

Town of North Greenbush
LWRP Monitoring Report
July 2018

Community Background:

The Town of North Greenbush is located between the cities of Rensselaer and Troy on the east shore of the Hudson River. Directly across the river lie the City of Albany and Village of Menands. The Town encompasses a total area of 19 square miles and at the time of the 2010 Census had approximately 12,075 residents. Nearly two miles of riverfront provide an important community asset, most of which is undeveloped aside from the Rensselaer County Sewage Treatment plant. Development in this area is arduous due to the steep escarpment between the river and the upland and a railroad line that parallels the river at the base of the slope. The relatively undeveloped waterfront in the Town stands in sharp contrast to the waterfronts in neighboring communities, which consist primarily of urban and industrial uses.

Land use within the Town was primarily rural until the mid-20th century, when suburban settlement patterns began to emerge across the landscape¹. Development was concentrated along the Route 4 corridor (to the east of the LWRP boundary), including small retail and service oriented businesses. As these types of development increased, agricultural land use began to decline. Presently only two active farms remain in the Town and the primary land use is residential. Growth within the Capital District spurred the emergence of North Greenbush as a bedroom community for neighboring cities with robust employment opportunities such as Albany, Troy, and Schenectady. In the late 1970's, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) constructed an office park between Route 4 and the Hudson River. This facility, known as the Rensselaer Technology Park features more than 1 million square feet of office space and has become a critical center for employment within the region.

There are less than a dozen property owners total within the LWRP boundary. Owners include public utilities, the Town, and RPI. Primary land uses in the waterfront area include vacant land, transportation and utility corridors, and the sewage treatment plant. The Sewer District owns approximately 34 acres along the northern section of the Town's waterfront. This parcel contains the sewage treatment plant facility that serves North Greenbush, Rensselaer, Troy, a portion of Brunswick, Sand Lake, and Schaghticoke. Although the Town boasts two miles of riverfront, public access to the water is made difficult due to the topography of the area (the river flat, adjacent wetlands, and steep escarpment are all undevelopable). Only on the plateau is there ample level and stable land that can support development. The Town owns an 8.9-acre parcel on the river flat, which was deeded to the Town by RPI when they built the technology park. Access to this parcel is challenging due to the steep grade.

Although the Rensselaer Technology Park parcel encompasses ~1,000 acres within the LWRP boundary, development is limited to the plateau portion of this property. The technology park is the largest

¹ Town of North Greenbush Final Comprehensive Plan, 2009.

property holder within the LWRP boundary. In 1996 the Town received funding through the Environmental Protection Fund LWRP grant program to make improvements to the trails in the technology park, including the construction of three pedestrian bridges. The trail network is open to the public and features creeks, waterfalls, and wooded areas (see map below).

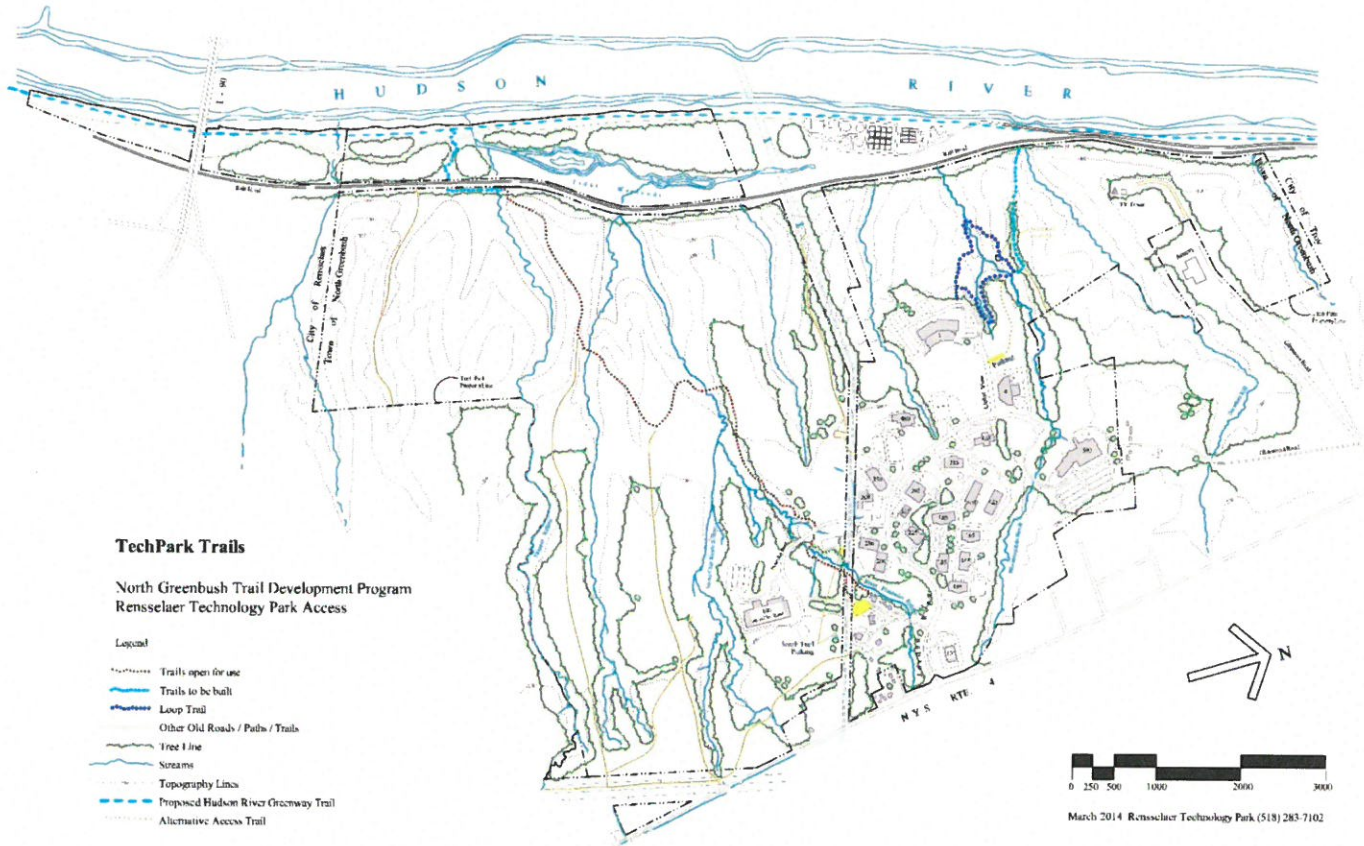


Figure 1. Rensselaer Tech Park Trail Map.

A seawall, which was constructed during the 1930's, runs along the majority of the Town's riverfront and serves as an erosion control and flood protection structure. Due to the design of this structure, it prevents access to the shoreline from the Hudson River. Additionally, there are not currently any access points to get the public down to the river to enjoy and utilize the resource; nor are there any water-dependent or water-enhanced uses underway within the Town. The Town is interested in future waterfront development to potentially include a marina, green space, and a mixed-use building that could accommodate a hotel as well as retail businesses on the first floor.

Collaborations with Department of State:

Since the completion of its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program in 1990, the Town has worked to advance its implementation. The Department of State has awarded one grant (EPF LWRP) of \$10,500 to

the Town in 1996 for the construction of three pedestrian footbridges on the Rensselaer Technology Park property. One of the bridges spans a deep ravine just upstream from a waterfall, affording hikers spectacular views along the trail.



Figure 2. Footbridge on the Rensselaer Technology Park property.



Figures 3 and 4. NYSDOS project signage; waterfall on technology park property is a popular hiking destination.

The Town is interested in providing vehicular access to the riverfront to allow for water-dependent and water-enhanced uses on the Town-owned waterfront property. The Town has commissioned a study to determine the feasibility and preferred location for constructing this access road. The study concluded that aligning the road along the bottom of the ravine just south of the power lines would reduce stability concerns and could be graded at 6-7%. This design would provide erosion control at the base of the ravine. This project has yet to be undertaken, however the Town remains interested in pursuing it.

It is worth noting that the Town has received funds from the Department's Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) program to devise a plan for redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties along the Main Ave. corridor in Wynantskill in the northern portion of the Town. The Wynantskill Creek runs

parallel to Main Ave (Route 66) in this area and is a designated inland waterway². The Town may be interested in considering expansion of the LWRP boundary to include the creek in a future LWRP update, which would enable them to undertake economic development and community revitalization projects throughout this corridor utilizing EPF LWRP funds.

The Town's collaborations with the Department have been limited, and the Department encourages the Town to identify and pursue future opportunities to work together to implement the proposed projects identified in the 1990 LWRP; and solicit technical assistance and/or funding to update the program as needed.

LWRP Monitoring Process:

The aim of the LWRP monitoring process is for the Department of State's Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure to assess a community's consistency with its LWRP to date and to understand the implementation activities and decision-making procedures related to the program. This process also provides an opportunity for the community to showcase successful projects and activities, as well as request additional technical assistance and/or training as needed.

The Department initiated this process for the Town of North Greenbush by sending a letter to the Town Supervisor, which described the process and included a list of survey questions for the community to respond to. An in-person meeting was held on April 13, 2018 to discuss the findings of the survey and offer guidance for implementation of future projects within the Town's waterfront revitalization area. Supervisor Lou Desso, Comptroller Tony Germano, and Building Inspector Mike Miner participated in the monitoring process. Matt Maraglio from the Department's Coastal Consistency Unit also attended the meeting.

Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure Findings:

Overview

The Town of North Greenbush LWRP was prepared to guide development within the coastal area in a manner which protects natural resources and enhances public use and enjoyment of the community's waterfront assets. Although the Town's LWRP was approved in 1990, the Town has undertaken more recent planning efforts that complement the LWRP and help to advance its overarching goals. For instance, the Town updated their zoning code in 2016 with partial funding for the effort from the Hudson River Valley Greenway³. The updated zoning map reflects a planned waterfront development district (PWDD) to encourage a mix of water-dependent and enhanced uses which benefit from or take advantage of proximity to the river. The PWDD includes all lands between the eastern shore of the river and the 150-foot contour line or 2,000 feet from the eastern shore, whichever is closest to the shoreline. Permitted

² EPF LWRP List of Coastal Waterbodies and Designated Inland Waterways:
https://www.dos.ny.gov/opd/programs/pdfs/WaterwaysList_07-12.pdf

³ [Town of North Greenbush Chapter 197 of the Town Code](#)

uses include marinas; boat launches; docks; hotels; conference centers; offices; restaurants; cultural, educational and scientific uses; and navigational aids and shoreline protection structures.

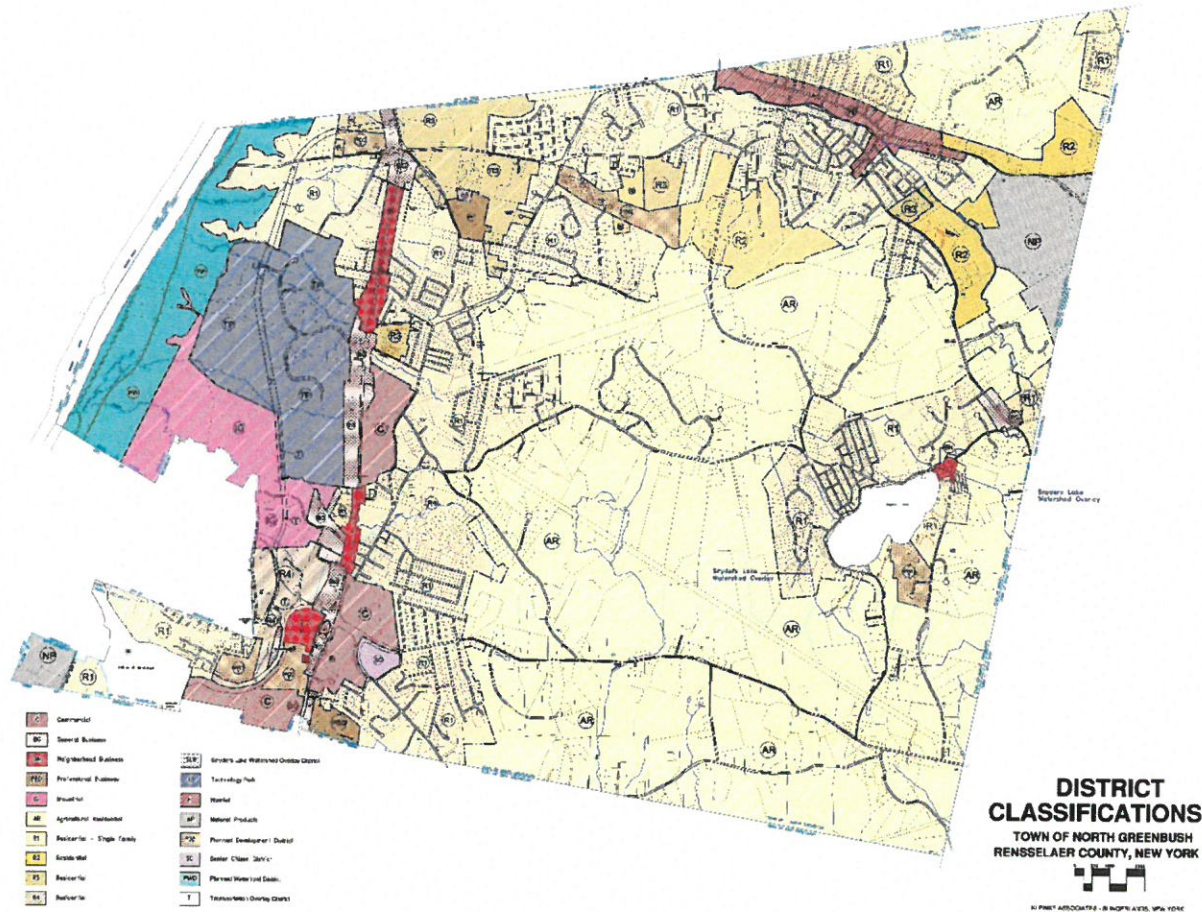


Figure 5. The Town zoning map was updated in 2016.

Note that the turquoise area on the left of the map is the Planned Waterfront Development District.

These zoning changes will allow the Town to undertake some of the proposed projects identified in their 1990 LWRP, including creation of a riverfront access road, development of a Town Park, wetlands enhancements, design and construction of a greenway trail, and dredging/excavation for marina development as well as bulkhead improvements. It is anticipated that the Town will partner with neighboring communities including the City of Troy to the north and the City of Rensselaer to the south

to prepare an application to fund design and engineering of an inter-municipal waterfront trail during the 2018 Consolidated Funding Application grant round⁴.

The Town may wish to consider updating its LWRP to ensure that the program continues to reflect the community's vision for their waterfront and that the land and water uses and potential projects remain current and pertinent. Preparing a LWRP update would provide an opportunity to consider and incorporate any new potential projects and actions within the LWRP boundary, which could be expanded to include the Wynantskill Creek waterfront and Main Avenue BOA pre-nomination study area. Undertaking a program update would also provide an opportunity to offer a local consistency training to the Town officials, Planning Board, and/or Zoning Board of Appeals.

LWRP Implementation:

Since the adoption of the LWRP in 1990, the Town has implemented one project of significance outlined in the program to improve its waterfront area. As noted in the "Collaborations with Department of State" section, the Town received an Environmental Protection Fund grant in 1996 for the construction of three footbridges to improve the Rensselaer Technology Park trail system. The trail system is widely used by the public and boasts several scenic waterfalls. A cursory internet search revealed blog posts from various Capital Region residents who utilize the trail system for nature study, botanical photography, hiking, dog walking, passive recreation, etc. Construction of the pedestrian footbridges enabled residents and visitors to traverse a deep, wide section of a ravine and safely enjoy the facility's trail amenities.

Aside from the technology park trail improvements, there has been little development or projects undertaken within the LWRP boundary. The Town has indicated that they are interested in further developing green space proximate to the LWRP area, which would include soccer fields, a picnic area, and trails for walking and bicycling.

LWRP Document Accessibility:

The Town's LWRP is available in the Building Department Library and is easily accessible by Town staff, the planning and zoning boards, Master Plan committee members, etc. Hard copies are also on file at the Town Clerk's office. An electronic copy is available on the Department of State website at the following link: https://docs.dos.ny.gov/opd-lwrp/LWRP/North%20Greenbush_T/Index.html.

Local Consistency Review:

The Town of North Greenbush Consistency Review Law (Town Code Chapter 193: "Waterfront Development") was adopted in 1990 to ensure that actions classified as Type 1 or unclassified under Part 617 of Title 6 NYCRR to be undertaken, approved, or funded by the Town will be done so in a manner consistent with existing laws and policies. The Town Planning Board is responsible for review

⁴ Personal communication, Linda von der Heinde, Rensselaer County Planning Department, June 26, 2018.

and resulting approval or disapproval of designs and plans for planned used development within the Planned Waterfront Development District (PWDD).

Per the Town’s Consistency Review Law, whenever an agency receives an application for approval or funding of an action to be located in the coastal area, the agency shall notify the Town Board so that the Board may initiate its consistency review. The agency shall refer a copy of all accompanying maps, plans, and the application to the Town Board along with the aforementioned notification. The Town Board will render its written determination and reasons therefor within 30 days following notification and receipt of all required documentation unless extended by mutual agreement of the Town Board and the applicant or, in the case of a direct action, the agency. The Town Board shall have the authority in its findings of consistency to impose practicable and reasonable conditions on any action to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with Chapter 193⁵.

Below is a list of Environmental Protection Fund Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grants received by the Town:

Year	Grant Award	Project Description	Status
1996	\$10,500	The Town of North Greenbush will construct three pedestrian bridges in the Rensselaer Technology Park to improve the trail system. Two of these bridges will be 30 feet in length and similar in design and construction to the two bridges already built. The other will be 100 feet in length and will cross a deep, wide section of ravine just upstream from a waterfall.	Closed

⁵ [Town of North Greenbush Waterfront Consistency Review Law, §193-2.](#)