

CITY OF OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK
COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

The City of Ogdensburg, New York is a small community on the St. Lawrence River in New York State's North Country region. The City is located on the international border with Canada, and the Ogdensburg-Prescott International Bridge provides a vehicular connection to Canada over the St. Lawrence River.

The City's land mass is 4.96 square miles, and it is bounded by the St. Lawrence River to the North, and the towns of Oswegatchie and Lisbon to the South.



The United States Census Bureau reported a 2010 population of 11,128. The Bureau projected a July 2019 population estimate of 10,436. The City's peak population was reported in 1930 with 16,915 residents. Over the past century, the City's population has declined by over 38%. Much of this decline can be attributed to the loss of economic opportunities, as industrial plants were closed with the onset of globalization and offshoring.

The City has 4,060 households with 64.5% of the homes being owner-occupied. The median household income is \$41,965, well below the New York State median of \$71,855 and the US median household income of 68,703. Fully 22.7 percent of Ogdensburg residents live below the poverty rate with 26.41% of its residents on public assistance.

Community leaders are working toward a goal of redeveloping the City by increasing job opportunities; redeveloping its beautiful St. Lawrence River waterfront; reducing taxation; consolidating services with St. Lawrence County; and by strategic investments in economic development, housing and community development. What follows is a Comprehensive Development Plan that clearly defines the City's long-term development strategy and plan.

VISION

The long term vision for the City of Ogdensburg, New York is to create a vibrant community where people want to live, raise a family, and prosper. Paramount to this end, the following document represents the aspirations of this community in a Comprehensive Development Plan. It concisely summarizes community goals to accomplish the community's vision in the areas of: economic development and job creation; tourism; recreation; housing; education; arts and culture; transportation; economic development; historic preservation; downtown redevelopment; and waterfront development.

GOAL STATEMENT

It is a goal of the City of Ogdensburg to develop a Comprehensive Development Plan that will move the community forward in a positive direction in regard to its vision for a vibrant community. This comprehensive plan seeks to define goals and action items that need to be implemented to achieve this vision.

The priority goals identified here include economic development and job creation; waterfront redevelopment; downtown redevelopment and tourism development.

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Just as critical are action items and goals in the areas of housing; arts and culture; historic preservation; recreation; education; and New York State facilities.

Much of Ogdensburg's future development will depend on cooperation from federal, regional, state and county officials. But much can also be achieved at the local level by empowering groups and city residents with the mission of implementing this plan for community development.

This plan, once adopted, should be revisited each year to determine the success of the implementation of the defined goals and to develop new strategies and goals *For A Better Ogdensburg*.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOB CREATION

Business Developer – there is nothing more important to the future stability and growth of the City than to create new job opportunities for its residents. The Ogdensburg City Council has budgeted for a Business Developer in the 2021 budget. This person would be responsible for working with existing businesses to assist them with expanding their businesses. They would also implement a marketing strategy to attract new businesses to the City.

Goal 1: When financially prudent, fill this position with an individual that can play an active role in business development in the City. This person would coordinate their efforts with the St. Lawrence County IDA, Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority, State economic development officials, and various other economic development entities. Another option would be to outsource this position to an existing agency that specializes in business development.

Goal 2: Resurrect the Joint Economic Development Committee of the City of Ogdensburg and the towns of Oswegatchie and Lisbon. This group would meet quarterly to steer joint efforts in the area of job creation and community development. A cost sharing arrangement based on population could be developed to jointly fund this position and the committee's marketing efforts and activities.

Former Newell Building – The City, St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and National Grid undertook a commendable effort to save this large industrial building by applying for grant funds to install a new roof and stabilize this structure. Title has been turned over to the SLC IDA to market the building to potential industrial or commercial users that would create new jobs in Ogdensburg.

Goal – Work with the IDA to encourage new businesses to use this building and create new job opportunities for Ogdensburg residents. The City should review the Payment In Lieu of Taxes agreement for renters to ensure it is receiving some real property taxes for the building. Long term, the County IDA should strive to sell this building to an appropriate business to get the entire facility back on the tax rolls.

Commerce Park – The Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority's (OBPA) Commerce Park and Port of Ogdensburg Heavy Industrial Park are the City's only business parks. These modern buildings



and investments in infrastructure have created the best opportunity for attracting businesses and jobs to Ogdensburg.

Goal: Work cooperatively with the OBPA and St. Lawrence County IDA to fill vacant space in these buildings, and work to secure additional grant funding to construct another speculative building to attract additional US companies to Ogdensburg, or

foreign direct investment from Canada or other countries.

Growth Fund – The Ogdensburg Growth Fund Development Corporation was created to provide low-interest gap financing that would encourage business development. The corporation has played an important role in some important business and community development projects.

Goal: Additional grant funding should be sought to replenish the Growth Fund to enable it to work with area banks to make more loans to businesses that will create jobs.

Regional Economic Development Council – Many decisions in terms of state-wide strategies and goals for economic development are now made by the Regional Economic Development Council. The State’s initiative to consolidate grant funding at the regional level was designed to encourage local input on strategic economic development investments.

Goal: Ogdensburg should have representation on the REDC, and community leaders should advocate for a seat at the table. Community leaders need to ensure that components of this comprehensive plan are presented as part of the strategic plan for the North Country, and that elements of this plan are adopted as “priority projects” and “transformational projects,” as defined by the Regional Council.

Zoning: Ogdensburg struggles with zoning restrictions have been debated for years. It is clear to all that zoning regulations need to be less-restrictive so as not to deter economic development efforts.

Goal: Council should amend the zoning code to eliminate some of the more-archaic codes that put undue restrictions on business development.

Private Waterfront Sites – The development of private waterfront sites will boost the economy of the City; provide new job opportunities; and expand the tax base. Ironically, and despite the vast amount of waterfront on the Oswegatchie and St. Lawrence rivers in Ogdensburg, there are very few private developments. This is largely due to the fact that the State of New York controls vast swaths of Ogdensburg waterfront. This includes the port area, area adjacent to the international bridge and waterfront lands at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center.

Goal: The City needs to work with the State of New York and Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority to sell these underutilized lands to the City for resale to private developers. Privatizing waterfront sites for redevelopment is true economic development and must be a priority for this community.

WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT

Greenbelt Area – this public recreation area is largely underutilized. This area would be an alternate site for a public beach area so that activity is concentrated in the downtown area. The boat launch should be removed and relocated to an area that is more-conducive to truck and trailer parking. Portions of this land should be considered for sale or lease for development to create activity on the waterfront. While there is a deed restriction on much of this land, the City should take action to lift this restriction through legislative action.

Goal 1: Explore private waterfront development through a long term lease or sale.

Goal 2: Work with federal and state representatives to remove the deed restriction on these properties as the former grant for recreation improvements has depreciated past its useful life.

Goal 3: Explore a public beach in this area.

Goal 4: Lease a portion of Dobisky Center and marina to a private entity that can operate the kitchen and the marina to make it much more active.

REDI Grant – The City of Ogdensburg is grateful to the Governor and our State representatives for the proposed investment of over \$4,875,000 million to stabilize and improve Ogdensburg's Greenbelt area. This investment will lessen the impact of future flooding, and will provide this community with a unique opportunity to significantly improve the Greenbelt and Crescent Park shorelines.

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Goal 1: Work cooperatively with the State on the design of these improvements, with an emphasis on new amenities and improvements that are beneficial and desired by its residents.

Goal 2: Implement this project during the 2021 – 2022 constructions seasons.

Former Diamond International Property – this former paper mill site was acquired by the City through back taxes after it was abandoned. Much effort has gone into making the site productive again, including demolition of the paper mill and an environmental cleanup by the EPA. In addition to the beautiful waterfront at this site, there is also deep water access and an unimproved pier that can be rehabilitated into a marina for deep draft vessels.

Goal: Return this waterfront property to private ownership for development. The City has now owned this for decades and has no business being in the business of proposed development that just drag on and on. This property needs to be placed into private ownership by subdivided it and selling the land at public auction to the highest bidder(s).



Above: Rendering of potential waterfront development at former industrial sites.

Former Shade Roller Property – this adjacent St. Lawrence River waterfront property is still in the process of cleanup. The City has invested heavily in grant funds to demolish this former industrial plant and begin remediation.

Goal: Remediation at this site needs to be completed in a timely manner, and like the former Diamond site the property needs to be sold and put into private ownership for development. This is the best way that the City can ensure future growth in terms of job creation and tax base.

Former Mobil Tank Farm Property – this property is located adjacent to the Fort site and has been remediated. While the Fort site offers some tangible benefits to the community, it is not taxed and stymie’s private-sector development that would otherwise expand the tax base, create jobs, and bring new residents to the City.

Goal: The City should work with the Fort Committee to sell this parcel and place it in private ownership for development and to expand the tax base.

Fort de La Presentation Site – discussed in Tourism section of this plan.

Former Augsbury Tank Farm Property – This deep-water St. Lawrence River waterfront site offers a unique opportunity to the City to reinvent itself from a former industrial use to a reimaged property that could support waterfront businesses and housing.

Goal 1: The City has an opportunity to acquire the middle acreage of this site from the Ogdensburg Kiwanis Club and should acquire the property as soon as possible.

Goal 2: Work with regulatory agencies; St. Lawrence County; and the New York State Spill Fund to clean the Kiwanis site and the adjacent sites to get them back into productive use.

Goal 3: Simultaneously work on a redevelopment plan to subdivide the site according to highest and best use, and sell at public auction to the highest bidder(s) for redevelopment.

Port of Ogdensburg Dredge Disposal Site – It is an environmental shame that the State of New York dredged the Port of Ogdensburg in the early 80s and created a dredge disposal site for contaminated soils on the pristine and beautiful shores of the St. Lawrence River.

Goal: Work with the State of New York and the Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority to obtain a commitment to remediate this site prior to commencing any new dredging project at the Port. The remediation of this site should be tied to any further dredging project, and the contaminated soils should be taken off site and disposed of properly.

Port Lands – Proctor Avenue – The Port Authority also owns property to the east of this site that is clean and can be developed. These lands need to be returned to the tax rolls promptly.

Goal: Work with the Authority to purchase this land through an intergovernmental transfer so they can be returned to the tax rolls and put into productive use. Alternatively, work with the Authority to hold a public auction of this site with a direct sale to a private party or parties.

Port Lands – Bridge Approach Parcels – The Authority also owns considerable waterfront lands adjacent to the Bridge Administration Building. These lands also need to be sold and returned to the private sector and placed on Ogdensburg’s tax rolls. The Authority has owned these lands for over 50 years with no development. This deprives the community of private sector development, and deprives the community as a whole of an expanded tax base.

Goal: Work with the Authority to purchase these waterfront lands through an intergovernmental transfer so they can be returned to the tax rolls and put into productive use. Alternatively, work with the Authority to hold a public auction of these lands with a direct sale to a private party. On September 12, 2019, the Authority Board unanimously adopted a resolution to declare these 50 acres of lands surplus and to sell them at public auction, and this sale needs to be expedited.

St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center Surplus Waterfront Lands – the State of New York owns large tracts of waterfront lands on what is commonly referred to as Chimney Point. These lands should be sold at public auction or transferred to the City with the express intent of selling them to private parties.

Goal: Accelerate the transfer of these waterfront lands to the City as authorized in a State Law that was introduced by Senator Ritchie and signed into law. Once acquired, the City should subdivide this waterfront lands and hold a public auction to dispose of these lands and place them into private ownership.

Private Waterfront Business Development – private waterfront businesses such as Hosmer’s Marina, the Tiki Bar and Marina and the newly proposed St. Lawrence River marina near the



former Shade Roller plant – need to be encouraged to create a dynamic community where local residents and visitors can enjoy the beauty of these rivers.

Goal: Cooperate with private developers who have an interest in developing shoreline properties by ensuring they receive assistance from various federal, state and local programs that are designed to create jobs and investments.

Oswegatchie River Pumphouse – this historic facility is largely underutilized and deteriorating. The City should explore the feasibility of selling this historic building and placing it in private ownership. The building could be used for upscale, waterfront housing; a waterfront restaurant; craft brewery; etc.

Goal – Explore the feasibility of selling this building to put it into productive use and on the tax rolls. Ensure historic preservation of this facility through a deed restriction or other legal means. Relocate existing utilities, if feasible, to facilitate this project. Alternatively, find a public use that is economically beneficial to the community if it remains off the tax rolls.

Oswegatchie River Dam – the ownership of this facility, which is through a long-term lease with the City, has changed hands multiple times in recent years. Past owners have been delinquent on payments to the City on many occasions. Significant investments have improved the operation of the facility, but have also contributed to flooding and significant damage along the crescent wall as the tail race directed spring runoff toward this park area.

Goal: The agreement for the lease of this facility should be reviewed for potential adjustments that would be most-beneficial to the City, or the City should look into the feasibility of owning and operating this facility for the betterment of the community.

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT

There is still a small business core located in Ogdensburg’s downtown, including: banking; insurance; restaurants; human services operations; health care; museum; library; city hall; professional offices; etc. A plan needs to be developed for its redevelopment. This can best be accomplished by applying for grant funding to develop a master plan.

Goal 1: Apply for funding to undertake a study on a master plan for downtown redevelopment. The master plan should look at downtown redevelopment as well as waterfront development on both sides of the Oswegatchie River.



Goal 2: Remove the federal restrictions on the downtown core area that were put in place from a previous federal grant. This is imperative as these restrictions stymie development, and the value of the assets that were funded with federal funds have been fully depreciated.

Goal 3: The study noted in Goal 1 above should give strong consideration on reconnecting Ford and Main Street with a single bridge. This would free up valuable waterfront in the Oswegatchie harbor area and allow for easier connections to the waterfront greenbelt area. The two-way traffic would increase traffic counts through the downtown, attracting additional commercial businesses while retaining existing businesses.

Goal 4: Federal highway funds should be explored to improve the appearance of the streetscape, similar to, although smaller in scale, to the streetscape improvements made in other New York communities, such as Albany.



Goal 5: The City must apply for New York State Main Street funding, as well as compete in New York State’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant program to make fundamental improvements to the downtown core.

Goal 6: Each of these grant opportunities should include facade restoration initiatives, or a separate grant should be written to assist with facade restoration projects.

Goal 7: The City should explore selling off sections of the large parking area surrounding the Ogdensburg Mall area to promote further private business development and ownership.

TOURISM

It must be recognized that we now live in a global economy that resulted in the loss of many of the City's former manufacturing facilities. Tourism, and other service sectors, must be promoted and encouraged as a way to create new jobs. The City's waterfront, once cleaned up and put into productive use, offers the community the unique opportunity to dramatically increase the tourism trade.

Amphitheater – a natural amphitheater, like the existing waterfront at the former beach area, could be used to promote musical events – bands concerts – with the beautiful St. Lawrence River as the backdrop.

Goal: Work to obtain this former beach area as a municipal park. It can double as a community beach and a natural amphitheater for community events.

Community Pavilion – having a community pavilion that is not enclosed would afford the community an opportunity to promote more outdoor events that can draw tourist.



Goal: The City should construct a large community pavilion next to the existing Dobisky Center as part of the REDI project. Such a facility could be used for events such as: musical bands; car shows; wine, beer and food festival; senior cookouts; youth recreation events; etc.

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Beach – The people of Ogdensburg want a beach on the St. Lawrence River! There is no cleaner and more-beautiful river in the world. Providing a beach for young and old to swim and play is critical to recreation for citizens and to attract tourists.



Goal 1: Explore locations for a community beach. The ideal location would be in the Greenbelt where activities can be centralized – sand bar, marina, beach, pavilion, Dobisky Center, etc. The beach and the pool would be open on different days and utilize the

same employees for life guards, etc.

Goal 2: If a Greenbelt beach area is not viable, the City should explore reopening the former beach near the Bridge Administration Building. This can be done in partnership with the OBPA through a lease and share maintenance responsibilities. Other areas could also be explored, but this location would be the easiest and quickest to open. This should be accomplished by June 1, 2021 without further delay.

Waterfront Revitalization – a strong emphasis needs to be put on development of the waterfront with real and tangible progress. By cleaning up sites, such as the former Augsburg Tank Farm Property; former Diamond International Site; Shade Roller Site, OBPA waterfront; etc., the City has a unique opportunity to promote private sector tourism. This development would include new waterfront restaurants, marinas, housing, etc.

Goal: The City's primary mission, over the next five years, should be waterfront cleanup and redevelopment with tangible results. The City should partner with St. Lawrence County on this effort. More specific action items are explained in a separate section of this Comprehensive Development Plan. This waterfront redevelopment strategy also includes taking existing public lands and getting them into private ownership and on the tax rolls for business and housing development.

Events: Many more events must be held in Ogdensburg to begin to foster additional opportunities to attract tourists to the community.

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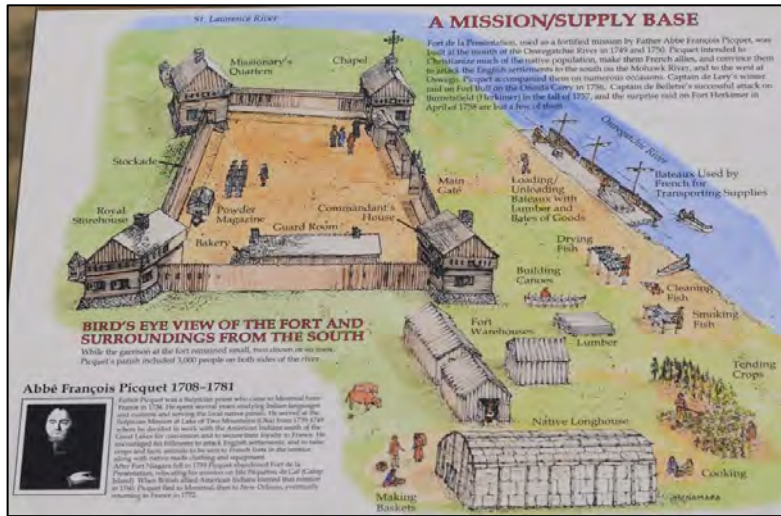
Goal: Work with private business owners, local and county chambers, outside event coordinators; etc., to make Ogdensburg a destination for recreational and cultural events. These events can include: fishing tournaments; fairs; parades; bands; barbecues; etc.

New Development Projects – preliminary plans are presently in the works for a downtown hotel on the Oswegatchie River and a new marina on the St. Lawrence River. These projects need to be encouraged. If they are built, this will offer tangible results in the area of facilitating more tourism in Ogdensburg.

Goal: Work with Federal, State and County leaders to facilitate the development of these projects by identifying programs that will assist with the private development of these projects.

Fort de La Presentation – the original 1749 settlement of Ogdensburg was located near the confluence of the Oswegatchie and St. Lawrence River on what is now commonly called Lighthouse Point. A French missionary built Fort de La Presentation as a mission and outpost. The Fort de La Presentation Association has cleaned up this polluted former industrial area and developed recreational improvements on the site. The Association holds annual battle reenactments on the site as a tourist attraction that explores the rich history of the site, which was occupied by many cultures, including: American, Canadian, Native American, French and

British. The Association has developed preliminary architectural plans for the redevelopment of the original Fort as a tourist attraction and cultural interpretive center.



Goal: The State of New York, North Country Regional Economic Development Council, and Federal Government should fund the construction of this Fort replica to commemorate the history and culture of this New York State and National Register of Historic Places site. Community leaders should advocate annually for funding to build this fort replica as a tourist attraction until it is funded and

built. The City should strive to have this project adopted as a priority and transformative project with the North Country Regional Economic Development Council

HOUSING

The City of Ogdensburg is predominantly comprised of an older housing stock that is complimented with more modern housing. The City needs to focus its limited staffing and resources on improving the quality of housing in Ogdensburg. This can be accomplished by partnering with other housing agencies and developers to facilitate restoration efforts, while preserving and improving the quality of housing that does exist.

Goal 1: City staff needs to focus its attention on federal and state programs that promote and encouraging better housing conditions for low and moderate income families. This can be accomplished by working with private consultants, the St. Lawrence County Planning Office, and the Development Authority of the North Country to write housing grant applications that will begin to address poor housing conditions. The grant programs include: Community Development Block Grant program; Neighborhood and Rural Preservation Program; New York State HOME program, etc.

Goal 2: Annually write a CDBG & HOME grant by utilizing other agencies to support this mission.

Goal 3: Annually write a housing grant application that provides financial assistance to first time homebuyers.

Goal 4: Research and apply for other federal and state grant programs that will improve housing in the City of Ogdensburg.

Goal 5: The City's recently-created Land Bank has proven a useful tool for putting tax exempt properties into productive use. More of an emphasis, however, needs to be placed on rehabilitation and less on demolition.

Goal 6: Explore working with the Board of Cooperative Educational Services to develop the vacant land they own behind their school on Park Street. BOCES teaches classes on heavy equipment operation as well as carpentry and housing construction. It would seem like a good opportunity to work with BOCES to install a street extension through this vacant, tax-exempt lands and have students build homes on the street. This would negate the need to move these homes when they are built and put out to bid for sale. The City could pay for materials for the street(s).

Goal 7: Explore the creation of a Neighborhood and Rural Preservation Corporation in conjunction with the towns of Lisbon and Oswegatchie.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Unfortunately, much of the city's glory, history, and heritage was destroyed during urban renewal when many of the city's historic downtown buildings were demolished. However, the city still has numerous historic and architecturally beautiful buildings that can be saved and restored. Every effort should be made to work diligently to save as many of these historic buildings by placing them on the State and National Register of Historic Places. This designation indicates a communities recognition of their historic and cultural significance to the community, and opens up restoration opportunities through federal and state tax credits to developers. Below are a few candidate buildings and properties for this designation.

St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center – the former St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center complex of abandoned buildings are historical treasures that have been abandoned by New York State and left to deteriorate in the elements. No effort has been made to preserve these historical buildings, and the State has allowed them to fall into terrible disrepair. A concerted effort should be



undertaken to work with the State to stabilize these buildings to preserve their beautiful architecture.

While an official application was made to the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Offices in August 2019 for listing these buildings with the New York State and Federal

Register of Historic Places, this agency has to date ignored this request. This is likely due to the fact that these are state-owned buildings and the State does not wish to invest money in them to preserve them.

Goal 1: Adopt a Council resolution affirming the request that these buildings be placed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Forward copies of this request to State and Federal Officials and request that they track the request through the proper processes at the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation offices to ensure action is taken.

Goal 2: After tentative approval is obtained from New York State, hire a consultant to complete inventory and analysis necessary for historic preservation standards.



Goal 3: Work with State officials on a historic preservation program that saves some of the most-outstanding buildings on this campus, while recognizing that some of the buildings are beyond repair.

City Hall – City Hall is in need of modest upgrades to improve its historical appearance, and could be improved internally to reopen the original and historic balcony and stage area for meetings and community events.

Goal #1: Improve maintenance of this facility by undertaking minor masonry repairs and aesthetic upgrades and modernization of the interior. Maintenance would include: front step restoration; repaired or replaced roof system; improved HVAC; bell and balcony restoration; black netting to keep birds out of bell tower, over front entrance and out of balcony area.

Goal #2: The City's engineer should review the original plans for the building and determine if an historic restoration project could be undertaken to restore the original grandeur of the Council Chambers by removing the drop ceiling and restoring the balcony and stage area. Grant funding through historic preservation; downtown redevelopment programs; and other sources should be sought for this project if it is feasible.



Bridge Administration Building – this building was part of the former St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and is presently used by the Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority for their administrative offices and private office rentals. It is presently in a state of disrepair, and every effort should be made to restore this building to its original beauty.

Goal 1: Work with the Authority to obtain designation of this building on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Such a designation would allow the Authority to secure historic preservation grants for a new roof; facade restoration; new windows and doors; etc.

Goal 2: Work with the Authority to sell this building to a private individual or business with the Authority as the anchor tenant. This strategy would see the building placed on the tax rolls while allowing the continued operation of this facility as the administration building for the OBPA.

RECREATION

Community Beach – Ogdensburg is located on one of the cleanest and most-beautiful rivers in the entire World. Unfortunately, it has been without a community recreational beach for over 20 years. The City should strive to reopen a community beach as soon as is practical. The cost of opening a beach can be minimal. Costs can be kept to a minimum by utilizing existing lifeguards and alternating this staff between the pool and beach.

Goal: Work to reopen the former city beach by June 2021. Concurrently, work with the State and regional partners on a strategy to open a new community beach on the St. Lawrence River in the Greenbelt area, or other suitable site.

Lockwood Arena – The Lockwood Arena has become a popular recreation facility that provides an indoor ice arena during the winter months; and as a place to host community events, such as the Greater Ogdensburg Chamber of Commerce’s Wine Beer and Food Festival. It has the potential for even more community and recreational activities.

Goal 1: Work with the Greater Ogdensburg Chamber of Commerce, St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, and other community groups to facilitate additional events at this facility. These events will provide additional recreational opportunities as well as foster tourism in the City.

Goal 2: Work toward securing grant funding for facade improvements that will make the facility more aesthetically appealing and raise its profile.

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Edwin L. Dobisky Center – This beautiful waterfront facility is greatly underutilized and needs to become a much more dramatic community center with additional tourism related events. Encouraging a private entity to operate a restaurant and bar at this center should be explored.

Goal: Explore a private lease at a portion of this facility to encourage additional use by the general public. The lease could foster the development of a beautiful riverfront venue on the St. Lawrence River at a nominal cost. A public area can be maintained for meetings and events, and the Chamber could operate this portion of the facility. In addition, the City should consider the construction of a pavilion next to the facility to allow for additional outdoor dining and seating, and to hold many more outdoor events. The lawn to the east of the facility is underused although it has abundant potential. Grant funding should be sought for the pavilion.

Youth Recreation Programs – Ogdensburg is blessed with numerous volunteer organizations who operate many of the youth recreation programs, including the Kiwanis Club; Minor Hockey; and the Ogdensburg Boys & Girls Club. It is also fortunate to have excellent and well-maintained facilities for these events that are now under the care of the Ogdensburg Department of Public Works. Many more recreational programs could be offered to area children and adults.

Goal: Work with service clubs to assist with future maintenance of these facilities, and coordinate additional recreation programs and events for children and youth.

Wheathouse Bay – This area outside the Port of Ogdensburg secure gate area is presently enjoyed by many for access to the St. Lawrence River for ice fishing and shoreline fishing. It is, however, an eyesore and needs to be greatly enhanced to provide additional recreational and waterfront activities.

Goal: The City should consider a long term lease on this property from the Authority. Additional enhancements could include a boat launch; improved paving for parking; landscaping enhancements, etc. The Authority or City should also consider sub-leasing a portion of this property for private development of a restaurant or other waterfront business that will make better use of the site and offer additional recreational opportunities.

Recreational Trails – The City has numerous recreational trails that offer safe walking and biking locations for area residents. The existing trails include the Maple City Trail; and trails at Fort LaPresentation site and the Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority.

Goal 1: These trails should be adequately maintained and additional amenities should be considered but should not impede with private development.

Goal 2: Work with the citizen group that envisions lighting enhancements in the Crescent Park while exploring similar colored lighting enhancements in the Greenbelt and through the downtown.

Waterfront Recreation – The City has the capacity to greatly expand its waterfront recreational opportunities, such as: fishing, boating, marinas, bait shops, and other businesses serving these recreation opportunities.

Goal: The City should strive to get as much of its waterfront into private hands for development to expand recreational opportunities and services on the St. Lawrence River.

St. Lawrence State Park Golf Course – While the aforementioned state-owned golf course is located outside the corporate boundaries of the City of Ogdensburg, this facility is enjoyed by many residents of Ogdensburg and its surrounding townships for recreational enjoyment. The State should invest more into this facility to make it a golf course that attracts more tourists and visitors to the Greater Ogdensburg area.

Goal 1: Work with State officials to secure additional investments in this State-owned and operated recreational facility with the aim of providing a better golfing experience and also to attract outside users, such as tourists from Canada. The State should resurrect its plans to turn this into an 18-hole golf course. The State should also consider modest improvements, such as: improved drainage and sprinklers; improved playing surfaces over hard bedrock areas; improved paved or stone cart paths; improved greens and green signage, etc. These types of improvements will make this a worthy 18-hole golf course that would improve recreational opportunities for children and adults while serving to attract more tourists to the area, thereby generating additional visitors. A “Canada Day” should be held by the present operators as a way to attract Canadian golfers on certain days.

Goal 2: The State should also work with local officials to explore improvements to the former ski and sledding area that is enjoyed by Ogdensburg area families.

TRANSPORTATION

Route 37 & 68 Intersection – The Intersection of New York State Routes 37 and 68 is a major entrance to the City of Ogdensburg and many retail stores. Yet this intersection is at best unattractive and at worst, unsafe! While the City and State invested significant funding in the rebuilding of Paterson Street recently, this intersection was not addressed.

Goal: The City should work with its elected representatives and the New York State Department of Transportation to redesign and rebuild this important entrance to the City. An emphasis should be placed on making the intersection safer, but also more appealing as an entrance to the community. The State owns considerable right-of-way on Route 37 that could allow for significant improvements and an improved appearance.

Downtown Arterial - The present arterial circumvents the downtown and waterfront areas, bringing one-way traffic around rather than through the downtown corridor. It would be better if master planning reversed this traffic pattern so that one bridge brought traffic through downtown, connecting Main and Ford Streets with a two-way traffic pattern.

Goal 1: Work with DOT on master planning to one day reconnect Ford and Main Streets with two way traffic over the Oswegatchie River and through the downtown mall area. This may take years, but it is a concept worth researching. Many communities in the United States are reinventing themselves with improved traffic patterns and by undoing some of the mistakes that were created when the interstate highway system was constructed.

Goal 2: At a minimum, work with NYS DOT to remove the connecting road loop that connects the two downtown arterials near the mall. This is essentially useless and takes up valuable land space in the downtown. Acquire this area and the area between the twin bridges for private redevelopment.



Port of Ogdensburg – While the Port of Ogdensburg is the only port facility in New York State’s North Country, it could be argued that the port has become significantly less relevant as a transportation facility. At its peak in the 1960s, Ogdensburg’s waterborne traffic exceeded 500,000 tons per year. At present, the Port’s waterborne shipments average less than 50,000 tons per year. It is also located in the center of the City, taking up significant and valuable waterfront

lands that may be more-valuable and more-beneficial to the long term growth and health of the community as private sector lands for housing and business development. In this regard, every effort should be made to regain some of the port property for housing development and business development that is compatible with the existing port operation.

Goal 1: Work with the Authority and State of New York to address blighted areas at the Port, and to transfer as much land as possible to the private sector for redevelopment. There is no reason for the Authority to retain valuable land at the end of Proctor Avenue. This should be turned over to the City for sale to the private sector for housing development.

Goal 2. More importantly, prior to the proposed dredging project, the Authority and the State should begin to address the environmental contamination created by the last port dredging project that resulted in contaminated soils being dumped on valuable St. Lawrence River waterfront. This dredge disposal site needs to be remediated by the State so it can be put back into productive use, or a study needs to be undertaken to determine if the heavy metals in the contaminated soils have dissipated over the years and what type of development is permitted on the site. Either way, it is the City's overarching goal to get this property back into private hands and into productive use that expands the tax base in Ogdensburg.

New York & Ogdensburg Railroad: This 26-mile-long short line from Norwood to the Port of Ogdensburg does provide a vital transportation linkage to the “outside world.” Buildings at the Port provide storage for agricultural products that are important to the region. However, increased rail shipments can also create traffic conflicts in the City.

Goal: Support restoration of this short line railroad. If there is future growth in rail shipments, the Authority should consider additional rail storage facilities outside the City so as to mitigate rail shipment increases into the City. There are lands owned by the Authority that are more-appropriately suited for this type of logistics, such as the Wagner Road parcel in the Town of Lisbon.

Ogdensburg International Airport – The Authority’s recent expansion of the Ogdensburg International Airport created an opportunity for additional passenger and commercial flights into and out of the City of Ogdensburg. This is beneficial for area businesses and to efforts to recruit new businesses to the City and County. It is also beneficial to area residents who seek convenient flights for vacations, and for former residents who return to the area during the summer months. It is also an important and vital transportation mode for the development of additional tourism opportunities in the area by attracting, primarily, Canadian citizens to the region.

Goal: The City should work cooperatively with the Authority and the State to encourage additional flights and commercial usage of the airport facilities to encourage job creation and tourism.

Ogdensburg-Prescott International Bridge – as a border community on the St. Lawrence River, Ogdensburg’s economy is dependent on trade and tourism over the international bridge. This 1.5-mile-long suspension bridge is key to commerce and growth. Yet it has unfortunately fallen into disrepair due to a failing paint system that was caused by the lack of an ongoing maintenance program. The City is grateful for the State’s recent investments – over \$40M in recent years - in this critical infrastructure. Millions in additional funding are needed, and the State should provide funding for ongoing maintenance so additional costs due to deterioration do not compound the problem.

Goal 1: Work with the Authority and State to secure additional Federal and State funding to complete the necessary repairs to this transportation facility.

Goal 2: Encourage the State to develop a 10-year capital improvement plan that includes ongoing painting of the structure to stop its deterioration and mounting costs for repairs.

EDUCATION

K-12 - Ogdensburg is fortunate to have three great K-12 educational schools with excellent teachers and staff, as well as a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) school for vocational education. It is critical to maintain excellent schools with educational programs that rival any other in New York State and across the country. When people look to relocate to a community, one of their primary concerns is the quality of the educational system.

Can math and reading proficiency scores and graduation rates be improved upon?

The school tax rate continues to climb to the point where it is now the highest school tax rate in St. Lawrence County and, perhaps the North Country and State. Both of these issues need to be addressed by school administration.

Goal: Work with the school administration to advocate for improved test scores, graduation rates, and significantly reduced taxation. The tax rate should be comparable to similar sized school districts, or else it acts as a deterrent to people wanting to live here and, therefore, a declining school enrollment.

Colleges – Ogdensburg no longer has a college or university after Mater Dei College closed in 1999. The City is served by nearby colleges, but it would be beneficial to have a college in the community, and city leaders should have discussions with nearby universities that may need additional classroom space. The former Mater Dei College could serve as an annex to one of the two state universities, providing college level courses for area residents, and it could also be used to attract Canadian customers to the universities due to its close proximity to the border.

Goal: Speak with area colleges about utilizing the former Mater Dei College or other underutilized buildings as an annex for college classes that would benefit the greater Ogdensburg region.

St. Lawrence River Institute – Community leaders should pitch the concept of a St. Lawrence River Institute or Research Center on the shores of the St. Lawrence River in Ogdensburg. This facility could be operated by a consortium of existing universities, and would provide waterfront access and research facilities for professors and students to study the river ecosystem. The mission of the Institute would be to understand and protect the ecosystems of the St. Lawrence River in New York State waters and beyond. Seed funding could come from Federal and State programs that are earmarked for the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River water quality grants for watershed improvements and education. This is an opportunity for the State of New York to shine with a world class institute devoted to better understanding the St. Lawrence River and its watershed. A similar facility exists in Cornwall, Ontario that could serve as the model for the New York State facility. Other such facilities exist in State's that border the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River region, but not in New York State.

Goal: Community leaders should work with the Regional Council and elected officials to promote this concept. Perhaps a former underutilized building on the grounds of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center could be restored for the initial physical presence on the site.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ogdensburg Command Performance – Ogdensburg is fortunate to have an organization that promotes and delivers Broadway productions to Ogdensburg at Ogdensburg Free Academy. These events bring excellent entertainment and culture to the City and attract people from throughout the North Country and Canada. Ogdensburg Command Performances (OCP) enjoys broad community support and financial support from the Ogdensburg City Council and private donors. Support from adjoining townships would also be welcome. The OCP organization could conceivably be expanded to promote live entertainment, such as Country & Western, Rock, and other musical bands at the Ogdensburg Dome, Lockwood Arena or Ogdensburg Free Academy Auditorium.

Goal 1: Work with OCP to have them expand their operations to include musical bands for the enjoyment of North Country residents and making Ogdensburg a destination for such events.

Goal 2: If this type of work is outside the mission of OCP, search for another event organizer that can accomplish Goal 1.

Frederic Remington Art Museum – This cultural attraction has grown over the years and continues to be a positive attraction for tourists visiting the city. The museum has also expanded its events to draw more patrons and tourist to the museum and city. Every effort should be made to support the museum while transitioning former city positions over to the corporation running the museum.

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Goal 1: While the museum has become much more independent in recent decades, the City should work with the museum to reaffirm in legal documents that the collection belongs to the residents of the City of Ogdensburg.

Goal 2: In 2009, the United States Congress enacted legislation renaming the Ogdensburg Post Office the Frederic Remington Post Office Building, in honor of painter Frederic Remington, who spent his formative childhood years in that city. Museum directors should work with the U.S. Postal Service for proper signage on the building to commemorate the naming of the building. This “branding” can help to serve as additional marketing to attract people to the museum.

Ogdensburg Public Library – The Ogdensburg Public Library is a treasure to the City and residents in the adjoining townships. It is also officially designated as the repository for Ogdensburg historical items.

Goal 1: The City and Library Board of Directors should work together to create an Ogdensburg History Museum on the second floor of the library, and officially designate the museum with proper signage on the front of the building. This can act as an additional tourism draw for the community. The library could also increase its visitors and increase its revenue by charging

admission to the museum. The Remington Museum could be an active partner in this second City museum by assisting with interpretative displays.

Goal 2: The Library has become less-dependent on the City in recent years with library personnel becoming employees of the independent library. To ensure the continued vitality of the library, the city and the two adjoining townships should work out a cost-sharing arrangement for monetary support of the library that is based on population and patronage.

Goal 3: It may also be worth exploring the merger of the two boards and not-for-profit entities into one entity that operates both the museum and library.

NEW YORK STATE FACILITIES

The city and county's economy is largely dependent on public sector jobs, in addition to jobs in health care; private employers; retail and other service sector jobs. It is imperative that the city work with state officials to maintain these jobs and encourage additional employment opportunities.

Ogdensburg has a long history of providing care to those suffering from mental health issues and is now a Center of Excellence at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center (SLPC).

Since the early 1980s, Ogdensburg offered assistance to the state when it was looking for additional locations for correctional facilities. The Ogdensburg Correctional Facility was built utilizing vacant buildings of the SLPC. Riverview Correctional Facility was built in 1988 to house New York City's and the State's rising inmate populations.

In recent years, the State's inmate population has decreased by over 50%, necessitating that some facilities throughout the State be closed. To date, Ogdensburg's facilities have been spared closure.

Goal 1: Community leaders will need to continue to work with State officials in an effort to convince them of the value and importance of the psychiatric center and correctional facilities in terms of care and cost. State officials should recognize that Ogdensburg small economy relies heavily on these state institutions, and cannot handle the closure of any operations.

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Goal 2: As philosophies shift toward policies of treatment vs. incarceration, Ogdensburg should work with State officials to encourage the State to set up additional treatment programs, such as those in Hamilton Hall on the grounds of the SLPC.

Goal 3: As previously stated, community leaders will simultaneously need to work with the State to get more surplus State lands back on the tax rolls.

Goal 4: Work with the Regional Council to secure funding for a master plan for the abandoned buildings and surplus lands that used to make up the larger SLPC grounds.

TAX RATE

Real property taxes can be an impediment to growth. If the tax rate gets too high, and is not comparable to other tax rates in the county, state or even nationally, it will serve as a major deterrent when trying to attract new residents and businesses. The tax rate should be comparable to similar sized cities, villages and towns in New York State.

A reasonable tax rate for Ogdensburg would be in the \$10 - \$12 per \$1,000 of assessed value range. The 2021 City tax rate is \$17.87, according to the adopted budget, down from \$19.84 in 2020.

Goal 1: The city should continue its efforts to reduce taxes to an affordable level that is lower or comparable to other communities.

Goal 2: The Council should consider a Local Law that caps taxes at a reasonable rate that will serve to stimulate investment and not act as a deterrent to attracting new residents to the City.

Goal 3: Work with officials at St. Lawrence County to study the benefits of consolidation of certain services. The State has specific programs to aid County's with consolidation and shared services. This shared services report is mandated by the Governor, but meaningful efforts in this regard have been unachieved to date.

Goal 4: The City should also work with the Ogdensburg School District to encourage a less-burdensome school tax rate. It does little good to lower city taxes while school district taxes continue to escalate.

AFFIRMATION

CITY OF OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK
COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The preparation of this Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Ogdensburg, New York was accomplished by the Ogdensburg City Council through a public participation process that included public participation on the following dates:

- _____ Public Visioning Meeting
- _____ Public Visioning Meeting
- _____ Ogdensburg Planning Board
- _____ Ogdensburg City Council

This Comprehensive Development Plan was recommended by the Ogdensburg Planning Board and adopted by the Ogdensburg City Council on the following dates.

- _____ Ogdensburg Planning Board
- _____ *Signature* (Director of Planning & Development)
- _____ Ogdensburg City Council
- _____ *Signature* (Mayor of the City of Ogdensburg)
- _____ *Signature* (Manager of the City of Ogdensburg)

Ogdensburg City Council Resolution # _____ of 2021

Cc:

- United States Elected Representatives
- New York State Elected Representatives
- Regional Economic Development Council
- St. Lawrence County Elected Representatives
- St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency & Planning Department
- Ogdensburg Bridge & Port Authority
- Ogdensburg City Council & Staff