

City of Plattsburgh Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Draft

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Key Definitions

Underutilized: *In terms of waterfront and downtown revitalization, property is not used to its full potential. This should be considered in any long-term plans for the future.*

Water-Dependent Use: *means a business or other activity which can only be conducted in, on, over, or adjacent to a water body because such activity requires direct access to that water body, and which involves, as an integral part of such activity, the use of the water.*

Water-Enhanced Uses: *means a use or activity which does not require a location adjacent to a water body, but whose location on the waterfront adds to the public use and enjoyment of the water's edge. Water-enhanced uses are primarily recreational, cultural, retail, or entertainment uses.*

Introduction

The City of Plattsburgh's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) has been prepared with the following goals foremost in mind:

- Increasing public awareness of, and accessibility to, the Lake Champlain and Saranac River waterfronts;
- Capitalizing on the economic development/downtown revitalization potential of waterfront redevelopment;
- Addressing ways to accommodate increasing public demand for recreational resources;
- Explore ways to work regionally to develop and enhance linkages to the rest of the Adirondack Coast; and
- Crafting a reasonable plan for protecting and enhancing the city's waterfront, cultural and natural resources.

Like many of its neighbors in the northeastern United States, the City of Plattsburgh is a regional urban center which has struggled to balance its numerous assets with the forces of change in the twentieth century. Its once thriving downtown, and resort- and industry-based waterfront, endured a long period of decline, which has recently begun to be reversed. Over the past several decades, the viability and cohesion of the city's downtown has been seriously eroded by the construction of I-87 and numerous outlying strip shopping centers, including Plattsburgh Plaza, Ames Plaza, Pyramid Malls, North Country Plaza, and Skyway Shopping Center. While I-87 linked Plattsburgh to the U.S. Interstate system, vastly improved its accessibility to the American and Canadian markets, and made it a much more attractive place to do business, it has also made it easier for potential visitors to bypass the city altogether, has spurred development at the western edge of the city and continues to draw people away from the downtown.

In an effort to counter deterioration of the central business district and its neighboring older commercial and residential areas, the city has made successful use of numerous federal and state funding programs for community planning, housing rehabilitation and commercial revitalization, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Renewal's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs and New York State programs such as Economic Development Zone designation, RESTORE, AHC and Rental Rehab programs. Revolving loan funds have also been established for the rehabilitation of downtown commercial buildings.

Since the late 1980s, the City has also undertaken a number of publicly-funded programs to improve waterfront and public park areas. Riverwalk Park, including a picnic area and pedestrian bridge, was developed on the south bank of the Saranac River, providing views of the Macdonough Monument and City Hall. In addition, a handicapped-accessible fishing dock was created at the Macdonough Monument, landscaping improvements and walkway paving were completed with substantial volunteer assistance at the Champlain Monument (opposite Riverwalk Park), the City Beach received major improvements and the Heritage Trail, complete with lengthy boardwalk, biking trail, and picnic pavilion, was created with Environmental Quality Bond Act funding. Walking trails, linking the city's various historic landmarks and natural resources, have also been established. Supported by multiple grants from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund - Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, the Dock Street Landing area has undergone a total transformation from a former rail yard and brownfield to a park, boat launch, trail, parking, and infrastructure to support future development. These activities are all part of the city's larger vision of creating a system of walking trails and publicly-accessible areas along Lake Champlain and the Saranac River, which will be addressed in the development of this Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

The City has also made great strides in terms of downtown revitalization, through the successful development of commercial facade improvement programs, infrastructure improvements, traffic pattern realignment, creation of additional parking facilities and aggressive programs to attract people and business to the downtown. In recognition of its efforts to improve, the City received a Main Street Revitalization Award from the Preservation League of New York State for its facade improvement and downtown revitalization efforts. In 1994 the Downtown Future Planning Commission was created to prepare a downtown development plan. The Commission generated four goals for downtown Plattsburgh, which include improving the city's appearance and atmosphere; easing movement of motorists and pedestrians; preserving, enhancing and capitalizing on historic and natural resources; and providing a capacity and environment that will stimulate economic development. The Point Historic District Committee was also formed around this time and provided important information for a 1996 study that explored links between the downtown and the waterfront.

A Local Waterfront Revitalization Waterfront Advisory Committee was first established in 1996 under the auspices of the Mayor and the City's Community Development Office to guide the development and implementation of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program for the City. From 1995 to 1998, a Project Team consisting of City staff, consultants, the Downtown Future Planning Commission, the Point Historic District Commission, and the Waterfront Advisory Committee held focus group meetings and prepared a draft LWRP supported by funding from an EPF-LWRP grant. The LWRP was subsequently circulated for public review by city residents and state agencies and revisions were made in response to comments submitted. Recognizing the need to coordinate the LWRP with the City's Comprehensive Plan, the City applied for and was awarded an EPF-LWRP grant in 2009 to re-examine the community's vision for its waterfront and update the LWRP to reflect that vision. In this most recent effort, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed to facilitate communication and cooperation among local governments, county and state agencies, interest groups, and others essential to the preparation of the LWRP. This volunteer committee was instrumental in public participation efforts, networking, sharing information, and formulating the goals and vision for the process (see the sidebar for the 2015 Vision Statement). Additional public participation information is contained in Appendices D, E and F. This LWRP presents the updated vision, policies to guide development and resource protection, and proposed LWRP implementation measures to reflect the community's priority projects and regional opportunities.

City of Plattsburgh Community Vision 2015:

The City of Plattsburgh is a community extraordinary in its orientation to Lake Champlain and the Saranac River that possesses rich environmental, recreational, historical, cultural, artistic and economic resources. Our trails, parks, marinas, and boat launches maximize access to our waterways, creating unforgettable recreational experiences and optimizing permanent public access.

Our inviting and vibrant city offers strong linkages to the rest of our region making it the hub of the Adirondack Coast.

We promote development that fosters the area's educational, cultural, artistic, recreational, dining and retail opportunities and attracts both residents and visitors throughout the year. We are stewards of our land and water and of the rich heritage that has shaped our community. We forge lifelong connections among all who live, work, and recreate here that will endure for generations.

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

The New York State Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is a comprehensive program that adopts legislatively established waterfront policies and allows locally refined policy explanations 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".

Article 42 articulates the State's policy regarding its coastal areas and inland waterways, and section 912 declares the following public policies:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. To encourage and facilitate public access for recreational purposes.
5. 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 measures, whenever possible.
6. To encourage the restoration and revitalization of natural and manmade resources.
7. To encourage the location of land development in areas where infrastructure and public services are adequate.
8. To conserve and protect agricultural lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide for open spaces, clean air sheds and aesthetic value as well as for agricultural use.
9. To assure consistency of state actions and, where appropriate, federal actions, with policies of the coastal area and inland waterways, and with accepted waterfront revitalization programs of the area defined or addressed by such programs.
10. To work cooperatively with the federal government, local governments, and private parties to implement programs to control and abate sources of nonpoint source pollution that may affect coastal and inland waterways.
11. To cooperate and coordinate with other states, the federal government and Canada to attain a consistent policy towards coastal and inland waterway management.
12. 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.
13. To facilitate the redevelopment of urban waterfronts.
14. To encourage local governments to enter into intermunicipal agreements to protect their shared environment and improve their region's economic strength.
15. To encourage state agencies to provide technical and financial assistance for implementation of local waterfront revitalization programs.

16. To encourage local governments and state agencies to celebrate, protect, and enhance the special places that made waterfronts distinct ecological systems and the preferred locations for people to live, work and recreate.

The LWRP 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 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, including surface water and underwater uses, 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 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 the LWRP is approved by the NYS Secretary of State, the community has the local controls in place 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.

The City's decision to develop a LWRP was concurrent with the completion of an Economic Development Zone (EDZ) Business/Employees Housing Study, a feasibility study of the City Harbor, and the ongoing efforts of the Lake Champlain Basin Program, a heritage- and natural resource-based regional planning and development initiative involving public/private partnerships with the states of New York, Vermont and the province of Quebec. The City's decision also reflects the need to manage growth as more and more people seek to enjoy the North Country as well as the need to accommodate steadily increasing boat and other recreational traffic. Through this NYS program, the City seeks to use waterfront revitalization strategies as a means of maximizing its resources.

I. Waterfront Revitalization Area Boundary

The City of Plattsburgh's Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA) includes the Lake Champlain waterfront and that portion of the Saranac River that lies between Lake Champlain and the third vehicular bridge (South Catherine Street), as well as some lands to the north and south of the River. The boundaries encompass the Municipal Beach, Bay Marina, Point Historic District, the City's Central Business District, and the waterfront area of the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base (see Map 1). There is an area of land – south of Rugar Street, north of the Saranac River, and east of I-87 – which the City has recently annexed from the Town of Plattsburgh. A portion of this land is part of the WRA.

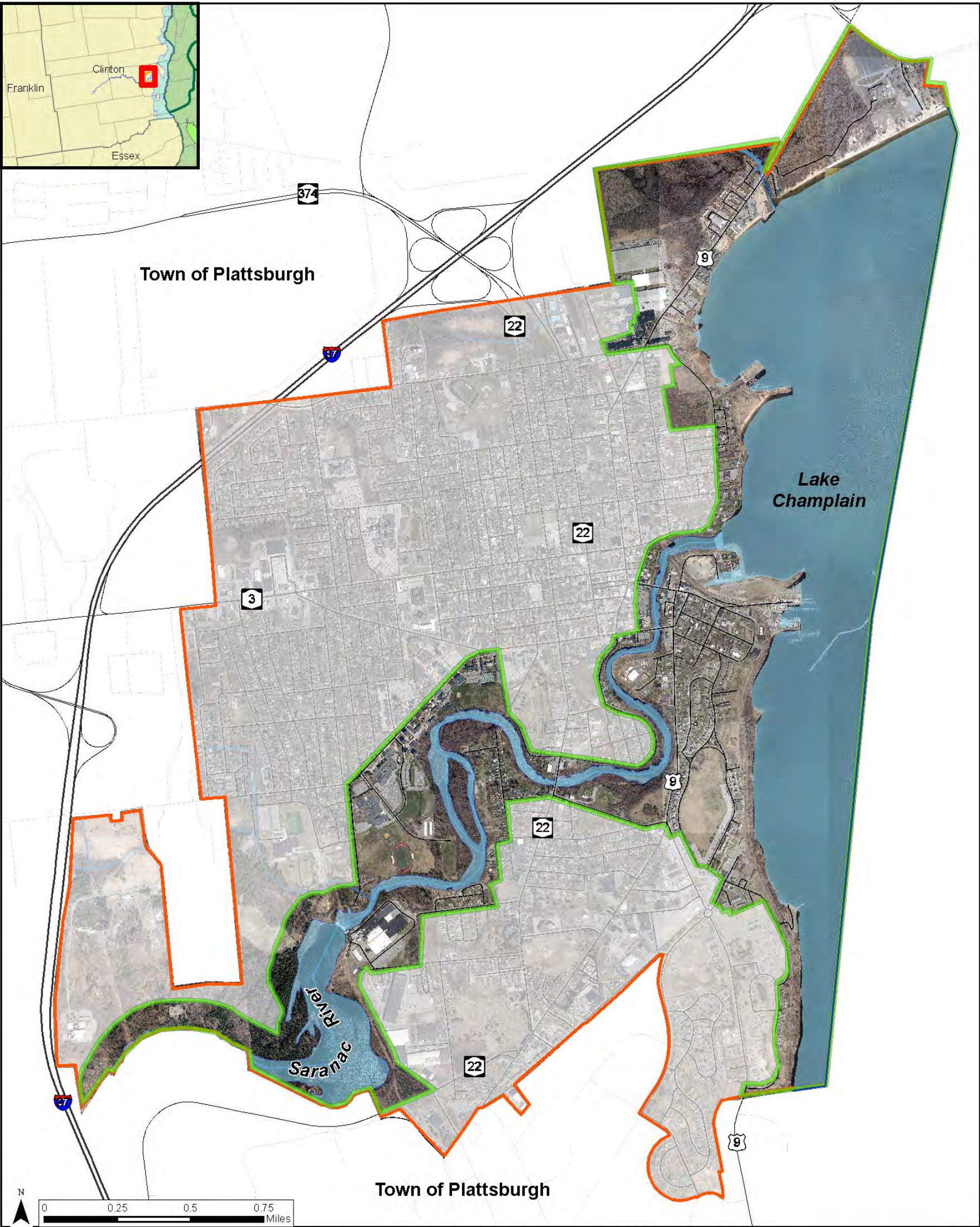
The Harbor Management Plan boundary extends from the Plattsburgh shoreline to the municipal boundary, as shown in Map 1. The Harbor Management Plan is integrated into this LWRP, as described in Section IV.

The specific boundaries of the WRA are as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of NYS Route 314 (Commodore Thomas Macdonough Highway) and the northeast corner of parcel 194.17-1-1 (the Municipal Beach), then west on NYS Route 314 to its intersection with NYS Route 9 (N Margaret Street), then southwest along NYS Route 9 to Scotion Creek, including parcel 193.21-1-1; along Scotion Creek and westward along the City Line to its corner, and southward along the City Line until it reaches parcel 207.8-1-18.1; then following the parcel boundary to Boynton Avenue; then eastward along Boynton Avenue to Cumberland Avenue; then south along Cumberland Avenue to include parcels 207.12-2-41 and 207.12-2-40 continuing south on Cumberland Avenue to its intersection with City Hall Place; then south on City Hall Place to its intersection with Bridge Street; then south on Durkee Street to its intersection with Broad Street; then west along Broad Street to its intersection with Pine Street; then following Pine Street along the meanders of the Saranac River to its intersection with South Catherine Street; then following Steltzer Road to the SUNY Plattsburgh campus (parcel 221.6-4-1), following the parcel boundary north to Broad Street; then west along Broad Street to Rugar Street; the southwest on Rugar Street to its intersection with Adirondack Lane, then south on Adirondack Lane to the stream crossing (at the intersection of parcels 221.10-1-36.1 and 221.10-1-36.2); then including an area 500' from the northern bank of the Saranac, extending westward to the City Line; then south along the City Line to its southwestern terminus, then following the City Line to its intersection with Route 22; then east on Route 22 to include parcel 233.6-1-6.1; then northwest along this parcel boundary to the eastern side of the railroad tracks; then following the railroad tracks north to Main Mill Street; then east along Main Mill Street toward the intersection with Hilltop Way, following the eastern parcel boundary of 221.14-2-1.1 northward to Underwood Avenue; then east along Underwood Avenue to the eastern edge of parcel 221.14-2-2, following this boundary north; then east to connect with Riverside Avenue; then north along Riverside Avenue to North Street and continuing east on North Street to Waterhouse Street; then north on Waterhouse Street to Hartwell Street; then east on Hartwell Street to Route 22; then crossing Route 22 to follow South Platt Street to the east to its intersection with NYS Route 9 (Peru Street/U.S. Avenue); then south along Route 9 to the northern edge of parcel 221.12-2-2.3, then south along US Oval to its intersection with Ohio Avenue; then east along Ohio Avenue to New York Road; then south along New York Road to the northwest corner of parcel 221.16-1-14.304; then following this parcel boundary south and west to parcel 221.16-1-14.303; then following this parcel boundary south and west to Ohio Avenue; then south along Ohio Avenue to its intersection with Nevada Oval; then south along Nevada Oval to US Avenue; then south along US Avenue to the City line; then following the City line east into the waters of Lake Champlain, then northerly following the city's eastern line back to parcel 194.17-1-1 (the Municipal Beach), to the point of beginning. Map 1, "Waterfront Revitalization Area Boundary Map," depicts both the LWRP boundary and the Harbor Management boundary.

The Waterfront Revitalization Area has been divided into five subareas: Subarea 1 or the North End Subarea, Subarea 2 or the Cumberland Avenue/Wilcox Dock Subarea, Subarea 3 or the Marina – Downtown Subarea (including a portion of the Saranac River); Subarea 4 or the Old Base Subarea; and Subarea 5 or the Upper Saranac Subarea (see Map 2). Boundary descriptions for each subarea are included in Section II-C.

The WRA has been delineated to include as many of the City's assets and potential assets as possible, with the expectation that, through the LWRP and related programs, these assets can be linked together and mutually enhanced.



City of Plattsburgh

**Waterfront Revitalization Area
and Harbor Management Area**

Map 1

Note: Harbor Management boundary is coterminous with the waterside municipal boundary and Waterfront Revitalization Area boundary.

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KEY

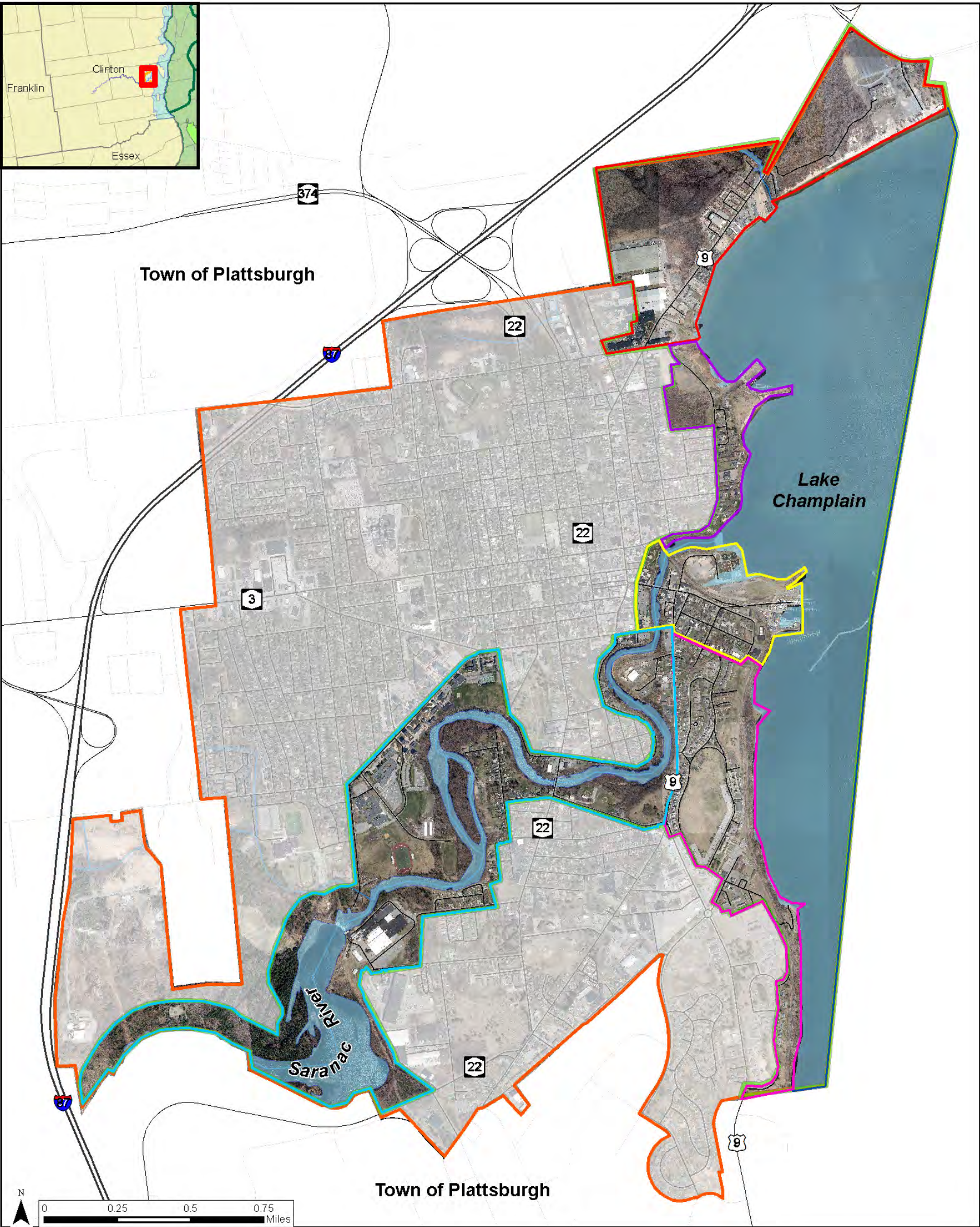
- City of Plattsburgh Boundary (2021)
- Harbor Management Plan Boundary
- Waterfront Revitalization Area

**SARATOGA
ASSOCIATES**

Landscape Architects, Architects,
Engineers, and Planners, P.C.



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City of Plattsburgh

Waterfront Revitalization Area Subareas

Map 2

Note: Harbor Management boundary is coterminous with the waterside municipal boundary and Waterfront Revitalization Area boundary.

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- KEY**
- City of Plattsburgh Boundary (2021)
 - Harbor Management Plan Boundary
 - Waterfront Revitalization Area
 - Subareas
 - North End
 - Cumberland Ave/Wilcox Dock
 - Marina-Downtown
 - Old Base
 - Upper Saranac

SARATOGA ASSOCIATES
Landscape Architects, Architects,
Engineers, and Planners, P.C.



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