Destination Fort Edward:
A Strategy for Community and Economic Development

University at Albany
Planning Studio
Fall 2005
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Town of Fort Edward and its staff for initiating and coordinating the Planning Studio, and the Rogers Island Visitors Center and Washington County for their involvement and support during the process. In addition, we would like to thank the Village of Fort Edward, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, New York State Division of Coastal Resources, Washington County Cornell Cooperative Extension, New York State Canal Corporation, and The Hudson River Valley Greenway for their involvement and support at strategic points in the process.

Individuals we would particularly like to thank include: Merrilyn Pulver, Fort Edward Town Supervisor; Eileen Hannay, Manager of the Rogers Island Visitors Center; Ben Syden, AICP, of the Laberge Group, Mark Galough, Director of the Washington County Department of Planning and Community Development; Aaron Frankenfeld, Director, Adirondack-Glens Fall Transportation Council; Neal Orsini, owner/operator of the Anvil Inn and Town Councilman, and Town Board Members, John Rieger, Edward Carpenter and Guy D’Angelico.

Many of the insights contained in this report regarding the qualities and features that make Fort Edward a special place, as well as the inspiration for many recommendations for local improvements were derived by exploring Fort Edward on foot, and by speaking informally with residents, property and business owners. The willingness of these residents, property and business owners in Fort Edward to take the time to speak with us, and share with us their views, concerns and hopes for the future, provided crucial input and direction in terms of identifying and framing issues and threats confronting the community, as well as opportunities and potential solutions.

Fort Edward / University at Albany Planning Studio Team
I. Introduction and Background

The Town of Fort Edward, population 5,892 in 2000, is 26.8 square miles in area and predominantly rural, with 12.8 miles of shoreline along the Hudson River. Incorporated in 1755, the Village of Fort Edward, population 3,561 in 2000, is located within the Town. Fifty-three (53) miles north of Albany, New York, 32 miles from the Vermont state line and 16 miles from Lake George, Fort Edward is well located in relation to major highway corridors. From points to the north, south and west, Fort Edward can be reached via State Route 197, which connects to exit 17 of the Adirondack Northway (Interstate 87), which connects directly to the New York State Thruway. NYS Route 4 passes directly through the Town and Village and acts as the “main street” of Fort Edward. Route 4 also serves as a travel route between the I-87 Northway and the Green Mountains in Vermont and the White Mountains in New Hampshire. (See Figure 1)

Fort Edward’s historical significance dates back nearly 15,000 years when the retreating Laurentide ice sheet created glacial lakes in the area now known as the Hudson River Valley. These glacial lakes left behind sand deposits along the edges of the lakebed that are now home to several communities. The sand deposits also created unique ecological environments like the Albany Pine Bush, as well as the arable farmland throughout the region.

Archeological information reveals that the area know today as Fort Edward was once known by Native Americans as “Wahcoooloosencoochaleva,” or “Great Carrying Place,” due to the fact that the Hudson River became unnavigable at this point because of falls, rapids, and shallow waters. Native Americans of many different tribes would leave the river here at Bond Creek and travel overland with their canoes to Lake Champlain. Archeological evidence indicates that as early as 1200 BC and until the 11th Century Native Americans not only used the area as a “carrying place” between the river and Lake Champlain and for hunting, but also established settlements on the banks of the Hudson River and the mouth of Little Wood Creek, now known as Bond Creek.
Figure 1

Town of Ft Edward
Average Annual Daily Traffic
State Highways

Data Source: NYSDOT
14 December 2005

Destination: Fort Edward
The history of the place we know today as Fort Edward is intimately linked to that of the Hudson River, which played a major role in early-American life as a strategic supply line and trade route, in turn reinforcing its strategic significance. The same natural features that led Native Americans to camp there also led to the development of several early fortifications, one of those being Fort Edward. According to Archeologist Dr. David Starbuck, the first military expedition through Fort Edward was lead by Major General Fitz John Winthrop in 1690. During Queen Ann’s War (1702-1713), General Francis Nicholson ordered Albany native, General Peter Schuyler, to erect a stockade and build a road to Fort Ann in 1709—a fortification known as Fort Nicholson, which was later abandoned. In 1755, shortly after the beginning of the French and Indian War, General William Johnson sent General Phinehas Lyman to build a fort at the Great Carrying Place. The post was called “Fort Lyman.” On September 21, 1755 after the Battle of Lake George, General Johnson officially named the fortification “Fort Edward” in honor of Edward Augustus, Duke of York and Albany.

In the years that followed, the Fort was built up by adding barracks, blockhouses, guardhouses, storehouses and hospitals. During this time, Rogers Island was used as a camp for provincial soldiers and rangers. Between 1756 and 1759, Major Robert Rogers and his Rangers camped in log huts on Rogers Island. Considered by some as the most daring of British colonial forces, Roger’s Rangers adopted Native American battle tactics and fought throughout New York and New England. In 1757, Major Rogers wrote a series of “Ranging Rules” and instructed his soldiers in the principles of forest “guerilla” warfare. Rogers Island became the birthplace of a very elite squad of fighters known today as the U.S. Army Rangers and Special Forces, part of the U.S. Special Operations Command.

In 1759 General Jeffrey Amherst gathered his army in Fort Edward to prepare for attacks upon Forts Carillon (Ticonderoga) and St. Frederic (Crown Point). According to Dr. David Starbuck, after the aforementioned forts were captured, “the garrison on Rogers Island [was] greatly reduced.”
Fort Edward played a particularly important role in the American Revolutionary war. In 1777, when the British General John Burgoyne was pushing toward Albany, Fort Edward became a pivotal place as Burgoyne advanced. The home of Patrick Smythe, now the Old Fort House Museum at 106 Broadway, was headquarters for both American and British troops – one of the few surviving structures of the Burgoyne campaign. Three American Generals (Philip Schuyler, Benedict Arnold and Horatio Gates) and one British General (John Burgoyne) headquartered there. Troops mustered and drilled on Rogers Island, perhaps as important, the Revolution’s first martyr, Jane McCrea, was murdered during Burgoyne’s march to Saratoga. It is said her death played a significant role in turning the tide of the campaign against Burgoyne.

Fort Edward, however, did not recede into obscurity. Rather, it became an important transportation and trade hub. Once again, the un-navigability of the Hudson River north of Fort Edward reinforced the community’s importance, providing the impetus for the construction of canals and railroads through the town. In 1823, the Champlain Canal was completed connecting the Hudson River and Lake Champlain, which flows north into the Saint Lawrence River — bringing large volumes of boat and barge traffic through Fort Edward. Three years later in 1826 the Erie Canal was completed between Albany and Buffalo. The Old Champlain Canal was subsequently enlarged several times and realigned to its present location just south of Rogers Island as part of the “New York State Barge Canal Improvements” in the early 20th Century.

The Champlain and Erie Canals transformed New York State into a leading center for business and commerce in the United States, earning it the title “Empire State.” The canal system also helped Fort Edward play a major role in the production of quality earthenware known worldwide as “Fort Edward Pottery.” The main producers of pottery in the region were the New York Stoneware Company, Ottoman Bros & Co. and Haxton & Co. Concrete manufacturers, a paper mill and a foundry also thrived in Fort Edward due to their locations on the canal.

The success of the canals in New York State was short-lived, however, because of the rapid emergence of a new transportation technology—the railroad. The relative ease and efficiency of rail transport quickly took precedence as the main form of commercial transportation in the United States. With the greater speed and load carrying capacity of the railroads, canal transportation was quickly made obsolete. Nevertheless, Fort Edward found itself in an equally favored position in terms of this new transportation mode when the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Railway, a descendant of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Corporation, decided to construct a railroad through Fort Edward.

The Fort Edward Station was built in 1900 in the late Victorian Style along the D&H Lake Champlain Route to Montreal. Two other local stations, at Altamont and Westport, were built in the same style. Well over a century later, paper products, lumber, and manufactured goods continue to flow past the train station at Fort Edward. The D&H Railway provided passenger service on this line to Canada until the nationwide transfer
of passenger service to the newly created AMTRAK in 1971. Today the former D&H rail line through Fort Edward is owned by the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway and “remains one of the most scenic routes in the east and is still one of the best train rides in Amtrak’s timetable.”
II. Present Realities and Future Challenges

Despite its rich history and significant environmental assets, Fort Edward has failed to benefit from the investment and population growth that has benefited other parts of the region in recent years. While the population of New York State increased 5.5% between 1990 and 2000, and Washington County’s population increased 2.9% during that same period, the Town of Fort Edward’s population decreased 6.9%, and the Village of Fort Edward’s population remained stagnant. (See Table 1) Fort Edward’s population is not just decreasing; it is also aging. The 2000 U.S. Census data reveals a significant decrease in the population aged 15-34 years age group between 1990 and 2000, which means that young people are not staying in Fort Edward but instead are choosing to relocate elsewhere in search of better employment opportunities.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Population 1990-2000</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Fort Edward</td>
<td>6,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village of Fort Edward</td>
<td>3,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>59,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
<td>17,999,778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The median income of families in the Town and Village continues to lag behind the median family income in Washington Co. as a whole. (See Table 2) Also, the percentage of Fort Edward Town residents with at least a Bachelor’s Degree is significantly lower than the New York State average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Median Family Income 1989-1999</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town, Fort Edward</td>
<td>$30,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village, Fort Edward</td>
<td>29,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>32,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
<td>39,741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of median home values in Fort Edward to those in Washington Co. provides yet another indication of Fort Edward’s lagging economic condition. As shown in Figure 3, the median value of homes in the Town and Village of Fort Edward in 2000 was $71,400 and $68,000 respectively, compared to $78,800 in Washington Co. as a whole. Also, while median home values increased between 1990 and 2000 in both the
Town and Village of Fort Edward, the percentage increase was less than was the case in Washington Co. as a whole. (See Table 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Median Home Value 1990-2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town, Fort Edward</td>
<td>$30,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village, Fort Edward</td>
<td>29,390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>32,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
<td>39,741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of the lag population growth and property values, both the Town and the Village of Fort Edward have relatively low tax bases from which to raise local revenue. As shown in Table 4, total property valuation (full value, equalized) per capita in the Town of Fort Edward in 2003 was $29,300; in the Village of Fort Edward it was only $25,203. By way of comparison, total property valuation (full value, equalized) per capita in the City of Albany in 2000 was $33,513, and in the Town of Guilderland it was $59,732.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Full Value Property Valuation 1998-2003</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town, Fort Edward</td>
<td>$159,389,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Val.</td>
<td>$27,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village, Fort Edward</td>
<td>$87,103,32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Val.</td>
<td>$24,460</td>
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</table>

In the process of preparing its new Master Plan, the Town of Fort Edward and its Master Plan Advisory Committee conducted a survey of Town residents to identify what they regarded as the “best” and “worst” aspects of the town. A total of 568 Town residents responded to the survey. According to respondents, the best aspects of the Town are:

- Small town rural and scenic character
- Historic quality
- Safe atmosphere
- Geographic location
According to survey respondents, the worst aspects of the Town are:

- Truck traffic
- Poor Main Street aesthetic quality
- Poor road conditions
- Lack of businesses

Related to fourth point above, there is very little business diversity within the Town and existing businesses do not appear to be working effectively together to promote themselves and Fort Edward. There also appears to either have been little action undertaken by the business community, the local government to attract new businesses—or if efforts have been undertaken they have proven ineffective. The sad fact is that Fort Edward is losing a significant portion of its market share to other communities. According to the recently completed Town of Fort Edward Economic Revitalization Plan, the average household in the Town spends about $23,000 each year on retail goods, but over half is being spent out of town.

As if theses problems were not enough, Fort Edward is about to become “ground zero” for a the multi-year PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) dredging operation that is being undertaken by General Electric (GE) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—an operation which is expected to commence in 2007 and last at least 7 years. Although the dredging operation has yet to start, Fort Edward has already been dealt a serious blow, due to the negative public image associated with being designated as the center of the toxic waste clean-up process. The fact that the dredging process is looming over Fort Edward has discouraged and postponed private investment that might otherwise have enabled the community to begin improving its economic condition.

Once the clean-up process begins and the dewatering site begins operations, local roads in the Town and Village of Fort Edward, already heavily impacted by truck traffic, will experience increased truck traffic. The intersection of US Route 4 and NYS Route 197 (Bridge Street), a major gateway for motorists entering the Village of Fort Edward from Interstate 87, will be particularly affected. According to the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Traffic Volume Report, the average daily traffic (ADT) for the area from Bridge Street to McCrea Street in 2002 was 15,680 vehicles per day—of which 9% was truck traffic. (By way of comparison, the NYS DOT statewide average percent of heavy vehicle traffic for the year 2002 for a Principal Urban Arterial was 6.2%.)

In addition, the large size and number of working barges required by the dredging operation will likely be great enough to shut down leisure boat traffic through the Champlain Canal for the duration of the project, curtailing an important source of commercial activity for local restaurants and businesses. When the dredging operation begins, it is expected that up to 30 barge trips per day will pass through Lock C-7. During the 2005 season through the first week of November, 1758 pleasure vessels and 40 commercial vessels passed through Lock C-7, with an average of 9 lockings per day.
way of contrast, the additional barge traffic through C-7 due to the dredging and the operations of the dewatering site will require 30 lockings per day. The considerable extent to which barges will interrupt and displace the passage of pleasure craft through the locks will undoubtedly cause many boaters to avoid the canal altogether so as to avoid what could turn out to be interminable delays.
III. Cultural Heritage Tourism as an Economic Development Strategy

In the Fall of 2005, the University at Albany Department of Geography and Planning, at the request of the Town of Fort Edward, conducted a three-month Graduate Student Planning Studio aimed at assisting Fort Edward in developing an overall strategy for community and economic revitalization. The principal tasks given to the Planning Studio were:

- Assist in developing a tourism strategy built around the history and culture of the region
- Focus on historic sites, parks, trails, greenways and street links through the Village of Fort Edward
- Put forward proposals for historic preservation and adaptive reuse of the train station, enhanced Visitor and Heritage Center facilities, and for related business promotion, parking, campsites, boat launches, etc.
- Incorporate a fiscal impact analysis of the future development of Rogers Island to assist the Town and Village in assessing the long-term financial benefits of investing in tourism development.

What is Tourism?

Tourism is defined as traveling for recreation or pleasure. A tourist is usually defined as a “person who travels for non-business reasons more than 50 miles from and overnights away from his or her usual place of residence.” Most travel statistics regarding tourism visits and expenditures are collected using this definition. Tourism has become one of the world’s leading generators of economic activity, accounting for 10.4% of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP) and 8.3% of worldwide employment. In the United States tourism is expected to generate $1.537 billion of economic activity, accounting for 10.8% of national GDP and 11.9% of total employment. Tourism is also one of the fastest growing sectors of the American economy. Economists forecast that tourism-related economic activity will grow by 4% per year through 2015. New York State’s share of the world tourism market in 2004 accounted for 139.7 million visitors (133.4 million domestic and 6.3 million international) and $38.5 billion in direct visitor spending ($31.3 billion domestic travelers and $7.05 billion international travelers).

- Tourism is not a single industry, but actually a combination of:
- Industries and small businesses - hospitality, transportation, entertainment, etc.;
- The public sector - local governments providing attractions and publicity campaigns (parks, street festivals etc.);
- Nonprofit organizations and volunteers promoting their causes - historical museums, arts fairs, etc.
In their publication *Blueprint for New Tourism*,\(^\text{13}\) the World Travel and Tourism Council states that in order to sustain a tourist-related economy three fundamental conditions be met:

- Local governments must recognize Travel & Tourism as a top priority
- Businesses must balance economics with people, culture and environment
- All parties must share the pursuit of long-term growth and prosperity. Therefore tourism needs to be considered as part of an overall economic development, growth, and environmental preservation plan for the community.

As the points in the *Blueprint for New Tourism* suggest, the political will of key players is an essential ingredient for creating a successful heritage tourism strategy. Indeed, for a successful heritage tourism program to be sustained, a community often has to be willing to forego short-term profit considerations, and base decisions on an array of other considerations related to what is best for the community in the longer run.

In terms of creating heritage tourism destinations that attract visitors, three additional ingredients are also critically important:

- A strong sense of “place” must be readily apparent;
- Tourism should “preserve and maintain a community’s distinctive fabric;”\(^\text{14}\)
- Shared marketing is very important.

The economic benefits of tourism include increased employment opportunities and an increase in local incomes, as well as increased collection of sales and lodging taxes by local governments and school districts. However, communities that want to achieve these economic benefits must also recognize that these economic impacts can also bring negative externalities such as increased traffic, noise, pollution and overcrowding. Indeed, if communities are not careful these externalities can undermine the very qualities that communities relied upon to attract tourists in the first place—in effect killing the proverbial goose that laid the golden egg. As if to reinforce that point, research shows that tourists today expect destinations to be environmentally responsible, and are more interested than ever in educationally valuable tourist experiences.\(^\text{15}\)

What does this mean for a community wishing to use tourism to strengthen its local economy? It means that tourism is not a cost-free form of economic development. Tourism has real costs associated with it. Sustaining a successful tourist-based economy also requires significant local effort, including financial commitments, to protect and promote a community’s historic, environmental, and quality of life resources.\(^\text{16}\)

Ford Edward’s rich history and current “history in the making” situation involving the Hudson River and PCB’s, and the attention it will garner, make it an ideal place to take advantage of the current tourism trends.
Cultural Heritage Tourism

Cultural Heritage Tourism is a specific segment of the overall tourism economy that involves travel to and visitation of natural, historic, cultural, and/or arts-related institutions and places. Eighty percent of adult travelers in the US (over 118 million people) have included an historic or cultural activity while traveling. A World Tourism Organization report predicts that cultural tourism and thematic tourism (where a special interest is the motivator for travel) will be “hot” trends in the next two decades (1998-2018).

The ultimate test of a tourism destination occurs if and when the visitor decides to return to a specific place. Returning to a place may take different forms. The visitor might return for a second visit. Or they might decide to actually relocate to the community they enjoyed visiting—either to work or retire in. Thus, every heritage visitor a community attracts is not just another single visitor, but has the potential to exert a continuing positive economic impact long after his or her initial visit.

Characteristics of Cultural Heritage Tourists

Tourist trips to historic/cultural destinations in the U.S. tend to be longer than most other types of tourism travel, encompassing on average seven nights or longer; trips to historic/cultural destinations are also likely to include air travel, a rental car, and hotel stays. According to recent surveys, the general characteristics of visitors to cultural/historic sites are as follows:

- 90% come with their families
- 55% spend nights away from home
- 58% are employed full-time
- 64% are visiting the site for the first time
- 84% will return to visit the site again to bring others or will take more time
IV. Fort Edward’s Place in American History

Fort Edward occupies a strategically important place in relation to a number of well-established state and national heritage areas. By accentuating and promoting its role and importance in relation to these heritage areas Fort Edward should be able to capture an increasing share of the region’s tourism market. Indeed, there is considerable potential for marketing Fort Edward as a base camp for tourists wishing to visit and experience sites of historic and cultural significance throughout the Upper Hudson Valley, Lake Champlain Basin and the Mohawk Valley.

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (HRVNHA)\(^\text{21}\), designated in 1996, is a federally designated area whose mission is to “recognize, preserve, protect and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the Nation.” The program highlights many historic and military-related themes, including the Colonial Period, the Revolutionary War, Industrial History, and Landscape and Art. The HRVNHA is managed by the Hudson River Valley Greenway, a New York State agency and public benefit corporation created by legislation in 1991.

New York State Revolutionary War Heritage Trail

Heritage New York\(^\text{22}\) was established by Governor Pataki to develop a system of thematic heritage trails, promote economic development through heritage tourism, and address the needs of heritage trail sites through grants and workshops. A major goal of Heritage New York is to promote heritage tourism by strengthening existing tourist destinations and fostering new ones. Through its promotional activities, signage, grants, and organizational development programs, Heritage New York is offering valuable assistance to local heritage tourism efforts.

The objectives and strategies of the Heritage Trails are to:

- Identify, preserve and interpret historic sites that are linked to a particular historical theme through community outreach and grant programs;
- Promote heritage tourism through web site, brochures, kiosks and other marketing activities;
- Establish connections among thematic properties of heritage sites through website links, brochures, uniform and consistent signage, and kiosks;
- Integrate national and state heritage sites with local and regional tourism and recreational efforts;
- Foster organizational and promotional efforts related to specific heritage sites through workshops and consultant assistance
The Revolutionary War Heritage Trail underscores New York State’s decisive role in America’s fight for independence. The stories behind the forts, battlefields, colonial estates, farmhouses, and urban mansions bring to life the rich Revolutionary War history of New York State.

**New York Independence Trail**

The New York Independence Trail is a regional promotional effort that draws public attention to the rich cultural heritage of the eastern New York region. As described on their website, the New York Independence Trail provides a road map for self-guided tours of some of the most important sites of the French and Indian and Revolutionary Wars stretching from New York City to Canada. Because many of the crucial events during the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War took place in and around Fort Edward, the Trail passes directly through Fort Edward.

**Revolutionary War Road Trip**

Like the Independence Trail, the Revolutionary War Road Trip is a regional promotional effort to bring attention to the role of the region in the Revolutionary War. As does the Independence Trail, the Revolutionary War Road Trip follows US Route 4 through Fort Edward. The Road Trip begins in Castleton, Vermont following Route 4, and ends in Albany, New York. As the website for the Road Trip states, “US Route 4 goes from Portsmouth, NH to Albany, NY, but for its last 100 miles you can find much history that dates back to three very important years in the United States’ struggle for independence: 1775, 1776, and 1777.” On the website, a traveler can purchase a book and audio-guide to the trip for $12.99. The trip specifically points out places of historical interest in Fort Edward.

**Henry Knox Cannon Trail**

The Henry Knox Cannon Trail is identified on maps and in programs promoted by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and Heritage New York. The Cannon Trail traces the route taken by Major General Henry Knox and his 59 cannons from Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain to Dorchester Heights, Massachusetts. The Trail follows the historic route taken by Knox as he brought cannons to George Washington just outside of Boston where they were used to force the British out of Boston. As do the other trails, the Henry Knox Cannon Trail passes directly through Fort Edward, so that any tourist retracing Knox’s trip will make their way into Fort Edward.

**Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor**

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, which includes the historic Champlain Canal, passes directly through Fort Edward. The canal system has been recognized as a nationally significant corridor and was designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior and Congress as a National Heritage Area in December 2000.
The Corridor runs along the historic Erie Canal from Tonawanda in western New York through the center of New York State to Whitehall on Lake Champlain. (See Figure 5 Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor) The Heritage Corridor designation applies to all 234 municipalities adjoining the 524 miles of the canal system. According to the plan for the Corridor, the purpose of its designation is to “protect and preserve the historic, natural, cultural and recreational resources; interpret and educate the public about the story of the canals; foster and promote recreational opportunities; help perpetuate canal culture; market the Corridor; stimulate economic development; and foster cooperative partnerships.” The plan further states that “The National Heritage Corridor will serve as an ‘umbrella’ to unite and coordinate existing federal, state, and local plans and multiple points of view.”

Figure 5: Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor
Revolutionary Week along the Historic Champlain Canal

Similar to the Independence Trail and the Revolutionary War Road Trip, the Revolutionary Week along the Historic Champlain Canal is a regional promotional effort aimed at drawing attention to the role of the region in the American Revolution. The boat tour parallels the Revolutionary War Road Trip on Route 4, traveling through Fort Edward on the waters of the Hudson River and into the Champlain Canal to Lake Champlain. It can also be combined with the auto tour on Routes 7 and 9. On the website, a traveler can purchase a book and audio-guide to the trip. As with the Revolutionary War Road Trip, the trip specifically points out places of historical interest in Fort Edward.

Lakes to Locks Passage

The Lakes to Locks Passage is a guide for water and road travelers that connects the Hudson River with the Champlain Canal, Lake George, Lake Champlain, the Chambly Canal, the Richelieu River and the St John River in Quebec. The passage focuses on four “lives” of the passage: natural forces & native peoples; conflict and settlement; corridor of commerce; and magnet for tourism.” Once again Fort Edward is a prominent part of this regional guide.

Historic Structures and Resources

In addition to being the home to the Old Fort House Museum and the Washington County Historical Society, Fort Edward has a large number of sites of national and state historic significance.

National and/or State Historic Listed Properties:

- Rogers Island
- Delaware and Hudson Railroad Station
- Old Champlain Canal
- Glens Falls Feeder Canal
- Old Fort House Museum
- St. James Episcopal Church
- Fort Miller Reformed Church Complex
- Wing-Northup House

Figure 7: Old Fort House Museum
Fort Edward, NY
Historical Markers

- North East Bastion of Old Fort Edward
- Great Carrying Place
- Remains of Old Moat
- Fort Edward
- The Smythe House
- Tobias Van Veghten
- Jane McCrea Burial Site
- State Street Burying Ground

Figure 8: Fort Edward, Historic Marker

Historic Re-enactments and Local Festivals

Fort Edward is the site of frequent re-enactments of the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War Encampments. Fort Edward Heritage Days and the Fort Edward Yacht Basin Boat Festival are also major attractions.

Remains of the Old Champlain Canal and Old Glens Falls Feeder Canal

Various remnants of the old canal locks can be found today throughout the Town and Village, including two locks and one aqueduct of the old Champlain Canal and four locks of the old Glens Falls Feeder Canal. These historic remains represent important resources that could become part of historic trails and interpretive displays that would be of great interest to visitors to Fort Edward.

Figure 9: Old Champlain Canal, Towpath to left

In addition to the historic sites listed above, Fort Edward is within easy drive of scores of other heritage sites. Table 5 lists historic/cultural sites within 75 miles of Fort Edward, their exact distance from Fort Edward, and the average number of visitors they attract per year—one of the most frequently visited sites being the Saratoga Battlefield (148,490 visitors per year), only 24 miles away from Fort Edward.
Table 5: Historic Sites within 75 miles of Fort Edward and Their Annual Average Numbers of Visitors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saratoga Battlefield</td>
<td>Stillwater, NY</td>
<td>24 miles</td>
<td>136,498.4*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Ticonderoga</td>
<td>Ticonderoga, NY</td>
<td>49 miles</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Van Buren National Historic Site</td>
<td>Kinderhook, NY</td>
<td>72 miles</td>
<td>14,866*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site</td>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>53 miles</td>
<td>6,000~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Independence State Historic Site</td>
<td>Orwell, VT</td>
<td>52 miles</td>
<td>5,500***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimney Point State Historic Site</td>
<td>Chimney Point, VT</td>
<td>65 miles</td>
<td>2,200***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubbardton Battlefield</td>
<td>Hubbardton, VT</td>
<td>42 miles</td>
<td>3,500***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bennington Battlefield SHS</td>
<td>Grafton, NY</td>
<td>60 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Historical Museum</td>
<td>Waterford, NY</td>
<td>43 miles</td>
<td>1,000 museum events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crailo State Historic Site</td>
<td>Rensselaer, NY</td>
<td>54 miles</td>
<td>3,863^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Point State Historic Site</td>
<td>Crown Point, NY</td>
<td>64 miles</td>
<td>40,000~ (20,000 museum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Cottage State Historic Site</td>
<td>Wilton, NY</td>
<td>11 miles</td>
<td>3,000~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson Hall State Historic Site</td>
<td>Johnstown, NY</td>
<td>52 miles</td>
<td>5000-6000~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site</td>
<td>Fort Hunter, NY</td>
<td>56 miles</td>
<td>4,000~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stillwater Blockhouse</td>
<td>Stillwater, NY</td>
<td>24 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Schuyler House</td>
<td>Schuylerville, NY</td>
<td>13 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skenesborough Museum</td>
<td>Whitehall, NY</td>
<td>25 miles</td>
<td>3,500~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS Slater</td>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>53 miles</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort William Henry</td>
<td>Lake George, NY</td>
<td>17 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort George</td>
<td>Lake George, NY</td>
<td>17 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks-Bentley House</td>
<td>South Glens Falls, NY</td>
<td>5 miles</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolutionary War Cemetery</td>
<td>Salem, NY</td>
<td>23 miles</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Hill</td>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>53 miles</td>
<td>3,119**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luykas Van Allen House</td>
<td>Kinderhook, NY</td>
<td>72 miles</td>
<td>24,000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten Broeck</td>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>53 miles</td>
<td>5,494^</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to being in relatively close proximity to multiple heritage destinations, Fort Edward is readily accessible by a number of transportation modes. First, Fort Edward is well located in relation to the statewide and regional highway network. (See Table 6 Regional Highway Network and Average Daily Traffic Volumes).

Second, it is one of only a couple of dozen communities in New York State to have an Amtrak Station stop. Third, during at least half of the year, Fort Edward can be reached by pleasure craft via the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal. For a summary of vehicle, passenger and Vessel travel through and around Fort Edward, see Table 5.

Table 6: Vehicle, Passenger and Vessel Around and Through Fort Edward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Route</th>
<th>Amount of Traffic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I – 87</td>
<td>44,000 (average vehicles per day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR – 197</td>
<td>8,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR - 4</td>
<td>16,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amtrak Off (2005)</td>
<td>3,168 (passengers per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amtrak On (2005)</td>
<td>2,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock 7 (2005)</td>
<td>1,758 (vessels locked per year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock 8 (2005)</td>
<td>1,661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. A Strategy for Creating “Destination Fort Edward”

Special Operations Museum and Archaeological Resource Center

The Town of Fort Edward understands the important role Rogers Island can play as a catalyst for economic and tourism development in Fort Edward. Toward that end, plans are already well underway to develop a Rogers Rangers/Special Operations Museum on Rogers Island on the current site of the Rogers Island Visitors Center. The only other Special Operations warfare museum in the country is the JFK Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which attracts between 37,000 and 59,000 visitors per year. Unlike the planned Special Operations Museum on Rogers Island, which will cover all branches of the armed services special ops units, the JFK special warfare museum exhibits focus only on the Army Rangers.

Co-Locate an Archaeological Resource Center with the Special Operations Museum

Rogers Island is also an important archaeological resource, and has already become the site of an ongoing archaeological excavation that has produced a number of significant artifacts. As this archaeological research proceeds, the potential increases for Rogers Island to become a significant regional and national destination for tourists interested in observing and learning about how archaeological excavations are performed, as well as for researchers and scholars in archaeology and anthropology. For this reason, the facility that will accommodate the Special Warfare Museum on Rogers Island (described above) is being designed to also include an Archaeological Resource Center capable of exhibiting artifacts recovered from Rogers Island and nearby areas of the Hudson River. It is envisioned that the Archaeological Resource Center will also include classroom space to accommodate educational seminars and visits by groups of students.

Preserve and Develop the Southern Portion of Rogers Island as an Environmental Amenity

The historic, archeological and environmental qualities of Rogers Island, and its relatively undeveloped state, make it uniquely suited to preserved and developed into a public park and environmental amenity for the enjoyment of residents of Fort Edward as
well as visitors. Access to the southern portion of the island is most easily gained along the eastern and western edges of the island, where the clearance between ground level and the railroad is greatest. From these entry points, a hiking and bike trail should be developed looping around the perimeter of the island, and additional trails should be developed leading to historic and archaeological sites and interpretive exhibits to invite staff-guided and/or self-guided walking tours. (See Figure 11) The Alaska Heritage Center has this type of trail network leading to outdoor exhibits. (See Figure 12)
The southern tip of Rogers Island affords beautiful views of the surrounding area and the Hudson River. Constructing a lookout at the southern tip of the island, along with special landscaping and benches to sit and enjoy the views, will make this a popular spot. Initially this area might attract eco-tourists interested in observing the dredging process. Later on, it can become a spot for passive enjoyment of the scenery and wildlife viewing. (See accompanying photo showing view from southern tip of the island)
Strengthen Connections between Rogers Island and the Mainland

For Fort Edward to capture positive economic spin-off benefits from the above described improvements planned and proposed for Rogers Island, it is crucial that connections between Rogers Island and surrounding landmarks and nodes of activity be strengthened. The planned replacement of the SR 197 bridge should improve the flow of motorized vehicles between Rogers Island and the Village. However, improving the ability of people to walk and/or ride bicycles between the Island and the Village center is also important. The new SR 197 bridge should therefore also include 10 foot wide pedestrian and bicycle lanes on both sides.

To further connect the Island to the mainland, and enable Rogers Island to achieve its full potential as a recreational amenity, a pedestrian bridge should be constructed linking the southern tip of Rogers Island to the mainland where the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC) currently has a maintenance facility property. (See following recommendation related to the proposed relocation of the NYSCC maintenance facility.)
Relocate the NYSCC Maintenance Facility to Make More Productive Use of the Property

The New York State Canal Corporation’s (NYSCC) Fort Edward Section I Maintenance Headquarters is located at the southern end of the Village, just north of Lock C-7, at the point where the East Branch of the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal diverge. To devote such a visually prominent and environmentally significant property at the junction of the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal to a maintenance facility is far from ideal, because it displaces other uses which would greatly contribute to Fort Edward’s attraction to visitors.

The Town and Village should enter into conversations with the NYSCC to see if the NYSCC can help Fort Edward to capitalize upon its strategic location along Champlain Canal and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor by making better use of the current maintenance facility site. The NYSCC owns a substantial amount of land along the west shore of the Champlain Canal north of the East Street bridge, including 26.8 acres of land which will be included in the 106.2 acres of the Dewatering Site. We recommend that NYSCC be encouraged to consider relocating its Fort Edward Section I Maintenance Headquarters to the north, to NYSCC-owned land near Lock C-8. This would allow the present site near Lock C-7 to be used for recreational purposes, and would be fully consistent with New York State policy aimed at promoting economic development through tourism. Once the maintenance facility is relocated, a boat launch and possibly some small commercial operations could also be developed on the site, such as a snack bar etc., for the convenience of boaters and visitors and also to lure people to take advantage of the site.

The proposed relocation of the NYSCC maintenance facility will most likely not be able to occur until after the dewatering process is completed, and until the dewatering site is converted into an industrial park. However, now is the time to begin reaching the understandings and making the agreements that will make the relocation of the maintenance facility happen.

Historic Preservation

For Fort Edward to be successful in becoming a statewide and regional cultural/heritage tourism destination, it is essential that old buildings that contribute to the historic fabric, character and charm of the community be preserved and maintained. Unfortunately, many attractive old buildings, including many historically significant structures, are in need of restoration and/or rehabilitation.

Historic homes dating as far back as the 18th Century are scattered throughout the Town. Once rehabilitated and restored, these historic homes could become a major tourist draw. Complementing such restorations with the addition of new period street-lighting and street and sidewalk improvements would make Fort Edward all the more desirable as a tourist destination, and as a place to live and work.
The process by which historic areas are restored and revitalized is often a lengthy process, and requires a sustained effort. The first step that Fort Edward needs to take is to decide to promulgate legislation affording a degree of protection to historic buildings, thereby increasing the likelihood that there will be something to restore when market conditions improve and restoration becomes economically feasible and attractive.

Establish a Joint Advisory Committee for Historic Preservation; Establish an Historic Preservation Commission; Adopt Historic Preservation Ordinances

The Town and Village should establish a Joint Advisory Committee for Historic Preservation to strategize what can be done to jump-start the rehabilitation and restoration of Fort Edward’s built environment, inform citizens about the economic benefits of historic preservation, and engage community participation/leadership to encourage historic preservation in the Town and the Village.

The Town of Fort Edward Master Plan has already recommended that the Town adopt a Historic Preservation ordinance, and we reiterate that recommendation. To help energize and orchestrate the preservation and revitalization effort, we recommend that the Town of Fort Edward amend the Town Code to create a Historic Preservation Commission, similar to that established by the City of Glens Falls. The Village of Fort Edward should be encouraged to form a similar Historic Preservation Commission as well. The Historic Preservation Commissions for both municipalities should be charged with overseeing all aspects of historic preservation in Fort Edward. The first responsibility of the respective Historic Preservation Commissions should be to draft historic preservation ordinances, ideally through a joint public process. The Joint Advisory Committee for Historic Preservation can play a critical role in this regard by helping to assure that the historic preservation ordinances of the two communities are similar and compatible. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation can assist the Town and Village in developing a compatible and effective historic preservation program. It can also help the Town and Village identify applicable State and/or Federal programs that can help fund and support local historic preservation efforts.

In developing an appropriate and effective historic preservation ordinance, Fort Edward can look to the following as possible models:

**City of Glens Falls Proposed Local Preservation Ordinance:**
The ordinance creates a Historic Preservation Commission that is responsible for identifying and designating historic properties. No exterior alterations allowed with Certificate of Appropriateness. Includes a hardship exemption and incentive plan.

**City of Beacon Historic District and Landmark Overlay Zone:**
No exterior alteration allowed without first obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Planning Board or Certificate of Economic Hardship from the Zoning Board. Historic Preservation Area has designated allowed uses. In addition to creating the
Historic District, Beacon also passed a local law requiring that first-floor storefronts that have been converted into residential units be re-converted back to storefronts.

**Village of Fishkill Historic Preservation Overlay Zone:**
To undertake renovations, owners of properties in the Overlay Zone need to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness. There is an allowance for economic hardship. Individual properties can be identified and added to the Overlay Zone on an ad hoc basis.

**City of Newburgh Architectural Review Commission:**
No changes to the exterior architectural features of existing buildings are allowed without obtaining site plan approval from the Architectural Review Commission. View corridors are identified and to be preserved.

**Town of Rhinebeck Historic Building Protection Law:**
Defines which buildings are deemed to be of historic and/or architectural significance. Building owners need to apply for permission before removing or demolishing a historic building.

The Town and Village should actively pursue state and federal funding that could be used to offer matching grants, low interest loans and other incentives to building owners to encourage them to improve the facades of their buildings. Potential funding sources include the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the NYS Department of State’s Quality Communities Program. It is important to note that joint applications submitted by two municipalities are looked upon extremely favorably by state funding agencies—so that if the Town and Village of Fort Edward were to cooperate with one another in putting forward a joint application it would greatly increase the likelihood of funding.

Other funding agencies and assistance programs that could be helpful include the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s National Main Street Program, the New York Preservation League, and the State Historic Preservation Tax Incentive program. Combining the Main Street program with historic preservation tax incentives could be particularly effective in encouraging building owners to invest in rehabilitating their properties.

**Gain Certified Local Government Status**

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is a nationwide program of financial and technical assistance that helps communities preserve properties significant in local history. A local government can only participate in this program when the State Historic Preservation Officer has certified that the municipality has established its own historic preservation commission and that its community preservation program meets federal and state standards. CLG status will provide Fort Edward an opportunity to make historic preservation an official function of local government, and help establish valuable partnerships with federal and state historic preservation organizations. By gaining CLG status Fort Edward will become eligible to apply for grants through the
New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Examples of grant monies awarded to CLGs related to historic preservation activities include: historic and archaeological resources surveys; nominations of properties to the National Registers of Historic Places; financial assistance for historic preservation activities that support community planning efforts; local outreach and education initiatives; technical, financial and training assistance from the SHPO to achieve local preservation and revitalization objectives.

**Develop and Improve the Train Station and Adjoining Parcels**

The Canadian Pacific Main Line, carrying both freight and passenger trains runs through the Town of Fort Edward, offering the Town a great locational advantage. Rail remains a popular choice for travel, especially for tourists, and in terms of Amtrak’s national rail network Fort Edward is the gateway to the Adirondack Park, a major tourist destination.

The historic railroad station and its surrounding area should be completely restored so as to become an attractive and welcoming gateway to Fort Edward and the Adirondacks. $600,000 in additional grant money has been secured to complete renovation of the station. Completion of the station renovation will project a positive image to the thousands of passengers who pass through Fort Edward by train each year—and encourage them to consider stopping in Fort Edward at some point in the future.

Annually, CPR’s US Holiday Train stops at Fort Edward, and for the 45 minute Christmas Concert, the Train Station area is bustling with activity. With some effort, such bustling activity could become a nearly daily occurrence.

Ideally, the building should be put to more active use. One possibility that should be explored is leasing out a portion of the station’s interior to a concession stand selling newspapers, magazines, coffee, pastries, sandwiches, etc. Areas adjacent to the station should also be redeveloped to provide a landscaped, lighted parking area for Amtrak passengers and visitors to the town. These site improvements should be designed to enable the property to accommodate outdoor activities such as a farmers market, crafts fairs, and antique car shows—
uses that would showcase the tourist opportunities of the area. Concession spaces can be leased for modest fees that should cover maintenance expenses, or in exchange for maintenance services provided by tenants.

Another way of transforming the Railroad Station area into a center of activity, and create additional visitor interest, would be to install a section of track between the train station and the adjacent Freight House to display one or two early D&H locomotives and 1920s D&H passenger coach. This display, combined with additional exhibits of historic railroad memorabilia in the Train Station, would encourage railroad enthusiasts to visit Fort Edward. The Mohawk-Hudson Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society might be extremely receptive to working with the Town to undertake such a project.

To achieve this vision for the historic Railroad Station area, the land adjacent to the railroad station currently used by Waste Management Co. for the storage of roll-off waste containers needs to be reclaimed and reconfigured. Waste Management currently leases this land for $1,000/month from the Local Development Corporation (LDC), but this highly visible location at an important gateway into Fort Edward is clearly not a desirable place for waste containers to be stored. Instead Waste Management should be encouraged to store its waste containers at the industrial park. Hopefully this can occur even while the dewatering process is taking place.

The approximate cost of completing renovations to the historic train station and associated site improvements is estimated at $150,000 - $300,000. Because the train station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, additional grant monies from public sources may be available. The estimated cost of constructing the above described parking area improvements, including landscaping and plantings, signage and lighting is approximately $95,000.

**Restore Freight Depot Adjacent to Railroad Station**

The old Freight Depot adjacent to the historic Fort Edward Railroad Station is a valuable but long neglected local resource that contributes significantly to the historic character and appeal of the railroad station area. One possibility that should be considered is renovating the old Freight so that it could be used for exhibition space and meeting space related to the Hudson River dredging and environmental reclamation project. The exhibition space could be lined with documents from the dredging and double as a research facility for those interested in studying the process. This facility would also be large enough to accommodate meetings involving the various parties and agencies involved in the dredging project. It could also serve as a

![Figure 19: Fort Edward Freight Depot](image)
repository for documents and reports related to the dredging project that the Town will otherwise have to try to store in their cramped quarters in the Town/Village Hall. As such, the cost of renovating the Freight Depot could be considered part of the overall cost of the dredging and dewatering project, and therefore something that GE should be willing to pay for.

The proximity of the structure to the proposed park and ride facility for the train station, and along the route of the loop trail system proposed earlier, will assure that exhibits in the Freight Depot are viewed on a fairly regular basis.

Restoration work related to the old Freight Depot should include replacement of gutters, installation of new windows and doors, insulation of the structure throughout, and installation of direct vent gas heating and cooling units, electrical wiring, wall finishing, interior flooring and ceiling, outside decking, railings, and steps. Approximate cost: $275,000.

**Preserve and Rehabilitate the Old High School Building**

The former High School building in the center of Fort Edward is a signature building that contributes greatly to the community’s identity and sense of place, and its central location makes it potentially important node of activity. We urge the Village and the Town to work together to see to it that the structure is preserved and restored to public prominence.

The former High School could be renovated and reused for a number of potential purposes. For example, the building could accommodate a new and expanded Fort Edward/Washington Co. Visitors Information Center, once the Special Operations Museum/Archaeological Resource Center is completed on Rogers Island. In our opinion, the location of the old High School building in the center of the Village, makes it a better place to initially welcome and orient visitors to Fort Edward, than its present location on Rogers Island. Relocating the Visitors Center to the old High School would also have the added benefit of creating an additional activity center from which positive economic spin-off benefits could be achieved.

Another possibility is that part of the old High School building could provide office space for environmental researchers tracking and studying the dredging process and its impacts. Perhaps the EPA might even consider giving this reuse a boost by establishing a research facility in Fort Edward on an interim basis. There are currently 14 EPA labs and office locations in various parts of the country, including a National Health...
and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory which conducts research aimed at evaluating the risks that pollution poses to humans and ecosystems.

One last reuse possibility that should be considered is that the old High School could provide badly needed municipal office space and meeting space for the Town and Village, which currently share inadequate space in a small building on Broadway. Indeed, it is altogether possible that the old High School building, which contains 13,000 square feet of floorspace, could accommodate two or even all three of these reuse possibilities.

Purchasing the old high school could cost approximately $275,000. The estimated cost of completely renovating the old high school building, restoring the building’s exterior and making it ADA accessible by installing of new elevator and shaft on the rear of the structure could cost between $950,000 and $1.1 million.

The feasibility of converting old buildings to new uses has been demonstrated over and over again in places throughout the country. For example, a former high school building in Niagara Falls, New York, has become the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC), a major cultural tourism destination which also provides affordable studio and office space for area artists and arts groups. The building that NACC occupies was built in 1924 and served as Niagara Falls’ central high school until 2000, when it was replaced by a new high school building. Slated for demolition, the building was rescued by a grassroots community coalition. Today the 166,000 sq. foot building is listed on both the National and New York State Historic Registers and is completely filled with more than 75 individual artists and arts groups.

Another example of an old high school that has been reused as a cultural center is the Adirondack History Center Museum in Elizabethtown, New York. The museum, which was established in 1955, is in the former Elizabethtown High School, which was built in 1915. The Adirondack History Center Museum has ten major exhibit areas and also features an Adirondack Fire Tower. It holds more that 4,000 artifacts from Adirondack history ranging from artifacts from the Fort at Crown Point to an extensive collection of antique dolls. The Museum is also complimented by a colonial-style garden full of heritage, native perennials.

In Lowell, Massachusetts, the headquarters of the National Park Service’s Lowell National Historic Cultural park is located in a brick building that was originally a corporation boardinghouse block for young women who worked in textile mills. Today, that building block houses the Center for Lowell History. The Center maintains the holdings of several archival collections including the Lowell Historical Society, the Boston and Maine Railroad Historical Society, and the University of Massachusetts-Lowell. The Center for Lowell History hosts historical research and documentation, the Scholar in the City Program, classes of the Learning in Retirement Association, exhibits, and general education courses related to the city’s history.
Formerly a post office and federal courthouse, the 1932 building that now houses the Havre Heritage Center and H. Earl Clack Museum was purchased by the City of Havre, Montana and the H. Earl Clack Museum Foundation, who feared it would be demolished after the post office moved to a new location in 1995. The building now houses the museum and museum offices, as well as space for the local Writer’s Guild, a photography program, an art gallery, the Historic Preservation Office, the Sands Foundation, and a gift shop. The Center offers a Christmas stroll, lecture series, exhibits, and an open house. Historic mailboxes are available in the lobby for purchase as a fundraiser.

**Capitalize on the Dredging Project**

At the beginning of our report, we pointed out that the impending multi-year dredging project that currently hangs over Fort Edward’s collective head has had, and will have, significant negative impacts on the community. On the other hand, the fact that Fort Edward is going to be the site of the largest environmental cleanup ever undertaken in this country could potentially produce some positive opportunities for the community.

Perhaps most notably, GE will be hiring approximately 500 people per season to work on the dredging project. While GE has made a commitment to the people of Fort Edward and surrounding communities to give priority to hiring workers who live in the area, many of the jobs will likely have to be filled by workers drawn from outside the area. New employment created by the dredging operation is likely to attract a large number of people to come to live in the area. Although people on pleasure boats may be discouraged from passing through Fort Edward, certain local stores and restaurants could see an increase in business during the project due to the influx of new workers.

The dredging project is also likely to spark the interest of environmentalists and scientists, many of whom will want to visit Fort Edward to observe, document and learn about the dredging activities and the results produced. Before plans regarding the logistics of the clean-up process have been finalized, EPA, in cooperation with partner agencies and local government officials, should attempt to identify potential vantage points from which environment-minded tourists and visitors can observe various aspects the cleanup process—including a lookout point from Rogers Island and some small area on the dewatering facility site. Signage directing visitors to these vantage points should be developed and put into place, along with interpretive signage at the viewing sites themselves.

If liability and public safety issues prevent visitors from directly observing the dredging and dewatering process, it is doubly important that exhibits related to the cleanup process be put prominently on display at a prominent location in the community. A scale model of the River and Fort Edward portraying the various steps and elements in the cleanup process (like the model of the “Big Dig” that was displayed at the Boston Science Museum) could prove to be a major attraction.
The PCB clean-up process also provides a marvelous opportunity for creating job training and internships in a number of fields of study, at little or no cost to the Town. For example, the project could provide an opportunity for offering intensive internships in Civil Engineering for graduate students in both the RPI and University at Buffalo Engineering programs. It could also provide job training and internships for graduate programs at UAlbany in Public Health, Environmental Health and Anthropology. Supporting and encouraging such internships would allow Fort Edward to attract some of the best and brightest young professionals to help work on solving a wide range of problems. Such interns could also be assigned to work actively on developing and implementing various elements of the community’s Cultural/Heritage tourism strategy. Once they have been immersed in confronting Fort Edward’s challenges, these future leaders and professionals will become ambassadors for Fort Edward, spreading Fort Edward’s story to all with whom they come into contact.

Lastly, Fort Edward should capitalize on the opportunity presented by the dredging project by seeking outside funding for the preparation of a full-length documentary video on the dredging project, suitable for being shown on The History Channel or The Discovery Channel and other major outlets. The video could also be marketed nationally, and would likely be of considerable interest to secondary schools and institutions of higher education with programs in Environmental Studies. Demand for such a video should be particularly strong from educational institutions—colleges and universities and high schools. Showing how Fort Edward has confronted and dealt with this major issue can bring positive and valuable publicity to the community, and help reinforce and strengthen the area’s fledgling tourism economy.

Revitalize Fort Edward’s Commercial Core along Broadway

Currently, the commercial core of Fort Edward does not project the image of a desirable destination. Our windshield surveys of properties along Broadway revealed a commercial strip that is far from living up to its potential. Indeed, from the vantage point of people driving through the town in cars, first floor storefronts of many buildings are often so bleak that it can be difficult to determine which buildings are vacant and which are occupied. In short, a serious effort needs to be undertaken to upgrade the appearance of the Route 4 Corridor and Village Center of Fort Edward to project a more positive and inviting image, so as to encourage people to get out of their cars and explore what Fort Edward has to offer.

A community’s commercial core is its heart and soul of a community—where government offices, post offices and churches are located, and where a significant proportion of commercial activity and social interaction takes place. Even though malls and shopping plazas have drawn business away from central business districts, Main Street business districts still have an important role to play. The National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street Program has identified several reasons why traditional Main Street business corridors and areas are important:
They are important centers of employment

The quality of a community’s Main Street reflects on the quality and character of the community as a whole; a run-down commercial core with vacant storefronts projects a negative image for the entire community

Main Street represents a significant portion of a community’s tax base

Traditional Main Streets are ideal locations for small, independent businesses

The historic character and charm of a Main Street commercial district can be a major tourist attraction

A healthy Main Street area reduces sprawl

Main Street business districts are typically also serve as centers of government and civic life

Main Street districts are civic forums, where members of the community can congregate

Traditional Main Street commercial districts represent a huge public and private investment.

Fort Edward needs to do a much better job in marketing and promoting business and development opportunities in the community, such as along Route 4 and Broadway where commercial activity is uneven at best. The U.S. Economic Development Administration and the Small Business Administration fund a number of programs that support small business development as well as Storefront Improvement Programs that could be of considerable help in this regard.

Having more apartments above retail spaces could help generate pedestrian activity along the street and make people more likely to stop and walk around themselves. Having the business district inhabited at night, after many businesses close (with lights on upper floors looking out onto the street) also makes people feel safer, and feeling safe is important to visitors if they are going to be willing to stop, walk around, window shop and look for a place to eat. (The Town and Village of Fort Edward should scrutinize current zoning along the Broadway commercial core to make sure it does not prevent such conversions of upper floor space to housing.)

The increased demand for local housing that will be created by the influx of workers employed on the dredging project could provide the economic stimulus building owners need to be willing to make substantial investments in renovating unused and underutilized upper floors into housing, and in upgrading deteriorated housing stock. Once the dredging project is completed, the renovated housing units initially occupied by workers employed on the dredging project could be marketed to young professionals and others attracted to living in a place with a small town atmosphere. The City of Beacon provides an excellent example of a community where the renovation and conversion of old buildings has attracted an influx of new residents, young professionals and artists—

Figure 21:
Fort Edward Storefront
which in turn has stimulated the creation of new local businesses and increased downtown business activity.

The Town’s Economic Revitalization Plan reveals local residents’ desire for an improved retail mix. Retail Trade is the third most important industry for employment in Fort Edward. Attracting new businesses will create jobs and provide local residents and tourists with needed goods and services. Business promotion and marketing efforts should focus on underrepresented categories identified by surveys, such as the need a pharmacy, a small grocery store, a bookstore, a boat supply store, souvenir stores, and eateries. The Town and Village should also look favorably on granting permits for outside sidewalk cafes associated with restaurants, bakeries and coffee shops—particularly along Broadway. Outdoor seating at cafes and restaurants creates a sense of vitality that generates additional commercial activity.

The Yacht Basin and Hudson River waterfront in Fort Edward is a tremendous asset that can help encourage and support the development of businesses catering to pleasure craft—such as boating equipment, food and supplies, take-out food, souvenirs, etc. There is also the possibility of supporting a business operation renting boats and other watercraft (kayaks, canoes, paddle boats) that would attract additional recreational visitors and business activity.

As the flow of tourists increases, the Town and Village should do all it can to encourage the development of a hotel/motel and bed and breakfasts to provide overnight accommodations for visitors. If the Town and/or Village’s zoning ordinances do not presently allow bed and breakfasts, they should be revised to allow them—particularly along the Route 4 corridor. Bed and breakfasts provide relatively inexpensive and quaint travel accommodations, and have the added advantage of generating income for local residents that tends to stay in the community.

**Promote Fort Edward as a Place to Live**

Since 1990, housing prices throughout the Capital District Region have soared, but increases in home prices in Fort Edward have been much more modest. This cost differential puts house in Fort Edward at tremendous advantage in terms of attracting potential homebuyers. Fort Edward is just as convenient a place to live, in terms of accessibility to I-87, as many other places in Saratoga County where housing prices are much more expensive. Such a significant cost differential gives Fort Edward a significant advantage over other places with over-heated housing markets where housing is prohibitively expensive. In additional to attracting a growing number of young families.
and young professionals, Fort Edward should also appeal to empty-nesters and retirees—who could find it appealing to stretch their nest eggs by trading in their expensive homes for much more affordable ones. Attracting more people to live in Fort Edward, in turn, will help stimulate additional business and economic activity in the community.

**Develop a Walking Tour**

Upon arriving in Fort Edward, visitors will want to know where to go and what to see. A great way to expose visitors to the attractions of the town (whether they arrive by train or car) is by providing them with a historic and cultural walking tour. The tour could even be tailored to people with different interests, such as hikers, naturalists and birdwatchers, boaters, history buffs, railroad enthusiasts, etc. The walking tour should consist of a brochure that contains a map with information about key sites and include innovative trail markers, such as painted footprints on the ground, with numbers corresponding to points of interest shown in the brochure. The walking tour trail should also include a series of interpretive signs that provide historical information and tell stories about Fort Edward’s place in history. Places the walking tour should enable people to reach include: the historic railroad station; Rogers Island; all the historic sites and historical markers; the canal trails; the Fort Edward Historical Association; the Art Center in the Grace House (1842); the Genealogical Research Center in the Northup House (1815); and the Old Fort House Museum housed in the Pat Smythe House (1772).

**Develop an Integrated Network of Trails**

Prior to the relocation and enlargement of the Old Champlain Canal and its incorporation into the NYS Barge Canal system, the route of the historic Champlain Canal followed the alignment of what is now Canal Street in the Village. We recommend the establishment of a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the former towpath of the historic canal from Argyle Street north to the intersection with East Street, a distance of about one-half mile. For clarity, we call our proposed bicycle/pedestrian trail the “Old Canal Towpath Trail”. South to north, the points of interest related to the canal include: an old, semi-modernized lock immediately north of Argyle Street; the remains of the Aqueduct over Bond Creek; a former mill building west of the canal trace; the remains of the abutments of the former Notre Dame Street bridge over the canal; and the former bed of the canal, now Canal Street, passing under the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) railroad bridge. North of East Street, Canal Street dead ends at the railroad embankment of the CPR Glens Falls Industrial Track, where there formerly was a railroad bridge over the canal. Immediately north of the railroad embankment, but not accessible to the public as of now, are the remains of an apparently original lock of the historic Champlain Canal.
From the intersection of our proposed Old Canal Towpath Trail and East Street, a pedestrian has a short walk east on historic slate sidewalks to reach the Train Station. From this point, a pedestrian or cyclist would have to negotiate over Village streets for three blocks north to reach the southern end of the Feeder Canal Trail in McIntyre Park. As a future alternative, the Town could negotiate with CPR for a bicycle/pedestrian underpass through the embankment at the north end of Canal Street, which would connect with the bed of the canal at the original lock. The trail would then continue into McIntyre Park, and connect with the Feeder Canal Trails. This route would be consistent with the intent of the NYS Canal Corporation (NYSCC) to maintain a continuous Canalway Trail from the Route 4 Bridge just north of lock C-7, around the Dewatering Site during its years of operation.

The intent of the NYSCC is to eventually extend the Canalway Trail from the southern border of the Town of Fort Edward, north past Locks 6, 7, 8, and into Kingsbury to the north. The remaining walls, aqueducts and locks of the old Champlain Canal in Fort Edward offer numerous opportunities for designing attractive trail connections and creating appealing recreational sites. Restoring the towpath of this historic waterway also offers a unique opportunity to connect the hamlet of Fort Miller with the Village of Fort Edward.

After the dredging is completed and the Dewatering Site is available for reuse, the NYSCC maintenance facility could be relocated near Lock #8. The existing maintenance facility property might then be available for recreational or mixed use development. Even before that occurs, we recommend that a pedestrian bridge be constructed linking Rogers Island to the mainland at the NYCC maintenance facility property. An integrated trail system should be established leading from Rogers Island along the edge of the NYCC maintenance facility past the Old Fort House Museum, to our proposed Old Canal Towpath Trail and eventually connecting with the future Canalway Recreation Trail. In the future, by connecting the Canalway Recreation Trail to the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail at the northern end of the Old Champlain Canal in Kingsbury, visitors and hikers can be brought back through the Town, into the Village, and back onto Rogers Island – all without having to double back. The main obstacle to achieving such an integrated trail system [with the future Canalway Trail] is that a detour [would] needs to be found around the Dewatering Site, requiring the cooperation of local landowners.
The advantage of this interconnected and looping trail network, even without a connection to a future Canalway Trail, is that visitors to Fort Edward would be able to begin their tour at any of a number of destinations or points of interest (Rogers Island, the train station, the Yacht Basin, etc.), and have the choice of proceeding in either direction—depending on their interests. The entire tour of points of interest could be completed without having to retrace one’s steps. To encourage visitors arriving in Fort Edward by car to explore the town via the trail network, a “park and walk” program should be developed and advertised, and signs should be placed at the improved Railroad Station/Freight Depot parking lot inviting visitors to park there so that they feel confident leaving their cars there.

Interpretive markers, exhibits and signage about canal history and life should be displayed along the trails to enrich the experience. Adding a few resting places with benches along the way, as well as areas for bird-watching and wildlife viewing, will increase the appeal of the trails to local residents and visitors alike. (See Figure 26)
Figure 26: Existing Trail Networks and Connections In and Around Fort Edward
A Possible “Rails-with-Trails” Alternative

To improve bicycle and pedestrian access to Rogers Island, we also recommend that the Town and Village undertake a study with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) of the feasibility of developing a one-half mile long, multi-use trail along the western edge of the Canadian Pacific Main Line right-of-way from the Train Station south to Rogers Island. (See Figure 27)

The original D&H Railway line was built wide enough to accommodate two tracks, as were the railroad embankment and three railroad bridges between East Street and Rogers Island. Only the easternmost railroad track now remains. The potential trail we are suggesting, if found to be feasible, could originate on the south side of East Street, just west of the existing highway-rail grade crossing. It would proceed south on the first thru-girder bridge over Canal Street, over Broadway on the second thru-girder bridge, and on the deck-girder bridge over the eastern branch of the Hudson River. The southernmost span of the latter bridge was removed some time ago, possibly to improve the roadway vertical clearance for the Idle Hours Club access road. A replacement span, capable of supporting bicycle and pedestrian loads, would therefore be required. After crossing this replacement span, the trail would descend on the west side of the existing railroad embankment and connect with the proposed circumferential trail on Rogers Island.

There are significant, but not insurmountable, issues that need to be addressed for a pedestrian-bicycle trail to be placed adjacent to an active rail line. For example, the existing rail traffic here includes four Amtrak trains at 45 MPH and up to 12 freight trains at 40 MPH per day. While the EPA Dewatering Site is operating, the freight traffic will increase. There are also two fiber optic lines buried in the right-of-way, which would have to be protected. To provide an incentive for CPR to consider accepting such a trail, we suggest that an easement for the trail be granted, thereby exempting the property from real estate taxes by Washington County and the Fort Edward School District. The easement would also probably have to be revocable by CPR, after due notice, in the event that capacity requirements of the Canadian Main Line required restoration of the second track. CPR would have to be involved throughout the process so as to assure that their safety, capacity and liability concerns were met. Other stakeholders such as abutting property owners, utility companies, law enforcement officials and residents would have to be involved as well.
Make Connections to Regional Trail Network

Creating an integrated network of trails could provide a powerful way of experiencing Fort Edward’s historic and cultural sites. It can also provide a safe and healthy way to travel within the area. There are currently two trails (the Feeder Canal Trail and the Warren County Bikeway) and one State bike route (Bike Route 9), that already connect Fort Edward to the larger region. The Feeder Canal Trail has endpoints at McIntyre Park, not far from the Amtrak station, the Feeder Dam in Glens Falls and the Old Champlain Canal in Kingsbury. The trail provides nine miles of walking, cross country skiing, biking, wheel chair access, boating, and fishing access. The Warren County Bikeway has endpoints in Lake George and, Glens Falls, with seventeen open miles for walking, cross country skiing, in line skating, and biking. Tying these trails to the Old Champlain Canal Towpath Trail, the existing and future Canalway Recreation Trail, the Saratoga County Heritage Trail, the Village, Rogers Island, and the NYS Canal Corporation Maintenance Facility property would create an extensive trail system for visitors as well as an alternative transportation option for local residents --creating a powerful attraction to the Fort Edward area. Trail users attracted to Fort Edward will bring life to Rogers Island and the downtown area. The trail network could also create opportunities for new retail businesses, such as a bicycle and hiking shop (including bicycle rentals and repair) a book shop selling guide books to the local area and region, and food and refreshments establishments. (See Figure 28)
Potential Additional Trail System, Rogers Island, Ft. Edward

Legend
- Canadian Pacific Railway
- State Highways
- Local Streets
- Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail
- Prop. Rogers Isl. & Canal Trail
- Possible "Rail-with-Trail"

Data Source: NYSDOT
16 March 2006

Figure 28
Promote Day Trips to Fort Edward on Amtrak

AMTRAK operates four passenger trains per day, two northbound and two southbound, all of which stop at the Fort Edward Railroad Station. The station is open from 8:15am to 7pm daily, except for Friday, when it is open until 10pm.

The Empire State Passenger Association (ESPA) publishes and promotes “Fun One-Day Trips” on their web site, and in their newsletters that are distributed to its hundreds of members. The most common destinations for these one-day trips have been Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica. We recommend that the Town of Fort Edward provide the ESPA with a mock-up of a flyer promoting day trips to Fort Edward, with locations to visit, a map of a walking tour, and a copy of the current AMTRAK schedule. As only four Amtrak trains per day serve Fort Edward as compared to the eight that serve the other locations mentioned (based upon current train schedules) the only option for visitors to take a day-trip to Fort Edward would be to travel to Fort Edward from the south on a Sunday, and return on a southbound train the same day. To increase public awareness of the feasibility of making such day trips, brochures promoting day trips to Fort Edward (along with the most current Amtrak timetables for the Adirondack and Ethan Allen Express trains) should be developed and placed in the Fort Edward train station. Also included on the Day Trip flier should be a reference to the walking tour brochure and a map keyed to sites described on the flier. The walking tour and day trip brochure should direct visitors attention to major points of interest, such as Rogers Island, the Special Operations Museum and Archaeological Resource Center, etc.

Improve Public Transit

Public transit is operated by Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT). The GGFT runs daily from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Saturday from Hudson Falls to Fort Edward. No service is on Sundays or holidays—which is unfortunate since tourists and people on holidays frequently visit tourist destinations on weekends and holidays. Times are approximate and buses will pick up passengers between listed stops when flagged. All of GGFT's fixed route buses are equipped with lifts. All fixed route buses are also equipped with bike racks that can accommodate up to two bikes at a time. Offering improved transit service to locals and tourists alike will help foster the kind of pedestrian-friendly environment that is conducive and supportive of a successful tourist destination.

GGFT offers the “Amtrak Train-Catcher Service”, a direct bus service connection to and from the Fort Edward train station for inbound and outbound AMTRAK passengers. The service is available seven days a week and can be arranged by calling Greater Glens Falls Transit at (518) 792-1085 at least 48 hours prior to arrival. Service
goes as far as the Village of Lake Gorge and costs $12.50. However, insufficient effort appears to have been put into promoting and advertising the service, and utilization of the service has been low.

**Marketing Fort Edward**

In the words of the Draft Preservation and Management Plan for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, “Preservation, conservation, recreation, and interpretation activities and resources alone do not generate tourism. A viable tourism economy results from marketing the attractions to appreciative audiences whose expectations match the offerings, including services, available from the local hospitality industry: places to eat, sleep, and shop.”

The Town and Village needs to work with state and regional tourist agencies to make people more aware of Fort Edward’s historic and recreational destination. At a minimum, the town’s marketing strategy should include brochures, radio and TV ads linked to the state’s “I Love New York” ad campaign, and ads in Amtrak’s on-board magazine. There is also a need for a concerted effort to improve directional signage leading to Fort Edward.

The primary exit for Fort Edward on I-87 (Exit 17) currently lists South Glens Falls as the primary destination (not Fort Edward). Fort Edward is displayed on a secondary sign, as is Rutland Vt. We recommend that the town of fort Edward explore with NSYDOT the rationale for displaying South Glens Falls as the primary destination, and the feasibility of displaying Fort Edward instead. Fort Edward would appear to have a strong case for such a change in signage, inasmuch as the year 2000 combined population of the Town and Village of Fort Edward was 9,033, while the 2000 population of the Village of south Glens Falls was 3,368.

Also, the existing “Attractions” sign on I-87 just before Exit 17 northbound fails to list Rogers Island or the Rogers Island Visitors Center as one of the local attractions. One panel is used by the “Exit 17 Miniature Golf Course” and the other by the “Old Fort House.” A third panel on the “Attractions” sign has been reserved through an application by the Mayor of South Glens Falls for “Coopers Cave.” and signs noting local destinations currently make no mention of the Rogers Island Visitors Center. Efforts are also needed to mark and improve the appearance of gateways into Fort Edward, and to install an attractive system of directional signs within the Village and Town directing visitors to the Visitors Information Center and to historic and cultural sites.

The internet is often the first and most frequently used means by which travelers obtain research information about places in order to determine which places they want to visit, and how long they will stay in various areas. Fort Edward needs to develop a Town/Village website that shows all of Fort Edward’s attractions (with contact information and directions), a calendar of events and a listing of all hotels and restaurants in the area (along with menus, descriptions of accommodations, contact information and directions). County level historical sites should also be listed on the website, such as the
Washington County Historical Society. It is equally important that links be created between the Fort Edward website and other tourism destinations—to underscore the point that Fort Edward is conveniently accessible to numerous other points of interest. The Washington County Tourism Association and Washington County Department of Parks and Recreation operate excellent websites. The Town and Village can strengthen their web presence by working with the Washington County Tourism Association, which already lists a number of Fort Edward's historical attractions on their website, and with the Washington County Department of Parks and Recreation, which has a great website with maps of trails, parks, etc.

Potential Marketing Partnerships and Suggested Website Links:

- Washington County Tourism Association [http://www.washingtoncounty.org/](http://www.washingtoncounty.org/)
- Washington County Department of Parks and Recreation (tel: 518-746-2440)
- Amtrak - Adirondack and Ethan Allen Routes
- Parks and Trails New York - greenway and trail maps
- Rails to Trails Conservancy [http://www.railtrails.org/](http://www.railtrails.org/)
- NYS Canal Corp. [http://www.canals.state.ny.us/welcome/](http://www.canals.state.ny.us/welcome/)
- Hudson River Valley Greenway [http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/](http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/)
- Adirondack Community College [http://www.sunyacc.edu/](http://www.sunyacc.edu/)
- Skidmore College [http://www.skidmore.edu/index.htm](http://www.skidmore.edu/index.htm)

Hire a Community Development Specialist

To implement and accomplish all the tasks recommended above, and cope with all the challenges the community faces as the Hudson River dredging project commences, it is absolutely essential that the Town of Fort Edward be able to hire a Community Development Specialist. If such a person is not added to the staff, many significant economic and grant opportunities will inevitably have to be foregone—because the Town Supervisor, lacking such capable full-time professional support, is simply unable to follow-up and follow-through on every initiative that could be beneficial to the Town. Indeed, to not hire such a person to assist and support the efforts of the Town Supervisor and Town Board at this critical point in time— when the Town is in a position to capture significant amounts of grant support from a number of sources— would simply be penny-wise and pound foolish.
Involve Local Residents in the Tourism Strategy

To date, Town and Village residents have not been significantly included in the planning process for tourism—or in the decision to pursue cultural heritage tourism as an economic development strategy. This will need to change if Fort Edward is to be successful with its tourism strategy, since local residents and business owners will be the community’s front-line ambassadors greeting and interacting with out-of-town visitors. Local residents need to “buy-in” to the program, and understand its potential benefits of the strategy. They may also have valuable knowledge and ideas not possessed by Town/Village employees/representatives.
VI. Transportation Access Improvements to Strengthen the Industrial Park for Future Business Development

The Fort Edward Industrial Park, where the Dewatering Facility will be located, has stood largely vacant for a number of years. The area encompassed by the Industrial Park runs from the southwest to the northeast centered on the alignment of the Canadian Pacific Railway’s Canadian Main Line. The Park is roughly bounded by State Route 196 at the north, the modern Champlain Canal to the east, the historic Champlain Canal and its towpath trail to the west, and the CPR Fort Edward rail yard at the south. Approximately one quarter of the Park is located in the Town of Kingsbury. (See Figure 30) The sole existing roadway entrance into the Park is from the south, by Towpath Road leading off McIntyre Street, and thus the only existing development in the Park is in this southern area west of the rail line. The Dewatering Facility will be constructed in the southern end of the Park, east of the Canadian Main Line, between the rail line and the modern Champlain Canal.

New roadway access related to the construction and operation of the Dewatering Site should provide improved roadway access into the Park, which should make the Industrial Park much more attractive for business development after the Dewatering process is completed. As part of improvements planned for the Dewatering Site, new wharf facilities will be constructed along the modern Champlain Canal, a new rail yard and siding tracks will be constructed along the Canadian Main Line, and a new network of roadways and other infrastructure will be constructed within the site. These improvements, combined with the site’s excellent access to mainline rail service, waterways and highways, should improve the Town’s prospects for marketing the Industrial Park for business development in the future.

Unfortunately, neither of the two access routes recommended by EPA provide for the kind of roadway access that is really needed to effectively market the site for development after the dewatering process is completed. Nor are they sufficiently satisfactory in terms of meeting the immediate needs of providing truck access to the site and minimizing impacts on the community. EPA proposes temporary access for trucks and construction vehicles by upgrading an existing dirt road and farm grade-crossing over the CP rail line. The convoluted route for trucks and construction vehicles from US Route 4 would be as follows: west on Schuyler St.; south on Burgoyne Ave; south on McIntyre Street; north on Towpath Road; and then east across the tracks. This passes numerous residences. Permanent roadway access for workers and service vehicles during the Dewatering Site operation would be from East Street, via a new roadway adjacent to and east of the rail line.

Changing the use of this farm-crossing would require a Public Hearing and approval by an Administrative Law Judge under Section 97 of New York State Railroad Law. We would expect that NYS Department of Transportation would vigorously oppose conversion of the crossing to heavy truck and construction vehicle use across a main line on which AMTRAK passenger service is operated.
We recommend two alternative routes be considered for construction access and permanent truck access. Alternate Route #1 would be an extension of Gates Avenue from US Route 4 and is more direct than the EPA recommendation. Alternate Route #1 would extend Gates Avenue east across Burgoyne Avenue, behind the few existing residences north of Wolf Street; east across the historic Champlain Canal and its towpath; east across the rail line on a new bridge structure, then south to the Dewatering Site.

**Figure 30: Proposed Alternative Truck Route**

Destination: Fort Edward
Alternate Route #2 would enter the Industrial Park land from the north, off State Route 196 in Kingsbury, and run south between the Canadian Main Line and the modern Champlain Canal to the Dewatering Site. Although requiring construction of two bridges over watercourses feeding the Champlain Canal, it would avoid construction of a new bridge over the rail line.

The alignment of Alternate Route #1 affects far fewer residences than the EPA routes and the Industrial Park land both east and west of the rail line will be opened up immediately for business development. All truck access to the Dewatering Site during the dewatering process, and thereafter to the Industrial Park, would be via this new Gates Avenue extension, thereby significantly reducing truck traffic on Towpath Road and on East Street. The alignment of Alternate Route #2 affects no residences in the Town, but opens up the land east of the rail line for immediate development. Truck traffic to the Industrial Park lands west of the rail line would still be via Towpath Road.

We suggest that the Town support Alternative Route #1 in its discussion with the FPA concerning access to the Dewatering Site.
VII. Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Tourism

Heritage tourism strengthens local economies by bringing a fresh infusion of outside dollars into local businesses—dollars which are then recycled in the community in the form of wages and additional purchases. In 2003, the Civil War Preservation Trust (CWPT) hired an independent research firm to assess the impact of tourism at 13 Civil War battlefield sites. The research found that tourists to the 13 Civil War battlefield sites spent a total of $173.6 million annually, generating $23 million in local and state tax revenues.\(^{36}\) A major factor contributing to the enhanced economic impact of tourism was the fact that non-local visitors had an average household income of $65,053, almost 50% above the national median at the time ($43,318). Visitors to the Gettysburg National Military Park alone spent a total of $121 million, supporting 2,653 local jobs—not including jobs in the Park itself.\(^{37}\)

A 2004 survey of cultural heritage visitors conducted by Dr. Ann Davis, Director of the Marist College Bureau of Economic Research, found that visitors to heritage sites in the Hudson River Valley spent, on average, $237 per party, per trip (average party size 1.94). She also found that the average income of cultural/heritage visitors was $84,000—considerably above the statewide average. The average age of cultural heritage visitors was 46. Only 17.4% of cultural heritage visitors surveyed visited with children. 44% stayed overnight and the average stay was 3.3 nights. Of those tourists who stayed overnight, 30% stayed with family and friends, 54% stayed at a hotel/motel, and 16% stayed at a bed and breakfast establishment. One-third of the respondents Dr. Davis surveyed were repeat visitors. 60.5% of all visitors surveyed originated from within New York State and 8.3% came from New Jersey. 49.8% were on a day trip or family outing; 19.8% were on a family vacation; and 7.9% were en route to another destination. Only 3.7% were on a business trip.

The results of another study found that visitors to cultural heritage tourism destinations spent, on average, $84 on meals, $284 on lodging, $34 on transportation, and $73 on shopping. In terms of deciding whether or not to make a return visit, tourists reported the following considerations, in rank order: restrooms (81.5%); availability of maps and self-guided tours (65.9%); quality of exhibits (65.5%); availability of guided tours (53.2%); quality of landscaping and gardens (47.8%); visitor’s center facilities (47.8%); and availability and quality of nature walks and trails (45.2%).\(^{38}\)

As of 2001 there were 838 tourism-related jobs in Washington County, an increase of 1.5% from 2000. Total tourism payroll was $8.47 million in 2001 up 8.16% from 2000. Tourism-related employment in other counties in the region is also significant (4,096 jobs in Schenectady County and 17,325 jobs in Albany County. Total tourism-related employment in the region as a whole was 33,682 in 2001, producing a total payroll of $501.322 million, up 3.83% from 2000. Tourism generated $161.3 million in visitor spending in the City Albany, and $32.13 million in the Adirondack Region.\(^{39}\)
The U.S. National Park Service has developed an economic model, called the Money Generation Model (MGM2), for estimating the economic impacts of NPS visitor’s spending on a local economy. The MGM2 model is an update from the NPS Money Generation Model and is designed to estimate the impacts that park visitors have on local economies in terms of their contributions to sales, income and jobs in the area. The Money Generation Model produces quantifiable measures of park economic benefits that can be used for planning, concessions management, budget justifications, policy analysis and marketing. The MGM2 model estimates the economic impacts of cultural heritage tourism using the following formula: Economic Impacts (EI) = Number of Visitors x Average Spending x Multiplier Factor.40

The average visitation of the 21 cultural/heritage tourism destinations within 75 miles of Fort Edward for which the number of visitors is available is 18,119. However the average is skewed by the disproportionate number of visitors attracted to two particular destinations—the Saratoga Battlefield (136,490 visitors) and Fort Ticonderoga (90,000 visitors). (See again Table 5) Fifteen (15) of the 21 destinations attracted significantly fewer than 10,000 visitors.

If Fort Edward implements the various components of the comprehensive tourism strategy recommended in this report, we believe there is a good possibility that Fort Edward could attract upwards of 12,000 visitors per year—making it one of the most important cultural heritage tourism destinations in the region. Based on the Marist College study of Hudson tourism that found that the average party size was 1.9, and that average spending per party per trip was $237, the economic impacts of tourism spending in and around Fort Edward could be as follows:

- 12,000 visitors/year / 1.9 visitors per party = 6315 tourist parties
- 6315 x $237 spending/visitor party x 2 (multiplier factor) = $ 2,993,310

The economic impacts of visitors staying overnight could be particularly positive—underscoring the importance of developing a hotel/motel in Fort Edward, as well as high quality B & B accommodations. As noted above, a major study of visitors to cultural heritage tourism sites found that 44% of all visitors stayed overnight, and that 54% of those stayed in hotels/motels, while 16% stayed in B & Bs. Using the data from that study related to spending/visitor party, the 44% of visitors staying overnight in and around Fort Edward could generate the following spending:

6315 visitor parties x 44% = 2779 visitor parties staying overnight

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</thead>
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<td>Shopping</td>
<td>$202,867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $1,329,925 x 2 (multiplier) = $2,659,850
As this calculation demonstrates, the economic impact of visitors staying overnight ($2,659,850) is nearly equal to the total economic impacts predicted by the MGM2 based on all visitors (2,993,310). This means that if no additional overnight accommodations are developed in Fort Edward, Fort Edward could lose out on much of the economic gain it otherwise can expect to generate by implementing the recommended cultural heritage tourism strategy.

The vast majority of out-of-town visitors to Fort Edward will undoubtedly arrive by car—although 5-10% could arrive by bus, RV and train. Assuming that all visitors who come to Fort Edward have a car at their disposal at some point during their visit, that the 12,000 visitors to Fort Edward would be arrive and visit in parties of 1.9, the additional tourist activity could be expected to put an additional 6315 vehicles on the roads leading in, out and through Fort Edward. Arriving and departing would constitute two trips; however visitors would generate additional trips traveling between points of interest, between their lodging accommodations and points of interest, commercial establishments, and restaurants, etc. Deliveries and sales activity related to businesses catering to visitors will also generate additional traffic. To take account of this additional traffic generation, it seems reasonable to assume that the typical visitor party will generate roughly the same number of vehicle trips per day as a typical single family detached dwelling (approximately 10 trips per day). Thus, the additional 6315 tourist parties visiting Fort Edward can be expected to generate an additional 631,500 vehicle trips per year. However, that traffic will not be generated evenly throughout the year. Rather, it is likely that 90% of that traffic will be generated during the 8 month period between April and November, and that 50% of the traffic will be generated during the summer (June-August).

Since transportation planners tend to be most concerned about estimating and handling traffic demands during peak periods, it seems most important to try to estimate the impacts of tourism-related traffic during the summer, when vacation related tourism is likely to be greatest. If 50% of the total 631,500 tourism-related vehicle trips occur during the summer, that will result in a total of 315,750 additional vehicle trips on Fort Edward roads. If those 315,750 are spread equally over the 92 days between June and August, that means that tourism related traffic could add 3432 vehicle trips per day to roadways running within and through Fort Edward. The vast majority of these vehicle trips can be expected to be on SR 197, SR 4 and East Street.

Although the additional traffic we are talking about here is probably not enough to cause significant congestion by itself, it is clear that it does need to be planned for, particularly considering the amount of truck traffic that already travels through Fort Edward, and the difficulty encountered by vehicles exiting from the current Rogers Island Visitors Center and attempting to make a left turn during the late afternoon rush hour.
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Town of Fort Edward Economic Revitalization Plan, Laberge Group


Why Main Street Are Important? http://www.mainstreet.org/content.aspx?page=1927

Town of Fort Edward Economic Revitalization Plan, Laberge Group


City of Glens Falls Website (http://www.cityofglensfalls.com/ggft/ggftransit.htm)

City of Glens Falls Website http://www.cityofglensfalls.com/ggft/ggftransit.htm


The Trust for Public Land, Land & People, Green Space and Glory. Vol. 17, No. 2, Fall 2005


I-87 Multi-Modal Corridor Study. Parsons-Clough Harbor. Section 2: Tourism Data

http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/activities.cfm#MGM2

http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/activities.cfm#MGM2
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