



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

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

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

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

MINUTES:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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