

Chapter V

Land Use & Environment

Land Use Planning

Niagara County occupies a total land area of about 527 square miles (approximately 337,000 acres) comprised of 20 municipalities that includes 3 cities, 12 towns and 5 villages, plus three Native American reservations/lands. Land use decisions and regulations in Niagara County and New York State are primarily the jurisdiction of these 20 municipalities under New York State's City, Town, Village and General Municipal laws (www.dos.state.ny.us). This responsibility of local municipalities to govern land use within their borders is known as "Home Rule".

Powers given to local municipalities by the State include not only the ability to regulate land use, but also to prepare municipal comprehensive plans and enter into intermunicipal agreements to prepare joint plans. A NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources in 2008 found that an increasing number of municipalities in New York continue to prepare and adopt written comprehensive plans, increasing from 64% of the State's approximately 1500 municipalities in 2004 to 69% in 2008.

Niagara County annually surveys municipalities within the County as a Planning Census to gather up-to-date information on the status of local land use plans and regulations. Information is collected on comprehensive plans, zoning, local waterfront revitalization plans, subdivision regulations, cell tower regulations and GIS mapping capabilities.

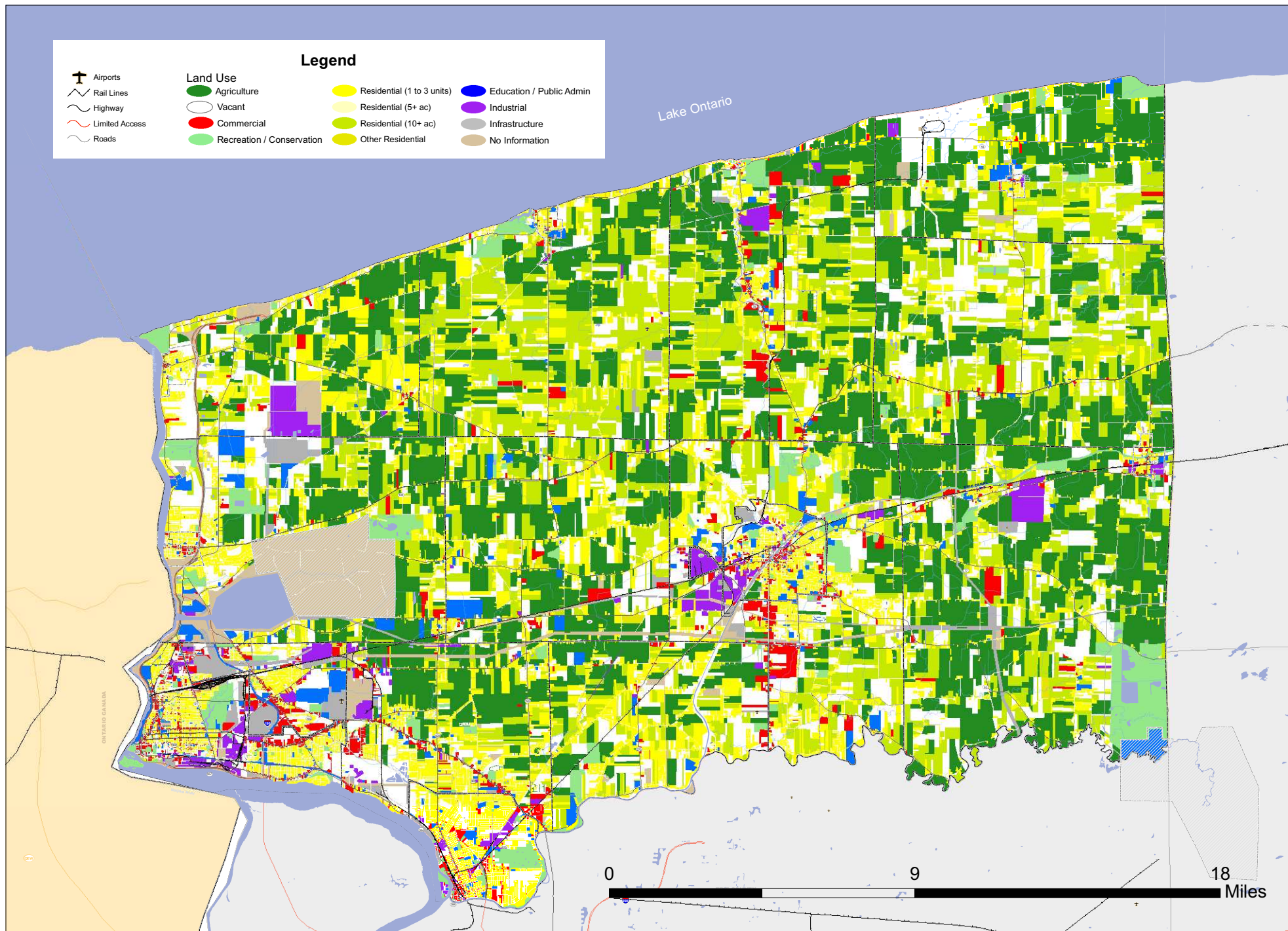
The County's Planning Census is an important benchmarking tool when comparing communities within the County as well as from outside County borders. The Niagara County Planning Census is summarized in Appendix B. The 2007 census indicates that of the County's 20 municipalities all have zoning regulations, all but one village and one town have comprehensive master plans, and 16 have subdivision regulations.

A New York State Legislative Commission Survey for 2008 indicates that

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*County Planning Census
see Appendix B*





Eighty-one percent of all counties in NYS have planning boards, 95% have farmland protection boards, 89% have farmland protection plans, 53% have comprehensive plans, and 42% have right-to-farm laws.

With completion of this comprehensive plan Niagara County now has all five of these important planning tools in place.



The percentage of parcels categorized as residential land use in Niagara County now exceeds that of active agriculture.

about 53% of the counties in New York State (about 30 of the 57 counties outside of New York City) have written comprehensive plans. Prior to this comprehensive plan Niagara County was among those counties that did not have a written comprehensive plan.

As the State's survey points out, county comprehensive plans are an important guidance tool for both county and local decision-makers in considering actions on related planning and land use development matters. This is particularly true in county reviews of local planning and zoning actions under Article 239-L and 239-M reviews under NYS General Municipal Law as well as county and town agricultural and farmland protection plans.

Eighty-one percent of all counties in New York have Planning Boards according to the 2008 Legislative Commission Survey, 95% have farmland protection boards, 89% have farmland protection plans and 42% have right-to-farm laws. With completion of this comprehensive plan Niagara County now has all five of these very important planning tools in place.

Land Use Trends and Conditions

Although still largely considered a mostly rural county, the percentage of parcels categorized as residential land use in Niagara County now exceeds that of active agriculture. This recent trend in land use is also discussed in Chapter III and resummarized below in Table V-1. Figure V-1 is a composite map of existing land use within Niagara County illustrating overall land use patterns. This composite was created as a compilation of individual land use category maps provided in Chapter III.

Based on the most recent landowner and property assessment data collected by the State, more land is now in various forms of residential use within the County than in agricultural or other uses. Vacant parcels, many of which are likely past agricultural lands, represent the third largest category of land use in the County.

Table V-1 Existing Land Use Categories in Niagara County

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

New York State contains a total of approximately 7.6 million acres of farmland. Farmland loss continues to accelerate in New York State with almost 26,000 acres being developed each year – more than twice the amount of farmland that is being protected. This loss of farmland is largely due to decentralization of populations from traditional urban centers and inner suburbs into outer suburbs and rural areas as is the case within Niagara County.

In 1992, New York instituted the State's Farmland Protection Program. As of late 2006 the program had granted over \$116 million in funds to protect approximately 50,429 acres on 241 farms in 26 counties (American Farmland Trust 2007). Much of this funding has gone towards the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR's).

"Purchase of development rights is a voluntary approach that pays farmland owners to permanently extinguish the development rights on their property. The land remains privately owned and on the tax rolls. However, a permanent restriction, commonly called a conservation easement, is placed on the deed preventing any future non-agricultural development of the property. Participating farmers are eligible to receive the difference between the agricultural value of the land and the fair market value of the land.

This technique allows farmers to access equity held in the land, while protecting it for future agricultural use. Farmers have used the funding to reinvest in their farm businesses as well as to retire or transfer the farm to a new generation of farmers." (American Farmland Trust 2007).

The use of PDR's and similar Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) in rural communities of Niagara County is a recommended action proposed in Niagara County's 1999 Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The use of these programs should be explored as a potentially viable tool to direct future large-scale development to appropriate regions of each municipality.

Despite encroachment by development and the trend for conversion of farmlands to other uses, agriculture remains one of the County's most important industries. The combination of rich farmland and weather conditions tempered by the presence of Lake Ontario and natural features like the Niagara Escarpment make Niagara County one of the State's most important fruit growing regions. The County ranks 4th in NYS in fruit growing agriculture.

Vineyards and viticulture are also a major component of the County's agricultural base, with the combination of rich soils and relatively mild winters providing excellent conditions for growing wine grapes. The Niagara Wine Trail is the fastest growing wine trail in the State and has grown from three wineries in the past few years to twelve that are in operation in 2008.

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

The number and size of farms in Niagara County have fluctuated over the past



*Niagara County
contains
approximately
189,000 acres of
farmland within
six designated
Agricultural Districts
distributed among the
County's 12 towns.*



The number of farms in the County dropped 6% in 5 years between 1997 and 2002, then increased 8% between 2002 and 2007.

20 years. The number of farms dropped 6% in 5 years between 1997 and 2002, then increased 8% between 2002 and 2007. However, during the same period the average acreage per farm increased 13% between 1997 and 2002, then decreased 11% between 2002 and 2007.

An analysis of the conversion of farmland within the County to uses other than agriculture was completed as part of the preparation of this Plan. The results of the analysis confirm that this conversion in recent years was moving northeasterly across the County into rural towns, including Cambria, Newfane and Somerset. This trend in conversion of farmland to other forms of land use is illustrated in Figures V-2 and V-3.

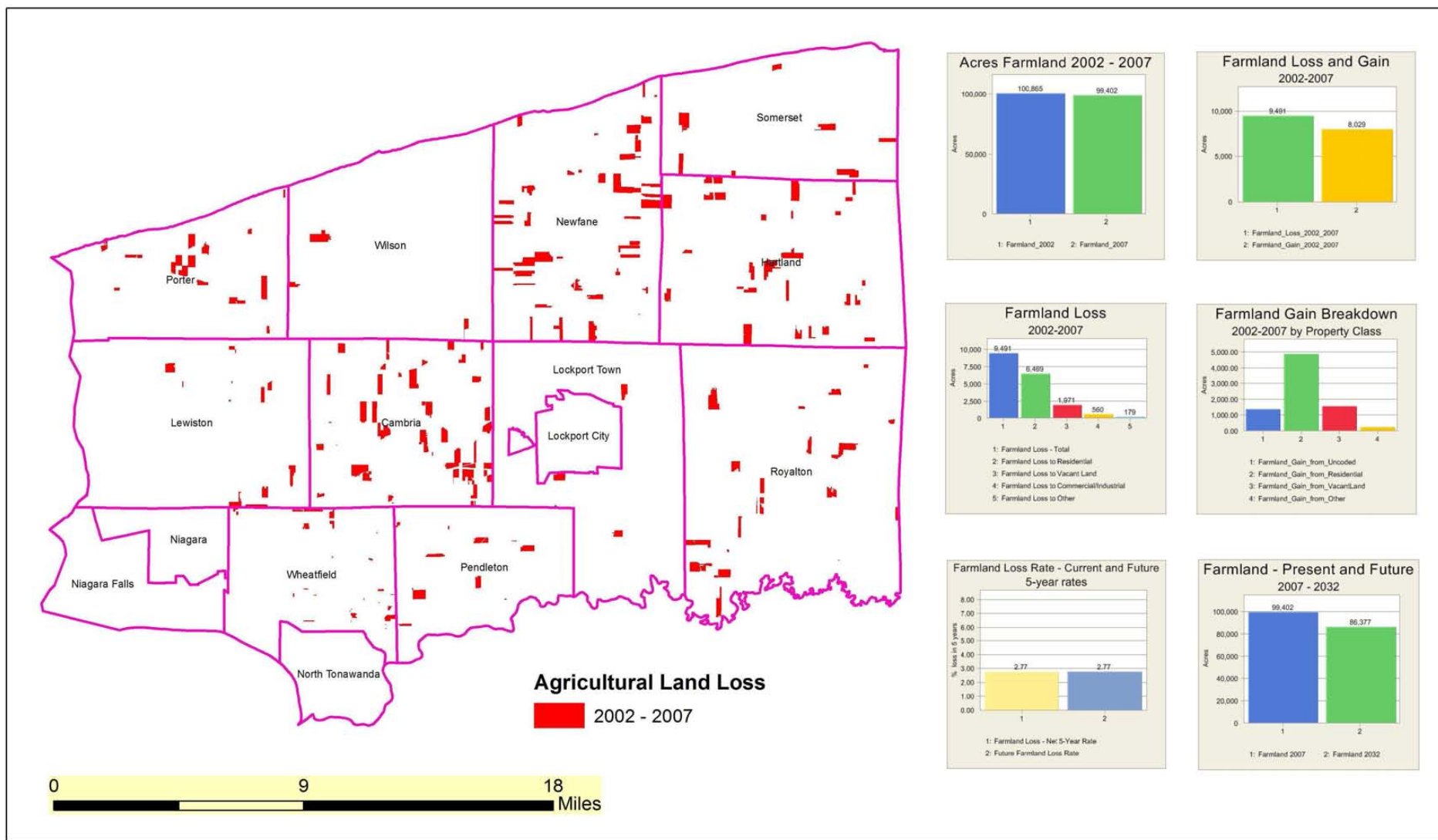
As noted previously in Chapter III, the County's population has been declining from a peak of 242,269 in 1960 to an estimated 214,845 in 2007, an overall 11.3% decrease. Niagara Falls remains the County's largest city, but its population fell by 45% between 1960 and 2000, from 102,400 to 55,600.

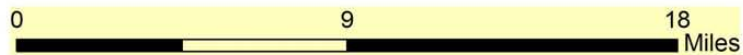
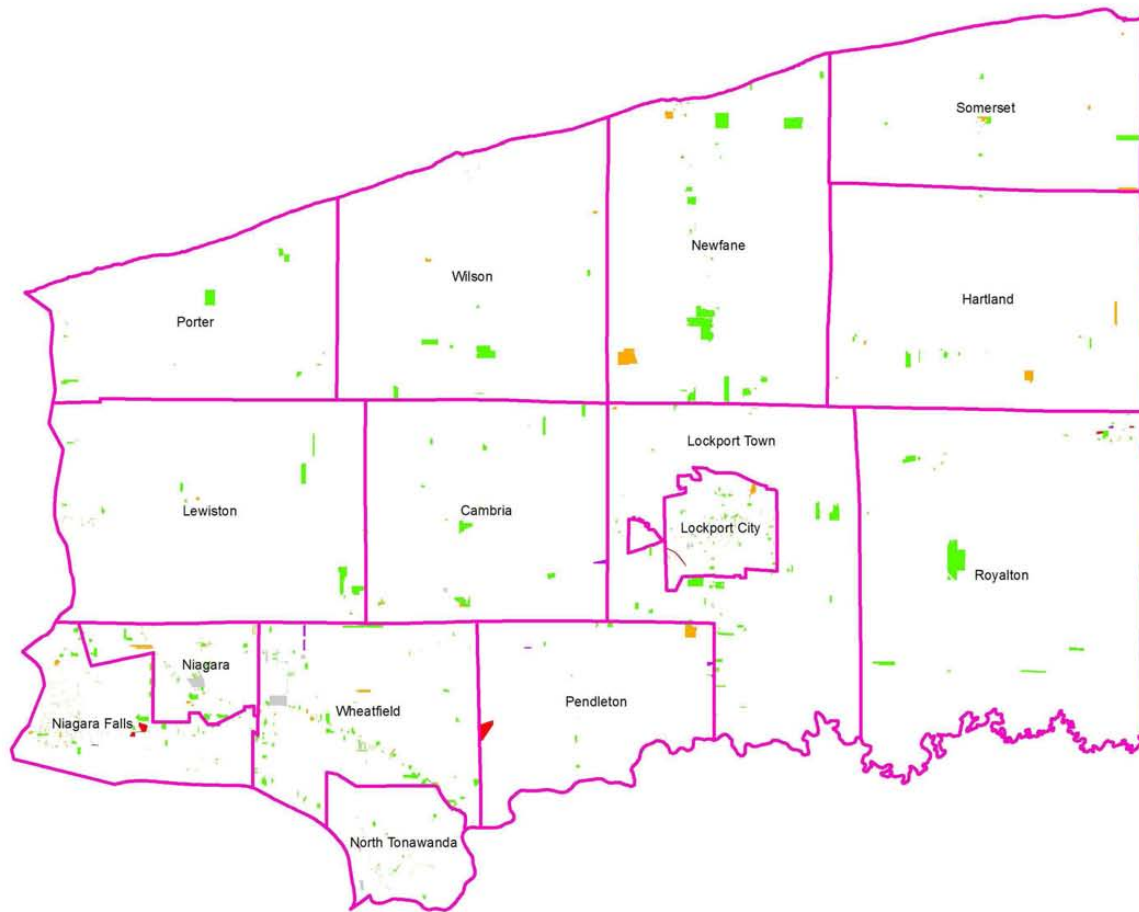
The distribution of population in Niagara County has been characterized by sprawling growth patterns over the last few decades, with almost all household growth concentrated in rural areas outside of, or on the fringes of its three cities. The number of households in rural areas of the County increased 33.4% between 1980 and 2000, while the number of households in developed areas increased by only one percent during the same period.

The Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth prepared in 2006 stated with regards to regional land use trends: "In the last half of the 20th Century, the [Erie-Niagara] region's urbanized area ... nearly tripled in size, expanding from 123 square miles in 1950 to 367 square miles in 2000. Despite only a modest increase in population over the same 50 year period, a little over 7 percent, residential, commercial, and institutional uses spread outward from the region's traditional centers to occupy large areas of the Towns of Niagara, Lockport and Wheatfield in Niagara County...."

Between 1980 and 2000, population increased dramatically in the southern half of the Town of Lockport, the westernmost part of the Town of Lewiston and the southern parts of the Towns of Wheatfield, Pendleton and Cambria. Housing permit data for the eight year period from 1999 to 2006 show a consistent pattern of investment in the Towns of Wheatfield and Lockport, where the average number of housing units permitted annually was 196 and 111, respectively.

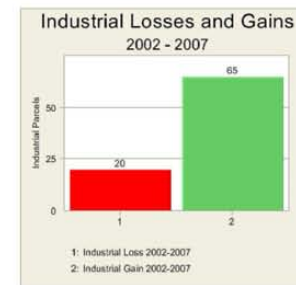
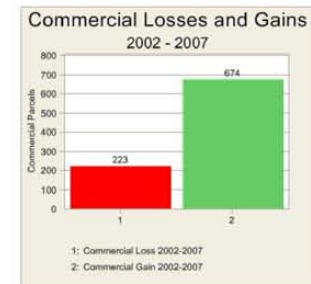
This expansion of urbanized and developed areas, coupled with declining population in Niagara County, has meant population loss and disinvestment in both the most densely settled, inner city neighborhoods and in the less densely settled rural village and town centers. As stated in the Regional Framework, Niagara Falls, Lockport, and North Tonawanda have been seeing declining populations, as have the northernmost towns. Disinvestment results in considerable vacant and underutilized properties throughout the County. Many of these vacant and underutilized properties are identified as brownfields due to environmental contamination from past land uses. The presence of these brownfields in most communities presents serious potential effects on the environment and public health.





2002 - 2007

Change - Industrial and Commercial



While substantial progress has been made, several hundred Niagara County brownfield sites remain in need of environmental assessments, notably Phase I Environmental Site Assessments, which are used to inform prospective owners of the environmental history of a site and to determine the potential need for further environmental investigation. According to Niagara County's 2006 brownfields inventory, 41 hazardous waste sites are still in need of Phase I investigations, as are approximately 200 petroleum-contaminated sites. Niagara County will continue to seek State and Federal funding to complete the necessary investigations required to advance the redevelopment of brownfield sites throughout the County. The redevelopment of these sites into useful properties is both an opportunity to benefit the environment and public health as well as providing increased economic development in communities. More information on the County's Brownfields program is provided in Chapter VI.

Natural Environment Trends and Conditions

Niagara County communities are rich in natural resources and natural features, many of which are unique to the County. The two features that quite literally stand out above all others in defining the natural and cultural heritage of the region are the Niagara Escarpment and Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Escarpment and Niagara Falls, which natural erosion of the escarpment created over eons of time, are geologic landforms unique to Niagara County. The Western New York Land Conservancy describes the Niagara Escarpment as "...a ridge of rock 100 – 150 feet high in some locations throughout the County. The Escarpment contains some of the best exposures of 405 to 500 million year old rocks and fossils of the Silurian and Ordovician periods to be found anywhere in the world."

Concerted efforts are underway to protect and preserve the Niagara Escarpment and its valuable ecosystems consisting of unique floral and faunal habitats. The Escarpment contributes significantly to the visual character of many communities in Niagara County, and to the region's economy as well. The combination of the Escarpment and proximity to Lake Ontario create microclimate conditions that, in combination with relatively flat, fertile farmlands, have supported generations of farmers.

The existing environmental conditions of Niagara County contribute to the success of wineries along the Niagara Wine Trail and other fruit growing areas in the County. The 2008 Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy indicates that Niagara County ranks 1st of all NY counties in production of pears, peaches, plums, prunes and sweet cherries and 4th in acreage of fruit grown statewide. Because of the important ties to local economies the natural resources that contribute to the success of agriculture in the County need to be maintained and protected especially in light of the conversion of farmlands that is taking place within the County.

The Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth described a number of "Heritage Assets" unique to Niagara County communities. These heritage

areas are based on the natural assets of the County. In addition to the Niagara Escarpment these heritage assets include: the Seaway Trail; the Erie Canal National Heritage Area; the Niagara National Heritage Area; the Niagara Wine Trail; and local waterfront areas in communities along the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and significant streams and tributaries in the County such as Tonawanda Creek and Eighteen Mile Creek. Along with the heritage areas, the County's rich natural environment includes prime farmland soils, diverse wetland complexes, floodplains and relatively intact riparian (stream) corridors which all contribute to local character and significant open space resources.

A composite map of Niagara County's natural resources is provided as Figure V-4. Individual maps of the resources that when compiled produced this composite map are provided in Chapter III.

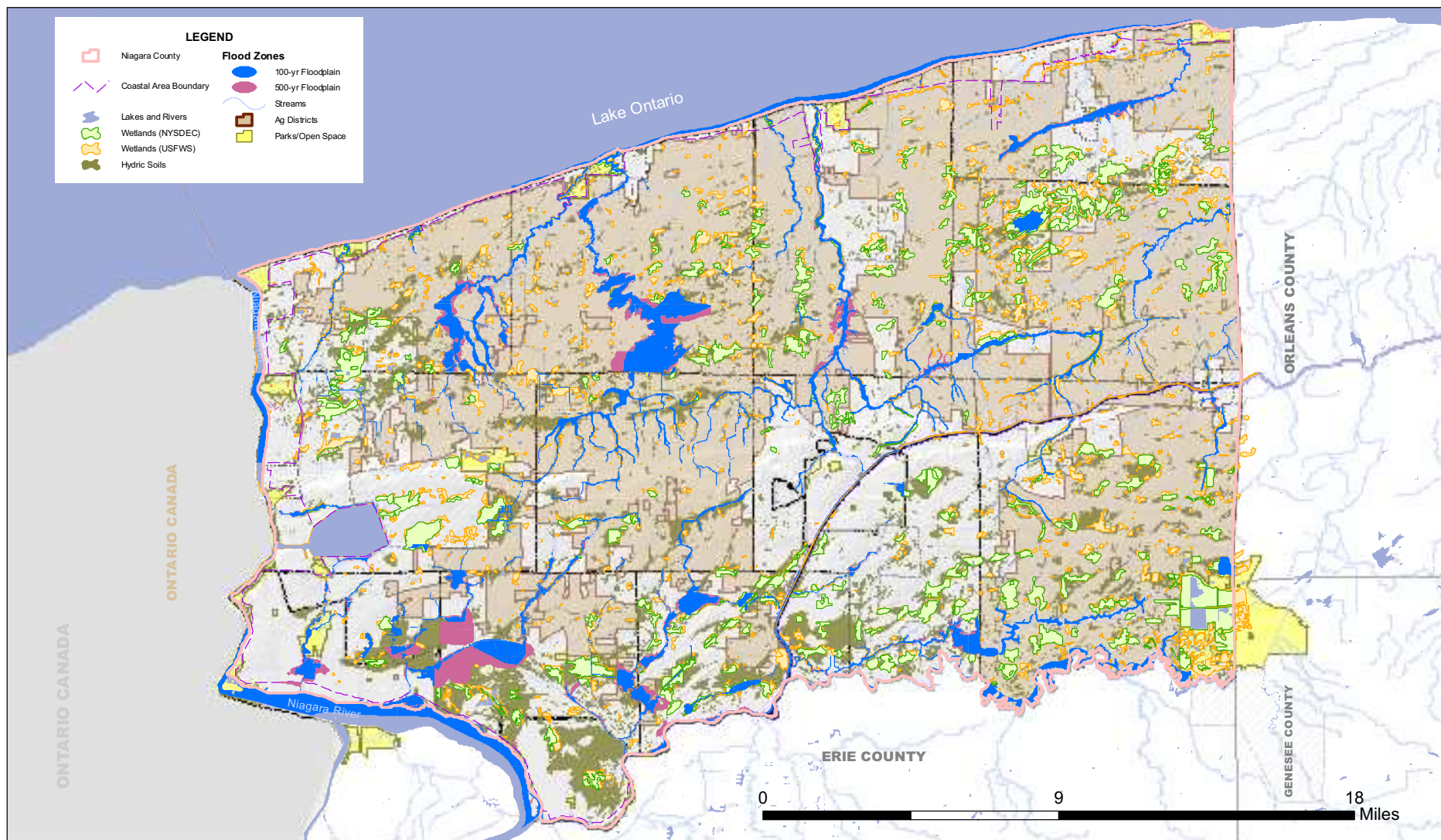
The Niagara River, Lake Ontario, the Erie/Barge Canal, Tonawanda Creek, Eighteen Mile Creek, Twelvemile Creek, the Niagara Power Project Reservoir and the many other water resources in the County all significantly contribute to the overall quality of life of Niagara County communities. These resources provide valuable aquatic and terrestrial habitats and ecosystems (there are 92 species of fish in the Niagara River alone), tourism and recreational opportunities and economic development opportunities. These natural assets contribute to each community's unique identity and character.

Numerous streams and small tributaries drain the two primary watersheds in the County. The Oak Orchard-Twelvemile Creek watershed drains the northern half of the County into Lake Ontario. The Niagara watershed drains the southern half of the County into the Niagara River.

Many streams and tributaries in the watersheds have large 100-year and 500-year floodplains associated with them, for example as in south-central portions of the Town of Wilson along the East Branch of Twelvemile Creek. These floodplains provide additional natural benefits in terms of wildlife habitats, and stormwater recharge into aquifers and groundwater resources.

Existing environmental features within the two watersheds include wetlands, streams, forest cover and other open spaces which help filter pollutants and limit adverse effects from erosion, stormwater runoff and other processes that may impact water quality of local waterways and ultimately Lake Ontario. As these natural systems become increasingly degraded and fragmented by sprawling development patterns their effectiveness in protecting the quality and quantity of local water resources is compromised.

Niagara County lies within the Great Lakes Basin which contains about one fifth of the world's freshwater supply. Although the Great Lakes are considered a source of a nearly inexhaustible supply of freshwater, only about one-percent of the water within the entire Basin is replenished each year and so the Great Lakes and the ecosystems supported by them are far more vulnerable to adverse impacts than many think (Ecojustice 2008).



Niagara County contains numerous areas of environmental sensitivity that support diverse wildlife habitats and functions as open space resources. In many cases, these areas provide additional benefits as opportunities for nature study and passive forms of recreation on public lands. An estimated 48,000 acres of potential Federal and State-regulated wetlands (approximately 14 percent of the County) are distributed throughout the County as shown in Figure V-4. The Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area in Royalton and the Hartland Swamp in Hartland are two of the County's most valuable open space resources.

State, County and local parklands also contribute to maintaining environmental quality and protecting environmental resources. There are ten State Parks in Niagara County, accounting for nearly 3,000 acres of public lands, and six County Parks with a total of more than 1500 acres and a multitude of local parks in municipalities across the County. Most public parklands are located along the waterfronts of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, although a few are located in interior sections of the County. These parkland resources are also supplemented by the many beaches along the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

Issues & Opportunities

The status of land use, transportation and environmental conditions in Niagara County was discussed throughout the comprehensive planning process. The process sought information from Niagara County communities, the public and other stakeholders on what they considered to be the most important issues and opportunities specifically related to these topics. Information gathered from meetings, group discussions and other input received from stakeholders is summarized below by planning subregion.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Primary land use and transportation issues and challenges include:

- The preservation of farmland and viable agriculture is important to the character of rural communities.
- Sprawl should be controlled.
- Business and growth areas should be concentrated along main transportation corridors.
- Preserve historic buildings and neighborhoods.
- Open space is important to help sustain wildlife and to maintain the area's character.
- Emergency transportation plans need to be in place in the event of a train or rail crossing problem, for example in Middleport or in Gasport.
- It is important to find uses for vacant properties.
- Environmental problems and contamination issues hinder the development of many properties.
- The general condition of roads has deteriorated, and many are in need of significant maintenance.
- Dangerous intersections that need to be studied include:
 - o Slayton Settlement / Hartland
 - o Mountain Road/Royalton Center Road



*The County contains
10 State Parks with
about 3,000 acres and
6 County Parks with
another 1500 acres.*

- o Checker Tavern /Rt. 104
- o State / Main – Village, Rt. 104 – Hartland

Key land use and transportation assets and opportunities include:

- The Erie Canal corridor provides opportunities to expand tourism in the area. More visitors may be drawn to the Canal if water and electric facilities are provided for boats.
- The existing railroad in the area is an asset.
- Agriculture and productive farmlands are assets in the region.
- The rural corridor to Becker Farms may present agri-tourism more opportunities. Becker Farms is an important asset as a 340-acre working farm in Gasport.
- Need to expand maple sugar production.

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

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

Top 3 assets and opportunities - land use & transportation

- Erie Canal corridor
- Becker Farms (agri-tourism)
- Railroad

Environmental issues include:

- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) facility – FMC present tire recycling and its related environmental quality concerns.
- FMC – creates potential water, soil, airborne issues with this facility. FMC – Middleport is a CAMU – (Corrective Action Management Unit).
- Natural gas wells – in Hartland – testing in farm areas raises concerns.
- There are pollution concerns regarding the dump on Griswold & Mountain Road.
- Several brownfields exist in the Village of Middleport.
- The Cold Storage property in Royalton is a brownfield site.

Environmental assets and opportunities

- Royalton Ravine and trails
- Vet's Park in Gasport
- Trails - want to expand in Hartland
- Parks, playground, and nature trails in Middleport
- Reservoir – Middleport to Royalton
- Improvements are needed on the trail network along Erie Canal.
- The Escarpment – has a positive effect on weather patterns
- Right-to-Farm laws – local law exists in Royalton
- Agri-tourism and open space lands are present opportunities
- Stone quarry
- Drainage – permanent easements are needed for maintenance in Hartland

Top 3 issues and challenges – environmental

- FMC/arsenic concerns
- Tire recycling and other “dumps” in the area

- Natural gas wells & testing

Top 3 assets and opportunities – Environmental

- Royalton Ravine
- Canal corridor
- Existing nature trails

Central Communities Subregion

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

Land use & transportation issues and challenges include:

- More parks & open space resources are needed
- The Niagara Escarpment district in Cambria and future development
- Preserving farmland – 80% of existing land in Cambria is farmland – per Cambria Comp Plan
- Pendleton at about a 22% existing agricultural land
- Residents consider development pressure low at this point.
- Residents would like communities to retain their small town character.
- Pendleton – has many new single-family homes
- Impacts to the road network need to be considered as the area develops:
 - o Must consider a corridor's capacity to handle large traffic volumes.
 - o Create 2nd outlets to developments to prevent overuse of roads.
 - o Campbell Boulevard has potential to serve as an economic development corridor.
 - o Bypass corridor near Lockport presents development opportunities.
 - o Plan streets as through streets, not dead ends.
 - o Need to plan ahead and consider alternative routes.
- Pendleton has a small percentage of commercial land use at present.

Land use & transportation opportunities

- The region has a rich agricultural heritage.
- Cambria presents a prime location for wineries.
- Pendleton and Lockport have town plans in place, and these should be incorporated in the countywide plan.

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

- Lockport and Pendleton are developing, and plans are in place to help manage growth.
- Agricultural preservation in Cambria is an important issue.
- There is a conflict between economic development vs. farmland preservation, particularly along highway corridors.

Top 3 assets and opportunities – land use & transportation

- Existing farmland
- Existing and new wine trails
- Lockport and Pendleton plans are in place.

Environmental issues and challenges include:

- Preserve the Niagara Escarpment.
- Maintain an appropriate balance between farmland for agriculture and wildlife habitat.
- Floodplain locations need to be studied in the context of future climate change issues.
- Preserve and protect Eighteen-Mile Creek and open spaces.
- Several brownfield sites

Environmental opportunities

- Capitalize on recreational opportunities provided by creeks and streams.
- Encourage growth of wine industry and grape production.

Top 3 issues & challenges, opportunities & assets

- Preserve the Niagara Escarpment.
- Need to better balance agricultural lands and development needs that result in the loss of wildlife habitat.
- Floodplain encroachment along creeks and streams needs to be resolved, notably along 18 Mile Creek.

Lakefront Communities Subregion

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

Key land use & transportation issues and challenges

- Maintain our vision (our visual character) as an agricultural community.
- Drainage issues are occurring and need to be resolved due to growing residential use and retracting agriculture
- Most residential development is along road fronts, creating difficulty for agricultural uses in behind parcels
- It would be advantageous to cluster residential areas
- How do we promote cluster developments and agricultural regions?
- What kind of incentives do we need to create this situation?
- We don't believe we have huge issues with regard to transportation
 - o One possible answer to one of the lesser transportation issues is the development of truck routes with proper maintenance of bridges and roads.
 - o A small issue is transportation needs for seniors
- The impediment created by the Army Corps of Engineers permitting for waterfront development is an issue.
- Raising lake levels may also hinder residential and waterfront development.
- Distance from NYS Thruway is a hindrance to development.

Land use & transportation opportunities include:

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

Top 3 issues and challenges - land use & transportation

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

Top 3 assets and opportunities – land use & transportation

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

Assets and opportunities by area

Somerset:

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

Newfane

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

Wilson

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

Key environmental issues and challenges include:

- Agriculture waste is a concern and a problem with regards to the large corporate farms
- Brownfield locations need to be redeveloped.
- 18-mile Creek has its environmental issues that need to be resolved
 - Reflects the industrial origins of the communities
- Old service stations have fuel tanks that make the sale of these properties difficult and keeps them off the tax rolls
- Drainage and ditching programs must be consistent throughout the towns with a coordinated countywide program.

Environmental assets and opportunities include:

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

Top 3 environmental issues and challenges

- Agricultural waste and runoff
- Brownfield locations need to be remediated and redeveloped
- Water quality and drainage, 18 Mile Creek, drainage ditches along roads a need for countywide consistency with stormwater

Top 3 environmental assets and opportunities

- Lake Ontario
- Agriculture and Agri-tourism
- Existing harbors and State Parks

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston,
Village of Youngstown

Key land use and transportation issues include:

- There doesn't seem to be much that is changing or happening in this area
 - There is some residential growth and the golf course in the Town of Lewiston
- Not much public transportation is available in this area
 - Plans to extend an existing bike / pedestrian path
 - Possible future cross-river ferry being considered
 - Marina in Youngstown has new owners
- All these communities are very similar
- Some development, mostly in the Town of Lewiston, but there is a lot of residential potential
- Available lands for residential development also exist in Youngstown and Porter

Land use and transportation opportunities include:

- River & lakefronts
- River & lake festivals
- Fort Niagara
- The ArtPark
- Residential development potential

Top 3 land use and transportation issues and challenges

- Not much change is occurring
- Lewiston has – bike path, golf course, ferry, marina opportunities
- Development opportunities also exist in Youngstown and Porter

Top 3 land use and transportation assets and opportunities

- River & lakefronts development
- ArtPark
- Fort Niagara

Environmental issues and challenges

- Lake Ontario Ordinance Works (LOOW) Project
- CWM (hazardous wastes)
- Modern Corporation solid wastes
- Cleanup, control & oversight needed on contaminated lands

Environmental opportunities

- Lake & riverfronts
- Agri-business

Top 3 environmental issues and challenges

- Ordinance works – cleanup, control and oversight needed

Top 3 environmental assets and opportunities

- Agriculture
- Lakefront
- Riverfront

Upper River Communities Subregion

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

City of Niagara Falls

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- Absentee landlords is a real problem in the City.
- LaSalle Expressway needs a bike path across communities
- Need more discussion over the LaSalle Expressway and future development
- The City has all transportation-related issues, including existing condition of streets and sidewalks and clearing snow from streets – these present problems especially for senior citizens
- Brownfields that span across municipal lines
 - Brownfield Opportunity Area lie adjacent to Niagara Falls boundary
- The Wal-Mart relocation to the Niagara Falls High School site
- Robert Moses Parkway redevelopment project creates issues in Downtown Niagara Falls

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

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

Town of Wheatfield

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- 102nd Street landfill covers local waterfront
- Issues with the transition from dense to less dense developments is affecting community character
- Changes from open space to suburban uses
- Residential trends, we are becoming more suburban in character
- Need for mixed-use development in hamlets
- Buffers needed along streams and floodplains to restrict development
- Oz project presents concerns regarding dealing with RVs, traffic and campers
- Water quality issues related to stormwater drainage and sewer infrastructure from new development
- Bus services needed for northern towns.

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Riverfront – new park
- Farmers are a major asset, we need to keep agriculture viable, and protect farmland – using PDR's
- Niagara Falls Airbase

City of North Tonawanda

Key land use, transportation and environmental issues and challenges include:

- Water quality issues
- Waterfront and Niagara River / Tonawanda Creek – restoration areas are needed
- Brownfields present huge challenges involving:
 - o Redevelopment and cleanup
 - o Transition from waterfront areas
 - o Landfills in general like “Mt. Garbage”
 - o Need accurate information on brownfields, conditions, etc.
- Concerns with air quality issues related to new projects, for example potential biofuels plant proposed for Wheatfield
 - o Smokestack concerns with projects and impacts on air quality
- Water quality / sediment contamination / contamination from industrial dumps, sewers, stormwater

Land use, transportation and environmental assets and opportunities include:

- Existing waterfront
- Preservation of open space and wildlife habitat
- Gratwick Park future uses
- Archeological resources of the area
- Wetlands preservation is needed for better flood control

Land Use Suitability Analysis

Land use within Niagara County in its most general sense is an umbrella topic under which many other topics, issues and opportunities need to be considered. This is reflected in the information provided as stakeholder input presented above. Topics related to land use include transportation; the natural environment; economic development; County services, facilities, infrastructure; education; and public health and safety. Because it is so all encompassing, special emphasis is placed on land use in this chapter and elsewhere in this Plan.

A focus on land use is typical for traditional comprehensive plans. This focus is also consistent with State Municipal Law that places local responsibility for land use decisions under “Home Rule” with cities, towns and villages. The countywide focus on land use as provided in this Plan is intended to guide County and regional decisions that may affect land use and provide background information to local communities for their own land use planning initiatives.

This Comprehensive Plan considers land use from different perspectives including more regional initiatives that are summarized in Chapter II. Existing land use patterns and trends identified in Chapter III can also be considered in addressing potential future land use conditions from a countywide perspective. Local land use planning initiatives are also discussed in Chapter IV. Information in this Chapter is countywide in its perspective and intended to fill in the gap in information between more regionally-oriented initiatives, such as the Erie/Niagara Regional Framework, the Niagara River Greenway Plan and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Plan, among others and local municipal plans.

In order to understand and appreciate the complexity of land use and related issues, an analysis was performed to provide information on possible future land use trends and scenarios in the County. A land use suitability analysis was undertaken in response to the identification of issues and concerns expressed throughout the planning process by the public and other stakeholders over uncontrolled sprawl and the potential implications it is having, or may have in the future, on communities throughout the County.

The suitability analysis included the use of GIS parcel data obtained as baseline data from County and State sources. GIS mapping techniques and scenario planning software were used to identify areas in the County that, based upon available data and information, appear to be most suitable for future growth, development, and redevelopment. Conversely, the analysis described below also identifies those areas of the County that appear to be most suitable for resource management, protection and/or conservation.

Methodology

Using *CommunityViz* as a scenario planning GIS software, a series of future development and resource suitability maps of Niagara County were produced. These maps provide significant value as a guide in making land use and related decisions on transportation, infrastructure and public services that cross municipal boundaries. The maps presented in this chapter graphically illustrate where investment in infrastructure and public services should be made at County, regional and local levels. The analysis can serve as a decision-making guide to help direct development/redevelopment to appropriate areas while at the same time managing and protecting the County's irreplaceable resources such as prime farmland, natural habitats, open spaces and rural character.

An interactive suitability analysis using *CommunityViz* was prepared to identify areas and clusters of parcels in Niagara County that appear to be well-suited for development or redevelopment based on available data. These areas are referred to as ***Potential Development/Redevelopment Areas***.

Conversely, the analysis provides valuable insight into areas of the County that are not well suited for development because they provide important value to Niagara County communities in other ways as potentially irreplaceable natural resources. These areas are referred to in the analysis as ***Natural Resource Areas***.

The results of the land use suitability analysis should be considered as a possible starting point for further discussions and decision-making at County, regional and local levels relative to land use, transportation, public infrastructure and service needs.

Potential Development/Redevelopment Areas – Areas considered potentially the most appropriate and/or most suitable for further growth and development, infill development, redevelopment and public investment. In general these areas exhibit:

- Consistency with local plans and zoning
- In-place or nearby infrastructure (water, sewer, road networks)

necessary to support development and redevelopment

- In-place or nearby facilities/services to support and facilitate growth and development such as emergency services (police and fire), schools and shopping areas

Natural Resource Areas – Areas considered the most appropriate for natural resource protection, conservation, management and/or resource enhancement/restoration emphasizing sustainable management practices. These areas exhibit:

- Large or contiguous environmentally sensitive lands such as 100-year floodplains, NYS DEC wetlands, Federal (NWI) wetlands greater than 10 acres, riparian corridors, significant woodlands, and wildlife habitats
- Farmlands in NYS agricultural districts containing prime, unique, and/or soils of Statewide importance
- Significant natural and geologic features

The suitability analysis includes 11 measures that can each be weighted dynamically using “slider bars” provided in the *CommunityViz* software. These measures are briefly summarized below.

1. ENVIRONMENT - Overlap with combined environmental constraints data -- a higher percentage of a parcel’s area overlapping environmentally sensitive areas results in a lower development suitability score. A lower score represents less suitability for development, but greater importance for resource protection. Environmentally sensitive areas considered include 100-year floodplains, agricultural district areas with prime agricultural soils, stream/riparian corridors, and wetlands including all State-designated (NYS DEC) wetlands and potential Federal (NWI) wetlands mapped as larger than 20 acres in size.

2. SMART GROWTH - Proximity to the currently defined potential development or redevelopment areas -- closer distances from individual parcels to identified growth center boundaries results in a higher development suitability score. These centers of existing, planned growth or future development areas (see Figure V-27) were obtained from local plans and/or discussions with community representatives. The use of these centers in the analysis is consistent with smart growth practices and principles of sustainability that emphasize the importance of directing development to existing locations where infrastructure and services are available.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE - Overlap with sewer districts (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if in a sewer district or the lowest score (0) if they are not.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE - Proximity to major roads -- parcels get a higher score if it is near a major road primarily defined as State roadways.

5. CURRENT SOCIAL FABRIC - Proximity to existing community anchors – defined as parcels with NYS property class codes of 452 (Neighborhood Shopping Centers), 454 (Large Retail Food), 460-469 (Banks and Office Buildings), 480-489 (Multi-Use), 540-549 (Indoor Sports), 611 (Libraries), 640-642 (Health), 652 (Government Offices), 681 (Cultural Facilities), 710-714 (Manufacturing except for 715). These uses provide existing local daily forms of services and by their presence may encourage further growth or development.

6. AVAILABLE SPACE - Vacant (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if

they have a “vacant” NYS property class code (300 - 399). Otherwise, they get the lowest score (0). Vacant parcels have development/redevelopment potential.

7. PUBLIC SERVICE - Available School Capacity -- parcels get higher scores if they are located in school districts with higher percentages of available school capacity. Three school districts did not have recent capacity data for 2006-2007. A 2004-2005 value was used for the Star Point district. A value of 80.65% was calculated for the Newfane district based on 2005-2006 Middle School/High School data. A placeholder “best guess” value was used for the Royalton/Hartland district. The assumption is that available school capacity may facilitate or not hinder development.

8. PUBLIC SERVICE - Proximity to Fire Stations -- parcels get higher scores if they are near existing fire stations. Often fire stations are near other important public services that may facilitate development.

9. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS - Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ) - TAZ based population projections -- parcels get higher scores if located in TAZ’s with higher percentages of projected population growth (see Figures V-20, 21 and 22). This measure uses the TAZ-based population projection data from the Niagara County MPO (GBNRTC).

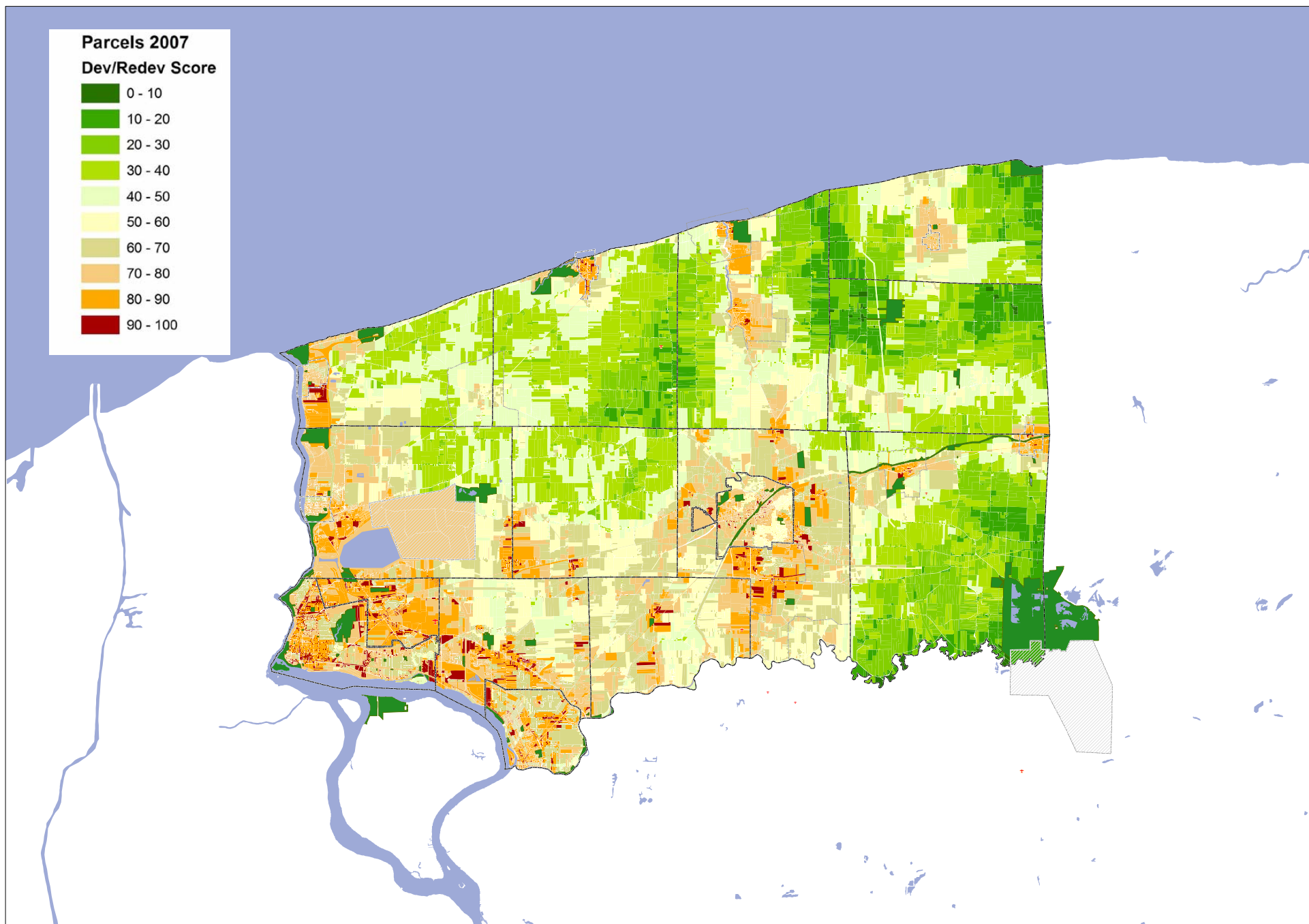
10. AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION - (Yes/No) Parcels get the lowest score (0) if they are located in an agricultural district. Otherwise they get the highest score (100). The assumption is that agricultural districts exist because of the value provided by existing agriculture and the recognized need to protect these areas from fragmented development.

11. CURRENT ZONING - Appropriate zoning designation (Yes/No) -- parcels get the highest score (100) if zoned or “near” commercial (not highway commercial), business, light industrial (LI in urban/suburban areas, LI and General I in rural areas), mixed use, multi-family residential, or PUD (except Somerset). Parcels with environmental remediation sites are excluded from the subset of appropriately zoned parcels. However, these locations have been mapped as provided in the countywide suitability maps. “Near” is defined as parcels overlapping the following buffer distances of appropriately zoned parcels: 1/16-mile in urban areas, 1/8-mile in suburban areas, and 1/4-mile in rural areas as defined by the countywide community type matrix provided in this chapter. All parcels not zoned or near appropriate zoning are given the lowest score (0).

Suitability Results

The results of the *CommunityViz* analysis are presented as a series of suitability maps beginning with Figure V-5. Figure V-5 is a composite map of the entire County that conceptually illustrates areas considered to be most suitable for development based upon the analysis of the weighted measures identified above. The analysis also identified those areas that may be most suitable for some form of resource protection depending on suitability scores.

Parcels are scored on a basis of 1 to 100 points and divided into ten levels of conceptual development suitability as identified in Figure V-5. Scores at the lowest end of a scale, for example from 1 to 30 are considered the least suitable



or appropriate for development/redevelopment primarily due to the presence of environmentally sensitive resources. These resources may include floodplains, wetlands or agriculturally important soils among others. The lower the suitability score, the more important these resources may need to be considered for some form of protection, management, restoration and/or enhancement. These decisions may be most appropriately done by and among local municipalities, perhaps as intermunicipal agreements, and implemented through municipal comprehensive planning processes, zoning ordinances and other land use regulations.

Parcels receiving the highest scores are considered to be the most suitable for development possibly due to the lack of environmentally sensitive resources or the presence of other factors considered capable of facilitating development such as the presence of infrastructure or proximity to existing services. Scores in the range of, for example, 70 to 100 are considered most suitable for development and redevelopment. In most cases the highest scores are in and around already developed areas consistent with smart growth principles.

Using the Suitability Maps

As stated previously, the suitability maps are intended to be a starting point for more advanced planning and discussions at local, subregional and regional levels. This information is also intended to provide guidance for decision makers and can be used by County Planners to assist in local resource protection efforts and by others including the County Planning Board as part of its review of private sector projects. This information will also be useful at the County level, for example as updates are made to the County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan and as decisions are made with regards to where capital improvements in public infrastructure or services should occur.

The analysis is not intended to indicate where or how individual parcels or properties should be developed. Local zoning should dictate those uses, but the maps may be used by local municipalities in updating their plans and ordinances. The suitability maps are most useful to illustrate where larger scale development, for example residential subdivisions may be suitable. The maps may also be useful in determining the cumulative effects of development.

Large scale development often requires new or expanded support infrastructure (roads, sewer, water) and services (education, fire, police, retail). Initially developers may cover the cost for installation of infrastructure, but long term maintenance and upgrades often fall upon local and County governments. By directing and encouraging development to those areas most suitable to it these costs can be contained or reduced to the benefit of taxpayers. Likewise potentially adverse cumulative effects on the environment from development can be mitigated.

Consistent with sustainable development and resource protection principles, development and redevelopment should be directed to locations within or adjacent to existing developed urban, suburban and rural areas where infrastructure and services are already in place or relatively easy to access or upgrade. The suitability maps illustrate these locations nicely as locations that rank higher in suitability score and trend in colors ranging from tan to red. Areas illustrated on the suitability maps in various shades of green are considered less suitable for large-scale development involving multiple acres than those areas shown in various shades of

tan, orange and red. The darker the shade of green the less suitable that area may be for development, but more important for resource protection.

Greenfield locations for example, tracts of vacant farmland in rural areas, should not be prioritized for development until other alternatives, such as redevelopment of existing vacant areas or underutilized areas, including brownfields have been considered. Leapfrog development patterns, including linear development along highway frontage should be discouraged in favor of more concentrated and concentric forms of development around existing communities where access to highways and services can be provided from fewer curb cuts and access points. Concentrated development will also protect the capacity levels and safety of existing roadways from being compromised.

Figures V-5a, 5b and 5c conceptually show the suitability for development/ redevelopment of rural, suburban and urban communities. As part of the planning process and to determine how different planning principles and techniques could possibly be applied to various development conditions and scenarios, existing communities in the County were each placed into one of six categories for planning purposes only as shown in Table V-2. These categories identify the overall character of each of the 20 municipalities in the County as being either urban, suburban or rural in nature.

The relative stage of development that each community may be experiencing is also categorized in table V-2 in very general terms ranging from being mostly developed, to communities experiencing development, and those that are relatively undeveloped. These categories are generally consistent with similar categories in the Framework for Regional Growth. Figures V-6 through V-16 provide additional background mapping specific to each of the 11 measures factored into the suitability analysis. Figures V-17 through V-19 summarize the results of the suitability analysis in terms of vacant and agricultural lands. Figures 20, 21 and 22 identify different population projection scenarios for the County based on no growth, some growth (Cornell University) and moderate growth (MPO), respectively.

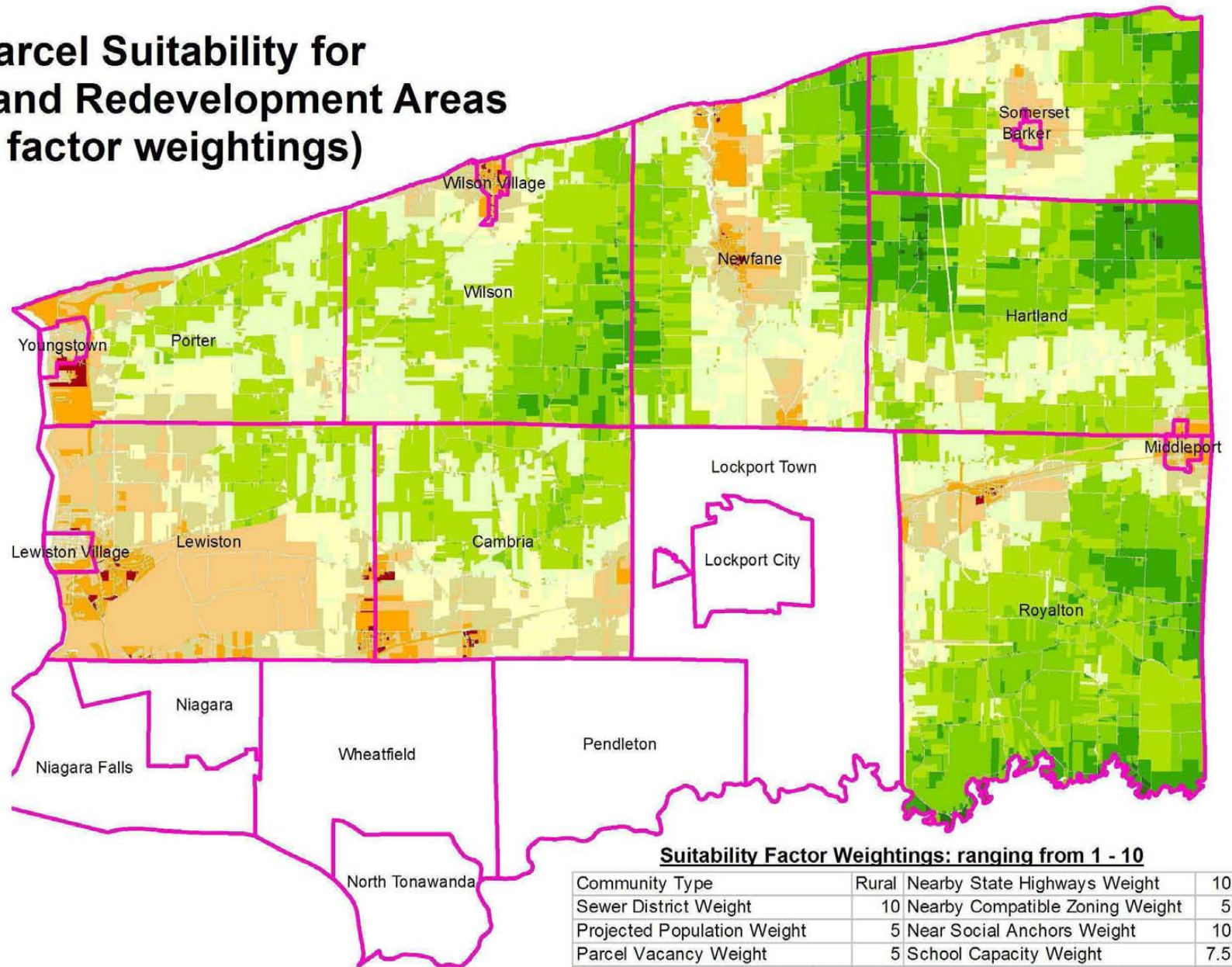
Table V-2 Land Use & Development Matrix

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

C = City, V = Village, T = Town

Rural Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

**Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score**



Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

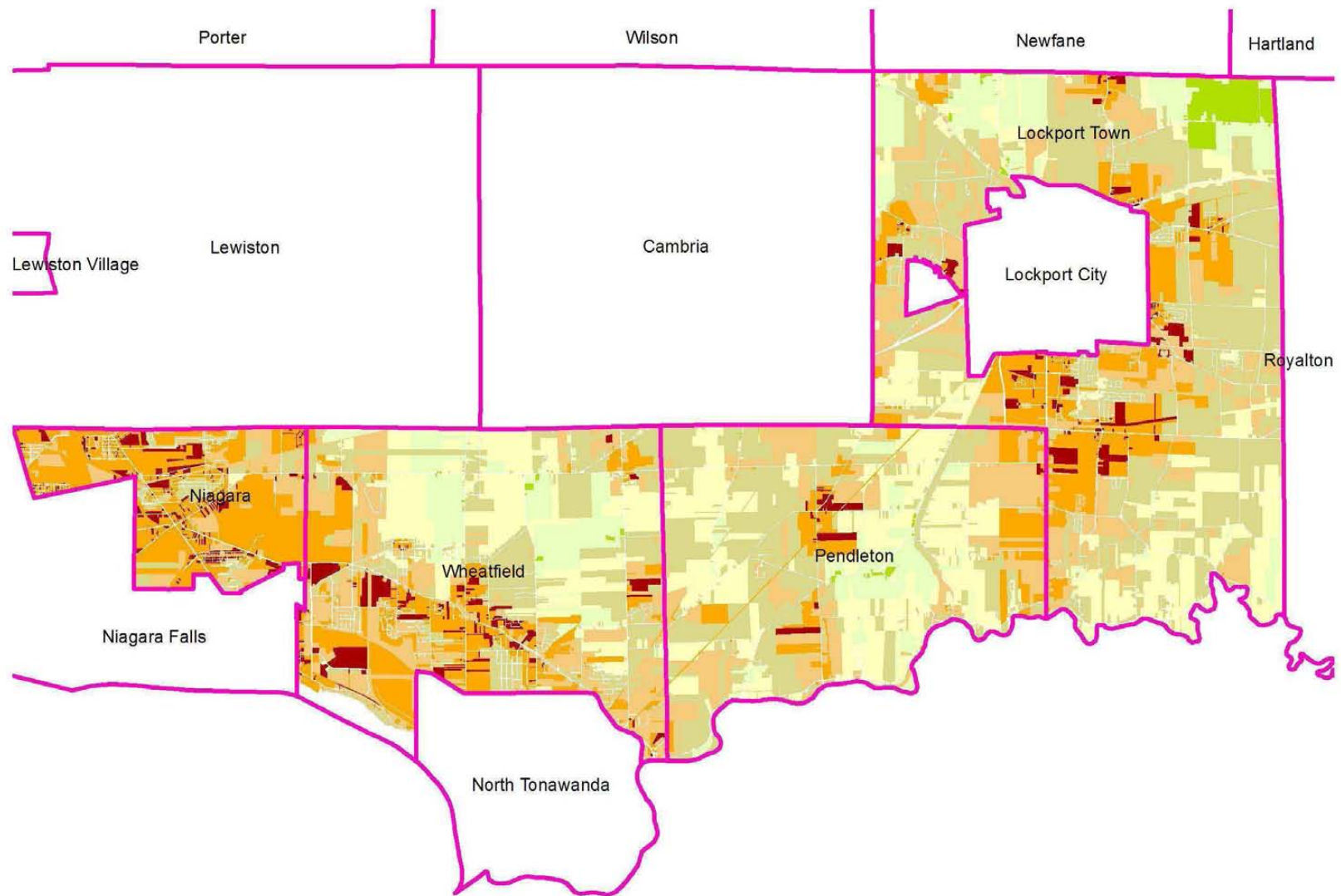
Community Type	Rural	Nearby State Highways Weight	10
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	5
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	10
Parcel Vacancy Weight	5	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	10
Near Sketch Areas Weight	10	Ag Protection Weight	10



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**Rural Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas**

**Figure
V.5a**



Suburban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

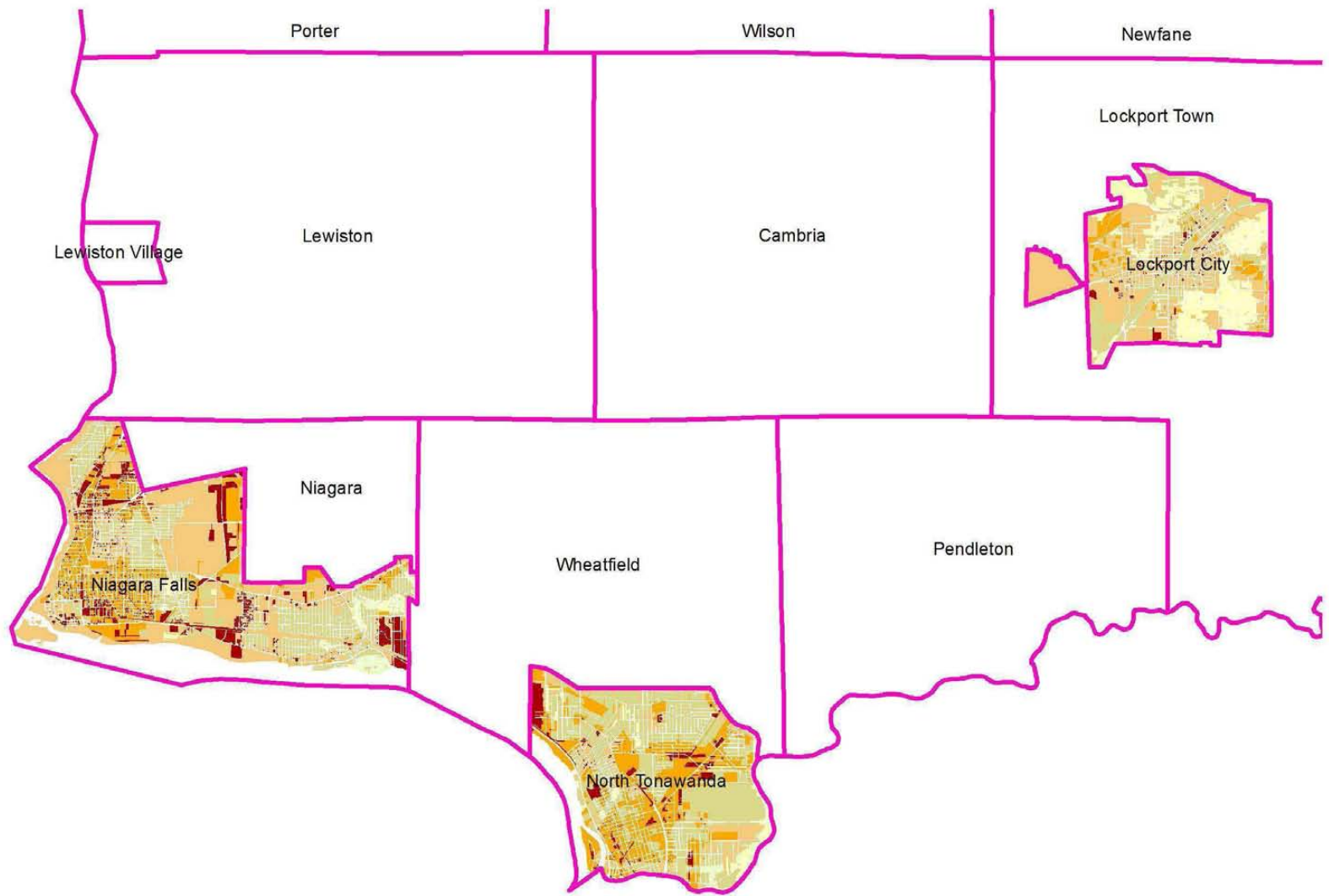
Community Type	Suburban	Nearby State Highways Weight	7.5
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	10
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	7.5
Parcel Vacancy Weight	7.5	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	7.5
Near Sketch Areas Weight	7.5	Ag Protection Weight	7.5



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Suburban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Figure V.5b



Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



Urban Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas (mixed factor weightings)

Suitability Factor Weightings: ranging from 1 - 10

Community Type	Urban	Nearby State Highways Weight	5
Sewer District Weight	10	Nearby Compatible Zoning Weight	10
Projected Population Weight	5	Near Social Anchors Weight	5
Parcel Vacancy Weight	10	School Capacity Weight	7.5
Environmental Protection Weight	10	Nearby Fire Stations Weight	5
Near Sketch Areas Weight	5	Ag Protection Weight	5



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**Urban Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas**

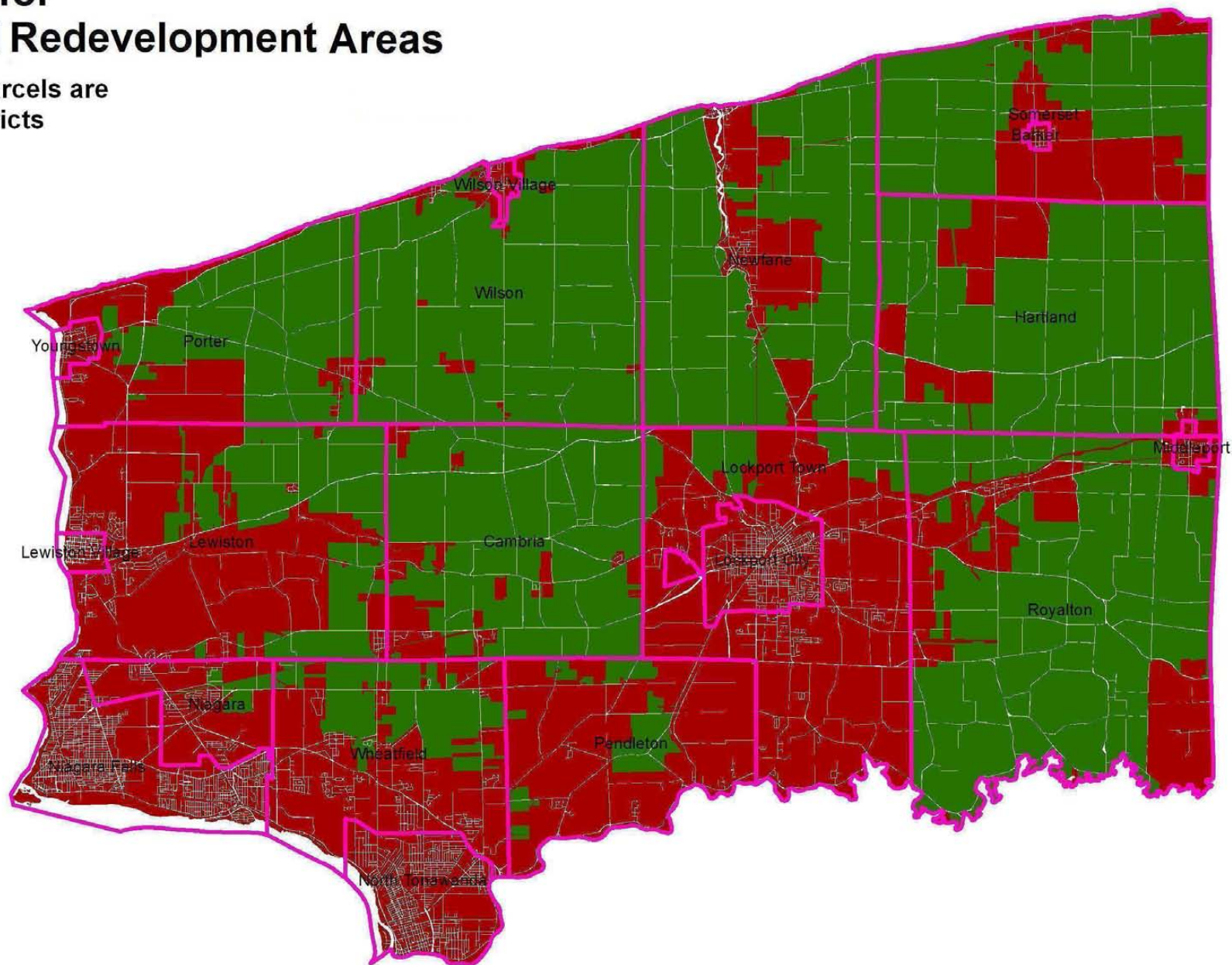
**Figure
V.5c**

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not parcels are located in Agricultural Districts

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Location of Agricultural Districts

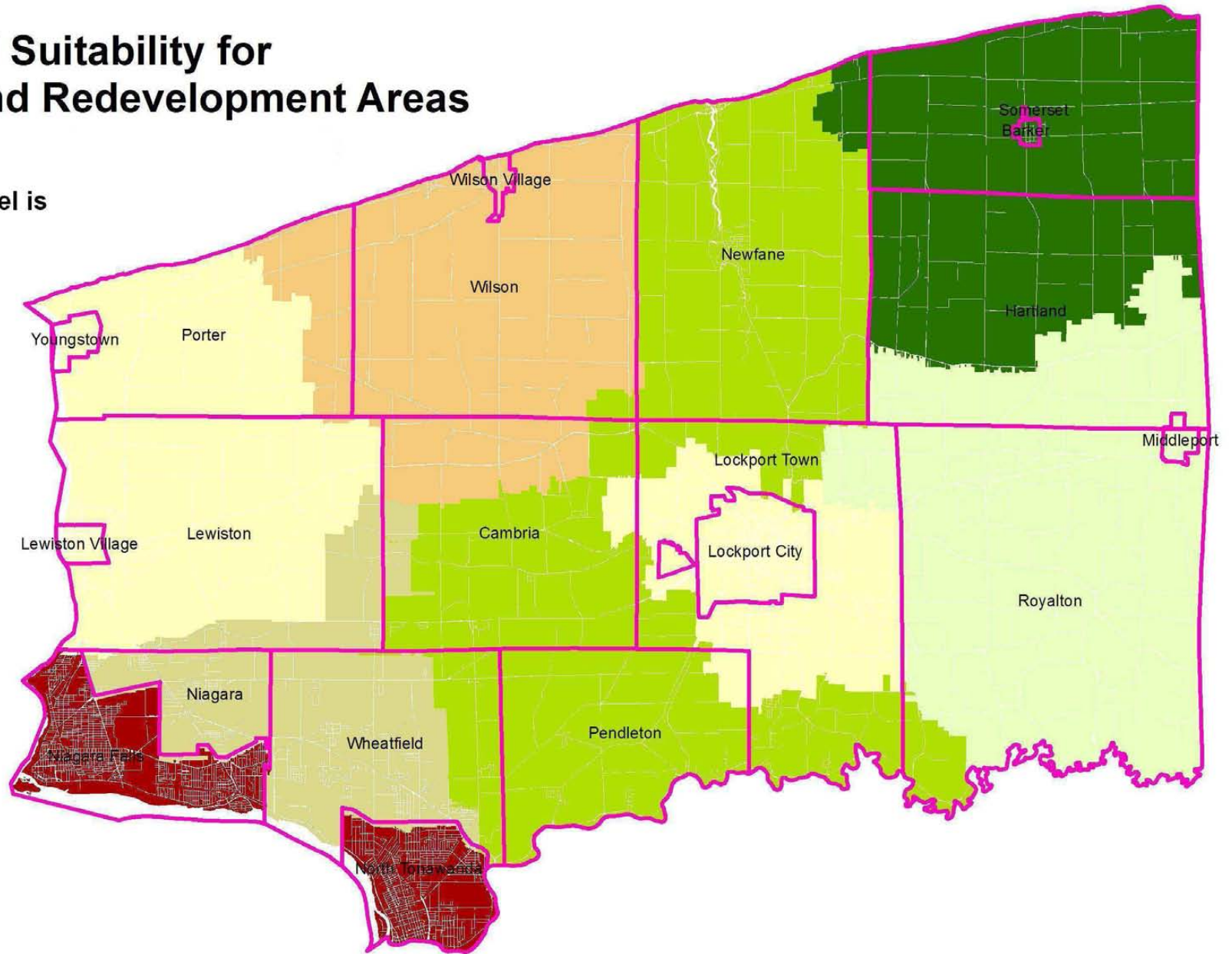
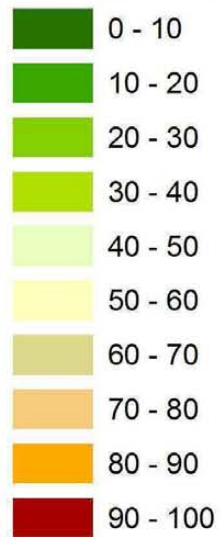
Figure
V.6

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the available capacity of the school district in which the parcel is located

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on School District Capacity

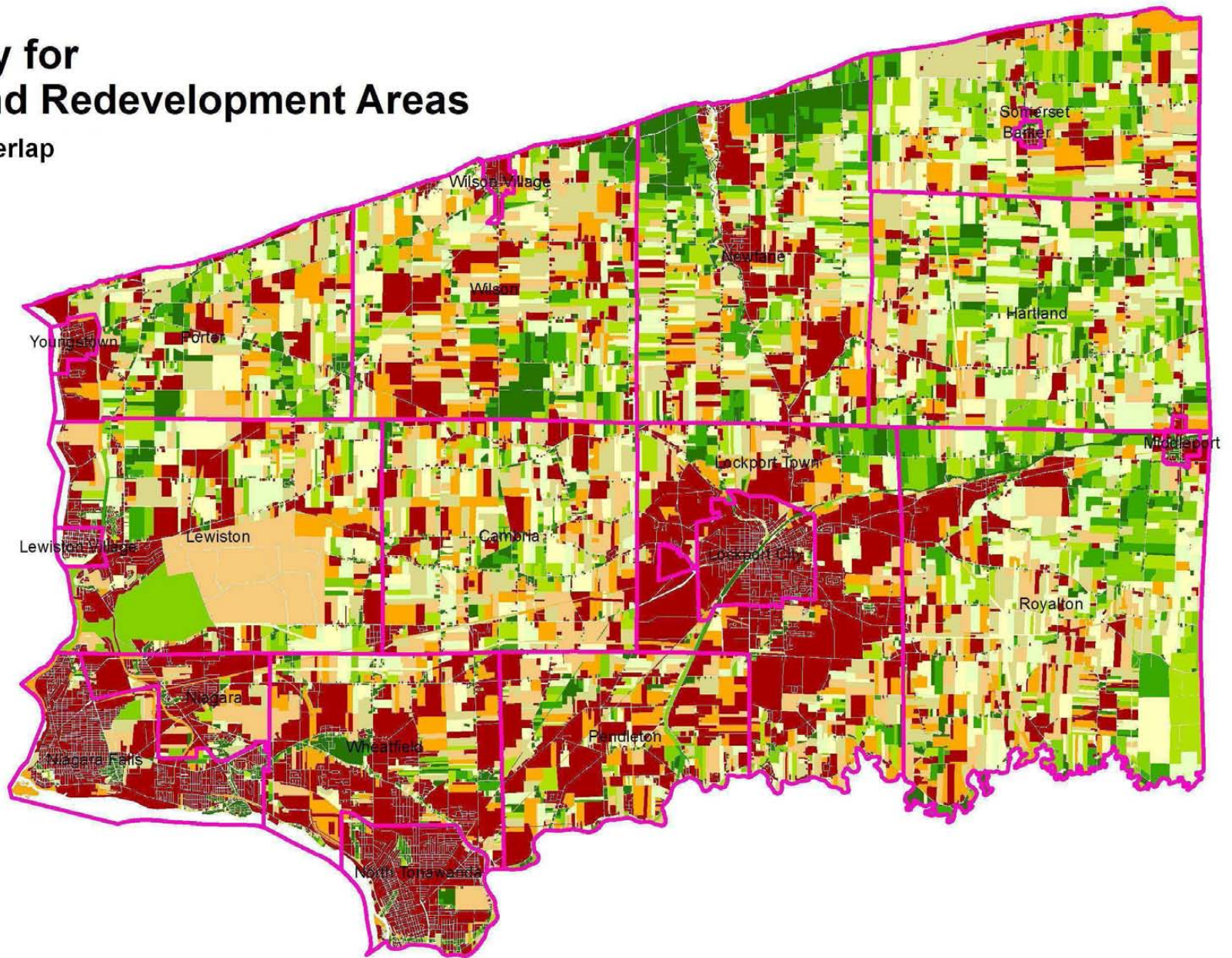
Figure
V.7

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the parcel's overlap with important natural resources

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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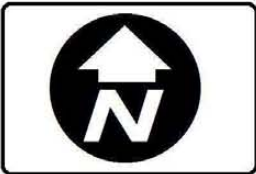
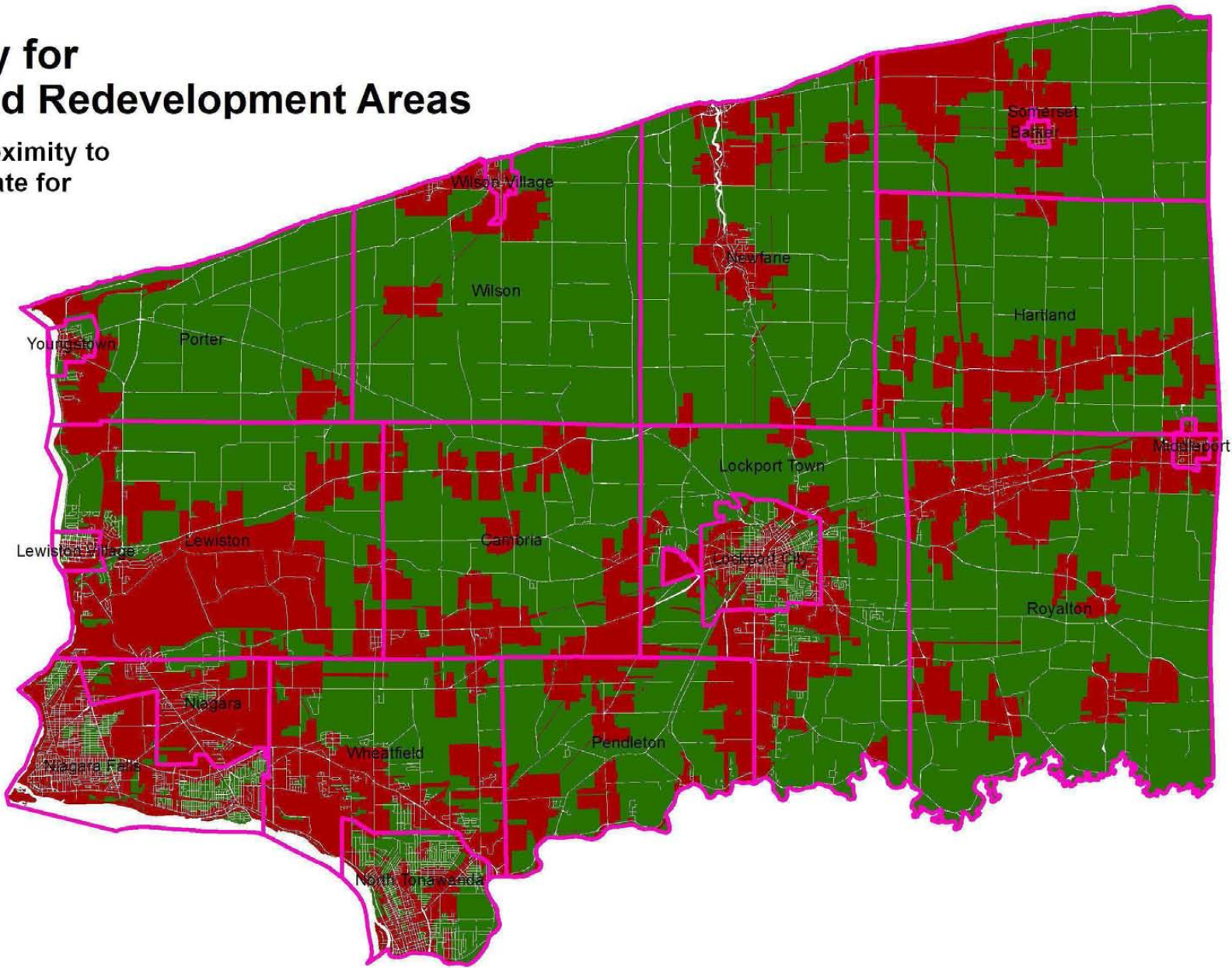
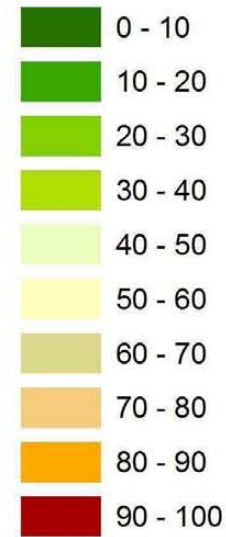
Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Natural Resources

Figure
V.8

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on the parcel's proximity to zoning districts appropriate for further development

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Compatible Zoning

Figure
V.9

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

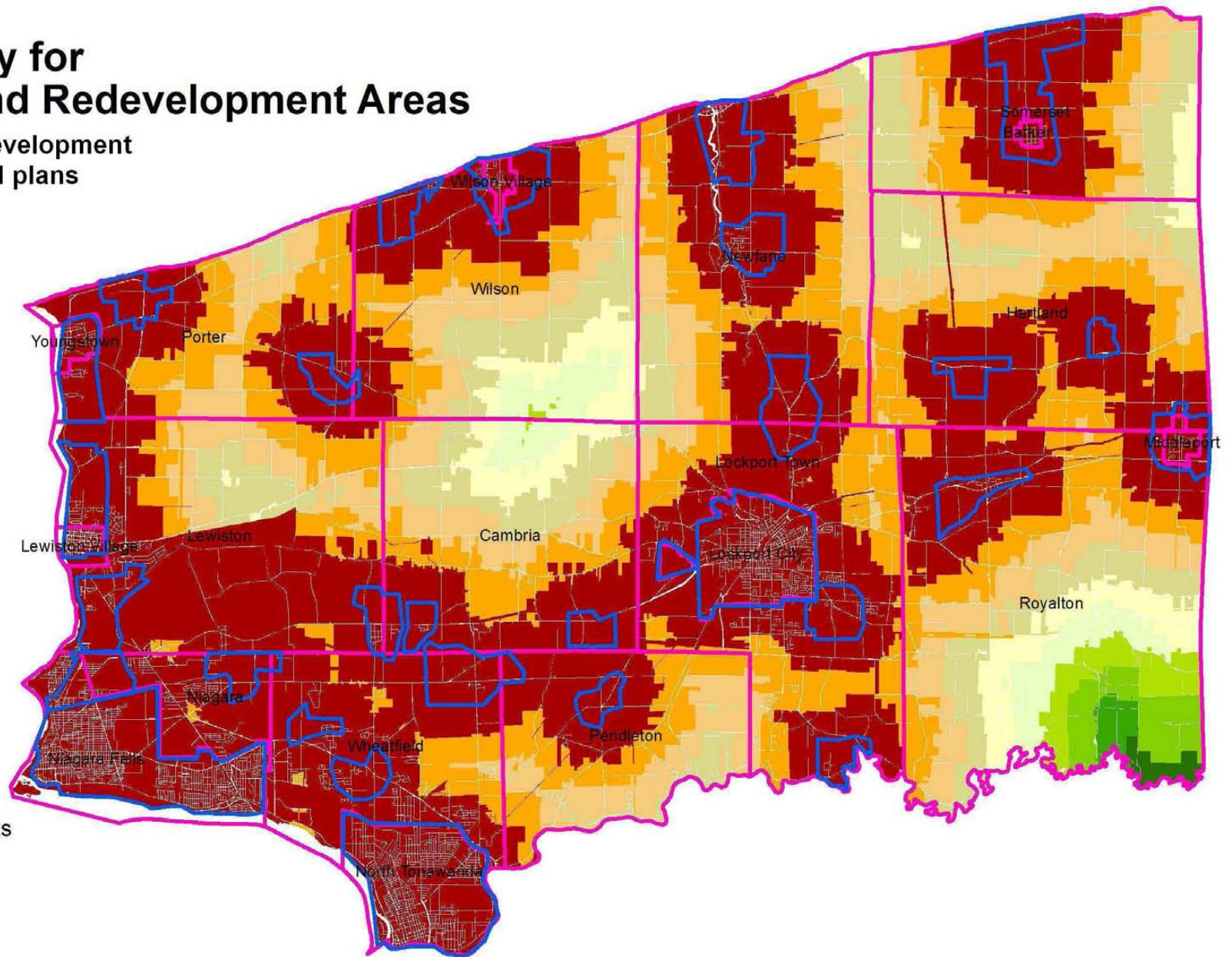
Based on proximity to development centers identified in local plans

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



Sketch Dev/Redev Areas



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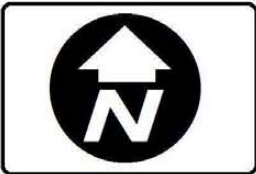
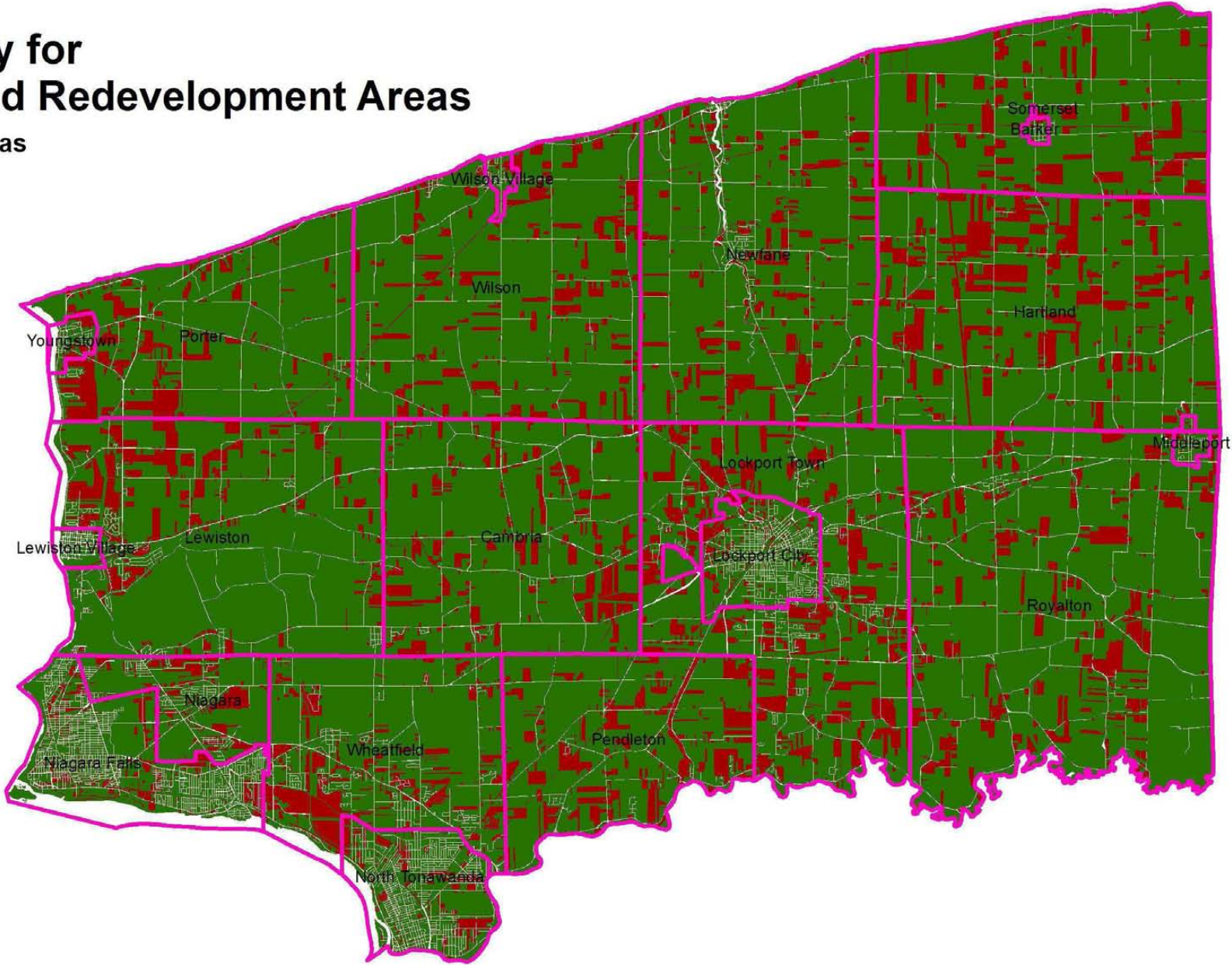
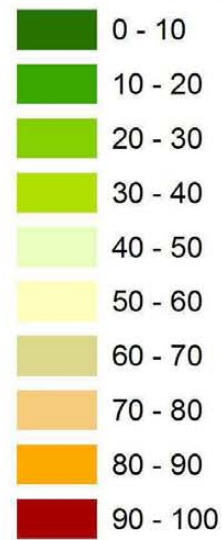
Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Currently Planned Centers

Figure
V.10

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcel's status as "vacant", as identified by Property Class Code

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



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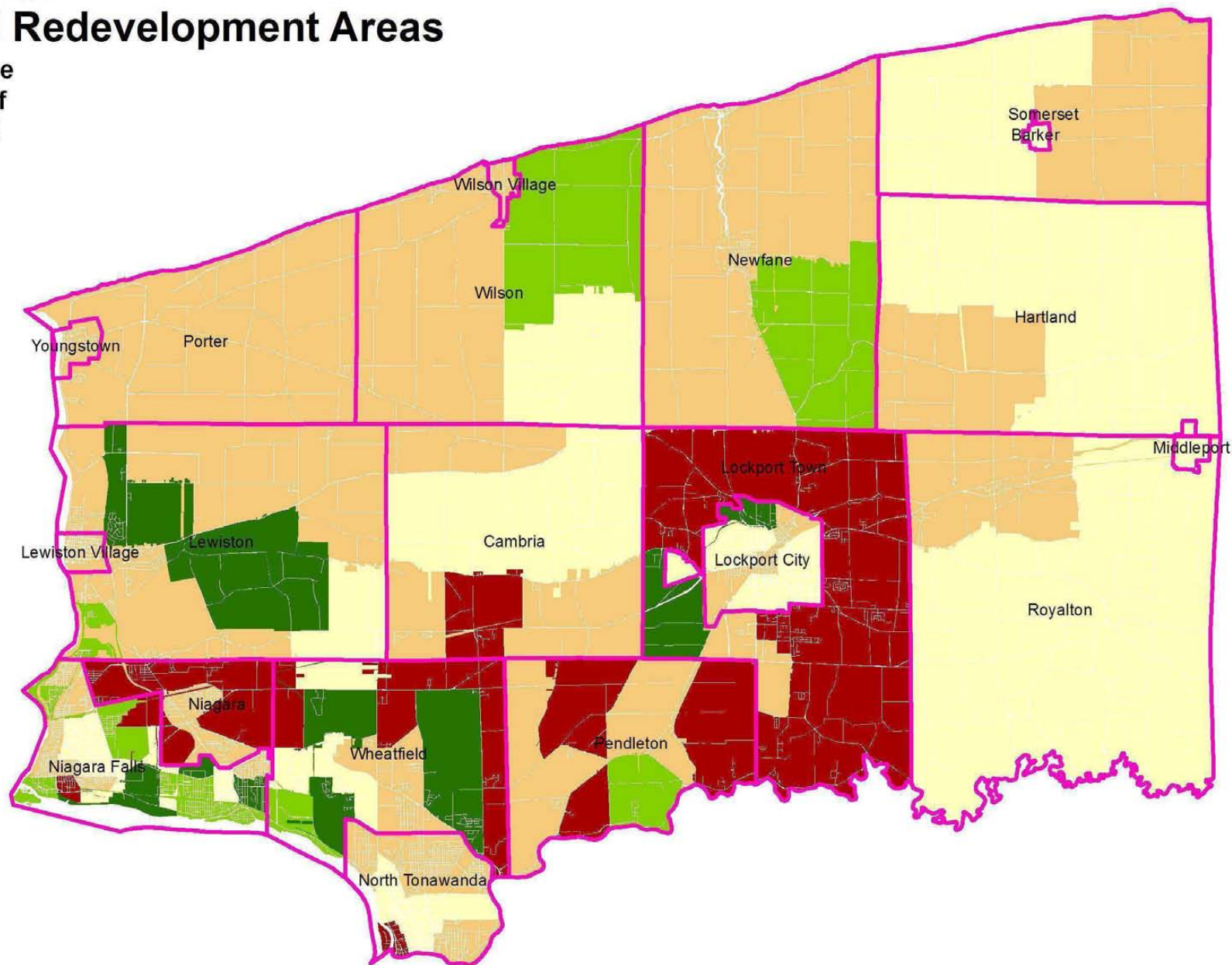
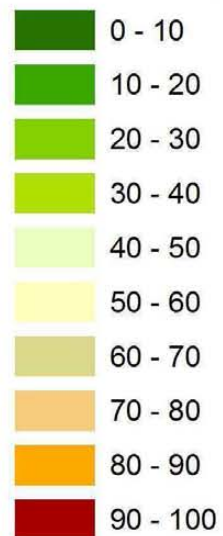
Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Vacant status

Figure
V.11

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not the parcel is located in a part of the County that is expected to see population growth
(Using GBNRTC's 2025 projections)

Parcels 2007 Dev/Redev Score



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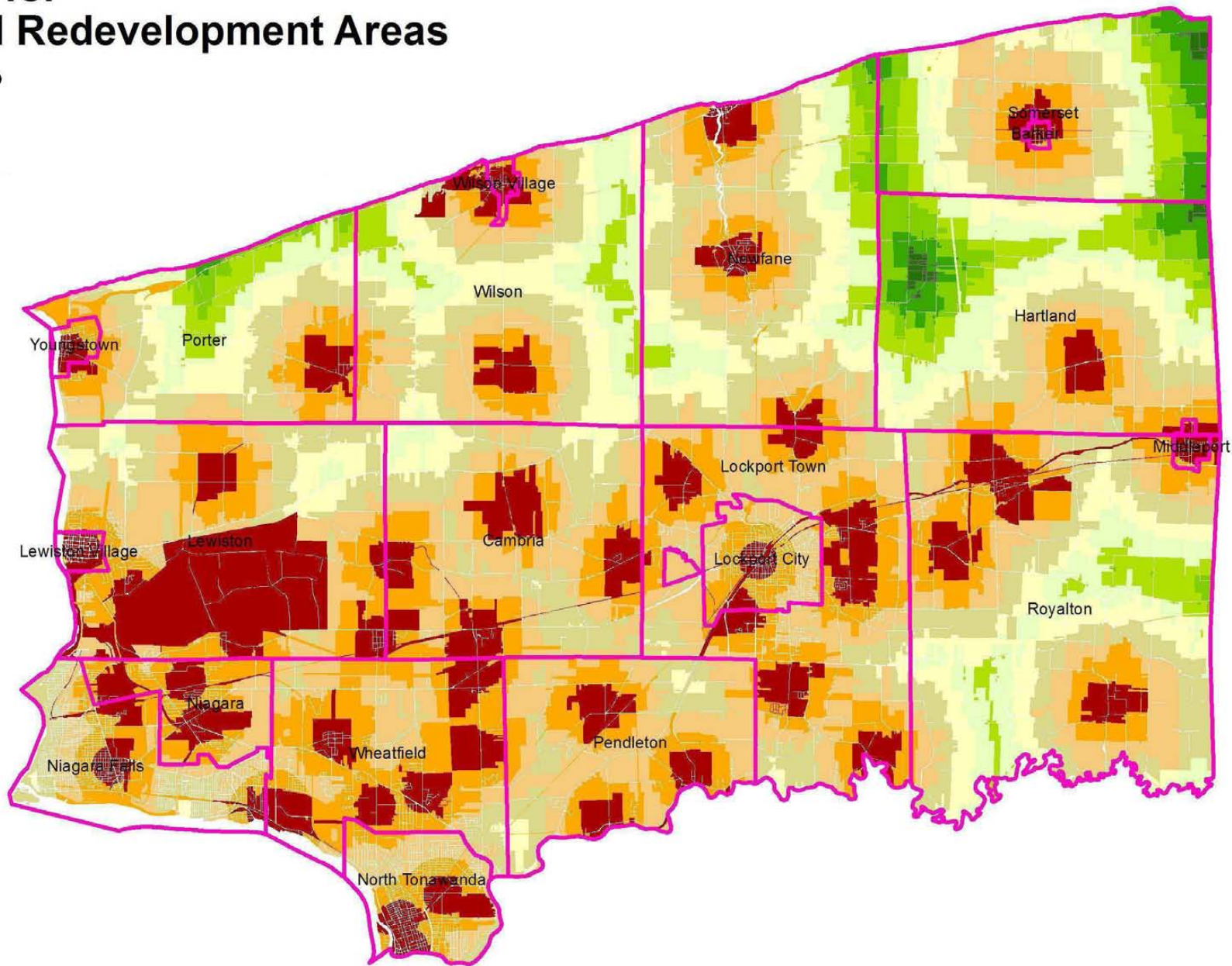
Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Projected Population Growth

Figure
V.12

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to fire stations

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



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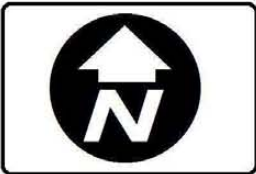
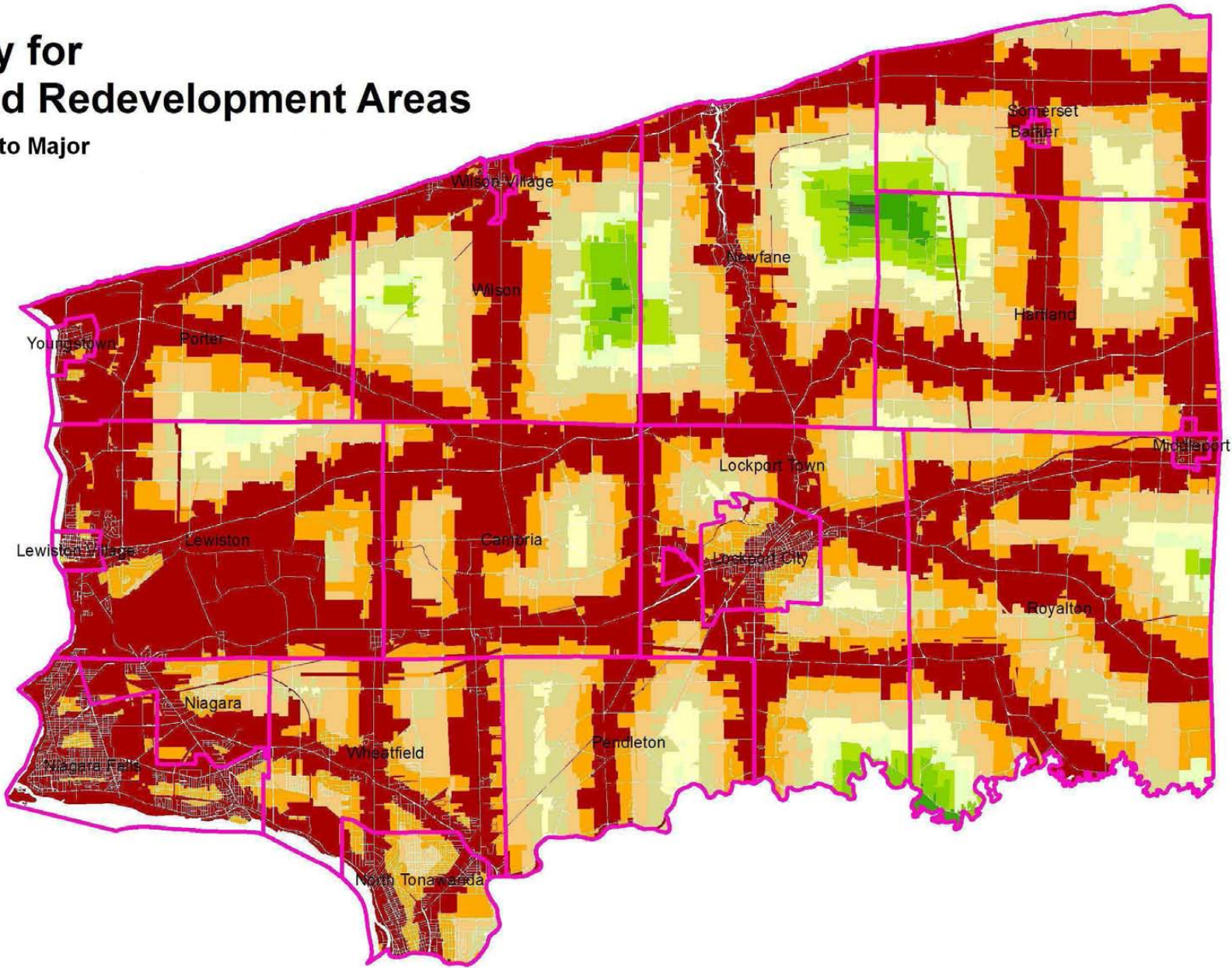
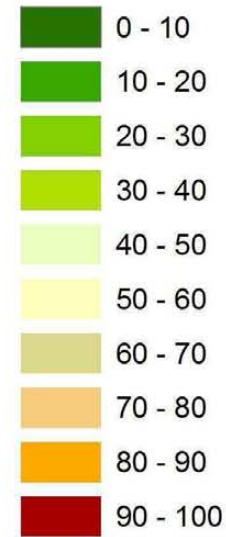
**Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Fire Stations**

**Figure
V.13**

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to Major Roads

Parcels 2007
Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Proximity to Major Roads

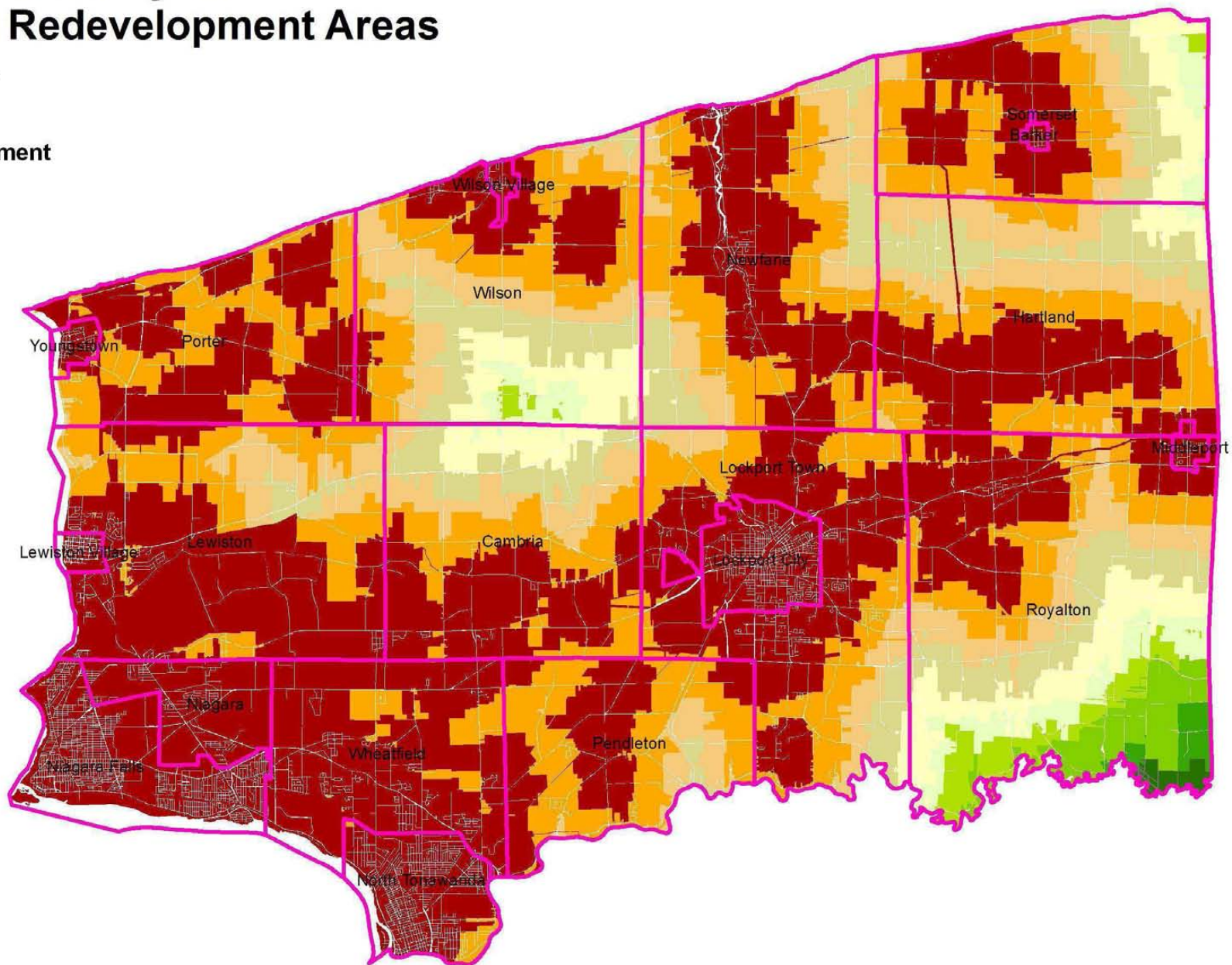
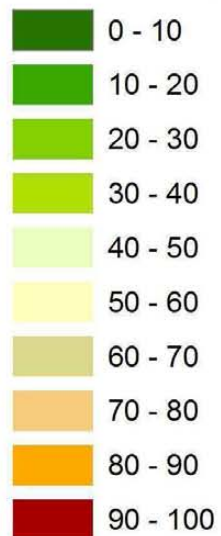
Figure
V.14

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on parcels' proximity to existing social anchors (for example, shopping centers, hospitals, libraries and government offices)

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score



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Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Existing Social Fabric

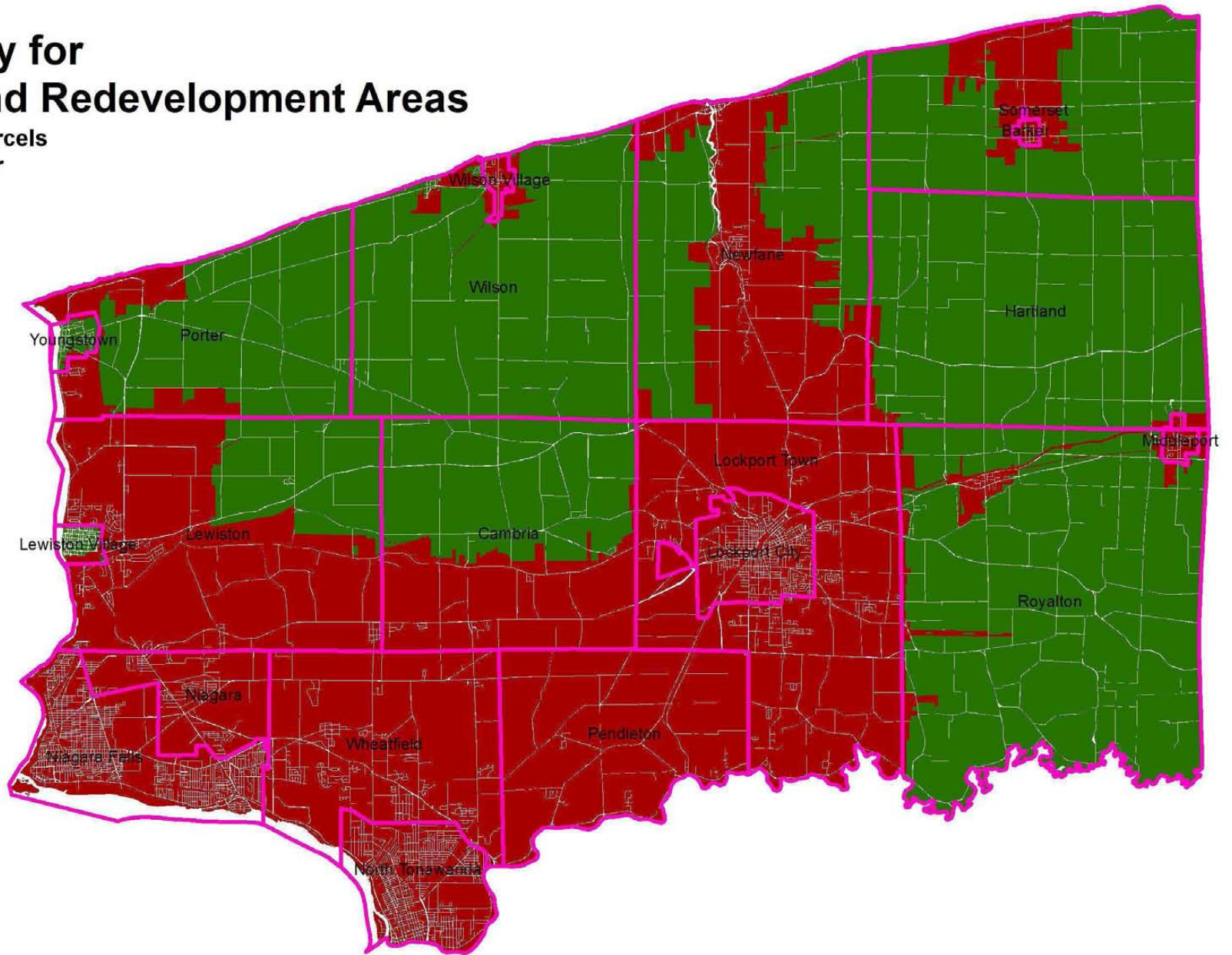
Figure
V.15

Parcel Suitability for Development and Redevelopment Areas

Based on whether or not parcels are located in existing sewer districts

Parcels 2007

Dev/Redev Score

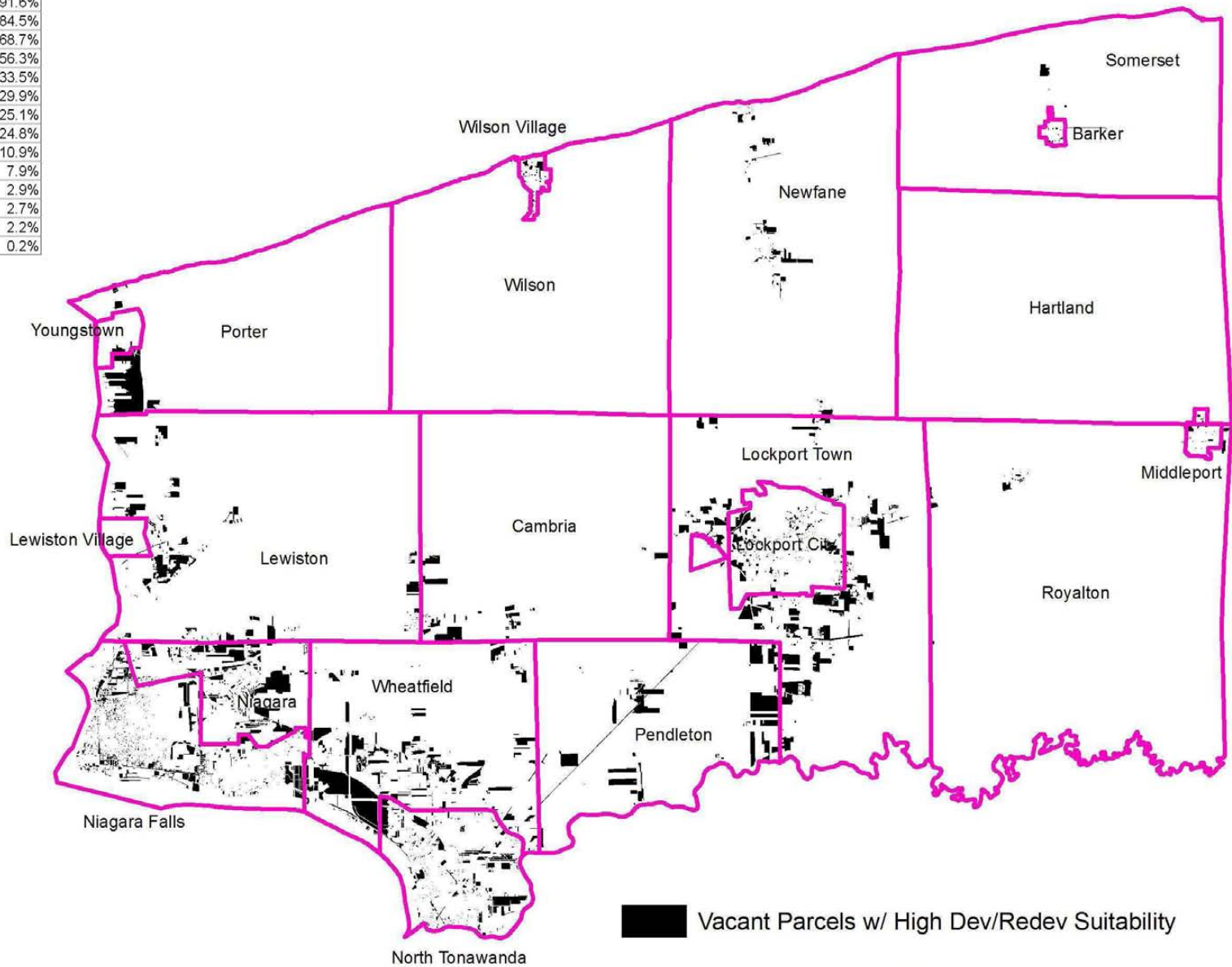


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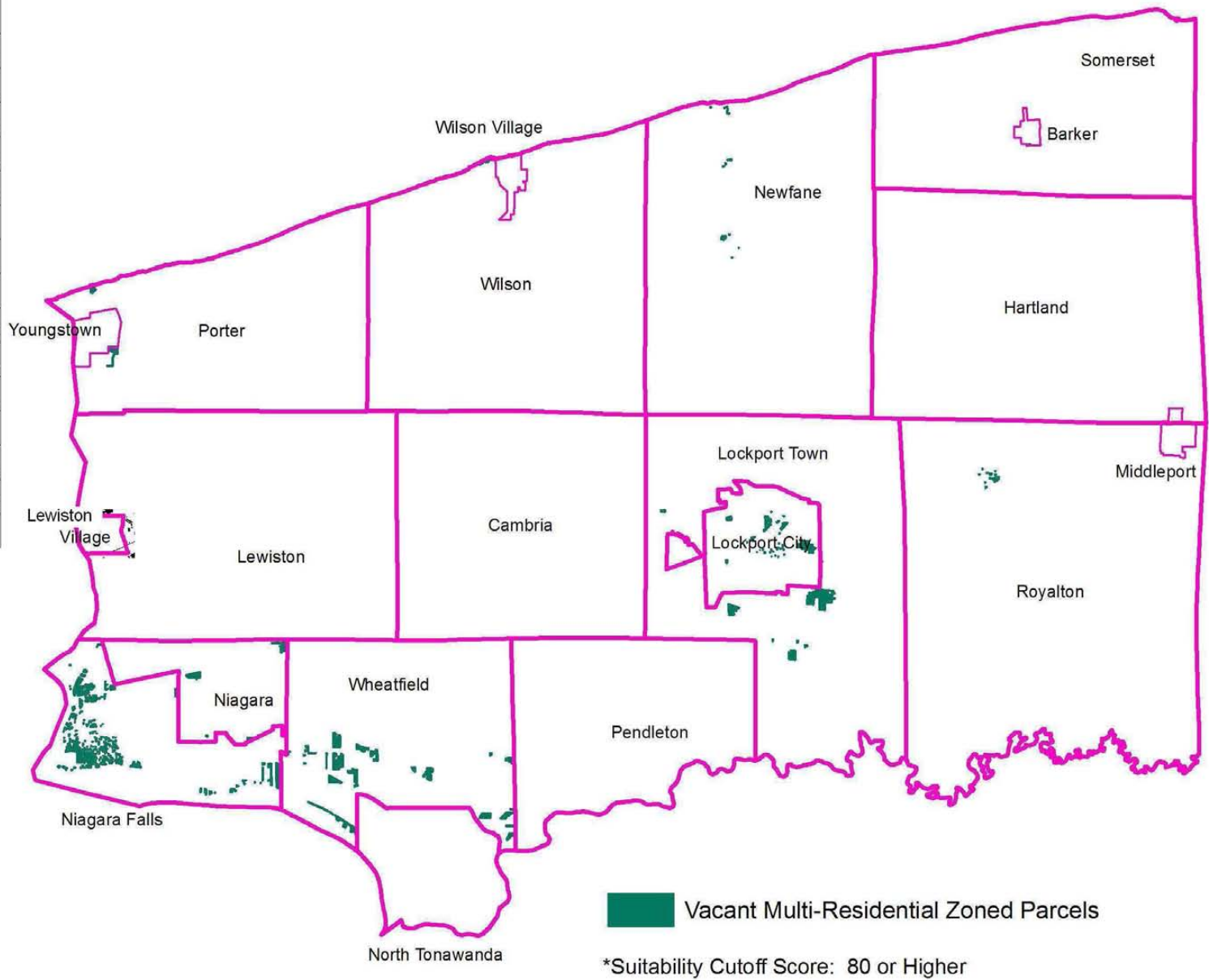
Parcel Suitability for
Development and Redevelopment Areas
Based on Existing Sewer Districts

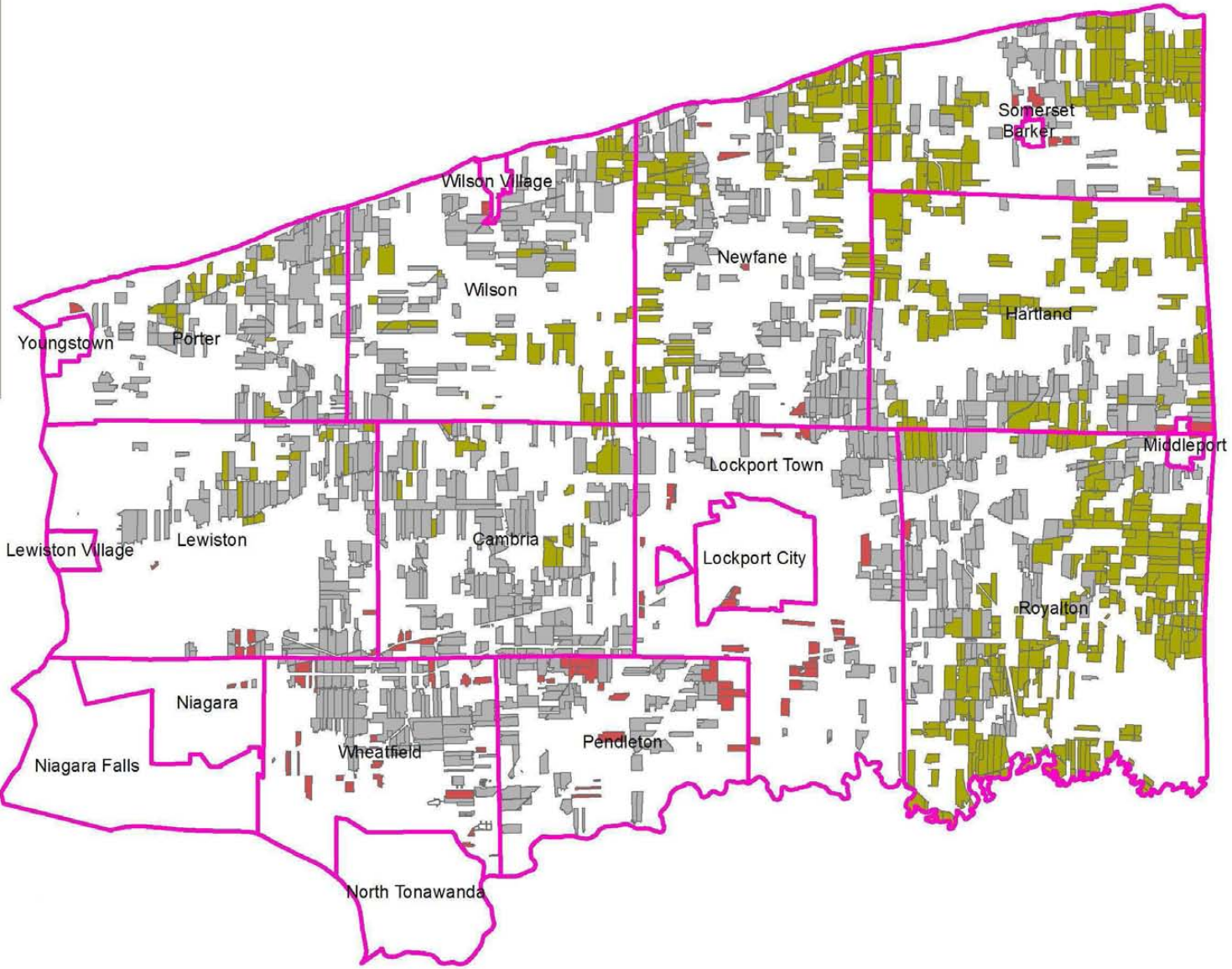
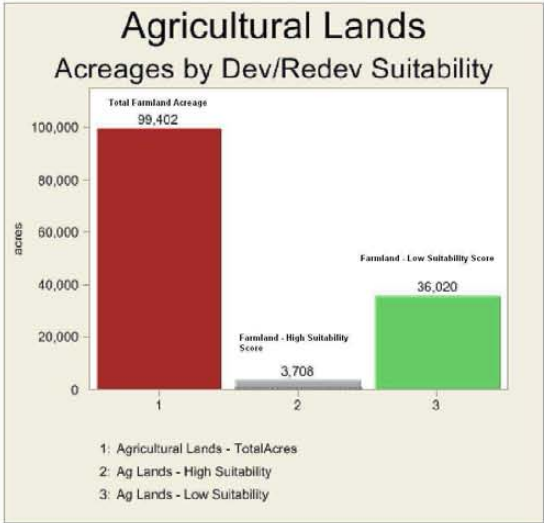
Figure
V. 16

Community	Vacant Acres Total	Vacant Acres Suitable	Suitable Pct
Niagara	1,137	1,096	96.4%
Niagara Falls	1,482	1,357	91.6%
North Tonawanda	965	815	84.5%
Wheatfield	3,095	2,127	68.7%
Lockport City	716	403	56.3%
Pendleton	3,828	1,284	33.5%
Lockport Town	6,468	1,937	29.9%
Porter	3,235	813	25.1%
Lewiston	4,039	1,000	24.8%
Cambria	3,912	425	10.9%
Newfane	3,899	308	7.9%
Royalton	5,776	168	2.9%
Wilson	4,345	116	2.7%
Somerset	3,659	79	2.2%
Hartland	6,669	11	0.2%



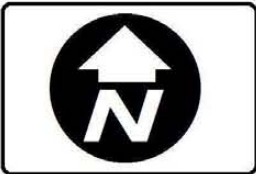
Community	Community Type	Total Vacant Multi-Family Residential Acres	Vacant Acres Suitable	Suitable Pct
Porter	Rural	35	35	100.0%
Newfane	Rural	12	10	83.3%
Royalton	Rural	13	9	69.2%
Somerset	Rural	17	2	11.8%
Wilson	Rural	62	5	8.1%
Cambria	Rural	-	-	N/A
Hartland	Rural	-	-	N/A
Lewiston	Rural	-	-	N/A
Niagara	Suburban	48	45	93.8%
Lockport Town	Suburban	202	179	88.6%
Wheatfield	Suburban	424	261	61.6%
Pendleton	Suburban	-	-	N/A
Lockport City	Urban	74	74	100.0%
Niagara Falls	Urban	321	306	95.3%
North Tonawanda	Urban	-	-	N/A





**Development / Redevelopment
Suitability of Agricultural Lands**

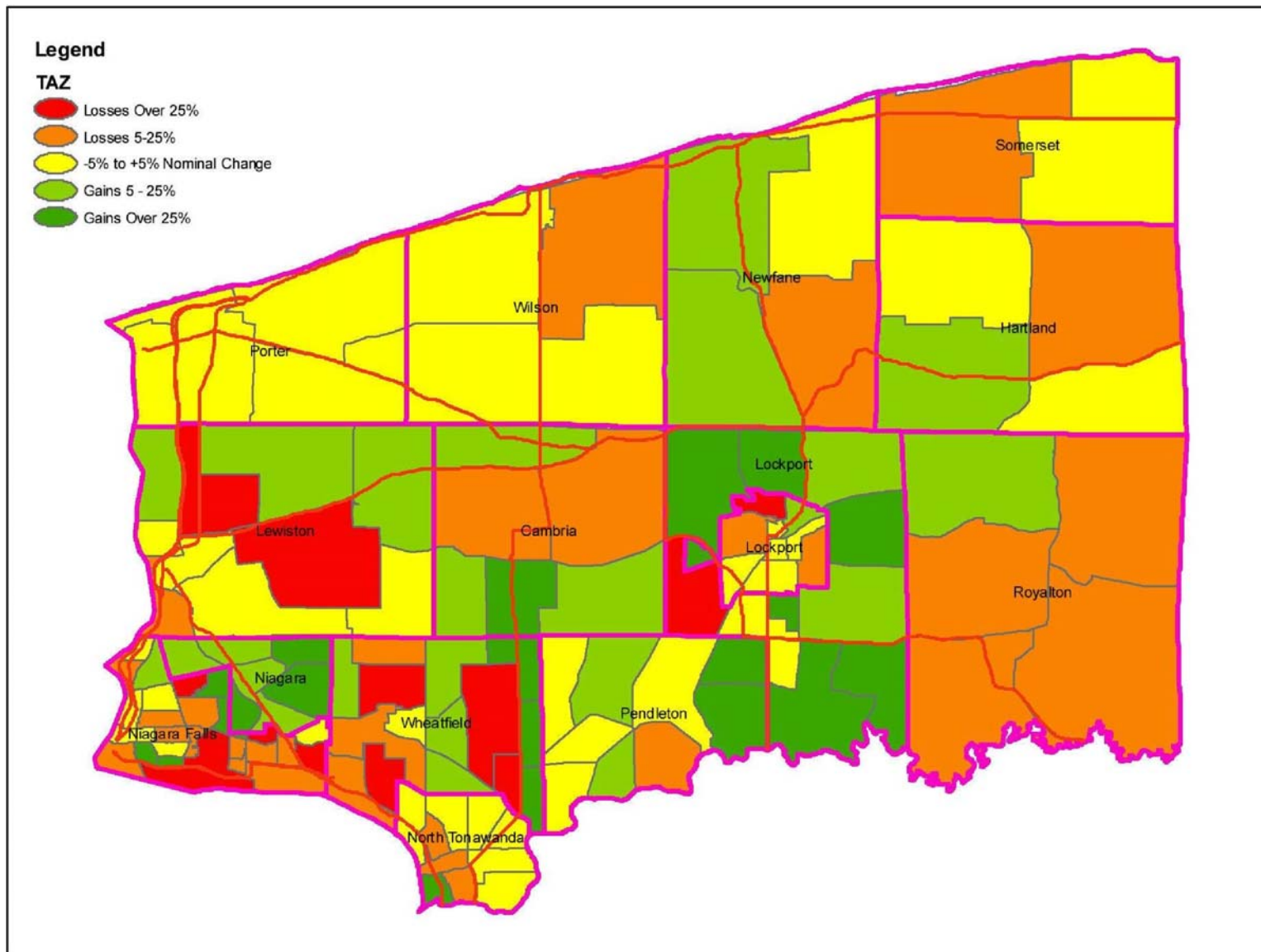
- Ag Lands - High Suitability
- Ag Lands - Low Suitability
- Ag Lands - Fair Suitability

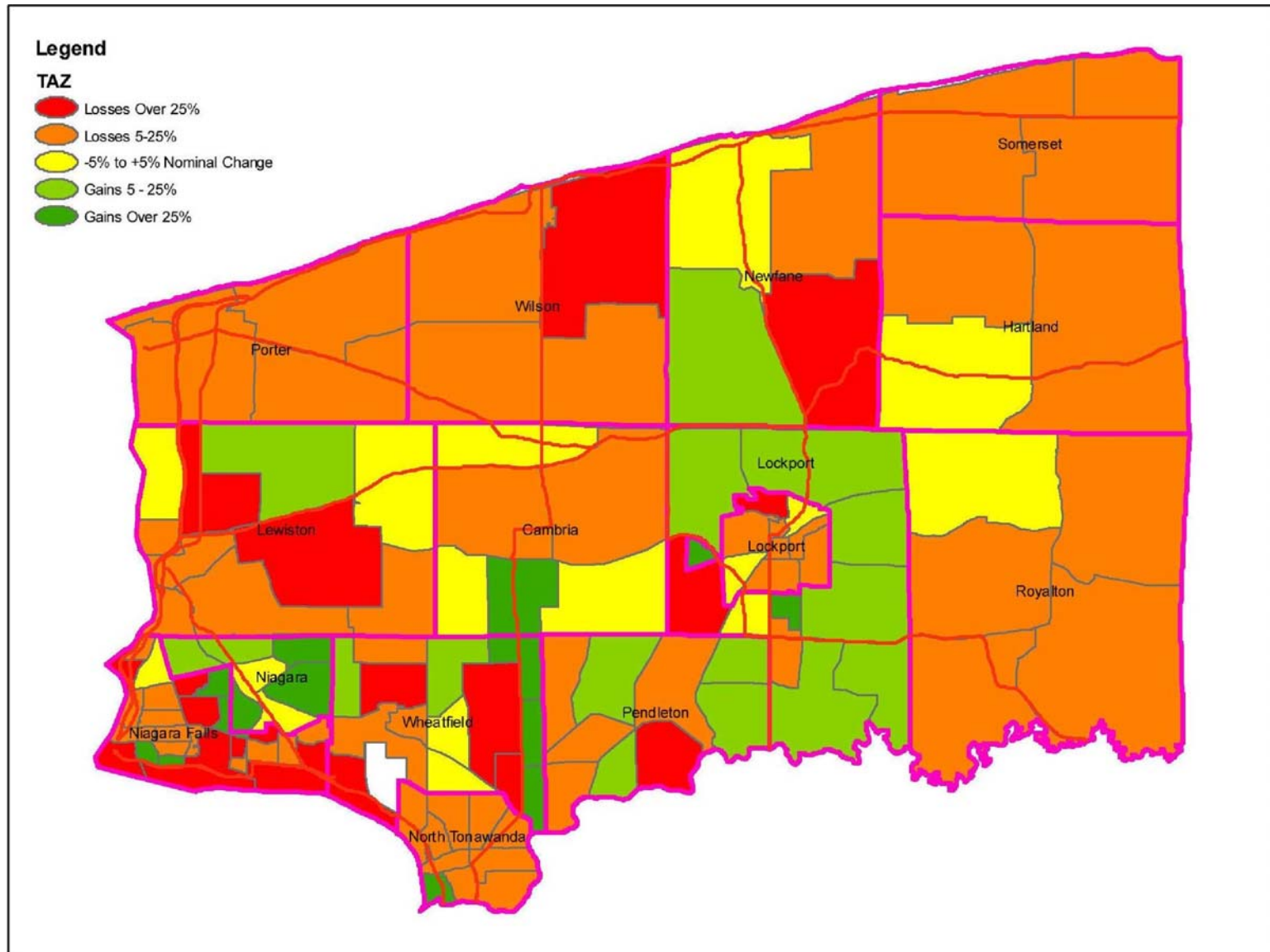


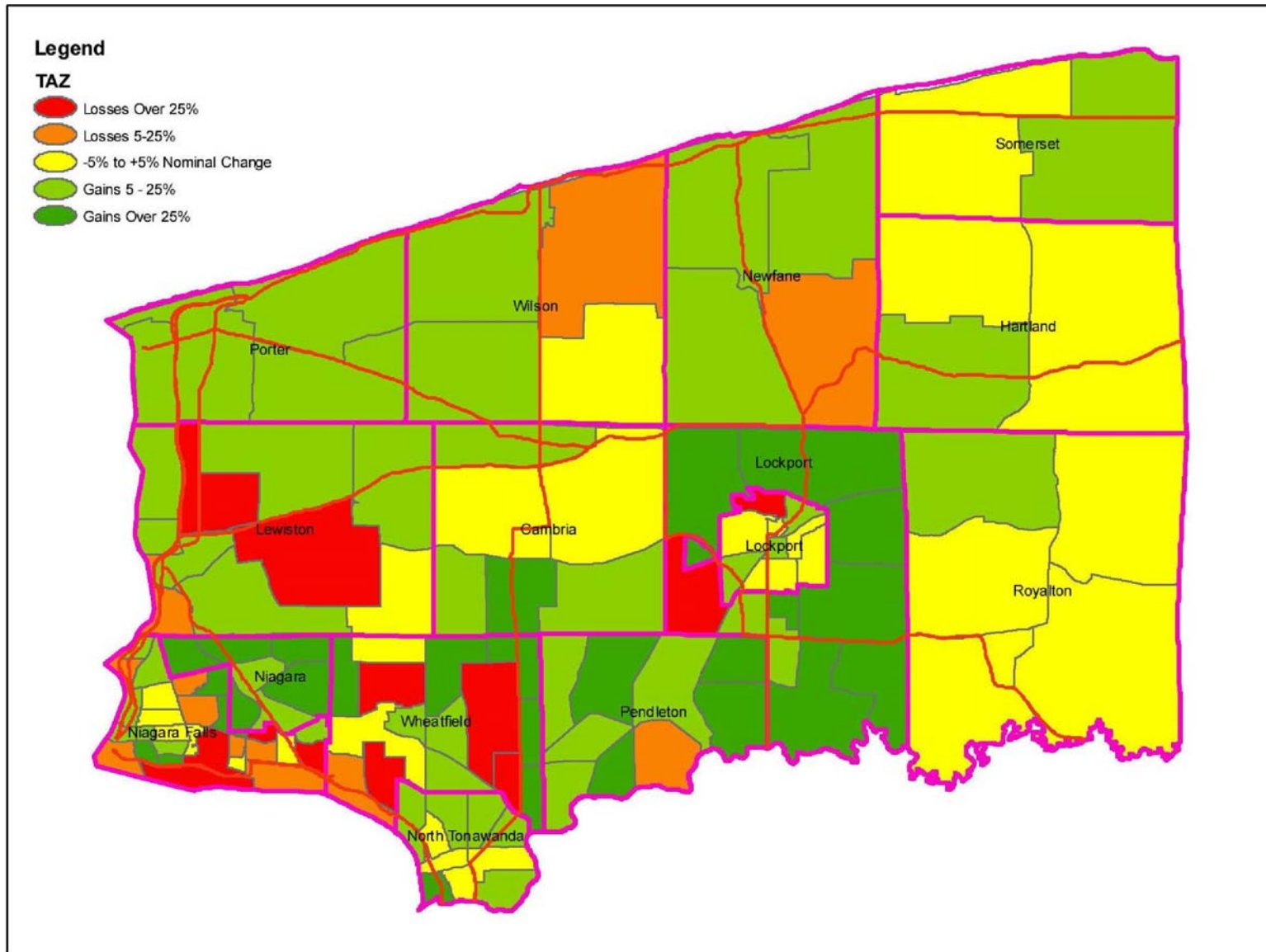
October 2008
Pete Young
Community Oriented Geography, LLC

**Agricultural Lands by Suitability for
Potential Development /
Redevelopment Areas**

**Figure
V.19**







Strategies

Three overarching strategies are discussed below with regards to land use, transportation and environmental resources within Niagara County. These include:

- 1.) Land use policies and decision-making at County levels need to be based on the principles and practices promoted under sustainability and smart growth.
- 2.) Transportation policies and decision-making likewise need to consider sustainable practices consistent with Federal and State agencies, including the New York State Department of Transportation as well as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) that promote smart growth practices.
- 3.) In addition, this Plan also encourages greater physical connectivity among communities throughout the County with linkages to areas beyond its borders as a means of enhancing transportation choices by creating interconnected systems served by transportation alternatives, both motorized and non-motorized. The concept of improved connectivity also relates to the protection and management of green infrastructure across the County as a way of better integrating natural systems and natural resources into decision-making processes and land use planning.

Each of these strategies is discussed in more detail as follows and illustrated in a series of maps beginning with Figure V-23 which locates ongoing initiatives within the County that are directly related to the Niagara River and Erie Canal corridor initiatives. Figure V-24 illustrates existing connections among communities via roads, trails and transit opportunities. Figure V-25 illustrates important corridors in the County and existing destinations of interest. Figures V-26 and V-27 are provided to illustrate existing and potential connections among various points of origin and destination in and around communities throughout Niagara County and between areas of potential growth, development and resource protection.

Sustainable Principles and Practices

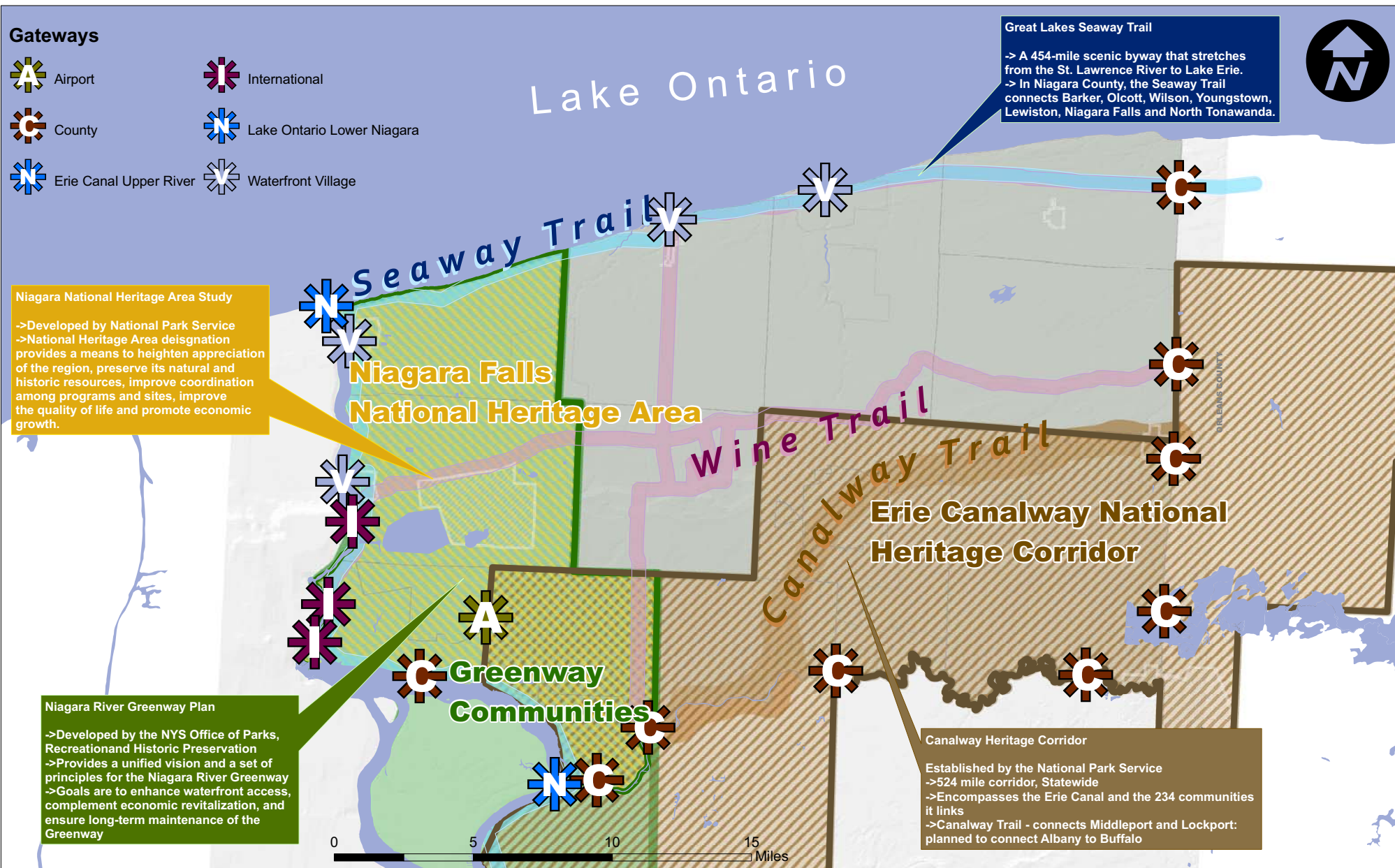
Sustainability and smart growth are defined in many different ways, but regardless of how each is defined, the concepts are based on sound and, in most cases, traditional principles of community planning and design. These principles focus on enhancing the quality of life of communities by achieving a more sustainable balance between human needs and the integrity of natural systems.

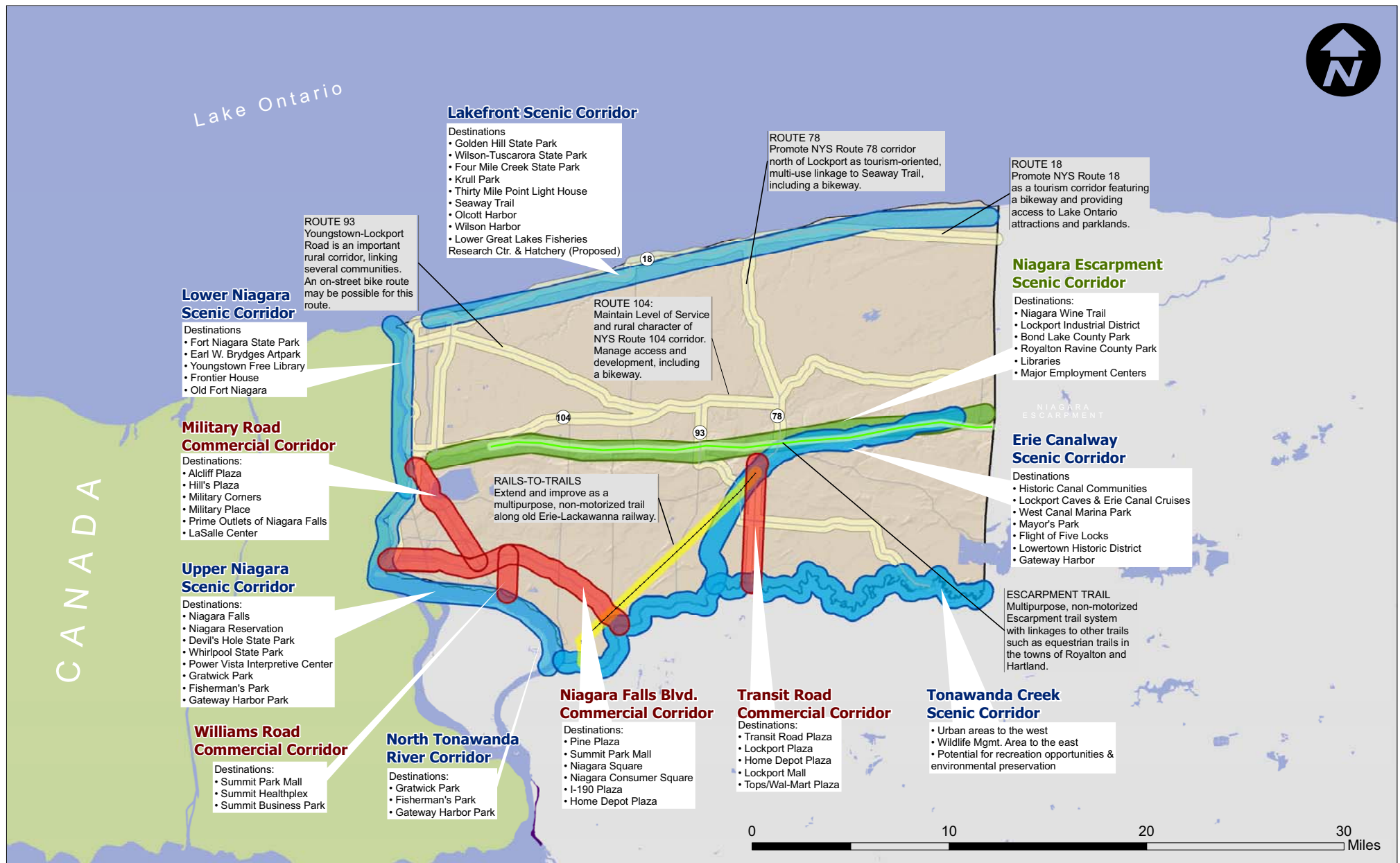
Principles of sustainability are becoming widely known and have been adopted in recent years by states, counties and local communities throughout the U.S., Canada and elsewhere. These principles support an emphasis on development and redevelopment in recognized existing centers of population over greenfield or undeveloped locations whenever and wherever possible.

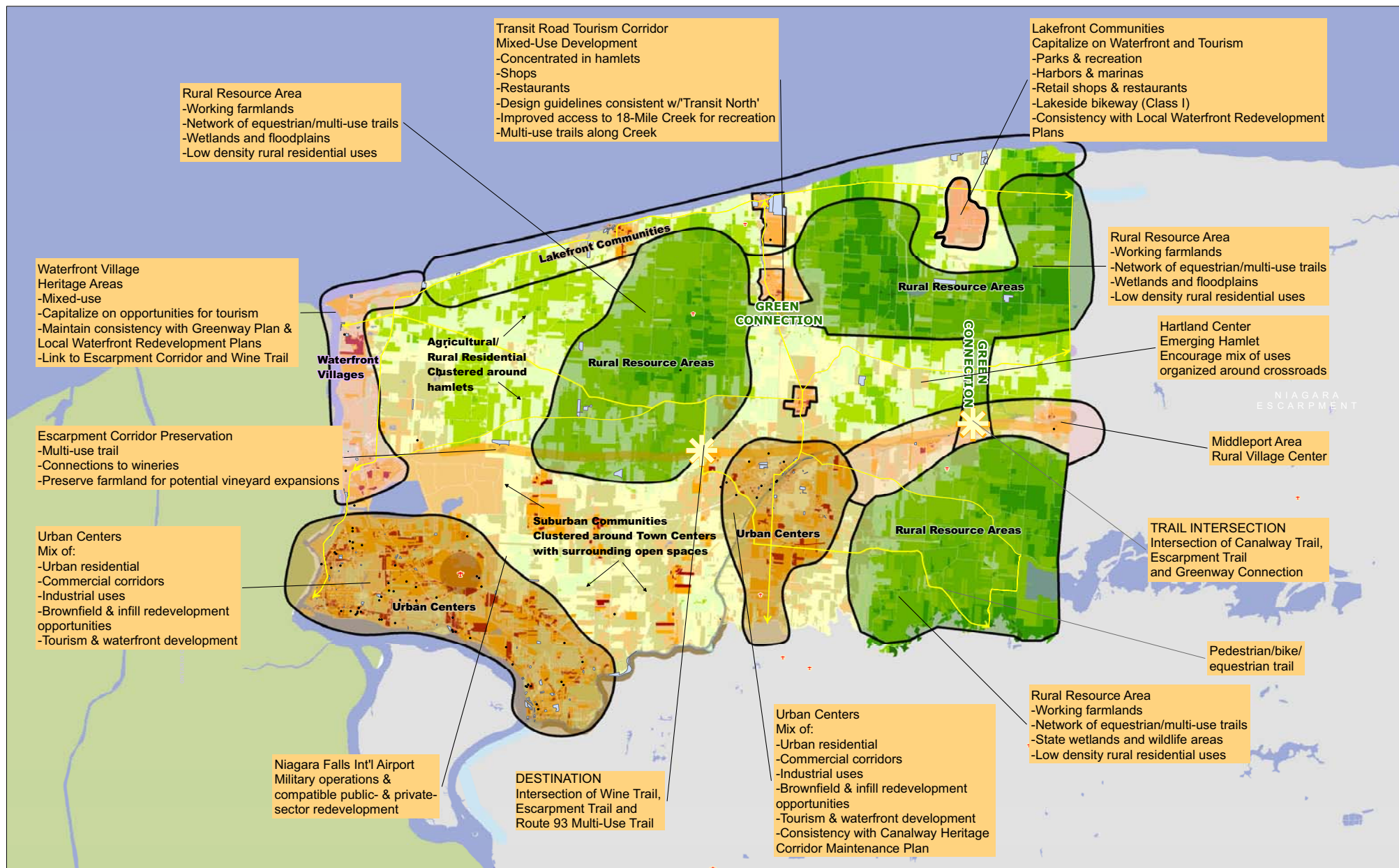
This Comprehensive Plan supports and encourages the principles and practices of sustainability and smart growth. In general, the 10 points that follow briefly summarize the basic tenets of smart growth. Over the years these have evolved

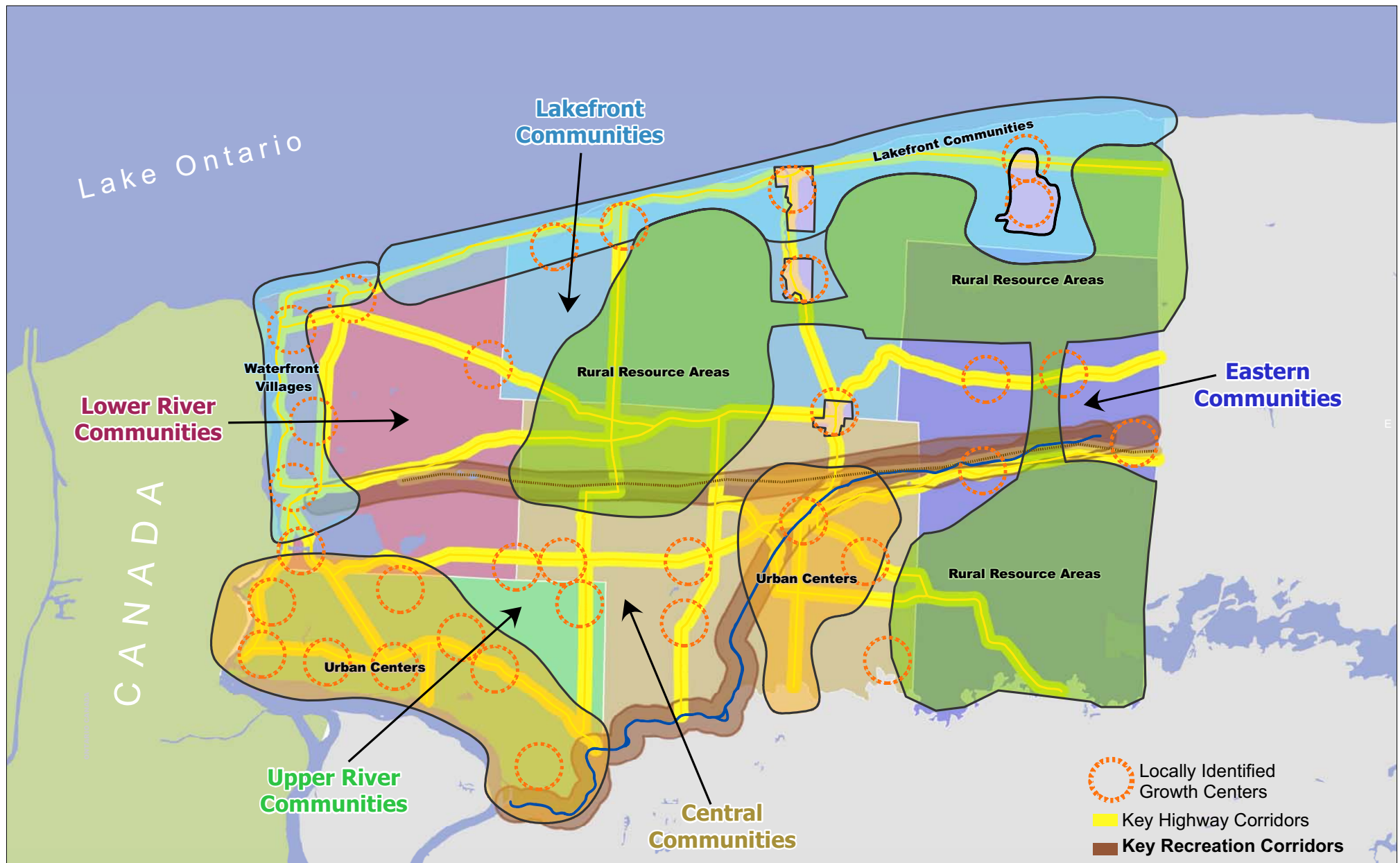


**Encourage
Sustainable
Principles**









into much more detailed planning, design and development practices intended to foster more sustainable land use patterns and uses. The 10 principles that follow are the basis for many of the recommendations provided throughout this Plan.

Briefly stated these principles include:

1. Creating a range of housing opportunities and choices by providing quality housing diversity for people of all ages, lifestyles, mobility and income levels.
2. Creating “walkable” neighborhoods, that are pedestrian-friendly, where less reliance on automotive travel is possible, and where daily services are readily available in proximity to housing and employment resulting in desirable places to live, work, learn and play.
3. Encouraging increased community and stakeholder collaboration to respond to a community’s sense of identity and vision of how and where it wants to grow.
4. Fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place by setting standards for design, development, construction and maintenance which responds to community values expressed through architecture and public places.
5. Making development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective by sending clear signals to developers and the private sector in making sound development decisions.
6. Mixing land uses by integrating compatible forms of land uses and multiple uses into the community, rather than the more conventional segregation of uses.
7. Preserving open space, scenic resources and environmentally sensitive areas which supports local economies, provides jobs, preserves critical environmental areas, and improves the overall quality of life of a region by guiding new growth into existing communities.
8. Providing a variety of transportation choices to people with more alternatives to move people and goods and with greater emphasis on connections to housing, employment, shopping and transportation.
9. Strengthening and directing development towards existing communities and developed areas that are already served by infrastructure and seeking to utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer, while conserving open space and irreplaceable natural resources.
10. Encouraging compact forms of development, site and building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive and sprawling development patterns.

Some communities within Niagara County have adopted many of these or similar principles. Many communities are also working towards their implementation through their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations. Opportunities exist, however, to expand the implementation of more sustainable practices at County and local levels. Niagara County is in a leadership position to facilitate

these efforts through County planning assistance to municipalities and guidance on modifying land use regulations that focus on sustainable practices.

Government agencies at Federal, State, regional and local levels have also adopted these principles in advancing sustainability. Three agencies that have particular relevance to Niagara County communities, for example include, but are by no means limited to the NYS Department of Transportation, NYS Department of State and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council. At the State level these principles are encouraged through Department of State funding programs such as Quality Communities and Restore New York. Grant funds for projects may well hinge on the ability to show consistency with these principles.

Connectivity

Enhanced connectivity among communities and places is another important concept encouraged by smart growth and sustainability principles. Connectivity is necessary for creating more pedestrian-friendly “walkable” communities and fostering less reliance on automotive travel. Connectivity requires collaboration and coordination among many different agencies, jurisdictions and municipalities to be effective in establishing interconnected networks of pedestrian, non-motorized and motorized pathways, trails, facilities and corridors.

Physically linking various types and intensities of local and regional land uses with points of origin and destinations of interest enhances travel alternatives. This concept of improving linkages between places is a key recommendation of this Plan. Connectivity encourages social interaction among neighborhoods and communities, provides environmental and health benefits, and promotes a greater sense of place, improved quality of life and community identity.

Niagara County along with its partner agencies such as the GBNRTC and State agencies has the ability to encourage and promote enhanced connectivity among communities. This can be achieved within Niagara County through ongoing support for intermunicipal planning initiatives, support for funding and technical assistance to communities, expedited project review and approvals, and through infrastructure development decisions that consider creating interconnected transportation networks that afford multi-modal means of travel.

Opportunities for improved interconnections of transportation systems also need to be identified and supported where people have the ability to shift from one means of travel to another through multi-use trails and facilities that provide for walking, hiking, biking, boating, canoeing, horseback riding and other non-motorized methods. Similar interconnections can be made between motorized and non-motorized systems that can provide the ability to shift from bus to bike travel or from one motorized means to another such as train to bus travel.

Large-scale development projects such as the planned Oz project in Wheatfield or continued development in the vicinity of the Niagara Falls International Airport may also afford new and innovative opportunities for enhanced public transit through people mover systems, perhaps in combination with other transit-oriented development. Niagara County and its many economic development partners need to promote and facilitate the development of enhanced physical connections and



***Increase
Connectivity***

multi-modal opportunities throughout the County. Future projects may range from relatively easy to implement projects, such as trails and bikeway corridors to much more complex mass transit projects.

Green Infrastructure

“Green infrastructure is our nation’s natural life support system – an interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural areas; greenways, parks and other conservation lands, working farms, ranches and forests; and wilderness and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to the health and quality of life for America’s communities and people.” (The Conservation Fund. n.d.).

Niagara County communities, through implementation of this Comprehensive Plan, are in position at the present time to proactively take steps to plan for, protect and manage the County’s green infrastructure network over the long-term. Initiatives presently underway within the County such as the Greenway Plan, the Erie Canalway Heritage Plan, the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project and others are setting the stage for Niagara County to take an even greater leadership role in green infrastructure issues and opportunities. This is especially true if strategies to implement smart growth and sustainable principles are implemented as discussed in this Chapter. Many of the land use and environmental issues identified in this Plan can be effectively addressed through a proactive approach among communities for maintaining, enhancing and protecting Niagara County’s green infrastructure.

As described above by the Conservation Fund, Niagara County presently has the natural and man-made resources that form the basis for a viable, functioning green infrastructure network. These include the County’s waterways, greenways, parks, woodlands, working farms, and open spaces. The Conservation Fund also describes green infrastructure as a combination of “hubs and links” and that is precisely what this Chapter encourages through its land use, transportation and environmental goals, objectives and recommendations.

Hubs are defined by the Conservation Fund as the anchors of a green infrastructure network. These hubs may include:

- Reserves – large protected areas such as the County’s State Parks and wildlife management refuges
- Managed Native Landscapes – large publicly-owned lands such as those set aside as forest areas
- Working Lands – private farms, forests and mineral extraction areas
- Regional Parks and Preserves – regionally significant County park lands
- Community Parks and Natural Areas – smaller sites that are protected and/or restored

Links are defined as the connections that link the system including hubs together. These links may include:

- Landscape Linkages – serving as large corridors, they are protected natural areas that link parks and preserves and allow plants and animals to flourish, and may include protection of historic sites and recreational



***Promote Green
Infrastructure***

- uses
- Conservation Corridors – less extensive linear areas, including rivers and streams that provide corridors for wildlife movement and perhaps public recreation as well
- Greenways – protected corridors managed for resource conservation and perhaps recreational use
- Greenbelts – protected natural lands or working lands that serve as a framework for development patterns while preserving native ecosystems and/or farms
- Ecobelts – linear wooded buffers between urban and rural uses that provide ecological and social benefits to urban and rural residents

The land use analysis discussed in this Chapter is a starting point for better integration of land use and environmental planning with a focus on green infrastructure. This integration of land use and environmental policies and practices creates greater efficiency in resource management, from both a physical and fiscal perspective. This integration also promotes sustainability. The analysis and resultant mapping suggest areas of the County where development and redevelopment may be most suitable resulting in potential costs savings to taxpayers by limiting the need for new or expanded “gray” infrastructure (roads, sewers, water) and services (police, fire, school, health).

Green infrastructure also addresses another component of community planning and design that considers the application of specific sustainable practices at a much smaller scale that may be appropriate for local municipalities and individual landowners. At County levels these practices could be implemented at County-owned and operated facilities. These practices include the use of pervious pavement materials for public infrastructure such as sidewalks, parking areas and roads; rain and rooftop gardens; collected roof runoff stored in cisterns and barrels; downspout disconnections to stormwater systems; natural vegetated drainage swales; and similar practices and technologies that focus on managing stormwater at the source by capturing and retaining it before it enters drainageways and stormsewer systems.

Green infrastructure practices have both environmental and fiscal benefits to communities and property owners by reducing dependence on traditional engineering approaches to stormwater management. The benefit of these practices is enhanced groundwater and surface water quality and quantity; less reliance on the use of piping and drainage systems resulting in potential cost savings; improved biological diversity; energy conservation; erosion control; and improved visual and community aesthetics. These practices are also encouraged as part of a comprehensive approach to protect and maintain the green infrastructure of Niagara County.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Key Definitions

The following definitions are provided to clarify terminology used in the goals, objectives and recommendations that follow in this and other chapters. These definitions are taken from NYS General Municipal Law including Section 119-u; City Law Section 20-f; Town Law Section 261-a; and Village Law Section 7-701.

Municipality – means a city, village or that portion of a town located outside the limits of any city or village.

Land Use Regulation – means an ordinance or local law enacted by a municipality for the regulation of any aspect of land use and community resource protection and includes zoning, subdivision, special use permit or site plan regulation or any other regulations which prescribe the appropriate use of property or the scale, location, and intensity of development.

Community Resource – means a specific public facility, infrastructure system, or geographic area of special economic development, environmental, scenic, cultural, historic, recreational, parkland, open space, natural resource, or other unique significance, located wholly or partially within the boundaries of one or more given municipalities.

Intermunicipal Overlay District - means a special land use district which encompasses all or a portion of one or more municipalities for the purpose of protecting, enhancing, or developing one or more community resources.

Development Rights – mean the rights permitted to a lot, parcel, or area of land under a zoning ordinance or local law respecting permissible use, area, density, bulk or height of improvements executed thereon. Development rights may be calculated and allocated in accordance with such factors as area, floor area, floor area ratios, density, height limitations, or any other criteria that will effectively quantify a value for the development right in a reasonable and uniform manner.

Receiving District – means one or more designated districts or areas of land to which development rights generated from one or more sending districts may be transferred and in which increased development is permitted to occur by reason of such transfer.

Sending District – means one or more designated districts or areas of land in which development rights may be designated for use in one or more receiving districts.

Transfer of Development Rights – means the process by which development rights are transferred from one lot, parcel, or area of land in any sending district to another lot, parcel or area of land in one or more receiving districts.

Goal – Farmland and Open Space Protection

To preserve and protect the long-term viability and sustainability of prime, unique and important farmlands and open spaces as well as related rural characteristics and evidence of the agricultural heritage, amenities and aesthetics of the County's farming areas.

Objectives

- Encourage the concentration of appropriate types, scale and intensity of land uses and development in and around existing population centers, including those potential development/redevelopment areas identified in this Comprehensive Plan, and those growth areas identified in local municipal comprehensive plans, master plans, and zoning districts through County planning assistance to local municipalities.
- Preserve the amount of viable countywide agricultural acreage from further conversion to other land uses, reduce development pressures on existing farming practices, and maintain open space resources.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities

- ☐ Promote and prioritize nodal centers and patterns of compact development with higher density residential and commercial development located in areas where physical infrastructure and community services are available or can be readily accessed.
- ☐ Discourage the conversion of agricultural lands in developing and undeveloped rural and suburban locations (see Table V-3) to other uses where the provision of new infrastructure or extension of services is not warranted or desired by local communities.
- ☐ Encourage smaller minimum lot size requirements in local ordinances in developing and undeveloped rural and suburban communities to reduce development pressure on farmlands and open space resources.
- ☐ Promote the creation of mixed-use and multiple-use development districts in local zoning ordinances, rather than the more typical single-use districts and encourage communities to establish floating zones such as Planned Unit Development (PUD) districts or mixed-use development overlay districts along important corridors.
- ☐ Encourage implementation and use of local incentive zoning, right-to-farm laws where they do not exist, land transfers, conservation easements and land trusts to protect open space resources.
- ☐ Encourage infill forms of development on vacant parcels and redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields in lieu of development on previously undeveloped properties.

For Rural Communities

- ☐ Provide County assistance to encourage local municipalities to direct development to appropriate locations away from prime and unique farmlands and protect the viability of large, contiguous agricultural parcels and the integrity of existing Agricultural Districts through their recertification.
- ☐ Encourage nodes of concentrated development in hamlets and crossroad locations with increased density and mixed uses with access to major



roadways and where other forms of services are available. Such areas should be priority locations for development and redevelopment over greenfield locations in rural communities where new infrastructure and services may need to be developed or expanded.

- ☐ Investigate means to more uniformly assess agricultural lands based on farming value, not the development potential of farmlands.
- ☐ Provide County assistance to communities as part of their comprehensive planning efforts in anticipation of potentially large scale agricultural uses or energy-related projects, such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) or windfarms, through the establishment of local ordinances to ensure proper planning steps are taken to reduce the potential for adverse impacts on communities and adjacent land uses. Ordinances should focus on protecting natural (air, water, land) resources, scenic resources, and compatibility with nearby land use possibly through requirements for the establishment of effective natural buffer areas.
- ☐ Encourage the establishment of local Transfer and/or Purchase of Development Rights programs as allowed under State Municipal Law and similar land use initiatives consistent with the recommendations of Niagara County's 1999 Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan that focuses on reducing the conversion of viable farmland.
- ☐ Support the complete update of Niagara County's 1999 Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan within two years (by 2011) in collaboration with the Farmland Protection Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension Service and the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District and other stakeholders.
- ☐ Encourage the expanded use of E-commerce opportunities among local farms and agricultural goods producers utilizing existing websites and links such as the Niagara Farm Markets (www.niagarafarmmarkets.org) and other sources of information available from Cornell Cooperative Extension and other agencies and organizations.
- ☐ Expand equestrian businesses as a locally important economic generator via increased marketing and small business incentives related to horse boarding, farriers, veterinarian services, hauling and trailer services, grain and hay production, fencing and tourism services that can be linked to County destinations and services. Niagara County currently ranks 20th among 58 counties in New York in number of horses with approximately 3000 horses valued at about \$12 million. Existing farms and stables feature western, English, dressage, draft, rodeo and trail riding opportunities.
- ☐ Provide for multi purpose/multi-use trail systems offering equestrian riding opportunities to encourage business and tourism opportunities that link with other trail networks throughout the County. Rural areas that may be most suited to expanded equestrian opportunities and trail systems include the towns of Royalton and Hartland followed by Somerset, Newfane, Wilson and northern Cambria with potential to link into other



existing and future trail networks, perhaps along the Wine Trail and future trails along the Niagara Escarpment.

Goal – Increased Connectivity among Communities

To increase the physical connections among Niagara County communities and between natural resources and cultural features within the County by providing opportunities for a variety of motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation along alternative transportation corridors and routes.

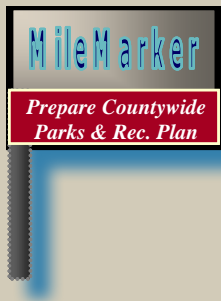
Objectives

- Support and encourage local communities' ongoing and new initiatives for physically connecting communities across Niagara County via a system of interconnected highways, bikeways, pedestrian trail systems, multi-use and equestrian trails, waterways and contiguous wildlife corridors consistent with, but not limited to the initiatives of the Niagara Greenway communities, Seaway Trail communities, Niagara Escarpment communities, Wine Trail communities, the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor communities, and the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor communities.
- Facilitate alternative forms of transportation across the County through public/private investment opportunities and partnerships to maintain and create acceptable commuting times, the timely transport of goods and services, and convenient access to employment centers, open space and recreational resources and tourist/business/retail destinations.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- ☐ Prepare a countywide Parks, Trails & Recreation Master Plan to determine critical park, trail, recreation and open space issues, opportunities and needs by identifying existing gaps in trail systems, park facilities and potential linkages to future specialized trails and multi-use trail networks.
- ☐ Develop a continuous network of trails, pedestrian paths, bikeways and multi-use trails throughout the County connecting population centers in urban, suburban and rural areas to neighborhoods, employment centers, business/retail destinations, open space resources, recreational facilities, schools and significant natural and cultural features.
- ☐ Support the Niagara Escarpment Legacy Project initiative of the Western New York Land Conservancy and other organizations to protect the ecological, open space and scenic value of the Escarpment, encourage the public acquisition and set aside of undeveloped parcels through private donation or purchase and investigate the potential of establishing public access trails and nature areas along the length of the Escarpment with linkages to other trail systems.
- ☐ Work with service providers and local communities to increase public transit opportunities through expanded transit bus routes, convenient work/school bus schedules and improved access to residential and business areas in rural communities.



- Support redevelopment strategies of cities, towns and villages along the Erie Canal corridor and waterfronts and reserve, restore and protect waterfront areas for public access, water-based recreation, open space and tourism-related businesses and amenities.
- Support the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor initiative and similar initiatives focused on increased connectivity and redevelopment opportunities.

Goal – Maintain Existing Infrastructure

To maintain and enhance existing public infrastructure as a countywide capital improvement priority over the construction of new infrastructure and public facilities in order to support more compact, mixed-use infill development, transit-oriented neighborhoods, and redevelopment of brownfields and grayfield sites located in existing urban centers and underutilized areas.

Objectives

- Encourage infill forms of mixed-use and multiple use development and the redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and brownfield and/or grayfield sites thereby discouraging development of undeveloped greenfield locations especially where extensions of public infrastructure (sewer, water and roads) and services might be required.
- Encourage an increase in the location of jobs and job creating opportunities in mixed-use and multiple-use areas, in order to minimize commuting and travel times, thereby making jobs more accessible and convenient to residential neighborhoods and public services.
- Encourage an increase in mixed use development through planning assistance to communities with greater housing diversity and affordability for all segments of the population in urban centers and those suburban areas where infrastructure is already in place.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- The County should continue to provide timely maintenance and required upgrades to its existing road, sewer, drainage and water infrastructure as a way to encourage development and redevelopment in areas where infrastructure is already in place.
- Planned increases in the capacities of existing County infrastructure need to consider the potential implications of increased capacity of roads, sewer and water systems on development patterns, sprawl and community character by coordinating decisions with local communities and consulting local comprehensive and master plans prior to making decisions on infrastructure projects.
- Limit or restrict the construction and/or extension of new County

infrastructure in developing suburban and rural areas to prevent sprawling development patterns unless issues of public health and safety are a concern or the basis for new projects.

- ☐ Continue to market brownfield sites to developers where infrastructure already exists and encourage infill development of these sites over development of greenfield sites.
- ☐ The County Planning Board should consider and emphasize in their review of development projects the need to encourage concentrated and compact forms of development over linear road frontage and leap frog development patterns that may result from project approvals requiring new or expanded infrastructure and services in communities.

Goal – Improve Intergovernmental Communication

To foster greater intergovernmental communication, coordination and collaboration in decision-making that affects short and long-term land use patterns, transportation systems and natural environments.

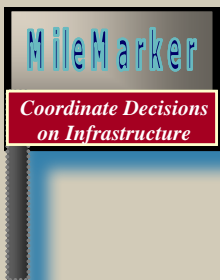
Objectives

- Provide continuing technical support, advice and information sharing to Niagara communities working to update their local comprehensive plans, zoning, subdivision regulations and project review procedures to encourage the implementation of sustainable principles and practices.
- Assist communities in identifying and accessing state-of-the-art information and database technologies through the County's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that can facilitate local land use decision-making processes and in identifying and avoiding spot zoning and/or approval of use variances in areas where such uses are incompatible with existing or planned uses or with desirable community land use goals.
- Continue to provide training and technical advice to municipal planning boards and zoning boards of appeals members as required by New York State Law under Chapter 662 of the Laws of 2006.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- ☐ Integrate and consider local comprehensive plans and their recommendations into County and regional planning and decision-making processes for significant capital improvement projects, including infrastructure, transportation projects, County services and public facilities.
- ☐ Support communities' efforts to identify and pre-list SEQRA Type I projects and proposed actions that require referral to the Niagara County Planning Board, pursuant to Article 12-B, Section 239-m of the New York State General Municipal Law.
- ☐ Instruct all County departments and agencies authorized to review

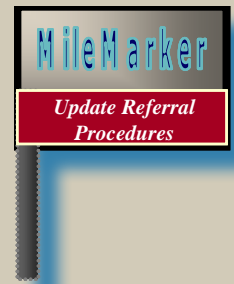


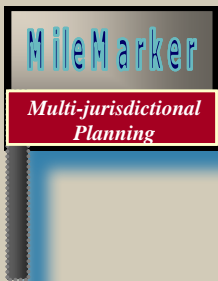
proposed development projects and issue permits to consider the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan and mapped information contained within it relative to the suitability of development in areas and the protection of environmentally sensitive resources.

- Increase the availability and sharing with communities of up-to-date GIS mapping, aerial photography and other planning tools necessary to make informed local decisions perhaps through website links to planning-related databases.
- Maintain a countywide GIS database of vacant and potentially developable parcels in suitable development areas that can support and facilitate local economic development initiatives and goals.
- Encourage and assist communities in developing and conducting community sustainability surveys to determine the effectiveness of local plans and regulations in identifying and protecting important local resources and managing large-scale development. These sustainability surveys should address housing, transportation, agriculture, cultural resources, natural resources, economic development, utilities, community services, open space and other issues that may be of local significance and concern.
- The County, working in coordination with local communities and the County Planning Board, should update its minimum information requirements, uniform project review checklists and written procedures that can be given to project applicants regarding the types of information expected from them. Local municipalities should be encouraged to utilize these documents when reviewing projects.
- Consideration of potentially significant upgrades in infrastructure capacities or extensions of County infrastructure must undergo increased scrutiny under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). This includes opportunities for public input prior to any decision-making that may affect land use and development patterns particularly anything related to the need for new infrastructure and services that will increase costs to taxpayers.
- Exactions and impact fees imposed on project developers are not legal options in New York State at the present time in order to cover the costs of new or upgraded infrastructure, so incentives for cost-sharing need to be established that are both fair and equitable to all parties so the burden of financing new or significant upgrading of infrastructure is not entirely assumed by the County, local governments or taxpayers.

Goal – Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas

To promote open space preservation and enhanced management/protection/restoration of environmentally sensitive areas of the County including 100 year floodplains, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, watersheds, significant flora and fauna habitats, and scenic resources.





Objectives

- Encourage the establishment and use of planning practices at the local municipal level designed to protect open space and rural characteristics, for example cluster development and conservation subdivisions, and direct higher density growth to villages, cities, town centers and hamlet areas identified by local communities as potential or preferred growth areas.
- Discourage development in areas that have unique natural features and significant environmental sensitivity such as floodplains, wetland complexes, contiguous wildlife corridors and habitats, as well as critical scenic viewsheds.
- Support the principles of protecting, managing and restoring “green infrastructure” throughout Niagara County and encourage communities through planning assistance and education to implement local measures to protect and enhance green infrastructure.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- ☐ Encourage development of an up-to-date countywide watershed protection plan as an important part of protecting the Great Lakes Basin and identify specific measures, including model ordinances for local communities to protect local surface waters and groundwater quality and quantity.
- ☐ Map environmentally significant and sensitive features at the local municipal level for integration into local plans beyond the more regional scale provided in this Comprehensive Plan in order to provide greater insight and guidance to local government decision-makers and developers on future land use development opportunities, constraints and options.
- ☐ Support multi-jurisdictional planning initiatives to address land use and environmental issues and opportunities that cross municipal boundaries through the use of intermunicipal overlay districts, for example along stream corridors to protect waterways and associated habitats. These overlay districts may include natural buffers and setback standards from streamside ranging in width from as narrow as 20 feet from an embankment in urban locations to perhaps as much as 300 feet in rural locations intended to protect wildlife habitat and other stream functions such as erosion control, filtration, and aquatic habitat.
- ☐ Identify the potential for creating wetland mitigation bank areas within the County to restore wetland complexes and wetland function in critical areas and provide developers and landowners a means for developing in more suitable areas.
- ☐ Given past and ongoing environmental problems faced by Niagara County and its communities resulting from the operations of former and existing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, as defined in New York Environmental Conservation Law Section 27-

1101(5), and consistent with an equitable distribution of such facilities throughout New York State, Niagara County should continue to work with local communities as well as State and Federal agencies to establish prohibitions to the future development and/or expansion of any industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facility within the County consistent with the policies established by the Niagara County Legislature via numerous resolutions passed in recent decades. Niagara County should also work with these and other stakeholders to ascertain liability for existing negative environmental impacts resulting from past and ongoing industrial hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities, including but not limited to adverse impacts on natural resources, public health, property values, public perception and quality of life. Niagara County should also continue to work with these stakeholders to ensure that sites contaminated with hazardous industrial waste are remediated for future use, or at a minimum, stabilized to prevent further adverse environmental impact.

Goal – Integrate Land Use and Transportation Decisions

To identify and consider the complex interrelationships between land use and transportation decisions in Niagara County that have implications on each other. In planning for the future these interrelationships need to be thoroughly explored to identify the cumulative beneficial and adverse effects at both local community levels and from a more regional or countywide perspective.

Objective

- Consider the implications of development decisions on growth patterns and the need for new or upgraded transportation services and facilities with established priorities to maintain and enhance existing transportation infrastructure.

Recommendations

For Urban, Suburban, Rural Communities

- The County and local municipalities should avail themselves of important information on land use decision-making and transportation planning principles provided by the New York State Department of Transportation on its Smart Growth website – www.nysdot.gov/smartplanning - as an important source of information in making future land use and transportation decisions.
- The County should expand its GIS based inventory and mapping to include all County roads and highways, bridges and drainage facilities by location, functional classification, traffic volume, conditions and capacities, scheduled improvements and maintenance records.
- The County Planning Board should review project site plans and referrals under Section 239 of Municipal Law based on consistency and compatibility with existing land use, local community plans, road access, road capacity, traffic safety, and roadway function.
- The County should encourage municipal land use plans to be



consistent with highway function and designs as well as desired community character, planning goals and objectives.

- ☐ The County should collaborate with local and regional jurisdictional agencies, for example the GBNRTC, the NYSDOT and local communities in developing corridor-long master planning for principal arterials within Niagara County, including NYS Routes 31, 78 and 104 to identify opportunities to support and link development/redevelopment centers, concentrate density in suitable commercial areas, foster economic growth, prevent linear road frontage sprawl, promote access management to preserve highway capacity and levels of service, and protect local community character.
- ☐ Collaborate and coordinate land use and transportation decisions among County, GBNRTC, State and local municipalities consistent with the goals, objectives and performance measures of the GBNRTC's 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan (www.gbnrtc.org) that emphasizes the following:
 1. Preservation of Existing Transportation Infrastructure
 2. Improve Regional Mobility and Accessibility
 3. Improve the Region's Economic Competitiveness
 4. Enhance and Protect the Region's Natural Environmental Quality, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Communities
 5. Improve Inter-Jurisdictional Transportation and Land Use Planning
- ☐ Coordinate with NYSDOT, the GBNRTC and local municipalities on long-term planning and access management to maintain the characteristics of the NYS Route 104 as an important rural east-west highway corridor.
- ☐ Utilize the principles of Context Sensitive Design (CSD) as a collaborative approach to involve local communities in decision-making about new transportation systems and facilities at the County level.

Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is

intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects will be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Infrastructure Improvements and Transportation (see Chapter VI) and Housing that include, but not limited to:

- \$4 billion to public housing capital fund
- \$2 billion for full year payments to owners receiving Section 8 rental assistance
- \$2 billion for the redevelopment of abandoned and foreclosed homes
- \$1.5 billion for homeless prevention activities
- \$250 million for energy retrofitting and green investments

Niagara County Projects include:

Highway Infrastructure

Niagara County Public Works

<input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Street Bridge Reconstruction over Tonawanda Creek [Town of Royalton]	\$ 3,394,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Townline Road Reconstruction [Town of Pendleton / Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 1,780,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Ewings Road Bridge Replacement over Eighteenmile Creek [Town of Newfane]	\$ 1,243,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Mapleton Road Bridge Replacement over Bull Creek [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 954,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Drum Road / Seaman Road Bridge Replacements at Jeddo Creek [Town of Hartland]	\$ 2,073,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Beebe Road Reconstruction [Town of Wilson]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Washing (78 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 130,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Deck Sealing (27 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 120,000

<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Painting (4 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 495,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Miller Road Bridge Reconstruction over Mud Creek [Town of Royalton]	\$ 650,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Lower River Road Drop Inlets Rehab/Replacement [Village of Lewiston]	\$ 60,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Packard Road Drop Inlets Rehab/Replacement [Town of Niagara]	\$ 40,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Carmen Road Bridge Repair over Johnson Creek [Town of Hartland]	\$ 40,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Youngstown Road Bridge Reconstruction over Sixmile Creek [Town of Porter]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Scour Protection/Waterway Opening Clearance (10 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 600,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Joint Replacement (6 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 300,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Bearing Rehab/Replacement/Lubrication (10 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 300,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Wearing Course Paving (41 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Substructure Protective Coating (23 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 150,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Plank Road Rehabilitation [Town of Royalton]	\$ 770,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Nash Road Resurfacing [Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Hartland Road Rehabilitation [Town of Somerset]	\$ 800,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Carmen and Quaker Road Box Culverts [Town of Somerset]	\$ 200,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Guide Rail End Replacement (approx. 350 locations) [Countywide]	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Tonawanda Creek Road Hot In-Place Recycling/Micro-Pave [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Bear Ridge Road Hot In-Place Recycling/Micro-Pave [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 650,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Mapleton Road Pavement Overlay [Town of Pendleton]	\$ 1,376,00
<input type="checkbox"/> Lockport Road Micro-Pave [Town of Wheatfield]	\$ 125,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Mountain Road Pavement Overlay [Town of Cambria]	\$ 123,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade Bridge Rail and Guide Rail (5 bridges) [Countywide]	\$ 1,000,000
Transit Capital Assistance	
Niagara County Economic Development	
<input type="checkbox"/> Niagara County Trolley Bus Network [Countywide]	\$ 200,000
Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center	
<input type="checkbox"/> Helipad for Transfer of Emergency Patients	\$ 250,000

Border Ports of Entry City of Niagara Falls	
□ Intl. Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center	\$ 16,500,000
Niagara County Economic Development	
□ Niagara Falls World Trade Center Feasibility Study [Countywide]	\$ 250,000

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