



## Public Information Meeting #4 Meeting Notes

**DATE:** August 27, 2008  
**PLACE:** Niagara County Community College, Main Cafeteria, Student Center  
**TIME:** 7:00 – 9:00PM

**ATTENDEES:** Clough Harbour & Associates planners, Mr. Peter Young of Community Oriented Geography, County staff, and members of the general public.

**PURPOSE:** To provide the public an opportunity to comment on the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals and recommendations as they currently stand, and to provide input on the CommunityViz model being developed to identify potential "development/redevelopment centers" throughout the County.

### MINUTES:

#### 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: The various “factors” are shown as having equal value in terms of how they affect parcels’ ratings. Shouldn’t they have different weights? And shouldn’t County residents have some input into how those weights are established?

A: The answer is ‘yes’ to both of those questions. All factors are weighted equally for the purposes of the presentation. We are brainstorming ways to get input from the public on how to rank / weight these suitability factors – possibly through a survey or some other means. We will also use these weights to develop different scenarios, allowing us to see the effect that different rankings would have on the suitability analysis.

Q: Are brownfields part of this analysis?

A: We are collecting information on brownfields with the objective of incorporating them into this analysis.

Q: Is this information available for my town and how easily can it be updated and made interactive?

A: We are working on different ways to make the application available to municipalities and the general public. It will be put on

the web, but the software does not have the capability built into it to make it fully interactive online. Niagara County will have the model and the underlying data. The County will be able to fully run the application once it is complete and will be able to update the model using input from municipalities and stakeholders.

Q: Regarding “Public Service 2” – proximity to fire stations. In the Town of Cambria, no one is close to a fire station. Is this factor really meaningful?

A: The analysis can be adjusted to reflect that this may be less important in rural areas than in urban areas. It could also be used to show what would happen in the event that a fire station was added to an area.

Q: The analysis seems to have missed an industrial area along the Transit Road corridor in Pendleton.

A: This initial run of the analysis did not consider the entire County. Only parcels within three miles of the conceptual “development / redevelopment areas” identified from local plans were considered. The next run of the model will include all parcels.

Q: Is the Plan going to discuss the potential for Niagara County to market and upgrade its equestrian industry? Cattaraugus County is doing an excellent job with this and Niagara County could follow that example.

A: Thank you – this is not an area that we have heard much about to date. We will look into this.

#### **IV. Wrap-Up**

- The Public Hearing is tentatively scheduled for October 1, 2008 in the Fine Arts Theater at Niagara County Community College.
- Walt Kalina reminded meeting attendees add their name to the “sign-in” sheets before leaving.

**The meeting ended at approximately 9 pm.**