



Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan

Notes of Meeting **Stakeholder Communities Plan Steering Committee Meeting #6** **NCCC Faculty Dining Room - Student Center G212**

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

Topic – Public Health and Safety

I. Introduction

Project Manager Walt Kalina welcomed the Steering Committee members and other stakeholders to the meeting and provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan's status:

- In order to provide a complete picture of individual communities' issues/ opportunities and goals/objectives, more communities need to prepare information for their community profiles. Some of the issues and opportunities information collected at stakeholder meetings can be used to fill these profiles in, but goals and objectives information is unique to each community and should be provided by the communities, perhaps as identified through existing local plans.

II. Visioning Exercise

Using two examples of vision statements of Niagara County, Mr. Kalina asked meeting attendees for their ideas or key words that could be used to describe Niagara County as it is now and words to describe the County in 20 years. A draft vision statement will be prepared for review at the next committee meeting.

- Descriptions of the County as it currently stands included:
 - Steeped in history
 - Unique
 - Premier
 - Mostly rural
 - Undiscovered beauty / beauty of our situation
 - We have Niagara Falls
 - Identification
 - Un-stereotyped
 - Border community
 - Take Canada for granted
 - Agricultural potential
 - Emerging viticulture
 - Locked in a megalopolis
 - Refreshing waterfront
 - Collaborative communities
 - Four seasons – refreshing weather

- Descriptions of the County in 2028 included:
 - World class tourist destination (that takes advantage of it)
 - Viticulture
 - Fishing
 - Cultural heritage: agricultural and historical resources preserved
 - Geographically located to support regional and industrial commerce
 - Healthy communities/healthy environment
 - Envious freshwater and water power
 - Easy to get to / not congested / spacious
 - Top educational facilities
 - Great place to live and raise a family
 - Continuous economic growth
 - Strong healthcare system nearby
 - National commerce
 - Safe
 - High quality jobs
 - Prepared and diverse workforce
 - Gentle lifestyle

III. Comprehensive Plan Objectives

- Working goals and objectives were presented for County Services, Infrastructure and Facilities and for Educational Institutions.
- The working collection of goals and objectives was available at the meeting for review. Steering committee members were asked for their input on these goals and objectives.

IV. Introduction of Topic and Instructions

As at the previous Steering Committee meetings, community representatives divided into groups, based on sub-regions of the County. Each group included about 2 or 3 Plan Steering Committee representatives and varying numbers of representatives from public health and public safety organizations and agencies from throughout the County. Because of a shortage of representatives from Group B (the Towns of Cambria, Lockport, and Pendleton and the City of Lockport), this part of the County was not discussed separately at the meeting. The two representatives from this part of the County joined other groups. The four groups discussed questions as found on the Detailed Agenda for the meeting relative to public health and public safety in Niagara County. At the conclusion of the breakout session, each group shared its findings.

Discussion Question #1 (20 minutes)

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **issue or challenge** facing your community today ***relative to public safety***? 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. What is the overall sense of security / safety in the neighborhoods in your community?
2. How would you rate the “visibility” of police patrols in your community? Who provides primary police coverage in your community (local police, Sheriff, State police)?
3. Based on your experience, are response times / coverage for emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) adequate in your community?
4. How is your community affected by proximity to the Canadian border?
5. What is the level of awareness in your community of the County’s efforts to coordinate emergency / disaster preparation programs?
6. What types of events has or might your community experienced that would require major emergency response? What assets does your community possess that would help it during an emergency?
7. What do you perceive to be the biggest challenges to public safety in your community? How about within the County and/or the region?

Discussion Question #2 (5 minutes)

*What is the most significant **asset or opportunity** that currently exists in your community **relative to public safety**? 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 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.

Discussion Question #3 (20 minutes)

*Based on your experiences and knowledge of your community what do you consider to be the most pressing **issue or challenge** facing your community today **relative to public health**? 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. Does your community have adequate access to healthcare facilities, including hospitals? Does your community have adequate coverage in terms of ambulatory services, including response times?
2. Do you feel your community would have adequate access to health services in the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster or otherwise?
3. What are the biggest public health concerns within your community? Are these ongoing concerns? Are there any issues that might be classified as health threats?
4. Does your community or organizations within your community offer programs aimed at improving public health/wellness? What types of programs (i.e. nutrition, vaccinations, exercise, anti-smoking, etc.)?
5. Is environmental health (i.e. water and air quality) a significant issue within your community? If so, why?
6. What is the level of awareness in your community of the County Health Department's programs and services?

Discussion Question #4 (5 minutes)

*What is the most significant **asset or opportunity** that currently exists in your community **relative to public health**? 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 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.

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 four 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.**

RESPONSES from GROUP A

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton & Village of Middleport

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Speed zones and caution light needed (104 & Checker Tavern)
- Emergency response time: Police – no Niagara County Sheriff or NYS Police presence
- Offer a health and wellness center
- Perceived health issues / lack of education-related to FMC
- Lack of mobility in emergency situations (Hartland, Middleport, Gasport)
- Need for local disaster plan and training in Royalton for increased train traffic and FMC

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Local police force presence
- Safe community – low crime
- Number of fire companies (5 in Royalton) – all work well together
- Ambulance services

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- [Included in Public Safety]

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- [Included in Public Safety]

RESPONSES from GROUP B

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

Only two representatives from Group B's communities were present; this group merged with other groups.

RESPONSES from GROUP C

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

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Police – lack of quality coverage
- Fire – increasing demands on the volunteer fire service / ambulance service / EMT status – regulatory actions are a constant threat. Training and regulation standards are a demand on the time of volunteers. We couldn't afford a paid service.
- Health care network – ICMH serves areas very well along w/volunteer ambulance service – know when to refer
- Demand on ambulance vs. fire trucks but readiness of both – too much concentration on trucks in relation to their use.
- Border – telephone reporting system (honor system) doesn't work
- Border / Water – means an additional strain on local volunteer fire companies – water rescue / boat maintenance costs

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Border – Border Patrols means a little extra police force
- Coast Guard & County Sheriff's Water Patrol means an extra layer of policing
- Volunteer fire companies mean that there is more interaction with the public than in cities with paid fire companies

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Border is porous and means there are a lot of "targets"
- No viable major routes for access / emergency evacuation

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- Disaster prep is pretty good
- Strong volunteer fire forces

RESPONSES from GROUP D

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

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Concern with response times for Sheriff's Dept.

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- You see the Sheriff's Patrol Boat on the water frequently with the Coast Guard
- Presence of Border Patrol, helicopters, State Troopers and local police
- Volunteer fire companies provide fire protection and ambulance services
- "We leave our doors unlocked."

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Concerns w/ LOOW site, Chemical Waste Management and Modern Disposal in our community
- Sewer plant reaching capacity

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- Abundance of EMS & health care facilities (St. Mary's Hospital, Our Lady of Peace, Fairchild Nursing Home, etc.)
- Community police force
- Very active volunteer fire depts. – mutual aid is often utilized during the day

RESPONSES from GROUP E

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

Question #1 (Public Safety Issues)

- Safety of Tourists – NF, Wheatfield (#1)
- Wheatfield – no workable emergency plan (#2)
- Traffic circulation – under and over-utilized roads (#3) – plenty of roads in some areas and not enough in others
- NF – continual stream of tourists and a large percentage of underprivileged residents
- As community changes, the County is slow to change w/public health and safety
- Overabundance of infrastructure
- Proliferation of services: multiple fire departments, school districts – requires a "need-based" analysis
- County as a whole: not producing students w/an appreciation of other people and property
 - Brain drain issue
 - Outmigration
 - Poverty related issues
 - Multi school districts
 - Population down, infrastructure in abundance, costs increasing
- Border crossing relationships
- Business, quality of life

Question #2 (Public Safety Assets)

- Military presence – secondary public safety support
 - Encourage development for military to be maintained and supported and influence the area

Question #3 (Public Health Issues)

- Multiple fire and ambulance districts (#1)
- Social services – large part of County budgets (#2)
- Abundance of older adults (#3)
- NF: noise pollution, abundance of dogs – stress levels are high
- Heart disease and obesity higher in NC than downstate
- Talk about increasing waste imports to the County
- Politicians have begun to “politick” rather than legislate

Question #4 (Public Health Assets)

- Array of medical facilities (#1)
- Military airbase – in a central location (supplemental fire fighting services, if needed)
- Local fire departments – have specialized training
- Fresh water
- Sewage treatment
- EMTs, Fire, Police – arrive quickly in NF

The meeting ended at approximately 7 pm.