



ADOPTED NOVEMBER 19, 2019

# NIAGARA 2018

## TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

---

This page intentionally left blank.

# Acknowledgments

## TOWN BOARD

Lee Wallace, Supervisor  
Charles Teixeira, Deputy Supervisor  
Marc Carpenter  
Samuel Gatto  
Richard Sirianni

Sylvia Virtuoso, Town Clerk



## PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

Lee Wallace  
Jim Catanese  
Charles Haseley  
Jonathan Haseley  
Ed Herman  
Robert McDermott  
Don Schildhauer  
Danny Sklarski  
Chris Stoianoff  
Jody Wienke  
Wally Wrobel  
Christina Zona

## DOCUMENT RESOURCES

Resources for the preparation of this plan update and its contents include the US Decennial Census, US Census American Community Survey Estimates, and the Niagara County Department of Economic Development.



## PLAN DRAFTED & PREPARED BY:



**Barton & Loguidice, DPC**  
Molly Gaudioso, AICP  
John Steinmetz, AICP

## MAPPING PROVIDED BY:



**Clark Patterson Lee**

---

This page intentionally left blank.

# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION..... 6

- » Plan Purpose & Process
- » Public Input Summary

## COMMUNITY PROFILE ..... 12

- » Location
- » Population
- » Education
- » Income
- » Housing
- » Workforce

## GOAL FRAMEWORK..... 18

- » Introduction
- » Community Vision
- » Municipal Foundations Goal
- » Local Economy Goal
- » Engaged Citizenry Goal

## LAND USE & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ..... 26

- » Existing Land Use Map & Assessment
- » Future Land Use Map & Summary

## APPENDIX .....UNDER SEPARATE COVER

## LIST OF FIGURES

### PAGE 12

1. Map of Niagara County

### PAGE 13

2. Historical Population Trend Lines
3. Town Population by Age
4. Population Change by Age Group 2000 to 2010

### PAGE 14

5. Educational Attainment by Locality
6. Town Household Income Distribution

### PAGE 16

7. Housing Occupancy
8. Housing Value Distribution
9. Year Built for Town Housing Stock

### PAGE 26

10. Town Acreage by Land Use

### PAGE 32

11. Neighborhood Design Comparison

### PAGE 33

12. Conceptual Residential Use & Lot Standards

## MAPS

- Existing Land Use Map (2018) - Page 27
- Future Land Use Map - Page 29

# Introduction

## PLAN PURPOSE

According to Section 272-A of NYS Town Law, the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to:

**... identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of a town.**

In other words, a Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for a community, with a well-defined framework upon which future public and private investment as well as local decision-making may be based. It accomplishes this by articulating an overall vision for the Town and a means to achieve that vision.

**NYS Town Law Section 272-A (11)a requires that all town land use regulations be in conformance with the most recently adopted comprehensive plan.**

## OUR PLANNING PROCESS

The Town of Niagara has undertaken this comprehensive planning effort as its first step in updating local policy and regulatory tools. A Steering Committee comprised of local residents, property owners, review board members, Town staff, and community volunteers was created to guide the process.

The general timeline of this Comprehensive Plan Update is listed below:

- MARCH 2017** Project Kick-Off
- MAY 2017** Community Forum
- JULY 2017** Draft Community Profile
- SEPT 2017** Draft Goal Framework
- MARCH 2018** Future Land Use Workshop
- MARCH 2018** Draft Future Land Use Map
- APRIL 2018** Preliminary Plan
- JUNE 2018** Revised Draft Plan
- OCT 2018** Public Hearing
- OCT 2019** Town Board Worksession
- NOV 2019** SEQR & Plan Adoption

It is expected that a comprehensive zoning code update will be undertaken upon the adoption of this Plan by the Town Board. The purpose of this is to ensure that the Town's regulatory framework is consistent with the vision and recommendations of this Plan for future development and investment.

## Advantages of a Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Niagara can help guide day-to-day activities in the following ways:

- By dealing with minor problems so that they do not become major problems in the long-range future;
- By making the most of recognized opportunities for a better Town in the years ahead;
- By being prepared thus limiting the impact of changes which can be foreseen which will occur in the future;
- By shaping new development to fit the Town's character and future needs;
- By stabilizing public and private investment values in land for future years; and
- By guiding both public and private action to save money, time, and effort.

The short-range and the long-range aim of the Plan is simply to make the Town a better place in which to live.

-- Town of Niagara 1972 Comprehensive Plan

## PLANNING HORIZON

The planning horizon is defined by the length of time for which the plan is considered relevant and representative of the community. It also quantifies the length of time necessary to implement a majority of the plan's recommendations.

The planning horizon for this Comprehensive Planning effort is 10 years or to 2028. However, it is recommended that the information contained in this Plan be reviewed and updated by the Town on a regular basis or as conditions in the community change.



## COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

There are numerous agencies, organizations, and planning references used throughout this document. The following list provides the acronyms for the most commonly used names and titles:

- » American Community Survey (ACS)
- » Community Preference Survey (CPS)
- » Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- » Department of Public Works (DPW)
- » Department of Transportation (DOT)
- » Future Land Use (FLU)
- » New York State (NYS)
- » State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- » United States (US)



Members of the Steering Committee discussing their SWOT responses at the Kick-Off Meeting



# Public Input Summary



Date of Community Forum  
**May 22, 2017**



Number of Attendees  
**Approximately 25**



CPS Images Rated  
**63**

## COMMUNITY FORUM

In an effort to ensure that this Plan update reflects the most current values and concerns of the public, opportunities were provided for residents and stakeholders to participate in the development of the Plan's content. A Community Forum was held in the first phase of the project to solicit input from the general public.

The Community Forum was held on May 22, 2017, at the Calvin K. Richards Community Center located in the Veterans' Memorial Community Park off of Lockport Road. Attendees of the Forum were provided with a brief overview of the comprehensive plan process and the importance of updating a local comprehensive plan.

After this brief presentation, attendees were given an opportunity to participate in a visual Community Preference Survey (CPS). The CPS asked residents and stakeholders to rate images showing various development styles from most desirable (score of 9) to least desirable (score of 0). The array of images on page 11 provides examples of the higher and lower scoring images by development category.

The purpose of the CPS was to help identify the Town's preferred character of development and application of design elements such as landscaping, signage, and architecture. A complete summary of the CPS results can be found in the Appendix.



**Photos of the May 22, 2017, Community Forum**

In addition to the CPS, attendees were asked to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) brainstorming exercise. The top responses from the SWOT are listed on the following page, while a complete summary can be found in the Appendix. The number preceding each item indicates the number of votes received by attendees to prioritize its overall importance to the Town of Niagara.



## STRENGTHS

- (5) Existing Community Center
- (3) Clean and quiet residential areas
- (2) Safe community
- (2) Existing school district and education system
- (2) Town services (plowing, waste removal, maintenance, etc.)
- (1) Park facilities and recreation programs
- (1) Centrally located highways with close proximity to businesses and services
- (0) Easy access to shopping
- (0) Low taxes
- (0) Open space, wooded areas, and natural environment
- (0) Police Force and Volunteer Fire Dept.

## WEAKNESSES

- (4) Lack of housing options and a need for space to build updated housing stock
- (3) Lack of senior housing options
- (2) Limited park facilities and access to current parks
- (2) Poor stormwater and drainage systems
- (1) Limited job opportunities for attracting young families
- (1) Need to diversify and balance the local economy (not enough manufacturing jobs and a lot of retail oriented jobs)
- (1) Foul smells from the landfill
- (0) Lack of sidewalks in neighborhoods and on commercial corridors
- (0) Poor maintenance of some roads
- (0) Segmented and often disconnected neighborhoods

## OPPORTUNITIES

- (5) The development of senior housing and assisted living facilities with close proximity and access to hospitals and other services
- (3) Designating new areas for development oriented to attracting young families
- (2) Expanding recreation and programming facilities for young adult programs and winter activities
- (2) Expanding manufacturing jobs and business development
- (2) Expanding housing options for young families
- (1) Capitalizing on the proximity of the Town to Canada, Buffalo, and other regional communities
- (1) Developing the shipping and logistics industry (Niagara Airport, highways and transportation corridors, etc.)
- (1) Conducting a Town wide re-assessment of property
- (0) Developing the waterfront for recreation and tourism (activities include, powered boats, paddle boats, ice skating, etc.)
- (0) Diverse commercial service sector that continues to develop
- (0) Historic District designation for better signage and building façade designs on commercial buildings
- (0) Plenty of shovel-ready sites for industrial development
- (0) Programming the creek/bank for recreation and tourism
- (0) Re-mediating contaminated buildings and sites

## THREATS

- (4) Expiring of the landfill agreement (new garbage tax, loss of revenue stream for the Town, etc.)
- (3) Declining and aging Town population, and associated problems (decline in services, housing vacancies, etc.)
- (2) Inequitable sharing of sales taxes from Niagara County
- (0) High debt of the school district
- (0) Health concerns associated with the power lines, the landfill and other industrial sites
- (0) Not enough restaurants
- (0) Potential of the Niagara Airbase closing
- (0) Shift in shopping from brick-and-mortar retail stores to online
- (0) Young people being drawn out of the community to other regional hubs (e.g. Buffalo, Amherst, etc.)



Attendees voting for their top SWOT Answers

**NOTE:** The responses listed above were provided by the general public at the Community Forum and represent the opinions of residents in attendance.

## COMMUNITY PREFERENCE SURVEY

As previously stated the general public was given an opportunity to participate in a visual Community Preference Survey (CPS) exercise at the May 2017, Community Forum. The attendees were shown 63 different images of various residential and commercial developments as well as streetscapes.

The images were scored on a scale from 0 to 9, with 0 being the lowest possible score and 9 being the highest. Attendees were asked to make their ratings based on several elements present in the photo, including but not limited to the architectural style, building location and scale, and use of landscaping, signage, and parking.

Town of Niagara										
Community Preference Survey										
Image	Worst <span>←</span> <span>→</span> Best									
#	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Example of CPS Score Sheet used by attendees.

Source: B&L

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER “LIKES”

- Landscaping and screening of parking lots from public view
- Commercial buildings with architectural details defining a base, middle, and crown
- Commercial buildings that are set closer to the street and are (or appear to be) at least two-stories in height
- Streetscapes with ample designated space for pedestrians
- Tree-lined streets and neighborhoods

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER “DISLIKES”

- Very high density multi-family residential buildings
- Lack of landscaping and/or screening elements on development sites
- Auto-dominant streetscapes and commercial corridors
- Commercial buildings with little to no window transparency on the first floor
- Overt use of franchise architecture
- Streetscapes with no separation or designation between pedestrian and vehicular travel-ways

In general, there were a few noticeable trends among higher scoring and lower scoring images that help to provide context for development preferences of the Town of Niagara community. These trends have been outlined in community character “likes” and “dislikes” above.

The photo array on the following page provides an example of some of the higher scoring images (to be encouraged) and lower scoring images (to be avoided) for various types of development.

## BAD - LOW SCORING

## BETTER - MIDDLE SCORING

## BEST - HIGH SCORING

## SINGLE-FAMILY



## MULTI-FAMILY



## COMMERCIAL



## STREETSCAPES



Photo Sources: B&L, The Conservation Fund, Urban Advantage, Wikimedia, and The Apricity.



# Community Profile



Top Employment Industry  
**22% Education/Healthcare/Social Services**



Unemployment Rate  
**6%**



Poverty Rate  
**15%**



Median Household Income  
**\$45,826**

Sources: 2015 ACS, 2010 US Census

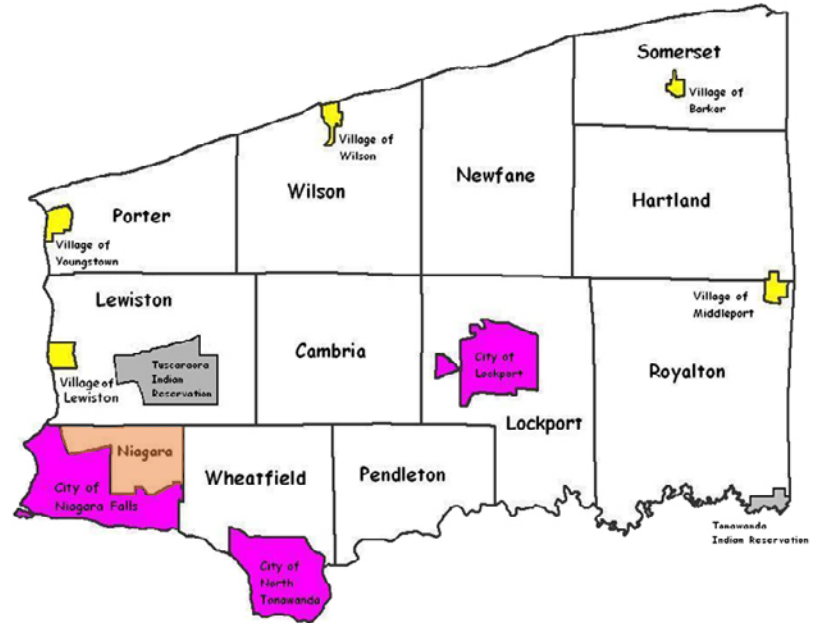
## LOCATION

The Town of Niagara is one of 12 towns located in Niagara County, at the northwestern most edge of New York State. The Town borders the City of Niagara to the south and west as well as the Towns of Wheatfield and Lewiston to the east and north respectively (see Figure 1 at right). The Town of Niagara is approximately 9.5 square miles in land area, and although not immediately adjacent to the Niagara River, is located within the Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed.

The Town of Niagara is well connected to the City of Niagara Falls (US), Canada, and the greater western New York region via Interstate 190 or the Niagara Thruway. Additionally, the Town hosts the western portion of the Niagara Falls International Airport along its eastern boundary.

## POPULATION TRENDS

In 2015, Niagara's town population was an estimated 8,227 residents. The Town reached its peak population in 1990, and has been steadily declining since. In comparison, the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara County both hit their peak populations in 1960, and have been declining at a much faster rate than that of the Town (see Figure 2 on the following page).

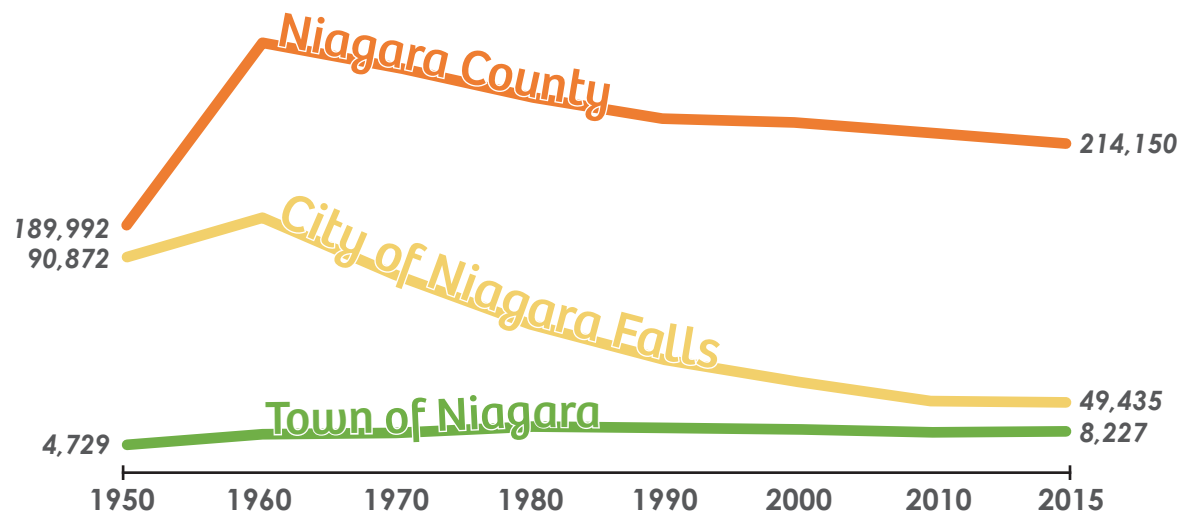


**Figure 1: Map of Niagara County**

Source: Niagara County Real Property Tax Services

From 2000 to 2010, the Town's population declined by 7%. During the same period, the City of Niagara experienced a population decline of 10%, and Niagara County overall fell by 2%. Over the last five decades, however, the Town has had a relatively stable population history. Therefore, it is anticipated that Niagara will not experience any significant periods of growth or decline over the next 10 years.

The median age of residents within the Town is 43.4, which is higher than that of the City and County. This is due to the fact that nearly 50% of the Town's population is 45 years of age or older (see Figure 3 on the next page). In fact, the largest age cohort of residents within the Town includes ages 45 to 64 at 29%.



**Figure 2: Historical Population Trend Lines**

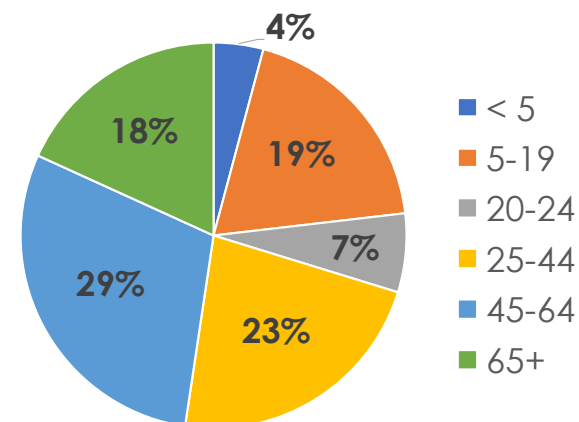
Source: US Decennial Census Data & 2015 ACS

The second largest age cohorts include ages 25 to 44 (23%) and Under 20 (23%). The 25 to 44 and Under 20 age groups may generally be paired to represent the share of young families in a community.

Figure 4 at the bottom right compares the change in population from 2000 to 2010 within each age group for the Town and County. Both the Town and County of Niagara saw an increase in residents 45 years of age or older. The County in particular is experiencing a rapid increase in its senior population, with growth rates as high as 48% (60 to 64 age group).

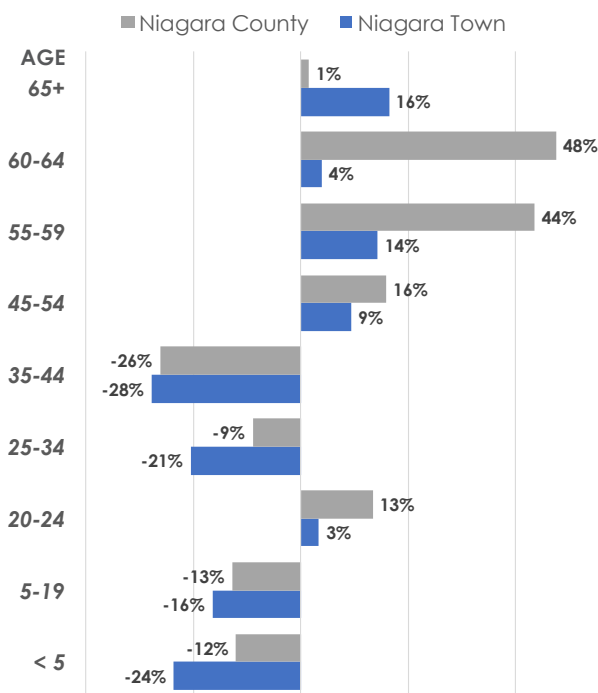
Furthering the concern over the aging populations of the Town and County is the fact that there are no new young professionals or young families moving into the Niagara region to replace the previous generation of residents. Figure 4 shows that the Town especially has seen a significant loss in families with young children with only a slight increase in young adults (20 to 24 years of age).

Due to the Town's aging population the demand for and cost of local services are likely to increase significantly without the addition of new generations to further local economic growth. While meeting the needs of aging residents will be important to the Town moving forward, consideration should also be given to ways Niagara can become more attractive to young professionals and young families.



**Figure 3: Town Population by Age**

Source: 2010 US Census



**Figure 4: Population Change by Age Group 2000 to 2010**

Source: 2000, 2010 US Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The level of educational attainment for the Town, City of Niagara Falls, and County is generally consistent from community to community. Figure 5 below compares the cumulative education level of residents for the City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, and Niagara County as a whole. Each column in Figure 5 represents 100% of the locality's 2010 population 25 years of age and older.

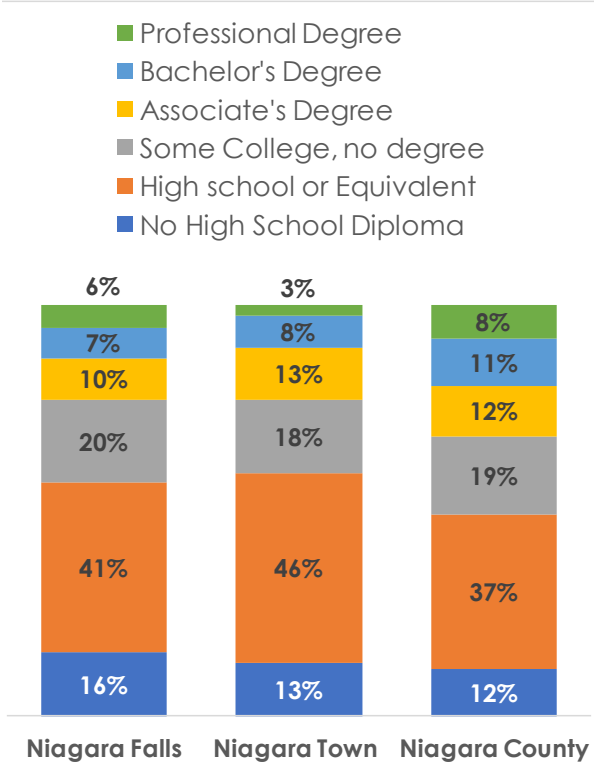


Figure 5: Educational Attainment by Locality  
Source: 2010 US Census

Figure 5 shows the Town with the highest share of residents with high school degrees and Associates Degrees. The City of Niagara Falls has a larger share of residents without a high school diploma at 16%, while the County as a whole has the highest share of residents with Professional Degrees.

These trends in educational attainment among residents are generally consistent with the median household income levels of each locality as shown at right. With the highest share of college educated residents county-wide, the County has the highest median household income value. The City of Niagara Falls has the lowest share of high school graduates and college educated residents, resulting in the lowest median household income value of the Town, City, and County.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The Town of Niagara's median household income of \$45,826 is generally on par with that of the County (\$49,449). The distribution of household income for the Town is further explored in Figure 6, showing the share of households by income level.

Based on the 2015 ACS estimates, just under 13% of Town of Niagara households reported a yearly income of \$150,000 or more. These income ranges were by far the smallest share of Town households. Approximately 1 in 3 households reported an income between \$75,000 and \$100,000 annually.

Median Household Income

**\$49,449** Niagara County  
**\$45,826** Town of Niagara  
**\$31,560** City of Niagara Falls

Source: 2015 ACS

It is important to note that nearly 55% of Town households earn less than \$50,000 annually. In 2015, the federal poverty level for a family of four was less than \$24,250 annually and a family of 2 was less than \$15,930. Within the Town the highest rate of poverty was estimated to be among single parents.

Of all Town households, 35% received Social Security and 24% earned retirement income. Those shares are not mutually exclusive, as some households may have received both. The average annual Social Security income was about \$19,000; while the poverty rate of residents 65 years or older was 12% in 2015.

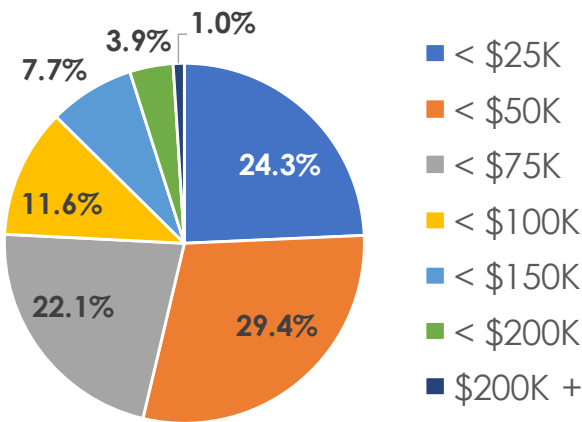


Figure 6: Town Household Income Distribution  
Source: 2015 ACS

## The Town of Niagara in 1960...

Completed in 1972, the current Town Comprehensive Plan relied on data from the 1960 US Census. This page is intended to provide a quick comparison of key data points from today and the 1972 Plan to give an indication of how much the Town has changed over the last five decades. This information is based on US Decennial Census and ACS Data.

### POPULATION CHANGE

In 1960, the population of the Town was 7,503. Although Niagara's population has experienced periods of growth and decline since, it was estimated to be 8,227 in 2015.

The median age of residents in 1960 was 23.5 years, significantly lower than that of the median reported in 2010 (43.4). Additionally, the share of residents 65 years of age and older in 1960 was just under 3%, while today this age group comprises approximately 18% of the Town population.

### FAMILY INCOME ADJUSTMENTS

The median family income reported in 1960 was approximately \$7,000 (\$56,099 in 2015 dollars). This indicates that the Town's median household income did not keep up with inflation, as the 2015 value is approximately \$46,000.

### GROWTH OF HOUSING STOCK

The number of housing units within the Town in 1960 was 2,081. Today there are estimated to be nearly 4,000 units. The share of owner-occupied units in 1960 was 72%, which is comparable to the share of owner-occupied units in 2010 (76%).

The median value of owner-occupied units in 1960 was reported to be \$12,200, approximately \$97,000 in 2015 dollars. The actual estimated median home value for the Town in 2015, however, was \$82,600. This indicates that like median income, home values have not kept up with inflation.

TABLE 15  
COMPARATIVE POPULATION AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS  
TOWN OF NIAGARA  
NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK

	TOWN OF NIAGARA		NIAGARA COUNTY	
	1960	1970	1960	1970
Population	7,503	8,368	242,269	235,720
Persons Per Housing Unit	3.9	-	3.2	-
Median Age	23.5	-	29.1	-
Persons 65 Years and Over	2.8	-	8.0	-
Median Income Per Family	\$7,041	-	\$6,692	-
Under \$5,000	34.4%	-	39.8%	-
Number of Housing Units	2,081	-	74,813	74,696
Owner-Occupied	71.8%	-	66.8%	-
Percent Single-Family	87.1%	-	68.1%	-
Median Contract Rent/Month	\$77	-	\$67	\$82
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units	\$12,200	-	\$14,000	\$15,900
Under \$15,000	73.7%	-	57.8%	-
Over \$20,000	23.8%	-	14.5%	-
Number of Mobile Homes	-	343	-	1,477
Percent of County Total	-	23.2%	-	-

- Indicates information not available at time of Table compilation.

Sources of Data: 1963 Business Fact Book, N.Y.S. Dept. of Commerce  
1970 Census of Population PC (V1) 34, U.S. Dept. of Commerce  
1960 and 1970 Census of Housing, HC (V1) 34, U.S. Dept. of Commerce

Page 125 of the Town of Niagara 1972  
Comprehensive Plan



One of the most pressing issues facing the Town into 2028 will be its rapidly aging population and increasing demand for local services by residents seeking to "age-in-place."



HOUSING MARKET

According to the 2010 US Census, of the 3,936 housing units within the Town 8% are vacant and 92% are occupied, which matches that of the County rates overall. Of the Town's 3,605 occupied housing units approximately 1 in 4 are renter-occupied (see Figure 7 below). It should be noted that the Town has a significantly lower share of renter housing stock than that of the County and City of Niagara Falls (31% and 45% respectively).

The distribution of housing value within the Town generally reflects that of the City and County, with the majority of housing units (62%) valued under \$100,000 (see Figure 8). This may be partially attributed to the lack of newly built housing units within the Town of Niagara. Figure 9 indicates that only an estimated 53 new housing units were built from the year 2000 to 2015 within the Town.

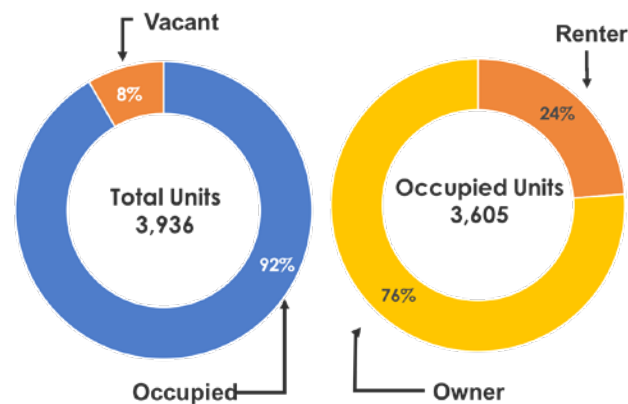


Figure 7: Housing Occupancy  
Source: 2010 US Census

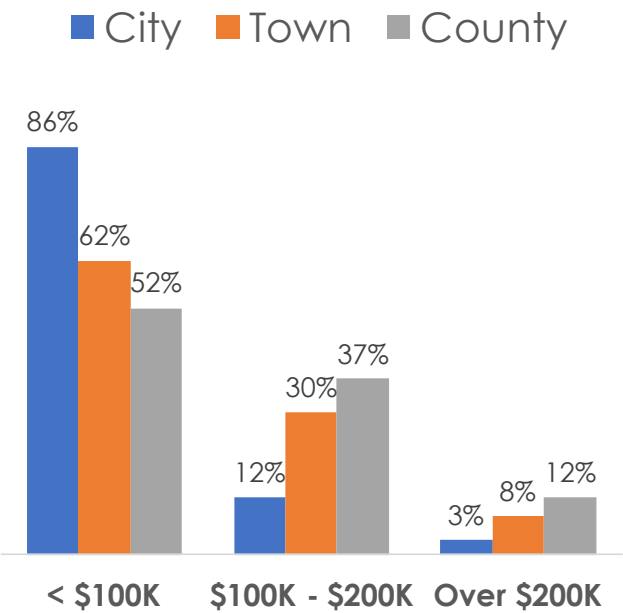


Figure 8: Housing Value Distribution  
Source: 2010 US Census

According to the 2015 ACS, approximately 84% of the Town's estimated 3,804 units were built prior to 1980, and 22% before 1950. The age of housing units may be contributing to the relatively low home values of Niagara, as the maintenance and upkeep of older homes is more difficult for its aging population and lower income households.

WORKFORCE EVALUATION

US Census "On the Map" reported that for 2014, there were 5,549 jobs located within the Town of Niagara. An estimated 7% of local jobs (366) were fulfilled by residents of the Town, while the remaining jobs were fulfilled by nonresidents commuting into the Town.

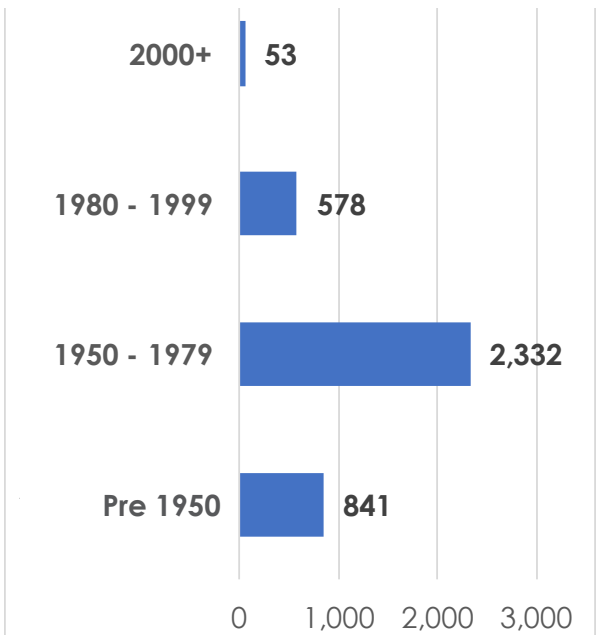


Figure 9: Year Built for Town Housing Stock  
Source: 2015 ACS, US Census

An additional 3,592 residents within the Town are employed, but travel to nearby communities for work. These communities include the City of Niagara Falls, City of Buffalo, and Tonawanda as the top employment centers of Niagara town residents.

Of the jobs available within the Town, nearly half are fulfilled by workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class. The jobs fulfilled by Town residents traveling to other communities are mostly employment opportunities in the "All Other Services" Industry Class.

This page intentionally left blank.

# Goal Framework

*"Through the... development of reasonable goals and objectives, the Town of Niagara can control its own destiny if they do not resist change when change is necessary - and if its leaders translate the formulated goals into implementing policies for the common good toward which its residents may strive."*

- 1972 Niagara Comprehensive Plan

## INTRODUCTION

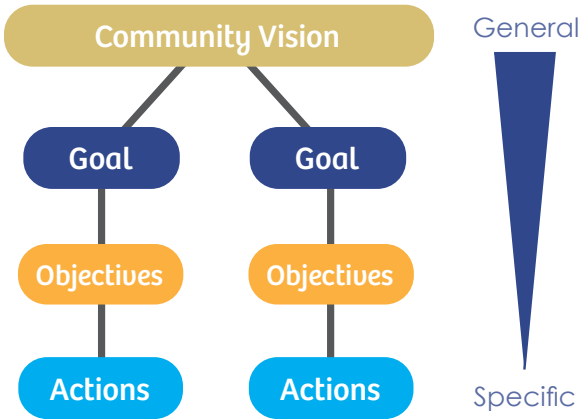
To be successful, a comprehensive plan needs to address the short- and long-term needs of a community while providing varying levels of detail. The purpose of this goal framework is to be future-oriented, acting as a guide for elected officials, leaders, residents, and stakeholders to achieve the Town's overall vision through sound decision-making. The Town of Niagara 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update includes following elements:

### » VISION

A general statement that describes the aspiration of the Town; it is an end towards which all actions are aimed. The vision should not dramatically change over time but rather be consistent throughout the planning horizon.

### » GOAL

Similar to a vision in that it is a general statement of a future condition towards which actions are aimed. However, the scope of a goal is more narrow. It should support the vision by addressing a particular area or issue facing the community. Goals should not dramatically change over time, but rather be consistent throughout the planning horizon. Ideally, the goals contained in this plan should also be useful for the 10-year planning horizon.



### » OBJECTIVE

A statement of a measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of a goal; it refers to some specific aspiration which is reasonably attainable. Think in terms of active words such as "increase," "develop," or "preserve." It should be noted that the Town might already be undertaking some of the objectives articulated in this plan. Therefore, including them helps to ensure that these efforts continue over the next decade. The lifespan of an objective is usually 6 to 10 years.

### » ACTION ITEM

A specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing an objective; it can take the form of a plan, project, or program. The lifespan of an action can vary from one to 10 years, depending on the item.

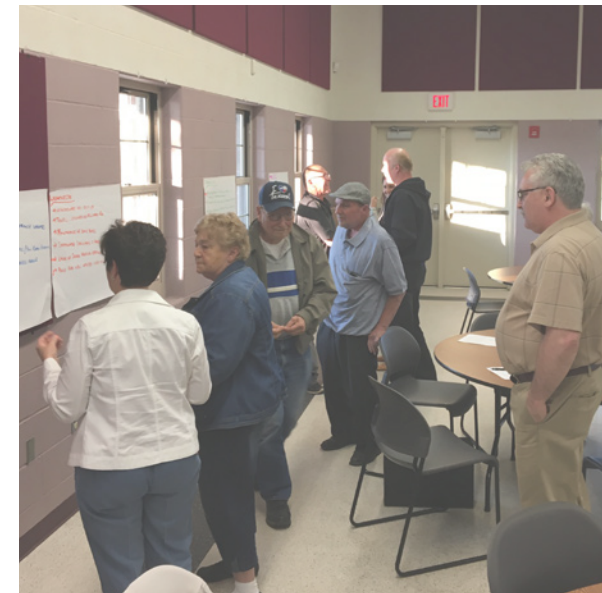


Municipal Foundations



Local Economy

Photo: Google Earth Pro, 2018



Engaged Citizenry

## Our Community Vision



Now and into the future, the Town of Niagara will be an increasingly desirable place in which to work, play, and live. We will continue to develop those aspects of community that provide for high quality of living, including:

- A solid **MUNICIPAL FOUNDATION** for decision-making,
- A thriving **LOCAL ECONOMY**, and
- An **ENGAGED CITIZENRY**.

The Town of Niagara will approach future growth and change in a measured and sustainable manner so as to maximize the benefits of public and private investments for the generations of today as well as tomorrow.



# Municipal Foundations



## GOAL STATEMENT

It shall be the goal of the Town to establish and maintain a strong foundation for local decision-making and the administration of daily governmental operations. Niagara's municipal foundations include protecting our natural environment, improving our public infrastructure, and providing the necessary public services to ensure current and future generations enjoy a high standard of living. The Town is committed to achieving efficiency and excellence through the provision of these public services and amenities while remaining fiscally responsible.

## OBJECTIVES

- A. Protect natural resources from degradation and capitalize on their inherent environmental, aesthetic, and recreational value.
- B. Improve and maintain the capacity of existing infrastructure to sustain future growth and prevent failures in service.
- C. Be proactive in the provision of public utilities and services to meet current and future demand.
- D. Develop a transportation network that provides a high level of service for all modes of travel--vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle.
- E. Partner with local, county, and state agencies for future planning of land use, infrastructure improvements, and delivery of public services.



*The **community benefit funding and free garbage collection** the Town receives from the local landfill **will expire in 8 years**. Ultimately, the Town will need a long-term plan to address this change in community service.*

## MUNICIPAL FOUNDATIONS ACTION ITEMS

1. Continue exploring potential fee structures to support the maintenance of Town infrastructure.
2. Pursue grant funding for planning and implementation of stormwater management improvements to address local drainage and flooding issues.
3. Coordinate long-range planning efforts with Erie and Niagara Counties and adjacent municipalities, when appropriate (e.g. regional transportation networks, watershed protection).
4. Review the Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan (2013) for goals and recommendations that may be implemented at the town level.
5. Pursue grant funding for the remediation and redevelopment of local brownfield sites and contaminated structures.
6. Continue to partner with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper for stormwater management and other projects that support the environmental integrity of Cayuga and Gill Creeks in the Niagara River Watershed.
7. Work with regional transportation agencies, such as the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, to improve public transportation access and connectivity for residents, especially seniors, to destinations in and around Niagara.
8. Coordinate with NYSDOT and the Niagara County DOT to promote multi-modal transportation access and connectivity with future roadway improvement efforts, especially along Military Road.
9. Consider completing a Transportation Master Plan to address multi-modal and public transportation issues and opportunities.
10. Review and revise the Town Code to ensure that development controls include provisions for pedestrian and bicycle network connections and infrastructure where desired.

## Local Economy



Photo: Google Earth Pro, 2018

### GOAL STATEMENT

It shall be the goal of the Town to foster a strong, stable local economy capable of supporting the social, cultural, and municipal functions which create a desirable community. Our residents should have access to a variety of goods, services, and employment opportunities. Local economic development efforts should be focused within Niagara's existing residential and commercial activity centers taking advantage of infill and redevelopment opportunities near to existing infrastructure. The expansion of existing industries and the attraction of new industries should also be encouraged in order to grow our tax base, increase local job opportunities, and foster an environment attractive to a variety of lifestyles.

### OBJECTIVES

- A. Build local commercial and residential tax base through infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- B. Develop access to public transit within the Town, especially for seniors and lower income residents.
- C. Continue to reduce community blight in targeted areas such as existing brownfields.
- D. Support the diversification of local business and industry to meet varying resident needs.
- E. Promote development of industries utilizing both skilled and unskilled labor.



*"Now, when consumers visit malls, they are looking for **experiences** that go well beyond traditional shopping...Sustainability concerns are causing some consumers to prefer mixed use developments where they can **live, shop and work all within walking distance.**"*

- The Future of the Shopping Mall (Nov 2014)  
Fantoni, Hoefel and Mazzarolo



## LOCAL ECONOMY ACTION ITEMS

1. Engage local real estate agents, assessors, and other professionals to determine the true valuation of property within the Town and inform a potential town-wide reassessment effort.
2. Educate property owners on the extent of their property maintenance responsibility (e.g. complying with local and state codes, and maintaining sidewalks where applicable).
3. Work with local Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to identify and prioritize areas suitable for commercial or industrial infill and/or redevelopment.
4. Establish a mixed-use district or overlay zone to foster higher-density, walkable commercial/residential activity centers.
5. Partner with regional economic development agencies to market the existing shovel-ready sites within the Town.
6. Consider opportunities to develop and program the waterfront/creek-bank for recreation and tourism.
7. Be proactive in planning for the decline of the outlet mall and consider viable redevelopment alternatives, such as the lifestyle center concept discussed on page 35.
8. Continue to pursue opportunities for the redevelopment of the Military Road School into a mixed-use activity center.

## Engaged Citizenry



### GOAL STATEMENT

It shall be the goal of the Town to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of our citizens and encourage public engagement in future decision-making. Niagara will be supportive of public and private investments that allow our citizens to achieve their fullest individual potentials in terms of intellectual, cultural, and economic opportunity. Our ultimate indicator of success will be the satisfaction of basic resident needs, including quality housing options, social engagement opportunities, and healthy lifestyles. In doing so, a strong sense of civic duty and pride will be developed, improving resident engagement in and contributions to the betterment of our Town.

### OBJECTIVES

- A.** Support the improvement of existing housing stock and provision of quality, connected neighborhoods.
- B.** Diversify local housing options to meet varying resident needs with respect to age, income, and lifestyle.
- C.** Continue to build local recreational, social, and educational opportunities to maintain resident investment in the community.
- D.** Foster a strong sense of community by promoting a Town identity and increasing communication with residents.



## ENGAGED CITIZENRY ACTION ITEMS

1. Pursue Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to support neighborhood revitalization efforts.
2. Consider developing a matching grant or other incentive program for resident property maintenance or improvement projects.
3. Explore feasibility of first-time home-buyer incentives (contributions to down payment and/or closing costs, etc.) to encourage young professionals and young families to move into Niagara.
4. Continue to maximize utilization of the Senior/Youth Community Center and Veterans' Memorial Park for all age recreational and social activities.
5. Increase local government understanding and engagement among youth with internship opportunities or inclusion of a student representative in Town Board meetings.
6. Continue the "Town Crier" quarterly newsletter as a means of communication to the residents of Niagara.
7. Increase and enhance the Town's presence and engagement through digital and online resources, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the Town website.
8. Work to create a recognizable "brand" and independent identity for the Town of Niagara building off of local assets.
9. Support individual neighborhood identities and organizations (such as Beldon Center or Colonial Village) to help increase the sense of community pride and partnership.
10. Highlight the Town's neighborhood parks (Beldon Center, Veterans Heights, John Street, etc.) as community assets and ensure open space and/or parkland is included with future residential developments.

# Land Use & Future Development

NOTE: This section does not negate any limitations on future development due to environmental limitations such as wetlands, steep slopes, or floodplains. All future development proposals should include the most current and accurate assessment of on-site environmental conditions as part of site plan review. This may require action on behalf of developers to coordinate with the NYS DEC and/or US Army Corps of Engineers.

## IMPORTANCE OF LAND USE

As the Town of Niagara's 1972 Comprehensive Plan states,

Land is the foundation of a municipality's physical, economic, and spiritual growth. Misuse of the land can become a community liability for decades to come. Similarly enduring community assets can result from the wise employment of land. It is, therefore, not only important but imperative that the use of land be intelligently planned for the maximum benefit to the Town of Niagara.

## EXISTING LAND USE ASSESSMENT

Before recommendations for future development may be made, it is important to understand the existing composition of land uses within the Town. Figure 10 at right and the map on the next page show the current breakdown of Niagara's land use classifications. This information is based on the most recent NYS Real Property Tax Data available at the time of writing this Plan.

Public services are by far the most extensive land use category within Niagara, at 28% of the Town's total acreage. Vacant, wild, park, and agricultural lands comprise the next most prevalent land use, at 23%. The largest of this grouping is vacant land (19% of Town acreage). However, the vacant parcels generally include undeveloped areas of open space, forests, and farmland. As a result, the measure of vacant lands has been combined with categories that reflect such uses.

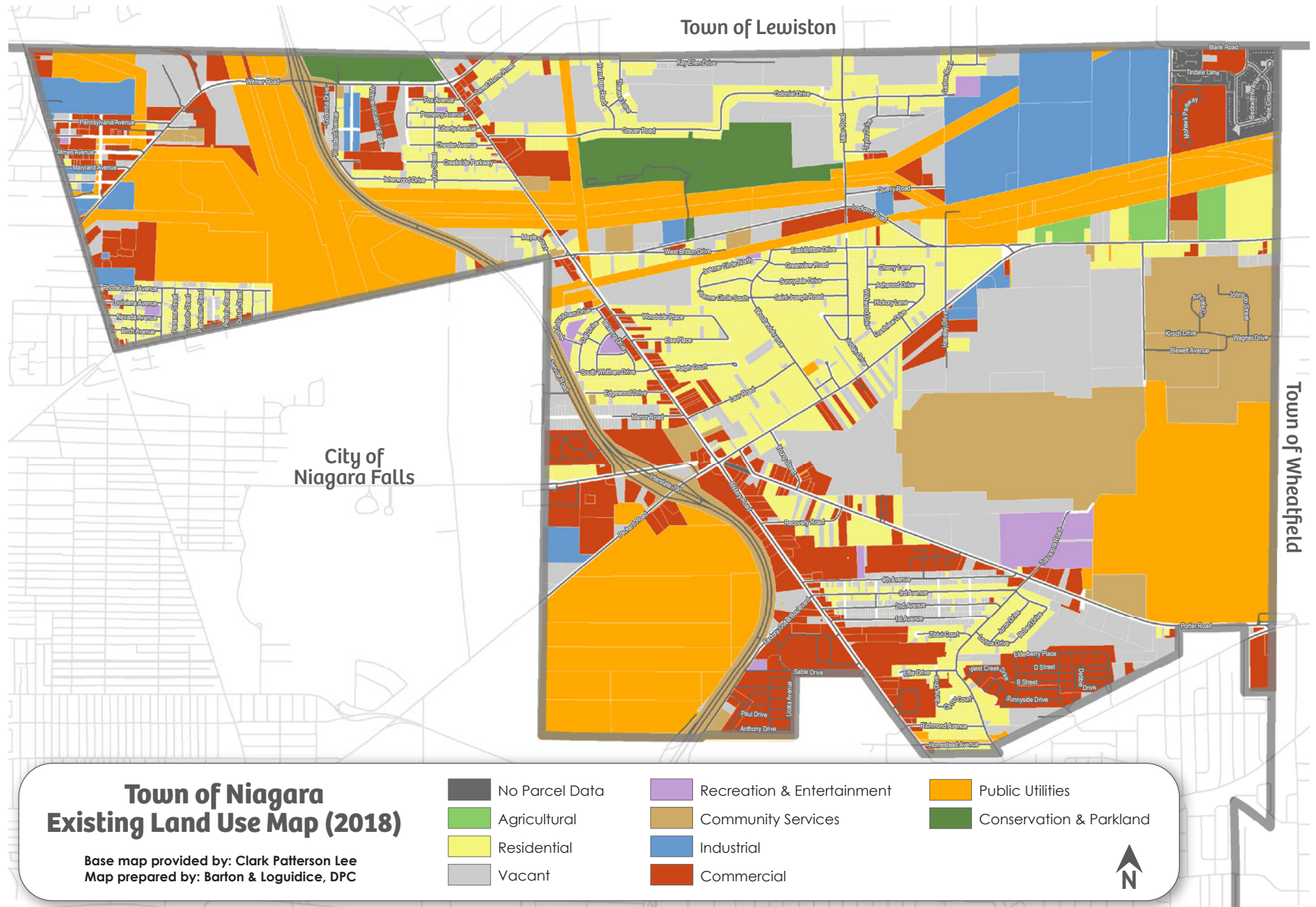
Land Use	Acreage	
Public Utilities	1,580.08	28%
Vacant, Wild, Park, & Agricultural Lands	1,291.09	23%
Residential	903.18	16%
Commercial	749.32	13%
Community Services	642.32	12%
Industrial	351.43	6%
Recreation/Entertainment	70.33	1%
No Data	48.49	1%
TOTAL	5,636.24	100%

Figure 10: Town Acreage by Land Use  
Source: 2018 New York State Real Property Tax Data

Of the remaining land uses, residential is the most significant. At 16% of the Town's total acreage, the residential parcels include a variety of single-family neighborhood developments. This residential figure does not include any higher density residential developments or mobile homes.

Apartments, mobile home parks, and other multi-family style developments are classified as commercial land uses as they are income generating properties. Given this, the actual share of residential uses is slightly higher than 16% and commercial uses slightly lower than 13%.

In the 1972 Plan, 46% of Town lands were classified as agricultural and/or vacant land uses.





FUTURE LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of articulating a desired future land use and development pattern is to equip the Town with a decision-making tool that will better inform public and private investments over the next decade.

This approach not only addresses existing land use patterns, but also defines the community's preferences for its future land use and character.

It should be noted that the future land use recommendations of this section are primarily focused on regulatory actions, as it is the Town's intent to pursue a zoning code update upon completion of this Plan.

The symbology below is utilized within the following future land use and development summary to indicate the level of action required to implement and achieve the development vision of the Town.



*Little to No Regulatory  
Action Recommended*



*Some Regulatory Action  
Recommended*



*Significant Regulatory  
Action Recommended*

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

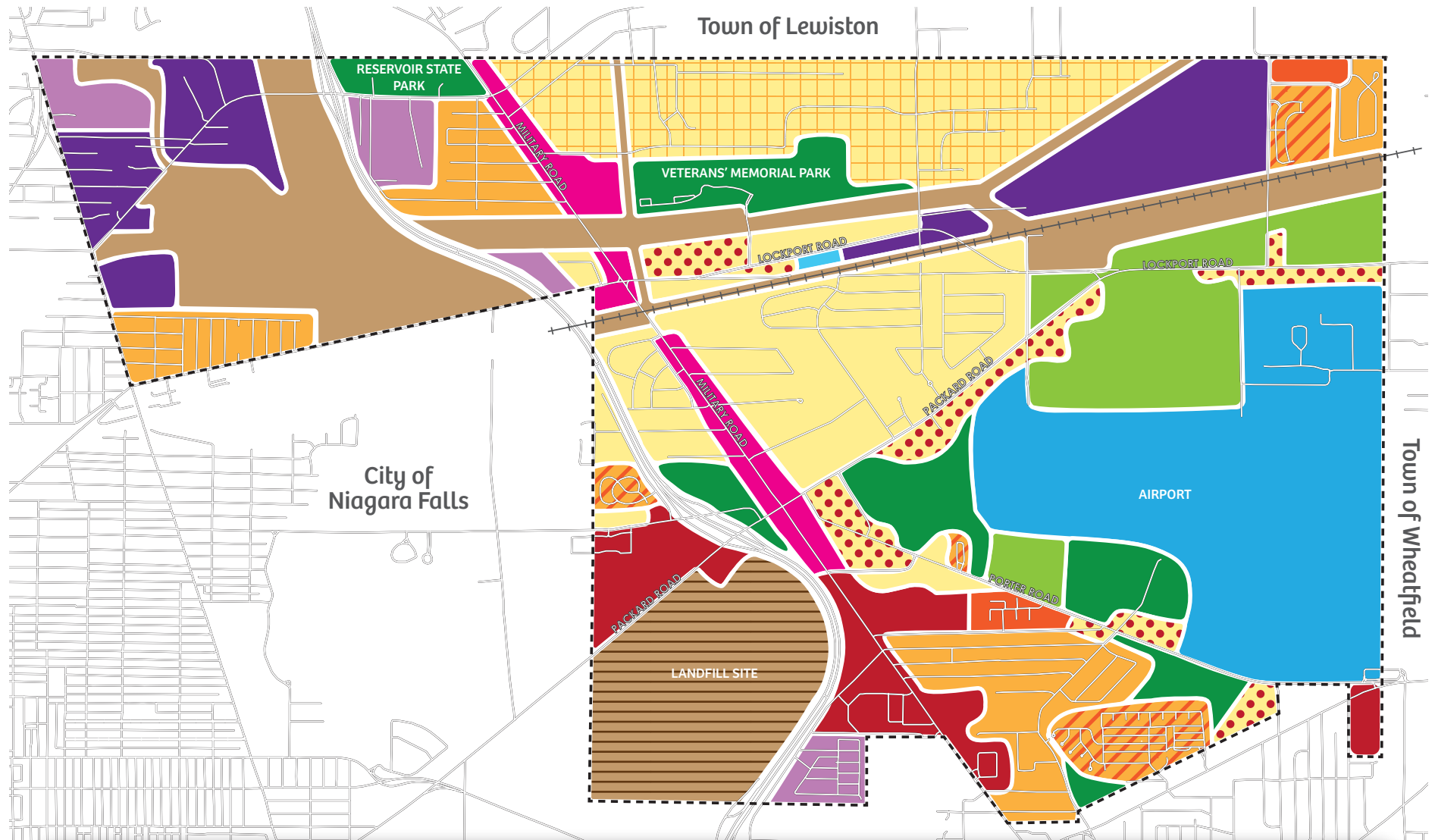
The Future Land Use (FLU) Map is intended to identify a general development pattern of desirable land use classifications for the Town of Niagara.

The purpose of the FLU Map is to represent the community's preferences regarding the location and character of various types of development in the Town. The future land use areas proposed for the Town are illustrated in the map on the next page and listed below.

- » **Parks & Open Space**
- » **Agricultural**
- » **Community Services**
- » **Mobile Home Parks**
- » **Multi-Family Residential**
- » **Small Lot Residential**
- » **Large Lot Residential**
- » **Mixed Residential**
- » **Business Non-Retail**
- » **General Commercial**
- » **Mixed Use Corridor**
- » **Industrial**
- » **Light Industrial**
- » **Public Services**
- » **Solid Waste**

This Plan should be considered an instrument of Town policy, but it should not foreclose decisions that may not align precisely with the stated vision and goals contained herein.

Although there are regulatory implications of the future land use summary and map, it is NOT intended to indicate specific parcel boundaries or follow zoning district designations. A Comprehensive Plan is not law. Therefore, this section does not supersede the Town's zoning code or local laws, but rather serves as a guide for potential regulatory change.



## Town of Niagara Future Land Use Map

Base map provided by: Clark Patterson Lee  
Map prepared by: Barton & Loguidice, DPC

- |                    |                          |                     |                  |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Parks & Open Space | Multi-Family Residential | Business Non-Retail | Light Industrial |
| Agricultural       | Small Lot Residential    | General Commercial  | Public Services  |
| Community Services | Large Lot Residential    | Mixed Use Corridor  | Solid Waste      |
| Mobile Home Parks  | Mixed Residential        | Industrial          | Railroad Line    |







## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

The areas highlighted in dark green on the FLU Map are designated as parks and open space. These include:

- > **Southern Portion of Reservoir State Park.**  
*Located in the northwest corner of the Town on the north side of Witmer Road. The remainder of the State Park is in the Town of Lewiston.*
- > **Colonial Drive Neighborhood Park.** *A small park situated at the eastern terminus of Colonial Drive.*
- > **Neighborhood Park/Playground.**  
*Encompassed by Sadlo Drive, Lawson Drive, and Bellreng Drive and serving surrounding residents.*
- > **Veterans' Memorial Park.** *Located north of and accessible by Lockport Road.*

Veterans' Memorial Park is the centerpiece of the Town's Park System. It contains a wide range of recreational facilities, such as the Calvin K. Richards Senior/Youth Activity Center, a playground, splash park, baseball/softball fields, multi-use fields, picnic pavilions, and a walking path. Over the past five years, the Town has upgraded various components of the Park.

The remaining areas highlighted in dark green on the FLU Map are areas of undeveloped open space, including wetlands, floodplains, and drainage facilities serving nearby neighborhoods or commercial districts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to invest in the Veterans' Memorial Park.
2. Consider additional trail connections between neighborhoods and activity centers.
3. Facilitate use of open space areas for passive recreational use.
4. Ensure drainage facilities, where required, are designed to also serve as public open space or recreation areas.



Veterans' Memorial Park



Town Plan for Accessible Miniature Golf Course



## AGRICULTURAL

Agricultural land use areas are shown in light green on the FLU Map and generally located:

- > *On the north and south sides of Lockport Road, east of Miller Road.*
- > *On the north side of Porter Road, west of Tuscarora Road.*

Much of the farmland along Lockport Road is part of the NYS Agriculture and Markets Agricultural District Program facilitated by Niagara County. The local designation, Agricultural District #7 expires in November of 2018, and is in the process of being renewed for another eight-year period. All property owners have requested to remain in the District. As a result, it is reasonable to assume these areas will remain farmland until 2026. However, the Town supports the conversion of these lands to other uses over time as the viability of agricultural operations in Niagara changes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to support existing and viable agricultural operations.
2. Ensure zoning regulations permit agricultural uses where noted.
3. Evaluate desirable development alternatives for farmland that is no longer utilized.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community services are shown in light blue on the FLU Map. In the Town these include the Niagara Falls International Airport, Niagara Aerospace Museum, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, and Town Hall.

Over the last decade, the long-term future of the Air Force Base had been uncertain. However, in 2017, the Base was re-designated as the 914th Air Refueling Wing. This ensures the viability of the Air Force Base for the foreseeable future.

No significant changes in the extent of these community service areas is anticipated over the next decade. However, should the airport or Air Force Base seek to expand, the development may be accommodated in the adjacent vacant, underutilized lands.



## MOBILE HOME PARKS

Residential areas that include mobile, modular, and manufactured home parks are denoted by orange with red stripes on the FLU Map. These neighborhoods include:

- > **Expressway Village.** Located west of I-90 north of Porter Road. This area is mostly built out.
- > **Cayuga Village.** Located north of Niagara Falls Boulevard. This park is also mostly built out.

- > **Tuscarora Village.** Located in the northeastern corner of the Town, north of the railroad tracks. The eastern portion of this park remains undeveloped at this time.

Mobile, modular, and manufactured homes contribute to the variety of housing types available in the Town and provide an affordable living alternative for residents. This land use should be continued in these areas with a focus on maintaining community character and quality of life.



## MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Areas of multi-family residential uses are indicated by the dark orange color on the FLU Map. Generally these developments have occurred in close proximity to small lot, single-family neighborhoods, such as the Tuscarora Village in the northeastern corner of Town. These apartments are, however, mostly isolated from nearby services and amenities.

Moving forward, the Town should direct multi-family development to the identified mixed-use corridor area. The provision of apartment buildings and upper-floor residential units along the corridor will help to support new and existing retail, entertainment, and service uses. Residents in this higher density environment will also benefit from the improved access to local goods and services.



CPS Score: 6.05 / 9.00

Photo: The Conservation Fund (Below)



CPS Score: 2.60 / 9.00

Well-designed, high quality multi-family structures scored higher in the CPS.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Direct higher density residential development to the mixed-use corridor area.
2. Consider developing multi-family building and site design standards.
3. Permit higher density development in areas where supportive services/goods are available.
4. Restrict expansion of multi-family dwellings in low density areas.

A Tale of Two Neighborhoods...

Nationally and regionally, the preference for large-lot, single-family homes is projected to decline into the next decade. A variety of households, from young professionals to empty-nesters and seniors, are increasingly looking for a more traditional, walkable neighborhood environment with smaller houses on smaller lots.

Some of the most successful neighborhoods under this housing market shift are those that include traditional design elements, such as narrow streets, sidewalks, street trees, variety in lot sizes, smaller front and side yards, and rear yard garages. The following comparison highlights the aesthetic differences and level of desirability between two recently constructed neighborhoods -- One of traditional design and one of suburban design.

Design Element	Pittsford	Chili
Street Width	20 Feet	25 Feet
Tree Lawn		
Width	7 Feet	None
Sides of Street	Both	N/A
Tree Interval	30 Feet	50-100 Feet
Sidewalk		
Width	5 Feet	None
Sides of Street	Both	N/A
Front Yard Setback	20 Feet	70-80 Feet
Lot Width	50-60 Feet	80-100 Feet
NOTE: These figures are approximate measurements.		

Figure 11: Neighborhood Design Comparison



Stonetown Hamlet (Pittsford, NY)

The Stonetown Hamlet neighborhood of the Town of Pittsford was built in the late 1990s. The attention to detail given to this project is evident as you drive into the neighborhood or walk its sidewalks. The streetscape utilizes all of the design elements shown in Figure 11 as well as some that are more uncommon, such as a landscaped median in the center of the street with a walkway and gazebo. In addition, the architectural detailing and variety of the homes help to create a sense of place. An emphasis is also placed on walkability by locating garages on a rear alley.



Bellaqua Estates (Chili, NY)

In contrast, the Bellaqua Estates subdivision located in the Town of Chili lacks many of the key neighborhood design elements (see Figure 11), and the elements that are present are inadequate. For example, street trees are spaced too far apart and lot widths and setbacks are too large to foster the walkable, inviting environment desirable under modern housing trends. Furthermore, there is no sense of identity or place as the homes are generally uniformly designed and the garages are emphasized over porches or front doors.

Niagara should strive to emulate the design cues of the Stonetown Hamlet with new residential development proposals in order to provide attractive neighborhoods that are well suited to meet changing resident lifestyles over time.





## SMALL LOT RESIDENTIAL

Areas of small lot residential development are identified by the light color orange on the FLU Map.

These areas represent a more traditional, grid-like neighborhood development pattern with smaller lots. Generally the lot size is under 80 feet wide and 1/2 acre in area.

There are some portions of small lot residential areas that are not completely developed, such as the neighborhood between Military Road and Porter Road. The Town should amend its Zoning Code and Map to ensure future development in these areas is consistent with the recommendations of Figure 12.



## LARGE LOT RESIDENTIAL

Indicated by the light yellow color on the FLU Map, the Large Lot Residential areas are generally characterized by single-family neighborhoods with lot sizes greater than 1/2 acre and 80 feet in width. These areas represent the most recently built neighborhoods within the Town.

Future development in these areas should remain consistent with the existing neighborhood settlement patterns. It is recommended that the Town's Zoning Code and Map be updated to reflect the standards outlined in Figure 12.



## MIXED RESIDENTIAL

The undeveloped area north of Veterans' Memorial Park (see photo below) has long been considered for a conventional single-family subdivision. However, the demand for continued development of this scale and character is uncertain given the national and regional shift in housing preferences (see page 32).



Photo: Google Maps, 2018

As a result, the Town should consider a mixed residential concept (shown in yellow with orange hatching on the FLU Map) for this area to provide a variety of housing opportunities. This could be accommodated through a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a large, integrated residential development adhering to a comprehensive plan and located on a single tract of land or on two or more tracts of land that may be separated only by a street of other right-of-way.

Properly written and administered, PUD's can offer a degree of flexibility that allows creativity in land planning, site design, and the protection of environmentally sensitive lands not possible with conventional subdivision and zoning practices.

A PUD for the mixed residential area should incorporate the residential use and lot standards of Figure 12, as well as the recommendations on the following page.

	SMALL LOT RESIDENTIAL	LARGE LOT RESIDENTIAL	MIXED RESIDENTIAL
<b>DENSITY</b>	Single-Family Units	Single-Family Units	Single-, Two- & Three-Family Units
<b>LOT SIZE</b>	1/2 Acre or Less	1/2 - 1 Acre	1/4, 1/2, & 1 Acre Lots (mixed)
<b>LOT WIDTH</b>	60 to 80 Feet	80 to 100 Feet	50 to 100 Feet
<b>FRONT YARD</b>	10 to 30 Feet	20 to 40 Feet	10 to 40 Feet
<b>GARAGE</b>	Side or Rear Yard	Side or Rear Yard	Rear Yard or Alleyway Access

Figure 12: Conceptual Residential Use & Lot Standards

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Permit single-, two-, and three-family dwellings to provide for greater housing variety. A maximum density of 3-4 units per acre is recommended.
2. Provide for a mix of lot sizes and housing variety along neighborhood streets. No lot should be less than 50 feet.
3. Develop housing of a compatible scale adjacent to existing homes and phase in a varied residential land use pattern in undeveloped areas.
4. Incorporate elements to enhance the public realm and streetscape, including but not limited to sidewalks, street trees, and street lights.
5. Require connection to Kay Ellen Drive.



## BUSINESS NON-RETAIL

Yellow areas marked with red dots on the FLU Map represent the business non-retail future land use category. These areas are generally located along major thoroughfares where the frontage consists of single-family homes on lots in excess of one acre with scattered commercial operations.

Many of these businesses have been established through the conversion of a residential structure to a commercial use. Because of the established residential



The proper design and scale of single- and multi-family dwellings in the mixed residential area will be important to foster a desirable neighborhood environment.

development pattern along these roadways, however, the businesses are limited to service oriented uses. Retail operations have a greater propensity for adverse impacts on the adjacent homes, as they often generate higher traffic volumes and activity. Non-retail operations in these areas include salons, offices, and financial institutions among others.

The intent is to provide access to services, without reducing the quality of life of nearby residences through substantial increases in traffic, light, noise, or other potential nuisances.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review and revise the B-2 Planned Commercial District to permit business non-retail uses.
2. Ensure regulations are in place to preserve residential character, where appropriate.
3. Include screening and buffering requirements to reduce impacts of commercial uses on adjacent residential uses.

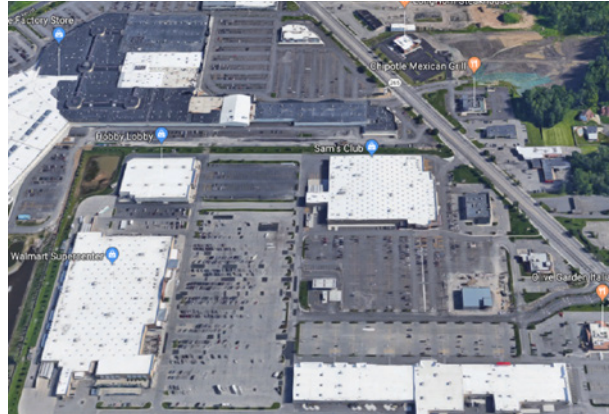
## Lifestyle Centers...

In response to the decline of traditional malls and outlets, many communities are encouraging the redevelopment of former “Big-Box” multi-tenant commercial sites into well-designed, mixed-use lifestyle centers. Lifestyle centers are characterized by large-scale developments that offer a mix of residential, retail, restaurant, office, and entertainment uses in a dense, walkable environment generally with high architectural and site design standards.

Previously the trend for shopping centers was a cluster of large structures and anchor tenants surrounded by parking lots. Today these kinds of developments are seen as tired single-use structures, providing little to no pedestrian accommodations or aesthetically pleasing design elements. The lifestyle center approach seeks to provide parking in an unobtrusive manner, permit multi-story developments, add a mix of uses, and ensure sites and structures are designed in such a way as to promote pedestrian activity and an attractive streetscape.

The intent of a Lifestyle Center is to reflect the development pattern of traditional downtowns or “Main Street” activity centers. A good example is Crocker Park in Cleveland, Ohio (lower right image). There are a number of currently developed and undeveloped areas within the Town that may present an opportunity to implement a lifestyle center, such as the general commercial area along Military Road (upper right image).

### WALMART PLAZA & NIAGARA FALLS OUTLETS



### CROCKER PARK - CLEVELAND, OH



*Photos: Google Maps, 2018*

Successful Lifestyle Centers strive to achieve the following objectives:

- » Foster a high-level of walkability throughout the development.
- » Promote mixed uses in traditional, multi-story structures and developments (e.g. commercial below, residential above).
- » Employ high-quality design, materials and building techniques that create a distinctive “sense of place” at a pedestrian scale.
- » Offer unique destinations and services that include local retailers and specialty businesses and restaurants.
- » Provide a multi-modal transportation network for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.
- » Celebrate natural features and promote the use of public space through landscape, hardscape, and streetscape design.
- » Incorporate green energy technology and design features.
- » Reduce parking requirements for retail and office uses.

**The annual tax yield per acre of mixed-use, multi-story buildings is more than 11 times that of single-story, single-use commercial developments. Dense, walkable developments have a much larger pay out for local governments than big-box retail.**

**- New Urban News, Vol. 15 (2010)**



WORK  
ZONE

## GENERAL COMMERCIAL

According to NYSDOT, I-190 is classified as an Interstate Principal Arterial that connects Buffalo, Grand Island, the Town of Niagara, and the City of Niagara Falls. Within the vicinity of Packard Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard, the average daily travel volumes on I-190 range from 33,000 to 35,000 cars per day, respectively (source: NYSDOT, 2014).

These motorists represent a reliable stream of potential customers for commercial operations along Niagara Falls Boulevard, Military Road, and Packard Road. As a result, consideration should be given to designating a portion of the land adjacent to these two interchanges for general business enterprises that cater to a regional customer base.

As shown in red on the FLU Map, general commercial uses should be allowed to continue in the following areas:

- » Along the north side of Packard Road, west of I-190.
- » The land encompassed by I-190, Niagara Falls Boulevard, and Military Road.

A review of the Town's zoning code and map indicates that these areas are currently zoned as General Business (B-1).

It is anticipated that the general commercial land use classification will continue to be characterized by:

- A wide range of commercial activity with the highest intensity of commercial uses within the Town; and
- Large scale buildings and parking areas.

As retail market trends continue to shift away from brick and mortar stores to online shopping, other uses may also become appropriate for these areas. These include office uses, limited industrial operations (e.g. warehousing and distribution centers) or mixed-use lifestyle centers (described in detail on page 35).

Typically, general commercial operations are designed to accommodate the automobile first and the pedestrian second or not at all. The Town should strive to create a higher level of pedestrian connectivity within and between these areas. This will allow patrons to park once and walk to multiple destinations. In addition, local regulations should include minimum building, site design, and landscaping requirements that result in high quality developments.

Access management provisions are recommended for all general commercial areas to reduce the number of curb cuts and vehicular/pedestrian conflict points. Internal circulation systems should be enhanced between existing uses, reducing the need for access points along major thoroughfares.



The CPS results show a preference for commercial buildings that utilize basic design principles.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure pedestrian and bicycle access and connectivity is included with future development.
2. Implement building and site design requirements to improve commercial development aesthetics.
3. Include landscaping requirements for building sites and parking areas to break up views of hardscape elements.
4. Implement access management provisions to improve circulation for all modes of travel.




 WORK  
ZONE

## MIXED USE CORRIDOR

The mixed-use corridor for the Town is shown in the color pink on the FLU Map. This corridor includes the frontage along both sides of Military Road from the northern Town boundary to Recovery Road, skipping the area at the railroad crossing.

Currently the character of the corridor is very auto-oriented, catering to the high traffic volumes running along Military Road throughout the day. The predominant land use pattern is single-story, single-use commercial structures with front building setbacks ranging from 40 feet to 250 feet. Several of these structures are large-scale, “big box” retail stores at 30,000 or more square feet situated on lots over three acres in size and 300 feet in width (see image below).

Despite the dominance of the auto-centric character along Military Road, there is an opportunity to transform this corridor with redevelopment over time. A walkable multi-



Photo: Google Maps, 2018

story, mixed-use spine may be created, bringing a new identity to the Town of Niagara. Significant regulatory changes will need to be made, however, in order to facilitate such a dramatic shift in land use and community character.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement a mixed-use district or overlay for the Military Road area.
2. Permit mixing of uses in a single structure or on a single site.
3. Reduce minimum lot width and setback requirements to create smaller blocks and a more walkable environment.
4. Permit and encourage the development of multi-story buildings along Military Road (two- to four-story maximum).
5. Establish nonresidential building design standards for infill development.
6. Prohibit the location of parking lots in the front yard area.
7. Support the creation of a “medical corridor” in the northern section of Military Road.

## Evolution of a Streetscape...

The design of a streetscape has a significant impact on the success of place-making. The photo simulations below depict how even a larger arterial roadway may be enhanced with public and private realm improvements.



Photos: Urban Advantage

## Transforming a Corridor...

In 2001, the Town of Greece completed their Town Master Plan Update. As part of that update it was acknowledged that the land use and transportation issues associated with the Dewey Avenue corridor were too complicated to be addressed in a town-wide planning effort.

As a result the 2001 Master Plan called for a more detailed corridor study to be completed by the Town. The Dewey Avenue Corridor Study was finished in 2007. The Study contained a wide range of recommendations that included reducing the number of travel lanes on the roadway and updating the zoning along the corridor to foster a mix of land uses.



CPS SCORE: 1.60 / 9.00

Dewey Avenue, Greece (NY) 2013

Photo: Google Streetview

The Town completed the subsequent Dewey Avenue Mixed Use District in 2011. As part of the zoning amendment the Town incorporated site and building design requirements to enhance the walkability of the corridor such as requiring:

- » Parking to be placed to the rear or side of newly constructed buildings;
- » Landscaping to be provided around the base of the buildings and along the perimeter of the site;
- » Entrances to be placed adjacent to the public sidewalk; and
- » Pedestrian connections to provide direct access from the public sidewalk to the building.



CPS SCORE: 5.75 / 9.00

Dewey Avenue, Greece (NY) 2017

The images above show some of the changes that have occurred along Dewey Avenue since the adoption of the new zoning regulations.

Large expanses of parking and asphalt have been converted to commercial development that cater to the auto-mobile second and pedestrian and bicyclists first. This has impacted how the corridor functions, looks, and feels to travelers of all types.

**Through the CPS Niagara residents expressed a preference for streetscapes and corridors that comfortably accommodate walking and biking to those that place emphasis on driving and automobile access. The Town should strive to implement the design requirements herein to help transform its own auto-oriented corridors.**



## LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

The light industrial areas on the FLU Map are shown in light purple. The location of these areas are as follows:

- > **Northwest corner of the Town**, fronting Hyde Park Boulevard. These uses are largely enclosed industrial operations like Niagara Monument Works and Tam Ceramics.
- > **East of I-90 and south of Reservoir State Park**, surrounding the Witmer Industrial Estates. Uses in this area are generally individually sited, indoor industrial facilities.
- > **West of the Lockport and Military Road Intersection**, bordered by residences to the east. Currently the site is undeveloped open space with a utility tower situated in the northwest corner.
- > **East of the landfill and I-90**, just south of the Niagara Outlet Mall. The area contains overflow parking for the mall and a self-storage facility.

The predominant development characteristics of these light industrial areas include large-scale, single-use, single-story structures set back from major thoroughfares. The sites are generally dominated by paved surfaces that facilitate vehicular and truck access throughout the site and provide for parking and outdoor storage areas.



CPS images that showed more greenery and landscaping scored higher than those in which pavement and parking areas were directly visible from the public right-of-way. The Town should strive to ensure future investment in industrial sites includes ample landscaping and screening.

Light industrial uses are generally considered to be low intensity operations with the majority of production, manufacturing, or other activities occurring within an enclosed structure. The impact of light industrial uses tends to be lesser with respect to nuisances, such as noise, odor, or visible outdoor storage areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure all light industrial areas are zoned Light Industrial (LI) and permit uses consistent with this summary.
2. Allow for the extension of utilities into light industrial areas.
3. Improve landscaping and buffering requirements of uses adjacent to residential properties.
4. Provide enhanced landscaped buffer areas along roadway frontages to visually screen parking lots.





## GENERAL INDUSTRIAL

The areas of dark purple on the Future Land Use map are the general industrial land use character areas. General industrial uses are largely characterized by operations that conduct activity outside of a structure and/or require a significant amount of outdoor storage. For example, junkyards, mines, heavy machinery use, and the processing or storage of chemicals.

In the Town of Niagara, the general industrial uses include, but are not limited to:

- > **Cassens Transport**, west of I-90 along Witmer Road.
- > **Various Auto Services in the northwest corner**, such as Art's Collision, Airport Auto Wrecking, Dave's Auto Wrecking, and Kachs Automobile Service.
- > **Lakes Pipe and Supply Corporation**, south of Highway 31 and east of Hyde Park Boulevard.
- > **Niagara Coatings Services and Valley Tire Co**, located where the railroad and Lockport Road intersect.
- > **LaFarge North America Quarry**, north of the railroad tracks near to the northeastern corner of the Town.

Article VI of the Town's Zoning Code contains "Design and Performance Standards for All Industrial Districts." The purpose of these requirements is to ensure that industrial operations do not negatively impact adjoining properties and uses. For example, Article VI requires, "landscaping along public streets or roads. Each property shall be appropriately landscaped, particularly along its frontage upon a public street or road."

It is recommended that the code contain more explicit requirements to assist the various Boards in their reviews and to provide clarity for potential applicants.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review the Heavy Industrial (HI) District to ensure the uses permitted are consistent with general industrial areas.
2. Implement landscaping and screening standards for general industrial sites adjacent to residential properties or public roadways.
3. Ensure that areas used for outdoor storage or operations have a sufficient setback from adjacent residential or lower intensity uses.
4. Provide for the mitigation of potential nuisance issues, such as noise and odor.



The LaFarge North America Quarry spans over 175 acres with a buffer of at least 150 feet from adjacent uses (Photo: Google, 2019).



## PUBLIC SERVICES

Areas of existing public services are shown in brown on the FLU Map. These services include, but are not limited to the following:

> **National Grid Electrical Transmission Lines.**

*Run from the northwest corner of the Town, eastward through Veterans' Memorial Park, crossing Tuscarora Road, and into the Town of Lewiston.*

> **Conrail Freight and Passenger Rail Lines.** *Run from Military Road to the eastern Town line.*

The location of public service areas is not expected to change over the next decade, as it is anticipated each utility will continue to serve the public and private sectors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although, there is a limited extent to which the Town may influence the use or reuse of public utility areas, the following should be considered:

1. Establish a multi-use trail system in unused open spaces of transmission line lands.
2. Support the provision of rail-dependent and rail-enabled uses along the Conrail lines.
3. Prohibit expansion of high impact public services, such as a landfill, in these areas.



## SOLID WASTE

Located south of Packard Road and west of I-190, shown in brown with brown stripes on the FLU Map, is the Allied Waste Landfill. This landfill has provided the community with free waste services under a community benefit agreement. However, the landfill will cease operation under the current agreement in eight years. As a result, the Town will need to consider alternatives for the provision of solid waste services.

Reuse or redevelopment of the landfill area is generally restricted by the existence of contaminants and other environmental concerns. It is likely that this area will remain undeveloped open space once the landfill closes.



Transmission lines like the one above can be seen running throughout the Town, generally with areas of natural open space beneath them.





# TOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN