

Village of Cape Vincent LWRP Monitoring Report June 2012

Community Background:

The Village of Cape Vincent is situated along the southern shore of the Saint Lawrence River in northern Jefferson County, New York. With a population of approximately 726 individuals according to the 2010 U.S census, the Village is the principal settlement in the Town of Cape Vincent. The Village is located approximately twenty-five miles northwest 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. Wolfe Island and City of Kingston, both popular tourist destinations, lie across the St. Lawrence River in Ontario, Canada.

The Village of Cape Vincent's location on the St. Lawrence River near the confluence of Lake Ontario was a major factor in the Village's initial settlement and its subsequent growth as a trade port. Today, the Village's waterfront location is still one of its greatest assets. Serving as the gateway to the Thousand Islands region, the Village has the distinction of being the only community with an international car ferry on the St. Lawrence River – allowing passengers and automobiles to travel between the United States and Canada. Due to the presence of this ferry, U.S. Customs maintains a port of entry and customs office at the ferry dock.

Over the years, the Club Street area surrounding the international ferry dock – which serves as the first impression for visitors entering the Village by ferry – has become marred by dilapidated buildings and lacks a strong connection to local businesses and attractions. In efforts to revitalize this prominent area, the Village has supported several projects including the relocation of the Cape Vincent Historic Museum and construction of a new customs and law enforcement building at the international



*Village of Cape Vincent
Downtown core along the St. Lawrence River¹*

¹ <http://www.upstateaerialphotography.com/1000islands.htm>

ferry dock, creation of a small parking lot behind the Chamber of Commerce building and the development of a Village Green where public events, such as concerts and the annual French Festival are held. Still much more work is necessary for the Club Street area to reach its fullest potential.

The Village's rich history, cultural diversity, old style architecture, natural environment, and access to the St. Lawrence provide a unique experience for those visiting and living in Cape Vincent. The Village's local waterfront revitalization area includes approximately 1.6 miles of St. Lawrence River shoreline. The predominant land use is single-family residential, however there are some commercial uses as well - mostly retail and service establishments related to tourism and recreation. Water-dependent recreation is an important part of the local economy. The Village's heavily used seven acre East End Park has two boat launches and provides access for fishing, scuba diving and passive recreation. The Village also maintains a public transient boat dock and several access points at dead-end street which provide additional locations where the public can reach the waterfront.

Collaborations with Department of State:

Since completion of its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1987, the village has worked to advance its implementation. The Department of State has awarded two (2) Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP) grants to the Village of Cape Vincent. (See attached chart: Grants Awarded - Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Village of Cape Vincent).

Through these EPF LWRP awards, the Village reconstructed the seawall and boat ramp at East End Park and completed designs for a new welcome center. The Village also prepared the Club Street Revitalization Plan which is intended to complement the Village's existing LWRP by preparing an implementation strategy to improve physical and visual waterfront access, address dilapidated structures and promote development in the Club Street area.



East End Park

LWRP Monitoring Process:

The goal of the monitoring process is for the Department of State (DOS) to assess a community's consistency with its approved LWRP, and to understand local 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 monitoring process with a phone call to the Mayor, asking the Village to participate and briefly describing the monitoring protocol. A follow-up correspondence was sent to the Village outlining the monitoring process along with a list of survey questions. The correspondence 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. During the call, the Village Mayor, Timothy Maloney, and Kristy Kennedy from the Cape Vincent Local Development Corporation described the relevancy of its LWRP, its use, and the local consistency review process.

As a follow-up, DOS staff traveled to Cape Vincent to meet with Village representatives. This meeting focused on review of the local consistency review law, as well as future opportunities to collaborate with DOS on waterfront revitalization projects. The meeting provided DOS with an opportunity tour the waterfront area including East End Park, Village Dock, and Club Street area.

DOS Findings:

Overview

The Village of Cape Vincent adopted its LWRP in 1987 to guide development within the coastal zone in a way that protects and preserves natural resources and supports development that will best utilize the potential of the waterfront. The LWRP recognizes the St. Lawrence River as the principal tourist draw and emphasizes the need to preserve and improve public access and use of the St. Lawrence River.

Through implementation of its LWRP, Cape Vincent has improved public access to the waterfront at East End Park and several streets ending at the River. The village has also made great strides in improving the aesthetics of its business core spurring private investment in commercial properties. Currently, the Village is focused on improving the Club Street area which acts as a waterfront gateway and providing additional amenities at the East End Park.

During the tour several waterfront issues were highlighted including maintenance of the breakwater and lack of sufficient public transient docking. The Village contacted the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE) – who are responsible for maintaining the breakwater – to discuss its integrity. The ACoE agreed to inspect the breakwater and determine the feasibility of repairing the structure. In the future, the Village would like to work with DOS to explore the potential for increasing public transient dock space to encourage day trips from Islanders and Canadians. This may include installing moorings within the breakwater area and construction of deep-water docking capable of accommodating larger ships at East End Park. These activities would be eligible for funding under the EPF LWRP grant program.

Although it is twenty-five years old, the Village of Cape Vincent LWRP is still used as a reference document which informs proposed waterfront development and revitalization projects. The LWRP is complemented by more recent planning work, including the Club Street Revitalization Plan and the Village and Town of Cape Vincent joint Comprehensive Plan. Although the Village feels the LWRP should be updated eventually, the Village currently lacks the staff and resources to prepare an LWRP update and feels its resources are better spent pursuing funding to advance projects identified in the LWRP, comprehensive plan, and Club Street Revitalization Plan. When the Village is ready to update the LWRP,

they might consider preparing a joint LWRP with the Town of Cape Vincent. The Village might also reexamine the coastal boundary and consider expanding it to include Village Green and commercial area along Broadway Street.

Since the Village does not have the staff capacity necessary to prepare and administer grant awards, dedicated volunteers from the Cape Vincent Local Development Corporation and Cape Vincent Improvement League have been essential to moving forward Village revitalization efforts.

LWRP Implementation

In order to implement the LWRP, the Village created a new Waterfront Overlay District, which encompasses the entire coastal zone, to ensure new development and redevelopment be reviewed for compatibility with polices and purposes of the LWRP. This new district incorporated applicable LWRP policies into site plan review criteria.

The LWRP has helped the Village secure community development funding from the Department of State's EPF LWRP grant program as well as other State agencies such as, the NYS Office of Community Renewal Main Street grant program and NYS Empire State Development Restore NY grant program.

East End Waterfront Improvements

The Village's LWRP identified the need to develop amenities and improve the appearance of East End Park – the main public recreational facility. With funding through EPF LWRP, the Village reconstructed the seawall and boat ramp at East End Park and prepared designs for a new welcome center/bathhouse. The boat launch has significantly improved water access in Cape Vincent with hundreds of tourists and residents from neighboring communities utilizing the public ramp each year.



Boat launch at East End Park

The Village is currently seeking funding through the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to construct the welcome center/ bathhouse and picnic pavilion at the park. Although this project would be eligible for funding through the EPF LWRP, the Village will seek funding through OPRHP as this program only requires a 25% local match from communities with a high poverty rate, while the EPF LWRP program requires a 50% local match for all communities.

Club Street Revitalization Plan

An essential part in revitalizing the Village's waterfront is tackling the Club Street Area which occupies a prominent location along the St. Lawrence River. The Club Street Area includes the international ferry dock, U.S. Customs and Immigration Service, Village Dock, three small private marinas as well as residential and commercial uses. This area serves as a gateway to the Village from tourists entering the village from the St. Lawrence River.

As noted in the LWRP, the Club Street area has become marred by dilapidated buildings which impact scenic river views and lacks a strong connection to local businesses and attractions. In efforts to improve this prominent area, the village has supported several projects including the relocation of the Cape Vincent Historic Museum, construction of a new customs and law enforcement building at the international ferry dock, creation of a small parking lot behind the Chamber of Commerce building and the development of a Village Green where public events, such as concerts and the annual French Festival are held.

In spite of these improvements, more work is necessary for the Club Street area to reach its fullest potential and serve to attract visitors. With funding through the EPF LWRP, the Village recently completed a community planning process to develop a conceptual master plan and implementation strategy for the Club Street area. This plan complements the LWRP by planning for the repair or removal of dilapidated structures, waterfront access enhancements and pathways providing connections to public amenities and local businesses. The Plan includes recommendations and implementation strategy that targets both public and private properties with the intent of developing the Club Street area to promote tourism, economic growth, and enjoyable living.



Conceptual land and water use plan from Club Street Area Revitalization Plan.

The Village is actively exploring various funding opportunities through NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) to advance projects identified in the Club Street Area Revitalization Plan.

Roxy Hotel & Business District

The Roxy Hotel, established in the 1894, is a landmark historic building located on the main corner of the Village’s business district. In 2009, the Cape Vincent Local Development Corporation received a Restore NY grant to assist a private developer to rehabilitate the hotel. Restoration included interior and exterior rehabilitation resulting in 16 hotel rooms and restaurant, demolition of a motel that sat directly behind the building, and construction of six garden apartments in place of the motel. Many of the neighboring smaller commercial buildings in the Village have been able to complete façade and apartment renovations with funding through the NYS Main Street grant program. The majority of the business district is located just outside the coastal zone, however the Village understands providing a welcoming gateway at its waterfront and strong connections to the business district from the waterfront will attract visitors and help these businesses thrive.

Dead-end Street Public Access Improvements

The streets in Cape Vincent follow a grid system, whereby several streets dead-end at the St. Lawrence River. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Village established public access points at each of the street ends providing small quiet access locations where the public can view the River. Improvements such as park benches and landscaping have been installed at Point, Market, Real, Kanady, and Murray Streets. Signage clearly indicating each dead-end as a public access site has also been installed.



Public access at end of Kanady Street

LWRP Document Accessibility

Copies of the Village of Cape Vincent LWRP are on file at the Village Office (127 E. Joseph St.) 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/>.

Local Consistency Review

The Village of Cape Vincent LWRP Consistency Law was adopted in October 1987 to provide for the protection and beneficial use of the natural and man-made resources within the Village of Cape Vincent 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 Cape Vincent LWRP.

The Village Mayor and Planning Board are aware of local consistency review law; however since it is rarely used they are not intimately familiar with the review process set forth in the law. Most years there are no proposed projects in the coastal zone which require consistency review. As part of the LWRP evaluation process, DOS staff reviewed the local consistency review law with the Mayor and discussed the process and consistency review requirements. If necessary, the village will consult with DOS consistency unit on proposed actions in the coastal area.

The Cape Vincent local consistency review law states that the Village Board of Trustees or a Village agency, when proposing to undertake, approve or fund a Type I or Unlisted action in the waterfront area, shall prepare or cause to be prepared a Waterfront Program Consistency Assessment Form for the proposed action. The Village Board may refer such actions to any Village Agency for review assistance and recommendation including but not limited to the Village Planning Board. The Village Board will make consistency determinations within 30 days of submission. No action shall be undertaken, approved, or funded unless the Village Board certifies its consistency with the policies and purposes of the LWRP. Written finding and certification of the Village Board shall be filed with the Village Clerk before the action is undertaken, approved, or funded.

LWRP Section V describes consistency review process and states that the Enforcing Officer will advise the applicant on consistency procedure and provides assistance in filling out the Coastal Assessment Form (CAF). If the action is subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board, the consistency review shall be integrated with the site plan review procedure to the maximum extent possible.

Grants Awarded			
Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP)			
Village of Cape Vincent			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
2009	\$20,275	Club Street Waterfront Project - The Village of Cape Vincent will complete a comprehensive revitalization plan to enhance land and water access and to improve dilapidated structures and pathways for the area known as the "Club Street Block" along the St. Lawrence River.	Closed
1998	\$90,700	East End Waterfront Improvements - The Village completed improvements to Village Park, an underutilized park along the St. Lawrence River. Projects components included reconstruction of the seawall and boat ramp at East End Park and designs for a new welcome center and bath house.	Closed