



## Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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

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

### **Topic - Land Use & Environment**

#### **I. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions**

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

#### **II. Break-out Session One**

##### **Discussion Question #1**

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

Each group was asked to provide the following:

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

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

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

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

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

### **Discussion Question #2**

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

Each group was asked to provide the following:

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

### **III. Break-out Session Two**

#### **Discussion Question #3**

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

Each Group was provided with the following points to consider.

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

Each group was asked to provide the following:

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

#### **Discussion Question #4**

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

Each group should provide the following:

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

#### **IV. Reconvened as a Group to Summarize Discussions**

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

#### **RESPONSES from GROUP A**

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

##### **Question #1**

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

##### **Question #2**

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

### Question #3

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

### Question #4

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

### Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use

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

### Top 3 Assets and Opportunities - Land Use

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

### Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment

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

### Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment

- Royalton Ravine
- Canal
- Nature trails

## **RESPONSES from GROUP B**

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

### **Question #1**

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

### **Question #2**

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

### **Question #3**

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

### **Question #4**

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

### **Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use**

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

### **Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use**

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

### **Top 3 Issues & Challenges, Assets & Opportunities – Environment**

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

### **RESPONSES from GROUP C**

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

#### **Question #1**

- Can we maintain our vision as an agricultural community?
- Drainage issues due to growing residential use & retracting use for agriculture
- Most residential development is road front, creating difficulty for agricultural uses
- It would be advantageous to cluster residential areas
- How do we promote cluster developments and agricultural regions?
- What kind of incentives do we need to create this situation?
- We don't believe we have huge issues with regard to transportation
  - One possible answer to one of the lesser transportation issues is the development of truck routes with proper maintenance of bridges and roads.
  - One small issue is transportation for seniors
- The impediment created by the Army Corps of Engineers to waterfront development
- The raising lake levels may also hinder residential and waterfront development
- Distance from Thruway

#### **Question #2**

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

#### **Question #3**

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

#### **Question #4**

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

### **Assets & Opportunities by Area**

Somerset:

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

Newfane

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

Wilson

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

### **Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use**

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

### **Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use**

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

### **Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment**

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

### **Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment**

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

## **RESPONSES from GROUP D**

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

### **Question #1**

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

### **Question #2**

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

### **Question #3**

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

### **Question #4**

- Lake & river fronts
- Agri-business

### **Top 3 Issues and Challenges - Land Use**

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

### **Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Land Use**

- River & Lakefront
- Art Park
- Fort Niagara

### **Top 3 Issues and Challenges – Environment**

- Ordnance works – cleanup, control and oversight needed

### **Top 3 Assets and Opportunities – Environment**

- Agriculture
- Lakefront
- Riverfront

## **RESPONSES from GROUP E**

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

### **City of Niagara Falls**

#### **Issues & Challenges**

- Absentee landlords
- LaSalle Expressway bike path - across communities
- Need discussion over LaSalle Expressway and future development
- All transportation-related issues, including condition of streets and sidewalks and clearing snow from streets for senior citizens
- Brownfields that span municipal lines
  - Brownfields Opportunity Area adjacent to Niagara Falls boundary
- Wal-Mart relocation to Niagara Falls High School site
- Robert Moses Parkway Project in Downtown Niagara Falls

#### Assets & Opportunities

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

#### **Town of Wheatfield**

##### Issues & Challenges

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

#### Assets & Opportunities

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

#### **City of North Tonawanda**

##### Issues & Challenges

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

#### Assets & Opportunities

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

**The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.**