

City of Fulton Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Introduction

The City of Fulton is located on the Oswego River, twenty-five miles north of the City of Syracuse and twelve miles south of Lake Ontario. The current geographic boundary of the City of Fulton was established in 1902 by uniting under one government the Village of Fulton on the east side of the Oswego River with the Village of Oswego Falls on the west side of the river. Today, Fulton is one of two cities in Oswego County. The other is the City of Oswego, located on the Lake Ontario shoreline. Fulton's population is 11,896. Together these two cities comprise 25% of Oswego County's 122,109 residents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010).

In 1828, before either Fulton or Oswego Falls were incorporated, the Oswego Canal was built connecting Oswego with Syracuse. The canal spurred the development of Fulton into an important milling center. The development of the railroad eclipsed Fulton's short life as a milling center, but the availability of water and power allowed for the establishment of new industries such as textiles, paper and machine tools. For nearly 100 years, from the mid-19th to the mid-20th Centuries, manufacturing was the foundation of Fulton's growth and prosperity.

From 1970 to 2010, the population of Fulton decreased from 14,003 to 11,896 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). A variety of factors explain the trend of population decline. One factor is the closure of several of the largest manufacturing companies in Fulton including Miller Brewing Company and Nestle. Another is the changing taste for residential development; over the years the population seemed to shift to the small towns surrounding the City of Fulton or farther out in Oswego County. This preference for rural or suburban living was facilitated by the rise of the automobile and expenditures on transportation infrastructure that has allowed people to live further from where they work.

Fulton City officials have become increasingly aware that Fulton's waterfront areas have tremendous power to attract residents and visitors as well as water-related commerce and industry. It has become evident that it is important to plan for the future of the city's waterfront and downtown areas. In an effort to establish a more comprehensive plan for its waterfront areas, the city decided to develop a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) with funding from the New York State Department of State. The LWRP process began with three major goals:

- Goal 1: To increase public awareness, appreciation and use of the city's waterfront areas through education and destination development;
- Goal 2: To stimulate economic development by strengthening linkages between the city's downtown and waterfront areas;
- Goal 3: To ensure that new construction is concentrated in and compatible with existing development patterns.

This document was prepared for the New York State Department of State using funds provided under Title II of the Environmental Protection Fund Program. The New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources' Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive program that refines legislatively established waterfront policies by incorporating local circumstances and objectives. Legislative authorization for the NYS LWRP is New York State Executive Law, Article 42, "Waterfront Revitalization of Coastal Areas and Inland Waterways" (adapted from Chapter 842 of the Laws of 1981 and Chapter 366 of the Laws of 1986). These laws articulate the State's policy regarding its coastal areas and inland waterways, and are designed to encourage the following goals:

- To achieve a balance between economic development and preservation that will permit the beneficial use of coastal and inland waterway resources while preventing the loss of living marine resources and wildlife, diminution of open space areas or public access to the waterfront, shoreline erosion, impairment of scenic beauty, or permanent adverse changes to ecological systems.
- To encourage the development and use of existing ports and small harbors including use and maintenance of viable existing infrastructures, and to reinforce their role as valuable components within the state's transportation and industrial network.
- To conserve, protect, and, where appropriate, promote commercial and recreational use of fish and wildlife resources and to conserve and protect fish and wildlife habitats identified by the Department of Environmental Conservation as critical to the maintenance or re-establishment of species of fish or wildlife. Such protection shall include mitigation of the potential impact from adjacent land use or development.
- To encourage and facilitate public access for recreational purposes.
- To minimize damage to natural resources and property from flooding and erosion, including proper location of new land development, protection of beaches, dunes, barrier islands, bluffs and other critical coastal and inland waterway features and use of non-structural measure, whenever possible.
- To encourage the restoration and revitalization of natural and man-made resources.
- To encourage the location of land development in areas where infrastructure and public services are adequate.
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- To conserve and protect agriculture lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide for open spaces, clean air sheds and aesthetic value as well as for agricultural use.

- To assure consistency of state actions and, where appropriate, federal actions, with policies within the coastal area and inland waterways, and with accepted waterfront revitalization programs within the area defined by such programs.
- To cooperate and coordinate with other states, the federal government and Canada to attain a consistent policy towards coastal and inland waterway management.
- To encourage and assist local governments in the coastal area and inland waterways to use all their powers that can be applied to achieve these objectives.

The LWRP is a voluntary, grass-roots effort that brings together local and state governments, commerce and industry, environmental interests, private organizations, and community citizens to assess current opportunities and constraints and to build a consensus on the desired future of the community's waterfront. More importantly, the LWRP provides a strategy for achieving that vision and for managing local resources. Decision makers will then be able to respond with increased knowledge and purpose to future events affecting their waterfront area and to actively pursue an agreed-upon program.

One of the components of such programs is the identification of long-term uses along the waterfront and specific projects for implementation. These uses and projects, in conjunction with an established management program, can significantly increase a community's ability to attract development activities that will take best advantage of the unique cultural and natural characteristics of their waterfront. The LWRP also serves to enhance the conservation and protection of natural resources. As such, the LWRP represents a balance between economic development and environmental protection that permits the beneficial use of waterfront resources, while preventing the loss of valuable resources and public access opportunities to the waterfront. Once the LWRP is approved by the NYS Secretary of State, the community has the local controls in place to guide waterfront development and the legal ability to ensure that all proposed actions for their waterfront are consistent with the LWRP. This "consistency" provision is a strong tool that assures that State and local governments work in unison to build a stronger economy and a healthier waterfront environment.

The LWRP consists of the following 7 major sections:

1. *Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) Boundaries* – The WRA boundaries establish the focus area for the plan, and are delineated on Map 1.
2. *Inventory and Analysis* - This section provides an information base for determining applicable state and local coastal policies in Section 3 and designating appropriate land and water uses and proposed projects in Section 4. It provides brief descriptions of the coastal resources, existing land and water uses and important economic activities of the City of Fulton waterfront area. It is developed based on existing and readily available state, local, and regional documents and maps, augmented by telephone interviews and meetings.
3. *Local Policies* - This section is developed through close collaboration by local officials and community development agency staff, the planning consultant, waterfront advisory committee members, and the NYS Department of State. Local policies are developed based on the thirteen coastal policies adopted by New York State. Policies are selected and elaborated based on appropriateness to specific waterfront areas. The policies focus on five major areas: regional character, economic development, recreation and culture, coastal environment, and environmental health and energy.
4. *Proposed Uses and Projects* - This section outlines preferred land and water uses and project for the waterfront revitalization area. It should strongly reflect the City's develop goals for the waterfront revitalization area.
5. *Techniques for Local Implementation* - This section outlines actions the City must complete in order to achieve the goals of the LWRP. It includes zoning amendments, legislative endorsement of the plan, passage of local laws, creation of a management structure, public and private actions, and project financing requirements.
6. *State Actions Likely to Affect Implementation* - This section is provided by the NYS Department of State and consists of a list of state agencies and actions that may affect the waterfront and the City's ability to protect and enhance waterfront areas.
7. *Local Commitment and Consultation* – The draft LWRP is developed with assistance from the Mayor, members of the Common Council, planning and zoning boards, City staff, State officials and a waterfront advisory committee composed of city residents. The committee meets on an approximate monthly basis to review and comment on document drafts, provide valuable information regarding local conditions and needs, make recommendations regarding waterfront projects, and provide input regarding local techniques for implementation. The committee's efforts will be augmented by a public forum.