

APPENDIX A

Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting Notes



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #1 Meeting Notes

DATE: February 27, 2008
PLACE: Niagara County Community College, Faculty Dining Room, G211
TIME: 5:00 – 6:30PM

ATTENDEES: Clough Harbour & Associates planners, community representatives, and members of the general public.

PURPOSE: To introduce representatives from Niagara County municipalities to the project, to discuss the scope of the project and the focus areas of the plan, to provide an update on data collection efforts and other preliminary work conducted to date, and to discuss inclusion of all stakeholders in the planning process.

MINUTES:

1. Walt Kalina began the meeting by introducing himself as the project manager from Clough Harbour & Associates LLP, the consulting firm hired by Niagara County to facilitate the planning process. He also introduced the project, describing it as the first comprehensive plan focused solely on issues in Niagara County. He directed meeting attendees to sign-in and to note the handouts available: a preliminary draft of Chapter II of the Plan that outlines the planning process and contains a preliminary review of previous plans, reports, and studies identified and reviewed to date; the “Summary of the Planning Process for the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan” brochure providing information on the scope of the plan and opportunities for stakeholder participation; a list of representatives from local municipalities that will participate on the Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee; and the draft outline of the Plan, which includes components of a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) required under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).
2. Mr. Kalina introduced the fundamental points of the planning process with the help of a PowerPoint presentation:
 - The success of the planning process will depend, in part, on the work of the Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee and input from the local communities; representatives will help relay information to and from their municipalities.
 - The ultimate purpose of the Plan’s recommendations will be to enhance the quality of life in the County. This will be achieved by working toward all of the goals and objectives that will be established during the process.
 - The primary goals of the planning process are to provide better decision-making with respect to managing growth and development, strengthening the local economy, improving services and infrastructure, coordinating

and prioritizing capital improvements, and enhancing quality of life. The goals will be addressed in the five (5) focus areas of the Plan: Land Use & Environment; Economic Development; Public Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure; Education; and Health & Safety.

- The issues and opportunities being considered will vary widely from one part of the County to another. This necessitates an approach that looks at sub-regions of the County that share common characteristics, for example natural resources, as well as common issues and/or opportunities such as farmland protection.
- The process used to develop the Plan needs to include input from all stakeholders to ensure that the Plan is used and supported.
- The Plan's recommendations are meant to reflect the visions, goals, and objectives of local communities and other stakeholders.

3. Mr. Kalina used a PowerPoint presentation to provide a detailed description of the Plan's legal basis, its goals, and the overall planning process to be used to develop the Plan. Key points included:

- The process to be used is unique because the Plan is not being developed from a "top down" perspective; instead it is being developed using input from the County's municipalities and other stakeholders as its basis, which is a "bottom up" approach.
- The planning process is currently in Phase I, information collection and review of previous planning initiatives, which will take advantage and be inclusive of plans, projects, and studies already undertaken in the county.
- *CommunityViz* GIS-based software will be used in the analysis phase of the project to evaluate the implications of various land use, environmental, infrastructure, and service strategies under different scenarios.
- This Plan will reflect and respect the "home rule" authority given to each city, town, and village through the New York State constitution. One goal of the Plan is to achieve greater consistency across municipal boundaries where broader issues often originate involving land use, transportation, zoning, infrastructure and services, etc.
- The Plan will build upon previous initiatives undertaken at all levels by articulating strategies and actionable steps that will address priority issues, providing greater efficacy in confronting challenges.

4. During the presentation, Mr. Kalina introduced the concept of "community profiles" as an important and unique component of the Plan, and examples of the profile sheets were distributed to individuals in attendance. A profile sheet will be prepared for each community in Niagara County and will be prepared with input from local communities and other stakeholders. The community profiles will serve as a starting place for identifying information pertinent to the planning process. The profile sheets include spaces to identify issues and opportunities as well as goals and objectives relative to each of the five focus areas of the Plan. Individuals were asked to review and consider these profiles and come prepared to discuss ideas at the next meeting. The profiles will be used throughout the

planning process and will be included within the Final Plan as a “snapshot” of each community in 2008 and the long-term visions, goals, and objectives that each community would like to see included in the Plan. The overarching goal of the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan is to enhance quality of life for all County residents. The definition of “enhanced quality of life” will evolve through the input and insight gained during the planning process.

5. The meeting concluded with general discussion on major issues and opportunities facing communities in Niagara County. The following items were mentioned:
 - Issues:
 - Problems with State regulations and policies coming from Albany and the implications on local communities
 - High taxes
 - An overall resistance to change
 - Stagnant growth / the loss (out-migration) of young people
 - Opportunities:
 - Quality of life issues that could reverse the trend of people migrating out of New York
6. The meeting concluded with the reminder that the next Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee meeting will be held on March 26 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (6311 Inducon Corporate Drive, Sanborn, New York) as NCCC will be closed for Spring Recess.

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Stakeholder Communities
Plan Steering Committee Meeting 1
February 27, 2008


Clough Harbour & Associates LLP




Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Today's Agenda

- I. Introductions & Project Summary
- II. Distribution & Review of Materials
- III. Status Update on Phase I
- IV. Next Steps



The first of eight steering committee meetings



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan




Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

The logo developed for the comprehensive planning process is intended to illustrate the participatory nature of the project.

What is the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan?

- The first countywide comprehensive plan undertaken solely for Niagara County.
- Past planning efforts involving Niagara County included the 1961 Erie Niagara Regional Plan & the 2006 Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth, which dealt primarily with land use patterns.
- It is intended to be a guiding document for decision-making developed through the input of stakeholders from across Niagara County

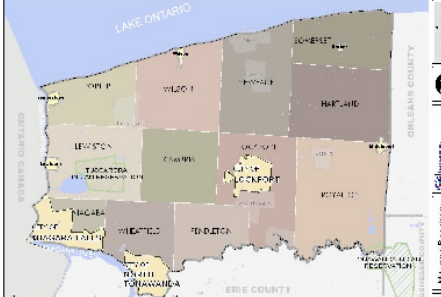



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Stakeholder Communities

Niagara County Stakeholder Communities


- 12 Towns
- 3 Cities
- 5 Villages
- 3 Reservations




Map of Niagara County showing stakeholder communities. The map includes labels for various towns, cities, and villages, as well as the locations of three reservations. The map is color-coded to distinguish between different types of communities.

Comprehensive Planning

An overall process that considers a wide range of interrelated topics of importance which typically leads to the creation of a comprehensive plan, the function of which is to provide direction and guidance to achieve a desired set of goals and future conditions.



What is Comprehensive Planning?



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan



What is a
Comprehensive
Plan?

Defined by State Law

A Comprehensive Plan is defined under NYS 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 a town, city, village, county, or region.



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



The contents
of a
comprehensive
plan can vary
depending on
the focus &
needs of the
community
identified
during the
planning
process.

Typical Considerations

- Population & Demographics
- Existing & Future Land Use
- Transportation
- Utilities & Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Parks & Recreation
- Historic & Cultural Resources
- Natural Resources
- Community Services



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



Why prepare a
comprehensive
plan?

Purpose

The purpose of the comprehensive plan is to provide guidance to public officials and all stakeholders in making more informed decisions about the future of Niagara County.

Issues & opportunities will be addressed under five categories:

- Land Use & Environment
- County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure
- Public Health & Safety
- Education
- Economic Development

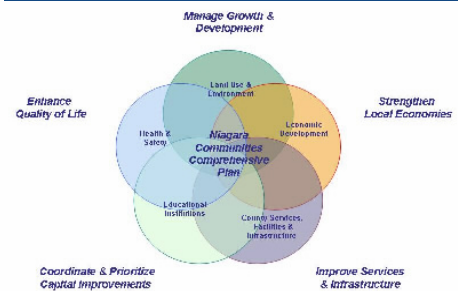


Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



The Plan will
address
issues &
opportunities
under 5 topics
implementing
sound
planning
principles and
practices.

Plan Goals & Topics



Planning Goals & Plan Elements



Is a plan
really
necessary?

Need

The plan will contain in one document an overall vision for the future of the County, future goals and objectives, and strategies for achieving them.

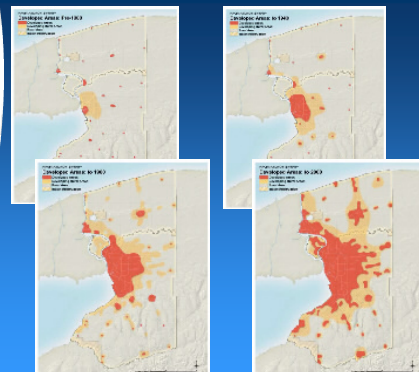
- It will provide a "snapshot" of Niagara County as it is in 2008 and provide an up-to-date source of information.
- It will build upon other recent planning initiatives not by duplicating them, but by expanding on more detailed actions.



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



Developed
areas in
Erie and
Niagara
Counties
pre-1900 to
2000



Framework for Regional Growth 2006


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Its value will be immediate & long-lasting.

Value

Value will be derived from the plan & from the process to create it.

- Bringing Communities Together in Dialogue
- Involving All Stakeholders
- Addressing Interrelated Issues
- Identifying Opportunities
- Agreeing on Strategies & Actions
- Creating Ongoing Review
- Finding Solutions to Complex Problems


 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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What better time to develop a vision and plan for the future than during the Bicentennial of Niagara County!

Project Timeframes

- The planning process will occur during most of 2008 with a draft plan available for public review and comment later this year.
- The draft plan must undergo SEQRA review and comment by the public prior to its adoption.

 NIAGARA COUNTY BICENTENNIAL 1806-2008

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The process will identify Countywide resources, services, needs & provide for greater planning consistency across municipal boundaries.

Major Steps in the Process



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Opportunities to Participate

- Public meetings will be held at NCCC on the fourth Wednesday of April, June and August
- Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for October 1st, 2008 at NCCC
- Information exchange through a Stakeholders Communities Plan Steering Committee
- Information is available through the County's website

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The Plan will focus on greater consistency across municipal boundaries, recognizing & respecting each community's uniqueness & "Home Rule".

Community Profiles

Each stakeholder community will have a Community Profile in the Plan, developed through the input by local residents and officials.

- Existing Conditions
- Community Assets
- Issues, Challenges & Opportunities
- Vision, Goals & Objectives
- Future Conditions & Needs

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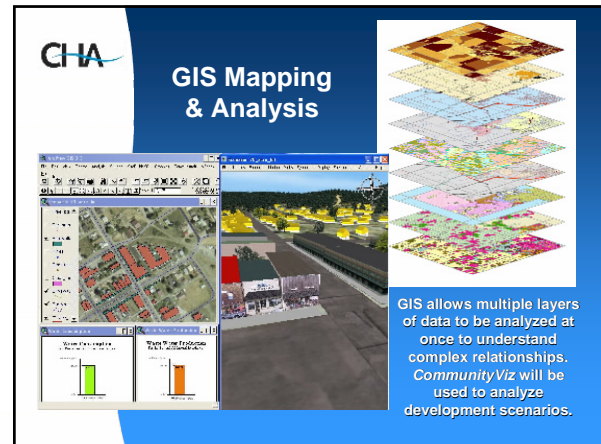
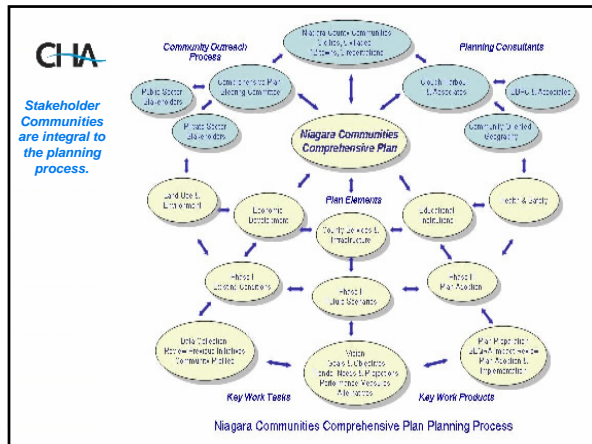
The process builds upon many previous initiatives which will be considered in the Plan.

Previous Planning Initiatives

Numerous studies & recommendations that are best carried out at local municipal levels

- Local community master plans, strategic plans, & local waterfront revitalization plans
- Framework for Regional Growth – Erie and Niagara Counties
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Niagara County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan
- Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan



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Plan Results

- Establishing a Countywide Vision, Goals & Objectives
- Identifying Future Needs for Public Services & Facilities
- Prioritizing Capital Improvements & Investments in Infrastructure
- Identifying Strategies for
 - Strengthening the Local Economy
 - Protecting Important Natural Resources
 - Encouraging Desirable Development Patterns
 - Improving Quality of Life

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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The Plan will be measurable and accessible.

Plan Performance

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan will provide:

- A Countywide Vision & Perspective on Planning Consistency
- A Guidepost for Niagara County Communities
- Improved Decision-making Capabilities
- Measurable Performance Goals
- Timeframes for Review
- Opportunity for Ongoing Dialogue
- Daily Access & Use by All Communities

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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Benefits of the Countywide Plan

- Sets a clear direction & establishes priorities for the future
- Provides enhanced understanding of the complexity of issues
- Identifies economic efficiencies and reduces duplication of efforts
- Promotes protection of community resources & local character
- Respects each community's uniqueness & opportunities

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Questions and Information

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Thank You!

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #2 Niagara County Center for Economic Development Training Room

Wednesday, March 26, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic - Land Use & Environment

I. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions

Break out sessions involved dividing the municipalities within the County into five (5) planning sub-region discussion groups. CHA provided the list of municipalities assigned to each group and each was given composite land use maps and environmental features maps for their use. Each group included about 3 or 4 stakeholder community representatives and varying numbers of stakeholders participating in the discussions. Each group assigned a leader, a note taker, and a spokesperson. Leaders were responsible for making sure that the discussion stayed on topic and schedule. CHA facilitated each group's discussions. A spokesperson provided a summary of discussions and conclusions by group.

II. Break-out Session One

Discussion Question #1

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **land use/transportation issue or challenge** facing your community today? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion. We are considering land use and transportation together because they are interrelated topics. Decisions on land use influence transportation needs and decisions on where to invest in roads and transit affect future land use patterns.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represents shared issues with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Each Group was provided with the following points to facilitate discussion.

1. Think about recent changes in land use patterns, development projects, and community character by considering different types of land use categories in your community: Agriculture, Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Open Space and Recreation, Vacant. Refer to the Existing Land Use Map. What do you see happening in your community?
2. Think about what types of transportation services are provided in your community (public roads, public transportation, access to multimodal transportation, etc.), and if there have been significant changes in transportation

services or in public access to those services in recent years. Under transportation, consider conditions and capacities for pedestrian, bicycling, personal auto, bus, heavy truck, train, air, and marine uses.

3. Does the character of your community differ from neighboring communities? In what way?
4. How would you best describe your community as it now exists:
 - Developed: built-out with virtually no “greenfield” development potential
 - Developing: a mix of established and emerging development
 - Redeveloping: e.g., re-use of formerly vacant properties
 - Undeveloped: e.g., agricultural areas are not being developed
5. How would you best characterize your community as it now exists – urban, suburban, or rural?

Discussion Question #2

*What is the most significant **land use/transportation asset or opportunity** that currently exists in your community? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- A list of the assets and opportunities identified by your group.
- The top three assets and opportunities as voted on by the group that represents shared assets and opportunities with the other communities in the planning sub-region.

III. Break-out Session Two

Discussion Question #3

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **environmental issue or challenge** facing your community today? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each Group was provided with the following points to consider.

1. Think about the different natural features of your community such as its waterways, floodplains, open space areas, wetlands, wildlife and wildlife habitats, and scenic views. Refer to the Environmental Features Map. Have any of these features changed recently? In what ways?
2. Does your community provide access to natural areas, scenic views, parks and open space? In what ways?
3. Have any actions been taken to protect environmental features in your community? Have any actions jeopardized environmental features?
4. Are the environmental features in your community an important part of your everyday life? In what ways?

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of issues and challenges identified by your group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represents shared issues or challenges with other communities in your planning sub-region.

Discussion Question #4

*What is the most significant **environmental asset or opportunity** for the future that currently exists in your community? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.*

Each group should provide the following:

- An overall list of assets and opportunities identified by your group.
- The top three assets and opportunities as voted on by the group that represents shared assets and opportunities with the other communities in the planning sub-region.

IV. Reconvened as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the second breakout session. Each of the five groups was asked to provide a summary of their discussions, conclusions reached, and the lists of issues and opportunities each created. **These are provided below by Group.** Due to time constraints further discussions will continue at the April Committee meeting to identify common and unique issues and opportunities among the communities and the five planning sub-regions.

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Question #1

- Preservation of farmland and agriculture
- Controlling sprawl
- Designate business and growth area, main corridors
- Historic preservation
- Conservation – wildlife & green space / open space
- Railroad – need emergency plan – closing of crossings (1 in Middleport & 1 in Gasport)
- Vacant buildings
- Buildings and property with environmental issues
- Deteriorating roads – maintenance needs
- Dangerous intersections:
 - Slayton Settlement / Hartland
 - Mountain Road/Royalton Center Road
 - Checker Tavern /Rt 104
 - State / Main – Village, Rt. 104 – Hartland
 - Sidewalks

Question #2

- Canal – tourism
 - Water & electric facilities needed for boats
- Railroad
- Agriculture / farmland
- Corridor to Becker Farms [<http://www.beckerfarms.com/>]
- Becker Farms [340-acre working farm in Gasport]
- Maple producer

Question #3

- RCRA – FMC [see <http://www.fmc.com/corporateresponsibility/HealthSafetyEnvironment/tabid/63/Default.aspx>]
- Tire recycling
- FMC – water, soil, airborne issues
- Gas wells – natural gas – Hartland – testing farm areas
- CAMU – Middleport [Corrective Action Management Unit – FMC; <http://www.middleport-ny.com/middleport/index.cfm?module=walkingtour>]
- Dump on Griswold & Mountain Road
- Two brownfields in Village
- Potential brownfield – Royalton (Cold Storage)

Question #4

- Royalton Ravine
- Vet's Park – Gasport
- Trails – Recreation Field – Want to expand – Hartland
- Parks – Middleport
- Playground – Middleport
- Nature Trail – Middleport
- Reservoir – Middleport to Royalton
- Canal Trails
- Escarpment – effect of weather pattern
- Right to Farm – local law in Royalton
- Agri-tourism and open lands
- Stone quarry
- Drainage – permanent easements for maintenance – Hartland

Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use

- Preservation of agricultural land & greenspace (protect against sprawl)
- Concern over rail accident/derailing with railroad cars to ethanol plant in Medina
- Vacancies along canal corridor and negative effects on tourism

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities - Land Use

- Canal
- Becker Farms (agri-tourism, agriculture is biggest industry)
- Railroad

Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment

- FMC/arsenic
- Tire recycling and dumps
- Gas (natural gas) well testing

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment

- Royalton Ravine
- Canal
- Nature trails

RESPONSES from GROUP B

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Question #1

- Parks & open space
- Escarpment district
- Preserving farmland – 80% [of existing land] – Cambria Comp Plan
- Pendleton 22% [existing agricultural land percentage]
- Consider development pressure low at this point
- Small town
- Pendleton – single family homes
- Development upsets our road systems
 - Must think out corridor to handle large volume traffic
 - Create 2nd outlets to not over-power the roads
 - Campbell Boulevard – economic corridor
 - Bypass corridor near Lockport [opportunity]
 - Plan streets as through streets
- Pendleton – small percentage of commercial

Question #2

- Agriculture
- Cambria wineries
- Pendleton / Lockport
 - Town plans in place
 - Zoning
 - Need to incorporate local plans [in County plan]

Question #3

- Recognition of the Niagara Escarpment – preservation!
- Balance of farmland for agriculture and wildlife habitat
- Floodplain – need to study their locations – important for future climate change issues
- 18-Mile Creek
 - Preservation and protection
 - Open spaces

Question #4

- Land use and recreational opportunities of creek and streams
- Wineries – grape production

Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use

- Lockport & Pendleton is developing, plans in place
- Cambria – agricultural preservation
- Highway corridors economic development vs. farmland preservation
 - Inter municipal agreements
 - Outlets needed as secondary access – ex.) Cambell Blvd.
 - Need to plan ahead

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use

- Farmland
- Wine Trails
- Plans that are in place in Lockport and Pendleton

Top 3 Issues & Challenges, Assets & Opportunities – Environment

- Escarpment
- Need to balance agricultural lands and development (loss of wildlife habitat)
- Creeks & Streams – floodplain encroachment – 18 Mile Creek

RESPONSES from GROUP C

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Question #1

- Can we maintain our vision as an agricultural community?
- Drainage issues due to growing residential use & retracting use for agriculture
- Most residential development is road front, creating difficulty for agricultural uses
- 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
 - One possible answer to one of the lesser transportation issues is the development of truck routes with proper maintenance of bridges and roads.
 - One small issue is transportation for seniors
- The impediment created by the Army Corps of Engineers to waterfront development
- The raising lake levels may also hinder residential and waterfront development
- Distance from Thruway

Question #2

- Two good main east-west routes (18 & 104)
- An asset in the eastern end is the railway from/to Somerset area
- Olcott Harbor and Wilson Harbor have tremendous potential with regard to tourism.
- Stable weather patterns that can help agriculture (grapes / wineries), industry (shipping), and energy (windmills)

Question #3

- Agriculture waste with the larger corporate farmers
- Brownfield locations
- 18-mile Creek has its environmental issues
 - Industrial origins [of communities]
- Old service stations that have fuel tanks that made the sale of these properties difficult (keeps them off the tax rolls)
- Ditching programs must be consistent throughout the towns with a coordinated plan (Countywide)

Question #4

- Lake Ontario – tourism
- Lake Ontario – industry
- Lake Ontario – recreation

Assets & Opportunities by Area

Somerset:

1. Agriculture
2. Waterfront – industry
3. Wind resource

Newfane

1. Agri-tourism
2. Olcott Harbor – deep harbor
3. Medical facility

Wilson

1. Agri-tourism
2. Wilson Harbor
3. Tuscarora State Park

Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use

- Maintaining the vision as an agricultural community
- Transportation; truck routes along the Lake – industry and access to markets
- Army Corps permit requirements and regulations as impediments to development along the Lake and levels in Lake Ontario

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use

- Routes 18 and 104 access
- Olcott and Wilson harbors for tourism and commerce
- Rail access, stable climate/weather and wind power resources

Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment

- Agricultural waste and runoff
- Brownfields
- Water Quality, 18 Mile Creek, drainage ditches along roads- need county-wide consistency

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment

- Lake Ontario
- Agriculture and Agri-tourism
- Harbors and State Parks

RESPONSES from GROUP D

Towns of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Villages of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Question #1

- There doesn't seem to be much changing
 - Some growth in the Town of Lewiston
 - Residential
 - Golf course
- Not much public transportation
 - Plans to extend an existing bike / pedestrian path
 - Future cross-river ferry
 - Marina in Youngstown has new owners
- Communities are very similar
- Some development, mostly Town of Lewiston, lot of residential potential
- Available lands for residential development in Youngstown and Porter
- Rural

Question #2

- River & lake front
- River & lake festivals
- Fort Niagara
- Art Park
- Residential development potential

Question #3

- Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Project
- CWM [hazardous waste]
- Modern Corporation solid waste
- Cleanup, control & oversight

Question #4

- Lake & river fronts
- Agri-business

Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use

- Not much change
- Lewiston – bike path, golf course, ferry, marina
- Development opportunities in Youngstown and Porter

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use

- River & Lakefront
- Art Park
- Fort Niagara

Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment

- Ordnance works – cleanup, control and oversight needed

Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment

- Agriculture
- Lakefront
- Riverfront

RESPONSES from GROUP E

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

City of Niagara Falls**Issues & Challenges**

- 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

Assets & Opportunities

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

Town of Wheatfield

Issues & Challenges

- 102nd Street landfill – covers waterfront
- Transition dense to less dense development effects on character
- Change of open space to suburban and resulting increase in infrastructure (sewer, etc.)
- Residential trends - suburban character
- Hamlet – need for mixed-use development
- Buffers needed along streams and floodplains – restrict development
- Oz – concerns dealing with RVs & campers
- Water quality issues related to stormwater drainage / sewer infrastructure from new development
- Bus services for north towns?

Assets & Opportunities

- Riverfront – new park
- Farmers – major asset – keep viable, farmland preservation – using PDR's
- Niagara Falls Airbase

City of North Tonawanda

Issues & Challenges

- Water quality issues
- Waterfront and Niagara River / Tonawanda Creek – restoration areas needed
- Brownfields – huge challenge
 - Redevelopment and cleanup
 - Transition from waterfront areas
 - Landfills in general “Mt. Garbage”
 - Need accurate info. on brownfields
- Air quality related to new development – potential biofuels plant proposed for Wheatfield
 - Smokestack concerns
- Water quality / sediment contamination / contamination from industrial dumps, sewers, stormwater

Assets & Opportunities

- Waterfront
- Preservation of open space – wildlife habitat
- Gratwick Park future use
- Archeological resources
- Wetlands preservation for better flood control

The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #3** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, April 23, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Economic Development

I. Summary of Steering Committee Meeting #2

- Review of key points covered in the March 26th Steering Committee meeting, focusing on land use/transportation and environmental issues. Notes from this meeting are available on Niagara County's website under the Meeting Schedule section of the Comprehensive Plan web pages (www.niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp.)
- Update on GIS mapping prepared to date, including the use of New York State Office of Real Property Services (RPS) property classification codes to show the current use of properties countywide.
- Brief review of how the "Community Profile" sheets are going to be used. A new profile sheet will be available at each Steering Committee meeting. Community representatives will use these sheets to provide information on their community's issues, opportunities, goals and objectives related to each week's meeting topic. Each month a profile sheet will be handed in to the consultants and Committee members will be given a clean sheet for the next meeting. The consultant will be inserting information on the sheets as provided by each community.

II. CommunityViz Presentation

Peter Young of Community Oriented Geography introduced the Committee to *CommunityViz*, an innovative geographic information system (GIS) that will be used during the planning process to model how current trends are affecting land use characteristics, population distribution, infrastructure needs, and County services over the next 20 years.

Examples presented included farmland conversion trends, an analysis of riparian corridor development patterns, a summary of where commercial and industrial land uses were gained and lost between 2002 and 2007, and a summary of how the County's projected 2030 population would affect the cost of providing services to elderly residents. The farmland conversion preliminary trend analysis, for example, indicates that land that is being converted from farmland into other uses is being offset to a large degree by conversion of land into farmland – most likely lands being converted into vineyards and as cropland to "feed" to ethanol plants.

III. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions

As in the previous Steering Committee meeting (March 26th), the breakout session involved dividing the municipalities in the County into five (5) planning sub-region discussion groups. Each group included about 3 or 4 stakeholder community representatives and varying numbers of other stakeholder groups invited to participate in the discussions. Each group assigned a leader, a note taker, and a spokesperson. Leaders were responsible for making sure that the discussion stayed on topic and schedule. CHA facilitated each group's discussions as necessary. A spokesperson summarized what was discussed in each group at the conclusion of the breakout session.

IV. Break-out Session

Discussion Question #1

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **economic development issue or challenge** facing your community today? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges (as voted on by the group) that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. Think about recent economic development-related issues that have been identified in your community or discussed through local media that have or may impact your community. This may include news about relocation of firms, changes in local employment, etc. What do you see or hear happening in your community that relates to the local economy, jobs, etc.?
2. Think about what types of economic development-related services and/or infrastructure facilities (sewer, water, electric, communication, roads, bridges, highways, air, marine) that are provided by or to your community that you may be familiar with and whether there are significant issues or changes in those services or infrastructure that may be needed.
3. Does the character of your community or recent economic trends differ from neighboring communities in terms of development occurring, job loss, job creation? In what way?
4. Are community assets such as parks, natural environmental features, cultural resources, educational/training facilities or general quality of life considerations being recognized as contributing to or being used for promoting economic development opportunities, including tourism?

Discussion Question #2

*What is the most significant **economic development asset or opportunity** that currently exists in your community? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the assets and opportunities identified by the group.
- The top three assets and opportunities (as voted on by the group) that represent shared assets and opportunities with the other communities in the planning sub-region.

III. Reconvene as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the breakout session. Each of the five groups was asked to provide a summary of their discussions, conclusions reached, and the lists of issues and opportunities each created.

These are provided below by Group and are annotated in some instances based on additional feedback from the groups.

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Issues and Challenges:

1. From the farm to the factory – keeping it local!! What is being produced locally should stay local. (referring to the need for local food processing, packaging, shipping, etc.)
2. Small businesses – Expansion of existing businesses and enticing new businesses – marketing is needed
3. Upgrade of infrastructure facilities
 - a. Sewer
 - b. Natural gas (only Routes 31 and 104 has gas lines)
 - c. Roads (needed for shipping farm products, etc.)
4. Exposure to a great community – come and stay – (need for a marketing campaign)
5. Vacant buildings – demolish and/or beautify.

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Agri-tourism
2. Canal
3. Parks and recreation – need to expand and build up
 - o Schools and public parks share athletic facilities
4. Beautification of buildings that can be saved.
5. Wildlife and conservation areas

RESPONSES from GROUP B

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Issues and Challenges:

1. Taxes – property tax rate is high
2. Overabundance of educational taxes (schools) – Town of Cambria has 5 districts, 5 in Town of Lockport
3. Municipalities paying municipalities for services, i.e., water treatment
4. Aging infrastructure: gas, water, etc.
5. Loss of people in the county
6. Shovel ready sites needed vs. red tape and bureaucracy in New York State, especially compared to other states.

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Wine trail
2. Educational component (NCCC)
3. Locks in Lockport (unique site on the Erie Canal)
4. Transit Road – historic (heritage) corridor

RESPONSES from GROUP C

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Issues and Challenges:

1. “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) negative attitude toward development proposals
2. Lack of sewers / natural gas in entire towns
 - a. Villages of Barker and Wilson are better, but towns (Wilson and Somerset) have poor coverage
 - b. Newfane has more coverage and it shows in more commercial use
3. Distance from main transportation systems
4. Employers leaving area
5. Parkways being non-commercial hinder use: Robert Moses Parkway should allow commercial traffic
6. Excessive taxes

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Harbors and lakefront
2. Road systems
3. Potential for other uses at AES facility in Somerset
4. Large areas are zoned industrial, but not being used

RESPONSES from GROUP D

Towns of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Villages of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Issues and Challenges:

1. Tourism – need to facilitate tourism
 - a. Farm Museum - Town of Lewiston (Sanborn)
 - b. Tourism in General
 - i. Town of Porter
 - ii. Village of Youngstown
 - c. Obstacles – Bureaucracy, High Taxes
 - d. Cross-River Ferry
 - i. Connection
 - ii. Cross-tourism (international – easy access across border needed)
 - e. Energy costs
2. Regional Employment – maintain employment levels
 - a. Village of Youngstown
 - b. Keeping residents in the area
3. Aging population
4. Community-specific:
 - a. Youngstown – sewer plant capacity
 - b. Town of Porter – promotion of agriculture

- c. Town of Porter / Town of Lewiston –
 - i. State properties (too many that cannot be developed) & development (Fort Niagara, Joseph Davis Park)
 - ii. Chemical Waste Management (CWM) / Modern Disposal
- d. Town of Lewiston – hydroponics / green houses

Assets and Opportunities:

- Geography of the area
 - River, lakes, etc.
- Cost of Living (COL), low housing costs
- Untapped potential for the area in general

RESPONSES from GROUP E

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Issues/Challenges and Assets/Opportunities:

- “Oz”
 - Schedule – largest project in the area now on the board
 - EIS this summer
 - Fall groundbreaking
 - 4 years to develop
 - Wheatfield & BEL Review
 - Wheatfield as lead agency
 - Largest private employer
 - 3K – 5K year round
 - Issues
 - Housing / quality of housing stock – need diversity of housing
 - Land recapture
 - Agriculture – fresh food / guests
 - Hospitality “perception”
 - Training
 - Universities
 - Technology providers / workforce
 - Transportation services – Wheatfield
- Wheatfield
 - Air Base
 - Appropriate new terminal
 - International heavy jets
 - Spinoff opportunities and surroundings
 - Environmental – tech support
 - Williams Road medical corridor
 - River property and access needed to waterfronts
 - Niagara Falls Boulevard corridor
 - Overlay
 - Businesses that bring in other businesses
 - Working together
 - Maintaining farming
 - Right-to-farm

- Businesses
- Smart Growth
 - Neighborhoods
 - Stand alone
 - Developer educators
- 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

- Multi-modal transportation
 - Customs House
 - Customs / sealed buses
 - Cost of fuel – City growth
 - Niagara Falls Experience Center
 - BCP
 - Terminal / transportation
 - Road infrastructure
 - Culinary institute

The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #4** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, May 28, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – County Services, Facilities and Infrastructure

I. Introduction and Review of Website

- Brief update from Project Manager Walt Kalina on what has been accomplished since the April 23, 2008 meeting. Notes from previous meetings are on the Comprehensive Plan website.
- Walt reminded Steering Committee representatives to continue to provide input by way of the community profile sheets. Community profile sheets were distributed to representatives.
- Niagara County Planner Ben Bidell provided a review of what has been added to the project website recently, including agendas and notes from the previous three Plan Steering Committee meetings and two public information meetings, GIS mapping, community profiles, draft chapters, and other planning documents.
 - Ben encouraged meeting participants to use the “Feedback” portion of the website to provide input on draft documents posted online.
 - Project website: www.niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp
 - Project email address: comprehensiveplan@niagaracounty.com

II. Goals and Objectives

- Walt introduced the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Goals for the first two focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan: Land Use & Environment and Economic Development. The Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Goals are presented as broad statements and will be followed by more detailed Objectives that will recommend specific strategies and action items.
- The list of Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Goals represents a synthesis of several data sources including feedback from Plan Steering Committee representatives at past meetings, Niagara County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, the County’s Economic Development Strategy, the Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth, and other planning documents.
- Meeting attendees provided additional input on the list of Preliminary Comprehensive Plan Goals. Specifically, the goals should include:
 - Brownfields
 - Niagara Escarpment Viticultural Area/Niagara Wine Trail
 - Right-to-farm ordinances
 - Escarpment preservation

III. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions

As at the previous Steering Committee meetings, community representatives divided into five (5) groups, based on sub-regions of the County. Each group included about 3 or 4 Plan Steering Committee representatives and varying numbers of representatives of other stakeholder groups invited to participate in the discussions. The groups discussed questions as found on the Detailed Agenda for the meeting relative to Niagara County services, facilities, and infrastructure. At the conclusion of the breakout session, each group shared its findings.

IV. Breakout Session

Discussion Question #1

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing issue or challenge facing your community today **relative to County services, County facilities or County infrastructure**? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges (as voted on by the group) that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. Think about what types of County-provided services (social services, health services, economic development, public works, public safety, courts, emergency services, education, employment and training, election services, etc.) are available and important to you and your community and whether there are any issues relative to the need for:
 - Additional services
 - Access to services currently provided
 - Changes in services provided as a result of, for example:
 - Changes in your community's population
 - Changes in your community's economic base
 - "External" factors (including changes in technology, national/global trends, legislation, local providers, level of services provided by government, etc.)
2. Likewise, think about the types of County facilities and infrastructure that are available and important to you and your community and what issues there may be with the provision and/or maintenance of these facilities and infrastructure. Refer to the maps provided. The County is responsible for and maintains:
 - Administrative, service, and public safety buildings
 - 6 County parks (Oppenheim, Krull, Bond Lake, Royalton Ravine, West Canal Marina, and the County Golf Course)
 - 283 miles of roads, 89 bridges and 800 drainage culverts
 - Sewer, water and refuse districts

Discussion Question #2

What is the most significant asset or opportunity that currently exists in your community relative to County services, facilities or infrastructure? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the assets and opportunities identified by the group.
- The top three assets and opportunities (as voted on by the group) that represent shared assets and opportunities with the other communities in the planning sub-region.

IV. Reconvened as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the breakout session. Each of the five groups was asked to provide a summary of their discussions, conclusions reached, and the lists of issues and opportunities each created.

These are provided below by Group.

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton, & Village of Middleport

Issues and Challenges:

- Feeling of isolation from County
- Need better emergency service response times / greater police presence
- Desire to be included in more projects at the County level

Assets and Opportunities:

- A mobile DMV should be considered, providing monthly visits to outlying communities
 - Also election services [e.g., voter registration], social services, nutrition, etc.
- Opportunities for more shared services and improved efficiency
- County should consider decentralizing services to Towns and Villages

RESPONSES from GROUP B

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Issues and Challenges:

- Redundant services / consolidation needed
- Being the County seat presents pros and cons for the City
 - Great access to services
 - Means a lot of non-taxable, public properties
- Size of County Legislature should be examined, many districts/legislators compared to other counties
- Greater efficiency in service delivery should be considered
 - For example: the Financial Recovery Division within County Social Services may be performing a function better left to State-level agencies
 - Are there other areas of County-State service overlap?

Assets and Opportunities:

- Potential for service consolidation, specifically water districts

RESPONSES from GROUP C

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Issues and Challenges:

- Nothing on County services map in this sub-region [other than roads and bridges] except for Krull Park
- Geographically distant from services in Lockport, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda
 - Given gas prices, driving distance becomes a more serious obstacle
 - Everything is a half hour drive away
- Police coverage is insufficient
 - Improved coverage is needed for Towns
 - Slow response times have been noted in the past
- There are “imaginary lines” running east-west [along the escarpment] and north-south [just east of the City of Lockport] separating these communities from the rest of the County.

Assets and Opportunities:

- County bus service and/or van service for seniors – more services for the elderly, rural population are needed
- Service sharing: Town of Somerset is served by the Village of Barker’s police
- More service consolidation is possible
 - Local water district consolidation is needed
 - Tough decisions need to be made to use tax dollars wisely

RESPONSES from GROUP D

Towns of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Villages of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Issues and Challenges:

- Sheriff’s Department patrols are sparse in the area; Village of Youngstown has a part-time police force
- Distance from County services in Lockport / Niagara Falls
- “We try to take care of ourselves” – Services are available when needed

RESPONSES from GROUP E

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Issues and Challenges

- Road infrastructure – not much County highway mileage in this area; County roads are “just as bad” as town roads.
- County buildings and facilities
 - In poor condition
 - Should be setting a higher standard for the area, but instead they reflect their surroundings
 - Volunteerism by County needed
- Oppenheim Park is a run-down facility
 - There was a proposal to sell this facility to the Town of Wheatfield
 - Accessible to tourists / visitors to the area and could be a major attraction – seems to be a missed opportunity now
 - County should consider selling it or making a greater investment in it

- Water & Sewer
 - Cities have their own service
 - Could be a model of “competitive cooperation” – more inter-regional perspective, without giving up local sovereignty.
- Aging population
 - Need for more services / better access to existing services
 - Seems to be a larger issue in Wheatfield
- Robert Moses Parkway
 - Replacement prior to removal
 - Improve time, opportunity to capture traffic
- LaSalle Parkway
 - Parkway to nowhere

Assets and Opportunities:

- Roads
 - Cities could use help from County in maintaining and improving roads
- Oppenheim Park
 - Could be a major asset, since it is right on Niagara Falls Boulevard
 - Possible zoo site?
- Surplus of low-income housing – insufficient newer moderate or higher-income housing development
- Airport holds a great deal of potential, because of its long runway and capability to handle cargo loads
 - Improve connections between Niagara Falls International and Buffalo Niagara International
- Multi-modal center in downtown Niagara Falls
- Old railroad rights-of-way present opportunities for trails / revival of rail
- Vantage Centre – filling up; should be marketed more
- County’s Brownfields coordinator has been a major asset to Niagara Falls and Wheatfield
- Aging population in the sub-region could be an asset

The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #5** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, June 25, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Educational Institutions

I. Introduction and Review of Website

- Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed the Steering Committee members and other stakeholders and provided a brief summary of the Plan's current status. (Notes from the PowerPoint presentation that accompanied this update are available on the Project website.)
 - Next month's meeting (July 23) will focus on the Health and Safety element of the Comprehensive Plan, the fifth of the five Plan elements.
 - The August meeting will be a more interactive discussion of goals, opportunities, issues and visions.
 - The Planning process, public meetings and Steering Committee meetings have produced valuable information, including the list of issues and opportunities by planning sub-region and community profiles.
 - Issues and opportunities by sub-region have been compiled in a single document as they pertain to the Plan elements previously addressed by the Steering Committee.
 - Community profiles will be Chapter 4 of the Plan.
 - Working drafts of Plan chapters 1 and 2 are on the website. Mr. Kalina reminded meeting attendees to review these chapters and provide comments.
- As part of the status update, Mr. Kalina presented a map showing 32 "growth areas" around the County. The locations of these are based on communities' plans and are symbolized by uniform-sized circles, meant to illustrate locations for growth, not the amount or geographic limits of growth.
 - Input from communities on the location of these growth areas is very important.
 - These growth centers will form the basis for future CommunityViz analysis of the impacts of growth.
- Mr. Kalina also presented the population projection data collected to date.
 - The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council anticipates +8.7 percent growth to 2030.
 - Cornell University's projections show a -9.5% decline countywide by 2030.
 - For this study, we have utilized CommunityViz software to allocate Cornell's countywide projection to the Traffic Analysis Zone level using the GBNRTC data.
 - Projections also have a CommunityViz "slider bar" attached to them, allowing an interactive look at population projections by TAZ at various growth rates.

II. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions

As at the previous Steering Committee meetings, community representatives divided into five (5) groups, based on sub-regions of the County. Each group included about 2 or 3 Plan Steering Committee representatives and varying numbers of representatives from educational institutions throughout the County, who were invited to participate in the discussions. The groups discussed questions as found on the Detailed Agenda for the meeting relative to educational institutions in Niagara County. At the conclusion of the breakout session, each group shared its findings.

IV. Breakout Session

Discussion Question #1

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **issue or challenge** facing your community today **relative to educational institutions**? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges (as voted on by the group) that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. How well do current educational facilities accommodate the school-aged population in terms of capacity? How well suited are they for changes in the school-aged population over the next 20 years? [Recent projections from Cornell University anticipate an overall decrease in the school-aged population in Niagara County by 2035 and school enrollment surveys compiled over the past 10 years indicate significant decreases in some of the cities, but gains in other school districts in the County.]
2. How familiar are you with Niagara County school districts' performance relative to English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science achievement standards? Do any achievements or shortcomings stand out? Does the school district in your community provide any special or enhanced educational programming that may not be provided in other school districts? If so, what types of programs are offered?
3. School district consolidation has been mentioned repeatedly throughout this process as being needed to reduce the tax burden. Is this an issue in your community? Points to consider include:
 - i. Consolidation may mean greater distance from school facilities for some students, if consolidation results in school closures.
 - ii. Per student expenditures do not appear to be above statewide averages in any of the Niagara County school districts.
 - iii. Merging districts may mean that the consolidated district is able to provide more programs / activities than either could alone.

4. Are any capital improvements needed, planned, or being made in your community relative to educational facilities, including school districts and community-wide facilities? If so, what types of improvements?
5. Does your community need better access to:
 - i. Educational facilities (e.g. libraries, computer centers, etc.)?
 - ii. Higher education (colleges/universities)?
 - iii. Workforce development programs (e.g., Orleans/Niagara BOCES, Niagara County Employment and Training, etc.)?
 - iv. Other facilities or programs?

Discussion Question #2

What is the most significant asset or opportunity that currently exists in your community relative to educational institutions? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the assets and opportunities identified by the group.
- The top three assets and opportunities (as voted on by the group) that represent shared assets and opportunities with the other communities in the planning sub-region.

IV. Reconvened as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the breakout session. Each of the five groups was asked to provide a summary of their discussions, conclusions reached, and the lists of issues and opportunities each created.

These are provided below by Group.

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton, & Village of Middleport

Issues and Challenges:

- Missing key component of the working population:
 - Agriculture classes (e.g., Future Farmers of America)
 - Tech. classes
 - Computer classes
- Taxes increasing as population is decreasing
- Need for additional computer (Wi-Fi)/ library / resource center
- Need for satellite school/facility - NCCC

Assets and Opportunities:

- Royalton-Hartland School District has plenty of room for expansion without additional construction
- School grounds – environmentally clean!!

RESPONSES from GROUP B

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Issues and Challenges:

1. Too many administrators? School consolidation is a major issue.
2. Teacher salaries should be uniform; there should be a level playing field from one school district to another.
3. There should be other funding sources than taxes
4. Services are duplicated in each district

Assets and Opportunities:

1. More than enough school buildings (“The greenest building is the one that’s already built.”)
2. Tie education to tourism, canal & wine trails
3. 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).

RESPONSES from GROUP C

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Issues and Challenges:

- Issues are similar to those of a private business
- Fuel costs are a major issue, because of the dispersed nature of the population in this area.
- Need more diverse sources of revenue
- Need to stay ahead of workforce needs and keep up with changes in technology (e.g., agricultural industry trends)
- Satisfy capacity needs

Assets and Opportunities:

- Nearly all districts in Niagara County have seen improved scores in math and science
- Consolidation of administrative / business functions may be possible
- Schools are community centers
- School facilities promote / provide quality of life activities – they are safe and clean
- Each student can get personalized attention in a rural school district

RESPONSES from GROUP D

Towns of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Villages of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Issues and Challenges:

1. Academic programs that match community/industry needs and opportunities (e.g., hospitality): disconnect between career guidance and local economic development programs.
2. Tax levies and budget approval are a big issue each year
3. Schools need up-to-date technology and infrastructure (hardware, software, etc.)
4. Need coordinated business partnerships with academia
5. School facilities need to be maintained
6. Schools need to be community centers for sports and athletic activities

7. 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.

Assets and Opportunities:

1. We have two higher education institutions in the community (2-year, 4-year and graduate programs: good variety for a range of student needs)
2. Good schools and higher education feed the intellectual desires of the community and attract new people
3. The BOCES system facilitates individual districts in purchasing, staff development, etc. Niagara U. offers teacher training.
3. Schools are major employers in the County.
3. Educational institutions give back/promote much in the community (service learning, volunteerism, etc.)
4. Library system (NIOGA)
5. School test scores are reasonably good and consistent
6. The area has an abundance of professional educators (good workforce to draw from)

RESPONSES from GROUP E

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

[The following items pertain primarily to the Niagara Falls City School District. The Niagara Wheatfield and North Tonawanda School Districts are also in this subregion.]

Issues and Challenges:

- Economically disadvantaged student population: enrollment has been dropping. Over the last two years, the district has lost 2000 students and compressed its facilities.
- Buildings are being closed / re-used / sold for other uses.
- Improve economic base to retain current generation of students.
- Student population is “needy”: guidance counselors are available for students starting at kindergarten level.

Assets and Opportunities:

- Infrastructure and buildings very well maintained as a result of State funding: Niagara Falls School District has not had to raise its tax levy in many years. State funding has meant that the budget has remained steadily in the \$20 to \$25 million range, despite falling population and enrollment.
- Residency rule for teachers in the District means a pool of well-paid professionals looking for upscale housing in the City.
- 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: education oriented around job opportunities
- Pride Program: after-hours (3-5 pm) classes for school-aged kids who just want a GED.

OTHER ISSUES / QUESTIONS RAISED:

Q (from floor): How are public libraries financed? Why are they an item in some City budgets?

A (from floor): Sometimes library districts are a separate part of the school district – they may have a separate line in the budget, but may be getting some portion of the school tax, not an additional tax.

ISSUE: What is lacking is a good foundation for students in civics. Without this kind of empowerment, future generations will lack motivation for civic engagement and the tools they need to recommend improvements to their community. This is input that is lacking in making the kind of quality of life improvements that could mean greater retention of students. Local history also needs to be part of the curriculum.

ISSUE: On the subject of politics, the reality of local politics is the source of many of the issues being discussed, countywide.

The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Project Update

June 25, 2008

 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Today's Agenda

- I. Project Information Update
County Website
- II. Phase I Existing Conditions Summary
Plan Chapters, Community Profiles & Mapping
- III. Phase II Analysis
Vision, Goals & Objectives
Preliminary Trends & Population Projections
- IV. Next Steps



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Niagara County Website

Project Information and Posted Materials

- Project Schedules
- Meeting Notes & Agendas
- Draft Plan Chapters, Community Profiles
- Draft Plan GIS Mapping & Analysis
- Links to Other Planning Sites of Interest




Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Phase I Existing Conditions Information

Countywide information and mapping is a valuable benchmarking tool for the County and local communities in planning and decision-making.

- Review of Previous Initiatives and Studies (Chapter II of Plan)
- Countywide Summary of Existing Demographic, Land Use, Environmental and Socioeconomic Conditions (Chapter III of Plan)
- Approximately 48 countywide GIS maps produced to date as a "snapshot" of the County and community features

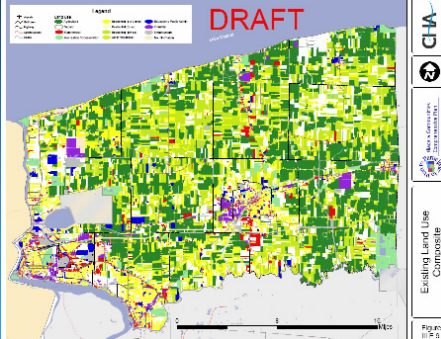



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan


Countywide Composite Mapping - Land Use


Composite maps incorporate multiple layers of GIS information.


DRAFT







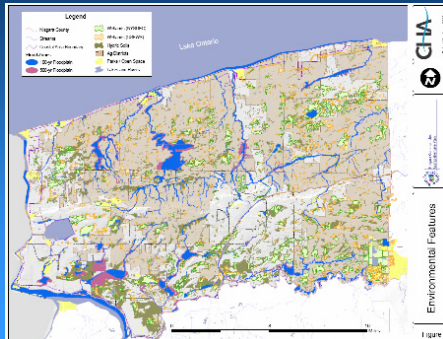






Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan


Countywide Composite Mapping - Environment


Each GIS layer of information will be a separate map in the Plan.











Work in Progress – Community Profiles

Profiles are important for benchmarking & comparisons to other communities.

- Community Profiles provide a brief summary of each of the 20 communities in Niagara County
- Each Community is working to complete its own Profile by identifying important local issues, opportunities, goals & objectives (local plans)
- Community Profiles will be incorporated as a Chapter into the Comprehensive Plan

Community Profile Example

Each community will have a profile summarizing existing conditions, local issues, goals & objectives.

Stakeholder Communities & Planning Sub-regions

Niagara County Stakeholder Communities:

- 12 Towns
- 3 Cities
- 5 Villages
- 3 Reservations
- 5 Sub-regions for planning purposes

Sub-regions by Community

Groups are identifying local issues & opportunities

Group A - T. Hartland; T. Royalton; V. Middleport

Group B – T. Cambria; T. Lockport; C. Lockport; T. Pendleton

Group C – V. Wilson; V. Barker; T. Somerset; T. Newfane; T. Wilson

Group D – T. Lewiston; T. Porter; V. Lewiston; V. Youngstown

Group E – C. Niagara Falls; T. Niagara; T. Wheatfield; C. North Tonawanda

Work in Progress – Five Plan Elements

Issues, Opportunities, Goals and Objectives are being identified for each Plan Element & by Sub-region:

- Land Use, Transportation & Environment
- Economic Development
- County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure
- Educational Institutions
- Health and Safety

Key Issues - Land Use & Transportation

Land Use & Transportation Issues


Group A - Preserve farmland & greenspace from sprawl; designate growth areas; vacancies along canal

Group B - Parks & open space; Escarpment district; economic development vs. farmland

Group C – Maintain agricultural character; industry and access to markets; ACOE permit regulations along lakefront

Group D – Lack of change; opportunities in Lewiston; development in Youngstown and Porter


Group E – Transportation-related issues; brownfields; change from open space to suburban development and infrastructure


 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Opportunities - Land Use & Transportation

Land Use & Transportation Opportunities

- Group A – Canal tourism; Rail access; agri-tourism
- Group B – Farmlands; Wine Trail; Comprehensive plans in place Lockport & Pendleton
- Group C – Route 18 & 104 access; Olcott & Wilson harbors; Rail access
- Group D – Riverfront and lakefront; ArtPark; Fort Niagara
- Group E – Niagara Falls; Upper & lower riverfront access; Niagara Falls airbase




 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Issues - Environment

Environment Issues

- Group A – Polluted lands, dumps & brownfields; water, soil and air quality; natural gas testing wells
- Group B – Escarpment protection; balance agriculture, development & loss of habitat; floodplain encroachment
- Group C – Agricultural waste and runoff; brownfields; water quality & drainage
- Group D – Ordinance Works; clean-up, control & oversight of the Ordinance Works
- Group E – Water quality; waterfront access; restoration of brownfields




 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Opportunities - Environment

Environment Opportunities

- Group A – Royalton Ravine; Canal; Nature trails
- Group B – Creeks & streams
- Group C – Lake Ontario; Agri-tourism; Harbors & State Parks
- Group D – Agriculture; Lakefront; Riverfront
- Group E – Waterfronts; Open space; Wildlife habitats





 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Issues - Economic Development

Economic Development Issues

- Group A – Keep farm products/processing local; small business expansion; upgrade infrastructure (sewer, natural gas, roads)
- Group B – High taxes esp. school taxes; Aging infrastructure; red tape & bureaucracy hinders ED
- Group C – NIMBY-ism; lack of sewer and natural gas; distance from main transportation routes
- Group D – Need to facilitate tourism; maintaining regional employment
- Group E – Challenges associated w/ OZ project; Need housing diversity; transportation services and need for multi-modes





 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Opportunities - Economic Development

Economic Development Opportunities

- Group A – Agri-tourism; Canal; Parks, recreation and conservation areas
- Group B – Wine Trail; NCCC; Erie Canal & Transit Road heritage corridors
- Group C – Harbor & lakefront; Road system; Potential uses of AES site in Somerset
- Group D – Geography of the area, rivers and lakes; Low cost of living and housing; Untapped potential of the area
- Group E – Niagara Falls; Riverfront areas




 **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

Key Issues - County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Issues

- Group A – Feeling isolated from rest of County; better emergency services & response times; inclusion in more County projects
- Group B – Redundant services; pros and cons of Lockport as County seat; need greater efficiency in service delivery
- Group C – Lack of County services & facilities; distance to services in cities; insufficient police coverage
- Group D – Sparse Sheriff patrols; distance to services in Lockport and Niagara Falls
- Group E – Poor road conditions in NF; poor conditions of County buildings; better access to services for aging population



Opportunities - County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Opportunities

Group A – Need mobile services (DMV, social services, etc.); more shared services needed; decentralize County to towns and villages

Group B – Consolidate districts esp. water

Group C – More bus service for elderly and rural areas; service consolidation esp. water district; service sharing – police, etc.

Group D – Ability to take care of ourselves and provide services where needed

Group E – Cities could use help from county in maintaining roads; NF Airport has great potential; RR rows have potential for trails

Identifying Potential Growth Areas

Potential growth areas are being identified from local plans and other sources of information.

Potential Growth Areas
Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Population Projections & Analysis

MPO projections indicate + 8.7% growth to 2030.

MPO PROJECTIONS POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population Projections & Analysis

Cornell projections indicate - 9.5 % decline.

CORNELL PROJECTIONS POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population Projections & Analysis

Using CommunityViz it is possible to see any range in between both extremes

ZERO GROWTH POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Work in Progress

- Establishing a Countywide Vision, Goals & Objectives
- Identifying Future Needs for Public Services & Facilities
- Prioritizing Capital Improvements & Investments in Infrastructure
- Identifying Strategies for
 - Strengthening the Local Economy
 - Protecting Important Natural Resources
 - Encouraging Desirable Development Patterns
 - Improving Quality of Life



Goals & Objectives

Goals & objectives are being prepared to address identified issues & opportunities and then these will be developed as action items in the Plan.

Issues being addressed include:

- Farmland protection and agricultural issues
- Growth, development and redevelopment opportunities
- Environmental protection and conservation measures
- Connections among Niagara County communities
- Economic development initiatives
- County services, facilities & infrastructure
- Education, public health & safety issues



Vision Statement Example #1

We the proud communities of Niagara County envision a future working together to create a world class living and working environment that befits the natural wonders and cultural heritage of our area. We will create sustainable economic health, protect and preserve our valuable and vital natural resources, and celebrate and enhance the unique character of each community. We will forge our future together with a sense of optimism, determination and connectedness to one another to assure that all residents and visitors enjoy a safe, healthy and productive environment.



Vision Statement Example #2

The Niagara County community is a collection of distinct municipalities working in collaboration to create a premier place to live, work and enjoy the fruit of our labor. Our legacy to future generations is the protection, preservation and conservation of our rich natural resources, productive lands and cultural heritage of our area in balance with sustainable economic vitality, quality job creation, physical health & well-being, and long-term safety and security.



What is your vision for Niagara County?



Important Reminders

- Public meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 27, 2008 at NCCC
- Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for October 1st, 2008 at NCCC
- Information exchange through the Stakeholders Communities Plan Steering Committee
- Plan Information is available through the County's website





Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #6** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, July 23, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Public Health and Safety

I. Introduction

Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed the Steering Committee members and other stakeholders to the meeting and provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan's status:

- In order to provide a complete picture of individual communities' issues/ opportunities and goals/objectives, more communities need to prepare information for their community profiles. Some of the issues and opportunities information collected at stakeholder meetings can be used to fill these profiles in, but goals and objectives information is unique to each community and should be provided by the communities, perhaps as identified through existing local plans.

II. Visioning Exercise

Using two examples of vision statements of Niagara County, Mr. Kalina asked meeting attendees for their ideas or key words that could be used to describe Niagara County as it is now and words to describe the County in 20 years. A draft vision statement will be prepared for review at the next committee meeting.

- Descriptions of the County as it currently stands included:
 - Steeped in history
 - Unique
 - Premier
 - Mostly rural
 - Undiscovered beauty / beauty of our situation
 - We have Niagara Falls
 - Identification
 - Un-stereotyped
 - Border community
 - Take Canada for granted
 - Agricultural potential
 - Emerging viticulture
 - Locked in a megalopolis
 - Refreshing waterfront
 - Collaborative communities
 - Four seasons – refreshing weather

- Descriptions of the County in 2028 included:
 - World class tourist destination (that takes advantage of it)
 - Viticulture
 - Fishing
 - Cultural heritage: agricultural and historical resources preserved
 - Geographically located to support regional and industrial commerce
 - Healthy communities/healthy environment
 - Envious freshwater and water power
 - Easy to get to / not congested / spacious
 - Top educational facilities
 - Great place to live and raise a family
 - Continuous economic growth
 - Strong healthcare system nearby
 - National commerce
 - Safe
 - High quality jobs
 - Prepared and diverse workforce
 - Gentle lifestyle

III. Comprehensive Plan Objectives

- Working goals and objectives were presented for County Services, Infrastructure and Facilities and for Educational Institutions.
- The working collection of goals and objectives was available at the meeting for review. Steering committee members were asked for their input on these goals and objectives.

IV. Introduction of Topic and Instructions

As at the previous Steering Committee meetings, community representatives divided into groups, based on sub-regions of the County. Each group included about 2 or 3 Plan Steering Committee representatives and varying numbers of representatives from public health and public safety organizations and agencies from throughout the County. Because of a shortage of representatives from Group B (the Towns of Cambria, Lockport, and Pendleton and the City of Lockport), this part of the County was not discussed separately at the meeting. The two representatives from this part of the County joined other groups. The four groups discussed questions as found on the Detailed Agenda for the meeting relative to public health and public safety in Niagara County. At the conclusion of the breakout session, each group shared its findings.

Discussion Question #1 (20 minutes)

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **issue or challenge** facing your community today **relative to public safety**? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. What is the overall sense of security / safety in the neighborhoods in your community?
2. How would you rate the “visibility” of police patrols in your community? Who provides primary police coverage in your community (local police, Sheriff, State police)?
3. Based on your experience, are response times / coverage for emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) adequate in your community?
4. How is your community affected by proximity to the Canadian border?
5. What is the level of awareness in your community of the County’s efforts to coordinate emergency / disaster preparation programs?
6. What types of events has or might your community experienced that would require major emergency response? What assets does your community possess that would help it during an emergency?
7. What do you perceive to be the biggest challenges to public safety in your community? How about within the County and/or the region?

Discussion Question #2 (5 minutes)

*What is the most significant **asset or opportunity** that currently exists in your community **relative to public safety**? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Discussion Question #3 (20 minutes)

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **issue or challenge** facing your community today **relative to public health**? Do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and refer to some consideration points below to help with the discussion.*

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. Does your community have adequate access to healthcare facilities, including hospitals? Does your community have adequate coverage in terms of ambulatory services, including response times?
2. Do you feel your community would have adequate access to health services in the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster or otherwise?
3. What are the biggest public health concerns within your community? Are these ongoing concerns? Are there any issues that might be classified as health threats?
4. Does your community or organizations within your community offer programs aimed at improving public health/wellness? What types of programs (i.e. nutrition, vaccinations, exercise, anti-smoking, etc.)?
5. Is environmental health (i.e. water and air quality) a significant issue within your community? If so, why?
6. What is the level of awareness in your community of the County Health Department's programs and services?

Discussion Question #4 (5 minutes)

What is the most significant asset or opportunity that currently exists in your community relative to public health? Again, do not consider your sub-region at this time, only your community and consider the same points above.

Each group was asked to provide the following:

- An overall list of the issues and challenges identified by the group.
- The top three issues and challenges as voted on by the group that represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

IV. Reconvened as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the second breakout session. Each of the four groups was asked to provide a summary of their discussions, conclusions reached, and the lists of issues and opportunities each created. **These are provided below by Group.**

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Speed zones and caution light needed (104 & Checker Tavern)
- Emergency response time: Police – no Niagara County Sheriff or NYS Police presence
- Offer a health and wellness center
- Perceived health issues / lack of education-related to FMC
- Lack of mobility in emergency situations (Hartland, Middleport, Gasport)
- Need for local disaster plan and training in Royalton for increased train traffic and FMC

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Local police force presence
- Safe community – low crime
- Number of fire companies (5 in Royalton) – all work well together
- Ambulance services

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- [Included in Public Safety]

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- [Included in Public Safety]

RESPONSES from GROUP B

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Only two representatives from Group B's communities were present; this group merged with other groups.

RESPONSES from GROUP C

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Police – lack of quality coverage
- Fire – increasing demands on the volunteer fire service / ambulance service / EMT status – regulatory actions are a constant threat. 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 – know when to refer
- Demand on ambulance vs. fire trucks but readiness of both – too much concentration on trucks in relation to their use.
- Border – telephone reporting system (honor system) doesn't work
- Border / Water – means an additional strain on local volunteer fire companies – water rescue / boat maintenance costs

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Border – Border Patrols means a little extra police force
- Coast Guard & County Sheriff's Water Patrol means an extra layer of policing
- Volunteer fire companies mean that there is more interaction with the public than in cities with paid fire companies

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Border is porous and means there are a lot of "targets"
- No viable major routes for access / emergency evacuation

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- Disaster prep is pretty good
- Strong volunteer fire forces

RESPONSES from GROUP D

Towns of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Villages of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Concern with response times for Sheriff's Dept.

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- You see the Sheriff's Patrol Boat on the water frequently 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."

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Concerns w/ LOOW site, Chemical Waste Management and Modern Disposal in our community
- Sewer plant reaching capacity

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- 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

RESPONSES from GROUP E

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield, City of North Tonawanda

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Safety of Tourists – NF, Wheatfield (#1)
- Wheatfield – no workable emergency plan (#2)
- Traffic circulation – under and over-utilized roads (#3) – plenty of roads in some areas and not enough in others
- NF – continual stream of tourists and a large percentage of underprivileged residents
- As community changes, the County is slow to change w/public health and safety
- Overabundance of infrastructure
- 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
 - Outmigration
 - Poverty related issues
 - Multi school districts
 - Population down, infrastructure in abundance, costs increasing
- Border crossing relationships
- Business, quality of life

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Military presence – secondary public safety support
 - Encourage development for military to be maintained and supported and influence the area

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Multiple fire and ambulance districts (#1)
- Social services – large part of County budgets (#2)
- Abundance of older adults (#3)
- NF: noise pollution, abundance of dogs – stress levels are high
- Heart disease and obesity higher in NC than downstate
- Talk about increasing waste imports to the County
- Politicians have begun to “politick” rather than legislate

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- Array of medical facilities (#1)
- Military airbase – in a central location (supplemental fire fighting services, if needed)
- Local fire departments – have specialized training
- Fresh water
- Sewage treatment
- EMTs, Fire, Police – arrive quickly in NF

The meeting ended at approximately 7 pm.



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #7** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, August 27, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Visioning & Development Suitability Analysis

I. Introduction

- Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed meeting attendees and summarized the meeting's agenda. Handouts available included:
 - Notes of July 23rd Plan Steering Committee Meeting
 - Community profiles
 - Draft "Connectivity" map
 - PowerPoint presentation summary
- Mr. Kalina introduced Peter Young of Community Oriented Geography, who has been using CommunityViz geographic information systems (GIS) software to analyze development suitability criteria countywide.
- Mr. Kalina reminded Plan Steering Committee members to provide input on behalf of their communities by way of the Community Profiles.
 - A question was raised regarding the major employer data on the community profiles. Specifically, the most recent draft of the Community Profiles does not reflect input previously provided on major employers. Mr. Kalina said that the previously provided information would be added to the profiles.
 - Mr. Kalina indicated that the Community Profiles have been reformatted to accommodate building permit data and the additional information has taken up any remaining room for community photos. However, photos will likely be used on the cover of the Plan and elsewhere in the document, so Steering Committee members are still encouraged to provide them.

II. Plan Status Update

- Mr. Kalina provided an update on the status of the Planning Process
 - The planning process is entering Phase III, Plan Preparation, wrapping up Phase II, Analysis.
 - The County's Vision Statement has been developed, based on Steering Committee input. Comments are invited on this Vision Statement.
 - Draft Goals and Objectives have been developed for each focus area of the plan (Land Use & Environment, Economic Development, etc.).
 - The cities, towns and villages in Niagara County have been classified in a matrix according to their overall development pattern (urban, suburban or rural) and the general development trend seen (developed, developing or undeveloped). Comments are invited on this matrix.
 - This matrix can be used to organize the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that the Plan both respects

- communities' differences and is relevant to their common issues, even as these communities change over time.
- The CommunityViz analysis continues to be developed and refined as data is added and updated.

III. Overview of CommunityViz Analysis

- Peter Young presented the CommunityViz analysis for the Comprehensive Plan, as it has progressed to date.
 - The CommunityViz analysis is intended to provide guidance on which parts of the County are better suited for development/redevelopment and which parts are better suited for natural resource preservation, based on planning principles and the geographic data compiled to date.
 - For the initial run of the CommunityViz analysis, only parcels near previously identified "development/redevelopment centers" were evaluated.
 - The analysis of parcels' development/redevelopment suitability was based on ten suitability factors, including:
 - ENVIRONMENT – Whether or not a parcel overlaps with the combined environmental constraints data.
 - A higher percentage of overlap with environmentally sensitive areas results in a lower score.
 - Environmentally sensitive areas currently include 100-year floodplains, agricultural district areas with prime ag soils, stream/riparian corridors, and wetlands (all DEC wetlands and NWI wetlands larger than 20 acres).
 - SUSTAINABILITY – Proximity to the draft development/redevelopment areas as currently defined from local plans.
 - Parcels closer to these areas get higher scores.
 - INFRASTRUCTURE 1 – Proximity to sewer districts.
 - A parcel gets a higher score if it is in or near a sewer district.
 - INFRASTRUCTURE 2 – Proximity to major roads.
 - A parcel gets a higher score if it is near a major road.
 - CURRENT ZONING – Within appropriate zoning district.
 - Parcels get higher scores if zoned commercial (C, C1, C2, C3), business (B, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5), light industrial (LI or IP), manufacturing (M1), mixed use (RC, VB), multi-family residential (R3), or planned unit development (PUD).
 - CURRENT SOCIAL FABRIC – Proximity to existing community anchors.
 - Parcels get higher scores if their property class code is 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), 710-715 (Manufacturing), or 800 (Public Services).
 - AVAILABLE SPACE – Whether or not the parcel is vacant.
 - Parcels get higher scores if they have a "vacant" property class code (300 - 399).
 - PUBLIC SERVICE 1 – Available School Capacity.
 - Parcels get higher scores if they are located in a school district with available capacity.
 - PUBLIC SERVICE 2 – Proximity to Fire Stations.
 - Parcels get higher scores if near existing fire stations.

- DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS – Whether or not the area is expected to gain or lose population based on population projections.
 - Parcels get higher scores if they are located in a TAZ with projected population growth.
 - This measure uses the TAZ-based population projections from GBNRTC, not the projections from Cornell University.
- The relative weights of these factors in determining an area’s overall score can be modified, using CommunityViz software.
- The analysis not only rates parcels’ suitability, but can be used to aggregate parcel information in order to rate the overall suitability of the identified development/redevelopment centers themselves.
- Comments and Questions from the Floor (paraphrased)

Q: Can the software be set up to differentiate between “development” and “redevelopment” centers?

A: The analysis may allow that eventually, but it is not ready to be used at that level of detail just yet.

Q: Some elements of the Social Fabric layer should be eliminated (e.g., the Army Base, the LOOW / CWM site, Bell Aerospace in Wheatfield, “notorious” brownfield sites, etc.)

A: We will take note of these and make sure that they are not included in the next run of the analysis.

Q: Some sewer districts appear to be missing, specifically Middleport, Youngstown, and Lewiston.

A: Thank you. We will make sure these omissions are corrected.

Q: Why does the rating of centers seem to show everything north and east of Lockport as poorly suited for development?

A: The most likely explanation is that the development/redevelopment centers themselves need to be re-evaluated. That is one goal of the analysis: to assist in identifying development/redevelopment centers that maximize community assets and minimize the development of lands where valuable natural resources are present.

Q: Will this application be available to my community? Will we be able to modify the weighted factors used to determine suitability?

A: We are in the process of identifying the best way to make the application available to the public. Niagara County will have the model and the underlying data.

IV. Wrap-Up

- The next, and final, Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee meeting will be held sometime in September with the date, time, and location to be determined.
- The Public Hearing is tentatively scheduled for October 1st at NCCC.
- Walt Kalina reminded meeting attendees that there is a public meeting immediately following today’s Plan Steering Committee meeting and he encouraged attendees to stay for this meeting, as well.

The meeting ended at approximately 7 pm.

Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Information Meeting

August 27, 2008



Niagara Communities
Comprehensive Plan



Today's Agenda

- I. **Project Information Update**
County Website
Citizens Guide
- II. **Phase I Existing Conditions**
Plan Chapters & Countywide Mapping
Stakeholder Community Profiles
- III. **Phase II Analysis**
Issues & Opportunities
Vision, Goals & Objectives
CommunityViz Analyses
Strategies & Recommendations
- IV. **Phase III Plan Preparation**
Draft Review & Public Hearing



Overall Guiding Principles - Planning Process

- *To Enhance Communication*
- *To Facilitate Collaboration*
- *To Improve Connections*



Niagara County Website

Project Information and Posted Materials

- Project Schedules
- Meeting Notes & Agendas
- Draft Plan Chapters, Community Profiles
- Draft Plan GIS Mapping & Analysis
- Links to Other Planning Sites of Interest



Citizens' Guide

The first guide to Niagara County Government

- Accessible through the County website
- Directory of County officials
- Overview of County budget
- Information on County departments & services



Phase I Existing Conditions Information

- Review of Previous Initiatives
(Chapter II of Plan)
- Countywide Summary & GIS Mapping
of Existing Conditions
(Chapter III of Plan)
- Stakeholder Communities Profiles
(Chapter IV of Plan)



Countywide &
community-
specific
information
and mapping
for better
decision-
making.



Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Five Plan Elements

- Land Use & Environment
- Economic Development
- County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure
- Education
- Public Health & Safety

Existing Conditions

Chapter II is a summary of previous initiatives and studies that formed the basis for more detailed information in the Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter III consists of a snapshot of existing conditions in the County focused on the five Plan Elements including more than 40 countywide maps.

Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Countywide Mapping

GIS maps contain information on existing environmental resources & land use.

Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Profiles provide a quick overview of important community information.

Stakeholder Community Profiles

- Community profiles provide a brief summary of each community in Niagara County including land use & socioeconomic conditions
- Profiles contain information on local issues, opportunities, goals & objectives, in some cases based on local comprehensive plans
- Profiles are a snapshot of local conditions and can be used for benchmarking

Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Each stakeholder community has a profile summarizing existing conditions, local issues, goals & objectives.

Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Niagara County Stakeholder Communities:

- 12 Towns
- 3 Cities
- 5 Villages
- 3 Reservations

5 Sub-regions for planning purposes

Stakeholder Communities & Planning Sub-regions

DRAFT

Niagara County Comprehensive Plan

Issues & Opportunities

- Each community invited to participate as members of a Steering Committee
- Focus of several meetings was on identifying significant issues & opportunities specific to each community and to each sub-region according to each plan element



Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Land Use & Transportation Issues

Key Issues & Needs - Land Use & Transportation

- Preserve farmland & greenspace from sprawl
- Designate growth areas & address vacant lands along canal
- Protect parklands & open space
- Promote economic development and farming
- Maintain rural agricultural character
- Enhance local industries and access to markets
- Improve overall lack of change in communities
- Address transportation needs and alternatives
- Encourage brownfield redevelopment
- Manage changes in character from rural to suburban





Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Land Use & Transportation Opportunities

Key Opportunities - Land Use & Transportation

- Canal tourism
- Agri-tourism
- Farmlands
- Wine Trail
- Local comprehensive plans in place
- Olcott & Wilson harbors
- Riverfront and lakefront
- ArtPark and Fort Niagara
- Niagara Falls, upper & lower riverfront access
- Niagara Falls airbase





Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Environmental Issues

Key Issues & Needs - Environment

- Clean-up polluted lands, dumps & brownfields
- Protect quality of water, soil and air
- Local concern with natural gas test wells
- Protect Niagara Escarpment
- Balance agriculture, development & loss of habitat
- Floodplain encroachment
- Agricultural waste and runoff
- Clean-up, control & oversight of Ordinance Works
- Improve waterfront access
- Restoration of brownfield areas






Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Environment Opportunities

Key Opportunities - Environment

- Royalton Ravine
- Nature trails
- Erie Canal
- Creeks & streams
- Lake Ontario, harbors
- State Parks
- Agricultural lands
- Waterfronts - lakefront & riverfront
- Open spaces
- Wildlife habitats






Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Economic Development Issues

Key Issues & Needs - Economic Development

- Keep farm products & processing local
- Expand small business investment;
- Upgrade aging public infrastructure (sewer, roads, nat. gas)
- Control high taxes esp. school taxes
- Reduce red tape & bureaucracy that hinders Econ. Devel.
- NIMBY-ism and negative attitudes toward change
- Lack of sewer and natural gas in rural areas
- Distances from main transportation routes
- Need to facilitate tourism
- Maintaining regional employment
- Need housing diversity
- Transportation & distances to services, provide multi-modes






Niagara Community Charter
Comprehensive Plan

Economic Development Opportunities

Key Opportunities - Economic Development

- Agri-tourism
- Erie Canal, parks, recreation & conservation areas
- Wine Trail
- NCCC
- Transit Road, heritage corridors
- Harbors & lakefront
- Potential uses of AES site in Somerset
- Geography of the area, rivers and lakes
- Low cost of living and housing
- Untapped potential of the area
- Niagara Falls and riverfront areas






Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Issues

Key Issues & Needs County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

- Feeling isolated from rest of County
- Improve emergency services & response times
- Inclusion in more County projects
- Reduce redundant services
- Pros and cons of Lockport as County seat
- Need greater efficiency in service delivery
- Lack of County services & facilities in rural areas
- Distance to services provided only in cities
- Insufficient police coverage esp. Sheriff patrols
- Poor road conditions in Niagara Falls
- Poor conditions of County buildings
- Need better access to services for aging population






Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Opportunities

Key Opportunities County Services, Facilities & Infrastructure

- Need mobile services (DMV, social services, etc.)
- Need more shared services – police, etc.
- Decentralize County services to towns and villages
- Consolidate special districts esp. water
- Need more bus service for elderly and rural areas
- Local ability to take care of ourselves & provide services
- Cities could use help from County in maintaining roads
- NF Airport has great potential
- Railroad ROWs have potential for trails







Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

Education Issues

Key Issues & Needs Education

- Address workforce needs w/ tech classes (e.g. agriculture), computers, Wi-Fi, library, resources, software/hardware
- School tax burden increasing as population decreases
- Need NCCC satellite facility
- Too many administrators & duplication of services
- Need uniform teacher salaries
- Find sources of funding/revenue other than taxes
- Fuel costs and dispersed populations in rural areas
- Academic programs to match community/industry needs
- Need community centers for sports and athletics
- Improve economic base to retain students
- Teach civics and local history – promote civic engagement






Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

Education Opportunities

Key Opportunities Education

- Some districts have excess capacity w/o new construction
- Education programs at college level can be better tied to County's marketing & business development
- Nearly all districts have seen improved test scores
- Consolidation of administrative/business functions may be possible
- Schools are community centers, clean & safe
- Students in rural districts get personalized attention
- County's college & university can meet range of needs
- BOCES facilitates districts' needs/ oriented to job needs
- Schools are major employers
- School facilities and libraries contribute to quality of life





Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

Public Health & Services Issues

Key Issues & Needs Public Health & Services

- Improve response times and police presence (State & County)
- Offer health and wellness center
- Concerns with local mobility in emergency situations and local disaster planning
- Increasing time demands on volunteers
- Water rescue places demands on local departments
- Concern with hazardous waste sites and waste imports
- Proliferation of services – requires need based analysis
- Need workable local emergency plans
- Concern with safety of tourists
- Social services, budgets and abundance of older adults
- Heart disease, stress & obesity concerns in County






Niagara County
Comprehensive
Development Plan

Public Health & Services Opportunities

Key Opportunities Public Health & Services

- Safe communities and low crime
- Number of fire companies – all work well together
- Border Patrol, Sheriff Patrol Boat and Coast Guard provide extra police services
- Disaster preparation is pretty good
- Abundance of EMS and health care facilities
- Community police forces
- Active volunteer fire departments
- Military presence enhances public safety
- Fresh water






Draft Vision Statement

Vision

Niagara County - known world wide as the home of natural wonders: Niagara Falls, the Niagara River & Gorge, the Niagara Escarpment and much more. We are a composite of unique communities steeped in history and prepared for the future. We are working together to ensure that our gift to future generations is a sustainable environment that protects rich natural resources, conserves productive lands and celebrates cultural heritage.

Niagara County - a world class destination that offers something for everyone, from vibrant historic waterfront cities, towns and villages, to the undiscovered rural beauty and gentle lifestyle of our farming communities.

Niagara County - a center of national and international commerce, and a safe and healthy place to raise a family, attend fine institutions of learning, find high quality employment, be part of a well-prepared and productive workforce, and live comfortably.






Goals & Objectives

Goals & objectives are being prepared to address identified issues & enhance opportunities. These will translate into implementable action items in the Plan.

Key goals and objectives are centered around a number of important topics including:

- Protecting the long-term viability of agriculture, prime farmlands and rural character by managing sprawl
- Implementing sustainable management practices to promote open space conservation and protection of resources and environmentally sensitive lands
- Increasing connectivity, coordination and collaboration among Niagara County communities
- Enhancing communication and information sharing among communities and all levels of government






Goals & Objectives (continued)

Key goals and objectives are centered around:

- Maintaining existing infrastructure and prioritizing capital improvements to enhance redevelopment and infill opportunities
- Increasing efficiency and cost savings in County services and facilities utilizing state-of-the-art technologies and team-centered management
- Enhancing accessibility to education and County services
- Facilitate the creation and use of energy saving technologies and alternative modes of transportation
- Aligning education and training programs in preparing the workforce for future needs of businesses




Community Matrix

Land Use & Development Character

	Developed	Developing	Undeveloped
Urban	C. Lockport C. Niagara Falls C. North Tonawanda	N/A	N/A
Suburban	V. Lewiston T. Niagara V. Youngstown	T. Lockport T. Pendleton T. Wheatfield	N/A
Rural	V. Barker V. Middleport V. Wilson	T. Cambria T. Lewiston T. Newfane	T. Hartland T. Porter T. Royalton T. Somerset T. Wilson

Strategies & recommendations are being organized in the Plan by different types of existing development character.






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Strategies & Recommendations

Strategies & recommendations are being developed based in part on the analyses of some key natural and man-made factors that may influence land development trends and patterns, or in turn be influenced by land use development and related decisions, such as the provision of public infrastructure. Considering these factors in different ways using GIS database mapping and *CommunityViz* modeling as planning tools can result in alternative development strategies for the various sub-regions of the County.





Important Reminders

- **Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for October 1st, 2008 at NCCC**
- **Plan Information is available through the County's website**

www.niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp





Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #8** **Niagara County Center for Economic Development**

Wednesday, September 17, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Community Connections

I. Introduction

- Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed meeting attendees and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. Mr. Kalina reminded everyone that this was the last scheduled meeting of the Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee, but encouraged everyone to continue to communicate their ideas and community profile input by way of email.
- Mr. Kalina made note of an important change in the Comprehensive Plan's schedule: the Public Hearing scheduled for October 1, 2008 is being postponed until after an additional five public meetings can be held in locations throughout the County. An initial draft of the Plan will be available for review prior to these meetings, which will be scheduled for early 2009.
- Handouts available included:
 - Notes of the August 29, 2008 Steering Committee Meeting
 - "Suitability Scores by Parcel" map based on CommunityViz
 - Suitability Factor Rating Form
 - Community Profiles
 - Vision Statement

II. CommunityViz Analysis

- Mr. Kalina introduced the countywide development/redevelopment suitability analysis being prepared using CommunityViz geographic information system (GIS) software. The data being prepared can be utilized by individual communities to define the boundaries of potential development or redevelopment centers within or adjacent to existing communities.
- Mr. Kalina explained that the CommunityViz analysis had been fine-tuned since the August 29th meeting. (For details on the model's methodology, see the August 29, 2008 meeting notes.) Changes to the model included:
 - Addition of an "Agricultural Districts" suitability factor, which lowers the overall suitability score of parcels within agricultural districts.
 - Elimination of remedial sites, landfills, wastewater treatment plants and parks from consideration as "social fabric anchors". Individual communities will need to determine how to integrate these uses into their long-range plans.
- Meeting attendees received a copy of the development/redevelopment suitability rating map produced by considering 11 factors for each parcel in the County. In general terms, the Comprehensive Plan will recommend preservation strategies for areas with relatively low scores and techniques for encouraging sustainable development in areas with relatively high scores. Mr. Kalina clarified that areas with

low scores are not considered undevelopable and areas with high scores should not be considered “open to development.” The suitability ratings are meant to assist communities in matching development ideas with the locations in which they are most appropriate and to help identify resource protection priorities.

III. Breakout Sessions

- Meeting attendees split into smaller groups (by the table at which they were seated, not by planning sub-regions as was done at previous meeting) for two tasks: ranking the CommunityViz suitability factors for the portion of the County in which their community is located and discussing physical connections between communities in the County. Community connections discussed included:
 - A bikeway along the lakeside portion of the Seaway Trail, connecting to riverside trails.
 - Possible use of the County’s many snowmobile trails for equestrian use. This led to an extended discussion of the possibility of expanding equestrian activities in Niagara County generally. [The question was raised of how many horses are currently in Niagara County: according to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there are 1,698 horses and ponies in the County, or 2.3% of the statewide total.]
 - People-moving systems (east-west and north-south), transit and rail.
 - Improvements in connections to specific destinations, such as the Seneca-Niagara Casino and medical facilities (especially from rural communities).
 - Toronto-Niagara rail connection.
 - Connections between wineries using equestrian trails.

IV. Future Meetings and Wrap-Up

- This was the last scheduled meeting of the Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Kalina thanked all of the participants for their time and for being such excellent partners in the planning process. The County is planning five additional public meetings, one in each of the planning sub-regions of the County to broaden the public participation/community outreach process. During the meeting, Mr. Ben Bidell, Planner with the Niagara County Department of Economic Development asked meeting attendees for suggestions on where to hold additional meetings. Suggested locations included:
 - Upper River Communities:
 - Niagara Falls City Hall
 - Wheatfield Town Hall
 - North Tonawanda City Hall
 - Lakefront Communities:
 - Wilson High School Auditorium
 - Barker High School Auditorium
 - Newfane Community Center (Old Miller Fire Hose Co.)
 - Lower River Communities
 - Lewiston-Porter School District – school facilities
 - Eastern Communities
 - Gasport Elementary School
 - Central Communities
 - Lockport City Hall
 - Palace Theatre

The meeting ended at approximately 8 pm.