SITE PLAN REVIEW LAW

As Amended and Enacted

by the Town of Keene

November 12, 2003

In Accord with

TOWN OF KEENE MASTER PLAN

Of The Keene Planning Board

Foreword

The intent of this Town of Keene Site Plan Review Law is to ensure the optimum overall conservation, protection, preservation, development and use of the natural and man-related resources of the Town by regulating land use activity with the Town through review and approval of development plans. The following is an outline of the contents of this Law:

ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS - A discussion on the intent and purpose of this Law, a definition of terms, a declination of what elements apply and what are the exceptions, and an introduction to the review procedures.

ARTICLE II: GENERAL REVIEW STANDARDS - Contains the standards and considerations utilized by the Planning Board for the review of a development plan submitted by an applicant.

ARTICLE III: REVIEW PROCEDURES - Requirements and guidelines for developing and submitting sufficient data regarding the proposed development to clearly illustrate the intention of the applicant.

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ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS

Section 1.1. Enactment

The Town Board of the Town of Keene, Essex County, New York, does hereby ordain and enact this Town of Keene Site Plan Review Law as enacted as Public Law #1 of 1990 and as hereby amended and now entitled Public Law #5 of 1995, and Local Law #2 of 2003 pursuant to the authority and provisions of Section 10 of the Municipal Home Rule Law and Sections 268, 274(a), 276, 277 and 278 of the Town Law.

The existing Town of Keene Site Plan Review Law shall supersede and control over the Town Law of the State of New York and the application of the Town Law of the State of New York including, but not limited to Art. 16 of the Town Law of the State of New York with respect to all matters pertaining to subdivision of land, land use, site plan review and any and all matters addressed and covered by Town of Keene Site Plan Review Law.

Section 1.2. Short Title

This local law shall be known as the "Town of Keene Site Plan Review Law." The Town of Keene is hereinafter referred to as the" "Town"."

Section 1.3. Intent and Purpose

A clean, wholesome, attractive community is declared to be of importance to the general well being of the inhabitants of the Town and, in addition, such an environment is deemed essential to the maintenance and continued development of the economy of the Town. Of primary importance in protecting the community and promoting orderly development in keeping with the character of the Town is the monitoring and regulation of land use within the Town.

The Town of Keene's economy and quality of life, are dependent in large part, upon the natural and scenic qualities of the Town. These qualities include views of mountains, hillsides and the AuSable River, open meadows and fields, waterfalls, the absence of unsightly commercial development along the Town's thoroughfares, and the generally attractive character of the Town's two densely-settled commercial/residential areas, "Keene" and "Keene Valley." The maintenance and conservation of the Town's existing historic and architectural character is also deemed essential to the continued development of the economy of the Town. Inharmonious development could destroy irretrievable historic and architectural resources. In addition, the scenic qualities, open space character, and quality of natural resources are significant in providing a quality of

life which contributes to the social and economic well-being of the Town. Development must be supervised to ensure the protection and enhancement of the Town's man-made and natural resources.

It is the intent of this local law to ensure the optimum overall conservation, protection, preservation, development and use of the natural and man-related resources of the Town by regulating land use activity within the Town through review and approval of development plans. It is intended that this control of development within the Town will achieve the following general objectives:

A. Preserve and improve the character of the Town.

B. Ensure adequate public access to the High Peaks both now and in the future.

C. Improve the visual quality of roads and streets.

D. Protect residential areas from traffic, noise and incompatible uses.

E. Establish an orderly method for evaluating individual projects and organizing growth and development so that they will enhance the character of the Town as well as the economy.

F. Ensure that new development is in keeping with adjacent uses, neighborhood character and Town character.

G. Protect and enhance the natural beauty of the area so that it may be enjoyed by future generations.

H. Protect areas of architectural importance from incompatible adjacent uses.

I. Enhance the image of the Town to residents and visitors. It is not the intent of this local law to prohibit per se any land use activity, but to allow all land use activities which will meet the standards set forth in Article II hereof.

J. Ensure the orderly, efficient and economical division of land in the Town. This includes the creation of buildable lots, safe access and egress from such lots, adequate water supply and sewage disposal, and proper stormwater management and sediment/erosion control. It also includes the preservation of the Town's rural character by avoiding excessive clearing and alteration of terrain.

K. Protect the community character of the town based on its differing types of landscape features.

L. Streamline procedures in order to expedite review of projects with minimal potential impacts.

M. Comply with provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

N. Minimize financial burden on the Town by obtaining reimbursable costs for review process.

Section 1.4 Definitions

As used in this local law, unless the context otherwise requires:

A. Accessory structure means any structure or a portion of a main structure customarily incidental and subordinate to a principal land use or development and that customarily accompanies or is associated with such principal land use or development, including a guest cottage not for rent or hire that is incidental and subordinate to, and associated with, a single family dwelling.

B. Board means the Town of Keene Planning Board.

C. Family means persons living together as a single housekeeping unit.

D. Land Use Activity means any construction or other activity which materially changes the use or appearance of land or a structure or the intensity of use of land or a structure. Land Use Activity shall explicitly include, but not be limited to, the following: new structures, expansions of existing structures, new uses, material changes in or expansions of existing uses, signs, roads, fences, driveways and excavations for the purpose of extracting soils or mineral deposits, demolition's, and on or off street parking. Agricultural fences and those less than four feet in height do not require permits. Land Use Activity shall also include any division of a parcel into two (2) or more lots, parcels or sites, whether adjoining or not, for the purpose of sale, lease, license or any form of separate ownership or occupancy save by devise.

E. Minor Division of Land means any division of land containing not more than six lots each not involving any new streets or roads (excepting private drives) or the extension of municipal facilities, not involving a Critical Environmental Area, not adversely impacting the development of the remainder of the parcel or adjoining properties.

F. Major Division of Land means any division of land not classified as a minor division of land.

G. One-family dwelling means a complete self-contained residential unit for permanent habitation by one family only, and each containing facilities for cooking, sleeping and sanitary needs.

H. Two-family dwelling means two complete but separate self-contained residential units each intended for permanent habitation by one family only, and each containing facilities for cooking, sleeping and sanitary needs, located in a single structure having a common roof, wall or ceiling.

I. Multiple-family dwelling means a structure containing three or more separate, self-contained units each intended for permanent habitation by one family, and each containing facilities for cooking, sleeping and sanitary needs.

J. Sign means any written or expressive communicative device that is visible from an out-of-doors position and is used to advertise or call the public's attention to any business, activity, object for sale or lease, person or place, or to bear any kind of message.

L. Shoreline means the mean high water mark of any lake, pond, river, or permanent stream.

M. Structure means any object constructed, installed or placed on land to facilitate land use and development or subdivision of land, such as buildings, mobile homes, fences, sheds, signs, tanks, and any fixtures, additions and alterations thereto.

Section 1.5. Authorization of Planning Board to Review Development Plans

The Planning Board is hereby authorized to review and approve, approve with qualifications or modifications or disapprove plans for new land use activities within the Town as hereinafter designated pursuant to and in accordance with the standards and procedures set forth in this local law.

Section 1.6. Applicability

A. General Applicability

1. Any use or structure to be constructed, maintained or constructed wholly or partially within the Town shall be reviewable under this local law except as specifically excluded pursuant to Section 1.6 (B). Buildings under 500 square feet with no water or sewer do not need a permit.

Further, when a house is lost by catastrophe, if it is replaced using the same footprint, it does not require a permit.

2. Any use that has been discontinued for a period of two (2) years or more shall be subject to review pursuant to the terms of this law before such use is resumed.

3. Applicability of this local law shall specifically include, but not be limited to the following:

    a. Any "Type 1" action as defined under Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law and Part 617, Volume 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations.

    b. Any land use or development considered a Class A Regional Project by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA).

    c. Any division of a parcel of land into two (2) or more lots, parcels or sites, whether adjoining or not, for the purpose of sale, lease, license or any form of separate ownership or occupancy save by devise.

    d. Any site preparation involving the stripping, excavating, filling or grading of land in the following areas:

        i. Within one hundred (100) feet of a wetland.

        ii. Upon existing slopes which exceed a 15 percent grade over any fifty (50) foot length.

        iii. Within one hundred (100) feet of all streams and water bodies as mapped and/or classified by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

        iv. Within the One Hundred (100) year flood plain of any water course as delineated on Flood Hazard Boundary maps or Flood Insurance Rate Maps prepared by the U.S.. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

    e. Excavation or filling which involves more than five hundred (500) cubic yards of material on one building site.

    f. The land clearing of forested or brush land of greater than two (2)

acres of land surface area.

4. Landscaping or grading which is related to a land use activity listed in "3" above only shall be reviewable under this local law.

5. Changes in use involving the following:

   a. Change from residential to commercial or public use.

   b. Change in the type of business being conducted where the new business requires a different federal, state, county or local license or approval.

   c. Significant changes in the function or operation of the business or the exterior appearance of a commercial or public establishment including signage, lighting, facade, type, parking and public visibility.

B. Exceptions from Review Requirements:

1. General Exceptions - All new land use activities within the Town designated in paragraph "A" above shall require review and approval pursuant to the provisions thereof before being undertaken, except the following:

   a. Ordinary repair or maintenance or interior alterations including, but not limited to, internal structural changes to existing structures, provided there is no change of use;

   b. New additions less than 500 square feet which do not include or require new sewer or water facilities are exempt from review. Additional above ground stories are to be included in this calculation. This exemption cap covers a 5-year period starting from the time that the first addition to the structure was completed. This exemption does not include signs, fences or other structures reviewable under the Site Plan Review Law;

   c. Non-structural agricultural or gardening uses not involving substantial timber cutting;

   d. Structures under one hundred (100) square feet in size, except signs and fences reviewable under this local law;

   e. Signs expressly exempted from review by Section 3 of this paragraph "B.";

f. Garage, lawn and porch sales not exceeding three (3) days in duration and not occurring more than three times in a calendar year;

g. Non-commercial agricultural operations;

h. Municipal activities are not subject to review procedures under Article III of this law, but should require joint review with the Planning Board.

2. Exceptions for Pre-Existing Uses - This law does not apply to uses and structures which are lawfully in existence as of the date this local law becomes effective. Any use or structure shall be considered to be in existence provided the same has been substantially commenced as of the effective date of this Local Law.

3. Signs Not Requiring Review - The following signs which, except as provided below, having a sign area of less than six (6) square feet may be erected and maintained without a development plan review and approval:

   a. Signs advertising the sale or rental of the premises upon which the sign is located.

   b. Signs denoting the architect, engineer or contractor where construction, repair or renovation is in progress, limited to one per property.

   c. Professional and trade name plates and home business signs. Such signs may be illuminated by external incandescent light only and shall be limited to one (1) per person or business.

   d. Signs which mark property boundaries, give directions for roads or trails; prohibit trespassing, hunting, fishing or off-road vehicles; or warn of hazards.

   e. Signs giving the name of the residents of a dwelling or its address. Such signs may be illuminated by external white light only and shall be limited to one per dwelling.

   f. Temporary signs, including banners, or pennants, relating to garage, lawn or other individual, non-recurring sales, for the sale of produce grown or harvested by the property owner where the subject sign is located, or for a church bazaar, political campaign, fund drive, parade, fair, firemen's field day or other event or undertaking conducted by a political, civic, religious, charitable or

educational organization. Such temporary signs are not limited in size and shall be removed immediately after the termination of the activity being advertised.

g. Any exterior business or commercial, or any one sign exceeding four (4) square feet is subject to Board review.

Section 1.7. Relationship to Other Laws

This local law in no way affects the provisions or requirements of any other federal, state or local laws or regulations, and does not excuse any person from having to comply with such other applicable laws and regulations. Where this local law is in conflict with any other law or regulation, the more restrictive shall apply.

Section 1.8. General Development Review Procedures

Activities requiring approval under this local law shall be reviewed according to the procedures set forth in detail in Article III hereof. Any person uncertain as to the applicability of this law to a given land use activity may apply in writing to the Planning Board for a written jurisdictional determination, and shall receive a reply within fifteen (15) days of the Planning Board's receipt thereof.

Application for review and approval shall be made on forms prescribed from time to time by the Planning Board and shall include all information requested on the requisite application form, unless waived by the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall notify the applicant of an incomplete application within fifteen (15) days of the Planning Board's receipt thereof.

In reviewing applications, the Planning Board shall apply the review considerations and standards described in Article II hereof.

Within forty-five (45) calendar days of receipt of a completed application, the Planning Board shall approve the application, approve it with conditions or modifications, or hold a public hearing on the application. If a public hearing is held, the Planning Board shall, within forty-five (45) calendar days of the date of the close of the hearing, approve, approve with conditions or modifications or disapprove the application. Any decision of the Planning Broad may be appealed by a proceeding under Article 78 of the Civil Practice Laws and Rules, and may be affirmed, modified or reversed. If the Planning Board deems it necessary to hold a public hearing, it shall do so advise the applicant of the

date, time and place thereof within thirty (30) days of receipt of a completed application.

At any such public hearing the applicant may be represented by counsel, who may cross examine witnesses and present evidence on the applicants behalf.

The Planning Board shall, and is hereby empowered to adopt and develop rules and procedures for the conduct of such public hearings.

Section 1.9. SEQRA Compliance

Upon receipt of application materials it deems complete, the Planning Board shall initiate the New York State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process by either circulating the application and Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) to all involved agencies (if coordinated review is undertaken) or by issuing its determination of significance within twenty (20) days. Where the proposed action shall not have a significant impact on the environment, the Planning Board shall issue a negative declaration. Where the proposed action may have a significant impact, the Planning Board shall issue a positive declaration and require the submission of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). No time periods for decision making in this Site Plan Review Law shall begin to run until either acceptance of a DEIS as satisfactory pursuant to NYCRR Section 617.8(b)(1) or the issuance of a negative declaration.

ARTICLE II: GENERAL REVIEW STANDARDS

The following standards and considerations shall be utilized by the Planning Board for the review of a development plan and no application shall be approved or approved with conditions or modifications which does not reasonably comply with these standards:

Section 2.1. Community Character

2.1.1 Introduction

Most landscapes of the Town of Keene have scenic qualities. These landscapes generally fit into four categories including:

1. Hamlets and Gateways
2. Highway Corridors
3. Upland Areas
4. Ridgelines and Steep Slopes

It is the Town 's intent to protect visual character according to each of these categories. The ability of each landscape category to assimilate the visual effects of changes varies widely. Accordingly, specific design considerations and techniques have been developed for each category. In order to facilitate these principles, the following considerations shall be utilized by the project applicant and Planning Board.

A. Site development shall be planned so that it harmonizes with the existing landscape character and blends into the landscape by using existing land forms and vegetation.

B. New land use activities, structures and site improvements for commercial and industrial uses shall be harmonious with existing character of the neighboring area. Review may be based on, but not limited to, such factors as general design, arrangement, location, texture, material, color, facade, openings and bays, cornice heights, building height and scale of the proposed land use activity or structure. Consistency with the existing character of nearby uses and structures, the possible detrimental effects on or obstruction of views of nearby buildings and the effect on the character of the area will also be considered.

C. The types and character of commercial use and industrial use buildings in

the Town vary considerable, so adjacent uses are the most important guide for building form and character. Buildings shall be of a size, construction, material, color and facade, and have lot sizes and setbacks, which are in keeping with the character of the Town and compatible with nearby buildings.

D. As there are different residential neighborhoods in the Town with different general types of buildings in each, consideration of construction of new structures shall be consistent with the style and character of the neighborhood and the existing buildings and structures.

E. Facades of buildings in hamlets especially shall conform closely to those of the adjacent buildings in terms of window and door openings, height of first and subsequent stories, cornice treatment, materials and other visible characteristics.

F. Side setbacks are appropriate, with rear or side (off-street) service access or side service access of approximately fifteen (15) feet.

G. Buildings shall not be more than forty (40) feet high.

H. In areas of mixed uses, adequate setbacks should be provided and screening should be used between dissimilar uses.

I. Where new construction or substantial rehabilitation is concerned, the needs of the site for plantings, paving, screening and other landscaping amenities shall be considered.

J. The location, size and intensity of the proposed activity shall be in harmony with the appropriate and orderly development of the area in which it is to be located.

Section 2.1.2 Design Considerations

The following tables describe each of the four landscape categories which exist in the town. Included in this section is a list of factors to be considered by the applicant in designing projects and by the Planning Board in reviewing projects. The Planning Board may conduct site visits, as necessary, to classify the landscape for visual character and to consider design solutions.

The tables do not attempt to comprehensively cover all project types, but instead focus on the more problematic of them. Creative design options are emphasized

and recommended for a variety of project types. As each site is unique, there may be other appropriate solutions not mentioned here. In all the guidelines listed below, exceptions will occur in which a different design solution may be appropriate.

TABLE 1 - HAMLETS AND GATEWAYS

Description

These areas includes the hamlets of Keene and Keene Valley and the gateway of St. Huberts. There is a high degree of landscape contrast between these population centers and the surrounding countryside. There is also a strong historic character to these centers and buildings typically have a common scale and pattern.

Considerations

- Composition of the overall project as seen from public viewpoints.
- Building scale and mass.
- Building lot sizes and set-backs.
- Spacing between buildings.
- Building orientation.
- Similar or harmonious building materials.
- Mixed uses that enhance street life.

Recommended

- Buildings which are compatible with the scale, massing, and siting of buildings in the area, and which reflect or otherwise respect pattern, materials, texture and scale of nearby buildings.
- Lots reflect lots sizes and setbacks of neighboring uses.
- Designs which encourage pedestrian access.
- Signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being overly ornate.
- Buildings orientation and circulation patterns that repeat elements of gateways and hamlets.
- Open space should be a distinct area of visual and/or functional importance.
- Small, unobstructive parking lots.
- Large parking lots broken up into small lots and/or screened with use of plantings, topography, walls, or other techniques.

Not Recommended

- Large, box-like structure which strongly contrasts in height or bulk with existing buildings.
- Unsightly storage and parking areas that are highly visible from public vantage points.
- Structure(s) which detract from or compete with existing public, historic, or traditional focal points.
- Commercial Lighting that is unduly bright, high, numerous or unshielded and is excessively visible from other properties or highway corridors.

TABLE 2 - HIGHWAY CORRIDORS

Description

These areas include the valley floor along Routes 73 and 9N outside of the hamlets and gateways. The conservation of open space along highway corridors is essential to maintaining the historic, compact settlement pattern of the town. In particular, open fields in the foreground are highly sensitive to changes in development patterns. Wooded areas along highway corridors are important for maintaining the sequence of views along the roadways.

Considerations

- Location and layout within the site and relative to neighboring uses.
- Size and scale of structures.
- Lighting and signage.
- Location and size of parking.
- Landscaping and buffers.
- Building material.

Recommended

- Buildings in less visible areas as edges or wooden areas rather than open meadows.
- Where prominent grade changes are required, soften visual effects with plantings and rounded corners.
- Patterns of buildings that are compatible with traditional patterns of orientation, density, scale, colors, massing, form, etc. Building form and massing which reduces the apparent scale of the project.
- Building materials that are compatible with local traditions.
- Lighting types and levels consistent with the surrounding area.
- Signage that effectively communicates the desired message without being overly ornate.
- Small, unobtrusive parking lots. Large parking lots broken up into small lots and/or screened with use of plantings, topography, walls, or other techniques.
- Place some or all parking behind or to the side of buildings.
- Where front lots are functionally required, create or maintain a sense of street edge with street trees or streetscape elements such as lighting and/or, where feasible, the use of buildings along the street.

Not Recommended

- Blocking distant views.
- Design which strongly contrasts with the surrounding landscape.
- Design which is excessively prominent (becomes the focal point or dominates view) and competes with existing natural or cultural focal points.
- Prominently located box-like building with little or no screening.
- Prominent grade changes that starkly contrast with surrounding contours.
- Projects which use unacceptable development patterns (e.g., strip development).
- Ineffective berms or attempts to screen without consideration of site lines.

TABLE 3 - UPLAND AREAS

Description

Wooded uplands or hillsides are typically less vulnerable to visual impacts of development, provided the tree canopy remains intact. Typically, these include areas of slight to moderate slopes as indicated on the Town of Keene Slope Map (excluding Hamlets, Gateways and Highway Corridors).

Considerations

- Size, location, and charter of surrounding forest.
- Location of structures within the site.
- Street design and layout.
- Lighting.

Recommended

- Consider portions of the site which are less scenic.
- Move buildings lower on hillside to ensure a backdrop of trees.
- Leave sufficient trees so that development is at least partially hidden and the sense of a wooded hillside is retained.
- Clustering to minimize sprawling suburban patterns.
- Minimize street widths for safety and access.
- Integrate new roads with existing road patterns.
- Roads, utility rights-of-ways and other linear alternations should follow topographic patterns, (i.e., diagonally traversing slopes).
- Minimal street and outside lighting. Point lighting rather than flood lighting.

Not Recommended

- Large-scale subdivision in which all or most houses will be highly visible.
- Little or no effect made to preserve scenic attributes of site.
- Trees cut leaving strong vertical and horizontal edges that are inconsistent with surrounding vegetative patterns.

TABLE 4 - PROMINENT RIDGELINES OR STEEP SLOPES

Description

Ridgelines seen against the sky are especially sensitive to clearing. Steep slopes create a highly visible backdrop that is sensitive to development activity. Areas of steep slopes are delineated on the Town of Keene Slope Map.

Considerations

- Location of structures within the site.
- Size, location, and characteristics of surrounding forest.
- Topography of the site.
- Size and scale of structures.
- Building materials.
- Visible lighting.

Recommended

- Move buildings lower on hills to ensure a backdrop of trees.
- Leave sufficient trees so that development is at least partially hidden and the sense of a wooded hillside is retained.
- Avoid excessive topographic changes.
- Consider variations in massing regarding height and width that would allow for better integration with the hillside.
- Avoid excessive use of glass and exterior lighting. Use contained lighting.
- Roads, utility rights-of-way and other alterations should follow topographic patterns, (i.e., diagonally traversing slopes).
- Colors of buildings and roofs should blend with background.

Not Recommended

- Highly visible development on a ridgeline.
- Trees cut leaving strong vertical and horizontal edges that are inconsistent with surrounding vegetative patterns.