical Aesthetics	2, 3 & 5	<p>Adopt and implement Complete Streets Policy</p> <p>Inventory existing, identify gaps in alternative transportation routes</p> <p>Adopt Climate Smart Community Policy</p> <p>Update Village lighting</p> <p>Develop & Promote historic walking map/brochure</p> <p>Inventory/assess & promote scenic vistas</p> <p>Acquire vacant land for parking</p>	<p>NYSERDA</p> <p>NYS DEC</p> <p>Scenic Byways</p> <p>NYS DOS</p> <p>NYS OPRHP</p> <p>NYS DOT</p> <p>Essex County</p>
Economic Development	1-6	<p>Beautify main street</p> <p>Adopt Zoning Regulations</p> <p>Infill & reuse for business development</p> <p>Improve & promote existing historic and cultural assets</p> <p>Upgrade sewer and water infrastructure</p>	<p>NYS DOS</p> <p>NYS DEC</p> <p>NYS CDBG</p> <p>CVHN</p> <p>ROOST</p> <p>NY Main Street</p> <p>Essex County</p> <p>IDA</p>
Infrastructure	2, 3, & 5	<p>Acquire vacant land for parking</p> <p>Adopt and implement Complete Streets policy</p> <p>Improve and promote existing cultural assets</p> <p>Update Village lighting</p> <p>Update water and sewer infrastructure</p> <p>Ensure roads, bridges sidewalks are</p>	<p>NYS DOS</p> <p>NYS OPRHP</p> <p>NYS DEC</p> <p>Essex County</p> <p>NYSERDA</p> <p>NYS CDBG</p>
Quality of Life and Sustainability	1 & 5	<p>Adopt Zoning Regulations</p> <p>Improve and promote existing historic and cultural assets</p> <p>Upgrade parks and main street assets to promote the exploration of Port Henry's heritage</p>	<p>NYS DEC</p> <p>NYS OPRHP</p> <p>NYS Main Street</p> <p>NYS CDBG</p> <p>NYS DOT</p> <p>Scenic Byways</p>
Housing & Neighborhood	5 & 6	<p>Adopt demolition needs plan</p> <p>Provide incentives and encourage improving rental units or home façade</p> <p>Zoning for mix-use, housing delineation</p> <p>Collaborate with code enforcement</p> <p>Maintain historic character</p> <p>Establish Rec. facility park & playground areas</p>	<p>AHT</p> <p>HAPEC</p> <p>NYS CDBG</p> <p>NYS DOS</p> <p>NYS SHPO</p> <p>NTHP</p> <p>NYS OPRHP</p> <p>Restore</p> <p>Essex County</p>

In Closing

The general statements of goals, objectives, principles and policies of this Comprehensive Plan represent the start of a long-term “roadmap” for growth and shaping the future of our community. By actively managing the village of Port Henry’s future, the village government will ensure that quality of life for all residents will improve. By working with local groups, organizations, and other area governments we can attract viable business investment to our downtown area while supporting community projects and interests.

This plan builds on the centrality of downtown, our scenic waterfront vistas, and our rich historic resources to take advantage of all the small village conveniences Port Henry can offer, and does offer. It is our hope that with careful and strategic planning the residents of the village will again enjoy an upbeat bustling community that truly represents the personality of the area.

Port Henry Village Board

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