

# Comprehensive Analysis of Lake Placid, NY Housing Crisis

A Review of the Relationship Between COVID-19 and Tourist Based Economies

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## Introduction

The balance of tourist-based economies lies on a thread of string that threatens to snap at any hindrance. Communities that rely on these economies are vulnerable to a multitude of hardships including housing inequalities, which have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a major threat to livelihood for low-income individuals and without proper addressing, the issue is only to get worse. This project focuses on Lake Placid, NY as the area of study for its unique tourist-based economy as well as a personal connection to the village. This focus area was chosen for its rich history in being a two-time Winter Olympic host as well as it being my home-town in which housing issues have been observed. Lake Placid is located in Essex County, NY and is nestled in the upper half of the Adirondack Park.



## Methods

The research conducted surrounds the impacts that Airbnb's have had on Lake Placid regarding the following questions: How has COVID-19 impacted low-income residents/locals on their ability to find homes? And what kind of weaknesses has COVID-19 revealed in Lake Placid's socio-economic systems?

### Types of Data

- The first question is established through qualitative data that was found through researching human subjects through a series of interviews.
- The second question was explored through both qualitative and quantitative data including interviews and comparative data gathering.

## Data Analysis

Regarding the current analysis of Lake Placid's housing issues in terms of COVID-19 and short-term rentals, there is a lack of voice from the local community and residents.

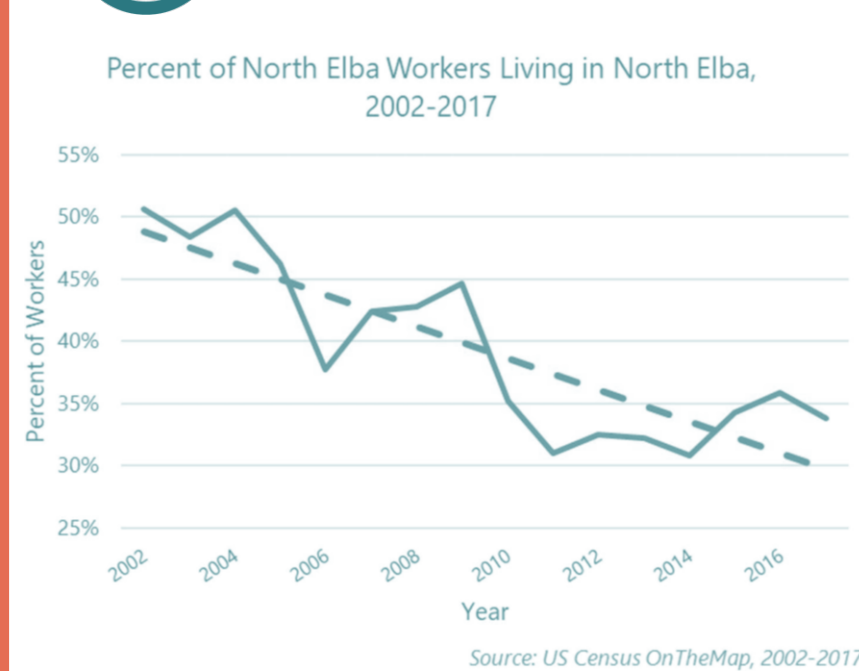
- Disconnect between residential needs and importance placed on those needs. Transformation of a lively community into a vacation home, destination-location.
- As more and more individuals cannot afford to live in the village, the workforce that supports this economy is quickly becoming commuter based.
- Housing issues have led to a decline in family households and subsequently a decline in student enrollment.
- Highlights tourism as the backbone of Lake Placid's economy.

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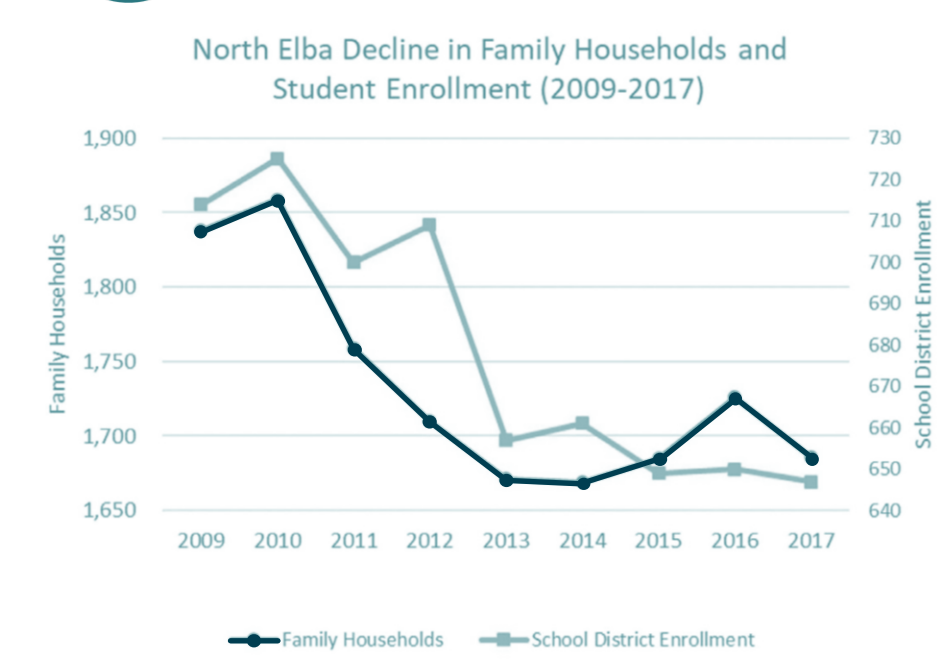
Housing Occupancy, 2017					
Geography	Owner-occupied	Renter-occupied	Seasonally Vacant	All Other Vacant	Total housing units
Village of Lake Placid	21.3%	34.7%	34.0%	10.1%	100.0%
Town of North Elba	35.2%	24.3%	33.7%	6.9%	100.0%
Essex County	44.4%	14.0%	33.6%	8.0%	100.0%
State of New York	47.8%	40.7%	4.1%	7.4%	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

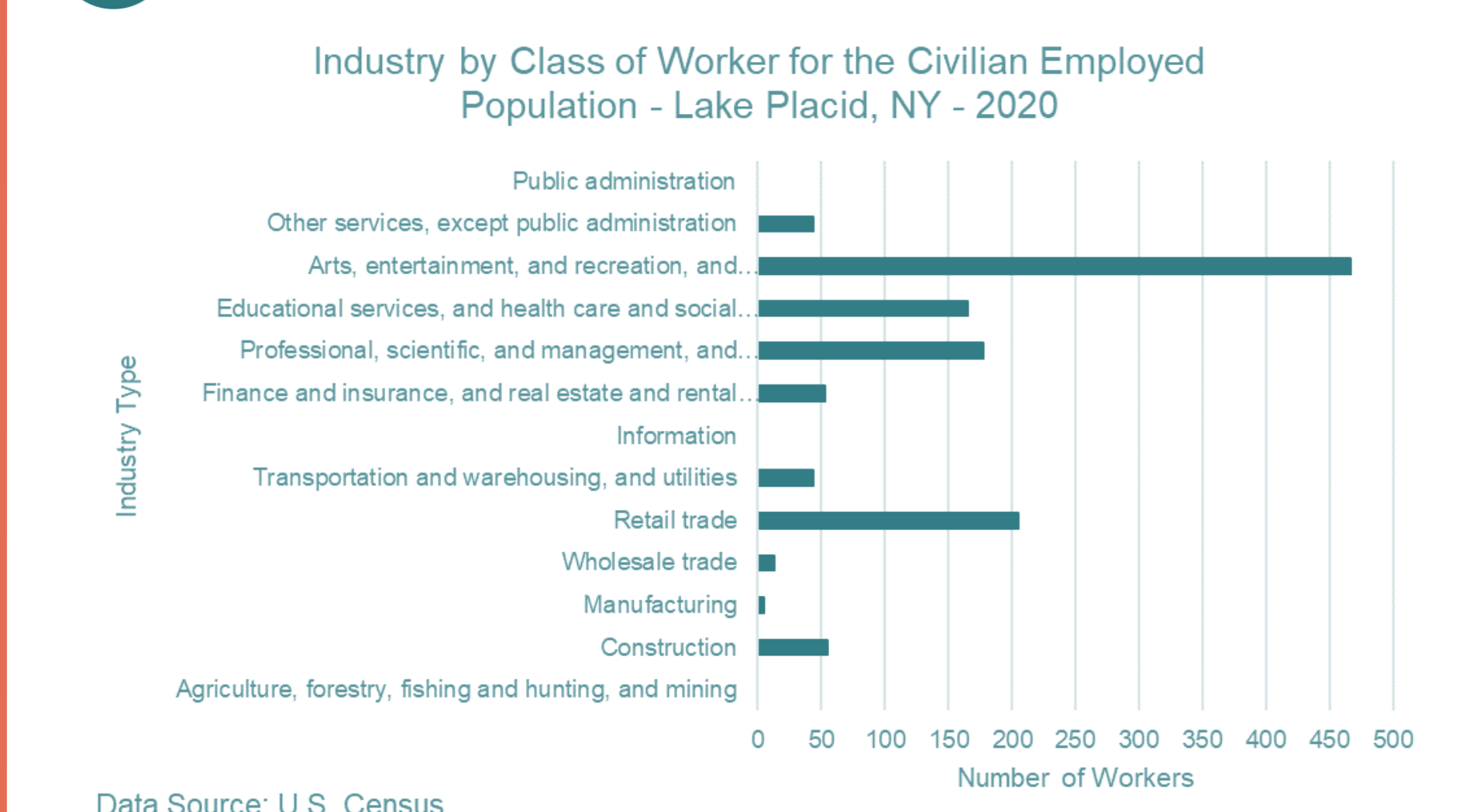
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Data Source: U.S. Census

## Results

According to the U.S. Census data, over 20% of Lake Placid's population is living below the poverty line which is about 11% higher than the national average in 2020 (U.S. Census Data, 2020) ②. Lake Placid's demographics reflect that of a tourist-based industry with little support given to the working-class population.

One of the main concerns seen with a tourist-based economy is a resistance to change and lack of adaptability. This concern is voiced by Petra Weber who states "Lake Placid is a one-horse pony. Tourism and sports events...so what happens when that fails?" ③. This is a challenge that has been exacerbated by COVID-19 as relying on a tourist-based industry during a pandemic can promote the spread of the virus as well as endanger workers and residents alike.

These underlying economic issues cause a major threat to the stability in housing for locals. One major driver of this is a lack of housing availability. The issues of housing shortages in Lake Placid had been present in years prior to COVID-19, but since the pandemic the issue has only gotten worse.

Another major contributing factor in the lack of owner-occupied homes is a decrease of affordability in the housing market. This has been exacerbated by the previously discussed dwindling market that is highly competitive.

These housing issues have been further worsened by the increase in short-term rentals and Airbnb's. These rentals are taking place in neighborhoods that would otherwise house families, but due to poor zoning codes they are slowing taking over residential areas. With Lake Placid depending on tourism as its primary form of economy, there is a certain disregard for local residents that is apparent both governmentally and interactionally. This places visitor satisfaction over local needs, effectively pushing people out of their homes.



### Main Street and Mirror Lake, Lake Placid, NY

This photo highlights Lake Placid's unique character and central location for tourism.

## Conclusion

COVID-19 has revealed several points of weakness in Lake Placid's housing and economy. With no legislation to protect residents from housing issues and an economy that demands for tourists at a time of crisis, there is a major concern for how Lake Placid will evolve sustainably. While there are several projects that address these issues, there are still few that have residents in mind as the primary concern. Recommendations for the issues faced by Lake Placid should include strict legislation regarding the zoning of Airbnbs and short-term rentals, a government employed position for Airbnb regulation, as well as community rooted affordable housing development. Overall, there must be more community involvement regarding the decisions and planning of the village for Lake Placid to maintain its unique character.

## References

- Mirror Lake During Winter <https://visitadironacks.com/winter>
- U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved September 18, 2022, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Lake%20Placid%20village,%20New%20York&t=Poverty&tid=ACST5Y2020.S1701>
- Interview with Petra Weber, a local generational hotel owner
- <https://www.adirondackstates.com/kindle-your-creative-spirit-with-the-rich-arts-culture-of-lake-placid-ny/>