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Ogdensburg officials benefit from Clarkson research funded through state Health Initiative

By Larry Robinson

OGDENSBURG — A project involving Clarkson University professors, their students and Ogdensburg officials has resulted in an archive of digital information that can now be used by the city to further efforts to become a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly community.

In 2015, Ogdensburg's Complete Streets Program plan was lauded nationally as the best in the nation. Adopted a year earlier, the Ogdensburg plan explained the municipality's vision for developing well-thought-out street and sidewalk systems that promote walking, biking and other physical activities.

The National Complete Streets Coalition later notified city officials that the initiative constituted "the best Complete Streets policy of its kind in the nation."

At a national level, the so-called Complete Streets program was created to promote the development of policies and practices that ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities and strive to balance transportation needs with local land uses, according to officials.

In Ogdensburg, Planning and Development Director Andrea L. Smith and members of City Council received a report from Clarkson University civil and environmental engineering professor Erik C. Backus, along with the college's geographic information system instructor

William Olsen and civil engineering student Samuel Skufca. Together the trio have overseen a project that began with a \$10,000 grant through the St. Lawrence County Health Initiative, and then expanded from there.

The digital engineering project involved completing an inventory of existing pedestrian facilities near the downtown core of the city including sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks and pedestrian signs.

During the process two students collected data by walking during the summer of 2018 and then helped produce a digitized map of information that was given to both the city and the Development Authority of the North Country. Over 35 miles of sidewalk were surveyed as well as 93 crosswalks, 25 pedestrian signals and 889 curb ramps, according to officials. A total of 198 intersection photos were also produced.

Ms. Smith said the information is invaluable for the municipality to help seek future grant money, and a clear example of the unique and important resource that area colleges and universities provide for the north country.

"In an environment where budgets are tight, collaborating with students and professors from local universities has been an innovative opportunity to reduce costs without jeopardizing core services," Ms. Smith said. "From an academic

perspective, it enables students to utilize the skills they are learning in the classroom in real life situations that better prepare them for post-collegiate endeavors."

Ms. Smith said that this latest project is not the city's first partnership with Clarkson University students and faculty, or other local college assets. She said that prior to this Complete Streets inventory, the Ogdensburg Planning Department worked with Clarkson students to assess the structural integrity of an abandoned railroad bridge over the Oswegatchie River and to develop concepts for creating a new walking loop as part of the municipality's the Maple City Trail.

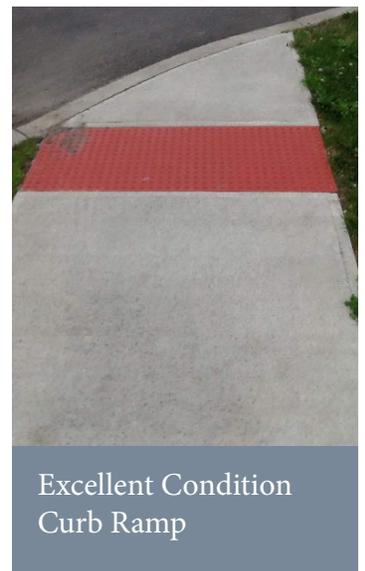
In fact, she said that partnership led to a successful grant application through the New York State Department of Transportation for funding to pay for the initiative. "Even before these recent collaborations, the city worked with St. Lawrence University students developing innovative concepts for the reuse of the former Diamond National site back in 2011," Ms. Smith said.

Ogdensburg's most recent work with the municipality involved the Health Initiative of New York and used grant money gleaned from two rounds of funding, according to Ms. Smith. She said the first round of funding was related to a proposed a bike

lane project in the amount of \$6,558. Additionally, state Health Initiative officials contributed \$10,000 to the effort related directly to Clarkson university's involvement for a total project cost of \$16,588.

The end product, according to Ms. Smith, is a wealth of digitized data that she and other Ogdensburg staff can use for capital and strategic planning, as well as grant applications.

"The information collected categorizes all of the sidewalks within the core of the city as excellent, good, fair, poor, need replacement," Ms. Smith said. "The information generated through this partnership with Clarkson is already being utilized. This spring we will be improving sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure in the vicinity of the Marina District and Maple City Trail"



Excellent Condition
Curb Ramp

Out and About in Ogdensburg

With the goal of increasing accessibility and revitalizing their community, the City of Ogdensburg began a movement, known as Complete Streets, to ensure roads are inclusive of proper sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks.



Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015–2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.



Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

St. Lawrence Health Initiative



CHSC grantee, St. Lawrence Health Initiative, is working with the City of Ogdensburg to increase safety, convenience, and mobility for residents while also supporting their physical activity behaviors.



Ogdensburg's Commitment:

In 2014, Ogdensburg passed a Complete Streets ordinance, formalizing the City's desire to have safe streets for all. This ordinance, ranked as the best in the nation in 2014, serves as a model for communities across the country. The Clarkson

University project and resulting inventory of pedestrian facilities is just one of the ways Ogdensburg is advancing its Complete Streets efforts. Looking forward, the City will use this data to identify and prioritize infrastructure enhancements and seek funding for future projects.

To learn more about Complete Streets in Ogdensburg, contact Karen Bage at the St. Lawrence Health Initiative, karen@gethealthyslc.org