

# Town of Amherst

LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

## Executive Summary



**Department  
of State**

This project is developed with funding provided by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund

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**The Town of Amherst Local Waterfront Revitalization Program documents can be found on the Town of Amherst website.**

**Please direct all questions and comments to:**

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# How does this affect my property?

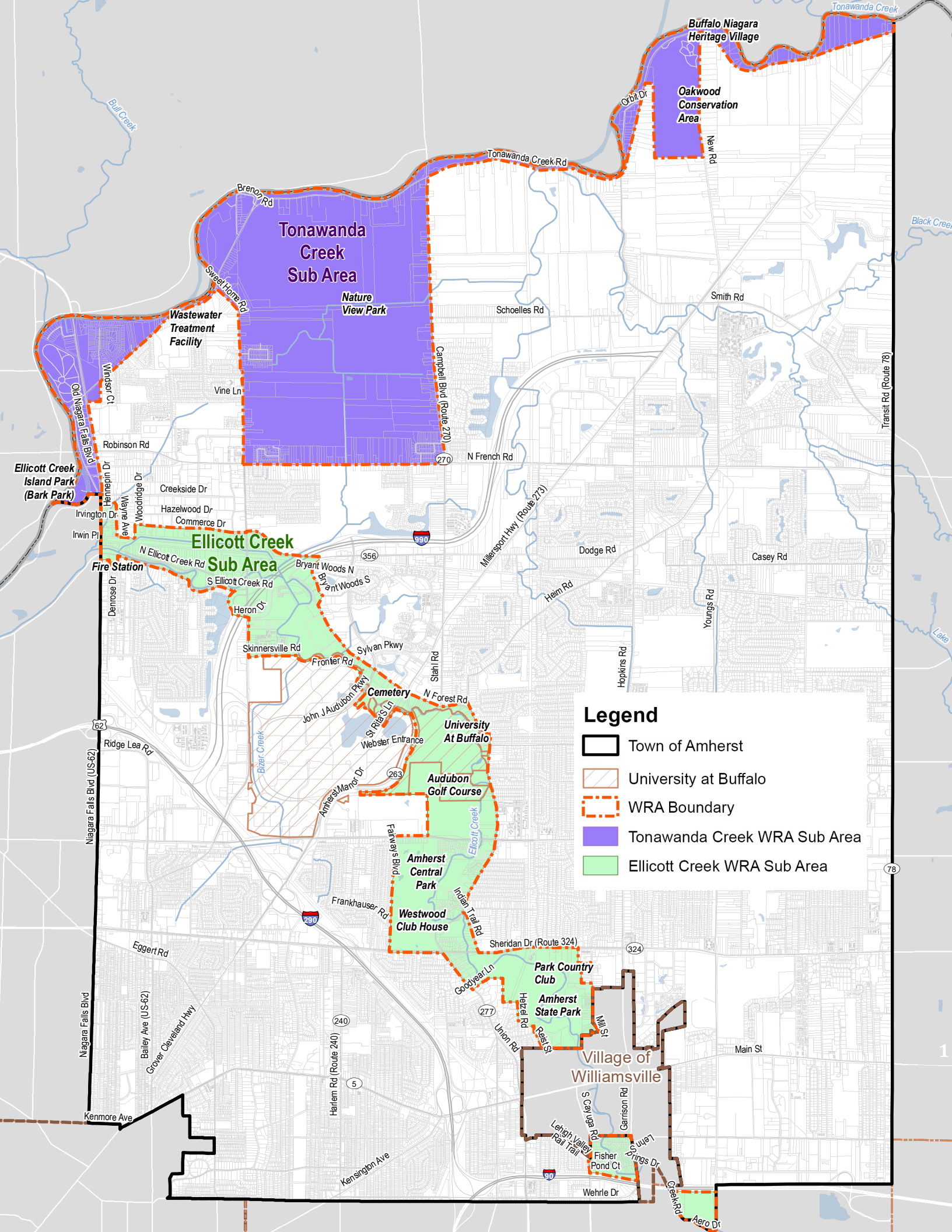
The Town of Amherst is comprised of several districts and property designations. Special considerations apply to some of these areas. One such designation is the New York State Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA). Private properties located within the WRA may be subject to an LWRP waterfront consistency review, depending on the type of proposed action.

The WRA is comprised of just under 2,300 properties located within the approximate 8-square-mile LWRP boundary. Owners contemplating a change to their property along or near Tonawanda Creek or Ellicott Creek should determine if their property is located within the WRA. Owners can consult the Town's website ([www.amherst.ny.us](http://www.amherst.ny.us)) or telephone the Planning Department at 716-631-7051 to determine if their location is within the WRA.

Most actions associated with commercially owned properties will require waterfront consistency review, similar to the requirements for site plan review. Residential land uses occur throughout the WRA, and most permitting actions related to residential properties are exempt from waterfront consistency review. A list of proposed actions exempt from the LWRP consistency review are listed in Appendix A of the LWRP document.

If waterfront consistency review is required, the applicant will need to complete a Waterfront Assessment Form (WAF). Once completed, review of the WAF will be placed on the appropriate board agenda. There may also be other necessary permits. At the time of application for a permit, the Building or Planning Department will notify applicants of any additional steps or necessary review.





### Legend

- Town of Amherst
- University at Buffalo
- WRA Boundary
- Tonawanda Creek WRA Sub Area
- Ellicott Creek WRA Sub Area

**Map Labels:**

**Water Bodies:** Bull Creek, Tonawanda Creek, Ellicott Creek, Black Creek, Lake, Brier Creek.

**Roads:** Tonawanda Creek Rd, Brenot Rd, Sweet Home Rd, Campbell Blvd (Route 270), N French Rd, Millersport Hwy (Route 273), Dodge Rd, Casey Rd, Youngs Rd, Heim Rd, Sylvan Pkwy, N Forest Rd, Frankhouser Rd, Sheridan Dr (Route 324), Goodyear Ln, Union Rd, Rest St, Garrison Rd, S Union Rd, Wehrle Dr, Kenmore Ave, Kensington Ave, Harlem Rd (Route 240), Eggert Rd, Ridge Lea Rd, Niagara Falls Blvd (US-62), Bailey Ave (US-62), Grover Cleveland Hwy, Irvington Dr, Woodridge Dr, Wayne Ave, Demrose Dr, Skippersville Rd, Frontiers Rd, Amherst Manor Dr, Fairway Blvd, Inlet Trail Rd, Hazel Rd, Mill St, Springs Dr, Fisher Pond Ct, Aero Dr, Transit Rd (Route 78).

**Facilities and Parks:** Wastewater Treatment Facility, Nature View Park, Ellicott Creek Island Park (Bark Park), Fire Station, Cemetery, University At Buffalo, Audubon Golf Course, Amherst Central Park, Westwood Club House, Park Country Club, Amherst State Park, Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village, Oakwood Conservation Area.

**Sub-Areas:** Tonawanda Creek Sub Area, Ellicott Creek Sub Area.



# Town of Amherst Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA)

## A VIBRANT + RESILIENT WATERFRONT

In revitalizing its waterfront, the Town of Amherst is doing its part to build community vibrancy and resiliency along its major waterways.

The key waterways within the Town of Amherst are Tonawanda Creek and Ellicott Creek.

The waterfront areas surrounding Tonawanda and Ellicott Creeks meander through the Town, lending a beauty and uniqueness that define Amherst today. Additionally, Tonawanda Creek is part of the Erie Canal system, which connects the town to many navigable waterways within North America. Until recently, however, these waterfront assets have not been fully recognized.

Revitalization of the waterfront means celebrating the existing waterfront while incorporating a renewed approach to development that balances economic priorities with amenities like public access and environmental stewardship.







# Importance of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)

## BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES

Through the New York State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), communities have the opportunity to increase environmental protection, incentivize economic development, protect valuable water resources, and improve public waterfront accessibility. Participation in the LWRP also ensures that all proposed actions within the WRA, including state and federal actions, are consistent with policies that promote LWRP goals. By adopting this LWRP, the Town of Amherst is able to seek funding through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund for proposed revitalization projects within the WRA. Furthermore, adopting this shared vision for the WRA increases the community's potential for obtaining other public and private funding for identified projects.

### A tool for responding to change

An LWRP is a way to monitor and respond to the ever-changing health of waterways and surrounding communities. Key changes addressed in this LWRP relate to the impacts anticipated from climate change and the implementation of resilient solutions to address those impacts. Climate change and rising local temperatures can drastically affect local waterways and ecosystems. For instance, more intense and frequent precipitation due to climate change has and will continue to flood areas and erode shorelines. The Town of Amherst LWRP provides an informed baseline for adapting to change in the future. Projects proposed by the LWRP, such as green infrastructure, will help to mitigate these anticipated impacts using resilient solutions.





## Long-Term Land and Water Use Plan

An LWRP includes a vision statement, goals, and proposed projects to guide future actions in the WRA, essentially acting as a land and water use plan. The proposed projects build off of other planning initiatives, like the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The intention is to capitalize on related planning efforts through waterfront-specific implementation actions. Each LWRP project aims to improve current waterfront conditions and public access. These projects work to incentivize appropriate development within the WRA.



# LWRP

## Framework for Implementation

LWRP policies provide a legal framework based on the economic, environmental, and cultural characteristics of the Town. They collectively aim to balance economic development and preservation of existing natural and cultural resources. The policies serve as a framework for private and public actions proposed within the Amherst WRA. These policies are implemented by local, state, and federal regulations and programs that guide development.



# Navigating the LWRP

## Components of an LWRP

An LWRP is a comprehensive land and water use program that expresses a vision for the waterfront area and provides the framework to achieve that vision. The LWRP contains seven sections detailing different aspects of the Amherst Waterfront Revitalization Area (WRA). It also includes the local law to ensure consistency of local actions with the LWRP.

- » Section I - Description and map of the Town of Amherst WRA boundary.
- » Section II - Inventory of existing resources and conditions within the WRA and an analysis of the needs and opportunities facing the WRA.
- » Section III - A complete list of the LWRP policies along with explanations regarding the state and local context of each policy within the WRA.
- » Section IV - Proposed long-term land and water uses within the WRA, along with short and long-term projects that the Town would like to pursue to revitalize its WRA.
- » Section V - Overview of local laws, management structures, and financial resources necessary to implement the LWRP vision, policies, and proposed projects.
- » Section VI - A list of State actions and programs which must be undertaken in a manner consistent with the Town of Amherst LWRP.
- » Section VII - Summarizes the Town's actions to obtain local input and support for the development of this LWRP.
- » Appendix A - Includes the local law that supports the implementation of LWRP policies, the municipal management structure for the implementation of the LWRP, and the related Waterfront Assessment Form (WAF). This form is used during the review of potential development in the WRA.

# Community Involvement

## Public and Stakeholder Meetings

This LWRP is built upon a foundation of deep and meaningful engagement with the residents and stakeholders of the Town of Amherst. The engagement process relied heavily upon input from waterfront property owners. A total of 14 public and stakeholder events guided the development of this LWRP. At the beginning of the LWRP process, the Town of Amherst formed a Waterfront Advisory Committee (WAC) to guide the development

of the LWRP. The WAC members represented Town departments, elected officials, educational institutions, local businesses, homeowner groups, and residents. Members participated in five tours of the WRA and engaged with other stakeholders through informal interviews to gain perspective on issues and opportunities facing the waterfront. The WAC also formed a spin-off group dedicated to the proposed Amherst Central Park project within the WRA.

### Public Meetings

- » December 2018 at Getzville Fire Station
- » July 2019 at Amherst Senior Center

### WAC Meetings

- » June 2018 at Northtown Center
- » November 2018 at Northtown Center
- » May 2019 at Northtown Center
- » September 2019 at Northtown Center
- » November 2020 virtually via Zoom

### WAC Tours & Site Visits

- » Northeast WRA (Tonawanda Creek Road)
- » Westwood & Audubon Golf Course
- » Amherst State Park & South of Sheridan Dr.
- » Northwest WRA
- » Northtown Center & University at Buffalo

The public outreach process included several avenues for eliciting input from local stakeholders. Three public meetings provided opportunities for community members to engage in the LWRP process. At each meeting, community members were encouraged to submit comments in-person or electronically. The first meeting was held in December 2018 to present the proposed WRA boundary and goals of the LWRP. The second public information meeting was held in July 2019 to provide details on the proposed projects. The third meeting occurred concurrent with the adoption of the final LWRP by the Town of Amherst in the spring of 2023.









# LWRP and the Bicentennial Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan

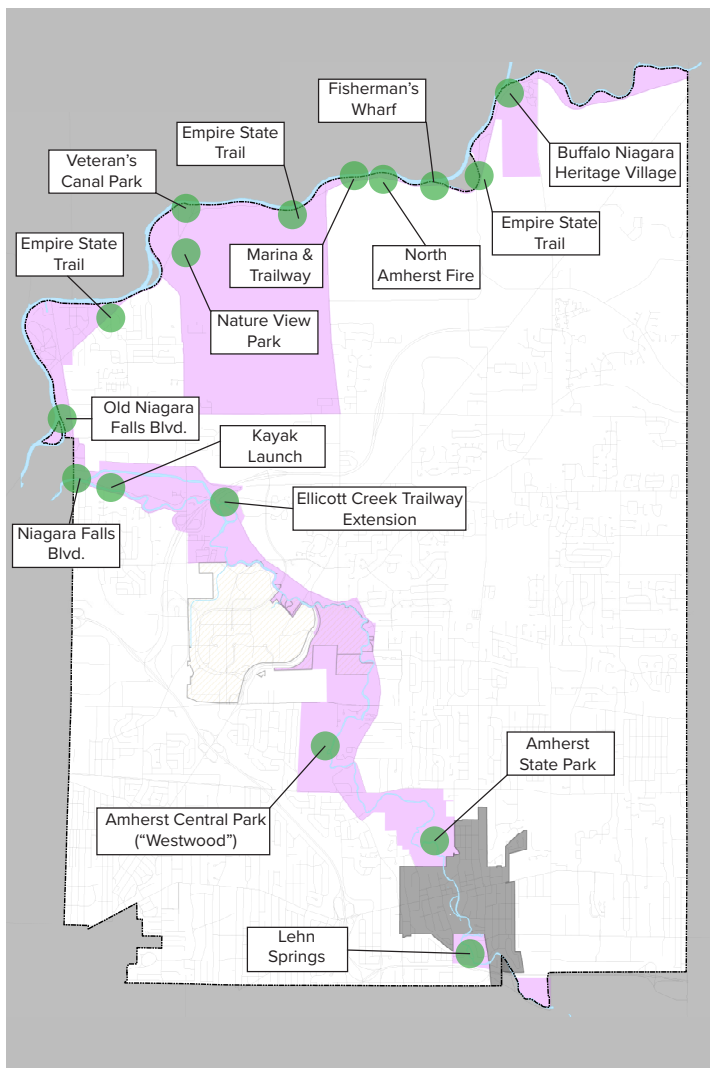
## Shared waterfront goals and policies

In celebration of the Town of Amherst's 200th anniversary, the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan was formulated to promote a vision of livability, community character, and shared direction with the Buffalo-Niagara region. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the Town's waterfront area as a significant community

asset and includes goals and policies related to natural resource protection and public waterfront access. These waterfront goals and policies are, in turn, supported by the LWRP. The graphic below illustrates the Town of Amherst's vision for its waterfront.



## LWRP PROPOSED PROJECT LOCATIONS



### Shared priority projects

The Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan specifically identifies the following parks, open space, and trails as significant resources along Tonawanda Creek and Ellicott Creek. The LWRP seeks to enhance these places, as shown on the map.

- » Empire State Trail
- » Ellicott Creek Trailway
- » Audubon Golf Course
- » Fisherman's Wharf
- » North Amherst Fire Station
- » Old Niagara Falls Boulevard
- » Amherst Veterans Canal Park
- » Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village
- » Amherst Central Park (formerly Westwood Country Club)
- » Amherst State Park
- » Lehn Springs Neighborhood
- » Nature View Park

The LWRP builds off of the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan and the Town's Recreation and Parks Master Plan to improve and enhance the Town's existing recreation amenities and trails. The Town proposes to do this at several project locations (see map above). Together, these proposed projects demonstrate a waterfront-scale approach for revitalization. Projects include waterfront park development, facilities and structures, trails, park amenities, and multi-modal transportation infrastructure.

Section IV of the LWRP features project descriptions and location maps. These maps identify the project site and the landowners of the individual parcels. Most of the projects take place on municipal land with existing permits and other agreements in place.

The LWRP project descriptions also include schematic illustrations and existing imagery of project locations. Preliminary cost estimates are included for project components, as well as related planning studies, permits, and construction plans. Each project lists responsible parties and stakeholders, potential funding sources, and time frames.

Certain projects will start with a master plan or feasibility study to initiate the design and permit phase and then continue to the construction phase. One of the LWRP project, Amherst Central Park (the former Westwood Country Club), has already undergone a public master planning process and is positioned to start with the preliminary design and permitting phase.



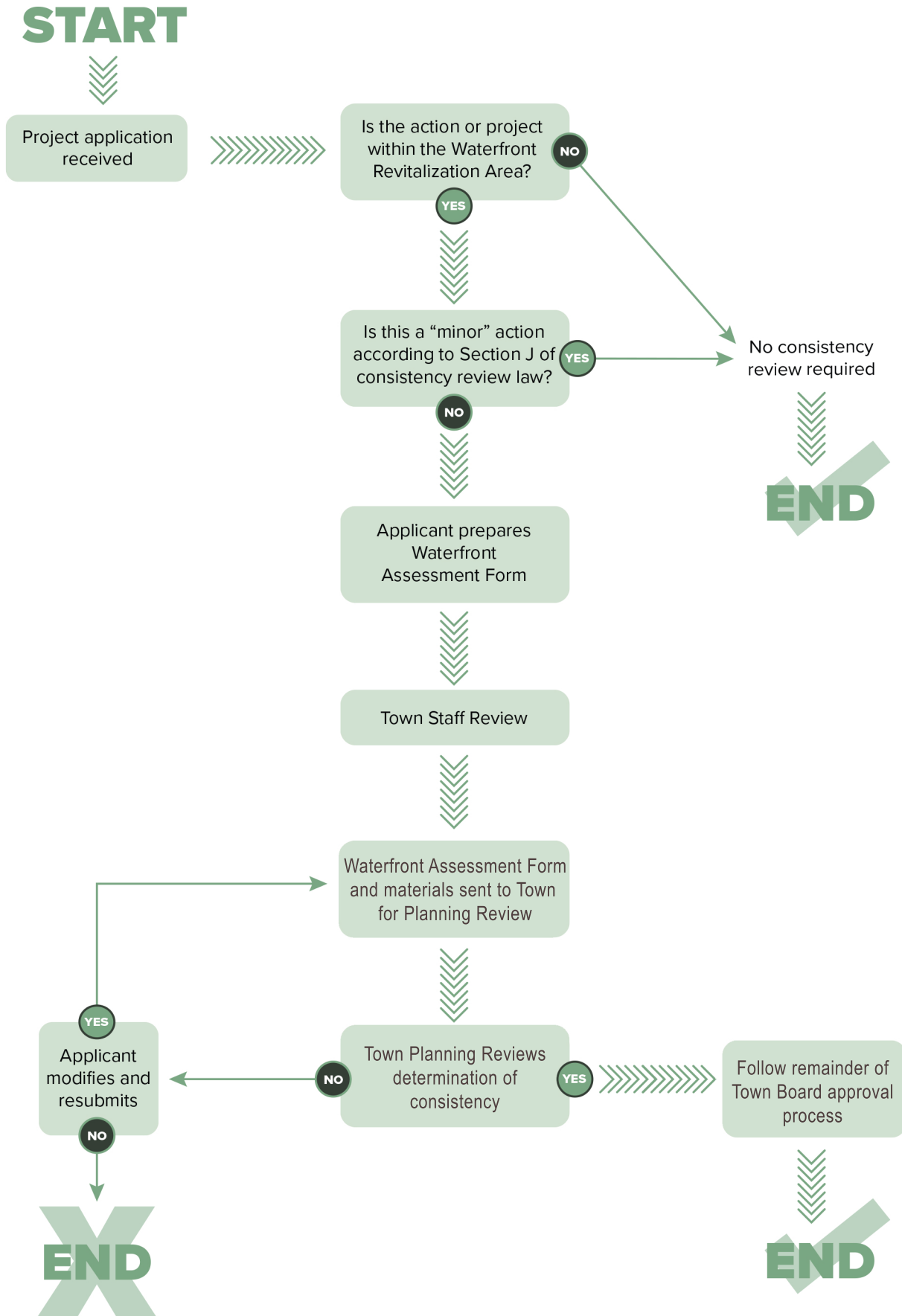
# Application of the LWRP

Concurrent with the adoption of the LWRP, the Town approved a local law entitled the Town of Amherst LWRP Consistency Review Law. The purpose of this local law is to provide a mechanism for the Town to ensure consistency with LWRP policies during proposed development actions/projects within the WRA. For a proposed project to be successfully implemented and developed within the WRA, the project must undergo a consistency review.

Waterfront consistency review is necessary only if the proposed action occurs in the WRA and is not a “minor” action as defined by Section J of the waterfront consistency law. In this case, the applicant must complete a Waterfront Assessment Form to be reviewed by the Town Planning Department. Upon a determination of consistency with the LWRP by the Town Planning Board, the proposed project/action can move to the next phase of site plan review.



# TOWN OF AMHERST WATERFRONT CONSISTENCY REVIEW PROCESS





# Adoption of the Town of Amherst LWRP

Following New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) review of the LWRP, all potentially affected State, regional, and local agencies were solicited to review the draft LWRP and submit comments in a process called “60-Day Review”. Upon the completion of this review, the Town incorporated comments into the final version of the LWRP and the supporting LWRP Consistency Review Law, which in turn were adopted by the Town Board. The locally adopted LWRP was then formally submitted to NYS DOS for approval from the NYS Secretary of State.

With formal adoption of the LWRP, implementation of actions and projects can begin. The Town, with the approval of the Town Board, can submit proposals for grant funding to implement proposed actions and projects. The Town of Amherst Planning Board will oversee the consistency review process for all site plan applications that occur within the WRA.





# Building upon the momentum

With the adoption of the LWRP, the Town will pursue funding for projects in the WRA. New York State's Environmental Protection Fund can provide funding for many of the capital projects listed in the LWRP to protect the environment and enhance the community. To facilitate implementation, additional funding for proposed projects can be acquired through other public and private sources.

LWRP projects collectively enhance public access, celebrate local history and culture, improve ecological health, and create economic opportunities. The Town is able to update the LWRP in the future if additional projects are identified that would contribute to the revitalization of the Amherst waterfront.



## North Amherst Fire Station

Before the official adoption of the LWRP, NYS DOS awarded a grant to a proposed LWRP project that enhanced the North Amherst Fire Station park grounds and provided access to Tonawanda Creek. This project promotes tourism, improves local ecological health, and creates economic opportunities for the community. Proposed improvements include new points of trail access to the water, a public dock and kayak launch, a new playground, the expansion of a parking lot, and additional plantings. The project is planned for construction starting in 2025. More projects like this along Amherst's waterfront will be developed and implemented in upcoming years. For more information on waterfront projects please refer to the Town of Amherst LWRP on the Town website.

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