

Planning for appropriate land use and development within the waterfront program area requires a clear understanding of its existing natural and man-made resources. The City's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program planning process has included review and updating of data provided within the City's three previously-referenced prior studies of its Hudson Riverfront:

- . The Rensselaer Riverfront: A Public Policy Guide;
- . City of Rensselaer: A Local Coastal Management Case Study; and
- . City of Rensselaer: Riverfront Development Plan

DETAILED NATURAL AND MAN-MADE RESOURCES INVENTORY

The Appendix of this Program report includes an excerpt from the "Facts" section of the aforementioned Public Policy Guide. This excerpt includes a comprehensive review of the natural characteristics (i.e., surficial/glacial geology, soils, topography/slope, topography/relief, water resources and floodprone areas), environmental standards (i.e., air quality, water quality and noise) and developmental characteristics (i.e., development pattern, historic resources, existing land use, population distribution, housing, parks and community facilities, transportation and public utilities) that describes the Rensselaer Riverfront.

Analysis today of this data base reaffirms fully the conclusions reached by the State's Coastal Management Program staff in its 1979 Case Study, specifically:

"The problem in Rensselaer is a problem of underutilization of coastal resources and amenities rather than one of competition or conflict between uses. The Rensselaer Riverfront is a place where there is both a need and an opportunity for major physical and economic improvements. It is a Riverfront that has ample space for all the uses that characterize an urban waterfront -- commerce, recreation, housing, and open space. The problem is making something happen -- finding funds, identifying a market, or creating a demand for the use of Rensselaer coastal resources. It is, therefore, those policies geared to inducing activity that are most relevant to Rensselaer and that should be the focus of a local coastal management program. Substantively, the policy direction of a local program for Rensselaer should center on needs in recreation/public access, economic development and aesthetic quality.

While there is now very little in the way of developed recreation facilities or public access, Rensselaer is in a better position to take advantage of its Riverfront for such development than most other Hudson River cities. There are several reasons for this. First, potential conflicts between recreation and other uses need not be a problem. Though there is industrial development, it is in the southern part of the City, removed from the relatively undeveloped shorefront in the remainder of the City. Second, railroads or urban expressways generally do not limit physical access to the river. In other Hudson River cities, such as Albany and Poughkeepsie, these are definite barriers to access. Third, there are no extreme topographic barriers to overcome. And fourth, there is a considerable amount of undeveloped land and land in public ownership. Development of a comprehensive open space plan should, therefore, be a primary concern of a local coastal management program.

Economic development is important to Rensselaer because as a small economically distressed city, its citizens need improved employment opportunities, and its government needs an improved economic condition if it is to have the revenue needed to undertake projects necessary for a fuller utilization of coastal resources. To meet the City's need for economic growth, there is potential for expanded activity on the Rensselaer side of the Albany Port District, particularly in light of reconstruction of the docks. There is potential also for industrial development on a highly suitable parcel of undeveloped land to the east of the Port District. This site has public utilities, rail sidings, good access to the port, few topographic constraints, and is surrounded by industrial uses. Given the site's high degree of suitability for water-dependent and other industrial uses as well as the need for economic development, conceptual 'preclearing' of permits would be one method to promote the area.

The significant amount of open space along Rensselaer's shore provides opportunity to enjoy not only the striking architectural variety of New York's capital city, with all its historic and cultural associations, but also the natural and man-made aesthetic attributes of Rensselaer itself. A tree-edged beach, gently rolling fields, and wooded hills are all to be found, as well as two areas of significant architecture representative of several historic periods. Unfortunately, the areas and views described are not always accessible and the historic districts are in a deteriorated state. Again, an open space plan would be an important next step in improving these conditions and thus the aesthetic quality of Rensselaer.

The most significant natural characteristic of Rensselaer is a strong susceptibility to flooding. As a result, the City is participating in the National Flood Insurance Program and will soon be accepted into the regular phase of the program, the final maps having been completed and floodproofing provisions having been incorporated into the City's Zoning Law for the flood hazard zone.

Issues related to water quality, air quality, fish and wildlife and energy, while important to the City of Rensselaer are not likely to be a direct concern of a local coastal management program. Major coastal concerns in these areas are primarily a State responsibility.

The City of Rensselaer has generally addressed the statewide Coastal Management Program issues on a policy level in the Riverfront Policy Guide and on a legislative level in new zoning and subdivision regulations enacted in January, 1979...it appears that an approvable local coastal management program for the City is in place. Once approved, an on-going local program can devote attention to the details of important issues so that desired change becomes reality."

One freshwater wetland, designated D-103, is located east of the petroleum tank farms in the southern extreme of the City's coastal area. This site is less than 12.4 acres, and is not a State regulated freshwater wetland. However, DEC Freshwater Wetlands standards are locally applied to this site. Local development standards are also in effect.

The N.Y.S. Museum Archeological Site Location Map and the N.Y.S. Historic Preservation Office Archeological Site File indicate numerous sites in the general vicinity of the City as possible sites with sensitive archeological resources. These resources will be protected by measures developed by the City in cooperation with the N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Since the completion of the 1979 Case Study, a significant component in the overall open space system has been developed by the City in cooperation with the NYS Department of Transportation, i.e., the Rensselaer Riverfront Park, and Rensselaer has been accepted into the regular phase of the National Flood Insurance Program.