

CITY OF FULTON

OSWEGO COUNTY, NEW YORK



OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

November, 2013

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Executive Summary

The City of Fulton has shown a commitment to the preservation of open space through the inclusion of goals and action items that address open space preservation in the City of Fulton Comprehensive Plan and the City of Fulton Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP). The City of Fulton is interested in continuing this effort as it completes Phase II of the Brownfield Opportunity Area Study. As a result, the *City of Fulton Open Space Strategy* has been created as a way of creating an inventory of the existing goals and strategies related to open space preservation outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and the LWRP. More specifically, the *City of Fulton Open Space Strategy* provides the City an opportunity to reinterpret the open space preservation goals and strategies outlined in previous plans as they particularly relate to the waterfront and open spaces in the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Study Area.

The *Open Space Plan* recommends improving the connectivity between the neighborhoods and the waterfront; developing a system of trails and greenways; enhancing a sustainable, high-quality parks and recreation system; and the redevelopment of vacant land along the waterfront.

Inventory of Open Spaces

As more communities are concerned with their quality of life appeal to current and potential residents, the availability and access to parks and open space becomes crucial. Parks provide public places for leisure, recreation, and social gathering. Open space, which includes parks, is considered any land which is not developed. Many communities have increased their effort to preserve open space as a way to add to the quality of life for their residents. Open space is valuable to municipalities as it provides the opportunity for trails, public access to waterfronts, and space for both passive and active recreational activities.

Parks

The City currently has thirteen (13) parks or open spaces located throughout its boundaries, seven (7) are located within the BOA Study Area. The BOA Study Area is divided into five neighborhoods, each which is located within a 10-minute walking distance (1,500 feet) to a public park or school owned recreational area. Van Buren Park is the largest neighborhood park, providing close proximity to the riverfront and an excellent opportunity to improve the resident's quality of life. Van Buren Park and Voorhees Park were identified as Key City Parks in the City of Fulton Comprehensive Plan.

The parks located within the BOA Study Area include:

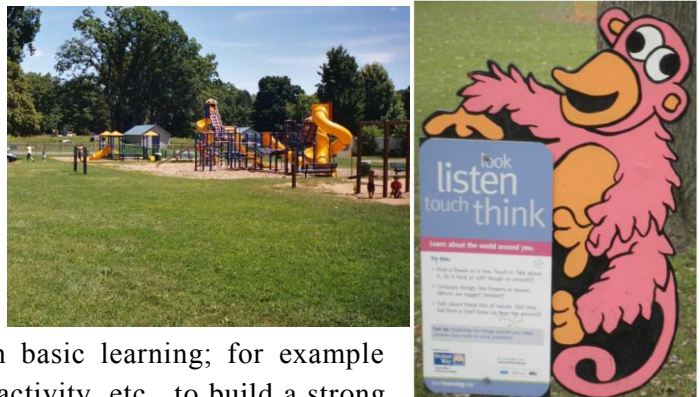
- Hulett Park
- Indian Point/Boat Launch
- Marina/Canal Park
- Oswego Falls Playground
- Van Buren Park
- Veteran's Park
- Voorhees Park



Hulett Park

Hulett Park is located on Division Street between South Sixth and South Seventh Streets in Neighborhood #1 of the BOA Study Area. The park features the ‘Born Learning Trail’ and the CV Abbott Memorial Playground.

The ‘Born Learning Trail’ is located in Hulett Park and includes a series of learning stations with activities that adults can play with young children. The purpose of the trail is to give children a chance to interact with adults in a fun atmosphere that promotes learning. The trail consists of 10 learning stations utilizing the surrounding environment to promote learning for youth five and under. The ‘Born Learning Trail’ helps teach children basic learning; for example counting, ABC’s, colors, animals, physical activity, etc., to build a strong foundation for education. Born Learning is a national public engagement campaign built on awareness, education and action to help parents, caregivers and communities create learning opportunities for young children. This trail is one of only three in New York State.



CV Abbott Memorial Playground is features age appropriate playground equipment, swings, bouncing animals, slides and more. Nearby benches, picnic tables and grills are available for families to use. Also public restrooms are located on site.

Indian Point/Boat Launch

Indian Point Boat Launch is located at the northeast edge of the City on the Oswego River. The Boat Launch is comprised of 1.5 acres consisting of a paved and landscaped parking area and boat launch. The canal is accessible for boating and fishing. There is a possibility that a snack bar or similar amenity be constructed on the site where an old traffic dam is located.

Marina/Canal Park

Marina/Canal Park is a one acre boat dock and event pavilion located at the City Marina, the creation of which was fully funded under the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development’s Canal Corridor Initiative.

Oswego Falls Playground

Oswego Falls Playground consists of 4.8 acres of parkland located along the Oswego River. Although a high earthen berm obstructs the view of the waterfront, the berm provides access to the water and is often used as an informal pedestrian path along the waterfront. The park includes a baseball field, a basketball court and children's play area consisting of swings and some



playground equipment.

Van Buren Park

Van Buren Park consists of 18 acres and provides an excellent opportunity for the City to improve the local quality of life through revitalization of the park system. Existing on an old landfill, the park had been listed on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's list of hazardous waste sites. The park has, however, recently been removed from this list despite reoccurring problems from a deteriorating creek-side retaining wall and resurfacing of garbage as layers of topsoil settle. The City of Fulton Comprehensive Plan recommends seeking Federal and State funds to address these issues. In the meantime, the City has developed a plan for the park that includes a skateboard park, a bicycle park and the creation of trails. These amenities would be additions to the existing park amenities which include soccer fields, tennis and volleyball courts, children's play area, and picnic areas.

Veteran's Park

Veteran's Park consists of 0.6 acres of open space. It is located along the Oswego River.

Voorhees Park

Voorhees Park is the oldest public park in the City of Fulton. A vision has been created for the park, including the construction of a bandstand/gazebo, historic benches, a brick walkway and the restoration of a horseshoe tree pattern that originally framed the park.

Trails

With Lake Neatahwanta and the Oswego River, the City of Fulton has abundant opportunities for waterfront access. The City of Fulton is planning on offering access through the creation of a trail network along the Oswego River.

Future Bridge-to-Bridge Path

The Bridge-to-Bridge Path refers to a 1 ½ mile pedestrian loop that will be created along the waterfront in Fulton. The path will link the Broadway Bridge, West First Street, the Oneida Street Bridge and the eastern shore of the Oswego River. The Pathfinder Trail, part of the Bridge-to-Bridge project, has been half-way completed. The Pathfinder Trail runs from the north City line, along the Oswego River to the 9th Street Bridge.

Future Canal Towpath Trail

The Towpath trail will be approximately 3.5 miles long, and will run along the Oswego River. The path will extend from Stop 28 to Indian Point Landing on the eastern side, and from the

Oneida and Broadway Bridges on the western side. The inclusion of pedestrian friendly lighting, signs and benches will make the trail easily accessible and useable for pedestrians.

Previous Open Space Goals & Strategies

The City of Fulton has shown a commitment to the preservation of open space through the inclusion of goals and action items that address open space preservation in the 2003 City of Fulton Comprehensive Plan and the City of Fulton 1998 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP).

Summary of the City of Fulton Comprehensive Plan Open Space Preservation Strategies

In 2003, the City of Fulton prepared a new Comprehensive Plan that was intended to build upon one of the City's biggest assets, its neighborhoods. The Plan's vision was to restore Fulton as a complete community in the regional economy through establishing several goals and recommendations for policy changes and important revitalization projects. The policies identified include advancing neighborhood stability, promoting economic vitality, and improving the overall quality of life for residents.

There were several goals and strategies from the Plan that specifically address the preservation of open space. The goals address preservation of open space, focusing on beautifying and greening the City, the development of active and passive recreational resources, particularly along the waterfront, and the creation of green transportation options throughout the City.

Action: Develop Strategy for Vacant Lots

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of informal open spaces and recommends that the preservation of these spaces, with particular purposes in mind, can have a positive effect on the appearance of the City. The Comprehensive Plan suggests the transfer of vacant lots in the neighborhoods to adjoining property owners. Alternatively these properties, particularly those along the waterfront, could be purchased by the City or the County and saved in a land bank. Through this method, the City or County may purchase and hold land that is vacant or underutilized before its value increases or is difficult to acquire due to development pressures. In addition, the City should work with property owners to establish a cost share street tree program to enhance vacant and underutilized open spaces within the City. Typically the cost share is 50/50 but the City could provide a greater share to increase participation and incentive.

Action: Plan New & Protect Existing Trees

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of trees throughout a City environment, particularly noting that trees cool the environment, provide visual appeal, clean the air, absorb rain run-off, and enhance residential property values as they improve street appearance. To increase the presence of trees throughout the City, the Comprehensive Plan suggests the creation of a Tree

Board dedicated to the issue of tree removal and plantings, the establishment of criteria for tree removal, the creation of park areas and waterways, and the creation of planting schemes for major thoroughfares.

Action: Restore and/or Improve Key City Parks

The Comprehensive Plan identifies Van Buren Park and Voorhees Park as “Key City Parks” within the City of Fulton, the future of which have been addressed in prior planning efforts. As a result, the Comprehensive Plan suggests the City of Fulton continue its effort to address the Van Buren Park/Waterhouse Revitalization Program and officially adopt the restoration/improvement plan for Voorhees Park.

Action: Update Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Parks and Recreation Master Plans present communities with the opportunity to create a comprehensive vision for open space located within that community. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes this opportunity and suggests the City of Fulton update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, last addressed in 1993.

Action: Develop an Integrated Waterfront Trail

The Comprehensive Plan notes the benefits of pedestrian trails in connecting communities, promoting energy conservation and pollution reduction by providing alternate methods of travel. The Comprehensive Plan suggests the City continue to build upon the present effort to create a pedestrian trail between the Broadway and Oneida Street Bridges as part of the Bridge-to-Bridge Project while also enhancing the towpath along the waterfront area through infrastructure and signage improvements. The Comprehensive Plan also encourages the extension of the trail on a regional and local level, expanding the trail to provide more opportunities for pedestrian travel within the region and community. The City has completed the Bridge-to-Bridge Plan and is currently working on expanding the trail within the City.

Action: Invest in a Citywide Bike & Pedestrian Network

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of creating connections within communities and the role that pedestrian and bike paths can play in creating these connections. Alongside the creation of the waterfront trails, the Comprehensive Plan recommends enhancing the pedestrian experience throughout the City. Actions include the regular repair of sidewalks (including the creation of a sidewalk replacement plan), the placement of benches in shady areas, directional signage, and pedestrian scaled lighting on pedestrian corridors, including those located within neighborhoods.

Action: Further Develop the Waterfront

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the Oswego River and Lake Neatahwanta are major assets within the City of Fulton and both serve as popular public gathering areas. Infrastructure enhancements over the past five years have helped enhance these public spaces. In order to encourage the creation of more public spaces along the waterfront, the Comprehensive Plan suggests that City: rezone the land opposite of Bullhead Point for mixed-use residential and commercial development and create a neighborhood plan to support the development; continue to pursue and encourage economic development opportunities along the Lake; acquire private land along the eastern shore of the Lake.

Summary of the City of Fulton LWRP Open Space Preservation Strategies

The City of Fulton completed an LWRP in 1998, which established a set of policies for how the Oswego River/Canal waterfront should be developed in the future. The plan concentrated on several community goals, including development and land uses that are beneficial uses of the coastal location; maintaining and enhancing natural areas, recreation areas, and open space areas; minimizing potentially adverse land uses, environmental and economic impacts that would result from proposed development; and protecting stable residential areas.

The LWRP was divided into six (6) sub-areas: Lake Sub-Area, Bridge-Bridge Sub-Area, Nestle Sub-Area, Phillips Sub-Area, and South End Sub-Area. Primary attention was given to uses immediately adjacent to the water. Within these Sub-Areas of the LWRP, there are several of the proposed brownfield sites for the BOA Nomination Study. Thus the recommendations of the Nomination Study should also be sensitive towards the policies established through the LWRP. Some of these policies include but are not limited to fostering smart patterns of growth that preserve community character and open space; providing public access to the waterfront; and minimizing environmental degradation in the waterfront area from solid waste and hazardous substances.

The following policies are highlighted as they specifically address the preservation of open space within the City and along the waterfront:

Policy 1.3: Preserve Open Space Along Waterfront

The LWRP recognizes the importance of public open space along the waterfront as a way of preserving the wildlife and protecting the water as a resource for City residents. Policy 1.3 encourages all new development be respectful of existing open space and the natural environment.

Policy 11.2: Provision of Visual Access

The LWRP recognizes that visual access to the Oswego River is limited. As a result, the LWRP supports the City's efforts to protect the existing viewsheds, create new visual connections, and promote appropriate mixed use development.

The LWRP also encourages the City to continue in its effort to:

- Encourage pedestrian activity along the waterfront through the completion of the waterfront trail loop that is part of the Bridge-to-Bridge Project;
 - Continue to improve existing parks, specifically mentioning Van Buren Park, Foster Park and the Oswego Falls Playground; and
 - Create connections between existing and future pedestrian paths throughout the City to create a pedestrian network.
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BOA Open Space Goals & Strategies

Historically, waterfronts have provided a working gateway into many American communities. For those lucky enough to be situated along rivers, lakes, and national harbors, small towns and villages with waterfronts were easily accessed by explorers, travelers, and eventually industry. The working waterfront of past years was the heart of the industrial and fishing communities in a small town. As a result, the commercial centers of these towns developed next to the waterfronts as well. Today, the downtown areas in small towns typically can be found within a few blocks of the waterfront.



Watkins Glen, New York.

Source: <http://www.watkinsglenyachtclub.com>

In order to help see the City of Fulton riverfront in the context of trends in waterfront development, best practices used in similar communities, redevelopment possibilities and management for implementation were identified. This section discusses the critical factors facing smaller communities in their efforts to revitalize their downtown waterfronts and nearby shopping districts. It is primarily based upon research and practical waterfront planning projects in New England, Michigan, the Canadian Maritimes, Upstate New York, Northern Ireland, Germany and Portugal. These best practices come from ports as large as Boston, to smaller harbors such as Westport, Gloucester and New Bedford (Massachusetts) to tiny waterfronts such as Menemsha (Martha's Vineyard) and Stonington (Connecticut). They have also involved industrial ports (Bridgeport, Connecticut), recreational ports (Nantucket), river ports (Port Chester, New York) and regional plans for waterfronts (Narragansett West Bay, Rhode Island). These key principles are presented in two sections. The first addresses some basic principles of riverfront development and management, how similar smaller communities have worked to revitalize their downtown waterfronts and second how they might impact the City of Fulton.

Key Principles in Waterfront Planning & Management

- 1. Environmental policies and technological changes typically have transformative impacts on working waterfronts: These policies and changes will have an impact on the economic health of downtown waterfronts.**

One must respect the environmental movement along with its stringent regulations. If environmental issues are handled in a “state-of-the-art” fashion, there will be reinvestment in the downtown. While more and more riverfronts are becoming more cognizant of environmental issues, there is still extensive work that is required. Moreover, great care must be taken to insure that sewer and/or combined sewer/storm water outflows are treated. Too frequently we have observed conditions where the lack of treatment has created less than optimally treated conditions. The environmental movement has also raised the



Queens, New York.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

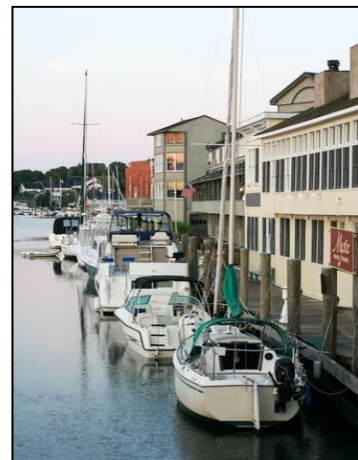
consciousness of the public concerning the dredging of harbors and riverfronts. On one side, the depth of a riverfront substantially dictates the size and type of vessel that can be welcomed. Thus, there is little mystery concerning why so many communities will endeavor to create deeper and deeper channels. On the other side, there are environmentalists who, justifiably, are concerned about the impact of this dredging on flora, fauna. This conflict is difficult to resolve and requires extensive work on the part of all parties.

Implications for Fulton

Fulton needs to be particularly sensitive to environmental issues as it plans for the riverfront and downtown areas.

2. Successful downtown waterfronts typically build on their historic and cultural assets.

Many riverfront communities are rich in history and culture. Many have historic forts and structures right on the waterfront. Lighthouses, maritime museums and trading ports all add to the charm and attraction of the harbor or riverfront. These historic and cultural structures draw tourists and help with the educational aspects of riverfronts as well. Such is the case today in Boston where, after years of having its downtown waterfront inaccessible, one can walk along the harbor’s edge from its Fort Point Channel in the south to its famed North End wharfs in the north. The maintenance and management of these elements are important to riverfront planning and marketing. In smaller ports, they are too frequently ignored. In Port Chester, New York, for example, shoppers walking along its major retail street scarcely realize that



Mystic Harbor, Connecticut.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

its waterfront is less than 300' away. Indeed, harbors or riverfronts with long histories such as Point Judith, Rhode Island, and Stonington, Connecticut, make it extremely difficult for the pedestrian to observe and participate in the waterfront experience. What is most distressing is that gaining access to these historic and cultural facilities is not, typically, a costly endeavor. With careful planning, they can be enjoyed by downtown business owners, workers, residents, and tourists.

Implications for Fulton

The Oswego River is historically and culturally significant. But there needs to be more: Fulton should explore building a brand to capture other activities on or near the water. Concerning tourism facilities, these facilities will be more beneficial if they are clearly tied to other activities including restaurants, conference facilities, and even retail activities. They are rarely effective when they are free-standing.



Alaska.

Source: Mullin Associates

3. Riverfronts should be integrated inland as extensively as possible.

The day-lighting (the opening up of these water bodies for public viewing) of channels, canals, rivers and streams can add value to communities and, perhaps more importantly, can integrate the riverfront more fully into the fabric of the community. Nowhere can this be more vividly noted than in the integration of the Ipswich River into an existing downtown fabric in Peabody, Massachusetts. This river had been long forgotten: It was simply a partially covered, small stream that flowed behind the downtown shops and institutions. Approximately five years ago, the city cleaned the river and created walkways along its banks. Today, several buildings have re-oriented their entrances to focus on both the riverside and the City's Main Street. It is following the example of the nearby town of Ipswich which has long integrated the river into its downtown: Many shops have openings on both river and land sides. Similar plans for bringing the Thames River into the fabric of downtown Middleton, Connecticut are now being implemented.



Peabody, Massachusetts.

Source: Mullin Associates

Implications for Fulton

Significant planning and design work is required to integrate the riverfront with Downtown. In fact, one is hard pressed to even know that the riverfront exists when traveling on NYS Route 481 through Fulton. Opportunity to daylight the canal and create visual connections to the river are all in order. Promote pop-up markets and community based activities along the riverfront. Fulton should explore a wide range of uses including linear parks and mixed developments.

4. Riverfronts must plan for a 16-hour day.

Nothing represents a missed opportunity such as a tour boat full of affluent tourists arriving on a Sunday when the shops are closed. Riverfront planners can learn a lesson from airport planners who insure that shop operations coincide with the arrival and departure of commercial aircraft. There should be recognition of the need to plan for multiple publics. The downtown areas adjacent to riverfronts are likely to attract different types of people all through the day. For example, from 5:00 AM to 8:00 AM, the typical waterfront may be full of fishermen, repairmen and women and other laborers. From 8:00 to 9:00, office workers will be on the street. From 9:00 to 12:00, it will be tourists who would be followed by the lunch crowd. From 2:00 to 5:00, tourists again will be commonplace along with school kids and shoppers. At five, the “night crowd” begins and continues until after midnight. While no two waterfronts will have the same mix at the same time, the fact remains that they all will have to cater to mixed publics: Workers, boat owners, business people, tourists, families, night-lifers and the like all have different requirements that need to be met.



Copenhagen, Denmark.

Source: <http://www.gebl.org/planning/lakefront>

Implications for Fulton

This is another area where careful planning can make a big difference. It is not readily noticeable that the waterfront caters to a 16-hour day.

Can one come early in the morning to buy a cup of coffee and read the newspaper at a waterside café? Is there place for evening strolls? Does one feel safe after dark? It's critical that the area should be oriented to an active life style. The movement of boats, the wind moving flags, the sound of water splashing, and the play of sun and moon set the stage. Building on this via well planned riverwalks, vendor facilities, and restaurants will add value. Planning should also consider some facility, such as a seating area at the end of the river to draw people to its very edge. These are all issues that need to be addressed.

5. Waterfronts must be planned for multi-use activities.

These include fishing, water-dependent industrial, recreational boating, educational and tourist activities. Furthermore, these uses are not mutually exclusive of each other. A working waterfront can co-exist with a recreational riverfront if it is well planned and managed. In fact mixed uses might actually complement each other. Such is the case in Portland, Maine where the authorities, using municipal zoning powers, have limited recreational boating to certain places where there is limited threat to the fishing industry.



Toronto, Canada.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

There is a place and need for the working riverfront. Not only does it provide jobs and tax base for the community, it serves a locational niche for water-related industries and supporting businesses. Furthermore, a safe, well maintained and managed section of the working riverfronts can actually be a draw for tourists curious to learn and observe the working of various industries. Such facilities need not be large. They can consist of fuel dispensing businesses, waste pumping stations, boat repair companies and even simple coffee shops. We know, in virtually all of our experiences, that tourists are intrigued about how riverfronts actually work.

Museums, aquariums and teaching programs would certainly be a draw for tourists and residents alike. As well, teaching and research programs would be highly beneficial to the river related industries. A research laboratory for a specialized trade could make the riverfront a special destination for professional groups as well as students. The federally funded "Sea Grant Program" provides resources for universities to become involved in such activities. New Bedford is staking a large part of its commercial future on the tourism/education components through its proposal to create an aquarium/hotel/conference center along its waterfront. Chatanooga's highly successful waterfront revitalization centers upon an aquarium that serves as both a tourist attraction and education center. Providence's Johnson and Wales Culinary College is now in the process of creating a campus at the very edge of the city's riverfront.

Implications for Fulton

Fulton can boast about mixed uses at its river! While these uses co-exist, careful thought on complimentary and long-term viability should be addressed. Careful buffering of the industrial uses is in order. The riverfront area has a great potential for more active use for both tourists and local residents alike. While the passive recreational uses are to be commended, they do little to add to the color and vitality of the area.

6. Tourism can provide a significant economic boost to older waterfront areas.

Visitors tend to support ancillary activities such as specialized shops, restaurants and bars, and even hotels and conference facilities. As well, other related activities and amenities such as marinas, boardwalks, parks, bandstands, swimming, and fishing activities can be used by local residents. They also are drawn to “great events” whether parades of boats, fishing derbies, racing activities or sport matches. If the riverfront is to serve as a tourist attraction, it is important to keep in mind services and amenities that are necessary for tourists. Information kiosks, telephone booths, public restrooms, benches, and trash receptacles need to be provided and be well marked.



Watkins Glen, New York

Source: Laberge Group.

It is also essential to remember that the tourism experience is intended to be unique and special. For this reason, ports that create a special atmosphere can gain an advantage. Historic preservation, architectural guidelines, period street lighting, and/or different street patterns (e.g. cobblestones) can all add flavor to the experience.

Finally, there is the issue of maintenance. It is all well and good to create a wonderful design scheme and/or to provide amenities. It is a disservice, however, if these features and facilities are not well maintained: Every implementation scheme must include a long term maintenance scheme.

Implications for Fulton

If Fulton wants to build on its tourist industry and broaden the shoulders of the tourist season, they must understand the nature of tourists that visit the area. What do they like to do? What do they spend their money? Who are they and from where do they come. There is much that can be done to provide a better tourist friendly environment. These can range from enhanced tourist activities, to essential amenities to basic way finding signage. Linkages between the waterfront, festivals, parades, fishing derbies, antique markets, gourmet food options, trails and treks, and bike paths are all activities that would need coordination and promotion to attract more tourists.

7. The recreation potential of riverfronts has dramatic potential in the coming decade.

Riverfronts are considered to be wonderful recreational amenities for communities. The potentials for boardwalks, marinas and swimming areas are certainly considered to be assets for both the local residents and tourists alike. A recreational riverfront also acts as a catalyst for other tourist related activities such as specialty shops, restaurants, hotels, marinas/boat rentals and aquariums. The placing of these activities in ports of transition can be costly, time consuming and risky.

However, even in these areas, small city after city is endeavoring to combine these activities within the port. Such has been the case, for example, in Newburyport, Massachusetts, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Wickford, Rhode Island and Port Jefferson, New York. In all of these instances, there is no one feature that stands out: It is the balanced combination of activities that has led to success.



Cleveland, Ohio

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

Implications for Fulton

Once again, the riverfront presents a great opportunity for increased recreational activity on the river itself. Canal boats, local festivals, river competitions, and any other activities, could be organized and promoted by local tourism organizations and chambers of commerce. The notion of combining these activities with other regional events appears to have significant merit. In all cases, Fulton must look at these activities with a regional focus, for the typical tourist family of four will look for multiple activities if it is to stay in the area.

8. Careful zoning, historic preservation, and architectural and site planning regulations can add great value to downtown waterfronts.

Zoning regulations, architecture and design controls and site planning regulations are all important to ensure that historical, cultural and aesthetic attributes as well as the optimal juxtaposition of uses at the riverfront are maintained.

Design, color, lighting and the festive nature of a place are definite draws. These elements enhance the feeling of security, vitality and bustle. In terms of design, there is a strong case for maintaining a sense of harmony, scale and “cultural feel” with the historic



Baltimore, Maryland – Public & Private Waterfront Space.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

waterfront. While one should not get carried away and recreate a stage setting (“ye olde port”), it is important to respect the evolutionary character of the riverfront. Part of this will relate to the use of color. Riverfronts tend to have backdrops of dark colors on the land side and shades of blue and white on the seaside. It is the land side that typically needs to be brightened. While color inevitably adds to a positive aesthetic environment it also contributes, along with lightening, to the creation of a strong sense of security. The walking public must feel totally safe when walking through the port. The key word is “feel.” If there are psychological feelings of distress then,

regardless of fact, the chances of public use of this space will decline. One of the most important elements of urban revitalization is a total sense of safety and security. Moreover, the transitional areas between riverfronts and downtown are equally problematic.

Concerning festivals, they attract people: People like to see and be seen. These events ranging from the “taste of downtown” and “chowdah” fests to the blessing of the fleet, the “tall ships” regatta and yacht races can add value. These events must be coordinated with the downtown merchants. We take this last point quite seriously: Too often, festivals result in a loss of revenue or of business opportunities during peak periods. Festival and event planners must work diligently to help merchants to maintain and expand their customer bases during these activities.

The downtown environment at the street level can play a significant role in the successful revitalization of a downtown. Traditional streetscape programs that incorporate overall signage programs, street furniture and unique paving patterns can take on a water characteristic in downtowns with active waterfront communities. Bringing aspects of the water such as color, symbols, and waves can all serve as a reminder to shoppers and visitors that the water and its activities lay just beyond the edge of the downtown. These aspects of the water can be incorporated in the signs used to identify the downtown district, on signs for individual businesses, in the paving patterns of bricks used in parks and along the sidewalks.

Urban design controls must call for a “stepping down” in the height of buildings. Too frequently, the views of riverfronts are blocked by high-rise buildings. We urge communities to maintain a low-rise profile along the waterfront and, if necessary, to increase the height as one moves inland. Waterfronts belong to the public. And yet, too often access is denied by private interests or the practical everyday work that takes place. It is important, as a planning principle, that public access be emphasized. We urge walking/biking paths be developed as close as possible to the water. We recognize and respect private property rights. We also consider the waterfront as a people’s place: Integrating these two potentially conflicting issues will be no easy task.



“Stepping Down” of building heights.

Source: Mullin Associates

Implications for Fulton

A careful assessment of the zoning regulations and design standards around the riverfront is in order. For example, zoning can and should allow water dependent or water related activities close to the waterfront. Parks, public spaces boardwalks, and value added uses such as riverfront dining should be encouraged. Better signage and visual linkages

between the downtown area and the riverfront would also be a welcome design element. The degree to which they are applied is dependent upon the values of the citizens of Fulton. We recognize that many controls add costs to development. We also recognize that there is a difference between safety and creating walls around waterfront activities: Does one have to place chain link fencing to protect visitors from harm or can well designed protective devices provide the same sense of security? In all uses, residents and visitors alike, there is a need to insure that the riverfront reflects the fact that it is putting Fulton's best face forward. It is the most powerful image that they will take with them. Thus, we urge that the community carefully articulate its long term vision in a manner that can be translated into the rules, regulations and guiding principles that will enhance this special place for decades to come.

9. A physical, social and psychological connectedness must be nurtured or developed between downtown and the waterfront.

In order for a community to begin capitalizing upon its proximity to a waterfront it must almost literally “turn around” and begin facing the water once again. Downtown districts have typically developed next to the water’s edge with streets radiating out from the port or dock area. Buildings have built up along these streets with their backs to the water. From the water’s edge itself, the downtown and community can appear almost closed off to travelers. From the street level of the downtown area, the water may not even be readily visible. Finding a way to re-connect with the water will be essential for any small town that wants to revitalize its downtown through waterfront development.

In order to maximize the potential of the riverfront, there needs to be a well-defined connection between the riverfront and the downtown area. As tourist riverfronts tend to be catalysts for growth in tourism related activities, the community as a whole can benefit through supporting businesses. Downtown stores, hotels and restaurants can be an integral part of the tourist experience. Wide roads or large paved parking areas that disconnect the rest of the community from the waterfront will be less likely to attract tourists inward from the riverfront. The issue of wide roads is particularly problematic. Throughout the 1950’s and 1960’s a period of great highway building, highway



Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Source: <http://activerain.com/blog/view/137467/portsmouth-nh-summer-seacoast-scene-in-july>

engineers typically chose flat areas that were less than vibrant as sites for their roads. Too frequently, they are located along the water's edge.

When direct connections are not possible due to the historic layout of the riverfront and the community, good signage and design elements (such as period streetlights or walkways and bridges) could offer direction and draw people from one area to another. This “connectedness” can be clearly noted throughout New Bedford’s Historic Whaling District and Portsmouth’s Strawberry Banke. In fact, the scale of these cities is such that there is little separation between the ports and the historic parts of downtown. Furthermore, there are constant efforts to expand the connections to other surrounding areas: One does not feel that the port and downtown are two distinct areas.

There is also a need to define the nature of the local market. Allowed uses at the riverfront could be of concern to downtown businesses. This would certainly depend on the physical layout of the riverfront in relationship to downtown. When the downtown area or retail business center is adjacent to the riverfront, there is little distinction between riverfront and downtown. However, when the riverfront is separated from the downtown there is the potential for competition. This must be carefully watched.



Providence, Rhode Island.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

Implications for Fulton

Fulton will have to work extensively with state, regional and local transportation facilities to ensure that its road system (NYS Route 481) does not become a barrier. Through traffic calming, increased pedestrian-crossings, lighting, signage and pavement design, it can help to mitigate the long term negative impacts of auto and truck movement through the area.

10. Downtown waterfronts benefit significantly from open spaces such as parks, plazas and trails: They add economic value.

There are a wide range of options from bike and pedestrian trails to river and boardwalks to plazas, docks, piers and market places. The scale and size of a waterfront open space project will be determined by many factors including available funding and the needs of the community. Before selecting a specific tool, a community should assess the specific needs of their downtown and identify the unique characteristics of their waterfront and downtown district. Does the downtown need a better mix of businesses, or do the buildings themselves need rehabilitated? Do

people still use the downtown as a place for their primary shopping needs, or is it an area that is struggling to compete with a strip commercial center on the edge of town? Does the community want to promote a downtown that is used daily by its citizens, or is it a district that attracts tourists by providing specialized goods and services?

Finding answers to these and other questions can help determine the type of downtown and waterfront area desired by the citizens of a community. This information then can be coupled with the



Chicago, Illinois.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

unique physical characteristics and natural beauty of the waterfront to select the best projects for the community.

Trails can be situated along a waters edge and extend into the downtown area and beyond. This type of systems links the water's edge, the shopping district, and nearby residential areas in a way that opens up the waterfront and downtown to children, parents, and tourists. We have noted them, for example, in Skinneatlis, New York, and Peabody and Ipswich, Massachusetts. The City of Portland, Michigan, a small town situated at the merging of the Looking Glass River with the Grand River in lower Michigan has created approximately 4 miles of river trails that



Rochester, New York.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

provide year round entertainment for all members of the family. These trails provide spaces for roller-skating, biking, walking, cross-country skiing, and take advantage of historical bridges crossing the two rivers. These paths wind along the river, through an existing city park at the water's edge, and pass through the downtown.

City parks provide a space near the water's edge that also allows a community to come together. These parks provide a reason for people to come down to the waterfront. While there, they are able to take advantage of nearby shopping and dining establishments. These city parks can provide outdoor spaces for recreational activities that involve water such as boat rides, or they can be an area for families to gather.

Port Clinton, Ohio, located on Lake Erie, has developed small city parks along the two streets running parallel to the main street of the downtown. These parks feature historic statues as well as a gazebo and gathering spaces for downtown shoppers and employees. Adjacent to the water, the community has situated sports athletic fields that draw kids during the day for informal sports and families during the evening for organized games during the summer months.

Boardwalks and river-walks provide citizens of the communities as well as tourists a way to interact directly with the water. These walkways put a person directly on the water's edge and give the water prominence in the community. Today, these walks provide access to docks used for recreational fishing and sporting as well as larger boats and yachts. For shoppers to a downtown district they can showcase the downtown as well as the area's history.

The town of Grand Haven, Michigan, has been particularly successful in using this tool to revitalize their downtown area. The main street through the downtown, Washington Street, radiates out from the water's edge. The street culminates in a plaza area that allows visitors to access the boardwalk. The 2 1/2 miles of boardwalk was funded through an investment of over \$30 million through grants and public funding. The boardwalk features access to shops, eateries, charter fishing boats, a miniature golf course, and scenic parks. As well, the boardwalk takes visitors past several prominent features of the downtown. Future plans will enable tourists to visit the Tri-Cities Historical Museum housed in the original railroad depot; the Waterfront Stadium, which seats 2,400 people and was built for viewing the "World's Largest Musical Fountain that plays nightly during the summer months and William Ferry Landing, a plaza area that provides a brass replica of the Grand River done to scale and imbedded in the cement walk area of the boardwalk.

Plazas can provide a focal point for the waterfront and downtown areas of a community as well as provide a place for festivals, recreational activities, and informal social gatherings. These plazas can function independent of a boardwalk area or as part of a greater scheme. The most important aspect of the plaza for the downtown is physical and visual access to the space. If visitors and shoppers to the community cannot easily access the waterfront, the downtown will not benefit as greatly.

Petoskey, Michigan is a small community that has gone to great lengths to develop a waterfront park area, Bayfront Park, that features the "Midway" promenade in addition to other smaller recreational uses. The Bayfront Park is physically accessible to the nearby downtown district known as the "Gaslight District" by means of a pedestrian



Petoskey Gaslight District, Michigan.

Source: http://www.expresspetoskey.com/image_03.jpg

tunnel passing under a busy thoroughfare. The Gaslight District is approximately a six-block area that is filled with small, independent shops that offer a unique shopping experience.

Petoskey is situated off Lake Michigan in the northern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan at the intersection of two busy highways. The annual tourists industry brings thousands of additional visitors to the town each year to visit the historic downtown district as well as the waterfront areas. One of these busy highways lies between the water's edge and the downtown district. To assist the tourists and citizens of Petoskey in accessing the waterfront a tunnel has been created that allow people to pass under Highway 31. From the water's edge the tunnel is clearly marked to show that the downtown lies just beyond view. From the downtown, the water is clearly visible from several vantage points and the path to the tunnel is marked as well. The waterfront plaza development, is a bright, colorful place that provides access to fishing, baseball fields, playground equipment, a museum, and gathering spaces. The area is used by young and old alike, pedestrian, bicyclers, and roller bladers.

While one can argue that these amenities are expensive, there is a significant amount of evidence that they encourage investment and reinvestment and add value to neighboring properties. Once the link is accomplished there is inevitably great community pride. This is particularly valid in areas that celebrate local culture.

Implications for Fulton

The Lock is a great asset that can be expanded and enhanced. Connecting the lock with "Bridge-to-Bridge" activities would add continuity and offer greater opportunity for enhanced activities. Open spaces complete with parks, trails, and recreation facilities will enhance Fulton's built environment. They provide settings that are unique and which typically draw shoppers, tourists, and recreationalists to the area. It is essential that both horizontal development (i.e.: parks and trails) be carefully tied to vertical, structural development.

11. Riverfronts must be comprehensively linked to key transportation systems and adopt traffic management policies.

Traffic management is necessary regardless of the use at the riverfront. This becomes more imperative if there are mixed uses. Adequate parking, well-defined walkways, (bike paths) and jogging trails need to be established. The need for managed circulation is a requirement not only for both the aesthetics and functionality of the riverfront but also for safety reasons. Once again, if it is not possible to entirely separate vehicle traffic from



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

pedestrians, strategies such as traffic calming or specific time limits for service vehicles would be beneficial.

Implications for Fulton

Fulton is already experiencing this with traffic passing through the City along NYS Route 481. Careful monitoring of these networks is in order. Traffic management is full of potential pitfalls as the need to have free flowing movement often interferes with pedestrian access. Moreover, the desires of merchants (i.e.: free parking) are often at odds with municipal officials who wish to recover costs (i.e.: meters). In all cases, there is need for extensive debate with stakeholders before implementation begins.

12. Make the waterfront an essential part of the downtown.

Downtowns in small towns throughout America are struggling to maintain viability and compete with suburban commercial centers. As communities seek to revitalize their downtowns, towns with waterfronts find themselves in a unique position to offer something special to citizens and visitors. Finding ways to make the waterfront an essential part of the downtown is a challenge to small communities, but also a great opportunity to build upon their unique culture and history. There are many examples of small towns that have each found a special way to meet the needs of their downtown by providing amenities at the water's edge. These waterfront developments have been successful in bringing more people of all ages to the community and to the downtown. They are special places.



Baltimore, Maryland.

Source: <http://www.gcbl.org/planning/lakefront>

Implications for Fulton

Fulton is fortunate to be on the water. It differentiates it from numerous small upstate communities, trying to enhance and regenerate their economic base. Fulton is starting from strength, has done an enormous amount of work, and is well poised to reach greater potential. The fact that both the downtown area and the waterfront are being studied at the same time through the BOA Program is testimony to good planning.

Conclusion

All aspects of the riverfront need attention. The working riverfront needs to be marketed toward water related industries and support services. The education aspects need to be marketed toward professional and trade associations as well as universities and other educational institutions and the recreational aspects need to be marketed and promoted toward residents and tourists alike. The riverfront, along with all its functions, and the community itself needs to market and promote itself as a tourist destination. Depending on the nature of activities, it could market itself to different target audiences such as family tourists, the young college/university students, business travelers, the sports minded tourists, seniors or people looking for a relaxing hide away. Above all, the marketing must be balanced. We know of no downtown waterfront success story that has narrowly defined its orientation: Balance leads to success. We also know of few successful downtowns that survive by orienting them to a short season (e.g. the summer months). It is very important that marketing specialists orient themselves to a multi-seasonal approach. This has worked quite well in the downtown riverfront areas of Martha's Vineyard (Edgartown, Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs) where the marketing specialists have successfully expanded the "shoulders of the season" from April to December: Each year more and more businesses are expanding the length of time that they are in operation. Similar approaches are being undertaken in the ski areas of Vermont.

In order to maximize the potentials for the riverfront, it is important to determine the use and character that the riverfront will serve. Riverfronts must be planned with the water as a unifying element. In fact, we urge riverfront communities to first emphasize water dependent and water related uses. Once these are satisfied then other uses could be considered. It is equally important to coordinate planning efforts. Management issues are crucial to the well being and success of the riverfront. Given its varied functions and clientele, public/private partnerships are in order. Fulton is already partnering with both public private and not for profit agencies and these partnerships can only be enhanced.

The following are some goals and objectives, once implemented, are intended to serve as the blueprint for the City of Fulton in achieving its vision for the future.

Goal 1: Improve the connectivity of the waterfront with the surrounding BOA Neighborhoods.

Objectives:

- Preserve, expand, and maintain river access, and neighborhood bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets and trails.
- Encourage pedestrian activity through the regular repair of sidewalks and adequate signage. Consider the creation of a sidewalk replacement plan.

- Enhance the pedestrian experience through the placement of benches and pedestrian-scale lighting along pedestrian corridors, including those within the neighborhoods.

Goal 2: Develop and maintain a comprehensive network of parks and open space in the BOA Study Area, linked by a complete system of trails and greenways.

Objectives:

- Promote the BOA Study Area as a bicycle, pedestrian and recreational waterborne transportation friendly place.
- Work regionally to link paths, trails and sidewalks with neighboring communities.
- Continue to support the Bridge-to-Bridge Trail and the Canal Towpath Trail.
- Consider expanding the paths on a regional level.
- Improve pedestrian amenities along the trails such as benches, pedestrian-scale lighting, banners, attractive pavement, planters, trees, and landscaped edges.
- Improve street conditions to improve pedestrian safety by ensuring the presence and safe condition of crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Consider introducing a winter sidewalk maintenance program to ensure pedestrian safety during the winter months.

Goal 3: Enhance and maintain a sustainable, high-quality parks and recreation system that reflects the needs of the BOA Study Area.

Objectives:

- Create a Tree Board or Committee dedicated to tree removal and plantings throughout the City.
- Increase tree plantings in park areas, along the waterway, and along major thoroughfares.
- Continue to seek funds to undertake the Van Buren Park/Waterhouse Creek Revitalization Project.
- Formally adopt and implement the restoration/improvement plan for Voorhees Park.
- Update the 1993 Parks and Recreation Master Plan to address the needs of the community.

Goal 4: Redevelop vacant sites along the BOA Study Area waterfront.

Objectives:

- Promote public and private community development/redevelopment partnerships that will encourage redevelopment along the BOA Study Area's waterfront.
- Develop program to transfer vacant lots, too small and isolated to consolidate for larger-scale development, to adjoining property owners.

- Establish a “land bank” of vacant or underutilized parcels along the waterfront. In anticipation of future development, the City or County may purchase and hold land that is vacant or underutilized before its value increases or is difficult to acquire due to development pressures.
- Consider rezoning the land opposite of the Bullhead Point for mixed-use residential and commercial development.
- Establish a cost share street tree program to enhance vacant and underutilized open spaces within the City.