

## Executive Summary

### Comprehensive Plan

The “Joint Town/Village of Clayton Comprehensive Plan” represents a shared community vision of what is desired regarding the future development of the Town and Village of Clayton. The Plan serves as a road map with respect to future sustainable development, integrating economic, environmental, cultural, recreational, and physical attributes that will preserve the opportunities for succeeding generations. All policies and strategies noted herein are based on the premise that it is imperative we preserve the “small town character” of this picturesque river community.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a law or a recipe of regulations. It is a guiding document that must be referenced when deliberating future planning and zoning decisions. Zoning adoption and amendments are required to be made in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

It is important to note that the creation of the Comprehensive Plan was a collaborative effort on the part of Town and Village representatives. Public participation was integral to the process for writing this document. It represents the culmination of this shared experience.

### Clayton Vision Statement

Clayton is a vibrant small town waterfront community. The residents of Clayton enjoy a quality of life and a very friendly community that welcomes all new residents and visitors to their safe, caring and diverse village and town.

The Village of Clayton retains its charming small town atmosphere, relishing its strong ties to the St. Lawrence River, upon which it relies for its tourist trade. Tourism has been important to the Village and Town for well over a hundred years as visitors arrive to partake of its opportunities for boating and fishing, its many museums, its quality restaurants, its burgeoning craft beverage industry, or just to enjoy its outstanding scenery and sunsets.

Clayton values its history and the architectural relevance of its downtown business section. Retail buildings are well maintained and attractive to residents and visitors alike. The downtown area is very pedestrian friendly, particularly its new Riverwalk, and sidewalks are well maintained and accessible to all.

The Town of Clayton recognizes the importance of its agricultural heritage and farming’s contributions to open space preservation. It also recognizes the importance of wetlands, forests and shorelines in protecting the natural ecosystems we value so much.

Clayton’s community churches are a part of the fabric of everyday life and we are proud of the strong association with the Thousand Islands Central School District and the quality education it provides for our students.

The Clayton Community strives to ensure that local residents and visitors alike benefit from future growth and development. Future development in the Town and Village will only occur in designated areas and will be compatible with nearby land uses and consistent with existing architectural styles.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

Clayton’s historic heritage is a precursor to the current character of our thriving community. The historical “footprint” has provided the framework for Clayton’s current attractiveness and economic viability. This chapter outlines several strategies for preserving historical resources, properties, and structures. It is important that future zoning amendments mitigate potential impact that would be detrimental to the historic character of the Town and Village of Clayton.

The cultural history of the Town/ Village of Clayton and the Hamlet of Depauville has resulted in many celebrated resources enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Many of these local attractions are important to the economic sustainability of the Clayton community.

## Demographic Trends

Demographic trends are often indicators for future development. Such components as resident population, age group fluctuation, and family households are examined relative to the Town and Village of Clayton. The study of demography will assist future planners in addressing such areas as transportation, housing, recreation, and health care needs for Clayton residents. Demographic data are important indicators of future societal needs.

### Historic/Cultural Resource Goal:

1. *Preserve and promote Clayton’s historic heritage as an integral part of the Town and Village culture, character, attractiveness and economic future.*

### Historic/Cultural Resource Objectives:

1. Support and assist in the preservation of historic resources, properties and structures within the Town and Village.
2. Preserve important historic/cultural resources and improve the basis for initiatives and informed decision-making relative to the preservation of historic buildings, structures, objects and sites.

### Historic/Cultural Resource Strategies:

1. To the extent possible, encourage the re-use of historic buildings.
2. Consider the character of historic buildings to mitigate potential impacts that may occur as part of the SEQR review process.
3. Consider zoning amendments to emulate historic building types and community character protection where applicable.
4. Consider the need for an historic overlay zone to include properties within the historic district in the Village.
5. Support efforts of the community to identify homes, structures, and sites for listing on the State and Federal Register.
6. Consider requiring underground utility placement within the historic district.

## Housing

Housing ages, types, and locations affect every community's social, economic, and physical character. Therefore, it is important that Clayton not only protect established neighborhoods but also prepare for future housing needs. Accessibility and walkability are often enhanced by compatible mixed land uses in specific districts to reduce automobile dependence. A variety of housing types should meet the needs of year-round, seasonal, workforce, and elderly residents. This chapter examines total housing units, year round occupancy status, residency patterns, and residential land use in the Town and Village.

### **Economic Development Goals:**

1. Foster economic development that capitalizes on rural and urban character.
2. Use a balanced approach to increase jobs and employment opportunities while fostering residential development to maintain a vibrant local economy while preserving neighborhoods.
3. Foster economic development to help retain the area's young adults by expanding employment opportunities.

### **Economic Development Objectives:**

1. Build on community character to expand economic development opportunities.
2. Expand the tourism based economy in a sustainable way that balances growth and preserves the natural environment and quality of life for residents and visitors.
3. Support economic development that will expand the tourism season to shoulder seasons as well as year round opportunities for residents and visitors.
4. Consider marketing the Village, Hamlet, and Town as a residential destination to expand development opportunities.

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### **Housing Goals:**

1. *Maintain safe housing for residents.*
2. *Continue to broaden housing opportunity, types, and choices for future residents.*

### **Housing Objectives:**

1. Protect the character of a variety of residential neighborhoods to maintain quality of life, aesthetics, and property value.
2. Provide a range of housing types to meet the needs of year round, seasonal, workforce, retiree, and elderly to allow residents and families to flourish in their desired community over the course of a lifetime as their housing needs may change.
3. Maintain mixed land uses or add density to increase walkability while protecting quality of life within neighborhoods.

### **Housing Strategies:**

1. Consider increased density near waterfront amenities and/or where services are available.
2. Promote accessible, workforce, and elderly housing accommodations.
3. Develop live-near-your-work options for permanent and seasonal workers.
4. Consider accessory dwelling units.
5. Weigh compatible mixed uses in appropriate areas.
6. Update zoning laws to encourage the preservation and enhancement of existing character.

## **Economic Trends and Development**

Economic development encompasses every aspect of the Comprehensive Plan. An in-depth analysis of business patterns based on Census Bureau criteria is presented for the Clayton Zip Code Area. The number of businesses in the 13624 zip code increased by 23% from 2003 to 2013. Included in this analysis are business types, business payroll, employee patterns, and household income. Resident employment by industry is graphically depicted for both the Town and Village of Clayton. Part of this breakout of data includes employee commuting trends.

An important segment of this chapter includes an analysis of Town and Village of Clayton assessed values as defined by each land use category. The majority of the assessed value both in the Town and Village is in the Residential Category. The chapter closes with some information about educational attainment, a tourism-based economy and local economic priorities.

### **Natural Resources**

Natural resources and landforms have a direct impact on how a community is developed. Therefore, it is important for Clayton to preserve open space, farmland, natural features, and critical environmental areas that provide for scenic quality, rural character, and recreational opportunities. This can be accomplished by designating scenic area protection zones, encouraging green infrastructure, and promoting the upgrading and reuse of existing properties. This chapter provides a review of our physical characteristics inclusive of the St. Lawrence River and the Chaumont River Corridor. Additionally, river area species and plants, scenic resources, and migratory patterns are examined in detail.

#### **Natural Resources Goals:**

- 1. Preserve and enhance open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas that provide scenic quality, help define rural character, waterfront community character, and recreational opportunities.*
- 2. Encourage green infrastructure to preserve water quality, air quality, and increase community resiliency to storm events.*

#### **Natural Resource Objectives:**

1. Designate scenic protection zones in appropriate areas.
2. Define character areas to enable priorities to be addressed by implementation steps.
3. Encourage green infrastructure at the site and neighborhood level.
4. Promote infill development by preserving, upgrading and reusing existing properties.
5. Protect important wildlife habitat, as well as threatened, endangered, and species of concern.

#### **Natural Resource Strategies:**

- 1. Designate priority farmland and critical environmental areas.**
- 2. Consider green infrastructure needs within areas sensitive to flooding.**
- 3. Examine open space and farmland protection needs in appropriate areas.**

## Transportation

Communities such as Clayton face a number of challenges providing accessibility, the transportation connection between the community and its needs and livability. Improving public health is directly linked to encouraging active transportation with safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle facilities. At the same time, we need to maintain our major highways as links to outside markets and to sustain our economic viability. Transportation and land use must be coordinated to ensure a rational use of land and a viable transportation network that continues to serve the community and region.

Walkability is an important aspect of any transportation program. Maintaining and creating a vibrant walkable and accessible Village that links parks, public spaces, and local attractions enhances the Village experience. The Riverwalk is an excellent example of improving walkability whereby residents and visitors can enjoy scenic views of the St. Lawrence River. The Town, outside the Village, is studying ways to connect Village walkways to trails providing additional recreational opportunities.

Establishing a workable parking plan that provides economic, social, and environmental benefits is important to the continuing growth of both our local and tourist-based economy. Such areas as street configuration, alternate modes of transport, and a plan for peak demand are necessary elements of a proposed parking plan.

### Transportation Goals:

1. Examine emergency vehicle access feasibility along roads including seasonal roads, recommending solutions to maintain adequate access to such areas to maintain public safety.
2. Establish zoning laws or guidelines that encourage or cause the main vehicular entry points to reflect the Town's rural character and the Village's more urban character.

### Transportation Strategies/Actions:

1. Maintain Arterial highway traffic flow by promoting interconnected projects between project parking areas, promote shared access, limit the number of access points along traffic arteries, and follow NYS DOT standards for driveway accesses. These steps should limit adding an excessive number of conflict points, cut-down on congestion, and maintain traffic safety.

### Walkability Goals:

1. *Maintain and create a vibrant, walkable and accessible village/hamlet that is a community and visitor focal point.*
2. *Provide/foster pedestrian connections among commercial, residential, and institutional areas to allow enhanced access and alleviate vehicular street/highway traffic congestion.*

### Walkability Objectives:

1. Improve the physical condition of the pedestrian walkways.
2. Increase pedestrian access and connectivity within parking areas and between projects.
3. Strive to develop walkways linking parks, public spaces, and location attractions.
4. Provide connections among commercial projects.
5. Assure walkways and building entrances are accessible to all types of users.
6. Develop a Town-wide pedestrian/bicycle trail plan.

### **Public Parking Goal:**

1. *Establish a workable parking management plan that provides the Village/Hamlet with economic, social, and environmental benefits.*

### **Public Parking Objectives:**

1. **Encourage the use of alternative modes of transport**
2. **Plan parking facilities to serve multiple users.**
3. **Plan for peak demand**
4. **Analyze street layout and configuration**

### **Community Facilities**

Planning for needs related to community facilities is an important aspect of the Comprehensive Plan. Maintaining facilities to meet the demands of residents and visitors, serves to enhance the quality of life. This chapter provides an overview of the existing public facilities, public recreation areas, and services available in the Town and Village of Clayton. Also presented are several challenges noted in such areas as public access to the river, expanding year round recreational activities, and continued expansion of trails connecting the Village to the Town outside the Village.

### **Public Input**

It is important to have a current plan in place to determine whether recently proposed projects are consistent with the updated vision held by the residents of the Clayton community. The genesis for formulating a revised Comprehensive Plan is public input. To that end, the committee conducted an on-line survey resulting in both qualitative and quantitative responses to a host of well-screened pertinent questions. A point by point analysis appears in this chapter. Additionally noted in this chapter are the comments gleaned from a public meeting. The goal was to gather as much public input from a variety of participants that would provide guidance for the content of this document.

### **Community Facilities Goals:**

1. Pursue funding sources for public utilities and parks projects consistent with community priorities.
2. Pursue funding sources to allow overhead utilities to be put underground in key areas.

### **Recreational Goals:**

1. Continue to educate the public about year round recreation opportunities in the Town and Village, including winter activities and resources.
2. Explore and promote the many ecotourism based recreation opportunities in the Town and Village to increase awareness for enhancing tourism levels and to expand recreational benefits to residents.

### **Recreational Objectives:**

1. **Consider facility options and explore needed recreational facilities to expand year round activities.**
2. **Expand and maintain public access to the St. Lawrence River waterfront.**

### **Recreational Strategies/Actions:**

1. Enhance and maintain boat access facilities and dockage as use levels may warrant.
2. Continue the expansion of trails to include the Riverwalk as they are valuable community assets that enhance quality of life for residents and visitors.
3. Consider the expansion of pedestrian and bikeway recreation trails that will tie into existing pedestrian systems.
4. Continue the development of the Riverwalk and explore means of connecting the pathway to pedestrian/bicycle routes into the countryside. (Particularly, the Thousand Island Land Trust is seeking funds to convert a portion of the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail into a pedestrian walkway/bikeway which would connect to the Riverwalk system. The project would still allow snowmobile use in the winter months.)

## Renewable/Alternative Energy

Renewable energy sources such as solar, geothermal and particularly wind have become prominent areas of interest. Such energy systems can have regional, community, and neighborhood impacts. Therefore, local governments need to review their land use planning tools to regulate proposed renewable energy projects in a manner that reflects community values and planning. The need for regulation is critical, in that such areas as noise, visual impact, health, safety, agriculture, tourism, property values, economics and a host of environmental issues must be addressed when locating such renewable/alternative facilities. This chapter as well as the Land Use Considerations Chapter examines the areas noted above, indicating the community's priorities.

### **Land Use/Character Objective related to renewable energy:**

7. Develop appropriate standards to ensure future commercial and non-residential development is in keeping with applicable rural or urban character.

### **Land Use/Character Strategy related to renewable energy:**

4. Recognize the multitude of factors when considering renewable energy facility placement, concluding that for some types such as large scale solar and commercial wind energy conversion systems there may be very few areas in the Town that may be suitable or compatible.

### **Housing Goal related to renewable energy:**

2. *Maintain safe housing for residents.*

### **Housing Objective related to renewable energy:**

3. Protect the character of a variety of residential neighborhoods to maintain quality of life, aesthetics, and property value.

### **Housing Strategy related to renewable energy:**

6. Update zoning laws to encourage the preservation and enhancement of existing character.

### **Natural Resource Goal related to renewable energy:**

7. *Preserve and enhance open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas that provide scenic quality, help define rural character, waterfront community character, and recreational opportunities.*

### **Natural Resource Objective related to renewable energy:**

5. Protect important wildlife habitat, as well as threatened, endangered, and species of concern.

### **Natural Resource Strategy related to renewable energy**

1. Designate priority farmland and critical environmental areas.

### **Land Use Goals related to renewable energy:**

4. *Consider compatible renewable energy systems in appropriate locations identified by the community.*
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 related to renewable energy:**

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.

## Agriculture

Agriculture is an integral part of the Town of Clayton in that it is recognized as essential to the Town's future. A recent resurgence for the desire to consume locally sourced foods and the increased interest in wineries, distilleries, and micro-breweries have placed additional importance on agriculture in the Clayton community. It is important to recognize that Clayton's agricultural lands are the single largest form of protection of the Town's "open spaces". The guidelines in this document promote agricultural-friendly land use policies. Facilitating businesses that develop and/or sell value added farm products will enhance local agricultural viability. This chapter clearly outlines the importance of agriculture and its relationship to the local economy.

### Agricultural Objectives:

3. Promote and encourage future agricultural developments and trends to continually revitalize and expand the Town Ag Economy.
4. Promote and encourage increasing the percentage of the locally produced foods in people's diets to a level of 25%. Historically, (decades ago) people's diets were almost exclusively derived from the area. Also, dollars spent on local foods stay within the community, and is one of the best ways to have a healthier diet, support local agricultural entrepreneurs, and protect local open spaces.
5. Promote and encourage marketing of produce and products from Clayton, promoting the farmers market and other local outlets. Explore establishing a label/logo for Clayton produce and products.
6. Consider farm-friendly zoning definitions and processes consistent with ag and markets law.
7. Consider allowing solar energy facilities for on-site energy production for farm use to increase agricultural product viability.
8. Foster businesses that develop or sell value added farm products to enhance local agricultural viability.

### Agricultural Goals:

1. *Reduce the negative impacts non-farm development has on critical farm areas, especially related to farmland fragmentation, traffic, and conversion in the Town of Clayton.*
2. *Permit, protect and encourage the continued use of rural areas for agricultural activities.*
3. *Revitalize, encourage, and protect agriculture activities as they function as farm businesses.*
4. *Recognize New York State, the County, and the Town as a "right to farm" priority area.*
5. *Research and implement policies for the protection of agricultural lands from unreasonable development pressures and property tax pressures due to increasing values.*
6. *Recognize the value the community gains through these policies, an added indirect benefit from agricultural lands, as agricultural properties have one of the lowest cost ratio of town services vs. taxes paid.*
7. *Promote and encourage all current forms of agricultural activities in Clayton; our working dairy/beef farms, vineyards, grain or hops producers, large and small market farms, backyard and community gardens.*
8. *Promote and encourage sustainable agricultural practices and/or organic practices. Promote and encourage "holistic" sustainable approaches to both small and commercial agricultural operations.*

### Agricultural Objectives:

1. Recognize Clayton's agricultural lands are also the single largest form of protection of the town's "open spaces", and Town Policy should reflect this vital relationship and contribution when developing proactive agricultural friendly land use policies.
2. Promote and encourage agricultural production and small to mid-size agricultural processing businesses to locate in the Town. Promote agricultural based entities that can utilize current and future local agricultural production. These would include: wineries, microbreweries, distilleries, small cheese producers as well as other types of small-scale agricultural processors.

## Land Use/Character

The Land Use/Character Chapter describes the land use, land cover, and using the two illustrates the character throughout the Town, Village, and Hamlet. It is used to determine which areas comprise the community's rural and urban form which allows a dialogue regarding future development to be framed and be placed in the proper context.

## Land Use Development Considerations

This final chapter of the "Joint Town and Village of Clayton Comprehensive Plan" is perhaps the most critical piece in that it notes a high correlation between land use intensity and the future character of the Clayton community. Potential residential, commercial, and other types of development decisions directly affect local community characteristics that we have all come to know and appreciate. Said development should be explored in the context that is compatible with hamlet, village and town character. It is incumbent on community leaders to encourage managed growth of the Village and Town via good planning and development standards meant to be compatible with enhance rural or urban character respectively. This chapter depicts the sum total of all previous chapter topics in that current land use and character holistically impacts appropriate future development.

## 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.

**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.