Human capital is the people—their skills, talents, and expertise. It is their physical labour, as well as what's stored in their brains. It is their paid labour as well as their unpaid labour, volunteer work. It is the work that they give, donate, barter, sell, and receive.
TOURISM
REDIRECTING THE SEASONAL ECONOMY

Ask anyone in the Adirondacks what drives the region’s economy and most will instantly reply, “tourism.” Unfortunately, location quotient analysis conducted for this report calls into question this commonly held view of the Adirondack economy. It is understandable why so many people mistake tourism as the driver of the Adirondacks. It accounts for nearly a third of the region’s jobs. That is a lot of human capital sequestered in one industry. If tourism is not necessarily a driver of the Adirondack economy, could it help attract new types of human capital to the region? Rather than a driver, could it become a vehicle?

The Blue Print for the Blue Line indirectly makes such a case, highlighting the need to bring professionals into the region to both play and live. The location quotient analysis in this report also supports such a policy. Tourism can act as a mechanism to attract not only a population of tourists and second homeowners, but also a resident population of telecommuters, sometimes called the “creative class.” These people could adopt the Park as their own, investing in their communities. They would plow their driveways during the winter, leave their lights on, coach Little League, volunteer with the fire department, and send their kids to school, invigorating both the economy and the community. They would be attracted to living in the Park for a number of reasons: for its “rural character,” for vibrant, bustling main streets with coffee shops and restaurants serving local food, and for accessibility in the form of Internet access and roads. The first step in making this a viable solution would be the investment in the infrastructure for broadband, as well as the encouragement of infill and main street revitalization. Tourism can market these qualities, showing people that the Adirondacks is a great place to call home.

However, there is no need to put one’s eggs all in the creative-class basket any more than in tourism. Other ways tourism can act as a mechanism to create new economic arrangements in the Park are by drawing in homesteaders or individuals participating in the current rebirth of the back-to-the-land movement. By offering programs for these types of individuals to work on organic farms, participate in permaculture design certificate classes, to learn about wildlife, or other ideas yet to be explored, tourism could bring in a diversity of individuals who will bring with them alternative economic terms that invigorate both people’s connections to the Park and to each other.

SPOTLIGHT: PAUL SMITH’S COLLEGE

The legendary Paul Smith, storyteller, charmer and savvy entrepreneur, founded the Saint Regis Hotel, one of the first tourist resorts and hotels of the Adirondacks in 1859 (Handmade, 2006). Paul Smith’s legacy of hospitality, however, also provides an historical instance of a successful strategy of using tourism as a vehicle to a new type of economy. The site of the Regis has become Paul Smith’s college, not only creating a new industry for the region, education, but also bringing young people to the Adirondacks every year, some who likely make it their home.
EDUCATION
EXPANDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND ATTRACTING INNOVATIVE MINDS

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
Transforming the Adirondacks into an outdoor classroom, shifting the focus from outdoor recreation and service jobs to educational tourism, is another method to reframe tourism. While there are a number of existing programs such as conservation education summer camps offered by the Department of Environmental Conservation and nature hikes offered by the Adirondack Mountain Club, potential exists to expand these activities.

At present many experience the Park through hiking its trails, canoeing its rivers, and swimming in its lakes. This brings people closer to nature, which has merit, but it does not necessarily deepen their understanding of its complex ecology or its unique natural and social history. Nor does it bring adequate financial compensation to Park residents. While other parks often charge an entrance fee, visitors access the Adirondack Park’s natural amenities for free, leaving Park residents to seek financial compensation through the service industry. The Adirondack region could shift its tourism industry to offer more active education, such as guided nature walks, apprenticeships with local artisans, farm-stays, or intensive nature camps, all led by Park residents. This type of tourism would capitalize on Adirondack residents as assets—utilizing more fully their knowledge and expertise.

This type of tourism could replace or augment seasonal and often low-paying service jobs with more valuable educational jobs. It could honor the knowledge and expertise of Park residents, and recast tourism so that it capitalizes on not only the land but the people within that land and their unique relationship with it. Finally, it would highlight the mutually beneficial relationship between people and the Park, demonstrating that the people support their Park and that the Park supports its people.

STEWARDS
A steward is a caretaker, and in this case a caretaker of the land. In the Adirondacks, no one knows and understands the Park better than its residents, and therefore no one is better able to care for the Park than its people. The Department of Environmental Conservation currently employs about 250-300 people year-round and 400 seasonally. These people are environmental conservation officers and forest rangers; they care for the campsites, boat launches, trails, and points of fishing access. In addition there are voluntary stewards coordinated through the Adirondack Mountain Club Stewardship Program and the Summit Steward Program.

As global climate change begins to act upon the landscape of the Park, there may be a need for more stewards to monitor the Park’s ecosystems and respond to changes. Park residents could be trained as ecologists, biologists, and climate change experts, and then employed to monitor areas that they are most familiar with. Park residents can bring their knowledge about how the land has evolved over their lifetime to the study of how it is currently changing. Stewardship allows Park residents to contribute meaningfully to current studies on global climate change and how it will affect land and people.
EDUCATION
EXPANDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND ATTRACTING INNOVATIVE MINDS

NEW FARMERS AND HOMESTEADERS
Many farmers are turning towards the growing, lucrative market for organic production. According to the Organic Trade Association, organic products have grown at a rate of nearly twenty percent per year for the last seven years, and industry experts are forecasting continued growth from nine to sixteen percent in the next five years. The Adirondacks, with a growing number of organic farms and CSAs, are already responding to this trend. In addition, there is a rising back-to-the-land movement where urban dwellers are migrating to rural areas, interested in reconnecting with nature and learning to work the land. Furthermore, many young people are flocking to organic farms near and far, itching to get their hands in the dirt. One organization in particular, WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) connects young people who are willing to work for room and board in exchange for some hands-on learning, and farmers who are anxious to get some more help in the field. The combination of these trends suggests potential for attracting farmers and homesteaders to the Park: people who are interested not in vacationing in the Park, but moving to the Park to work the land and actively participate in its communities.

So what would it take to be a farmer or homesteader in the Adirondacks? When asked about farming potential in the Adirondacks, both Rob Hastings of Rivermede Farm and Mark Kimball of Essex Farm mentioned it had less to do with a lack of available farmland and more to do with a lack of well-trained growers. The training required is two-fold: hands-on experience and business training. Many farmers in the Adirondacks are already offering training to young apprentices, and this could be expanded, either by joining the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms network, or by offering farm stays. In addition, the Adirondack Harvest has begun offering training courses to Adirondack farmers, including the New Farmer Training Program, and could expand these efforts to fill gaps in training that would prepare new farmers for setting up shop in the Adirondacks. In addition, farmers could offer permaculture design courses where students would become certified to start their own homestead. This would not only add an additional source of income for the farmer and more farmhands working the field, but also foster enthusiasm for a lifestyle that will help strengthen local communities.

There is a rising trend of young people looking to work on organic farms—exchanging labor for hands-on experience. Adirondack farms are poised to offer this type of mentorship, possibly leading to an increase in small-scale organic farmers and homesteaders in the region.
GOVERNMENT
SWAPPING PRISON GUARDS FOR PARK RANGERS

At the beginning of 2008 the New York Times spotlighted Franklin County and its five state prisons. “What we’ve seen in New York and other states,” the Times quoted, “is that one prison led to another prison and led to another prison, creating the notion that there’s no other economic development option than to build prisons to foster stability in rural areas” (Santos, 2008).

When a community becomes dependent on prison income, it’s hard to turn back. Indeed, nearly thirty percent of the Adirondacks’ employment is in government services and a significant percentage of that is related to prisons. The Adirondack region supplies a third of New York State’s Prisons, which provides statewide 10,000 jobs and $465 million in annual payroll (Jenkins & Keal, 2004).

But now some of those prisons are beginning to close, like the Camp Gabriels facility in Franklin County. According to Edmund J. McMahon, director of the Empire Center for New York State, also quoted in the New York Times, “There should be other ways of improving the economic situation in upstate New York that doesn’t involve filling upstate New York with prisons.”

One idea that corresponds well with the strategies highlighted in the previous discussion on education is to specifically target employees of the current prison system to become the trainers and organizers in Adirondack stewardship and outdoor classroom programs. While this idea may sound farfetched, it is not hard to fathom how many of the social skills of running correction facilities and programs may translate into the social skills needed to run training programs in other areas. In essence the Park could begin swapping its prison guards for private park rangers.

Naturally, there are no easy answers to problems as big as a declining prison employment base. There will be numerous prison facilities with the lights out and numerous people who need work, and clearly everyone cannot be trained to work in the outdoor recreation and education sectors. The trick is to envision these economic changes as opportunities, and the newly unemployed as assets rather than liabilities. Fortunately, countless communities have already dealt with the closing of large facilities like prisons, military bases, or other large industries and have survived. The strategy for redeploying the built and human capital of these places is rooted in the planning process. Communities that plan earlier and involve the community in the process of redirecting these resources do better. Local officials can play an integral role in recovery by directing the community process of assembling these plans. If not prison guards to park rangers and educators, perhaps the community will envision a better strategy to tackle the difficult transition.

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Whether by tanning, paper mill manufacturing, or outdoor recreation, the forest has always been vital to the Adirondack economy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries forest jobs mostly meant lumber extraction. “The jobs connected to the logging industry were labor intensive, and it took many hands to tap the resources of the forest. One premier job in the woods was that of spudder. The spudder was the one who removed the bark in sheets from the hemlock trees to make tannic acid necessary to tan hides. It was a skilled job and paid the highest wages” (Williamson, 2002).

By the late twentieth century, however, the forest became mostly a visual asset for tourists and second-homeowners to enjoy. The spudders mentioned in the quote ceased to exist and by 2005 all but one Ticonderoga paper mill has disappeared. Is there a future in forestry that can build on this history? This report has discussed sustainable forestry and alternative forestry techniques: another way to realize the potential of both natural and human Adirondack assets is to create forest products with the region’s local manufacturing expertise—in other words, the region’s human capital in wood-related manufacturing.

Looking at the manufacturing data from the Census Bureau’s 2005 Business Patterns data set, the Adirondacks’ manufacturing sector reveals a high export potential, as well as gainfully employing sixteen percent of the workforce.

Inside the Blue Line, the dominance of wood in the manufacturing sector becomes especially evident. While it is true that removing the Ticonderoga paper mill slices out a significant number of Adirondack manufacturing jobs, a still sizeable twenty-five percent of all manufacturing jobs is dedicated to a smorgasbord of wood specific manufacturing, from kitchen cabinets to tiny sawmills to wood pallet and cardboard box makers. If global economic and ecological crisis ultimately put pressure on local forests to be utilized as more than just scenic assets, combining forestry and manufacturing to create an even more diverse wood manufacturing industry in the Adirondacks would be good policy.

To create more vibrant, healthy communities of the future, it is time to think out of the box—a wood box no doubt—and to capitalize on this asset and manufacturing heritage.
ARTISANS
DESIGNING CRAFTS AND COMMUNITIES

Wood is part of the cultural life force of the Adirondacks. It was from wood that an artistic Adirondack identity was born, manifesting in a myriad of forms, including but not limited to the well-known Adirondack chair.

“The use of native materials was a natural occurrence in the Adirondacks. Existing materials grown in the forests were inexpensive and available. Rustic twig furniture, logs, and rustic trim on houses, rustic gateways, fences, and bridges were commonplace” (Williamson, 2002).

Opportunities exist to expand the region’s wood working tradition. Wooden furniture imports in the United States grew from about $12 billion in 2002 to about $17 billion in 2006. Of that, 46.5 percent came from China (worth $7.9 billion). Adding a twist, American owned companies make up 60% of the exports of wooden furniture from China (UNECE, 2007). Many other types of artisans contribute to the diverse human capital of the region, from local granite workers who helped build the Wild Center in Tupper Lake; to Ian Itar and Sam Hendren of Clovermead Farm who make local cheese in Keeseville; to numerous potters, jewelers and metal workers.

High numbers of artists, artisans and other creative individuals are believed to be indicators not just of the cultural but also of the economic vibrancy of a community. Artisans and other creatives have an impact on economic development by fostering a creative culture. Their main contribution to the community is to think, designing new methods for fixing the problems not just in the arts but in multiple facets of community life.

The Forest Stewardship Council is a not-for-profit “created to change the dialogue about and the practice of sustainable forestry worldwide.” The FSC sets standards for guiding forest management toward sustainable outcomes. In the Adirondacks the FSC has certified a half dozen wood workers who create Adirondack chairs and other wood products from locally grown and certified sustainable wood.

Participants include Hickory Hill Woodworks of Westport, Old Adirondack of Willsboro, Northern Hardwoods of Lake George, and Hornbeck Boats of Olmsteadville (FSC, 2008).
The Adirondacks have a relatively high percentage of people over the age of sixty-five, compared to many parts of New York and the United States. The older population, many of whom are retirees, is a unique asset for the region. Retirees have a wealth of experience and many have strong social networks built up over a lifetime.

Retirees often want to give back to their communities. Nationwide, about 45 percent of retirees participate in formal volunteer activities, which is near an all-time high (Zedlewski, 2007). In 2006, 61.2 million Americans volunteered. The estimated value of their labor was $152 million (West, 2007). David Eisner, the head of the Corporation for National Service, a government agency that promotes and coordinates volunteer services, put it this way, “the bottom line is volunteering isn’t just nice, its necessary to solving some of our toughest social challenges” (West, 2007).

It’s clear that retirees are a significant resource for the Adirondacks and that volunteering should be encouraged and facilitated. Generally, volunteers face several challenges. Many retirees want to volunteer but can’t find opportunities, especially ones that are interesting and challenging (Great Expectations, 2007). Adirondack organizations could strengthen their volunteer outreach through word of mouth, flyering, and mass media. Nationwide, the Internet is one of the leading methods that volunteers use to find opportunities (Great Expectations, 2007). This is yet one more reason why the Adirondacks would benefit from an improved broadband network.

Some volunteers have trouble arranging transportation to volunteer opportunities. For example, a gentleman in Inlet would like to volunteer weekly at the town hall, but he is unable to drive. Organized ride shares and public transportation would facilitate his volunteering (See “Alternative Transportation”).

In the coming years there is likely to be an explosion of volunteering as the baby boom generation ages. The number of Americans who will turn sixty-five over the next two decades increased by thirty-nine percent during this decade (Greenberg, 2005). Aging baby boomers could double the number of volunteers by 2034 (West, 2007). As baby boomers retire, and look for a place to live out their years, the Adirondacks could be working to attracting them.

The first step in attracting baby boomers is to make sure that the Adirondacks are caring well for their elderly now. Aging baby boomers may evaluate prospective homes based on the availability of health care and activities for retirees. They will also be drawn by natural amenities. Recent studies show that Americans prefer to move to places with mountains, water, and a pleasant climate—warm winters and mild summers with low humidity are desirable (ERS/U.S.D.A., 2007). Currently, the Sunbelt states lead the way when it comes to attracting retirees, but as climate change makes the Sunbelt a little too sunny, and Adirondack winters become milder, the region might find that its lakes and mountains draw an echo-boom of retiree volunteers.
GREEN COLLAR JOBS
CATALYZING ECONOMIES THROUGH BETTER INFRASTRUCTURE

Contrary to some perceptions, the Adirondack construction sector is not in expansion but rather decline. In 1998, based on zip codes in and around the Park, the construction sector had roughly 6,400 jobs. Eight years later, in 2005, and despite a national boom in construction that likely peaked in that year, jobs in this sector declined to only 5,000 positions, a twenty percent drop, and one of the largest job declines in the Adirondack region in both absolute and percent change terms. There is likely a significant amount of skilled human capital in this sector looking for ways to gainfully redeploy its expertise.

Earlier in this document we recommended green buildings, green streets, green towns and green corridors. Retrofitting the Adirondack built environment to achieve all this green will require skilled labor. In essence, a policy of building green is also a policy for “green jobs.” In the same way that tourism could be used as a vehicle to spur new industry clusters, the second-home industry in concert with the Adirondacks’ numerous social service agencies and appropriate regulations could produce an economic cluster in green buildings. Essentially, the public sector would implement codes that all buildings and streets must be built to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, while providing workforce development training in these skills. The public sector could also jump start the market in this industry by taking the initiative and rehabbing their built assets first. The US Environmental Protection Agency, among many other organizations, is already administering grants to assist towns and regions wishing to implement smart growth principles and to build green. As climate change and energy crisis pressures increase, grants from the state and federal levels will probably increase as well.

Local granite used in Wild Center piers.
Planting seedlings on the green roof of the Wild Center’s Bio Building.
Installation of the first solar panel on the roof of the Bio Building.
SOCIAL CAPITAL

Gathering places provide an opportunity for people to come together and build community. In the Adirondacks, gathering places are dispersed relatively evenly throughout the Park. Retail and food service establishments tend to cluster and to co-occur with libraries and churches. Libraries and churches, however, also often stand alone. Parks and sporting facilities tend to cluster and often are far from other gathering places.

Gathering places are much more concentrated outside of the Blue Line (shown here for a ten-mile extent beyond the Park’s border).

Providing more gathering places might be a good way to build community in the Adirondacks. In particular, providing more parks and sporting facilities near eating establishments might be a good investment for the Adirondack region.
Social capital is the networks formed by the people in the Park. It is the organizations and collectives, both formal and informal. It is communities of farmers, snowmobilers, business people. It is the community of Inlet or the community of the upstate New York region. It is people interacting and collaborating.
When asked where he did most of his shopping, a gentleman in Old Forge said, “I go to Utica.” We asked if he ever shopped at home or in other towns in the Park. “Utica’s much closer; its only an hour away,” he replied. It’s a familiar story in the Adirondacks. People will drive miles to acquire essential goods and services. From Old Forge to Utica, for example, is fifty miles. Retail services often cling to the edges of the Park, especially congregating in the larger nearby cities such as Utica. It is understandable, that, when many products not geared to tourists are not well stocked or are not well priced within the Park, people often leave to make these essential purchases. But how many times have retail dollars that could be supporting a local merchant with more of a stake in the community left the region? Most people are creatures of habit, especially when doing essential shopping. Perhaps they would buy from a local merchant if those habits could be redirected. In other instances Park residents might spend more simply to support their local economy, if they were given more information about where and how to do it.

The concept of buying American has been around for decades; in recent years some communities are taking this concept one step closer to home by buying local first. Buying local first does not mean walling oneself off from the global economy. It does mean restoring balance to one’s current set of economic arrangements. There are many compelling reasons to buy local first. If it’s dollars one is after, recent research is showing that money spent at a locally owned and operated stores has a greater economic impact on the community than money spent at chains. One of the better known studies, by Civic Economics, compared purchases at a local bookstore in Austin, Texas, to a national chain. They found that the multiplier effect was much higher at the local store. For every $100 spent at the chain store they showed that only $13 went back into the local economy. The same $100 spent at the local store generated $45, nearly three times as much local economic activity (Civic Economics, 2002).

Local firms spend so much more of their income locally because they don’t have the chain stores’ economies of scale. For example, the local store may have to outsource some of its advertising and marketing budget to someone local whereas a large chain has the efficiency of an in-house staff doing this task and others in a corporate headquarters miles away. While the prices at local businesses do tend to be higher, (although even this idea is coming into question) the number of dollars circulating locally is much higher. There are also many intangible, non-monetary benefits to buying local first. It is well documented that local business owners are more likely to be involved in their communities, supporting everything from the local chamber of commerce to the local soccer team. Local profits tend to stay in the community too, supporting charitable giving and other social causes. And from the consumer’s perspective, buying local often means more of a community experience in his or her daily shopping. The benefits of these kinds of informal interactions are hard to quantify. Still, it may be that these social capital benefits are the most valuable aspect of buying local first.
CASE STUDY: BUSINESS ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES

Realizing the need to compete with the economies of scale of the big chains, networks of local business owners and entrepreneurs have been forming around the country. These networks pool resources in things like marketing, learning from each other what it takes to not just survive but thrive in a world of chains. The fastest growing group of this kind is the Business Alliance For Local Living Economies (BALLE). Today there are over fifty BALLE networks in twenty-five states and provinces. In New York State they include Buffalo First and Sustainable Hudson Valley.

Probably the best type of local-first initiative is not between consumers and businesses, but rather between businesses and other businesses, also known as B2B. The concept of businesses selling to Adirondack businesses first may not be the most financially lucrative arrangement for those businesses, but it could be the most sustaining. The economist Michael Shuman, author of Going Local, recommends many ways to achieve the benefits of selling local first (Shuman 2000).

- Form a producer cooperative: these are business groups that collectively purchase, advertise, and politically lobby for local sellers
- Direct Deliver: B2B delivery services affiliated exclusively with local sellers can cut individual delivery costs
- Create a B2B Marketplace: These are business that link local businesses to one another. They take a commission on each local “input replacement.” Such an entity could also broker deals to help local businesses buy cost effective inputs of local supplies. This could especially work well with energy inputs.
- Create a B2G (business to government) entity: This is a business that aggregates small businesses into an entity that for a fee bids for government contracts
- Establish Micro Funds: These are loan funds for small businesses to create a lending pool for businesses wanting to sell local first

**Spotlight: Adirondack Harvest**

Transporting goods to markets across a 6 million acre region is a challenge Adirondack farmers often face. Adirondack Harvest is experimenting with ways to connect sellers and buyers. Their Winter 2008 newsletter highlighted the Farm to Family Food Network, which addresses food distribution in the region. Jennifer Perry, co-manager of Paul Smith's Farmers’ Market and a Certified Naturally Grown Market Gardener, is coordinating with vendors and consumers to launch the Farm to Family Food Network. The delivery service will operate from October to May, allowing time to focus on farmers’ markets during the summer months. Member consumers will pay an annual fee and member vendors will connect with Jennifer to inform consumers about availability and cost on a bi-weekly basis. Though the endeavor is still in its infancy, the Farm to Family Food Network addresses a growing need in the Adirondacks to encourage connections between growers and consumers.
As communities throughout the world work to boost their local economies, provide decent living wages for residents, and supply products of good quality, a number have found success with alternative business models, including cooperatives, of which there are four general types: consumer, worker, producer, and purchasing/shared services.

The business model for a cooperative is fairly straightforward: a number of people who share a common business and community goal pool their resources to produce enough start-up capital to purchase the necessary space, equipment, and supplies to begin operations. Each member therefore literally has a vested interest in the venture’s success. The members can be workers, producers, consumers, or a combination of the three. Worker-owned cooperatives, for example, offer a way for workers to become shareholders at their places of employment, encouraging a greater connection to their work and the other employees.

Due to a cooperative’s democratic decision-making process, businesses are also able to reevaluate present trends, rules, and structures and readjust accordingly to make the system more effective, efficient, and advantageous not just for the present moment, but over time. For instance, the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation of the Basque Region of Spain, renowned for its unique, large-scale cooperative model, has been able to accommodate members’ priorities as they shift over the years. "As the environment became a matter of world concern, Mondragon was able to act collectively both to retool their processes to be more environmentally friendly and to invest in product technologies that are in line with the values of conservation" (Graham, 2008). Mondragon’s system essentially involves a cooperative of cooperatives, where a larger umbrella cooperative organizes the smaller ones. The smaller cooperatives are divided into three areas: industrial (e.g., household products or automotive parts), financial (e.g., banks and insurance groups), and distribution (e.g., food and commercial distribution).

A smaller-scale operation, but no less effective an example, can be found in northern California. Located in what is known affectionately as the Gourmet Ghetto of Berkeley, California, the Cheese Board Collective has been successfully

**SPOTLIGHT: THE ARTWORKS**

Looking for a place to showcase their work, in June, 1989, several artists formed the Artworks cooperative in downtown Old Forge. Established under the auspices of the Adirondack North Country Association, The Artworks has been self-sufficient for about eighteen years. There are no employees; every member volunteers time to help the store run smoothly, managing everything from sweeping the floors to coordinating sales. Each artist gives 20 percent of sales to the co-op for maintenance, rent, utilities, packaging, etc. There are a few consignment artists who give 40 to 60 percent and one wholesaler, Adirondack Chandlers in Glens Falls, New York. A selection committee decides what pieces to show, always with the goal of presenting a variety of styles and media. The gallery includes an eclectic array of work: baskets, jewelry, quilts, clay work, pottery, origami, woodwork, photography, and painting. Each piece shown is an original.

The cooperative has inspired other artists’ cooperatives, including one in Lowville, New York. In addition to offering artists the space to exhibit their work, The Artworks builds social capital by providing a place for like-minded individuals to connect.
operating for over forty years. The collective now specializes in artisan breads and pizzas. In fact, the collective was so successful that the worker-owned cooperative expanded to Oakland in 1997 and eventually made its way across the bay to San Francisco in 2000, with Arizmendi Bakery establishing itself as a favorite of the Inner Sunset district. The new bakery took its name from José Maria Arizmendiarríeta, the young priest who helped found the Mondragon cooperative system.

From food co-ops, to department stores, to bakeries, to banks, the cooperative model can effectively influence a wide variety of businesses and industries.

**Spotlight:** Saranac Lake Community Store

Imagine a store that carries affordable socks and sneakers, as well as fleeces made by your neighbor, furniture made by the local Little League coach, and food grown by local farmers. Imagine a store that complements instead of competes with other stores in your downtown, pays a living wage, and provides decent health care to its full-time employees. Imagine walking into a store that offers you a gathering space for community meetings, holds farmers’ markets outside its doors, and even delivers goods to the elderly in your town. Imagine that you own part of this store. Sound like Utopia? It might be. But Saranac Lake, along with a number of other small towns across America, is doing it.

In July 2007, the Saranac Lake Community Store was launched. The motivation behind this store was a hotly contested but defeated Wal-Mart bid, a resident population that was tired of driving fifty miles to Plattsburgh to buy socks, and a hamlet in the process of revitalizing its downtown.

When asked if this model could be replicated throughout the Adirondacks and rural America, local community organizer and artist Gail Brill responded with a resounding “yes”. She pointed to the homogenization of rural America and offered community-owned stores as a way for small towns to retain their individuality and human scale. She advocated community stores as a way to provide goods to residents while keeping money and jobs local. She felt that community stores reinvigorate not only the local economy but also the local downtown and ultimately the larger local community.

“I love Saranac Lake and I believe it’s important for local support to go to local people.”

Kelly Morgan

Images courtesy of the Saranac Lake Community Store
Local currencies, also known as community currencies, are intended for trade solely in a town or a region. There are many models for local currencies. Some can be used like actual dollars while other local currency systems are similar to barter. Whatever the model, local currencies are based on agreed rules or an agreed backer of the currency’s value, such as hours. Perhaps the easiest way to understand local currencies is to think of them as functioning like a gift card or a coupon; however, instead of only being redeemable for a certain product or at a certain store, they are useable at multiple businesses throughout one’s community. Because they can only be circulated at locally participating businesses, people tend to use them before using other forms of cash, thus facilitating more exchanges locally than a typical currency does. In economic terms their “velocity” is considered high. Moreover, local currencies can catalyze a community that has unproductive and underutilized resources. This is especially true for undervalued human capital.

Almost everyone has expertise that can contribute to economic activity whether or not they can find a job in the traditional market place. When jobs are scarce due to national or international economic conditions, local currencies can release some of this pent-up economic potential. Author and economist Jane Jacobs explains that this works because currencies are simply regulators of trade. “Currencies are powerful carriers of feedback information, and potent triggers of adjustments, but on their own terms. A national currency registers, above all, consolidated information on a nation’s international trade” (Jacobs, 1984). A local currency can give back this feedback ability to the local economy. Local currencies respond to local trade conditions, not national or international trade conditions; and thus, facilitate local trade among willing and able parties whether or not the trading partners have access to national dollars.

To grease the wheels of buy-and-sell-local-first strategies; to stop seepage of wealth to goods and services outside the region; and to build the local economy, the Adirondacks could set up their own small-scale monetary system that could be used only within the Blue Line. It might even be fun for the tourists and second-homeowners who arrive seasonally. Through innovative marketing campaigns that hook tourists on using the local currency, visitors’ buying patterns could be realigned to benefit Adirondack communities more often. It is even conceivable that residents in gateway communities who acquire the new AdironDollars or AdironBucks, could begin coming into the Park to shop: a welcome counterpoint to the current situation of residents within the Park who leave it to shop.

CASE STUDY: ITHACA HOURS
Since 1991 the town of Ithaca, New York, has been using a community currency called Ithaca Hours to buy everything from goat cheese to tax consulting. Communities around the world have begun replicating Ithaca’s unique local currency model that is backed by hours. In their own words, “Ithaca Hours help to keep money local, building the Ithaca economy. It also builds community pride and connections. Over 900 participants publicly accept Ithaca Hours for goods and services. Additionally some local employers and employees have agreed to pay or receive partial wages in Ithaca Hours, further continuing our goal of keeping money local” (Ithaca Hours, 2008)
Though the heady days of dot-com fever are over, the Internet continues to reshape life across the globe. Seventy-five percent of Americans use the Internet and of those, seventy-two percent use it on a daily basis (Pew, 2008). Although sites like YouTube get most of the attention, the Internet is still mainly used for email and to find information (Pew, 2008)—activities that are essential to building businesses and functioning democracies.

Although Internet evangelists promoted the web as the “great leveler,” Internet usage patterns remain closely correlated with old social divisions: young people use the Internet more than older ones, urban residents use the Internet more than rural residents, and people with more education and income use it more than people with lower education and income. These statistics point to a “digital divide.” Anecdotal evidence suggests that Adirondack residents are on the wrong side of this divide; they suffer from slow or unavailable service and pay high prices for what they have. As the Internet creates new business opportunities and knowledge becomes the driving commodity in the economy, Adirondack residents fear they may be left behind.

Ironically, rural residents may be the ones who most need the Internet in the first place. The Internet could remake rural life by eliminating the isolation that stunts rural economies and communities. Better broadband could connect Adirondackers to each other across long distances, open access to telecommuting jobs in and out of the Park, and provide much needed workforce development through distance learning. In addition, more high paid knowledge workers might want to make the Park their permanent home, if fast broadband were added to its long list of amenities.

If fossil fuel prices continue to increase, world business exchanges may be profoundly transformed. The Internet may transition from a better way to do “business as usual,” to a whole new way of doing business. For example, players of “Second Life,” an on-line virtual reality game, spent $1.6 million real U.S. dollars on virtual products and virtual real estate on a recent run-of-the-mill March day (Second Life, 2008). By building their infrastructure and training residents the Adirondack region can position itself for the digital future.

**SPOTLIGHT: CBN Connect**

CBN Connect is a public-private partnership that is working to bring cutting edge broadband service to Clinton, Essex, and Franklin counties.

CBN Connect will build a public fiber optic and wireless broadband network that will be used by private companies to provide voice and data services to end users. The model is similar to a publicly owned airport that is used by private airlines.

The network will:
- Connect every school, hospital, library, business, and municipality
- Provide connection solutions for residents
- Support expanded cell phone coverage
- Be affordable and secure
- Offer a choice of competitive retail services to end users.

The effort was initiated in 2000. A feasibility study determined that a publicly created broadband network could bring $120 million in economic benefits to the three counties within ten years. The cost of building the 500-mile fiber optic network is estimated at $14.9–53.4 million. Currently, CBN Connect has raised $8,693,111 (CBN Connect, 2008).
COMMUNITY HOUSING

PRESEVING HOMES FOR PARK RESIDENTS

The boom in second-home development has resulted in drastic increases in property values and taxes. Many in the Park are being forced to sell their homes, move just outside the Blue Line where homes and the cost of living are cheaper, and commute long distances back into the Park to work. The significance of this trend extends beyond individuals not being able to afford taxes or purchase a home—the very fabric of Adirondack communities is unraveling.

The Adirondacks are not alone in their current housing crisis. As a response, community land trusts have sprung up across the county in order to provide affordable housing to residents of a community. Under this model the community land trust retains ownership of the land, while homeowners own the house on the property. In order to assure that these homes remain affordable into perpetuity, the appreciation is capped so that when a homeowner decides to sell their home, they either sell it to the trust or to another qualifying homeowner for an affordable price.

The Adirondack Community Housing Trust has been established to create a stock of homes that will remain affordable for year-round Park residents. Under this model, the housing trust will retain ownership of the land on which the trust homes are located, while residents will own the home itself. When the homeowner want to sell their home, the ACHT will have first option to buy, followed by other income-qualified families. A formula written into the lease will limit the amount of appreciated value the homeowner will receive at the time of sale, ensuring that the home remains affordable for future owners.

So what might community housing in the Adirondacks look like? Housing would ideally be located in town centers, close to amenities as well as other people. They could be single or multi-family homes, and could be retrofitted to be energy efficient (saving residents money) and handicapped accessible, or new homes built with Adirondack materials, Adirondack labor, and honoring traditional Adirondack architecture.

Community land trusts can go beyond providing affordable homes to stimulating sustainable economic growth and invigorating town centers and community. They can create jobs for local realtors, construction workers, and landscapers. They can incubate green building, encouraging the construction of energy efficient homes built from local materials. Finally, the availability of affordable housing to year-round residents will inspire pride and invigorate communities.
The “third place” is a term used by community developers to refer to the social places outside of home and work. Ray Oldenburg coined the term in his book *The Great, Good Place*, where he argued that third places are critical to civil society, democracy and social well-being. Third places are where people “meet, trust, and form associations.” They are critical social glue and the anchors of community life. Oldenburg’s hallmarks of a true third place include:

- Friendly environments
- Free or inexpensive access
- Available food and drink
- Regulars—people who habitually congregate there
- Visitors—people who may be there for the first time

In light of research on the creative class and the *Blue Print for the Blue Line*’s emphasis on broadband to attract them, local officials should consider taking an inventory of their “third places.” Telecommuters often seek third places to do their work via computer laptops. Workers cite isolation in working at home and many feel the third place is a happy medium between the home office and the work office. While third places often involve food and drink they are not limited to it. Oldenburg claims that the best third places are locally owned and operated by someone everybody knows in the neighborhood. Traditional third places were often the corner store or the neighborhood pub.

In downtown Saranac Lake there’s home, work, and then there’s Nori’s Village Market. Asking for information about the community on the street, more than one local suggested to ask at Nori’s.

As one walks in the door he or she is greeted by a large community board, a small seating area to have a cup of coffee with your neighbors, and of course the smiling faces of the owners, Lori Dodge-Cushman, Andy Keal and Amy Kohanski, the latter two of whom are represented to the left.

Left: Nori’s village market with owners Amy Kohanski (left) and Andy Keal (right).
A successful model since its introduction to the United States in the mid-1980s, Community Supported Agriculture is an agricultural business approach in which farms are supported by locals who buy shares for a certain amount of produce each month. Some operate on a system in which members receive (either through delivery or pick-up) a box of produce each week. Others rely on a weekly market set-up. Sometimes members are required to work a certain number of hours on the farm as well. Whatever the arrangement, the advantages to Community Supported Agriculture are numerous. For the farmers, they are often able to have money up front to start the growing season, and therefore can pay more attention to the field and less to marketing. For members, CSAs provide local high-quality produce (often at a much lower cost than at a store), as well as a much-needed connection to community growers and the food they consume.

The CSA comprises 75 individuals (about 30 families altogether). Their setup includes a weekly market that is held on Fridays from 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm. Each member has a free choice share, meaning that everyone should take all they and their family can eat for a week. There is no required number of hours of volunteer work, though many CSA members gladly offer help in the field when it’s needed.

During a phone interview, Mark reviewed the farmstand’s contents for a week in early March: the spread included a wide array from sour cream to parsnips, to winter squash, to corn flour, to ground beef. Using, as the Kimballs see it, a fairly rudimentary storage setup in their basement, they are able to store a great deal of vegetables to add to their year-round supply, which is also supplemented by the meat and dairy products they sell. Their ability to sell to customers throughout the year, due to their diversity of products, makes their model particularly lucrative.

Why has the CSA model worked so well for the Kimballs? The perks are many, but to start, the farmers know their customers; they interact on a weekly basis. This provides the initial connection that gets people coming back. Then, the high quality of food further encourages the relationship. Eventually, the members establish sustaining connections to one another, sometimes showing up to swap recipes and stories. Mark also noted that the farm’s free-choice system allows for better farming decisions. As long as everyone’s fed, then the farm is doing fine and the farmers can experiment with cover cropping and different varieties of crops. Because the customers pay in advance, this also takes cash out of the customer’s minds and in turn creates a different relationship with the products and food in general.

The story of Mark and Kristin Kimball and their farm is nothing short of inspiring. Kristin, a writer, went to interview Mark, a farmer, at his farm in central Pennsylvania. “The next thing I knew,” Kristin recounts in an article from the New Farmer Journal, “I had a hoe in my hand, and Farmer Mark and I were talking as we made our way down opposite sides of the same row of broccoli. Somewhere in the smell of turned dirt and sting of worked muscles, something clicked.” The writer never wrote the interview and before long the two had moved up to Essex, New York to start what is now one of the most successful CSA farms in the region, their first season starting in fall 2003.

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STRATEGIES FOR A NEW VISION
ASSEMBLING THE PIECES FOR SUSTAINABILITY ONE BY ONE
LAST THOUGHTS

This report began by acknowledging the work of the Common Ground Alliance, a non-profit, non-partisan group representing government, businesses, social, and environmental interests in the Park, a group that is working together to identify common concerns and to build a platform for action. Next, this report talked about vision, and even took a stab at articulating one. This report discussed at length the marriage of environment and economy, showing how from the very beginning they’ve always been together. In that discussion some emerging trends—demographic, environmental, and fossil fuel related—were discussed. Some of these trends were more alarming than others; all of them require action.

This report has discussed four types of capital, including natural, built, human, and social capital. This report then highlighted strategies—from no-till agriculture to cluster development—which the people of the Adirondacks might employ to build each type of capital as well as the connections between them. Some of these strategies have been very specific; most have been very broad, requiring refinement. Sometimes these strategies even conflict. There are complex decisions to be made. Hopefully, the vision, the trends, the history, and at least some of the strategies have been compelling. But one may still legitimately wonder, “Why struggle to make any of these strategies real? Why make the effort?” Zooming out from the Adirondacks for a moment might provide some perspective.

First, consider the environment. In the distant past people’s actions, their strategies for building better lives and communities, may not have had such huge effects on the natural capital on which all other forms of capital are dependent. Today, the world seems to be changing very fast. There are acid rain, invasive species, climate change, to name just a few environmental concerns that appear in the Common Ground Alliance’s Blue Print for the Blue Line. Moreover, people’s actions seem to be having huge effects, quickening these crises into a tsunami of problems that is complex and difficult to know how to confront. But it is also clear we cannot go back to the past. Setting aside an area as “forever wild”, for example, may have seemed adequate at one time, but is probably not sufficient to combat the global environmental problems of today.

Next consider, the economy. Until the present an economy built on constant growth and global comparative advantage may have had its merits, but as struggling people in the Adirondacks and elsewhere can attest, these economic models aren’t necessarily working well, for either the environment or for a majority of people, especially in rural places like the Adirondacks. In short, just as the old environmental models may no longer be working when those models don’t sufficiently fit people into the ecosystem, the old economic models may no longer be working when they don’t sufficiently fit people into the economic system, and if people must construct new models, it makes sense to create models that work for both ecosystems and economies.

Zooming back to the Adirondacks, the unique opportunity for the region becomes more intriguing. Since the Adirondacks is an actual rather than a figurative park, with people living and working inside it, it is a very special place. There are few places like the Adirondacks. The Park could play a very special role, perhaps becoming a model for places around the globe. More specifically that role could be to demonstrate tools to emulate in and outside of the Blue Line that provide people with the power to forge a new vision that is better for both people and parks.

The most exciting thing about the Adirondacks, however, is not that this could be a reality, but rather that it is a reality, materializing daily through the innovative work done by communities and people across the region. Time after time as the authors of this report tried to recommend a cutting edge technique or concept for sustainability to the Adirondacks, we discovered that the region was always one step ahead of the curve. In one strategy after another, either through agroforestry in Lake Placid or an artist’s cooperative in Old Forge, the people of the Adirondack Park are already creating the new intertwined environmental and economic models the world so desperately needs.

Many residents may not realize just how much is going on in the Park. Since the seeds of
environmental and economic transformation have already sprouted in the Adirondacks, the next step may not be so much to plant seeds but to nurture what exists. The people of the Adirondacks could then design the complex support structures, whether ecological or economic, which form in all systems.

Such a plan for putting it all together is a process one cannot glean from a manual. While there are countless connections to be made between the strategies spotlighted here and ones yet to be named, the process of discovering and strengthening those connections will be the work of Adirondack residents. Ultimately, creating the vision and the future of the Adirondacks is up to the people in the Park. Fortunately, the Adirondacks are already constructing that vision, through numerous strategies in all types of capital.

With continued hard work and cooperation, the Adirondacks can become a more vibrant model for us all.


Donaldson, M.M. “Use of Highway Underpasses by Large Mammals and Other Wildlife in Virginia and Factors Influencing their


Randall, John. *Understanding the Impacts of Invasive Plants in Natural Areas*. 90


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Pastoral: Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

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Children: Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

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Anglers: Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

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**RESOURCES**

**A VISION**

**DEMOGRAPHICS IN RURAL AMERICA**

Social Explorer and Queens College CUNY: www.socialexplorer.com

ERS/USDA Briefing Room, Rural Population and Migration: www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Population

**CLIMATE CHANGE**


**FOSSIL FUELS**


**THE MARRIAGE**

**ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC THEORIES**


**NATURAL CAPITAL**

**FOOD PRODUCTION & CSAs**

The Adirondack Harvest: www.adirondackharvest.com

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets: www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/organic

Local Harvest: www.localharvest.org

Cornell Cooperative Extension: www.cce.cornell.edu

Northern New York Agricultural Development Program: www.nnyagdev.org

New York Agriculture in the Classroom: www.nyaged.orgaitc


The Intervale Center, Burlington, VT: www.intervale.org

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The Intervale Center, Burlington, VT: www.intervale.org
Conservation Tillage Information Center: www.conservationinformation.org?action=learningcenter_core4_convotill

High Tunnels: www.hightunnels.org

Pennsylvania State Center for Plasticulture: www.plasticulture.cas.psu.edu

The New England Small Farm Institute: www.smallfarm.org

Adirondack Farmers’ Market Cooperative: www.adirondackfarmersmarket.com

USDA’s Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (CSAs): www.nal.usda.govafsicpubbscsacsa.shtml

**AGROFORESTRY**

USDA National Agroforestry Center: www.unl.edu/nac

Cornell Sugar Maple Research Program: www.maple.dnr.cornell.eduUihleinuihlein.htm

**SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY**

Forest Stewardship Council: www.fscus.org

Adirondack Park Sustainable Forestry Project. Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks: www.rcpa.org/forestry.html

**ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**


**BIOMASS**

Biomass Energy Resource Center: www.biomasscenter.org/upcoming.html


**ALTERNATIVE ENERGY**

Energy Smart Park Initiative: www.energysmartpark.org


American Wind Energy Association: www.awea.org

Low Impact Hydropower Institute: http://www.lowimpacthydro.org
**BUILT CAPITAL**

**LAND USE**


Smart Growth Online: www.smartgrowth.org


**GREEN BUILDINGS**


**GREEN STREETS**
Portland Bureau of Environmental Services: www.portlandonline.com/bes

**GREEN TOWNS**
John Todd Ecological Design, Inc.: www.toddecological.com

Ocean Arks International: www.oceanarks.org


**ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**
Adirondack Scenic Railroad: www.adirondackrr.com

Car Sharing.net: www.carsharing.net

Ithaca Car Share: www.ithacacarshare.org

**FORM-BASED CODES**
Local Government Commission: www.lgc.org

Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company: www.dpz.com

**TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS**
American Planning Association: www.apa.org

**TRANSECT**
Smart Code Central: www.smartcodecentral.com

**HUMAN CAPITAL**

**EDUCATION**
Department of Conservation Environmental Education Camps: www.dec.ny.gov/education/29.html

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms USA: www.wwoofusa.org

Permaculture Institute: www.permaculture.org

**ARTISANS**
The Forest Stewardship Council: www.fscus.org