



**TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

# **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**



*“A Great Place to Live, Work and Play”*

DECEMBER 2005

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan was made possible through the efforts of:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction (Section I)

This document is the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Tonawanda, Erie County, New York. The Town of Tonawanda is a first-ring suburb that borders on the City of Buffalo. It is the third largest Town in Erie County, with a population of approximately 78,000 residents, including the Village of Kenmore.

The Town's last Comprehensive Plan was done in 1955. While that document provided excellent guidance to the Town during its years of strong growth, it is acknowledged that the existing plan is outdated, and the several area-wide studies need to be consolidated into an overall vision for the Town to help guide decision-making.

The primary purpose of this document is to guide redevelopment in the eastern portion of the Town and guide the development of significant vacant parcels in the western portion of the Town in order to help the Town ensure it remains a great place to live, work and play. Strategies approach the varied character of the Town. The eastern part of the town is primarily residential and retail, and is essentially built out. Recommendations focus on maintenance, revitalization, and redevelopment with an emphasis on neighborhood features. The region to the west of Military Road is more industrial, with many undeveloped and brownfield sites that provide an opportunity for growth and development. This area also has prime waterfront lands with opportunities for development of recreational opportunities.

The Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan will serve as a basis for land use regulation, community projects, and public and private investment in the Town. It is the intent of this document that it will help guide decision making in the Town of Tonawanda in order to maintain those features that the community values so highly, while mitigating any impacts of future change.

### Goals and Visioning (Section II)

The Goals and Visioning section of the report represents the broad, general values that should guide future land use decisions. The goals were strongly influenced by the comments and input received from residents, officials and other stakeholders. Input was solicited through a variety of meetings, including general public input meetings and smaller focus meetings with various groups and organizations in the Town. "Big picture" goals for the Town are listed below. Section II of the report details additional objectives under each of these major goals in order to provide additional guidance for how to achieve the vision of the community.

- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will strive to maintain a high quality of life and high level of services for its residents.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will work to ensure the continued vitality of its neighborhoods.
- ★ The Town will strive to be a safe community.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will retain a well-maintained, diverse stock of neighborhood residential properties that meets the needs of all residents.

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- ★ The Town will promote attractive and well-planned economic development opportunities.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will promote a safe and efficient transportation system for all modes of transportation.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will support increased intermunicipal cooperation where appropriate.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda supports the preservation of environmental features and the continued mitigation of environmental concerns.
- ★ The Town of Tonawanda will supply a well-maintained, cost-effective infrastructure system that provides good roads, ample safe public water, proper wastewater treatment and effective storm water management together with other utility service to support sustainable land use and economic development.

These goals represent big picture guidance to the Town. In addition, a written vision was established for the Town of Tonawanda. This vision for the future sets an ideal goal of how the community will develop over the next 20 years. Key points are summarized below; further information is available in Section II-C.

- The industrial/waterfront area of the Town west of Military Road will see new development and a revitalization and rebirth of its business base. Projects in this area will include commercial, office, industrial and recreational uses.
- Accessibility and public enjoyment of the waterfront region will also continue to grow. The RiverWalk, the Niagara River Greenway, development of Cherry Farm Park and other public access projects will help to bring people to the area to enjoy recreational activities.
- The Town will improve its image and aesthetics, through streetscape projects along major corridors, enhanced landscaping and design standards and targeted projects designed to increase the attractiveness of the Town.
- The Town and Village, through cooperative planning, will see the improvement of the Delaware Avenue, Elmwood Avenue and Kenmore Avenue corridors in and around the Village.
- The Town will continue to improve walkability and interconnectivity. Residents will be able to easily walk, bike or drive to parks, schools, churches and neighborhood shopping. The creation of an interconnected network of trails will improve access throughout the community.
- Congestion and traffic problems along Niagara Falls Boulevard will be addressed through access management techniques that reduce the number of driveways and provide for shared access (drives) between parcels. Aesthetics will be improved with more landscaping and stronger design standards. The impacts of possible deepening of business lots will be investigated to evaluate the relative merits to residences and businesses.
- Sheridan Drive will remain the Town's major east/west corridor. Transportation improvements will help promote the success of this area. A "Town Center" at Sheridan Drive and Delaware Avenue will contain a mix of offices, retail, and public uses, with attractive gathering areas. Improved pedestrian crossings across Sheridan Drive, connections to schools and surrounding residential areas, and design standards, will also help to create a sense of place.

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- Sheridan Drive west of Military Road will be redeveloped to support the Sheridan Parkside and Riverview neighborhoods and improve the image of the Town.
- Neighborhood retail centers, such as the plazas at Brighton/Eggert, Colvin/Highland and Colvin/Eggert, will be attractive commercial centers, accessible to neighborhood residents by car, foot or bike. A mix of uses will be encouraged, with appropriate buffers and screening to minimize negative impacts on surrounding residents. The focus will be on convenience retail uses such as convenience stores, restaurants, and personal services. Façade programs and landscaping/design standards will help ensure they are “good neighbors”.
- Neighborhoods will be re-invigorated by strategic investments in neighborhood facilities, establishment of strong neighborhood associations, improved communications, and continued homeowner investments in their properties. All neighborhoods will have a gathering place, such as a park, playground, school, church or shopping district.
- The Town’s high quality municipal recreational services will continue to be a strong asset of the Town. The Town’s services will adjust to meet the needs of changing demographics, as the demographics of the Town shift towards younger families, but still with a high percentage of seniors.
- The Town’s outstanding other municipal services, such as trash collection, recycling, street cleaning, plowing, road repair and street lighting will continue as a highly regarded attribute and recognized as a major advantage of living in the Town.
- Strategic investments in Town water and sewer infrastructure in conformance with governmental regulations will allow the Town to continue to efficiently provide services to its existing customer base and new customers, while addressing environmental considerations and concerns.
- Housing revitalization will occur in targeted areas and blighting influences will be addressed. Sheridan Parkside will be the focus of continued redevelopment for affordable housing, but market-rate housing will also be built as the character of the neighborhood changes. Homeowner improvements and additions to existing housing throughout the Town will help diversify the housing stock.
- The abundance of well maintained residential properties coupled with the recognized high quality of municipal services will continue to make for high value and quick sales in purchasing homes in the Town. This will benefit the town by maintaining high occupancy and a good tax base.
- The Town will continue to identify potential blight and take steps to prevent or stop the spread of blighted conditions through redevelopment, neighborhood improvements, tax incentives, financial initiatives and state and federal programs.
- The linear park and trail system in the Town will continue to grow, improving access and connecting major features throughout the Town.
- The safety and security of the Town will be assured though the continuance of meritorious police, fire and other emergency services supplemented, where appropriate, by citizen volunteer activities, in support of Homeland Security and improved quality of life.

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- Economic development efforts will invigorate the commercial and industrial areas of the Town. The Town's strategic location in the region and its excellent interstate highway access will create demand for developable commercial and industrial lands in the western portion of the Town. With strategic improvements in infrastructure such as access roads, the Town will be a demand community for business investment. The Town tax structure will support a competitive business climate.
- Build out of the Colvin Woods site will result in new jobs, which will lead to improvements in retail and personal services, such as shops and restaurants, in that area, including revitalization of the Colvin-Eggert Plaza for a mix of uses. These activities, in turn, will enhance the Town's tax base.
- The Town will continue to ensure its water and sewer facilities and systems incorporate new technologies in order to provide efficient, cost-effective services throughout Town.
- The Town will see a controlled distribution of communication towers and underground installations in appropriate locations to link businesses and facilitate state-of-the art communications.
- There will be improvements to the I-190, the I-290 and the Grand Island Bridges to handle increased traffic.
- The Town will solidify an identity as an attractive, convenient, affordable place to live. It will attract younger families that will continue to invest in the Town. Some see the Town creating its own new identity as the Town of "Ken-Ton."

## **Inventory of Existing Conditions (Section III)**

Section III, Inventory of Existing Conditions provides an overview of existing conditions in the Town of Tonawanda. It includes the following subsections:

- Existing Land Use Pattern: this section of the document outlines how development has occurred in the Town, including residential; commercial; industrial/manufacturing; institutional and public facilities; and vacant land and open space. It also notes areas that have been the subject of specific local land use studies (Waterfront and Sheridan Parkside Village Courts).
- Land Use Controls: this section provides information regarding the land use controls that govern how land may be developed in the Town. It includes a description of the various zoning districts and their allowable uses, and references other sections of the Town Code that address land use issues.
- Demographics: this section provides a description of the Town's demographic characteristics, including population and household trends for the Town and Village; age distribution; income characteristics; and information on residents' occupation and industry. Comparative statistics for a number of comparable or adjacent communities in Erie County are also provided.
- Housing and Neighborhoods: this section provides a description of housing characteristics, such as the number of units; vacancy rates; and homeownership rates. Statistics on housing types (single-family vs. apartments), housing age, and home prices are also provided. This section also provides a description of neighborhoods in the Town, and a discussion of the Community Development efforts in the Town of Tonawanda.
- Environmental Features: this section of the document describes important natural features and environmental concerns in the Town. These include streams and rivers; watersheds and water quality; floodplains; wetlands; significant habitats; soils; brownfields and hazardous waste sites; and solid waste sites.



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- Utilities: this section provides information about the Town's infrastructure systems for public water, waste water, and storm water; and other utilities (electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications).
- Transportation: this section describes the transportation network serving the Town. It discusses the roadway network, with information about roadway classification, traffic volumes, and roadway conditions. It describes facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, and provides an overview of transit and rail service in the Town. It also outlines proposed transportation improvements in the Town, based on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) prepared by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) and NYS Department of Transportation (DOT).
- Community Facilities and Cultural Resources: this section provides an inventory of the many community facilities and cultural resources in the Town. It lists municipal buildings and parks and recreational sites, including trailways. It lists senior services and facilities, libraries, and public, private and parochial schools within the Town. It also lists facilities for emergency services, such as police and fire protection. Historic and architectural resources and scenic vistas/ visual resources are also noted.
- Economic Development: this section provides an overview of economic development activities in the Town of Tonawanda. It describes the activities of the Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation (TTDC) and outlines the characteristics of the Town's Empire Zone. An overview of the Town's economic base and workforce is provided, along with trends in business investment and business trends. Results of the TTDC's local survey of businesses are outlined. This section also provides a descriptive inventory of business properties in the Town, and a description of available business development services provided by the Town.

## Findings and Issues (Section IV)

The Findings and Issues section of this document presents the conclusions that were the result of the data analysis and planning research. It is divided into three subsections. The first subsection presents a number of initial findings, organized around the categories of the Inventory. It presents basic observations about conditions in the Town. The second subsection presents a number of key issues, organized loosely around the goals and objectives from Section II. This subsection presents general areas of concern or opportunities in the Town. The third subsection takes a more detailed examination of certain areas of concern that emerged from the planning process as meriting additional investigation: transportation and major thoroughfares; connectivity; neighborhood revitalization; and zoning. The strengths and weaknesses of each of these issues are detailed.

The assessment of major thoroughfares is based on the aesthetics and functionality of major roadways through the Town, with an emphasis on improving their appeal. The "Connectivity" analysis examines transportation through Town from a multi-modal perspective, looking at ways to try to make it easier for residents to travel through Town, by car, transit, bike or walking. The discussion on neighborhood revitalization reflects the fact that neighborhoods are a crucial element of the quality of life in the Town of Tonawanda. Zoning is addressed because it is one of the tools available to the Town to help achieve its vision.

## Recommendations (Section V)

This section outlines specific recommendations for the Town of Tonawanda, designed to help the Town achieve its stated vision for its future. It is organized around a number of issues, reflecting the Town's vision. Each subsection begins with a summation of the Town's vision for that specific area, and then provides a discussion to set the context. This discussion is followed by a series of specific

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recommendations. These recommendations are briefly summarized here. They are presented in more detail in Section V of this document.

## **A. Waterfront**

- New industrial access road for North Youngmann Commerce Center and the Isle View (300-acre) sites.
- Creation of new Business/Industrial Park at North Youngmann Commerce Center (Mud Flats).
- Creation of new Office/ Light Industrial Park on rezoned land off River Road (Isle View).
- Development of new access road in the Sawyer Road/James Drive area.
- Re-use of the Town landfill for a recreational use.
- Continued improvements to trails in the waterfront area.
- Continued implementation of the Town's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Waterfront Land Use Plan.
- Recreational Improvements- including Cherry Farm Park, the Niagara River Greenway, and a possible waterfront park north of the Grand Island Bridge.
- Continue to support and seek remediation of brownfields, radiation sites and waste sites as identified, with appropriate reuse of sites.

## **B. Economic Development**

- Support and improve shopping opportunities in the Town
- Support additional economic development efforts.
- Coordinate zoning standards at Village edges so development is compatible with Village plans.
- Coordinate land use standards at other jurisdictional boundaries.
- Ensure adequacy of rail service.
- Create a Town Center at Sheridan and Delaware.
- Investigate tax structure and impacts on economic development.

## **C. Thoroughfares/(Traffic and Access Management)**

- Institute access management requirements along major roadways– reduce number of driveways per parcel; reduce congestion from cars turning into and out of the travel lanes.
- Institute measures to alleviate congestion, such as dedicated turn-lanes, coordination of signals.
  
- Prepare a Kenmore Avenue Corridor Study.
- Continue to study Niagara Falls Boulevard jointly with the Town of Amherst.
- Address problem intersections.
- Investigate streetscape improvements—trees and landscaping, better signage, pavement treatments, crosswalks and pedestrian walkways, improved lighting, etc.
- Create commercial corridor overlay districts (special zoning districts to add standards for landscaping, design, signage, control of driveways, etc. to improve traffic flow and aesthetics.
- Remain involved in I-290 Planning—both traffic and aesthetic issues (landscaping, billboards).
- Institute a roadway reconstruction program for local roads.
- Continue to monitor traffic capacity issues.
- Improve facilities for pedestrians—crosswalks, walkways, benches, etc. for access and safety.
- Coordination with GBNRTC—to promote projects important to the Town.
- Over the long term, explore the desirability and feasibility of reconfiguring lots on Niagara Falls Boulevard to enable better site planning.

## **D. Connectivity**

- Complete trails that are currently funded—Sherwood Greenway and the Erie Canalway Trail.
- Construct proposed trail along the NFTA right-of-way (Midtown Greenway)
- Connector trail—if Midtown Greenway is constructed, build a link to Brighton Park.

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- Trail along the Lehigh Valley rail line from the Tonawanda Creek to Ellicott Creek—linking to Amherst trail system.
- Establish an east-west trail, (separated or clearly designated on-road) linking Lincoln Park area through to the Village of Kenmore.
- Develop a Connector trail linking the Village of Kenmore to the Sherwood Trail.
- Create an east-west trail in the northern part of Town, across Brighton Road west of Kenney Field and Waverly Avenue.
- Develop waterfront trails connections—along Rattlesnake Creek and through the “Isle View”.
- Continue to invest in sidewalks in residential neighborhoods.
- Continue improvements to on-road bicycle lanes, through better markings, etc.

## **E. Neighborhoods / Housing**

- Support neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups
- Support/develop “Neighborhood Assets”—each neighborhood should have a school, park, playground, church, or some “asset” or be walking distance to a feature nearby.
- Make sure neighborhood shopping is accessible, and is an asset (“good neighbors”).
- Encourage “walkability”—sidewalks, crosswalks, trees, etc. to make it easy and safe to walk.
- Address “Problem Properties”.
- Encourage private reinvestment.
- Encourage property upkeep and enforce maintenance codes.
- Continue Community Development Investments.
- Provide a “Welcome Package” to new residents.
- Post Office—support efforts for a consolidated, centralized post office for the Town.
- See also Appendix with detailed assessment of neighborhoods.

## **F. Zoning Recommendations**

- Eliminate Unzoned Areas.
- Consider a new zoning district for neighborhoods.
- Evaluate Signage Regulations.
- Develop Zoning Revisions—make Code more user friendly.
- Improve the Town Landscape Ordinance.
- Amend zoning in the areas of Kenmore Avenue and Elmwood Avenue around the Village to match Village’s planning efforts.
- Revise zoning in Old Town neighborhood to match preferred uses (residential).
- Develop Overlay Districts (see Thoroughfares).

## **G. Additional Recommendations**

- Improve Sheridan Drive (make it more attractive and improve traffic flow.)
  - Improve Delaware Avenue.
  - Consider a PDR (Purchase of Development Rights) Program—to preserve open space.
  - Evaluate need for new Recreation/Community Facilities.
  - Monitor conditions, and if needed, consider incentives for residential housing improvements.
  - Continue enhancement of tree maintenance/tree-planting program.
  - Promote efforts/pressures to improve odors/aesthetics at the waterfront/bridge area.
  - Consider “Gateway Projects”.
  - Support continued Town/School Cooperation.
  - Continue to optimize utility operations to ensure effective services.
  - Consider development of a War Memorial in Town.
  - Develop a “Marketing” Package- to promote the community as desirable place to work and live.
- 
- Work with GBNRTC and NFTA to expand transit options for residents

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- Work with the GBNRTC on “bicycle-friendly features” (bike racks, park-and-bike lots, lockers).

## **Implementation (Section VI)**

This section of the report outlines a strategy for accomplishing the recommendations. It first provides a list of administrative actions the Town should undertake, such as formal adoption procedures and creation of policies and organizations to monitor continued progress. It recommends establishment of a steering committee to take ownership of implementation actions, and monitor accomplishments and conditions, making adjustments as needed. This committee would develop subcommittees to address particular topics, and provide annual updates on progress to the Town Board.

The Implementation section then provides tables that summarize the implementation plan. Based on the recommendations provided in Section V, each item is assigned a priority, and a time-frame. Responsible parties and potential funding sources are identified. The table also indicates the nature of the action (administrative, planning, capital investment, etc.)

## **Annual Review (Section VII)**

In today’s environment, where change is constant and unpredictable, it is important to continue to monitor conditions and assess whether the actions recommended in the plan remain valid, or whether a shift in emphasis is needed in order to remain consistent with the intent and substance of the plan. This section sets forth a recommended annual review procedure to assess accomplishments and make needed adjustments to the plan to ensure its continued relevance.

## **Environmental Review (Section VIII)**

This section is designed to assist with the environmental review of the document under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). It constitutes an assessment of potential environmental impacts deriving from the plan document itself. The plan is determined to be preferable to the “No Action” alternative, since it is designed to properly manage growth and development to mitigate potential impacts and support public preferences. All subsequent development actions taking place after the adoption of the plan, including actions recommended in the document, will be subject to SEQR review on a site-specific basis, but this document will facilitate future assessment of planned development actions.



## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

According to New York State Law, a Comprehensive Plan provides a municipality with the “guidelines, policies, [and] standards . . . for the immediate and long-range protection, enhancement, growth and development of the municipality.”

The Town of Tonawanda’s existing Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1955. It helped establish the location of parks, schools and other community facilities in a Town that was growing and developing, and provided excellent guidance for the Town during its years of growth. The Town has also been proactive in studying specific areas of the Town, such as the waterfront, to provide policies and guidance for new development.

Over the past 50 years since the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, there have been many changes—locally, regionally and nationally. The Town is now largely built up, and the region is characterized by a shrinking population base. National trends, such as aging populations and changing economic bases, also affect the Town of Tonawanda. The issues and challenges facing the Town now are very different from those of the 1950’s and 1960’s.

New guidelines and standards are needed to provide guidance for new challenges and opportunities. The emphasis of the current planning document focuses on the protection and enhancement of the Town. It is clear from the planning process that residents of the Town of Tonawanda appreciate a high quality of life and high quality services, but that there are opportunities for improvement. The goal of this document is to help the Town ensure it remains a great place to live, work and play.

### **Regional and Local Setting**

The Town of Tonawanda is a first-ring suburb that borders on the City of Buffalo. The third largest Town in Erie County, the Town of Tonawanda is an attractive community of approximately 78,000 residents, including the Village of Kenmore.

Earliest settlement of the Town focused in the northern portion of the Town, where the Tonawanda Creek (later part of the Erie Canal) provided excellent access. Beginning in the 1890’s, the establishment of streetcar lines led to the development of the Village of Kenmore, which was one of the first suburban communities in the Buffalo area. Most of the remainder of the Town remained rural in character well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Town of Tonawanda is typical of early suburban communities, with attractive, tree-lined streets, sidewalks, strong neighborhoods, and a more varied mix of uses than newer suburban towns. However, it is a national trend that the “first suburbs” are under influences that threaten their continued vitality. It is important for the Town to plan for its future to ensure its continued attractiveness and vitality.

### **Purpose for the Comprehensive Plan**

The primary purpose of this document is to guide redevelopment in the Town in order to enhance the quality of life and ensure that the Town of Tonawanda remains a desirable place to live. The existing Comprehensive Plan was prepared over fifty years ago, during a time when the Town was experiencing substantial growth. While it was a useful document to guide the development of the Town at that time,

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the Town now operates under very different circumstances and concerns. Most of the Town of Tonawanda is built out. The largest area of undeveloped land, the waterfront, has been the focus of a prior planning study that this document reaffirms. The current focus is less on growth and new development, and more on enhancement and redevelopment.

With regard to its development status, the Town may be considered to consist of two regions. The eastern part of the town may be considered the "Residential/Retail" region, generally east of Military Road. This region encompasses primarily homes, apartments, churches, schools, and retail establishments. This region is essentially built out, and is the subject of maintenance, revitalization, and redevelopment with an emphasis on neighborhood features. The region to the west of Military Road can be described as the "Industrial/Waterfront" region. It boasts many industrial plants and facilities, together with waterfront parcels along the Niagara River. It is this region where many undeveloped vacant and brownfield sites, consisting of several hundred acres, provide an opportunity for growth and development. This document will present recommendations and development strategies for both of these regions.

The Town of Tonawanda is now facing unique challenges. The Town's pattern of development was characterized by explosive growth during the post-World War 2 period. While Tonawanda has been one of the premier communities in Western New York, it is now facing concerns due to changing demographics and changing market forces. We see the continued potential of the Town, and this document seeks to help guide efforts that will reinforce positive change in the Town.

According to New York State Law,

"Among the most important powers and duties granted by the legislature to a town government is the authority and responsibility to undertake town comprehensive planning and to regulate land use for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety and general welfare of its citizens."

*~New York State Town Law § 272-a.*

New York State does not dictate what form a comprehensive plan must take, but suggests that it consist of written and graphic materials that identify the goals, objectives, principles and standards that the Town wishes to set forth for its immediate and long-term protection, enhancement, growth and development.

There are many reasons for having an adopted Town Comprehensive Plan. A municipality's Comprehensive Plan is the legal foundation for all zoning and land use regulation decisions made in the Town. While municipalities are given the power to regulate land uses within the community, it is understood that these decisions should be based on sound planning principles, and not be arbitrary or capricious. A municipal Comprehensive Plan, developed with public support and input, helps ensure that the Town's land use regulations are built on a solid foundation and represent a consensus on the part of the Town's residents.

Modern comprehensive plans go beyond zoning issues. A Comprehensive Plan provides guidance toward the priorities and concepts of local residents regarding what they consider important to their quality of life. It establishes goals and objectives that reflect those priorities, and provides a set of recommendations and actions to help the Town achieve those goals. While there are recommendations that pertain to land use and zoning, other actions and priorities are also articulated.

Another important purpose of a Comprehensive Plan is to put the community's vision for its future on the record. Any development proposal or action, whether private or public, should take into

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consideration the Town's vision as expressed in the Plan, and attempt to be consistent with these stated priorities. An adopted Comprehensive Plan provides an accessible and clear guide for entities seeking to undertake a project in the community. It provides them with a better understanding of what the Town is likely to approve and the types of actions that are preferred. It also provides the Town with greater leverage to have an effect on planning activities and programs instituted by other governmental authorities, such as the County or New York State agencies, who are required to take local plans into consideration.

An adopted Comprehensive Plan shows a commitment on the part of the community toward a shared vision for its future. This commitment can be helpful in seeking governmental assistance for projects that help move the community toward that vision through the forms of grants.

Finally, a Comprehensive Plan helps the community recognize what is important about your Town. It identifies what is important to protect, support and encourage, and what elements of your Town you would like to see improved. It provides a clear assessment of where you are now, vision on where you would like to be, and concrete recommendations and strategies to help you get there. Not all elements included in the plan will be achieved, but the Plan contains a source of potential solutions to problems or issues that may arise in the future.

It became clear over the course of this effort that people of the Town of Tonawanda are generally satisfied with the Town, and residents do not seek major changes. Much of the focus of this document, therefore, is on retaining and improving the Town.

The Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan will provide guidance for local actions, with an emphasis on redevelopment. It will serve as a basis for land use regulation, community projects, and public and private investment in the Town. It is the intent of this document that it will help guide decision making in the Town of Tonawanda into the future in a manner that helps maintain those features that the community values so highly, while mitigating any impacts of future change.



## SECTION II: GOALS AND VISIONING

Goals for the Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan were developed through an iterative process, with input from Town officials, the public and various stakeholders. These goals and objectives were refined throughout the process, and from this refinement, a vision for the future of Town was developed. This section of the report summarizes the process and the results of this visioning effort.

### A. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

The Town of Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan project incorporated an extensive public participation component. A total of three public meetings were held, which were advertised town-wide. In addition, a series of meetings were held with small groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, seniors, and church groups. Meetings were also held to obtain input from Town Department heads. A meeting with economic development stakeholders and transportation stakeholders were also held. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan Board, a group of volunteers representing a diverse range of interests was responsible for reviewing, evaluating and making comments on all aspects of the Plan document throughout the process. Appendix A provides summaries of the public meetings that were held during the Planning process.

#### Public Outreach

##### **General Public Meetings:**

**Public Input Meeting:** November 20, 2003 - to obtain general input into issues, concerns, ideas from the public

**Public Focus Meeting:** April 20, 2004 - to present findings on data and inventory, and confirm direction of the plan, including goals.

**Public Summary Meeting:** January 27, 2005- to obtain feedback and comments on recommendations.

##### **Special Groups Meetings:**

In addition to the Public Meetings, informal presentations about the Comprehensive Plan were given to a number of groups in the Town of Tonawanda, including:

- Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce. February 18, 2004 (approximately 20 present)
- Town of Tonawanda Seniors. March 3, 2004 (approximately 40 present)
- Kenmore Garden Club at Kenmore United Methodist Church. May 11, 2004 (approximately 50 present)
- St. John the Baptist Church, Senior Travel Club. May 27, 2004 (approx. 75 present)
- Kenmore United Methodist Church. Senior Members. Sept. 26, 2004 (approximately 50 present)
- Town of Tonawanda Historical Society, Knoche Road. Jan. 9, 2005: Planning, Past, Present and Future (approximately 30 present)
- Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation, Sheridan Parkside Dr., Feb. 17, 2005 (approximately 20 present)

##### **Stakeholder Meetings:**

Meetings were also held with stakeholders to obtain more detailed information about their areas of expertise:

- Town Department Heads (Water, Technical Support, Parks and Recreation, Community Development, Building Inspector, Highway)
- Economic Development (Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce, ECIDA, TTDC, ESD, BNE)
- Transportation (NYSDOT, GBNRTC, Erie County Public Works, NYTA, NFTA, Town)



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As a result of the public input process, including input from Town officials, the general public and various stakeholders, a series of general goals and objectives for the future of the Town of Tonawanda emerged. These goals and objectives represent the “big picture”, and are intended to provide guidance toward the general priorities and issues facing the Town.

**The Town of Tonawanda will strive to maintain a high quality of life and high level of services for its residents.**



The motto of the Town of Tonawanda is “A Great Place to Live, Work and Play”. It is clear from public input that residents value a high quality of life and expect a high level of town services. It is important to work to preserve a high quality of life in the Town for its residents. Issues related to “quality of life” include:

- Achieve improved maintenance and upkeep of privately owned property
- Maintain the high standards of maintenance at neighborhood parks and other public facilities
- Maintain the high quality of Town services, including highway, water, wastewater, waste collection, recreation, seniors, youth, police, libraries and other public services.
- Be supportive of school district activities to maintain the high quality of the educational system and schools
- Ensure continued tree maintenance and tree replacement policies in order to preserve community character, quality of life and property values
- Integrate quality of life issues consciously in Town decision-making actions, looking at impacts on local residents as well as on the built and natural environment

**The Town of Tonawanda will work to ensure the continued vitality of its neighborhoods**

Neighborhoods in Tonawanda help contribute to the character of the Town. They provide a sense of community, and neighborhood schools, parks and business areas contribute to the vitality of the Town and the quality of life for residents. As a Town that is essentially “built-out”, continued improvement and tax base will depend on ensuring the Town’s neighborhoods remain vital and attractive.



- Encourage investment and reinvestment in the existing homes, buildings and neighborhoods in the Town of Tonawanda
- Ensure that local policies and actions encourage activities and actions that make neighborhood shops attractive places for local residents
- Encourage the continued use of schools as neighborhood centers and a source of community identity and pride

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Promote the adaptive reuse of underutilized or vacant commercial properties
- Work to keep neighborhood business districts vital, active and attractive
- Support private and public actions to improve the appearance of the Town through investment in landscaping and infrastructure such as sidewalks and roadways
- Support the development of neighborhood identities through methods such as coordinated activities and neighborhood watch groups
- Ensure adequate, efficient public services, such as libraries, parks, recreational activities, police and fire protection, water, sewers, schools and youth and senior services
- Maintain the Town's infrastructure, including roadways, water treatment and distribution systems, wastewater collection and treatment facilities and stormwater conveyance systems.



## **The Town of Tonawanda will strive to be a safe community**

The Town of Tonawanda will put safety and security provisions in place which identify risks, establish protective measures, provide for handling incidents and coordinate with other area entities involved with public safety issues.

- Establish security provisions that identify risks, establish protective measures and provide for emergency responses coordinated with Countywide actions
- Provide police measures which continue to secure a low crime rate
- Supply police, paramedic and fire activities with appropriate equipment and training
- Promote continuance of volunteer citizen supporting activities, including hazardous material program, neighborhood watch groups, emergency response training, citizen radio patrols and public crime and drug awareness programs
- Coordinate activities with County and regional Homeland Security organizations
- Ensure adequate protections against natural disasters through appropriate flood protection regulations and other disaster planning efforts

## **The Town of Tonawanda will retain a well-maintained, diverse stock of neighborhood residential properties that meets the needs of all residents**

The housing stock in the Town of Tonawanda is generally in good condition. However, there is a need for greater variety in the types of housing available for area residents. This includes both larger, more modern homes for growing families, as well as housing targeted at the growing number of seniors, smaller families and non-traditional households in the Town.



- Promote redevelopment that provides a wide variety of housing types, styles and sizes.
- There are no large residential building lots- need "step-up housing."
- Maintain and protect residential property values.
- Encourage investment in the existing housing stock to maintain its quality.
- Develop housing that is attractive to seniors and empty nesters.
- Encourage home improvements and investments in existing homes.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Establish programs to identify, plan, revitalize, finance and redevelop residential and business properties expanding upon the current successful Community Development Block Grant program



## **The Town will promote attractive and well-planned economic development opportunities**

Economic development is important to balance the tax base, to provide job opportunities for local residents, and to contribute to the Town's continued vitality. One asset of the Town of Tonawanda is its large supply of available vacant lands for light industrial and business development. At the same time, it is important to ensure that existing developed areas remain attractive places to do business.

- Establish high standards for development that will minimize negative impacts and ensure a high quality of economic development that will attract potential commercial or industrial users.
- Promote the establishment and growth of new business enterprises.
- Encourage reinvestment in and revitalization of the existing economic base of the Town, including the expansion and improvement of existing businesses.
- Maintain programs and economic development efforts that keep the Town an attractive location for local industries and businesses.
- Capitalize on the Town's assets, in particular the waterfront area, for new industrial and business development.
- Support the remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites.
- Encourage private investment to strengthen existing businesses
- Ensure that the Town's tax structure and rate is competitive with other nearby municipalities

## **The Town of Tonawanda will promote a safe and efficient transportation system for all modes of transportation**

Transportation and traffic issues have significant impacts on the community, in terms of economic development, quality of life, and community development. There are specific areas where transportation improvements are needed to alleviate traffic congestion or unsafe conditions. There is also support for alternatives to automobile travel, including walking, bicycling and public transit.



- Institute access management techniques where needed
- Improve and expand opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians where appropriate
- Support traffic improvements that reduce congestion and promote greater safety
- Work with the surrounding communities, Erie County, New York State Department of Transportation and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) to coordinate transportation issues and improvements.
- Strive to maintain existing levels of public transportation service, and expand transit opportunities where feasible
- Support continued improvements to rail facilities in the Town
- Ensure the capacity of state and federal highways are upgraded to handle projected pass-through traffic volumes
- Initiate a program of road reconstruction to ensure the quality of the system and to address any deficiencies due to the aging of the system.

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## **The Town of Tonawanda will support increased intermunicipal cooperation where appropriate**

The Erie-Niagara region is increasingly recognizing the importance of intermunicipal and regional cooperation. The Town of Tonawanda influences and is influenced by the Village, the adjoining communities (Town of Amherst, City of Buffalo and City of Tonawanda), the school districts and Erie County. These interrelationships present certain limitations, but also represent a source of opportunity for improved planning and cooperation. It is

critical to consider the adjacent communities—especially Kenmore, but also the City of Buffalo, the City of Tonawanda and the Town of Amherst—in planning efforts by the Town.

- Investigate areas where shared services and/or costs between two or more communities are appropriate, and encourage joint efforts in these areas.
- Work cooperatively with the County in regard to economic development efforts
- Promote intermunicipal cooperation and coordination with the Village of Kenmore, adjacent communities and Erie County.
- Encourage greater collaboration and coordination of efforts with the school districts in the Town.
- Explore the potential for joint public service activities, and participate where benefits result
- Stay involved in regional planning efforts
- Work with local, state and national agencies on issues, such as the Niagara River and the Erie Canal, with regional impact.

## **The Town of Tonawanda supports the preservation of environmental features and the continued remediation of former waste sites**

Natural resources in the Town of Tonawanda contribute to the character of the Town and provide important environmental benefits. The creeks, the riverfront and the parks and other areas of open space and natural features merit protection. It is also a priority of the Town to remediate environmental issues.



- Support and encourage continued progress toward the remediation of brownfields and former waste sites, and their appropriate reuse.
- Provide for the preservation of waterways in the Town, including the Niagara River, Ellicott Creek, Tonawanda Creek and Two Mile Creek, and maintain and improve public access to these assets.
- Provide attractive public parks, riverwalks, streetscapes, linear parks and waterfront facilities that take advantage of the environmental features of the Town.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**The Town of Tonawanda will supply a well-maintained, cost-effective infrastructure system that provides good roads, ample safe public water, proper wastewater treatment and effective storm water management together with other utility services to support sustainable land use and economic development.**

A well maintained, cost-effective infrastructure system is important for quality of life for the Town's residents, to ensure environmental quality, and to support economic development efforts. Excellent facilities and services have been a hallmark of the Town, and the reason why it remains a desirable location.



- Continue road maintenance programs, including reconstruction where necessary.
- Make provisions for preventative maintenance and replacement of facilities and equipment with more modern, efficient items
- Ensure new lines and treatment facilities incorporate provision for future expansion to support expanded economic development
- Keep abreast of and be responsive to Federal and State regulations
- Install systems or programs which minimize or eliminate sanitary sewer overflow
- Install state-of-the-art communication systems supportive of economic development.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## C. VISION STATEMENT

These goals stated in Section B represent big picture guidance to the Town and help the visioning process for the community. Based on continued community input, the analysis of the data, and the needs, desires and concerns of the public, a written vision was established for the Town of Tonawanda. This vision for the future sets an ideal goal of how the community will develop over the next 20 years.

### VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA:

- The industrial/waterfront area of the Town west of Military Road will see new development and a revitalization and rebirth of its business base. This area will see improved access (new roads, better access to the interstate system, etc.), continued light manufacturing and office development, improved aesthetics, and a strong re-investment in the existing manufacturing companies. Development will occur in accordance with the recent land use plan of the Waterfront Zoning Update. Projects in this area will include:
  - North Youngmann Commerce Center (NYCC) as a commercial/ light industrial development with roadway connections to Two Mile Creek Road, East Park Drive and an access road north through the Town landfill, connecting to Military Road near the rail crossing in the City of Tonawanda.
  - A recreational facility on the Town landfill, now scheduled for complete closure by 2010. Identified uses include a nine-hole executive golf course and ball fields.
  - The extensive riverfront River World site, a brownfield that is proceeding with remediation, will see mixed uses. As the Tonawanda Coke riverfront brownfield parcel is remediated, it presents opportunities for extending River World's developments. Both sites boast significant deep-water dockage facilities.
  - Public access to the water will be stressed, including the proposed Niagara River Greenway, and public parkland along the waterfront north of the Grand Island Bridges.
  - Industrial uses are planned for the region south of the I-190 inland of River Road.
  - The region north of the Seaway Landfill is almost wholly undeveloped land. It is envisioned that this area, known as the "Isle View site" or the "300 Acres site", will be developed with uses such as offices adjacent to River Road, with light industrial and warehousing uses farther inland. The town will continue towards the goal of redevelopment of this area. Traffic studies have been completed and water and sewer plans are now underway.
- Accessibility and public enjoyment of the waterfront region will also continue to grow. The connection of the RiverWalk to other trails, bikeways, businesses and features of the Town will provide tremendous opportunities for the public. The Niagara River Greenway and development of Cherry Farm Park and other public access projects, along with supportive commercial development in appropriate areas will also help to bring people to the area to enjoy recreational activities.
- The Town will become a premier community in Western New York, the town of quality neighborhoods and outstanding services. It will improve its image and aesthetics, through streetscape projects along major corridors, enhanced landscaping and design standards and targeted projects designed to increase the attractiveness of the Town. Such projects would include targeted upgrades of commercial centers through façade programs, creation of gateways and/or pocket parks, public artwork and other efforts to improve appearances, upgrade property maintenance standards and encourage continued private sector investment in the Town. Significant enhancement of major thoroughfares through access management, façade improvements, removal of billboards and streetscaping will result in higher customer attraction and contribute to the enhancement of the Town's image.

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- The Town and Village, through cooperative planning, will see the improvement of the Delaware Avenue, Elmwood Avenue and Kenmore Avenue corridors in and around the Village. Aesthetic improvements, through streetscape projects and improved design standards, will create an overall improved appearance of these areas. With these improvements and through targeting economic development efforts, these areas will serve as important commercial and community backbones for Kenmore and Tonawanda. Cooperative planning efforts with the City of Buffalo for Kenmore Avenue and the Town of Amherst for Niagara Falls Boulevard improvements will also improve the attractiveness and functionality of these corridors.
- The Town will continue to improve walkability and interconnectivity for both automotive and non-automotive traffic. Neighborhoods and important public features will be accessible, and residents will be able to easily walk, bike or drive to local destinations such as parks, schools, churches and neighborhood shopping. The creation of new multi-use trails connecting to the Riverwalk will create an interconnected network of trails that improve access throughout the community, connecting parks, neighborhoods, the Village, commercial centers, schools, recreational sites and other public facilities. Sidewalks and walkways will be improved or provided where needed along busy corridors, such as Niagara Falls Boulevard, both to improve access and for public safety.
- Niagara Falls Boulevard will continue to be a major commercial destination supporting both the Town of Tonawanda and Amherst, with “big box” style retailers on the Amherst side of the roadway, and smaller, supporting retail and commercial uses on the Town of Tonawanda side. Congestion and traffic problems will be addressed through access management techniques that reduce the number of driveways and provide for shared access between parcels, particularly in the center section of the Boulevard (between Sheridan Drive and the I-290 entrances). Aesthetics will be improved with more landscaping and stronger design standards. The impacts of possible deepening of business lots will be investigated to evaluate the relative merits to residences and businesses.
- Plans will recognize that the character of Niagara Falls Boulevard is not uniform, but can be divided into four segments:
  - South of Sheridan Drive: mixed use, with pockets of low density retail. Focus should be on aesthetic standards, traffic calming and linking commercial uses with adjacent neighborhoods.
  - Sheridan Drive to I-290: primarily commercial. Access management improvements are most needed in this section. More creative approaches to site design, including expansion from the rear of properties along Niagara Falls Boulevard should be explored over the long run.
  - I-290 north to Ellicott Creek Road: primarily commercial, with some residential and mixed use. Access management improvements also important in this segment, with efforts to tie convenience retail to neighborhood better.
  - North of Ellicott Creek Road: mixed use, including park. Improvements to bikeways and improving pedestrian facilities are needed.
- Sheridan Drive will remain the Town’s major east/west corridor, and a commercial center of the Town. Access management initiatives, design standards, and investments in this corridor will help to improve the success of this area. The Town envisions a community focal point in the area of Sheridan Drive and Delaware Avenue. This area, the geographic center point of the Town, will contain a mix of offices, retail, and public uses, with attractive gathering areas to enhance the sense of community. Improved pedestrian crossings across Sheridan Drive, connections to schools and surrounding residential areas, and design standards, will also help to create a sense of place.

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- Sheridan Drive west of Military Road will be redeveloped to become more of a community focal point supporting the Sheridan Parkside and Riverview neighborhoods, and improving the image of the Town and capitalizing on the presence of the Sheridan Park golf course.
- Neighborhood retail centers, such as the plazas at Brighton/Eggert, Colvin/Highland and Colvin/Eggert, will be attractive commercial centers, accessible to neighborhood residents by car, foot or bike. A mix of uses will be encouraged, with appropriate buffers and screening to minimize negative impacts on surrounding residents. The focus will be on convenience retail uses such as convenience stores, restaurants, and personal services. Façade programs and landscaping/design standards will help ensure they are “good neighbors”.
- Neighborhoods will be re-invigorated by strategic investments in neighborhood facilities, re-establishment of strong neighborhood associations, improved communications, and continued homeowner investments in their properties. All neighborhoods will have a community focal point or gathering place, such as a park, playground, school, church or shopping district. To reinforce neighborhood features and improve the quality of life in Tonawanda, neighborhood groups and organizations will become a larger force in decision-making concerning their neighborhoods.
- The Town’s high quality municipal recreational services will continue to be a strong asset of the Town. The Town’s services will adjust to meet the needs of changing demographics, as the demographics of the Town shift towards younger families, but still with a high percentage of seniors.
- The Town’s outstanding other municipal services, such as trash collection, recycling, street cleaning, plowing, road repair and street lighting will continue as a highly regarded attribute and recognized as a major advantage of living in the Town.
- Strategic investments in Town water and sewer infrastructure will allow the Town to continue to efficiently provide services to its existing customer base and new customers, while addressing environmental considerations and concerns.
- Housing revitalization will occur in targeted areas, and in certain areas, deteriorated housing should be removed with replacement housing meeting younger family requirements. Sheridan Parkside will be the focus of continued redevelopment for affordable housing, but market-rate housing will also be built as the character of the neighborhood changes. Homeowner improvements and additions to existing housing throughout the Town will help further diversify the housing stock.
- The abundance of well maintained residential properties coupled with the recognized high quality of municipal services will continue to make for high value and quick sales in purchasing homes in the Town, since prices are below the county average for comparable homes. This will benefit the town by maintaining high occupancy and a good tax base.
- The Town will continue to identify potential blight or depreciated locations and take steps to prevent or stop the spread of blighted conditions through redevelopment, neighborhood improvements, tax incentives, financial initiatives and state and federal programs.
- Improvements to the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood will continue in accordance with the 2003 Master Plan for the neighborhood, resulting in a more attractive, diverse community.
- The linear park and trail system in the Town will continue to grow, improving access and connecting major features throughout the Town.



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- The safety and security of the Town will be assured through the continuance of meritorious police, fire and other emergency services supplemented, where appropriate, by citizen volunteer activities.
- Where schools or other community facilities may be closed or sold, there should be a consideration of the possibility of maintaining some of the greenspace and/or recreational features associated with that facility unless appropriate alternative open space or recreational areas already exist.
- Economic development efforts will invigorate the commercial and industrial areas of the Town. The Town's strategic location in the region and its excellent interstate highway access via the Youngmann highway will create demand for the large amounts of vacant, developable commercial and industrial lands in the western portion of the Town. With strategic improvements in infrastructure such as access roads, the Town will be a demand community for business investment. The Town tax structure will support a competitive business climate.
- Build out of the Colvin Woods site will result in hundreds of new jobs, which will lead to improvements in retail and personal services, such as shops and restaurants, in that area, including revitalization of the Colvin-Eggert Plaza for a mix of uses.
- The Town will continue to ensure its water and sewer facilities and systems incorporate new technologies in order to provide efficient, cost-effective services throughout Town.
- Recognizing the communication explosion, the Town will see a controlled distribution of communication towers and underground installations in appropriate locations to link businesses and facilitate state-of-the art communications.
- There will be improvements to the I-190, the I-290 and the Grand Island Bridges to handle increased traffic. These improvements will be under the responsibility of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, the Thruway Authority, and the New York State Department of Transportation, with continued involvement of Town officials.
- The Town will solidify an identity as an attractive, convenient, affordable place to live. It will attract younger families that will continue to invest in the Town. Some see the Town creating its own new identity as the Town of "Ken-Ton."



**SECTION III:  
INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**A. EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS**

The Town of Tonawanda is a densely built-up suburb, with a diverse mix of residential, commercial, industrial and public uses. The eastern and the western sides of the Town exhibit very distinct land use patterns. East of Military Road (Route 265), land uses are predominately residential, with a mix of commercial properties, primarily along major transportation routes, and public uses and parks scattered throughout the eastern portion of the Town. There are only a few, scattered industrial uses in the eastern part of Town. West of Military Road, land use is predominately industrial, with some areas of vacant lands. Where there is residential development in the western part of the Town, it is primarily concentrated in specific neighborhoods (Sheridan Parkside, Riverview, and Old Town), with a limited amount of residential development along Two-Mile Creek Road and Sawyer Avenue.

**Residential**

The Town of Tonawanda is unusual, in that much of the residential development in the Town was built over a fairly concentrated time period. Two-thirds (67 percent) of the housing stock in the Town outside the Village was built between 1940 and 1959. Residential growth over this period was explosive: the Town outside the village grew by nearly 21,700 residents between 1940 and 1950, and by an additional 48,600 new residents between 1950 and 1960.

As opposed to many suburban Towns in Erie County, the Town of Tonawanda did not grow around hamlet centers. The Village of Kenmore is the traditional core of the Town, and the location of its earliest development. Other areas of Town developed as neighborhoods, with many retaining the name that was designated by the builder.

Residential areas adjacent to the Village of Kenmore tend to be older, more established neighborhoods, with a mix of housing types. Along the City of Buffalo line, housing is similar in style and age to housing in the adjacent City neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods in the eastern and northern part of the Town consist of post-war housing of single-family homes. There are not areas of vacant lands for new housing development in the Town of Tonawanda, and very few new homes are being built. New homes for an affordable housing market are being developed under the auspices of the Community Development Department in the Sheridan Parkside, Kenilworth and Old Town neighborhoods. Potential purchasers of these homes must meet income guidelines. Other new housing is scattered site infill development on existing lots. In addition to single-family homes, Tonawanda has a number of apartment complexes. Kenmore Avenue, Sheridan Drive and Raintree Island all have concentrations of apartments. The Sheridan Parkside neighborhood also has a concentration of rental units, in both duplex and multi-unit structures.

**Commercial**

Most commercial properties in the Town of Tonawanda are located in a strip pattern along primary transportation routes. Commercial corridors include Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive, Delaware Avenue, Elmwood Avenue, Kenmore Avenue and Englewood Avenue.

Niagara Falls Boulevard, the dividing line between the Town of Tonawanda and the Town of Amherst, is one of the major commercial centers in the Buffalo metropolitan area, anchored by the Boulevard Mall,

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

at Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road in the Town of Amherst. Land use in the Town of Tonawanda along Niagara Falls Boulevard is very commercial in nature north of Sheridan Drive. Uses include numerous chain restaurants, retail plazas, hotels, and other commercial uses. Older plazas tend to be smaller in scale than is typical on the Amherst side of the roadway, configured in traditional strips of small storefronts with one or two rows of parking in the front. Newer developments along the Boulevard in Tonawanda are more likely to be larger, stand-alone commercial uses, such as the Krispy Kreme donut franchise, or the Pier One store. Commercial development continues along Niagara Falls Boulevard for a few blocks south of Sheridan Drive, but then becomes less solidly commercial in nature, with residential properties mixed in with the commercial uses.

Commercial patterns are similar along Sheridan Drive, with strip plazas and individual commercial uses lining both sides of the roadway. Uses include small restaurants, bars, retail stores, drug stores, and offices. The Town's largest plaza is located on Sheridan Drive at Delaware Avenue. There are also a number of apartment complexes, single-family dwellings, churches and other uses mixed in with the commercial strip development on Sheridan Drive.

Delaware Avenue is the shopping district in the Village of Kenmore, with a traditional Village core of shops, restaurants and other services built at a pedestrian scale. Commercial development in the Town outside of Kenmore along Delaware Avenue is a mix of office and retail uses, at a larger scale and more oriented toward automobiles than the Village center.

Commercial development on Elmwood Avenue outside of Kenmore is concentrated south of Sheridan Drive. It includes an eclectic mix of small businesses and restaurants. A similar situation is present on Kenmore Avenue, where apartment and residential properties are mixed in with commercial development. Like Niagara Falls Boulevard, the centerline of Kenmore Avenue is the boundary line between the Town of Tonawanda and the City of Buffalo. On Kenmore Avenue, the two sides of the street exhibit similar land use patterns. Commercial "flex-space" (a flexible mix of office and warehousing) is being developed at the 40 to 45-acre Colvin Woods site.

## **Industrial/Manufacturing**

Nearly all industrial and manufacturing land uses in the Town of Tonawanda are located in the western part of Town. Larger, heavier industrial uses are located primarily in the waterfront area, particularly along River Road south of the Grand Island bridges. Large industrial uses in Tonawanda include General Motors, Dupont, Dunlop, and Tonawanda Coke. The Huntley power generating station occupies a large parcel on River Road, and is a dominant feature of the waterfront area. Numerous other manufacturing plants and industrial uses, including factories, recycling operations, gas and oil storage, and landfills, are located in the waterfront area, along River Road, Sawyer Avenue, Grand Island Boulevard, the western end of Sheridan Drive and Kenmore Avenue north of Sheridan.

There are also significant areas of light industrial and warehousing type uses. Many of these lighter industrial uses are located east of the riverfront area, and west of Military Road. Uses in this area include Praxair, the Fire Tower Industrial Park, the Interstate Commerce Center, and businesses off Pearce Avenue. Industrial and warehousing uses are also located along Military Road, mixed in with some retail, commercial and even residential uses.

## **Institutional Uses and Public Facilities**

Numerous institutional uses such as schools and churches are distributed throughout the community. The Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District is a significant property owner, with 13 schools and an administrative building located throughout Tonawanda and Kenmore. Sweet Home School District also operates one school within the Town of Tonawanda, in the northeast portion of Town. There are also over a dozen private and parochial schools in Tonawanda, including St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, Cardinal O'Hara High School and Mount St. Mary Academy, which are Catholic high

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schools that attract students from a regional area. The Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce lists 40 churches in the community. Kenmore Mercy hospital is located on Elmwood Avenue, and several nursing homes and senior housing facilities are located throughout the Town.

Town-owned facilities constituted the other principal institutional use in the Town of Tonawanda. The Municipal Center in the Village of Kenmore houses Town and Village administrative offices. Other facilities and departmental offices are located in various locations throughout the Town. The Town of Tonawanda also operates a large inventory of parkland, including several neighborhood parks, two 18-hole golf courses and numerous playgrounds. These town-owned uses are discussed more thoroughly in the section about Community Facilities.

## **Vacant Land and Open Space**

The eastern part of the Town of Tonawanda is densely built up, with very little vacant land available. There are a few areas north of the Youngmann Memorial Highway (Route 290), where there is a limited amount of vacant land, and some small, isolated vacant parcels mixed in built-up neighborhoods.

In contrast, there are significant areas of open space west of Military Road. These include the 92-acre Town-owned area known as the "Mud Flats" or the North Youngmann Commerce Center off Two Mile Creek Road north of the Youngmann expressway, and various vacant lands, totaling over 300 acres, in the waterfront area.

## **Special Areas**

A few specific areas of the Town have been the subject of more extensive examination in regard to land uses. The Waterfront Land Use Plan was completed in 2002. This study thoroughly examined existing conditions, circulation, development trends and environmental issues in order to make recommendations for various lands in the waterfront area of the Town. The land use concept plan developed as part of this study recommends a mix of industrial, light industrial, commercial and recreational uses along in the waterfront area. The study recommends that lands along the River Road corridor, particularly north of the Grand Island bridges, be subject to higher design standards in order to preserve scenic views and preserve public access to the waterfront. New zoning districts and regulations for the waterfront area were adopted in 2003 to help guide new development in a manner consistent with the plan, and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program has been amended to reflect new plans and priorities.

An analysis of the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood was conducted in the spring of 2003 for the Office of Community Development (*Sheridan Parkside Village Courts Redevelopment Plan*). This neighborhood has been the location for significant reinvestment, with older, substandard homes being demolished and replaced with new homes for qualified moderate-income buyers. The Sheridan Parkside Plan provides a new conceptual site plan for the neighborhood that will facilitate redevelopment, with new circulation patterns, landscaping standards, and recommendations for phasing and housing types.

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## **B. LAND USE CONTROLS**

The primary means of regulating land uses in the Town of Tonawanda is through the Town's Zoning Code, which is set forth in Chapter 215 of the Town Code. The Zoning law establishes a number of residential, business, industrial and waterfront districts. In addition, there are certain lands, occupied by schools, parks or cemeteries, which are not zoned. The Town Zoning Map (Map 3) depicts the zoning districts and the unzoned lands (labeled as School-Parks-Cemeteries).

There are three residential zoning districts in the Town of Tonawanda. The A First Residential District allows one-family homes; rooming for up to two boarders in owner-occupied homes; churches; primary and secondary schools; municipal buildings and libraries. Auxiliary housing units, defined as semi-independent units for use by elderly or disabled members of the family, are allowed with a special use permit. The code prohibits breeding or keeping of farm animals or exotic animals in the A First Residential District.

The B Second Residential District allows all uses in the First Residential District, plus two-family homes; recreational and community centers; public museums; memorial buildings; public parks; public buildings and grounds; and philanthropic institutions (except correctional institutions). Cemeteries are also allowed, with the permission of the Town Board.

Both the First and Second Residential Districts are governed by the same regulations concerning accessory uses, structures, yards (front, side and rear), building lines, fences, maximum lot coverage and floor area. The code provides very explicit regulations in regard to accessory structures such as garages and swimming pools.

The final residential district is M-F Multifamily Dwelling District. The only uses allowed in this district are residential dwelling units for one or more families, accessory garages, and recreational facilities for the use of residents. Non-residential uses, such as schools, parks and churches that are allowed in the First and Second Residential Districts are not allowed in the Multifamily Dwelling district. One- and two-family units must conform to the requirements of the other residential districts.

The code distinguishes between standard multifamily dwelling units (less than three stories), mid-rise (three to six stories of occupied floor levels) and high-rise (seven occupied stories or higher). It sets forth requirements for yards, lot area per dwelling unit, required parking and minimum living area per unit for each type of multifamily dwelling. It also regulates landscaping, accessory structures and swimming pools. Homeowners' associations are allowed, but require application to the Town Board and review by the Town Attorney.

The Town's Zoning Code has two commercial districts. C-1 Restricted Business District allows any use allowed in a residential district (Residential A or B), plus hospitals; non-profit organizations; clubs; multifamily dwellings; banks or financial institutions; medical buildings; mortuaries; nursing homes; general offices of any type; computer services; insurance offices and real estate offices. Institutional uses may not be for contagious patients, mental patients or other similar types of institutions. Retail sales and storage of merchandise are not allowed. There are regulations governing yards, maximum lot coverage, and landscaping.

In the C General Business District, allowed uses include any uses in either residential district, the MF Multifamily district or the C-1 Restricted district, plus retail sales (must be free from dust, fumes, smoke, odor, gas, noise or vibration). Other allowed uses are hotel or motel, restaurant and theatre. Multifamily buildings are subject to lot area coverage restrictions. There are restrictions on storage tanks for flammable liquids, gasoline pumps, and automobile shops and dealers.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Properties facing streets zoned for business use (C or C-1) are allowed to use property abutting the rear property line for business purposes, as long as specified depth limits are not exceeded. For most streets, the maximum depth that may be used for business purposes is 150 feet from the street line. Properties facing Delaware Avenue or Niagara Falls Boulevard may extend to a depth of 200 feet. On Sheridan Drive, the maximum depth is the depth of the lot or 150 feet, whichever is greater. A 65-foot building setback is required, and any business use must be a minimum of 10 feet from any residential street line. The code specifies yard requirements for business uses, and sets forth landscaping standards.

As stated in the zoning code, the Performance Standards Use District is “to encourage and allow the most appropriate use of the land. . . [for] commercial and industrial uses, unhampered by restrictive categorizing. . . ” The Town Board has the authority to determine that a use is appropriate, as long as it meets performance standards set forth in the code, and is not expressly forbidden. Junkyards, waste transfer, land mining, stockyards and most residential uses are not permitted. All uses require a performance standards use permit, unless a waiver is obtained, as specified in Section 215-118 of the code. The code specifies required setbacks (yards) and building line setbacks, and landscaping standards. It also establishes the procedure required to obtain a performance standards use permit. A site and development plan must be submitted with the request for the permit. The performance standards that must be met pertain to noise, odor, dust, smoke, gases, vibrations and glare. Basic health and safety standards are also required.

The G-I General Industrial district is the industrial district in the Town of Tonawanda. The code specifies the uses that are not allowed in the G-I district, and notes that any other use shall be permitted, as long as it does not violate any law or regulation. All residential uses are excluded, including uses such as hospitals or motels, although the code sets forth conditions where pre-existing subdivisions within industrial districts may be allowed. The Supervising Building Inspector or the Town Board may require performance standards use permits for any proposed use or operation in a G-I district, if deemed to be in the best interests of the Town. Specific design standards are provided for properties fronting on Grand Island Boulevard and River Road within the regulations of the G-I district.

There are four waterfront districts governing lands in the waterfront area of the Town of Tonawanda. These districts were created in 2003 as a result of a land use study conducted for the waterfront region. All waterfront districts contain design and landscaping standards, intended to assure the visual quality of the area, and support the goals and policies of the local waterfront revitalization program. In addition, a River Road Overlay district provides additional standards for properties fronting River Road to a depth of 500 feet.

The W-MU - Waterfront Mixed Use district allows parklands; boat launching facilities; marinas; boatyards and boat storage areas; commercial excursion and charter fishing boat facilities; visitor center; a motel; and retail stores with size restrictions. Additional uses are allowed with special permits. The RHC- Retail Highway Commercial district allows restaurants, gasoline stations, retail stores and motels and hotels. Truck stops and travel plazas are allowed as specially permitted uses. The WB -Waterfront Business district allows parkland and recreation areas; offices; laboratories for testing and research; research and development; and assembly of component parts. Specially permitted uses include retail, restaurant and lodging; in-service training schools incidental to primary uses; day care for employees in the district; and warehousing and distribution facilities, if less than 50% of the building area and accessory to the primary use. The WID -Waterfront Industrial District is a light industrial district that allows parks; boat storage; light industry; assembly of component parts; wholesale businesses and storage; warehousing; public utilities; research facilities and business or medical offices. Specially permitted uses include industrial service or repair; retail sales; nursery schools for employees in the district; commercial laundry plants and bottling plants. No residential dwellings are allowed, and junkyards, waste transfer, land mining and stockyards are prohibited.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Several other sections of the Town Code address land use issues. These include Chapter 73: Drainage Control; Chapter 76: Environmental Quality Review; Chapter 77: Excavations; Chapter 92: Flood Damage Prevention; Chapter 121: Junk; Chapter 129: Local Water Revitalization; Chapter 140: Parking Areas (Off-street); Chapter 165: Sewers; Chapter 179: Excavation, Removal and Storage of Materials; Chapter 181: Solid Waste Management; Chapter 185: Subdivision of Land; Chapter 195: Trailer Parks and Camps; Chapter 197: Trees and shrubs; Chapter 203: Abandoned Vehicles (outdoor storage of); and Chapter 207: Abandoned Vehicles.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## C. DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population

The Town of Tonawanda is one of the most populous municipalities in Erie County. In 2000, the population of the Town of Tonawanda was 78,155 persons, including the Village of Kenmore. The population of the Town outside the Village, or the Tonawanda CDP<sup>1</sup>, was 61,729. It is currently the fourth largest municipality in the Erie County. Only the City of Buffalo and the Towns of Amherst and Cheektowaga are more populous.

The Town is also one of the most densely populated municipalities in Erie County. The Village of Kenmore is the most densely developed municipality in the County, with a population density that exceeds that of the City of Buffalo. The Town including the Village is the sixth most densely populated community in Erie County, and the Town outside the Village ranks ninth, with an average of 3,554 persons and 1,565 housing units per square mile.\_

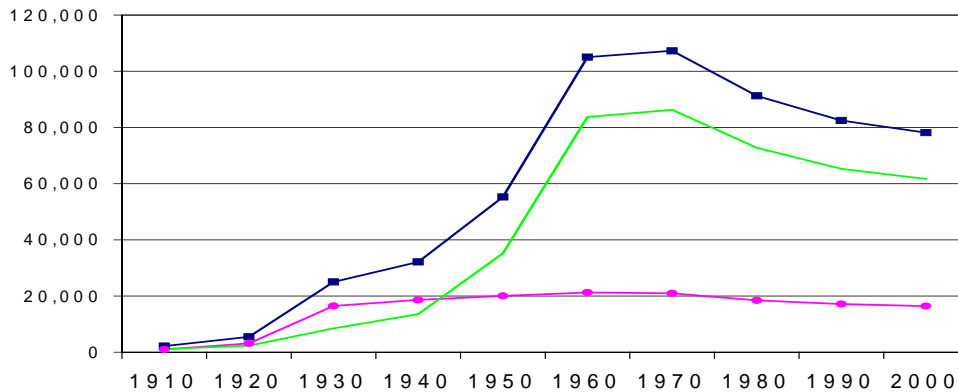
The Town lost population between 1990 and 2000, losing 4,309 persons over the ten-year period, or 5.2 percent of the Town's total population. Population was lost at a slower rate within the Village, and the Town outside the Village of Kenmore saw a decrease of 3,555 persons between 1990 and 2000, or 5.4 percent.

**Figure 1**  
**Population Trends, 1990-2000**

	1990	2000	Change 1990-2000	
			Number	Percent
Tonawanda CDP (Town outside Village)	65,284	61,729	-3,555	-5.4%
Village of Kenmore	17,180	16,426	-754	-4.4%
Town and Village	82,464	78,155	-4,309	-5.2%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000

**Figure 2**  
**Population Trends 1990-2000**  
**Town Tonawanda, Town Outside Village and Village of Kenmore**



<sup>1</sup> The Town of Tonawanda outside the Village of Kenmore is a CDP, or "Census Designated Place". For ease of reference, this discussion uses the term Tonawanda CDP to refer to the Town not including the Village. Because this report is a Town document, the focus of the discussion is on the CDP.



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Households

Despite population losses, the number of households in the Town of Tonawanda has remained essentially steady. In 2000, there were 33,278 households in the Town, of which 26,207 were outside the Village. These figures represent a loss of approximately 1 percent between 1990 and 2000. The stability in the number of households in the Town is due to a trend toward smaller household sizes, and in particular, an increase in the number of one-person households. The number of one-person households in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village grew by nearly 16 percent between 1990 and 2000, to a total of 8,104 one-person households in 2000. In contrast, the number of family households decreased by nearly 10 percent, to 16,932 families. Single-person households now comprise nearly one-third of all households in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village, compared to 26 percent in 1990. The size of the average household in the Tonawanda CDP decreased from 2.43 persons in 1990, to 2.33 persons in 2000.

**Figure 3**  
**Household Trends, 1990-2000**

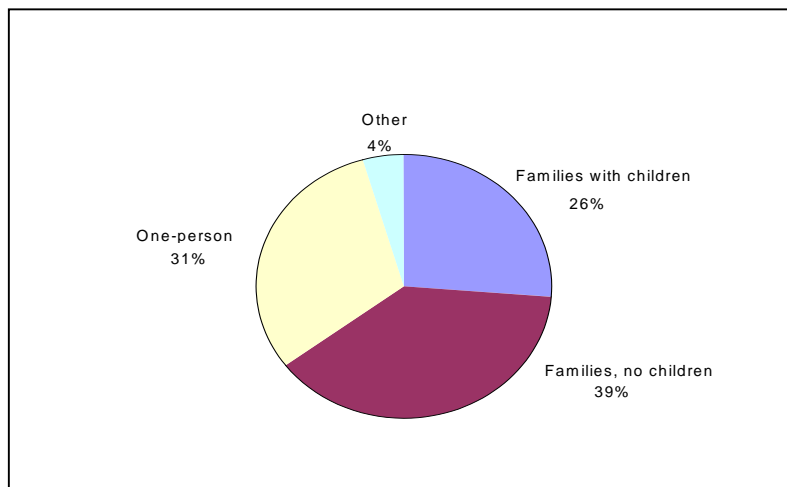
	1990	2000	Change 1990-2000	
			Number	Percent
Tonawanda CDP (Town outside Village)	26,541	26,207	-334	-1.3%
Village of Kenmore	7,095	7,071	-24	-0.3%
Town and Village	33,626	33,278	-358	-1.1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000

## Household Composition

Traditional family households remain the most common household type. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of all households in the Town outside the Village are categorized as traditional family households (related persons living together). As noted above, however, families are getting smaller. Nearly half of all families (48 percent) consisted of two persons, most of which are married couples who do not have children living at home. Less than half of all families (42 percent) have children under the age of 18 living at home, and only 28 percent of all households in the Tonawanda outside the Village include children under age 18. On the other hand, a greater share of the population is aging. Over one-third (36 percent) of households in the Town outside the Village include at least one family member who is age 65 or older.

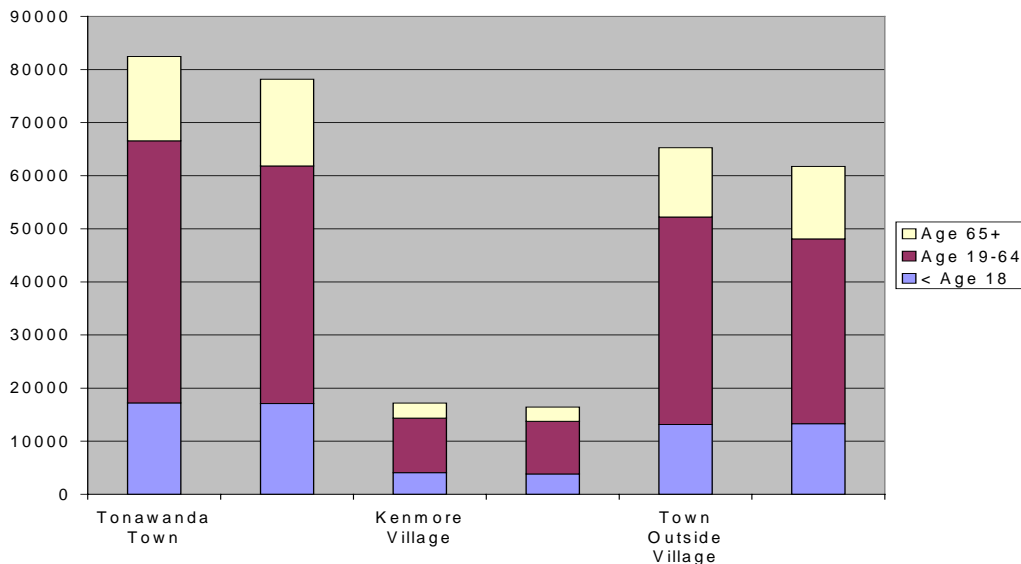
**Figure 4**  
**Household Composition**



**Age Distribution**

The age distribution of the population has not changed dramatically between 1990 and 2000. Seniors aged 65 and older make up 22 percent of the CDP population, compared to 20 percent in 1990. Children under the age of 18 currently represent 21.5 percent of the total population, compared to 20 percent in 1990. The proportion of non-elderly adults (age 18 to 64) in the Town outside the Village decreased slightly, from approximately 60 percent of all persons in 1990, to 56.4 percent in 2000. Median age in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village is 41.8 years old. Population loss in the Town is occurring primarily among the non-senior adult population. While the number of seniors aged 65 and older grew by 4 percent between 1990 and 2000, and the number of children under 18 grew by 1 percent, the age group between 18 and 64 decreased by nearly 11 percent over the past decade.

**Figure 5  
Age Distribution Trends, 1990 - 2000**



**Population Projections**

Population projections for all municipalities in Erie and Niagara County were prepared as part of a study for the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). This report, *Phase 2: Economic / Demographic Overview Study Final Report (1997)* projected several regional growth scenarios, and a Study Review Team selected the most appropriate forecast for each community, based on an assessment of regional growth trends, constraints and attitudes in each community. The study was prepared for transportation planning purposes, and tended to be optimistic to ensure adequate capacity. Although the projections were prepared before the 2000 Census was available, the GBNRTC adjusted the figures in 2003 to account for these differences.

For the Town of Tonawanda including the Village of Kenmore, the projections indicate continued population losses, with the Town's population decreasing to 75,000 persons by 2025, a 4 percent decrease in population over the next two decades. Household projections prepared by the GBNRTC suggest that there will be 32,900 households in the Town of Tonawanda in 2025, or approximately 1 percent less than current figures. However, these estimates were based on the assumption that the average household size for the County would be 2.35 persons, and not adjusted for local distinctions. The current average household size for the Town including the Village of Kenmore is 2.32, suggesting that the household figures may be inaccurate.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## **Income**

Median household income in the entire Town of Tonawanda was \$41,453 in 1999<sup>2</sup>. Levels in the Town outside the Village were very similar, at \$41,332. These income levels were approximately 7.5 percent higher than the Erie County median income (\$38,567). Per capita income, or the average income per person in the Town, was \$20,748 (CDP). These income levels are characteristic of inner ring suburban communities, where incomes are higher than income levels in cities (Buffalo or Tonawanda) but generally lower than income levels in second ring suburbs, such as Amherst. In comparison, the median income in the City of Buffalo was \$24,536 and \$55,427 in the Town of Amherst. Median income in Cheektowaga was \$38,121 and West Seneca residents earned a median of \$46,278.

In terms of income trends, the population in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village is slightly better off than they were in 1989. In 1989, the median household income for the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village was the equivalent of \$39,751, after adjusting for inflation. In other words, the typical household had \$1,581 more income in 1999 than in 1989. The trend is more pronounced with per capita income. For Town residents outside the Village, average income per person was the equivalent of \$18,420 in 1989, compared to \$20,748 in 1999.

Approximately 7 percent of the population in the Town of Tonawanda live below the poverty level. In comparison, 12.2 percent of all Erie County residents have incomes that place them below the poverty line.

## **Occupation and Industry**

Residents of the Town of Tonawanda exhibit a mix of occupational backgrounds. Approximately one-third (35 percent) of employed residents age 16 or older are occupied in managerial, professional or related occupations while a slightly lower percentage (31 percent) are in sales or office occupations. Approximately 14 percent are employed in production or transportation, and 13 percent are in service occupations.

In terms of the type of industry where residents are employed, the largest proportion are employed in the education, health and social services sector (27 percent). Approximately 13 percent of employed residents work in the manufacturing sector, and another 13 percent work in retail trade. Employment is split among the remaining sectors of the economy, with no other sector employing a significant proportion of the workforce in the Town of Tonawanda.

Basic demographic information for a number of other communities in Erie County has been collected in order to assess the Town of Tonawanda in relation to other Towns. These communities include the Town of Amherst and the Town Grand Island because they border the Town of Tonawanda. The Towns of Cheektowaga and West Seneca, as Towns that border the City of Buffalo were also included, as was Erie County. In comparison with these communities, the Town of Tonawanda (outside the Village) tends to have a somewhat older population, with 22 percent of the population over the age of 65, and a median age of 41.8 years in the year 2000. Average household size (2.33 persons) in the Town of Tonawanda (outside the Village) is among the smallest. The Village of Kenmore and the Town of Cheektowaga are slightly smaller at 2.31 and 2.32 respectively. The average household size countywide is 2.41 persons.

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<sup>2</sup> The 2000 Census data shows the amount earned in the previous year (1999).

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 6**  
**Comparable Communities-Demographic Profile**

	<b>Tonawanda (except Kenmore)</b>	<b>Village of Kenmore</b>	<b>Town of Tonawanda</b>	<b>Town of Amherst</b>	<b>Town of Cheektowaga</b>	<b>Town of Grand Island</b>	<b>Town of West Seneca</b>	<b>ERIE COUNTY</b>
Population	<b>61,729</b>	16,426	78,155	116,510	94,019	18,621	45,920	950,265
Median Age	<b>41.8</b>	38.5	41.1	39.6	40.9	39.1	41.1	38.0
% under 18	<b>21.5%</b>	23.3%	21.9%	22.2%	20.6%	26.7%	22.3%	24.3%
% 65 or older	<b>22.1%</b>	16.4%	20.9%	17.7%	20.5%	11.3%	18.2%	15.9%
Households	<b>26,207</b>	7,071	33,278	45,076	40,045	6,898	18,328	380,873
Average HH Size	<b>2.33</b>	2.31	2.32	2.42	2.32	2.68	2.47	2.41
Housing Units	<b>27,175</b>	7,459	34,634	46,803	41,901	7,355	18,982	415,868
Vacancy Rate	<b>3.6%</b>	5.2%	3.9%	3.7%	4.4%	6.2%	3.4%	8.4%
% Owner-occupied	<b>74.6%</b>	66.6%	72.9%	74.0%	71.8%	83.3%	78.4%	65.3%
% Renter-occupied	<b>25.4%</b>	33.4%	27.1%	26.0%	28.2%	16.7%	21.6%	34.7%
Median HH Income	<b>\$ 41,332</b>	\$ 42,252	\$ 41,453	\$ 55,427	\$ 38,121	\$ 60,432	\$ 46,278	\$ 38,567
Per Capita Income	<b>\$ 20,748</b>	\$ 21,695	\$ 20,947	\$ 27,647	\$ 19,627	\$ 25,816	\$ 20,529	\$ 20,357
Percent of Persons Under Poverty Line	<b>7.3%</b>	5.2%	6.9%	6.4%	6.5%	3.0%	4.6%	12.2%

Town figures include Villages within the Towns unless noted  
Source: US Census Bureau, Census 2000

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## D. HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

### Housing Statistics

There are 27,175 housing units in the Town of Tonawanda CDP<sup>3</sup> ("CDP" refers to the portion of the Town that is outside the Village). There are an additional 7,459 housing units in the Village of Kenmore, for a total of 34,634 units town-wide (including the Village). These figures include occupied and vacant units.

The housing vacancy rate is low in the Town of Tonawanda. Outside the Village, only 3.6 percent of units in the Town were vacant and unoccupied in 2000. Typically, a vacancy rate of around 5 percent is considered "normal". Normal vacancy includes units that are temporarily vacant because they are for sale or for rent, or have been sold or rented but are not yet occupied. Rates that are higher than normal are an indicator of problems with the housing market, and often reflect the presence of undesirable or dilapidated structures that are difficult to sell or rent. The Town's low vacancy rate suggests a healthy housing market, without being so low as to indicate housing shortages.

In the Town of Tonawanda, the market is particularly strong for homeownership units. According to the Census, only 0.9 percent of owner-occupied units were vacant in 2000. Because homeowners tend to live in the same unit for a longer period, typical vacancy rates for owner-occupied units is around 2 percent. Rental units, which experience greater turnover, typically have a higher vacancy rate, and a rate of around 6 percent is considered normal. In the Town of Tonawanda, vacancy among rental units was 5.6 percent in 2000, which is an acceptable rate.

Vacancy rates are higher in the Village. In 2000, 5.2 percent of housing units in the Village of Kenmore were vacant. Homeowner vacancy, at 1.1 percent, was only slightly higher than the Town's rate. Rental vacancy in the Village was 6.8 percent. These rates are still within the normal range.

**Figure 7**  
**Housing Stock Trends, 1990-2000**

	Town of Tonawanda		Village of Kenmore		Town outside Village	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
All Housing Units	34589	34,634	7,330	7,459	27,259	27,175
Occupied Units	33765	33278	7101	7071	26664	26207
Vacant Units	824	1,356	229	388	595	968
Vacancy Rate	2.4%	3.9%	3.1%	5.2%	2.2%	3.6%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000

As a community with very little developable land, it is not surprising that there has been no net housing growth in the Tonawanda outside the Village. The number of housing units remained essentially unchanged between 1990 and 2000, with the loss of 84 units, or 0.3 percent. There has been some new building, particularly in the neighborhoods targeted by the Town Department of Community Development, such as Sheridan Parkside. Community Development is building affordable homes for first-time homebuyers in these targeted areas. These areas also account for much of the loss of units in the Town, as aging, dilapidated multi-family structures are being replaced with new single-family homes.

The housing stock in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village is predominately owner-occupied, with 74.6 percent of units occupied by their owners. There is a higher percentage of rental units in the

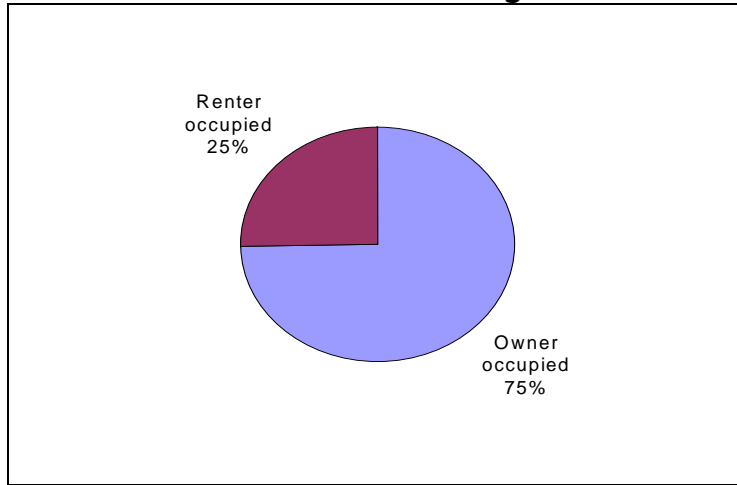
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<sup>3</sup> The term "Tonawanda CDP" stands for "Census Designated Place" and refers to the Town excluding the Village of Kenmore

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

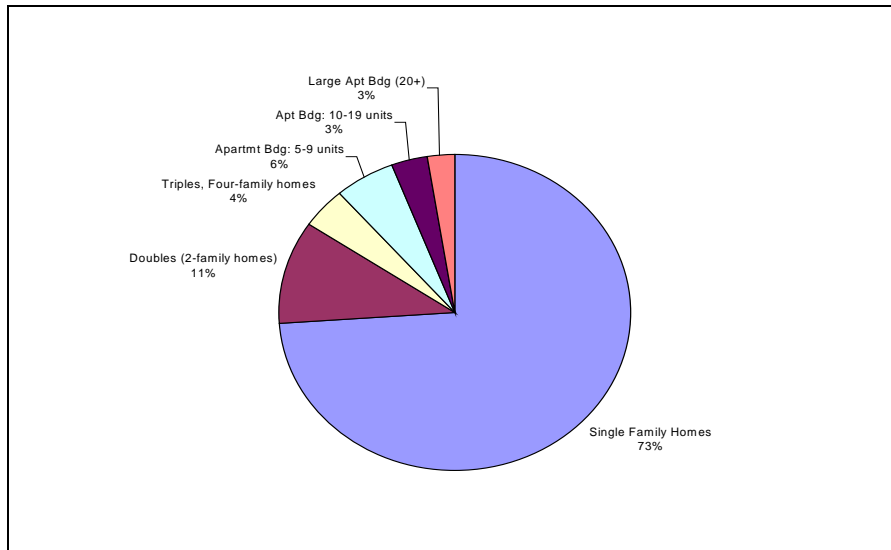
Village, where 66.6 percent of all housing units are owner-occupied. The owner-occupancy rate for the Town including the Village is 72.9 percent.

**Figure 8**  
**Tenure, Town Outside Village, 2000**



Most of the housing stock in the Town of Tonawanda is single-family dwellings. Outside the Village, 74 percent of all housing units are in single-family structures (these figures include mobile homes, which total less than half of one percent). Two-family homes make up 11 percent of the housing stock, and the remaining housing stock is in buildings housing three or more units. Most apartment buildings are small, with only 2.5 percent of the housing stock in structures with 20 units or more. The housing make-up in the Village is more diverse. Just under 59 percent of units are in single-family homes. Nearly 29 percent of units are in two-family homes, and 12 percent are in structures with three or more apartments. Seven percent of units in the Village are in large apartment buildings with over 20 units. Many of the larger apartment buildings in the Village are designated for senior citizens.

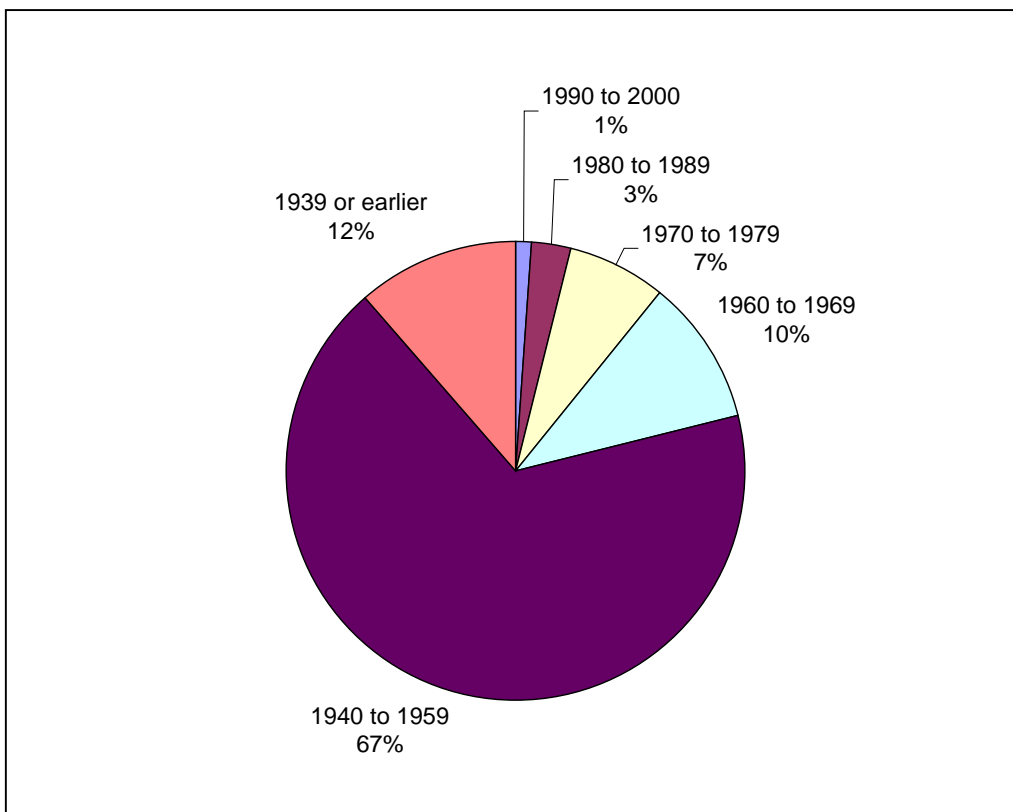
**Figure 9**  
**Housing Characteristics, Town of Tonawanda Outside Village, 2000**



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A significant characteristic of the housing in the Town of Tonawanda is its age. Most of the housing stock in the Town of Tonawanda was built in a relatively short time period. According to Census statistics, over two-thirds (67.3 percent) of the housing stock in the Town outside the Village was built between 1940 and 1959. Over 46 percent was built between 1950 and 1959. Just over 11 percent of the housing stock in the Town outside the Village was built prior to 1939, and just under 11 percent was built between 1960 and 1969. The remaining housing stock (approximately 12 percent) was built after 1969. Median year built for residential housing stock in the Town outside the Village is 1954. Housing in the Village is older than in the Town outside the Village. Over half of the homes in the Village (53.4 percent) were built before 1939, and 87 percent of the village housing stock was built over 40 years ago. Less than 8 percent of the Village's housing stock was built after 1969. For the Town including the Village, approximately 80 percent of the housing stock is over 40 years old.

**Figure 10**  
**Year Housing Built, Town of Tonawanda Outside Village, 2000**



New housing starts are very limited. Only about 1 percent of the housing stock was less than ten years old in 2000. Much of the new construction of housing in the Town of Tonawanda is for affordable housing. The Town Department of Community Development has a program for new construction in the Sheridan Parkside, Old Town and Kenilworth neighborhoods, which is described in more detail below, in the discussion on community development.

Residents of the Town of Tonawanda are typically long-term residents. According to mobility statistics from the 2000 Census, over half (54.7 percent) of residents had lived at their current address for more than 10 years. Over one-quarter (25.5 percent) had lived at the same address for over 30 years.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Housing prices in the Town of Tonawanda are affordable. According to the Census, the median value of owner-occupied homes in the Town outside the Village was \$85,900 in 1999. The figure is slightly lower (\$85,100) when the Village of Kenmore is included. In comparison, the median value of owner-occupied homes in Erie County was \$90,800. In comparison to other suburban communities, the Town of Tonawanda has an affordable housing market. For example, median home values in neighboring Amherst were reported to be \$120,000. Sales data from the Greater Buffalo Board of Realtors support the figures from the Census. Based on actual sales data through the Multiple Listing Service, the average sale price of housing in the Town of Tonawanda in 2003 was \$85,897, including homes in Kenmore. A total of 290 homes sold in the Town in 2003. By comparison, the average sale price across the Multiple Listing System area was \$108,429, based on a total of 10,174 sales.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of homes in the Town of Tonawanda are in good condition and well maintained. Based on building permit records, residents invested \$5.86 million in housing improvements in 2002 and \$5.75 million in 2003. These figures include only renovations that would require building permits, such as new additions. It is evident from observation that much more than that was invested by residents in siding, painting, landscaping and other improvements that do not require town permits.

In terms of expected housing needs, currently about 39 percent of all households in the Town of Tonawanda outside the Village are families with no young children living at home. Most of these households are "empty-nesters", whose children are grown and have their own households. Another 31 percent of households are comprised of a person living alone. These include both young persons and seniors. Just over one-quarter of households (26 percent) are young families with children under the age of 18.

## **Neighborhoods**

The Town of Tonawanda is characterized by a number of strong neighborhoods. Areas such as Parkview Triangle, Kenilworth, Deerhurst Park and other local neighborhoods have a particular image and sense of identity. The Village of Kenmore also helps contribute to local identity, by serving as the "village center" with a business district that serves the wider Town of Tonawanda area. Several retail and public uses are also located on Sheridan Drive, with the Sheridan Delaware Plaza, the Aquatic Center, the Town Court and Police Department providing a central focus of activity, and a number of other public and retail uses located nearby.

Unlike many suburban areas, the Town of Tonawanda has a variety of distinct neighborhoods that is more than a collection of subdivisions. These neighborhoods do not always have exact boundaries, but Map 4 provides a general depiction of where different neighborhoods in Town are located. Several of these neighborhoods have a community organization that sponsors activities and programs. Others are more informal in nature. They have a historic identity, and may have been more organized in the past, but current neighborhood interaction is informal. The Town also has a very strong neighborhood watch system, which patrols neighborhoods, looks for suspicious activities and helps support neighborhood identity. There are nine neighborhood watch organizations across the Town. Strengthening the activities and efforts of the neighborhood watch organizations is the Crime Resistance Executive Board, which provides coordination and networking opportunities between these organizations. The Crime Resistance Executive Board also oversees the Mobile Eye Patrol. This volunteer program helps supplement police efforts by identifying suspicious activities and maintaining patrols to enhance safety in the Town.

The Town of Tonawanda Police Department helps support the sense of neighborhood in the Town. The Community Policing Program is offered in Sheridan Parkside Village Courts, Old Town, Kenilworth and Lincoln Park neighborhoods. The goal of this program is to foster community and police interaction in

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<sup>4</sup> The MLS area covers seven counties of Western New York, but the vast majority of sales are in Erie and Niagara Counties.



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

order to reduce crime and foster a high quality of life. Events and neighborhood functions are sponsored by the Police Department to help achieve this goal. Satellite Police offices are maintained at Lincoln Park and Sheridan Parkside Village Courts.

Tonawanda has a neighborhood park system, with playgrounds and parks distributed throughout the Town. Similarly, neighborhood schools and churches are located throughout the Town, offering a community gathering place, playfields and other activities. Most residents live within easy walking distance of a park, playground and/or a schoolyard. Another factor contributing to the quality of neighborhoods in the Town of Tonawanda is the presence of small, neighborhood business districts. These provide important services to local residents and help promote local identity.

## **Community Development**

The Town of Tonawanda has a Department of Community Development that focuses on neighborhoods where income levels or other factors make them eligible for community development block grant (CDBG) investment. Most suburban municipalities in Erie County receive CDBG funded through the Erie County consortium. However, because the Town of Tonawanda has a population over 50,000 residents, it is eligible to receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The primary national objective of the CDBG program is to revitalize neighborhoods, increase employment opportunities or improve community facilities and services, with a priority on programs and projects that benefit low- to moderate-income residents. Activities that address slums or blight or urgent needs that threaten health or welfare of the community are also eligible.

A range of activities may be undertaken with community development block grant funds. In the Town of Tonawanda, several areas are designated as eligible, based on income levels of existing residents, for community development activities. These include the Sheridan Parkside Village Courts area, Old Town, and portions of Kenilworth, Lincoln Park and the Village of Kenmore. In addition, because economic development activities are eligible (in order to create employment opportunities for low- to moderate-income residents), much of the Town's Economic Development Zone qualifies for community development funds. This includes most of the areas west of Military Road, excluding Praxair and the Riverview neighborhood. The areas eligible for community development block grant funding in the Town of Tonawanda are shown on Map 4.

Activities sponsored by the Town of Tonawanda Department of Community Development include new home construction, home repair, and a first-time home ownership program. The Department also offers a range of services, such as housing counseling, a weatherization program, and community building programs, such as a stewardship council, which is designed to formalize citizen input into community activities, including educational, recreational and cultural opportunities. The Department also is responsible for housing activities under the HOME program, through a Consortium with the Towns of Amherst and Cheektowaga.

A primary focus of the Town of Tonawanda in regard to community development is the promotion of homeownership. Over the last decade, the Town has used federal and state funds to construct nearly 80 new homes for first-time homebuyers in the Kenilworth, Sheridan Parkside and Old Town neighborhoods. This program is being continued, and has started transforming the character of these neighborhoods.

In the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood, the transition is dramatic, as multi-family, row housing is being replaced with single-family homes. It is a goal of the Town's Community Development program to create a more diverse, attractive neighborhood in the Sheridan Parkside Village Courts area. This

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

neighborhood is characterized by low incomes, high turnover, and a high percentage of substandard rental housing. The Town has been investing in infrastructure, acquisition of dilapidated buildings and selective demolitions in order to diversify the housing stock and support a higher proportion of homeownership in the neighborhood. A concept plan for the transformation of the neighborhood has been prepared which will be used to guide reinvestment in the neighborhood, targeting areas for different housing types, green space and other amenities. Eventually, improvements will include new lot configurations, new street circulation patterns to facilitate access, and public improvements to improve the appearance and image of the neighborhood.

The Town also promotes home improvements, with a deferred payment loan program for home repair. For residents who meet eligibility criteria, the money is at 0% and payments are deferred until the loan recipient sells or moves out of the property.

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## E. ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

### Streams and Rivers

The largest waterway in the Town of Tonawanda is the Niagara River. Tonawanda Channel of the Niagara River forms the western land edge of the Town, and the Town boundary is located in the Niagara River. The western portion of the Town falls within the State Coastal Zone, and the Town has a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program that guides development in the waterfront region.

Tonawanda Creek and Ellicott Creek flow parallel to each other in the northeastern corner of the Town. The area between these two waterways is known as Raintree Island. The eastern portion of Raintree Island falls within the Town of Tonawanda, while the western end is in the City of Tonawanda. Two Mile Creek also flows through the Town of Tonawanda, northerly through Sheridan Park. Rattlesnake Creek is a small stream that flows into Two Mile Creek in the waterfront region of the Town. These four waterways all flow from the Town of Tonawanda through the City of Tonawanda, where they terminate in the Niagara River.

### Watersheds and Water Quality

The Town of Tonawanda falls within the Niagara River/Lake Erie Basin. All Town effluents flow into the Niagara River, either directly or via Tonawanda Creek, Two Mile Creek or Ellicott Creek. The Niagara River/ Lake Erie basin drains an area of 2,300 square miles, incorporating all of Erie County, and significant portions of the entire Western New York region. In addition, the Niagara River receives waters from four Great Lakes that are upstream of the River (Lakes Erie, Michigan, Superior, and Huron).

Water quality is a concern in the Niagara River. The Great Lakes area, including the Town of Tonawanda waterfront, is heavily industrialized. Pollutants in the River are generated both locally and by cities and industries upstream. The Niagara River has been designated an Area of Concern (AOC) by the International Joint Commission (IJC), the bi-national organization that oversees the management of the Great Lakes Basin. Designation as an Area of Concern indicates that the level of pollutants impairs the "beneficial use" of a water body, resulting in restrictions on activities that can take place. In the case of the Niagara River, there are restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption and dredging activities. There are also problems relating to fish deformities, loss of habitat, and contamination in sediments (degradation of benthos<sup>5</sup>).

In order to address these concerns, a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the Niagara River was completed in 1994, with an updated Status Report published in 2000. The RAP identifies issues and pollutants affecting the River, and sets forth recommendations to address the problems. Priorities in the Niagara River RAP include strategies to address stream water quality, contaminated river sediments, inactive hazardous waste sites, point source pollution (pollution from specific sources), and fish and wildlife habitat improvements.

A broad range of interest groups, including environmental, industrial, academic, recreational, community and governmental representatives were involved in the Remedial Advisory Committee (RAC) that prepared the RAP. Additional public outreach included public meetings, reports, brochures, displays and an informational video. Accomplishments that have been achieved in regard to the Niagara River RAP include the following:

- Progress in hazardous waste site remediation,
- Removal of contaminated river sediments in several locations,
- Decrease in amount of point source pollution discharged into the River,

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<sup>5</sup> Benthos are organisms, including animals, vegetation and bacteria, that live in or on the bottom of an aquatic environment.

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- Implementation of strategies to address non-point source pollution (pollution, such as road run-off, that cannot be traced back to a single source),
- On-going assessment of impacts on fish and wildlife, and
- On-going research into fish consumption advisory status and long-term trends

Remediation activities for the Niagara River are an on-going process, and there are continued monitoring of problems, activities and achievements. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) requires State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permits for all sources that discharge liquids into the Niagara River. The RAC meets on a regular basis, and future monitoring and research will continue, with the long-term goal of restoring an improved quality of life for the ecosystem of the Niagara River and its watershed.

## **Floodplains**

Floodplains, or flood zones, are areas that have been designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as subject to flooding hazards. These areas are depicted on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Floodplains are areas that FEMA has determined would experience flooding during what is known as a 100-year storm, when excessive precipitation would lead to creeks and rivers overflowing their banks.

In the Town of Tonawanda, the largest area of what FEMA designates as the 100-year floodplain is associated with the Niagara River. Much of the shoreline along the River has been designated a floodplain. The bands of floodplains are widest in the central sector of the waterfront, in the vicinity of the Grand Island Bridges. There are narrower bands of floodplains in the southern and northern portions of the waterfront area, as well as a few specific locations where the designated flood zone encroaches further inland south of the bridges. There are also smaller areas of floodplains associated with Ellicott Creek, and some areas of floodplain along the Tonawanda Creek. These areas are shown on the Environmental Features Map (Map 5).

## **Wetlands**

There are isolated areas of both federal and state designated wetlands in the Town of Tonawanda. Wetlands are low-lying areas where water is retained, and groundwater can be found at or near the surface of the soil for extended periods of time, or soils that tend to be wet. A wetland can be regulated by New York State and the federal government concurrently. Regulating authority is determined individually by the state and federal government based upon the specific regulations which define the criteria by which a wetland is identified. The US Army Corps of Engineers is the federal entity and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is the state entity regulating wetlands. The definition of what is classified as a wetland differs between these two entities.

Federal wetlands are primarily identified by the presence of hydric soils, or soils that tend to be wet. There are areas along Tonawanda Creek, Ellicott Creek and Two-Mile Creek that have been designated as federal wetlands by the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory. Small areas of federal wetlands can also be found in scattered locations west of Military Road. Federal policy is evolving in regard to federal wetlands, particularly smaller isolated areas not associated with Waters of the United States. Most of the federal wetlands in the Town of Tonawanda fall into this category. It is still the case, however, that persons seeking to develop within any federal wetland need to obtain a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers. A federal wetland does not need to be on the National Wetland Inventory Map in order to be regulated by the Corps of Engineers, and determinations of regulatory jurisdiction are typically made by the Corps of Engineers through field investigation.

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New York State identifies wetlands by a number of factors, primarily by the types of vegetation that are found in the area. Plants found in State wetlands prefer wet soils or flooding conditions. By definition, a State regulated wetland must be 12.4 acres in size or greater unless it has been determined by the commissioner to have unusual local importance (See 6 NYCRR Part 663.2(p)). In the Town of Tonawanda, there are three areas designated as wetlands by New York State. The largest area of state wetlands is located in the industrial area of Town, north of Sawyer Road. These wetlands run adjacent to a rail corridor, on industrial lands that are primarily vacant. A second area of State wetlands is located on a 57-acre parcel known as the future Cherry Farm Park. This vacant parcel is a former hazardous waste site that has been remediated (cleaned up). The wetland is concentrated in an 18-acre strip along the east edge of the parcel. The site is designated for future parkland, and the wetlands on the site have been incorporated into the design of the park as a positive environmental and educational feature along a proposed nature trail system. A third area of State wetlands is located on Raintree Island. The majority of this wetland falls within the City of Tonawanda, but the eastern portion of it extends into the Town. A permit from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is required prior to development of any State-designated wetland, or within one hundred feet of a State-designated wetland.

## **Significant Habitats**

The Strawberry Island – Motor Island Shallows are located in the Tonawanda Channel of the Niagara River, which flows between the Towns of Tonawanda and Grand Island. The Shallows is officially designated as a significant coastal fish and wildlife habitat by New York State. Strawberry Island falls within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Tonawanda, while Motor Island is within the boundaries of the Town of Grand Island. The area is the largest area of riverine littoral zone in the Niagara River, a rare type of ecosystem. The Strawberry Island – Motor Shoals Shallows is a very important fish spawning area in the upper Niagara River that is nationally recognized as a spawning ground for muskellunge. The area is also an important bird habitat. The National Audubon Society has designated the entire upper Niagara River corridor as an “Important Bird Area of International Significance,” and Strawberry Island is a significant location for waterfowl, used for feeding, wintering and resting during migrations. In 1998, the State of New York allocated over \$700,000 to an aquatic habitat restoration project on Strawberry Island. The money is designated to restore three acres of wetlands and install features to stabilize the Island against further erosion. This project was recommended in the Niagara River RAP, and funding of this project represents progress toward remediation and enhancement efforts.

## **Soils**

Most of the Town of Tonawanda has been developed, and surface soils have been excavated, built on and disturbed. Throughout Town, most soils are categorized as urban land. In areas of vacant land, particularly within the waterfront area, most of the soils that are not urban land are various forms of silt loams. There are areas of clay soils throughout the Town.

Another indicator of soil condition is the presence of hydric and potentially hydric soils. Hydric soils are lands where the water table is near the surface, and the possibility exists for seasonal wetness (standing or ponded water conditions). Potentially hydric soils are soils that have a high likelihood of containing pockets or areas of hydric soils. In the Town of Tonawanda, the majority of the soils are non-hydric soils. There are areas of potentially hydric soils spread throughout the Town. There are only a few small areas where hydric soils are found, mostly corresponding to creek corridors or wetland areas.

## **Brownfields/Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites**

The Town of Tonawanda has nine sites that are classified as Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites under the DEC's Inactive Hazardous Waste Site Remediation Program (Cherry Farm and the adjacent River Road site have been combined into one site). All of these sites are state-designated sites, and are under the

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jurisdiction of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. New York State established the Inactive Hazardous Waste Site Remediation Program in 1979 as part of the Superfund Initiative, to identify, evaluate and remediate inactive hazardous waste sites that may have a significant impact on human health or the environment. The designation of a hazardous waste site under this program is subject to very specific regulations, and there is a standard process that must be followed to remediate, or clean up these sites.

Under the State Hazardous Waste Site program, sites are classified as Class 1 through 5. Class 1 is the most serious category. Sites in this category represent an immediate or imminent threat and emergency action is required to protect the public health or the environment. None of the sites in the Town of Tonawanda are Class 1 sites. Class 5 are sites that have been completely remediated, to the point where no further monitoring or maintenance is required.

Four of the sites in the Town of Tonawanda are classified as Class 4, which means they have been successfully remediated of hazardous wastes, and are considered "closed". Two adjacent sites, River Road and Cherry Farm, were successfully remediated jointly, and plans are to develop a regional State Park on the site. Dunlop Tire and O-Cell-O have also been successfully remediated, and continue in operation as industrial uses. At these locations, on-going monitoring has confirmed that there have been no further environmental concerns. The final site, Seaway Landfill, has been closed, but because radioactive material from the Manhattan Project was stored on-site in the past, this site is subject to more intensive investigation by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Two sites in the Town area are classified as Class 3. Class 3 sites have some remaining hazardous wastes, but these wastes are contained and do not present a threat to public health or the environment. In the case of Tonawanda, the contamination on the two Class 3 sites is confined to a very localized portion of the site. At the Bisonite Paint site on Military Road, most of the site has been remediated, and remaining contamination is contained in a former settling lagoon. The remainder of the site has been redeveloped. Contamination at the Ashland Tank site is similarly contained in a storage tank, and redevelopment could occur on the remainder of the site.

The remaining three sites in the Town of Tonawanda are considered Class 2 sites, where there is a significant threat to the public health of environment. Remediation is required at these sites, although not on an urgent basis. The former Roblin Steel site, now known as Niagara River World, is currently undergoing remediation work for a portion of the site, and assessment for the remainder of the site. Negotiations with Tonawanda Coke as to the extent of the area classified as contaminated are underway. At the third Class 2 site, Polymer Applications, design of a bio-remedial system has been completed. The reauthorization of the State Superfund/Brownfields monies will facilitate remediation at these three sites where more serious contamination remains an issue.

There are some locations in the Town of Tonawanda where radioactive residue is (or was) an issue. These sites exist due to Linde's involvement in the Manhattan Atomic Bomb project during World War II. The clean-up of these sites is under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers, under FUSRAP (Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program). The sites are two parcels owned by Ashland, located on either side of the Seaway Landfill, the Seaway Landfill, the Town of Tonawanda Landfill, and the former Linde property, currently owned by Praxair. One Ashland site has been fully remediated, and the second is expected to be fully remediated in 2004, according to the Army Corps of Engineers. Remediation at Rattlesnake Creek, which is considered part of the Ashland 2 site, is underway, with the removal of contaminated soil scheduled for 2005 and complete closure expected by 2007. Small areas of elevated levels of radioactive wastes were identified at the Tonawanda Landfill and adjacent Mud Flats site. The Army has made official findings, based on soil tests and analysis, that any radioactivity at these two sites are within federal and state health standards, and no remedial activities are needed

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under FUSRAP. Investigation continues at the Seaway Landfill site. Final remediation is in process at the Linde/Praxair site, and scheduled to be completed in 2004 under the supervision of the Corps of Engineers.

## **Solid Waste Sites**

There are three sites in the Town of Tonawanda that are current or former Solid Waste Sites. The Seaway Landfill is a 100-acre landfill that has undergone remediation and is considered closed. It is privately owned, and redevelopment is unlikely in the near future. The Town of Tonawanda Landfill is located off Military Road, near the border with the City of Tonawanda. This 45-acre landfill is inactive, and in the process of final closure. The Town is exploring re-use alternatives for this site, focusing primarily on recreational uses.

The NRG-Huntley Landfill is the only currently active landfill in the Town. It is an 80-acre site located on River Road south of the Grand Island bridges. The front 30-acre portion of this site has been closed. It is screened from the roadway with a planted berm. There are 6 acres in active use as a disposal site for waste materials (mainly fly ash) generated by the Huntley power station, which is a coal-fired electric generating plant. The remaining 44 acres of this site remains available for future continued use as a disposal site.

## **Archeological**

No known significant archeological sites are located in the Town of Tonawanda. The Town's original Local Waterfront Revitalization Program indicated a potential site may have existed in the vicinity of the General Motors Plant on River Road. However, subsequent investigations were unable to locate any archeological finds. An archeological assessment conducted as part of the SEQRA review for the expansion of the General Motors plant indicated a low archeological sensitivity of the site, due to extensive prior disturbance. Most of the lands in the Town have experienced prior disturbance. It is unlikely that other significant archeological sites exist in the Town.

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## F. UTILITIES

### **Public Water, Wastewater and Storm Water**

The Town of Tonawanda Water Resources Department provides water and wastewater services to residents of the Town of Tonawanda. The Town is fully serviced by public water and sewer. The Town's water supply is drawn from the Niagara River, which is treated by a water treatment plant on Aqua Lane. The Town has consistently maintained high quality water standards, and water quality exceeds federal and state requirements. The Village of Kenmore purchases water from the Town for the Village water system.

Waterlines are generally older with some being undersized based on current design standards. The Town has a systematic approach to distribution system replacement, based primarily on need due to age, and continuously addresses any problems with the system. In general, the water system is capable of meeting existing Town and Village needs within 20% additional capacity available at peak demands and additional capacity available during average water demand conditions.

The Town has recently completed an energy efficiency upgrade at the water treatment plant that included the installation of new motors and variable speed drives better allowing the Town to cost effectively manage fluctuations in demand as well as additional capacity beyond current water demands. Despite this additional capacity, the Town continues and will continue to proceed with waterline replacements and upgrades as needed, predominately due to the age of the system, to ensure the long-term viability of the potable water supply to Town and Village residents.

The Town of Tonawanda wastewater treatment plant serves the Town, the Village of Kenmore and the City of Tonawanda. The plant handles all residential and industrial effluent from the three communities. In order to protect the plant, local industries are required to pre-treat their wastewater. This system has generally worked well. The Town monitors and enforces this pre-treatment requirement for all three communities.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant is 28 years old, and the operational staff is beginning to experience the need to replace and upgrade equipment that is nearing the end of its design life. The wastewater treatment plant staff does continuously optimize the operation of their existing treatment processes while modifying and changing equipment when it becomes cost effective. An example of this approach is showcased in the current sludge handling project. This project involves the replacement of the existing Zimpro sludge conditioning and vacuum dewatering systems with a more efficient and cost effective centrifuge process.

Although the wastewater plant is currently operating at 66% of dry weather capacity, it has reached 100% of wet weather capacity. A long-term wet weather control program has been developed and submitted to the governing regulatory agencies for approval. Town officials are confident that plant improvements as well as a wet weather control program will enable the Town to provide adequate capacity in a cost effective and efficient manner. The Water Resources Department has also been proactive in terms of potential emergency needs, and has backup power capacity (generators) sufficient to maintain operations in the event of a power failure.

The Town operates a separate stormwater sewer system. Under federal EPA regulations, instituted in 2003, the Town of Tonawanda is subject to Phase II Stormwater regulations, and is required to have a plan for management of stormwater in the community. The major issue in the Town regarding stormwater is the sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) system, which allows sanitary sewer lines to overflow into the stormwater drainage system when excess wastewater is running through the system. The Town has a number of these SSO points throughout the collection system. Since these overflow points were



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incorporated into the original system design, it would be cost prohibitive to eliminate them. However, the Town is faced with pressure from the regulatory agencies to abate SSO's.

The Town addresses the abatement issue in the long term wet weather control plan submitted to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in accordance with the Town's SPDES Discharge Permit. The Town is also preparing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stormwater Management Annual Report as mandated by the provisions of the General Stormwater Permit.

## **Other Utilities**

Electricity is distributed in the Town of Tonawanda by the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation. Major power lines run through the Town, and electricity service is able to handle major industrial users, as well as residential customers. Energy deregulation now provides an opportunity for customers to purchase electricity from several suppliers. The Huntley Station, a coal-burning energy generation facility, is located within the Town of Tonawanda on River Road, immediately adjacent to the town's industrial core. Transmission lines of various capacities branch throughout the industrial sector.

Natural gas is distributed in the Town of Tonawanda by National Fuel Gas. Natural gas service is available to all residential, commercial and industrial properties in Town. Large capacity lines are located in close proximity to existing and planned industrial properties.

The Town also has excellent telecommunications infrastructure, including a mainline running along the I-290. Fiber optic and high-speed internet service are also available.

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## G. TRANSPORTATION

### Highway Network

The Town of Tonawanda has a roadway network system that includes State, County and Town routes. This roadway system provides very good access throughout the Town, and provides excellent connections between the Town, the wider Western New York region, the Interstate Highway System and Canada.

Two Interstate routes run through the Town, both of which are part of the New York State Thruway system. Route I-190 runs parallel to the Niagara River from the City of Buffalo north through the Town of Tonawanda, where it continues across the Grand Island Bridges, heading northwest toward Niagara Falls and Canada. Interchanges on the I-190 are at Sheridan Drive, the I-290, and River Road. This roadway provides very good interstate access to the industrial waterfront portion of the Town. The Grand Island Bridge is also part of the interstate system.

Route I-290 is a six-lane, divided highway that runs east-west through the northern part of the Town, connecting Route I-90 with I-190. Route I-290, also known as the Youngmann Expressway, has three major interchanges in the Town of Tonawanda, located at Niagara Falls Boulevard, Colvin Avenue and Delaware Avenue. There is also an eastbound on/off-ramp at Knoche Road. The western terminus of Route I-290, where it merges with Route I-190 is located in the Town of Tonawanda in the waterfront area. The eastern terminus of Route I-290 is in the adjacent Town of Amherst, where it connects to the main line of the New York State Thruway (I-90). This excellent access to the interstate highway system has attracted several truck terminals to locate in the Town.

There are several roads under the jurisdiction of New York State. These include Niagara Falls Boulevard (Route 62); Delaware Avenue (Route 384); Military Road (Route 265) and River Road (Route 266). Sheridan Drive is also a State Road, designated Route 324 from the eastern border of the Town to its intersection with Grand Island Boulevard. At that point, Grand Island Boulevard becomes Route 324, and Sheridan becomes Route 325 to its terminus at River Road.

Roads under Erie County's jurisdiction include Ellicott Creek Road, Creekside Drive, Colvin Avenue, Eggert Road, Brighton Road, Englewood Avenue, Elmwood Avenue, Kenmore Avenue, Ensminger Road, Knoche Road, Two Mile Creek Road, and Sawyer Avenue. All the State Roadways in the Town of Tonawanda are classified as principal arterials, with the exception of River Road and the Route 325 section of Sheridan Drive, which are classified as minor arterials. Kenmore Avenue (County Road 307) is also a principal arterial. Most other County Roads are minor arterials. There are three exceptions: Colvin Boulevard north of Old Colvin, Sawyer Road, and Ensminger Road are all classified as Collectors. All other roads in the Town are local roads, under the jurisdiction of the Town. The table on the following page summarizes roadways in Town by jurisdiction.

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**Figure 11  
Roadways by Jurisdiction**

<b>New York State Thruway Authority</b>	
Route I-190	Niagara Extension of the NYS Thruway
Route I-190	Grand Island Bridges
<b>New York State</b>	
Route I-290	Youngmann Expressway
Route 62	Niagara Falls Boulevard
Route 384	Delaware Avenue
Route 265	Military Road
Route 266	River Road
Route 324	Sheridan Drive (east of Grand Island Boulevard)
Route 325	Sheridan Drive (west of Grand Island Boulevard)
<b>Erie County</b>	
CR 196	Brighton Road
CR 118	Colvin Boulevard
CR 130	Eggert Road
CR 580	Ellicott Creek Road
CR 119	Elmwood Avenue
CR 129	Englewood
CR 542	Ensminger
CR 307	Kenmore Avenue (Military Road to Niagara Falls Boulevard)
CR 189	Kenmore Avenue (Vulcan to Grand Island Boulevard)
CR 306	Knoche Road (Military Road to Delaware Avenue)
CR 170	Sawyer Road
CR 524	Two Mile Creek Road (Kenmore Ave. to Tonawanda City line)

Source: GBNRTC

## Roadway Classification

Roadways are also categorized by classification. Traffic operations, safety and needs of residents create different demands on roadways, which sometimes are in conflict with each other. For example, slower speeds may impede traffic flow, but may also improve safety. With a growing emphasis on accommodating other types of traffic in addition to motorized vehicles, these conflicts are increasingly common. Roadway classification is a hierarchical method of categorizing roads, and assists in balancing these priorities. It is also a useful tool for planning purposes, in terms of addressing and prioritizing issues such as traffic calming measures, access management issues and accommodations for non-motorized traffic.

Roadways are classified as expressways, principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors or local roads. Expressways, including the interstate highways, are intended to facilitate smooth traffic flow throughout the wider region. These roadways are generally limited access, multi-lane roads, with higher posted speed limits. They do not provide direct access to the adjacent land uses and are designed to carry high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds. At the other end of the spectrum, local streets are intended primarily to provide access to the homes, businesses and other properties along their frontage. While they serve an obvious transportation purpose, their primary role not facilitating large volumes of traffic, but in providing full property access. Traffic speeds are low, and the priority should be the needs of the local residents, not traffic efficiency.

In between these two extremes, arterials accommodate relatively high traffic volumes and speeds, but also allow for access to the properties along their route. While they can accommodate higher rates of

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

speed than local streets, this must be balanced with the needs of the adjoining property owners. Principal arterials are generally higher volume roads, or roads that are important links between different areas of the region. Minor arterials are not as important to the regional transportation network, but also accommodate larger volumes of traffic. Collector streets are intended to “collect” and distribute traffic between local streets and arterials. They are the intermediate link between the local roadway network and the regional arterial system.

Each street is given a designation, based on the type of service it is designed to accommodate. The higher the level of traffic, the more likely speed limits, lane widths and road widths will be higher. Also, the greater the potential for conflict between motorized traffic and other non-motorized modes of travel (pedestrians and bicyclists). Public transportation is usually most appropriately located along arterials, as part of the regional transportation system.

In Erie and Niagara Counties, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Planning Council (GBNRTC) has categorized roadways as to their primary function. The classifications for roadways in the Town of Tonawanda are shown in the following table.

**Figure 12  
Roadways by Classification**

<b>Interstate/ Expressway</b>	
I-190	Niagara Thruway
I-190	Grand Island Bridge
I-290	Youngmann Expressway
<b>Principal Arterial</b>	
62	Niagara Falls Boulevard (Sheridan to North Creek Road)
265	Military Road (Buffalo City line to I-290)
324	Grand Island Boulevard (I-190 access to Sheridan Drive)
324	Sheridan Drive (Sheridan split at GI Blvd. to Niagara Falls Boulevard)
384	Delaware Avenue (Kenmore Avenue to Tonawanda City line)
CR 307	Kenmore Avenue (Military Road to Niagara Falls Boulevard)
<b>Minor Arterial</b>	
266	River Road (Buffalo City line to Tonawanda City line)
325	Sheridan Drive (I-190 to Grand Island Boulevard)
CR 118	Colvin Boulevard (Kenmore Avenue to Eggert Road)
CR 119	Elmwood Avenue (Kenmore Avenue to Knoche Road)
CR 129	Englewood (Highland Parkway to Kenmore Avenue)
CR 130	Eggert Road (Niagara Falls Boulevard to Colvin Avenue)
CR 189	Kenmore Avenue (Vulcan to Grand Island Boulevard)
CR 196	Brighton Road (Delaware Avenue to Niagara Falls Boulevard)
CR 306	Knoche Road (Military Road to Delaware Avenue)
CR 524	Two Mile Creek Road (Kenmore Avenue to Tonawanda City line)
CR 580	Ellicott Creek Road (Tonawanda City line to Niagara Falls Boulevard)
<b>Collector</b>	
CR 118	Colvin Boulevard (Old Colvin to Island Parkway)
CR 170	Sawyer Road (River Road to Kenmore Avenue)
CR 542	Ensminger (Two Mile Creek Road to Military Road)
<b>Local Roads</b>	
All other roads are local roads	
Source: GBNRTC	

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## Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes vary greatly on the Town's roadways. Volumes are very high on Routes I-190 and I-290, which are limited access roadways and part of the interstate system. Volumes on these roads are as high as 104,600 per day (AADT)<sup>6</sup> for the segment between the Niagara Falls Boulevard and Colvin exits. Traffic volumes on arterials and collectors vary greatly, depending on location. Traffic counts are not generally taken on local roads, which have a relatively low traffic volume. Available traffic counts are summarized in a table at the end of this section, and are also shown on Map10.

## Roadway Conditions

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) has rated County, State and federal roadways in the region. Roadways are ranked from 1 to 10, according to the following scale:

		<b>Town of Tonawanda Ratings</b>
Ratings 9-10:	Excellent	16% of segments; 19% of lane miles
Rating 7-8:	Good	57% of segments; 52% of lane miles
Rating 6:	Fair	22% of segments; 25% of lane miles
Ratings of 1 to 5:	Poor	5% of segments; 4% of lane miles

According to these data, most state, county roadways in the Town of Tonawanda are in good condition. Erie County has a program of renovating roads in the County. A total of 46 roadway segments in the Town of Tonawanda are included in the current listing, totaling approximately 24 miles of roadway. The total work list consists of over \$63 million in road work. The portion in the Town of Tonawanda has been estimated to total \$3.5 million. At the current pace and current dollars, all of the currently identified segments in the Town of Tonawanda would be completed in approximately seven years. A table summarizing the work list project in the Town of Tonawanda is at the end of this section.

Local roads are not rated, but the Town has a systematic program of resurfacing local roads. Roadways are prioritized and repaved to the extent that funds are available, although the amount of roadways that need resurfacing generally exceeds available funds. In 2003, the Highway Department resurfaced 41 streets throughout the Town. The Highway Department also maintains curbs and sidewalks damaged by tree roots where needed. The Town has a first-class recycling program and refuse collection, and is noted for its leaf collection and snow removal programs.

The GBNRTC has studied capacity issues for the regional roadway network. In the Town of Tonawanda, there are a few areas where capacity issues are expected over the next twenty years, primarily along the interstate routes. The GBNRTC analyzed existing conditions (as of 2000), and projected two scenarios for the year 2025. The "Null Network" represents an extension of current conditions, and the "Long-Range Plan Network" shows the impact on the roadway system of the proposed improvements. Although the proposed improvements do not address all capacity issues, they do correct many deficiencies, and the Long-Range scenario is preferred to the Null Network scenario, where LOS deteriorates in a number of areas.

The following table summarizes areas in the Town of Tonawanda where Level of Service problems are indicated under each scenario. A LOS of C or better suggests that there are not any serious capacity problems along the roadway. LOS D represents a potential need for improvement. LOS E or F indicates deficiencies. According to the GBNRTC analysis, the Town of Tonawanda will have only three roadway segments with serious deficiencies under the Long-Range Plan scenario.

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<sup>6</sup> AADT, or average annual daily traffic, is an estimate of the number of vehicles that typically travel a given road segment in a day, averaged over a year to adjust for seasonal variations.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 13**  
**Projected Traffic Deficiencies, Town of Tonawanda**

	<b>Current Conditions (2000)</b>	<b>Null Network 2025</b>	<b>Long-Range Plan 2025</b>
South Grand Island Bridge	LOS E or F	LOS E or F	LOS E or F
Rte I-190, south of Sheridan	LOS D	LOS E or F	LOS C or better
Rte I-290: Delaware to Eggert	LOS D	LOS E or F	LOS C
Rte I-290: Eggert to NFB	LOS D	LOS E or F	LOS E/F
Niagara Falls Boulevard, north of Ellicott Creek Road	LOS D	LOS E or F	LOS E or F
Brighton Rd, NFB to Eggert Rd.	LOS C or better	LOS E or F	LOS C or better

Source: GBNRTC: 2025 Long-Range Plan

## **Bicyclists and Pedestrians**

The Town of Tonawanda, unlike many suburban communities, has sidewalks in most areas. This makes the Town much more pedestrian friendly than other areas. Repair of sidewalks is the responsibility of the property owner unless damage was created by town-owned trees. The Town replaced sidewalks in front of over 350 homes in 2003. The Town also sponsors an aggressive tree trimming and planting program, planting an average of 500 trees per year. The Town has been awarded the "Tree City USA" designation from the National Arbor Day Foundation for the past seven years, based on its comprehensive program of tree planting, maintenance and tree management. The Town also has a tree ordinance in effect.

Most of the sidewalks in the Town are set back from the curb, with a "tree lawn" between the sidewalk and the roadway. This provides additional greenspace, making it more attractive and pleasant to walk. It also provides added safety for pedestrians and functions as a snow storage area during the winter months.

While the Town has an excellent network of sidewalks, there are areas where crosswalks are needed. The pedestrian bridge over Sheridan Drive helps pedestrians cross this busy roadway. Additional pedestrian crossing should be considered, whether bridges or at-grade. Bridges are more expensive to construct and maintain, but offer safety advantages. Major thoroughfares such as Sheridan Drive are cited by residents as difficult to cross.

The Town has designated off-road bicycle trails in a few locations. The RiverWalk is a multi-use trail that accommodates a range of users (bicyclist, pedestrian, roller bladers, etc.) This trail runs through Isle View Park and extends along the waterfront, generally parallel to River Road, for the entire waterfront from the City of Tonawanda to the north to the City of Buffalo to the south. The RiverWalk connects into other trail systems, and is a regional recreational asset. The Two Mile Creek Greenway runs parallel with Two Mile Creek from its intersection with the RiverWalk in the City of Tonawanda, south to its current terminus in Sheridan Park. Erie County has received funding to extend this trail with a new connecting route, called the Sherwood-Two Mile Creek Greenway, which will continue south through the Praxair property, along Woodward Avenue to Sheridan Drive and connect into the RiverWalk at the foot of Sheridan Drive. This extension will create a loop connecting a number of recreational assets in the Town. The project is currently in the design phase. Construction for the Sherwood Greenway is scheduled to start in mid-2005.

There is also a multi-use recreational trail in the northern portion of the Town, which runs through Ellicott Creek Park, along the route of the Erie Canal to the City of Tonawanda. This trail, which is part of the Erie Canalway, connects to a trail system that runs east into the Town of Amherst. Another trail is under design in this vicinity. The Tonawanda to Amherst Canalway Trail would run from the City of

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Tonawanda, along the Erie Canal route (Tonawanda Creek) along Creekside Drive to Ellicott Creek Park and then north into Amherst along the route of the canal. Additional extensions of this trail system eastward are also being implemented.

There are proposals for an additional trail in the Town of Tonawanda. The proposed trail would be a rails-to-trails trailway along the right of way of the former rail corridor that cuts diagonally through the Town of Tonawanda east of Colvin Boulevard. The former Erie rail corridor is owned by the NFTA, which is keeping it as a possible future extension of the rapid rail system in the region. The proposed bike path would not affect future transit plans. The proposed trailway would connect to the North Buffalo Rails to Trail project that is underway south of the Town, and extend through the City of Tonawanda to connect to the Erie Canalway Trail, which links to the RiverWalk. This trail would create a recreational loop in the Town, and complete gaps in the trail network. This project is in its earliest stages of development. If the project moves forward, the first step would be to conduct public outreach during the design phase in order to determine the project's feasibility and public support.

In addition to off-street multi-use trails, there are also a number of on-street designated bicycle routes in the Town of Tonawanda. Bike trails are designated along Military Road, Ensminger Road, Kenmore Avenue, Parker Boulevard, Ellicott Creek Road and the northern portion of Colvin Boulevard (in the vicinity of Brighton Park). GBNRTC rated these on-street bicycle routes in 2000. At that time, most of the routes in the Town of Tonawanda were rated good or very good. The exception was Kenmore Avenue, which was fair in the middle section (east of Starin and west of Elmwood were rated good). These routes are included on a two-county "Bicycle Route Guide" map issued by the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council to encourage greater bicycle usage in the region.

Pedestrian-oriented improvements have also been provided in the Village of Kenmore along Delaware Avenue, where a streetscape project being implemented includes new sidewalks, benches, curbs and roadway improvements. This project is intended to make the village more attractive and support economic revitalization of the business district.

## **Transit**

Transit services in the Town of Tonawanda are provided by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), which offers a number of bus routes through the Town. In general, the Town is relatively well served by bus routes that provide access to downtown Buffalo, and has more transit access than most suburban communities. However, there is a shortage of east-west routes. The Kenmore Avenue bus provides service along Kenmore Avenue. One route of the Elmwood bus provides transit along Sheridan Drive between Sheridan Parkside and Elmwood, while another route of the Elmwood bus provides service along Knoche between Elmwood and Delaware. One route of the Niagara Street bus (Route 5) provides service along Sheridan Drive between Sheridan Parkside and Northtown Plaza, and west of Two-Mile Creek Road to River Road.

The following table summarizes bus routes in the Town of Tonawanda.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 14**  
**NFTA Bus Routes Serving Town of Tonawanda**

Route 5- Niagara	In the Town of Tonawanda, route runs down Sheridan (from Northtown Plaza) west to East Park Drive, then up through Ensminger/Cooper light industrial area before returning to Sheridan via Two-Mile Creek Road. It continues down River Road into the City of Buffalo.
Route 11- Colvin	In the Town of Tonawanda, route runs along Colvin Boulevard, with a loop to Paramount, and extends to downtown City of Buffalo to the south. The "D" bus continues north to City of Tonawanda.
Route 20- Elmwood	Various routes. In the Town of Tonawanda, routes generally run along Elmwood Avenue. "H" bus goes along Sheridan to Sheridan Parkside/Ensminger. "T" bus goes along Knoche to Orchard Loop east of Delaware Avenue. Some runs extend to North Tonawanda in the north, and most runs extend to downtown Buffalo to the south.
Route 25- Delaware	In the Town of Tonawanda, routes generally run along Delaware Avenue. One run extends to Town of Wheatfield in the north; all extend to downtown Buffalo to the south.
Route 30- Kenmore	In the Town of Tonawanda, route runs along Kenmore Avenue, Military Road, and extends to Riverside neighborhood in Buffalo at the west. It also has a link to the north metro rail station. Also provides access to Erie Community College North, industrial parks off Wehrle Drive, and the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport to the east (circuitous route).
Route 34- Niagara Falls Boulevard	Various routes. In the Town of Tonawanda, runs along Niagara Falls Boulevard. Extends to East Robinson Road in Amherst on the north, with a loop east to Sweet Home Road and the Audubon Industrial Park, and a loop west along Old Niagara Falls Boulevard and a park and ride facility. Another loop provides access to Northtown Plaza in Amherst. Southern terminus is the north metro rail station.
Route 79- Tonawanda Express	A commuter route that runs along Knoche and Elmwood Avenue in the Town of Tonawanda. Northern terminus is in North Tonawanda. Express service south of Amherst Street to downtown Buffalo.

Source: NFTA, 2004

## **Rail**

All active rail lines in the Town of Tonawanda are located in the western portion of the Town. These lines service the industrial businesses, and rail access in the Town of Tonawanda is superior to that of most suburban communities. One major rail line through the Town parallels Military Road and continues north to the City of Tonawanda. Numerous rail lines extend west into the industrial waterfront portion of the Town. Several industrial users have rail sidings and use rail to ship products or supplies.

Recently, a combination of State and private funds were used to improve rail facilities to the NOCO terminal off Grand Island Boulevard in the waterfront area of the Town. This investment has improved the company's ability to ship products, and resulted in the retention of 100 jobs.

Other former rail lines in the eastern portion of the Town are no longer active. Rails-to-Trails projects are proposed on some of these routes (see Connectivity section).



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Transportation Improvements

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) determines the transportation improvement program, or "TIP" for all communities in the two county region. Part of the GBNRTC's long-range planning mandate, it includes all federally funded transportation projects being considered for implementation over a two-year period. The current TIP covers the 2004-2006 period. The current TIP includes 164 transportation projects totaling \$467 million. Eight projects are within the Town of Tonawanda. These are as follows:

**Figure 15  
Proposed Transportation Projects, 2004-2006**

Project Location/Type	Project Number	Construction Cost (Est.)	Est. Start Date	Agency
Sheridan Drive Extension at Kenmore Intersection Realignment	5086.22	\$2.5 million	Spring 2005	Erie Co. NYSDOT
Route 62 at Koenig/Ridge Lea /I-290 Ramp Interchange/Ramp Realignment	5308.08	\$5 million	Summer 2007	NYSDOT
Tonawanda to Amherst Canalway Trail (trail construction)	5756.63	\$1.5 million	April 2004	NYSDOT NYSTA
Sherwood-Two Mile Creek Greenway (trail construction)	5756.76	\$0.75 million	Fall 2004	Erie Co. NYSDOT
Tonawanda Rails-to-Trails (trail construction)	5756.84	\$1.4 million	Winter 2006	Erie Co. NYSDOT
Colvin Boulevard and Brighton Road Signal improvements (15 locations)	5756.86	\$0.5 million	Oct. 2006	Erie Co. NYSDOT
Elmwood Avenue corridor Signal improvements (95 locations)	5756.87	\$0.35 million	Oct. 2006	Erie Co. NYSDOT
I-290 – I-190 to Main Street (2 years) Resurfacing	5580.32	\$25 million	March 2004	NYSDOT

In addition to the projects on the TIP, the New York State Thruway Authority is planning to make improvements to the Grand Island Bridges over the next several years. These include painting, steel repairs, deck repairs and sidewalk improvements. The New York State DOT and the Thruway Authority (NYSTA) are also coordinating on an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) incident management project for the I-190 and I-290 area. This project, (PIN 5755.30) is expected to start in spring 2005, and cost \$9 million. It will consist of messaging systems and other methods of better managing traffic on these roadways.

Erie County also conducts a systematic program of road repair. Prioritization is based on GBNRTC road ratings. Under this "Road Life Cycle" program, Erie County allocates approximately \$8 to \$9 million annually toward roadwork across the County, including the Town of Tonawanda. Based on the latest ranking, there are 46 road segments in the Town of Tonawanda scheduled for roadwork over the next seven to eight years. The schedule roughly corresponds with the road rating. All county road segments rated 5 in the Town of Tonawanda (7 segments) are scheduled for construction starting in 2005.<sup>7</sup> County roadway in Tonawanda that are rated 6 (13 segments) are scheduled for construction in 2006. There are 15 county roadways with a score of 7, and these are scheduled for 2007 and 2008. Higher ranked roadways will be addressed in later years.

<sup>7</sup> Rankings are from 1 to 10 based on priority, with lower numbers representing higher priority. See table on page 5.

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A table summarizing the Erie County Road Life Cycle rankings for the Town of Tonawanda is attached to this report.

The GBNRTC has also prepared a long-range plan that looks at transportation needs out to 2025. Goals guiding long-term transportation planning by the GBNRTC focus on preserving the existing roadway network, improving mobility and accessibility, and supporting economic development. Overall, 70% of funds will be dedicated to maintaining existing roads in Erie and Niagara Counties.

The GBNRTC Long-Range Plan outlines major proposed transportation projects for the next 20 years. Only one of the identified projects is located in the Town of Tonawanda. In support of transit, the agency proposes a "Tonawanda-Niagara Falls Corridor High Quality Transit Improvement" project, at an estimated cost of \$200,000,000, to study the feasibility of extending transit between the City of Buffalo and the City of Niagara Falls. The probable route would be the existing right-of-way along the former rail corridor in the Town of Tonawanda. Options to be studied include express buses, bus rapid transit or light rail.

Another identified project is likely to have indirect impacts on the Town of Tonawanda. The report recommends widening Route I-290 between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Main Street in Amherst. While this project is outside the Town of Tonawanda, Town residents will be affected by it, in terms of delays during construction as well as benefits once it is completed. There are plans to study how to improve the Niagara Falls Boulevard/ I-290 interchange, which is acknowledged by area transportation planners to be a problem.

The GBNRTC notes that due to limited funding, several important projects could not be included in the Long-Range Plan. Congestion on the Grand Island Bridges is cited as the most significant capacity congestion project not addressed under the plan. The plan also notes that the Youngmann Expressway between the I-190 interchange and Niagara Falls Boulevard merits improvements.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 16**  
**Town of Tonawanda Roadways on Erie County Life Cycle Listing**

Road	Segment	Length	Score	Est. Cost	Yr. of Work
Kenmore Avenue	Colvin to Starin	0.7	5	\$105,000	2005
Elmwood Avenue	Kenmore to Village line	0.9	5	\$135,000	2005
Kenmore Avenue	Delaware to Colvin	0.6	5	\$ 90,000	2005
Knoche Road	Elmwood to Delaware	0.2	5	\$ 30,000	2005
Kenmore Avenue	Military to Elmwood	0.5	5	\$ 75,000	2005
Kenmore Avenue	Elmwood to Delaware	0.4	5	\$ 60,000	2005
Colvin Boulevard	Ellicott Cr. To Island	0.3	5	\$ 45,000	2005
Kenmore Avenue	Parker to Englewood	0.3	6	\$ 45,000	2006
Kenmore Avenue	Englewood to NFB	0.4	6	\$ 60,000	2006
Elmwood Avenue	Village line to Sheridan	1.5	6	\$225,000	2006
Kenmore Avenue	NFB to Main	0.2	6	\$ 30,000	2006
Brighton Road	Parker to NFB	0.71	6	\$106,500	2006
Knoche Road	Military to Elmwood	0.21	6	\$ 31,500	2006
Ellicott Creek Rd	Parker to NFB	0.9	6	\$135,000	2006
Englewood	Highland to Starin	0.1	6	\$ 15,000	2006
Englewood	Starin to Parker	0.4	6	\$ 60,000	2006
Ellicott Creek Rd	Colvin to Parker	0.6	6	\$ 90,000	2006
Englewood	Parker to Kenmore	0.41	6	\$ 61,500	2006
Colvin Boulevard	Old Colvin to Ellicott Cr.	0.77	6	\$115,500	2006
Ellicott Creek Rd	Ton. City line to Colvin	0.2	6	\$ 30,000	2006
Kenmore Avenue	Starin to Parker	0.2	7	\$ 30,000	2007
Colvin Boulevard	Englewood to Sheridan	0.5	7	\$ 75,000	2007
Colvin Boulevard	Village line to Englewood	0.41	7	\$ 61,500	2007
Brighton Road	Eggert to Parker	0.18	7	\$ 27,000	2007
Colvin Boulevard	Kenmore to Village line	0.67	7	\$100,500	2007
Brighton Road	Colvin to Eggert	0.5	7	\$ 75,000	2007
Highland Pkwy	Colvin to Englewood	0.12	7	\$ 18,000	2007
Highland Pkwy	Delaware Rd. to Colvin	0.3	7	\$ 45,000	2007
Elmwood Avenue	Sheridan to Knoche	0.8	7	\$120,000	2008
Kenmore Avenue	Ontario to Military	0.2	7	\$ 30,000	2008
Ensminger	E. Park to Military	0.7	7	\$105,000	2008
Two Mile Creek	Kenmore to Sheridan	0.4	7	\$ 60,000	2008
Two Mile Creek	Ensminger to Ton. City	0.6	7	\$ 90,000	2008
Two Mile Creek	Sheridan to Ensminger	0.5	7	\$ 75,000	2008
Ensminger	Two Mile Cr. To E. Park	0.2	7	\$ 30,000	2008
Colvin Boulevard	Brighton to Eggert	0.5	8	\$ 75,000	2009
Colvin Boulevard	Sheridan to Brighton	0.94	8	\$141,000	2009
Eggert Road	Brighton to Colvin	0.78	8	\$117,000	2009
Eggert Road	NFB to Sheridan	0.1	8	\$ 15,000	2009
Eggert Road	Parker to Brighton	0.2	8	\$ 30,000	2009
Kenmore Avenue	Grand Island Bvd to Sheridan	0.44	8	\$ 66,000	2009
Brighton Road	Delaware to Colvin	1	8	\$150,000	2009
Eggert Road	Sheridan to Parker	0.85	8	\$127,500	2009
Creekside	River to Ellicott Creek Pkway	1	8	\$150,000	2010
Creekside	Ellicott Creek Entrance	0.95	8	\$ 11,400	2011
Sawyer Road	River Road to Kenmore	0.9	9	\$135,000	2012

Source: GBNRTC. Estimated year work starts is based on Erie County budgeting \$8.5 million annually for roadwork and the location of the project on the cumulative project listing.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 17**  
**Traffic Counts by Classification**

Rte. #	Route Name	Segment	Lanes	Width	Count (AADT)	Year
<b>Interstate</b>						
190-I	Niagara Thruway	Buffalo City line to Exit 15 Sheridan	4	50	62,000	2003
190-I	Niagara Thruway	Exit 15 NB Sheridan to Exit 15 324	4	50	58,000	2003
190-I	Niagara Thruway	Exit 15 SB 324 OLP to Exit 16 I-290	4	50	58,000	2003
190-I	Niagara Thruway	I-290 to River Road	6	50	63,900	2003
190-I	Grand Island Br.	River Rd to Grand Island Town Line	4	50	60,600	2003
290-I	Youngmann Exp	I-190 to Delaware	6	72	60,800	2000
290-I	Youngmann Exp	Delaware to Colvin	6	72	95,600	2002
290-I	Youngmann Exp	Colvin to Niagara Falls Boulevard	6	72	104,600	2000
<b>Principal Arterial</b>						
62	Niagara Falls Bvd	Sheridan to Maple	6	94	24,000	1991
62	Niagara Falls Bvd	Maple to I-290	6	94	38,000	2000
62	Niagara Falls Bvd	I-290 to Willowridge	6	--	43,900	2002
62	Niagara Falls Bvd	Willowridge to Ellicott Creek Rd	5	88	33,700	2002
62	Niagara Falls Bvd	Ellicott Creek Rd to N. Creek Rd.	5	40	34,500	1998
265	Military Road	Buffalo City line to Kenmore	4	46	17,100	2002
265	Military Road	Kenmore to Sheridan	4	46	18,500	2002
265	Military Road	Sheridan to I-290	4	46	16,600	2001
324	Grand Island Bvd	Access Rd to I-190 to Sheridan Dr.	4	50	7,600	2001
324	Sheridan Drive	Sheridan to Military	6	72	14,600	2001
324	Sheridan Drive	Military to Elmwood	8	108	18,900	2002
324	Sheridan Drive	Elmwood to Delaware	8	108	23,100	2002
324	Sheridan Drive	Delaware to Colvin	8	108	27,300	2001
324	Sheridan Drive	Colvin to Parker	7	108	37,400	2002
324	Sheridan Drive	Parker to Eggert	7	108	24,300	1996
324	Sheridan Drive	Eggert to Niagara Falls Bvd	8	108	26,100	2001
384	Delaware Ave.	Kenmore to Delaware Road	4	58	20,500	2002
384	Delaware Ave.	Delaware Road to Sheridan	5	78	21,400	2002
384	Delaware Ave.	Sheridan to Brighton	5	78	20,500	2002
384	Delaware Ave.	Brighton to I-290	5	78	25,100	2002
384	Delaware Ave.	I-290 to Tonawanda City line	5	61	17,000	1999
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Military to Elmwood	2	37	8,200	1999
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Elmwood to Delaware	2	31	8,200	2002
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Delaware to Colvin	2	32	12,400	2002
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Colvin to Starin	2	37	13,900	2000
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Starin to Parker	3	36	16,000	2000
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Parker to Englewood	3	36	17,000	2000
CR 307	Kenmore Ave.	Englewood to Niagara Falls Bvd	3	37	16,500	2002
<b>Minor Arterial</b>						
266	River Road	Vulcan to Sheridan	4	66	8,700	2002
266	River Road	Sheridan to Grand Island Bridge	2	41	8,700	2000
266	River Road	GI Bridge to 2 Mile Creek Rd	4	63	9,100	2001
325	Sheridan Drive	I-190 to Kenmore	4	46	8,000	2002
325	Sheridan Drive	Kenmore to Grand Island Bvd	4	64	8,400	2002
CR 196	Brighton Road	Delaware to Colvin	2	42	7,500	2002

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Figure 17, continued**  
**Traffic Counts by Classification**

Rte. #	Route Name	Segment	Lanes	Width	Count (AADT)	Year
CR 196	Brighton Road	Colvin to Eggert	4	40	9,600	2002
CR 196	Brighton Road	Eggert to Parker	4	42	13,000	2002
CR 196	Brighton Road	Parker to Niagara Falls Bvd.	4	41	9,600	1998
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Kenmore Ave to Village line	4	40	12,900	1996
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Kenmore Village line to Englewood	4	44	13,300	2002
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Englewood to Sheridan	4	44	14,700	2002
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Sheridan to Brighton	4	45	16,500	2002
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Brighton to Eggert	4	45	18,200	2002
CR 130	Eggert Road	Niagara Falls Bvd to Sheridan	4	49	7,700	1998
CR 130	Eggert Road	Sheridan to Parker	4	40	7,000	1998
CR 130	Eggert Road	Parker to Brighton	4	42	7,500	1998
CR 130	Eggert Road	Brighton to Colvin	4	45	8,800	1998
CR 580	Ellicott Creek Rd	Tonawanda City line to Colvin	2	33	4,600	1998
CR 580	Ellicott Creek Rd	Colvin to Parker	2	33	8,100	2002
CR 580	Ellicott Creek Rd	Parker to Niagara Falls Bvd	2	32	8,900	1998
CR 119	Elmwood Avenue	Kenmore to Kenmore Village line	4	41	13,500	2002
CR 119	Elmwood Avenue	Kenmore village line to Sheridan	4	41	14,600	2002
CR 119	Elmwood Avenue	Sheridan to Knoche	4	42	6,900	2002
CR 129	Englewood	Highland to Starin	2	41	8,600	2002
CR 129	Englewood	Starin to Parker	2	41	8,600	2000
CR 129	Englewood	Parker to Kenmore	2	41	7,400	2002
CR 189	Kenmore Avenue	Grand Island Bvd to Sheridan	2	42	7,600	1998
CR 189	Kenmore Avenue	Sheridan to Vulcan	4	41	7,100	1998
CR 306	Knoche Rd.	Military to Elmwood	4	53	12,000	1996
CR 306	Knoche Rd.	Elmwood to Delaware	2	47	11,100	2002
CR 524	Two Mile Creek Rd	Kenmore to Sheridan	2	35	4,400	1997
CR 524	Two Mile Creek Rd	Sheridan to Ensminger	2	39	2,800	2000
CR 524	Two Mile Creek Rd	Ensminger to Tonawanda City line	2	36	2,900	1997
<b>Collector</b>						
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Old Colvin to Ellicott Creek	2	40	5,900	2002
CR 118	Colvin Bvd	Ellicott Creek to Island Pkway	4	40	7,000	1998
CR 542	Ensminger	Two Mile Creek to E. Park	2	37	2,600	2000
CR 542	Ensminger	E. Park to Military	2	34	5,800	2002
CR 170	Sawyer Road	River Road to Kenmore	2	37	3,300	1999

Source: GBNRTC, 2004

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## H. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Town of Tonawanda has a large inventory of community facilities and cultural resources. These facilities contribute to the quality of life of the community. This section of the inventory provides a brief listing of these assets. All facilities are shown on Map 7.

### **Municipal Buildings**

The Town of Tonawanda operates a variety of public facilities.

- The Municipal Center, 2919 Delaware Avenue, houses Town and Village administrative functions, including the Assessor, Town Clerk, Comptroller, Town Attorney, and Technical Support Departments.
- The Sheridan Parkside Community Center, 169 Sheridan Parkside Drive, houses the Department of Community Development; the Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation (Empire Zone Administration); Meals-on-Wheels operations; a Youth Center; a branch library; a Head Start program, and large auditorium and meeting rooms.
- Police Headquarters, 1835 Sheridan Drive, also houses the Paramedics; the Fire Alarm Headquarters; Justice Court; Animal Control; and Personnel and Labor Relations.
- Highway-Sanitation/Recycling-Forestry Department is located at 450 Woodward Avenue. This facility includes a new garage and offices, rebuilt after a fire destroyed the former structure in 1995.
- Water Resources, Two-Mile Creek Road, is at the Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Building Inspector and Permits, 525 Belmont Avenue
- Youth, Parks & Recreation, 2440 Sheridan Drive
- Historical Society, 100 Knoche Road
- Senior Citizen Center, Ensminger Road
- Water Treatment Plant, Aqua Lane.

### **Parks and Recreation**

The Town of Tonawanda is noted for its excellent recreational offerings. The Town maintains a neighborhood-based park system, with parks dispersed throughout the community. Including local and county facilities, there are over 700 acres of parkland in the Town. Parks and recreational facilities operated by the Town of Tonawanda include:

- Aquatic and Fitness Center, 1 Pool Plaza
- Aqua Lane Park, Aqua Lane
- Brighton Park and Golf Course, Brompton Road
- Curtis Park, Curtis Parkway
- Dexter Terrace Playground, Dexter Terrace
- Ellwood Park, Stoneleigh Avenue
- Ensminger Park, Ensminger Road
- Expressway Park, Ensminger Road
- Glendale Playground, Glendale School, Glendale Avenue
- Holmes Playground, Holmes School, Dupont Avenue
- Irvington Park, Irvington Terrace
- Kaufman Playground, Sawyer Road
- Kenilworth Park, Ford and Hawthorne Avenues
- Kenney Field, Brighton Road and Colvin
- Lincoln Park, Decatur Avenue
- Mang Park, Mang Avenue (Village of Kenmore)
- Old Town Park, Grove Place and Roswell Avenue

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- Parkside Village Community Center, Sheridan Parkside Drive
- Sheridan Park and Golf Course, Sheridan Drive
- Thurston Park, Thurston Avenue
- Tonawanda Small Boat Harbor, Sheridan Drive and River Road

Recreational facilities operated by the Town include an indoor aquatic center with an indoor 50-meter pool, a wading pool, fitness room and support facilities, such as locker rooms and a sauna. The Town operates two 18-hole golf courses and a driving range. The Paddock Chevrolet Golf Dome has an indoor driving range, a practice putting green, and an 18-hole indoor miniature golf course. In addition, the Town has two covered ice rinks, three outdoor swimming pools, four outdoor wading pools, automated batting cages and numerous playing fields, playgrounds and picnic areas. Picnic shelters are available for rental at Aqua Lane Park, Lincoln Park, Mang Park and Sheridan Park. Shelters range in size, with the smallest accommodating groups of about 15, and the largest able to house up to 200. The NOCO pavilion at Sheridan Park has a full kitchen, and can accommodate 135 persons. Facilities for boating (boat launch, mooring) are available at the Small Boat Harbor and Aqua Lane Park. The Youth, Parks and Recreation Department also operates two Youth Centers.

The Town coordinates an extensive recreational program offering programs for youth and adults in baseball, hockey, soccer, football, basketball, and competitive swimming among other sports and activities. The Town also runs a summer recreational playground program at thirteen playgrounds throughout the Town, with supervised programs running from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday at most locations.

There are additional recreational facilities operated by the County and New York State. Erie County operates Ellicott Creek Island Park and Isle View Park. These regional parks have trails, picnic areas, waterfront access and other amenities. New York State is responsible for Strawberry Island, an island in the Niagara River that has been preserved as open space due to its significance as a wildlife habitat and fish spawning area.

The Town of Tonawanda also has a trail system that operates as a linear park, linking recreational sites in the Town. The Riverwalk is a major trail that runs from the City of Buffalo north along the Niagara River through the Town of Tonawanda and continuing through the City of Tonawanda. The Riverwalk, which is used by a regional population base, connects to the Erie Canalway Trail, a statewide trail system that follows the route of the Erie Canal and connecting canal systems. Efforts are underway to complete missing portions of the Canalway, and create a 524-mile continuous trail across the State.

Two-Mile Creek Greenway runs parallel to Two-Mile Creek from the Niagara River along Sheridan Park to Sheridan Drive. A future extension will extend the trail from Sheridan Park south to Woodward Avenue, then west to Sheridan Drive. It will connect to the Riverwalk again near the Town's Small Boat Harbor. Other potential trails are being studied. These are discussed in greater detail in the section on transportation.

## **Senior Services**

The Town of Tonawanda operates a Senior Citizen Center on Ensminger Road, offering a variety of activities and programs for seniors, including exercise and wellness programs, dances, trips, a lounge and a library. Van service for errands within the Town is provided by reservation through the Senior Citizen Center. The Senior Citizen Center also offers programs at five branch locations throughout the Town.

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The Town provides nutrition services, in cooperation with Erie County. Lunches are available each weekday at the Ensminger Senior Citizen Center for a small, voluntary donation. A Ken-Ton Meals-on-Wheels program offers home delivery of meals for homebound elderly.

Senior Citizen Center branches in the Town of Tonawanda are as follows:

- Senior Citizen Center, 291 Ensminger Road (Monday through Friday)
- Brighton Branch, Zion Church of Christ, Parker Boulevard (Tuesdays)
- Kenmore Presbyterian Branch, Kenmore Presbyterian Church, Delaware Avenue (Fridays)
- Kenmore Mang Park Branch, Mang Avenue (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays)
- Kenmore Village Apartments, Colvin Avenue (Tuesdays)
- Ellwood Branch, Ellwood Fire Hall, Englewood Avenue (Tuesdays)

## **Libraries<sup>8</sup>**

The Town of Tonawanda has five branch libraries of the Buffalo and Erie County Library Public Library System, including one within the Village of Kenmore. These branches are:

- Brighton Library, 999 Brighton Road (closed in 2005)
- Greenhaven Library, 350 Greenhaven Terrace (closed in 2005)
- Kenilworth Library, 318 Montrose Avenue
- Kenmore Library, 160 Delaware Road
- Parkside Village Library, 169 Sheridan Parkside Drive (closed in 2005)

## **Schools**

Most of the Town of Tonawanda is in the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District, also known as the Ken-Ton School District. Ken-Ton serves all of the Village of Kenmore, and all but the northeastern corner of the Town of Tonawanda, which falls within the Sweet Home School District.

The Ken-Ton District operates eight elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools. Ken-Ton is one of the largest school districts in New York State, with average enrollment ranging from 9,200 to 9,500 students in grades Kindergarten through 12. Public Schools in the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District include the following:

- Elementary Schools:
  - Alexander Hamilton Elementary School, 44 Westfall Drive
  - Ben Franklin Elementary School, 500 Parkhurst Boulevard
  - Charles A. Lindbergh Elementary School, 184 Irving Terrace
  - Herbert Hoover Elementary School, 199 Thorncliff Road
  - Holmes Elementary School, 365 Dupont Avenue
  - Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School, 283 Washington Avenue
  - Thomas A. Edison Elementary School, 236 Grayton Road
  - Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, 230 Athens Boulevard
- Middle Schools:
  - Ben Franklin Middle School, 540 Parkhurst Boulevard
  - Herbert Hoover Middle School, 199 Thorncliff Road
  - Kenmore Middle School, 155 Delaware Road

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<sup>8</sup> The inventory was prepared in 2004; three branch libraries were closed in 2005. There are on-going planning efforts regarding the status of libraries in the Town of Tonawanda.



# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- High Schools:
  - Kenmore East Senior High School, 350 Fries Road
  - Kenmore West Senior High School, 33 Highland Parkway

The Sweet Home School District, which also serves a portion of the Town of Amherst, has one school located within the Town of Tonawanda. The Glendale Elementary School is located on 101 Glendale Drive. The district also operates three additional elementary schools, a middle school and a high school, which are located in the Town of Amherst. Total enrollment in the Sweet Home School District is approximately 3,900 students. The annual school budget is approximately \$45.9 million.

In addition to these public schools, there are a number of private, parochial schools in the Town of Tonawanda. Private Schools in the Town of Tonawanda and Village of Kenmore are:

- Private and Parochial Schools:
  - Blessed Sacrament School (pre-K – 8), 263 Claremont Avenue
  - Cardinal O'Hara High School (grades 9-12), 39 O'Hara Road
  - Charter School for Applied Technologies (K-6), 2303 Kenmore Avenue
  - Covenant Academy (pre-K – 8), 245 McConkey Drive
  - Mount Saint Mary Academy (9 – 12), 3746 Delaware Avenue
  - Saint Amelia School (pre-K – 8), 2999 Eggert Road
  - Saint Andrew Country Day School (pre-K – 8), 1545 Sheridan Drive
  - Saint Christopher's School (pre-K – 8), 2660 Niagara Falls Boulevard
  - Saint Edmund's School (pre-K – 8), 530 Ellicott Creek Road
  - Saint John the Baptist School (pre-K – 8), Belmont Avenue
  - Saint Joseph's Collegiate Institute (grades 9-12), 845 Kenmore Avenue
  - Saint Paul School (pre-K – 8), 47 Victoria Boulevard

In addition, there are two schools offering specialized educational services. The Stanley G. Falk School, 1 Cambridge Street, provides an alternative educational program for special educational students, from Kindergarten through High School. Their focus is on behavioral and emotional disabilities. Summit Educational Resources, Inc., 3000 Fries Road, offers educational programs and assessment for students with autism, language, hearing or related developmental disorders. The school has educational services for pre-school, elementary, middle school and high school aged students.

## **Emergency Services**

Fire protection in the Town of Tonawanda is provided by a number of independent fire districts, staffed by volunteer fire fighters. Dispatch for the fire departments is coordinated through Public Safety Communications, centrally located in the Police headquarters building on Sheridan Drive. Facilities include:

- Brighton Fire District 5
  - Station #1, 50 Jamaica Road
  - Station #2, 26 McConkey Drive
  - Station #3, Ellicott Creek Road
- Ellwood Fire District 1, 1000 Englewood Avenue
- Kenilworth Fire District 2, 84 Hawthorne Avenue
- Kenmore Village Fire District, 16 Nash Road
- River Road Fire District 3, 59 Kaufman Avenue
- Sheridan Park District 4
  - Station #2, 744 Sheridan Drive
  - Station #4, 1708 Military Road

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A small portion of the Town of Tonawanda, north of Ellicott Creek, falls within the Ellicott Creek Fire District. This fire district and its firehouse are based in the Town of Amherst, and it has no fire houses in the Town of Tonawanda.

The Town of Tonawanda Police Department is located at 1835 Sheridan Drive. The Department has over 100 police officers and approximately 50 civilian employees. The Police Headquarters operates a centralized dispatch system for all emergency services, including police, fire and paramedics. The Department's operations include crime prevention, traffic enforcement, patrolling and criminal investigations. In addition, the Police Department also conducts extensive community outreach activities, with Satellite Stations at the Sheridan Parkside Community Center and the Lincoln Park/Kenilworth neighborhood. The Police Department coordinates a strong Neighborhood Watch/Crime Watch program in the Town, which has 9 organized volunteer Neighborhood Watch groups and a Citizen's Mobile Eye patrols by approximately 50 volunteers. The Police Department also participates in the Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (DARE) program, and has jurisdiction over animal control. The Town has two animal control officers. A Citizens' Police Academy trains over 50 volunteers per year.

Medical emergency service is provided by the Town of Tonawanda Paramedic Department. This department operates out of Police Headquarters. All paramedics are certified Emergency Medical Technicians.

Kenmore Mercy Hospital, 2950 Elmwood Avenue, is a full-service hospital affiliated with the Catholic Health System. It offers a range of in-patient and out-patient services, including emergency room services. The hospital is noted for orthopedic care. Additional hospitals in the Buffalo region are easily accessible to residents of Tonawanda.

## **Historic and Architectural Resources**

The oldest building in the Town of Tonawanda is the Tonawanda-Kenmore Historical Society Museum, at 100 Knoche Road. The building was built in 1849, as St. Peter's, a German Evangelical Church. The museum has been undergoing renovations, and is scheduled to reopen to the public in May 2004. When it reopens, it will have new exhibits, an enhanced research area, and improved public meeting space.

A segment of the original Erie Canal, which opened in 1825 and extended through the Town adjacent to what is now River Road, has been restored to its original configuration, including the exact tow path and an official historic marker. It is, in fact, the only portion of the Erie Canal to be restored in Erie County.

One structure in the Village of Kenmore is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Eberhardt Mansion, 2746 Delaware Avenue, was placed on the National Register in 1983. The Victorian structure is currently being used as a retail building. There are numerous other buildings in the Town and Village that are of local historic importance, or that contribute to the character of the area. These properties are privately owned.

## **Scenic Vistas/ Visual Resources**

The Town of Tonawanda is bordered on its western boundary by the Niagara River. There are several locations along the River where scenic views of the water are available, including the Town Boat Launch, Aqua Lane Park, and at locations along the Riverwalk. A portion of the Town's northern border fronts on the Erie Canal. The Town's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) identifies scenic vistas and addresses the preservation of these visual resources.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## I. Economic Development

The Town of Tonawanda has a significant inventory of commercial and industrial properties, and is an important location for economic development activities for the Buffalo Niagara region. Unlike many suburban towns, which are primarily bedroom communities, the Town of Tonawanda is characterized by a strong economic base, and is home to some of the region's largest employers. Major manufacturing employers in the Town of Tonawanda include Praxair, American Axle, General Motors, Dunlop, DuPont, 3M, NRG's Huntley Power Station and FMC. Kenmore Mercy Hospital is also a major employer in the Town.

As noted in the discussion on land use, commercial and industrial uses are concentrated in the western section of the Town. Commercial and industrial properties in the Town of Tonawanda evidence a range of conditions. There are many modern, well-maintained business properties, and many of the largest employers in the Town have made significant investments in their facilities. At the same time, there are areas within the Town where commercial and industrial properties are under-utilized, or are in need of improvements.

The economic development of the Town was traditionally based in heavier industries, such as General Motors and Tonawanda Coke. In more recent years, however, the Town has been successful at attracting less intensive industries, such as light industrial, distribution and warehousing businesses. Newer development in areas such as the Interstate Commerce Center and the recently-approved Colvin Woods area are diversifying the economic base of the community.

Economic development efforts in the Town are spearheaded by the Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation (TTDC). The TTDC has served the business community in the Town of Tonawanda since 1963. It is governed by a board of directors that includes representatives from major corporations, local government, education, banking, utilities, law and health care. The TTDC has been a leader in the identification of local economic priorities and projects, while coordinating its activities with county, regional and state agencies. The TTDC is a member, with the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) and 11 other communities, of the 'Economic Development Alliance' (EDA), which facilitates cooperation and coordination among the economic development agencies across the County, while maintaining the local autonomy of its members. The TTDC played an important role in the development of the cooperative agreement that resulted in GEICO, a major national company, to locate in Western New York. In exchange for extending Tonawanda Empire Zone benefits to a location in Amherst, the Town was able to receive funds to develop the North Youngmann Commerce Center, and priority consideration for the new jobs being created by GEICO. Activities sponsored by the TTDC include business development services, assistance through Town processes (zoning, building permits, etc.), and information on available resources. The TTDC is also responsible for coordinating the Town's Empire Zone.

The Town of Tonawanda is one of three municipalities in Erie County authorized by the State Legislature to have an Empire Zone, which is located in the western portion of the Town. Designation as an Empire Zone enables the Town to offer significant benefits to prospective businesses. These include tax credits, tax exemptions and other incentives to encourage investments in capital facilities, production equipment or job creation. Economic development opportunities within the Empire Zone include space and/or buildings available in industrial parks, such as Colvin Woods, Fire Tower Industrial Park, Pearce Industrial Park and Interstate Commerce Center, among others. There are also significant parcels of industrially-zoned land, including the 282-acre Isle View site, and the Town-owned North Youngmann Commerce Center. These two parcels represent significant opportunities for business development in the Town. Additional lands available for commercial or industrial development are scattered throughout the designated Empire Zone, including the 2.5-acre site of the former Eastern States Grain Mill and the 13-

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

acre site of the former Elf Atochem. A mix of existing buildings and vacant sites are also available for commercial or industrial development along Ensminger Road, Sheridan Drive and Military Road. In addition to these lands within the designated Empire Zone, additional properties are available for development or redevelopment throughout the Town of Tonawanda.

Residents of the Town of Tonawanda work in a variety of industries, with the greatest concentration in services. Educational, health and social services together employed 28 percent of workers who lived in the Town in 2000. Manufacturing continues to be a major portion of the Town's economic base, and 13 percent of the Town's residents who were employed worked in manufacturing jobs in 2000. Unlike many suburban Towns, a significant proportion of Town residents are able to find work within the Town: the Town ranks fifth in Erie County for the number of residents who work in the Town of their residence. Nearly one-quarter (23.7 percent) of Town residents who are in the work force work in the Town of Tonawanda.

Industries have been investing in the Town of Tonawanda. According to data from the Erie County Industrial Development Authority (ECIDA), they have assisted with 35 projects in the Town over the past ten years, including 17 projects since 2000. Total project investment since 1994 has been \$975.6 million, with two-thirds of this amount, or \$619.6 million occurring in the past five years. Industries who have received assistance include major employers, such as General Motors Corporation and Praxair, as well as smaller companies.

The Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation conducts a regular survey of local industrial and commercial businesses. Conducted in 1998, 2000 and 2003, these surveys provide a general sense of business trends in the Town. For the most recent survey, 52 of over 300 industries surveyed provided a response, or about 20 percent. The majority of those responding were locally owned (73 percent). Most of the businesses that responded were smaller companies. Half employed less than 20 persons, and another 23 percent employed between 20 and 49 persons. In comparison to previous years, the most recent survey had a greater proportion of responses from smaller (1 to 9 employee) businesses.

Factors of concern include energy costs (77 percent), property taxes (75 percent) and corporate taxes (68 percent), but an overwhelming majority of businesses liked working in the Town of Tonawanda, and over half of all respondents expected to increase employment over the next three years. Given the issues of greatest concern, it is not surprising that the most commonly requested economic development services related to ways of reducing business costs: information on tax abatements, followed by information on utility programs. The third most common area of interest was employment and training programs. Interest in these issues has consistently grown since the first survey was taken.

One of the most consistent findings of the three surveys is satisfaction with the Town and Village as a positive location for business. The Town consistently received very high scores for this factor, with ratings ranging from 89 to 96 percent. A retail survey, conducted by the Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce in 1998 had parallel results. Ninety-four (94) percent of retail and commercial businesses responding to the Chamber's survey believed the Village and Town are a positive location for business.

Data from the surveys and the TTDC suggest that there continues to be a strong demand for commercial and industrial property in the Town of Tonawanda, but expansion has been hindered by a lack of "shovel-ready" space. Most of the industrial parks that were constructed over the past few decades are largely built-out and occupied. The Colvin Woods and North Youngmann Commerce Center projects will help accommodate some of the demand for new space for business and industrial development, and a development proposal for a 106-acre site on River Road is being prepared. The property was recently rezoned to support business uses, which has stimulated interest in the area. Inventory of business properties in the Town of Tonawanda include the following:

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## **Multi-tenant facilities**

A range of options exists in the zone for start-up and small businesses. The Interstate Commerce Center (ICC) and the Tonawanda Commerce Center (TCC) are multi-tenant facilities operated by the Uniland Development Company within the Empire Zone. Both properties offer flexible space for lease by small businesses requiring a combination of office and warehouse activities. The ICC and TCC are particularly popular for regional distribution operations, based on close proximity to the I-190 and I-290 interchange.

Smaller, 'stand-alone' buildings are located along Military Road and Cooper Avenue, providing an option for companies to purchase their own properties.

The TTDC identifies a need for a 'traditional' incubator facility in the community, offering shared services, technical assistance and below-market rents. No such facility exists in the Town of Tonawanda.

## **Growth-stage companies**

There are two existing industrial parks located in the Town of Tonawanda – the Fire Tower Industrial Park and the Pearce Industrial Park – which provide opportunities for small and mid-sized companies that need larger, 'stand-alone' facilities. However, most of these facilities are built out, and there is a shortage of serviced industrial properties to accommodate demand for such property in the Town of Tonawanda. Several local companies have been forced to relocate outside the Town due to a lack of available facilities within the Town. There is a very strong desire for new, serviced industrial parcels to accommodate that growth, as well as to attract new investment.

## **Large industries**

The Empire Zone is host to several large corporations, including Praxair and American Axle. The real estate needs of these corporations tend to focus on the re-use or demolition of out-dated structures and improvements to infrastructure that produce more efficient operations.

These needs have been primarily met through cooperative efforts including town, county and state agencies, as well as elected officials from those jurisdictions. A recent example is the \$1 billion investment by General Motors in the Power Train facility. This property is located outside the Empire Zone and does not qualify for Zone benefits, but an assistance package was developed working cooperatively with the ECIDA and other agencies.

## **Business Development Services**

Town takes a proactive stance on providing assistance to local companies, where feasible. For example, the Town, in cooperation with Erie County and New York State, has made investments in infrastructure, including transportation access (road and rail), to help local companies remain competitive. These investments include the reconstruction of Kenmore Avenue in support of General Motors, and investments in an expanded rail terminal and new rail service to NOCO's River Road property. The Town's cooperation was also an important factor in the decision of General Motors to expand their Tonawanda plant.

The Town of Tonawanda, in conjunction with public and private development partners, has developed a comprehensive network of business development programs and services to meet the needs of businesses in the Town. The TTDC serves as the focal point for provision of these services. Some of the services are only available to companies that are located within the Empire Zone, while others are

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

available town-wide. The programs are available to assist local businesses ranging from small “start-up” companies to large industries. Some of these programs include:

- **Technical assistance.** Technical assistance varies depending on the need of the company. Start-up and small businesses, including Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE-WBEs), generally require assistance in the basic mechanics of starting and operating a business, such as formation of the business entity, financial planning, product development, and marketing. The TTDC works with partners such as the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Buffalo State College, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE) to provide counseling services. For larger, more established companies, access to available resources to facilitate investment and growth is a greater issue. The TTDC has a strong outreach program to help keep these companies informed about the services available to them.
- **Financial assistance.** Adequate financial resources are perhaps the most critical element in the formation of a new business or in laying plans for growth. The TTDC provides direct financial assistance through the Town of Tonawanda Business Incentive Fund (TTBIF) and coordinates with public and private lending sources, including local banks, the SBA the ECIDA and ESDC. For companies located within the Empire Zone, the TTDC can also offer incentives such as property tax abatements, sales tax exemptions and wage tax credits. Often, these incentives may leverage investments not otherwise possible
- **Workforce.** The need to recruit and train a skilled workforce is the most important issue facing companies located throughout Western New York. There are training funds available through the Workforce Investment Consortium (i.e.- the former Private Industry Council) and the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) for training new workers and retraining existing workers.
- **Infrastructure.** Many of the companies in Tonawanda are very sensitive to transportation – getting supplies to the facility and sending finished product to the end-user, and it is important to ensure that infrastructure, including road and rail access, remains capable of meeting businesses’ needs. As noted above, the Town has been successful in obtaining State assistance to improve infrastructure access for several large employers.
- **Other services.** The Kenmore-Tonawanda Chamber of Commerce is an active business organization which provides a range of vital services to the small business community, including access to group health care insurance, advocacy and technical assistance through membership in state and national organizations, monthly meetings and seminars, and special events such as trade shows.

The Town of Tonawanda continues to support economic development activities. The TTDC maintains a database of information about available land and buildings. The Town participates with State economic development efforts, including the NYSitefinders website, which markets available properties and sites across New York State. Currently, there are seventeen available commercial or industrial facilities located in the Town of Tonawanda that are listed on this website, as well as two ready-to-build sites (both at Colvin Woods). The Town also actively supports and participates in regional marketing activities, such as the Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise (BNE), which are designed to attract investment from outside the Buffalo-Niagara region.



## SECTION IV: FINDINGS AND ISSUES

### A. INITIAL FINDINGS

A number of initial findings were developed, based on an analysis of the information contained in the Inventory. To supplement the research from various data sources, input was obtained from the public, from Town officials and Department Heads, and from regional experts in economic development and transportation. This section of the report highlights these major findings, organized around the categories of the Inventory.

#### ***Land Use and Zoning—how the Town is developed in general***

- The Town is densely built up, with a diverse mix of residential, commercial and public uses, particularly in the eastern part of Town.
- The Town has a number of strong neighborhoods, which merit recognition and support.
- The western part of Town is primarily industrial, with the beginnings of change toward a more recreational orientation, with the Riverwalk and Isle View Park. Proposed plans for the waterfront acknowledge its industrial heritage, but strongly support increasing trails, waterfront access and other recreational amenities into new development.
- Two-thirds of the housing in the Town was built over a twenty-year period between 1940 and 1959.
- The Village of Kenmore serves as the traditional business core of the Town, but additional commercial centers and commercial uses are spread throughout the Town.
- Much of the commercial development is in a strip pattern along major roadways, such as Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan, Kenmore, Delaware and Elmwood.
- There are scattered, small neighborhood shopping areas, such as Eggert-Colvin, Brighton-Eggert, Kenmore-Englewood, and Highland-Colvin-Englewood. These areas serve a more localized market. A number of these smaller neighborhood shopping areas merit reinvestment and renovation.
- There is a strong mix of industrial uses, from heavy manufacturing to light industrial and warehousing uses. This provides the Town with a stronger economic base than most suburban communities.
- While there is remaining industrial land in the Town of Tonawanda, in most cases, additional work is needed before it is fully “shovel-ready” for development. The North Youngmann Commerce Center, also known as the “Mud Flats” site, needs some transportation improvements (access road) before development could proceed, but these improvements are currently under design, and the site is expected to be fully ready for development in the near future. The Town is currently reviewing a private proposal for office and warehouse development on a 106 acre site on River Road in the area recently rezoned for such use.
- There are a few areas that have been the focus of special studies, such as the waterfront and the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. This Comprehensive Plan supports and endorses these studies, and incorporates them by reference.

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- There should not be non-zoned areas in the Town. This leads to confusion. For many non-zoned sites (schools, parks), a community facilities district would be appropriate.

### **Demographic—what is the population like**

- The population of Tonawanda is decreasing—the Town lost about 5 percent of the population between 1990 and 2000.
- Over the same time period, the number of households (occupied homes) remained about the same.
- This is because families are getting smaller.
- The biggest increase is in the number of one-person households. Nearly one-third of all households in the Town are now occupied by a single-person. Most of the non-family households in the Town of Tonawanda are single- persons.
- The Town of Tonawanda remains a family community— nearly two-thirds of all households are families (people living together who are related by blood or marriage). But fewer households still have children living at home. The most common family type in the Town is a married couple with no children under the age of 18.
- About 28 percent of all households have a child under the age of 18 living at home.
- About 36 percent of households have a senior citizen living in them (age 65 or older).
- Despite the trend toward aging population, there is a fairly even age distribution in the Town. About 22 percent of the population are minors and another 22 percent are seniors. About 33 percent are younger adults (age 19-44) and the remaining 23 percent are older adults (45-64).
- The median age of the population of the Town is 41.8 years old, or slightly older than the Erie County median, which is 38 years.

### **Housing and Neighborhoods- the areas that create a sense of “community”**

- There is a total of approximately 27,200 housing units in the Town outside the Village, and about 34,600 including homes in the Village of Kenmore.
- Vacancy rates are healthy; about 3.6 percent of units are not occupied, which is considered a normal vacancy. Higher rates suggest housing problems, and lower rates are an indication of housing shortages.
- The Town’s housing stock is relatively homogeneous. It consists primarily of smaller single-family homes, with the majority of units (67 percent) built between 1940 and 1959. A total of about 79 percent of the housing in the Town outside the Village is over 40 years old. This large concentration of older homes indicates a potential need for housing rehabilitation.
- Owner-occupancy is high, which is a positive sign. At the same time, the Town of Tonawanda has a wider range of rental housing available than many suburban communities, which helps to diversify options available for residents. Just under three-quarters of the housing stock is in single-family dwellings; about 11 percent of dwelling units are in two-family homes, and the remaining 16 percent of the housing stock is in multi-family housing (three or more units).
- The area is very affordable. Median home value is about \$85,900. In comparison, the average sale price of a home in Western New York is approximately \$108,400.



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- Many of the residents of the Town have lived at their current address for a long time—38 percent had lived at the same address for over 20 years, while 26 percent had lived in the same home over 30 years. This suggests that there is the potential for significant turnover in homeownership.
- Based on household types, it is expected that the strongest demand is for “empty-nest” type units—smaller, easy to maintain homes targeted at families with no children living at home or persons living alone.
- Tonawanda has strong neighborhoods. There is a strong neighborhood watch system, some neighborhood organizations, and an awareness of neighborhoods on the part of many residents.
- This strength needs to be nurtured, as newer residents do not always have the awareness or appreciation of strong neighborhoods, which can help stabilize areas and improve quality of life factors, such as crime and property maintenance issues.
- There is a distinct character to different neighborhoods that should be supported— unlike many suburban communities, where it all blends together.
- Tonawanda has a strong system of neighborhood schools, neighborhood parks, churches and other community facilities that help to anchor neighborhoods.
- There is still some scattered neighborhood retail—to a much greater extent than many other communities. The Town should encourage reinvestment and upgrading of these neighborhood retail centers, but at neighborhood scale for smaller pockets of retail. The goal is to create convenience retail centers for neighborhood use, not major retail centers.
- To the degree possible, neighborhoods should be made “walkable” to encourage non-automotive travel within the neighborhood (to corner store, library, school, etc.)
- The plan supports the existing Sheridan Parkside redevelopment plan, which aims at a greater mix of incomes and housing styles in that neighborhood.
- There is a need for a greater range of housing types, including homes for larger families and homes for seniors. This may require the demolition of existing housing to make room for new homes.
- There are no large residential building lots, making it difficult to meet local demand for new-built homes. New home building in the Town is nearly all as affordable units under the community development program.

## ***Environmental Features—the natural environment and environmental issues***

- The Niagara River, and Tonawanda, Ellicott and Two-Mile Creeks provide an important role in the Town for drainage, open space, and aesthetics.
- More could be done to promote the environmental and cultural values of these waterways. Tonawanda Creek is part of the Erie Canal route.
- There are some environmental issues and brownfield sites in the Town, and a priority is the continued clean-up of these sites.
- Some areas of wetlands and flood plains remain in Town, which merit protection.
- Strawberry Island is officially designated as a significant habitat of statewide importance.

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## **Transportation- Roads, transit, sidewalks, trails and rail**

- The Town has good access to the region and the interstate system beyond Western New York, by means of I-190 and I-290.
- Sheridan Drive is the major east-west route through the Town.
- There are several major north-south corridors, including Military, Elmwood, Delaware and Colvin.
- Traffic patterns in the western part of Town are very different from the eastern roadway network.
- On certain roadways, there is a tension between their function as a transportation corridor and as a means of access to neighboring properties. This does not exactly correspond to the classification of the roadway—there are roadways that have been classified as major arterials where congestion is not as great a problem as on minor arterials. For example, Grand Island Boulevard is classified as a principal arterial, but it has lower traffic volumes and less perceived congestion than Colvin Boulevard or Brighton Avenue, which are minor arterials.
- Major problem areas include Sheridan Drive, Niagara Falls Boulevard, Highland/Englewood, Colvin Boulevard, Delaware Road, Kenmore Avenue and Brighton Road.
- Traffic concerns include congestion, difficulty in making left-turn lanes, and certain “problem intersections”.
- Compared to most suburban communities in Western New York, Tonawanda has better transit service. However, it is still limited, particularly east-west service.
- Most of the Town has sidewalks, making it easier to walk than in many other communities. However, repairs are needed in some locations. It is the responsibility of the property owner to make repairs.
- There are attractive greenways in the waterfront area, which connect into a wider network of trails for recreational use.
- Rail is still an active use in the Town, servicing industrial users. However, it is reaching capacity limits.
- Parking on both sides of the street along certain roadways creates problems for traffic flow, particularly for school buses, garbage trucks and snow plows.
- The frequency of driveways on major thoroughfares (Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive, Delaware Avenue, Elmwood Avenue and Kenmore Avenue) needs to be addressed.
- The GBNRTC has inventoried all traffic signals in Erie and Niagara counties, and will be studying possible signalization coordination and other system improvements to help improve traffic flow.
- Another priority of GBNRTC is bikeways, and they are promoting a shoreline corridor from Youngstown to Brant. The Riverwalk in Tonawanda is part of this trail system, and when it is completed, local residents will have excellent access to the entire Lake Erie-Niagara River- Erie Canal shoreline.
- GBNRTC is studying potential new light rail corridors, with a study to look at linkages from the Buffalo Airport to Niagara Falls in the preliminary stages. This route would likely run through the

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Town of Tonawanda along the existing NFTA right-of-way. These are very long term plans. Present plans to put a bike path along the same right-of-way could be accomplished without affecting future viability of transit.

- There are no planned service expansions for the bus system. Starting this year, all new buses will be outfitted with bike racks.
- Job access is a priority of NFTA, and the agency is working on being able to provide more flexible transit options for concentrations of employment, such as use of smaller vans, subscription service and other alternatives to fixed bus routes.
- The Thruway Authority is working with GBNRTC on long-term needs for the Grand Island Bridges, with the goal of reducing congestion.
- The traffic increases on the Grand Island Bridges have been among the largest increases across New York State, with an average increase in traffic volume of about 2.9% per year. It is likely that this is at least partly due to a significant amount of through-traffic associated with Canada.
- The Town Highway Department has a regular cycle of repaving Town roads. While this addresses most needs, it presumes that no major reconstruction is needed on local roads, although most are over fifty years old and have reached normal life expectancy. The Town needs to plan for more extensive roadway reconstruction on local roads.
- The “Harrison Hump” is the area where grade changes occur over the rail right-of-way and creates a hazard.
- The Town has a sidewalk program, and will replace uplifted sidewalks if the cause is due to Town-owned trees. The Town also has a sidewalk maintenance ordinance. Enforcement is through the Police Department, if there are complaints.
- The Town also has an extensive tree-planting program, and plants over 500 trees annually. However, given the age of existing trees, and the concentration of single species, tree planting needs to remain a priority.
- There are a few areas in Town where “Florida sidewalks” are a problem. In these areas, there is no tree lawn between the walk and the curb. They are very hard to keep clear of snow, and can be a safety hazard.
- There are no immediate plans to change the configuration of the I-290 highway, although long-term plans include looking at potential widening, particularly in the eastern end (Amherst).
- The DOT recognizes a need to improve the interchange at I-290 and Niagara Falls Boulevard (Route 62), but traffic growth is exceeding their projections, and they are looking at various alternatives, including the possibility of rebuilding the interchange. This study is in the very preliminary stages.
- The Sheridan-Kenmore intersection is a State intersection, but the improvements are being led by the County. Extensive changes are likely (realignment of the railroad, relocation of Woodward Avenue intersection, adjustments to off-ramp).
- Kenmore Avenue, particularly from Starin to Niagara Falls Boulevard, experiences significant congestion, particularly at peak periods. From Elmwood Avenue to Niagara Falls Boulevard,

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roadway width is an issue. This roadway is jointly owned by Erie County and the City of Buffalo, which complicates efforts at addressing problems.

- The Sherwood Bike trail design is being funded by Erie County, and supervised by the Town. This project is moving forward.
- The NYS DOT is open to making safety improvements identified by the Town.
- Sheridan Drive is the main east-west corridor through Town, and will likely remain automobile-oriented. However, better accommodations for pedestrians should be considered where feasible (crosswalks, count-down timers at streetlights, medians).
- The NYS DOT is exploring the issue of roundabouts in Western New York, and is considering studying the feasibility of roundabouts in the Town of Tonawanda at certain problem intersections.

## **Utilities—water, sewer, other infrastructure**

- The Town has full water, sewer, and other utilities throughout the Town.
- The infrastructure is older, but in generally good shape. There are areas of Town with undersized waterlines. Replacements are scheduled based on overall need in addition to age.
- The Town has many Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO's), which allow sanitary sewer lines to overflow into the stormwater drainage system when excess wastewater is running through the system (sometimes caused by infiltration/inflow (I/I) into the sewer system). These overflow points were designed into the sewerage system, and are difficult and costly to retrofit.
- The Town is currently studying possible solutions to this problem and developing a long-term plan to meet regulatory requirements. Complete elimination of all SSO's would be prohibitively expensive. There is currently no evidence that the SSO's are having a negative impact on water quality issues in the Town.
- The Town of Tonawanda operates the wastewater treatment system for the Town, the Village of Kenmore and the City of Tonawanda. The stormwater systems are independently operated by each municipality. The Town is currently working on conformance with the new State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) requirements, which address standards for erosion and sediment control in stormwater run-off.
- Local industries are required to pre-treat their wastewater, and this is generally working well. The Town monitors and enforces this requirement for all three communities.
- The Wastewater Treatment Plant is 28 years old, and there is beginning to be the need to replace some equipment. It is possible to increase capacity and efficiency of the treatment plant by incorporating advances in technology when replacing existing equipment.
- The wastewater treatment plant staff continuously optimizes the operation of their existing treatment processes while modifying and changing equipment when it becomes cost effective. An example of this approach is the current Solids Handling Project which involves the replacement of the existing Zimpro sludge conditioning and vacuum dewatering systems with a more efficient and cost effective centrifuge process.
- The wastewater treatment plant is currently operating at wet weather capacity. Improving equipment and operations efficiency along with addressing the I/I and SSO issues in the Town will help address this issue and provide additional capacity in a cost effective manner.

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## **Community Facilities—parks, libraries, senior services, emergency services, historic resources**

- In general, Town residents enjoy a high level of community services.
- The Town has an excellent park system, with parks distributed throughout the Town.
- Police and emergency services are rated highly by local residents.
- Highway services (road repair, garbage collection, recycling, snowplowing, etc.) are also rated highly on surveys and comment forms.
- The Historical Society building, housed in the oldest structure in the Town, has undergone a recent renovation.
- High quality municipal services are valued by residents, with many stating that this is the reason they chose to move to the Town of Tonawanda.
- There is concern about the status of the Town’s libraries, but there is no consensus on the appropriate solution. Many are in favor of a more centralized system, while many others value the neighborhood based libraries.
- Parking is an issue at a number of community facilities, such as schools, libraries, athletic fields and post offices.
- Parks Department priorities focus on areas used by the public, but there is also a need to improve maintenance-related facilities and storage capacity.
- Pools are in generally good shape—investments have been made except at Sheridan Parkside, which the Department would like to convert to a water playground instead of a wading pool.
- Recent investments have been made at the Aquatic and Fitness Center, although there is interest in additional improvements, including an improved lobby with concession stand, membership area, retail store, unisex locker with direct access to pool area, increased storage; increased aerobic space; a water fun area that appeals to a broader age group; and certain basic maintenance needs (roof, paint pool bottom, HVAC system).
- The Town’s golf courses are in generally good shape, with recent investments in improvements, such as drain tile, etc.
- An Executive Golf Course (short par 4) could be built on the former landfill when closure is complete.
- Desired improvements to the Senior Center include parking, traffic flow, and a canopy over the entrance.
- A Skate Park would meet needs of a group not currently served. The most likely location would be Lincoln Park, in an area separated from playground and adjacent homes.
- Some support was shown for a youth center with a gym in the eastern part of Town. Perhaps these needs could be provided through existing facilities at schools.
- There are shared use agreements with the school district to share facilities.

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- All parkland is heavily used, and basic maintenance/improvements will be needed (re-crown fields, drain tile, irrigation/hydrants, etc.)
- Annual tree plantings are a priority.
- Parking is a major concern at all parks, especially Kenney Field, Brighton and Expressway Parks. Kenney Park is getting additional parking through the Colvin Woods Business Park project.
- The hockey arenas are older facilities, but well kept. Ice rinks are very expensive to operate, and the Town can't charge enough for ice time to cover expenses. While there is public support for improved hockey facilities, a new facility would be very expensive. There is interest on the part of the Town in a second pad of ice at Lincoln Park.
- There are 7-8 new "Friendship Parks" at sites of home demolitions. The need to maintain small, scattered sites must be balanced with other maintenance duties.
- Town greenhouse crews do an excellent job maintaining the stone gardens on medians.

### ***Economic Development- job opportunities for residents and tax base for the Town***

- The Town has been proactive in terms of working with regional economic development entities, and is starting to see the benefits of that cooperation.
- The Empire Zone program has been an asset in attracting businesses.
- The Town has a diverse workforce. Town residents work in a variety of industries, with greatest concentration of residents working in the fields of education, health and social services (28 percent of workers living in the Town work in one of these fields.) Around 13 percent of employed persons in Town work in manufacturing industries, and 13 percent work in retail industries. The rest of employed residents are fairly evenly distributed among all other industries.
- The Town is strongly white collar. Approximately 35 percent of workers are management or professional workers; 31 percent work in sales or office occupations.
- 61 percent of those 16 and older are in the labor force. The unemployment rate is 4.3 percent.
- 7.3 percent of residents live below the poverty line. This rate is slightly higher than Amherst (6.4 percent) or Cheektowaga (6.5 percent), but is much lower than Erie County (12 percent).
- Median household income is \$41,300, compared to \$38,600 in Erie County. Median family income is \$51,100. Most people (79 percent) work for private companies. 17 percent work for the government; 4 percent are self employed.
- Nearly all drive to work, either alone or in a carpool. Fully 94 percent of workers in the Town of Tonawanda use an automobile to get to work. The remainder take a bus, walk or work at home. The average commute is just over 19 minutes, which is typical in Western New York.
- A significant number of Town residents are able to find employment in the Town of Tonawanda. Only the City of Buffalo, the Town of Amherst, Cheektowaga, and – narrowly- the Town of Hamburg have larger numbers of residents working within the Town of their residence.

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- For Cherry Farm Park, Niagara Mohawk and other responsible parties are studying whether the conditions of underground pollutants have improved enough to lower the amount of filtering and other maintenance required. If so, that would help move the project forward.
- Empire State Development's role in the Town is largely focused on the waterfront area.
- There is already a great deal of cooperation between the Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation (TTDC), Empire State Development (ESD) and Erie County Industrial Development Authority (ECIDA) on working with major employers in the Town. For example, the Kenmore-Sheridan traffic study to improve access for GM, Dunlop area industries was an ESD project, working cooperatively with New York State Department of Transportation.
- Local economic development experts feel that the Town of Tonawanda is well positioned to capitalize on increases in trade with Canada. The North Youngmann Commerce Center could be a potential Foreign Trade Zone, tied with the Empire Zone, where components could be brought for assembly and final finishing.
- The two-tier tax rate (homestead/non-homestead) is an impediment to business growth. The Town should continue efforts to end the two-tier system.
- The lack of available sites that are ready for development is another impediment, particularly in the 5 to 10 acre-size. There has been a lot of interest in the Colvin Woods site for this reason.
- For companies committed to Western New York, the Town of Tonawanda has a good reputation, and the Town is competitive when there are appropriate sites available.
- Economic development experts see retention of existing businesses as a priority.
- The depths of parcels in commercial zones limit the type of retail that can be built in Tonawanda. There are no sites appropriate for larger scale "big box" type retail. There has been interest in "office condo's", but that is also not feasible given land use patterns. Given adjacent land use patterns, it would be very difficult to retrofit the Town's commercial corridors.
- The Village business district should be supported. The streetscape project underway will establish design elements to create sense of "place" and improve the appeal of the Village.
- The Delaware-Sheridan intersection is one of the Town's concentrations of retail. It is very automobile-oriented, and realistically, it will remain auto-oriented, although some improvements could be made to make it safer to walk.
- There are neighborhood business areas, on Sheridan and elsewhere, that serve as convenience shopping areas for surrounding residences. Better accommodation of pedestrians should be supported in these locations.
- There are empty commercial buildings that should be redeveloped.
- The Town's Community Development monies are currently focused primarily on residential redevelopment (Sheridan Parkside, Kenilworth, Old Town), but commercial development is an eligible activity for community development spending.
- According to economic development experts, Elmwood Avenue is the most vulnerable commercial corridor in the Town. There are some buildings along Elmwood Avenue in need of renovations, and high rents affect occupancy levels. There is a need to help make it more attractive for owners to

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invest in their properties. In Amherst, the local Industrial Development Authority has been aggressive at targeting neighborhood commercial strips for reinvestment funds. EDICA is looking at the issue also.



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## **B. ISSUES**

The Town of Tonawanda recognizes that there are a number of issues facing the Town and identification of important issues began even before this study was initiated. Public input, discussions with various stakeholders, input from Town officials, Department Heads and members of the Comprehensive Plan Board, as well as other means of outreach, highlighted additional issues. As opposed to the findings, which emerged from an assessment of the data in the inventory, these issues represent public sentiment about conditions in the Town. At the same time, there are areas of overlap between the two sections, with public sentiment corresponding to what the data indicated.

This section of the report summarizes the major issues facing the Town of Tonawanda, categorized by topical area. An assessment of these issues was used to refine the goals and objectives, and develop the vision for the Town of Tonawanda.

### **Quality of Life**

Tonawanda's motto is "A Great Place to Live, Work and Play". It is important to work to preserve a high quality of life in the Town for its residents.

- High quality Town services are a priority, and a major reason people choose to live in the Town of Tonawanda.
- The Plan needs to focus on "People" issues and look through the filter of how the plan affects the residents. Tonawanda is a Community, not just a collection of physical features
- The Bike and Pedestrian trail network is an important asset.
- Quality of education/ schools is important.
- Tree maintenance and tree replacement policies—trees are important to community character, quality of life and property values. Many trees in the Town are of a similar age and species, and there is a risk of losing significant proportion of the tree stock over a relatively short time frame.
- Aesthetics and upkeep of properties—both residential and commercial—are important components of quality of life.

### **Community Development/ Neighborhoods and Housing**

Tonawanda is essentially a "built-out" suburb. Continued improvement and tax base will depend on ensuring its neighborhoods remain vital and attractive.

- The Town has strong neighborhoods that should be supported. However, there are areas where there is not a strong neighborhood identity, or neighborhood-based group.
- Neighborhood watch groups provide a valuable service and should be encouraged.
- There are no large residential building lots, and residents who want to move up into larger homes often have difficulty finding this type of home within Tonawanda.
- There is a need for a greater variety of housing types, including smaller homes for seniors.
- Libraries are important, and people feel strongly that this is a valuable public service.
- Schools are neighborhood centers and big landowners in the Town.
- There is a need to prevent blight and degradation. There are many older homes and older businesses. Maintenance and upkeep of these buildings should be a priority.

### **Economic Development**

Parallel with community development is the need to provide for economic development in the Town. New business development is necessary for jobs for local residents, tax base and the vitality of the Town.

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- Economic development efforts should be targeted to keep industries healthy and remain in Town.
- Tonawanda has been a leader in regional cooperation for economic development purposes. This cooperation should continue to be stressed.
- The Waterfront is an important asset for economic development efforts, and the recent Waterfront Land Use Study identifies several sites for economic development.
- Economic development efforts are supported and complemented by having a high quality of living.
- The Empire Zone has been a crucial tool in assisting economic development efforts. Continued designation as an Empire Zone community should be a priority.
- Areas for new economic development should be made “shovel-ready” to the extent feasible in order to facilitate business development and recruitment.
- Aesthetics should be considered with economic development or commercial development efforts.
- Business districts need to be kept vital. Neighborhood business areas should include businesses that cater to local residents and create activity without having too much traffic.
- Neighborhood business centers should be pedestrian friendly.
- New roadways are needed to service the large, undeveloped industrial lands in the waterfront area. Areas for new roadways include the North Youngmann Commerce Center site, the area on River Road south of the City of Tonawanda (“Isle View”), and the Sawyer Road area.

## **Transportation**

Transportation and traffic issues have significant impacts on the community, in terms of economic development, quality of life, and community development.

- Need to be bicycle and pedestrian friendly.
- New roadways are needed for economic development purposes (see above)
- Roadway improvements needed for to address congestion: for example, Kenmore Avenue.
- There are areas where transportation improvements are recommended.
- See Technical Investigation discussion for further elaboration.

## **Cooperation**

The Erie-Niagara region is increasingly recognizing the importance of intermunicipal and regional cooperation. The Town of Tonawanda influences and is influenced by the Village, the adjoining communities, the school districts and the County. These interrelationships present certain limitations, but also represent a source of opportunity for improved planning and cooperation.

- It is critical to consider the adjacent communities in the plan—especially Kenmore, but also City of Buffalo, City of Tonawanda, and the Town of Amherst.
- A cooperative relationship between Town and School District(s) should be a priority.

## **Environmental**

Natural resources in the Town of Tonawanda contribute to the character of the Town and provide important environmental benefits. These natural features merit protection. It is also a priority of the Town to ensure continued progress toward clean-up of environmental issues.

- Ellicott Creek is a major resource and deserves more attention.
- More could be done to promote the heritage and cultural aspects of the Erie Canal.
- There are issues of storm sewer overflow. The Town should continue to work with authorities to improve the situation.

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- Continued clean-up and monitoring of brownfields should be a priority. Where feasible, appropriate re-use of the sites is encouraged.

## **C. TECHNICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

In addition to the basic findings and the issues raised during the planning process, certain areas of concern in the community have emerged as requiring additional investigation. Partly, these areas emerged from priorities stated by the Town prior to beginning this study, but they also reflect areas that are clearly priorities based on the findings and issues analysis. The identified areas of study are transportation and major thoroughfares; connectivity and neighborhoods.

The assessment of major thoroughfares is based on the aesthetics and functionality of major roadways through the Town, with an emphasis on improving their appeal. The “Connectivity” analysis examines transportation through Town from a multi-modal perspective, looking at ways to try to make it easier for residents to travel through Town, by car, transit, bike or walking. There is also an extensive discussion on neighborhoods, because it is clear that neighborhoods are a crucial element of the quality of life and appeal to the Town of Tonawanda.

### **Transportation and Major Thoroughfares**

The Town of Tonawanda has a number of major thoroughfares that run through the Town. These thoroughfares are major arterials, and have an important regional transportation function. They are also major centers for retail and commercial development, which contributes to the local economic base, tax base and conveniences for local residents. The amount of traffic on these roadways, however, had led to problems with congestion. Access management, traffic system management and other techniques are needed to improve capacity and service. There are also concerns about the aesthetic quality of these thoroughfares, which provide the primary impression that many non-residents have about the Town of Tonawanda.

#### **Strengths**

- The Town’s transportation network provides excellent access throughout the Town and region. Routes I-190 and I-290 provide access to the interstate system, which is a benefit for economic development purposes, as well as a convenience for local residents.
- Local arterials, such as Sheridan Drive, Delaware Avenue, Military Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard accommodate relatively high traffic volumes, and facilitate traffic through Town.
- With the exception of the I-290 and the Grand Island Bridges, all roads in the Town of Tonawanda have a capacity level of service (LOS) of C or better, which corresponds to satisfactory or better.
- Some cross-access is in place, particularly along Niagara Falls Boulevard. Driveway connections between adjacent parcels enable drivers to avoid having to use the busy roadway to go from one business to the next for short distances. The Town is cooperating with the Town of Amherst to further study this issue.
- The Town has some landscaping standards in place.
- The Town has incorporated some landscaping and aesthetic improvements on public land, such as the median on Sheridan Drive. The Town has also developed “gateways” with signage and landscaping at key entry points to the Town, many of which correspond to these corridors.
- At Town’s initiative, a joint program with NYS DOT has been carried out, resulting in the planting of over 500 trees by the DOT on Sheridan Drive between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Military Road.

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- The Town has very good rail access to the industrial section of Town,
- Track realignment in the vicinity of Sheridan Drive and Kenmore Avenue has been addressed by Erie County with a major reconstruction anticipated in the near future.
- NOCO Energy Corporation is making a multi-million dollar capital investment in their rail facilities, assisted with \$1 million from the State of New York, to improve service to their terminal on Grand Island Boulevard.

## **Weaknesses**

- There are no formal access management requirements. In many cases, the number of curb cuts and driveways allowed along major thoroughfares is excessive.
- Landscaping standards are not required along all major thoroughfares for commercial development.
- Traffic volumes tend to be heavy, making it difficult to access some businesses, particularly if left turns are required.
- Development tends to be “strip” development in nature, rather than nodal, making it more difficult to coordinate access, or have central entry points to a plaza, particularly along Niagara Falls Boulevard.
- As noted, these major thoroughfares are often the primary impression pass-through travelers have of the Town. Improved aesthetic appearances would help enhance the Town’s image.
- There are concerns about traffic problems throughout Town. Residents cited several “problem” intersections, many of which correspond to problem areas identified in the 1988 Traffic Systems Management study.
- The I-190/I-290 corridor has a LOS of D, which means there is a potential for improvement. While this is an issue, most of the remainder of the I-290/I-90 corridor east of the Town of Tonawanda is categorized as E or F, which indicates serious deficiencies. The Grand Island Bridges are also categorized as level E or F. These deficiencies, although not in Tonawanda itself, have indirect impacts. For example, they could affect economic development efforts, if industries that depend on excellent interstate access experience delays.
- Sheridan Drive is the primary east-west route in the Town, and as a result, carries large traffic volumes. There are no good alternative routes. It is also a major commercial thoroughfare, and turning movements into and out of plazas and stores affect traffic congestion.
- Kenmore Avenue is an alternative east-west route at the southern end of town, but the roadway condition is not good. There is also significant congestion along portions of the road, particularly between Starin and Niagara Falls Boulevard. The roadway is divided through the center, with only the northern lane in the Town of Tonawanda. The southern lane is in the City of Buffalo. This complicates efforts at maintenance and improvements. Single ownership would be preferred.
- Brighton Road is serving as an alternate east-west route, but it is not designed to carry large volumes of traffic.

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- The number of driveways and curb cuts along major arterials impedes both traffic flow and pedestrian movement.

## **Connectivity**

The dominant means of transportation in the Town of Tonawanda is the automobile. At the same time, there is a desire to make it easier to get around the Town by other means. Increasing connections between parks, neighborhoods, corner stores and community facilities like libraries and schools makes them more accessible to residents. It also helps encourage walking and takes unnecessary traffic off the roadways, which can help alleviate congestion. While many residents will still choose to drive for most trips, increasing connections increases options and has other benefits, for health, quality of life, and civic pride. The following discussion addresses strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities and outlines strategies to improve connectivity throughout the Town.

### **Strengths**

- In most places, the transportation network is consistent with “new urbanist” concepts, with a traditional street pattern, small blocks, appropriate street widths, and a minimum of cul de sacs. This street pattern distributes neighborhood traffic more effectively, makes it easier to walk, and minimizes barriers between various destinations.
- Many of the local streets are attractive, tree-lined streets that promote a sense of neighborhood.
- Unlike many suburban Towns, the Town of Tonawanda has very good accommodations for pedestrians, with sidewalks along most streets.
- There is the beginning of an integrated multi-use trail system that connects major parks and other features in the Town.
- The proposed Rails-to-Trails bike route would complete a loop through the Town, enabling access to most major parks. The first phase of the proposed project will include an assessment of potential impacts, along with possible mitigations. The Town should remain involved in the process to ensure citizens’ concerns are addressed. In designing the route, potential spur routes to connect to other major features should be explored to enable a fully integrated bike trail- park system. In particular, pedestrian and bike access to Brighton Park and Ellicott Creek Park should be maximized.
- The pedestrian bridge across Sheridan provides important access across the busy highway, and links Town facilities on either side of the road.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Because the major arterials carry such high traffic volumes, it is difficult to cross these busy streets. There are few crosswalks, pedestrian crossings, “bump-outs” or other features to address this problem.
- Under current conditions, it would be difficult to institute safe methods of crossing Niagara Falls Boulevard north of Sheridan, particularly since the roadway is in two jurisdictions. Long-term, improvements should be supported where feasible.
- East-west bicycle access is limited. While the Riverwalk and other trails provide access within the waterfront district, access to the waterfront from residential neighborhoods is more difficult.
- While transit from the Town of Tonawanda to the City of Buffalo is superior to many suburban communities, cross-town access is limited. Most transit lines run along the major north-south

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arterials, providing service to the City Buffalo. There are few east-west routes, and service along the Town's primary east-west route, Sheridan Drive, is limited.

- Parking on both sides of some local roads is creating a safety concern, and in some cases impeding traffic flow.
- Although most areas have sidewalks, there are areas without any sidewalks. Also, maintenance and upkeep is an issue.

## **Neighborhood Revitalization**

Strong neighborhoods are one of the central strengths of the Town of Tonawanda. Resident input has made it clear that strong, vital neighborhoods are a high priority, and the Town should take steps to protect, promote and improve Tonawanda's neighborhoods.

### **Strengths**

- The Town has many attractive, treed, neighborhoods with well-maintained homes and a strong sense of identity and pride.
- There are several active neighborhood groups and organizations that help support this pride, and provide activities and projects designed to strengthen community spirit and improve the area.
- The Town receives consistently high praise for the quality of municipal services.
- Many of the neighborhoods in the Town of Tonawanda already have many of the qualities that contribute to a quality community. The street pattern is interconnected, with short blocks and sidewalks. These features contribute to the "walkability" of the community.
- Most neighborhoods have a community anchor, such as a neighborhood school, a park, a library, a church and/or a community center.
- Many neighborhoods have neighborhood shopping available within walking distance.
- There are a variety of neighborhood styles, providing a choice for residents. Some neighborhoods are more purely residential; others have a greater mix of uses. Different neighborhoods offer different housing styles and price ranges.
- The Town has an active Community Development Department that is making significant investments in neighborhood improvements and new housing choices for residents.
- The establishment of police substations and Neighborhood Watch Groups in Sheridan Parkside and Lincoln Park neighborhoods has proven to be effective in reducing criminal activities.
- Sheridan Parkside, the Town's principal concentration of low- to moderate income residents has received major attention by the Town, and has seen significant improvements. A Sheridan Parkside Village Master Plan has been created to guide and encourage future development in the area.
- Certain neighborhoods, such as Kenilworth, have been the recipient of public investment in infrastructure and new affordable housing units, under the direction of the Community Development Department, using HUD funds.

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- The Community Development Department has been recognized for its outstanding performance in planning and execution of programs to assist low to moderate income residents, resulting in substantial benefits to the Town.

## **Weaknesses**

- There are neighborhoods that are experiencing problems with disinvestment, poor landlord practices and other activities that detract from quality of life and sense of safety.
- Some neighborhoods do not have or are losing their sense of identity.
- Changing demographics is both a concern and an opportunity. There are areas of the Town of Tonawanda where the majority of residents are older, and these areas will eventually transition to new owners.
- There are limited resources available for revitalization efforts, and recent federal policies lead to the concern that these funding levels could be significantly reduced, placing planned activities at risk.

## **Zoning**

Zoning is one of the tools available to the Town to help achieve some of the goals outlined in this document. There are some issues relating to zoning that need to be addressed.

### **Strengths:**

- The Town has made some improvements and updates to its zoning ordinance.
- The Town has some more modern zoning designations in place. These include landscaping standards, the performance zone and the overlay district for the River Road corridor.
- The zoning already allows some mixed uses.

### **Weaknesses:**

- There are unzoned areas of the Town still (parks, cemeteries, etc.)
- Additional standards are needed to control the type and manner of development, particularly along major thoroughfares, where there are access management and aesthetic issues.
- The Town only has two commercial districts. A new, neighborhood oriented business district may be warranted.
- There are areas that are zoned for commercial use that are primarily residential in nature (e.g. Old Town; Sheridan Drive between Elmwood Avenue and Military Road; and east side of Military Road north of Sheridan Drive). These areas need to be reviewed and rezoned for the appropriate use, if necessary.
- The special use permit process needs updating.



## SECTION V: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines specific recommendations for the Town of Tonawanda, designed to help the Town achieve its stated vision for its future. For the readers' convenience, the vision outlined in Section II of this report is paraphrased here prior to each section of recommendations.

### **A. Waterfront:**

#### **Vision:**

The Waterfront will be a location for public access and recreation, and economic development, with an emphasis on higher quality commercial development in visible locations along River Road. The Waterfront can be divided into three areas: waterfront lands along River Road; the inland area north of the I-290/Grand Island Bridges; and the industrial lands south of the I-290/I-190 split.

For properties with frontage on the Niagara River, the primary emphasis will be on including public access where possible. The area inland of River Road is seen as a prime location for new commercial development, with more attractive, higher value uses fronting the roadway and other uses occupying lands not visible from River Road. The area south of the I-290/I-190 intersection will remain an important location for industrial development, with additional businesses and industries developing on available lands.

The waterfront will have improved access for businesses (new roads, better access to the interstate system, etc.), as well as better recreational access (connections to Riverwalk with other trail systems; development of additional public access at Cherry Farm and other locations).

The Town's strategic location in the region and its excellent interstate highway access will create demand for the large amounts of vacant, developable commercial and industrial lands in the western portion of the Town. With strategic improvements in infrastructure such as access roads, the Town will be a demand community for business investment. New development will focus on light manufacturing and office development, with continued support of existing business sector. Aesthetics, particularly in areas visible from River Road, will be improved.

#### **Discussion:**

The intent of the recommendations for the waterfront are to support the recommendations of the Town's Amended Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) and the Waterfront Land Use Study; to support and encourage the appropriate and attractive redevelopment of the area for economic development purposes; and to ensure continued public access to the waterfront. Public actions should make lands intended for economic development as "shovel ready" as possible, by assisting with provision of infrastructure (especially roads). Regulations have been put in place to guide development to ensure public access, more attractive design, and appropriate uses. Enhancements to the recreational system in the waterfront area include reuse of the Town Landfill for recreation use and development of additional recreational lands.



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## Recommendations: Waterfront

### See Map 13: Projects

- **Development of a new industrial access road**  
A new industrial access road would help spur economic development efforts in the waterfront area. The roadway should serve both the North Youngmann Commerce Center and the Isle View sites, connecting the business parks through to Two Mile Creek Road, and ideally continuing through to Military Road to the east, connecting near the Spaulding site in the City of Tonawanda.
- **Creation of new Business/Industrial Park at North Youngmann Commerce Center (Mud Flats)**  
Efforts are currently underway to develop the North Youngmann Commerce Center. The Town is taking a very aggressive approach on getting this facility ready for development, putting in infrastructure, including an access road, water and wastewater facilities. The Town is also sponsoring an environmental impact analysis for the site, which establishes acceptable thresholds of impacts (e.g. amount of traffic, acceptable uses). If new development falls within these thresholds, no additional environmental review would be needed, expediting construction efforts. These actions will make the site more than “shovel-ready”. This “build-ready” site will enable new development to occur with a minimum of delays.
- **Creation of new Office/ Light Industrial Park on rezoned land off River Road (Isle View or 300-acre site):**  
Development of the property off River Road once known as the “300-acre site” requires a new industrial access road, which should be coordinated with the roadway discussed above. To achieve the highest benefit of full depth of the parcels, any development along River Road should take into consideration access to rear of parcels in the future. In accordance with the Waterfront Land Use Plan, aesthetics and public access should be considerations in site planning for development along River Road. Since the land was rezoned, there has been a development proposal submitted for a portion of this site, which would be consistent with these objectives.
- **Development of new access road in the Sawyer Road/James Drive area:**  
Improved industrial access through vacant lands in this area would facilitate its development for light industrial use.
- **Re-use of the Town landfill for a recreational use.**  
The Town landfill is undergoing the process of closure, and could be a site for redevelopment for recreational uses, such as a 9-hole golf course or ball fields.
- **Continued improvements to connectivity in the waterfront area to the Riverwalk and other trails in the area.**  
The Town of Tonawanda benefits from the Riverwalk along the waterfront lands, which provides access to the River and to connecting trail systems. Extension of this trail system region-wide, through the Niagara River Greenway initiative is a priority of New York State. This trail system links to the Erie Canalway trail in the City of Tonawanda, and will eventually connect to a trail system being developed along the Lake Erie shoreline in the South Towns. Recommendations in the connections section detail proposed linkages.
- **Continued implementation of the Town’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Waterfront Land Use Plan and incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.**  
The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program was recently amended, and is considered included by reference in the Comprehensive Plan. General recommendations include:

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- Streetscape improvements along River Road and higher design standards for new development to establish a new image and ensure development is compatible with recreational use of the waterfront. Transitioning uses from heavy industrial at the southern portion of the waterfront to increasingly less intensive uses toward the north.
- Redevelopment of specific sites in accordance with the land uses identified in the Plan.
- Development of Cherry Farm Park—this should be coordinated with efforts of the newly established Niagara River Greenway.
- Mixed use development in the vicinity of the Grand Island Bridges, including the potential for a Riverfront Park and public access. The Niagara River Greenway should also be involved with these plans.
- Development of the vacant United Refining parcel
- Small business redevelopment south of the Grand Island Bridges, including redevelopment of River World and potential small businesses along James Avenue.

In addition, the Town should continue to monitor issues and priorities, and make future updates and amendments to the LWRP as needed.

### ▪ **Recreational Improvements.**

Recreational improvements should be instituted as feasible to enhance public access and waterfront opportunities. Potential projects include Cherry Farm Park, possible improvements to the Town boat launch, and the waterfront park near the foot of the Grand Island Bridge. In particular, the area along the waterfront from Cherry Farm Park site north to Isle View should be prioritized for recreational improvements and waterfront access. The development of this priority area for public access should be coordinated with the efforts of the Niagara Greenway Commission.

### ▪ **Continued cleanup of contaminated sites**

Continue to support and seek remediation of brownfields, hazardous waste sites and other contaminated sites with appropriate reuse of the sites. Promote completion and issuance of Record of Decision (ROD) by Army Corps of Engineers for radioactive waste sites in the Town of Tonawanda

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## B. Economic Development

### Vision:

In addition to the economic development efforts occurring primarily in the waterfront district, the Town of Tonawanda will promote additional economic development efforts to ensure that goods, services and jobs are available to residents, to support businesses in the Town and to enhance a healthy tax base. The Town will encourage new commercial development and reinvestment in existing commercial businesses. In terms of retail development, the Town supports revitalizing existing neighborhood shopping areas, easily accessible to residents' homes as well as larger, regional shopping along major thoroughfares. The Town will also ensure that commercial uses, such as offices, are attractive and well planned as a source of jobs and economic activity in the Town.

Neighborhood retail centers will be small scale, attractive commercial centers, accessible to neighborhood residents by car, foot or bike. A mix of uses will be encouraged, with appropriate buffers and screening to minimize negative impacts on surrounding residents. The focus will be on convenience retail uses such as convenience stores, restaurants, and personal services. Façade programs and landscaping/design standards will help ensure they are "good neighbors".

The Town will improve its aesthetic image, through streetscape projects along major corridors, enhanced landscaping and design standards and targeted projects designed to increase the attractiveness of the Town. Such projects would include targeted upgrades of commercial centers through façade programs, creation of gateways and/or pocket parks, public artwork and other efforts to improve appearances. Creation of a "Town Center" at the Sheridan Drive and Delaware Avenue intersection will further enhance the Town's image and improve the quality of life for residents. Upgraded property maintenance standards and continued private sector investment in the Town will also improve the quality of development.

### Discussion:

The Town of Tonawanda needs a varied tax base and a mix of businesses, not only to stabilize the community, but also to provide jobs, goods and services to residents. It is important, however, that these uses fit in appropriately with other uses in the Town. Commercial and industrial developments in the Town are seen as adding significant tax base and jobs. These recommendations are intended to support economic development efforts in the Town in a manner that is beneficial to neighborhood stability and community appearances.

### Recommendations: Economic Development

(See Map 13: Projects)

- **Support Existing Neighborhood commercial convenience centers:**

Neighborhood commercial convenience centers are the small convenience shopping areas located within and adjacent to the residential areas of the Town. They offer small shops, restaurants and personal service establishments, such as hair salons, in locations catering to the surrounding homes. These are the most likely to have a higher proportion of pedestrian traffic, and their design should support and encourage customers to walk. Tonawanda is fortunate to have existing neighborhood convenience centers available to many residents.

The priority neighborhood business areas for the Town of Tonawanda are shown as small stars on the Projects Map. They are the Eggert-Colvin Plaza, the Brighton-Eggert area, the area in the

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

vicinity of Kenmore Avenue and Englewood, and the Highland-Englewood-Colvin area. The Town should ensure that these neighborhood business districts stay vital, through the following means:

- a. Improve appearances through façade improvements, landscaping, streetscaping, etc.
- b. Encourage private investment in neighborhood businesses through loan programs, supplemented with targeted investment of community development dollars if necessary.
- c. Ensure adequate buffers between commercial and adjacent residential uses.
- d. Ensure businesses are accessible to area residents, through pedestrian-friendly aspects, such as clear walkways through parking lots, landscaping and pedestrian-scale lighting.
- e. Businesses in these areas should remain small scale

## ▪ **Improve other community shopping areas**

Other shopping areas in the Town offer larger scale shopping. These retail centers draw from a wider area, including people from outside the neighborhood or Town. They offer a range of services and can accommodate larger stores. They tend to be developed at a larger scale and greater number of stores than smaller, neighborhood based shopping areas.

The priority community shopping areas, shown with larger stars, are the Sheridan-Eggert Plaza and adjacent plazas, and the Sheridan and Delaware area. There are also large amounts of retail development along the major roadways, such as Niagara Falls Boulevard and Kenmore Avenue.

Recommendations include:

- a. Improve appearances through façade improvements, landscaping, streetscaping
- b. Ensure adequate parking, but consider pedestrian access through parking lots, and encourage provision of landscaping along edges and within parking areas.
- c. Establish general design standards to encourage attractive development and discourage generic architecture, particularly in areas adjacent to the Village.
- d. Ensure adequate buffers between commercial and adjacent residential uses.
- e. Encourage provisions for bus stops in vicinity of community shopping areas.
- f. Institute access management standards, corridor overlays and other techniques to help reduce congestion and improve appearances along commercial strips. (see also section on thoroughfares)

## ▪ **Support additional economic development efforts**

In addition to the economic development efforts for the waterfront area, discussed previously, the Town and the Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation (TTDC) should continue to work toward other economic development prospects, such as the Colvin Woods project.

## ▪ **Coordinate zoning standards at the Village edges**

While the Village of Kenmore is outside the scope of this document, the Village is an important aspect of the Town, and the Town should coordinate and support Village efforts. This includes coordinating with Village of Kenmore to match zoning categories, bulk standards, design requirements and other regulations guiding commercial development along the major thoroughfares shared by these communities: Delaware Avenue; Kenmore Avenue; and Elmwood Avenue. (see *The Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Kenmore Business District*, prepared by the Village of Kenmore Planning Board, October 2003.)

## ▪ **Coordinate land use standards at other jurisdictional boundaries**

In addition to the boundary with the Village of Kenmore, the Town shares boundaries with the Town of Amherst, the City of Buffalo and the City of Tonawanda. The Town should investigate land use standards, such as zoning and design standards along these shared boundaries to determine where better coordination makes sense.

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- **Ensure adequacy of rail service**

Rail service is an important asset for the Town of Tonawanda in regard to attracting business development. The Town should investigate the adequacy of rail service in the Town for business use, and try to facilitate needed improvements.

- **Create a Town Center at Sheridan and Delaware**

The Sheridan and Delaware area is an important community shopping center, but it could have an enhanced “sense of place” that would contribute to the Town. The area could be converted to a mixed-use area that includes community features and “gathering places” in addition to the shopping plaza. Integration of the existing shops and businesses, the Aquatics Center and Hoover School through landscaping, changing on-site traffic patterns, and addition of more attractive features could enhance this area and turn it into a central “town center” for residents. Possible features could include a small open, multi-use plaza or courtyard that could accommodate events and activities such as small open-air performances or a craft fair. Improved connections across Sheridan, whether “bump-outs” to narrow the pavement at the intersections or an overhead pedestrian walkway, would help extend and link this area to the shopping and neighborhoods south of Sheridan Drive.

- **Investigate tax structure and impacts on economic development**

The Town needs to ensure that its taxing structure is competitive with other area communities.

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## C. Thoroughfares/(Traffic and Access Management)

### Vision:

Major roadways through the Town will be targeted for improved image, aesthetics and economic development opportunities, with improvements to help reduce congestion. Sheridan Drive will remain the Town's major east/west corridor, and a commercial center of the Town. The Sheridan-Delaware area will become a community focal point, with a mix of offices, retail, and public uses, and attractive gathering areas to enhance the sense of community. Improved pedestrian crossings across Sheridan Drive, connections to schools and surrounding residential areas, and design standards will also help to create a sense of place. Between Military Road and Two-Mile Creek, Sheridan Drive will become a community focal point supporting the Sheridan Parkside and Riverview neighborhoods, and improving the image of the Town in the area of the Sheridan Park golf course.

The Town and Village, through cooperative planning, will improve Delaware, Elmwood and Kenmore Avenues in and around the Village. Aesthetic improvements, through streetscape projects and improved design standards, will improve the appearance of these areas, which will serve as important commercial, and community backbones for Kenmore and Tonawanda. Cooperative planning efforts with the City of Buffalo for Kenmore Avenue and the Town of Amherst for Niagara Falls Boulevard will improve the attractiveness and functionality of these corridors.

### Discussion:

The intent of these recommendations is to improve the functionality of major roadways throughout the Town, while also improving their appearances. They focus on efforts to alleviate congestion, such as access management improvements, improved signalization and other traffic improvements.

### Recommendations: Traffic and Access Management

*(See Map 10: Transportation Issues)*

- **Institute access management requirements along major roadways.**  
Sheridan Drive, Niagara Falls Boulevard, Delaware Avenue, Kenmore Avenue and possibly Military Road would all benefit from access management measures. These measures include reducing the number of drives allowed for an individual parcel and limiting turning movements in order to reduce congestion resulting from cars turning into and out of the travel lanes. Elements of access management include:
  - a. Encouraging adjacent properties to share driveways
  - b. Requiring cross access (ability to get from one parking lot to adjacent properties) where feasible. This eliminates the need to go back out onto the street to get to nearby businesses.
  - c. Encourage coherent on-site circulation patterns that enable motorists and pedestrians to move safely and easily through the site (clearly marked lanes, walkways, signage and landscaping islands to direct traffic).
  - d. Limit the number of driveways allowed for one parcel, and
  - e. Control driveway spacing to minimize conflict points.
- **Institute traffic system management improvements (TSM) to address congestion**  
Other measures to alleviate congestion should also be investigated, such as dedicated turn-lanes (with appropriate stacking lengths), and coordination of signals. Signalization coordination is being instituted along Colvin Boulevard, Eggert Road and Elmwood Avenue as part of the Transportation

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Improvement Plan by the GBNRTC. There should be continued effort to upgrade signals and address turn-lanes, with priority on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive, Delaware Avenue, Brighton Road and Kenmore Avenue. In addition, a number of traffic system recommendations were made in an earlier TSM study for the Town, which merit further investigation. These include improvements in the following areas:

- Harrison Avenue
  - Delaware Road (from Sheridan Drive to Brighton Road)
  - Kenmore Avenue (Woodward Avenue west to Two Mile Creek Road)
  - Elmwood Avenue corridor
  - Englewood Avenue/Highland Parkway corridor
  - Colvin Boulevard (Kenmore Avenue to Sheridan Drive)
  - Brighton Road.
- **Kenmore Avenue Corridor Study**

Kenmore Avenue is in poor condition, and merits a corridor study. Curbing and lane placement are ambiguous, traffic movement is confusing, and better markings are needed. In addition to the access management issues discussed above, a study of Kenmore Avenue would determine where parking should be allowed, how many through lanes are needed, and other improvements, including pedestrian improvements. Streetscape improvements are also needed. This route is under multiple jurisdictions (City of Buffalo, Erie County and Village of Kenmore), so a coordinated approach is necessary.
  - **Niagara Falls Boulevard**

The Town is studying Niagara Falls Boulevard and access management issues jointly with the Town of Amherst. This effort should recognize the distinctions along the length of the corridor, as outlined in the Vision section.
  - **Address problem intersections**

Investigate improvements at various locations where problem intersections have been identified. Problem intersections and corridors were identified through an earlier traffic study. Many of these locations are still considered problems. Members of the public also identified a number of problematic intersections during the public outreach efforts. These intersections, which are also shown on the Transportation Issues Map, are as follows:

**From TSM Study:**

    - Colvin Boulevard/ Belmont Avenue/ Northwood Drive (also identified by public)
    - Delaware Avenue and Oakridge Avenue/ Ken-Ton Presbyterian Village driveway
    - Colvin Boulevard and Sharon Avenue (also by public)
    - Delaware Avenue and Delaware Road/ Lincoln Boulevard (also by public)
    - Delaware Avenue and Colonial Avenue/Thornclyff Road

**From Public Input (in addition to those noted above):**

    - Ellicott Creek Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard
    - I-290 exits at Niagara Falls Boulevard
    - Koenig Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard
    - Sheridan Drive and Niagara Falls Boulevard
    - Eggert Road and Colvin Boulevard
    - Colvin Boulevard and Brighton Road
    - Sheridan Drive and Colvin Boulevard
    - Highland Parkway and Delaware Road
    - Highland Parkway and Englewood Avenue
    - Englewood Avenue and Parker Avenue
    - Sheridan Drive and Delaware Road
    - Sheridan Drive and Kenmore Avenue

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- **Investigate making streetscape improvements**

The Town should continue to make investments in trees, planted medians and other landscaping features that help make the roadways more attractive. In conjunction with the overlay district, the Town should explore the possibility of streetscape improvements in priority locations. Features could include better signage, more creative pavement treatments, including textures to set off crosswalks and pedestrian walkways, improved lighting, street trees, and other improvements. Priority areas include areas adjacent to the Village and Sheridan Drive, particularly in the vicinity of the proposed Town Center.

- **Create commercial corridor overlay districts**

Zoning overlay districts along the major corridors could provide landscaping, design, signage and access management standards for new development and redevelopment. This would improve traffic flow and aesthetics along these important thoroughfares.

- **I-290 Improvements**

Transportation planning for the I-290 corridor is under the responsibility of New York State and the GBNRTC. However, changes to the roadway can have profound impacts on transportation patterns and quality of life in the Town of Tonawanda. Therefore, the Town should remain involved in discussions with these entities to ensure their interests are represented in planning for this major roadway through the Town. In addition, efforts should be made to improve aesthetic issues along the Youngmann, such as maintaining trees and landscaping and regulating billboards.

- **Roadway reconstruction program**

Many of the Town roads are fifty to seventy years old, and have reached their anticipated life. A program of evaluating Town road conditions and instituting reconstruction should be initiated. The Town should conduct the necessary engineering studies, including soils analysis, in order to determine the condition of the road foundation and drainage structure in order to determine the needs and priorities of a reconstruction program.

- **Continued Traffic Capacity Analysis**

The Town should continue to monitor capacity issues on local roadways, and sponsor specific studies where roadway concerns are raised. In particular, the traffic flow on Brighton Road and Park Road should be assessed.

- **Improve facilities for pedestrians**

Certain pedestrian improvements will increase accessibility. Crosswalks are needed across busy streets, particularly where there is a great deal of pedestrian activity. Priority areas for crosswalks are areas where there are major destinations or activity centers, such popular retail centers, schools, parks, the YMCA or apartment buildings. Where feasible, better accommodations for pedestrians should be incorporated into site design. There should be clear passageways for pedestrians through parking lots. Features such as benches, bus stops, sidewalks, greenspace and landscaping can help improve the aesthetics of the corridor, enhance pedestrian access and promote safety.

- **Coordination with GBNRTC**

Attending GBNRTC meetings can help priority projects receive attention in regional transportation planning. The Town should continue to attend GBNRTC meetings on a regular basis, to lobby for local projects and ensure Town's interests are being addressed. The Town should also actively participate in the GBNRTC Bicycle Committee.

- **Long Term Concepts**

Over the long term, the Town should explore more aggressive measures such as the potential acquisition of adjacent properties along the rear property lines of Niagara Falls Boulevard. This



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would enable parking to be moved to the rear of properties and to improve access to the surrounding residential areas for both cars and pedestrians. This concept would be expensive, and would require land acquisition. It would need to be coordinated with adjacent neighborhoods to ensure that it is implemented in a sensitive manner, but it could help improve traffic along this busy street, and help integrate the shopping along Niagara Falls Boulevard more closely into the adjacent neighborhoods.

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## D. Connectivity

### Vision:

The Town will be a place where residents can easily reach their destinations, whether by car, bike or walking. Roadway improvements will reduce congestion. Trailway connections, building off existing systems, will link key parks, schools, churches and neighborhood schools. Sidewalks, crosswalks and other improvements will encourage walking, further helping to decrease roadway congestion.

### Discussion

The intent of the recommendations in this section is to ensure that residents have choices in regard to how they travel through the Town. Major destinations, such as parks, schools, and stores will be connected not only by the road network, but also by linear greenways or sidewalks. These connections increase linkages within and without the Town. They serve a transportation function, and they are also recreational assets for the Town.

Map 11: Connectivity illustrates the recommendations in this section. The map shows all existing multi-use trails, such as the Riverwalk, in dark blue. On-road bike paths are shown in turquoise. These routes have been officially designated by the GBNRTC as bike routes in Western New York, although there are areas where improvements are warranted. Potential bike routes identified in the GBNRTC transportation planning documents are shown in dark green. These routes are under study. Two new pathways have been funded and are currently being developed. They are expected to be constructed in the near future. They are shown in purple on the map. Finally, there are new connections recommended here to increase connectivity and accessibility for Town residents. They are shown as orange lines on the map.

### Recommendations: Connectivity

*(See Map 11: Connectivity)*

▪ **Complete trails that are currently funded:**

The Sherwood Greenway connecting Two-Mile Creek Greenway and the Riverwalk; and the Erie Canalway Trail through the Town of Tonawanda are funded and under development. These trails help create “loops” that link the waterfront and parks and increase accessibility of these assets to Town residents. They also create links to existing trail systems (Erie Canalway, Riverwalk) in adjacent communities. They are shown in purple on the map, and are labeled “A” and “B”.

▪ **Construct the proposed trail along the NFTA right-of-way along the former railroad bed connecting to the City of Tonawanda and the Erie Canalway to the north, and the City of Buffalo to the south. (Mid-Town Greenway)**

This trail will enable linkages between several assets in the Town, including Lincoln Park, the YMCA, Kenney Field, several small retail centers and the City of Tonawanda and the Erie Canalway trail system. It helps increase the ties between residential neighborhoods and these assets, and creates a “linear park” through the center of the Town, increasing north-south mobility for non-automotive traffic, and helping to tie adjacent neighborhoods together. Studies of similar rail-to-trails have shown increases of property values. Security concerns can be addressed through the institution of effective security measures.

This trail, if pursued, would go through its own design review process that would include provisions for public input and comments. This process would also solicit input on issues, such as how to safely

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cross Sheridan Drive, to ensure residents' concerns are addressed through this effort. This trail, shown in dark green on the map, is labeled "C".

- **Develop a Connector trail linking the trail along the NFTA right-of-way to Brighton Park.**

If the NFTA trail is developed, it provides access to many features along its length, but does not connect to Brighton Park. A short connector trail could be developed that would provide access to this major Town park. It would make the park more accessible to residents living south of the Youngmann Highway. This proposed connector, shown in orange on the map, is labeled "D".

- **Construct a proposed trail along the Lehigh Valley rail line from the Tonawanda Creek to Ellicott Creek.**

The trail along this right-of-way has been funded in the Town of Amherst. The continuation of this trail in Tonawanda would connect into the Town of Amherst trail system at the southern end, and to the Ellicott Creek Park at the northern end. Through Ellicott Creek Park, access to the Erie Canalway trail is possible. The right-of-way exists and is currently not used, and it is available to the Town at no cost. On the map, this trail is shown in orange and is labeled "E".

- **Establish an east-west trail, whether a separated or clearly designated on-road system, linking Lincoln Park area through to the Village of Kenmore.**

Lincoln Park, Crosby Field and Mang Park are assets that are within easy biking distance of each other, but there are no formal connections between them. There is also a shortage of east-west access through the Town. This connection could be accomplished as a marked, on-road system. Planning should take into consideration safe crossings. This connector, shown in orange is labeled "F" on the map.

- **Develop a Connector trail linking the Village of Kenmore to the Sherwood Trail being developed in the western portion of the Town.**

The Two Mile Creek-Sherwood Trail corridor provides very good access to Sheridan Park and the waterfront, but these trails could be better linked to population centers. A very short connector between Military Road and the Sherwood Greenway would improve the connection between residential neighborhoods of Kenmore and the surrounding areas of Town. It would also help improve access to Mang Park, and with other suggested connectors, complete a loop linking all parks in the Town. The conceptual location of this suggested route is represented by line "G" on the map, although the exact route of this connector is yet to be determined.

- **Create an east-west trail in the northern part of Town, across Brighton Road west of Kenney Field and Waverly Avenue.**

As noted, there is a lack of east-west routes through the Town, particularly for non-automotive traffic. Creation of an east-west trail in the northern part of the Town would help alleviate this problem. It would also improve the ties between Kenney Field and Sheridan Park, and improve residents' access to the western part of the Town, including the waterfront. This route is shown as "H" on the map.

- **Develop waterfront trails connections**

Waterfront trail connections have been discussed above. Trails along Rattlesnake Creek and through the "Isle View", or 300-acres development site off River Road would improve recreational opportunities.

- **Continue to invest in sidewalks in residential neighborhoods. (not mapped- throughout)**

The Town of Tonawanda has an excellent sidewalk system; unlike many suburban communities, most areas of the Town have sidewalks. The Town has a sidewalk ordinance and a program for replacing sidewalks, if the damage is related to Town-owned trees or sewer or waterline repairs. As residents

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noted at public meetings, however, sidewalks must be maintained in good condition to encourage people to use them. Where there are no sidewalks, efforts should be made to install them, particularly in areas where there are activity generators, such as businesses, public facilities or schools, where people could be walking. Where there are maintenance problems, the Town should work with property owners to help address the situation.

- **Continue improvements to on-road bicycle lanes, through better markings, etc.**

The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) has designated bicycle routes throughout the region, including several in the Town of Tonawanda. All of the designated routes in Tonawanda are located on-road, which means that bicyclists must share the roadway with cars and trucks. Many of these routes could be improved, through better markings that more clearly distinguish the bicycle lane from the automobile lanes. Particularly along Kenmore Avenue, access management standards and aesthetic improvements will also help improve bike lanes, because there are many areas where there is no clear distinction between the roadway, the curb and parking areas. Designated bike routes are shown in turquoise on the Connectivity map.

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## E. Neighborhoods / Housing

### **Vision:**

Neighborhoods will be re-invigorated by strategic investments in existing neighborhood facilities, re-establishment of strong neighborhood associations, improved communications, and continued homeowner investments in their properties. All neighborhoods will have a community asset or resource to serve as a source of local pride and identification. This focal point could be a park, playground, school, a shopping area, or some other asset. To reinforce neighborhood features and improve the quality of life in Tonawanda, neighborhood groups and organizations will become a larger force in decision-making concerning their neighborhoods.

Housing revitalization will occur in targeted areas, and in certain areas will see housing removed with replacement housing meeting needs of younger families. Sheridan Parkside will be the focus of continued redevelopment for affordable housing, but market-rate housing will also be built as the character of the neighborhood changes. Homeowner improvements and additions to existing housing throughout the Town will help further diversify the housing stock.

The Town's high quality municipal services will continue to be a strong asset of the Town. The Town's services will adjust to meet the needs of changing demographics, as the Town shifts towards younger families, but still with a high percentage of seniors. Strategic investments in Town water and sewer infrastructure will allow the Town to continue to efficiently provide services to its existing customer base and new customers, while addressing environmental considerations and concerns. The Town will continue to provide and maintain streets in good condition.

At the same time, there should be targeted projects to increase the attractiveness of the Town, such as targeted upgrades of commercial centers through façade programs; creation of gateways and/or pocket parks, and public artwork and other efforts to improve appearances. Enforcement of state and local property maintenance standards will help address blighting influences.

The Town will solidify an identity as an attractive, convenient, affordable place to live. It will attract younger families that will continue to invest in the Town. Some see the Town creating its own new identity as the Town of "Ken-Ton."

### **Discussion:**

Neighborhoods are the heart of a community, and the future of the Town depends upon strong, attractive neighborhoods. Attractive residential neighborhoods form the basis of what makes people want to move to the Town and they are a critical element of the quality of life. The Town is fortunate that the great majority of its residential properties have been well maintained over the years, and therefore present the opportunity for sustaining their condition and value as highly desirable and affordable real estate.

There is much discussion currently about "new urbanism" and "traditional neighborhood planning." Many suburban towns are trying to reclaim or retrofit a more traditional pattern of streets and neighborhoods to help establish a stronger community identity. The Town of Tonawanda already has the basis of this type of development, with existing strong neighborhoods, pedestrian friendly streets, neighborhood shopping areas and community parks. This plan supports reinforcing these positive aspects, ensuring that they are respected and promoted, and making improvements where warranted.

For the purposes of analysis, "planning neighborhoods" have been created. Where possible, these neighborhoods correspond with traditionally identified neighborhoods in the Town. However, there are areas where there is no strong neighborhood identity. Boundaries of the neighborhoods have been

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

adjusted so that all residential areas in the Town fall within one of the “planning neighborhoods.” Guiding principles include the concept that each neighborhood should have a focal point; major destinations should be accessible by pedestrians; and neighborhood shopping should be accessible, if not within the neighborhood, then nearby.

## **Recommendations: Neighborhoods and Housing**

*(See Map 12: Planning Neighborhoods)*

- **Support neighborhood associations and neighborhood watch groups**

The Town should encourage the establishment and expansion of neighborhood associations, neighborhood watch groups and other volunteer activities that enhance the life of the neighborhoods. The residents who live in the neighborhoods have the best understanding of what is needed. The neighborhood groups form an effective conduit to communicate with Town officials about needed improvements, problems and issues. They also are a valuable resource; these groups can sponsor smaller projects, such as beautification projects, neighborhood clean-ups, or pocket parks or neighborhood gateways plantings and maintenance. They can also help improve a sense of community, through sponsoring social events and activities.

The neighborhood watch group also helps promote safety, a feeling of security and quality of life. The Town should continue to sponsor these groups and support their activities.

- **Neighborhood Assets**

Each neighborhood should have at least one neighborhood resource or asset to serve as a focal point, such as a school, a park, a playground, a church or some other community feature. If this is not possible, there should be easy, convenient access (within walking distance) to such a feature in an adjacent neighborhood. (see map for neighborhood focal points) Connectivity improvements, as discussed previously, can help make features accessible to more residents. These features help build neighborhood identity and stability, and if there are proposals to close any of these features, the impacts should be considered.

- **Neighborhood shopping areas**

Neighborhood shopping areas enhance quality of life in the neighborhood, and should be considered a vital element of the neighborhood. Recommendations above about revitalizing the Town’s neighborhood shopping areas help support strong neighborhoods.

Currently, most neighborhoods in the Town of Tonawanda have shopping areas, either in or adjacent to the neighborhood. However, in some cases, the shopping is along a major roadway, and is sited so that its “back” is to the neighborhood. There is an opportunity for more creative site layouts that would make these businesses more accessible to pedestrian traffic from adjacent side streets. Well lit, attractive walkways along the side property line or alternative “back door” access are possible ways to better tie businesses to the neighborhoods.

- **Encourage “walkability”**

Residents should feel able to walk safely to the key neighborhood focal points, to local stores, and to other locations in the Town. Sidewalks help provide alternative ways to reach a destination, increasing accessibility. They enhance the community’s appearance and foster community interaction. Improving connectivity, as noted above, will improve “walkability” in the Town, but other improvements can encourage more people to choose to walk. The Town should ensure that sidewalks are maintained and in good condition. The Town should develop crosswalks at key locations, and continue to plant street trees to provide shade. In site plan reviews, the Town should

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ensure that new development screens large parking lots, because large open expanses discourage people from walking. Also, each site should have clearly designated vehicle access to properties so pedestrians know where cars will enter.

- **Problem Properties**

There are a number of “problem properties” that evidence poor maintenance, poor tenant management, or other issues. Particularly in more modest neighborhoods, these problem properties can create problems that extend to adjacent areas and have a negative impact on the quality of life in these neighborhoods. The Town should work with landlords of these properties to encourage better maintenance, and use stricter enforcement efforts where needed.

The maintenance of properties affects their market value and occupancy levels. While voluntary compliance is preferred, state and Town property maintenance codes provide the town with the tools to enforce compliance through more rigorous enforcement. Property owners who are eligible for assistance need to be made aware of the programs available to help them maintain their properties.

- **Encourage private reinvestment**

Many Town residents are choosing to upgrade and invest in their homes, rather than relocate to other communities. This helps diversify the housing stock, increase the tax base, and retain residents. The Town should notify homeowners of Town programs that are available in eligible areas. The Town should ensure that the permitting process for home improvements is efficient and encourages private investment in the housing stock.

- **Community Development Investments**

The Town’s community development department is making investments in targeted neighborhoods to improve the housing stock and public facilities. These investments should continue, including support of other elements of a strong neighborhood, such as community focal points (parks, businesses, etc.) and public infrastructure and amenities. This plan also supports the Town’s plans for the redevelopment of the Sheridan Parkside Village neighborhood into a more diverse neighborhood, with a mix of housing styles, prices and types. This effort should be guided by the plan for this neighborhood created in 2003.

- **Welcome Package**

A welcome package providing relevant information about the Town could be distributed to new residents. The packet could include the Town map, information about Town services (recreational programs, aquatic and fitness center brochure, garbage collection, etc.), organizations, meeting schedules, local newspaper supplements, neighborhood watch information, schools, etc. This method could also be used to inform new residents of Town policies regarding sidewalk maintenance, parking, etc. A private service organization, such as the Chamber or neighborhood watch groups, could be responsible for this effort.

- **Post Office**

The locations of post offices are outside the jurisdiction of the Town. However, the issue of the need for a central post office serving Tonawanda was raised frequently in public input. Part of this issue pertains to community identity, as residents are proud of their Town and would like their mailing address to reflect that pride. There are currently three postal zones within the Town (Kenmore, Buffalo and Tonawanda- associated with the City of Tonawanda) leading to some confusion. Part of the issue is more practical, as the current locations for post offices do not have ideal facilities, with limited parking and located in heavy traffic areas. Where feasible, the Town should try to influence federal officials in support of a consolidated, centralized post office for the Town.

A more detailed assessment of neighborhoods in the Town is included as an appendix to this report.

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## F. Zoning Recommendations

### ▪ **Unzoned Areas**

All areas of the Town should fall within a specific zoning district; there should be no lands designated as "School/Park/Cemetery", which is essentially "unzoned." Appropriate zoning must be in place to guide future potential uses. In many cases, the unzoned parcels fall within residential areas, and the property should be zoned residential. Where the facility would be an asset if redeveloped for non-residential use, other zoning categories should be considered.

For Town parks, recreational facilities and certain other properties, where it is unlikely and undesirable for a change of use to occur, the Town should establish a "Community Facilities" district. This district would restrict uses to parks, recreational facilities and similar uses. All major parks and Town owned facilities such as the Senior Center and Sheridan Parkside Community Center would fall into this category. A number of school lands may also fall into this category.

For properties that are not Town-owned, (schools and cemeteries), other zoning designations should be evaluated. These properties are more likely to change uses, as the school district or cemetery determines it no longer needs excess properties. For example, old school buildings in other communities have been renovated for offices, retail or residential uses. The zoning category selected should provide enough controls that the resulting use is an asset to the neighborhood. A new TND or TNB district could be an appropriate option. For school properties where commercial reuse is not appropriate, zoning should be residential.

### ▪ **TND (Traditional Neighborhood Design) or TNB (Traditional Neighborhood Business) Zoning District.**

A TND or TNB district could be developed to set use and design standards/requirements that promote a sense of community or neighborhood for neighborhood business districts. It would set requirements to ensure business development is consistent in scale, style and size to a neighborhood-based business district. It would also set standards for establishing buffers between commercial and residential uses, such as fences or berms, and encourage pedestrian-friendly site design. The difficulty of this type zoning is that it works better on large undeveloped areas within an urban or suburban setting. Further study is required to determine if there are areas where this zoning would be appropriate. Areas to consider for this type of district would be in areas where there is a mix of residential and business uses, such as at the Highland-Englewood-Colvin area. The intent is to encourage vital neighborhood business districts that are good neighbors to the adjacent residential uses.

### ▪ **Signage Regulations**

The Town should evaluate its sign ordinances, to determine if they provide adequate protection. Consideration should be given to possibly restricting pylon signs in locations. The Town also needs to assess where billboards are allowed, and restrict their use in residential areas.

### ▪ **Zoning Revisions**

The Zoning Code could use a major re-write to make it more user friendly. A short-term solution would be to provide guidance documents to applicants to help reference applicable code sections, procedures and answer commonly asked questions. Due to the built out nature of the Town, the Town should explore expanding the performance type zoning districts in the Town.

### ▪ **Improvement of the Town Landscape Ordinance**

The Town has a landscape ordinance, but it should be assessed to determine if it could be made more effective.



## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- **Amend zoning in the areas of Kenmore Avenue and Elmwood Avenue around the Village**

As noted above, the Town should revise the zoning in the areas bordering the Village to match the Village's concepts in their Comprehensive Plan for the Business Districts. Particularly on Elmwood Avenue, where Town properties are literally across the street from Village parcels, the standards should be compatible. These standards relate to allowable building size; maximum and minimum building setbacks; parking requirements (loosening standards to avoid large areas of parking); buffers; landscaping; building finishes; and exterior signage. The intent of the recommendations is the support Delaware Avenue as a pedestrian-scale, village downtown; Elmwood Avenue as a location for less restricted, general business; and Kenmore Avenue as a more diverse business district, with residential, office and retail uses. Please refer to the Village's Plan for further details.
- **Old Town Rezoning**

There are significant areas of the Old Town neighborhood that are zoned commercial, even though the uses are residential. This is a vestige of when the neighborhood was a more self-contained village, and areas were set aside for a "downtown." These areas should be rezoned to residential use.
- **Overlay Districts**

To implement the access management standards outlined above, the Town should develop overlay districts for the major corridors that address the number of curb cuts, access, etc. The overlay would also address aesthetic issues, to help improve the image of the Town.

## G. Additional Recommendations

- **Sheridan Drive Improvement Project:**

This would entail a major reconstruction of Sheridan Drive to improve all forms of transportation and the aesthetics of this roadway. The project would include improvements to intersections, adding more pedestrian crossings (including Safe Zones), enhancing the sidewalk areas (trees, walls, etc.), streetscape features, bike lanes, bus stops, better connections to the businesses, etc. This work would be combined with zoning changes to the Commercial districts (most probably a Zoning Overlay).
- **Delaware Avenue Improvement Project:**

Improvements similar to the recommended improvements on Sheridan Drive should also be provided along Delaware Avenue.
- **A PDR (Purchase of Development Rights) Program**

The Town has limited areas of remaining open space. The Town should consider a PDR program or the outright purchasing of some of the remaining important open space features of the Town.
- **New Recreation/Community Facilities:**

High quality services are important to Town residents, and the Town should continually be evaluating what type of services meet needs. Potential projects include improvements/renovations of ice rinks, soccer fields, facilities for seniors, etc.
- **Creation of a 485-b type program for residential housing improvements.**

There is a good level of private investment in housing improvements in the Town. However, if this falls off or if additional investment is desired, the Town should consider creating a program that provides tax incentives to make home improvements. It would follow the model of the Commercial 485b tax program, where the increase in assessment due to the improvements is phased in, so that the homeowner does not bear the full cost of added taxes immediately. This program would target those areas that are seeing the stresses of blighted conditions.
- **Further enhancement of the tree maintenance/tree-planting program.**

The Town has an excellent tree program, but trees are very important to quality of life, aesthetics and sense of community in the Town. Also, many of the trees in the Town were planted over a short time frame, and are reaching the end of their life expectancy at a similar time. There are also many areas where there are concentrations of single species. These facts suggest this may become a larger issue in the near future. Studies have shown that the presence of mature trees and vegetation tends to increase property values. The Town should continue to be at the forefront of this issue.
- **Promote efforts/pressures to improve the odor issue and aesthetics at the waterfront/bridge area.**

The Town should promote efforts to eliminate the objectionable odors near the waterfront in the vicinity of the Grand Island Bridge. Identifying the source and means to mitigate them are desirable since they could deter development of the Isle View/300 acres region. This effort should consist of enforcement of standards and cooperation with area businesses.
- **"Gateway Projects"**

Gateway projects, or attractive improvements at several prominent entrances to the community (Niagara Falls Boulevard at major Intersections, entrances to I-290, etc.) would help establish a higher quality image for the Town.

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- **Town/School Cooperation**

The Town and School District should step up their efforts in utilizing/cooperating with the use of each other's facilities. Schools in many of the neighborhoods are the most prominent and important feature. The Town and the School District should explore whether the schools could be more integrated into the neighborhoods (provide more services: e.g. shared library services, use of school buildings for neighborhood meetings, etc.)

- **Utilities**

The wastewater treatment plant staff will continuously optimize the operation of their existing treatment processes while modifying and changing equipment when it becomes cost effective. An example of this approach is the current Solids Handling Project which involves the replacement of the existing Zimpro sludge conditioning and vacuum dewatering systems with a more efficient and cost effective centrifuge process.

- **War Memorial**

There are proposals to develop a War Memorial in the Town of Tonawanda in honor of local service men and women. The proposed "Town Center" area is one potential location. Private donations could be solicited to defray the cost.

- **"Marketing" Package**

Creation of a Town marketing package and image program will help to promote the community as a desirable place to work and live. The package will stress the waterfront, strong neighborhoods, a well-balanced industrial/commercial base, community amenities and services, stable taxes, central location/easy access to the region, etc.

- **Transit**

The Town should work with GBNRTC and NFTA to expand transit options for residents, particularly for cross-town service. Improvements should also include more creative alternatives to traditional bus routes, such as commuter service to major employers (including those in adjacent communities); jitney service (on-demand transit) for seniors, paratransit (small businesses and van service); and temporary service to major special events.

- **Bikes**

Work with the GBNRTC on providing additional "bicycle-friendly features", such as bike racks, park-and-bike lots and locker service for bicyclists.



## SECTION VI: IMPLEMENTATION

Planning is an on-going effort, and the preparation of the Town of Tonawanda's Comprehensive Plan is only a first step. As important is the next stage, which is to begin implementation of the ideas and concepts outlined here. This section of the document provides an implementation table that summarizes and prioritizes the recommendations for the Town of Tonawanda.

Each item in this section has an assigned priority, ranked as high, medium or low. High priority items are issues that are important to achieving the goals and objectives of the Town, and should generally be addressed in the near term (1 to 2 years). Not all of these high priority items will be accomplished within that one to two year time frame, but they are issues of high importance where at least preliminary progress should be instituted. Items with moderate to low priority ranking are actions that the Town can take a longer time frame to address.

While the priority listing provides a general guideline to scheduling, it is important to take a flexible approach. It is likely that some items with lower priority will actually be accomplished prior to higher priority items. Partly, this will be a function of effort, as some high priority issues are long-term actions that cannot be accomplished overnight, while some lower priority actions are items that can be accomplished easily. Some actions may get accomplished because a particular group or organization may want to adopt as a project (e.g. neighborhood gateways). In some instances, state or federal priorities may affect the scheduling of actions: if funding because available for a particular project, the Town may choose to move forward on a lower priority item in order to take advantage of this assistance. Accomplishing projects wherever possible is encouraged, regardless of the priority ranking. The cumulative effect of many smaller projects can be significant and help build momentum and support for other improvements.

Perhaps the most important implementation item is the need to constantly monitor circumstances in the Town and reprioritize actions as conditions change. The Town should establish a steering committee to take ownership of implementation actions. This committee would monitor accomplishments and conditions, and make adjustments to prioritization or specific recommendations as implementation items move forward and/or as conditions change. This committee would develop subcommittees to address particular topics, and would be responsible to provide annual updates on progress to the Town Board.

### Administrative Actions

The following actions are high priority items that should take place immediately in order to begin the process of implementation.

- **Comprehensive Plan Adoption:** the Town Board, after holding the appropriate public hearing and completing the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process, should adopt the comprehensive plan.
- **Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee:** the Town Board should form a comprehensive plan implementation committee by resolution. The composition of the Committee is at the discretion of the Town Board, but it is recommended that a member of the Town Board or the Planning Board chair the Committee. A good model is the Comprehensive Plan Board, which oversaw the preparation of this document. This group had diverse membership, including

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representation from the Town Board, the Planning Board, the County, ECIDA, the School Districts, the business community and other Town committees and interests. The Implementation Committee would meet at scheduled times, as needed, to assess implementation activities and progress. Several meetings may be necessary in the first year or two after adoption. The meeting schedule can be adjusted to need thereafter. The committee would be responsible to help ensure that the plan is being implemented, evaluate the results of actions, re-prioritize implementation actions as necessary, and suggest modifications to the plan as required.

- **Distribute Copies of the plan:** The Town should provide copies of the plan to the Town's boards, departments and committees.
- **Implementation Budget:** Each year at budget time, the Implementation Committee will provide the Town Board with an approximate budget needed for the coming year's implementation actions. The committee will also provide assistance to the Town Board in identifying and seeking grants for these actions. The Town Board will then budget for these actions and/or apply for grants.

## Implementation Summary Table

This section of the report provides an initial list of actions for the Town to undertake. Shown as a table of actions, it indicates priority, type of action, responsible parties and, where available, an estimated cost. It begins with the procedural actions that must occur in order to adopt and begin implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, and then follows the format of the Recommendations section.

### Implementation Actions: Procedural

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Procedural Actions</b>				
Adopt the Comprehensive Plan	High Immediate	Legislation	Town Board	NA- minimal cost
Form Implementation Committee	High Immediate	Procedural	Town Board	NA- minimal cost
Distribute copies of Plan to Town Departments, Boards, Committees	High Near-term	Administrative	Town	Local (photocopying)
Develop implementation budget	High Near-term	Administrative	Town Board	Local



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### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Waterfront</b>				
New industrial access road through Isle View site <sup>9</sup> : design road, conduct SEQR, build road	High Near-term	Capital investment- infrastructure	Town, TTDC, Erie County, GBNRTC, DOT, private sector	Economic development programs, NYS DOT Industrial Access program, private sector
North Youngmann Commerce Center: SEQR, site planning, marketing	High Near-term- action underway	Economic Development	Town, County, ECIDA, TTDC	Economic development programs
Isle View (300-acre) site: site assembly, infrastructure (water/sewer) site planning, design, capital investment, marketing- including designation as "Shovel Ready"	High Near-term	Economic Development	Town, TTDC, Erie County, private sector, Planning Board, building department	Economic development programs, Town, private sector, NYS
New Access Road- Sawyer Road/ James Drive area	Moderate Mid-term	Economic Development	Town, TTDC, Erie County, private sector	Economic development programs; Industrial Access program
Recreational Use of former landfill: final closure procedures; site design, capital investment	Moderate Long-term	Capital investment- Recreational	Town, NYS DEC	Brownfields programs; parks development programs
Waterfront trails, through Isle View site and priority access areas: design, construction	Moderate Various	Capital Investment- Recreational	Town, GBNRTC, private sector, Niagara River Greenway Cmsn.	Town Parks Department, NYS Parks development programs, transportation enhancements, private sector
River Road Streetscape: develop standards; obtain funds (perhaps Revolving Loan Fund); outreach to property owners, construction	High Long-term	Capital investment- beautification	Town, private sector	Economic development programs

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<sup>9</sup> Isle View area is roughly bounded by River Road, City of Tonawanda line, Two-Mile Creek Road and the Seaway Landfill site.

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Waterfront (continued)</b>				
Cherry Farm Park: acquisition, development, operations	High, On-going	Capital investment- Parks development Recreational	Town, PRP's, ESD, NYS Parks, Niagara River Greenway Commission	Brownfields programs, NYS Parks development programs, PRP's , Power Authority licensing
Riverfront Park: acquisition, design, development, operation	High Mid-term	Capital investment- Parks development Recreational	Town, Planning Board, Parks Department, Niagara River Greenway Commission	Brownfields programs, NYS Parks development programs, private sector , Power Authority licensing
RiverWorld and other business development (James Avenue): technical assistance, business planning, recruitment, etc.	Moderate, On-going	Economic development	Town, TTDC, Erie County, ECIDA, NYS	Small business assistance programs, Brownfield Programs, PRP's. ESD, NYS, private sector
Continue to support and seek remediation of contaminated sites, with appropriate reuse of sites.	High On-going	Monitoring	Army Corps of Engineers, NYDEC, Town Environmental Committee	Responsible parties; NY DEC, EPA, ACOE
Implement LWRP and update as necessary	High On-going for implementation; as needed for updates	Planning	Town, Planning Board	NA



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### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Economic Development</b>				
Streetscape & façade Improvements for major roadways, business districts: develop standards, obtain funds (perhaps Revolving Loan Fund); outreach to property owners construction	High Mid-term	Economic Development	Town, TTDC, property owners, business owners; technical assistance from Main Street programs	Small business assistance programs, NYS (Main Streets program), private sector
Rail System monitoring	Moderate Mid-term	Capital improvements, infrastructure	Town, private sector	State, federal, private
Landscaping Standards for residential and commercial : see zoning	Moderate- Near-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board, Building Department	NA- to develop standards State, federal, local to implement programs
Parking standards: research appropriate standards, write new codes, adopt as part of zoning code	Low- Long term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA
Design Standards: write new standards- perhaps as visual based code, outreach to property owners	Moderate Near to mid-term	Either regulatory (land use controls) or educational (standards available but not mandatory)	Town, Planning Board	NA
Zoning: Village edges: see zoning Also, other adjacent communities	Moderate On-going	Regulatory- zoning	Town, Planning Board, Village of Kenmore, other adjacent municipalities	NA
Town Center: longer term, more detailed study required	Low- Long-term	Planning, capital investment, regulatory-zoning	Town	Depends on extent of improvements
Ensure competitive tax structure	High On-going	Tax structure	Town Board, assessor, TTDC, ESD	NA

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Thoroughfares</b>				
Access management standards: work with NYS DOT, GBNRTC to develop standards; adopt as part of zoning code	High On-going	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, GBNRTC, NYS DOT	NYS DOT, GBNRTC, DOS (Quality Communities)
Traffic System Management improvements: more study required	High Mid-term	Transportation Planning; capital investment	Town, NYS DOT, GBNRTC	NYS DOT, GBNRTC
Kenmore Avenue corridor study: redesign & construction: detailed study will be needed	High Near term	Transportation planning, capital investment	County, Village, NYS DOT, GBNRTC, City of Buffalo	NYS DOT, GBNRTC, Erie County, Village of Kenmore, City of Buffalo
Niagara Falls Boulevard Study: study initiated with Town of Amherst <sup>10</sup>	High On-going	Transportation Planning, capital investment	Town, NYS DOT, GBNRTC, Amherst	NYS DOT, GBNRTC-DOS (Quality Comm.)
Problem Intersections: more detailed study will be required	High Longer-term	Transportation Planning	Town, NYS DOT, GBNRTC	NYS DOT, GBNRTC
Commercial corridor overlay districts: see zoning	High Mid-term	Regulatory- land use planning	Town, Planning Board	NA
Cooperate with Transportation planners re. I-290, I-190, other roads	High On-going	Coordination/ communication	Town, NYS DOT, GBNRTC	NA
Reconstruction of Town-owned roadways- determine needs, priorities and schedule	Moderate On-going	Planning; capital investment	Town Highway Department	NA
Pedestrian improvements/sidewalks	Moderate On-going	Capital investment	Town, NYS DOT, GBNRTC, private sector	NYS DOT, GBNRTC, Town, private sector
Traffic Capacity Analysis: actions from previous studies and new needs	High On-going	Transportation Planning	Town, Highway, NYS, GBNRTC	Town, State, federal, county (depends on jurisdiction)
Maintain program for reconstruction of Town Roads	High On-going	Capital improvements	Town, Highway Dept.	Town

<sup>10</sup> NOTE: NYS Quality Communities Grant Application pending

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<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority/ Time Frame</b>	<b>Type of Action</b>	<b>Responsible Parties</b>	<b>Potential Funding Source</b>
<b>(Thoroughfares, continued)</b>				
Study methods of improving traffic flow on Brighton Road	High Near-term	Transportation Planning	Town Highway Dept., Police, Town Board	State, County, Federal
Investigate merits of redesign of Parker to increase traffic capacity	Medium Long-term	Transportation Planning	Town Highway Dept., Planning Board, Police	Town, GBNRTC
Participate in GBNRTC Bicycle Committee	Medium On-going	Transportation Planning	Town, Parks	NA

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Connectivity</b>				
Sherwood Greenway- currently being developed	High Near-term	Capital investment- trail	Town, County	Funded
Erie Canalway- currently being developed	High Near-term	Capital investment- trail	Town, County	Funded
"Mid-Town Greenway"- design, construction	High Mid to long-term	Capital investment- trail	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Brighton Park Connector- design, construction	Moderate Mid to long-term	Capital investment- trail- could be on-road	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Lehigh Valley Rail line trail- design	Moderate Longer term	Capital investment- trail	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Kenmore east-west linkages	Low On-road- mid term Off-road- longer	Capital investment- trail could be on-road	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Brighton Road trailway	Moderate On-road- mid term Off-road- longer	Capital investment- trail, could be on-road	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Bike lane/path improvements	Moderate On-road- mid term Off-road- longer	Capital investment	Town, County, GBNRTC	County, GBNRTC
Sidewalk improvements	Moderate On-going	Capital investment	Town	Town

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Neighborhoods</b>				
Foster Neighborhood watch program	High On-going	Organizational	Neighborhoods, Town, Police, Crime Resistance Executive Board (CREB)	State grants to CREB
Neighborhood Assets: ensure upkeep of neighborhood "anchors" and assets (parks, schools, businesses, etc.)	Moderate- Long-term	Planning, capital investment	Town, Schools, neighborhoods, churches, private sector	Depends on project: Parks development funds, private sector
Property maintenance standards and enforcement	High On-going	Enforcement	Town, building department, Community Development	NA
Property maintenance standards: technical assistance, financial guidance, outreach, construction	High On-going	Technical Assistance, education, outreach, possible incentives	Town, building department, Community Development	Private, federal (CDBG), grants
Community redevelopment and blight prevention/correction	Moderate Near-term	Community Development	Town	CDBG and HOME funds, Federal & NYS grants
Welcome packet	Medium On-going	Outreach	Organizations, service clubs, Town, possibly Chamber of Commerce	Private sector
Post office- encourage USPS to build a central facility for Town	Moderate- On-going	Coordination, outreach	Federal Government Town, USPS	Federal Government (US Postal Service)

## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Zoning</b>				
Rezoning of unzoned property, improperly zoned areas	High Near-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board, Building Department	NA
New district creation: (TND) <sup>11</sup> research requirements, develop zoning, adopt as part of zoning code	Moderate Mid-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA
Signage regulations: research requirements, develop standards, adopt as part of zoning code	Moderate Mid-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA
Zoning "Guide": first step to make code more user-friendly	High Near-term	Educational	Town, Planning Board	NA
Zoning revisions: more extensive changes to zoning	Moderate On-going	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA
Landscaping standards: develop standards, adopt as part of zoning	Moderate Mid-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Planning Board, Environmental Committee, Town	NA
Zoning: Town edges: write new zoning standards to complement Village's standards; and work with adjacent communities to secure compatible zoning, design standards	Moderate Mid-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board, Village of Kenmore, adjacent communities.	NA
Old Town rezoning	High Near-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA
Commercial Corridor Overlay Districts: develop standards, adopt as part of zoning code	High Mid-term	Regulatory- land use controls	Town, Planning Board	NA

<sup>11</sup> "Traditional Neighborhood District" – a district designed to support pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development in the style of traditional neighborhoods or villages.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Implementation Actions: By Topic Area

Action	Priority/ Time Frame	Type of Action	Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Source
<b>Additional Recommendations</b>				
Sheridan Drive improvements: more detailed study required	Moderate Long-term	Transportation Planning	Town, NYS DOT	NYS DOT
Delaware Road improvements: more detailed study required	Moderate Long-term	Transportation Planning	Town, NYS DOT	NYS DOT
PDR program: inventory resources, prioritize, possible purchase	Low Long-term	Open Space planning, purchase	Town	NYS
New recreational facilities: evaluate needs: more detailed study needed	Moderate Long-term	Recreational planning, capital investment	Town, Parks Department	NYS- recreational programs
Homeowner investment incentives- develop and promote	Moderate If needed	Tax incentive program	Town, Community Development, TTDC	NA
Tree program enhancement	High On-going	Investment	Town, Highway, Parks Departments	NYS, Town, federal
Town/school cooperation	Moderate On-going	Communication, coordination	Town, School Districts	NA
Gateways: attractive improvements at major entrances	Low Varies	Capital investment	Town	Town, State grants
Marketing Package to enhance Town image, attract businesses & residents	High On-going	Education, marketing, outreach	Town, Private sector, TTDC	Town, Private sector
Transit: encourage GBNRTC and NFTA to expand options	Moderate On-going	Coordination, Education	GBNRTC, NFTA	GBNRTC, NFTA
Bikes: research needs, implement project	Moderate On-going	Coordination, Education	GBNRTC	GBNRTC, private sector
War Memorial	Moderate Long-term	Capital investment	Town, Veteran's organizations, Chamber of Commerce	Town, private donations
Continue to work toward alleviation of stormwater/ SSO issue; and prioritize water and sewer system maintenance and expansion activities	High On-going	Capital investment	Town, Water Resources	State, Federal, Town



## VII. ANNUAL REVIEW

A Comprehensive Plan is only useful if it reflects current conditions. In today's environment, where change is constant and unpredictable, it is important to continue to monitor conditions and assess whether the actions recommended in the plan remain valid, or whether a shift in emphasis is needed in order to remain consistent with the intent and substance of the plan.

It is recommended that the Town of Tonawanda Town Board establish a Committee to conduct an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the plan remains a dynamic and useful document. This Committee would also be responsible for judging the accomplishments of the Town in implementing and enforcing the goals and objectives of the plan. This Committee will most likely consist of members of the Town Planning Board, assisted by representatives from the local community, as designated by the Town Board. The annual review shall include the following.

- All Site plan and subdivision approvals issued during the previous year will be reviewed in conjunction with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan to determine where this activity has occurred, if it has occurred consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and the overall impact of these planning approvals on general land use trends in the Town.
- Any major rezoning decisions approved during the previous year will be reviewed in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan to determine if these actions were consistent with the recommendations of the plan and the overall impact of the rezoning decisions on the general land use trends in the Town.
- The zoning actions specified in the Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed to determine which items were accomplished and which ones should be undertaken in the coming years. The overall impact of these rezoning decisions should be evaluated with respect to general land use trends in the Town. The Planning Board should also determine if there are any new zoning actions that should be added to this list.
- The list of other priority items, as contained in the implementation section of the Comprehensive Plan, will be reviewed to determine which items were accomplished during the previous year. It should also be determined if there is a need to update or amend this list.
- Comments from Town Board, departments and committees and public input gathered during the previous year will be evaluated in conjunction with the information ascertained from the reviews outlined above, and an action plan for Comprehensive Plan implementation activity in the coming year will be developed.
- The Committee will prepare a statement outlining the accomplishments of the past year, including a listing of all site plan, subdivision and rezoning approvals, and a list of accomplishments in terms of zoning code amendments and other implementation achievements, as specified in the Comprehensive Plan. This information, along with the action plan for the continuing implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, should be presented to the Town Board for their review and approval.

In addition to the review of accomplishments and needs, the annual update report should include of a list or recommended actions. The specific actions to be accomplished may differ from the list of actions in the implementation plan, as long as the intent is consistent.



## TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

By following this procedure, the Town will be able to continually monitor the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Plan in achieving the vision it articulates. It is anticipated that the Committee will need to meet several times during the first year in order to establish procedures and review the priority actions. As items are implemented and the procedure becomes more established, annual meetings are likely to be sufficient. The adjustments, amendments and changes recommended by the Committee and approved by the Town Board will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan by acceptance by the Town Board, and provided as an annual update document.

Approximately every five years, as circumstances indicate the need, the Comprehensive Plan should be more thoroughly reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect current priorities, needs and goals, using the annual update reports to assist in this effort. At the end of this more extensive review and update, the Town should incorporate all changes into an updated plan, and undergo formal adoption procedures (including public hearings and SEQR review) to accept the updated plan. Unless there are major changes to circumstances or conditions in the Town, it is anticipated that these reviews and re-adoption procedures will be simple. They are important, however, in order to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains a relevant and useful document to guide growth and development in the Town, and help the citizens of the Town of Tonawanda build a community that meets their goals for its future.



## SECTION VIII – ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Typically, the potential environmental impacts of a Comprehensive Plan are evaluated through a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). To meet this requirement, the Comprehensive Plan itself can be set up to represent the GEIS (see §272-a.8 of Town Law). This format enables the reviewers, the Lead Agency, all involved and interested agencies, and the public to review one comprehensive document that outlines Plans for the future and the potential environmental implications of the Plan. This section of the Comprehensive Plan has been provided to assist with the environmental review for this document.

A GEIS, like an Environmental Impact Statement, includes a section on Environmental Setting. The Inventory section (Section III) of this Comprehensive Plan provides a description of the environmental setting of the Town of Tonawanda as it exists now. Section III includes information on the following:

- Existing Land Use (Subsection A and Map 2: Existing Land Use)
- Land Use Regulations (Subsection B and Map 3: Zoning)
- Socio-economic Conditions (Subsection C and D)
- Streams and Rivers (Subsection E and Map 5: Environmental Features)
- Watersheds and Water Quality (Subsection E)
- Floodplains (Subsection E and Map 5: Environmental Features)
- Wetlands (Subsection E and Map 5: Environmental Features)
- Significant Habitats (Subsection E)
- Soils (Subsection E)
- Environmental Hazards (Subsection E and Map 5: Environmental Features)
- Historic and Archeological Resources (Subsection E)
- Utilities (Subsection F)
- Transportation (Subsection G and Map 6: General Transportation)
- Parks and Recreation (Subsection H, Map 4: Neighborhoods and Parks; Map 7: Town Facilities)
- Schools (Subsection H and Map 7: Town Facilities)
- Emergency Facilities (Subsection H)
- Government Facilities (Subsection H and Map 7: Town Facilities)
- Economic Development (Subsection I and Map 8: Economic Development)

### **A. Potential Significant Adverse Environmental Impacts**

The underlying purpose and a major goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to promote appropriate land use in the Town of Tonawanda, and to avoid significant adverse environment impacts in the community that it covers. However, it is important here to acknowledge and discuss potential adverse impacts. This section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses potential impacts to the community related to land use and development, which would be affected by the Plan.

#### ***Short term/long term and cumulative impacts (also refer to Section IV: Findings)***

The Comprehensive Plan is designed to properly guide growth in the Town to lessen the negative impacts of land use and development decisions. Based on the environmental setting of the Town of Tonawanda, the following potentially significant adverse environmental impacts could occur if the

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

community did not plan adequately and provide the proper tools for the management of growth and development. The discussion is based on the format of the Full Environmental Assessment form (SEQR Areas of Review). The following are the potential short term and long term impacts due to present growth patterns and how they may be affected by the actions of this Plan:

**a. Impacts on Land**

- In general, the Town has limited areas for future development. This Plan helps to focus new development and redevelopment to areas where land is already developed.
- There are areas of non-developed lands, such as the waterfront area, where new development may occur.

**b. Impacts on Water**

- The Town has very limited areas of Federal and State wetlands. These areas have been identified on the Comprehensive Plan mapping. (See Map 5: Environmental Features)
- The Town's major water features include the Niagara River, which runs along the western border of the Town, as well as the waterways of Ellicott Creek, Tonawanda Creek and Two-Mile Creek. There are some areas of floodplains associated with these waterways.
- The Town will continue to implement the new Phase 2 stormwater regulations (SPDES), thus helping to protect the community's waterways (including protection from erosion and siltation).
- The Town is completely serviced by public water and sewer systems. The Town will continue to invest in this infrastructure and does not foresee major problems with capacity issues.

**c. Impacts on Plants and Animals**

- Significant wildlife habitats are located on Strawberry Island. New York State is responsible for this area, which is protected.
- Through the actions of this Plan, more protection will be afforded the Town's waterways. These actions will help to protect habitats on Strawberry Island and also non-protected species and habitats.

**d. Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources**

- There are no agricultural lands in the Town.

**e. Impacts on Aesthetic Resources**

- As a fully developed suburb, most aesthetic resources in the Town are associated with parkland or man-made features, such as architecture or landscaping.
- Deterioration of buildings can be seen as an aesthetic issue.

**f. Impact on Open Space and Recreation**

- The Town has limited major areas of undeveloped open space. These existing areas are predominantly located in the waterfront area of the Town.
- The Town has an excellent park system, with parks and playgrounds distributed throughout the community. School facilities also provide open space and recreational resources. Some additional recreational opportunities are supplied by private businesses and by governmental facilities in adjacent communities.

**g. Impact on Transportation**

- The Town has excellent access to the Interstate Highway System through I-190 and I-290.
- Several state and county roads also traverse the Town.
- The Town, like many suburban communities, has problem areas in its transportation system, such as problem intersections or congestion.
- Development and growth both within and outside of the Town has transportation impacts.
- The transportation system is heavily dependent upon automotive travel.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Land uses throughout most of the Town are dense enough to support alternative modes of travel, such as walking or biking, but there are not always adequate facilities for these alternative modes.
- Rail remains an important mode of transportation in the Town for commercial (freight) use.
- Additional development or redevelopment has the potential to increase demands on the transportation system, or increase potential conflicts between pedestrians, bikes and automobiles.
- The plan contains several recommendations that are intended to lessen negative impacts on transportation systems in the Town.

## ***h. Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood***

- The Town of Tonawanda has experienced shrinking household sizes for several decades.
- As demographics change and new families move into homes now occupied by smaller households, there is a potential for population increases.
- The Town was built to accommodate a larger population than is currently residing in the Town, and is able to absorb the level population growth likely to occur due to the Plan's recommendations without negative impacts to community character.
- The Plan focuses mainly on redevelopment and making the community more aesthetically pleasing and enhancing quality of life features for the community.
- The Plan's recommendations are intended to strengthen and improve neighborhood character.

## **B. Adverse Environmental Impacts That Can Not Be Avoided**

With or without the adoption and implementation of the Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan, the Town will continue to have new development and redevelopment that will impact the environment and the character of the Town. The adoption of this Plan will allow the Town to better manage growth and development, and reduce potential environmental impacts. All development actions taking place after the adoption of this Plan will still be subject to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process on a site specific basis. Nothing contained in this document supplants the necessity of adequate review of future actions. However, this Comprehensive Plan will be a resource that can be used to facilitate the review of future development actions. The Plan will have the greatest impact on rezoning requests, because zoning must be in accordance with the community's Comprehensive Plan.

## **C. Growth Inducing Aspects of the Plan**

Most of the implementation actions outlined in this Plan will help to control and better direct growth within the community. Certain implementation actions will act to encourage certain types of development or redevelopment in specific areas of the Town. However, the Town is largely built out, and most of the anticipated development will be improvements and upgrades, consistent with the general character of the Town.

## **D. Mitigation Measures**

It is the objective of this Comprehensive Plan to help to reduce the potential impacts that could be caused by the present development trends in the planning community. This can be accomplished by providing techniques for changing the development trends of a community, such as amending zoning or other development regulations, or by providing tools to help mitigate the possible impacts of those development trends (improved infrastructure, increased/improved standards for development, etc.). A good Comprehensive Plan will supply

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

techniques for changing the direction of the community, and the tools for reducing the impacts of development that themselves do not create other adverse environmental impacts. The following section discusses the Plan's recommendations and the logic as to why and how they help mitigate the potential impacts of future growth. (See Section V for further discussion of the recommendations.)

**a. Impacts on Land**

- Most of the remaining undeveloped lands in the Town are located in the waterfront district. This Plan supports the Waterfront Land Use Study. Development guidelines for the district encourage preservation of resources, clustering and compatible development.
- The Plan encourages redevelopment of existing underdeveloped properties, which will divert development away from undeveloped lands.

**b. Impacts on Water**

- Waterfront lands in Tonawanda are protected by a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), which the Town recently updated. This Plan reaffirms that document.
- Continuation of the implementation of the Phase 2 stormwater regulations will help improve water quality issues.

**c. Impacts on Plants and Animals**

- The Town is largely built up.
- By encouraging redevelopment of existing developed lands and preservation of important open space, the Plan minimizes potential impacts on plants and animals.

**d. Impacts on Agricultural Land Resources**

- There are no agricultural lands in the Town of Tonawanda.

**e. Impacts on Aesthetic Resources**

- The Plan recommends many techniques to protect the aesthetic resources of the Town and to improve them as redevelopment occurs. These techniques include overlay districts, façade programs, buying important lands, design guidelines, gateway improvements, protection of historic properties, etc.

**f. Impacts on Historic and Archaeological Resources**

- The Plan supports the protection of important historic resources in the Town. There are no known significant archaeological resources in the Town.

**g. Impacts on Open Space, Parks and Recreation**

- The Plan identifies the important open space and recreation features of the community.
- The Plan recommends trailways and connections to improve public access to open space, parks and recreational assets in the Town.
- The Plan recommends some opportunities for additional recreational facilities, such as converting the former Town landfill to recreational use.
- The Plan also recommends additional coordination of recreation with the school systems.

**h. Impacts on Transportation**

- Transportation in Tonawanda is heavily based on roadways and automobiles. The Plan portrays the existing conditions of these roadway systems.
- The Plan makes numerous suggestions to improve multi-modal opportunities, such as enhanced trail connections, bike paths, and pedestrian improvements to encourage walking and biking.

# TOWN OF TONAWANDA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Land use recommendations in the Plan are designed to facilitate pedestrian or bicyclist access to uses, potentially reducing congestion on the roadways.
  - The Plan identifies localized problems within the community, and recommends continued cooperation with regional transportation entities to address these problems.
  - The Plan recommends access management improvements on major corridors in the Town, as well as other traffic system improvements, such as coordinated signalization.
  - The Plan also makes other recommendations to address congestion and traffic in the Town.
- i. ***Impact on Growth and Character of Community or Neighborhood***
- The projected growth rate of the Town of Tonawanda is for continued modest population loss over the next two decades.
  - Much of the population decline is due to shrinking household size. The Town was built to accommodate a larger number of people, and could accommodate additional population growth without severe negative impacts.
  - The adoption of the Plan may lead to the reversal of population decline or modest growth, if younger families move in and there are more people per household.
  - The Plan provides the opportunity to better control how redevelopment occurs in the Town, encouraging mixed use, revitalization of existing commercial districts, and enhancing the character of the community.
  - Recommendations discussed throughout the Plan focuses on the character of the community and will help to create a Town Center, better commercial districts, improved design standards throughout the community, revitalization of older neighborhoods, and improved gateways.

## **E. Evaluation of Alternatives**

Throughout the Planning process, alternatives for helping residents of the Town Tonawanda achieve their Goals and Vision were evaluated, and the recommendations in this Plan represent the concepts that best express their Goals. Recommendations and implementation alternatives were evaluated for not only their desired results, but also their impact to the environment, the needs of local residents, private property rights, and the vitality of the community.

The evaluation focused primarily on the near to immediate term recommendations. Long-term actions were not thoroughly evaluated since these actions were intended for potential implementation only if short-term recommendations are not achieving the desired results.

The “No Action” alternative was considered for the Town. However this alternative does not afford the Town the ability to direct and manage growth or mitigate potential environmental impacts, and was therefore deemed inappropriate. There is also the potential that the “No Action” alternative would lead to increased negative impacts, as the Plan encourages revitalization and enhancements to the Town which may not occur without the Plan in place.

**APPENDIX A:  
NEIGHBORHOOD FEATURES**

## Neighborhood Recommendations

Neighborhoods are a critical element of the quality of life in the Town of Tonawanda. In many ways, the Town of Tonawanda characterizes many of the priorities and policies of the neo-urbanist, "Smart Growth" movement in planning. In an era when many policy analysts are attempting to address issues of "sprawl", the Town of Tonawanda is an example of a community that meets many of the standards given to promote higher quality of life in urban America.

### Smart Growth/ Neo-Urbanist Policies

- **Encourage Compact Development**

The Town of Tonawanda is already built at a compact, "walkable" scale, with attractive, established neighborhoods, characterized by well-kept homes, mature street trees, neighborhood schools and parks

The scale and location of the Town places it within convenient access to regional shopping centers; the regional job market; and the regional park system (River Walk; waterfront parks; Ellicott Creek Park, etc.). The Town has excellent recreational amenities, including waterfront access. These assets are easily accessible.

- **Mixed Land Uses**

Much more than many suburbs, Tonawanda has encouraged a mix of land uses, with residential, commercial and public uses mixed throughout neighborhoods, and industrial uses segregated but convenient to residences.

- **Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices and promote walkable communities**

Residents of the Town of Tonawanda have a broader choice of transportation than most suburban residents, with more transit, sidewalks, and off-road trails than is typical. This is an area where improvements are recommended, with amenities to promote pedestrian activity (benches, landscaping, crosswalks, etc.) and policy stances in support of improved transit.

- **Create a Wider Range Of Housing Choices**

This is an area where improvements are needed. There is a need for a wider range of housing options, including ownership "empty-nester" options, move-up housing for growing families, and additional senior housing.

## Neighborhood Features

The following discussion outlines the assets and features of each residential neighborhood in the Town of Tonawanda. Because we were trying to incorporate all residential areas into a "Planning Neighborhood", these neighborhoods do not necessarily correspond to what residents may include within their neighborhood. Also, some areas, where there was no strong neighborhood identification, have been artificially created for the purposes of this discussion.

It provides a listing of the assets and features of the neighborhood, and lists some of the issues and concerns that pertain to the area. Specific recommendations for improvements to the neighborhood are also given. The format of this section is designed to encourage local residents and neighborhood groups to expand upon the discussion provided here, and develop locally-based recommendations for their neighborhood.



### Irvington Creekside

Between Ellicott Creek and Tonawanda Creek in the northeastern portion of Town.

#### Features/Assets

- Ellicott Creek Park
- Irvington Playground
- Access to bike trails through Ellicott Creek Park, extending west and east to wider regional trail system
- Future trail extension (Erie Canalway) is being developed
- St. Christopher School
- Churches: St. Christopher
- Shopping on Niagara Falls Boulevard

#### Issues

- Retail uses not walkable because of orientation on Niagara Falls Boulevard and high traffic volumes

#### Recommendations:

- Improve connections between neighborhood and adjacent retail
- Maintain local playground
- Proposed trail will improve access to other areas of the Town

### Raintree Island

Between Ellicott Creek and Tonawanda Creek in the northern portion of Town.

#### Features/Assets

- Ellicott Creek Park is nearby
- Access to bike trails through Ellicott Creek Park, extending west and east to wider regional trail system
- Future trail extension (Erie Canalway) is being developed
- Homes on Creekside Drive have frontage on Erie Canal (Tonawanda Creek).

#### Issues

- Access to Ellicott Creek Park could be improved
- Housing is a mix of single-family and apartments
- Recreational amenities are available to apartment residents (through apartment complex)
- Essentially no shopping services in vicinity

#### Recommendations:

- Improve access to Ellicott Creek Park and Brighton Park

### Parkview Triangle

Triangle of land formed by Ellicott Creek to the northwest, Niagara Falls Boulevard to the east and Niagara Mohawk right-of-way to the southwest.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very active community organization</li> <li>▪ Dexter Terrace School</li> <li>▪ Brighton Fire Department station</li> <li>▪ Shopping along Niagara Falls Boulevard</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Geographic isolation promotes strong neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪ High traffic volumes on adjacent roadways (Niagara Falls Boulevard, Ellicott Creek Road)</li> <li>▪ Traffic on Ellicott Creek Road impedes access to park and trails</li> <li>▪ Shopping difficult to walk to because of orientation on Niagara Falls Boulevard and high traffic volumes</li> <li>▪ Utility right-of-way separating neighborhood from adjoining neighborhood to the south (Green Acres North) could become trail linkage</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support efforts of community group</li> <li>▪ Address issues of traffic on Niagara Falls Boulevard</li> <li>▪ Improve access to Ellicott Creek Park by creating safe place to cross Ellicott Creek Road</li> <li>▪ Explore ways to improve bike access along Ellicott Creek Road</li> <li>▪ Improve connections between neighborhood and adjacent retail</li> </ul>
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### Green Acres North/Willowgrove

North of Youngmann Expressway (I-290) and east of Brighton Park in northeastern portion of Town. These two neighborhoods have been combined for assessment.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Brighton Park</li> <li>▪ Glendale School</li> <li>▪ Greenhaven Library</li> <li>▪ Shopping on Niagara Fall Boulevard</li> <li>▪ Churches: St. Bartholomew's Episcopal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High traffic volumes on adjacent roadways (Niagara Falls Boulevard, Ellicott Creek Road)</li> <li>▪ One access point to neighborhood from Niagara Falls Boulevard- traffic backups</li> <li>▪ Shopping difficult to walk to because of orientation on Niagara Falls Boulevard and high traffic volumes</li> <li>▪ Utility right-of-way separating neighborhood from adjoining neighborhood to the north (Parkview Triangle) could become a trail linkage</li> <li>▪ Condition of Greenhaven Library</li> <li>▪ Ellicott Creek Park is nearby, but access could be improved</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Address traffic issues on Niagara Falls Boulevard, particularly at entrance to neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Improve connections between neighborhood and adjacent retail</li> <li>▪ Improve access to Ellicott Creek Park by creating safe place to cross Ellicott Creek Road</li> <li>▪ Explore ways to improve bike access along Ellicott Creek Road; complete sidewalks along Ellicott Creek Road (including across former rail tracks)</li> <li>▪ Explore feasibility of trail along right-of-way (power lines)</li> <li>▪ Replace dying street trees</li> </ul> <p>Widen Willowgrove connection off Parker (east entrance)</p>
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### Colvin Estates

North of Brighton Park, South of Ellicott Creek in north of town.

**Features/Assets**

- Brighton Park
- St. Edmund School
- Churches: St. Edmund

**Issues**

- Excellent access to Brighton Park facilities
- Plaza at Colvin and Young provides variety of shopping opportunities, but no retail in walking distance

**Recommendations:**

- Improve pedestrian connections between Colvin Estates neighborhood and area shopping, such as Colvin Eggert plaza

### Alexander Hamilton/St. Amelia

South of Brighton Park, north of Eggert Road.

**Features/Assets**

- Alexander Hamilton School
- St. Amelia School
- Adjacent to Brighton Park
- Kenney Field within walking distance to part of neighborhood
- Brighton Fire Department station
- Neighborhood Watch group
- Churches: St. Amelia, Augustana Lutheran
- Shopping at Colvin-Eggert Plaza, Brighton-Eggert Plaza.

**Issues**

- Access to Brighton Park
- Traffic issues along Colvin, particularly at I-290 interchange

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure safe, convenient access to Brighton Park, Kenney Field
- Ensure continued viability of Colvin-Eggert Plazas to serve neighborhood needs
- Address I-290 Colvin exit traffic issues in conjunction with DOT corridor study

### Green Acres

South of Youngmann Expressway, west of Niagara Falls Boulevard.

**Features/Assets**

- Ken-Ton Community Center
- Shopping along Niagara Falls Boulevard
- Churches: First Trinity Lutheran and Zion United Church of Christ
- Kenmore East High School in adjacent neighborhood- across Brighton Road
- Brighton Library in adjacent neighborhood- across Brighton Road

**Issues**

- Traffic congestion on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Brighton Road
- Minimal public green space within neighborhood
- Shopping along Niagara Falls Boulevard difficult to walk to because of high traffic volumes, automobile orientation
- Access to Brighton Park could be improved

**Recommendations:**

- Address traffic issues on Niagara Falls Boulevard
- Improve connections between neighborhood and adjacent retail
- Long-term, consider establishing a buffer between commercial on Niagara Falls Boulevard and adjacent residential properties
- Investigate feasibility of creating parkland around community center

### **Marvin Gardens/ Brighton/Fries Road area**

North of Sheridan Drive, west of Niagara Falls Boulevard. The two neighborhoods are combined for assessment purposes

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kenmore East High School</li> <li>▪ Brighton Library</li> <li>▪ Shopping on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive, Eggert Road, Brighton/Eggert</li> <li>▪ Brighton/Fries Road area has a neighborhood watch group</li> <li>▪ Churches: Grace Baptist, Temple Beth El, Brighton Community Baptist</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High traffic volumes on Niagara Falls Boulevard and Sheridan Drive; congestion in locations on Eggert Road and Brighton Road.</li> <li>▪ Issues of congestion at Brighton library, particularly in regard to parking</li> <li>▪ Large variety of shopping within short distance, but not easily accessible except by car.</li> <li>▪ No park or greenspace within the neighborhood except that associated with the school</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Address traffic issues, especially along Brighton, Eggert.</li> <li>▪ Explore options for Brighton Library</li> <li>▪ Improve connections between neighborhood and adjacent retail</li> <li>▪ Long-term, consider establishing a buffer between commercial on Niagara Falls Boulevard and adjacent residential properties</li> </ul>
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### **Area Around Thomas Edison School**

South of Eggert Road, north of Sheridan, east of Colvin. Not identified as a distinct neighborhood during public meetings.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thomas Edison School</li> <li>▪ Kenney Field at periphery</li> <li>▪ YMCA nearby</li> <li>▪ Church: Bethany United Methodist</li> <li>▪ Shopping at Brighton-Eggert Plaza, Sheridan Drive, Colvin-Eggert Plaza</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to Kenney Field, YMCA could be improved</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure safe access across Colvin and Brighton to Kenney Field</li> <li>▪ Ensure safe access to YMCA</li> <li>▪ Ensure continued viability of Brighton-Eggert and Colvin-Eggert Plazas to meet neighborhood needs</li> <li>▪ Explore feasibility of trail along NFTA right-of-way</li> <li>▪ Begin to foster greater neighborhood identity</li> </ul>
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## Lincoln Park/Curtis Park

Area north of Lincoln Park to Sheridan Drive. Two neighborhoods combined for assessment purposes.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lincoln Park</li> <li>▪ Benjamin Franklin School</li> <li>▪ Thomas Jefferson School</li> <li>▪ Curtis Park Playground</li> <li>▪ Shopping along Sheridan Drive, Niagara Falls Boulevard</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood watch in Lincoln Park area</li> <li>▪ Police Substation</li> <li>▪ Churches: Curtis Park United Presbyterian, Good Shepherd Lutheran</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential future trail linkage along NFTA right-of-way</li> <li>▪ Shopping difficult to access by foot</li> <li>▪ Lower-income area, with significant density, including two- and three-family homes</li> <li>▪ Portions of the area are eligible for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) based on income</li> <li>▪ Perceived crime issue</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make continued investments in CDBG funds to improve neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Ensure appropriate standards of home maintenance</li> <li>▪ Continue to encourage Neighborhood Watch, Police substation and other methods to enhance safety and security of neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Maintain independent identity of Curtis Park</li> <li>▪ Explore feasibility of trail along NFTA right-of-way</li> </ul>
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## Kenilworth

Southeastern corner of Town, north of Kenmore Avenue, west of Niagara Falls Boulevard.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kenilworth Playground</li> <li>▪ Kenilworth Library</li> <li>▪ Kenilworth Fire Department station</li> <li>▪ Stanley Falk School (special education)</li> <li>▪ Churches: Blessed Sacrament, Kenilworth United Church of Christ</li> <li>▪ Shopping on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Kenmore Avenue</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Portions of the area are eligible for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) based on income</li> <li>▪ Potential future trail linkage along NFTA right-of-way</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make continued investments in CDBG funds to improve neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Ensure appropriate standards of home maintenance</li> <li>▪ Explore feasibility of trail along NFTA right-of-way</li> </ul>
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### Wilton-Argonne

North of Kenmore Avenue, south of Englewood Avenue, east of Village of Kenmore

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute</li> <li>▪ Scattered shopping along Kenmore Avenue, Englewood Avenue</li> <li>▪ Lindbergh School within walking distance (in Kenmore)</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood Watch group in adjacent area of Kenmore (Lindbergh School)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Area of apartments along Kenmore Avenue eligible for CDBG funding</li> <li>▪ No easily accessible greenspace or parks</li> <li>▪ Limited shopping within walking distance</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve connection between neighborhood and Lincoln Park, the nearest parkland</li> <li>▪ Trail along NFTA right-of-way could facilitate this access</li> <li>▪ Most of the neighborhood is stable—ensure continued property upkeep to maintain property values</li> </ul>
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### Belmont/“Elwood Park”/ St. John the Baptist:

Area surrounding Highland Plaza/ St. John the Baptist, south of Sheridan, east of Colvin, north of Englewood and west of Center Avenue.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighborhood Watch for Belmont area</li> <li>▪ Shopping at Highland Plaza, Sheridan Drive, limited shopping on Colvin, Englewood</li> <li>▪ Post Office</li> <li>▪ Triangle provides neighborhood focus</li> <li>▪ Churches: St. John the Baptist</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighborhood divided on issue of bike trail along NFTA right-of-way</li> <li>▪ Areas included in neighborhood for assessment purposes may not feel strong affinity for neighborhood</li> <li>▪ No accessible park or greenspace</li> <li>▪ Confusing traffic patterns in places</li> <li>▪ Traffic on Englewood can be a problem</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop triangle more clearly as neighborhood focal point- create a stronger “sense of place”</li> <li>▪ Consider an additional east-west route in vicinity</li> <li>▪ Involve neighborhood in planning for any potential trail along NFTA right-of-way</li> </ul>
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### Deerhurst Park

Northeast of Kenmore, south of Englewood.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kenmore West High School</li> <li>▪ Attractive, older neighborhood with larger lots than typical in Tonawanda</li> <li>▪ Shopping at Highland Plaza</li> <li>▪ Accessible to Kenmore</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood Watch</li> <li>▪ Church: Deerhurst Presbyterian; St. John at periphery</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>
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### Cardinal O'Hara area

North of Youngmann Expressway, south of City of Tonawanda. For analysis purposes, includes neighborhoods both east and west of Delaware Avenue.

#### Features/Assets

- Cardinal O'Hara High School
- Excellent access to I-290/I-190 corridor
- Shopping along Delaware, Military Road

#### Issues

- Given barrier of I-290, this area is isolated from remainder of Town, and orients toward City of Tonawanda

#### Recommendations:

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### Bonnet Street area

Small subdivision north of Elmlawn Cemetery, south of I-290.

#### Features/Assets

- Secluded area
- Church: Kenmore Alliance

#### Issues

- Adjacent to Youngmann Expressway
- Traffic at exits along Delaware
- No services within walking distance

#### Recommendations:

- Bikeway/walkway through Colvin Woods to Colvin Avenue

### Paramount

Identified neighborhood centers on Paramount Parkway. For analysis, area has been expanded to include neighborhood south of Elmlawn Cemetery and north of Sheridan Drive, between Delaware Avenue and former rail right-of-way/Colvin Avenue.

#### Features/Assets

- Hoover Elementary/Middle School
- Aquatics Center
- Shopping at Sheridan-Delaware Plaza; Delaware Avenue
- Brighton Fire District Station
- YMCA nearby
- Kenney Field nearby
- Churches: New Covenant Tabernacle, Church of the Nativity UCC

#### Issues

- Traffic along Sheridan and Delaware limit accessibility to areas south and west of neighborhood
- Shopping not pedestrian-friendly
- No park or greenspace

#### Recommendations:

- Consider developing greenspace at curve of Colvin Avenue
- Improve ability to get to shopping, other features by walking
- Improve accessibility to YMCA, Kenney Field
- Explore feasibility of trail along NFTA right-of-way

<b>Elmwood North</b>	
Area north of Sheridan Drive, between Delaware Avenue and Military Road.	
<b>Features/Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mount Saint Mary Academy</li> <li>▪ Philip Sheridan Building (former school)</li> <li>▪ Sheridan Parkside Fire Department station</li> <li>▪ Church: Faith United Presbyterian</li> <li>▪ Shopping along Delaware, some on Military Road, Sheridan Drive</li> </ul>	<b>Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No strong neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪ Areas are eligible for CDBG funds</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ -</li> </ul>	

<b>Sheridan Parkside</b>	
North of Sheridan Drive, east of Sheridan Park Golf Course	
<b>Features/Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sheridan Parkside Community Center: Library, Youth Center, Headstart, etc.</li> <li>▪ Sheridan Park/Golf Course</li> <li>▪ Ensminger Park</li> <li>▪ Senior Citizen Center</li> <li>▪ Erie County SPCA</li> <li>▪ Two Mile Creek Trailway</li> <li>▪ Limited shopping available on Sheridan Drive, Ensminger Road</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood Watch</li> <li>▪ Police substation</li> <li>▪ Churches: St. Timothy's, Calvary New Covenant Baptist</li> <li>▪ St. Timothy's Senior apartments north of Sheridan Parkside</li> <li>▪ Expressway Park nearby</li> <li>▪ Accessible to waterfront</li> <li>▪ Area-wide study completed in 2003</li> </ul>	<b>Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Concentration of dilapidated properties</li> <li>▪ Entire area eligible for CDBG funding</li> <li>▪ Limited amount of shopping within walking distance</li> <li>▪ Confusing circulation pattern</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to work toward implementation of Sheridan Parkside Village Courts Redevelopment plan</li> </ul>	

<b>Riverview</b>	
South of Sheridan Drive, east of I-190, south of Sheridan Park.	
<b>Features/Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Holmes Elementary School</li> <li>▪ BOCES facility</li> <li>▪ Sheridan Park is adjacent</li> <li>▪ Sheridan Parkside Fire Station</li> <li>▪ Church: Korean Church of Buffalo</li> <li>▪ Shopping: limited retail on Sheridan</li> <li>▪ Sherwood Trail</li> </ul>	<b>Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adjacent to industrial uses</li> <li>▪ Somewhat isolated geographically from rest of Town</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sherwood Trail will improve access to Sheridan Park, recreational assets, including waterfront</li> </ul>	



### Old Town

Southwestern corner of the Town, north of Vulcan, east of Niagara Street.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Old Town Park</li> <li>▪ Town Boys Club</li> <li>▪ Riverside Park in City of Buffalo is nearby</li> <li>▪ Limited shopping on River Road</li> <li>▪ Shopping also in Riverside neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Access to River: Riverwalk, overlook</li> <li>▪ Churches: Calvary Chapel</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood watch group</li> <li>▪ Accessible to industrial area (jobs)</li> <li>▪ Accessible to interstate system</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Entire area eligible for CDBG funding</li> <li>▪ Isolated from remainder of Town</li> <li>▪ Proximity to industrial uses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue community development efforts</li> </ul>	

### “Greater Kenmore- northwest”

Area northwest of Village of Kenmore, south of Sheridan Drive, west of Delaware Avenue.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kenmore Mercy Hospital</li> <li>▪ Shopping along Elmwood</li> <li>▪ Accessible to the Village</li> <li>▪ Neighborhood watch group for West Girard Neighborhood</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Significant areas eligible for CDBG funds</li> <li>▪ No clear neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	

### Greater Kenmore- northeast”

Area north of Village of Kenmore, south of Sheridan Drive. Includes the neighborhood “Between the Delawares” and area immediately east.

<p><b>Features/Assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kenmore West is adjacent</li> <li>▪ Shopping on Delaware Avenue and Sheridan Drive</li> <li>▪ Also accessible to shopping in Kenmore</li> <li>▪ Police Station on Sheridan at edge of neighborhood</li> <li>▪ Churches: St. Mark’s Lutheran; St. Andrew’s</li> </ul>	<p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shopping on Sheridan, northern portion of Delaware Avenue is not easily accessible by foot</li> <li>▪ Not a strong neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪ Vacant former Quality Market is an issue and an opportunity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve accessibility to area north, where Sheridan-Delaware Plaza and Aquatics Center are located</li> <li>▪ Identify appropriate re-use options for former Quality Market building</li> <li>▪ Encourage development of stronger neighborhood identity</li> <li>▪ Ensure accessibility to Kenmore West</li> </ul>	

**NOTE:** “Between the Delawares” was identified as a neighborhood, but given street patterns and other barriers, this neighborhood has been included in other planning areas for assessment purposes.

**APPENDIX B**  
**SUMMARY OF MEETINGS**

## Summary of Meetings

### Public Meetings

Public Information Meeting	November 20, 2003	Approx. 90 persons (estimated)
Public Focus Meeting	April 20, 2004	Approx. 70 persons (estimated)
Public Charrette Meeting	January 27, 2005	Approx. 70 persons (estimated)

### Stakeholder Meetings/ Input

Group	Date	Attendees
Economic Development Group	February 17, 2004	Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce; Erie County IDA; TTDC; Empire State Development; BNE
Transportation Group	February 19, 2004	NYS DOT, GBNRTC, Erie County Pubic Works (Division of Highways), NY Thruway Authority, NFTA, David Krotz, Highway
Highway Department	November 5, 2004 (phone)	Brad Rowles
Water Resources	November 5, 2004 April 2005	John Camilleri
Youth, Parks and Recreation	November 5, 2004	Dan Wiles
Town Board	February 23, 2004	Town Board members
Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce	February 18, 2004	Board of Directors
Town of Tonawanda Seniors	March 4, 2004	Couples Club
Town of Tonawanda Community Development	Various (phone/fax/email)	Robert Cymerman
Town of Tonawanda Development Corporation	Various	Robert Dimmig
Town of Tonawanda Supervising Building Inspector	Various	Michael Hazen

### Comprehensive Plan Board Meetings

- September 18, 2003
- October 14, 2003
- December 9, 2003
- February 4, 2004
- April 27, 2004
- June 29, 2004
- August 3, 2004
- October 12, 2004
- December 14, 2004
- April 26, 2005

## **APPENDIX C**

### **GLOSSARY**

## **Glossary**

The following are definitions of words and planning terms used in this document. It is an attempt to explain these items in common language for the benefit of the reader.

### **Access Management**

Access Management is a program to manage features such as driveways, intersections and traffic signals to balance the competing demands for traffic mobility and land access. Standards are set for managing the frequency, location, and design of driveways, intersections, signals, medians, turn lanes, and other roadway features. The goal of Access Management is to protect the safety, capacity, and traffic flow on the highway system while providing access to adjacent property as appropriate and necessary.

### **Arterial roadways**

A class of roadway serving larger volumes of traffic not served by interstate highways. These roadways are generally four lanes, have higher speeds, and more traffic. Arterials are intended primarily for traffic movement and secondarily for access to abutting properties.

### **Buffer**

An area that provides physical and/or visual separation between uses. A buffer can be a fence, an earthen berm, landscaping (trees/ shrubs) or physical distance (setbacks).

### **Collector road**

Collector roads serve to collect and distribute traffic from and to neighborhoods and commercial areas and connect it to arterial roadways. This class of road provides direct access to land and features more driveways and lower speeds. Traffic loads are intended to be lower than on arterials. These roadways tend to have two lanes.

### **Development regulations**

Any controls placed on development or land use activities by the Town including, but not limited to zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations.

### **Floodplain**

Land adjoining a river, stream or lake that is covered by water during a flood.

### **Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC)**

The interagency planning group that establishes transportation policies and programs for Erie and Niagara Counties. In 1975, the GBNRTC (which was then known as the NFTC- Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee) was designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for transportation planning in these counties, and therefore, the agency responsible for allocating federal transportation funds.

### **Household**

All persons who occupy a single housing unit. A household is not always a family, but may be one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements. A one-person household is not considered a family by the U.S. Census.

### **Housing Stock**

The overall supply of housing in an area, including all sizes and styles of residential development.

### **Infrastructure**

Public utilities, facilities and public works systems, such as sewers, water lines, roadways, drainage, sidewalks and other public services.

**Level of Service, or LOS**

A qualitative measure describing the operational conditions of a roadway, or how well it fulfills its transportation functions. Grading is based on factors such as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay and safety. Roadways are graded from "A" through "F", with "A" representing the best conditions with minimal delays and "F" representing failing conditions with extensive congestion.

**Mixed-use**

A development includes more than one compatible land uses to be in close proximity to one another, such as stores with apartments above. Mixed-use is commonly seen in older development, where homes and businesses were traditionally within walking distance. Modern suburban development is typically not mixed-use in nature, but segregates residential neighborhoods from business parks and shopping plazas.

**Multifamily house**

A structure or portion of a structure containing three or more dwelling units.

**Overlay District**

A zoning district that is applied in addition to the existing zoning in order to specify additional regulations. Frequently, these standards address design issues, such as architectural standards or access management standards. Overlay districts enable a community to more closely regulate development in a specific geographic area, such as a business district or a retail strip. Its boundaries often include more than one underlying zoning district. When development is proposed within the boundaries of an overlay district, the developer must comply with the requirements of the existing zoning district and the overlay district.

**Passive Recreation**

Non-strenuous activities such as picnicking, bird watching, casual walking and scenic viewing.

**Pedestrian-friendly development**

Development designs that encourage walking by providing site amenities for pedestrians. Pedestrian friendly environments reduce auto dependence and may encourage the use of public transportation.

**Right-of-way**

A strip of land used or intended for use as a street, walkway, utility line or other access.

**Subdivision**

The division of any parcel of land into two or more lots for immediate sale or development with or without streets or highways.

**Strip commercial**

An automobile oriented linear commercial development pattern. It typically generates high traffic volumes.

**Traffic Calming**

The process of slowing automobile speed and volume in order to promote pedestrian safety. Measures to accomplish traffic calming can include changes in street alignment, installation of barriers, and other physical measures to reduce traffic speeds and/or cut-through volumes, as well as non-physical measures, such as increased police enforcement of speed limits. The goal of traffic calming is to reduce vehicle speeds, improve safety, and enhance quality of life.

**Wetlands**

Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, or that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically

adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands include bogs, swamps, marshes, cattail ponds, wet forests and meadows. These areas may not be wet or covered by water throughout the year.

**Zoning**

The process by which the town legally controls the use of property and physical configuration of development upon land within its jurisdiction. Under zoning, the Town is divided into distinct "zones", legally specified on the official zoning map. Each zoning district has specific regulations regarding allowable uses and how structures may be placed on the parcel (e.g. required lot sizes and minimum front and side yards)