

SECTION IV

PROPOSED LAND AND WATER USES

A. INTRODUCTION

The proposed land and water uses for the City's waterfront are intended to translate the policies contained in Section III into a cohesive physical plan for the shoreline. The time period for the implementation of the plan is 15 years; however, some proposals can be carried out within the short-term (i.e. 5 years). These specific areas are highlighted in the text.

It should be stressed that the recommendations have been developed as a means of implementing the waterfront policies. The formulation of the proposed uses is the result of a process which blends the policy statements with an evaluation of the development potential and constraints of particular areas. Potentials and constraints are determined by numerous factors including environmental considerations, physical barriers to development, adjacent land use patterns and market demand.

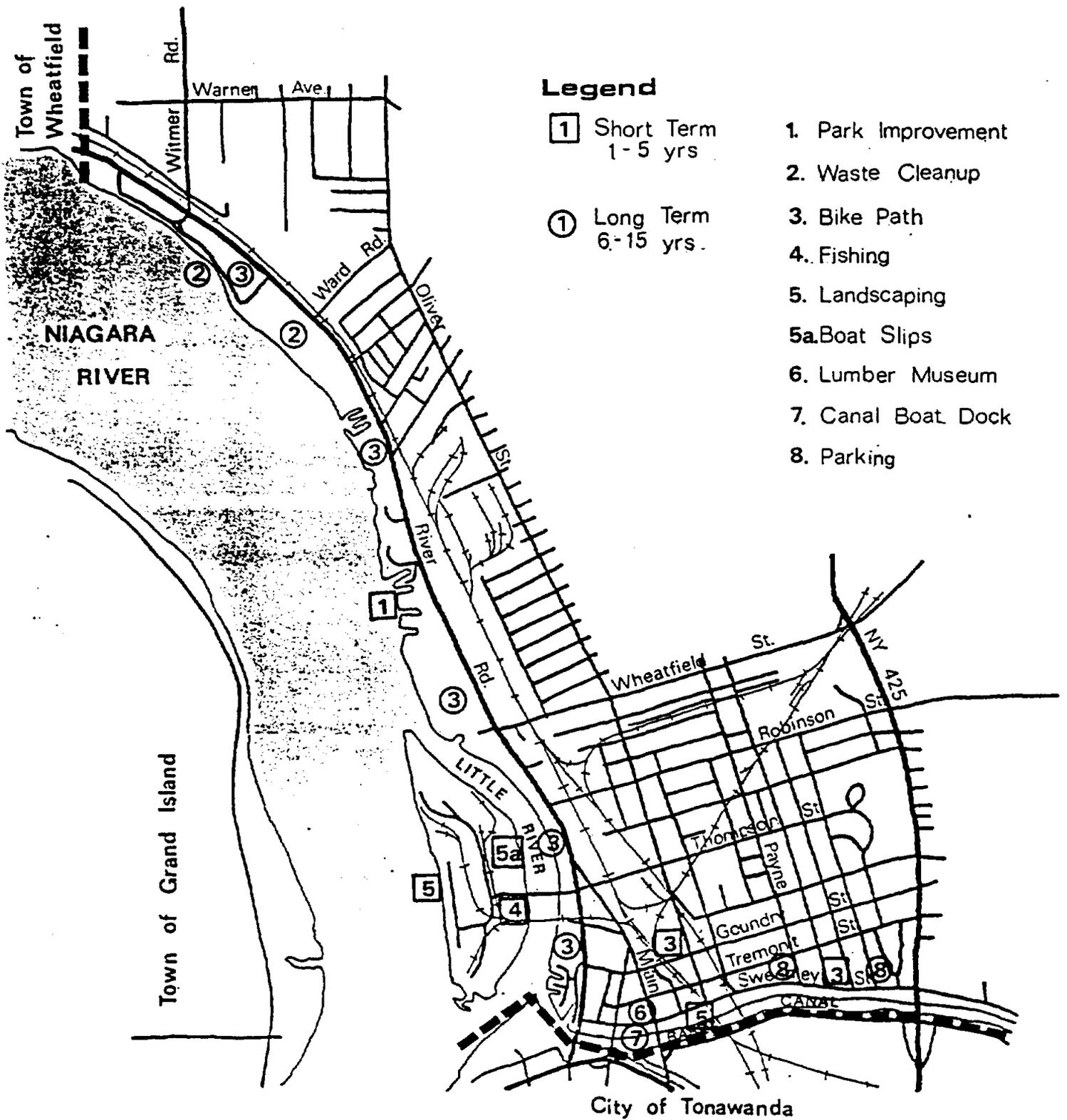
B. PROPOSED LAND USES

The following narrative provides a general description of proposed land uses for each sub-area. Given market conditions and environmental constraints, full achievement of the recommendations is likely to occur within a 15 year time period. Reference should be made to Figures 20A and 20B for a graphic description of the short and long term proposals, and to Figures 21A and 21B for a generalized comprehensive waterfront land use plan for the City through the Year 2000.

It should be noted that "nuisance" uses such as auto wrecking, junkyards, scrap metal yards, dumps, and slag piles will not be allowed in any of the waterfront sub-areas.

Finally, the large vacant parcels on Tonawanda Island and the Niagara River sub-areas are recommended for redevelopment that would accommodate water-dependent or enhanced uses. Enhanced uses include restaurants, office parks, large residential developments, light industry, etcetera. Such a recommendation assumes that a waterfront location will assist in the overall marketing of these sites and provide an attractive setting for water oriented designs. In addition, water-dependent boating and industrial uses would also be appropriate for those areas. As previously noted, an industrial use would have to satisfy strict site design standards to insure its consistency with the LWRP. This would be a major condition any local zoning approval required.

1. NIAGARA RIVER: This sub-area has the greatest potential for change. This conclusion is based on two factors; namely, it has the highest percentage of vacant parcels (i.e. 38 percent) and many large parcels under single ownership.

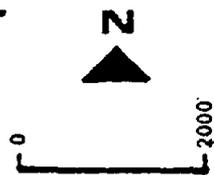


City of North Tonawanda

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

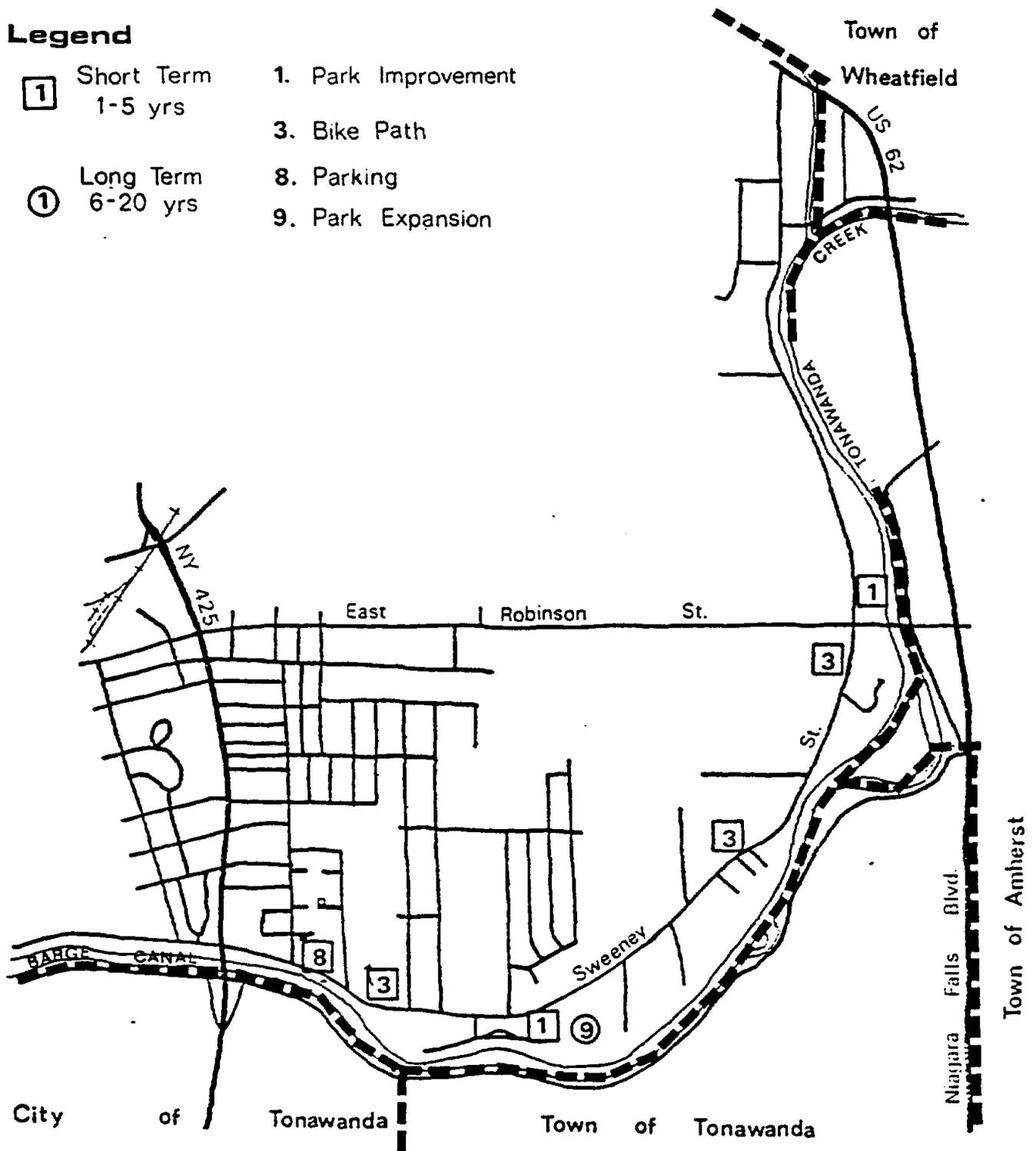
Figure 20A: PROPOSED LAND USE PROJECTS

Stuart I. Brown Associates



Legend

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Short Term
1-5 yrs</p> <p>① Long Term
6-20 yrs</p> | <p>1. Park Improvement</p> <p>3. Bike Path</p> <p>8. Parking</p> <p>9. Park Expansion</p> |
|---|---|

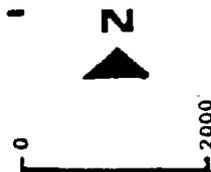


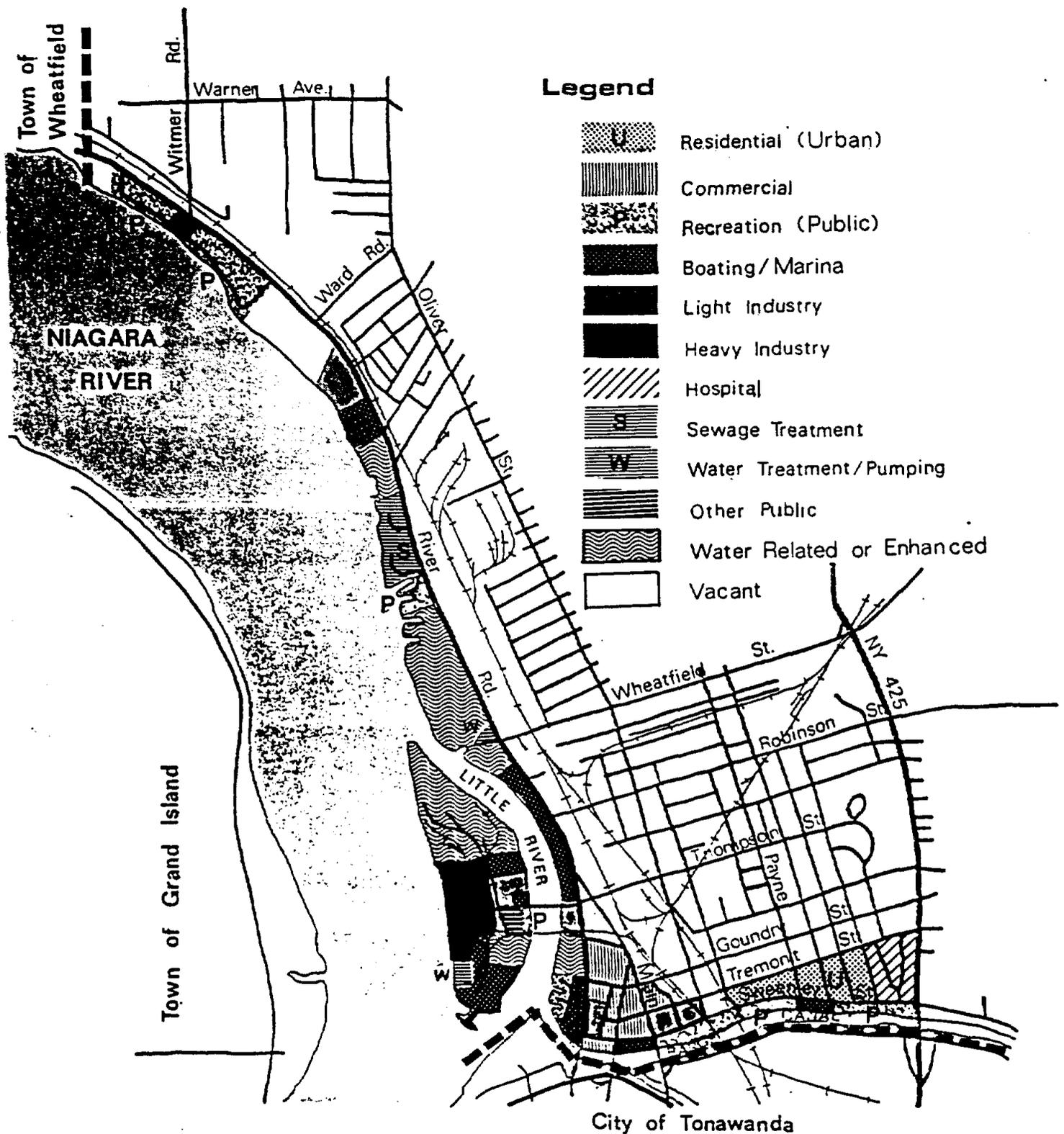
City of North Tonawanda

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Figure 20B: PROPOSED LAND USE - PROJECTS

Stuart I. Brown Associates





City of North Tonawanda

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Figure 21A: PROPOSED LAND USE CONCEPT

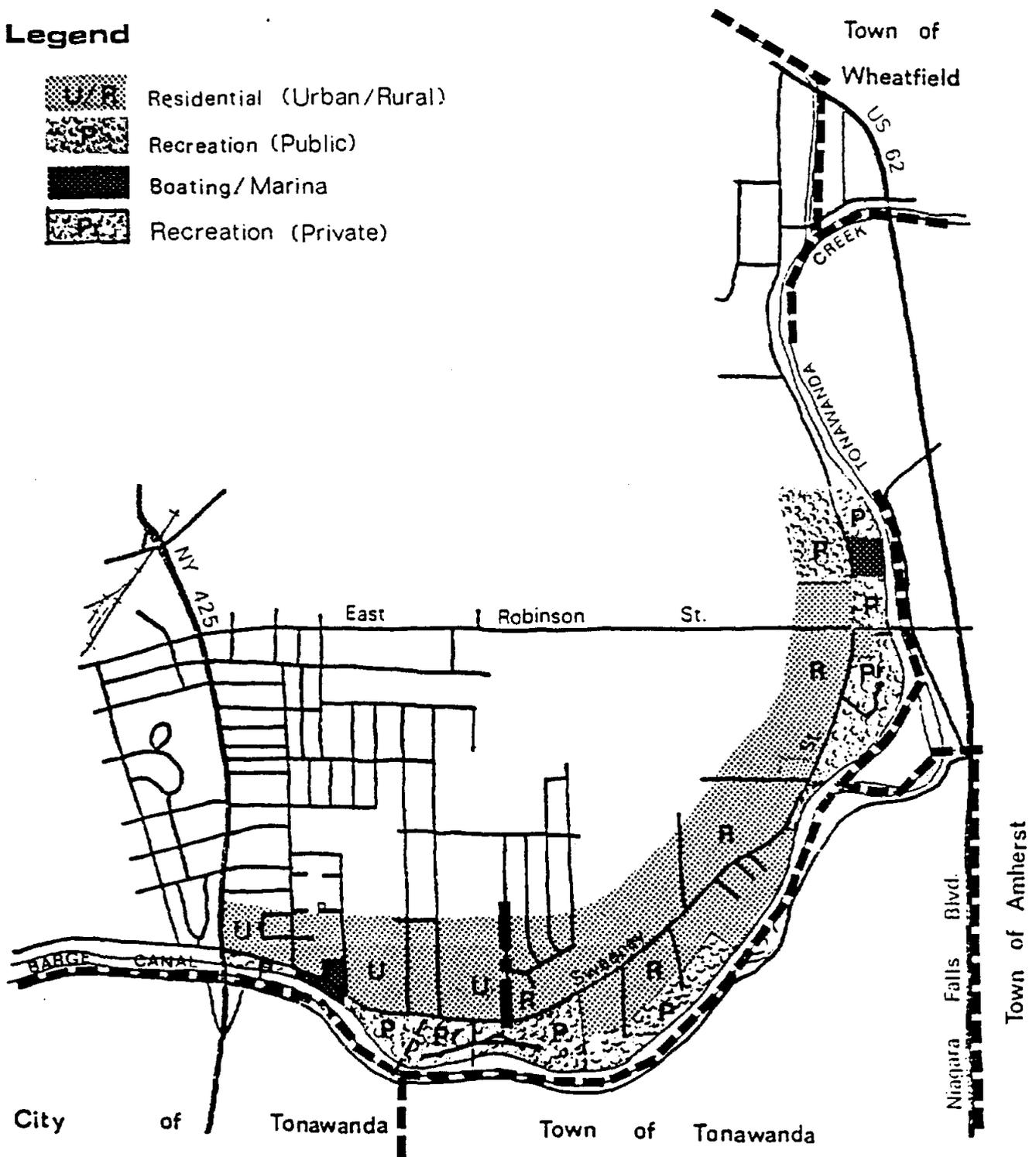


Stuart I. Brown Associates



Legend

-  Residential (Urban/Rural)
-  Recreation (Public)
-  Boating/Marina
-  Recreation (Private)



City of North Tonawanda

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Figure 21B: PROPOSED LAND USE CONCEPT



Stuart I. Brown Associates

The land area extending from the Tonawanda Iron Works site north to the Town of Wheatfield municipal boundary is proposed for a variety of water-dependent and enhanced uses, including parkland, marinas, commercial, industrial, and residential development. This recommendatin will allow a flexibility in attracting new uses to the area which may presently be constrained by the poor market (e.g. owners of the Tonawanda Iron Works site have been marketing their land for eight years). In addition, the uses proposed will be required to satisfy specific zoning and site plan review criteria pertaining to site design, waterfront access and consistency with the LWRP. This will serve to improve the aesthetic character of the River Road corridor. The Waterfront Zoning District, for example, will require shoreline uses to be water-dependent, or to provide for public access for those non-water-dependent uses which locate there.

Existing water-dependent uses to be maintained include Fisherman's Park, Niagara River Yacht Club, and the City Sewage Treatment Plant. Proposed improvements to Fishermans Park total \$55,000 and include slip dredging, restroom facilities, sanitary sewer system, lighting, parking improvements, and handicapped access. The cost figure was supplied by the City Parks Department.

Gratwick-Riverside Park will continue as a municipal park unless results of current State and County soil and water testing determines that public use of the area is detrimental to public health. In this event, the City will urge prompt cleanup of the area by responsible parties so that the land can be eventually reopened for public waterfront recreation.

Although owners of the Tonawanda Iron Works Site have been marketing the area with no success, the site does have potential for development of a light industrial park or as the location for a spin-off plant from a large area manufacturing concern. Although the A.D. Little analysis has not urged the creation of new industrial areas in Niagara County, the memoranda have indicated the possible justification of one additional park site. The combination of water, rail and truck access offered by the Tonawanda Iron Works site, the availability of on site utilities and its proximity to Canada may make the property attractive to potential industrial park users. The cost per acre of the Tonawanda Iron Works site, compared to other industrial property in the market area, would establish the feasibility of this parcel as a potential industrial park.

South of the Tonawanda Iron Works site to Wardell's Boatyard, a waterfront commercial/marina district is proposed. This reflects the character of the area located adjacent to the Little River and the anticipated demand for the new boat slips.

Existing water-dependent uses to be maintained include the Bow and Stern Marina, Smith Boys Marina, Wardell Boatyard and Spier's Marina.

The only new recreation opportunity suggested for this sub-area is a Class I bikepath (i.e. bikepath separated from road) along River Road. This would be a long term proposal (i.e. 7 to 15 years) and feasible only if the Tonawanda Island Railroad were to be abandoned.

The bikepath would utilize existing sidewalks along the Seymour Street Bridge, while providing a direct connection to the Erie County Riverwalk in the City of Tonawanda. In the City of North Tonawanda the trail would run parallel to River Road until it reaches the area near to the Smith Boy's Marina (River Road and Thompson Street). The path would then utilize the existing Tonawanda Island Railroad right-of-way to its termination at the former Kopper's facility where a new right-of-way would be required along River Road.

It should be stressed that the pursuit of this proposal should not be undertaken in the short term. All efforts to utilize the Tonawanda Island Railroad as an attraction to potential users of vacant parcels along the River should be pursued. However, if after a period of years the railroad becomes economically unfeasible, the alternative recreational use of right-of-way should be considered.

Access to the bike route from adjacent residential neighborhoods would be provided from local streets located perpendicular to River Road. It is also proposed that finger extensions to the Niagara Riverfront be provided as redevelopment occurs. For example, if the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation site is redeveloped for a water-dependent or enhanced use, then an extension of the bikepath from River Road to the water's edge should be incorporated into the site design. The trail would also have the potential for linking up with the proposed bike system along the City of Niagara Falls waterfront.

In determining alternative land uses, previous planning reports were examined in light of current conditions. It was determined that the promotion of additional public open space along the River, as recommended by the Regional Planning Board and the City's 1971 Master Plan, was no longer appropriate. As noted in the overview of market conditions, the City can accommodate additional community park needs elsewhere in the City.

Furthermore, the trail concept has been maintained but with a recognition that site design and land use will ultimately determine the potential for extending the route from River Road to the water's edge. The concept of mixed use, as opposed to continuous public open space, is also more appropriate in the City as the mixed use concept will generate business that will improve economic conditions. All opportunities to redevelop vacant and underutilized waterfront parcels into revenue and job producing enterprises must be given priority.

2. TONAWANDA ISLAND: The former International Paper site on the northern tip of the Island is recommended for water-dependent or enhanced uses. Similar to the large vacant parcels along the Niagara River, this 29 acre site should not be targeted for a specific type of use given current market conditions. Maximum flexibility must be the rule. The only restriction which should be enacted are those that would ensure that eventual development be part of a well designed, cohesive site plan, and be dependent or enhanced by a waterfront location. The provision of public access to the shoreline is a key factor.

The location of the property along the Little River and its relative isolation from other more intensive uses may provide opportunities for residential development. However, the existing transportation system, aesthetic appearance, and various rail crossings on the Island would more than likely require major improvements prior to obtaining any developer interest. As mentioned earlier, the availability of on-site utilities, as well as opportunities for linking boat slip space with residential units, can serve as key inducements to future development.

An alternative to residential use of the site would be the development of an industrial park. The area has transportation access, utilities, and offers the potential for a creative waterfront site design. The fact that vehicular access to the site must utilize the two lane Thompson Street Bridge may, however, limit attractiveness of the site for business development. At this time, the very limited demand for new industrial park space in Niagara County makes it unlikely that both this area and the Tonawanda Iron Works site could be developed for industrial use. Private developers and public economic development officials, in conjunction with the City, should determine the most appropriate location for new industrial use and pursue the recommendation accordingly.

A final point regarding the northeastern area of Tonawanda Island pertains to the potential for pedestrian linkage with the former Tonawanda Iron Works site. In the event that two complementary uses are developed for the parcels, a unique design feature could include a pedestrian bridge over the Little River which would connect the related uses and create an attraction by itself.

The remaining sections of the Island are recommended for marinas, restaurants, and light industry. It should be stressed that existing light industrial uses such as Tayco, Taylor Devices and Tayco Technology would not be inconsistent with the recommended use pattern. In addition, existing water-dependent uses on the Island to be maintained include Smith Boys Marina, City's Water Treatment Plant, Placid Harbor II Marina, and Inn On The River restaurant.

Finally, a public fishing area along the Little River is proposed on property currently owned by Niagara County and used for fire training. The public recreational use could occur during times

when fire training activities are not underway. The area would provide the only onshore fishing spot along the Little River.

The proposals for Tonawanda Island are consistent with those proposed by the Regional Planning Board. Because of changing market conditions, a variation from the City's 1971 Master Plan proposal for the area was necessary. The latter designated the entire site as suitable for heavy industry.

3. DOWNTOWN: Generally, the existing commercial activity is proposed to continue throughout the planning period. Existing water-dependent or enhanced uses such as the City Boat Docks and Packett Inn will be maintained. It is recommended that a site within downtown be identified for use as a lumber museum. This would complement current activities by the Carousel Society of the Niagara Frontier and the Western New York Railroad Historical Society to develop the Carousel Factory Museum and a Rail Theme Walking Park both within a short distance of the CBD and waterfront. Both initiatives are being actively promoted by the City and area interest groups.

As noted in the Inventory and Analysis Section, the City has a valuable heritage in the lumber industry, yet little attention is focused on this part of the community's heritage. A cooperative effort among the City, museum interest groups, Chamber of Commerce, New York State, and Niagara County is necessary to organize management, financial, site location, and program strategies. The potential for drawing tourists from outside the City, including those visiting Niagara Falls, to the downtown area will certainly increase through such a development. A museum "circuit" centered on the three themes which represent the City's heritage would strongly complement the \$2.8 million public and private investment projected for the downtown area.

A minor proposal for this sub-area includes designation of Sweeney and Manhattan Streets as Class III bike routes (i.e. bike signs only). Existing traffic volumes and road conditions are adequate to accommodate shared roadway usage. Such a route would be consistent with the New York State Barge Canal and Trailway System. It would eventually link with the Class I bike route along River Road. As the State trailway system becomes fully developed, consideration should be given to renovating a vacant downtown structure in the 1978 New York State Recreation Plan. This would further the overall City policy of channeling tourist, recreational and boating traffic into the downtown area as a means of benefitting commercial retail establishments.

4. BARGE CANAL - WEST: Existing use patterns are recommended to continue during the program period. The key emphasis should be placed on the following areas:

- a. Ensure that all State land adjacent to the Canal is properly maintained and landscaped, thereby creating an attractive visual environment, as well as providing public access to the Canal edge.
- b. Continue the present State policy relative to boathouse permits. This should be supplemented by conditions placed on each permit relative to maintenance which would then be enforced by periodic State inspection.
- c. Designate a site between Main Street and the Penn Central Railroad bridge as a dockage area for an old packet boat and/or canal barge. This would further supplement the "museum circuit theme" noted in sub-section 3 (i.e. Proposed Uses-Downtown Sub-area).
- d. Continue the Class III bike route along Sweeney Street as mentioned in sub-section 3 for the downtown area.
- e. As the area between the Twin Cities Memorial Highway and the Penn Central Railroad bridge increases in usage, new parking facilities should be provided. The use of shared parking lots with DeGraff Memorial Hospital and the Veteran's Legion Post should be pursued.
- f. A linkage between the Barge Canal corridor and the linear park leading to the Herschell Building should be provided. This could occur through signage from Sweeney Street onto Vandervoort Street or by utilizing the abandoned Conrail right-of-way which would provide a direct link between the Canal and the linear park.

Use of the abandoned rail right-of-way would only be feasible if the NFTA decides not to extend the existing rail transit line in the northtowns area. However, even if a northtowns extension is planned, its construction would not occur in the short term. As an interim use, the NFTA should be urged to provide a low cost Class I trail on the track bed until the line is under construction. In the event that the Goundry Street Post Office is expanded eastward onto the abandoned track bed, the proposed Class I trail would require a slight realignment in this area.

- g. If NFTA does not pursue a northtowns extension, the City should pressure Conrail or NYSDOT to remove the old Erie-Lackawanna Bridge and abutments. This creates visual blight in the area and serves no useful purpose.
- h. Maintain existing water related uses including State-owned lands maintained by the City as parkland between the Canal and Sweeney Street, as well as Hi-Skipper Marina and Sales.

The recommendations for this sub-area are generally consistent with the plans prepared by the Erie and Niagara Counties Regional Planning Board and reinforce the New York State Barge Canal Trailway system promoted by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Finally, the tourist circuit concept outlined in the A. D. Little strategy would certainly complement the proposals outline above.

5. BARGE CANAL - EAST: During the next 15 years it is expected that existing use patterns will continue in this sub-area. The vacant parcels on the landside of Sweeney Street will gradually convert to low density residential development as demand for new housing increases. With a limited market for such uses, the conversion will not be rapid.

Other uses proposed for the sub-area are noted below:

- a. Expand Mayor's Park to the east by adding the vacant 18 acre State-owned parcel. This will offset the high demand at Mayor's Park, respond to the need for additional community parkland, and offset the possible temporary loss of Gratwick-Riverside Park.
- b. As noted for the Barge Canal-West sub-area, ensure that all State land adjacent to the Canal is properly landscaped and maintained.
- c. Continue the boathouse controls described for the Barge Canal-West sub-area.
- d. Provide improved parking facilities for the Service Drive Launch Ramp and the adjacent park areas by designing an attractive and well landscaped facility on property owned by the North Tonawanda Housing Authority. This is immediately east of the Service Drive Ramp.
- e. Extend the Class III bike trail along Sweeney Street. A connection can be made with the bicycle trail being constructed in Erie County as part of the Ellicott Creek flood control project at the East Robinson Bridge.
- f. Maintain all existing water-dependent and enhanced uses including Mayor's Park, Boys Club, Girl Scout Camp, Service Drive Launch Ramp, Botanical Gardens, and State-owned but City-maintained parkland between the Canal and Sweeney Street.
- g. Improve the existing Mayor's Park by relocating the restrooms and the pavilion, controlling Canal bank erosion, and installing a sanitary sewer system. Such improvements have been estimated at \$64,300 by the City Parks Department.

- h. Improve the Botanical Gardens by renovating the boat ramp, reconstructing the boat dock area, and improving the parking facilities. The total cost has been estimated at \$67,000 by the City Parks Department.

It was determined that a public marina east of Mayor's Park, as proposed by the Regional Planning Board, was no longer appropriate. New marinas should be centralized along the Little River. The compatibility of the area for such uses, as well as the potential for economic spin-offs to adjacent commercial districts make the Little River an ideal location for the recreational boating activities. Other recommendations are generally consistent with previous plans.

C. PROPOSED WATER USES

Existing water uses will be maintained, which include recreational boating and fishing, and public water supply. Commercial shipping within existing navigational channels will be permitted should any new water-dependent industry locate along the waterfront which requires water transportation. In addition, periodic dredging for recreational boating and/or commercial shipping purposes will be permitted subject to existing Federal and State Regulatory requirements. Commercial barge traffic along the Barge Canal is also a permitted water use.