



# Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

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## **Notes of Meeting** **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #7** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

**Wednesday, August 27, 2008**  
**5:00 pm to 7:00 pm**

### **Topic – Visioning & Development Suitability Analysis**

#### **I. Introduction**

- Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed meeting attendees and summarized the meeting's agenda. Handouts available included:
  - Notes of July 23<sup>rd</sup> Plan Steering Committee Meeting
  - Community profiles
  - Draft "Connectivity" map
  - PowerPoint presentation summary
- Mr. Kalina introduced Peter Young of Community Oriented Geography, who has been using CommunityViz geographic information systems (GIS) software to analyze development suitability criteria countywide.
- Mr. Kalina reminded Plan Steering Committee members to provide input on behalf of their communities by way of the Community Profiles.
  - A question was raised regarding the major employer data on the community profiles. Specifically, the most recent draft of the Community Profiles does not reflect input previously provided on major employers. Mr. Kalina said that the previously provided information would be added to the profiles.
  - Mr. Kalina indicated that the Community Profiles have been reformatted to accommodate building permit data and the additional information has taken up any remaining room for community photos. However, photos will likely be used on the cover of the Plan and elsewhere in the document, so Steering Committee members are still encouraged to provide them.

#### **II. Plan Status Update**

- Mr. Kalina provided an update on the status of the Planning Process
  - The planning process is entering Phase III, Plan Preparation, wrapping up Phase II, Analysis.
  - The County's Vision Statement has been developed, based on Steering Committee input. Comments are invited on this Vision Statement.
  - Draft Goals and Objectives have been developed for each focus area of the plan (Land Use & Environment, Economic Development, etc.).
  - The cities, towns and villages in Niagara County have been classified in a matrix according to their overall development pattern (urban, suburban or rural) and the general development trend seen (developed, developing or undeveloped). Comments are invited on this matrix.
    - This matrix can be used to organize the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that the Plan both respects

- communities' differences and is relevant to their common issues, even as these communities change over time.
- The CommunityViz analysis continues to be developed and refined as data is added and updated.

### III. Overview of CommunityViz Analysis

- Peter Young presented the CommunityViz analysis for the Comprehensive Plan, as it has progressed to date.
  - The CommunityViz analysis is intended to provide guidance on which parts of the County are better suited for development/redevelopment and which parts are better suited for natural resource preservation, based on planning principles and the geographic data compiled to date.
  - For the initial run of the CommunityViz analysis, only parcels near previously identified “development/redevelopment centers” were evaluated.
  - The analysis of parcels’ development/redevelopment suitability was based on ten suitability factors, including:
    - ENVIRONMENT – Whether or not a parcel overlaps with the combined environmental constraints data.
      - A higher percentage of overlap with environmentally sensitive areas results in a lower score.
      - Environmentally sensitive areas currently include 100-year floodplains, agricultural district areas with prime ag soils, stream/riparian corridors, and wetlands (all DEC wetlands and NWI wetlands larger than 20 acres).
    - SUSTAINABILITY – Proximity to the draft development/redevelopment areas as currently defined from local plans.
      - Parcels closer to these areas get higher scores.
    - INFRASTRUCTURE 1 – Proximity to sewer districts.
      - A parcel gets a higher score if it is in or near a sewer district.
    - INFRASTRUCTURE 2 – Proximity to major roads.
      - A parcel gets a higher score if it is near a major road.
    - CURRENT ZONING – Within appropriate zoning district.
      - Parcels get higher scores if zoned commercial (C, C1, C2, C3), business (B, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5), light industrial (LI or IP), manufacturing (M1), mixed use (RC, VB), multi-family residential (R3), or planned unit development (PUD).
    - CURRENT SOCIAL FABRIC – Proximity to existing community anchors.
      - Parcels get higher scores if their property class code is 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), 710-715 (Manufacturing), or 800 (Public Services).
    - AVAILABLE SPACE – Whether or not the parcel is vacant.
      - Parcels get higher scores if they have a "vacant" property class code (300 - 399).
    - PUBLIC SERVICE 1 – Available School Capacity.
      - Parcels get higher scores if they are located in a school district with available capacity.
    - PUBLIC SERVICE 2 – Proximity to Fire Stations.
      - Parcels get higher scores if near existing fire stations.

- DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS – Whether or not the area is expected to gain or lose population based on population projections.
      - Parcels get higher scores if they are located in a TAZ with projected population growth.
      - This measure uses the TAZ-based population projections from GBNRTC, not the projections from Cornell University.
- The relative weights of these factors in determining an area’s overall score can be modified, using CommunityViz software.
- The analysis not only rates parcels’ suitability, but can be used to aggregate parcel information in order to rate the overall suitability of the identified development/redevelopment centers themselves.
- Comments and Questions from the Floor (paraphrased)

Q: Can the software be set up to differentiate between “development” and “redevelopment” centers?

A: The analysis may allow that eventually, but it is not ready to be used at that level of detail just yet.

Q: Some elements of the Social Fabric layer should be eliminated (e.g., the Army Base, the LOOW / CWM site, Bell Aerospace in Wheatfield, “notorious” brownfield sites, etc.)

A: We will take note of these and make sure that they are not included in the next run of the analysis.

Q: Some sewer districts appear to be missing, specifically Middleport, Youngstown, and Lewiston.

A: Thank you. We will make sure these omissions are corrected.

Q: Why does the rating of centers seem to show everything north and east of Lockport as poorly suited for development?

A: The most likely explanation is that the development/redevelopment centers themselves need to be re-evaluated. That is one goal of the analysis: to assist in identifying development/redevelopment centers that maximize community assets and minimize the development of lands where valuable natural resources are present.

Q: Will this application be available to my community? Will we be able to modify the weighted factors used to determine suitability?

A: We are in the process of identifying the best way to make the application available to the public. Niagara County will have the model and the underlying data.

#### IV. Wrap-Up

- The next, and final, Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee meeting will be held sometime in September with the date, time, and location to be determined.
- The Public Hearing is tentatively scheduled for October 1st at NCCC.
- Walt Kalina reminded meeting attendees that there is a public meeting immediately following today’s Plan Steering Committee meeting and he encouraged attendees to stay for this meeting, as well.

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