

Introduction - Background Information on Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs

The approach to managing waterfront areas taken by New York State is significantly different from the approach used in other states. While state government can promote development and provide protection for critical resources, it is recognized that municipalities are in the best position to determine their own waterfront objectives and to adapt statewide approaches to specific local needs. Accordingly, the Department of State, pursuant to the Waterfront Revitalization of Coastal Areas and Inland Waterways Act, has encouraged waterfront communities to prepare their own Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs.

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive program that refines legislatively established waterfront policies by incorporating local circumstances and objectives. It is a voluntary grass roots effort which 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.

In general, a LWRP is a detailed realistic effort to promote and protect waterfront resources. By preparing a LWRP, a community has the opportunity to evaluate its waterfront resources and to develop and implement a management program for the best use and development of those 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. 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 valuable 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 completed and approved by the New York State Secretary of State, a community has in place the local controls to guide waterfront development and -- a distinct benefit of a LWRP -- the legal ability to ensure that all State actions proposed for their waterfront only occur in the fashion prescribed in the LWRP. This "consistency" provision is a strong tool that assures that State and local governments work in unison, and not at cross purposes, to build a stronger economy and a healthier waterfront environment.