

Town of Plattsburgh, New York

SMART GROWTH PLAN

FOR THE FORMER CLINTON COUNTY AIRPORT SITE:
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE



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PREPARED FOR



THE TOWN OF PLATTSBURGH

PREPARED BY



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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Plattsburgh has secured grant funding from the National Association of Realtors to develop a smart growth plan to help guide the redevelopment of the former Clinton County Airport. Behan Planning and Design with Regrowth Planning and Upstate GIS have been engaged by the town to assist in the preparation of the plan. This plan provides a future land use vision that identifies appropriate smart growth principles targeted toward the specific characteristics and community goals for the area, including land conservation opportunities along the Saranac River. As the county currently looks to secure subdivision plat approval for the property and project sponsors seek approval of individual site development plans, the preparation of this smart growth document is very timely. The goal of this plan is to guide the transformation of the existing area into a useful asset that will serve the economic needs of community members while also coordinating with adjacent transportation facilities and existing land uses and highlighting the nearby natural resources. In order to address these needs, the town invited local stakeholders to participate in the development of the plan and to discuss potential zoning and land use management recommendations.



*Figure 1 - Aerial view of former Clinton County Airport site.
Image by Google.*

Overview of Current State

The plan advisory group described the current state of the former Clinton County Airport property as fallow and vacant, but full of potential with its panoramic views and wildlife habitat. Both the site's proximity to the town center area and somewhat tucked away location as a previously developed site make it a shovel ready opportunity for a whole new development.

Future Vision for the Successful Re-Use of the Former Airport Property

As discussed with the project advisory group, this large property will be thoughtfully envisioned into a successful economic development project as an extension of the community's built environment. It will feature unique, mixed-use amenities and complete streets while protecting the town's natural resources, quality of life, and providing significant employment opportunities and tax revenue benefits. The vision includes:

- Guiding future land use and zoning actions compatible with current infrastructure plans.
- Providing a sense of place using placemaking principals to create enticing public spaces.
- Responding to natural resources including the Saranac River corridor and associated habitats.
- Fostering use of renewable resources and transportation alternatives.
- Supporting an economically successful development pattern that will serve the town for the long term.

SITE ANALYSIS

Behan Planning and Design, with ReGrowth Planning and Upstate GIS, conducted site analysis on the approximately 500 acres of land that is planned for redevelopment at the former Clinton County Airport. The site is couched within several unique natural resources, including the Saranac River corridor to the south and wetlands to the north, west, and southeast. Green infrastructure design concepts will help to accentuate these features in order to maintain the natural beauty and achieve functionality.

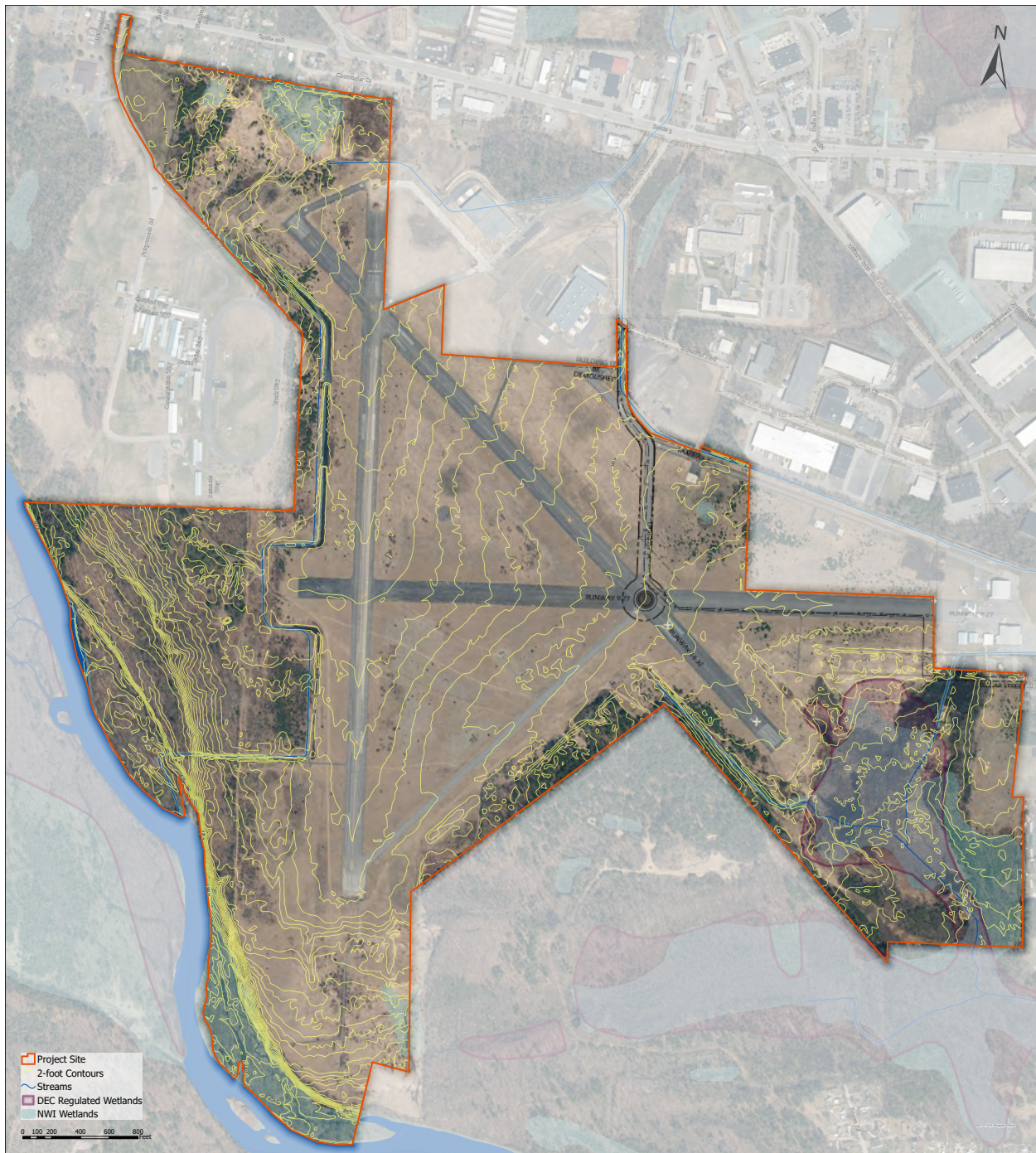


Figure 2 - Site Map of Former Clinton County Airport

SITE ANALYSIS

Topography

As a former airport, the site consists of previously disturbed, flat land that is well-suited for redevelopment and will provide a blank slate for future design plans, as seen in figure 2. Drainage tends to move to the south towards the surrounding wetlands and nearby Saranac River. Soil maps (see figure 3) show predominantly well-drained, somewhat excessively-drained, and excessively-drained soil in the central project area where two large storage facilities are planned. These conditions offer few constraints to overall development. Additionally, these soils will allow stormwater to be managed through infiltration techniques.

Well-drained soils along the west side of the project area include:

- Adams loamy sand, 3 to 8 percent slopes

Somewhat excessively-drained soils, taking up the majority of the central area:

- Udorthents, smoothed

Excessively-drained soils in the very center area as well as bands to the southwest and southeast ends:

- Adams loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes
- Fahey gravelly fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes, loamy substratum

Planning ahead with a comprehensive stormwater management plan for the property will be highly advantageous. Bioswales along streets will help to mitigate runoff and can direct surface flow to central, naturalized stormwater ponds, streams, and wetlands. The redevelopment design will be consistent with nearby properties of similar design on Area Development Drive and Industrial Boulevard. (Note: All mapping and conceptual plans are based on geographic information system and related data. While developed to a relative scale, these are presented for illustrative purposes only for the purpose of conducting land use discussion for the client and with representatives of the Town of Plattsburgh.)

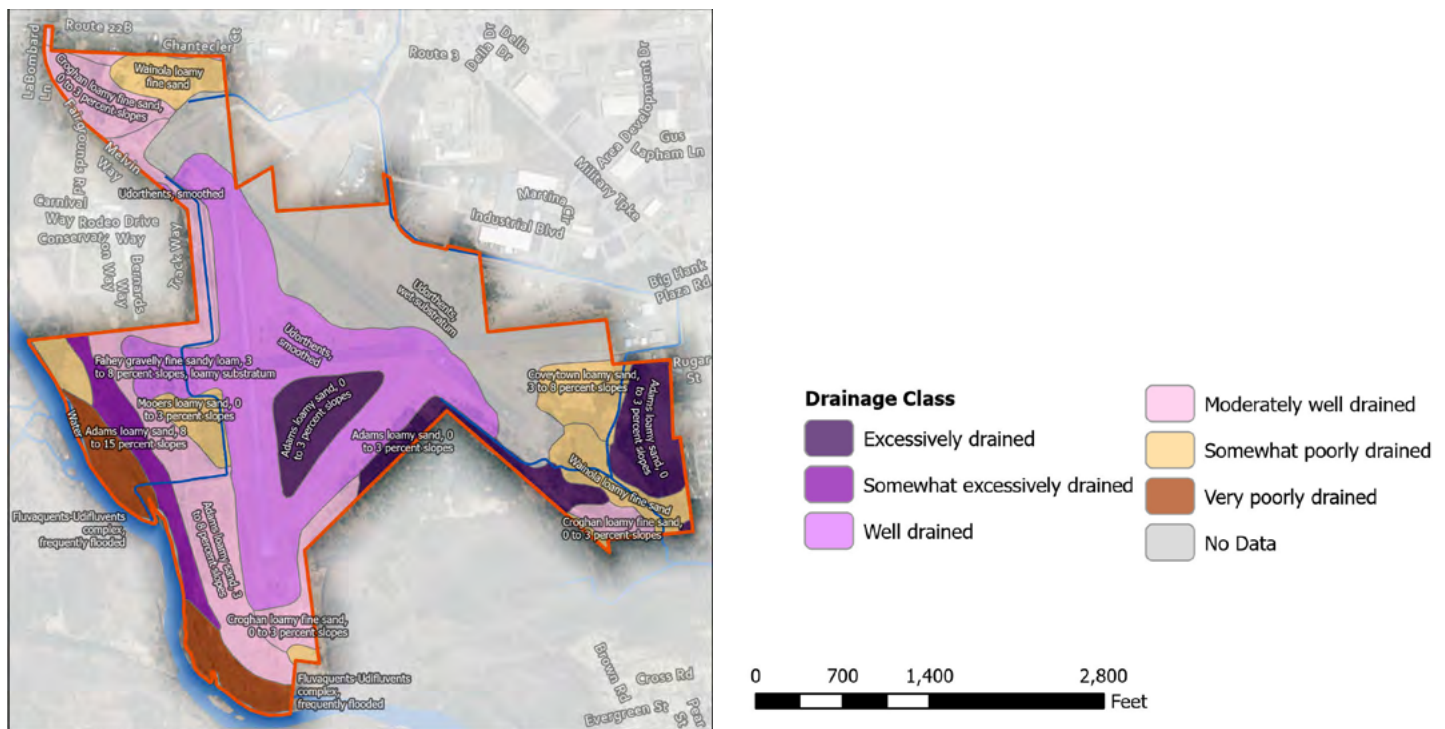


Figure 3 - Soils Map

SITE ANALYSIS

Wetlands to the north, west and southeast of the site (see figure 4) are expected to remain undisturbed – or, if activities prove unavoidable, to minimize disruption to wetlands. Permits are likely required by New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) if disturbance to southeastern wetland occurs by way of the proposed access road to Military Turnpike. It might be possible to mitigate this activity with the creation of replacement wetland areas, perhaps as part of a comprehensive stormwater management system.

Figure 4 - Wetlands Map, south end of site

The site is accessed primarily through NYS Route 3 to the north, a major state highway, that connects to Industrial Boulevard and Military Turnpike. The site is also accessible from Rugar Street to the east and a potential access point near Fairground Road and NYS Route 22B to the west.

SITE ANALYSIS

Current Land Use & Zoning

Operations at the Clinton County Airport ceased in the early 2000s and the current land use is still shown as public services, see figure 5.

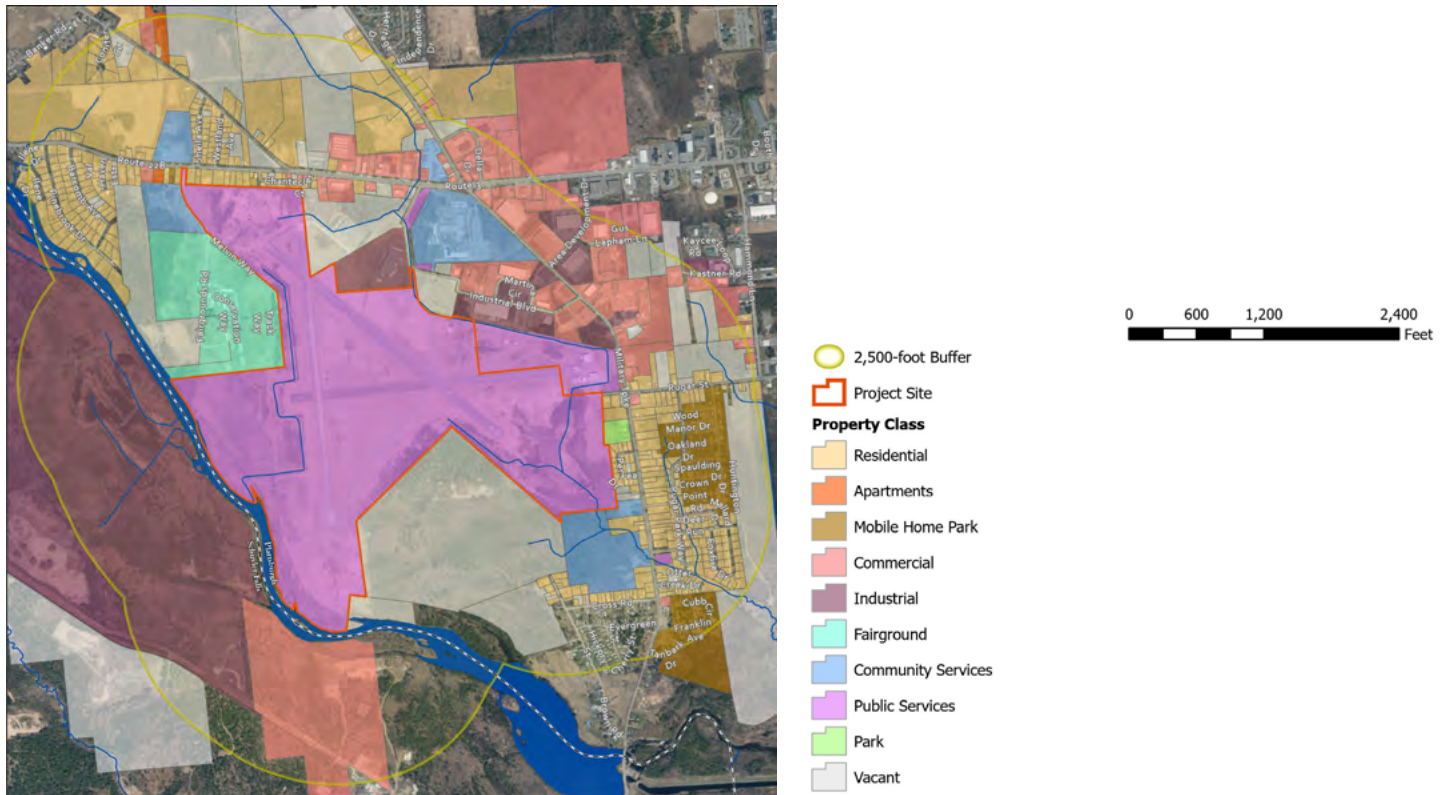
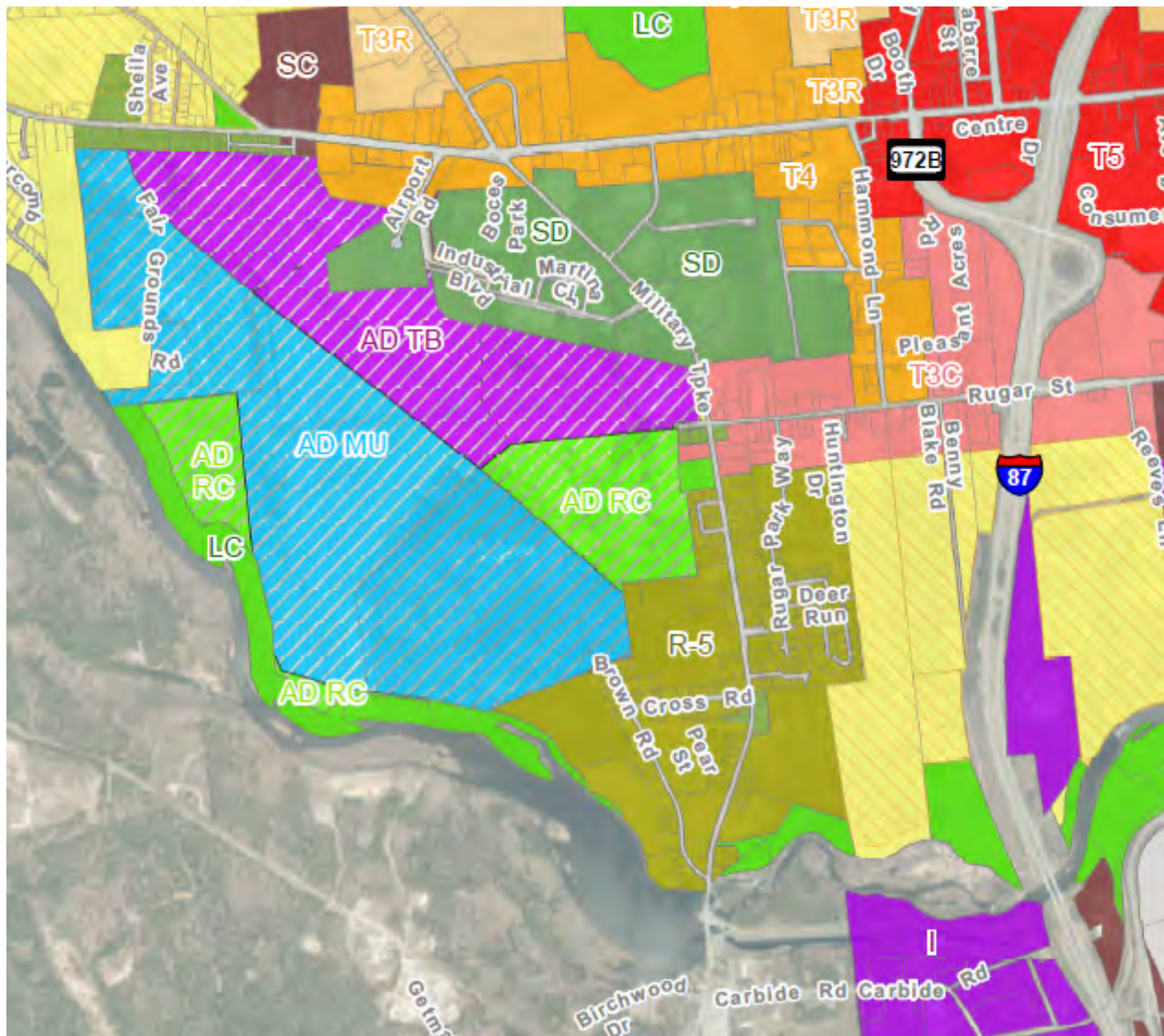


Figure 5 - Site Land Use Map

Zoning for the site area previously included commercial business, technology, and mixed-use zoning with some land conservation along the Saranac River. The official Town of Plattsburgh Zoning Map, effective on June 17, 2021, shows the former Clinton County Airport site broken up into a few different development zones, see figure 6. Roughly half the site is zoned Airport Development District – Mixed-Use Sub-District (AD-MU), running from the northwest corner down to the southwest corner in a triangular shape. Most of the north side of the site is zoned Airport Development District – Technology/Business Sub-District (AD-IND) and the remainder is zoned Airport Development District – Riverfront Conservation Sub-District (AD-RC). It will be important to consider the extent to which any modification to the zoning code may be advantageous considering the results of this smart growth planning process.

SITE ANALYSIS



Zoning (06/11)

	A1		R-4
	A2		R-5
	AD MU		MDR
	AD RC		C
	AD TB		SC
	I		SD
	IP		T3C
	NC		T3R
	PDD		T4
	R-1		T5
	R-2		LC/OS
	R-3		Wellhead Protection Overlay
			PDD Overlay

Figure 6 - Town of Plattsburgh Zoning Map, cropped to site area

SMART GROWTH PLAN

Initial Design Concepts

Early design concepts incorporate areas for renewable forms of energy, housing along nearby green space, and central parking, as seen in Figure 7 below.

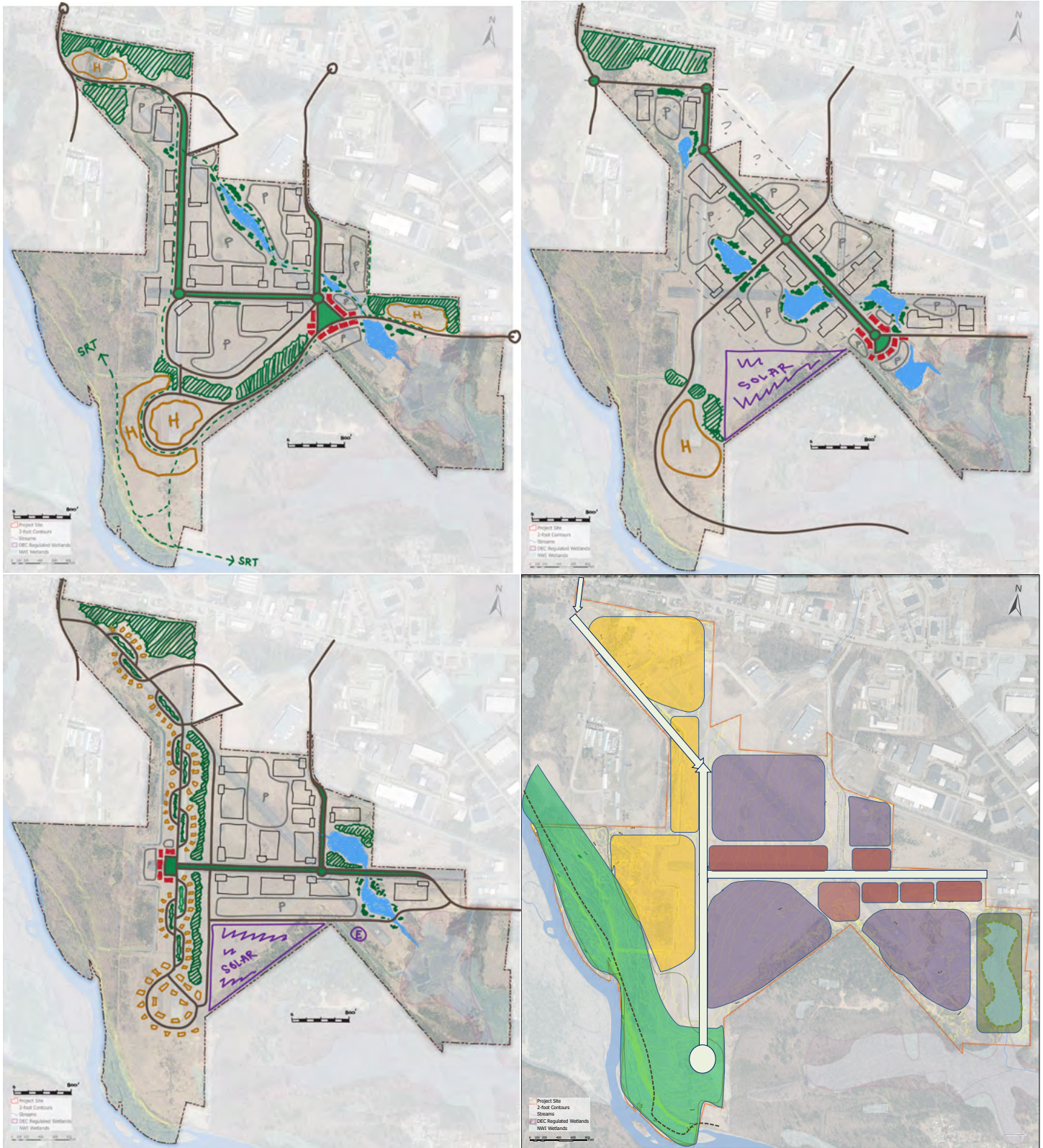


Figure 7 - Initial Concept Plans

SMART GROWTH PLAN

Smart Growth Concepts

The plan incorporates the following:

- Designing **accessible and complete streets that will help create a unique sense of place** for this area of the Town.
- Providing **development design guidelines** so project sponsors can address site plan and design features that are compatible with the existing and planned community character of the area.
- **Highlighting nearby natural resources** such as the Saranac River corridor, surrounding wetlands, and green spaces and, where possible, **permanently set aside these resources for conservation, recreation, and public access** purposes including the Saranac River Trail.
- Building a **shared stormwater infrastructure** to improve stormwater quality, create enhanced habitats, and reduce construction costs to provide more efficient maintenance opportunities.
- Creating additional attractive and affordable **housing opportunities for the local work-force population** – specifically, multi-family and townhouses would be appropriate.
- Making space for supportive **mixed-use services and amenities** in the area to help create economically successful redevelopment that will serve the town and county over the long term.
- Promoting the use of **renewable resources, public transportation and alternative transportation** infrastructure.
- Reserving areas in development plans to **allow for future infill of the area** that will build off current infrastructure investments and provide additional tax base and housing as well as employment opportunities.

These concepts were developed specifically for this location in the town. In addition to input from the town and the consulting team, the following documents were considered: Town of Plattsburgh Town Center Smart Growth Plan, National Association of Realtors Smart Growth Principles.

Smart Growth Plan Specifics

The concept plan in figure 8 shows the proposed smart growth land use for the former Clinton County Airport site. With the Town's desire to promote economic development while preserving green space and creating housing opportunities, the plan depicts a robust mix of land uses, configured to allow for the maximum compatibility. In addition to large areas planned for warehouse/transshipment/light industry, some of the additional land use opportunities that will benefit this area and enhance the potential of the property are:

- Single-family homes to the south end
- Multi-family homes to the northwest of the parcel and along the west side
- Supporting commercial resources (gym, daycare, café, etc.) to create a neighborhood feel
- Supporting amenities (open space, multi-use path near or along homes)

The purpose of the Smart Growth concept plan is to illustrate the smart growth principles mentioned above and show possible locations of uses.

SMART GROWTH PLAN

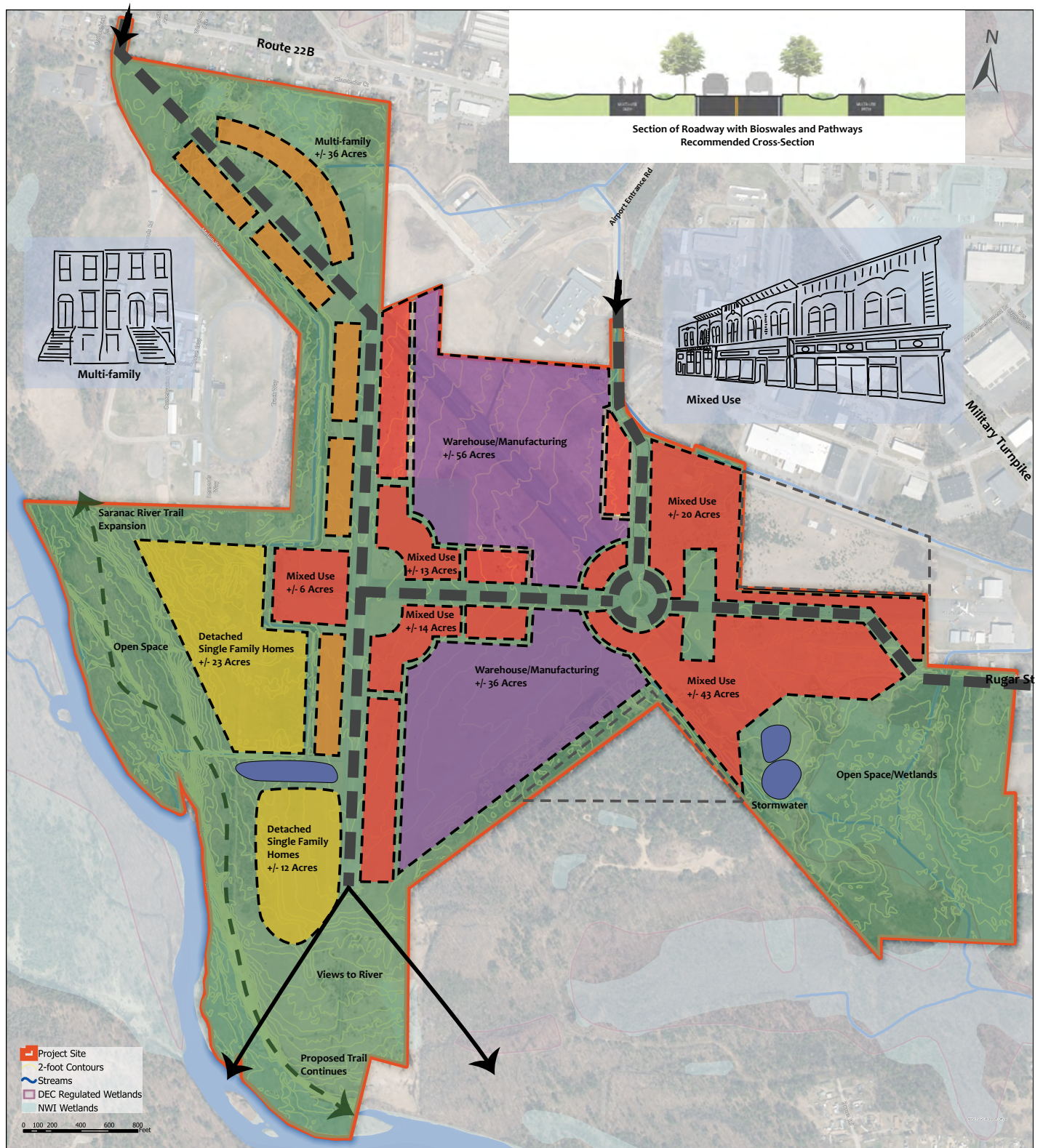


Figure 8 - Smart Growth Concept Plan

SMART GROWTH PLAN

Light Industrial/Warehouse/Transshipment

The industrial lots in the center of the proposed smart growth concept plan are based on real world interest from business and can accommodate large building and parking footprints. The edges of the lots should include buffers towards other uses, like mixed use and green space, see the rendering shown in figure 9. This buffering addresses the environmental and quality of life issues that can support successfully blending of light industrial and residential uses.

Mixed Use

Mixed use development is shown in the center of the plan, running from west to east, and running north to south on the west side of the plan. This can mean both mixed uses within a building (commercial on ground floor with housing above) and adjacent buildings with a mix of uses (apartment building next to drugstore). Both larger and smaller neighborhood commercial uses, such as daycare services, gyms, cafes and restaurants, etc., could be developed. Smaller scale commercial space is also surrounding the traffic circle on the southeast of the site. This area will have a small downtown feel with the inclusion of



Figure 9 - Smart growth rendering of mixed use development with a view of bioswales and multi-use path.

a town park near the circle. The mixed housing and commercial uses will serve the needs of the local workforce population and create a sense of place and identity.

Housing

The site has the opportunity to boast multiple types of housing for the community. Multi-family housing in the form of townhomes, condominiums or apartments, are shown to the west and northwest of the site. Mixed use housing the form of apartments or condominiums runs through the center of the site, and there is roughly 30 to 40 acres of land available for single-family detached homes to be developed in the southern end overlooking undisturbed green space. These neighborhoods will bring a scenic and desirable quality of life to residents.

SMART GROWTH PLAN

Open Space

Roughly half of the site plan can be reserved as open space, both usable green space and wetlands creating a unique natural setting. The existing wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes will be protected and minimally disturbed. This open space can accommodate both passive recreation uses such as trails, and active recreation uses including open fields for sports. The Saranac River frontage is a resource that cannot be replaced and is imperative to preserve. A path around the curve of the river would allow public use and appreciation of nature, increasing quality of life for the community and expanding on the existing Saranac River Trail. Figure 10 shows an example of a scenic river overlook that could be added as an open space amenity for the community.

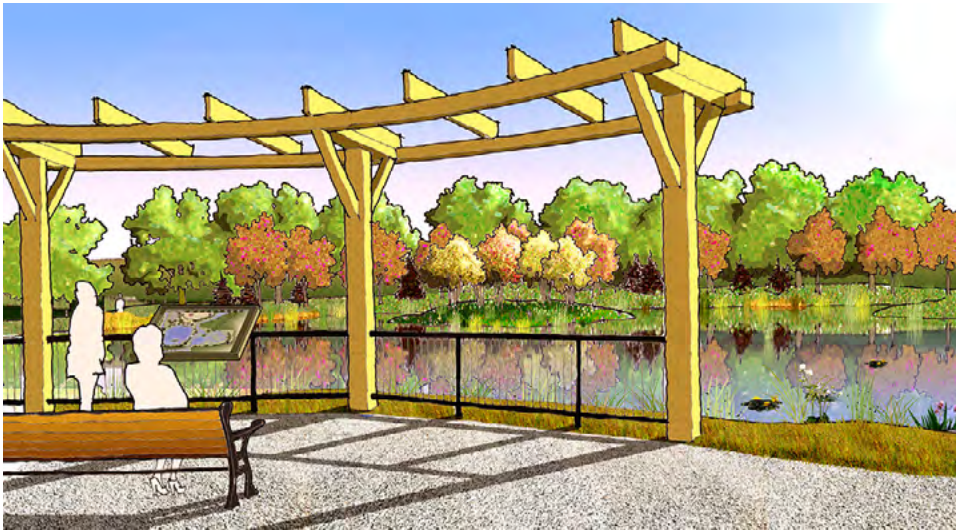


Figure 10 - Sample of a scenic river overlook open space amenity. The open space network envisioned will help create a sense of place.

Traffic Patterns

The former runways leave a wide-open canvas and opportunity to create complete streets. Figure 11 shows a cross section of the proposed roadway as a “green street”. Two lanes of traffic are shown on the two-way street. Turning pockets can be added to the lanes at intersections where it is warranted. The travel lanes are flanked by trees and green infrastructure in the form of bioswales. These create a buffer so that a multi-use path located on the other side will be comfortable, safe, and inviting for the community. The bioswales would serve as a stormwater treatment and conveyance system.



Figure 11- Boulevard Cross Section

SMART GROWTH PLAN

Green Infrastructure

Site-wide green infrastructure to address stormwater needs is shown through the use of bioswales along roadways and by the stormwater retention areas shown in the southwest corners of the site. These stormwater retention areas would capture the runoff from the large industrial site and, therefore, replace the need for individual stormwater infrastructure on this most valuable part of the property. The pools abut existing wetlands and are not using buildable land. Figure 12 shows a sample configuration of stormwater retention pools alongside natural streams and open space.

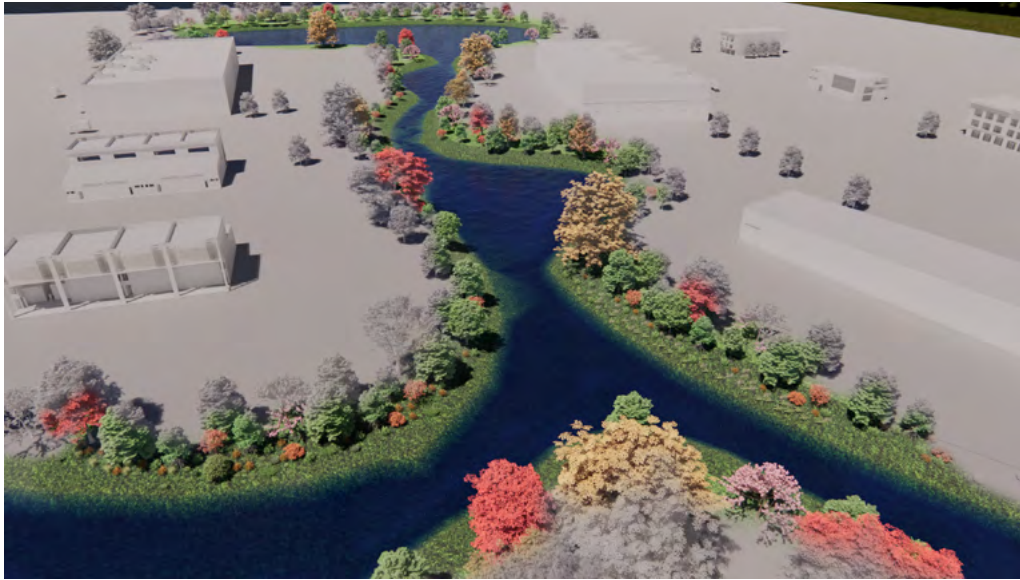


Figure 12 - Rendering of constructed stormwater treatment wetland-pond system. This green infrastructure practice of constructed wetland-shallow pond system that could be developed near an existing wetland or drainage corridor. Constructed wetlands are shallow marsh systems planted with emergent vegetation that are designed to treat stormwater runoff. They are extremely effective for pollutant removal and can mitigate flooding and reduce runoff volume. <https://efc.ny.gov/green-stormwater-infrastructure#eligible-practices>

Branding and Wayfinding

A branding and wayfinding program would be advantageous in terms of marketing the site and helping create a sense of place. Currently, the property is referred to as “the former Clinton County Airport property”. As a working title, Behan Planning and Design is suggesting Riverbend at Plattsburgh Town Center. This working title recognizes the site’s setting at a bend on the Saranac River and its adjacency to the town center area. Folks may simply prefer to call the area Riverbend—or whatever nomenclature is ultimately created.

Using landscape architectural elements such as decorative lighting, landscaping and an attractive signage program, visitors to the site could be guided intuitively from the heart of the town center and the local highways to the Riverbend area of the town center. Incorporation of local arts and culture into the wayfinding system would be a nice way to include local history and artists into the creation of the sense of place of this new neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

Thoughtfully redeveloping this large property of the former Clinton County Airport into a successful economic development project as an extension of the Town of Plattsburgh's built environment is a wise course of action. Incorporating the smart growth concepts and the specifics of the proposed plan will create a sense of place and community with development that can serve the town for the long term. It will feature unique, mixed-use amenities and complete streets while protecting the town's natural resources, quality of life, and providing significant employment opportunities and tax revenue benefits.

Future Opportunities

Next steps could include the following opportunities for the future:

- A green infrastructure grant, such as the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program grant from New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Division of Water, or the Green Innovation Grant Program from the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation.
- An affordable housing grant, such as those United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Build out the Saranac River Trail to be part of the regional network of the Saranac River Trail Greenway with Clinton County.