

# NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK



## COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

SUBMITTED TO  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

**JUNE 2010**

Prepared by:



**NIAGARA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF  
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## **I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The development of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document for Niagara County was made possible by the insightful guidance and devotion of the CEDS Committee. The diversity of interests represented on the CEDS Committee and their shared vision for the future of Niagara County ensures that the benefits resulting from this effort will be distributed equally throughout the county.

Many organizations and county government departments provided input critical to the analysis of data and development of the vision statement and program goals. Chief among these are the Niagara County Department of Economic Development, Niagara County Industrial Development Agency, Cooperative Extension Service - Niagara County office, Niagara County Departments of Management and Budget, and Social Services, and the New York State Department of Labor. Special thanks are extended to the staff of the Center for Economic Development for their valuable input and preparation of this report. Gratitude is owed to all those who assisted in this collaborative effort to devise a strategy to bring sustainable prosperity to the people of Niagara County.

Special appreciation is extended to the twenty chief elected officials and municipal clerks of Niagara County's cities, towns and villages. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration's effort to promote cohesive planning, within the bounds of the entities eligible for financial assistance, has been favorably received by Niagara County's mayors and supervisors. Recognition of the importance of comprehensive economic development planning is illustrated by the timely and thoughtful priority projects list contributions made by each community and duly noted.

The Niagara County Legislature, on behalf of the citizens of Niagara County, wishes to thank all the organizations and individuals who participated in the preparation of this important document. Because the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a living document which is expected to evolve in response to changing needs and opportunities, every effort will be made to guarantee the integrity of the productive working relationships that made this high quality report possible.

## **II. ORGANIZATION**

The Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee represents all sectors of the economy, the citizenry, elected officials at the local, county, state and federal levels, and public service professionals working in both government and not-for-profit capacities.

The willingness of people to continue to serve on the committee sustains the productive dynamic evidenced by the quality of past documents. The Niagara County Economic Development Alliance (NCEDA) remains as the core of the committee. NCEDA, which is an informal alliance of public and private agencies from throughout the county, has an economic development professionals group that meets monthly. The dialog at these gatherings centers on issues such as business attraction/retention, information exchange and other forms of business assistance. Having a cadre of experts at the center of the committee who work on economic development issues on a daily basis adds substantively to the effort to plan for, manage and track economic growth in the county.

The Niagara County Legislature, through its Economic Development Committee and the Niagara County Manager, actively support an agenda that places significant emphasis on comprehensive economic development. Through the daily efforts of the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, this agenda is transformed into actions which seek to leverage the potential for sustainable prosperity in all twenty of the county's rural and urban municipal units. The Center for Economic Development staff, under the guidance of Commissioner Samuel M. Ferraro, work in concert with the CEDS Committee to determine and articulate a shared vision for economic development that best meets the needs of all the County's residents. CEDS is seen as an opportunity to "fine tune" a tool considered critical to the effort to coordinate, for mutual benefit, the initiatives at the county level and among the local governments to stake a claim to future prosperity in Western New York.

### **III. WHERE WE ARE NOW**

#### **A. Historical Context**

The history of the economy of Niagara County is one that parallels very nearly that of the nation as a whole. The initial migration to the area stemmed from the westward expansion of the New England population in search of suitable land for farming. The high quality soils, lake moderated climate and water transportation opportunities helped to stimulate the growth of a bustling agrarian based economy in the early nineteenth century. Growing demand for the region's timber resource and the development of the Erie Canal further enhanced the County's standing as a place of opportunity. An increase in mobility, which resulted from railroad expansion and other modes of modern transportation, helped establish Niagara Falls as the destination of choice for vacationers in general and honeymooners in particular.

The industrial revolution came quickly to Niagara County. The Niagara River and Erie Canal were a source of both power and water for fledgling industries expanding to meet the growing demands of the consuming public in the late 1800's. Mills and factories labored to churn out flour, wood products, paper, ropes, textiles and machinery for convenient distribution to the population centers in the east and west. With the advent of alternating current and the harnessing of the Niagara River to produce hydroelectric power, the die was cast that would shape the local economy for the next 100 years. The timely influx of German immigrants to the region catalyzed the births of the electrochemical and electro-metallurgical industries in Niagara County. Abundant raw materials, cheap electricity, technological know-how and the well-developed transportation system made Niagara County a direct beneficiary of an increasingly industrialized economy.

The importance of chemicals and metals to the world economy of the early 1900's facilitated the diversification of the industrial base of the Niagara Frontier region. The disruption in world trade caused by World War I led to a rise in the domestic production of basic commodities. The effects of the Great Depression were greatly mitigated locally, however, due to the region's strong and diverse production-oriented economy. The relatively stable period between WWI and WWII, along with the demand created by Allied campaigns in WWII reinforced the region's competitive advantage in the 1950's and 1960's (Schulmeister, 1966).

Niagara County enjoyed relative prosperity throughout the 1950's and 1960's. However, beginning in the 1970's and continuing to the present time, the local economy has suffered from adverse local, regional, national and international influences. An increasingly global economy has created competition from countries with lower labor and regulatory costs. This has been an important factor in the national transition to an economy dominated by the service sector and high-tech industry. Niagara County, with a large percentage of jobs in the manufacturing sector, has therefore lagged behind many other regions of the United States. Regionally, Niagara County has had trouble competing with Buffalo and Erie County due to their better-developed service/retail/banking and medical (medical corridor) sectors, among others.

Uncertainties regarding the future cost of electricity and currency exchange rates with Canada have also contributed to the persistent economic stagnation that Niagara County has experienced over the past four decades. The international consolidation of company facilities as well as the recent economic downturn that began in the fourth quarter of 2008 has resulted in the closing or downsizing of a number of well-known companies like Occidental, Nabisco, Birdseye and Delphi.



However, Niagara County has experienced positive economic development, especially in the area of tourism development. The Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel continues to be a major catalyst to the development of downtown Niagara Falls and Niagara County.

The Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel continues to be one of Niagara County's largest employers with 2,715 employees. The Casino, which opened on December 31, 2002, expanded in December 2005 with the opening of the 26-story luxury hotel, represents one of the most significant development projects in the region's history. The Seneca Nation has developed 24 of the 50 acres it owns in downtown Niagara Falls under an agreement signed with the State of New York. The Seneca Nation has demolished existing structures on its remaining acreage in downtown Niagara Falls, and continues to formulate its master plan for the remaining 26 acres. When build-out of the remaining 26 acres is complete, it is estimated that employment levels in the overall 50-acre footprint will reach 5,000, making the Seneca Nation the largest employer in Niagara County.

Latest information reveals that the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel employees earn an average of \$28,000 with \$8,400 in fringe benefits. This results in an annual payroll approaching \$85 million. The Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel accounts for two-thirds of the Seneca Gaming Corporation's revenues at \$330 million annually. There are numerous local vendors in Niagara County and the region that benefit from the casino and hotel. According to a State of New York consultant, there are about 1,000 spin-off jobs supported by the casino, many of them with the 600 vendors and companies that do business with the casino.

There are other key impacts of the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel. The complex has added world-class dining, entertainment and accommodations to the Niagara Falls, USA tourism product, and has created a year-round tourism venue as opposed to the pre-casino seasonal tourism offerings. In addition to the 614-room hotel, there are six restaurants, a 443-seat theater and retail shops. It is estimated that 6 million people visit the complex annually.

In December 2007, the Seneca Nation presented New York State with a check totaling \$135 million representing the State of New York's slot machine revenue share from the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel and the Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel. The payment was in keeping with the terms of the Seneca Nation's Compact Agreement. This payment puts the total number of revenues paid to New York State from the Nation's casino operations at more than \$295 million. This economic benefit trickles down locally, in that 25% of the revenues sent to the State are returned to the host community, the City of Niagara Falls. It is estimated that the City of Niagara Falls will receive \$23.6 million from the combined payments from 2006 and the first 6 months of 2007.

Construction of the new state-of-the-art \$31.5 million terminal at the Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) is complete, and the new terminal is open for business. The terminal is the major component of an overall \$42.5 million airport improvement project. For the past few decades, the NFIA has been hindered by the lack of jet ways and adequate terminal facilities. The 68,000 ft<sup>2</sup> facility is three times the size of the former terminal, with a second story that includes new jet bridges that airport officials are confident will help draw more interest in the facility.

With the new terminal, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is in a better position to lure additional airlines, both scheduled and charter, to build on the recent successes of Direct Air, which provided more than \$1.5 million in economic impact to the region in 2007, when it began service as Myrtle Beach Direct Air. Direct Air's estimated economic impact in 2008 was \$5 - \$10 million. Construction impact of the new terminal project exceeded \$90 million.

In 2007, Myrtle Beach Direct Air began service at NFIA, with direct non-stop service to Myrtle Beach. Initial plans called for two flights per week, but were later increased to five flights per week due to high demand. In late 2007, Myrtle Beach Direct added three “snow bird” flights per week to Tampa/St. Petersburg, Florida. The success led to the change in the name of the airline from Myrtle Beach Direct Air to simply Direct Air, which begins its fourth year of operation at NFIA in 2010.

The New York State designated Niagara Wine Trail runs through the heart of Niagara County and into Orleans County. The Trail is host to 13 wineries and seasonal wine tastings and community events including live music performances, an art show, jazz, blues and classic concert, and a harvest festival. In turn, the Trail provides an extension to local communities’ annual festivals, fairs and other popular local and tourist venues.

Artpark, located in Lewiston, continues its successful rebirth. The Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce, the Lewiston Council of the Arts, and the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC) have been actively involved in promoting this unique venue. A New York State Park, Artpark has been in existence since 1974, and is now experiencing a re-birth with exciting local and national performing artists, plays, and the increasingly popular Tuesdays in the Park and Wednesdays on the Gorge outdoor concert series.

Several brownfield areas are being redeveloped throughout the County, while Erie Canal development has gained increasing support and interest. Each municipality is gaining strength by virtue of rediscovering its own unique identities. With the knowledge that the true character of a community is borne of struggles, adversity and eventual triumph, Niagara County is poised to recover from these pitfalls to emerge stronger, more competitive and innovative than ever.

The New York Power Authority continues to operate the Niagara Power Project resulting in significant economic, environmental, and recreation-tourism benefits to the Niagara Frontier. The Niagara Power Coalition (NPC), consisting of Niagara County, the Towns of Lewiston and Niagara, the City of Niagara Falls, and the Lewiston-Porter, Niagara Falls and Niagara-Wheatfield school districts signed a Host Communities agreement with NYPA in June 2005. This agreement provides that NYPA shall make available to the Host Communities 25 megawatts of power (of which Niagara County will receive 9mW), establish a Host Community Fund of \$5 million per year for 50 years, and allocate \$3 million per year for 50 years for greenway consistent recreation/tourism projects in Niagara County.

The Niagara County Legislature has authorized the use of its hydropower allocation, received from the agreement, for economic development. As a result, “Empower Niagara” was established in September 2007 as a non-for-profit Development Corporation authorized to enter into agreements for the purposes of providing certain electric power benefits to those companies that meet the eligibility criteria. To date, 6 allocations have been awarded to companies in agriculture, manufacturing, and food sales, warehousing and distribution, and tourism sectors. In the meantime, the allocation is being used to lower the County of Niagara’s electric bills at their County-owned sites.

The new 50-year license also assures continued production of low-cost hydroelectricity, which is linked to some 32,600 local jobs through NYPA’s Replacement and Expansion Power programs and another nearly 3,000 jobs in Niagara County through the Power for Jobs Program. Over the next several years, this phase of the relicensing process will entail continued cooperation and collaboration with the NPC and other stakeholder groups, especially those communities closest to the Niagara project. (Source: Western New York Update, Niagara Power Project, Spring 2007)

The County of Niagara, as a member of the Niagara Power Coalition, is intimately involved in distributing Niagara County's share of the power (9mw) to its county-owned sites, and with the Greenway Commission in developing a list of priority recreation projects to be part of the "Niagara River Greenway Plan". The final Niagara River Greenway Plan was released in 2007. In addition to these important activities, the Niagara County Department of Economic Development continues to assist local businesses to retain and/or receive low cost power allocations for business expansion. As a member of the Western New York Advisory Group, Niagara County Center for Economic Development has the chance to review and support all applications submitted to NYPA for approval.

## **IV. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **A. Demographic and Socio-Economic Data**

#### **1. Population:**

According to the United States Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, Niagara County's population continues to increase slightly in recent years. In fact, for the first time in over 40 years, the Census Bureau reports that Niagara County's estimated population on July 1, 2009 was 214,557, up from 214,197 in 2008, and 214,191 in 2007. These estimates are based on the most recent decennial census in the year 2000, which indicated a population of 219,846 for Niagara County. The prior census in 1990 placed the Niagara County population at 220,756, indicating a loss of 910 people, or just .004% from 1990 to 2000.

Prior to 1960, Niagara County's population had been increasing distinctly to a peak of 242,269 in 1960. (See Graph 1.) Since that time, the overall reduction of 22,423 persons from 1960 to 2000 translates to an average loss of 561 annually. The total loss for this 40-year period is approximately 9.2%. Taking into account the estimates produced on an annual basis by the U.S. Census Bureau, the trends indicate that the population loss in Niagara County has slowed, as shown on Graph 1.

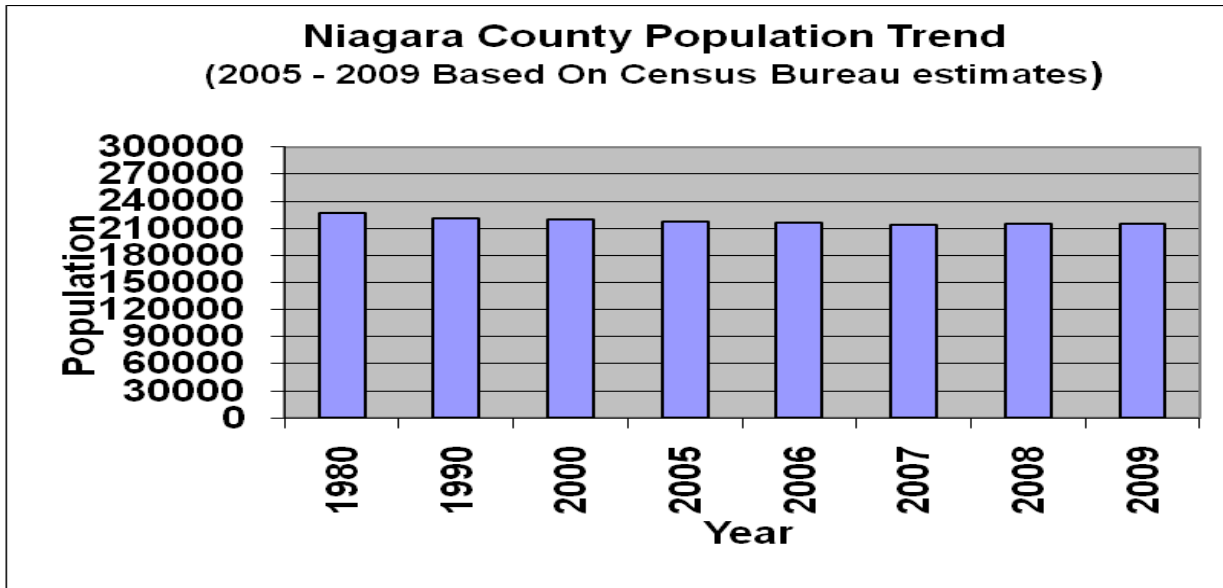
An important indication of the health of the Niagara County economy is the population of its largest city, Niagara Falls. During the period from 1960 to 2000 the population of Niagara Falls shrank from 102,394 to 55,593, or a 45.7% reduction. According to the Estimates Program, the decline continues, with the July 1, 2008 population of the City of Niagara Falls estimated at 51,345, down from an estimated 51,645 in 2007. This decline mirrors the departure, or downsizing of large employers in and around Niagara County from the following industries: steel production, aircraft and aerospace, automotive, chemical, specialty ceramics, and paper manufacturing.

To fully understand the significance of the population trend in Niagara County, it is informative to also consider population figures reported for the Buffalo/Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as well as for population trends in New York State and other states.

The period from 1990 to 2000 saw a decline in population in the Buffalo/Niagara Falls MSA from approximately 1,189,340 to 1,170,111, a reduction of 1.6%. According to estimates from the United States Census Bureau, the population decline in the Buffalo/Niagara Falls MSA has continued at a more rapid rate of 3.9% from 2000 to 2008. This population decline has dropped the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA from the 42<sup>nd</sup> largest MSA in the United States in 2000 to 47<sup>th</sup> position in 2008, with an estimated population of 1,124,000. This continued population decline is an indication of the extent to which Western New York had been precluded from participating in the national economic expansion experienced in the earlier part of this decade.

Considered in the context of New York State as a whole, it is readily apparent that Niagara County and the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA suffer uncharacteristic out-migration of its population base. Census 2000 data indicates an increase in the state's population of approximately 986,002 from 1990 to 2000, or a 5.5% increase. According to Census Bureau estimates, the rate of that growth in New York between the years 2000 and 2008 has slowed to 2.7%. Although the rate of population growth for New York State is the

Graph 1.



Source: Base Count from Census 2000 – 2009 New York State Statistical Yearbook/U.S. Census Bureau. 1980 – 2000 inclusive are decennial census demographics; Years 2005 - 2009 are estimated.

lowest among the five most populous states it still outpaces the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, which as indicated above has experienced a 3.9% rate of decline in population for the same time period of 2000 to 2008.

According to Census Bureau estimates for July 1, 2009 New York remains the third most populous state with an estimated population of 19,541,453. California ranked number one with 36,961,664 and Texas was number two with a population of 24,782,302. Rounding out the top ten states in terms of estimated 2009 population were: Florida, 18,537,969; Illinois, 12,910,409; Pennsylvania, 12,604,767; Ohio, 11,542,645; Michigan, 9,969,727; Georgia, 9,829,211; and North Carolina, 9,380,884. North Carolina has knocked New Jersey out of the top ten, and the Census Bureau is projecting that by the year 2015, Florida will surpass New York as the third most populous state, dropping New York into the number four position.

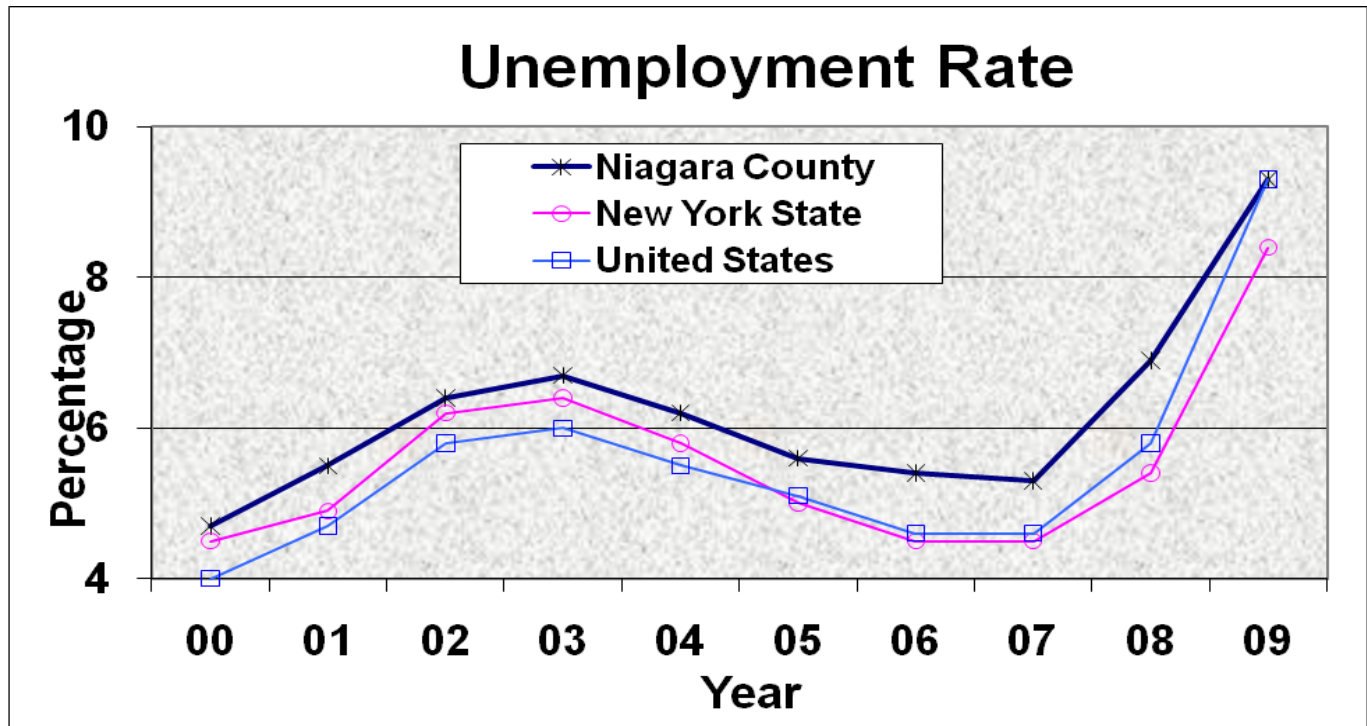
According to the Census Bureau's Estimates Program, growth in state populations between 2000 and 2009 provides insights into the continuing effect the transitioning national economy, from manufacturing based to service sector based, is having on population movements. The top ten states for population growth during this period included: Nevada, 30.1%; Arizona, 26.7%; Utah, 22.6%; Georgia, 18.3%; Idaho, 17.8%; Texas, 16.7%; Colorado, 14.8%; Florida, 14.7%; North Carolina, 14.6%; and South Carolina, 11.7%.

## 2. Employment:

The downturn in the U.S. economy continued to adversely affect Niagara County's employment outlook. The unemployment rate as measured by percentage of total workforce, for Niagara County was 9.3% in 2009, up sharply from 6.9% in 2008. Niagara County's unemployment rate continues to exceed New York State's 2009 unemployment rate of 8.4%, but the United States unemployment rate for 2009 jumped dramatically from 5.8% in 2008 to 9.3% in 2009, equaling the Niagara County rate. (Rates are not seasonally adjusted.)

Up to 2009, Niagara County has had a consistently higher unemployment rate when compared to the United States as a whole throughout this decade. (See Graph 2.) It is necessary to qualify this statistic by pointing out that the significant migration of the workforce out of Niagara County during this period, and the years previous to 2000, reduces the measurable effect of the loss of jobs on the unemployment rate in the County.

**Graph 2.**



Source: New York State Department of Labor/U. S. Department of Labor

**Note:** Due to a new estimating methodology implemented in January 2005, sub-state labor force statistics from January 2000 to present are not comparable to data from earlier years.

Considered in the context of the sixty-two counties in New York State, Niagara County ranked at a tie for 8th highest unemployment in 2009. There were 9 counties with unemployment rates at or above Niagara County, and 52 counties with lower unemployment rates. The highest annual unemployment rate in New York continues to be recorded in Bronx County, which had a rate of 12.2% in 2009. Other counties with higher or equal unemployment rates in 2009 included: Clinton (9.3%); Fulton (9.6%); Kings (10.1%); Montgomery (9.4%); Orleans (9.3%); Oswego (9.7%); St. Lawrence (9.8%); Steuben (9.7%).

The lowest 2009 unemployment rate among New York's 62 counties was once again recorded in Tomkins County at 5.8%. The next lowest rates were: Saratoga (6.3%); Albany, Putnam & Yates (6.7%); Nassau & Rockland (6.9%); Westchester (7.1%); Schenectady (7.2%); Ontario & Suffolk (7.3%).

Taking a look at the regional unemployment perspective, Niagara and Orleans Counties had the highest unemployment rate in the eight counties of Western New York (See Table 1).

Table 1.

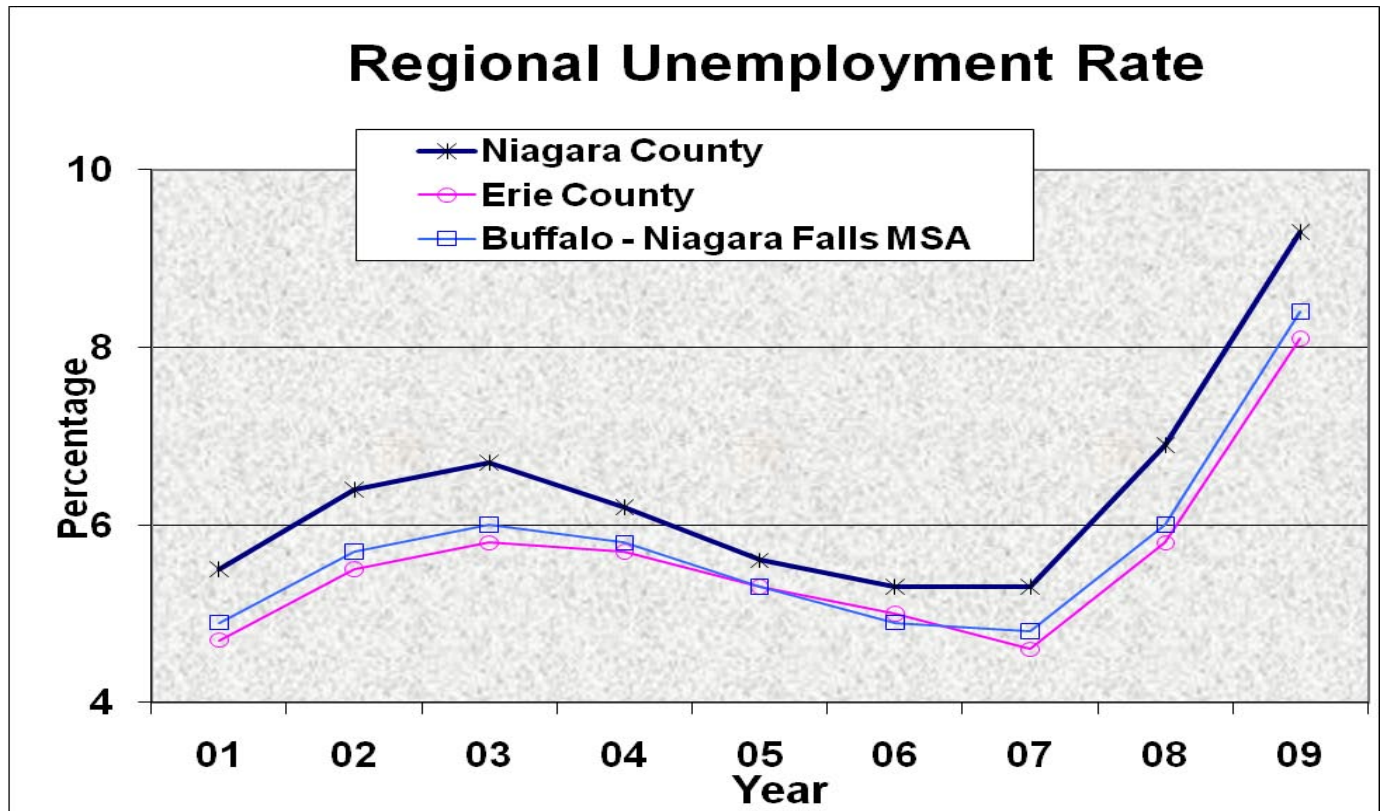
WESTERN NEW YORK COUNTIES - UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (2009)

County	% Rate	County	% Rate
Orleans	9.3	Erie	8.1
<b>NIAGARA</b>	<b>9.3</b>	Wyoming	9
Allegany	8.7	Chautauqua	8.3
Cattaraugus	8.6	Genesee	7.6

Source: New York State Department of Labor

The Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Erie and Niagara Counties, recorded a 6.0% unemployment rate in 2008. Niagara County’s unemployment rate over the last several years has been consistently higher than the rate of both Erie County and the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA (See Graph 3).

Graph 3.



Source: New York State Department of Labor

### 3. Personal Income:

Per-capita personal income in Niagara County has consistently trailed that of New York State and the United States in recent years. (See Table 2.) Per capita personal income in Niagara County in 2007 was \$30,448. This compares to \$35,038 in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, \$46,364 in New York State, and \$38,615 in the United States. The highest per capita personal income among New York counties in 2007 was \$120,790 in New York County, followed by Westchester at \$74,878; Nassau at \$62,981; Rockland at \$53,482 and Putnam at \$50,813. The lowest per capita personal income in 2007 was \$23,292 in Allegany County. To give personal income data more perspective, the average annual per capita personal income for the New York Metropolitan Area in 2007 was \$47,841. This compares to \$29,288 in the Non-New York Metropolitan Area of the State. Niagara County is just slightly above the average annual per capita personal income for the Non-New York Metropolitan area of the State.

**Table 2. Per Capita Personal Income (\$)**

	2005	2006	2007
<b>United States</b>	<b>\$34,690</b>	<b>\$36,794</b>	<b>\$38,615</b>
<b>New York State</b>	<b>\$40,781</b>	<b>\$43,724</b>	<b>\$46,364</b>
<b>Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA</b>	<b>\$31,832</b>	<b>\$33,611</b>	<b>\$35,038</b>
<b>Niagara County</b>	<b>\$27,911</b>	<b>\$29,454</b>	<b>\$30,448</b>

Source: U. S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

### 4. Social Service Caseloads:

Niagara County Department of Social Services was showing a significant decrease in Public Assistance after the implementation of Welfare reform in 1996. The emphasis on job placement changed the focus of Social Services. Several placement programs implemented showed positive results. In late 2003 a change in shelter amount calculation raised the standard of need for Social Services households. During 2004 this resulted in an increase in the number of Public Assistance households. In 2008, there was a sharp increase in the number of caseloads, adding an additional 3,983 caseloads from the previous year, particularly in the medical assistance category. 2009 experienced another significant increase of 4,214 additional caseloads from 2008.

In an effort to improve service and better manage caseloads, the Niagara County Department of Social Services implemented a new services delivery method in January 2005. All households applying for cash assistance, medical assistance and/or food stamps will be processed by a common worker. If opened, they are maintained by a TA/MA/FS worker or a FS/MA worker—depending on what they qualify for. It is the expectation of the Department that the new Program Eligibility Department will be able to identify specific household needs at application and help them set goals that will enable the department to assist households to self-sufficiency.



**Table 3.**

**SOCIAL SERVICES CASELOADS**

<b>TYPE OF SERVICE</b>	<b>December 2005</b>	<b>December 2006</b>	<b>December 2007</b>	<b>December 2008</b>	<b>December 2009</b>
Temporary Assistance	2,451	2,140	2,161	2,288	2,504
Medical Assistance	16,982	16,889	17,228	19,449	21,510
Food Stamps	7,352	7,428	7,747	9,382	11,319
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,785</b>	<b>26,457</b>	<b>27,136</b>	<b>31,119</b>	<b>35,333</b>

Source: Niagara County Department of Social Services – 2010

**B. Environmental and Natural Resource Profile**

**1. Geography and Climate:**

Niagara County is located in the northwestern-most corner of New York State. It is bordered on the north by Lake Ontario, the west by the Niagara River, the south by the Niagara River, Erie County and the Buffalo metropolitan area and the east by Orleans and Genesee Counties. Niagara County is situated in a central location relative to the population centers of New England and the Great Lakes region. Substantial markets within a five hundred mile radius of Niagara County include: Rochester; 50 miles, Syracuse; 110 miles, Montreal; 412 miles, Boston; 485 miles, New York City; 371 miles, Philadelphia; 360 miles, Baltimore/Washington; 402 miles, Pittsburgh; 225 miles, Cleveland; 191miles, Detroit; 252 miles, Toronto; 105 miles, and Buffalo; 19 miles. Slightly more distant urban centers include Indianapolis; 509 miles, Chicago; 539 miles, and Milwaukee; 626 miles.

The western edge of Niagara County is bordered by the Niagara River, of which the Niagara Gorge is one part. The Niagara River is a significant landform due to the presence of the great Niagara Cataracts, and the Niagara River Gorge. It is also a significant international waterway, as it represents the international border with Canada. Another significant landform that impacts micro-climate on the Lake Ontario Plain is the escarpment.

The climate of Niagara County is relatively mild in comparison to regions in similar latitudes elsewhere. Owing to the moderating effects of its proximity and orientation to two of the five Great Lakes, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, Niagara County enjoys temperate extremes in weather patterns. Annual average snowfall in Niagara County is 70.8 inches whereas Buffalo, which is less than twenty miles to the south, experiences an average of 92.4 inches. This disparity represents a full 30% increase in winter precipitation. The cities of Rochester and Syracuse, which lie on roughly the same latitude as Niagara County, experience 89.7 and 109.9 inches of snowfall per year, respectively. The Annual average liquid precipitation in Niagara County is 35.7 inches. Annual average daily high temperature is 57.2 degrees and annual average daily low temperature is 38.2 degrees Fahrenheit. The region experiences only five days of temperatures in excess of 90 degrees annually and one hundred forty-three nights of 32 degrees or less per year on average (Niagara County Market Facts).

## **2. Environment and Natural Resources:**

Niagara County is characterized by the open spaces and natural landforms. The most notable topographic feature in the County is the escarpment that runs east to west roughly parallel with the Lake Ontario shoreline. The escarpment is a geologic bluff-like formation approximately 600 feet in elevation from the low water level of Lake Ontario. The Ontario Plain that extends from the foot of the escarpment to the shore of Lake Ontario is home to many of the county's most productive fruit farms. Nearly 16% of the land in Niagara County is covered by woodland. Most of this acreage is second growth that is not suitable for harvest as forest commodities.

1.3 percent of the area of Niagara County is covered by open water. Contributing to this percentage are the Niagara River, Erie/Barge Canal, Tonawanda Creek, Eighteenmile Creek, 12 Mile Creek, Mud Creek, Johnson Creek and various other small tributaries and man-made and natural impoundments. The inland waterways listed above are the primary courses through which the county landmass drains the precipitation that falls on the area in the course of the year. The Freshwater Inventory of wetlands also reveals that 16,196 acres of Niagara County's area has been designated as wetlands.

Much of the open-space under Federal, state or local government ownership is made available for outdoor recreational purposes. Approximately 3,754 acres are managed as municipal, state or federal parks which offer access to activities that range from wildlife observation to camping and boating.

## **3. Agricultural Assets:**

The United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service conducts a Census of Agriculture every five years. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Niagara County ranks in the top 20% of all counties in the nation as a fiscally robust place to farm. There were 865 farms in Niagara County in 2007 compared to 801 farms in 2002. Even though the number of farms increased, the amount of land used for farming decreased to 142,636 acres in 2007 compared to 148,041 acres in 2002.

The Census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or produced. Niagara County has seen an increase in small farm operations and a decrease in larger farm operations (over 500 acres). In 2007, the market value for agricultural products sold in Niagara County increased by 73% to \$103,644,000. Crop sales accounted for 59% of the agricultural products while livestock accounted for the remaining 41% of the sales.

Niagara County is a significant agricultural county in New York State. Agriculturally diverse, the county is fortunate to have many farms that sell directly to consumers making it 5<sup>th</sup> among New York counties in retail sales. It is 1<sup>st</sup> among New York counties in peaches, sweet cherries, plums, and prunes. The county is 2<sup>nd</sup> in tart cherries and pears and 5<sup>th</sup> in apple and berry production.

Agri-tourism is growing in Niagara County. A new marketing brochure entitled "Pick Niagara: Local Farm Products & Agri-Tourism Guide" was published and a new website, [www.pickniagara.org](http://www.pickniagara.org) was set up, providing information on area farms, u-pick opportunities, and local farmers markets. In addition, the Niagara Wine trail has grown to thirteen members with additional wineries in the planning stages.

Niagara County participates in the New York State Agricultural Districts program that provides tax abatement and a measure of development protection for its farming enterprises. The County has five agricultural districts totaling 189,713 acres. Districts are reviewed every eight years. The County also has an active Farmland Protection Board and an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan which was accepted

by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets in November of 1999. As a significant contributor to the local economy, agriculture is seen as an important factor to the prosperity of the County. The loss of farmland and agricultural production can be viewed, in part, as a result of “hyper-sprawl” development associated with the subsequent emptying out of the region’s urban centers. Efforts are underway at the county and town level to begin implementing the recommendations that are part of the Farmland Protection Plan to protect farmland in the County from alternative forms of development. Niagara County adopted a right-to-farm law that provides additional protection to active farmers. In addition, several local municipalities have adopted town right-to-farm laws. With changing land use and intermix of farm and non-farm residential and business use increasing, county guidance on wind generation and other land use issues could be helpful.

## **C. Infrastructure**

### **1. Transportation:**

Niagara County, as part of Western New York, is served by a well-planned and maintained highway system. The portion which is part of the Federal Aid Functional Classification System (Funded with Federal Dollars) in Niagara County amounts to 465.25 miles measured at the centerline. This total breaks down into .4 miles owned by the Bridge Commission, 252.32 miles under state ownership, 132.02 miles under the responsibility of the county and 80.51 miles in local jurisdictions (2010 Transportation System Plan, Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee). This network of roads and highways provides convenient access to and from the region. Interstate I-90 connects New York to points east and west. The I-190 connects New York and Niagara County to points north, and west into the Province of Ontario, Canada via the Lewiston Queenston Bridge and Canadian Expressway Route 405, and to Interstate I-90 at its southern most point. The I-190 also connects the New York State Thruway with Canada’s Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW), effectively linking points east (Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, New York City and Boston) with urban centers to the west (Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Chicago). The QEW also connects Niagara County with Hamilton, Toronto, and Detroit via Canadian Expressway Route 401. Niagara County benefits from three international bridges, the Queenston-Lewiston, Rainbow and Whirlpool (NEXUS only), with the Peace Bridge in Buffalo being less than twenty miles to the south. These four spans handle 70% of the commerce-generated traffic between the two countries.

The City of Niagara Falls Long-Range Transportation Strategy fully recognizes tourism as that sector of the economy with the greatest potential to spur development and growth. The Strategy focuses on creating greater access to the City vs. mobility through it by developing new gateways for international and regional travelers and altering the existing transportation system, primarily, the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway. Specific proposals include developing an intermodal transportation center, international railway station at the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge, together with a US border security facility for consolidated Amtrak, ViaRail to and from Canada, a reconfigured Robert Moses Parkway, improved downtown circulation patterns and streetscapes, and implementation of traffic-calming recommendations within the scope of the Main Street Revitalization Plan.

Niagara County’s highways and local roadways are equally as conveniently planned and maintained. The system consists of a total of 1,652 miles, 251 miles of which are under state jurisdiction, 283 miles are county jurisdiction, 610 miles are town roads, 432 miles are city streets, 33 miles are the responsibility of village governments, and 41 miles fall under other jurisdictions. (2006 statistics taken from the 2008 New York State Statistical Yearbook.)

Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) has seen some major infrastructure improvements over the years, helping it move into areas other than its traditional role in the past as an airport used primarily as a general aviation airport. NFIA is also home to a United States Air Force installation. In April 2002, an \$8.5 million runway improvement project was announced. The improvements are a joint effort between the Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). The military's \$4 million share of the project extended the airport's main runway length to more than 10,000 feet, which can accommodate any size military or commercial aircraft. On the commercial side, the project included overhauling the runway and a taxiway.

Niagara County is blessed with access to water transportation opportunities both in and near its boundaries. The Port of Buffalo affords a convenient outlet to the Great Lakes System, the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Atlantic Ocean. The Erie/Barge Canal bisects Niagara County as it runs east and west connecting the Great Lakes System, via the Niagara River, with the Hudson River and Atlantic Ocean and inland waterways of New York State.

## **2. Water and Sewer Services:**

The Niagara County Water District provides potable water to a substantial percentage of the total number of housing units in the county. The water district extracts water from the Niagara River and treats it prior to transmission. The water is sold on a wholesale basis to the twelve towns and five villages within the county. The towns and villages operate and maintain their individual distribution systems. The three cities, Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport each have their own source of supply and treatment facilities. The cities also operate and maintain transmission and distribution infrastructure. System extensions and the construction of additional housing units in the last ten years have increased the total number of households served, although the proportion remains approximately the same. The two percent of households with individual sources of water utilize either drilled or dug wells that are subject to periodic inspections by the Niagara County Health Department.

Sewage disposal in Niagara County is accomplished by means of both publicly provided services and systems designed to accommodate individual households. The Niagara County Sewer District No.1 operates and maintains the treatment plant and major collector lines that serve approximately 25% of the total land area of the county. This system covers all of the Towns of Wheatfield and Pendleton, and portions of the Towns of Lockport, Cambria, Lewiston and Niagara. The three cities and five villages in the county also operate sewage disposal infrastructure that serves households within, and under some circumstances, outside corporation limits.

## **3. Utilities:**

Residents and businesses in Niagara County have access to natural gas, electricity, telephone services and cable television provided by major suppliers with distribution networks in the region.

The eastern portion of Niagara County is supplied natural gas by the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) and National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation services customers in the western reaches of the county. Both these companies offer economic development consulting services including business incentives, site locating and equipment advice, among others. In addition, National Fuel will partner with companies to find low cost power alternatives, such as the production of electricity through natural gas-fired distributed generation.

Electricity is produced and distributed by several large and small suppliers operating in Niagara County. The largest supplier is National Grid, formerly Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation, which services all of Niagara County with the exception of the Town and City of Lockport, which is serviced by NYSEG. The New York Power Authority's Niagara Power Project is one of the largest hydroelectric complexes in the world. Industrial developers who use a large quantity of electric power as a raw material in their production processes are eligible to apply for special low-cost blocks of power from the Power Authority. Covanta Energy operates a state of the art waste-to-energy facility in Niagara Falls that produces enough electricity to meet the needs of 38,000 homes. Niagara Generation, LLC is a company that operates a coal-fired and bio-mass generating plant that produces electricity. Fortistar, a combined cycle power plant, sells extraction steam to Wheatfield Gardens. Lockport Energy Associates, L.P. maintains a co-generation facility that provides electricity and process steam to Niagara County's fifth largest employer, General Motors (GMC), with excess power being sold to NYSEG. AES Somerset, LLC owns and operates a coal-fired power plant that diverts 625 megawatts of electricity into the grid for transmission and sale.

Modern Landfill in the Town of Lewiston operates a landfill gas power plant, providing excess steam to their hydroponic green house (H2Gro), which primarily grows tomatoes for distribution to regional grocers. Future plans include growing green peppers and a variety of other vegetables.

Verizon is the major provider of telecommunication services in Niagara County. The totally digital network makes access available to advanced features such as caller ID, voice mail and three-way calling, among others. Over 5,600 miles of high-speed fiber optic cables are in place in the county, enabling residential and business customers the convenience of high-speed, high-volume transmission of voice, video and data. Wireless communication service is offered by Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, among others, in Niagara County. Cable television coverage of Niagara County is widely available through service offerings from Time-Warner and Verizon. Upgrades being made to the cable systems locally are expanding the number of channels available and adding high-speed Internet access to the options subscribers can choose.

## **D. The Economy of Niagara County**

Major categories of contributors to the economy of Niagara County include manufacturing, services, tourism, agriculture and public utilities. Within these classifications are various subcategories that can be considered on a stand-alone basis by virtue of the role they may play in the future prosperity of the county.

### **1. Sectors:**

Not unlike the country as a whole, the manufacturing sector is responsible for an increasingly smaller share of the total income of county residents. The trend is proportionally more significant in Niagara County due to the reliance on heavy industry that was attracted to the area due, in part, to low cost hydro power made available at the Niagara Power Project. According to the United States Census Bureau's County Business Patterns Report, the Manufacturing sector of Niagara County's economy, while not the contributor it once was, still provides the most jobs at 17.5% of the total in 2007, down from 18.3% in 2006. Health Care and Social Assistance has moved into second place at 16.4%, up from 15.6% in 2006, and surpassing retail. Retail Trade, at 16% of total jobs ranks third, up from 15.8% in 2006. Accommodation and Food Services ranks fourth at 9.9%, up from 9.2%. Total 2007 annual payroll for the Manufacturing sector in Niagara County continues to be far and away, the leader at \$542.1 million, down from \$566.1 million in 2006. The Health Care and Social Assistance sector follows, and continues to grow, at \$292.6 million. That is up from \$287.3 million in 2006. The Retail Trade sector is next, rising sharply to \$197.7 million, up from \$187.7 million the year before. Statewide, in comparison, the Manufacturing sector (\$24.9 billion) has dropped from fourth to fifth in annual payroll. It continues to trail the Finance and

Insurance (\$107.6 billion); Health Care and Social Assistance (\$54.8 billion); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (\$45.7 billion); and now the Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$25.4 billion) sectors.

Manufacturing remains a strong component of Niagara County's economy, with the most number of employees and the highest payroll, despite the smaller number of total establishments. (See Table 4 and Graph 4.) The future of the manufacturing sector is uncertain, at best, but should not be totally discounted because of resources like low-cost hydropower, availability of fresh water, location and other advantages which Niagara County has traditionally been known.

The services industry is increasing in importance in Niagara County. The Health Care and Social Services sector has seen continued growth as indicated in Table 4. The number of establishments in this sector has grown from 462 in 1998 to 525 in 2007. Annual payroll in this sector has also increased from \$191 million in 1998 to \$292.6 million in 2007. Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center (NFMMC) has become an economic engine in the Health Care & Social Assistance sector in Niagara County and the region. NFMMC is currently Niagara County's seventh largest employer, with 1,004 jobs. Other area hospitals, Mount St. Marys Hospital and Health Center in the Town of Lewiston, DeGraff Hospital in the City of North Tonawanda, and The Eastern Niagara Health System in the City of Lockport and Town of Newfane provide both quality health care and employment opportunities to area residents.

The tourism and hospitality industry has always been a significant part of the local economy, with millions of tourists coming annually to view one of the world's natural wonders, Niagara Falls. The opening of the Seneca Niagara Casino in 2002 and the 26-story Seneca Niagara Casino Hotel in 2005 continue to be significant tourism attractions. As Table 4 clearly indicates, the opening of the Seneca Niagara Casino has dramatically increased the annual payroll of the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation Sector in Niagara County and continues to have great potential for Niagara County. Linking the conventional attractions, such as Niagara Falls and Fort Niagara, with the more contemporary visitor destinations like the Erie Canal is seen as critical to the future of the county economy.

Agriculture's importance to the local economy continues to skyrocket. In 2007 agriculture injected nearly \$104 million in product sales into the local economy, a sharp increase when compared to the nearly \$60 million in market value of production in the 2002 Census of Agriculture. (Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture). As the oldest and most steady sector of the economy, farming is seen as increasingly threatened by low commodity prices and sprawl from the regions urban centers.

There was an increase in Niagara County's efforts to protect valuable agricultural land seem to be "bearing fruit." This is evidenced by the fact that Niagara County has seen an 8% increase in the number of farms, from 801 farms in 2002 to 865 farms in 2007. Although the number of farms has increased, the average size of the farm has decreased from 185 acres in 2002 to 165 acres in 2007. In 2008, there were 142,636 acres in farms, 43% of the county's total 334,628 acres. Niagara County ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the state for number of farms and 23<sup>rd</sup> for land in farms. (Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Niagara County Farm Statistics, August 2009). Efforts are underway to protect the valuable agricultural land in Niagara County and steps are being taken to identify opportunities to enhance the viability of existing farming operations and attract additional producers and value-added businesses. The future of agriculture in the county is seen as sustainable given certain circumstances.

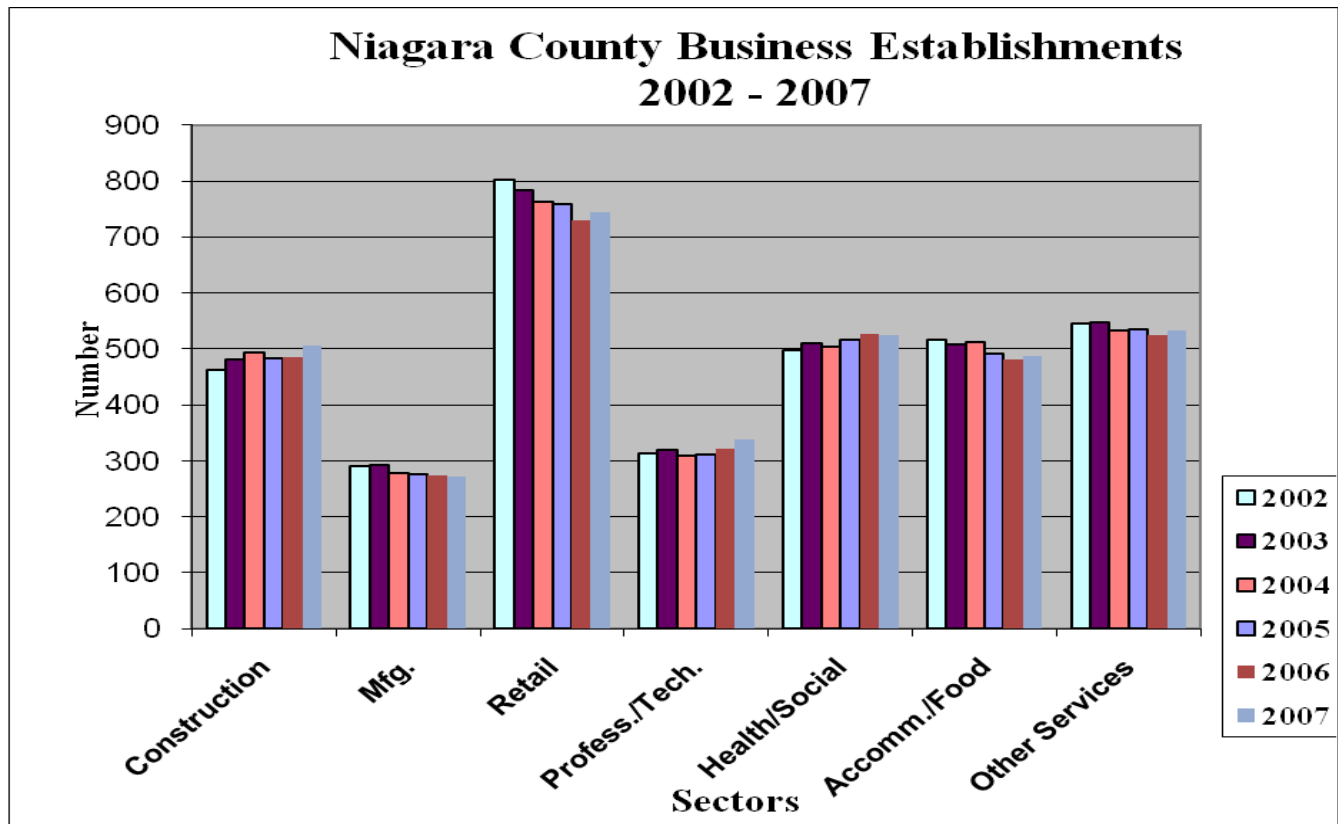
Table 4.

NIAGARA COUNTY ANNUAL PAYROLL (\$1,000)					
SECTOR	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1. Manufacturing	584,018	598,134	566,881	566,141	542,125
2. Health Care, Social Services	250,380	262,556	268,815	287,340	292,599
3. Retail Trade	175,724	182,359	184,887	187,736	197,763
4. Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remed. Svc.	104,449	105,485	120,160	133,244	132,636
5. Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	61,925 <sup>1</sup>	85,473	97,819	115,591	<sup>2</sup>
6. Construction	96,530	101,118	104,017	111,053	99,081
7. Wholesale Trade	79,999	89,240	105,926	89,303	106,366
8. Accommodations, Food	62,196	63,459	65,484	66,068	71,859
9. Transportation/Warehousing	57,620	58,017	57,859	60,364	64,603
10. Finance & Insurance	58,092	56,589	58,193	49,335	39,730

<sup>1</sup> Seneca Niagara Casino impact

<sup>2</sup> Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual companies

Graph 4.



Source: Niagara County Business Patterns

## 2. Regional and State Context:

The Niagara region, namely Niagara and Erie Counties, includes New York State's second largest metropolitan area, which is greater Buffalo. While the economies of these two counties are inextricably linked, their strengths and weaknesses are distinctly different. Heavy "smokestack" industry has traditionally located in Niagara County to take advantage of the hydroelectric power produced here. The tourism industry has made a more significant contribution in Niagara County owing to Niagara Falls and other local attractions. One of those attractions is the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel, which is entering its eighth year of operation in downtown Niagara Falls.

The "Conference Center Niagara Falls," located just west of the Casino opened in June 2004, and is having a significant economic impact on the region. Through 2009, there have been 1,306 events at the Center generating 82,869 room nights at area hotels. 2009 estimated economic impact number was not available as of the published date of this document. The estimated economic impact in 2008 was reported to be nearly \$34 million. The Conference Center reports that room nights generated, as well as room revenue and total conference center revenue was all up in 2009 compared to 2008, which most likely equates to an economic impact greater than \$34 million in 2009. All of this activity is in addition to the great growth in tourism product across the border in Canada. Two casinos, new hotels, and many new tourism attractions are on the venue in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, enabling a more vibrant bi-national tourism product offering.

The transition away from a manufacturing based economy that began in the 1970's has been more detrimental to the Niagara County economy than that of the Buffalo metro area. Buffalo and Erie County have experienced steady gains in the finance, insurance and real estate portions of the service sector. The concentration of these types of support services in the Buffalo area of the region can be attributed to the convenient access to the large urban market that exists there. This trend continues today with consolidations in the finance industry resulting in the strengthened positions of some large institutions based in Buffalo. While not a direct economic benefit in terms of jobs and income, Niagara County businesses have convenient access to the finance and insurance products offered in Erie County. Metropolitan attractions such as professional football, hockey and baseball and large venues to accommodate the likes of ice shows and concert performances provide outlets to the increased discretionary spending that has proliferated in recent years. Niagara County suffers from the lack of such opportunities to attract these recreational dollars.

Considered in the context of the state as a whole, the Niagara County economy has not kept pace with contemporary trends, as the population of the state has grown slightly and Western New York's has declined. Those leaving the area tend to be the better-educated individuals whose employment expectations cannot be met by the opportunities available. This dynamic is self-reinforcing making it difficult to break the cycle. There have been some exciting projects over the past year that could help start reverse this trend. One of those projects is in the high-tech arena. Yahoo, Inc. is building their Northeast Regional Data Center in Niagara County, in the Town of Lockport. Yahoo is investing \$150 million to construct the state-of-the-art 190,000 square foot facility on 30 plus acres at the Town of Lockport Industrial Park. The project, which is on target to open in September 2010, will create between 75 and 125 new jobs, with average wage and benefit packages near \$65,000 annually.

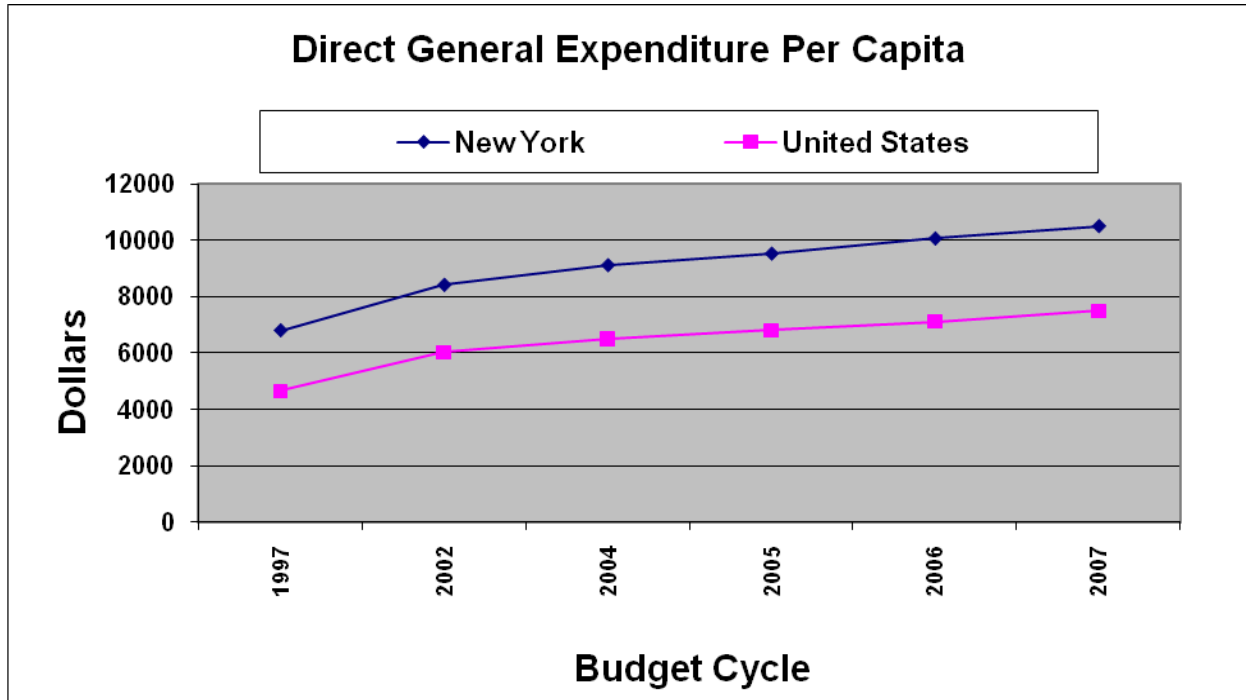
The distance between the New York City metropolitan area and western New York, both literally and figuratively, results in an "election year" mentality on the part of state politicians regarding the local economy. Close races at the state level garner the attention of candidates in need of votes, and that attention invariably gets redirected to the massive population center downstate following the election.



### 3. Factors Directly Affecting Economic Performance:

The burden of taxation has long been considered one of many reasons why businesses in New York State are unable to reach their full potential. New York has consistently ranked third in expenditures (includes state and local government spending) per capita among all states, following only Alaska, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia. While growth in that spending has paralleled the national average, per capita spending continues to be greater in New York. In 2007, direct expenditures per capita in the United States was \$7,496, compared to \$10,501 in New York State. (See Graph 5.)

Graph 5.



Source: [www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts](http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts)

### 4. Factors Indirectly Affecting Economic Performance:

Niagara County is subject to the same legal constraints imposed on business that other communities in New York State are. Seen by some as overly restrictive, efforts to protect the environment add to the cost of operating in many sectors of the economy. On the local level, every attempt is made to facilitate the development of safe, sustainable business opportunities, without sacrificing the integrity of the natural environment. In recent years, growing uncertainty about the future price of local power has added an element of risk to decisions to locate light and heavy industry here. The ability of Niagara County and its local governments to bond for reasons of investment is good. High ratings and low levels of current indebtedness give Niagara County municipalities the flexibility necessary to implement their development plans. In fact, the bond rating has been raised twice in the last four years by Moody's Investment, and remains stable.

Niagara County has an abundance of available industrial sites and business parks conveniently located and served by the full complement of utilities. All municipal units in the County administer zoning ordinances that are implemented by the respective municipality.

Niagara County benefits from substantial public open spaces, much of which is protected and managed for recreational uses. The Lake Ontario shoreline in Niagara County provides access to those seeking nautical pleasures by way of the harbors in Olcott and Wilson. Fort Niagara at the mouth of the Niagara River affords tourists and local residents a glimpse into the annals of the Historic Niagara Frontier. Other state, county, and local parks are maintained, which offer a wide array of recreational opportunities year-round.

The County and City of Niagara Falls are both involved in very active efforts through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Initiative to return underutilized industrial and commercial real estate to productive usage.

Niagara County has been making a genuine effort to reduce the effects of property taxes on development. By streamlining government and through budget efficiencies, the County Legislature has been able to hold the amount raised by taxation to an average of 3.36% per year from 2000 through 2009. (See Table 5.)

Historic preservation is an important element of the future development of the county. The Erie Canal Corridor, rural hamlets and city centers are rife with historic amenities that tell the story of the Niagara Frontier. Several individuals and organizations have joined in the effort to retain these assets for future people to marvel. In 1999 the New York State Legislature and Governor Pataki approved legislation that created the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor (WECHC). This designation was the first step towards recognizing that Niagara County is an important national historic region. On December 21, 2000, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Act (PL 106-554, Title VIII) was signed into law. It is one of only 49 national heritage areas in the United States. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is preserving and interpreting our nation's past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving the quality of life in corridor communities and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century "River of Commerce and Culture." In June 2005, the congressionally mandated, twenty-seven member Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission released a Preservation and Management Plan through the National Park service. This far reaching document established a framework for revitalizing this nationally significant corridor through heritage preservation and sustainable development.

The City of Lockport was recently designated a Certified Local Government by New York State. The City has established a historic preservation board. A three year architectural survey will be started shortly, identifying properties that are preservation-worthy for architectural/design attributes or as places linked with a significant event, notable people or heritage.

The City of Niagara Falls' Historic Preservation Commission is engaging in an intensive survey of structures within specific areas of the City as well as a general reconnaissance of citywide historical assets with the aid of private and state dollars. These efforts help the City to identify a valuable asset and its role in future development of the Niagara Frontier. In addition, the City is assisting efforts for the creation of a heritage-based museum attraction for the downtown area, is working with the National Parks Service to establish a national heritage area for the Niagara River Corridor, and is advocating for the creation of a series of heritage-based interpretive venues in support of this initiative.

**Table 5.**

**Adopted Budget Statistical Data Comparative Information  
2000 –2009**

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
GROSS BUDGET	\$202,816,940	\$211,445,973	\$225,427,100	\$233,453,271	\$249,032,086
Less: estimated revenues	145,254,961	148,361,262	158,010,798	170,178,604	183,664,374
Less: tax stabilization	0	2,200,000	204,647	0	0
Less: appropriated fund balance	6,330,864	8,296,168	3,490,038	0	0
Less: repayment of med. ins.	313,739	341,148	646,950	0	0
TAX LEVY FOR BUDGET	\$50,917,376	\$52,247,395	\$63,074,667	\$63,274,667	\$65,367,712
Add: deferred tax revenue	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	800,000	800,000
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED BY TAXATION</b>	<b>\$51,917,376</b>	<b>\$53,247,395</b>	<b>\$64,074,667</b>	<b>\$64,074,667</b>	<b>\$66,167,712</b>
<b> </b>					
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
GROSS BUDGET	\$261,966,529	\$262,248,887	\$310,547,497	<b>\$302,025,025</b>	<b>\$304,771,906</b>
Less: estimated revenues	190,370,311	191,449,876	233,720,012	<b>230,001,131</b>	<b>232,994,624</b>
Less: tax stabilization	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Less: appropriated fund balance	2,800,000	0	4,150,000	<b>4,930,051</b>	<b>4,979,000</b>
Less: repayment of med. ins.	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
TAX LEVY FOR BUDGET	\$68,796,218	\$70,799,011	\$72,677,485	<b>\$67,093,843</b>	<b>\$66,798,282</b>
d: deferred tax revenue	800,000	800,000	800,000	<b>800,000</b>	<b>800,000</b>
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED BY TAXATION</b>	<b>\$69,596,218</b>	<b>\$71,599,011</b>	<b>\$73,477,485</b>	<b>\$67,893,843</b>	<b>\$67,598,282</b>

Source: Niagara County Office of Management and Budget (2010)

**E. Niagara County Industrial Development Agency**

**2009 in Review:**

In 2009, the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) assisted numerous projects in the manufacturing sector, as well as additional projects related to training and administration, financial services and senior housing.

The Niagara County Microenterprise Assistance Program was created in 1995 for the benefit of low-to-moderate income individuals and small businesses with 5 employees or less. Since that time, the NCIDA has provided 27 rounds of training to local entrepreneurs. The program has an excellent record of success,

with over 1500 applications received since its inception and 575 individuals graduating from the educational portion to date. Over \$2.3 million in loans have been approved since 1995. For 2009, 2 loans were approved totaling \$65,000, creating 7 new jobs and retaining 4 jobs.

In 2009, the NCDC (the lending arm of the NCIDA) closed three loans totaling \$481,000. These projects retained 55 jobs and will create 18 new jobs within 3 years.

During the year, the NCIDA successfully closed on 9 lease and bond projects, projecting to create over 350 jobs within 3 years and retaining over 100 jobs, with a total investment of over \$62,000,000.

**2009 REVOLVING LOAN FUND PROJECTS\***

<b>Company</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Amount of Loan</b>	<b># of Jobs at Facility Retained Created*</b>	
107 Goundry St. (Hurtubise Tire)	North Tonawanda	\$200,000	19	7
Ashdan Screw Machine Products	Lockport	\$61,000	3	2
DJF Holdings, LLC (Contracts Unlimited)	Manufacturing	\$220,000	33	9

\* projected within 3 years

**2009 MICROENTERPRISE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM LOANS**

<b>Company/Proprietor</b>	<b>Business Type</b>	<b>Loan Amount</b>	<b>Number of Jobs Retained Created *</b>	
<b>Wanderfalls Hostel &amp; Guesthouse</b>	<b>Hostel/Inn</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Jacobs Ladder, LLC</b>	<b>Exercise Equipment</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

\* projected within 3 years

**2009 INDUSTRIAL REVENUE BOND AND LEASEBACK PROJECTS**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Amount of NCIDA Project</b>	<b>Number of Jobs Retained Created *</b>	
Kissling Interests	Acquisition and renovation of Remington Rand building into multitenant live/work spaces	North Tonawanda	\$ 15,100,000	0	125 FT 40 PT
1093 Group LLC	Renovation and expansion of commercial plaza	Niagara Falls	8,635,000	44	0
Ceres Crystal Industries	Expansion of Manufacturing Facility	Wheatfield	5,400,000	50	25
Merani Hospitality	Acquisition and renovation of hotel	Niagara Falls	20,000,000	0	75
LaSalle Hospitality	Acquisition and renovation of hotel	Niagara Falls	5,000,000	0	30
Budwey's Market	Acquisition and reopening of abandoned supermarket	Newfane	1,400,000	0	58
Snow Park	Construction of tourism destination	Niagara Falls	5,220,000	0	36
Niagara's Choice Federal Credit Union	Construction of new facility	Wheatfield	1,700,000	2	4
Todd Erection Company	Expansion of environmental contracting and remediation company	Pendleton	200,000	17	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>\$ 62,655,000</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>378</b>

\* projected within 3 years

## V. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

### State of the County Economy

#### Strengths

Niagara County has an abundant and competitive labor force of trained and skilled workers.

Niagara County's proximity to Canada is an economic plus. Sixty-two percent of the Canadian population resides within a 500-mile radius of Niagara County. Niagara County is also within 500 miles of the majority of Canada's industry, providing good opportunities for businesses wishing to take advantage of trade agreements.

Niagara County has an abundance of high quality educational institutions located within its borders or within a half-hour drive. Niagara County is home to Niagara University, Niagara County Community College and SUNY Empire State College, where Bachelor, Associate and advanced university degrees can be earned day or night, full or part-time. Niagara County is also within a one-half hour drive to institutions like the State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo State College and Canisius College. These institutions are reaching out to the region, to offer resources for economic development. A good example would be the UB Business Alliance housed at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Utilities are another of Niagara County's strengths. Three of the State's largest utilities, New York Power Authority (NYPA), National Grid, and New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG), supply electricity to county businesses and residents. With the onset of deregulation, there are several smaller suppliers of electricity available to business and consumer alike. Natural gas service is supplied by NYSEG to the eastern portion of Niagara County and by National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation to the western portion of Niagara County. National Grid, NYSEG and National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation all have economic development staff able to assist new and existing businesses within the county. Other strengths include the relatively low cost of living, housing and available land for both commercial and residential uses.

#### Challenges

People are any community's greatest resource. The county population has decreased from 235,720 in 1970 to 219,846 in 2000. The good news is, as the chart below indicates, the rate of decline in population in Niagara County seems to be stabilizing between decennial censuses. This is further substantiated by the U.S. Census Bureau's Populations Estimates Program, which reports that Niagara County's estimated population has increased two years in a row, and is at 214,557 as of July 1, 2009, up from 214,197 in 2008 and 214,181 in 2007.

Niagara Falls, the county's largest city, has seen a dramatic decrease in population over the last 40 years going from 102,394 in 1960 to 55,593 in 2000. While it is true that these are staggering numbers, with the rate of population decline being double-digit numbers from one decennial census to another, the population decline in the City of Niagara Falls is also slowing. According to the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, the City of Niagara Falls population as of July 1, 2008 was 51,345, compared to 51,954 in 2006.

A declining manufacturing sector, with its good paying jobs, is seen as a major contributor to the declining population. Even though manufacturing continues to be a key business sector in Niagara County with efforts underway to retain and grow this sector (as discussed later in this document under brownfield redevelopment), Niagara County continues to work toward diversification of its local economy, looking to create more jobs in the areas of advanced manufacturing, healthcare-related, ag-related, renewable energy, logistics and tourism. The struggle lies in the adjustment by the population, which in some cases will need training to adapt to “the new economy.”

<u>Decennial Census</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rate of Decline from Previous Census</u>
<u>1970</u>	<u>235,720</u>	<u>2.7%</u>
<u>1980</u>	<u>227,354</u>	<u>3.5%</u>
<u>1990</u>	<u>220,756</u>	<u>2.9%</u>
<u>2000</u>	<u>219,846</u>	<u>0.4%</u>

The cost of electrical power, outside of any low cost blocks of power made available by the New York Power Authority, is seen as a major detriment to the Niagara County economy. Other areas seen as a barrier to economic growth are being addressed by the New York State Legislature, which is working to reduce the tax structure to businesses as well as lowering workman’s compensation costs to employers as well. Other areas of concern being addressed are unionization rates and the slow and fragmented permitting process.

**Growth Sectors & Clusters**

Hospitality & tourism; advanced manufacturing (chemical/plastics, metal fabricating/ machining); agriculture/food processing; telecommunications/call centers; health care/social assistance; medical products; medical technology research and development; high tech/emerging industries; forest and wood products; printing; logistics, warehousing & distribution; and aerospace/defense have been identified as the region’s top growth sectors and clusters.

**Where the Local Economy is Headed**

A number of forces are driving the local economy. One of those factors is the continued decline of the U.S. dollar, which at the time of this writing, is virtually at par with the Canadian dollar. This means that tourism opportunities in Canada are becoming less desirable for the millions of visitors who descend on Western New York annually. As this trend continues, Niagara County will continue to realize an economic increase in the local tourism sector, with a corresponding increase in the amount of sales and bed tax revenue being collected. The Niagara County Center for Economic Development continues to market the assets of Niagara County to Canadian companies, who, as these economic conditions continue, are actively seeking a location in the United States.

Niagara County has developed and updated a comprehensive local plan under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. This plan was implemented July 1, 2000, and has developed a universally accessible workforce development system that serves the area’s job-seeking customers as well as provides services to business. The plan’s vision is to present a seamless service with rapid response to all of the

community, and help to improve the economic well being of individuals and the local economy. The plan covers business, jobseeker, employed worker, and youth needs.

The Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) focuses its services in demand occupations to respond more quickly to businesses' needs, and to best utilize its resources to support local industries. It aligns with the western NY regional effort in working to transform the regional economy in supplying workforce needs in the areas of Advanced Manufacturing and in Life Sciences. The local WIBs are taking a leadership role in addressing this need.

Businesses, as well as individuals seeking employment/upgrading, are served through the One-Stop Centers, which bring together the resources of WIB and Department of Employment Services staff. Partner programs are also represented. Core services are made available to everyone, along with intensive and training services for those who need additional assistance. Training is provided in demand occupations based on local needs. Funding cuts over the past five years have greatly decreased the level of funded training services that can be provided, yet universal customer services and business connections will be maintained.

## **External Trends and Forces**

### **Opportunities & Challenges**

The growth of Canadian tourism is driving that industry in the Niagara region. According to a March 15, 2010 report prepared by the Business Development Department of Niagara Falls, Canada, by the year 2016, capital spending alone is predicted to reach \$2.8 billion creating an additional 65,000 additional tourism jobs. This can be viewed as both an opportunity and a challenge.

Fallsview Casino Resort is Niagara Falls, Ontario's newest casino, and joins Casino Niagara, which celebrated its 12th year in business in 2009. The above-referenced report states that gross gaming revenue in the current fiscal year 2009-2010 in Niagara Falls, Ontario was \$477 million. According to the operators of the Ontario casinos, a majority of their patrons come from U.S. markets; most of which drive through Niagara County, New York. The above-referenced report indicates that the number of patrons at Niagara Falls, Ontario casinos in fiscal year 2009-2010 to date is 7.3 million. Creating new attractions and venues that entice the casino patrons to stay on the U.S. side of the border is a real opportunity, and one that is being explored in earnest by economic development officials.

New hotels are being constructed in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The new Niagara Convention & Civic Centre (NCCC) is scheduled to open in downtown Niagara Falls, Ontario in the spring of 2011. When completed, the NCCC will have the ability to accommodate large conferences, conventions and events. This new convention facility right across the border will compete with the Conference Center Niagara Falls, New York. The NCCC, as of May 2009, already had over 250 event dates on tentative hold. This will be an obvious challenge when competing for the very lucrative convention business.

The 26-story Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel opened for business in 2005. With this expansion, the Seneca Gaming Corporation now boasts 147,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> of world-class gaming space, 600 hotel rooms, 7,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> of meeting space, 30,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> of space for trade shows and banquets, etc., restaurants, full service spa and salon, and more.

In January 2001, the USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN) was formed as a special subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) in response to significant physical and



economic decline in downtown Niagara Falls over several preceding decades. Since USAN was formed, downtown Niagara Falls has realized approximately \$640 million in total investment and the creation of approximately 4,500 jobs.

The goals of USA Niagara Development Corporation's (USAN) strategy for downtown Niagara Falls are to reclaim the area as a premier tourist destination, create first-class experiences for tourists, and reposition Niagara Falls as the hub of regional and international tourism. The primary objective is to fashion an infrastructure of interesting cultural attractions and a mix of commercial, retail, and residential projects that support and enhance the extraordinary falls and parks network.

Some of the signature projects of USA Niagara Development Corporation include: The Conference Center Niagara Falls; Crowne Plaza Hotel; United Office Building/Giacomo Hotel; Third Street Strategy; Old Falls Street – West Mall Initiative; NTCC Official Visitor Center; NCCC Culinary School; Niagara Experience Center; Robert Moses Parkway – South & North Segments; a proposed hotel renovation project; redevelopment opportunity at 225 Old Falls Street; USAN Grant program; and the Buffalo Avenue Heritage District Microgrant Program. These projects are detailed further in this document, Section IX, Overview of Economic Development Priorities.

Niagara County must focus on the retention of its remaining manufacturing base, while promoting brownfields redevelopment. Assisting Niagara County manufacturers in the transition to “advanced and clean manufacturing” with techniques like lean manufacturing and other innovative practices is crucial in the retention of the manufacturing base. Promoting the expansion of low cost power availability for industry is essential. Working with the New York Power Authority and other economic development professionals to promote the renewable energy sector to existing businesses represents a great opportunity to help expand the existing industrial base in Niagara County and surrounding region. Currently, there are numerous opportunities for retaining and expanding businesses as a result of the relicensing of the Niagara Power Project. Niagara County concluded negotiations with the New York Power Authority (NYPA) on the relicensing of the Niagara Power Project in June, 2005. NYPA agreed to various settlement packages, which will benefit the host communities, as well as Niagara County in general, in exchange for support of a new 50-year license approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2007. The settlement packages were arrived at through the participation and collaboration of hundreds of stakeholders in the Buffalo-Niagara region, including the Niagara Power Coalition (NPC), the Western New York Relicensing Consensus Committee (WNYRCC), and many others.

Niagara Falls is a world renowned travel destination. The Niagara Region is suitably positioned for tourism and to take advantage of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Niagara County's proximity to Canada and the majority of that nation's industry strategically positions Niagara in the international marketplace. Niagara County is also within a day's drive to such markets as Buffalo, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Toronto and Montreal. The close proximity to the large, growing metropolitan area of Toronto creates a unique economic opportunity for the Niagara Region. The Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA), and the relocation of the Amtrak station closer to the U.S./Canadian border will expand the modal opportunities for expanding the Niagara region in the areas of tourism and commerce.

## **Partners and Resources for Economic Development**

All of the organizations mentioned below provide support, funding and/or resources for economic development activities:

- Niagara County Legislature
- Niagara County Department of Economic Development
- Niagara County Economic Development Alliance
- Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA)
- Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE)
- Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas
- City of Lockport Greater Lockport Development Corporation
- City of Niagara Falls Department of Economic Development
- City of Niagara Falls Empire Zone
- City of Niagara Falls Renewal Community
- City of North Tonawanda Lumber City Development Corporation
- Empire State Development
- Insyte Consulting
- Leaders Encouraging Action & Progress – (LEAP)
- National Fuel, National Grid, New York State Electric & Gas
- NCCC Small Business Development Center
- New York Power Authority
- New York Business Development Corporation
- New York State Department of Labor
- New York State Department of State
- New York State Energy Research & Development Authority
  - Niagara County Department of Employment & Training
  - Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)
- Niagara Falls Bridge Commission
- Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC)
- Niagara USA Chamber
- Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency
- Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency
  - UB Business Alliance
  - United States Small Business Administration
- USA Niagara Development Corporation
- WNY Regional Education Center for Economic Development
- The Niagara County Department of Employment & Training addresses workforce development issues.
- The Niagara County Department of Social Services addresses Social Services delivery.

Natural resource issues are addressed by a number of agencies, including:

- Cornell University Cooperative Extension – Niagara County
- International Joint Commission (IJC)
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Niagara County Department of Economic Development
- Niagara County Farm Bureau
- Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District
- United States Department of Agriculture

## **VI. VISION STATEMENT**

*Our vision of Niagara County is a proactive model of economic development and sustainable growth.*

*By thinking as a responsible, resourceful community, we hope to build on our assets by promoting a viable economic future for our children that emphasizes brownfields revitalization, qualitative development vs. quantitative growth, living wage jobs, and the creation of sound and practical planning through regional cooperation.*

## **VII. NIAGARA COUNTY GOALS**

The goals for Niagara County reflect a realistic view and their relationship to the vision statement previously described. Both the vision statement and goals provide a framework for public and private decision making and serve as the basis for the formulation of the action plan.

### **GOAL 1: Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Niagara County**

- A.** Implement sustainable development practices by:
  - 1. Encouraging compatible land uses
  - 2. Encouraging concentrated development patterns
  - 3. Redeveloping traditional populations centers
  - 4. Promoting development in areas already serviced by infrastructure
  - 5. Encouraging reuse of existing buildings over new construction
  - 6. Cleaning up and redeveloping brownfields
  - 7. Encouraging mixed-use and multi-use development projects
  - 8. Integrating transportation, housing, education, public health and safety, economic development, and environmental considerations into land use planning and decision-making
- B.** Attract higher paying jobs to afford Niagara County residents opportunities for higher incomes.
- C.** Broaden the tax base
- D.** Improve the environment by protecting natural resources by:
  - 1. Reducing the County's "ecological footprint", striving for greater self-sufficiency by conserving energy, water, and other natural resources, by reducing waste, and by using local materials and agricultural products.
  - 2. Conserving our environmental resources by protecting fish and wildlife populations, habitats and bio-diversity, as well as parks, trails, greenways, air, water, farmland and historic buildings and districts.
  - 3. Encouraging commercial and industrial development on vacant and/or underutilized land to protect rural and agricultural areas.

### **GOAL 2: Increase Employment Opportunities by Encouraging the Expansion of Key Economic Sectors of the County's Economy**

- A. Industry**
  - 1. Focus on identifying and attracting high-growth economic sectors companies, specifically manufacturing.
  - 2. Acquire a second Empire Zone for Niagara County.
  - 3. Encourage spin-offs from large companies.
  - 4. Continue to administer retention program, meeting with at least 60 companies annually.
  - 5. Provide infrastructure improvements at industrial parks.
  - 6. Expand industrial incubator and multi-tenant facilities.
  - 7. Implement Niagara County Opportunity Zones program.
  - 8. Market low cost power allocations through Empower Niagara Program.
  - 9. Market availability of fresh water to companies currently in water-starved states.
  - 10. Market county buildings and sites through the filtered versions of New York State Site Finder, which are found on NCIDA and Niagara County websites.

11. Market City of Niagara Falls incentive programs as well as New York State Empire State Development Corporation Programs and/or Federal Programs.
12. Monitor studies of expanding hydro-electric generating facilities in Lewiston.
13. Retain existing large companies by helping them to remain competitive, (helping to maintain their supply of low cost hydro-power).
14. Market the supply chain opportunity in the renewal energy sector, to existing companies.
15. Market City of Niagara Falls incentive programs – New York State Empire Zone and Federal Renewal Community.
16. Focus on brownfield regeneration and redevelopment.
17. Revitalize the Harrison Place Industrial Complex, City of Lockport.

**B. Tourism**

1. Increase tourism promotion efforts countywide.
2. Develop world class visitor attractions in our urban centers, to be premier centerpieces of our natural and cultural heritage. (e.g.: Niagara Experience Center, the Erie Canal, Niagara Gorge, etc.).
3. Focus on identifying and attracting tourism-based companies – particularly resort/hotels.
4. Develop the Niagara River Corridor Greenway, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, the Niagara Wine Route, and continue development of the Seaway Trail and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor as premier tourist destinations.
5. Support development of a cross-river ferry service between Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario and Youngstown, New York.
6. Support the Niagara River Greenway Plan.
7. Create opportunities for major new investment in other educational and interpretive facilities. Specifically, the City of Niagara Falls is proposing the development of a “Cultural District,” as a base for a series of interrelated and linked museums, exhibits, and interpretive sites.
8. Develop new attractions and expand existing ones.
9. Develop the Niagara River Corridor as a National Heritage Area, and continue development of the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor as a premier tourist destination.
10. Support The Flight of Five, Erie Canal Project, City of Lockport.
11. Expand water-related activities, fishing derbies, boating etc.
12. Expand and support area sporting and other recreational and cultural events.
13. Support Niagara Falls waterfront agenda.
14. Create opportunities for major new investment in other educational and interpretive facilities. Specifically, the City of Niagara Falls is proposing the development of “Niagara Discovery Centers”, a series of interrelated and linked museums, exhibits, and attractions.
15. Encourage redevelopment of the downtown tourist district in Niagara Falls, New York including areas around the new Seneca Niagara Casino.
16. Support the Lockport Harbor marina project on the Erie Canal.

**C. Agriculture**

1. Support the establishment of a Niagara County Agribusiness Fund.
2. Continue the implementation of the Niagara County Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan, including exploring the purchase of development rights.
3. Strengthen the system for marketing fresh produce and value-added agricultural products in Niagara County, including activity with some city markets and high traffic tourism areas.

4. Continue to support the newly expanded Niagara County Wine Trail.
5. Seek funding for an agricultural economic development specialist.
6. Measure results of farm market website and other outreach.
7. Seek grower assistance grants and assist individuals with business plans.
8. Pursue funding for feasibility study for a viable agricultural project.
9. Investigate branding opportunities for Niagara County agricultural products.

**D. Commercial/Other**

1. Establish office space (i.e., an international center) designed to attract Canadian companies.
2. Develop a research center, which will focus on the cleanup and disposal of hazardous wastes.
3. Develop a commercial aircraft maintenance facility and air cargo/warehousing operation at Niagara Falls International Airport.
4. Develop a regional air transportation strategy.

**GOAL 3: Strengthen the Competitive Position of County Businesses**

**A. Reduce the cost of doing business by:**

1. Providing financial assistance, such as revolving loan funds, bonds, guaranteed loans and other programs.
2. Retaining low cost power "blocks" of hydro-power for large energy dependent companies and assist co-generation facilities.
3. Expanding training/retraining programs.
4. Expanding technical assistance programs, especially to small businesses.
5. Providing low cost incubator space for start-up companies.
6. Providing completely serviced sites and/or facilities for "just-in-time" suppliers to locate near plants.
7. Re-certifying agricultural districts as needed.

**B. Improve the business climate by:**

1. Expanding labor management councils.
2. Promoting positive aspects of Niagara County's image through tourism and industrial marketing efforts.
3. Expanding countywide promotion, information & marketing support through the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC).

**GOAL 4: Diversify the County's Economic Base**

- A. Expand marketing programs to attract Canadian and other foreign manufacturing, service, distribution and office activities.
- B. Work with New York Power Authority and other partners to promote supply chain opportunities in the emerging renewable energy sector, to existing Niagara County businesses.
- C. Promote the assets of Niagara County to renewable energy companies.
- D. Promote the assets of Niagara County and the Niagara Falls International Airport, to airlines, logistics companies.
- E. Expand incubator facilities and technical assistance programs to encourage the development of new types of business.

- F. Diversify fresh fruit and vegetable crops to those most in demand in the large urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest.
- G. Promote fishing, boating, marina, and waterfront projects to take advantage of current high market demand for water-related activities.
- H. Expand taxable and non-taxable industrial bond programs, as well as revolving loan funds and loan guarantees.

**GOAL 5: Development of a Comprehensive Education & Training Program**

- A. Education: Develop educational policies and programs in our local schools to provide employment opportunities.
- B. Training: Develop and provide job-training programs that offer skilled employment. Provide an outreach program on job availability.

Contained within these goals are six special features, which reflect the environment and special needs of Niagara County and are as follows:

1. Flexibility: A framework is provided within which individual projects and programs can be modified as conditions change over time.
2. Balance: Key diverse sectors of the County's economy, as well as all geographic areas of the County are addressed. While all areas of the County need help, focusing on a strategy of urban redevelopment will produce greater results on return of investment and allow for a more focused decision making process.
3. Opportunity: The framework allows the County to identify and take advantage of current market and funding opportunities, emerging trends and/or new technologies.
4. Short & Long Term: Short term elements of the strategy promote long term growth.
5. Broad Based Approach: The strategy recognizes and takes advantage of the wide range of groups and efforts which are likely to affect the County positively. Directing development away from sensitive areas and towards our urban centers will encourage revitalization of our cities, while protecting natural resources.
6. Focused Approach: The strategy provides a means of focusing a variety of efforts on any given high priority project so that a "critical mass" of effort will produce maximum effectiveness.

## NIAGARA COUNTY GOALS

GOAL	DESCRIPTION	ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2009	ANTICIPATED ACTION IN 2010
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Improve the quality of life for the people of Niagara County.</b>	<p>Completed the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan establishing goals, objectives, and recommendations for land use and the environment, economic development, county services and infrastructure, education, and public health and safety in Niagara County.</p> <p>Established a revolving loan fund to encourage private investment in brownfields remediation and redevelopment .</p>	<p>Continue implementing the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan and Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth.</p> <p>Continue to market Niagara County, both internally and internationally in order to foster business expansion and create job opportunities.</p>
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Increase employment opportunities by encouraging the expansion of key economic sectors.</b>	<p>Assisted companies in the manufacturing, research and development, agri-business and not-for-profit sectors. As a result of these projects, 155 jobs were retained and 368 are projected to be created over the next three years.</p> <p>Implemented the Niagara County Opportunity Zone Program, a comprehensive tax abatement program for retail and tourism related businesses locating in economically distressed areas of the Cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport.</p> <p>Continued to market Empower Niagara Program to small businesses. Have approved 6 allocations of low-cost power that resulted in nearly \$11 million in capital investment, and helped retain 364 jobs, and create another 143 jobs.</p>	<p>Continue to develop projects in these areas as well as in clusters identified by Empire State Development studies as having potential for this area including business services, logistics &amp; distribution, advanced manufacturing, food processing, renewable energy, industrial machinery, tourism and financial services.</p>
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Strengthen the competitive position of County business by reducing the cost of doing business and improving the business climate.</b>	<p>Streamlined the economic development function in Niagara County by housing the Niagara County Department of Economic Development and the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency under one roof as the Niagara County Center for Economic Development. Have partnered with the Towns of Niagara and Lockport IDAs and Niagara County's three Chambers of Commerce to further enhance and improve the business climate.</p> <p>The Niagara County Center for Economic Development aggressively marketed Niagara County to Canadian and domestic companies through a number of avenues including marketing missions, advertising, and direct mail.</p>	<p>The Niagara County Center for Economic Development continues to market Niagara County to Canadian and domestic companies through a number of avenues including marketing missions, advertising, and direct mail.</p> <p>Niagara County has implemented an Opportunity Zone program, which will offer a new incentive for commercial, retail and tourism related businesses to expand or relocate to the economically distressed areas of the Cities of Lockport, Niagara Falls or North Tonawanda. By combining the opportunity zone incentive with other available incentives, reinvestment and redevelopment can be concentrated in the urban core.</p> <p>Niagara County will continue to assist local businesses to expand by working closely with NYPA on larger projects to allocate low cost power, where applicable. Niagara County has also created the Empower Niagara Program to assist smaller companies and making it easier for them to access low-cost power.</p>



## NIAGARA COUNTY GOALS (continued)

GOAL	DESCRIPTION	ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2009	ANTICIPATED ACTION IN 2010
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Diversify the County's economic base.</b>	<p>Assisted companies in the manufacturing, research and development, agri-business and not-for-profit sectors.</p> <p>Assisted companies in the hospitality &amp; tourism, logistics/warehouse &amp; distribution, and pharmaceutical sectors.</p> <p>Began working with the New York Power Authority and other partners to promote supply chain opportunities in the emerging renewable energy sector, to existing Niagara County businesses.</p>	<p>Continue to develop projects in these areas, as well as in clusters identified by Empire State Development as having potential for this area, including advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, business services, logistics &amp; distribution, financial services, food processing, industrial machinery and tourism.</p>
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Develop a comprehensive education &amp; training program.</b>	<p>Conducted 3 seminars in conjunction with the two other industrial development agencies in Niagara County's three cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport, to familiarize businesses with the incentives and programs available through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development.</p> <p>Conducted a seminar for local municipalities and taxing jurisdictions to familiarize them with incentive programs.</p> <p>Made numerous presentations to area groups, including economic development and trade associations to present new marketing materials.</p> <p>Economic Summit for Success public event, which was scheduled for October 2009, had to be moved to March 2010 because new airport terminal building was not ready for public use. Event highlighted speakers from the business, government, education and training entities, aimed at highlighting recent successes and future opportunities for our area.</p> <p>Produced 10 cable television programs in 2009 that aired on local cable access to educate the business community and the general public on available resources and agencies.</p>	<p>Will conduct seminars in four of Niagara County's townships to familiarize businesses with the incentives and programs available through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development.</p> <p>Will work with regional partners to develop and implement the Buffalo Niagara Technology Business Innovation &amp; Growth Strategy, through the NYS Office of Science, Technology &amp; Academic Research (NYSTAR).</p> <p>Will conduct a fifth <i>Economic Summit for Success</i> public event in 2011 at a venue TBD. Speakers will continue to represent a wide segment of the business, government, education and training entities, aimed at highlighting recent successes and future opportunities for our area. This event will be sponsored by the NCCED and co-sponsored by the 3 Chambers of Commerce, and the Towns of Lockport and Niagara IDAs.</p> <p>Production of monthly cable television programs continues in 2010, which are aired on local access to educate the business community and the general public on available resources and agencies.</p>

## **VIII. ACTION PLAN: HOW DO WE GET THERE?**

Niagara County has advanced to a new level of expectation for public and private expansion with appropriate development standards that enhance, maintain, and promote the environmental and cultural integrity of our area. It has been agreed upon that structural, social and physical problems at a regional level must be addressed. Neighborhoods cannot be improved without addressing all the problems that are destroying them. Residents want real, systemic, permanent change. They want good jobs, quality education, useful job training, a sound neighborhood, and direct control of their destiny.

Thinking and acting collaboratively and using the collective strength of the public and private sectors are necessary due to the enormity of the area's economic problems. Providing an overall reference framework for planning and development in the area is important for ensuring long-term sustainability and is another goal of the regional partners. Planning efforts clearly envision a higher level of public coordination, planning, and capital investment to help transform the Region, one of the most distressed in nation.

In a November 1999 HUD Report, *Now is the Time: Places left behind in the New Economy*, Niagara Falls was listed as one of fifteen distressed northeast communities suffering from a combination of persistently high poverty, population loss and unemployment. Income and poverty figures confirm the idea suggested by labor force and unemployment data that the area is growing poorer. Niagara County has not yet recovered from the economic collapse of our old heavy-industry economy. De-industrialization and the absence of a comprehensive regional strategy to confront the changing economic realities has resulted in the area experiencing a loss of population, economic stagnation, loss of manufacturing sector employment, high concentration of sites with environmental contamination, and increasing development pressure on greenfield sites and agricultural lands.

Formalizing a regional partnership is required to further promote the economic activity that will bring much-needed new jobs and tax money to Niagara County. Building upon the partnerships that have been formed with federal, state and local agencies will be key to the Region's ability to move forward with economic revitalization strategy. Further, we must empower the cities, towns and villages to be part of any regional approach if it is to be successful. Existing partnerships include: Federal agencies such as EDA, EPA, Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Interior, National Endowment for the Arts, and the Department of Transportation; State agencies such as Empire State Development, DOT, Department of State, and the Department of Environmental Conservation; local governments such as the twenty Niagara County municipalities and neighboring Erie County; non-government organizations such as the Economic Development Alliance, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, Western New York Land Conservancy, and the Niagara Frontier Wildlife Habitat Council; educational institutions such as SUNY at Buffalo, Niagara County Community College and Niagara University; and international partners such as the University of Toronto, Environment Canada, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, University of Waterloo, and the Province of Ontario Ministries of Tourism, Environment and Transportation.

Niagara County, in conjunction with its local governments, completed a Framework for Regional Growth project with Erie County. The purpose of the Framework is to provide a vision for how the region should grow and develop over the next fifteen years. The plan identifies policies, strategies and partnerships that are needed to increase efficiency, improve livability, promote economic vitality, and conserve sensitive natural and cultural resources in the region. The Framework will help Niagara and Erie Counties make decisions about growth and development on a coordinated and consistent basis.

Our approach is to combine environmental restoration with economic development in finding new life and new jobs for our communities. Promoting regional opportunity together with our Niagara County municipalities, and working with our federal partners is imperative to ensure Niagara County’s economy is positioned to compete in the global marketplace and facilitate the re-birth of our communities.

Niagara County also participated in the completion of a “Niagara River Greenway Plan”.

Niagara County prepared a first-ever “Niagara County Communities Comprehensive Plan” beginning in 2007, and was adopted by the Niagara County Legislature in 2009. The purpose of public sector strategic planning is to establish long-term goals, annual objectives, and detailed actions and strategies that address issues related to performance, productivity, community and personal well-being and required statutory services.

## **IX. OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

### **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture remains a top priority in the Niagara County economy. The Niagara Wine Trail is one of New York State's fastest growing wine regions. Currently there are thirteen wineries on the Wine Trail with additional wineries in the planning stages. Indications are this number could easily double in the next several years. In order to facilitate growth in this sector, there is a need for capital resources to assist those entrepreneurs who would like to start a winery or other related agribusiness. The need is necessitated by the fact that many of these start-ups are viewed as high risk, due to the nature of their business. The establishment of a Niagara County Agribusiness Fund to assist these start-up companies and reduce financial risk is recommended.

### **“Value-added” Agriculture Project Possibilities**

A serious exploration of alternatives to showcase the region's fruits, vegetables and value-added agriculture products is needed. Farm markets of various sizes are found along many of the roadways in Niagara County. There is an excellent opportunity for Niagara County, where a significant volume of traffic crosses an international border to locate a publicly or private not-for-profit facility for locally grown or value-added products. It may be necessary to devote funding to study the feasibility of this project, as well as the feasibility of investing in other food crops, as they pertain to the growth of the agri-tourism market. Recent focus group discussions with farmers and county legislators on needs and issues in agriculture have resulted in specific implementable projects being identified and placed on a schedule.

### **NIAGARA COUNTY FARM STATISTICS <sup>2</sup>**

- Niagara County ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in New York State for number of farms and 23<sup>rd</sup> in the state for land in farms.
- Niagara County is estimated to have 865 farms on 142,636 acres of land or 165 acres average farm size
- In 2007, according to the Census of Agriculture, the market value of all agricultural products sold from county farms was \$103.6 million. Total sales averaged \$119,820 per farm. The leading products sold were: milk & dairy; fruits and nuts; grains and dry beans; vegetables and potatoes; and nursery & floriculture.
- The Census showed 51% of the farm operators reported farming as their principal occupation. The average age of the operator was 56.7 years.
- Niagara County is 5<sup>th</sup> among New York counties in fruits and nuts sales in 2007, and is home to the largest fresh apple packing plant in Western New York.

<sup>2</sup>New York Farm Statistics – August 2009; New York Agricultural Statistics Service, Oct. 2009, [www.nass.usda.gov/ny](http://www.nass.usda.gov/ny)

### **BROADBAND**

Access to broadband internet is increasingly important in the new economy. Broadband internet expands access to global markets, increases access to information, and improves data sharing capabilities. However, it is estimated that 75% of rural areas in New York State do not have access to affordable high speed internet, limiting business development potential and consumer access in rural areas. New York State has been working to identify current broadband service areas in an attempt to pinpoint underserved parts of

the state that might be targeted for broadband expansion projects. In addition, the federal government has instituted programs to provide financial and technical assistance in expanding broadband coverage. Niagara County is working to expand broadband access by partnering with local communities, educational institutions, hospitals, libraries, economic development agencies, and others on projects to extend service lines and install Wi-Fi hotspots for access by businesses, institutions, and residents. Niagara County is also working to attract new information technology companies to the county, such as Yahoo! Inc., which recently constructed a data center in the Town of Lockport Industrial Park, the first project of its kind in Niagara County. In addition, Niagara County submitted a proposal to Google Inc. to serve as a test site for its proposed ultra high-speed broadband internet service, which would provide internet connection speeds up to one hundred times faster than current broadband connections. Niagara County will continue to identify opportunities to expand access to broadband internet and will continue to market the county to businesses in the information technology sector.

## **BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT**

The character of the communities in Niagara County range from declining industrial cities and villages to rural and suburban townships, many of which contain at least one, if not many brownfield sites. Moreover, Niagara County has a long, dubious history with environmental contamination, where indiscriminate toxic dumping of wastes in the Niagara River and back lots was a fact of life. As home to Love Canal, the area can lay claim to the birthplace of the federal Superfund Program. There are a significant number of state and federal Superfund sites and over 300 identified brownfield sites in Niagara County. There are few tracts of undeveloped, uncontaminated land remaining for development within the County's major urban centers, making brownfield cleanup imperative for economic growth. Redeveloped, brownfields can be catalysts for community revitalization and sustainable development.

In the past, redevelopment of brownfield sites in the region has been hampered by the changing global economics, a sluggish regional economy, and the environmental legacy left behind by post-industrial decline. Niagara County is concentrating on brownfield redevelopment as a key strategy for economic regeneration and environmental revitalization, understanding that jobs, education and livable neighborhoods equal empowerment— it is the basis for regeneration and a sustainable economic future. Brownfield sites offer substantial economic opportunity to help the region compete in the 21st century and to reverse the out-migration of people, jobs and capital from the region.

Brownfields redevelopment will broaden the County's sagging tax base, attract new industry and create thousands of new jobs. The benefits of brownfields development are numerous:

- Reuse of existing infrastructure
- Protection of public health and the environment.
- Innovative reuse of sites can increase the sense of place and community in Niagara County.
- Positive effect on Niagara County's growth patterns by encouraging the redevelopment of abandoned properties within the urban core and discouraging development of green space in outlying areas.
- Several federal and state initiatives offer significant financial incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment projects.

In October 2000, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) announced the designation of the Niagara Region Brownfields Coalition as a Brownfield Showcase Community. The Niagara Region Coalition consists of the Counties of Niagara and Erie and the Cities of Niagara Falls and Buffalo. The Niagara Region Coalition is among 28 communities across the country acknowledged for its efforts to clean

up and redevelop brownfield sites. The Showcase program is a nationwide effort to promote the clean up and re-use of former industrial land to fight urban sprawl; enhance the environment; and promote sustainable, livable communities. The Showcase designation has helped the Niagara Region Coalition compete for technical and financial assistance on brownfield-related projects from over 20 federal agencies, including EDA.

The objectives of the Niagara Region Showcase Community were to develop a regional brownfields strategic waterfront plan and conduct Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) at high priority brownfield sites throughout the two counties. The regional strategic brownfields waterfront plan, entitled *Revisioning Brownfields: A Regional Strategic Approach*, was completed in 2007. The plan includes a method for prioritizing brownfield sites, principles for regional sustainable development, community involvement and environmental education, and detailed conceptual redevelopment plans for four high priority sites in Niagara County. Using the prioritization methods outlined in the plan, 79 parcels received Phase I ESAs and 6 parcels received Phase II ESAs in Erie and Niagara Counties through the Showcase Community grant funding.

Niagara County has also received three USEPA Brownfields Assessment grants for conducting site assessments on hazardous waste and petroleum contaminated brownfield sites. Through the \$550,000 in grant funding received, comprehensive site inventories were created and Phase I ESAs were conducted at 52 parcels and Phase II ESAs were conducted at 8 parcels.

USEPA awarded Niagara County, in conjunction with the City of Niagara Falls, \$1.9 million in grant funding for a brownfields cleanup revolving loan fund program through which financial incentives are provided to the public and private sectors to encourage remediation of brownfield sites. To manage the program, Niagara County created a local development corporation, the Niagara County Brownfield Development Corporation. Funding is available in the form of low-interest loans to the private sector and subgrants up to \$200,000 to municipalities and non-profits organizations who are remediating a brownfield site that they own. To date, one loan for \$250,000 has been approved and one subgrant for \$90,000 has been approved.

Municipalities within the County have also successfully undertaken brownfield projects and programs. Each of the three cities in the County have received New York State Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) grants to establish a community based revitalization plan and implementation strategy to achieve brownfield redevelopment in a proactive and systematic way. To date BOA funding has been received for the Lockport Tourism Focus Area in the City of Lockport, the Highland Area and Buffalo Avenue in the City of Niagara Falls, and the North Tonawanda waterfront in the City of North Tonawanda.

In 2008, New York State amended the Brownfield Cleanup Program to create greater tax incentives for brownfield remediation and redevelopment in New York State. The legislative amendments, however, failed to address funding for the Environmental Restoration Program. This program complements the Brownfields Cleanup Program and provides municipalities with grant funding to address contaminated properties where remediation by the private sector is not feasible. Currently, no funding is allocated to continue this program. Several municipalities in Niagara County have applications pending and additional program funding is needed as soon as possible in order for these projects to move forward.

Cleaning up contaminated sites and making them productive again means jobs and a healthier environment for Niagara County. The recent changes in state laws concerning brownfields redevelopment are a step in the right direction to help municipalities overcome some of the obstacles associated with brownfields redevelopment. The state tax incentives and funding subsidies for brownfields redevelopment

will begin to “level the playing field” with greenfield development, thus enhancing brownfield revitalization successes. However, further changes in state and federal law regarding liability relief are needed in order to continue successful brownfield redevelopment. The challenge is to integrate former brownfield properties back into the social, economic and ecological systems in ways that contribute to a vibrant urban life. EDA is a critical partner and catalyst necessary in our efforts to achieve economic revitalization in Niagara County.

## **COMMERCIAL**

### **Opportunity Zones**

In light of the changing economy and recent economic conditions, the Niagara County Legislature together with its IDA sought a method to broaden the availability of financial assistance to assist small retail related companies and commercial businesses looking to expand or relocate to Niagara County. In late 2008, the Niagara County Legislature passed a resolution asking the NCIDA to establish a comprehensive tax abatement program for retail and tourism related businesses locating in economically distressed areas of Niagara County. Specifically this resolution asked the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED) staff to reach out to the three cities and broach the topic.

As a result of steps taken by the Niagara County Legislature and NCIDA Board of Directors, the NCCED now has the opportunity to extend its current economic incentives to retail and tourism businesses interested in locating in economically-distressed areas in Niagara County. Through this new program, called Opportunity Zones, a new incentive will be offered for retail and tourism based businesses to reinvest in our downtowns and return these areas to the thriving communities they are meant to be.

The City of Niagara Falls has numerous economic development projects underway. On one front, the city is seeking to take better advantage of the millions of tourists who visit annually by offering attractions to expand the drawing power and economic impact of the Falls. At the same time, the City is pursuing redevelopment of a stagnant industrial base. As an older city, the community faces the challenge of dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars for necessary infrastructure improvements.

The following lists the priority projects USA Niagara (USAN) is working on:

**Conference Center Niagara Falls (CCNF)** – The USAN owned and developed CCNF opened in June, 2004, a new hybrid venue for meetings and events. This \$20 million 116,000 square foot facility in the heart of downtown Niagara Falls includes a 32,200 square foot Entertainment/Exhibit Center with a capacity of 4,000 people; 10,500 square foot ballroom; 15 conference rooms with built-in multi-media equipment, a 5,000 square foot dining room, and more. The center fills the void (in part), created with the loss of the City’s convention center, which was converted to the Seneca Niagara Casino in December, 2002. USAN competitively selected Global Spectrum as the new manager of CCNF starting 1/1/09. USAN also has recently entered into an agreement with the City of Niagara Falls for Global Spectrum to fully manage the maintenance and programming of activities and events on Old Falls Street.

**Crowne Plaza Hotel** – A \$34 million hotel investment in downtown Niagara Falls in 2006, ESD/USAN invested \$6 million of the \$34 million to induce the project. This project is the largest, non-gaming investment since USA Niagara was formed in 2001, now employing about 150 people.

**United Office Building / Giacomo Hotel** – An example of a successful private-public partnership between USAN and First Street Group, LLC, an affiliate of Buffalo-based Ellicott Development Company. USAN

invested \$845,000 to clear an option on the building, which led First Street Group to invest approximately \$10 million to transform downtown's long vacant historic signature building into a fully functioning asset. Built in 1929 and designed in the art deco style of that era, it is today home of the Giacomo — the premiere 38 room luxury boutique hotel in Niagara Falls. The Giacomo also features a residential component hosting 24 luxury apartments, office and retail space.

**Third Street Strategy** – USAN has been working closely with the City of Niagara Falls to identify and implement a number of discreet activities to better facilitate business development in this district. This effort is intended to build upon USAN/City streetscape infrastructure improvements completed in 2005. USAN is undertaking both technical and coordination activities with various City agencies for: new service access/parking on Third Street; updating selected City ordinances that affect small business; better tracking and promotion of available buildings for sale/for lease; and improving the quality of various promotion/collateral materials for the City's small business development programs.

**Old Falls Street-West Mall Initiative** – A groundbreaking ceremony was held on November 6, 2008, for this \$7.9 Million City-by-City funded project, which will fully restore access on Falls Street corridor from the entrance of Niagara Falls State Park through the core of downtown. Phase I of the project from the State Park to Rainbow Blvd was completed on-time/on-budget July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend and has already hosted two successful summer concert events, a Blues Festival, and a major New Year's Eve event. Phase II of the project, re-establishing Falls Street through the block containing the former Wintergarden building, is ongoing. The Wintergarden structure is now down, restoration of adjoining building facades (Rainbow Centre Mall & Quality Inn) is completed, and utilities and concrete sub-base work is completed for the new cobblestone street. Full project completion is scheduled for spring 2010.

**Niagara County Community College (NCCC) Culinary School** – USAN has led the effort with NCCC and the City of Niagara Falls to bring NCCC's Culinary Institute to downtown Niagara Falls. The proposed approximately \$15 million project would include culinary education programs, retail components (bakery, deli, wine & book store) as well as exhibition kitchens. Various locations and options are currently under consideration.

**Proposed Hotel Renovation Project** – Merani Hospitality, Inc. has proposed a \$15M project to acquire and renovate the former Fallside Hotel located at 401 Buffalo Avenue. This major downtown hotel renovation project will create 55 new jobs and includes a re-branding and substantial upgrade of a currently vacant hotel to a 3 - 3 ½ diamond hotel with approximately 200 guest rooms as well as a full service restaurant and banquet facilities. Merani was awarded a \$2M convertible loan from the ESD Upstate Regional Blueprint Fund and a \$750,000 grant from USAN.

**Redevelopment Opportunity 225 Old Falls Street** – In April 2010, USAN issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the redevelopment of The Power City Building, a prime privately-owned commercial building at 225 Old Falls Street. The historic building is located strategically between Niagara Falls State Park and the Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel, at the entrance of Old Falls Street and adjacent to the Third Street Entertainment District. The redevelopment of this site is an important component for downtown revitalization, as it could foster significant linkages between these notable areas, further connecting the major assets of downtown Niagara Falls.

**USAN Grant Program** – In 2003, USAN and the Niagara Economic Development Fund ("NEDF") authorized \$2 million in NEDF funds for the USAN Grant Program. The Grant Program provides financial assistance to projects that will create or retain jobs, and to business activity that would not occur without



public sector investment. A total of \$1,170,000 has been committed to date, leveraging over \$36 million in private sector investment.

**Buffalo Avenue Heritage District Microgrant Program** – USAN and the City of Niagara Falls have explored the establishment of a \$100,000 Microgrant Program to help revitalize and preserve the Buffalo Avenue Heritage District. The program will focus on preserving, stabilizing and upgrading the existing building stock. It is intended to assist individual property owners and small business owners to maintain major capital features of their historic properties and to incorporate features to help expand their businesses.

Harrison Place, located in the Central Business District of the City of Lockport, is a 495,000 square foot industrial complex made up of four (4) buildings. Through Niagara County’s brownfields program a Phase I environmental assessment was conducted on this property and due to the likelihood of site contamination, the County has completed a Phase II assessment. Currently, NYSDEC is conducting a site characterization soil and groundwater assessment. This facility is 80 percent vacant and was taken over by the Greater Lockport Development Corporation through a for-profit corporation known as 210 Walnut Street, LLC, which is currently evaluating re-use options.

The City of Lockport has obtained casino funds from Niagara County to match Environmental Protection Fund grant monies it received from New York State to support phase one of a multi-organizational collaborative effort to create the new Lockport Harbor Complex. Located in the City of Lockport, within the Lockport Locks Heritage District, on the north side of the Erie Canal above the locks, east of NYS Route 78, the Lockport Harbor project will provide a stopping point in downtown Lockport for boaters just above the locks. Features may include a pedestrian friendly harbor walk that will tie into the Canalway Trail, boat launch, slips and tie-ups, harbormaster station, restroom and laundry facilities, a restaurant, and parking with two points of access. Phase one of this project will result in a feasibility study and preliminary “to scale” design drawings.

One block east of this planned development is the new Canal Street (formerly Richmond Avenue) block, which is swiftly taking shape with complete rehabilitation of four historic canal stone commercial buildings, a six-hundred foot safety wall and overlook walkway completely landscaped adjacent to the canal locks, plus the new Erie Canal Discovery Center, an interactive visitors center describing and explaining canal history, engineering/inventions and canal heritage.

To maximize Erie Canal development currently underway and capitalize on the opportunity it presents the City of North Tonawanda is implementing downtown revitalization activities in concert with Erie Canal revitalization initiatives. To accomplish this, the City has taken action to implement the concept plan commissioned by the UDC in 1993 for downtown redevelopment.

The City of North Tonawanda formed the Lumber City Development Corporation (LCDC) in 2004, to assist companies investing in North Tonawanda. The organization works closely with the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency. The main product offering is a business loan fund to provide lending with flexible terms and conditions to companies that contribute to the City’s tax base and hiring new employees. The LCDC is continuing efforts to improve the appearance of the Webster Street area and to attempt to leverage further private investment. The LCDC is pursuing funding to combine with the organization’s funds for a series of demonstration projects, whereby the LCDC will: 1) purchase available buildings with historical significance and high visibility; 2) renovate and rehabilitate the building to the appropriate structural and preservationist standards; and 3) place the property out for bid for private ownership and management. Further, the organization will assist property owners with the marketing of the area and their specific properties. The LCDC has acquired the first of these structures at 64-66 Webster Street with the intention of converting the building to a boutique hotel with an associated restaurant.

The LCDC, the City and the Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas are also seeking out new ways to find the "best use" for the properties along the canal in the Webster and Main Street downtown area.

The Twin Cities and the Tonawandas Chamber of Commerce are also exploring development of a visitors and canal interpretive center at the Western Gateway to the 524-mile historic system. Tonawandas Gateway Harbor, Inc., a non-profit corporation, has been developed to operate and provide entertainment and event management for the Tonawandas Gateway Harbor Park.

We support the \$20 million request by the City of Niagara Falls for the Niagara Experience Center and \$16.5 million for their Rail Station/Intermodal Center on Main Street. We support the City of Lockport's request for \$4 million to restore the Flight of Five locks, a \$1 million request to demolish their municipal parking ramp and a \$1 million request to develop an ice hockey rink in the City. As previously mentioned under Infrastructure, we support the \$3 million investment by the City of North Tonawanda in Buffalo Bolt Business Park. In addition, the City of North Tonawanda is requesting \$500,000 to convert an 11, 000 ft<sup>2</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century building on Webster Street into a 12 – 15 room boutique hotel that will include a quality first floor restaurant. The City is also seeking a \$500,000 expansion of the Riviera Theater by connecting a 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> adjacent building that will include a café, gift shop and theater company.

Finally, a new initiative developed jointly by the City of Lockport and the Towns of Lockport and Pendleton is support for the Transit North Historic Canalway Corridor. These three municipalities are requesting \$20.065 million in development funding to transform a major 7-mile commercial corridor into a historically-themed shopping district. All of these initiatives represent major economic investments in Niagara County and must be supported.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

### **Framework for Regional Growth**

The Framework for Regional Growth is a planning document that was prepared jointly by Niagara and Erie Counties with extensive input from local municipalities and other regional stakeholders. The document was adopted by the Erie County Legislature and accepted by the Niagara County Legislature in 2007. The Framework for Regional Growth was developed in response to fractured decision-making regarding land use, growth, and development, which often results in development patterns that lead to inefficient utilization of infrastructure, loss of important natural resources, abandonment of traditional population centers, and sprawling growth across the region. The plan establishes a vision for how the region will grow and develop in the coming years, and it outlines policies, programs, and projects consistent with that vision. It promotes coordinated decision-making across political jurisdictions on issues affecting land use, growth, and development, and promotes sustainable development patterns. Niagara County continues to work with Erie County on implementation of the Framework and has targeted use of geographic information systems and county level review of development projects as opportunities to advance Framework principles.

## **Geographic Information System (GIS)**

Niagara County's GIS program is a coordinated effort to manage and share local, county, and regional level data using industry standards in databasing and mapping technologies. The program endeavors to provide access to maps and data by all units of government as well as community-based organizations and the public. The program improves data sharing and communications capabilities between Niagara County departments, municipalities, partner agencies/organizations, and Erie County. GIS technology provides Niagara County and Niagara County Center for Economic Development staff with the ability to access real property data, track changes in land use, monitor important agricultural and environmental resources, map economic development projects, perform site assessments, assist with site selection, and conduct demographic analyses.

Since 2002, Niagara County has been working aggressively to implement the recommendations of its GIS Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan through hardware and software acquisition, training for key county departments and staff, and development of custom GIS applications to improve access to information and streamline departmental operations. Niagara County has also invested heavily in Pictometry aerial photography software, which is used widely by county departments and municipalities. In addition, Niagara County has entered into a strategic partnership with Erie County to coordinate and share costs associated with GIS development and deployment, including regional level initiatives. Niagara County continues to develop and strengthen the partnerships necessary to promote the use of GIS as an efficient means for storing, accessing, and analyzing information about the region. The Niagara County Center for Economic Development continues to identify new ways to use GIS to benefit its myriad projects, programs, and services, including outreach to businesses and provision of technical planning services to municipalities, businesses, community groups, and others.

## **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan**

The Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Niagara County Legislature in July 2009 following a two-year county driven effort. This countywide plan provides guidance on the allocation of resources for county projects and services through 2030. In addition, it serves as a tool for encouraging desirable land uses and development patterns, promoting a strong local economy, improving delivery of public services, prioritizing and coordinating capital projects and improvements in public infrastructure, protecting important natural resources, and enhancing the quality of life of Niagara County residents. The plan focuses on five key areas: Land Use and the Environment; Economic Development; County Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure; Education; and Public Health and Safety. It identifies a future vision for the county and charts a course of action to achieve that vision based on short and long-range planning goals, policy statements, and strategies that recognize and respect the rich diversity and different needs of the 20 communities that make up the county. The plan was developed with significant community input and is intended as a tool to be used by diverse county stakeholders. This is reflected in the theme of the plan, which encourages stakeholders to "Communicate, Collaborate, and Connect." Niagara County continues to identify resources and steps towards implementation of the plan.

## **INDUSTRIAL - MANUFACTURING**

The Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency proposes to construct a 30,000 square foot multitenant building in the IDA Industrial Park. This multitenant facility is designed to accommodate the increased demand, both domestically and internationally, for new, clean warehouse and light manufacturing space. With the parity of the Canadian dollar, there has been significant increase in demand for this type of

space. This facility will be financed through commercial loans, equity and governmental sources. The estimated cost is \$2,000,000. We will be requesting up to \$1 million from USEDA.

The City of Niagara Falls is proposing the development of a 50,000 square foot “flex” or business incubator building.

The Town of Wheatfield proposes to construct a new incubator building in the Town. The building will be approximately 18,000 sq. ft., expandable to 25,000 sq. ft. The building will be single-story, which can be divided into three or four individual areas. The proposed cost estimate is approximately \$1 million. Also in the Town of Wheatfield, Calamar, a private development & real estate company, continues to develop the 150-acre Woodlands Corporate Center, east and west campuses. The complex includes Class A offices, industrial, flex, medical and retail space, along with senior housing and patio homes.

As previously mentioned under the Brownfields Redevelopment category, the 24-acre Roblin Steel site in the City of North Tonawanda has been remediated and is ready for development. The City is in the process of contracting for the development of site plan options to guide the redevelopment and insure that it is done in a professional, consistent, and aesthetically pleasing manner.

The Wurlitzer Industrial Park complex and National Industrial Park, former single-tenant buildings converted into multi-tenant facilities, continue to offer opportunities for businesses to rent commercial and industrial space at a reasonable cost within close proximity to regional transportation routes. The City of North Tonawanda, in concert with the Lumber City Development Corporation, is working with Kissling Interests for reuse of the 160,000 ft<sup>2</sup> former Remington Rand facility. The building, which has fallen into disrepair, is structurally sound and is a reminder of the City’s proud industrial past. Its location along the Gateway Harbor of the Erie Canal makes it a critical piece of the redevelopment puzzle for the City’s downtown waterfront district. Through Niagara County’s brownfields program a Phase I environmental assessment was conducted on this property and indicated that minimal contamination exists. Redevelopment plans include 81 live/work lofts, a fitness center, and restaurant.

The Niagara County Legislature approved inclusion of infrastructure funds for the Buffalo Bolt site (previously referred to as Roblin Steel) in its formal request for Upstate Revitalization Funding in 2008. Additionally, the City also submitted appropriations requests with the support of Niagara County for the construction of an access road to open the site up for full development. The Niagara County Center for Economic Development has worked in conjunction with the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE) to earmark the site as a regional priority for federal funding.

The City of Niagara Falls continues to investigate techniques to bring the benefits of the Empire Zone and Renewal Community programs together with the development potential of surplus industrial locations. The City continues to make strides with work such as the Highland Area Redevelopment Plan that would reconnect existing industrial infrastructure with actual business park development and the preparation of accessible, clean, serviceable land that is important to enhancing the City’s job retention and growth as well as market flexibility. The City has begun to expand its efforts along the Buffalo Avenue industrial corridor as well.

The Low Cost Power component of the Upstate Blueprint Fund request is designed to reauthorize Power for Jobs legislation and provide businesses 7-year contracts for energy certainty, as these contracts are set to expire this year, and establish new criteria and new allocation methods for power distribution. We fully support the New York State Power for Jobs Program and recommend all business contracts be extended for 7 years. This would provide energy certainty to approximately 19 companies, who receive a combined 5.3 megawatts of power, and have promised to retain a total of 3,365 jobs.

NYPA Expansion & Replacement Power is an extremely valuable tool we promote as a part of our countywide Business Retention Program. We strongly recommend that capital investment, especially for the manufacturing sector, be the key criteria in determining the process of power allocation under these programs.

The Venture Capital element in the Upstate Blueprint Fund request is designed to establish a \$10 million venture capital fund, a pilot program to provide seed capital tied to small companies that have the potential to expand into major employers. We offer 3 companies that have such potential: Canrom Photovoltaics is a developer and manufacturer of solar cells and modules; CENO Technologies is a start-up company that will be producing high-tech powder coating used in aerospace and defense industries. Finally, Worldwide Kiln, a Canadian company seeking a U.S. location that develops and manufactures state-of-the-art grinding equipment.

Our Blueprint Fund request is to offer \$1.5 million in investment for these and other high-tech start-up companies.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Infrastructure element in Niagara County's Upstate Blueprint Fund request is designed to target capital for the creation of development-ready sites and industrial parks to bring existing sites up to standards that businesses are seeking today. This is also designed for public investment to leverage private dollars. Working with our partners we have identified several initiatives that will increase capacity at our industrial parks to keep pace with current business demand.

Electric Service upgrades are necessary at our industrial park in Wheatfield. With the pending sale of remaining parcels, electric service in the central and western portions of the park now requires completion. We are requesting \$65,000 for this work.

The City of North Tonawanda, through the New York State Environmental Restoration Program, has remediated and cleared for redevelopment the former Roblin Steel site, now known as Buffalo Bolt Business Park. The site requires \$1.5 million in infrastructure improvements to market the site to developers. In addition, \$1.5 million is requested to construct a 30,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> spec building for warehousing, distribution and manufacturing uses.

The City on North Tonawanda is also proposing to construct a 40 – 45, 000 ft.<sup>2</sup> spec building at the former Occidental Chemical (Durez/Oxy) site at a cost of \$2 million.

The Town of Lockport IDA requires \$2.125 million for infrastructure build-out in the park. This improvement will allow the park opportunity for continued growth. \$2.2 million is requested to construct a 30,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> spec building for distribution and manufacturing uses.

The Town of Niagara seeks \$2 million for construction of a 30,000 ft.<sup>2</sup> spec building with quick access to the I-190 New York State Thruway.

One of the new elements in airport development is the future acquisition and use of the Army Reserve Hangar properties in the Town of Niagara. Should the Town of Niagara acquire this site, they will need support for the operation, maintenance, demolition, rehabilitation, and infrastructure improvements in order to accommodate new business growth. Approximately \$2.5 million over two years would be necessary to assist in this effort.

The Town of Cambria is seeking support for the demolition of abandoned buildings including asbestos abatement at the former Lockport Airforce Station – NIKE site located at Routes 31 and 425 at a cost of \$1.4 million.

Roads, Bridges and Highways is designed to allocate \$100 million for a variety of infrastructure issues. Listed here are priority projects under Roads for Niagara County, totaling \$19.2 million.

Listed here are the priority bridge projects for Niagara County totaling \$5.1 million dollars:

1. *Miller Road Bridge over Mud Creek, Town of Royalton* – Timber deck over steel beams to be replaced with single span concrete precast slab on abutments on steel piles. Also guide and bridge rail, storm and under drainage work.

**Request: \$1,000,000**

2. *Niagara Road Bridge over Bergholz Creek, Town of Wheatfield* – Similar rehabilitation work as described above.

**Request: \$1,000,000**

3. *Chestnut Street Bridge over East Branch of Twelve Mile Creek, Town of Wilson* – Similar rehabilitation work as described above.

**Request: \$1,000,000**

4. *Lockport Road Bridge over Bergholz Creek* – Construction of a new bridge on Lockport Road over Bergholz Creek, Town of Wheatfield.

**Request: \$1,155,000**

5. *Griswold Street Bridge over Tributary of Mud Creek, Town of Royalton* – Replace existing 26' concrete deck with jack arch, single span concrete slab on concrete abutments on steel piles. Guide & bridge rail, storm & under drainage, scour protection, establish turf & paving.

**Request: \$1,000,000**

**Robert Moses Parkway (RMP) – South & North Segments** – USA Niagara (USAN) entered into an MOU with State Parks, NYS DOT, and the City of Niagara Falls in Spring 2006 to jointly solicit funding, provide non-federal matching funds, and administer projects to reconfigure two segments of the RMP: a “South” segment along the Upper Niagara River from John Daly Blvd to Prospect Street and a “North” segment along the Niagara Gorge from Main Street to the Village of Lewiston. Planning/design efforts on both segments are being managed by State Parks. Public scoping is now completed on the South segment and it has progressed to preliminary engineering; public scoping on the North segment has not yet started.

On September 15, 2009, the City of Niagara Falls, in full cooperation/support with State Parks, USAN, and NYSDOT, filed an application with the Federal Highway Administration for \$52.5 million under the federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) (aka “federal stimulus”) program to: 1) fund the balance of construction costs of the South segment; 2) to upgrade its parallel road – Buffalo Avenue (which contains an emerging heritage district); and 3) to construct a “first phase” project along the North RMP corridor from Main Street to Findlay Avenue, consisting of a project that combines access

provided by RMP and Whirlpool Street (which immediately parallels RMP) into a single waterfront street. Letters from all key municipalities along the Niagara River corridor have been received by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood supporting this TIGER application.

## **MARKETING**

Marketing is meant to expand efforts to tap international markets, especially Canada, to support a marketing budget to complement local initiatives. Our office began its Canadian marketing campaign in 2004 and over the past four years has been building a marketing and development program which has translated into success at our industrial park and established Canadian interest throughout Niagara County.

To continue with our marketing efforts, Niagara County has requested \$150,000 for its Canadian Marketing Campaign and an additional \$150,000 for our Domestic Marketing Campaign to water-starved states through the Upstate Blueprint Fund.

## **PARKS**

The Parks element in the Upstate Blueprint Fund request is designed to allocate \$80 - \$100 million for the restoration of New York State Parks. We support the planned improvements at the Niagara Reservation State Park, including the Goat Island Bridge. We also recommend an investment in state parks that support our fisheries industry, another important component in our local economy. Proposed construction of a \$13.5 million fish hatchery at Joseph Davis State Park and \$100,000 in boat launch and transient dockage at Fort Niagara State Park are necessary facilities to attract visitors and sustain the viability of this important industry.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

The Town of Wheatfield plans to construct a recreation building and garage/storage building for the Sewer/Water department. 2007-2008 town funds will be used for these municipal projects.

In January 2006, the City of Lockport submitted a Non-Defense Appropriations Request to their federal representatives. The request was for \$4 million through the Transportation, Treasury, Housing Urban Development, Judiciary Appropriations Bill, EDI Program. This \$4 million project is a key component of the \$16 million Demonstration Project spelled out in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Management Plan. This component provides for renovation of the Municipal Parking Ramp (which is currently closed for safety reasons) in downtown Lockport including rehabilitation of deteriorated concrete work, drainage infrastructure, ramp elevator, and creation of new facade walls, all as recommended by the National Park Service.

Witmer Road in the Northwest portion of the City of North Tonawanda is subject to frequent flooding due to the expanded wetlands in close proximity, and the lack of an adequate drainage system to handle the runoff. The area was developed residentially before the flooding was a serious problem. Forty-three (43) homes are in the area with no drainage to handle the flood problems. Additionally the road is impassable due to flooding multiple times each year, cutting off the only viable North/South route in that portion of the City. Finally, one of the City's growing businesses has made complaint to the City due to the negative effects of the flooding on their suppliers and employees.

This priority project in North Tonawanda is an attempt to piggyback off of a \$3 million city investment in an outfall into the Niagara River, with twin 102 inch pipes leading to a catch basin that is well positioned

to handle all of the water runoff in the northwest portion of the City. Specifically, this project entails the construction of just over one-mile of storm sewer from the catch basin northwest to Witmer Road and north along the length of the road to the City line. The southern half of the sewer will be 42 inches, to handle the mounting water being displaced from the road and the residential areas. Ten (10) catch basins will be included in the project to ensure rainwater does not stand on the road or flow into houses. The full project includes the appropriate siding and aprons in the areas receiving new sewers; and the total project cost is estimated at \$1 million.

## **RECREATION**

Niagara County is surrounded by water. The Niagara River, Lake Ontario, Erie Canal, and numerous creeks and streams contribute to one of the greatest fresh water fisheries in North America. Niagara County continues to support and promote its' fisheries as part of an overall tourism promotion program, and through a partnership with the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation.

Part of this effort included the completion in 2008 of a feasibility study for a Lower Great Lakes Fisheries Research Center and Fish Hatchery. The facility's primary purpose would be to raise sport fish, primarily lake trout, for stocking into Lake Ontario and Lake Erie in support of the State's recreational fishing industry. The facility would also serve as a research facility, an educational asset and a tourist attraction all rolled into one.

The study evaluated four sites, and recommended Joseph Davis State Park as the most favorable site to establish the projected \$39.7 million facility.

This study is only phase one of the process. Phase II, and next steps include discussions with New York State Parks, engineering firms, consultants and many other companies. There will also be an outreach effort to form partnerships and develop relationships to make this project a reality. Another critical next step requires conducting a detailed water investigation study at the chosen site.

The City of North Tonawanda, is implementing a downtown signage and streetscape program to enhance linkages between the downtown and waterfront amenities and recreational opportunities. Additionally the City of North Tonawanda is in the process of reworking one municipal duty statement to create a new Recreation supervisor position that will largely be responsible for the upkeep of waterfront parks.

In 2008 the City of North Tonawanda took ownership of the 54 acre brownfield turned greenspace known as Gratwick Riverside Park. A site plan for redevelopment of the Park has been developed and was deemed to be consistent by the Niagara River Greenway Commission. The City pursued numerous funding sources to implement the Plan – that is designed to improve accessibility to the waterfront, improve connectivity with local neighborhoods, provide better connections to regional waterfront projects, provide more programming for residents and visitors of all ages, and provide the amenities necessary for the Park to flourish. Niagara County provided \$248,000 of its share of greenway funds toward this project. Playground equipment was ordered in December 2008 and the design for the natural play area is conceptually completed, pending any cost adjustments needed when the final costs are known on the fishing pier. The fishing pier design has been presented to the NYSDEC and the Army Corps of Engineers for permitting approvals. Representatives of both the DEC and Army Corps of Engineers have provided positive feedback about the design and project as a whole. Construction documents will be finalized upon formal permitting approval.

The Town of Porter plans to create a fire company park in Ransomville.



The Town of Wheatfield plans to expand its town parks and develop new baseball diamonds and soccer fields.

## **TOURISM**

Niagara Tourism & Convention Corp. (NTCC) Official Visitor Center – USA Niagara (USAN) sponsored NTCC’s application for funding for the Niagara USA Official Visitor Center Project through the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP), a federal reimbursement program through the Federal Highway Administration. In November 2006, a \$1M federal grant was awarded toward this \$2.1M project. The Visitor Center will be comprised of a public gallery containing visitor information attendant stations, all-season gathering spaces, and displays of regional attractions; space for small meetings and promotional videos on attractions in the region; public restroom facilities; production areas for brochures and other tourist information; and administrative space for NTCC staff. Construction was awarded in August 2009. The building is scheduled to be substantially complete by June 2010.

Niagara Experience Center (NEC) – The top initiative for the City of Niagara Falls and a top state and federal funding priority in the Buffalo Niagara Partnership’s Regional Agenda—will be a \$100 million market-changing experiential museum, interpretative center and portal to attractions throughout the Buffalo-Niagara region. USAN has provided staff support for NEC Inc., the organization charged with developing the project. Supporters of the NEC have asked for \$20 million in federal funding. An additional state investment of \$20 million would finance critical components of the master plan to make the project “real” to all other stakeholders necessary for the successful development of the project. The rest of the funding would have to be secured from a private sector operator, sponsorships, the City of Niagara Falls and debt.

Artpark, located in Lewiston, is a New York State Park situated on the Niagara River Gorge, and has been in existence since 1974. It is a unique public park, host to Western New Yorks most innovative venue for summer art festivals and performing arts. Artpark offers entertainment such as Broadway musicals, band concerts, celebrity performances, and music and cultural festivals, many of which are free. Artpark also offers art, theater and video “camps” for youth and a variety of family programs. The continuing “Tuesdays at the Park”, and “Wednesdays on the Gorge” summer series provide weekday evening entertainment.

The Village of Youngstown, New York and the Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario lie on opposite shores of the Niagara River at the confluence of the River and the fifth Great Lake, Lake Ontario. Though the US-Canadian boundary separates these two municipalities, in reality it is but a mere 2,000 feet of river water that forms the divide. Because of the proximity of these two settlements to one another and due to their strategic locations at the mouth of the Niagara River, both communities share long, distinguished histories.

Today, rich histories, well-preserved architecture and historic sites, and main street commercial districts have become the life force of the economies of Youngstown and Niagara-On-The-Lake (NOTL). Evident by the hundreds of thousands of visitors that are drawn to these locations every year, these communities have become an eclectic mix of old and new, and provide a diversity of cultural and heritage tourism attractions.

However, currently, there is no easy way for visitors to travel between these two communities, which together offer enormous tourism possibilities and opportunities for business development. Therefore, the Niagara County Legislature, through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, together with

the Village of Youngstown, New York and the Town of Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario, are seeking to develop a ferry service on the Niagara River between Youngstown and Niagara-On-The-Lake. By connecting these two unique destinations with a passenger ferry service, the tourism draw of both communities will be enhanced.

Based on the overwhelming success of a promotional event and consistent demand to renew the ferry service which once served the two forts decades ago, the Niagara County Legislature, through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, has continued to work with Youngstown and Niagara-On-The-Lake to establish a permanent ferry service. Once approved, a pilot service is expected to commence.

With the assistance of the USDA to refinance a mortgage to the Wienke Farm, the Sanborn Area Historical Society constructed an equipment storage building. Now equipped with electric and skylights, this 48' x 93' steel building has a concrete floor and two work areas. A number of displays, including an early 20<sup>th</sup> century farm kitchen, are open to the public in this building. Equipment maintenance is performed on machinery used regularly on the farm in this building as well. The Sanborn Area Historical Society now uses the century-old barn as part of its interpretive farm museum (which opened in 2008) and can rotate displays as they come in. This addition allows them to accept large farm artifacts and store them out of the elements until ready for display.

The City of Lockport has identified the restoration of Erie Canal Locks 67-71, known as the "Flight of Five", as the City's number one tourism initiative. A Flight of Five Committee was created and to date have obtained \$2.4 million in federal transportation funding and an additional \$300,000 in state funds toward restoration of the Flight of Five site. HABS has performed a state of the art 3-D survey of the Flight of Five using laser scanners. A project manager has been hired for three years by the city with funds provided by the Grigg-Lewis Foundation. A consortium of Engineering and Historic Preservation specialists have provided professional engineering and design services, which included a sediment sampling study, followed by a Hydraulic Study of the canal locks in Lockport. The city's goal is to restore the Flight of Five to its mid-19th century condition. Actual restoration work began in August 2009 through a demonstration project.

In 2004, state law legislation created the Niagara River Greenway Commission. The purpose of the Commission is to serve as a cooperative regional organization that will work with participating state agencies, municipalities, organizations and residents to implement a linear system of parks, conservation and recreation areas that will redefine the Niagara River region by increasing landside access to the river, augment economic revitalization activities and celebrate the region's industrial heritage.

The Niagara River Greenway plan incorporates and complements various aspects of Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plans, state designated trailways such as the Seaway Trail, Niagara Wine Trail and Erie Canal Trail as well as the National Park Service's proposed National Heritage Area. A comprehensive greenway will significantly improve the quality of life for local residents and drastically enhance the tourism potential of the Niagara River Region.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA) has the capacity to accommodate the landing and take-off of major aircraft. Construction of the new state-of-the-art \$31.5 million terminal is complete, and the new terminal is open for business. The terminal is the first major component of an overall \$42.5 million airport improvement project. The 68,000 ft<sup>2</sup> facility is three times the size of the former terminal, with a second story that includes new jet bridges that airport officials are confident will help draw more interest in the facility. Creating the

demand for scheduled passenger services will complement Niagara Falls as an attraction and offer many advantages to the public and private sector. In 2007, Myrtle Beach Direct Air began charter service from NFIA to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as well as stops in St. Petersburg, Florida. Charters are scheduled twice weekly, and are a non-stop service. This airport is critical to economic development in Niagara County and the region. The County continues to work on airport development plans with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). Niagara County has identified Logistics/Distribution/Warehousing as a growth cluster, and continues to work with the NFTA, NFIA and other stakeholders in developing the airport for air cargo operations. A new state-of-the-art passenger terminal building at the Niagara Falls Airport is now under construction.

On the opposite side of the Niagara Falls Airport is the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Base, Niagara County's second largest employer with over 3,000 employees. Niagara County supports the Niagara Falls Base through the Niagara Military Affairs Council (NIMAC) formed by the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce in 1996. NIMAC was formed with the potential return of a Base Closure Commission and more importantly, with an effort to "Grow the Base".

New York State and Niagara County have actively participated in the "Grow the Base" campaign. In 2006 the State of New York provided funding for this effort. These funds, \$100,000, were used to retain Hyjek & Fix, Inc., a Washington consultant, to assist our efforts to secure needed construction dollars at the Base. A strategic plan was prepared for the Niagara Falls Airbase by Hyjek & Fix, Inc. This plan identifies short- and long-term plans, including an integral milestone chart. The planned development at both the Niagara Falls Airport and Air Base serve as key components to designate this area as a multi-modal transportation hub.

Over the years, the Town of Wheatfield has advocated for a passenger station stop to connect with the Niagara Falls Airport. A new station stop would allow local government to promote the development of this area, including an intermodal transportation center, which would link air, high, transit and rail transportation modes. A station in the area would also better serve residents in eastern Niagara and northern Erie Counties.

The City of Niagara Falls is moving forward on its plans to construct new border infrastructure in the form of a new International Train Station. The intent is to create a rail centered multi-modal, multi-functional transportation facility at the Whirlpool-Rapids bridgehead. The proposal will also provide for the first time, at the border and in a single facility, U.S. Customs and Border Protection processing in conjunction with other services dedicated to passenger rail service. In addition to furthering the objectives of creating improved transportation infrastructure, congestion mitigation and installation of necessary law enforcement and safety improvements, the project will expand and enhance the modal alternatives for international travel between the Province of Ontario, Canada and New York State. Another important objective is protection of the "Old Customs House," a National Register (NR) historic transportation structure incorporating its restoration and reuse as part of the project. This proposal is in direct response to long-identified infrastructure and operational deficiencies related to moving goods and people by rail across the U.S. border with Canada. This project will improve safety and mobility of the traveling public, border enforcement capabilities, economic opportunities and local quality-of-life issues.

## **WATERFRONT**

Niagara County is surrounded in large part by water. The Niagara River, Lake Ontario, Erie Canal, and numerous creeks and streams contribute to one of the greatest fresh water fisheries in North America. Niagara County continues to support and promote its fisheries as part of an overall tourism promotion program, and through a partnership with the NTCC.

Part of this effort included the completion in 2008 of a feasibility study for a Lower Great Lakes Fisheries Research Center and Fish Hatchery. The facility's primary purpose would be to raise sport fish, primarily lake trout, for stocking into Lake Ontario and Lake Erie in support of the State's recreational fishing industry. The facility would also serve as a research facility, an educational asset and a tourist attraction all rolled into one.

The study evaluated four sites, and recommended Joseph Davis State Park as the most favorable site to establish the projected \$39.7 million facility. This study is only phase one of the process. Phase II and next steps include discussions with New York State Parks, engineering firms, consultants and other companies. There will also be an outreach effort to form partnerships and develop relationships to make this project a reality. Another critical next step requires conducting a detailed water investigation study at the chosen site.

The City of Niagara Falls' updated waterfront plans reemphasizes the importance of reconnecting many elements of the cityscape such as the downtown, its neighborhoods and the Niagara River Waterfront. New design frameworks aim to repair and improve the surrounding urban and natural environments as well as reconnect the physical and historical spaces to create a meaningful understanding of Niagara Falls' place in the history of the Niagara Riverfront. The City's waterfront plan is an aggressive waterfront strategy to help Niagara Falls assume its proper role in the economic vitality of the region. The strategy is based on an assumption that the environmental regeneration of Niagara Falls must go hand in hand with its economic resurgence. The strategy's proposals for developing natural green infrastructure and, in particular heritage-based attractions, restoring health to the environment, and creating community-wide access to the waterfront are interconnected and interdependent with other emerging initiatives, including the work of the USA Niagara Corporation. Its intent is to create a waterfront that is unique, enhances the quality of life for citizens, generates confidence among private investors, and attracts tourists to spend significantly more time and money in the city. In all, the waterfront development program behind the strategy encompasses nearly fifty individual projects, plus four citywide initiatives. The preliminary cost estimate totals \$145 million and should take ten years. Citywide improvements address: 1) Access to the waterfront by completing a waterfront trail system that reconnects Niagara Falls neighborhoods with the waterfront. Recently completed Phase I of the Riverview section of the Niagara River Trail anticipates additional Phase II improvements and private development at LaSalle Waterfront Park. Trail extensions will eventually link eastward to Griffon Park, northward to Artpark in Lewiston, including new linkages and access points all along the Niagara River; 2) Mitigation of the negative impacts of the Robert Moses Parkway on waterfront access, urban environment, and city image through its reconfiguration; 3) Creation of a city museum or experience center downtown as the focal attraction of an expanding set of heritage and cultural interpretive attractions or discovery centers, and; 4) Bringing state park status to the Niagara Gorge and/or the creation of an independent Niagara River Park Trust and National and World Heritage Area designation to the entire Niagara River Corridor.

The Olcott Harbor Breakwater project in the Town of Newfane proposes construction of a 600 foot offshore breakwater in Lake Ontario, perpendicular to existing federal piers. While a number of potential designs for the breakwater have been considered, this configuration best meets the goals for the project. The improvements are necessary to promote a safe harbor and also meet the growing demand for boat slips in the Town of Newfane and Niagara County. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has prepared several preliminary feasibility studies and cost-benefit analyses for this project. The next step will involve procurement of funds to conduct a full feasibility analysis for the project and develop plans and specifications for the final breakwater design. The Town of Newfane has already begun improvements to the harbor in advance of this project. In 2005, the Town completed electrical upgrades at the Newfane Marina, which were necessary to promote safe use of the harbor. The upgrades were funded in part by a grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. The Town is currently planning additional

upgrades to support harbor usage. The combined upgrades will ensure harbor safety, expand usage of the harbor, and promote greater access to waterfront amenities.

Public and private property continues to suffer from erosion and neglect along Cayuga Creek, off the Upper Niagara River. A restoration program modeled after the award winning Eighteenmile Creek project is being implemented on Cayuga Creek. To guide the restoration efforts, the United States Army Corps of Engineers is developing a Watershed Restoration Road Map. In addition, Niagara County, on behalf of the City of Niagara Falls secured funding through the Niagara County Environmental Fund to establish the LaSalle Canoe Trail along Cayuga Creek. This project will occur over a two-year period and consists of constructing a canoe launch, removing dead trees and vegetation that are impeding canoe navigation, and installing educational signage along the established trail.

The Niagara County Legislature has gone on record in support of the \$1.8 million Olcott Harbor Breakwater construction, which would leverage other matching federal funds. The Legislature has also supported \$150,000 for the Cayuga Creek Watershed Restoration Plan, the County's top priority restoration project. We also support \$75,000 for access improvements to the Olcott east pier, \$100,000 to purchase public fishing rights at Eighteenmile Creek in Newfane, and \$100,000 to assist pen rearing projects that benefit trout and salmon stockings along the Lake Ontario shoreline in Niagara County. Another important issue related to our fresh water and the environment is the Great Lakes Compact. The Niagara County Legislature went on record in 2008 in full support of this compact, which the New York State Legislature passed.

The Cities of North Tonawanda and Tonawanda, located at the confluence of the Niagara River and Erie Canal, serve as the Western Gateway to the State's 524-mile Canal System. As an urban gateway location with a multitude of retail and service establishments, the Twin Cities have a greater opportunity to attract visitors than many other locations on the Canal System. North Tonawanda is also less than 10 miles from Niagara Falls, which attracts more than 12 million visitors annually. The Western Canal Gateway Initiative, now complete, is viewed as the City of North Tonawanda's major catalyst for commercial revitalization. This initiative includes Tonawanda's Harbor Improvements at Gateway Park (formerly Pinochle Park) on Sweeney Street in front of the Gateway Center, a 55,000 square foot residential and commercial complex, and additional improvements to the east on Sweeney Street between Main Street and Payne Avenue. Specifically, canalfront and downtown revitalization activities include docking, a pavilion, park furnishings, lighting, a waterfront esplanade, and improvements to the canal wall, as well as a winding canalway trail in the green space between Oliver Street and Payne Avenue. These improvements, along with the reconstruction of Sweeney Street between Main and Oliver Streets, were made at a cost of approximately \$2 million with funding provided primarily by the State's Canal Corporation.

In addition, the City of North Tonawanda is adding new docking along the Sweeney Street canal wall dock from Marion Street to the Rail Bridge at Oliver Street, and providing electric and water hookups for boats along the length of the wall dock.

The Cities of North Tonawanda and Tonawanda are continuing to coordinate their mutually supportive canal revitalization activities to enhance the attractiveness of the historic waterway and improve regional economic conditions.

In the City of Niagara Falls, reconfiguring the Robert Moses Parkway between downtown and Lewiston is called for in the City's Strategic Master Plan. The intent of the plan is to focus attention upon the economic and recreational potential of the Niagara River Gorge. The goal of the plan is to increase the usage of the Gorge open space for both citizens and visitors while renewing interest and visitation.

Along the Upper Niagara River, the City of Niagara Falls completed Phase I of the Riverview Trail, a hiking and bike path along the Robert Moses corridor from the Niagara Reservation to the North Grand Island Bridges. The City is also planning improvements at other key “waterfront modes” where access is an impediment to local development goals, as well as at key waterfront parks in the LaSalle area of the City.

The City of Lockport completed a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program focusing on the Erie Canal and Eighteenmile Creek. The plan is currently under final review by the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources has undergone a 60 day agency review. Final revisions are in the process of being made. Once approved, the plan will help guide development throughout the waterfront areas of the City. Furthermore, implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan will lead to a higher quality of life, while boosting economic development activity.

## **X. PRIORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS** **BY CATEGORY**

### **AGRICULTURE:**

- ◇ Agribusiness Funding to support agricultural enterprises in the County – Niagara County
- ◇ Funding to help promote and expand the Niagara Wine Trail (agri-tourism) – Niagara County

### **BROADBAND:**

- ◇ Expand access to broadband internet in underserved areas of the County – Niagara County

### **BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT:**

- ◇ Phase I site assessments and preliminary investigation into potential environmental contamination/site impairments for various parcels – Niagara County
- ◇ Phase II and II site assessments, soil samplings and analysis as well as other environmental surveys as necessary for parcels flagged during Phase I site assessments for various parcels – Niagara County
- ◇ Site cleanup, demolition and remediation of identified brownfield sites, including building demolition required to prepare the sites for redevelopment – Niagara County
- ◇ Cleanup of Harrison Place site (formerly Commerce Square) for redevelopment – City of Lockport
- ◇ Cleanup of historic Mill Street and Lowertown sites for redevelopment – City of Lockport
- ◇ Cleanup Simonds Steel property and industrial park development – City of Lockport
- ◇ Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor Brownfield Opportunity Area Project, City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Highland Avenue Brownfield Opportunity Area Project, City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Highland Area Greenspace Consortium Green Jobs Training – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Porter Road Brownfield Site Redevelopment – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Cleanup of Tonawanda Island sites for redevelopment – City of North Tonawanda
- ◇ Former Lockport Air Force Base Station/NIKE site asbestos abatement, demolition of abandoned buildings – Town of Cambria
- ◇ Youngstown Cold Storage site - remediation and demolition of contaminated buildings in preparation for redevelopment – Village of Youngstown

### **COMMERCIAL:**

- ◇ Support Niagara County Opportunity Zones in the Cities of Lockport, Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda – Niagara County
- ◇ Niagara County IDA Conference Center – purchase equipment and upgrade broadband infrastructure in support of developing and marketing a video conferencing and training center for business – Niagara County
- ◇ Restoration of the historic Palace Theatre – City of Lockport
- ◇ Daly Boulevard/Niagara Street Commercial Redevelopment – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Hotel Development – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Cultural District Planning and Development – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Gateway Harbor Inn – redevelop existing building into a boutique hotel – City of North Tonawanda
- ◇ Expansion of Riviera Theater – City of North Tonawanda

- ◇ Façade improvement program – matching grant program to upgrade commercial building exteriors consistent with design guidelines in targeted commercial districts – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Improvements to enhance Transit North infrastructure and streetscaping to enhance attractiveness for retail business expansion; relocation of municipal water line; streetscape improvements (median, crosswalks, and signage); relocation of utility lines and poles; related paving and acquisition expenses – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Relocation of Transit Road water line, from the intersection of NY 93 (Robinson Road) to the Niagara County line – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Frontier House restoration – rehab historical building for commercial and residential development – Village of Lewiston

**INDUSTRIAL:**

- ◇ Proposed Highland Green Energy Business Park - City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Development of 50,000 sq. ft. Industrial flex or incubator building - City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Construct a 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> spec building for warehousing, distribution, and manufacturing uses in the Buffalo Bolt Business Park – City of North Tonawanda
- ◇ Construct a 40,000 – 45,000 ft<sup>2</sup> spec building at the former Occidental Chemical (Durez/Oxy) site – City of North Tonawanda
- ◇ Construct a 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> multi-tenant building for distribution and manufacturing uses in the town of Lockport Industrial Park – Town of Lockport IDA
- ◇ Construct a 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> spec building with quick access to the I-190 New York State Thruway – Town of Niagara IDA
- ◇ Conduct project feasibility study, planning and preliminary design and engineering work towards development of a deep water port, infrastructure, and related facilities – Town of Somerset
- ◇ Conduct engineering studies and environmental review towards shovel-ready site certifications and pre-permitting for a Town of Somerset Port Side Industrial Park – Town of Somerset
- ◇ Extend water and sewer lines along Lockport Road and Comstock Road to enhance marketability of General Business Zone – Town of Cambria
- ◇ Improvements to Sanborn sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Improvements to enhance Transit North Infrastructure and streetscaping to enhance attractiveness for retail business expansion; relocation of municipal water line; streetscape improvements (median, crosswalks, and signage); relocation of utility lines and poles; related paving and acquisition expenses – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Relocation of Transit Road water line, from the intersection of NY 93 (Robinson Road) to the Niagara County line – Town of Lockport

**INFRASTRUCTURE:**

- ◇ Transportation projects as outlined in Niagara County’s Federal Stimulus Request and the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Niagara County
- ◇ Rainbow Ramp Rehabilitation – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Third Street Parking Ramp Construction – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Cayuga Creek flood control measures – repairs to Cayuga Creek to control flooding – Town of Niagara
- ◇ Redevelopment of former Army hangar, buildings and property – Town of Niagara IDA
- ◇ Replace grinder pump – Town of Pendleton



- ◇ Replace water line along Campbell Boulevard between Mapleton and Lockport Roads – Town of Pendleton
- ◇ Repair water tank – Town of Pendleton
- ◇ Expansion of Youngstown Estate subdivision, creating a separate entrance/egress for residential safety – Town of Porter
- ◇ Install sewer lines for Ransomville residents – Town of Porter
- ◇ Replace old clay sewer lines and update sewer plant in Gasport – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Replace leaking and outdated water mains and lines in Gasport – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Replace deteriorating equipment at pump station on East Avenue in Gasport – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Extend water line along Route 31 between Bolton Road and Griswold Street – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Completion of southern drainage system, additional work to alleviate flooding affecting present and future homes, to be completed in conjunction with flood control measures to be instituted by the City of North Tonawanda – Town of Wheatfield
- ◇ Replace 100 year old drainage system – Village of Barker
- ◇ Street resurfacing, drains, and sidewalks improvements – Village of Barker
- ◇ Replace 8,150 linear feet of water line – Village of Barker
- ◇ Extend Center Street for additional commercial development – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Water and sewer main expansion to provide expansion for ArtPark activities – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Replace 50 year old deteriorated water lines for safe, clean drinking water – Village of Youngstown

## **MARKETING**

- ◇ Business marketing campaign to attract new and to grow existing businesses - Niagara County
- ◇ Canadian marketing campaign to attract Canadian businesses – Niagara County
- ◇ Opportunity Zones marketing campaign to attract businesses to distressed urban areas of the County – Niagara County
- ◇ Air Carrier incentive program for Niagara Falls International Airport – Niagara County

## **PARKS & RECREATION:**

- ◇ Implement City of Lockport Bicycle and Greenway Plan – City of Lockport
- ◇ Construct an ice hockey rink – City of Lockport
- ◇ Various Park and Trail Development – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Town park and recreation area, 110 acres adjacent to Town Hall: athletic fields, picnic areas, nature trails – Town of Cambria
- ◇ Town park expansion: add new lighting and playing fields – Town of Hartland
- ◇ Construct shelter and restroom facility for Day Road Park – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Construct parking lot and boardwalk for Lytle Park – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Park enhancement and development: improvements to Fisherman’s Park and Newfane Marina; park design and development involving reuse of two sites along Main Street commercial district, including a brownfield site undergoing cleanup – Town of Newfane
- ◇ Finish linear trail between Meyer and Townline Roads – Town of Pendleton
- ◇ Develop park, playgrounds, pavilions, etc. at Porter-on-the-Lake park – Town of Porter
- ◇ Develop Ransomville Fire Company Park in the Hamlet of Ransomville – Town of Porter
- ◇ Construct bicycle and pedestrian trail along River Road connecting Erie Canal Trail and North Tonawanda waterfront trail to City of Niagara Falls trail section – Town of Wheatfield
- ◇ Construct a bicycle path connecting Wilson and Youngstown – Town of Wilson

- ◇ Expand and develop Wilson Tuscarora State Park – Town of Wilson
- ◇ Improve Academy Park with new curbs, sidewalks, and parking – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Bicycle and hiking path greenway along escarpment through Village – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Improve and expand recreational facilities at Lewiston Plateau Park – Village of Lewiston

**PUBLIC FACILITIES:**

- ◇ Construct new public works facility including office space, vehicle service areas, equipment storage garages, etc. – Niagara County
- ◇ Demolition of municipal parking ramp – City of Lockport
- ◇ Parking Ramp replacement/repairs, (and possible construction of new parking ramp adjoining the Conference Center), City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Improve energy efficiency at town hall and highway garage – Town of Hartland
- ◇ Expand board meeting room and court offices at town hall – Town of Hartland
- ◇ Renovate existing Artpark amphitheater to bring it up to code – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Construct a new fire safety training facility – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Construct an addition to senior center building to expand programming – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Construct new town recreation center – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Construct sidewalks on Locust St./Shimer Drive & Snyder Drive; add wing walls to Donner Creek Bridge for Snyder Drive Sidewalk – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Install traffic light at Snyder Drive and Robinson Road – Town of Lockport
- ◇ Expand police and court offices at town hall – Town of Niagara
- ◇ Construct community center – Town of Pendleton
- ◇ Expand town court at town hall – Town of Porter
- ◇ Repair/replace roof, floor, and heating system at highway garage – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Construct new salt shed to increase storage capacity to allow for volume purchasing of salt – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Update handicap accessibility, conference rooms, and basement/office use at town hall – Town of Royalton
- ◇ Install air conditioning system in the town’s youth recreation center to allow for year round use of the facility – Town of Wheatfield
- ◇ Construct ADA compliant restrooms to serve a 50-acre park that contains extensive recreational facilities and is used by thousands of area residents each year – Town of Wheatfield
- ◇ Construct a new town hall building – Town of Wilson
- ◇ Sanitary/storm sewer and wastewater treatment plant improvements - study and replace problematic sewer lines to reduce infiltration and inflow; upgrade the plant’s filtrate nitrogen and phosphorous nutrients system – Village of Middleport
- ◇ Assessment of facility needs and upgrades for 40 year old wastewater treatment plan – Village of Middleport
- ◇ Main Street utilities - relocate above ground electric service poles and wires to buried facilities – Village of Wilson
- ◇ Storm sewer facilities – replace aged and undersized storm sewers along the west end of Young Street – Village of Wilson

## **TOURISM**

- ◇ Trolley Bus Network – establish trolley service connecting tourist destinations – Niagara County
- ◇ Hotel Development – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Aquarium of Niagara Expansion – City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Sanborn Historical Society building – construct facilities to house a restroom and congregation area – Town of Lewiston
- ◇ Construct an agricultural museum to highlight the agricultural heritage of northern Niagara County – Village of Wilson
- ◇ Cross-Border Ferry Service – customs processing building and operations for international cross-border ferry service between Youngstown, New York and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario – Village of Youngstown

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- ◇ Niagara Falls International Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center Project includes: Relocation Amtrak terminal; Restoration of the ‘Old Customhouse;’ Replacement of railway infrastructure, and; Reconstruction of highway infrastructure - City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Access and Park Restoration Project is intended to realize an appropriately-scaled and sensitively configured system of road access and park facilities along the Upper and Lower Niagara River - City of Niagara Falls

## **VENTURE CAPITAL:**

- ◇ Niagara Venture Capital Fund - establish a revolving loan fund program offering venture capital for emerging businesses and technology - Niagara County.

## **WATERFRONT:**

- ◇ Construction of a boat launch and transient dockage at Fort Niagara State Park – Niagara County
- ◇ Construct a new State fish hatchery at Joseph Davis State Park to supply Lake Ontario and its tributaries – Niagara County
- ◇ Fisheries projects for Niagara River and Lake Ontario - assist pen rearing projects that benefit trout and salmon stockings along the shoreline – Niagara County
- ◇ Flight of Five – Restoration of Erie Canal Locks 67 – 71 – City of Lockport
- ◇ Construct a harbor complex consisting of a harbor walk, boat slips and tie ups, boat launch, harbormaster station, restrooms and laundry – City of Lockport
- ◇ Niagara Riverview Park and Trail expansions, City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Niagara Gorge/waterfront plan development, City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ LaSalle Waterfront Park development, City of Niagara Falls
- ◇ Olcott fish hatchery to supply Lake Ontario and tributaries – Town of Newfane
- ◇ Olcott Harbor breakwater project: construct an offshore breakwater to protect the harbor from storm surge and erosion; create a safe harbor for construction of a marina and further waterfront development – Town of Newfane

- ◇ Promenade - construct an ice rink complex – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Waterfront park – expand slips, boat launch, parking and park facilities – Village of Lewiston
- ◇ Margaret Dorman park improvements: picnic shelter, tables, grills, playground equipment, additional landscaping, utility hookups, install multi-purpose dock, construct small parking lot – Village of Middleport

## **XI. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Several of the economic development projects identified in previous report sections may support full funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), while other projects may involve only a specific component that requires EDA support.

In the event that projects are further defined by interested parties, priorities may shift within the development categories. The availability of additional project funding will also determine how projects are scheduled for implementation.

Additionally, some projects may be partially or completely funded by the Regional Upstate Blueprint Fund, as well as projects identified for possible funding as part of the Niagara River Greenway.

### **Potential Funding Opportunities**

In 2009, New York Governor David Patterson announced the creation of a \$120 million Upstate Regional Blueprint Fund to provide investment in businesses, infrastructure, and downtown redevelopment. Financial assistance is available in the form of subsidized loans, convertible loans, and grants. Funding can be used to for acquisition, hard costs, and project-related soft costs and is available to a wide range of entities including county and municipal governments, local development corporations, public benefit corporations, for-profit businesses, economic development organizations, not-for-profit corporations, and many others. The Upstate Regional Blueprint Fund provides significant opportunity for funding to implement components of Niagara County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

In 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the Federal Stimulus Bill, to stem rising unemployment and foreclosure rates and bolster confidence in financial markets in the face of the U.S. economic recession. In response to the passage of that bill, Niagara County compiled a list of "shovel-ready" projects and programs that could be readied within 90 to 180 days of funding. The list was submitted to the federal and state governments as Niagara County's Federal Stimulus Request. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act may provide opportunities for funding to implement components of Niagara County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## **XII. EVALUATION: HOW ARE WE DOING?**

Measurements of success will serve as the ultimate determinant of how well we are doing. Evaluation will be an element of our ongoing planning process and a key component of our redevelopment strategy. Performance measures criteria identified as important to evaluating our progress are listed below:

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
1. How many of our priority projects have succeeded (the deal has been made)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Buffalo Bolt Industrial Park (former Roblin Steel site) remediation in North Tonawanda</li> <li>▪ USA Niagara Development Corporation downtown redevelopment, including United Office Building/Third Street entertainment district in Niagara Falls.</li> <li>▪ Niagara Falls Conference Center, Old Falls Street, Niagara Falls is complete.</li> <li>▪ Rebirth and expansion of Summit Park Mall.</li> <li>▪ Construction of 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> multi-tenant facility/incubator building in Vantage International Pointe in Wheatfield.</li> <li>▪ Construction of multi-tenant industrial space within Cherokee site and EPA Superfund/Empire Zone site.</li> <li>▪ Parking ramp in Niagara Falls has been demolished and will be replaced by surface parking.</li> <li>▪ Community/Senior Center in Wheatfield is complete.</li> <li>▪ Town hall expansion – Town of Cambria</li> <li>▪ Town hall expansion – Town of Niagara</li> <li>▪ Niagara Falls Air Base – Base saved and grow the base initiatives continue.</li> <li>▪ Border crossing efficiency improved at Whirlpool Bridge to Canada.</li> <li>▪ Foreign Trade Zone #34 expanded to include Vantage International Pointe</li> <li>▪ Water system improvements, Stone &amp; Leete Roads, Town of Lockport</li> <li>▪ Sunset Island Sewer installation, Town of Wilson</li> <li>▪ Construction of 30,000 ft<sup>2</sup> Ulrich City Centre on the formerly vacant South Block, City of Lockport.</li> <li>▪ Water system expansion for the Town of Hartland is complete.</li> <li>▪ Canal Street (f/k/a Richmond Avenue) Block, City of Lockport, is complete.</li> <li>▪ Niagara Wine Trail continues to expand, now with 13 wineries. A brochure has been produced and distributed which details each winery's information, location, events, and provides a website, <a href="http://www.niagarawinetrail.org">www.niagarawinetrail.org</a>.</li> </ul>
2. How many brownfields sites have been redeveloped?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Several sites in Niagara County are currently in remediation. It is anticipated that when remediation is completed, the sites will be reused for a variety of uses, including manufacturing, commercial and residential projects.</li> </ul>

CRITERIA	RESPONSE
3. How many businesses have been assisted and new businesses have located in the County?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 2009, through the Business Retention Program, we contacted 52 companies. We conducted 52 meetings and/or conference calls with 40 of those companies. In addition, the Microenterprise Assistance Program closed 2 loans totaling \$65,000. As a result of these loans, 7 jobs are projected to be created, and 4 jobs are retained.</li> </ul>
4. How effectively is the County leveraging public and private investment dollars?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During the reporting year, companies assisted through the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (a union of the Niagara County Department of Economic Development and the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency), invested over \$62 million in expansion projects.</li> </ul>
5. How effectively do we coordinate development projects with our regional partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED) works cooperatively with the Niagara County Economic Development Alliance (NCEDA), a consortium of municipalities, economic developers, utilities and training groups located throughout the county and region. The NCCED also administers a countywide retention program with all our NCEDA partners.</li> </ul>
6. Has the County developed and implemented sustainable development criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainable development criteria developed by the county includes the number of jobs created by economic development projects, capital investment from these projects and the impact on local supplier networks impacted by the projects.</li> </ul>
7. What role do community groups play in the economic development decision making process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The NCEDA is a group comprised of economic developers representing various municipalities in the county, utility representatives, job training professionals and local business groups. This group regularly meets, and all representatives have input in the countywide economic development decision making process.</li> </ul>
8. Is the County coordinating economic development with other projects and priorities (i.e. land use planning strategies)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Niagara County has a number of industrial parks and industrially zoned land located throughout the county. Only properly zoned sites are promoted for economic development projects throughout the county.</li> <li>▪ In 2009, the Niagara County Legislature adopted the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan, which addresses interconnected issues related to: Land Use and the Environment; Economic Development; County Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure; Education; and Public Health and Safety. The plan is intended to achieve five high priority goals - encouraging desirable land uses and development patterns; strengthening the local economy; improving delivery of public services; coordinating and prioritizing capital projects; and enhancing the quality of life for Niagara County residents.</li> </ul>

CRITERIA	RESPONSE
9. How many living wage jobs has the County attracted and retained?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In 2009, the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) assisted numerous projects in the manufacturing sector, as well as additional projects related to training and administration, financial services and senior housing.</li> <li>▪ The Niagara County Microenterprise Assistance Program was created in 1995 for the benefit of low-to-moderate income individuals and small businesses with 5 employees or less. For 2009, 2 loans were approved totaling \$65,000, creating 7 new jobs and retaining 4 jobs.</li> <li>▪ In 2009, the NCDC (the lending arm of the NCIDA) closed three loans totaling \$481,000. These projects retained 55 jobs and will create 18 new jobs within 3 years.</li> <li>▪ During the year, the NCIDA successfully closed on 9 lease and bond projects, projecting to create over 350 jobs within 3 years and retaining over 100 jobs, with a total investment of over \$62,000,000.</li> </ul>
10. Are the County's various economic development agencies working cooperatively?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The NCCED works cooperatively with the NCEDA, a consortium of municipalities, developers, utilities, and training groups, and holds monthly meetings at the NCCED offices as well as the two other IDAs in Niagara County.</li> <li>▪ NCCED works with the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise in business attraction and marketing endeavors and also with Empire State Development in providing comprehensive incentive packages to companies expanding or locating in Niagara County.</li> <li>▪ Niagara County is a member of the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise.</li> </ul>
11. Are farm revenues growing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Census definition of a farm is as any unit selling \$1000 or more of agricultural product. Niagara County has increased dramatically in small farm operations. These should not be discounted given the increased interest in value-added retail products that come from "cottage industries."</li> <li>▪ Niagara County, ranks in the top 20% of all counties in the nation as a fiscally robust place to farm according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The February 2009 release of the USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture revealed that farm numbers increased by 64% (865) from the 2002 Census although land in farms decreased by 4% to 142,636 acres.</li> </ul>
12. Has the population decline subsided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Niagara County's population peaked at 242,269 in 1960. The 2000 Census has the Niagara County population at 219,846. Niagara County's 2008 <u>estimated</u> population is 214,464, a slight increase over the July 1, 2007 estimation, marking the first time in over 40 years that Niagara County's population increased from one year to the next. (See Section IV. of this report for more detail.)</li> </ul>



## **REGIONAL INDUSTRY CLUSTERS**

The Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED) understands that industrial clusters are groupings of industries, suppliers and supporting institutions within our region that export to national and global markets. They are a set of industries that share commonality in terms of technology, worker skills, finance and logistical inputs. As a result, they have tended to congregate near one another, sharing innovative practices and economies of scale.

Industrial clusters are very important to our region. While they typically account for only 20% of the employment base, their economic multipliers account for much of the balance of the region's employment. This makes them the driving force of our local economic development.

Studies by Empire State Development have identified the major clusters driving the Western New York economy. These are: business services, financial services, distribution, industrial machinery and tourism. The NCCED has continued to work with companies in these sectors to assist them in expansion and growth.

Recently, companies in other sectors such as agri-business and research and development have also made a major impact on Niagara County's economy. Future marketing and outreach programs will continue to target these major industry clusters.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION INVESTMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

<u>Guideline</u>	<u>Niagara County's Response</u>
<p><b>1. The proposed investments are market-based and results driven.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic development efforts in Niagara County must be results-driven and sustainable. One component of the NCCED is the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency, which supports itself only from fees for services. The agency, in turn, uses these fees for operational expenses and to promote Niagara County. The relationship with the NCCED adds a new aspect to the array of services available to businesses wishing to expand or move to Niagara County.</li> <li>▪ During the reporting year, the marketing strategy designed to market the county and its attributes internationally and domestically that was previously developed continued to be implemented. In 2009, marketing strategies expanded to include a campaign aimed at urban core areas, designated as “opportunity zones”.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. The proposed investments have strong organizational leadership.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The relationship between the Department of Economic Development and the Industrial Development Agency has greatly strengthened the economic development function in Niagara County. Not only are these entities housed under one roof as the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, they also share a common Commissioner/ Executive Director. This arrangement has also greatly improved communication and relationships with the Niagara County Legislature and has enhanced delivery of economic development services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. The proposed investments look beyond the immediate economic horizon, anticipate economic changes, and diversify the local and regional economy.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The NCCED realizes that the economic base of Niagara County is and has been changing from traditional heavy manufacturing to a more diversified composition. As a result, the focus has been changed in order to assist commercial services, tourist destinations, agricultural related businesses, logistics, and small service and retail businesses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. The proposed investments demonstrate a high degree of commitment.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The County of Niagara is committed to providing the highest degree of assistance to local businesses and the community as a whole. This is witnessed by the establishment of a “One Stop Shop” for economic development assistance and services in Niagara County – the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (<a href="http://www.nccedev.com">www.nccedev.com</a>). The NCCED has developed new and innovative marketing materials, website and marketing CD to assist in this endeavor. The NCCED shares the same Commissioner/ Executive Director, greatly improving communication with the legislative body and the delivery of economic development services.</li> </ul>

## Guideline

## Niagara County's Response

**5. The proposed investments demonstrate a high degree of commitment.**

- The County of Niagara is committed to providing the highest degree of assistance to local businesses and the community as a whole. This is witnessed by the establishment of a “One Stop Shop” for economic development assistance and services in Niagara County – the Niagara County Center for Economic Development ([www.nccedev.com](http://www.nccedev.com)). The NCCED has developed new and innovative marketing materials, website and marketing CD to assist in this endeavor. The NCCED shares the same Commissioner/ Executive Director, greatly improving communication with the legislative body and the delivery of economic development services in the County.

### **XIII. NIAGARA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

#### **CEDS COMMITTEE SELECTION/STAFF SERVICES**

The CEDS Committee members are selected and appointed annually by the Niagara County Legislature. Members appointed to serve on the CEDS Committee represent a cross-section of the entire county.

The staff of the Niagara County Center for Economic Development serves as staff to the CEDS Committee. This group updates the report, gathers and analyzes statistical data, canvasses committee members and municipal officials for their input, prepares and distributes meeting notices, agendas, meeting minutes and draft reports for distribution and approval by the CEDS Committee. The Niagara County Center for Economic Development staff persons assigned to the CEDS Committee are:

Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner/Executive Director  
Kathleen J. Arigoni, Confidential Assistant & CEDS Coordinator  
Michael A. Casale, Deputy Commissioner of Business Development  
Amy E. Fisk, AICP, Senior Planner  
Benjamin J. Bidell, AICP, Senior Planner  
Lawrence Witul, Assistant Director, NCIDA  
Susan C. Langdon, Marketing/Project Manager, NCIDA  
Jeffery P. Degnan, Graphic Artist  
Mary P. Melloni, Recording Secretary, Economic Development Alliance

#### **CEDS MEETINGS/AGENDAS**

In preparation for the 2010 CEDS Report, two meetings are scheduled with the CEDS Committee, one on May 18, 2010 and the second on June 15, 2010. Agendas and attendees are included in this document. All CEDS meetings are open to the public.

In addition, Niagara County has an Economic Development Alliance (EDA), consisting of economic development professionals, planners, etc. from across the County and region. This group meets quarterly at our Center for Economic Development agency. Many of our EDA members are also members of the CEDS Committee and meetings cover topics, issues and programs contained in the CEDS document. As with the CEDS Committee meetings, all EDA meetings are open to the public.

The EDA and CEDS Committee agendas, membership roster, list of meeting attendees and meeting minutes are included in this report.

## AGENDA

### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, May 18, 2010**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Center for Economic Development  
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive  
Sanborn, NY 14132**

- 1.0 Call to Order
- 2.0 Welcome/Introductions
- 3.0 Overview of CEDS Draft Document
- 4.0 Additional Comments/Corrections – due no later than Friday, June 4, 2010
- 5.0 Questions/Comments
- 6.0 Adjournment

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>REMINDER</b></p>
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**The next CEDS Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 15, 2010 at Vantage Center.  
The purpose of this meeting will be to review and adopt the 2010 Report.  
Kindly make every effort to attend this meeting.**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
(CEDS) COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, May 18, 2010**

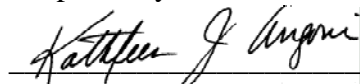
**9:00 a.m.**

**Center for Economic Development  
Sanborn, NY 14132**

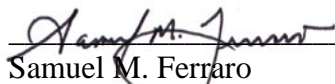
Attendees: See attached sign in sheet

- 1.0 Commissioner Ferraro called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.
- 2.0 Commissioner Ferraro asked all members in attendance to introduce him/herself.
- 3.0 Commissioner Ferraro and the committee review the 2010 draft CEDS report. The format of the document remains fairly constant, as part of the guidelines set by the U.S. Economic Development Administration. This draft includes efforts at the beginning of the year to canvass all municipalities for their list of priority economic development project. Rather than add an appendix to the 2010 report, this list is included in Section X of the report. These projects are not in any priority order, but rather is a comprehensive list of projects each municipality deemed important. They are also included in Niagara County's overall request for federal stimulus funding through the ARRA 2009.  
  
Commissioner Ferraro informed the Committee that Niagara County's CEDS Report will serve as a model for Erie County's efforts to prepare and submit their report.
- 4.0 Supervisor Ellis inquired if all municipalities have had an opportunity to provide input for this report. While there are some municipal elected officials on the Committee, as appointed by the Niagara County Legislature, all municipalities are welcome to provide substantive input through the Niagara County Supervisors Association.
- 5.0 Ms. Oswald was interviewed for an article about women in business in Niagara County for *Buffalo Spree* magazine. The article was positive and Ms. Oswald was commended for her enthusiastic and forward thinking comments in the article.
- 6.0 There being no further business, Commissioner Ferraro entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Moved by Mr. Parise, seconded by Mr. Kay. The meeting adjourned at 9:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen J. Arigoni  
Recording Secretary



Samuel M. Ferraro  
Commissioner



## **AGENDA**

### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, June 15, 2010**

**9:00 a.m.**

**Center for Economic Development  
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive  
Sanborn, NY 14132**

- 1.0 Call to Order
- 2.0 Welcome/Introductions
- 3.0 Overview of CEDS Second Draft Document
- 4.0 Adoption of 2010 CEDS Report - Resolution
- 5.0 Questions/Comments
- 6.0 Adjournment



**MEETING MINUTES**

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
(CEDS) COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, June 15, 2010**

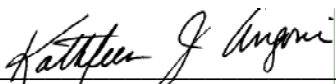
**9:00 a.m.**

**Center for Economic Development  
6311 Inducon Corporate Drive  
Sanborn, NY 14132**

**Attendees: See Attached sign in sheet**

- 1.0 Commissioner Ferraro called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.
- 2.0 Commissioner Ferraro welcomed members and invited those in attendance to introduce him/herself.
- 3.0 Copies and CDs were distributed to members and a brief review was conducted. Commissioner Ferraro acknowledged the assistance of the Niagara County Supervisors' Association and Niagara County cities for their additional comments and revisions to the first draft. These revisions were incorporated into the final report.
- 4.0 Commissioner Ferraro entertained a motion to adopt the 2010 CEDS Report as written. Supervisor Ellis moved and William Evert seconded the motion for adoption. The motion carried unanimously.
- 5.0 There being no further business, Commissioner Ferraro entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Moved by Mr. Casale, seconded by Mr. See. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen J. Arigoni, Recording Secretary  
June 15, 2010



## **CEDS COMMITTEE FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

- ◆ For 2011, the CEDS Committee will hold a minimum of two meetings to review the draft and prepare for final approval of the document.
- ◆ In advance of these meetings and during the draft review, numerous phone calls are anticipated between County staff and CEDS Committee members to review the updates.
- ◆ In advance of these meetings and during the draft review, all municipal chief elected officials and clerks, community development directors, and other interested parties are requested to review and comment on the draft, and recommend inclusion of municipal priority projects.
- ◆ In addition, monthly meetings of the County's Economic Development Alliance (EDA) will continue. Since many of the Alliance members are on the CEDS Committee, we anticipate on-going discussions regarding priority development projects and initiatives contained in the CEDS Report.

**XIV. NIAGARA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**2010**

	<b><u>GENDER</u></b> <sup>(1)</sup>	<b><u>RACE</u></b> <sup>(2)</sup>
Legislator William L. Ross, Chair Niagara County Legislature Courthouse, 175 Hawley Street Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Legislator Richard E. Updegrove, Chair Economic Development Committee Niagara County Legislature Courthouse, 175 Hawley Street Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner Niagara County Department of Economic Development Vantage Center, Suite One 6311 Inducon Corporate Drive Sanborn, New York 14132	M	W
Wright H. Ellis, President Niagara County Supervisors Association Supervisor, Town of Cambria 4160 Upper Mountain Road Sanborn, NY 14132	M	W
Steven C. Richards, Supervisor Town of Niagara 7105 Lockport Road Niagara Falls, New York 14305	M	W
Lynn M. Oswald, Director Small Business Development Center/ Corporate Training Center 50 Main Street Lockport, New York 14094	F	W

**CEDS COMMITTEE 2010 (continued):**

William Evert, Director Community Development, City of Lockport Municipal Building, One Locks Plaza Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Deanna Alterio Brennen, President/CEO Niagara USA Chamber Vantage Center, Suite 2 6311 Inducon Corporate Drive Sanborn, New York 14132	F	W
Erik M. Solomon, General Energy Consultant National Fuel 6363 Main Street Williamsville, New York 14221-5887	M	W
Joyce Santiago, Executive Director Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas 15 Webster Street N. Tonawanda, New York 14120	F	W
James Bittner 7171 East Lake Road Appleton, NY 14008	M	W
Paul Parise, Director Niagara County Employment and Training 1001 11 <sup>th</sup> Street Niagara Falls, New York 14301	M	W
Anthony Restaino, Commissioner Niagara County Department of Social Services 20-40 East Avenue Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Frank Roma 552 29th Street Niagara Falls, New York 14301	M	W
George Helfrich Human Energies 18 Millar Place Lockport, New York 14094	M	W

**CEDS COMMITTEE 2010 (continued):**

Kevin MacDonald, Superintendent Royalton-Hartland Central School District 54 State Street Middleport, NY 14105	M	W
Paul Lehman, Agriculture/CRD Program Leader Cornell Cooperative Extension 4487 Lake Avenue Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Jerald Wolfgang WNY Regional Ed. Center for Economic Dev. P. O. Box 1930 Niagara University, NY 14109-1930	M	W
Thomas Weeks Grand Island Transit Corp. 5355 Junction Road Lockport, New York 14094	M	W
Mark Meyerhofer, Manager Local Government Affairs National Grid 144 Kensington Avenue Buffalo, New York 14214	M	W
Paul A. Dyster, Mayor City of Niagara Falls P.O. Box 69 Niagara Falls, New York 14302-0069	M	W
Clara Dunn, Zone Coordinator Niagara Falls Empire Development Zone City of Niagara Falls P. O. Box 564 Niagara Falls, New York 14305	F	B
Joseph Collura City of Niagara Falls Community Development P.O. Box 69 Niagara Falls, New York 14302-0069	M	W

**CEDS COMMITTEE 2010 (continued):**

James Sullivan, Director M W  
Lumber City Development Corporation  
500 Wheatfield Street  
North Tonawanda, New York 14120

Robert Cliffe, Supervisor M W  
Town of Wheatfield  
2800 Church Road  
North Tonawanda, New York 14120

Tom DeSantis, AICP, Senior Planner M W  
City of Niagara Falls  
745 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, New York 14302

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:**

Gregory D. Lewis M W  
Niagara County Manager  
59 Park Avenue  
Lockport, New York 14094

Christina Orsi, Regional Director F W  
Empire State Development Corporation  
95 Perry Street  
Buffalo, New York 14203

Honorable Antoine M. Thompson M B  
New York State Senator, 60th District  
619 Pine Avenue  
Niagara Falls, New York 14302

Honorable George D. Maziarz M W  
New York State Senator, 62nd District  
2578 Niagara Falls Boulevard  
Wheatfield, New York 14304

Honorable Francine DelMonte F W  
New York State Assembly Member, 138th District  
1700 Pine Avenue, Suite 102  
Niagara Falls, New York 14301

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS (continued):**

Honorable Jane Corwin New York State Assembly Member, 142 <sup>nd</sup> District 8180 Main Street Clarence, New York 14221	F	W
Honorable Stephen Hawley New York State Assembly Member, 139 <sup>th</sup> District 121 North Main Street, Suite 100 Albion, New York 14411	M	W
Honorable James P. Hayes New York State Assembly Member, 148 <sup>th</sup> District 5555 Main Street Williamsville, New York 14221	M	W
Honorable Robin Schimminger New York State Assembly Member, 140 <sup>th</sup> District 3514 Delaware Avenue Kenmore, New York 14217	M	W
Honorable Louise M. Slaughter, Congresswoman United States House of Representatives, 28 <sup>th</sup> District – NY 1910 Pine Avenue Niagara Falls, NY 14301	F	W
Honorable Christopher A. Lee, Congressman United States House of Representatives, 26 <sup>th</sup> District - NY 500 Essjay Road, Suite 260 Williamsville, New York 14221	M	W

**Demographic breakdown requested by USED A:**

- (1) Gender: M = Male; F = Female
- (2) Race: W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; O = Other



## **XIV. CEDS AUTHORIZING RESOLUTION**

### **NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK**

#### **COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) 2010**

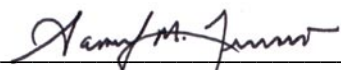
**WHEREAS**, Niagara County, in accordance with U. S. Department of Commerce guidelines, files a yearly Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) with the Economic Development Administration; and

**WHEREAS**, this CEDS is an instrumental tool in seeking economic development support and funding; and

**WHEREAS**, the Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee is charged with overseeing preparation of this document; and

**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee has met on June 15, 2010 and approved the 2010 CEDS; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the 2010 CEDS be filed with the U. S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration prior to June 30, 2010.



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Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner  
Niagara County Department of Economic Development  
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee