

Village of Youngstown LWRP Monitoring Report June 2012

Community Background:

The Village of Youngstown is a quaint and historic village located in the northwest corner of Niagara County, approximately ten miles north of Niagara Falls. It is situated near the confluence of Lake Ontario



Mouth of the Niagara River: View from Youngstown

and the Niagara River, and immediately east of Niagara On-The-Lake, Ontario. The Great Lakes Seaway Trail runs along the Village's Main Street. The Village, which is located in the Town of Porter, comprises approximately one square mile and has a population of roughly 2,000. With a prime location to draw tourists, one of the main attractions in Youngstown is its waterfront parks, where the splendor of the Lower Niagara River can be seen from nearly every vantage point. Its offshore anchorage, synonymous with the Village's identity, provides unique vistas for residents and visitors alike. Located just to

the north of the Village is Old Fort Niagara, a National Historic Landmark and State Historic site that welcomes more than 100,000 visitors each year. The Fort is adjacent to Fort Niagara State Park, a 500 acre multi-purpose recreation facility.

Collaborations with Department of State:

Upon completion of its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in 1989, the Village of Youngstown has methodically worked to advance its implementation. The Village's grants partnership with the Department began in 1994 with a \$15,000 Title 11 of the New York State Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (EPF LWRP) grant to prepare detailed design plans, specifications and cost estimates for the Village's two waterfront parks: Constitution Park and South Waterfront Park. Building on that previous grant, the Village was subsequently awarded a \$75,000 EPF LWRP grant in 1996, to provide for the construction of Constitution Park. Elements of the project included reconstruction of the deteriorated seawall, and construction/installation of a gazebo, interpretive signage and other park amenities. A trail from Constitution Park to the nearby South Waterfront Park was also constructed under the '96 grant.

Then, the Village sought financial assistance to rehabilitate South Waterfront Park, initially receiving support from the 1996 Clean Water, Clean Air Bond Act (\$100,000), under the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. In 2003, the Village applied for and received an EPF LWRP award for \$85,000. This investment of money, and professional expertise from the Department of State, has resulted in an improved South Waterfront Park, and expanded public access opportunities for pedestrians and boaters. The project included a comprehensive overhaul of the park, including installation of a new



single lane boat ramp, reconstruction of 160 linear feet of shoreline bulkhead, and an 8-foot wide concrete sidewalk along the water's edge. The new wall stabilized the ramp and park providing permanent erosion protection. Parking for an additional twelve cars is provided on a stone covered surface lot. There are also new benches, trash receptacles, lighting, a restroom building with a passport identification station, and facilities with electrical outlets for transient boaters. The weeping willow trees on-site were removed - replaced with vegetation more appropriate to the use and scale of the site.



South Waterfront Park

The success of the 2003 project prompted the Village to promote additional enhancements to its public waterfront area, and provide regional trail connections, important scenic views and improved pedestrian, boat, and vehicular access for residents and visitors to the Niagara River.

LWRP Monitoring Process:

The goal of the monitoring process is for the Department of State-Division of Coastal Resources (DCR) 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 the community to highlight successes, and request technical and financial assistance for program implementation.

The DCR began the Village of Youngstown's LWRP monitoring process with a phone call to the Village's Clerk/Treasurer to describe that the Village had been selected by DCR to participate in the LWRP monitoring project. A follow-up letter was sent to provide information relating to what the process would involve, and a list of survey questions was attached. The letter indicated that a conference call would take place between DCR 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, DCR 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 the details necessary for DCR to make its assessment. Neither the mayor nor Village Clerk/Treasurer was available to participate in the conference call. Bob Gallucci, Village Engineer, provided all of the responses.

As a follow-up to the call, DCR's Local and Regional Programs and Consistency Review Staff traveled to Youngstown to meet with Village representatives. An evening meeting was held with Village Board and Planning Board members to discuss the relevance of the LWRP, its use, and where the Village stood in its implementation. Participants from the Village included Mayor Raleigh Reynolds, Deputy Mayor Steven Sutor, and Trustees Tim Lockhart, Tim Adamson and Beverly Van Deusen; also present were Tim Adamson, Peggy Hanson, Brian Muller, Fred Braun and John Stevens. DCR provided information regarding the benefits of having an approved LWRP, including the *consistency* provision which assures that federal, State and local governments work in unison and in accordance with the Village's LWRP to

build a stronger economy and a healthier waterfront environment. The meeting provided DCR with an opportunity to more fully assess the Village's understanding and implementation of its LWRP, and to clarify several items discussed during the call.

A tour of the Village and waterfront was taken the following day with Village representatives.

Division of Coastal Resources Findings:

Overview



Signs: Corner of Main and Water Streets

Overall, the *Village of Youngstown Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)* (adopted October 19, 1989), along with the *Town of Porter Comprehensive Plan 2012*, are the key documents that guide waterfront revitalization and public access projects in the Village. The LWRP represents the official Village Master Plan through the year 2000. The entire Village is included in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Area.

Through implementation of its LWRP, Youngstown has improved its recreation facilities, open spaces and waterfront connections. Concurrently, improvements to the Main Street commercial district have been made as part of the State Route 18F rehabilitation, with the addition of new street lighting, trees, brick paver sidewalks and parking spaces. These enhancements have helped to make the Village a more attractive and welcoming place. Several of the public improvements made in the Village are identified in the LWRP. Details regarding those projects are provided below.

While the Village has advanced implementation of its LWRP, local capacity to manage and coordinate complex projects is more limited. Many of the larger projects mentioned on the tour, some of which are described in the LWRP, would require extensive collaboration with multiple partners. As the administrative work of the Village is done by part-time personnel, including the governing body, those projects would prove more challenging to implement.

LWRP Implementation

The Village has completed several of the proposed projects identified on Figure 25 in the LWRP and further described in Sections IV and V – some have been done using EPF LWRP funds in partnership with the DCR. Funding under Title 11 of the New York State Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program has been instrumental to the implementation of the Village's LWRP. As a result of the LWRP and these projects, the Village has expanded public enjoyment of its waterfront and substantially improved its ability to take advantage of tourism opportunities. (See attached chart.) The Village has also partnered with other State agencies to assist in implementing waterfront goals and projects, including the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the Department of Transportation.

Constitution Park - At the time of the LWRP, the Village had recently acquired the one-acre property. The Village has enhanced public access to the Niagara River by improving the stairways and landings down the embankment to the waterfront. These improvements were made using local funds, donations and Environmental Protection Fund grants. Curbside parking along State Route 18F, close to the gazebo at the park, was installed by the State and County. *Improved connections between Constitution Park and Falkner Park, i.e., signage and street crossings, are still needed to provide a safe link between the two parks, crossing Route 18F/Main Street.*

Hinman Street Stairway - A series of stairways are in place along the steep slope embankment that exists between the Niagara River shoreline and Main Street. The public stairway known as the Hinman Street Stairway (located opposite the end of Hinman Street, to the west of Main Street) has been re-built, using pressure-treated wood. This stairway connects Main Street to Water Street and Waterfront Park, and is constructed on a public access easement on land owned by the Youngstown Yacht Club. During the course of the monitoring session, the Village expressed doubt that all visitors were aware of how to access the waterfront. Dense vegetation covers much of the embankment, and views of the Lower Niagara River are diminished or altogether blocked. *Along with selective clearing of vegetation along the embankment, better signage and street crossings to align with the tops of the staircases, could enhance public access to the waterfront.*



Constitution Park Stairway

Main Street Promenade - Improvements to the Main Street commercial district were made as part of the State Route 18F rehabilitation, with the addition of new street lighting, trees, brick paver sidewalks and parking spaces. However, more needs to be done – as these enhancements are in place for only 1½ blocks.

Parking Improvements - Additional parking spaces were placed along Second Street, adjacent to Falkner Park. Parking along Hinman Street has been enhanced. During the course of the monitoring session, the Village identified other potential locations where additional parking could be provided – including the Village-owned parcel at the northeast corner of Main and Hinman Streets, and the parcel occupied by the Department of Public Works (DPW) adjacent to Falkner Park. *The LWRP includes multiple references to pedestrian movement and needed parking. The Village should consider undertaking a study to evaluate vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian circulation and existing and future parking supply and demand. In conjunction with preparation of such a study, relocation of the DPW facilities to an outlying section of the Village should be further explored to provide increased open space/future public parking at the current DPW location.*

Yacht Club Redevelopment Plan - The privately-owned facilities of the Youngstown Yacht Club are located along Water and Ferry Streets – along the Niagara River shoreline. Yacht Club property is sandwiched between Constitution Park and Waterfront Park. Existing vehicular access off Water Street leading to Constitution Park is a narrow and unimproved right-of-way. While some improvements have

been made to landside storage of yachts and sailing craft, more needs to be done to better organize parking, boat servicing and storage activities.



Waterfront Park - The Department provided technical and financial assistance to design, rehabilitate and enhance (South) Waterfront Park. Improvements to the Park included bulkhead and boat launch rehabilitation, parking area rehabilitation, and sidewalk reconstruction. In addition, the Village was awarded a grant from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to install new benches, trash receptacles, lighting, a restroom building with a passport identification station, and facilities with electrical outlets for transient boaters. During the course of the tour, the Village pointed out the portion of the bulkhead between the boat ramp and Petroy Marine which is slumping toward the water. The Department will work closely with the Village and other permitting agencies as necessary, to correct the issue.

Other Projects

Water taxi/ferry - The LWRP notes that a seasonal passenger ferry used to operate on the Niagara River between the Village Dock and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, but was discontinued. The Niagara County Legislature, through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, and together with the Village of Youngstown and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, are seeking to redevelop that passenger ferry service. Currently, there is no easy way for visitors to travel between these two communities, which together offer enormous heritage tourism possibilities and opportunities for business development. Based on the overwhelming success of a promotional event (September, 2005) and consistent demand to renew the ferry service, the Niagara County Legislature, through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, is continuing to work with both communities to establish a permanent ferry service. Village-owned facilities are in place at Constitution Park to accommodate such service, although would require some rehabilitation. Improved vehicular and pedestrian access from Main Street and Water Street to the ferry facilities would be necessary. *While improved stairways and landings from Main Street down the embankment to the waterfront are now in place, an incline elevator or other people mover system should be considered to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic.*

Facade improvements - The LWRP describes the Village's interest to improve the physical appearance of the Village Center, and proposes a commercial building facade improvement program. To date, such a program has not been developed. Such improvements, in combination with continued streetscape improvements and other recommendations relative to advancing tourism opportunities, would increase waterfront redevelopment and help build private investors' confidence in the Village and its commitment to support local investment.

Cold Storage - At the time of the LWRP, the Youngstown Cold Storage Company was the only industrial use located in the Village - formerly utilized for the storage, washing, and packing of locally grown apples. Located at the intersection of Elliott and Third Streets, adjacent to Veteran's Park and close to the Village's downtown, the Village owns the property and proposes to develop senior housing. Negotiations are now underway with a developer. A hazardous substances remedial investigation has

occurred to address the potential for contamination associated with historic operations at the site and identify appropriate remedial measures based on the planned reuse of the site. The Village will amend its LWRP to show a change in the proposed land use, from Industrial to Multi-Family Residential. If feasible, the Village could retain the building's three-foot thick stone walls in the housing redevelopment project to reflect the historic use of the building, or alternatively, reuse the stone in historical gateways.

Youngstown branding - Fort Niagara State Park's South entrance is located approximately ½ mile from the center of the Village, where Main Street intersects with Lockport Street. The Park's 500 acre multi-purpose recreation facilities and sports fields host multiple weekend-long soccer and lacrosse tournaments. However, many of those visitors travel to the Park via the Robert Moses Parkway, leave the same way, and essentially by-pass the Village. During the course of the monitoring session, the Village expressed the desire to attract those families that attend sports tournaments at the Park – coming up with mechanisms to bring more visitors into the Village from Fort Niagara, e.g., better tourism marketing/"branding" Youngstown, wayfinding system, and signage/banners. The Village could prepare a tourism development strategy that would identify a tourism niche and include a business mix analysis and implementation strategy to reinforce the brand identity and guide business expansion.

El Dorado Hotel - Currently a privately owned, vacant site located in the center of the Village along Main Street at the intersection of Lockport and Water Streets, the El Dorado Hotel site is a local historic site. (The El Dorado Hotel was torn down in 1935.) At such time it becomes available for purchase, the Village could acquire the property to enhance and protect the site – possibly for a park and gateway to the waterfront.

LWRP Document Accessibility

Paper copies of the LWRP document are kept in the Village Clerk's office. The document is available for review to anyone who makes a request. Additionally, the LWRP is available electronically on the Department of State's website. *The Village should consider placing the LWRP on the Village's website.*



Site of the El Dorado Hotel

Local Consistency Review

Village agencies, local officials and the public are aware of the LWRP and the consistency requirements associated with it. The LWRP has been instrumental in protecting the Village's waterfront resources. Village representatives cited an example where the LWRP was used to ensure new development proposed on the historic Eldorado Hotel site would not obstruct the scenic vistas from the Main Street/Lockport Street area. Larger development proposals have not been prevalent in the Village.

The Village uses its LWRP as a guideline and standard base for discussions for all waterfront actions. 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 Village Board of Trustees for review and recommendations regarding the action's consistency with the policies and purposes of the Village of Youngstown LWRP.

The Village should consider amending its consistency review law, where responsibility for review of actions for consistency with the LWRP would be removed from the Board of Trustees and delegated to the Planning Board, with assistance provided by the Building Inspector. The Planning Board is familiar with project reviews in accordance with the Village’s zoning ordinance, and could make certain that uses are consistent with the LWRP. The DCR will provide an example local law to the Village.

Need for LWRP Amendment

The Village is considering amending its LWRP to update and incorporate new planning efforts, zoning/local law amendments, and projects that would promote reinvestment in the Village – thereby attracting more visitors and strengthening the local economy. Updating and amending the LWRP is an eligible activity in the Department’s 2012-2013 EPF solicitation, and the Village has applied for a grant to do so.

Grants Awarded			
Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program			
Village of Youngstown			
Year	Amount of Grant	Project Description	Status
1994	\$15,000	<p>Design Improvements for Waterfront Park & Constitution Park</p> <p>The project involved preparation of detailed design plans, specifications, and cost estimates for renovation/improvements to the Village’s two waterfront parks: Constitution Park, and Waterfront Park. The Village wanted to be sure that the passive recreational features of the parks were retained, as well as be completely accessible.</p>	Closed
1996	\$75,000	<p>Constitution Park and Trail</p> <p>Building on the previous grant, this grant award provided funding assistance for to construct Constitution Park. Elements of the project included reconstruction of the deteriorated seawall, a gazebo, lighting, landscaping, benches, signage, a trail linking the facility with the nearby Waterfront Park, and other improvements.</p>	Closed
2003	\$85,000	<p>Construction of a Niagara River Boat Launch and Pier</p> <p>The project included a comprehensive overhaul of the park, including installation of a new single lane boat ramp, reconstruction of 160 linear feet of shoreline bulkhead, and an 8-foot wide concrete sidewalk along the water’s edge. The new wall stabilized the ramp and park - providing permanent erosion protection. Parking for an additional twelve cars is provided on a stone covered surface lot.</p>	Closed