

Village of Clayton LWRP Monitoring Report June 2011

Community Background:

The Village of Clayton is situated along the shores of the Saint Lawrence River in northern Jefferson County, New York. The village offers its nearly 2,000 permanent residents and visitors a quaint downtown with scenic vistas of the many small islands which dot the St. Lawrence River. Touted as the “Gateway to the Thousand Islands,” Clayton has long been a recreational destination for fishing, boating and sightseers. Clayton is also the cultural center of the Thousand Islands Region with three museums, a performing arts center, and a downtown village business district that features several galleries as well as unique and independent shops.

The village is located approximately twenty miles north of the City of Watertown which serves as the region’s commercial and financial center. The Fort Drum U.S. Army Military Base is located just a few miles outside of Watertown and is one of the region’s largest employers and a major economic generator. The Canadian Town of Gananoque, a popular tourist destination, lies approximately seven miles across the St. Lawrence River.



Village of Clayton - downtown core along the St. Lawrence River.

The village’s local waterfront revitalization area includes over four miles of St. Lawrence River shoreline and encompasses a mix of commercial, residential, vacant, recreation and entertainment, and community service uses. The downtown area, located at the tip of the peninsula, includes specialty shops, restaurants and bars, docking and boat launching, as well as two major tourist attractions – the Clayton Opera House and the Antique Boat Museum. As tourism opportunities are heavily centered around water-dependent activities, tourism takes place mainly during the summer months. As a result, many businesses close during the winter months.

Collaborations with Department of State:

Since completion of its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1986, the village has worked to advance its implementation. The focus of these efforts has involved revitalization of the downtown and the expansion of public access to the waterfront.

Since 1996, the Department of State has awarded nine (9) Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP) grants to the Town and Village of Clayton for projects within the village. The town and village work together on community planning projects; however, since the town has more resources it is often the designated grant recipient for projects within the village. The Town and Village of Clayton view themselves collectively as the “Clayton Community” and work collaboratively to advance revitalization projects.

Through these EPF LWRP awards, many waterfront planning and construction projects have been completed including installation of a breakwater and transient docking at Memorial Park, construction of the Thousand Islands Regional Dock, site assessment and remediation feasibility analysis for the Frink America Parcel, professional land use planning to advance redevelopment of the Frink America property, renovation of the Clayton Opera House, and design and construction of the first phase of the Clayton Riverwalk along the Frink America property.

Recent EPF LWRP awards will fund extending the Clayton Riverwalk from Frink Park to the Clayton Monument in the center of the village’s commercial core, as well as improvements to Frink Park.

The EPF LWRP grant program has been instrumental in improving recreational and cultural amenities for Clayton residents and tourists and has made a positive impact on the local economy and quality of life. (See attached chart: Grants Awarded - Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Village of Clayton & Town of Clayton)



Restoration of the Clayton Opera House supported by EPF LWRP funding

LWRP Monitoring Process:

The goal of the monitoring process is for the Department of State (DOS) to assess a community’s consistency with its LWRP, and to understand implementation activities and decision-making procedures related to the LWRP. Additionally, this process provides a forum for a community to highlight successes and request technical and financial assistance for program implementation.

DOS began the Village of Clayton’s LWRP monitoring with a phone call to the Mayor, asking the village to participate and briefly describing the monitoring protocol. A follow-up letter was sent to provide information relating to what the monitoring process would involve, and a list of survey questions was attached. The letter indicated that a conference call would take place between DOS representatives and key municipal officials to answer the survey questions; a follow-up site visit/meeting would be arranged

to review the responses provided in the survey; and, following the site visit, DOS would prepare a written assessment of findings to identify areas of improvement, training, or need for LWRP amendments.

The conference call to discuss the village's answers to the survey questions was informative and provided much of the details necessary for the DOS to make its assessment. As part of the meeting, the village described the relevancy of its LWRP, its use, and their local consistency review process. Participants from the village were Norma Zimmer, the Mayor, and Geneva Phelps Miller, the Clerk-Treasurer.

As a follow-up to the call, DOS staff traveled to Clayton to meet with staff from the village and Clayton Local Development Corporation. This meeting focused on implementation of current EPF LWRP projects, as well as future opportunities to collaborate with DOS. The meeting provided DOS with an opportunity to tour two current project sites - the planned Riverwalk extension and transient docking facility - and discuss conceptual designs for both projects. The DOS provided technical assistance regarding proposed layout to the project and what should be included in the federal consistency application.

DOS Findings:

Overview

The Village of Clayton Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is the key document that guides waterfront development/revitalization and funding of key revitalization projects in the village, such as renovations to the historic Opera House and the Frink America brownfield redevelopment. Through implementation of its LWRP, Clayton's waterfront has undergone a visible change for the better, although more work is planned to fully transform the waterfront area into a thriving mix of recreation, retail and residential uses. With DOS technical assistance and EPF LWRP funding for waterfront planning and construction projects, the village has made great strides toward achieving their community vision. The LWRP has also helped the village secure funding from other federal and State agencies including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Office of Community Renewal, and the Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as private investment into the downtown commercial core.

LWRP Implementation

Clayton's 1986 LWRP concentrates on downtown revitalization, increasing public access to the waterfront, and promoting tourism. The LWRP has provided the village with a programmatic vehicle for focusing on its waterfront resources and planning for development.

In order to implement the LWRP, several amendments to the village zoning ordinance were necessary, including creation of the Waterfront Overlay District and establishment of site plan review regulations. The Waterfront Overlay District, which follows the coastal area boundary, was created to ensure that proposed land uses and development activities would be consistent with the policies and purposes of the LWRP. Site plan review regulations were adopted which require the preparation of site plans for

proposed developments for review and approval by the village prior to the issuance of a building permit or certification of occupancy. In 1996, the village further refined its zoning by splitting the Waterfront Overlay District into three smaller districts – Riverwalk A, Riverwalk B, and Riverwalk C – with each having varying permitted uses, site plan review uses, and height restrictions aimed at promoting a mix of uses.

Docking Facilities

The village’s LWRP identified the need to expand transient docking facilities to support the local tourism economy by attracting visitors to the downtown. Clayton received two EPF LWRP grant awards to address this need. The first allowed the village to install a breakwater and docks at Memorial Park. The second funded construction of the Thousand Islands regional dock, a 200 foot long deep-water dock capable of handling large commercial cruise ships, naval ships, tall ships and larger privately owned ships.



The Lynx, a 122 foot sailing vessel, at the Thousand Islands regional dock.

Clayton Opera House

In 2003, Clayton, in partnership with the Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund (TIPAF), undertook renovation of the historic Clayton Opera House. Built in 1903 and located in the heart of Clayton’s downtown, the Opera House had been an important venue for cultural and community events in the Thousand Islands region for many decades, but over the years lost its functionality and was in desperate need of improvements to heating, air conditioning, insulation, handicapped access, bathroom facilities, electrical, and seating.

With funding through the EPF LWRP and local fund raising efforts, renovations bringing the Clayton Opera House into compliance with building code and ADA requirements were completed in 2007. The Clayton Opera House is now a year-round cultural center, a destination for visitors, and a new center of life for downtown Clayton fostering culture, commerce, and a sense of community in the region. The Clayton Opera House has served as the cornerstone of Clayton’s downtown revitalization efforts.

In 2009, over 170 events were hosted at the Opera House with an estimated total attendance of over 14,000 and revenues totaling over \$280,000.

Frink America Property Redevelopment

An essential part in revitalizing the village’s waterfront was tackling an eight acre brownfield area located along the St. Lawrence River. The vacant Frink America Property, the site of a former snowplow factory, is located on desirable waterfront property within the downtown. However, it included several dilapidated structures and potential environmental hazards.

In 2003, with financial assistance from an EPF LWRP grant award, a site assessment work and remediation feasibility analysis was conducted for the contaminated site. Upon completion of this work, the Town of Clayton decided to purchase the property and worked with the NYS Department of

Environmental Conservation through the Brownfield Cleanup Program to remediate the site for redevelopment.

With additional funding from the EPF LWRP, Town of Clayton, in partnership with the Village of Clayton and the Clayton Local Development Corporation, hired a professional land planner prepare a concept master plan to illustrate the community's vision for redevelopment of the Frink America property with a mix of uses, including a hotel with landmark qualities, town homes/condominiums with waterfront views, and commercial/retail/office space intermingled with the residential uses. The Town of Clayton is currently in talks with a developer that intends to pursue building a destination hotel on the site. Redevelopment of this property builds upon the success at the adjacent Opera House and will bring substantial economic benefit to the village's downtown, attract new commercial and residential development, serve as a destination and gathering place for tourists, and return a former brownfield site to the tax rolls.

Clayton Riverwalk

To meet the community's goal of improving waterfront access, Clayton dedicated a 25 ft. wide permanent easement along the entire shoreline of the Frink property. Leveraging the waterfront easement value, the community was able to secure EPF LWRP funding to build a pedestrian Riverwalk along the shoreline. This new public space is extremely popular with residents and tourists and is also being used as the site for a weekly farmer's market. With an additional EPF LWRP award combined with funding from the US Fish & Wildlife Service Boating Infrastructure Grant Program, Clayton plans to design and construct a public docking system adjacent to the Frink America property to accommodate transient boaters and drawing visitors into the downtown.



Clayton Riverwalk

The Clayton Riverwalk is a key component of the revitalization of Clayton's downtown that aims to provide a continuous pathway which connects neighborhoods, cultural institutions and commercial establishments, forming the framework around which high quality public and private development will be organized. Building upon the first section of the Riverwalk completed on the Frink America property, the village, with funding provided through the EPF LWRP, plans to extend the Riverwalk 1,056 feet to connect with the Clayton Monument in the center of the village's commercial district. It is anticipated this additional section of the Riverwalk will be completed in 2012.

LWRP Update

Over the years, the need to update the LWRP became apparent to clarify the community vision and identify the next generation of waterfront revitalization projects. As the Village and Town of Clayton work closely together on community planning projects and share resources, the town and village

cooperatively applied for and received an EPF LWRP grant award to develop a joint LWRP. To date, a preliminary draft of the joint LWRP has been completed. The community vision seeks to provide opportunities for development that are in scale with the existing community fabric and balanced with existing uses; increase access to the waterfront and water-related recreational opportunities while preserving sensitive natural places; enhance a pedestrian friendly downtown; and, develop amenities for residents and visitors that will allow Clayton to be an interesting year-round place to live, visit, work, and play. High priority projects detailed in the joint LWRP include further planning and redevelopment of the Frink America Property, including installation of boat docking and services, expansion of the Clayton Riverwalk, planning for redevelopment of the municipal wastewater treatment plant site, reconstruction of the French Creek Bridge, and improving bicycle and pedestrian access on main transportation corridors (Routes 12 & 12E). The joint LWRP also includes a harbor management plan to address problems of conflict, congestion and competition for space in the use of St. Lawrence River. It is anticipated the joint LWRP will be adopted by the end of 2011.

LWRP Document Accessibility

Copies of the Village of Clayton LWRP are on file at the Village Clerk's Office (425 Mary Street) and in the Zoning Office (405 Riverside Drive), and are accessible during normal business hours. An electronic copy of the LWRP is available on the DOS website: <http://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/>. Once LWRP has been updated, it will be available in electronic format on the village website: www.villageofclayton.org.

Local Consistency Review

The Village of Clayton LWRP Consistency Law (Chapter 64-1 to 64-7) was adopted on March 29, 1986 to provide for the protection and beneficial use of the natural and man-made resources within the Village of Clayton waterfront area by ensuring that actions classified as Type I or unlisted under Part 617 of Title 6 of NYCRR to be undertaken, approved or funded by village agencies will be undertaken in a manner consistent with the policies and purposes of the Village of Clayton LWRP.

The Joint Town/Village Planning Board, the Joint Town/Village Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), the Clayton Local Development Corporation (CLDC), and the Village Board are familiar with the LWRP and associated consistency requirements.

As part of the village's local consistency process, applicant(s) or, in the case of direct actions, the village agency proposing to undertake the action, refers the action and all pertinent information to the Joint Town/Village Planning Board or the Joint Town/Village ZBA, as appropriate, for review and recommendations regarding the action's consistency with the policies and purposes of the LWRP. Review of the proposed action's consistency and preparation of written recommendations to the referring village agency are to be completed within thirty (30) days of a complete referral. No work or activity on a project in the Coastal Area that is subject to review under this law shall be commenced or undertaken until the Village Board certifies its consistency with the policies and purposes of the LWRP.

Most residents however, are not aware of the LWRP and local consistency law. The Zoning Officer is usually the first point of contact for residents proposing actions within the LWRP boundaries, and the Officer provides information to the applicant on the consistency process and Waterfront Assessment Form (WAF) along with the building or zoning permit. Some residents have commented this process is time-consuming and somewhat confusing, and usually requires assistance in filling out the WAF.

The Planning Board reviews approximately six (6) consistency applications per year. Completed WAF and consistency determinations are kept on file in the Zoning office along with other forms and documents pertaining to the proposed project.

The LWRP has been effective in protecting the village's waterfront resources and ensuring proposed development will advance the village's vision. For example, if an applicant approaches the Zoning Officer with a potential project which is not consistent with the LWRP, the Officer can use the LWRP to illustrate why the project is not consistent and how it could be modified to meet approval. This proactive approach usually expedites the local consistency process. When necessary, the village will consult with DOS consistency unit on proposed actions in the coastal area.

Grants Awarded			
Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP)			
Village of Clayton			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
2009	\$316,625.00	Clayton Riverwalk - Frink Park - The Village of Clayton will complete the second phase of the Clayton Riverwalk at Frink Park on the St. Lawrence River. The extended Riverwalk will expand public access and connect waterfront parks, the downtown commercial district, and cultural resources in the community. Construction will include installation of seating, lighting, viewing decks, a performance area and two short pedestrian bridges.	Underway
2001	\$550,000.00	The Thousand Islands Regional Dock - The Village will construct a new dock at Frink Park capable of handling large commercial cruise ships, naval ships, tall ships and privately owned ships navigating the St. Lawrence River. The development of this dock will serve as a gateway to the community. Improvements will include rehabilitation of 400 linear feet of existing seawall, rehabilitation of an existing pier, planting, and upland paving.	Closed

Grants Awarded			
Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP)			
Town of Clayton			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
2008	\$388,334.00	Clayton River Walk - Frink Segment, Phase II - The Town of Clayton will advance Phase II development of the Clayton Riverwalk on the 8.4-acre, Town owned Frink property, encompassing 1,254 feet of St. Lawrence River waterfront. Phase II work will include completion of design for the Frink Riverwalk segment, clearing and stabilization of portions of the shoreline, and construction of infrastructure and amenities including two overlooks, three sets of stairs to future docks and one handicapped access ramp, as well as installation of seating, lighting, railing and plantings.	Underway
2007	\$35,000.00	Professional Land Planner for the Frink Redevelopment Project - The Town of Clayton, in partnership with the Clayton Local Development Corporation, will contract with a professional land planner to advance the proposed mixed-use redevelopment of the 8-acre Frink property, located on the St. Lawrence River in the Clayton Riverwalk District. Work will include identification of appropriate uses; development of concept alternatives, a site master plan, design standards, and marketing materials; and solicitation and selection of a site development team. This redevelopment will advance the Town's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and complement the previously funded "Riverwalk" pedestrian walkway.	Closed
2006	\$300,000.00	Construction of Clayton Riverwalk - Frink Segment - The Town of Clayton will implement an element of their updated LWRP by constructing the Frink Segment of the Clayton Riverwalk, located along the St. Lawrence River in the Village of Clayton. The Riverwalk is intended to promote use of the St. Lawrence River and Clayton's water-related recreational resources, while connecting institutions and neighborhoods.	Closed
2005	\$500,000.00	Renovation of the Clayton Opera House - The Town of Clayton, in partnership with the Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund (TIPAF), will renovate the Clayton Opera House, located on the St. Lawrence River in downtown Clayton, to serve as a regional, year-round performing arts center. Work involves complete renovation of the existing building to provide adequate facilities, comply with building codes and provide ADA access.	Closed
2004	\$40,000.00	The Town and Village of Clayton will prepare a Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Harbor Management Plan for their St. Lawrence River waterfronts, update their Joint Comprehensive Plan, and prepare amendments to Town and Village Zoning Laws. The project	Underway

Grants Awarded Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP) Town of Clayton			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
		complements work developed under a previous EPF award.	
2004	\$40,000.00	Site Assessment and Remediation Feasibility Analysis for Frink America Parcel - The Town of Clayton, in partnership with the Village of Clayton, will conduct site assessment work and prepare a remediation feasibility analysis for the privately-owned, contaminated Frink America, Inc. site on the waterfront in the Village of Clayton. This work will inform the decision as to whether the Town of Clayton will purchase and redevelop the property.	Closed
1996	\$80,000.00	Breakwater Dock - The project entails the purchase and installation of a main breakwater/dock which is ten feet wide and 200 feet long as an extension from the shoreline at Memorial Park. This section of the breakwater/dock would extend from the shoreline at Memorial Park, down river and will provide protection to the existing Village Park transient docks.	Closed