

NIAGARA COUNTY, NEW YORK



**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
(CEDs)**

**Submitted To:
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION**

JUNE 2015

Prepared by:

Niagara County
Center for Economic Development

**6311 Inducon Corporate Drive
Sanborn, New York 14132
www.NiagaraCountyBusiness.com**

Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner

NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE

www.niagaracounty.com

William L. Ross, Chair
Clyde L. Burmaster, Vice-Chair
Mark J. Grozio
Owen T. Steed
Jason A. Zona
Dennis F. Virtuoso, Minority Leader
Kathryn L. Lance
Richard L. Andres
Randy R. Bradt
David E. Godfrey
Anthony J. Nemi
Wm. Keith McNall
Richard E. Updegrove, Majority Leader
Dr. John Syracuse
Michael A. Hill
Jeffrey M. Glatz, Niagara County Manager

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Legislator Richard E. Updegrove, Chair
Legislator Kathryn Lance, Vice Chair
Legislator Richard L. Andres
Legislator Randy Bradt
Legislator William Keith McNall
Legislator Jason Zona

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

Ross, William L.

Updegrave, Richard E.

Ferraro, Samuel M.

Alterio Brennen, Deanna

Bittner, James

Butcher, John

Cliffe, Robert

Collura, Joseph

DeSantis, Thomas

Dyster, Paul A.

Ellis, Wright H.

Helfrich, George

Johnson-Renda, Angela R.

Lovejoy Maloney, Cathy

MacDonald, Kevin

Oswald, Lynn M.

Redman, Michael

Restaino, Anthony

Roma, Frank

See, David

Smith, Brian

Solomon, Erik M.

Wallace, Lee

Weeks, Thomas

Wolfgang, Jerald

Zimmerman, Michael

Glatz, Jeffrey M. *

Schoepflin, Christopher *

Ortt, Honorable Robert G.*

Ceretto, Honorable John D. *

Corwin, Honorable Jane L.*

Schimminger, Honorable Robin *

Walter, Honorable Raymond *

Higgins, Honorable Brian *

Collins, Honorable Chris*

*** Ex-Officio**

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 and the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency. 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, municipal clerks, and community development directors 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 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, responding 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.

Table of Contents

I. Background Information	1
A. Demographic and Socioeconomic Data	1
1. Population	1
2. Employment	2
3. Per Capita Income	3
B. Natural and Cultural Resource Profile	3
1. Geography and Climate	3
2. Environment and Natural Resources	4
C. Infrastructure	4
1. Transportation	4
2. Water and Sewer Service	7
3. Utilities	7
4. Buildings and Sites	8
D. Industry Sectors	9
1. Manufacturing	9
2. Hospitality and Tourism	9
3. Agriculture	10
E. Regional and State Context	11
1. General Context	11
2. Regional Economic Development Council	11
F. Factors Affecting Economic Performance	12
1. Direct Factors	12
2. Indirect Factors	12
G. Community and Economic Resiliency	12
II. SWOT Analysis	13
A. Business Climate	13
1. Strengths	13
2. Weaknesses	13
3. Opportunities	13
4. Threats	13
B. Industry Sectors	13
1. Strengths	14
2. Weaknesses	14
3. Opportunities	14
4. Threats	14
C. Infrastructure	15
1. Strengths	15
2. Weaknesses	15
3. Opportunities	15
4. Threats	15
D. Quality of Life	16
1. Strengths	16
2. Weaknesses	16
3. Opportunities	16
4. Threats	16
E. Workforce	17
1. Strengths	17
2. Weaknesses	17
3. Opportunities	17
4. Threats	17

III. Strategic Direction and Action Plan	18
A. Vision Statement	18
B. Goals and Objectives.....	18
1. Business Climate	18
2. Industry Sectors	19
3. Infrastructure	20
4. Quality of Life	21
5. Workforce.....	21
C. Implementation Strategies.....	22
1. Business Climate	22
2. Industry Sectors	22
3. Infrastructure	23
4. Quality of Life	24
5. Workforce.....	24
IV. Evaluation Framework	25
A. Performance Measures	25
1. Business Climate	25
2. Industry Sectors	25
3. Infrastructure	26
4. Quality of Life	26
5. Workforce.....	26
B. Accomplishments	27
1. Accomplishments & Anticipated Actions	27
2. NCIDA Projects.....	29
V. Appendices	31
A. Municipal Priority Projects	31
B. Buffalo Niagara Regional Agenda	40
C. Economic Development Partners	44
D. CEDS Committee.....	45

FIGURES

Figure 1. Population Trend: 1950 - 2010 Censuses	1
Figure 2. Unemployment Rate Comparison 2007-2014	2
Figure 3. Land Coverage.....	4
Figure 4. Rail Transportation Network	5

TABLES

Table 1. Per Capita Personal Income	3
Table 2. Niagara County Annual Payroll (\$1,000)	9
Table 3. Agricultural Trends in Niagara County	10
Table 4. 2014 Microenterprise Assistance Program Loan	29
Table 5. 2014 NCIDA Closed Industrial Revenue Bond and Leaseback Projects	30

I. Background Information

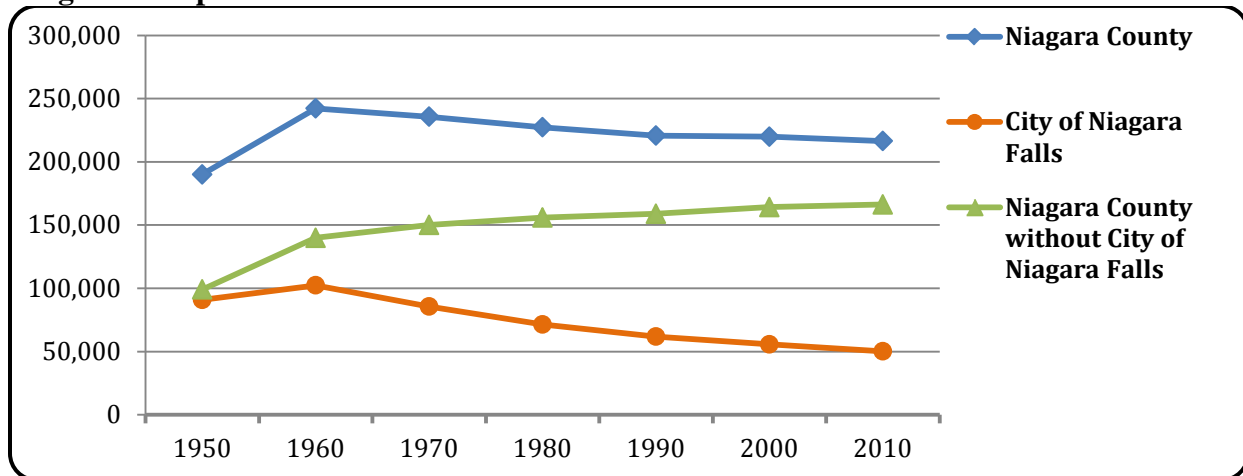
A. Demographic and Socioeconomic Data

1. Population

According to the United States Census Bureau's 2010 Census, Niagara County's population was 216,469. The population has remained relatively stable with a decrease of only 1.5% since the 2000 Census. The Census Bureau's Population Estimate Program estimated the July 1, 2014 population to be 213,525.

Niagara County's population peaked in 1960 with 242,269 residents. Population growth is attributed to rapid industrial development in the City of Niagara Falls and the construction of the Niagara Power Project from 1957 - 1960. The City of Niagara Falls' population also peaked in 1960 at 102,394. The departure or downsizing of large employers in steel production, aircraft and aerospace, automotive, chemical, specialty ceramics, and paper manufacturing sectors resulting in significant population loss in the City of Niagara Falls. According to the 2010 Census, the City of Niagara Falls' population was 50,193, a 51% loss from 1960. The Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program indicates the population loss in Niagara Falls continues, with a July 1, 2014 population at 49,468.

Figure 1. Population Trend: 1950 - 2010 Censuses



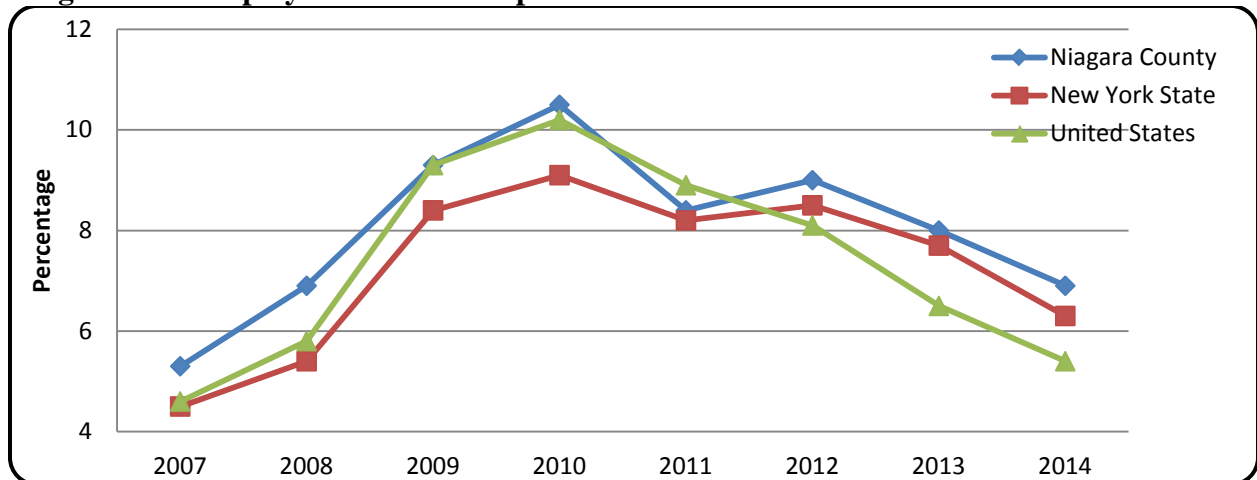
Source: Census.gov

As displayed in Figure 1, with the exception of the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County's population has increased as growth has shifted to townships. In the Town of Wheatfield, the City of Niagara Falls' neighbor to the east experienced one of the largest population increases for a municipality its size in New York State. The Town of Wheatfield's population grew from 14,086 in 2000 to 18,117 in 2010, an increase of 28.6%. The Towns of Cambria, Pendleton and Lockport also experienced population growth. In comparison to the population increase of New York State, Niagara County and the eight counties of Western New York continue to suffer out-migration of its population base. Of the sixty-two counties in New York State, seventeen counties experienced population decline between 2000 and 2010.

2. Employment

The United States Department of Labor and the New York State Department of Labor maintain statistics on unemployment levels. Figure 2 displays unemployment rates from 2007 through 2014. The average annual unemployment rate as measured by percentage of total workforce for Niagara County was 6.9% in 2014, down from 8.0% in 2013. The 2014 unemployment rate for New York State was 6.3%, down from 7.7% in 2013. The 2014 unemployment rate for the United States was 5.4%, down from 6.5% in 2013.

Figure 2. Unemployment Rate Comparison 2007-2014



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

Niagara's WorkSourceOne is the largest Employment & Training initiative in Niagara County. Developed under Title I of the Workforce Development Act (WIA) of 1998, the program is expected to continue under the new legislation, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2015. Through two One-Stop Career Center locations, Niagara's WorkSourceOne harnesses the resources of various organizations in Niagara County to provide a seamless array of services to both local businesses and to job seekers who are unemployed, under-employed, or "dislocated" due to business closure or significant lay-off.

The Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) focuses on demand occupations to respond more quickly to businesses' needs and utilizes its resources to support local industries. WIB is taking a leadership role and working in conjunction with regional efforts to supplying workforce needs in the areas of advanced manufacturing and life sciences.

Businesses, as well as individuals seeking employment/upgrading, are served through the One-Stop Career 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 amount of funded training services; however universal customer services and business connections have been maintained.

3. Per Capita Income

Per-capita income in Niagara County is lower than New York State, the United States, and neighboring Erie County. As seen in Table 1, the Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate indicates the per capita income in Niagara County to be \$25,991.

Table 1. Per Capita Personal Income

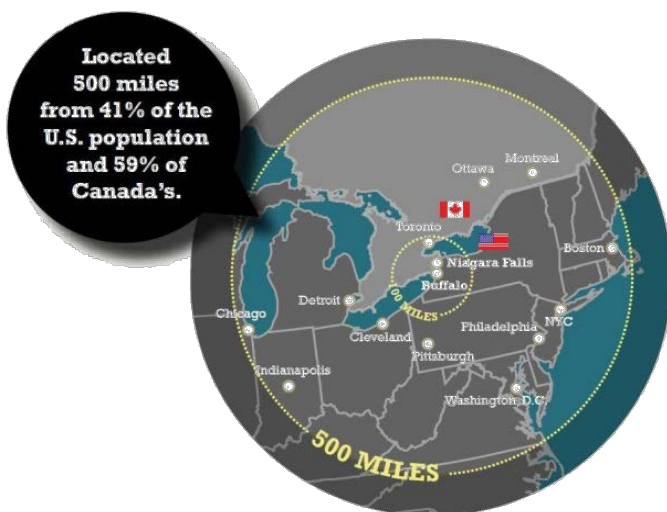
2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates	Per Capita Personal Income	Margin of Error
United States	\$28,155	+/- \$76
New York State	\$32,382	+/- \$136
Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA	\$27,600	+/- \$236
Erie County	\$27,978	+/- \$262
Niagara County	\$25,991	+/- \$425

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

B. Natural and Cultural Resource Profile

1. Geography and Climate

Niagara County is located in the northwestern corner of NYS with borders along Erie, Genesee, and Orleans Counties, and Lake Ontario. The Niagara River and the Province of Ontario, Canada form the western border of Niagara County. Niagara County encompasses a total land area of 527 square miles incorporated into three cities, twelve towns, and five villages. Two Native American nations are located within the County.



Access to key population centers is important to the County's success. Located within 500 miles from 41% of the U.S. population and 59% of Canada's population with access to 25% of the world's fresh water, Niagara County is poised to take advantage of its many assets and strengths.

The northern temperate climate allows for four season weather influenced by the Great Lakes. Humid warm summers and long, cold winters with periods of lake effect snow are common. The average daily high temperature is 57.2°F with a low temperature of 38.2°F.

2. Environment and Natural Resources

The primary natural features that make Niagara County geologically unique are the Niagara Escarpment, the Niagara Gorge, and Niagara Falls. The Niagara River, which creates Niagara Falls as a result of its waters flowing over the Niagara Gorge, is the primary drainage passage for the four upper Great Lakes. The Niagara River is a significant international waterway forming the boundary between the U.S. and Canada. Although the Niagara River is only 37 miles in total length, its impact on the growth and development of the County has been enormous. This natural setting led to the development of relatively inexpensive hydroelectric power that historically fueled industrial expansion and the economic base of the region.

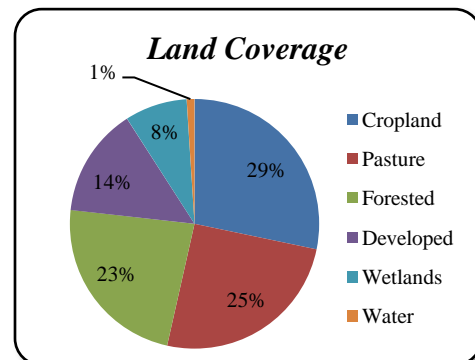


The rich diversity of aquatic life in the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and many of the County's creeks makes the region a desirable destination for sportfishermen from across the country, providing additional tourism and associated economic opportunities.

The Niagara Escarpment runs east to west roughly parallel with the Lake Ontario shoreline. The Niagara Escarpment is a sloping bluff-like geological formation that sits nearly 400 feet above the water of Lake Ontario and has contributed to the success of agriculture in the region due to its cooling effect. Agriculture is discussed in more detail under Industry Sectors.

Land use in the County ranges from developed urban areas to rural agricultural land. As depicted in Figure 3, a majority of the County remains undeveloped.

Figure 3. Land Coverage



Source: National Land Coverage Dataset

C. Infrastructure

1. Transportation

Niagara County benefits from the region's legacy as an international transportation center. Its strategic location within the bi-national, Great Lakes region and access to the Erie Canal made the region a major port, while development of the rail network in the early 20th century established the region as the second largest rail center in the world. Construction of the U.S. Interstate Highway System captured significant business from the railroads. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Welland Canal diverted freight from the ports and further reduced the market share of railroads.

Niagara County and the Western New York region are served by a well-planned and well-maintained highway system. There are 465 miles of highway in Niagara County that are part of the Federal Aid Functional Classification System (funded with federal highway dollars); 252

miles in state jurisdiction, 132 miles in county jurisdiction, and 81 miles in local jurisdiction. This network of roads and highways provides convenient access to and from the region.

Interstate I-90 connects the region to points east (i.e. Rochester, Syracuse, New York City, Boston) and west (i.e. Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Chicago) as well as routes south at major urban interchanges. Interstate I-190 connects the region to points north and west via the National Highway System in Canada including Toronto via the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW) and Detroit via Canadian Route 401. Niagara County has three international automobile bridges into Canada; the Lewiston-Queenston, Rainbow, and Whirlpool Bridges in addition to the Peace Bridge in Buffalo less than 20 miles south. These four spans handle 70% of the commercial traffic between the U.S. and Canada.

The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission is proposing a \$64 million widening of the U.S. plaza at the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. The plan calls for five new inspection lanes dedicated to passenger vehicles, replacing existing commercial inspection lanes, adding a new bus processing lane, providing new parking and building a new canopy, all to reduce congestion at one of the busiest crossings on the northern border. Over 3 million vehicles enter the U.S. annually over the bridge with a significant portion of the \$32 billion in annual trade between the U.S. and Canada passing over the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge. The Canadian federal government contributed \$65 million to the overall almost \$130 million project and work on the Queenston side of the bridge in Canada was completed in 2014.

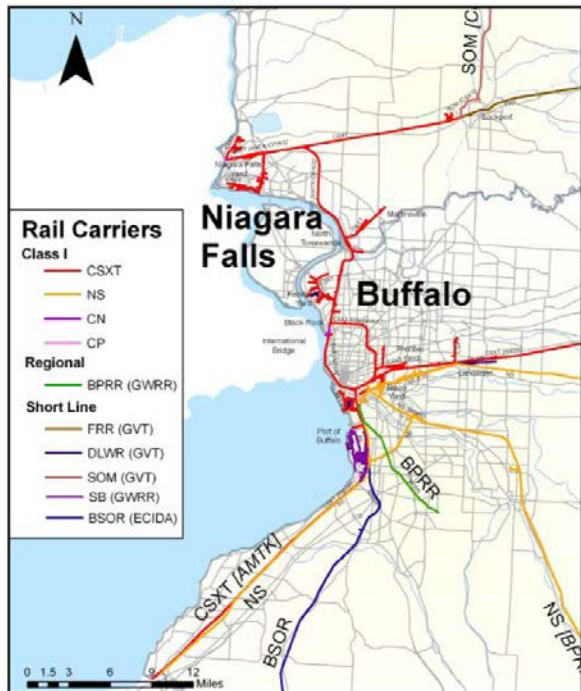


Other major highway transportation projects in Niagara County include reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway into downtown Niagara Falls to enhance parkland and improve the downtown gateway and removal of the Robert Moses Parkway along the Niagara Gorge in the north part of the city to enhance recreational opportunities. Reconstruction of Niagara Falls Boulevard from North Tonawanda to Niagara Falls is also planned.

Niagara County is still well-served by rail with four Class I railroads operating in the region: CSX Transportation, Norfolk-Southern, Canadian National, and Canadian Pacific railways. CSX and Norfolk-Southern operate 176 miles of the 250 total miles of track in the Buffalo Niagara region. Canadian National and Canadian Pacific have trackage rights over these lines and provide important connections into Canada via the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge (Niagara Falls) and International Railway Bridge (Buffalo). An additional 73 miles of track are operated by Class II and Class III railroads.

CSX operates most of the rail lines in Niagara County with connections to the north on the Somerset Railroad, which provides coal to the Somerset Power Station on the shore of Lake Ontario, and connections to the east on the Falls Rail Road. Most rail lines are concentrated in the western end of the county. The Niagara County rail transportation network is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Rail Transportation Network



Rail yards in Niagara County include the underutilized Lehigh Valley Rail Yard located just north of Niagara Falls, which is owned by New York State Department of Transportation, and the adjacent Niagara Falls Yard owned by CSX. The Lehigh Valley Rail Yard is being examined for expanded use including a rail car maintenance and/or intermodal transportation facility. Other major rail yards and intermodal facilities in the region include the CSX Frontier Yard, which is the region's principal freight car classification facility and largest switching yard, CSX Seneca Yard, and Norfolk Southern Bison Yard, all located in the City of Buffalo.

In addition to reactivating the Lehigh Valley Rail Yard, major rail projects in Niagara County include construction of the International Railway Station and Intermodal Transportation Center at Whirlpool Rapids Bridge in Niagara Falls, which will house a U.S. Customs &

Border Protection facility, consolidated Amtrak / ViaRail operations for passenger travel to and from Canada, and a history museum highlighting Niagara Falls as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

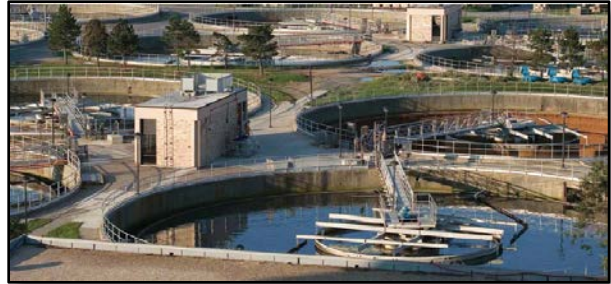
Aviation is also important in Niagara County, which is home to Niagara Falls International Airport (NFIA). In 2009, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) constructed a new, state-of-the-art passenger terminal at NFIA, which is helping to attract additional passenger service. Outside its role as a general aviation airport, NFIA is home to the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS), a U.S. military installation. NFARS has an estimated annual economic impact of more than \$200 million and is the county's largest employer, making base retention a top economic development priority. NFTA and NFARS share in the operation and maintenance of NFIA, making it more cost-effective. Recent airport improvements include lengthening the main runway to more than 10,000 feet to accommodate any size military or commercial aircraft. The NFTA also recently updated its Master Plan for NFIA, identifying development opportunities at the airport including air cargo operations.

Maritime shipping opportunities also exist in Niagara County, which has direct access from Lake Ontario to the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence Seaway, access to Lake Erie and the upper Great Lakes from Lake Ontario via the Welland Canal and Upper Niagara River, and access to the Erie Canal connecting the Great Lakes system with the inland waterways of New York State, the Hudson River, and the Atlantic Ocean. The Port of Buffalo is the only active maritime port / transload facility in the region.

2. Water and Sewer Service

The Niagara River is the main source of potable water in Niagara County. Through the Niagara County Water District, potable water is provided to the towns and villages in the County. Each of the three cities operates and maintains their own public water system. Two percent of households in the County utilize either drilled or dug wells as a water source.

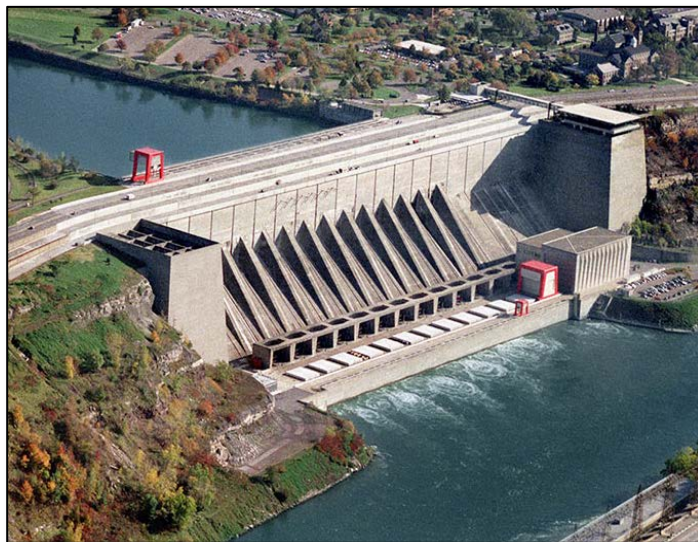
Sewer service in the County is controlled by multiple providers. Niagara County Sewer District No.1 serves six towns in the County. Each of the three cities and five villages operate their own sewage disposal infrastructure. Private sewage treatment is handled through on-site septic systems overseen by the Niagara County Health Department. Niagara County, like many older communities, has an aging



combined stormwater and sanitary sewer system that is problematic during storm events. As a result of severe storms in 2013, Niagara County received a disaster declaration and completed a countywide resiliency plan through the NY Rising Program. The 2014 plan recommends specific sewer and stormwater investments that will help increase resiliency to future flood events.

3. Utilities

Residents and businesses in Niagara County have access to natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications services. The eastern portion of Niagara County is supplied with natural gas by New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG), while the western end of the county is serviced by National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation. Both of these companies offer economic development consulting services including business incentives and site locating and equipment advice. 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 in Niagara County is produced and distributed by several large and small suppliers. The largest distributor is National Grid, formerly Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation, which services all of Niagara County except the City and Town of Lockport, which are serviced by NYSEG. The New York Power Authority's (NYPA) Niagara Power Project is the largest hydroelectric power plant in New York State and the fourth largest in the U.S. It is the largest supplier of clean energy in the region. Industries using large amounts of electricity in the production process are eligible to apply for special

low-cost blocks of power from NYPA. Upstate New York Power Producers, Inc. operates the coal-fired Somerset Generation Plant, which has a 655 megawatt generating capacity, the largest of any electric producer in Niagara County. It is also the county's largest tax-payer.

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. Sterling Energy Group, Inc. produces electricity at its wood-burning and bio-mass generating plant. Fortistar is a combined cycle power plant that sells extraction steam to Wheatfield Gardens. Lockport Energy Associates, L.P. maintains a co-generation facility that provides electricity and process steam to General Motors (GM) Components Holdings, LLC (Niagara County's third largest employer) with excess power sold to NYSEG. Modern Landfill in the Town of Lewiston operates a landfill gas power plant, providing excess steam to hydroponic greenhouse H2Gro, which primarily grows tomatoes for distribution to regional grocers. Future plans include growing medical marijuana at the site.

All major telecommunications services are available in Niagara County including telephone service, wireless communication, internet, and television. Over 5,600 miles of high-speed fiber optic cable and an extensive copper cable network enable residential and business customers access to high-speed, high-volume transmission of voice, video, and data. Verizon is the largest provider of telephone services in the county, though internet-based phone service is increasingly competitive. Wireless service is offered by Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, Transwave, and others. Time Warner Cable is the largest provider of high-speed internet and television. Verizon provides DSL internet service, though access to higher-speed FIOS service including television is expanding within the region. Satellite television is also available. Frontier, Level 3, and Windstream provide internet service mainly to business customers.

4. Buildings and Sites

Niagara County has plenty of available building space and developable land, much of which is already serviced by major transportation and utility networks. Available buildings and sites are regularly inventoried and posted online through the Buffalo Niagara Commercial Listing Service (CLS), CoStar, and other online real estate sites.

The affordability of real estate in Niagara County is a huge economic advantage. According to the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise 2012 Economic Guide, the average price per square foot for leasable industrial space in the Buffalo-Niagara Region is \$4.31 and even lower in the City of Niagara Falls at \$3.43 per square foot. These rates are significantly less than the average rates in almost all major cities in the U.S. For example, a 100,000 square foot industrial facility in Niagara Falls would cost \$160,000 less per year than the same size facility in Minneapolis-St. Paul and \$318,000 less per year than a facility in the New York metropolitan area.

Niagara County works to prepare buildings and sites for development. The Niagara County Industrial Development Agency constructed several business incubation facilities targeting small companies and startups. The Niagara County Brownfields Development Corporation works actively to remediate contaminated sites for redevelopment. Niagara County also facilitated the planning and environmental work necessary to certify the Cambria Technology Park and Niagara Airport Commercial Park as "shovel-ready" through New York State's Build Now-NY Program.

D. Industry Sectors

Major sectors of the County's economy 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 play in the future prosperity of the county. Annual payroll broken down by industry sector is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Niagara County Annual Payroll (\$1,000)

SECTOR	2008 (\$)	2009 (\$)	2010 (\$)	2011 (\$)	2012 (\$)
Manufacturing	482,685	381,280	395,046	427,047	424,450
Health Care, Social Services	300,874	287,343	323,374	321,609	328,993
Retail Trade	200,772	206,261	212,436	222,484	219,073
Accommodations, Food Services	149,122	144,725	149,166	145,169	152,588
Waste Mgmt., Remediation Svcs.	131,518	132,843	146,740	131,184	147,051
Construction	108,558	103,021	100,510	103,962	112,924
Wholesale Trade	86,988	84,861	88,955	97,298	96,050
Professional, Scientific, Tech. Svcs.	80,457	76,612	76,888	78,390	85,437
Transportation/Warehousing	61,384	59,649	65,333	65,859	71,025
Mgt. of Companies & Enterprises	46,945	45,577	62,406	51,383	55,919

Source: U.S Census Bureau, 2012 County Business Patterns

1. Manufacturing

According to the United States Census Bureau's County 2012 Business Patterns Report, the Manufacturing sector in Niagara County remains in fourth place in terms of total jobs behind Retail Trade, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Accommodation and Food Service sectors.

The manufacturing sector in Niagara County grew from 7,784 jobs in 2010 to 8,566 jobs in 2012. While not the total jobs generator it once was, the manufacturing sector provides the largest annual payroll in Niagara County at \$424.4 million. In New York State, the manufacturing sector is ranked 9th in the annual payroll category. Niagara County has made a concerted effort to retain high paying manufacturing jobs with an aggressive Business Growth & Retention Program. The future of the manufacturing sector is uncertain, but Niagara County has locational advantages such as low-cost hydropower, availability of fresh water, and proximity to markets, including Canada, that provide an attractive incentive to manufacturing operations.



2. Hospitality and Tourism

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, the 26-story Seneca Niagara Casino Hotel in 2005, and the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute in 2012 continue to be significant tourism, adding to iconic attractions such as the Maid of the Mist, Cave of the Winds, and Niagara Falls State Park. There are exciting new developments planned in Niagara Falls. A preferred developer has been selected to undertake a \$150 million transformation of the former Rainbow Centre Mall into the "Wonder Falls" Resort featuring a hotel tower with world-class amenities, restaurants, and entertainment facilities including a water park. Linking the attraction of Niagara Falls with

other visitor destinations across Niagara County such as Fort Niagara, the Erie Canal and Flight of Five Locks, Niagara Wine Trail, etc. in order to extend visitor stays is critical to the future of Niagara County's economy.

3. Agriculture

Production of food and agricultural products is a leading industry sector in Niagara County. Due to the combination of productive soils, relatively flat agricultural land, and a climate moderated by Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment, the County ranks 4th in New York State in fruit growing. The unique microclimate is suitable for the production of exquisite wines. The Niagara Wine Trail features 22 wineries and is expanding to include local microbreweries representing a niche of the local economy and an important part of the County's agritourism efforts. Information on the wine trail is available at www.niagarawinetrail.org.



As seen in Table 3, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture, the number of farms is decreasing but the acres of land farmed are increasing. The market value of agricultural products produced in Niagara County and the number of farms participating in agritourism activities are on the rise. The recent profusion of local farmers markets provide area farmers with an outlet for their produce and help consumers buy locally sourced goods.

Table 3. Agricultural Trends in Niagara County

	2007	2012	Change
Number of farms	865	760	↓ 105
Acres farmed	142,636	142,818	↑ 182
Agricultural product market value	\$103,644,000	\$122,600,000	↑ \$18,956,000
Farms participating in agritourism	15	25	↑ 10

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture 2012 Census of Agriculture

Niagara County participates in the New York State's Department of Agriculture and Markets Agricultural Districts program, which provides tax abatements and development protections for farming operations within five designated districts in the County. Niagara County and several municipalities have adopted right-to-farm laws to provide additional protections to farmers. The county also has a Farmland Protection Board and a state accepted Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan that highlights the importance of agriculture to the regional economy.

Niagara County has a strong agricultural base, but farming is increasingly threatened by low commodity prices and development pressures. Steps are being taken to identify opportunities to enhance the viability of existing farming operations and attract additional producers and value-added businesses. Many farms in the county are examining opportunities to capitalize on the growing interest in agritourism and eating locally grown foods. The future of agriculture in the county is viewed as sustainable and valuable.

E. Regional and State Context

1. General Context

The Buffalo Niagara Region, which is comprised of Niagara and Erie Counties, is the second largest metropolitan area in New York State. The economies of the two counties are inextricably linked, but with different strengths and weaknesses. For example, the tourism industry plays a more significant role in Niagara County owing to Niagara Falls and attractions like the Seneca Niagara Casino. However, Erie County and the City of Buffalo have professional sports and large venues to accommodate concerts and other performances, providing the type of outlets for recreational spending that Niagara County lacks. The economies of Niagara Falls, USA and Niagara Falls, Canada are also inextricably linked. Niagara Falls, USA competes directly with Canada for tourism. While Canada arguably has a stronger tourism product with more hotels and attractions, the U.S. offers greater access to the Niagara River, Niagara Falls, and Niagara Gorge.

The transition away from the manufacturing economy that began in the 1970's has been more detrimental to the Niagara County economy than that of Erie County and the City of Buffalo, which have experienced steady gains in the back office subsectors of finance, insurance, and real estate. The concentration of these industries can be attributed to the much larger urban market in Buffalo and its first-ring suburbs. This trend continues today with consolidations in the banking industry that have resulted in large financial institutions anchored in Buffalo. Niagara County businesses benefit from access to the finance and insurance products offered in Erie County.

While the population of the state has grown, especially in the New York City metro area, the population of Western New York has declined. Like most urban areas in Upstate New York, the cities in this region have lost population, while suburbs have grown. Individuals leaving the area tend to be younger and better-educated with employment expectations that cannot be met by current opportunities. This dynamic is self-reinforcing making it difficult to break the cycle, but recent projects such as construction of Yahoo!'s northeast data center in Niagara County and expansion of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus are beginning to reverse this trend.

2. Regional Economic Development Council

In 2011, Governor Cuomo transformed the economic development process in New York State by establishing ten Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) led by the Regional Directors of Empire State Development Corporation. Each REDC was tasked with creating a regional economic development plan to compete for capital funds and tax credits from New York State. The Governor also streamlined the application process for seeking economic development funding through existing state programs by creating an online Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process.

Niagara County took an active role in developing the Regional Economic Development Plan for WNY. The plan emphasizes job readiness, smart growth, and entrepreneurship, and focuses on target industry sectors that include: advanced manufacturing, agriculture, bi-national logistics, energy, health and life sciences, higher education, professional services, and tourism. In early 2012, Governor Cuomo announced a multi-year funding commitment of \$1 billion for economic development projects in WNY with a focus on Buffalo. Known as the "Buffalo Billion," this funding is governed by a new business plan building off the success of the WNY REDC.



F. Factors Affecting Economic Performance

1. Direct Factors

Niagara County's border location offers a competitive advantage because of convenient access to both U.S. and Canadian markets for goods and services. Access to low-cost power, fresh water, finance and insurance products, and business incentives are helping to grow existing businesses and attract new industries to the area. The County has a well developed transportation network that includes highways, rail, and water access. Coupled with a significant amount of undeveloped land, Niagara County is well positioned for future growth and development. As the local economy diversifies and expands, workforce training efforts will be needed to target skills gaps between existing workers and the demands of new industries.

2. Indirect Factors

Quality of life issues indirectly impact the economic resiliency of Niagara County. Niagara Falls is the region's most recognizable asset, but Niagara County has an abundance of key resources including cultural, historical, agricultural and recreational assets. Affordability makes the County an attractive place to run a business and raise a family. Great colleges and universities provide a foundation for a thriving knowledge economy and produce an educated workforce. Continuing to build on these assets will help Niagara County advance economic prosperity.

G. Community and Economic Resiliency

During summer 2013, Niagara County was hit by several fast-moving, localized storm events that dropped significant precipitation on local communities. Hardest hit were Niagara County's three cities - Niagara Falls, Lockport and North Tonawanda. Significant flooding, property damage, and power outages affected more than 17,000 residents in the region. Severe damage occurred to electric substations, water systems, wastewater treatment plants, homes, and businesses. The impact of the storms was exacerbated by the intensity of the precipitation, which overwhelmed existing infrastructure, causing significant combined sewer and storm sewer backups as well as at-grade and basement flooding of homes and businesses.

In response, Niagara County was selected for participation in the NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program, which was established by Governor Cuomo to provide rebuilding and revitalization assistance to communities severely impacted by storms. The program involved development of a **Countywide Resiliency Plan** that included: an Overview of Existing Conditions, an Assessment of Risks and Needs, Reconstruction and Resiliency Strategies, and Projects for storm recovery and resiliency to future events. The plan as well as more information on NY Rising can be found online at: <http://stormrecovery.ny.gov/nyrcr/community/niagara-county-communities>.



II. SWOT Analysis

The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to Niagara County's economy considers five areas fundamental to economic growth: Business Climate, Industry Sectors, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, and Workforce. These interrelated themes also frame the Goals and Objectives, Implementation Actions, and Evaluation Framework in the subsequent chapters of the CEDS, reinforcing their fundamental importance to the broader economic development strategy.

A. Business Climate

Niagara County's business climate benefits from the involvement of many agencies and organizations working proactively to strengthen the economy with economic development efforts coordinated at the county, metropolitan, and regional levels. More than a dozen colleges and universities in the region provide access to new workers and research with efforts to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem focused on commercializing research and attracting venture capital for startups. Proximity to major population centers provides convenient access to U.S. and Canadian markets with a number of Canadian companies expanding into Niagara County for better access to U.S. markets. Access to low-cost power and other business incentives strengthen Niagara County's competitiveness. An aging workforce coupled with skills gaps between available jobs and workers is a challenge.

1. Strengths

- Low-cost hydropower for business development
- High quality educational institutions (workforce training, research and development, etc.)
- Proximity to U.S. and Canadian populations / markets
- Active local and regional economic development agencies

2. Weaknesses

- Taxes
- Workforce skills gaps
- Access to venture capital

3. Opportunities

- Attract Canadian companies
- Brownfields redevelopment
- Clean, energy-efficient manufacturing incentives

4. Threats

- Aging workforce
- Negative perception of business climate
- Competition from other regions / states / countries

B. Industry Sectors

Niagara County has industry strengths in manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, agriculture, retail trade driven largely by visitors, and healthcare. It also has strengths in waste management and armed services. The manufacturing sector remains strong due to access to hydropower, which has historically driven Niagara County's industry. Niagara Falls continues to drive the tourism industry, while newer regional attractions such as the Niagara Wine Trail are contributing to longer visitor stays. An opportunity exists to capture a greater share of the tourism market in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Currency fluctuations impact foreign tourism and cross-border retail-activity by Canadian shoppers.

Further diversification of the economic base is needed to mitigate shocks to major industry sectors with opportunities to grow the data center/back office, cargo/logistics, armed serves, and healthcare sectors as well as to tap into the manufacturing of renewable energy systems and other advanced manufacturing. The region as a whole needs to improve its ability to commercialize research and attract venture capital to promote startups in high-growth industry sectors.

1. Strengths

- Manufacturing including chemicals / plastics, metal fabrication / machining
- Hospitality and tourism including accommodations, restaurants, retail, etc.
- Agriculture including value-added products (wine, craft beverages), agritourism, etc.
- Armed services at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station

2. Weaknesses

- Commercialization of local research and development
- Access to venture / angel capital
- Access to decision-makers in corporate headquarters

3. Opportunities

- Capture greater share of Canadian tourism market
- Growth in renewable energy sector (wind and solar)
- Growth in health services (Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus), etc.
- Warehousing and distribution
- New and expanded missions at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station
- Call and data centers, back office operations

4. Threats

- Currency fluctuations affecting cross-border retail activity
- Off-shoring of manufacturing processes
- Automation and downsizing workforce
- Aging farmers

C. Infrastructure

Niagara County benefits from access to extensive regional transportation and utility infrastructure. The region's industrial legacy created a solid backbone on which to build the 21st century economy. The region possesses extensive electrical production and distribution systems, oil and gas pipelines/distribution systems, telecommunications networks, and sewer and water treatment facilities as well as national and transnational highway and rail corridors, U.S.-Canada border crossings, international airports, developable buildings and sites, and more. However, extensive infrastructure requires extensive maintenance and lack of funding has led to a major project backlog that is expected to continue well into the future. Meanwhile, annual road and bridge repair creates seasonal congestion. Combined sewer and stormwater systems yield additional problems such as urban flooding and reduced water quality.

Niagara County is investigating an International Trade Gateway that leverages existing transportation networks to capture a greater share of the cargo and logistics industry. Development of Niagara Falls International Airport and the Niagara Falls International Railway Station are opportunities to utilize transportation assets to support the tourism industry. Cleanup of brownfields and creation of shovel-ready sites is creating attractive land for new development.

1. Strengths

- Utility network; electric, gas, water, sewer, telecommunications
- Electricity production; Niagara Power Project, Covanta, Upstate NY Power Producers
- Transportation network; highway, rail, aviation, maritime
- Four international commercial / passenger automobile crossings
- Two international rail crossings
- Two international airports
- Waste disposal services

2. Weaknesses

- Substandard roads, bridges, and utility infrastructure
- Rail line deficiencies (bottlenecks, bridge capacity, etc.)
- Combined sewer and storm water systems

3. Opportunities

- International Trade Gateway
- Reactivation of Lehigh Valley Rail Yard
- Passenger and air cargo development at Niagara Falls International Airport
- Niagara Falls International Railway Station & Intermodal Transportation Center
- Brownfields cleanup and creation of shovel-ready sites for development

4. Threats

- Aging infrastructure and access to repair / replacement funding
- Extensive annual road and bridge work
- Contaminated land and water

D. Quality of Life

Niagara County has a high quality of life. Compared to many other parts of the U.S., Niagara County has a relatively low cost of living including affordable real estate, which allows more people to become homeowners. The county offers urban, suburban, and rural living choices. Good schools and short commute times are also attractive. Natural amenities including lakes, rivers, forests, and parks provide a myriad of outdoor recreational opportunities, many of which are part of the growing Niagara River Greenway recreation corridor. World-class cultural amenities also provide entertainment options from concerts to museums, theater, and more.

Taxes counterbalance the low cost of goods and services, housing, transportation, and other expenses. While the area benefits from the beauty of the four seasons, severe winter weather can pose major problems for homes, schools, businesses, and commuters. Industrialization created a solid foundation for the current and future industrial economy, but left a legacy of environmental contamination, which Niagara County is addressing as an economic development opportunity. A concentration of poverty and crime in blighted, urban areas is also a problem. These and other factors contribute to a negative image of the region that can drive away residents and businesses. Promoting the positive aspects of the area's quality of life will help address the image problem and can help retain the young, college-educated population that will drive the future economy.

1. Strengths

- Low cost of living
- Affordable real estate
- World-renowned location
- Natural and cultural amenities
- Productive farmland
- Educational institutions including higher education
- Short commute times
- Four seasons

2. Weaknesses

- Taxes
- Winter weather problems including transportation, closings, and safety
- Concentrated poverty and crime

3. Opportunities

- Retain/recapture young adult population; reverse the “brain drain”
- Business recruitment efforts highlighting quality of life
- Niagara River Greenway development including natural and cultural amenities
- Brownfields redevelopment and environmental restoration

4. Threats

- Negative image
- Changing climate
- Rising real estate prices

E. Workforce

Niagara County has a strong workforce development network that includes the Niagara County Workforce Investment Board, Niagara County Employment and Training / WorkSource One, Orleans-Niagara BOCES, WNY Regional Economic Development Council, and other organizations. The region is home to more than a dozen colleges and universities training future workers in fields ranging from architecture and engineering to health sciences, information technology, and more.

There is currently a lack of skilled tradesmen to fill available manufacturing jobs due in part to a retiring workforce and the misperception by young people that manufacturing and agricultural jobs are low-paying and unskilled. The region is working to address the disconnect between available jobs and job training programs by establishing new programs such as: the Buffalo Niagara Advanced Manufacturing Institute; Dream It, Do It; the Finishing Trades Institute of Western & Central New York; the Niagara Global Tourism Institute; and the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute. These programs will help fill existing jobs vacated by retirees, fill new jobs opening up in hospitality and tourism as well as advanced manufacturing, up-skill existing workers, and change perceptions by young people by showing them new opportunities.

1. Strengths

- Educated and skilled workforce
- Niagara County Workforce Investment Board
- WNY Regional Economic Development Council
- WorkSource One center for employment, training, and recruitment services
- Orleans-Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- Higher educational institutions within the region

2. Weaknesses

- High unemployment rates compared to state and national averages
- Lack of skilled manufacturing tradesmen and qualified farm workers
- Disconnect between available jobs and job training programs

3. Opportunities

- Transition from Workforce Investment Act to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Dream It, Do It advanced manufacturing training in high schools
- Career fairs connecting job-seekers with employers and available jobs

4. Threats

- Aging population
- Pirating of skilled manufacturing tradesmen (drives up wages)
- Perception of manufacturing and agricultural jobs and messaging to future workforce
- Federal labor and immigration laws affecting migrant and seasonal farm workers

III. Strategic Direction and Action Plan

The Strategic Direction of this CEDS is articulated by our Vision Statement, the Goals and Objectives that must be pursued to achieve that vision, and the Implementation Actions that will get us there. The Strategic Direction and Action Plan are part of the CEDS Annual Performance Report that will be submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration each year.

A. Vision Statement

Niagara County's Vision Statement expresses the need for proactive involvement, regional cooperation, and conscientious decision-making to build sustainable economic prosperity for all Niagara County residents, now and into the future.

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 generations to come that emphasizes brownfields revitalization, qualitative development vs. quantitative growth, living wage jobs, and the creation of sound and practical plans through regional cooperation

B. Goals and Objectives

Niagara County's economic development goals and objectives are intended to build on strengths, address weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate threats in the local and regional economy. They further articulate the vision statement and provide a framework for the strategies and actions used to achieve that vision. These goals and objectives will be accomplished by coordinating public and private decision-making on economic development.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy establishes the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic problems and capitalize on the resources of the region. Strategic projects, programs and activities identified in the Strategy are designed to fulfill these goals and objectives. Goals are broad, primary regional expectations. Objectives are more specific than goals, clearly measurable, and stated in realistic terms considering what can be accomplished over the five-year time frame of the Strategy.

1. Business Climate

Goal: Strengthen the Competitive Position of County Businesses

Objectives:

- Reduce the cost of doing business by:
 - Providing financial assistance, such as revolving loan funds, bonds, guaranteed loans and other programs.
 - Retaining low cost power "blocks" of hydro-power for large energy dependent companies and assist co-generation facilities.
 - Expanding training/retraining programs.
 - Expanding technical assistance programs, especially to small businesses.
 - Providing low cost incubator space for start-up companies.
 - Providing completely serviced sites and/or facilities for "just-in-time" suppliers to locate near plants.

- Improve the business climate by:
 - Expanding labor management councils.
 - Promoting positive aspects of Niagara County's image through tourism and industrial marketing efforts.
 - Expanding countywide promotion, information & marketing support through the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC).

2. Industry Sectors

Goal 1: Expand Key Sectors of Niagara County's Economy

Objectives:

Manufacturing

- Focus on attracting high-growth economic sectors companies, specifically manufacturing.
- Encourage spin-offs from large companies.
- Administer retention program, meeting with at least 60 companies annually.
- Provide infrastructure improvements at industrial parks.
- Expand industrial incubator and multi-tenant facilities.
- Market low cost power allocations through Empower Niagara Program.
- Market availability of fresh water to companies currently in water-starved states.
- Market City of Niagara Falls incentive programs as well as New York State Empire State Development Corporation Programs and/or Federal Programs.
- Retain existing large companies by helping them to remain competitive, (helping to maintain their supply of low cost hydro-power).
- Market supply chain opportunities in renewable energy to existing companies.
- Focus on brownfield regeneration and redevelopment.

Tourism

- Increase tourism promotion efforts countywide.
- Develop world class visitor attractions in our urban centers as centerpieces of our natural and cultural heritage. (e.g.: Niagara Experience Center, Erie Canal, Niagara Gorge, etc.).
- Focus on identifying and attracting tourism-based companies, i.e. resorts/hotels.
- Develop the Niagara River Corridor Greenway, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, the Niagara Wine Trail, and continue development of the Seaway Trail and Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.
- Support promotion of agritourism and direct to consumer farm market opportunities.
- Support development of a cross-river ferry service between Niagara-On-The-Lake, Ontario and Youngstown, New York.
- Implement the Niagara River Greenway Plan to improve outdoor amenities.
- Create opportunities for new investment in educational and interpretive exhibits.
- Develop new attractions and expand existing ones.
- Develop the Niagara River Corridor as a National Heritage Area, and continue development of the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor as a premier tourist destination.
- Support The Flight of Five, Erie Canal Project - City of Lockport.
- Expand water-related activities, fishing derbies, boating etc.
- Expand and support area sporting and other recreational and cultural events.
- Support Niagara Falls waterfront agenda.
- Encourage redevelopment of the downtown tourist district in Niagara Falls, NY
- Support the Lockport Harbor marina project on the Erie Canal.

Agriculture

- Support the establishment of a Niagara County Agribusiness Fund.
- Facilitate the necessary funding for the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, in conjunction with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County to update the 1999 Niagara County Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan and ensure appropriate projects are identified and implemented.
- Strengthen the system for marketing fresh produce and value-added agricultural products in Niagara County including activity with city markets and high traffic tourism areas and development of related infrastructure and services.
- Support the craft beverage production including wine, beer, distilling, and cider.
- Promote Niagara County as a great place to farm to attract new and beginner farmers.

Commercial

- Establish office spaces designed to attract Canadian companies.
- Utilize Niagara County Opportunity Zones program.

Transportation

- Develop a commercial aircraft maintenance facility and air cargo/warehousing operation at Niagara Falls International Airport.
- Develop a regional air transportation strategy.

Goal 2: Diversify Niagara County's Economic Base

Objectives:

- Expand marketing programs to attract Canadian and other foreign manufacturing, service, distribution and office activities.
- Work with New York Power Authority and other partners to promote supply chain opportunities in the renewable energy sector to existing Niagara County businesses.
- Promote the assets of Niagara County to renewable energy companies.
- Promote the assets of Niagara County and the Niagara Falls International Airport, to airlines, logistics companies.
- Expand incubator facilities and technical assistance programs to encourage the development of new types of business.
- Diversify fresh fruit and vegetable crops to those most in demand in the large urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest.
- Promote fishing, boating, marina, and waterfront projects to take advantage of current high market demand for water-related activities.
- Increase the number of companies receiving economic development incentives

3. Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure Quality Transportation and Utility Infrastructure Networks Necessary to Support Businesses and Development

Objectives:

- Update degraded and substandard transportation and utility infrastructure
- Extend transportation and utility infrastructure to key economic development areas, especially shovel-ready development sites
- Cleanup brownfields sites and prepared them for redevelopment

- Make airside and landside infrastructure improvements at Niagara Falls International Airport to support expansion of passenger service and development of air cargo
- Develop the infrastructure necessary for an inland port supporting the Port of NY/NJ
- Reactivate the Lehigh Valley Rail Yard for rail operations, rail car maintenance, cargo operations, and logistics.
- Build the passenger rail, high-speed rail, and intermodal transportation infrastructure necessary to grow passenger rail service and rail cargo operations
- Construct a new Niagara County Public Works facility to support maintenance of county infrastructure

4. Quality of Life

Goal: Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Niagara County

Objectives:

- Implement sustainable development practices by:
 - Encouraging compatible land uses
 - Encouraging concentrated development patterns
 - Promoting development in areas already serviced by infrastructure
 - Encouraging reuse of existing buildings over new construction
 - Cleaning up and redeveloping brownfields
 - Encouraging mixed-use and multi-use development projects
 - Integrating transportation, housing, education, public health and safety, economic development, and environmental considerations into land use planning and decision-making
- Attract higher paying jobs to afford residents opportunities for higher incomes:
 - Reducing the County's poverty rate
- Improve the environment by protecting natural resources by:
 - Reducing the County's ecological footprint, striving for greater self-sufficiency by conserving energy, water, and other natural resources; reducing waste; and using local materials and agricultural products.
 - 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.
 - Encouraging commercial and industrial development on vacant and/or underutilized land to protect rural and agricultural areas.

5. Workforce

Goal: Develop a Comprehensive Education and Training Program

Objectives:

- Develop educational policies and programs in our local schools to provide employment opportunities.
- Develop and provide job-training programs that offer skilled employment. Provide an outreach program on job availability.
- Reduce the unemployment rate in Niagara County through job training and placement.

C. Implementation Strategies

The Goals and Objectives outlined in this document will be achieved, in part, through the following Implementation Strategies. These economic development priorities are established through the Niagara County Economic Development Address delivered annually to the County Legislature by the Chair of the Legislature's Economic Development Committee. While these strategies represent county priorities, they also reflect broader, regional strategies for economic development as outlined by the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council, Niagara County Economic Development Alliance, and other regional entities to which Niagara County is a part. For a complete list of priority economic development projects, refer to Appendix A - Municipal Projects and Appendix B - Buffalo Niagara Regional Agenda.

1. Business Climate

WNY Regional Economic Development Council

- Continue to take an active role in the WNY Regional Economic Development Council.
- Monitor implementation of the WNY Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan and participate in plan updates.
- Advocate for funding for Niagara County projects listed in the Strategic Plan and advocate for inclusion of future Niagara County projects.
- Monitor state funding opportunities and provide guidance to municipalities on the NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process.

Business Growth & Retention Program

- Monitor major employers to ensure their long-term viability in Niagara County.
- Reach out to approximately 60 companies annually and provide support as necessary to help companies retain and/or expand operations in Niagara County, including jobs.
- Work proactively to retain jobs, expand missions, and market assets and capabilities at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

Marketing & Outreach Programs

- Aggressively market Niagara County in the Greater Toronto Area, promoting specific sites and incentives through developer tours and personal outreach to companies.
- Expand Niagara County's presence at trade shows in the U.S. and Canada
- Partner with Canadian manufacturing associations and Canadian chambers of commerce.
- Remain active in organizations such as the NYS Commercial Association of Realtors, National Association for Industrial and Office Parks, and local chambers of commerce.
- Work with the Niagara Falls Central Business District (CBD) team on marketing and developing downtown Niagara Falls.
- Conduct marketing and outreach within Niagara County via the NCCED newsletter, social media, Niagara County Economic Development Alliance, business workshops and seminars, the annual Business Opportunities Familiarization Tour, and more.

2. Industry Sectors

Agribusiness Development

- Attract more wineries to the Niagara Wine Trail and encourage wine trail tourism.
- Attract more agricultural operations to Niagara County that build on the existing agricultural industry and increase production in Niagara County.

- Attract more agribusinesses to Niagara County that create value-added goods from local agricultural products including food processing and packaging companies.
- Aggressively market local agricultural products.
- Attract a new tenant to the former Pfeiffer food facility in the Town of Wilson.

Commercial Development

- Promote hotel development in the three cities, monitor renovations of former hotels and construction of new hotels in downtown Niagara Falls and Niagara Falls Blvd.
- Promote the Niagara County Opportunity Zones Program by actively marketing the program to new and existing businesses. Update the inventory of available properties located within the Opportunity Zones and identify eligible projects.

High-Tech Industries

- Attract more advanced manufacturing companies to Niagara County and help existing companies with conversion to advanced manufacturing processes.
- Create synergies and build critical mass around the information technology sector by attracting more information technology companies to Niagara County.
- Create synergies and build critical mass around the green technology sector by attracting more green technology companies to Niagara County.

Tourism & Waterfront Development

- Provide technical support for the Erie Canal Flight-of-Five Locks Restoration as well as implementation of the Flight-of-Five Interpretation Plan.
- Support Niagara River Greenway projects including upland state trail connections.
- Market Niagara County as a sportfishing destination at conventions and tradeshow and continue to advocate for the sustainability of Niagara County's fisheries.
- Work with NFIA Stakeholders Group and airlines at Niagara Falls International Airport to develop tourism packages marketing Niagara Falls as a vacation destination.
- Market Niagara County as a destination for agritourism and local foods through development of an agritourism app.

3. Infrastructure

Brownfields Redevelopment

- Carry out site assessment and remediation work at contaminated properties throughout Niagara County using grant funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Secure additional grant funding for site assessments and remediation work.
- Focus on returning tax delinquent brownfield sites to the tax rolls.

Industrial Parks and Shovel-Ready Sites

- Aggressively market New York State-certified shovel-ready development sites along with existing industrial and business parks located throughout Niagara County.
- Market sites with a focus on attracting high-tech and advanced manufacturing operations.

Niagara Falls International Airport Development

- Market the Niagara Airport Commercial Park shovel-ready site adjacent to the airport for high-tech, air cargo, and/or logistics operations.

- Monitor the Niagara Falls U.S. Army Reserve Center Site for conveyance to the Town of Niagara by the U.S. Government and help market the site for development.

4. Quality of Life

Community Development

- Participate in local and regional planning efforts focused on building strong communities
- Cleanup brownfields to improve public health and provide redevelopment opportunities
- Improve parkland and park access to enhance community recreational opportunities.
- Facilitate an update of the Niagara County Farmland Protection Plan, lead by Cornell Cooperative Extension in conjunction with the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, to promote farmland/open space protection.

5. Workforce

Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station Base Retention

- Work proactively to retain jobs and expand missions at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve through implementation of the NFARS Strategic Action Plan and Outreach Agenda.

Workforce Training Programs

- Work proactively with the Niagara County Workforce Investment Board.
- Promote the On-The-Job Training, Customized Training, and Workforce Development programs of Niagara WorkSourceOne to train new and existing workers.
- Expand Dream It, Do It program in Western New York, encouraging the continued collaboration between Niagara County manufacturers and school districts to engage young people about career pathways in advanced manufacturing.

IV. Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework serves as a tool for measuring progress on the overall CEDS. It is an important element of the ongoing planning process and seeks to answer the questions, "How are we doing?" and "What can we do better?" The Evaluation Framework is part of the CEDS Annual Performance Report that will be submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration each year.

A. Performance Measures

Measurements of success will serve as the ultimate determinant of how well we are doing. Evaluation is a key element of our ongoing planning process and redevelopment strategy. The following performance measurement criteria are important to evaluating Niagara County's progress. Where possible, benchmarks are provided in at least a 10-year increment.

1. Business Climate

Goal: Strengthen the competitive position of Niagara County businesses

Objective: Reduce the cost of doing business

Metric: New York State Corporate Tax Rate (decrease)

Data source: The Tax Foundation (<http://taxfoundation.org>)

Benchmark: 9.0% (2000)

Current: 7.1% (2014)

Change: ↓ 1.9%

Summary: New York State's corporate tax rate is the lowest since 1968. Repeated calls from the business and economic development community to alleviate the corporate tax burden are beginning to yield important advances. A low corporate tax rate will make Niagara County more economically resilient by helping to keep existing businesses in New York State, while attracting new businesses.

2. Industry Sectors

Goal: Expand key sectors of Niagara County's economy

Objective: Focus on identifying and attracting high-growth economic sectors companies, specifically manufacturing

Metric: Manufacturing Sector Annual Payroll (increase)

Data source: United States Census Bureau's County Business Patterns

Benchmark: \$758,591,000 (2002)

Current: \$424,450,000 (2012)

Change: ↓ \$334,141,000

Summary: The manufacturing sector provides the largest annual payroll in Niagara County. Payroll is down as industries automate their processes.

Goal: Diversify Niagara County's economic base

Objective: Increase the number of companies receiving economic development incentives

Metric: Number of companies receiving incentives (increase)

Data source: Niagara County Industrial Development Agency Annual Report

Benchmark: 11.2 companies (2009-2013 average)

Current: 12 companies (2014)

Change: ↑ 1.4 companies

Summary: Projects incentivized by the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency provide a good indicator of economic activity within the County. The number of companies assisted has increased due to aggressive marketing efforts.

3. Infrastructure

Goal: **Ensure Quality Transportation and Utility Infrastructure Networks Necessary to Support Businesses and Development**

Objective: **Cleanup brownfields sites and prepare them for redevelopment**

Metric: Number of brownfield sites receiving Certificates of Completion (increase)

Data source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Benchmark: 1.2 sites (2009-2013 average)

Current: 2 sites (2014)

Change: ↑ 1 site

Summary: Deindustrialization and population decline have left a legacy of damaged industrial land and vacant lots. New York State Brownfield Programs are helping to drive cleanup activity with lucrative tax incentives and liability releases.

4. Quality of Life

Goal: **Improve the quality of life for the people of Niagara County**

Objective: Attract higher paying jobs to afford residents opportunities for higher incomes.

Metric: Niagara County Poverty Rate (decrease)

Data source: United States Census Bureau (www.census.gov)

Benchmark: 11.4% (2003)

Current: 13.8% (2013)

Change: ↑ 2.4%

Summary: The poverty rate reached a 25 year high of 14.7% in 2012. The importance of the poverty rate, as an economic measure is critical because it indicates the percent of the County's population which earns minimal income for subsistence and basic needs. These minimal earnings impact many aspects of individual or family well-being. Decreasing the poverty rate will help improve the quality of life for many County residents.

5. Workforce

Goal: **Develop a comprehensive education and training program**

Objective: **Reduce the unemployment rate through job training and placement**

Metric: Niagara County Average Annual Unemployment Rate (decrease)

Data source: NYS Department of Labor Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Benchmark: 6.2% (2004)

Current: 6.9% (2014)

Change: ↑ 0.7%

Summary: While the current unemployment rate in Niagara County is up over the 2004 benchmark, the rate is down from its 25-year high of 9.3% in 2009 (the height of the Great Recession), but still up significantly from the 25-year low of 4.7% seen in 2000. To be more economically resilient, Niagara County needs a diverse economic base capable of absorbing shocks to the economy and a workforce equipped with diverse, translatable skills to ensure continued employment.

B. Accomplishments

Annual accomplishments are identified and assessed relative to the Goals outlined in this CEDS. The information is used to frame anticipated actions for the current year. Accomplishments by the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency are also listed, providing a snapshot of economic activity within the county over the past year.

1. Accomplishments & Anticipated Actions

Niagara County continues to make progress towards its economic development goals. The following section identifies accomplishments over the past year and anticipated actions for the current year. The accomplishments are intended to provide additional context around the Performance Measures in the previous section.

Business Climate

Goal: Strengthen the Competitive Position of County Businesses

2014 Accomplishments:

- Through the Empower Niagara Program, approved three low cost power allocations resulting in \$17.7 million in capital investment, retaining 22 jobs, and creating 33 jobs.
- Consulted with Niagara County Community College and Niagara University on the establishment of START-UP NY tax-free business programs.
- Conducted free Business Workshops in Niagara County's three cities promoting local, state, and federal resources for businesses.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Market the Empower Niagara Program to small and medium-sized businesses that do not qualify for New York Power Authority Expansion/Replacement Power Programs.
- Work with Niagara County Community College and Niagara University on START-UP NY tax-free program for eligible businesses expanding or locating in Niagara County.
- Conduct free Business Workshops in four towns within Niagara County.

Industry Sectors

Goal: Expand Key Sectors of Niagara County's Economy

2014 Accomplishments:

- Through the Niagara County Business Growth and Retention Program, contacted nearly 60 businesses to offer assistance and ensure business success.
- The Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) assisted companies in the manufacturing, tourism and hospitality sectors resulting in \$96.2 million in new capital investment, retention of 550 jobs, and creation of 238 new jobs in the next three years.
- Marketed Niagara County to approximately 2,900 Canadian companies through advertising, direct mail, tradeshow, and in-person meetings.
- Utilized a \$300,000 New York State Military Base Retention Grant to identify and market base development opportunities at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Reach out to approximately 60 existing companies through the Niagara County Business Growth and Retention Program to offer business assistance.

- Aggressively market business incentives available through the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency to facilitate new capital projects, job retention, and job growth.
- Aggressively market Niagara County to U.S. and Canadian companies through advertising, direct mail, tradeshow, and in-person meetings.
- Develop a marketing program to promote availability of fresh water in Niagara County to industries with water-intensive processes in water-starved states.

Goal: Diversify Niagara County’s Economic Base

2014 Accomplishments:

- Worked with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to update the Master Plan for Niagara Falls International Airport identifying passenger service and air cargo development opportunities.
- Supported construction of a customer service center at Yahoo!’s northeast regional data center in the Town of Lockport, strengthening the back office sector in Niagara County.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Work with economic development partners to promote supply chain opportunities in the emerging renewable energy sector to existing Niagara County businesses.
- Expand the cargo and logistics sectors in Niagara County by examining opportunities through the Buffalo Niagara International Trade Gateway.

Infrastructure

Goal: Ensure Quality Transportation and Utility Infrastructure Networks Necessary to Support Businesses and Development

2014 Accomplishments:

- Assisted the NFIA Stakeholders Group, Inc. in securing \$250,000 in grant funding to conduct a Fiber Optic Infrastructure Assessment with a focus on the Niagara Falls airport.
- Identified transportation infrastructure projects necessary to support the Buffalo Niagara International Trade Gateway.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Assist the NFIA Stakeholders Group, Inc. in carrying out the Niagara County Fiber Optic Infrastructure Assessment and identify actions necessary to expand and/or improve infrastructure including design and engineering.
- Advocate for infrastructure projects at Niagara Falls International Airport, Lehigh Valley Rail Yard, and Lewiston-Queenston Bridge Plaza.

Quality of Life

Goal: Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Niagara County

2014 Accomplishments:

- Completed the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, “One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara,” which was approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- Completed 48 Phase I and 14 Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and one brownfield remediation project through the Niagara County Brownfields Program.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Sign an agreement with regional stakeholders to establish an Implementation Council for implementation of “One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara,”
- Market brownfields assessment and cleanup incentives available through the Niagara County Brownfields Program and implement projects at approved sites.
- Update the Niagara County Farmland Protection Plan to retain the quality of life for those living in rural areas and to support the local food system.

Workforce

Goal: Develop a Comprehensive Education and Training Program

2014 Accomplishments:

- Promoted workforce development programs through the Niagara County Business Growth & Retention Program and Niagara County Business Workshops.

2015 Anticipated Actions:

- Identify opportunities to expand Dream It, Do It in Niagara County connecting high school students with employment opportunities in manufacturing.
- Identify and implement programmatic changes in the transition from the Workforce Investment Act to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- Invest in opportunities to expand Cornell Cooperative Extension’s AgX program to connect students with educational and career opportunities in the region’s food system.

2. NCIDA Projects

Projects incentivized by the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency provide a good indicator of economic activity within the County. In 2014, the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency (NCIDA) assisted projects in the manufacturing sector as well as numerous projects related to hospitality and tourism. There was no Niagara County Economic Development Fund (NEDF) revolving loan projects. The NCIDA closed one loan through its Microenterprise Assistance Program and closed on 12 leaseback projects.

Table 4. 2014 Microenterprise Assistance Program Loan

Business	Location	Loan Amount	# of Jobs (FTE’s)	
			Retained	Created*
Caron Manufacturing	City of Lockport	\$25,000	0	4

*Jobs projected within 3 years

Table 5. 2014 NCIDA Closed Industrial Revenue Bond and Leaseback Projects

Company	Project Description	Location	Project Amount	# of Jobs (FTE's)	
				Retained	Created*
Bawja Niagara	Renovation of vacant auto repair shop for gas station and convenience store	City of Niagara Falls	\$797,253	0	11
Merani Holdings, LLC	Construction of restaurant adjacent to existing hotel	City of Niagara Falls	\$1,400,000	0	30
Covanta LP	Expansion of industrial facility	City of Niagara Falls	\$30,100,000	86	23
Indian Ocean	Construction of Courtyard Marriott	City of Niagara Falls	\$6,650,000	0	28
452 Third Street	Renovation of vacant building for boutique hotel	City of Niagara Falls	\$595,000	0	4
Brent Industries	Addition to warehouse	Town of Royalton	\$604,250	6	6
Wurlitzer Industrial Park	Build-out of industrial and commercial space	City of North Tonawanda	\$1,240,000	275	18
Reid Petroleum	Renovation and construction of addition	City of Lockport	\$1,370,000	65	12
Irr Supply Centers	Renovation of industrial space	City of North Tonawanda	\$2,250,000	86	24
Niagara Falls Hospitality, Inc.	Construction of Microtel	City of Niagara Falls	\$2,980,000	0	11
Niagara Lodging, Inc.	Construction of LaQuinta Hotel	City of Niagara Falls	\$4,540,000	0	12
Ultimate Physique	Renovation of former school for gym and commercial use	City of Lockport	\$1,210,000	4	25
Sterling Energy	Assignment of Lease	City of Niagara Falls	\$25,000,000	27	0
Summit Outlets, LP	Renovation of Summit Mall	Town of Wheatfield	\$17,447,676	1	34
*Jobs projected within 3 years			Totals:	550	238

V. Appendices

A. Municipal Priority Projects



CITY OF LOCKPORT

Brownfields

Remediation of the Eighteenmile Creek corridor superfund site
City of Lockport Tourism Focus Area Brownfield Opportunity Implementation

Commercial

Support Niagara County Opportunity Zones in the City
Restoration of the Historic Palace Theatre
Implement economic development program for business assistance and capital improvements in the CBD

Industrial

Continue to bring in new and growing manufacturing and industrial users to Harrison Place

Infrastructure

Implement 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, primarily focused on sewer separation and road reconstruction
Develop and implement a comprehensive milling and paving program

Parks and Recreation

Implement City of Lockport Bicycle and Greenway Plan
Construction of the state-of-the-art Lockport Ice Arena and Sports Center
Improve pedestrian connections across the Erie Canal. Enhancements include: constructing switchback trail down the Niagara Escarpment from the former Dussault Foundry site to Market Street; restoration of a scenic walkway along the Rail Bridge; and enhancements to the North Adams Lift Bridge

Public Facilities

Construction of Canal District gateways on Canal Street

Residential

Create new market rate apartment units in downtown Lockport, stand-alone and mixed use

Tourism

Implement a comprehensive interpretation plan for the Restoration of the Flight of Five
Flight of Five – Restoration of Erie Canal Locks 67 – 71
Restoration of the Historic Palace Theatre
Restore and revitalize the historic Holly Edison building
Develop a variety of overnight accommodations for all segments of the visitor market
Leverage development of at least one downtown hotel
Ongoing development of Market Street Art Studios

Transportation

Improve pedestrian connections across the Erie Canal
Develop new rail connections utilizing Lockport Station

Waterfront

Construct a harbor complex consisting of a harbor walk, boat slips and tie ups, boat launch, harbormaster station, restrooms and laundry
Create and implement a new operation and investment plan for Widewaters Marina



CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS

Brownfields
Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor Brownfield Opportunity Area Project Implementation
Highland Avenue Brownfield Opportunity Area Project Implementation
Tract II & Power City Sites Redevelopment
Highland Area Greenspace Consortium Green Jobs Training
Commercial
Support Niagara County Opportunity Zones in the City
Industrial
Development of 50,000 sq. ft. industrial flex or incubator building
Proposed Highland Green Energy Business Park
Infrastructure
Proposed Third Street Parking Ramp (New) Construction
Rainbow Centre Parking Ramp Rehabilitation
Parks and Recreation
Various Park and Trail Development
Renovation / Improvement of NF Ice Rinks
Beech Avenue (park replacement)
Public Facilities
Construction of new parking ramp adjoining the Conference Center
Redevelopment of former Municipal Public Safety Building
Restoration of City Hall
Tourism
Trolley Bus Network – expand trolley service connecting tourist destinations
Old Falls Street Entertainment District
Underground Railroad Heritage Interpretative Center, at the Customhouse
Hotel Development
Aquarium of Niagara Expansion
Transportation
The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Access and Park Restoration Project intended to realize a configured system of road access and park facilities along the Upper and Lower Niagara River
Niagara Falls International Railway Station Intermodal Transportation Center Project
Waterfront
Niagara Riverview Park and Trail, Expanded Implementation
Upper River Waterfront ‘Old Stone Chimney’ Relocation & Heritage Site Development
Niagara Gorge/waterfront plan development
LaSalle Waterfront Park & site development
Niagara River Greenway Vision Project Implementation



CITY OF NORTH TONAWANDA

Brownfields

Brownfield Opportunity Area Implementation Step 3

Commercial

Support Niagara County Opportunity Zones in the City

Redevelopment of downtown properties along Webster, Main, Sweeney, and Oliver Streets

Implementation of key projects in the NT Momentum redevelopment plan

Industrial

Business expansion projects for manufacturing companies located in the Buffalo Bolt Business Park

Parks and Recreation

Final phase of redevelopment of Gratwick Park Marina

Extension of the Erie Canal Bike Path

Installation of new kayak launch facilities on the Erie Canal

Public Facilities

Continue to address flooding/drainage issues with continued 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

Tourism

Expansion of Riviera Theater

Development of a 80+ room hotel in downtown

Renovation of the historic Carnegie Art Center

Waterfront

Continue to focus planning efforts on the development potential of Tonawanda Island, a nearly 80 acre island in the Niagara River at the terminus of the Erie Canal, which is primed for redevelopment



TOWN OF CAMBRIA

Brownfields

Continue with redevelopment of Former Lockport Air Force Station/NIKE site

Industrial

Priority infrastructure projects at the Cambria Technology Park, a Build-Now NY Shovel-Ready Certified site. Infrastructure needs include an entrance road, sanitary sewer service and associated pump station, at a total cost of \$1.7 million

Infrastructure

Replacement/Rehabilitation of aging water/wastewater lines at various locations in accordance with Asset Management Plan

Parks and Recreation

Town park and recreation area, 35 acres remains to be developed with additional athletic fields, picnic areas, walking trail extension & construction of an administrative/storage building with restrooms



TOWN OF HARTLAND

Parks and Recreation

Town park expansion: add new lighting and playing fields

Public Facilities

Improve energy efficiency at town hall and highway garage

Expand board meeting room and court offices at town hall



TOWN OF LEWISTON

Commercial

Storm piping and sanitary sewers need to be installed at all potential commercial development sites

Improvements to Sanborn sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping

Infrastructure

Improvements to the Town's sanitary sewer collection system & abatement

Roof repair at the water pollution control center administration and maintenance building

Parks and Recreation

The Town only has two small Town owned parks and should have a centralized main park.

Public Facilities

Develop Town owned waterfront properties

Construct an addition to senior center building to expand programming to meet existing and future needs.

Transportation

Resolve the traffic pattern at the barricaded road at the corner of Route 104 and Indian Hill Road



TOWN OF LOCKPORT

Commercial

Facade improvement program – matching grant program to upgrade commercial building exteriors consistent with design guidelines in targeted commercial districts

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); related paving and acquisition expenses

Industrial

Construct a 30,000 ft² multi-tenant building for distribution and manufacturing uses in Lockport Industrial Park

Infrastructure

Install broadband service to Lockport Industrial Park to service future technology and datacenter businesses

Relocation of Transit Road water line, intersection of NY 93 (Robinson Road) to the Niagara County line

Parks and Recreation

Construct bicycle path from Day Road Park to Cold Springs Bridge/Canalway Trail

Public Facilities

Install traffic light at Snyder Drive and Robinson Road

Trails and pathways to connect existing parks and recreational facilities as identified in Town of Lockport Trail, Pathways and Connectivity Plan

**TOWN OF NEWFANE****Parks and Recreation**

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 that was recently remediated

Waterfront

Olcott fish hatchery to supply Lake Ontario and tributaries

**TOWN OF NIAGARA****Brownfields**

Assistance with asbestos removal for Military Road School

Industrial

Construct a 30,000 ft² spec building with quick access to the I-190 New York State Thruway

Infrastructure

Cayuga Creek flood control measures

Public Facilities

Expand police and court offices at town hall

Redevelopment of the Niagara Army Reserve Center to be used as a First Responder Center

**TOWN OF PENDLETON****Infrastructure**

Replace water meter reader heads

Replace water line along Campbell Boulevard between Mapleton and Lockport Roads

Repair water tank

Reconstruct Meyer Road

Parks and Recreation

Finish linear trail between Meyer and Townline Roads

Public Facilities

Construct community center

Replace Historical Society Building

Add addition to town garage, salt shed



TOWN OF PORTER

Infrastructure

Expansion of Youngstown Estate subdivision, creating a separate entrance/egress for residential safety

Parks and Recreation

Develop park, playgrounds, pavilions, etc. at Porter-on-the-Lake park

Develop Ransomville Fire Company Park in the Hamlet of Ransomville

Public Facilities

Expand town court at town hall



TOWN OF ROYALTON

Infrastructure

Replace old clay sewer lines and update sewer plant in Gasport

Replace leaking and outdated water mains and lines in Gasport

Extend water line along Route 31 between Bolton Road and Griswold Street

Replace deteriorating equipment at pump station on East Avenue in Gasport

Public Facilities

Repair/replace roof, floor, and heating system at highway garage

Update handicap accessibility, conference rooms, and basement/office use at town hall.

Construct new salt shed to increase storage capacity to allow for volume purchasing of salt



TOWN OF SOMERSET

Industrial

Conduct project feasibility study, planning and preliminary design and engineering work towards development of a deep water port, infrastructure, and related facilities.

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 WHEATFIELD

Brownfields

Modify River Road Park to become part of the Greenway Trail

Commercial

Develop a proposal for a Wheatfield Town Center

Infrastructure

Complete a town-wide drainage study which may lead to future improvements at various problem areas

Parks and Recreation

- Construct bicycle and pedestrian trail along River Road connecting Erie Canal Trail and North Tonawanda waterfront trail to City of Niagara Falls trail section.
- Make improvements at Mario Park by adding a parking lot and youth baseball fields
- 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 – (per 50/50 grant from State of New York)
- Break ground on a park for Veterans

Public Facilities

- Install back-up generators at Community Center and Youth Center for Red Cross use
- Perform a study to determine if Wheatfield needs to offer library services



TOWN OF WILSON

Commercial

- Find a tenant for the 86,000 sq ft food manufacturing plant – (formerly the Pfeiffer/T. Marzetti salad dressing bottling company). It sits on approximately 7 acres and is surrounded by 23 more acres of agricultural land
- Expand the Woodcock Brothers Brewery to include a bottling facility

Parks and Recreation

- Construct a bicycle path connecting Wilson and Youngstown
- Expand and develop Wilson Tuscarora State Park



VILLAGE OF BARKER

Infrastructure

- Replace 100 year old drainage system
- Street resurfacing, drains, and sidewalks improvements

Residential

- Market four acres of Village Property for private sector senior housing

Parks and Recreation

- Pave ice rink for year-round use



VILLAGE OF LEWISTON

Commercial

- Frontier House restoration – rehab historical building for commercial and residential development

Infrastructure

- Extend Center Street for additional commercial development
- Design and construction of replacement water and sewer lines which are in service beyond life expectancy and in failing condition
- Water and sewer main expansion to provide expansion for ArtPark activities

Parks and Recreation
Improve Academy Park with new curbs, sidewalks, and parking
Improve and expand recreational facilities at Lewiston Plateau Park
Security enhancements at Lewiston Landing
Bicycle and hiking path greenway along escarpment through Village
Public Facilities
Design and construction of enhancements at Lewiston Landing fish cleaning station
Tourism
Enhancements to the tourist welcome center
Waterfront
Waterfront Park – expand slips, boat launch, parking and park facilities
Promenade - construct an ice rink complex



VILLAGE OF MIDDLEPORT

Public Facilities
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
Assessment of facility needs and upgrades for 40 year old wastewater treatment plan
Waterfront
Margaret Dorman park improvements: picnic shelter, tables, grills, playground equipment, additional landscaping, utility hookups, install multi-purpose dock, construct small parking lot



VILLAGE OF WILSON

Industrial
Find a new owner for the former Pfeiffer/T. Marzetti facility
Infrastructure
Finish replacing 100 year old drinking water lines
Upgrade 100 year old sanitary sewer lines to reduce inflow and infiltration into the newly renovated (\$1.6 million) waste water treatment plant
Parks and Recreation
Implement a public brush pile for composting
Develop a bicycle and walking green way throughout the Village and Town of Wilson connecting the Wilson Historical Society to the lakeside park
Public Facilities
Main Street utilities - relocate above ground electric service poles and wires to buried facilities
Agricultural museum and ice house building, including a handicap accessible rest room, on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail/Niagara Wine Trail
Storm sewer facilities – replace aged and undersized storm sewers along the west end of Young Street

Tourism
Develop an artistic community
Construct an agricultural museum to highlight the agricultural heritage of northern Niagara County.
Construct a ship building museum as a tourist destination with handicap restrooms on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail/Niagara Wine Trail

Waterfront
Enhance Krueger Park with rest stop facilities (i.e.: RV dump station) handicap restroom, parking area, basketball courts, tennis courts



VILLAGE OF YOUNGSTOWN

Brownfields
Demolition of Cold Storage building and reuse of stone in historical gateways

Commercial
Acquisition of empty lot, Main and Water Streets for gateway to waterfront park facility
Develop a Village business and services feature marketing program
Streetscape and façade improvements in the business district on Main Street and Lockport Street

Infrastructure
Repair/replace porous pavement on Main Street
Replace 50 year old deteriorated water lines for safe, clean drinking water on Route 93

Parks and Recreation
Running track at Veteran's Park
Band shell for Falkner Park summer concert program and annual civic sponsored entertainment
Constitution Park – access to and renovation of gazebo

Public Facilities
Re-point 110 year municipal Red Brick Schoolhouse headquarters

Tourism
Cross-Border Ferry Service – customs/building/operations for international cross-border ferry service between Youngstown, New York and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

Waterfront
Update and expand north dock and fishery
North and south dock security systems
Secure additional properties along waterfront
Installation of pedestrian lift/elevator from Main Street to waterfront
Improve pedestrian access and safety to waterfront areas
Investigate and repair dock area at waterfront park

B. Buffalo Niagara Regional Agenda



2015 Regional Agenda

Economic development policies and projects compiled by the Buffalo Niagara Partnership in conjunction with the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls and counties of Erie and Niagara




2014 REGIONAL AGENDA SUCCESSES:

- Brownfield Cleanup Program short term extension
- Children's Hospital relocation to Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
- Buffalo Manufacturing Works launches with EWI-NY
- Creation of the International Trade Gateway Organization

2015 Regional Agenda

For 14 years, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership has worked with area municipalities identifying priority projects our state and federal representatives should support. The Partnership, in collaboration with the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls and the counties of Erie and Niagara, has compiled the region's top state and federal funding and policy requests.

These economic development priorities will dictate the Partnership's advocacy efforts for the next year on behalf of Buffalo Niagara's business community and the region as a whole.


 Denotes initiatives that are included in WNY Regional Economic Development Council's strategic plans, including the Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan.



© 2014 University at Buffalo | Douglas Levere

TOP REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

 Site acquisition, rail reconstruction and construction of **Bethlehem Steel** main access road to access 400 acres of land for proposed business park.

 Long term extension of the **Brownfield Cleanup Program** to enhance private-sector cleanups of brownfields and provide developers with tax credits for the development or adaptive reuse of contaminated sites.

Department of Environment Conservation finalization of a site permitting program to allow **Liquefied Natural Gas** storage, dispensing and transportation in NYS.

Support the **Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station**, in light of possible 2015 or 2017 U.S. Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendations. Emphasis on retention of the 914th and 107th Airlift Wings.

Enhance the **Peace Bridge Cargo Pre-Inspection** program and to encourage the Department of Homeland Security to provide adequate staffing to make the program permanent.

 Back NYS efforts to build **Regional Workforce Advancement Center** and **Buffalo Manufacturing Works**.

Support U.S. Department of Labor efforts for a smooth and orderly transition from Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**.



Transportation/Logistics



Reauthorization of **MAP-21** funding, including allocations to the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

Federal aviation funding authorization (**AIR-21**).

Create **Buffalo Public Works Campus** by relocating all divisions of Department of Public Works to one campus.

Support for study recommendations to identify and evaluate transit access to the **Canalside and Cobblestone Districts**.

Continue phases of **Cars Sharing Main Street** between Mohawk and Court Streets, along the Main Street Transit Mall in downtown Buffalo.

Restoration of SEIS funding for **Continental 1, Route 219** as a safe and fuel-efficient four-lane highway.

Repair or replace **CP Draw Bridge** over the Buffalo River.

Identify a mechanism to provide dedicated transportation funding to **Federal Transportation Infrastructure & Highway Trust Fund** and passage of a long-term transportation funding bill.

Improve border efficiencies at region's four **international crossings**:

- Encourage Canadian officials to expedite implementation of RFID technology in Canadian passports
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection & Canada Border Services Agency approval of expanded NEXUS hours and streamlined programming

 Support for **critical trade, transportation and logistics assets**:

- Expedite completion of Peace Bridge U.S. Plaza enhancement projects
- Funding for completion of Portageville Bridge
- Funding for Lewiston-Queenston U.S. Plaza renovations
- Seek out and identify air cargo operations at Niagara Falls International Airport
- NYS facilitation of relationships with the Port Authority of NY/NJ

Support for study recommendations on **NFTA Transit enhancements in the Buffalo Metro Rail and Town of Amherst**.

Funding for the **Niagara County Public Works Facility**.

Finalize plans for **Niagara Gorge Corridor Project**

Funding for a City of Buffalo **Smart LED Commercial District Pilot Project**.

Reform **NYS funding formula for transportation infrastructure projects** that provide capacity for economic development projects.

Provide support for essential **public infrastructure projects**, such as:

- Elimination of the Lackawanna Waste Treatment Plant
- Rush Creek Interceptor Project
- Upgrade of the Southtowns Sewer Treatment Plant
- Combined sewer outfall correction in the City of Lockport
- High Street sewer separation in the City of Lockport
- Pump station at Sherwood Ave. and Walck Rd. in North Tonawanda
- Separation of storm water and sanitary sewers in North Tonawanda

Obtain capital funding for **Upstate and Downstate transit infrastructure**.

Implement **WNY Passenger Rail Infrastructure Action Plan** to advance High Speed & Intercity Passenger Rail implementation throughout the region.



Smart Growth



Provide funding to drive and monitor the implementation of **One Region Forward**, including the continuation of the Citizen Planning School, Economics of Sustainability Series and the development of a program to assist municipalities as they update their comprehensive plans and zoning codes. Stay consistent with the One Region Forward Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

Establish a shovel-ready **agribusiness park** in Erie County that will allow food and agricultural processing facilities.

Eliminate the **Asbestos Notification Fee** on each property demolition to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods.

Pass the **Asbestos Remediation Tax Credit** and address asbestos and lead paint remediation regulations.

Obtain funding from NYS for the **Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program**.

Construct infrastructure at shovel-ready **Cambria Technology Park** to allow site development.

Municipal exemption from **compulsory interest arbitration awards** authorized by New York Civil Service Law §209.

Reauthorize the **Environmental Restoration Program** for redevelopment of former industrial sites for commercial, industrial, residential or public use.

Develop 80-acre **Niagara Falls Highland Area Commerce Park** in Highland Brownfield Opportunity Area to house advanced manufacturing, high-tech and renewable energy companies.

Develop former **Niagara Falls Army Reserve Center** for light industrial uses and aviation/aerospace activities.

Resume funding for **Restore NY Program** to address high rate of vacant properties to continue rehabilitation and/or demolition of city structures.



Tourism



Establish a **Visit Buffalo Niagara Funding Advisory Board** to explore mechanisms for increasing and stabilizing funding.

Engage in planning effort to secure the future of the **Buffalo Bills** following the end of the current Ralph Wilson Stadium lease.

Fund improvements that ensure the longevity and viability of **Coca Cola Field**.

Conduct **Downtown Convention Center** feasibility study to determine feasibility and appropriate size for new downtown convention center.

Restore historic **Erie Canal Locks 67, 68 and 71** (the "Flight of Five") to their original 1842 functionality in order to promote heritage tourism.

Renovate the interior and exterior of the **Historic Palace Theatre** to attract more events and performances, helping to revitalize Lockport's business district.

Initiate development of a **Niagara Experience Center** as the hub for the marketing and promotion of the region's tourism assets and initiatives.

Fund the comprehensive marketing strategy for **Niagara Falls International Airport** to attract inbound passengers, new air carriers and Canadian travelers.

Construct a breakwater at **Olcott Harbor** to protect the harbor and Lake Ontario shoreline, allowing for further harbor development.

Expand the historic **Riviera Theatre** to improve the visitor experience, attract more performances and events and substantially increase attendance.



Eds & Meds



Improve **Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus'** utility infrastructure, energy efficiency and grid modernization.

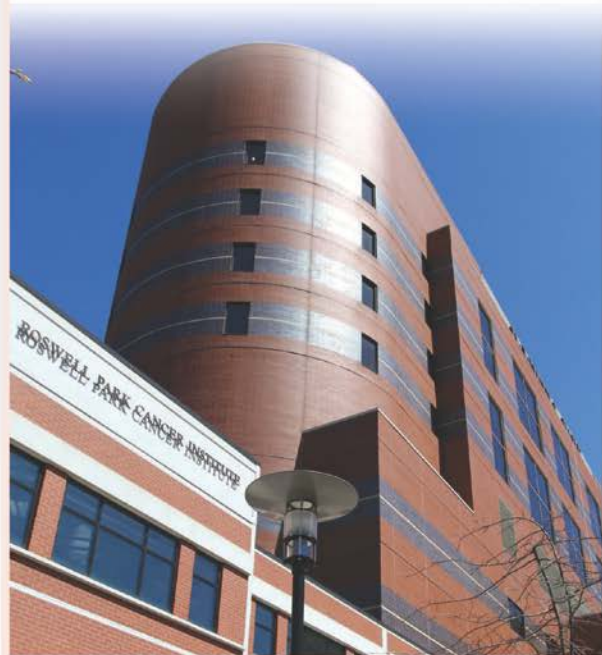
Plan and implement **Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus'** sustainable transportation initiatives for employees and nearby residents.

Continue support of relocation of **Children's Hospital** to Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

Ensure **Roswell Park Cancer Center Institute's** NYS Budget language maintains funding for Roswell Park.

Create a 5 year capital plan for **University at Buffalo** that includes South & North campus capital requests as well as critical maintenance funding for existing infrastructure.

Increase operational budget for **University at Buffalo** for next 3 years to address collective bargaining increases in the 2014-15 budget and allow NY SUNY 2020 accomplishments to continue to move forward.



665 Main Street, Suite 200, Buffalo, NY 14203 | 716.852.7100

thepartnership.org/2015regionalagenda

©Buffalo Niagara Partnership 2014

C. Economic Development Partners

- 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 Renewal Community
- City of North Tonawanda Lumber City Development Corporation
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
- Empire State Development Corporation
- International Joint Commission (IJC)
- Leaders Encouraging Action & Progress (LEAP)
- National Fuel
- National Grid
- New York State Electric & Gas
- NCCC Small Business Development Center
- New York Business Development Corporation
- New York Power Authority
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- 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 Department of Social Services
 - Niagara County Farm Bureau
 - Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District
 - Niagara County Workforce Investment Board (WIB)
- Niagara Falls Bridge Commission
- Niagara-Orleans Regional Alliance
- Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC)
- Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Lockport Industrial Development Agency
- Town of Niagara Industrial Development Agency
 - University at Buffalo Business Alliance
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - U.S. Small Business Administration
- USA Niagara Development Corporation
- WNY Regional Economic Development Council

D. CEDS Committee

1. Organization

The Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee represents all sectors of the economy, citizenry, elected officials at the local, county, state and federal levels, and public service professionals. 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, meets quarterly to discuss issues such as business attraction/retention, business assistance, and economic development opportunities. NCEDA has at its core a cadre of experts who work on economic development issues on a daily basis, which 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 supports an agenda that places significant emphasis on comprehensive economic development. Through the daily efforts of the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED), this agenda is transformed into actions which seek to leverage the potential for sustainable prosperity in all twenty of the county's municipalities. NCCED staff 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 and businesses. The 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.

2. Members

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 and include representatives from the business community, key industry sectors, and economic development organizations. A complete list of CEDS Committee members can be found at the beginning of the document.

3. Staff

The NCCED serves as staff to the CEDS Committee. This group updates the report, gathers and analyzes statistical data, canvasses committee members and local officials for input, prepares and distributes meeting notices, agendas, meeting minutes and draft reports for approval by the CEDS Committee. NCCED staff assigned to the CEDS Committee are:

- ❖ **Samuel M. Ferraro**, Commissioner, Niagara County Department of Economic Development and Executive Director, Niagara County Industrial Development Agency
- ❖ **Kathleen J. Arigoni**, Confidential Assistant/CEDS Coordinator, NCDED
- ❖ **Michael A. Casale**, Deputy Commissioner of Business Development, NCDED
- ❖ **Benjamin J. Bidell**, AICP, GISP, Senior Planner, NCDED
- ❖ **Amy E. Fisk**, AICP, Senior Planner, NCDED
- ❖ **Jeffery P. Degnan**, Graphic Artist, NCDED
- ❖ **Susan C. Langdon**, Director of Project Development, NCIDA