CLARENCE 2030

Town of Clarence
Comprehensive Plan

DRAFT
NOVEMBER 2016

Acknowledgments

This planning effort was completed by the joint efforts of Town Officials, Staff, Boards, and Committees. The contents herein shall serve as an update to the Town of Clarence 2015 Master Plan, providing a framework for future decision-making and guidance for local leaders.

Town Planning Staff was integral in the drafting of this Comprehensive Plan Update through the contribution of their institutional knowledge, mapping capability, and supplementary documentation materials. The Town would like to thank all members of the community and stakeholders who contributed to this Plan's vision.

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Sources Include:

- *US Census and the American Community Survey*
- *Town of Clarence Assessor's Office*
- *Previously adopted Town Master Plans*

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Introduction

Preface

Municipal planning has its roots in the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, commonly known as the "police power". All public land use decisions must protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community. These decisions must also obey private property rights, which have been ruled in the courts to mean allowing "reasonable uses" of the property. No municipal decision to regulate land use may significantly burden the landowner financially from the property without proper compensation. If it does, then the private property owner may claim a "taking" in a court of law.

The Town of Clarence has seen much growth over the last few decades, especially when it comes to single-family residential development, which has caused rapid changes in the character of our community. Due to these growth and development pressures the Town felt it was time to reexamine its goals and strategies to ensure that our community vision is reflective of the changing demographics and desires of our population.

Based on community input received throughout this process, the preference to remain a semi-rural small town has been prevalent. Residents want to protect existing farmland and open spaces instead of allowing additional cookie-cutter subdivisions. They desire the preservation and rehabilitation of existing historical structures and development at a village scale with neighborhood parks and sidewalks. This Plan has been drafted in an effort to achieve what our resident's want, a Clarence that is more livable, walkable, social, and a great place to do business.

"Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a local government is the authority and responsibility to undertake comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens."

- NYS Municipal Law

Plan Purpose & Intent

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide an overall framework for future public and private investment in our community. This investment can take many forms, including but not limited to, our community's financial, civic, and creative resources. In the Town of Clarence, it is this collective investment by our residents, businesses, civic institutions, and our local government that will shape the physical, social, and economic character of our community.

It is important to note that this plan is consistent with New York State Municipal Law. Comprehensive planning equips municipalities with the direction and goals necessary to grow and develop toward meeting the needs of the community. In the absence of planning, towns, villages, and cities incur a greater number of unintended consequences. Planning helps municipalities to avoid reactionary decision-making by taking the steps necessary to insure proper development.

A good Plan outlines action steps toward implementation and ensures that goals are met. It is the intent of the Planning Board, Planning Staff, and Steering Committee to prepare a Comprehensive Plan that can be used by all those doing business with the Town of Clarence, residents and companies alike. This will be accomplished in the 2030 Plan by articulating an overall vision for the Town as well as a means to achieve that vision.

"Begin with the end in mind."
- S. Covey

The Town of Clarence 2030 Comprehensive Plan will serve as the foundation upon which future planning and policy decisions are to be based. Although this document is an instrument of Town Policy, it should not preclude future decisions that may not align precisely with the stated vision and goals. However, for actions or decisions that deviate from the goals expressed in the Plan, a sound argument and rationale must be presented that is as convincing as that presented in the Plan. Such deviations should not be a common or an easily attainable outcome, and should be supported only after careful consideration of the overall benefit to the community.

Once completed this Plan may directly or indirectly inform a number of municipal functions and initiatives. The bullets below outline some examples of how this Comprehensive Plan Update may inform and benefit municipal decisions into the future.

Planning Horizon

The planning horizon is defined by the length of time for which this Plan is considered relevant and representative of the community. It may also quantify the length of time necessary to implement a majority of the Plan's recommendations. The planning horizon for this comprehensive planning effort is approximately 14 years, or to the year 2030. It is imperative that the public planning process continues and is revisited with the future changes that are sure to occur. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town review the information contained in this document every year, as outlined on page 55, in order to ensure that it is still relevant and beneficial prior to 2030.

- **Grant Acquisitions** Federal and State funding is increasingly tied to a community's Comprehensive Plan. The projects and programs that have public support and are identified in the Plan are more likely to be successful in obtaining funding than those that are not.

- **Zoning, Subdivision & Land Development** A Comprehensive Plan can inform future regulatory changes in a municipality. Over time, regulatory tools such as zoning, design review, subdivision requirements and environmental protection overlay districts should be brought into conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Budgeting & Capital Improvement Planning** The Comprehensive Plan can be used as a tool during the development of a municipality's annual budget. The projects and programs contained in the Plan are often included in the budgeting process to ensure the community's priorities are being considered and addressed.

- **Cultural & Economic Development Efforts** An increasing number of communities are beginning to undertake more non-traditional efforts to foster community vitality. Examples include the creation of arts and cultural venues and programming as well as economic development initiatives to reduce commercial vacancies. The need and support for such efforts is often determined through the comprehensive planning process and documented in the Plan itself.

Planning Process

The planning process utilized to complete this Plan was overseen by the project's Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of individuals who volunteered their time and effort to take on this important process. Committee members included elected officials, community residents, Board members, and stakeholders as well as Town Planning Staff. The role of the Steering Committee was to provide a preliminary direction for the Plan and help draft and review documents throughout the process. The general timeline of key milestones associated with the planning process is provided below:

- *Committee Kick-Off Meeting ..... Dec 2014*
- *Youth Workshop ..... Dec 2014*
- *Stakeholder Interviews ..... Dec 2014 to Mar 2015*
- *Community Input Summary ..... Mar 2015*
- *Town Board Presentation ..... Aug 2015*
- *Draft Vision & Goals ..... Aug 2015*
- *Draft Community Profile ..... Sept 2015*
- *Future Land Use Workshop ..... Dec 2015*
- *Preliminary Plan ..... Mar 2016*
- *Joint Board Workshop ..... May 2016*
- *Draft Comprehensive Plan ..... June 2016*
- *Open House ..... June 2016*
- **SEQRA Review ..... XX*
- **Public Hearing ..... XX*
- **Plan Adoption ..... XX*

* Indicates task yet to be completed.

Comprehensive Plan or Master Plan?

Historically, the terms Comprehensive Plan and Master Plan have been used interchangeably. Each was used to describe a document whose primary purpose was to address the physical development of a community. However, over the past twenty years, the two terms have diverged in their planning applications.

The modern Comprehensive Plan's scope has broadened to include areas of interest that go far beyond the physical characteristics of an area. Goals and recommendations that address community resources and social issues are examples of topics covered by a Comprehensive Plan. Modern Master Plans continue to focus on the physical development of an entire community or a portion of it, such as transportation, infrastructure, or redevelopment sites.

Acronyms Used

There are numerous agencies, organization, and planning references used throughout this document. The following list provides the acronyms for the most commonly used names and titles:

- **ACS:** American Community Survey
- **DEC:** Department of Environmental Conservation
- **DOT:** Department of Transportation
- **DPW:** Department of Public Works
- **EC:** Erie County
- **IDA:** Industrial Development Agency
- **LUAMP:** Land Use Access Management Plan
- **NYS:** New York State
- **PB:** Planning Board (Clarence)
- **PD:** Planning Department (Clarence)
- **SEQRA:** State Environmental Quality Review Act
- **TB:** Town Board (Clarence)
- **US:** United States

Town History

Since its establishment, Clarence has progressed from an isolated, heavily forested wilderness inhabited by a few sturdy pioneers to a thriving suburban town. Named from the English House of Clarence the Town was established as the first township in Erie County on March 11, 1808. It contains more than 52 square miles and, while it has not incorporated villages, it is comprised of communities of Clarence, Harris Hill, Clarence Center, and Wolcottsburg as well as parts of the hamlets of Swormville, East Amherst and Millersport.

At one time the Town was inhabited by Native Americans and was called “Ta-Num-No-Ga-O” - place full of hickory bark. Subsequent name changes occurred including Ransomville, Pine Grove, Ransom’s Grove and Clarence Hollow, before it became known as Clarence.

In 1799, before the town had been established, Joseph Ellicott, an agent for the Holland Land Company, offered lots on old Buffalo Road to those who would build and operate taverns upon them. These lots were 10 miles apart and were sold at the company’s lowest price of $2 per acre on a longterm no interest basis. The first settler to take advantage of this offer was Asa Ransom a young silversmith from Geneva, New York, who became the Town’s first resident. Ransom erected a spacious, two-story log house and tavern where he opened the Holland Land Company’s land office in 1801. That spring he erected a sawmill on the banks of the creek that winds through Clarence Hollow and bears his name. He expanded his operations in 1803 by building a gristmill. In 1807, Asa Harris, a Revolutionary War colonel, constructed a tavern along the Buffalo Road on a barely discernible rise today known as Harris Hill.

During the war of 1812, the able-bodied men and boys of Clarence marched off to join the American militia assembling on the Niagara Frontier. Just before Buffalo burned during this struggle, Smith and Hezekiah Salisbury, publishers of the Buffalo Gazette, escaped with their printing equipment to the Harris Tavern. They subsequently printed their first issue there on Jan 14, 1814.

Spoors Hotel in Clarence Hollow (10768 Main Street), Constructed circa 1812.

After the depression of the 1930’s, there was a land boom and the Town experienced its greatest period of development after World War II. Census records show that in the year 1900 there were 2,948 people residing in the Town and 6,331 in 1950. Ten years later, the population doubled to approximately 13,267. In 2000 the census figure showed the Town population in excess of 26,000 people.

Agriculture was the chief source of income. However, the industrial history of the Town began with the manufacture of potash, followed by brick factories, which used clay from the banks of Ransom Creek. This development was followed by rock quarrying operations which provided sand and gravel for a number of industries. With the discovery of a large deposit of gypsum on Roll Road, National Gypsum Company built a plant and began operations in June 1926. This was followed by Universal Atlas Cement Company also on Roll Road and in later years, the Certainteed plant on Kraus Road. The pioneering work in the development of the heart pacemaker and other items of medical electronics by Wilson Greatbatch brought this industry to Clarence and provided employment for many people in the 1980’s.

Much of the northern section of Town remains rural in character.

The Town of Clarence continues to grow today with many new residential homes being built. We are rich in history and proud of our heritage.

(Reprinted from “About Our Town” on the Town of Clarence webpage).

Named from the English House of Clarence, the Town was the first township established in Erie County.

Public Input Summary

As part of the Comprehensive Plan Update process, various stakeholder groups were assembled for interviews to solicit their input on the current issues and opportunities facing the Town. Each group participated in an open dialogue with Planning Staff as well as the project consultants to help identify the key ideas and concerns that should be addressed within the Plan update. The following is a list of stakeholder groups included in this initial public outreach effort:

- ***Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Committee***
- ***Recreation Advisory Committee***
- ***Clarence Senior Citizens, Inc. and Clarence Senior Center Staff***
- ***Clarence Hollow Development Committee***
- ***Historic Preservation Commission***
- ***Local Developer/Professional Panel***
- ***Clergy Association of Clarence***
- ***Chamber of Commerce***
- ***Clarence Youth Bureau***
- ***Clarence Sports Groups***

The listing in the next column is a brief summary of the top responses received from the groups as a result of the interviews. The Public Input Summary document in the Appendix contains the complete listing of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by each group.

Strengths

- Safe, friendly community
- Parks, trails, wildlife, and open space
- Rural character and agriculture
- History of Town and historic structures/sites
- High-end markets; high income community

Weaknesses

- Affordability and care for seniors
- Bedroom community, potential to overdevelop
- No “Town Center” or Community Center
- Lack of understanding of historic value
- Vacant buildings, lack of retail/entertainment

Opportunities

- Reinvestment and new development in Hamlets
- Walkable, “village” environments in Hamlets
- Historic tourism and marketing
- Growth of local sports programming
- Good, prime soils - thriving farms

Threats

- Poor sewer conditions and limited sewer capacity
- Congestion on north/south roadways
- Drainage issues to the north
- Auto-centric community
- Poor transportation for elderly
- Lack of adequate senior housing

Youth Workshops

In the initial public outreach effort of this Plan, the Steering Committee and Town Staff felt that it was important to reach out to the youth of Clarence to hear their thoughts on what it is like to grow up in the community. The Consultant Team conducted workshops with three senior classes in the areas of AP Public Policy and AP Human Geography. The students were asked four questions: what they liked about growing up in the Town, what they didn’t like about growing up in the Town, what they envisioned themselves doing in 5 to 10 years, and whether or not they would return to Clarence at that time. A listing of all student responses is included in the Public Input Summary in the Appendix. The top comments provided by the students are outlined below:

Likes

- *Parks and recreational trails*
- *The Four-Corners (cafe, pizza, etc.)*
- *Sports programs*
- *Safe community, nice people*

Dislikes

- *Lacks evening and weekend activities for teens*
- *Needs more variety in restaurants, cafes, shops, etc.*
- *Lacks a community center facility*
- *Lacks walkable,“town center” atmosphere*

Why would you come back? Why not?

- *Good place to raise a family*
- *Depends on job opportunities*
- *Concerned about cost of living and housing costs*
- *Will return to the region, but maybe not Clarence*

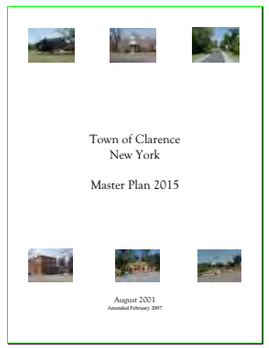
Pictured at Left: Molly Gaudioso of Steinmetz Planning Group facilitating one of the three Youth Workshops held in senior classes at Clarence High School.

Previous Plans & Studies

The Town of Clarence has a long history of planning for its future. The plans and studies that are most relevant to the Town's Comprehensive Plan Update have been summarized below. This Plan will incorporate the key recommendations of these documents into its goal framework. However, the level of detail these plans and studies contain cannot be completely incorporated in the final Comprehensive Plan. As a result, these documents, with the exception of the current 2015 Master Plan, will continue to play a key role in future decision-making in the Town.

2015 Master Plan

Town's current Master Plan was prepared in 2001 and amended in 2007. The Plan contains nine community goals that have served to guide local decision-making over the past 15 years.



2002 Greenprint Program

In an effort to respond to the priorities established in the Master Plan, the Town held a public referendum to bond $12.5 million to be used for open space and farmland preservation. The referendum was approved and has resulted in the protection of over 1,500 acres of forests, meadows, stream corridors and working farms in Clarence.

15% A study of the Greenprint Program revealed an average increase of 15% in the sale price of properties adjacent to preserved opens pace.

2003 Clarence Hollow Improvements Study

The goal of this study was to prepare a streetscape concept plan to establish a vision for Clarence Hollow, zoning code revisions to create a new zoning classification to protect the unique character of the Hollow area, and a Hamlet Revitalization Strategy to support and assist businesses.

2004 Transit Road Land Use Access Management Plan

Increasing traffic congestion on Transit Road prompted Amherst and Clarence to partner with the NYSDOT to address concerns regarding this important regional corridor. The plan contains land use and transportation recommendations that include, but are not limited to:

- Land use and regulatory modifications such as land use density and type adjustments; frontage requirements; set back requirements; shared and joint access requirements; driveway spacing standards; corner clearance standards; improved site circulation; and subdivision regulations that support the development of local roads.
- Highway improvements such as medians, auxiliary turn lanes, median openings, frontage/access roads, pedestrian accommodations, and local road improvements.

2012 Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan

This planning effort was funded with a grant from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. The final set of recommendations consists of strategies and actions intended to Protect Farmland; Plan for Infrastructure; and Promote Agriculture.

2013 Parks & Recreation Master Plan

According to the inventory of existing parks contained in this Plan, the Town has 16 recreational facilities containing 1,028 acres of parkland. Key recommendations include:

- Dedicate undeveloped green space for passive activities which can include walking or hiking trails.
- As participation in youth recreational programming is expected to decrease over the next decade, the Town should focus on maintaining existing developed parks and recreation spaces rather than increasing facilities.
- Strong interest and support continues for expanding and connecting the existing recreational trails in the Town of Clarence. A north-south connection would be a major asset to the Town, and its residents.

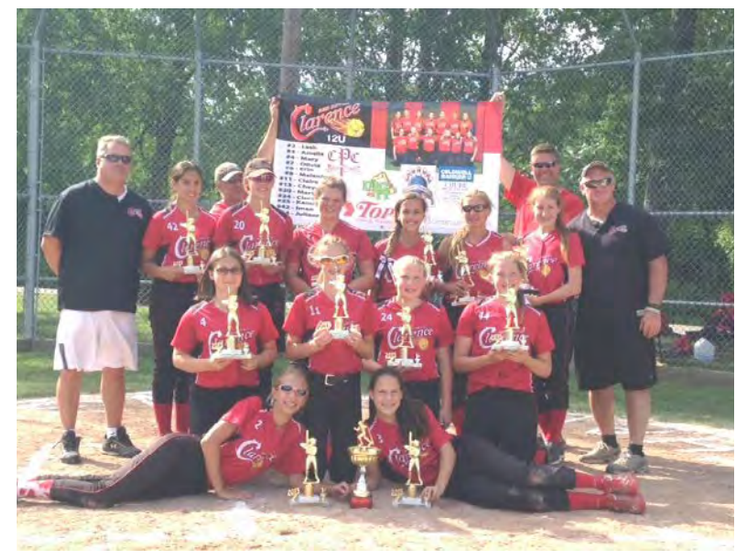


Photo: Town of Clarence Recreation Department

Community Profile

Location

The Town of Clarence is located in Western New York within the northeastern part of Erie County, abutting Niagara County to the north across from Tonawanda Creek (See Figure 1 to the right). The Town measures 8.9 miles long (north to south), and 6.0 miles wide (east to west), encompassing 53.63 square miles in area. The Towns of Lockport (Niagara County), Amherst, Newstead, and Lancaster surround the Town of Clarence to the north, west, east, and south respectively.

Clarence is located approximately 20 miles northeast of downtown Buffalo. The City of Buffalo serves as the cultural center for the Western New York Region. The City of Toronto, Ontario (Canada), is approximately 65 miles to the northwest of Clarence. The City of Rochester, New York, is approximately 50 miles to the east, and the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is nearly 180 miles to the south.

Clarence at a Glance!

Population (2013): 30,721
Total Land Area: .....53.63 sq. mi.
Population Density: .....573 people/sq. mi.
Median Age: .....43.9 years
Established: .....March 11, 1808

Figure 1: Erie County Regional Map (Source: New Buffalo Impact)

Population Trends

Since 1970, Erie County has experienced a steady decline in its population from over 1.11 million residents in 1970 to 919,040 in 2010 (as shown in Figure 2 on the following page). However, more recent estimates indicate that the County's population decline may have stopped with a slight population increase since the 2010 Census count. In contrast to the County's historical population decline, the number of residents in the Town of Clarence has increased each of the last three decades by a total of 69%. According to a Demographic Analysis prepared by the Town, Clarence's population is expected to increase from 30,721 to 36,010 (15%) by the year 2020. A large portion of this growth is expected to occur in the northern parts of the Town.

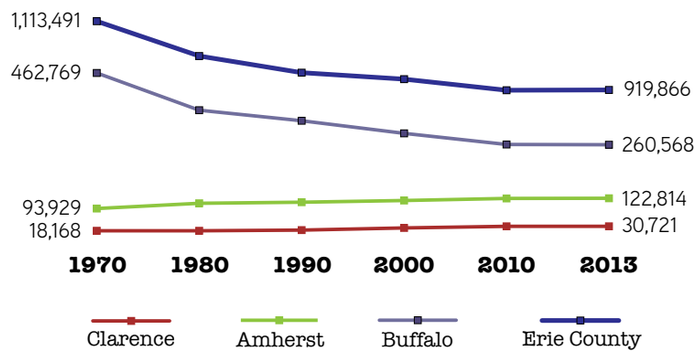


Figure 2: Countywide Population Trends

According to the 2010 Census, the composition of the Town's population has changed in a number of ways since 2000. Figure 3 shows that the largest increases occurred in the 60 to 64 age group (up 73%) and the Over 85 age group (up 68%). Meanwhile, the 25 to 34 (down 10%) and the 35 to 44 (down 14%) age groups declined. The loss of these age groups may be attributed to a number of community living factors including lifestyle choices and cost of housing.

There has been an increasing trend in recent decades for those aged 25 to 44 to delay marriage, homeownership, and starting a family. This group also shows an increasing desire to live in areas and neighborhoods that offer a variety of entertainment options and opportunities to socialize with their peers. In Erie County, these areas are located in City of Buffalo neighborhoods such as Elmwood Avenue and in downtown. The high cost of housing in Clarence may also be a barrier for these younger age groups looking to move into the Town.

The increase in 45 to 54 year olds in Clarence may be an indication that many individuals and families move into Clarence once they have an established career and have the income necessary to buy

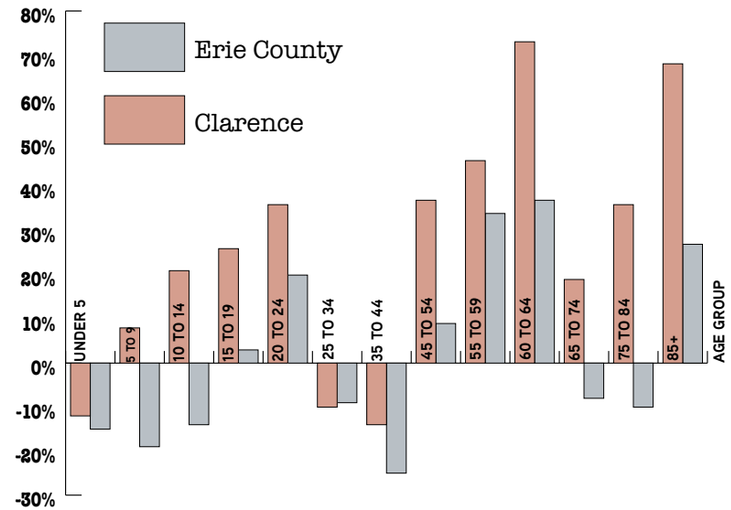


Figure 3: Town Population Change by Age (2000 - 2010)

and maintain a home. This factor, coupled with significantly high growth rates among seniors (shown in Figure 3), have resulted in a cumulative population shift indicating an overall rapidly aging Town population from 2000 and 2010. This trend is expected to continue into 2020.

Other changes that should be noted include a 32% growth in non-family households. These are defined by the Census as "a non-family household consisting of a householder living alone or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related." Additionally the Town has experienced a 30% increase in households headed by a person over the age of 65, and a 29% increase in single mothers with children under the age of 18. These changes may have contributed to the average household size decreasing from to 2.80 persons per household in 2000, to 2.68 in 2010.

Housing Market

Clarence has issued 9,067 building permits for single family residences since 1950. A review of Figure 4 below indicates that permit activity reached its peak in 1999, when 286 permits were issued in a single year. The highest concentration of permits were issued from 1998 through 2003, resulting in 1,471 permits issued over a six year period.

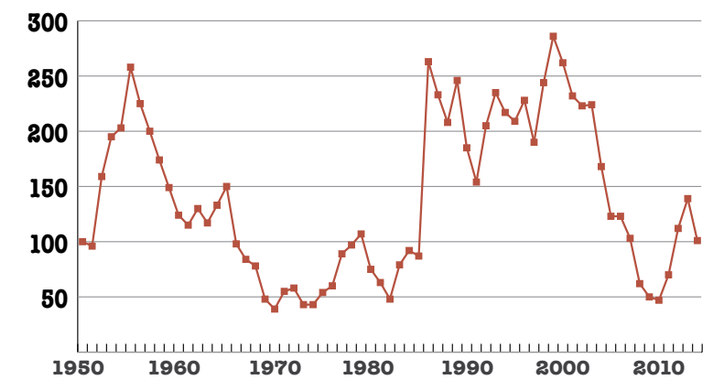


Figure 4: Single-Family Home Permits Issued (1950 - 2014)

11,282
Households (HH)

2.68
Average HH Size

The construction of new housing in the Town is a vibrant source of local employment and positively contributes to the local economy in many ways. However, the residential growth the Town has experienced also contributed to the loss of rural character and an increase in traffic congestion on local roadways.

Over the past decade, the Town's policy has consisted of striving to ensure future residential development occurs in approved subdivisions with sewer service. The emphasis on focusing residential growth in areas with sewer service has reduced the need for septic systems and the potential to negatively impact environmental features such as our local stream corridors and underground aquifers.

Initial Year of Approval	Number of Subdivisions	Total Lots	Share of Lots Remaining
2003	1	428	47%
2005	3	57	11%
2006	5	75	81%
2007	2	49	6%
2008	4	483	54%
2009	1	2	100%
2010	2	77	100%
2011	1	4	100%
2013	3	108	79%
2014	1	151	100%
Total	**23**	**1,434**	**59%**

Figure 5: Subdivisions Approved (2003 - 2014)

As shown in Figure 5 above, the Town has approved 23 subdivisions between 2003 and 2014 with a total of 1,434 lots. As of the writing of this plan, there are 852 (59%) unused lots remaining.

The result of this single-family development activity is a housing stock that is newer, higher in value, and has a lower vacancy rate compared to the County as a whole. More specifically according to the 2008-2013 American Community Survey;

- 49% of the Clarence's housing units were built after 1980 compared to only 18% for the County.
- 61.5% of Clarence's housing stock is valued over $200,000 compared to the 21.7% for the County.
- The median home value for Clarence is nearly twice as high as the County (see graphic to right).
- The vacancy rate for Clarence is 3% compared to 9% for the County (see Figure 6).

Clarence
$237,000

Erie County
$124,300

The cumulative impact of these statistics gives a clear indication that Clarence's housing stock is very desirable and should remain so for the foreseeable future.

In addition to the lower vacancy rate of housing units (both renter and owner-occupied), the Town of Clarence also has a lower share of rental housing units compared to that of the County. As of 2013, it was estimated that 15% of the Town's occupied housing units were rental, whereas 65% of the County's occupied housing units were rental. Although there is no set balance of owner- to renter-occupied housing that any one community should strive for, it will be important for the Town to consider the need for rental housing in the community to provide a variety of living options. Rental housing options will help to attract and retain young professionals, traveling executives, empty nesters, and continue to foster the development of a local workforce.

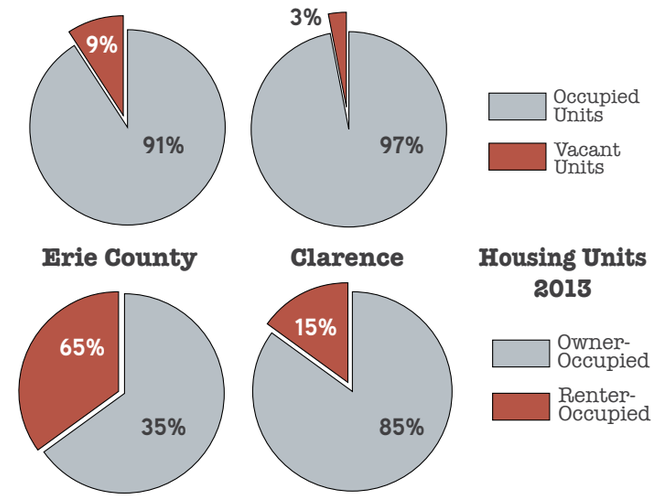


Figure 6: Housing Vacancy and Tenure (ACS 2013)

Local Economy

There is no single statistic or measure to gauge the health of a community's economy. However, the collection of indicators provided in Figure 7 gives a brief assessment of the state of Clarence's economy as compared to the County as a whole.

Clarence has a higher share of adults (25+) with a bachelors or advanced college degree (48%) than Erie County (31%). This is consistent with the fact that the Town's median household income level ($87,327) is above that of the County's ($50,653), as educational attainment levels within a community are often a good indicator of its income levels. Since the earnings potential of college educated individuals is generally higher, a larger share of college educated adults typically results in a higher median household income.

The Town's unemployment rate is currently 3.6% and poverty rate is 3.7%; whereas Erie County's is 8.6% and 14.6% respectively. These extremely low levels of unemployment and poverty in Clarence may be an indication that residents have greater or more improved access to jobs and career opportunities than others in Erie County. The location of jobs, both inside and outside of the Town, held by Clarence residents is broken down in Figure 8.

Figure 8 to the right indicates the inflow and outflow of workers to and from Clarence in 2002 and 2011. In 2002 there were a total of 11,930 jobs in the Town. Over 15% of these jobs were filled by local residents, while just under 85% were filled by workers from outside of Clarence. In 2011, the number of jobs in Clarence increased to 13,398. The proportion of jobs filled by local workers remained consistent between 2002 and 2011.

Indicator	Clarence	Erie County
College Degree (Bachelor's +)	*48%*	*31%*
Median Household Income	*$87,327*	*$50,653*
Unemployment Rate	*3.6%*	*8.6%*
Poverty Rate (Individuals)	*3.7%*	*14.6%*

Figure 7: Economic Indicators (2013 ACS)

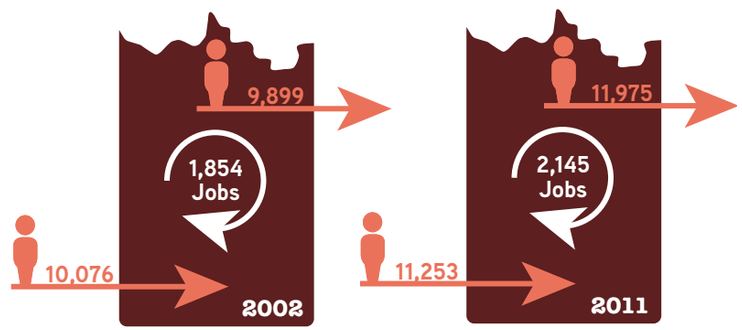


Figure 8: Inflow & Outflow of Town Jobs (U.S. Census)

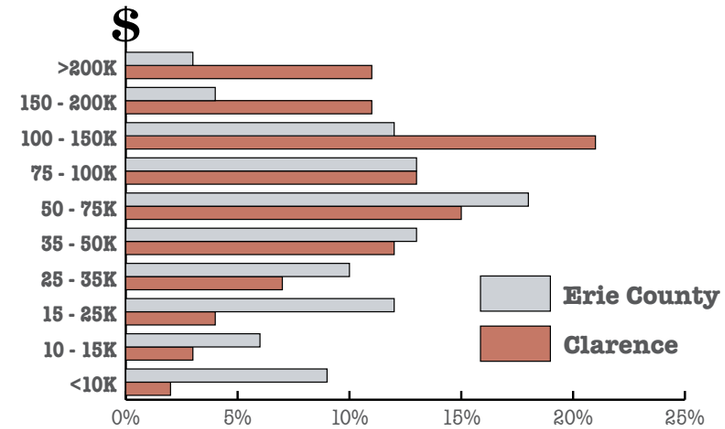


Figure 9: Household Income Distribution (2013)

Figure 9 above shows the disparity in distribution of household income within Clarence and the County as a whole. Based upon this graph it is clear that Clarence has a significantly larger portion of high-income households and a smaller portion of low-income households. For example, in 2013, 56% of households in Clarence earned over $75,000 compared to only 32% in the County. Meanwhile, the change in household income from 2000 to 2013 indicates that the households in the top three earning brackets experienced the largest increases in income. The net result is that the Town can be described as a very affluent community that is continuing to attract high-income households.

Land Use & Zoning

Figure 10 at right provides a breakdown of the various land uses within the Town while Map 1 shows their general location using the current zoning map. Based upon the information presented in the Map and Figure 10, the Town's land use pattern can be described as follows:

» 60% of the Town's land is classified as vacant or is occupied by agricultural or residential uses situated on parcels greater than five acres in size. These properties are generally zoned as Agricultural-Floodzone (shown in white on the Zoning Map) or Agricultural-Rural Residential (shown in light brown) and are located in the north and northeastern areas of the Town. Despite occupying 60% of Clarence's land area, these uses comprise only 8% of the total assessed value.

» 25% of the Town's land is occupied by residential uses (< 5 acres). These properties are generally zoned as Residential Single-Family (shown in yellow) or Planned Unit Development (shown in light blue) and are located in the western, central, and southern areas of the Town. Although these parcels represent only one-fourth of the Town's land use, they make up 76% of the Town's total assessed value.

» 7% of the Town's land is occupied by commercial or industrial uses. These properties are generally zoned as Major Arterial (shown in purple), Commercial (shown in red), Restricted Business (shown in pink), Traditional Neighborhood (shown in dark blue), or Industrial (shown in gray). The most intensive commercial activity is generally located along Transit Road and Main Street. Smaller business operations are concentrated in the five hamlets. Industrial uses are clustered in three areas of the Town; along County Road, Wehrle Road, and Roll Road. The share of assessed value for commercial/industrial is 12%.

» 7% of the Town's land is devoted to community services or public facilities. These are generally zoned Community Facility (shown in green) and are scattered throughout Clarence. Their share of assessed value is 4%.

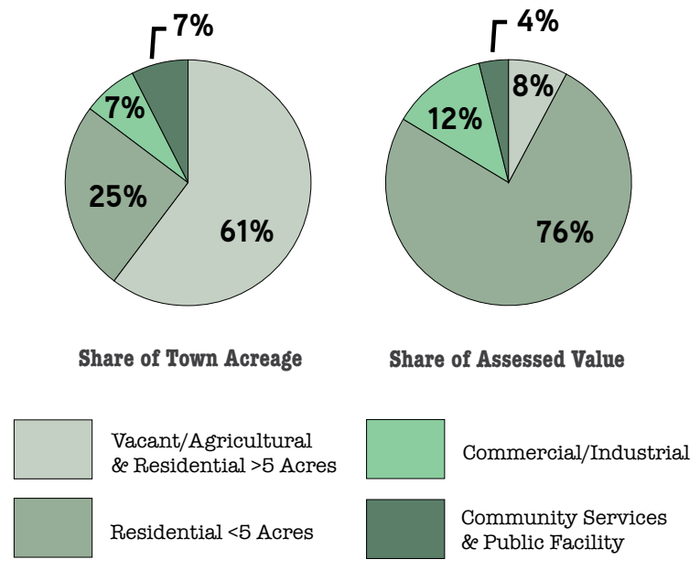
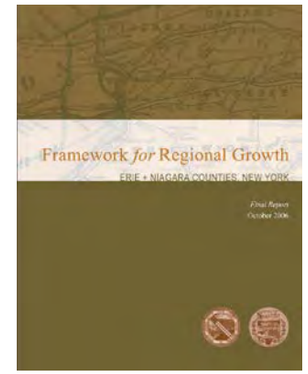


Figure 10: Share of Land Use by Acreage & Assessed Value

Much of the Town's history is rooted in its five hamlets. These include Swormville, Wolcottsburg, Clarence Center, Harris Hill, and Clarence Hollow.

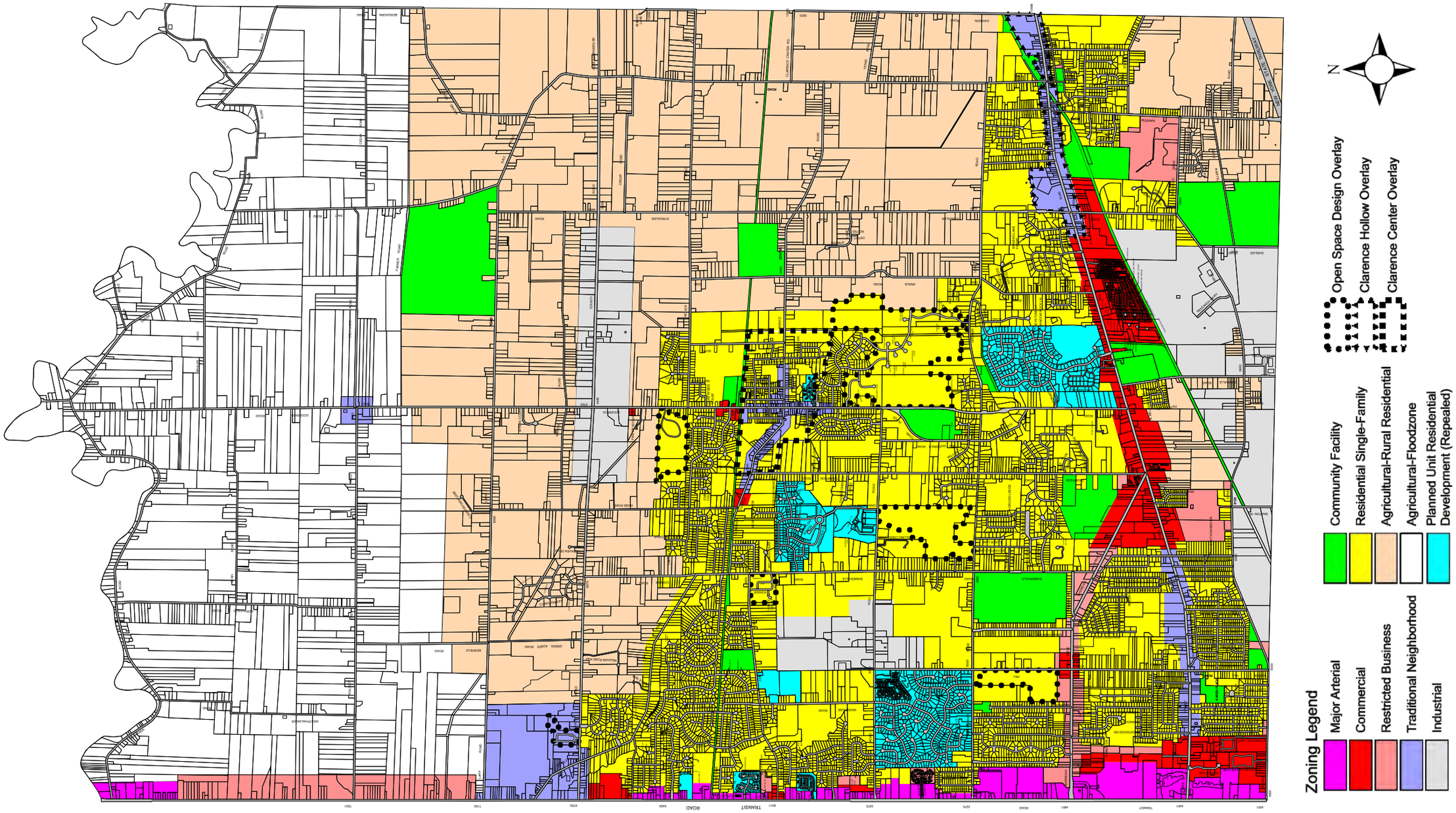


According to the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth, Clarence can be divided into three character areas. Their proposed development framework provides another perspective on the Town's land use pattern and existing landscape. The southwest corner of the Town is designated as Developed Area. These areas "extend outward from the cities of Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Lockport and include contiguous blocks of urban and suburban development served with public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure."

The northeast corner of the Town is designated as Rural Area. Rural Areas include, "the region's least intensely developed areas with large, contiguous blocks or farmland and forested property as well as the compact commercial, public and residential uses clustered in incorporated villages and hamlets." Situated between these two areas is a strip of land designated as Developing Area. The Developing Area, "includes both recently developed and sparsely settled areas experiencing development pressure and increasing demand for the extension of public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure." In Clarence, the Developing Area extends from the northwest corner, diagonally to the southeast, encompassing a large portion of the middle of the Town.

Over the next decade, the Town will continue to strive for a balanced approach to growth that includes new development in the Developed Areas, farmland preservation in the Rural Area, and an efficient use of land and resources in the Developing Area.

Map 1: Zoning Districts



Sewer Service

Infrastructure considerations, particularly the extension of sewer lines, have been a critical factor in determining growth and in guiding land use decisions over the past decade in Clarence. Access to public sewers remains critical to the long-term environmental health of the community and a primary determinant to our future development patterns. Sewer service has been extended relatively slowly and has produced significant growth impacts on the Town. The limits of sewer service available in the Town are shown in Map 2. As the map illustrates, there are currently seven service districts and two additional areas serviced by package sewer plants.

- **Erie County Sewer District #5:** Services the western portion of the Town from Shimerville Road on the east to Transit Road, including development along Transit Road. Provides access to Town of Amherst Sewer Treatment Plant.
- **Clarence Sewer District #2:** Services Clarence Center.
- **Clarence Sewer District #4:** Services the developments southeast of Clarence Center to Kraus Road and Greiner Road.
- **Clarence Sewer District #6:** Services developments such as Beech Meadows Court, Pine Breeze, and Stone Creek.
- **Clarence Sewer District #7:** Services the Fox Trace Subdivision.
- **Clarence Sewer District #9:** Services most of Clarence Hollow.
- **Clarence Sewer District #10:** Services generally undeveloped parcels to the east and west of Harris Hill Road between Greiner Road and Sheridan Drive.
- **Package Plant:** Services the Spaulding Lake subdivision and Brothers of Mercy campus.

Master Sewer Plan

A Sewer Master Plan was developed in conjunction with Master Plan 2015. The Sewer Master Plan identifies future sewer extensions and capacities in order to provide service to areas of Town that have pollution concerns and to best determine future growth areas within the Town.

The extension of sewer lines and access to the existing capacity of the Amherst Sewer Treatment Plant and required infrastructure associated with conveying flows to it will be critical to the long term environmental health of the Town of Clarence and to maintaining a rational and phased pattern of growth. The ultimate goals are to:

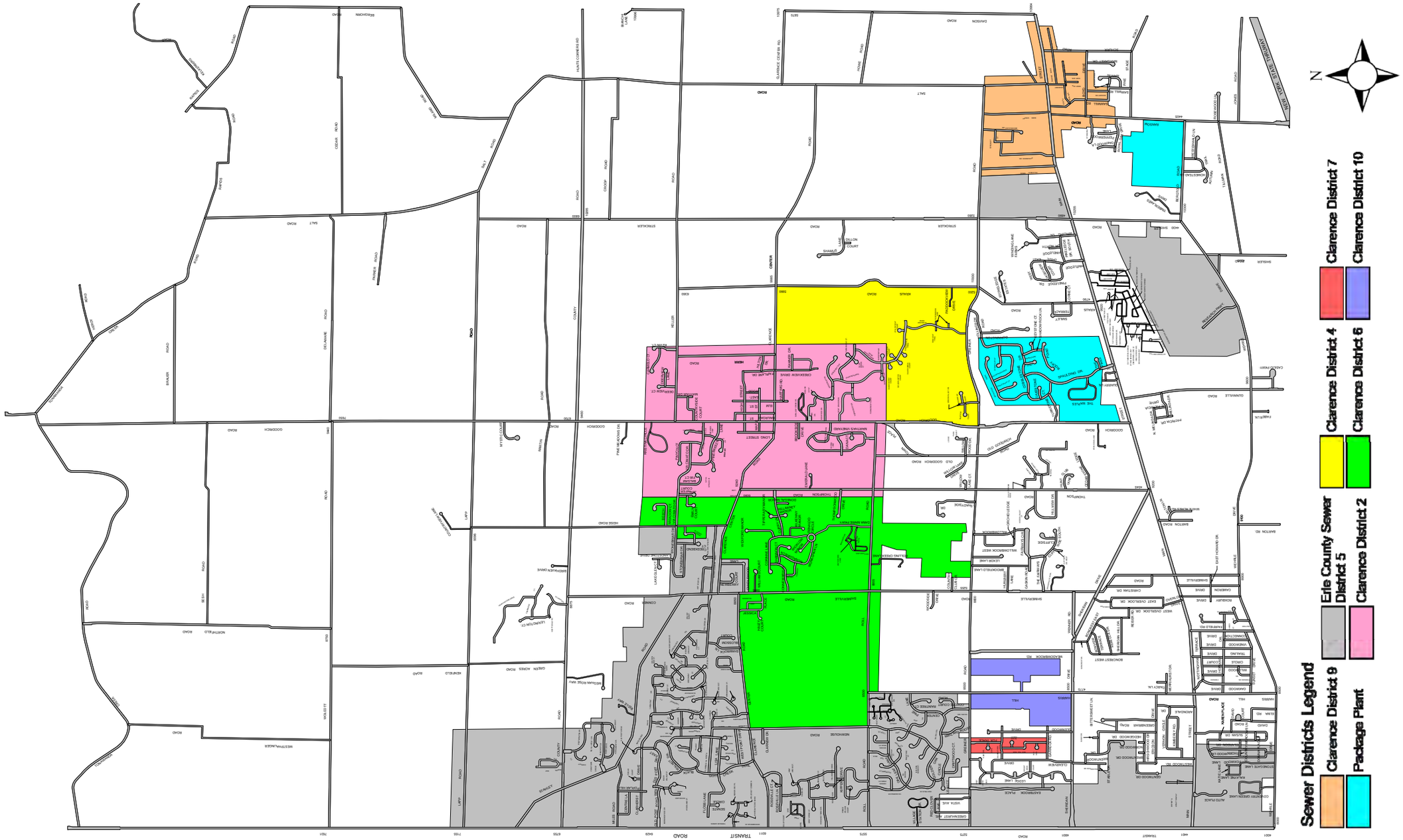
The current limits of sewer service in the Town have been identified by the development committee as the number one issue that needs to be addressed over the next decade.

- Plan and systematically provide for public sewers to existing residents within major subdivisions and areas of high residential densities in the Town;
- Eliminate known pollution sources;
- Coordinate the timing and location of development with the availability of adequate wastewater capacity; and
- Provide sewer access in the most cost effective means appropriate.

A consequence of providing access to public sewer service is growth and higher density development. Over the last few decades the extension of sewer lines has triggered residential housing development in concentrated areas, such as Clarence Center and Harris Hill. It will be necessary for the Town to continue to coordinate with the sewer districts within Clarence in order to identify possible sewer extensions and then further identify acceptable land types and intensities along such sewer extensions.

The Spaulding Green Subdivision (pictured above) was approved in 2008. At the writing of this Plan, approximately 150 of the 380 lots have been developed, which are serviced by Clarence Sewer Districts #2 & #4.

Map 2: Sewer Districts



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

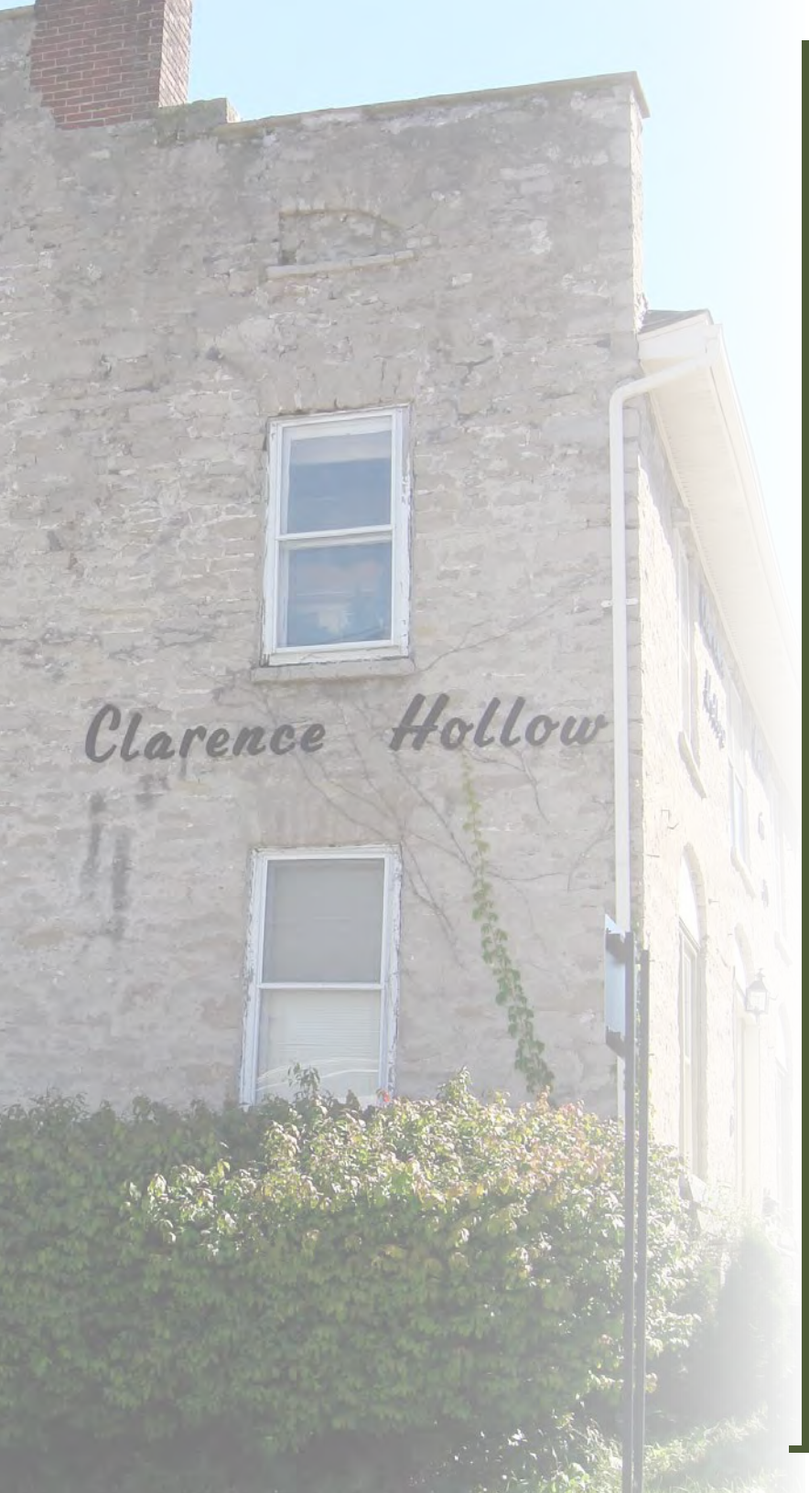
Implications

The information contained in this Community Profile is intended to provide a snapshot of the Town's past, present, and future conditions. Although the exact changes that will occur in Clarence over the next decade are impossible to predict with a high degree of accuracy, the following assumptions along with the public input gathered throughout the planning process form the basis of Clarence's vision and the recommendations contained in this Comprehensive Plan update.

1. *The Town is affluent and will likely remain or become more affluent.*
2. *High housing costs and land value may continue to limit the attraction and retention of young families and non-family households.*
3. *The Town has seen an increase in the number and share of senior residents living in Clarence. This trend will continue.*
4. *A large portion of the Town's quality of life is currently driven by private investment (e.g. farms, restaurants, neighborhoods, etc).*
5. *There is an opportunity to address many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the public by increasing the density of the hamlets.*
6. *Private development is typically focused on the short term and limited to parcel by parcel thinking. Since private investment is often short sighted, the Town's role has been to guide this investment towards longer term goals.*
7. *Agricultural land is under development pressure from residential development.*
8. *As newcomers continue to locate in Clarence and long time residents leave, the existing social and civic ties are eroding, which may be perceived as apathy towards the community and its future.*
9. *There is a growing demand for more diverse recreational opportunities and specialized facilities for our youth. The older population may not be supportive of the recreation needs and desires of the younger population.*
10. *We will continue to lose historic structures and sites unless we can find sustainable options for adaptive reuse.*
11. *There is an increasing desire for alternative transportation options for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the senior community.*

"We are drowning in information, but starved for knowledge."
- John Naisbitt

Rare Oak Savannah - Harris Hill Nature Preserve
Photo: Western New York Land Conservancy



Goal Framework

A successful comprehensive plan is developed and implemented on multiple levels, addressing the short- and long-term needs of a community while providing varying levels of detail. In an effort to accomplish this, the Goal Framework for the Clarence 2030 Comprehensive Plan will include the following elements:

VISION

An overarching statement that describes the aspiration of Clarence as a whole, all goals and strategies in the comprehensive plan are aimed at achieving this end. The vision is a statement intended to be a guide for the long-term identity of our Town; therefore, it should not change dramatically over time.

GOAL

Similar to a vision in that it is a general statement of a future condition towards which actions are aimed. However, the scope of a goal is much more narrow. It should support the vision by addressing a specific area or issue facing the community. Goals should not dramatically change over time, but rather be consistent throughout the planning horizon. Ideally, the policies contained in this plan should be useful for the 10-year planning horizon.

STRATEGY

A statement of a measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of the goal; it refers to some specific aspiration which is reasonably attainable. Think in terms of actions such as “increase”, “develop”, or “preserve”. It should be noted that the Town may already be undertaking some of the strategies articulated in this plan and wishes to ensure that they continue to do so over the next decade. The general lifespan of a strategy is 6 to 10 years.

ACTION ITEMS

A specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing a strategy, it can take the form of a plan, project, or program. Implementation items can address both the short- and long-term strategies with a lifespan ranging from one to 10 years, depending on the item.

Our Measure of Success

As a measure of success for the implementation of this Plan, it shall be left to the Town Board and its faculties to review all Action Items on a semi-annual basis to monitor the progress made towards the achievement of Clarence’s Goals. For the purposes of this review and to readily accommodate the removal of completed items or addition of new items, a comprehensive listing of all Action Items in this Plan has been included in the Appendix.

Said document may be maintained, updated, and edited by Town Staff as necessary.

Our Community Vision

As the oldest town in Erie County, Clarence strives to remain connected to its rich agricultural heritage and historic hamlets, while pursuing sustainable growth and maintaining a high quality of life for its residents. There are many elements that together shape the vision and identity of our community, including our...

The mindful management of these elements and proper balance of public and private investment will help to ensure a future for Clarence that is vibrant, prosperous, and competitive.

Introduction

As one of the fastest growing Towns in the region, the Town of Clarence continues to be concerned over the loss of open space and productive agricultural lands. The Town has consistently averaged over 200 residential building permits per year for the past ten years and projections for future growth remain consistent. Clarence has become a popular community in which to reside because of its open character, agricultural heritage, safety, and cultural amenities. A common theme has emerged in community meetings that preservation of the rural character of the Town of Clarence is extremely important to its residents.

The Town of Clarence has a long and significant agricultural heritage. Soils in the Town, which lie within the Erie-Ontario Lowlands or lake plain, range from moderate to very high in terms of potential for agricultural activities. The quality of the soils and the rich limestone geology attracted Pennsylvania German farmers to the Town of Clarence in the early 1800's. Numerous farms existed in the Town below the Onondaga Escarpment and while there are several active farms within the Town today, much of the original farmland lies vacant or has been converted to non-agriculture use. Figure 11 shows the drastic change in the share of land use acreage within the Town since the 1970 Master Plan was adopted to present day.

The concern for loss of farmland and open space resulted in the adoption of the Town of Clarence Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan in 2012. The purpose of the Agriculture and Open Space goal in this Comprehensive Plan is not to replace the Town's Farmland Protection Plan, but rather augment it. The following is a summary of three of the agriculture and open space protections the Town currently employs. More information can be found in the 2012 Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.

Master Plan	Year Adopted	Agricultural/ Vacant	Residential <5Acres	Other
1970	**1959**	*90%*	*3%*	*7%*
2030	**2016**	*61%*	*25%*	*14%*

Figure 11: Change in Share of Land Use Acreage

Agricultural District Program

Nearly 50% of the Town is within Erie County Agricultural Districts managed by New York State Agriculture and Markets. Map 3 on the following page indicates those properties that are included in the Clarence-Newstead and Alden-Newstead Agricultural Districts. Properties in Agriculture Districts benefit from legal protections that help to support active farm operations in communities across NYS.

"To preserve and protect ecologically significant landscapes, valuable agricultural resources, aesthetic beauty, and the rural character of the town, while maintaining a stable tax base and managing growth."
- Greenprint Program Mission`

Greenprint Program

In its long history of Master Planning, Clarence has consistently identified the loss of open space and agricultural lands as a major concern and has initiated several programs to save the character that makes Clarence so attractive. Towards achieving this goal, the Town adopted the Greenprint Program in 2003. Through 2014, the Greenprint Program has helped protect more than 1,300 acres of meadows, forests, wildlife habitat, scenic views, and working farms. In 2013, after 10 years experience with the Greenprint, a study revealed an average increase of 15% in the sale price of properties adjacent to preserved open space.

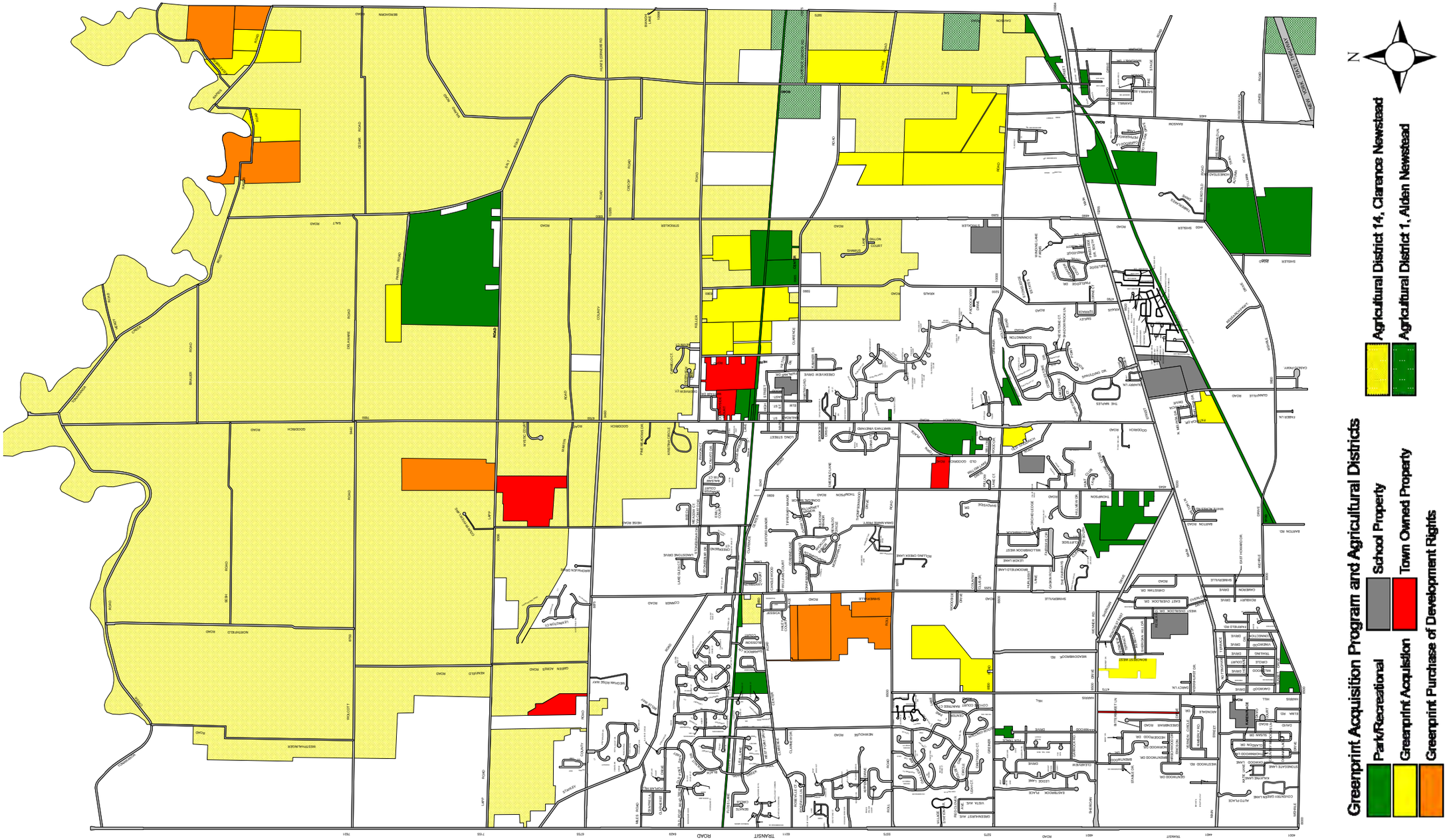
Properties under consideration for purchase under the Greenprint Program are prioritized by a number of factors including soil quality, size, farming status, natural features, and proximity to already protected lands. Farmland has been, and will continue to be, a significant part of the Greenprint protected land. In fact, the vast majority of the land purchased with Greenprint funds has been farmland. There are two distinct ranking procedures used to evaluate land for participation in the Greenprint program. One is focused on farmland and one on natural lands.

Local Land Use Laws

The Town of Clarence has also enacted a Right-to-Farm Law. The purpose of this law is to "reduce the loss to the Town of Clarence of its agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which farming may be deemed to be a nuisance and to allow agricultural practices inherent to and necessary for the business of farming to proceed and be undertaken free of unreasonable and unwarranted interference or restriction."

The Town also utilizes a distinct Agricultural Zoning District. This district differs from the Erie County Agricultural District Program in that it is adopted and administered by the Town only. The intent of this zoning classification is to limit the type of land uses allowed within the Agriculture Zoning District and aid in the protection of existing open space and agricultural lands by reducing the potential for development of a conflicting land use in the zoning district.

Map 3: Agricultural Districts



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Agriculture & Open Space

Goal Statement

We will continue to support our agricultural community to ensure the long-term viability of local farms and farm operations. Protecting farmland and open space through the Greenprint Program and other land use measures will continue to be a priority for the Town in an effort to reduce development pressure on viable farmland and soils. Our agricultural operations and open space will be celebrated for their contributions to the greater community in the form of economic value, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, and the provision of local foods.

Strategies

A. *Protect farmland to minimize net loss of farmland within the Town.*

B. *Institute infrastructure planning that formally and routinely considers the needs of agriculture with regard to drainage, roads, utility lines, and water in any town zoning districts that allow farms.*

C. *Inform the public about the variety of contributions farms make to the town, and what agricultural practices to expect in a farm community.*

Table 1: Agriculture & Open Space

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Increase awareness and education of the Town's participation in the Agricultural District program and the implications of living within close proximity to active farms that may result.	Low	WNY Land Conservancy, ***FPC***	Town Code, Farmland Protection Plan, Right-to-Farm Law
Create awareness and understanding among residents regarding the use of major roadways to move farming equipment.	Low	Highway Department, Town Administrators, ***FPC***	Town Website, Signage
Continue to support and help market the Clarence Farmers Market to increase awareness and participation by local residents and farms.	Low	CHA, RAC, Town Administrators, ***Farmers Market Association***	Town Website
Include local youth and seniors in Town efforts to promote farms and organize agricultural related events and activities.	Low	RAC, SC, ***YAB***	Farmers Market Association, Community Supported Agriculture Program
Review and update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Continue protection of farmland from subdivisions and support of active farm operations, especially those without succession plans.	Low/Medium	EC, NYS Agriculture and Markets, PB, RAC, TB, ***FPC***	Town Code, Farmland Protection Plan
Review the Town Subdivision Law to: *- Discourage the conversion of agriculturally zoned properties to non-agricultural uses* *- Minimize subdivision sewer expansions within agricultural zones*	Medium	PB, PD, TB, ***FPC***	Zoning Map, Agriculture Map, Zoning & Subdivision Law, Right-to-Farm Law
Facilitate ditching to ensure proper drainage and use of farmland, especially within the northern section of Town.	Medium/High	ECDPW, Engineering Department, FPC, ***Highway Department***	
Continue the use of the Recreation Advisory Committee Buy-Back Program.	Medium/High	TB, ***RAC***	Greenprint Program Data
Support the development of a "Farm-to-Table" community and other Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) efforts.	High	RAC, TB, Town Attorney, ***PD***	Greenprint Program
Increase communication and coordination with the Town's Farmland Protection Committee, NYS Agriculture and Markets, and the Erie County Farm Bureau.	High	PD, ***FPC***	
Continue to implement the Town's Greenprint Program and conservation easements to preserve valuable farmland and soils.	High	PD, TB, ***RAC***	Greenprint Program (Sell back to farmers)

***Acronyms:** *CHA: Clarence Hollow Association, EC: Erie County, ECDPW: Erie County Department of Public Works, FPC: Farmland Protection Committee, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, RAC: Recreational Advisory Committee, SC: Senior Center, TB: Town Board, YAB: Youth Advisory Board*

Introduction

Sustainability was founded on the idea that the general welfare of a population is dependent upon its region's natural resources and environment. Although there is no simple way to define sustainability, sustainable practices are often identified as those that allow for the growth of a community to meet its current economic, social, and environmental needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet such needs of their own. Sustainability recognizes the finite nature of natural resources and commits to the use of them in a way that conserves their integrity for the long term.

There are a number of natural features within the Town worthy of conservation, including wetlands, floodplains, stream corridors and similar environmental resources. These features hold significant ecological, aesthetic, and recreational value for the Town and have been identified as community strengths by residents and leaders alike. Map 4 on the opposing page shows areas of significant environmental features to be conserved. These resources may also be considered growth constraints for Clarence.

Streams

Identified stream corridors having countywide significance within the Town of Clarence include Ransom Creek and Tonawanda Creek. Other streams within the Town include Gott Creek, Beeman Creek and Black Creek. Through local and state land use controls, the Town can work to protect these stream corridors.

Flood Zones & Wetlands

The Town of Clarence has an extensive flood zone in the northern portion of the Town. Due to the restrictive nature of the flood zone, this area is constrained in terms of development potential. Approximately 24% of the Town is located within the 100-year flood plain. Clarence works closely with the NYS DEC and US Fish and Wildlife Service to protect floodplains and wetlands through regulation of new development and the SEQR process.

Parkland

The Town of Clarence currently has approximately 11 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents, which reflects the importance of park and recreational activities to the citizens of Clarence. There are also several recreational sites owned by the School District and State of New York that are not included in the ratio analysis but that play a role in meeting the overall recreational needs of the community. The Town has identified the need for additional park improvements to address high park participation rates in the Town. As new residential development continues, so too will the need for additional improved parklands to meet the needs of new residents and to maintain current level of service standards. Figure 12 summarizes parkland acreage owned by the Town of Clarence.

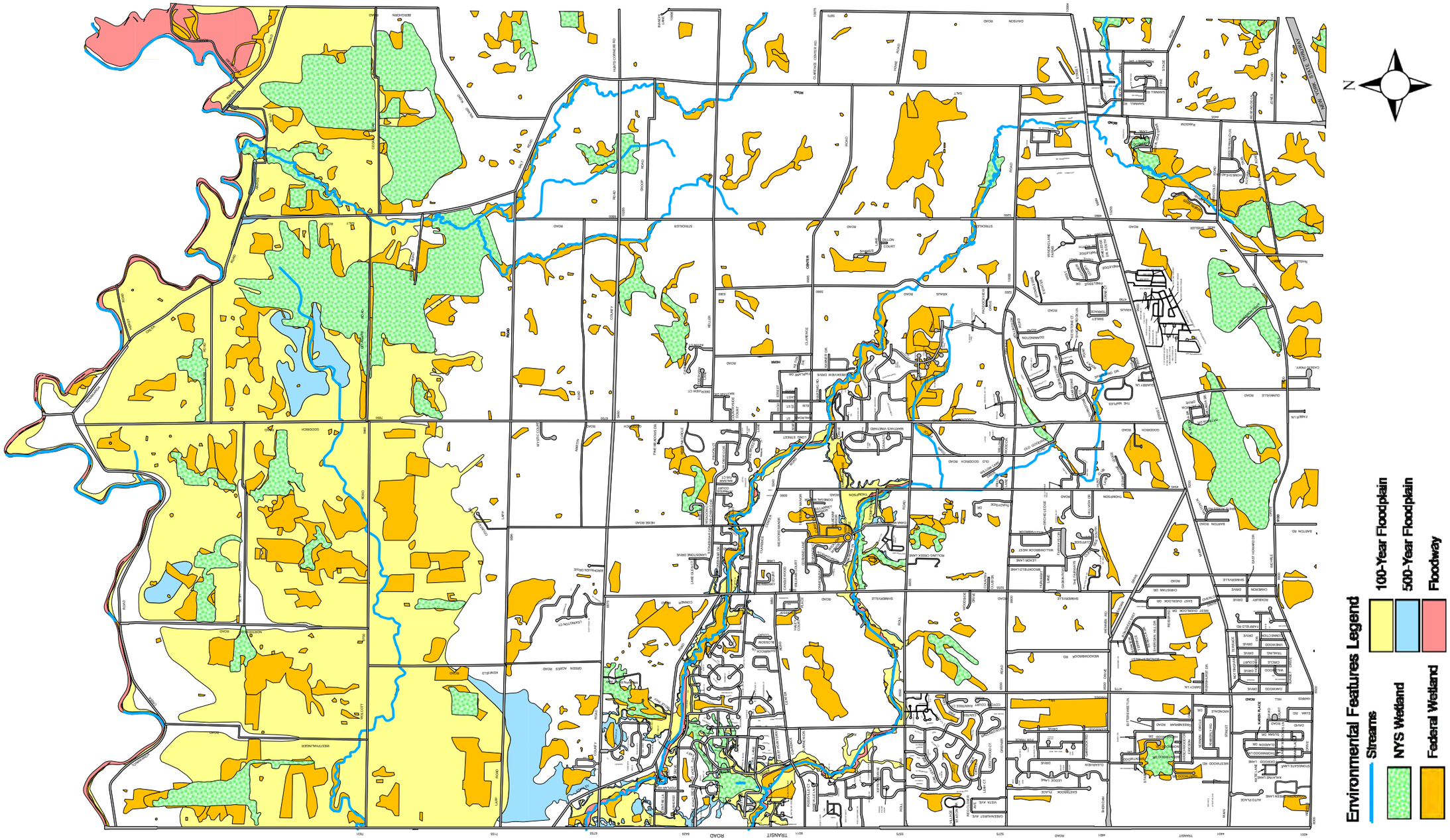
The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sets a "target of excellence" of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which the Town of Clarence exceeds.

There also are a number of public lands that are owned by the Town or state that have not yet been developed. These lands could be utilized to fulfill increasing recreational demands within the community. For example, the State of New York owns a Wildlife Refuge at Tillman Road measuring over 219.3 acres that is not included in any of the recreational analyses for determination of future needs due to its size of non-accessible wetland area, but surely it provides a significant passive recreational benefit for the Town of Clarence.

Park Area	Developed	Undeveloped	Total
Beeman Creek Park	-	386.3	386.3
Carlton Thompson Property	-	73.9	73.9
County Road Property	-	27.56	27.56
Fogelsonger Park	4.5	1.5	6
Kruger Property	-	3.94	3.94
Main Town Park	34.3	50.4	84.7
Meadowlakes Park	25.1	-	25.1
Memorial Park	73	13	86
Nuchereno Preserve	-	27.41	27.41
One Town Place	50.1	19.67	69.77
Parker Park	6.4	-	6.4
Peanut Line Trail	49.75	-	49.75
Sunset Park	17.2	-	17.2
Thompson Road Park	20	72.75	92.75
Town Escarpment Area	-	14.14	14.14
West Shore Trail	57.45	-	57.45
Total	**337.8**	**690.57**	**1,028.37**

Figure 12: Town Owned Parkland Acreage (2013 Park Master Plan)

Map 4: Environmental Features



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Environmental Health & Sustainability

Goal Statement

We will practice environmental stewardship in our decision-making, ensuring the quality of our natural resources for the use and enjoyment of existing and future generations. Maintaining the health of our floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, creeks and tributaries, as well as our passive and active parklands is essential to our community's long-term sustainability. We will achieve this by minimizing our ecological footprint through the employment of sound development practices and appropriate land use regulations that prevent the degradation of our natural assets and conserve their environmental, aesthetic, and recreational significance.

Strategies

A. *Protect our creeks and floodplains as natural stormwater management systems.*

B. *Identify and preserve scenic vistas and critical environmental areas.*

C. *Promote the use of our environmental assets for passive and active recreation.*

D. *Ensure potential negative impacts from development on the natural environment are minimized.*

E. *Support and engage in wildlife management practices.*

F. *Coordinate with local, state, and federal environmental agencies and departments.*

Table 2: Environmental Health & Sustainability

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Address increasing issues with and management of the deer and geese population.	Low	CAC, ***TB***	Deer Abatement Program
Require that mature woodlands and other unique or valuable natural features be preserved in developments as part of site plan review process.	Low	PD, TB, ***PB***	Open Space Design Development Overlay District
Create a comprehensive map and inventory of the significant landscape features and environmentally critical sites throughout the Town such as Oak Savannah, Hard Bottom Swamp, the escarpment, and other significant features.	Low	LRC, RAC, ***PD***	Greenprint Parcel Prioritization Map
Increase use and understanding of the State Environmental Quality Review process by all review boards to protect our natural environment from potential negative impacts of development.	Low	PD, ***PB***	SEQRA
Develop formal hiking and snowmobile trails through natural areas where suitable.	Low	PD, TB, ***RAC***	Grant Writer
Continually review impacts of new development and investment on existing wildlife populations and their natural habitats.	Low	PD, ***PB***	Open Space Design Development Overlay District
Reduce Town's overall environmental footprint through management of pollution, waste material, and use of energy.	Low	TB, Town Administrators, ***Engineering Department***	Continuing Education Opportunities
Actively monitor and preserve water quality throughout the Town.	Low	CAC, ***Engineering Department***	Convert Water Level Monitors
Incorporate better wayfinding and signage identifying the Town's passive and active recreational opportunities and guiding the public to them.	Low/Medium	Parks Department, RAC, ***Highway Department***	Parks Master Plan, Bike Master Plan
Include passive and active recreational amenities at environmental sites, such as benches, educational signage, lights, trail maps, etc.	Low/Medium	Parks Department, RAC, Highway Department, ***TB***	Parks Master Plan, Bike Master Plan
Provide opportunities for kayaking or other water-based recreational uses on Tonawanda Creek	Low/Medium	TB, ***RAC***	Greenprint Program
Review and revise the Town's Land Use Law to provide consistency with the desired land use patterns outlined in this Plan.	Medium	PB, PD, ***TB***	Comprehensive Plan, Town Code
Draft and adopt Environmental Protection Overlay Districts (EPODs) for environmentally critical areas and resources, including but not limited to floodplains, wetlands, woodlands, steep slopes, and wildlife management areas, to better monitor and protect them from development pressures and degradation.	Medium/High	ACoE, DEC, RAC, PB, WNY Land Conservancy, ***PD***	Growth Constraints Map
Review and revise the Town Code to include provisions for green infrastructure and renewable energy use in both building and site design.	Medium/High	Engineering Department, PB, PD, ***TB***	Consultant
Encourage the application of natural stormwater management practices, such as bioswales or rain gardens, with new development proposals.	Medium/High	PB, PD, TB, ***Engineering Department***	MS4 Community

***Acronyms:** *ACoE: Army Corps of Engineers, CAC: Conservation Advisory Committee, DEC: Department of Environmental Conservation, LRC: Landscape Review Committee, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, RAC: Recreational Advisory Committee, TB: Town Board.*

Introduction

When assessing a community's transportation network and connectivity, it is important to look at both motorized and non-motorized transportation options. The Town of Clarence roadways are predominantly rural in character outside of the hamlet areas. In order to increase the level of service for all users of the Town's transportation network it will be important for the Town to consider not only the vehicular traffic impacts of future development and investment, but also the opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations where appropriate.

In 2015, the Town initiated a Corridor Economic Redevelopment Plan for Route 5 to develop Main Street as a place people will be motivated to slow down and explore.

Roadways

Within the Town of Clarence there are privately owned streets, Town owned streets, county owned roadways, and state routes. Vehicular connectivity within the Town is predominantly provided via east/west running roadways. During stakeholder interviews, one of the main traffic concerns raised was over the lack of north/south travel routes for motorists. As development continues traffic volumes generated by denser development areas and collector streets to subdivisions will continue to increase and put pressure on the limited north/south connections.

The peak hour congestion currently experienced at the intersection of Goodrich Road and Clarence Center Road is a good example of the high traffic volumes already present on Clarence's north/south routes. Traffic impacts will continue to be a critical factor in reviewing future projects and to maintaining the quality of life within the Town. It will be critical in the future to better coordinate land use with regional transportation agencies (Erie County and NYS DOTs) to ensure that potential traffic problems are addressed prior to granting land use approvals.

West Shore Trail at Davison Road

In 2004, the Towns of Clarence and Amherst developed a Land Use Access Management Plan (LUAMP) for the Transit Road Corridor (summarized on page 6). Transit Road represents one of the major north/south roads east of the city of Buffalo. The goal of the LUAMP was to make Transit Road a safer, more efficient transportation corridor as well as a more dynamic commercial corridor. The recommendations of the LUAMP should continue to be applied throughout the corridor for better access management.

Sidewalks

The major roadways within the Town that provide consistent sidewalk access are Main Street and Transit Road. Clarence Center has a relatively developed sidewalk network linking the surrounding neighborhoods to the four-corners area; while the Clarence Hollow hamlet area provides limited sidewalk connectivity to Main Street. The Harris Hill hamlet area provides sidewalks near to the elementary school, as well as north and south of Main Street along Harris Hill Road. The hamlets of Swormville and Wolcottsburg, however, currently have little to no sidewalk accommodations. In areas where there is an increased density of development, such as Clarence Center, Clarence Hollow, and Harris Hill a more established sidewalk network is desirable to connect local residents to the neighboring businesses and promote a more traditional, village-like character.

On-Road Bicycle Facilities

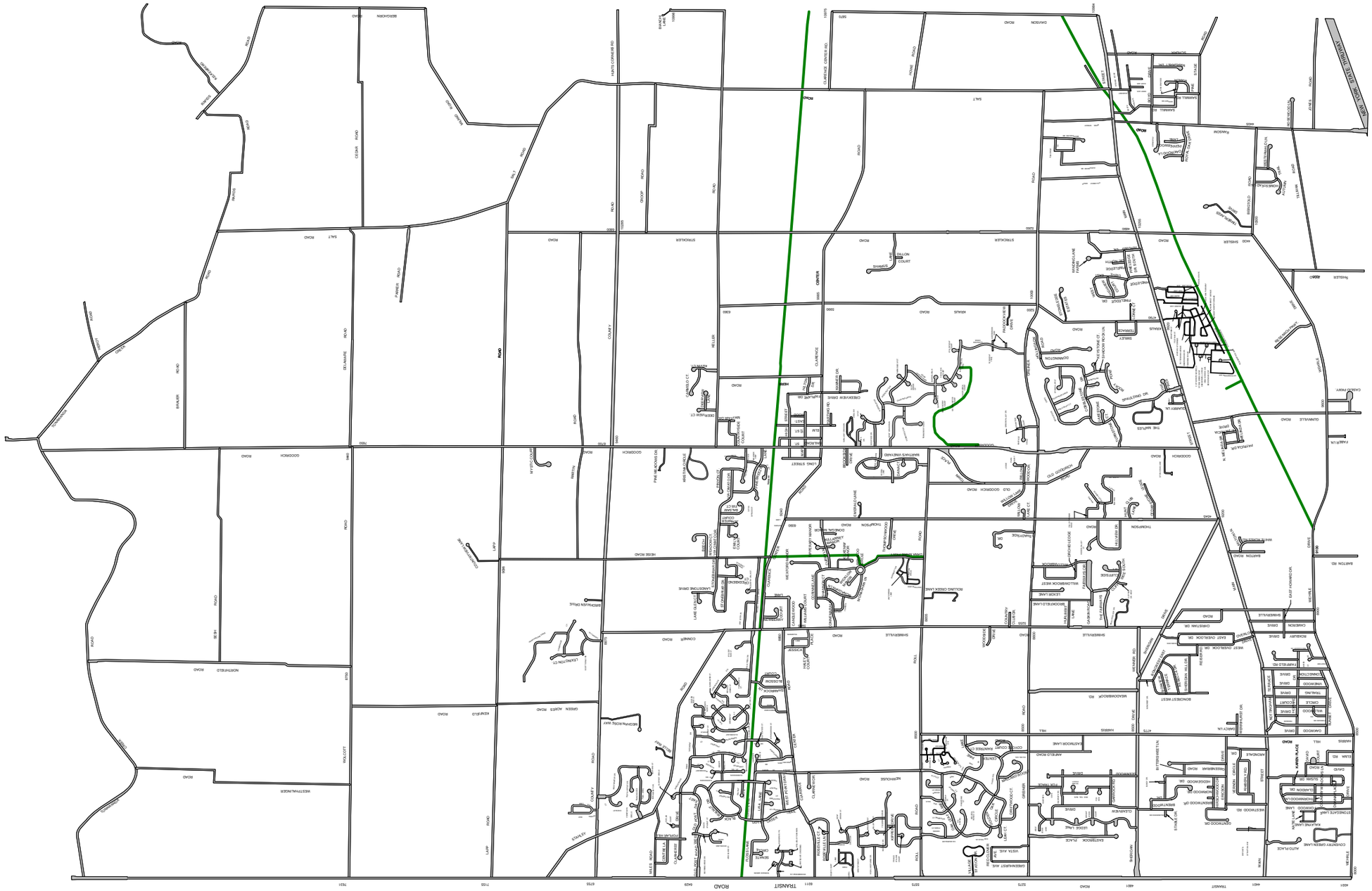
Although many of the Town's roadways are rural in character and would not be appropriate for sidewalk development, there are opportunities for on-road bicycle facilities. Roadways such as Roll Road, Goodrich Road, Greiner Road, Harris Hill Road, Salt Road, Strickler Road, and Clarence Center Road could provide increased bicycle connectivity via bike lanes, shared use lanes, or increased shoulder widths. On-road facilities such as these would improve the level of service for bicyclists greatly with little capital investment. Provided the right-of-way and roadway design criteria permit these facilities, they could be accomplished with routine roadway re-striping.

Recreational Trails

Currently there are two trails totaling 10.2 miles that run through the Town and connect local parks and historic destinations. The Peanut Line Trail runs 6.1 miles east-west across the Town connecting recreational sites such as Meadowlakes Park and the Memorial Park Soccer Center. The West Shore Trail is a 4.1 mile path running south of Main Street until Salt Road, and then continuing northeast into the Town of Newstead. The West Shore Trail connects both historic and recreational resources in the Town, including the Landow Log Cabin, Town Park Clubhouse, Main Town Park, and Parker Commons Park. The expansion of a trail network within Clarence is a priority for the future as these trails are heavily utilized by Town residents and considered a major recreational and off-road transportation connectivity asset for the Town.

Continued development of recreational trails is a major recommendation of this Plan update. Trail development will aid in discouraging excess automobile usage on residential collector streets. In addition, trails provide one of the most desirable recreational experiences identified for future recreational needs by Clarence residents.

Map 5: Transportation Network



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Transportation & Connectivity

Goal Statement

We will strive to create a transportation system that is safe and serves as an asset to local businesses and residents. It is our intent to enhance the access, convenience, and comfort of all users regardless of age and physical ability, while also providing a more healthy, active lifestyle for our residents. The Town will place a priority on connecting our neighborhoods, hamlets, commercial activity centers, and community resources using a combination of roads, bike facilities, multi-use trails, sidewalks, and transit service.

Strategies

A. *Implement traffic calming measures where desired and appropriate.*

B. *Expand transportation networks and connections for all modes of travel.*

C. *Increase access and mobility for non-vehicular users, such as seniors and the disabled.*

D. *Improve on-street and off-street facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.*

E. *Promote walkability and access in and around the hamlets and other activity centers.*

F. *Encourage and support enhanced transit opportunities.*

The Metropolitan Planning Organization for Erie and Niagara Counties, the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), is required to maintain a long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) that identifies transportation deficiencies, policies, strategies, and projects for the region.

The MTP makes the GBNRTC Planning Area (Erie and Niagara Counties and their respective municipalities) eligible to receive a large amount of federal transportation funding to improve, maintain, and operate highways, public transit, bikeways, sidewalks, and related facilities.

For more information on the GBNRTC and the most recent MTP update visit: www.gbnrtc.org

Table 3: Transportation & Connectivity

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Develop a comprehensive Bike Path and Trail Master Plan and Map of off-road trails and identify areas for trail expansions, connections, or amenities. *- Create more north/south bicycle connections and tie into regional bike path networks* *- Add amenities to paths such as lighting, wayfinding signage, benches, dog waste bags, and water fountains.*	Medium	Highway Department, RAC, UB, ***PD***	Recreational Trail Master Plan, Maps, GBNRTC Region Bicycle Master Plan
Coordinate public transportation and/or Town supported or sponsored transportation opportunities to increase frequency and stops to Clarence activity centers and major destinations for all users. *- Provide transportation for workers to get into Town for employment opportunities* *- Improve access for residents needing transportation out of Town for recreational, medical, and other services*	Medium	NFTA, PD, SC, ***TB***	Needs Analysis (to be created)
Draft and adopt a Complete Streets policy that classifies roadways based on anticipated users and desired improvements.	Medium	ECDPW, Engineering and Highway Departments, DOT, PB, PD, TSAC, ***TB***	Example Complete Streets Policies
Review policies regarding public and private roadway design and use to maintain consistency of Town standards for all future roadways and roadway improvements.	Medium	Engineering and Highway Departments, PB, PD, ***TB***	Town Code, Federal and State Standards
Work with local, state, and regional transportation departments and authorities to include on-street bicycle facilities, where appropriate, when re-striping roadways. *- Consider bike lanes along major roadways connecting existing recreational areas and trails* *- Widen and clear shoulders where bike lanes are not feasible (e.g. Roll Rd, Wehrle Dr, County Rd)*	Medium	DOT, Highway Department, PB, PD, ***TB***	Bike Path Master Plan, DOT Standards
Review Town Code to promote a walkable development pattern and non-motorized transportation facilities in the hamlets. *- Ensure parking requirements meet current industry standards* *- Review provisions that restrict parking to the side or rear yard only* *- Reduce setbacks for new development and infill to reflect the traditional development character* *- Provide provisions for pedestrian/bicycle amenities and connections both on- and off-site*	Medium/ High	CHA, CHCCPC, CCCCPC, Discover Main Street, PB, TB, TSAC, ***PD***	Design Guidelines, Town Code, Industry Standards
Promote the feasibility of roundabouts or other traffic-calming alternatives where an increased level of service for vehicular and non-vehicular users is desired.	High	ECDPW, Engineering and Highway Departments, DOT, PB, TB, TSAC, ***PD***	SEQR, Grants
Draft and adopt a Transportation Network Master Plan and Map that considers both vehicular and non-motorized transportation connections and facilities throughout the Town, with an emphasis on the improvement of north and south connections.	High	ECDPW, Engineering and Highway Departments, DOT, PB, RAC, SC, YAB, ***PD***	Traffic Studies, Trails Master Plan, Level of Service Baseline Document, Access Management Plan

***Acronyms:** *CCCCPC: Clarence Center Community Character Protection Board, CHA: Clarence Hollow Association, CHCCPC: Clarence Hollow Community Character Protection Board, DOT: Department of Transportation (NYS and/or Erie County), ECDPW: Erie County Department of Public Works, GBNRTC: Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council, NFTA: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, RAC: Recreational Advisory Committee, SC: Senior Center, TSAC: Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, UB: University of Buffalo, YAB: Youth Advisory Board.*

Introduction

The public health and safety of Clarence lies in the provision of local and regional community resources. These resources may include, but are not limited to, schools, parks, civic organizations, emergency services, and public utilities. The Town has a strong sense of public health and safety, and prides itself on the high quality of life afforded to its residents. A few of the Town's community services contributing to resident health, safety, and wellness have been outlined below.

Educational Opportunities

Map 6 on the next page shows the current extent of the School Districts located within the Town of Clarence. These School Districts include Clarence Center, Sheridan Hill, Harris Hill, Ledgeview, Williamsville, and Newstead.

One of the greatest points of pride in Clarence is the strength of school education and programming. During the Youth Workshops students expressed that they felt well prepared for college and were provided a great education. The majority of the Town educational facilities are operated by the Clarence Center School District which includes Clarence High School, Clarence Middle School, Clarence Center Elementary, Harris Hill Elementary, Ledgeview Elementary, and Sheridan Hill Elementary. The local School Districts within Clarence have successfully partnered with the Town, to provide educational and recreational opportunities to generation after generation of young adults and children in the community.

Recreational Opportunities

As previously discussed in the Environmental Health and Sustainability Goal (page 23), and the Transportation and Connectivity Goal (page 27), there are ample recreational opportunities available within the Town in the form of parklands and trails. Additionally the Town has well-organized recreational programming for residents young and old. The Town of Clarence Youth Bureau helps to facilitate sports and summer programs for the school aged children of the community. Their mission is "to provide services, opportunities and resources that promote positive, healthy development among the youth of Clarence." Furthermore, the Town has an active senior population through Clarence Senior Citizens, Inc. who organize and offer adult programming and social events at the Town's Senior Center.

Local musicians at the Clarence Senior Center (December 2014)

Emergency Services

The six Fire Districts that serve the Town of Clarence include Clarence, Clarence Center, Rapids, Swormville, Harris Hill, and East Amherst. The largest fire district in terms of coverage is the Clarence Center Fire Company, while the Harris Hill Fire District receives the most calls. It is important to note that the Town does not control the Fire Districts; as like School Districts they are operated under their own leadership with separate tax revenue. A map of Fire Districts can be found in the Appendix.

The police services for the Town of Clarence include the New York State Police Troop A in Zone 2, with barracks located on Main Street in Clarence. The Erie County Sheriff's Department also provides police services to the Town, and maintains a substation on Goodrich Road. In 2016, the Town announced its partnership with the NYS Police and Erie County Sheriff's Department to move the local police stations and establish a Town of Clarence Public Safety Complex. This complex will be located on the Town Hall Campus and will provide space for the operation of State Police, Town Court, and Erie County Sheriff barracks. Completion of this project is expected in fall of 2017.

Additionally, Clarence has an Emergency Services Department and Security Department. The Emergency Services Department provides leadership, coordination and support during times of crisis, disaster and unforeseen events. They work to prepare and equip employees and residents alike on the proper response and techniques needed during times of emergency. The Security Department includes 11 personnel who patrol all Town facilities including Town Parks. They also enforce the Town Property and Facilities Laws. They work closely with the Erie County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police helping to preserve the safe environment residents enjoy in Clarence.

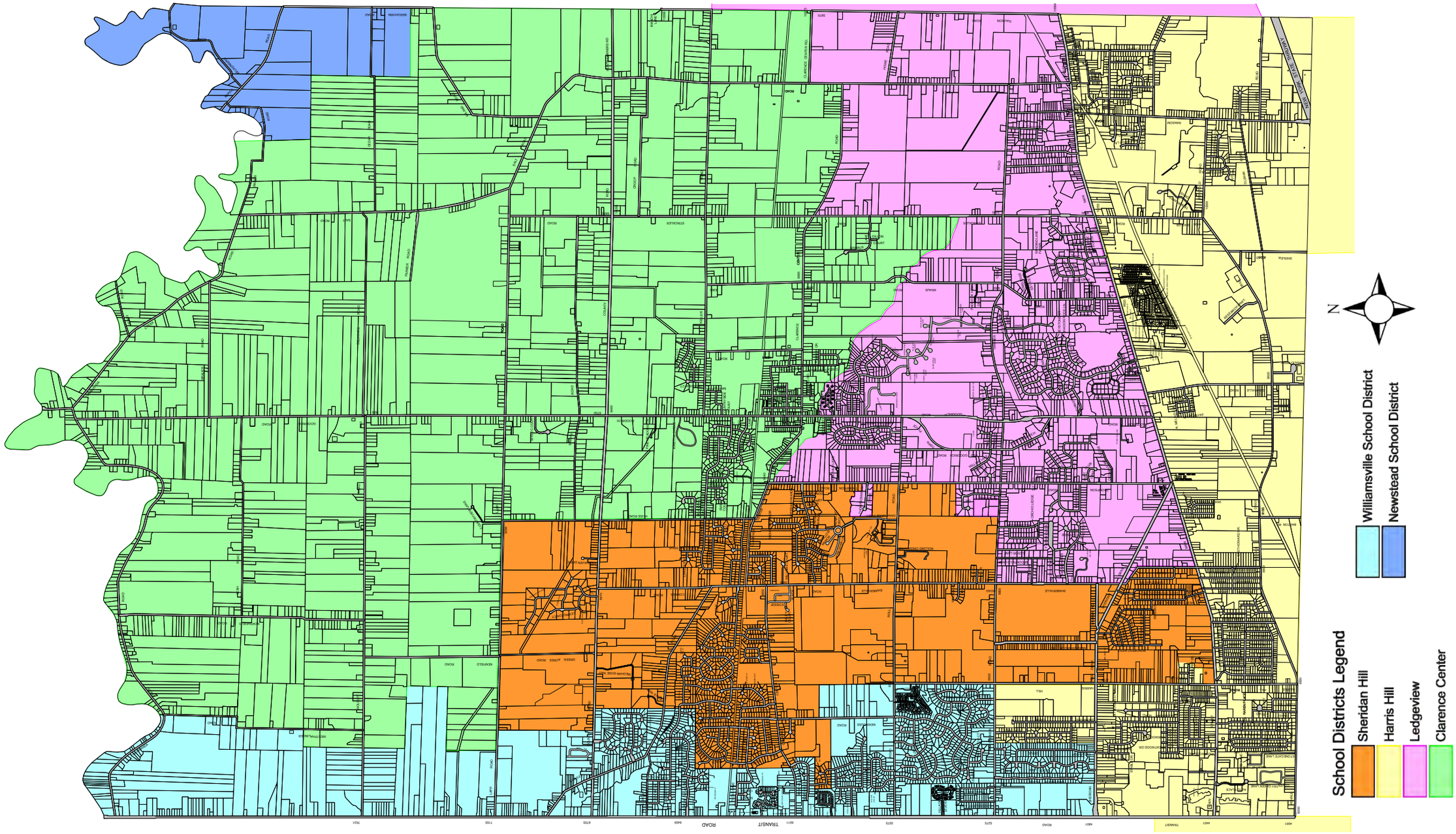
Public Utilities

The New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) provides electrical transmission and distribution service throughout Clarence. National Fuel Gas provides natural gas service to portions of the Town, mainly to the south of Clarence Center Road and west of Salt Road.

The Town is served by municipal water facilities throughout its entire area with minor exceptions. Clarence has an agreement with the Erie County Water Authority to manage water service within the Town. Clarence should continue to coordinate with the Erie County Water Authority to ensure that, as new residential and commercial growth occurs in the Town, water supplies are available and adequate to serve the needs of new residents and employees. New development should proceed at a pace that maintains the adequacy of the water supply to meet commercial and domestic consumption.

A full summary of the Town's sewer infrastructure has been included in the Community Profile on page 13.

Map 6: School Districts



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Public Health & Safety

Goal Statement

We will sustain the health, safety, and well-being of our residents by supporting the delivery of community services, organizations, and institutions that enrich our quality of life. These service providers generally fall into two categories, public and not-for-profit. Public entities include our school system, utility providers, emergency service providers, and parks and recreation department. Not-for-profit groups include our religious organizations, senior care providers, service organizations, and sports leagues. It is the combined efforts of these public entities and not-for-profit organizations that elevate our residents' well-being by providing opportunities to learn, worship, serve, engage, and play in our Town.

Strategies

A. *Continue to evaluate and upgrade public service infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.) to ensure they are adequate and well-maintained.*

B. *Support the community service organizations and agencies that are meeting the physical, social, and mental health needs of Town residents.*

C. *Provide access to recreational and educational programming and activities to meet the needs of our residents, regardless of age.*

D. *Maintain the adequacy of community services, such as fire, police, emergency service responders, etc.*

Table 4: Public Health & Safety

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Review and maintain currency of the Town of Clarence Parks and Recreation Master Plan. *- Inventory the use of both public and private facilities in Town for all ages* *- Include consideration of private and non-profit sports programs for potential collaboration efforts* *- Consider opening up parks and sports programming to non-residents* *- Review Town recreation and facility fees to ensure they are reflective of current costs and demand* *- Consider the development of smaller, neighborhood recreation centers (playgrounds, etc.)*	Low	PB, PD, RAC, ***Parks Department***	Site Work, Existing Parks Master Plan, Demographic Study
Encourage neighborhood groups and activities to increase community engagement and communication and welcome new families or residents.	Low	Town Assessor, ***Clarence Chamber of Commerce***	Town Records
Foster an increased cultural experience throughout Town by supporting local music, theater, and arts programs or events.	Low	Churches, Schools, ***Clarence Concert Association***	Demand/Usage
Continue to support and coordinate efforts with the private and non-profit organizations that provide programming and recreational opportunities for residents.	Low	Parks Department, Schools, ***Recreation Department***	Demand/Usage
Encourage the development of programs to assist seniors with home maintenance and everyday needs, such as grocery shopping, lawn services, and minor house repairs.	Low/Medium	SC, YAB, ***Recreation Department***	Local Faith Community, Local Schools, Community Development Block Grants (home repair and maintenance only)
Support the development of a handyman service for seniors.	Low/Medium	SC, YAB, ***Recreation Department***	Local Faith Community, Local Schools
Study the potential use of community facilities, such as fire halls, schools, the legion hall, clubhouse, youth and senior center, for community activities and meetings.	Medium	Fire Departments, Parks Department, Schools, SC, YAB, ***TB***	Inventory, Usage, Communication
Review the Sewer Master Plan to help prioritize and guide future decision-making and funding regarding sewer maintenance, upgrades, and expansions.	High	ECSD#5, HBSWC, PB, PD, TB, ***Engineering Department***	Sewer Master Plan, Environmental Impact Statement (Spaulding Lake)
Pursue funding to assist with the update and expansion of sewer infrastructure in the Harris Hill community and other appropriate areas.	High	Local, State, and Federal Grants, Engineering Department, PD, ***TB***	Grant Writer, Public/Private Partnership
Investigate making an investment in year-round sports facilities that could be rented or shared with both private and non-profit programs (e.g. an arena or ice rink).	High	Parks Department, RAC, Recreation Department, PB, YAB, ***TB***	Demand/Usage
Consider the feasibility of opening a community center that would provide meeting space, recreational activities, and programming for residents of all ages.	High	Parks Department, SC, YAB, ***TB***	Previous Research and Studies, Usage Numbers

***Acronyms:** *ECSD#5: Erie County Sewer District #5, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, RAC: Recreational Advisory Committee, SC: Senior Center, HBSWC: Heise-Brookhaven Sewage Works Corporation, TB: Town Board, YAB: Youth Advisory Board.*

Introduction

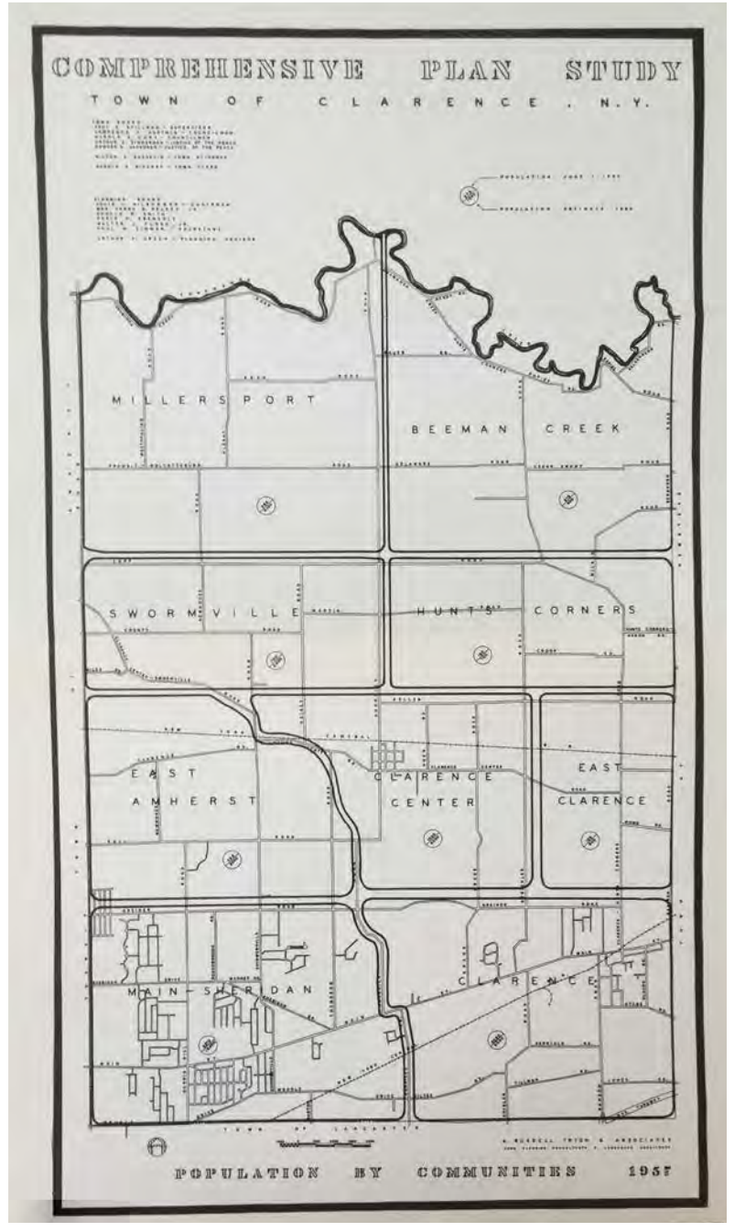
As the oldest municipality in Erie County, the Town of Clarence has a rich heritage in both its agricultural practices and early settlement days. Clarence has historically been a rural town that saw the development of traditional, village-like hamlet areas over time. The Map at right from Clarence's 1959 Plan shows the previous nine communities of the Town which were largely undeveloped at that time. Much of Clarence's residential growth occurred in the last four decades (over 6,000 acres were developed) in the areas known as Clarence Center, Swormville, East Amherst, Main-Sheridan (Harris Hill), and Clarence Hollow.

The Town has lost some of its rural character to the south due to residential, commercial and industrial development. However, the vast green environment and open spaces are still one of the prime characteristics enjoyed by Clarence residents. Many also take pride in the history, architecture, and walkability of the Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow hamlets.

Rural Character

The north of the Town remains dominated by farmlands and open spaces, with barns and single-family homes fronting the roadways. Despite the level of residential development in the southern portions of the Town, there are still pockets of farmland and open spaces along roadways which highlight Clarence's agricultural history. Wehrle Drive and Greiner Road, for example, generally run east/west between the hamlets of Clarence Center and Harris Hill. Their character in the area between the hamlets remains largely rural and undeveloped.

The Town does and will continue to employ techniques to protect the farmland and open space that contributes to its rural heritage and environment. These techniques include, but are not limited to, the preservation of agriculture districts, conservation easement programs, property tax relief, agricultural zoning classifications and development right purchases.



Map from the 1959 Comprehensive Plan showing the nine communities established in Clarence.

Historic Preservation

Clarence is blessed with several historic landmarks, historic properties, and older neighborhoods that have retained a historic character. The concept of preserving the historical aspects of the Town has long been identified as a significant community goal by residents and members of the Town's Historical Society and Historic Preservation Commission.

Previously most historic preservation efforts occurring within the Town were the result of private interests of property owners and from the support offered via the Historical Society and interested citizens. In 2007, the Town Board adopted a Historic Preservation Law guided by the Historical Preservation Commission as part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. The Law was established to achieve the following objectives:

- Protect and enhance the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of the Town of Clarence's historic, architectural, social, economic, and cultural heritage;
- Foster civic pride in the accomplishments of the past;
- Protect and enhance the Town's attractiveness to visitors and the support and stimulus to the economy thereby provided, and promote the use of historic districts and landmark sites for the education, pleasure and welfare of the Town; and
- Ensure the harmonious, orderly, and efficient growth and development of the Town, while safeguarding the Town's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage as embodied and reflected in such landmarks and districts.

Additional efforts may be desirable in the future to help designate and protect areas of high historical and cultural value to the Town.

Historic Landmarks

10465 Main Street

4830 Thompson Road

6110 Salt Road

6020 Goodrich Road

4765 Ransom Road

10622 Main Street

8520 Tonawanda Creek Road

9455 Clarence Center Road

6879 Salt Road

10525 Clarence Center Road

10700 Boyd Drive

4150 Harris Hill Road

Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow have a number of structures that contribute to local architectural and cultural heritage. Each hamlet has its own character with a variety of architectural styles and development patterns. Clarence has designated 20 local landmarks through the Certified Local Governments program and boasts two national landmarks that are recognized by the State and National Registers.

The local Historic Preservation Commission is devoted to protecting and enhancing the landmarks and historic districts which represent distinctive elements of the Town of Clarence's historic, architectural, social, economic, and cultural heritage. The Town's current local landmarks include the addresses pictured at left, as well as the following:

- 10405 Main Street;
- 10465 Main Street - Landow Log Cabin;
- 10529 Main Street;
- 10748 Main Street;
- 10768 Main Street - Spoors Hotel;
- 10847 Main Street;
- 10871 Main Street; and
- 10897 Main Street.

Additionally, the Historical Preservation Commission has completed three surveys that are existing resources for the Town of Clarence. These include the:

- Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources;
- Intensive Level Historic Resources Survey; and
- Reconnaissance Level Survey of Barns and Agricultural Structures.

Community Character & History

Goal Statement

We will strive to ensure that future growth and development compliments our character and history. This will require the preservation of some of our most important buildings, sites, and places. At the cultural, social, and economic heart of the community are our hamlets, which showcase many of our historical buildings and sites in a dense, walkable traditional development pattern. Meanwhile, the roots of our agricultural heritage are still very visible in the vast open spaces, active farms, and historic places situated outside the hamlets today. Future development and decision-making will recognize the importance of architecture, siting, and context sensitive design to assure the compatibility of development with the desired aesthetic of the Town.

Strategies

A. *Ensure developments within the hamlet(s) are consistent with the walkable, traditional development pattern and desired character of the area.*

B. *Encourage the historically accurate preservation and rehabilitation of historic sites and structures.*

C. *Ensure new developments and investments promote a sense of place and respect the character of the surrounding environment.*

D. *Promote the history of the Town through its character and identity.*

Table 5: Community Character & History

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Educate the community on the benefits of listing local sites, structures, and districts on the National Register of Historic Places and with the State Historic Preservation Office.	Low	CHS, PB, PD, SHPO, TB, TH, ***HPC***	National Register of Historic Places, CB Survey, Barn Survey, Schools, Town Website
Utilize the services of a design professional, where needed, to assist the Planning Board or other review bodies in their review of development proposals to improve the appearance of developments.	Low	PB, PD, ***TB***	Consultant
Review the Town Code to better apply overlay and historic design standards within the hamlets and other traditional development areas.	Low/Medium	PB, PD, SHPO, ***TB***	Zoning Code, Clarence Hollow & Clarence Center Design Guidelines
Review and revise nonresidential design standards for future development and investment Town-wide to ensure applications reflect the character of the surrounding environment.	Low/Medium	PB, PD, Town Attorney, ***TB***	Town Code, Design Guidelines
Review and revise Town Code to include Historic Design Guidelines and permit a wider variety of uses for the preservation, rehabilitation, or revitalization of historic structures within the Town, particularly within Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow.	Medium	CCCCPC, CHCCPC, HPC, PB, PD, ***TB***	Town Code, Design Guidelines
Review the role of the Historic Preservation Commission in the review of historic sites, structures, and districts.	Medium	HPC, PD, Town Attorney, ***TB***	Town Code
Implement pedestrian environment enhancing traffic-calming measures within the hamlets, such as street trees, lawns, bump-outs, high-visibility crosswalks, and 10-foot vehicular travel lanes.	Medium	Clarence Chamber of Commerce, CCCCPC, CHCCPC, Discover Main Street, DOT, IDA, PB, PD, ***TB***	IDA Study, 2005 Report
Review the use of the Clarence Hollow Overlay Zone and the subsequent design guidelines to ensure compatibility with the desired density, walkability, and historic pattern of development outlined in this Plan.	Medium	PB, PD, Town Attorney, ***TB***	IDA Study, Town Code, Overlay Zones, Land Use Access Master Plan
Review Town Code to facilitate the redevelopment of Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow. *- Permit mixing of uses and an increased density of development where desirable* *- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings where appropriate* *- Review parking requirements to ensure consistency with current demand*	Medium	CCCCPC, CHCCPC, PB, PD, ***TB***	Town Code, Overlay Zoning
Work to ensure that the management of traffic and congestion within the Hollow does not detract from enhancing its overall walkability.	Medium	DOT, ECDPW, Engineering Department, Highway Department, TB, ***PD***	Main Street Plan
Conduct a historic resource survey and pursue designation on the State and National Registers. *- Investigate the use of Historic Districts for Clarence Hollow and Clarence Center* *- Individually list sites and structures with historical significance outside these areas Town-wide*	Medium/High	CHS, PB, PD, SHPO, TB, TH, ***HPC***	CB Survey, Barn Survey, SHPO Documents & Guides
Continue to enforce building and property maintenance codes for derelict or deteriorating structures and sites throughout the Town.	Medium/High	Code Enforcement, HPC, PD, Town Attorney, ***Building & Engineering Department***	Local Landmark List, Whistle Blower Hotline, NYS Building Code

***Acronyms:** *CCCCPC: Clarence Center Community Character Preservation Committee, CHCCPC: Clarence Hollow Community Character Preservation Committee, CHS: Clarence Historical Society, DOT: Department of Transportation (Erie County and/or New York State), HPC: Historic Preservation Commission, IDA: Clarence Industrial Development Agency, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, SHPO: New York State Historic Preservation Office, TB: Town Board, TH: Town Historian*

Introduction

Since the dramatic increase in residential land uses since the 1970s, the Town has adopted an economic development strategy to attract and support new and expanding industrial and commercial operations to offset the large share tax base provided by residential developments. With over 75% of the Town's assessed land value coming from single-family residential developments (see page 11), there is a need for the Town to diversify and increase its value and share of nonresidential properties.

Town of Clarence Industrial Development Agency The Town of Clarence Industrial Development Agency (TCIDA), in partnership with Town officials and staff, continues to successfully market Clarence as a great community for new commercial and industrial operations or expansions. The TCIDA's mission is:

> *"To provide a high quality of life to the residents of the Town, by promoting, developing, encouraging, and assisting in the acquiring, constructing, reconstructing, improving, maintaining, equipping, and furnishing industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, commercial, research, and recreation facilities; through incentives; and thereby advancing the job opportunities, health, general prosperity, and economic welfare of the Town residents in a cost effective and efficient manner."*

The TCIDA seeks to achieve this mission through the implementation of a variety of programs and incentives, such as industrial revenue bonds and leases, local property tax abatements, construction materials sales tax exemptions, and mortgage recording tax exemptions. Generally the TCIDA focuses on Clarence's Transit Road Corridor, Main Street Corridor, Business Park areas, and Clarence Hollow.

Hamlet Revitalization

Map 7 on the opposing page shows the general location and coverage of Clarence's existing hamlets, while also providing an indication of their current level of development and character. The areas encompassing Clarence Center, Clarence Hollow, and Harris Hill are well-developed, dense mixed-use activity centers. Despite the limited share of residential developments in and around Swormville, the hamlet still serves as a commercial activity point for many residents. Wolcottsburg, however, remains predominantly rural with the opportunity for some additional commercial or community uses at the intersection of Wolcott Road and Goodrich Road.

Master Plan 2015 discussed the potential negative effects of a shift in national retail trends to construct "Big Box" outlets in suburban landscapes. The Plan noted the potential threat "Big Box" development could have on existing retail infrastructure and character within the Town by providing an oversupply of retail space allowing vacant storefronts to persist. This concern remains for Clarence's hamlet areas and should be addressed through a hamlet revitalization strategy that encourages private investment and fosters a sense of place attracting residents and visitors alike.

The Town's more densely developed hamlets offer a unique opportunity for economic reinvestment with a focus on sustainability, affordability, and community health and wellness. By reinvesting in the hamlet centers, the Town can implement sustainable, "smart growth" development practices, such as:

- Permitting a mix of land uses;
- Promoting compact building design;
- Creating diverse housing opportunities;
- Fostering a sense-of-place;
- Preserving open space, farmland, and the environment; and
- Reinvesting in existing community infrastructures (buildings, utilities, etc.).

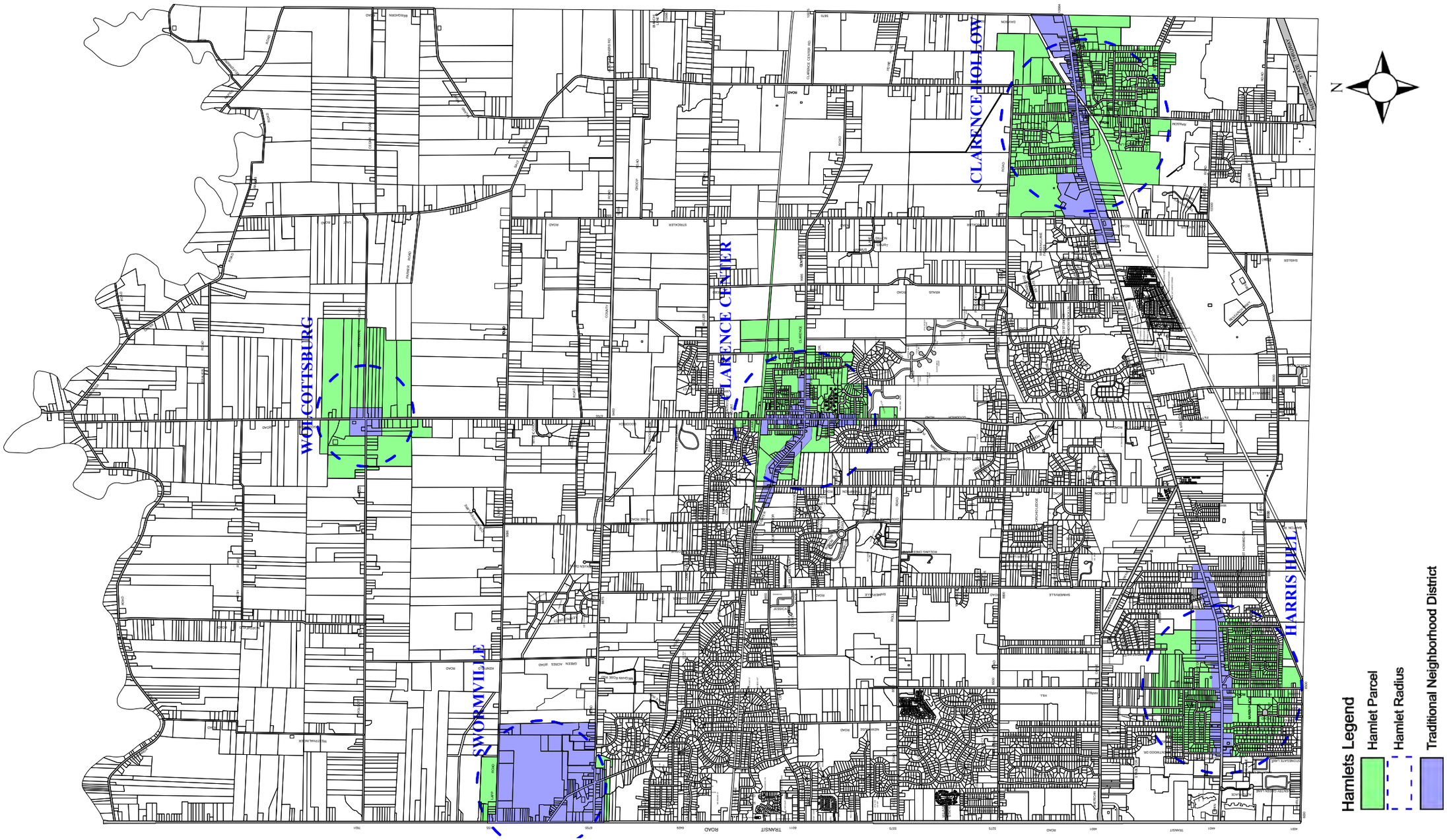
> "Building walkable, livable communities means that places would get more compact with a variety of amenities located close to homes. Developing denser places limits outward growth, conserves land, curbs infrastructure costs, and makes it easier to get around without a car."
> - One Region Forward Plan (2015)

Investment opportunities that capitalize on the existing strengths, character, and infrastructure of Clarence's hamlets will provide a high rate of return to the community not only in terms of economic value, but also to the pride, health, and enjoyment of residents. Fostering a mixed-use, active and walkable environment in hamlets like Clarence Center, Clarence Hollow, and Harris Hill will promote a healthier, active lifestyle and provide increased opportunities for residents to shop and dine locally. Support and input from the Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow Community Character Preservation Committees will be important in the pursuit of hamlet revitalization efforts in those areas.

There is a demand for market rate and affordable units within the Town. The hamlet areas are a great place to accommodate diverse housing prices and styles through the zoning code's Traditional Neighborhood District (TND), also shown on Map 7. The TND allows residential units as permitted uses on second story structures at an increased density compared to that of other residential areas. This gives developers and property owners an incentive to renovate buildings to include alternative housing options, both renter- and owner-occupied, at affordable rates.

It is important to note that the primary limitation to the success of this hamlet revitalization strategy is the Town's sewer infrastructure. Major upgrades and improvements will need to be made in hamlets like Harris Hill to support the increased density and level of activity that is desired by Clarence residents. Ultimately it will take a series of public/private partnerships and investment to achieve this.

Map 7: Town Hamlets



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Economic Development & Hamlet Revitalization

Goal Statement

We will manage and pursue investments, both public and private, that promote sustainable economic growth throughout our Town. The success of our local economy relies on the commercial, office, and industrial investments located throughout the Town, as these operations provide opportunities for employment, tax revenue, and growth. Over the next decade, the collection of businesses located along Transit Road and Main Street will continue to be a primary source of economic activity. However, it is anticipated that the role that our hamlets serve in our local economy will become more significant. Our hamlets will emerge as more vibrant activity centers, characterized by unique services, shopping, entertainment, jobs, and housing opportunities within their historic, walkable environments.

Strategies

A. *Encourage and support the growth of local businesses and enterprises.*

B. *Foster a mix of residential and commercial activity in the hamlets that contributes to a walkable and affordable lifestyle.*

C. *Pursue and promote the attraction and expansion of local commercial, industrial, and office investments.*

D. *Monitor the balance and location of residential and nonresidential development throughout the Town.*

Table 6: Economic Development & Hamlet Revitalization

Action Item	Level of Complexity	Potential Parties* (Bold Indicates Lead Party)	Tools
Work with local agencies to promote and attract local business to Clarence.	Low	IDA, ***Clarence Chamber of Commerce***	Chamber Website, IDA Website, SCORE
Promote local history and the hamlets to increase visits by residents and others. *- Create a motto and/or marketing campaign* *- Draft and distribute brochures* *- Increase awareness of community events* *- Publish local history column in State of Town or other paper*	Low	Discover Main Street, HPC, IDA, ***Clarence Chamber of Commerce***	IDA Study, Town Website
Review and revise the Sewer Master Plan. *- Identify areas where adjustments or additions to sewer districts are necessary or appropriate* *- Prioritize critical areas for sewer infrastructures improvements, upgrades, or expansions* *- Consider impacts of growth constraints and other utility infrastructure pressures*	Medium	PB, PD, TB, ***Engineering Department***	Sewer Plan, Environmental Impact Statement
Work with developers and property owners to coordinate future infrastructure investments (sewer and electric power especially) for continued growth of the Town's industrial and commercial areas.	Medium	Engineering Department, PB, PD, ***TB***	Master Sewer Plan, Amendment to Master Plan
Investigate and support the provision of quality, affordable renter and owner-occupied housing options within the Town for young professionals, young families, recent graduates, seniors, the local workforce, and others.	Medium	PD, TB, ***PB***	Town Code; Housing Study
Review and revise Town application review processes to increase understanding by the applicant and action by the boards and streamline the process. *- Review zoning code to reflect market trends and Town expectations for development* *- Analyze provisions for density bonuses, incentive zoning, clustering, or transfer of development rights* *- Look at Zoning Board of Appeals actions for trends in variances and other code issues*	Medium/High	PB, TB, Town Attorney, ***PD***	Town Code
Support provision of entertainment and daily-need uses in the Hamlets to help spur activity.	High	CHA, IDA, ***Clarence Chamber of Commerce***	Town Code
Market existing industrial centers (County Road, Sheridan Drive, Roll Road) to attract further growth and development, particularly within the science and medical technology industry.	High	Clarence Chamber of Commerce, ***IDA***	Town Website, IDA Website

***Acronyms:** *CHA: Clarence Hollow Association, HPC: Historic Preservation Commission, IDA: Clarence Industrial Development Agency, PB: Planning Board, PD: Planning Department, TB: Town Board.*

Future Land Use Summary

Introduction

One of the primary roles of a comprehensive plan is to inform future land use decisions for local governments. The recommended land uses for the Town of Clarence are illustrated on Map 8 on the following page. The purpose of the Future Land Use Map is to identify general categories of land use. It is not intended to indicate specific boundaries or exact zoning district designations. It does, however, represent the community's preferences regarding the location and character of various types of development in the Town. It is reasonable to assume the exact size and boundaries of the land use classifications may change over time, while remaining consistent with the overall intent of this Plan. The Future Land Use Map for Clarence consists of the following six land use categories:

1. **Agricultural/Passive:** Sparsely developed or undeveloped land used for large lot residential, crop production, animal raising, or other farming related activities.
2. **Residential/Passive:** Single-family homes on varying lot sizes and configurations.
3. **Hamlet Neighborhood:** A mix of residential living options blended with community uses and neighborhood commercial uses.
4. **Transitional Business:** Professional offices, service businesses, and residential uses that are limited in site related impacts and generate less traffic than retail establishments.
5. **Business Center:** Retail, office, and service related uses that cater to local residents and the traveling public.
6. **Light Industry:** Limited manufacturing, assembly, warehouse, and distribution activities.

The Future Land Use Map should be used by the Town Board, the Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals, as well as developers and the public to guide future zoning decisions, land use regulations, community services, and priorities for capital improvements and land acquisitions over the next decade.

It should be noted that the Future Land Use Map and Summary is not intended to supplant the Town's development review process and ability to scrutinize proposals, even if they are consistent with the general intent of this Plan.

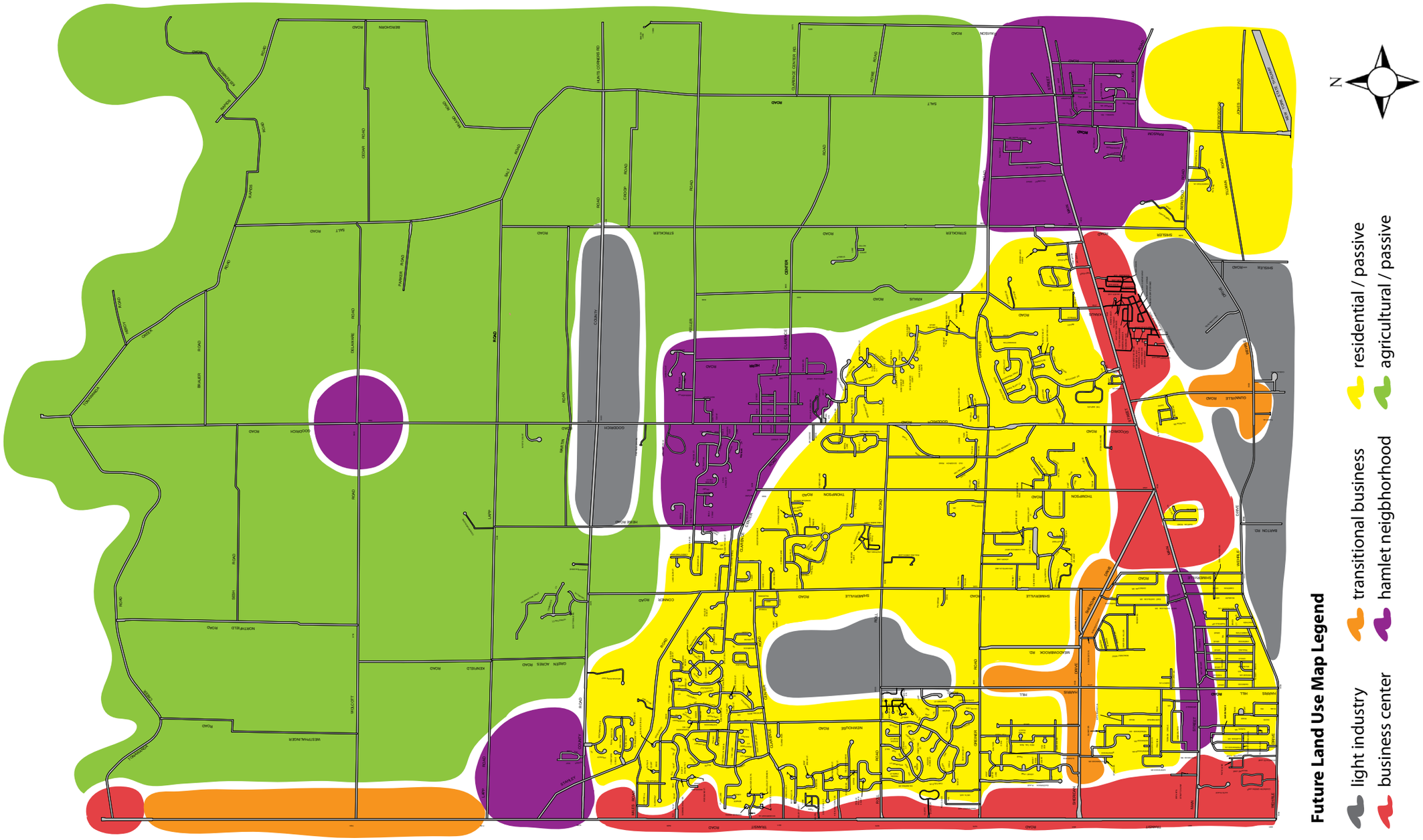
For example, if a commercial use is proposed in an area of the Town that is shown as commercial on the Future Land Use Map, the Town may still deem that use to be inappropriate in that particular location based on specific concerns. These include, but are not limited to, the project's scale, drainage characteristics, and the intensity of its site related impacts (such as traffic generation or lighting). In other words, the Town should utilize the Future Land Use Map in conjunction with its zoning code and the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process to ensure future developments are in the best interests of the community.

Mapping Clarence's Future

This event was formulated around the One Region Forward Initiative, which promotes more sustainable forms of development in Erie and Niagara Counties. On February 8, 2014, the Town hosted a One Region Forward Scenario Planning Workshop at Town Hall. During this Workshop, residents took a broad approach to understand and conceptualize the entire region. Mapping Clarence's Future continued this conversation with a greater level of specificity towards Clarence's place in the region. The event was advertised to the public with the description provided below:

> *"As part of the update to the Master Plan, the Town is holding a public planning exercise to determine the best land uses for particular areas of Clarence. This will involve an analysis of the existing conditions within the Town, the existing Future Land Use Map, past amendments to Master Plan 2015 along with historical land use patterns, in an effort to identify areas (if any) that may be eligible for different land use classification or intensity."*

Map 8: Future Land Use



Map prepared by Town of Clarence Planning Department. For planning purposes only.

Agricultural/Passive

The community input gathered as part of the processes used to develop the Town's Master Plan 2015 and this Comprehensive Plan update indicate that the preservation of the Town's agricultural heritage and rural character has remained a top priority of residents for the past two decades. Despite the significant residential and commercial growth that has occurred in Clarence, agriculture is the predominant land use in the Town and is responsible for the rural character that local residents enjoy. Farming remains a significant industry in the Town, Erie County, and the Buffalo-Niagara Region. It directly supports a variety of agribusinesses and indirectly supports local retail and service establishments. Many of the farmland owners in the Town have expressed a commitment to continue farming by placing their land in an Agricultural District or participating in the Town's Greenprint Program (described on page 19).

The area indicated by the color green on the Future Land Use Map is designated as Agricultural/Passive. Historically, the preferred land use within this area has been farming and farm-related operations. However, there has been a limited number of single-family homes and residential subdivisions constructed within northern and eastern Clarence over the last three decades. The Town should continue to limit the number of non-agricultural uses that locate in this area and direct development away from areas with prime agricultural soils. It should be noted that any such preservation effort must recognize and balance the owner's right to develop their property.

"Passive" in the context of this future land use section is intended to include areas of open space, parkland, or preserved land that are not necessarily residential or agricultural in use.

Photo: www.therootdownfarm.com

Photo: www.brookfieldstables.com

Clarence is home to a diverse array of agricultural businesses. They include U Pick Farms, Community Supported Agriculture operations such as the Root Down Farm (upper left), and a premier horseback riding facility at Brookfield Farms Equestrian Center (upper right).

As previously stated, the Town completed an Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (FPP) in 2012. The Full Build-Out Analysis contained in the FPP is consistent with this Plan update approach to development in agricultural areas. The FPP reads, "The final analysis suggests the potential of an additional 4,480 housing units given current infrastructure constraints and available capacity. As of the 2010 Census there were 9,497 housing units in the town. Existing agricultural zoning classifications contain a majority of the large lot vacant acreage available for residential development. It is imperative that the sanitary sewer prioritization strategy outlined in Master Plan 2015 is adhered to, as this will maximize existing infrastructure investments and minimize sprawling growth into agricultural areas. Total potential build-out capacity will increase greatly if sewer infrastructure expands into agricultural areas. The Master Plan (2015) is critical of this possibility as it will increase the rate and total loss of prime agricultural lands."

Furthermore, the area designated for Agricultural uses on the Future Land Use Map is generally consistent with the Town's Agricultural Floodzone (AF) and Agricultural Rural Residential (ARR) Zoning Districts. The FPP suggests several amendments be made to the Town's Zoning Code and specifically the AF and the ARR Districts to be more supportive of farming operations.

"Mapping Clarence's Future"

The farming operations within the Agricultural area play a key role in the local economy. In addition, the scenic vistas and open space they provide is a defining attribute of Clarence's landscape. The Town should continue to utilize a wide range of regulatory tools, strategic infrastructure investments, and the Greenprint Program to ensure the long term viability of farming and to maintain the rural character of the Agricultural and Open Space area.

Residential/Passive

The Residential/Passive land use classification is shown in yellow on the Future Land Use Map. The areas designated as Residential are located in the southern portion of the Town. Residential areas are generally characterized by single family homes constructed on lots typically ranging from one-third to two acres per unit. As previously stated in Figure 5 (page 9), there have been 23 residential subdivisions containing 1,434 lots approved in Clarence since 2003.

As of the writing of this Plan, there were over 800 undeveloped lots remaining within those 23 approved subdivisions. A significant majority of these lots are located within the Residential land use area. The Town feels that the combination of the areas classified on the Future Land Use Map as Residential and Hamlet Neighborhood are sufficient to accommodate the anticipated residential growth in Clarence over the next ten to fifteen years.

A predominant number of vacant parcels within the Residential land use classification are regulated by the Residential Single-Family Zoning District. This district permits a limited number of non-residential uses such as public service facilities, parks or playgrounds, schools, and churches. Permitting these community resources within residential areas serves to create more vibrant and livable neighborhoods by placing recreational facilities, religious institutions, and public services in close proximity to people's homes. The Town will continue to support the integration of community resources in appropriate locations throughout the Residential land use area.

"Mapping Clarence's Future"

The top and middle photos to the right are representative of the types of single-family residential neighborhoods that have been developed in Clarence over the past fifty years. Over the next decade the Town would like more residential subdivisions to utilize the Open Space Design Development (OSDD) Overlay District or clustering provisions contained in Chapter 229-106 of the Town Code. This approach permits a greater array of living options while conserving open space and natural areas. A prime example of this approach can be seen in the Spaulding Green Project (photo to the bottom right).

Spaulding Green contains a wide variety of housing to cater to different age groups and income levels. Housing types offered in Spaulding Green include estate lots with large single-family homes, patio homes on smaller lots, and attached four-unit "quad" residences. The project also provides a system of sidewalks and recreational trails to connect residents with their neighbors.

One Acre Residential Lots

Two Acre Residential Lots

Mix of Lot Sizes and Housing Types

Photos: Clarence Pictometry, 2016.

Hamlet Neighborhood

Many towns across Upstate New York have a single hamlet or village characterized by a walkable, mixed-use "Main Street" that serves as the social, civic, and economic heart of the community. However, the Town of Clarence was settled uniquely over time with the development of several neighborhood activity centers that are identified today as the Town's hamlets rather than a single town center.

Indicated by the color purple on the Future Land Use Map (page 44), the Hamlet Neighborhood areas are generally located at the traditional commercial centers of the Town's remaining hamlets, Clarence Center, Clarence Hollow, Harris Hill, Swormville, and Wolcottsburg. Each of these hamlets has historically contained a mix of land uses, providing public and community uses as well as commercial establishments in close proximity to residential neighborhoods. The general character and development potential of each hamlet is described in the following sections.

Clarence Center

The four-corners area of Clarence Center (shown in the top photo in the far right-hand column) and its surrounding neighborhoods have a traditional, walkable village-like atmosphere. The commercial structures are generally two to three stories and are set close to the street with parking located to the side or rear of the buildings. The existing sidewalk network connects the adjacent neighborhoods to the businesses along Goodrich Road and Clarence Center Road, such as Clarence Center Coffee Company, Creative Essence, Gerties, and Perfect Gift. Public uses in the Hamlet include, Clarence Center Elementary School, Clarence Center Fire Department, and several places of worship. The established grid-like, quarter-acre lot development pattern of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the hamlet area provide the population density necessary to support the local public, restaurant, and retail establishments. Over the next decade there may be opportunities in Clarence Center to accommodate upper-floor residential development and new mixed-use developments near to the hamlet's commercial center.

Clarence Hollow

The Hollow is very similar to that of Clarence Center in that it is a walkable, dense, and village-like activity center. There is an increased presence of commercial uses in The Hollow as Main Street (Route 5) serves as its main artery. Structures lining Main Street are typically no more than ten feet from the sidewalk, and range from one to two stories in height. Parking areas are generally located to the side or rear of structures. Commercial establishments include, but are not limited to, The Hollow Bistro and Brew, Clarence Deli, Briarhurst Garage, and Massaro Cleaners. The residential neighborhoods with direct access to the hamlet's commercial spine stem from Hillcrest Drive, Alexander Drive, Bank Street, and Salt Road to the north, and Ransom Road, Sawmill Road, Academy Street, and Schurr Road to the south. The Hollow would benefit from a focused effort over the next decade to incentivize the renovation and reuse of vacant storefronts and buildings for mixed-use purposes.

Harris Hill

The character of the Harris Hill hamlet is much different from that of Clarence Hollow. Nonresidential development is generally setback 50 feet or more from the right-of-way, with parking areas fronting the street often with multiple curb cuts. Sidewalk connectivity is sporadic along this corridor which is uninviting for pedestrians. The middle photo at right shows a strip-mall along Main Street in Harris Hill that has no curbing or pedestrian facilities, blurring the street with the parking lot. Despite the predominance of auto-oriented uses and development along the hamlet's commercial corridor, the established neighborhoods stemming from Main Street are generally grid-like in design and have access to Harris Hill Elementary School, Harris Hill Park, and several places of worship. Future investment within this hamlet should utilize the site design practices listed on the following page to improve the streetscape and public realm.

Photos: Google Streetview, 2016.

Swormville

Swormville generally consists of community uses such as the Swormville Fire Department and places of worship. There are several commercial uses to the north along Transit Road including Love Your Dog and 7KidsPlay. There are sections along Stahley Road where parking facilities abut the street right-of-way (see bottom photo above). The narrow shoulders are an impediment to pedestrians and do not support a comfortable environment. Residential development in Swormville mostly consists of single-family homes along Stahley Road. New development and investment in Swormville is likely to occur in the adjacent agricultural lands should they no longer continue to be active farmlands.

Wolcottsburg

This hamlet has the smallest share commercial activity and residential development of all the hamlets. Currently the only commercial use in Wolcottsburg is Marvin's Bar and Grill located at the intersection of Wolcott Road and Goodrich Road. St Paul's Church is also located in this hamlet. The character of this hamlet is predominantly rural with some single-family homes and farm homesteads along Wolcott and Goodrich Road.

The overall character of this hamlet is not anticipated to change over the next decade; however, there may be additional opportunities for commercial or community uses to locate near the main intersection.

Traditional Neighborhood District (TND)

The commercial and activity centers of each hamlet are currently zoned TND (see page 40 for district boundaries). It is recommended that the Town continue to apply the standards and regulations of the TND zone as its regulations are designed to achieve the following objectives, which align with the desired character of the hamlets:

- Provide incentives to encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures.
- Allow and encourage a mixture of uses and mixed-use structures.
- Accomplish and continue a sense of community.
- Provide a walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Respect and preserve unique natural features within the district.
- Provide design regulations that encourage compatible building arrangements, massing, scale, character and landscaping to establish a livable, harmonious and diverse environment.
- Discourage the demolition of existing structures that possess significant historic or other essential elements that contribute to the character of the district.
- Create a small-town, historic-style business district that limits large scale out-of-character commercial developments.

In the columns to the right are basic hamlet design principles that should be incorporated into new developments or renovations within the Town's hamlet areas.

Basic Hamlet Design Principles

Building & Site Design

- Buildings should be at or close to the sidewalk and at least two stories in height.
- One story structures should have the scale of a two story structure.
- Wider facades (greater than 50 feet) shall be broken up into smaller visual increments.
- Parking should be located in the side or rear yard only and always be screened from view.

Facades

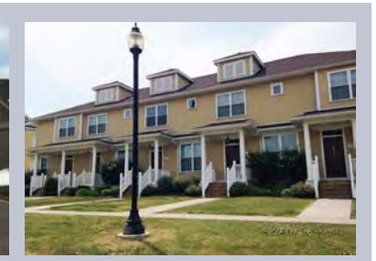
- First floors should be mostly transparent (windows & doors).
- Upper floors should have a lesser amount of transparency.
- Where transparency is not appropriate, architectural features (recessed areas, etc) or other visual elements must be used.
- Original window and door openings should be maintained.
- Wood, brick, or high-quality materials are preferred.

Multifamily Development

- Multifamily buildings shall be laid out so that entrances face the public street and connect to the sidewalk.
- Larger buildings shall be visually divided into smaller sections by gaps, recesses, or other architectural devices.
- Garage entrance/exit doors are prohibited on the front facade of buildings.

Signage

- Flat sign faces are to be avoided (carved or raised lettering is to be encouraged).
- Internally illuminated and cabinet signs should be discouraged.
- Signs should be sized and placed in a manner that is consistent with the architectural features of the building.

	To Be Avoided	To Be Encouraged
Pedestrian Realm		
Commercial Use		
Multifamily		
Historic Facades		

Transitional Business

The area indicated by the color orange on the Future Land Use Map is designated as Transitional Business. The purpose of the Transitional Business land use classification is to foster a blend of office uses, civic uses, multi-family living opportunities, and limited retail operations that meet the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and the traveling public. Development in these areas should promote the health, safety, and general welfare of residents by fostering physical activity, alternative transportation choices, and greater social interaction along major transportation corridors. These corridors include portions of Transit Road, Sheridan Drive, Harris Hill Road, and the area that encompasses the intersection of Gunnville Road and Wehrle Drive.

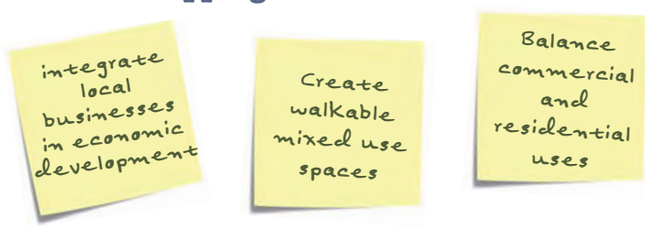
The Transitional Business land use areas along Transit Road, Sheridan Drive, and Harris Hill Road are primarily zoned as Restricted Business (RB). The notable exception is the Commercial Zoning District that encompasses the intersection of Sheridan Drive and Harris Hill Road. A review of the RB District requirements indicate that the District is well suited to implement the Transitional Business classification. Chapter 229-75 of the Town Code states, "The intent of the RB District is to allow for the continued and future use, expansion, and new development of professional offices and similar less intensive business uses. The regulations are designed to be more compatible with residential areas of the Town and are intended to be less traffic-generating than retail businesses. Professional office development is encouraged along the Sheridan Drive corridor, northern Transit Road, and small sections of Wehrle Drive and Bergtold Road. As most of the restricted business districts are located outside of areas serviced by public sewers, designs should reflect a more open character." It is recommended that the Town leave the current zoning along these corridors in place.

The existing land uses within the vicinity of the Gunnville Road/ Wehrle Drive intersection include single-family homes on the west side of Gunnville Road and industrial uses along the east side of the

Photos: Bing Maps, 2016.

road. There are also vacant parcels in three of the four quadrants. The residential properties are generally zoned as Agricultural-Rural Residential. The remaining properties that are within the Transitional Business land use area are zoned as Industrial Business Park. In order to ensure the existing residential properties are not negatively impacted by future industrial development, the Town should consider rezoning the industrial parcels within the Transitional Business area to RB. The Town should also consider adding a maximum building footprint provision to the RB Zoning District to limit the scale and intensity of business operations.

"Mapping Clarence's Future"



A good example of the desired character of the Transitional Business land use classification is the office uses along Sheridan Drive, east of Wenner Road (shown in the photo to the left). The character of the Transitional Business areas should be respectful to the adjacent neighborhoods. This is accomplished through generous buffering and setback requirements, appropriately scaled developments, and visually appealing buildings and sites.

To be encouraged in Transitional Business Areas

To be avoided in Transitional Business Areas

Photos: Google Streetview, 2016.

The Transitional Business land use classification is intended to foster development of professional offices and limited service establishments (upper photo). Larger retail operations, such as those located along Transit Road are inappropriate for the Transitional Business areas (lower photo).

Lifestyle Center Development

At the writing of this Plan update, the Town of Clarence is researching and drafting a Lifestyle Center Overlay District to potentially be used as a floating district within the Town to encourage the redevelopment of former "Big-Box" multi-tenant commercial sites into well-designed, mixed-use lifestyle centers. Lifestyle centers are characterized by large-scale developments that offer a mix of residential, retail, restaurant, office, and entertainment uses in a dense, walkable environment with high architectural and site design standards.

There are a number of currently developed and undeveloped areas within the Town that may present an opportunity to implement a lifestyle center. Previously the development trend for shopping centers were a cluster of large structures and anchor tenants surrounded by parking lots. Today these kinds of developments are seen as tired single-use structures, providing little to no pedestrian accommodations or aesthetically pleasing design elements. The lifestyle center approach seeks to provide parking in an unobtrusive manner, permit multi-story developments and a mix of uses, and ensure sites and structures are designed in such a way as to promote pedestrian activity and an attractive streetscape (see photos at right).

Lifestyle Centers should strive to achieve the following objectives:

- Foster a high-level of walkability throughout the development.
- Promote mixed uses in traditional, multi-story structures and developments (e.g. commercial below, residential above).
- Employ high-quality design, materials and building techniques that create a distinctive "sense of place" at a pedestrian scale.
- Offer unique destinations and services that include local retailers and specialty businesses and restaurants.
- Provide non-automobile transportation network for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.
- Celebrate natural features and promote the use of public space through landscape, hardscape, and streetscape design.
- Incorporate green energy technology and design features.

Eastern Hills Mall

Crocker Park Lifestyle Center - Cleveland, OH

Photos: Bing Maps, 2016.

The annual tax yield per acre of mixed-use, multi-story buildings is more than 11 times that of single-story, single-use commercial developments. Dense, walkable developments have a much larger pay out for local governments than big-box retail.
- New Urban News, Vol. 15 (2010)

	To Be Avoided	To Be Encouraged
Multi-Tenant Commercial		
Multi-Family Residential		
Parking Facilities		

One of the most difficult aspects of implementing a lifestyle center is accommodating the required parking spaces to support the retail, commercial, and residential uses. However, due to the compact, mixed-use, and walkable nature of the site design the industry standards for parking requirements are considerably reduced. Generally the Town should strive for 0.25 or 0.50 spaces per 100 square feet of commercial uses, and 0.50 to 1.00 space per room for hotels or residential units depending on the density of development.

Business Center

The areas on the Future Land Use Map designated as Business Center Districts are shown in red. These include:

- The Transit Road corridor from the southern town boundary to Swormville (currently zoned Major Arterial and Commercial);
- The area surrounding the intersections of Transit Road with Millersport Highway and Tonawanda Creek Road (currently zoned Major Arterial);
- Main Street from Shimerville Road to Strickler Road (currently zoned Commercial); and
- Sheridan Drive from Main Street to Shimerville Road (currently zoned Commercial).

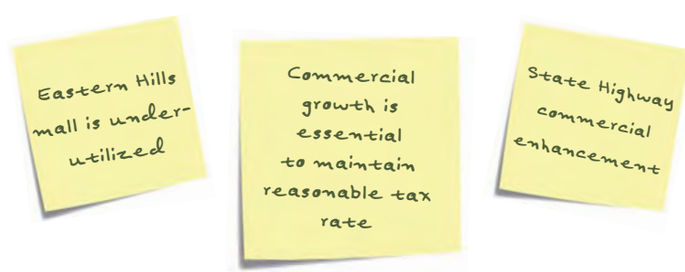
The public input received throughout the planning process indicates that the size of the existing commercial areas and the services they offer are generally adequate to serve the local community. Therefore, no significant changes are anticipated in the size and extent of the Business Center areas. This does not, however, preclude expansions to these areas in the future if appropriate.

Clarence has a long history of planning for its future; including its commercial corridors. In 2004, the Transit Road Land Use Access Management Plan (LUAMP) was completed for the Towns of Amherst and Clarence. In 2016, a Main Street Corridor Study was initiated and will be finished near the end of the year. The Town should implement the transportation, land use, and design recommendations contained in both of these documents.

These Business Center areas are generally characterized by: 1) a wider range of commercial activity within the community; and 2) large-scale buildings and parking areas. These areas are located along travel routes with a very high daily traffic volume. As a result, the Business areas were originally designed to accommodate the automobile first and the pedestrian second, or in some cases not at all. Over the past two decades, the Town has placed an increasing emphasis on providing pedestrian connectivity throughout these areas as well as building and site design requirements in order to achieve a higher standard of development.

A review of the Major Arterial and Commercial Zoning Districts indicate they each have limited building design requirements. It is recommended that the Town consider additional building and site design requirements to increase the visual quality of the streetscapes along Transit Road and Main Street. Due to the difference in character of these two transportation corridors, the design requirements may have criteria that are unique to the Major Arterial Zoning District (along Transit Road) and the Commercial Zoning District (along Main Street). It is also recommended that the Town utilize the services of an architect or other design professional to assist the various advisory boards and staff with project reviews.

"Mapping Clarence's Future"

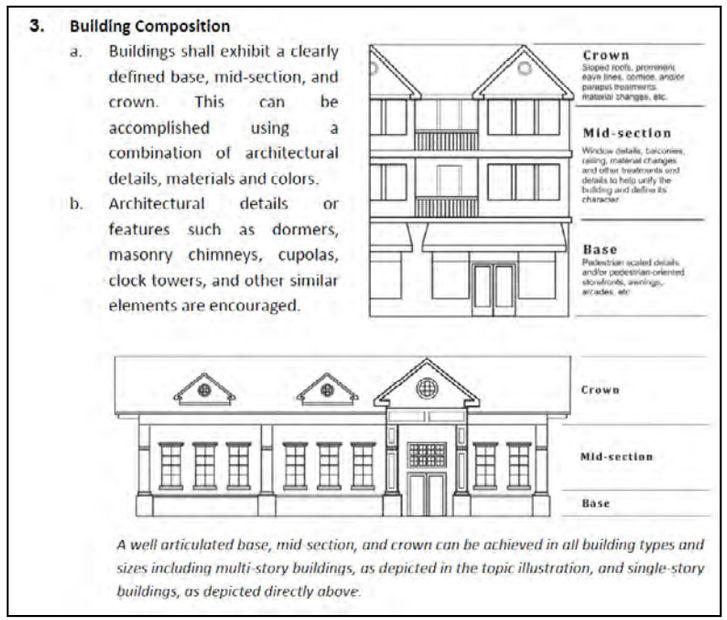


Photos: Bing Maps, 2016.

The southern portion of Transit Road in Clarence (shown in the top photo) is one of the most intense commercial corridors in the region. The development pattern generally consists of large-scale buildings, plazas, and parking areas. By comparison the business establishments along Main Street (shown in the bottom photo) are smaller in size and are often placed closer to the road. This serves to foster a more pedestrian-scaled character on Main Street versus the auto-dominated landscape of Transit Road.

Business Center Design Criteria

Additional building and site design requirements may be appropriate for the areas of the Town included in the Business Center land use area. The graphic below is an excerpt from the Dewey Avenue Mixed Use Zoning Amendment adopted by the Town of Greece, NY in 2012. Building requirements include architectural detailing of facades, providing a minimum amount of transparency, and breaking up large blank walls. Site requirements include limiting the percentage of lot frontage that can be used for parking, placing parking behind the front wall of the building, and providing a continuous pedestrian circulation system throughout the site.



Town of Greece, NY - Dewey Avenue Mixed Use Zoning Amendment Graphic

A Preferred Development Survey (PDS) was conducted as part of the process used to complete the Transit Road LUAMP. The PDS consisted of stakeholders rating a series of photographs on a scale of 1 to 10. The photographs included examples of commercial signage, building architecture, density and mix of development, streetscape and roadside features, and undeveloped land. In general the lowest rated photographs were those that showed little to no pedestrian amenities, strip plaza development with unscreened parking areas, and buildings with limited architectural style. The highest scoring photographs tended to be streetscapes with visually appealing buildings and sites with pedestrian accommodations that separated vehicles from pedestrians. The image comparisons to the right illustrate the types of development that are preferred along the Transit Road Corridor.

The results of the Transit Road Preferred Development Survey indicated that the Town is supportive of building and site design in the Major Arterial Zoning District that is architecturally pleasing, well-landscaped, and comfortable to navigate on foot.

Preferred character of the Business Centers along Transit Road.

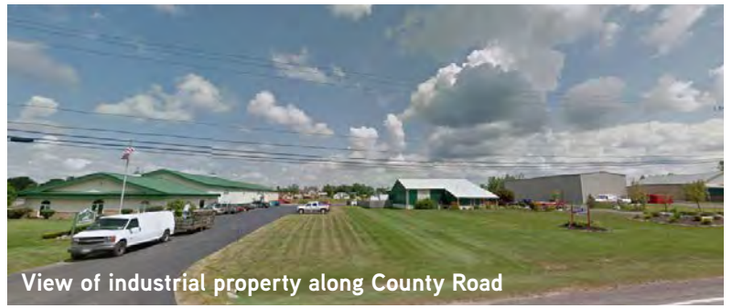
Light Industry

The areas on the Future Land Use Map designated as Light Industry are shown in gray on Map 8 (page 44). These generally include the following areas:

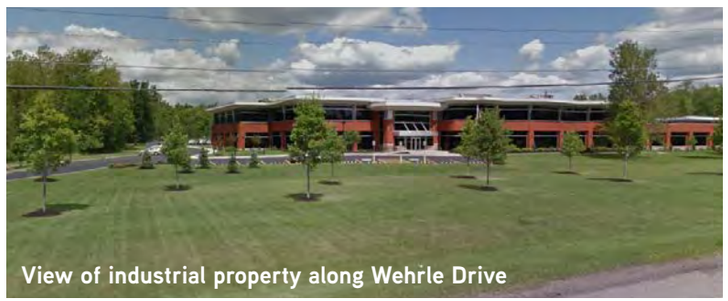
- On both sides of County Road, from Heise Road to Strickler Road;
- Along the east side of Harris Hill Road, starting just north of Greiner Road, and extending north and east past Roll Road, terminating south of Clarence Center Road; and
- Along the southern Town boundary, east of Harris Hill Road extending eastward to Shisler Road.

These three areas are primarily zoned as Industrial Business Park (IBP). The Town has been successful in attracting new industrial development to these areas. However, there still remains an abundant amount of undeveloped land in the Industrial areas. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Town will need to designate a fourth industrial area during the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. In other words, the three industrially zoned areas should be sufficient to satisfy the anticipated demand in Clarence over the next 10 to 15 years.

It should be noted that the availability of public sewer service will be a prime determinant of the level of industrial investment that will occur on the three Industrial areas. For example, some of the Industrial properties located along Wehrle Road are part of Erie County Sewer District #5. The presence of public sewer service allows for larger scale facilities and corporate headquarters in a more campus like setting (see photo below of Wehrle Road). These facilities typically have a higher level of architectural details constructed with more permanent building materials such as brick or decorative block. By comparison, the Industrial areas that do not have access to sewer service are characterized by smaller scale operations contained in prefabricated metal pole barns that detract from the character of the area and are generally not aesthetically pleasing. (see photos at right of County Road and Roll Road).

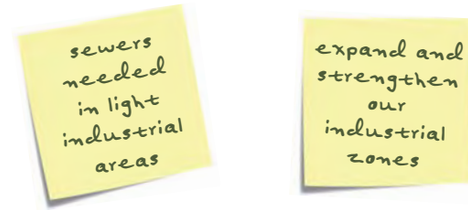

View of industrial property along County Road

View of industrial property along Roll Road


View of industrial property along Wehrle Drive

Photos: Google Streetview, 2016.

"Mapping Clarence's Future"



Clarence has successfully created industrial areas and sites that are visually appealing with generous amounts of greenspace. This has been accomplished by the consistent application of the IBP code requirements by the various Town Boards and Town Staff. According to Chapter 229-99 of the Town Code, the intent of the IBP District is to, "facilitate convenient access, minimize traffic congestion, and reduce visual clutter within this district." The following code requirements contribute to the campus like settings that exists within the Town's three industrial areas.

- Minimum lot size of 1 acre with a minimum front setback of 80 feet.
- Minimum side setback is 20 feet for non-residential uses and 100 feet when placed next to a residential use.
- Parking may only occur within the side or rear setbacks of the principal building.
- There shall be a minimum forty-five-foot greenbelt from any parking area to a residentially zoned property line.

Over the next decade, the Town should continue to apply these code requirements to ensure new industrial uses are good neighbors and positively contribute to the Town's character.

Clarence Hollow Farmers Market
Photo: Discover Main Street

Utilization of the Plan

Plan Adoption

This 2030 Clarence Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Town Board on XXXXXXX, 2016. It shall be the policy of the Town to reference the Comprehensive Plan for all re-zonings and infrastructure projects planned by the Town and proposals from other governmental agencies. A copy of this adopted Plan should also be provided to county and state agencies to assist with their future plans and projects in the community.

Keeping the Plan Off the Shelf

In an effort to ensure the use and applicability of this Plan, it shall be made available on the Town's website for ease of access by elected officials, board members, committee members, Town Staff, and the general public. It is highly encouraged that members of the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board and Town committees have a copy of the Plan available for reference or review at each relevant meeting or workshop as an aid to decision-making.

The Town Board may also require that annual department budget requests include a brief memorandum or summary of any planned actions that may help to achieve the goals of this Plan.

Annual Review

In addition to the reference of this Plan by individual Town Staff and board members, it shall be the policy of the Town to require an annual review of the document by the Town Board. A Public Hearing shall be held once a year, as initiated by the Town Board, to gather input from the public and other interested parties as well as considering any proposed alterations to the Plan. The Town Board shall have the opportunity to table, deny or refer any proposals to the Planning Board for further review and recommendation.

A successful Plan is developed and implemented on multiple levels, addressing short and long term needs of the community while providing varying levels of detail through the following elements, as outlined on page 17: Vision, Goals, Strategies and Action Items. The Annual Review will act to keep the Plan current and relevant throughout its lifespan by updating outcomes and accomplishments. During the year and prior to the yearly Public Hearing, the Planning Department will gather outcomes, comment, status, critique and recommendations from Town Staff, boards, residents and potential parties as listed within each Action Item. This gathered information will be analyzed in relationship to the Plan, and subsequently presented to the Town Board for review.

The Annual Review process may generate four types of proposed amendments to the Plan. These types of amendments are as follows:

- **Relevancy Update:** Minor text, image, map or figure changes. Relevancy Updates may add accomplishments, correct publishing errors, update demographic and census data, replace outdated images and amend Action Items.
- **Shifting Focus:** Alterations to Strategies. Shifting Focus may alter a Strategy in order to better accomplish a Goal. As community needs continue to evolve, it may be necessary to adapt the method for which a goal is achieved.
- **Changing Course:** Alterations to Goals. Changing Course may add, remove or amend a Goal to better achieve the Vision. An unforeseen event could require this moderate to significant action in order to maintain an effective Plan.
- **Varying Function:** Alterations to the Future Land Use Map. Varying Function may amend the Future Land Use Map. Any changes could guide subsequent re-zoning proposals that otherwise would be in conflict with the Plan previously.

Conclusion

As previously stated in the Acknowledgments section, the completion of this Comprehensive Plan Update would not have been possible without the support of the Town Planning Staff, Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board, as well as the feedback from local residents and stakeholders.

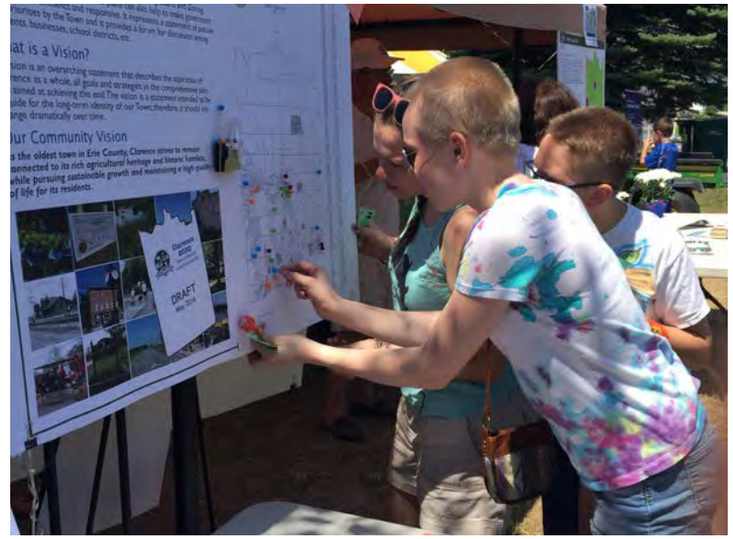
Prior to the formal public hearing for adoption of this Plan, the Town felt it would be beneficial to present the draft Plan materials to the public at an open house style event. The intent was to provide residents with an opportunity to informally review and comment on the content of the Plan, while also engaging with Steering Committee members, Town Staff, and the Planning Consultants.

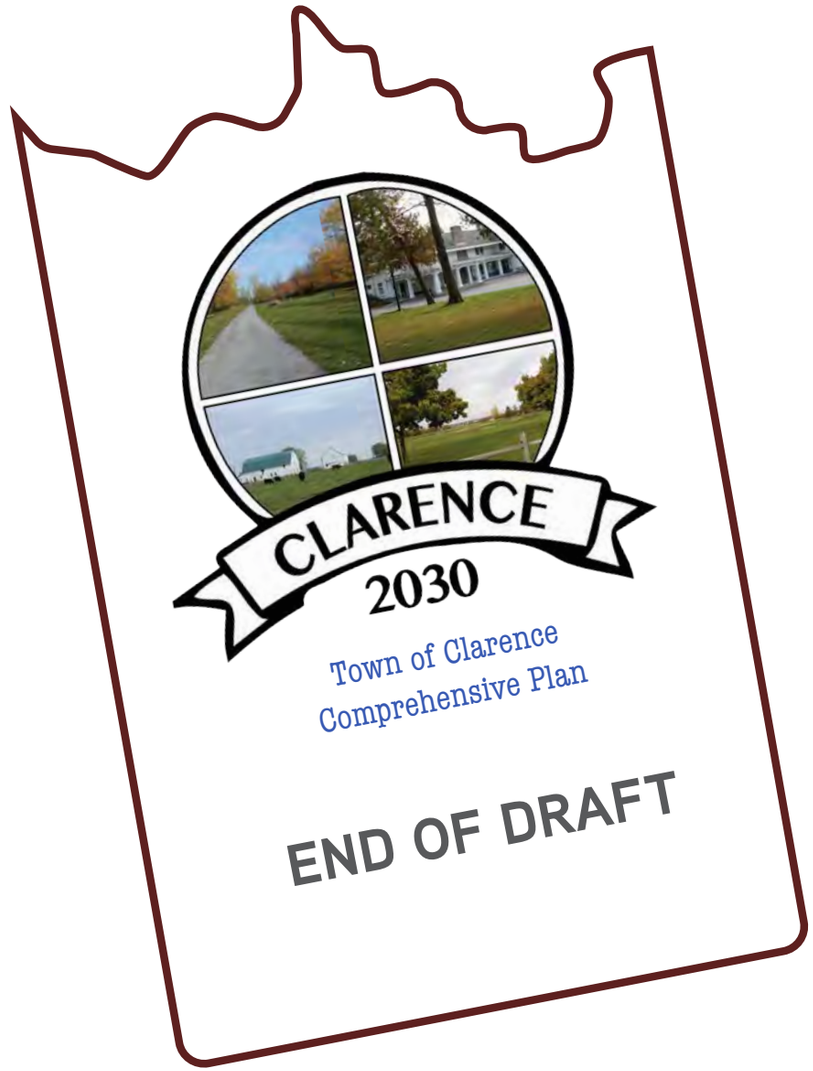
This Open House was held on Saturday, June 25, 2016, in coordination with the Town's annual Day in the Park event. Informational posters were created by the Town to display the proposed vision, goals, strategies, and action plans for the community. Event photos are included at right.

In order to provide an added level of engagement with the public, the event was centered around attendees investing "Clarence Bucks" on the goal areas that they felt were most important to the Town moving forward. Approximately 80 people participated in this exercise, resulting in Clarence residents' unofficial "ranking" of goal areas ($ indicates number of Clarence Bucks received):

1. Economic Development & Hamlet Revitalization ($98)
2. Environmental Health & Sustainability ($64)
3. Public Health & Safety ($64)
4. Transportation & Connectivity ($61)
5. Community Character ($58)
6. Agriculture & Open Space ($55)

Overall, public feedback was positive and expressed strong community support for the Clarence 2030 Plan Update.




CLARENCE
2030
Town of Clarence
Comprehensive Plan
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