

VILLAGE OF INTERLAKEN MAIN STREET DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARED FOR THE VILLAGE OF INTERLAKEN

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DesignConnect is a multidisciplinary student outreach organization at Cornell University. DesignConnect strives to create long lasting community-student partnerships through collaborative design and planning projects. Students from many areas of study collaborate with communities across Upstate New York to create comprehensive and sustainable design and planning solutions. These communities receive thoughtful and innovative designs while students obtain vital real world experience. More information at www.designconnectcornell.com or email community.outreach@designconnectcornell.com.

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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Main Street Design Guidelines represent an important step in creating a unified aesthetic vision for Main Street, Interlaken. The Village of Interlaken's board and mayor, the Interlaken Revitalization Committee, the Green Thumb Garden Club, and the Historical Society of Interlaken initiated the Guideline project in Autumn 2010, approaching Design Connect for expertise and assistance. The resulting conceptual plan incorporates direction from this steering committee, input from the Interlaken community as a whole, and the experience and guidance of Design Connect members and their advisors.

The community has taken many steps to improve aging buildings to take advantage of empty lots, and to improve the street's appearance, but organizations planned each of these steps independently of one another. The steering committee desired to formulate a set of guidelines to unify organizations' and property owners' improvement projects. This document is meant to serve as these guidelines and as a conceptual framework for individual projects. The proposed improvements have been phased, so each element can be implemented in order of priority as resources become available.

The Village of Interlaken faces many challenges. Businesses along Main Street have closed as owners retire or move and the buildings that housed them remain vacant. Several regional employers have disappeared, leaving families to struggle to find nearby work. In addition, funding for rehabilitating aging infrastructure and buildings is becoming scarce. It is more important than ever that resources be utilized to maximum effectiveness.

That being said, the Village has a wealth of assets. Foremost is an enthusiastic and engaged community that takes pride in Interlaken and its history. Well-attended festivals and events speckle the Village calendar. The Village contains a wide range of expertise, as evidenced by the vibrant flower plantings along Main Street and the comprehensive museums on Main Street. The surviving buildings are prime and beautiful examples of early twentieth-century architecture.

These Design Guidelines aspire to augment these assets. It makes suggestions for historically-styled and functional lighting, sidewalk improvements to ease access to businesses in the site area, creation of focal points at intersections rich with history, and signage intended to guide both residents and visitors to points of interest. The Design Guidelines also

hope to suggest themes for Interlaken: a village of history, a village of gardens, a village of artisans, a village of agriculture, and a village of community.

The conceptual plans in the Design Guidelines will ideally provide a springboard for design and improvements in-line with the community's vision. Main Street Interlaken has rich opportunities to become an important step on wine and cheese trails, a spot for entrepreneurs to grow fledgling businesses, and a home for individuals and families. It is our hope that the Design Guidelines serve to enhance these opportunities.

The Main Street Design Guidelines document has been separated into several sections. The Overview summarizes Interlaken's current demographic conditions, history, and nearby physical assets. The Community Process describes the methods and results of community involvement. Pedestrian Mobility describes current problem areas and suggestions and guidelines for improvements. Landscaping describes current plantings and a concept for a more unified and functional planting scheme. The Comprehensive Vision summarizes guidelines and provides conceptual plans for improvements. Finally, Phasing suggests priorities, consecutive steps, and improvements that could benefit from being implemented simultaneously.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2000 Census, the total population of the Village of Interlaken was 674. Consequent projections by the Census Bureau expect this number to go down to 651 in 2009. Both the Village and the County as a whole have seen an overall population loss in the past 40 years.

The race composition of Village residents is predominantly white (97.8%, versus 75.1% nationally); only 3.8% is foreign-born (versus 11.1% nationally).

The median age of Village residents is 38.6, which is 3.3 years above the national average. As defined by the Census, those with a disability make up 26.2% of the Village population (the national figure is 19.3%). The average household size, 2.51, and average family size, 3.05, are very close to US averages.

The median household income in the Village is \$31,518. This compares to \$41,994 nationally. The mean retirement income is \$12,102.

Village housing is made up predominantly of units built before 1940 (74.1%). The median value of a single-family home is \$60,500. In 14.3% of units, the householder moved in before 1970.

Twelve percent of households do not own an automobile.

VILLAGE HISTORY

The Village was first settled in the late 1790s and 1800s, and became home to many families originally from New England and New Jersey. Early businesses included hotels, blacksmiths, a post office, a bank, and a railroad station. These businesses supported the families and farmers from the surrounding areas. Four churches were established in the 19th century to serve the community: Union Baptist Church in 1819, Reformed Church of Farmerville in 1830, a Universalist church in 1850, and St. Francis Solanus Catholic Church in 1874.

The Village was originally called Farmerville, then subsequently Farmer. Prosperous homes were built on Main Street, Lodi Street (now West Avenue), and along the side streets. LeRoy, Lake View, Clinton and Knight Streets were added later on.

In 1904, due to an increase in summer travellers in the area from the Lehigh Valley Railroad, a movement had begun to rename the railroad depot something other than Farmer. The Railroad sponsored a contest to find a new name for the station, and a school teacher named Georgiana Wheeler, who had once travelled to Switzerland, suggested the name Interlaken based on the city of the same name there. The residents of Farmer were also working to establish the community as an incorporated village at the time. There was a vote taken at the time of the village's incorporation to decide on its name, and the Farmer Review encouraged citizens to vote for Interlaken. On March 2, 1904, the village was incorporated as Interlaken and the Farmer Review newspaper changed its name to the Interlaken Review.

The appearance of Main Street changed over time with major fires taking place in December 1880 (when much of the south end of Main Street burned down - the Covert Saddlery Works which is now the site of Big Time Studio was built shortly after), in February 1891 (when the Gambee House burned, later replaced by the Goodman House, and now the site of the Interlaken Farmer's Museum), in April 1926 when a warehouse at Orchard and Main burned down, and finally in February 1939, when the Robinson Hotel burned down (at the same site as the current Quick Stop Gas Station). In 1959, the last passenger train passed through Interlaken, with freight service also ceasing in the 1960s.



Crane Block Building (currently Big Time Studio), 1896.



General View of Main Street, 1910s.



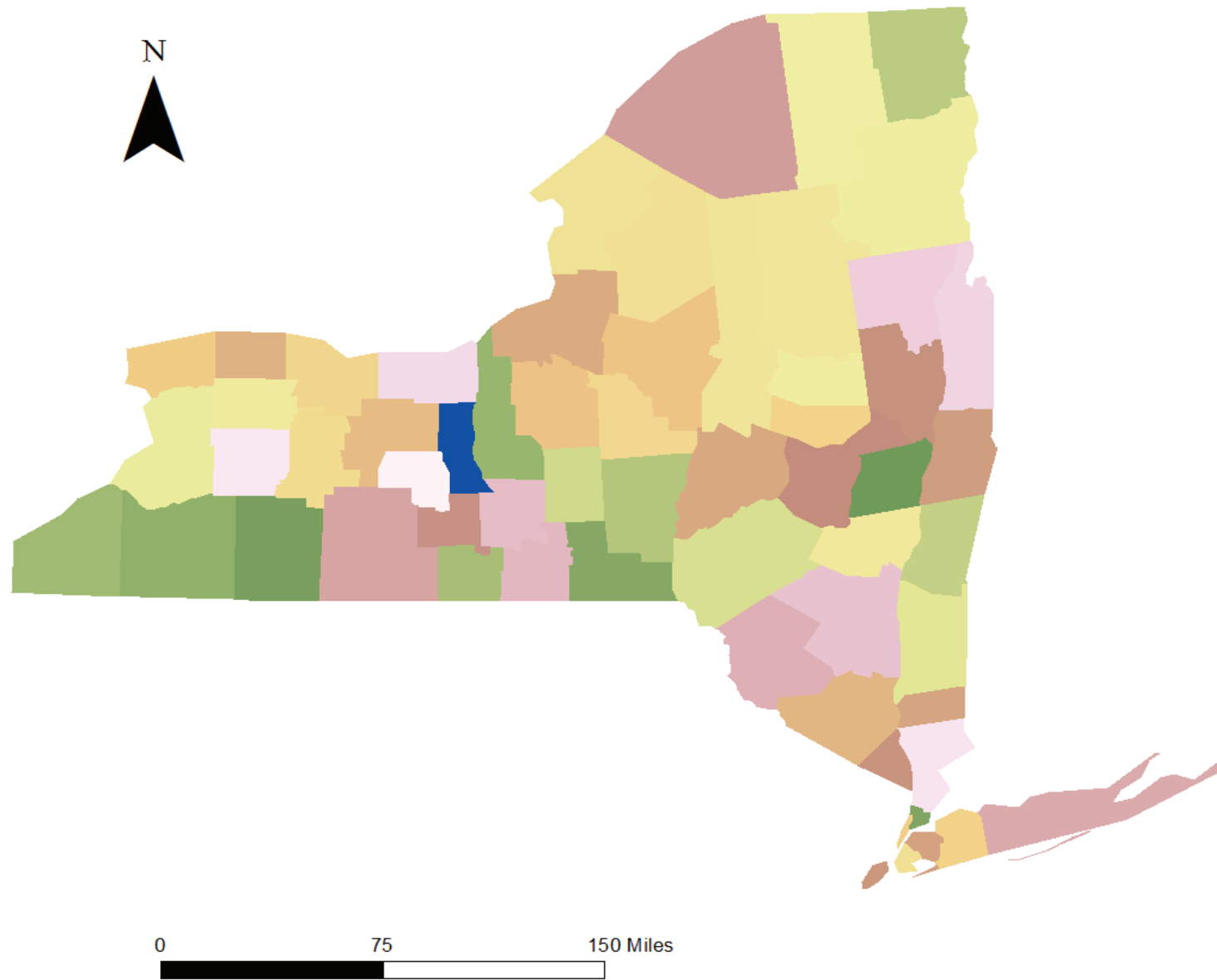
Crane Block Building (currently GunBlack and old barbershop), 1907.



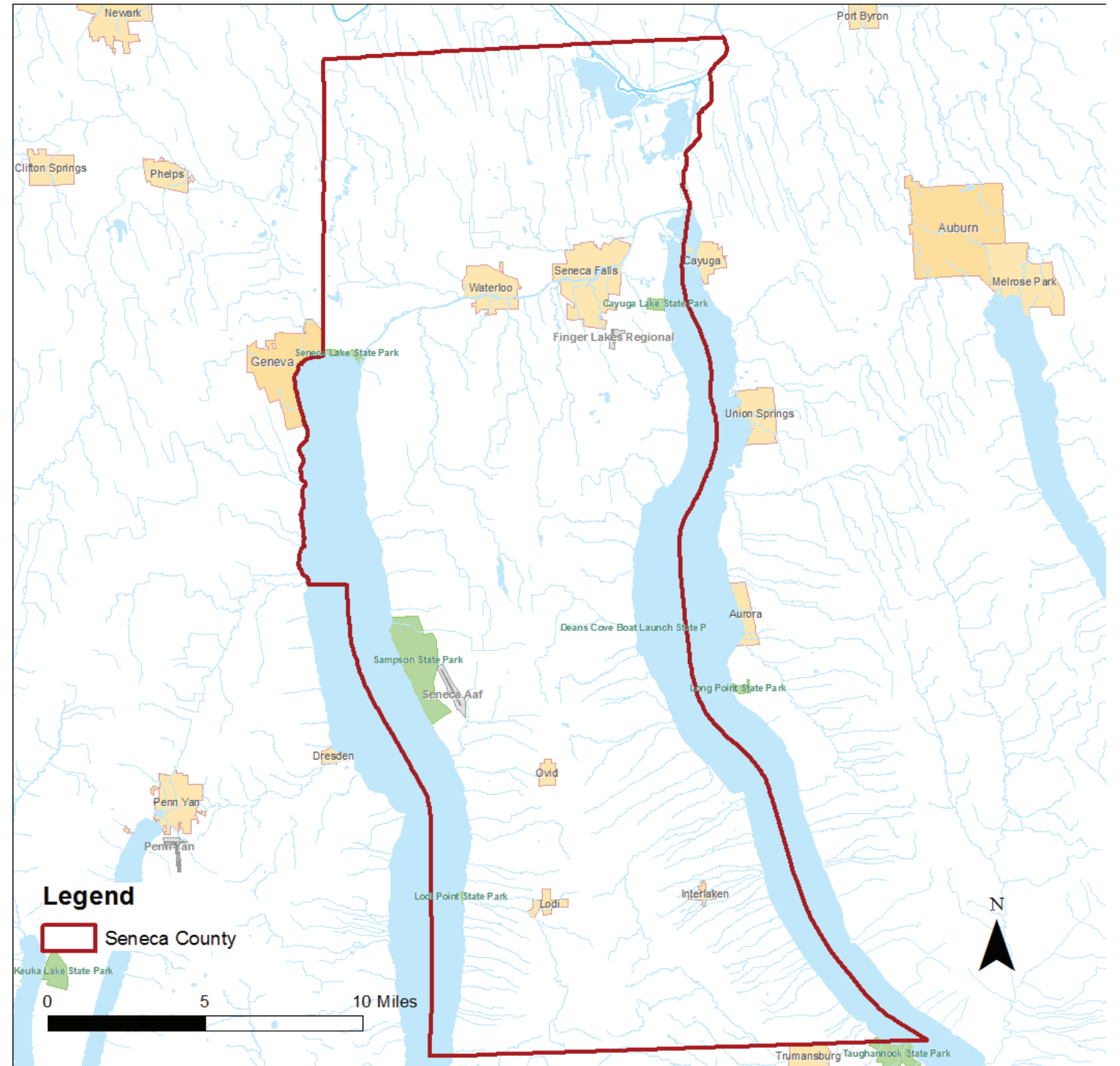
Wheeler National Bank (currently Community Bank), 1917.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Seneca County Within the State of New York



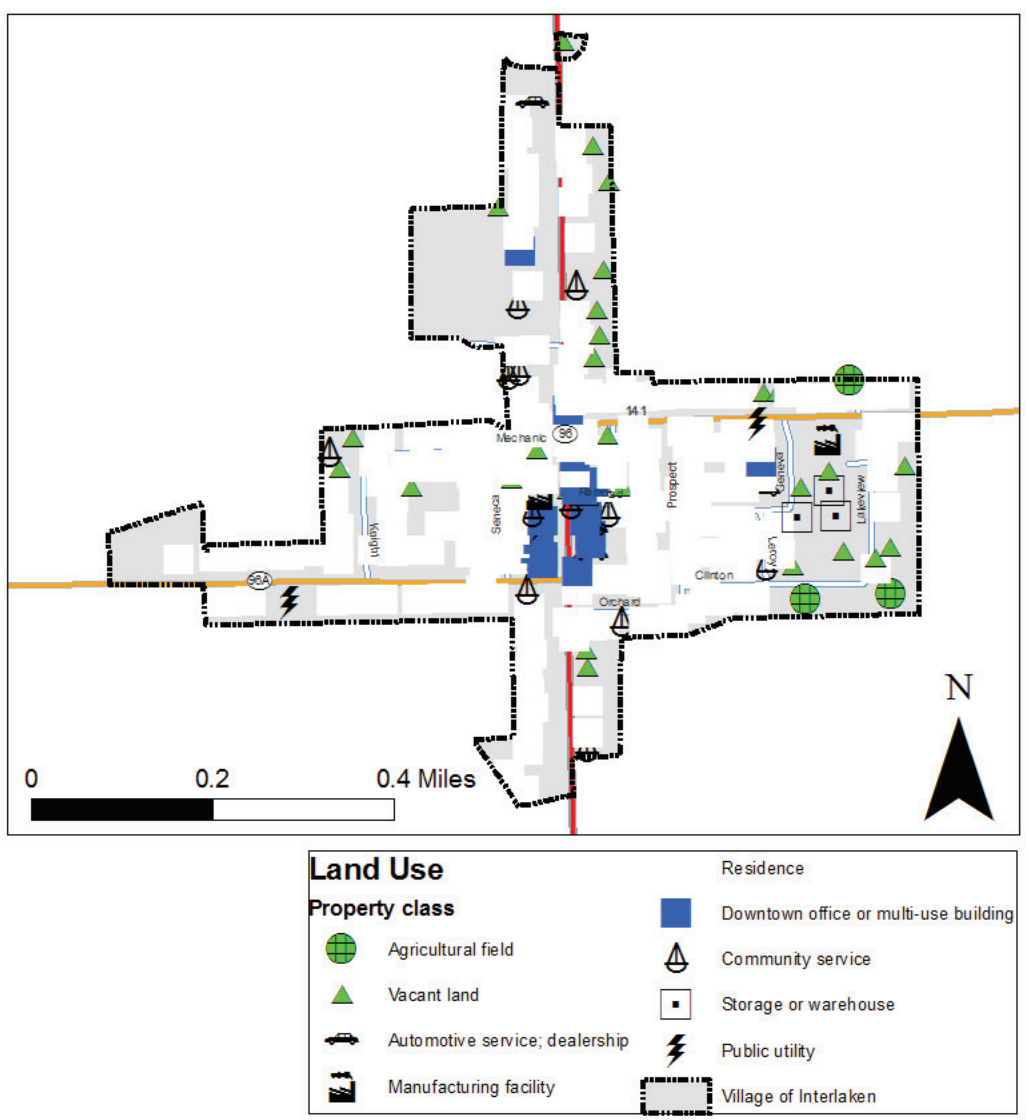
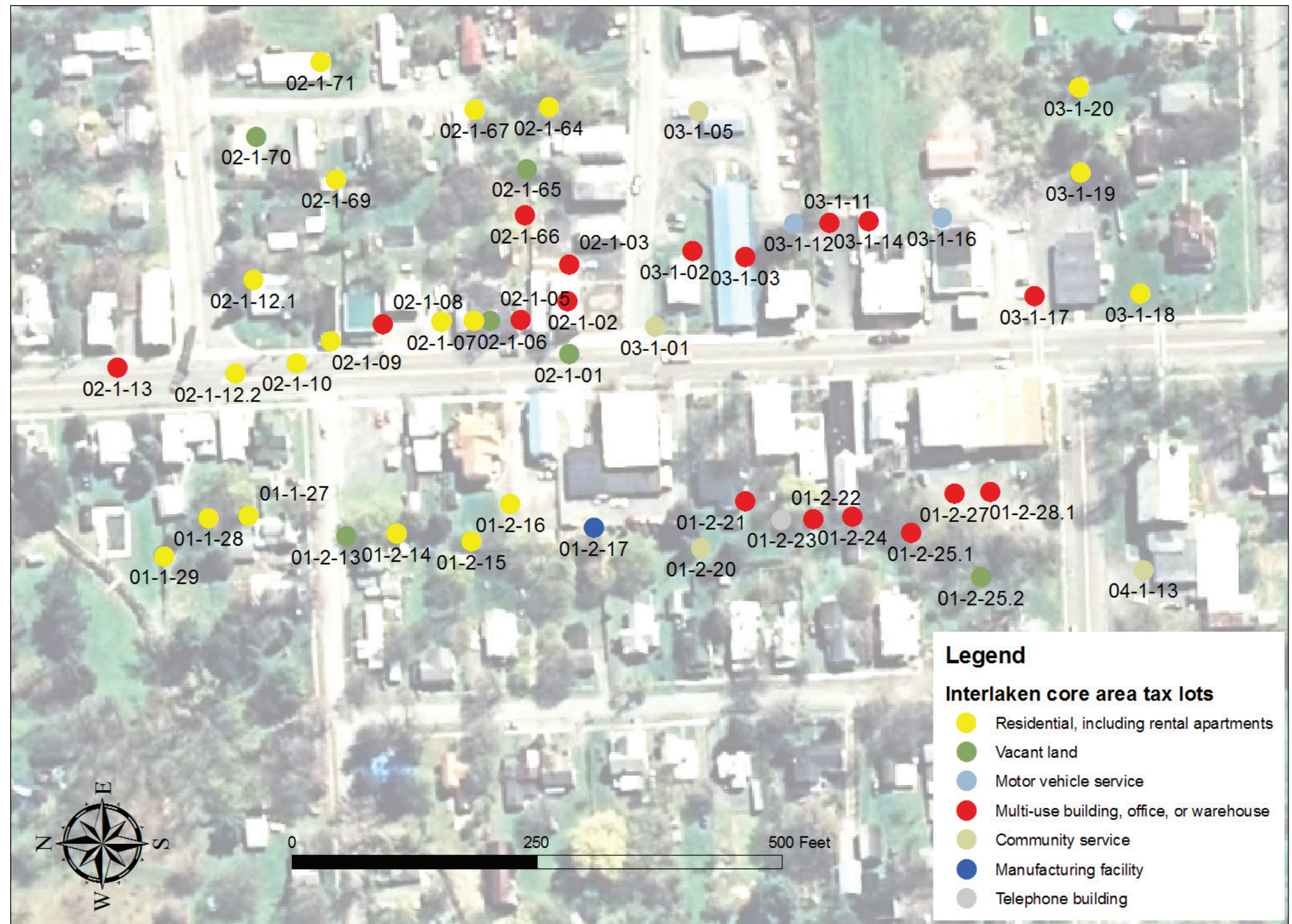
Village of Interlaken within Seneca County



Seneca County, depicted in dark blue, is one of the smaller counties in New York State with approximately 330 acres. Located in the Finger Lakes Region between Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake, Seneca County is bounded by Wayne County to the north, Tompkins and Schuyler Counties to the south, Cayuga County to the east and Yates and Ontario Counties to the west.

There are a total of 56 towns, cities, and other populated places in Seneca County. The county seat is in Waterloo. At the time of the 2000 Census, there were 33,342 residents in Seneca County.

Land Use Map



The Village of Interlaken is home to a variety of residences, businesses, and industries. Commerce and manufacturing are condensed around Main Street, while residential areas takes up the majority of the land area on the side streets. The east corner of the Village has a concentration of some storage and agricultural uses. The Main Street Study Area is a core area of a variety of buildings on Main Street between West Street and Cayuga Street. The map above shows their distribution along with their tax lot identification numbers. Main Street caters to a wide variety of users: residents, industrial and commercial employees, delivery trucks, tourists, through travelers, and others.

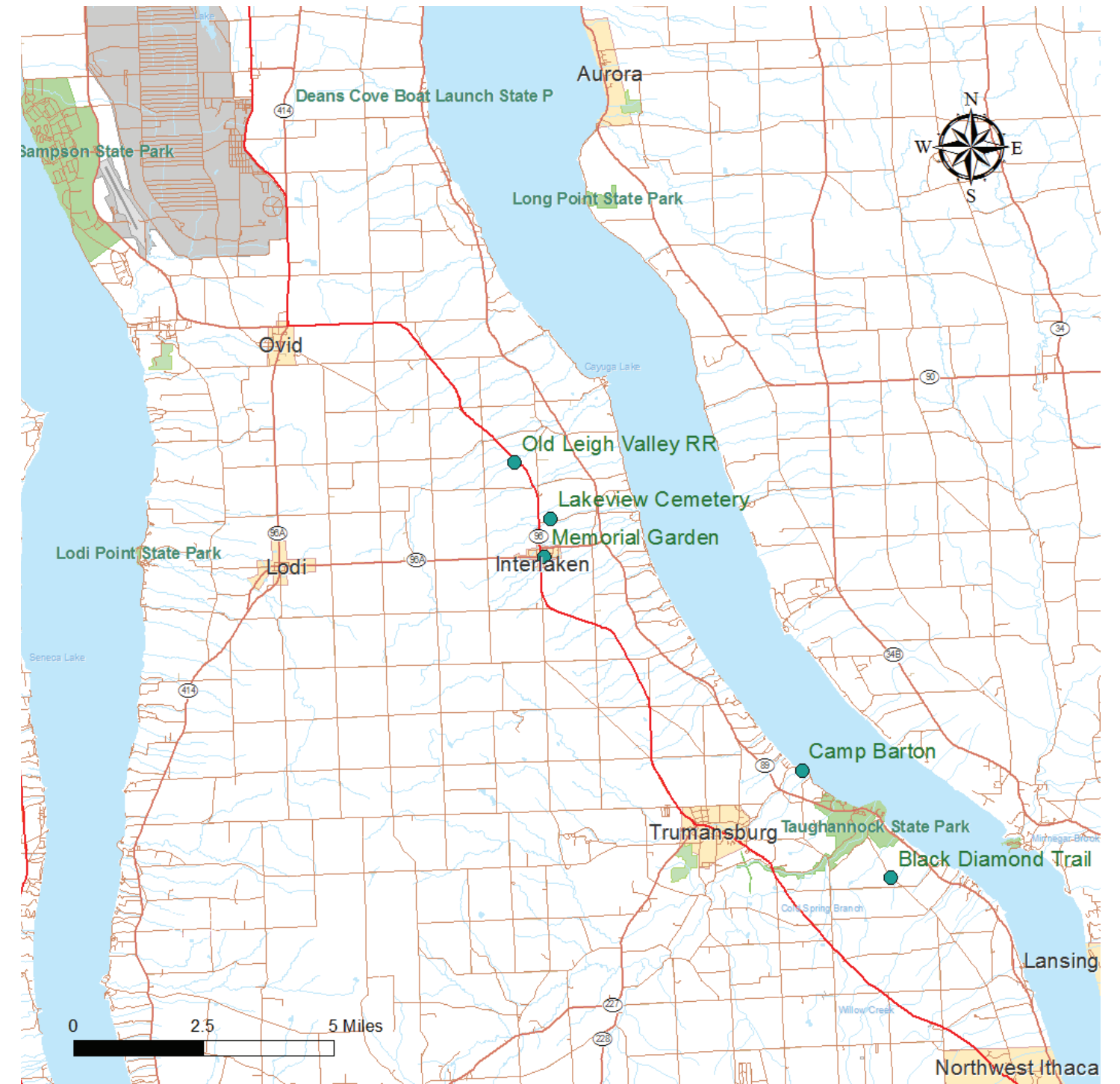
REGIONAL ASSET IDENTIFICATION

Wineries



The Finger Lakes region is well-known for its wineries. The Cayuga and Seneca Wine Trails are composed of wineries primarily located along the shores of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. Attracting many visitors annually, these local wineries are a growing part of the regional economy. Because Interlaken is located at an important crossroads between the two wine trails, it has the potential to benefit from this tourism.

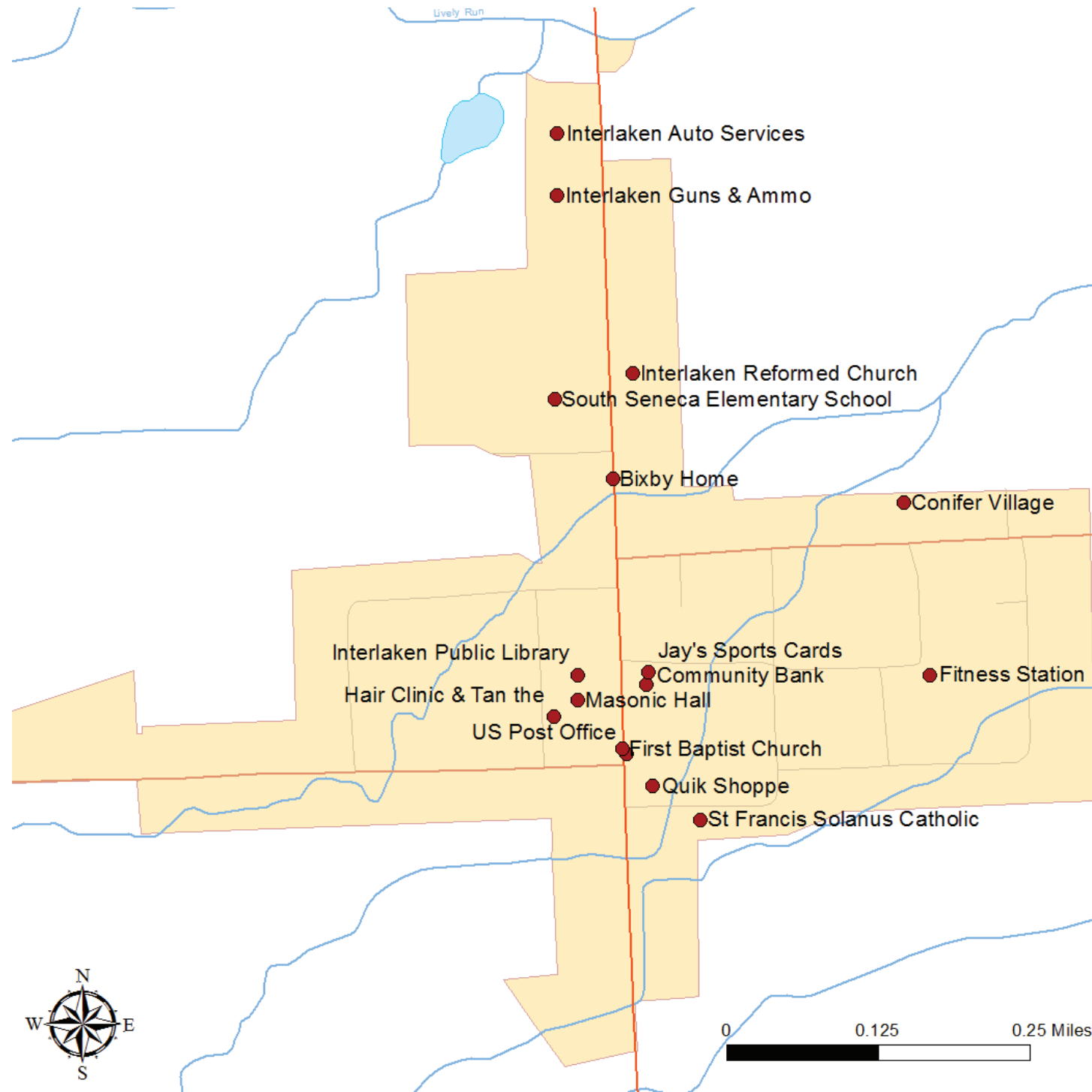
Parks and Nature Areas



Several state parks and nature areas are within the Interlaken region, and there is significant potential to expand and develop new park resources. The Black Diamond Trail, a rails-to-trails project, is the first step toward re-purposing the old Lehigh Valley Railroad right-of-way for recreational use.

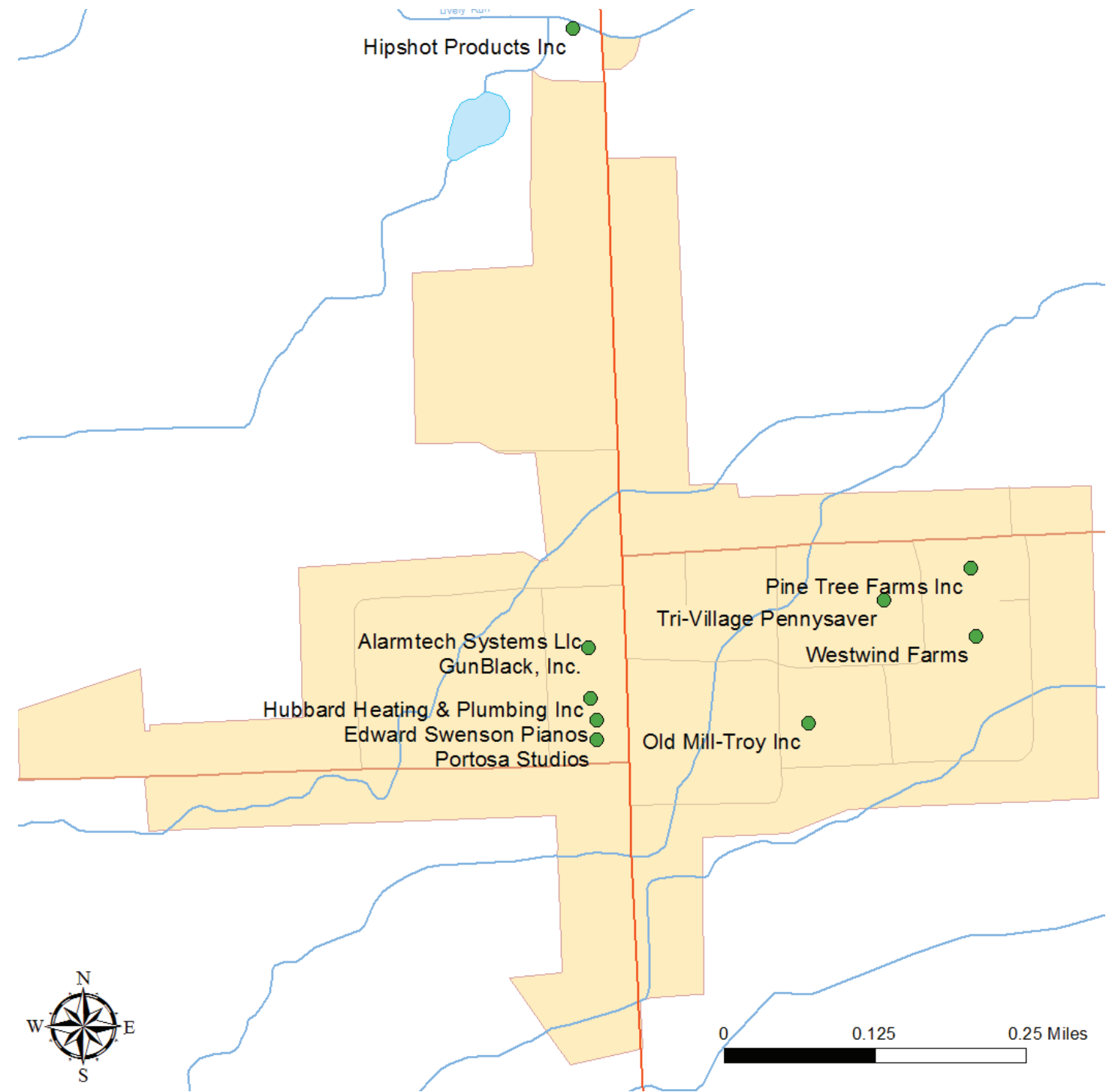
VILLAGE ASSET IDENTIFICATION

Services and Community Spaces



There are various community resources in Interlaken - the South Seneca Elementary School, the Masonic Hall, the Interlaken Reformed Church, the First Baptist Church, and the St. Francis Solanus Church. Area businesses also serve important functions by providing common items and services. To facilitate the success of these entities, the Village can ensure quick and easy access for both residents and tourists.

Industry



A variety of manufacturing, trade, and farming industries call Interlaken home. Maintaining an industrial base is important for both area employment and the Village tax base.