

## Land Use/Character Introduction

Much of the land use pattern throughout the Town and Village reflects its roots as a waterfront community in northern New York. The Village of Clayton has been fortunate to retain its dominant character of a small urban village along the St. Lawrence River, visually surrounded on the remaining three sides by the rural countryside of the Town.

Today, typical suburban sprawl and commercial strip development has not destroyed the Village's historic, urban context and intimate scale or the Town's distinct rural agricultural character with open vistas and skies. After listening to residents throughout the community it is this Plan's objective to help ensure the Village's and Town's physical character is preserved and enhanced for generations to come.

This does not mean Clayton should not continue to grow. Instead we should work hard to maintain that same sense of order, intimacy, and security that we cherish. That is a resident community organized around its historic waterfront, and wrapped in the Town's rural countryside.

To accomplish that goal we must work to build upon the character defining elements of our past. A Village character that reflects the efficiencies of high density, walkability, safe/slow moving narrow streets, short blocks, and structures reflecting the massing and roof forms of our architectural past; all organized around an efficient street grid lined with treed lawns.

The Town outside the village and hamlet is quite rural with predominantly agricultural, wetland and forest lands with scattered residential, and businesses throughout open

### Land Use/Character Goals:

1. Foster future land uses in a manner and arrangement that will preserve agricultural and natural features along with rural character that make Clayton an attractive and hospitable place to live, work, and visit.
2. Encourage sound commercial and related development that is small/medium in scale and compatible with hamlet, village, and town character.
3. Provide for residential development in a manner that results in both housing and neighborhoods that are safe, healthy, and attractive, while providing a wide choice and supply of dwelling units.
4. Consider compatible renewable energy systems in appropriate locations identified by the community.
5. Foster walkable areas with physical and visual access to and along the waterfront for public use.
6. Preserve the scenic character of community gateways and corridors along NYS Route 12E, and NYS Route 12 throughout the Town of Clayton.

### Land Use/Character Objectives:

1. Initiate provisions to accommodate future residential, commercial, and other types of development in appropriate locations.
2. Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands and existing farming operations.
3. Encourage the preservation of natural features and open space.
4. Discourage the placement of land uses that are incompatible with the surrounding development, natural features and/or archeological resources.
5. Preserve the quality and natural state of environmentally sensitive areas, including surface waters, groundwater, wetlands, forested land, and wildlife habitat and migration corridor and stopover sites.
6. Protect Clayton's residents from development that would degrade environmental quality, aesthetics, natural appearance, or character of the community.
7. Develop appropriate standards to ensure future commercial and non-residential development is in keeping with applicable rural or urban character.
8. Direct more intensive types of future development into areas where public facilities and services can be economically provided in the future, as needed.

areas with less development. It is the dominance of agricultural land and natural features combined, that the residents of both the Town and Village cherish, as well as those who come to visit. Clayton is also well known for its seasonal residences along the St. Lawrence River that forms its northern boundary. Seasonal residences along the shorelines of both the Chaumont River in Depauville and St. Lawrence River (among the islands as well) in the Village and Town of Clayton also define the area where summers typically have more economic and recreational activity in and around the waterfront.

The Village of Clayton is more urban in nature, and has seen a rebirth of its downtown district in recent years. While the dominant land use is residential, commercial uses are generally concentrated in the downtown area and along the state route traffic arteries in the village. The peninsula portion of the Village contains a concentration of residential uses located within walking distance to the downtown. Also, a centrally located village green with a playground for children and open areas for adults is used for passive recreation and community activities such as a farmer’s market. Other cultural destinations, events, and activities have allowed the Village to begin to flourish year round.

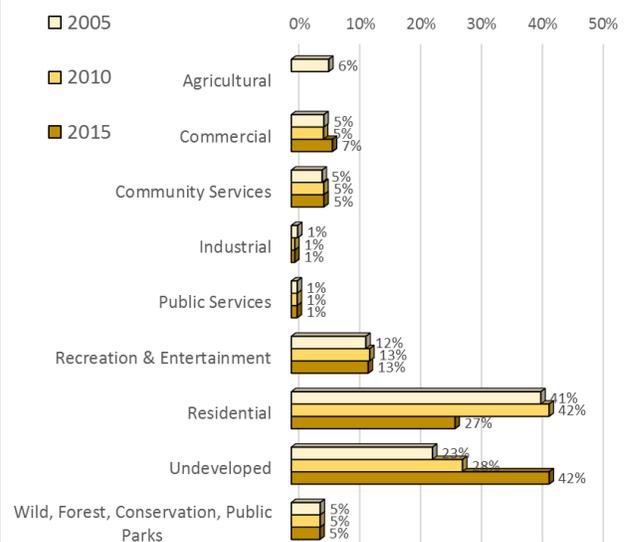
The hamlet of Depauville is the other more urban area being the other population center that historically was the focus of commerce for the agricultural community. It is primarily residential with a few small businesses, churches and a library.

The following sections provide a discussion of Clayton’s land uses based on assessment category information from the Jefferson County Office of Real Property. Afterwards, a discussion of land cover and land character

**Land Use/Character Strategies:**

1. Encourage beautification efforts in commercial areas through amenities such as lighting, signage, and landscaping.
2. Direct future industrial development to locate in areas suitable for light industrial growth.
3. Ensure that necessary public services and facilities are available to support future development.
4. Recognize the multitude of factors when considering renewable energy facility placement, acknowledging that for some types such as large scale solar and commercial wind energy conversion systems there are very few areas in the Town that may be suitable.
5. Encourage managed growth of the Village and Town through good planning and appropriate development standards.
6. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities and encourage waterfront revitalization.
7. Take advantage of compact community design that enhances, preserves, and provides access to waterfront resources.

Figure 67. Land Use by Acreage of Assessment Category (Village of Clayton)



Source: Jefferson County Real Property Office 2005, 2010, 2015

based on aerial photography and predominant land use is described.

### Village by Assessment

A breakdown of Village land use acreage by assessment category shows that by 2015, residential uses made up almost one third of the Village with undeveloped, recreation and entertainment, and commercial comprising the next three highest acreages (Figure 67).

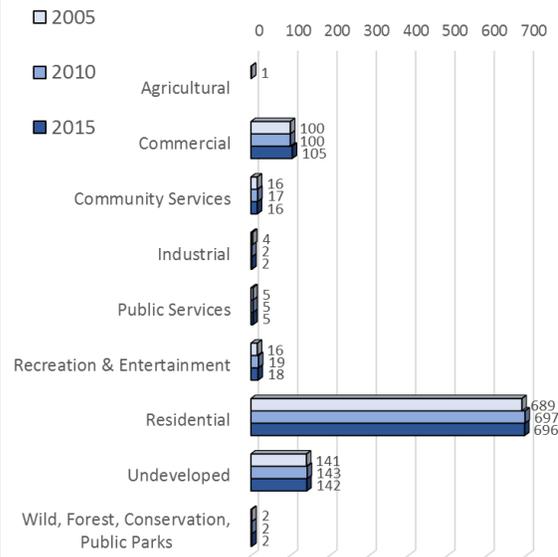
While recent assessment changes have led to some of the shifts such as the Clayton Country Club (~150 acres) now assessed as undeveloped (2015), in 2010 it had previously been coded as residential. The increase in Commercial has been largely due to the Thousand Islands Harbor Hotel which opened in 2014. The number of parcels (Figure 68) indicates that residential properties outnumber all other categories combined in the village.

### Town by Assessment

The Town’s three predominant land uses by acreage are agriculture, residential (year round, seasonal, et al) and undeveloped shown by Figure 69. While agricultural decreased in acreage from 2005 to 2015, farming is still a viable activity for a large percentage of the Town. Residential has increased to 33.3% of the Town’s acreage, while Commercial has also increased to comprise 1.9%.

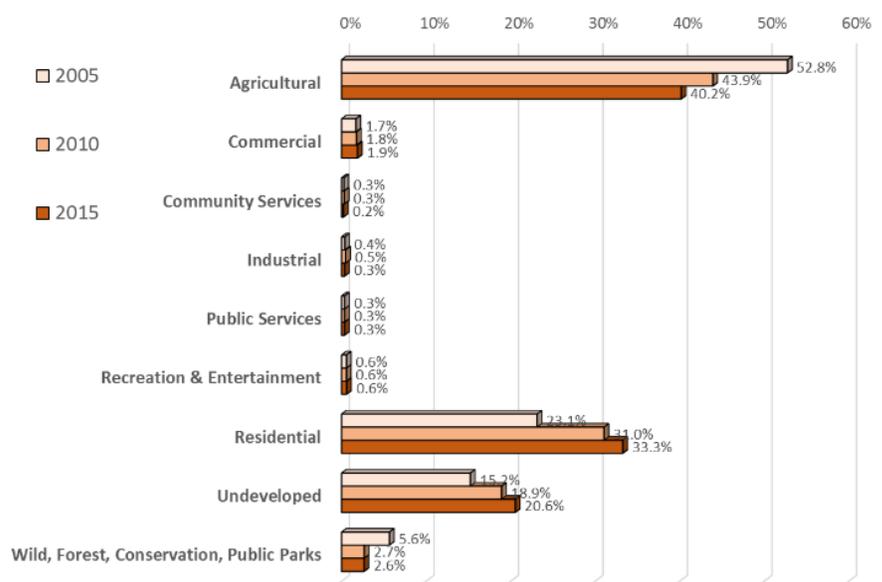
As for numbers of parcels, the most numerous category in the Town was residential with 1,864 parcels in 2015, shown by Figure 70. This number of residential

Figure 68. Land Use by Number of parcels by Assessment Category (Village of Clayton)



Source: Jefferson County Real Property Office 2005, 2010, 2015

Figure 69. Land Use Acreage by Assessment Category - Town of Clayton



Source: Jefferson County Real Property Office 2005, 2010, 2015

parcels includes year round residences, seasonal residences, etc. The second highest number included the undeveloped category, which would include forested, vacant, and generally undeveloped properties. The

second highest in terms of developed properties was agricultural which had declined from 2005 to 2015.

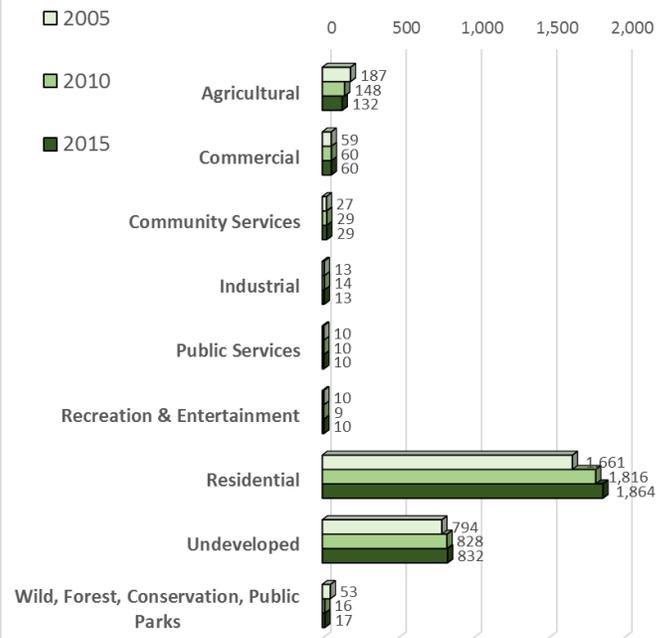
### Agricultural/Farmland

Although the Town of Clayton has significant riverfront resources with water related development, 40.2% of the Town’s acreage (outside the Village) was assessed as farmland in 2015. Based upon the total acreage, farming still encompasses the highest proportion of property town-wide. This is evident with many agricultural fields and NYS Agricultural Districts in various areas throughout the Town described in the Agricultural Chapter. Such farm fields allow for open views of much of the surrounding countryside, water bodies, and natural features. The Land Use by Assessment Map illustrates the location of agriculturally assessed parcels. The operating farms and farm fields also provide habitat options for birds and are considered part of the St. Lawrence River grassland complex which supports migrating birds and bats throughout many areas in the Town.

### Rural Residence with Acreage

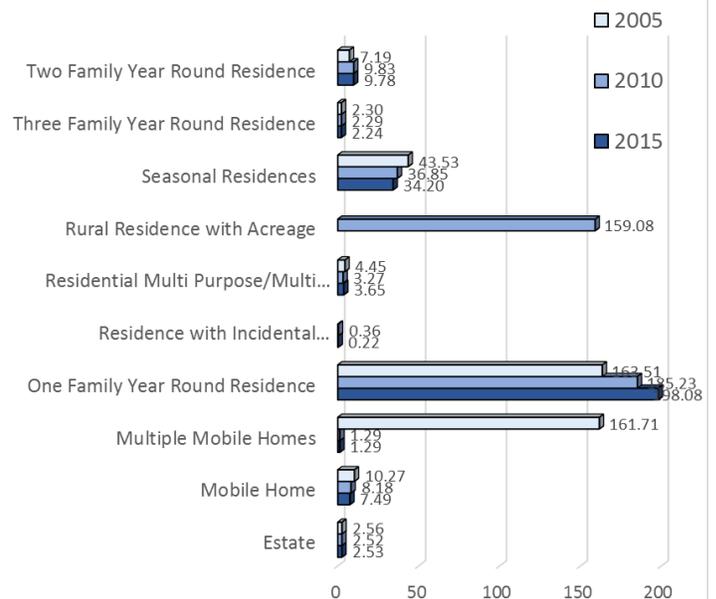
The rural residence with acreage category has been steadily increasing from 2005 to 2015 in the Town of Clayton. The consistent acreage increases for the past ten years is an indication of how open space is important to many households. In the Village, the category included data in 2010, but the parcels were re-categorized since then.

Figure 70. Land Use by Number of Parcels by Assessment Category - Town of Clayton



Source: Jefferson County Real Property Office 2005, 2010, 2015

Figure 71. Residential Land Use Acreage by Assessment Category - Village of Clayton



Source: Jefferson County Real Property Office 2005, 2010, 2015

### Year-Round Residential

Similarly, year-round residential acreage increased from 2005 to 2015 in the Village and the Town. Some of these are due to seasonal conversions to year-round use in addition to new residences.

### Seasonal Residential

While in the Village the number of seasonal residences has declined, the number in the Town increased from 2005 to 2010, and then declined slightly from 2010 to 2015. It is assumed that the declines were in large part due to conversions to year-round use.

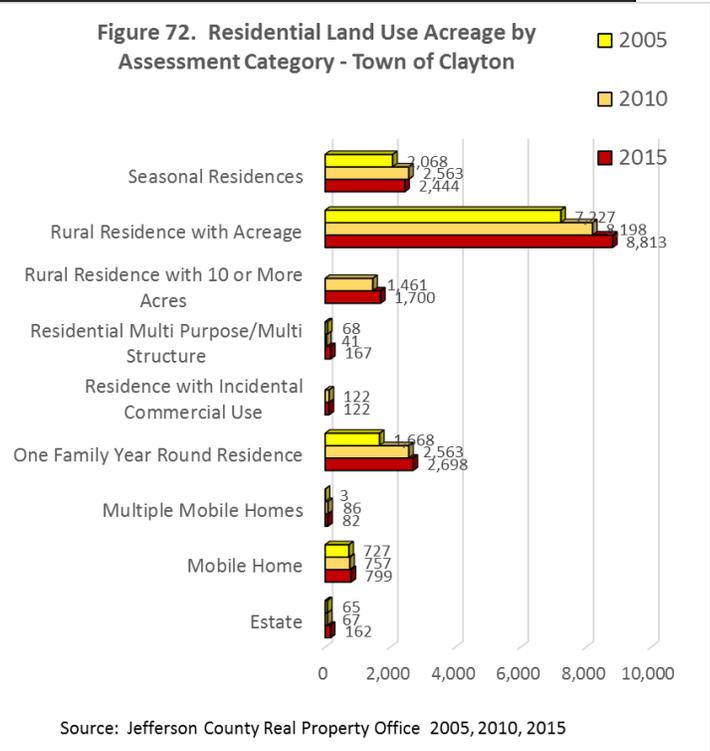
### Mobile Homes

While the Village mobile home acreage declined 37% from 2005 to 2015, the number of acres in the Town increased 10% during the time period. Clearly this affordable option for housing is still needed for some residents and their families.

### Businesses

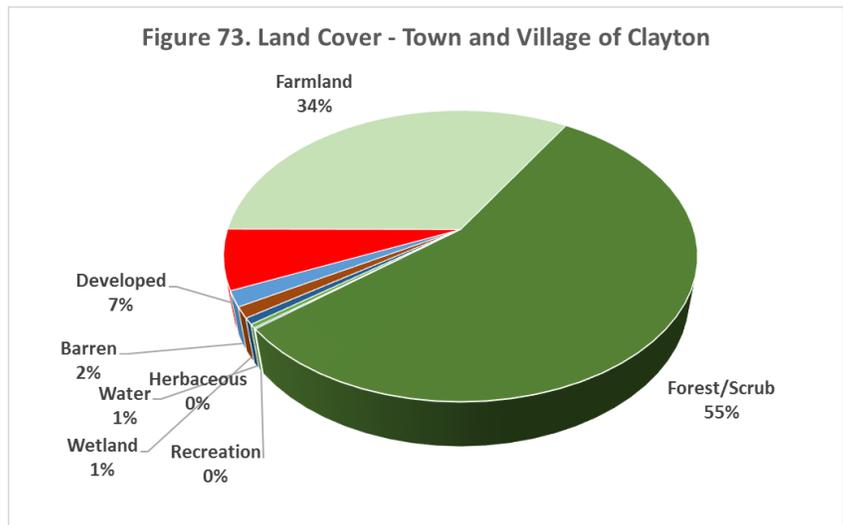
**Commercial** - In the Village, commercial uses comprise 7% of the acreage having increased to that by 2015 (Figure 67). In the Town, commercial acreage had increased to 1.9% by 2015 (Figure 69).

**Recreation and Entertainment** – In the Village, recreation and entertainment was 13% of acreage. In the Town, 0.6% of the acreage was assessed as recreation and entertainment consistently for 2005, 2010, and 2015.



### Land Cover Types

Land Cover was mapped based on 2015 aerial photography Town and Village wide at a scale of 1:5,000. Categories used were: Barren (quarries), Developed, Farmland, Forest/Scrub, Herbaceous, Recreation, Water, and Wetland according to the US Geological Survey – Land Cover Institute.



**Forest Scrub** - comprised 55% of the Town in terms of acreage. This included areas characterized by tree cover and natural or semi natural woody vegetation. Trees included evergreen, deciduous, and mixed types, as well as shrub and overgrown areas.

**Farmland** - comprised 34% of the Town in terms of acreage. This included areas of pasture, or areas planted and managed such as hay, row crops, and grains.

**Developed** - areas included residential, commercial, mixed uses, and vacant structures that may be underutilized. It included the Village of Clayton, Hamlet of Depauville, and many of the shoreline areas where seasonal and year-round homes predominate and comprised 7% of the area.

**Barren** - areas made up about 2% of the Town, and included areas of bare rock/sand/clay which included mining areas. Mining for sand and gravel and former quarries are recognizable. Please note: some areas coded as barren may actually be wetlands that may have appeared brownish when the aerial photography was taken.

**Recreation** - areas made up a small percent of the mapped area (0.4%), as they only included the two golf courses described in the Community Facilities Chapter. All other recreation areas were coded as their predominant land cover types.

**Herbaceous** - areas include very small sections that appeared to be dominated by grassland that made up 0.1% of the area.

**Wetland** – included areas where the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water and appeared to include wetland associated plants.

## Land Use, Land Cover, Landscape = Character Areas

A character area is a portion of the town or community with distinct features, shared identity, and characteristics that differ from neighboring areas. The above described agricultural, year-round residential, seasonal residential, commercial and recreational land uses, when recognized within their associated landscape, landform, and land cover types, comprise a number of distinct areas throughout the Town. Many such land use/landscapes are considered special and unique with their own characteristics that make a multitude of areas in the Town and Village attractive places to live, work, and visit.

Therefore, the character areas were developed to identify such places and emphasize the importance of the Town's and Village's rural character and land uses within their landscape context. The intent behind identifying the Character Areas is to consider appropriate future land uses.

The Town's and Village's character areas were generalized and mapped using aerial photography, land use parcels by assessment category, NYS Certified Agricultural districts, and categorized into Character Areas identified throughout the Town and Village of Clayton. The [Existing Character Areas Map](#) shows their locations

and general areas of extent. The specific Character Areas are listed below:

**Farmland Character Area** – Farmland areas are dominated by large fields utilized for crops and/or grazing. In addition, there are farmsteads and scattered groups of residences that occur primarily in a linear fashion along roadways. Portions of NYS Routes 12 and 12E, as well as County Routes 3, 5, 11, 12, and 181 have a number of farm fields alongside.

**Forest/scrub/grassland Character Area** – Such areas include deciduous and some coniferous trees, with a high percentage of the land that is forested or covered by early successional scrub brush/trees that grow after farm fields are not cultivated or cleared for a number of years. Some areas include grasslands, creeks and wetlands. Portions of NYS Routes 12 and 12E as well as many Town Roads and County Routes intersect Forest/scrub land character.

**Rural Residential Character Area** - The Rural Residential Character Area represents a transitional area between farmland and/or forest and village/hamlet areas. Within these areas, housing may not occupy the largest portion of the land, but both farmsteads and other residences were captured. Rural residential occurs along many of the Town and County Roads, and many portions of the State Roads.

**Village/Hamlet Center Character Area** – The Village/Hamlet Center areas are relatively compact with more urban style development focused along stretches of

main streets, state highways, or near primary intersections. The land use mix of these urban centers typically includes residential with retail, services, offices, restaurants, schools, churches, parks, or municipal buildings. While in some cases they are near commercial businesses, village/hamlet centers contain single and multi-family homes. On some main streets, sidewalks may exist or be broadened to allow for enhanced pedestrian activity and the streetscape that typically includes street trees, light poles, and other amenities. Overall, these centers play a major role in defining the image and quality of life for their respective village or hamlet, and their surrounding town areas.

**Commercial Character Area** – The commercial areas include areas of commercial activity such as small retail, motels, hotels, restaurants, marinas, convenience stores, and other businesses that may be within or near the village/hamlet centers, or scattered throughout farmlands, forests, rural residential, and/or waterfront residential areas. They often occur along major highways where traffic levels provide a consistent source of exposure to potential customers (along NYS Route 12) They occur some along NYS Route 12E, but that stretch of highway is more residential with scattered mixed uses. Such areas outside the village and hamlet can be often more suburban in character than the surrounding rural areas. Where the Village/Hamlet character areas include a greater density of services and development, the Commercial areas can

include single story or buildings such as in the Village/Hamlet. It also includes the sand/gravel mining operations in the Town.

Outside the village/hamlet centers, many properties are designed primarily for access by automobile, although pedestrian activity does occur and should be incorporated to diversify traffic types and make the Town a more inclusive destination for all travelers. Boat access can enhance customer levels and be more attractive to an increased number of customers as occurs in the Village.

**Open Recreation Character Area** – The Open Recreation Character area consists of state parks, golf courses, and other lands set aside for recreation purposes. However, state wildlife management areas, Thousand Island Land Trust properties, Nature Conservancy, and similar parcels were still categorized as either forest or wetland character area depending on the predominant land cover.

**Waterfront Residential Character Area** – Most of the uses in waterfront residential areas include year-round and seasonal residences along the shorelines of the St. Lawrence River and its bays. There are some marinas and businesses oriented to the water, however the predominant use in many cases are the residences and seasonal residences. Marinas were assigned as commercial.

## Future Land Use Development

Each character area within the Town, Village, and Hamlet should be considered when developing or amending respective zoning regulations and allowable uses. Prospective development should enhance or add to community and rural character and should minimize impacts within the community.

The following chapter outlines a series of considerations to use when deliberating the merits and scope of potential development proposals and implementing the Comprehensive Plan for any pending amendment(s) or review procedures.