



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #3** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

Wednesday, April 23, 2008
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Topic – Economic Development

I. Summary of Steering Committee Meeting #2

- Review of key points covered in the March 26th Steering Committee meeting, focusing on land use/transportation and environmental issues. Notes from this meeting are available on Niagara County's website under the Meeting Schedule section of the Comprehensive Plan web pages (www.niagaracounty.com/comprehensiveplan.asp.)
- Update on GIS mapping prepared to date, including the use of New York State Office of Real Property Services (RPS) property classification codes to show the current use of properties countywide.
- Brief review of how the "Community Profile" sheets are going to be used. A new profile sheet will be available at each Steering Committee meeting. Community representatives will use these sheets to provide information on their community's issues, opportunities, goals and objectives related to each week's meeting topic. Each month a profile sheet will be handed in to the consultants and Committee members will be given a clean sheet for the next meeting. The consultant will be inserting information on the sheets as provided by each community.

II. CommunityViz Presentation

Peter Young of Community Oriented Geography introduced the Committee to *CommunityViz*, an innovative geographic information system (GIS) that will be used during the planning process to model how current trends are affecting land use characteristics, population distribution, infrastructure needs, and County services over the next 20 years.

Examples presented included farmland conversion trends, an analysis of riparian corridor development patterns, a summary of where commercial and industrial land uses were gained and lost between 2002 and 2007, and a summary of how the County's projected 2030 population would affect the cost of providing services to elderly residents. The farmland conversion preliminary trend analysis, for example, indicates that land that is being converted from farmland into other uses is being offset to a large degree by conversion of land into farmland – most likely lands being converted into vineyards and as cropland to "feed" to ethanol plants.

III. Introduction of Topic, Maps & Instructions

As in the previous Steering Committee meeting (March 26th), the breakout session involved dividing the municipalities in the County into five (5) planning sub-region discussion groups. Each group included about 3 or 4 stakeholder community representatives and varying numbers of other stakeholder groups invited to participate 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 as necessary. A spokesperson summarized what was discussed in each group at the conclusion of the breakout session.

IV. Break-out Session

Discussion Question #1

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **economic development 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 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 represent shared issues or challenges with other communities in the planning sub-region.

Groups were asked to consider these points:

1. Think about recent economic development-related issues that have been identified in your community or discussed through local media that have or may impact your community. This may include news about relocation of firms, changes in local employment, etc. What do you see or hear happening in your community that relates to the local economy, jobs, etc.?
2. Think about what types of economic development-related services and/or infrastructure facilities (sewer, water, electric, communication, roads, bridges, highways, air, marine) that are provided by or to your community that you may be familiar with and whether there are significant issues or changes in those services or infrastructure that may be needed.
3. Does the character of your community or recent economic trends differ from neighboring communities in terms of development occurring, job loss, job creation? In what way?
4. Are community assets such as parks, natural environmental features, cultural resources, educational/training facilities or general quality of life considerations being recognized as contributing to or being used for promoting economic development opportunities, including tourism?

Discussion Question #2

*What is the most significant **economic development 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:

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

III. Reconvene as a Group to Summarize Discussions

The Plan Steering Committee members and invited stakeholders reconvened at the end of the 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 and are annotated in some instances based on additional feedback from the groups.

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Issues and Challenges:

1. From the farm to the factory – keeping it local!! What is being produced locally should stay local. (referring to the need for local food processing, packaging, shipping, etc.)
2. Small businesses – Expansion of existing businesses and enticing new businesses – marketing is needed
3. Upgrade of infrastructure facilities
 - a. Sewer
 - b. Natural gas (only Routes 31 and 104 has gas lines)
 - c. Roads (needed for shipping farm products, etc.)
4. Exposure to a great community – come and stay – (need for a marketing campaign)
5. Vacant buildings – demolish and/or beautify.

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Agri-tourism
2. Canal
3. Parks and recreation – need to expand and build up
 - a. Schools and public parks share athletic facilities
4. Beautification of buildings that can be saved.
5. Wildlife and conservation areas

RESPONSES from GROUP B

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

Issues and Challenges:

1. Taxes – property tax rate is high
2. Overabundance of educational taxes (schools) – Town of Cambria has 5 districts, 5 in Town of Lockport
3. Municipalities paying municipalities for services, i.e., water treatment
4. Aging infrastructure: gas, water, etc.
5. Loss of people in the county
6. Shovel ready sites needed vs. red tape and bureaucracy in New York State, especially compared to other states.

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Wine trail
2. Educational component (NCCC)
3. Locks in Lockport (unique site on the Erie Canal)
4. Transit Road – historic (heritage) corridor

RESPONSES from GROUP C

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

Issues and Challenges:

1. “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) negative attitude toward development proposals
2. Lack of sewers / natural gas in entire towns
 - a. Villages of Barker and Wilson are better, but towns (Wilson and Somerset) have poor coverage
 - b. Newfane has more coverage and it shows in more commercial use
3. Distance from main transportation systems
4. Employers leaving area
5. Parkways being non-commercial hinder use: Robert Moses Parkway should allow commercial traffic
6. Excessive taxes

Assets and Opportunities:

1. Harbors and lakefront
2. Road systems
3. Potential for other uses at AES facility in Somerset
4. Large areas are zoned industrial, but not being used

RESPONSES from GROUP D

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

Issues and Challenges:

1. Tourism – need to facilitate tourism
 - a. Farm Museum - Town of Lewiston (Sanborn)
 - b. Tourism in General
 - i. Town of Porter
 - ii. Village of Youngstown
 - c. Obstacles – Bureaucracy, High Taxes
 - d. Cross-River Ferry
 - i. Connection
 - ii. Cross-tourism (international – easy access across border needed)
 - e. Energy costs
2. Regional Employment – maintain employment levels
 - a. Village of Youngstown
 - b. Keeping residents in the area
3. Aging population
4. Community-specific:
 - a. Youngstown – sewer plant capacity
 - b. Town of Porter – promotion of agriculture

- c. Town of Porter / Town of Lewiston –
 - i. State properties (too many that cannot be developed) & development (Fort Niagara, Joseph Davis Park)
 - ii. Chemical Waste Management (CWM) / Modern Disposal
- d. Town of Lewiston – hydroponics / green houses

Assets and Opportunities:

- Geography of the area
 - River, lakes, etc.
- Cost of Living (COL), low housing costs
- Untapped potential for the area in general

RESPONSES from GROUP E

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

Issues/Challenges and Assets/Opportunities:

- “Oz”
 - Schedule – largest project in the area now on the board
 - EIS this summer
 - Fall groundbreaking
 - 4 years to develop
 - Wheatfield & BEL Review
 - Wheatfield as lead agency
 - Largest private employer
 - 3K – 5K year round
 - Issues
 - Housing / quality of housing stock – need diversity of housing
 - Land recapture
 - Agriculture – fresh food / guests
 - Hospitality “perception”
 - Training
 - Universities
 - Technology providers / workforce
 - Transportation services – Wheatfield
- Wheatfield
 - Air Base
 - Appropriate new terminal
 - International heavy jets
 - Spinoff opportunities and surroundings
 - Environmental – tech support
 - Williams Road medical corridor
 - River property and access needed to waterfronts
 - Niagara Falls Boulevard corridor
 - Overlay
 - Businesses that bring in other businesses
 - Working together
 - Maintaining farming
 - Right-to-farm

- Businesses
- Smart Growth
 - Neighborhoods
 - Stand alone
 - Developer educators
- Niagara Falls (between Main Street and Whirlpool)

Important issues center on brownfield clean-up and dealing with bureaucratic red tape that hinders redevelopment – need to better leverage investments

- Multi-modal transportation
 - Customs House
 - Customs / sealed buses
 - Cost of fuel – City growth
 - Niagara Falls Experience Center
 - BCP
 - Terminal / transportation
 - Road infrastructure
 - Culinary institute

The meeting ended at approximately 7pm.