

Introduction and Overview

New York State's Waterfront Revitalization of Coastal Areas and Inland Waterways Act is a unique waterfront tool that encourages a local, home-rule decision-making process for waterfront management. The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive waterfront management plan developed under the authorization of the Act by local municipalities. The LWRP formulates waterfront development objectives by adopting statewide legislation policies to the unique and individual requirements of each municipality. The LWRP also outlines strategies that are used to meet the municipality's objectives.



The LWRP process involves cooperation with State, County, local, and private agencies, as well as an appointed LWRP local advisory committee that included local planning and municipal board members, and village and town Residents. The LWRP outlines specific projects and policies to encourage environmental protection, foster economic development, protect valuable water resources, and improve public waterfront access. The LWRP ensures that State and local actions proposed within the waterfront area are conducted in a manner consistent with the policies of the LWRP.

One of the components of the LWRP is the identification of long-term uses and specific projects along the waterfront related lands. These uses and projects, in conjunction with an established management program, can significantly increase a community's ability to attract and manage development activities that complement the unique cultural and natural characteristics of its waterfront.

An LWRP approved by the New York State Secretary of State provides a community with the local controls to guide waterfront development. More importantly, a distinct benefit of the LWRP is the legal ability to ensure that all actions proposed for its waterfront only occur in a fashion prescribed by the LWRP. This “consistency” provision is a strong tool that assures that State and local government works in unison, and not at cross purposes, to build a stronger economy and healthier waterfront environment.

The Villages of Celoron, Lakewood, Mayville, and Bemus Point and the Towns of Ellicott, Busti, North Harmony, Chautauqua, and Ellery are located within Chautauqua County, New York, in the Southern Tier. Like many communities in this area, these communities have suffered economically since the collapse of the Industrial Revolution. Manufacturing employment, traditionally supplying family sustaining jobs, has steadily declined since the 1950’s, when industrial employment meant jobs for 28,000 of the County’s 135,000 people. In 1975 industrial employment had declined to 17,000 and continued to decline, slipping to significantly under 14,000 by 1996. This decline, coupled with the decline of the agricultural economy, has significantly affected and impacted communities and the region. Numerous factors contributed to these downturns including the decrease in manufacturing throughout the northeast and Midwest and the decline in smaller family farms across the nation.

The Chautauqua Lake communities were first studied on a collective basis in 1970 as part of a regional planning effort for the Urban Area Planning Board of Southern Chautauqua County. The purpose of this comprehensive study was to examine the existing and future redevelopment potential of the region and the Lake’s importance to the success of the region as a residential, commercial, industrial and recreational area. This first plan generated many extraordinary visions for the lake region. Included among these conceptual designs were the development of an outer circumferential route system that would alleviate traffic congestion along NYS Routes 394 and 430; the construction of a Route 60 bypass through Celoron; development of a regional park in the Mayville area; planned unit developments in both the Hartfield and Ellicott areas; a year round recreational center at Tom’s Point and a southern shore overlook. In addition, this regional plan emphasized long-term intermunicipal cooperation that would enable the Chautauqua Lake communities to complement each other’s efforts and develop a strong regional identity.

More recent planning efforts include *Chautauqua Lake – Entering the 21st Century: State of the Lake Report*, completed in May of 2000; and *The Management of Chautauqua Lake and Its Watershed*, completed in November of 2000. Unfortunately, limited community cooperation and comprehensive planning efforts throughout the 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s has done little to establish the basis for implementation of these plans or to stimulate the growth within the lake region. With economic concerns facing and impacting the lake communities a reexamination of the development and redevelopment opportunities necessary to strengthen the local economy is essential to the region’s future.

In an effort to address general development concerns and identify new economic opportunities around Chautauqua Lake, the nine communities surrounding the lake completed this Local Waterfront

Revitalization Program (LWRP). This step built upon the past planning efforts and identified new opportunities and concerns. The LWRP is beneficial for local communities because it:

- Provides a clear vision for waterfront development for Chautauqua Lake.
- Formulates policies and projects that will effectively manage and guide development along the waterfront and in areas to be impacted by waterfront development.
- Refines State policies related to waterfront development, and apply them to the Chautauqua Lake region.