

## Section 4. Proposed Land and Water Uses and Projects

The land and water use plan outlined in the following section is designed to translate the policies of the local waterfront revitalization program into actions and projects that will effectively draw upon or positively modify existing waterfront and land side resources to stimulate revitalization as well as facilitate local and regional tourism and environmental preservation and enhancement goals. The land and water use projects outlined below are based on an analysis of opportunities and constraints, public input, and the wide range of existing and ongoing projects articulated in other recently completed plans and grant applications. The proposed projects and programs are grouped in the following categories:

- Public Access and Recreational Enhancement
- Infrastructure and Redevelopment Projects and Programs
- Heritage Protection Projects and Programs
- Economic Opportunities

### 4.1 Proposed Land Use

The Town and Village of Clayton will build on their already established position as the cultural center of the Thousand Islands. With museums, performing arts, and visual arts, Clayton is located in a spectacular naturally beautiful setting with easily accessed recreational activities. This small community has a distinct village commercial core surrounded by a traditional village residential structure, and rural open space and residential waterfront development outside of the village. Clayton's diverse waterfront areas offer space for picnics and open-air summer concerts, areas for informal fishing, small-scale boat building and island-shipping operations, recreational boat docking, and outdoor commercial and dining opportunities. The land uses found along the river are varied, particularly in the peninsula area of the Village. For the future, the most important aspect of these diverse uses is to achieve a balance that continues to add character and vitality to the community and enhances the Thousand Island region as a highly desirable place to not only visit, but to live and work. To achieve that balance, the Clayton community needs to ensure its waterfront is an inviting place for people to unwind and enjoy civic activities, while also providing important new places and opportunities for innovative residential, commercial, and professional activities (see [LWRP Map 13](#)).

A number of proposed projects have been identified that represent a cohesive physical plan for the community (see [LWRP Map 11](#)). The proposed projects include redevelopment of the Frink America property, infill development with the Village's commercial core, enhancements to public waterfront access and recreation, infrastructure improvements, heritage protection initiatives, economic programs, and zoning updates.

## 4.2 Proposed Water Use

Within the Town and Village of Clayton, various existing water-dependent uses and the associated infrastructure are proposed to continue within the jurisdictional waters of the Village and Town (see Appendix A-Harbor Management Plan). These uses include recreational boating, intra-island barge traffic and workboats, water-based entertainment (such as visiting cruise ships, and visiting naval vessels), local tour boat operations, boathouses, and boatyards. Water-dependent activities that will continue to occur in the waters of Clayton are water skiing, recreational boating, operating personal watercraft, sailing, paddling, fishing, swimming, and scuba diving. Floating domiciles are not considered a water-dependent use and may not be attached to the shore by dock, pier, causeway or grounding within the village's harbor management area except by permit when associated with a vacant lot with a minimum of 200ft of shoreline that is owned by the occupant of the floating domicile or docked at a commercial marina facility. Winter activities that occur on the ice include ice fishing, cross-country skiing, hiking, kite skiing, snowmobiling, and previously horse racing. An international shipping corridor runs between Clayton's islands and the mainland. Shipwreck diving sites, as well as locations for anchoring and mooring, are also found throughout the St. Lawrence River. Projects listed in the following section that addresses water use consider the need for transportation improvements, recreational amenities, and increased access to water-based facilities, such as boat launches and docks for transient boaters.

## 4.3 Public Waterfront Access and Recreational Enhancement Projects and Programs

### **The RiverWalk** (PRIORITY PROJECT)

The Clayton RiverWalk is a comprehensive pedestrian access system that will ensure optimum use of the waterfront and Clayton's water related recreational resources, while also connecting cultural institutions and neighborhoods. The RiverWalk will ultimately provide pedestrian's access from the Frink America Property to the Antique Boat Museum. It is intended to be the unifying element along the Village's waterfront. It will be the centerpiece of Clayton and a catalyst for Clayton's business development goals. In order to be effective, the Clayton community must develop a long-term incremental approach to implementing the RiverWalk that capitalizes on existing assets and builds momentum for successive projects—the Frink-segment of the RiverWalk being an excellent first step. Likewise, building strong relationships between the public and private sectors will be crucial to success. As new initiatives are planned, it will be important to make the quality of the experience a defining component of the initiative. It will also be important that the Clayton community celebrate these initiatives, no matter how big or small. Frequent reminders of RiverWalk development efforts will bring the RiverWalk to the front of people's minds and help to gradually change negative perceptions and build a unified front.

The RiverWalk will also evolve as an important waterside gateway for the community. In order for Clayton to effectively draw boaters from the St. Lawrence River it will be important to effectively display to boaters that Clayton is an energetic community that offers unique dining and entertainment opportunities. Treatment of the waterfront as a gateway is important because it forms not only first

impressions for visitors already determined to come to Clayton, but also to boaters on their way to other destinations. Unique treatments like banners, lighting, and trees along the St. Lawrence River side for the RiverWalk may inspire those “passing through” to stop in Clayton. Additionally, the treatment of the buildings and landscape within the view of the water should be given special care and attention. Nodes of activity should be encouraged in an effort to stimulate interest and draw visitors in. Developing the RiverWalk is an important way for Clayton to not only improve the outside world’s perception of Clayton, but also a way to encourage building owners to improve the “backside” of their buildings and create improved connections along the waterfront.

**Figure 4.1 - Proposed plan of RiverWalk improvements from Frink Memorial Park to the Village dock area.**



## Recreational trail opportunities

Clayton has many beautiful opportunities for walking, hiking, jogging, biking, paddling, cross-country skiing, and fishing, as well as viewing nature, particularly birds, native flora and fauna, and historic features. Recreational trails promote a healthy lifestyle and provide opportunities for small businesses: bicycle repair, outdoor equipment, ice cream or other food-related shops. Where appropriate, small businesses, such as these, can be associated with rest areas and trailheads. Specific recreational trail opportunities include:

- **Routes 12 and 12E trail (PRIORITY PROJECT).** Both roads are scenic, but traffic moves quickly. Improving bicycle and pedestrian access along these main corridors would improve the opportunities for transportation and safe recreation throughout the community and the local region.

- **Reuse of the existing railroad bed for a multi-use trail.** The railroad played an important part of Clayton emerging as a vacation destination. Today, the railroad that once contributed so greatly to the emergence of Clayton has been abandoned, but has created an opportunity to develop a trail connection to a broader trail network. Connecting this linear corridor to a broader trail network not only creates an opportunity to attract touring cyclists, but also creates an additional amenity (including interesting views of the St. Lawrence River) that can be offered to visitors and residents. Those who want to snowmobile, bicycle, take a walk through the countryside, or bird watch, could all use the trail. The Town and Village should create a committee to develop the rail line into a trail. The committee should organize themselves around the principles and structure outlined by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Land ownership issues would likely need to be addressed during the planning efforts.
- **French Creek trail.** A hiking trail along French Creek, possibly with access for biking, and educational elements related to current SUNY-ESF and NYS DEC wetlands restoration efforts would enhance access to this significant natural resource, and would help local families and students better understand their environment. A link to the proposed Route 12E trail is also proposed.
- **Grindstone Island trail.** A designated trail on or adjacent town roads would allow further enjoyment of the island's scenic resources.
- **Paddling trail.** A designated paddling trail along French Creek and out to an island, such as Round Island would encourage additional visitor interest in the area and promote increased access to the community's water resources.
- **Dedicated bike lanes in the Village.** Bike lanes provide enhanced transportation options and safety for visitors and residents. Appropriate roads for bike lanes include James Street and Riverside Drive.

## Mainland Public Swimming Access

A pool is located at the Recreation Park, but few opportunities exist for the public to swim in the river from the mainland. The Clayton community should continue to investigate opportunities for a public swimming facility, including the option of developing a swim platform and deck at Centennial Park.

## Develop Scuba Diving Sites

Several of shipwrecks and other submerged cultural and physical features exist throughout the waters of the St. Lawrence River. Clayton should take greater advantage of these assets by promoting existing dive sites as well as developing new dive sites. A study should be conducted to explore potential locations for dive sites including suitable locations which will not lead to the destruction or loss of sensitive resources, physical layout of proposed sites; narrative descriptions of the underwater cultural, natural, and other resources of the proposed sites; nearby land-based resources and potential linkages; proposed actions for site development and a implementation strategy, including site and area

marketing. Developing a dive site directly off the shoreline would increase access to this recreational opportunity.

Existing and new scuba diving sites should be coordinated with the NYS Underwater Blueway Trail and Seaway Trail. The NYS DOS has initiated development of the Underwater Blueway Trail to enhance recreational use at specific underwater locations throughout the state. Trail development includes marking shipwrecks and rock formations with buoys, guiding lines and signage. The Great Lakes Seaway Trail “Dive the Seaway Trail” promotes dive sites accessible from points along the Great Lakes Seaway Trail. Dive site information and mapping is provided on the Seaway Trail website. Association with these trails will make Clayton more attractive to divers, and provide additional publicity for the dive sites in Clayton.

### **Enlarge Grindstone Island public dock**

Facilitate greater public access to this beautiful island and the public roadways and lands on it.

### **Develop a skateboard park**

A skateboard park has been identified as a viable recreational amenity that would serve the need for recreational opportunities for young adults, both visitors and residents. This type of park feature can be developed in one of the existing parks within the Village of Clayton.

### **Develop a shuffleboard or court game area**

The community indicated there is a desire for additional recreational opportunities. These type of court game recreational features can be developed in some of the existing parks within the Village of Clayton.

### **Provide places for dogs to swim**

Dog owners would like to find locations for dogs to swim. Possible locations include streets that extend to the river, such as Bain Street and Union Street. In addition, Canoe Point and Picnic Point State Park on Grindstone Island both provide opportunities for dog owners to allow their pets to swim.

## 4.4 Infrastructure and Redevelopment Projects and Programs

### **Frink America property redevelopment** (PRIORITY PROJECT)

Redevelopment of the Frink America property is the single-most important opportunity that will influence reinvestment in the Village of Clayton for the foreseeable future. This site will attract new business and residential development ventures in Clayton as well as attract new residents and retain existing residents. Redevelopment of the Frink America property will facilitate an economically integrated commercial core and waterfront. Key components to redevelopment:

- Proactively attract developers committed to the Clayton community's vision. Do not release the property to a developer that may be interested in the property but does not embrace the principles illustrated on the Concept Master Plan (see Figure 4.2).
- Leverage public investment to attract private development complementary to the Village's commercial core (i.e. grant-funded projects such as the RiverWalk, partnerships with the NYS DOS, or other matching grant opportunities).
- Continue to stabilize the shoreline area and expand RiverWalk amenities such as benches, picnic tables, and interpretive signage (with references to the railroad, snow plow, and lumber industries and St. Lawrence Seaway history).
- Provide public waterfront access for multiple users: residents, tourists, boaters, and pedestrians.
- Provide connections to the broader trail network along the abandoned railroad right-of-way.
- Provide a Welcome Center for boaters coming off the St. Lawrence Seaway with restrooms and shower facilities. The facility could also provide an office for a harbormaster.
- Make clear connections to the commercial core via a Riverside Drive extension and provide seamless connections to the adjoining neighborhoods.

### **Boat docking and services at the Frink America property** (PRIORITY PROJECT) **and other areas**

In recent years there has been increasing competition for both short-term and extended stay dockage. In addition, as Clayton continues to attract new residents, many of which are coming to the community with both cars and boats, the increased competition for boat dockage will continue to rise. As a result, residents and waterfront personnel have noted the need to enhance boating services and facilities in Clayton. Boaters that regularly transit Alexandria Bay, Gananoque and Kingston are unable to find dock space in Clayton. The municipal dock at Mary Street has good facilities, but it can accommodate only fifteen boats for overnight docking and parking for vehicles with boat trailers is limited. Commercial marinas also have a limited number of overnight spaces.

The Frink America property redevelopment project provides a very practical opportunity to address the docking shortage. A breakwater extending easterly from the Frink America property into Goose Bay toward Washington Island would provide excellent protection in a water area that is currently



underutilized and is already fairly well protected. When considering the appropriateness of constructing a breakwater, the Village and Town should seek a breakwater that provides: the greatest marine protection benefits, the least monetary cost, the least impacts upon current uses and users, the least environmental impacts upon the WRA, and consistency with state, regional and local plans and policies. In addition, the breakwater system could protect a floating dock system to serve additional transient boaters and individual owners of adjacent housing. The transient boater dock facility would have electricity and water hook-ups and an adjacent toilet/shower facility. This would give the Village a first class transient boat docking system in the heart of the commercial core within walking distance of almost all the major attractions in the Village. There would be no seasonal docking. All services, fuel, repairs, etc., would be provided by local marinas.

Provision of improved docking facilities, such as additional docks and electrical service, especially for large boats, will allow more people to visit Clayton. Possible locations for improvements include the RiverWalk docks, the Mary Street dock, and the enlargement of the Town-owned dock at Upper Landing on Grindstone Island. The proposed permanent tie-up pylons would extend the Regional Dock at Frink Memorial Park providing another opportunity to accommodate larger transient boats (see Figure 4.2).

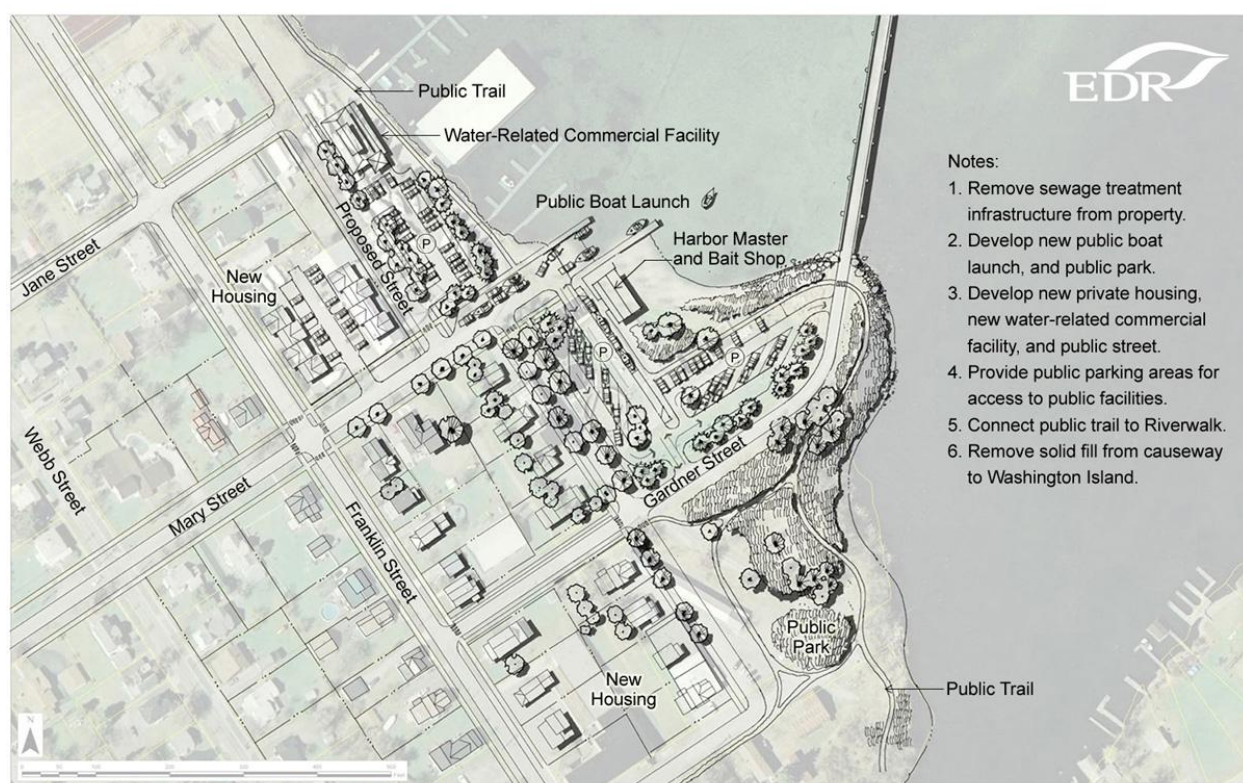
**Figure 4.2: Concept Master Plan for the Frink America property.**



### Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant Redevelopment (PRIORITY PROJECT)

The Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant occupies an attractive piece of waterfront property. The services provided by the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant should be provided by another facility, and the site redeveloped with water-enhanced uses (see also LWRP Section 4.4.5). Based on community input, a mix of public and private improvements related to improved access to the water is preferred (see Figure 4.3). The concept plan below proposes new public facilities such as a boat launch and floating dock, harbor master/bait shop building, park/green space, parking areas, public street, and pedestrian linkages to the RiverWalk. Proposed new private amenities include housing and a water-related commercial facility.

**Figure 4.3 - Proposed concept redevelopment plan for the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant property and surrounding area, including the Washington Island causeway.**



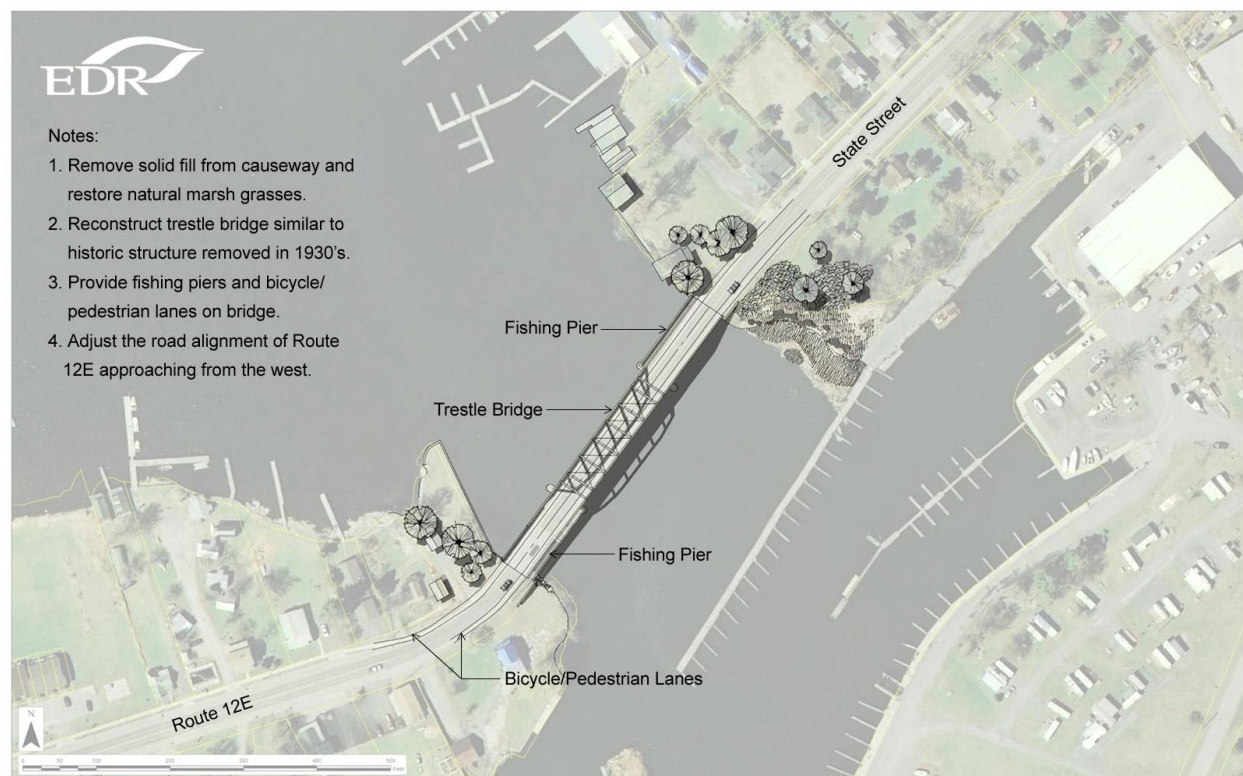
### Route 12E Bridge at French Creek Reconstruction (PRIORITY PROJECT)

A causeway currently blocks most of the channel connecting French Creek to French Creek Bay. A reconstructed bridge would improve navigability, address ecological issues, and serve as an aesthetically pleasing landmark structure. Plus, the view from this location is one of the most spectacular scenic vistas in the Village of Clayton. A new bridge is envisioned to have pedestrian walkways, a public fishing/observation platform with seating, and a designated bike lane (see Figure 4.4). Lighting for the bridge should be carefully designed to illuminate the vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle routes. When the causeway is removed, the silt and solid fill should be removed from the creek and the natural creek edge vegetation restored. The historic trestle bridge that was removed in the 1930's would be an appropriate



design inspiration for the new structure. This concept will require additional study to determine the current impacts of the existing causeway, the predicted impacts of its removal, and the feasibility of its removal.

**Figure 4.4: Proposed concept plan of reconstructed NYS Route 12E Bridge at French Creek.**



### **Water, sewer and stormwater management (PRIORITY PROJECT)**

The Town and Village of Clayton have a variety of issues related to the water system, sewage system, and stormwater management. Combined sewer overflows (CSO) during wet weather conditions are a high priority concern. The Village worked with a consultant in 2007 and 2008 to prepare a Prioritized Project Plan to deal with multiple ongoing sewer related issues. These include collection system expansions, potential and existing new developments, combined sewer overflow/wet weather issues, and operational issues with respect to the Cape Vincent Correctional Facility force main and pumping system. Recommendations include the creation of a CSO Long Term Control Plan, and the relocation of the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Rather than revisit these issues, the LWRP supports the recommendations of the Prioritized Project Plan. The Town of Clayton should work collaboratively with the Village of Clayton on these prioritized projects, including a feasibility study on the relocation options for of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Additionally, both the Town and Village of Clayton should consider green infrastructure options for implementation of the priorities.

Additionally, in order to improve ground water and river water quality, properties within the WRA, especially areas with moderate housing density (i.e. under one dwelling per acre) should be connected to a municipal sewer system. For instance, a sewer hookup should be required if a sewer main is installed between Clayton and Collins Landing.

### **Frink Memorial Park improvements (PRIORITY PROJECT)**

Frink Memorial Park is an important open space area located within the commercial Village core which provides wide-open views and access to the waterfront. Improvements should include the RiverWalk and the following other elements (see also Section 4.3.1):

- A site layout that accommodates public waterfront events that promote the arts, environment and education
- A design that celebrates the environmental features of the region and the exposed glacial stone at the park
- Space for the farmers' market

### **Washington Island causeway rehabilitation**

Significant silting has occurred in the bays adjacent to the causeway and the causeway itself has been damaged significantly from the wave action caused by severe storms. The causeway also restricts the natural flow of water to Goose Bay and limits fishing opportunities. If the causeway was removed and a low bridge system built, this would improve the silting problem and storm damage potential (See Figure 4.3). This concept requires additional study to determine the current impacts of the existing causeway, the predicted impacts of its removal, and the feasibility of the most appropriate solution.

### **Village streetscapes improvements**

It is important for the Clayton community to develop a long-term coordinated streetscape enhancement plan to establish standards and direction for improvements that create a pedestrian-friendly environment and enhance the identity of the area, as well as connections to the waterfront. The principle objective of the streetscape plan should be to promote a public and private investment in the pedestrian environment. The Clayton community has discussed the following improvements:

- **Repair and maintain sidewalks linking residential areas to the downtown.** In a pedestrian-oriented community like Clayton, it is important that sidewalks are maintained in areas that link to the downtown. The Village should establish a priority schedule for maintaining sidewalks in higher traffic areas such as James, Webb, and Mary Streets.
- **Improve crosswalks.** The easier a street is to cross, the more inviting and safe it will be for pedestrians. While stop signs and traffic signals are helpful, their goal is usually to stop automobiles rather than to guide the pedestrian safely across the road. In response, a highly visible crosswalk standard should be designed which can be applied throughout the Village. It is recommended that the Village investigate the possibility of

using unit pavers at key (i.e., heavily traveled) intersections to differentiate crosswalks from road asphalt pavement. Bulb-outs should also be considered, particularly for the western end of Riverside Drive at James Street.

- **Provide pedestrian amenities.** In addition to safe crosswalks and continuous sidewalks, it is important that the Village continue to invest in amenities that make walking more interesting and enjoyable. Benches offer pedestrians a place to rest, talk, and people watch, and should be distributed widely. Attractive human-scale lighting enhances the aesthetic, and engenders a sense of personal security. Lights should be lower to light walkways, not wash buildings. Trees, planters, hanging flower baskets, banners, way finding signage, and attractive pavement also help enhance the pedestrian environment. Street amenities such as wide sidewalks, benches, pedestrian scaled decorative light fixtures and posts, street trees, clocks, planters, and trash receptacles should be located in the areas generally with high pedestrian activity. These amenities should also draw visitors to the water's edge at places like Centennial Park and Frink Memorial Park.
- **Landscape edges and nodes.** Where parking lots abut the sidewalk, a distinct border should exist between the two. Ideally, this border would be landscaped, creating a continuous edge to the sidewalk and enhancing the aesthetic value. Such a border could take the form of a low hedgerow, a wooden or wrought iron fence, or a planting strip of shrubbery. This border would serve not only to improve the aesthetics, but also to create a physical barrier to separate pedestrians from parked vehicles. Places where these treatments should be considered a priority include the parking lots along James Street, a primary gateway into the Village's commercial core for both pedestrians and vehicles. Other specific locations should be identified in the Village core, and interested parties should spearhead the design, installation and maintenance of edges and nodes, in coordination with the Village.
- **Eliminate visual clutter.** Many community residents identified overhead utilities as a concern. As the Village continues to negotiate ownership of Riverside Drive with the NYS Department of Transportation, it is strongly recommended that every effort be made to bury existing power lines to help soften the visual character of the commercial core. When a related project is scheduled, such as road re-surfacing or utility maintenance, the Town and Village of Clayton should consider burying the utility lines in key locations, such as Riverside Drive. The Village should also consider removing the dated parking meters, and replacing them with consolidated solar operated parking meter stations.
- **Develop a Riverside Drive median.** One of the ideas from the community includes the construction of a curbed median large enough to accommodate the tree and shrub plantings. This idea is reminiscent of the median that existed in the early to mid 20th century on Riverside Drive. A median, whether permanent or seasonal (i.e., moveable large pots filled with small trees or flowers along the centerline of the street) would

improve pedestrian crossing safety and reduce the large expanse of asphalt that exists today on Riverside Drive.

### **Village parking improvement strategy**

As the Village continues to grow in terms of residential population as well as new retail and professional establishments, parking should be addressed with a comprehensive parking strategy. In addition, existing parking lots should be made more inviting and visually appealing with plantings that flower in the summer months. Permeable paving that reduces stormwater runoff should also be considered when public parking improvements are proposed. Potential parking improvements include:

- Expanded summertime visitor parking at the elementary school with a shuttle service to the Village downtown, and
- A parking garage strategically located (preferably sited behind buildings and/or in a rear yard area) with adequate buffers/screening between single-family residential properties

### **Gateway enhancements**

Gateways play an important role in forming first impressions and welcoming visitors and residents alike. Both the form and the character of a gateway can influence the overall experience of a particular area. Enhancements at key intersections can also help to lead visitors to the waterfront and important community destinations. Generally, the goal should be to create signature gateways that give an enlivened feeling and a sense of arrival into Clayton and clear direction to main destinations like the Antique Boat Museum and the Village's commercial core. Existing signage should be enhanced with additional landscaping to make a more pronounced statement about the pride that Clayton residents have in their community. Special consideration should be taken at the following intersections:

- Route 12 and James Street
- Route 12 and Webb Street
- Mary Street and James Street
- Route 12 at McCarn Hill
- Route 12E at the Town boundaries

### **Coordinated way finding signage**

The object of an effectively communicated way finding system is to get visitors out of their initial mode of transportation (i.e. cars, buses, motorcycles, boats, bicycles, etc.) and become pedestrians who immerse themselves into the communities that they are passing through. To do this, however, it is important to develop a coordinated communication network that starts with the automobile or boat traveler and gradually, and conveniently, moves the visitor into and around the community. For example, the community noted a need to draw visitors from the Antique Boat Museum to James Street. Consequently, it is recommended that a hierarchical communication network be developed. The strength of this hierarchy of signs is that it clearly connects the traveler's transition from an automobile or boat, to a walking environment, and a visitor experience.



Part of this coordinated signage system should be placement of informational signage at all public and semi-public boating facilities. The signage should include, but not be limited to, the following considerations:

- Listing of service offered by the facility and required fees
- Posting of all rules and regulations for use of the public boating docks, ramps, and mooring and anchorage areas
- Location of both short term and overnight parking facilities
- Location of marinas and boat repair, service and supply facilities, including laundry, pump out, showers, ice and fuel
- Location of various commercial facilities such as grocery stores, retail shops, lodging, restaurants, and Laundromats
- Telephone numbers of taxi services, coast guard, police, and fire department
- Locations of other points of interest such as historic structures, scenic vistas, parks, theaters, and other cultural attractions
- Notices regarding special community events and activities

### **Encourage alternative transportation opportunities**

When people visit Clayton, they can enjoy the community in a variety of different ways. Enhanced access to businesses and sightseeing destinations can be encouraged through the following modes of transportation:

- Local bus/trolley
- Small ferries or water taxis to islands and historic sites
- Kayak/canoe, golf cart, scooter, bike, or Segway rentals

## **4.5 Heritage Protection Projects and Programs**

### **Town Strategy**

The Town should preserve properties and places that provide historic or cultural character, open space or important views. The following should be considered:

- **Open Space Network Plan.** An open space network plan or green infrastructure plan would be a useful tool to strengthen the protection of the Town's rural character and natural resources. A interconnected open space network that integrates public open spaces and parks, private open spaces (e.g., golf clubs and protected farmlands), and significant environmental features will help maintain the Town's visual character, preserve natural and cultural resources, and provide new recreational opportunities. A comprehensive inventory of priority natural and cultural resources is the necessary first

step to identify and confirm the location of these resources. The results of this inventory should be integrated into the county's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and become a key resource in site plan review.

- **Protect agricultural and natural landscapes, open space, and important views and provide public access where appropriate.** Purchasing the development rights or coordinating conservation easements are ways to protect the character of local agricultural and natural lands. The Bechaz Farm is an important agricultural landscape where these types of tools could be applied. Incentives to reward landowners who keep their shorelines natural in appearance is a way to help protect the character of the WRA. Open space resources that deserve protection include natural areas, such as French Creek, as well as developed open space areas, such as golf courses. The community identified the Palisades as an area with important views to the water that are inaccessible to the public. TILT is a possible partner in seeking protection and possible public access to sections of this area and other areas in the WRA. NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets would be good partner and possible grant funding source in seeking protection of farmland.
- **Protect historic properties.** Historic properties impart a sense of place, and remind residents, as well as visitors, of the story associated with the community. These properties can be restored and reused for any number of uses. Properties with historic significance and worthy of protection in the Town of Clayton include Fairview Manor and the Grindstone Island cheese factory.

## Village Strategy

Preserving historic buildings, traditional urban development patterns, and park space like Lion's Field helps connect a community to its origins. This can, in turn, establish the community's contemporary identity and help set a direction for future revitalization efforts. Like many small urban communities of the 1960s, the Village of Clayton knew that it had a number of special buildings that were being destroyed by Urban Renewal projects. In response, the Village designated two historic districts, one in 1985 and another in 1997, which still continue to provide important protections for these buildings. Both the Federal and State governments encourage historic preservation through various means. A number of not-for-profit organizations have also established programs that support local historic preservation efforts. Many progressive economic development practitioners are using historic preservation as a central component to long-term economic development.

The Village should develop a strategy that clearly defines design review and incentive programs for historic preservation efforts. Further, a comprehensive single volume Historic Preservation Plan should be developed in coordination with design guidelines and standards. This plan can comprehensively revise existing policies and accurately reflect current goals. This plan should include the definition (or redefinition) of the Historic District boundaries, standards for building renovation and reconstruction within the district, protection of important views (such as those to the river on axis with village streets), and financial and technical assistance programs (including local, state and federal programs). National

and State Historic districts have the potential to gain tax credits for various projects. Consequently, a Historic District Grant and Low Interest Loan Program should be developed that includes grants and low-interest loans for storefront renovation, adding residential spaces above businesses, signage, elevator installations, painting, and roofing which directly benefits the Historic District. Taking advantage of the National Trust's Main Street Program can be one approach used to market and manage an expanded Clayton Historic Preservation program. Clearly, other partners and funding sources will need to be identified. Some of these partners may include the National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation League of New York State, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Council on the Arts, and New York Landmarks Conservancy.

## 4.6 Economic Opportunities

The Town and Village of Clayton should work to develop a viable year-round economy that provides opportunities for residents to live, work and play, as well as reasons for tourists to visit.

### Diversify retail and service offerings

Understanding who is coming to Clayton and what type of amenities and services they expect is the foundation for continued success. By fostering the development of and by nurturing more specific goods and a service-based niche, Clayton has enormous potential to draw a resident and visitor base that can extend the season on both ends. For Clayton, this should include niches that build around restaurants and culture. Clayton's village commercial area also provides unique cultural experiences including the Antique Boat Museum, Opera House, Thousand Islands Museum and Thousand Islands Art Center, Home of the Handweaving Museum. Cultural attractions, in particular, have become an increasingly powerful tool for attracting tourists. Studies have found that large numbers of travelers are more interested in a museum or music festival than in a theme park. Clayton can couple its unique, walkable environment with its cultural opportunities and waterfront to attract a broad group of visitors to the community. Nearby populations, such as military families at Fort Drum, should be considered as possible visitors.

The following niches should be considered for Clayton:

- **Retirees.** Communities with an attractive range of resources and interesting commercial cores have become increasingly important to those who are considering where to retire or have a second home. Additionally, communities that can offer opportunities for residents to live within a community and walk to their boats are also very attractive. Clayton has a unique opportunity to provide housing within walking distance to a viable commercial district as well as boat docking areas. In addition, more and more retirees and second homeowners are moving to Clayton. With 20 million Americans projected to retire in the coming decade, the attractiveness of this niche for Clayton can only be expected to grow. What's more, this same demographic has the ability to contribute significantly to downtown merchant revenues. Many of these retirees spend their money locally on services and many like to eat out often.

- **Tourists.** In addition to a growing retiree niche for Clayton, it cannot be ignored that the community has a history of being a visitor destination. Like the retirees living in the community, tourists eat out at local restaurants. In addition, heritage, cultural and eco-tourism are becoming increasingly important travel industry niches. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” According to a recent study by the Travel Industry Association of America, people who engage in historic and cultural activities spend more, do more, and stay longer than other types of U.S. travelers. Baby boomers in particular wish to experience history through travel, visiting the authentic places where significant events occurred or made relevant contributions to the development of America. Likewise, international visitors to the U.S. desire a deeper understanding of America’s heritage. Heritage tourism’s popularity, though, also stems from the opportunity to educate. The American heritage traveler is older, better educated, and more affluent than other tourists, much like the retiree population moving into Clayton. Clayton, with its historic intact commercial core and surrounding environmental features has great potential to be successful focusing on these heritage and eco-tourism niches. Clayton already has establishments such as the St. Lawrence Gallery and Winged Bull Studio in addition to boat builders and photographers. Clayton is also known as the home of the St. Lawrence Skiff. Clayton should take advantage of these resources and seek to build a marketing strategy that targets these types of establishments. Clayton also has the potential to promote craftsmen-produced items that should not be underestimated.

An informal survey completed by the committee responsible for developing 2007 draft Village LWRP found that the top three businesses that are needed in downtown are, in order of priority, restaurants, a bakery, and a hotel open year round. The Committee responsible for developing this LWRP was very interested in supporting year-round employment opportunities that are not necessarily dependent on tourism.

### **Encourage waterfront and housing opportunities in the Village core**

A strong residential component is recognized as being essential for a thriving village core. Downtown residents create and expand the market for downtown businesses by demanding a diverse mix of products and services including retail, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. Downtown residents also ensure that the vitality of the downtown is maintained, especially after business hours. Other benefits of downtown housing include more efficient use of existing infrastructure, more sustainable lifestyle choices for Clayton residents, and an enhanced image of the village for residents and visitors. Although the downtown has experienced a good deal positive redevelopment in recent years, residential development has been limited. In order to ensure the continued revitalization of the downtown to the benefit of the village as a whole, further action to stimulate more housing downtown is needed. Recent studies and trends across the United States indicated a strong interest among young professionals and the retirement community for downtown housing. With Fort Drum nearby, Clayton might be attractive for military personnel looking for waterfront urban living.



For many, the major appeal of living downtown is being close to the shopping and services offered downtown. In Clayton, many of the buildings offer not only this accessibility but also the ability to walk to private boat slips and some very unique views along the St. Lawrence River. However, among the key issues affecting the development of housing in the downtown are the cost of converting existing buildings, obstacles to new construction, parking, financing, and incentives. Opportunities exist to convert the upper floors of commercial buildings to residential use while retaining commercial uses on the main floor. These opportunities should be sought and strategies, such as local incentives, should be developed to provide increased residential development above commercial establishments.

Other than converting existing buildings, another way to gain more residential units downtown is to build new multi-unit mixed-use buildings. Building new avoids many of the costs associated with conversions but has its own set of challenges. Among these are the high cost of downtown property and the high costs of construction. Finding suitable locations for new development in the downtown can also be an impediment. Assembling property for a new housing development by focusing on land with derelict buildings is an option but the costs of demolition can be a significant factor in the financial viability of this type of project. Most importantly, if new construction is proposed within the downtown commercial core, then mixed-use buildings ought to be required with commercial space on the ground floor and architectural detailing must be reflective of downtown's historic character. This mixed-use concept has been promoted in the Frink America property concept master plan.

Residential developments in the downtown can be eligible for incentives and funding assistance under programs available through the New York State Housing Finance Agency and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. The CLDC should facilitate the conversion and rehabilitation of downtown buildings for residential uses on upper floors. The CLDC should identify the buildings in the downtown that are the best candidates for full conversion or partial conversion (upper floors only) to residential and examine costs associated with building conversion.

### **Encourage and organize winter activities**

The Clayton community should take advantage of opportunities for winter activities such as cross country skiing, snowmobiling, ice-skating, and shopping. Cross-country skiing could occur on existing trails and municipal golf courses. Ice-skating could occur at the rink at Lion's Field and on French Creek.

### **Expand and promote the Farmer's Market**

The Clayton community should promote a vibrant farmer's market as a way to bring community residents together, attract other regional residents, and help support the agricultural industry that is integral to Clayton's history. The Clayton Farmer's Market should continue to be located at Frink Memorial Park or at some other location in the heart of the Village to ensure spinoff business opportunities for other village merchants. Establishing a market with a critical mass of vendors and consumers is a higher priority than constructing a market building that might not be financially viable. The market should be open on weekends to attract boaters as part of the critical mass. In response to the burgeoning interest in farmers' markets, more and more federal and state government agencies and private foundations are providing grants and technical assistance to assist with the promotion of

farmers' markets. For instance, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, through its Farmers' Market Grant Program, funds proposals for the construction, reconstruction, improvement, expansion, or rehabilitation of farmers' markets in New York State.

### **Expand entertainment venues**

The Clayton community already has a tremendous resource in the Clayton Opera House. However, community residents suggested that a different type of venue is needed to bring in events and shows. Events and shows would be a welcome amenity for residents and a tourist attraction for overnight, year-round visitors. Possible venues include an improved bandstand in Frink Memorial Park, more athletic playing fields, and a hotel with an indoor water slide or spa.

### **Continue to market Clayton's assets**

The Clayton community should to continue to promote Clayton as year-round destination in the following ways:

- **Develop and support eco-tourism and recreational opportunities.** The natural and scenic qualities of Clayton lend themselves to ecological tourism, which generally involves travel to places where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Possible eco-tourism opportunities in Clayton include birding along the waterfront, paddling French Creek, scuba diving historic shipwrecks and enjoying open space on Grindstone Island. In addition, Clayton has a number of recreational amenities for biking, hiking and paddling, among other things, that need to be better promoted.
- **Promote local history.** The Town and Village of Clayton should also encourage heritage tourism. Heritage tourism promotion might include installing historic signage or markers at locations such as French Creek and McCarn Hill, walking tours, or interpretive signage at diving sites. Local history could be promoted through the Thousand Islands Museum and a historic resource guide that identifies important historic resources and structures in the Town and Village of Clayton.
- **Highlight distinctive features.** The Clayton community has a number of distinctive features that could be emphasized in order for visitors to find and enjoy them. An example is lighting unique features along the riverfront, or developing signage or a scenic overlook at McCarn Hill.
- **Encourage walking.** The Town and Village of Clayton need to provide reasons for people to get out of their cars and walk around. Ways to do this would be to improve wayfinding signage, provide interesting scenic overlooks with historic photos, develop attractive storefronts for window-shopping, light the storefronts at night, and promote walking tours and hiking routes. Walking tours can be led by a tour guide or docent, as well as self-guided, using a brochure or audio recording.
- **Develop a map of all public trails and fishing access points.** A map of public trails and fishing access locations would be useful to residents, as well as visitors, as they try to enjoy all that Clayton has to offer. When new trails are developed, a trail map will be a logical extension.

Other highlights, such as the pool and walking trail at Recreation Park should also be listed. Maps could be distributed at local businesses and at the Chamber of Commerce.

- **Communicate the shipping schedule for public enjoyment.** Provide information regarding vessels traveling along the International Shipping Channel. Other river communities have seaway shipping monitoring stations that are interactive. These could be located anywhere along the waterfront, such as Frink Memorial Park. The Chamber of Commerce could maintain interpretive signage.

### **Maintain and enhance the relationship with the Seaway Trail and the Thousand Island Council**

The New York State Seaway Trail, a 454-mile scenic route paralleling Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, is an important partner in promoting Clayton and bringing international attention to the communities that it passes through. The mission of the Seaway Trail Discovery Center is to educate and entice visitors to learn more about the historic, cultural, recreational, natural, architectural and agricultural resources by traveling to sites along one of “America’s Byways.” This mission is an appropriate fit with Clayton’s heritage tourism objectives.

A good example of the advantages that an organization like the Seaway Trail can bring to Clayton is the Seaway Trail Walk currently in place. This is a guided walking tour of Clayton that is advertised as part of the Seaway Trail’s general marketing materials and brings outside visitors not only into Clayton, but gets them out of their vehicles to walk and “experience” the community, thereby making them potential patrons of local establishments. As new projects and programs are developed, the Village should be sure to keep the Seaway Trail informed and whenever possible get publicity assistance.

### **Make efforts to reclaim cruise ship visitations**

Building a strong tourism infrastructure that includes unique destinations like the Thousand Islands Art Center, the Thousand Island Museum, the Antique Boat Museum and the Clayton Opera House while fostering a walkable environment with points of interest will continue to make Clayton a more attractive stop for the various cruise ship companies that were once such an important part to Clayton’s economic base. To do so, it will be necessary to build the infrastructure required for the cruise ship companies to stop in Clayton, as well as get the word out that Clayton is a worthwhile stop.

Redevelopment of the Frink America property, or adjacent Frink Memorial Park, should include amenities to provide the necessary dock space for the cruise ships. The advantage of locating here is that visitors will then be drawn along Riverside Drive as they make their way to the visitor destinations named above and the available commercial activities.

### **Continue to monitor the business environment**

The following suggestions should be considered to further the understanding of the business environment in the WRA:

- **Continue to update the space inventory.** This should include adding not only business addresses, names and owners, but should also include commercial space by the Census Bureau's Standard Industrial Classification. Doing so will allow continued analysis of emerging niches that might need to be fostered. The inventory should also include identification of commercial and retail properties that are underutilized and efforts should be made to work with these property owners to maximize the use of the space.
- **Obtain and analyze sales data.** Working with local business owners, sales data should be collected and recorded by SIC (not by business name, so as to maintain privacy).
- **Conduct a shopper-intercept survey.** A survey of shoppers to the area is one of the best ways to understand why people are coming to downtown as well as the types of services and establishments that would bring them back more often. However, these surveys can be difficult and should be well thought out before actually performing. Additionally, the surveys should be short (no more than ten questions) and finding the appropriate location will be critical.
- **Conduct a trade area survey.** Coupled with the findings of a shopper intercept survey, a very holistic understanding of needs and expectations for the commercial core can be developed. Additionally, identification of emerging niches can become very evident. However, like a shopper intercept survey, a trade area survey can be improperly performed and not reveal accurate or useful findings. If properly developed, these surveys can be very useful in helping to identify the goods and services for which residents and visitors alike feel are under-served.
- **Collect zip code data.** This type of information can be very useful in helping to define the trade area for downtown Clayton as well as the types of goods and services they are purchasing when in Clayton. This information can be collected from business owners at the point of purchase and shared with the Clayton Area Chamber of Commerce (or another organizing body for downtown merchants).
- **Study other communities.** The Town and Village of Clayton need to stay up-to-date and informed about what other communities are doing, and should consider visiting local and national destination communities for inspiration on how to attract visitors, attract businesses, and revitalize the waterfront. Community leaders should look to precedents in the following communities:
  - Sackets Harbor, NY (planting, lighting)
  - Skaneateles, NY (shops, walkable, compact scale)
  - Merrickville, ON (restaurants, arts - glass blowing)
  - San Antonio, TX (public-private partnerships, River Walk)
  - Lake George, NY (planting, alleys, walk along water)
  - Gananoque, ON (excellent transient boater facilities, artisan businesses)
  - Kingston, ON (excellent marina for transient boaters, farmer's market)