



## TOWN OF TONAWANDA: Law amendment encourages riverfront development

By Daniel Pye  
The Tonawanda News

Town of Tonawanda April 13, 2008 12:39 am

— Recent tweaks to the Town of Tonawanda's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program have limited the use to commercial and industrial development in an effort to draw new companies to the area.

The zoning laws prior to 2003 included a Waterfront Residential District, but at that time there was a plan in place to move River Road further inland. When the cost of moving the road proved too high, plans to relocate it were scrapped along with hopes of housing development, said Wendel Duscher Consultant Ellen Parker. Since the highly industrial area wasn't the most appealing place to live, the town modified its plans for the area. Now, the LWRP change is catching up to that move, Parker said.

"It took residential out as a possible use, but there never was any demand for residential there," Parker said. "There's not a lot of demand to live next to NOCO's tanks and former school properties have been redeveloped to fill some of that need.

The recently approved revision to the LWRP only applies to the area designated by New York state as coastal area, said Town Attorney Daniel Cavarello. But the 2003 changes included a rezoning of the town, eliminating the waterfront residential district from the town's waterfront entirely.

That left the town free to devote its underutilized riverfront areas to develop new businesses, no easy task with 95 percent of the town's land area currently in use. Riverview Commerce Park, which opened on River Road last year with a 55,000-square-foot building to house three tenants, is already beginning construction of a second facility twice that size, said Developer Tom Montante. The idea to keep a large part of the park dedicated to green space has made it a big hit with current tenants, he said.

"Everyone has reacted very positively," Montante said. "You can't help but like it. It's the best looking commerce park in Western New York."

Montante has a big vision for the 200-acre park, including a total of 15 structures on the inland side of River Road and even waterfront multi-story office buildings if he can get a significant tenant lined up in advance.

The cooperation of the City of Tonawanda and Town of Tonawanda governments combined with the park's central location will make drawing those types of clients a distinct possibility, he said.

"You're 10 minutes from downtown Buffalo, 10 minutes from the airport and 20 minutes from the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge," Montante said. "This is a good place to do business.

Good business for Riverview is good business for the Town of Tonawanda. The construction of the facility's new 103,000-square-foot building has already generated \$2 million for the town in the form of building permits and fees. That kind of development is exactly what is needed in the town, Councilman Joseph Emminger said at last Monday's town board meeting.

"Hopefully this is a sign of more buildings going up," Emminger said. "We greatly appreciate what Mr. Monotone is doing over there."

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EXPANSION: Construction crews work constructing a new 103,000 square foot facility at the developing Riverview Commerce Park. The Tonawanda News