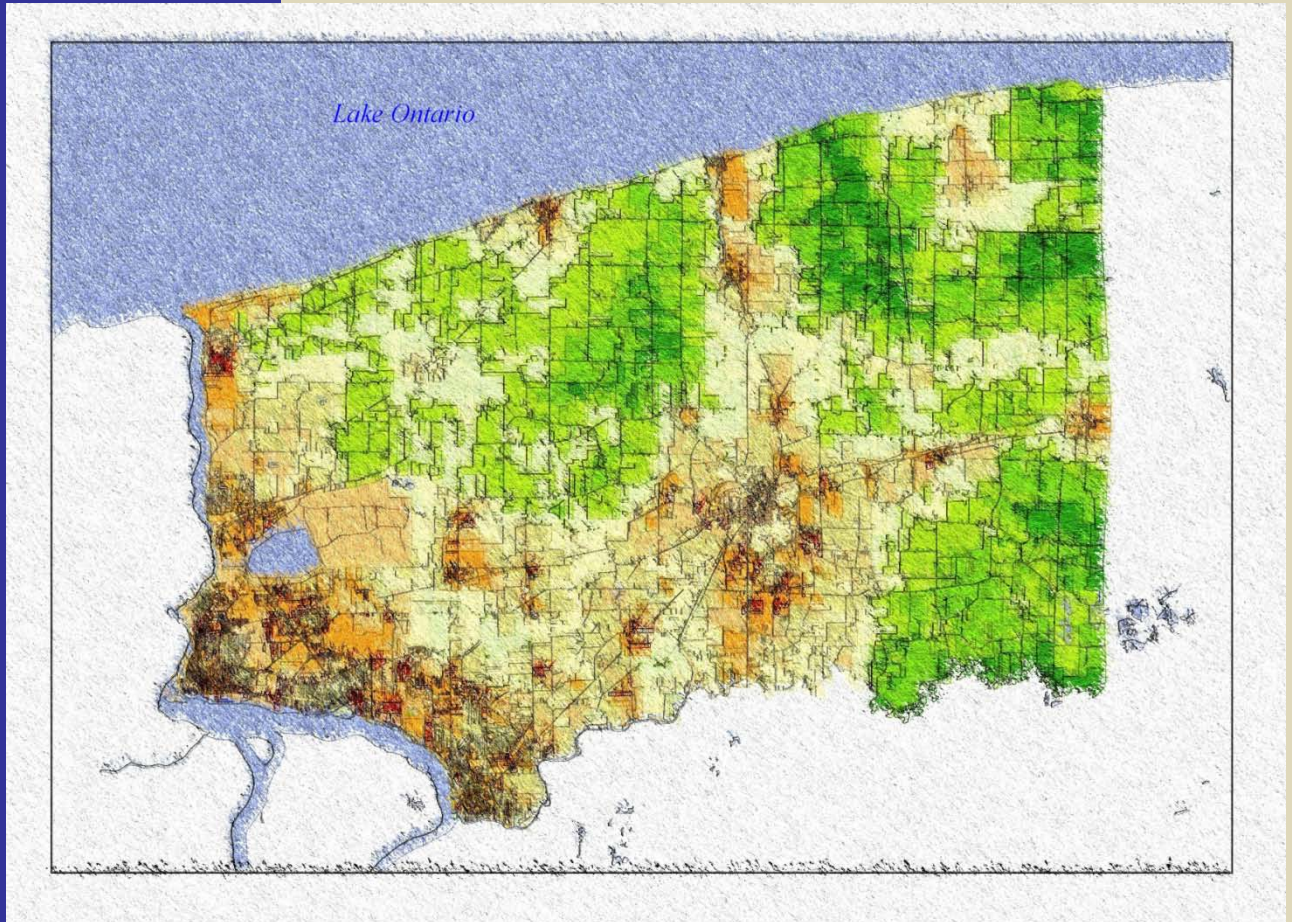




Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030



*A Plan to Communicate,
Collaborate & Connect
Niagara County, New York*

July 2009



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Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

Overview

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030 is Niagara County's first-ever comprehensive planning document that is dedicated solely to the entire County and its twenty municipalities. Although the County and many communities within Niagara County have been actively involved in numerous local and regional planning initiatives in recent years, the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is countywide in perspective and emphasizes a multi-municipal approach to planning and informed decision-making. This countywide perspective is sometimes lacking in other plans and initiatives that are rightfully focused on addressing specific needs, projects, locations or particular opportunities within the Niagara region.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for achieving five high priority goals:

- Encouraging desirable and appropriate growth and development
- Strengthening the local economy
- Improving the delivery of services
- Prioritizing and coordinating capital improvements
- Improving the quality of life for County residents

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to unify existing countywide planning efforts under a single umbrella document, while recognizing the important planning initiatives undertaken at other levels of government as well as by community organizations and agencies. The Plan is a guidepost to assist decision-making over the next 20 years by providing direction to County policies and the allocation of resources. It also provides further direction into ongoing and future planning efforts, including interdepartmental coordination within County government, furthering intermunicipal cooperation and public-private partnerships. The Plan also recommends various strategies and potential projects and will help in securing funding to undertake these initiatives.

Information on the Comprehensive Plan is available on the County's website at www.niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp.

*Information on the
Comprehensive Plan
and the planning
process is available on
the County's website at
www.
[niagaracounty.com/
comprehensiveplan.asp](http://niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp)*

Previous Planning Initiatives

The intent of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is to build upon previous initiatives undertaken by stakeholders at different levels of municipal government as well as local and regional agencies, groups and organizations in Niagara County. It is not the intent of the Plan to duplicate or contradict these earlier efforts or the results of a lot of hard work by many dedicated individuals and organizations. Rather the Comprehensive Plan addresses certain issues and opportunities in greater detail, such as countywide land use. Previous initiatives, such as the Erie-Niagara Counties Framework for Regional Growth, the Niagara River Greenway Plan, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Plan are among several initiatives referenced and summarized within the Comprehensive Plan. These initiatives are potential starting points for further countywide dialogue and actions.

Vision Statement

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is the result of more than two years of stakeholder participation through formal and informal meetings, email correspondence, website information sharing, community surveys and other public forums. The planning process has focused on current countywide issues and discovering opportunities for fulfilling the County's Vision Statement, the complete text of which is expressed at the beginning of Chapter One of the Plan. It is a vision that strives for better recognition of the unique assets and the attractive diversity of natural, cultural and social resources of Niagara County communities.

Simply stated the Niagara County Vision Statement seeks the recognition of Niagara County as:

- A world class destination
- A center of national and international commerce
- A community that values its rich natural, heritage and cultural resources
- A great place to live and raise a family

The Comprehensive Plan represents the beginning of what needs to become an ongoing dialogue among communities, governments and stakeholders working collaboratively towards fulfillment of the vision for the County. The vision includes establishing Niagara County as a model for sustainable communities and environments. In order to achieve a sustainable future a shift from short-term to long-term thinking needs to occur. The valuable resources that contribute to Niagara County's present quality of life need to be better acknowledged, locally at first and then on a national, international and global scale. As the value of what the County has to offer is more fully recognized, especially by residents and decision-makers, then sound long-term planning principles will need to be implemented to protect and enhance the County's assets and resources for present and future generations.

Plan Review and Future Updates

Too often ambivalence and negative attitudes about the ability or reluctance to change can cause inaction. The inability to act on key issues of importance to the County could result in the eventual loss of unique assets and resources that should never be taken for granted. For example, the County's prime farmlands, unique natural features like the

The intent of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is to build upon previous initiatives undertaken by stakeholders at different levels of municipal government as well as local and regional agencies, groups and organizations in Niagara County.

Niagara Escarpment, and the quality of life in the County's urban, suburban and rural areas need to be better understood and appreciated through public education. The Plan emphasizes increased communication, collaboration and connection among all the communities of Niagara County to foster a greater sense of understanding and appreciation of local assets and resources as identified within the Plan.

The information presented in the Plan is part of an evolutionary planning and decision-making process that needs to be maintained as an up-to-date source of data on the County. Stated goals and objectives found throughout the Plan need to be flexible in order to adjust to the changing needs and conditions of Niagara County. As such, the contents of the Plan are not intended to be static. Information has been added, for example, due to the recent global economic crisis. This added information includes potential funding opportunities to implement capital improvement projects within the County utilizing Federal Stimulus monies appropriated by Congress through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The Plan is an evolving guide that provides a foundation for a long term approach to problem solving, decision-making and for facilitating informed dialogue with the intent of resolving current issues and anticipating future countywide needs and opportunities. Good planning has no defined beginning nor should it have a defined endpoint. It simply needs to be an ongoing process to be most effective.

The content of the Niagara Communities' Comprehensive Plan is extensive and its value will be realized over time from its routine use. The Plan contains three distinct sections, but additional information can be added to it anytime in the future. Each section needs to be reviewed and updated as necessary by the County to make sure the document stays current. Periodic reviews should occur at no more than two-year intervals to identify and update information that becomes available. More substantive reviews and updates, including GIS mapping and analysis should occur at no greater than five year intervals.

Phase One – Chapters I through IV - Existing Conditions

Phase one of the planning process, which consists of Chapters I through IV of the Plan contains countywide, subregional and community-based information. For planning purposes each of the 20 municipalities within Niagara County were placed into one of five planning subregions based on location and other common characteristics such as existing land use and degree of development. Subregions include:

- The Upper River Communities
- The Lower River Communities
- The Central Communities
- The Lakefront Communities
- The Eastern Communities

Phase one provides a “snapshot” of existing conditions and current trends across Niagara County as of 2008. The first two chapters begin with a general introduction of the planning process, followed by a summary of previous planning initiatives undertaken within the County or specific communities. Chapters III and IV include detailed descriptions of existing conditions on a Countywide level and a community basis, respectively.

Chapter III provides extensive mapping that describes in detail various land uses, environmental features, demographics, public services and facilities throughout Niagara County. This is the first time that such complete mapping of existing conditions in the County

The information presented in the Plan is part of an evolutionary planning and decision-making process that needs to be maintained as an up-to-date source of data on the County.

The planning process included three distinct phases. Phase one focused on existing conditions throughout the County.

is available in one document. Chapter III introduces the concept of “Benchmarks” which are identified as values or conditions that presently exist in the County. These benchmarks are possible starting points from which measurements can be made, for example, in tracking changes in various land use categories across the County over time.

Chapter IV includes community profiles prepared for each of the 20 municipalities in the County consisting of land use maps, demographic, and employment information. These community profiles contain significant issues and opportunities identified by the communities during the planning process and can be used to supplement existing local plans or become the basis for preparing new plans. Chapter IV also includes subregional profiles that compile information according to the five planning subregions.

Phase one results provide a readily available source of information including detailed mapping of current physical features, socioeconomics and environmental resources within the County. This information is considered as baseline conditions from which future needs of the County can be determined and by which progress on resolving current issues can be monitored. Phase one chapters should be consulted frequently for important input into County and community decision-making processes.

Phase Two – Chapters V through IX - Issues, Opportunities and Recommendations

The second phase of the planning process is contained within Chapters V through IX. Each chapter addresses in some detail existing issues and opportunities identified by stakeholders during the planning process that relate to the five focus topics, also known as the five planning elements, of the Plan. These topics are listed below. The information contained within these five chapters includes issues and opportunities identified by planning subregion; strategies for dealing with issues identified in each chapter by a “Guidepost” symbol; goals and objectives for addressing specific issues and opportunities; and recommended actions to undertake for achieving those goals and objectives. Key recommendations are identified in the margins of each chapter by a “Milemarker” symbol.

The information provided under phase two provides guidance into tackling important issues and capitalizing on local and regional opportunities. It also allows for more informed decision-making by all levels of government as well as the general citizenry of the County relative to the following planning elements:

- Land Use, Transportation and Environmental Resources
- Economic Development
- County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure
- Education
- Public Health and Safety

Phase Three – Chapter X - Priorities and Plan Implementation

The third and final phase of the planning process is contained within Chapter X. This is the implementation section of the Plan. This section summarizes a series of key actions that should be undertaken to begin to “implement” the primary recommendations of the Plan identified in previous chapters. This section provides direction to responsible parties for carrying out actions.

Chapter X is an important section of the Plan because it lays out defined actions for implementing the Plan. This section of the Plan in particular requires periodic review

The second phase focused on existing issues and opportunities followed by strategies, goals, objectives and recommendations for each of the five topic areas.

The third phase is the implementation phase of the process and begins with public review and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

and updating as priorities change and actions are accomplished. This is especially important because it is the type of information that can be used to seek and secure possible funding to carry out important projects. For example, preparing a Countywide Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Plan is considered a high priority item for which funding should be sought. Once prepared, that plan in turn can be used to seek additional funding from State and Federal sources to implement recreation-related projects.

Current County Trends

Population trends indicate that the population of Niagara County as a whole has been declining for several decades, yet land use development, particularly residential use continues to spread northward and eastward from the older, more established urban centers of the County into rural areas. This type of an expanding development pattern without actual growth in population often results in fragmented and “leapfrog” land use patterns that consume valuable farmlands, and jeopardizing open spaces and important natural resources such as wetlands, floodplains and woodlands. Concerns over undesirable development patterns like these that result from redistribution of population are being expressed throughout the County.

The conversion of land from one use to another is reflected in apparent changes in community character. Changes in community character from relatively undeveloped forms of use to more developed uses are most noticeable in rural areas. In urban areas, shifting population to suburban and rural towns results in disinvestment, blighted neighborhoods and increases in vacant and underutilized properties.

If not managed correctly, subtle changes in land use over time can add cumulative pressures for converting agriculture and other rural uses to other uses that may place significant strain on local infrastructure and increased demand for public services. Increased demand in turn puts added stress on the financial resources of the County and local governments which are expected to provide support infrastructure and services. The financing of new or expanded infrastructure (roads, sewer, water, etc.) and services (fire and police protection, schools, etc.) generally comes from increased property and special district taxes.

Stakeholders with varied interests and levels of expertise in wide ranging topics expressed interest and concern over the effects of sprawl in Niagara County. Early in the planning process it became readily apparent that stakeholders, regardless of their backgrounds and interests, were overwhelmingly concerned about the physical, environmental, social and fiscal implications of sprawl on the overall character and economic health of communities in Niagara County. These concerns were repeatedly voiced throughout the planning process. Although communities may be addressing these issues at local levels through their own municipal planning efforts and land use regulations, there is significant added value in looking at these issues from multi-municipal and countywide perspectives which is accomplished in this Plan.

The potential for sprawl and land use conflicts caused by incompatibilities in zoning along municipal boundaries can often be a point of contention, especially where communities may be developing at different rates and competition for development varies. Conflicts may present themselves for example, at village/town boundaries or along town/city boundaries. Added value to local planning can be derived from taking a larger perspective that encompasses multiple municipalities to identify common issues, visions for the future, and land use goals among communities. Value is also derived from a better understanding of the unique attributes and opportunities that each community contributes to the overall diversity and quality of life in the County.

An expanding development pattern without actual growth in population often results in fragmented and “leapfrog” land use patterns, otherwise known as sprawl that consumes valuable land and natural resources.

Added value to local planning can be derived from taking a larger perspective that encompasses multiple municipalities to identify common issues, visions for the future, and land use goals among communities.

Identification and an increased understanding of the many unique characteristics and commonalities among communities in Niagara County is a primary focus of this Plan. A multi-jurisdictional and subregional perspective among neighboring municipalities adds to an appreciation for the things municipalities have in common and for the uniqueness assets and attributes of individual communities. This appreciation can result in greater collaboration towards more consistency in land use patterns, economic development practices, and the provision of services across municipal boundaries that will ultimately benefit all residents within the County.

Land Use, Transportation and Environment Element

Under the topic of land use, transportation and environment, several key issues and opportunities emerged during the planning process. Regardless of location in the County the issue of future land use and sprawl with its implications on farmlands, community character, transportation corridors, and the natural environment has been expressed as an important concern to communities. Managing sprawl to protect viable agriculture and existing farmlands in addition to maintaining rural character and open space resources is a considerable challenge facing communities today throughout the country as they attempt to preserve their uniqueness and identity. The issue is not limited to rural portions of Niagara County, but urban and suburban communities as well as they seek to enhance quality of life and local identity.

Environmental issues and related opportunities focused on the importance of cleaning up previously contaminated lands and redeveloping brownfields and other underutilized properties. The County has also been host to numerous waste disposal sites in the past, hazardous and non-hazardous and the County should consider formulating policies and procedures for dealing with these issues in the future.

Management of water resources, air quality, wildlife habitats, unique natural features such as the Niagara Escarpment, and important scenic resources is also on the list of priority issues in the County. There is widespread recognition that future economic development opportunities are afforded through protection of the County's rich natural resources, waterfronts, parklands and cultural resources including the Erie Canal corridor.

Transportation issues have centered on the need for improvements and maintenance of existing roads and bridges and planning for the future needs of the County in terms of alternative means of travel and movement of agricultural goods and materials. There appears to be widespread support for multi-modal projects in urban areas and enhanced pedestrian and non-motorized trail networks throughout the County.

Addressing and analyzing the issue of sprawl and identifying the future infrastructure and service needs of the County have been a major focus of the planning process and a topic of much discussion among project stakeholders. The Comprehensive Plan recommends several strategies for dealing with sprawl and its implications relative to the future of Niagara County. Mitigating sprawl will provide enhanced quality of life benefits for County residents as well as afford opportunities for economic development and the provision of County services and public infrastructure in a cost effective manner.

The analysis of existing land use development trends and patterns on a countywide basis is an important component of the Comprehensive Plan. The analysis is presented

Environmental issues and related opportunities focused on the importance of cleaning up previously contaminated lands and redeveloping brownfields and other underutilized properties.

in Chapter Five. This information provides a countywide land use perspective that has been unavailable up to now. The overall result of the analysis is the conceptual identification of areas across the County that can be considered most suited for development and/or redevelopment at appropriate densities based on local municipal plans and land use regulations. The analysis also identifies areas that may be considered less suited to development and more suited for management, protection and conservation of important natural resources.

Chapter Five can be utilized by local municipalities as a source of information for their own detailed land use planning needs. Because the analysis is done at a countywide scale municipalities may choose to use this information as a starting point for more detailed study of land use and environmental resources at the local level. Communities may utilize the information as they see appropriate according to their land use planning needs and goals.

Strategies for managing land use emphasize the importance of directing future growth and development as well as infill redevelopment to areas within or adjacent to established centers of population in the County's 3 cities, 5 villages, and town centers where infrastructure and public services already exist. Each of the 20 municipalities in the County has areas suited for future development and redevelopment. By directing and encouraging development into these areas valuable farmlands, unique natural features, aquatic and terrestrial natural resources and local community character can be protected and enhanced for a more sustainable future.

Additional strategies beyond sustainable land use management practices include promoting concepts of enhanced "connectivity" among communities and recognition of the importance of maintaining "green infrastructure" countywide. Connectivity encourages physically connecting communities via road, trail and waterway networks that can accommodate alternative means of transportation such as walking, hiking, biking, canoeing, horseback riding, and vehicle use. Connectivity encourages less reliance on motorized transportation in favor of a healthier alternative to travel between destinations.

Maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure which includes existing natural systems and ecological functions such as wetlands, floodplains, and woodlands is a way to lessen the physical stress and associated costs of maintaining "gray" infrastructure that typically consists of traditionally engineered stormwater management, piping and drainage systems. The benefits of maintaining green infrastructure include:

- Enhanced wildlife habitats
- Water conservation and groundwater recharge
- Reduced flooding, erosion and pollutant loads on waterways
- Reduced stormwater management construction and maintenance costs
- Reduced sewer overflows in urban areas
- Improved air quality and reduced heat island effects
- Lower energy consumption
- Recreational and open space opportunities
- Enhanced property value
- Improved human health

Three overarching land use, transportation and environmental strategies need to be considered in decision-making processes in Niagara County. Implementation of these strategies along with other related principles and practices of sustainability promoted by the Plan can put Niagara County and its communities in a leadership position among New York State municipalities. These include:

Strategies for managing land use emphasize the importance of directing future growth and development as well as infill redevelopment to areas within or adjacent to established centers of population in the County's 3 cities, 5 villages, and town centers where infrastructure and public services already exist.

- 1.) Encouraging land use policies and related decision-making at County levels that are based on the principles and practices of environmental sustainability and smart growth. This includes practices designed to promote green infrastructure across the County as a way of better integrating natural systems and natural resource conservation into land use planning, project reviews and decision-making processes.
- 2.) Promoting transportation policies which are interwoven with land use decision-making that consider sustainable practices consistent with Federal and State agencies, as well as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization, the GBNRTC, all of which encourage smart growth practices.
- 3.) Encouraging greater communication, collaboration, and connectivity among communities with physical linkages to areas both within and beyond Niagara County borders as a means of enhancing transportation choices for the movement of people and goods by creating interconnected systems served by both motorized and non-motorized alternatives.

Economic Development Element

Niagara County's ability to guide development in towns, villages and cities is very limited because land use decisions are largely a local municipality's responsibility under the provisions of New York State Municipal "Home Rule" Law. The County's primary land use planning function is to provide guidance and recommendations to communities about future land use as provided in the Comprehensive Plan.

The County however, does have the ability to influence land use and transportation through its project permitting decisions under Section 239 of Municipal Law when State and County facilities are affected. When it comes to economic development decisions County officials, working in collaboration with local municipalities, can also play a much more direct role in steering projects toward suitable development and redevelopment areas. The County can also encourage compact, mixed-use and transit-oriented forms of development that are interwoven with its transportation and environmental goals and policies. Similarly, the County can encourage initiatives in parts of the County considered to be environmentally sensitive.

Development and redevelopment projects typically need access to existing road, water, drainage and sewer infrastructure systems along with necessary support services to facilitate economic growth and development. System improvements and upgrades may also be necessary. Development and redevelopment should be steered to areas within the County's cities and villages, as well as appropriate fringe areas of cities and villages, suburban town centers, and existing hamlets/rural crossroads. The redevelopment and reuse of brownfields and infill development of vacant and other underutilized properties can have significant positive impact on communities and further protect rural resources and environmentally sensitive areas and should be encouraged.

Locations identified in the Plan as being poorly suited for development and redevelopment from a land use or environmental perspective may be attractive at first glance to develop for financial reasons. Land values and property acquisition costs may be substantially lower in rural areas and therefore, attractive to develop. The value to the community of developing resource areas may not be reflected in a property's market value and the true cost of development may not be realized for some time. The

The redevelopment and reuse of brownfields and infill development of vacant and other underutilized properties can have significant positive impact on communities and further protect rural resources and environmentally sensitive areas and should be encouraged.

cumulative effect of development of valuable resources such as prime farmlands, wetlands and riparian corridors, may not be fully realized at first until these areas become increasingly fragmented and ultimately lose their inherent value.

In economic terms, the cumulative effect of typical forms of “leapfrog” development and conventional subdivision is an increased cost to municipal and County government for new or expanded infrastructure, added support services, such as roads, sewer, drainage systems, schools, fire districts, and increased demands on current transportation systems. These added costs translate into higher taxes on residents and property owners.

Inter-governmental cooperation and collaboration are critical to directing and encouraging development, preferably mixed-use development, into those areas of each community that are considered suitable for development/redevelopment. This will also make it easier to preserve important community characteristics, such as scenic open spaces, environmentally sensitive lands, and working farmlands that contribute to a community’s sense of identity and character.

Inter-municipal cooperation is also important in attracting and recruiting those businesses and industries that best complement the unique character of each community, whether they are urban centers, suburban communities, waterfront communities or farming communities. Economic development needs to be appropriate to the existing infrastructure and regional location of communities relative to the rest of Niagara County. For example, large industrial uses and businesses that rely on extensive infrastructure and support services should first consider locations in areas that are appropriately zoned for such uses and served by existing infrastructure; tourism-based businesses along the area’s many beautiful waterfronts should be located consistent with the Niagara River Greenway and Erie Canalway initiatives; and agriculturally-based businesses and home-based enterprises are suited to rural communities.

There must be a concerted countywide collaborative effort to prioritize improvements and upgrades to existing infrastructure, especially with regards to water, sewer and transportation systems, before consideration is given to creating new infrastructure. Obviously in cases where public health and safety are at risk, priorities must be different based on those needs.

Giving top priority to the maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure over the creation of new systems, and directing development/redevelopment to where it already exists, is consistent with national planning principles and with New York State and regional planning initiatives. Agencies like the NYS Department of State, the NYS Department of Transportation, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Region Transportation Council, and many others have expressed their support of sustainable principles and smart growth initiatives. By focusing on improving the infrastructure that is already in place, communities can inhibit and prevent sprawling development patterns and possibly reverse the continuing migration of businesses and populations from traditional centers of commerce in the County.

When businesses decide where to locate their operations, they consider numerous factors, such as the availability of a prepared workforce, proximity to major transportation routes and markets, and other strategic advantages of a location. Quality of life factors, such as diverse housing, education, transportation alternatives, walkability and recreational opportunities can tip the scales in a given community’s favor. The ability to attract and retain employment and economic activity can be enhanced by preservation of the County’s natural and cultural assets. The recommendations contained within the Comprehensive Plan can help ensure that Niagara County’s communities can continue to both attract business opportunity and protect important quality of life factors.

Priority given to the maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure over the creation of new systems, and directing development and redevelopment to where it already exists, is consistent with national planning principles and State planning initiatives.

County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Element

Niagara County provides a wide range of services, facilities and public infrastructure that contributes to the area's present standard of living. Niagara County remains committed to meeting its responsibilities to its residents, businesses and taxpayers by providing the most efficient and cost-effective services possible. It is imperative that existing services, facilities and infrastructure are maintained in a manner that retains their public investment value as well as keeping pace with the changing needs of County residents, businesses, property owners, and visitors.

The task of providing financially-effective and fiscally responsible services are increasingly complicated by changing demographics and aging infrastructure throughout Niagara County. An aging population requires new and expanded services at a time when budgets are under increased strain themselves. A growing senior population will require increased health care, affordable housing, accessible transportation and a host of other services and facilities. Aging public facilities and infrastructure also add to stress on local budgets because of increased costs for maintenance and upgrades.

In lieu of new infrastructure, continuing prioritized maintenance and replacement programs and strategically upgrading existing water, sewer, drainage, road and bridge systems needs to be a countywide priority as part of an effective management strategy. Emphasis on directing limited resources to maintain and upgrade existing systems is particularly important when such actions will help facilitate and direct development and redevelopment to appropriate areas of the County.

Opportunities for enhanced sharing of services, joint facilities, and possible consolidation of services and facilities through inter-municipal agreements between the County and local municipalities and among municipalities themselves need to be investigated further acknowledging that such arrangements already exist in some communities. Feasibility studies should be encouraged which are often supported at State levels under shared services incentive grant programs. Although some of the more obvious studies often include police, fire, shared court systems, and emergency services, some less obvious alternatives need to be explored such as inter-municipal stormwater management, joint parks and recreation facilities, shared school facilities, joint training programs, and inter-municipal subregional planning initiatives.

Education Element

During the comprehensive planning process stakeholders, including local residents, educators and service providers acknowledged that there are some significant issues related to the provision of educational services in Niagara County. Many, but not all, issues center on some common themes, including:

- Increasing school taxes on property owners at a time of decreasing population in the County;
- A need to identify additional funding sources to support education;
- A perception, and perhaps a reality, that there are redundancies and inefficiencies in services within and among school districts;
- Concerns over the escalating cost of fuel, especially in transporting students to and from dispersed locations;
- A possible time lag between the needs of employers for particular skill sets in the workforce and job training programs; and

The task of providing financially-effective and fiscally responsible services are increasingly complicated by changing demographics and aging infrastructure throughout Niagara County.

- A need for improved educational facilities, resources and infrastructure, such as high-tech computer software and hardware.

These issues are complex and will not be resolved quickly or easily by a single action on the County’s part. It is important to remember that the Comprehensive Plan is intended to prompt discussion on these issues, and identify possible ways to resolve them, among multiple school districts, educators, and residents. It is critical that these stakeholders create and sustain an ongoing dialogue, perhaps through a joint action committee that involves all school districts in the County, including administrators, teachers, transportation officials, educators from institutions of higher learning such as NCCC, BOCES and student representatives. This dialogue needs to identify where efficiencies and cost cutting measures can be established without adversely affecting the quality of services.

It is also important to recognize that land use and development decisions can have significant effects on the need for public services and infrastructure, including educational services. Sprawling development resulting in dispersed populations particularly in rural areas tend to translate into higher transportation costs and the need to site school facilities in multiple locations according to residential development patterns. The land use and development principles recommended in the Plan provide opportunities to manage costs to taxpayers and school districts by encouraging redevelopment in areas where school facilities may already exist. Managed growth and concentrated forms of development can control the cost of providing services and related infrastructure at dispersed locations and result in smaller taxpayer burdens.

Public Health & Safety Element

One of the key recommendations coming out of the planning process with regard to public health and safety is to increase public education opportunities and communication among communities to expand citizen awareness of countywide and local efforts in preparing for potential emergencies and large-scale disasters. The lack of awareness and community input into local and County planning for emergencies was cited as an issue by residents of several communities.

Although the County has made great strides in emergency preparedness in recent years, additional collaboration and information sharing with local officials and the public may be warranted, perhaps through local public education and information sessions, community meetings, and via County and local websites. With regard to public health, safety and emergency preparedness, Niagara County needs to enhance communication and collaboration with local municipalities and other jurisdictional agencies involved in public health and safety in educating citizens, assisting in developing detailed local emergency plans, planning for disaster prevention through local land use policies to prevent occurrences like flooding, and establishing policies that facilitate recovery and redevelopment.

Land use management policies are key to preventing or mitigating the effects of natural and man-made emergencies. The County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan cites several examples, including:

- Adopting a land use management policy to promote the control of private development in floodplains at local levels of government, and to assure that County construction activities comply with State floodplain regulations
- Encouraging lending institutions to withhold funding of projects in areas prone to disasters

Land use and development decisions can have significant effects on the need for public services and infrastructure, including educational services.

Land use management policies are key to preventing or mitigating the effects of natural and man-made emergencies.

- Promoting underground utility lines in new subdivisions to prevent power outages due to destruction of lines during storms
- Promoting the development of building regulations at local levels of government
- Developing compliance and enforcement programs, including designation of officials to implement policies

Implementation Plan

Implementation of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan begins with its formal acceptance by each municipality in the County and adoption by the County Legislature. This formal process also includes public review and comment under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) as required by State Municipal Law. This information is provided in detail in Chapter II of the Plan and summarized as necessary administrative actions in Chapter X.

Once adopted the Plan becomes a guide for decision-making by all levels of government including the State, regional entities, County and local municipalities. Decisions on a variety of actions by both the public and private sector should consider the contents of the Plan and determine the consistency of proposed actions with the Plan's goals and recommendations. The Plan cannot anticipate all issues and opportunities that may present themselves in the future. Therefore, the Plan should undergo periodic reviews and updates at approximately two year intervals with more extensive review and updates at five year intervals to ensure that it remains current and meets the needs of the County and its communities.

Chapter X which is the Implementation section of the Plan highlights about two dozen recommended actions to begin the process of implementing the Plan. These actions are considered high priority items for various reasons that are identified throughout the Plan. However, chapters V through IX contain detailed strategies, goals, objectives and numerous recommendations that should be considered for implementation in the future. These chapters also identify critical projects throughout the County that could be funded by the availability of recent Federal Stimulus monies and/or leveraged with other grant and funding opportunities at Federal, State, and local levels.

As projects are identified and undertaken and as funding mechanisms become known this information should be updated to maintain the usefulness and up-to-date status of the Comprehensive Plan. This is critical to an ongoing and successful planning process.

Implementation of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan begins with its formal acceptance by each municipality in the County and adoption by the County Legislature.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Vision Statement

Niagara County is a world class destination; home to natural wonders including Niagara Falls, the Niagara River, the Niagara Escarpment and Gorge, and Lake Ontario; a community steeped in the celebration of its beauty, culture, and man-made heritage like the Erie Canalway; and a place to see and share with others.

Niagara County is a center of national and international commerce; a place to locate and grow your business, find high quality employment, attend fine institutions of learning, learn a trade or hone your skills, and be part of a well-prepared and productive workforce.

Niagara County is a community that values its rich natural resources; a community working together to protect and restore natural resources, conserve important wildlife habitat, clean up contaminated lands, and ensure that our gift to future generations is a sustainable environment.

Niagara County is a great place to live and raise a family; a diverse community of historic cities, towns, and villages; from the uniqueness and vibrancy of our waterfront communities to the pastoral beauty and gentle lifestyles of our farming communities, Niagara County is a safe and healthy place to live, work, and play; a place of diverse housing choices, excellent schools, abundant recreation opportunities, and affordable living; and a community offering a high quality of life for all.

Niagara County Communities 2008

Introduction

The Vision Statement expressed at the beginning of this Plan summarizes the great diversity and uniqueness of the natural and cultural resources that exist within Niagara County and that contribute so significantly to the quality of life of its communities. Just as important, the Vision Statement points to a number of overarching goals that are intended to enhance Niagara County's role as **a world class destination, a center of commerce, a model for sustainable environments, and a premier place to live.** These important themes were discussed throughout the planning process and form the foundation for many of the stated goals, objectives, strategies and recommendations of this Plan.

This Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030 is Niagara County's first comprehensive plan. The Plan is the result of nearly two years of stakeholder participation and public dialogue focused on identifying current issues and discovering opportunities to fulfill the Vision of the County. In recent years, Niagara County and many of its twenty municipalities have taken a proactive approach to planning for the future and a great deal of work has been accomplished by a variety of agencies, organizations, groups and individuals. However, additional work is needed in order to make the Vision for Niagara County a reality.

Like all planning tools this Comprehensive Plan is focused on the future of Niagara County. However, its value in providing countywide information as a snapshot of current conditions and trends across Niagara County in 2008 cannot be overstated. This document provides a compilation of information that is exclusive to Niagara County and its communities.

This information constitutes baseline data from which future progress on resolving issues can be measured.

Information contained within this Plan is provided in written and graphic formats. Much of this information has not been previously available to County residents, property owners, developers and public officials. For example, this Plan contains more than 100 countywide and topic-specific maps and supporting graphics utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, analysis and mapping techniques. Information available in this comprehensive document can be referenced to facilitate dialogue and allow for more informed decision-making about future land use, public services and infrastructure needs within the County.

Background

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan has been created to provide a frame of reference for more informed decision-making at County levels based upon a more thorough knowledge of the existing conditions and future needs of Niagara County. This is particularly important as the County celebrates its Bicentennial in 2008. As its name implies, this Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is considered unique because it includes a considerable amount of information and input from local communities. County officials decided very early in the planning process that the Plan needs to reflect what is on the minds of residents living in communities throughout Niagara County.

This Plan reveals and documents some of the most pressing issues and concerns of County residents and other stakeholders. More importantly, however, this Plan represents the beginning of what needs to become an ongoing dialogue among communities, governments and stakeholders working collaboratively towards fulfillment of the vision for the County.

Niagara County

A World Class Destination

A Center of National and International Commerce

A Community that Values its Rich Natural Resources

A Great Place to Live and Raise a Family

Preparation of this Plan began in 2006 when Niagara County officials sought funding assistance from New York State for its preparation. Funding assistance was secured in early 2007 from two State agencies: The New York State Department of State through the Quality Communities Grant Program, and the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation, Office of Community Renewal.

Clough, Harbour & Associates LLP was selected in mid-2007 as the County's planning consultant for the project. The County formed a Coordination Committee to oversee preparation of the Plan during the second half of 2007. The Coordination Committee included representatives of the County Legislature, County Manager, Commissioner of Economic Development, and County Planning. A Plan Steering Committee was also formed, which included representatives from each of the 20 municipalities of the County and the County's three Native American communities. Documentation of meetings held with the Plan Steering Committee, stakeholders and the public are provided in Plan Appendix A.

Recently, Niagara County and Erie County collaborated with numerous stakeholders in preparing the Erie-Niagara Counties Framework for Regional Growth to address regional issues and opportunities. The Framework was adopted in 2006 and laid the foundation for future planning initiatives by both counties including this Comprehensive Plan.

Niagara County has also been significantly involved in the Niagara River Greenway Plan and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Plan among other initiatives of regional importance. These and other initiatives are briefly summarized in Chapter II. These initiatives have regionwide perspectives that cross County boundaries in addressing specific issues, opportunities and resources. By contrast, up to now Niagara County has lacked a comprehensive approach to decision-making at the County level that explicitly addresses the interests and opportunities of all of the communities within its borders.

The need for a countywide comprehensive plan became increasingly evident over the years especially as these regional planning initiatives moved forward. Many issues and opportunities of countywide significance were identified by those initiatives, but as regional studies they could not address more locally specific topics regarding existing conditions, trends and the future needs of the communities in the County. Nevertheless, these initiatives helped to establish a need and build momentum for community-based dialogue supporting a more comprehensive approach to growth and development, County services, public infrastructure needs, resource protection and advancing opportunities for greater economic benefits derived from the area's rich natural and cultural resources.

This Plan builds upon other regional and local community planning initiatives, plans and studies. It provides discussion aimed at better understanding the complex role and interrelationships that land use, transportation, infrastructure, services and development decisions play in the County's overall quality of life. The planning process has brought stakeholders together to discuss and reach a better understanding of specific issues and important opportunities that exist in the County's urban, suburban and rural communities.

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan identifies key issues on the minds of County residents and other stakeholders. As the planning process moved forward,

This Plan represents the beginning of what needs to become an ongoing dialogue among communities, governments and stakeholders working collaboratively towards fulfillment of the vision for the County.

“Sprawl is defined as uncontrolled, low-density, fragmented, automobile-dependent development that rapidly spreads on the fringes of existing communities, often consuming agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands.”

the complexity and interrelationships of many issues became increasingly obvious to those involved in the process. Issues and opportunities surfaced as a result of discussions that occurred during the process and many can potentially have a significant bearing on Niagara County’s future and the overall quality of life of its residents.

Population trends indicate that the population of Niagara County has been declining for some time, yet development patterns have been spreading northward and eastward farther and farther into the rural areas of the County. The continuation of these “sprawling” development patterns frequently results in the suburbanization of what were once completely rural areas. Sprawl has been identified as an important countywide issue. “Sprawl is defined as uncontrolled, low-density, fragmented, automobile-dependent development that rapidly spreads on the fringes of existing communities, often consuming agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands.” (League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara. 2006).

Nationwide the consequences of haphazard development or sprawl have shown to include: the loss of prime farmland, unique farm soils, and the decline of widespread agriculture; encroachment and ultimate degradation or loss of natural systems that otherwise provide natural flood control, wildlife habitat, and protection of water quality and quantity; adverse effects on community aesthetics such as increased noise levels, visual impacts and loss of community character; and increased costs to taxpayers for providing expanded services such as new schools, fire protection and public infrastructure such as new roads, sewer and water systems. A multitude of studies, reports and publications are available that provide information on sprawl and the costs associated with it.

The Brookings Institution is among the many organizations that have studied the fiscal implications of sprawl as well as the benefits of Smart Growth development patterns on communities and regions. One such Brookings study summarizes these relationships between land use and fiscal welfare:

...rational use of more compact development patterns from 2000 to 2025 promise the following sorts of savings for governments nationwide: 11.8 percent, or \$110 billion, from 25-year road building costs; 6 percent, or \$12.6 billion, from 25-year water and sewer costs; and 3.7 percent, \$4 billion, for annual operations and service delivery. (The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. 2004)

Brookings (2004) also found that regional economic performance is enhanced and that suburbs benefit from Smart Growth development patterns and investment in “healthy urban cores”. Research by Brookings and others suggests that adoption of smart growth policies and practices could reduce capital expenditures for some state’s and localities in the range of 10 to 20 percent at a minimum.

As documented within this Plan, significant concerns have been expressed about the adverse effects of sprawl and unmanaged growth and development in Niagara County. Because these issues are complex and often cross municipal boundaries, the County is uniquely qualified to bring communities together to address these issues from a countywide perspective.

Focus of this Plan

– Communication, Collaboration and Connection

The planning process is focused on enhancing communication and collaboration within and among various communities and stakeholders across Niagara County in identifying and addressing topics of concern and interest. As such, this Plan serves as a tool to facilitate an ongoing communication process and collaborative efforts among all Niagara communities. The Plan also emphasizes the need to enhance connections among communities, physically as well as figuratively in order to promote a better understanding of countywide issues and opportunities.

The need for enhanced communication, collaboration and connection is emphasized throughout this document. By bringing stakeholders from communities across the County together to sit down and discuss their needs and those of their neighbors, the Niagara communities may be able to view short and long-term needs and goals from different perspectives.

This Plan also focuses on utilization of sound land use policies, such as implementation of “Smart Growth” principles on a countywide basis. Existing and future land use issues are discussed throughout the Plan accompanied by considerable mapped information, particularly in Chapters III, IV and V. These chapters also include information relative to present planning within Niagara County communities, some of which have up-to-date comprehensive plans that incorporate Smart Growth principles.

Each chapter of this Comprehensive Plan, whether devoted to economic development, County services and infrastructure, education, or public health and safety is tied in some way to the influences that past and future land use decisions have on residents and taxpayers in Niagara County. As land use evolves it affects virtually all other aspects of community life. In New York State land use decisions are largely the sole responsibility of local municipalities under the State’s Municipal Law, also referred to as “Home Rule”.

Municipal responsibility under “Home Rule” is discussed in Chapter II. It is important to note however, that what one municipality decides relative to land use, transportation and public infrastructure within its boundaries, through local comprehensive plans, zoning and other land use regulations, can have profound effects on determining land use patterns and the provision of infrastructure and services in adjoining municipalities and throughout the County. The County itself also influences land use by making decisions on where public infrastructure is developed and where services are provided.

As part of the planning process the County was divided into five planning subregions to facilitate discussion and the identification of commonalities and differences among the various areas of the County. Utilizing this subregional approach enabled discussion and analysis that considered future land use and how development patterns and trends may be altered to concentrate development to areas where it is most appropriate, thereby reducing the adverse effects of sprawl. In many cases these areas already have important infrastructure in place as well as the services needed to support future growth and development. The concentration of large-scale development in potentially suitable development and redevelopment areas in turn

In New York State land use decisions are largely the sole responsibility of local municipalities under the State’s Municipal Law, also referred to as “Home Rule”.

will help protect irreplaceable resources, such as prime farmlands, and control the cost to taxpayers related to the provision of public services and infrastructure by County and local governments.

Decisions relative to land use, although often made with the best of intentions, can sometimes result in unforeseen adverse cumulative impacts on the environment. For example, approvals of small scale projects that by themselves may seem relatively safe, but when considered as part of a larger development scenario can result in “leap frog” development patterns that fragment prime farmlands and adversely affect naturally functioning systems such as wetland complexes and floodplains. Therefore, this Plan considers future land use from a more countywide and subregional perspective to help guide future decisions and reduce the potential for adverse and cumulative impacts on communities and the environment.

Organization of the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is organized into ten chapters and several appendices. Each chapter has been set up to address a particular area of interest and intended to function independent or nearly independent of other chapters. This format will allow information to be updated and revised as necessary in the future without the need to revise the entire Plan at any one time. The format also provides the user the ability to focus on those elements that may be of most interest.

Phase I - Existing Conditions

This chapter, Chapter I, provides a brief introduction to the comprehensive planning process and general contents of the Plan. It is followed by three chapters prepared during Phase One of the planning process that focused on existing conditions within the County. This phase also identified previous planning initiatives and studies conducted within the general Niagara region, the County and its 20 municipalities.

Chapter II describes the overall planning process and justification for preparing the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter also provides discussion relative to the Plan’s purpose, need and the authority given to the County Legislature under provisions of NYS Municipal Law to undertake preparation of a comprehensive plan. State law allows counties to undertake comprehensive planning as a service to their residents and communities. Chapter II also summarizes numerous noteworthy planning initiatives and studies that have been undertaken in recent years by State, regional and local agencies, groups and organizations that have particular relevance to Niagara County and its communities.

Chapter III describes existing conditions within Niagara County as of 2008. This chapter provides a wealth of important information for use as benchmarks, so that future updates of the Comprehensive Plan can reflect back on these conditions in order to measure progress being made towards achieving stated goals and objectives under the five elements of the Plan.

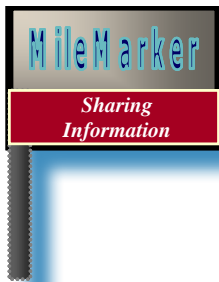
Chapter III introduces the several concepts as measurement tools to track progress of the Plan as it is implemented. These include the use of benchmarks, guideposts, milemarkers and milestones. Symbols representing these concepts have been placed in the sidebars throughout the document, to indicate that corresponding content is important to the Plan’s implementation.



Benchmark – This term and its associated symbol denote a specific situation, characteristic or condition that presently exists as a starting point from which measurements can be made much like a surveyor begins with a known benchmark from which all further measurements are taken. As an example, the percentage of a specific category of land use that currently exists within the County as identified in Chapter III is a benchmark value. These percentages, such as total farmland acreage in the County can be tracked to determine changes in agriculture over time.



Guidepost – This term and its associated symbol denote specific strategies that can be implemented to achieve certain outcomes. As a guidepost the strategy sets a direction for achieving a desired outcome, just as one might follow a guidepost to reach a destination. Using farmland protection as an example, one strategy to enhance agriculture includes adopting sustainable land use practices such as directing new development and public infrastructure to existing population centers in order to reduce pressure on rural agricultural lands.



MileMarker - This term and its associated symbol denote a measurement of progress in completing significant recommended actions relative to achieving stated goals and objectives. The milemarker may be an interim, but important accomplishment and may be emphasized as one among many recommendations. For example, a milemarker may be the completion of a revised and up-to-date County Farmland Protection Plan that is part of the goal and objectives that seeks the reversal in the trend of farmland conversion across the County. The MileMarker can become a new benchmark for measuring further progress on an issue.



Milestone – This term and its associated symbol identifies a significant event that can be achieved as a result of implementing a specific course of action. For example, using the farmland protection example, a milestone may be the adoption by municipalities of a revised, up-to-date County Farmland Protection Plan. A milestone event may also be the reversal in the trend of farmland conversion as stated in the example above. Another milestone event will be the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter III includes a considerable amount of mapped information using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data provided by State and County sources. These maps illustrate existing conditions related to land use, transportation, natural

resources, man-made facilities, cultural resources, public infrastructure, public facilities, demographics and socioeconomic conditions throughout the County. Many benchmarks are noted in the chapter to underscore the importance of this information in monitoring future progress towards stated goals.

Chapter IV provides summary profiles of key existing conditions within specific Niagara County communities. Each of the 20 municipalities in the County has a Community Profile that summarizes important local data and information related to land use, demographics and socioeconomic conditions. Each profile also provides summaries gathered from participating communities on significant issues, opportunities, goals and objectives categorized under each of the five Plan elements. Profile information was provided by community representatives that participated as Plan Steering Committee members. Local comprehensive plans and similar community-based documents were reviewed and information selected from these documents has been included in the Community Profiles.

Phase II - Plan Elements

Phase II of the planning process focused on each of five primary Plan elements:

Chapter V – Land Use and Environment;

Chapter VI – Economic Development;

Chapter VII – County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure;

Chapter VIII – Education; and

Chapter IX – Public Health and Safety.

Chapter V discusses land use, related transportation issues, and environmental information. This chapter builds upon information provided in previous chapters, and focuses on some of the most important issues and challenges presently confronting local communities and the County as a whole with regards to land development and natural resource protection. Chapter V provides analyses and recommendations on future land use and environmental resources under a Smart Growth countywide scenario. The analyses is focused on identifying those areas of the County that are most suited to development and redevelopment as well as areas considered to be most important for resource protection. This chapter outlines recommended actions for developed, developing and undeveloped areas of the County. Concern over the continued exodus of population and businesses from urban areas in the County, the loss of viable farmlands, changes in rural character, sprawling development, and the potential loss of natural assets are addressed in Chapter V.

Chapter VI provides information relative to economic development within Niagara County. This chapter identifies issues and concerns expressed during the planning process as well as future economic development initiatives and opportunities. Much of the information contained in this chapter has been summarized from Niagara County's annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report which discusses current and future economic development initiatives and opportunities in detail.

Chapter VII discusses the provision of County services, facilities and public infrastructure. This chapter contains specific information on the types of services provided to residents by various departments within Niagara County government. Information is also provided on County-owned facilities, including parklands, and other County-owned and maintained infrastructure such as roads and bridges.

Issues and opportunities discussed during the planning process focused on the lack of infrastructure and services in some areas of the County and the need for improvements to existing public infrastructure such as roads, sewer and water systems.

Chapter VIII focuses on local education and the various educational institutions and systems available within the County. Baseline information is provided on the County's ten school districts, the public library system and related facilities. Summary information on institutions of higher learning and continuing education is also provided including Niagara University, Niagara County Community College and Niagara County BOCES.

Chapter IX provides information on public health and safety, including current issues of importance expressed by stakeholders. Information relative to police, fire and emergency services, and emergency preparedness is addressed on a countywide level. Opportunities for enhanced public health and safety in the County are also addressed.

Phase III - Plan Implementation

The final chapter, Chapter X is the implementation portion of the comprehensive planning process. Chapter X provides action items for implementing the various strategies and recommendations of the Plan that are discussed in previous chapters. This chapter general timeframes and prioritization of key recommendations and identifies those entities which are responsible for implementing specific actions. Chapter X provides information on possible funding sources where appropriate for specific public capital improvement projects and for undertaking other countywide initiatives, including opportunities for shared services and inter-municipal agreements.

Chapter X also emphasizes the need for review and update of the Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis. As the County's first Comprehensive Plan it is not intended to be a static document. In order for this Plan to remain relevant to County conditions, trends and needs, and to remain a viable planning and decision-making tool, it must be reviewed regularly, revised as changing conditions warrant, and allowed to evolve as part of an ongoing countywide participatory process among all communities as they adapt to new opportunities and future challenges.

Appendices accompany the Comprehensive Plan as supporting information. Appendix A includes documentation of stakeholder and public meetings held during the Plan's preparation. Additional technical information is provided in other appendices as listed in the Table of Contents. As the document evolves new information should be included as additional appendices.

To remain relevant and useful, the Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed regularly, revised as changing conditions warrant, and allowed to evolve as part of an ongoing countywide participatory process.

References

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. 2004. *Investing in a Better Future: A Review of the Fiscal and Competitive Advantages of Smarter Growth Development Patterns*. Mark Muro and Robert Puentes. The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara. 2006. *At Taxpayers' Expense – How Government Policies Encourage Sprawl in Erie and Niagara Counties*. The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, Buffalo, New York.

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Chapter II

The Planning Process and Previous Initiatives

Preparation of this Comprehensive Plan

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030 is the result of a planning process that began in early 2007 with the awarding of a New York State Qualities Communities Grant. This grant was combined with other grant monies and funds to prepare this Comprehensive Plan.

Upon notification of the Quality Communities Grant award, the Niagara County Legislature subsequently sought the services of a qualified planning consultant through a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) in May 2007. In response to the RFP, Clough Harbour & Associates LLP (CHA) was awarded the contract to assist the County and its communities in developing the first countywide comprehensive plan dedicated exclusively to Niagara County.

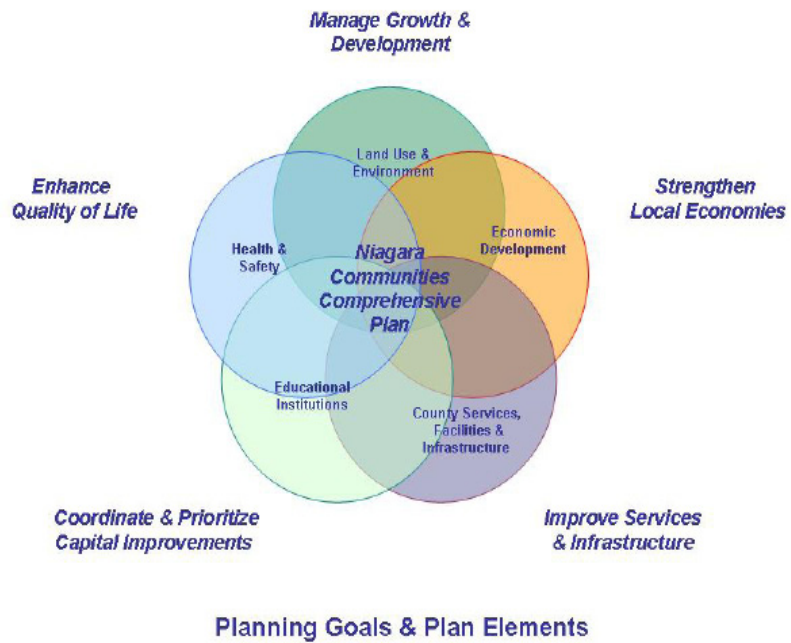
The Comprehensive Plan addresses five core planning topics or elements. These five elements are considered and discussed throughout the Plan in terms of planning goals and objectives; issues and opportunities; existing conditions and future needs; and strategies and recommendations. These five elements include:

1. Land Use and Environment
2. Economic Development
3. County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure
4. Education
5. Public Health and Safety

The planning process was also guided by five overall goals that were established early in the Plan's development. These goals were used as the basis for establishing further goals and objectives described throughout the Plan. These overarching goals include:

1. Manage Growth and Development
2. Strengthen Local Economies
3. Improve Services and Infrastructure
4. Coordinate & Prioritize Capital Improvements
5. Enhance Quality of Life

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan addresses five core planning elements and five overall goals.



Comprehensive Plan - Definition, Content & Authority

Definition

A County Comprehensive Plan – Defined under Article 12-B, Section 239-b of New York State General Municipal Law as “the materials, written and/or graphic including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, reports and other descriptive material that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the county, as may be prepared pursuant to section two hundred thirty-nine-d of this article.”

Content

Section 239-d of the NYS General Municipal Law describes the findings and intent for the content of a County Comprehensive Plan which “*may include, but shall not be limited to the following topics at the level of detail adapted to the special requirements of the county:*

- *General statements of goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards upon which proposals for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the county are based;*
- *Consideration of regional needs and the official plans of other governmental units and agencies within the county;*
- *The existing and proposed location and intensity of land uses;*

Section 239-d of NYS General Municipal Law describes the intent for the content of a County Comprehensive Plan.

- *Consideration of agricultural uses, historic and cultural resources, coastal and natural and scenic resources and sensitive environmental areas;*
- *Consideration of population, demographic and socio-economic trends and future projections;*
- *The location and types of transportation facilities, including the reuse of abandoned transportation facilities;*
- *Existing and proposed general location of public and private utilities and infrastructure;*
- *Existing housing resources and future housing needs, including affordable housing;*
- *The present and future general location of educational and cultural facilities, historic sites, health facilities, and facilities for emergency services;*
- *Existing and proposed recreation facilities and parkland;*
- *The present and potential future general location of commercial and industrial facilities;*
- *Specific policies and strategies for improving the county economy in coordination with other plan topics;*
- *Proposed measures, programs, devices, and instruments to implement the goals and objectives of the various topics within the county comprehensive plan;*
- *All or part of the plan of another public agency;*
- *Any and all other items which are consistent with the protection, enhancement, orderly growth and development of the county; and*
- *Consideration of cumulative impacts of development, and other issues which promote compliance with the state environmental quality review act under article eight of the environmental conservation law and its implementing regulations.”*

Legislative Authority

Under the State’s General Municipal Law, the County Legislature is given the authority to determine who prepares the plan or any amendments thereto, including by its resolution, directing a county planning board or a special board to prepare such a plan.

SEQRA Compliance

A county comprehensive plan is also subject to the provisions of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing procedures. A county plan can also be designed to serve as, or be accompanied by, a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS). No further compliance with such law is required for subsequent site specific county actions that are in conformance with thresholds established for such county actions in the GEIS and its Findings Statement.

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030, its first version dated 2009, is accompanied by a Full Environmental Assessment Form with attachments included in the SEQRA Appendix to this Plan. The Plan at this time does not establish specific County policies or commit the County or any communities within Niagara County

to a specific course of action, permitting approvals, funding, or the undertaking of site specific projects that might require a Generic Environmental Impact Statement or other further SEQRA action at this time. However, as acknowledged in the Environmental Assessment Form further specific policies, approvals, funding or site specific projects by the County in the future may require additional SEQRA review, including the possibility of preparing an environmental impact statement at the time specific actions and/or projects are being considered.

Agricultural Review and Coordination

A county comprehensive plan and any amendments for a county containing all or part of an agricultural district or lands receiving agricultural assessments within its jurisdiction, shall continue to be subject to the provisions of Article 25-AA of the State's Agriculture and Market Law. A newly adopted or amended plan must take into consideration applicable county agricultural and farmland protection plans as created under Article 25-AA of the Agriculture and Market Law.

Referrals

The County Legislature, prior to adoption, must refer a proposed county comprehensive plan or any amendment thereto to the county and regional planning boards as well as the legislative bodies and the planning boards of each municipality within the county for review and recommendation.

Public Hearings

Prior to its adoption or any amendments to a comprehensive plan, the county legislative body must hold one or more public hearings of the proposal and publish a notice of a public hearing in a general circulation newspaper in the county at least ten days in advance of the hearing.

Adoption and Filing

The county legislative body may adopt a county comprehensive plan or any amendments thereto by resolution and then must have the plan filed in the County Clerk's office or register and a copy with the county planning board, the Secretary of State, as well as the clerk of each municipality within the county.

Effect of Adoption

All county land acquisitions and public improvements, including those identified in the county official map adopted or amended pursuant to Article 12-B of the General Municipal Law, shall be in accordance with the county comprehensive plan. All plans for capital projects of a municipality or state governmental agency on land included in the county comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to Section 239-d of the General Municipal Law shall take the comprehensive plan into consideration.

Periodic Review

The county legislative body shall provide, as a component of a proposed county comprehensive plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed.

Comprehensive vs. Strategic

A comprehensive plan differs in content and purpose from a strategic plan. A comprehensive plan is more general in terms of describing existing conditions, future visions for an area, goals and objectives, and recommended actions. By its very nature, a comprehensive plan typically considers a wide range of topics, but may selectively delve into greater detail and strategies for specific issues and topics known to be important to a community. A strategic plan by comparison typically considers a specific topic, reflects a more focused approach, and provides specific recommendations and ways to measure progress in meeting future goals and objectives.

Document Features

Most comprehensive plans consist of several common document features. The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan includes each of the following features and more. These include:

- A statement giving the governing body the authority to prepare and adopt a plan
- Identification of planning participants (stakeholders) and an outline of the public participation process used in preparing the plan
- A review of previous planning initiatives, reports, studies, and plans
- Baseline data and information on existing conditions in the area influenced by the plan
- A vision statement supported by goals and objectives
- Analyses of trends and future needs
- Recommended actions and alternatives
- An assessment of the potential impacts of the plan
- A future land use plan showing where growth and development is most suitable
- Plan implementation
- Plan adoption and periodic review and updating

Purpose, Value & Intent of the Plan

The **purpose** of a comprehensive plan is to provide a “blueprint” so to speak, for the residents and property owners of communities within the county, decision-makers in those communities, as well as elected and appointed officials at all levels of government including the County, State and Federal governments.

As such, the purpose of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is to set a direct course of action that guides local officials in their day-to-day administration of government in an effort to meet the local community’s immediate and long-term needs. To remain effective, the Plan must be reviewed on a regular basis and updated periodically. The Plan is flexible enough to meet the ever-changing needs, issues and opportunities of County residents, businesses, governments and visitors to the area.

The real **value** of the Comprehensive Plan, however, will be derived from its day-to-day usefulness and relevancy towards achieving the stated vision, goals and objectives expressed throughout the planning process and reiterated in this Plan. It is often said

To remain effective, the Plan must be reviewed on a regular basis and updated periodically.

that the true and lasting value of a comprehensive plan or any sound planning initiative for that matter is with the process that leads to the creation of the planning document(s). That certainly holds true for this Comprehensive Plan as well.

It is the **intent** of the many participants in the planning process that the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan be the basis for making the day-to-day decisions that directly and indirectly affect the residents, taxpayers and communities of Niagara County. This document is intended to be the cornerstone for enhancing quality of life by providing a mechanism by which rationale decisions can be made about short and long-term priorities and identifying the means that will result in measurable progress towards a true and realistic Vision for Niagara County.

This Comprehensive Plan is a valuable source of information for the Niagara County Planning Board in fulfillment of its responsibilities in reviewing projects and providing planning guidance and assistance to community officials. The Niagara County Planning Board was established under NYS General Municipal Law. As stated under Municipal Law Section 239-c - “The development of a county comprehensive plan can foster cooperation among governmental agencies in the planning and implementation of capital projects. Similarly, county comprehensive plans can promote intermunicipal cooperation in the provision of public services.”

Powers and duties of the County Planning Board by which this Plan can be utilized include the review of certain municipal planning and zoning actions and certain subdivision plats per sections 239-l, 239-m and 239-n of Article 12-B of Municipal Law. Also, the County Planning Board can use the information contained in this Plan as allowed by Municipal Law to assist with local studies, conduct countywide studies, prepare a county official map, provide information to local boards, provide technical assistance to local governments and comment on state and county highway reconstruction.

Among its many responsibilities the Niagara County Planning Board members and staff maintain a planning and zoning library of countywide plans and regulations, conducts an annual planning and zoning census of municipalities, develops custom GIS applications to track County Planning Board referrals, and assist local officials in identifying properties that need to be sent to the County Planning Board for review. Planning Board members and staff, and the communities they serve, will benefit greatly from the contents and maintenance of this Plan as an up-to-date source of countywide information.

Needs and Benefits

A variety of important public needs and benefits will be derived from this Comprehensive Plan. Benefits from creating an up-to-date countywide comprehensive plan as a source of information will be realized by the public and private sectors, agencies, organizations, groups and individuals alike. The following points are some of the significant day-to-day types of needs that will be met and benefits that will be derived from this Comprehensive Plan.

Up-to-date Source of Information

- Changes in local population growth/decline and distribution, demographic characteristics (age, education, employment, income), housing conditions,

transportation and infrastructure, social services, education, and economic trends all need to be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect the changing conditions and needs of citizens. For example, a 10-year old plan may be based on data that are 10 to 20 years old or more. The comprehensive planning process is a means to identify what changes are occurring at a specific point in time and address how changing needs can be met using the most recent information available.

- An up-to-date comprehensive plan is a substantial source of community-based information and pride. Information may be used to forecast needs, revenues and costs. This is a valuable source of information to elected officials, administrators, planning boards and commissions, police and fire departments, schools, real estate and development interests, state and regional agencies, local institutions, civic groups, citizens and adjacent communities.
- A comprehensive plan allows for consideration and incorporation into one document, either directly or by reference other plans, regulations, and planning initiatives conducted by municipalities in the region.
- New York State SEQRA and Federal NEPA environmental review processes require local data collection, review and consideration of proposed projects relative to consistency with local, county and regional plans. An updated plan facilitates these processes as a source of current information about local resources, capital improvement needs and priorities.

Zoning Credibility and Defensibility in Litigation

- Frequent rezoning requests and variances at the local municipal level may indicate that zoning ordinances are no longer meeting the needs of the real estate market, economic development trends and/or resident priorities within a community. An updated county comprehensive plan can provide land use guidance to local communities to identify these changing trends, forecast future growth patterns and provide recommendations to modify local zoning regulations and anticipate where future public infrastructure is most needed.
- When project-related decisions are challenged in court, communities and public officials are in a much stronger position to defend municipal actions and decisions if they have current, recently adopted plans supported by community input and based upon up-to-date information and knowledge of local conditions.

Community Involvement

- The comprehensive planning process allows for consensus-building opportunities, citizen involvement in decision-making, mechanisms to formulate the County's Vision, and focuses planning efforts and resources on critical issues and priorities. A municipality that is not proactive in its planning initiatives may lead to local decisions being made reactively, on the spur of the moment, and/or by other involved institutions, such as the court system that may result in decisions that may not be in the best interest of a community.
- The comprehensive planning process is an opportunity to educate everyone on the importance of planning in resolving local issues and making informed decisions that enhance quality of life. The development and completion of an up-to-date comprehensive plan can be a milestone event generating enthusiasm, future interest and further involvement by the next generation of residents

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be the cornerstone for enhancing quality of life in Niagara County.

and officials as they move forward in determining the future of their communities.

Legal Framework and Responsibilities

- Land use regulations, and local zoning ordinances in particular, must be in conformance with a “comprehensive” or “well considered” plan. However, no clear definition of such a plan is stated in NY State statutes. Although courts have held that zoning can be legal even in the absence of a written plan, zoning and land use decisions are best supported by adopted plans. In New York State, the legal bases for communities to prepare such plans include: General City Law, Sections 25 and 28; Town Law, Sections 263 and 272; Village Law, Article 7 Section 7; and General Municipal Law, Article 12 Section 239.

Public Infrastructure and Capital Improvements Planning

- The comprehensive planning process identifies deficiencies and future needs for public services and infrastructure. The provision of infrastructure can be costly and if not properly considered at a regional level can lead to unnecessary sprawl, undesirable land uses, conflicts among adjacent municipalities and increased costs in providing municipal services. A comprehensive plan is an effective land use management tool designed to guide future land use and capital improvement decisions.

Natural Resource Protection

- An updated comprehensive plan identifies and addresses current natural and environmental resource issues in a community. Issues may relate to changing land use patterns and development activity that may pose concerns over the protection and management of valuable natural assets including open space, floodplains, aquifers, wetlands, surface waters, steep slopes, prime and unique soils, woodlands, endangered and threatened species habitats, and critical environmental areas.

Community Character and Heritage Preservation

- An updated comprehensive plan also addresses implementation techniques for maintaining and enhancing community character by protecting and preserving significant landmarks, community character, scenic features, recreation areas, historic sites, and cultural resources.

Comparisons to Other Regions

- An up-to-date comprehensive plan facilitates comparison of one region to another in terms of quality of life issues, housing, schools, employment, recreation, economic development, tax base, services and public facilities. The ability to make these comparisons can be an effective marketing tool in attracting new and appropriate economic development into the area.

Grant Funding

- Funding agencies and private sector organizations are more likely to fund projects that are supported by an up-to-date plan based on consensus of local stakeholders and communities. The implementation section of a comprehensive plan typically identifies projects to be undertaken, project timeframes and potential sources of funding all of which facilitate successful project funding requests.

Community & Stakeholder Participation

The Niagara County Legislature took the following position very early in the comprehensive planning process: To be truly meaningful and achievable the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan would involve the participation and input from all stakeholder communities in the County. Rather than a top-down approach to the planning process, it was agreed that this approach would use the knowledge, experiences and information gathered from each stakeholder community to prepare the comprehensive plan.

New York State is a “home rule” state in which decisions on land use and other significant issues are under the jurisdiction and responsibility of individual municipalities, such as towns, cities and villages. Because so many of the goals and objectives outlined in this Plan are best achieved at and by the local municipal levels of government, for example through municipal zoning and land use planning initiatives, under “home rule” the ultimate vision, goals and objectives identified at the County level will only be achievable through the input and consensus of each stakeholder community in Niagara County.

Stakeholder communities include the three cities, twelve towns, five villages and three Native American tribes that comprise Niagara County. Each of these communities has been afforded the opportunity to participate and guide the process for preparing this Comprehensive Plan. Stakeholder communities include:

- City of Lockport
- City of Niagara Falls
- City of North Tonawanda
- Town of Cambria
- Town of Hartland
- Town of Lewiston
- Town of Lockport
- Town of Newfane
- Town of Niagara
- Town of Pendleton
- Town of Porter
- Town of Royalton
- Town of Somerset
- Town of Wheatfield
- Town of Wilson
- Village of Barker
- Village of Lewiston
- Village of Middleport
- Village of Wilson
- Village of Youngstown
- Tuscarora Indian Reservation
- Tonawanda Indian Reservation
- Seneca Nation of Indians

New York State is a “Home Rule” state. Decisions on land use issues are under the jurisdiction and responsibility of individual municipalities - cities, towns and villages.

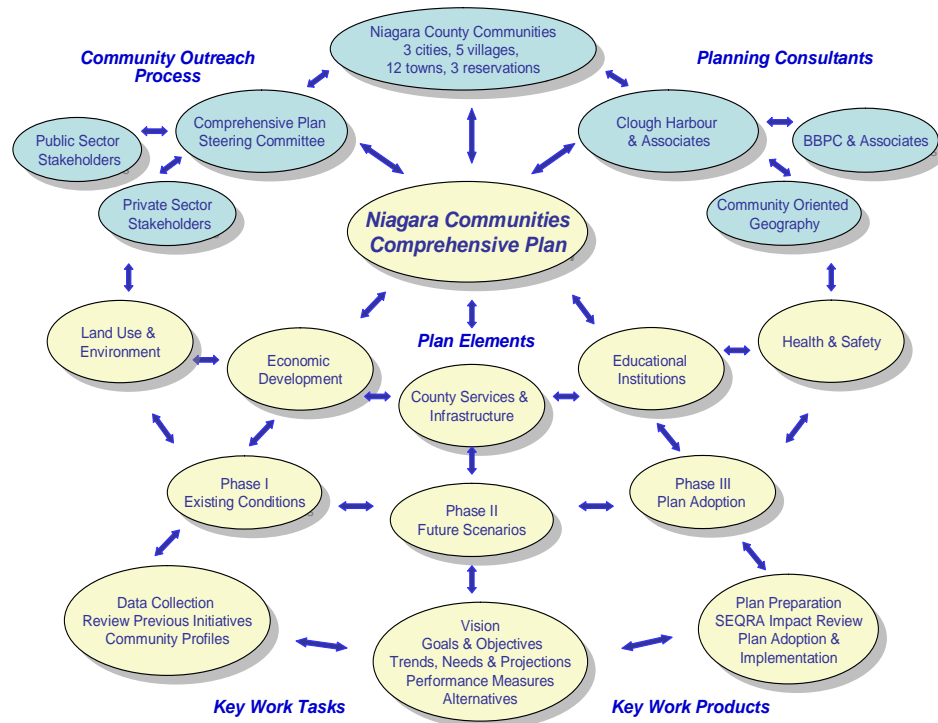
Stakeholder communities include the 3 cities, 12 towns, 5 villages and 3 Native American tribes in Niagara County.

Each stakeholder community delegated a community representative and an alternate(s) to participate in the planning process as a member of the Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee. Members were asked to provide input and guidance on the preparation of the comprehensive plan as well as assist in the collection and dissemination of information and contribute to its content. Scheduled Plan Steering Committee meetings were held throughout the spring and summer of 2008. Minutes of those meetings are provided in Appendix A.

The planning process reached out to other stakeholder participants throughout the Plan's development and preparation. A listing of stakeholders invited to participate in the planning process is included in Appendix A with meeting documentation provided, including notices and minutes. Public participation occurred in many ways via the stakeholder community meetings, general public meetings, focus group discussions, interviews and through website links and other public media.

An important result of the community and public participation process was the identification and subsequent review and discussion of previous planning initiatives conducted at some local and regional levels. Important information gleaned from this information follows in this chapter and much of the information was used in the analysis and recommendation phases of the comprehensive planning process.

The overall comprehensive planning process is illustrated below. This illustration describes how the community outreach stakeholder participants (shown in blue) served as the basis for feeding information into each step of the planning process ranging from the various plan elements and phases of plan development to the key work tasks and work products that comprise the comprehensive plan.



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan Planning Process

Review of Previous Planning Initiatives

As part of the preparation of this Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan it was important to review previous planning initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years that have particular relevance to Niagara County, to the communities that comprise the County, and the Niagara region in general. The following documents were reviewed and are summarized because each contains information that is relevant to the preparation and ultimately the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. Important initiatives are listed under the five plan elements considered throughout the planning process. Where available, website links are provided so that direct access can be gained to these documents.

Land Use and Environment

Framework for Regional Growth (October 2006)

The Framework establishes basic policies and principles to guide the future growth and development of the Erie County - Niagara County Region. The Framework identifies the major challenge facing the region as follows. “The combined effects of disinvestment and sprawling development has reduced the livability of older neighborhoods, eroded the competitive position of traditional centers of commerce and industry; increased fiscal stress; isolated low income, minority and elderly residents; and threatened the resources that make the region an attractive place to live – river and lake fronts, historic city, town and village centers, and rural landscapes.” These are issues that need to be addressed at the local and county levels of government.

This document is a regionwide vision for conservation, development, and public investment, providing direction for decisions regarding the location and pace of development, investments in economic development, the extension of sewer and water service, improvements to parks and major public facilities, and investments in transportation infrastructure.

The document is divided into three sections: *Context and Challenges*, *Guiding Growth and Investment*, and *Taking Action*.

Context and Challenges provides an overview of the regulatory and organizational context for regional planning, a review of the region’s context, a development history and demographics, and summaries of the counties’ challenges (e.g. declining population density and disinvestment, sprawl, limited development-ready sites, loss of agricultural lands, traffic congestion, threats to natural systems and strain on public infrastructure).

Guiding Growth and Investment establishes the principles for the region’s growth, development, and conservation. Policy and strategy statements are articulated that form the basis for county action agendas. This section establishes seven framework principles (A Vital Economy, Strong Rural Communities, Sustainable Neighborhoods, Improved Access and Mobility, Efficient Systems and Services, Conserved Natural and Cultural Assets, Effective Regional Stewardship) and distinguishes types and patterns of development for three broad geographic areas (development, developing, and rural) as well as three types of sub areas (centers,

The Framework points out that with traditional planning authority granted to municipal governments (home rule), including the regulation of land use through zoning and land subdivision, the counties’ direct influence on the region’s development pattern is limited.

corridors, and conservation overlays)

Taking Action outlines County actions to implement the Framework Plan. Early actions (Years 1 to 5) and longer term actions (Years 5 to 10) are identified. Early actions include initiating a planning assistance program for local municipalities, developing capital project review policies and procedures, developing New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Type 1 Action lists, and strengthening reinvestment policies. Longer term actions include developing planning area specific standards for County roads, adjusting sewer and water district limits consistent with the Framework and expanding assistance for agricultural conservation efforts.

The report points out that with traditional planning authority granted to municipal governments (home rule), including the regulation of land use through zoning and land subdivision, the counties' direct influence on the region's development pattern is limited. "The Framework is not intended to serve as a conventional zoning or land use plan or capital improvement program – recommendations regarding future residential or commercial zoning districts are not part of the Framework nor are detailed recommendations concerning the extension of public utilities or investments in the transportation network."

The Framework provides policy and strategy statements organized by policy area. Some of the most relevant policies and strategies are summarized below. These strategies are categorized in the Framework for Developed Areas, Developing Areas, and Rural Areas.

Economic Development & Public Investment Strategies

- Develop a regional inventory and marketing strategies for vacant, underutilized and Brownfield properties
- Preserve and properly zone larger scale vacant and underutilized sites that can support large scale uses
- Encourage major government and educational facilities, sport and entertainment venues, and cultural facilities and attractions to locate in regional population centers
- Encourage public investments in existing infrastructure and public facilities and services
- Limit capacity improvements to roads and sewer infrastructure
- Support protection of future rights-of-way for future infrastructure
- Expand efforts to strengthen the region's rural economy

Development Guidance Strategies

- Support local comprehensive planning policies that designate areas appropriate for development and conservation, minimizes conversion of agricultural lands and natural areas, and avoids leap-frog development patterns
- Work with localities to identify and minimize regulatory and planning barriers to mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development
- Support mixed-use land development and minimize conversion of significant open space, agricultural lands and natural systems
- Support local planning and zoning to protect sites deemed most suitable to employment intensive uses
- Identify and conserve agriculture and forested lands designated in local

- plans for rural or agricultural use
- Work with localities to resolve planning barriers to infill development and the preservation and adaptive reuse of older, historic buildings

Mobility & Accessibility Strategies

- Support GBNRTC’s “maintenance first” policies regarding existing transportation infrastructure
- Review criteria for curb-cut approvals on county roads to encourage access management and parcel to parcel connectivity
- Work with localities to restrict “strip” commercial and industrial development along highways in developing areas
- Explore feasibility of providing public transportation service between rural centers and developed area destinations

Public System & Service Strategies

- Assist localities in the assessment of economic, fiscal and environmental costs and benefits of extending sewer and water services
- Support local policies that channel growth where sewer and water exist
- Encourage authorities to evaluate the feasibility of contracting sewer district boundaries where they extend into areas designated for conservation or agricultural use
- Continue support for intermunicipal agreements that increase cost savings in the delivery of services
- Establish priorities for conservation of regionally, nationally and internationally significant natural and cultural heritage resources

Bi-National Transportation Strategy for the Niagara Frontier (December 2005)

This report was prepared to address existing and future transportation needs of the region’s border crossings and approach corridors. This was a joint effort by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the NYS Department of Transportation with participation by other government agencies and industry stakeholders.

The four highway bridges and two railway bridges across the Niagara River make the Niagara Frontier the second busiest commercial border along the U.S. Canadian border carrying about 16% of all trade between the two countries. Over 15 million vehicles, including 2.3 million trucks crossed the border in 2004, carrying \$70 billion in goods by truck and \$14 billion by rail. An estimated 480,000 jobs in Ontario and 348,000 jobs in New York State rely on this trade.

The Niagara Region is served by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the Canadian National (CN) Railway and U.S. freight carriers Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation, Inc. Amtrak provides passenger service between New York City and Niagara Falls, NY, connecting to Toronto by VIA Rail.

Marine transportation contributes \$6 billion annually to the U.S. Canadian economies along the Great Lakes Seaway System, of which the Welland Canal is the major component in the Niagara Region. Air transportation is primarily

The four highway bridges and two railway bridges across the Niagara River make the Niagara Frontier the second busiest commercial border along the U.S. Canadian border.

handled out of the Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA) which handled over 4 million passengers in 2002 as well as providing air cargo and general aviation services.

The Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) operates in joint agreement with the U.S. military and provides charter and cargo services as well as acting as a reliever airport.

Six strategy elements are identified in the report including:

- Improving cross border coordination between agencies and stakeholders
- Ensuring adequacy of highway approach capacity and connectivity to economic centers
- Improving enforcement and processing to enhance efficiency, security and safety at the borders
- Providing sufficient river crossing capacity
- Optimizing use of all transportation modes to improve efficiency
- Realizing unique opportunities for overall border network management including innovative Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (August 1999)

This Plan identifies the importance of agriculture as an economic contributor to the rural communities of Niagara County with an annual impact of \$87 to \$230 million. The primary objective of the Plan is to help make farming viable in the County, otherwise as stated in the Plan, what agriculture brings to the County in positive economic impact and social value may be lost in the next twenty years as a result of residential build-out and sprawl forms of development.

The document points out that due to its rich soil and geographic location Niagara County ranked (in 1997) 22nd out of the State's 61 counties. The Plan refers to numerous studies that support the fact that agricultural land generates a positive tax base advantage to local towns because it consistently generates more in tax revenues than it requires in service expenditures, including schools.

The American Farmland Trust identifies the Ontario Plains and Finger Lakes Region of western NY, including Niagara County, as being ranked 11th of the top 20 most threatened Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) in the U.S. due to the development pressures on the region's farmlands. Of the County's 20 municipalities, 12 have land located within six established agricultural districts encompassing approximately 52% of the County's land area or about 176,000 acres.

The Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board recommends a number of strategies in the Plan concluding, "that economically strengthening agricultural enterprises, increasing the level of public awareness about farming and gaining supportive local public policies provides the most effective and affordable means to achieve the goals of both state and local agriculture and farmland protection." Strategies and recommended action items fall under three primary categories including:

- Agricultural Economic Development
- Education, Promotion and Public Relations
- Government Policies and Farmland Protection Strategies

"...agricultural land generates a positive tax base advantage to local towns because it consistently generates more in tax revenues than it requires in service expenditures, including schools."

A key conclusion of the Plan is that “land use controls to preserve farmland will not provide an effective mechanism to maintain a farmland base nor force an industry to exist that is not economically viable.” Key government policy strategies provided in the document include:

- Review of town comprehensive plans by the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board prior to their formal adoption
- Encouraging creative developments utilizing Planned Unit Developments (PUD) and cluster development
- Establishing mechanisms for the Transfer and/or Purchase of Development Rights
- Encouraging infill development where existing infrastructure is in place
- Passing right to farm laws in all towns and the County
- Increasing quantity and quality of wildlife habitat
- Utilizing a land evaluation-site analysis (LESA) using GIS technology

Niagara River Greenway Plan and FEIS (April 2007)

The Greenway Plan identifies priorities and a plan of action for improvements to the Niagara River corridor in Erie and Niagara counties, with the objective of promoting projects that address connectivity, environmental factors, redevelopment and opportunities for economic development/tourism. The plan focuses on the municipalities bordering the Niagara River (with the addition of the Town of Niagara in Niagara County and the Village of Kenmore in Erie County). Part of the impetus for the plan is the fact that the region has a dedicated funding source as a result of the NY Power Authority Relicensing Agreement, providing \$9 million per year for the next 50 years.

This plan provides an inventory of parks and public lands, ecological resources, trails and heritage sites. It also includes an extensive “Action Plan” that provides sketch-level project plans targeting specific improvements.

Economic Development

“Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” (June 2007 and 2008)

These documents represent Niagara County’s annual reporting on its strategy to address opportunities as well as challenges that have prevented growth, capitalizing on recent signs of economic potential and the County’s competitive strengths.

The reports begin with an overview of the County’s demographic and economic conditions as well as existing physical conditions (environmental and natural resources, infrastructure, water and sewer, utilities). The next section presents an overview of the Niagara County economy, including leading industry sectors, the County’s economy within the regional context, factors directly affecting

The Greenway Plan identifies priorities and a plan with the objective of promoting projects that address connectivity, environmental factors, redevelopment and opportunities for economic development/tourism.

economic performance, and the Industrial Development Authority. Economic development issues are presented in the next section, summarizing the County’s economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The final sections present the County’s economic development goals and anticipated successes, followed by an implementation agenda providing an overview of economic development projects by category and by priority level.

Niagara County Economic Development Fact Sheets

This document was produced by the Niagara County Center for Economic Development and presents economic development “facts” about Niagara County. Topics covered include available financial incentives, transportation access, workforce unionization, labor force skills, industry sectors, building availability and location of industrial parks, home values, the Niagara Falls Empire Zone, educational opportunities, and tourism/recreation assets.

Niagara County Economic Development Market Facts

This document was produced by the Niagara County Department of Economic Development and presents Niagara County market facts. Topics covered include agricultural facts (e.g. crops harvested, cattle and milk production, farmland acreage, cash receipts from farm marketing), banks, climate, the construction sector (permits, building inspector contact information, median home values), economic development agencies, educational institutions, the Foreign Trade Zone adjacent to the Niagara International Airport, health care institutions, the housing sector and utilities, incentive programs, location of industrial parks, largest employers and data on the County’s manufacturing sector, labor force statistics, population statistics, tourism/recreation assets, retail sector data, tax rates, transportation infrastructure, utilities and water, and industrial zoning.

“Revisioning Brownfields: A Regional Strategic Approach”

This document was prepared for the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund. The plan provides a framework from which brownfield redevelopment projects in the Niagara region should be approached. The plan also establishes a prioritized approach for regional investment and identifies roles and responsibilities for local and regional leaders.

The plan is divided into five sections. It begins with an introduction to brownfields planning, providing and understanding of the regional context, opportunities and challenges, and the role of local and regional government. The next section addresses the community involvement process. The third section prioritizes brownfield sites and presents design concepts for redevelopment. The fourth section outlines brownfield funding and financing resources. The last section presents an implementation strategy. There are also several appendices, including site rankings, a financial analysis users guide, case studies, and demographic and socioeconomic data.

“...the County’s strategy is to address challenges that have prevented growth, capitalizing on recent signs of economic potential and the County’s competitive strengths.”

“Niagara County Business Development and Commercial Revitalization Study: Villages of Lewiston, Youngstown, and Wilson”

This study provides direction for business development and revitalization in three Niagara County villages – Lewiston, Youngstown, and Wilson. The projects include a market analysis, an inventory of downtown properties, a business survey, and recommendations for business development, marketing, and commercial revitalization.

General recommendations include incentives to encourage development/renovation of lodging facilities, partnerships with local educational institutions, installation of wireless internet service, and continued promotion of Niagara County Microenterprise Assistance Program. Village-specific recommendations address development of the tourism industry, selection of priority redevelopment sites, development of promotional/special events, streetscape improvements and landscaping, and public investments such as public bathrooms, ferry service, and other transportation improvements.

The following research reports are from the New York State Office of the State Comptroller.

“Property Taxes in New York State”

This report provides an overview of the property tax trends across New York State and gives insight into some of the salient issues arising from this tax.

The property tax is the largest tax imposed by local governments in the State, accounting for 79 percent of all local taxes outside of New York City. This results in a per capita property tax burden that is 49 percent higher than the national average and as a share of personal income is 28 percent higher. The increase in local property tax levies outstripped the rate of inflation from 1995 to 2005 (60 percent versus 28 percent).

In Niagara County, the property tax levy per household and per \$1,000 of personal income is relatively low. However, the property tax rate in relation to full property values is relatively high in the County, which is likely due, in part, to the relatively low property values characteristic of Niagara County.

Although the property tax is stable and easy to use, it has been noted for some serious flaws and has been the subject of much controversy, particularly in New York State. Some issues relayed in the article include:

- Property taxes are based on a fairly subjective property values assessment system
- Home values (upon which property taxes are assessed) may not accurately reflect ability to pay
- Property tax “rebates” commonly used to relieve tax burden are essentially a transfer of tax burden and not a tax cut
- Property taxes are often considered regressive – the burden falls more heavily on lower-income tax payers as a percentage of their income

“Local Government Sales Taxes in New York State”

This report provides an overview of the use and trends in sales tax in New York counties and cities. Sales taxes are a significant source of revenue for local governments in the State, making up 8.6 percent of total local government revenues in 2004. These taxes are an even more significant component of Niagara County’s total revenues, representing 17.5 percent. Generally, the sales tax is levied at the county level and sales tax proceeds are distributed to other units of government within county boundaries, according to a sales tax sharing arrangement.

New York State has one of the highest combined state/local sales tax rates in the nation, with an average combined state-local sales tax of 8.25 percent, compared to the national average of 5.93 percent. The majority of counties in the State have sales tax rates exceeding 3 percent (Niagara County’s rate is 4 percent). Overall, 85 percent of New York’s population resides in areas where the combined tax rate is 8 percent or higher.

Counties that share sales taxes with municipalities within their borders retain anywhere from 31 percent to 98 percent of taxes levied. Niagara County falls roughly in the middle, retaining 58 percent of collected sales taxes for solely County purposes. In addition to sharing sales taxes with localities, some counties also share a portion of these taxes with school districts (Niagara not included). Some cities reserve the right to collect their own sales tax independent of counties (not the case for Niagara’s three cities).

“Town Special Districts”

This report provides the background information on New York State’s town special districts and discusses trends and current issues with these districts. A town special district is a designated geographic area within a town established to address specific service needs of property owners within that area (i.e. garbage, sewer, water, fire protection, parks, lighting and drainage). These districts utilize charges, mainly through property taxes, and user fees paid by taxpayers within the district to finance these services.

There are currently 6,927 special districts across the State, 92 of which are located in Niagara County. The majority of the County’s special districts provide water, sewer, garbage, and lighting services. Revenues for town special service districts account for 41 percent of all town revenues in Niagara County (second highest percentage of all NY counties); 77 percent of all property tax revenues in the County go to fund these special districts (highest percentage of all NY counties).

Due to the rapidly-growing populations of some towns in New York, and therefore the rapidly-increasing use of town special service districts, concerns have arisen regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of using this mechanism to fund certain town services. There has been a general lack of transparency in the specific use of special district revenues and the actual cost of providing services within these districts. Additionally, the ad-hoc use of the districts has raised questions about the efficiency of the mechanism and the potential for district consolidation. The report discusses some potential actions to address these issues, specifically unit cost analysis, consolidation thresholds, and expansion of the State’s Shared Municipal Services Incentive.

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There are currently 6,927 special districts across the State, 92 of which are located in Niagara County. By comparison, Onondaga County has the second highest number of special districts in the State at 941 behind Erie County.

The majority of special districts in the County provide water, sewer, garbage, and lighting services.

“Revenue Sharing in New York State”

Revenue sharing is unrestricted State aid to local governments that can be used for any local governmental purpose. This unrestricted aid has been distributed to localities through a number of categories, such as General Purpose for Local Government Aid (GPLGA), Emergency Aid to Certain Cities, Emergency Aid to Eligible Municipalities, Supplemental Municipal Aid (SMA), and Local Government Aid to Counties. This report gives an overview of revenue sharing practices in New York State, and explores trends and current issues with the State’s allocation of unrestricted aid.

Revenue sharing in New York currently totals about \$800 million, with the vast majority of these funds (over 90 percent) going to cities. From FY-88 to FY-05, revenue sharing has been reduced by more than 26 percent, while cumulatively State funds have increased by 93 percent. In addition, revenue sharing funds have been outpaced by inflation, which has increased 65 percent over this 17-year period.

Several of the categories through which unrestricted aid was distributed have been eliminated. Since FY-01 cities have predominantly received funding through SMA (which make up over 50 percent of unrestricted aid payments) and GPLGA. The SMA was established in 1996 to help support cities receiving Emergency Financial Assistance, like Niagara Falls, who face fiscal difficulties due to constitutional tax limitations.

Many issues have arisen over the amount of revenue sharing provided by New York State and the mechanism for determining how much aid is distributed to each locality. Original statutory formulas based on population, per capita property valuation, and personal incomes were established to guide fair, equitable and flexible aid distributions. However, these formulas have been unused for decades, as unrestricted aid amounts have been frozen. The report suggests reinstating these formulas and assigning higher State budget priority to revenue sharing as a means of reestablishing sufficient levels of this funding to localities in need.

“Fiscal Challenges Ahead for New York’s Cities”

This report gives an overview of the recent fiscal challenges faced by cities in New York State, and certain measures the State is taking to help cities deal with these challenges. Specifically, the State is helping cities focus on long-range planning as a tool for coping with rising expenditures and budget gaps. To promote this long-range planning, cities must certify that they have completed multiyear (at least three fiscal years) financial plans in order to receive additional State funds through the Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) program.

The report also analyzed the results of the financial plans submitted in 2006. Most cities reported budget gaps projected to increase over the next three years, averaging 5.2 percent of total revenues in 2007 and 9.8 percent by 2009. Ten cities projected gaps exceeding 10 percent of their total revenues, which generally indicates severe fiscal stress. Soaring service costs and expenditures appear to drive these expected budget gaps in the cities of the Hudson Valley and Long Island, while stagnant property values, population decline and thus

reduced revenues were likely the cause for projected gaps in upstate cities, such as those in Niagara County.

The City of Niagara Falls' financial plan was highlighted in the report. Flat property values, aging infrastructure and population losses have put a burden on generating tax revenues and caused budget gaps in recent years. In addition, the City has been constrained in its ability to raise property tax rates to close these gaps, due to being very close to its constitutional tax limits. Meager assessed value increases in Niagara Falls have further complicated this situation.

Achieving Niagara Falls' Future (April 2002)

The report is essentially a catalog of 46 projects/initiatives estimated to cost \$145 million, to be implemented on the Niagara Falls waterfront, including both short-term (\$11 million) and long-term recommendations. As the report says it "has taken the best ideas from nearly a dozen different plans, reports, studies and proposals" and combined them. There are three strategies at work in the selection of projects: 1.) reconnect the City to the waterfront, 2.) repair the urban and natural environments, and 3.) build the visitor industry by developing "the means to tell the compelling stories of the city and region..."

Big ticket items (with estimated costs as provided in this report) include: the new Amtrak station proposal (\$20M), reconfiguring the Robert Moses Parkway (\$40M), gorge trail system and trailhead improvements (\$10M), redeveloping buildings adjacent to the Niagara Greenway (\$50 - \$100M), the Family Museum (\$13M), and the Discovery Center (\$22M). The report's appendices include a brief summary of several of the reports from which proposed projects were selected.

Rethinking Niagara – Heritage Tourism on the Bi-National Regional Agenda (October 2001)

Information on Heritage Tourism initiatives, developed in collaboration with the Ontario Heritage Foundation, presented in newsletter format and summarizing progress made at a bi-national meeting held in October 2001. This initiative is bi-national, capitalizing on the common aspects of Ontario, Canada and Niagara County. Marketing and capital investments will be geared around several "themes" common to both sides of the river: the landscape, the bounty of nature (agriculture, vineyards), stories of war, peace and freedom, the wealth of a region (focusing on industrial history), and enterprise in the arts. Part of the effort is development of a single map that will highlight attractions on both the U.S. and Canadian sides corresponding to these themes.

Revealing Niagara – A Citizen Vision for Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Bi-National Niagara Region (September 2002)

"Two nations, many stories, one destination" is the over-arching message of this cultural tourism strategy. This report elaborates on the ideas in "Rethinking Niagara", providing summaries of each of the themes of this heritage tourism strategy, as well as mapping of the locations of heritage sites by theme. The report

also provides mapping of wetlands, agricultural districts and parks on the U.S. and Canadian sides of the border.

Cultural Tourism in the Buffalo-Niagara Region – Plan and Policy Briefs (2002)

This document was commissioned by the John R. Oishei foundation and prepared by the University of Buffalo’s Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. It includes an extensive inventory of previously completed cultural tourism planning work for Erie and Niagara Counties, as well as regionally, statewide and bi-nationally. This plan notes that previous cultural tourism efforts appear to have been inefficient and poorly coordinated. This plan outlines an approach that would remedy this deficiency by creating a new coordinating committee with a project manager, a timeline and goals and quantifiable results.

The bulk of the report is the inventory of previous work which was meant to lay the foundation for further studies, including an inventory of the Erie-Niagara region’s resources for arts and culture-based tourism. This document includes an appendix of mailing addresses for the initiative’s stakeholders.

Preservation and Management Plan for the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor

The Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor encompasses lands surrounding the Erie Canal between Albany to the east and Lake Erie to the west, including the stretch of the canal passing through Niagara County. The Preservation and Management Plan’s stated objective is as follows:

“The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation’s past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving the quality of life in corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century “River of Commerce and Culture.”

The National Heritage Corridor Plan provides a framework to help enable Corridor communities statewide to harness the potential benefits provided by the historic canal. According to the Plan, development along the canal itself should be mindful of its historic significance, and uses capitalizing on the canal as an amenity are encouraged. Trail systems following the banks of the canal provide recreational and educational opportunities; by (1) making trailways suitable for pedestrian and bicycle uses and (2) providing connections among existing and future trail systems, these features will enhance public enjoyment of the canal and boost its appeal to tourists.

The Plan emphasizes preservation of natural and manmade features throughout the Corridor. Niagara County’s natural features, such as Lake Ontario, the Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Falls and the Niagara River, and the many streams running through the area, are among the important Corridor features to be protected for residents and tourists to enjoy. Many villages along the canal feature buildings with unique Canal Era architecture, and the preservation

of these properties is important to creating and maintaining a charming and harmonious experience for travelers of the National Heritage Corridor.

Community Services

“The Demand for Local Services and Infrastructure Created by an Aging Population” (2007)

This report, prepared by the Buffalo Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, identifies concerns that local governments and institutions will be facing in providing services and infrastructure to the expanding segment of the population that is aging. The concerns are heightened by the fact that local economies are slow growing and being stressed fiscally by the need to provide increased services. The report indicates that between 2005 and 2030 Upstate New York is expected to experience a 40% increase in the number of older people, more than twice the rate of the previous 25 years and far above the rate expected for people under sixty-five years old.

By 2030, nearly 20% of the U.S. population will be 65 years old or older. This segment of the population heavily relies on age-related services and infrastructure including health care and accessible housing, services provided by local governments, community-based organizations and local institutions. Counties fund portions of in-home personal care and other related health services through Medicaid. Social services range from nutrition programs, such as Meals on Wheels and adult day care, to transportation for non-driving adults.

The report indicates that the greatest demand for services and infrastructure tends to be in areas already experiencing fiscal stress due to rising expenditures and eroding tax base, such as larger cities, inner ring suburbs and large counties that contain these areas – areas often experiencing slow economic and population growth as a result. These local governments that face the increased demand for services and infrastructure also face difficult decisions in where to allocate stressed resources, financial and otherwise. This also has a ripple effect on community-based groups that serve older populations as they may face difficulties in meeting demands because these groups often rely on local governments for resources.

2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Erie and Niagara Counties Region (June 2007)

This is the multimodal blueprint for transportation systems and services in this two-county region. It serves as a guide for development of the Transportation Improvement Program, which lays out funding priorities over a five-year period.

It also has an important land-use planning function, in that it provides forecasts for population and employment locations in 2030 based on a set of assumptions. This plan assumes that most new households will locate in existing developed areas of the region with modest increases in developing and rural areas. It also provides a forecast for the region based on existing (1990 – 2000) trends, demonstrating the more dispersed land use pattern that would result under these circumstances.

...between 2005 and 2030 Upstate New York is expected to experience a 40% increase in the number of older people, more than twice the rate of the previous 25 years and far above the rate expected for people under sixty-five years old. By 2030, nearly 20% of the U.S. population will be 65 years old or older.

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The plan devotes 70% of funds to maintenance, leaving \$1.8 billion for other projects. Congestion is identified as a fairly minor problem, with the greatest need for spot improvements on I-90 between Exits 50 & 53 (Buffalo). Also, the South Grand Island Bridge is identified as seriously deficient and in need of congestion management.

Niagara Frontier Urban Area Freight Transportation Study, Technical Memo 1 – “Air Cargo Sector Preliminary Traffic Flow Analysis” (April 2007)

This study provides background information on freight flows in the Erie-Niagara Region, with an emphasis on air cargo facilities. Existing freight flows at the region’s two airports, Buffalo Niagara International and Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) are provided in detail.

Twelve airlines offer combined cargo and passenger service from Buffalo Niagara International, with 48,000 tons of air cargo shipped through this airport in 2006. Buffalo Niagara ranks 75th in the nation in terms of total cargo tonnage. This airport also has a “cargo complex” in which Fed Ex, UPS, DHL, the US Postal Service and Superior Cargo Services have facilities totaling 305,000 square feet.

Niagara Falls International shipped 12,000 tons of freight in 2006, making it 113th in the nation in terms of tonnage. There are no dedicated air cargo facilities at this airport: Kitty Hawk Air Cargo is the only scheduled freight provider at this facility. It is part of a nationwide air cargo network, with its hub in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

The report identifies Niagara Falls International as having opportunities for freight service expansion, due to proximity to Canadian markets. At the same time, it faces challenges in the form of competition with Canada’s Hamilton International Airport, competition from freight trucking and the fact that there are no express freight carriers sited there.

Niagara Frontier Urban Area Freight Transportation Study, Technical Memo 2 – “Transportation Infrastructure Profiles” (June 2007)

This memo is part of a larger freight transportation study and is a detailed look at the Erie-Niagara Region’s freight transportation infrastructure, including air cargo, highways, rail, waterways and cross-border facilities. It includes little in the way of recommendations or analysis but provides extensive information on both domestic and Canadian infrastructure.

Highlights include a profile of key industrial highway routes in Niagara County, including the facilities served, a summary of a study examining the feasibility of a freight ferry on Lake Ontario, some recommendations for tying the AE Somerset facility into the Port of Buffalo’s terminal system and a summary of traffic volumes on the international bridges in the region.

Transportation Improvement Program, 2008 – 2012 (June 2007)

This document is the transportation funding plan for the region through 2012, with priorities based on the 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) provides a brief recap of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), including the performance measures developed for the LRTP's goals. The document then provides information on the project development and selection process, a summary of the TIP's compatibility with the goals of Federal SAFETEA-LU policy and changes (by project) to the TIP since adoption of the 2006-2010 TIP. This is followed by the list of the nearly 300 programmed projects in the region.

The TIP allocates approximately \$800 million in Federal funding and over \$300 million in other transportation funds to a variety of projects; one-half of this funding is allocated to bridge and highway maintenance.

The TIP allocates approximately \$800 million in Federal funding and over \$300 million in other transportation funds to a variety of projects; one-half of this funding is allocated to bridge and highway maintenance. One-fifth is dedicated to congestion relief projects. Thirteen percent (\$150 million) is programmed for transit projects. The remainder goes to economic development, implementation of new technologies, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and quality of life projects.

Major projects identified in Niagara County include maintenance work on 10th Street in Niagara Falls, between Niagara Street and Cedar Avenue, extension of the John B. Daly Boulevard from Niagara Street to Pine Avenue in Niagara Falls, the Niagara USA Visitor Center, restoration of the Flight of Five Locks in Lockport, funding for the Historic Lewiston Tourist Center and for the Lewiston Scenic Pathway.

Olcott Harbor Breakwater Project Summary

Olcott Harbor is located at the mouth of Eighteen Mile Creek and is the only deep-water port along the southern shore of Lake Ontario between the Niagara River and Rochester.

This report summarizes a proposed project to construct a new breakwater and/or wave absorbers at Olcott Harbor located in the Town of Newfane, in order to improve the harbor's safety and protect its piers and marinas from storm surge and heightened wave action on Lake Ontario. Beyond protecting existing resources, the project is needed in order to expand the Port's docking facilities. Currently, demand for boat slips and other docking facilities exceeds supply, pushing boaters to use slips at other harbors. In addition to anticipated secondary effects (such as a boost in the number of boaters attending seasonal events in Olcott), the project would provide direct improvements in safety, benefitting a variety of current users. The report provides a summary of the services this harbor currently provides.

Olcott Harbor is located at the mouth of Eighteen Mile Creek and is the only deep-water port along the southern shore of Lake Ontario between the Niagara River and Rochester. The port is a critical safe harbor for vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard and NYS Police Marine Detail conduct boating patrols at the harbor. U.S. Customs and Border Protection maintains a videophone check-in point for boaters from Canada/international waters. The Niagara County Sheriff's Department Marine Division and the Olcott Volunteer Fire Department maintain boating stations here as well.

Niagara Falls International Railway Station (January 2007)

This project overview report provides an introduction to the proposal to move the

existing Amtrak station from its location on the eastern edge of Niagara Falls' downtown area to the City's heart: the Whirlpool Bridge crossing of the U.S.-Canada Border. The project's cost is estimated at upwards of \$30 million and includes three phases: preserving the historic "Old U.S. Customs House" structure (a National Register-listed site) around which the new station would be built, re-constructing the CSX railroad bridge over the Niagara River and rehabilitating the CN bridge over Whirlpool Street, and station construction. The project would upgrade security screening operations, tie together multiple modes of transportation, and improve the experience of using rail to cross the border. Project completion is currently scheduled for 2011.

Niagara Falls International Airport (2006)

This study looks at the possibilities of expanding Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) cargo-carrying capacity and charter flight service. The study looks at trends in the air cargo industry, NFIA's assets, constraints and competition, potential benefits, case studies of similar projects and what would be required to implement an expansion.

The dual themes running throughout this study are that air cargo is going to increase in importance in the future and that NFIA is uniquely well suited to increased air cargo traffic: there is room for expansion, there's very little congestion (for either planes or land-side freight haulers) and the airport's runway can accommodate planes of any size, unlike Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA).

NFIA is identified as being within the "Greater Golden Horseshoe," a region that is generally identified with Toronto and the Canadian side of Lake Ontario, but which includes Niagara Falls. Within this region, airports with cargo-carrying capacity include Pearson International in Toronto and BNIA, both of which are characterized by congestion. Hamilton International in Ontario also provides air cargo services.

This report provides a description of Foreign Trade Zone 34; NFIA is located within this zone. The report states that "A Foreign Trade Zone/Free Trade Zone (FTZ) allows foreign goods to enter free of customs duties and taxes, pending their eventual processing, trans-shipment or re-exportation." This allows manufacturers to piece together components of a product without paying a duty on individual parts. Duty is paid on products to U.S. markets only on the final product; there are no taxes on exports. Most importantly, the report states that FTZ 34 "is currently dormant."

The report points to numerous potential benefits of increased air cargo activity at NFIA including making the area more attractive to high-tech or advanced manufacturing industries that may need access to specialized air freight facilities. At the same time, air freight is not a "silver bullet" for all of the issues confronting this area. This report recommends further cooperation with Canadian interests and residents of Niagara County to explore this concept.

NFIA is uniquely well suited to increased air cargo traffic: there is room for expansion, there's very little congestion and the airport's runway can accommodate planes of any size.

Niagara National Heritage Area Study (2005)

This study looks primarily at Niagara Falls and the City of Niagara Falls as the heart of a potential National Heritage Area (NHA) that would include the municipalities along the River in Niagara County (from North Tonawanda to Youngstown/Town of Porter). The study itself was authorized by Congress and is organized around Federal requirements for an NHA, specifically that the area meets certain criteria. Management of this NHA would be either through a State agency, a regional nonprofit, or a Federal commission.

Goals of a Niagara National Heritage Area would include:

- Improving visitor experience,
- Strengthening the region’s identity,
- Increasing public awareness of local history and the need for preservation,
- Encouraging research on local history, and
- Improving the local economy

The study identifies four “heritage themes”: Natural Phenomenon, Tourism and Recreation, Power and Industry and Borderland / Border Crossing. The study also identifies three National Historic Landmarks in the study area:

- Adams Power Transformer House, Niagara Falls, the home of hydroelectric power
- Niagara Reservation (Niagara Falls State Park), designed by Frederick Law Olmstead
- Colonial Niagara District in Lewiston and Youngstown, including Old Fort Niagara

An Environmental Assessment was conducted to evaluate the potential effects of establishing an NHA in this region. It concludes that the potential impacts of this designation would not be significant. Additional visitors staying over longer periods of time would contribute to the tourism economy and specific sites might receive increased visitation as a result of this designation.

The study provides an inventory of conditions in the study area, including ongoing planning efforts, natural resources, cultural resources, recreational resources and socioeconomic resources. Items of interest in this inventory are summarized below.

- Niagara Falls State Park: Established in 1885 and formerly known as “the Niagara Reservation,” this park is currently listed “threatened / damaged by the National Park Service’s National Historic Landmark program” because of adjacent commercial development.
- Other State Parks in the area include:
 - Devil’s Hole State Park
 - Whirlpool State Park
 - Reservoir State Park
 - DeVeaux Woods State Park
- Robert Moses Parkway: this multi-lane, limited-access highway extends from Grand Island Bridge in Niagara Falls to Youngstown. It is managed by the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, with some components owned by the NY Power Authority (NYPA) and the NYS Department of Transportation. It was built in conjunction with

The National Heritage Area Study identifies four “heritage themes”: Natural Phenomenon, Tourism and Recreation, Power and Industry and Borderland / Border Crossing. The study also identifies three National Historic Landmarks in the study area:

the Niagara Power Project, circa 1960, “and originally cut through Niagara Falls State Park.” Since its development, direct public access to Niagara River/Gorge has been restricted. Several citizens’ groups have continually lobbied for the Parkway’s removal and restoration of open space, while others see it as an important route for commuters. Two lanes of the Parkway in Niagara Falls have been closed in recent years.

- Niagara Falls economic conditions: the report lists the major employers that have left Niagara Falls in recent years, including a number of industrial plants and a Nabisco plant. The report states, however that “Despite these closings, 28% of the jobs in Niagara Falls remain in the industrial sector (1997).”

Health and Safety

Niagara County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

This plan is intended to enhance Niagara County’s ability to manage emergency situations, with the focus on rapidly and adequately responding in order to minimize injury and speed recovery. It consists of three components: disaster prevention and mitigation, disaster response and disaster recovery. The CEMP defines roles and responsibilities in prevention, response and recovery, including a detailed chain of command during an emergency. This plan places an emphasis on the role of local jurisdictions as first-line responders, but identifies the key role that County departments play in the process. The CEMP points out the importance of land use controls and development regulations in hazard-prone areas (e.g., floodplain development) in hazard avoidance and minimization.

The Niagara County Emergency Management Office is identified as the coordinating office for all emergency management activities. It is “responsible for assisting individual towns and villages within Niagara County. The CEMP contains few specifics on hazards peculiar to Niagara County (e.g., sites using hazardous chemicals). This information is in Annexes on file with the Niagara County Emergency Management Office. Examples of incidents by their hazard level include: “High-hazard” incidents

- Terrorism
- Utility failure
- Severe winter storm
- Hazardous materials incident in transit

“Moderately high hazard” incidents

- Transportation accident
- Explosion
- Severe storm, ice storm or tornado
- Fixed site HAZMAT incident
- Cyber failure
- Earthquake
- Oil spill
- Ice jam
- Dam failure
- Air contamination

The CEMP places an emphasis on the role of local jurisdictions as first-line responders, but identifies the key role that County departments play in the process. The CEMP points out the importance of land use controls and development regulations in hazard-prone areas (e.g., floodplain development) in hazard avoidance and minimization.

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Chapter III

Environmental Setting & Overview

of Existing Conditions

Setting and History

A. Geographic Setting

Niagara County is located in the northwestern corner of New York State along the southern shore of Lake Ontario. Erie County and the Buffalo metropolitan area borders Niagara County to the south and southwest. Orleans County and Genesee County are located to the east and southeast, respectively. The Niagara River and the Province of Ontario Canada form the western border of Niagara County as well as the international border between the U. S. and Canada (see Figure III.A.1 Regional Context). Tonawanda Creek forms the southern boundary of the County with Erie County.

Niagara County encompasses a total land area of approximately 527 square miles. The County is located within the Huron and Ontario Lake Plain. The Ontario Plain extends from the shore of Lake Ontario southward to the Niagara Escarpment; the Huron Plain starts at the Niagara Escarpment and continues southward into Erie County. The Escarpment divides Niagara County roughly in half in an east-west direction.

The primary natural features which make Niagara County geographically and geologically unique are the Niagara Escarpment, the Niagara Gorge and Niagara Falls all of which are on the western edge of the County. The Niagara River, which creates Niagara Falls as a result of its waters flowing over the gorge, is the primary drainage passage for the four upper Great Lakes of the Midwestern part of the U.S., the largest supply of freshwater in the world.

The Niagara River is a significant international waterway forming the boundary between the U.S. and Canada. The River is divided into its upper 22.5 mile stretch and its lower 14.5 mile reach below, or north of Niagara Falls. The Niagara River drains the upper Great Lakes and flows into Lake Ontario which ultimately flows into the Atlantic Ocean through the St. Lawrence River.

Although the Niagara River is only 37 miles in total length its impact on the growth and development of the County has been enormous. Most of the early urban and industrial growth took place in the southwestern portion of the County along the Niagara River contributing to the development of the cities of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda. The Niagara River cascades over the gorge forming the Niagara Cataracts and Falls one of the most spectacular natural wonders of the world. This natural setting led to the development of relatively inexpensive hydroelectric power that historically fueled industrial expansion and the economic base of the region that continues to this day.

The geographic setting of Niagara County significantly contributes to the importance and success of agriculture in the region. Areas of Niagara County have been and continue to be very significant fruit-growing areas largely due to the combined effects of productive soils for farming, relatively flat agricultural lands and a climate that is tempered and moderated by the presence of Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment.

B. History of Niagara County

Niagara County celebrated its Bicentennial in 2008. The County was created on March 11, 1808 from what was then Genesee County, NY. Prior to its establishment, the area that was to become Niagara County was once part of a much larger region then known as Albany County that stretched across all of New York State. As originally established, Niagara County was much larger than it is today, but comprised of only the Town of Cambria.

Niagara County gets its name from the Indian word *Ongiara*, which means “thunder of water” referring, of course to Niagara Falls. Erie County, its neighbor to the south was created from Niagara County on April 2, 1821.

The history of Niagara County dates back hundreds of years when the lands were originally occupied by the Neuter Indians, then followed by what became the tribes of the Haudenosaunee, the “People of the Longhouse” who settled the area in the early 1700’s. The French and European settlers arrived during the later half of the 1600’s and into the 1700’s. The County, particularly along the Niagara River and the international border with Canada has been the setting for battles fought during the French and Indian Wars, the War of 1812 and the Patriot War.

In the early years of the 19th century the eastern portion of Niagara County was more settled and populated than the western portion as settlement moved westward across the State. The area was primarily agricultural with overland supply routes to western areas of the County. As expansion moved westward military forts were positioned at both ends of the Niagara River to protect trading posts and strategic

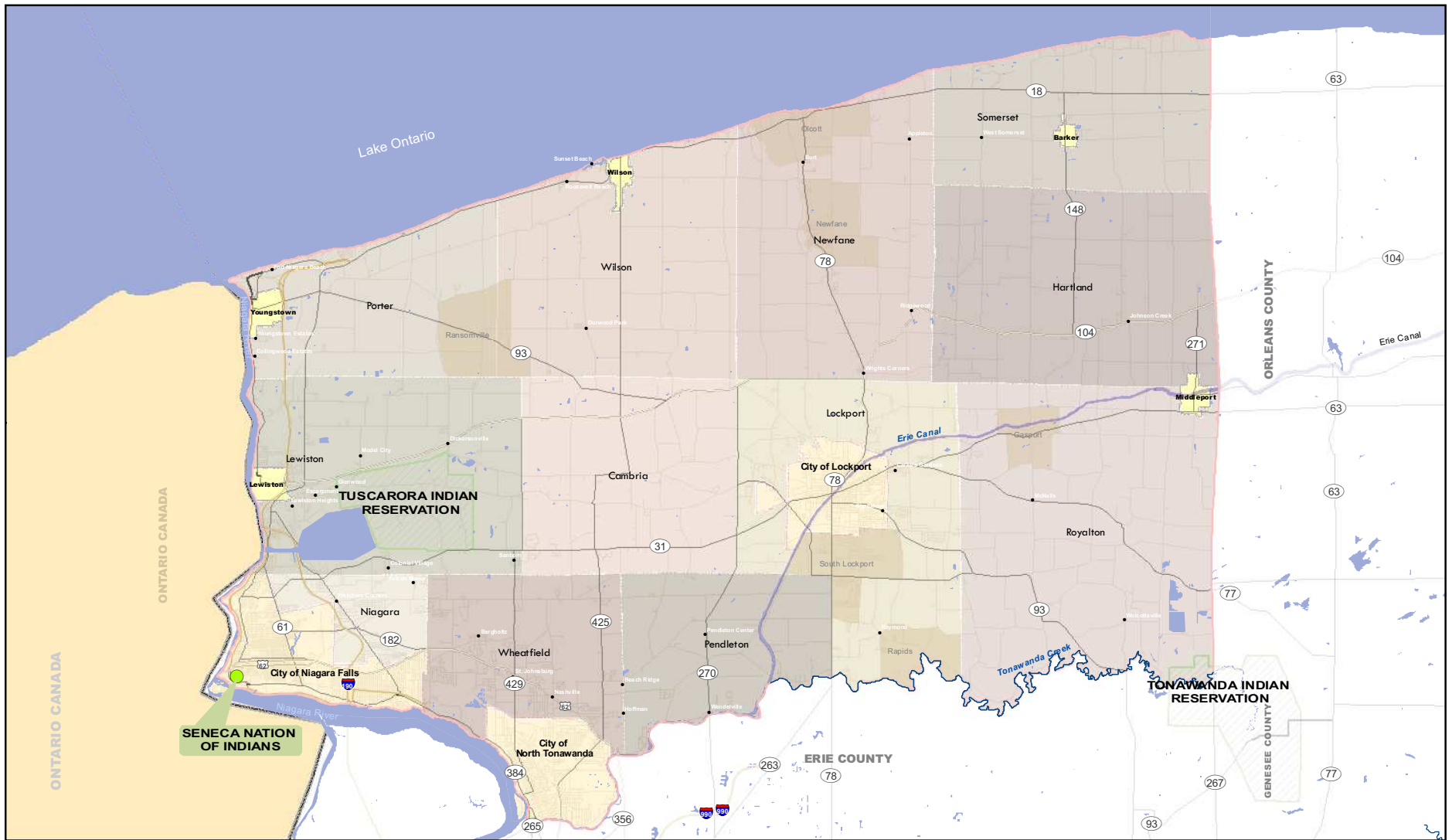




Regional Context

Figure III.A.1

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Niagara County Communities

Figure III.C.1

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transportation routes. Small concentrated areas of growth included rural market places at Ransomville, Barker, and the waterfront villages of Youngstown and Lewiston (Niagara County Planning Board 1961).

Fort Niagara, in the Town of Porter, is a National Historic Site dating back to the time of LaSalle in 1679. The Fort was also known as Fort Conti and Fort Denonville and had been at one time under the control of the French, British and Americans. The French Castle built in 1726 is the oldest standing structure at the site (Niagara Historic Trail 1993).

The construction of the Erie Canal in the 1820's resulted in the first period of major growth and development in the County. Niagara County is located at the westernmost end of the 363 mile long State Erie Canal System. The five locks along the canal in the City of Lockport know as the "Flight of Five" were completed in 1825. These locks were necessary to overcome the changes in elevation along the canal due to Niagara Escarpment. Lockport became the grain milling and shipping center of the County as a result of the construction of the Canal.

Just like other areas of Upstate New York the advance of the railroads by the mid-1800's spurred additional expansion throughout the region, particularly as settlement moved outward from Buffalo. The important combination of opportunities for shipping raw materials and goods by both rail and ships through ports along the Great Lakes from the Midwest U.S. gave rise to the manufacturing of steel and the chemical industry throughout the region. The region continued its growth during the mid to late 1800's and well into the 20th century, particularly due to the advent of relatively inexpensive hydroelectric power generated by Niagara Falls.

With few exceptions much of the growth in population and expansion of urban and suburban development during the first half on the 20th century was concentrated in the southwestern portions of Niagara County adjacent to the Niagara River in the City of Niagara Falls and the City of North Tonawanda. Farther inland the City of Lockport continued to develop along the Erie/Barge Canal system during the early part of the century.

The widespread availability of automobiles to many families and the construction of paved roadways, then highways, and eventually the interstate system during the 1940's through the 1970's accelerated an outward expansion of urban and suburban development into other areas of the County. Populations from the industrialized cities in the southwestern portion of the County migrated to the east, northeast and northward into the rural and agricultural towns and villages of the County.

This same pattern of outward expansion from the traditional population centers in the southwestern portion of the County continues to this day, but at a much slower pace. However, the biggest difference in recent decades has been expansion of suburban forms of development into rural areas without any actual growth in population. In fact the County's overall population continues to decline. The issue of sprawl into the rural areas of the County which results from this expansion without true growth in population is an important issue and a growing topic of concern in many communities in the County as expressed in later chapters and throughout the development of this Plan.

Interestingly, the issue of sprawl is not just a present day concern as many might think.

The history of Niagara County is rich dating back hundreds of years, details of which are beyond the ability to provide in this Plan. Readers are encouraged to contact the Niagara County Historian for more information.

Concerns over sprawl were acknowledged several decades ago in the Erie-Niagara Regional Plan that was prepared by the Erie County Planning Department and the Niagara County Planning Board in 1961. This same overall concerns expressed in that plan nearly five decades ago are still relevant today. The plan stated: *“Urban blight and urban sprawl are twin problems, essentially interrelated and interacting. Devising effective means of coping with each of these problems requires that they be approached in the total concept of the regional urban structure so that comprehensive planning efforts by the local municipalities mesh together rather than conflict with each other.”*

C. Political and Administrative Structure

Niagara County is a non-charter county under New York State law which means it has not adopted its own charter. As a result, Niagara County operates under New York’s County Law. Thirty-seven of New York’s 57 counties (not including the five borough’s of New York City) operate under this non-charter form of county government. Nineteen of those 37 counties, including Niagara County, have replaced their original board of supervisors, as prescribed by County Law, with an elected county legislature as their law-making body. These counties provide for a county administrator or county manager to run the day-to-day operations of the county. Niagara County is one of only five counties in the State that employ a county manager.

Attempts at adopting a charter for Niagara County have not succeeded in the past when brought before the voters. Most recently, a referendum to replace the current form of government with a chartered form was defeated in 2001. The referendum passed in the County’s cities, but was defeated in the towns by an almost two-to-one margin. The result is that Niagara County remains New York State’s most populous county to not have an adopted charter (Western New York Coalition for Progress 2006).

Niagara County operates through an elected county legislature as its legislative or law-making body. As a non-charter county all laws created by the legislature must be consistent with the general laws of New York State. The county seat for Niagara County is the City of Lockport where many, but no all, County services are provided.

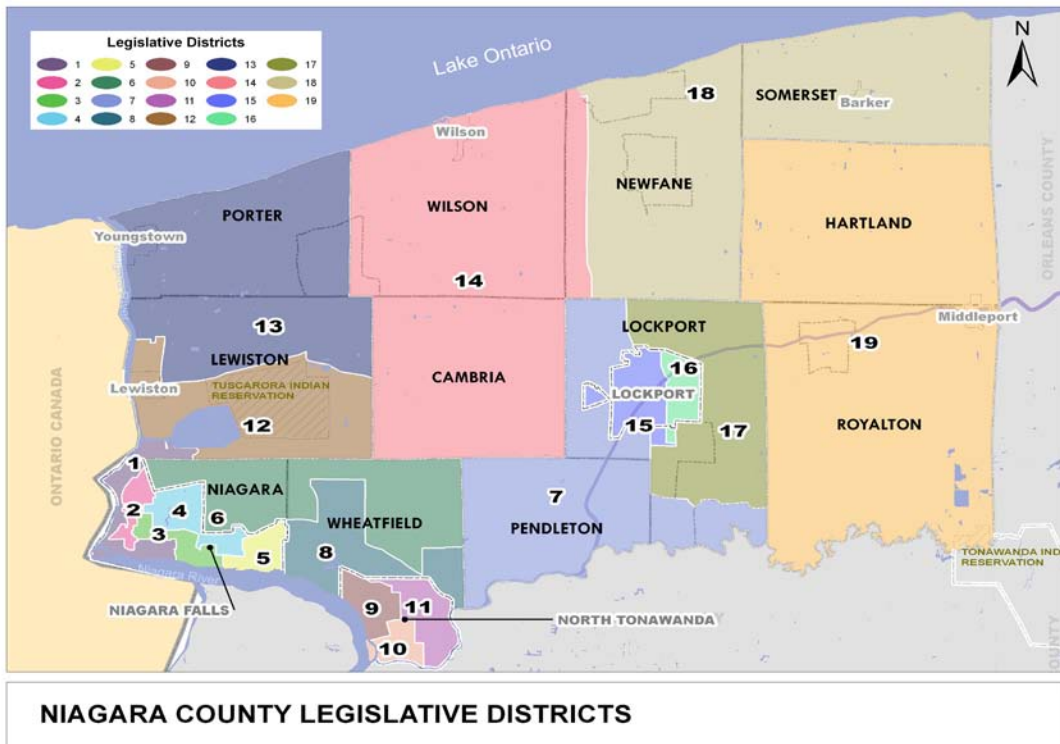
The Niagara County Legislature, as the legislative body includes a chairman, vice chairman, majority leader and a minority leader. Legislators filling each of these positions also serve the constituents of one of the 19 legislative districts in the County. County Legislators serve two year terms and the entire Legislature is elected at the same time.

As the chief governing body of Niagara County the responsibilities of the Legislature include establishing the County budget and tax levy, establishing policies for the provision of County services, approving contracts and appointing key staff to serve in County agencies.

New York State includes 62 counties, including the five boroughs of New York City, a combined total of 1,544 cities, towns and villages, and 14 Native American reservations.

Niagara County is comprised of 20 municipalities including 3 cities, 12 towns, 5 villages and 3 Native American reservations.

The County is divided into 19 legislative districts.



The County Legislature includes six legislative work committees designed to address issues related to important County services and functions including:

1. Administration
2. Community Services
3. Community Safety and Security
4. Public Works
5. Economic Development
6. Refuse

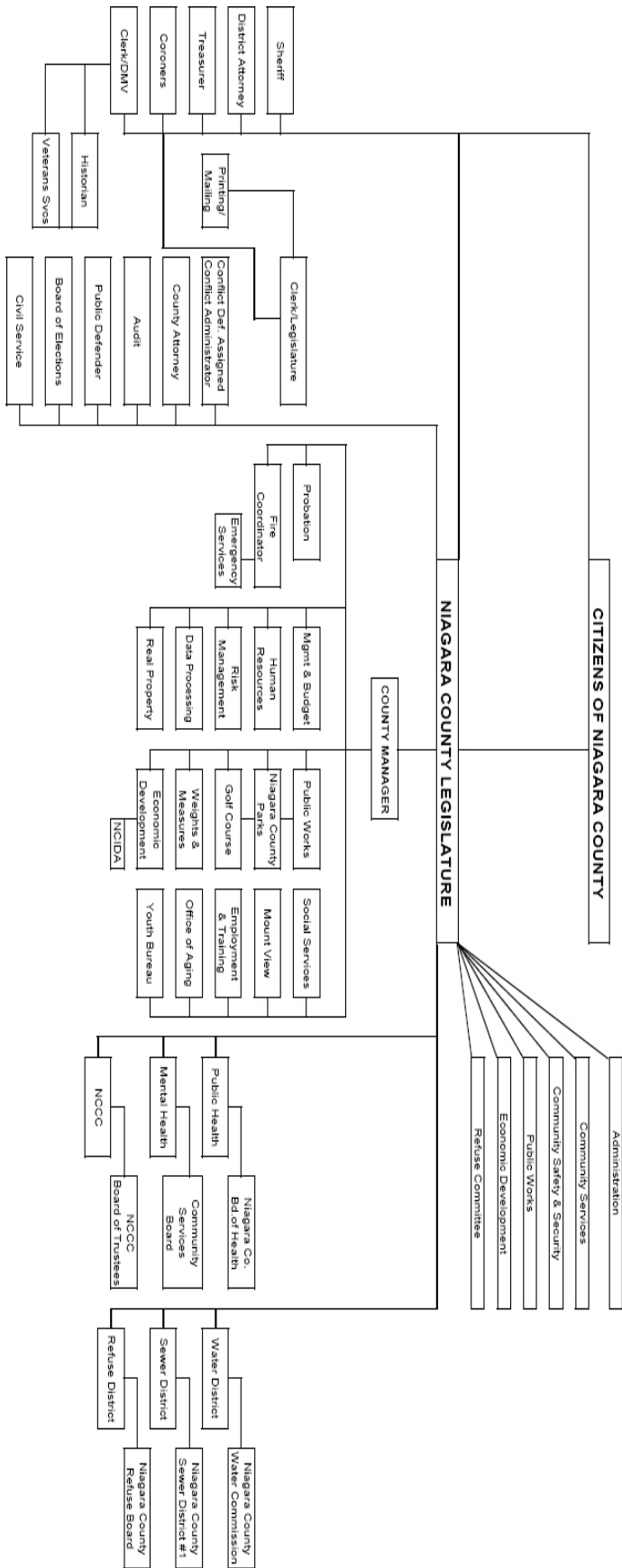
The County Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of operations by the County. The Niagara County Manager is an appointed position of the County Legislature under a four year contract.

Responsibilities of the County Manager per the Administrative Code include overseeing the operations and management of all county departments, county-owned facilities and county staff. The Manager is responsible for preparing a draft county budget and submitting it to the Legislature for its approval or/or modification. The Manager also appoints county department heads, which are also subject to the approval of the Legislature.

The organizational chart of the County that follows illustrates the various departments, boards and commissions that function within County government. The chart also identifies the general types of services provided by Niagara County. Information on County Departments and services is provided in more detail in Chapter VII. of this Plan.

Information about the County Legislature including district representatives, meeting schedules and standing committees can be found on the County's website at www.niagaracounty.com and the County Board of Elections website at www.elections.niagara.ny.us.

**NIAGARA COUNTY
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



2/5/2008

D. Environmental Features

1. Climate

The climate of Niagara County is northern temperate and considered to be relatively mild compared to other locations at similar northern latitudes in the U.S. Climatic conditions are tempered due to the County's location in the westernmost part of New York State along the shore of Lake Ontario and proximity to Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes. Niagara County's general climate and daily weather conditions are greatly influenced throughout each of the four seasons of the year by the presence of these two Great Lakes.

The County has relatively humid, warm summers and fairly long, cold winters. Lake Ontario, in particular, has a significant impact on local climate and daily fluctuations in weather conditions. Lake Ontario and the topography of the region contribute to the moderation of temperatures during each season of the year, cooling the area in the summer, and moderating the severe cold that flows southward from Canada during the winter. Snowfall in this part of New York State is enhanced in winter by the westerly and southwesterly winds flowing over the relatively warmer lake waters.

It takes water longer to heat up and cool down than land. As a result, Lake Ontario is a source of heat during the fall which provides for a longer frost-free growing season in Niagara County than surrounding areas. The modification of local temperature conditions are very conducive to growing grapes and other temperature-sensitive fruits and farming in the County. There is also a noticeable delay of plant growth and to the warming of the air during the spring due to the relatively cold lake waters.

The following yearly averages are experienced in Niagara County based on most recent weather data collected from late 2007:

Annual Average Daily High Temperature:	57.2 degrees F
Annual Average Daily Low Temperature:	38.2 degrees F
Number of Days 90 degrees F or more:	5
Number of Nights of 32 degrees F or less:	143
Liquid precipitation:	35.7 inches annually
Annual Average Snowfall:	82 inches

2. Topography

Niagara County is located within the Huron and Ontario Lake Plain. The Ontario Plain extends from the shore of Lake Ontario approximately 8 miles southward to the Niagara Escarpment (see Figure III.D.1a. Relief Map).

The Huron Plain begins at the Niagara Escarpment and continues southward where it terminates in Erie County. The Ontario Plain is relatively flat with broad valleys and small streams that flow northward into Lake Ontario. Topography of both the Huron and Ontario Plain is relatively flat with slopes of less than 20 feet in elevation per mile.

The shoreline of Lake Ontario contains vertical bluffs that range in elevation between 15 to 60 feet high. These bluffs are unique and continuously being eroded by the wind and wave action along the Lake's shoreline (see Figure III.D.1b. Elevations). The ordinary high water elevation of Lake Ontario is 247.3 feet (International Great Lakes Datum or

Weather conditions are moderated in the County by the Great Lakes and local landforms making the area a significant fruit and wine-growing region.

IGLD), the lowest of the five Great Lakes. By contrast the elevation of Lake Erie is 573.4 feet IGLD (*Niagara River Greenway Commission 2007*). That significant difference in elevation contributes to the beauty and uniqueness of Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Escarpment is a visually prominent natural feature in the County rising more than 600 feet in elevation, crossing the County in an east/west direction (*Niagara County Planning Board 1961*). Niagara Falls is the result of where the Niagara River crosses the Escarpment. At the Falls, the Niagara River plummets approximately 212 feet from its upper reach into its lower reach.

The Escarpment is steepest in the western portion of the County. It is a spectacular geologic feature that is visually distinct from the rest of the County ranging in slope from 106 to 317 feet in elevation per mile. The Escarpment is also a unique area providing a diversity of wildlife and vegetation habitats.

The Huron Plain is also characterized by relatively flat uniform topography, broken up occasionally by low-lying ridges. Overland drainage south of the Niagara Escarpment is channeled to the west to feed into the Niagara River. The primary drainage way to the Niagara River is Tonawanda Creek which flows more than 90 miles westward from its headwaters in Genesee County east of Niagara County.

3. Geology

a. Bedrock

Geological conditions that contribute to the spectacular natural features and landscape of Niagara County are described as either bedrock or surficial geology. Bedrock is the rocky layer or the “crust” of the earth’s surface which has a thickness of several miles. In some places of the County bedrock is exposed at or near the surface, but in most cases bedrock is unseen and lies beneath layers of inorganic geologic materials and the organic components of surface soils.

The primary bedrock formations of Niagara County are Queenston shale, Lockport dolomitic limestone and Rochester shale (see Figure III.D.2a. Bedrock Geology). Lairdsville and Lockport soils found in the County come from parent material that is eroded away from the Queenston shale formation. Brockport soils come from eroded material in the Rochester shale formation. Queenston shale can be found around the banks of the Niagara River Gorge. Lockport dolomitic limestone is exposed along the Niagara Escarpment and can be seen along the Erie/Barge Canal in the County.

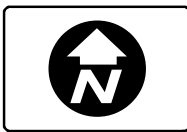
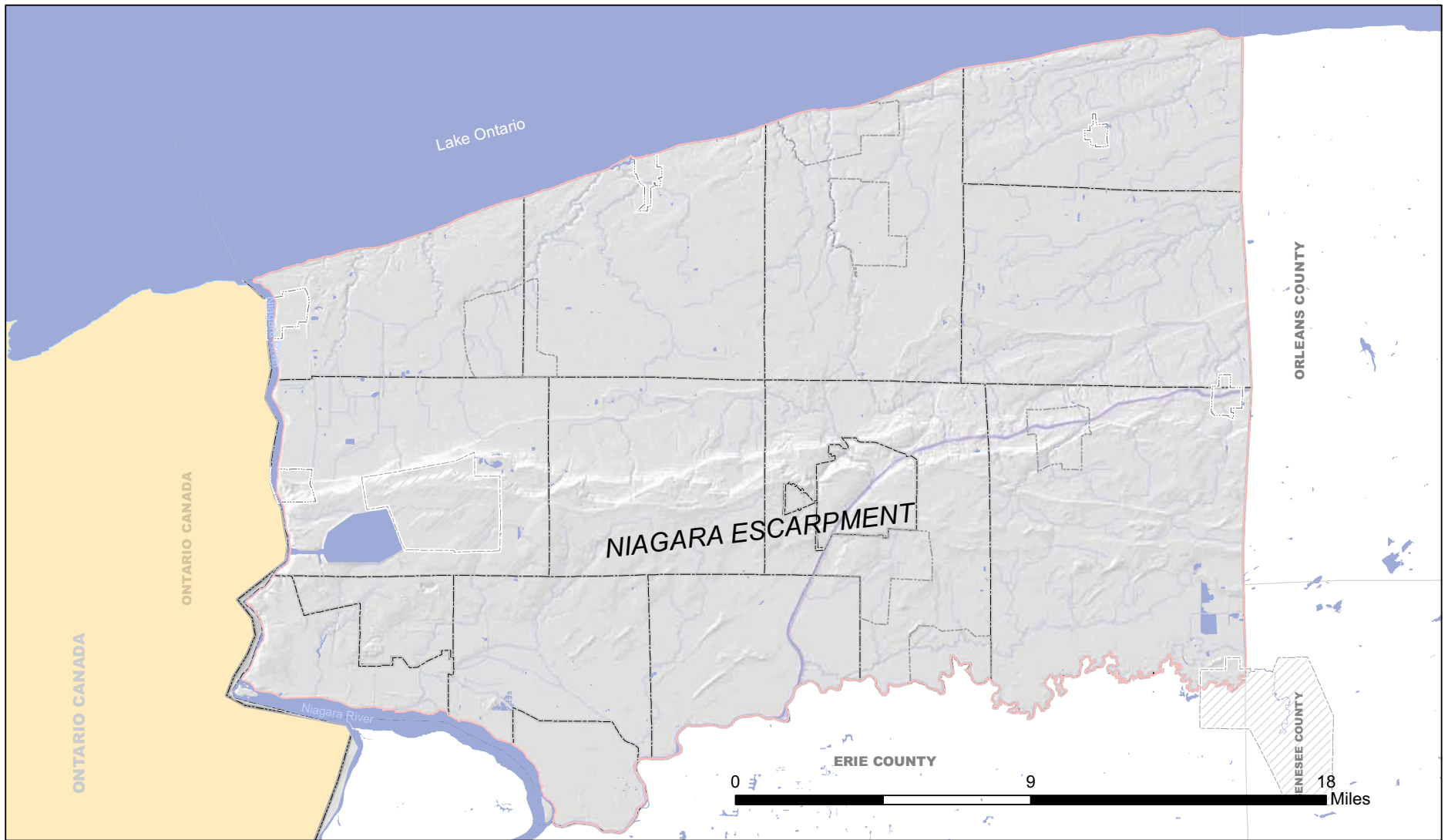
Bedrock is an important consideration in land use development and construction projects. Depending on its stability, hardness and depth from the surface, bedrock could be a significant constraint to development and quite costly to overcome.

The American Falls are 184 feet high and 1,060 feet wide containing approximately 10% of the flow of the Niagara River.

The Horseshoe Falls in Canada are 176 feet high and 2,200 feet wide containing about 90% of the flow of the River.



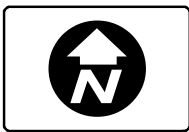
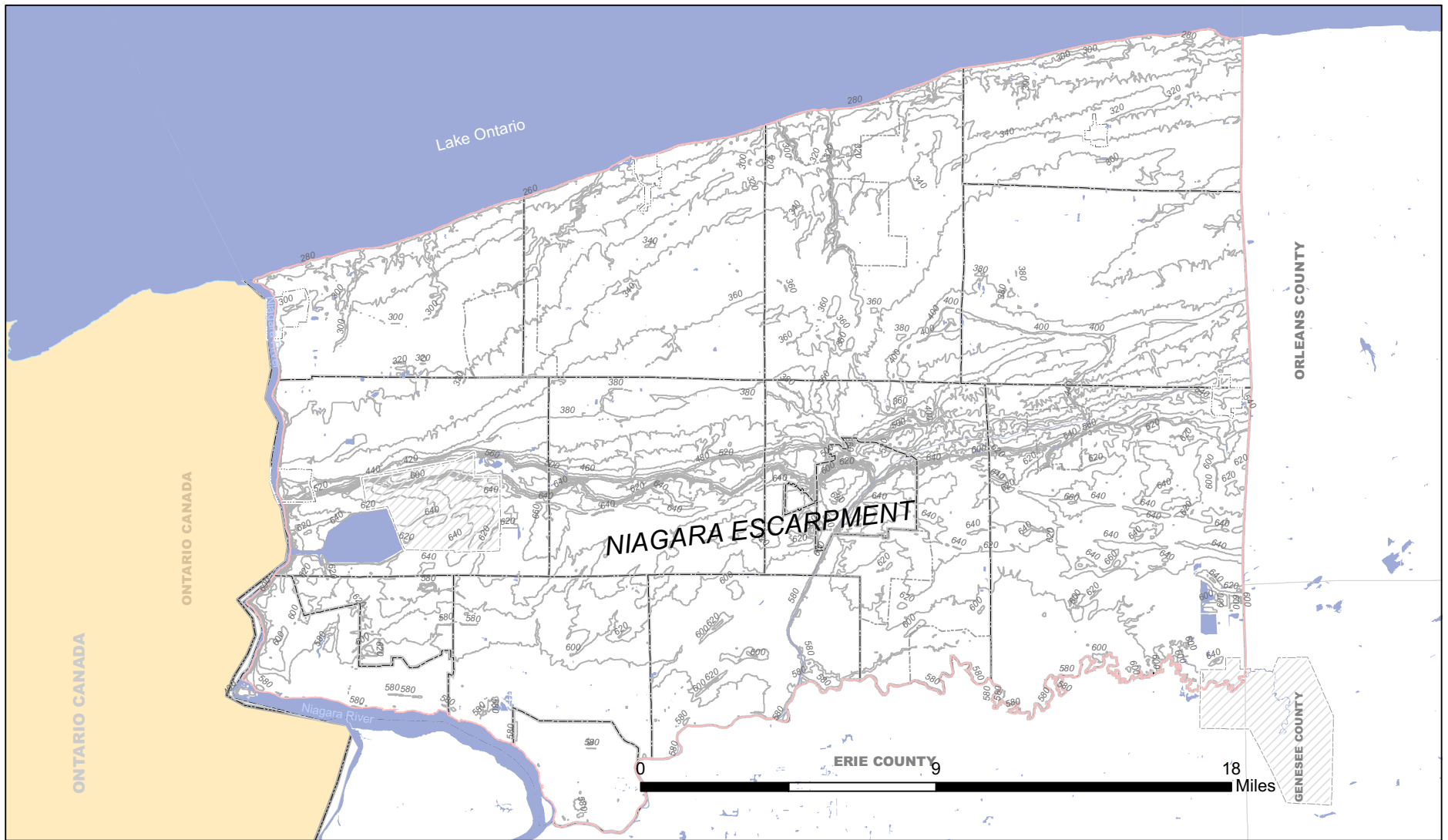
Ninety percent of New York State bedrock is covered by surface deposits that are more than three feet thick.



Relief Map

Figure
III.D.1a

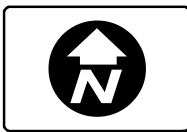
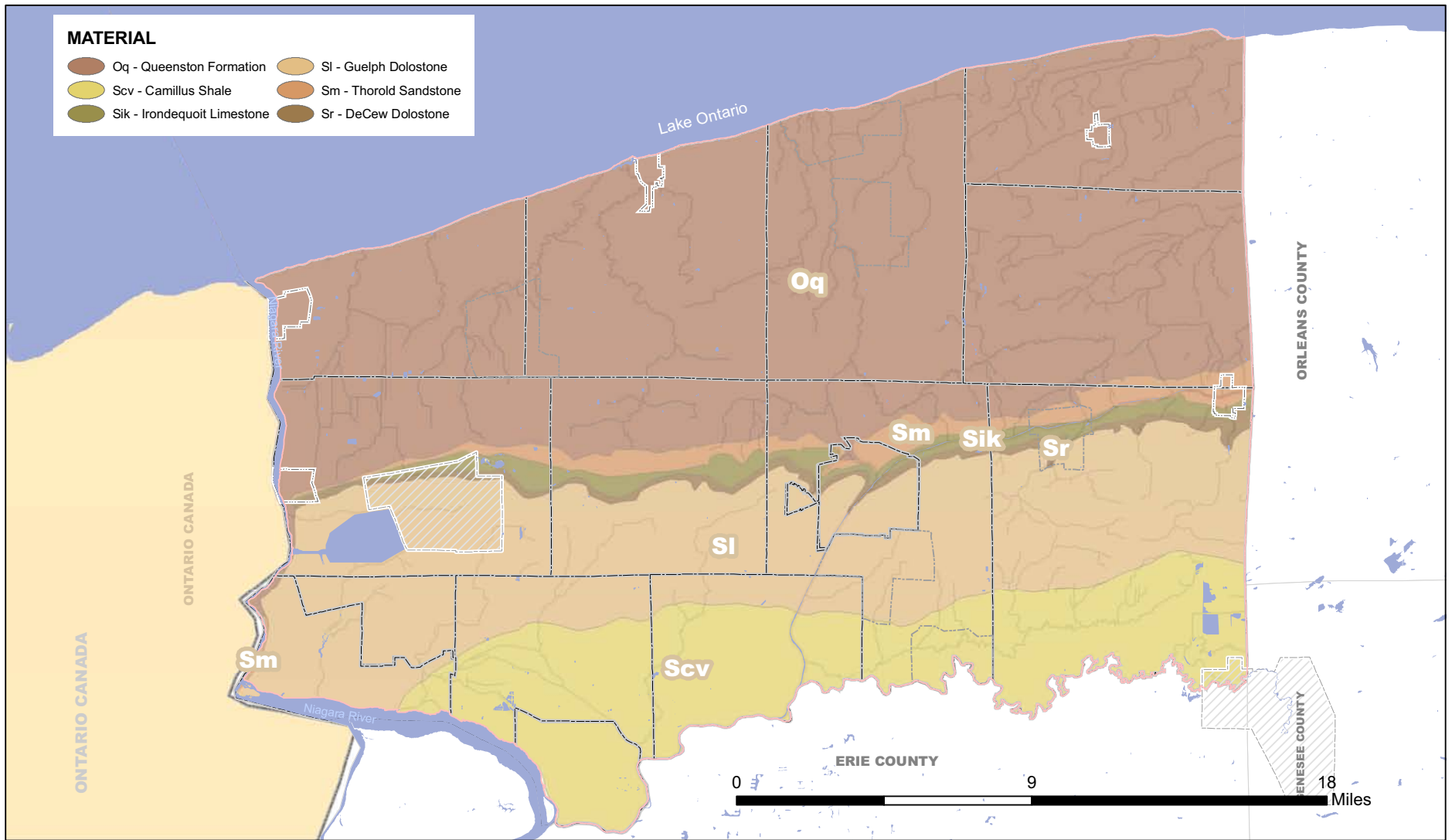
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Elevation Above
Sea Level

Figure
III.D.1b

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Bedrock Geology

Figure III.D.2.a

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b. Surficial Deposits

Bedrock is usually covered by a relatively shallow layer of soil and other loose granular material, mostly sands and gravel. The product of erosion and the “weathering” of materials by wind and water over long periods of time breaks down parent materials found in bedrock into these smaller loose granular materials. These materials are then transported by wind, water and ice. Over the course of centuries these loose materials are deposited in concentrations and form many of the features that contribute to the natural landscapes seen in the County.

Niagara County soils are largely composed of materials deposited during the most recent ice age, which ended approximately 12,000 years ago. The glacially deposited material, called glacial till, was scoured by receding ice sheets and deposited in the form of hills, ridges and plains. The different types of surficial deposits found in Niagara County are identified in Figure III.D.2b. Surficial Geology.

Four types of glacial till deposits exist in the County. These are ground moraines, drumlins, elongated till ridges and terminal moraines. Glacial till underlies most areas and consist of lake sediments. These sediments are the remnants of glacial lakes that were once present in the region.

Deltas were formed in Niagara County when one large glacial lake overflowed into another. These lakes would occasionally remain for long periods of time forming distinct shorelines. The gravel bed along NYS Route 104 which traverses Niagara County in an east-west direction is a good example of where a distinct shoreline was created from what was once Lake Iroquois that existed during glacial times.

The Lake Ontario shoreline exhibits thick layers of lake sediments as a remnant of Lake Iroquois. Lake Iroquois was the last large glacial lake in the region. This glacial lake covered the area north of NYS Route 104. The deepest parts of the lake surrounded what is now the shore of Lake Ontario. Thick lake sediments were deposited as silt and clay. These thick sediments around the shoreline of Lake Ontario consist of lacustrine soils such as Collamer, Niagara, Hudson and Rhinebeck (USDA Soil Conservation Service 1972).

Other glacial lakes were present in the Niagara region. Lake Lundy contributed to the reddish-colored lake sediments that form Odessa, Lakemont and Schoharie soils. Lake Tonawanda contributed to olive and brown colored sediments that form Raynham, Rhinebeck and Canandaigua soils. Lockport, Lairdsville, Hilton, Appleton, Cazenovia and Ovid soils were all formed from shallow portions of Lake Iroquois. Collamer, Niagara and Hudson soils were formed in the deeper parts of Lake Iroquois. Rhinebeck soils, although formed in Lake Tonawanda, are also believed to have been formed in the deeper parts of Lake Iroquois.

4. Soils

There are 11 soil associations that exist in Niagara County. These soil associations are briefly described below summarized from the Niagara County Soil Survey. The Soil Survey should be consulted for detailed soils information and locations of the

Four types of glacial till deposits exist in the County. These are ground moraines, drumlins, elongated till ridges and terminal moraines.

Important details on soils found in Niagara County and elsewhere can be found at the Natural Resources Conservation Service website at www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app

soils in Niagara County.

Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Glacial Till

These soil associations cover approximately 33 percent of Niagara County. The primary use of these soils has historically been for dairy farming.

Appleton-Hilton-Sun association

These soils are deep, moderately well-drained to very poorly drained soils having medium textured subsoil. This association is mainly located in parts of Newfane and Wilson, the southern part of Somerset and the northern part of Hartland. The Appleton-Hilton-Sun association occupies approximately 14 percent of the County.

Hilton-Ovid-Ontario association

These soils are deep, well-drained to somewhat poorly drained soils having medium textured or moderately fine textured subsoil. There is one continuous area that occupies the central region of Niagara County in an east to west direction. This area includes a limestone escarpment and a sandy delta near the City of Lockport. The Hilton-Ovid-Ontario association occupies approximately 15 percent of the County.

Lockport-Ovid association

These soils are moderately deep, somewhat poorly drained soils having fine textured or moderately fine textured subsoil. There are six separate areas in the County where these soils can be found. This association exists in the area north of NYS Route 104. The Lockport-Ovid association occupies approximately four percent of the County.

Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Gravelly Glacial Outwash or in Beach or Bar Deposits

These soil associations cover approximately six percent of Niagara County and are located in the northern half of the County. Fruit and vegetable growing is the major use for these soils. Sand and gravel can be obtained from these associations as well.

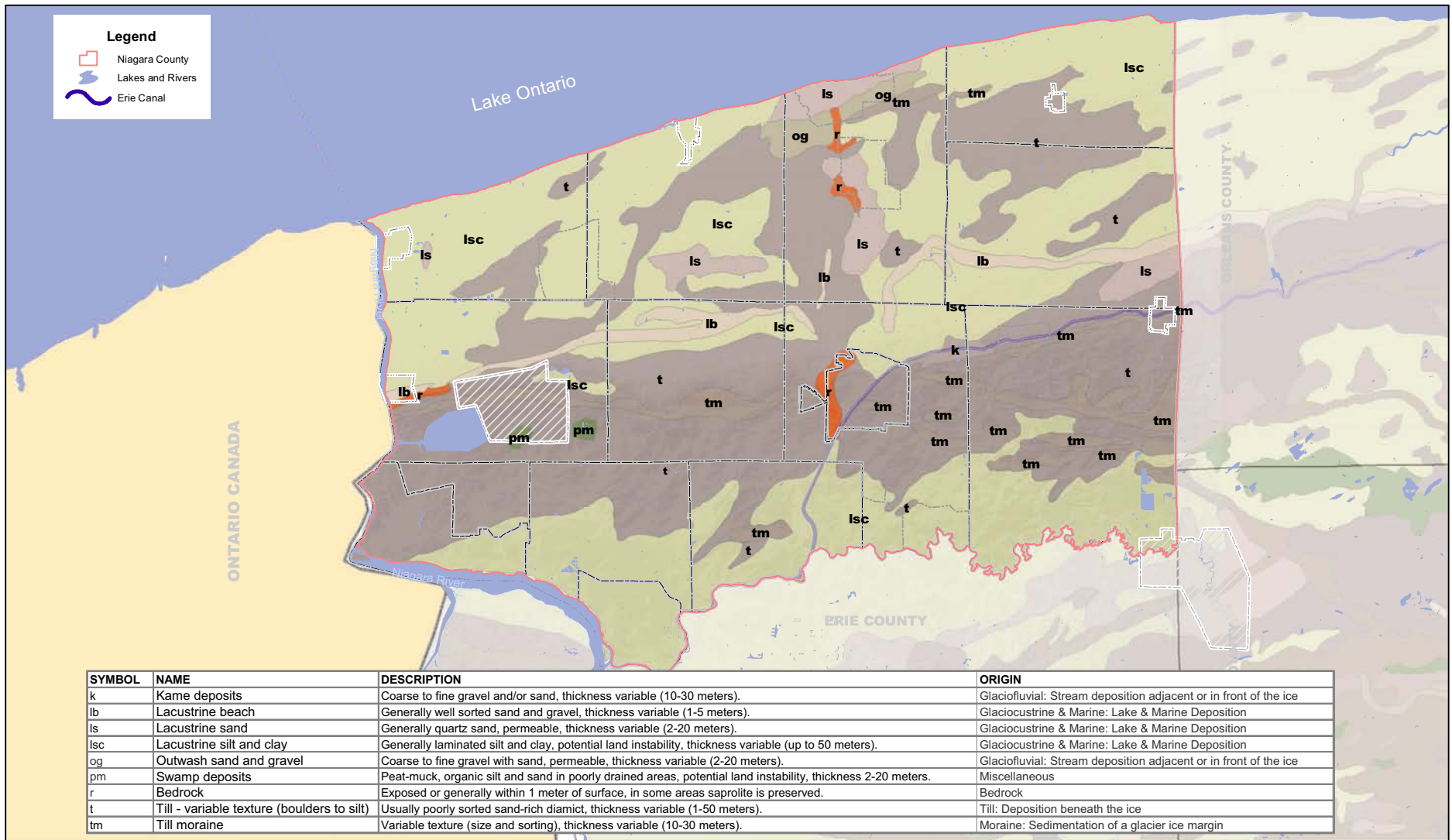
Howard-Arkport-Phelps association

These soils are deep, somewhat excessively drained to moderately well drained soils having a medium textured to moderately coarse textured subsoil located over gravel and sand deposits. This association is found extending from east to west in the hamlet of Olcott. The northern boundary is formed by Lake Ontario. The Howard-Arkport-Phelps association occupies approximately two percent of the County.

Otisville-Altmar-Fredon-Stafford association

These soils are deep, excessively drained to poorly drained soils having medium textured to coarse textured subsoil over gravel and sand deposits. Areas include a large area near Wrights Corners and Ridgewood, and its northern extension along Hess Road and a separate large and a small area near Ewings Road and Chestnut Street. The Otisville-Altmar-Fredon-Stafford association occupies approximately four percent of the County.

A soil association is made up of adjacent soils that are large enough to be mapped individually, but are not due to the time and effort required to do so. Rather these soils are considered as one unit because of uniformity in the pattern of their characteristics and the extent of dominant soils, although individual soils may differ greatly from one another.



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Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Lake Laid Sands

These soil associations cover approximately eight percent of Niagara County. Fruit and vegetable growing is the major use for these soils.

Minoa-Galen-Elnora association

These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained and moderately well-drained soils having a medium-textured, moderately coarse textured, or coarse textured subsoil, located over fine or very fine sand. The largest areas of this association occur near Chapman Road in the Town of Hartland and near Hatter Road in the Town of Newfane. The Minoa-Galen-Elnora association occupies approximately four percent of the County.

Claverack-Cosad-Elnora association

These soils are deep, well drained to somewhat poorly drained soils having coarse textured subsoil, located over clay or fine sand. There are 4 separate areas that occur in Niagara County. All four occur north of NYS Route 104 with the largest single area being near Ransomville. The Claverack-Cosad-Elnora association occupies approximately four percent of the County.

Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Lake-laid Silts and Very Fine Sands

These soil associations cover approximately 17 percent of Niagara County. These soils are limited for farm use because of the natural drainage issues that occur with these soils. Vegetable growing is feasible on these soils.

Niagara- Collamer association

These soils are deep, poorly drained to moderately well drained soils having a medium textured to moderately fine textured subsoil. There are 4 major areas that are found in the County. More than one-half of the association's total acreage is found near Slayton Settlement and Wheeler Roads. The Niagara-Collamer association occupies about six percent of the County.

Canandaigua-Raynham-Rhinebeck association

These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained soils having dominant medium-textured to fine textured subsoil. This association is found in the City of North Tonawanda and part of the Tonawanda Reservation. The Canandaigua-Raynham-Rhinebeck association occupies approximately 11 percent of the County.

Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Lake-laid Clays and Silts

These soil associations cover approximately 36 percent of Niagara County. There is little to no farming value derived from these soils due to drainage constraints.

Rhinebeck-Ovid-Madalin association

These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained soils having fine textured or moderately fine textured subsoil that is dominantly brown or olive in color. The majority of this association can be found near the Village of

Youngstown. The Rhinebeck-Ovid-Madalin association occupies approximately 15 percent of the County.

Odessa-Lakemont-Ovid association

These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained to very poorly drained soils having fine textured or moderately fine textured subsoil that is dominantly reddish in color. The larger of two areas is found west of the Erie/Barge Canal. The other area is found east of the Erie/Barge Canal. The Odessa-Lakemont-Ovid association occupies approximately 21 percent of the County.

Hydric Soils

There are 14 different hydric soils listed for Niagara County (USDA NRCS website). As hydric soils these are generally poorly drained, and may be strong indicators of the presence of other important wetland characteristics including areas of important groundwater recharge.

Figure III.D.3. Hydric Soils illustrates the mapped locations of hydric soils known to exist in Niagara County. The map indicates important surface waters features, including streams that may be associated with these soils and their drainage characteristics. The Niagara County Soils Survey contains detailed characteristics about these and other specific soils found in Niagara County and should be consulted for more information on possible development uses and constraints.

5. Water Resources

Niagara County is bordered by three significant bodies of water and numerous smaller creeks and streams that drain both the Lake Ontario and Niagara River watersheds. Lake Ontario borders the northern part of the County, Tonawanda Creek borders the south, and the Niagara River borders the County to the west. The abundance of freshwater resources in Niagara County have had a tremendous influence on the unique history of the County and provides similar opportunities for the County's future. The extent of the County's two primary watersheds, the Oak Orchard-Twelve-mile watershed that drains the northern half of the County into Lake Ontario and the Niagara watershed that drains into the Niagara River are illustrated in Figure III.D.4. Hydrology.

Tonawanda Creek, a primary inland stream, flows east-west through five counties, including Niagara County, for a distance of approximately 90 miles. Tonawanda Creek drains an area of about 650 square miles as a primary tributary of the Niagara River. The creek is classified as Class C by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and is best suited for fishing and similar uses.

Niagara County is a true gateway location providing access to other significant water resources in the northeastern U.S. and southern Ontario, Canada. Local waterways are important destinations that offer passage for boaters traveling Lake Ontario and other waterways such as the St. Lawrence River and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Erie/Barge Canal is a man made waterway and an important part of the history of Niagara County. The Canal significantly contributes to the uniqueness of many communities in the County. The Canal enters the County near the Village

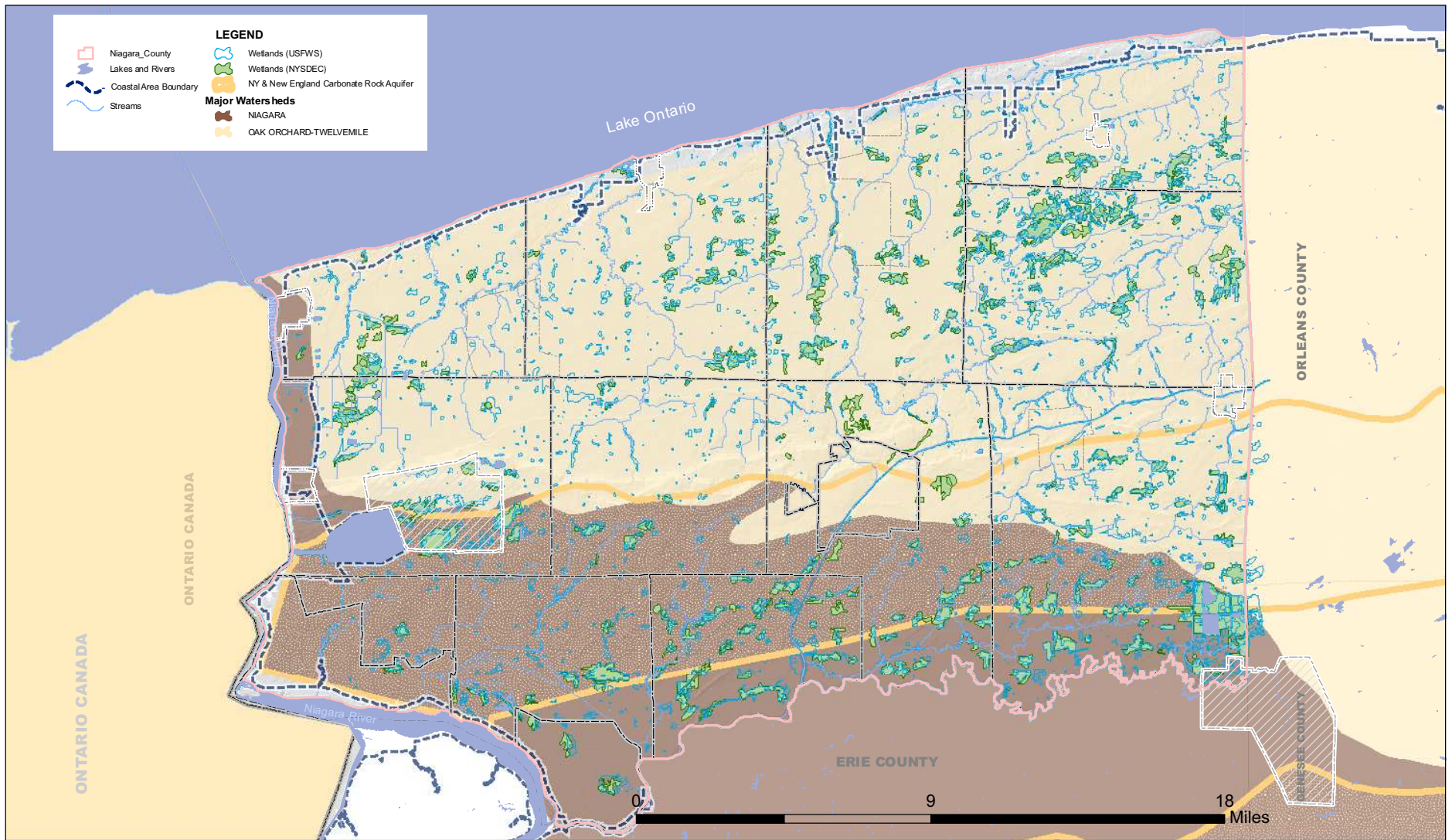
Niagara County has two primary watersheds, the Oak Orchard-Twelve-mile watershed that drains into Lake Ontario and the Niagara watershed that drains into the Niagara River.



Hydric Soils

Figure
III.D.3

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Hydrology

Figure III.D.4

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of Middleport in the northernmost part of the Town of Royalton then traversing westward through the Town and City of Lockport, then southward into the Town of Pendleton where it joins Tonawanda Creek.

Another significant man-made water body is the Lewiston Power Reservoir located in the southwestern portion of the Town of Lewiston. The water that is pooled in the reservoir is used to generate power at the Robert Moses Niagara Power Project.

The natural and man-made water resources of Niagara County are unique to the County and its communities. Their individual or combined importance to the culture and heritage of the area is well beyond the scope of detail of this Plan and interested persons are encouraged to contact the County's Historian for further information. There is an extensive body of work done by others especially in recent years that detail the history of these resources as well as the many future opportunities associated with these resources.

6. Aquifers

The New York and New England Carbonate Rock Aquifer is a principal aquifer that underlies a considerable portion of the southern half of Niagara County. The location of this aquifer and other significant hydrologic features within the County are identified in Figure III.D.4. Hydrology.

Three bedrock aquifers are contained within this principal aquifer. These include the limestone aquifer occurring in the Onondaga Limestone, Akron Dolomite and the Bertie Limestone formations; the Camillus aquifer occurring in the Camillus Shale formation, the Syracuse formation and the Vernon Shale formation; and the Lockport aquifer occurring in the Lockport Dolomite formation. All three bedrock aquifers yield small to moderate quantities of water and are not used for significant public withdrawals of water (Niagara River Greenway Commission 2007). Public water supplies provided by the County's Water District are obtained from the Niagara River.

7. Wetlands

Freshwater wetlands are a valuable natural resource and provide a variety of important functions to maintain a healthy, well-balanced natural environment. Among the many functions provided, wetlands serve as a flood control mechanism by temporarily storing and gradually releasing large amounts of stormwater runoff to surface and groundwater resources. Wetland benefits include filtration of contaminants and aquifer recharge. Wetlands also control the erosion of soils by supporting the presence of vegetation that are adapted to living in wet environments. They also provide valuable habitat and food sources for indigent and transient wildlife. Wetlands and wetland complexes that hydraulically link wetlands provide humans with passive forms of recreation and educational opportunities such as nature study, bird watching and wildlife conservation.

Wetlands are identified by three different parameters or criteria: vegetation, hydrology and soils. In order for a wetland to exist, all three parameters must be present. Generally speaking, wetlands fall under the jurisdiction of two regulating agencies. Wetlands are regulated by either the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under



Niagara County contains approximately 29,795 acres of potential Federally-regulated wetlands and approximately 17,813 acres of potential State-regulated wetlands.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which are considered Federally regulated wetlands, or by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) under Article 24 of the New York State Conservation Law. The Corps of Engineers has no size requirement for regulating Federal wetlands as long as they meet wetland criteria and considered hydraulically connected to waters of the United States. The NYSDEC regulates and designates wetlands as State regulated if they meet the criteria and are greater than 12.4 acres in size.

Wetlands exist and are fairly evenly distributed throughout much of Niagara County. Known wetlands are identified in Figure III.D.4 Hydrology. These wetland areas are categorized as either National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetlands, that typically may be under the jurisdiction of the Corps of Engineers, and NYSDEC wetlands that may be under the jurisdiction of New York State.

Approximately 29,795 acres of potential Federal wetlands exist in Niagara County; and approximately 17,813 acres of potential State-regulated wetlands exist based on current GIS mapping data. Although Figure III.D.4 shows the general locations of known or suspected wetlands based on soils data or other information, field reconnaissance and boundary delineations by wetland specialists are necessary to adequately determine the presence and extent of wetland boundaries in specific areas. Mapped wetlands presented in this Plan are intended to provide general information on location and type of wetland characteristics that may be present for planning purposes only. This limited information should not be the basis for making site specific decisions regarding development potential or opportunities for wetland preservation, conservation or management.

8. *Wildlife Management Areas*

The Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area is located in the extreme southeast portion of Niagara County in the Town of Royalton (see Figure III.D.5. Parks, Recreation and Open Space). The Wildlife Management Area mostly consists of wetlands and is within the floodplain of Tonawanda Creek. In addition to providing significant and diversified floral (vegetation) and faunal (wildlife) habitats, this area offers a variety of recreational opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, nature study, and other similar pursuits.

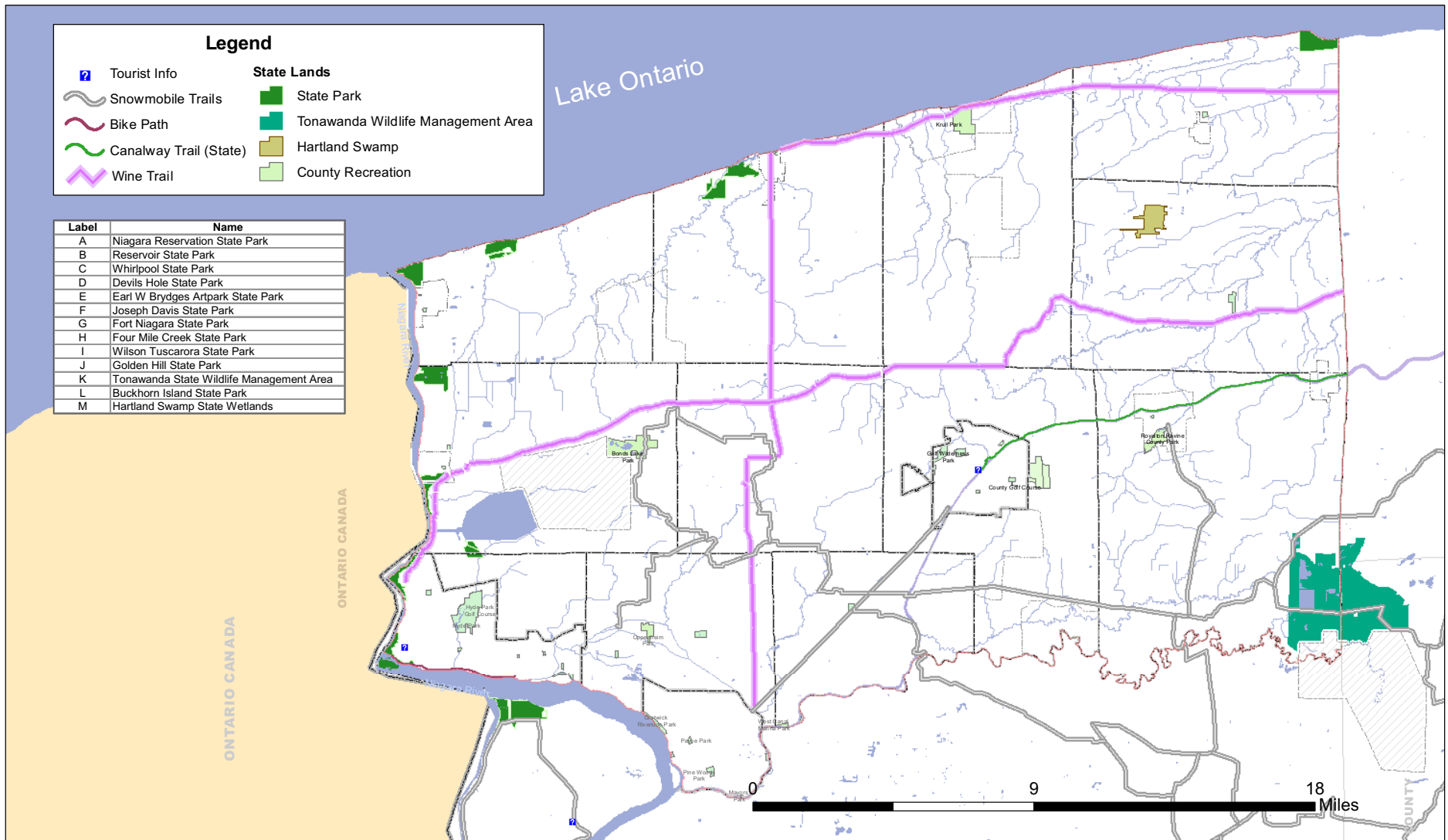
9. *Critical Environmental Areas*

Presently, no officially designated Critical Environmental Areas (CEA) exists in Niagara County pursuant to New York State standards for such designation.

However, the Niagara River corridor has been designated as a bi-national Important Bird Area (IBA) by the provincial government in Canada and the U.S. National Audubon Society (Niagara River Greenway Commission 2007). This designation is due to the large and varied numbers of waterfowl that migrate and winter in the area. The river corridor is also known to be occupied or visited by several State and Federally listed threatened and/or endangered species including Peregrine falcons and Bald eagles.



*Presently,
no officially
designated Critical
Environmental
Areas (CEA) exists
in Niagara County
pursuant to New York
State standards*



Parks, Recreation and
Open Space Resources

Figure
III.D.5

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E. Land Use Characteristics

1. Land Use Classifications

Land use parcel data for all properties located within Niagara County are provided by the New York State Office of Real Property Services. These data have been utilized for GIS mapping purposes throughout this Plan to illustrate existing land use categories and patterns of land use development throughout the County.

New York State uses a system of classifying land use utilizing numeric codes in nine different land use categories. The nine categories of land use and a brief general description of the primary land use associated with each category are provided below.

<u>Code</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>
100	Agricultural	Property used for the production of crops and livestock.
200	Residential	Property used for human habitation.
300	Vacant Land	Property that is not in use, is in temporary use, or lacks permanent improvement.
400	Commercial	Property used for the sale of goods and/or services.
500	Recreation & Entertainment	Property used by groups for recreation, amusement, or entertainment.
600	Community Services	Property used for the well-being of the community.
700	Industrial	Property used for the production and fabrication of durable and nondurable man-made goods.
800	Public Services	Property used to provide services to the general public.
900	Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands & Public Parks	Reforested lands, preserves, and private hunting and fishing clubs.

An overview of existing land use within Niagara County follows using the nine land use categories. Each land use is accompanied by a detailed parcel based map (see Figures III.E.1 through III.E.9) showing the extent and location of each category in communities throughout the County. Detailed land use information is also provided in other sections of this Plan including Chapter IV. Community Profiles and Chapter V. Existing Land Use which describes current issues and trends relative to land use in the County.

2. Agricultural Land

Lands classified as agricultural may include the following uses: agricultural vacant land (may be designated as vacant, but considered productive); livestock and products; field crops; truck crops grown in muckland and non-mucklands; orchard crops; nursery and greenhouses; specialty farms; and fish, game and wildlife preserves. Figure III.E.1 illustrates agricultural land uses that are distributed throughout the County.

It is interesting to note the concentrations of specific types of agricultural lands across Niagara County, noting for example, the concentration of orchards near Lake Ontario in the northern towns primarily in Newfane and Porter; vineyards concentrated primarily in the towns of Lewiston and Cambria along NYS Route 104; and the concentrations of dairy farms in the towns of Wheatfield, Lewiston and Cambria in the southern part of the County as well as the towns of Royalton, Hartland and Somerset in the eastern part of the County.

Based on GIS mapping of current (2007) parcel data, approximately 158 square miles, or about 31 percent of the County is categorized as agricultural. Farming has historically been and remains a viable business in the County and considered one of the area's most important industries and sector of the local and regional economy.

Due to the combination of rich farmland and ideal weather conditions tempered in large part by the presence of Lake Ontario, the County is one of the State's most important fruit growing regions. Niagara County ranks 4th in NYS in fruit growing. The combination of favorable climatic conditions and rich farmland in combination with local topographic conditions, such as the Niagara Escarpment, has given rise to the success of a number of local vineyards in recent years. The Niagara Wine Trail is the fastest growing wine trail in the State and has grown from three wineries in the past few years to twelve that are in operation today.

United States Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture for 2007 indicates that Niagara County ranks 17th among the 62 counties in New York State in total value of agricultural products sold. Agricultural land is primarily used for grains, vegetables, fruit and nursery production. The County ranks high in the production of pears, peaches, plums, prunes, grapes and sweet cherries.


















The number and size of farms in Niagara County have fluctuated over the past 20 years. The number of farms dropped 6% in 5 years between 1997 and 2002, then increased 8% between 2002 and 2007. However, during the same period the average acreage per farm increased 13% between 1997 and 2002, then decreased 11% between 2002 and 2007. The most recent Census of Agriculture in 2007 indicated the average farmer in the County was almost 57 years old.

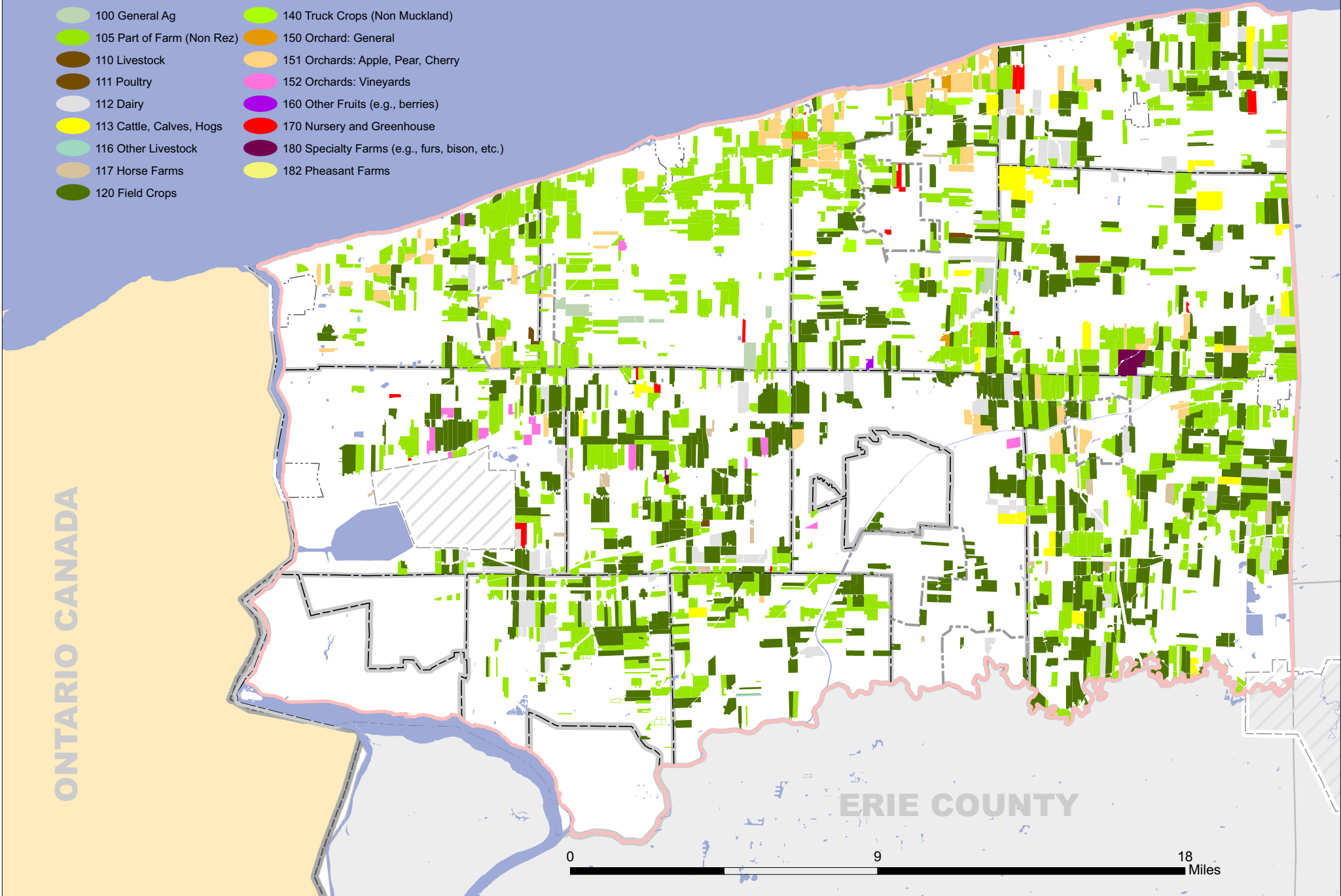


Approximately 158 square miles, or about 31% of Niagara County is categorized as Agricultural.

The Niagara Wine Trail is the fastest growing wine trail in the State and has grown from three wineries in the past few years to twelve that are in operation in 2008.

Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | |
|--|---|
|  100 General Ag |  140 Truck Crops (Non Muckland) |
|  105 Part of Farm (Non Rez) |  150 Orchard: General |
|  110 Livestock |  151 Orchards: Apple, Pear, Cherry |
|  111 Poultry |  152 Orchards: Vineyards |
|  112 Dairy |  160 Other Fruits (e.g., berries) |
|  113 Cattle, Calves, Hogs |  170 Nursery and Greenhouse |
|  116 Other Livestock |  180 Specialty Farms (e.g., furs, bison, etc.) |
|  117 Horse Farms |  182 Pheasant Farms |
|  120 Field Crops | |



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Niagara County Agriculture

<u>Census Year</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2007</u>
Number of farms	923	749	855	801	865
Land (acres) in farms	146,537	135,494	139,031	148,041	142,041
Average farm size (acres)	159	181	163	185	165

<u>Ag District</u>	<u>Towns</u>	<u>Acres</u>	
		<u>1999*</u>	<u>2006**</u>
District 2	Hartland, Royalton, Somerset	37,381	40,454
District 4	Hartland, Lockport, Newfane, Royalton	34,828	34,663
District 6	Cambria, Lewiston, Niagara, Pendleton, Wheatfield	22,283	24,076
District 7	Cambria, Lockport, Pendleton, Wheatfield, Wilson	17,449	18,067
District 8	Porter, Wilson	38,979	40,726
District 9	Royalton	<u>25,186</u>	<u>30,667</u>
TOTAL		176,106	188,654

*Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2006)

**Cornell University Geospatial Information Repository (CUGIR, 2006)

3. Residential land

Residential land consists of a variety of dwelling types. This category of land use includes: one family year-round residences; two family year-round residences; three family year-round residences; rural residences with acreage of 10 or more acres; estates of not less than 5 acres; seasonal residences; mobile homes; residential - multi-purpose/multi-structure (may include multiple dwellings on one parcel/partial conversion to commercial use).

Residential land uses are illustrated in Figure III.E.2. Several characteristics of residential land use are noteworthy. Among these is the concentration of single family homes primarily in the southern and western towns as well as in the central areas of the County. The lack of what is categorized as rural residential acreage of ten acres or more in the western and southern communities and the concentration of rural residential uses in the northern towns is apparent as an indication of the suburbanization of southwestern portions of the County.

Rural residential uses with acreage is defined as year-round residences with 10 or more acres of land with the possibility of up to three year-round dwelling units. This acreage can be characterized as primarily residential, but also in use for agricultural production (NYS numeric code 240) or for more large lot recreational residential use (NYS numeric code 242).

Residential uses account for approximately 180 square miles or about 34 percent of the total land area of Niagara County. The acreage of residential land use now exceeds the acreage of active agricultural uses and all other uses in the County as



Approximately 180 square miles or about 34% of Niagara County is categorized as Residential.

shown below.

<i>Land Use</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Total Acres</i>	<i>Total Sq. Miles</i>
Residential	34	115,606	180
Agriculture	30	101,280	158
Vacant Land	16	54,150	85
Commercial	< 3	8,462	13
Recreation	< 2	5,026	8
Community Services	2	6,726	11
Industrial	< 2	5,525	9
Public Services	< 2	5,438	9
Conservation and Parks	2	6,684	10
Lakes, Reservations, etc.	4	14,908	23
Other – Roads, ROW's, etc.	< 4	13,448	21

4. Vacant land

Vacant lands include the following possible uses: residential vacant land (vacant lots in residential areas); residential land including small improvement; rural vacant lots of 10 acres or less in rural residential areas; underwater vacant land; rural (abandoned agricultural land, residential vacant land over 10 acres, waste lands, sand dunes, marshes, swamps, rocky areas, and woods and brush of non-commercial trees species); vacant land in commercial areas; vacant land in industrial areas; urban renewal or slum clearance; and public utility vacant land.

Vacant lands are mapped in Figure III.E.3. It is interesting to note that lands identified as vacant are distributed throughout each of the municipalities in the County with few patterns or concentrations of these uses that might distinguish one region of the County from another. Approximately 17 percent of the total land area within the County is classified as vacant, the third largest category of land use in the County.

5. Commercial land

This is one of the most all-encompassing categories of land uses and accounts for a variety of business types including: living accommodations (apartments, hotel, motel, mobile home parks, camps, cottages, inns, lodges, boarding houses); dining establishments (restaurants, diners, snack bars, night clubs, bar, fast food franchises); motor vehicle services (auto dealers, auto sales and services, service and gas stations, body and tire shops, car washes, parking lot and garage; storage warehouse and distribution facilities; retail services (regional shopping centers, neighborhood shopping centers, large retail outlets, food stores, dealerships); banks and office buildings; miscellaneous services (funeral homes, dog kennels, vet clinics, junk yards); and multiple use or multipurpose (downtown row type, converted residence, one-story small structure, minimart).

Commercial parcels account for only three percent of all the land area within the















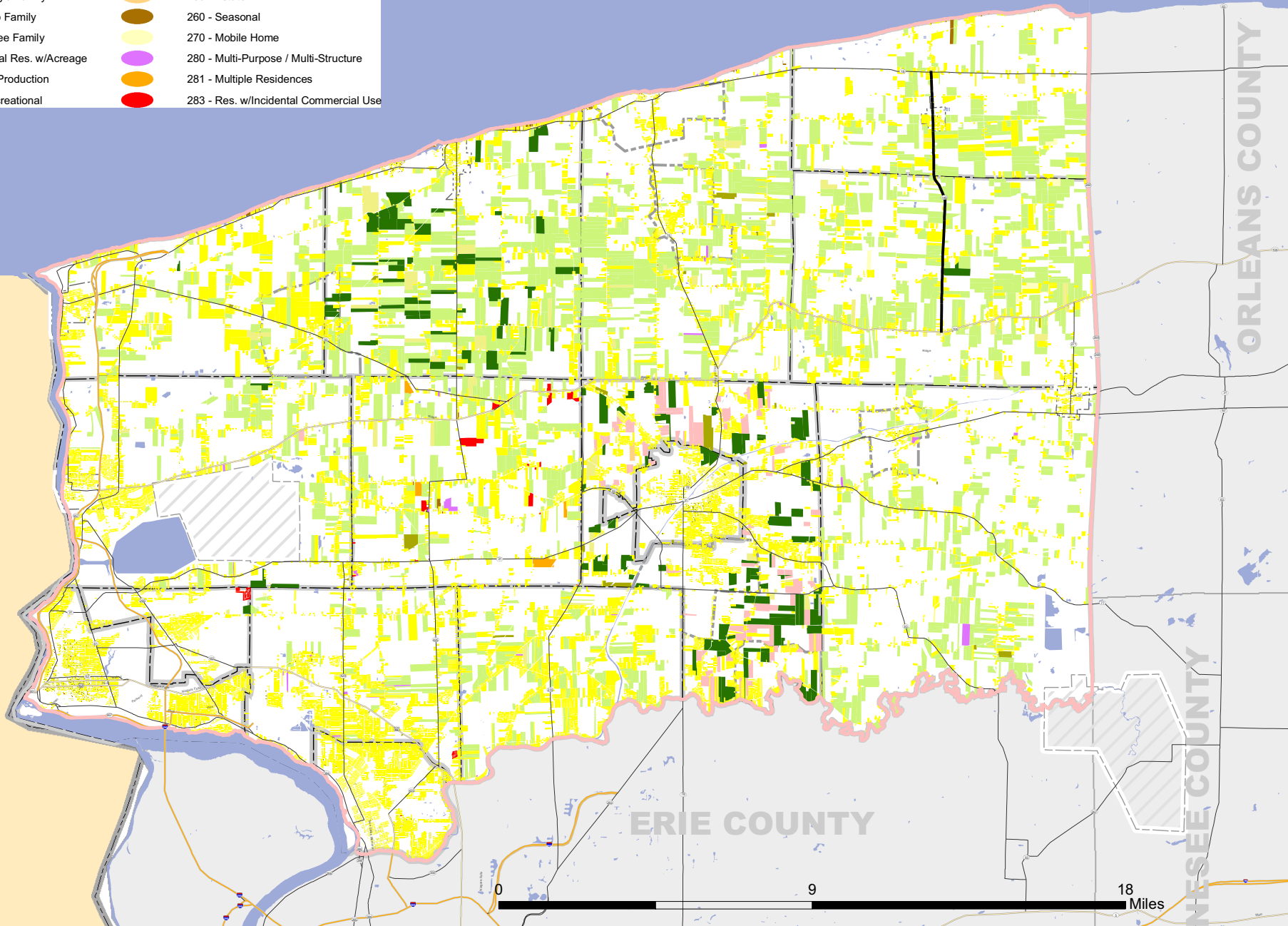
Approximately 85 square miles or about 16% of Niagara County is categorized as Vacant.



Commercial parcels account for approximately 3% of all of the land area in Niagara County.

Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|--|
|  | 210 - Single Family |  | 250 - Estate |
|  | 220 - Two Family |  | 260 - Seasonal |
|  | 230 - Three Family |  | 270 - Mobile Home |
|  | 240 - Rural Res. w/Acreage |  | 280 - Multi-Purpose / Multi-Structure |
|  | 241 - Ag Production |  | 281 - Multiple Residences |
|  | 242 - Recreational |  | 283 - Res. w/Incidental Commercial Use |











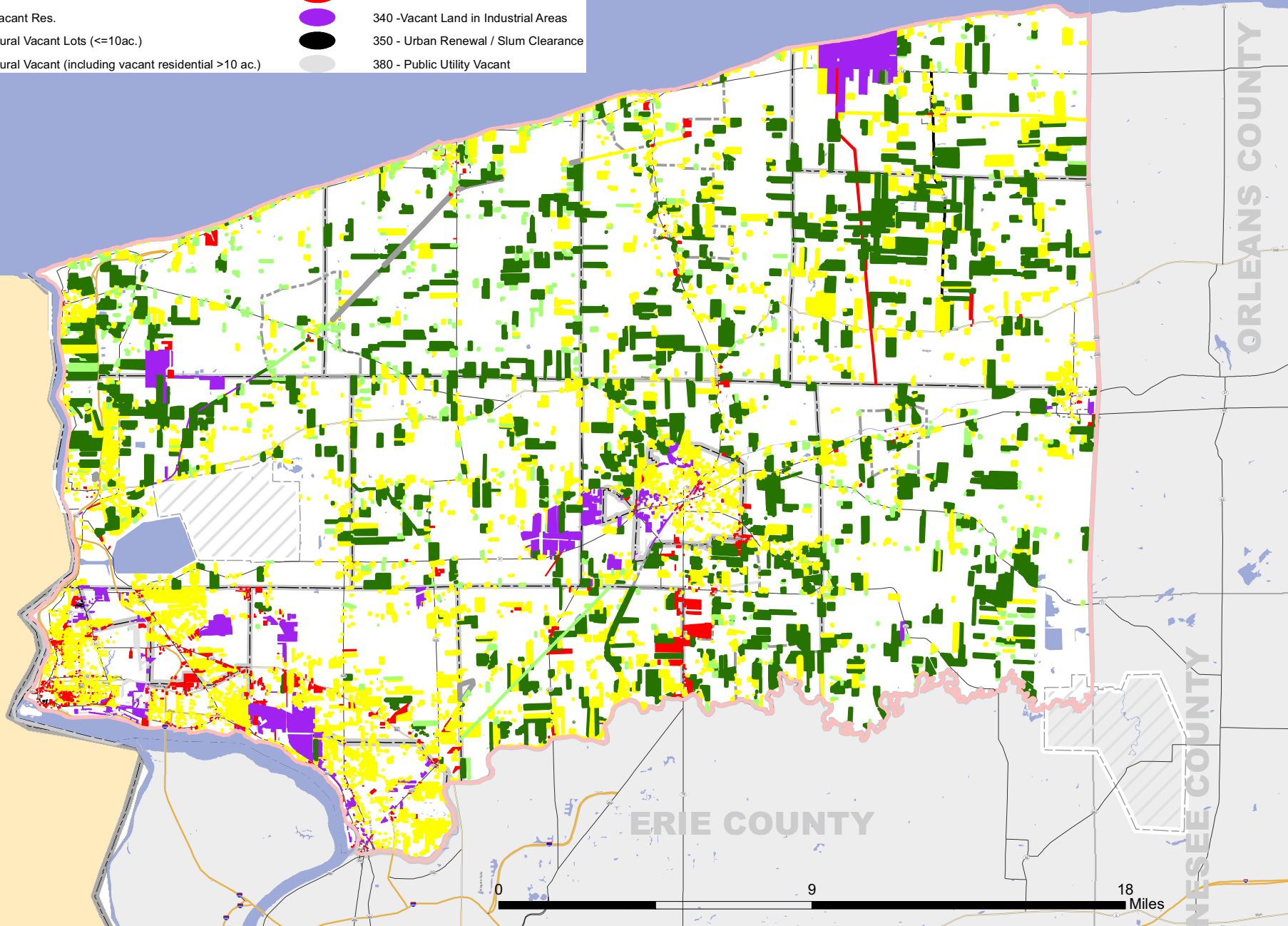
**Existing Land Use:
RESIDENTIAL**
Property Class Code 200 Series

**Figure
III.E.2**

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Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | 300 - Vacant |  | 330 - Vacant Land in Commercial Areas |
|  | 310 - Vacant Res. |  | 340 - Vacant Land in Industrial Areas |
|  | 314 - Rural Vacant Lots (<=10ac.) |  | 350 - Urban Renewal / Slum Clearance |
|  | 320 - Rural Vacant (including vacant residential >10 ac.) |  | 380 - Public Utility Vacant |



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**Existing Land Use:
VACANT**

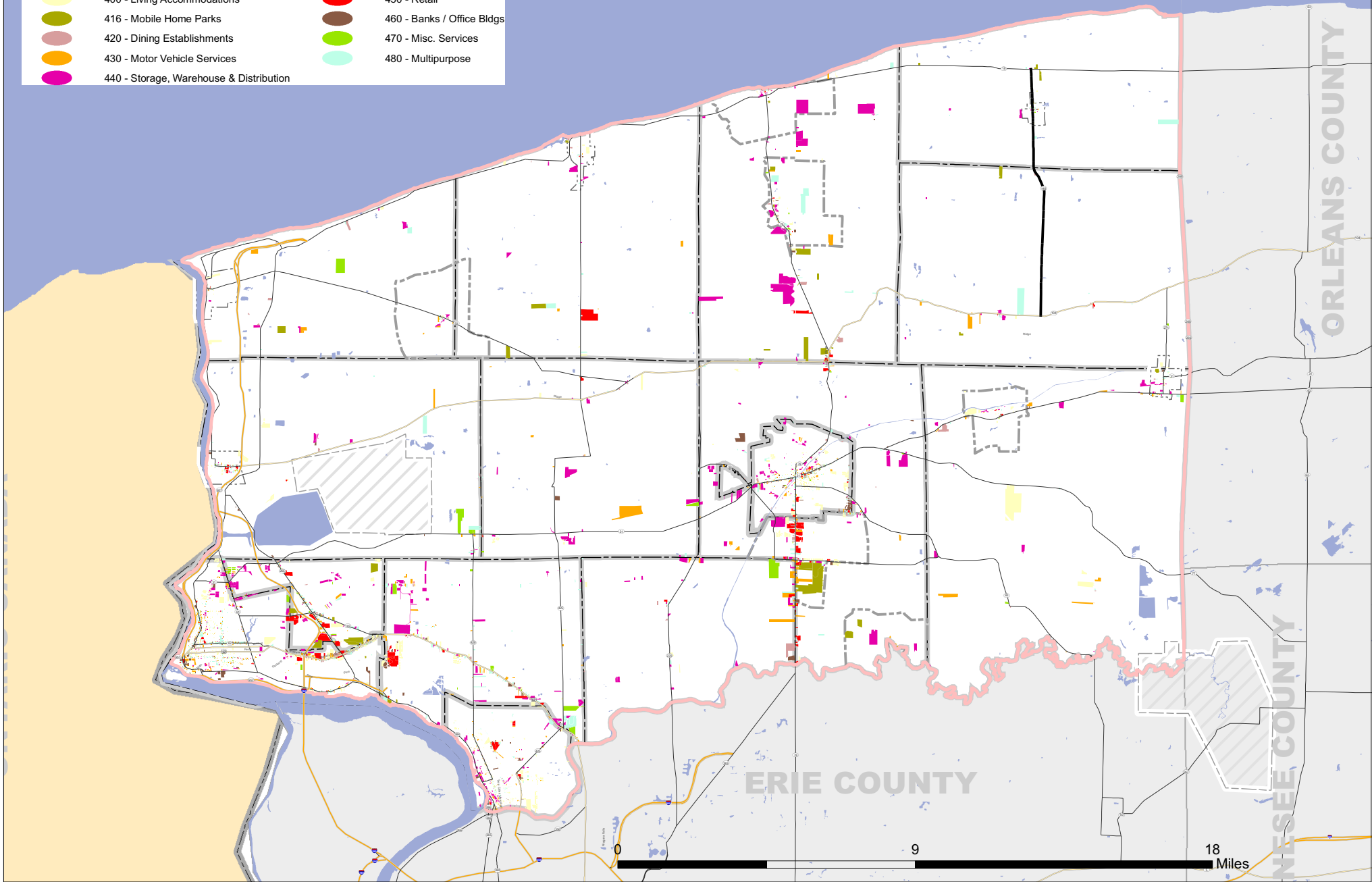
Property Class Code 300 Series

**Figure
III.E.3**

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Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
|  | 400 - Living Accommodations |  | 450 - Retail |
|  | 416 - Mobile Home Parks |  | 460 - Banks / Office Bldgs |
|  | 420 - Dining Establishments |  | 470 - Misc. Services |
|  | 430 - Motor Vehicle Services |  | 480 - Multipurpose |
|  | 440 - Storage, Warehouse & Distribution | | |



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**Existing Land Use:
COMMERCIAL**

Property Class Code 400 Series

**Figure
III.E.4**

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County. Most commercial properties as illustrated on Figure III.E. 4 are located in the older developed municipalities such as the cities of Niagara Falls, Lockport and North Tonawanda, the Town of Niagara Falls and the primary highway corridors leading to and from these communities including NYS Routes 62, 78 and 31.

6. Recreation and Entertainment

This category includes: entertainment assembly (theaters, drive-in theaters, auditoriums, exhibition halls, radio, tv and motion picture studios); sports assembly (stadiums, arenas, racetracks); amusement facilities (fairgrounds, parks, game farms, social organizations); indoor sports facilities (bowling, skating rinks, pools, spas, courts, etc.); outdoor sports activities (skiing, public golf, private country clubs, outdoor swimming pools, riding stables, rinks); improved beaches; marinas; camps, camping facilities and resorts; and parks (playgrounds, athletic fields and picnic grounds).

This category of land use makes up about two percent of the County's total land area or just over a total of approximately 5,000 acres. These uses are shown in Figure III.E.5. Many of the uses associated with this category are typically located near population centers and as such are found in or near the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport.

7. Community Services

This category of land use includes: education (libraries, schools, colleges, universities, special schools and institutions); religious; welfare (orphanages, benevolent and moral associations, homes for the aged); health (hospitals and other related facilities); government (highway garage, office building, parking lots); protection (armed services, police and fire, civil defense); correctional; cultural and recreational (museums, art galleries, nature trails, bike paths); miscellaneous (professional associations, roads, streets, highways and parkways, expressways and adjoining lands, Indian reservations, animal welfare shelters, cemeteries).

Community services comprise approximately two percent of the County. The locations of these uses are shown in Figure III.E.6. Most services are concentrated in the southwestern, central and western portions of the County near the well established population centers of cities and suburban towns.

8. Industrial

These uses include: manufacturing and processing (high tech, light industrial and heavy manufacturing); mining and quarrying; production wells (oil, gas, water for oil production, gas and oil storage); industrial product pipelines (gas, water, brine, petroleum products).

Industrial uses are found primarily in the southwestern communities in the



Recreation and Entertainment parcels account for approximately 2% or about 5,000 acres of all of the land area in Niagara County.



Community Services, Industrial, and Public Services each account for approximately 2% of all of the land area in Niagara County.

County including the cities of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda as well as towns of Niagara and Wheatfield as shown in Figure III.E.7. Industrial lands (vacant and in use) are also located in the City and Town of Lockport, eastern Cambria, southern Porter and northern Somerset. Industrial uses account for approximately two percent of the total County or about 5500 acres.

9. *Public Services*

These are lands used for the provision of public services including: water (flood control, water supply, water treatment and transmission); communication (telephone, telegraph, radio, CATV, cellular phone towers); transportation (motor vehicle, railroad, air, bridges, tunnels, subways and pipelines); waste disposal (solid waste, landfills and dumps, sewage treatment and water pollution control, air pollution; special franchise property (electric, gas, water pipelines and television); electric and gas (generation, transmission and distribution).

This category of land use accounts for approximately 2 percent or less than 5500 acres of the County's total land area as shown in Figure III.E.8. These uses are found primarily in the southwestern and southeastern portions of the County.

10. *Wild, Forested, Conservation Lands and Public Parks*

This category includes: private wild and forest lands; private hunting and fishing clubs; state owned forest lands, reforested land and related conservation lands; public parks; other wild or conservation lands; taxable state owned conservation easements; and other taxable state lands.

This category includes parklands and wildlife management area scattered throughout the County as shown in Figure III.E.9. These uses account for approximately 6,700 acres or about two percent of the County.



Conservation Lands account for more than 2% or about 6,700 acres of all of the land area in Niagara County.

F. Population and Housing

This section provides an overview of Niagara County's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and some of the trends in municipalities within the County. Additional population, housing and income data are available for each municipality in the County in Chapter IV. Community Profiles.

1. *Current County Demographics*

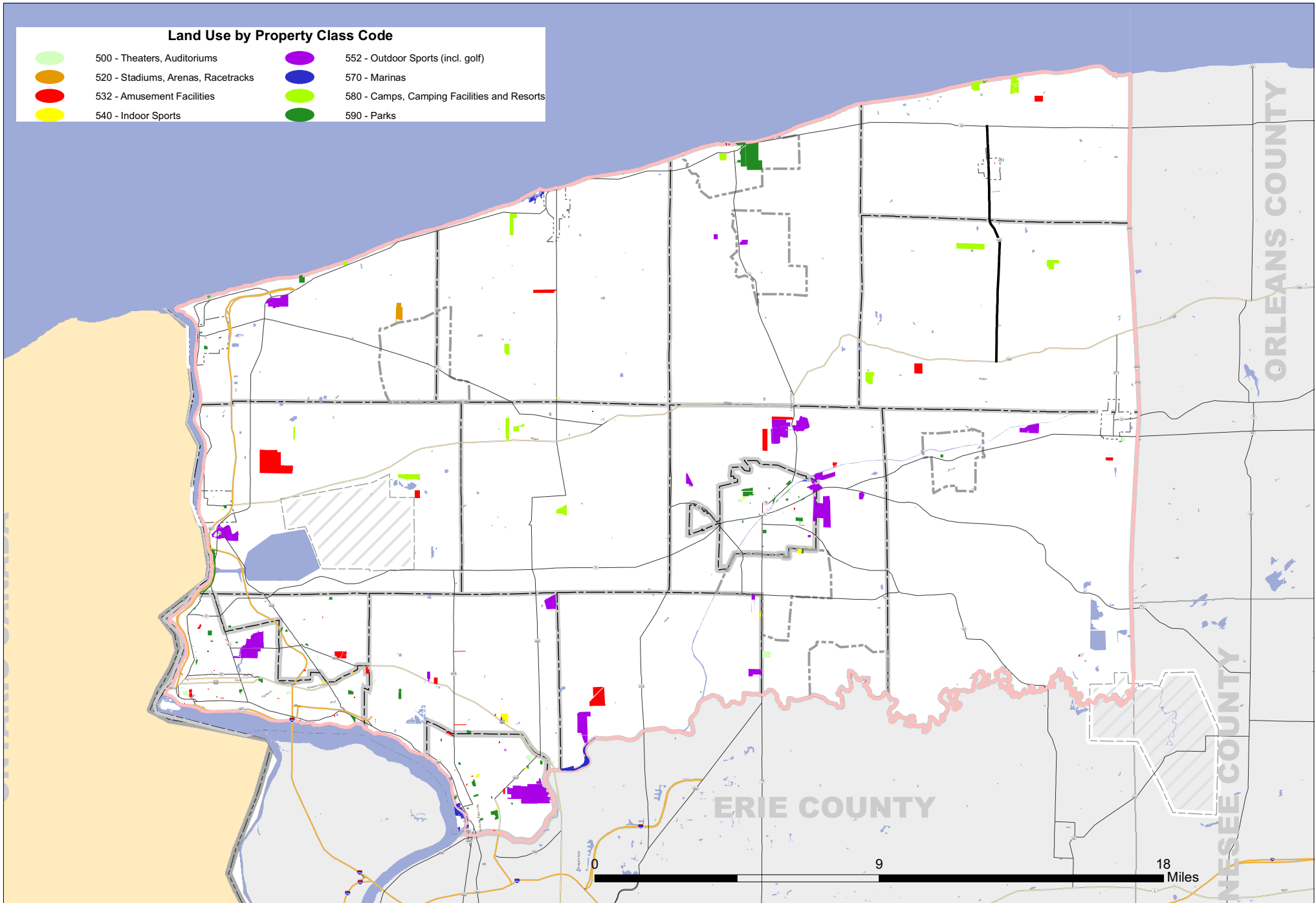
The following population and demographic data were obtained from 2000 U.S. Census data, unless otherwise noted.

a. *Population & Race*

Population density (people per square mile) is illustrated in Figure III.F.1. The highest population densities in Niagara County are found in the City of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport and in and around the villages along the Niagara River.

Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|
|  | 500 - Theaters, Auditoriums |  | 552 - Outdoor Sports (incl. golf) |
|  | 520 - Stadiums, Arenas, Racetracks |  | 570 - Marinas |
|  | 532 - Amusement Facilities |  | 580 - Camps, Camping Facilities and Resorts |
|  | 540 - Indoor Sports |  | 590 - Parks |



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**Existing Land Use:
RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT**

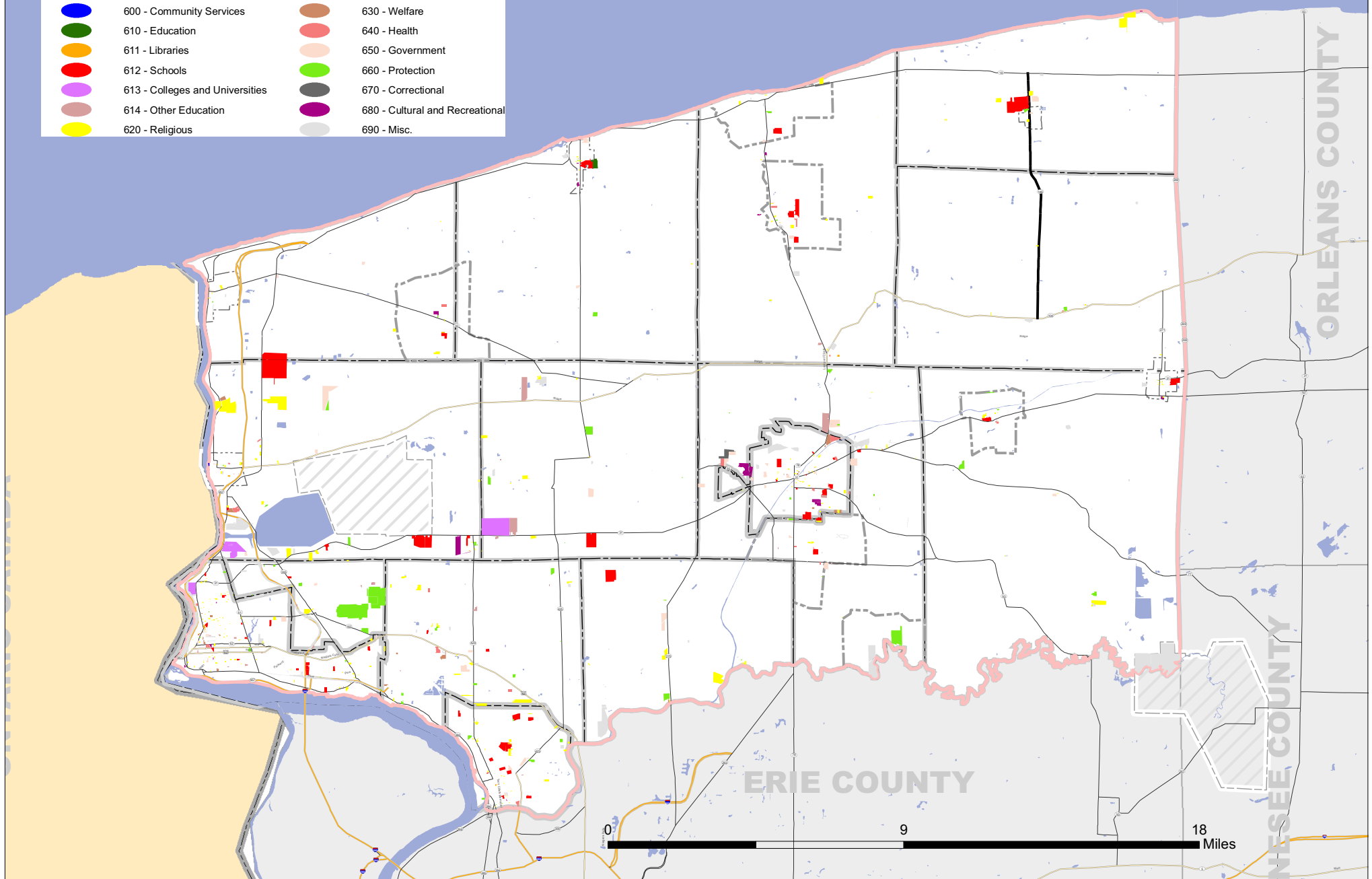
Property Class Code 500 Series

Figure
III.E.5

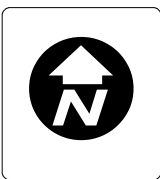
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Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | 600 - Community Services |  | 630 - Welfare |
|  | 610 - Education |  | 640 - Health |
|  | 611 - Libraries |  | 650 - Government |
|  | 612 - Schools |  | 660 - Protection |
|  | 613 - Colleges and Universities |  | 670 - Correctional |
|  | 614 - Other Education |  | 680 - Cultural and Recreational |
|  | 620 - Religious |  | 690 - Misc. |



0 9 18 Miles



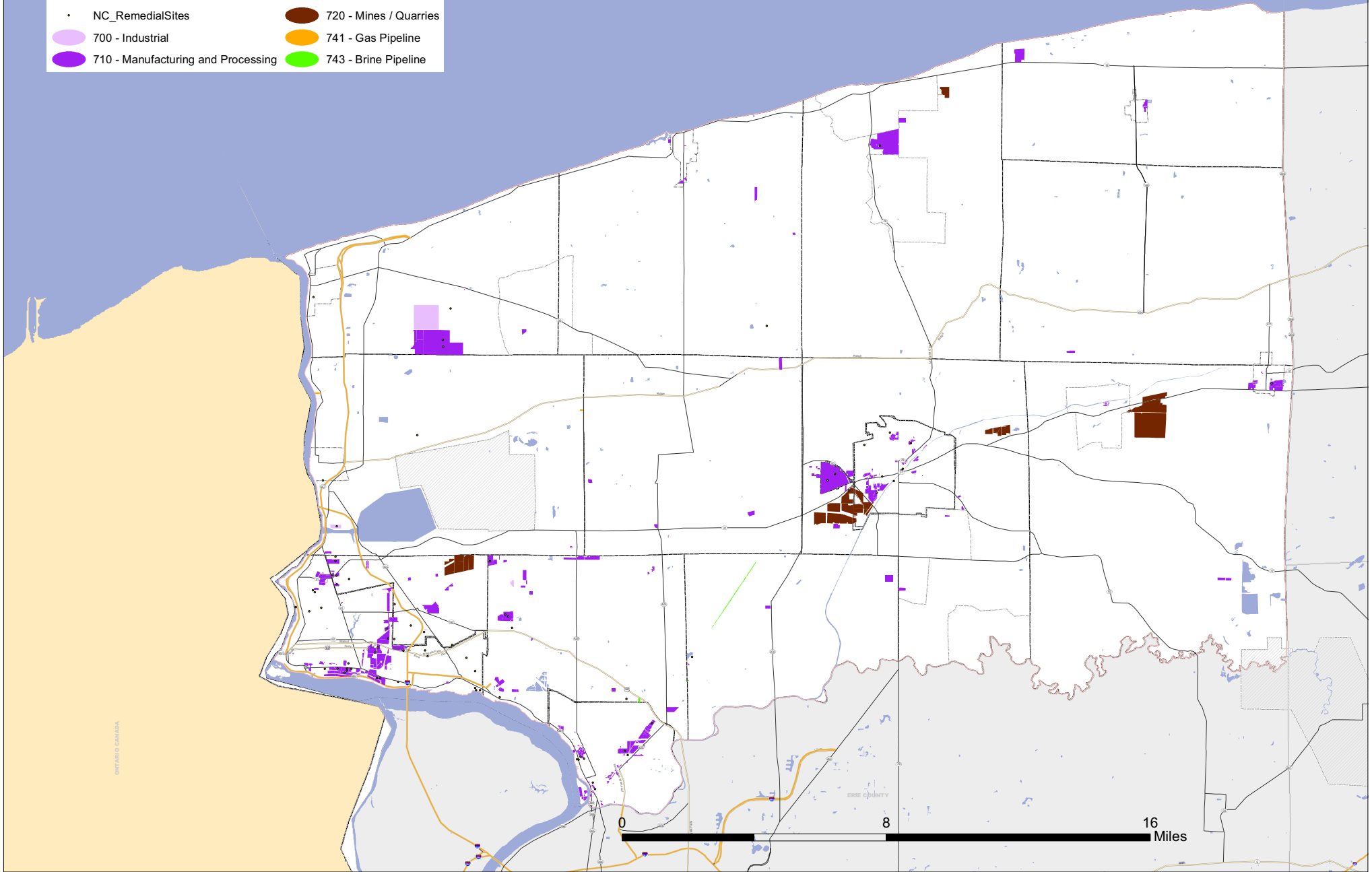
**Existing Land Use:
COMMUNITY SERVICES**
Property Class Code 600 Series

**Figure
III.E.6**

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Land Use by Property Class Code

- NC_RemedialSites
- 720 - Mines / Quarries
- 700 - Industrial
- 741 - Gas Pipeline
- 710 - Manufacturing and Processing
- 743 - Brine Pipeline



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Existing Land Use: INDUSTRIAL

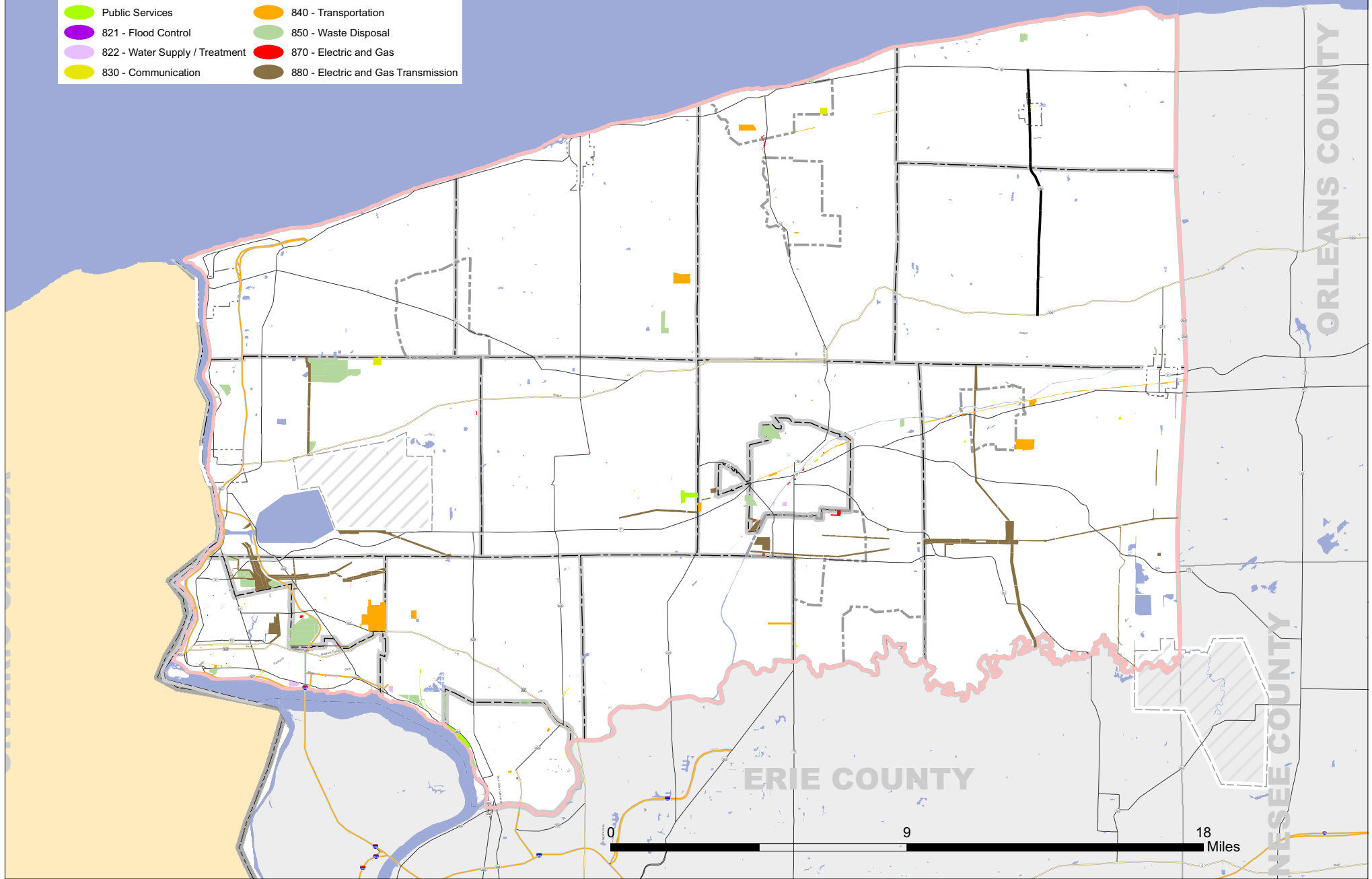
Property Class Code 700 Series

Figure
III.E.7

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Land Use by Property Class Code

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Public Services |  840 - Transportation |
|  821 - Flood Control |  850 - Waste Disposal |
|  822 - Water Supply / Treatment |  870 - Electric and Gas |
|  830 - Communication |  880 - Electric and Gas Transmission |



Project Number: 17256



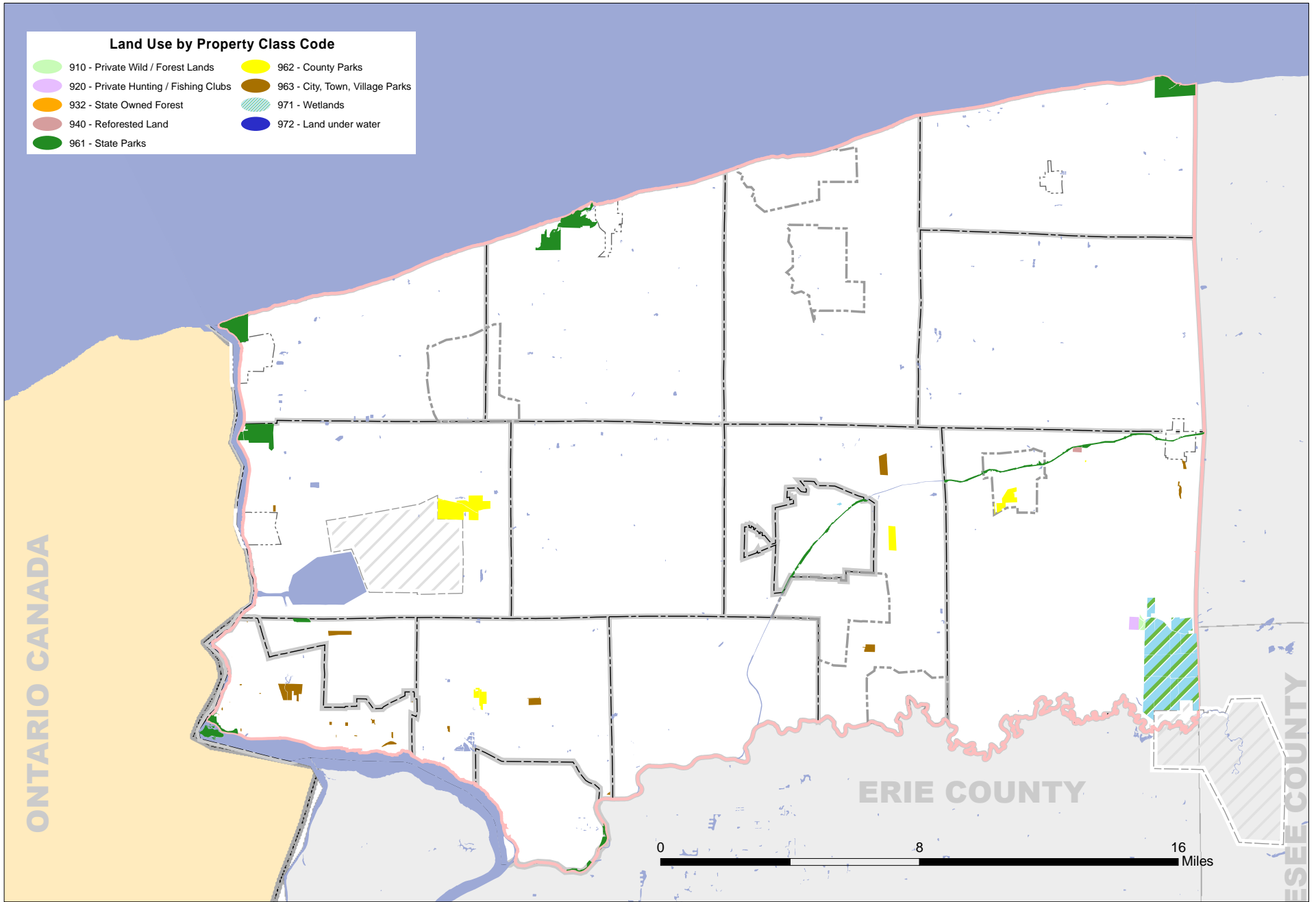
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Comprehensive Plan

**Existing Land Use:
PUBLIC SERVICES**

Property Class Code 800 Series

Figure
III.E.8

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Existing Land Use
 WILD, FORESTED, CONSERVATION LANDS
 & PUBLIC PARKS
 Property Class Code 900 Series

Figure
 III.E.9

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- Year 2000 U.S. Census population – 219,846
- Year 2005 U.S. Census estimate – 217,008 (1.3% decrease from 2000)
- Year 2006 U.S. Census estimate – 216,130 (1.7% decrease from 2000)
- Year 2007 U.S. Census estimate – 214,845 (2.3% decrease from 2000)
- Niagara County is predominantly White (90.7%), with the largest minorities African Americans (6.1%); and 1.3% Hispanic

b. Housing & Income

Housing density (units per square mile) is illustrated in Figure III.F.2. The greatest concentration of housing units is, as expected in the three cities in the County. Per capita income, median household income, and the percentage of the population below the poverty level are illustrated in Figures III.F.3, 4 and 5, respectively.

- Percent of individuals below poverty line in 2000 – 10.6

Information on vacant housing units, median housing unit value, median-year built, and median year moved into, is provided in Figures III.F. 6, 7, 8 and 9, respectively.

As of 2000, the median home value in Niagara County was \$82,700, 55 percent of the State’s median home value of \$148,700. All of the cities had median home values below the County median. The towns of Cambria, Lewiston, Lockport, Pendleton, Wheatfield, and Wilson as well as the villages of Lewiston, Wilson, and Youngstown had median home values above the County median.

The number of permits issued for residential construction remained relatively steady from 1999 through 2007, based on data collected through the County Economic Development Department’s annual building permit survey. An average of 620 residential units were permitted annually, ranging from a low of 456 units in 1999 to highs of 772 and 764 in 2003 and 2007, respectively.

- In 2000, 65.4% of County residents lived in single-family residential units
- In 2000, 44.6% of County residents lived in multi-family residential units
- 2000 median home value (owner-occupied) was \$82,700
- 2000 median monthly rent was \$479

c. Age, Education & Labor Force

Information on median age by census block group in the County is provided in Figure III.F.10. Information on the percentage of residents in age groups 65 and over, 18 to 21, and 5 to 17 is provided in Figures III.F. 10, 11, 12 and 13, respectively.

As of 2000, the Niagara County labor force consisted of 107,560 civilian employees with average weekly wages of \$576.47. The labor force is employed in industries including mining, construction, manufacturing, transportation, wholesale trade, retail trade, finance and real estate, accommodation and food service. The largest portions of the labor force are employed in manufacturing (26%), retail trade (16%), and accommodation and food services (10%).

- In 2000 the median age of residents in the County was 38.2 years
- 83.3% of County residents 25 years or older have high school diplomas or higher; 47.1% of County residents have bachelor’s degrees or higher

- Total labor force (16 years and older) was 171,806 individuals
- Civilian labor force was 107,560 individuals

2. County Demographic Trends

Niagara County's population has decreased steadily in recent decades from its peak of 242,269 in 1960. The County lost population each decade between 1960 and 2000, with a population decrease of 22,423 (or 9.3 percent) over this 40-year period (an annual average decrease of 561 individuals). According to 2007 population estimates, the County has lost approximately 5,000 residents since 2000 (2.2 percent decrease). This rate of population decline is consistent to that experienced over the 40 year period between 1960 and 2000.

The County's unemployment rate dropped from just over 6 percent in 2002 to 5.3% in 2006. There has been a steady decrease in unemployment over the past few years however this rate was above the New York State rate (4.5 percent) and national rate (4.6 percent) for the same period. Unemployment has increased somewhat during 2007-2008 consistent with other areas of the country as the economy continues to slow down. The County recently ranked tenth in highest unemployment rate of New York's 62 counties, and second of the Western New York region's eight counties (behind Orleans and tied with Allegany).

The population of Niagara County indicates sprawling growth patterns over the last few decades, with almost all household growth concentrated in rural areas outside of or on the fringes of its three cities. The number of households in rural areas increased by 33.4 percent, while the number of households in developed areas grew by only 1 percent between 1980 and 2000. This general trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

3. Subarea Demographic Profiles

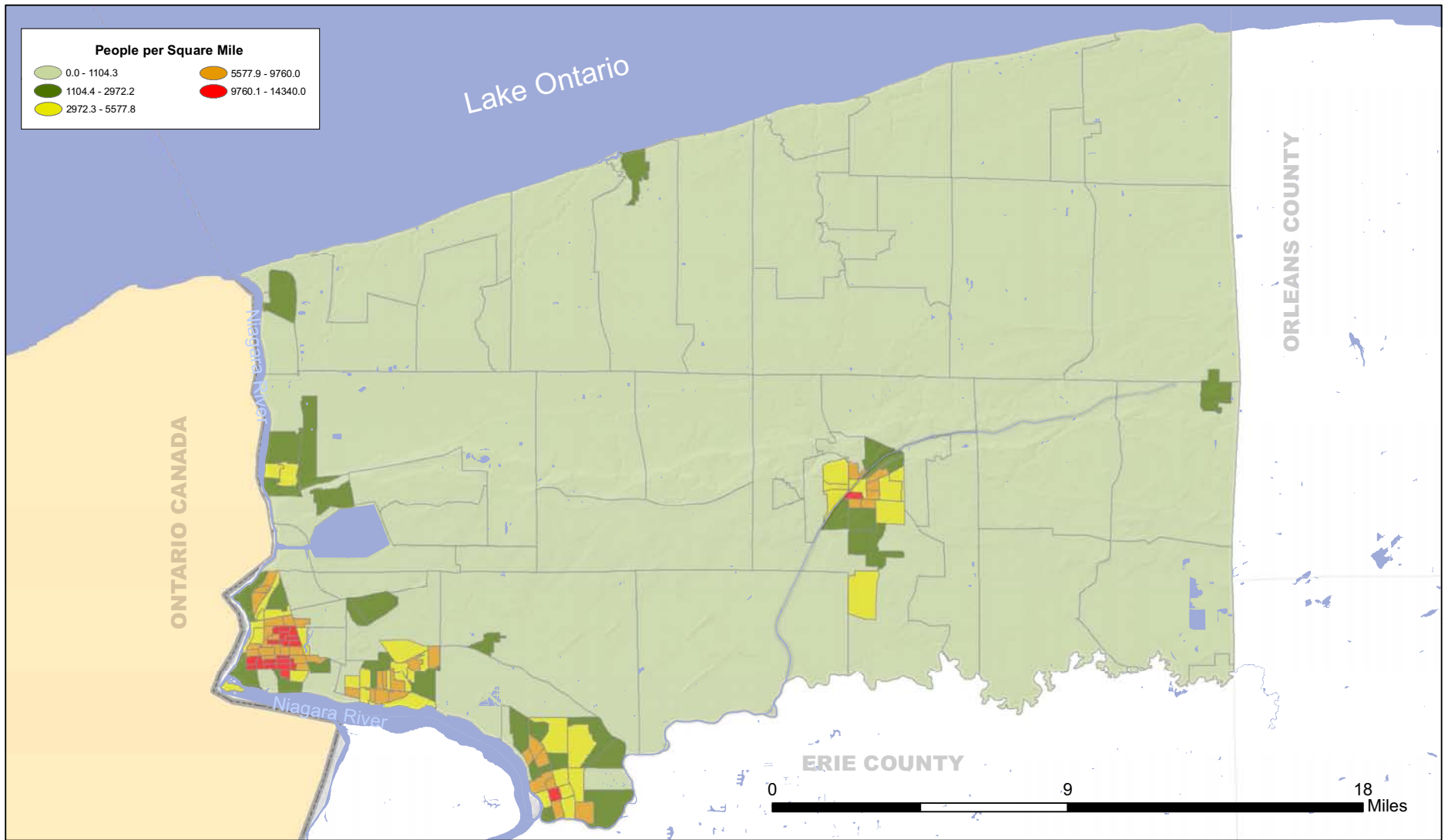
Detailed demographic data for each of the twenty municipalities of Niagara County are provided in Chapter IV. Community Profiles. Below are some notable characteristics and trends regarding these municipalities based on 2000 Census information. Due to their unique characteristics, demographic information from the three Native American reservations in the County is not provided.

Niagara Falls is Niagara County's largest city. It has experienced greater population loss than the County overall. From 1960 to 2000, the City's population decreased more than 45 percent from 102,394 to 55,593, almost five times the population decrease experienced by the entire County over the same period. Niagara Falls is clearly the most diverse locality in the County. Its population comprises 23.8 percent minority races, including 18.7 percent African American residents. Outside of Niagara Falls, most other municipalities (cities, towns and villages) tended to have similar racial and ethnic compositions. These other municipalities were predominantly White, with their populations usually being less than 10 percent minority.

Educational attainment levels were generally similar for residents 25 years and older among Niagara County's municipalities, with the exception of Niagara Falls. Most municipalities had over 80 percent of their populations attaining a high school



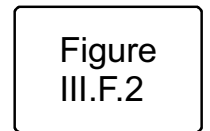
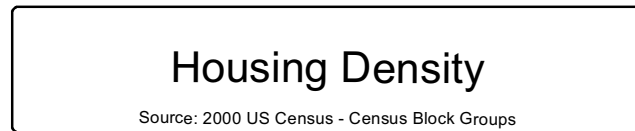
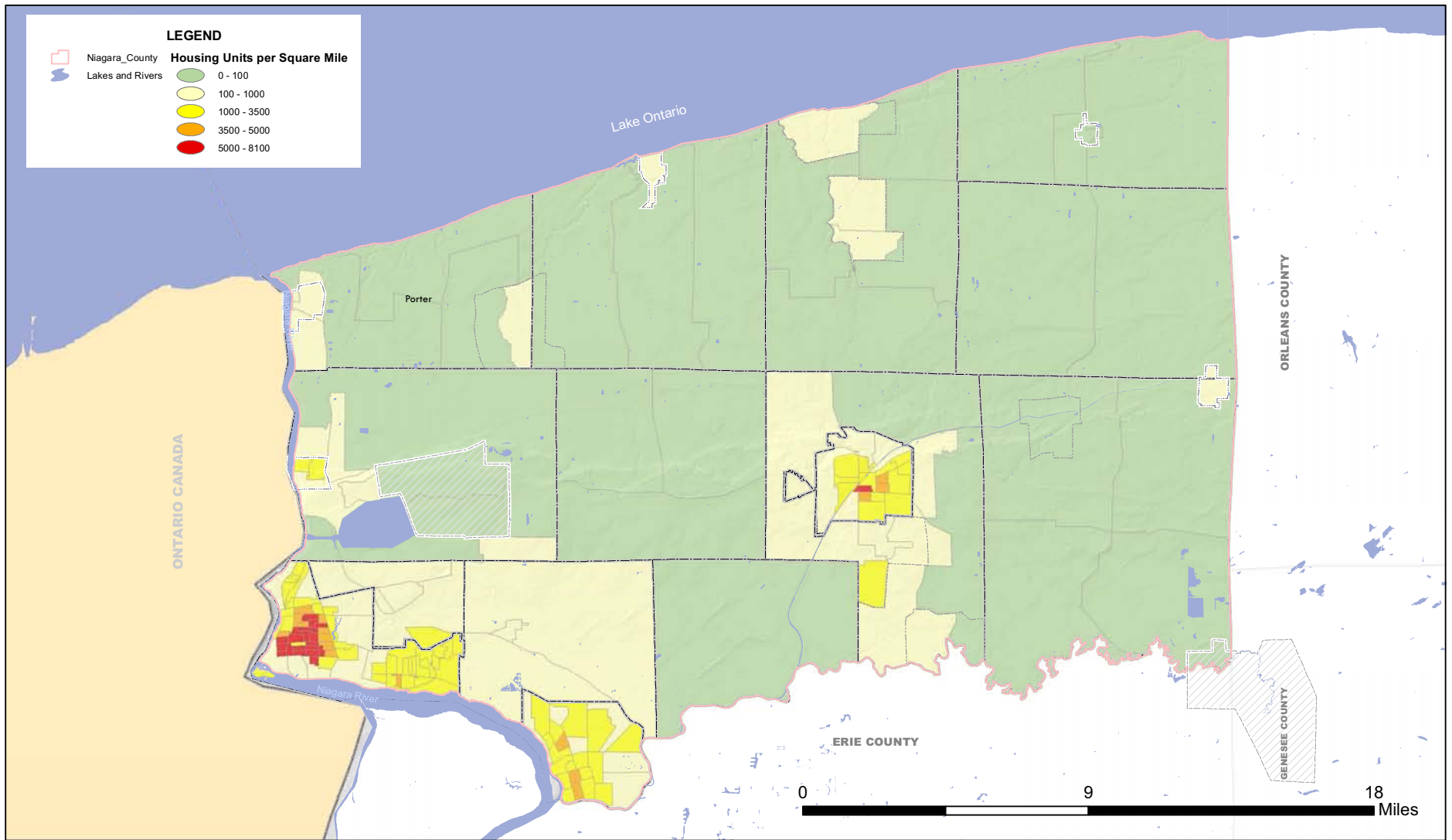
The estimated population of Niagara County in 2007 was 214,845, a decrease of 2.3% from the year 2000 Census.



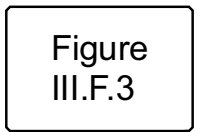
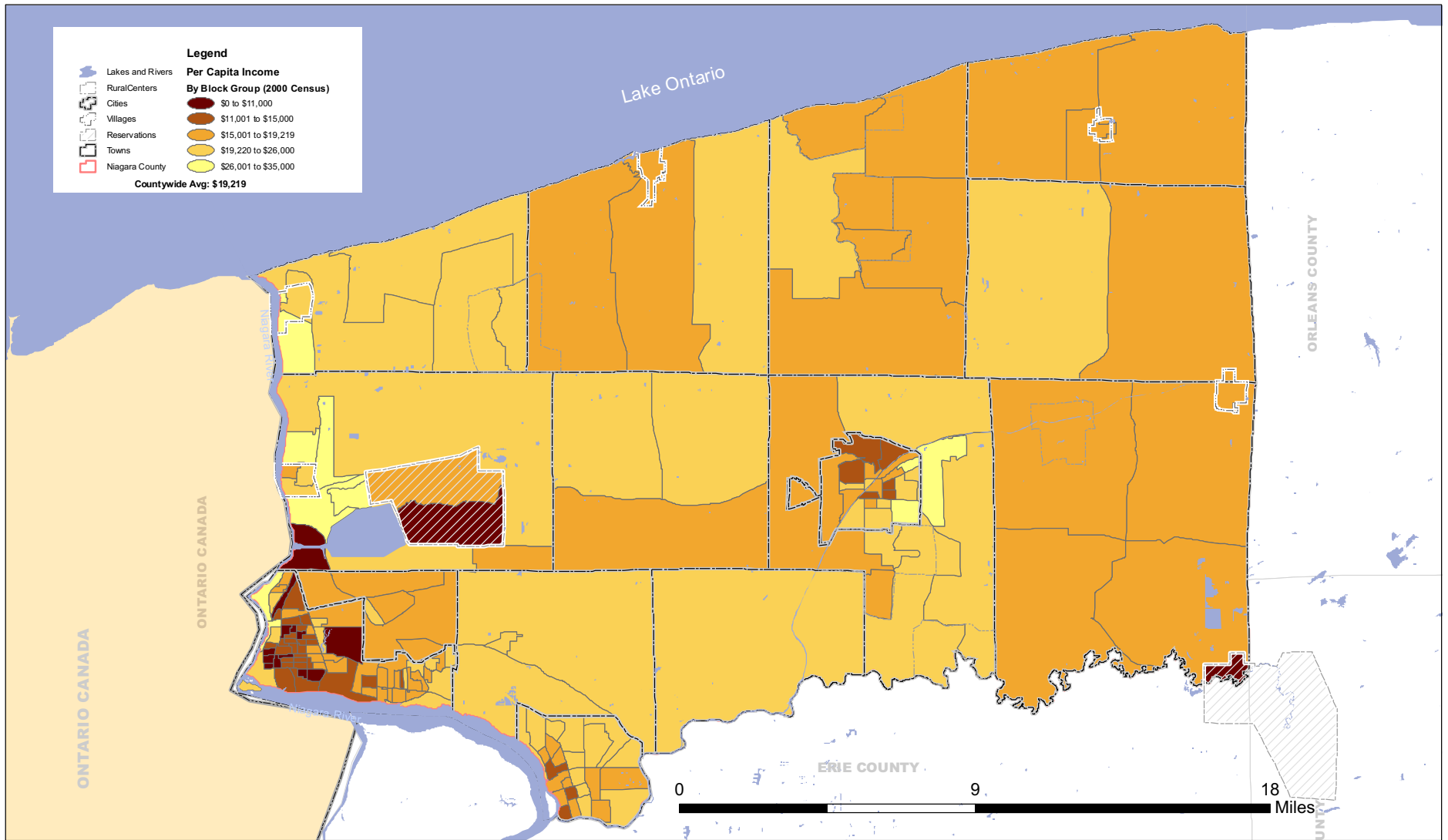
Population Density
 Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.1

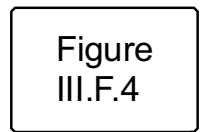
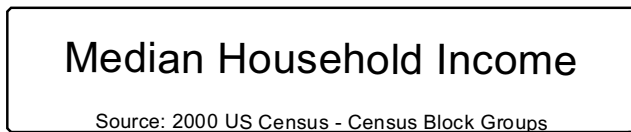
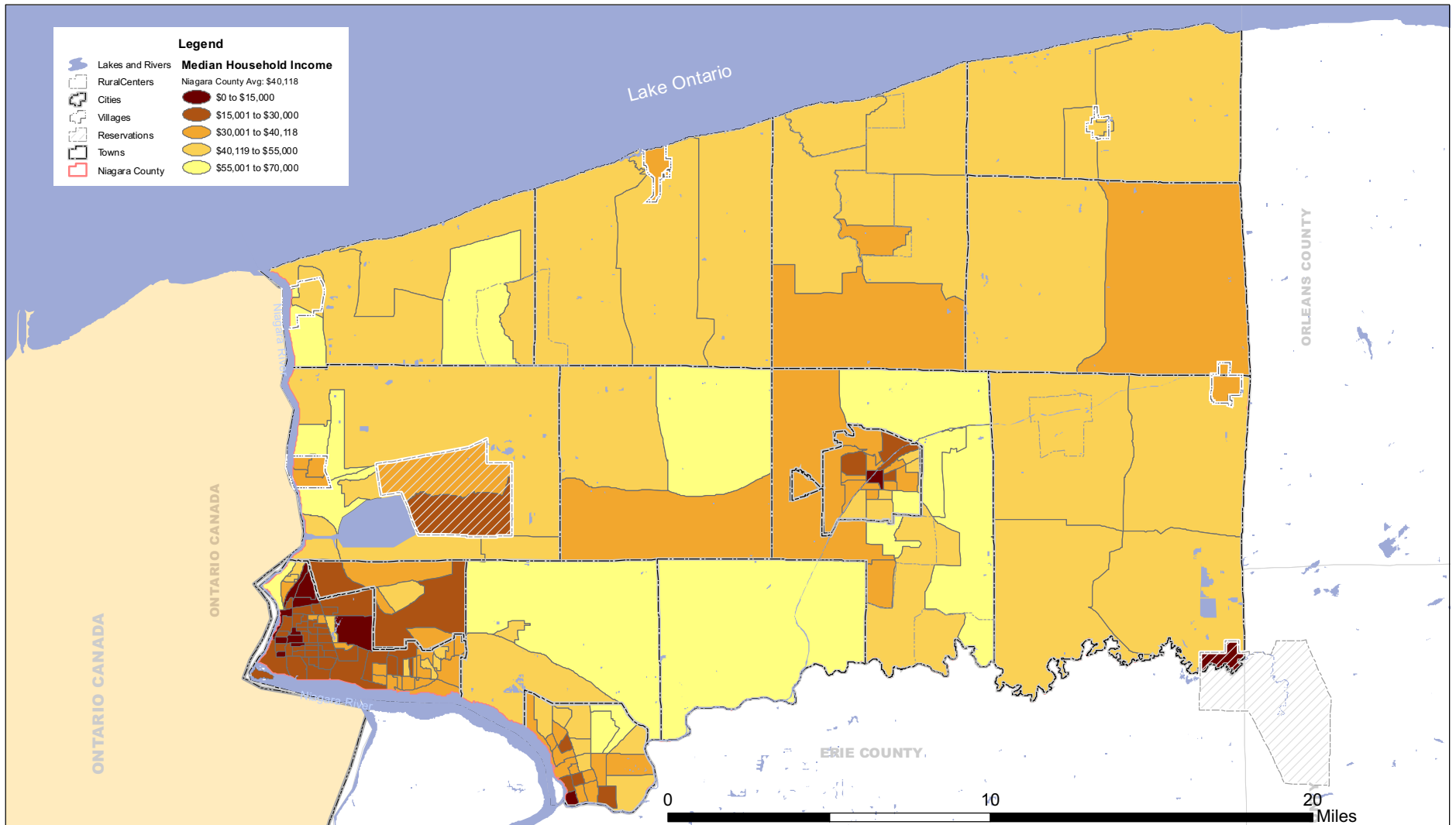
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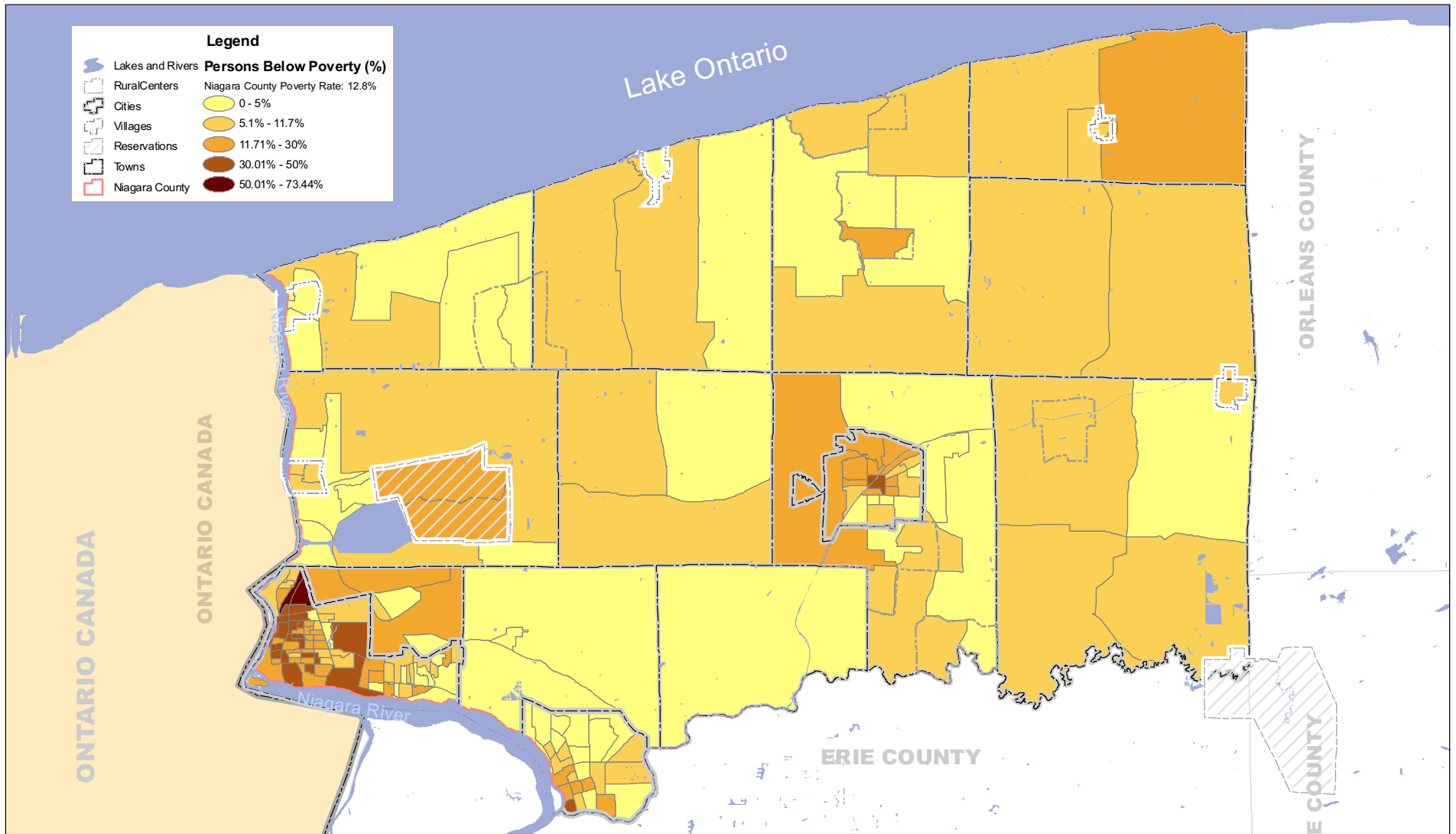
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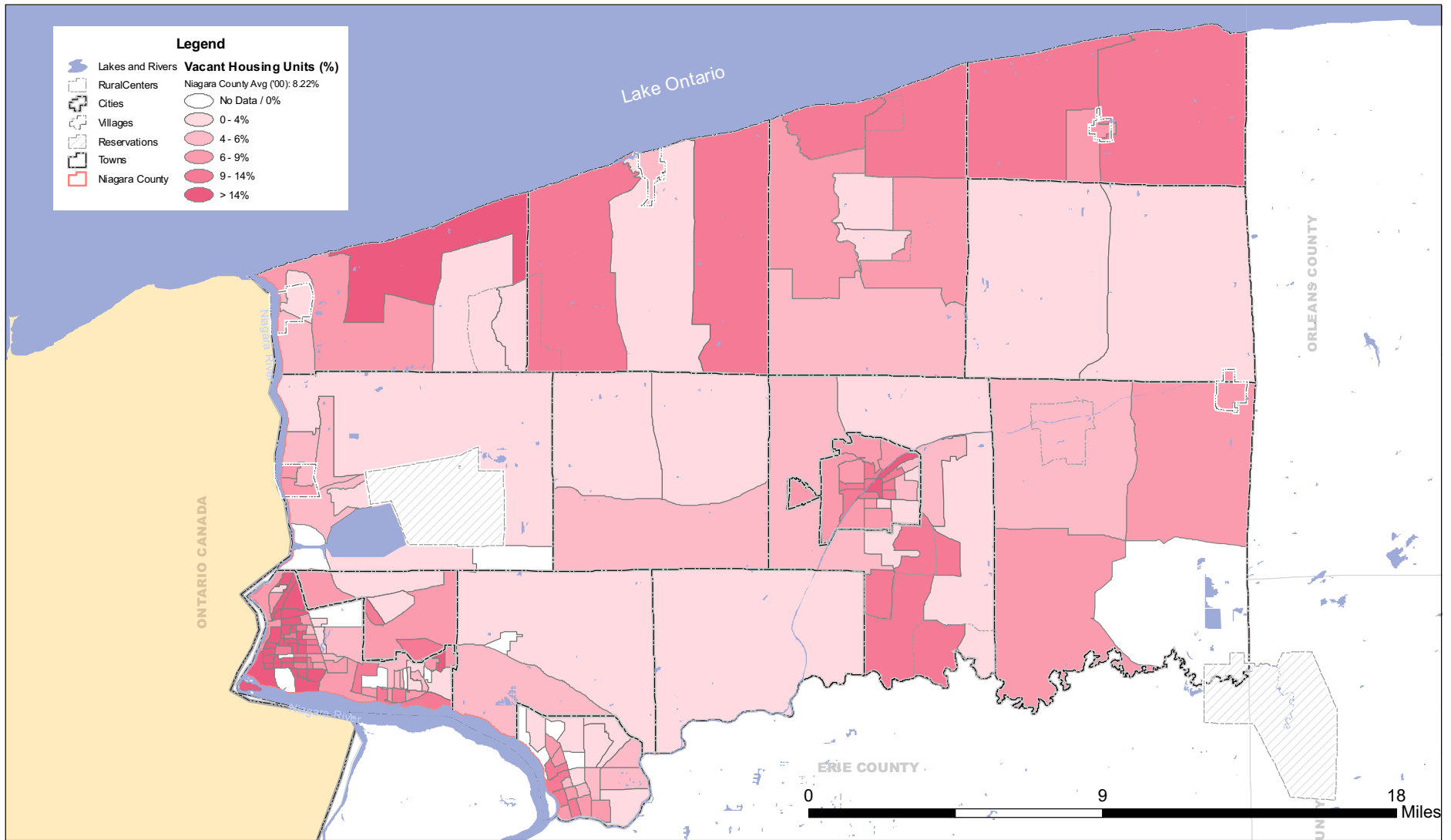
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Population Below Poverty (%)
 Source: 2000 Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.5

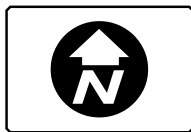
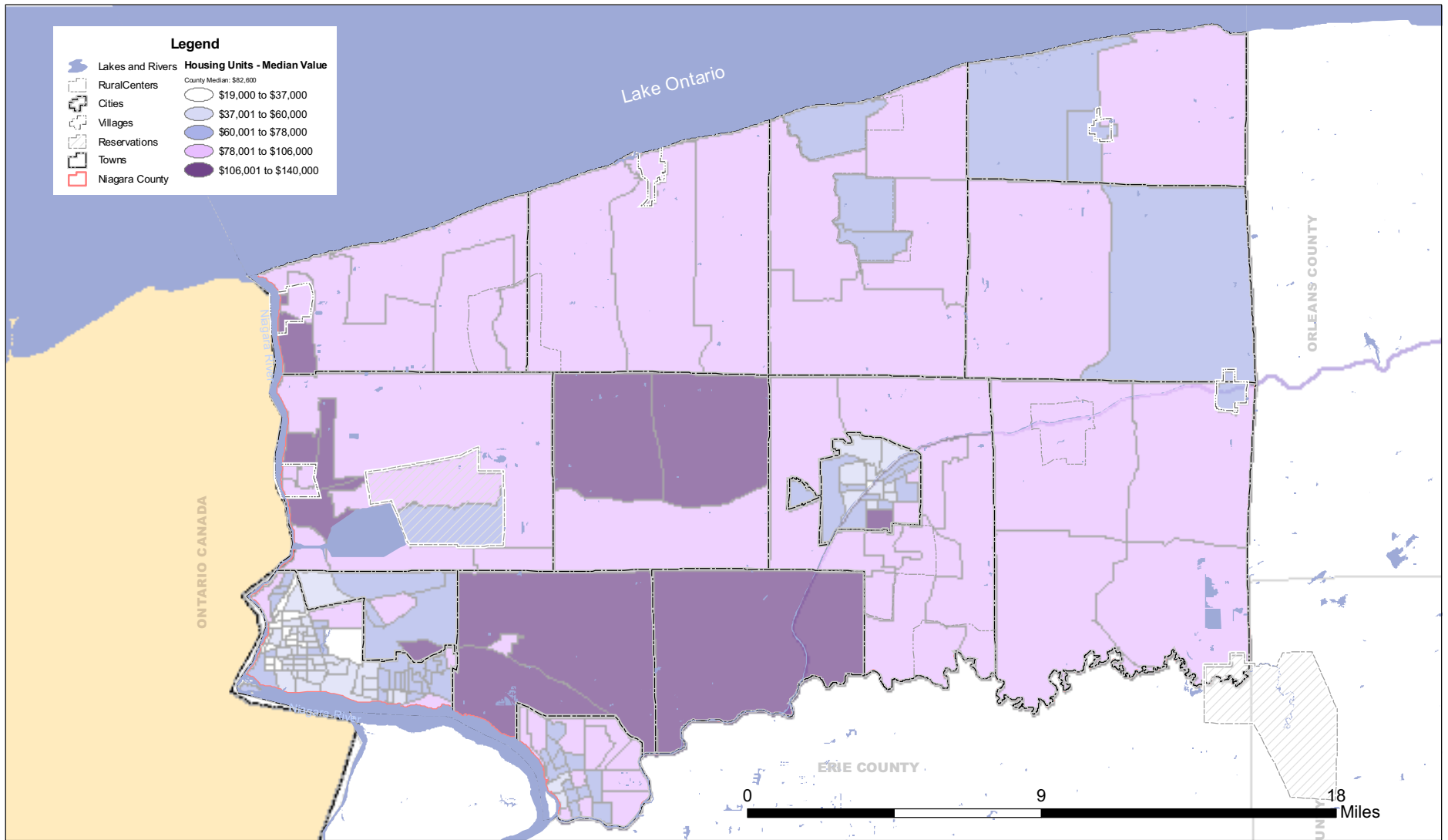
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Vacant Housing Units (%)
Source: 2000 Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.6

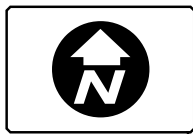
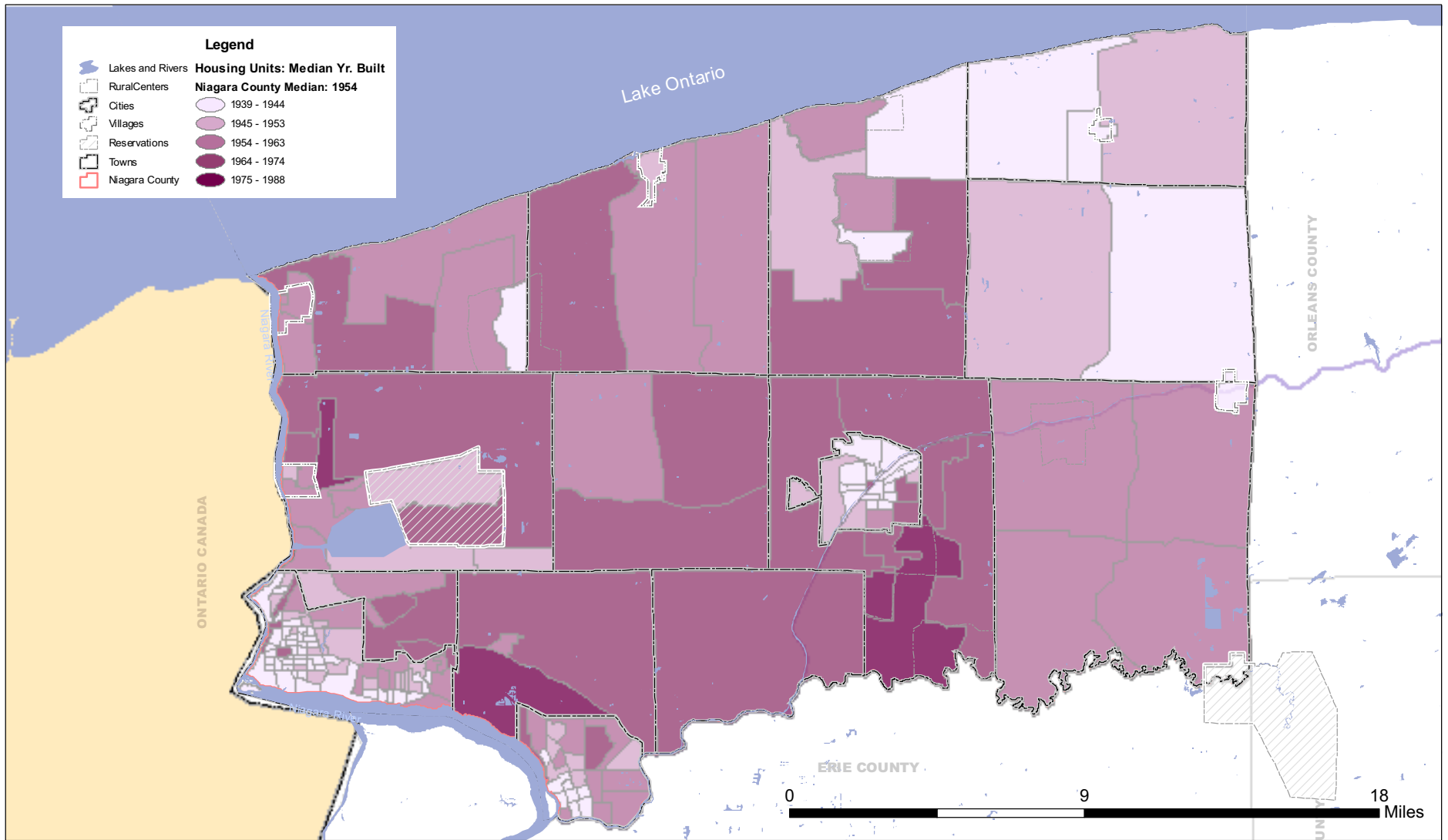
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Median Housing Unit Value by Block Group
Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups
Specific Owner-Occupied Housing Units

Figure III.F.7

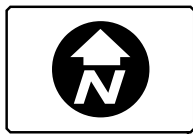
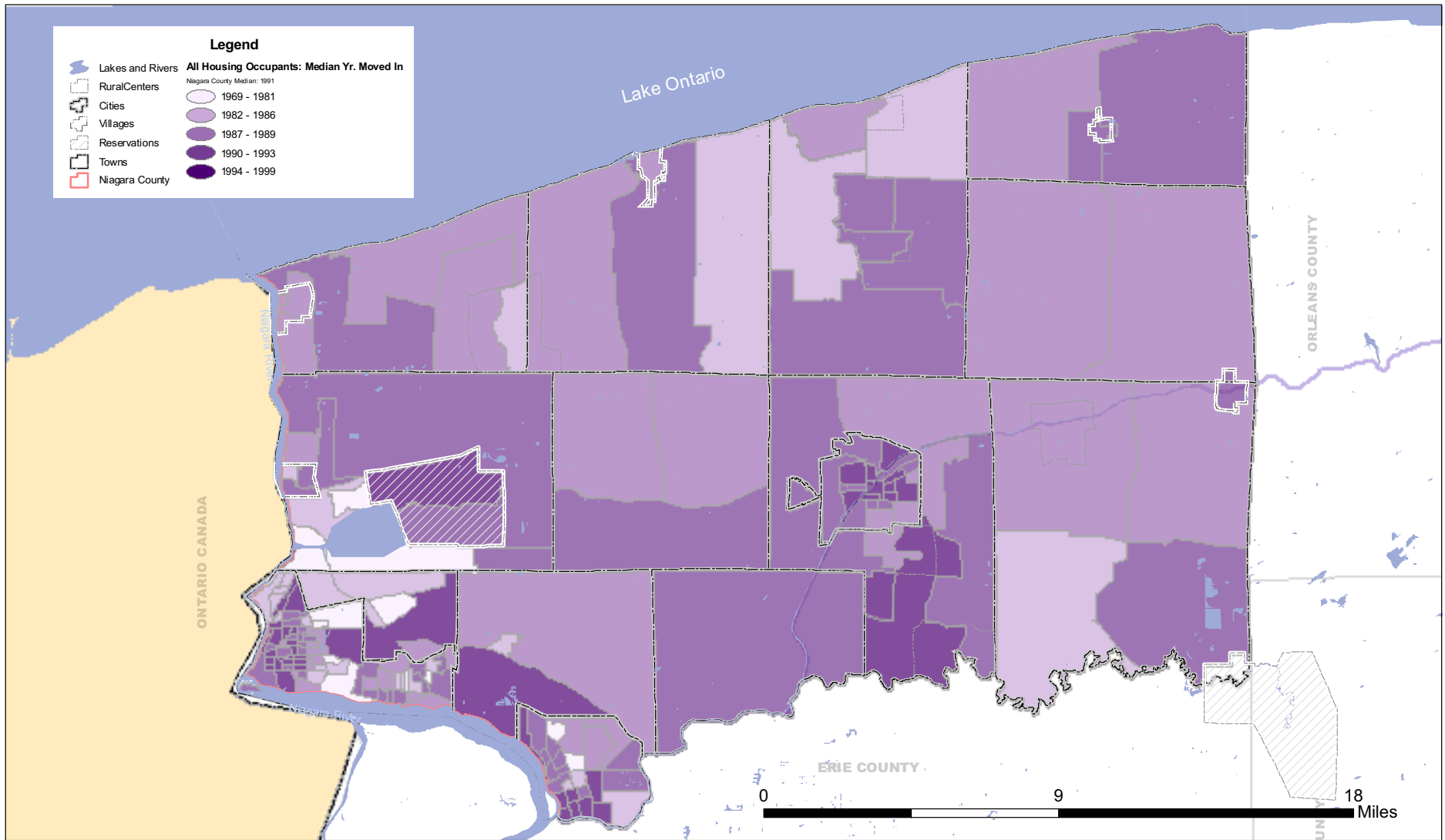
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Housing Units: Median Year of Construction
 Source: 2000 Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.8

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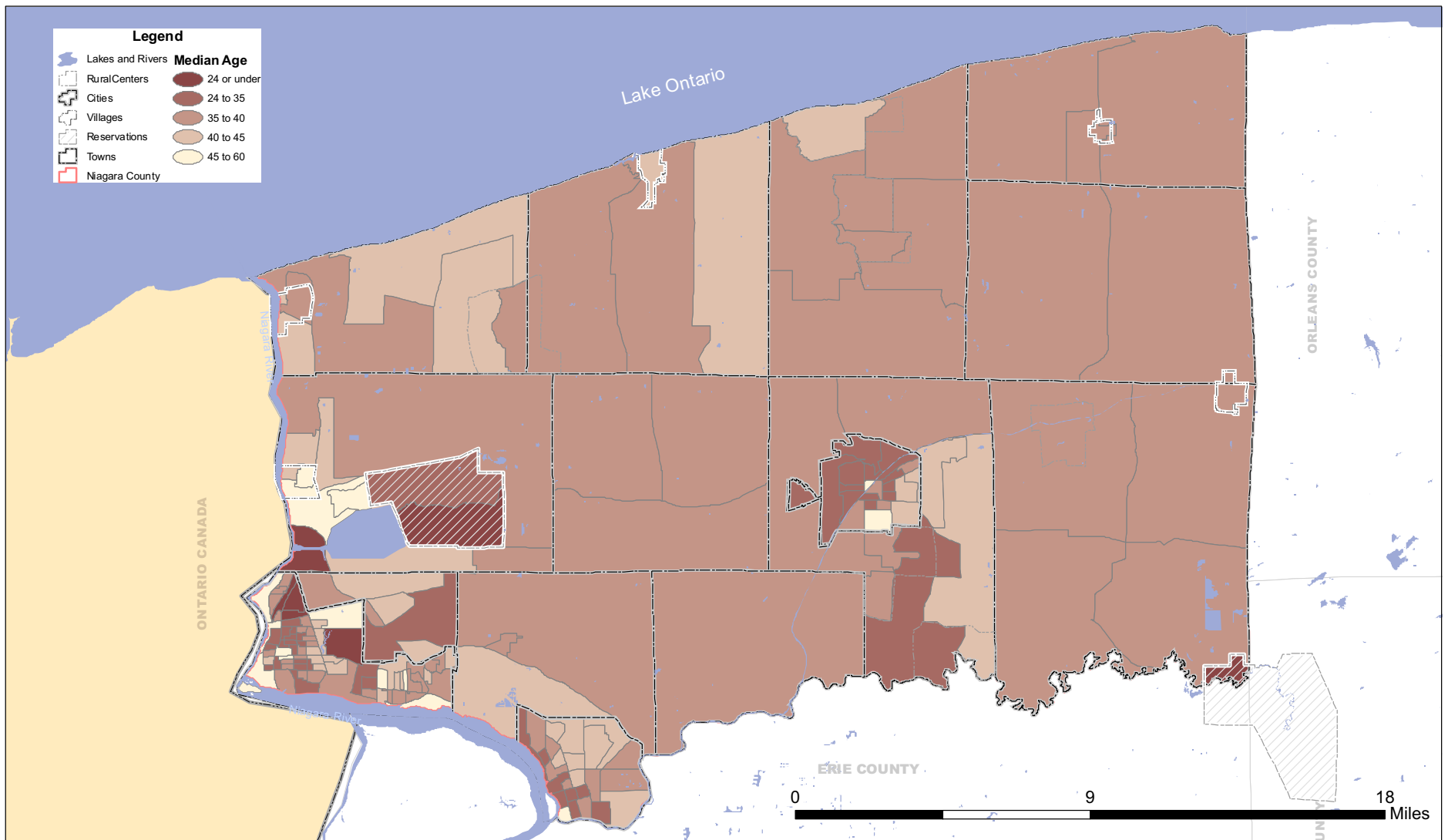


Housing Occupants: Median Year
Moved Into Current Unit

Source: 2000 Census Block Groups
Includes homeowners and tenants.

Figure
III.F.9

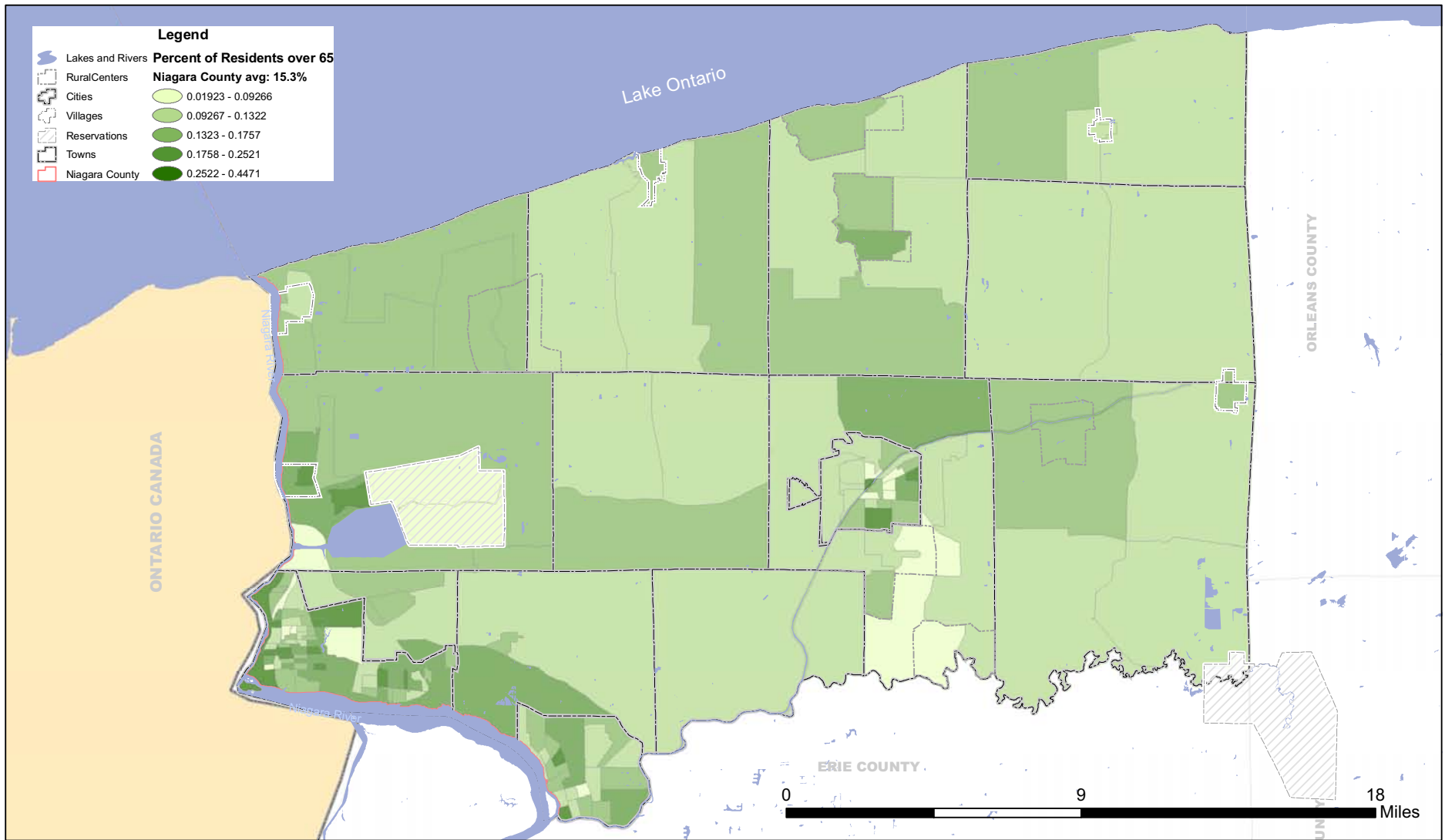
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Median Age by Block Group
Source: 2000 Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.10

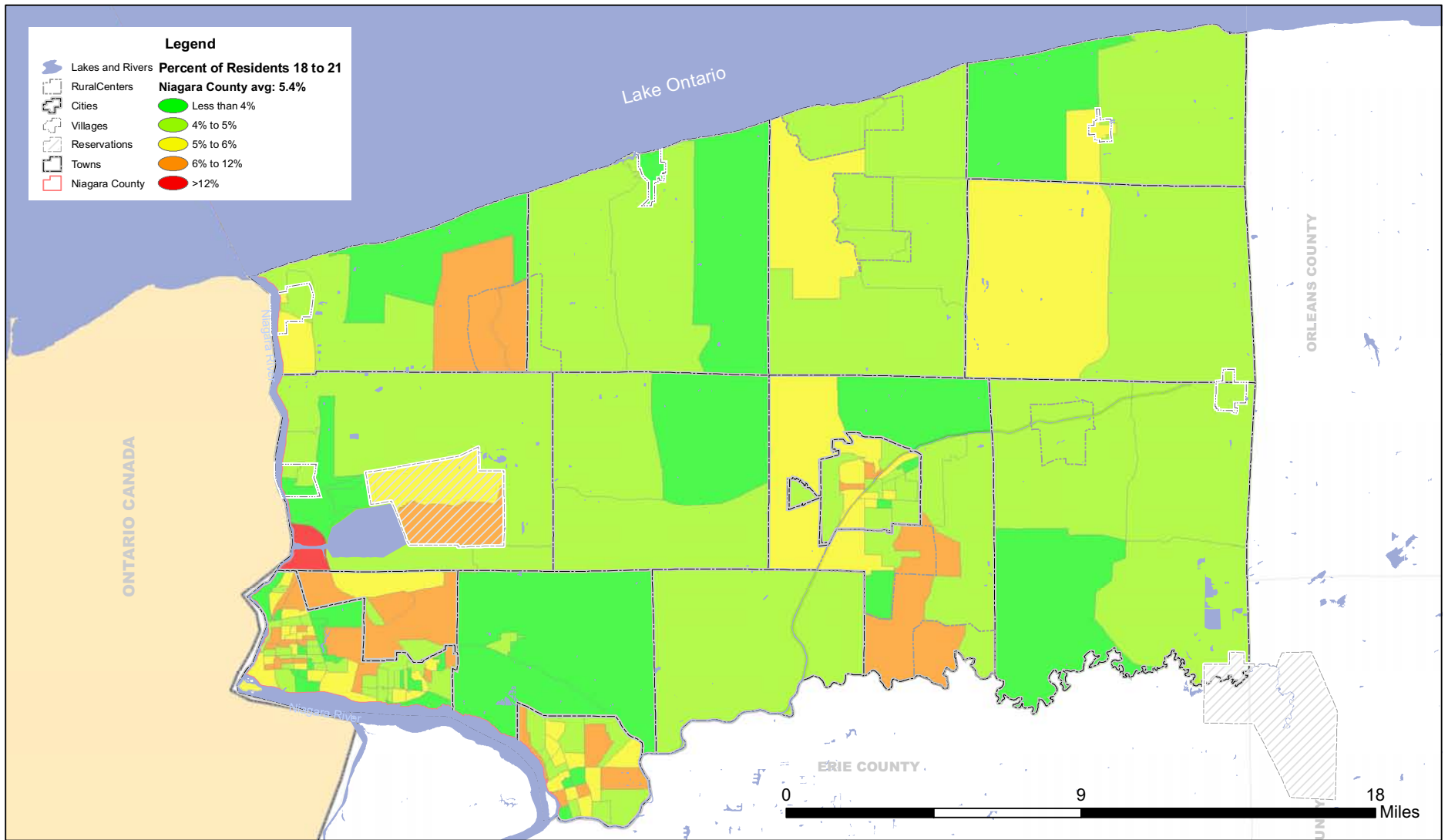
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Percent of Residents Over Age 65
 Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

Figure III.F.11

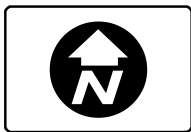
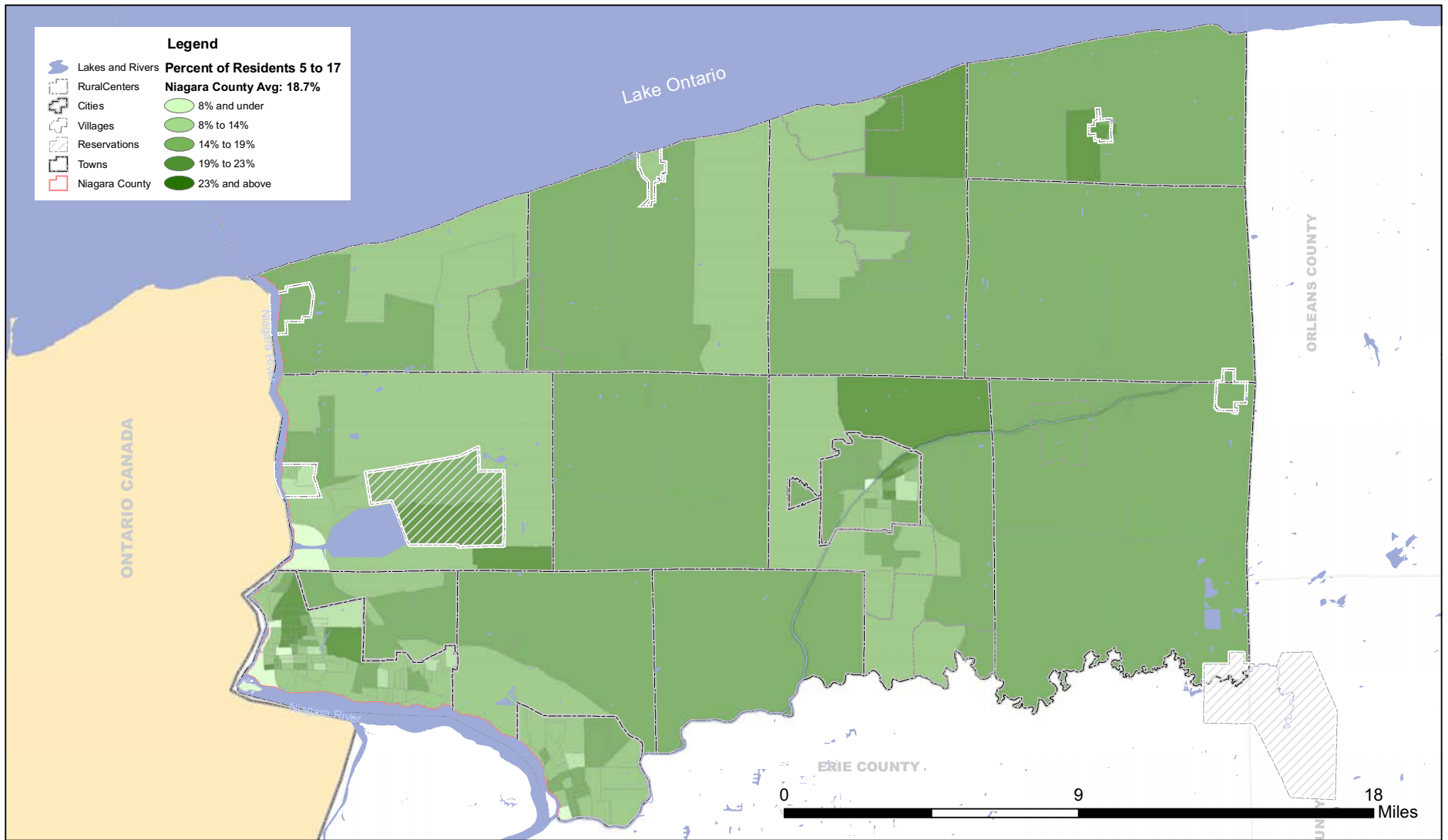
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**Percent of Residents
Ages 18 to 21**
Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

**Figure
III.F.12**

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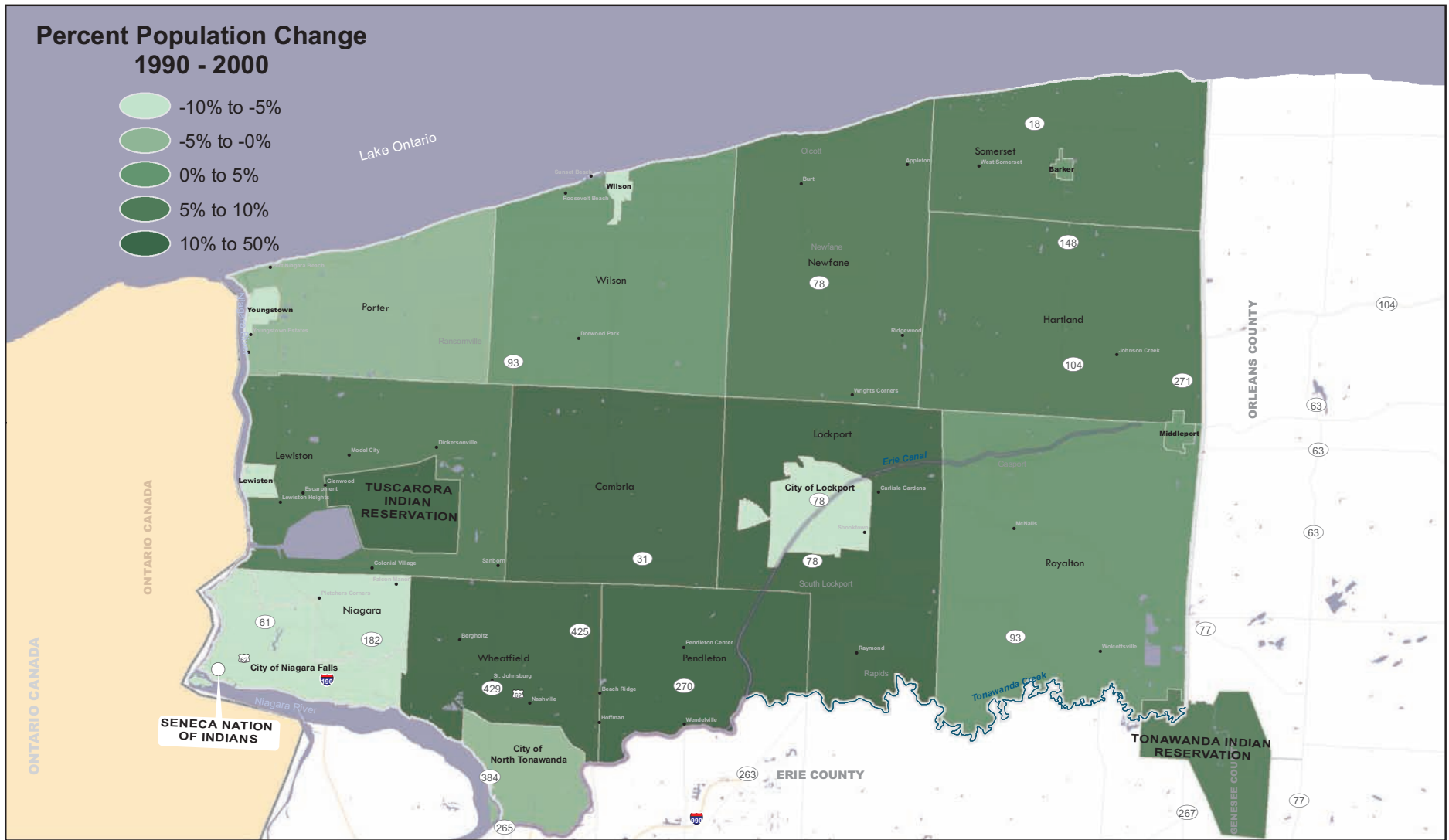
**Percent Residents
Ages 5 to 17**
 Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

**Figure
III.F.13**

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Percent Population Change 1990 - 2000

- 10% to -5%
- 5% to -0%
- 0% to 5%
- 5% to 10%
- 10% to 50%



Population Change by Municipality, 1990 to 2000

Figure III.F.14

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diploma or higher, while only 76.6 percent of Niagara Falls' population had achieved that level of education. Almost half of the populations of most County municipalities had bachelor degrees or higher, while only 38.7 percent of Niagara Falls residents had attained a bachelor degree or higher.

Median age was similar across all municipalities in the County, ranging from the mid-30s to the early-40s. Median household incomes tended to be lower in Niagara County's 3 cities compared to its towns and villages. All three cities had median incomes below \$40,000, while most towns and villages had incomes above \$40,000 with some surpassing \$50,000. Of the major cities and towns, Niagara Falls had the lowest median household income at \$26,800.

Individual poverty rates in the County in 2000 were highest in the cities, with all three cities having poverty rates below 10 percent. Niagara Falls had the highest poverty rate at 19.5 percent. Most towns and villages had poverty rates below 10 percent, with some below 5 percent.

Median home values varied greatly across the County in 2000, ranging from just over \$60,000 to over \$100,000. Towns and villages tended to have higher home values. Median monthly rents primarily ranged between \$400 and \$500. All major localities' housing stock was predominantly single-family units. The cities tended to have the most multi-family units (between 33 and 46 percent), while these units generally made up less than a quarter of housing units in the County's towns and villages.

G. Economic Data

The following information is intended as a summary of existing fiscal and economic conditions within Niagara County. This information provides a "snapshot" of conditions based upon the information available at the time of this Plan's preparation.

1. Fiscal Conditions

a. Major Sources of Revenue

The predominant source of revenue for localities in New York State varies based on the level of government. For most counties and cities, including Niagara County and the three cities within its boundaries, property taxes contribute most to total revenues.

Sales taxes also make up a significant portion of these localities' revenue streams. Revenue sharing also plays an important role in supporting revenues and addressing rising costs, especially for cities. Towns have historically made use of special districts to fund the major services provided to residents in certain areas outside of cities and villages where enhanced support for services is required. These different sources of revenue utilized in Niagara County and its municipalities are described in more detail below.

Property Tax Revenue



The median home value in Niagara County in the year 2000 was \$82,700, or about 55% of New York State's median home value of \$148,700.



Property taxes represented approximately 26% of Niagara County's total revenues in 2007. The percentage of total revenues that property taxes represent in the County's 3 cities was somewhat greater ranging between 31% and 36%.

Property tax accounts for 79 percent of all local taxes and makes up 43 percent of all local government revenue sources in jurisdictions in the State outside of New York City. Specifically in 2007, property taxes represented 26.4 percent of Niagara County's total revenues; 35.6 percent of the City of Niagara Falls' total revenues; 32.7 percent of the City of Lockport's total revenues; and 31 percent of the City of North Tonawanda's total revenues.

The property tax is a relatively stable, locally-controlled revenue source, mainly used to pay for services like schools, roads and libraries. They are also the predominant source of revenue for independent fire districts in the State, representing over 90 percent of these districts' revenues. Property taxes are generally used to balance municipal budgets after accounting for all other sources of revenue, which often leads to more abrupt increases if other revenues stagnate or decline.

Compared to the State as a whole, Western New York had fairly moderate property tax levies in 2005, around \$3,000 per household, lower than the State's 2005 median of \$3,977 per household. Niagara County had 2005 household property tax levies of \$3,784, higher than Western New York, but lower than the State median for that year. However, the property tax rate, in dollars per \$1,000 of full assessed property value, was higher than the State median in 2005 (\$41.96 compared to \$30.81).

Sales Tax Revenue

Sales taxes also make up a significant portion of local government revenues in New York State, representing 8.6 percent of total local government revenues in 2004. These taxes are a significant component of Niagara County's total revenues, representing about 17.5 percent.

Generally, the sales tax is levied at the county level and then proceeds are distributed to other jurisdictions within county boundaries (primarily cities), according to local sharing agreements. Counties that share sales taxes with municipalities within their borders retain anywhere from 31 percent to 98 percent of taxes levied. Niagara County falls roughly in the middle, retaining 58 percent of collected sales taxes, while distributing the remaining 42 percent to localities within County borders.

The vast majority of counties (49 of 57, excluding the five boroughs of New York City) had 2006 sales tax rates exceeding 3 percent, with 5.5 percent being the maximum. Niagara County currently levies sales tax at 4 percent. Combined with the State's 4 percent rate, this creates a state-local sales tax of 8 percent for those residing within the County.

The Western New York region has recently experienced more modest annual average sales tax distribution increases than other regions of the State. The region showed an average increase of 3.9 percent from 1999 to 2005, ranking 8th of 10 regions (ranging from average annual increases of 3.1 percent to 9.2 percent).

A small number of counties have agreements to share portions of their sales tax revenues with school districts within county boundaries. Although Niagara County does not directly share sales tax revenues with any school districts, the City of

Niagara Falls' school districts impose a sales tax known as the Consumer Utility Tax.

Town Special Districts

Town special districts are designated geographic areas within a town established to address specific service needs of the property owners within that area. These districts utilize charges, mainly through property taxes and user fees paid by taxpayers within the district to finance these services.

Niagara County contains 92 town special districts. This total is higher than the median number of districts for New York counties which is 78, but is modest compared to the number of districts in more active special district counties. Seven counties in New York State have 200 or more town special districts. Erie County has the most at 939 closely followed by Onondaga County. In Niagara County these districts serve the following purposes:

- Water - 26 districts
- Sewer - 18 districts
- Refuse & garbage - 13 districts
- Lighting - 13 districts
- Fire protection - 12 districts
- Drainage - 7 districts
- Other - 3 districts

Towns within Niagara County are highly dependent on town special district funds to support local services. Revenues from special districts account for 41 percent of all town revenues in the County (the second highest percentage of all New York counties). Furthermore, 77 percent of all town property tax revenues in the County go to fund these districts (highest percentage of all New York counties).

Revenue Sharing

Revenue sharing is unrestricted State aid to local governments that can be used for any local governmental purpose. Over 90 percent of revenue sharing funds go to cities, which have historically been more dependent on unrestricted. Revenue sharing represents over 18 percent of total city revenues in New York State, while only accounting for one percent of town and village revenues. Over the last decade, unrestricted aid to towns and villages has been cut substantially, and completely withheld from counties.

Currently, unrestricted aid is available for distribution to localities through the following categories:

- *General Purpose for Local Government Aid (GPLGA)* - available to cities, towns and villages. This is the largest revenue sharing category, making up between 74 and 92 percent of unrestricted aid allocations from 1989 to 2005.
- *Emergency Aid to Eligible Municipalities* - this category of aid has been distributed since 1979 to assist localities demonstrating fiscal need and facing fiscal difficulties due to constitutional tax limitations. This category has been used to fund 6 localities: the City of Niagara Falls, Erie County, and New York's "Big Four" cities – Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.



Niagara County contains 92 town special districts. Revenues from these special districts account for 41% of all town revenues in the County.

- *Supplemental Municipal Aid (SMA)* - established in 1996 to further support cities receiving Emergency Financial Assistance (e.g. Niagara Falls). This has become the dominant category of revenue sharing funds for cities in the State, representing over one-half of their unrestricted aid distributions. These funds are currently not available to towns, villages or counties.
- *Emergency Aid to Certain Cities* - designed to support New York's larger cities (excluding New York City) that are at or close to their constitutional taxing limits. Only Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers are eligible for this category of unrestricted aid.

Despite their importance to cities with rising costs, flat property values and revenue constraints, revenue sharing distributions have been significantly limited by the State over the past 17 plus years. From FY-88 to FY-05, unrestricted aid has been reduced by more than 26 percent, while cumulatively State funds have increased by 93 percent. In addition, revenue sharing funds have been outpaced by inflation, which has increased 65 percent over this same 17-year period.

Revenue sharing distributions to municipalities within Niagara County have been reduced by almost 15 percent from 1988 to 2005 (\$18.9 million to \$16.1 million). This has been one of the lowest decreases in unrestricted aid to localities within counties, but the County still lags behind 6 counties that have either experienced nominal decreases or increases. For comparison, Erie County's revenue sharing distributions increased almost 16 percent from 1988 to 2005.

b. Major Expenditures

Many municipalities across New York State are experiencing rising expenditures due to the increasing cost of services, need for infrastructure maintenance, and other related costs. These expenditures have caused strains in the budgets of many localities across the State, but have hit Upstate areas, including Western New York, particularly hard. This section provides an overview of general trends in expenditures across the State, some specific expenditure trends within Niagara County, and some budget implications of these expenditures.

Expenditure Trends

Cities providing fiscal projections (as a requirement of the new Aid and Incentives for Municipalities [AIM] program that requires cities to develop financial plans in order to receive certain types of State aid) over the coming years have all predicted expenditure increases from 2006 through 2009, with an average expected increase in total city expenditures of 4.1 percent. Below are the projected expenditure increases broken down by major expenditure category. These estimates were also made prior to recent economic downturns.

- Personal service costs represent that largest portion of city expenditures, accounting for 48 percent of expenditures on current operations (NOTE – not including debt service or capital outlay) in 2004. These costs were projected to increase between 3.3 and 3.7 percent from 2006 to 2009.
- Employee benefit costs increased 12 percent between 1999 and 2004, but are expected to exhibit more moderate growth between 2006 and 2009, with

projected increases between 7.4 and 9.5 percent. Still, this is the highest projected expenditure increase of any of the major categories.

- Non-personal services (NPS) include contracts for services and supplies, as well as equipment and capital expenditures. Growth in this category for 2006-2009 is expected between 3.4 and 4 percent.

-- Expenditures and Budget Implications for Niagara Falls

Flat property values, aging infrastructure and population losses have put a burden on tax revenue generation in the City of Niagara Falls, the largest population center in the County. Although the population has decreased, the cost of services has risen and the need to repair its aging infrastructure has caused annual expenditure increases of approximately 5 percent over the last several years.

Modest increases in assessed value were projected for 2007 and 2008 (2 percent), which was expected to increase existing budget gaps over the next couple of years. In addition, the City has been constrained in its ability to raise property tax rates to close these gaps, due to being very close to its constitutional tax limits. The City cannot simply increase property tax levies, as an increase over the limit would mandate the New York State Comptroller to withhold certain State aid revenues. This would obviously further Niagara Falls' budget gap problems.

-- General Budget Implications for Cities in New York State

Expanding budget gaps are expected in cities besides Niagara Falls over the next few years. Projected budget gap increases average 5.2 percent of total revenues in 2007 and 9.8 percent by 2009. These estimates were made before recent downturns in the national economy. Ten cities projected gaps exceeding 10 percent of their total revenues, which generally indicates severe fiscal stress. Soaring service costs and expenditures appear to be driving these expected gaps in the cities of the Hudson Valley and Long Island, while stagnant property values, population decline and thus, reduced revenues were likely the cause for projected gaps in other Upstate cities, such as those in Niagara County.

c. General State of Affairs

Rising expenditures, constrained revenues, and widening budget gaps have characterized the fiscal state of many municipalities in New York State, like those of Niagara County. In light of these conditions, many governmental issues, fiscal concerns and policy questions have arisen, demanding re-examination of local government practices, State and local policies, and State and local funding mechanisms.

-- Local Tax Burden

- New York taxpayers have the highest combined State and local tax burden in the nation, with a total tax bill of \$131 for every \$1,000 of personal income in 2002, nearly 26 percent higher than the national average.
- New York's high tax burden is entirely driven by high local taxes – State taxes are about average, at \$64 per \$1,000 of personal income, versus \$62 for the nation as a whole.

- Local taxes are the highest in the country, at \$67 per \$1,000 of personal income, 60 percent higher than the national average of \$42. Maine is the next highest state at \$55 – nearly 20 percent lower than New York.

- Although New York does not rank first in any individual major local tax, it is among the top seven states for the three major taxes: local property, sales and personal income. It is the combination of high local taxes across the board that causes the State’s overall local tax ranking to rise to the top.

-- Property Tax Burden

- Outside of New York City, property taxes per capita are \$1,634 – 73 percent above the national average.

- Over the last 10 years, property tax levies have grown by 60 percent, more than twice the rate of inflation during that period (28 percent). Most of this growth occurred in the last 5 or so years – when property tax levies increased by 42 percent, compared to inflation of 13 percent.

- In Niagara County the property tax levy per household and per \$1,000 of personal income is relatively low. However, the property tax rate in relation to full property values is relatively high, which is likely due, in part, to the relatively low property values characteristic of Niagara County.

-- Property Tax Issues

Although the property tax is stable and easy to use, it has been noted for some flaws and has been the subject of much controversy, particularly in New York State. Some major property tax issues include:

- Property taxes are based on a fairly subjective property values assessment system.

- Home values (upon which property taxes are assessed) may not accurately reflect an ability to pay.

- Property tax “rebates” commonly used to relieve tax burden are essentially a transfer of tax burden and not a tax cut.

- Property taxes are often considered regressive – the burden falls more heavily on lower-income tax payers as a percentage of their income.

-- Sales Tax Burden

- New York State has one of the highest combined state/local sales tax rates in the nation, with only Tennessee, Louisiana and Washington being higher. The State’s average combined state-local sales tax rate of 8.25 percent for New York compares to a national average rate of 5.93 percent.

- Sales tax revenues grew by nearly 45 percent from 1993 to 2001, more than double the rate of growth of property taxes, which grew by 20 percent during this period.

-- Sales Tax Issues

- New York has one of the highest combined state/local sales tax rates, and it is the local portion that drives up New York's overall rate. However, local sales taxes in New York State have long been linked to the existence of a large county share of Medicaid costs, whereas most states do not require significant local contributions toward Medicaid.
- Competition from adjacent states, and from internet sales, is a serious tax policy issue in New York State. Each year, State and local sales tax revenues are lost to the growing popularity of e-commerce transactions (i.e., internet purchases), where sales tax is often not collected. As this form of commerce continues to grow, so will the amount of uncollected sales tax revenue.
- Because many sales tax sharing agreements are based on population, cities which have lost population, like Niagara Falls, are particularly vulnerable to sales tax revenue losses.

-- Town Special District Issues

- Due to the rapidly-growing/redistribution of populations of towns in New York, and therefore the rapidly-increasing use of town special service districts, concerns have arisen regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of using this mechanism to fund certain town services.
- There has been a general lack of transparency in the specific use of special district revenues and the actual cost of providing services within these districts.
- The ad-hoc use of districts has raised questions about the efficiency of this mechanism and the potential for district consolidation.
- Town special districts generate revenues only from residents living within the district boundaries, yet residents outside of these boundaries sometimes benefit from the services funded by district revenues.
- Towns in New York State are growing rapidly in terms of increased populations – ten towns now exceed 100,000 in population (compared to only 5 cities in the State). This increase due in large part by redistribution of population from urban to rural areas has caused many towns to look and act more like traditional cities, yet because towns are so diverse in their composition and operation it is difficult to develop standardized models for specific service delivery, as is generally done for cities.

-- Revenue Sharing Issues

Many issues have arisen over the amount of revenue sharing provided by New York State and the mechanism for determining how much aid is distributed to each locality.

-- Revenue Sharing Amounts

- Revenue sharing in New York State peaked at nearly \$1.1 billion in FY-89

and currently totals about \$800 million. From FY-88 to FY-05, revenue sharing has been reduced by more than 26 percent, while cumulatively State funds have increased by 93 percent.

- Revenue sharing represented about 3 percent of the State budget in FY-89, but in FY-05 presented only 1 percent of the budget. This makes apparent a lowered priority for revenue sharing at the State level.

-- Unrestricted Aid Allocation Mechanisms

- Original statutory formulas based on population, per capita property valuation, and personal income were established to guide fair, equitable and flexible aid distributions. However, these formulas have been unused for decades, as unrestricted aid amounts have been essentially frozen.
- The Governor established a new Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) as part of the 2005-06 Executive Budget that would consolidate several revenue sharing categories and allowed almost all municipalities a 2.5 percent to 12.5 percent increase in unrestricted aid funds in 2005-06 and a 5 percent to 25 percent increase in 2006-07.
- The Governor also established a Shared Municipal Services Incentives Awards program that supports municipalities with mergers, consolidations, cooperative agreements and shared services. This program encourages increased efficiency in local services, thereby reducing costs and the need for unrestricted aid.

H. Economic Development

Niagara County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), last completed in mid-2008, sets forth several goals for economic development. Detailed information regarding economic development issues and opportunities in Niagara County are provided in the County's annual Economic Development Strategy, Chapter VI of this Plan, and on the County's websites.

Goals established in the CEDS address the following general issues and opportunities:

- Implementation of sustainable development practices, both in terms of recruiting high paying jobs and broadening the tax base as well as protecting natural resources
- Expansion of key economic sectors (industry, tourism, agriculture, and commercial activity)
- Enhancement of the County's competitive position
- Diversification of the County's economic base
- Development of a comprehensive education and training program to enhance workforce development

1. Market Facts

Niagara County's prior planning initiatives and studies as summarized in Chapter II and Chapter VI of this Plan, as well as the annual CEDS report include a wealth of

economic development information, market facts and statistics. This information includes leading industry sectors, labor force information, the availability of land and building space, home values and housing statistics, locations of recent development projects, and retail data. This information is briefly summarized below because it can further economic development opportunities within the County and directly relates to the economic health and quality of life of communities within Niagara County.

a. Leading Industry Sectors

Niagara County’s leading industry sectors are presented below in descending order, by total payroll:

- Manufacturing
- Health care, social services
- Retail trade
- Construction
- Arts, entertainment, recreation
- Accommodations, food services
- Administration, support, waste management, remediation services
- Wholesale trade
- Transportation/warehousing
- Finance and insurance

While the trend is these sectors are gradually declining as in the nation as a whole, manufacturing is still a leading industry in the County. Heavy industry continues to benefit from low cost hydroelectric power made available by the Niagara Power Project.

The services industry is increasing in importance, particularly health care and social services as well as jobs and economic activity related to the tourism sectors. Agriculture also continues to be important, generating nearly \$60 million in product sales in the local economy. Farmland preservation continues to be a major issue and a goal of the region in general as the County’s population redistributes itself, for the most part, into outer ring suburbs and rural towns.

b. Major Employers

Consistent with the data on leading industry sectors, Niagara County’s top employers include manufacturers, entertainment/recreation facilities, retail centers, school districts, and hospitals. The list of top employers by number of employees follows. Major employers are also identified in Figure III.H.1.

Private Sector

Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel	2,861
Delphi Thermal	2,600
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	1,200
Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls	1,000
Mount St. Mary’s Hospital	700

Public Sector

Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station	2,936
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Niagara County	1,550 (1427 FTE's)
Niagara Falls City School District	1,325
North Tonawanda City School District	765
Lockport City School District	730
Niagara County Community College	713

c. Industry Targets and Projections

The County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identifies the following sectors as leading growth industries:

- Tourism
- Agriculture/food processing
- Automotive
- Telecommunications/call centers
- Medical products
- Medical technology research and development
- Chemical/plastics
- Metal fabricating/machining
- High tech/emerging industries
- Forest and wood products
- Printing
- Trade/distribution, logistics, and warehousing
- Aerospace and defense

d. Availability of Land and Building Space

Niagara County is host to several corporate and industrial parks, located primarily in the Town of Niagara, the Town of Wheatfield, the Town of Lockport, and Niagara Falls. These include:

- Niagara Industrial Airport adjacent to the Niagara Falls International Airport (217 acres)
- Town of Lockport Industrial Park (203 acres)
- Woodlands Corporate Center in the Town of Wheatfield (150 acres)
- Vantage International Pointe adjacent to the Niagara Falls International Airport (158 acres)
- Summit Business Park in the Town of Wheatfield (225 acres)

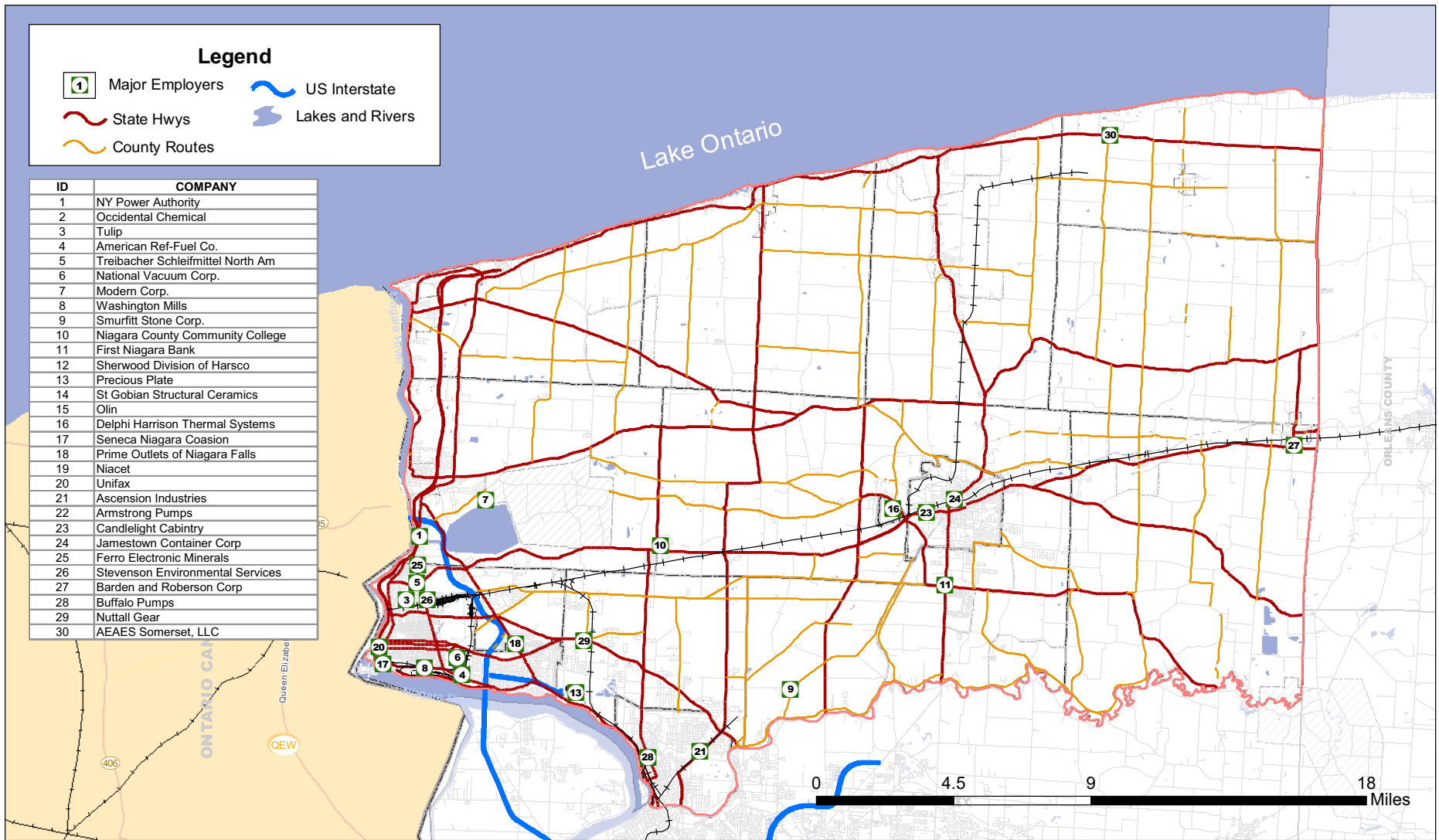
Throughout the County, land is currently available in a range of locations, in addition to existing corporate and business parks. Clusters of available land are found in the Town of Lockport, Town of Niagara and Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda. Available acreage ranges from less than one acre to 285 acres at the Town of Lockport IDA Park.

Available office and industrial space within existing buildings is also clustered in the Town of Lockport, Town of Niagara and Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda. Available space ranges from 1,000 square feet to 625,000 square feet.

-- Retail

Niagara County has several retail clusters. Shopping malls include the Fashion Outlets of Niagara in Niagara Falls and the Summit. There are major shopping areas located throughout the County. These include:

- Little Italy, Niagara Falls Blvd./Route 62, and Niagara Falls City Market in



Major Employers

Figure III.H.1

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the Falls Region

- Historic Lewiston and Historic Youngstown in the River Region
- Lakeview Village Shoppes and Wilson Harborfront Shops in the Lake Region
- The Historic Bewley Building, Lockport Farmers Market, North Tonawanda City Market, Transit Road/Route 78, Ulrich City Center, and Payne Avenue in the Canal region.

e. Utilities

Niagara County is well served by three of the State's largest utilities - New York Power Authority (NYPA), National Grid, and New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). Several smaller suppliers provide electric and gas to residents and businesses throughout the County. National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation also provides natural gas to the western portion of the County and NYSEG supplies natural gas to the eastern portion of the County. National Grid supplies electricity to most of the County with the exception of the Town and City of Lockport that is serviced by NYSEG.

The NYPA generates electricity through the Niagara Power Project, one of the world's largest hydroelectric facilities. Other large producers include: COVANTA Company of Niagara, which operates a large waste to energy facility in Niagara Falls; Niagara Generation, LLC which operates a coal-fired and bio-mass plant; Lockport Energy Associates, L.P. which provides electricity from its co-generation facility to Delphi Thermal; and AES Somerset, LLC which owns and operates a coal-fired plant in Somerset (Niagara County Center for Economic Development 2008).

Verizon is the major provider of telecommunication services in the County. More than 5,600 miles of high speed fiber optic cables exist for transmission of voice, video and data to residential and business customers. Wireless communications are provided by Verizon, Sprint, Cingular and others. Cable television is also available from Time Warner.

I. Cultural and Historic Resources

1. Cultural and Historic Resources

The Niagara River waterfront area and the Erie/Barge Canal region have both significantly contributed to the rich cultural heritage and each area contains many of the most significant cultural and historic resources of Niagara County. As early settlement of the County progressed from east to west, trade centers and transportation routes became increasingly important. In order to protect these early trade routes Old Fort Niagara, located north of the Village of Youngstown at the point where the Niagara River flows into Lake Ontario, became a critical military outpost to maintain early trade in western New York. Old Fort Niagara, as perhaps one of the better known and earliest of the historic resources of the area, like many of the other cultural and historic resources of communities throughout Niagara County, are identified in Figure III.I.1 Cultural Resources.

The Erie/Barge Canal is a tremendously important resource and a major part of

Niagara County history, contributing particularly to the early development of the central portion of the interior parts of Niagara County in and around the City of Lockport. The Erie Canal opened in 1825 and created a vital trade link between Lake Erie on the west and the Hudson River in the eastern part of the State.

The Canal provided a means of transportation over the Niagara Escarpment which had proven to be a significant physical impediment to commercial activity across the County. Today, the Canal not unlike many of the important historic and cultural resources in the County, is crucial to the health of local economies and significantly contributes to the community character of the region. The Canal corridor itself and adjacent lands provides future opportunities for recreation and community development.

A complete listing of National and State Register resources found in Niagara County is provided in the Cultural Resources Appendix. Interested individuals are also encouraged to contact the County Historian Office.

J. Recreation and Tourism

1. Recreation

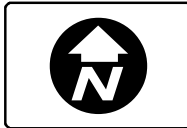
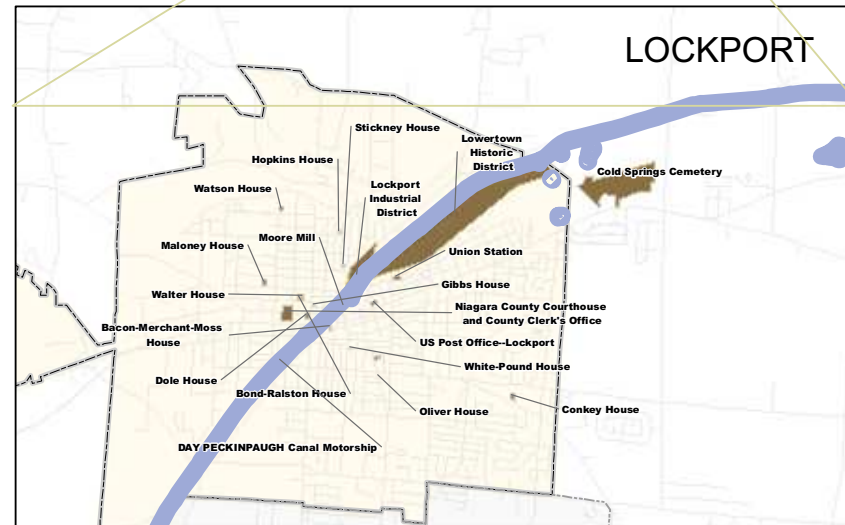
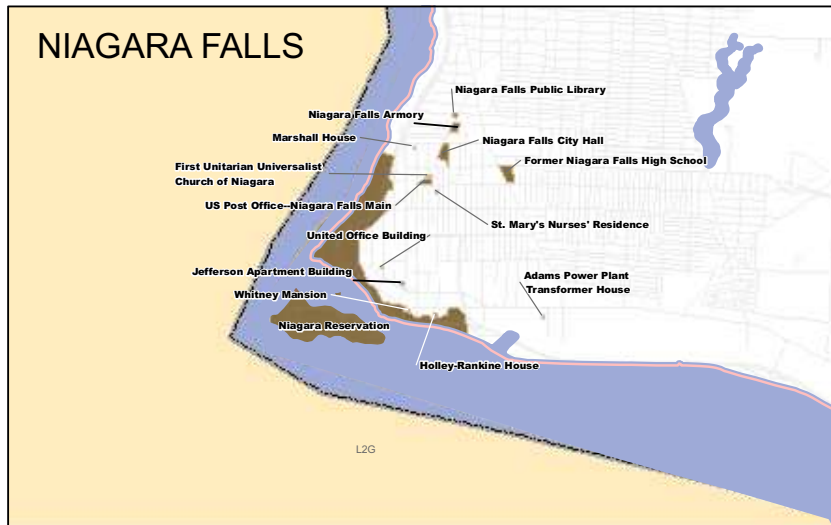
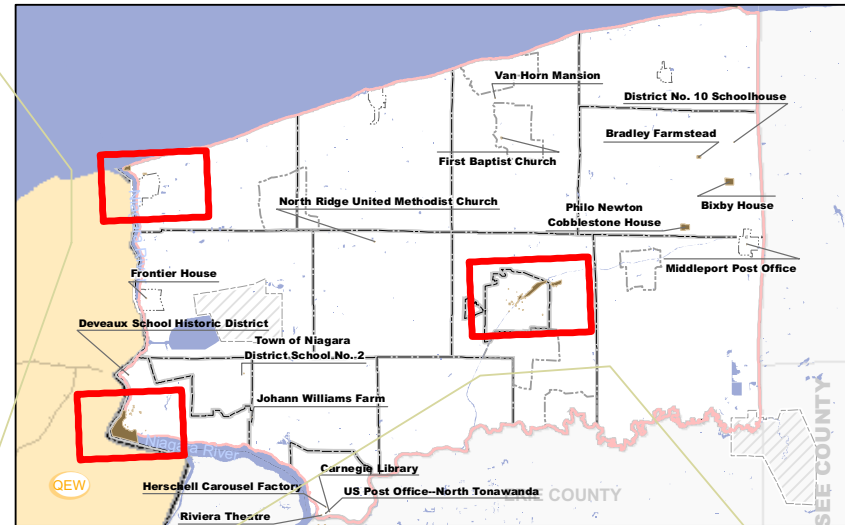
Niagara County is a center for all types of year-round recreational opportunities and tourist destinations. No destination is better known or contributes more to the tourism industry of the region than Niagara Falls. In addition to this natural wonder of the world, Niagara County affords a diversity of waterways and water-oriented recreational opportunities along Lake Ontario, the Niagara River, Tonawanda Creek and the Erie/Barge Canal that runs through the City of Lockport as well as the towns of Royalton, Lockport and Pendleton.

Figures III.D.5. and III.E.5. identify the locations of important recreation and tourism destinations in the County including major waterways, major park locations and waterfront public access points throughout the County.

The rich water resources and the shorelines of Niagara County make the area a top destination for sport fishing. Anglers from all over the United States enjoy the County's beautiful scenery as well as the opportunity to catch trophy fish. Brown trout, lake trout, largemouth bass, muskellunge, northern pike, perch, salmon, walleye, steelhead trout are some of the variety of species of fish that can be caught year round in the region. Charter boats can be taken out of marinas in Wilson, Olcott and the Niagara Bar.

The upper and lower reaches of the Niagara River and some of its tributaries support both warm water and cool water fisheries. A total of 92 different species of fish have been recorded in the Niagara River (Niagara River Greenway Commission 2007). Salmon fishing is one of the most popular types of fishing because of the intense effort involved in landing these fish. Fish can be caught all over the County including many of the area's smaller streams and creeks. The map above illustrates the many types of fish that are available in the Niagara County region.

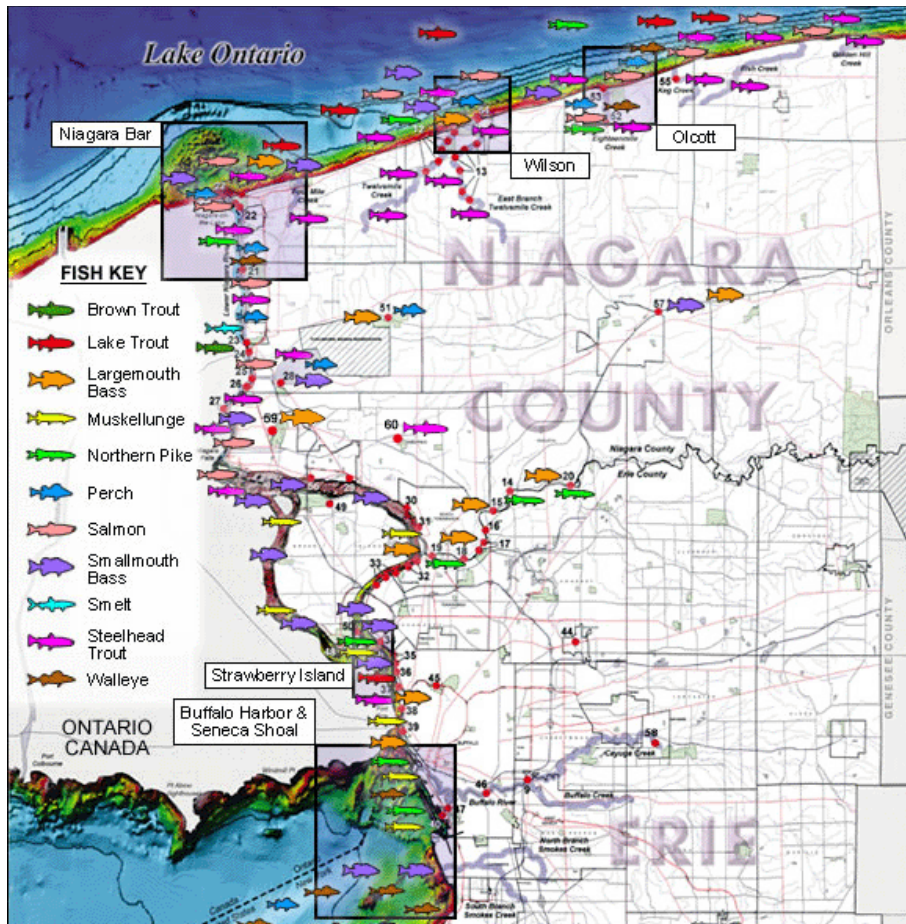
Information on recreation and tourism opportunities in Niagara County can be found at www.niagara-usa.com



Historic and Cultural Resources

Figure III.I.1

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Feasibility studies are underway to locate and construct a Lower Great Lakes Fisheries Research Center and Fish Hatchery to raise sport fish, primarily lake trout for stocking in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie a part of an effort to enhance New York's recreational fishing industry. The estimated \$40 million facility would be a center for research, education and a tourist destination. A study completed in 2008 recommended Joseph Davis State Park as a potential location (Niagara County Center for Economic Development 2008).

Hunting is also a very popular recreational activity in the region. Niagara County contains two Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), the Tonawanda WMA and the Hartland Swamp WMA. Both are open to the public for hunting. Popular species include white-tailed deer, turkey, duck, pheasant and rabbit.

Snowmobiling, hiking and biking are popular outdoor pursuits enjoyed around the County. There are numerous miles of snowmobile trails where riders can travel from the center of the County south to Erie County and elsewhere. Individuals that enjoy hiking and biking make use of these trails during the spring and summer months. Hikers and bikers use the trails in both the Hartland Swamp WMA and the Tonawanda WMA as well as some State Parks. There is also a scenic bike trail which runs along the Niagara River. The different trails designated for snowmobilers, hikers and bikers are identified on Figure III.D.5.

The County owns and maintains five parks plus the County Golf Course. Detailed information on these County facilities is provided in Chapter VII of this Plan. County Parks include:

- Bond Lake Park

- West Canal Marina
- Krull Park
- Oppenheim Park
- Royalton Ravine Conservation Park

State Parks are also prevalent around Niagara County because of the many diversified types of water resources in the County. The majority of the State Parks are found on either the shore of Lake Ontario or the Niagara River. The State Parks offer access to these waterways from nearby boat launches and beaches. Opportunities for fishing from the shore also exist. New York State Parks in Niagara County include:

- Buckhorn Island State Park
- Devils Hole State Park
- Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park
- Fort Niagara State Park
- Four Mile Creek State Park
- Golden Hill State Park
- Joseph Davis State Park
- Niagara Reservation State Park
- Reservoir State Park
- Wilson Tuscarora State Park

Recreational activities abound in the County for golfing, boating, hiking, biking, bird watching and nature study among many other active and passive pursuits. Numerous public and private golf courses exist throughout the County as well.

2. Tourism

In addition to the area's many local, County and State parks and recreation facilities there are a variety of tourist destinations throughout Niagara County. Tourists have the opportunity to visit Niagara Falls, enjoy wines at different wineries along the Niagara Wine Trail and Niagara Escarpment Trail, visit the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel in Niagara Falls and the Niagara Aquarium, enjoy the scenic Niagara River and Lake Ontario, or explore local history and the many retail shops found in local villages.

Niagara Falls is one of the greatest natural wonders of the world and remains the region's top tourist destination. Niagara Falls consists of two separate waterfalls. The Canadian Horseshoe Falls plunges 170 feet into its large pool. The American Falls plunges from 70 to 110 feet to the base of the falls. Boat tours to the base of the falls are offered through much of the year. This adventure is particularly impressive when you consider that approximately 6 million cubic feet of water cascades over the falls into the Niagara River every minute.

The Niagara Wine Trail runs along the shore of Lake Ontario from Orleans County. The trail enters the Town of Wilson and then turns south until it exits Niagara County at the border with Erie County. The majority of wineries are located in central Niagara County with a few along the shore of Lake Ontario. There are 12 award winning wineries along the Niagara Wine Trail. Each winery offers its own locally grown specialty wines.

Running along the Niagara Escarpment is the Niagara Escarpment Wine Trail. This trail is smaller than the Niagara Wine Trail. Just like the Niagara Wine Trail, the Escarpment Trail offers different wines from grapes grown in Niagara County. There are various destinations provided for wine tasters along the Escarpment Trail.

The Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel is a major tourist destination located in the City of Niagara Falls. This is a 147,000 square foot casino with the largest hotel in New York State outside of Manhattan. The gaming floor at the casino offers over 4,200 slot machines and 100 table games. The Casino offers numerous shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities.

Among the area's historic resources is Old Fort Niagara which is an historic site just north of the Village of Youngstown. The Fort features numerous battle re-enactments, hosts educational programs for students, and has a museum shop and a new visitor's center. The Fort includes some of the oldest buildings on the Great Lakes based on its 300 year history. Adjacent to the Fort is the 500 acre Fort Niagara State Park which offers boat launches, nature trails and other facilities. Old Fort Niagara hosts approximately 100,000 visitors annually while the State Park hosts approximately 500,000 annual visitors.

Other attractions in Niagara County include fall and spring festivals, the Niagara Aquarium, local concerts in area parks, boat races, farmers markets, as well as bed and breakfast type inns along Lake Ontario and the Niagara River for overnight stays.

A full detailed list of tourist destinations in Niagara County is provided at www.niagaracounty.com. However, some other notable destinations include the Artpark in Lewiston, a State Park located along the Niagara Gorge. The Artpark hosts a variety of summertime art festivals and performing arts.

The Inn at Barton Hill in Lewiston recently opened and provides a full-service boutique style hotel. This new destination is expected to draw about one-half million visitors annually to the Lower River region who may also be visiting major events such as the Porter Cup Golf Tournament, the Artpark, Lewiston Jazz Festival, Lewiston Art Festival, Ransomville Cabbage Festival and others (Niagara County Center for Economic Development 2008).

Several noteworthy projects are also underway in the County. Efforts to develop ferry service between the Village of Youngstown and Niagara-On-The-Lake in Ontario, Canada continue. The Niagara County Legislature and the Niagara County Center for Economic Development are working with Youngstown and the Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake to develop such service to link both areas as unique tourist destinations.

The following significant projects are also in various stages of progress. Among these, USA Niagara is pursuing development of a Niagara Experience Center in the City of Niagara Falls as a high-end cultural tourism and entertainment destination complex. The City of Lockport is pursuing the restoration of the mid-19th century Erie Canal Locks 67-71, also known as the “Flight of Five” as its primary tourism initiative. The “Magic Lands of Oz” project is progressing by Oz Central, LLC on an 800 acre site in the Town of Wheatfield.

Perhaps one of the most important initiatives is the Niagara River Greenway Plan which was approved by involved municipalities along the Niagara River in 2007. The Plan incorporates and is intended to complement Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plans (LWRP) of local communities as well as other State, National and regional initiatives such as the Seaway Trail, Niagara Wine Trail, Erie Canal Heritage Corridor and the National Park Service’s proposed National Heritage Area. These initiatives and other local plans and projects are anticipated to have a significant positive impact on the tourism industry of Niagara County in the near future.

K. Transportation

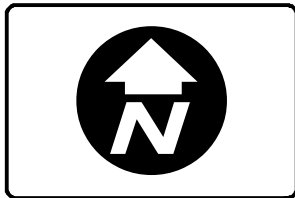
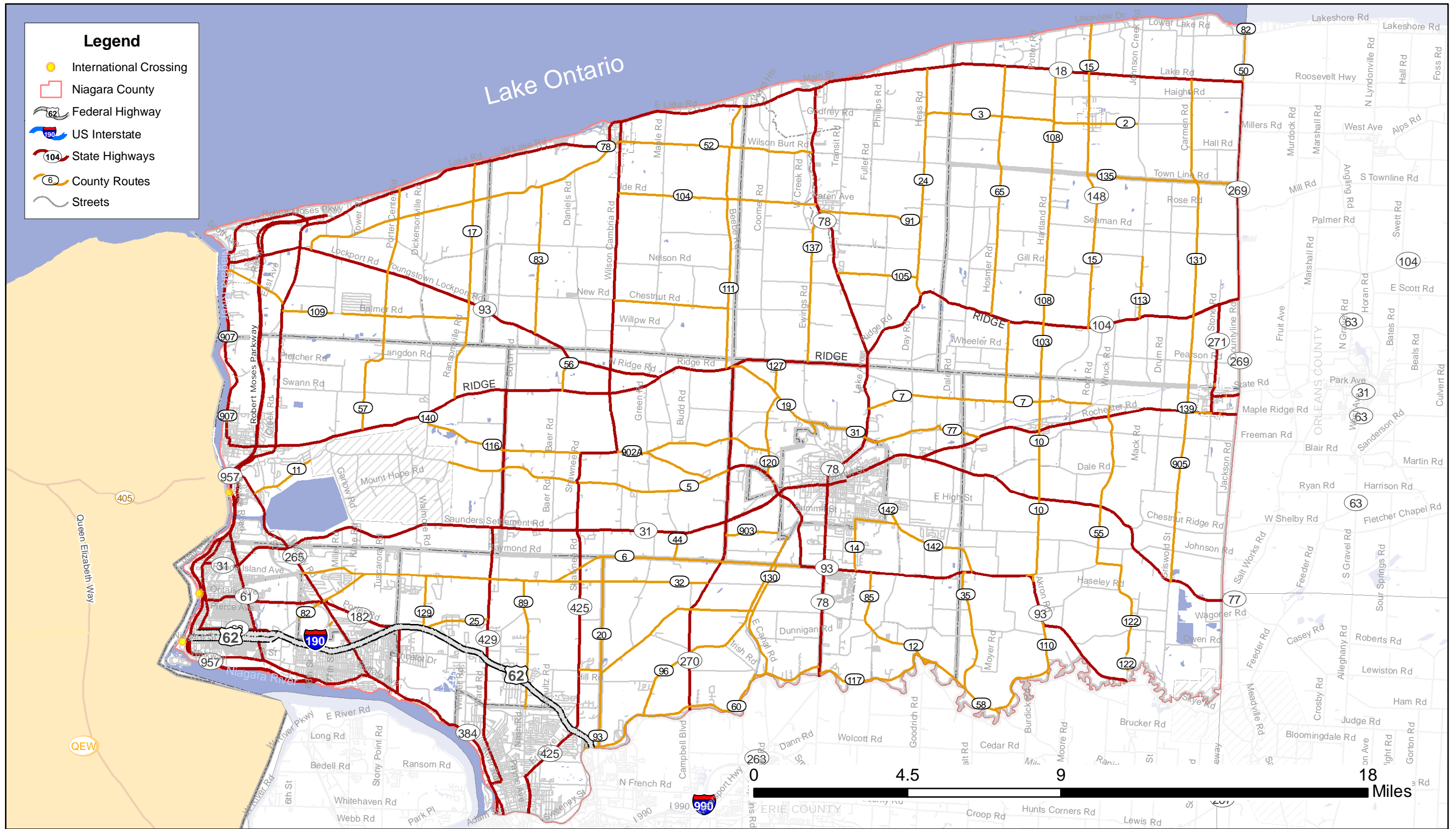
1. Roads and Highways

A well developed network of local roads, highways and bridges exists throughout the 20 municipalities that comprise Niagara County. In total, more than 1650 miles of roads and highways exist within the County. Of this total about 65 percent are considered local roads and streets under the jurisdiction of the various towns, cities and villages as shown in the accompanying table. Approximately 610 miles are town roads, 33 miles are village roads and 434 miles are city streets.

An additional 283 miles are County-owned roadways, 97 percent of which are distributed throughout the 12 towns in the County. The remaining three percent are within villages and cities. In addition, the County has jurisdiction and responsibility for maintenance and upkeep of 89 bridges and over 1100 drainage culverts. Additional information about the County’s roads and bridges including mapped locations is provided in Chapter VII. County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure.

State highways account for approximately 251 miles of roadway in the County. These roads and highways fall under the jurisdiction of the NYS Department of Transportation Region 5. About 87 percent of these are within the towns, 10 percent are within cities, and three percent are in villages.

Roads and highways are identified by agency jurisdiction in Figure III.K.1. The southwestern portion of the County is served by interstate highway directly linking the County to other interstates and the highway system in Canada via the three international bridge crossings identified in Figure III.K.1.



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2008										
NIAGARA COUNTY REGION 5 COUNTY 4										
MINOR CIVIL DIVISION		GEO- CODE	POP. 2000	TOTAL STATE TOURING ROUTE	CENTERLINE HIGHWAY MILEAGE BY JURISDICTION					
TYPE	Name of Town, Village or City				TOWN VILLAGE or CITY	COUNTY	TOTAL LOCAL	D.O.T. OWNED	OTHER	TOTAL STATE & LOCAL
TOWNS	Cambria	0112	5,390	28.1	31.4	18.3	48.7	28.1	0.0	77.8
	Hartland	0379	3,670	18.0	56.5	28.7	86.2	12.4	0.0	87.6
	Lewiston	0464	14,610	30.8	64.5	13.8	78.3	28.3	26.1	132.6
	Lookport	0481	19,650	23.0	85.1	33.9	118.0	24.3	0.0	143.2
	Newfane	0572	9,660	17.8	69.5	21.4	91.0	17.9	0.0	108.8
	Niagara	0584	8,980	11.7	30.0	5.9	36.8	11.7	0.0	47.8
	Pendleton	0648	6,050	7.8	26.6	30.4	67.0	7.8	0.0	84.8
	Porter	0681	4,960	20.2	27.1	23.6	60.7	16.0	6.5	73.1
	Royalton	0728	6,290	24.4	82.1	35.9	118.0	25.2	0.0	143.2
	Somerset	0786	2,290	13.6	33.4	19.1	62.6	11.5	0.0	84.1
	Wheatfield	0903	14,090	17.7	63.0	17.8	80.8	19.9	0.0	100.7
	Wilson	0916	4,630	14.8	41.2	26.1	67.3	14.8	0.0	82.1
	SUBTOTAL			100,270	228.9	610.4	275.0	885.4	217.8	32.6
VILLAGES	Barker	1035	580	1.0	1.8	1.7	3.6	0.0	0.0	3.6
	Lewiston	1268	2,780	2.6	13.8	0.6	14.4	2.0	0.8	17.1
	Middleport	1308	1,920	2.4	6.4	1.1	7.6	1.8	0.0	8.2
	Wilson	1540	1,210	2.7	4.2	0.8	4.8	2.7	0.0	7.8
	Youngstown	1549	1,960	2.4	6.6	2.2	8.8	1.0	0.0	9.8
	SUBTOTAL			8,450	10.9	32.7	6.4	39.0	7.4	0.8
CITIES	Lookport	2027	22,280	8.0	90.1	1.6	91.7	4.7	0.1	96.8
	Niagara Falls	2035	55,590	28.8	228.5	0.0	228.6	15.7	7.8	262.0
	North Tonawanda	2036	33,260	10.8	115.0	0.0	116.0	5.4	0.0	120.3
SUBTOTAL			111,130	47.4	433.6	1.6	435.2	25.7	7.9	468.8
COUNTY TOTAL			219,850	287.2	1076.6	282.9	1359.6	250.9	41.3	1651.7

2. Aviation, Rail and Marine Facilities

The Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) is located four miles east of the City of Niagara Falls. The NFIA is a commercial service airport that provides aviation facilities for business and corporate flights, recreational flights, police and law enforcement, and traffic/news flights. The NFIA operates under a joint agreement with the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station. International charter and cargo flights are accommodated due to the airport’s long runway, the fourth longest in New York State.

The airport also provides U.S. Customs and Immigration facilities to process international passengers. The airport has the capacity to accommodate large passenger and cargo aircraft. Niagara County is working on airport development plans with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) to facilitate development of the airport as an air cargo hub in support of identified growth potential in logistics/distribution/warehousing types of uses in the area. A new state-of-the-art passenger terminal building was under construction at the airport in 2008.

On the opposite side of the NFIA grounds from the public cargo and passenger area is the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base. The Base employs nearly 3,000 employees and is one of the County’s largest employers. The County supports the Base in efforts to “Grow the Base” through the Niagara Military Affairs Council (NIMAC) formed by the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce in 1996. The combined initiatives to development both the military and private sector

sides of the airport and base are designed to create the facility as a true multi-modal transportation hub.

Several small general aviation airports also serve the Niagara County area. The locations of these facilities are shown in Figure III.K.2 Air, Rail and Marine Facilities.

Rail service in Niagara County is provided by CSX and by Falls Road Railroad Company, which is a GTV Rail subsidiary. The Somerset Railroad traverses Niagara County between Niagara Falls and the Town of Somerset to supply the fossil fuel electrical generation plant in northern Somerset. With regards to rail service the Town of Wheatfield has advocated for passenger rail service to link the community with the Niagara Falls Airport (Niagara County Center for Economic Development 2008).

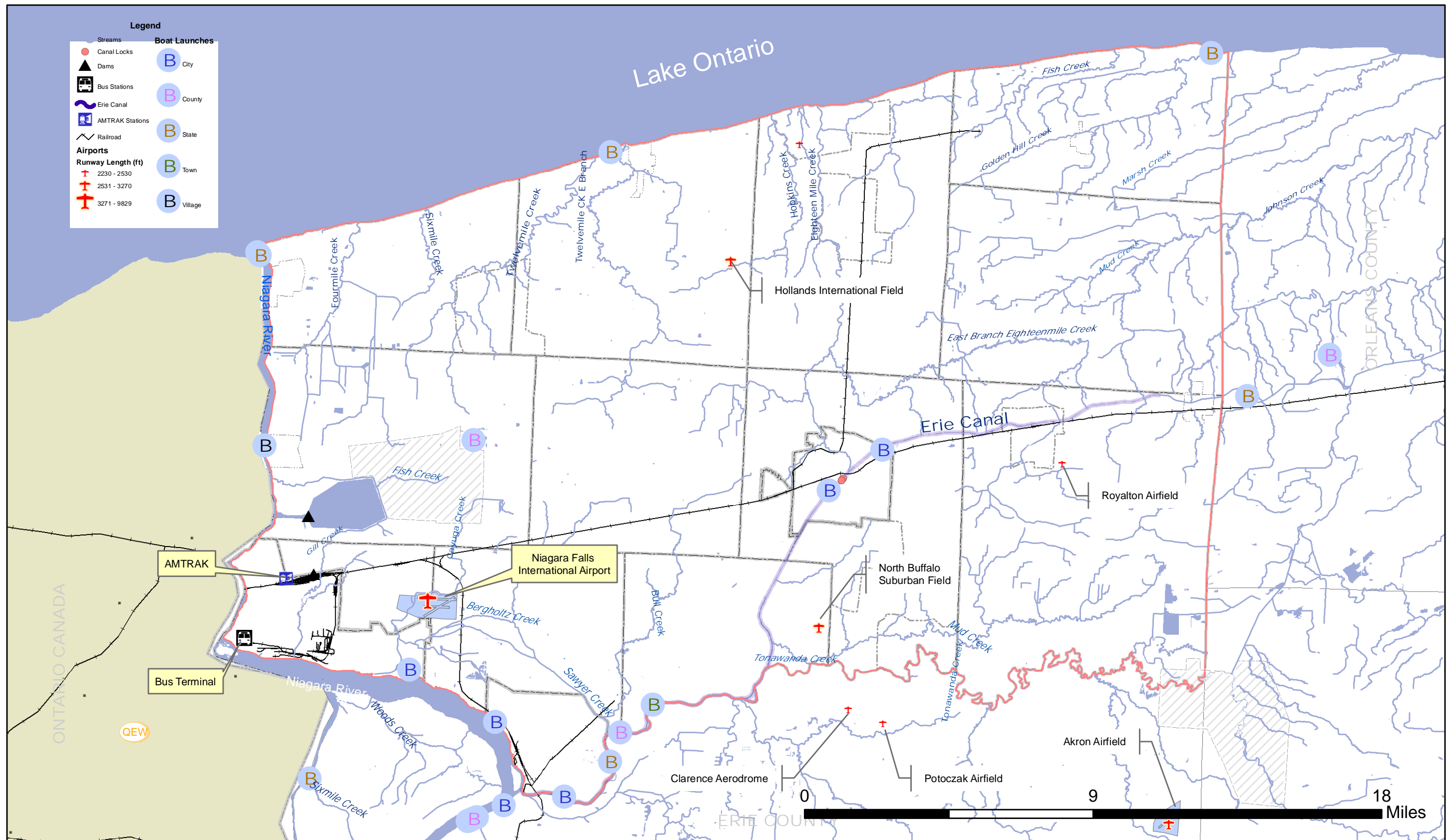
The City of Niagara Falls is progressing on plans to construct a new border crossing facility between New York and Ontario, Canada with a new International Train Station. This project is intended to create a rail centered multi-modal, multi-functional transportation facility at the Whirlpool-Rapids bridgehead. The facility would provide U.S. Customs and Border Protection processing in conjunction with passenger rail service. The project is intended to respond to the need to improve moving goods and people by rail safely across the border.

Niagara County is afforded a variety of significant marine resources and facilities along the shore of Lake Ontario, the Niagara River, the New York State Erie/Barge Canal and numerous creeks and streams. Significant project planning and project implementation continues at various stages in communities located along waterfronts throughout the County. These initiatives are summarized below from information provided by the Niagara County Center for Economic Development.

The City of Niagara Falls has significant plans to reconnect the City's Downtown and neighborhoods with the Niagara River waterfront. Plans include new trails as part of the Niagara River Trail to eventually link Griffon Park with Artpark in Lewiston and new links to access points all along the riverfront. Other initiatives call for the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway to afford better riverfront access to the public, and cultural interpretive destinations and other projects related to establishing the entire Niagara River Corridor as a National and World Heritage Area.

The Olcott Harbor Breakwater project in the Town of Newfane proposes construction of a 600 foot offshore breakwater in Lake Ontario, perpendicular to existing Federally-owned piers to improve safety in the harbor and provide an increasing demand for boat slips in the Town of Newfane and Niagara County.

Restoration of Cayuga Creek in the County to mitigate erosion and other problems along the creek continue between Niagara County and its partners on the project, which include the City of Niagara Falls, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers and several other public and private organizations. The project is intended to be modeled after the award winning restoration project for Eighteenmile Creek. The COE is working on a watershed restoration plan and the County continues to seek funding to progress the project. Funding has been secured through the Niagara County Environmental Fund to establish the LaSalle



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Canoe Trail along the Creek.

Revitalization efforts also continue in communities along the Erie Canal in Niagara County. These include the Western Canal Gateway Initiative which includes various revitalization and public access projects along the waterfront which is now largely complete at the confluence of the Niagara River and Erie Canal in the cities of North Tonawanda and Tonawanda, also known as the “Twin Cities”. The project is considered key to long-term revitalization in North Tonawanda by serving as a major link from the Western Gateway to the State’s 524-mile Heritage Canal System.

L. Health and Safety

Residents of communities in Niagara County are provided a variety of public and private sector health and safety services by local hospitals, law enforcement agencies, skilled nursing facilities, nursing homes, American Red Cross shelters and other service providers.

The locations of public health and safety facilities are identified in Figure III.L.1. Many health and safety facilities are located in the urbanized centers of the southern half of the County primarily in and around the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Fewer facilities are located in the less densely populated rural areas in the northern half of the County. American Red Cross shelters are provided in numerous locations around the County.

1. Hospitals

Five primary care hospitals are located in Niagara County as follows.

- ***Degraff Memorial Hospital***
445 Tremont Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
- ***Inter-Community Memorial Hospital at Newfane Inc.***
2600 William Street
Newfane, NY 14108
- ***Lockport Memorial Hospital***
521 East Avenue
Lockport, NY 14094
- ***Mount St. Mary’s Hospital and Health Center***
5300 Military Road
Lewiston, NY 14092
- ***Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center***
621 Tenth Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14302

2. Law Enforcement

Niagara County residents are served by both the New York State Police and the Niagara County Sheriff's Office. NY State Police barracks are located along Witmer Road in the Town of Niagara, just north of the City of Niagara Falls and along Dysinger Road, just south of the City of Lockport as shown in Figure III.L.1.

In addition, the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport have municipal police departments, as do the the villages of Youngstown, Barker and Middleport. The Town of Niagara also has its own police department. There is a combined police department for the Town and Village of Lewiston.

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office is located in the City of Lockport.

- **Niagara County Sheriff's Office**
5526 Niagara Street Ext., P.O. Box 496
Lockport, New York 14095-0496

All wireless 911 calls are received at the Sheriff Office in Lockport. However, all land line 911 emergency calls go to respective centers in each of the three cities in the County and the County Sheriff handles the remaining municipalities of the County.

3. Fire/Rescue Departments

Fire Departments are located throughout Niagara County. In all there are 31 fire/rescue department locations as listed below and shown in Figure III.L.1. In addition to local fire/rescue, a U.S. Coast Guard Station is located at the mouth of the Niagara River along the shoreline of Lake Ontario in the Town of Porter. The County is also served by the Tri-Town Ambulance Service, Rural Metro, and the Tri-Community Ambulance Service. Existing departments include:

Adams Fire Co.
7113 Nash Road
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120
Phone 692-3212

Barker Fire Co.
1660 Quaker Road
Barker, NY 14012
Phone 795-3011

Bergholz Fire Co.
2470 Niagara Road
Niagara Falls NY 14304
Phone 731-4848

Cambria Fire Co.
4631 Cambria-Wilson Road
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone 434-8948

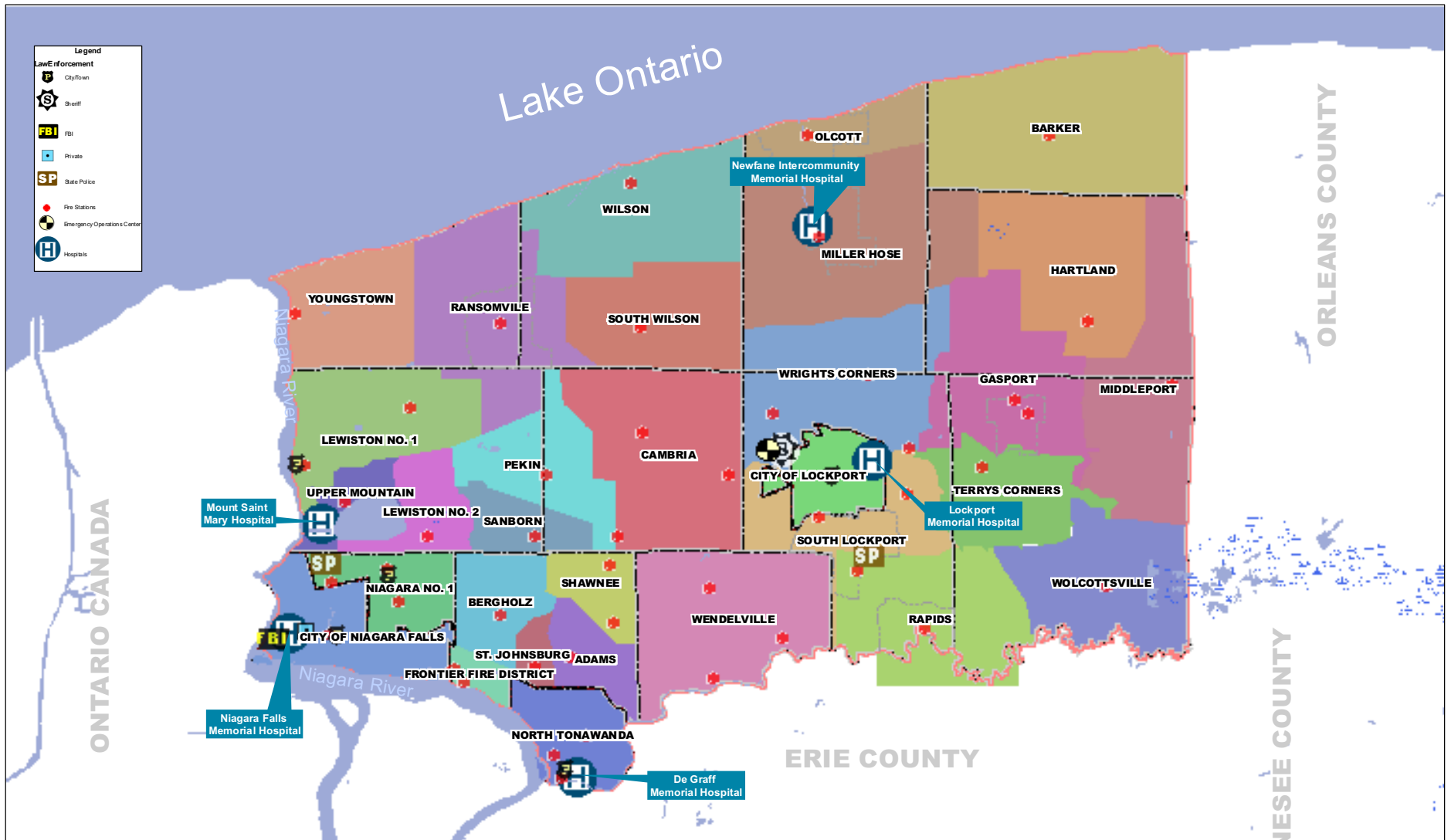
Frontier Fire Co.
2176 Liberty Drive
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
Phone 283-5700

Gasport Fire Co.
8412 State Street
Gasport, NY 14067
Phone 772-7751

Hartland Fire Co.
8945 Ridge Road
Gasport, NY 14067
Phone 735-3283

Lewiston #1 Fire Co.
145 N. 6th Street
Lewiston, NY 14092
Phone 754-2180

Lewiston #2 Fire Co.
1705 Saunders-Settlement
Niagara Falls, NY 14304
Phone 297-0050



Fire Districts, Hospitals and Law Enforcement

Figure III.L.1

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Lockport Fire Dept.
Municipal Building
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone 439-6611

Middleport Fire Co.
Main St. PO Box 94
Middleport, NY 14105
Phone 735-7872

Miller Hose Fire Co.
6161 McKee Street
Newfane, NY 14108
Phone 778-7544

Niagara Active Fire Co.
3995 Lockport Road
Niagara Falls, NY 14305
Phone 282-1776

Niagara Falls Fire Dept.
3115 Walnut Ave. PO Box 69
Niagara Falls, NY 14305
Phone 286-4725

North Tonawanda Fire
495 Zimmerman Street
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120
Phone 693-2201

Olcott Fire Co.
1573 Lockport-Olcott Rd.
Olcott, NY 14126
Phone 778-9252

Pekin Fire Co.
3024 Upper Mountain Road
Sanborn, NY 14132
Phone 731-4777

Ransomville Fire Co.
2525 Youngstown-Lockport
Ransomville, NY 14131
Phone 791-4411

Rapids Fire Co.
7195 Plank Road
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone 434-4502

Johnsburg Fire Co.
7165 Ward Road
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120
Phone 693-3131

Sanborn Fire Co.
5811 Buffalo St. Box 362
Sanborn, NY 14132
Phone 731-4616

Shawnee Fire Co.
3747 Lockport Road
Sanborn, NY 14132
Phone 731-3666

South Lockport Fire Co.
5666 S. Transit Road
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone 434-4626

South Wilson Fire Co.
4194 Chestnut St.
Wilson, NY 14172
Phone 751-6079

Terry's Corners Fire Co.
7801 Chestnut Ridge Road
Gasport, NY 14067
Phone 434-4800

Upper Mountain Fire Co.
839 Moyer Road
Lewiston, NY 14092
Phone 297-0330

Wendelville Fire Co.
7340 Campbell Blvd.
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120
Phone 693-4747

Wilson Fire Co.
250 Young Street
Wilson, NY 14172
Phone 751-6038

Wolcottsville Fire Co.
Wolcottsville Road
Akron, NY 14001
Phone 542-4422

Wrights Corners Fire Co.
4043 Lake Ave.
Lockport, NY 14094
Phone 433-2759

Youngstown Fire Co.
PO Box 387
Youngstown, NY 14174
Phone 745-3324

M. Education

Niagara County offers a variety of high quality educational institutions within its borders including Niagara University, Niagara County Community College (NCCC), and SUNY Empire State College. These institutions offer Associate, Bachelor and advanced university degrees on full-time and part-time bases. In addition, Niagara County is within a one-half hour drive or less from the State University of New York in Buffalo, Buffalo State College and Canisius College. These insitutions of higher education afford diverse degree programs to their student populations with similar diverse career and life interests.

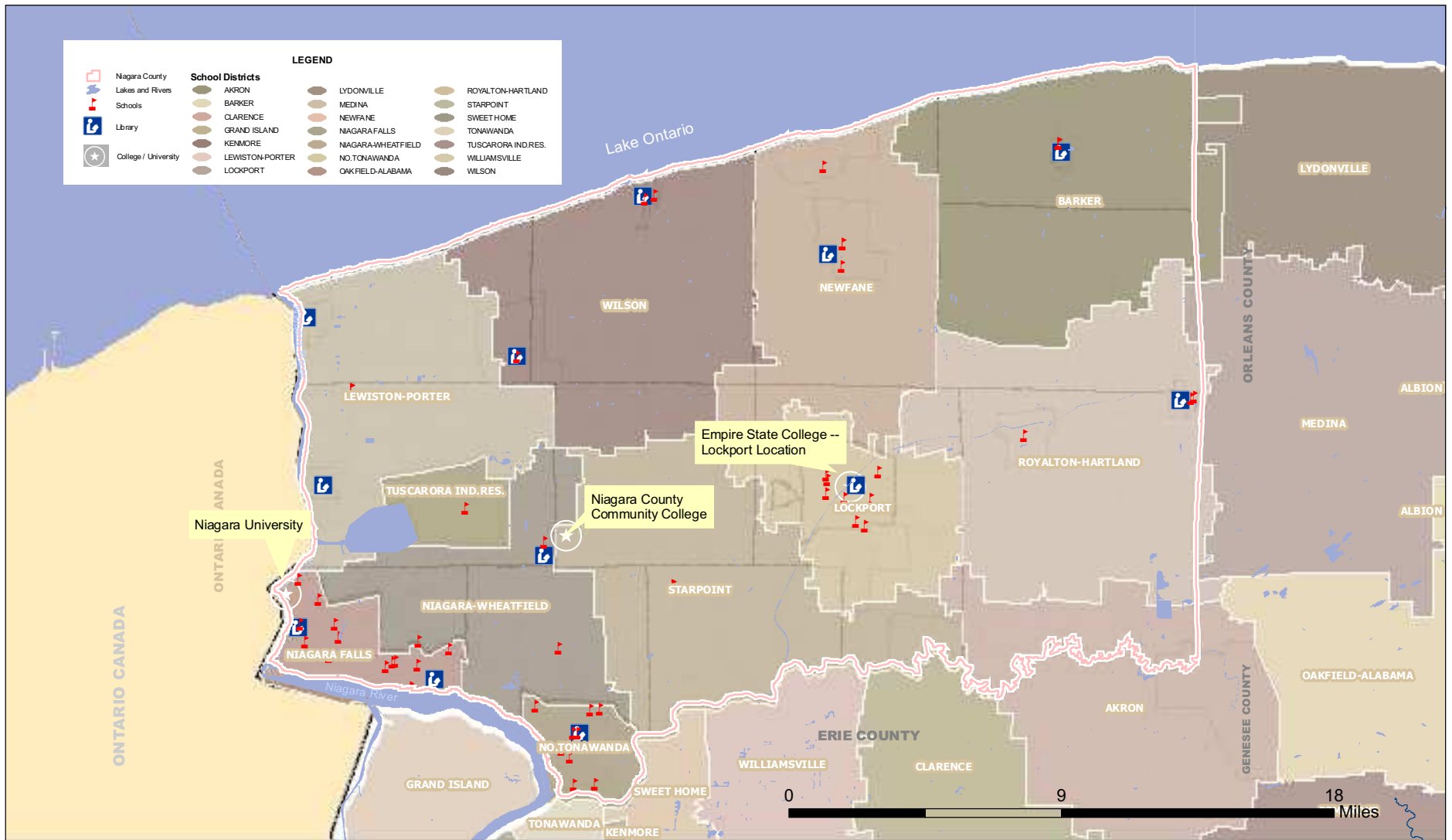
Niagara University was founded in 1856 by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and first chartered in 1861 as a seminary, then rechartered as a university in 1883. The 160 acre Niagara University campus is located on Route 104 along the northern limits of the City of Niagara Falls. The campus setting is along the top of the Monteaagle Ridge overlooking the Niagara River Gorge just four miles north of Niagara Falls near the U.S. and Canadian border. Niagara Univesity is a mid-size school with an enrollment of approximately 2,600 undergraduates, 800 graduate students and another 750 students enrolled in continuing and community education. More information is available at www.niagara.edu.

Niagara County Community College was established in 1962 as a locally sponsored college supervised by the State University of New York. The College was constructed in 1973 on a 287 acre campus located in Sanborn along Saunders Settlement Road (NYS Route 31) in the Town of Cambria. The College includes nine centrally located buildings including administration, a student center, a library, two gyms and several academic buildings including a science center, fine arts, humanities and social sciences, and business classrooms. In 2008 on-campus housing, called the Village College Suites, was constructed for the 2008-2009 academic year with housing for approximately 300 students. Total enrollment at the College varies around 6,000 students as a combination of full and part-time students.

Public libraries in Niagara County are part of the NIOGA Library System, a non-profit cooperative library system serving public libraries in three counties - Niagara, Orleans and Genesee. The system consists of 21 public libraries and receives most of its financial support from the New York State Department of Education.

Ten school districts exist within Niagara County. The locations of these districts as well as other educational institutions in the County are identified in Figure III.M.1. As indicated many of the elementary, junior and senior high schools are located in the developed urban areas of the County in the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Fewer schools are located in the rural towns of the County. Information on school districts and education in general, including current issues and trends is provided in Chapter VIII. School Districts in Niagara County include:

- Barker Central
- Lewiston Porter Central
- Lockport City
- Newfane Central Schools
- Niagara Falls City
- Niagara Wheatfield Central



School Districts and Educational Facilities

Figure III.M.1

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- North Tonawanda City
- Royalton Hartland Central
- Starpoint Central
- Wilson Centra5

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Niagara County Center for Economic Development. 2005. Industrial and Business Directory – 2005 Industrial Land Use Survey and Analysis. Niagara County Center for Economic Development. Sanborn, NY.

Niagara County Center for Economic Development. 2007 & 2008. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Niagara County Center for Economic Development. Sanborn, NY.

Niagara River Greenway Commission. 2007. Niagara River Greenway Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. Prepared by Wendel Duchscherer; Ecology and Environment; The HOK Planning Group; Advanced Design Group; Synegraphics; and the Niagara River Greenway Commission. Buffalo, NY.

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Chapter IV

Community Profiles

Community Profiles

The 20 municipalities and three Native American Indian Nations that comprise the 23 communities of Niagara County were invited to participate as key stakeholders in the planning process leading up to preparation of this Comprehensive Plan and the Community Profiles presented in this chapter. Active participation in the process included attendance by stakeholder community representative(s) during eight Plan Steering Committee meetings in 2008 and subsequent review and modification of information by the communities via a written survey in late 2008 and early 2009.

Information received from all stakeholder communities was incorporated into each respective community profile. In addition to the input provided by community representatives, data were obtained from a review of municipal comprehensive plans and other sources of information including U.S. Census Bureau data and countywide employment and socioeconomic information.

The community profiles, including one for Niagara County itself as presented in this chapter are intended to be a “snapshot” summary of current conditions in each community. They are not a detailed analysis of current needs and conditions, nor are they intended to be a substitute for local comprehensive planning initiatives. Rather, the profiles serve as a possible starting point for some communities that may need to update their comprehensive plans or other local data. The profiles also provide a unique opportunity for Niagara County communities to benchmark themselves in comparison to neighboring communities and to the rest of Niagara County. A summary profile for Niagara County is included among the other profiles.

The community profiles are also useful for identifying commonalities among communities in different areas such as the five subregions of the County that are defined in this Plan. For this purpose this chapter also contains a set of subregional profiles that combine information from the communities within those subregions.

The community profiles presented in this chapter are intended to be a “snapshot” summary of current conditions in each community.

Both the community and subregional profiles are useful for monitoring progress on the effectiveness of addressing important local and regional issues.

Each community profile includes an existing land use map of the municipality using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) property class data. These maps identify the locations of major land uses in each community with some overlap mapping of adjoining communities which is provided for more context.

Side one of each profile generally includes: land use percentages; population, housing and income statistics; recent information on building permit activity, major local employers, school districts, and agricultural districts; and planning information on local plans and land use regulations. The second side of each community profile contains important information on issues, opportunities, goals and objectives that have been identified by the communities during the planning process. Information is provided according to the five major subject areas or elements of the Plan.

Each of the 3 cities, 12 towns and 5 villages of Niagara County has a community profile. Similar information is not readily available for the three Native American Tribes or for their respective sovereign lands that are located in the County. Available information is summarized below, but although limited, the lack of information should not preclude consideration of each of the tribes as important stakeholders in the present and future of the County.

Indian Nations

Three Native American Indian Nations exist within Niagara County. These include the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Tuscarora Nation, and the Tonawanda Band of Senecas. The three tribes are part of the Iroquois Confederacy and refer to themselves as the Haudenosaunee, the “People of the Longhouse”.

Seneca Nation of Indians

The Seneca are known as the “People of the Great Hill”. Their tribal lands were set aside in three reservations by the Canandaigua Treaty of 1794, all of which were located outside of Niagara County. These include:

- The Cattaraugus Indian Reservation in Cattaraugus, Erie and Chautauqua counties containing 21,618 acres
- The Allegany Indian Reservation in Cattaraugus County, originally 30,469 acres, but 10,000 acres were inundated by construction of the Kinzua Dam & Reservoir in 1964
- The Oil Springs Reservation, containing about one square mile (640 acres) along the Allegany/Cattaraugus counties border

Tribal membership in the Nation is approximately 6,400 with about 3,000 members living on reservation lands. The Seneca Nation follows an elective, constitutional form of government with Executive, Legislative (16 member Tribal Council) and Judicial branches, as first established in 1848.

Most recently, in 2002 the Nation and New York State entered into the Nation-State Gaming Compact that granted the Nation the exclusive right to build and operate three

Class III gaming facilities in Western NY. The Seneca Gaming Corporation, chartered in 2002, is a wholly owned tribally chartered corporation of the Seneca Nation of Indians. The Corporation, through its subsidiaries operates the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel in Niagara Falls, NY as well as the Seneca Allegany Casino and Hotel in Salamanca, NY and the Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino in Buffalo, NY, scheduled for completion 2010. The 26-story Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel in Niagara Falls, NY has become Niagara County's largest private sector employer and is an important contributor to the economic base of the region.

Tuscarora Nation

The Tuscarora Nation encompasses an area of approximately 5,700 acres of land located about nine miles northeast of Niagara Falls, located external to the south central portion of the Town of Lewiston in western Niagara County. The New York State Power Authority's Niagara Power Project Reservoir, located just west of the Nation's Reservation was once part of the Nation's tribal lands.

Approximately 1200 members of the Tuscarora Nation reside within its Territory. The Tuscarora Nation governs under the traditional Council of Chiefs and Clan Mothers form of government. The Tuscarora Chiefs sit on the Haudenosaunee Grand Council. Chiefs from each of the Six (Iroquois) Nations meet regularly with the Onondaga, near Syracuse, New York with other members of the Haudenosaunee.

Tonawanda Band of Senecas

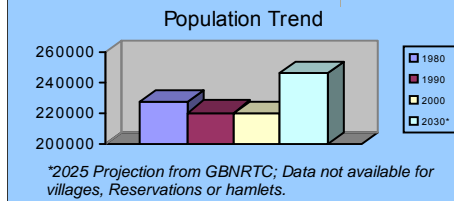
The Tonawanda Seneca territory consists of approximately 7,550 acres of land mostly located within Genesee County. Only a relative small portion of the Nation's Territory is within the extreme southeastern corner of Niagara County, just north of Tonawanda Creek.

The Nation has a population of about 1200 members, approximately 700 of which live within its Territory. The Tonawanda follow the traditional form of government in which Clan Mothers select the Chiefs, which sit on the Council of Chiefs as well as on the Haudenosaunee Grand Council. Chiefs from each of the Six Nations also meet regularly with the Onondaga with other members of the Haudenosaunee.

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overview

population	219,846	<i>New York State:</i>
percent of State:	1.16 %	18.9 mill.
avg household size:	2.45	2.61
pop/sq mi:	417.2	346.4
median age	38	35.9
pct school age (5-17):	18.7 %	13%
pct 65 and older:	15.4 %	12.9%

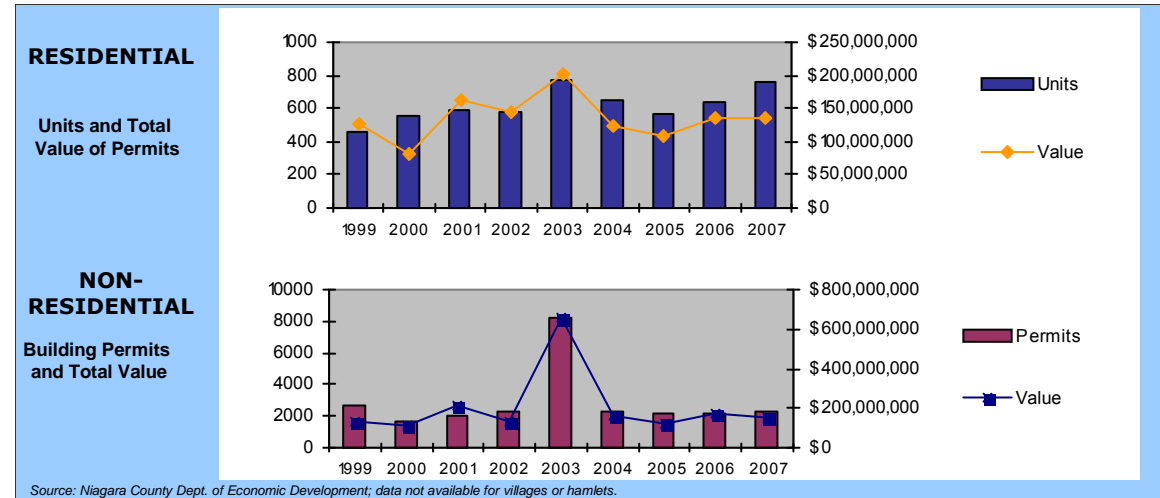


housing and income

median HH income:	\$38,136	<i>New York State:</i> \$43,393
per capita income:	\$19,219	\$23,389
poverty rate:	10.59%	14.6%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	31.7%	26.0%
<i>public assistance:</i>	4.0%	4.9%
<i>retirement:</i>	23.2%	16.9%
Housing units:	95,715	7.68 mill.
Percent Owner-Occ:	69.9	53%
Median year built:	1954	1954
Median home value:	\$80,900	\$148,700

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

School District	Enrollment ('06-'07)	School District	Enrollment ('06-'07)
Niagara Falls City	7,551	Lewiston Porter Central	2,338
Lockport City	5,169	Newfane Central Schools	2,036
North Tonawanda City	4,353	Royalton Hartland Central	1,553
Niagara-Wheatfield Central	4,074	Wilson Central	1,428
Starpoint Central	2,822	Barker Central	1,097
		TOTAL	32,421



agricultural districts

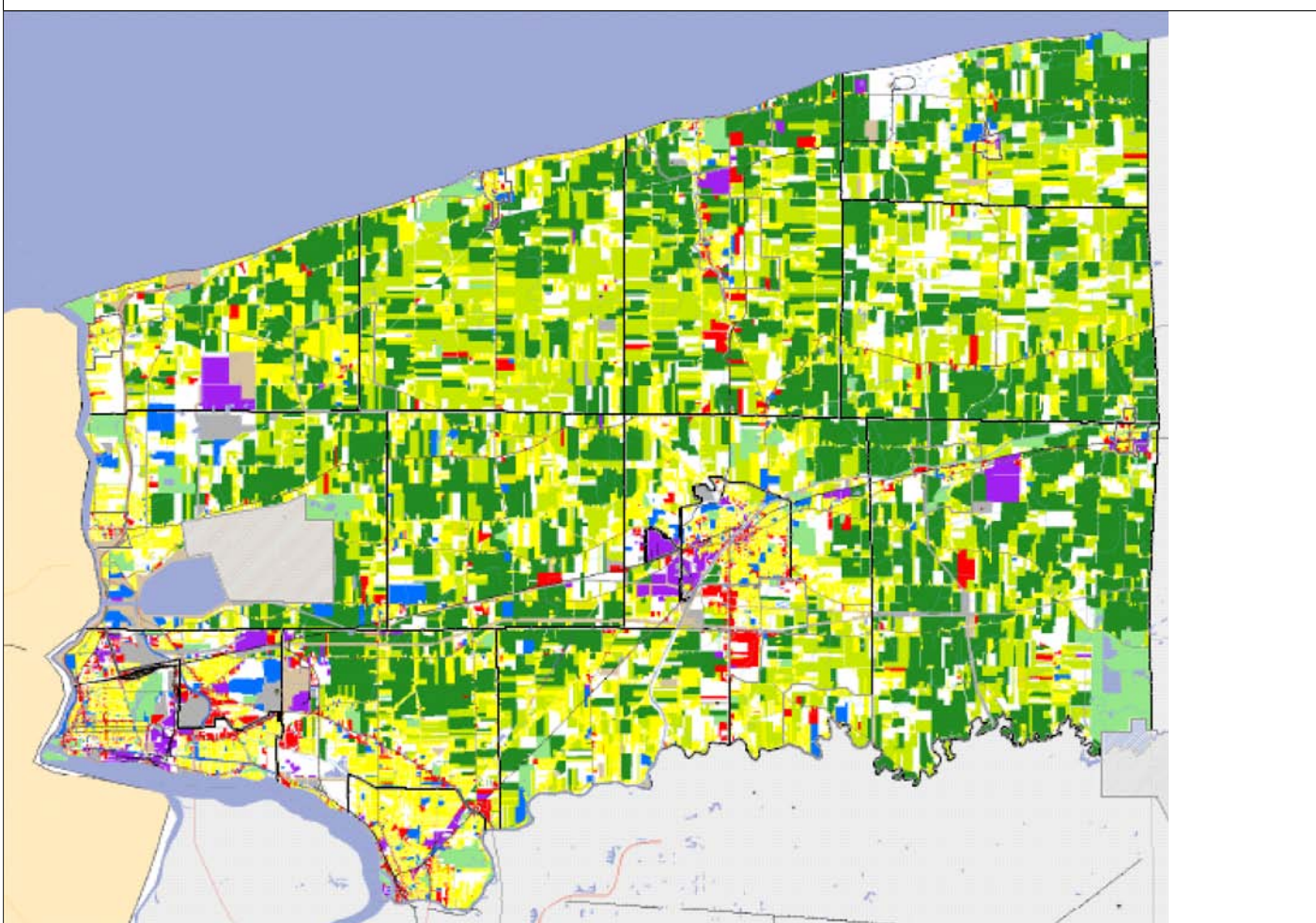
Percent of County in Ag Districts: **55.7%**

District	Towns	Acres	
		1999*	2006**
District 2	Hartland, Royalton, Somerset	37,381	40,454
District 4	Hartland, Lockport, Newfane, Royalton	34,828	34,663
District 6	Cambria, Lewiston, Niagara, Pendleton, Wheatfield	22,283	24,076
District 7	Cambria, Lockport, Pendleton, Wheatfield, Wilson	17,449	18,067
District 8	Porter, Wilson	38,979	40,726
District 9	Royalton	25,186	30,667
	TOTAL	176,106	188,654

*Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2006)
**Cornell University Geospatial Information Respository (CUGIR, 2006)

Land Use

Agriculture	Residential (1 to 3 units)	Education / Public Admin
Vacant	Residential (5+ ac)	Industrial
Commercial	Residential (10+ ac)	Infrastructure
Recreation / Conservation	Other Residential	No Information



major employers

Employer	Employees
Niagara Falls Joint Air Reserve Station	2936
Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel	2861
Delphi Thermal	2600
Niagara County	1550
Niagara Falls City School District	1325
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	1200
North Tonawanda City School District	765
Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls	1000
Lockport City School District	730
Niagara County Community College	713
Mount St. Mary's Hospital	700
Mount St. Mary's Hospital/Our Lady of Peace Nursing Home	700
First Niagara Bank	677
Niagara University	635

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

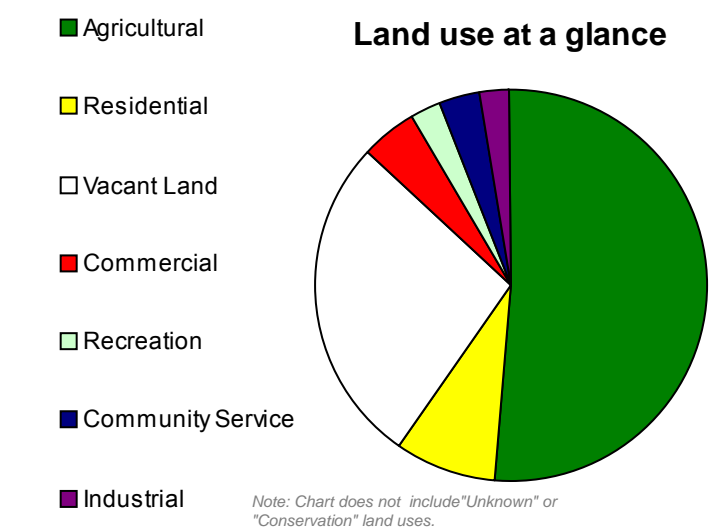
land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	101280	43.00%
Commercial	8462	4.00%
Community Service	6726	3.00%
Industrial	5525	2.00%
Parks & Conservation	6684	3.00%
Public Service	5438	2.00%
Recreation	5026	2.00%
Residential	15606	7.00%
Unknown	28356	12.00%
Vacant Land	54150	23.00%

special districts

There are 92 special districts in Niagara County providing critical health, safety, and other services. Three of the largest are:

- Niagara County Water District** Serves 150,000+ residents
- Niagara County Sewer District** Avg daily flow of 5 million gallons per day (MGD) with capacity for 14 MGD.
- Niagara County Refuse Disposal District** Recycling and reuse rate of 5,000 tons/year since 1998; District includes 120 acres of landfills.



land use and environment

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues

LAND USE
 •Preservation of farmland, agriculture and the character of rural communities
 •Sprawl and the loss of open space and natural resources
 •Preservation of the Niagara Escarpment and other natural habitats
 •Lack of public transportation in rural areas
ENVIRONMENT
 •Area's underutilized, vacant and contaminated lands
 •Protection of water quality from pollution and sedimentation
 •Drainage and erosion issues along streams and other waterways

•Need to encourage and expand rural businesses and agri-tourism and opportunities related to agricultural resources
 •Must upgrade aging infrastructure and services to support economic development, including roads and utilities
 •High taxes are a disincentive to economic development

•Sense of isolation in rural areas from the rest of the County and the need to be more involved in County-level decision-making
 •General lack of services in rural areas, including bus service, and the distance to services in the cities
 •General condition of County facilities including buildings, parks, and the need to maintain infrastructure

•Need more training in the latest technologies to include all segments of the County's population in educational programs such as Future Farmers of America
 •Increasing school taxes even as the population of the County is declining
 •Schools and job training need to stay ahead of local workforce needs and changes in technology

•Lack of coverage and response times in some areas by County Sheriff patrols
 •Increasing demands on volunteers and emergency service providers
 •Concern over needing more information at local levels in the event of an emergency situation that may alter transportation or evacuation routes
 •Servicing the needs of a dispersed and aging population

assets and opportunities

LAND USE
 •Local farming and the agricultural heritage of the area
 •Local network of roads and highways
 •Existing historic and natural assets such as the Erie Canal and the Niagara Escarpment
ENVIRONMENT
 •Local natural areas, parklands, trails and water resources
 •Lake Ontario, Erie Canal, and Niagara River waterfronts for recreation and tourism
 •Wetlands, streams, floodplains and wildlife areas

•Cultural assets like the Erie Canal, local schools and local agriculture are vital to the local economy
 •Low cost of living, including housing, can be a major factor in marketing the area's quality of life
 •Local farming and tourism are key economic generators

•Need to identify opportunities for shared services and greater efficiencies in providing County and municipal services
 •Great development potential of the Niagara Falls Airport and surrounding areas
 •Present work being done with the County's brownfield redevelopment staff

•Explore more opportunities to link job training to local tourism, agriculture and wineries
 •The quality of local education is good and improving with an abundance of professional educators
 •BOCES is a major local asset in job training

•The abundance and professionalism of existing emergency providers and health care facilities in the County and their ability to work well with each other
 •The abundance of fresh water
 •Safety and security of communities due to the levels of protection from local police, sheriff, State police, Coast Guard and Border Patrol

Vision for Niagara County

Niagara County is a world class destination; home to natural wonders including Niagara Falls, the Niagara River, the Niagara Escarpment and Gorge, and Lake Ontario; a community steeped in the celebration of its beauty, culture, and man-made heritage like the Erie Canalway; and a place to see and share with others.

Niagara County is a center of national and international commerce; a place to locate and grow your business, find high quality employment, attend fine institutions of learning, learn a trade or hone your skills, and be part of a well-prepared and productive workforce.

Niagara County is a community that values its rich natural resources; a community working together to protect and restore natural resources, conserve important wildlife habitat, clean up contaminated lands, and ensure that our gift to future generations is a sustainable environment.

Niagara County is a great place to live and raise a family; a diverse community of historic cities, towns, and villages; from the uniqueness and vibrancy of our waterfront communities to the pastoral beauty and gentle lifestyles of our farming communities, Niagara County is a safe and healthy place to live, work, and play; a place of diverse housing choices, excellent schools, abundant recreation opportunities, and affordable living; and a community offering a high quality of life for all.

POPULATION

Municipality	1990	2000	2006	2030*
City of Niagara Falls	61,840	55,593	52,328	47,373
City of North Tonawanda	34,989	33,262	31,770	34,733
Town of Niagara	9,880	8,978	8,570	9,887
Town of Wheatfield	11,129	14,088	16,100	20,507
SUB-REGION	117,834	111,919	108,766	122,902

*2030 Projections from GBNRTC; only available for Cities and Towns.

NIAGARA COMMUNITIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPPER RIVER COMMUNITIES

...Cities of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda, Towns of Niagara and Wheatfield.



AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural Districts by Town		
Town Name	Acreage	Percent of Town
Niagara	592	10%
Wheatfield	6012	33%
TOTAL	6,604	27%



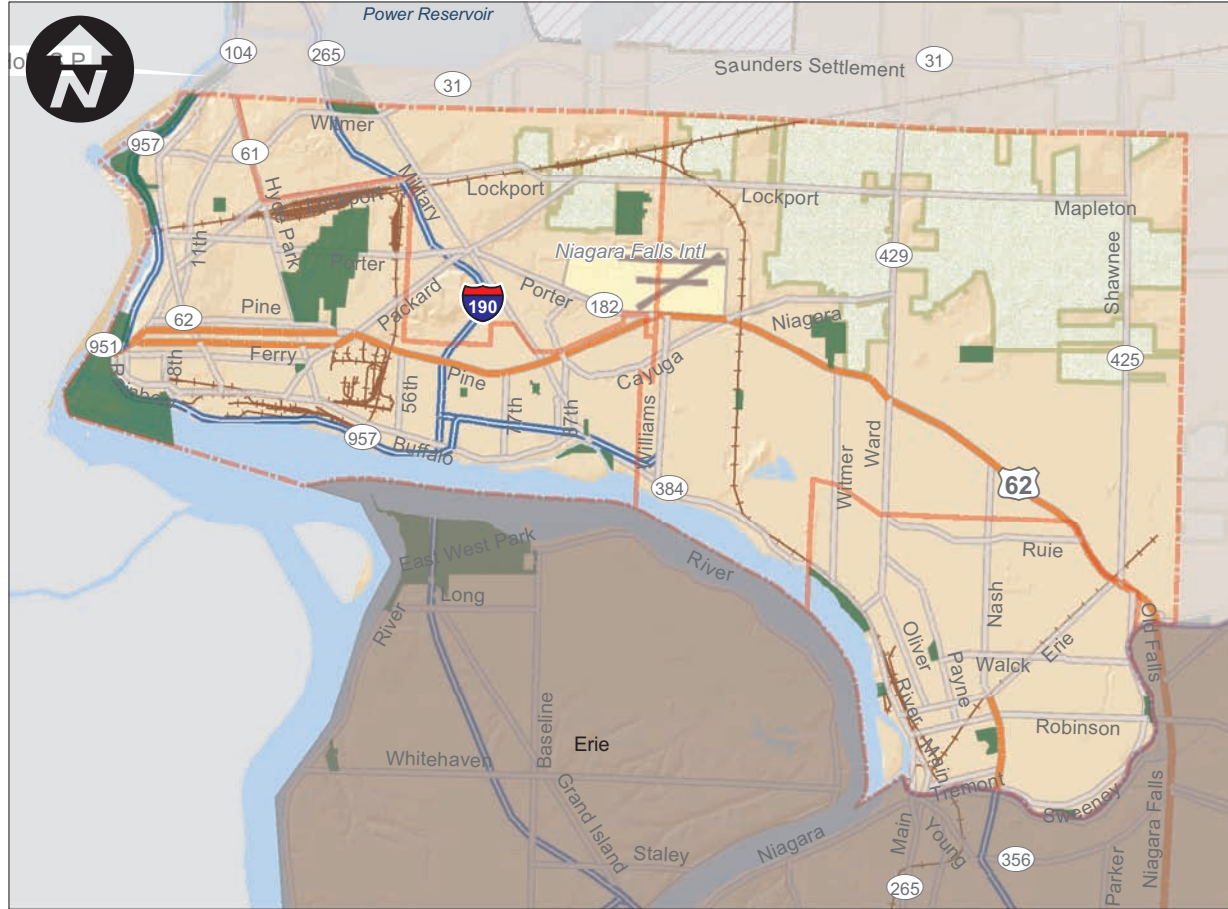
EDUCATION

Lewiston Porter Central	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
Avg. Class Size	19	20	n/a
K-12 Teachers	246	270	206
K-12 Capacity	3320	3320	2650
K-12 Enrollment	2884	2625	2338
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 14,380.00		
Niagara Wheatfield SD	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
Avg. Class Size	19	18	n/a
K-12 Teachers	390	380	321
K-12 Capacity	6725	6725	3950
K-12 Enrollment	4037	4106	4074
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 13,496.00		
Wilson Central	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
Avg. Class Size	20	21	n/a
K-12 Teachers	127	129	143
K-12 Capacity	n/a	1900	3538
K-12 Enrollment	1481	1498	1428
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 13,370.00		

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

Employer	# of Employees (Range)
DuPont Company	451 - 750
Washington Mills Electro Minerals Corporation	451 - 750
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	251 - 450
Occidental Chemical Corporation	251 - 450
Saint Gobain Structural Ceramics	251 - 450
Smurfit - Stone Container Corp.	251 - 450
Unifrax Corporation	251 - 450
Unifrax Corporation	251 - 450
Moore North America	101 - 250
National Vacuum	101 - 250
Niagara Sample Books	101 - 250
Norampac Industries, Inc.	101 - 250
Nuttall Gear/DeIroyd	101 - 250
Praxair, Inc.	101 - 250
Sherwood Valve	101 - 250
Treibacher Schließmittel North America, Inc.	101 - 250
Vishay Thin Films	101 - 250

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development; Industrial and Business Directory 2008



Legend

- Hospital
- Community Boundaries**
- Niagara
- Niagara Falls
- North Tonawanda
- Wheatfield
- Public Lands
- Agricultural Districts
- Villages

NORTH TONAWANDA



This subregion includes the two well-established urban centers of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda, as well as the suburban towns of Niagara and Wheatfield. Niagara Falls International Airport is a center of military, public and private-sector reinvestment and redevelopment. Infill development and brownfield redevelopment are supported by established public infrastructure (roads, sewer, water) and services (government, education, medical). Emphasis should be placed on public transit and multi-modal transportation facilities, mixed-use development, public access to waterfronts and housing diversity. New development and redevelopment should be redirected to these established centers.



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overview

population	55,593	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	25.3 %	
avg household size:	2.27	2.45
pop/sq mi:	34,798.1	417.2
median age	38	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.3 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	18.6 %	15.4%

Population Trend

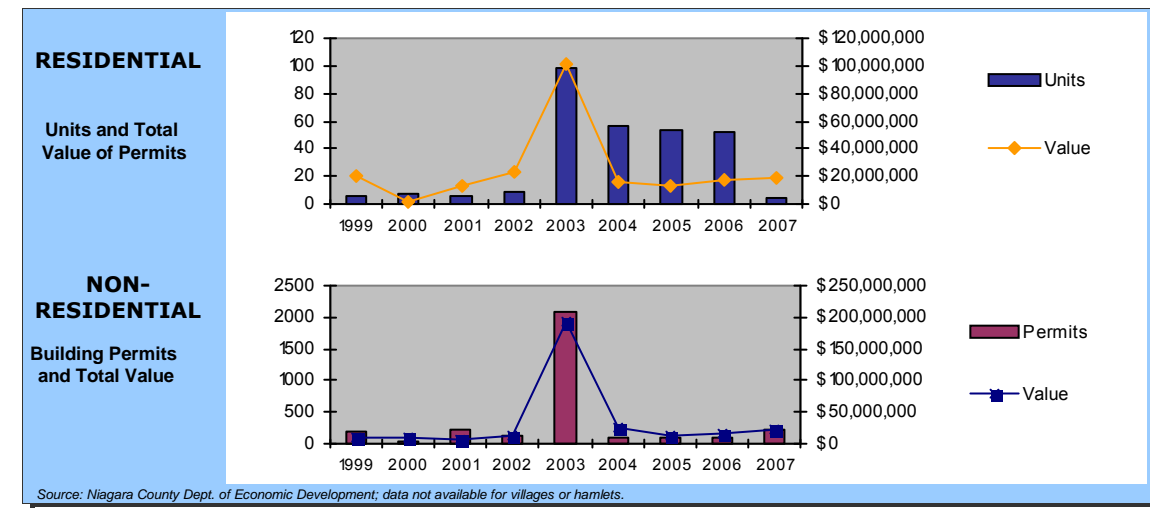
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$26,800	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$15,721	\$19,219
poverty rate:	19.47%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	36.6%	31.75%
public assistance:	7.0%	3.98%
retirement:	22.3%	23.2%
Housing units:	27,836	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	57.6	69.9%
Median year built:	1946	1954
Median home value:	\$59,300	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Lewiston-Porter Central School District
 - Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
 - Niagara Falls City School District
-

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1992	Draft - 2004
ZONING TEXT:	Y	No info. provided	1998
ZONING MAP:	Y	No info. provided	No info. provid
LWRP:	Y	Not adopted	2004
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	N	N/A	N/A
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2007	

geographic information systems (GIS)

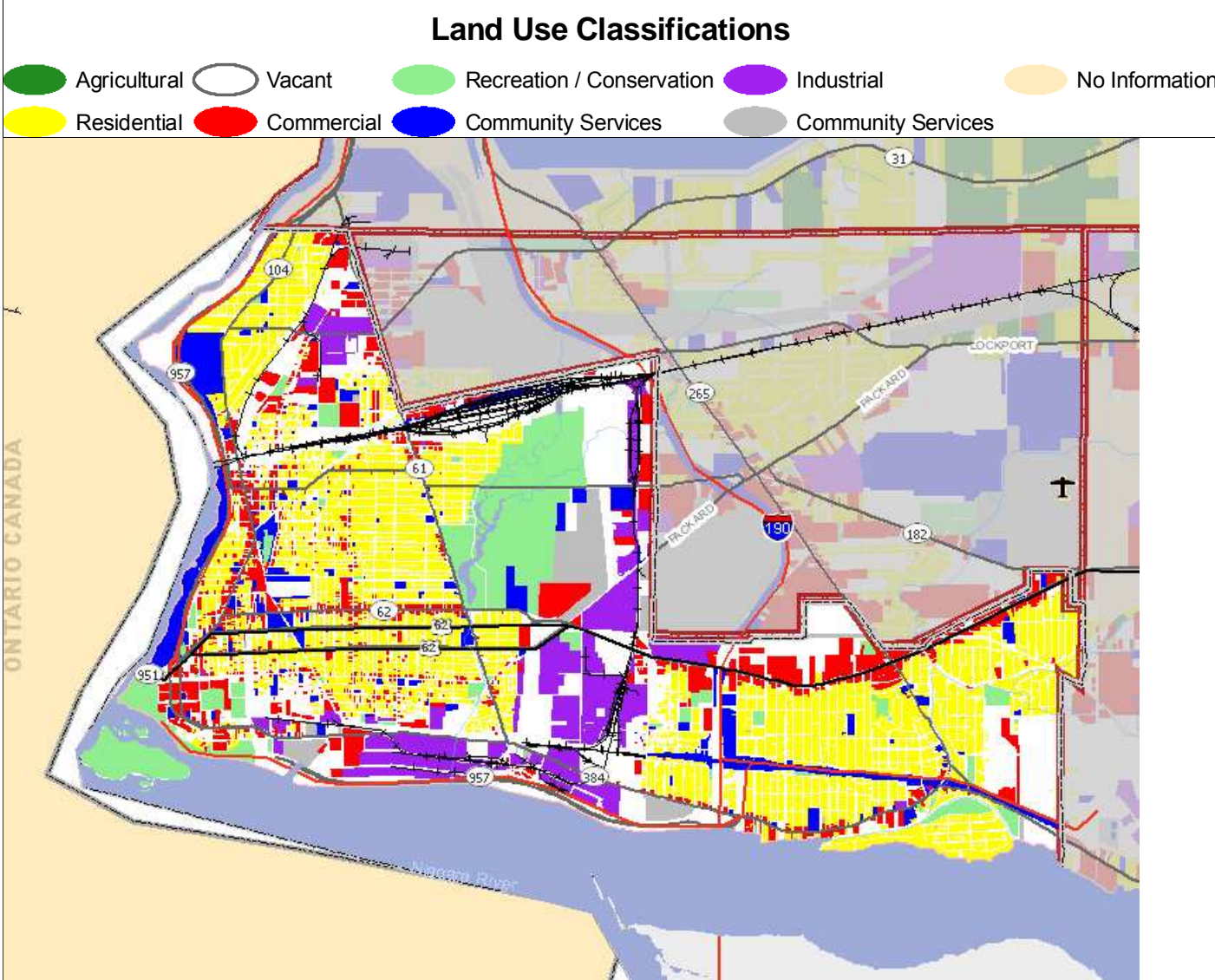
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) Y

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) Y

major employers

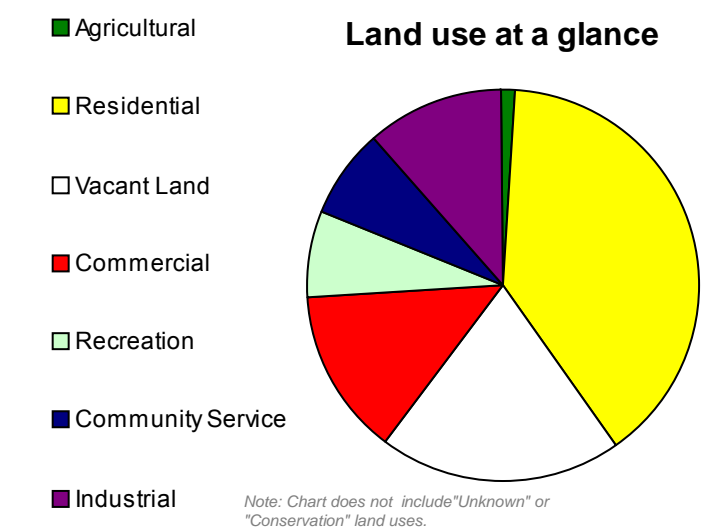
Employer	Employees
Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel	2861
Niagara Falls City School District	1325
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	1200
DuPont Company	451 - 750
Washington Mills Electro Minerals Corporation	451 - 750
Occidental Chemical Corporation	275
Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company	251 - 450
Saint Gobain Structural Ceramics	251 - 450
St Gobain Structural Ceramics	186
Olin Corporation	170
Ferro Electronic Minerals	160
Stevenson Environmental Services	150
Moore North America	101 - 250

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Commercial	799.53	11.78%
Community Service	440.19	6.48%
Industrial	655.41	9.65%
Parks & Conservation	400.3	5.90%
Public Service	222.18	3.27%
Recreation	410.94	6.05%
Residential	2251.49	33.16%
Unknown	465.82	6.86%
Vacant Land	1143.600	16.84%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use

Over the past four decades, the City of Niagara Falls has suffered from economic and industrial decline, and serious employment and population loss. As well, a number of misguided renewal initiatives that removed residential and commercial stock in the heart of the city have fragmented the downtown core and the communities that traditionally supported it. Today, many urban neighborhoods are in decay, large areas of the city's industrial corridors are abandoned, and many residents, community and business leaders have lost their sense of pride in their city. In fact, many former residents have chosen to move out of Niagara Falls.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Absentee landlords
- LaSalle Expressway bike path - across communities
- Need discussion over LaSalle Expressway and future development
- All transportation-related issues, including condition of streets and sidewalks and clearing snow from streets for senior citizens
- Brownfields that span municipal lines
- Brownfields Opportunity Area adjacent to Niagara Falls boundary
- Wal-Mart relocation to Niagara Falls High School site
- Robert Moses Parkway Project in Downtown Niagara Falls

environment

The City of Niagara Falls is a fully developed city. It was nearly so over fifty years ago. Most of the physical environmental changes to the natural environment were well established by the first quarter of the last century. Notwithstanding the major natural features of the City are the Niagara River and its tributaries, Niagara Falls, and the Niagara Gorge, including as defined by the State Parkland and lands in immediate proximity thereto. There is accessibility to these resources but these are very limited. There is no doubt that these resources are important to the life of the City—these are important icons of nature to the nation and to the world.

economic development

1. Decline of industry and manufacturing
2. High unemployment
3. Declining and aging population
4. Competitive suburban growth and decline of the core city

county services and facilities

1. County cuts in social services and programs effecting the largest number and concentration of low-income residents, particularly in the areas of housing and job training.
2. Lack of cooperation in consolidating service infrastructure and facilities, including utilities
3. The lack of restraint in allowing the expansion of water and sewer utilities, and service areas.

educational institutions

1. Increased student achievement beginning in Universal PreKindergarten and sustained through Senior year is the single most important issue for the District.
2. Many families in Niagara Falls are unable to provide a quality of life for their children such that they are well-fed, adequately clothed, suitably sheltered, and cared for medically. Students living in poverty sometimes bring greater needs to the classroom and struggle academically as a result.
3. Financial stability is a key concern. The tax base in Niagara Falls continues to diminish while students' needs increase. Remaining residents have no ability to pay greater taxes.

public health and safety

1. Dealing with a lack of proper funding, having the latest technology and crime fighting/crime solving equipment available for our personnel is always a problem.
2. With a higher than normal number of either vacant or dilapidated housing units. The lack of sufficient locks, doors, motion detectors and burglar alarms tend to increase our number of burglaries and larcenies.
3. Staffing
4. Equipment age and reliability
5. Interoperable communications

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use

While any of the following listed 'opportunities and economic drivers' have significant potential to improve the quality of life within Niagara Falls, it is the creation of employment and training opportunities that will have the most immediate impact on the lives of residents now and in the future. Opportunities and economic drivers: Green-Economy Commerce, Tourism, Arts and Culture, Regional Health Care, Education / Employment Training, Primary Commercial Nodes and Corridors, Heritage Resource Protection.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Niagara Falls
- Upper & Lower River
- Cayuga Creek restoration – public access

environment

The most significant opportunities would be the transformation of the Niagara River waterfront into the Niagara River Greenway and National Heritage Corridor and its physical connections to existing park assets as well as its programmatic integration into the fabric of the community. (See the Niagara River Greenway Vision.)

economic development

1. Promote and support locally owned and controlled small businesses.
2. Coordinate the City's land use and zoning policies with the City's economic development vision.
3. Pursue and support programs, institutions and activities aimed at the promotion and development of retraining programs, facilities and satellite facilities within key growth sectors.
4. Retain and attract a broader population to Niagara Falls, including young families and young adults.

county services and facilities

Social services and programs being provided at the neighborhood level effecting the largest number and concentration of low-income residents.

educational institutions

1. The Niagara Falls City School District is committed to excellence and equity for all students, regardless of socioeconomic strata or any other consideration. Also, we work to provide access to 21st Century technology.
2. In our community, students are safest when they are in school, and many receive their best or only meal at school. Also, adult supervision in a caring environment.
3. The Niagara Falls City School District is committed to providing access to school as much as possible, and to keep the doors open after school and through summer programming.

public health and safety

1. Economic development helps turn stagnant streets into vibrant neighborhoods.
2. Intelligence gathering and analytical study of crime.
3. Since the inception of the Seneca Niagara Casino and the disbursement of the City's share of those funds, the N.F.P.D. has been able to improve our equipment and infrastructure.
4. Cooperation between LE and the FD
5. Community support
6. Lack of significant events (could also be a detriment as the odds will catch up with us)

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use

It is the City's policy to ensure that the City's vision for development is supported by appropriate land use policies and regulations, and that the City pursue a fine-grained, mixed use approach to land use that respects the existing character of healthy, stable neighborhoods, while allowing the City to grow and revitalize.

environment

It is the City's policy to preserve, conserve, and recognize the environmental and natural resources of the City in a manner that contributes to the City's overall quality of life, enhances public health, and fosters appropriate development.

economic development

It is the City's policy to ensure that the City's economy is comprised of and supported by a diverse mixture of businesses and that the City's land use, zoning and development policies are supportive of economic growth, including the development and expansion of the tourism industry, cultural resources and the health care sector.

county services and facilities

Provide resources in the area of housing assistance, and job training for residents.

educational institutions

Provide additional resources to NCCC generally and for job training programs specifically

public health

Juvenile drop-out and drug avoidance programs focusing on at-risk populations, and/or a Youth Conservation Program, for low-income youth

public safety

There are 7 strategic goals for the N.F.P.D. in 2009. They are too lengthy to repeat here but cover everything from crime reduction and prevention, arrests and investigations, traffic management, working with the community, and finally homeland security and emergency disaster plans.

overview

population	33,262	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	15.1%	
avg household size:	2.43	2.45
pop/sq mi:	33,262.0	417.2
median age	38	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.1%	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	15.6%	15.4%

Population Trend

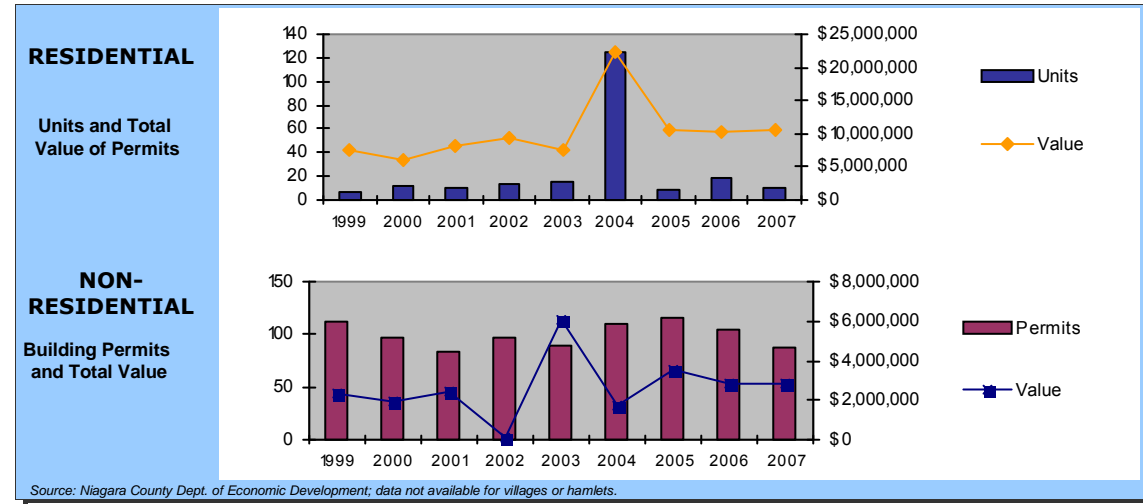
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$39,154	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$19,264	\$19,219
poverty rate:	7.16%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	31.2%	31.75%
public assistance:	3.1%	3.98%
retirement:	22.7%	23.2%
Housing units:	14,425	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	68.7	69.9%
Median year built:	1953	1954
Median home value:	\$82,000	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

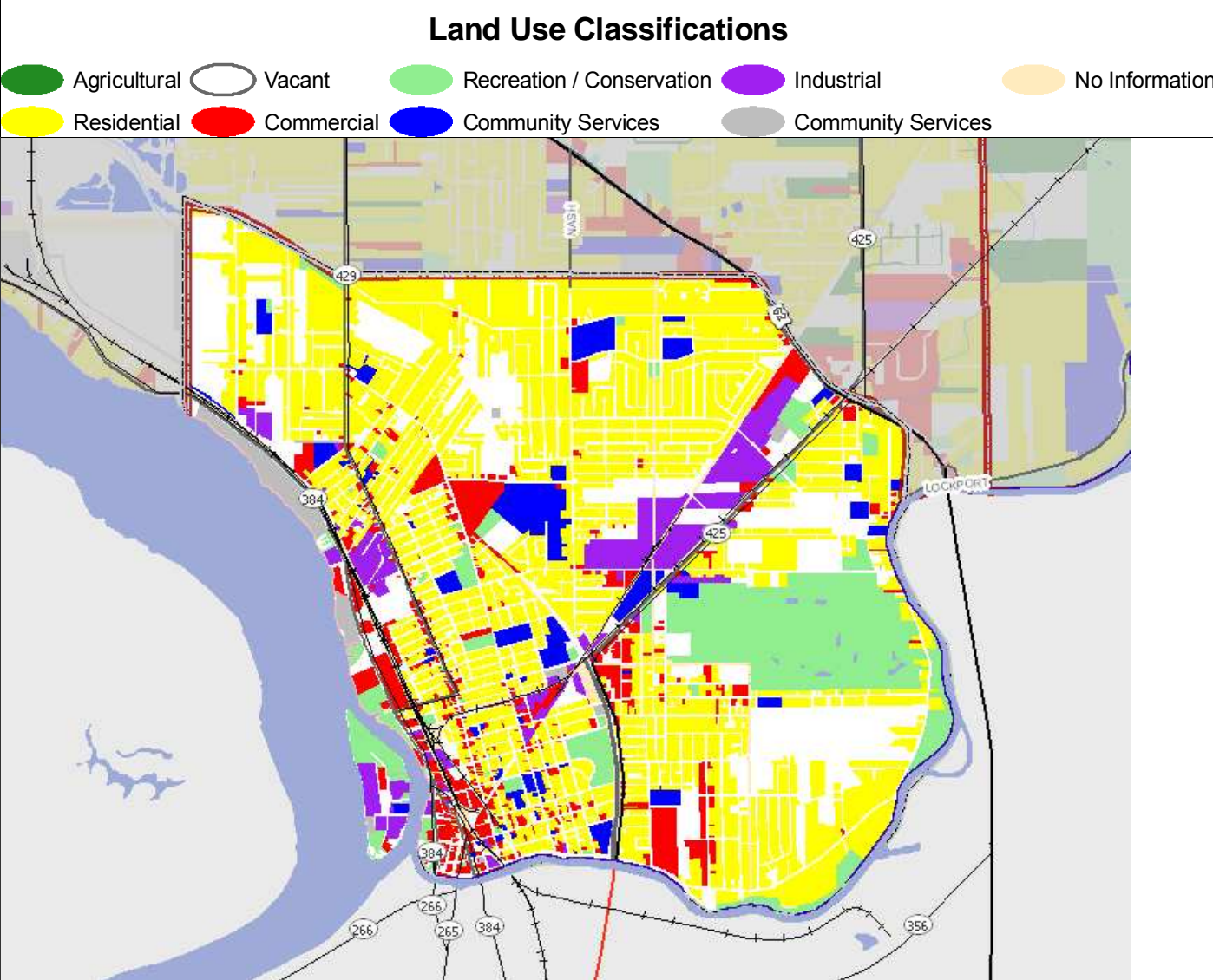
- Starpoint Central School District
 - Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
 - North Tonawanda City School District
 - Sweet Home School District
-

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1990	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	No info. provided	No info. provid
ZONING MAP:	Y	No info. provided	No info. provid
LWRP:	Y	1998	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1970	N/A
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?			
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:			
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	N		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		N/A	



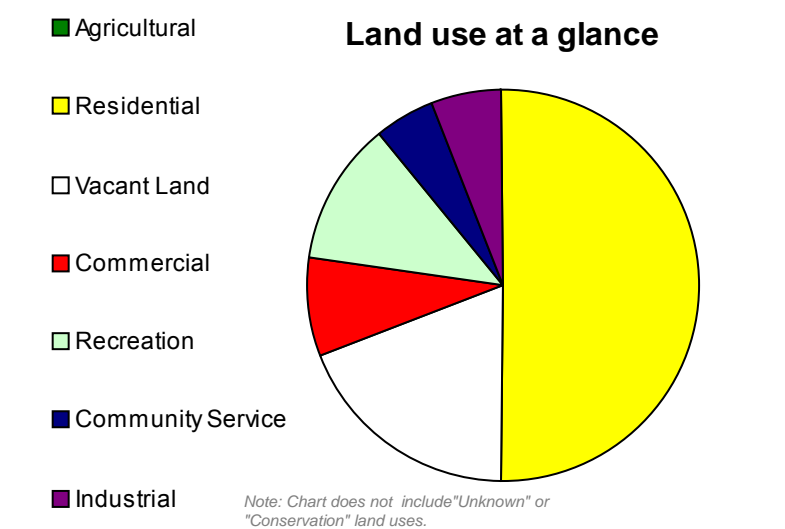
major employers

Employer	Employees
North Tonawanda City School District	765
Smurfit - Stone Container Corp.	250
Buffalo Pumps, Inc	125
Armstrong Pumps, Inc.	110
Ascension Sheet and Metal Fabrication, Inc	110
Confer Plastics	51 - 100
Erie Engineered Products Inc.	51 - 100
International Fiber Corporation	51 - 100
Suflo, Inc.	51 - 100
Taylor Devices, Inc.	51 - 100
Superior Lubricants	51 - 100
AnCor Industrial Plastics, Inc.	26 - 50
Battenfeld Grease and Oil Corporation of New York	26 - 50

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Commercial	418.84	7.78%
Community Service	254.39	4.73%
Industrial	290.06	5.39%
Parks & Conservation	66.6	1.24%
Public Service	85.67	1.59%
Recreation	607.15	11.28%
Residential	2531.100	47.02%
Unknown	165.56	3.08%
Vacant Land	963.49	17.90%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The reuse and remediation of brownfields. 2. Greater involvement in regional transportation systems, from trails to public transportation corridors 3. Best and highest use for our waterfront, that is compatible with the uses of neighboring communities. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gratwick - Riverside Park: now municipally owned •Public-Private Partnerships and Relationships (Marina) •Defined Gateways to City and Downtown •Walkability and Connectivity: Rail beds as options •Wetlands delineation is an issue •Water quality / sediment contamination / contamination from industrial dumps, sewers, stormwater •Out of date LWRP: Waterfront and Niagara River / Tonawanda Creek – restoration areas needed •Brownfields – huge challenge -Redevelopment and cleanup, accurate info. -Transition from waterfront areas -Landfills in general "Mt. Garbage" •Air quality related to new development – potential biofuels plant proposed for Wheatfield -Smokestack concerns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making the waterfront more accessible and friendly to all ages 2. Improving the trail systems and connectivity for pedestrians and other recreational travelers 3. Cleanup of former industrial sites 	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <p><i>Downtown revitalization</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Preservation based -Mixed-use <p><i>Need to harness and combine efforts of cultural resources as tourist draw and economic drivers</i></p> <p><i>Brownfields! Need incentives like BOA/BCP to leverage investment</i></p> <p><i>Lower Tax Base</i></p> <p><i>Maximize waterfront as economic draw & driver</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aging infrastructure (roads) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximizing the use of job training resources available 2. Increasing partnerships between the City and the School District 3. Planning for the highest and best use of school district lands and properties. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DeGraff's future! 2. Keeping DeGraff as a full service health care facility. 	

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional location 2. Downtown revitalization <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Redevelop brownfields •Improve pedestrian connections and access to waterfront •Cluster commercial activities in appropriate areas, NOT machine shops in residential areas •Waterfront •Preservation of open space – wildlife habitat •Gratwick Park future use •Archeological resources •Wetlands preservation for better flood control 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waterfront 	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <p><i>Redevelop brownfields</i></p> <p><i>Increase critical mass in downtown</i></p> <p><i>Cluster commercial and industrial activities in appropriate areas.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. County economic development is a great coordinator for local and regional efforts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working with the County to bring in job training opportunities and continuing education to an aging and evolving population. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DeGraff 	

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>Encourage (re)development in former industrial areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediation Re-zoning (where appropriate) Local and regional incentives 				<p>Public safety is currently confidence inspiring and efficient.</p>		

overview

population	8,978	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	4.1 %	
avg household size:	2.49	2.45
pop/sq mi:	988.2	417.2
median age	39	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.3 %	18.7 %
pct 65 and older:	14.6 %	15.4 %

Population Trend

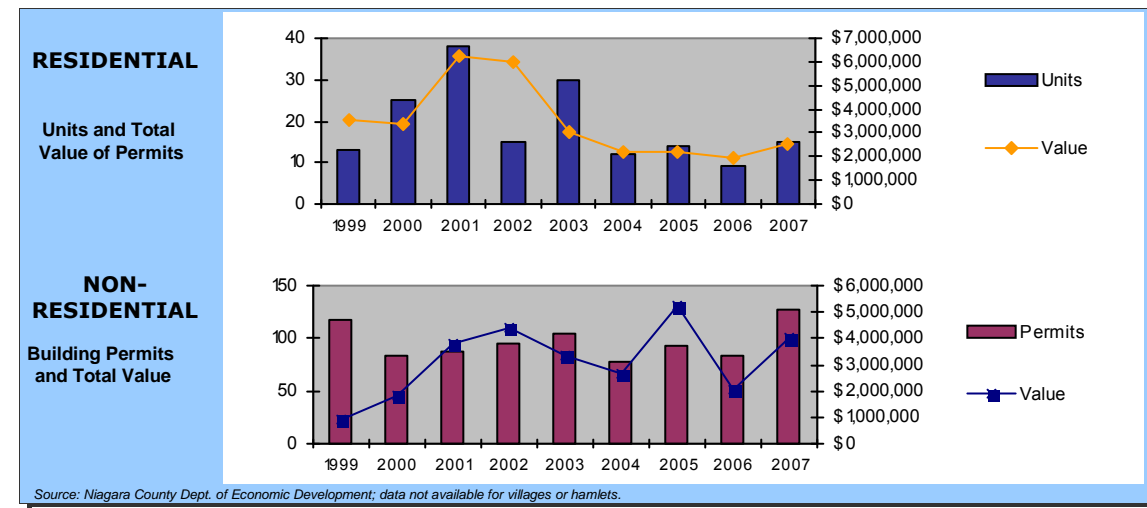
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$37,327	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$17,500	\$19,219
poverty rate:	9.31%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	35.5%	31.75%
<i>public assistance:</i>	4.4%	3.98%
<i>retirement:</i>	26.4%	23.2%
Housing units:	3,880	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	75.6	69.9%
Median year built:	1964	1954
Median home value:	\$74,500	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Lewiston-Porter Central School District
 - Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
 - Niagara Falls City School District
-

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **10%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1939	1972
ZONING TEXT:	Y	2001	2008
ZONING MAP:	Y	No info. provided	2006
LWRP:	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1999	2000
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:	N/A		

geographic information systems (GIS)

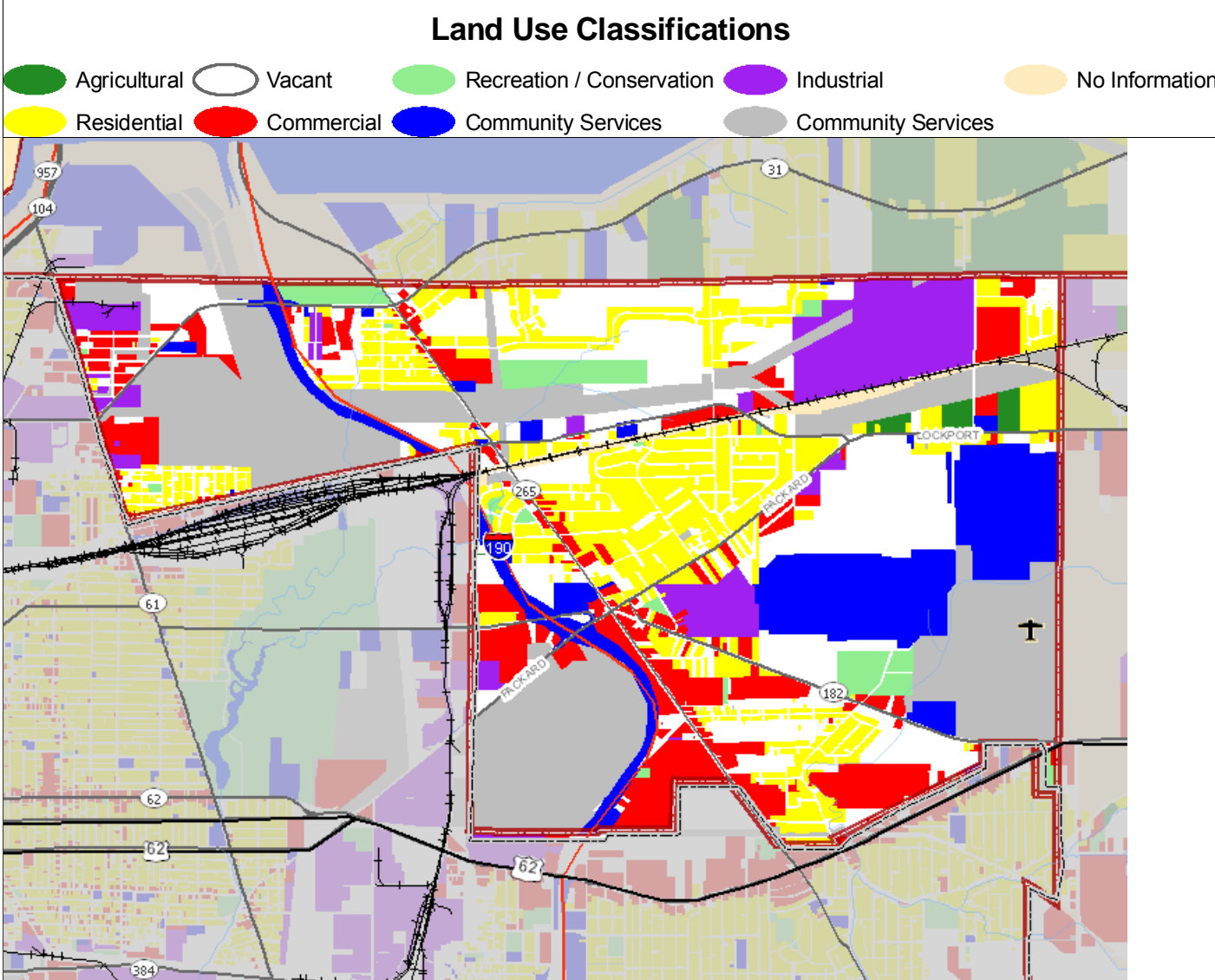
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) N

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) N/A

major employers

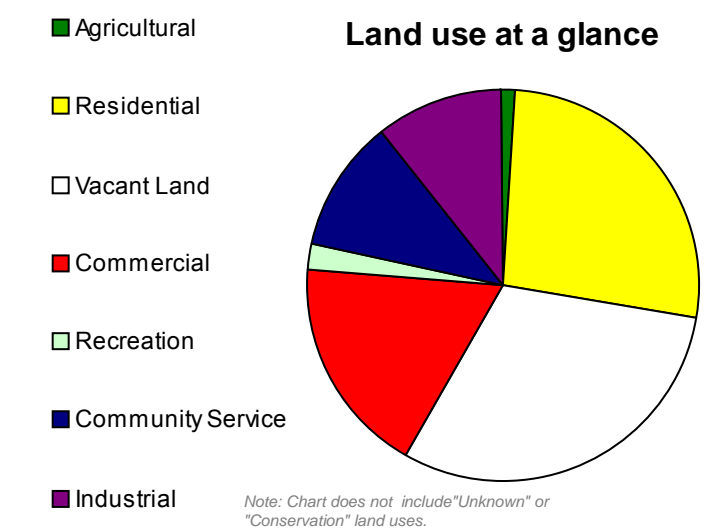
Employer	Employees
Niagara Falls Joint Air Reserve Station	2936
Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls	1000
Ferro Electronic Minerals	160
Stevenson Environmental Services	151
Electro Mech Systems Group, Inc	51 - 100
Stollberg, Inc.	51 - 100
Tam Ceramics Inc.	51 - 100
Calato, J.D. Manufacturing Co., Inc.	26 - 50
Cooper Sign Company, Inc	26 - 50
Helmel Engineering Products	26 - 50
Niagara Thermal Products, LLC	26 - 50
North American Hoganas, Inc.	26 - 50
Airport Auto Wrecking	1 - 25
American Glass & Mirror Co., Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	38.79	1.01%
Commercial	573.67	14.93%
Community Service	356.35	9.28%
Industrial	336.9	8.77%
Public Service	571.79	14.88%
Recreation	74.59	1.94%
Residential	856.4700	22.29%
Unknown	3.44	0.09%
Vacant Land	971.37	25.28%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. RESIDENTIAL: Less residential area available for new construction. Try to determine best use of current vacant land that would benefit community.</p> <p>2. BUSINESS: Seek different developers for business area. Excellent access to interstate and rail transportation.</p> <p>3. INDUSTRY: Transportation feature can be developed to expand local industry.</p>	<p>1. RESIDENTIAL: Continue to preserve natural environment as much as possible (i.e., Town Park).</p> <p>2. BUSINESS: Encourage developers to maintain green spaces and bring into the area businesses that will not harm our environment.</p> <p>3. INDUSTRY: Develop more industrial area/parks for better concentration and encourage maintaining as much green space as possible.</p>	<p>1. Town is limited to development of green space.</p> <p>2. Military Road has been the main development emphasis, shaping areas as well as medical offices and business/agencies.</p> <p>3. Important to find proper tenants for Reserve Base when military leaves.</p>	<p>1. Improvement and/or repair of any county roads and bridges.</p> <p>2. Making County services more available to Town residents (young and old residents)</p>	<p>1. Maintaining the quality of education in the N-W School District without a substantial increase in taxes.</p> <p>2. Lack of a satellite educational opportunity that could be established in one of the vacant storefronts in the Town.</p> <p>3. Provide better access to workplace development programs fro residents. Schedule outreach services on a weekly basis in Town area.</p>	<p>1. A program for seniors of the Town to become better informed of available County and not-for-profit services</p> <p>2. A better system to provide ambulatory services for all areas of the Town</p> <p>3. Ability to expand nutrition program provided currently at the Town Community Center. Transportation for seniors is an ongoing issues. Seniors need good nutrition and socialization on a regular basis.</p>	<p>1. The potential of a hazardous incident that requires a hazard response procedure.</p> <p>2. The potential of an air/aviation incident.</p>

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. RESIDENTIAL: Highly regarded school district is an asset to the Town. Community Center/Park current and future development is aspiration.</p> <p>2. BUSINESS: Ease of public transportation; NFTA location, bring shoppers to Outlet. Easy access for shoppers and Canadians. New businesses will benefit.</p> <p>3. INDUSTRY: Easy access for transporting goods to area industrial parks, etc.</p>	<p>1. RESIDENTIAL: Town of Niagara Community Park - protecting and enhancing a large green space for use by community. Plans to provide all-year-round (12 mo) recreation for residents.</p>	<p>1. Military Road business district and access to I-90</p> <p>2. "Medical corridor" developing on northern part of Military Road.</p> <p>3. Tenants for US Reserve Base can bring employment to area.</p>	<p>1. Close proximity to opportunities offered at County parks.</p> <p>2. Availability of County water and sewer systems.</p>	<p>1. A highly regarded school district that is a draw for residential development</p> <p>2. Potential for satellite educational opportunity.</p>	<p>1. A Town Park Activity building capable of hosting county presentations for available services to residents.</p> <p>2. A good road network to access healthcare facilities.</p>	<p>1. Cooperation of local industries that manufacture hazardous material, transported through the Town, works with Town to establish a hazardous response procedure.</p> <p>2. Cooperation with the air base that allows their special response equipment to be used during an appropriate emergency.</p> <p>3. Cooperation of neighboring fire districts to share equipment during an emergency.</p>

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
	<p>Complete plans for Town Park and maintain Maintain BF landfill and stone quarry when all excavation has been completed and both are closed.</p>					

overview

population **14,086** Countywide: 219,846

percent of County: 6.4 %

avg household size: 2.58 2.45

pop/sq mi: 485.7 417.2

median age 0 38.2

pct school age (5-17): 18.3 % 18.7%

pct 65 and older: 15.8 % 15.4%

Population Trend

*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income: \$51,700 \$38,136 Countywide:

per capita income: \$22,184 \$19,219

poverty rate: 4.17% 10.59%

percent of households with income from...

Social Security: 29.2% 31.75%

public assistance: 1.3% 3.98%

retirement: 18.6% 23.2%

Housing units: 5,555 95,715

Percent Owner-Occ: 79.3 69.9%

Median year built: 1976 1954

Median home value: \$115,700 \$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits

RESIDENTIAL

Units and Total Value of Permits

NON-RESIDENTIAL

Building Permits and Total Value

Source: Niagara County Dept. of Economic Development; data not available for villages or hamlets.

school districts

Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
Starpoint Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **33%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	No info. provided	2004
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1988	2003
ZONING MAP:	Y	No info. provided	2004
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1995	0000
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2004	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		Y	

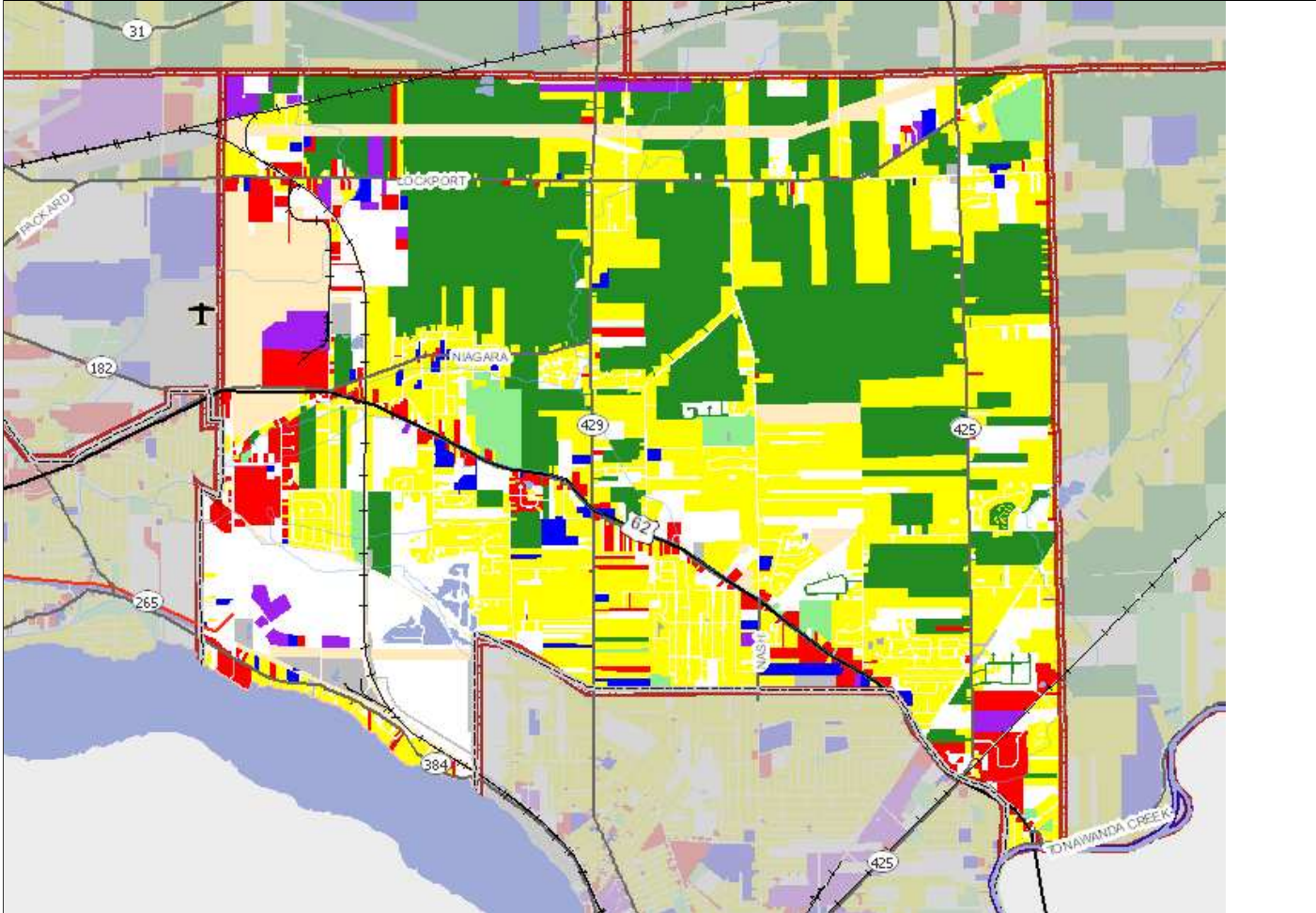
major employers

Employer	Employees
Sherwood Division of Harsco	423
Precious Plate, Inc.	180
Nuttall Gear/Delroyd	120
Sherwood Valve	101 - 250
Vishay Thin Films	101 - 250
Unifrax Corporation	92
Aero Instruments & Avionics, Inc.	51 - 100
American Coaster Company	51 - 100
Atlantic Research Corporation	51 - 100
Lockheed Martin	51 - 100
Metalluc Systems	51 - 100
Niagara Sheets, LLC	51 - 100
Precision Process Equipment, Inc.	51 - 100
Transcedar Industries/Motorad of America	51 - 100

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

Land Use Classifications

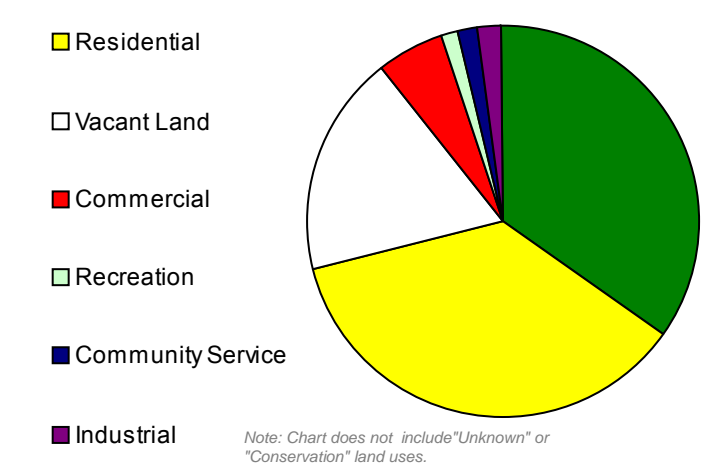
■ Agricultural ○ Vacant ■ Recreation / Conservation ■ Industrial ○ No Information
■ Residential ■ Commercial ■ Community Services ■ Community Services



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	5231.5	31.72%
Commercial	831.58	5.04%
Community Service	245.34	1.49%
Industrial	303.96	1.84%
Parks & Conservation	162.28	0.98%
Public Service	155.41	0.94%
Recreation	201.26	1.22%
Residential	5427.980	32.91%
Unknown	1134.9	6.88%
Vacant Land	2797.09	16.96%

Land use at a glance



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. We have a shortage of East/West roads. There is also a possible issue facing North/South roads => waiting time at intersections.</p> <p>2. Major economic impact (Oz project) may have significant impact on local roads. Setbacks should be increased to plan for future expansion of Niagara Falls Blvd.</p> <p>3. Increasing commercial uses along commercial corridor.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •102nd Street Landfill - covers waterfront •Change of open space to suburban and resulting increase in infrastructure (sewer, etc.) •House construction •Oz Park - Potential; RVs & Campers •Water Quality •Transition dense to less dense development has effects on character •Need for mixed-use development in hamlets •Buffers needed along streams and floodplains to restrict the encroachment of development •Water quality issues related to stormwater drainage / sewer infrastructure from new development •Bus service expansion 	<p>1. Preservation of NYS and Federal wetlands.</p> <p>2. Revisiting berm requirements.</p> <p>3. Preventing government entities expansion of floodplains.</p> <p>4. Improving Town drainage, the town is flat.</p>	<p>1. Commercial development to revisit zoning along major routes coming into the Town, especially along Niagara Falls Blvd.</p> <p>2. Attracting commercial and industrial parks => need regional economic development coordinated effort.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Oz Park •Very little diversity in housing •Transportation •Bringing in / attracting new businesses 	<p>1. Oppenheim park should be better maintained. The park could also be upgraded.</p> <p>2. Emergency communication system.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <p><i>Issues:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging population Utilizing Sheriff's Dept. County park <p><i>Opportunities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> County roads More Sheriff's Deputies County Park - on Niagara Falls Boulevard 	<p>Niagara Wheatfield Central School is almost at capacity.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <p><i>Niagara-Wheatfield elementary schools are almost at capacity. The Junior/Senior High has passed capacity. People are still coming into the area and more classrooms are needed, especially at the elementary school level.</i></p> <p><i>Wheatfield could use a library.</i></p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i></p> <p><i>SAFETY ISSUES:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Police presence: Constables & one Sheriff's Deputy patrol area. -Fire Dept.: winter weather and accessibility issues (specifically, the prevalence of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets in residential areas) present fire-fighting challenges. -Snow removal -Crime rate is low, but the population is growing -There is some talk about rats -Insufficient north-south roads -Development of land around the airport - the military may use the land, curtailing Town planning in this area. -Preserve farmland <p><i>HEALTH ISSUES:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -large percentage of older adults. The Town has no hospital but there are many medical offices. -No guidance in creating an emergency plan for the Town. 	

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. If Oz project comes to fruition, the project will alter the Town of Wheatfield forever.</p> <p>2. Commercial Development contiguous to the Airport.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Riverfront •Farming: farmland preservation / retention measures •NF Airbase: work for the retention of local Air Force installation •Airport: preserving land contiguous to the Airport; land use of properties in the Airport location •Improvement of traffic flow •Traffic enforcement •Prepare for the "Oz" concept •Create "Town Center" concept •Promote "mixed" use development in Town •Connections between subdivisions, i.e., walkways / bike paths 	<p>1. Niagara River</p> <p>2. Bull Creek, Cayuga Creek</p> <p>3. Bergholz Creek, Sawyer Creek</p>	<p>1. Airport, waterfront, railroads</p> <p>2. Industrial parks</p> <p>3. Proximity to thruways</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Airbase / airport •Williams Road Medical Corridor •River •Farming •Smart Growth / "Mixed Use" development •Entice and retain commercial industrial development •Maintain / update website and make it more user friendly •Simplify the site development process •Upgrade GIS mapping 	<p>If Oppenheim were maintained, the park could be a major asset.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of recreation areas - both active and passive Preserve and improve green space Implementation of Homeland Security measures Improvement of State/County communication support 	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior citizens educational programs Strengthen relationship between local school districts Merge region's school districts 	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Crime rate has been low, historically - sufficient for constables and one Sheriff's Deputy. -Many medical offices, including physical therapists, dentists, etc. -Emergency planning Commission re: Homeland Security -ID emergency housing facilities -Protection of water supply -People movers for seniors 	

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>Preserving farmland => Comprehensive Plan Task Force is working toward, possibly, PDRs and TDRs.</p> <p>Oz => the Task force is beginning to plan for the possibility of a large scale theme park.</p>	<p>Preserving greenspace and recreation space</p>	<p>Get organized.</p> <p>Have some goals and objectives.</p>				

POPULATION

Community	Population			
	1990	2000	2006	2030*
Lewiston Town	15453	16257	16712	19429
Porter Town	7110	6920	6797	7417
Tuscarora Reservation	772	1138	1088	n/a
Lewiston Village	3048	2761	2662	n/a
Youngstown Village	2075	1957	1891	n/a
Ransomville Hamlet	1542	1488	n/a	n/a

*2030 Projections from GBNRTC; only available for Towns.

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Name	Agricultural Districts by Town	
	Acreage	Percent of Town
Porter	12,586	59%
Lewiston	9,865	31%
TOTAL	22,451	42%



EDUCATION

Lewiston Porter Central	2004 - 2005		2005 - 2006		2006 - 2007	
	Avg. Class Size	19	20	n/a	n/a	206
K-12 Teachers	246	270	270	270	2650	2650
K-12 Capacity	3320	3320	3320	3320	3320	3320
K-12 Enrollment	2884	2929	2929	2929	2929	2929
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 14,380.00					

Niagara Wheatfield Central	2004 - 2005		2005 - 2006		2006 - 2007	
	Avg. Class Size	19	18	n/a	n/a	321
K-12 Teachers	380	380	380	380	3850	3850
K-12 Capacity	6725	6725	6725	6725	6725	6725
K-12 Enrollment	4637	4108	4108	4108	4074	4074
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 13,496.00					

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

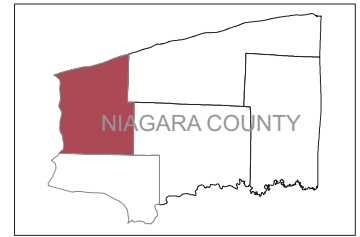
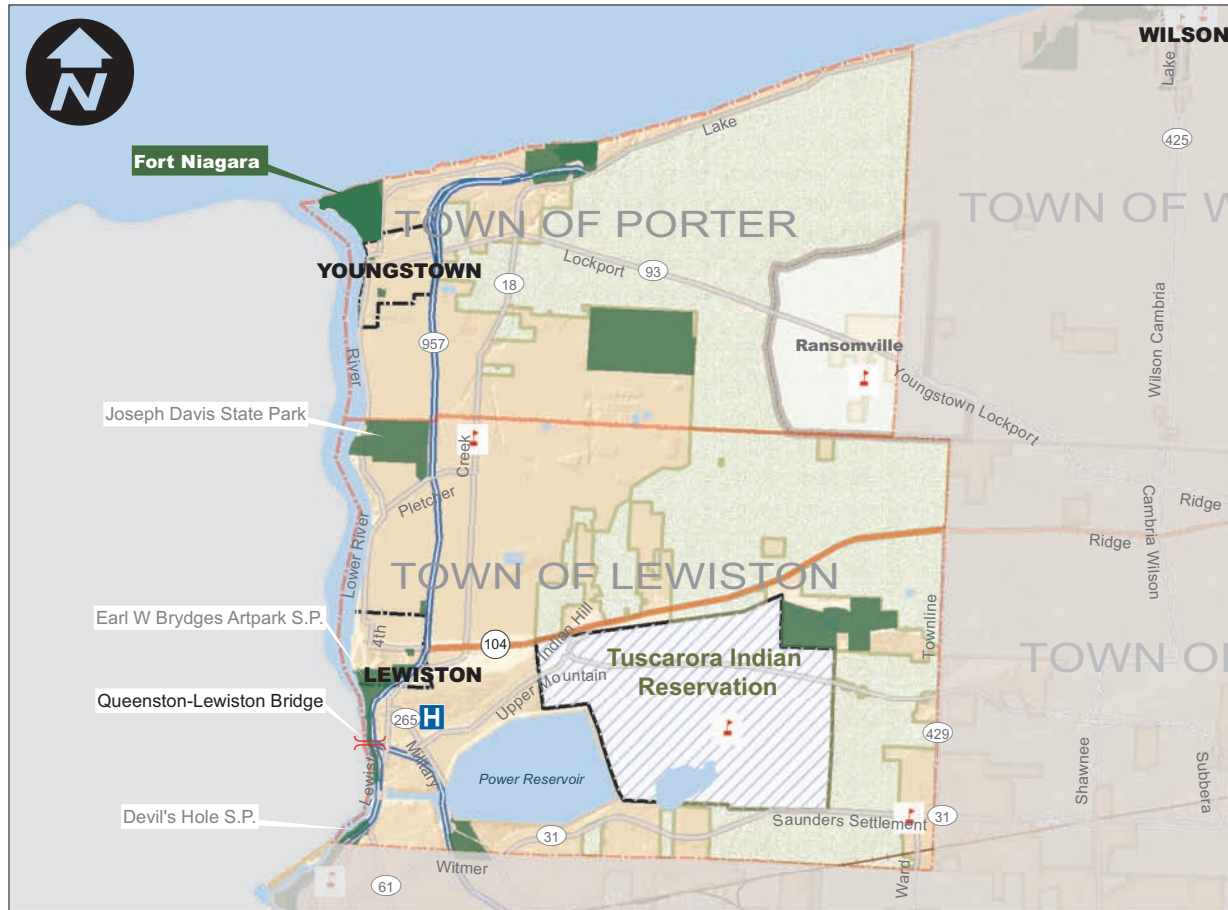
Employer	# of Employees (Range)
Tuskegee Krafts	451 - 750
Waste Management, Inc.	101 - 250
Modern Disposal Services, Inc. Modern Landfill, In	26 - 50
Waste Technology Services	26 - 50
D. F. Colkins Lumber, Inc.	1 - 25
Edwin Mellen Press	1 - 25
H2 Gro, LLC	1 - 25
J.F. Machining Co., Inc.	1 - 25
Ken Wendt's Propane Gas Service, Inc	1 - 25
Lewny Tools	1 - 25
Unit Step, Gamble, Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Industrial and Business Directory 2008



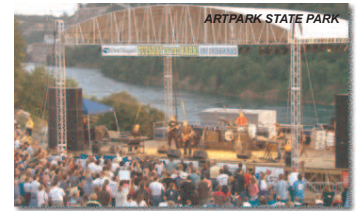
NIAGARA COMMUNITIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LOWER RIVER COMMUNITIES

...Hamlet of Ransomville, Villages of Youngstown and Lewiston, Tuscarora Reservation, Towns of Porter and Lewiston.



Legend

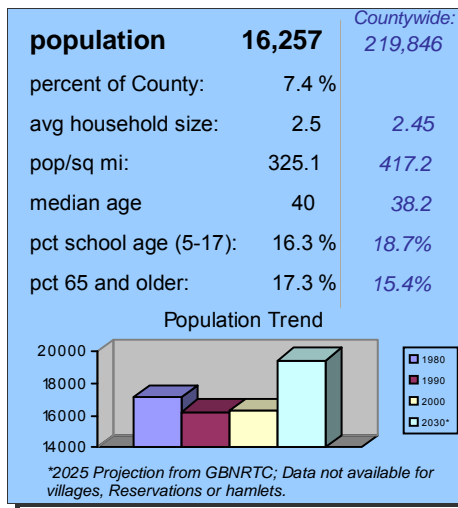
- Hospital
 - International Crossing
 - Schools
 - Public Lands
- ### Community Boundaries
- Lewiston
 - Porter
 - Ransomville
 - Agricultural Districts
 - Villages
 - Tuscarora Reservation



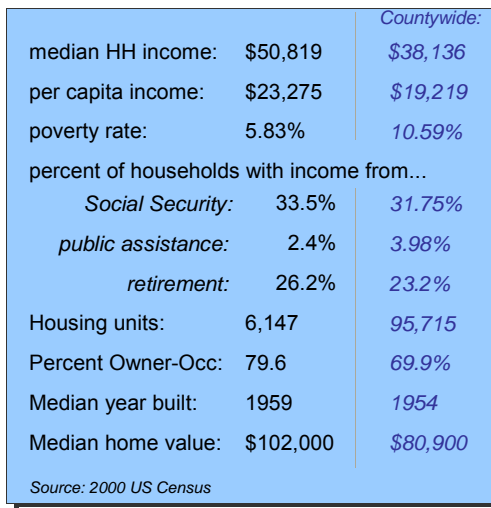
The communities within this sub-region are transitional areas between the urban centers to the south and the rural and lakefront communities to the east. Centers of Riverfront tourism and business exist within and near the villages of Lewiston and Youngstown. The uniqueness of these communities must be protected as valuable centers of cultural resources and small-scale commerce and business. Residential development should be encouraged within the mixed-use centers and their peripheries. Conservation subdivisions and development around Ransomville should be encouraged, as opposed to linear forms of low-density development along local roads.

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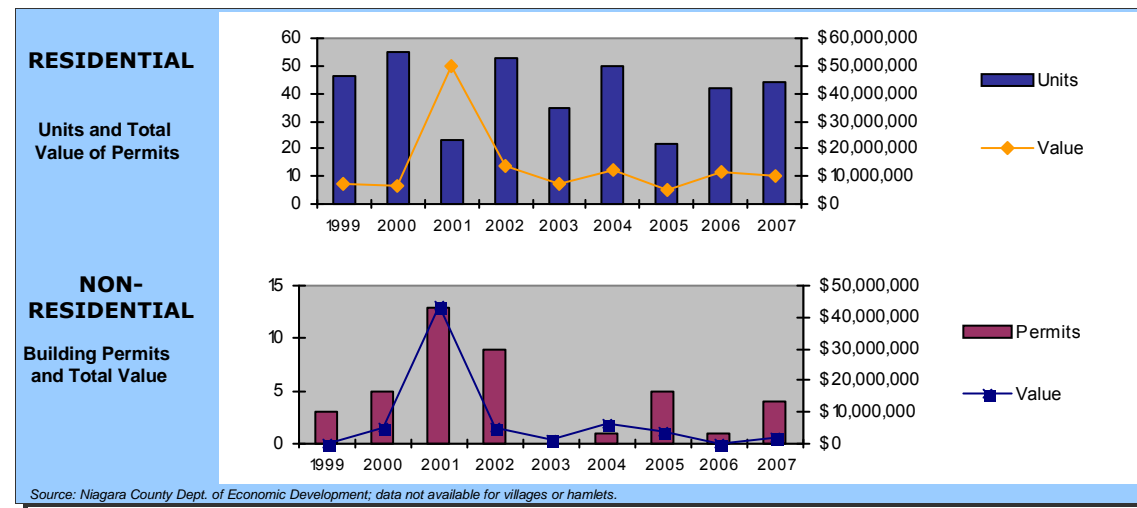
overview



housing and income

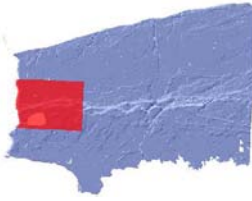


building permits



school districts

- Lewiston-Porter Central School District
- Niagara Wheatfield Central School District
- Niagara University
- Tuscarora Indian Reservation



agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **31%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	2004	In process
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1963	2004
ZONING MAP:	Y	1963	2004
LWRP:	Y	2000	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1963	2004
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		1997	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)		N	
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		N/A	

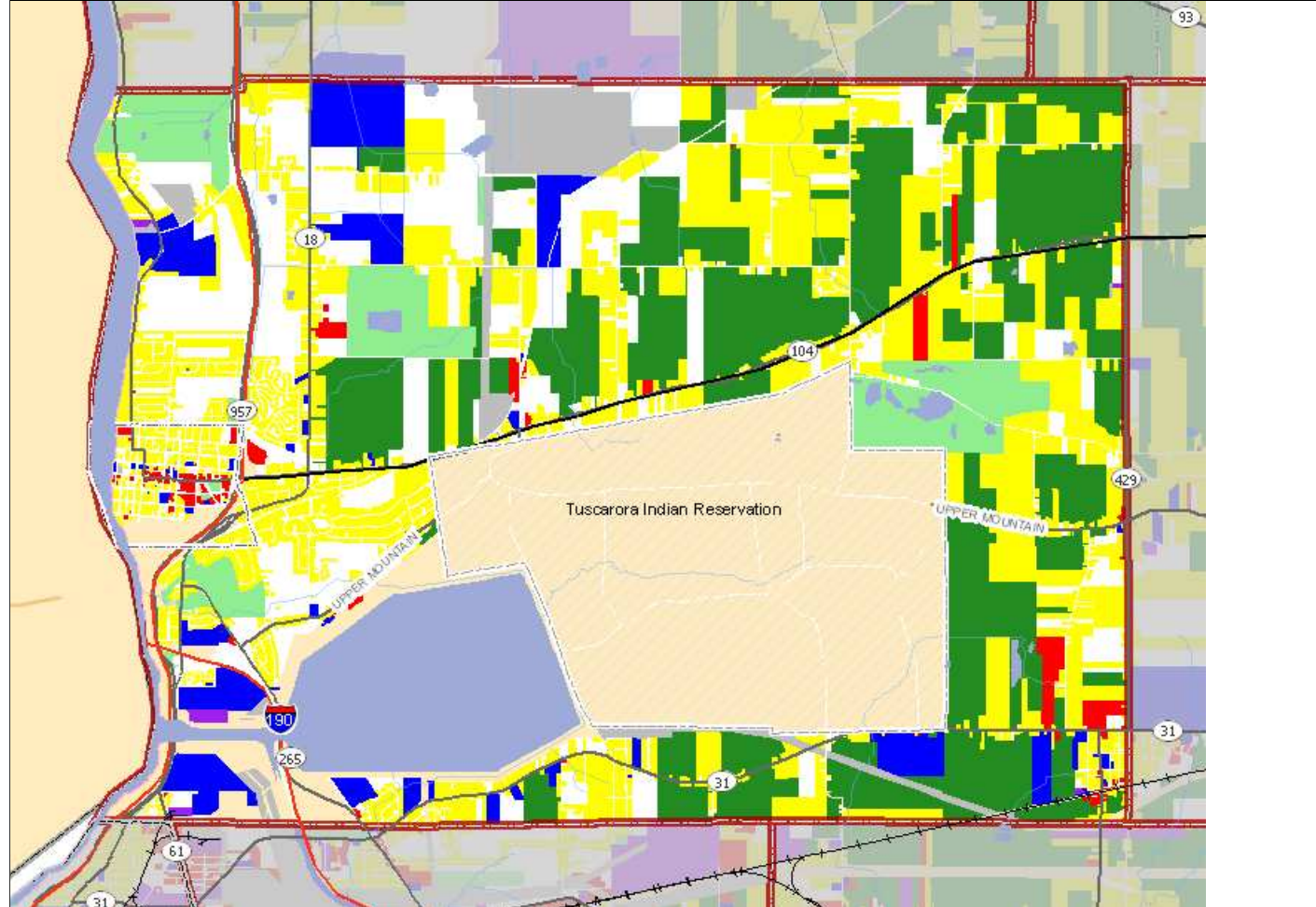
major employers

Employer	Employees
Mount St. Mary's Hospital/Our Lady of Peace Nursing Home	700
Niagara University	635
Modern Disposal Services	450
NY Power Authority	300
Town of Lewiston	70
D. F. Calkins Lumber, Inc.	1 - 25
H2 Gro, LLC	1 - 25
Ken Wendt's Propane Gas Service, Inc	1 - 25
Tuskewee Krafts	1 - 25
Unit Step, Gamble, Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

Land Use Classifications

- Agricultural (Green)
- Vacant (White)
- Recreation / Conservation (Light Green)
- Industrial (Purple)
- No Information (Yellow)
- Residential (Yellow)
- Commercial (Red)
- Community Services (Blue)
- Community Services (Grey)

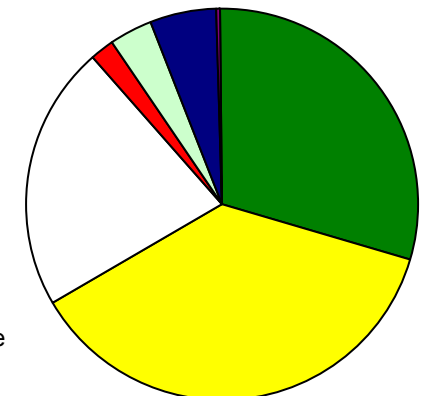


land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	5399.82	26.18%
Commercial	346.82	1.68%
Community Service	1014.88	4.92%
Industrial	41.8	0.20%
Parks & Conservation	930.91	4.51%
Public Service	968.96	4.70%
Recreation	639.43	3.10%
Residential	6651.240	32.25%
Unknown	597.8543	2.90%
Vacant Land	4035.23	19.56%

- Agricultural (Green)
- Residential (Yellow)
- Vacant Land (White)
- Commercial (Red)
- Recreation (Light Green)
- Community Service (Blue)
- Industrial (Purple)

Land use at a glance



Note: Chart does not include "Unknown" or "Conservation" land uses.

Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current Master Plan consistent with Town Code. 2. Attract & encourage commercial tax base within existing business zones. 3. Continue to encourage use of designated bike paths and walking trails. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect open areas, woodland, wildlife habitats & water courses from encroachment of development. 2. Controlled development riverfront & gorge & escarpment areas. 3. Insure that mining within the Town is controlled for the safety of the Town and aesthetics of our community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distance from an airport maybe a challenge to economic development. 2. Existing transportation costs, fees, taxes. 3. Limited economic prosperity during seasonal conditions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Underdevelopment of the County & State Parks. 2. Areas of Lewiston that are part of the Niagara County Sewer District are not sewered but continue to pay fees to the plant. 3. Ongoing problems in the Town with drainage issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Population growth would enable school districts to improve and better utilize their current facilities. 2. STAR programs which alleviate burden for all residents would be continued. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LOOW Site. 2. Out of town hazardous waste being trucked through the Town of Lewiston. 3. Agricultural spraying poses a threat to our water and air quality. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Challenges to illegal activities along Niagara River and the international bridge. (Lewiston Queenston Bridge) 2. Increase in crime and having to deal with less personnel. (i.e., illegal drug use and sales.) 3. Current traffic to CWM (hazardous waste facility) by chemical trucks poses a potential danger to the Town. Large volumes of trucks carrying refuse to Modern Disposal site has major concerns to the Town on the highways.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Residents suggest that there has not been much recent change in land use patterns.
- The Town of Lewiston has experienced some growth, including residential and golf course development.
- Communities in the Subregion are very similar in terms of land use.
- Plans are in place to extend an existing bike/pedestrian path; a cross-river ferry will be introduced in the future, and the marina in Youngstown has new owners.
- Lewiston holds lots of residential potential, and has experienced some new development.
- Lands are available for residential development in Youngstown and Porter; much of the Subregion is rural.
- Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Project
- CWM [hazardous waste]
- Modern Corporation solid waste - cleanup, control & oversight

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Escarpment, river access & park land. (i.e., Picturesque views) 2. Promotion of country like setting. 3. Senior Citizen Center and transportation availability. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Park land/waterfront & ways. 2. Escarpment 3. Bike paths/walking trails 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closeness to the NYS Thruway & International Bridge; the Falls/tourists. 2. Hospital facilities & nursing home availability. 3. Freshwater fishing facilities and an agricultural area. (i.e., NYS Wine Trail) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current parks maintained by the County could be better utilized if maintained aggressively. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our current school districts can accommodate growth. 2. Recent capital improvements to our school systems are an asset to the entire community. 3. Greenway Commission's allocated funds will enhance our entire educational facilities without placing a burden on taxpayers and residents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hospital and nursing facilities are available. 2. Provide transportation for our senior citizens to get our medical corridor. 3. Provide a facility for seniors to partake in "Meals on Wheels" availability and other seniors activates in the Town of Lewiston. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lewiston has its own Police Department that works in conjunction with the Niagara County Sheriffs and the NYS Police. 2. Active U.S. Border Patrol Agency presence at the Niagara River access and bridge areas. 3. Trained volunteer firemen and HAZMAT teams provide protection and safety when an incident occurs.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
Promote continued stability in established neighborhoods.	Preserve the Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara Gorge. Town Environmental Commission established to protect our environmental concerns.	Continue to encourage economic vitality of the Town & Village of Lewiston including the Hamlet of Sanborn.	County parks should be maintained to meet standards of county residents. Near term goals for upgrades and repairs on stationary sewer infrastructure.	To utilize any and all available funding sources. Safe and reliable transportation. Maintain the high standard of quality education.	Insure that our drinking water is free of pharmaceutical contaminants. Continue efforts to cease having hazardous wastes being trucked into our community.	Having the New York Power Authority located in the Town of Lewiston brings potential terrorism threats to our community and a need to encourage an open communication and preparedness with all agencies involved. To keep our community safe with the budget afforded to us and the current laws that we have.

overview

population	6,920	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	3.1 %	
avg household size:	2.6	2.45
pop/sq mi:	203.5	417.2
median age	41	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	19.6 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	14.6 %	15.4%

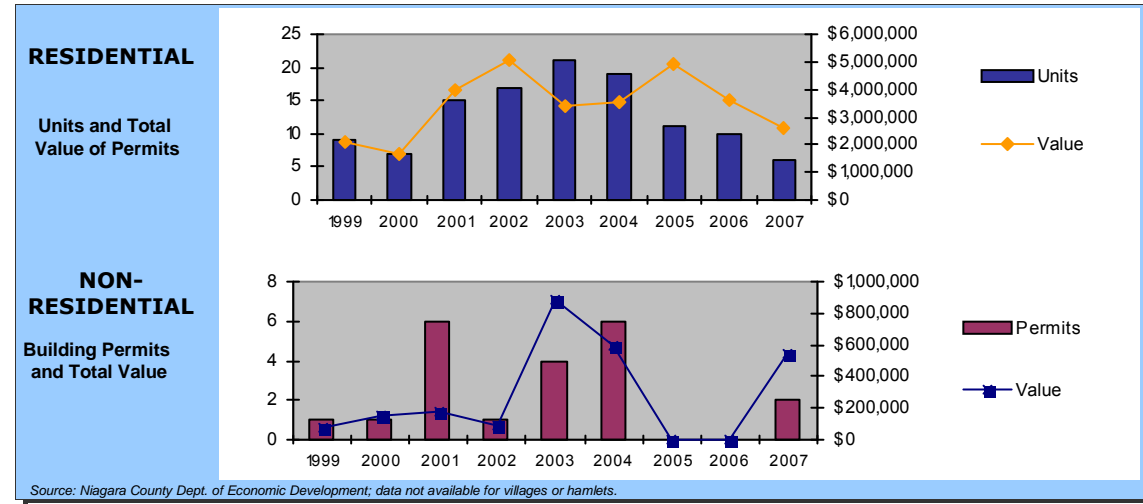
**2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.*

housing and income

median HH income:	\$50,425	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$23,951	\$19,219
poverty rate:	4.07%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	30.3%	31.75%
<i>public assistance:</i>	2.0%	3.98%
<i>retirement:</i>	26.4%	23.2%
Housing units:	2,846	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	81.3	69.9%
Median year built:	1958	1954
Median home value:	\$96,300	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Lewiston-Porter Central School District
Wilson Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **59%**

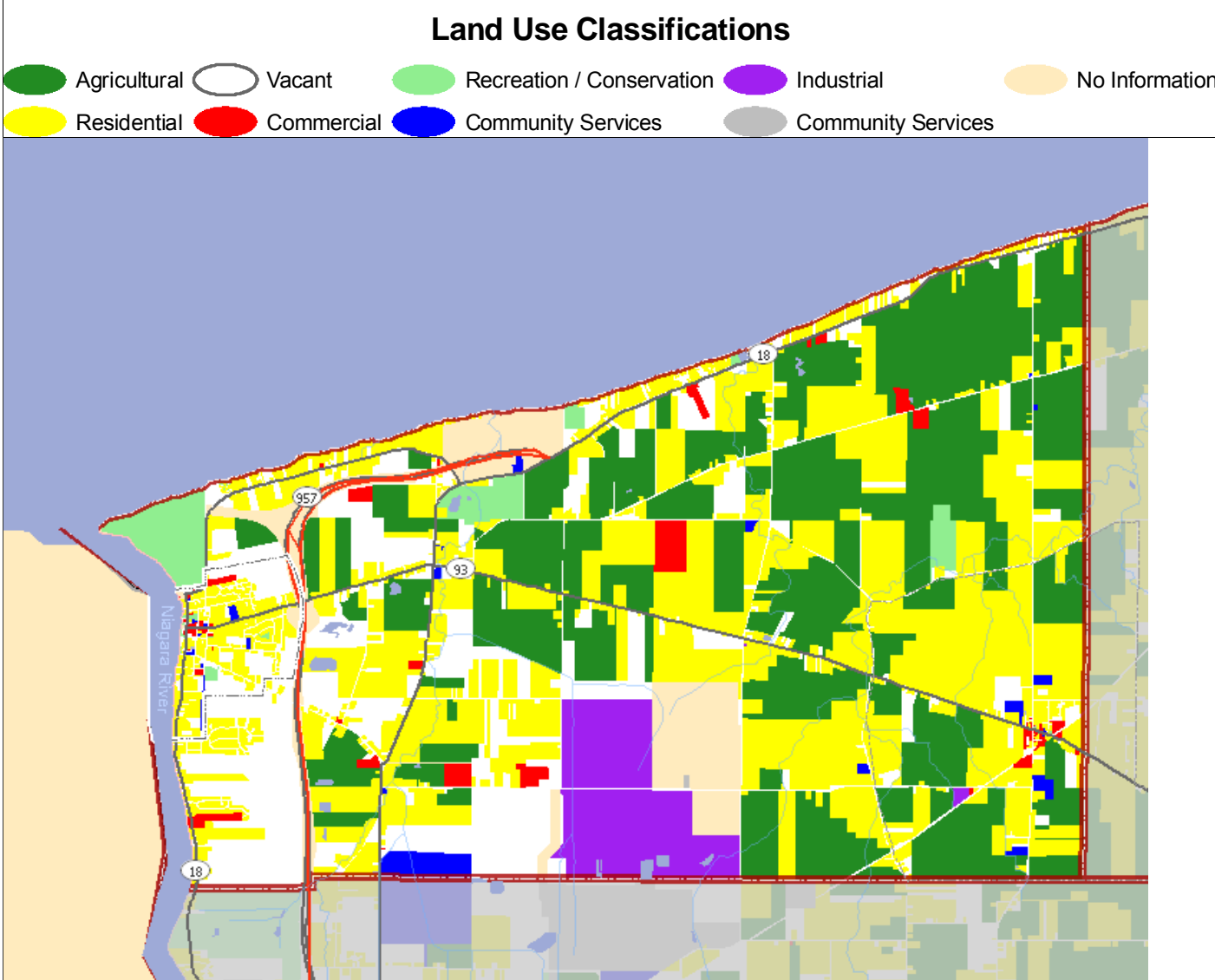
planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1981	2004
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1968	1995 (In proce
ZONING MAP:	Y	1968	2005 (In proce
LWRP:	N/A	N/A	In process
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1963	1975 (In process)
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:	N/A		
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)		No info. provided	
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		No info. provided	

major employers

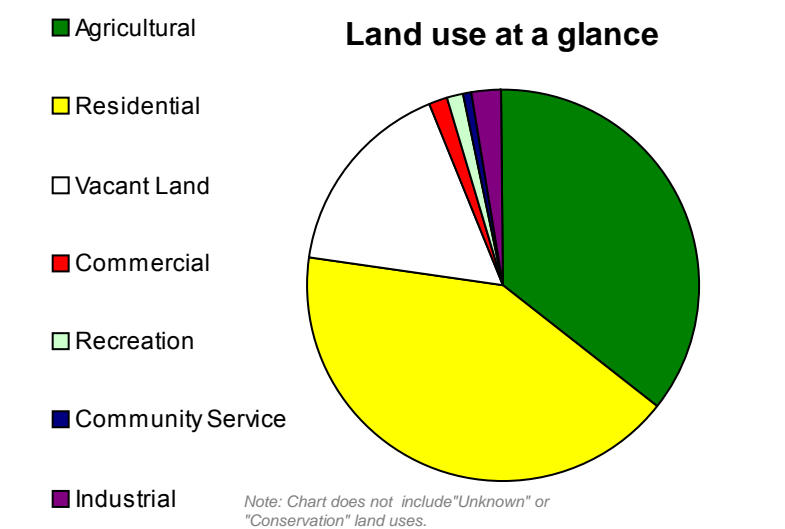
Employer	Employees
Waste Management, Inc.	101 - 250
J.F. Machining Co., Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niaraa County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	5917.02	34.43%
Commercial	298.82	1.74%
Community Service	83.39	0.49%
Industrial	425.71	2.48%
Public Service	5.24	0.03%
Recreation	225.81	1.31%
Residential	6908.84	40.20%
Unknown	546.38	3.18%
Vacant Land	2773.74	16.14%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. A need for senior citizen housing with a potential for transportation needs to be met.</p> <p>2. We should plan for the commercial development of lands associated with Lake Ontario Ordinance Works (LOOW), which is about 1500 acres, after it is made available.</p> <p>3. Land use should be about 70% agriculture, 20% residential and 10% commercial/industrial.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i> Land Use: Golf course No public transportation Bike path Cross border travel Room for residential growth Farming</p> <p><i>Environment</i> Lake Ontario Ordinance Works Chemical Waste Management (CWM) - Limit future impacts</p>		<p>1. The cost of electricity is disproportionate for the fact that it is generated in our area. Locally generated energy should assist our business development.</p> <p>2. We are not centrally located.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> The Town must continue to work collaboratively with CWM. The Town will promote agriculture and minimize land use conflicts between agricultural land and other uses. Tourism Obstacles: bureaucracy Regional employment (keeping brain power / residents) Aging population Geography - we're not centrally located Cost of living - very reasonable; Energy cost - an asset; State properties - may be an asset CWM & Modern (Hydroponics)</p>	<p>1. Serious consolidation of all aspects of government services to reduce the cost of government, hence taxes.</p> <p>2. Reduce the size of the legislature, merge towns and villages, school districts.</p> <p>3. Put welfare and social services recipients on infrastructure improvement. Use BOCES as a training ground for the people using the system.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> Promote cooperation between NY State Troopers, the Sheriff's Dept., Lewiston & Village of Youngstown Police Depts., the Border Patrol and the NY State Parks Police.</p> <p><i>Promote historical organizations within the Town.</i></p>	<p>1. We should look at a consolidated Lewiston-Porter-Wilson School District with state of the art educational opportunities.</p> <p>2. Expand the libraries to serve multiple purposes, such as a latchkey service, and to service the younger generation.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> Need high-quality education that utilizes the latest computer and teaching technology.</p> <p><i>WiFi needed.</i></p>	<p>1. The sewer and water infrastructure must allow for future development. (a) Adequately repair the existing system and (b) ensure expansion potential, this would include the Hamlet of Ransomville.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i> We need access to the Town of Porter to remain unencumbered. Ensure general maintenance of roadways, including safety. We need to monitor changes in transportation systems throughout the community and region. Sewers needed in Ransomville.</p>	

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>1. We need to revitalize agriculture by increasing the demand for local agricultural products.</p> <p>2. Growth in single family housing will slow down over the next 10 years.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i> Coordinate the growth in the Town of Porter so that it complements the Town's existing agricultural character and capitalizes on its unique waterfront location. The State Parks are an asset for the Town. The Town strives to develop a system of open space that includes a network of parks and trails. Control clean-up Protect natural resources Assets: Lake Ontario Niagara River Festivals, year-round Art Park Fort Niagara</p>		<p>1. We need to entice people to this area for the months of April-October. Our housing is very reasonable, but the taxes are a detriment.</p> <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> To recognize the Town of Porter as a bedroom community and promote appropriate businesses within the Town. Tourism is supported to diversify the economy and promote economic growth. Create a business-friendly community. Encourage new businesses that improve the quality of life for all residents.</p> <p><i>Promote agriculture</i> <i>Promote development</i> <i>Increase sewer plant capacity</i> <i>Cross-river ferry</i></p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> To deliver community services to all residents and improve the quality of life within Porter.</p> <p><i>Promote and respect the historical and cultural resources in the Town of Porter.</i></p> <p><i>Provide cost-effective emergency services.</i></p> <p><i>High-quality education.</i></p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> Work with the Lewiston-Porter and Wilson School Districts to identify and implement programs that benefit the entire community.</p> <p><i>Maintain the school in Ransomville that is part of the Wilson School District.</i></p> <p><i>Support the William J. McLaughlin Free Library and the Youngstown Free Library.</i></p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i> To ensure adequate housing choices for all residents in the Town of Porter.</p> <p><i>Improving the condition of water quality, including streams and creeks, is essential.</i></p> <p><i>To coordinate the delivery of infrastructure and utilities in Porter while protecting the rural character of the community (Limit to specific development nodes).</i></p>	

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety

overview

population	2,781	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	1.3 %	
avg household size:	2.11	2.45
pop/sq mi:	2,317.5	417.2
median age	46	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	12.8 %	18.7 %
pct 65 and older:	26.3 %	15.4 %

Population Trend

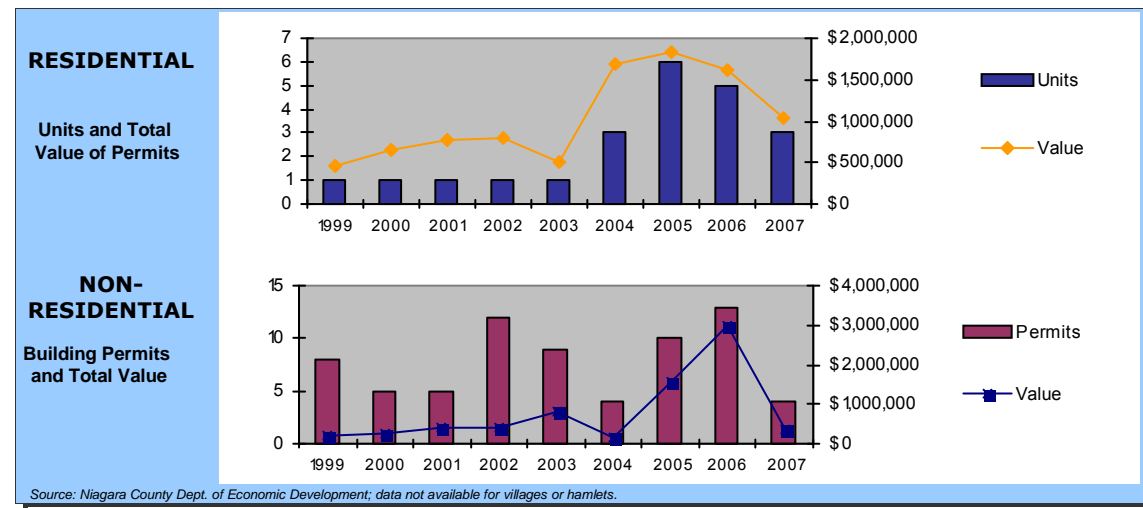
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$37,598	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$21,482	\$19,219
poverty rate:	8.58%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	38.8%	31.75%
public assistance:	3.4%	3.98%
retirement:	25.6%	23.2%
Housing units:	1,351	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	62.4	69.9%
Median year built:	1955	1954
Median home value:	\$89,100	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Lewiston-Porter Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

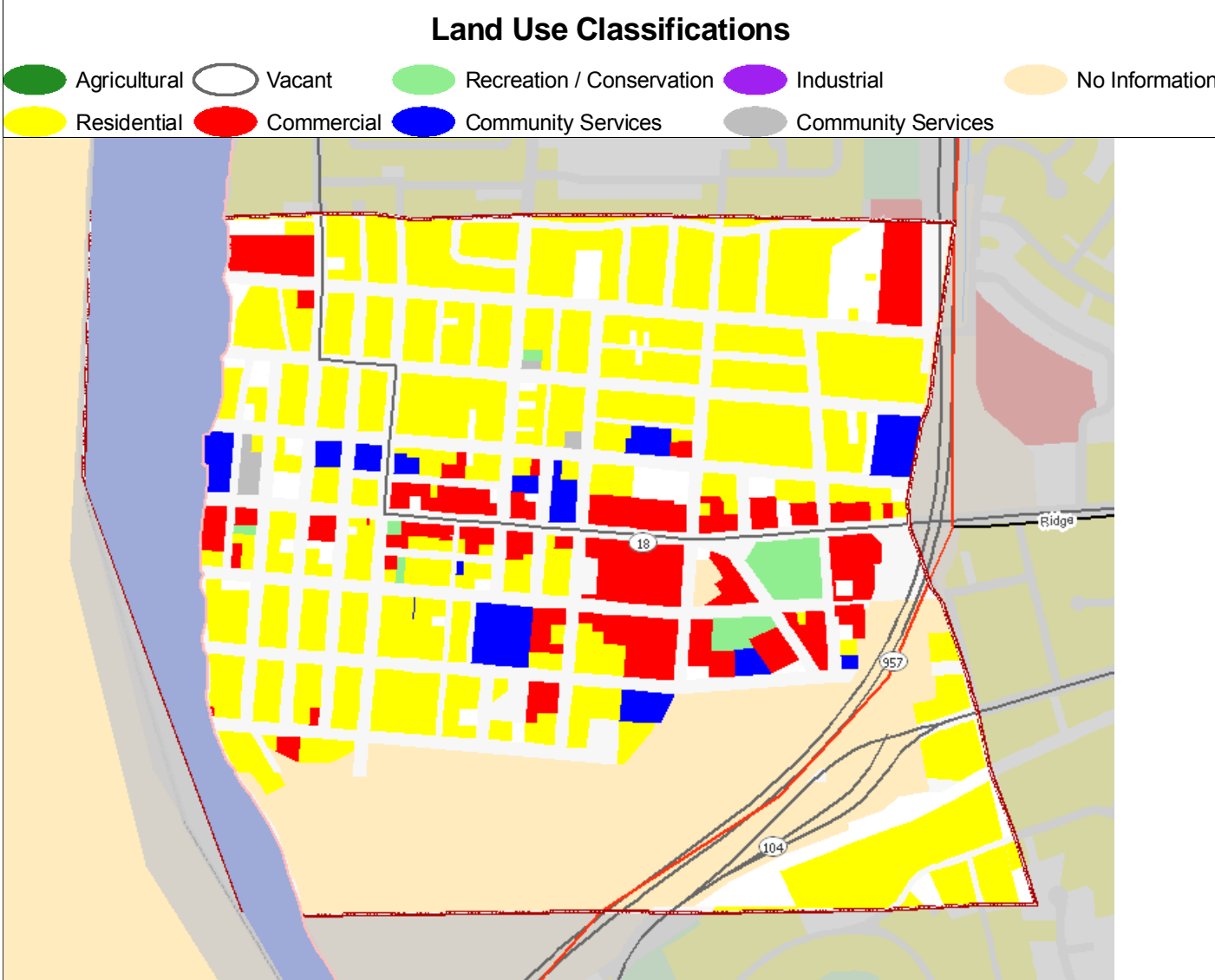
planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1973	2004
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1973	In process
ZONING MAP:	Y	1973	In process
LWRP:	Y	1991	1991
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1973	In process
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2001	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		Y	

major employers

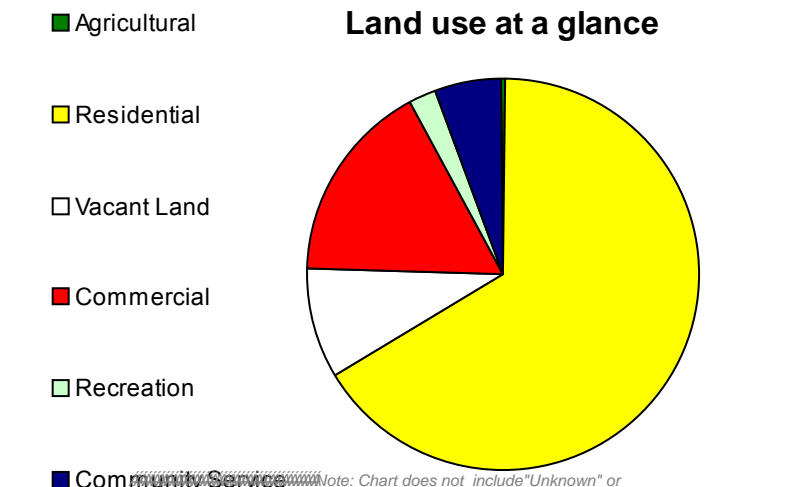
Employer	Employees
Mount St. Mary's Hospital	700
Waste Technology Services	26 - 50
Edwin Mellen Press	1 - 25
Lewny Tools	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Commercial	60.5	11.74%
Community Service	19.75	3.83%
Public Service	2.12	0.41%
Recreation	8.31	1.61%
Residential	234.68	45.56%
Unknown	157.28	30.53%
Vacant Land	32.51	6.31%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continuation of the Robert Moses Parkway between Niagara Falls and Lewiston. Introduction of a Visitor's Trolley from Niagara Falls to Lewiston to Youngstown, Old Fort Niagara. Create additional parking and improve outgoing traffic from Artpark. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Plant management to prevent erosion at Lewiston Landing hill. Advance recreation and habitat areas at Lewiston Plateau. Close Chemical Waste Management Hazardous Landfill located in the Town of Porter. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation - Countywide and regional. Improve and enhance the Niagara Parkway. Winter activities to make our community a twelve-month destination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do we need a County government? Do we need a County Legislation and Town Supervisor? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidation of school systems. School taxes. Tie in Lewiston-Porter Schools with the Niagara River Greenway. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> We encourage good health since we are a walkable community. Citizens' groups and elected leaders must be determined to remove Chemical Waste Management from the Town of Porter. Too much smoking outside of local restaurants. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminate Transportation of Hazardous Waste to Chemical Waste Management sites. Overall cost for Public Safety. Establish a walkable community.

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> We are a walkable community. A visitor-friendly and scenic Parkway along the gorge between Lewiston and Niagara Falls. World class fishing and charter fishing destination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Niagara River and Lewiston Landing. Lewiston Plateau. Parks in and around the Village of Lewiston. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidation of governments. Support of Artpark. Good location: safe community to visit, live and work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Better use of Bond Lake Park. Shrinkage of County Government. Reduction in County Taxes. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Niagara University. Niagara County Community College. Historic Landmarks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mt. St. Mary's Hospital Two nursing homes Removal of Chemical Waste Management which will reduce heavy truck traffic. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent local Police Department. Excellent Volunteer Fire Company. Cooperation between Local Police Department, Boarder Patrol, State Police and County Sheriff Department.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
First-class maintenance of Center Street, Lewiston Landing and Village Parks.	Maintain the Niagara River shoreline. Beautification of Center Street, Hennepin Park, Academy Park, and Seneca Park. The Lewiston Plateau Recreation and Habitat continued development.	Always strive to be better, with a clean village and a multitude of Activities and Festivals.	Improve the Village of Lewiston's sewer system.	Offer adult education courses in the Village. Attract Board members with common sense values and business backgrounds. Board harmony.	Closer relationships with Mt. St. Mary's Hospital. Better understanding of County Health Services.	Continue with high skilled and personable Police and Fire departments.

overview

population	1,957	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	0.9 %	
avg household size:	2.42	2.45
pop/sq mi:	1,397.9	417.2
median age	0	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.5 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	16 %	15.4%

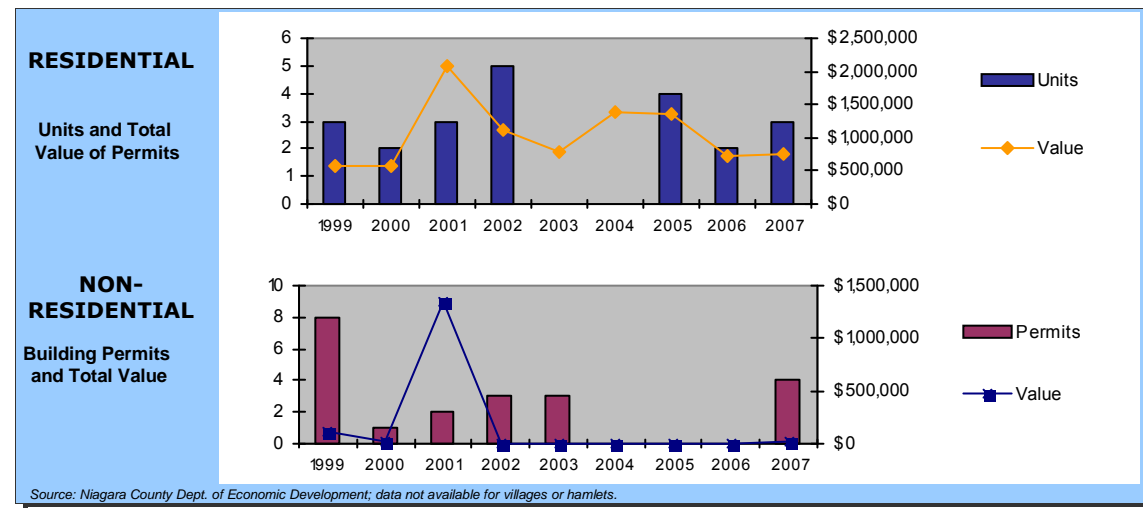
**2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.*

housing and income

median HH income:	\$48,333	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$23,705	\$19,219
poverty rate:	3.95%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	33.7%	31.75%
<i>public assistance:</i>	2.3%	3.98%
<i>retirement:</i>	25.2%	23.2%
Housing units:	869	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	73.9	69.9%
Median year built:	1958	1954
Median home value:	\$97,000	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Lewiston-Porter Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

planning context

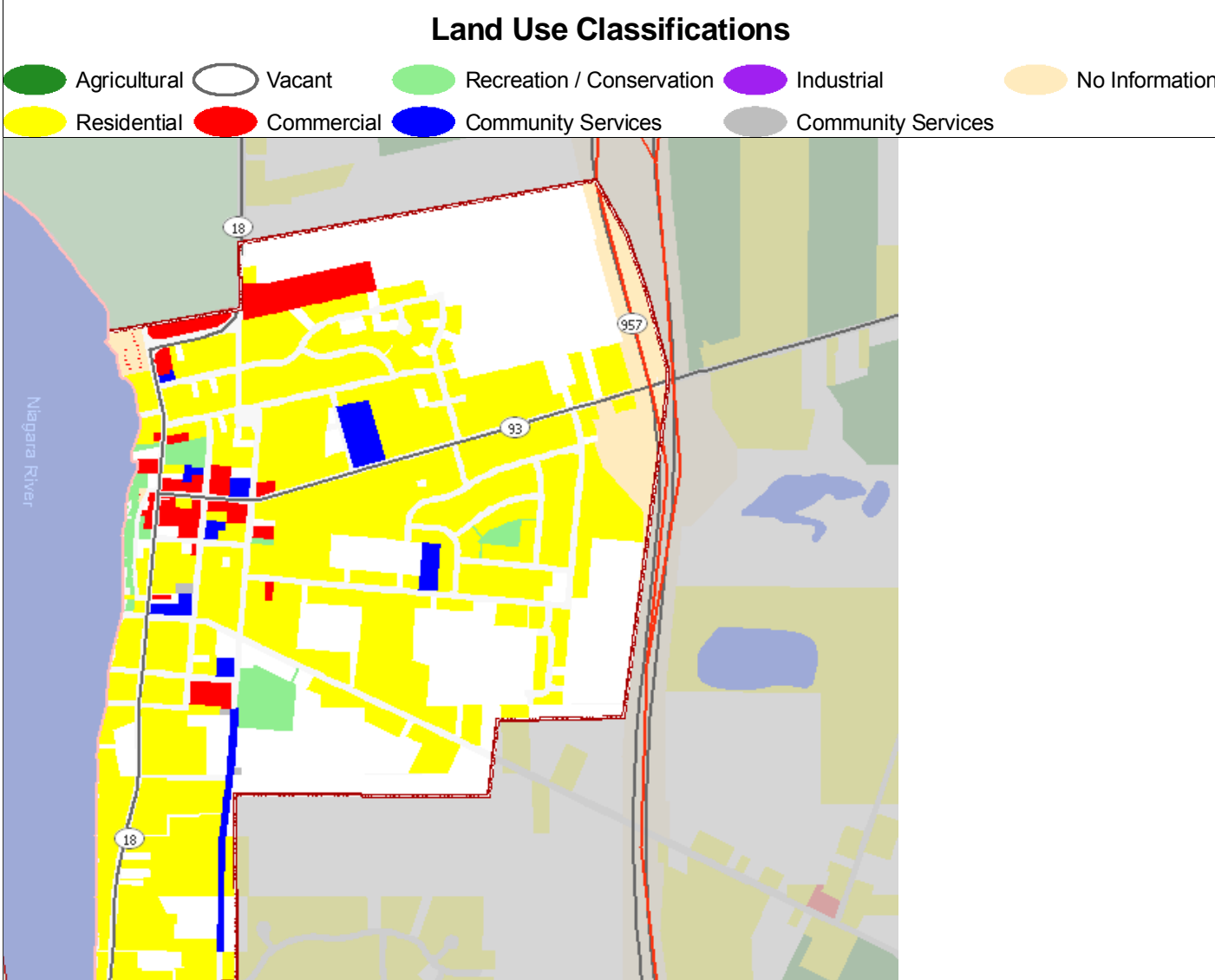
	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	No info. Provided	1974	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1962	2004
ZONING MAP:	Y	1976	2004
LWRP:	Y	1989	1989
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1977	1998

CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:

geographic information systems (GIS)

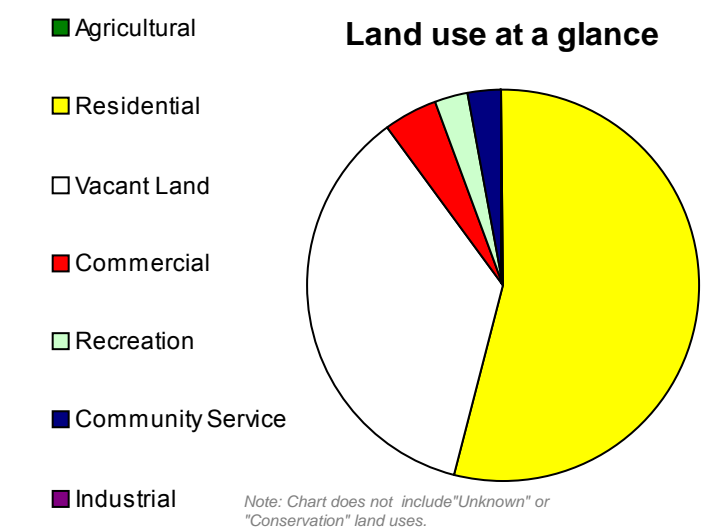
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) Y

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) Y



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Commercial	26.86	4.40%
Community Service	15.86	2.60%
Public Service	0.64	0.10%
Recreation	15.92	2.61%
Residential	314.99	51.55%
Unknown	26.75	4.38%
Vacant Land	209.98	34.37%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redevelopment and environmental clean-up of our Youngstown Cold Storage site an abandoned farmers cooperative on Elliott Street. 2. Preservation and enhancement of all Village owned Waterfront Parks and potential additional acquisition to facilitate fishing, recreational boating and across river ferry service. 3. Restoration of regional bus transportation to the Village and Fort Niagara to energize tourism business and accommodate senior population access south. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial Condo Development of Green Space entry to South Waterfront entry eliminating spectacular vista and Main Street Business Theme - - a major challenge. 2. Beyond highly successful South Waterfront re-development to improve Water Street and embankment, infrastructures approximately a \$2 million project. 3. All Village Parks have been successfully redeveloped for family and Village visitor recreational use and further resource expansion and maintenance cost a major issue. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-energizing the Business Community: Diversity, quality of services, special niches on feature products, and unifying the Business Association. 2. Attracting new and unique businesses that can succeed year round in this seasonal and distant north community. 3. Engaging the area residents to support their local businesses, not just enjoy the quality of life here but spend and buy locally. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. \$.36 County Tax increase to Porter/Youngstown because we complied with NYS mandated full assessment is an unfair community burden, especially in this pressing economic cycle. 2. Niagara County IDA services need to be more aggressively marketed and services to smaller rural community businesses enterprise initiatives. 3. Niagara County Road Route signage needs update and replacement in many areas due to wear, weather and plowing/collision damage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requirement for additional after school education, training and supportive or supplemental activities: computer literacy, trade skills, etc. 2. Need for more corporate involvement in community to define WNY potential employee opportunities, needed skill sets, course requirements, etc. 3. Area summer and part-time student job opportunities are severely limited for students to aid college expenses and to apprentice for professions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proximity of Chemical Waste Management Facility and DEC in-action on low site facilitator agency to investigate site threats. 2. Expansion of CWM facility and constant transport of hazardous chemicals adjacent to Lewiston Porter Central School. 3. Severe winter cold weather and rising fuel costs especially for senior citizens. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very Limited Niagara County Sheriffs support due to distance, time and short staff. 2. Rarely receive incident reports from Niagara County Sheriff's Department no Village calls. 3. Due to proximity to border, limited access to vitally needed Homeland Security Funds as Police and Fire Agencies often first responders.

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waterfront Park development completion north and south for vista enjoyment, fishing, sailing and recreational boating and access for potential cross river ferry return. 2. Route 18 River Road completed reconstruction plus pedestrian and bike path, as one of WNY's most scenic drives and walkways along the Seaway Trail. 3. "Imagine Youngstown" Project with Niagara University Tourism Department to promote Village Waterfront, Fort Niagara and Business Community and create expanded business opportunities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spectacular Waterfront vistas, celebrated Level Sailing Regattas, Jet Boat and recreational boating resource sites in Western NY. 2. One of Western NY's most prolific fishing areas - - nearly 50% of all fishing tournament fish caught off the "bar" by Fort Niagara. 3. Three beautiful and accessible parks (i.e. 2 in Village) and Fort Niagara State Park plus the world famous Fort Niagara Historical site and visitors center. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Certainly Fort Niagara, a must significant historical site attracting 100,000+ visitors annually; challenging these visitors into rather than around the village is a challenge 2. The Waterfront: Fast River Ferry initiative, year round fishing, more efficient customs processing, more than one museum, marina service expansion. 3. Recreational sports tournament, concert and festival use of in village parks and Fort Niagara State Park. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niagara County Public Works Management is responsive to drainage and road and bridge issues reported. 2. Niagara County tub chipper rental facilitates our DPW brush chipping and recycling program and resident services. 3. Emergency response preparedness training is excellent as is emergency response agency coordination for storm, severe weather or environmental incidents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lewiston Porter School Academic rating is high and excellent resource for advanced education. 2. Solid network of area Library facilities with strong emphasis on youth reading programs coordinated with Lewiston Porter. 3. Niagara County Community College and Niagara BOCES facilities in near by communities excellent resource for special workshop training If advantages better advertised. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent Parks system and area to facilitate walking, jogging, biking, and recreational family activities. 2. Very accessible to in Village Health Club, Medical Offices and near by Clinic and Hospital Facilities. 3. Police driving and Yacht Club and Coast Guard optional safety courses accessible and well thought and attended. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Part-Time, affordable and very accessible Police Department Staff, continued communication, special patrol assignments, bike and foot patrols. 2. Excellent Volunteer Fire Company, Fire and ambulance response, deeply involved with community as a partner. 3. Very responsive to Village declared emergency disasters: i.e. gas leaks, storm ice and wind, snow, etc.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
Continue initiative to successfully implement cross river ferry, network all area Commerce Chambers to promote Youngstown; engage local residents to support existing businesses; expand agriculture and historical site and tour promotion and exhibit sites.	Complete Water Street reconstruction and deteriorating retaining walls: Greenway and NYS grant funding; ecological restoration of Village and resident owned waterfront properties and habitats; support Niagara River Keeper Riparian Restoration Greenway Grant Project.	Village and Niagara River chamber promotion of Village assets, resources and businesses; Niagara University/Village "Imagine Youngstown" tourism project, TV, Radio, cable and newsletter promotions and ads, meet with key business franchise and expanded WIFI services.	More open and specific communications recording homeland security, volunteer fir company state mandate expense, community development funding (i.e. fast ferry) vital service needs.	New Community Room for Computer training and skill sharpening, special education and speakers, workshops, etc. \$10,000 funding to date, construction next quarter.	Major issue here of course is preventing further volume import of hazardous chemicals to CWM and the facility expansion. More Professional Environmental Agency involvement in the site monitoring and violations critical.	Part-time Police force in increasing crime and vandalism era: need much tighter and more communicative relationship with Niagara County Sheriffs for response, Coordinator and incident reporting

POPULATION

Municipality	1990	2000	2006	2030*
Town of Newfane	8,996	9,657	9,488	10,791
Town of Somerset	2,855	2,865	2,793	3,060
Town of Wilson	5,793	6,460	6,271	6,092
Village of Barker	669	577	551	n/a
Village of Wilson	1,307	1,413	1,160	n/a
Hamlet of Olcott	1,432	1,156	n/a	n/a
Newfane CDP	3,001	3,129	n/a	n/a
SUB-REGION	17,452	18,342	18,040	19,944

*2030 Projections from GHRTIC; only available for Towns

NIAGARA COMMUNITIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAKEFRONT COMMUNITIES

...Hamlets of Olcott and Newfane, Villages of Wilson and Barker, Towns of Newfane, Somerset and Wilson.



AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural Districts by Town		
Town Name	Acreage	Percent of Town
Newfane	34,900	77%
Somerset	13,957	59%
Wilson	28,888	91%
TOTAL	77,745	77%



WILSON HARBOR

EDUCATION

Barker Central S.D.	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Avg. Class Size	17	18	n/a
K-12 Teachers	100	n/a	99
K-12 Capacity	n/a	n/a	1066
K-12 Enrollment	1064	n/a	1097
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 18,833.00		

Newfane Central	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
Avg. Class Size	22	21	n/a
K-12 Teachers	52	56	182
K-12 Capacity	800	800	n/a
K-12 Enrollment	627	645	2036
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 12,610.00		

Wilson Central	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
Avg. Class Size	20	21	n/a
K-12 Teachers	127	129	143
K-12 Capacity	n/a	1800	3538
K-12 Enrollment	1481	1496	1428
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 13,370.00		

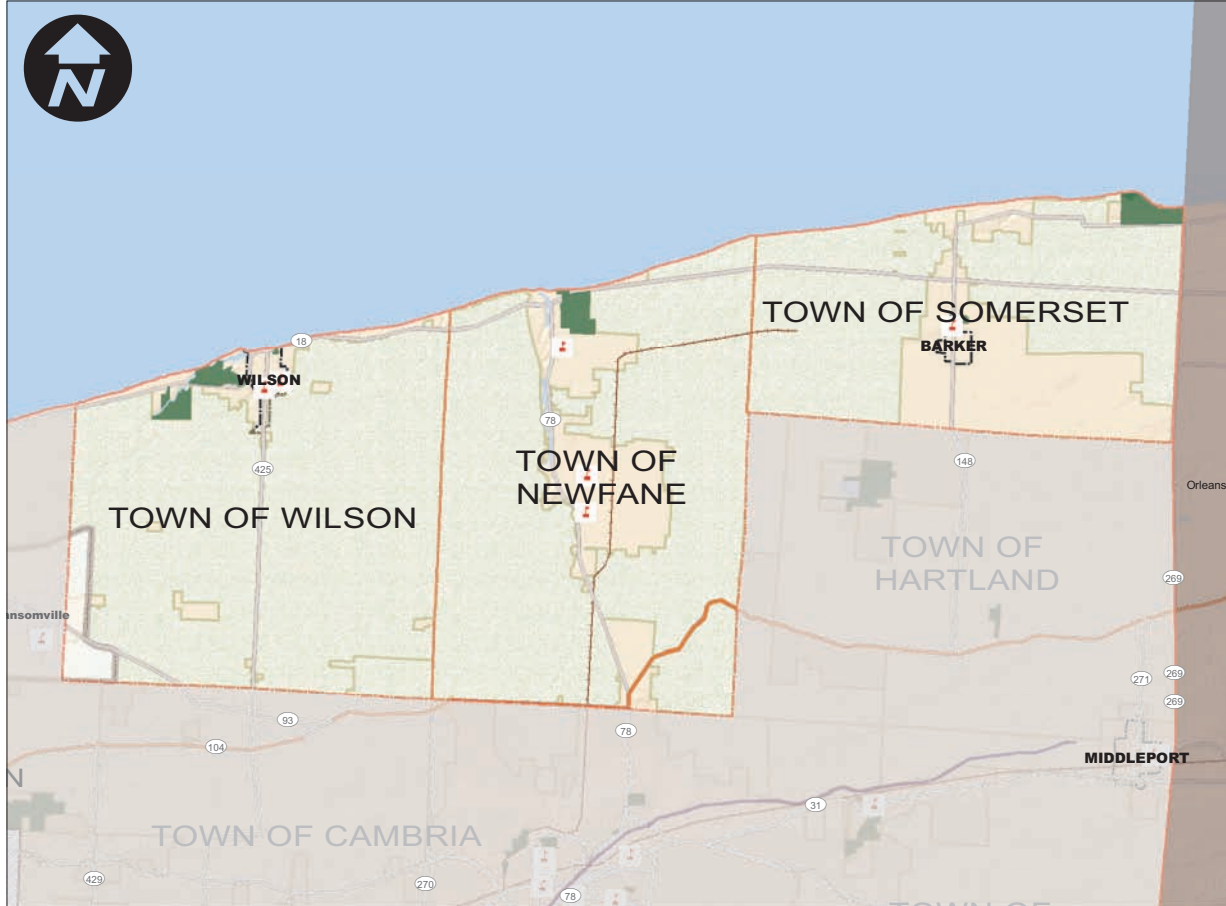
LARGEST EMPLOYERS

Employer	# of Employees (Range)
AES Somerset, LLC	101 - 250
Atlantic Transformers	101 - 250
Mayer Brothers Apple Products, Inc.	101 - 250
Russell Fruit Farms	51 - 100
S.O.P.S. Inc.	51 - 100
Pfeiffer Foods, Inc.	51 - 100

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development; Industrial and Business Directory 2008

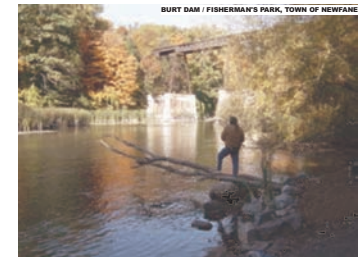


GOLDEN HILL STATE PARK, TOWN OF SOMERSET



Legend

- Hospital
- Erie Canal
- Community Boundaries**
- Newfane
- Somerset
- Wilson
- Schools
- Public Lands
- Agricultural Districts
- Villages



BURT DAM / FISHERMAN'S PARK, TOWN OF NEWFANE



VILLAGE OF BARKER

The Lakefront Communities possess significant opportunities for mixed-use, waterfront and tourism-based small-scale development along the NYS Route 18 and Route 78 corridors. Nodal development should be encouraged along these two corridors, with further nodal development centered on the villages of Wilson and Barker as well as Olcott, Newfane, Wright's Corners and Somerset. Interior areas within this subregion afford additional opportunities for rural resource protection, rural businesses, trail and bikeway development and rural residential uses appropriately sited among working farmlands.

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overview

population	9,657	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	4.4 %	
avg household size:	2.63	2.45
pop/sq mi:	185.7	417.2
median age	38	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	20.1 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	14.4 %	15.4%

Population Trend

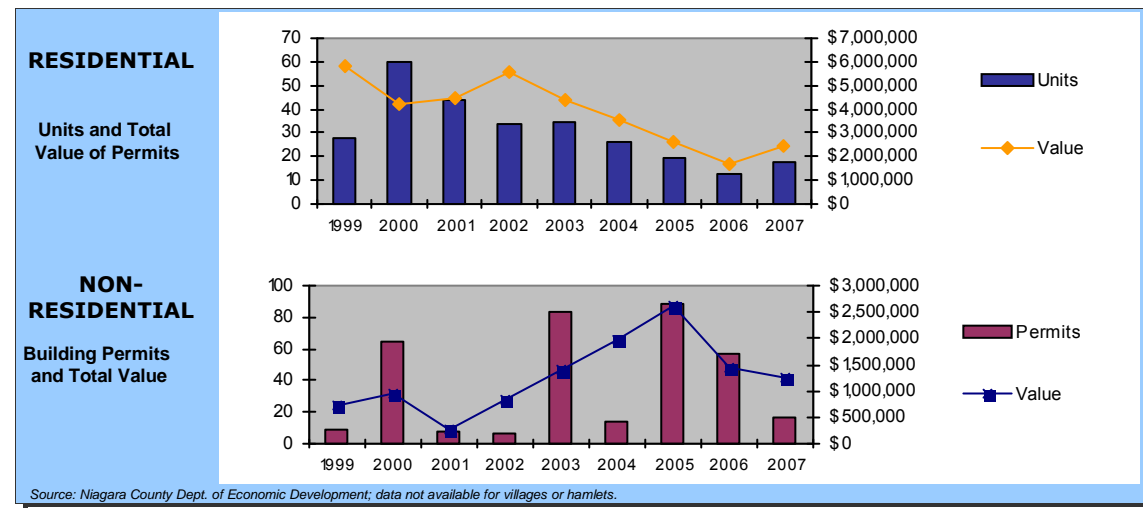
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$41,438	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$18,311	\$19,219
poverty rate:	6.80%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	31.6%	31.75%
public assistance:	2.5%	3.98%
retirement:	27.9%	23.2%
Housing units:	3,854	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	82.5	69.9%
Median year built:	1957	1954
Median home value:	\$79,900	\$80,900

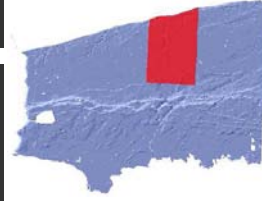
Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Barker Central School District
- Newfane Central School District
- Wilson Central School District
- Royalton-Hartland Central School District

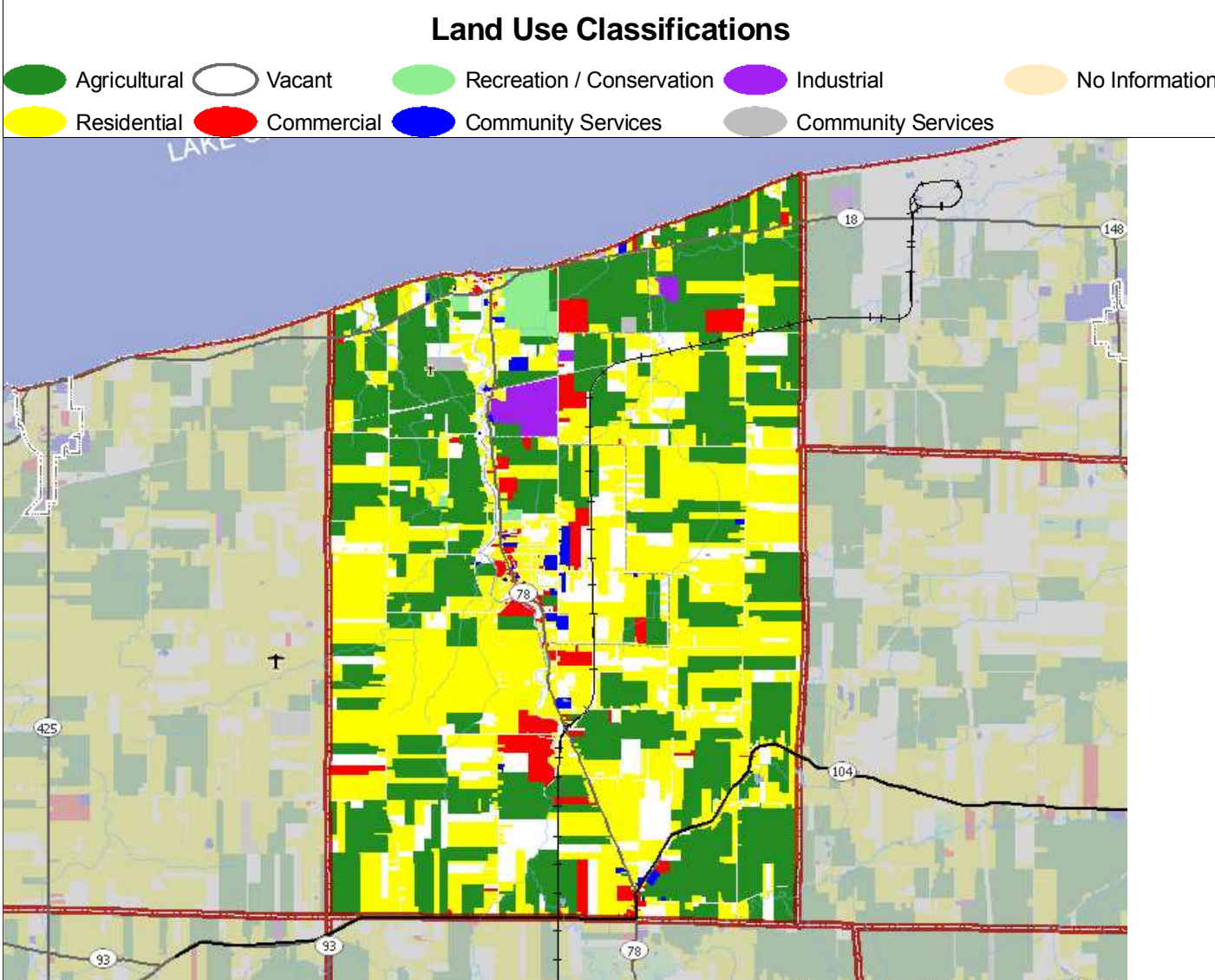


agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **77%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1970	1999
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1972	1999
ZONING MAP:	Y	1972	2005
LWRP:	Y	1986	1998
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1993	2001
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Special Use Provision in zoning code		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:	N/A		
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	N		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)	N/A		



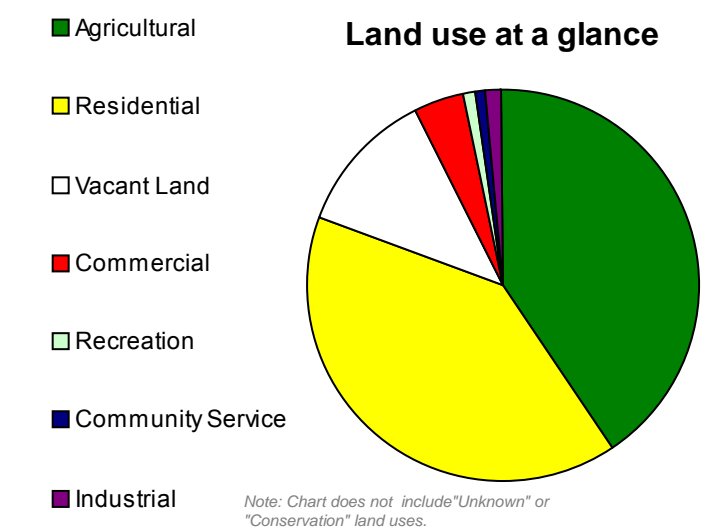
major employers

Employer	Employees
Russell Fruit Farms	51 - 100
S.O.P.S. Inc.	51 - 100
Sun Orchard Fruit Company	26 - 50
AKZO Nobel Polymer Chemicals, LLC	1 - 25
ATLAS Container, Inc.	1 - 25
Bucolo Cold Storage	1 - 25
Jeff Watkins Signs	1 - 25
Patterson General Contracting, LLC	1 - 25
Plasticweld Systems	1 - 25
Schulze Vineyards and Winery	1 - 25
The Winery at Marjim Manor	1 - 25
Voelpel Farms, Inc.	1 - 25
WNY Cherry Producers Co-op	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	11584.58	40.24%
Commercial	1172.28	4.07%
Community Service	227.95	0.79%
Industrial	373.95	1.30%
Public Service	99.52	0.35%
Recreation	306.6	1.07%
Residential	11432.87	39.71%
Unknown	122.89	0.43%
Vacant Land	3467.22	12.04%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of sufficient public transportation!! Our population is aging. 2. No major highway – north to south- Route. NYS Route 78 for all intense purposes ends in Lockport, NY 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harbor Breakwall at Olcott Harbor – this has long history of study & NO ACTION. 2. The beach at Krull Park has remained a problem for years – County of Niagara only recently has made public swimming possible. 3. Assisting towns to remediate Brownfields ie: old gas stations with contaminated areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminating & Redevelopment of aging structures & properties ie: Brownfields (old gas stations) 2. Lack of light industry – Very few jobs 3. Constant struggle to maintain successful small businesses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No major North/South highway 2. Struggle to maintain present water, sewer, etc. Expensive and constant. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school system is the largest taxing entity in the town. School tax levies are higher than the county's. 2. More transportation to get citizens to NCCC or any other higher educational venues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pollution in area streams. Reducing mercury levels etc. 2. Residue from agricultural spraying. 3. Eliminate contaminated properties in the community especially old gas stations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More road patrols – either county or state 2. Curfew enforcement 3. Waterfront – International Harbor – Need video camera in Olcott Marina

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Harbor at Olcott beach at the mouth of 18 Mile Creek. Our lakefront has enormous potential for recreational, industrial & agricultural development. 2. The fishery in 18 Mile Creek, the fish stocking program attracts sportsmen from all states, Canada – from the Lake to the Burt Dam is a world class attraction. 3. We host the best fruit growing lands in North America – Strong agricultural base. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The harbor at Olcott and all lakeshore areas. 2. The Fishery – Lake Ontario – 18 Mile Creek – Fisherman's Park at Burt Dam – World class. 3. Agricultural acreage – The Ontario plain presents finest acreage in North America – finest fruit orchards period! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent community hospital & local school system. Great environment for families and light industry 2. Harbor – Fishery – Waterfront 3. Excellent geography & lake effect that supports the best fruit farms in the world 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Krull Park is the only County presence in our town – Any enhancement would be appreciated. 2. No County offices in our town – Town Hall project on Main St. will make information more available. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The local school system is excellent. Our local community hospital is profitable and extremely efficient. 2. NCCC provides opportunities for all ages. Inexpensive first step for higher education pursuits. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local hospital very active in local events and media. 2. Response of first responders – fire, ambulance etc. Volunteer fire companies more effective than paid city units. 3. Public education from fire units & County Health Dept is very good. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Response time for 1st responders, especially fire and EMS is unparalleled. Miller Hose, has only paramedics in Western Niagara County. 2. Neighbor watch groups with Niagara County support are now effective in our town. 3. Town drafting an emergency plan document

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):
 •Agriculture
 •Waterfront industry
 •Wind resources

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>Maximize our natural resources by revitalizing historic Olcott Beach attractions, town village shops, carousel project, Krull Park and swimming enhancement.</p>	<p>Town of Newfane has enacted a Wind Ordinance to protect agricultural areas and also promote wind energy plans. Applying for all grants to enhance agriculture, fishery and recreation opportunities</p>	<p>Town of Newfane has a master plan & zoning and planning mechanisms to assist progress.</p>	<p>Improve Krull Park!</p>	<p>Cooperate with school organizations and groups. Local churches are quite active and need support. Also volunteer fire companies to give educational instruction.</p>	<p>Support all efforts of our hospitals and volunteer fire companies to continue their excellent efforts.</p>	<p>State Police negotiating for office space (satellite) in old town hall on Transit Rd. We encourage any increase in Police patrols in Town of Newfane.</p>

overview

population	2,865	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	1.3 %	
avg household size:	2.85	2.45
pop/sq mi:	77.4	417.2
median age	37	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	22.9 %	18.7 %
pct 65 and older:	11.9 %	15.4 %

Population Trend

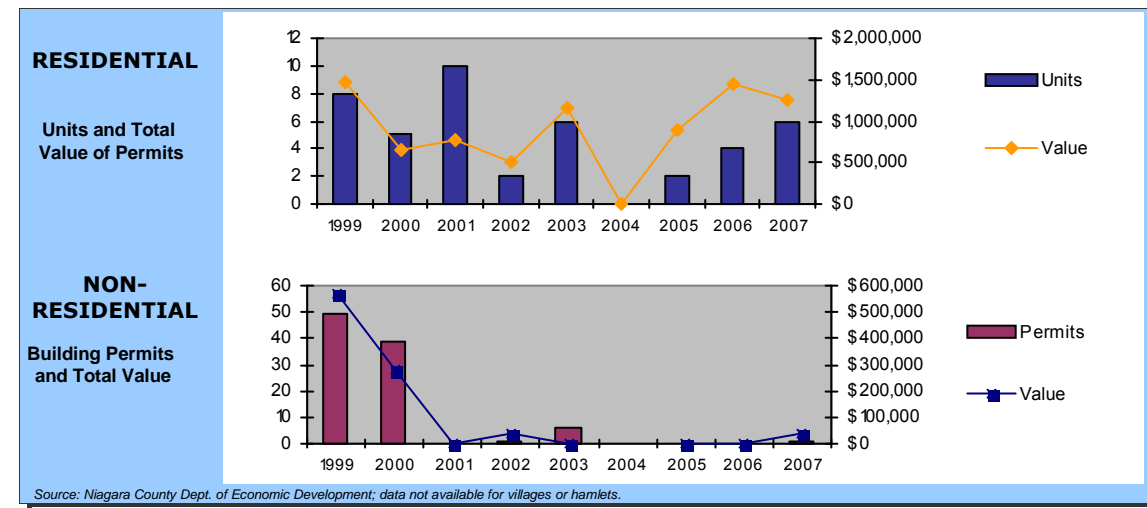
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$44,216	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$17,792	\$19,219
poverty rate:	10.07%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	30.2%	31.75%
public assistance:	1.9%	3.98%
retirement:	22.5%	23.2%
Housing units:	1,132	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	80.1	69.9%
Median year built:	pre-1940	1954
Median home value:	\$80,100	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Barker Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **59%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1971	2003
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1978	2007
ZONING MAP:	Y	1978	2005
LWRP:	Y	2005	2005
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1984	2007
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		1997	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		N	

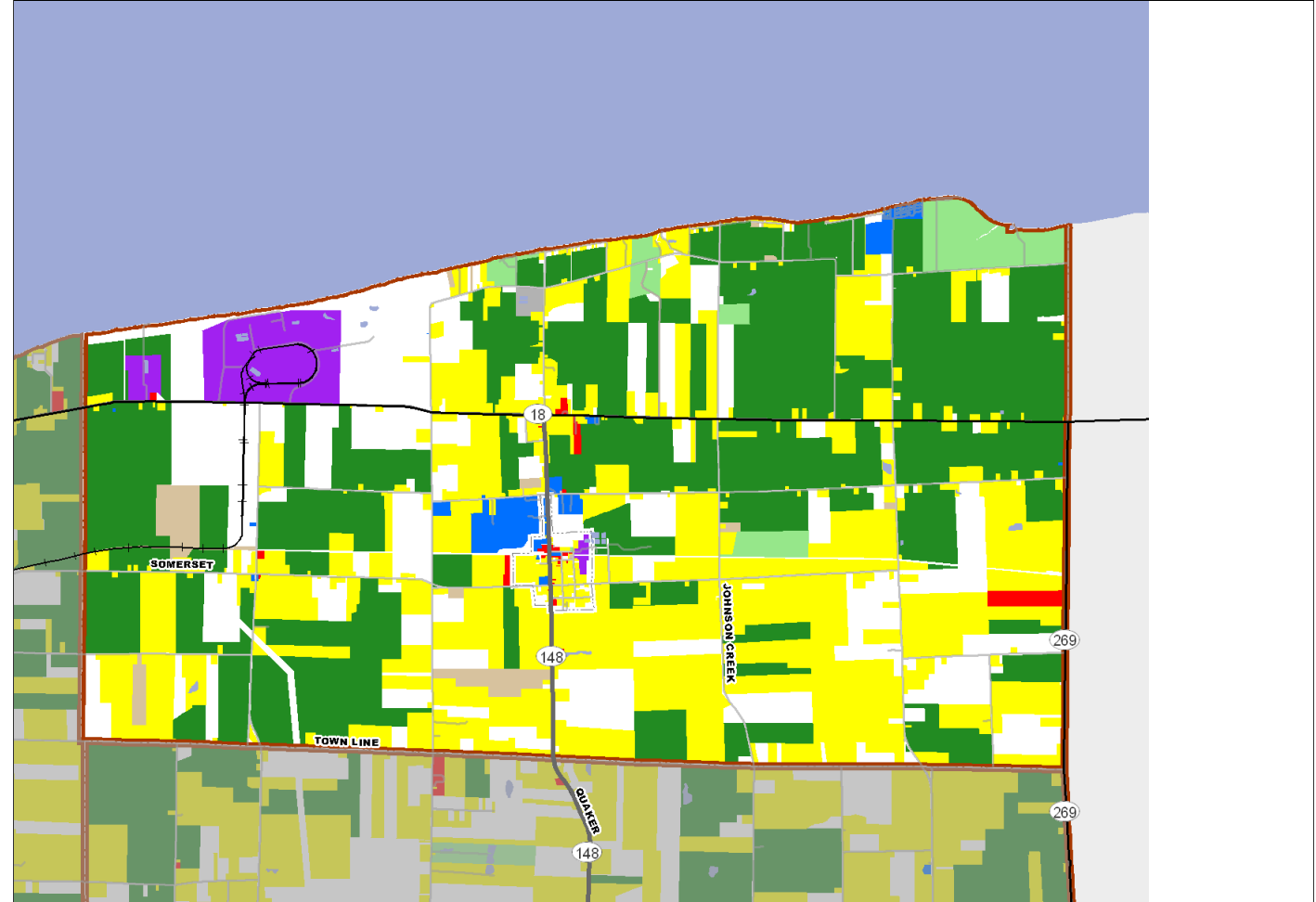
major employers

Employer	Employees
AES Somerset, LLC	101 - 250
Atlantic Transformers	1 - 25
Mayer Brothers Apple Products, Inc. Barker Warehouse	1 - 25
Mayer Brothers Apple Products, Inc. Somerset Division	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

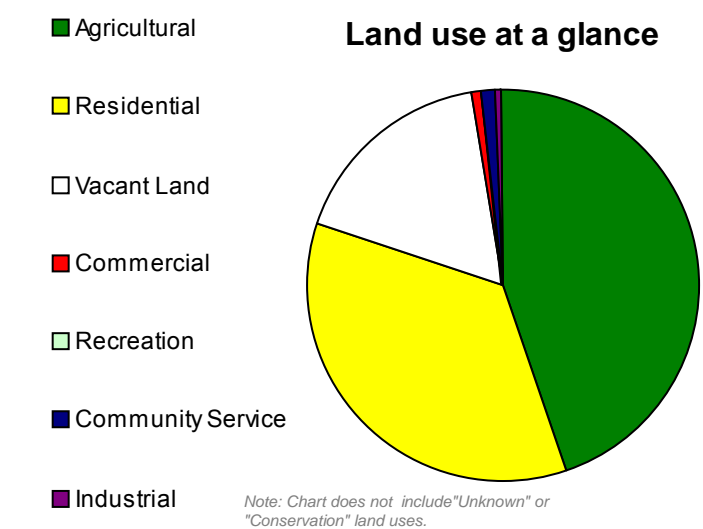
Land Use Classifications

- Agricultural
- Vacant
- Recreation / Conservation
- Industrial
- Residential
- Commercial
- Community Services
- Community Services
- No Information



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	8899.94	44.01%
Commercial	116.95	0.58%
Community Service	239.02	1.18%
Industrial	89.2	0.44%
Public Service	34.18	0.17%
Recreation	29.55	0.15%
Residential	6986.7	34.55%
Unknown	347.13	1.72%
Vacant Land	3481.6	17.21%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation of rural character and associated agricultural areas while developing our base with clean commercial and industrial development. 2. Highlight the need for county transportation amenities that our residents pay for that currently do not service this part of the county. The associated cost of fuel when no other transportation resource is offered is a heavy burden on the residents of Somerset. 3. County bridge and road repair seem to be lagging the need. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a waterfront public recreational park for our residents. 2. Drainage that crosses municipal boundaries must be coordinated to meet the needs of each community. State and County drainage ditches must be kept clean to insure proper drainage of properties and roadways. 3. Shoreline erosion promises to increase if the International Joint Commission chooses to raise the lake levels in opposition to the wishes of the coastal residents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Declining stable tax base from commerce and industry. Too much dependence on one taxing entity (AES Somerset). 2. Not enough of the necessary promotion from outside of the Town of Somerset, eg. IDA, NCCED, Empire State Development Corporation. 3. The need to bring the small portion of the residents who are strongly against any development in our town into the mindset that it is necessary to survive. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Water district is the only county service available in the Town of Somerset. 2. The county does not recognize the need in Somerset as being significant enough to be worth the additional cost associated with a community far from the county services centers. 3. We do not have accessible public transportation to get to the county services. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excessive educational taxation. 2. Opening the school grounds to the community when available. 3. AES Pilot and State tax losses and the additional cuts needed at the school. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Too far away from major medical centers. 2. No local fitness centers. 3. No local major grocery shopping center 	<p>Evening police coverage.</p>

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large availability of open land and wind resource for wind plant development. 2. Waterfront access for both residential and industrial uses with the additional possibility of a port facility associated with AES Somerset. 3. Access to the Somerset Railroad rail system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Lake Ontario shoreline and all of the benefits that come along with it. 2. Large amounts of green space. 3. The close proximity to the waterfront creates steady winds that are beneficial for harvesting the power of that wind. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Available large acreage property on the Lake Ontario shoreline for companies that need waterfront access or cool clean water for their processes. 2. The Possibility of low cost power and steam access through an industrial partnership with AES for potential industrial applications. 3. Low taxes, good schools, and cheap housing and property. 	<p>There are none.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good school system at Barker Central School. 2. Many good colleges within driving distance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farming community with fresh fruits and vegetables during the harvest months. 2. Clean air and water 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local police force. 2. Large, well equipped fire and rescue department.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<p>Development while in keeping with our rural character. This can be accomplished by pursuing the types of businesses that are in keeping with our community characteristics. Companies such as microchip assembly or other clean businesses can coexist with the rural farming land use that we currently have here in Somerset.</p>	<p>Insure that we pursue the proper size wind plant for our area that can both utilize our wind assets as well as not obstructing our natural beauty.</p> <p>Create a community park on the waterfront property that has been agreed upon to be turned over to the Town from AES Somerset.</p>	<p>Pursue business that can locate in our town and utilize the many assets we have. We need to meet with the different economic development groups in NYS to insure we are being properly represented to those companies who are looking to locate in our state.</p>	<p>Encourage the County to establish a mobile services unit to bring county services out to the Town of Somerset, as well as other towns, so the residents would not have to travel the 60 – 100 mile round trip to access most community services.</p>	<p>Reduce cost at Barker Central School. Bring in additional and diverse revenue for the district. Consolidate duplicate services of the Town, Village and District.</p>		

overview

population	5,840	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	2.7 %	
avg household size:	2.63	2.45
pop/sq mi:	121.4	417.2
median age	0	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	20.0 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	13.5 %	15.4%

Population Trend

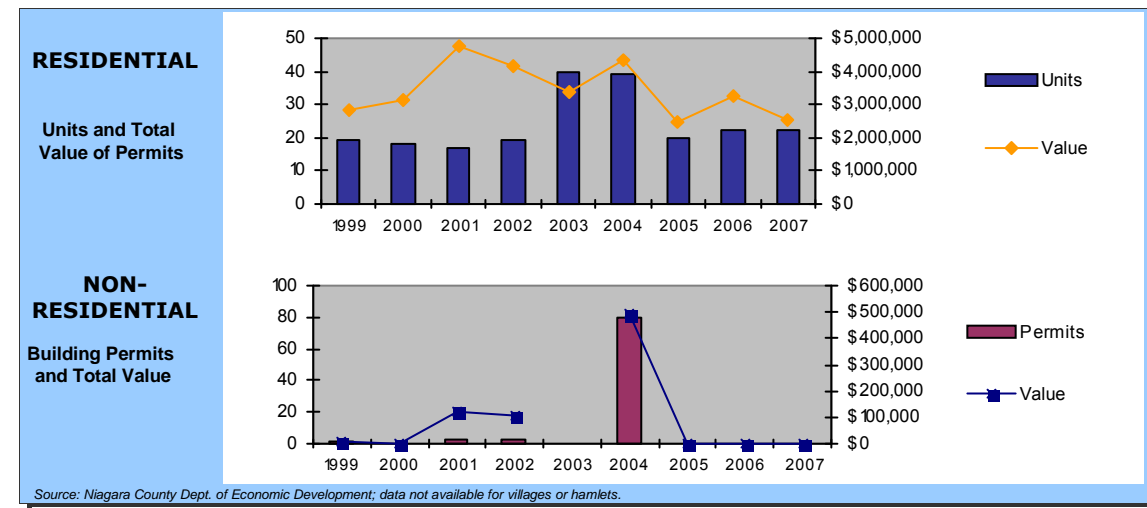
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$44,557	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$19,654	\$19,219
poverty rate:	5.24%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	31.1%	31.75%
<i>public assistance:</i>	1.6%	3.98%
<i>retirement:</i>	26.7%	23.2%
Housing units:	2,489	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	86.5	69.9%
Median year built:	1957	1954
Median home value:	\$87,400	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Newfane Central School District
Wilson Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **91%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1966	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1972	1994
ZONING MAP:	Y	1975	2006
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1994	2006
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2006	

geographic information systems (GIS)

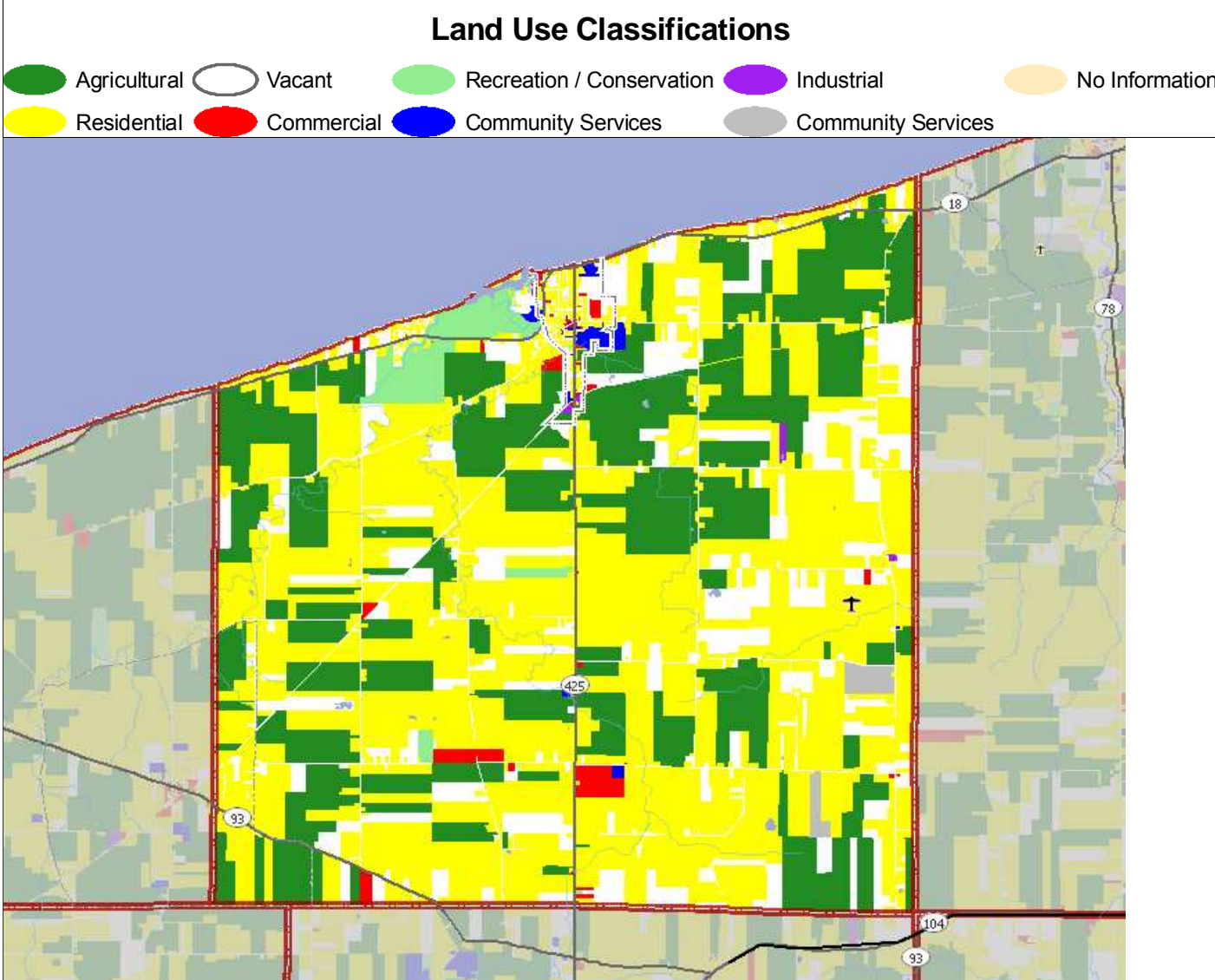
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) N

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) N/A

major employers

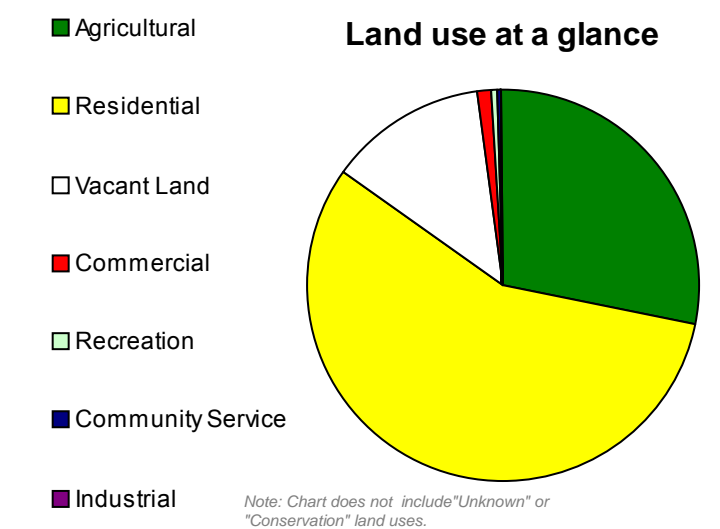
Employer	Employees
Niagara Falls Joint Air Reserve Station	2936
Pfeiffer Foods, Inc.	51 - 100
Ontario Orchards Inc.	26 - 50
KSM Group Ltd.	1 - 25
Lynx Product Group	1 - 25
Nuclear Alloys Corporation	1 - 25
Savaco, Inc.	1 - 25
Valair, Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	7501.9	28.26%
Commercial	268.61	1.01%
Community Service	57.75	0.22%
Industrial	27.43	0.10%
Public Service	164.33	0.62%
Recreation	169.97	0.64%
Residential	14867.78	56.02%
Unknown	5.21	0.02%
Vacant Land	3478.48	13.11%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Road and bridge maintenance needs to be a priority We also need to maintain our image as an agricultural community It will also be important to develop a link through public transportation with the region's cities (especially important for seniors). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Waterfront shore erosion with high water levels as well as water quality Development of regulations with regard to the use of windpower Development of a countywide ditching program 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our proximity to cities can be a challenge - especially for seniors. The distance can make it difficult to draw industrial development. Another issue is the lack of public transportation. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Financial issues are the biggest challenges with regards to education. Schools rely heavily on state aid. State mandates, declining enrollment make costs difficult on school districts. Cost of higher education (college) and the lack of local employment is creating challenges for our youth. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The transportation of hazardous waste through the area. Water quality, including runoff and our shoreline. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of programs and care for an elderly population. Lack of a county emergency management plan. With the increased time obligations and training required, it becomes difficult to maintain a volunteer fire company.

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our biggest asset is our waterfront and the opportunities to develop tourism. We have a large State park with the Seaway and Niagara Wine Trails. We also have significant amount of land still available for development. We also have an industrial corridor south of the Village on Route 425. This area lends itself to smaller industry with access to a state route. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our community is blessed by having the waterfront access provided by a State park adjacent to a picturesque harbor. Because of the significant abundance of undeveloped land, we can properly plan for development that can preserve the peaceful community we now enjoy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the Seaway and Niagara Wine Trails can significantly affect tourism The New York State Tuscarora Park property around both the east and west branch of Twelve-Mile Creek Maintaining the Agriculture District 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> We get excellent coverage from the Sheriff's Dept. and other law enforcement agencies. We have two well-trained and equipped volunteer fire companies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A strong academic program ranked highly on a regular basis at a good cost per student. Plenty of activities for our youth to participate in. Our buildings and grounds are in very good condition. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our clean rural environment is a huge asset. Active fire company programs and developing community training and health services (i.e., blood pressure testing). Fitness equipment in school buildings is open and accessible to the public Proximity to local hospitals. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a County Emergency Management Plan.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The development of a workable Master Plan/ Upgrading and updating of zoning laws. Development of sufficient sewer and water systems. 	<p>Development of a Town Plan and zoning laws to preserve these natural features.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of roads, bridges, sewer and water distribution systems Development of more service and public transportation for an aging population We feel it would be beneficial to everyone if the County would get rid of properties and business that would be better in the private sector. 	<p>Smaller and more efficient government services.</p>	<p>Maintain our high standards and expand technical programs.</p>		

overview

population	577	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	0.3 %	
avg household size:	2.73	2.45
pop/sq mi:	1,442.5	417.2
median age	36	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	24.8 %	18.7 %
pct 65 and older:	13.3 %	15.4 %

Population Trend

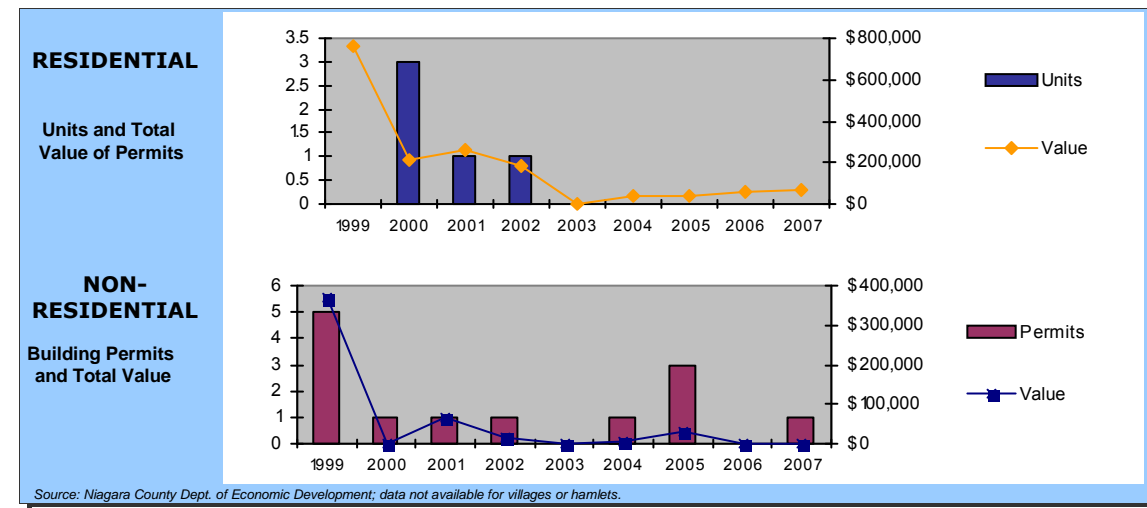
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$37,411	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$16,042	\$19,219
poverty rate:	9.65%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	37.9%	31.75%
public assistance:	2.3%	3.98%
retirement:	21.5%	23.2%
Housing units:	235	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	65.4	69.9%
Median year built:	pre-1940	1954
Median home value:	\$76,600	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Barker Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

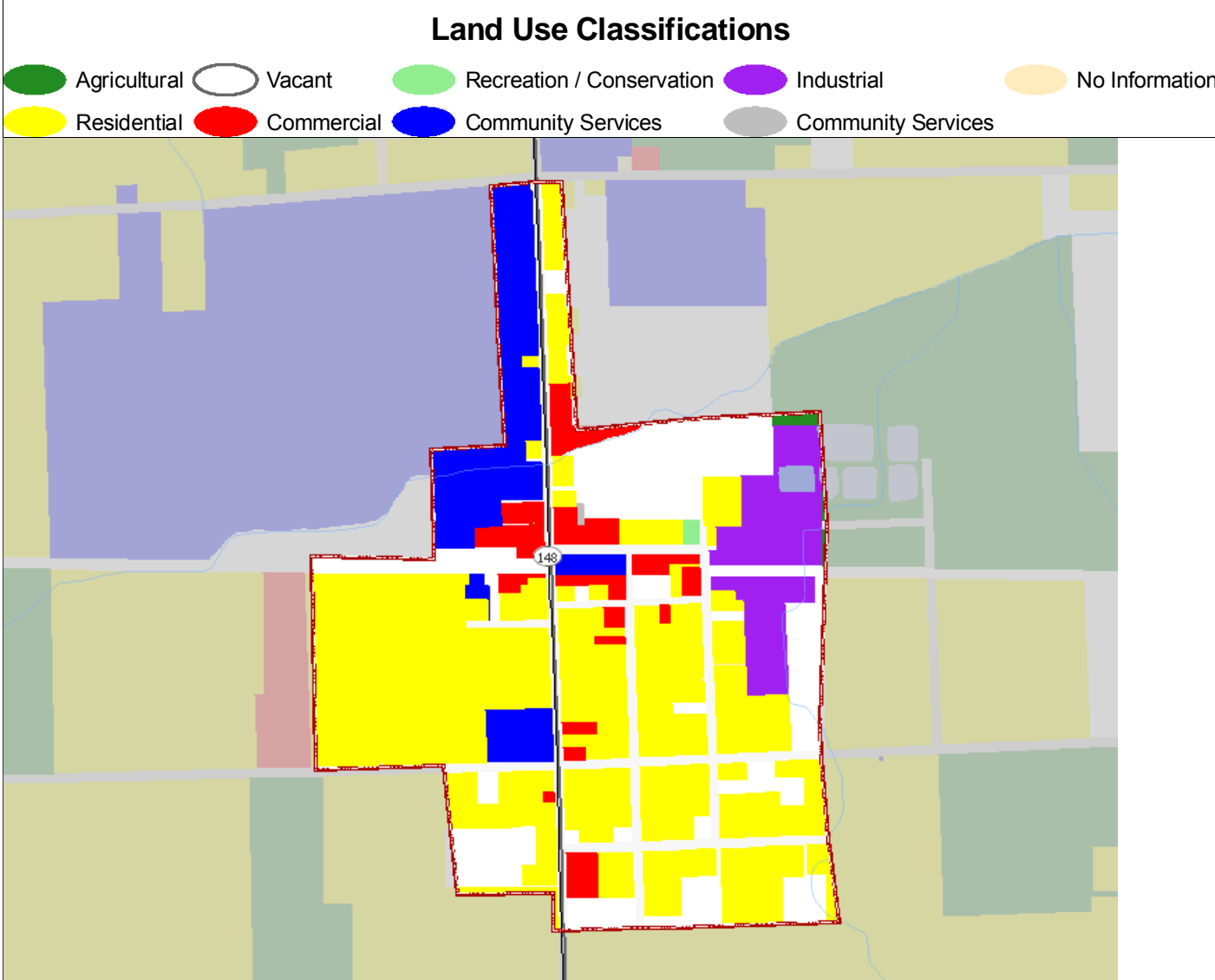
planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1972	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1958	2004
ZONING MAP:	Y	1958	2000
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	N	N/A	N/A
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		1997	

geographic information systems (GIS)

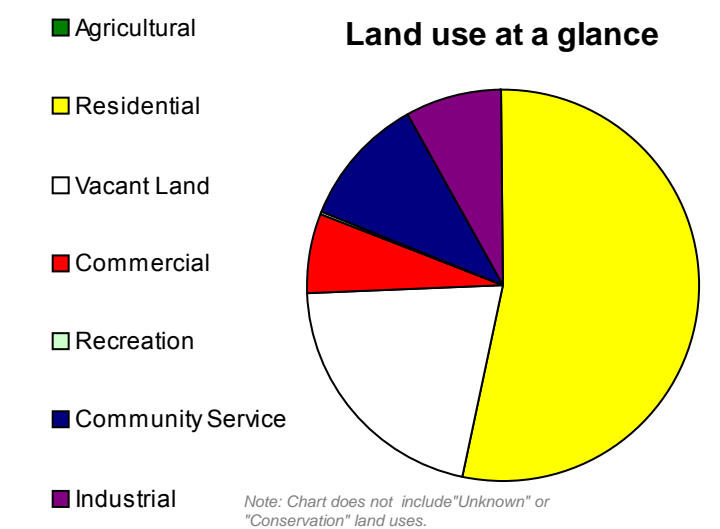
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) N

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) N/A



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Commercial	15.76	6.56%
Community Service	25.98	10.81%
Industrial	19.69	8.19%
Residential	127.45	53.02%
Vacant Land	50.78	21.13%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Redevelopment of vacant properties. Attracting business and industry to our small village. Loss of our only industry and largest water user by 50%. 2. Road improvements to support current truck traffic and to allow increased usage from a more appropriate route. 3. Replacement of our ancient water lines and drainage system to improve our residential properties as well. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Erosion of shoreline at our lake park. Sink holes in this park also. 2. Creek that passes through village needs dredging for better water flow and reduce possibility of flooding. 3. Village Park on Main Street could use improvements to ice skating rink. Paving this facility would provide year-round usage for recreation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attracting business and industry to our village. 2. Vacant businesses. 3. Support of local businesses and encouraging residents to by locally. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our greatest issue is our decrepit water system. 2. Widening and refurbishing of West Somerset Road to handle truck traffic entering the Village. 3. Uncertainty as to what County services are available to us. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barker has an excellent School district. We have experienced an increased tax burden due to the PILOT granted to AES. This has resulted in loss of Jobs. 2. As far as consolidation is concerned, it is a great distance to the next district. 3. Our local NIOGA free library struggles financially. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concern that our aging water system may contain lead 2. Ten Miles to ICMH. No doctor in the Village. 3. Need for more volunteers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are fortunate to have our local Police. We don't seem to have much coverage from the Sheriffs department. Our department is part time. If no one is on duty, we may have a long wait. 2. We are always in need of more volunteer firemen. Especially that are available during daytime hours. 3. Lack of funding to increase police hours, purchase better equipment. Especially with the proximity of the AES plant.

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rural location, low traffic volume. 2. Relatively low taxes, low cost purchasing, and excellent school system. 3. All utilities available; i.e. water, sewer, electric, gas, phone, and cable. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We Continue to offer lake Ontario access at our BiCentennial Park. Park has gazebo, picnic tables, grills and beautiful sunsets. 2. Our large Village park, located in the center of the Village on Main Street provides an excellent location for our Farmer's market and other community gatherings. 3. Our rural setting provides a lovely backdrop for biking and walking. The school has a nature trail in the Village also for walking and cross country skiing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All utilities available - water, sewer, electric, natural gas, cable and phone. 2. Attractive "downtown" Main Street area. Farmer's Market has brought in visitors from other areas. 3. Affordable pricing on available properties. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niagara County Public Works have been very helpful to us. 2. Niagara County Water District is always ready to come out to help with a problem. 3. Niagara County Health Department, as well as Treasurers Office, Real Property, Clerk's Office, Data Processing, Civil Service, Economic Development, Emergency Services, Print Shop, Risk Mgmt., Sheriff's Dept. have all been helpful. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Barker Central has had a pre-K program for many years. We also have community education and summer recreation. 2. We have an excellent campus which is continually being restored and improved. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several volunteer Emit's in our Fire Department. Access to mercy flight. Village considering a tax exemption for volunteer fireman. 2. Barker Police Department has a defibrillator and all officers have been trained to use it. 3. We have a Senior Nutrition Site at our firehall. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Barker Police Department provides coverage and "small town" service. 2. Volunteer Fire and Ambulance service with several EMT's 3. Working with entire county on Emergency Response and Disaster Mitigation.

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
The Village hopes to improve our infrastructure to attract business and light industry. Road improvements will facilitate existing truck traffic and allow increase. Working for grant funding and shared services.	The Village is always looking for more uses of our parks. We hope to construct shoreline erosion protection and provide beach access that is not available now. Revamping the ice rink and adding basketball and skateboard usage is another goal. More picnic tables and benches are also necessary.	Our Planning Board is becoming more active in encouraging economic growth. We hope to tap into County resources to help attract business to our Village. The Village owns a 7 acre parcel in an industrial Zone that we hope to market to our advantage.	Continue to communicate and work together to improve services for our residents and businesses. Increase communication.	Continue to communicate with the district residents. Continue to strive for excellence.	There has been discussion on brining and doctor and dentist into the community. Continually looking for the best method, most cost effective, of replacing waterlines.	Continue to work together with all county agencies and municipalities to share resources to provide the safest environment for our residents. To encourage better participation in these endeavors.

overview

population	1,213	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	0.6 %	
avg household size:	2.4	2.45
pop/sq mi:	1,323.0	417.2
median age	0	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.6 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	17.3 %	15.4%

Population Trend

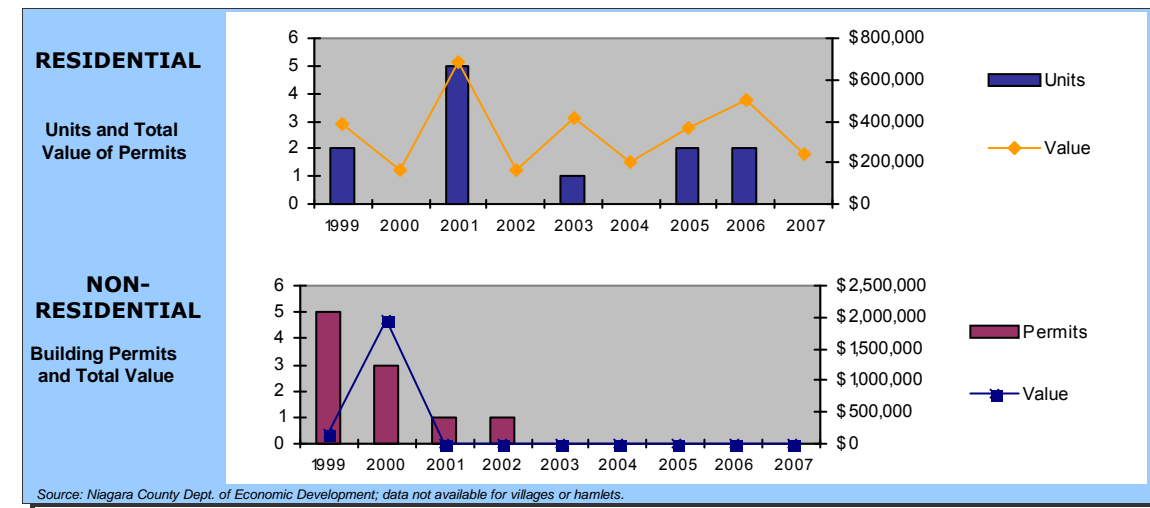
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$36,534	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$19,175	\$19,219
poverty rate:	4.55%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	30.8%	31.75%
public assistance:	2.2%	3.98%
retirement:	23.2%	23.2%
Housing units:	588	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	77.6	69.9%
Median year built:	1946	1954
Median home value:	\$81,800	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Wilson Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1966	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1970	1994
ZONING MAP:	Y	1994	N/A
LWRP:	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	N/A	N/A	N/A

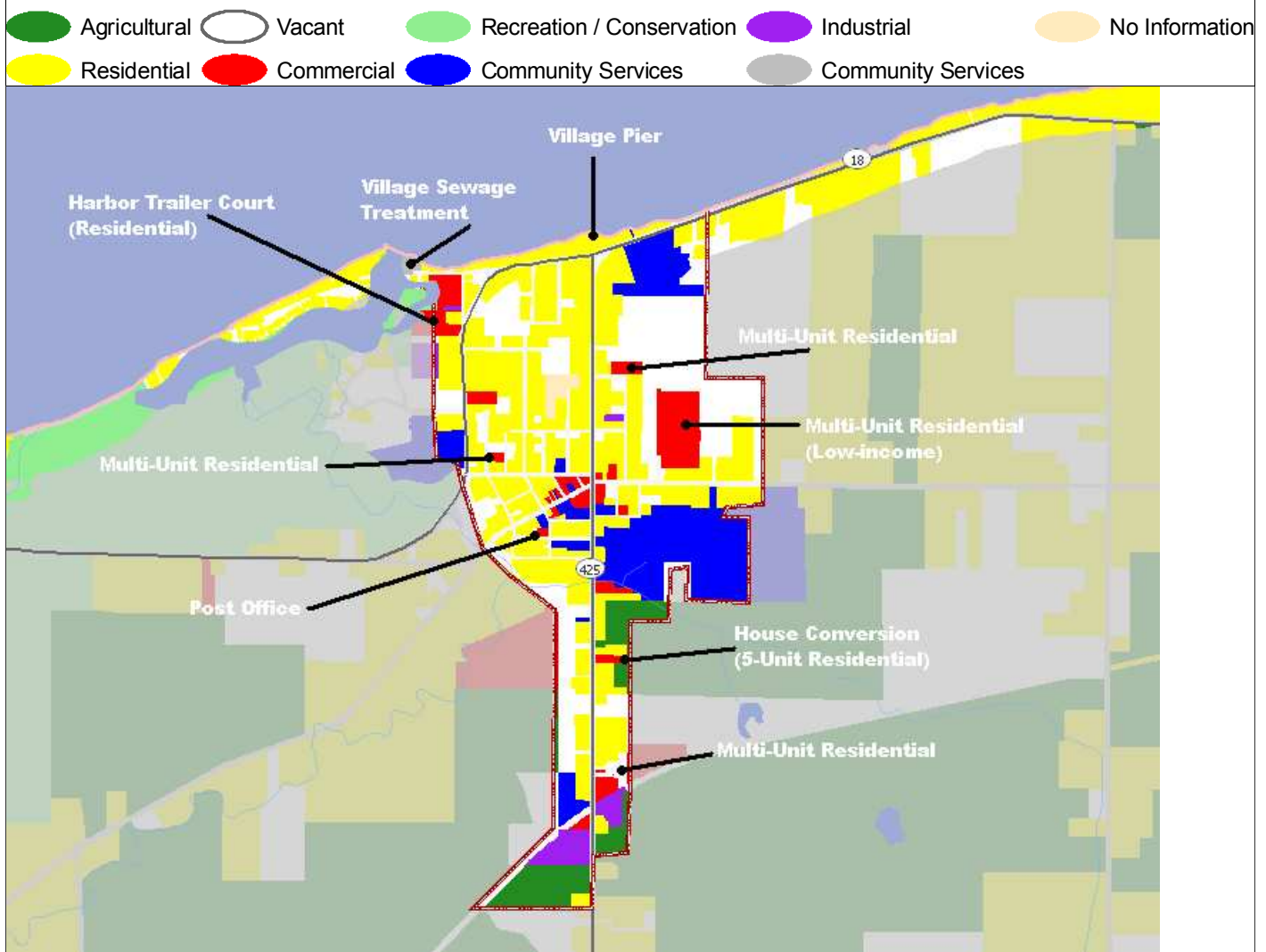
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:

geographic information systems (GIS)

USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) Y

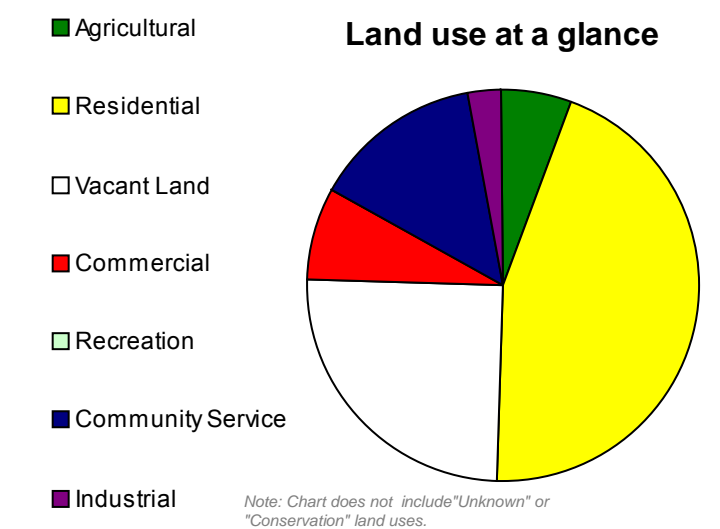
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) Y

Land Use Classifications



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	24.59	5.91%
Commercial	32.66	7.85%
Community Service	58.39	14.04%
Industrial	10.88	2.62%
Residential	182.05	43.77%
Unknown	4.2	1.01%
Vacant Land	103	24.77%



Issues and Assets

land use

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues and challenges

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

1. Outside (Town uses) influencing Village.
2. The village's primary commercial corridor is not being used to its full potential.
3. Inattention to building and zoning codes: properties in violation hurt the community.
4. Fractured commercial districts.
5. Infrastructure and streetscape.
6. Creek access.
7. Sewage treatment plant sited at harbor gateway.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

1. Location, Location, Location: Village is perceived as too far away from major cities.
2. Accessibility: commercial traffic cannot use the Robert Moses Parkway or Lake Ontario State Parkway.
3. High taxes
4. Fractured development: three centers for development - Harbor, Central, Station
5. Beautiful harbor, but only public ownership is State Park area.
6. No village "center" - no public park area in the central commercial district that the business community can get around and use for events.
7. Conversion of homes to rental units leading to reduction in owner investments and loss of property value.
8. Parking: landscaping / renovations to parking lots.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- County facilities are minimal, other than roads.
- Young Street is a County road, making it harder to implement the Village's ideas for improvements to the road.
- Lack of County services is a definite problem: transportation, aging, distance to County offices are all issues.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Tax levy is a problem: the community is basically poor, but taxes are high. School district has been building/remodeling facilities for 12 years. School system is up-to-date, but costs weigh on property owners.
- Administrative functions have multiplied in recent decades, while population shrinks.
- School facilities include elementary and middle/high schools. Three gymnasiums, improved auditorium, exercise facility, athletic fields and facilities. Facilities are geared for school use - missing opportunities for cross-use.
- Library is a strong community asset. Relies on on-street parking.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):

- no volunteer fire company in village, one in town.
- Ambulance services is busy.
- Two boats for water rescue.
- Mandated training and equipment requirements cause serious problems for volunteers.
- Support for fire protection comes from contracts with town and village, but greater transparency is needed in budgeting process.
- Police coverage (Sheriff / State Police) is poor, w/lack of consistent personnel. Leads to lack of community policing.

assets and opportunities

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Future planning should continue creating a walkable community.
- We need some form of Historic Preservation commission tied in with the Planning Board, which needs to have a greater ability to assist with design and aesthetics.
- Park access along creek for fishing / low-impact recreation.
- Update Master Plan
- Do not dissolve Village.
- Consider annexing additional Town land into Village.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Economic incentive zone for retail core
- Return commercial/retail use to Central Commercial District
- Provide easy access to "Main Street" façade improvement grants and other programs.
- Build on historic heritage in development/rehabilitation projects.
- Greater commercial/retail activity.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Joint County/Village/Town plan for Young Street, including streetscape design, aesthetics and drainage.
- Improve/add County services. Satellite office?

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Town Historian - full-time, paid position
- Add hours to Historical Society Museum
- Intermunicipal partnership to develop an indoor pool for year-round school/public use.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):

- Improve connections between residents and State / County police
- Redesign parking lots with pedestrian safety and accessibility in mind.
- Enforce health and safety code for housing

POPULATION

Municipality	1990	2000	2008	2030*
City of Lockport	24,426	22,279	21,033	22,518
Town of Cambria	4,779	5,393	5,462	6,084
Town of Lockport	16,696	19,653	20,340	26,879
Town of Pendleton	9,010	6,050	6,312	6,550
South Lockport CDP	7,112	8,552		
Hamlet of Rapids	1,162	1,356		
SUB-REGION	50,811	53,375	53,069	63,725

*2030 Projections from SIBERTIC; only available for Cities and Towns

NIAGARA COMMUNITIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CENTRAL COMMUNITIES

...Hamlets of Rapids and South Lockport, City of Lockport, Towns of Cambria, Lockport and Pendleton.

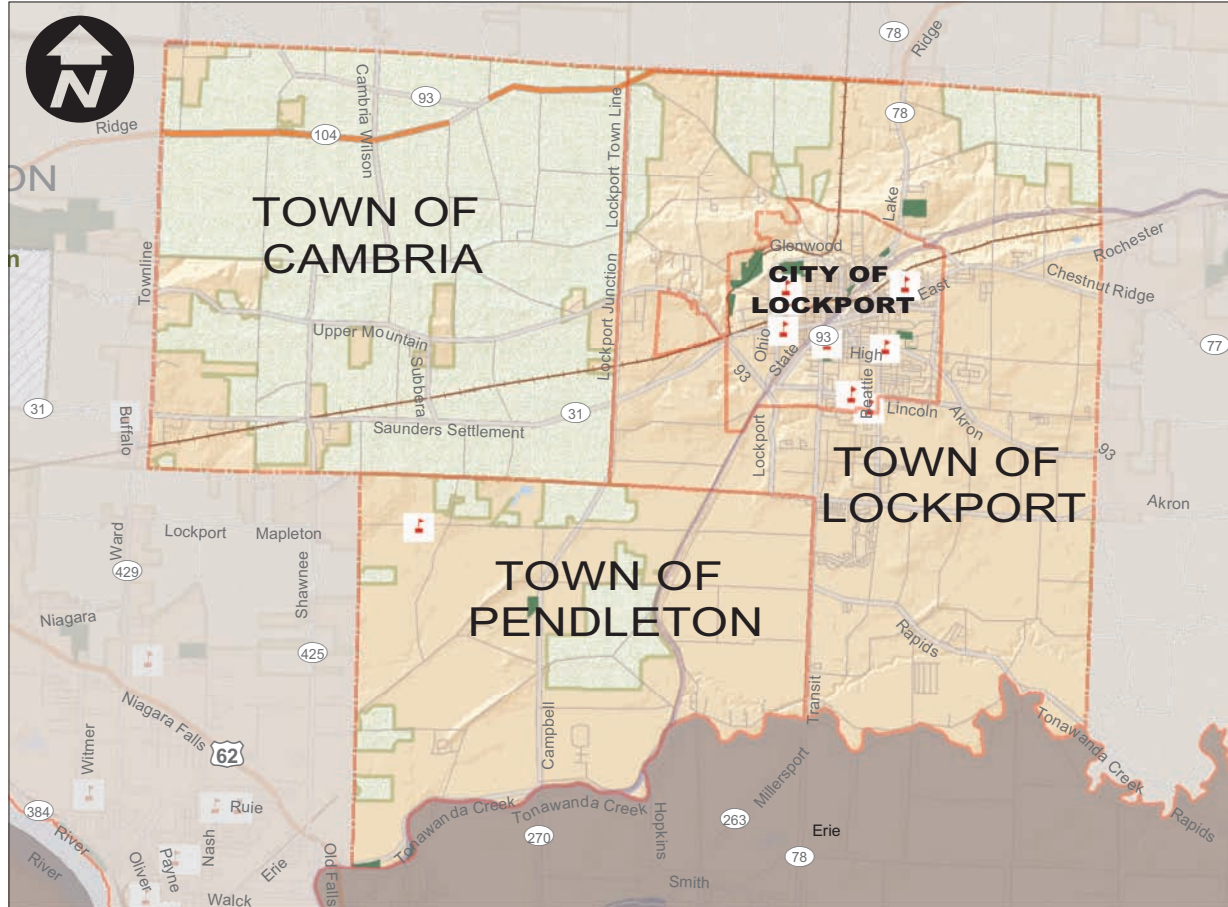


AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural Districts by Town			
Town Name	Acreage	Percent of Town	
Cambria	21861	86.00%	
Lockport	3516	12.00%	
Pendleton	2474	14.00%	
TOTAL	27,851	38%	



RAILS-TO-TRAILS IN PENDLETON



Legend

- Hospital
- Erie Canal
- Schools
- Public Lands
- Agricultural Districts

Community Boundaries

- Cambria
- Lockport
- Pendleton
- Villages

EDUCATION

Lockport City	04 - '05	05 - '06	06 - '07
Avg. Class Size	18	18	n/a
K-12 Teachers	459	452	471
K-12 Capacity	6800	6800	5469
K-12 Enrollment	5225	5225	5169
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 12,486.00		
Starpoint Central	04 - '05	05 - '06	06 - '07
Avg. Class Size	23	22	n/a
K-12 Teachers	212	219.4	221
K-12 Capacity	3845	1795	n/a
K-12 Enrollment	2859	2884	2822
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 12,000.00		
Niagara County Community College	04 - '05	05 - '06	06 - '07
Enrollment	6587	6538	6100
Full-Time Faculty	135	132	117
Part-Time Faculty	164	201	222

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

Employer	# of Employees (Range)
Delphi Thermal	2251 - 2850
Allvac, An Allegheny Technologies Company	101 - 250
Candlelight Cabinetry	101 - 250
LaFarge North America	101 - 250
Metal Cladding	101 - 250
Pivot Punch Corporation	101 - 250
Diversified Manufacturing Company, Inc.	51 - 100
Gooding Company, Inc.	51 - 100
Jamestown Container Corporation	51 - 100
Mac's Antique Auto Parts, Inc.	51 - 100
Milward Alloys, Inc.	51 - 100
Philpac Corp.	51 - 100
Vanchlor Company, Inc.	51 - 100
Barry Steel Fabrication, Inc.	26 - 50
Bison Bag, Inc.	26 - 50
E & R Machine, Inc.	26 - 50
Excel Logistics	26 - 50
Kistner Concrete Products, Inc.	26 - 50
Niagara Fiberboard	26 - 50
Van DeMark Chemical, Inc.	26 - 50

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Industrial and Business Directory 2008

The Central Region is characterized by a central urban center within the City of Lockport that offers a mix of government, office, small business, commercial, residential and services. Surrounding towns are experiencing varying degrees of development, ranging from Lockport, the most developed, to Cambria and Pendleton, with less development and more intact open space resources. The City of Lockport should be encouraged as the government seat for the County, with adjacent support facilities and support services in the Town of Lockport. Concentrated nodal development should be encouraged along the NYS Route 31 corridor in Cambria and the Campbell Road and Transit Road corridors in Pendleton, with conservation of surrounding open space resources, especially in northern portions of Cambria and Lockport along the Niagara Escarpment.



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



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overview

population	22,279	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	10.1 %	
avg household size:	2.33	2.45
pop/sq mi:	2,560.8	417.2
median age	36	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.8 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	14.3 %	15.4%

Population Trend

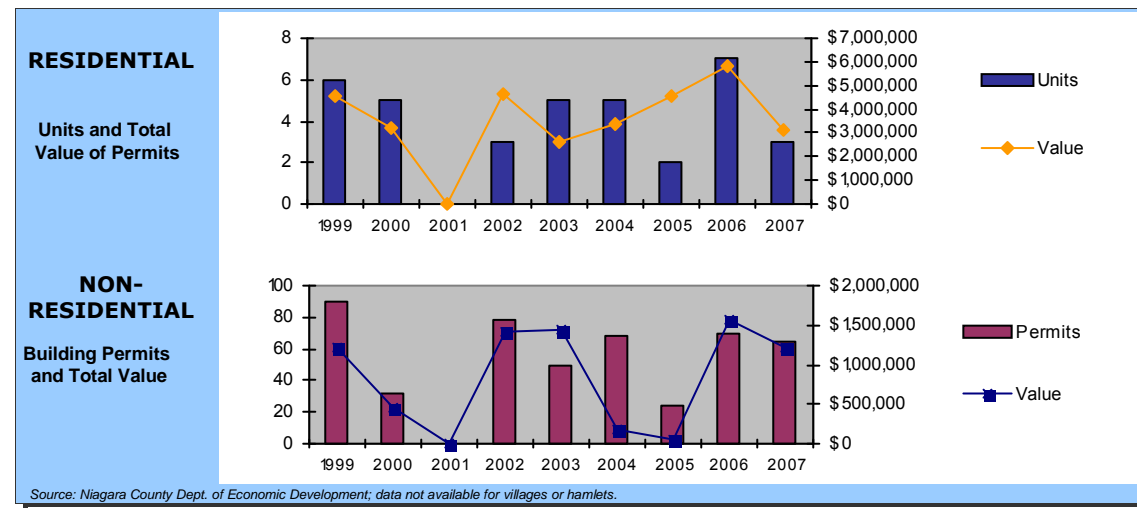
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$35,222	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$19,620	\$19,219
poverty rate:	13.32%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
<i>Social Security:</i>	28.2%	31.75%
<i>public assistance:</i>	4.2%	3.98%
<i>retirement:</i>	22.6%	23.2%
Housing units:	10,341	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	56.6	69.9%
Median year built:	pre-1940	1954
Median home value:	\$69,300	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

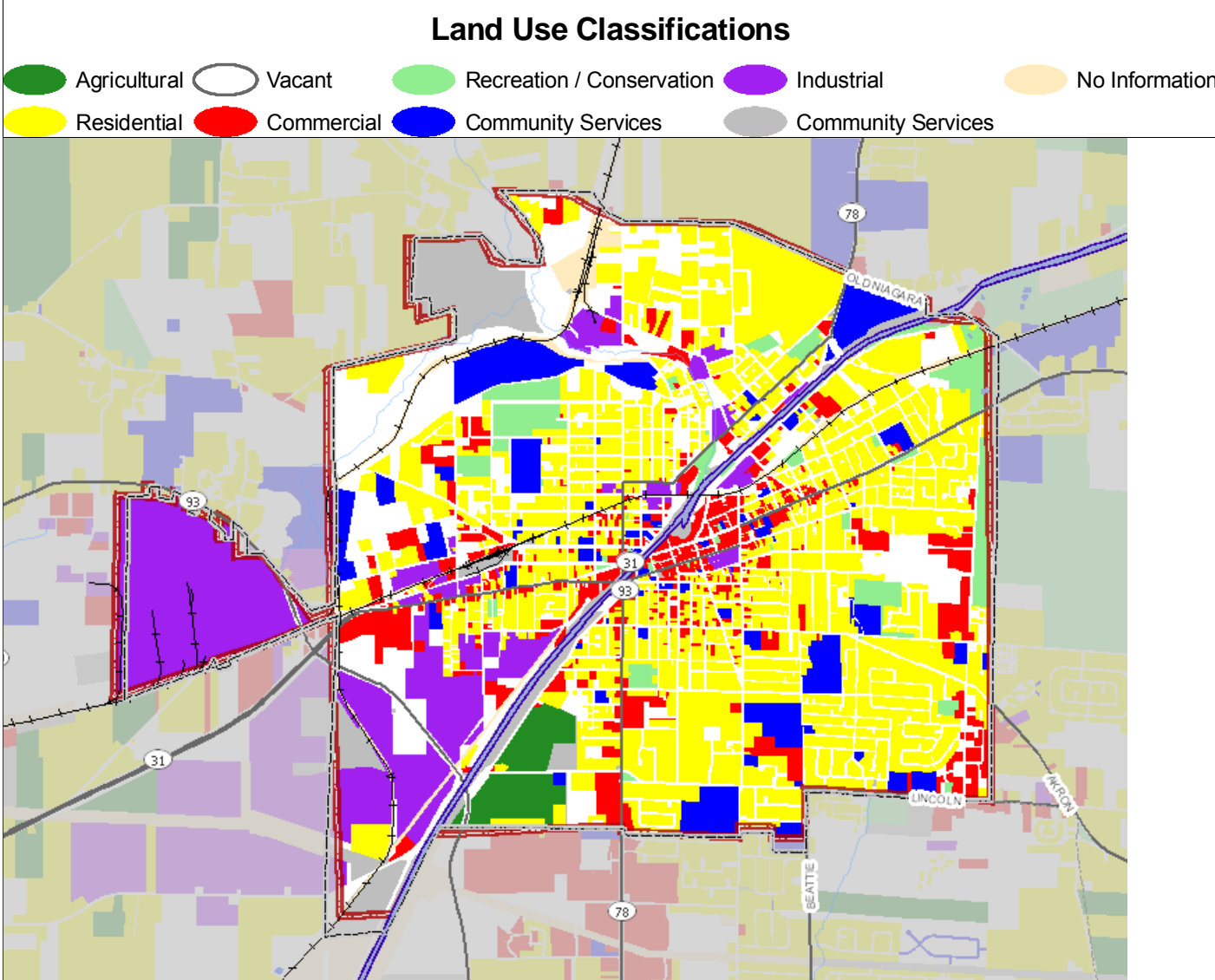
Newfane Central School District
Lockport City School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **0%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1998	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1984	2004
ZONING MAP:	Y	1984	1998
LWRP:	Y	In draft form	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1971	1991
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?			
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:			
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		Y	



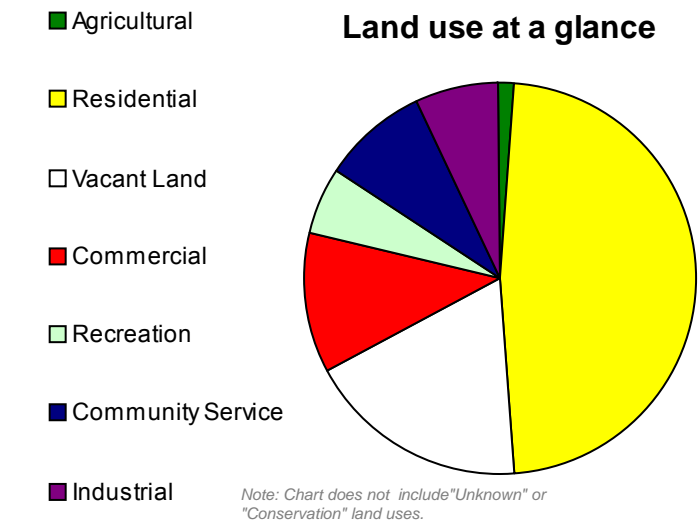
major employers

Employer	Employees
Delphi Thermal	2600
Lockport City School District	730
Candlelight Cabinetry	120
Jamestown Container Corporation	120
Allvac, An Allegheny Technologies Company	101 - 250
LaFarge North America	101 - 250
Metal Cladding	101 - 250
Diversified Manufacturing Company, Inc.	51 - 100
Milward Alloys, Inc.	51 - 100
Vanchlor Company, Inc.	51 - 100
Barry Steel Fabrication, Inc.	26 - 50
E & R Machine, Inc.	26 - 50
Niagara Fiberboard	26 - 50
Van DeMark Chemical, Inc.	26 - 50

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	47.81	1.31%
Commercial	421.24	11.50%
Community Service	320.78	8.76%
Industrial	246.28	6.73%
Parks & Conservation	5.34	0.15%
Public Service	33.89	0.93%
Recreation	199.85	5.46%
Residential	1699.22	46.40%
Unknown	38.76	1.06%
Vacant Land	648.57	17.71%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loss of Industrial Tax Base and industrial jobs 2. Aging Infrastructure 3. Lack of developable land 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contaminated property 2. Potential upgrade of 18 Mile Creek from Class D, which will require upgrade of Wastewater Treatment facilities 3. Tightening of Federal & State regulations of the elimination of combined sewer outfalls 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State of Economy <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Taxes are a disincentive to development – property tax rate is too high •The overabundance of education related taxes (schools taxes) – Town of Cambria, for example, has 5 school districts, 5 in Town of Lockport •Municipalities paying other municipalities for services, i.e., water treatment •An aging infrastructure: gas, water, sewer, etc. •The challenges faced due to the loss of people in the County •The need for "shovel ready sites" vs. the red tape, bureaucracy and delays in getting projects done in New York State, especially compared to other states 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. County does very little in the way of providing services to City versus towns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rising cost of college tuition 2. School Taxes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rising Costs of providing medical care to employees 2. Lack of medical insurance for working poor 3. Aging Population 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost of Providing Public Safety services 2. Cost of NOT providing Public safety Services 3. declining Tax Base

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Location (proximity to Buffalo, Niagara Falls & Toronto) 2. Affordable Housing 3. Established Industrial Facilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niagara Escarpment 2. Waterways – 18 Mile Creek and the Erie Barge Canal 3. Network of Municipal Parkland 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affordable Housing 2. Greater Lockport Development Corporation 3. Community Development Programs -- 1st time homebuyers -- Home Improvement program 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niagara County Community College – Corporate Training Center 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niagara County Community College – Corporate Training Center 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City owned and operated Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities and Compost Facility 2. Lockport Memorial Hospital 3. Lockport Fire Department - EMS 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Police Departments 2. Paid Fire Department with EMS 3. Increased Staff in Building Inspection Department

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
					<p>Maintain a cooperative relationship with the County for emergency water service versus the county installing more water lines</p>	

overview

population	5,393	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	2.5 %	
avg household size:	2.7	2.45
pop/sq mi:	134.8	417.2
median age	39	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	19.9 %	18.7 %
pct 65 and older:	13.6 %	15.4 %

Population Trend

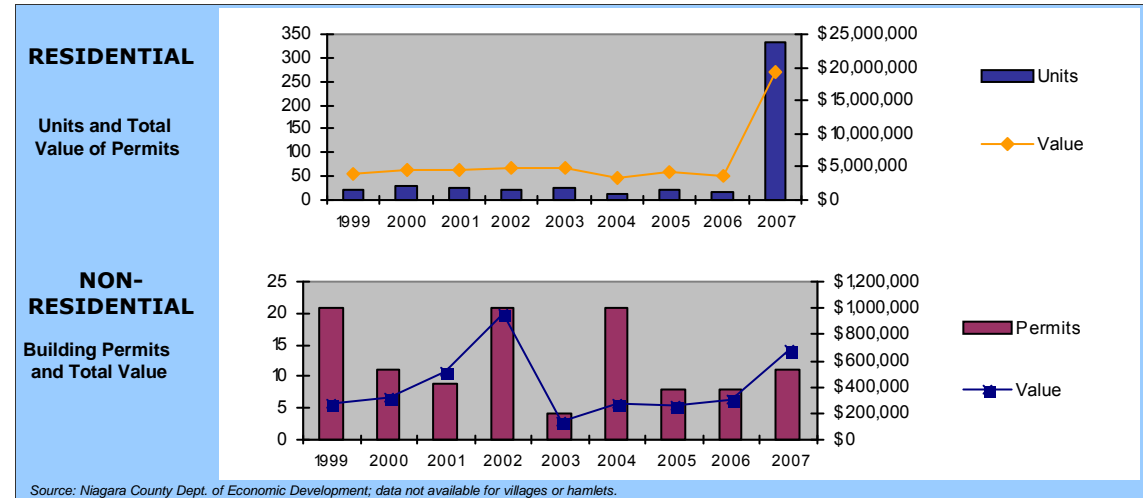
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$46,534	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$20,397	\$19,219
poverty rate:	5.11%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	33.0%	31.75%
public assistance:	1.4%	3.98%
retirement:	26.1%	23.2%
Housing units:	2,066	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	82.3	69.9%
Median year built:	1965	1954
Median home value:	\$108,600	\$80,900

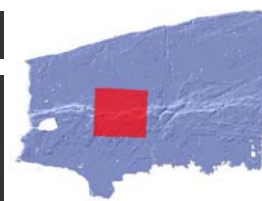
Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Newfane Central School District
- Wilson Central School District
- Lockport City School District
- Starpoint Central School District
- Niagara Wheatfield Central School District



agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **86%**

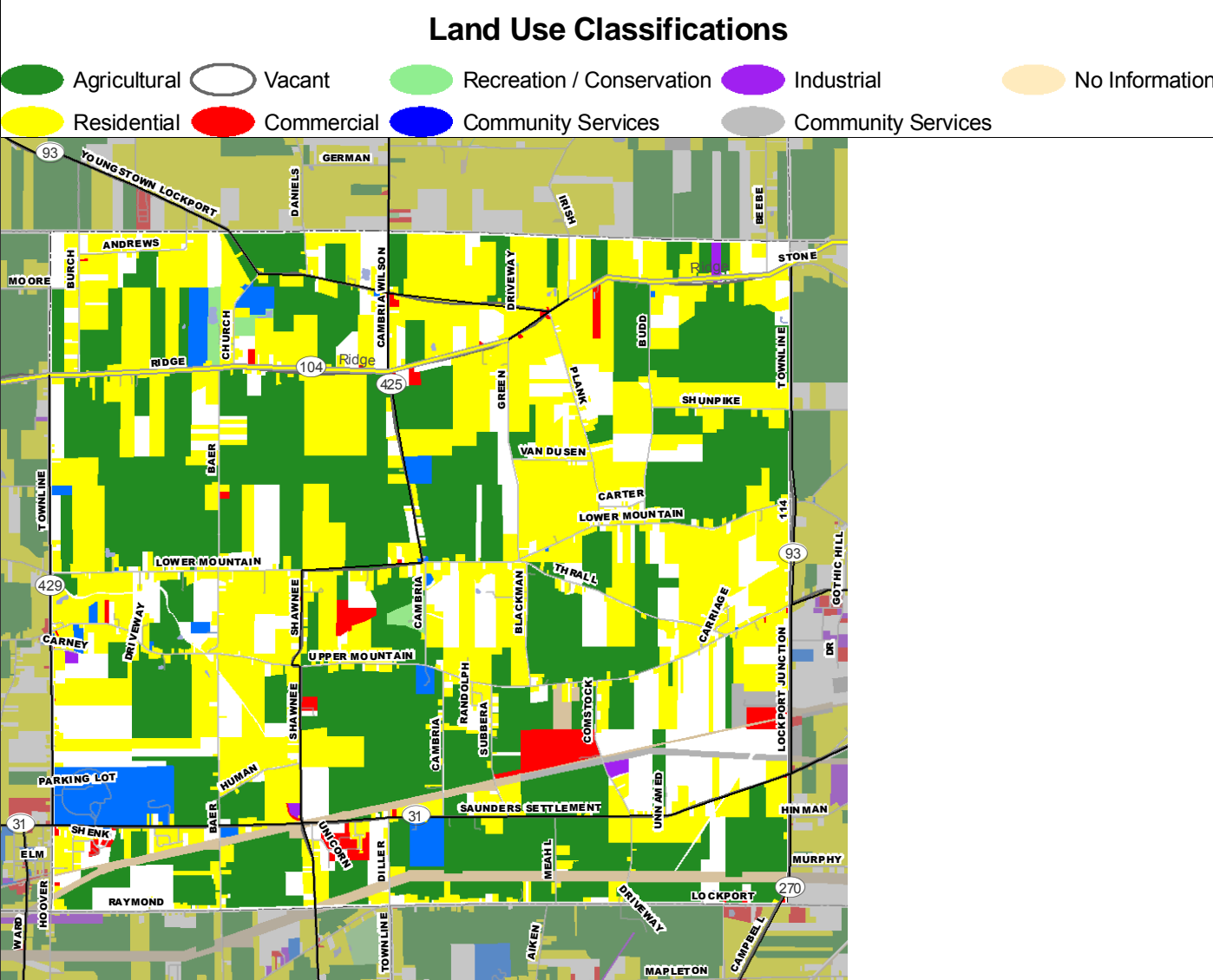
planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1965	1997
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1939	2004
ZONING MAP:	Y	1939	2004
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1965	2007
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2002	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Initial stages
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		N	

major employers

Employer	Employees
Niagara County Community College	713
Orleans/Niagara BOCES	195
Buffalo Machine & Tool of Niagara Inc.	1 - 25
Cambria Contracting Inc.	1 - 25
EMPRO Niagara	1 - 25
Faery's Nursery	1 - 25
Franklin Traffic	1 - 25
Junction Road Recycling, Inc.	1 - 25
Outdoor Equipment Distributors Inc.	1 - 25
Towne Building Systems	1 - 25

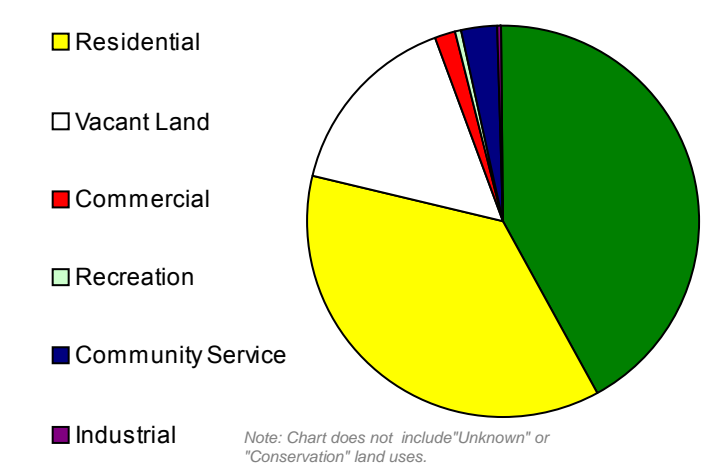
Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	9656.17	40.81%
Commercial	387.4	1.64%
Community Service	698.6	2.95%
Industrial	52.45	0.22%
Public Service	154.96	0.65%
Recreation	122.57	0.52%
Residential	8467.79	35.79%
Unknown	486.24	2.06%
Vacant Land	3633.92	15.36%

Land use at a glance



Issues and Assets

land use

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues and challenges

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Agriculture shall be emphasized as the primary land use, available for conversion into other uses; these uses should be sympathetic to the remaining agricultural interests and practices.
- The areas that have the most potential for higher density residential development are those within reach of the sanitary sewers south of Route 31. This area also features some retail and service commercial activity complementary to residential growth.
- The escarpment area has the greatest potential for supporting the most expensive and most desirable residential properties. Views to the north, variations in topography, large trees and cliff edge position make this area especially unique and attractive for high end residential development.
- Commercial development has the most chance of success if it can be located near existing commercial uses, is closest to the largest populated areas and can take advantage of public resources: roads, sewers, water gas and communications. Portions of Route 31 from Sanborn to Campbell Blvd. meet this criteria and it has the strongest potential for supporting successful commercial development.
- Industrial development is a minor activity in the town. Some lands have been planned for industrial uses as evidenced by lands currently zoned Industrial use along the Conrail railroad in the southeast part of the Town. The Town does not have an Industrial Park with infrastructure in place.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- There are several new businesses opening and existing businesses expanding in Town
- The Niagara Wine Trail offers opportunities for the growth and expansion of existing wineries, and the potential for new businesses.
- The presence of Educational Facilities in Town, Niagara County Community College and Erie Niagara BOCES not only offer employment opportunities, they also work closely with local employers to provide educational programs and advanced technical training that meet the needs of the workforce.
- There are several vacant parcels in Town that are zoned for business development.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
Generally satisfied with County provided services

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Increase shared services between the five (5) school districts and the Town for providing recreational programs.
- Encourage joint use of Town and School facilities for Community events and programs.
- Niagara County Community College and Orleans/Niagara BOCES are major employers in Town, and continued growth and expansion will provide employment opportunities.
- Encourage continued cooperation between local businesses and Niagara County Community College to provide programs that meet the technical training required by future and existing employees.
- Encourage continued support and cooperation between the Town and Niagara County Community College.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):

- The Town is generally satisfied with law enforcement support provided by the Sheriff and State Police.
- Other departments within the County government have provided adequate support as needed.
- Funding of volunteer fire companies and ambulance services is becoming increasingly difficult due primarily to state mandated requirements.
- Enhanced mutual aid between neighboring volunteer fire companies could possibly reduce the need for duplicate equipment.

assets and opportunities

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- The Town has developed and is implementing land conservation methodology which permits agriculture to continue but does not completely prohibit the development of residential uses.
- Overlay districts may be created to guide the development of non-agricultural (residential) uses in the most unique agricultural areas. The purpose would be to safeguard the most agriculturally productive and unique soils from consumption by non-agricultural uses which could just as well locate elsewhere in the Town.
- The Town has adopted an updated zoning ordinance to regulate nine different land use classifications as recommended in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
- An escarpment district was created to specifically establish regulations that will allow for the orderly development of this unique area while at the same time strive to minimize the environmental impacts and preserve the natural beauty for all to enjoy.
- Commercial land uses were primarily established along portions of the Route 31 corridor from Sanborn to Campbell Boulevard and an area along Lockport Road in the southeast corner of Town. The Town continues to support and encourage further commercial development in this area.
- Access to sanitary sewers from the interior portions of industrial zoned area will be possible with the construction of service laterals to the main line at Comstock Road. Construction may be coordinated with concurrent Industrial development when service is required.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Continue to promote and encourage the development and expansion of existing and new businesses in Town.
- Promote and foster the enhancement of the Niagara Wine Trail
- Expand and promote the educational opportunities at Niagara County Community College and Erie Niagara BOCES.
- Continue to expand the infrastructure required to support commercial development

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
Generally satisfied with County provided services

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- All school districts have outstanding performance scores, and quality educational facilities enhance community growth and quality of life issues.
- Promote and encourage additional shared services between the five (5) school districts.
- As evidenced by the successful Bi-Centennial Celebration, the Town would like to continue the strong relationship it has developed with Niagara County Community College.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):

- Evaluate and study the cost/benefit ratio of the state mandated training requirements and the impact on the local tax rate.
- Work to improve better communication between neighboring volunteer fire companies in an effort to enhance mutual aid and possibly reduce the need to duplicate specialized equipment.

overview

population	20,240	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	8.9%	
avg household size:	2.52	2.45
pop/sq mi:	436.7	417.2
median age	37	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	18.7%	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	11.9%	15.4%

Population Trend

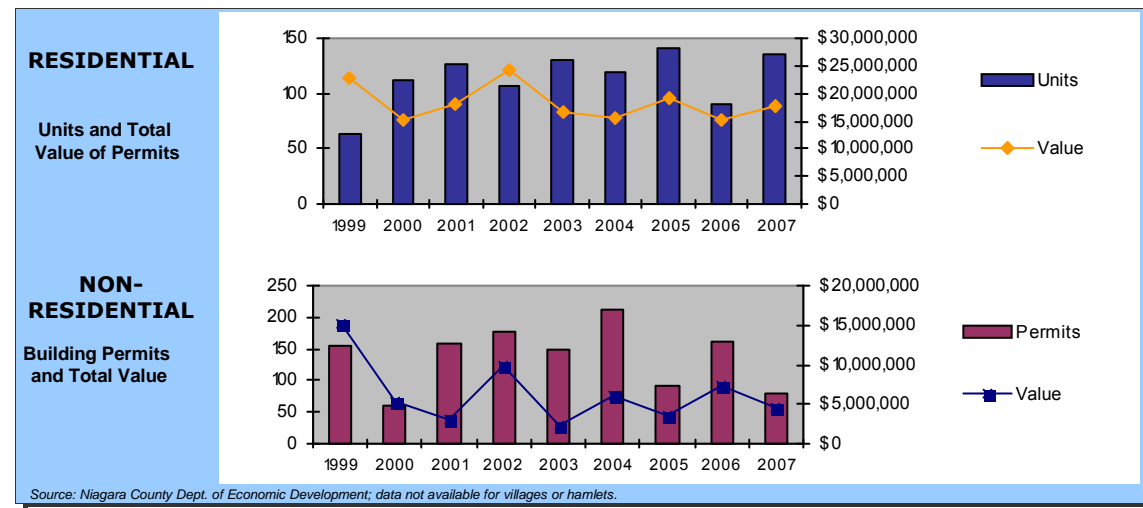
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$45,977	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$22,194	\$19,219
poverty rate:	7.70%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	25.4%	31.75%
public assistance:	2.4%	3.98%
retirement:	21.5%	23.2%
Housing units:	8,059	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	77.8	69.9%
Median year built:	1980	1954
Median home value:	\$85,300	\$80,900

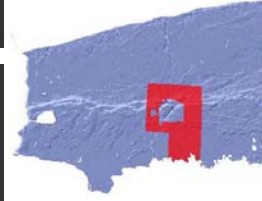
Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Newfane Central School District
- Royalton-Hartland Central School District
- Lockport City School District
- Starpoint Central School District
- Akron Central School District



agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **12%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1963	1997
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1961	2005
ZONING MAP:	Y	1961	2008
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1965	2003

CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY? **Included within Zoning Code**

CELL TOWER REGS DATE: 2005

geographic information systems (GIS)

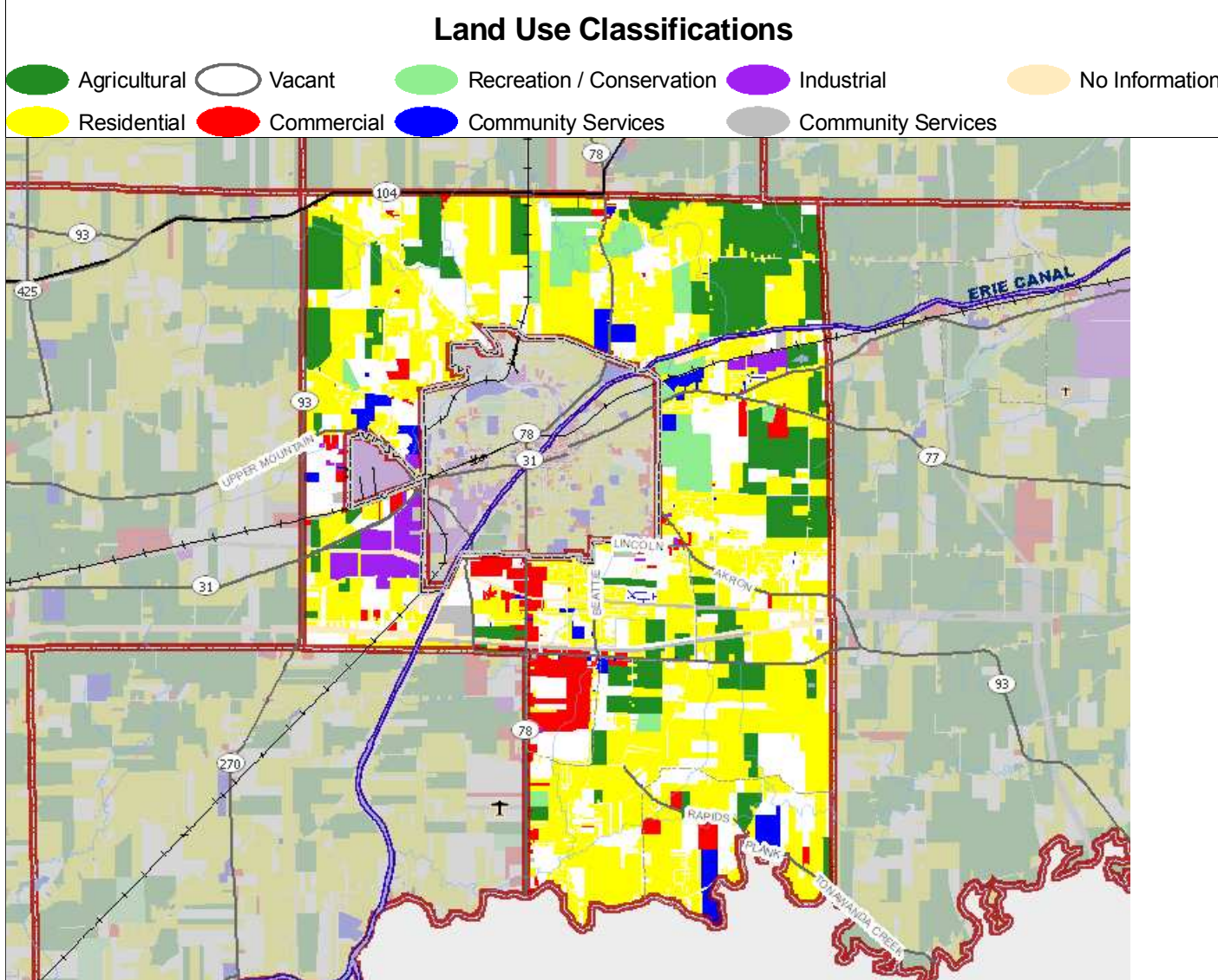
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) Y

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) Y

major employers

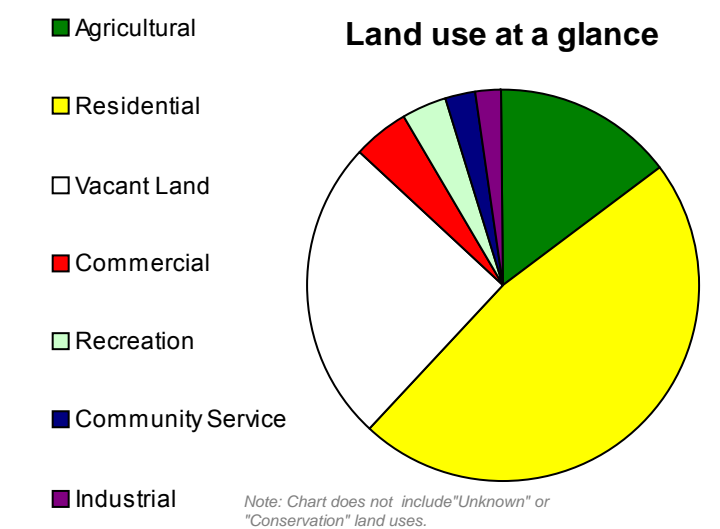
Employer	Employees
Lockport City School District	730
First Niagara Bank	677
Wal-Mart	365
Tops Market	225
Home Depot	124
NYSDOT	71
Bison Bag, Inc.	65
Excel Logistics	64
Cornerstone FCU	100
Gooding Company, Inc.	51 - 100
NYSEG	50
Kistner Concrete Products, Inc.	26 - 50

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	3624.84	14.27%
Commercial	1155.81	4.55%
Community Service	624.4	2.46%
Industrial	546.6	2.15%
Parks & Conservation	253.36	1.00%
Public Service	369.39	1.45%
Recreation	863.48	3.40%
Residential	11292.45	44.44%
Unknown	586.11	2.31%
Vacant Land	6093.250	23.98%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining infrastructure, fix aging infrastructure and expand infrastructure as community grows. (Water/sewer) Bridge maintenance and repair. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i> Vision of growth since 1962 when first Comprehensive Plan put in place. •Denser development occurring in the SE sector of Town – subdivision development pressure. •Impacts to wetlands and floodplains •Agricultural lands remaining in some areas of the Town. •Re-development and new development occurring in Transit Road corridor. •Strong infrastructure system.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Unfunded state/federal mandates. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> National economy <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Transit North Initiative – involving communities of Lockport (City), Lockport (Town) and Pendleton •Retail development •Town of Lockport IDA established in 1983. Assists in job creation and retention, which currently totals 340 jobs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The perception that consolidation will make government more efficient. Poor communications between legislators - supervisors. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Sheriff Dept / Jail •Highway Dept. •Niagara County Water •Transportation •Service sharing</p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Pedestrian connections to schools •Coordination of Town growth initiatives with changing needs of the schools: families, programs, number of classrooms, etc. •Brain drain</p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i> •Traffic congestion on Transit Road •Cleanup of brownfields •Trails and pathway opportunities •Flooding issues •Aging population</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> County emergency services are not ready for an emergency. We need to hold a live drill at least 1 time per year. Turn off power and see what works.

What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inexpensive land for development. Infrastructure growth capacity. Government willing to work with developers to encourage quality growth. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i> •To guide the growth and development of the Town •To ensure land uses in accordance with the character of the District •Provide for orderly and beneficial growth and provide public facilities and services, with parks and greenspace planning •Assistance with farmland protection</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Canal Niagara Escarpment Agriculture/farming - more agri-tourism 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> WNY stigmatism as rust belt - poor - snowbound <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Transit North Historic (Heritage) Corridor – market / promote and develop similar design guidelines and objectives by the three participating communities •Destination gateway to Niagara County, and recognize this marketing area •Have a robust Town of Lockport IDA to promote job growth in the manufacturing sector.</p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Coordinate efforts with a regional approach •County bus service/van service (better use of NFTA) •Balance of urban, suburban and rural vitality</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cut school property taxes in half. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i> •Generation planning •Utilization of information technology</p>	<p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Public Health & Safety):</i> •Develop facilities for all age groups •Trails, pathways and connectivity implementations •Day Road Park improvements / soccer fields •John Austin Nature Park Trail improvements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> NYS Police

Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Transit North: Themed historic retail shopping district New IDA Director with Supervisor leading development. 	<p>Expanding parks Building bikepaths/walkways</p>	<p>Securing money for commercial corridor infrastructure. 25 million needed.</p>				

overview

population	6,050	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	2.8 %	
avg household size:	2.85	2.45
pop/sq mi:	224.1	417.2
median age	39	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	21.7 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	11.4 %	15.4%

Population Trend

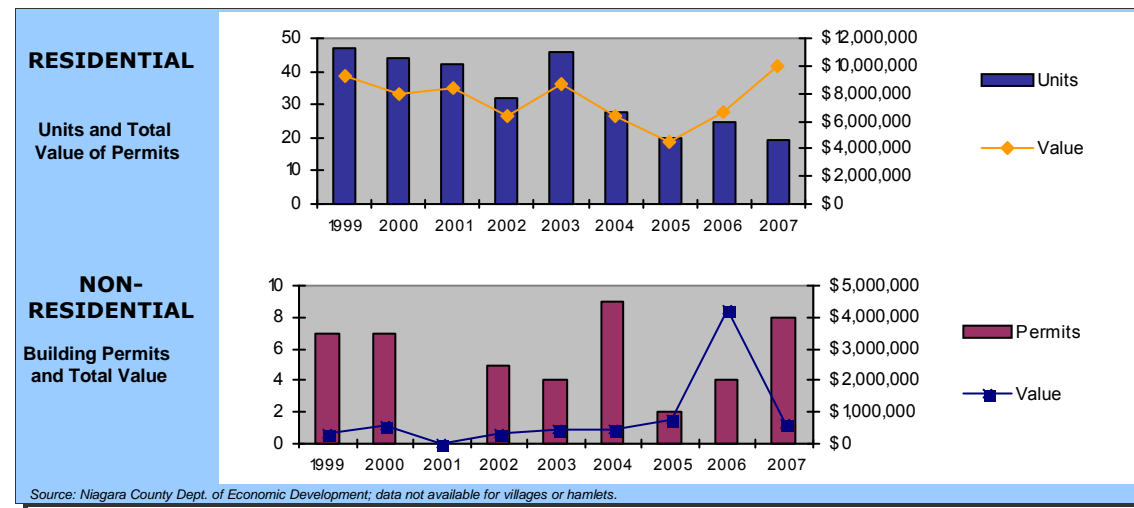
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$60,625	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$23,651	\$19,219
poverty rate:	4.67%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	25.6%	31.75%
public assistance:	1.7%	3.98%
retirement:	22.9%	23.2%
Housing units:	2,162	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	91.8	69.9%
Median year built:	1970	1954
Median home value:	\$127,200	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

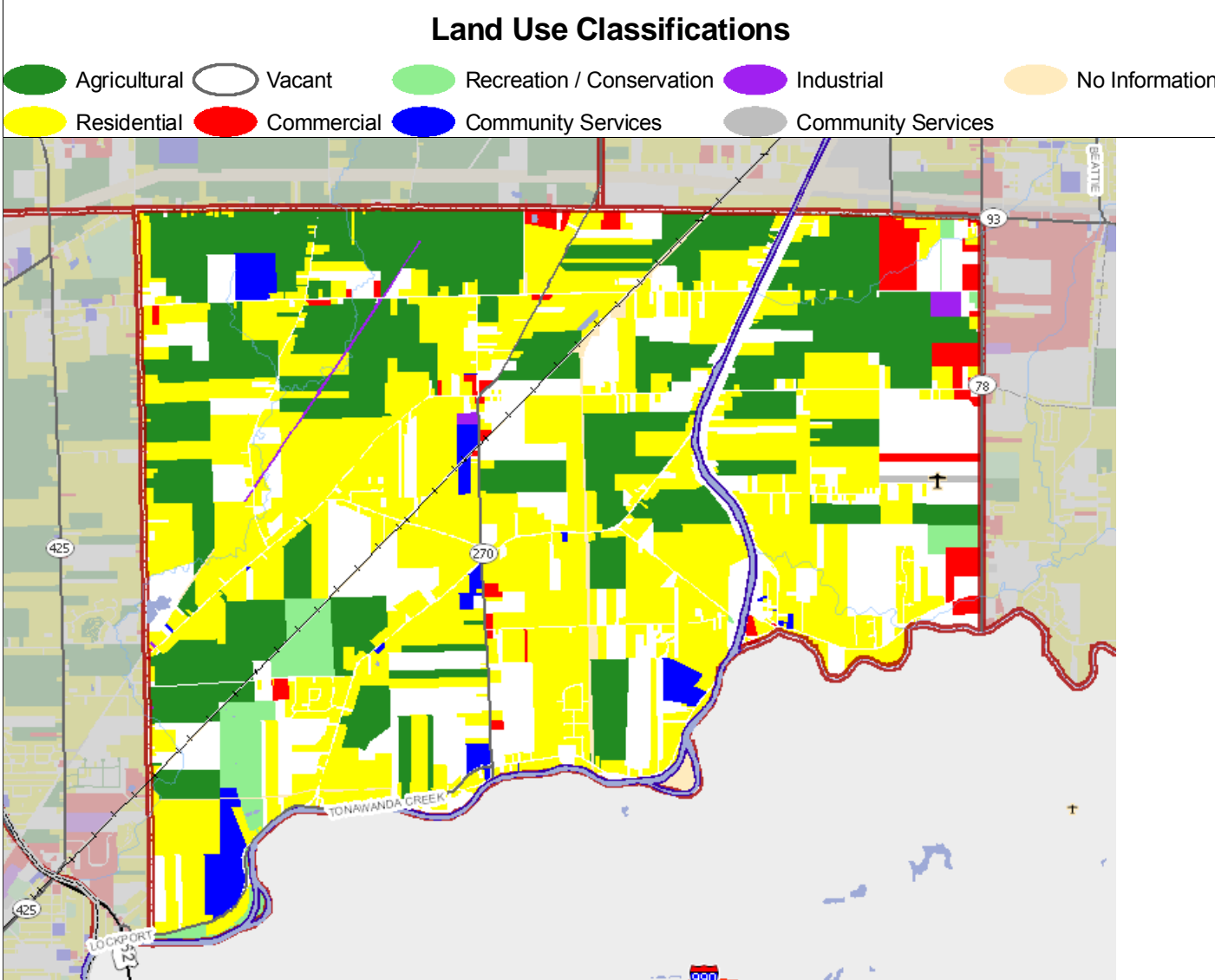
Lockport City School District
Starpoint Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **14%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	Aug. 2008	In process
ZONING TEXT:	Y	No info. provided	2005
ZONING MAP:	Y	No info. provided	2004
LWRP:	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	No info. provided	2001
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		1997	
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		Y	



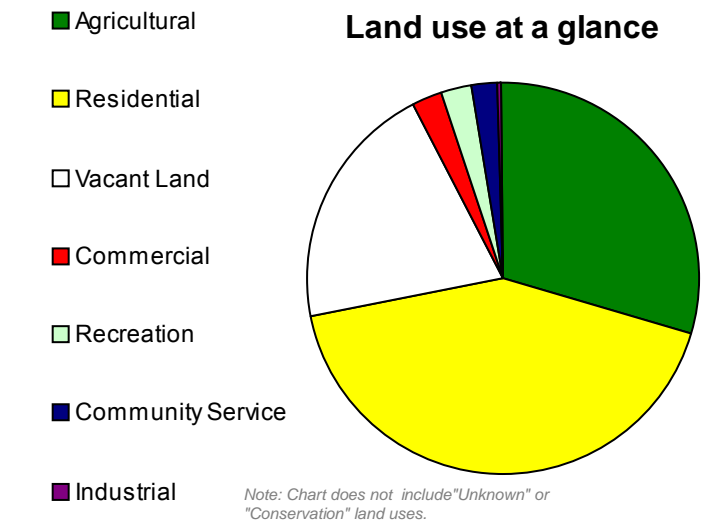
major employers

Employer	Employees
First Niagara	162
Pivot Punch Corporation	100
Philpac Corp.	51 - 100
Mac's Antique Auto Parts, Inc.	51 - 100
Boka Farms	1 - 25
Brauer Restaurant	1 - 25
Brenon Topsoil	1 - 25
Chameleon Color Cards, Ltd.	1 - 25
Country Cottage	1 - 25
Dore Landscaping	1 - 25
Enterprise Car Rental	1 - 25
Fred's Pizza	1 - 25
Hebeler Sales	1 - 25
Heritage Fireplace	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	4860.36	29.29%
Commercial	402.73	2.43%
Community Service	354.25	2.14%
Industrial	64.82	0.39%
Recreation	390.98	2.36%
Residential	6886.19	41.50%
Unknown	160.93	0.97%
Vacant Land	3443.23	20.75%



Issues and Assets

land use

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues and challenges

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Lockport & Pendleton are developing, plans in place
- Highway corridors: economic development vs. farmland preservation
- Inter municipal agreements
- Outlets needed as secondary access – ex.) Campbell Blvd.
- Need to plan ahead
- Need to balance agricultural lands and development (loss of wildlife habitat)
- Creeks & Streams – floodplain encroachment
- Large percentage of land use is residential: less than 10% is industrial and commercial
- Most of the residential use is single-family homes
- Over one quarter of land use acreage is agricultural
- Approximately 10% of the land is mapped wetlands
- Large percentage of the land is open space due to lot configuration.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Small percentage of commercially and industrially zoned land.
- Creation of a Business Development Committee

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Utilities:
- Transportation: Need County assistance in assessing traffic volumes on Tonawanda Creek Road, Bear Ridge Road, Fiegle Road and Lockport/Robinson Road. Past studies suggest these roads are being heavily used for traffic between Lockport and Buffalo.

(Central Communities Subregion)

- School consolidation as a way to increase efficiency is a major issue.
- Teacher salaries should be uniform; there should be a level playing field from one school district to another.
- There should be other funding sources than taxes.

(Countywide)

- As communities changes, the County seems slow to change w/publi health and safety services
- Social services – large part of County budgets
- Abundance of older adults require services
- Heart disease and obesity higher in the County than downstate
- Police – lack of quality coverage in the area
- Multiple fire and ambulance districts

assets and opportunities

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):

- Continue to provide high quality environment for single-family homes
- Extend Light Industrial districts in appropriate areas of the Town
- Protect and encourage more agricultural activities in the Town
- Farmland
- Plans that are in place

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Increase industrial and commercial land use and development
- Encourage a balanced tax base

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:

- Utilities:Encourage development only where public water and wastewater supplies are already available.
- Transportation: Close coordination between the Town, County, GBNRTC, and State DOT will ensure the future effectiveness of the transportation system.

(Central Communities Subregion)

- There are more than enough school buildings in this part of the County.
- Tie education and job training programs to tourism, the Erie Canal & wine trails.
- Educational programs, especially at the Community College level, can be tied to the County's marketing / business development (e.g., if you want to attract employers in a specialized industry, take time to discuss how NCCC can help develop a workforce in that industry).

(Countywide)

- Array of medical facilities
- Fresh water is an important asset
- Disaster prep seems pretty good
- Strong volunteer fire forces
- Safe community – low crime

POPULATION

Municipality	1990	2000	2006	2030*
Town of Hartland	3,911	4,183	4,033	4,488
Town of Royalton	7,453	7,710	7,599	8,421
Village of Middleport	1,876	1,912	1,816	n/a
Tonawanda Indian Reservation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of Census	1,336	1,248	n/a	n/a
SUB-REGION	11,364	11,873	11,658	12,909

2030 Projections from GHWTIC; only available for Towns.

NIAGARA COMMUNITIES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EASTERN COMMUNITIES

...Hamlet of Gasport, Village of Middleport, Towns of Hartland and Royalton



AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural Districts by Town		
Town Name	Acreage	Percent of Town
Hartland	27,754	83.00%
Royalton	34,900	77.00%
TOTAL	62,654	80%

VILLAGE OF MIDDLEPORT



EDUCATION

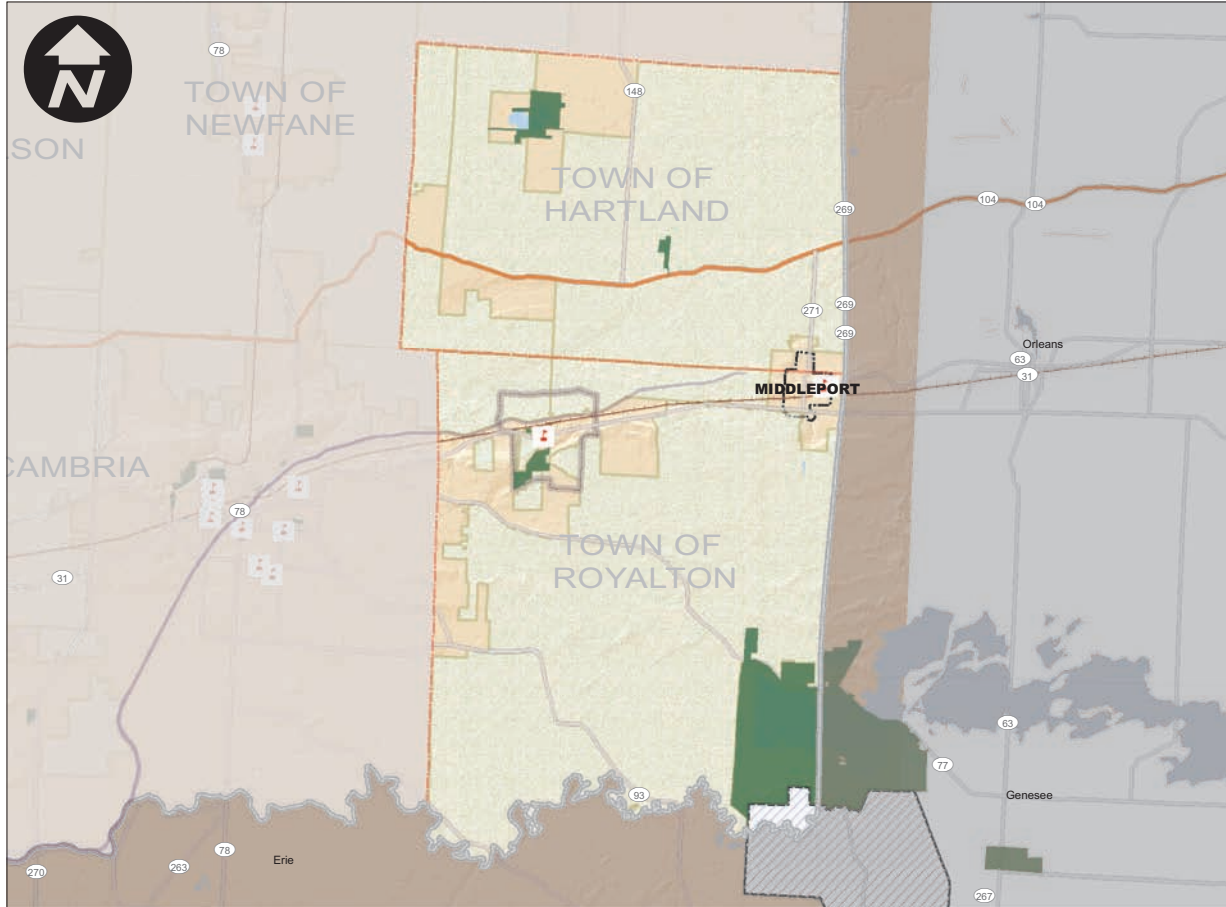
Barker Central S.D.	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Avg. Class Size	17	18	n/a
K-12 Teachers	100	n/a	99
K-12 Capacity	n/a	n/a	1066
K-12 Enrollment	1064	n/a	1097
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 18,833.00		

Royalton-Hartland S.D.	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Avg. Class Size	20	23	n/a
K-12 Teachers	134	124	115
K-12 Capacity	n/a	n/a	n/a
K-12 Enrollment	1614	1573	1553
Expenditures / Pupil	\$ 12,291.00		

LARGEST EMPLOYERS

Employer	# of Employees (Range)
Barden and Robeson Corporation	101 - 250
FMC Corporation	26 - 50
Entertion Industries, Inc.	1 - 25
European Meats & Deli, Inc.	1 - 25
Harris Farms	1 - 25
New England Seafood of Barker	1 - 25
Suburban Propane	1 - 25
Vizzarra Vineyards at Becker Farms	1 - 25
Wolfe Lumber Mill, Inc.	1 - 25
AG-PAK, Inc.	1 - 25
C.J. Niagara County Plastics, Inc.	1 - 25
Cosmicco of Western New York	1 - 25
Gasport Welding & Fabricating, Inc.	1 - 25
Gasport Wood Products, Inc.	1 - 25
Hydro Silica Corporation	1 - 25
J. & D. Enterprises	1 - 25
LaFarge	1 - 25
Lobe Pump & Machinery Company	1 - 25
Martin Aircraft Supply	1 - 25
Route 31 Enterprises, Inc.	1 - 25
Vince's Auto Wrecking & Sales, Inc.	1 - 25
W.H.R. Services, Inc.	1 - 25
Wallace Design Service	1 - 25
Hydro Fabrication	1 - 25
Maedl's Woodcrafts	1 - 25
Niagara Foods	1 - 25
Performance Manufacturing Corp.	1 - 25
Sigma Motor, Inc.	1 - 25
Specialty Grinding	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Industrial and Business Directory 2008



Legend

- Hospital
- Erie Canal
- Schools

Community Boundaries

- Hartland
- Royalton
- Public Lands
- Agricultural Districts
- Villages



The Eastern Communities subregion contains irreplaceable natural and cultural/heritage resources, including the Erie Canalway corridor, population centers in Middleport and Gasport and the important NYS Route 104 and 31 highway corridors. This subregion lends itself to enhanced rural business opportunities, including agri-tourism and, in particular, equestrian and nature-based recreation. Linear sprawl along rural roadway frontages should be discouraged in favor of development around existing village and hamlet centers. Infrastructure (roads, sewer, water) should be mostly limited to upgrades of existing facilities with little, if any, increase in carrying capacities outside of developed centers. New, large-scale development should be directed to these centers and avoid interior sections of both towns to preserve rural resources.



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



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overview

population	4,165	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	1.9%	
avg household size:	2.73	2.45
pop/sq mi:	79.8	417.2
median age	38	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	20.4%	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	11.1%	15.4%

Population Trend

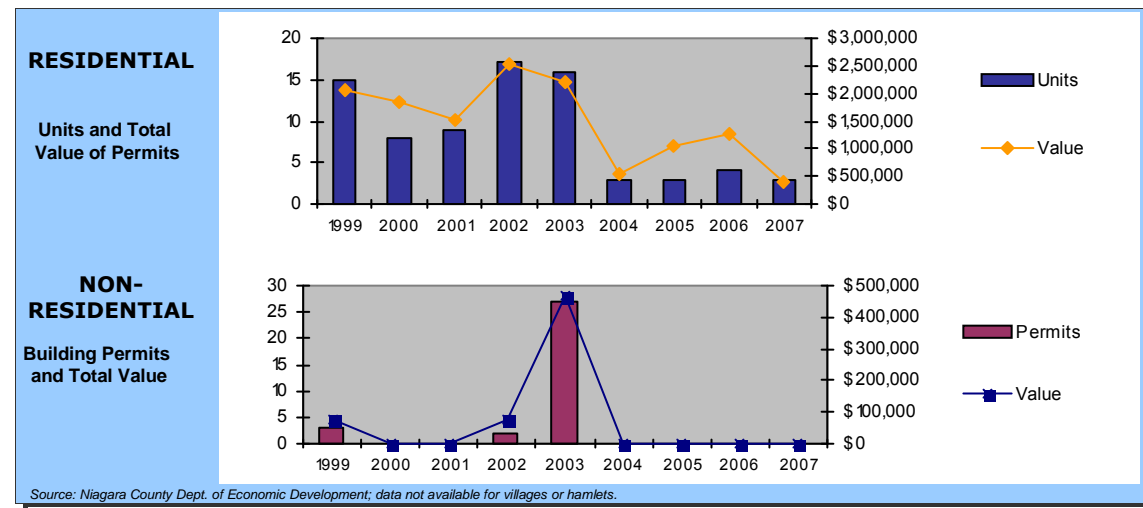
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$40,281	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$17,253	\$19,219
poverty rate:	9.27%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	27.4%	31.75%
public assistance:	1.8%	3.98%
retirement:	26.5%	23.2%
Housing units:	1,582	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	85.1	69.9%
Median year built:	1949	1954
Median home value:	\$77,900	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

- Barker Central School District
 - Medina School District
 - Royalton-Hartland Central School District
-

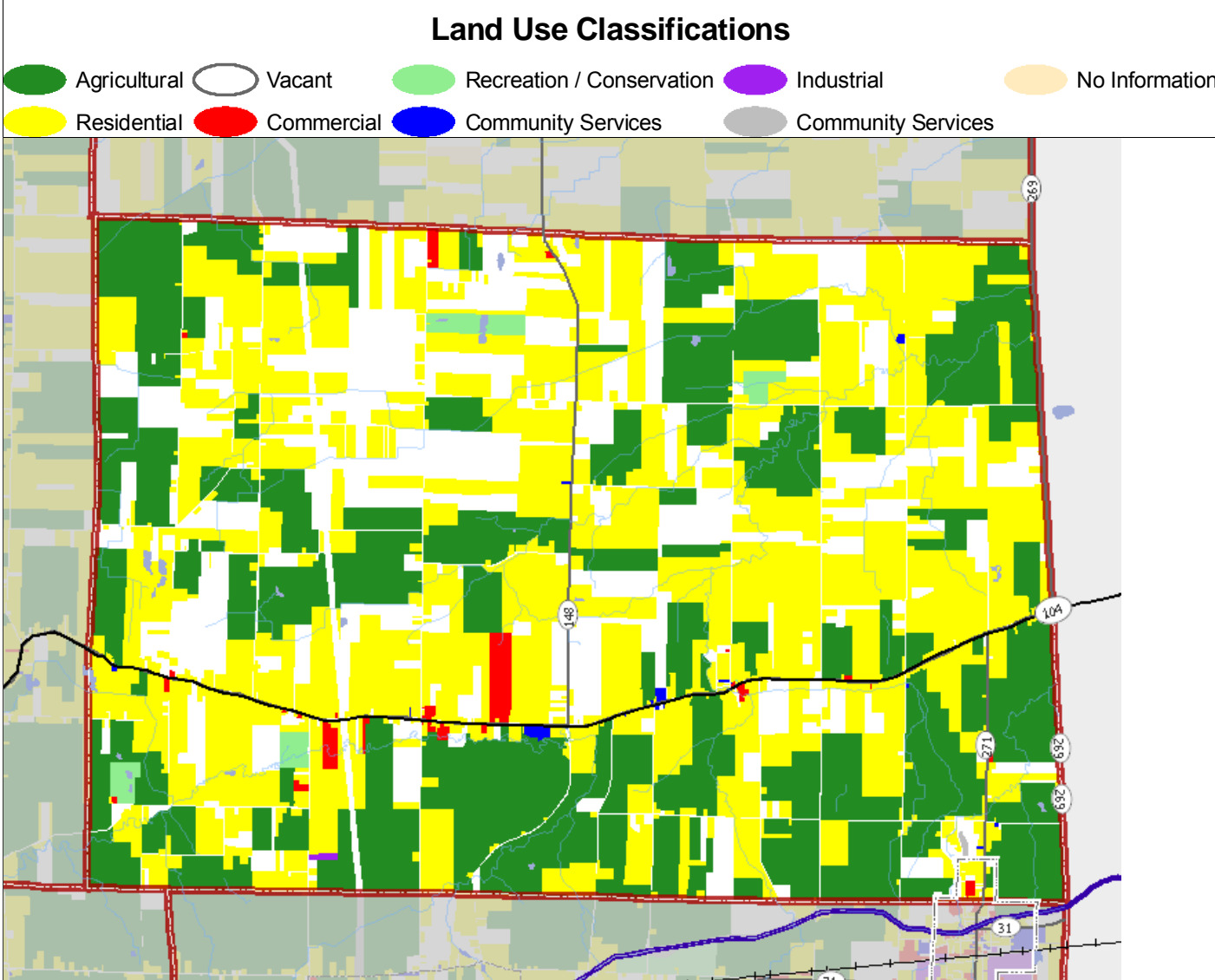
agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **83%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	Y	1998	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1986	2006
ZONING MAP:	Y	1983	2008
LWRP:	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1986	N/A
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:	None provided		
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		Y	

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



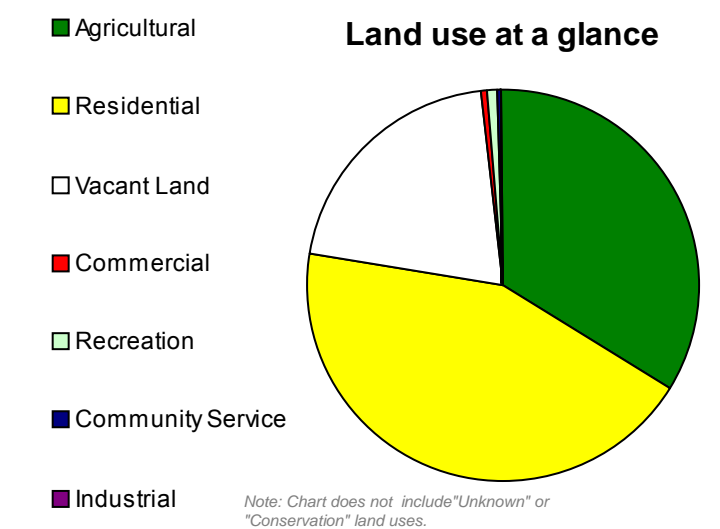
major employers

Employer	Employees
Entertron Industries, Inc.	1 - 25
European Meats & Deli, Inc.	1 - 25
Harris Farms	1 - 25
New England Seafood of Barker	1 - 25
Suburban Propane	1 - 25
Vizcarra Vineyards at Becker Farms	1 - 25
Wolfe Lumber Mill, Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	10625.83	33.93%
Commercial	233.59	0.75%
Community Service	38.28	0.12%
Recreation	260.13	0.83%
Residential	13677.63	43.67%
Vacant Land	6466.82	20.65%



Niagara Communities Survey

Following are this community's responses to a survey of Niagara County communities. The complete results of this survey are available from Niagara County. Additional background on each subject area is included below the survey results (in italics). This additional information was provided by the members of the Stakeholders Steering Committee during the planning process.

What do you consider to be the three most pressing ISSUES OR CHALLENGES facing your community relative to...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Desperation of development Keeping Agricultural Characteristics Re-opening Bridge (Wruck Road) for corridors to Erie Canal and alternate routes. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farms Town recreation use - lighting and expansion of park 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Old buildings in need of repair. Constant battle to clean up. Making room for more people to enjoy the park. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of building. Jobs Taxes <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agritourism, Wine Trail 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Police Protection; contract with another municipality for protection Distance to health provider Road maintenance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Three school districts - one district is for another county <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boundaries (Districts) Part of Orleans County SD is in Hartland 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Distance to health providers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of police enforcement.

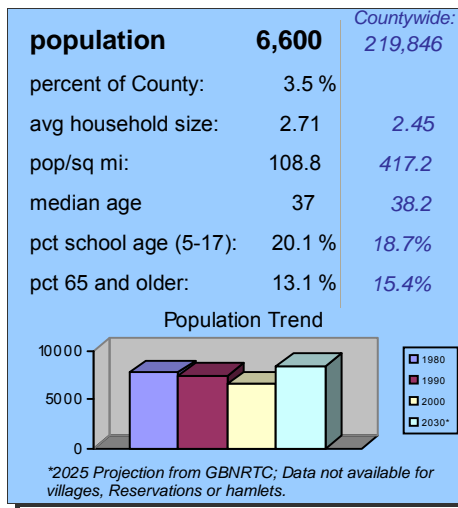
What do you consider to be the three most significant ASSETS or OPPORTUNITIES in your community relative to....

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Location of Emergency Services Agri-tourism People <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural - agriculture Small business - small developments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for Park Expansion - This could be one of the nicest parks in Niagara County - excluding state parks. 104 Corridor - Wine trail brings people right through Hartland Agricultural land. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Land to build Increase in total Town value to bring tax rates down. <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm stands Would like Wine Trail to go through on 104 Corridor 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Two school districts - change all residents to Niagara County <p><i>STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two school districts instead of 3 		

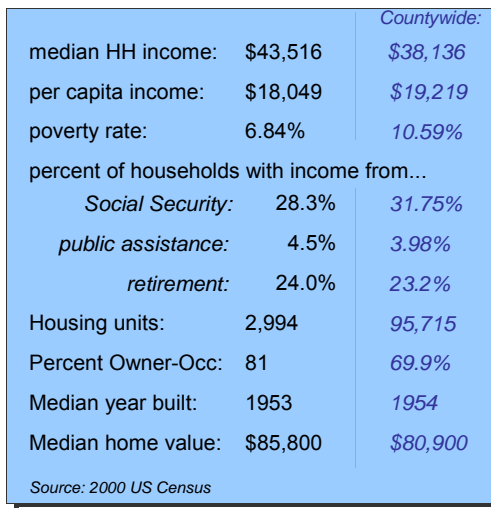
Describe your community's GOALS and OBJECTIVES for...

land use	environment	economic development	county services and facilities	educational institutions	public health	public safety
Re-development of the Township - New face for buildings - expansion of recreation park for more tourism. We are on the wine trail would like to see these people passing through to stop and smell our roses.	Currently investigation types of grants to help with park expansion.	Building lots have been made larger to promote greenspace. Also, smaller lots grandfathered for building. Town feels that more tourism from wine trail will help economical stature - resulting in more development				Contract with other municipality for protection.

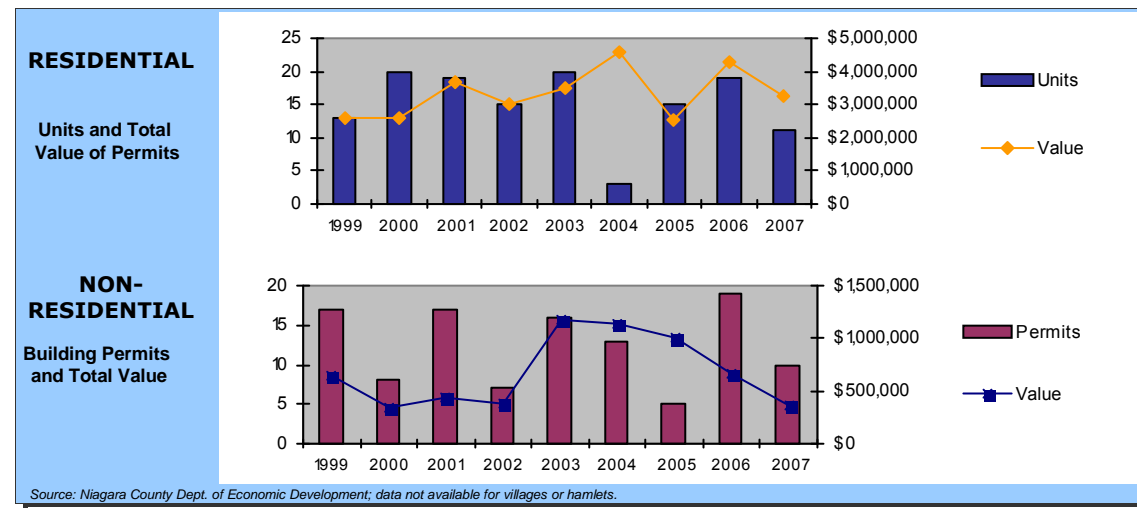
overview



housing and income



building permits



school districts

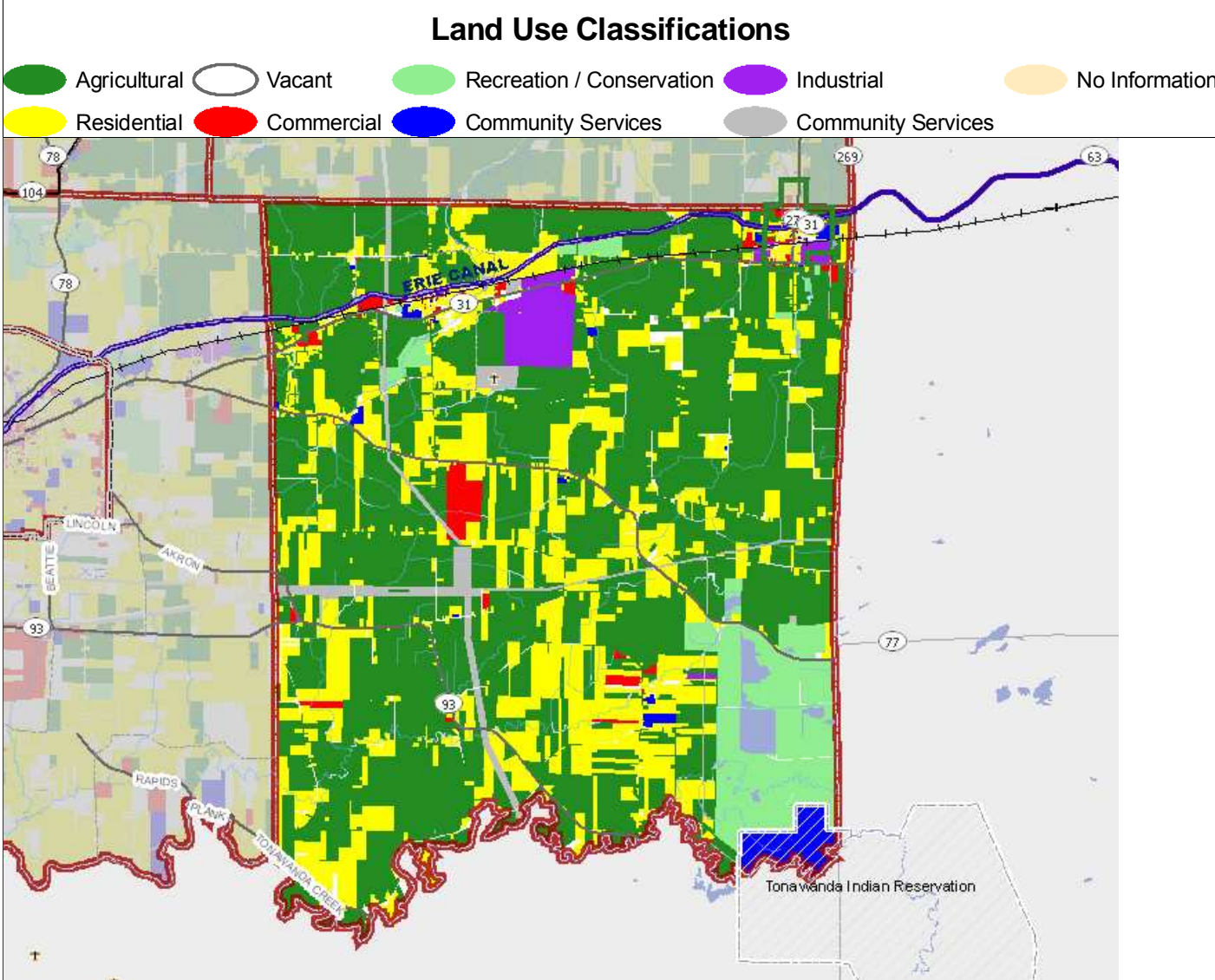
- Royalton-Hartland Central School District
 - Starpoint Central School District
 - Akron Central School District
-

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts: **77%**

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	N/A	N/A	In process
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1955	1999
ZONING MAP:	Y	1955	2006
LWRP:	N	N/A	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	Y	1975	1996
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?			
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:			
geographic information systems (GIS)			
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N)	Y		
ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N)		N	



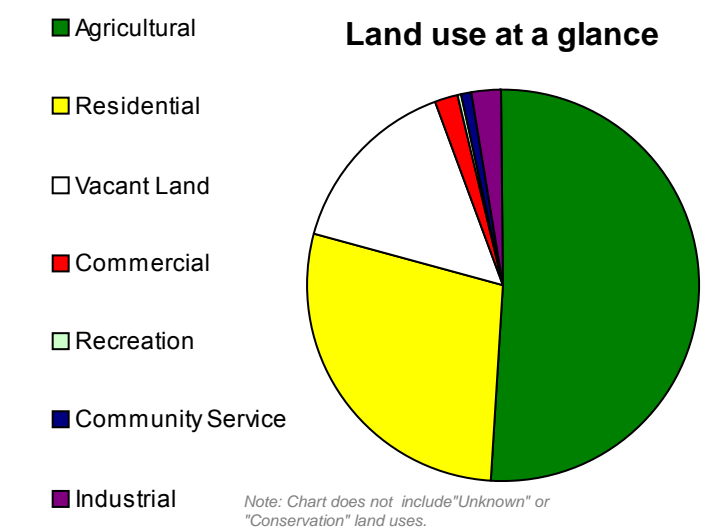
major employers

Employer	Employees
AG-PAK, Inc.	1 - 25
C.J. Niagara County Plastics, Inc.	1 - 25
Cosmicoat of Western New York	1 - 25
Gasport Welding & Fabricating, Inc.	1 - 25
Gasport Wood Products, Inc.	1 - 25
Hydro Silica Corporation	1 - 25
J. & D. Enterprises	1 - 25
LaFarge	1 - 25
Lobee Pump & Machinery Company	1 - 25
Martin Aircraft Supply	1 - 25
Renwaldt Builders	1 - 25
Route 31 Enterprises, Inc	1 - 25
Vince's Auto Wrecking & Sales, Inc.	1 - 25
W.H.R. Services, Inc.	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".

land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	18226.72	46.99%
Commercial	634.22	1.64%
Community Service	337.85	0.87%
Industrial	854.19	2.20%
Parks & Conservation	1867.22	4.81%
Public Service	1074.25	2.77%
Recreation	120.31	0.31%
Residential	10171.65	26.23%
Unknown	5.7	0.01%
Vacant Land	5493.91	14.16%



Issues and Assets

land use

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues and challenges

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):
1. Agricultural conservation

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
•Agri-tourism
•Canal
•Conservation Areas
•Royalton Ravine Park
•Aging infrastructure - roads, sewer gas
•Vacant buildings
•Enticing small business

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
•Royalton Ravine Park
•Shared highway services
•Need for greater police presence
Be included in more County projects

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
Royalton-Hartland
Gasport Elementary
Middleport Elementary
High School - Middleport
Missing key components of working population:
1. Ag class - FFA
2. Tech classes
3. Computer classes
Taxes are increasing and population is decreasing
Need additional Wi-Fi / resource center
NCCC satellite needed

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):
1. Village of Middleport Police - excellent police presence. Contracted to the Town of Royalton.
2. Tri-Town Ambulance Service
3. Five fire companies in the Town.

assets and opportunities

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Land Use & Environment):
1. Preserve agriculture
2. Preserve wildlife and conservation areas
3. Create bike, walking-type trails

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
•Business & Industrial Development along Route 31 Corridor
•Improve Infrastructure
•Closer facilities for agricultural food - from the farm right to a LOCAL processor.
•Wildlife & Conservation areas
•Need for community center
•Promote 4th of July celebration
•Expand our celebrations and incorporate local businesses.

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
•Improve Roadways
•To expand shared services (for example, highway maintenance)
•Expand NFTA services
•Mobile county services - DMV, social services, voter registration

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT:
Roy-Hart has plenty of room for expansion w/o construction
School grounds are environmentally clean!!

STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT (Health & Safety):
1. Health outreach to the Community.
2. More police presence from the State / Sheriff.

overview

population	1,917	Countywide: 219,846
percent of County:	0.9 %	
avg household size:	2.54	2.45
pop/sq mi:	2,130.0	417.2
median age	36	38.2
pct school age (5-17):	21.3 %	18.7%
pct 65 and older:	14.9 %	15.4%

Population Trend

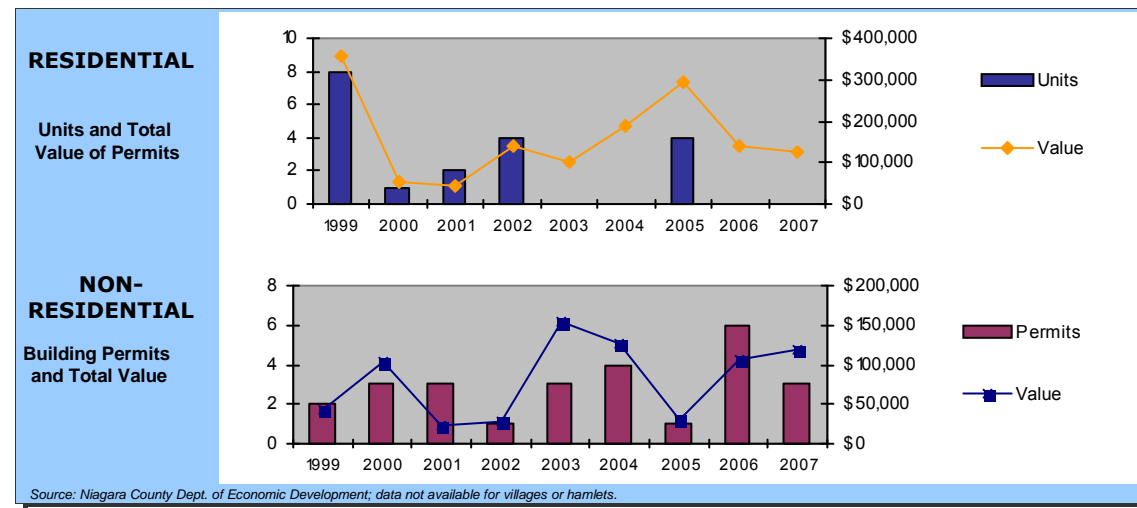
*2025 Projection from GBNRTC; Data not available for villages, Reservations or hamlets.

housing and income

median HH income:	\$36,464	Countywide: \$38,136
per capita income:	\$17,043	\$19,219
poverty rate:	8.25%	10.59%
percent of households with income from...		
Social Security:	27.7%	31.75%
public assistance:	5.5%	3.98%
retirement:	25.9%	23.2%
Housing units:	828	95,715
Percent Owner-Occ:	66.4	69.9%
Median year built:	pre-1940	1954
Median home value:	\$68,800	\$80,900

Source: 2000 US Census

building permits



school districts

Royalton-Hartland Central School District

agricultural districts

Percent of Municipality in Ag Districts:	0%
--	-----------

planning context

	Adopted?	Date (Orig.)	Date (Update)
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:	N/A	N/A	N/A
ZONING TEXT:	Y	1955	2006
ZONING MAP:	Y	1954	2001
LWRP:	Y	2002	N/A
SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS:	N/A	N/A	N/A
CELL TOWER REGULATIONS ON FILE WITH COUNTY?	Y		
CELL TOWER REGS DATE:		2001	

geographic information systems (GIS)

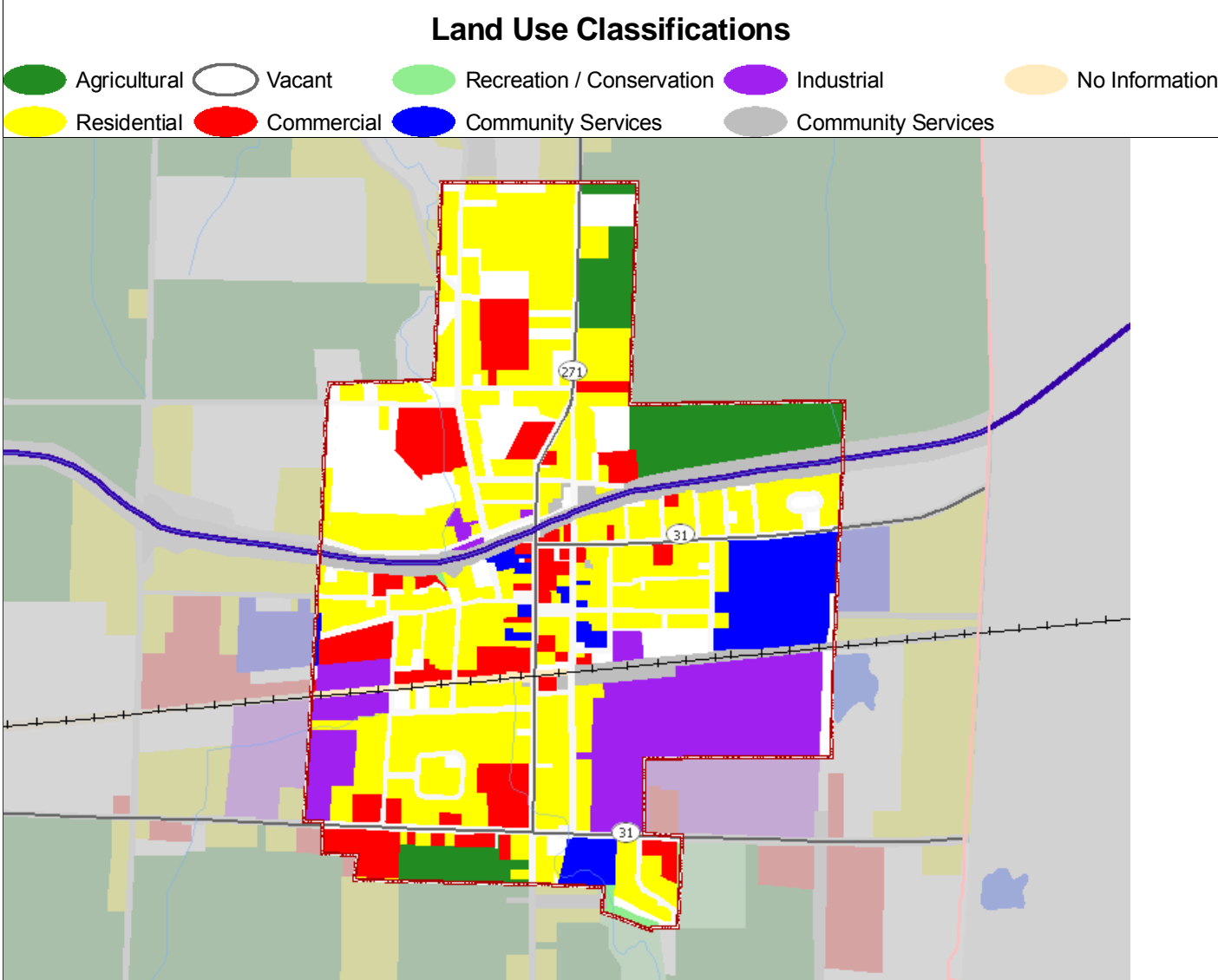
USING GIS FOR ZONING / PLANNING? (Y/N) N

ELECTRONIC ZONING? (Y/N) N/A

major employers

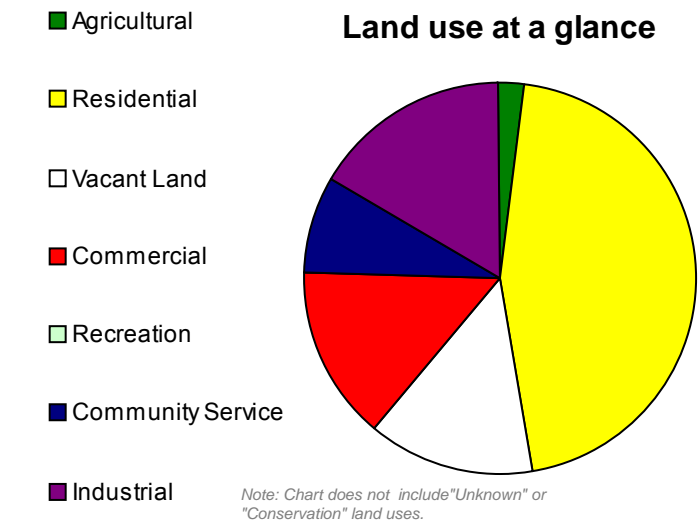
Employer	Employees
Barden and Robeson Corporation	125
FMC Corporation	26 - 50
Hydro Fabrication	1 - 25
Maedl's Woodcrafts	1 - 25
Niagara Foods	1 - 25
Performance Manufacturing Corp	1 - 25
Sigma Motor, Inc.	1 - 25
Specialty Grinding	1 - 25

Source: Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008".



land use

Use	Acres	Pct of Total
Agricultural	9.19	1.91%
Commercial	59.69	12.39%
Community Service	33.64	6.98%
Industrial	69.59	14.45%
Public Service	31.32	6.50%
Residential	188.34	39.10%
Unknown	4.08	0.85%
Vacant Land	56.24	11.67%



Issues and Assets

land use

economic development

county services and facilities

educational institutions

public health and safety

issues and challenges

1. Perception of poor quality of life due to contaminated soil - FMC
2. No end in sight for remediation of soils / areas effected.

1. Vacant storefronts.
2. Buildings falling apart.
3. Multi-use buildings not being used to potential.
4. Factory complex falling down. Too much owed on property/legal issues to do anything with it.

1. Seems like we are too far east in Niagara County to receive much county services - feels like forgotten in County planning.

1. Royalton-Hartland Central Schools - Middle school & high school

1. Poor sidewalks in parts of Village
2. Great police force and low crime rate
3. Old, failing infrastructure (sewer & water, storm sewers)

assets and opportunities

1. After cleanup complete - turn negative press and mindset to positive.
2. Fill vacant buildings and homes.
3. Bring small business back to downtown.

1. Continue work on grants for downtown renovations.
2. Fill vacant buildings.
3. Demo buildings when needed.
4. Help existing local businesses to prosper in the future.

1. More attention from County services and programs.

1. Obtain grant funding for Safe Routes to School for sidewalk renovations.
2. Obtain grant money to repair aging infrastructure, update/new sewer treatment plant modifications and storm sewer projects.

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Chapter V

Land Use & Environment

Land Use Planning

Niagara County occupies a total land area of about 527 square miles (approximately 337,000 acres) comprised of 20 municipalities that includes 3 cities, 12 towns and 5 villages, plus three Native American reservations/lands. Land use decisions and regulations in Niagara County and New York State are primarily the jurisdiction of these 20 municipalities under New York State's City, Town, Village and General Municipal laws (www.dos.state.ny.us). This responsibility of local municipalities to govern land use within their borders is known as "Home Rule".

Powers given to local municipalities by the State include not only the ability to regulate land use, but also to prepare municipal comprehensive plans and enter into intermunicipal agreements to prepare joint plans. A NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources in 2008 found that an increasing number of municipalities in New York continue to prepare and adopt written comprehensive plans, increasing from 64% of the State's approximately 1500 municipalities in 2004 to 69% in 2008.

Niagara County annually surveys municipalities within the County as a Planning Census to gather up-to-date information on the status of local land use plans and regulations. Information is collected on comprehensive plans, zoning, local waterfront revitalization plans, subdivision regulations, cell tower regulations and GIS mapping capabilities.

The County's Planning Census is an important benchmarking tool when comparing communities within the County as well as from outside County borders. The Niagara County Planning Census is summarized in Appendix B. The 2007 census indicates that of the County's 20 municipalities all have zoning regulations, all but one village and one town have comprehensive master plans, and 16 have subdivision regulations.

A New York State Legislative Commission Survey for 2008 indicates that

An increasing number of municipalities in New York continue to prepare and adopt written comprehensive plans, increasing from 64% of the State's approximately 1500 municipalities in 2004 to 69% in 2008.



*County Planning Census
see Appendix B*

about 53% of the counties in New York State (about 30 of the 57 counties outside of New York City) have written comprehensive plans. Prior to this comprehensive plan Niagara County was among those counties that did not have a written comprehensive plan.

As the State’s survey points out, county comprehensive plans are an important guidance tool for both county and local decision-makers in considering actions on related planning and land use development matters. This is particularly true in county reviews of local planning and zoning actions under Article 239-L and 239-M reviews under NYS General Municipal Law as well as county and town agricultural and farmland protection plans.

Eighty-one percent of all counties in New York have Planning Boards according to the 2008 Legislative Commission Survey, 95% have farmland protection boards, 89% have farmland protection plans and 42% have right-to-farm laws. With completion of this comprehensive plan Niagara County now has all five of these very important planning tools in place.



Eighty-one percent of all counties in NYS have planning boards, 95% have farmland protection boards, 89% have farmland protection plans, 53% have comprehensive plans, and 42% have right-to-farm laws.

With completion of this comprehensive plan Niagara County now has all five of these important planning tools in place.

Land Use Trends and Conditions

Although still largely considered a mostly rural county, the percentage of parcels categorized as residential land use in Niagara County now exceeds that of active agriculture. This recent trend in land use is also discussed in Chapter III and resummarized below in Table V-1. Figure V-1 is a composite map of existing land use within Niagara County illustrating overall land use patterns. This composite was created as a compilation of individual land use category maps provided in Chapter III.

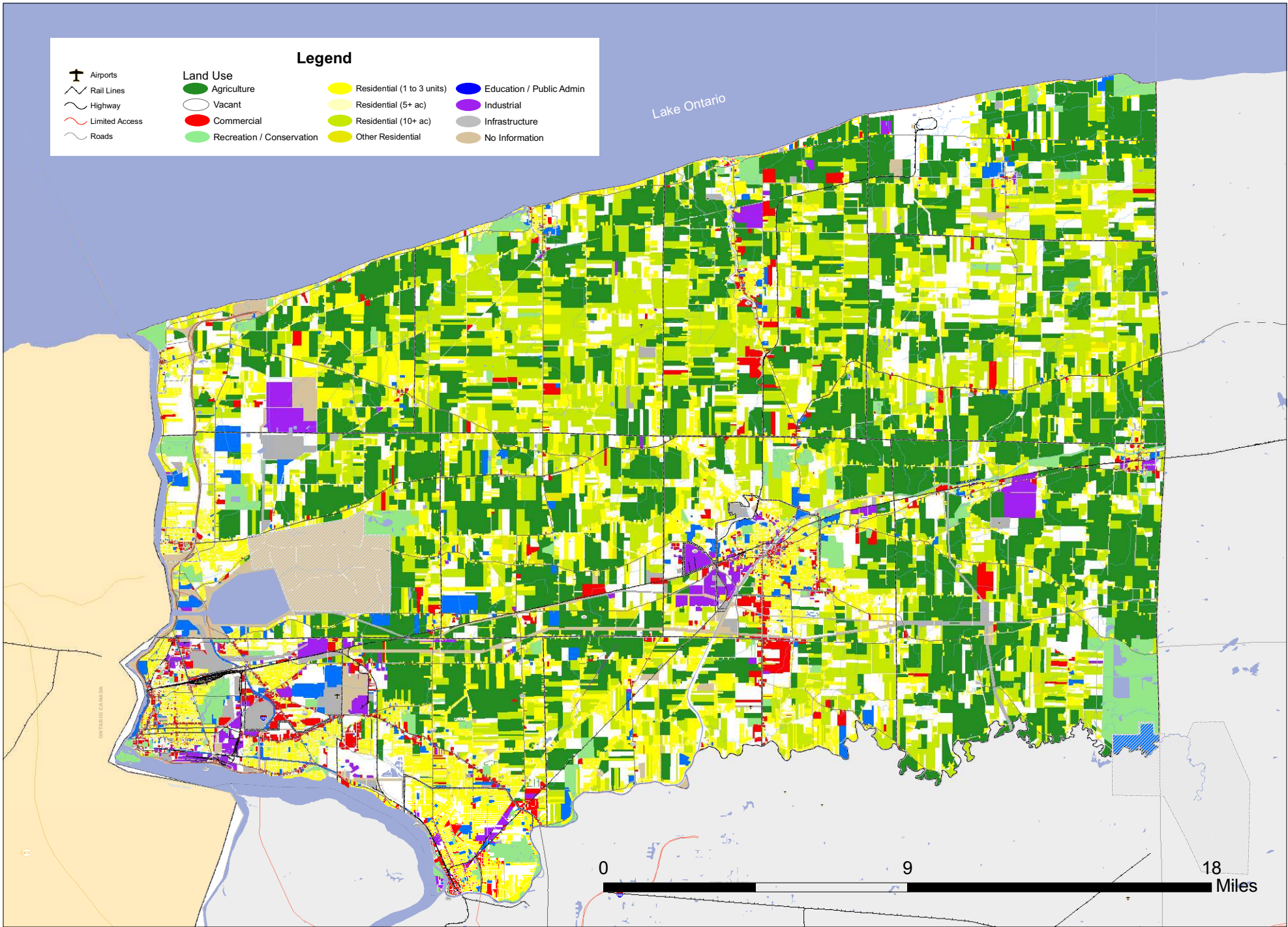
Based on the most recent landowner and property assessment data collected by the State, more land is now in various forms of residential use within the County than in agricultural or other uses. Vacant parcels, many of which are likely past agricultural lands, represent the third largest category of land use in the County.

Table V-1 Existing Land Use Categories in Niagara County

<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Total Acres</i>	<i>Total Sq. Miles</i>
Residential	34	115,606	180
Agriculture	30	101,280	158
Vacant Land	16	54,150	85
Commercial	< 3	8,462	13
Recreation	< 2	5,026	8
Community Services	2	6,726	11
Industrial	< 2	5,525	9
Public Services	< 2	5,438	9
Conservation and Parks	2	6,684	10
Lakes, Reservations, etc.	4	14,908	23
Other – Roads, ROW’s	< 4	13,448	21



The percentage of parcels categorized as residential land use in Niagara County now exceeds that of active agriculture.



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New York State contains a total of approximately 7.6 million acres of farmland. Farmland loss continues to accelerate in New York State with almost 26,000 acres being developed each year – more than twice the amount of farmland that is being protected. This loss of farmland is largely due to decentralization of populations from traditional urban centers and inner suburbs into outer suburbs and rural areas as is the case within Niagara County.

In 1992, New York instituted the State’s Farmland Protection Program. As of late 2006 the program had granted over \$116 million in funds to protect approximately 50,429 acres on 241 farms in 26 counties (American Farmland Trust 2007). Much of this funding has gone towards the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR’s).

“Purchase of development rights is a voluntary approach that pays farmland owners to permanently extinguish the development rights on their property. The land remains privately owned and on the tax rolls. However, a permanent restriction, commonly called a conservation easement, is placed on the deed preventing any future non-agricultural development of the property. Participating farmers are eligible to receive the difference between the agricultural value of the land and the fair market value of the land.

This technique allows farmers to access equity held in the land, while protecting it for future agricultural use. Farmers have used the funding to reinvest in their farm businesses as well as to retire or transfer the farm to a new generation of farmers.” (American Farmland Trust 2007).

The use of PDR’s and similar Transfer of Development Rights (TDR’s) in rural communities of Niagara County is a recommended action proposed in Niagara County’s 1999 Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The use of these programs should be explored as a potentially viable tool to direct future large-scale development to appropriate regions of each municipality.

Despite encroachment by development and the trend for conversion of farmlands to other uses, agriculture remains one of the County’s most important industries. The combination of rich farmland and weather conditions tempered by the presence of Lake Ontario and natural features like the Niagara Escarpment make Niagara County one of the State’s most important fruit growing regions. The County ranks 4th in NYS in fruit growing agriculture.

Vineyards and viticulture are also a major component of the County’s agricultural base, with the combination of rich soils and relatively mild winters providing excellent conditions for growing wine grapes. The Niagara Wine Trail is the fastest growing wine trail in the State and has grown from three wineries in the past few years to twelve that are in operation in 2008.

United States Department of Agriculture’s Census of Agriculture for 2007 indicates that Niagara County ranks 17th among the 62 counties in New York State in total value of agricultural products sold. Agricultural land is primarily used for grains, vegetables, fruit and nursery production. The County continues to rank high in the production of pears, peaches, plums, prunes, grapes and sweet cherries.

The number and size of farms in Niagara County have fluctuated over the past



Niagara County contains approximately 189,000 acres of farmland within six designated Agricultural Districts distributed among the County's 12 towns.



The number of farms in the County dropped 6% in 5 years between 1997 and 2002, then increased 8% between 2002 and 2007.

20 years. The number of farms dropped 6% in 5 years between 1997 and 2002, then increased 8% between 2002 and 2007. However, during the same period the average acreage per farm increased 13% between 1997 and 2002, then decreased 11% between 2002 and 2007.

An analysis of the conversion of farmland within the County to uses other than agriculture was completed as part of the preparation of this Plan. The results of the analysis confirm that this conversion in recent years was moving northeasterly across the County into rural towns, including Cambria, Newfane and Somerset. This trend in conversion of farmland to other forms of land use is illustrated in Figures V-2 and V-3.

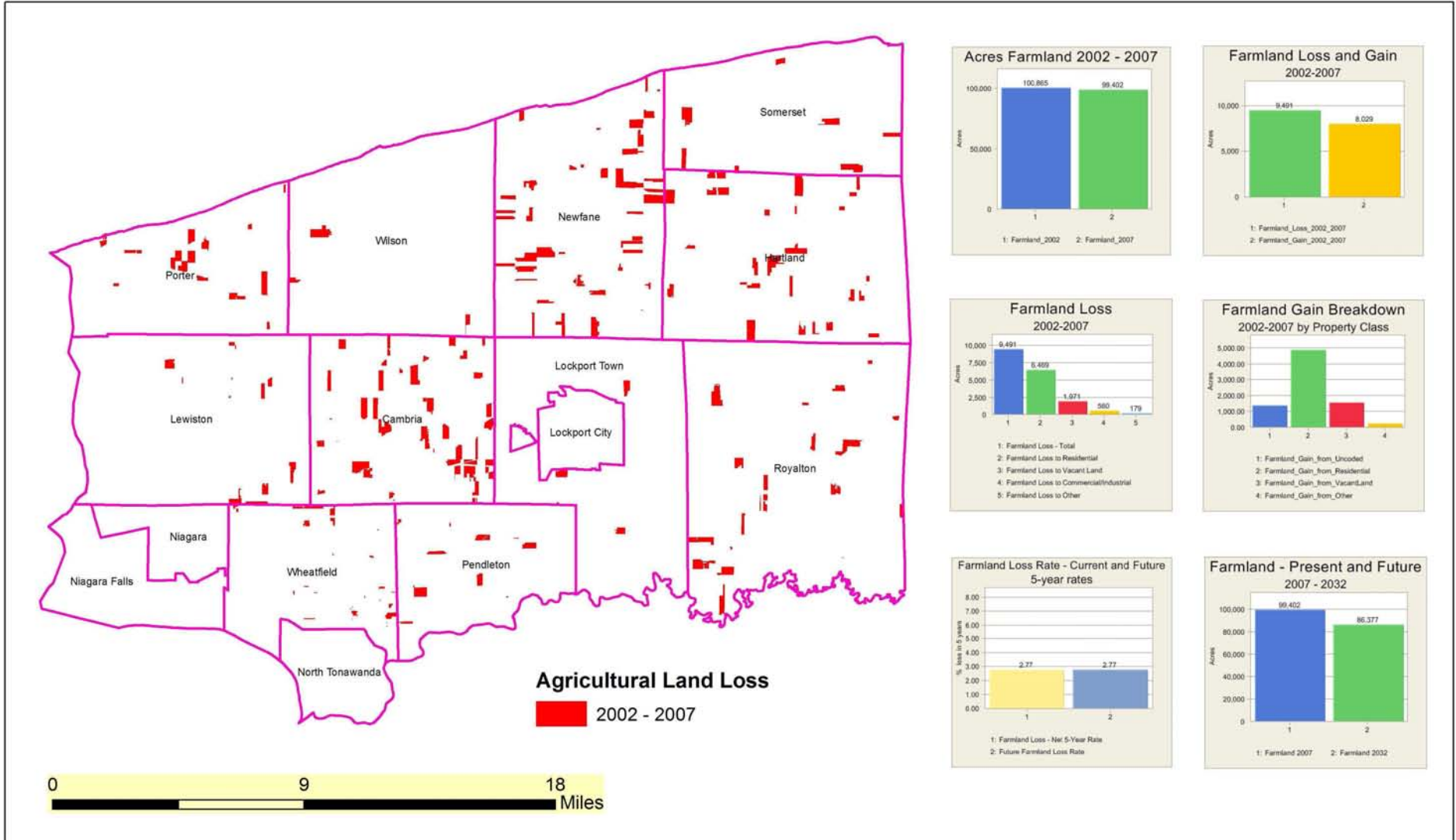
As noted previously in Chapter III, the County's population has been declining from a peak of 242,269 in 1960 to an estimated 214,845 in 2007, an overall 11.3% decrease. Niagara Falls remains the County's largest city, but its population fell by 45% between 1960 and 2000, from 102,400 to 55,600.

The distribution of population in Niagara County has been characterized by sprawling growth patterns over the last few decades, with almost all household growth concentrated in rural areas outside of, or on the fringes of its three cities. The number of households in rural areas of the County increased 33.4% between 1980 and 2000, while the number of households in developed areas increased by only one percent during the same period.

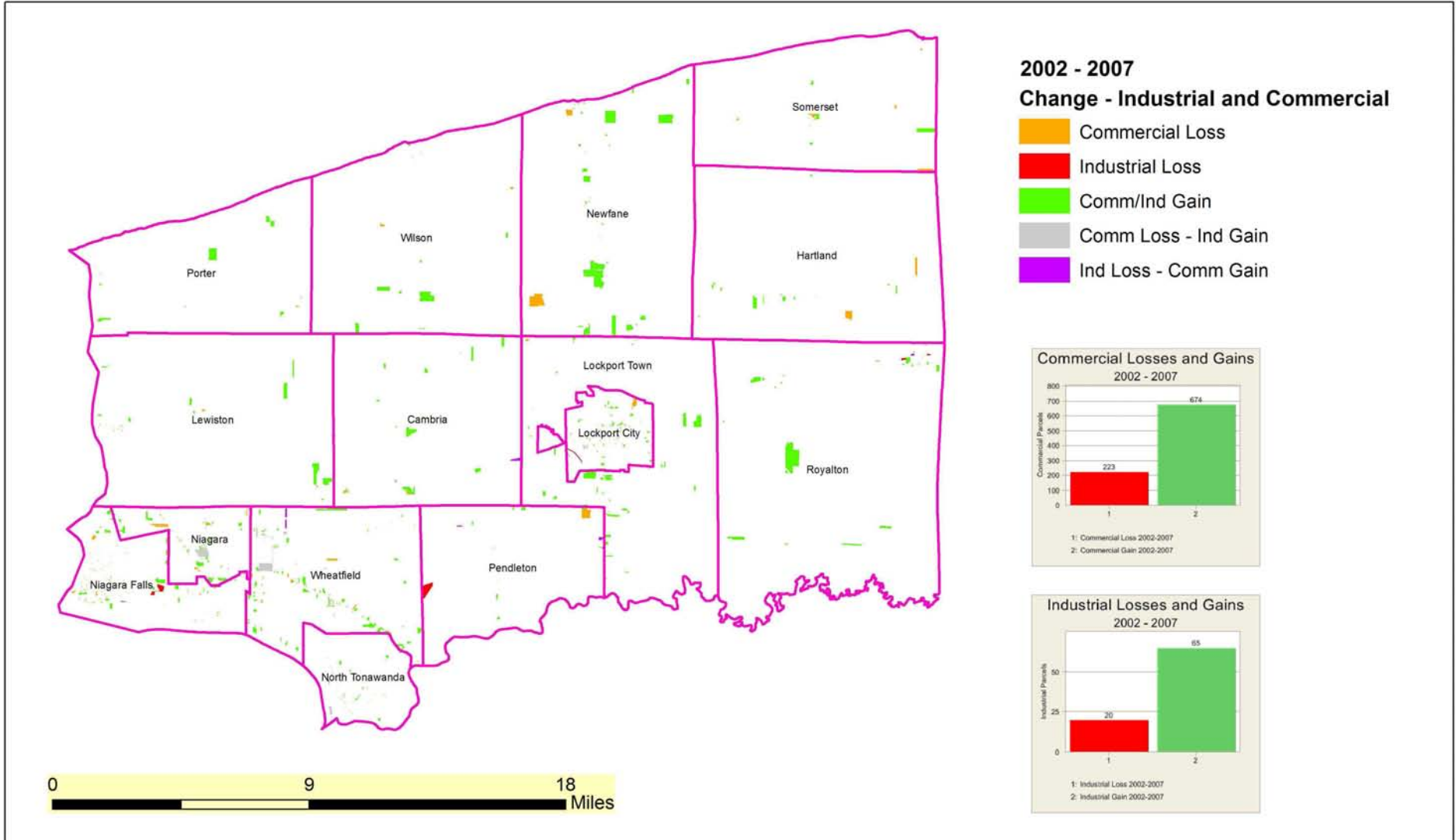
The Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth prepared in 2006 stated with regards to regional land use trends: "In the last half of the 20th Century, the [Erie-Niagara] region's urbanized area ... nearly tripled in size, expanding from 123 square miles in 1950 to 367 square miles in 2000. Despite only a modest increase in population over the same 50 year period, a little over 7 percent, residential, commercial, and institutional uses spread outward from the region's traditional centers to occupy large areas of the Towns of Niagara, Lockport and Wheatfield in Niagara County...."

Between 1980 and 2000, population increased dramatically in the southern half of the Town of Lockport, the westernmost part of the Town of Lewiston and the southern parts of the Towns of Wheatfield, Pendleton and Cambria. Housing permit data for the eight year period from 1999 to 2006 show a consistent pattern of investment in the Towns of Wheatfield and Lockport, where the average number of housing units permitted annually was 196 and 111, respectively.

This expansion of urbanized and developed areas, coupled with declining population in Niagara County, has meant population loss and disinvestment in both the most densely settled, inner city neighborhoods and in the less densely settled rural village and town centers. As stated in the Regional Framework, Niagara Falls, Lockport, and North Tonawanda have been seeing declining populations, as have the northernmost towns. Disinvestment results in considerable vacant and underutilized properties throughout the County. Many of these vacant and underutilized properties are identified as brownfields due to environmental contamination from past land uses. The presence of these brownfields in most communities presents serious potential effects on the environment and public health.



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While substantial progress has been made, several hundred Niagara County brownfield sites remain in need of environmental assessments, notably Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, which are used to inform prospective owners of the environmental history of a site and to determine the potential need for further environmental investigation. According to Niagara County's 2006 brownfields inventory, 41 hazardous waste sites are still in need of Phase I investigations, as are approximately 200 petroleum-contaminated sites. Niagara County will continue to seek State and Federal funding to complete the necessary investigations required to advance the redevelopment of brownfield sites throughout the County. The redevelopment of these sites into useful properties is both an opportunity to benefit the environment and public health as well as providing increased economic development in communities. More information on the County's Brownfields program is provided in Chapter VI.

Natural Environment Trends and Conditions

Niagara County communities are rich in natural resources and natural features, many of which are unique to the County. The two features that quite literally stand out above all others in defining the natural and cultural heritage of the region are the Niagara Escarpment and Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Escarpment and Niagara Falls, which natural erosion of the escarpment created over eons of time, are geologic landforms unique to Niagara County. The Western New York Land Conservancy describes the Niagara Escarpment as "...a ridge of rock 100 – 150 feet high in some locations throughout the County. The Escarpment contains some of the best exposures of 405 to 500 million year old rocks and fossils of the Silurian and Ordovician periods to be found anywhere in the world."

Concerted efforts are underway to protect and preserve the Niagara Escarpment and its valuable ecosystems consisting of unique floral and faunal habitats. The Escarpment contributes significantly to the visual character of many communities in Niagara County, and to the region's economy as well. The combination of the Escarpment and proximity to Lake Ontario create microclimate conditions that, in combination with relatively flat, fertile farmlands, have supported generations of farmers.

The existing environmental conditions of Niagara County contribute to the success of wineries along the Niagara Wine Trail and other fruit growing areas in the County. The 2008 Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy indicates that Niagara County ranks 1st of all NY counties in production of pears, peaches, plums, prunes and sweet cherries and 4th in acreage of fruit grown statewide. Because of the important ties to local economies the natural resources that contribute to the success of agriculture in the County need to be maintained and protected especially in light of the conversion of farmlands that is taking place within the County.

The Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth described a number of "Heritage Assets" unique to Niagara County communities. These heritage

areas are based on the natural assets of the County. In addition to the Niagara Escarpment these heritage assets include: the Seaway Trail; the Erie Canal National Heritage Area; the Niagara National Heritage Area; the Niagara Wine Trail; and local waterfront areas in communities along the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and significant streams and tributaries in the County such as Tonawanda Creek and Eighteen Mile Creek. Along with the heritage areas, the County's rich natural environment includes prime farmland soils, diverse wetland complexes, floodplains and relatively intact riparian (stream) corridors which all contribute to local character and significant open space resources.

A composite map of Niagara County's natural resources is provided as Figure V-4. Individual maps of the resources that when compiled produced this composite map are provided in Chapter III.

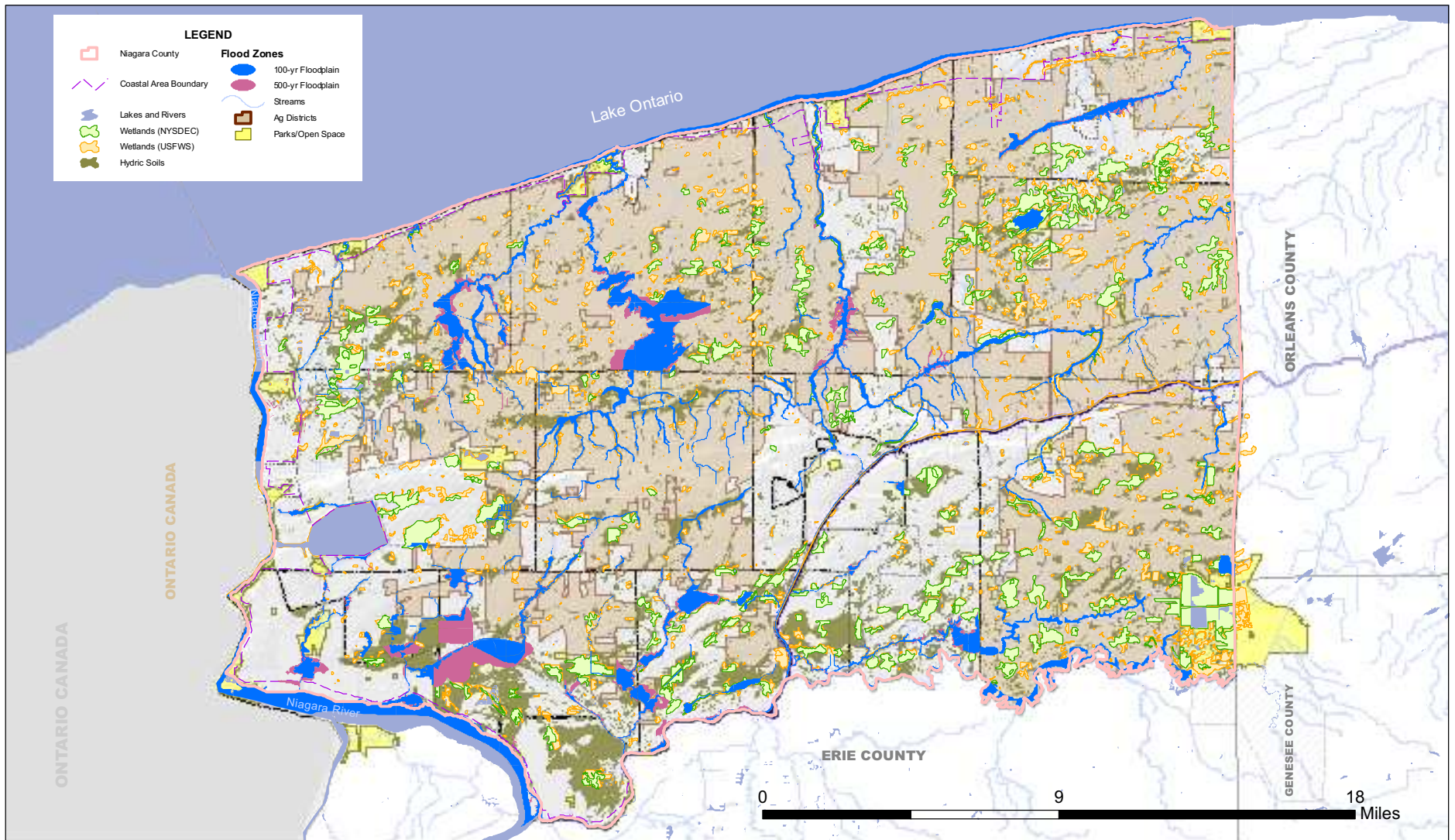
The Niagara River, Lake Ontario, the Erie/Barge Canal, Tonawanda Creek, Eighteen Mile Creek, Twelvemile Creek, the Niagara Power Project Reservoir and the many other water resources in the County all significantly contribute to the overall quality of life of Niagara County communities. These resources provide valuable aquatic and terrestrial habitats and ecosystems (there are 92 species of fish in the Niagara River alone), tourism and recreational opportunities and economic development opportunities. These natural assets contribute to each community's unique identity and character.

Numerous streams and small tributaries drain the two primary watersheds in the County. The Oak Orchard-Twelvemile Creek watershed drains the northern half of the County into Lake Ontario. The Niagara watershed drains the southern half of the County into the Niagara River.

Many streams and tributaries in the watersheds have large 100-year and 500-year floodplains associated with them, for example as in south-central portions of the Town of Wilson along the East Branch of Twelvemile Creek. These floodplains provide additional natural benefits in terms of wildlife habitats, and stormwater recharge into aquifers and groundwater resources.

Existing environmental features within the two watersheds include wetlands, streams, forest cover and other open spaces which help filter pollutants and limit adverse effects from erosion, stormwater runoff and other processes that may impact water quality of local waterways and ultimately Lake Ontario. As these natural systems become increasingly degraded and fragmented by sprawling development patterns their effectiveness in protecting the quality and quantity of local water resources is compromised.

Niagara County lies within the Great Lakes Basin which contains about one fifth of the world's freshwater supply. Although the Great Lakes are considered a source of a nearly inexhaustible supply of freshwater, only about one-percent of the water within the entire Basin is replenished each year and so the Great Lakes and the ecosystems supported by them are far more vulnerable to adverse impacts than many think (Ecojustice 2008).



Natural Resources
Composite Map

Figure
V.4

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Niagara County contains numerous areas of environmental sensitivity that support diverse wildlife habitats and functions as open space resources. In many cases, these areas provide additional benefits as opportunities for nature study and passive forms of recreation on public lands. An estimated 48,000 acres of potential Federal and State-regulated wetlands (approximately 14 percent of the County) are distributed throughout the County as shown in Figure V-4. The Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area in Royalton and the Hartland Swamp in Hartland are two of the County's most valuable open space resources.

State, County and local parklands also contribute to maintaining environmental quality and protecting environmental resources. There are ten State Parks in Niagara County, accounting for nearly 3,000 acres of public lands, and six County Parks with a total of more than 1500 acres and a multitude of local parks in municipalities across the County. Most public parklands are located along the waterfronts of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, although a few are located in interior sections of the County. These parkland resources are also supplemented by the many beaches along the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

Issues & Opportunities

The status of land use, transportation and environmental conditions in Niagara County was discussed throughout the comprehensive planning process. The process sought information from Niagara County communities, the public and other stakeholders on what they considered to be the most important issues and opportunities specifically related to these topics. Information gathered from meetings, group discussions and other input received from stakeholders is summarized below by planning subregion.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Primary land use and transportation issues and challenges include:

- The preservation of farmland and viable agriculture is important to the character of rural communities.
- Sprawl should be controlled.
- Business and growth areas should be concentrated along main transportation corridors.
- Preserve historic buildings and neighborhoods.
- Open space is important to help sustain wildlife and to maintain the area's character.
- Emergency transportation plans need to be in place in the event of a train or rail crossing problem, for example in Middleport or in Gasport.
- It is important to find uses for vacant properties.
- Environmental problems and contamination issues hinder the development of many properties.
- The general condition of roads has deteriorated, and many are in need of significant maintenance.
- Dangerous intersections that need to be studied include:
 - o Slayton Settlement / Hartland
 - o Mountain Road/Royalton Center Road



*The County contains
10 State Parks with
about 3,000 acres and
6 County Parks with
another 1500 acres.*

- o Checker Tavern /Rt. 104
- o State / Main – Village, Rt. 104 – Hartland

Key land use and transportation assets and opportunities include:

- The Erie Canal corridor provides opportunities to expand tourism in the area. More visitors may be drawn to the Canal if water and electric facilities are provided for boats.
- The existing railroad in the area is an asset.
- Agriculture and productive farmlands are assets in the region.
- The rural corridor to Becker Farms may present agri-tourism more opportunities. Becker Farms is an important asset as a 340-acre working farm in Gasport.
- Need to expand maple sugar production.

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

- Preservation of agricultural land & greenspace - protect against sprawl
- Concern over rail accident/derailing with railroad cars to the ethanol plant in Medina
- Vacancies along Canal corridor and negative effects this has on tourism

Top 3 assets and opportunities - land use & transportation

- Erie Canal corridor
- Becker Farms (agri-tourism)
- Railroad

Environmental issues include:

- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) facility – FMC present tire recycling and its related environmental quality concerns.
- FMC – creates potential water, soil, airborne issues with this facility. FMC – Middleport is a CAMU – (Corrective Action Management Unit).
- Natural gas wells – in Hartland – testing in farm areas raises concerns.
- There are pollution concerns regarding the dump on Griswold & Mountain Road.
- Several brownfields exist in the Village of Middleport.
- The Cold Storage property in Royalton is a brownfield site.

Environmental assets and opportunities

- Royalton Ravine and trails
- Vet’s Park in Gasport
- Trails - want to expand in Hartland
- Parks, playground, and nature trails in Middleport
- Reservoir – Middleport to Royalton
- Improvements are needed on the trail network along Erie Canal.
- The Escarpment – has a positive effect on weather patterns
- Right-to-Farm laws – local law exists in Royalton
- Agri-tourism and open space lands are present opportunities
- Stone quarry
- Drainage – permanent easements are needed for maintenance in Hartland

Top 3 issues and challenges – environmental

- FMC/arsenic concerns
- Tire recycling and other “dumps” in the area

- Natural gas wells & testing

Top 3 assets and opportunities – Environmental

- Royalton Ravine
- Canal corridor
- Existing nature trails

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Land use & transportation issues and challenges include:

- More parks & open space resources are needed
- The Niagara Escarpment district in Cambria and future development
- Preserving farmland – 80% of existing land in Cambria is farmland – per Cambria Comp Plan
- Pendleton at about a 22% existing agricultural land
- Residents consider development pressure low at this point.
- Residents would like communities to retain their small town character.
- Pendleton – has many new single-family homes
- Impacts to the road network need to be considered as the area develops:
 - o Must consider a corridor’s capacity to handle large traffic volumes.
 - o Create 2nd outlets to developments to prevent overuse of roads.
 - o Campbell Boulevard has potential to serve as an economic development corridor.
 - o Bypass corridor near Lockport presents development opportunities.
 - o Plan streets as through streets, not dead ends.
 - o Need to plan ahead and consider alternative routes.
- Pendleton has a small percentage of commercial land use at present.

Land use & transportation opportunities

- The region has a rich agricultural heritage.
- Cambria presents a prime location for wineries.
- Pendleton and Lockport have town plans in place, and these should be incorporated in the countywide plan.

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

- Lockport and Pendleton are developing, and plans are in place to help manage growth.
- Agricultural preservation in Cambria is an important issue.
- There is a conflict between economic development vs. farmland preservation, particularly along highway corridors.

Top 3 assets and opportunities – land use & transportation

- Existing farmland
- Existing and new wine trails
- Lockport and Pendleton plans are in place.

Environmental issues and challenges include:

- Preserve the Niagara Escarpment.
- Maintain an appropriate balance between farmland for agriculture and wildlife habitat.
- Floodplain locations need to be studied in the context of future climate change issues.
- Preserve and protect Eighteen-Mile Creek and open spaces.
- Several brownfield sites

Environmental opportunities

- Capitalize on recreational opportunities provided by creeks and streams.
- Encourage growth of wine industry and grape production.

Top 3 issues & challenges, opportunities & assets

- Preserve the Niagara Escarpment.
- Need to better balance agricultural lands and development needs that result in the loss of wildlife habitat.
- Floodplain encroachment along creeks and streams needs to be resolved, notably along 18 Mile Creek.

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Key land use & transportation issues and challenges

- Maintain our vision (our visual character) as an agricultural community.
- Drainage issues are occurring and need to be resolved due to growing residential use and retracting agriculture
- Most residential development is along road fronts, creating difficulty for agricultural uses in behind parcels
- It would be advantageous to cluster residential areas
- How do we promote cluster developments and agricultural regions?
- What kind of incentives do we need to create this situation?
- We don't believe we have huge issues with regard to transportation
 - o One possible answer to one of the lesser transportation issues is the development of truck routes with proper maintenance of bridges and roads.
 - o A small issue is transportation needs for seniors
- The impediment created by the Army Corps of Engineers permitting for waterfront development is an issue.
- Raising lake levels may also hinder residential and waterfront development.
- Distance from NYS Thruway is a hindrance to development.

Land use & transportation opportunities include:

- We have two good main east-west routes (routes 18 & 104)
- An asset on the eastern end is the railway from/to Somerset area
- Olcott Harbor and Wilson Harbor have tremendous potential with regard to increased tourism.
- Stable/predictable weather patterns help opportunities in agriculture (grapes / wineries), industry (shipping), and energy (windmills)

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

- Maintaining the visual character as an agricultural community
- Transportation; truck routes along the Lake – servicing industry and providing access to markets
- Army Corps permit requirements and regulations are impediments to development along the Lake and water levels in Lake Ontario

Top 3 assets and opportunities – land use & transportation

- Routes 18 and 104 access
- Olcott and Wilson harbors for tourism and commerce
- Rail access, stable climate/weather and wind power resources

Assets and opportunities by area

Somerset:

1. Agriculture
2. Waterfront – industry
3. Wind resources

Newfane

1. Agri-tourism
2. Olcott Harbor – a deep harbor
3. Medical facility

Wilson

1. Agri-tourism
2. Wilson Harbor
3. Tuscarora State Park

Key environmental issues and challenges include:

- Agriculture waste is a concern and a problem with regards to the large corporate farms
- Brownfield locations need to be redeveloped.
- 18-mile Creek has its environmental issues that need to be resolved
 - Reflects the industrial origins of the communities
- Old service stations have fuel tanks that make the sale of these properties difficult and keeps them off the tax rolls
- Drainage and ditching programs must be consistent throughout the towns with a coordinated countywide program.

Environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Lake Ontario – for tourism
- Lake Ontario – for industry
- Lake Ontario – for recreation

Top 3 environmental issues and challenges

- Agricultural waste and runoff
- Brownfield locations need to be remediated and redeveloped
- Water quality and drainage, 18 Mile Creek, drainage ditches along roads a need for countywide consistency with stormwater

Top 3 environmental assets and opportunities

- Lake Ontario
- Agriculture and Agri-tourism
- Existing harbors and State Parks

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston,
Village of Youngstown

Key land use and transportation issues include:

- There doesn't seem to be much that is changing or happening in this area
 - There is some residential growth and the golf course in the Town of Lewiston
- Not much public transportation is available in this area
 - Plans to extend an existing bike / pedestrian path
 - Possible future cross-river ferry being considered
 - Marina in Youngstown has new owners
- All these communities are very similar
- Some development, mostly in the Town of Lewiston, but there is a lot of residential potential
- Available lands for residential development also exist in Youngstown and Porter

Land use and transportation opportunities include:

- River & lakefronts
- River & lake festivals
- Fort Niagara
- The ArtPark
- Residential development potential

Top 3 land use and transportation issues and challenges

- Not much change is occurring
- Lewiston has – bike path, golf course, ferry, marina opportunities
- Development opportunities also exist in Youngstown and Porter

Top 3 land use and transportation assets and opportunities

- River & lakefronts development
- ArtPark
- Fort Niagara

Environmental issues and challenges

- Lake Ontario Ordinance Works (LOOW) Project
- CWM (hazardous wastes)
- Modern Corporation solid wastes
- Cleanup, control & oversight needed on contaminated lands

Environmental opportunities

- Lake & riverfronts
- Agri-business

Top 3 environmental issues and challenges

- Ordinance works – cleanup, control and oversight needed

Top 3 environmental assets and opportunities

- Agriculture
- Lakefront
- Riverfront

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield,
City of North Tonawanda

City of Niagara Falls

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- Absentee landlords is a real problem in the City.
- LaSalle Expressway needs a bike path across communities
- Need more discussion over the LaSalle Expressway and future development
- The City has all transportation-related issues, including existing condition of streets and sidewalks and clearing snow from streets – these present problems especially for senior citizens
- Brownfields that span across municipal lines
 - Brownfield Opportunity Area lie adjacent to Niagara Falls boundary
- The Wal-Mart relocation to the Niagara Falls High School site
- Robert Moses Parkway redevelopment project creates issues in Downtown Niagara Falls

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Niagara Falls
- Upper & Lower River and riverfronts
- Cayuga Creek restoration – provides public access

Town of Wheatfield

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- 102nd Street landfill covers local waterfront
- Issues with the transition from dense to less dense developments is affecting community character
- Changes from open space to suburban uses
- Residential trends, we are becoming more suburban in character
- Need for mixed-use development in hamlets
- Buffers needed along streams and floodplains to restrict development
- Oz project presents concerns regarding dealing with RVs, traffic and campers
- Water quality issues related to stormwater drainage and sewer infrastructure from new development
- Bus services needed for northern towns.

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Riverfront – new park
- Farmers are a major asset, we need to keep agriculture viable, and protect farmland – using PDR's
- Niagara Falls Airbase

City of North Tonawanda

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- Water quality issues
- Waterfront and Niagara River / Tonawanda Creek – restoration areas are needed
- Brownfields present huge challenges involving:
 - o Redevelopment and cleanup
 - o Transition from waterfront areas
 - o Landfills in general like “Mt. Garbage”
 - o Need accurate information on brownfields, conditions, etc.
- Concerns with air quality issues related to new projects, for example potential biofuels plant proposed for Wheatfield
 - o Smokestack concerns with projects and impacts on air quality
- Water quality / sediment contamination / contamination from industrial dumps, sewers, stormwater

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Existing waterfront
- Preservation of open space and wildlife habitat
- Gratwick Park future uses
- Archeological resources of the area
- Wetlands preservation is needed for better flood control

Land Use Suitability Analysis

Land use within Niagara County in its most general sense is an umbrella topic under which many other topics, issues and opportunities need to be considered. This is reflected in the information provided as stakeholder input presented above. Topics related to land use include transportation; the natural environment; economic development; County services, facilities, infrastructure; education; and public health and safety. Because it is so all encompassing, special emphasis is placed on land use in this chapter and elsewhere in this Plan.

A focus on land use is typical for traditional comprehensive plans. This focus is also consistent with State Municipal Law that places local responsibility for land use decisions under “Home Rule” with cities, towns and villages. The countywide focus on land use as provided in this Plan is intended to guide County and regional decisions that may affect land use and provide background information to local communities for their own land use planning initiatives.

This Comprehensive Plan considers land use from different perspectives including more regional initiatives that are summarized in Chapter II. Existing land use patterns and trends identified in Chapter III can also be considered in addressing potential future land use conditions from a countywide perspective. Local land use planning initiatives are also discussed in Chapter IV. Information in this Chapter is countywide in its perspective and intended to fill in the gap in information between more regionally-oriented initiatives, such as the Erie/Niagara Regional Framework, the Niagara River Greenway Plan and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Plan, among others and local municipal plans.

In order to understand and appreciate the complexity of land use and related issues, an analysis was performed to provide information on possible future land use trends and scenarios in the County. A land use suitability analysis was undertaken in response to the identification of issues and concerns expressed throughout the planning process by the public and other stakeholders over uncontrolled sprawl and the potential implications it is having, or may have in the future, on communities throughout the County.

The suitability analysis included the use of GIS parcel data obtained as baseline data from County and State sources. GIS mapping techniques and scenario planning software were used to identify areas in the County that, based upon available data and information, appear to be most suitable for future growth, development, and redevelopment. Conversely, the analysis described below also identifies those areas of the County that appear to be most suitable for resource management, protection and/or conservation.

Methodology

Using *CommunityViz* as a scenario planning GIS software, a series of future development and resource suitability maps of Niagara County were produced. These maps provide significant value as a guide in making land use and related decisions on transportation, infrastructure and public services that cross municipal boundaries. The maps presented in this chapter graphically illustrate where investment in infrastructure and public services should be made at County, regional and local levels. The analysis can serve as a decision-making guide to help direct development/redevelopment to appropriate areas while at the same time managing and protecting the County's irreplaceable resources such as prime farmland, natural habitats, open spaces and rural character.

An interactive suitability analysis using *CommunityViz* was prepared to identify areas and clusters of parcels in Niagara County that appear to be well-suited for development or redevelopment based on available data. These areas are referred to as ***Potential Development/Redevelopment Areas***.

Conversely, the analysis provides valuable insight into areas of the County that are not well suited for development because they provide important value to Niagara County communities in other ways as potentially irreplaceable natural resources. These areas are referred to in the analysis as ***Natural Resource Areas***.

The results of the land use suitability analysis should be considered as a possible starting point for further discussions and decision-making at County, regional and local levels relative to land use, transportation, public infrastructure and service needs.

Potential Development/Redevelopment Areas – Areas considered potentially the most appropriate and/or most suitable for further growth and development, infill development, redevelopment and public investment. In general these areas exhibit:

- Consistency with local plans and zoning
- In-place or nearby infrastructure (water, sewer, road networks)

necessary to support development and redevelopment

- In-place or nearby facilities/services to support and facilitate growth and development such as emergency services (police and fire), schools and shopping areas

Natural Resource Areas – Areas considered the most appropriate for natural resource protection, conservation, management and/or resource enhancement/restoration emphasizing sustainable management practices. These areas exhibit:

- Large or contiguous environmentally sensitive lands such as 100-year floodplains, NYS DEC wetlands, Federal (NWI) wetlands greater than 10 acres, riparian corridors, significant woodlands, and wildlife habitats
- Farmlands in NYS agricultural districts containing prime, unique, and/or soils of Statewide importance
- Significant natural and geologic features

The suitability analysis includes 11 measures that can each be weighted dynamically using “slider bars” provided in the *CommunityViz* software. These measures are briefly summarized below.

1. ENVIRONMENT - Overlap with combined environmental constraints data -- a higher percentage of a parcel’s area overlapping environmentally sensitive areas results in a lower development suitability score. A lower score represents less suitability for development, but greater importance for resource protection. Environmentally sensitive areas considered include 100-year floodplains, agricultural district areas with prime agricultural soils, stream/riparian corridors, and wetlands including all State-designated (NYS DEC) wetlands and potential Federal (NWI) wetlands mapped as larger than 20 acres in size.

2. SMART GROWTH - Proximity to the currently defined potential development or redevelopment areas -- closer distances from individual parcels to identified growth center boundaries results in a higher development suitability score. These centers of existing, planned growth or future development areas (see Figure V-27) were obtained from local plans and/or discussions with community representatives. The use of these centers in the analysis is consistent with smart growth practices and principles of sustainability that emphasize the importance of directing development to existing locations where infrastructure and services are available.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE - Overlap with sewer districts (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if in a sewer district or the lowest score (0) if they are not.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE - Proximity to major roads -- parcels get a higher score if it is near a major road primarily defined as State roadways.

5. CURRENT SOCIAL FABRIC - Proximity to existing community anchors – defined as parcels with NYS property class codes of 452 (Neighborhood Shopping Centers), 454 (Large Retail Food), 460-469 (Banks and Office Buildings), 480-489 (Multi-Use), 540-549 (Indoor Sports), 611 (Libraries), 640-642 (Health), 652 (Government Offices), 681 (Cultural Facilities), 710-714 (Manufacturing except for 715). These uses provide existing local daily forms of services and by their presence may encourage further growth or development.

6. AVAILABLE SPACE - Vacant (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if

they have a “vacant” NYS property class code (300 - 399). Otherwise, they get the lowest score (0). Vacant parcels have development/redevelopment potential.

7. PUBLIC SERVICE - Available School Capacity -- parcels get higher scores if they are located in school districts with higher percentages of available school capacity. Three school districts did not have recent capacity data for 2006-2007. A 2004-2005 value was used for the Star Point district. A value of 80.65% was calculated for the Newfane district based on 2005-2006 Middle School/ High School data. A placeholder “best guess” value was used for the Royalton/ Hartland district. The assumption is that available school capacity may facilitate or not hinder development.

8. PUBLIC SERVICE - Proximity to Fire Stations -- parcels get higher scores if they are near existing fire stations. Often fire stations are near other important public services that may facilitate development.

9. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS - Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ) - TAZ based population projections -- parcels get higher scores if located in TAZ’s with higher percentages of projected population growth (see Figures V-20, 21 and 22). This measure uses the TAZ-based population projection data from the Niagara County MPO (GBNRTC).

10. AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION - (Yes/No) Parcels get the lowest score (0) if they are located in an agricultural district. Otherwise they get the highest score (100). The assumption is that agricultural districts exist because of the value provided by existing agriculture and the recognized need to protect these areas from fragmented development.

11. CURRENT ZONING - Appropriate zoning designation (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if zoned or “near” commercial (not highway commercial), business, light industrial (LI in urban/suburban areas, LI and General I in rural areas), mixed use, multi-family residential, or PUD (except Somerset). Parcels with environmental remediation sites are excluded from the subset of appropriately zoned parcels. However, these locations have been mapped as provided in the countywide suitability maps. “Near” is defined as parcels overlapping the following buffer distances of appropriately zoned parcels: 1/16-mile in urban areas, 1/8-mile in suburban areas, and 1/4-mile in rural areas as defined by the countywide community type matrix provided in this chapter. All parcels not zoned or near appropriate zoning are given the lowest score (0).

Suitability Results

The results of the *CommunityViz* analysis are presented as a series of suitability maps beginning with Figure V-5. Figure V-5 is a composite map of the entire County that conceptually illustrates areas considered to be most suitable for development based upon the analysis of the weighted measures identified above. The analysis also identified those areas that may be most suitable for some form of resource protection depending on suitability scores.

Parcels are scored on a basis of 1 to 100 points and divided into ten levels of conceptual development suitability as identified in Figure V-5. Scores at the lowest end of a scale, for example from 1 to 30 are considered the least suitable

or appropriate for development/redevelopment primarily due to the presence of environmentally sensitive resources. These resources may include floodplains, wetlands or agriculturally important soils among others. The lower the suitability score, the more important these resources may need to be considered for some form of protection, management, restoration and/or enhancement. These decisions may be most appropriately done by and among local municipalities, perhaps as intermunicipal agreements, and implemented through municipal comprehensive planning processes, zoning ordinances and other land use regulations.

Parcels receiving the highest scores are considered to be the most suitable for development possibly due to the lack of environmentally sensitive resources or the presence of other factors considered capable of facilitating development such as the presence of infrastructure or proximity to existing services. Scores in the range of, for example, 70 to 100 are considered most suitable for development and redevelopment. In most cases the highest scores are in and around already developed areas consistent with smart growth principles.

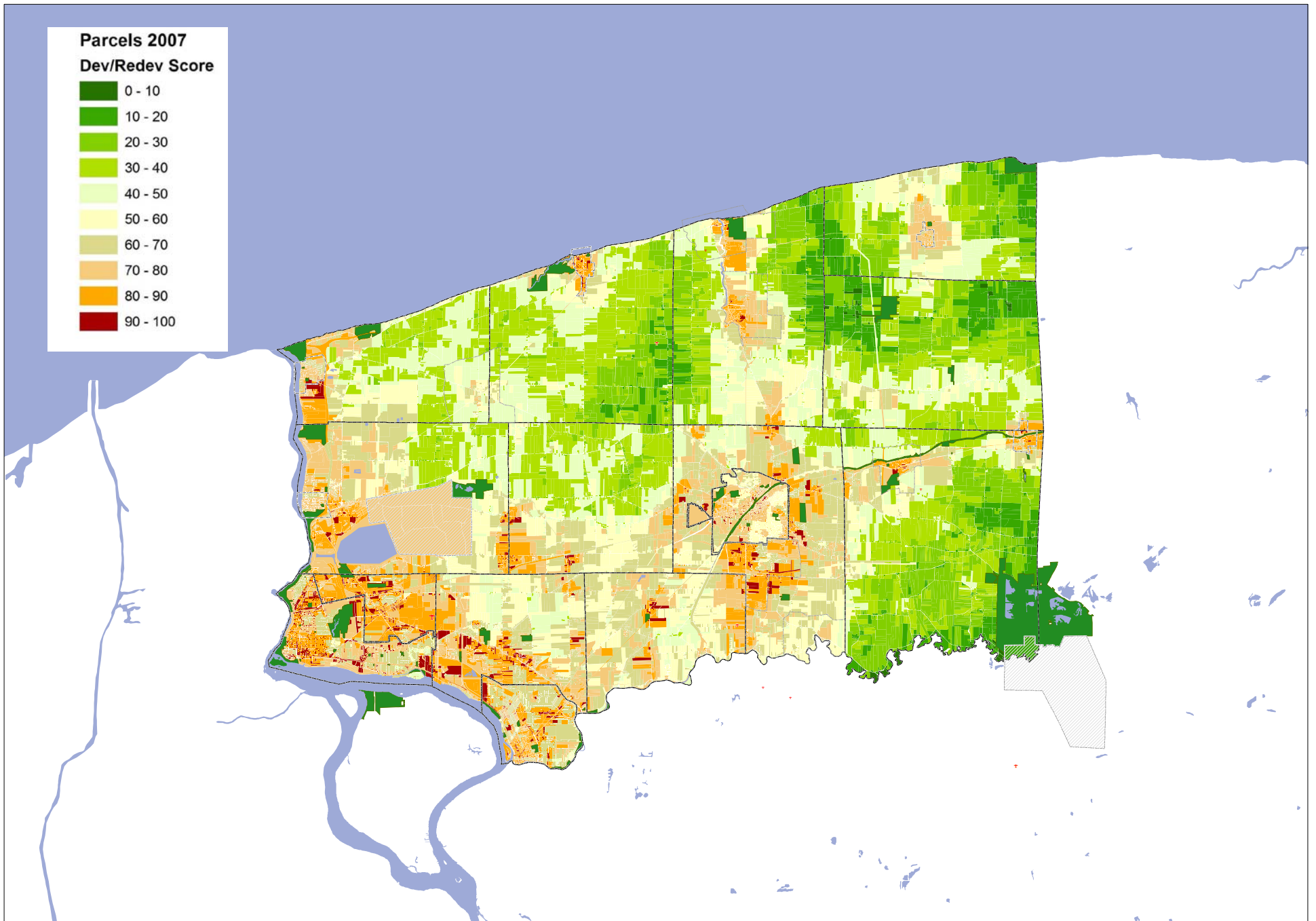
Using the Suitability Maps

As stated previously, the suitability maps are intended to be a starting point for more advanced planning and discussions at local, subregional and regional levels. This information is also intended to provide guidance for decision makers and can be used by County Planners to assist in local resource protection efforts and by others including the County Planning Board as part of its review of private sector projects. This information will also be useful at the County level, for example as updates are made to the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and as decisions are made with regards to where capital improvements in public infrastructure or services should occur.

The analysis is not intended to indicate where or how individual parcels or properties should be developed. Local zoning should dictate those uses, but the maps may be used by local municipalities in updating their plans and ordinances. The suitability maps are most useful to illustrate where larger scale development, for example residential subdivisions may be suitable. The maps may also be useful in determining the cumulative effects of development.

Large scale development often requires new or expanded support infrastructure (roads, sewer, water) and services (education, fire, police, retail). Initially developers may cover the cost for installation of infrastructure, but long term maintenance and upgrades often fall upon local and County governments. By directing and encouraging development to those areas most suitable to it these costs can be contained or reduced to the benefit of taxpayers. Likewise potentially adverse cumulative effects on the environment from development can be mitigated.

Consistent with sustainable development and resource protection principles, development and redevelopment should be directed to locations within or adjacent to existing developed urban, suburban and rural areas where infrastructure and services are already in place or relatively easy to access or upgrade. The suitability maps illustrate these locations nicely as locations that rank higher in suitability score and trend in colors ranging from tan to red. Areas illustrated on the suitability maps in various shades of green are considered less suitable for large-scale development involving multiple acres than those areas shown in various shades of



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tan, orange and red. The darker the shade of green the less suitable that area may be for development, but more important for resource protection.

Greenfield locations for example, tracts of vacant farmland in rural areas, should not be prioritized for development until other alternatives, such as redevelopment of existing vacant areas or underutilized areas, including brownfields have been considered. Leapfrog development patterns, including linear development along highway frontage should be discouraged in favor of more concentrated and concentric forms of development around existing communities where access to highways and services can be provided from fewer curb cuts and access points. Concentrated development will also protect the capacity levels and safety of existing roadways from being compromised.

Figures V-5a, 5b and 5c conceptually show the suitability for development/ redevelopment of rural, suburban and urban communities. As part of the planning process and to determine how different planning principles and techniques could possibly be applied to various development conditions and scenarios, existing communities in the County were each placed into one of six categories for planning purposes only as shown in Table V-2. These categories identify the overall character of each of the 20 municipalities in the County as being either urban, suburban or rural in nature.

The relative stage of development that each community may be experiencing is also categorized in table V-2 in very general terms ranging from being mostly developed, to communities experiencing development, and those that are relatively undeveloped. These categories are generally consistent with similar categories in the Framework for Regional Growth. Figures V-6 through V-16 provide additional background mapping specific to each of the 11 measures factored into the suitability analysis. Figures V-17 through V-19 summarize the results of the suitability analysis in terms of vacant and agricultural lands. Figures 20, 21 and 22 identify different population projection scenarios for the County based on no growth, some growth (Cornell University) and moderate growth (MPO), respectively.

Table V-2 Land Use & Development Matrix

	<i>Developed</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Undeveloped</i>
<i>Urban</i>	C. Lockport C. Niagara Falls C. N. Tonawanda	N/A	N/A
<i>Suburban</i>	T. Niagara V. Lewiston V. Youngstown	T. Lockport T. Wheatfield T. Pendleton	N/A
<i>Rural</i>	V. Barker V. Middleport V. Wilson	T. Cambria T. Lewiston T. Newfane T. Porter T. Wilson	T. Hartland T. Royalton T. Somerset

C = City, V = Village, T = Town

Strategies

Three overarching strategies are discussed below with regards to land use, transportation and environmental resources within Niagara County. These include:

- 1.) Land use policies and decision-making at County levels need to be based on the principles and practices promoted under sustainability and smart growth.
- 2.) Transportation policies and decision-making likewise need to consider sustainable practices consistent with Federal and State agencies, including the New York State Department of Transportation as well as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) that promote smart growth practices.
- 3.) In addition, this Plan also encourages greater physical connectivity among communities throughout the County with linkages to areas beyond its borders as a means of enhancing transportation choices by creating interconnected systems served by transportation alternatives, both motorized and non-motorized. The concept of improved connectivity also relates to the protection and management of green infrastructure across the County as a way of better integrating natural systems and natural resources into decision-making processes and land use planning.

Each of these strategies is discussed in more detail as follows and illustrated in a series of maps beginning with Figure V-23 which locates ongoing initiatives within the County that are directly related to the Niagara River and Erie Canal corridor initiatives. Figure V-24 illustrates existing connections among communities via roads, trails and transit opportunities. Figure V-25 illustrates important corridors in the County and existing destinations of interest. Figures V-26 and V-27 are provided to illustrate existing and potential connections among various points of origin and destination in and around communities throughout Niagara County and between areas of potential growth, development and resource protection.

Sustainable Principles and Practices

Sustainability and smart growth are defined in many different ways, but regardless of how each is defined, the concepts are based on sound and, in most cases, traditional principles of community planning and design. These principles focus on enhancing the quality of life of communities by achieving a more sustainable balance between human needs and the integrity of natural systems.

Principles of sustainability are becoming widely known and have been adopted in recent years by states, counties and local communities throughout the U.S., Canada and elsewhere. These principles support an emphasis on development and redevelopment in recognized existing centers of population over greenfield or undeveloped locations whenever and wherever possible.

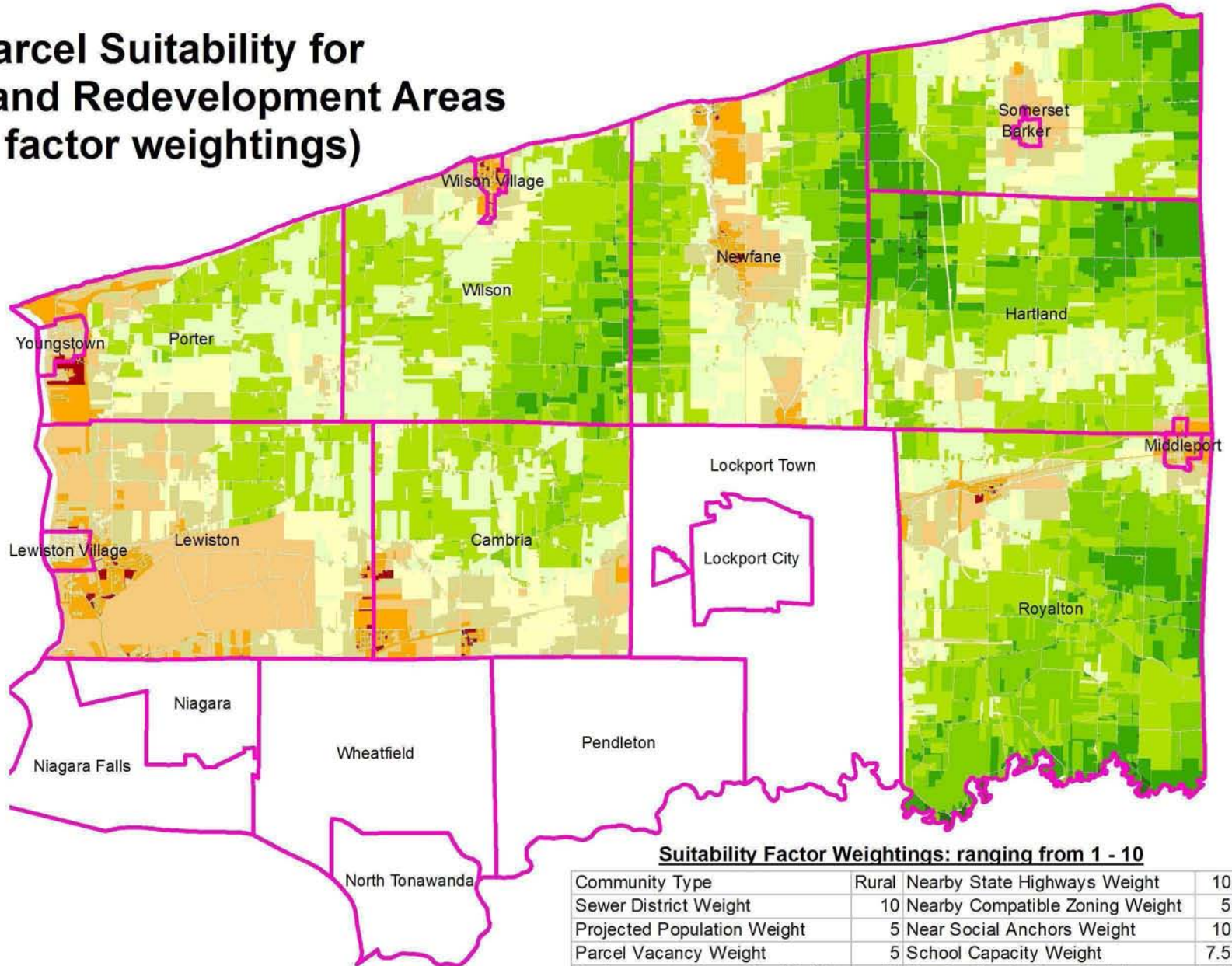
This Comprehensive Plan supports and encourages the principles and practices of sustainability and smart growth. In general, the 10 points that follow briefly summarize the basic tenets of smart growth. Over the years these have evolved



**Encourage
Sustainable
Principles**

Rural Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

Parcels 2007 Dev/Redev Score



Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

Community Type	Rural	Nearby State Highways Weight	10
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	5
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	10
Parcel Vacancy Weight	5	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	10
Near Sketch Areas Weight	10	Ag Protection Weight	10

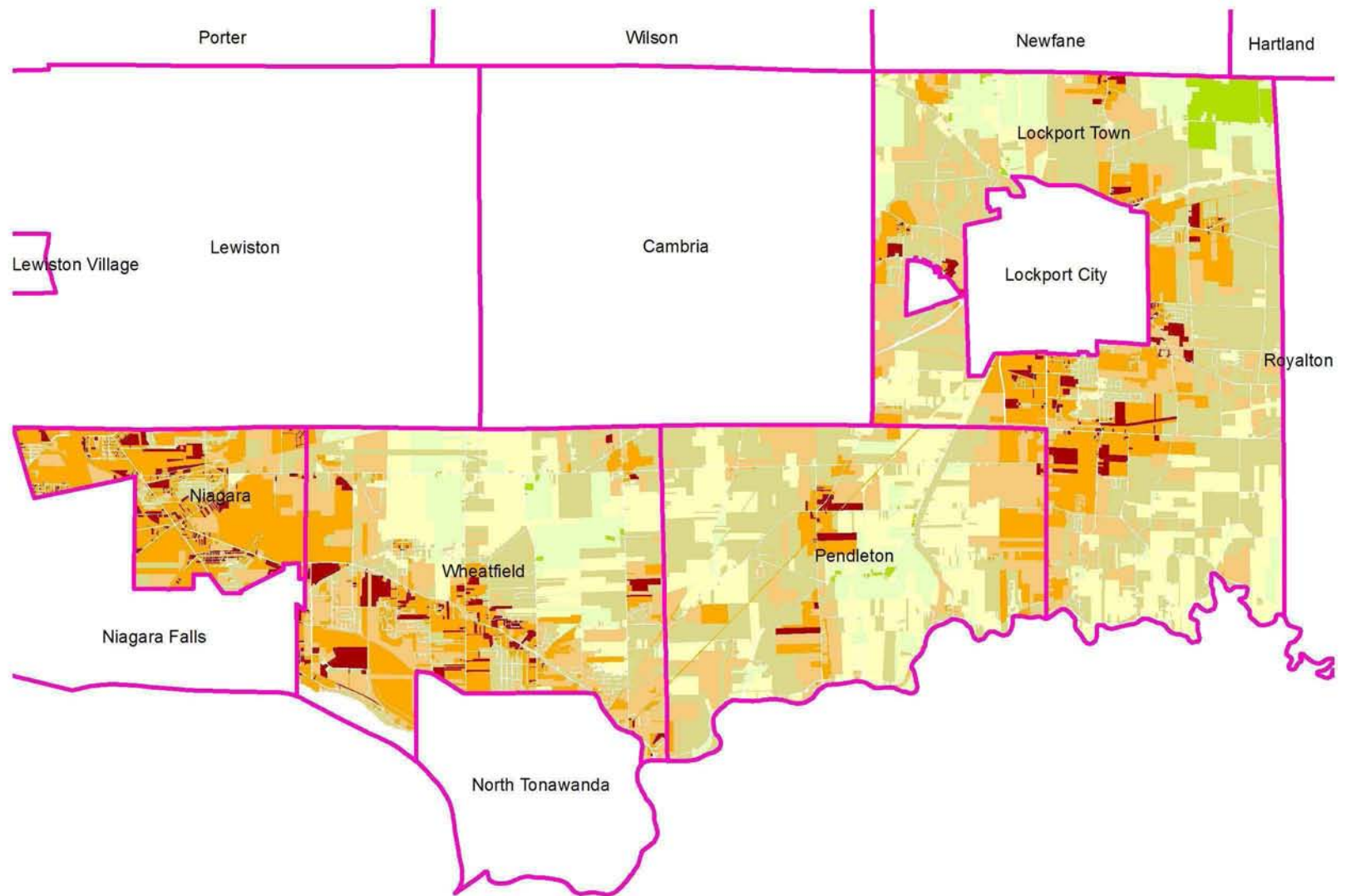


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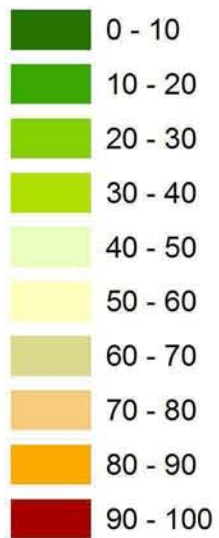
Rural Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Figure V.5a

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Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



Suburban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

Community Type	Suburban	Nearby State Highways Weight	7.5
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	10
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	7.5
Parcel Vacancy Weight	7.5	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	7.5
Near Sketch Areas Weight	7.5	Ag Protection Weight	7.5

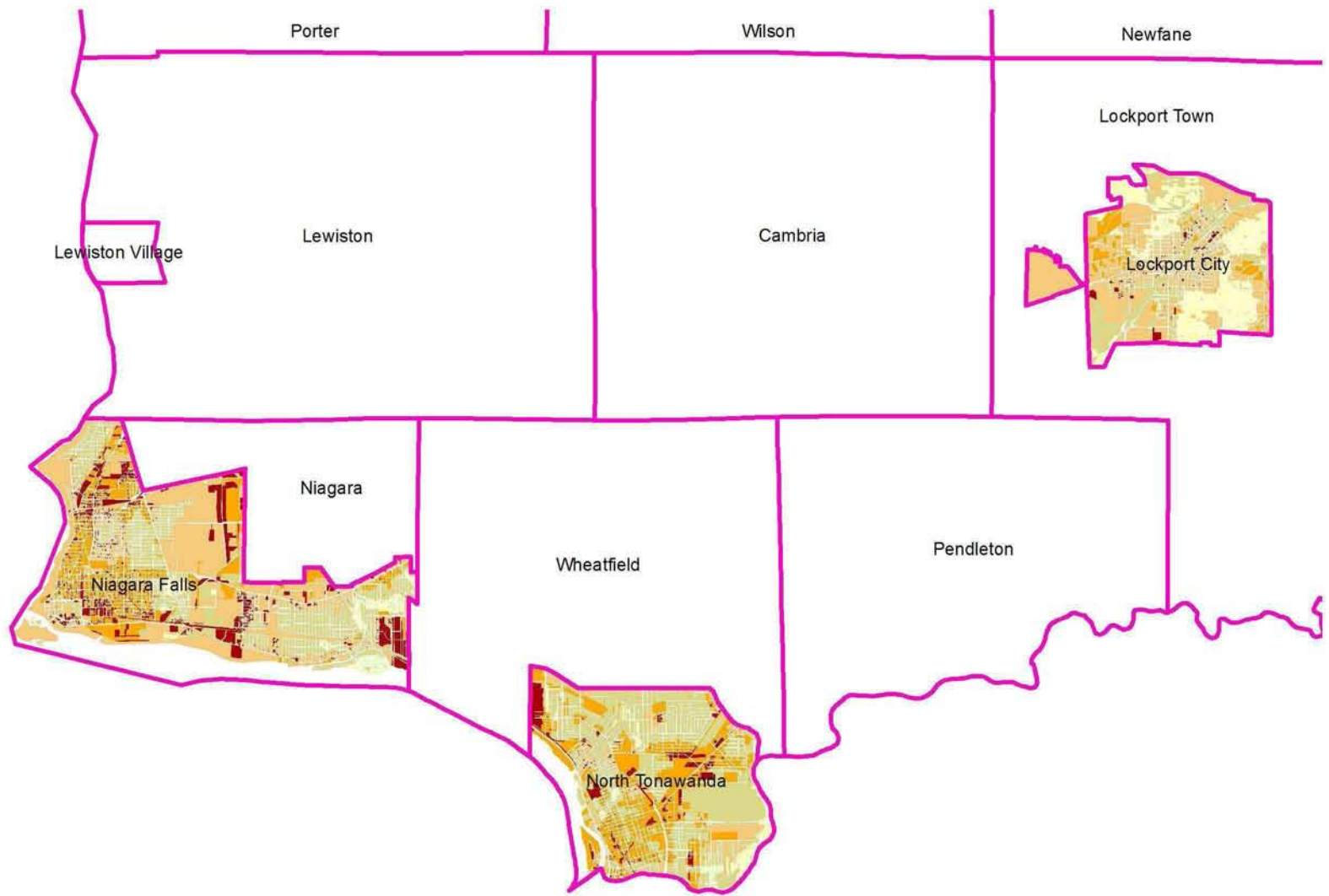


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Suburban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

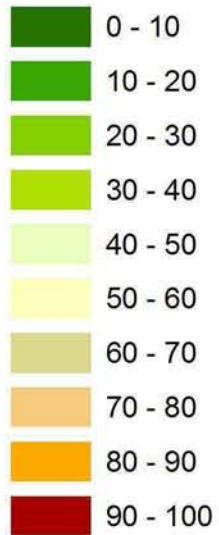
Figure V.5b

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Parcels 2007

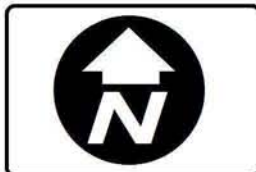
Dev/Redev Score



Urban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

Community Type	Urban	Nearby State Highways Weight	5
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	10
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	5
Parcel Vacancy Weight	10	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	5
Near Sketch Areas Weight	5	Ag Protection Weight	5



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Urban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Figure V.5c

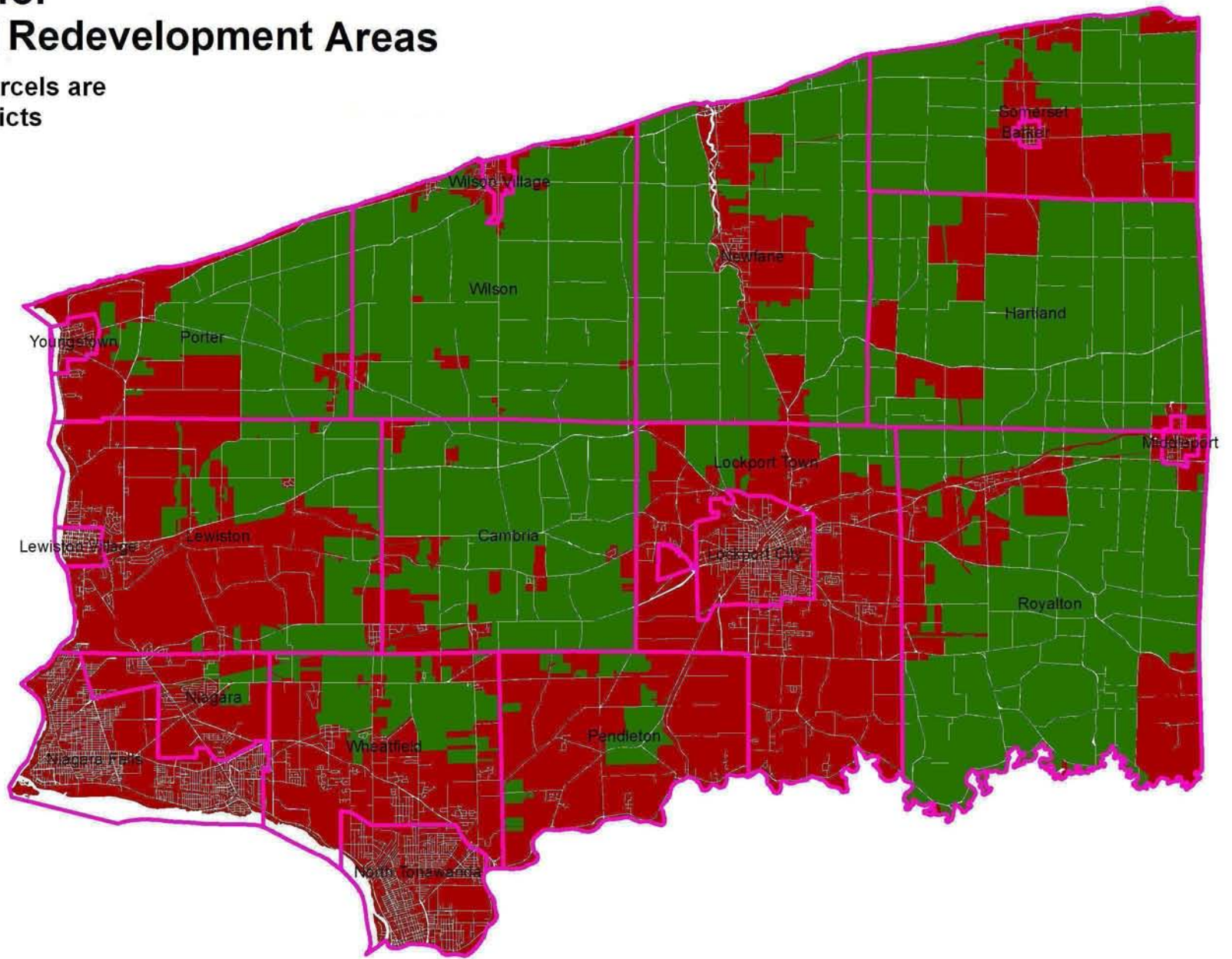
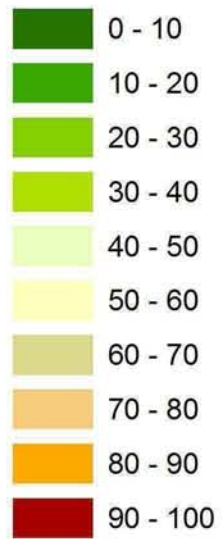
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not parcels are located in Agricultural Districts

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Location of Agricultural Districts

Figure
V.6

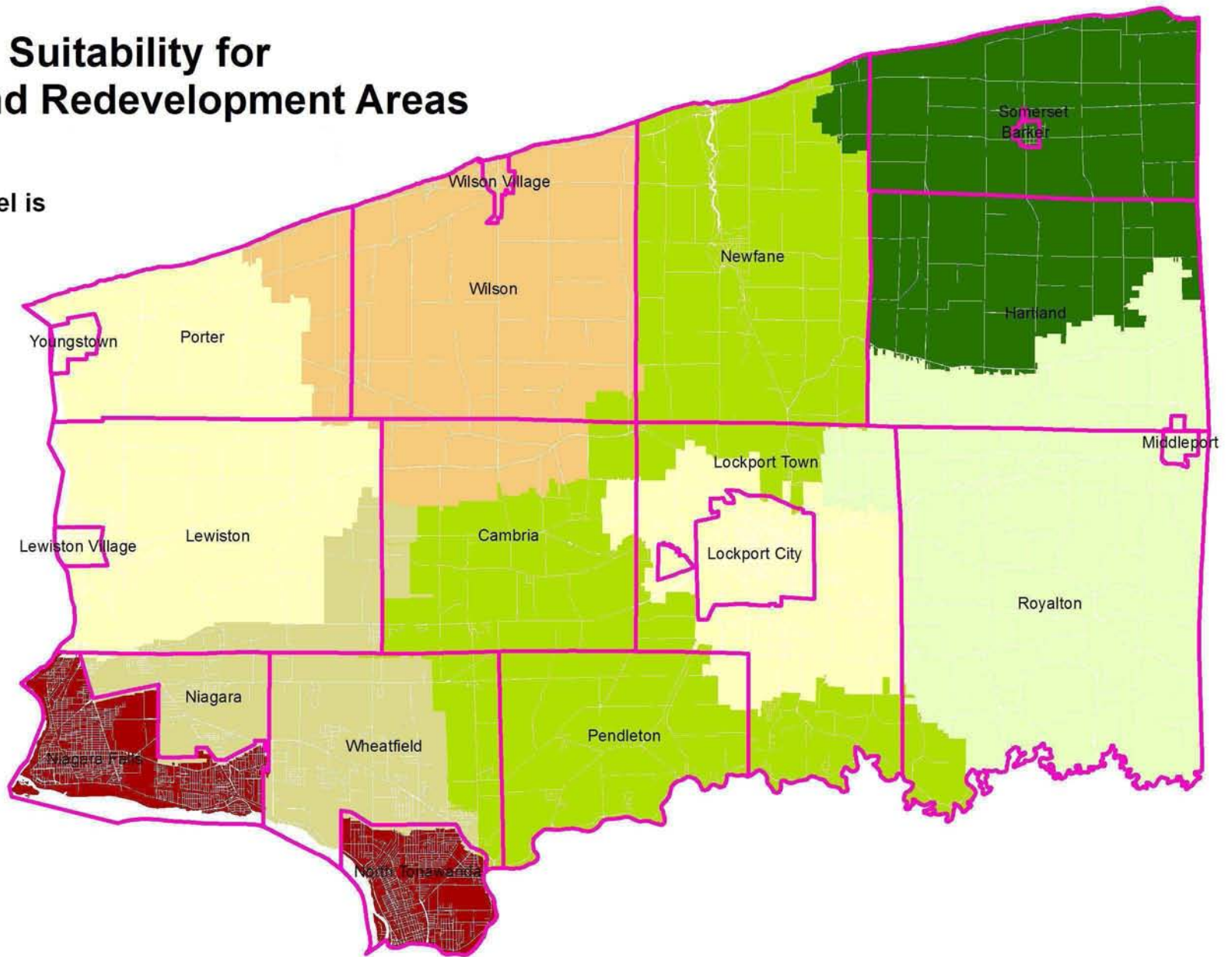
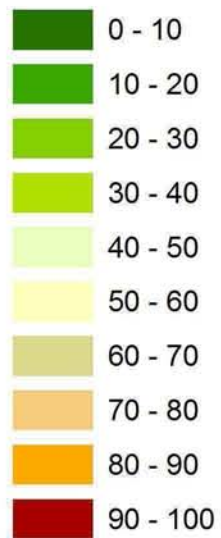
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the available capacity of the school district in which the parcel is located

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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**Parcel Suitability for
 Development and Redevelopment Areas
 Based on School District Capacity**

**Figure
 V.7**

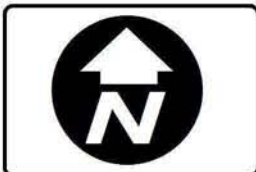
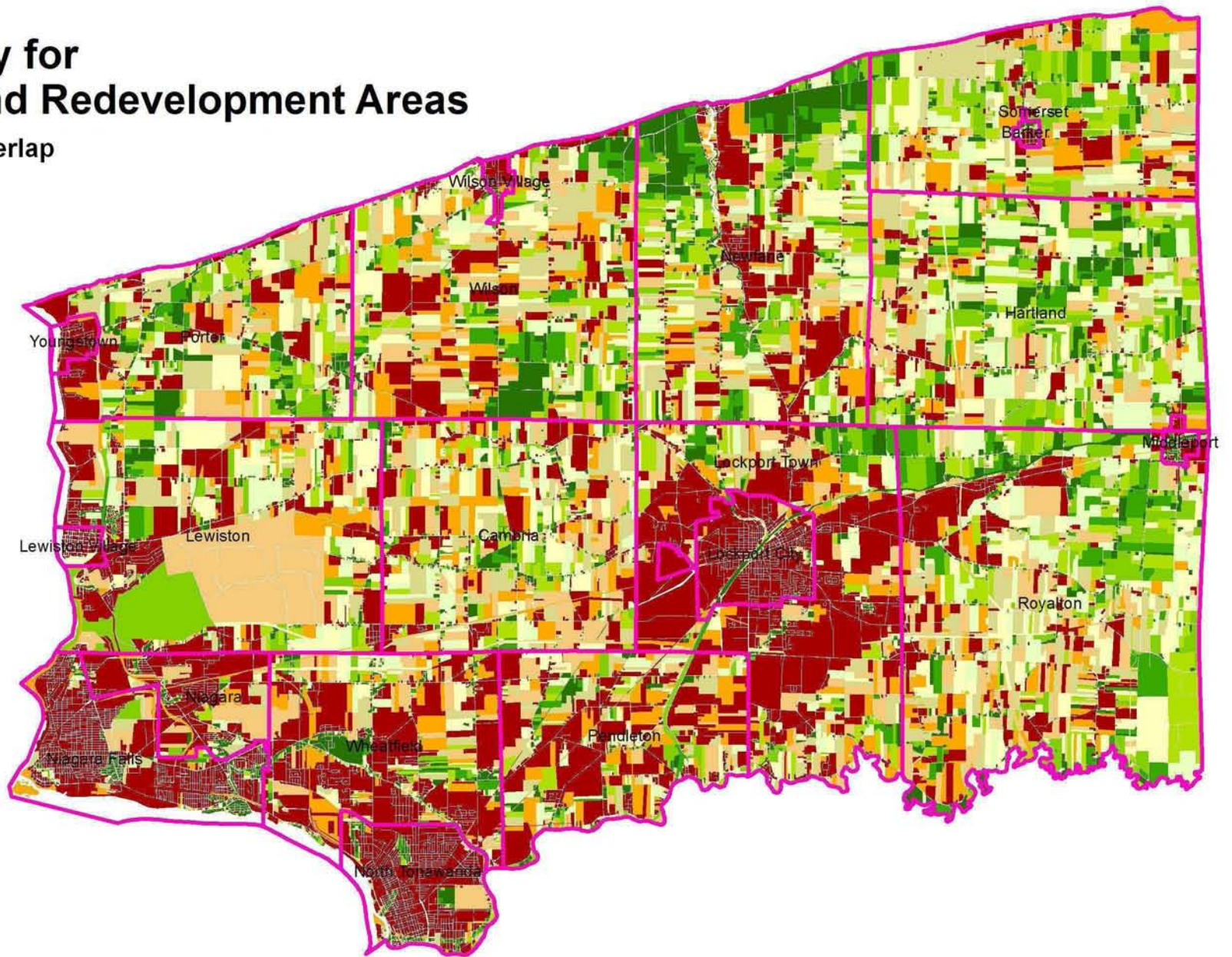
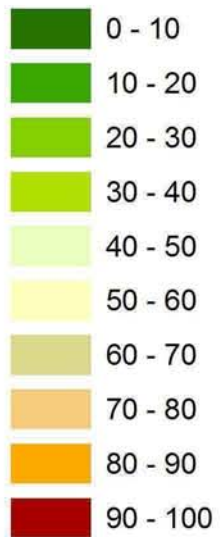
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the parcel's overlap with important natural resources

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Natural Resources

Figure
V.8

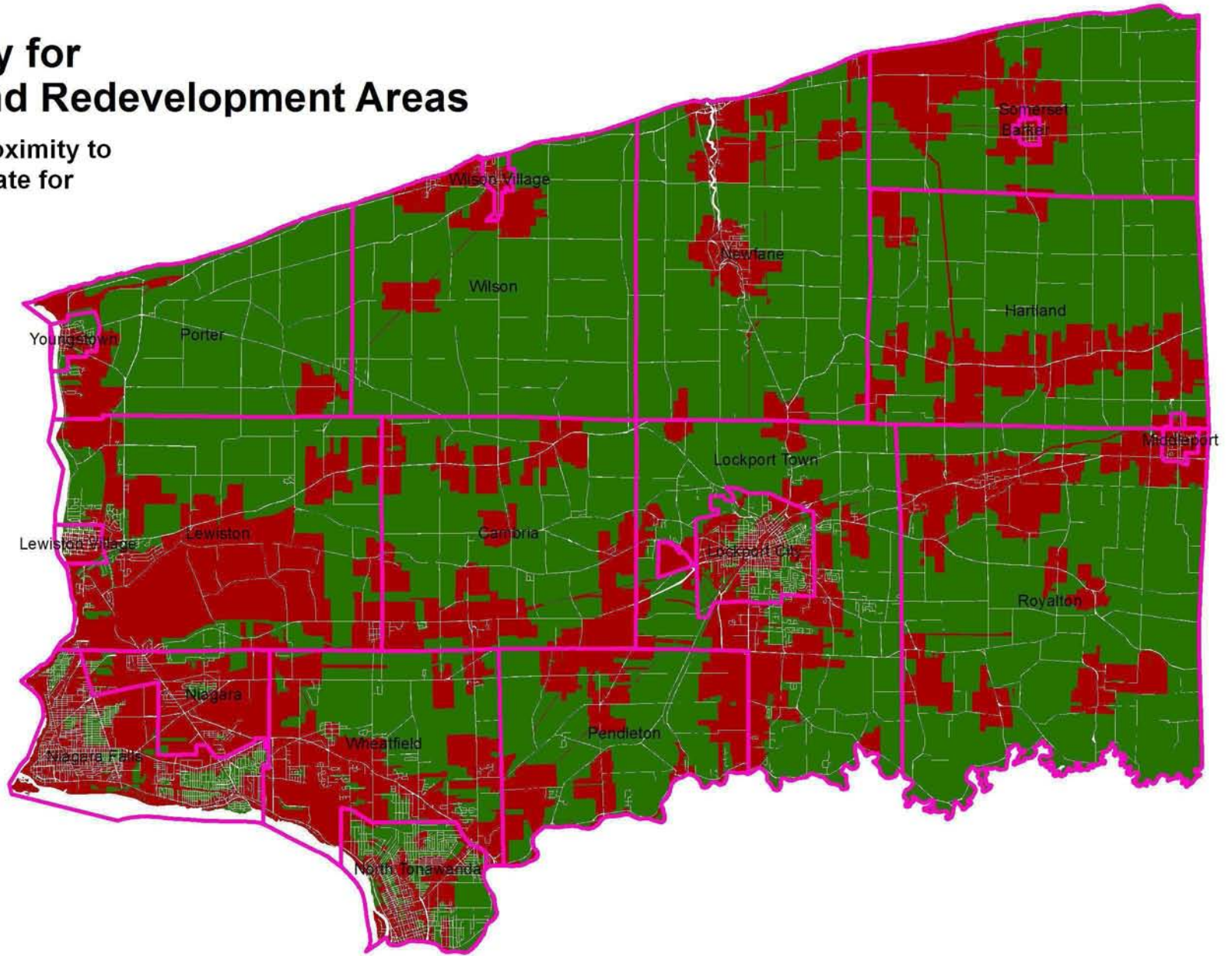
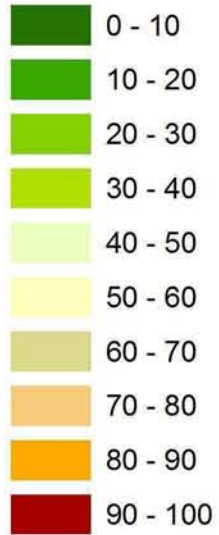
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the parcel's proximity to zoning districts appropriate for further development

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Compatible Zoning

Figure
V.9

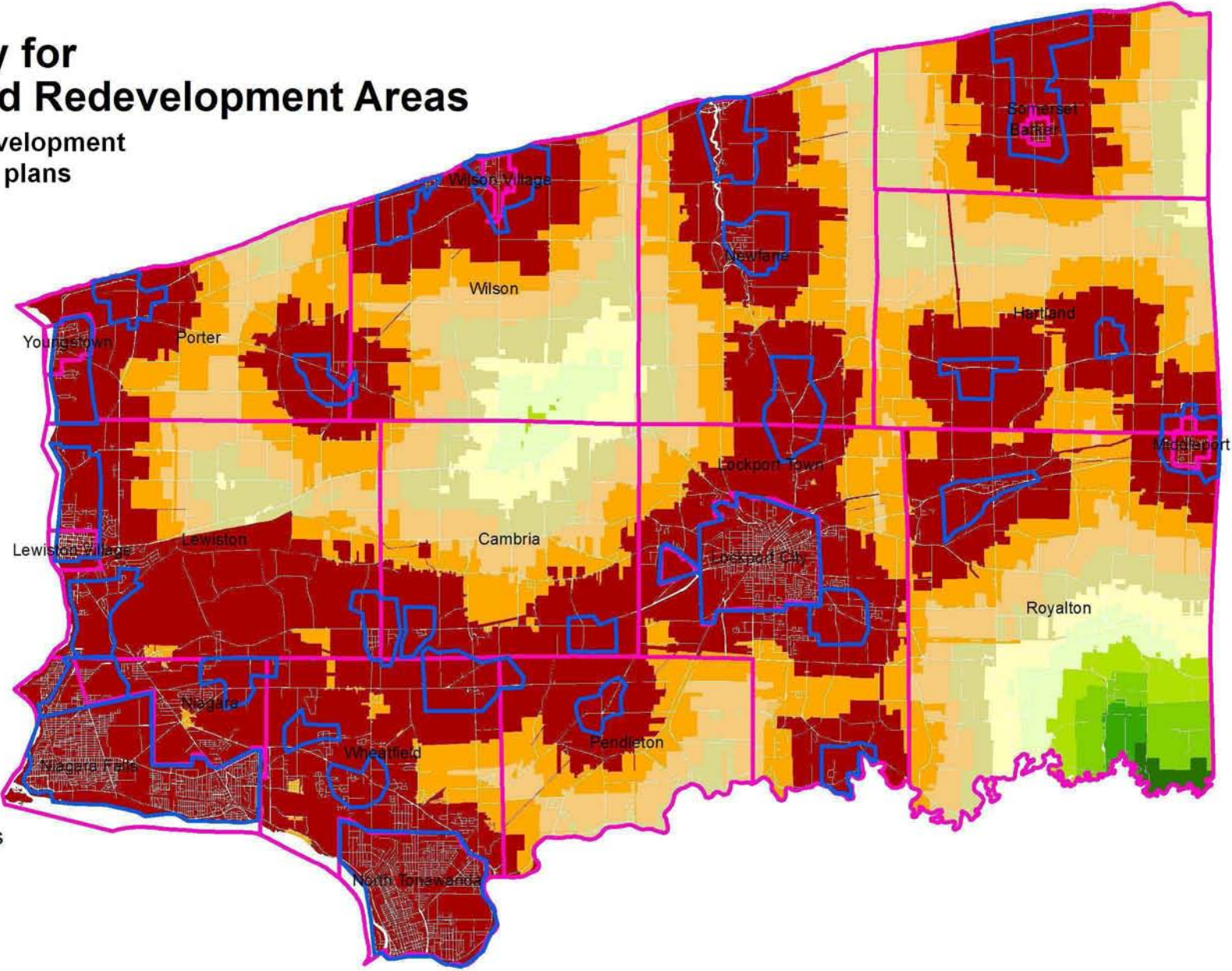
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on proximity to development centers identified in local plans

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score

- 0 - 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60
- 60 - 70
- 70 - 80
- 80 - 90
- 90 - 100
- Sketch Dev/Redev Areas



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**Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Currently Planned Centers**

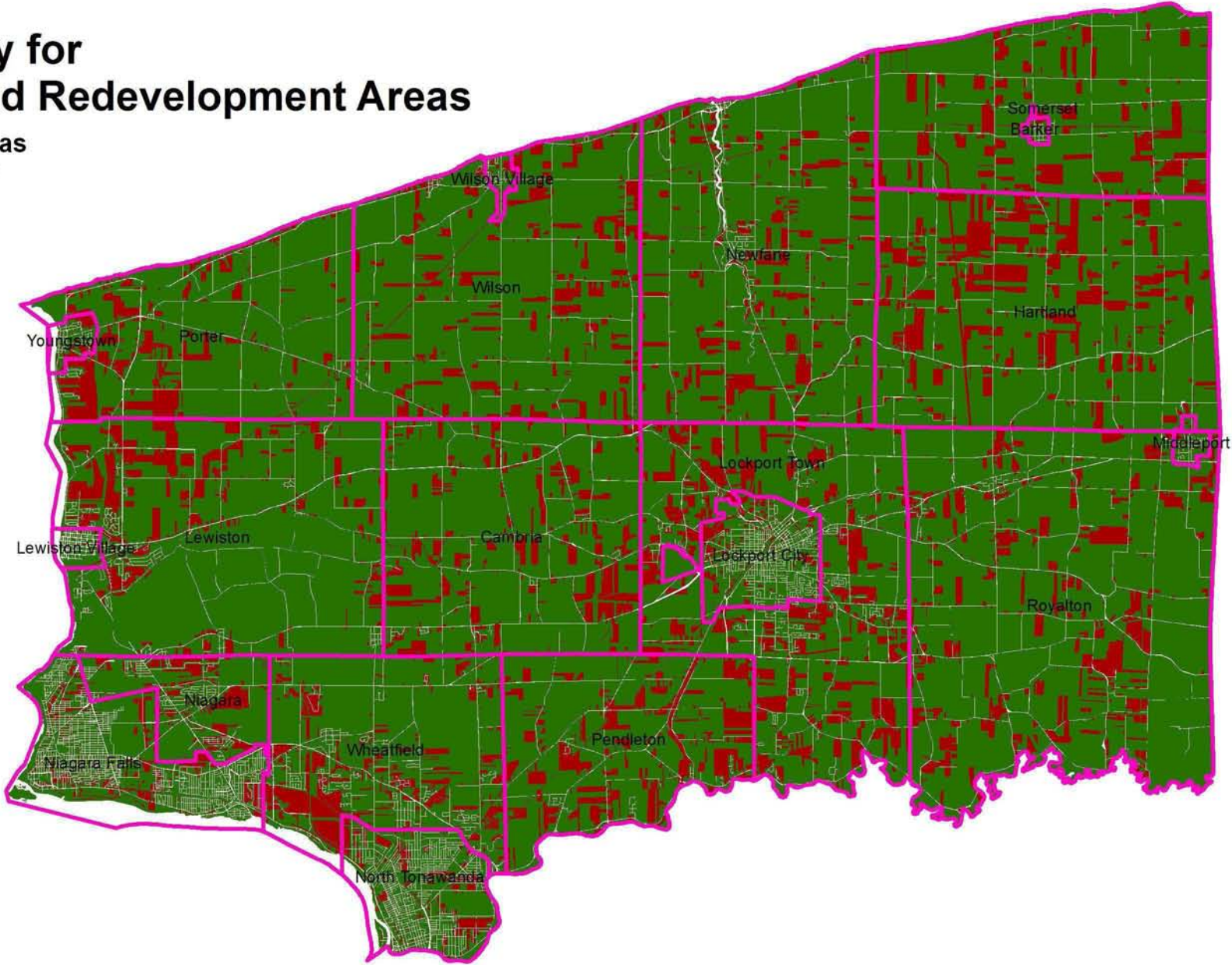
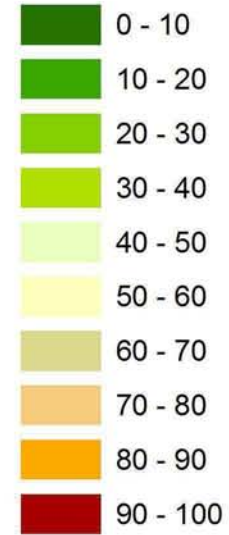
**Figure
V.10**

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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcel's status as "vacant", as identified by Property Class Code

Parcels 2007 Dev/Redev Score



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**Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Vacant status**

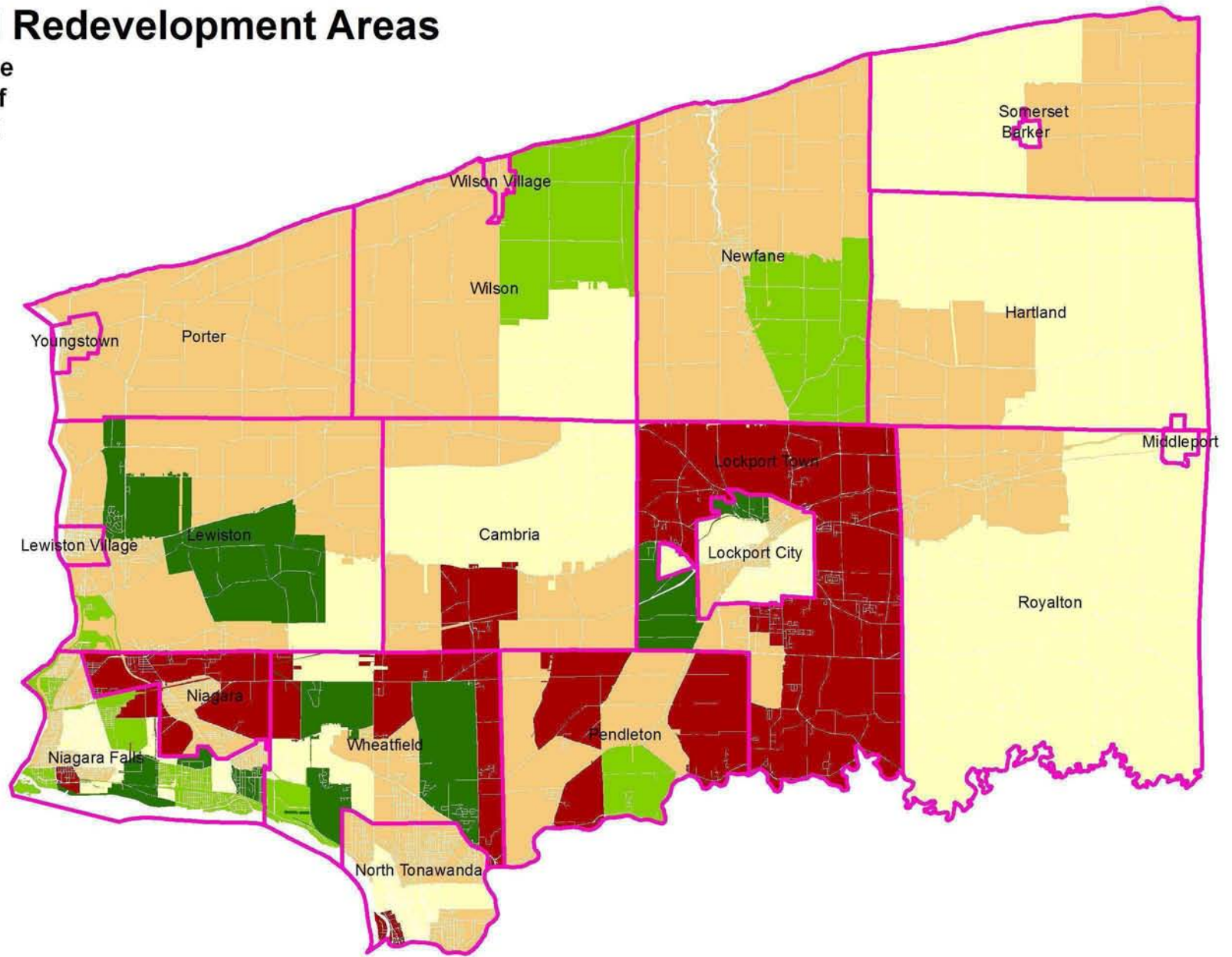
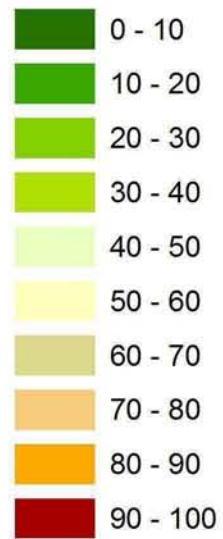
**Figure
V.11**

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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not the parcel is located in a part of the County that is expected to see population growth
(Using GBNRTC's 2025 projections)

Parcels 2007 Dev/Redev Score



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**Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Projected Population Growth**

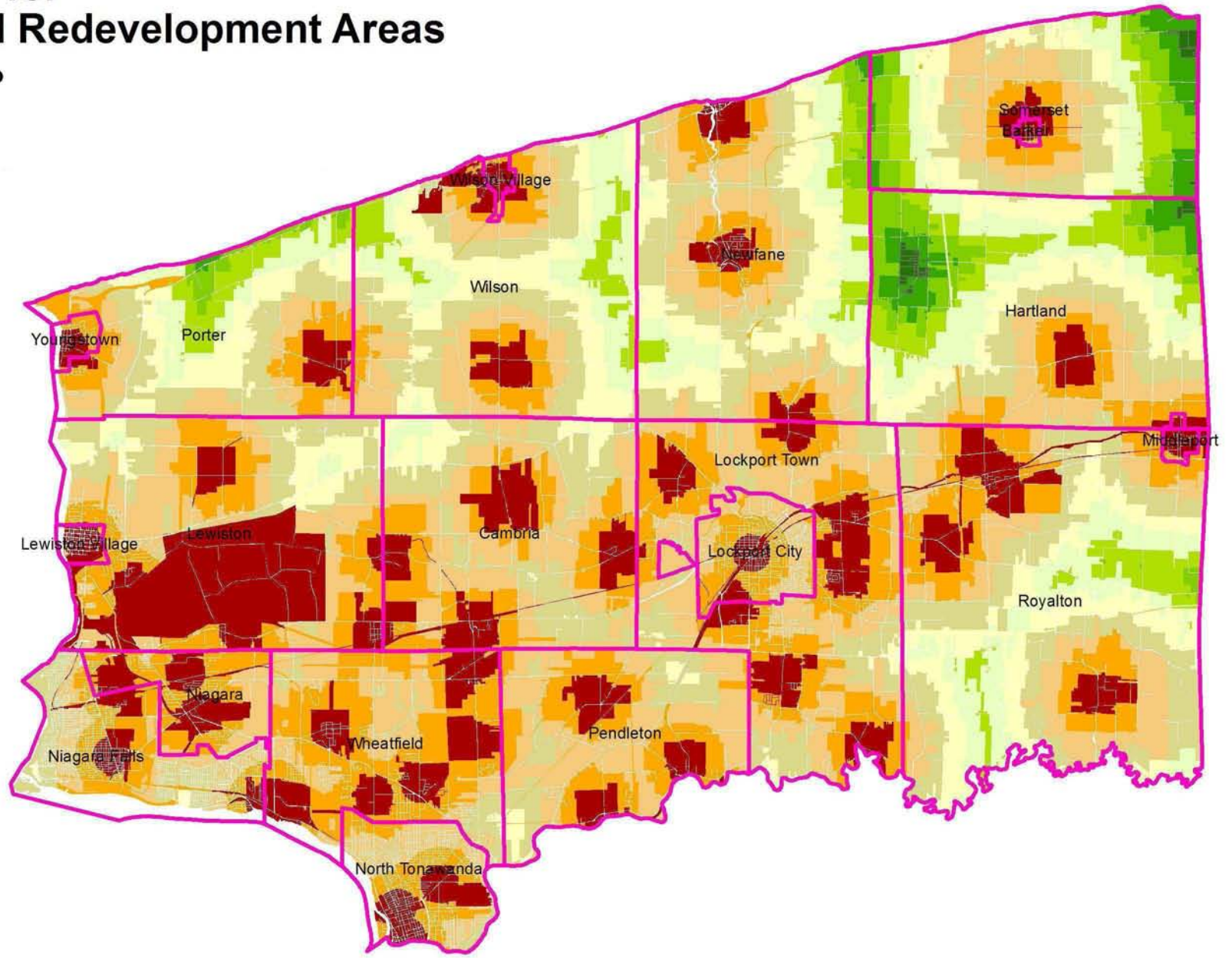
**Figure
V.12**

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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to fire stations

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Dev/Redev Score



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**Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Fire Stations**

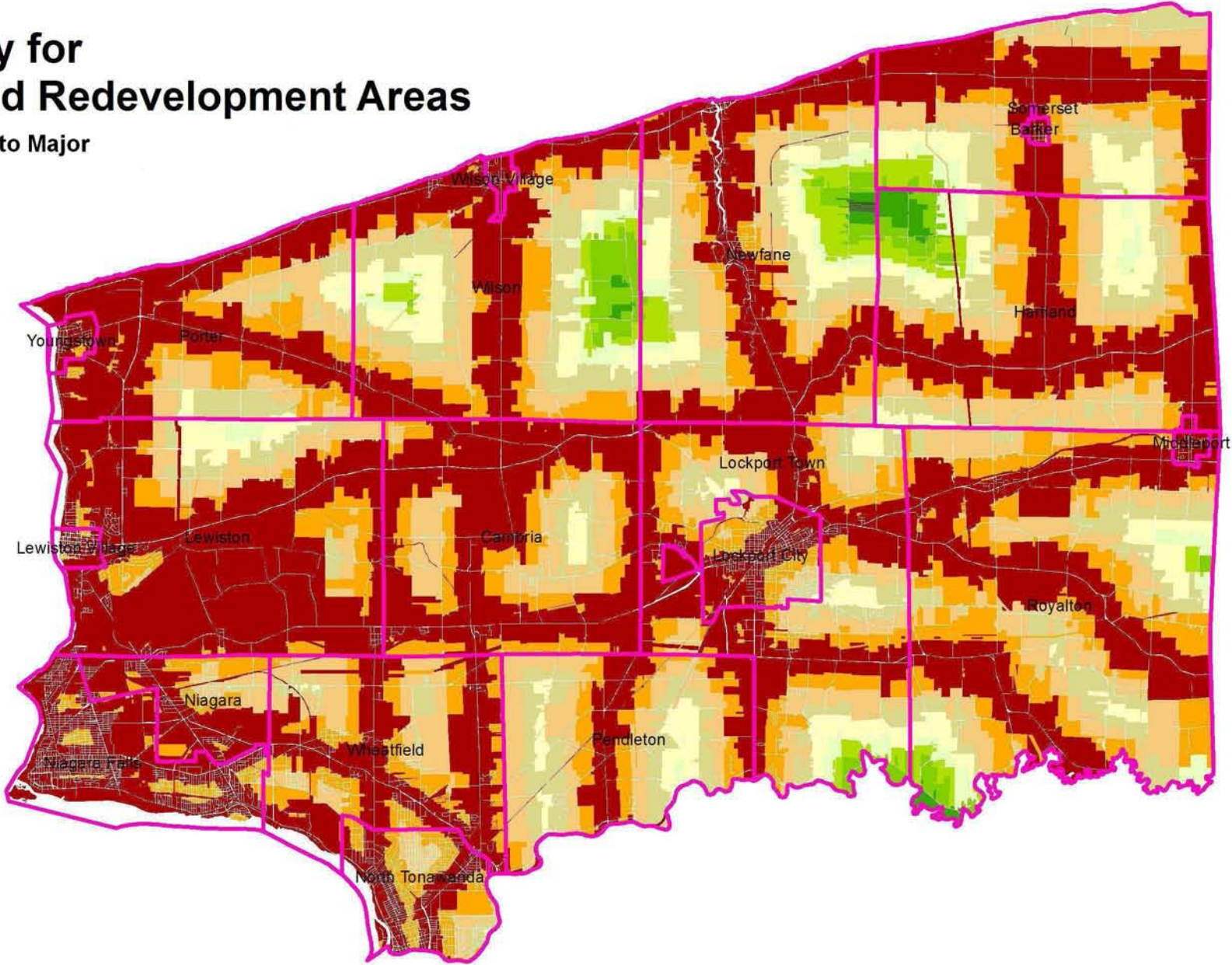
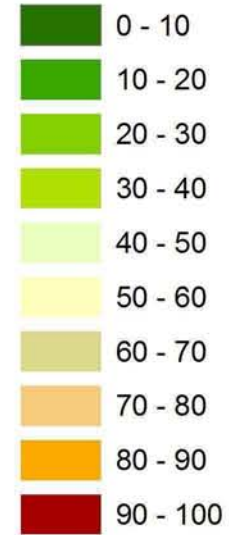
**Figure
V.13**

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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to Major Roads

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Major Roads

Figure
V.14

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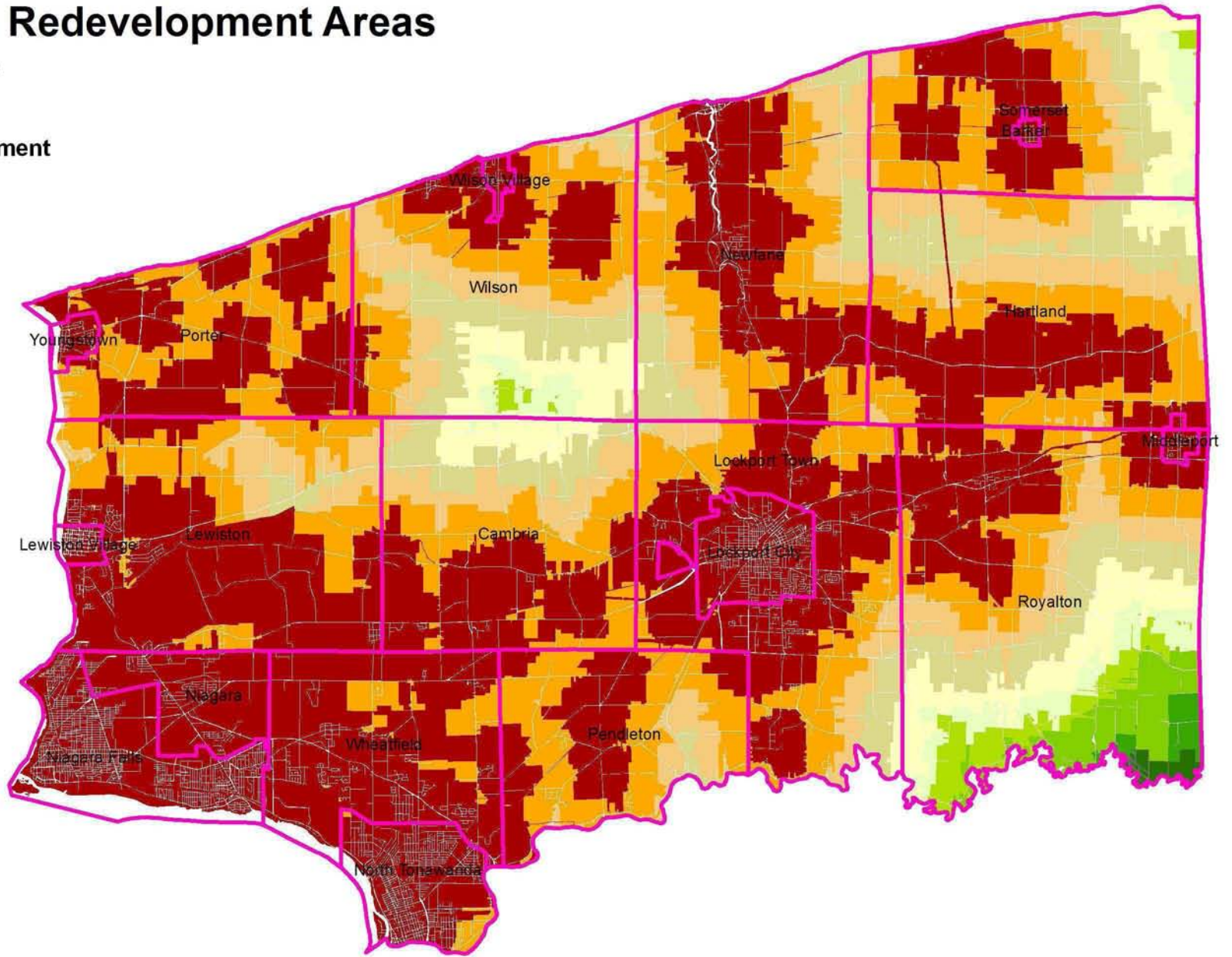
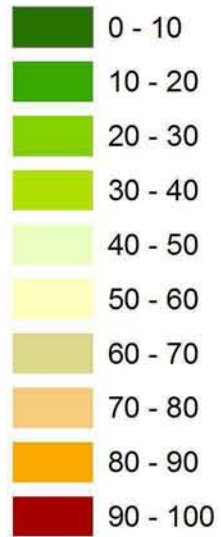
Parcel Suitability for

Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to existing social anchors (for example, shopping centers, hospitals, libraries and government offices)

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Existing Social Fabric

Figure
V.15

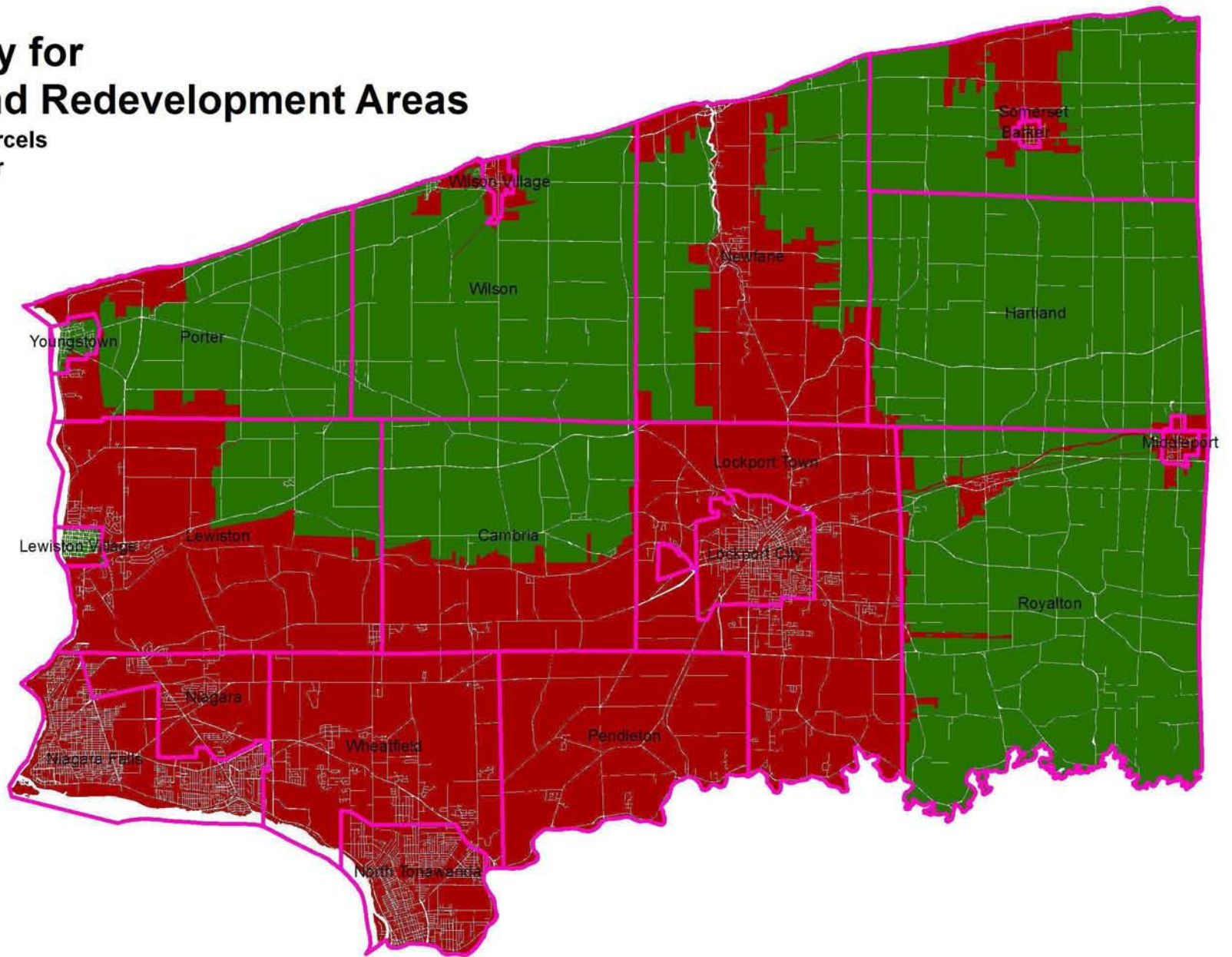
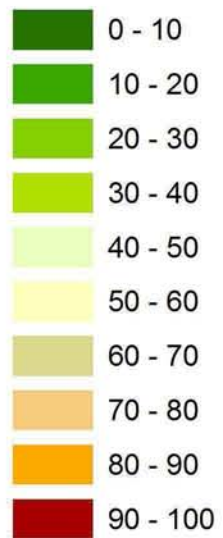
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Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not parcels are located in existing sewer districts

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



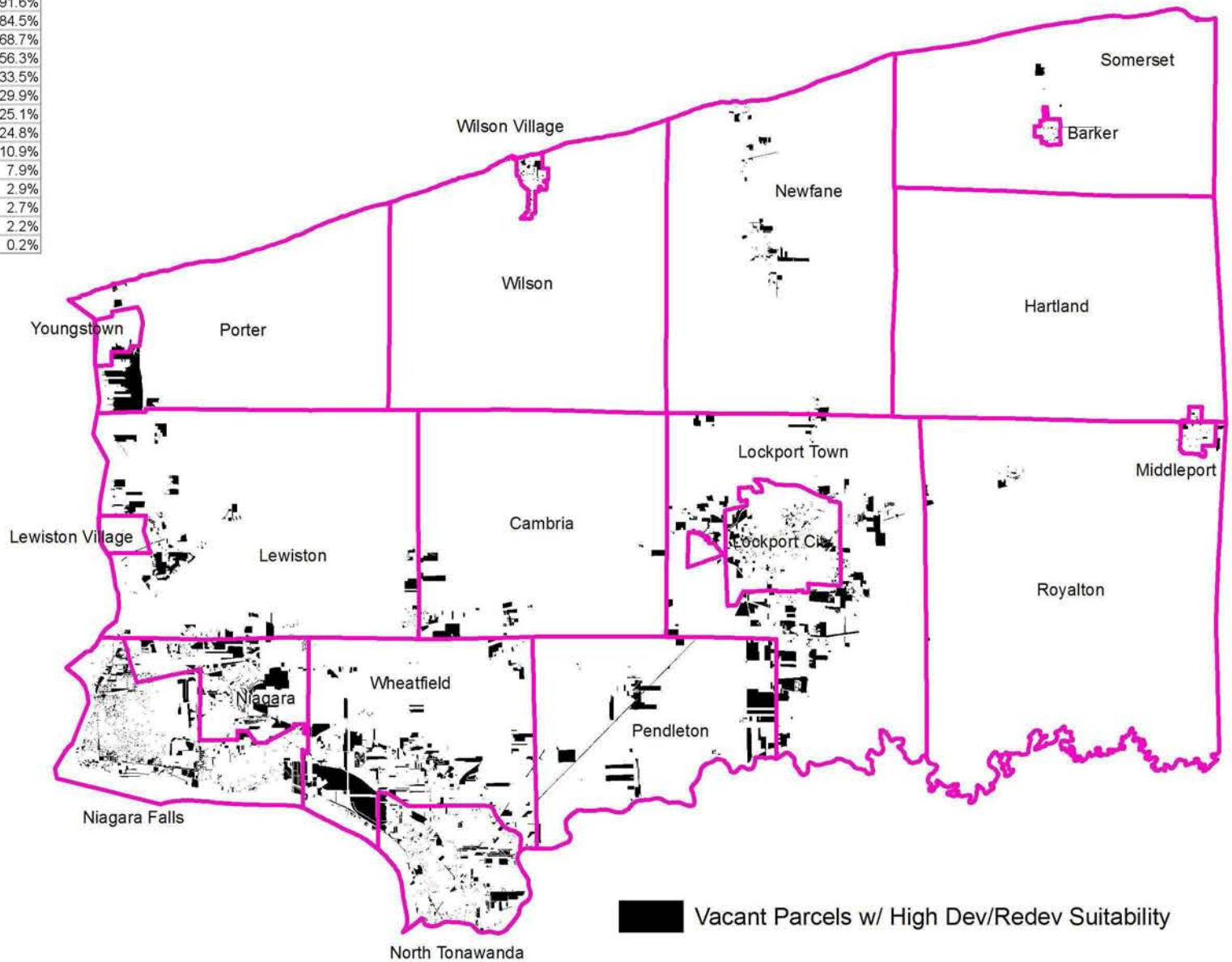
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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Existing Sewer Districts

Figure
V. 16

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Community	Vacant Acres Total	Vacant Acres Suitable	Suitable Pct
Niagara	1,137	1,096	96.4%
Niagara Falls	1,482	1,357	91.6%
North Tonawanda	965	815	84.5%
Wheatfield	3,095	2,127	68.7%
Lockport City	716	403	56.3%
Pendleton	3,828	1,284	33.5%
Lockport Town	6,468	1,937	29.9%
Porter	3,235	813	25.1%
Lewiston	4,039	1,000	24.8%
Cambria	3,912	425	10.9%
Newfane	3,899	308	7.9%
Royalton	5,776	168	2.9%
Wilson	4,345	116	2.7%
Somerset	3,659	79	2.2%
Hartland	6,669	11	0.2%



■ Vacant Parcels w/ High Dev/Redev Suitability

*Suitability Cutoff Score: 80 or Higher

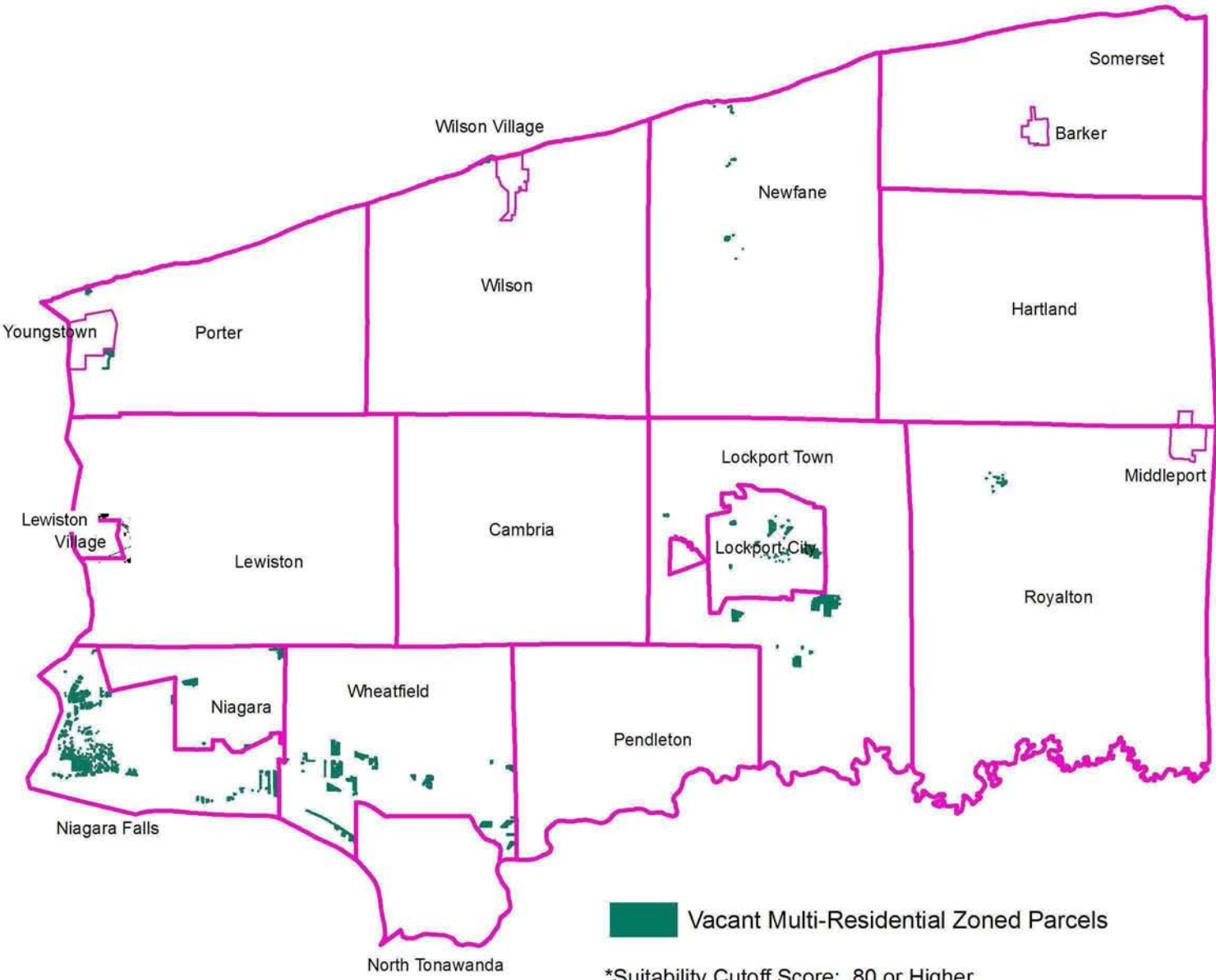


Vacant Lands Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Figure V.17

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Community	Community Type	Total Vacant Multi-Family Residential Acres	Vacant Acres Suitable	Suitable Pct
Porter	Rural	35	35	100.0%
Newfane	Rural	12	10	83.3%
Royalton	Rural	13	9	69.2%
Somerset	Rural	17	2	11.8%
Wilson	Rural	62	5	8.1%
Cambria	Rural	-	-	N/A
Hartland	Rural	-	-	N/A
Lewiston	Rural	-	-	N/A
Niagara	Suburban	48	45	93.8%
Lockport Town	Suburban	202	179	88.6%
Wheatfield	Suburban	424	261	61.6%
Pendleton	Suburban	-	-	N/A
Lockport City	Urban	74	74	100.0%
Niagara Falls	Urban	321	306	95.3%
North Tonawanda	Urban	-	-	N/A



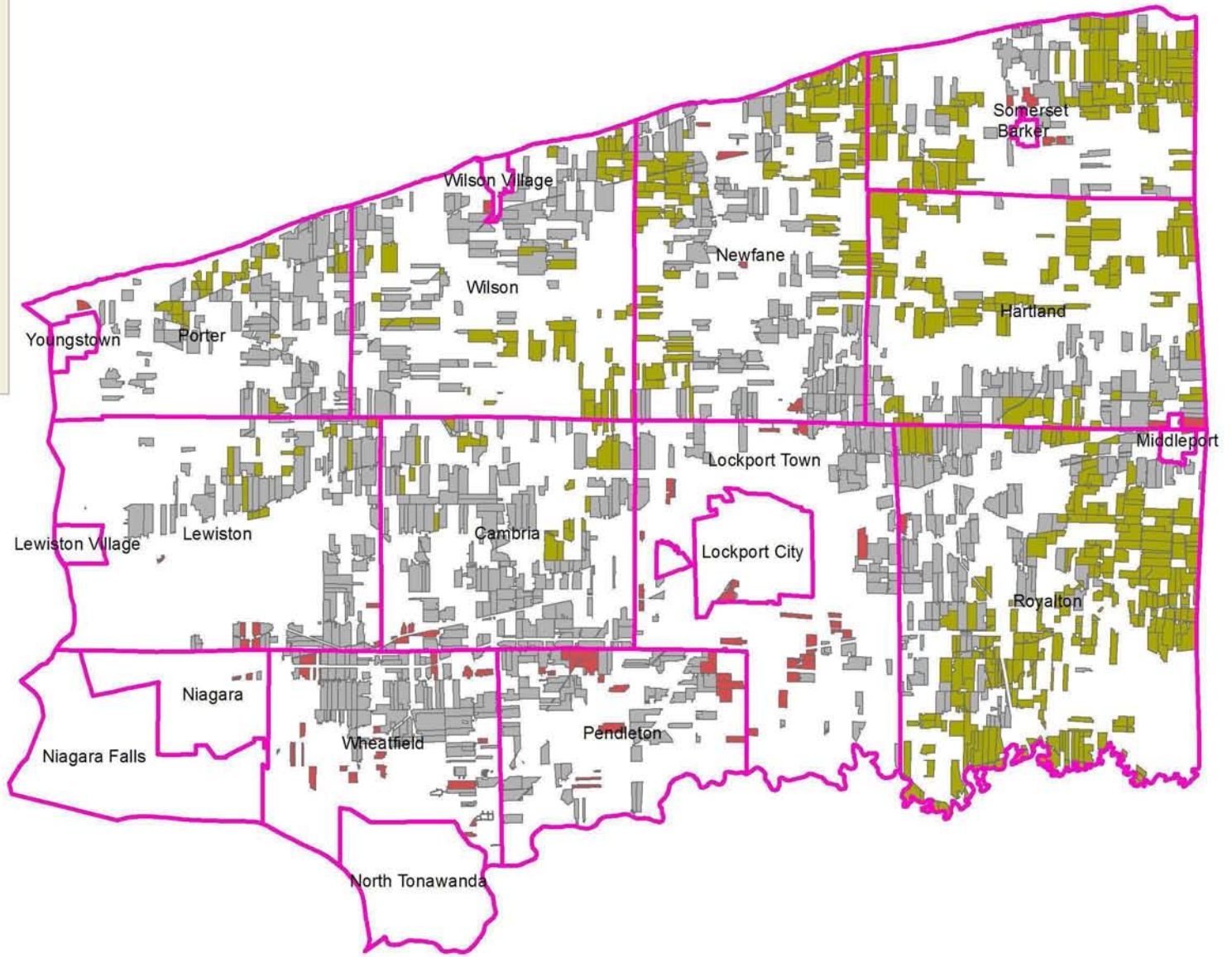
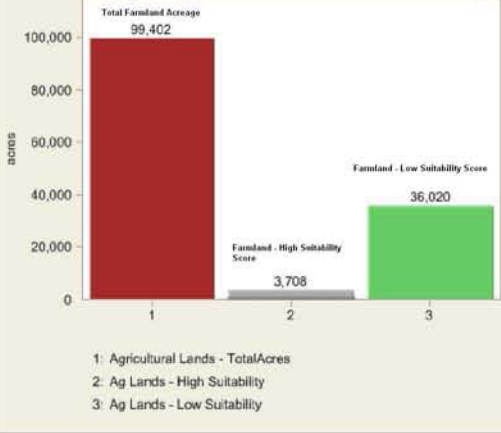
Vacant Parcels Zoned for Multiple-Family Use Suitable for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Figure V.18

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Agricultural Lands

Acreages by Dev/Redev Suitability



Development / Redevelopment Suitability of Agricultural Lands

- Ag Lands - High Suitability
- Ag Lands - Low Suitability
- Ag Lands - Fair Suitability

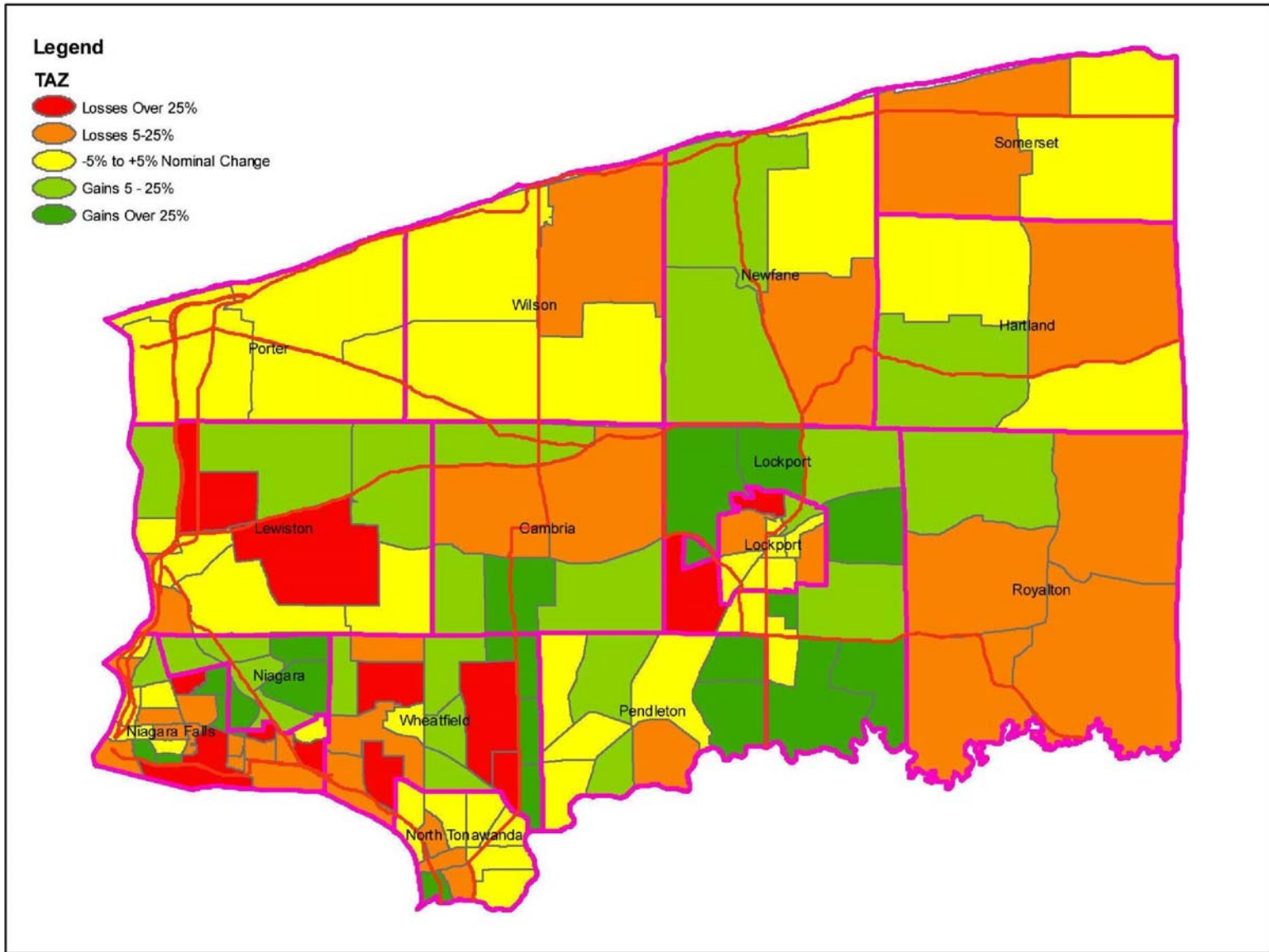


October 2008
 Pete Young
 Community Oriented Geography, LLC

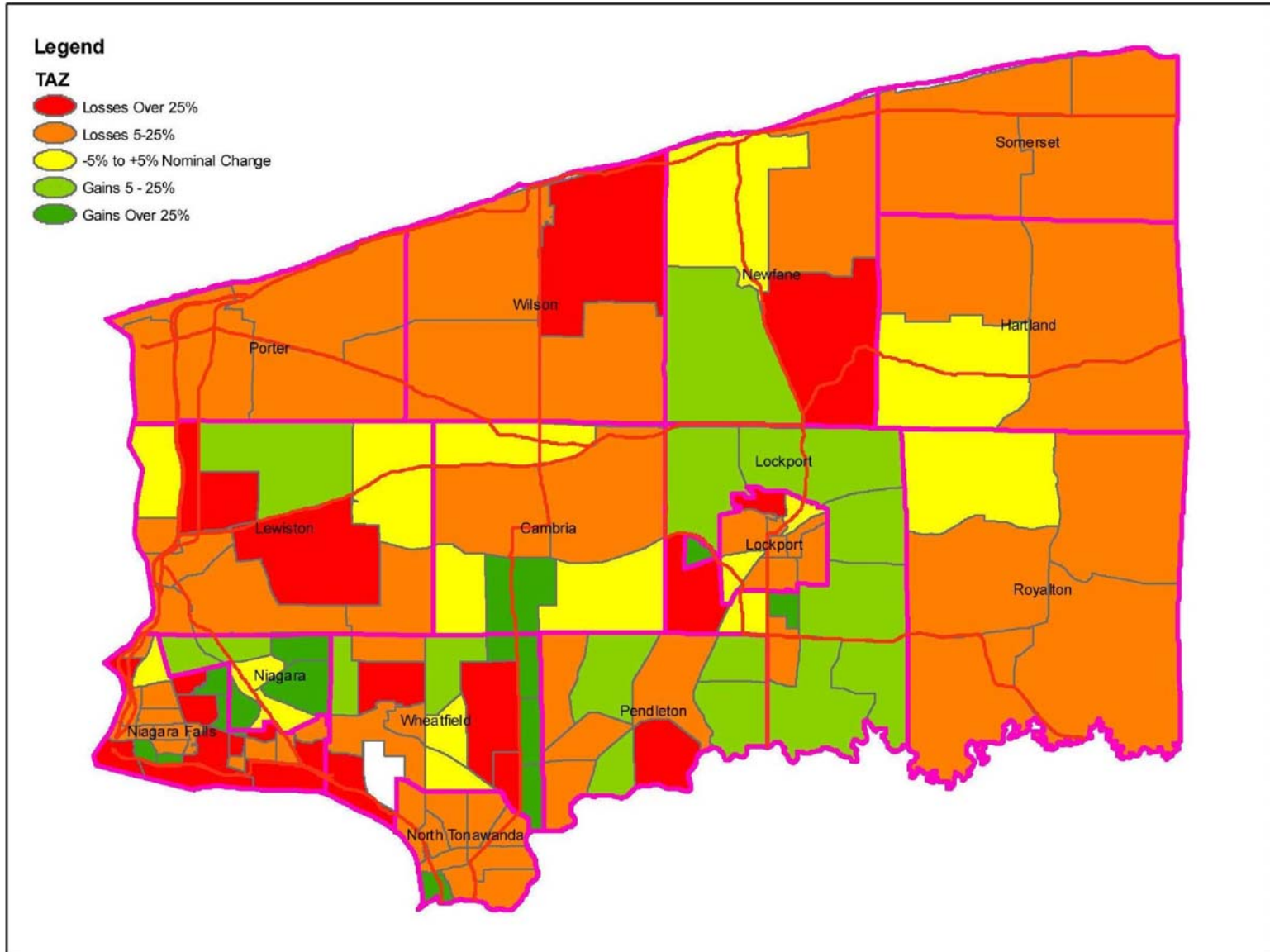
**Agricultural Lands by Suitability for
 Potential Development /
 Redevelopment Areas**

**Figure
 V.19**

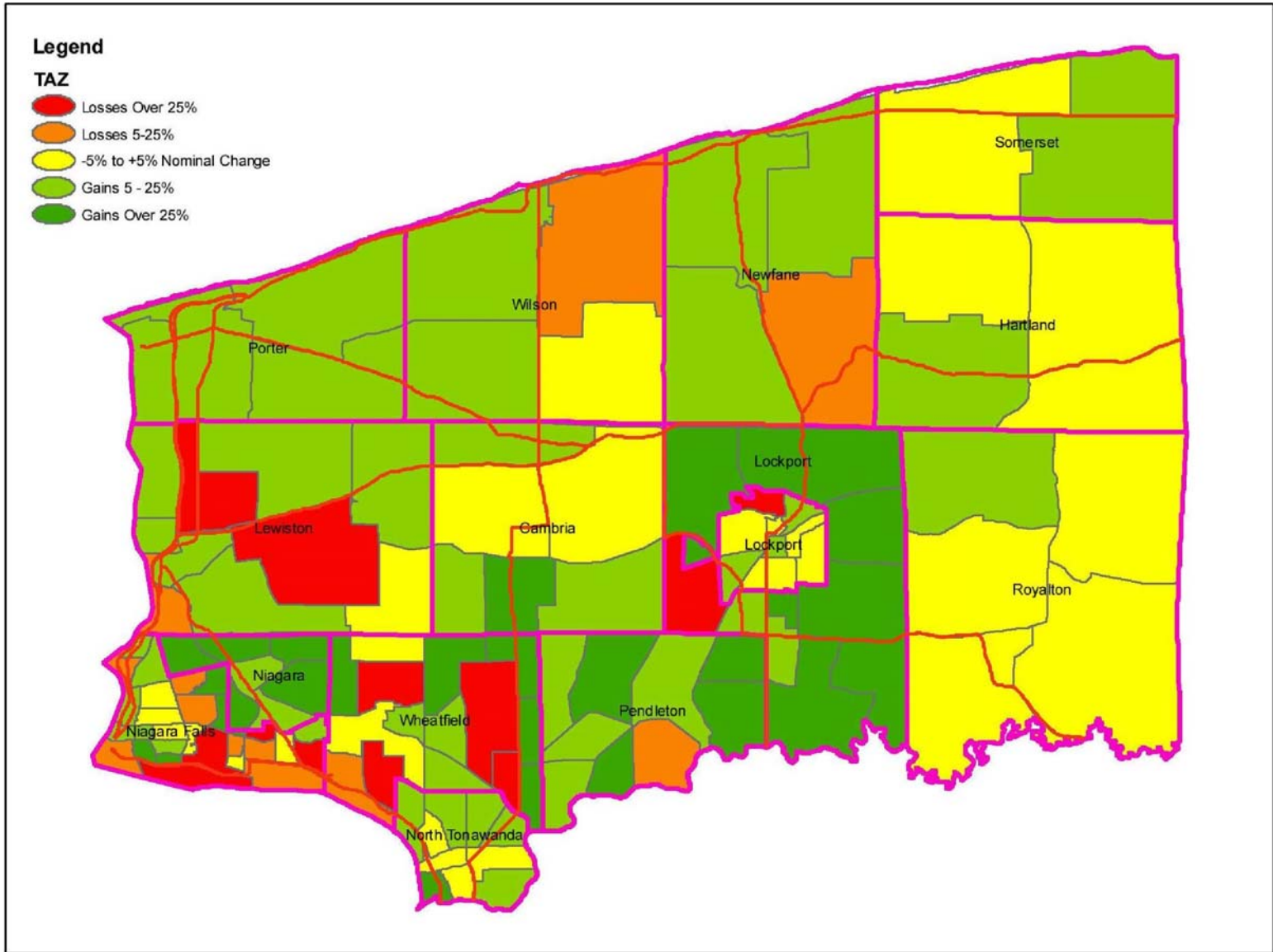
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Gateways

- Airport
- International
- County
- Lake Ontario Lower Niagara
- Erie Canal Upper River
- Waterfront Village

Great Lakes Seaway Trail

- > A 454-mile scenic byway that stretches from the St. Lawrence River to Lake Erie.
- > In Niagara County, the Seaway Trail connects Barker, Olcott, Wilson, Youngstown, Lewiston, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda.



Lake Ontario

Niagara National Heritage Area Study

- >Developed by National Park Service
- >National Heritage Area designation provides a means to heighten appreciation of the region, preserve its natural and historic resources, improve coordination among programs and sites, improve the quality of life and promote economic growth.

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

Wine Trail

Canalway Trail

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Greenway Communities

Niagara River Greenway Plan

- >Developed by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- >Provides a unified vision and a set of principles for the Niagara River Greenway
- >Goals are to enhance waterfront access, complement economic revitalization, and ensure long-term maintenance of the Greenway

Canalway Heritage Corridor

- Established by the National Park Service
- >524 mile corridor, Statewide
- >Encompasses the Erie Canal and the 234 communities it links
- >Canalway Trail - connects Middleport and Lockport; planned to connect Albany to Buffalo



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

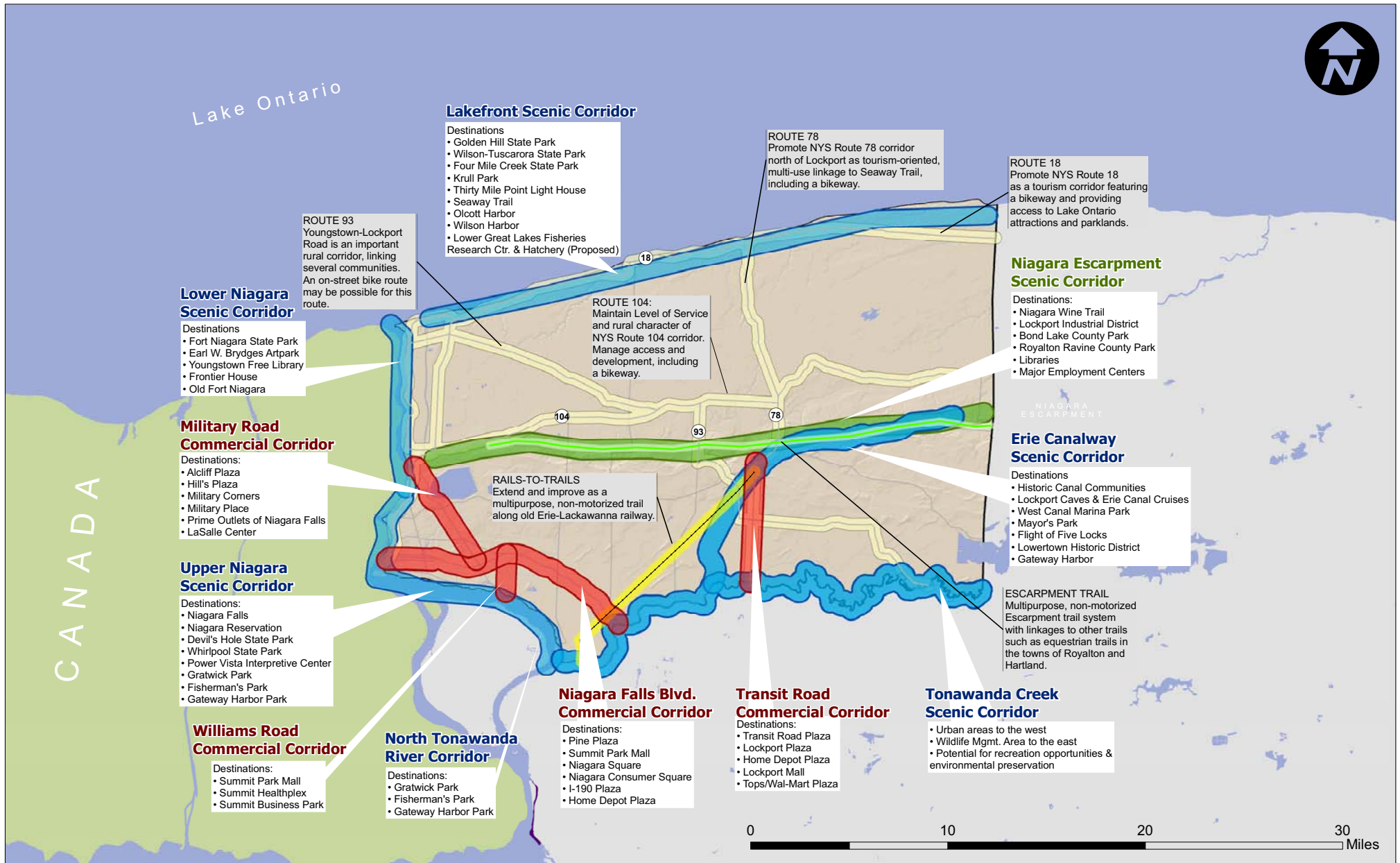
ONGOING INITIATIVES

FIGURE V.23

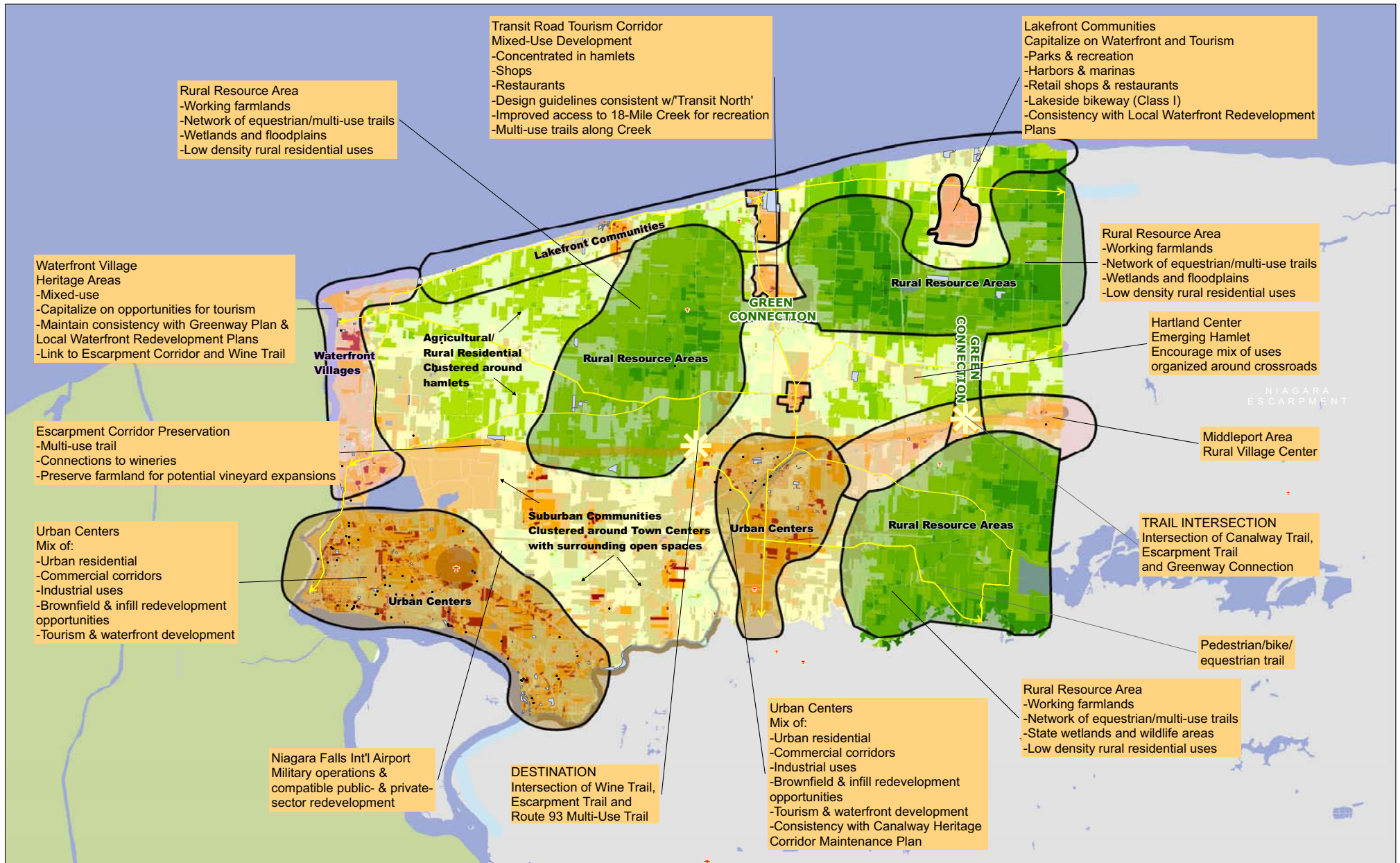


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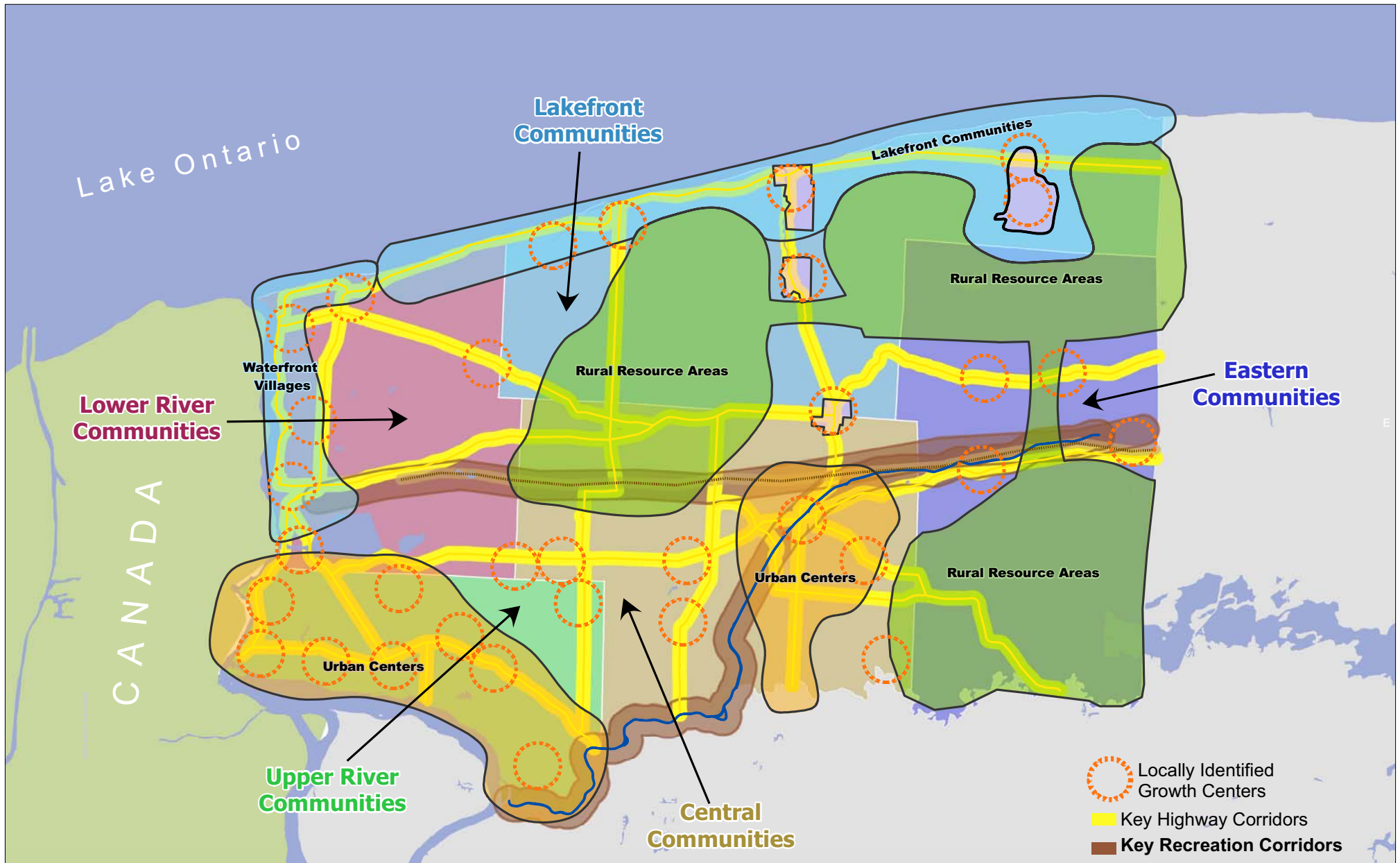
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into much more detailed planning, design and development practices intended to foster more sustainable land use patterns and uses. The 10 principles that follow are the basis for many of the recommendations provided throughout this Plan.

Briefly stated these principles include:

1. Creating a range of housing opportunities and choices by providing quality housing diversity for people of all ages, lifestyles, mobility and income levels.
2. Creating “walkable” neighborhoods, that are pedestrian-friendly, where less reliance on automotive travel is possible, and where daily services are readily available in proximity to housing and employment resulting in desirable places to live, work, learn and play.
3. Encouraging increased community and stakeholder collaboration to respond to a community’s sense of identity and vision of how and where it wants to grow.
4. Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place by setting standards for design, development, construction and maintenance which responds to community values expressed through architecture and public places.
5. Making development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective by sending clear signals to developers and the private sector in making sound development decisions.
6. Mixing land uses by integrating compatible forms of land uses and multiple uses into the community, rather than the more conventional segregation of uses.
7. Preserving open space, scenic resources and environmentally sensitive areas which supports local economies, provides jobs, preserves critical environmental areas, and improves the overall quality of life of a region by guiding new growth into existing communities.
8. Providing a variety of transportation choices to people with more alternatives to move people and goods and with greater emphasis on connections to housing, employment, shopping and transportation.
9. Strengthening and directing development towards existing communities and developed areas that are already served by infrastructure and seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, while conserving open space and irreplaceable natural resources.
10. Encouraging compact forms of development, site and building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive and sprawling development patterns.

Some communities within Niagara County have adopted many of these or similar principles. Many communities are also working towards their implementation through their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations. Opportunities exist, however, to expand the implementation of more sustainable practices at County and local levels. Niagara County is in a leadership position to facilitate

these efforts through County planning assistance to municipalities and guidance on modifying land use regulations that focus on sustainable practices.

Government agencies at Federal, State, regional and local levels have also adopted these principles in advancing sustainability. Three agencies that have particular relevance to Niagara County communities, for example include, but are by no means limited to the NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Department of State and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council. At the State level these principles are encouraged through Department of State funding programs such as Quality Communities and Restore New York. Grant funds for projects may well hinge on the ability to show consistency with these principles.

Connectivity

Enhanced connectivity among communities and places is another important concept encouraged by smart growth and sustainability principles. Connectivity is necessary for creating more pedestrian-friendly “walkable” communities and fostering less reliance on automotive travel. Connectivity requires collaboration and coordination among many different agencies, jurisdictions and municipalities to be effective in establishing interconnected networks of pedestrian, non-motorized and motorized pathways, trails, facilities and corridors.

Physically linking various types and intensities of local and regional land uses with points of origin and destinations of interest enhances travel alternatives. This concept of improving linkages between places is a key recommendation of this Plan. Connectivity encourages social interaction among neighborhoods and communities, provides environmental and health benefits, and promotes a greater sense of place, improved quality of life and community identity.

Niagara County along with its partner agencies such as the GBNRTC and State agencies has the ability to encourage and promote enhanced connectivity among communities. This can be achieved within Niagara County through ongoing support for intermunicipal planning initiatives, support for funding and technical assistance to communities, expedited project review and approvals, and through infrastructure development decisions that consider creating interconnected transportation networks that afford multi-modal means of travel.

Opportunities for improved interconnections of transportation systems also need to be identified and supported where people have the ability to shift from one means of travel to another through multi-use trails and facilities that provide for walking, hiking, biking, boating, canoeing, horseback riding and other non-motorized methods. Similar interconnections can be made between motorized and non-motorized systems that can provide the ability to shift from bus to bike travel or from one motorized means to another such as train to bus travel.

Large-scale development projects such as the planned Oz project in Wheatfield or continued development in the vicinity of the Niagara Falls International Airport may also afford new and innovative opportunities for enhanced public transit through people mover systems, perhaps in combination with other transit-oriented development. Niagara County and its many economic development partners need to promote and facilitate the development of enhanced physical connections and



***Increase
Connectivity***

multi-modal opportunities throughout the County. Future projects may range from relatively easy to implement projects, such as trails and bikeway corridors to much more complex mass transit projects.

Green Infrastructure

“Green infrastructure is our nation’s natural life support system – an interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural areas; greenways, parks and other conservation lands, working farms, ranches and forests; and wilderness and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to the health and quality of life for America’s communities and people.” (The Conservation Fund. n.d.).

Niagara County communities, through implementation of this Comprehensive Plan, are in position at the present time to proactively take steps to plan for, protect and manage the County’s green infrastructure network over the long-term. Initiatives presently underway within the County such as the Greenway Plan, the Erie Canalway Heritage Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project and others are setting the stage for Niagara County to take an even greater leadership role in green infrastructure issues and opportunities. This is especially true if strategies to implement smart growth and sustainable principles are implemented as discussed in this Chapter. Many of the land use and environmental issues identified in this Plan can be effectively addressed through a proactive approach among communities for maintaining, enhancing and protecting Niagara County’s green infrastructure.

As described above by the Conservation Fund, Niagara County presently has the natural and man-made resources that form the basis for a viable, functioning green infrastructure network. These include the County’s waterways, greenways, parks, woodlands, working farms, and open spaces. The Conservation Fund also describes green infrastructure as a combination of “hubs and links” and that is precisely what this Chapter encourages through its land use, transportation and environmental goals, objectives and recommendations.

Hubs are defined by the Conservation Fund as the anchors of a green infrastructure network. These hubs may include:

- Reserves – large protected areas such as the County’s State Parks and wildlife management refuges
- Managed Native Landscapes – large publicly-owned lands such as those set aside as forest areas
- Working Lands – private farms, forests and mineral extraction areas
- Regional Parks and Preserves – regionally significant County park lands
- Community Parks and Natural Areas – smaller sites that are protected and/or restored

Links are defined as the connections that link the system including hubs together. These links may include:

- Landscape Linkages – serving as large corridors, they are protected natural areas that link parks and preserves and allow plants and animals to flourish, and may include protection of historic sites and recreational



Promote Green Infrastructure

- uses
- Conservation Corridors – less extensive linear areas, including rivers and streams that provide corridors for wildlife movement and perhaps public recreation as well
- Greenways – protected corridors managed for resource conservation and perhaps recreational use
- Greenbelts – protected natural lands or working lands that serve as a framework for development patterns while preserving native ecosystems and/or farms
- Ecobelts – linear wooded buffers between urban and rural uses that provide ecological and social benefits to urban and rural residents

The land use analysis discussed in this Chapter is a starting point for better integration of land use and environmental planning with a focus on green infrastructure. This integration of land use and environmental policies and practices creates greater efficiency in resource management, from both a physical and fiscal perspective. This integration also promotes sustainability. The analysis and resultant mapping suggest areas of the County where development and redevelopment may be most suitable resulting in potential costs savings to taxpayers by limiting the need for new or expanded “gray” infrastructure (roads, sewers, water) and services (police, fire, school, health).

Green infrastructure also addresses another component of community planning and design that considers the application of specific sustainable practices at a much smaller scale that may be appropriate for local municipalities and individual landowners. At County levels these practices could be implemented at County-owned and operated facilities. These practices include the use of pervious pavement materials for public infrastructure such as sidewalks, parking areas and roads; rain and rooftop gardens; collected roof runoff stored in cisterns and barrels; downspout disconnections to stormwater systems; natural vegetated drainage swales; and similar practices and technologies that focus on managing stormwater at the source by capturing and retaining it before it enters drainageways and stormsewer systems.

Green infrastructure practices have both environmental and fiscal benefits to communities and property owners by reducing dependence on traditional engineering approaches to stormwater management. The benefit of these practices is enhanced groundwater and surface water quality and quantity; less reliance on the use of piping and drainage systems resulting in potential cost savings; improved biological diversity; energy conservation; erosion control; and improved visual and community aesthetics. These practices are also encouraged as part of a comprehensive approach to protect and maintain the green infrastructure of Niagara County.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Key Definitions

The following definitions are provided to clarify terminology used in the goals, objectives and recommendations that follow in this and other chapters. These definitions are taken from NYS General Municipal Law including Section 119-u; City Law Section 20-f; Town Law Section 261-a; and Village Law Section 7-701.

Municipality – means a city, village or that portion of a town located outside the limits of any city or village.

Land Use Regulation – means an ordinance or local law enacted by a municipality for the regulation of any aspect of land use and community resource protection and includes zoning, subdivision, special use permit or site plan regulation or any other regulations which prescribe the appropriate use of property or the scale, location, and intensity of development.

Community Resource – means a specific public facility, infrastructure system, or geographic area of special economic development, environmental, scenic, cultural, historic, recreational, parkland, open space, natural resource, or other unique significance, located wholly or partially within the boundaries of one or more given municipalities.

Intermunicipal Overlay District - means a special land use district which encompasses all or a portion of one or more municipalities for the purpose of protecting, enhancing, or developing one or more community resources.

Development Rights – mean the rights permitted to a lot, parcel, or area of land under a zoning ordinance or local law respecting permissible use, area, density, bulk or height of improvements executed thereon. Development rights may be calculated and allocated in accordance with such factors as area, floor area, floor area ratios, density, height limitations, or any other criteria that will effectively quantify a value for the development right in a reasonable and uniform manner.

Receiving District – means one or more designated districts or areas of land to which development rights generated from one or more sending districts may be transferred and in which increased development is permitted to occur by reason of such transfer.

Sending District – means one or more designated districts or areas of land in which development rights may be designated for use in one or more receiving districts.

Transfer of Development Rights – means the process by which development rights are transferred from one lot, parcel, or area of land in any sending district to another lot, parcel or area of land in one or more receiving districts.

Goal – Farmland and Open Space Protection

To preserve and protect the long-term viability and sustainability of prime, unique and important farmlands and open spaces as well as related rural characteristics and evidence of the agricultural heritage, amenities and aesthetics of the County’s farming areas.

Objectives

- Encourage the concentration of appropriate types, scale and intensity of land uses and development in and around existing population centers, including those potential development/redevelopment areas identified in this Comprehensive Plan, and those growth areas identified in local municipal comprehensive plans, master plans, and zoning districts through County planning assistance to local municipalities.
- Preserve the amount of viable countywide agricultural acreage from further conversion to other land uses, reduce development pressures on existing farming practices, and maintain open space resources.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities

- Promote and prioritize nodal centers and patterns of compact development with higher density residential and commercial development located in areas where physical infrastructure and community services are available or can be readily accessed.
- Discourage the conversion of agricultural lands in developing and undeveloped rural and suburban locations (see Table V-3) to other uses where the provision of new infrastructure or extension of services is not warranted or desired by local communities.
- Encourage smaller minimum lot size requirements in local ordinances in developing and undeveloped rural and suburban communities to reduce development pressure on farmlands and open space resources.
- Promote the creation of mixed-use and multiple-use development districts in local zoning ordinances, rather than the more typical single-use districts and encourage communities to establish floating zones such as Planned Unit Development (PUD) districts or mixed-use development overlay districts along important corridors.
- Encourage implementation and use of local incentive zoning, right-to-farm laws where they do not exist, land transfers, conservation easements and land trusts to protect open space resources.
- Encourage infill forms of development on vacant parcels and redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields in lieu of development on previously undeveloped properties.

For Rural Communities

- Provide County assistance to encourage local municipalities to direct development to appropriate locations away from prime and unique farmlands and protect the viability of large, contiguous agricultural parcels and the integrity of existing Agricultural Districts through their recertification.
- Encourage nodes of concentrated development in hamlets and crossroad locations with increased density and mixed uses with access to major



roadways and where other forms of services are available. Such areas should be priority locations for development and redevelopment over greenfield locations in rural communities where new infrastructure and services may need to be developed or expanded.

- Investigate means to more uniformly assess agricultural lands based on farming value, not the development potential of farmlands.
- Provide County assistance to communities as part of their comprehensive planning efforts in anticipation of potentially large scale agricultural uses or energy-related projects, such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) or windfarms, through the establishment of local ordinances to ensure proper planning steps are taken to reduce the potential for adverse impacts on communities and adjacent land uses. Ordinances should focus on protecting natural (air, water, land) resources, scenic resources, and compatibility with nearby land use possibly through requirements for the establishment of effective natural buffer areas.
- Encourage the establishment of local Transfer and/or Purchase of Development Rights programs as allowed under State Municipal Law and similar land use initiatives consistent with the recommendations of Niagara County's 1999 Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan that focuses on reducing the conversion of viable farmland.
- Support the complete update of Niagara County's 1999 Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan within two years (by 2011) in collaboration with the Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension Service and the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District and other stakeholders.
- Encourage the expanded use of E-commerce opportunities among local farms and agricultural goods producers utilizing existing websites and links such as the Niagara Farm Markets (www.niagarafarmmarkets.org) and other sources of information available from Cornell Cooperative Extension and other agencies and organizations.
- Expand equestrian businesses as a locally important economic generator via increased marketing and small business incentives related to horse boarding, farriers, veterinarian services, hauling and trailer services, grain and hay production, fencing and tourism services that can be linked to County destinations and services. Niagara County currently ranks 20th among 58 counties in New York in number of horses with approximately 3000 horses valued at about \$12 million. Existing farms and stables feature western, English, dressage, draft, rodeo and trail riding opportunities.
- Provide for multi purpose/multi-use trail systems offering equestrian riding opportunities to encourage business and tourism opportunities that link with other trail networks throughout the County. Rural areas that may be most suited to expanded equestrian opportunities and trail systems include the towns of Royalton and Hartland followed by Somerset, Newfane, Wilson and northern Cambria with potential to link into other



existing and future trail networks, perhaps along the Wine Trail and future trails along the Niagara Escarpment.

Goal – Increased Connectivity among Communities

To increase the physical connections among Niagara County communities and between natural resources and cultural features within the County by providing opportunities for a variety of motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation along alternative transportation corridors and routes.

Objectives

- Support and encourage local communities' ongoing and new initiatives for physically connecting communities across Niagara County via a system of interconnected highways, bikeways, pedestrian trail systems, multi-use and equestrian trails, waterways and contiguous wildlife corridors consistent with, but not limited to the initiatives of the Niagara Greenway communities, Seaway Trail communities, Niagara Escarpment communities, Wine Trail communities, the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor communities, and the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor communities.
- Facilitate alternative forms of transportation across the County through public/private investment opportunities and partnerships to maintain and create acceptable commuting times, the timely transport of goods and services, and convenient access to employment centers, open space and recreational resources and tourist/business/retail destinations.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- Prepare a countywide Parks, Trails & Recreation Master Plan to determine critical park, trail, recreation and open space issues, opportunities and needs by identifying existing gaps in trail systems, park facilities and potential linkages to future specialized trails and multi-use trail networks.
- Develop a continuous network of trails, pedestrian paths, bikeways and multi-use trails throughout the County connecting population centers in urban, suburban and rural areas to neighborhoods, employment centers, business/retail destinations, open space resources, recreational facilities, schools and significant natural and cultural features.
- Support the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project initiative of the Western New York Land Conservancy and other organizations to protect the ecological, open space and scenic value of the Escarpment, encourage the public acquisition and set aside of undeveloped parcels through private donation or purchase and investigate the potential of establishing public access trails and nature areas along the length of the Escarpment with linkages to other trail systems.
- Work with service providers and local communities to increase public transit opportunities through expanded transit bus routes, convenient work/school bus schedules and improved access to residential and business areas in rural communities.



- Support redevelopment strategies of cities, towns and villages along the Erie Canal corridor and waterfronts and reserve, restore and protect waterfront areas for public access, water-based recreation, open space and tourism-related businesses and amenities.
- Support the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor initiative and similar initiatives focused on increased connectivity and redevelopment opportunities.

Goal – Maintain Existing Infrastructure

To maintain and enhance existing public infrastructure as a countywide capital improvement priority over the construction of new infrastructure and public facilities in order to support more compact, mixed-use infill development, transit-oriented neighborhoods, and redevelopment of brownfields and grayfield sites located in existing urban centers and underutilized areas.

Objectives

- Encourage infill forms of mixed-use and multiple use development and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield and/ or grayfield sites thereby discouraging development of undeveloped greenfield locations especially where extensions of public infrastructure (sewer, water and roads) and services might be required.
- Encourage an increase in the location of jobs and job creating opportunities in mixed-use and multiple-use areas, in order to minimize commuting and travel times, thereby making jobs more accessible and convenient to residential neighborhoods and public services.
- Encourage an increase in mixed use development through planning assistance to communities with greater housing diversity and affordability for all segments of the population in urban centers and those suburban areas where infrastructure is already in place.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- The County should continue to provide timely maintenance and required upgrades to its existing road, sewer, drainage and water infrastructure as a way to encourage development and redevelopment in areas where infrastructure is already in place.
- Planned increases in the capacities of existing County infrastructure need to consider the potential implications of increased capacity of roads, sewer and water systems on development patterns, sprawl and community character by coordinating decisions with local communities and consulting local comprehensive and master plans prior to making decisions on infrastructure projects.
- Limit or restrict the construction and/or extension of new County

infrastructure in developing suburban and rural areas to prevent sprawling development patterns unless issues of public health and safety are a concern or the basis for new projects.

- Continue to market brownfield sites to developers where infrastructure already exists and encourage infill development of these sites over development of greenfield sites.
- The County Planning Board should consider and emphasize in their review of development projects the need to encourage concentrated and compact forms of development over linear road frontage and leap frog development patterns that may result from project approvals requiring new or expanded infrastructure and services in communities.

Goal – Improve Intergovernmental Communication

To foster greater intergovernmental communication, coordination and collaboration in decision-making that affects short and long-term land use patterns, transportation systems and natural environments.

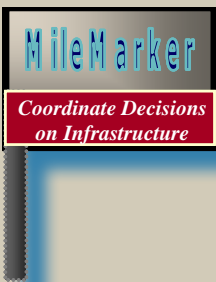
Objectives

- Provide continuing technical support, advice and information sharing to Niagara communities working to update their local comprehensive plans, zoning, subdivision regulations and project review procedures to encourage the implementation of sustainable principles and practices.
- Assist communities in identifying and accessing state-of-the-art information and database technologies through the County’s Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that can facilitate local land use decision-making processes and in identifying and avoiding spot zoning and/or approval of use variances in areas where such uses are incompatible with existing or planned uses or with desirable community land use goals.
- Continue to provide training and technical advice to municipal planning boards and zoning boards of appeals members as required by New York State Law under Chapter 662 of the Laws of 2006.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- Integrate and consider local comprehensive plans and their recommendations into County and regional planning and decision-making processes for significant capital improvement projects, including infrastructure, transportation projects, County services and public facilities.
- Support communities’ efforts to identify and pre-list SEQRA Type I projects and proposed actions that require referral to the Niagara County Planning Board, pursuant to Article 12-B, Section 239-m of the New York State General Municipal Law.
- Instruct all County departments and agencies authorized to review

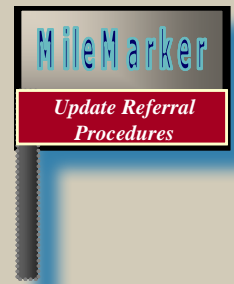


proposed development projects and issue permits to consider the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan and mapped information contained within it relative to the suitability of development in areas and the protection of environmentally sensitive resources.

- Increase the availability and sharing with communities of up-to-date GIS mapping, aerial photography and other planning tools necessary to make informed local decisions perhaps through website links to planning-related databases.
- Maintain a countywide GIS database of vacant and potentially developable parcels in suitable development areas that can support and facilitate local economic development initiatives and goals.
- Encourage and assist communities in developing and conducting community sustainability surveys to determine the effectiveness of local plans and regulations in identifying and protecting important local resources and managing large-scale development. These sustainability surveys should address housing, transportation, agriculture, cultural resources, natural resources, economic development, utilities, community services, open space and other issues that may be of local significance and concern.
- The County, working in coordination with local communities and the County Planning Board, should update its minimum information requirements, uniform project review checklists and written procedures that can be given to project applicants regarding the types of information expected from them. Local municipalities should be encouraged to utilize these documents when reviewing projects.
- Consideration of potentially significant upgrades in infrastructure capacities or extensions of County infrastructure must undergo increased scrutiny under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). This includes opportunities for public input prior to any decision-making that may affect land use and development patterns particularly anything related to the need for new infrastructure and services that will increase costs to taxpayers.
- Exactions and impact fees imposed on project developers are not legal options in New York State at the present time in order to cover the costs of new or upgraded infrastructure, so incentives for cost-sharing need to be established that are both fair and equitable to all parties so the burden of financing new or significant upgrading of infrastructure is not entirely assumed by the County, local governments or taxpayers.

Goal – Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas

To promote open space preservation and enhanced management/protection/restoration of environmentally sensitive areas of the County including 100 year floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, watersheds, significant flora and fauna habitats, and scenic resources.



Objectives

- Encourage the establishment and use of planning practices at the local municipal level designed to protect open space and rural characteristics, for example cluster development and conservation subdivisions, and direct higher density growth to villages, cities, town centers and hamlet areas identified by local communities as potential or preferred growth areas.
- Discourage development in areas that have unique natural features and significant environmental sensitivity such as floodplains, wetland complexes, contiguous wildlife corridors and habitats, as well as critical scenic viewsheds.
- Support the principles of protecting, managing and restoring “green infrastructure” throughout Niagara County and encourage communities through planning assistance and education to implement local measures to protect and enhance green infrastructure.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- Encourage development of an up-to-date countywide watershed protection plan as an important part of protecting the Great Lakes Basin and identify specific measures, including model ordinances for local communities to protect local surface waters and groundwater quality and quantity.
- Map environmentally significant and sensitive features at the local municipal level for integration into local plans beyond the more regional scale provided in this Comprehensive Plan in order to provide greater insight and guidance to local government decision-makers and developers on future land use development opportunities, constraints and options.
- Support multi-jurisdictional planning initiatives to address land use and environmental issues and opportunities that cross municipal boundaries through the use of intermunicipal overlay districts, for example along stream corridors to protect waterways and associated habitats. These overlay districts may include natural buffers and setback standards from streamside ranging in width from as narrow as 20 feet from an embankment in urban locations to perhaps as much as 300 feet in rural locations intended to protect wildlife habitat and other stream functions such as erosion control, filtration, and aquatic habitat.
- Identify the potential for creating wetland mitigation bank areas within the County to restore wetland complexes and wetland function in critical areas and provide developers and landowners a means for developing in more suitable areas.
- Given past and ongoing environmental problems faced by Niagara County and its communities resulting from the operations of former and existing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, as defined in New York Environmental Conservation Law Section 27-



1101(5), and consistent with an equitable distribution of such facilities throughout New York State, Niagara County should continue to work with local communities as well as State and Federal agencies to establish prohibitions to the future development and/or expansion of any industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facility within the County consistent with the policies established by the Niagara County Legislature via numerous resolutions passed in recent decades. Niagara County should also work with these and other stakeholders to ascertain liability for existing negative environmental impacts resulting from past and ongoing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, including but not limited to adverse impacts on natural resources, public health, property values, public perception and quality of life. Niagara County should also continue to work with these stakeholders to ensure that sites contaminated with hazardous industrial waste are remediated for future use, or at a minimum, stabilized to prevent further adverse environmental impact.

Goal – Integrate Land Use and Transportation Decisions

To identify and consider the complex interrelationships between land use and transportation decisions in Niagara County that have implications on each other. In planning for the future these interrelationships need to be thoroughly explored to identify the cumulative beneficial and adverse effects at both local community levels and from a more regional or countywide perspective.

Objective

- Consider the implications of development decisions on growth patterns and the need for new or upgraded transportation services and facilities with established priorities to maintain and enhance existing transportation infrastructure.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- The County and local municipalities should avail themselves of important information on land use decision-making and transportation planning principles provided by the New York State Department of Transportation on its Smart Growth website – www.nysdot.gov/smartplanning - as an important source of information in making future land use and transportation decisions.
- The County should expand its GIS based inventory and mapping to include all County roads and highways, bridges and drainage facilities by location, functional classification, traffic volume, conditions and capacities, scheduled improvements and maintenance records.
- The County Planning Board should review project site plans and referrals under Section 239 of Municipal Law based on consistency and compatibility with existing land use, local community plans, road access, road capacity, traffic safety, and roadway function.
- The County should encourage municipal land use plans to be



consistent with highway function and designs as well as desired community character, planning goals and objectives.

- The County should collaborate with local and regional jurisdictional agencies, for example the GBNRTC, the NYSDOT and local communities in developing corridor-long master planning for principal arterials within Niagara County, including NYS Routes 31, 78 and 104 to identify opportunities to support and link development/redevelopment centers, concentrate density in suitable commercial areas, foster economic growth, prevent linear road frontage sprawl, promote access management to preserve highway capacity and levels of service, and protect local community character.
- Collaborate and coordinate land use and transportation decisions among County, GBNRTC, State and local municipalities consistent with the goals, objectives and performance measures of the GBNRTC's 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan (www.gbnrtc.org) that emphasizes the following:
 1. Preservation of Existing Transportation Infrastructure
 2. Improve Regional Mobility and Accessibility
 3. Improve the Region's Economic Competitiveness
 4. Enhance and Protect the Region's Natural Environmental Quality, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Communities
 5. Improve Inter-Jurisdictional Transportation and Land Use Planning
- Coordinate with NYSDOT, the GBNRTC and local municipalities on long-term planning and access management to maintain the characteristics of the NYS Route 104 as an important rural east-west highway corridor.
- Utilize the principles of Context Sensitive Design (CSD) as a collaborative approach to involve local communities in decision-making about new transportation systems and facilities at the County level.

Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is

intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects will be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Infrastructure Improvements and Transportation (see Chapter VI) and Housing that include, but not limited to:

- \$4 billion to public housing capital fund
- \$2 billion for full year payments to owners receiving Section 8 rental assistance
- \$2 billion for the redevelopment of abandoned and foreclosed homes
- \$1.5 billion for homeless prevention activities
- \$250 million for energy retrofitting and green investments

Niagara County Projects include:

Highway Infrastructure

Niagara County Public Works

<input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Street Bridge Reconstruction over Tonawanda Creek [Town of Royalton]	\$ 3,394,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Townline Road Reconstruction [Town of Pendleton / Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 1,780,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Ewings Road Bridge Replacement over Eighteenmile Creek [Town of Newfane]	\$ 1,243,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Mapleton Road Bridge Replacement over Bull Creek [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 954,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Drum Road / Seaman Road Bridge Replacements at Jeddo Creek [Town of Hartland]	\$ 2,073,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Beebe Road Reconstruction [Town of Wilson]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Washing (78 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 130,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Deck Sealing (27 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 120,000

<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Painting (4 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 495,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Miller Road Bridge Reconstruction over Mud Creek [Town of Royalton]	\$ 650,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Lower River Road Drop Inlets Rehab/Replacement [Village of Lewiston]	\$ 60,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Packard Road Drop Inlets Rehab/Replacement [Town of Niagara]	\$ 40,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Carmen Road Bridge Repair over Johnson Creek [Town of Hartland]	\$ 40,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Youngstown Road Bridge Reconstruction over Sixmile Creek [Town of Porter]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Scour Protection/Waterway Opening Clearance (10 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 600,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Joint Replacement (6 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 300,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Bearing Rehab/Replacement/Lubrication (10 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 300,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Wearing Course Paving (41 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Substructure Protective Coating (23 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 150,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Plank Road Rehabilitation [Town of Royalton]	\$ 770,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Nash Road Resurfacing [Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Hartland Road Rehabilitation [Town of Somerset]	\$ 800,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Carmen and Quaker Road Box Culverts [Town of Somerset]	\$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Guide Rail End Replacement (approx. 350 locations) [Countywide]	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Tonawanda Creek Road Hot In-Place Recycling/Micro-Pave [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bear Ridge Road Hot In-Place Recycling/Micro-Pave [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 650,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Mapleton Road Pavement Overlay [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 1,376,00
<input type="checkbox"/> Lockport Road Micro-Pave [Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 125,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Mountain Road Pavement Overlay [Town of Cambria]	\$ 123,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade Bridge Rail and Guide Rail (5 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 1,000,000
 Transit Capital Assistance	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/> Niagara County Trolley Bus Network [Countywide]	\$ 200,000
 Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	
<input type="checkbox"/> Helipad for Transfer of Emergency Patients	\$ 250,000

Border Ports of Entry City of Niagara Falls	
□ Intl. Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center	\$ 16,500,000
Niagara County Economic Development	
□ Niagara Falls World Trade Center Feasibility Study [Countywide]	\$ 250,000

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Chapter VI: Economic Development

Background

The Niagara County Department of Economic Development (NCDED) and the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) have cooperated extensively to facilitate economic development within the County since 2003. Together, these two entities comprise the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED), located in the Vantage International Pointe (VIP) Industrial Park in the Town of Wheatfield.

The consolidation of a staff and resources at NCCED provides “one stop” economic development services under a single roof. The combined efforts of the NCCED has resulted in significant cost savings to County residents, enhanced responsiveness to business opportunities, and is considered a model for a team-centered management approach to providing economic development services to residents, businesses and prospective employers in Niagara County.

The NCCED is also the coordinative center of the Niagara County Economic Development Alliance (NCEDA) which was formed in 1993. The NCEDA is a working group of more than 30 agencies that provide support services and project coordination to the business community.

The NCCED is charged with the responsibility for economic development from a countywide perspective. The Center actively partners with many agencies and organizations in providing effective economic development services, and is somewhat unique among economic development agencies due to its focus on both job retention and job creation. Niagara County, led by the Niagara County Department of Economic Development, is one of only a few counties in New York State that emphasizes business and job retention and as part of the effort to facilitate job retention routinely surveys existing businesses in the County to better serve their needs.

The Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) is a public benefit corporation and represents the funding arm for economic development projects in

the County. The NCIDA utilizes a variety of financing mechanisms, tax incentives, site location assistance, and job training programs to facilitate economic growth and development. Funding mechanisms include: Industrial Revenue Bonds; Lease/Lease Transactions; Revolving Loan Funds; Economic Development Funds; and the Microenterprise Assistance Program.

In 2007, the NCIDA approved 26 projects, creating 511 new jobs and retaining over 1600 existing jobs. These projects represent over \$172 million in new private sector investment in Niagara County. In 2006, the Office of the New York State Comptroller issued a report on the performance of IDA's across New York State. The report identified the NCIDA as one of the highest ranking IDA's in the State. It ranked 9th out of the State's 62 counties in the creation of new jobs (a total of 2,486 jobs) and 6th in the State in the number of projects (91).

In 2008, the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) assisted numerous projects in the manufacturing sector, as well as additional projects related to training and administration, financial services and senior housing.

The Niagara County Microenterprise Assistance Program was created in 1995 for the benefit of low-to-moderate income individuals and small businesses with 5 employees or less. Since that time, the NCIDA has provided 26 rounds of training to local entrepreneurs. The program has an excellent record of success, with over 1500 applications received since its inception and 550 individuals graduating from the educational portion to date. Over \$2.3 million in loans have been approved since 1995. For 2008, 8 loans were approved totaling \$250,000, creating 40 new jobs and retaining 27 jobs.

In 2008, the NCDC (the lending arm of the NCIDA) closed one loan for \$200,000. This project retained 19 jobs and will create 7 new jobs within 3 years. During the year, the NCIDA successfully closed on 11 lease and bond projects, projecting to create over 200 jobs within 3 years and retaining over 175 jobs, with a total investment of over \$83,000,000.

Key business development initiatives by the NCCED during 2008 included:

- Ongoing Business Retention and Growth Initiatives – In the past 8 years, 447 existing companies in Niagara County communities have been contacted. The NCCED averages about 50 to 60 calls on local companies per year. At least 51 business development projects resulted from these visits.
- Canadian Marketing Campaign – In 2007, a total of 2,093 Canadian companies were contacted and three parcels were sold to Canadian companies in the Vantage International Pointe (VIP) Industrial Park in Wheatfield. One Canadian firm has built a 24,000 sq. ft. building employing approximately 10 full-time employees. The Industrial Park's success continues toward full build-out of its 158 acres.
- Domestic Marketing Campaign to “Water Starved States” – In 2008, this campaign focused on marketing Niagara County's access to fresh water, targeting businesses in the south and southwestern U.S. that were facing severe water shortages. The water starved initiative targeted the power generation, energy, chemical, and food and beverage processing sectors in the southeast U.S. Staff conducted in-depth research, conducted focus groups with local industries, attended

the Metalform trade show in Alabama, and sent a direct mail marketing piece to 1,060 companies. By year's end, the drought situation in the southern U.S. had eased.

- Empower Niagara Program - Empower Niagara is a not-for-profit development corporation formed to provide low cost electricity for business growth and development throughout Niagara County. The Niagara County Center for Economic Development serves as the administrative organization to review and select applicants to receive this low cost power. The program is an important addition to the incentives that are currently available to businesses locating and expanding in Niagara County. Applicants must meet the following qualifying criteria:

- Business must be located in Niagara County
- Business must not already be a recipient of low cost power through existing State programs or receive a separate allocation during the term of the contract with Empower Niagara
- Business must be planning to acquire or expand an existing facility, or build a new one
- Project must create at least 75kW of new net load
- Project must result in the retention and/or creation of jobs and the applicant must be willing to commit in writing to create and maintain these jobs
- Proposed use of the power must result in an economic benefit for Niagara County
- Project must be completed within 2 years, with construction beginning within 1 year of application approval

Niagara County Economic Development Services

Detailed, up-to-date information regarding Niagara County Economic Development services, initiatives, partnerships, and on-going projects is provided on the County's website at www.niagaracounty.com and at the Department of Economic Development website at www.nccedev.com. The information that follows highlights additional information relative to recent economic development initiatives and services in Niagara County.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Niagara County Department of Economic Development is to provide high quality professional planning services to the municipalities, citizens and organizations of Niagara County; to promote orderly growth and development through the dissemination of information, preparation of plans, projects and programs and provision of technical services.

The Department will promote sustainable economic development in harmony with the natural environment, creating and retaining jobs, expanding the tax base, and improving the quality of life for Niagara County residents under the direction of the Niagara County Manager and policies of the Niagara County Legislature.

Planning and Technical Assistance

The Department provides planning/technical assistance to local levels of government. These include:

- Special project planning services
- Transportation planning services
- State of the art graphic and mapping services
- Staff support to over 30 boards and committees
- Public requests for census information and data
- Technical assistance and grant support

Niagara County Business Assistance

The Department of Economic Development heads an effort to strengthen and solidify Niagara County business and industry by setting up meetings with a team chosen by the Department to assess the needs of local businesses. The idea behind these meetings is to take a proactive approach to retention by addressing needs before a business decides to close or transfer to another area. In addition, the Department works in conjunction with the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency to search for possible new business enterprises and opportunities for Niagara County by initiating contact with prospects, providing them with marketing information, and follow up.

State Affiliate Data Center

The Department, in cooperation with New York's Empire State Development, participates in a program that provides access to statistics on Niagara County's economy, housing, and population. As an affiliate member of Empire State Development's New York State Data Center, Division of Policy & Research, the Department maintains an extensive library of U.S. Census and other publications. The data can be provided directly, upon request, to local governments, businesses, and individuals. Under this program the Department of Economic Development is a major source of data for firms conducting marketing studies and for companies and individuals interested in establishing businesses in Niagara County.

Niagara County Economic Development Alliance (NCEDA)

The Alliance is a consortium of economic development organizations, utilities, public entities and municipalities. The mission of the Niagara County Economic Development Alliance is to maintain the quality of life for Niagara County citizens by providing services necessary to keep business in the County and to attract new business into the area. The principal purpose of the NCEDA is to provide a wide range of supportive services to business and to coordinate and facilitate the provision of those services. The long-range goal is to provide a singular business-friendly referral service in which all business support services are linked and into which all business can link in order to resolve operational problems, which could endanger their continued operation in Niagara County. The Alliance members are listed, along with contact and program information, in the Connections for Business brochure available through the Niagara County Department of Economic Development.

Special Planning Efforts

The Department continues to work in conjunction with and expand special planning efforts in the following strategic areas:

- Farmland Protection in conjunction with Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Erie Canal Recreationway in conjunction with local communities, NYS Thruway, NYS Canal Corporation and the National Park Service

- Lake Ontario Shoreline in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Niagara River Greenway in conjunction with the Niagara River Greenway Commission
- Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station in conjunction with the Military Affairs Council
- Brownfields Development in conjunction with the Brownfields Working Group
- Cayuga Creek in conjunction with City of Niagara Falls, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Homeland Security funding in conjunction with Niagara County Emergency Services and Niagara County Sheriff's Department

Transportation Assistance

The Department plays an active role in transportation issues, including:

- Participates with Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Committee on 2025 Long Range Transportation Plans
- Assists in the development of a 5-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)
- Participates in special studies related to transportation issues
- Monitors and analyzes the activities of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority in Niagara County, especially at the Niagara Falls International Airport
- Participates in efforts to stabilize railroad activities and lobby for rail infrastructure improvements
- Facilitates regular meetings between the Greater Niagara Manufacturers Association and CSX Railroad

Environmental Assistance

The Department maintains a library of environmental data that includes information on wetlands, floodplains, soils, hydrography, bedrock geology, land use characteristics, etc. The data can be provided directly, upon request, to local governments, businesses, individuals, and community organizations to assist with planning and development initiatives.

Brownfields

The Department also administers Niagara County's Brownfields Program. The purpose of the program is to collaborate with all levels of government and create public-private partnerships that lead to identification and remediation of brownfield sites so that they can be returned to productive use. The Brownfields Program covers assessment, end-use planning, and remediation. The Department maintains an extensive inventory of brownfields including sites identified by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as well as locally identified sites. The Department also participates in a regional brownfields consortium that includes the City of Niagara Falls, City of Buffalo, and Erie County.

Tourism Development

The Department works closely with the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (NTCC) and Niagara County Sportfishing to promote Niagara County as a world-class sportfishing destination through attendance at key sportfishing/outdoor trade shows, in strategic sportfishing/outdoor print and electronic media and through public relations programs such as hosting outdoor writers and fishing derbies and tournaments.

General Characteristics and Trends

Positive economic growth and development activity is the lifeblood that is so critical to sustaining healthy local and regional economies. Fiscal management, in combination with sound economic, land use and transportation policies can be the impetus to creating strong economies and a solid tax base in the County that in turn enhances the region's quality of life, attracts new investment, and retains existing businesses and residents. The information that follows highlights some additional economic development activities and trends in Niagara County.

Strategic partnerships and intergovernmental and inter-municipal cooperation are critical to building strong economies and successful business retention and recruitment programs. Niagara County, in collaboration with a long list of economic development partners that has formed over the years, is realizing significant success brought about through regional and local economic development collaboration. These partnerships and their collaborative efforts need to be expanded to continue and sustain recent economic development success. As the nation's economy declined in the latter half of 2008 these partnerships and collaborative efforts have become more important than ever.

This section provides a summary of important characteristics and recent trends in Niagara County with regards to economic development. Issues remain, however, and these issues and the many diverse opportunities for further growth have been identified by stakeholder groups and individuals through the comprehensive planning process.

Much of the background information in this chapter has been provided by the Niagara County Department of Economic Development, including information contained in its most recent 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report. The CEDS report is submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. Further information on economic development initiatives and projects in the County is available at www.nccedev.com and information on the 2008 CEDS Report is available at www.niagaracounty.com/docs/2008CEDSRpt.pdf.

As pointed out in the County's 2008 CEDS report, recent trends indicate Niagara County has been experiencing some very positive signs of its economic potential in spite of the recession that the United States is currently experiencing. Niagara County continues to be very active in promoting available low-cost hydropower from the New York Power Authority. In 2008, NYPA allocated nearly 60 megawatts of low-cost hydropower to five existing and three start-up companies in Niagara County. These allocations will support the creation of 763 new jobs and help retain 304 jobs in Niagara County, while seeing these companies invest over \$326 million in their facilities over the next three years. Niagara County will continue its efforts to promote low-cost hydropower from NYPA, an extremely important tool in its economic development toolkit.

The Niagara County Center for Economic Development also serves on the "Western New York Advisory Group" (WNYAG), which was created in 2004 by a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the process to coordinate the marketing and allocation of New York Power Authority hydropower known as Expansion Power (EP) and Replacement Power (RP). Other positive aspects of the economy of Niagara County are described below.

Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel

A major catalyst to the development of downtown Niagara Falls and Niagara County in general is the Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel, which has emerged as a world-class casino and resort destination since its grand opening in 2002. The original casino opened on December 31, 2002 in the former Niagara Falls Convention and Civic Center. The Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel opened on December 31, 2005. The 26-story luxury hotel became fully operational in the spring of 2006, at a cost of about \$235 million. With the expansion, the employment level at the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel increased to nearly 2,900 employees, making it the largest employer in Niagara County, surpassing the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station with 2,752 employees.

Niagara Wine Trail

Another example of recent positive economic trends is the success of the Niagara Wine Trail which runs through the heart of Niagara County. The Wine Trail grew to twelve wineries in 2008. The Wine Trail is host to seasonal wine tastings and community events including live music performances, an art show, jazz, blues and classic concerts, and a harvest festival. The Trail complements local communities' annual festivals, fairs and other popular local and tourist venues. Niagara Wine Trail brochures are available locally and detailed information including events is also available online at www.niagarawinetrail.org.

Artpark

Artpark, located in Lewiston, is also experiencing a much welcomed “renaissance” in recent years. The Lower Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, the Lewiston Council of the Arts, and the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC) have been actively involved in promoting this unique venue. Artpark is a New York State park in existence since 1974. The park plays host to local and national performing artists, plays, and its “Tuesdays in the Park” series.

Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor

The Erie Canal, which traverses several Niagara communities, is now widely recognized as a significant cultural, recreational and economic resource for Canal communities and the Niagara region in general. The Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor was established by the New York State Legislature in 1999 as part of the New York State Heritage Area System. This Heritage Area includes all the municipalities of Wayne, Monroe, Orleans, Niagara and Erie counties along with a 136-mile section of the Erie Canal.

In 2000, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor was established by the U.S. Congress as one of only 37 federally designated National Heritage Areas. This designation will help preserve and revitalize interest in the historical, natural, scenic, and recreational resources of the Canal, celebrate its national significance, and facilitate further revitalization of canal-side communities. Information on Western Erie Canal Management Plan can be found at www.eriecanalheritage.com/content/News and at www.eriecanalway.org/background.asp.

Niagara River Greenway

Similar to the recognition of the Erie Canal as a valuable resource, the Niagara River corridor is also being recognized as a tremendous resource for economic development and tourism. In 2004, the Niagara River Greenway Commission was established by State legislation and charged with the responsibility of creating the Niagara River

Greenway Plan.

Subsequently, the Niagara River Greenway Plan was adopted in 2007. The Greenway Plan establishes a common vision for the Greenway as well as setting forth a variety of principles for connecting communities and the many natural and cultural resources within Greenway boundaries. These resources include the Seaway Trail, the Niagara Wine Trail and the Erie Canalway. The Greenway Plan encompasses several river communities within Niagara County. These include: the Towns of Porter, Lewiston, Niagara and Wheatfield; the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown; and the cities of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda.

Niagara Power Project

Another important milestone event occurred after five years of open and publicly inclusive efforts by the New York Power Authority (NYPA), State and Federal agencies, and over 100 stakeholders from across Western New York, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approved a new 50-year license for the Niagara Power Project on March 15, 2007. The project will continue to result in significant economic, environmental, and recreation-tourism benefits to the Niagara Frontier. The new 50-year license assures continued production of low-cost hydroelectricity, that is estimated to be tied to several tens of thousands of local jobs.

The Niagara Power Coalition (NPC), consisting of Niagara County, the Towns of Lewiston and Niagara, the City of Niagara Falls, and the Lewiston-Porter, Niagara Falls and Niagara-Wheatfield school districts signed a Host Communities agreement with NYPA in June 2005. This agreement provides that NYPA shall make available to the Host Communities 25 mw of power (of which Niagara County will receive 9 mw), establish a Host Community Fund of \$5 million per year for 50 years, and allocate \$3 million per year for 50 years for Greenway consistent recreation/tourism projects in Niagara County.

Niagara County, as a member of the Niagara Power Coalition, is involved in distributing Niagara County's 9 mw share of power to its County-owned sites. Additionally, the Niagara County Department of Economic Development is assisting local businesses to retain and/or receive low cost power allocations for business expansion. The Niagara County Legislature has authorized the use of its hydropower allocation, received from the agreement, for economic development. As a result, "Empower Niagara" was established as a not-for-profit Development Corporation authorized to enter into agreements for the purposes of providing certain electric power benefits to those companies that meet eligibility criteria. In the meantime, the allocation is being used to lower the County's electric bills at County-owned sites.

Other important recent economic indicators that provide a snapshot of the local economy are provided below.

- The unemployment rate as measured by percentage of total workforce for Niagara County was 5.3% in 2007, down slightly from a rate of 5.4% in 2006. Although the County's unemployment rate improved slightly, the rate continued to exceed the non-seasonally adjusted 2007 rates of both New York State (4.5%) and the U.S. (4.6%). These unemployment rates were prior to the nationwide economic downturn experienced during the latter half of 2008. The rate for the first eleven months of 2008 was at 6.8% and rose significantly higher at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009.
- Per-capita income in Niagara County in recent years has consistently trailed that of



Niagara County, as a member of the Niagara Power Coalition, is involved in distributing Niagara County's 9 mw share of power to its County-owned sites and in assisting local businesses with low cost power.

New York State and the United States. Per capita personal income in Niagara County in 2005, the most recent year for which information is available, was \$27,923. This compares to \$39,967 in New York State, \$34,471 in the United States, and \$32,071 in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). In current dollar terms, not adjusted for inflation, personal income increased an average of 3.9% per year in Niagara County from 2004 to 2005. This compares to a 3.7% increase in per capita personal income for the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, a 4.1% increase in the United States, and a 3.8% increase in New York State for the same time period. These numbers suggest that Niagara County has closed the gap slightly in per capita personal income growth from 2004 to 2005, but still lags behind when compared to the region and the nation.

- Growth sectors & clusters in the economy that show positive signs for the future include hospitality & tourism; advanced manufacturing (chemical/plastics, metal, fabricating/machining); agriculture/food processing; telecommunications/call centers; health care/social assistance; medical products; medical technology research and development; high tech/emerging industries; forest and wood products; printing; logistics, warehousing & distribution; and aerospace/defense have been identified as the region's top growth sectors and industry clusters.
- Major categories that continue to significantly contribute to the economy of Niagara County include manufacturing, services, public utilities, tourism and agriculture. Within these are various subcategories that can be considered on a stand-alone basis by virtue of the role they may play in the future prosperity of the County.

- Manufacturing remains a strong component of Niagara County's economy, with the greatest number of employees and the highest payroll, despite a relative smaller number of total establishments. The future of the manufacturing sector is uncertain, at best, but should not be totally discounted because of resources like low-cost hydropower, availability of fresh water, location, infrastructure and other advantages for which Niagara County has traditionally been known.

- The service industries are increasing in importance in Niagara County. Service industries include: Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services; Company and Enterprise Management Services; Administrative Support, Waste Management, Remediation Services; Education: Health Care & Social Services; Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; and Accommodation & Food Services. The Health Care and Social Services sector has seen continued growth and leads other service industries in total annual payroll, number of employees and number of establishments. The number of establishments in this sector grew from 462 in 1998 to 516 in 2005. Annual payroll in this sector also increased from \$191 million in 1998 to \$268.8 million in 2005. Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center (NFMMC) has become an economic engine in the sector in Niagara County and the region. In 2006, NFMMC opened a \$20 million ER One Facility and Heart Center of Niagara, significantly expanding its campus and employment opportunities. NFMMC is currently Niagara County's sixth largest employer, with 1,200 jobs. Over the past five years, NFMMC has invested \$26 million in capital projects and has an additional \$30 million in capital projects in various stages of development.

- The tourism and hospitality industry has benefitted greatly from growth in disposable income in the Country as a whole. This industry may be affected by the recent economic downturn. Though it has always been a significant part of the

local economy, many initiatives are underway across the County to cultivate tourism potential, including the Niagara River Greenway Plan and the Western Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. This sector continues to have great potential for Niagara County. Linking the conventional attractions, such as Niagara Falls and Fort Niagara, with the more contemporary visitor destinations like the Erie Canal is seen as critical to the future of the County's economy. Historic preservation is also an important element of the future development of the County. The Western Erie Canal Corridor, rural villages and hamlets and city centers are rife with historic amenities that tell the story of the Niagara Frontier. Several individuals and organizations have joined in the effort to retain and enhance these assets.

- Agriculture continues to be an important factor in the Niagara County economy. In 2007 agriculture injected nearly \$104 million in product sales into the economy according to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture. As the oldest and most steady sector of the economy, farming is seen as increasingly threatened by low commodity prices and sprawl from the regions urban centers. This is borne out by the fact that the average size of farms and total farm acreage in Niagara County declined between 2002 and 2007 from 185 acres per farm in 2002 to 165 acres in 2007. Total farmland acreage in 2002 of 148,041 acres fell to 142,636 acres in 2007. Efforts are underway to protect the valuable agricultural land in Niagara County and steps are being taken to identify opportunities to enhance the viability of existing farming operations and attract additional producers and value-added businesses. The future of agriculture in the County is seen as sustainable given certain circumstances. Many collateral quality of life and security benefits are also associated with future growth in this sector of the economy.

- Utilities are another of Niagara County's strengths. Three of the State's largest utilities, New York Power Authority (NYPA), National Grid, and New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG), supply electricity to County businesses and residents. With the onset of deregulation, there are several smaller suppliers of electricity available to business and consumer alike. Natural gas service is supplied by NYSEG to the eastern portion of Niagara County and by National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation to the western portion of Niagara County. National Grid, NYSEG and National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation all have economic development staff able to assist new and existing businesses within the County. In addition, blocks of low cost hydro power are available to business and industry through the Empower Niagara program which offers hydroelectric power at some of the lowest rates in the U.S.

- Niagara County has been making a genuine effort to reduce the effects of property taxes on development. Sound fiscal policies including streamlining government and budget efficiencies has allowed the County Legislature to hold the amount raised by taxation to an average of 3.59% per year from 1997 through 2007.
- The Niagara County Industrial Development Agency concluded another strong year in 2007, completing projects in manufacturing, warehouse/distribution, tourism, health care, transportation, and educational sectors. The IDA successfully closed on 12 lease and bond projects projected to create over 130 jobs within 3 years and retain over 1,200 jobs. Total investment for these projects is over \$82 million. Nine additional projects were approved, but did not close by the end of the year. These projects are projected to create 300 jobs within 3 years and retain over 150 jobs with a total investment of \$87 million. In 2007 the IDA closed on 7 loans totaling \$1.9 million projected to create 49 jobs within 3 years and retain over 240 jobs.

- The Niagara County Microenterprise Assistance Program was created in 1995 for the benefit of low-to-moderate income individuals and small businesses with 5 employees or less. Since that time, the NCIDA has provided 24 rounds of training to local entrepreneurs. The program has an excellent record of success, with over 1400 applications received since its inception and 525 individuals graduating from the educational portion to date. Over \$2,000,000 in loans have been approved since 1995.

Brownfields Redevelopment

Niagara County is very active in brownfields redevelopment with its brownfields program to help spur the redevelopment of key properties that have been contaminated in the past. Most municipalities in the County contain at least one, if not many, brownfield sites. While contamination of these properties may present obstacles to their redevelopment, brownfield programs offer courses of action to clean these sites and attract productive uses to Niagara County's communities. There are few tracts of undeveloped, uncontaminated land remaining for development within the County's major urban centers, making brownfield cleanup imperative for economic growth. Redeveloped, brownfields can be catalysts for community revitalization and sustainable development.

Brownfields redevelopment will broaden the County's tax base, attract new industry and create thousands of new jobs. The benefits of brownfield development are numerous and include:

- Reuse of existing infrastructure.
- Protection of public health and the environment.
- Innovative reuse of sites can increase the sense of place and community in Niagara County.
- Positive effect on Niagara County's growth patterns by encouraging the redevelopment of abandoned properties within the urban core and discouraging development of green space in outlying areas.
- Several Federal and State initiatives offer significant financial incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment projects.

With the County Legislature's support, the Niagara County Department of Economic Development established a brownfields program in 1999 with the following goals:

- Identify and create a countywide inventory of brownfield sites
- Create collaboration between all levels of government and the private sector
- Engage the public in the brownfields identification and assessment process
- Identify funding sources and find innovative ways to finance brownfield redevelopment
- Develop creative reuses for brownfield sites

The County and many communities have been quite successful in implementing its brownfields program. To date, millions of dollars in funding have been awarded to Niagara County by State and Federal brownfield programs, and these funds have been used to investigate and clean-up many of the County's priority brownfield sites. By prioritizing sites for redevelopment, investigating the nature and degree of contamination present on these sites, applying remediation measures if necessary and feasible, and marketing them to encourage redevelopment, the County has successfully navigated a number of brownfield sites through the redevelopment process, resulting in the development of clean and productive uses on these once-contaminated properties.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment."

While substantial progress has been made, several hundred Niagara County brownfield sites remain in need of environmental assessments, notably Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, which are used to inform prospective owners of the environmental history of a site and to determine the potential need for further environmental investigation. According to Niagara County's 2006 brownfields inventory, 41 hazardous waste sites are still in need of Phase I investigations, as are approximately 200 petroleum-contaminated sites. Niagara County will continue to seek State and Federal funding to complete the necessary investigations required to advance the redevelopment of brownfield sites throughout the County.

To facilitate brownfield redevelopment, Niagara County partnered with the City of Niagara Falls to jointly receive a \$1 million Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund from the U.S. EPA. The Fund will provide loans and subgrants to eligible borrowers and applicants in need of assistance in remediating brownfield sites in Niagara County. Funds provided can be leveraged to advance brownfield sites to the next level of redevelopment.

The County's Brownfields Program needs to be promoted to be most effective in identifying and remediating priority brownfields. Promotion can be accomplished through several different media including brochures, meetings, business workshops and public information campaigns. The County recently created the position of Public Information Officer. This position can facilitate the dissemination of information on brownfields and other economic development programs and incentives. In 2009 the Public Information Officer will be assisting in business workshops sponsored by the NCCED and its partners. Information on the County's Brownfields Program can be obtained at www.nccedev.com.

New York State, through the Department of Environmental Conservation, also provides significant brownfield remediation opportunities through programs for both the public and private sectors. Information is available at www.dec.state.ny.us. The Department of State also offers substantial assistance through its Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program to communities and community-based organizations. Information is available at www.nyswaterfronts.com/grantopps_BOA.asp.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also offers several Federal brownfield programs to assist the public and private sectors. Information on Federal programs is available at www.epa.gov/brownfields.

The State and Federal brownfields programs offer significant economic and financial incentives to identify, remediate and redevelop brownfield sites. The County's program in combination with these State and Federal programs are having a major positive economic impact on Niagara County since program incentives include tax credits and release from liability offered through the State program are the driving force behind the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Some recent brownfield successes include:

- The Wurlitzer Site in North Tonawanda
- Niagara Falls Transportation Center in Niagara Falls
- The Wendy's Restaurant in Niagara Falls

Several brownfield projects are underway:

- Santarosa Holdings in Niagara Falls
- Northern Ethanol in Niagara Falls

- Globe Specialty Metals in Niagara Falls
- Remington Rand in North Tonawanda

Canadian Tourism

A number of forces, including tourism coming into the County from outside the U.S. are driving the local economy. The U.S. dollar continues to fluctuate relative to the value of the Canadian dollar. Niagara County realizes an economic increase in the local tourism sector based on any increased strength of Canadian currency, with a corresponding increase in the amount of retail sales and bed tax revenue being collected. Sales taxes are less in New York State compared to the Province of Ontario, Canada for example, further attracting Canadian buying power.

The growth of Canadian tourism is driving that sector throughout the Niagara region on both sides of the border. According to the Niagara Economic & Tourism Corporation, there are currently \$6 billion in tourism-related projects underway in the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada. These can be viewed as both an opportunity and a challenge for Niagara County, NY. Canadian projects include:

- The Fallsview Casino Resort is Niagara Falls, Ontario's newest casino, joining Casino Niagara, which celebrated its 10th year in business in 2007. According to the operators of the Ontario casinos, a majority of their patrons come from U.S. markets; most of which drive through Niagara County, NY. Creating new attractions and venues that entice the casino patrons to stay on the U.S. side of the border is a real opportunity, and one that is being explored in earnest by County economic development officials.
- New hotels are being constructed in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Attractions like the Butterfly Conservatory have been built and there are plans to build a new convention center in Niagara Falls, Ontario within the next three to five years. This convention center would compete with Niagara Falls, NY for the very lucrative, but limited convention business.

Workforce Investment

Niagara County has developed and updated a comprehensive local plan under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This plan was implemented July 1, 2000 and has developed a universally accessible workforce development system that serves the area's job-seeking customers as well as provides services to business. The plan's vision is to present a seamless service with rapid response to all of the community, and help to improve the economic well being of individuals and the local economy. The plan covers businesses, jobseekers, employed workers, and youth employment needs.

The Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) focuses its services in demand occupations to respond more quickly to businesses' needs, and to best utilize its resources to support local industries. It aligns with the western NY regional effort in working to transform the regional economy in supplying workforce needs in the areas of Advanced Manufacturing and Life Sciences. The local WIBs are taking a leadership role in addressing this need.

Businesses, as well as individuals seeking employment/upgrading, are served through the One-Stop Centers, which bring together the resources of WIA and Department of Employment & Training Services staff. Partner programs are also represented. Core services are made available to everyone, along with intensive training services for those who need additional assistance. Training is provided in demand occupations

based on local needs. Funding cuts over the past five years have decreased the level of funded training services that can be provided, but the programs' universal customer services and business connections will continue to be maintained.

Niagara County must focus on the retention of its remaining manufacturing base, while promoting brownfields redevelopment as a means of attracting new industry to the County's abundant spaces available to industry. Assisting Niagara County manufacturers in the transition to "advanced manufacturing" with techniques like lean manufacturing and other innovative practices is crucial in the retention of the manufacturing base.

Green industries involved in producing sustainable technologies represent a blossoming pool of new-age manufacturing companies promising to expand in the future, and Niagara County should focus on recruiting and meeting the needs of such these manufacturers. Promoting the expansion of low cost power availability for industry is essential. Currently, there are numerous opportunities for retaining and expanding businesses as a result of the relicensing of the Niagara Power Project.

Tourism Travel and the Niagara Falls International Airport

Niagara Falls is a world renowned travel destination. The Niagara Region is suitably positioned for increased tourism and to take advantage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Niagara County's proximity to Canada and the majority of that nation's industry strategically positions Niagara County in the international marketplace. Niagara County is also within a days drive to such markets as Buffalo, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Toronto and Montreal. The proximity to the large, growing metropolitan area of Toronto creates a unique economic opportunity for the Niagara Region.

The underutilized Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA), and the relocation of the Amtrak station closer to the U.S./Canadian border, will expand the modal opportunities available in Niagara County, and will open doors to advance tourism and commerce in the Niagara region.

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority is currently in the midst of a \$43.9 million improvement project at the Niagara Falls International Airport, featuring a new state-of-the-art terminal, with improvements to the apron and surrounding area. Designed to better accommodate modern passenger jets and improve passenger's security experience, the facility is scheduled to open September 2009 (information available at www.niagarafallsairport.com/newterminal.asp).

The new terminal at 69,430 square-feet will more than triple the size of the current one, with a second story to facilitate jet bridges. Security and processing operations will take full advantage of new technologies to make the airport efficient and user-friendly for passengers. The creative design of the new terminal will reflect the grandeur of the Niagara community, promoting a positive "Gateway Image" to the region. The two-gate facility will provide for efficient, customer friendly passenger processing, a two level layout for jet bridge boarding, food/beverage concessions, fully functional TSA inspection facilities, in-line baggage screening, eight stationary ticket counter stations, car rental and a multi-modal Metro transit center. Other improvements include access roads, a circulatory road, walkways and parking.

The terminal will provide the operational capability to simultaneously process

international and domestic flights and fully accommodate 747-400 and 757-300 aircraft. The innovative split-level holdrooms with initial seating for 280 (design provides for additional seating) will provide all passengers with an outstanding level of customer service regardless of aircraft size. Functionally, the design takes cues from the Federal Aviation Administration and International Air Transport Association guidelines.

NFIA is well positioned to take advantage of a new terminal. It is located within 500 miles of 55% of the U.S. population and 62% of Canada's population. It is just 15 minutes from Niagara Falls and 10 miles from two international border crossings. At 10,000 feet in length, the airport has one of the longest runways in the State, making it capable of accommodating the largest aircraft in the world..

Partners and Resources for Economic Development

As stated previously, present success of Niagara County and local economic development initiatives is attributable to strategic partnering with a variety of municipalities, groups and organizations. Facilitating these partnership opportunities is critical to future successes as well. The following list, although it may not be entirely inclusive of all partners working together towards increased economic growth and development, is representative of the diverse range of stakeholders needed to promote, facilitate and sustain healthy economic activity.

Partners and Resources for Economic Development include, but are not limited to:

- Niagara County Legislature
- Niagara County Department of Economic Development
- Niagara County Economic Development Alliance
- Niagara County Industrial Development Agency
- Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE)
- Buffalo Niagara Partnership
- Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas
- City of Lockport Greater Lockport Development Corporation
- City of Niagara Falls Empire Zone
- City of Niagara Falls Renewal Community
- Empire State Development (USA Niagara)
- Insyte Consulting
- Local and Regional Chambers of Commerce
- Lower Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce
- Lumber City Development Corporation
- NCCC Small Business Development Center
- New York Power Authority
- New York State Department of State
- New York State Economic Development Council
- New York State Association of County Planning Directors
- Niagara County Department of Employment & Training
- Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)
- Niagara Falls Bridge Commission
- Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC)
- Niagara USA Chamber
- Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency
- Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency
- University of Buffalo Regional Institute
- USA Niagara Development Corporation

- WNY Advisory Council
- WNY Regional Education Center for Economic Development

Niagara County also works closely with the following agencies and organizations in providing important resource information related to existing economic activity and potential economic opportunities. These include:

- Cornell University Cooperative Extension – Niagara County
- International Joint Commission (IJC)
- New York State Data Center
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Niagara County Farm Bureau
- Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Various local and regional committees

Issues & Opportunities

Further indication of the status of economic development in Niagara County in 2008 was obtained through the comprehensive planning process that asked Niagara communities and stakeholders to identify what they saw as issues and opportunities specifically related to economic development in the County. The information gathered from these stakeholders is summarized below by planning subregion.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- “From the farm to the factory – a need for keeping it local!” What is being produced locally should stay local and marketed locally (referring to a greater need for relying on more local food production, processing, packaging, shipping, marketing, etc.)
- Small businesses expansion of existing businesses and enticing new businesses is needed along with better marketing of existing small local businesses.
- Upgrade infrastructure facilities, including sewer services, to support economic development.
- Only NYS Routes 31 and 104 corridors have natural gas service - there is a need to expand gas service to support development.
- Roads need improvements for trucking and shipping farm products, etc.
- Need to expand public knowledge to a great community – come and stay – we need a marketing campaign to promote local communities.
- Need to address concerns with vacant buildings – either demolish and/or beautify these buildings to enhance the attractiveness and promotion of areas such as along the Canal

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- Agri-tourism offers a means to draw visitors to the area.
- The Erie Canal has historic significance and economic development potential.
- Existing parks and recreation facilities have a need to expand and improve some of their facilities.
- Schools and public parks share athletic facilities now - need to increase this

potential.

- Opportunities for beautification of the many older buildings that can still be restored and saved.
- Existing wildlife and conservation areas need to be protected.

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Taxes are a disincentive to development – the property tax rate is too high
 - The overabundance of education related taxes (schools taxes) – Town of Cambria, for example, has 5 school districts, 5 also in the Town of Lockport - creates disincentive to live and work here.
 - Municipalities are paying other municipalities for services, i.e., water treatment
 - An aging infrastructure hinders development - gas, water, sewer, etc.
 - The challenges faced due to the loss of people in the County
 - The need for improving “shovel ready sites” vs. the red tape, bureaucracy and delays in getting projects done in New York State, especially compared to other states

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- The importance of the Niagara Wine Trails
- The availability of higher educational facilities like NCCC
- The historic canal locks in Lockport (a unique site on the Erie Canal)
- The Transit Road corridor and our historic (heritage) corridors

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

- Primary issues and challenges identified include:
 - A general attitude in the area of “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) and negative attitudes toward any development proposals and change in general.
 - The overall lack of sewers and natural gas in entire towns
 - Villages of Barker and Wilson have good infrastructure coverage, but coverage is poor in the towns of Wilson and Somerset
 - Newfane has good infrastructure coverage and it shows in more commercial use
 - Distance from main transportation systems is a hindrance to development
 - Employers are leaving the area
 - Parkways are for non-commercial use - hindering development: Robert Moses Parkway should allow commercial traffic
 - Excessive taxes

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- The existing harbors and the Ontario lakefront itself
- Opportunities to expand sportfishing and tourism based economies
- The existing road systems for transporting goods and services
- The potential for other uses at the AES facility in Somerset
- The large areas that are zoned industrial, but not being used as such

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The need to facilitate tourism
- Obstacles to businesses – bureaucracy, high taxes, energy costs
- Cross-river Ferry is needed
- Connection to other areas is needed
- Cross-tourism (international – easier access across border needed)
- The need to maintain regional employment levels
- Keeping residents in the area
- Dealing with the needs of an aging population
- Youngstown – sewer plant capacity is an issue
- Town of Porter – more promotion of agriculture needed
- There are too many State properties that cannot be developed - Fort Niagara Joseph Davis Park, etc.
- Chemical Waste Management (CWM) / Modern Disposal concerns
- Need to facilitate new industries such as in the Town of Lewiston – hydroponics & greenhouses
- Need a “people mover” transportation system from Niagara Falls to Lewiston

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- The beautiful geography and nature of the area
- Farm Museum - Town of Lewiston (Sanborn)
- The Niagara River, lakes, streams, and waterways
- The low cost of living, including low housing costs
- The untapped potential for the area in general

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The “Oz” Project and what challenges it may entail:
 - Schedule – largest project in the area that is now on the boards
 - 4 years to develop project
 - Project will be the largest private employer in the County with 3,000 – 5,000 year round employees estimated creating jobs, but also traffic, housing needs
- Other issues in this area include a need for more diversity of housing and better quality of existing housing stock
- More support for agriculture and related businesses is needed – market fresh food/guests accommodations/agri-tourism
- Support for the hospitality industry – need for additional training for workforce
- Need more technology providers and trained workforce
- Public transportation services needed in Wheatfield
- Niagara Falls (between Main Street and Whirlpool) - Important issues center on brownfield clean-up and dealing with bureaucratic red tape that hinders redevelopment – need to better leverage investments already made in cities
- River property needs more public access needed to waterfronts
- Niagara Falls Boulevard needs corridor enhancements
- Overlay districts are needed to enhance redevelopment and aesthetics
- Businesses are needed that bring in other businesses

- Need for working together
- Maintaining farming in the area
- Right-to-farm laws are needed
- Smart growth development is needed
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Educating the development community about what is needed in a community

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- The Air Base
- New terminal at NFI airport
- International heavy jets that can be accommodated at the airport
- Spinoff opportunities and surrounding redevelopment potential from the airport
- Environmental clean-up and services – technical support from County is available when needed
- Williams Road medical corridor is an asset
- Multi-modal transportation in the Niagara Falls area
- The high cost of fuel should promote greater city growth
- The U.S. Customs House and its history
- Niagara Falls Experience Center
- Existing road infrastructure
- The Culinary Institute
- Opportunities surrounding the new Niagara Falls Public Safety Complex – and Main Street potential of the cities

Strategies

Land use decisions and regulations are a local municipal responsibility under New York State Municipal Law (“Home Rule”), the County’s ability to guide development in towns, villages and cities is very limited. The County’s primary planning function is to provide guidance and recommendations to communities about future land use, as provided in this Comprehensive Plan.

However, when it comes to economic development decisions at the County level, County officials, working in collaboration with local municipalities, should continue to encourage projects toward suitable development/redevelopment areas including brownfields. The County can also encourage compact, mixed-use forms of development and transit-oriented projects by assisting communities in updating zoning provisions that allow for these uses.

Locations identified as being poorly suited for development/redevelopment typically are in rural areas and may be rich in natural resources. These areas may be attractive to development for financial reasons because land values and acquisition costs may be substantially lower than elsewhere, but these locations may also be far from existing community centers and services. Many of these lands should be retained for their natural resource value with limited hamlet forms of low density rural development.

Development/redevelopment areas will typically have access to existing road, water, drainage and sewer infrastructure along with the necessary support services to facilitate economic development, although system improvements and upgrades may be



***Collaborate
with
Municipalities***

necessary. These types of infrastructure improvements may be eligible for various State and federal funding mechanisms including economic stimulus packages.

Primary development/redevelopment areas are generally located in and directly adjacent to the County's 3 cities, 5 villages, the developed fringe areas of those cities and villages, suburban town centers and some hamlets/rural crossroads. Many of the targeted development/redevelopment locations identified in Chapter V of this Plan were identified from a review of local municipal plans, input provided by stakeholder communities and GIS mapping and land use analysis.

The cumulative effect of the development of valuable local resource and working lands, such as prime farmland, wetlands, and riparian corridors, may not be recognized until some time in the future after small developments on these lands are approved and constructed. By then the value of these lands from an environmental standpoint may already be diminished.

In economic terms, the cumulative fiscal effect of conventional forms of "leapfrog" development is ultimately increased by municipal and County costs for infrastructure extensions, added support services, such as roads, sewer, drainage systems, schools, fire districts, and increased demands on current transportation systems. These added costs translate into higher taxes on residents and property owners.

Inter-governmental cooperation and collaboration are critical to directing and encouraging development, preferably mixed-use forms of development, into those areas of each community that are considered most suitable for development/redevelopment. This will also make it easier to preserve important community characteristics, such as scenic open spaces in rural areas, environmentally sensitive lands, and working farmlands that can help make communities distinct from one another.

Inter-municipal collaboration is also important in attracting and recruiting those businesses and industries that best complement the unique character of each community, whether they are urban areas, suburban communities, waterfront communities or farming communities. Economic development needs to be appropriate to the existing infrastructure and regional location of communities relative to the rest of Niagara County. For example large industrial uses and businesses that rely on extensive infrastructure and support services should be located in areas appropriately zoned for such uses and adequately served by existing infrastructure; tourism-based businesses along the area's many beautiful waterfronts should be located consistent with the Niagara River Greenway and Erie Canalway initiatives; and agriculturally-based businesses and home-based enterprises are best suited for rural communities.

It should remain a priority to continue the countywide collaborative effort to prioritize improvements and upgrades to existing infrastructure first, especially with regards to water, sewer and transportation systems, before consideration of creating new infrastructure relative to economic development. This is being accomplished via the Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as well as the Greater Buffalo Niagara Region Transportation Council (GBNRTC) through its Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Obviously in cases where public health and safety are at risk, priorities must be different based on those local needs.

Giving high priority to the maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure over



**Collaborative
Business
Recruitment**

the creation of new systems, and directing development/redevelopment to where it already exists, is consistent with national planning principles and with State and regional planning initiatives. Agencies like the NYS Department of State Quality Communities Initiatives, the NYS Department of Transportation, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Region Transportation Council and others encourage this approach. By focusing on improving the infrastructure that is already in place, communities can inhibit and prevent sprawling development patterns.

When businesses decide where to locate their operations, they consider numerous factors, such as the availability of a prepared workforce, proximity to major transportation routes and markets, and other strategic advantages of a location. Quality of life factors can tip the scales in a given community's favor. The recommendations in this Plan can help ensure that Niagara County's communities can continue to both attract business opportunity and protect these quality of life factors.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Many of the goals and objectives in this chapter are also provided in the 2008 County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report. Others have been developed in response to the issues and opportunities identified by stakeholders during the comprehensive planning process and others are provided based on planning research and best management practices. These goals and objectives should be considered "fluid" and need to be reviewed and updated periodically as economic development trends, needs and opportunities require their modification.

Goal – Attract and Retain Economic Activity by Preserving the County's Natural and Cultural Resources through Sustainable Practices

To attract and retain economic activity by implementing sustainable development practices to improve the overall quality of life in Niagara County which will in turn result in increased economic activity. Long-term economic development can be strengthened by ensuring that Niagara County continues to be a naturally beautiful, as well as geographically advantageous place to live and do business. By revitalizing developed areas and preserving natural and cultural resources, a commitment to a higher quality of life for future generations will be demonstrated. A commitment to sustainable development practices will help make Niagara County more attractive to both economic activity and retention of a skilled labor pool.

Objective

- Continue to protect natural and cultural resources and examine ways to improve countywide stewardship of the environment. Reduce the County's "ecological footprint" or impact on the environment; strive for greater self-sufficiency by conserving energy, water, air and other natural resources; reduce waste generation; increase reuse and recycling of materials; and use local products, materials, agricultural goods, and other wares.

Recommendations

- Encourage communities to conserve environmentally sensitive lands and resources by adopting sustainable economic development practices focused on protecting fish and wildlife resources, significant floral and faunal habitat areas, and bio-diversity. The County as well needs to consider implementing sustainable development practices in

An "ecological footprint" is a measure of demand on an ecosystem such as on the land, air and water resources of an area that is required to support and sustain a current lifestyle, economy, or the consumption patterns of a particular population. It includes the ability of that ecosystem to assimilate the waste that the population or economy produces.



County economic development projects.

- Encourage communities to establish minimum design standards, perhaps through LEED certification and use of “green” technologies for economic development projects that contribute positively to the natural environment, community character, neighborhood aesthetics, and local quality of life.
- Protect open space resources and encourage conservation of large contiguous natural corridors as designated greenways, blueways, and prime farmland resources of countywide importance through development of the Niagara River Greenway as well as through other local and regional initiatives.
- Encourage commercial and industrial development on vacant and underutilized lands including reuse of brownfield/greyfield sites as a countywide priority over “greenfield” development to protect open spaces and prime agricultural areas.
- Actively support the creation of local parklands and open spaces that are linked by greenways, blueways and multi-use trails.
- Support context sensitive design and redevelopment of areas appropriate to locations in proximity to cultural and historic resources and that are not detrimental to local community character or environmentally sensitive areas.
- Increase energy efficiency of County-owned facilities by considering the incorporation of green technologies, sustainable building and site design, and construction practices.

Goal – Increase Countywide Employment Opportunities

To increase overall employment opportunities by encouraging the expansion of key economic sectors including industrial, tourism and agricultural sectors of the County’s economy and support the entrepreneurial spirit and efforts in cutting edge industries such as clean energy alternatives, green building technologies, and clean manufacturing practices.

Objective

- Support local efforts at improving industrial sector expansion and employment opportunities

Recommendations

- Request New York State to designate additional Empire Zone designations in the County.
- Encourage spin-off enterprises from large companies
- Continue to market and attract Canadian and other international investment
- Provide infrastructure improvements in existing industrial parks
- Expand the availability of industrial incubators and multi-tenant facilities

- Aggressively market low cost power allocations through the New York Power Authority, and for smaller industrial projects, when NYPA power is not an alternative, through the Empower Niagara Program
- Market the availability of fresh water to companies currently in water-starved states
- Market County buildings and sites through the filtered versions of the NYS Site Finder, found on the NCIDA and County websites
- Monitor studies expanding hydro-electric generating facilities in Lewiston
- Focus on countywide brownfield redevelopment opportunities through promotion of the Niagara County Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund program.
- Encourage growth of clean manufacturing and green technology industries

Objective

- Improve tourism and tourism-based business opportunities throughout the County

Recommendations

- Increase tourism promotion of the County and its diverse communities and subregions through development of multi-media materials in collaboration with the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (NTCC) and local communities.
- Develop world class visitor attractions and tourist destinations in urban centers, to be premier centerpieces of natural and cultural heritage. (e.g. Niagara Experience Center, Erie Canal, Niagara Gorge, etc.).
- Continue to support the newly expanded Niagara County Wine Trail
- Support implementation of the Niagara County Greenway Plan and the Erie Canalway Plan.
- Develop the Niagara River Corridor as a National Heritage Area, and continue to encourage development and redevelopment of the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor as a premier tourist destination in the County.
- Work in collaboration with the City of Niagara Falls, USA Niagara Development Corporation, and other economic development agencies to lure four- and five-star hotels to the downtown Niagara Falls tourist district.
- Continue to support the Niagara County Community College's Hospitality & Tourism Center, the largest component of which will be the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute in downtown Niagara Falls.
- Support efforts to create physical linkages and link business information between Niagara County's communities that will help extend the stay of tourists, and thus spread economic wealth throughout the County.



Objective

- Improve and support retention of the agriculture sector of the economy.

Recommendations

- Pursue establishment of a Niagara County Agribusiness Fund through the proposed New York State Upstate Revitalization Fund.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County, in collaboration with the Farmland Protection Board should facilitate the update of the Niagara County Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan within the next two years by 2011.
- Strengthen the system for marketing fresh produce and value-added agricultural products in Niagara County, including activity with some city markets and high traffic tourism areas and corridors.
- Seek funding for a County agricultural economic development specialist.
- Seek grower assistance grants and assist individuals with rural business plans.
- Investigate branding opportunities for Niagara County agricultural products.
- Increase advertising in different media markets and via different media to promote greater consumption of locally grown foods and products.
- Support the efforts of organizations like Cornell Cooperative Extension to develop and implement a farm-to-institution program.

Goal – Strengthen the County’s Competitive Position

To strengthen the competitive position of countywide businesses involved in all sectors of the economy.

Objective

- Reduce the cost of doing business in Niagara County.

Recommendations

- Continue to provide financial assistance, such as revolving loan funds, bonds, guaranteed loans and other incentive programs to businesses through the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency.
- Retain low cost power “blocks” of hydro-power for large energy dependent companies and assist development of co-generation and alternative energy facilities
- Provide completely serviced sites and/or facilities for “just-in-time” suppliers to locate near existing manufacturing plants
- Re-certify agricultural districts as needed and investigate other potential farming incentive programs to allow for reduced tax rates on agricultural properties.



Goal – Diversify the Total Economic Base of Niagara County

To support waterfront and rural-based business opportunities and other economic development initiatives to diversify the economies that may be specific and appropriate to the character of particular areas, corridors and resources of communities throughout the County.

Objectives

- Facilitate greater public accessibility to waterfronts and natural features and support the development of water-oriented and rural-based businesses and uses.
- Enhance the diversification and sustainability of rural economies and small businesses through protection of natural and cultural resources, large contiguous working farms, woodlands, mineral resources and scenic (pastoral) landscapes.
- Implement actions designed to establish a countywide connections via inter-municipal multi-use trail systems that can be utilized year-round for diverse forms of recreation and transportation.

Recommendations

- Foster local entrepreneurship by recognizing and celebrating local success stories of new businesses, new business ideas and student enterprises that are based on local opportunities and resources through public recognition, media coverage and financial/scholarship award programs offered through local educational institutions.
- Continue to support efforts to develop sites at and around the Niagara Falls International Airport for logistics companies (i.e. air cargo, warehousing and distribution centers, etc.).
- Support efforts to assist manufacturing companies in making the transition to advanced manufacturing techniques that will allow them to become more productive and more competitive in the global marketplace.
- Expand marketing efforts to attract new renewable energy companies to Niagara County, and promote opportunities that this sector could present to existing Niagara County companies.
- Conduct countywide competitions for creative approaches to “branding” local community produced and manufactured products.
- Support entrepreneurship in the development of nature-based business, tourism and recreational opportunities as well as other agriculturally based business enterprises, such as equestrian business opportunities in rural and suburban communities.
- Support business opportunities through regional and out-of-state promotional activities, public awareness campaigns, construction of interconnected multi-use trails, and incubator business assistance in support of rural businesses and support services.
- Expand marketing programs to attract Canadian and other foreign manufacturing, service, distribution, and office/administrative activities.
- Attract suppliers producing products that are used by the local automobile, chemical



and ceramic industries.

- Expand incubator facilities and technical assistance programs to encourage the development of new types of sustainable businesses, particularly in rural areas of the County that rely on renewable resources.

Goal – Enhance Countywide Education and Training Opportunities

To develop comprehensive and integrated education and training programs to meet the near-term and long-term needs of businesses and industries.

Objectives

- Collaborate with local educators to develop educational policies and programs in local schools to provide enhanced employment and training opportunities based on local community assets and resources.
- Align education and training programs with key industry sectors and economic development priorities, especially new sustainable technologies and green-based businesses.
- Increase knowledge and awareness of sustainability planning and best practices including, but not limited to community planning principles such as New Urbanism, Transit-oriented Design and Traditional Neighborhood Development that can foster economic growth and community development.

Recommendations

- Involve local educators, primarily those involved with institutions of higher learning such as NCCC and Niagara University in business and talent recruitment activities and marketing visits to prospective businesses and employers who may be considering locating to Niagara County to ensure that local training programs are aligned with the workforce needs of new business.
- Collaborate with local educators to establish curricula and training programs at the high school and college level that increase awareness of opportunities for employment in “green technologies” and other potential high growth business and high technology sectors.
- Continue to market and expand the efforts of the Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Niagara County Employment and Training, and other agencies involved in workforce training programs to help facilitate the regional expansion of targeted growth industries.
- Provide for broad-based training of County officials and local municipal elected officials, board members and the public in strategic land use and transportation planning consistent with NYS DOT and NYS Quality Communities sustainable development practices and other sound planning principles that affect decision-making in regional and local capital improvements in public infrastructure, transportation, land use, and environmental protection.
- Continue and expand the provision of educational and training opportunities for local planning and zoning board members to ensure that members keep up to date on best planning and land use management practices.



Goal – Market the Diversity and Unique Qualities of All Niagara County Communities

To aggressively market the diversity and amenities of all communities in Niagara County as offering something for everyone including prospective employers, employees and residents by emphasizing the different assets, resources, lifestyle and housing opportunities, low cost of living, and other quality of life attributes available in the County’s urban, suburban and rural communities.

Objectives

- Develop multi-media materials and web-accessible information for use by economic development agencies, educational institutions, tourism-based businesses and others that graphically highlight to areas outside of Western New York the diversity and character of communities in Niagara County.
- Highlight the excellent quality of life available throughout the County’s diverse regions via various media outlets and markets by emphasizing the County’s opportunities including its proximity to international population centers, excellent and reliable water supply, trained workforce, urban waterfront opportunities, conveniently located suburban neighborhoods, and quiet rural lifestyles.

Recommendations

- Encourage local communities to establish minimum development standards and design guidelines for public and private sector development projects to ensure that they contribute positively to community character, neighborhood aesthetics and local quality of life.
- Market developers in national markets to encourage their exploring the largely untapped redevelopment potential of existing developed urban centers and older inner ring suburban areas of the County where marketable populations are most dense and where public infrastructure and community services are already in place.

Goal - Link Economic Development to Multi-modal Transportation Alternatives

To ensure that the County’s transportation systems provide for efficient and effective alternative modes of moving people and goods throughout the County via interconnected road networks; public transit facilities; pedestrian and multi-use trail facilities; and aviation, rail and marine facilities to support and enhance economic development opportunities.

Objectives

- Establish measurable performance standards in collaboration with stakeholder agencies, such as the NYSDOT, GBNRTC, NFTA and transportation service providers to track the efficiency, use, short-term and long-term needs of the County’s overall transportation systems.
- Maximize flexibility and adaptability of the County’s transportation systems utilizing alternative modes to respond to emergency situations, such as natural disasters, or significant changes in supply or price of fuels in order to protect existing businesses and industries from unforeseen disruptions.

- Promote the creation and use of alternative modes of transportation of freight and passengers including greater accessibility to alternative forms of transportation, especially public transit for employees and residents.

Recommendations

- Work with local transportation agencies (GBNRTC, NYSDOT, NFTA and others) and service providers to conduct public opinion surveys on the potential use of increased availability of public transit services and other transportation alternatives throughout Niagara County.
- Develop incentives to encourage developers to link development and redevelopment opportunities in preferred development centers and corridors to alternative modes of transportation, particularly in mixed-use projects.
- Encourage GBNRTC to undertake countywide corridor management plans integrating an extensive public involvement process for long-term land use/transportation planning for major road corridors that link communities across Niagara County, particularly NYS Routes 31, 104, 62 and 78.
- Integrate countywide transportation planning with land use planning to implement sustainable development practices as encouraged by stakeholder agencies, such as the NYSDOT Smart Growth initiatives and similar planning principles. These principles should promote where appropriate compact, mixed-use, transit- and pedestrian-oriented development patterns that are complementary to each community's plans for enhancing its respective urban, suburban and rural characteristics in balance with economic development needs, as well as protection of natural environments and cultural heritage.
- Implement the recommendations of the GBNRTC *Niagara Frontier Urban Area Freight Transportation Study* to facilitate the safe and effective movement of freight by rail and highway throughout the region.
- Continue efforts to develop and implement Niagara County Planning Board project review guidelines based on the *Framework for Regional Growth*. Incorporate the strategies from this plan into the Planning Board guidelines.
- Examine the potential to encourage, through incentives or by other means, incorporation of multi-modal and transit-oriented components into public and private sector projects.
- Support the creation of a sustainable interconnected countywide transportation networks that include multi-modal transportation systems including highways, water-based modes, public transit, bikeways and multi-use trails that facilitate compact, nodal mixed-use development patterns in urban, suburban and rural communities. This interconnected system needs to physically link convenient public access via various modes to the region's major natural and cultural resources including, but not limited to the Niagara Greenway, Erie Canalway, Seaway Trail, Wine Trail, and Niagara Escarpment initiatives.
- Provide user accessibility for interconnections between different modes of transportation to encourage users to safely and conveniently transfer and utilize alternative modes such as through the provision of bike racks on public transit buses



and conveniently located transit stops at points of transfer from one mode, for example bus to rail, in centers of commerce and housing.

- Support tourism transportation needs and infrastructure (i.e. trolley system from Niagara Falls to Lewiston and cross-river ferry service from Youngstown, New York to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.
- Support public transit and transit-oriented development in the developed neighborhoods of the cities and suburbs of the County to provide enhanced employee access between workplace and home.
- Connect employment centers with residential areas with multi-modal choices of commuting including public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Work with local communities to ensure that transportation systems support local economic development initiatives via aviation, rail, highway and marine modes of transport of people, goods and materials.
- Work with the NFTA and others to develop the opportunities for increased tourism and air cargo capacity, as well as warehouse and distribution facilities in and around the new Niagara Falls International Airport terminal, scheduled to open in July/August 2009.
- Balance development requirements with employee needs and support services, such as locating daycare facilities in proximity to employment centers.
- Connect employment centers with residential areas and provide choices of commuting including public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Support the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor initiative currently underway.

Goal – To Increase the Number of Economic Development Projects Being Implemented in the County

Objective

- Leverage additional funding for projects

Recommendations

- Continue to appeal to the Federal government for direct funding via congressional appropriations, federal economic stimulus funds, etc.
- Continue to appeal to the State for direct funding via legislative earmarks.
- Appeal to the Federal and State governments for a greater share of available Federal and State funding.
- Establish stronger partnerships with Federal and State elected officials, especially members of the WNY delegation.
- Identify and apply for competitive Federal and State grants.

- Hire a full time grant writer/administrator for the County.
- Encourage New York State to create an Upstate Revitalization Fund.
- Identify foundations at the local, State and Federal levels, and appeal for funding as appropriate.

Objective

- Maintain up-to-date lists of economic development projects in the County.

Recommendations

- Maintain and periodically update lists of high priority and shovel ready economic development projects.
- Develop a priority ranking system for economic development projects.
- Continue to update the Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) annually and include lists of projects from local municipalities.
- As this Plan is updated, update the list of high priority economic development projects included in this Plan using the CEDS report.

Objective

- Continue to encourage implementation of high priority economic development projects and diversification of the economic base of the County.

Recommendations

- Assemble economic development teams to monitor projects, including funding levels, and meet regularly to discuss strategies for advancing projects.
- Enlist the support of the County Public Information Officer and increase public relation efforts in educating communities and the public on available economic development incentives and the importance of sustainable economic development projects and redevelopment of underutilized sites, such as brownfields, to the overall economic and environmental health and quality of life in Niagara County.
- Identify means to make greater use of the potential “synergy” afforded by the existing economic base of the County to foster increased diversity and spin-off business development opportunities through more partnerships and collaboration between and among public and private sectors of the economy.

Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance

from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects will be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Infrastructure Improvements and Transportation that include, but not limited to:

- \$7.2 billion for Broadband
- \$2.75 billion for the Department of Homeland Security
- \$4.6 billion for the Corps of Engineers
- \$1.2 billion for VA hospital and medical facility construction and improvements
- \$3.1 billion for repair, restoration and improvement of public facilities
- \$4.2 billion for Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization
- \$2.33 billion for Department of Defense
- \$2.25 billion through HOME and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program
- \$1 billion for the Community Development Block Grant program
- \$1 billion for the Bureau of Reclamation

- \$27.5 billion for highway investments
- \$8.4 billion for public transportation
- \$1.5 for competitive grants to state and local governments for transportation
- \$1.3 billion for air transportation system
- \$9.3 billion for rail transportation, including Amtrak, High Speed and Intercity Rail

Funding for economic development projects is available from a number of sources including Niagara County’s share of casino revenue. Likewise, funding for recreation and tourism based projects is available from Niagara County’s share of Niagara County River Greenway Funding such as through the New York Power Authority Re-licensing Agreement under the Recreation/tourism Fund.

Niagara County Projects include:

Broadband to Give Every Community Access to the Global Economy		
Wireless and Broadband Grants		
Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Town of Lockport IDA Industrial Park Wi-Fi Network	\$ 5,000
Niagara County Economic Development		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Broadband Access for Eastern Niagara County [Towns of Newfane, Royalton, and Somerset / Village of Barker]	\$ 30,000
Niagara County Data Processing		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wi-Fi Hotspots for Niagara County Municipalities	\$ 500,000
Creating Small Business Opportunity Economic Development Assistance		
Niagara County Economic Development		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara County IDA Industrial Park Electrical Service [Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 65,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Marketing Campaign [Countywide]	\$ 300,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venture Capital Fund for High-Tech Startup Businesses [Countywide]	\$ 1,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara County Agribusiness Fund [Countywide]	\$ 1,000,000
City of North Tonawanda		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buffalo Bolt Business Park Infrastructure	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Buffalo Bolt Business Park Spec Building	\$ 1,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Durez/Oxy Site Spec Building	\$ 2,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gateway Harbor Inn	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Riviera Theater Expansion	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historical Museum	\$ 200,000
Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Town of Lockport IDA Industrial Park Infrastructure	\$ 2,125,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Town of Lockport IDA Spec Building	\$ 2,200,000
Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara Industrial Airpark Shovel-Ready Status	\$ 20,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Town of Niagara Spec Building	\$ 2,000,000
Niagara County Economic Development		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transit North Corridor Infrastructure Improvements [City of Lockport / Towns of Lockport and Pendleton] Funding request for portion of above project that can be shovel-ready in 90 days	\$ 20,065,000 \$ 4,175,000

Construction on Public Lands and Parks	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proposed Fish Hatchery at Joseph Davis State Park [Town of Porter] \$ 13,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fisheries Projects for Niagara River and Lake Ontario [Countywide] \$ 100,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prop. Boat Launch & Dock at Fort Niagara State Park [Town of Porter] \$ 100,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olcott East Pier Access [Town of Newfane] \$ 75,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eighteenmile Creek Public Fishing Rights [Town of Newfane] \$ 100,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Underground Railroad Interpretive Program [Countywide] \$ 1,000,000
Water Resources	
Corps of Engineers	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Olcott Harbor Breakwater Project [Town of Newfane] \$ 1,800,000
Bureau of Reclamation	
Watershed Infrastructure	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cayuga Creek Watershed Restoration Plan [City of Niagara Falls; Towns of Niagara, Wheatfield Lewiston, Cambria; Tuscarora Indian Reservation] \$ 150,000
Closed Military Bases	
Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reuse of U.S. Army Hangar and Buildings at Niagara Falls Army Reserve Center (Demolition/Rehab/Infrastructure) \$ 2,500,000
Economic Development Assistance	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Former Lockport Air Force Station/NIKE Site Asbestos Abatement and Demolition [Town of Cambria] \$ 1,400,000
NOAA Habitat Restoration	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Youngstown Cold Storage Site Remediation [Village of Youngstown] \$ 275,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara County Brownfields Program Coalition Environmental Site Assessments (30+ sites) [Countywide] \$ 1,000,000
Community Development Block Grants	
City of Niagara Falls	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara Experience Center Economic Development Assistance \$ 20,000,000

City of Lockport

<input type="checkbox"/>	Erie Canal “Flight of Five” Locks Restoration Economic Development Assistance	\$ 4,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Municipal Parking Ramp Demolition Economic Development Assistance	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ice Hockey Rink Construction Economic Development Assistance	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Palace Theatre Restoration Economic Development Assistance	\$ 500,000

Reference

United States Congress. 2009. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 - Federal Stimulus Congressional Press Summary. Washington, D.C.

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Chapter VII

County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

Background and Trends

Niagara County Budget

Niagara County provides a multitude of services to County residents which fall under the jurisdiction of various County departments, offices and staff. The following information on County services is presented according to five tiers of County government. This tiered approach is used to organize departments and services for budgeting and other management purposes, including the allocation of funds under the County's annual budget. Each tier of County government generally identifies the types of services provided by that tier. These tiers are described below along with many of the services provided. Also provided are the 2008 County budget appropriations for each tier.

The provision of services and budgeting for those services is a complex process performed on an annual basis. The County operates on a fiscal year that runs concurrent with the calendar year from January 1st to December 31st. The budgeting process is well documented and the results are published each year as the County's Annual Budget. Details of the County's budget are beyond the scope of this Comprehensive Plan, so the budget is discussed in mostly general terms. Detailed information on the County's 2008 budget is available at www.niagaracounty.com/CountyBudget.asp.

Niagara County's 2008 adopted budget was \$262,945,025. This total does not include \$39,880,000 of revenue which is offset by corresponding appropriations of \$39,880,000 from sales tax revenue shared with other government entities. The County's 2008 budget represented a 2.74% decrease from the 2007 budget. The County's 2008 property tax levy of \$67,893,843 represented a 7.6% decrease from 2007.

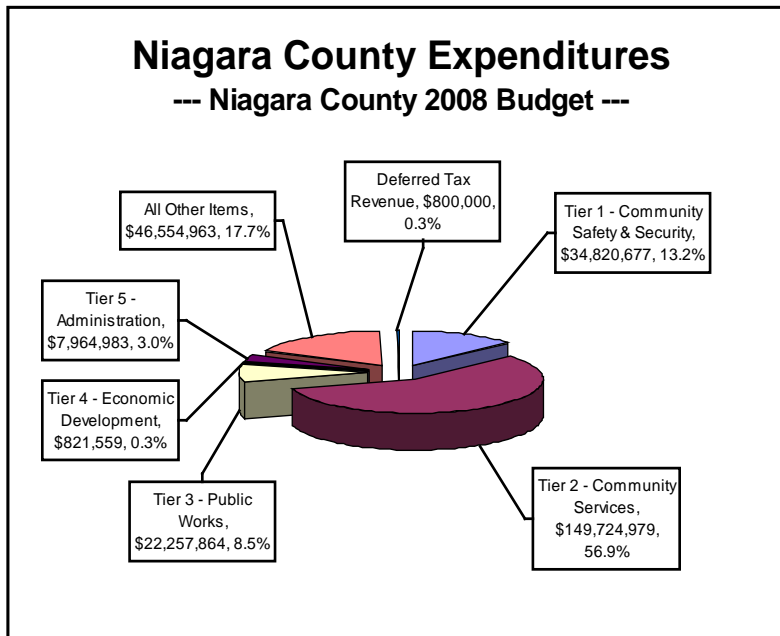
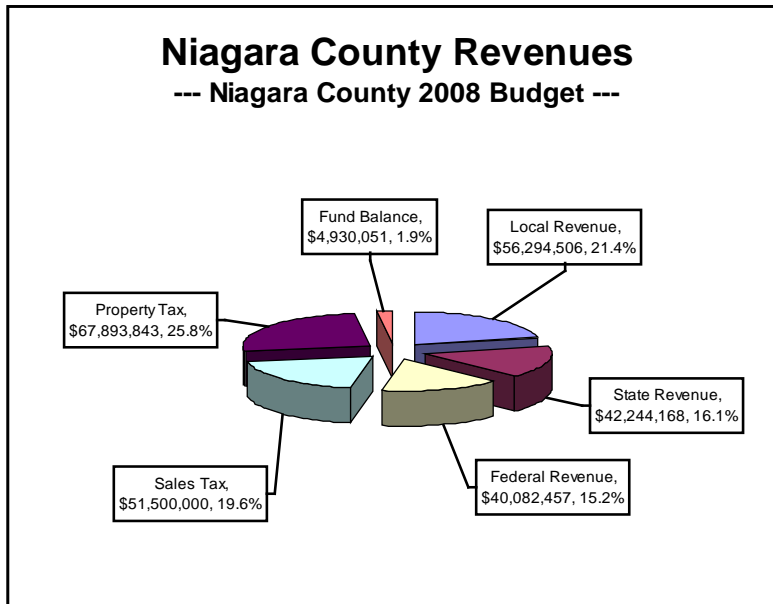
Detailed information on the County's 2008 budget is available at www.niagaracounty.com/CountyBudget.asp.

The County's 2008 property tax levy of \$67,893,843 represented a 7.6% decrease from 2007.

Niagara County receives revenues from the State and Federal government through direct allocations, competitive grants, and other public funding. The County's budget revenue sources are summarized as follows:

- 15% from Federal Government
- 16% from State Government
- 21% from Local Revenue
- 26% from Property Taxes
- 20% from Sales Taxes
- 02% from Appropriated Fund Balance

Revenues and expenditures under the County budget are illustrated in the following charts. The expenditures chart identifies allocated funds to each of the five tiers of County government as well as other items, including employee benefits, debt service, CD fund and special items.



Niagara County Services

Tier 1 - Community Safety & Security

Office of the Sheriff

The Niagara County Office of the Sheriff is one of the largest departments within Niagara County government, and is directly responsible for the safety and security of County residents. The Sheriff's Office is located in Lockport, NY. The Office of the County Sheriff is an elected position, and the Sheriff is supported by a staff of 348 professionals including deputy sheriffs, correction officers, dispatchers, and civilian support personnel.

The Corrections Division is the largest division of the Office of the Sheriff. It operates with a staff of approximately 145 correction officers and 40 civilian support personnel. The County Jail annually houses more than 6,000 inmates, and on a daily basis the Jail houses approximately 500 inmates. In 2006, the County Jail generated approximately \$2.7 million in revenue for the County, primarily from sources such as the housing of inmates from Federal and State law enforcement and corrections agencies.

The Civil Law Enforcement Division is the law enforcement arm of the courts and serves divorce and eviction notices, as well as warrants and other court appearance orders. The Law Enforcement Division provides the police services that may be best known to the public in general, including the County's Road Patrol, Crime Scene Identification Unit, the Communications Center, Criminal Investigation Bureau and others listed below. The Sheriff's Office includes a number of specialized support units and teams which are also identified below.

Dispatchers answered more than 98,731 calls for police, fire, and emergency services in 2007, and the number of calls for emergency service continues to trend upward each year. The County Communications Center dispatches appropriate emergency personnel from the Sheriff's Office, five local police agencies, twenty-eight volunteer fire companies, the North Tonawanda Fire Department, two ambulance services and other organizations as needed. The Communications Center averages over 250 calls per day. In recent years Deputies assigned to law enforcement duties have responded to more than 60,000 calls for service annually, which represents an increase of greater than 35% since 2002.

One of the newest divisions within the Sheriff's Office is the Field Intelligence Division, which collects data on crimes and other incidents and includes crime analysis as one of its primary functions. This division works to identify crime patterns, trends and problems throughout the County, and facilitates the dissemination of information and intelligence used to develop strategies and tactics to combat crime. The Sheriff's Office has begun using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and mapping techniques to track reported incidents.

A number of the highly specialized services provided by divisions and support units of the Sheriff's Office are as follows.

Emergency 911 Communications

Field Intelligence Division

Civil Law Enforcement
Civil Division

Law Enforcement

Road Patrol
Crime Scene Identification Unit
Communications Center
Computer Operations Division
Criminal Investigation Bureau
Juvenile Investigation Bureau
Western NY Joint Terrorism Task Force
Welfare Fraud Bureau
Drug Task Force
Court/Building Security
Niagara County Law Enforcement Academy
Forensic Laboratory
Property/Evidence Office

Corrections/Jail

Corrections
Sheriff's Work Program
Inmate Education Program
Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT)
Jail Medical Department
Facility Maintenance

Support Units/Teams

Marine Unit
Underwater Recovery Team
Aviation Unit
Emergency Response Team/Firearms Training
Office of Traffic Safety and Stop DWI
K-9 Unit
Warrants Division
Drug Awareness and Resistance (DARE) Unit
Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP)
Victim's Assistance Unit

District Attorney

The Niagara County District Attorney is the County's chief prosecutor. Staff includes 3 Deputy District Attorneys, 20 Assistant District Attorneys, 5 Criminal Investigators, 12 Support Staff, and 2 Crime Victim Advocates. The District Attorney's Office is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all criminal activity within Niagara County. In addition to prosecuting felony cases at the County Court level, the District Attorney prosecutes cases in all 3 of Niagara County's City Courts (Niagara Falls, Lockport & North Tonawanda) and all 12 of the County's Town Justice Courts.

The District Attorney's Office also argues appeals and post-conviction matters, institutes forfeiture proceedings, oversees the extradition of fugitives, and litigates habeas corpus petitions in both State and Federal courts.

The District Attorney's Office has specific bureaus which target areas of crime, including:

- Violent Crimes
- Narcotics
- White Collar Crime & Fraud
- Crimes Against the Elderly, Children & Special Victims
- Domestic Violence
- DWI & Vehicular Crimes

Homeland Security & Emergency Management Office

The Homeland Security & Emergency Management Office is responsible for maintaining and updating a Countywide Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) with input from the Niagara County Local Emergency Planning Committee, the County Manager, the County Attorney, County government officials, NY State Disaster Preparedness Commission, NY State Emergency Management Office, other appropriate departments and the citizenry of Niagara County. The CEMP is discussed in more detail in Chapter IX Public Health and Safety.

Niagara County and its cities, towns, and villages are part of a multi-jurisdictional emergency mitigation planning process, responsible for participating in risk reduction activities with the Niagara County Director of Emergency Management and the Niagara County Local Emergency Planning Committee. The office coordinates all emergency management activities and is responsible for assisting individual towns and villages within Niagara County that have fully committed their resources, but still unable to cope with a disaster of any type.

Probation Department

Services provided by the County's Probation Department include the preparation of pre-sentence investigations and reports for the criminal courts, and the supervision of criminals sentenced to probation. The Local Conditional Release Commission provides investigation and supervision functions for criminals released from jail. Intake, investigation and supervision services are provided for Family Court, and any discretionary services for pretrial and alternative sentencing are also available.

The Probation Department also administers the Intensive Supervision Program, which provides an alternative to incarceration. The Department provides eligibility assessments, court-ordered restrictions, monitoring, field supervision and intensive supervision services. Probation administers the Pre-Trial Services, Treatments Alternatives to Street Crime, and Community Services programs.

Public Defender

The County's Public Defender provides legal counsel to individuals unable to afford their own legal services. Unlike many other states, in New York the cost of providing this legal counsel is the responsibility of the County. The Public

Defender's Office is located in the County Courthouse in Lockport.

Tier 2 - Community Services

Department of Health

The Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) is responsible for providing a healthy, disease-free environment to the citizens of Niagara County. The NCDOH includes a staff of approximately 118 employees and operates from its offices located in the Shaw Building at the Mountview Campus in Lockport and in the Trott Building in Niagara Falls. Detailed information on the services provided by the County Department of Health is available at www.niagaracounty.com/Health/.

The NCDOH provides a variety of very important functions in protecting the health of residents and visitors in Niagara County. On an ongoing basis, Environmental staff monitors the quality of public water supplies, inspects septic systems, issues permits, inspects public pools and beaches for water quality, enforces no-smoking regulations in public places, and evaluates food service facilities. The Department's highly-skilled staff has been nationally recognized with awards for the "Healthy Neighborhoods Program" administered through the Environmental Health Division. This program offers the underserved of the County with home safety assessments, checks for lead-based paint and functioning smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and provides public health referrals when needed.

Under the Department's Nursing Program, Public Health Nurses provide skilled services to those recently discharged from the hospital or a directly referred from a physician's office. Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Audiology service, medical social work, respiratory therapy, home-delivered meals, nutritional counseling and social day care are also coordinated through the Nursing Division. Nursing staff operate immunization, flu, rabies, STD/HIV, Tuberculosis and outbreak vaccination clinics, and plan for potential disasters with other emergency providers. The Department's "Healthy Living Partnership" Program has been recognized as No. 1 in New York State for providing breast and cervical cancer screening and services to uninsured and under-insured women.

The Public Health & Emergency Preparedness Division coordinates local health disaster planning with the National Center for Disease Control Preparedness Strategic National Stockpile, the National Response Plan and the Great Lakes Cross Border Initiative. This Division also provides Public Health Alerts and trains local Health Emergency Response Teams to be able to respond to local emergencies.

Some of the key services provided, and programs administered by the Department of Health, are listed below. In general, the largest percentage (about 90%) of the Department's annual budget goes to services and programs mandated by the State and Federal governments.

Environmental Health

- Healthy Neighborhoods Program
- Disease Surveillance & Protection
- Community Environmental Health

Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Public Health Education

Public Health Nursing and Home Care Services

- Public Health Services
- Certified Home Health Agency
- Long Term Home Health Care Program

Children with Special Health Care Needs

- Early Intervention Program
- Preschool Special Education Program
- Physically Handicapped Children's Program

Children with Special Healthcare Needs Program

Department of Social Services

The Department of Social Services is the largest of all County departments. A staff of 424 employees works from offices in Lockport and Niagara Falls, and a satellite office is located in North Tonawanda. The primary purpose of the Department is to administer social service programs mandated by the State and Federal governments.

The Department consists of five Divisions: Administration, Services, Program Eligibility, Financial Recovery & Support, and Legal.

The Administration Division consists of personnel assigned to the internal management of the Department: Payroll, Accounting, Information Technology, and Staff Development.

The Services Division includes a number of specialized internal units and "case workers" that administer mandated programs and services to clients, including: Child Protection, Child Welfare, Adult Protection, Home Care, Day Care, Nursing Home Care, Medical Transport, and Managed Care.

The Program Eligibility Division includes specialized internal units and "eligibility workers" that administer mandated programs and services to clients, including: Employment, Transitional Opportunities Program, Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps, and Medicaid. At any given time throughout the year, each individual eligibility worker may be handling an average of 350 individual client cases. Assigned cases typically fall under one of three programs, and are distributed as follows: 54 % Medicaid; 32 % Food Stamps; and 14 % Temporary Assistance. All adults deemed work-eligible are scheduled to participate in employment-related activities until they achieve self-sufficiency.

The Financial Recovery and Support Division has specialized units, including: Child Support, Fraud, Resources, and Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). The Legal Division includes attorneys dedicated to legal services needed by clients in the administration of Department services and programs.

Office for the Aging

The Office for the Aging provides a number of services directly to the citizens

of the County, including not only seniors (defined as those 60 years and older), but also their caregivers. Services such as Congregate and Home Delivered meals have been provided for over 30 years, along with transportation to medical appointments and dining sites, information and assistance, non-medical homecare including housekeeping and chore assistance, help with Medicare and other insurance questions, caregiver training and education, help with HEAP applications and home weatherization issues, and legal advice and assistance using a local elder law attorney.

In addition to providing many services directly, the office also supports and serves as the central referral hub for services such as: Caregiver Respite and Support, Adult Day Care, the Long Term Care Ombudsman program, programs for the visually and hearing impaired, early intervention programs to help combat memory loss, and physical fitness and nutrition counseling and education.

Youth Bureau

The Youth Bureau contracts with not-for-profit agencies throughout the County to address the needs of young people under the age of 21. Funding for its programs comes from the NYS Office of Children & Family Services through several funding streams. Monies spent to support Youth Development is Delinquency Prevention (YDDP), Youth Initiatives (YI), YDDP Recreation, and YDDP Services require a 50% match from funding agencies. Runaway, Transitional Living, and Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP) monies are 60 to 100% funded. The Youth Bureau and three United Way agencies have developed a unique joint funding process to distribute available funds. The cost to the County for these services was less than 1% of the Bureau's \$1.2 million budget in 2008, or approximately \$16,760. State and Federal grants provide 99 % of the Bureau's funds. Any program within the agency that is funded by the Bureau is offered free.

The Youth Bureau has three direct service programs that are Federally funded. These include:

- The Abstinence Commitment by Teenagers (ACT)
- The Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

The Youth Bureau is a grant-driven department and is subject to concerns regarding funding reductions for the programs offered. Some State and Federal grants are awarded to schools rather than these funding agencies, and practically speaking, it may be more cost efficient for funds to be granted directly to the agencies through the Youth Bureau system. This source of inefficiency is a concern to funding agencies. The Bureau provides high-quality youth programs through a variety of venues including recreation through resolution of high risk behaviors. In the long term, the Bureau would like to offer high-end programs that provide job training and community arts activities, modeled after programs of the Manchester Craftsman Guild in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania.

Department of Mental Health

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is the administrative division for Local Government and the Community Services Board responsible for the

execution of mental health, developmental disabilities, alcoholism and drug abuse service plans. DMH has operated under a business and professional service model since 1995, and emphasizes responsibility, accountability, and transparency in its work.

Services are provided through 10 different program categories in the direct services County-operated group, and through a system of 12 community agencies under contract management. Access to care and early intervention are emphasized, with a special emphasis on family involvement. The Department encourages patient treatment at the lowest level of appropriate care in the continuum of treatment. Community residents are encouraged to call Crisis Services, available 24/7, in critical situations. Crisis Services provides on-site response to emergencies. Single Point of Access (SPOA) provides streamlined entry to mental health case management and residential services for children and adults, and residents may call for assistance.

Since 1995, DMH has reduced its County funding by 67% by aggressively pursuing grant opportunities and other revenue sources, in combination with close management of expenses. Approximately 94% of the DMH revenues come from non-County sources, including Federal and State government funds. Additionally, DMH has been recognized by NYS Audit Division as being “exceptionally well operated in its direct services and overall administration.”

Employment and Training Department

The Employment and Training Department provides employment services for job seekers such as on-the-job training or vocational classroom training, and also provides business services to employers seeking workers. This program is 100% Federally funded under the Workforce Investment Act. Services include: job opening information, skills and aptitude testing, resume assistance, career counseling, interview coaching, vocational training, workshops, and meetings with employers. The Employment and Training Department provides services to approximately 10,000 residents each year. Additional information is available at www.worksource1.com.

Office of the County Clerk

County Clerk is an elected, four-year position. The County Clerk is a NYS Constitutional Office with a statutory responsibility to serve as Clerk of the New York State Supreme and County Courts. The office administers the County Recording Office which is responsible for the recording of deeds and other land-related documents, and also serves as the local agent for the NYS Commissioner of Motor Vehicles by managing three local DMV offices throughout Niagara County.

The Office of the County Clerk provides services to the general public. These include indexing and recording land records, filing business certificates, military discharges and court-related documents, issuing pistol permit licenses, passport acceptance and maintenance of judgment dockets. The County Clerk serves as Records Management Officer for the County, overseeing the proper retention, storage and disposition of the inactive, permanent & archival records of over 40 departments, and administers the Niagara County Veteran’s Service Agency and the Historian’s Office as County Clerk Partner Agencies.

Niagara County Veteran’s Service Agency

Staff of the Niagara County Veteran’s Service Agency counsel veterans and their dependents to ensure that they have access to any benefits to which they may be eligible as the result of the veteran’s active duty military or naval service. Benefits due to Reservists and National Guardsmen are determined on an individual basis.

Topics most frequently counseled by the Niagara County Veterans Service Agency include:

- Service-Connected Disability Compensation
- Nonservice-Connected Disability Pension
- Widows Dependents Pension
- Montgomery G.I. Educational Bill
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Home Loan Guaranty
- Request for military records & service medals
- Recording of DD214/Separation papers w/County Clerk
- NYS Alternative Property Tax Exemption
- NYS Medals for Certain Active Duty Service
- Discharge Upgrade
- Burial Benefits

Niagara County Historian Office

The Niagara County Historian Office is housed in Niagara County’s most historic government building, which is located in Lockport and dates to circa 1856. This office serves as part of New York State’s network of officially appointed local municipal historians. The office is a resource to the community, offering research and writing on Niagara County history and interpreting community history through work with teachers, schools, and civic organizations.

The Historian’s office organizes and delivers public programming, assists in commemorative events, advocates for historic preservation of the built environment, preservation of manuscripts and recordkeeping documenting Niagara County history. The office aids in the promotion of Niagara County tourism, especially heritage tourism, and allows the public to view historic public records for research purposes. The Historian’s office houses a diverse collection of diaries, photos, letters, maps, blueprints, and scrapbooks of yesteryear.

Niagara County Community College

Niagara County Community College (NCCC), established in 1962, is a locally sponsored college supervised by the State University of New York (SUNY). Niagara County Community College is authorized by the Board of Regents of the SUNY to award the Associate in Arts Degree (AA), the Associate in Science Degree (AS), the Associate in Applied Science Degree (AAS) and the Associate in Occupational Science Degree (AOS) to regularly matriculated students upon successful completion of curriculum requirements. NCCC receives annual appropriations from the County for a variety of purposes.

Tier 3 - Public Works

Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works is responsible for the operation, repair and maintenance of the County's highways, bridges, County-owned office buildings & grounds, 5 County parks, and the County's vehicle fleets. The Department is staffed by 140 full time employees plus 46 seasonal employees and one part time employee. The number of staff has declined considerably since 1998, when 237 individuals were employed by the Department.

The Department is divided into a number of divisions working out of five different locations. These divisions reflect the variety of services provided by the DPW, and include Administration, Engineering, Buildings & Grounds, Power Management, County Parks, Solid Waste (recycling), Highway Administration & Maintenance, Road Construction, Bridge Maintenance, Drainage, Snow Removal, Vehicle Maintenance, and County Golf Course.

The Highway Division has jurisdiction over the County's 283 miles of highway, 89 bridges and approximately 1,100 drainage culverts. Most of the County's bridges were built in the 1940's and 50's, and some wooden timber bridges remain intact under the Highway Division's purview. Due to age these require regular maintenance. Approximately 15 bridges have been replaced since 2001, and another 4 or 5 are scheduled for replacement before 2011.

The Highway Division is staffed by 29 full time maintenance personnel, 6 seasonal employees and 4 administrative staff. Responsibilities include highway maintenance, road construction under the State's Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) program, drainage improvements, snow removal, waste reduction and composting activities. Snow and ice removal and road maintenance responsibilities are shared through formal agreements with local municipalities. Approximately two-thirds of the County's roads are plowed on a reimbursement basis by local towns.

The Department participates in the County's "work fair program" in conjunction with the Department of Social Services. Under this program, able-bodied individuals receiving public assistance may work 10 days per month assisting Public Works crews in yard repair and clean-up activities at no additional cost to the County. The Department has also participated for the past 13 years in the "Safety Fair" with other agencies and utilities. The Safety Fair focuses on teaching youth about the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

During the next few years, Public Works will consolidate its services under one roof in a modern facility replacing the current outdated buildings currently in use. It is anticipated that this new facility will be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified and built to energy efficient standards to reduce operating and maintenance costs. Department operations currently housed in five separate buildings will be consolidated into a single facility, resulting in substantial cost savings to County residents. Costs will be controlled internally through shared office space and centralized vehicle and parts storage, resulting in greater efficiency.

The DPW maintains nearly the entire County-owned fleet of vehicles. About one-third of the fleet of approximately 200 cars and trucks belongs to the Sheriff's Department, and

the fleet requires constant maintenance by the DPW due to extremely heavy use. Public Works also maintains the County's five public parks as well as the County Golf Course.

Weights & Measures

Wherever commodities are sold by some type of measure, County Weights and Measures staff members work to ensure the accuracy of what is measured and sold to the public. Services include inspecting supermarkets, convenience stores, specialty retailers like butcher and fish markets, hardware stores, drug stores, gas stations, feed mills, taxis and many other everyday service providers.

Tier 4 - Economic Development

Department of Economic Development

The Niagara County Department of Economic Development & the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency became the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED) in 2003, a one-stop center for comprehensive business services designed to help new and existing businesses become more successful in Niagara County.

It is the mission of the NCCED to actively retain, attract, and develop economically sound commerce and industry in order to foster job opportunities and economic prosperity for all residents of Niagara County. Detailed information about economic development services and activities is provided in Chapter VI.

The NCCED facilitates economic growth through financial incentives and support services such as providing information to businesses & the public including demographic, economic, land use, zoning, and environmental information, as well as providing technical assistance through project planning, site assessment, graphic design and mapping, grant support, etc.

Programs and services provided through the NCCED include:

Niagara County Department of Economic Development:

- Niagara County Business Growth and Retention Program Canadian Marketing program for attracting new businesses
- Marketing Campaign targeting "Water-Starved States"
- Empower Niagara low-cost power allocation incentive
- Local Affiliate Data Center for the U.S. Census Bureau
- Staff Coordinator for Niagara County Planning Board
- Coordinating Center for the Niagara County Economic Development Alliance (NCEDA)
- Administration of State and Federal Brownfields planning, assessment and remediation programs including the Niagara County Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support
- Planning/technical assistance

Niagara County Industrial Development Agency:

- Industrial Revenue Bonds and Leaseback Transactions
- Revolving Loans through the Niagara County Development Corporation and Niagara Economic Development Fund
- Microenterprise Assistance Program

- Foreign Trade Zone #34 and other site location assistance
- Coordination of State and Federal economic development programs

Tier 5 – Administration

The services provided under the Administration tier of County government are diverse and include the policy-making, administrative support and staff services needed to manage the day-to-day operations of the County. Administration represents approximately 2.6 % of County spending and includes the following types of services:

- Licenses, public records, elections, and property tax administration
- Business services, including budgeting, information and communication
- Economic Development Fund
- Human Resources Management & Civil Service Administration and oversight
- Employee benefits, such as insurance and retirement programs
- Contingency funds for unanticipated expenses
- Debt service on the County's outstanding debts

Office of the County Manager

The County Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of County government. The County Manager is a four-year contract position appointed by the County Legislature. The County Manager prepares the County's annual budget and appoints individuals as heads of the various County departments. The County Manager in Niagara County is one of only nine similar County Manager positions among the 57 counties of New York outside of New York City's five boroughs.

County Treasurer

The County Treasurer is one of four elected positions in Niagara County government. The other elected positions include the County Sheriff, the District Attorney and the County Clerk. The County Treasurer is the Chief Fiscal Officer of Niagara County and is responsible for managing and accounting for the County's financial resources. Among the services provided by the office are administering the County's payroll, implementing investment strategies, and directing the County's cash flow. The Treasurer office assists local municipalities in the collection of property and school tax payments. The office also collects delinquent tax payments from residents and may get involved in tax foreclosure procedures.

Clerk of the Legislature

The Clerk of the Legislature serves the support needs of the County Legislature and is staffed by three individuals. The Clerk and staff attend Legislative meetings, prepare agendas, prepare resolutions and correspondence, records proceedings, provide media releases and public notices, provide referrals to appropriate committees and coordinates on issues with various local, State and Federal agencies on matters that pertain to legislation affecting Niagara County.

In addition to being support staff to the 19 County Legislators the Clerk also provides daily assistance to the County's four Coroners. The office maintains the fiscal accounts and records, including payroll and expense accounts for the Legislators and Coroners. The Clerk also supervises and arranges for printing, binding of proceedings and other materials, including the meeting minutes for Yearly Journals. The County's mailroom and Print Shop are part of the Department under the supervision of the Clerk.

County Board of Elections

The Niagara County Board of Elections is responsible for executing and upholding the New York State Election Law within the County ensuring that the electoral process is conducted fairly and efficiently in a bipartisan manner. The Board maintains a website at www.elections.niagara.ny.us that identifies County Legislature representatives by district location as well as other election related information including polling locations and voter registration. The Board is responsible for registering eligible voters, maintaining necessary public records, assisting individuals seeking public or party office, and certifying the results of all elections within its jurisdiction.

Office of Management and Budget

The Office of Management and Budget provides a variety of services that basically fall under two primary functions that include budgeting and purchasing. Budget functions include: Financial Planning and Reporting; Capital Improvement Plans; creating the County's operating and capital budget; monitoring and managing budgets; providing financial analyses to all County service lines; and engaging in special projects as assigned by the County Manager.

The second primary function is purchasing. This function entails preparation, opening, analyzing and awarding sealed bids and requests for proposals; managing requisition processes; issuing purchase orders for goods and services; maintaining fixed inventory records; and coordinating surplus auctions, asset disposition and disposal, including innovative services such as online auctions to dispose of surplus inventory.

Real Property Tax Services

The Department of Real Property Tax Services responsibilities include tax mapping, real property tax administration, and assessment administration assistance. The Department includes a staff of seven individuals including the Director, Real Property Information Clerk, Senior Account Clerk, Computer Coordinator and three tax map technicians. The Department is responsible for the tax levy apportionment for the County's general tax and County special districts, including sewer and water district levies.

The Department also prepares the tax rolls and tax bills for Niagara County, all 12 towns including all special districts, County villages, all Central School Districts, the City of Lockport (school and City purposes), and the City of North Tonawanda (school and City purposes). Services provided include tax rate calculations and verification, NYS Real Property System assessment data file organization, printing tax rolls and tax billings, tax roll assembling and Tax Warrant preparation. Additional administrative assistance is provided to local governments and the public and includes technical support and computer program and data file maintenance under the State's Real Property System, property valuation, reassessment planning and public information, training assistance to the Board of Assessment Review and Assessor Orientation for all newly appointed assessors.

Additional services provided under this tier include:

- Human Resources & Civil Service
- Risk Management
- Central Printing & Mailing
- Central Data Processing
- GIS Mapping

County Facilities

Buildings and Grounds

Niagara County's operations and services are currently provided from a number of buildings and service facilities that are located in several communities across the County, including the City of Lockport which is the County Seat, City of Niagara Falls, City of North Tonawanda and the Town of Wheatfield. Following are the addresses of major County buildings and facilities. These locations are identified in Figure VII-1:

- *Niagara County Courthouse*

175 Hawley Street, Lockport NY 14094-2740

Houses Courtrooms; Legislative Office; County Clerk's Office; Pistol Permit Office; District Attorney's Office

- *Philo J. Brooks County Office Building*

59 Park Avenue, Lockport, NY 14094

Houses the Treasurer's Office; Budget and Management Office; Audit Office; County Manager; Public Works Office; Data Processing Office; Engineering Office; Purchasing Office

- *Civil Defense Building*

139 Niagara Street, Lockport, NY 14094

Houses County Historian's Office; Public Defender's Office

- *Mount View Campus*

5467 Upper Mountain Road, Lockport, NY 14094

Houses Mental Health Office; Speech & Hearing Office; Public Health Office; Print Shop; Housed Mount View Health Facility (no longer exists).

- *Davison Road Campus*

100 Davison Road, Lockport, NY 14094

Houses Parks Maintenance Office

- *Golden Triangle Building*

111 Main Street, Lockport, NY 14094

Houses Veteran's Office; Probation Office; Office for the Aging; Board of Elections; Department of Motor Vehicles; Risk Management Office; Human Resources; Civil Service Office

- *Civic Building*

775 Third Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14302

Houses courtrooms

- *Human Resources Building*

301 Tenth Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14302

Houses Social Services Office; Youth Bureau's Office

- *Trott Access Center*

1001 11th Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14301

Houses Social Services Office; Mental Health Office; Public Health Office; Employment & Training Office; Department of Labor; Probation Office

- *County Building*

500 Wheatfield Street, North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Houses Probation Office; Courtrooms; Department of Motor Vehicles

- *NCCED Vantage Pointe*

6311 Inducon Corporate Drive, Sanborn, NY 14132-9099

Houses Niagara County Center for Economic Development; Department of Economic Development; Niagara County Industrial Development Agency

Niagara County Parks

Niagara County owns and maintains five County Parks as well as the Niagara County Golf Course, which is a public facility. Information on each park is summarized below. More detailed information, including maps, is also available on the County's website at www.niagaracounty.com/Parks. Park locations are identified on Figure VII-1.

- *West Canal Marina*

4070 Tonawanda Creek Rd., North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Located in the Town of Pendleton, this marina includes more than 27 acres of land located along the Erie Canal. The marina is open from mid-May until the end of September. Facilities include two large shelters and three small shelters, all of which are rentable, playground and restrooms facilities, a boat dock and fishing pier, and boat launch access to the Erie Canal.

- *Bond Lake Park*

2571 Lower Mountain Rd., Ransomville, NY 14131

Located in the Town of Lewiston, this 532-plus acre park is located along the Niagara Escarpment and encompasses five small lakes. The park site was formerly an early 20th Century quarry. The park's natural features are available for enjoyment year-round. Facilities include two large shelters and picnic tables, 13 miles of cross-country ski trails also available for hiking, biking and bird watching, plus a Warming House available for rental from mid-March through mid-November, a tubing hill, a large skating rink, and a small ice hockey rink. The Bond Lake Nature Center is located in the Warming House and is staffed year-round on Sunday afternoons by members of the Bond Lake Environmental and Beautification Committee.

- *Royalton Ravine Park*

Gasport Road, Gasport, NY 14067

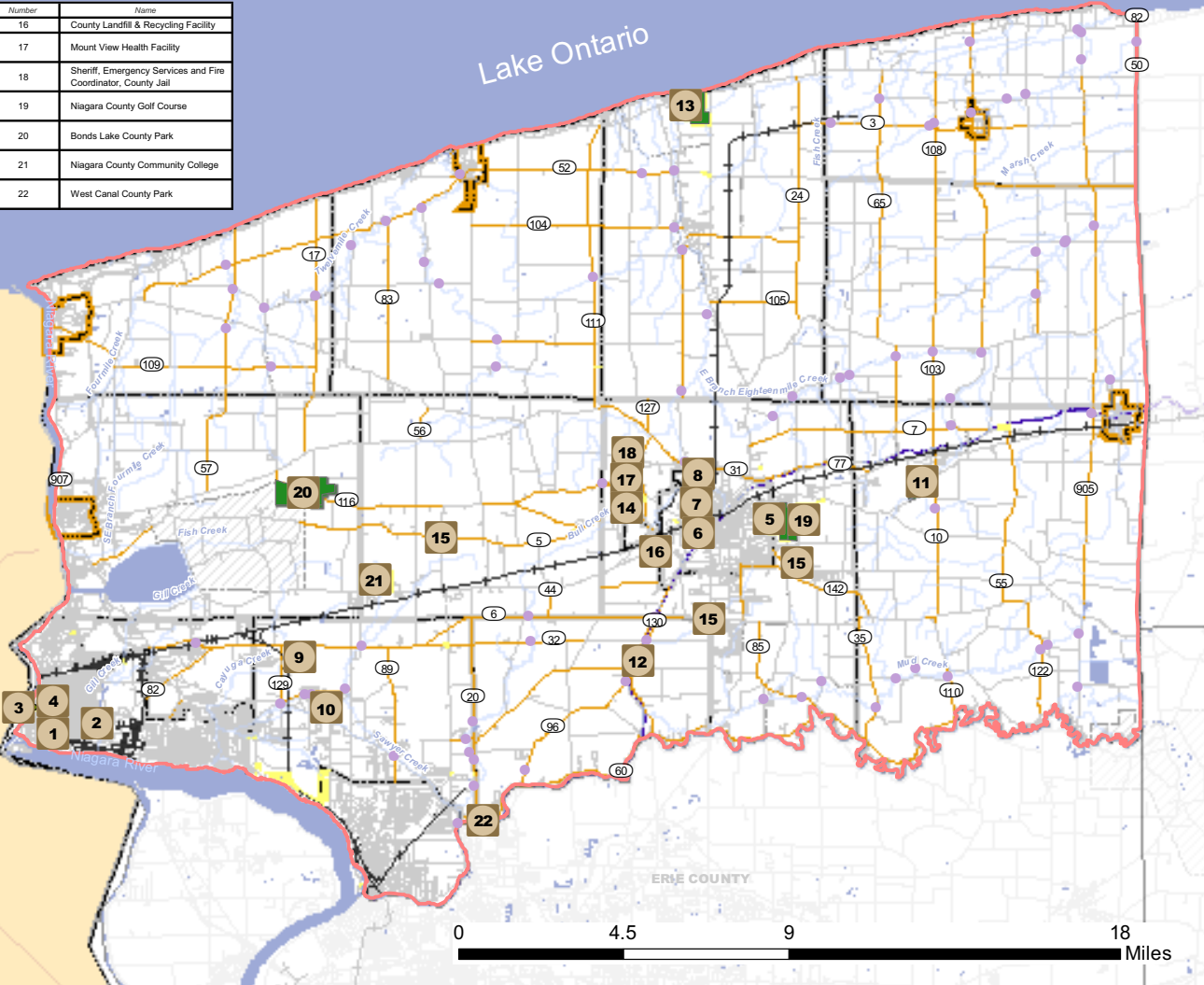
The Royalton Ravine Park is located along Gasport Road in the Town of Royalton. This 146-acre park accommodates both active and passive forms of recreation. Several miles of nature trails exist along both sides of the Royalton Ravine. The park also provides three rentable picnic shelters, a fishing pond, a baseball field and restrooms. The park is open from Memorial Day Weekend through September. Trails provide access to features including a wooden suspension bridge, a waterfall and the ruins of an historic homestead. The historic homestead was the 1830 birthplace of Belva Lockwood, the first woman to run for President of the United States and the first woman to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court. More detailed information on the homestead and Belva Lockwood is

Number	Name	Number	Name	Number	Name
1	Human Resources Building	9	Vantage Centre	16	County Landfill & Recycling Facility
2	Community Vocational Rehab Center	10	Oppenheim County Park	17	Mount View Health Facility
3	Civic Building	11	Royalton Ravine County Park	18	Sheriff, Emergency Services and Fire Coordinator, County Jail
4	Trott Access Building	12	Niagara County Sewer District	19	Niagara County Golf Course
5	Public Works - Parks & Recreation Division	13	Krull Park	20	Bonds Lake County Park
6	Civil Defense Building	14	Public Safety Training Facility	21	Niagara County Community College
7	Philo J. Brooks County Office Building	15	Niagara County Water District (3 properties)	22	West Canal County Park
8	Niagara County Courthouse				

Legend

- County Bridges
- Niagara County
- Lakes and Rivers
- County Properties
- Building / Land
- Park
- Railroad
- County Routes
- Erie Canal
- Villages
- Rural Centers
- Cities
- Reservations
- Towns

County Parks	Observation Points	Soft Course	Picnic Tables	Pavilions	Beach	Pool	Hiking	Nature Trail	Playground	Tennis	Fishing	Basketball	Launch Site	Volleyball	Ice Skating	X-County Skiing
Bond Lake Park	2571 Lower Mountain Road, Ransomville	x	x				x		x	x	x					x
West Canal Marina	4670 Tonawanda Creek Road, North Tonawanda		x													
Krull Park	Lake Road, Getz		x		x		x		x	x	x					
Niagara County Park & Golf Course	314 Davison Road, Lockport		x						x							
Oppenheim Park	2713 Niagara Falls Blvd., Wheatfield		x						x							
Royalton Ravine Conservation Park	Gasport Road, Gasport		x				x				x					



County Routes, Bridges
Parks and Buildings

Figure VII.1

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available on the County's website at www.niagaracounty.com/Parks/royaltonravine.asp .

- *Krull Park*

6108 Lake Road, Olcott, NY 14126

Krull Park is located along Olcott Beach in the Town of Newfane. This 325-acre park is used for a variety of year round activities. The park is open during the traditional summer season from Memorial Day weekend through September. The park includes a beach, four large rentable shelters, several smaller rentable shelters, a band shelter, five softball diamonds, soccer fields with shelters, a sprinkler pool, basketball courts, horseshoe pits, two playgrounds, tennis courts, two large skating rinks, a warming house, restrooms and a model airplane field.

Special events held at the park include:

- Pirates Festival
- Celtic Festival
- Independence Day celebrations and fireworks
- Labor Day Weekend Car Show
- Town of Newfane Sunday concerts
- Newfane Lions Club Swim for Sight - Polar Bear Plunge
- Dog shows

- *Oppenheim Park*

2713 Niagara Falls Boulevard, Niagara Falls, NY 14304

Oppenheim Park is a 92-acre park located in the Town of Wheatfield. Facilities include 3 large rentable picnic shelters, 14 small rentable shelters, a rentable band shelter, basketball courts, volleyball courts, tennis courts, a sprinkler pool, a small lake stocked for fishing, playgrounds and restrooms. The park is open from Memorial Day weekend through September.

- *Niagara County Golf Course*

314 Davison Road, Lockport, NY 14094

The Niagara County Golf Course is a 380-acre public golf course located in Lockport. This course is a par 72 totaling 6,400 yard course from the blue tees, and a par 73 course totaling 5,200 yards from the red tees. A driving range and full service pro shop are provided on site. The course also includes Caddy Jack's Restaurant. Although the facility receives funds appropriated by the County through the Department of Public Works, the facility generates a significant portion of its operating funds through greens fees, advertising revenues and profits made through its restaurant operations.

County Infrastructure

Roads, Highways & Bridges

Niagara County owns and maintains approximately 283 miles of County roadway, 89 bridges and approximately 1,100 drainage culverts along its road rights-of-way throughout the County. County roads are identified in Figure VII-1. The County Highway Department is responsible maintenance of County roads and for inventorying all local bridges over 20 feet in length and designating them for upgrades and repair. The County is also responsible for maintaining its drainageways and ditches along its rights-of-way.

County Water District

The Niagara County Water District (NCWD) supplies water to 12 towns and 5 villages in Niagara County as shown in Figure VII-2. Water is drawn from the West Branch of the Niagara River, and the water quality is rated as excellent. The water system serves over 150,000 residents through 108 service connections located in Niagara County as well as Erie and Orleans counties. In 2007, the NCWD completed upgrades at several of its facilities including the rehabilitation of the Filter Waste Valves at the Water Treatment Plant, rehabilitation of the Traveling Screen at the Raw Water Pump Station, and commencement of a filter controls upgrade at the Water Treatment Plant.

In 2007, the total amount of water delivered to customers by the Water District was 6.15 billion gallons; the daily average of water treated and pumped through the system was 16.50 million gallons per day. The highest usage was recorded on June 25, 2007 at 27.02 million gallons. In 2007, water customers were charged \$0.75 per 1,000 gallons of water.

County Sewer District

The Niagara County Sewer District No. 1 is responsible for the treatment and disposal of wastewater in the south-central portion of the County. Its service area completely covers the Towns of Wheatfield and Pendleton, and covers portions of the Towns of Niagara, Lockport, Cambria, and Lewiston as shown in Figure VII-3.

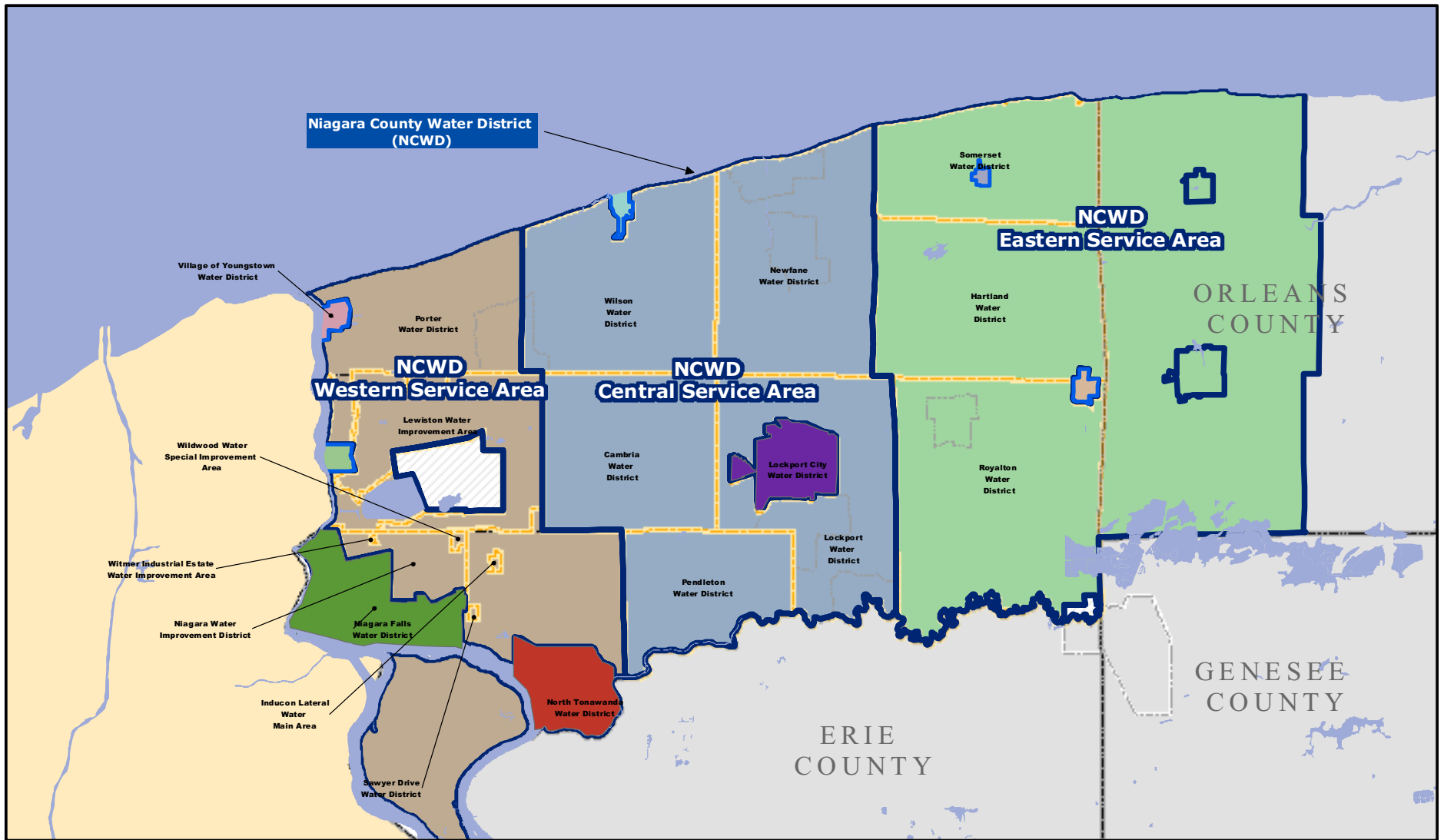
The Sewer District's wastewater treatment plant is located in the southwestern corner of the Town of Wheatfield, and has sufficient capacity for an average daily flow rate of 14 million gallons of water daily (MGD). The actual average daily flow rate is approximately 5 MGD, but heavy rains may increase the flow of water into storm sewers with peak flows on the order of 30 MGD.

The Niagara County Sewer District operates approximately 61 miles of sewer interceptor lines and six pump stations. Niagara Sewer District No. 1 is the largest, but not the only, sewer district in the County. Many of the areas not served by the District operate under local sewer districts. Each of the three cities in the County and many of the communities north of the Niagara Escarpment are served by local sewer districts. Niagara Sewer District No. 1's interceptor lines do not run north of the Escarpment.

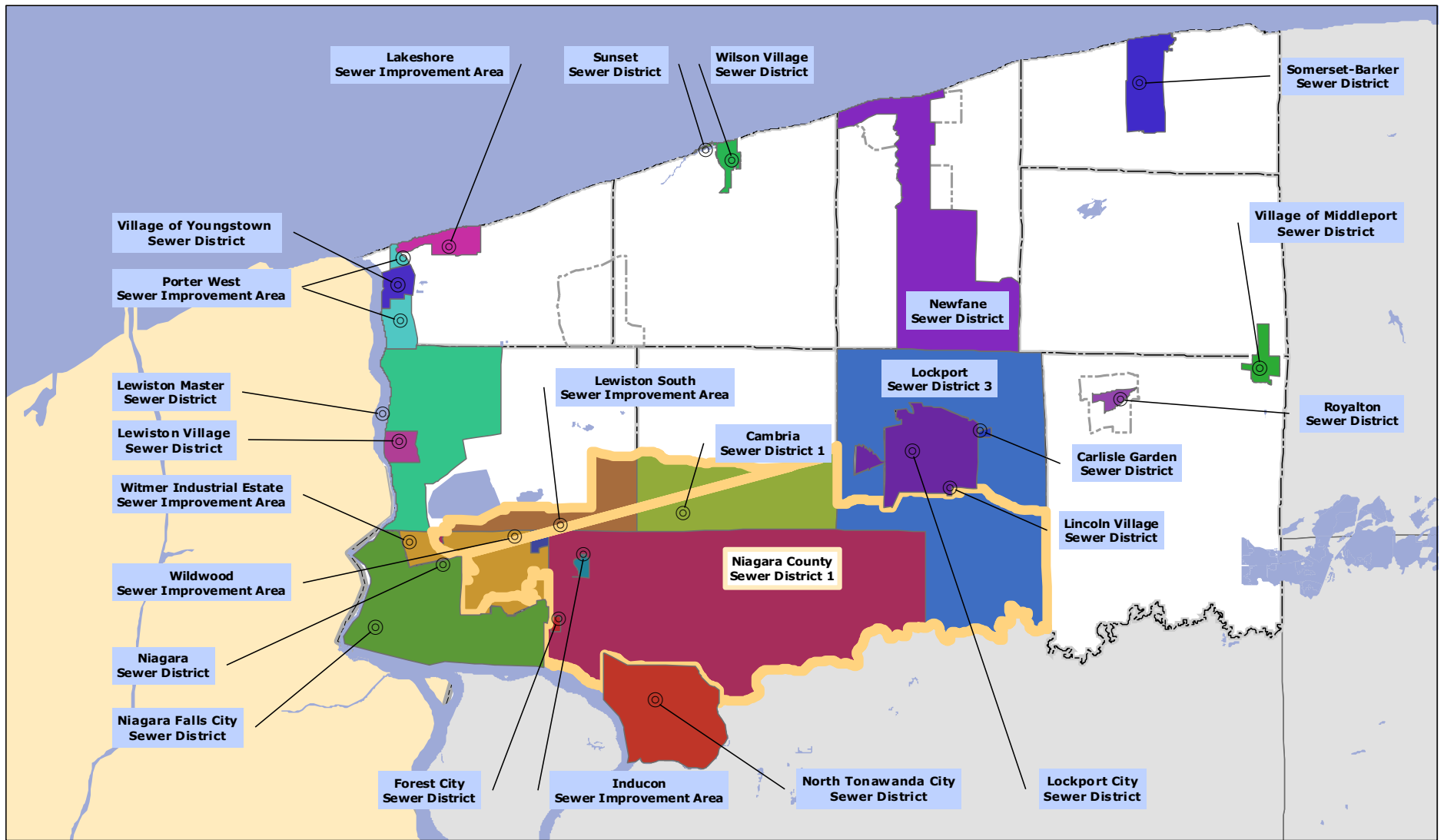
County Refuse District

The Niagara County Refuse Disposal District, operating under the title of "Niagara County Landfill and Recycling", was established under a State Charter as a special district that covers all municipalities in Niagara County except Cambria, Newfane, Niagara and Wilson. The Refuse Disposal District is a special district with taxing powers, which are levied as a refuse tax within the municipalities that are part of the district. Tax revenues cover the cost of remedial activities related to State or Federally designated hazardous waste sites (Superfund sites). The purpose and intent of the district is to regionalize household hazardous waste disposal and municipal green waste disposal (composting), recycling and all other pertinent solid waste management activities.

The Niagara County Refuse Disposal District provides environmental services which are not readily conducted by private sector businesses due to the relatively low revenue generating capacity of these services. Funding assistance is provided in the form of grant monies from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Solid waste reduction, landfill remediation and household hazardous waste collection days are partially reimbursed by state grant funding. These County initiatives satisfy solid or hazardous waste mandates and the recommended waste recycling responsibilities



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typically provided by New York State municipalities.

Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District

The Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District provides technical assistance, public education services and advice to local farmers, landowners and municipalities with regard to natural resources, particularly local information on soil and water best management practices, drainage assistance and conservation measures. The District is a partner agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cornell Cooperative Extension. The District has provided these services to Niagara County residents for more than 50 years. District offices are located at the Niagara County Fair Grounds. More information is available at www.niagaraswcd.com.

Some of the specific services offered by Niagara County Soil and Water include:

- Agricultural assistance provided to local farmers focused on controlling point and non-point sources of pollution.
- Partnering with local farmers, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service agency to deliver USDA Farm Bill Programs. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) have been successful programs in Niagara County. The WRP provides landowners the opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife habitat improvement on their property. The EQIP is a voluntary program that promotes agricultural production and environmental management practices including assistance, installation and implementation of structural and non-structural management practices.
- Assisting landowners with pond site analyses, including evaluation of pond locations, water sources, soils and drainage features. Ponds are important for fish production, fire protection, livestock water supply, and landscape enhancement.
- Providing annual pond stocking aquatic wildlife and trees seedling sales that total approximately 85,000 seedlings each year.
- Providing assistance with agricultural assessments and map information to landowners. Eligible landowners can receive reduction in property tax bills for land in agricultural production by obtaining a reassessment of their property based on the soils located on the property.
- Serving as a repository for County Flood Insurance Rate maps, NYS DEC and NWI wetland maps, soils surveys, topographic maps and Geographic Information System (GIS) maps and information.
- Providing assistance and technical expertise with regard to water quality monitoring and streambank stabilization. In 2003 the District teamed with County Planning, the Town of Newfane, the NYSDEC and the Army Corps of Engineers on the Eighteen Mile Creek Restoration Project to improve water quality, fish habitat and fishing enhancement. The NCSWCD is the lead agency for the Remedial Action Plan Coordination and Management program designed to delist Eighteen Mile Creek as an Area of Concern as designated by

Issues and Opportunities

During the comprehensive planning process, Niagara community representatives and other stakeholders identified a variety of issues and opportunities with regard to the County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Plan Element. These issues/challenges and opportunities/assets that have been identified are summarized below by planning Subregion.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton, & Village of Middleport

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- A sense of isolation from the rest of the County
- A need for better emergency service, including improved response times and greater police visibility and presence
- A desire by some communities to be included in more projects and decision-making at the County level

Key opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- The possibility of utilizing a mobile Department of Motor Vehicles unit, providing monthly visits to outlying communities. Similar mobile units could be made available for election/voter services [e.g., voter registration], social services, health and nutrition services, etc.
- Identifying opportunities for more shared services and improved efficiency among municipalities and the County, for example grass mowing of County properties could be done by local municipalities with reimbursement by the County
- Consideration of decentralizing other County services down to the towns and villages

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- A general need for consolidation of redundant services
- Recognition that being the County seat presents both pros and cons for the City of Lockport
 - Being County Seat provides great access to services
 - It also translates into a lot of non-taxable, public properties
- Evaluation of the present size of the County Legislature, with many districts/legislators as compared to other counties in New York State
- A need for greater efficiency in service delivery needs to be considered
 - For example, the Financial Recovery Division of County Social Services may be able to perform functions that are better left to State-level agencies
 - There may be other areas of the County and State where services overlap that need to be examined

Key opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- Evaluation of the potential for service consolidation, specifically of local water districts

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The general lack of County services in this subregion
- Some of the subregion’s communities are geographically distant from various services in Lockport, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda
 - o Given gas prices, driving distance becomes a more serious obstacle
 - o Everything is a half-hour drive away
- Police coverage is insufficient
 - o Improved coverage is needed for the towns
 - o Slow response times to emergencies have been noted in the past
- There seem to be “imaginary lines” running east-west along the escarpment, and north-south just east of the City of Lockport, which separate these communities from the rest of the County.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- There is a need for County bus service and/or van service for seniors in the area – more services are needed for the elderly and the rural population
- Service sharing exists now: Town of Somerset is served by the Village of Barker’s police
- More service consolidation is possible
 - o Local water district consolidation is needed
 - o Tough decisions need to be made to use tax dollars wisely

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Primary issues, challenges, assets and opportunities identified include:

- The County Sheriff’s patrols are sparse in the area; Village of Youngstown has a part-time police force
- The general problems associated with this area’s distance from County services in Lockport / Niagara Falls
- An asset of the area is that “We try to take care of ourselves” – Services are available locally when needed

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The general condition of the area’s road infrastructure is poor – not much County highways in this area; County roads are “just as bad” as town roads.
- Existing County buildings and facilities in this area need work
 - o Buildings are in poor condition
 - o County properties should be setting a higher positive standard for the area, but instead they reflect their negative surroundings
 - o More volunteer activity by the County is needed

- The County’s Oppenheim Park is a “run-down” facility
 - o There was a proposal to sell this facility to the Town of Wheatfield; the Town may still be interested in the park,
 - o The park is accessible to tourists and visitors to the area given its location along Niagara Falls Boulevard, and could be a major attraction – this seems to be a missed opportunity right now
 - o County should consider selling the park or making a greater investment in it
- Water & sewer infrastructure
 - o Cities have their own water and sewer services
 - o Providing this type of infrastructure could become a model of “competitive cooperation” – from a more inter-regional perspective, without giving up local sovereignty
- Aging population
 - o There is a general need for more services & better access to existing services
 - o This seems to be a larger issue in Wheatfield
- Robert Moses Parkway
 - o Replacement is needed for this highway prior to its removal
 - o There is a need to improve commuting time from outlying areas and an opportunity to capture more commuter and tourist business traffic in the area
- LaSalle Parkway
 - o This is essentially a “parkway to nowhere”

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- With regards to local roads
 - o Cities could use help from the County in maintaining and improving local roads
- Oppenheim Park
 - o The park could be a major asset, given its location on Niagara Falls Boulevard
 - o The park could be a possible site for a zoo
- There is a surplus of low-income housing in the area, especially the cities – and insufficient newer moderate or higher-income housing development that would make the area more competitive with the suburbs
- The Niagara Falls Airport holds a great deal of potential, especially because of its long runway and capability to handle large cargo loads
 - o There needs to be improved connectivity between Niagara Falls International Airport and Buffalo Niagara International Airport
- Multi-modal center/transportation alternatives are needed in Downtown Niagara Falls
- Old railroad rights-of-way present opportunities for trails and/or revival of the rail system in some areas
- Vantage Centre – the facility is filling up; could be marketed more effectively
- The County’s current Brownfields coordinator has been a major asset to Niagara Falls and Wheatfield, and should be recognized as such
- The aging population in the subregion could be an asset and should be viewed from that perspective

Strategies

Niagara County provides a range of services, facilities and public infrastructure that contributes to the area's high standard of living and Niagara County remains committed to meeting its responsibilities by providing the most cost-effective services possible to its residents and taxpayers. It is imperative that existing services, facilities and infrastructure are maintained in a manner that retains their public investment value as well as keeping pace with the changing needs of County residents and businesses.

The task of providing financially-effective and fiscally responsible services are increasingly complicated by changing demographics, aging infrastructure and financial constraints throughout Niagara County. An aging population requires new and expanded services, including health care, affordable housing and transportation needs at a time when municipal budgets are under increased strain themselves. Aging public facilities and infrastructure also require consistent maintenance and upgrading.

Resolving the issues identified in this Plan relative to the provision of services and infrastructure will take a cooperative and collaborative approach between the County and local municipalities to find opportunities for cost savings and enhanced services. Among the key strategies Niagara County needs to consider are limitations on providing new or expanded infrastructure in areas of the County where the result may be further sprawl and undesirable development patterns.

In lieu of new infrastructure, continuing maintenance and upgrading existing water, sewer, drainage, road and bridge systems needs to be a high Countywide priority as a quality of life issue and as an important land use decision-making tool. This emphasis on directing limited resources to maintain and upgrade existing systems is particularly important when such actions will help facilitate and direct development and redevelopment to those areas of the County identified by this Plan as being most suited to further growth and development. These include the County's three urban municipalities, already developed suburban areas and highway corridors, and the existing developed centers of population in rural areas, including villages, town centers and hamlets. The County needs to identify infrastructure needs in the various subregions of the County and aggressively seek its share of State and Federal funding assistance to bring important public projects and services on line.

The County and local communities cannot control the aging process of its populations, but working in a cooperative fashion sprawling populations over wider and wider areas as opposed to concentrated areas inevitably increase demands on services, facilities and infrastructure as they age. The provision of cost efficient services, including social, health care and educational programs can be more effectively managed in existing population centers as outlined in this Plan.

Opportunities for the enhanced sharing of municipal services, joint facilities, and the possible consolidation of services and facilities through intermunicipal agreements between the County and local municipalities and among municipalities themselves need to be investigated further. Such arrangements already exist in some communities. Feasibility studies should be encouraged by the County. These studies are often supported at State levels under shared services incentive grant programs. Although some of the more obvious studies often include police, fire, shared court systems, and emergency services, other less obvious alternatives need to be explored such as intermunicipal



***Maintain
Existing
Infrastructure***

stormwater management, joint parks and recreation facilities, shared school facilities, joint training programs, and intermunicipal planning initiatives.

Goals, Objectives and Recommendations

Goal – Maintain and Upgrade Existing Infrastructure

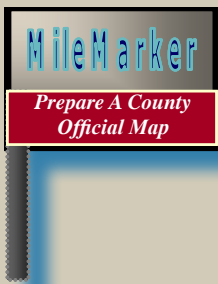
To prioritize the maintenance and upgrading of existing County-owned public infrastructure in developed urban areas and centers of population of the County as a high priority over the construction and/or expansion of new infrastructure in areas determined by the County and local communities as unsuited to future development.

Objectives

- Limit the construction of new County-owned road, water and sewer infrastructure in undeveloped areas of the County unless issues of public health and safety are involved.
- Maintain and upgrade existing County-owned road, water and sewer infrastructure in developed areas of the County to facilitate and direct new development and redevelopment of existing population centers where public infrastructure, services and facilities are already in place.

Recommendations

- Prepare an up-to-date County Official Map of Niagara County consistent with Sections 239-e and 239-f of NYS General Municipal Law for the purpose of facilitating the planning and development of roads and drainage systems; sites for public development; and the protection of rights-of-way that may be needed for future road and highway modifications, the upgrading of water, sewer and drainage systems, and sites that may be developed for future public use.
- Require the consultation and review of the County Official Map and elements contained within this Comprehensive Plan consistent with NYS General Municipal Law by project reviewing agencies which include the County Planning Board, County Department of Health, County Department of Public Works and others as necessary prior to any decisions affecting project approval to ensure that private and public sector projects are consistent with the goals and objectives of this Plan, the Official Map and local municipal comprehensive plans.
- Prioritize the continued maintenance and upgrade of existing road, sewer, water and drainage systems in developed urban communities and population centers over the construction and/or expansion of new infrastructure in undeveloped areas and areas determined by local communities as not suited to development, except in cases involving public health and safety.
- Partner with NYS DOT and GBNRTC on long-term planning initiatives of major highway corridors under their jurisdictions within Niagara County that provide linkage to existing and future centers of development and redevelopment to ensure the set aside of undeveloped lands as possible future rights-of-way for roads and utilities and potential parallel service roads to manage highway access in residential and commercially developing areas.



Goal – Enhance County Open Space, Parks and Recreation Resources

To encourage the preservation of open space resources, conservation of fish and wildlife habitats, increase public access to natural resources, and promote the development/enhancement of parks and recreational opportunities to serve the diverse needs of County residents and foster an environmentally sensitive approach to preservation, conservation and stewardship of natural resources.

Objectives

- Identify the County’s short and long-term parks, recreation and open space needs for the next 20-year planning horizon. Prepare a County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan as a blueprint for the provision of green infrastructure, recreational services, facilities and programs at the County level. The Plan would address necessary upgrades of existing facilities; potential acquisition/disposition of properties; development, construction and maintenance of parks, trails, bikeways, recreation facilities, historic resources and open space/environmentally sensitive resources. The process should also explore opportunities for green infrastructure and shared services relative to parks and recreation within Niagara County.
- Develop an interconnected network of trails, pedestrian paths and bikeways throughout the County with linkages to and among the existing and planned networks Countywide, such as the Niagara Greenway and the Erie Canal system. The trail network would connect County population centers, tourist destinations, community facilities, schools, employment centers, residential neighborhoods, recreational facilities, parks, and public open space resources.

Recommendations

- Identify and seek funding opportunities for preparation of a Countywide Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan founded upon inter-municipal cooperation and collaborative partnerships with other State, regional and local governmental agencies, as well as private sector entities. Potential partners in such a project include the Niagara River Greenway Commission, Niagara County Environmental Management Council, Erie Canal Heritage organizations among others.
- Prepare a County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan that includes the following tasks:
 - Perform an inventory and create a GIS database of parks, facilities, open space and historic resources including State, County, local, and school facilities within the County
 - Survey and assess public attitudes regarding demand, supply, needs and deficiencies of the County’s existing parks, recreation facilities and programs
 - Establish a public participation and stakeholder involvement process
 - Establish project priorities, capital improvement plans and design / development “green building” and “green infrastructure” standards for outdoor recreation facilities and grounds to include, but not be limited to: greenways, blueways, parklands, trails, bikeways, pedestrian networks, and special destination features
 - Identify projects and seek funding to connect existing trail networks to new multi-use trails, pedestrian paths, bikeways and green infrastructure to eliminate “gaps” in existing trail systems



- Design and construct recreation facilities and pursue recreational opportunities that ecologically benefit the County’s riparian corridors, floodplains, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive lands

Goal – Enhance County-owned Public Facilities, Buildings and Grounds

To enhance the appearance and functionality of County-owned public facilities, buildings and grounds to achieve a higher standard of quality in the design, construction, operation and maintenance of properties, which are appropriate to – and consistent with – the setting and desired aesthetic character of surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

Objectives

- Examine the potential to establish architectural, engineering and site design guidelines and standards for County-owned facilities, buildings and grounds. These guidelines should address neighborhood aesthetics and site feature requirements to be considered and/or implemented in the design, construction and maintenance procedures for County facilities.
- Enhance the long-term environmental quality, sustainability and energy conservation of County facilities and buildings to decrease operating and maintenance costs and enhance the environment.

Recommendations

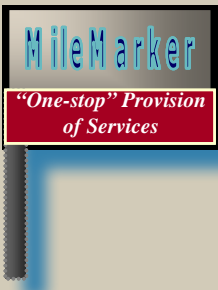
- The County should investigate and prioritize its long term service and facility needs to determine the potential for further consolidation of services and facilities “under one-roof” or at locations that can best meet the needs of County residents, but at the same time realizing cost savings and enhanced service delivery. Previous initiatives that can serve as models include the success of locating the services of the Niagara County Center of Economic Development under one roof and current plans to consolidate the facilities and services of County Public Works at one location.
- Establish best management practices for implementing context-sensitive site design, building construction and landscaping techniques for County development projects.
 - Encourage the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and techniques in County projects and other public sector projects in the County including schools, libraries, health facilities, etc.
 - Incorporate Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles and certification requirements into the design and construction process of new County projects and encourage the use of these principles in all public projects.

Goal – Improve Communication among County Departments

To improve communication among and between County Departments and related service providers and agencies in the provision of public services.

Objective

- Investigate ways to facilitate greater communication and increased efficiency through the sharing of information and the provision of services to the public among County Departments and other public service agencies and municipalities.
- Encourage more team-oriented approaches to the provision of County services based upon the experience and knowledge gained from the 2003 combination of



Niagara County's Economic Development Department and the County Industrial Development Agency into a "one-stop shop", the Niagara County Center for Economic Development. This model has increased operational efficiency and resulted in cost savings to the taxpayer through the sharing of staff, office space and other business resources.

- Investigate the feasibility and potential benefits and savings in the establishment of a customer service system such as a 311 or similar non-emergency telephone communication system, which would allow public access to local government information and services.

- Expand the sharing of current land use and other pertinent planning and service data, including community-oriented planning information, through the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) databases and mapping services. This includes, for example sharing recent aerial photographs and similar sources of data/information with local communities to facilitate updating of local comprehensive plans and land use regulations.

- Investigate the feasibility of utilizing creative approaches to bring County-provided services to residents who may otherwise find it difficult to access available services or transportation, such as seniors living in rural areas of the County.
 - Determine the need for providing various services via state-of-the-art information-sharing technologies via computer networks and linkages and explore the possible use of mobile service facilities, for example, mobile DMV units, mobile health clinics, or other social services to access greater numbers of residents.

Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may

be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects will be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Environmental Clean-up, Water and Waste Disposal; Help for Workers and Families Hardest Hit by the Economic Crisis; and Energy that include, but not limited to:

- \$6 billion towards environmental clean-up of former weapon production and energy research sites
- \$6 billion for local clean water and drinking water infrastructure improvements
- \$1.2 billion for EPA's nationwide environmental clean-up programs, including Superfund
- \$1.38 billion in loans and grants for needed water and waste disposal in rural areas

- \$19.9 billion for additional Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- \$2 billion for Child Care Development Block Grant
- \$2.1 billion for Head Start & Early Head Start
- \$4 billion for State and Local Law Enforcement
- \$555 million for Department of Defense Homeowners Assistance Program

- \$4.5 billion for repair of Federal buildings
- \$3.4 billion for Fossil Energy research and development
- \$11 billion for smart grid related activities
- \$6.3 billion for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Grants
- \$5 billion for Weatherization Assistance Program
- \$2.5 billion for energy efficiency and renewable energy research
- \$2 billion in grants for manufacturing advanced batteries systems
- \$6 billion for new loan guarantees
- \$1 billion for other energy efficiency projects

Niagara County Projects include:

Reliable, Efficient Electricity Grid

Mount Saint Mary's Hospital

- | | |
|--|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integrated High Efficiency/Solar Panel-Lined Roof | \$ 750,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replace 180 Windows with Energy-Efficient Windows | \$ 300,000 |

Local Government Energy Efficiency	
Niagara County Sheriff's Office	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correctional Facility Appliance Efficiency Upgrade \$ 430,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sherriff's Building Energy Efficiency Upgrade \$ 750,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Energy Efficiency Conservation Upgrade \$ 140,000
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Back-up Emergency Power Generators \$ 740,000
Niagara County County Clerk	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara County Inactive/Archival Records Storage Facility \$ 5,152,000
Home Weatherization	
Niagara County Social Services	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weatherization Revitalization Assistance Program (WRAP) \$ 100,000
Modernization of public buildings:	
Niagara County Public Works	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Department of Public Works Facility - Town of Cambria \$ 38,000,000
Niagara County Data Processing	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial and Payroll Systems for Niagara County \$ 1,200,000
Clean Water	
Clean Water State Revolving Fund	
Niagara County Sewer District No. 1	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrade Tonawanda Creek Forcemain \$ 1,700,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wastewater Treatment Plant Modifications and Collection System Improvements \$ 10,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extension of Cambria Interceptor \$ 5,300,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extension of Pendleton Interceptor \$ 3,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Tower Rehabilitation \$ 650,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tonawanda Creek Slope Stabilization \$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearing of Interceptor Right-of-Ways \$ 600,000
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	
Niagara County Water District	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearwell Upgrade \$ 7,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transmission Line Upgrade \$ 16,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Electrical Upgrade \$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	High Service Pump Station VFD Upgrade \$ 750,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sludge Lagoon Rehabilitation \$ 325,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pump Coating Upgrade \$ 50,000
Niagara County Public Health	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Tank Removal \$ 150,000
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking Water and Wastewater Treatment System for Tuscarora Indian Health and Community Center \$ 885,000
Niagara County Refuse Disposal District	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara County Landfill Cap \$ 9,000,000

<input type="checkbox"/>	Construction of Three Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Storage Facilities	\$ 175,000
Niagara County Social Services		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Home Run Program	\$ 150,000
Employment		
Mount Saint Mary's Hospital:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certified Nursing Assistants Training for 60 Individuals with Guaranteed Job Placement	\$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phlebotomist Training for 12 Individuals with Guaranteed Job Placement	\$ 27,600
Community Services Block Grant		
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish Federally Qualified 330 Comm. Health Care Center	\$ 1,420,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Tuscarora Nation Health and Community Center	\$ 2,200,000
Mount Saint Mary's Hospital		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expand Services at Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen	\$ 500,000
Niagara County County Manager		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Smart Permitting Regional Online Permitting System	\$ 250,000
Emergency Food and Shelter		
Niagara County Social Services		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food and Shelter Assistance	\$ 100,000
Centers for Independent Living		
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Assisted Living Facility in Niagara Falls	\$ 15,000,000
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families		
Niagara County Social Services		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safe Dates Program	\$ 70,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child Protective Services/Domestic Violence Collaboration	\$ 200,000
State and Local Law Enforcement		
Niagara County District Attorney		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Project Safe Childhood Program	\$ 85,000
Niagara County Sheriff's Office		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vehicle/Evidence Storage Facility	\$ 2,500,00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer Equipment Upgrade	\$ 222,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheriff's Office Facility Security Upgrade	\$ 1,090,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interoperable Communications Equipment	\$ 1,700,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile Command Center	\$ 150,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tactical Communication Vehicle	\$ 80,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Automated External Defibrillator	\$ 60,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Firearms Training Simulator	\$ 75,000

Niagara County County Attorney's Office

<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara Falls Gang and Gun Prevention Program	\$	372,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	North Tonawanda/Lockport Sexual Abuse Prevention Program	\$	409,500

Reference

United States Congress. 2009. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 - Federal Stimulus Congressional Press Summary. Washington, D.C.

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Chapter VIII

Education

General Characteristics & Trends

Educational resources in Niagara County include ten public school districts, Niagara University, Niagara County Community College (NCCC), the NIOGA Public Library system, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) system, and 19 private schools, most of which are affiliated with religious institutions. These educational institutions are mapped and identified in Chapter III, Figure III.M.1.

Many schools are located in the historically developed urban areas of the County in and around the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Fewer schools are located in the rural towns, but as the County population continues to shift northward, the potential need for additional schools and related educational facilities in suburban and rural areas exists as well. As a result of shifting populations, urban school districts like those in Niagara Falls have accommodated the reuse of school facilities that are no longer needed due to decreases in local population and enrollment.

Niagara County provides financial support to Niagara County Community College and the NIOGA Library System, and operates several job training programs, the County Youth Bureau, education programs in public schools for children with disabilities, and recreation programs.

A number of issues and opportunities related to the role of the County in education and educational initiatives in general have been identified during the planning process and are discussed in this chapter. Many issues and opportunities focus on the County's ability to function as a key coordinating body with other education stakeholders, particularly in its role in providing social services, economic development and job development. Following is a brief summary of current characteristics and trends related to education and educational institutions in Niagara County.

Public School System (K-12)

Based on an annual school enrollment survey conducted by the Niagara County Department of Economic Development, total enrollment in the County's public

schools was 32,421 during the 2006-2007 school year. The largest school districts are those in the County's urban centers. The four largest districts (Niagara Falls City School District, Lockport City School District, North Tonawanda City School District and Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District) account for approximately 65% of the County's public school enrollment. Table VIII-1 summarizes enrollment in the 10 public school districts within Niagara County.

**Table VIII-1 – Public School Enrollment,
2006-2007 School Year**

School District	School Buildings	Total Enrollment ('06-'07)
Niagara Falls City	13	7,551
Lockport City	10	5,169
North Tonawanda City	8	4,353
Niagara-Wheatfield Central	6	4,074
Starpoint Central	4	2,822
Lewiston Porter Central	4	2,338
Newfane Central Schools	5	2,036
Royalton Hartland Central	3	1,553
Wilson Central	3	1,428
Barker Central	3	1,097
TOTAL	59	32,421

**Table VIII-2 – Facilities and Capacity by School District,
2006-2007 School Year**

School District	Elementary Level		Middle / Junior / High School Level	
	Number of Schools	Student Enrollment / Student Capacity	Number of Schools	Student Enrollment / Student Capacity
Barker Central	1	102%	2	103%
Lewiston Porter Central	2	87%	2	89%
Lockport City	7	97%	3	93%
Newfane Central Schools	3	N/A	2	N/A
Niagara Falls City	9	61%	4	50%
Niagara Wheatfield Central	4	92%	2	113%
North Tonawanda City	6	58%	2	59%
Royalton Hartland Central	1	N/A	2	N/A
Starpoint Central	2	N/A	2	N/A
Wilson Central	2	37%	1	44%

Table VIII-2 summarizes school facilities and the percent of total capacity available in each of the 10 public school districts serving County residents. Three districts are nearing or have exceeded their enrollment capacity: Barker Central School District, Lockport City School District and Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District. Data for the 2006-2007 school year was unavailable where noted as “N/A.”

Private Schools

There are 19 private schools in Niagara County, most of which are affiliated with religious institutions or other organizations. The largest of these is DeSales Catholic School, which had an enrollment of 533 students in 2006-2007. Total reported private school enrollment for the 2006-2007 school year was 2,093 students, or about 6% of total school enrollment countywide. Enrollment numbers for private schools can be found in Table VIII-3. Data for the 2006-2007 school year was unavailable where noted as “N/A.” Data on school capacity for private schools is on file, but not presented here given the small share of total school enrollment countywide.

**Table VIII-3 – Private Schools in Niagara County
by Enrollment,
2006-2007 School Year**

Private Schools	Enrollment
DeSales Catholic School	533
Prince of Peace School	220
St. Peter’s, Lewiston	212
Niagara Catholic	101
St. Matthew Lutheran	180
Stella Niagara Education Park	180
North Tonawanda Catholic	166
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel	124
St. Peter’s Lutheran -Walmore Rd.	63
Holy Ghost Lutheran	100
St. John Lutheran	68
St. Peter’s Lutheran - North Ridge	64
Sacred Heart Villa	53
St. Mark Lutheran	29
Henrietta G. Lewis Campus School	N/A
Niagara Christian Academy	N/A
St. Dominic Savio	N/A
St. John de LaSalle School	N/A
St. Joseph School	N/A
Total	2,093

Institutions of Higher Education

Niagara County offers three institutions of higher learning within its borders: Niagara University, Niagara County Community College (NCCC), and SUNY Empire State College. These institutions offer Associate, Bachelor and advanced university degrees on full-time and part-time bases. Niagara County is located within a very reasonable one-half hour drive or less from the State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo State College and Canisius College. These institutions of higher education afford diverse degree programs to their student populations, with similarly diverse career choices and life interests.

Niagara University

Niagara University was founded in 1856 by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and was first chartered in 1861 as a seminary. It was re-chartered as a university in 1883. The 160-acre Niagara University campus is located on NYS Route 104 near the northern limits of the City of Niagara Falls. The campus is situated along the top of Monteagle Ridge overlooking the Niagara River Gorge, approximately four miles north of Niagara Falls. Niagara University is a comprehensive university with an enrollment of approximately 2,600 undergraduates and 800 graduate students, with another 750 students enrolled in continuing and community education programs. In addition, Niagara University offers bachelor's and master's degree programs at sites in the Toronto and York regions of Ontario. All programs operate with written consent from the Ministry of Training and enroll more than 300 students annually. More information is available at: www.niagara.edu

Niagara County Community College

Niagara County Community College was established in the City of Niagara Falls in 1962 as a locally-sponsored college supervised by the State University of New York. The present campus in Sanborn was constructed in 1973 on 267 acres of land at Saunders Settlement Road (NYS Route 31) and Townline Road (NYS Route 429) in the Town of Cambria. The College offers over 60 programs of study and the campus includes nine buildings. In August 2008, Village College Suites was opened to provide on-campus housing for approximately 300 students. Total full-time and part-time enrollment at the College is approximately 7,000 students in credit programs with another 7,500 students enrolled in workforce and community education programs. More information is available at: www.niagaracc.suny.edu

Empire State College, State University of New York

Empire State College is a component of the State University of New York that is dedicated to providing educational opportunities to working adults. There are Empire State College locations in 34 cities in New York, including the Niagara County location in the City of Lockport.

Empire State College offers a wide array of online courses and specializes in distance learning. Its offices in Lockport function primarily as a place for students to meet with faculty advisors and to access the College's resources and student services.

Job Training / Adult Education

Employment and Training Department

The County's Employment and Training Department provides employment services for job seekers such as on-the-job training and vocational classroom training, as well as business services for employers seeking workers. The County provides these services to about 10,000 residents annually. Services include: job opening information, skills and aptitude testing, resume assistance, career counseling, interview coaching, vocational training, workshops and meetings with employers.

Niagara County Community College

NCCC's Division of Workforce and Community Development provides an umbrella of educational services for youth and adults in the Niagara region. Available in a variety of formats, programs include: foundational instruction, life skills, employment readiness, vocational training, career development, professional preparation, testing, and technology education.

Workshops, as well as short-term and long-term training sessions, assist students in developing computer skills and directs students to entry into a certificate or a college program; immediate employment; or immediate employment with continuing education to obtain a certificate or an academic degree. The focus is determined by student need and desire.

The department's case manager works closely with students to identify their interests and skill levels, appropriate options, and available resources for funding. As students become involved in programs, the case manager will continue to help students throughout their experience.

Collaboration with several government and neighborhood organizations means students get more resources to help achieve lifelong goals. The department is also one of the WorkSource One-Stop Partners, a cluster of more than 10 groups working together to provide coordinated delivery of employment services to businesses and job seekers.

At the Career Education and Counseling Center, based at the Trott ACCESS Center, staff members focus on foundational instruction and job-readiness training. Preparation and testing for TABE and COMPASS are also provided.

NCCC participates in the College Acceleration Program (CAP) which is an articulation between NCCC and area high schools that provides over 1,200 students with the opportunity to obtain college credit while still enrolled in high school. Seniors and highly qualified juniors are eligible to be part of the program. The college-level courses are taught at the high school. By taking advantage of this opportunity, students are able to gain college credit while in high school and provide for a smoother transition to college.

Workforce and Community Development programs and services are always being evaluated and updated to provide students with the current information and skills students need to discover and enjoy lifelong learning. In addition to the Sanborn campus, offices are located at NCCC's Niagara Falls Extension Site, and at the Corporate and Business Development Center in the City of Lockport.

Niagara University

Through the university's Family Literacy and Counseling Centers, job readiness programming and educational assistance in literacy and math skills are available. The Office of Continuing and Community Education at NU provides a number of workplace and professional development programs in areas such as computer applications, web graphics, personal enrichment and language. Professional certificates in Geographical Information Systems and Emergency Management are among program offerings. The Department of Nursing offers a bachelor of science nursing completion degree for registered nurses prepared in an accredited Associate Degree Program or Hospital School of Nursing as well as leadership workshops for nursing professionals.

Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ONBOCES)

The Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ONBOCES) provides a variety of vocational and alternative education programs to students in Niagara and Orleans counties. The ONBOCES district encompasses the ten public school districts in Niagara County and two school districts in Orleans County.

ONBOCES offers career and technical education training in over two dozen fields, including automotive repair, computer technology, law enforcement, and health occupations. ONBOCES also offers continuing education and special education programs.

During the 2006-2007 school year, ONBOCES served 1,021 general education students and 490 students with disabilities. According to the ONBOCES 2006-2007 Report Card, 71 percent of the previous year's graduates were either employed (35 percent) or continuing with post-secondary education (36 percent).

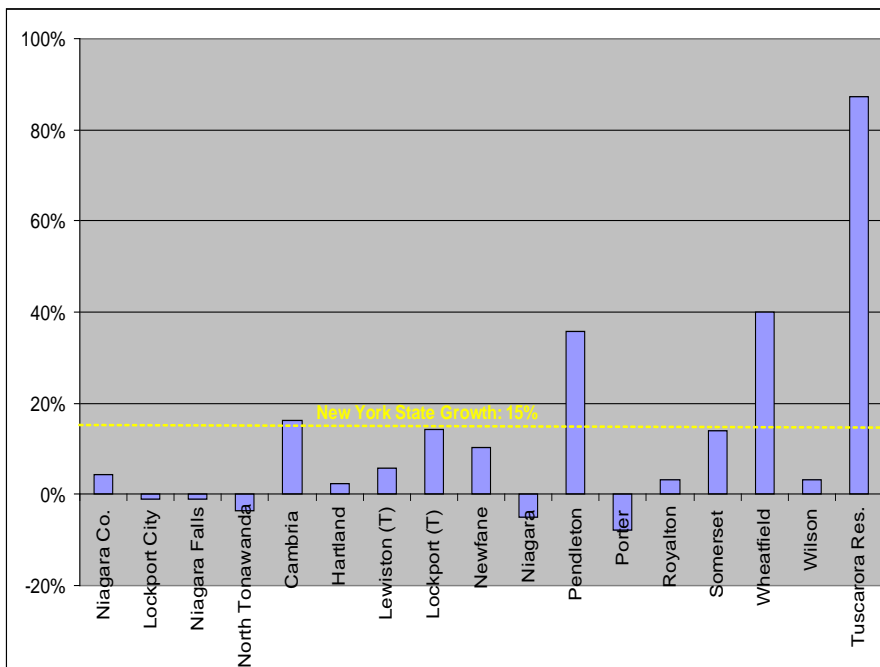
ONBOCES' Niagara County facilities are clustered in Sanborn in western part of Cambria, and include Niagara Academy and Niagara Career and Technical Educational Center and the Orleans / Niagara East Conference Center both located next to NCCC on Saunders Settlement Road.

Population and School Enrollment

Figure VIII-1 illustrates changes in school age population for municipalities in Niagara County between 1990 and 2000. At the time of the 2000 Census, 41,000 school-age children (ages 5 to 17) resided in Niagara County, a four percent increase over 1990. While the County’s school-age population increased over this time period, it failed to keep pace with the rest of the State: Statewide, the school-age population increased by 15 percent.

The greatest proportional increase in school-age children was on the Tuscarora Reservation, which experienced an increase of 122 children, or an 87 percent increase over 1990 enrollment. The towns of Wheatfield and Pendleton experienced increases of 40 and 36 percent, respectively, and the Village of Barker experienced a 34 percent increase. Several communities had growth approximately on par with the Statewide rate: The towns of Cambria, Lockport, Newfane and Somerset gained school-age residents at rates between 10 and 16 percent between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Middleport also gained population in this age bracket.

Figure VIII- 1 Change in School-Age Population, 1990-2000



The towns of Porter and Niagara experienced the greatest declines in school-age population, with a total loss of nearly 200 school-age residents. The cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport lost population in this age cohort, at rates of about one percent in Niagara Falls and Lockport and 3.7 percent in North Tonawanda. In real numbers, these three cities lost a total of 368 school-age residents between 1990 and 2000. The villages of Youngstown, Lewiston and Wilson also experienced decreases in this age cohort.

Niagara County began conducting an annual school enrollment survey in 1999. Using information from this survey, Figure VIII-2 summarizes changes in public school enrollment countywide between 1999 and 2007. Public school enrollment in the 1998-1999 school year was nearly 36,000.

Figure VIII-2 Change in Public School Enrollment Countywide, '99 – '06

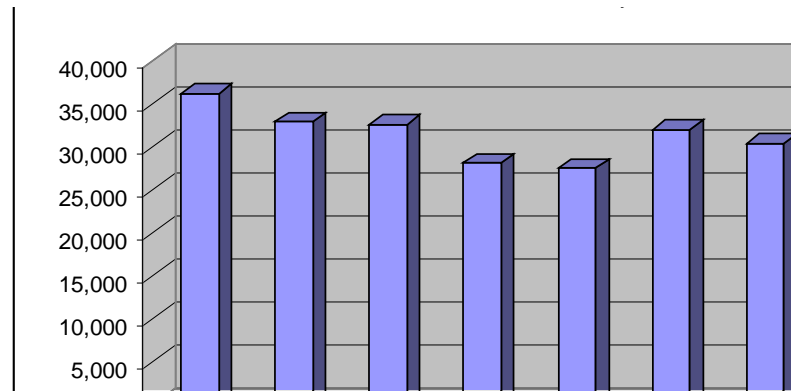


Table VIII-4 summarizes public school enrollment in the 1998-1999 and 2006-2007 school years. Public School enrollment declined between these two school years by approximately 3,500 students to its current level of approximately 32,400 students. Decline was greatest in the three city school districts: North Tonawanda (-18 percent), Niagara Falls (-17 percent) and Lockport City School Districts (-17 percent). Three school districts added to their enrollment in this period: Barker Central (+27 percent, Niagara Wheatfield (+5 percent) and Starpoint Central (+7 percent).

Table VIII-4 – Change in Public School Enrollment, 1998/'99 – 2006/'07

Public School District	Enrollment		Change	
	1998/99	2006/07	Number	Percent
Barker Central	863	1097	234	27%
Lewiston Porter Central	2504	2338	-166	-7%
Lockport City	6197	5169	-1028	-17%
Newfane	2068	2036	-32	-2%
Niagara Falls City	9108	7551	-1557	-17%
Niagara Wheatfield Central	3884	4074	190	5%
North Tonawanda City	5295	4353	-942	-18%
Royalton Hartland Central	1772	1553	-219	-12%
Starpoint Central	2636	2822	186	7%
Wilson Central	1556	1428	-128	-8%
TOTAL	35883	32421	-3462	-10%

Educational Attainment

Table VIII-5 summarizes educational attainment during the 1990 - 2000 school year. Between 1990 and 2000, educational attainment improved in Niagara County, with a seven percent increase in the proportion of residents attaining at least a high school diploma. This compares favorably to a five percent increase nationally, and a four percent increase statewide. In Niagara County, this measure of educational attainment improved in every town and city in the County and by 22 percent within the Tuscarora Indian Reservation.

Table VIII-5 – Change in Educational Attainment, 1990 - 2000

Town / City	Residents w/at least a HS Diploma		
	1990	2000	Change
Lewiston	87%	89%	1%
Somerset	81%	84%	3%
New York State	75%	79%	4%
Porter	85%	90%	4%
Niagara	74%	79%	5%
United States	75%	80%	5%
North Tonawanda	80%	85%	6%
Cambria	82%	88%	6%
Wilson	77%	83%	6%
Wheatfield	80%	87%	7%
Lockport (Town)	81%	88%	7%
Royalton	77%	84%	7%
Niagara County	76%	83%	7%
Lockport	74%	81%	8%
Pendleton	83%	91%	8%
Hartland	74%	83%	9%
Niagara Falls	68%	77%	9%
Newfane	76%	86%	10%
Tuscarora Reservation	64%	86%	22%

Fiscal Conditions

Following is a fiscal overview of the 10 Niagara County school districts from the 2001 - 2002 school year to the 2005 - 2006 school year, the most recent school year for which information is currently available. Information for Niagara County has been compared to statewide data whenever possible, in order to place County conditions in a suitable context for comparison.

This section summarizes data from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Chapter 655 Report and reports generated by NYSED's Fiscal Analysis Research Unit (FARU). Specific analyses conducted by NYSED and/or FARU were also utilized, as noted.

The FARU reports provide a comprehensive analysis of fiscal statistics and trends for each New York State school district, as well as aggregate data at the state level. In addition, the Chapter 655 Report provides specific per pupil revenue and expenditure data and data on enrollment trends and student performance. This overview focuses on the financial aspects of the Niagara County school districts.

Financial Data

Revenue and expenditure numbers for Niagara County's ten school districts, and for New York State as a whole, are provided below. Revenues and expenditures are broken down into subcategories and compared to statewide standards in order to provide a complete picture of where local schools' funds come from, how they are spent, and how local trends compare to the rest of the State.

Revenues

Revenues are broken down into three sources: State, local and Federal. Descriptions of these sources follow.

State Sources - State sources are divided into two categories:

STAR - Represents revenues from the State for school tax relief (STAR) payments. Under this program New York State provides revenues to school districts so that homeowners may receive an exemption (in whole or in part) from the district property tax. State Aid - represents revenues received by a district from New York State

Local Sources - Local sources include General Fund revenues, interfund transfers, and proceeds of long term debt.

Federal Sources - All revenues provided by the Federal government.

Expenditures

Board of Education - This item consists of expenditures related to the Board of Education, including the Board of Education members, the district clerk's office, auditing services, the treasurer's office, the tax collector's office, legal services, and the school census.

Central Administration - This item consists of expenditures for central administration, including the chief school officer (superintendent), the business office, the purchasing office, the personnel office, the records management officer, public information and services, and fees for fiscal agents.

Instructional Expenditures - This item consists of instruction-related expenses, such as teacher salaries, curriculum development and supervision.

Operation & Maintenance - This item consists of General Fund and Special Aid Fund expenditures for the operation and maintenance of physical facilities plus repair reserve expenditures.

Fringe Benefits & Other Undistributed Funds - This expenditure item consists of teacher related benefits such as retirement and health insurance. It also includes other undistributed funds mainly used for outside service fees.

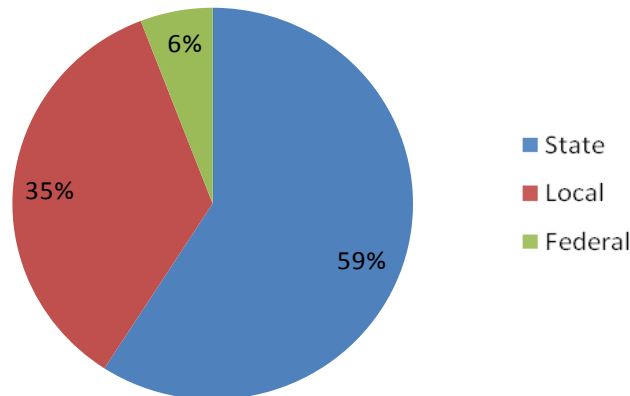
Other Expenditures - This expenditure category consists of all other expenditure items not included in the other categories. This consists primarily of intrafund transfers and community service program (i.e. recreation, youth, parent-teacher association) expenditures.

NOTE: Transportation and debt service (principal and interest) expenditures are considered separately from the above expenditures and are not included in this overview.

Summary of Fiscal Conditions and Trends

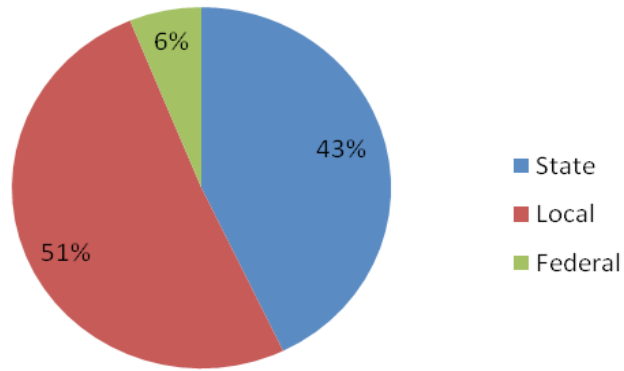
Revenues for the 10 Niagara County school districts totaled \$481.7 million for the 2005-06 school year. As illustrated in Figure VIII-3, State sources, which include the STAR and State Aid components, made up the majority of revenues (59.1 percent), totaling \$284.5 million. Local sources accounted for 35.1 percent of total revenues or \$169.1 million. Federal sources made up the smallest portion, representing only 5.8 percent of all revenues or \$28.1 million.

Figure VIII-3 Distribution of Niagara County School District Revenues by Source, 2005-06



Niagara County school district revenues represented just over 1 percent of all school revenues for the State of New York, which totaled \$46.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. In contrast to Niagara County, local revenues were the majority source statewide, making up 50.9 percent of total revenues as illustrated in Figure VIII-4. State sources represented 42.9 percent of total statewide revenues. As in Niagara County, Federal sources represented approximately 6 percent of total revenues.

Figure VIII-4 Distribution of New York State School District Revenues by Source, 2005-06

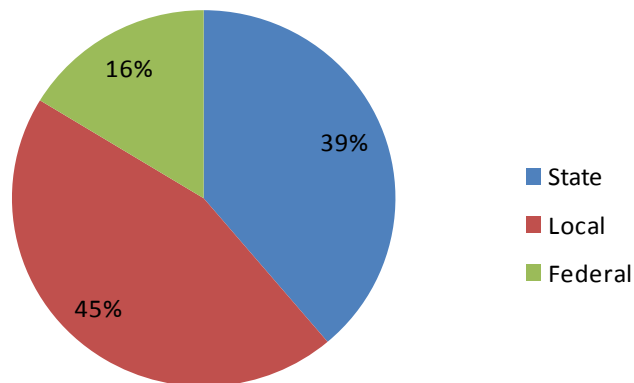


Revenue Growth Trends 2001-02 to 2005-06

Figure VIII-5 illustrates revenue growth for Niagara County schools during the 2001 – 2002 and 2005 – 2006 school years. Total revenues for Niagara County’s school districts grew by \$63.6 million or 15.2 percent during these periods (\$418.1 million to \$481.8 million). This was approximately half the growth rate of statewide revenues, which grew 31.7 percent over this four-year period.

The largest portion of the \$63 million growth in Niagara County school district revenues was in local sources, which accounted for 44.9 percent or \$28.6 million. State sources represented the second largest portion of revenue growth, making up 38.9 percent of total revenue growth (\$24.7 million). The proportion of growth attributed to Federal sources was the smallest, accounting for only 16.2 percent of all revenue growth in Niagara County (\$10.3 million).

Figure VIII-5 Distribution of Niagara County School District Revenue Growth by Source, 2001-‘02 to 2005-‘06



In comparison, as shown in Figure VIII-6, local sources also accounted for almost two-thirds of total statewide revenue growth (65.9 percent). State sources accounted for less than a quarter of the statewide revenue growth (24.6 percent), and Federal sources represented the smallest proportion at 9.6 percent.

Figure VIII-6 Distribution of New York State School District Revenue Growth by Source, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06

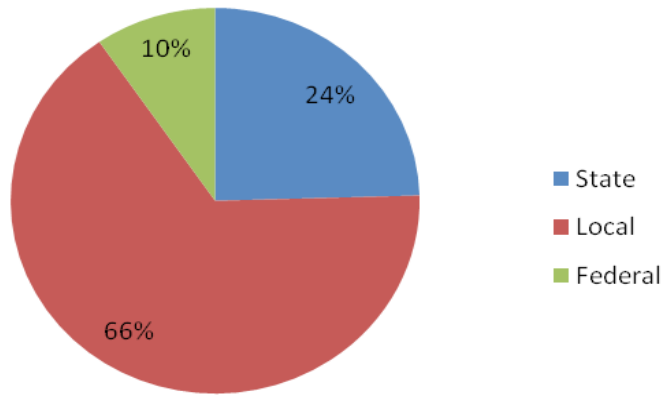
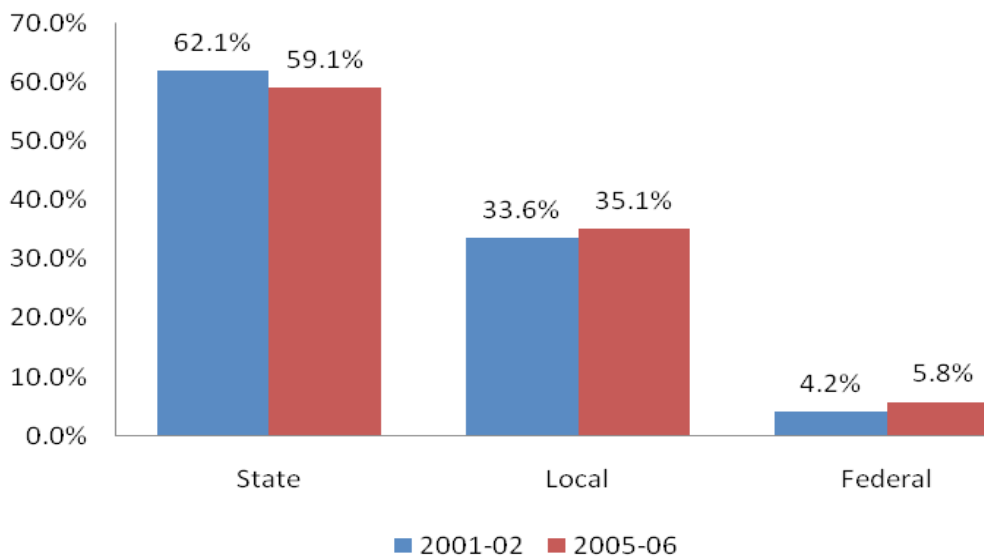


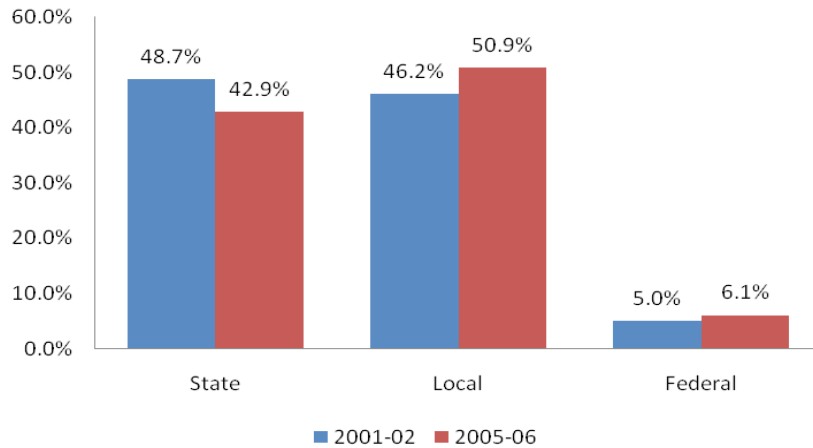
Figure VIII-7 Change in Share of Total Revenue – Niagara County School Districts, 2001-02 to 2005-06



As shown in Figure VIII-7, the respective share represented by the three main sources did not vary greatly for the Niagara County school districts from the 2001-02 to the 2005-06 school year. The share represented by State sources decreased slightly from 62.1 percent of total revenues to 59.1 percent. The proportion of total revenue from local sources increased slightly from 33.6 percent to 35.1 percent. Likewise, the proportion from Federal sources increased slightly, from 4.2 percent to 5.8 percent.

Statewide, changes in revenue sources' representative shares were slightly larger than at the local level in this four-year period as shown in Figure VIII-8. The most notable change was the decrease in State revenues as a proportion of all revenues, from 48.7 to 42.9 percent. Local sources became more prominent as a result, increasing to 50.9 percent of revenues, from 46.2 percent in 2001-02. Federal sources' share increased slightly from 5 percent to 6.1 percent.

Figure VIII-8 Change in Share of Total Revenue – New York State School Districts, 2001-02 to 2005-06

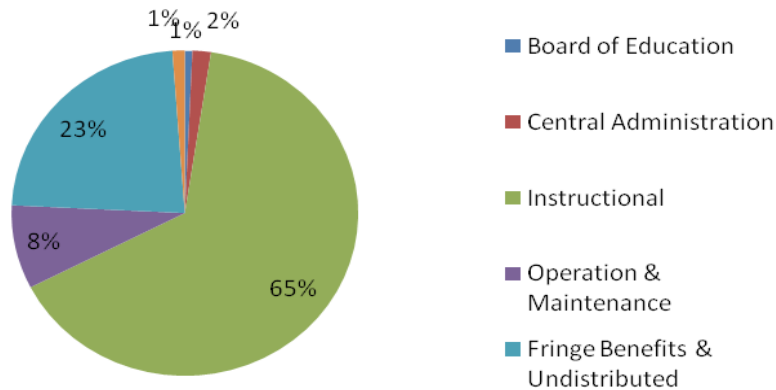


Total Expenditures

Expenditures for the Niagara County school districts totaled \$413.2 million for the 2005-06 school year. This total represented just over one percent of the total expenditures for school districts statewide, which was \$40.5 billion. This corresponds closely to Niagara County’s proportion of statewide public school enrollment: 1.2 percent of the State’s 2.7 million students are enrolled in Niagara County’s districts.

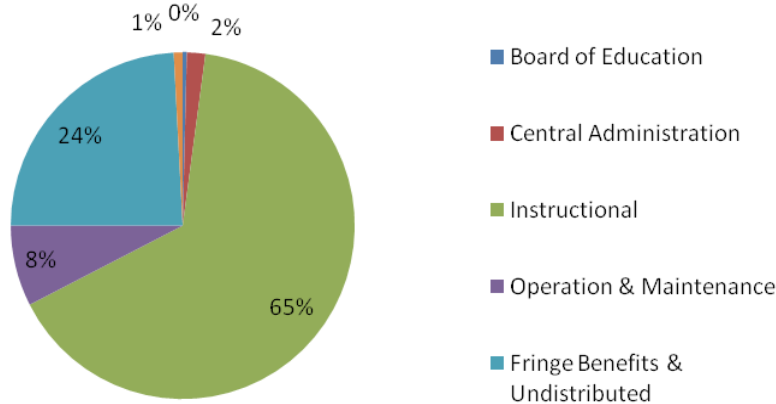
Instructional expenditures made up the largest portion of expenditures for school districts in Niagara County in 2005-06 as shown in Figure VIII-9, representing 65 percent of the total or \$268.7 million. Fringe benefits (and other undistributed funds) accounted for the second largest portion of total expenditures, making up 23.1 percent of the total or \$95.4 million. The next largest portion was operation and maintenance expenses, accounting for 8.3 percent of total expenditures, or \$34.4 million.

Figure VIII-9 Niagara County School District Expenditures by Category, 2005-06



Statewide, instructional expenditures (65.4 percent) accounted for the vast majority of total expenditures for the 2005-06 school year as shown in Figure VIII-10. Fringe benefits were the second highest expenditure, making up 24.1 percent of all expenses. Operations and maintenance expenses were the third highest component of total statewide expenditures, representing 7.5 percent of the total.

Figure VIII-10 New York State School District Expenditures by Category, 2005-06



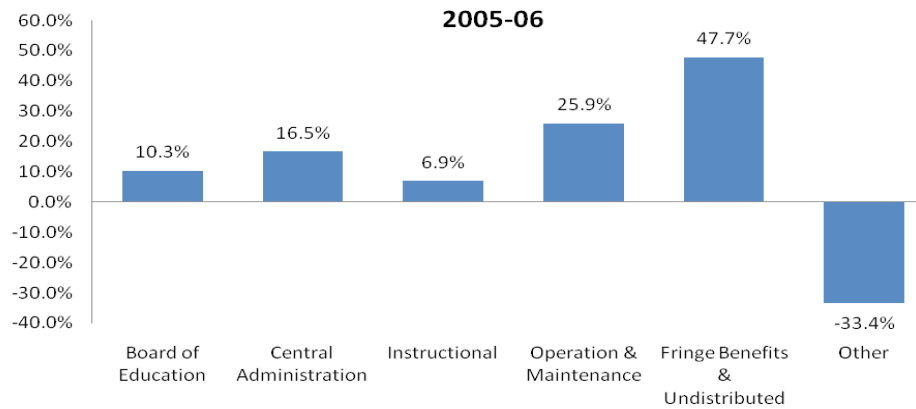
Expenditure Growth Trends 2001-02 to 2005-06

Total expenditures in the Niagara County school districts increased 15 percent from \$359.1 million in the 2001-02 school year to \$413.2 million in the 2005-06 school year (a \$54 million increase). By comparison, statewide school district expenditures increased by 27.1 percent.

The largest percent increase in Niagara County school district expenditures from 2001-02 to 2005-06 occurred in fringe benefits as shown in Figure VIII-11, which increased 47.7 percent from \$64.6 million to \$95.4 million over the four-year period.

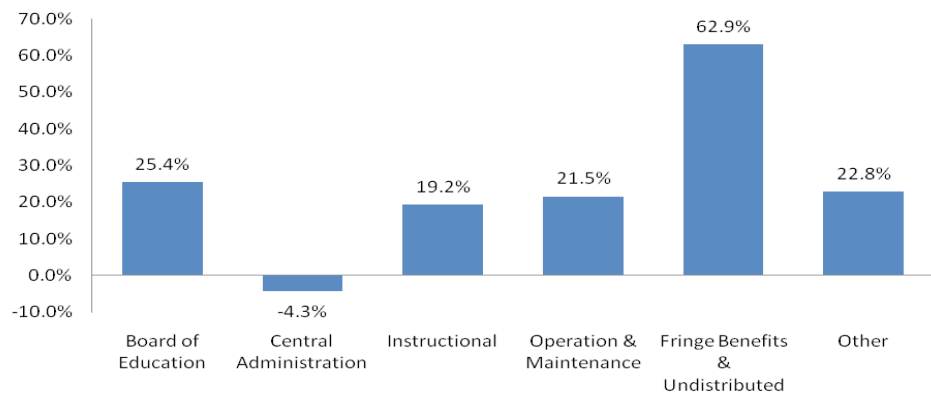
The second largest percent increase was in operation expenses, which increased 25.9 percent from \$27.3 million to \$34.4 million. Other “expenditures” (which primarily include intrafund transfers and community service program expenditures) was the only expense category that declined over the four-year period, decreasing 33.4 percent from \$7.1 million to \$4.7 million.

Figure VIII-11 Percent Change in Expenditures by Category – Niagara County School Districts, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06



Fringe benefit expenditures had the highest growth rate statewide from the 2001-02 to the 2005-06 school year, increasing by 62.9 percent as shown in Figure VIII-12. Board of Education expenditures showed the second highest increase, growing by 25.4 percent. Central administration expenditures decreased on a statewide basis, declining by 4.3 percent.

Figure VIII-12 Percent Change in Expenditures by Category – New York State School Districts, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06



Expenditure Per Pupil for the 2005-06 School Year

Analyzing the expenditure (or cost) and revenue per pupil is a common way of looking at the amount that a school district invests in each of its student's education. Overall, the Niagara County school districts invested less money per pupil than the State average in the 2005-06 school year. The Niagara County districts averaged a cost of \$12,555 per pupil, which was 77.4 percent of the average State cost per pupil.

Table VIII-6 summarizes per pupil expenditures by school district during the 2005 – 2006 school year. Within the County, the Barker Central School District exhibited the highest cost per pupil, \$14,383, which was 14.6 percent higher than the County average but 11.3 percent less than the State average. The Niagara Falls School District had the second highest cost per pupil at \$14,339. Starpoint School District had the lowest cost per pupil in the County, spending \$11,243 per student. This was 10.5 percent lower than the County average and 30.7 percent lower than the State average. Lockport School District exhibited the second lowest cost per pupil at \$11,335. The expenditure cost per pupil and percent of the State expenditure cost per pupil is provided below for each of the ten school districts in Niagara County.

Table VIII-6 – Per Pupil Expenditures by School District, 2005-‘06

School District	Total Enrollment	Expenditure Cost/Pupil	Percent of State Average
Lewiston-Porter Central School District	2,429	\$13,320	82.2%
Lockport City School District	5,543	\$11,335	69.9%
Newfane Central School District	2,120	\$12,071	74.5%
Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District	4,036	\$12,306	75.9%
Niagara Falls City School District	8,491	\$14,339	88.4%
North Tonawanda City School District	4,467	\$11,576	71.4%
Starpoint Central School District	2,859	\$11,243	69.4%
Royalton-Hartland Central School District	1,614	\$11,780	72.7%
Barker Central School District	1,082	\$14,383	88.7%
Wilson Central School District	1,487	\$11,894	73.4%
TOTAL ENROLLMENT/ AVERAGE	34,128	\$12,555	77.4%
State of New York		\$16,212	100.0%

Issues and Opportunities

A variety of issues and opportunities were identified by stakeholders during the planning process, most importantly as part of scheduled meetings that took place during June 2008 that focused on education and related topics. The following information is summarized from that meeting and categorized according to the five planning subregions of the County. Notes of that and all stakeholder meetings are also provided in the Appendix of this Plan.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton, & Village of Middleport

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Classes and job training programs are missing key components of the working population (e.g., there is no Future Farmers of America type programs), and there is not enough training in the latest technologies.
- Taxes are increasing as population is decreasing.
- There is a need for an additional computer (Wi-Fi)/ library/resource center.
- There is a need for a Niagara County Community College satellite school or satellite classroom facility.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- Royalton-Hartland School District has plenty of room for expansion without the need for additional construction.
- The school district's grounds and facilities are environmentally clean.

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- School consolidation may be a way to increase efficiency is a major issue.
- Teacher salaries should be uniform; there should be a level playing field among districts.
- There should be other funding sources than taxes.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- There are more than enough school buildings in this part of the County.
- Link education and job training programs to tourism, Erie Canal, and wine trails.
- Educational programs, especially at the Community College level, can be tied to the County's marketing/business development (e.g., if you want to attract employers in a specialized industry, take time to discuss how NCCC can help develop a workforce in that industry).

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The school districts' issues are similar to those of a private business: there is a need to innovate and to balance revenues and expenditures, etc.
- High fuel costs are a major issue, because of the dispersed nature of the population in this area.
- School districts need more diverse sources of revenue.
- Schools and job training programs need to stay ahead of workforce needs and keep up with changes in technology (e.g., agricultural industry trends).

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- The quality of the education is good and/or improving: Nearly all districts in Niagara County have earned improved scores in math and science.
- Consolidation of administrative/business functions may be possible for some districts.

- Schools are community centers of activity.
- School facilities promote and provide quality-of-life activities – they are safe and clean.
- Each student can get personalized attention in a rural school district.

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- There seems to be a “disconnect” between career guidance and local economic development programs.
- Tax levies and budget approval are major political issues every year.
- Schools need up-to-date technology and infrastructure (hardware, software, etc.).
- Need coordinated business partnerships with academia.
- School facilities need to be maintained.
- Schools need to be community centers for sports and athletic activities.
- Boards of Education should be policy makers and understand that they impact enrollment and the degree to which people want to move into their school districts.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- There are two institutions of higher education in the community, offering a variety of programs and degrees.
- Good schools and higher education “fuel” the intellectual desires of the community and can make an area more attractive as a place to live.
- There is good support within the County for the providers of educational services: The BOCES system facilitates individual districts in equipment purchasing and staff development, and Niagara University offers teacher training.
- Schools are major employers in the County.
- Educational institutions give back to their communities (service learning, volunteerism, etc.).
- The Nioga Library System (shared by Niagara, Orleans and Genesee Counties) provides dispersed opportunities for learning and enrichment.
- School test scores are reasonably good and consistent.
- The area has an abundance of professional educators (good workforce to draw from)

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield,
City of North Tonawanda

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- This part of the County is home to an economically disadvantaged student population and enrollment has been dropping. Over the last two years, the district has lost 2,000 students and compressed its facilities.
- School district buildings are being closed/re-used/sold for other uses in Niagara Falls.
- Improve the economic base to retain current generation of students.
- Student population has many needs and requires guidance; guidance counselors are available for students starting at kindergarten level.

- Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:
- Infrastructure and buildings are very well maintained as a result of State funding: The Niagara Falls City School District has not raised its tax levy in several years. State funding has allowed the budget to remain steady in the \$20 to \$25 million range, despite falling population and enrollment.
 - The residency rule for teachers in the Niagara Falls City School District maintains a pool of well-paid professionals looking for upscale City housing.
 - School facilities contribute to quality of life in the City: School libraries are open to the community; buildings are open for adult education, etc.
 - BOCES classes are a major asset: they provide education oriented around job opportunities.
 - The Niagara Falls City School District's "Pride Program" provides after-hours (3-5 pm) classes focused on earning a GED.

Strategies

It is clear from discussions during the comprehensive planning process that many stakeholders, including local residents as well as educators and related service providers acknowledge that there are some significant issues related to the provision of educational services in Niagara County. Many, but not all, issues center around commonly expressed themes including:

- The continually increasing school taxes on property owners at a time of decreasing population in the County;
- The need to identify additional funding sources for education;
- The perception, and perhaps a reality, that there are redundancies and inefficiencies in service within and among school districts;
- Concerns over the escalating cost of fuel, especially in transporting students to and from dispersed rural locations;
- The possible time lag between the needs of employers for particular skill sets in the workforce and job training programs to meet those needs; and
- The need for improved educational facilities, resources and infrastructure, such as high-tech computer software and hardware.

These issues are complex and will not be resolved quickly or easily by any single action on the County's part or by other stakeholders. It is important to remember that this Comprehensive Plan is intended to prompt discussion on these issues, and possible ways to resolve them, among multiple school districts, educators, and residents. It is critical that these stakeholders create and sustain an ongoing dialogue, perhaps through a joint action committee involving all school districts and educators in the County including administrators, teachers, transportation officials, institutions of higher learning such as NCCC, and student representatives.

A countywide dialogue needs to focus on cost reduction initiatives by identifying where efficiencies and cost cutting measures can be established without adversely affecting the quality of services from a district and countywide perspectives. For example, such a committee would be well suited to look at possible partnerships among school districts and between the public school systems and the private sector. This committee could investigate the feasibility of inter-district sharing of staff, resources, training programs, equipment, transportation services, etc.

Grip Post

*Create
Opportunities
for Dialogue*

It is also important to consider that land use and development decisions can have significant effects on the need for public services and infrastructure, including educational facilities and related services. Sprawling development patterns that result in dispersed populations particularly in rural areas tend to translate into higher transportation costs on districts and consequently a need to site school facilities in multiple locations according to residential development patterns.

The land use and development principles recommended throughout this Plan provide opportunities to manage costs to taxpayers and school districts by encouraging redevelopment in areas where school facilities already exist. Managed growth and concentrated forms of development can control the cost of providing services and related infrastructure at dispersed locations and result in smaller taxpayer burdens by directing resident and student populations back to the traditional urban and developed centers of the County.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Goal – The Countywide Availability of High Quality Education

To make available to all County residents the highest quality educational services, facilities, experiences and attainment opportunities possible.

Objective

- Identify deficiencies and inefficiencies in the educational system countywide by involving all school districts in dialogue, focusing on the need to provide cost-effective services, appropriate job training programs, additional library facilities, technical resource needs, before- and after-school programs, and sports, music and art programs.

Recommendations

- Establish an ongoing coordinating committee of school district administrators, private industry representatives, parents, teachers and students to serve as a clearinghouse for issues, opportunities and ideas that can continuously monitor how well the education system is serving the community from a unified, countywide perspective involving all school districts.
- Identify alternative funding sources and opportunities for coordination and sharing of services and facilities among school districts to help offset some costs, including securing public or private sector foundation grants or corporate sponsors, as possible additional funding mechanisms for improving educational opportunities, facilities and resources in the County.

Goal – Meet Existing and Future Workforce Needs

To utilize a comprehensive and coordinated Education & Training Program to meet the existing and future workforce needs of local communities and area employers, based on existing countywide priorities such as agricultural preservation, tourism and high technology businesses.





Objective

- Coordinate districtwide and inter-district educational policies and programs in schools to train and provide for local employment opportunities specific to the County's urban, suburban and rural businesses and industry needs.

Recommendations

- Continue to develop, provide and enhance job training programs offering long-term skilled employment and career opportunities which can provide on-the-job training possibilities, particularly in agriculture and agri-tourism based sectors of the economy.
- Support job shadowing programs countywide in partnership with local governments, school districts, and businesses, as well as NCCC and BOCES.
- Coordinate County and local economic development efforts with the countywide educational system and local school districts, including enhanced programs offered through Niagara County Community College and Niagara University.
- Coordinate the County's economic development programs, outreach and marketing to prospective employers with input and assistance from local educators, including capitalizing on staff knowledge, resources, expertise and experience of NCCC and Niagara University in County efforts to attract and retain businesses and industry.

Goal – Fully Utilize Existing Educational Resources

To utilize the existing educational resources provided in the County to their fullest potential.

Objective

- Encourage new private and public sector development and redevelopment opportunities through County and local initiatives in areas where a surplus or anticipated surplus of school buildings and other education-related facilities exist, including buildings, libraries and athletic facilities, consistent with an emphasis on upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure over construction of new facilities, unless otherwise warranted.

Recommendations

- In areas of potentially expanding student enrollment, the County and local school districts in coordination with local communities must consider the goals and objectives contained throughout this Comprehensive Plan and in local plans in all siting decisions for new school/educational facilities and satellite locations for facilities related to higher education.
- Support school districts' efforts to find suitable adaptive reuses for surplus facilities and coordinate marketing the availability of sites and facilities through County Economic Development.
- In cooperation with cities, towns and villages, and as part of an overall assessment of parks and recreation needs in the County (see Chapter VII), develop



joint-use agreements with public school districts for the use of their grounds as possible “after hours” recreation areas and community centers.

- Encourage, support and facilitate increased coordination among schools and school districts to share staff, resources, equipment and facilities as appropriate, including efforts to pursue and secure funding for shared services.

Goal – Retain Youth in the County

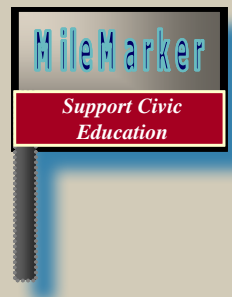
To encourage educational programs, job and career growth opportunities and related quality-of-life efforts like affordable housing to prevent the outmigration of the County’s youth.

Objectives

- Support local and countywide efforts and marketing campaigns to project a positive image of the County and promote local communities as places that provide diverse lifestyles, employment opportunities, job training and career opportunities.
- Develop programs and opportunities for middle school and high school students to become more interested and better educated about the history and unique character of local communities by participating in local government, attending meetings, participating in civic activities and through volunteer organizations.

Recommendations

- Create internships and job-shadowing programs within various County departments for students at the high school and college level to provide job-training experience and career guidance.
- Support a greater emphasis on civics in school curricula including local community and County history as well as opportunities for participating in the day-to-day operations of local governments to foster an increased awareness in students about issues that affect quality of life in Niagara County.
- Work with the Youth Bureau to develop a mock County Legislature for high school-aged students as a means of engaging students, encouraging their participation in local decision making and giving them a larger stake in the future of their communities.
- Encourage and include school age children to participate in community planning exercises and initiatives by holding youth summits that focus on future needs and issues of young adults in communities, including seeking input on upgrades to facilities for athletics and recreation programming.
- When developing educational materials for County departments and services, consider child-friendly versions for distribution at elementary and middle schools.



Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects may be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Education and Training that include, but not limited to:

- \$53.6 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund
- \$13 billion for Title I
- \$12.2 billion for Special Education/IDEA
- \$15.6 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500
- \$3.95 billion for job training
- \$1 billion for NASA
- \$3 billion for the National Science Foundation
- \$2 billion for Science at the Department of Energy
- \$830 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association

Niagara County Projects include:

Niagara County Community College:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Outdated Electrical Switching Gear	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reforest Northeast Part of Campus/Replace Screening Trees	\$ 150,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Access Road for Service Areas & New Athletic Fields	\$ 1,200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Multi-Use Trail System Throughout Campus	\$ 1,018,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repair and Reconstruct Existing Roads and Parking Lots	\$ 2,063,200
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correct Health, Safety, and ADA Deficiencies on Campus	\$ 1,615,400
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remediate Drainage Problems on Site	\$ 315,400
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Vehicle Maintenance and Equipment Building/	\$ 2,436,200
	 Improve Operations and Maintenance Areas	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Relocate & Renovate Athletic Fields/Construct Support Building	\$ 3,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct New Culinary Institute Facility in Niagara Falls	\$ 13,200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Floors and Doors in Common Areas	\$ 1,729,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improve Energy Efficiency by Installing New Environmental	\$ 1,358,400
	 Controls and Replacing Outdated Equipment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renew and Improve Safety of Grounds, Fields, and Playgrounds	\$ 618,200
<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Elevated Courtyard Membranes and Exterior Seals/	\$ 1,560,700
	 Repair and Repoint Brick	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Update Science Center and Improve Facility Safety	\$ 1,366,800
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repair Metal Mansard Roofs	\$ 339,300
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrade Classrooms/Lecture Halls to Educational Standards	\$ 5,835,300
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct New Learning Commons Facility/Renovate Existing	\$ 20,000,000
	 Facility Expansion and Renovation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renovate Pool and Retrofit Squash Court	\$ 1,134,000
	 Education Technology	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrade Scientific and Information Technology in Classrooms	\$ 1,329,000

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Chapter IX

Public Health & Safety

Background and Trends

The general trend towards increasingly complex and technologically dependent lives, the aging of the “baby boom” generation, a general decline of healthy lifestyles of large segments of the population in the United States, concerns over natural disasters, terrorism, food contamination, transportation-related accidents involving hazardous materials, and other potential emergency situations increases the importance of the role that County and local governments play in protecting public health and safety. Some of Niagara County’s population that is disadvantaged or has special needs, including many seniors and the disabled, are among the most vulnerable of society and rely on government for their protection and safety, particularly in emergency situations. However, all residents of Niagara County need to be assured that their health and safety are a priority and so communicating new and ongoing initiatives that are undertaken to protect the public’s health and safety is more important than ever.

It is estimated that by the year 2030, approximately one-fifth of the population in the U.S. will be 65 years of age or older. Upstate New York is expected to experience a 40 percent increase in its population of those who are 65 years old and older during the same timeframe, more than double the rate of increase for the same demographic segment during the period between 1980 and 2005 (Deitz and Garcia 2007). As the population continues to age it is important that policies and procedures are in place to anticipate future needs not only in the event of an emergency, but in meeting daily needs as well such as health care, affordable housing and access to transportation.

Estimates like those noted above are important considerations when planning for the future at any level of government, but they are especially important at county and local levels because these numbers translate into potentially large segments of the population that may need special attention and quick response in the event of a local emergency. The problem of response is further complicated during widespread emergencies, for example during severe storms and power outages, when potentially dispersed and vulnerable populations need to be reached efficiently and effectively.

Residents of Niagara County need to be assured that their health and safety is a priority and so communicating new and ongoing initiatives that are undertaken to protect the public’s health and safety is more important than ever.

Nationwide the number of volunteer firefighters decreased by 8%, or approximately 74,000 between 1984 and 2006. The number of EMT's declined by more than 15,000.

The Firemen's Association of New York estimates that it would cost local taxpayers more than \$5 billion annually to replace volunteers with paid fire and ambulance services.

Response to emergencies is complicated by the fact that fewer individuals are volunteering their time and skills as emergency responders due to a variety of reasons including time commitments required and other individual and family needs that must be met. It is estimated that Nationwide the number of volunteers fell by 8 percent, or approximately 74,000 between 1984 and 2006. In New York State volunteer firefighters declined from 140,000 in the early 1990's to fewer than 90,000 at the present time (New York Legislative Commission on Rural Resources 2008).

The number of Emergency Response Technicians declined by more than 15,000 volunteers to a current total of about 35,000. The Firemen's Association of New York estimates that it would cost local taxpayers more than \$5 billion annually to replace volunteers with paid fire and ambulance services (New York Legislative Commission on Rural Resources 2008).

Many issues related to an aging population and those with special needs in social services, public health, health care, child care and related services, are addressed in Chapter VII under County Services. This chapter focuses on the role of Niagara County and local governments in providing emergency preparedness, police protection, fire coordination, emergency response, and homeland security.

Niagara County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

One of the primary roles of County government is preparing for emergency situations and each year emergency responders across Niagara County review procedures outlined in the Niagara County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP is prepared by County officials working in collaboration with Federal, State and local agencies and emergency responders under the coordination of the New York State Emergency Management Office, as part of a statewide emergency management program.

The purpose of the CEMP is to minimize or prevent the impacts of disasters, and to enhance the efficiency of response and recovery operations in Niagara County. Niagara County Emergency Services is responsible for maintaining and updating the CEMP with input from the Niagara County Local Emergency Planning Committee, County Manager, County Attorney, County government officials, New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission, other appropriate department heads, and the citizenry of Niagara County. Niagara County and its cities, towns, and villages are part of this multi-jurisdictional planning process.

Niagara County Emergency Services is the coordinating office for all emergency management activities. According to the CEMP, Emergency Services is "responsible for assisting individual towns and villages within Niagara County if they have fully committed their resources and are still unable to cope with any disaster." When local departments or agencies are unable to adequately respond, Emergency Services may be asked to assume a leadership role. The CEMP is intended to enhance Niagara County's ability to manage emergency situations if a local municipality is unable to handle an emergency.

The CEMP consists of three components:

1. Disaster Prevention and Mitigation. This component involves identifying and prioritizing likely hazards as well as response resources at risk and the appropriate measures to take to prevent or mitigate the effects of disasters;
2. Disaster Response. Effective response requires stipulating effective processes and policies for responding to potential disasters through the utilization and coordination of all of the County's response capabilities; and

3. Disaster Recovery. Recovery requires providing processes and policies for recovery and redevelopment after disasters, including the utilization of State and Federal programs for emergency recovery.

The CEMP defines roles and responsibilities in prevention, response, and recovery, including a detailed chain of command to be followed during an emergency. Emergency management responsibilities for County departments and agencies are outlined in the plan and assignments have been made within the framework of current department and agency capabilities and existing organizational responsibilities. Together, local government agencies and County departments work together to prevent, respond, and facilitate the recovery process for significant disasters.

The CEMP is an all-hazards management plan. Briefly summarized, the CEMP provides the following:

- Identifies, assesses, and prioritizes local vulnerabilities to emergencies or disasters and the resources necessary to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from them
- Outlines measures to improve the County's ability to manage hazards
- Provides that County government will take appropriate actions to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from disasters
- Provides for the efficient use of all available resources
- Provides for the use and coordination of County, State, and Federal programs to assist disaster victims and prioritize responses to the needs of the elderly, disabled, low income and other groups that may be affected, and
- Provides for coordination of State and Federal programs for recovery from a disaster

Niagara County Local Emergency Planning Committee

In 1996, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed regulations requiring facilities that use, make, or store more than certain amounts of regulated chemicals to make information available about their risk management activities to local emergency responders, Federal and State officials, and the public. The Niagara County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) was formed in response to those regulations. The LEPC is made up of member groups representing communities, government, and industry. The LEPC monitor activities of companies that store, use or transport hazardous chemicals.

LEPC members work to promote the health, safety, and economic well being of local community residents and company employees under risk management procedures. Risk management is intended to prevent chemical releases, improve company plant safety, and protect the public by collecting information to encourage community discussions in four key areas:

- The potential effects of chemical releases,
- A five-year history of the facility's accidental chemical releases,
- The facility's program for preventing accidents, and
- The facility's program for responding in an emergency.

LEPC members serve on technical and communications committees. The technical committee assists companies in gathering hazard, prevention, and emergency response information. The communications committee develops ways to effectively communicate risk management information to employees and local citizens.

The CEMP defines roles and responsibilities in prevention, response, and recovery, including a detailed chain of command to be followed during an emergency.

Risk management covers all aspects of a facility from its design and construction through start-up and operation, as well as maintenance and training procedures. It is an ongoing process requiring continuous monitoring and testing of equipment, management systems, and training personnel to ensure the safety of employees and community members as well as protecting the environment.

Risk management provides for the following:

- Eliminate or reduce hazards
- Prevent occurrences of incidents
- Minimize or contain impact of incidents
- Prepare the public and employees for possible incidents
- Respond promptly and professionally to emergencies, and
- Serve as a resource to other emergency agencies

Safety procedures that may be implemented include the following:

- Specially designed vehicles and rail cars for transport and storage of bulk chemicals
- Site lighting to provide for employee safety during operation and maintenance
- Messages over loud speakers describing plant activities
- Bells or sirens signaling an incident or drill, and
- Emergency response agencies operating at a plant for the purpose of familiarization or for training exercises

A number of Federal, State and local agencies require risk management activities. In particular, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires companies to maintain safety programs that review processes, equipment, training, and plant procedures on a regular basis.

Some of the issues and concerns raised by the public and industry in the past with regards to these types of emergencies include:

- Trucks transporting products through residential streets
- Noise abatement
- Notification methods of the community during an incident
- Effects of weather (e.g., high winds, tornadoes, snow storms) on plant operations
- Potential incidents involving trucks, rail cars, or pipelines
- Nuisance odors
- Emergency response training and preparation
- Plant inspection, testing, and maintenance
- Plant design safety
- Plant operations safety
- Accident prevention/risk reduction
- Community dialogue, and
- A Community Alert Network

County Fire Service

Niagara County communities are well covered to provide quick response to emergencies. The County includes 31 fire districts. Fire districts are political subdivisions established to provide fire protection and emergency response. A fire district has an elected governing body, administrative officers and limits on expenditures, and has the powers to incur indebtedness and require the levy of taxes which are collected at the same time as other municipal taxes.

The County is divided into four Mutual Aid areas. County Fire Services provides emergency response and coordination, training and instruction in fire and emergency response, as well as public informational materials to adults and children on fire-safety and emergency services.

County fire personnel include the following key positions that are responsible for emergency response, mutual aid coordination, communications, investigations, hazardous materials coordination, and training.

- Fire Coordinator and Director of Emergency Services
- Assistant Director of Emergency Services
- Mutual Aid Deputies (each of the four Mutual Aid areas of the County)
- Communications Deputy
- EMS Deputy
- Fire Investigations Deputy
- HazMat Deputy Coordinator

Office of the Sheriff

The Niagara County Office of the Sheriff provides a variety of public safety and security services to residents of Niagara County through its primary divisions and support units. Corrections, the largest division is responsible for operation of the County Jail. This division is also responsible for the inmate work program, inmate education program, corrections emergency response, jail medical services and facility maintenance.

The Civil Division includes a variety of services including road patrols, crime scene investigations, 911 communication and computer operations, criminal investigations, juvenile investigations, Western NY Joint Terrorism Task Force, Drug Task Force, forensics lab, property evidence, law enforcement academy and County Court/building security.

Special units and teams within the Sheriff's Office include: Marine Unit, Underwater Recovery Team, Aviation Unit, Emergency Response Teams and Firearms Training, Traffic Safety and Stop DWI, Domestic Violence, K-9 Unit, Warrants, Drug Awareness and Resistance (DARE), Victim's Assistance, and Welfare Fraud.

Additional information on County Emergency Services, County Fire Coordination, the County Sheriff's Office, and the LEPC is available at www.niagaracounty.com. Additional information is also provided in Chapter VII County Services.

Issues and Opportunities

During the planning process, community representatives and other project stakeholders involved in emergency preparedness and response were asked to provide insight into local issues and concerns relative to public health and safety. Individuals were asked to identify what they consider some of the most important public health and safety assets and opportunities that exist in Niagara County. This information is summarized according to the five planning subregions of the County.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- A need for more speed zones and a caution light at NYS Route 104 & Checker Tavern Road
- Slow emergency response times by police – little or no Niagara County Sheriff or NYS Police presence in the area
- Need for a health and wellness center
- Perceived health issues and a lack of education - related to FMC
- Concern over a possible lack of mobility or access to routes in emergency situations in Hartland, Middleport, Gasport
- Need for local disaster plan and training in Royalton, especially with regard to increased train traffic in the area and FMC

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- Local police force presence
- Safe communities with low crime
- Present number of fire companies (5 in Royalton) – all working well together
- Local ambulance services

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Only two representatives from these communities were present at this meeting, so these individuals merged with other subregions.

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Police – lack of quality coverage in the area
- Fire – increasing demands on the volunteer fire service/ambulance services/ EMT status – regulatory actions are a constant threat and concern to volunteers. Training and regulation standards are a demand on the time of volunteers. We couldn't afford a paid service.
- Health care network – ICMH serves areas very well along w/volunteer ambulance service – they know when to refer people elsewhere
- Demand on ambulance vs. fire trucks, but readiness of both – too much concentration on fire trucks in relation to their degree of use.
- Border security concerns – telephone reporting system (is an honor system) doesn't work
- Border security/Water rescue – means an additional strain on local volunteer fire companies – need to be ready for water rescue/increases boat maintenance costs
- Border is porous and means there are many “targets”
- Appear to be no viable major routes for access/emergency evacuations

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- Border – Border Patrols mean a little extra police force is available in the area
- Coast Guard & County Sheriff's Water Patrol provides an extra layer of policing

on the water

- Volunteer fire companies provide more interaction with the public than in cities with paid fire companies
- Disaster preparation seems pretty good
- Area has strong volunteer fire forces

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Concern with long response times from the Sheriff's Department
- Concerns w/ LOOW site, Chemical Waste Management and Modern Disposal in the community
- Sewer plant is reaching capacity

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- Sheriff's Patrol Boat is on the water frequently along with the Coast Guard
- Presence of Border Patrol, helicopters, State Troopers and local police
- Volunteer fire companies provide fire protection and ambulance services
- "We leave our doors unlocked."
- Abundance of EMS & health care facilities (St. Mary's Hospital, Our Lady of Peace, Fairchild Nursing Home, etc.)
- Community police force
- Very active volunteer fire depts. – mutual aid is often utilized during the day

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Safety of tourists
- Traffic circulation – under and over-utilized roads – plenty of roads in some areas and not enough in others
- Niagara Falls – experiences a continual stream of tourists and a large percentage of underprivileged residents who need services
- As communities change, the County seems slow to change w/public health and safety services
- Overabundance of infrastructure in Niagara Falls no longer needed or used
- Proliferation of services: multiple fire departments, school districts – requires a "need-based" analysis
- County as a whole: not producing students w/an appreciation of other people and property
- "Brain drain" issue - youth leaving the area
- Outmigration of population
- Poverty related issues
- Multiple school districts
- Population down, infrastructure in abundance, costs increasing
- Border crossing relationships
- Business, quality of life needs in general
- Multiple fire and ambulance districts
- Social services – large part of County budgets
- Abundance of older adults requiring services

- Noise pollution, abundance of dogs – stress levels are high
- Heart disease and obesity higher in the County than downstate
- Concern about increasing waste imports to the County
- Politicians tend to “politick” rather than legislate

Key assets and opportunities of the communities in this subregion include:

- Military presence in the area – serves as a secondary public safety support in emergencies
- Need to encourage development for military to be maintained and supported in the area
- Array of medical facilities
- Military airbase – in a central location (provides supplemental fire fighting services, if needed)
- Local fire departments – have specialized training
- Fresh water is an important asset
- Sewage treatment is effective
- EMTs, Fire, Police – respond quickly in Niagara Falls

Strategies

An important part of County efforts to prevent or reduce the impacts of future emergency situations is to anticipate and recommend, through the CEMP, LEPC and other forums, supplemental recovery information relative to economic development, community development, land use, and transportation systems. These recommendations may address recovery measures from natural or man-made disasters relative to replacement priorities of public facilities and infrastructure, as well as to providing for private sector redevelopment and reinvestment.

Risk reduction is an important responsibility of Niagara County in protecting its citizens, property owners, businesses and taxpayers from the physical and financial impacts of emergencies and disasters. The County CEMP states that Niagara County may effectuate risk reduction in two ways:

1. Identifying, developing and implementing policies, programs and projects for County-owned resources and assets under its direct control, and
2. Advising and supporting local jurisdictions as necessary in reducing local risks, as authorized under NYS General Municipal Law, or as requested by local jurisdictions or private entities.

Furthermore the CEMP states that risk reduction activities include:

- Complying with local land use regulations when siting new County facilities;
- Adhering to State and Federal regulations (i.e., building and safety codes, floodplain and wetland regulations) when constructing new County facilities; and
- Advising and assisting local jurisdictions in the County with preparation of comprehensive plans, local waterfront revitalization plans, and subdivision zoning ordinances.

Land use management policies are key to preventing or mitigating the adverse effects of natural and man-made emergencies. The CEMP cites several examples, including:

- Adopting a land use management policies to promote the control of private development in floodplains at local levels of government, and to assure that County construction activities comply with State floodplain regulations;
- Encouraging lending institutions to withhold funding of projects in areas prone to disasters
- Promoting underground utility lines in new subdivisions to prevent power outages due to destruction of overhead lines during storms;
- Promoting the development of building regulations at local levels of government
- Developing compliance and code enforcement programs, including designation of officials to implement policies focused on risk reduction

Consistent with its role and the land use and environmental focus of this Comprehensive Plan, County government has the ability to take a proactive approach to facilitate and assist municipalities in preparing for and preventing or mitigating emergency situations, perhaps as multi-jurisdictional or subregional plans for response, recovery and redevelopment. Funding for such localized planning initiatives may be available from Federal and State programs, such as Quality Communities and/or Shared Municipal Services.

In 2003 a self assessment of the County's readiness to respond to emergencies was undertaken as part of the process to prepare the CEMP and identify future needs relative to emergency preparedness. That assessment of strengths and weaknesses identifies four readiness capabilities that were rated at less than 55 percent of full capability. Weaknesses included:

- Public Education & Information
- Exercises, Evaluations & Corrective Actions
- Direction, Control & Coordination
- Planning

During the comprehensive planning process, the issue of information dissemination prior to and during emergencies was identified by stakeholders in discussions about concerns over what needed to be done at local levels that might, for example, require implementation of evacuation routes. Although the County has made great strides in emergency preparedness in recent years, additional collaboration and information sharing with local officials and the public may be warranted, perhaps through local public information sessions, community meetings, and via County and local websites.

With regard to public health, safety and emergency preparedness, Niagara County needs to enhance communication and collaboration with local municipalities and other jurisdictional agencies involved in public health and safety in educating citizens, assisting in developing detailed local emergency plans, planning for disaster prevention through local land use policies, and establishing policies that facilitate recovery and redevelopment.

Improvements in information sharing between the County and other jurisdictional agencies, for example among the Sheriff's Office, local and State Police agencies, will



**Enhance
Information
Sharing**

also foster greater coordination among those agencies. Although this coordination now exists in data management for example, an expanded use of Countywide GIS mapping and databases could be produced from information collected by all police agencies to map and visually track concentrations of various types of crime throughout the County. This could enhance law enforcement capabilities and pinpoint potential problem areas that might require increased police presence or perhaps highlight where response times need to be improved. These same mapping and information sharing capabilities could be used to map and share information on flood prone areas, evacuation routes in the event of a rail accident, identifying high priority evacuation sites, and similar information that can be quickly accessed during an emergency.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Goal – Educate the Public on Emergency Preparedness

To increase public education opportunities and communication among communities to expand public awareness of Countywide and local efforts in preparing for potential emergencies and large-scale disasters.

Objectives

- Increase the flow of information from the County level to and among local governments and communities about disaster preparedness issues, plans and strategies.
- Integrate local emergency preparedness information into County and local plans, such as identifying local evacuation routes and alternative routes in response to local emergencies. For example, concern has been expressed about what would need to be done in the event of a train derailment in which streets might be blocked or inaccessible. Although these procedures may be in place, information should be made readily accessible to the public as part of the preparation and updating of local community comprehensive plans and Countywide emergency planning initiatives and decision-making.

Recommendations

- Update emergency preparedness information on the County’s website, including actions to be taken in the event of an emergency, maps and information on emergency responders, maps of potential evacuation and alternative transportation routes, and links to local emergency plans as they are developed.
- Allow for increased stakeholder and public input on the preparation of local and regional emergency plans, and increase the dissemination of information through County and local websites and public educational materials.
- Include emergency service providers and responders as key stakeholders in the decision-making processes that involve or may affect their ability to fully execute their responsibilities to protect the health and safety of the public. For example, during the project planning and decision-making process for construction or reconstruction of County infrastructure and/or public facilities, include emergency responders in the process, especially during the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process. The same consideration should be afforded for project reviews of private sector actions.



Goal – Create Safe, Healthy and Walkable Communities

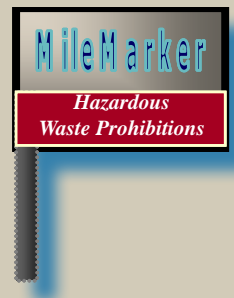
To facilitate and encourage the creation and maintenance of safe and healthy communities and recognize health and safety as perhaps one of the most important, but often overlooked aspects to enjoying a high quality of life that stimulates local economic benefits and maintains community vibrance and character.

Objectives

- Encourage the establishment of countywide land use and environmental policies and project review procedures, specifically through the SEQRA process, that prioritize natural resource protection and sustainable management practices including, but not limited to land, air and water quality.
- Work with local communities in encouraging more “eyes on the street” types of community planning initiatives and site design requirements for safety enhancement and as potential crime prevention techniques.
- Create opportunities for increased walkability and physical exercise, social interaction, and reduced reliance on automotive forms of transportation by establishing opportunities for safe, connected networks of non-motorized trails, pedestrian pathways, bikeways and public space destinations.

Recommendations

- Encourage countywide implementation of local land use and environmental policies that protect and conserve natural resources including, but not limited to air quality, water quality, significant wildlife and aquatic habitats, woodlands and unique natural features. Priorities need to be established at County and local levels to enhance protection, conservation and restoration of natural buffer areas and contiguous greenways and blueways along stream corridors, wetlands, and other significant drainageways.
- The County and communities working in collaboration should establish clear policies and project review procedures and criteria with the intent of placing restrictions and/or prohibitions on the development and/or expansion of specific types of land uses that may have significant adverse health, safety and environmental implications.
- Given past and ongoing environmental problems faced by Niagara County and its communities resulting from the operations of former and existing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, as defined in New York Environmental Conservation Law Section 27-1101(5), and consistent with an equitable distribution of such facilities throughout New York State, Niagara County should continue to work with local communities as well as State and Federal agencies to establish prohibitions to the future development and/or expansion of any industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facility within the County consistent with the policies established by the Niagara County Legislature via numerous resolutions passed in recent decades. Niagara County should also work with these and other stakeholders to ascertain liability for existing negative environmental impacts resulting from past and ongoing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, including but limited to adverse impacts on natural resources, public health, property



values, public perception and quality of life. Niagara County should also continue to work with these stakeholders to ensure that sites contaminated with hazardous industrial waste are remediated for future use, or at a minimum, stabilized to prevent further adverse environmental impact.

- The County should support and assist with implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and similar techniques which have shown to be an effective planning technique in creating safer neighborhoods and communities. CPTED initiatives can take many different forms of community action based on local needs and opportunities, ranging from detailed consideration of safety and security issues during site plan and project review processes; incorporation of traffic-calming measures; building and site security; landscaping techniques that create more visible public spaces; and increased policing to reduce opportunities for illegal activities.
- Encourage the addition of sidewalks, pedestrian trails and similar neighborhood amenities in new residential and commercial developments that link to existing or planned pedestrian networks.

Goal – Encourage Volunteerism and Shared Services

To foster an atmosphere of greater commitment to community throughout the County by encouraging volunteers to participate in local emergency planning and response, public health and safety programs, and initiatives to investigate opportunities for shared services.

Objectives

- Stabilize and then increase the number of groups and individuals that participate in local volunteer efforts to protect public health and safety by increasing incentives for volunteering and removing some of the obstacles that hinder the volunteer spirit.
- Investigate opportunities for the consolidation and/or sharing of services among the various emergency service providers and districts within Niagara County.

Recommendations

□ County and local governments, institutions, organizations and groups need to work together to identify incentives to stabilize and then increase volunteerism. For example, as identified by the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness, new incentives need to facilitate the recruitment and retention of volunteers, such as appealing to the needs of young firefighters by perhaps providing tuition assistance to NCCC, providing for some form of college loan assistance or tuition reimbursement, or financial assistance with vocational training through BOCES and similar programs. Similar incentives have been passed by the NYS Legislature allowing local governments to implement property and income tax credits for active volunteer firefighters and ambulance corps members (New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness. 2008.).

□ According to the New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources Rensselaer County, NY has established an emergency response program in which



Sheriff deputies in road patrols in rural locations are now certified by the State and cross trained as emergency response technicians. Niagara County should investigate the feasibility of instituting a similar program to enhance responsiveness in rural areas.

□ Niagara County should encourage through public education and the promotion of intermunicipal agreements that reduce costs through consolidation for the sharing of emergency services related functions that may include combined training, combined maintenance of equipment/facilities or joint dispatching of the nearest responders to emergency scenes. According to the NYS Department of State consolidation can take two forms. The first form is considered “operational” in which there is a sharing of services, equipment, apparatus and staffing through intermunicipal agreements. The second form is “jurisdictional” in which fire districts, for example combine operations into a new single district. As the numbers of volunteers continues to decline existing emergency providers should consider investigating the first or both forms to make more effective use of limited resources.

Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects may be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Health that include, but not limited to:

- \$19 billion, including \$2 billion in discretionary funds and \$17 billion for investments and incentives through Medicare and Medicaid to ensure widespread adoption and use of interoperable health information technology (IT)
- \$1 billion for prevention and wellness programs
- \$10 billion to conduct biomedical research
- \$1.1 billion to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, NIH and the HHS Office of the Secretary

Niagara County Projects include:

Health Information Technology

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Real Time Bed Management System	\$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrated Financial Accounting Software	\$ 140,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wireless Network on all Nursing Units with Medication Carts	\$ 505,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pharmacy System with Drug Interaction and Point of Care Medication Administration Checking	\$ 582,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enterprise-Wide Picture Archiving and Communication System	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Voice Recognition for Radiology	\$ 142,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computerized Provider Order Entry w/ Nursing Documentation	\$ 3,800,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interactive Education Delivery System for Patients and Staff	\$ 210,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preventative Care and Chronic Disease Management	\$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laboratory Information System	\$ 735,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vitrea Enterprise-wide Advanced Visualization Software	\$ 207,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intesys Clinic Suite G2	\$ 102,000

Mount Saint Mary's Hospital:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinical Electronic Medical Record (EMR) - Hospital Facilities	\$ 6,500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinical Electronic Medical Record (EMR) for Doctors Offices	\$ 1,000,000

Prevention and Wellness Fund

Niagara County Office for the Aging

<input type="checkbox"/>	Chronic Disease Self-Management Program	\$ 50,000
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Niagara County Public Health

<input type="checkbox"/>	Childhood Lead Prevention Program	\$ 25,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Asthma Education/Intervention Program	\$ 60,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Prevention Agenda	\$ 50,000

Mount Saint Mary's Hospital		
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Health Literacy Program for Grades 3, 4, 5	\$ 20,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-Diabetes Education Program	\$ 20,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peri-Natal Mood Disorders Program	\$ 20,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hospital Employee Health Education Program	\$ 50,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Afternoon Reading All Stars Program for Underserved Children	\$ 10,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Summer Fitness and Nutrition Program - Underserved Children	\$ 5,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nutrition for Good Health Program for Impoverished Children	\$ 10,000

Healthcare Effectiveness Research		
Niagara County Office for the Aging		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Four Pillars of Care Model	\$ 50,000

Community Health Centers		
Mount Saint Mary's Hospital		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expanded Construction of Shovel-Ready 6,500 SF Community Health Clinic in Underserved Section of Niagara Falls	\$ 1,500,000

Rural Community Facilities		
Niagara County Emergency Services		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construction of Emergency Operations Center	\$ 1,250,000

Nuclear Waste Cleanup		
Niagara County Public Health		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niagara Falls Storage Site Risk Assessment Rep. Expert Review	\$ 25,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Project Continuance	\$ 50,000

References

Deitz, Richard and Ramon Garcia. 2007. *The Demand for Local Services and Infrastructure Created by an Aging Population*. Upstate New York Regional Review, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2007. Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Buffalo, NY.

New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness. 2008. *21st Century Local Government*. Albany, NY.

New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. 2008. *Rural Futures - News of Interest about Rural New York, September-October 2008*. Albany, NY.

United States Congress. 2009. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 - Federal Stimulus Congressional Press Summary. Washington, D.C.

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Chapter X

Implementation Plan

Implementation and Action Items

This chapter provides recommendations and suggested action items for beginning the process of implementing key strategies, goals, and objectives discussed throughout this Comprehensive Plan, particularly those identified in chapters V through IX under each of the five focus topics. The recommendations that follow are not inclusive of all the recommendations suggested in earlier chapters. Rather the following actions relate to administrative actions in adopting and maintaining the Plan followed by several key actions considered high priority items that can be implemented over the next two to three year period following the Plan's adoption. Some actions may be subject to further review and compliance under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) prior to any action by the County or municipalities to undertake, fund or approve certain actions and/or projects.

Following each recommendation, potentially responsible entities are identified. These entities may include a range of government and non-governmental entities and elected and non-elected public officials at various levels of government particularly at County and local municipal levels. Responsible parties may include County departments, public agencies, and other stakeholders and/or potential project partners including citizen groups and not-for-profit organizations that are not specifically identified.

Recommendation under each focus topic are followed by possible funding opportunities and sources, primarily associated with New York State and Federal agencies. This information is provided as a starting point for further research on possible funding for projects. These agencies may not be the only source of funds and agencies under one topic may also provide funding opportunities under other project topics. Website information is also provided that includes the identification of some typical funding programs in each agency.

Funding information is always subject to change and providing all sources of project funds is not possible. The information provided is based on recent information

Some actions may be subject to further review and compliance under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) prior to any action by the County or municipalities to undertake, fund or approve certain actions and/or projects.

available from agencies and from information associated with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Projects identified for possible funding under this Act or through other funding mechanisms are identified in chapters V through IX. Information on the New York State Recovery website is also found at www.economicrecovery.ny.gov and information on the Federal program is available at www.recovery.gov.

Coordination and Collaboration

Several key factors are necessary for the successful implementation of the recommendations and projects identified in this Comprehensive Plan. These factors include the following.

1. Effective and ongoing dialogue to build consensus among all communities within the County for achieving the overall vision, goals and objectives of this Plan. Equally important is the need to link and integrate the visions, goals and objectives of each community into this Plan and with decision-making processes at County and local levels.
2. Over the course of time updates to this Plan may require adjusting that vision, goals and objectives as expectations and situations change and as new opportunities arise within the County. There needs to be a system in place at the County level for consistent review and update to keep this Plan current as a relevant source of information and as a reference tool for making decisions. Projects and funding needs and opportunities change often and this information needs to be kept current to be most useful in pursuing projects.
3. The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed periodically and adjusted as needed. Ongoing review and updates of sections should occur at no greater than two year intervals with major updates and possible revisions occurring at no greater than five year intervals.
4. Maintaining, enhancing or creating some semblance of the Community Stakeholder Committee that assisted in the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan is a means to ensure that the Plan remains current. This Committee may be made up of community representatives as part of a more permanent structure, perhaps assisted by County staff to complete periodic reviews and updates within established timeframes. This Committee can also assist in further development of the Plan as an evolving document, assist in assigning priorities to recommended actions, and complete an annual summary report of the Plan's progress on implementation.
5. Building partnerships is essential by involving Federal, State, regional, County and local municipal officials, institutions, businesses, residents, property owners, private sector organizations and service providers in an on-going planning dialogue that consistently refers back to the goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Plan. Effective and productive partnerships between the County and other entities have been very successful in recent years and these efforts need to continue, be encouraged through various means, and enhanced through new and innovative partnering focused on resolving issues identified in this Plan.

6. Developing sustainable funding mechanisms to facilitate private and public investment in implementing this Plan is also critical, especially in times of economic downturn and as financial resources become increasingly stressed. Being prepared to secure funding for projects and actions recommended in this Plan needs to be a high priority. Innovative solutions to partnering and funding projects also needs to be a high priority item for implementing this Plan.

The County and partner communities within Niagara County can achieve far greater things through a more regional or subregional approach to resolving issues and capitalizing on opportunities than by dealing with issues and opportunities in isolation. Consolidating services and sharing resources can free up capital that can be used for other things. The County and its existing and prospective partners must consider the following as opportunities for implementing this Plan.

- The allocation of limited financial resources requires greater efforts at prioritization of capital improvement programs and projects consistent with the goals, objectives and recommendations of this Plan
- Establishment of more private investment incentives such as low interest loans or revolving loan funds through local lending institutions
- Increased utilization of available Federal, State and regional grant programs as well as private sector funding opportunities through foundations and other groups and organizations to their fullest potential and “piggybacking” complementary grant funds to undertake and fund intermunicipal projects
- Consideration of tax increment financing opportunities, business improvement districts, special assessment districts and others as allowed under NYS Municipal Law as potential sources of revenue for projects
- Working towards greater efficiency and fiscal effectiveness through efforts focused on the sharing of resources and/or possible consolidation of services

The following recommendations are an important part of beginning the implementation process for this Comprehensive Plan. The specific actions complement the strategies and recommendations provided throughout this Plan. As with other sections of the Plan these action items require monitoring for benchmarking progress, shifting priorities as necessary, and updating information as conditions warrant. Modification of this information is an important part of an evolving planning and implementation process.

Action Items

Administrative Actions Required for the Comprehensive Plan

1. Recommendation - Finalize Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030
Primary Actions – Initiate municipal and public review and comment, conduct SEQRA public hearing, prepare revision/finalization of plan.
Potentially Involved Entities - County Legislature and County Economic Development
2. Recommendation - Adopt Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030
Primary Actions – Adoption by County Legislature and municipalities
Potentially Involved Entities - County Legislature and municipalities
3. Recommendation – Consider maintaining Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Committee
Primary Actions - Committee provides oversight of implementation of Comprehensive Plan recommendations, future review and revisions.
Potentially Involved Entities - County Legislature and municipalities
4. Recommendation - Commence periodic review of Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan
Primary Actions - Schedule 2 year timeframe for interim review and update of sections of the Comprehensive Plan, followed by complete review and update at no more than 5 year intervals.
Potentially Involved Entities - County Legislature and municipalities



Land Use, Transportation and Environment

5. Recommendation – Update the Niagara County Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan
Primary Actions - Complete update of 1999 Farmland Protection Plan by 2011
Potentially Involved Entities - Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension
6. Recommendation – Consider investigating the need to update/standardize County Planning Board project review/applicant criteria and SEQRA Type I procedures
Primary Actions - Coordinate with stakeholders to determine Section 239 project review procedures and establish SEQRA Type I list of projects
Potentially Involved Entities - County Planning Board, municipalities
7. Recommendation - Collaborate on future NYS highway corridor planning initiatives
Primary Actions - Identify funding and project priorities to undertake countywide NYS highway corridor land use and access management planning for NYS Routes 31, 62, 78, and 104 to assess future transportation needs, potential right-of-way acquisitions, bikeway feasibility, etc.
Potentially Involved Entities - NYSDOT, GBNRTC, County and municipalities



8. Recommendation - Collaborate with NYSDOT, GBNRTC and municipalities to identify potential designated bikeways along State, County and local roads.

Primary Actions - Secure funding and conduct preliminary feasibility studies, including cost estimates and addition of potential bikeway routes into Long Range Transportation Plan

Potentially Involved Entities - NYSDOT, GBNRTC, County and municipalities

9. Recommendation – Consider preparing an up-to-date countywide watershed management plan

Primary Actions - Identify funding and conduct a countywide watershed management plan to address stormwater management/drainage issues, erosion control, point source pollution control mechanisms, potential restoration projects and green infrastructure practices

Potentially Involved Entities - County Soil and Water Conservation, Cornell Cooperative Extension and stakeholders

10. Recommendation – Consider developing and conducting a community-based or subregional “Sustainability” survey of Niagara County communities

Primary Actions - Develop and implement a countywide survey to assess local needs including affordable housing, resource protection, land use, transportation alternatives, community services, needs of seniors and other quality of life issues due to changing demographics.

Potentially Involved Entities - County Economic Development and municipalities

11. Recommendation – Consider preparation of a countywide Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan and provide continuing support at local/subregional levels for the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project and other similar initiatives to protect unique and significant open space resources by encouraging land trusts, transfer/purchase of development rights, etc.

Primary Actions - Funding identification and planning assistance

Potentially Involved Entities - County Economic Development, municipalities and stakeholders

Possible Funding Opportunities - Land Use, Transportation and Environment

NYS Canal Corporation
www.nys.canals.gov/

NYS Council on the Arts
www.nysca.org/public/guidelines/architecture/index.htm

NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
www.agmkt.state.ny.us/
Agriculture & Farmland Protection Implementation Project Program
Agricultural Non-point Source Abatement Control Program (ANSCAP)



NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT)
www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/programs/smart-planning/funding
Industrial Access Program (IAP)
DOT Capital Program
Job Access and Reverse Commute Grants
Ferry Boat Program
Transportation Enhancements (SAFETEA-LU)
www.nysdot.gov/programs/tep

Natural Resource Conservation Service
www.nrcs.usda.gov/
Watershed Rehabilitation

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
www.usace.army.mil/Pages/Default.aspx
Feasibility Studies
Construction Projects

U.S. Department of Agriculture
www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/cp.htm
Rural Communities Facilities - Direct Loans

U.S. Department of Transportation
www.dot.gov
Discretionary Grants for a National Surface Transportation System

U.S. DOT Federal Aviation Administration
www.faa.gov
Grants-in-Aid for Airports

U.S. DOT Federal Highway Administration
www.fhwa.dot.gov
Highway Infrastructure Investment

U.S. DOT Federal Railroad Administration
www.fra.dot.gov
Capital Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation
High Speed Rail Corridors

U.S. DOT Federal Transit Administration
www.fta.dot.gov
Fixed Guideway Modernization
Transit Capital Assistance
New Starts/Small Starts

Economic Development

12. Recommendation – Consider creation and maintenance of an up-to-date countywide GIS database of properties suitable for development and redevelopment.
- Primary Actions - Create GIS database and mapping with website links that provides information on vacant, underutilized and the infill/redevelopment potential of properties, including brownfield sites.
- Potentially Involved Entities - County Economic Development, Real Property Tax Services, municipalities and stakeholders
13. Recommendation - Continue to educate the public and encourage participation by property owners, municipalities and the development community in the Niagara County Brownfields Program and the State’s Brownfield Opportunity Area program.
- Primary Actions - Seek additional funding and aggressively market the program within and beyond the boundaries of Niagara County and collaborate with communities on identification of potential BOA projects that include sites that cross multiple jurisdictions and municipalities.
- Potentially Involved Entities - County Economic Development, municipalities and stakeholders.
14. Recommendation – Consider increased coordination on business recruitment efforts with NCCC
- Primary Actions - Establish new programming and mechanisms for coordinating educational training and business recruitment activities between County economic development and NCCC on training programs and business/talent recruitment/marketing campaigns
- Potentially Involved Entities - County Economic Development and NCCC

Possible Funding Opportunities - Economic Development

- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
www.dec.ny.gov/index.html
Brownfields Cleanup Program (BCP)
Environmental Restoration Projects
Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Site Remedial Program
Environmental Protection Fund
- NYS Department of Housing & Community Renewal (DHCR)
www.dhcr.state.ny.us/
Housing Trust Fund
Housing Development Funds
- NYS Department of State
www.nyswaterfronts.org/grantopps_stategrants.asp
Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP)
Division of Coastal Resources

NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)
www.nyserda.org

Department of Energy
www.eere.energy.gov/
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
Defense Environmental Cleanup Projects
Electric Power Transmission Projects

U.S. EPA Brownfields Program
www.epa.gov
Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund
Brownfields State and Tribal Assistance Grants

U.S. EPA Brownfields Program
www.epa.gov/brownfields/

U.S. Treasury IRS
www.irs.gov/
Recovery Zone Bonds
Industrial Development Bonds

FEMA Grants and Assistance Programs
www.fema.gov/government/grant/bzpp/index.shtm
Buffer Zone Protection Program (BZPP)

National Telecommunications and Information Administration
www.commerce.gov/
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program

U.S.D.A. Department of Agriculture
www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm
Rural Business Enterprise Grants
Rural Community Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
Rural Development Water and Environment Program
Rural Utilities Service

U.S. Economic Development Administration
www.eda.gov/
Economic Development Assistance Program

County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure

15.Recommendation – Consider preparation of an up-to-date County Official Map consistent with Sections 239-e and 239-f of NYS Municipal Law

Primary Actions - Determine feasibility, funding requirements and immediate need to prepare an up-to-date Official Map that provides mapped information on County infrastructure, properties, existing and future rights-of-way, etc. for future funding and infrastructure needs assessments.

Potentially Involved Entities - County DPW, Real Property Tax Services

16.Recommendation – Consider expanding and updating a GIS database of County infrastructure

Primary Actions - Expand GIS database inventory and mapping of County roads, bridges, drainage culverts, parks, buildings and grounds to track and monitor conditions, use, maintenance intervals and structural deficiencies.

Potentially Involved Entities - County DPW, Real Property Tax Services

17.Recommendation – Consider determining the feasibility of increased shared highway services

Primary Actions - Conduct a feasibility and needs assessment for increasing opportunities for shared highway services among County and local municipalities

Potentially Involved Entities - County DPW and municipalities

18.Recommendation – Consider determining the feasibility of countywide assessment and tax collection services

Primary Actions - Conduct a feasibility study to determine potential efficiencies and cost savings from combined tax services.

Potentially Involved Entities - County Real Property Tax Services and municipalities

19.Recommendation – Consider developing a County Trails program

Primary Actions - Seek funding to conduct subregion trail studies, for example, extending the Erie-Lackawanna Railway trail through Pendleton to the City of Lockport to link with the Erie Canal and identify other multi-use opportunities for trails such as an equestrian trails network in rural areas.

Potentially Involved Entities - County DPW Parks Division and municipalities

Possible Funding Opportunities - Community Services and Facilities

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

www.nysparks.state.ny.us/grants/

Environmental Protection Fund

Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act

Municipal Parks Grants

Heritage Area Grants

Historic Preservation



Recreational Trails Program
Land & Water Conservation Fund
NYS Barn Restoration & Preservation Program
Snowmobile Trail Development

NYS Office of Real Property Services
www.orps.state.ny.us/
Real Property System
Assessment Administrator Training
Consolidation Incentive Aid
Maintenance and Reassessment Aid

National Endowment for the Arts
www.nea.org
Cultural Funding

U.S. Department of Energy
<http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/wip/>
Weatherization Assistance Program

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.hrsa.gov/
Community Health Centers and Infrastructure

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.hud.gov
Native American Housing Block Grants

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/omhar/
Assisted Housing Stability, Energy and Green Retrofit Investments

U.S.D.A. Rural Development
www.rurdev.usda.gov/ny/Mainprograms.htm
Water and Wastewater Loans and Grants
Technical Assistance & Training Grants
Solid Waste Management Grants

Education

- 20.Recommendation – Consider establishing a joint committee to conduct a feasibility study for expanding shared resource and administrative services among school districts and BOCES facilities.
Primary Actions - Seek funding and conduct studies to determine potential feasibility of expanded use of shared resources and functions.
Potentially Involved Entities - County facilitation, participating school districts and BOCES
- 21.Recommendation – Consider holding a countywide summit on education
Primary Actions - Prepare and conduct a survey of local educators and service providers, including school districts, NCCC, Niagara University, BOCES, student representatives, etc. to determine interest in a summit(s) to identify countywide educational issues and needs.
Potentially Involved Entities - County facilitation, educators and other stakeholders
- 22.Recommendation – Consider creation of new incentives to increase volunteer service
Primary Actions - Coordinate identification of possible incentives to encourage volunteerism, such as tuition assistance/tuition reduction for volunteering in emergency services.
Potentially Involved Entities - County facilitation, NCCC, BOCES, emergency providers and vocational/trades

Possible Funding Opportunities - Education

NYS Education Department
www.usny.nysed.gov/grants/

National Institute of Standards and Technologies
www.nist.gov
National Scientific and Technical Research
Construction of Research Facilities

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
www.noaa.gov
Operations, Research and Facilities

National Science Foundation
www.nsf.gov
Research Equipment and Facilities Construction



Public Health and Safety

23. Recommendation – Consider the expanded use of GIS databases and mapping including utilization of GIS information in this Plan in interdepartmental communication and coordination
Primary Actions - Increase utilization of GIS data sharing and analyses among County departments and municipalities including the Sheriff's Office, County Fire Coordinator and Emergency Response Services.
Potentially Involved Entities - County Manager, County Departments, municipalities
24. Recommendation – Consider determining the feasibility of department resource sharing
Primary Actions - Seek funding to conduct feasibility studies focused on cost reduction from improved information and resource sharing, training and equipment sharing and possible consolidation of services and or locations.
Potentially Involved Entities - County Manager, County Departments
25. Recommendation – Consider determining the feasibility of fire department/district and emergency services resource sharing and possible consolidation
Primary Actions - Seek funding to conduct feasibility studies focused on cost reduction from improved sharing of resources, training and equipment and possible consolidation of services and or locations.
Potentially Involved Entities – County, participating districts, municipalities and providers



Possible Funding Opportunities - Public Health and Safety

NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC)

www.efc.org/home/index.asp

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

FEMA Grants and Assistance Programs

www.fema.gov/government/grant/hsgp/index.shtm

Homeland Security Grant Program

Firefighters Assistance Grants

National Institute of Standards and Technology

www.nist.gov

Health Care Information Enterprise Integration Research Centers

U.S. EPA

www.epa.gov/owm/cwfinance/cwsrf/

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

www.epa.gov/safewater/dwsrf/index.html

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

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