

# Chapter III

## Environmental Setting & Overview

### of Existing Conditions

#### Setting and History

##### A. Geographic Setting

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

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

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





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

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

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

## B. History of Niagara County

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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The County is divided into 19 legislative districts.*

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

## C. Political and Administrative Structure

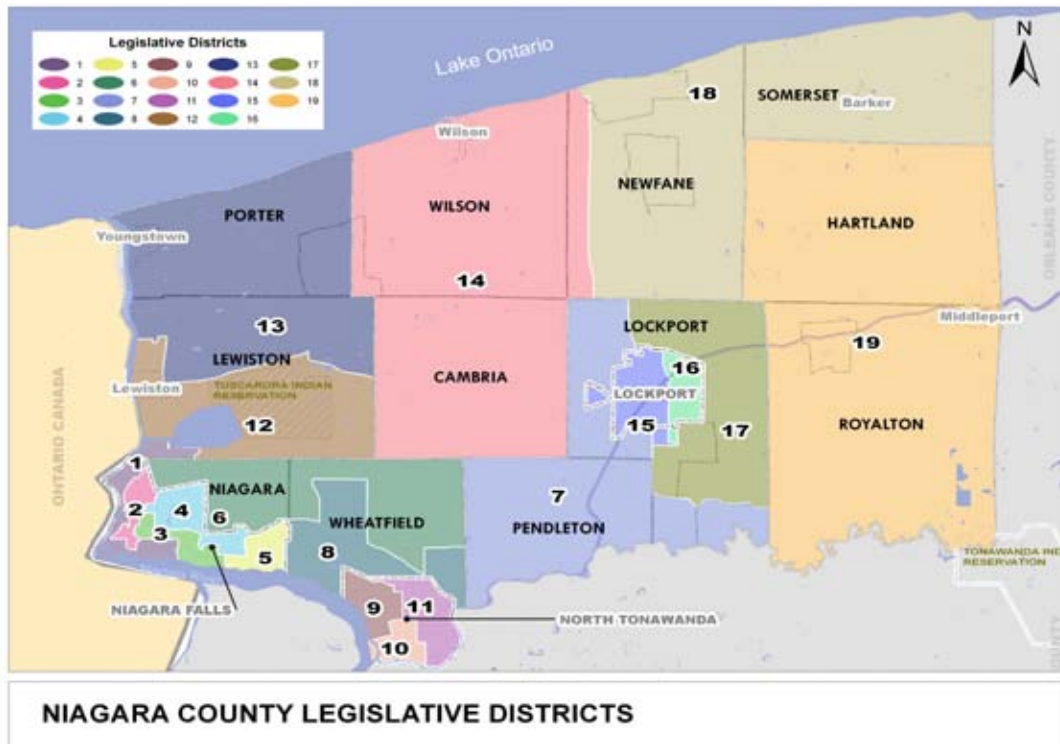
Niagara County is a non-charter county under New York State law which means it has not adopted its own charter. As a result, Niagara County operates under New York’s County Law. Thirty-seven of New York’s 57 counties (not including the five borough’s of New York City) operate under this non-charter form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

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

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

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

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



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

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

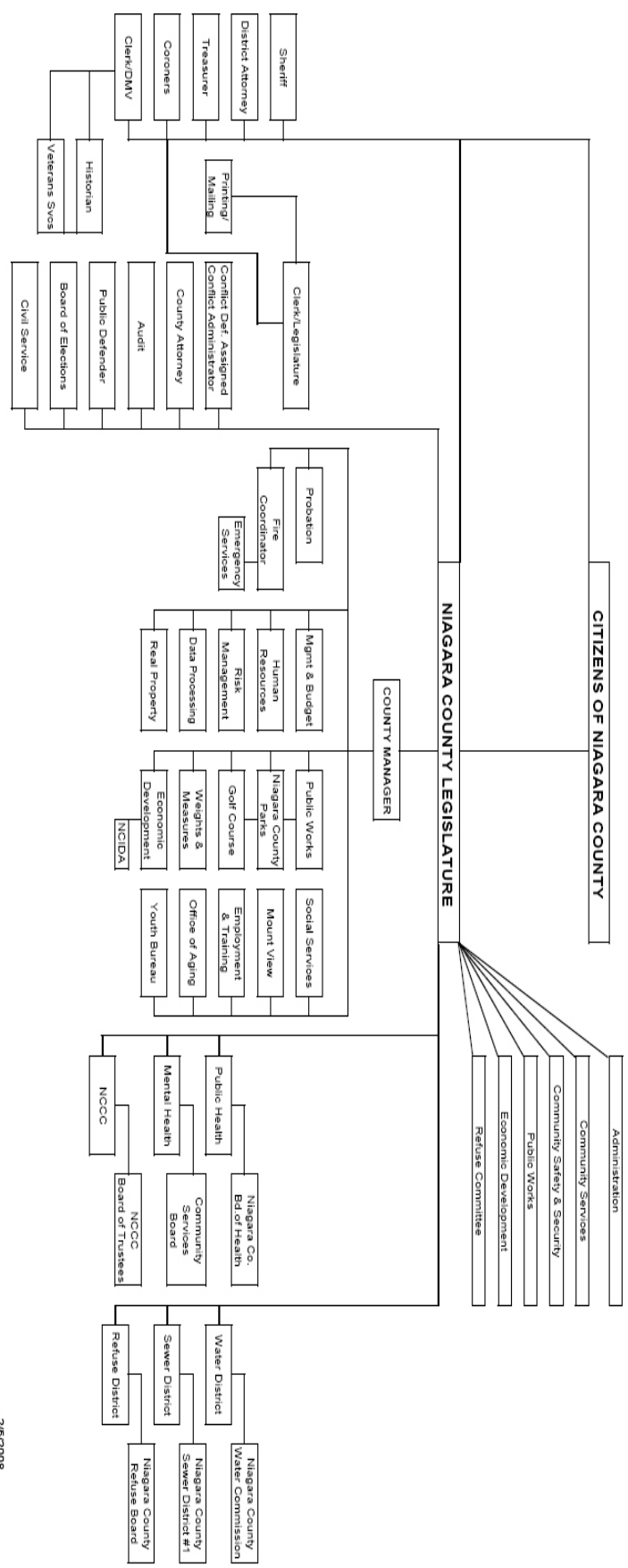
The County Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration and management of operations by the County. The Niagara County Manager is an appointed position of the County Legislature under a four year contract.

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

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

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

# **NIAGARA COUNTY ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



2/5/2008

## D. Environmental Features

### 1. Climate

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

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

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

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

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

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

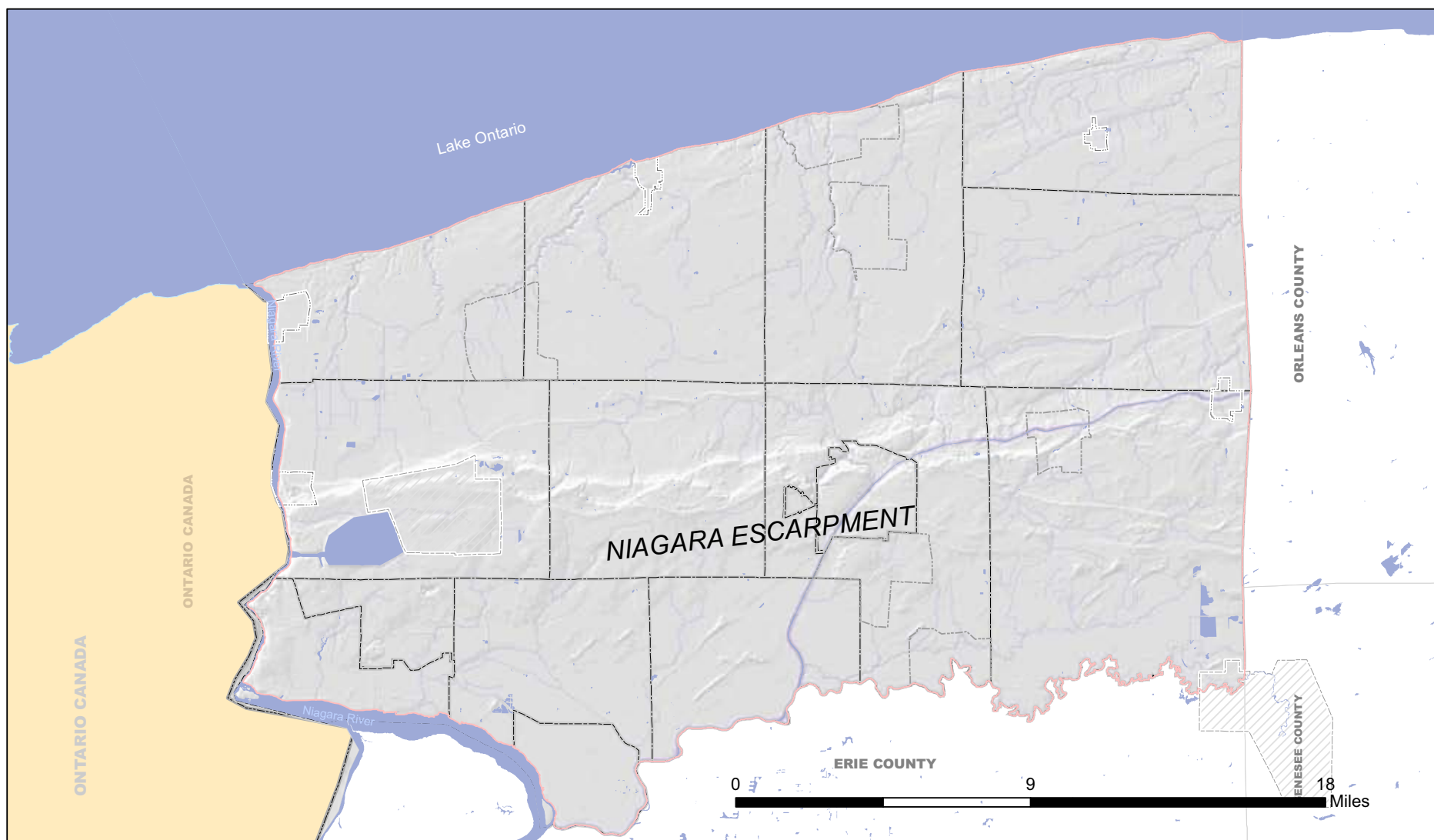
### 2. Topography

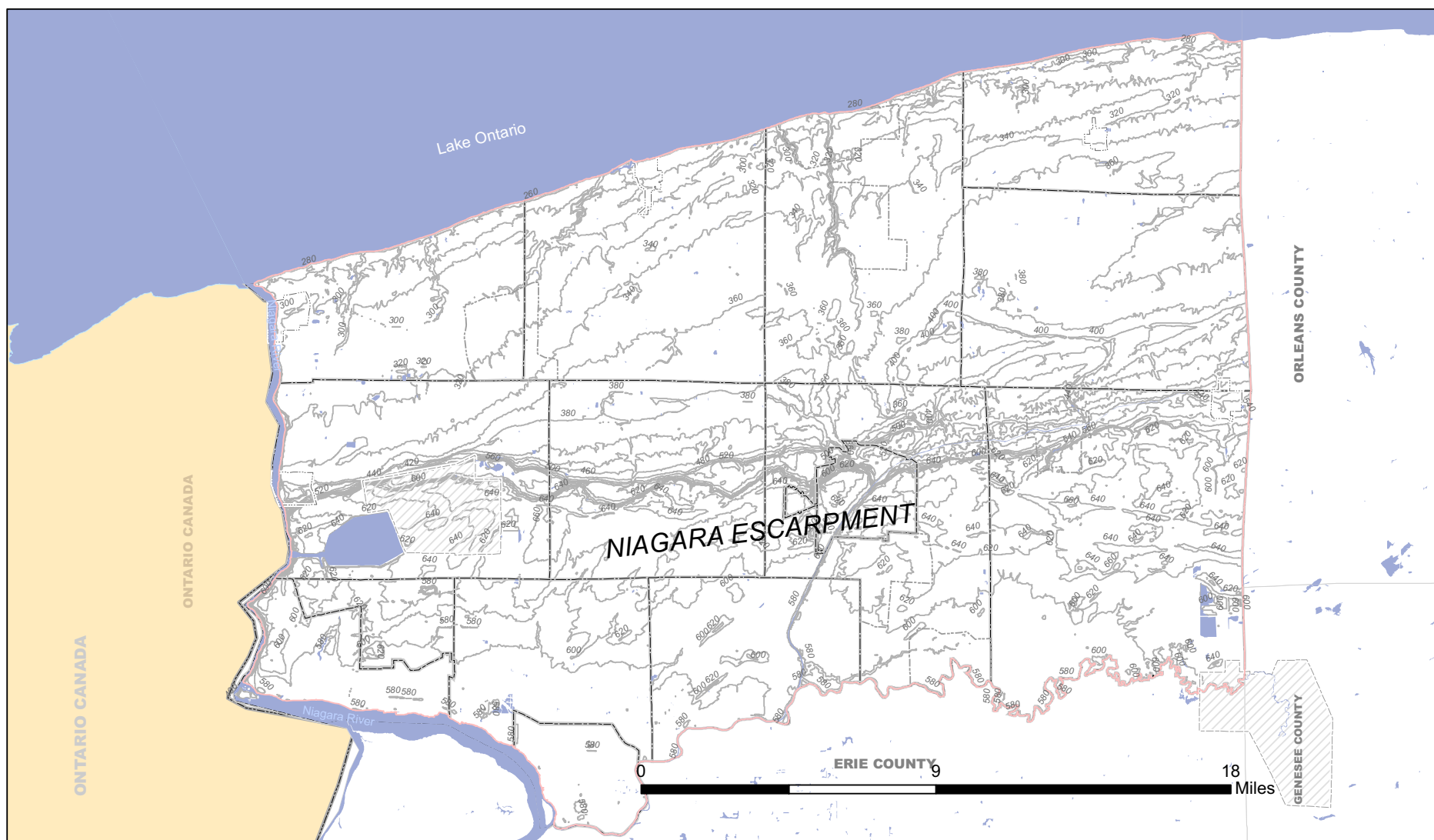
Niagara County is located within the Huron and Ontario Lake Plain. The Ontario Plain extends from the shore of Lake Ontario approximately 8 miles southward to the Niagara Escarpment (see Figure III.D.1a. Relief Map).

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

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







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

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



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

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

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

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

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

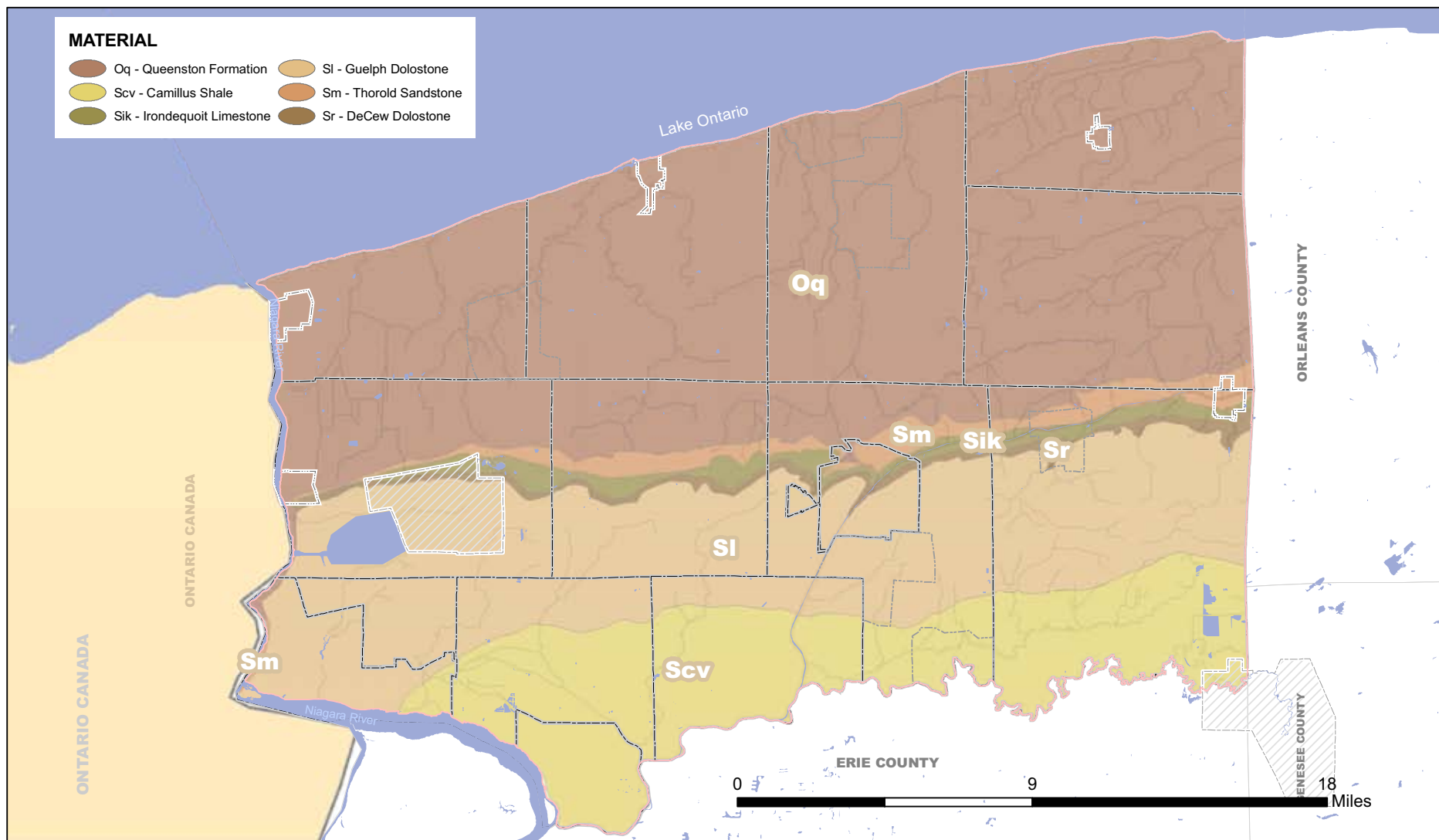
### *3. Geology*

#### *a. Bedrock*

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

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

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



## b. Surficial Deposits

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

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

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

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

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

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

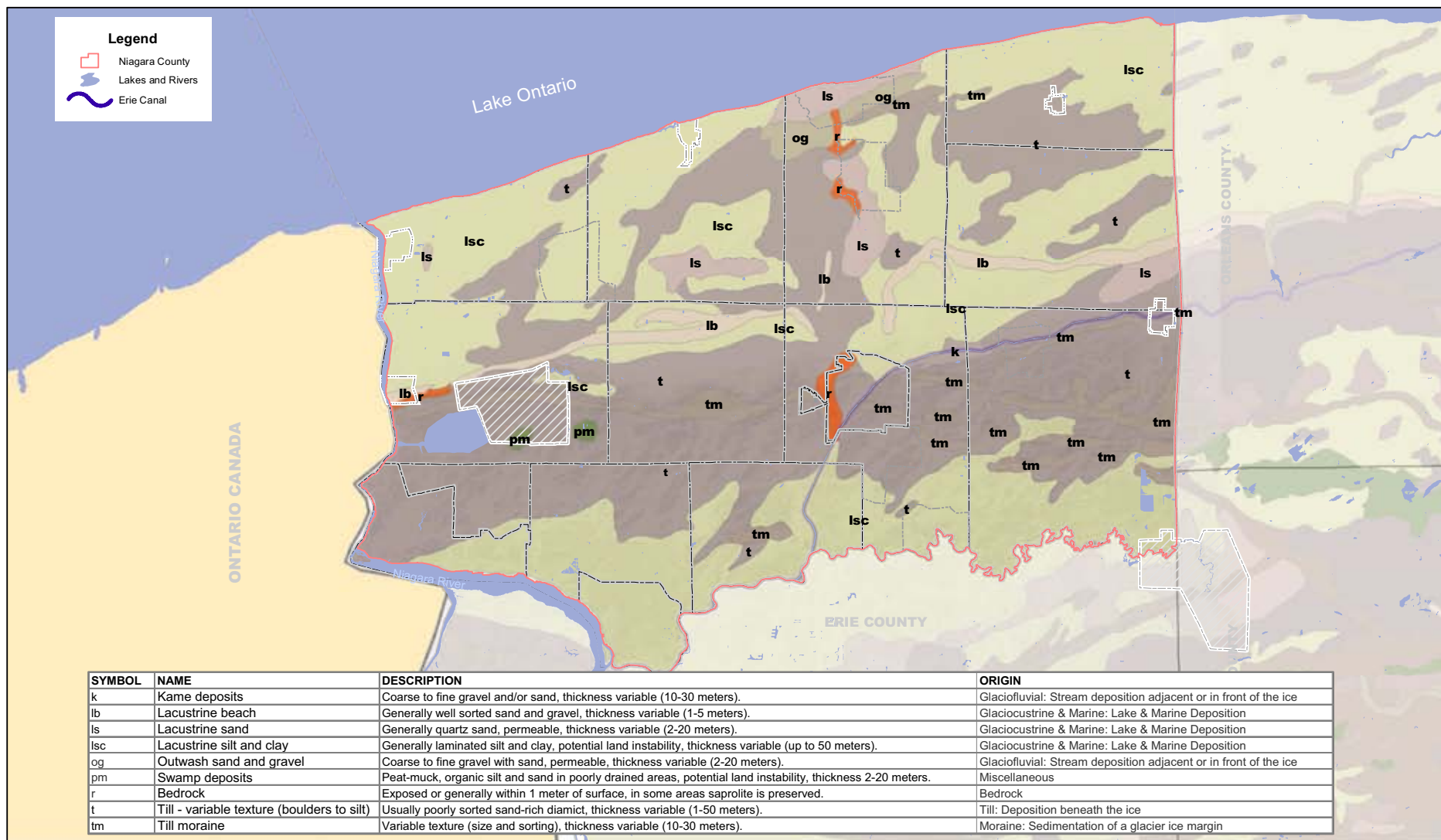
## 4. Soils

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

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

*Important details on soils found in Niagara County and elsewhere can be found at the Natural Resources Conservation Service website at [www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app](http://www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app)*





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

soils in Niagara County.

### **Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Glacial Till**

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

#### *Appleton-Hilton-Sun association*

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

#### *Hilton-Ovid-Ontario association*

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

#### *Lockport-Ovid association*

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

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

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

#### *Howard-Arkport-Phelps association*

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

#### *Otisville-Altmar-Fredon-Stafford association*

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

### **Areas Dominated by Soils Formed in Lake Laid Sands**

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

#### ***Minoa-Galen-Elnora association***

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

#### ***Claverack-Cosad-Elnora association***

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

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

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

#### ***Niagara- Collamer association***

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

#### ***Canandaigua-Raynham-Rhinebeck association***

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

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

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

#### ***Rhinebeck-Ovid-Madalin association***

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

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

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

#### *Odessa-Lakemont-Ovid association*

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

#### ***Hydric Soils***

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

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

### ***5. Water Resources***

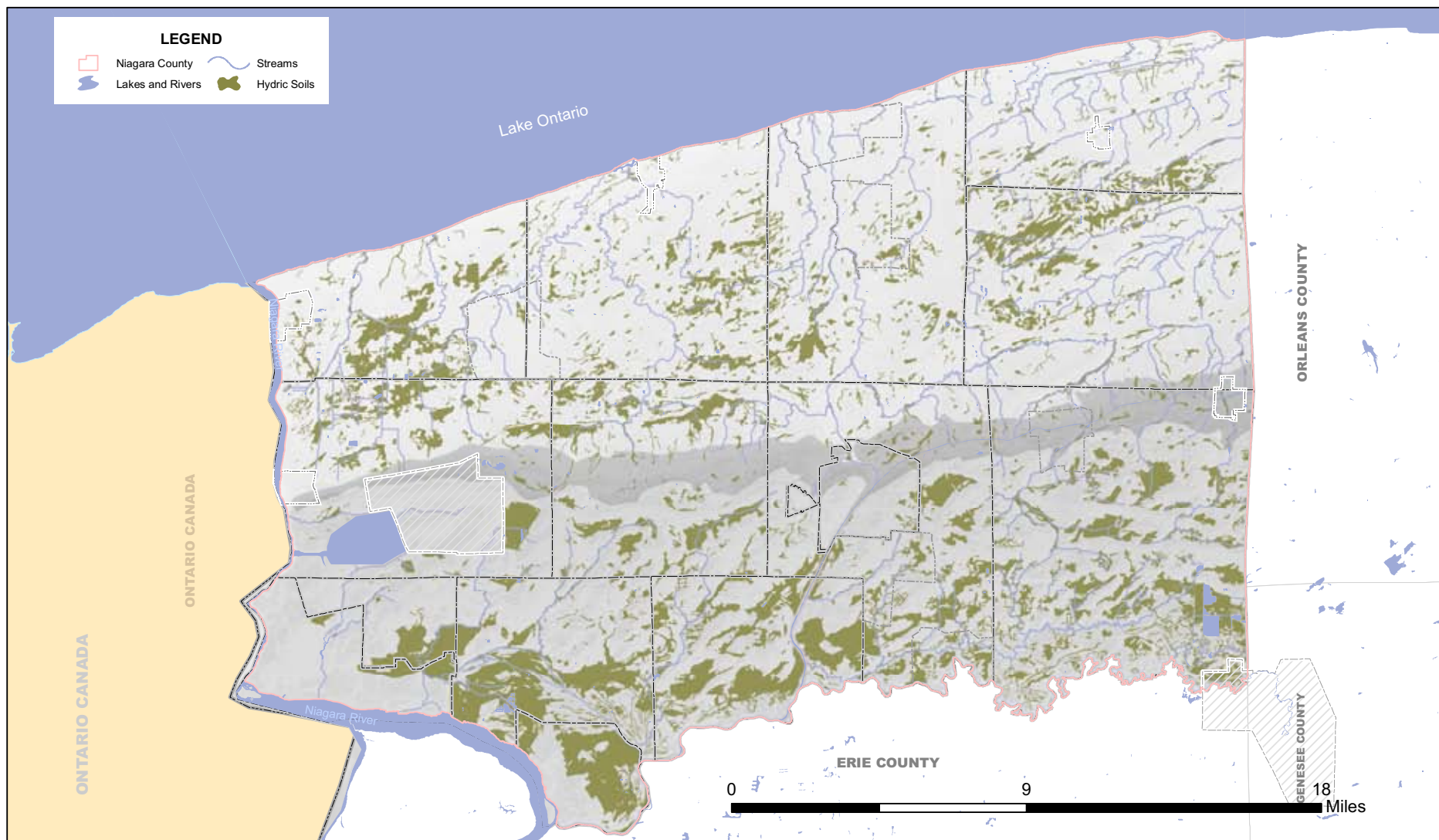
Niagara County is bordered by three significant bodies of water and numerous smaller creeks and streams that drain both the Lake Ontario and Niagara River watersheds. Lake Ontario borders the northern part of the County, Tonawanda Creek borders the south, and the Niagara River borders the County to the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

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

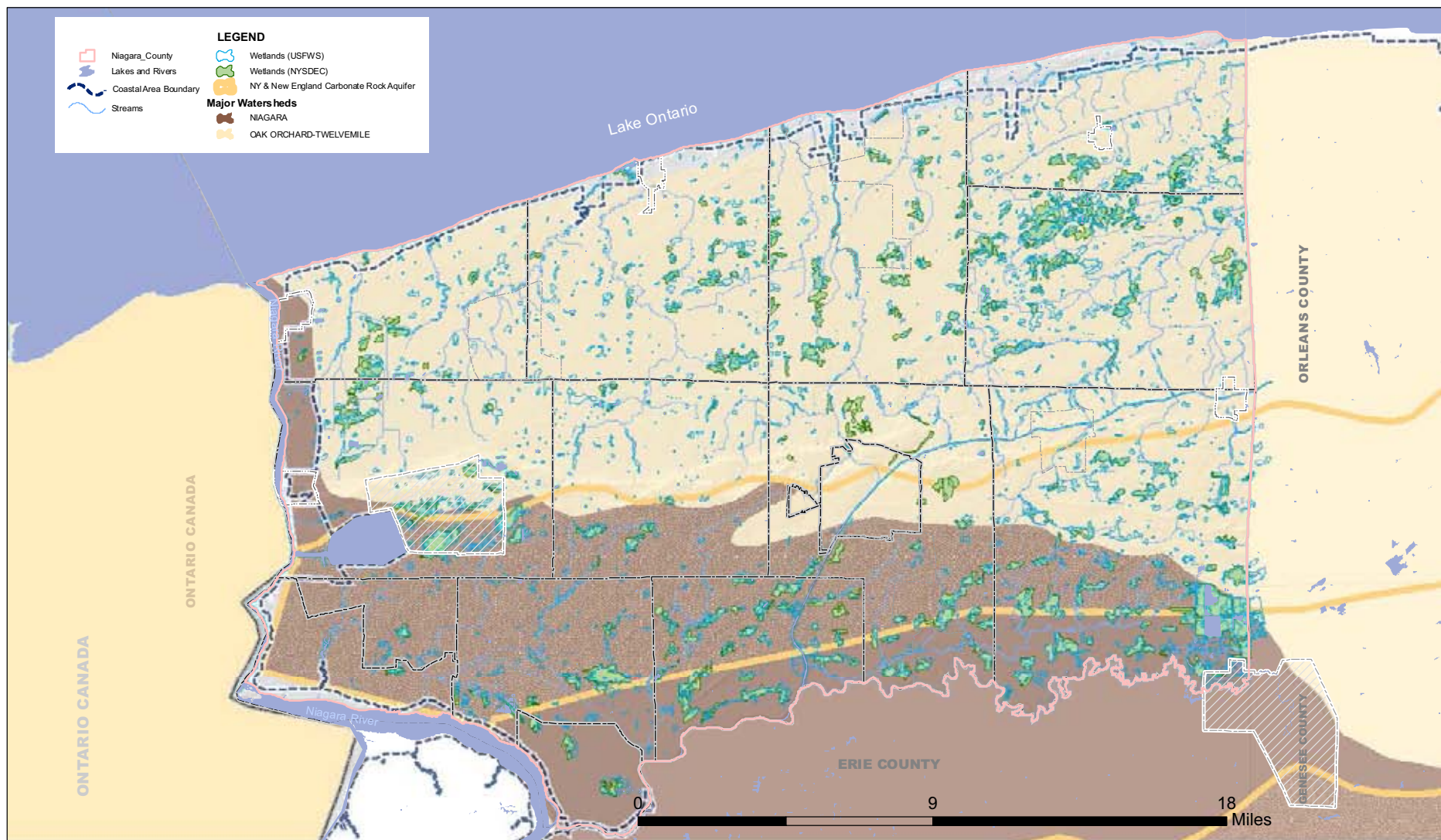
Niagara County is a true gateway location providing access to other significant water resources in the northeastern U.S. and southern Ontario, Canada. Local waterways are important destinations that offer passage for boaters traveling Lake Ontario and other waterways such as the St. Lawrence River and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

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









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

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

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

## 6. Aquifers

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

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

## 7. Wetlands

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

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



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

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

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

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

#### *8. Wildlife Management Areas*

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

#### *9. Critical Environmental Areas*

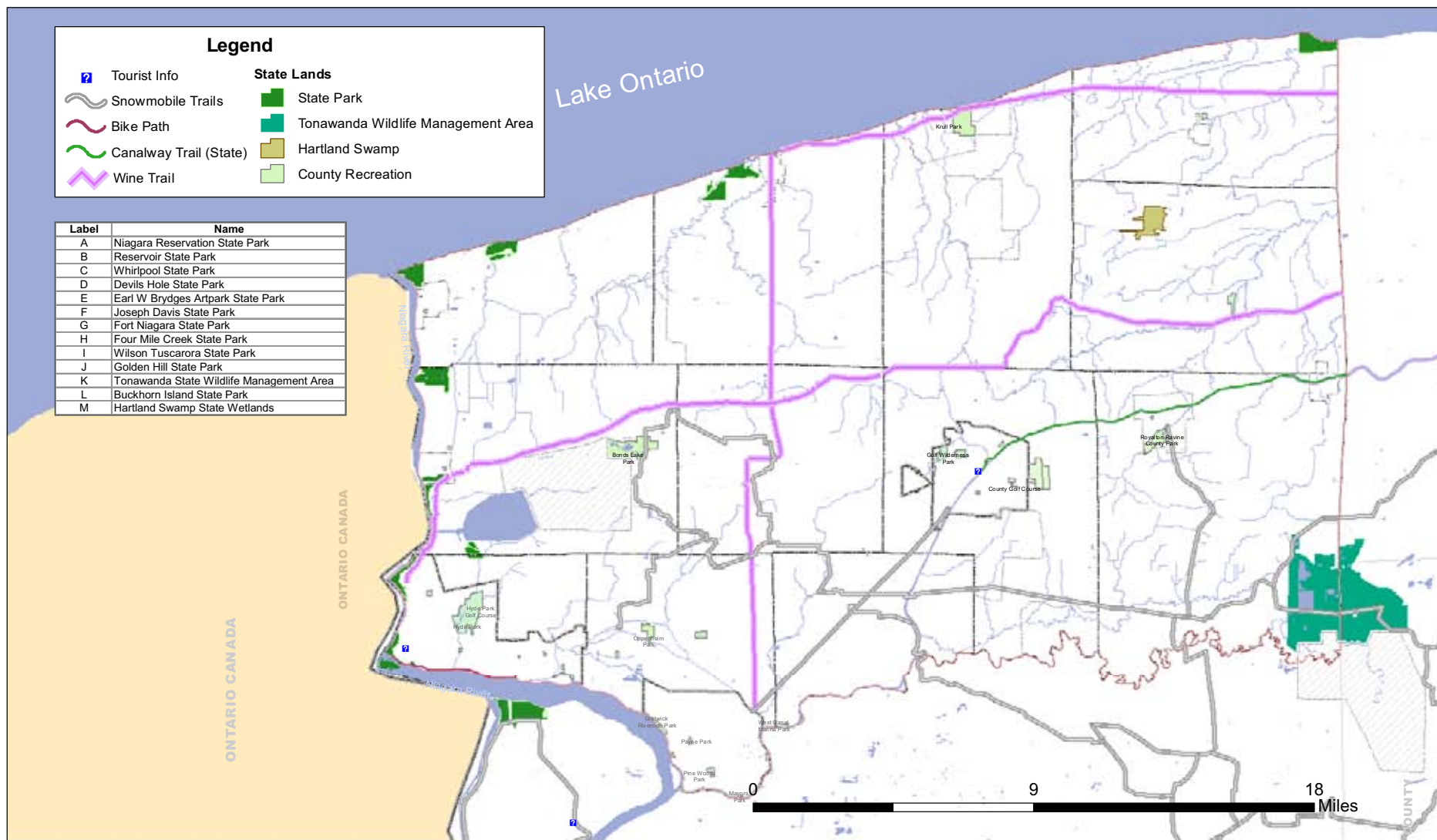
Presently, no officially designated Critical Environmental Areas (CEA) exists in Niagara County pursuant to New York State standards for such designation.

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



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





## E.Land Use Characteristics

### 1. Land Use Classifications

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

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

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





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

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

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

## *2. Agricultural Land*

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

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

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

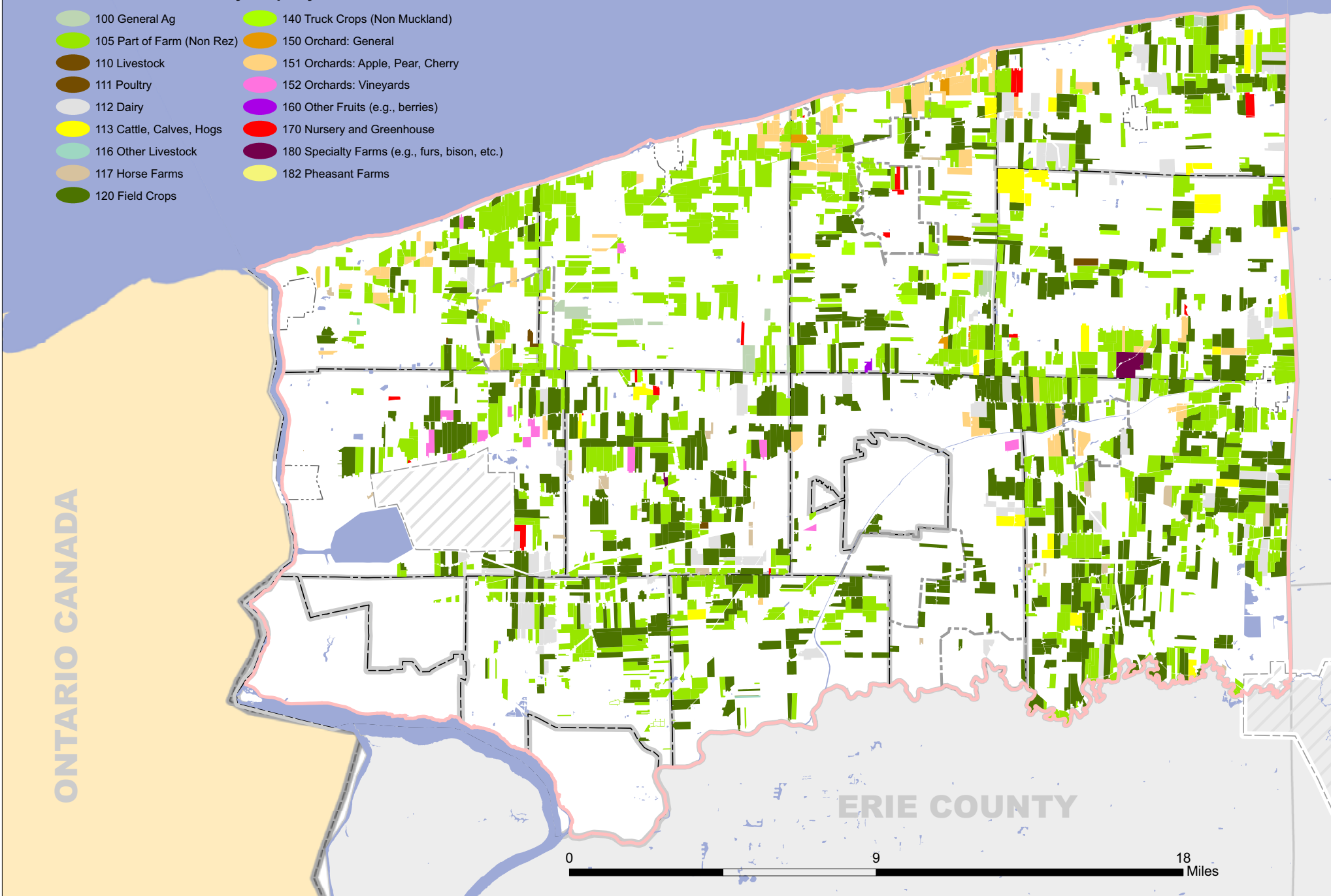
Due to the combination of rich farmland and ideal weather conditions tempered in large part by the presence of Lake Ontario, the County is one of the State's most important fruit growing regions. Niagara County ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in NYS in fruit growing. The combination of favorable climatic conditions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

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

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

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



## Niagara County Agriculture

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

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

\*Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2006)

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

### 3. Residential land

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

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

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

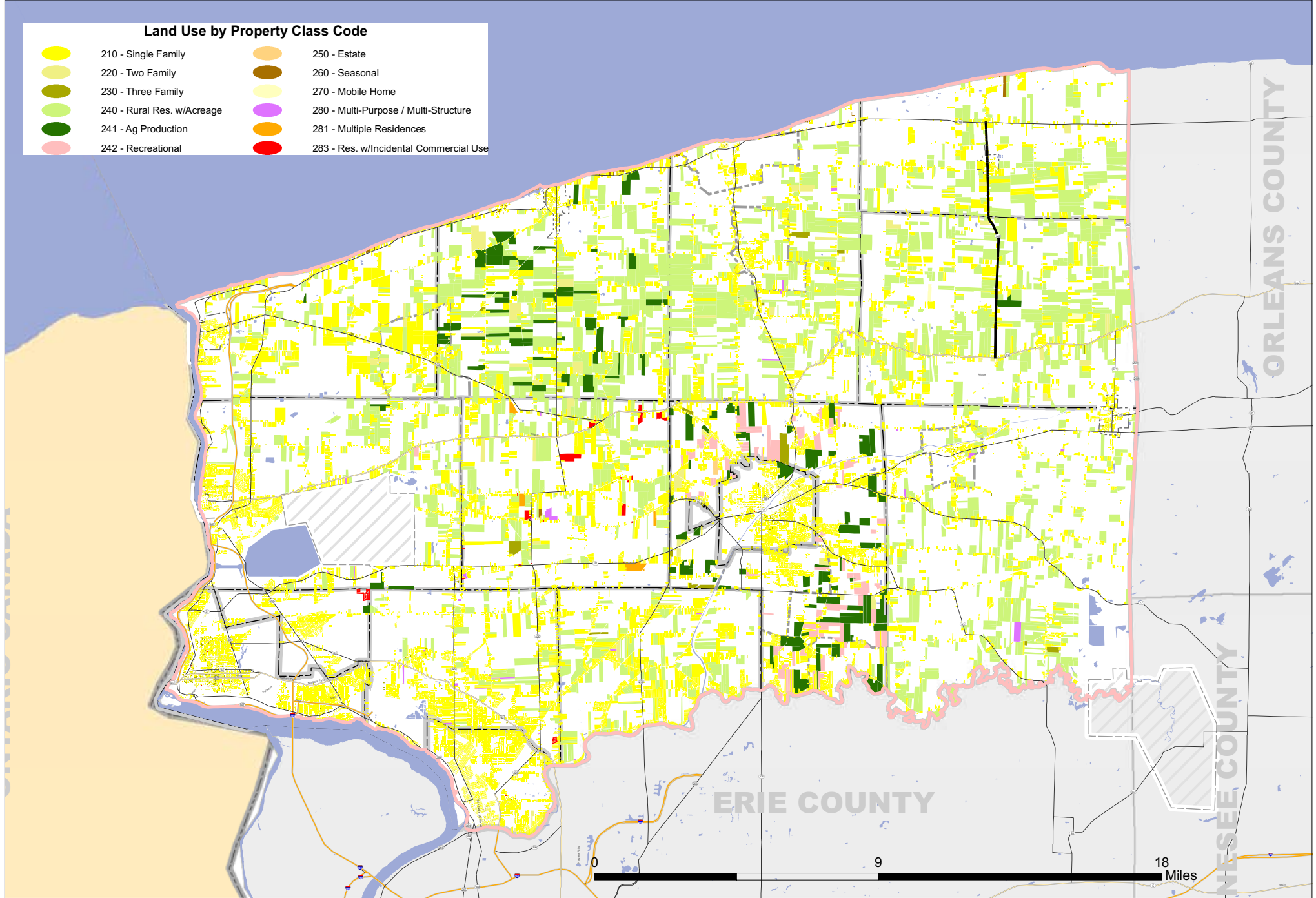
Residential uses account for approximately 180 square miles or about 34 percent of the total land area of Niagara County. The acreage of residential land use now exceeds the acreage of active agricultural uses and all other uses in the County as



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

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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## Existing Land Use: RESIDENTIAL

Property Class Code 200 Series

Figure  
III.E.2

shown below.

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

#### *4. Vacant land*

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

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

#### *5. Commercial land*

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

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











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

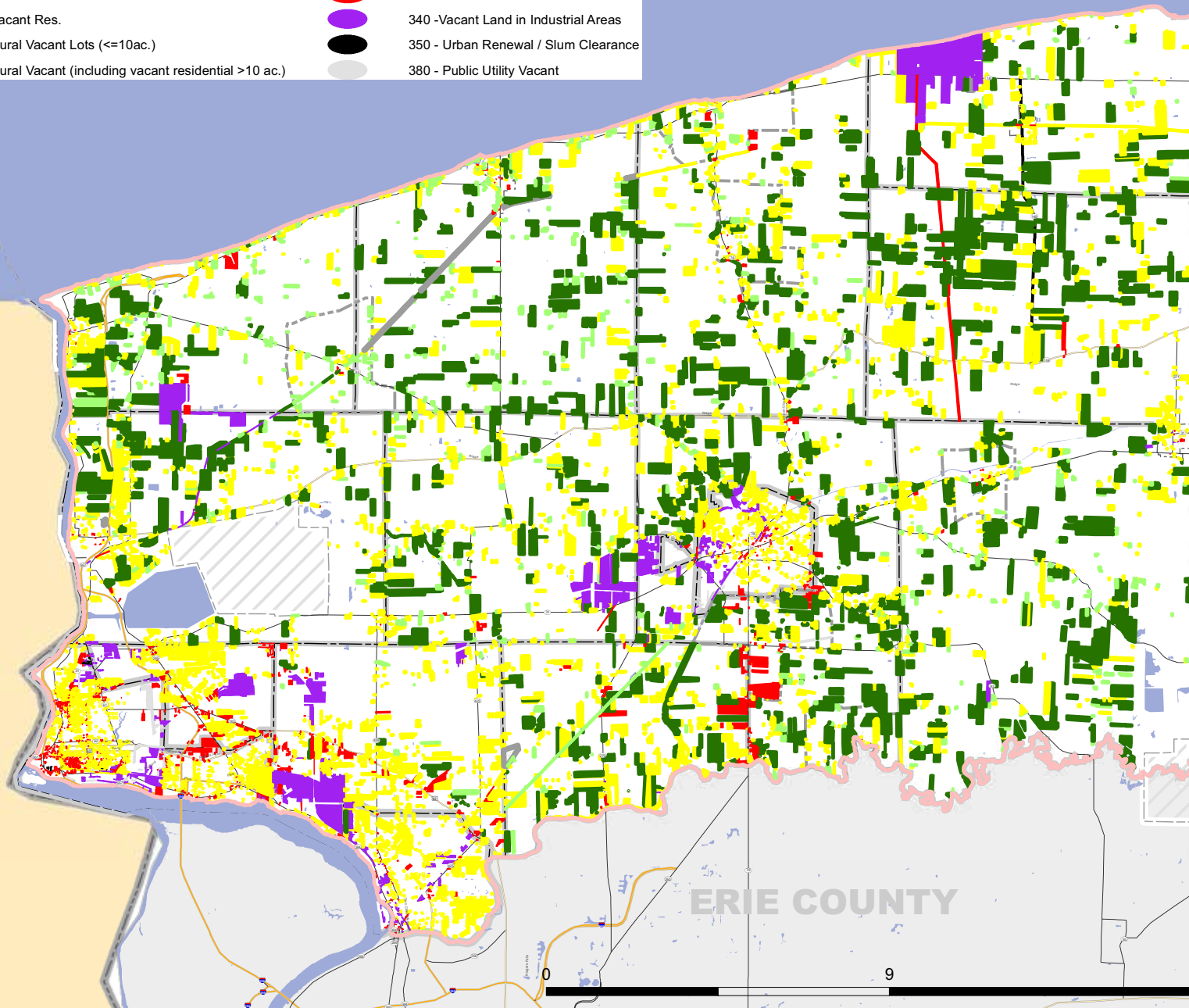


*Commercial parcels account for approximately 3% of all of the land area in Niagara County.*



# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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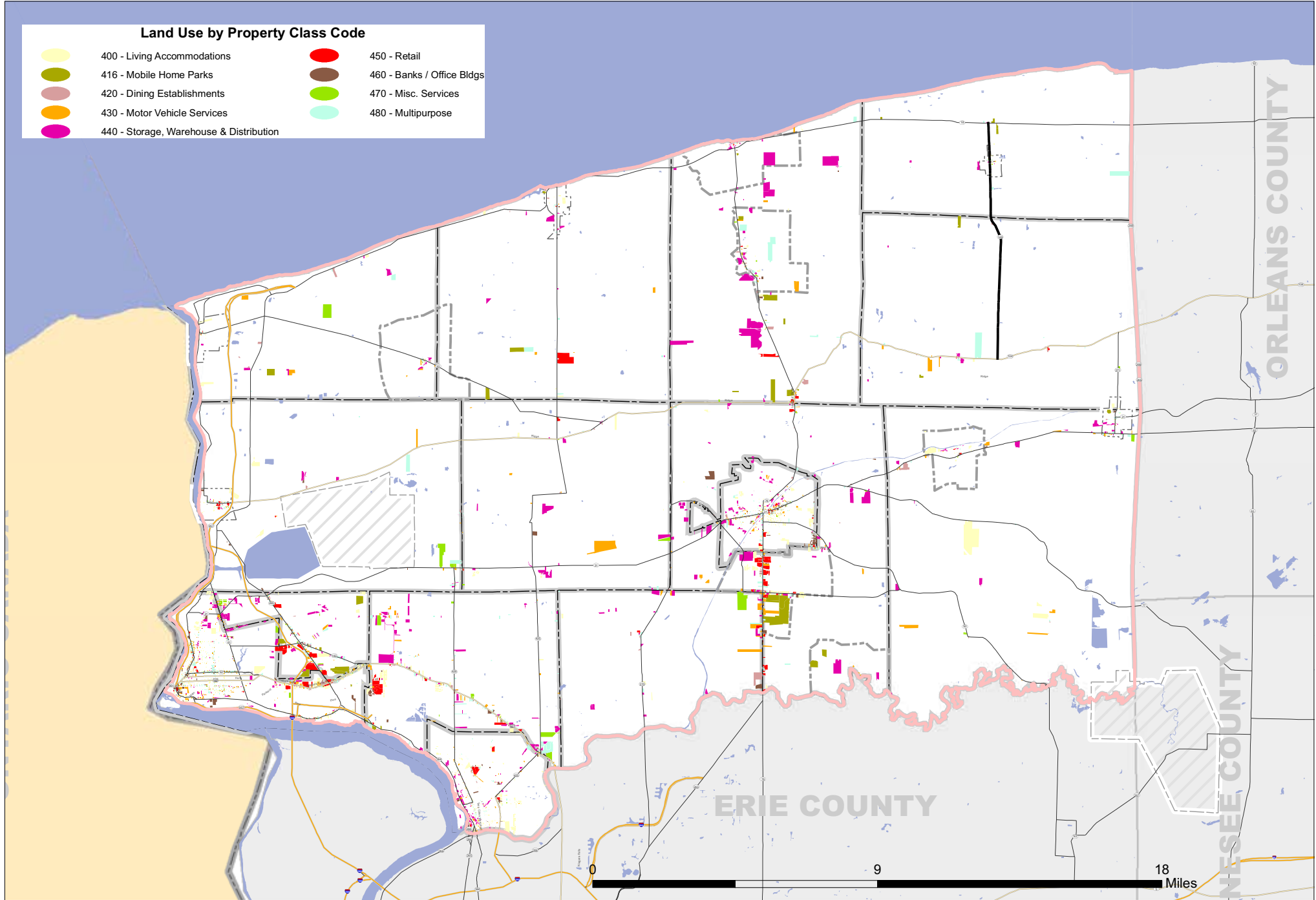
## Existing Land Use: VACANT

Property Class Code 300 Series

Figure  
III.E.3

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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## Existing Land Use: COMMERCIAL

Property Class Code 400 Series

Figure  
III.E.4

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

## *6. Recreation and Entertainment*

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

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

## *7. Community Services*

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

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

## *8. Industrial*

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

Industrial uses are found primarily in the southwestern communities in the



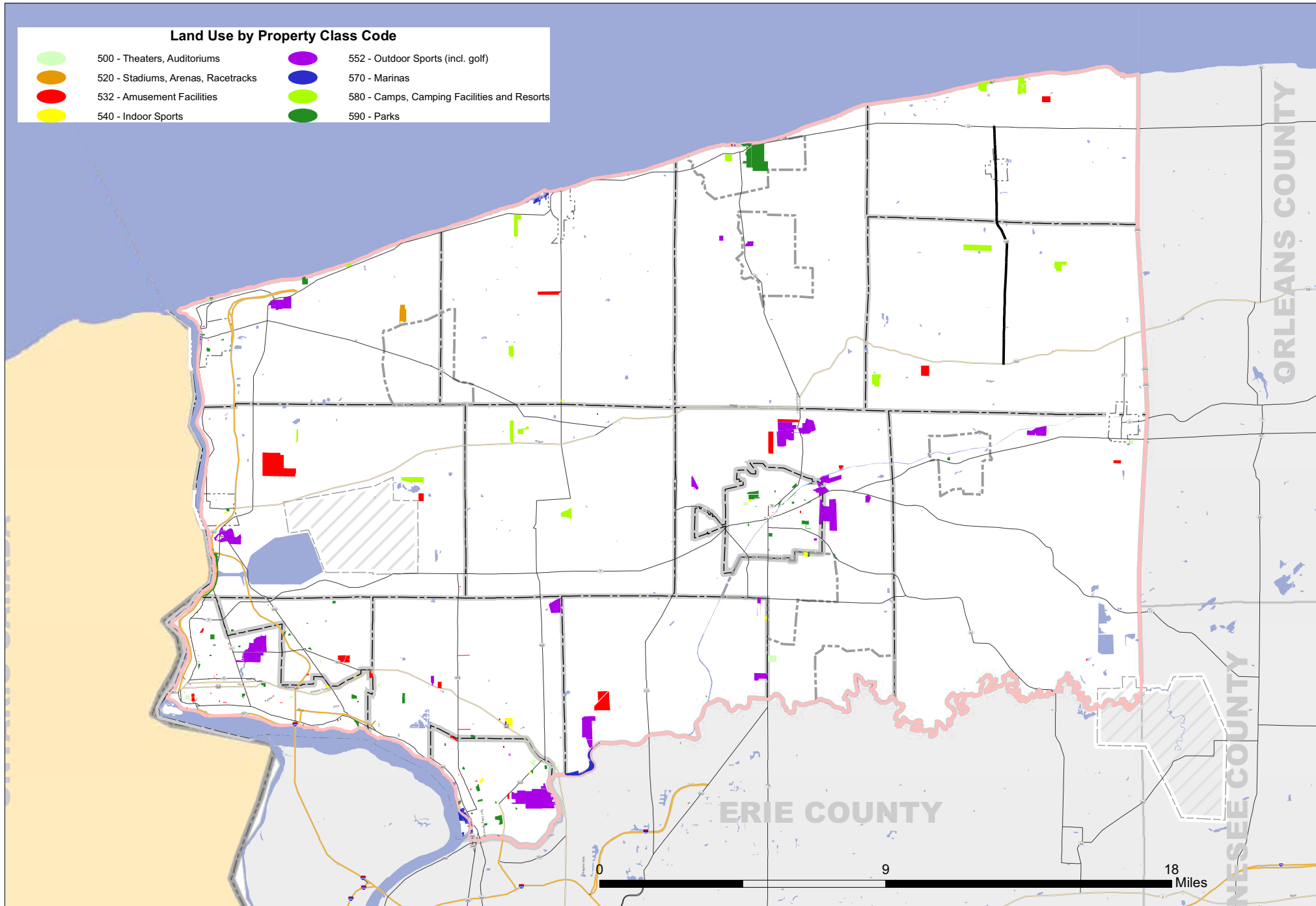
*Recreation and Entertainment parcels account for approximately 2% or about 5,000 acres of all of the land area in Niagara County.*



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

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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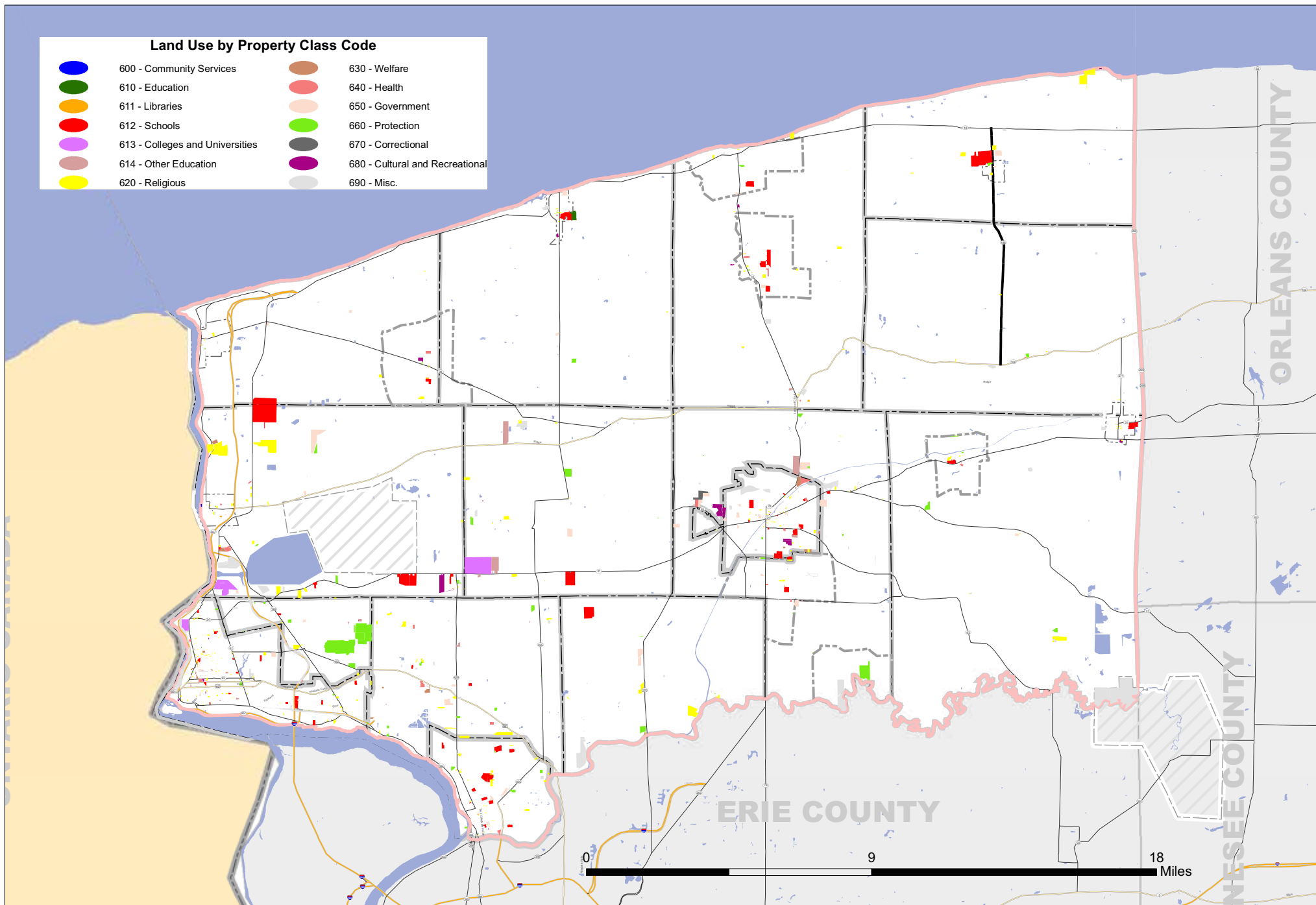
## Existing Land Use: RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Property Class Code 500 Series

Figure  
III.E.5

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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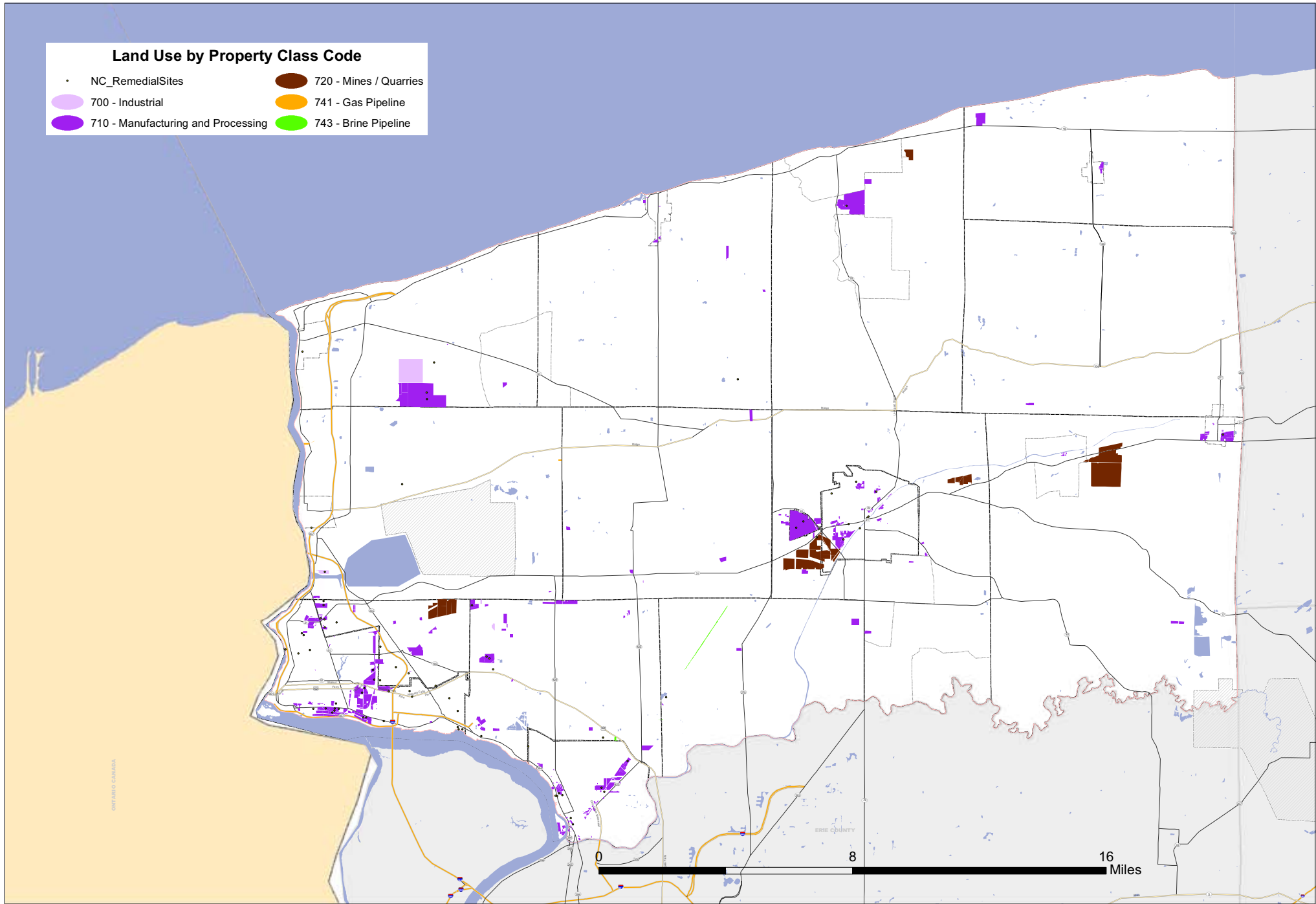
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## Existing Land Use: COMMUNITY SERVICES

Property Class Code 600 Series

Figure  
III.E.6





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

### *9. Public Services*

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

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

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

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

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



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

## **F. Population and Housing**

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









### *1. Current County Demographics*

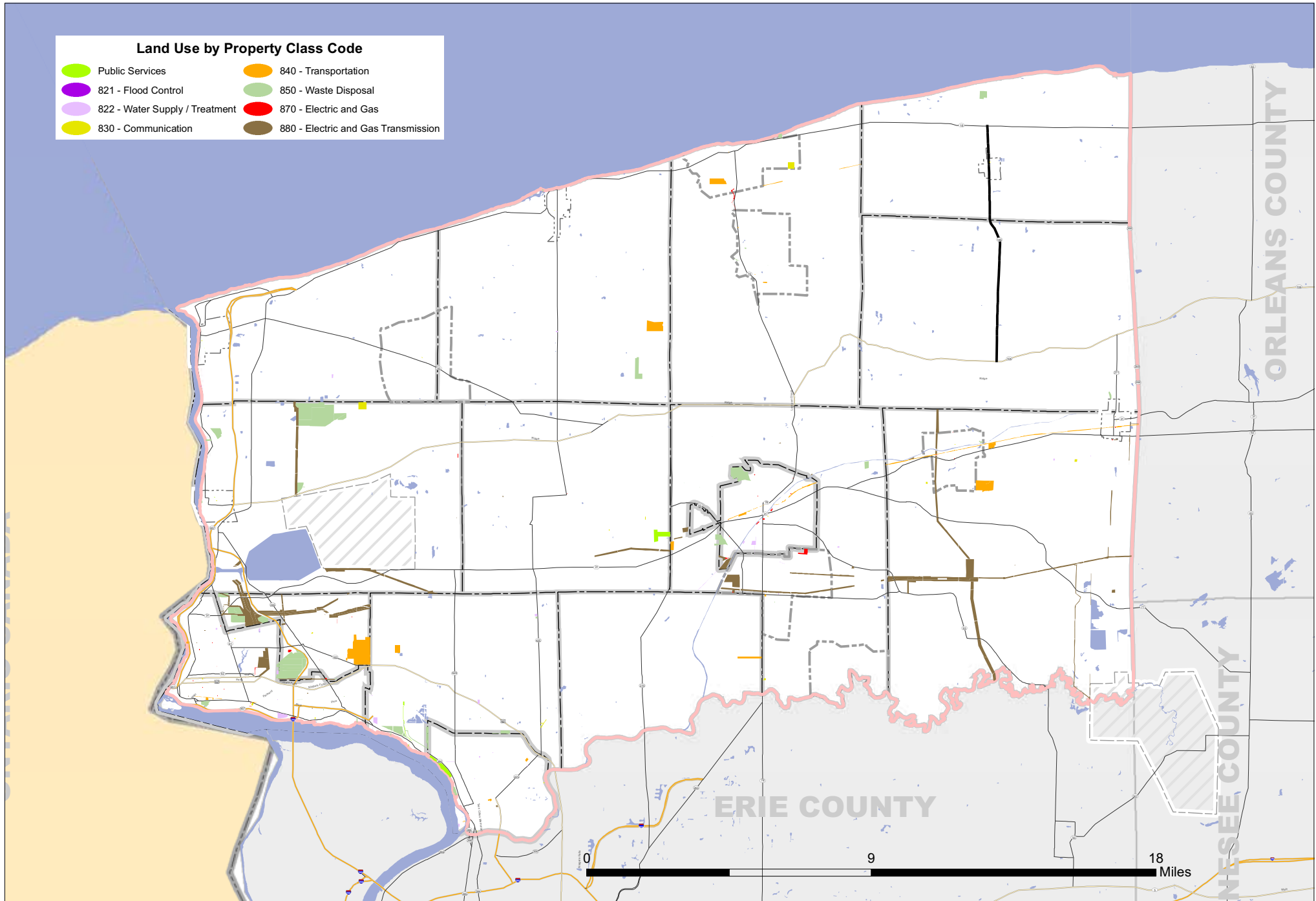
The following population and demographic data were obtained from 2000 U.S. Census data, unless otherwise noted.

#### *a. Population & Race*

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

# Land Use by Property Class Code

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



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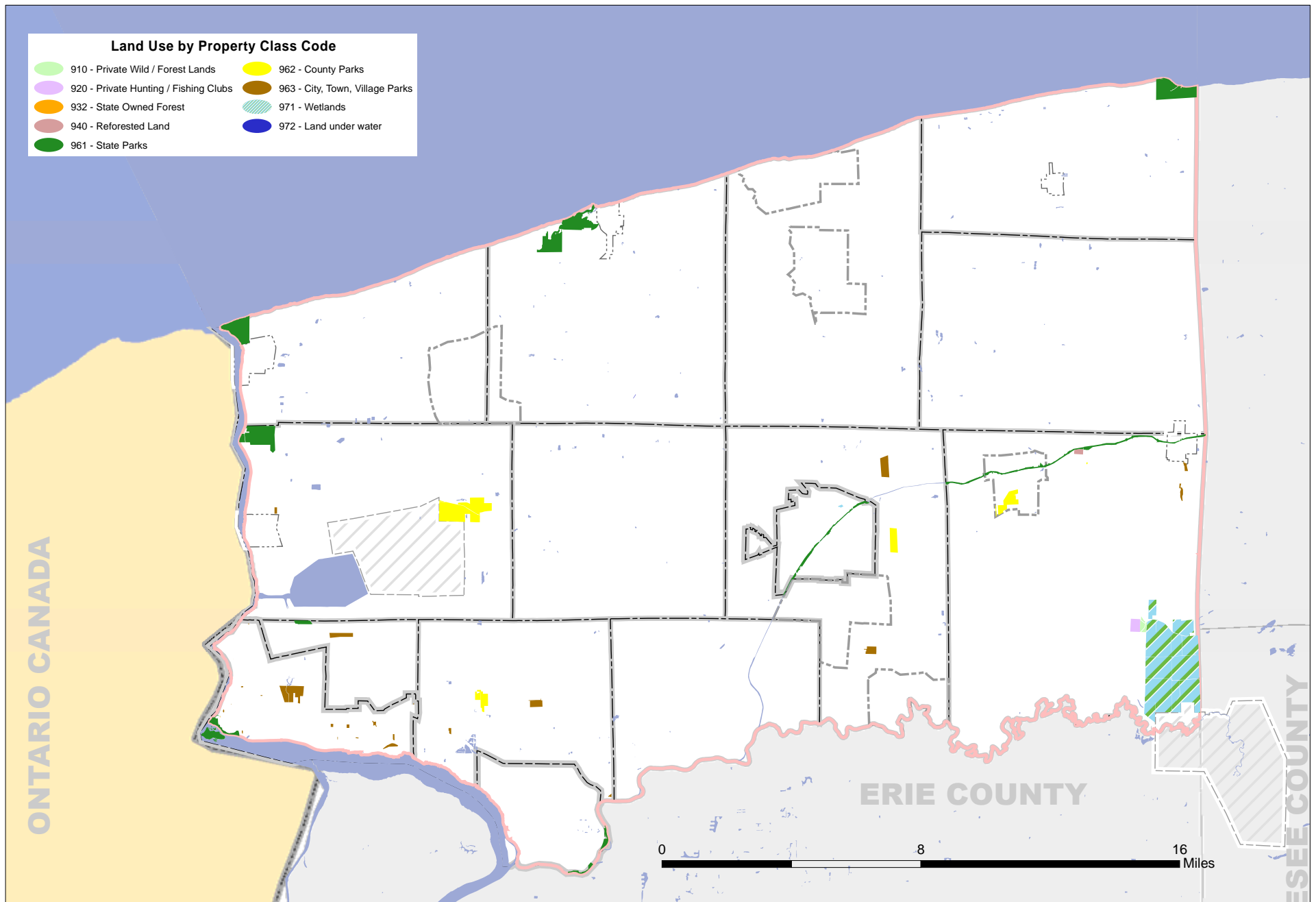


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## Existing Land Use: PUBLIC SERVICES

Property Class Code 800 Series

Figure  
III.E.8





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

#### b. Housing & Income

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

- Percent of individuals below poverty line in 2000 – 10.6

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

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

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

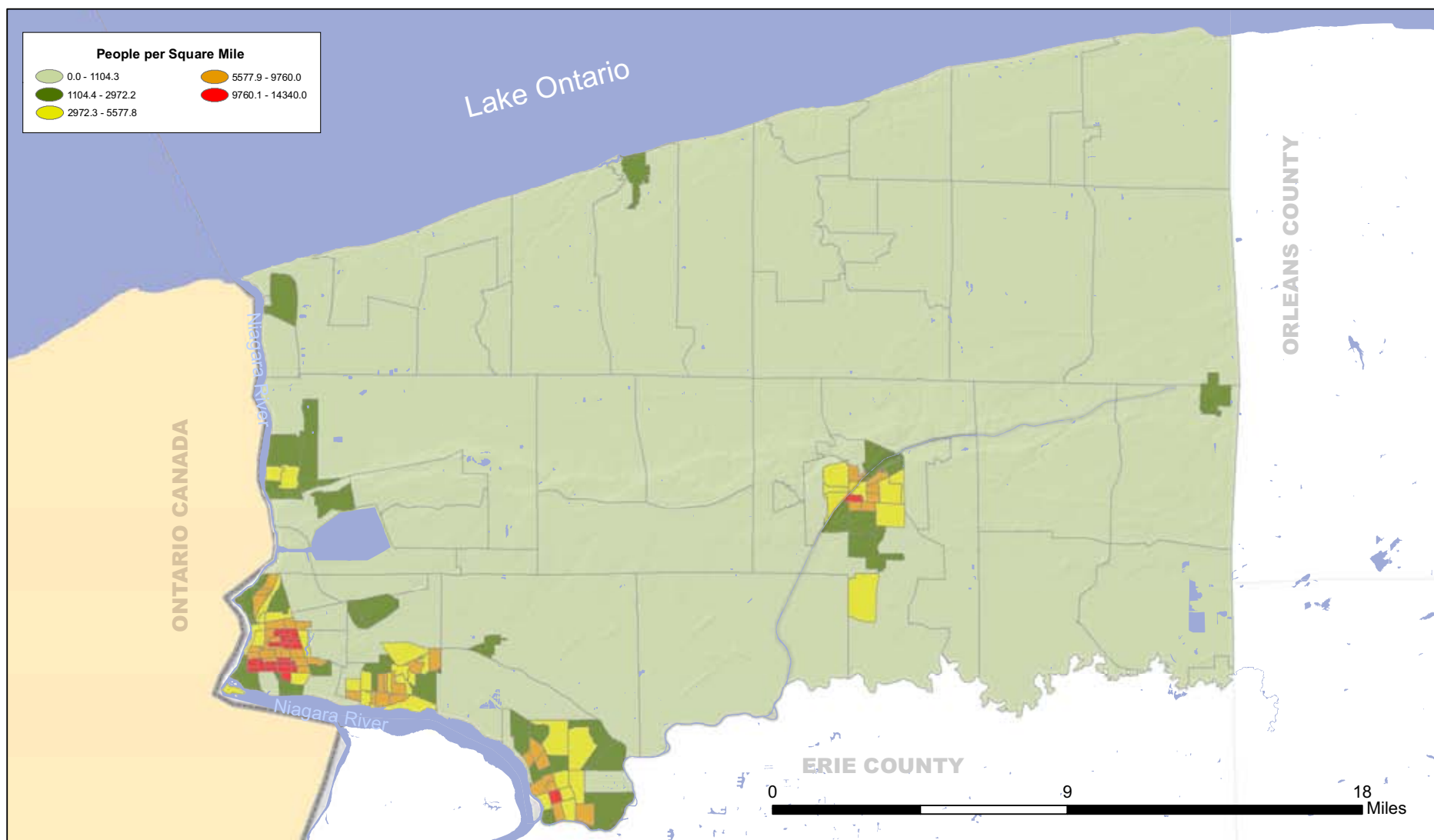
- In 2000, 65.4% of County residents lived in single-family residential units
- In 2000, 44.6% of County residents lived in multi-family residential units
- 2000 median home value (owner-occupied) was \$82,700
- 2000 median monthly rent was \$479

#### c. Age, Education & Labor Force

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

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

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



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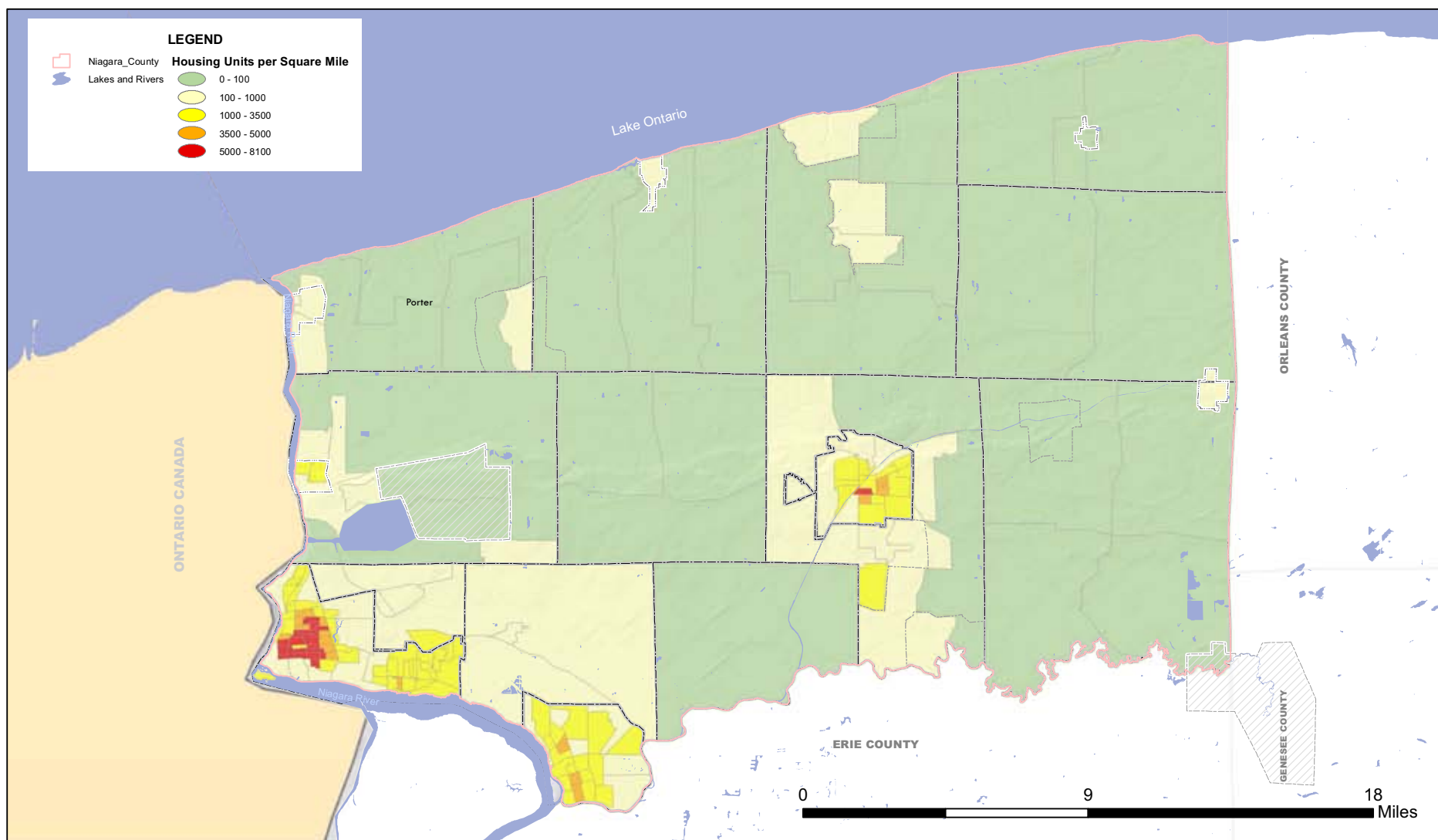


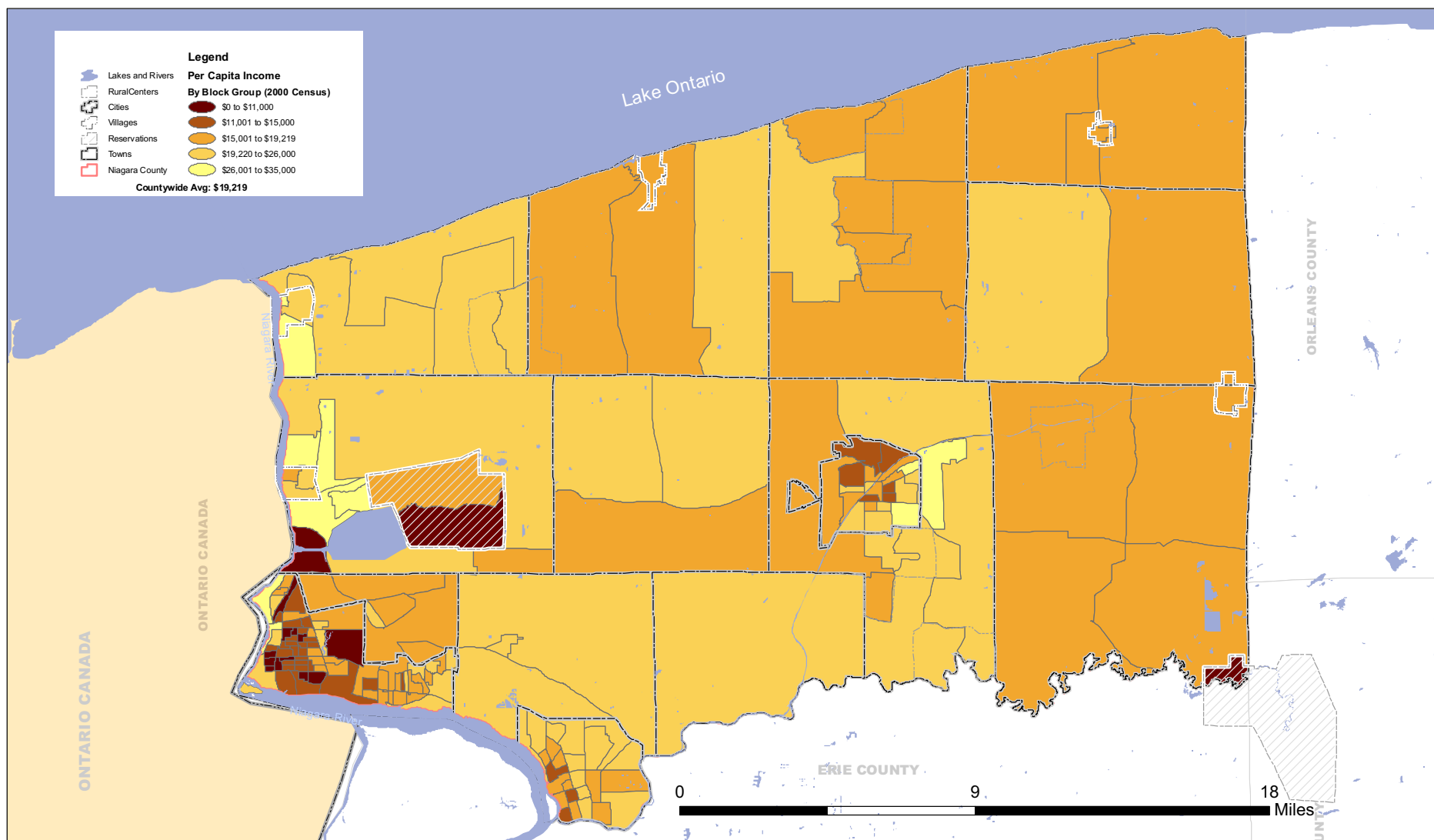
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## Population Density

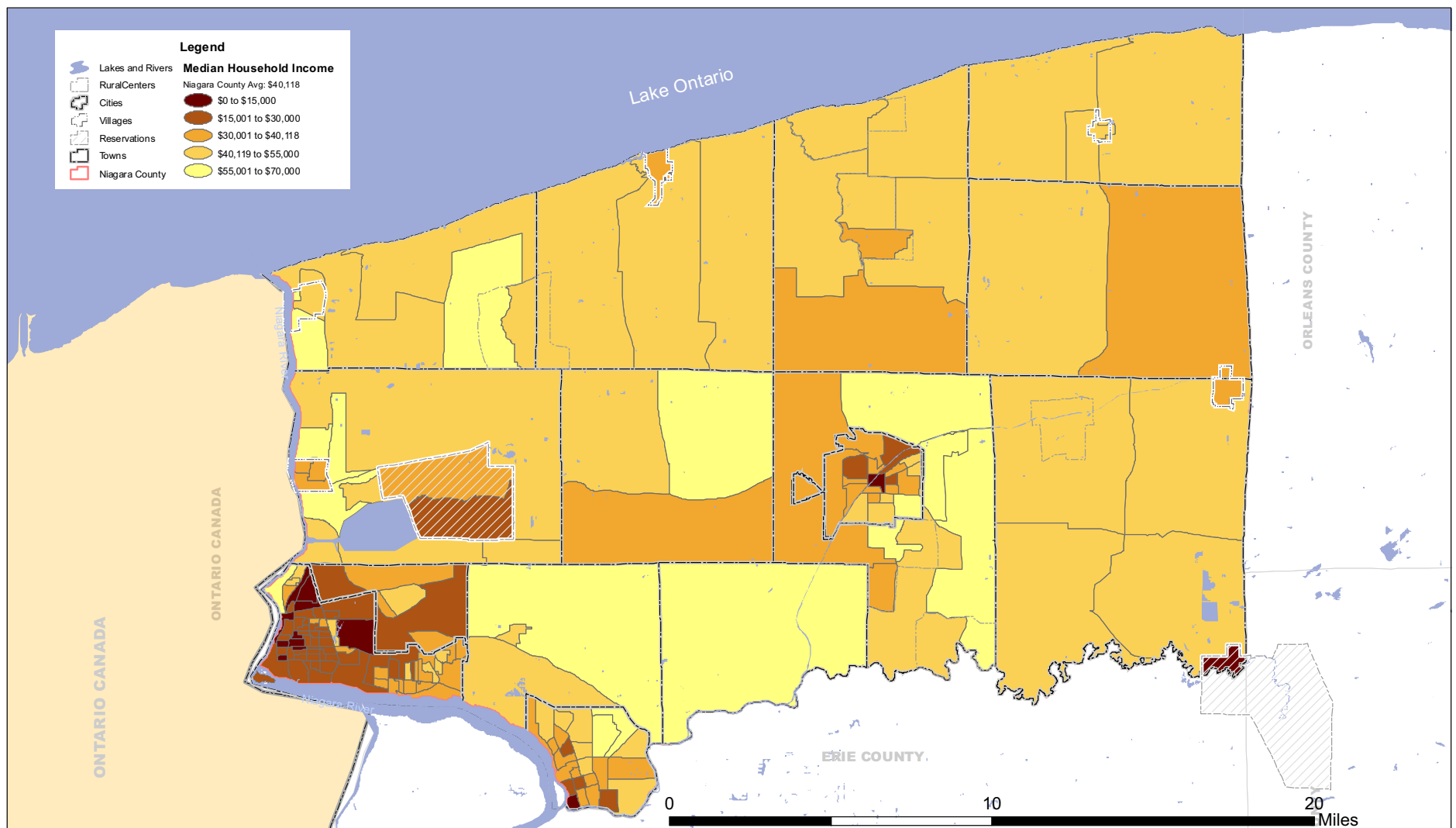
Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

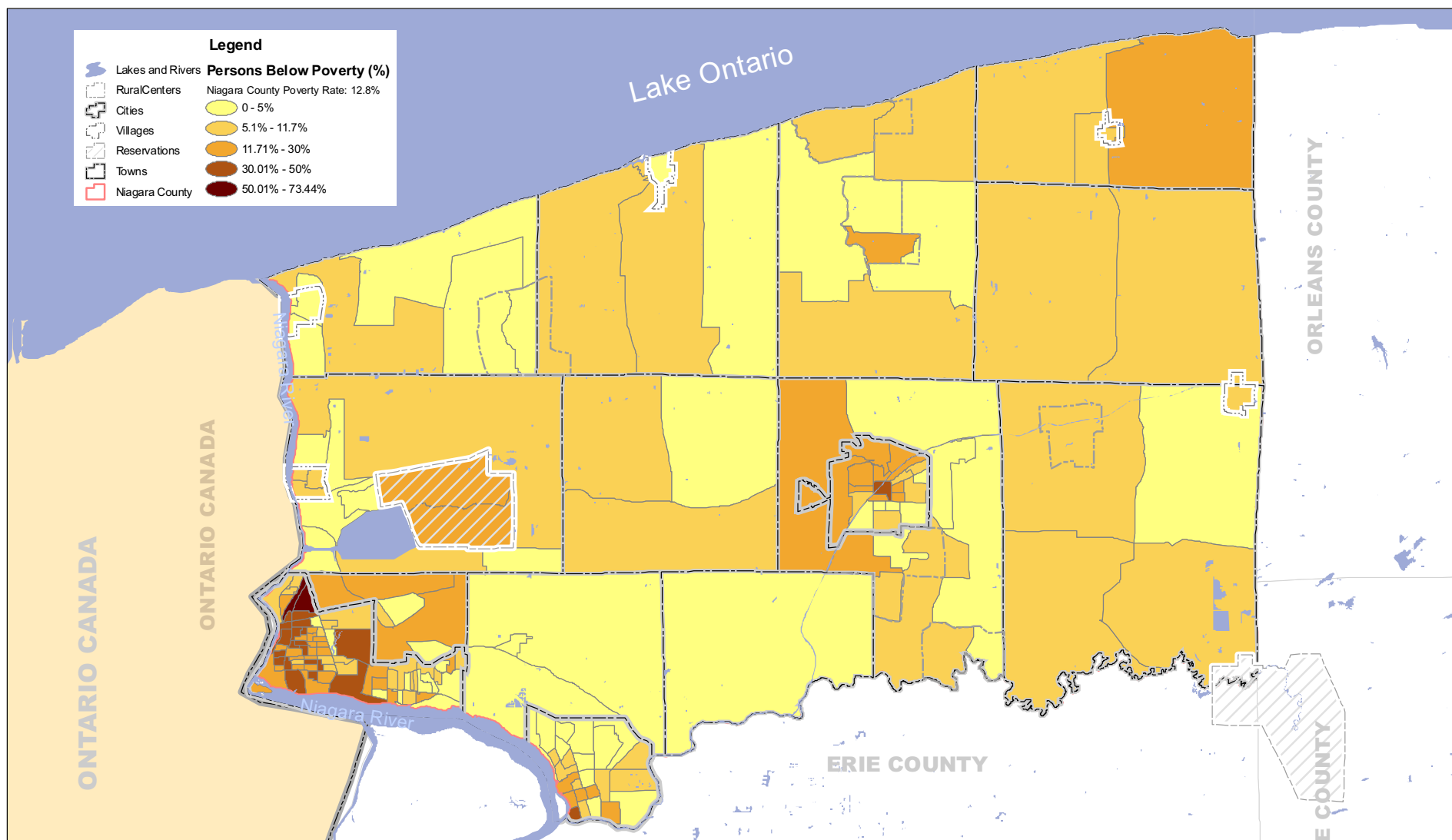
Figure  
III.F.1

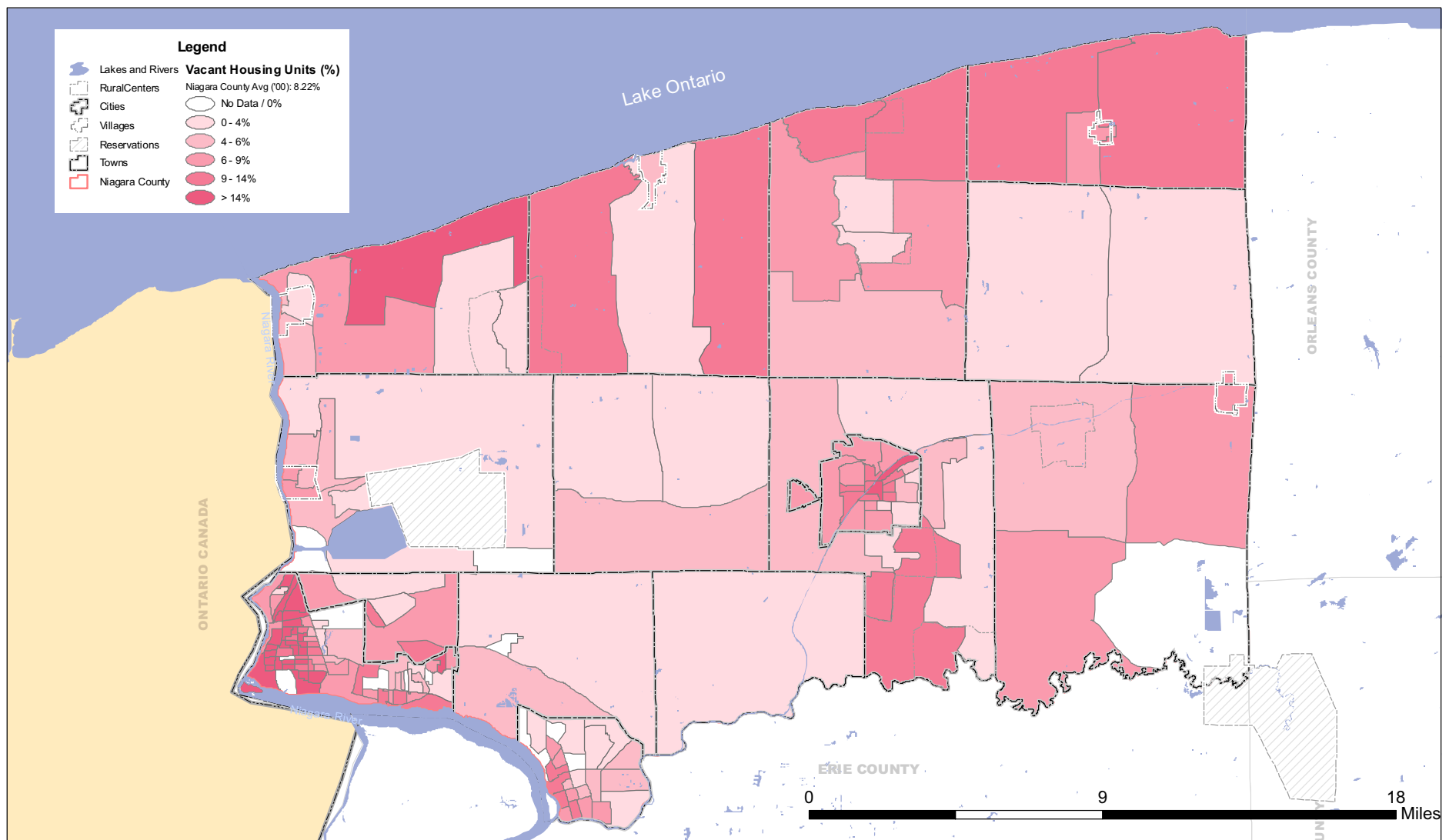


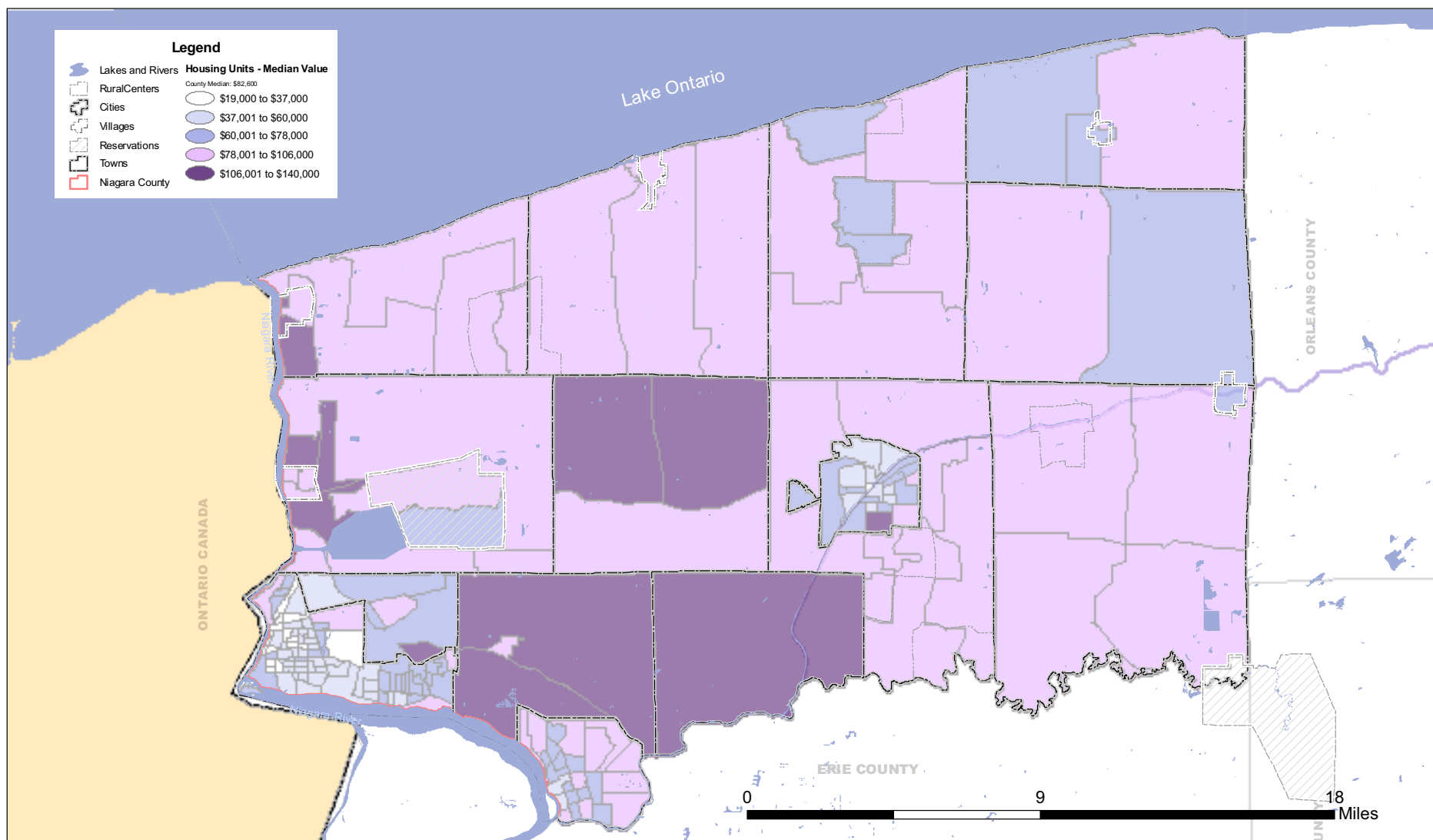


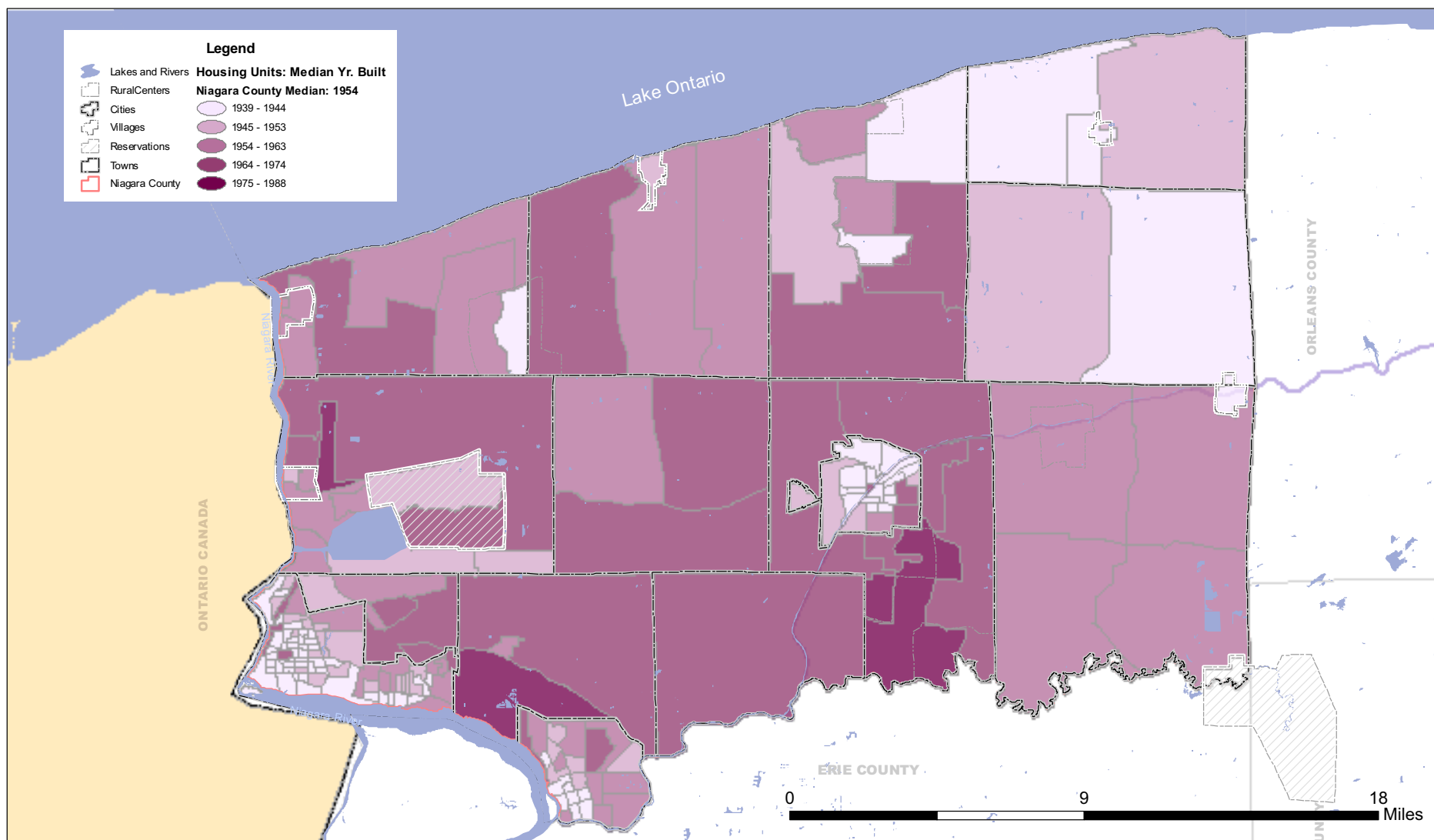




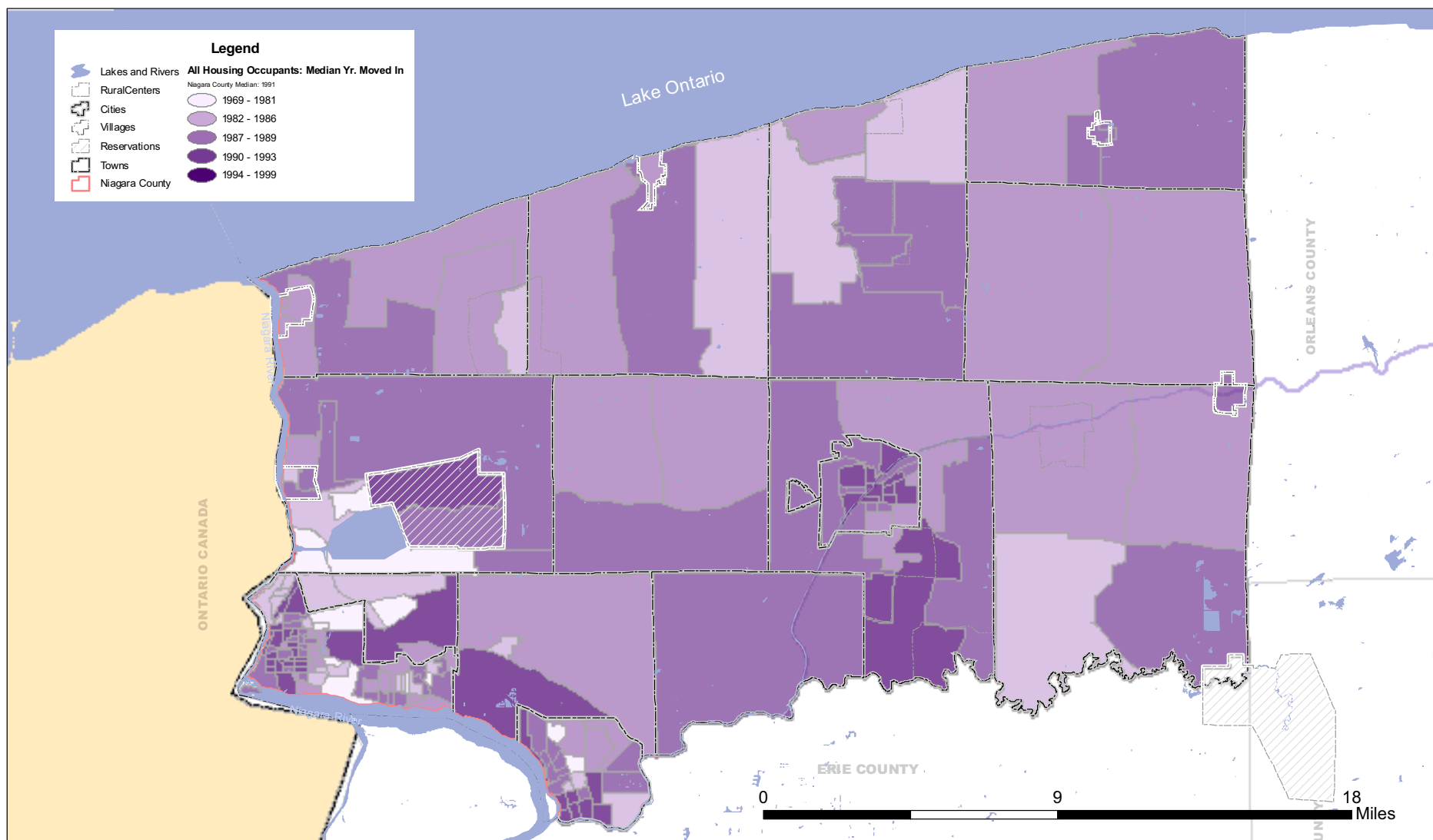


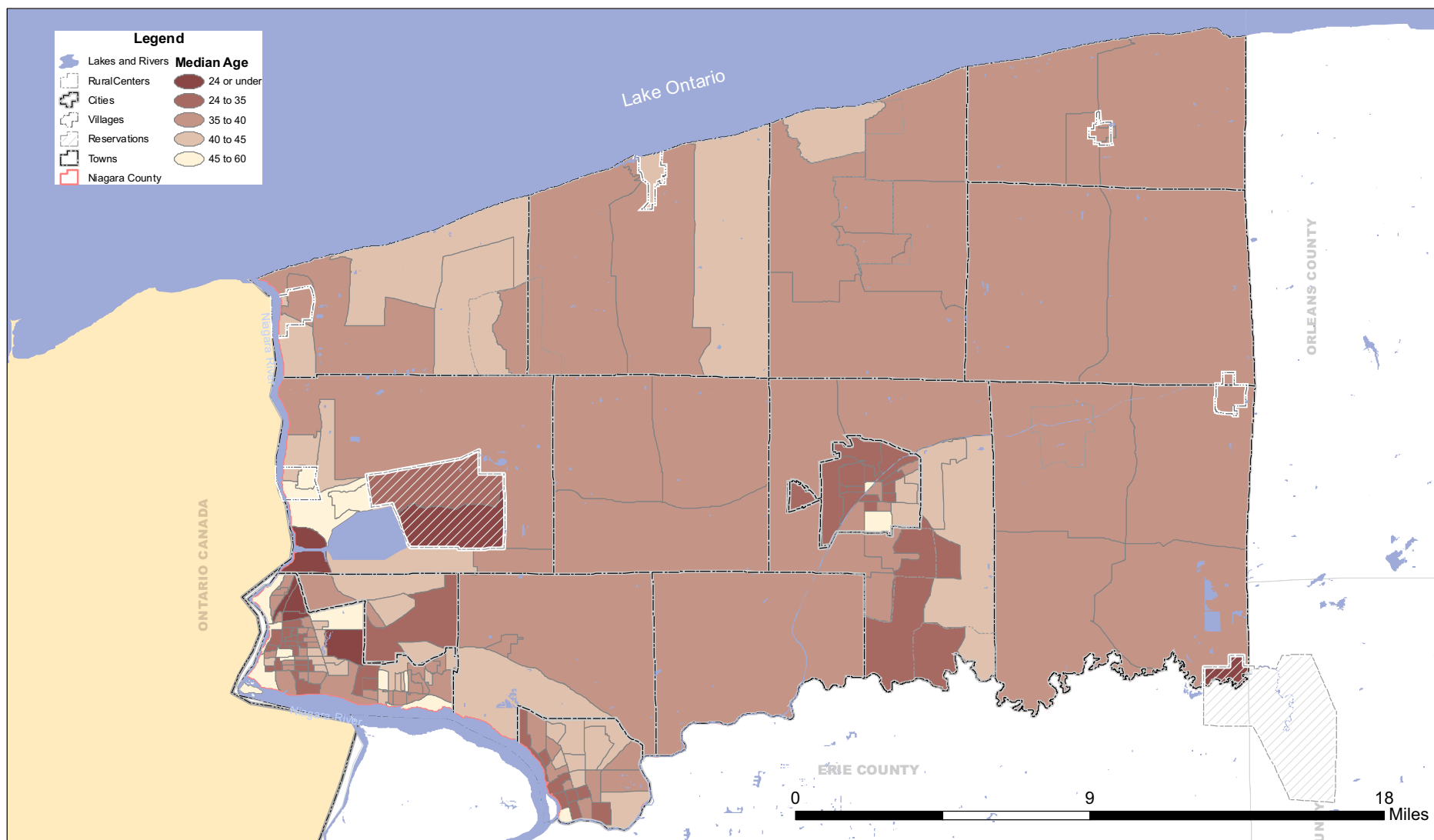


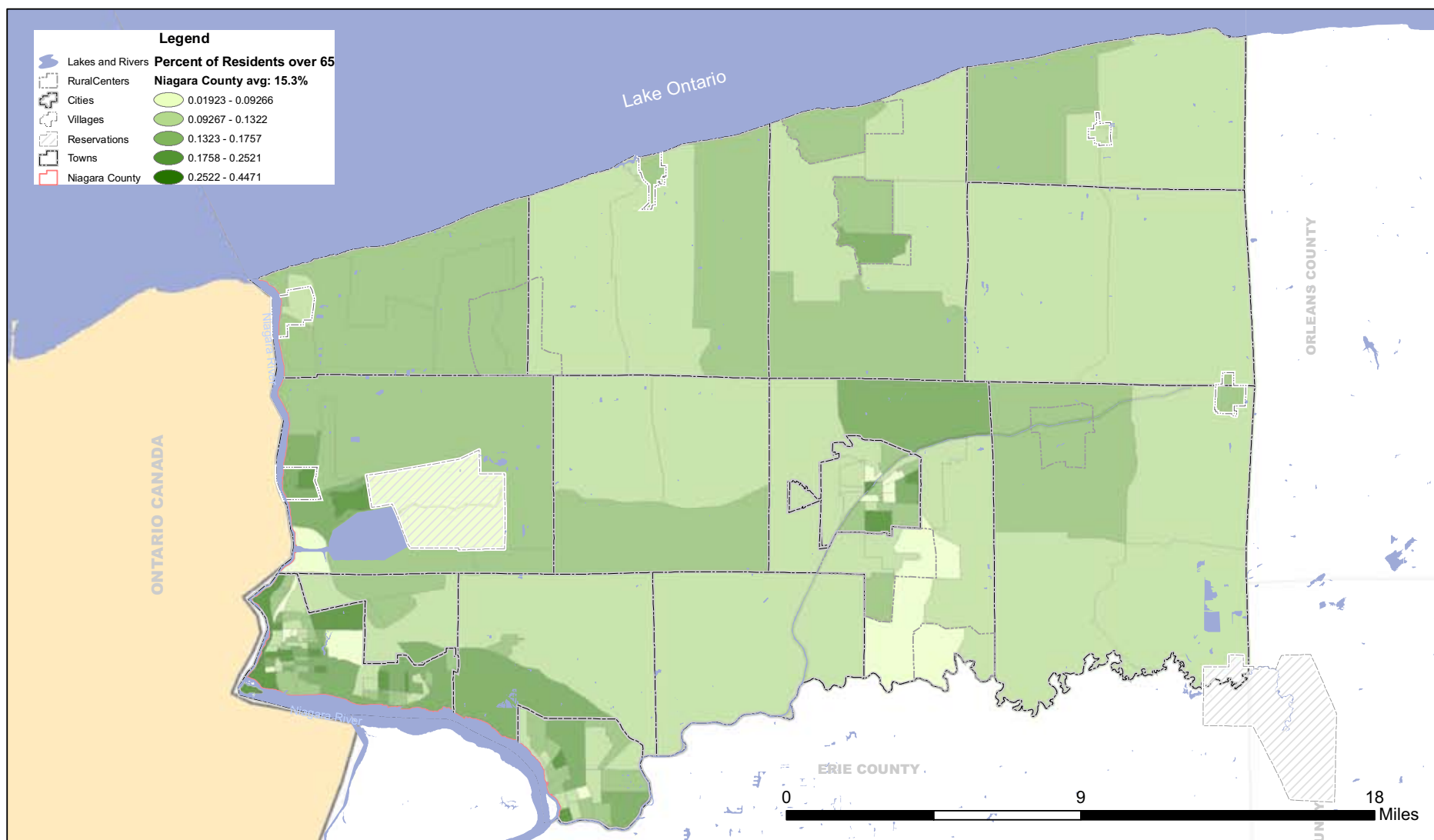


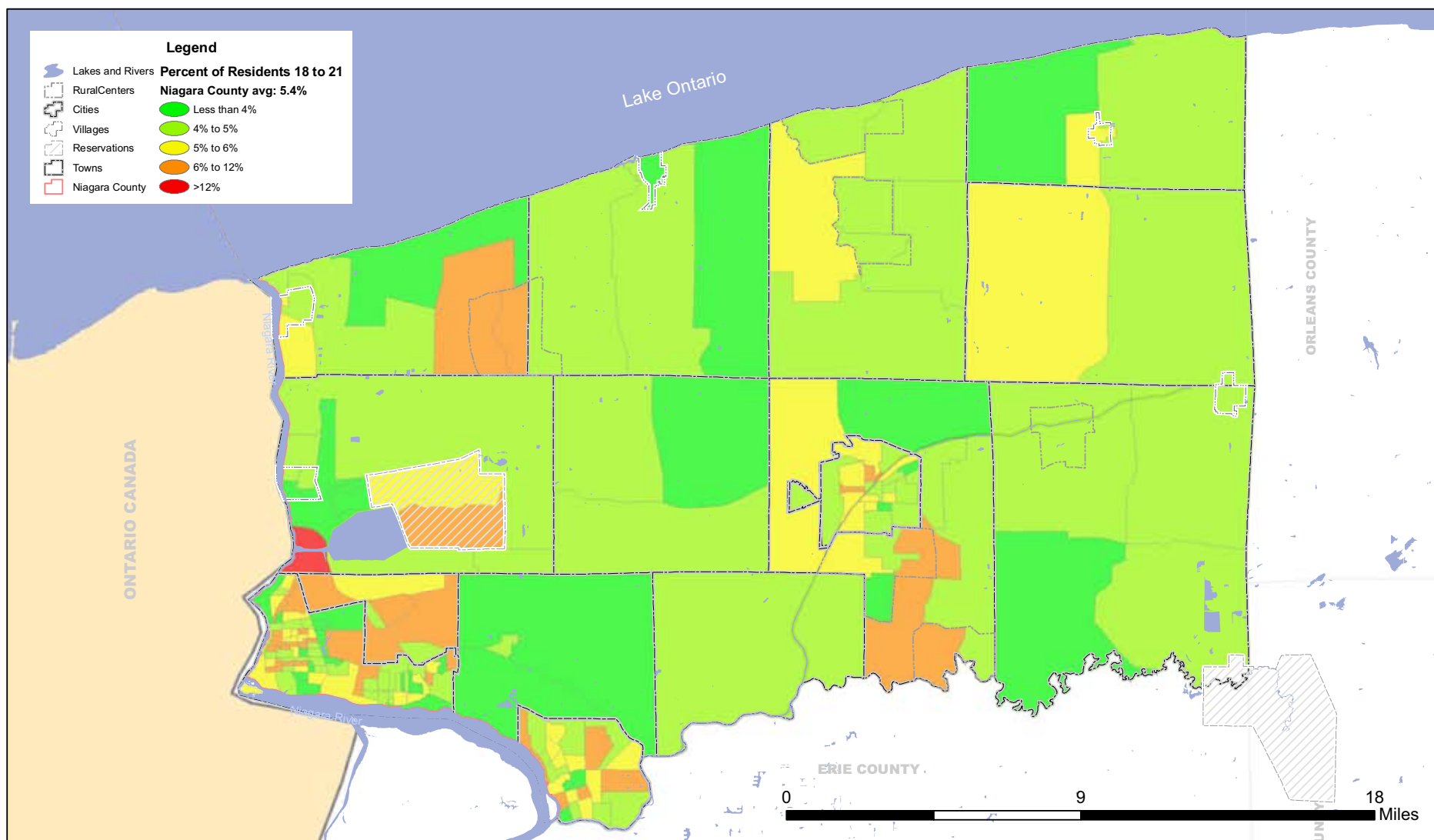


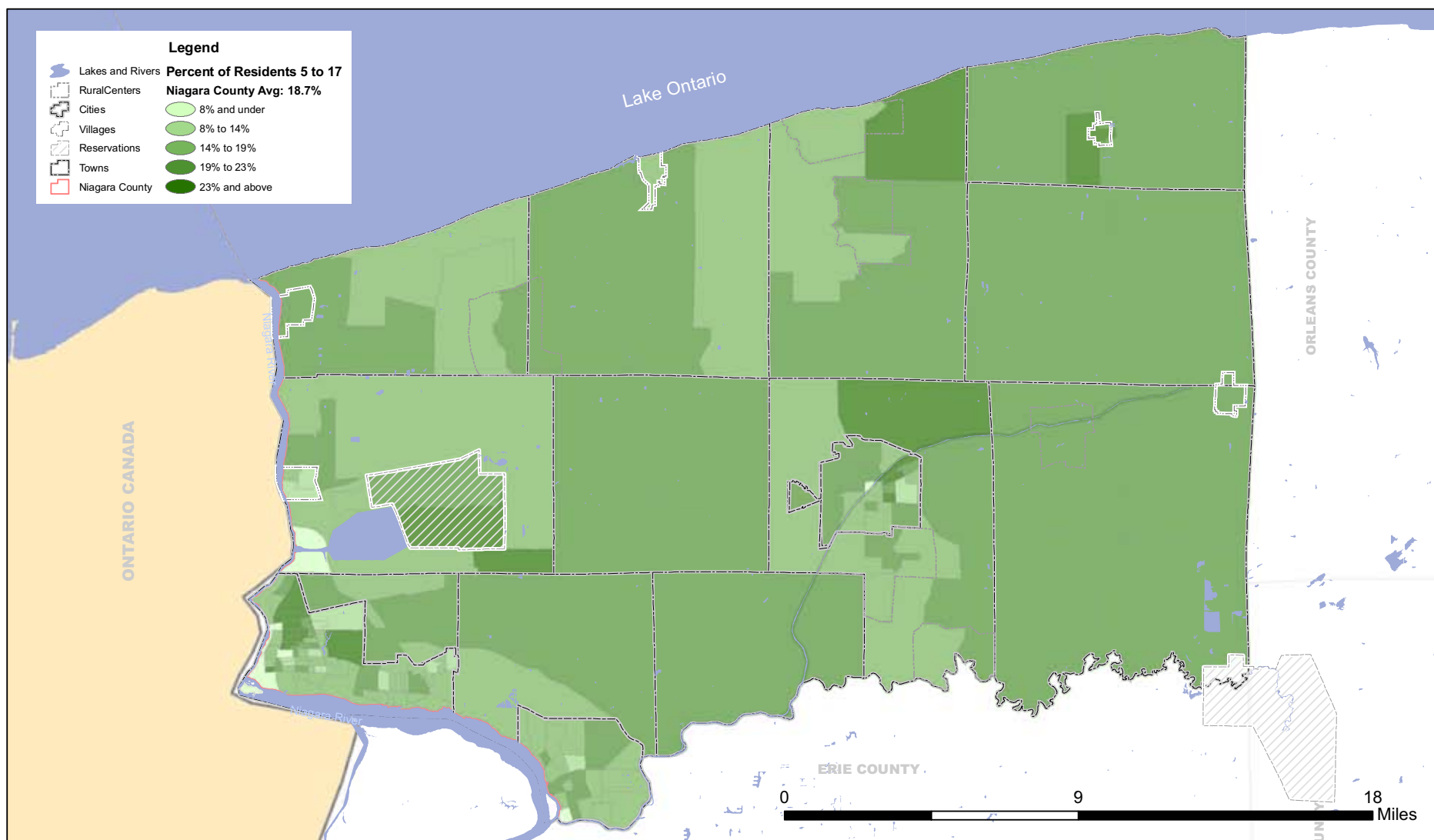












Project Number: 17256



Niagara Communities  
Comprehensive Plan

## Percent Residents Ages 5 to 17

Source: 2000 US Census - Census Block Groups

Figure  
III.F.13



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

## 2. County Demographic Trends

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

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

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

## 3. Subarea Demographic Profiles

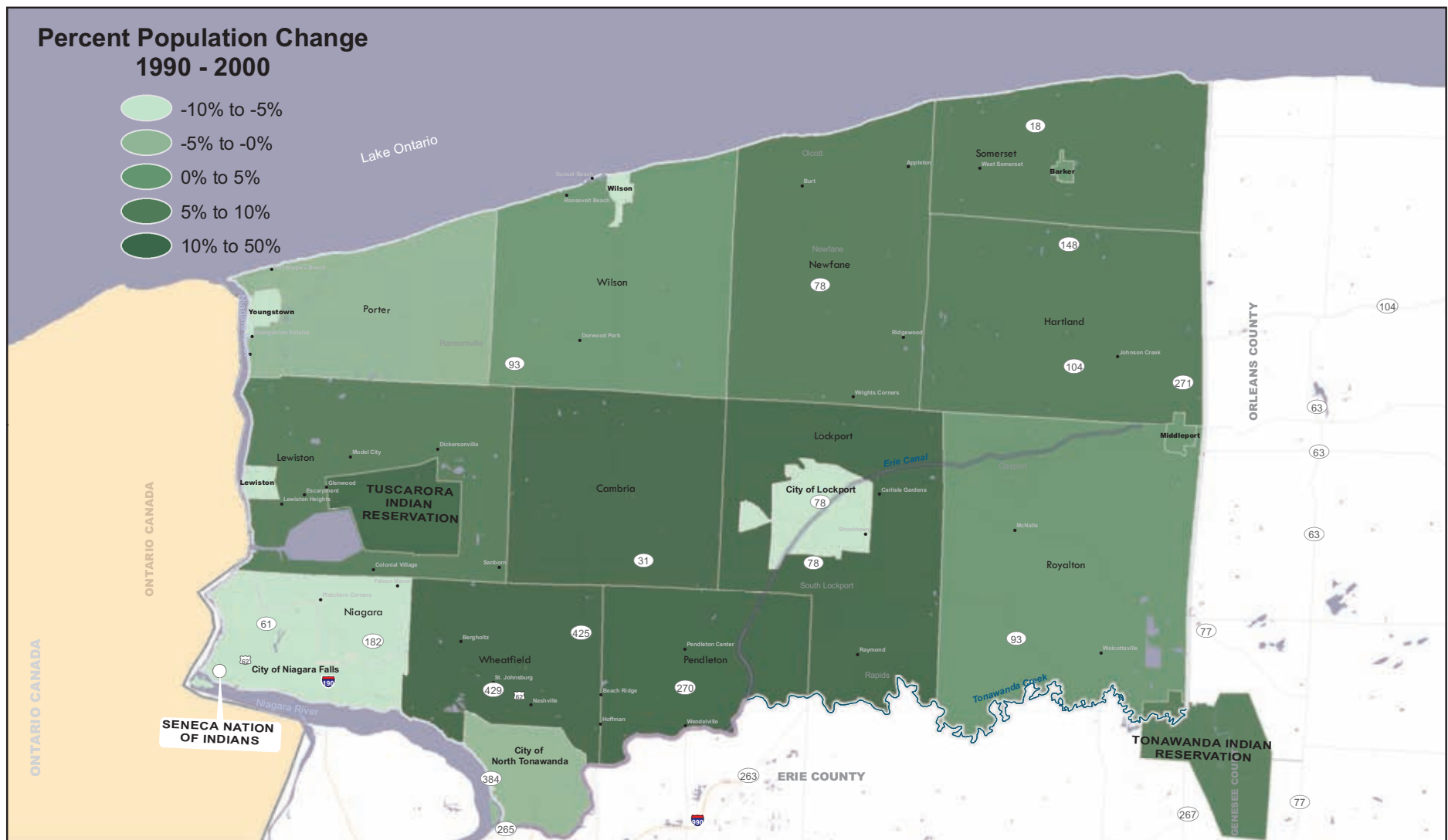
Detailed demographic data for each of the twenty municipalities of Niagara County are provided in Chapter IV. Community Profiles. Below are some notable characteristics and trends regarding these municipalities based on 2000 Census information. Due to their unique characteristics, demographic information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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

## G. Economic Data

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

### 1. Fiscal Conditions

#### a. Major Sources of Revenue

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

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

Property Tax Revenue



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



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

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

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

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

#### Sales Tax Revenue

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Town Special Districts

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

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

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

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

### Revenue Sharing

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

## **b. Major Expenditures**

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

### **Expenditure Trends**

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

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

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

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

#### -- Expenditures and Budget Implications for Niagara Falls

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

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

#### -- General Budget Implications for Cities in New York State

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

### c. General State of Affairs

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

#### -- Local Tax Burden

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

- Local taxes are the highest in the country, at \$67 per \$1,000 of personal income, 60 percent higher than the national average of \$42. Maine is the next highest state at \$55 – nearly 20 percent lower than New York.
- Although New York does not rank first in any individual major local tax, it is among the top seven states for the three major taxes: local property, sales and personal income. It is the combination of high local taxes across the board that causes the State’s overall local tax ranking to rise to the top.

#### -- Property Tax Burden

- Outside of New York City, property taxes per capita are \$1,634 – 73 percent above the national average.
- Over the last 10 years, property tax levies have grown by 60 percent, more than twice the rate of inflation during that period (28 percent). Most of this growth occurred in the last 5 or so years – when property tax levies increased by 42 percent, compared to inflation of 13 percent.
- In Niagara County the property tax levy per household and per \$1,000 of personal income is relatively low. However, the property tax rate in relation to full property values is relatively high, which is likely due, in part, to the relatively low property values characteristic of Niagara County.

#### -- Property Tax Issues

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

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

#### -- Sales Tax Burden

- New York State has one of the highest combined state/local sales tax rates in the nation, with only Tennessee, Louisiana and Washington being higher. The State’s average combined state-local sales tax rate of 8.25 percent for New York compares to a national average rate of 5.93 percent.
- Sales tax revenues grew by nearly 45 percent from 1993 to 2001, more than double the rate of growth of property taxes, which grew by 20 percent during this period.

## -- Sales Tax Issues

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

## -- Town Special District Issues

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

## -- Revenue Sharing Issues

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

## -- Revenue Sharing Amounts

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

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

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

#### -- Unrestricted Aid Allocation Mechanisms

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

## H. Economic Development

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

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

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

### 1. Market Facts

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



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

#### *a. Leading Industry Sectors*

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

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

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

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

#### *b. Major Employers*

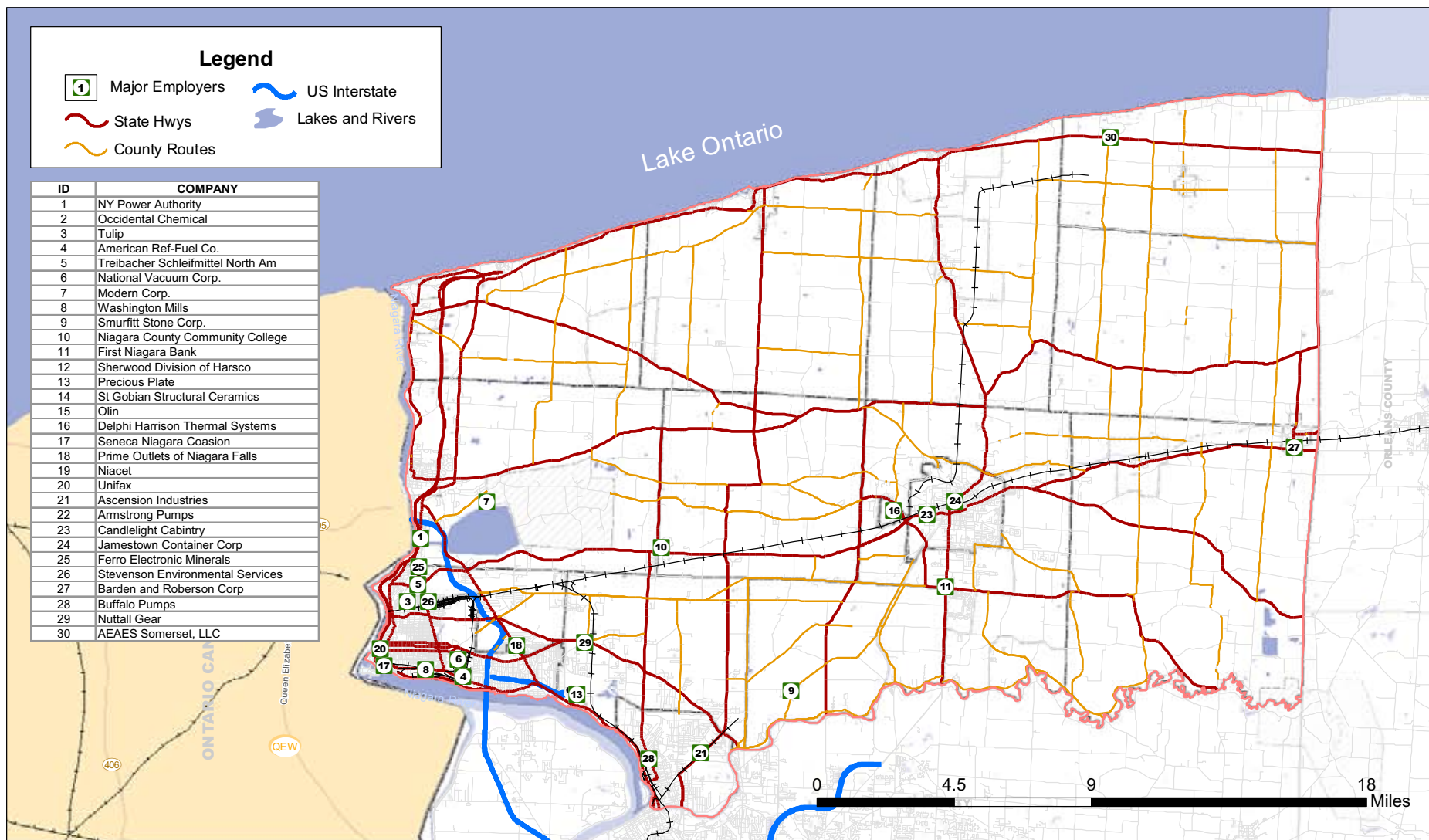
Consistent with the data on leading industry sectors, Niagara County's top employers include manufacturers, entertainment/recreation facilities, retail centers, school districts, and hospitals. The list of top employers by number of employees follows. Major employers are also identified in Figure III.H.1.

##### *Private Sector*

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

##### *Public Sector*

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

### c. Industry Targets and Projections

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

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

### d. Availability of Land and Building Space

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

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

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

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

-- Retail

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

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

the Falls Region

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

#### e. Utilities

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

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

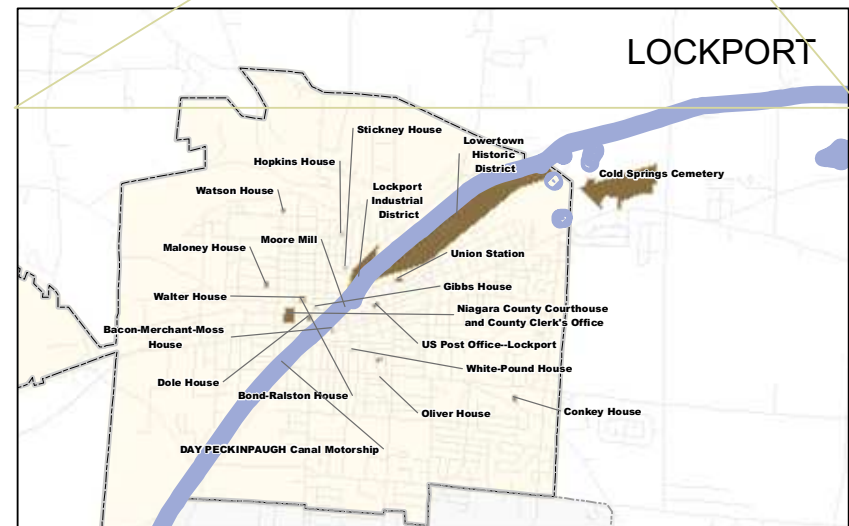
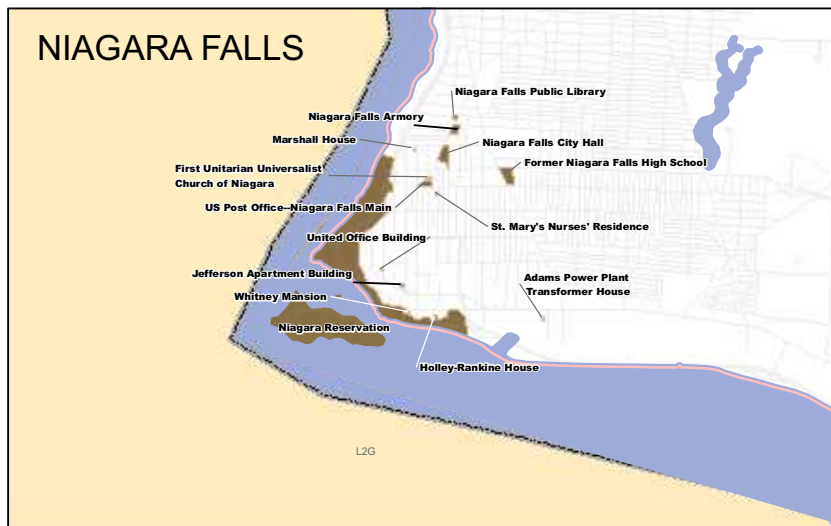
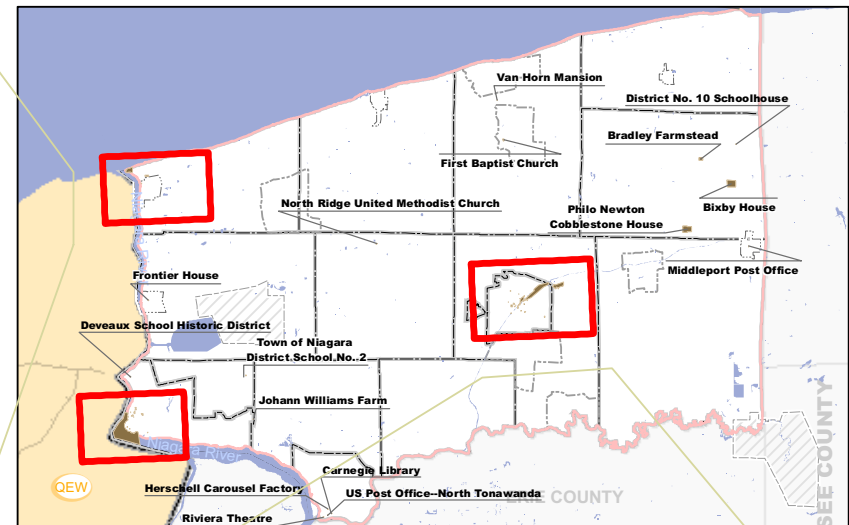
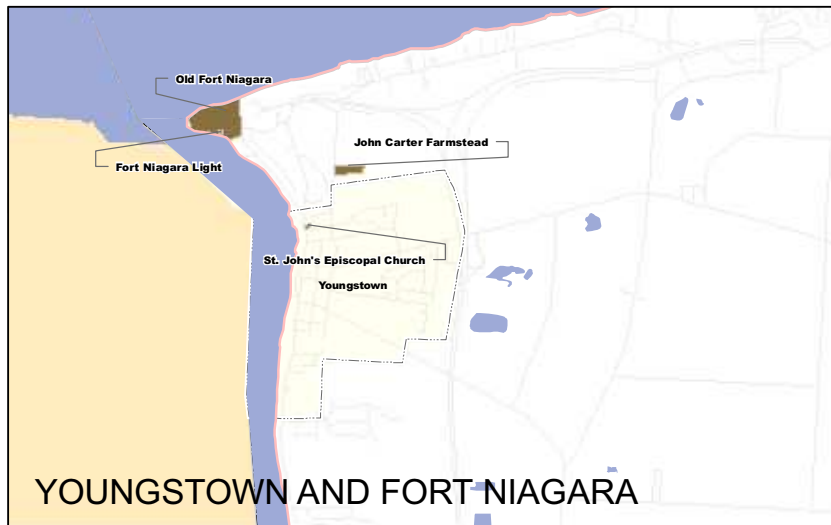
Verizon is the major provider of telecommunication services in the County. More than 5,600 miles of high speed fiber optic cables exist for transmission of voice, video and data to residential and business customers. Wireless communications are provided by Verizon, Sprint, Cingular and others. Cable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

## I. Cultural and Historic Resources

### 1. Cultural and Historic Resources

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

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





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

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

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

## J. Recreation and Tourism

### 1. Recreation

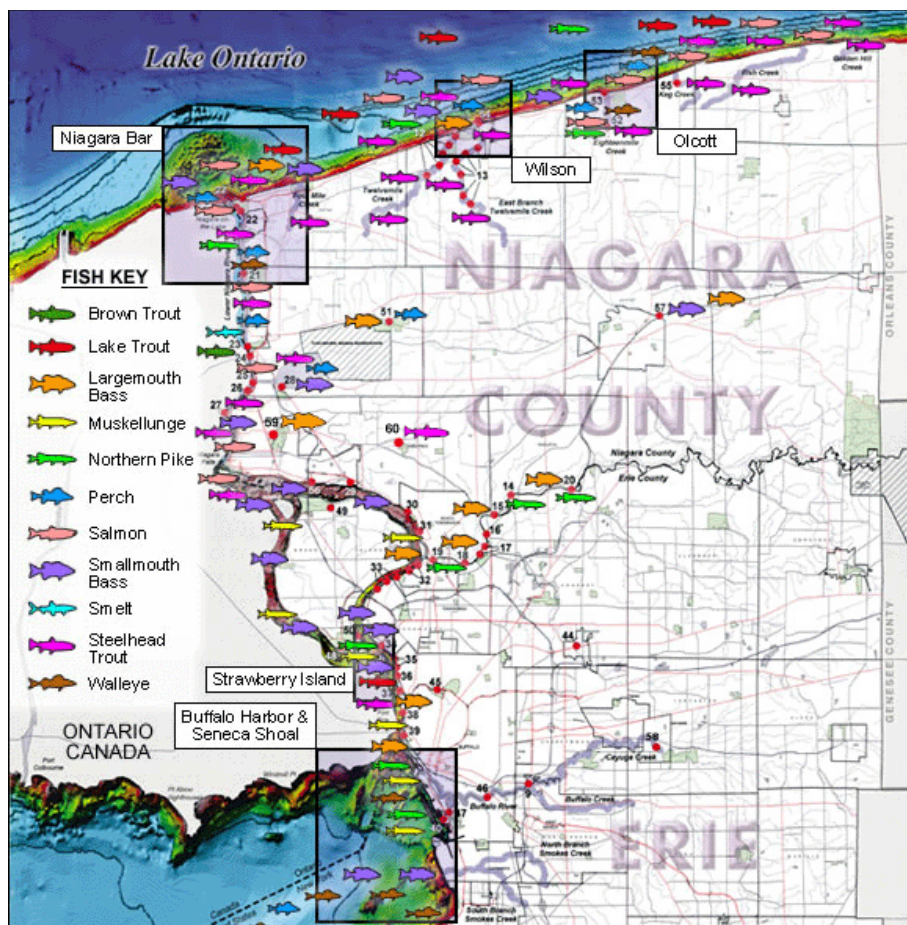
Niagara County is a center for all types of year-round recreational opportunities and tourist destinations. No destination is better known or contributes more to the tourism industry of the region than Niagara Falls. In addition to this natural wonder of the world, Niagara County affords a diversity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

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

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

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

*Information on recreation and tourism opportunities in Niagara County can be found at [www.niagara-usa.com](http://www.niagara-usa.com)*



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

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

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

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

- Bond Lake Park

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

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

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

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

## 2. Tourism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## K. Transportation

### 1. Roads and Highways

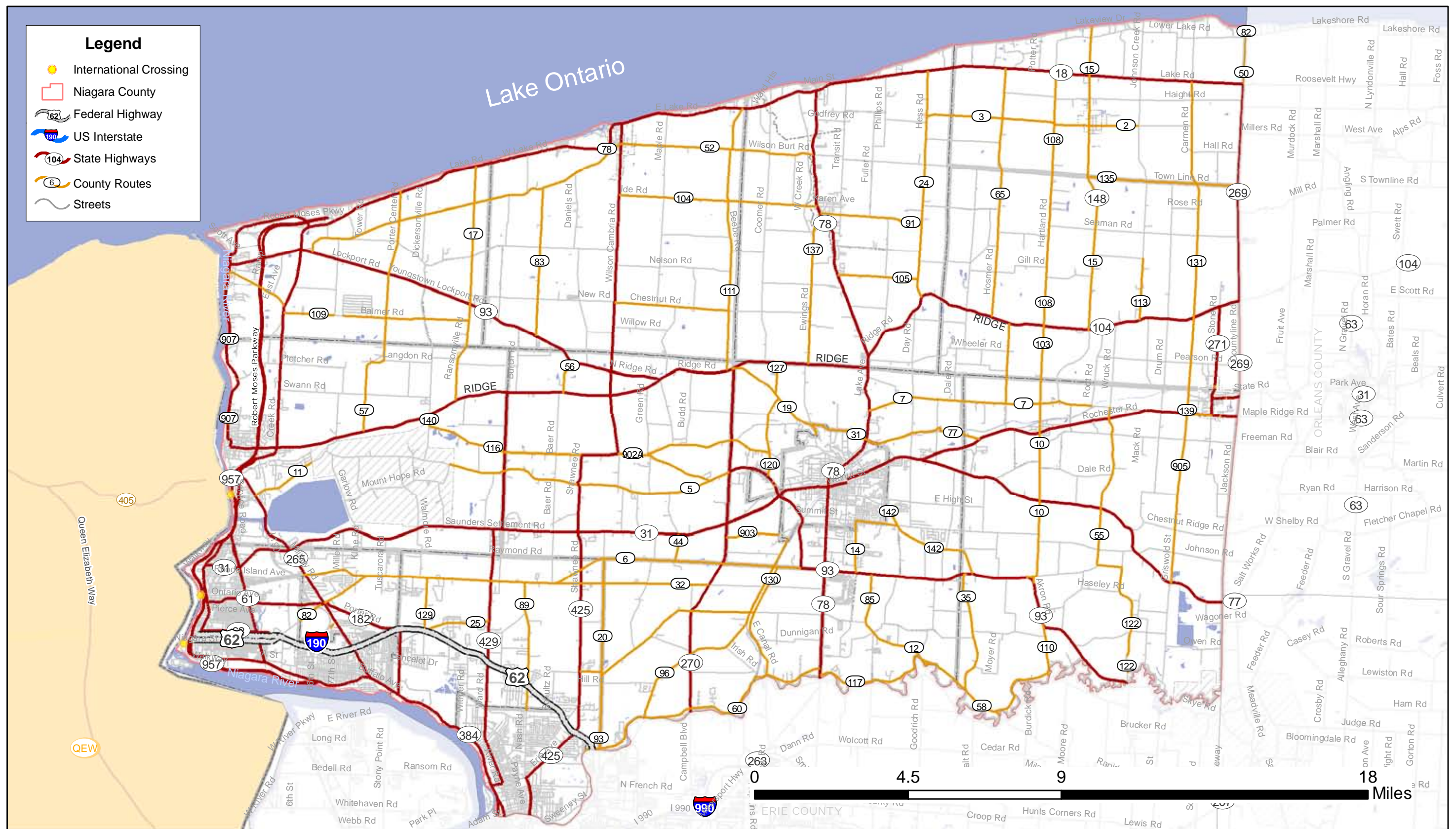
A well developed network of local roads, highways and bridges exists throughout the 20 municipalities that comprise Niagara County. In total, more than 1650 miles of roads and highways exist within the County. Of this total about 65 percent are considered local roads and streets under the jurisdiction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

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

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

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





2008 NIAGARA COUNTY REGION 5 COUNTY 4										
MINOR CIVIL DIVISION		GEO- CODE	POP. 2000	TOTAL STATE TOURING ROUTE	CENTERLINE HIGHWAY MILEAGE BY JURISDICTION					
TYPE	Name of Town, Village or City				TOWN VILLAGE or CITY	COUNTY	TOTAL LOCAL	D.O.T. OWNED	OTHER	TOTAL STATE & LOCAL
TOWNS	Cambria	0112	5,390	28.1	31.4	18.3	49.7	28.1	0.0	77.8
	Harland	0379	3,670	18.0	56.5	28.7	85.2	12.4	0.0	97.6
	Lewiston	0464	14,610	30.8	64.5	13.8	78.3	28.3	26.1	132.6
	Lookport	0481	19,650	23.0	85.1	33.9	119.0	34.3	0.0	143.2
	Newfane	0572	9,660	17.6	69.5	21.4	91.0	17.9	0.0	108.9
	Niagara	0584	8,980	11.7	30.0	5.9	35.9	11.7	0.0	47.6
	Pendleton	0648	6,050	7.8	26.6	30.4	57.0	7.8	0.0	64.8
	Porter	0681	4,960	20.2	27.1	23.6	50.7	16.0	6.5	73.1
	Royalton	0728	6,290	24.4	82.1	35.9	118.0	25.2	0.0	143.2
	Somerset	0786	2,290	13.6	33.4	19.1	52.5	11.5	0.0	64.1
	Wheatfield	0903	14,090	17.7	63.0	17.8	80.8	19.9	0.0	100.7
	Wilson	0916	4,630	14.8	41.2	26.1	67.3	14.8	0.0	82.1
SUBTOTAL			100,270	228.9	610.4	275.0	885.4	217.8	32.6	1135.7
VILLAGES	Barker	1035	580	1.0	1.8	1.7	3.5	0.0	0.0	3.6
	Lewiston	1268	2,780	2.6	13.8	0.6	14.4	2.0	0.8	17.1
	Middleport	1308	1,920	2.4	6.4	1.1	7.5	1.8	0.0	9.2
	Wilson	1540	1,210	2.7	4.2	0.8	4.9	2.7	0.0	7.6
	Youngstown	1549	1,960	2.4	6.6	2.2	8.8	1.0	0.0	9.8
SUBTOTAL			8,450	10.9	32.7	6.4	39.0	7.4	0.8	47.2
CITIES	Lookport	2027	22,280	8.0	90.1	1.6	91.7	4.7	0.1	96.8
	Niagara Falls	2035	55,590	28.8	228.5	0.0	228.5	15.7	7.8	262.0
	North Tonawanda	2036	33,260	10.8	115.0	0.0	115.0	5.4	0.0	120.3
SUBTOTAL			111,130	47.4	433.6	1.6	435.2	25.7	7.9	468.8
COUNTY TOTAL		----	219,850	287.2	1076.6	282.9	1359.6	250.9	41.3	1651.7

## 2. Aviation, Rail and Marine Facilities

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

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

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



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

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

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

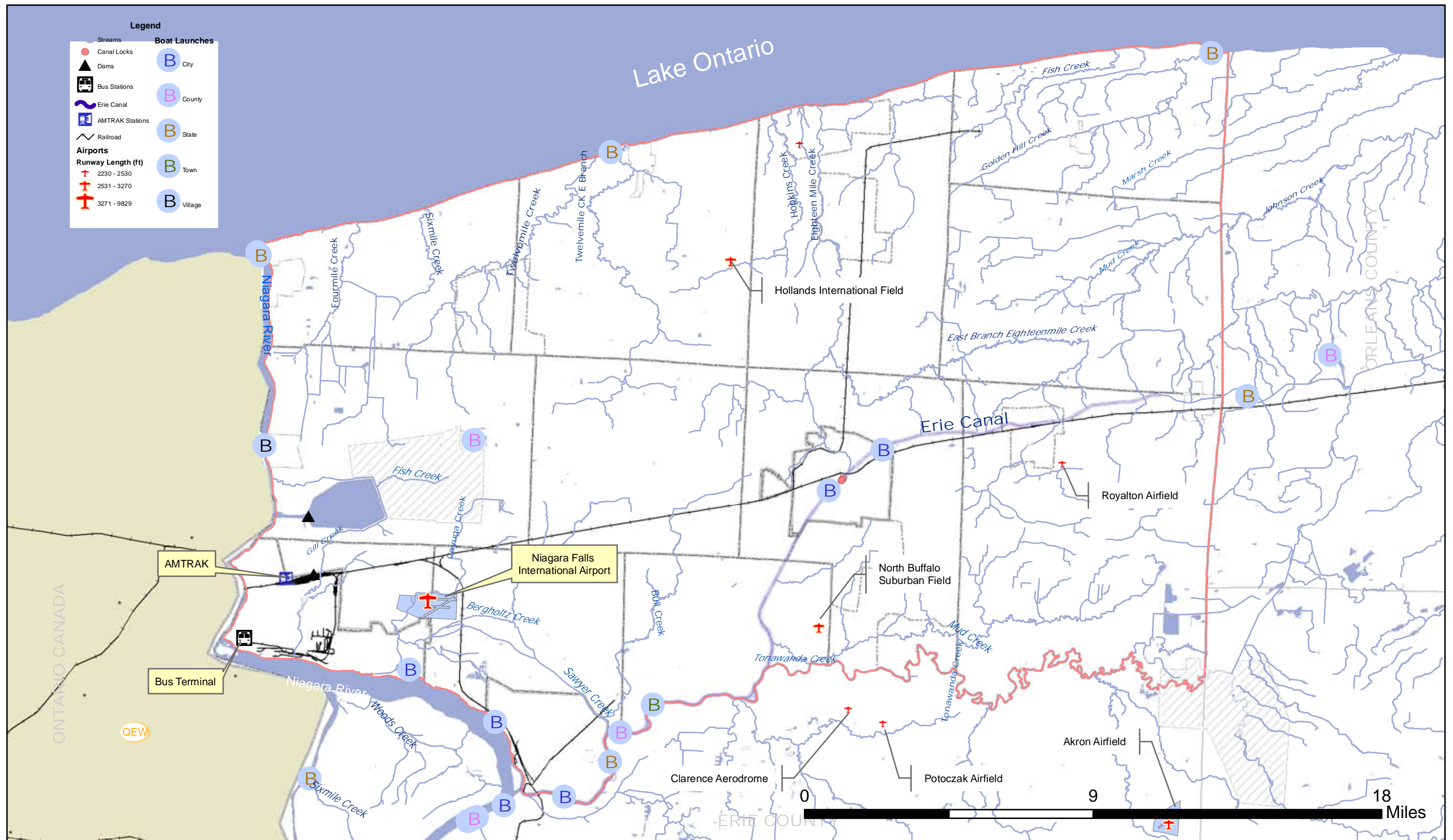
The City of Niagara Falls is progressing on plans to construct a new border crossing facility between New York and Ontario, Canada with a new International Train Station. This project is intended to create a rail centered multi-modal, multi-functional transportation facility at the Whirlpool-Rapids bridgehead.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

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

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

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

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



Canoe Trail along the Creek.

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

## L. Health and Safety

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

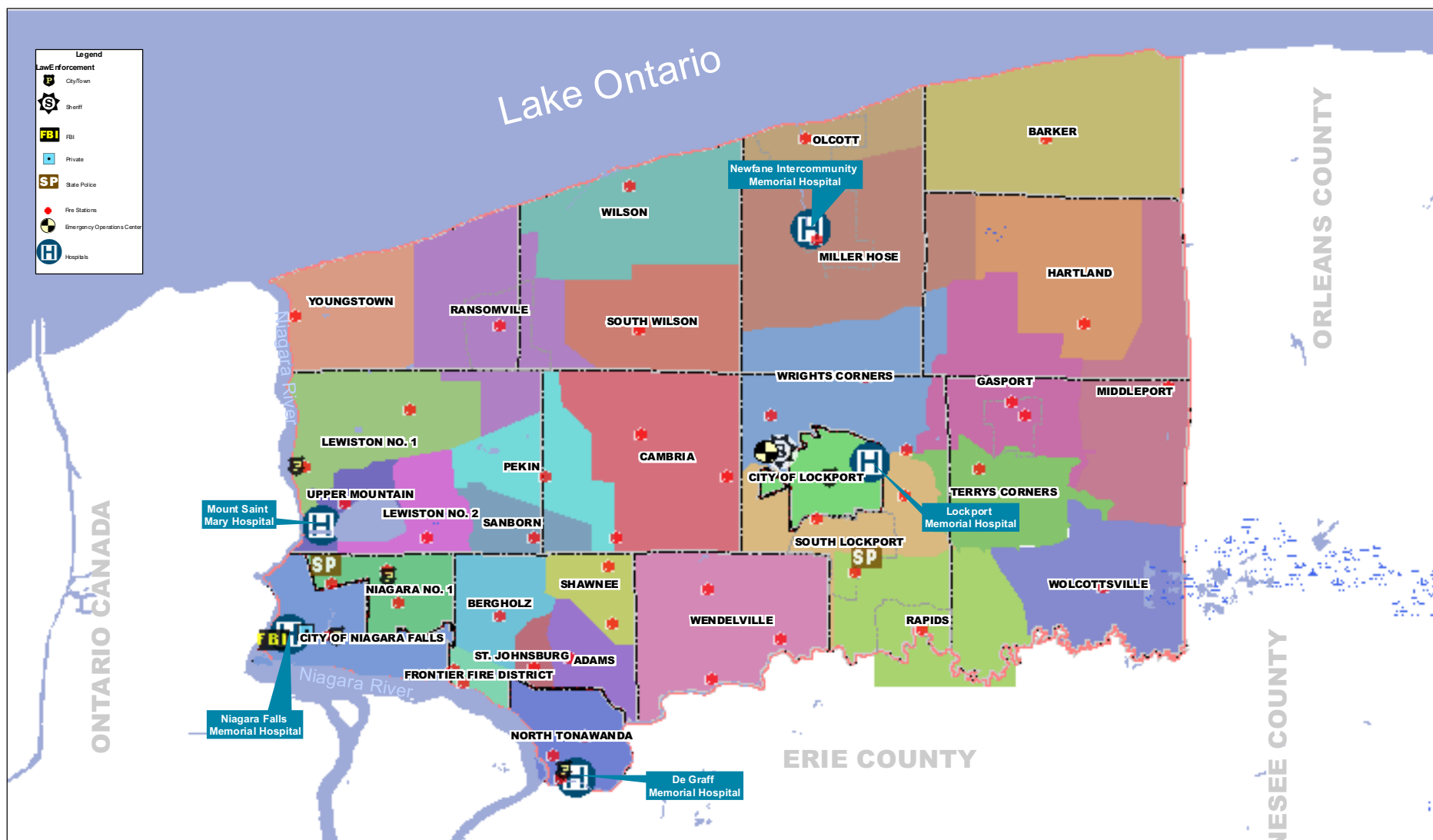
The locations of public health and safety facilities are identified in Figure III.L.1. Many health and safety facilities are located in the urbanized centers of the southern half of the County primarily in and around the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Fewer facilities are located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

### 1. Hospitals

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

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





## 2. Law Enforcement

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

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

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

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

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

## 3. Fire/Rescue Departments

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

<b>Adams Fire Co.</b> 7113 Nash Road N. Tonawanda, NY 14120 Phone 692-3212	<b>Barker Fire Co.</b> 1660 Quaker Road Barker, NY 14012 Phone 795-3011	<b>Bergholz Fire Co.</b> 2470 Niagara Road Niagara Falls NY 14304 Phone 731-4848
<b>Cambria Fire Co.</b> 4631 Cambria-Wilson Road Lockport, NY 14094 Phone 434-8948	<b>Frontier Fire Co.</b> 2176 Liberty Drive Niagara Falls, NY 14304 Phone 283-5700	<b>Gasport Fire Co.</b> 8412 State Street Gasport, NY 14067 Phone 772-7751
<b>Hartland Fire Co.</b> 8945 Ridge Road Gasport, NY 14067 Phone 735-3283	<b>Lewiston #1 Fire Co.</b> 145 N. 6th Street Lewiston, NY 14092 Phone 754-2180	<b>Lewiston #2 Fire Co.</b> 1705 Saunders-Settlement Niagara Falls, NY 14304 Phone 297-0050

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## M. Education

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

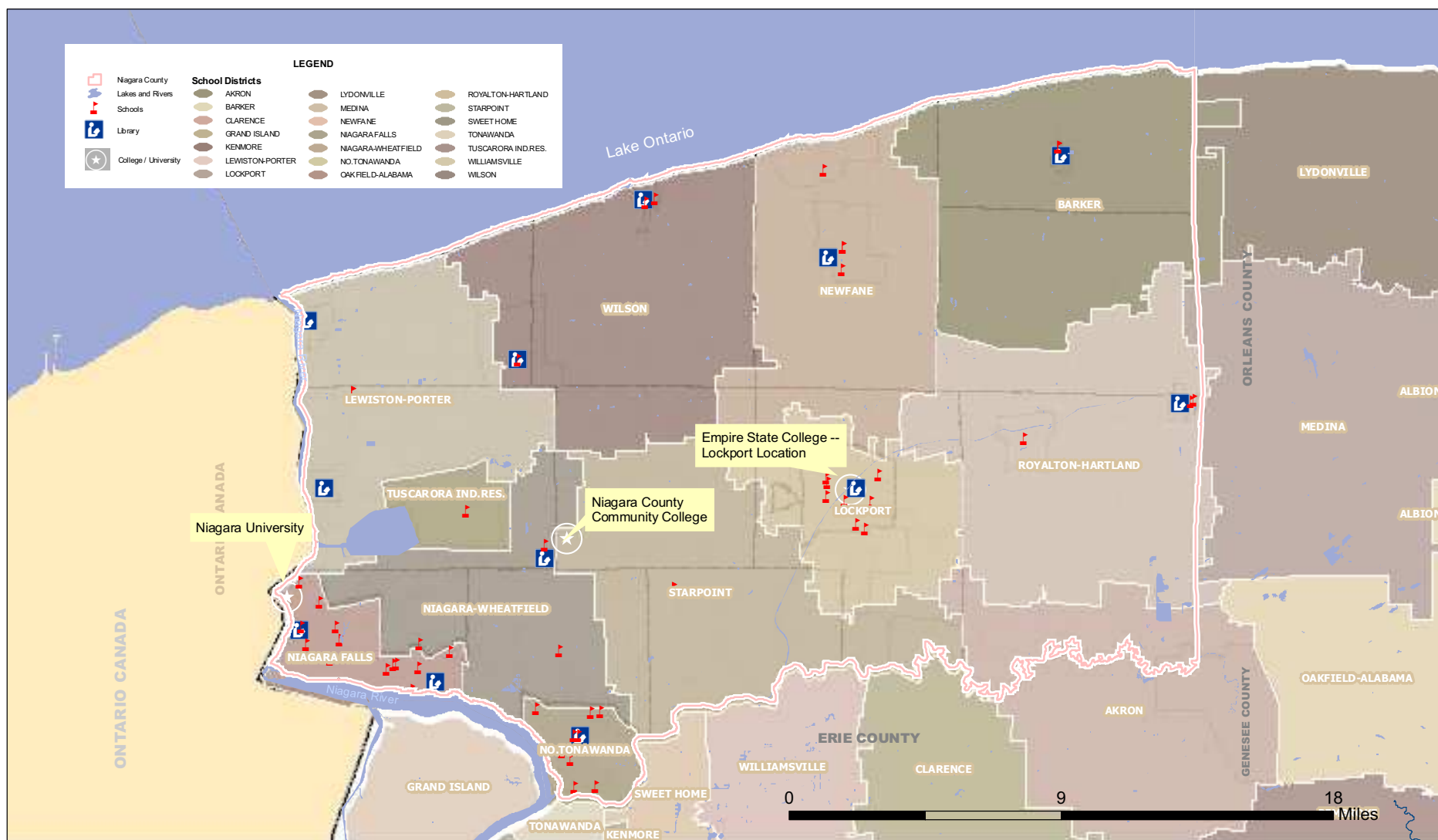
Niagara University was founded in 1856 by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and first chartered in 1861 as a seminary, then rechartered as a university in 1883. The 160 acre Niagara University campus is located on Route 104 along the northern limits of the City of Niagara Falls. The campus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

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

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

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

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





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

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