



# Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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

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

### **Topic – Community Connections**

#### **I. Introduction**

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

#### **II. CommunityViz Analysis**

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

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

### III. Breakout Sessions

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

### IV. Future Meetings and Wrap-Up

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

**The meeting ended at approximately 8 pm.**