

CITY OF RENSSELAER
Rensselaer County, New York
LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past decade, the City of Rensselaer has recognized the strong potential of its Hudson Riverfront as the focus of its long-term revitalization efforts. The City consequently views the LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM as an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the wise development of this unique resource, to call the attention of the business community to the substantial investment opportunities present there, and to discuss areas in which inter-governmental cooperation (local/county/state/federal) and private/public partnership will be essential to fully achieve PROGRAM objectives.

The City's Hudson Riverfront has been the subject of three prior comprehensive studies during the past decade, specifically:

- The Rensselaer Riverfront: A Public Policy Guide, Arthur F. Brod Jr., AIP, and Floyd E. Barwig, AIA, for the Office of the Mayor, 1976, 187 pages.
- City of Rensselaer: A Local Coastal Management Case Study, New York State Department of State Coastal Management Program, 1979, 61 pages.
- Riverfront Development Plan: Riverfront Open Space System, Historic Neighborhood Plans and Rensselaer Downtown, Rensselaer Planning and Development Agency and The Saratoga Associates, 1981, 99 pages.

These studies have collectively addressed the singular policy statement that presents both the comprehensive intent of the New York State Coastal Management Program and the overall objective of the City's LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM:

"RESTORE, REVITALIZE AND REDEVELOP DETERIORATED AND UNDERUTILIZED WATERFRONT AREAS FOR COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND OTHER COMPATIBLE USES."

The Riverfront Development Plan, in particular, focuses upon four highly significant objectives of the City's LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM, namely (1) improved recreation and public access, (2) increased economic development, (3) greater aesthetic quality within the coastal zone, and (4) protection from flooding.

It is not the intention of this PROGRAM report to replicate the technical detail provided in the prior studies, but merely to state as succinctly as possible the basic elements of the LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM so that intergovernmental acceptance and approval of its content may be sought and private/public achievement of its recommendations guided.

PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Rensselaer's LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM (LWRP) has been developed in accordance with the New York State Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act (1981) and related procedures, requirements and guidelines promulgated by the New York State Department of State.

The planning process through which the City's PROGRAM has evolved included the following steps, as sequentially discussed in the body of this report:

1. BOUNDARY DETERMINATION, in which the coastal area serving as the program basis for waterfront policies and activities is defined.
2. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS, in which conservation and development opportunities and constraints within the program area are identified and their complexities and interrelationships examined.
3. POLICY DETERMINATION, in which the City's governing body, its Common Council, upon recommendation of the City's Planning Commission, identifies those State policies applicable to the city's coastal area and develops a statement of local policies.
4. USES AND PROJECTS, in which specific proposals are presented regarding potential land uses and projects to be undertaken to advance the coastal policies.
5. IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES, in which specific management, funding and program strategies are identified or developed including organizational structures, land use controls, laws, ordinances, regulations, local government capabilities, and necessary and appropriate state actions.
6. CONSULTATION WITH FEDERAL, STATE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL AGENCIES, in which these agencies comment on the proposed waterfront program.
7. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS, in which the impacts of non-local programs and actions are considered and both those programs and the proposed waterfront program are modified for consistency.
8. LOCAL COMMITMENT, in which the Planning Commission formally presents the proposed waterfront program to the Common Council, which approves the program and transmits the LWRP to the State of New York.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE AND PRELIMINARY DRAFT SUBMISSION, in which the waterfront program is examined for impacts on the environment and the program is presented to State, regional, and local authorities for review and comment.
10. DRAFT SUBMISSION, in which the revisions which may be suggested in the prior step are incorporated in the program report and submitted to the New York State Department of State for approval.

One of the major benefits of the Waterfront Revitalization Act is the concept of "consistency". The process of program approval allows the State an adequate opportunity to determine that the local program does, in fact, further State coastal policies so that with State approval, the LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM can act as a guide for State and Federal actions to ensure their consistency with the local program.

Additionally, another benefit available to the City is financial assistance through the Department of State Coastal Management Program for implementation of the LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM. Once the program is approved, grants are available for research, studies, design development, and other necessary activities which serve to implement the various projects identified in the Program.