

SECTION IV - Proposed Land and Water Uses

The Town of Tonawanda first prepared its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program in the early 1990's. Since that time, changed circumstances have affected the feasibility and desirability of proposed land and water uses for the waterfront area included in that document, particularly for the Northern and Central Sectors of the waterfront. In 2001, the Town decided that previous plans were not effectively achieving their goals for redevelopment of the Tonawanda waterfront, and a new land use study was commissioned to reassess the issue. The land use study focuses on the northern and central sectors of the Tonawanda waterfront. These are the areas where there are significant parcels available for development or redevelopment. Land uses in the southern sector are more fixed, and no significant changes are anticipated in the foreseeable future.

The study was guided by a steering committee representing a variety of interests, including Town and County governments, several Town Departments, the Town Planning Board, the Town Environmental Commission, local and county economic development officials and the New York State Department of State. Meetings with various interest groups and the public were also held to receive additional input. The result of this effort is the proposed new land and water uses section as outlined in Section C below.

A. Recent Reports

The Tonawanda riverfront has been the focus of numerous studies dating back many years and yielding a wealth of data about this area. The first step of the land use planning study was to conduct a literature review of existing reports and data. This ensured that the land use plan is based on a solid understanding of previous plans and recommendations for the waterfront. Some of the reports have retained more relevance than others, but all provide important insights into planning successes and failures in the area.

A brief summary of the earlier reports and the data they contain is contained here.

- 1. Upper Niagara River Study, 1976, Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board:** The Regional Planning Board conducted a study of how to increase the recreational opportunities along the Niagara riverfront from the City of Buffalo's northern border to the fall area of the City of Niagara Falls. Emphasis was placed on the development of both general and specific proposals which could be implemented with existing operation and maintenance funds of various agencies operating along the river. The plan emphasizes the improvement of access to the riverfront, development of specific recreational areas, and the development of a continuous trail along the entire Niagara River.

Specific recommendations for the Town included the following:

a. Southern Sector

- Continuation of Riverwalk between the Thruway and Niagara River, as well as along Niagara Street.
- Limited public use of Strawberry Island and designation as a nature preserve.
- Development of an artificial reef offshore of Strawberry Island for shore protection and fish habitat.
- Expansion of recreation facilities at Aqua Lane Park.
- Linking Sheridan Park to the waterfront by a Class I trail.

b. Central Sector

- Continue the Riverwalk along the Erie Barge Canal bed, acquiring public access easements between the Town boat launch and the Grand Island Bridge.
- Develop the area north of the Spencer Wickwire/Roblin site (Cherry Farm and adjacent parcels) into a municipal shoreline park with facilities for picnicking, boat launching and docks, bicycling, motor camping, and sports.
- Continue industrial land uses in all areas except the park area.

c. Northern Sector

- Continue the Riverwalk to connect with the Niawanda and Two Mile Creek Parks.
- Coordinate industries to use a single river dock.
- Promote landscaping along the entire corridor.
- Complete the extension of Isle View Park into the Town.

2. Interim Report on Feasibility of Improving Access and Water-Related Land

Management, 1979, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: The Corps report outlined alternative water and related land management plans compatible with the comprehensive development goals of the Buffalo area. The recommendations for sections of the Town of Tonawanda waterfront include the following:

- Bicycle path on the waterside of the Thruway in Niagara View and extending to Sheridan Park via Sheridan Drive and Two Mile Creek Road.
- Ferry service to Strawberry Island.

3. Riverwalk - Phase II, 1981, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning: The County report identified the preliminary trail route in the Town and City of Tonawanda. In the Niagara View section, the walk would be located on the waterside of the Thruway. The trail would follow the old Canal bed through the industrial corridor with two diversions to the water's edge at the Erie County Water Authority treatment plant,

as well as at the Cherry Farm Overland Express International complex. In the Northern Sector, the Riverwalk would follow the canal bed to the undeveloped section of the County's Isle View Park. At that point, the trail would hug the shoreline.

4. **Comprehensive Development Plans and Strategy for Expansion of Fire Tower Industrial Park**, 1985, by Saratoga Associates with Economic Research Associates. This report addresses the Fire Town Industrial Park area, and the approximately 500 acres to its north, encompassing most of the waterfront area north of the Grand Island Bridges. The report is in three sections. The first section examines industrial development trends locally and in the region, in order to recommend a target strategy for the area. The second section proposes a Land Use plan for the area, while the third section provides a financing analysis for the development of the land.

The Land Use plan divides the area into three primary zones. Zone 1, the area along the River Road corridor, is identified as an area for light industry, ideally focusing on office and service industries. Zone 2, south of Rattlesnake Creek and north of the Fire Tower Industrial Park, is designated for general industrial use, including light and heavy industries. Zone 3 is Fire Tower Industrial Park. The report contains many recommendations regarding access, standards, landscaping, buffers and other issues that remain relevant.

5. **Horizons Waterfront Action Plan**, 1992, Horizons Waterfront Commission: In the Fall of 1988, the City and Town of Tonawanda, the Cities of Buffalo and Lackawanna, the Towns of Hamburg, Evans, and Brant, Erie County, and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority signed the Intermunicipal Agreement forming the Horizons Waterfront Commission. The Commission then began work on the Horizons Waterfront Master Plan, which was a multi-year effort to define the waterfront study area, inventory critical resources, formulate goals and objectives, develop a conceptual land use plan and prepare implementation recommendations and guidelines. The goals of Action Plan are to:

- provide a waterfront that gives significant enrichment to the quality of life;
- rejuvenate and sustain the waterfront as a clean, inviting, and healthy environment;
- achieve a prosperous waterfront by pursuing economic development that advances environmental quality and enriches the quality of life.
- The Town of Tonawanda was an active member of the Horizons Waterfront Commission, and continues to be with its successor, Western New York Empire State Development; therefore, its plans for future development are in concert with recommendations put forth in the Action Plan.

6. **Waterfront Region Master Plan, Town of Tonawanda¹⁸**, 1992, by Waterfront Master Plan Consulting Team (Halcyon Real Estate Advisors, Sasaki Associates and Nutter Associates). It builds upon the recommendations that the Horizons Commission made in 1991 for the Tonawanda waterfront. This plan, like the Horizons Plan, recommends a mix of uses along the waterfront, including residential, recreational, commercial, industrial, and retail based land uses. Six target projects were identified: River Road relocation; riverfront residential development; three office/light industrial projects; and two recreational projects (Cherry Farm and a Riverfront Park north of the Grand Island Bridge.) The report recommends a revision to the Town's zoning regulations, based on the premise that the proposed land uses (including the relocation of River Road) would be implemented.

The realignment of River Road north of the Grand Island Bridge was the most dramatic recommendation, and was considered a key priority. By moving the roadway 1000 feet inland, additional waterfront land was to be made available for the riverfront residential development. The logic was to capitalize on the added value of a waterfront location, the excellent views from the bluffs, and the presence of residential neighborhoods to the north in the City of Tonawanda (although these neighborhoods would not be adjacent to the proposed housing). The relocation of the roadway was to be paid for by public funds, estimated to be \$5.4 million in 1991, not including the costs of acquiring the necessary rights-of-way. A decade later, it is clear that these funds will not become available, and any proposed housing development in this area is unlikely.

The report proposes office and light industrial uses on the east side of the relocated River Road. Two target projects were identified: the Isle View site, which had first priority; and a "Thruway Commerce Center" on River Road adjacent to the I-190. It was estimated these developments would support a total of over 5.3 million square feet in office, light industrial, and a small amount of convenience retail space. Additional light industrial space was proposed for the east side of River Road south of the Bridges. The remainder of the area was proposed to be open space or mixed use development.

Much of the information in this report is dated, or was specific to the development proposals and is no longer relevant (e.g. project feasibility analyses, cost-benefit analyses, market conditions). However, the report includes extensive background data on existing conditions (e.g. environmental conditions, transportation facilities, utilities), as well as information on possible site plans, sub-area development guidelines, design standards, etc. which remain useful.

¹⁸ The report is in two volumes: Volume I includes the main project information. Volume II- Appendices provides more detailed information/calculations for the market, cost-benefit, and project cost assumptions. It also provides the text of proposed regulations (zoning, site plan, subdivision regulations). The Executive Summary is included in Volume I and is also bound as a separate document.

7. **The Town of Tonawanda Waterfront Traffic Study**, 1996, by Bettigole Andrews and Clark, Inc. It is a detailed traffic study for the River Road corridor. It was commissioned in order to investigate potential means of providing improved access to three major open areas: along the waterfront from Sawyer Avenue north to the City of Tonawanda border; the North Youngmann Commerce Center Area¹⁹, and the Isle View site²⁰. The Bettigole study analyzes the potential traffic impacts and estimated costs of various alternatives for providing access to these sites.

The report contains extensive data on existing traffic conditions, including traffic counts, peak volumes, Levels of Service (LOS) for roadways and intersections, accidents, etc. It also provides projections of future traffic estimates, based on the proposed land uses summarized in the Waterfront Region Master Plan report. Eight alternative highway systems were devised, including one that did not assume the relocation of River Road. Traffic conditions for each of these alternatives were calculated. On the basis of this analysis, specific traffic and safety problems were identified. Additional alternative highway systems were also analyzed, and remediation measures were proposed to address problem areas. All alternatives were premised on the proposed land uses of the earlier reports, and as these assumptions change, the accuracy of the analysis is compromised. However, the report provides valuable insight into preferred traffic alternatives, and where major problems may occur, particularly in areas where there is substantial similarity in intensity and scale of proposed land uses.

One area where the report made recommendations was the on- and off-ramps for the I-190 at the Grand Island Bridges. These recommended measures were adopted and implemented by the New York State Department of Transportation in the course of their reconstruction of I-190, improving access and traffic flow in this area.

8. **River Road & I-190 Industrial Redevelopment Corridor Study**, 2000, by Bergmann Associates. The purpose of the study was to help promote development in the area of Tonawanda bounded by the I-190 south of the Grand Island Bridges. The report contains base data for this area (e.g. zoning, land use, type and capacity of infrastructure), and refers to a database of information about each parcel (owner, address, acreage and use), although the full database was not included in the report. A series of interviews with major businesses and agencies supplemented the data review.

The report summarizes assets and constraints, and makes recommendations regarding how to improve the development potential of area. The existing zoning is identified as one of the primary major obstacles to development in this area. The report concludes

¹⁹ This area is bounded by the railroad, the power lines, Two Mile Creek Road, and I-290. It is sometimes referred to as the “Mudflats” site.

²⁰ This area is bounded by River Road, the power lines, the City of Tonawanda boundary and Two Mile Creek Road. It is sometimes referred to as “300-acres”.

with the identification of four “Key Project Areas” and a summary of estimated costs and benefits to development.

- 9. Sites Analysis and Development Strategies for Erie and Niagara Counties** (draft November 2001) prepared for Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise by Deloitte & Touche with Fantus. The draft of this report analyzes the development readiness of a number of sites in the Buffalo-Niagara region, including five sites in Tonawanda. Three of the sites are those identified in the Bergmann report. The other two are located north of the Grand Island Bridges, and therefore out of the study area for the earlier report. Four of the five sites are at least partially within the waterfront zone.

The ranking factors for the Site Analysis report were targeted for specific industry clusters, and therefore did not cover a full range of potential users²¹. Based on the development standards used in the report, however, two sites (North Youngmann Commerce Center and the River Road/Isle View site) were considered “viable” on a first-cut analysis, and investigated further. The report summarizes the advantages and constraints of these two sites, and suggests the best target industries. Neither site made the final selection, but they were identified as having future potential. Two other sites in Tonawanda were selected as “alternative” sites. Their characteristics did not meet the development requirements of the target industries at this time, although this did not preclude future development potential. One site, the former Roblin Steel property (currently known as Niagara River World), was rejected as having too many constraints for near-term redevelopment, at least for the target industries.

B. Market Factors

Buffalo's role as one of the nation's leading industrial centers in transportation, chemical production, and steel-making has declined since the 1960's as a result of national and international competition, significant shifts in the nation's economic and industrial output, and the aging of the region's capital stock and infrastructure. Today, Buffalo's economy is presently undergoing transformation from heavy industrial and manufacturing to service, reflecting similar nationwide trends. Service industries and wholesale and retail trade have experienced significant growth since the 1970s. The current leading manufacturing industries in Greater Buffalo include automotive components, printing, fabricated metals, industrial machinery, chemical and food processing, and computer and medical instruments.

As part of the region's economic restructuring, a number of public and private initiatives have been created to enhance economic and industrial development. These efforts are led by local, State, and federal governments, as well as private industry to facilitate regional economic diversification, industrial expansion and relocation, and linkages between education, research, and industry. The Erie County Industrial Development Authority (ECIDA) and the Metro Buffalo Alliance (MBA) are two examples of public/private partnerships involved in economic and industrial development.

²¹ The target industries were Information Technology, Research and Development (Medical Tech), Medical Device Manufacturing, Back Office Operations, and Warehousing and Distribution.

The Town's waterfront offers a unique physical setting which may warrant private developer interest, even without the massive public assistance programs of the past. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the following market observations for some key land uses prior to outlining any proposed land and water uses:

1. Industrial

Based on recent trends and nationwide shifts, industrial growth areas are likely to be high technology sectors. The total Buffalo SMSA absorption of this type of industry per year is approximately 50 acres. It is expected that many of the new and growing industries in this field will continue to seek suburban locations with good corridor access.

Recent reports have indicated little demand for water-dependent industry along the Buffalo waterfront due to market changes, lack of growth rate projected for water-dependent industry, and the fact that the availability of sites having access to processed water is not limited to the waterfront.

As of 1990, there were 700 vacant acres of industrial park space in Erie County. Given the annual absorption rate, the above figure is enough to accommodate the region's needs for the next 12-15 year period. Given the large amount of underutilized waterfront industrial land in the Town of Tonawanda, opportunities are present to redirect these vacant areas to alternative land uses.

The absorption rate for industrial park space at the Town's Fire Tower Park averaged 8 acres annually over an 8 year period. Based on market data, it is estimated that the '300 Acres Site' could absorb some 3.02 million square feet of light industrial and office space.

2. Residential

An evaluation of the need for residential units in the year 2000 indicates that there is likely to be an oversupply of units to satisfy Town population needs. The analysis was limited strictly to Town needs and assumed a year 2000 population of 79,650 and total households of 27,190. However, by using a parallel analytical technique, recent reports have indicated that the City of Buffalo will need 30,580 new units by the year 2000. It can be assumed that much of this demand can be met in the Town of Tonawanda.

The actual number of units which can be supported at the waterfront is certainly a function of numerous items including site availability, environmental conditions, and pricing structure. Since the waterfront and adjacent areas are the only substantial areas in the Town where vacant land exists, it is reasonable to assume that some residential uses could be accommodated at choice locations if certain other conditions are present. These are noted later in this section.

3. Marina

Demand for boat slips on the Tonawanda waterfront will come from three basic sources: latent demand, or boats that would dock in a marina if space were currently available; transfer demand, or boats captured from existing marina space; and new boats entering the market each year seeking dockage

space. A market analysis indicates that tapping area boating demand is limited more by a lack of available waterfront sites than by a lack of market strength.

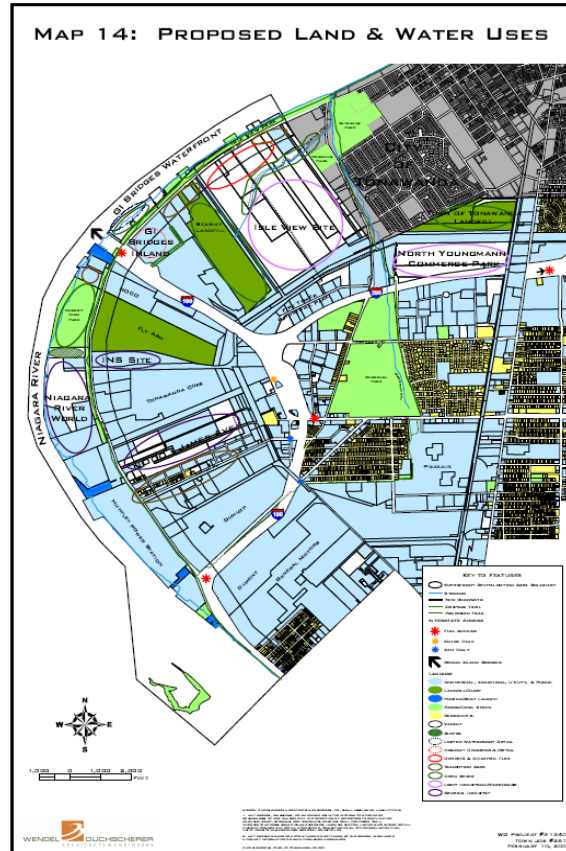
- a. **Latent Demand:** Local marina operators estimate that 25% of boat owners in Greater Buffalo would desire a boat slip. This yields a supply of 7,952 craft (of 31,809 total craft in 1987). Assuming present occupancies approaching 100%, the entire existing and proposed 1991 supply of slips is projected to be 4,362 slips. As a result, it is estimated that there is an unmet demand for approximately 3,590 slips. Halcyon projects that an attractively designed, well-located marina(s) on the Tonawanda waterfront could capture 20% to 30% of this latent demand, or from 700 to approximately 1,000 craft.
- b. **Capture from Existing Marinas:** The ability of a marina on the Tonawanda waterfront to capture demand currently being met by existing facilities depends, in large part, on the facility's location, access, fees, services, and design. However, these sources of demand will depend on a site-specific, detailed marina development program. A limited capture is possible.
- c. **Annual Growth Potential:** Erie and Niagara Counties have witnessed a substantial increase in the number of registered boats, particularly since 1985. This growth rate is conservatively projected to continue at approximately 3.0% annually into the early 1990s, yielding 1,937 new boats by 1991. Presuming 25% of these owners would desire boat slips, this results in an annual slip demand of 242 over this two-year period. Tonawanda's waterfront could capture 20% to 30% of this annual growth, providing demand for 97 to 145 slips.

Table 6: Marina Demand Analysis Summary Tonawanda Waterfront Region

	Demand	Unmet Demand(3)	Capture of Unmet Demand
Latent Demand	7,952(2)	3,950	@20.0 718 @30.0 % 1,077
Capture from Existing Marinas	N/A	N/A	N/A
Annual Growth Potential	1,937(4)	484(5)	@20.0% 97 @30.0% 145
TOTAL:			@20.0% 815 @30.0% 1,222
(1)	In Erie and Niagara Counties Only.		
(2)	Assumes 25% of total existing demand (31,309) would utilize boat slips.		
(3)	Existing slip demand @ 25% less existing and proposed marina slips (4,362).		
(4)	Growth compounded annually between 1989-1991.		
(5)	At 25%.		

C. Proposed Land and Water Uses

As noted above, the Town of Tonawanda undertook a land use study for the waterfront region in 2001-2002. The study process included a review of past studies, regulations and issues, and a thorough assessment of existing conditions, including infrastructure, existing land use, environmental features and concerns, and market indicators. Wherever possible, the data was mapped in a GIS format to facilitate analysis. These factors comprised the opportunities and constraints that determined feasible development options for the waterfront.



Map 14 – Proposed Land and Water Uses

The waterfront region in the Town of Tonawanda is in a period of transition. The area has a strong industrial heritage, but it is increasingly focused on waterfront recreational and scenic purposes. The Riverwalk, Isle View Park, Niawanda Park, Veteran’s Park, Fireman’s Park, Aqua Lane Park, the Town Boat Launch and the Two-Mile Creek Greenway are some of the recreational assets in or near the Town’s waterfront region. These amenities have increased public access and open space in the region, and are helping to change the character of the area. Former environmental concerns have largely been addressed. The area is ready for redevelopment in a new context—one that recognizes the importance of industrial and commercial uses, but that also increasingly accommodates recreational use, public access to the waterfront and the aesthetic potential of the area.

1. Southern Sector

The Southern sector includes lands south of Sheridan Drive in the Town of Tonawanda, including Strawberry Island. As noted above, most of the land uses in the southern sector of the waterfront are longstanding uses that are proposed to continue. Many are in public use, including the New York State Thruway, Aqua Lane Park, the Town Boat Launch, Strawberry Island and the Town's Water Treatment Plant. The industrial uses in this sector, such as General Motors, are major employers that are vital to the regional economy, and the Town supports continuation of these uses. These public and industrial uses are expected to continue into the foreseeable future. A small area near the City of Buffalo border is a stable residential neighborhood, bordered by a small commercial strip on the west side of River Road. While some redevelopment may occur in this area, it is expected it would be small scale and replaced by similar uses.

Land use recommendations in this sector are to maintain and improve existing uses. It is recommended that additional improvements to parkland and the Riverwalk through this sector be made, focusing on improving the availability and quality of public access. An example of the type of use to be promoted is the Sherwood-Two Mile Creek Greenway, which would create a link between the Two Mile Creek trail and the Riverwalk. Aesthetic improvements to existing trails and parklands and continued upgrading of facilities are also recommended.

2. Central Sector

This sector of the waterfront extends from Sheridan Drive on the south to the Grand Island Bridges. The southern portion of this sector is characterized by industrial uses, dominated by the Huntley Power Station property. It is anticipated that any development that occurs south of Sawyer Avenue will be industrial in nature. Over the long term, it is recommended that the residential area along Sawyer Avenue gradually transition to light industrial and commercial uses. The area from the northern boundary of the Niagara River World site south to the Huntley Power Station is a transition area between the heavily industrial lands of the southern portion of the waterfront and the more mixed uses to the north. It is recommended that new development in this area be focused on light industrial and commercial business. Mixed uses (commercial, parkland, retail and light industrial) should be encouraged in the northern portion of the central sector, including a proposed park at the Cherry Farm site. Recommendations for specific sites are as follows:

- a. **James Avenue:** Lands east of River Road along James Avenue, currently owned by NOCO, should be developed as small-scale businesses and industries, including industrial-services operations such as tool and die manufacturers and repair services. This type of development would be consistent with adjacent developed land uses. Only a small portion of this area falls within the waterfront revitalization area boundary.
- b. **Niagara River World:** This is a large (62-acres) site in one ownership. Redevelopment of the site is complicated by the presence of infrastructure and foundations from former users, and environmental concerns. It has a number of assets for industrial development, including an excess capacity of infrastructure, docking facilities, and good

connections to the interstate transportation system. Recommended land use is as a mixed-use facility, primarily industrial in nature. Water-dependent industrial uses are strongly encouraged on the riverfront portion of the parcel. Care will be taken that any development located along River Road maintain high design and landscaping standards.

- c. **East side of River Road across from Niagara River World:** These parcels are not vacant, but occupied by active, industrial uses that are expected to continue over the near term. Over the long-term, it is recommended that efforts be made to relocate the heavy uses occupying River Road frontage to less visible locations outside the waterfront revitalization boundary. Given adjacent areas, the site is likely to remain industrial, but redevelopment can take better advantage of rail and highway access, and have fewer negative impacts to the environmental and visual character of the area. Parcels on the east side of River Road are located a significant distance from the waterfront in this area, and non-water-related uses are appropriate. However, the visual impacts to the waterfront area should be considered in any redevelopment efforts, with an emphasis on improving landscaping, façades and other aesthetic features.
- d. **Cherry Farm:** This 57-acre site is a beautiful and strategically located parcel which offers excellent scenic views along a shoreline that extends nearly one-half mile along the River. Although it formerly contained low levels of hazardous wastes, the site has been successfully remediated, with provisions that facilitate its redevelopment as a park. The Town funded a park site master plan that includes nature trails through its 18 acres of natural wetlands, an interpretive center, and other recreational improvements. The trail system is designed to link into the Riverwalk to extend shoreline access. The Town is fully supportive of redevelopment of this site as a regional State Park.
- e. **Parcels adjacent to Cherry Farm:** The parcel to the south of the Cherry Farm site is vacant. Any development proposal for this site should take into account potential impacts on the Cherry Farm parcel, and be compatible with the proposed park. A trucking company currently occupies the parcel to the north of Cherry Farm. This is not a water-dependent or water-enhanced use, and ideally should be relocated to the non-waterfront side of River Road. As a viable business and an important component of Tonawanda's economy, the company should not be displaced, but if it becomes feasible at some point in the future, relocation should be supported. Location on the inland side of River Road would be acceptable.

3. Northern Sector

This sector has the greatest potential for successful redevelopment, away from its industrial past to a new image and identity. While the proposed waterfront revitalization area extends from the River to 500 feet east of the eastern right-of-way of River Road, land use plans for this sector encompass the entire area bounded on the north by the northern Town border, on the east by Military Road, and on the south by the Youngmann Expressway (I-290). Much of this land is vacant or underutilized, and includes significant acreage available for redevelopment. The long-term goal is to redevelop this area

with a focus on recreational amenities, high quality commercial development and increased public access.

Isle View Park and the Riverwalk set the image for the waterside development. Development should be concentrated on public access and parkland, with some limited commercial activity (e.g. small snack bar). On the east side of River Road, a mix of land uses is proposed, including commercial, office, retail, and research and development within the waterfront revitalization area, and light industrial and warehousing on the properties that are farther inland. Along River Road, the focus is on higher quality development (office park and highway retail). In contrast to former land use plans, residential development is not seen as an appropriate use in this area. Earlier plans for residential use were premised on the relocation of River Road to the east, which is no longer a viable option. The proximity to industrial uses and the potential for environmental issues further mitigate against the possibility of residential development in this area. Open space and possible public access along Rattlesnake Creek are recommended.

Recommendations for specific sites are as follows:

- a. Grand Island Bridges parcel- waterfront:** This vacant, wooded site is approximately 10 acres in size. To the north of this area is an active water-dependent industrial use (dockage for oil tankers) that separates the site from Isle View Park. Environmental issues (floodplains and wetlands) limit the amount development that is feasible. The site has excellent access and visibility from the Thruway. It is located directly on the Riverwalk, and provides excellent views of the River. A riverfront park in this location would fill in a gap in the ribbon of green space along the River from Niawanda in the City of Tonawanda to the proposed Cherry Farm Park to the south. Some limited ancillary park-related commercial development, such as a visitor center, small-scale convenience retail or a restaurant, is possible. Any development that occurs in this location should be a water-dependent or water-enhanced use, and provide for public access.
- b. Grand Island Bridges parcel-inland:** This site is located immediately north of the Grand Island Bridges on the east side of River Road. It is approximately 25 acres in size. Its high visibility and ease of access from the interstate system makes it an attractive location for highway-related retail activity, such as a truck depot or restaurant. Its proximity to the bridge toll plazas and the presence of oil storage tanks at the rear of the parcel limit its use for higher-value development. A new commercial use at this location would provide a transition between the industrial uses at the rear of the parcel and the more recreational-oriented uses (existing and proposed) on the opposite side of River Road. Any new development on this site should maintain high design standards, including a buffer to screen the oil tanks, and the site plan should include accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- c. Isle View Site:** This site fronts River Road on the inland side across from Isle View Park. It is primarily vacant, and has excellent potential for redevelopment. Rattlesnake Creek

bisects the property, running approximately parallel to River Road. The frontage property, which is within the waterfront revitalization area, is proposed as a high quality office park with some related commercial development. To maximize the value and appeal of the location, the site plan should establish strong visual and physical linkages to trails and parks adjacent to the site. For example, Rattlesnake Creek and its associated wetlands should be maintained as open space, possibly with limited trail access connecting to the Two-Mile Creek trail system. This will help establish a new image for the area, distinct from the industrial nature of the waterfront to the south, and provide additional access to waterfront assets.

The site is very large, extending over 200 acres inland. Although the interior portions of the site are not within the waterfront revitalization area, they are adjacent and were included in the land use planning efforts, along with the vacant parcel known as the North Youngmann Commerce Park, across Town Mile Creek Road from the Fire Tower Industrial Park. These properties are proposed for light industrial development, including warehousing and flex-type space.

For any development to occur at the Isle View site, some site improvements, including improved roadway access and the extension of utilities to the interior of the site would be required. Coordination of multiple owners or site consolidation would also be needed. Most likely a public-private partnership will be required to effectively accomplish land use plans for this site.

- d. **Landfill sites:** The Seaway Landfill, adjacent to the waterfront revitalization area, is inactive. Eventually, as the closure process is completed, it may be suitable for low-intensity recreational uses such as walking trails and open space. The Town landfill, although outside the boundaries of the waterfront area, could be redeveloped in a similar manner. Such reuse is encouraged, as it will help reinforce the transition of the Tonawanda waterfront to a more recreational-oriented area. It will also further public access and provide a more attractive neighboring use for planned adjacent uses.
- e. **River Road Corridor Improvements:** To successfully change the image of the area and promote waterfront revitalization, it is very important that any new development be carefully implemented. Techniques such as adequate buffers, high design standards and careful site planning will be utilized to ensure a high quality of development.

For all properties located along River Road, measures to help improve the visual image of the area are proposed. This is true for small, individual uses as well as more large-scale projects. Aesthetics and streetscape issues help set the tone for the area. Detailed site-specific landscape plans were made for all River Road frontages south of the bridges in 1991. These plans can serve as a basis for consideration for other properties along River Road. Also, to the extent feasible, current owners (including the NYS Thruway Authority) should be encouraged to invest in improvements and landscaping.

In addition, there are several uses along the waterfront which are not water-dependent or water-enhanced, or which do not complement the character that the Town is attempting to establish in this area. Over time, as opportunities are presented, it should be a policy to encourage these uses to relocate and be replaced with more compatible uses.

These recommendations are designed as a guideline for the types of development that are most appropriate for each location. They are not intended to preclude consideration of other types of development that are compatible with the Town's goals for this area and the policies of the LWRP. The intent of these proposed uses is to create a vital, active mix of uses in the waterfront region that are economically sound, promote public access, and improve the visual and physical character of the area.

The revitalization of Tonawanda' waterfront will be a challenge, requiring a long-term commitment and cooperative action on the part of both the public and the private sector. However, there is significant potential to transform key portions of the waterfront into attractive and productive new uses.

D. Proposed Projects

1. Cherry Farm Park

The Town remains committed to implementing the Cherry Farm Park Master Plan, and will continue to take steps to bring this project to fruition. This will increase public access, and implement policy 21A.

2. River Walk- Further Improvements/landscaping

The River Walk has been a successful project which has opened public access along the length of the waterfront in Tonawanda. The Town, in conjunction with the County, is committed to continuing to improve the aesthetics of the trail, and to provide additional spurs and linkages.

3. Sherwood-Two Mile Creek Greenway

The Town, in conjunction with Erie County, is in the process of implementing the Sherwood-Two Mile Creek Greenway. This trail system will extend the existing Two-Mile Creek Trail, extending it through the Praxair property, along Sheridan Drive, and connecting to the Riverwalk at the foot of Sheridan. This will complete a loop trail, and expand the public's ability to use and enjoy waterfront resources.

4. River Road Corridor Improvements

Instituting aesthetic improvements along River Road will improve the visual character of the waterfront region in the Town of Tonawanda. This will require cooperation with landowners and developers, and enforcement on the part of the Town of the standards and requirements provided in the new zoning regulations.

5. Niagara River World redevelopment

This is the responsibility of the private owner of this site. The Town will remain in communication with the landowner and the Tonawanda Development Corporation to determine how they can facilitate redevelopment of this site.

6. Town Boat Launch Improvements

The Town will support expansion and improvements to the Town Boat Launch on Aqua Lane to improve the public access to the water. Continued upgrades and improvements can be instituted overtime increasing the different types of water usage in the area.

7. Aqua Lane Improvements

The Town supports private business activities, additional improvements, and enhanced aesthetics in the Aqua Lane area.

8. Riverfront Park

The Town supports adding public trails, reserving the wetlands, and allowing limited commercial development in the area, in order to increase public access. Also the Town will consider the potential incorporation of adjacent lands into the park area.

9. Isle View Park Extension

The Town will support continued upgrading and improvements to Isle View Park.

10. Strawberry Island

The Town will support State efforts for reclamation and preservation of Strawberry Island.

11. Isle View Development

The Town will encourage the consolidation of parcels to facilitate economic development efforts within the Isle View development site area on the inland side of River Road. The Town will also consider other actions supportive of economic development efforts, such as assistance with extending infrastructure, or offering economic development zone incentives for development on the site.

12. Huntley Station - Visual Improvements