

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Village of Speculator

Mayor Jeannette A Barrett, PhD
Adirondack Park Agency Board Meeting
February 19, 2026



Speculator's Vision



Our vision is to **foster a thriving, sustainable Adirondack community** where the well-being of both residents and visitors is nurtured by our **commitment to preserving our natural beauty and heritage.**



We strive for **sustainable growth and economic development** that enhances the **quality of life for all, while maintaining the character of our village.**



We aim to **address growing housing needs, protect our unique environment,** and offer visitors authentic, memorable experiences that **celebrate the outdoor spirit, our cultural heritage, and the small-town charm** of our region.



We seek to **create a resilient local economy,** through **responsible stewardship** and innovative local enterprises and collaborations, that will thrive for generations to come.



Makomis Fire Tower

White Tail Deer

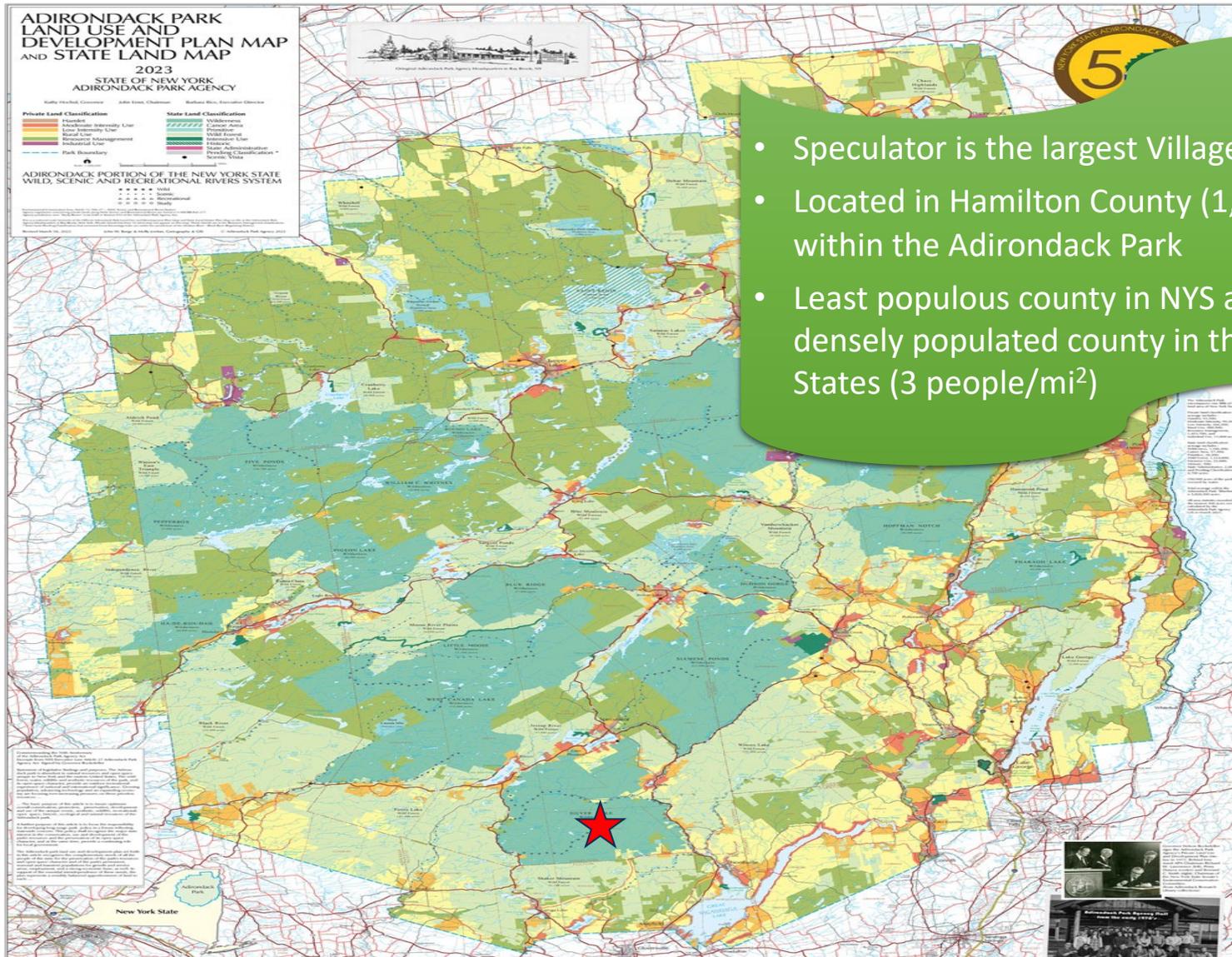
Oak Mountain

Community Garden



Speculator Snapshot

- Located in the Town of Lake Pleasant, County of Hamilton,
- Speculator is the only incorporated Village in Hamilton County (1925)
- Originally Newton's Corners later renamed "Speculator" in 1896
- All Season Tourist-based economy
- Designated a NYS Pro-Housing and a Climate Smart Community



- Speculator is the largest Village in NYS (47.2 mi²)
- Located in Hamilton County (1,808 mi²), entirely within the Adirondack Park
- Least populous county in NYS and the least densely populated county in the Eastern United States (3 people/mi²)



Regional History: *Legendary Heavyweight Boxing Training Ground*

- **Gene Tunney (1926-1928):** Undefeated World HW Champion; defeated Jack Dempsey twice.
- **Max Schmeling (1930-1932):** World HW Champion; defeated Joe Louis in 1936.
- **Max Baer (1934-1935):** World HW Champion; trained with his brother Buddy Baer.
- **Over a Dozen World Champions:** Including Billy Wallas, Jimmy Slattery, Maxie "Slapsie Maxie" Rosenbloom, and Jorge Brescia.



French Louie

The best boat afloat



The Lake Pleasant Special
BUILT TO ORDER ONLY
THE SACANDAGA and KUNJAMUCK
are both good ones also and kept in stock
Call or write for circulars and prices

23 YEARS' EXPERIENCE — REPAIRING — PAINTING
HORSESHOEING, ETC.

DEALER IN
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS, WAGONS, SLEIGHS,
SADDLERY-HARDWARE and HARDWARE SPECIALTIES

Automobile and Motor Boat Repairs **JOHN F. BUYCE** SPECULATOR, N. Y.
HAMILTON COUNTY



Isaiah Perkins

Regional History

Guides and Trappers

- French Louie (Louis Seymour): A famous Adirondack hermit and trapper, Louie died at Brooks Hotel in Speculator in 1915 and is buried in Speculator Cemetery.
- John F. Buyce: A renowned builder of Adirondack guide boats and andirons for the Great Camps, Buyce operated a shop in the village starting in 1908
- Isaiah Perkins, legendary guide and Innkeeper. Opened the Adirondack Theater to show silent movies in 1914

Culinary Superstars

- Chef Louis Petrozza: Competitor on Hell's Kitchen (Season 4). Chef, Oak Mountain, Acorn Pub and Restaurant.
- Chef Lance Nitahara: Competitor on Chopped (Season 8 and 12). Former Executive Chef, Camp-of-the-Woods.



Lance Nitahara



Lou Petrozza

Speculator Today

- Year-round population: 420 residents, growing to more than 5,000 visitors
 - Three not-for-profit children's camps and one Family resort.
 - Nearly 80% of residences are second homes/vacation rentals.
- DEC Campgrounds:
 - Moffitt Beach Campsite located outside the Village. Boasts a beautiful beach, boat ramp, and 261 campsites, 88 of which are located directly on the waterfront.
 - Lewey Lake Campsite is located to the north with 195 campsites. DEC has selected sites for restoration.



Slalom skiing on Lake Pleasant



Deerfoot Boys Camp, Whitaker Lake



4th of July Parade, Speculator, NY

Speculator Today

- Hamilton County well known for snowmobiling during the winter months and has 750 miles of groomed snowmobile trails.
- Hosted Adirondack Cross-Country Snow Mobile Races on Lake Pleasant



Speculator Today: Oak Mountain



- The oldest ADK ski mountain with 22 trails. Key venue for youth and scholastic alpine racing in the ADKs
 - Broadalbin Perth Alpine Ski Team and Oak Mountain Race Team
 - Host Regional High school-sanctioned alpine races
 - School Based Ski Programs: Lake Pleasant, Arietta, Wells, Indian Lake, Mayfield
- Southern ADK Mountain Rescue Training Center (2021)
- Mountain bike trails, disc golf, community events
- Popular wedding venue boasting beautiful settings of Lake Pleasant and the ADK Mountains.



Speculator Today: Makomis Fire Tower

- Makomis Fire Tower set in 1916, one of the first 10 towers set in the ADKs. Relocated to Speculator in 2022.
 - DEC Smart Growth Grant, ADK Foundation Grant, Public donations
- Most accessible fire tower to the public, open 365 days/year, dawn to dusk
- APA worked with the Village to secure a variance
- Makomis Fire Tower boasts beautiful views and attracts many new visitors.
- Educational kiosk highlights Fire Tower history, local history and attractions, regional flora and fauna, promotes environment





Conservation Easements

- Speculator Tree Farm and Perkins Clearing Tracts can become a **model for sustainable, accessible, and enjoyable outdoor recreation** in the central Adirondacks.
- **36,000 acres** open year-round for recreation such as hunting, fishing, biking, and snowmobiling.
- Urging DEC to **finalize the Recreational Management Plan.**
 - Interim plan, November 2005
 - Solicited input 2018, no results
 - Public Hearing, Sept 2025

Lake Pleasant- Sacandaga Association

- Lake Pleasant-Sacandaga Association (LPSA)
 - Non-profit founded in 1953
 - Dedicated to preserving the water quality and ecological health
- Actively manages Invasive species,
 - Only known invasive species: spiny water flea
- Conducts water surveys and samplings.
- Coordinates environmental education and scholarship program for local students
- Operates a free boat-wash station on days not covered by ADK watershed.



“We are proud of our clean waters and will do what needs to be done to keep them that way.”



CHALLENGES FACING ADK COMMUNITIES

- **The Adirondack Context:**
 - The responsibility of maintaining **~1.1 Million acres** of the ADK "Forever Wild" landscape—and the infrastructure that protects its sensitive watersheds—falls on less than 5,000 year-round residents across 9 towns and 1 village in Hamilton County.
- **One-size-fits-all Policy Approach Doesn't Consider Our Realities**
 - **Infrastructure Financial Burden:** Small user base must maintain water and wastewater systems that protect state-owned land. Costs are unsustainable for local taxpayers.
 - **Administrative Barriers:** Complexity of grant applications exceeds the capacity of limited village staff. No dedicated grant writers.
 - **Reimbursement Delays:** Severe cash-flow issues given limited capital reserves and the multi-year wait times for state reimbursement.
 - **Operational Shifts:** Population loss and a shift toward a tourism-based economy have increased the demand for reliable broadband, housing, and infrastructure, yet the resources to fund these improvements remain elusive.

CHALLENGES TO SUPPORT VISITORS AND RESIDENTS



Available Workforce

Declining population
Median Age: 56 years;
39 years statewide
~60% employed by
county and
municipalities.



Lack Of Affordable Workforce Housing

Approximately 80%
second home or
vacation rentals vs 10%
statewide
High demand for
retiree homes
Rising construction and
development costs
Extra APA regulatory
hurdles



Regional Wage Mismatch

Wages in the local
economy do not align
with the high, rising
cost of housing



Municipal Income Stream:

No shared sales tax and
no bed tax in Hamilton
county



Competition For Grant Dollars

Challenges of living in
ADK not reflected in
Disadvantaged
Community (DAC)
designation.
Less than 3% of the
nearly \$3 billion in
EFC's WIIA grants have
gone to ADK towns and
villages since 2015.



Funding formulas

The grant scoring
matrices used to
distribute grants and
funding allocate points
based on multiple
criteria that
misrepresent the needs
of the ADK Park which
can make communities,
like Speculator, appear
more affluent due to
tourism and second-
home economy.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

The Village of Speculator provides both Sewer and Water services to most of the Village. Systems are aged and in need of improvements and extensions.

Wastewater Projects

- **\$2.5 Million WWTP Upgrade** recently completed.
 - *Funding: \$475K WIIA Grant, \$500K Senator Tidesco*
 - *Village: \$1.5M EFC 30-yr low interest EFC loan*
- **\$468,750 Disinfection Project:**
 - Funding: \$226,500 WQIP Grant,
 - *Village: \$242,250 WWTP Capital Reserve Project Fund*
- **FEMA Wastewater Projects** from Halloween Storm of 2019 (*SOW Changes still under review*)





Well Building



Water System & Well Building

The aging Water System supplies most of the Village.

Replaced Distribution pumps, motors and piping in the last 5 yrs

\$3.2 Million Water System Upgrade Project

- Water system improvements,
- Replace Well building control panels,
- Build chlorine room,
- Replace main transmission lines, AC and iron lines

Funding:

- \$1.54M WIIA Grant
- \$1.0M NYS EDS County Infrastructure Grant (50/50) to support housing infrastructure;
 - \$500K Village's portion
 - \$500K Developer's portion for 10 homes

\$1.16 M Village Portion, financing TBD

Additional Village Projects

Pavilion Parking Lot and Pathway Park Improvements

- 2022 – NYSDEC WQIP – Pathway Park Facilities Green Infrastructure Engineering Feasibility Study Report - \$30,000 – **awarded**
- Multiple Grants rejected to date
- **Project Costs: \$950,000**

Revitalization of Downtown and Public Spaces

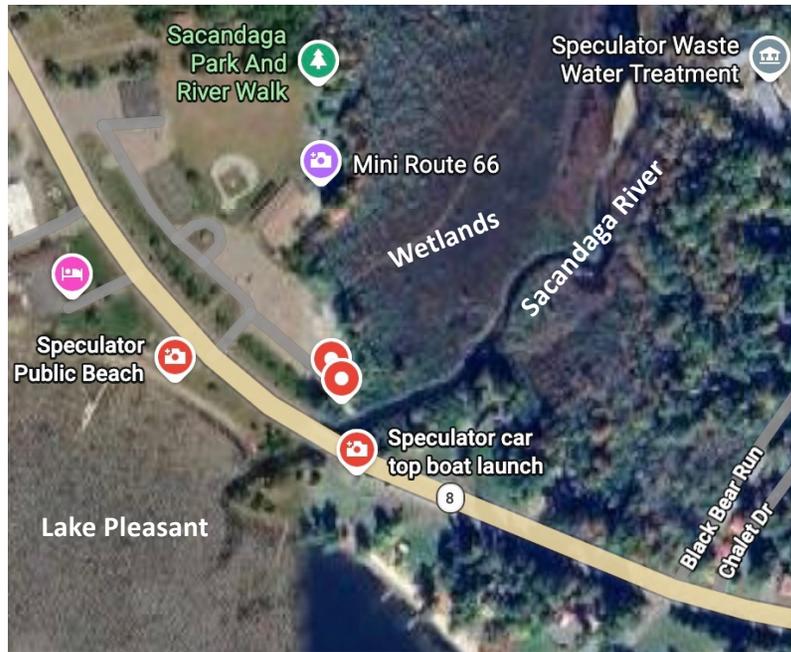
- 2024 – NYSDEC Adirondack Communities Smart Growth Grant –Comprehensive Plan - \$65,000 – **awarded**
- \$4.5 Million NY Forward Grant for Village and Businesses. Rejected

Brownfield Conversion to Public Park and Parking

- Centrally located property, former gas station
- 2025 EPA grant through LCLGRBP for Brownfields for environmental assessment and preliminary planning designs
- **Project Costs: \$500,000**

Wastewater Inflow & Infiltration (I&I)

- Wastewater I&I Study completed; Repairs and replacement of sewer mains and manholes
- 20,000 linear feet sewer line; 70+ manholes with severe I&I in more than half
- **Estimated Project Costs: \$4Million slip-lining Sewer Lines; \$350K Manhole frames and covers;**



Safeguarding Waterways: Pavilion Parking Lot Project

Pavilion Parking lot is surrounded by Lake Pleasant, Sacandaga River and Wetlands

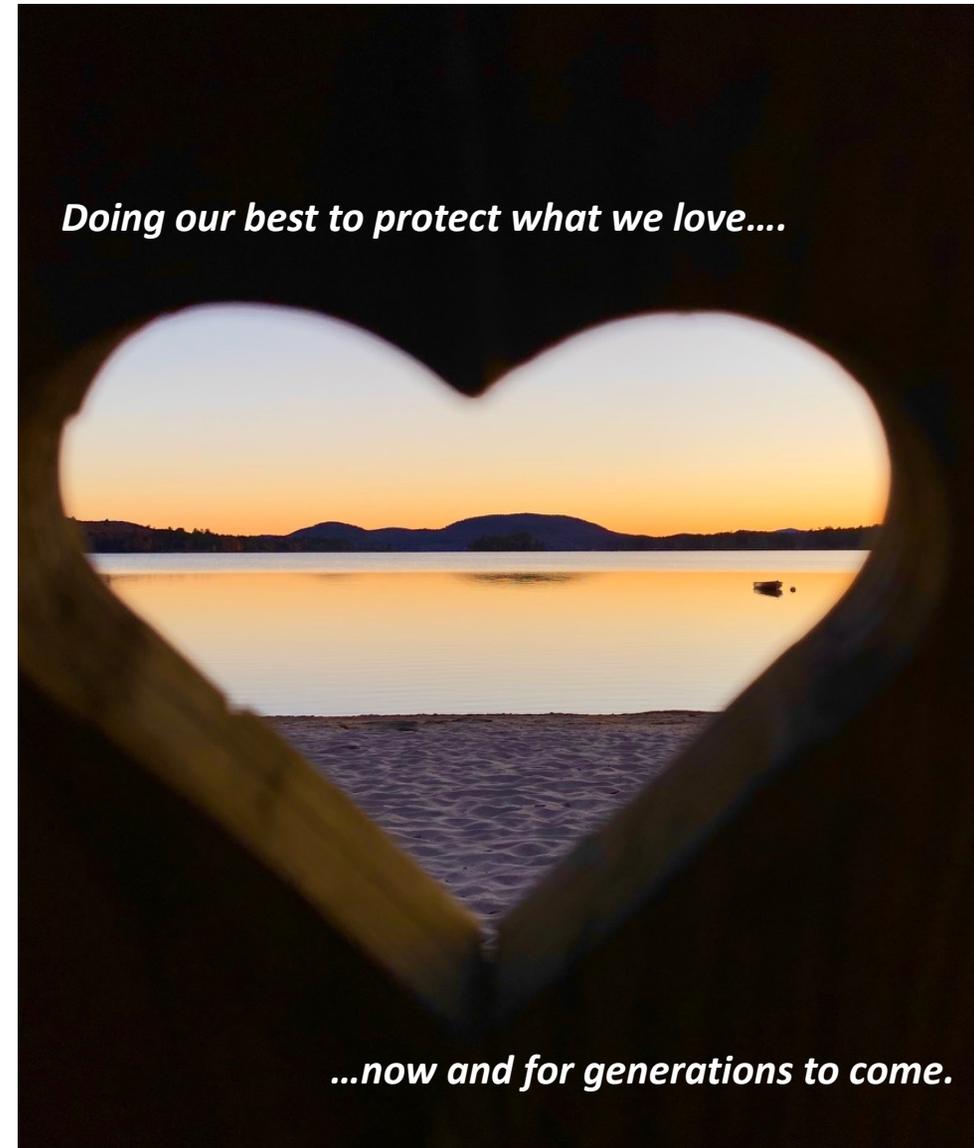
- 2024 – NYSDEC WQIP Eco-Friendly Pavilion Parking lot - \$875K – *not awarded*
- 2025 – OPRHP Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant - Pathway Park Improvement Project - \$927,058 – *not awarded*
- 2025 – NYSDOS LWRP – Village of Speculator Waterfront Parks Improvement Project - \$945,000 – *not awarded*
- 2025 Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP)-\$900K –*not awarded*



Speculator Pavilion Parking Lot

HIGH COST OF PROTECTING WHAT WE CARE ABOUT

- Projects totaling over \$9.5 Million
 - \$3.2 Million Water Project
 - \$470K Disinfection Project
 - \$1 Million Pavilion Parking Lot
 - \$4.4 Million I&I
 - \$500K Brownfield reclamation
- Small user base (~400) must maintain water and wastewater systems that protect state-owned land.
- Hamilton County does not share sales tax and does not have a bed tax





Lake Pleasant



Speculator Mountain

QUESTIONS?

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Makomis Fire Tower in moonlight