



TONAWANDA OPPORTUNITY AREA

PRE-NOMINATION STUDY

NOVEMBER 2012



This report was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda and the New York State Department of State with state funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prior to the development of the Buffalo Niagara interstate highway system the Tonawanda Opportunity Area was a pristine, undeveloped area along the Niagara River in the Town of Tonawanda between the Cities of Buffalo and Tonawanda.



Historic New York Central Railroad Map (1904) of the Buffalo Niagara region showing the undeveloped Tonawanda waterfront that includes the approximate Tonawanda Opportunity Area (yellow highlighted area).

With the exception of the Erie Canal, and some electrical transmission lines, the area was utilized primarily as farmland.

However, in the early 1900's the area began to develop into one of the premier industrial centers in the region. A significant portion of the area was utilized for the production and storage of energy products for vehicles and industry. Warehouses and other uses that take advantage of the area's proximity to the Interstate Highway System also occupy significant portions of the area.

Since the 1970's some of the industries in the area have contracted, leaving empty buildings and underutilized or abandoned properties. The decline of industry, coupled with an increased interest in quality of life,

environmental issues and access to the Niagara River by local residents and businesses has prompted the Town to reflect on the area's past development patterns and consider opportunities for a new development model for the future.

To address the need for a new area wide vision of development the Town applied for and received a grant from the New York State Department of State under the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program to prepare a Step 1 Pre-Nomination Study. The purpose of the Brownfield Opportunity Area program is to help communities develop proactive redevelopment plans for areas impacted by multiple brownfield, underutilized, vacant and abandoned properties. A Step 1 Pre-Nomination establishes preliminary issues and opportunities for redevelopment before undertaking a more detailed evaluation and implementation plan in the BOA program.

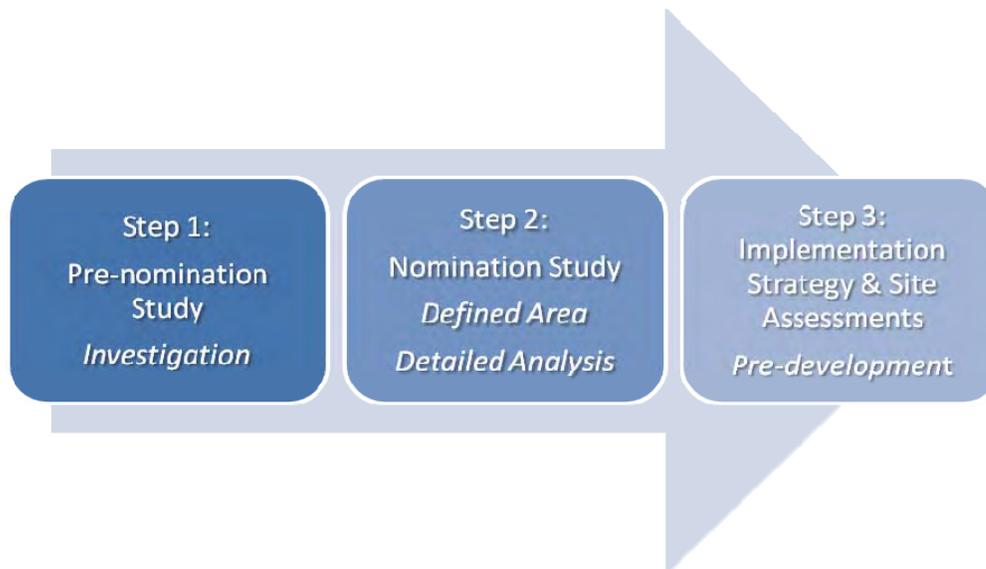


Figure 1. New York State's Brownfield Opportunity Area Program Steps

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area (TOA) evaluated under the Step 1 Pre-Nomination phase is a large area approximately bordered by Interstate 290, Interstate 190, the Niagara River and the City of Tonawanda (Figure 2). A section is also located to the south of interstate 190 as well.

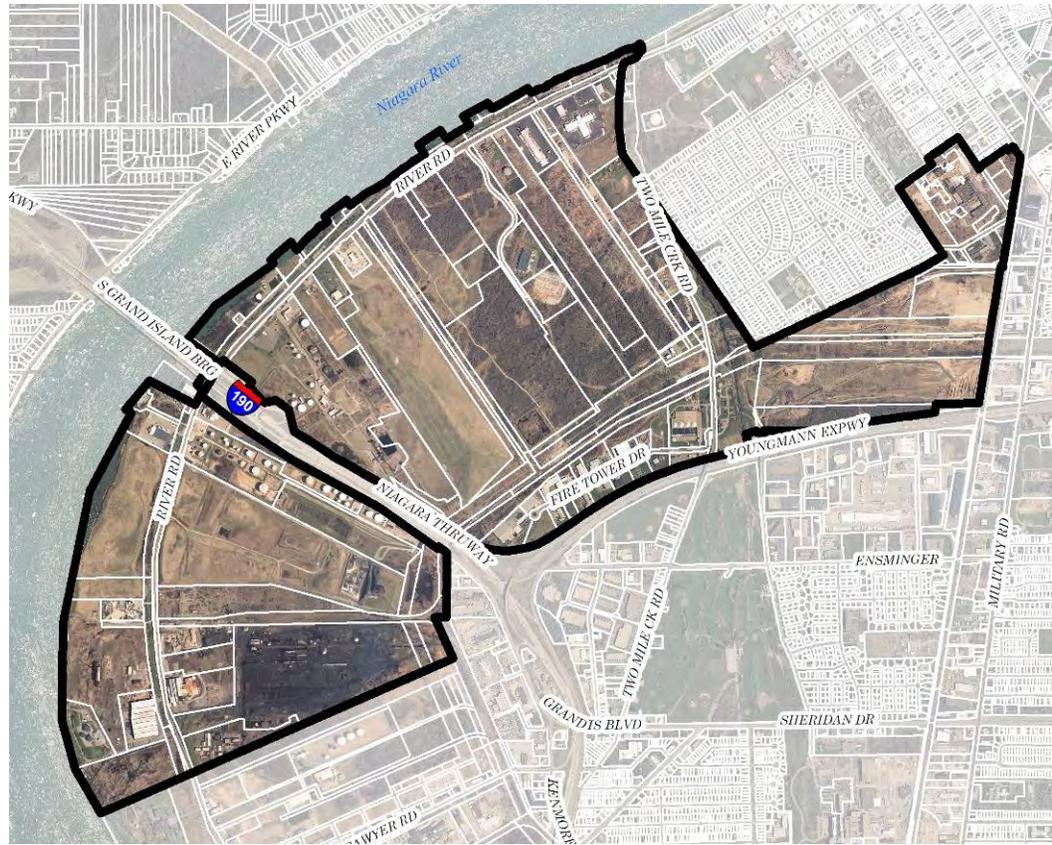


Figure 2. Tonawanda Opportunity Area

The TOA encompasses 1,743 acres and 202 parcels. The majority of the TOA is located in the Town of Tonawanda but it also includes City of Tonawanda properties near Two Mile Creek Road and the Spaulding Fibre redevelopment area. The Town's goal in completing the study is to develop a plan to encourage redevelopment, cleanup and reinvestment in the area to enhance the Town's waterfront area and to generate jobs and tax revenues.

The Town of Tonawanda and its partners (City of Tonawanda and Erie County) initiated the study because of the obvious and inherent redevelopment opportunities the TOA possessed. The TOA is literally located in the center of the Buffalo Niagara Metropolitan area with proximity to two interstate highways and three regional roadways that provide access to the metro area and Canada. Strategic location factors of the TOA are further enhanced by access to the three miles of Niagara River waterfront.

Recent successes demonstrated that redevelopment was possible in the TOA. The momentum created by the redevelopment of the Spaulding Fibre site in the City of

Tonawanda and remediation of several parcels in the TOA persuaded community leaders in the Town, City and County to assess redevelopment opportunities throughout the TOA.

At the same time, the advantages of the TOA location are constrained by several factors. Twenty nine properties, or approximately 14 percent of all the properties and 47 percent of the land area in the TOA, are classified as brownfield, underutilized or vacant parcels. Brownfield and underutilized properties are deterrents to development in the area because they create a perception of decline. Some active heavy industrial properties also hinder development as their appearance and production processes are incompatible with certain commercial and light industrial uses.

The current property arrangement within the TOA also discourages redevelopment. Many of the parcels are long, some averaging one mile in length, with no road access and associated utilities.

Demographic and economic factors are also a factor in the future redevelopment of the TOA. The Town, City and all the census tracts within the TOA experienced population declines in excess of five percent for each of the last two decades. Manufacturing employment, once the dominant industry employer in the TOA, declined by more than 10,000 jobs over the last decade in the Buffalo Niagara region.

To assess opportunities for future redevelopment in the TOA, the study first evaluated the community's visions, goals and objectives as reflected in existing community plans and input received at community meetings. Community plans offered several relevant recommendations for the TOA including:

- Establishment of an internal road network to increase access to properties;
- Positioning and preparing properties in the TOA so they are “shovel ready” for future development;
- Improving River Road's image; and
- Continued remediation of contaminated properties.

Input received at two community meetings in the winter and fall of 2011 echoed many of the recommendations of the community plans. However, residents of the community also wanted to stress the need to insure access to the Niagara River and preservation or enhancement of natural areas in the TOA. Based on the community plans and input a vision statement was established for the TOA:

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area will become a sustainable mixed use district with an improved image that will reconnect the community's residential areas to the Niagara Riverfront through multi-modal transportation improvements and green infrastructure to advance redevelopment of underutilized properties.

Detailed analyses of land use, zoning, brownfield properties, underutilized properties, vacant properties, transportation systems, land ownership and natural resources in the TOA was performed to reveal opportunities for redevelopment. The analyses were supplemented by an Economic and Market Analysis to determine feasible uses for properties in the TOA.

Based on the property and economic analyses four preferred uses were recommended for redevelopment of brownfield, underutilized and vacant properties in the TOA including:

1. Professional Offices
2. Light Industrial
3. Accommodation and Restaurants
4. Heavy Industrial

Professional offices, light industrial uses, and accommodation and restaurants were the preferred uses attendees at the final public meeting recommended for attraction or retention in the TOA. Future heavy industrial uses were not preferred for economic development attraction efforts. However, attendees recognized the need to maintain existing heavy industrial uses on the condition that future production processes or development patterns were more consistent with the Town's desire to improve the quality of life of adjacent residential and business areas.

In addition, current real estate market conditions for light industrial, office and retail uses were considered together with the analysis of feasible uses. Based on the current real estate market for the Northtowns' submarket in the Buffalo area, a phased redevelopment approach in the TOA is recommended starting with light industrial attraction efforts followed by similar efforts for retail and office uses.

To advance redevelopment in the TOA, consistent with the market analysis, the following land use and zoning recommendations were also suggested:

- **Extend the Waterfront Business Zone** south of River Road to I-290;
- **Extend the Waterfront Mixed Use Zone** along the entire length of the waterfront in the TOA;
- Add **light industry as a Special Use** within the Waterfront Business Zone;
- **Establishment of a Sustainable Development Overlay** and related incentives to encourage sustainable development in the TOA;
- **Development of Land Conservation zone** to facilitate land banking; and
- **Adopt Planned Unit Development regulations** to advance redevelopment of properties with multiple constraints.

A synthesis of the property analysis, economic analysis and land use recommendations generated a master plan for the TOA with the following recommended actions for revitalization:

1. **Riverfront Development** of key properties on the Niagara River;
2. **Enhancement and narrowing of River Road** to reconnect the TOA to the waterfront;
3. **Development of a Light Industrial/Office flex zone** for interior portions of the TOA;
4. **Realignment and upgrading of Two Mile Creek Road** as a signature boulevard to provide interior access in the TOA;
5. **Development of a Multi-use trail** as an amenity for both employees and residents in the area that would connect with the Niagara Riverwalk; and
6. **Implementation of existing plans for Spaulding Fibre area, Youngmann Commerce Center and Cherry Farm Park.**

More in-depth analyses of several Land Use and Master Plan recommendations were suggested to be incorporated in the Step 2 Nomination study including a detailed use and design analysis of the Cherry Farm Park, an evaluation of Land Assembly strategies and the development of Sustainable Development overlay zoning for the TOA.

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The report is organized according to the outline provided by the New York Department of State (NYSDOS) for all BOA funded projects:

The **Description of the Proposed Project, Boundary and Public Participation** is divided into five sections:

1. Community Overview and Description – A general description of the Town and its relationship to the BOA and region.
2. Project Overview –A brief overview of the Brownfield Opportunity Area characteristics.
3. Brownfield Opportunity Area Boundary Description and Justification – A narrative describing the boundaries and justification of the BOA.
4. Community Vision, Goals and Objectives – Community development needs proposed to be addressed by the plan.
5. Community Participation Techniques and Process – Details the community’s efforts to help define community needs in the TOA.

The **Preliminary Analysis of the Tonawanda Opportunity Area** is divided into multiple sections that review and evaluate existing conditions in the following areas:

- Existing Land Use and Zoning
- Brownfield, Abandoned and Vacant Sites
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Land Ownership
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic and Market Conditions.

Upon completion of a review of the existing conditions in the TOA a **Summary of the Preliminary Analysis and Actions for Revitalization** provide preliminary reuse and redevelopment opportunities for the area.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT, BOUNDARY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A description of the 1,743 acre Tonawanda Opportunity Area and efforts to gather and incorporate public needs for the project are described below.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area (TOA) is located in the northwest section of the Town of Tonawanda and also includes a small portion of the southern section of the City of Tonawanda. Tonawanda is a first ring suburb in the Buffalo Niagara metropolitan area located in the northernmost section of Erie County adjacent to Niagara County as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Community Context Map

Most of the Town is completely developed and little open land is available for new development. The small, quaint Village of Kenmore is part of the Town.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of the Town is 73,567 persons according to the 2010 census and it is the third largest Town in Erie County. Since 2000 the Town has lost 4,309 persons or more than five percent of its population. Both the City of Tonawanda and Erie County also lost population during the same period. Most of the population loss can be attributed to household sizes contracting as less than one percent of the owner occupied housing units in the town are vacant. Households are also getting older as 41 percent of the Town’s population is 62 years of age or older.

Table 1. Population within the Town, region and Census tracts within the TOA

Area	Population (Year)			Change 1990-2000		Change 2000-2010	
	1990	2000	2010	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Census Tract 78	6,154	5,615	5,206	-539	-8.76%	-409	-7.28%
Census Tract 83	3,076	2,864	2,584	-212	-6.89%	-280	-9.78%
Census Tract 84	2,827	2,678	2,406	-149	-5.27%	-272	-10.16%
City of Tonawanda	17,284	16,136	15,130	-1,148	-6.64%	-1,006	-6.23%
Town of Tonawanda	82,464	78,155	73,567	-4,309	-5.23%	-4,588	-5.87%
Erie County	968,532	950,265	919,040	-18,267	-1.89%	-31,225	-3.29%
New York State	17,990,455	18,976,457	19,378,102	986,002	5.48%	401,645	2.12%

Portions of census Tracts 78, 83 and 84 are within the TOA as shown on Figure 4 and outlined in green. However, there are virtually no residential properties within the TOA boundary. Therefore, the Census population and housing data reflects conditions in residential areas near or adjacent to the TOA. All the census tracts in the TOA lost population between 2000 and 2010 as exhibited in Table 1. Population losses ranged from just above seven percent to just over 10 percent in the TOA Census Tracts.

A majority (72.6%) of the Town’s housing units are owner occupied according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the most recent estimate (2010) of the Town’s median housing value is \$110,000. The Town’s median household income 2010 estimate was \$50,243.

An Economic and Market Analysis provides additional economic and demographic information on the Town and area in the Preliminary Analysis of the Tonawanda Opportunity Area section of this plan.

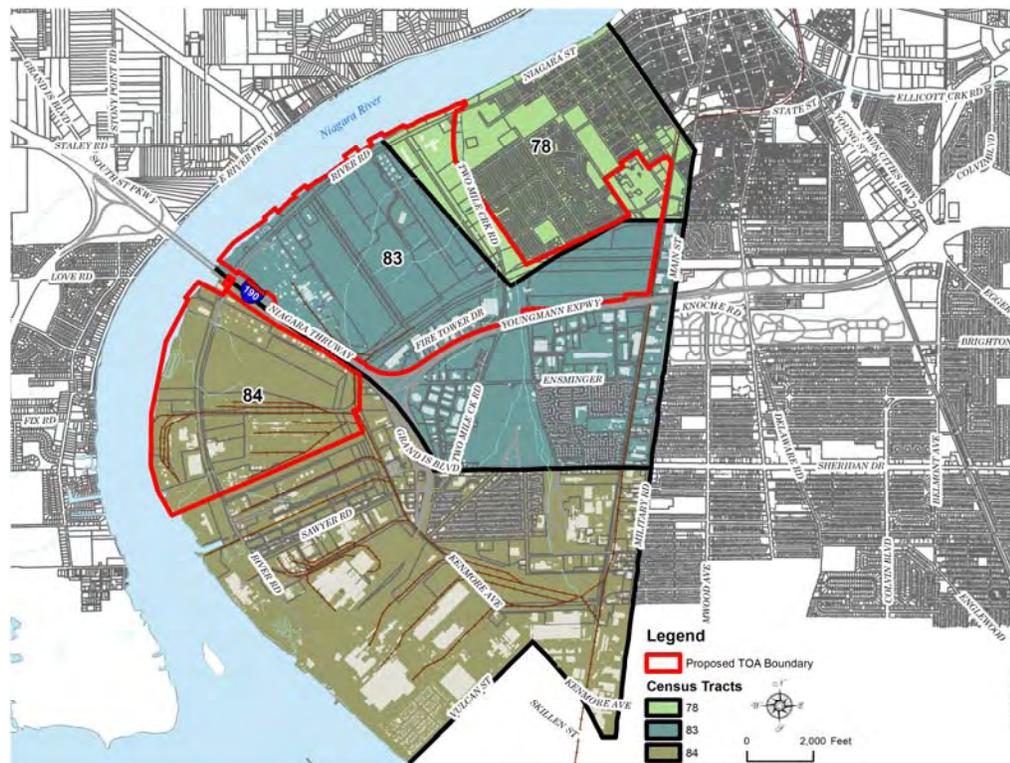


Figure 4. Census Tracts within the TOA

EXISTING TOWN AND AREA PLANS

The Town of Tonawanda has been very active in planning for its future over the last decade. Three planning projects have been completed in the Town with relevant recommendations for the TOA. The plans completed include the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, 2002 Waterfront Rezoning Study and the 2008 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Plan.

Fortunately all the planning documents are consistent and provide the following similar recommendations relevant to the TOA Plan:

- Roadway System Connectivity:** The majority of the properties included in the TOA are long parcels that extend between the Niagara River and River Road to the National Grid right-of ways to the east. *The average lengths of many parcels are approximately one mile.* To take advantage of the area's location on the Niagara River and to facilitate access for property redevelopment, the plans recommended installation of a roadway network in the TOA.

- **Shovel Ready Economic Development Sites and Areas:** To be competitive in today's regional and national economic development environment municipalities and economic development organizations need to have sites ready for redevelopment. The plans all recommend that Town sites in the TOA have access to roadways, utilities and that sites are appropriately zoned to attract investment and facilitate reuse and redevelopment.
- **Improving River Road's Image:** As the primary transportation route into the TOA along the Niagara River's edge, the appearance and function of River Road is critical to the future of the area. All the plans recommend traffic calming, buffering of adjacent properties and gateway treatments along the four lane roadway. By instituting these measures River Road will help to join the properties east of River Road with the Niagara River rather than divide them as River Road currently is doing.
- **Environmental Protection and Remediation:** The plans all recognize that the future of the TOA lies in the ability of the Town to capitalize on the underutilized, natural properties adjacent to the Niagara River in the TOA and to remediate properties that are contaminated to provide one of the most unique, uninterrupted waterfront redevelopment opportunities in the urbanized area of the Buffalo Niagara metropolitan metro.



Wildlife in undeveloped areas of the Tonawanda Opportunity Area.

CURRENT OR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA

The Town of Tonawanda, City of Tonawanda and the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning have also been very proactive in advancing redevelopment and remediation in the TOA including the following projects:

- North Youngmann Commerce Center:** This project involves the redevelopment of vacant Town owned land bordered by Two Mile Creek Road and the I-290. The Town and County have developed concept plans for the site which provides great access to the Interstate and local roads as well as exceptional visibility from the I-290. The Town has received partial funding from the Empire State Development Corporation's Blueprint fund to build the roadways planned for the Center and are pursuing other funding to complete the project.



North Youngmann Commerce Center Plans

- Spaulding Commerce Center:** The City of Tonawanda recently completed a demolition and cleanup of the former Spaulding Fibre site in the southwest section of the City adjacent to the Town of Tonawanda. Currently the City is building roadways and utilities into the site to promote and facilitate development in the area.
- 5335 River Road:** The County has obtained temporary incidence of ownership on this parcel and along with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has removed former abandoned petroleum storage tanks from the site and is performing any necessary remediation. Once the project is completed the property could potentially be available for development.



Removal of above ground tanks at 5335 River Road.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

To continue and build upon the success of the Spaulding Fibre redevelopment project, the 5335 River Road remediation and plans for the North Youngmann Commerce Center, the Town, City and Erie County wanted to evaluate opportunities for additional development in the area. Comprehensive Plan concepts to create a road network in the area also needed to be developed more fully and the partnership needed a better idea of the level and extent of contamination in the area.

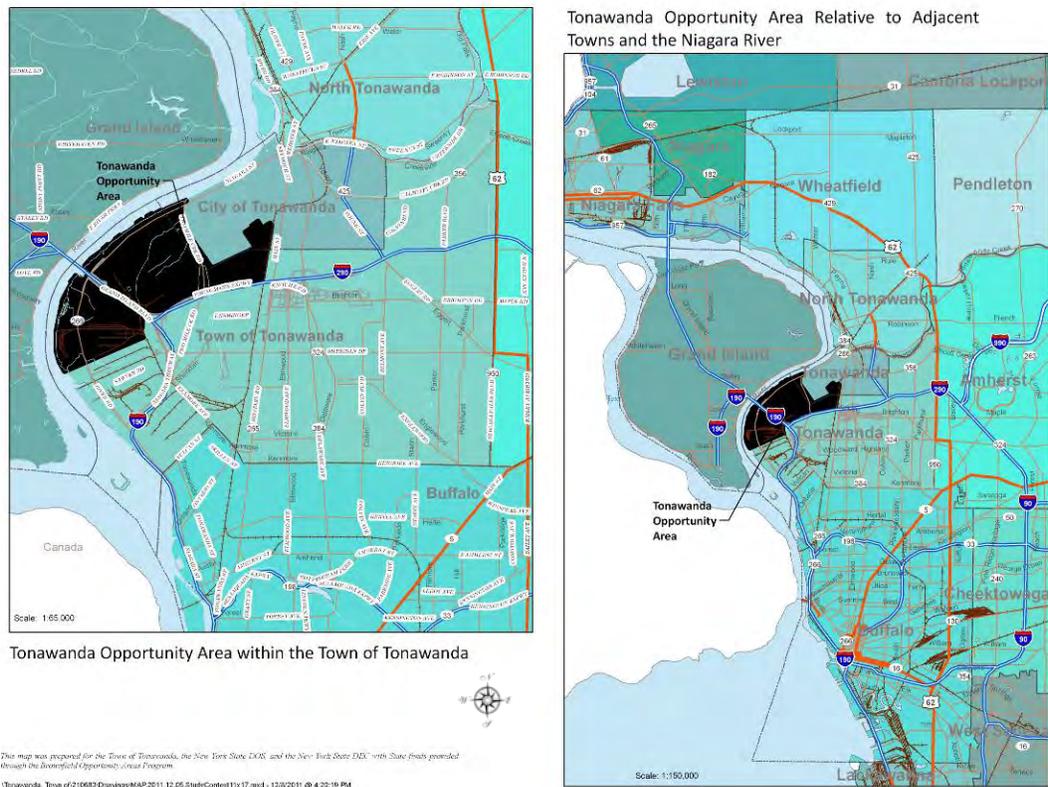


Figure 5. Study Area Context Map

Therefore the partnership applied for a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Step 1 grant from the Department of State to comprehensively examine land use, transportation, natural resources, market factors, contamination and public input in the area to establish a preliminary area wide revitalization strategy. The Step 1 BOA study will help Tonawanda develop plans and gain community support to advance future redevelopment in the area.

The brief project overview generally describes the Tonawanda Opportunity Area and the benefits of the study and the Study Area Context Map (Figure 5) shows the location of the BOA in the context of the “Northtowns” area of Erie County.

EXISTING LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

With the exception of the Fire Tower Drive Industrial Park and Riverview Solar Technology Park, the Tonawanda Opportunity Area’s current land use and development pattern is characterized by underutilization. Of the approximate 202 parcels in the TOA, more than 14 percent of the parcels and 47 percent of the land area are either brownfield, underutilized or vacant parcels.

Another 51 parcels are categorized as commercial or manufacturing land uses but many of them are also significantly underutilized. Many of the commercial and industrial parcels are underutilized because they are elongated parcels and there is no road access to them. Consequently, many of the parcels have buildings or structures located along River Road frontage but the rear of the properties are idle. Other parcels are occupied by fuel storage facilities or warehouses that do not provide jobs or economic activity for the area. A Land Use Map of the Area is included in the Preliminary Analysis of the Brownfield Opportunity area as Figure 8.

BROWNFIELD, UNDERUTILIZED AND VACANT SITES IN THE OPPORTUNITY AREA

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area contains a mix of brownfield, abandoned, vacant, undeveloped and underutilized sites. For the purposes of this study brownfield sites are properties with documented contamination. Underutilized sites are properties that are only partially developed or formerly developed with abandoned or vacant buildings. Vacant sites, on the other hand, are undeveloped properties that have no record of development. A single property may exhibit characteristics of some or all three types but the dominant character of the site determined how a property was categorized.

Based on the property research conducted for this study a summary of brownfield, vacant, and underutilized sites is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of Properties in the Opportunity Area

Property Type	Number of Properties	Acreage	% Acreage of TOA
Brownfield Properties	8	385.89	22%
Underutilized & Abandoned Properties	9	147.42	8.5%
Undeveloped/Vacant Properties	12	286.9	16%

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the underutilization of sites and the presence of brownfield properties there exists a tremendous opportunity for future redevelopment in the Tonawanda Opportunity Area. Opportunities for development are considerable because of the area's exceptional location and area amenities including:

- Most of the properties are adjacent to the **Niagara River, the Erie County Riverwalk, Isle View Park, Sheridan Park and Veteran's Memorial Park.**
- Access to **Interstates I-190 and I-290**
- Access to major regional roadways including **River Road, Military Road and Sheridan Drive.**
- **Central location in the Northtowns** area of the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region.
- Adjacent to more than **three miles of waterfront.**
- **Proximity to Canada** and regional population centers.

In addition many of the properties have sidings to access the CSX railroad system.

Currently, several new office buildings have been constructed in the Opportunity Area and several more are planned. Another developer recently announced that he is considering residential development along the waterfront in the TOA.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to develop potential concepts for development in the area as it transitions from an underutilized industrial and commercial corridor to a mixed use area that realizes its full development potential. As the Town and City of Tonawanda are now fully developed, Town and City leaders have recognized the importance of finding redevelopment areas like the TOA to locate new businesses that will generate both jobs and tax revenue for the Town. Similarly, leaders in the municipalities recognize the importance of remediating contaminated properties for both the business community and local residents.

Figure 6 provides a preliminary Development Opportunity Map which ranks and categorizes development potential of each site within the TOA based on current opportunities, constraints and planned infrastructure projects. Opportunities include road access, Niagara River frontage, parcel shape, parcel size, and presence of utilities. Constraints include lack of access, irregular shaped parcels, small parcels and possibility of contamination.

As can be seen in the map there is a large area (yellow shaded) that has a high potential for development. This map can be further revised in the Step 2 Nomination document as additional information on opportunities and constraints is revealed. The construction of a roadway network, as discussed in the Preliminary Analysis of the Brownfield section of this report, is critical to the redevelopment potential of the TOA. Both a new roadway network, as well as trails, will also help to reconnect the opportunity area with the neighborhoods to the north and east and help Tonawanda reclaim the waterfront as an important amenity for its residents and business community.

**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

Development Potential Rating

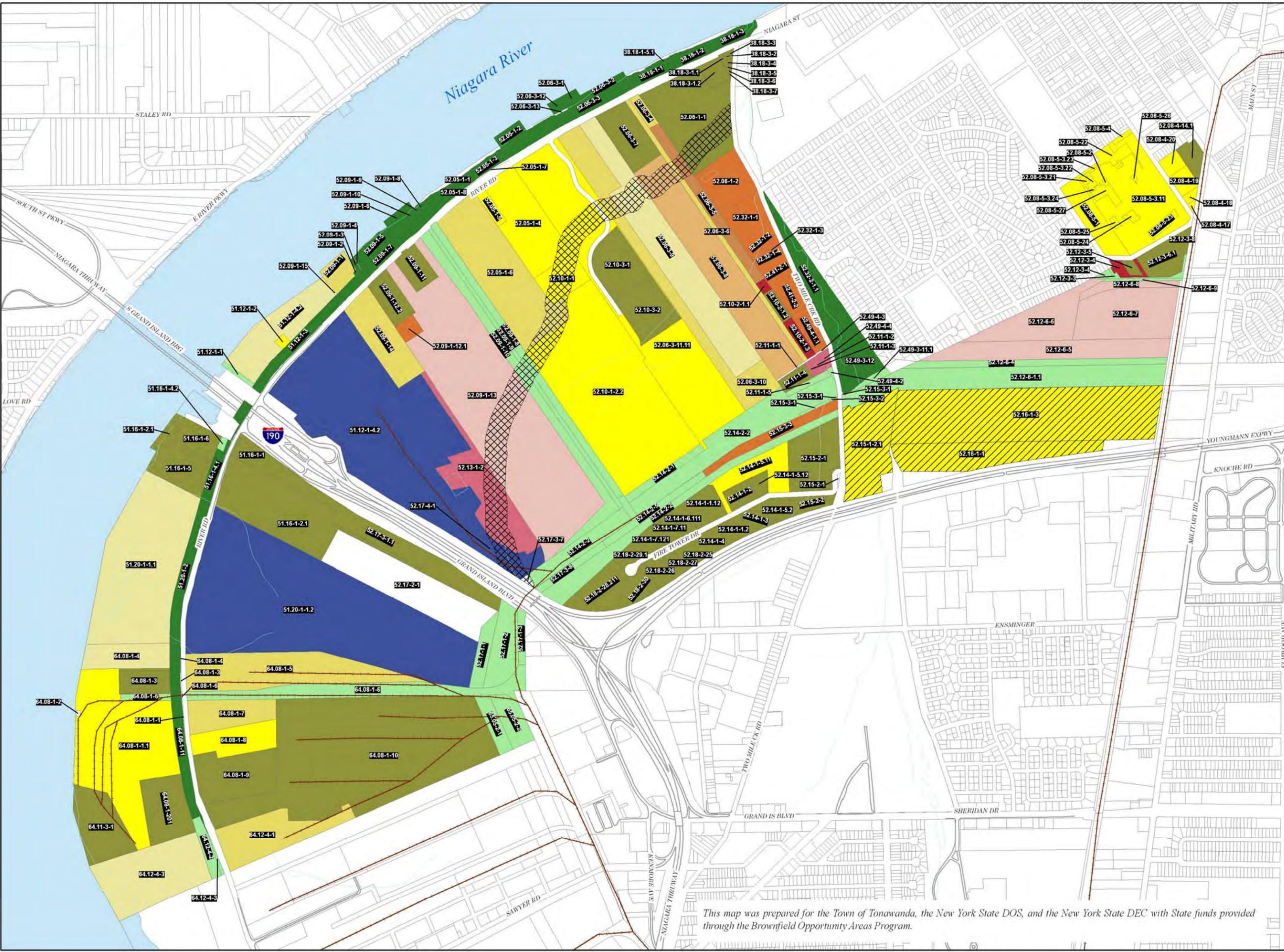


- UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES**
- High Development Potential, No Known Constraints
 - High Development Potential, Some Known/Potential Constraints
 - High Development Potential, Known Constraints
 - Medium Development Potential, No Known Constraints
 - Medium Development Potential, Some Known/Potential Constraints
 - Medium Development Potential, Known Constraints
 - Limited Development Potential, No Known Constraints
 - Limited Development Potential, Some Known/Potential Constraints
 - Limited Development Potential, Known Constraints
- DEVELOPED PROPERTIES**
- Fully Developed without Environmental Records
 - Fully Developed with Environmental Records
- OTHER**
- Utilities, Railroads, RGNS
 - Parkland & Open Space
 - Rattlesnake Creek Restricted Development (150' Buffer)
 - Infrastructure Needed (Road, Sewer, Water, etc)

0 700
1 inch = 1,250 feet

**Figure 6. Preliminary
Development Opportunities
Rating**

**Labella Project No:
210683**



This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA DESCRIPTION

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area (TOA) boundary is exhibited in Figure 7. There are 202 parcels that occupy 1,743 acres. The area primarily is industrial in character based on current and previous uses in the area. Some of the dominant uses include several truck transportation terminals, fuel storage facilities, and warehousing.

The boundaries of the proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area, as shown in Figure 8, are as follows:

- Northern boundary: Niagara River
- Southern boundary: Interstate 290 (east of Interstate 190) and railroad or utility rights of way (west of Interstate 190).
- Eastern Boundary: Military Road and Two Mile Creek
- Western Boundary: Utility rights of way adjacent to Tonawanda Coke Corp.

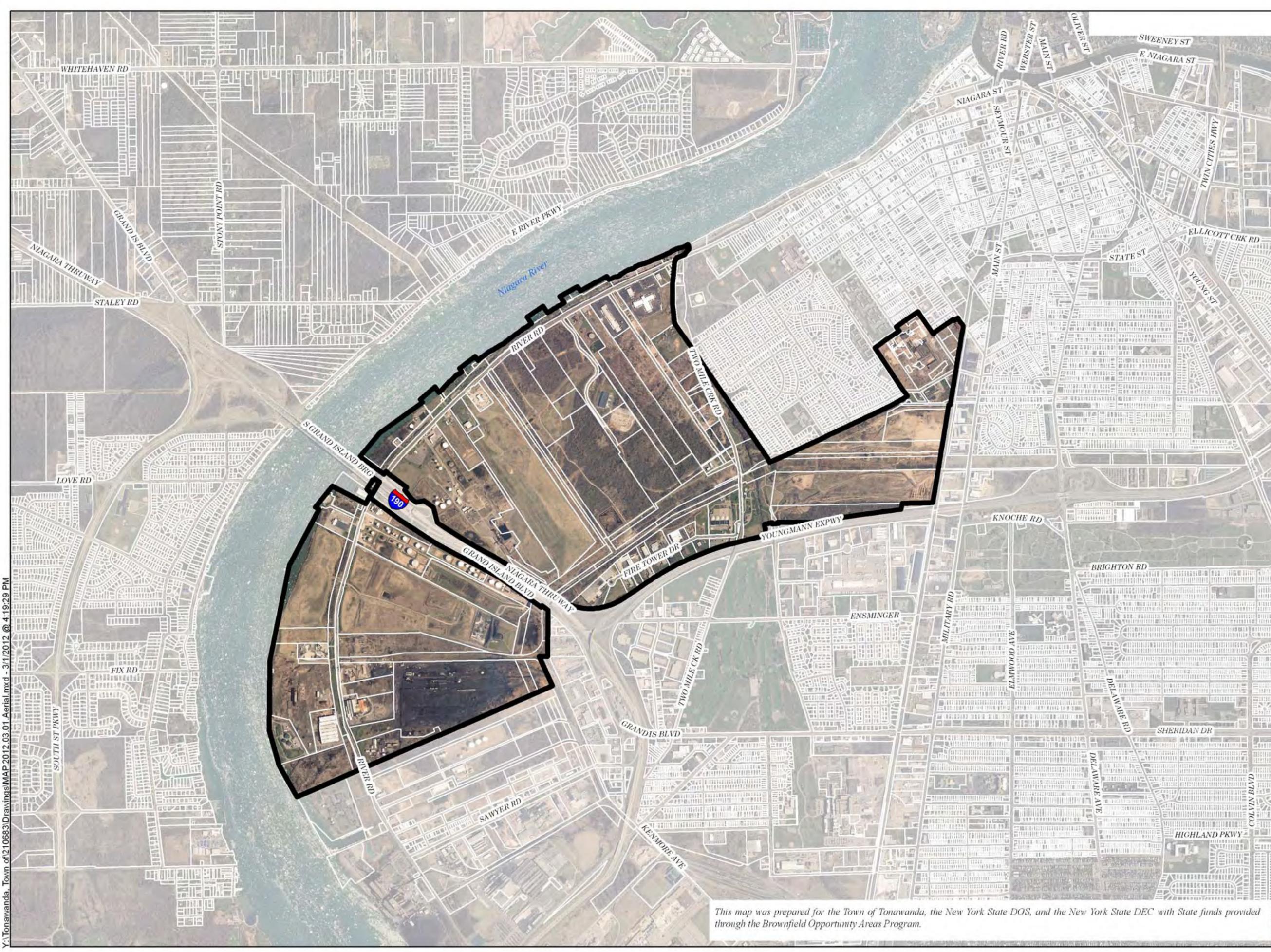
The boundaries were selected for several reasons:

- ***Distinct Physical Borders***: The boundaries generally provide distinct borders (interstates, waterways) between the opportunity area and other areas.
- ***Vacant and Underutilized Properties***: The most vacant and underutilized areas in the Town and City of Tonawanda that have tremendous opportunities for redevelopment and cleanup are included in the area.
- ***Similar Property Characteristics***: Most of the properties have similar characteristics. They are long and narrow with some development along River Road combined with an undeveloped or underutilized interior.
- ***Relationship to Brownfields***: Redevelopment and remediation of key brownfield properties in the BOA will advance redevelopment of properties without any contamination. Brownfield properties have a negative impact on development potential of clean properties.

The photos in Figure 12 illustrate the current character of the area:

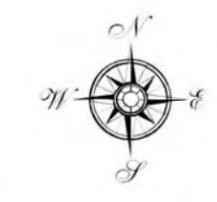


Photos depicting current image of Tonawanda Opportunity Area



**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

PROPOSED PROJECT
BOUNDARY



Proposed TOA Boundary
 Parcel Boundaries

0 1,150
1 inch = 2,000 feet

**Figure 7. Tonawanda
Opportunity Area Boundary**

**Labella Project No:
210683**

This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

Y:\Tonawanda_Town of 210683\Drawings\MAP 2012.03.01.Aerial.mxd - 3/1/2012 @ 4:19:29 PM

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A Community Participation Plan (CPP) was developed for the Tonawanda Opportunity Area project well in advance of the first public meeting and is included in the appendices. The CPP outlined a comprehensive public participation process that included public meetings, press releases, online media, stakeholder meetings, steering committee meetings and the project's schedule. Contacts for the project were also included in the document if anyone from the public had questions about the project. A copy of the CPP was kept in the Town of Tonawanda Technical Services Department and the Town Clerk was notified of its availability.

A summary of public, steering committee and stakeholder meetings is provided below as well as other public input opportunities.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Town held two public meetings to present the background and findings of the Tonawanda Opportunity Area study. A summary of the two meetings is provided below.

- **January 27, 2011** – the meeting was held in the Sheridan Parkside Community Center and was attended by approximately 30 people. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the background and purpose of the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program and to provide the existing conditions in the opportunity area including demographics, economic data, relevant plan recommendations, existing zoning, current land uses, land ownership, and natural/cultural resources. Information on existing brownfield issues and potential brownfield incentives was also presented.
- **September 22, 2011** – The second public meeting was held in conjunction with the kickoff meeting for the Town's Waterfront Land Use Plan (*Restoring our Waterfront*) study. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting. Meeting topics included how the TOA plan was aligned with the Land Use study, the findings of the Economic and Market Analysis, an analysis of land use and zoning issues related to the market analysis and a presentation on a Preliminary master Plan for the TOA.

Each meeting provided an opportunity for participants to ask questions and provide comments on the findings. Those comments were taken into consideration and adjustments were made accordingly to the findings and preliminary master plan.

TONAWANDA BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREA PLAN

Town and City of Tonawanda

Public Meeting Tonawanda Brownfield Opportunity Area

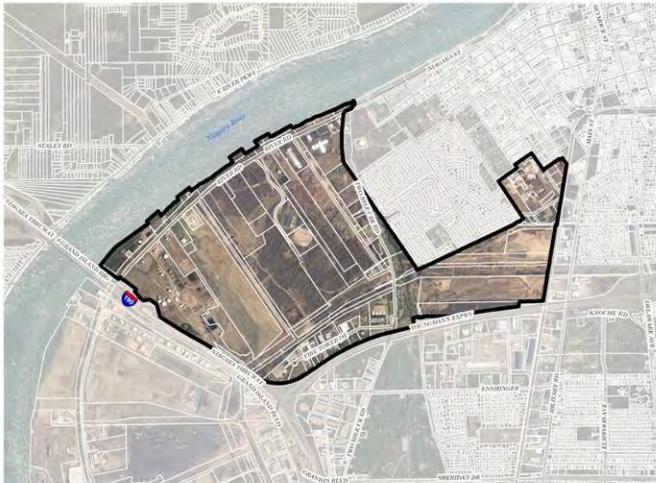
The Tonawanda Brownfield Opportunity Area Steering Committee invites you to a public meeting to provide information on the Tonawanda Brownfield Opportunity Plan. The purpose of the plan is to develop an area wide revitalization and cleanup strategy for brownfield, vacant, abandoned and underutilized properties in the area. ***As your property may be within the Brownfield Opportunity Area we encourage your attendance.***

Thursday, January 27, 2011

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Sheridan Parkside Community Center

(169 Sheridan Parkside Dr, Tonawanda)



www.tonawanda.ny.us/BOA



CONTACT / QUESTIONS

James B. Jones, PE, Town Engineer
Town of Tonawanda Technical
Support Department
716-877-8805
www.tonawanda.ny.us/BOA

A public meeting notice sent to property owners and stakeholders

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Three Steering Committee meetings were also held throughout the duration of the project to keep members informed about the progress of the study and to ask for their feedback on findings prior to public meetings. The Steering Committee consisted of approximately 16 individuals representing the Town of Tonawanda, City of Tonawanda, Erie County and partners such as the Department of State, Department of Environmental Conservation and Empire State Development Corporation.

Meeting summaries are provided below:

- **October 21, 2010** – The purpose of the first Steering Committee was to kickoff the project. The Erie County Department of Planning presented the history of the TOA and some of the significant cleanup projects completed or in the process of completion within the TOA. The consultant team of LaBella Associates and Harris Beach then introduced themselves and presented the purpose of the TOA study and the proposed schedule followed by a description of the BOA program by the Department of State. LaBella and Harris Beach also requested various documents and information from the committee members and committee members shared their knowledge of the TOA.
- **January 13, 2011** – A second steering committee meeting was held prior to the January 27, 2011 public meeting to update the committee on activities completed and to review the presentation for any input.
- **August 25, 2011** – The final steering committee meeting was held in the summer to again update the committee on activities and to review some of the information for the September 22, 2011 public meeting. The Town also informed the committee about its effort to proactively work with industrial polluters to help clean the air in the Town, known as the E3 initiative, following a NYSDEC report on air quality issues in the Town. Coordination between the TOA plan and the Town’s Waterfront Land Use Plan were also discussed.

Several subcommittee meetings (Town, City and County staff members) were also held in the Spring of 2011 with the consultant team to develop the master plan and to discuss the findings of the consultant’s research on various properties.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Stakeholders were apprised of each public meeting via mailing of notices. Prior to the final public meeting, the consultant team directly contacted thirteen property owners that would be directly impacted by the master plan development concept. The purpose of contacting the owners was to get their reaction to the preliminary master plan drawings, gain any insight on potential opportunities or constraints with their properties and, at a minimum, make them aware of the TOA project to encourage their input and advance redevelopment of their properties.

In addition, several personal meetings were held with the TM Montante Development group to discuss the project and master plan. TM Montante owns a significant portion of the properties in the TOA. The development group not only provided insight on the TOA, but they also shared their future development plans and offered a developer's perspective on the proposed TOA recommendations.

OTHER PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

Fortunately the public meetings were well promoted and covered by area media including WIVB Channel 4, the Buffalo News, Tonawanda Bee and Tonawanda News. Various media articles are included in Attachment A. In addition, the Town posted information about the project on its website, including a survey, and encouraged public participation and comments throughout the study.

COMMUNITY VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The public input received from the steering committee, public meetings and stakeholder meetings generated a set of goals for the project. Goals, opinions and desires expressed at the meetings from various individuals and organizations were practical and consistent with many of goals expressed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan and Land Use Study. The most common goals expressed during the community participation process fell into the following categories:

- **Waterfront Access** – The TOA spans almost three miles of Niagara Waterfront and the Erie County Riverwalk is adjacent to the waterfront. Residents and businesses noted how popular the Riverwalk is and that continued and improved access to the River should be a critical component of the final plans.

- **Green Infrastructure** – In addition to the Riverwalk, the TOA is fortunate to include Isle View Park, a trail along Two Mile Creek and is adjacent to Sheridan Park and Veteran’s Memorial Park. Participants wanted to see those parks integrated into the plan and to augment them with additional park areas and trails. Both businesses and residents also wanted to preserve some existing undeveloped natural areas as a unique asset that is consistent with the Town’s Sustainability Initiative and development community’s desire for sustainable sites and neighborhoods.
- **Economic Development and Economic Restructuring** – As a first ring suburb in the Buffalo Metropolitan area, Tonawanda has been experiencing declines in population and jobs over the last two decades after years of substantial growth, resulting in vacant, underutilized or abandoned properties. The community expressed a desire to maintain the existing heavy industrial jobs in the TOA but also recognized that new jobs needed to be generated for future employment opportunities as older industrial companies continued to contract. Developers contacted for the project also recognized the need to transition to a new model for development that included green infrastructure, more compact development and recreational amenities that took advantage of the Niagara River location.
- **Quality of Life** – Residents and businesses alike also recognized that improving the quality of life in the TOA was a “win-win” concept that encouraged both residential and business investment. Therefore, the community expressed desires to 1) insure there were buffers between existing residential areas and new commercial development; 2) require, encourage or incentivize remediation of contaminated land, water and air; and 3) promote a more balanced (vs. single use industrial), mixed use, environmentally friendly approach to future development.
- **Monitor Costs** – Residents encouraged projects to advance redevelopment but with an eye toward controlling costs and maximizing Town tax revenues to keep Town tax rates reasonable.
- **Improve the TOA’s Image** – Public meeting and Steering Committee participants also recognized that the image portrayed by underutilization of properties as well as certain existing uses in the TOA are not consistent with the Town and City’s attractive residential neighborhoods, the quaint commercial district in the Village of Kenmore and redevelopment efforts in the City and Town commercial cores.

Based on public input and the scope of the project developed by the Town, City and Erie County the following preliminary TOA vision statement has been established:

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area will become a sustainable mixed use district with an improved image that will reconnect the community's residential areas to the Niagara Riverfront through multi-modal transportation improvements and green infrastructure to advance redevelopment of underutilized properties.

The goals and vision of the community are also consistent with recent plans completed for the Town including the Comprehensive Plan, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Land Use Plan. Some of the goals that are shared by the plans and the TOA community vision include an improved transportation network, environmental protection and remediation, and an image upgrade.

RESTORING OUR WATERFRONT: SUSTAINABLE TONAWANDA

The Town of Tonawanda has been working concurrently on two parallel initiatives related to the Tonawanda Opportunity Area. The Town's Technical Services Department in coordination with the Tonawanda Development Corporation has been working on a Town of Tonawanda Sustainability Initiative modeled after, and in partnership with, the Environmental Protection Agency's E3 Program. Under the initiative officials in the Town will be working with local businesses to reduce energy consumption, lessen pollution and initiate innovative "green" production processes.

At the same time the Town has recently started its Healthy Niagara Waterfront Land Use Plan in partnership with the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper's Healthy Niagara Watershed Plan. The plan will assess opportunities for land use and design changes to encourage more appropriate development along Tonawanda's waterfront. The boundary of the BOA is within the study area for the Healthy Niagara project.

As all three projects – the TOA, E3 Initiative and Healthy Niagara –have related goals and boundaries, the Town has included them under one umbrella initiative entitled "Restoring Our Waterfront." The Restoring Our Waterfront initiative acknowledges that the future of the Town of Tonawanda is tied to sustainable development on the Niagara River waterfront that balances environmental, economic and community needs.

The TOA is consistent with the environmental, economic and community principles of the Restoring Our Waterfront initiative:

- **Environmental** – the plan encourages access to the Niagara River, preservation of natural resources, environmental remediation and sustainable development.
- **Economic** – the purpose of the TOA project is to advance redevelopment of underutilized properties and to expose development opportunities.
- **Community** – improving the economy and quality of life for residents through economic development, environmental remediation and access to the River are key goals of this plan.





The Riverwalk along the Niagara River

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE TONAWANDA OPPORTUNITY AREA

The Town of Tonawanda and City of Tonawanda, in cooperation with the Erie County Department of Planning, pursued a pre-nomination study for the Tonawanda Opportunity Area to assess realistic opportunities for area wide redevelopment. Several economic development projects and studies had been executed for the area and this study was an opportunity to continue the momentum created by those projects and establish a viable sequence for future redevelopment.

While many of the previous studies evaluated Town wide or City wide conditions, the Preliminary Analysis of the Tonawanda Opportunity Area study focuses on specific conditions within the TOA or how region wide factors impact the feasibility of redevelopment in the TOA. The next sections of the report examine existing conditions in the TOA to establish a basis to develop actions for revitalization.



Existing TOA conditions assessed to develop Actions for Revitalization

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

The Town of Tonawanda completed a Land Use Plan (LUP) and a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) in the 1990's to begin the process of transitioning the Niagara waterfront area from a predominantly industrial area to a mix of uses. Design and appearance of future development was also a key element of the plans. Following completion of the plans, the Town's zoning codes were also updated to reflect the recommendations of those plans. As a result of those planning and zoning efforts there are some key differences between the current land use pattern within the Tonawanda Opportunity Area and the current uses allowed by the new zoning codes.

Current land uses are illustrated in Figure 8. Three land uses are dominant in the TOA according to current real property tax data: vacant land, commercial and manufacturing. However, some of the properties categorized as commercial under the real property tax data, including multiple properties with fuel storage tanks, are more industrial in nature and appearance.

The most dominant use of property in the TOA is vacant land. Moreover, some of the properties labeled as commercial and manufacturing land uses are underutilized or practically vacant as they undergo building or structure demolitions as part of a remediation program. This is a significant finding as vacant land can provide opportunities for new development in the TOA. Unlike many developed urban areas where vacant land is scattered, the vacant properties in the TOA are generally adjacent to one another which will advance future redevelopment of the area and facilitate property assembly if necessary.



Dominant land uses in the TOA: vacant land and industrial uses

**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

LANDUSE

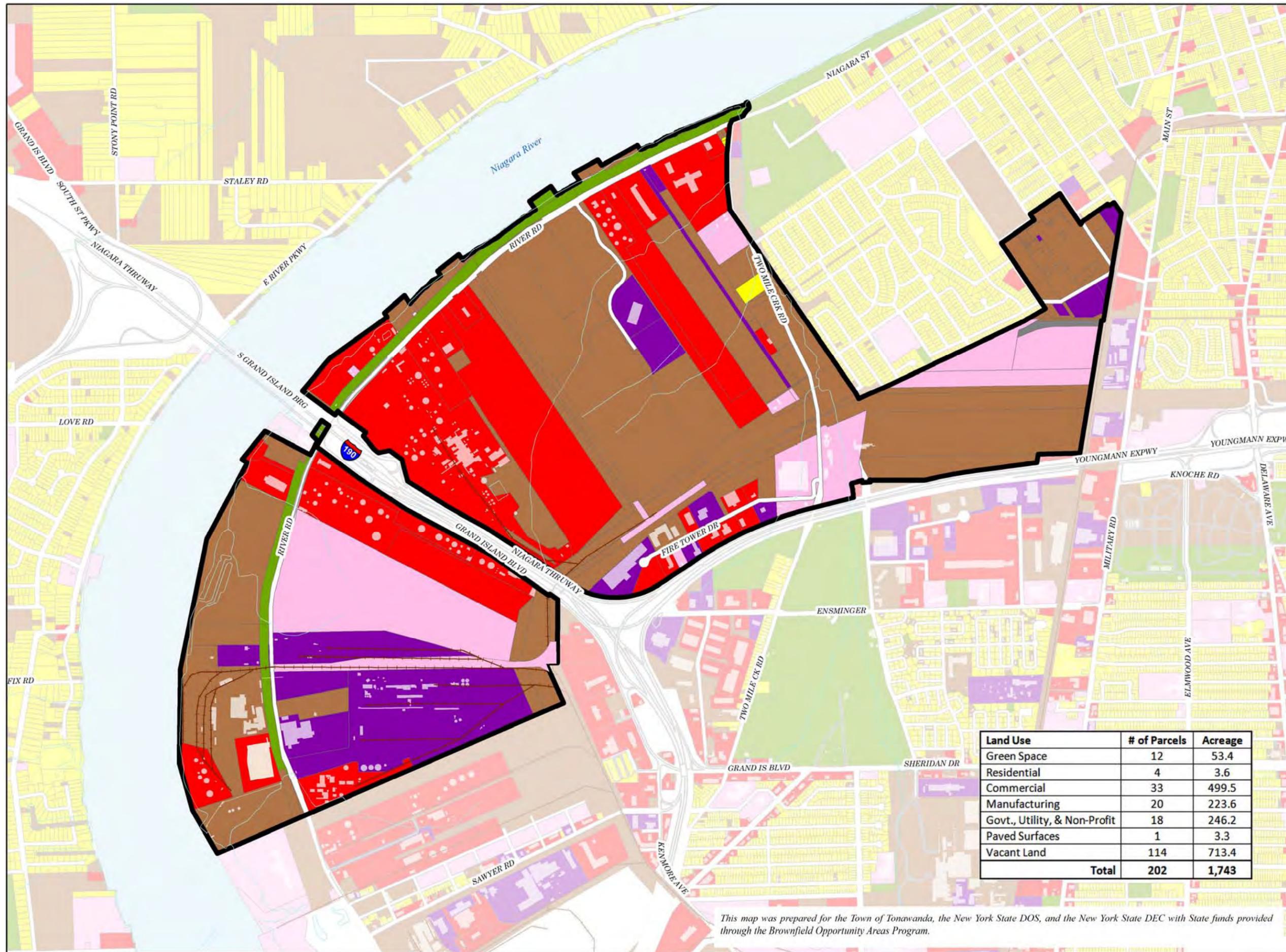


- Green Space
- Residential
- Commercial
- Manufacturing
- Govt., Utility, & Non-Profit
- Paved Surfaces
- Vacant Land

0 900
1 inch = 1,500 feet

Figure 8. Land Uses

**Labella Project No:
210683**



Land Use	# of Parcels	Acreage
Green Space	12	53.4
Residential	4	3.6
Commercial	33	499.5
Manufacturing	20	223.6
Govt., Utility, & Non-Profit	18	246.2
Paved Surfaces	1	3.3
Vacant Land	114	713.4
Total	202	1,743

This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

Zoning in the TOA (Figure 9) has been developed to encourage more appropriate uses compatible with its location on the Niagara River and, north of the I-190 (Niagara Thruway), its proximity to residential neighborhoods. North of the I-190 the zoning in the TOA is consistent with the LWRP and LUP recommendations for less intense commercial development. A majority of the interior areas east of River Road and near I-290 are zoned Waterfront Industrial which permits office and light industrial uses. A wide strip of land east of River Road but north of the Seaway Landfill is zoned Waterfront Business which permits office and research uses. Just to the south of the Waterfront Business district on River Road is the Retail, Highway and Commercial zoning district that permits retail, restaurant and accommodations. The area to the west of River Road along the Niagara River is zoned Waterfront Mixed Use permitting small scale commercial and water dependent uses.

South of the I-190, all of the land east of River Road in the TOA is zoned General Industrial. The General Industrial zone allows any use except for residential, accommodation, hospital, institutional and junkyards. Land west of River Road in the TOA is split between the Waterfront Mixed Use district and Waterfront Industrial district.

Two City of Tonawanda zoning districts are also within the TOA. The properties between the Town of Tonawanda northern boundary and Two Mile Creek are zoned manufacturing which permits industrial uses. The Spaulding Fibre area south and west of Military Road was recently re-zoned to the Spaulding Commerce Park District to permit light industrial and commercial uses.

With the exception of the Manufacturing district in the City of Tonawanda, proposals for development must meet design and/or performance requirements and conform to any site plan requirements set by the Planning Boards.

Currently, the Town of Tonawanda is preparing a comprehensive Waterfront Land Use Plan to reassess the current uses, regulations and zoning along the entire waterfront including the TOA to advance more appropriate development. The findings and recommendations of this TOA plan are being coordinated with the Land Use Plan.

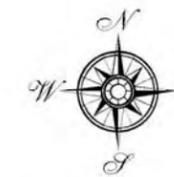
Currently, there are no other local, county, state or federal economic development designations in the TOA. However, the TOA is within the LWRP boundary which makes projects in the TOA eligible for grant funds for land and water based construction projects through the New York Departments of State and Parks.

Table 3. Zoning categories within the TOA

Zone	Uses Permitted	Special Uses Permitted
Town Zones		
General Industrial	Any use except for residential, accommodation, hospitals, institutions and junk yards.	None
Retail, Highway, Commercial	Restaurants, Gasoline Stations, Retail Stores, Motels and Hotels	Truck stops and travel plazas
Waterfront Business	Parks, offices, research, product assembly	Retail, restaurant, lodging, nursery/day care, warehousing
Waterfront Mixed Use	Parks, water dependent uses, lodging, retail, restaurants	Mixed use, water dependent facilities (docks, pipelines)
Waterfront Industrial	Parks, boat storage, light industry, assembly, warehousing, research, offices	Service, repair, retail, nursery/daycare, commercial laundry
City Zones		
Manufacturing	Industrial uses, truck terminals	None
Spaulding Commerce Park	Parks, retail, restaurants, offices, medical, custom shops, warehousing, research	Service or repair

**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

ZONING



Town of Tonawanda Zone

- A - First Residential
- B - Second Residential
- MF - Multifamily Dwelling
- C - General Business
- C1 - Restricted Business
- RHC - Retail - Highway Commercial Use
- G1 - General Industrial
- P-S - Performance Standards Use
- WB - Waterfront Business
- WID - Waterfront Industrial District
- WMU - Waterfront Mixed Use
- Sch-Pk-Cem

City of Tonawanda Zoning Districts

- R-1 - Single Family Residential District
- R-2 - General Residential District
- R-C - Residential Restricted District
- C-1 - Neighborhood Shopping District
- C-M - General Commercial Service District
- M-1 - Manufacturing District
- SCPD - Spaulding Commerce Park District

Town of Tonawanda Zoning Sub-Area

- Business Transition Area
- Light Industrial Corridor Area
- Thruway Impact Area

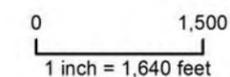
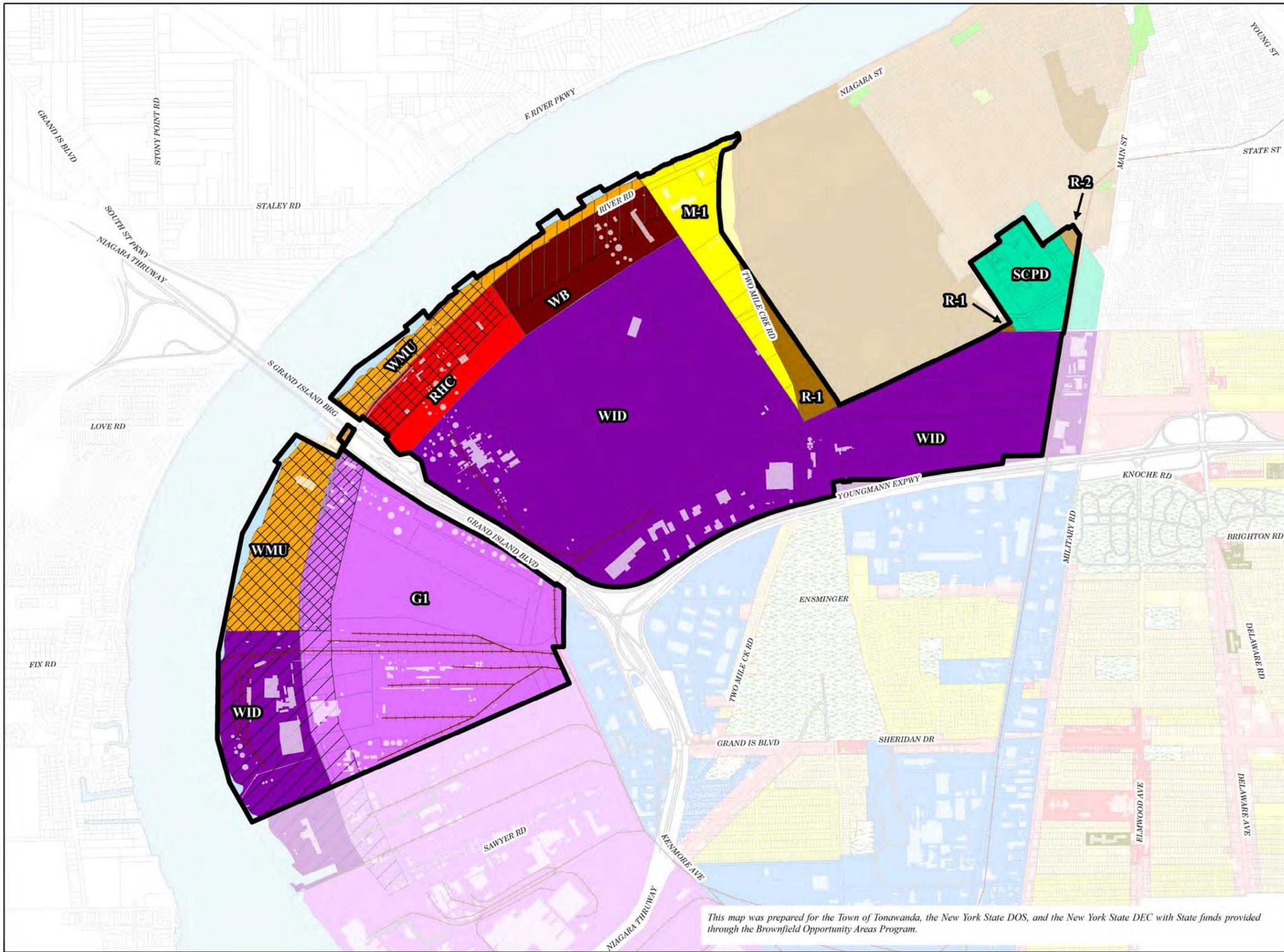


Figure 9. Zoning

**Labella Project No:
210683**



This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

BROWNFIELD, ABANDONED AND VACANT SITES

The TOA includes 29 brownfield, underutilized and vacant/undeveloped properties. Appendix B provides site summaries of all the properties that include detailed information on tax parcel data, utilities, transportation access, use and environmental information. The environmental information provides a background of the site, information on public environmental records for the property and data regarding and groundwater contamination.

The properties labeled as brownfields generally fall into the following categories: public or private landfills, properties formerly used in energy production or storage and abandoned parcels that were used for construction or other waste material disposal. The Town, County and NYSDEC are taking a proactive approach with some of those properties and are currently in various stages of testing materials and soil at the sites.

A review of the tax status of the private properties was also performed as part of the study. Three of the brownfield properties owe almost \$3 million in back taxes and interest fees. Two of the properties are abandoned properties where the owner has passed away and the property is in the process of being foreclosed on by Erie County. However, the Seaway landfill is a prominent brownfield in the area and is owned by Benderson Development Company. The back taxes owned on that property are more than \$2 million. The Tax status of all properties is also included in Appendix B.

Underutilized parcels in the TOA also fall into similar categories as the brownfield properties but also include properties with underutilized buildings or sites. Some of the key underutilized properties include the Cherry Farm Park and Niagara River World sites which both have prime locations on the waterfront.

The vacant parcels were a mix of uses. However, the majority were vacant parcels owned by adjacent property owners likely for future expansion.

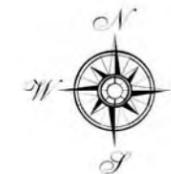
Table 4 lists the brownfield, underutilized and vacant parcels in the TOA. The Town and City of Tonawanda were the only public entities that owned brownfield and vacant parcels in the TOA. The Town Landfill, comprising several properties on East Park Drive, is considered a brownfield, while properties reserved for the Youngmann Commerce Center and Spaulding Fibre are labeled as vacant parcels. Figure 10 illustrates the location and size of the various brownfield, underutilized and vacant parcels.

Table 4. Brownfield, underutilized and vacant properties

#	Parcel	Address	Owner Listed	Acres
BROWNFIELD/LANDFILL PROPERTIES				
1	51.20-1-1.2	4293 River Road	Huntley Power LLC	116.95
2	51.12-1-4.2	4545 River Road	United Refining	17.25
3	52.13-1-2	4625 River Road	Ashland Oil & Refining	20.33
4	52.09-1-13	4825 River Road	Seaway Industrial Development	96.62
5	52.06-3-9	5445 River Road	Lake Ontario Steel	37.48
6	52.06-3-8	5565 River Road	Nick Magliarditti	37
7	52.10-2-1.1	5605 River Road	Nick Magliarditti	0.6
8	Various	793-797 River Road	Town of Tonawanda	59.66
UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES				
1	64.12-4-1	3821 River Road	Rouse Breihan Inc.	17.35
2	64.08-1-9	3937 River Road	ECIDA	16.52
3	64.08-1-1.1	4002 River Road	Niagara River World, Inc.	50.08
4	51.20-1-1.1	4290 River Road	Niagara Mohawk Power Corp.	56.42
5	51.12-1-2	4560 River Road	Enbridge Energy Partners	0.5
6	52.09-1-1	4630 River Road	Giuseppe Holdings, LLC	3.75
7	52.09-1-12.1	4697 River Road	Browning Ferr Ind. Of NY Inc.	1.84
8	52.09-1-2	4700 River Road	Enbridge Energy Partners	0.07
9	52.15-1-2.2	786 East Park Drive	Pinnacle Towers	0.89
VACANT/UNDEVELOPED PROPERTIES				
1	64.08-1-8	4001 River Road	Braxner, LLC	9.7
2	52.09-1-15	4620 River Road	Ashland Oil & Refining	0.04
3	52.05-1-6	4999 River Road	Ashland Oil & Refining	35
4	52.05-1-4	5201 River Road	5201 River Road Inc.	19.96
5	52.10-1-1	5211 River Road	Wachovia Bank National	6.62
6	52.06-3-11.11	5315 River Road	5201 River Road Inc.	54.31
7	52.06-3-10	5335 River Road	Riverview Inds Center	25.19
8	52.06-3-4	5601 River Road	Con-way Transportation	1.64
9	52.06-3-5	5603 River Road	3679 River Road Inc.	8.63
10	52.11-1-2	5607 River Road	Enbridge Energy Partners	0.81
11	Various	785-791 River Road	Town of Tonawanda	87
12	Various	Spaulding Fibre Sites	City of Tonawanda	38
			TOTAL	820.21

**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

**BROWNFIELD,
UNDERUTILIZED, AND
VACANT SITES**

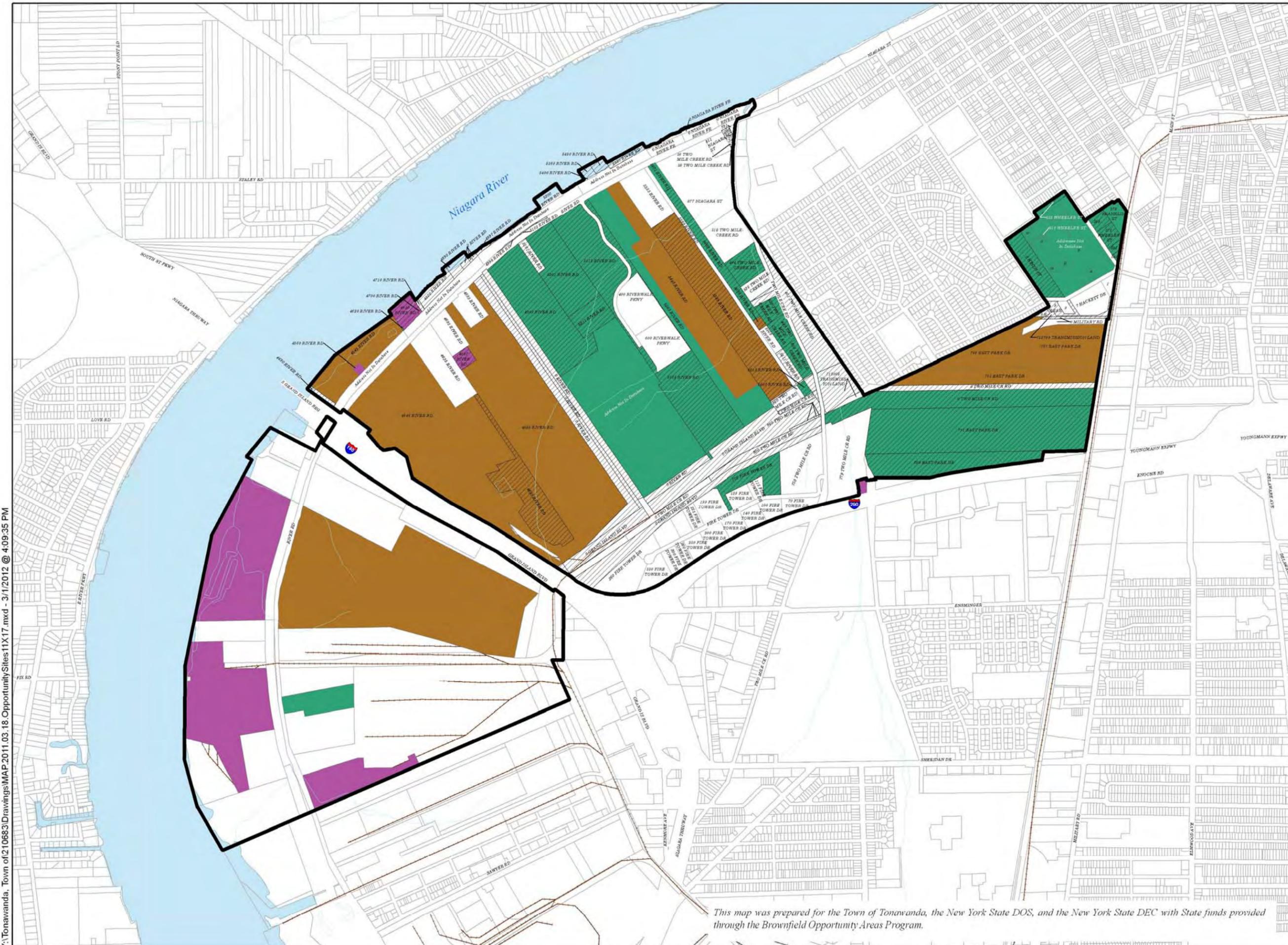


- BROWNFIELD/LANDFILL
- UNDERUTILIZED
- VACANT/UNDEVELOPED
- Landuse as Vacant (76 parcels)

0 850
1 inch = 1,500 feet

**Figure 10. Brownfield,
Underutilized and Vacant Sites**

**Labella Project No:
210683**



This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS

Currently, the TOA is somewhat limited in the level of local infrastructure available for development (Figure 11). There are only two primary local roads which serve the TOA. River Road runs in an east-west direction near the TOA's northern boundary and generally follows the Niagara River's path approximately 1/10th to 1/4th of a mile from the River's shore. Similarly, Two Mile Creek Road runs in a north south direction near the eastern boundary of the TOA generally following Two Mile Creek's path. Both River Road and Two Mile Creek are present in the historic map shown in the introduction section. Therefore, with the exception of these original historic roads, and Fire Tower Drive, no other roads have been constructed in the TOA, which is in sharp contrast to the adjacent residential and commercial areas that contain multiple streets and roads. The lack of roadways has prevented access into the TOA and discouraged property development and subdivision of land.

Water and sewer infrastructure is also limited in the TOA. There are water and sanitary sewer lines along River Road, Fire Tower Drive, and the future Youngmann Commerce Center parcels. Another water line, as well as the Town's storm sewer outfall line, runs in a northwesterly direction between Fire Tower Drive and River Road but there are no sanitary sewer lines in the same area.

However, access to regional road networks is extraordinary and with the exception of downtown Buffalo, the TOA may rank as one of the most accessible areas in the Buffalo Niagara metropolitan region. This exceptional regional road network includes:

- Interstates I-190 and I-290 which have two exit/entrance points to the TOA. These are both subsidiary roadways to Interstate 90, New York State's primary Interstate. They offer access within the Buffalo Niagara region and to the rest of New York State, Canada and Pennsylvania.
- State Routes 324 (Sheridan Drive) and 266 (River Road). Sheridan Drive is a major east west roadway in the Buffalo area providing access to regional shopping and employment opportunities, while River Road is a primary roadway between the City of Buffalo and City of Tonawanda. Military Road (State Route 265) is not directly in the TOA but is adjacent to the Spaulding Fibre area.

To encourage redevelopment, therefore, an internal, local road network is needed to complement the regional road network.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Land ownership in the TOA is predominantly privately owned. Of the 202 parcels in the TOA, 144 parcels (1488.95 acres out of 1,830 acres) are privately owned. Thirty one privately owned parcels (346.25 acres) are owned by private utilities or railroads including Niagara Mohawk (National Grid) and Conrail.

The remainder of the parcels (58 parcels, 341.65 acres) are owned by public agencies. However, there are several large, strategic parcels owned by the Town of Tonawanda and City of Tonawanda including the future North Youngmann Commerce Center plot and the Spaulding Fibre redevelopment site.

A map of Land Ownership Patterns is shown in Figure 12.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

One of the most unique amenities in and around the TOA is the number of accessible natural and recreational resources (Figure 13) including:

- **Riverwalk** – this well used resource is part of a region wide walkway and bikeway path that stretches between downtown Buffalo’s Lake Erie lakefront and the Erie Canal. On a warm summer day the section of the Riverwalk in the Town and City of Tonawanda is heavily utilized.
- **Veterans Memorial Park** – the City of Tonawanda park is not in the TOA but is directly adjacent to its boundary. The park provides a neighborhood green space and recreational area.
- **Sheridan Park** – an 18 hole golf course is directly south of the TOA and accessible via the Two Mile Creek trail.
- **Two Mile Creek Greenway** – this is a multi-use trail that runs along Two Mile Creek between East Park Drive and River Road and connects Sheridan Park and residential area east of the TOA to the Niagara River.
- **Niagara River** – the Niagara River is the region’s greatest open space and recreational resource. In addition to the Riverwalk, the Niagara waterfront in the TOA includes a private marina and areas for fishing.

Two small creeks are also within the TOA. Two Mile Creek runs in a north-south direction between Sheridan Drive and the Niagara River. Rattlesnake Creek runs in an east-west direction between the I-190 and empties into Two Mile Creek. Some sections of the Niagara Riverfront are also within the 100 year flood plain.

TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA

INFRASTRUCTURE

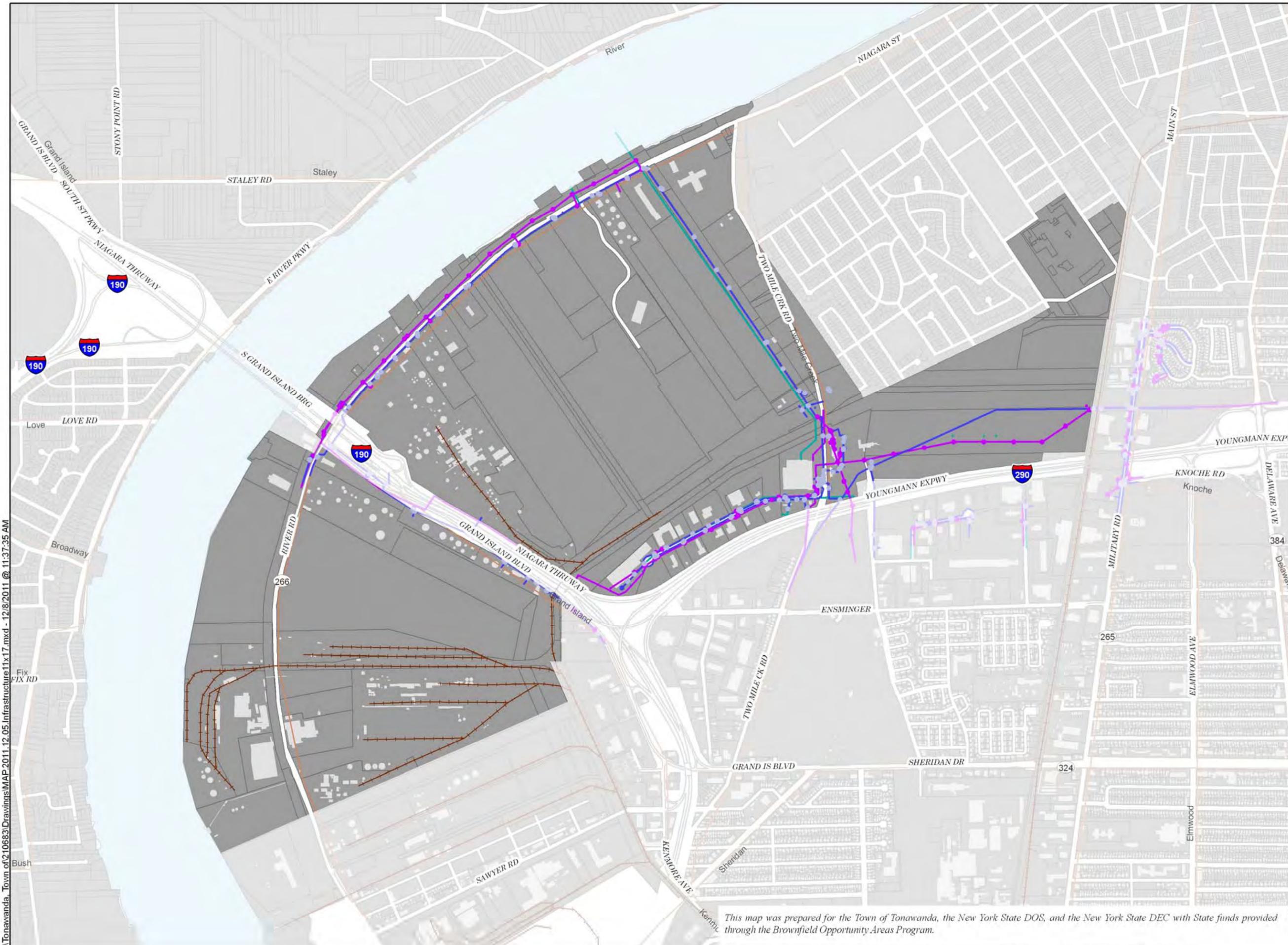


- WATER HYDRANT
- WATER VALVE
- SANITARY MANHOLES
- WATER LINES
- SANITARY SEWER LINES
- STORM SEWER LINES

0 850
1 inch = 1,500 feet

Figure 11. Transportation and Infrastructure

Labella Project No:
210683



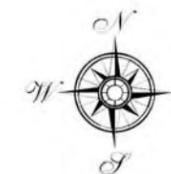
This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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Category	# Parcels	Acreage
Private	114	1155
Public Utility	31	346.25
City of Tonawanda	16	64.5
Town of Tonawanda	15	198
Erie County	25	65.5
State of New York	1	1.4
Total	202	1830.65

TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA

PUBLIC/PRIVATE OWNERSHIP



- PRIVATE
- UTILITY
- CITY OF TONAWANDA
- TOWN OF TONAWANDA
- ERIE COUNTY
- STATE OF NEW YORK
- UNKNOWN

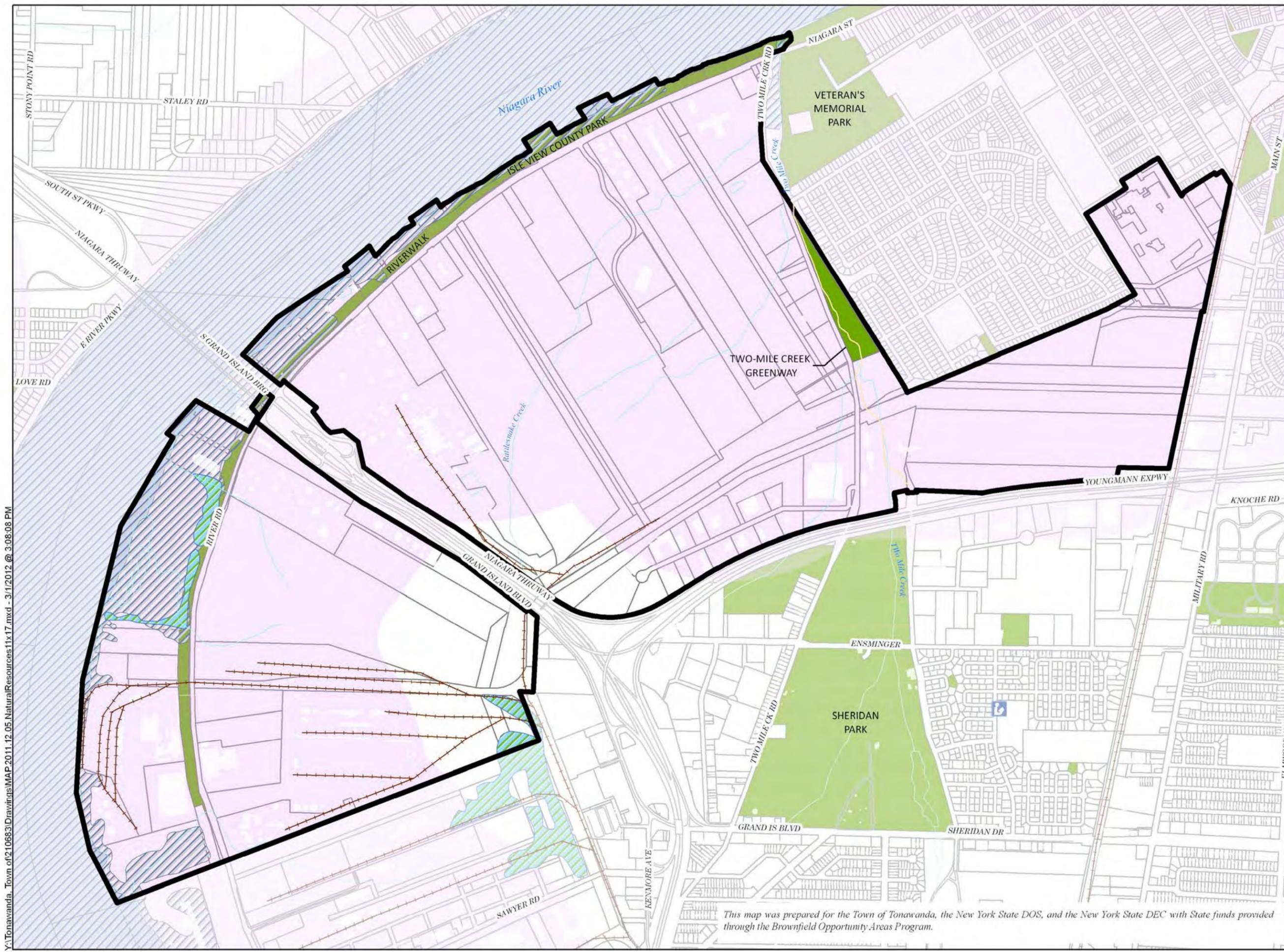
0 650
1 inch = 1,114 feet

Figure 12. Land Ownership

LaBella Project No:
210683

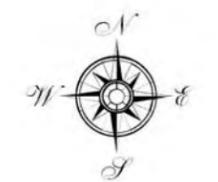
This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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**TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA**

**NATURAL AND HISTORIC
RESOURCES**



- Public Library
- Railroads (ESRI)
- NYSDEC Mapped Wetland
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Archeo-Sensitive Area
- Green Space
- Water Body
- Proposed BOA Boundary

0 700
1 inch = 1,250 feet

Figure 13. Natural and Cultural Resources

**Labella Project No:
210683**

This map was prepared for the Town of Tonawanda, the New York State DOS, and the New York State DEC with State funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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The constraints presented by waterways and the floodplains should be recognized in the final plan for the TOA. Development in the 100 year flood plain adjacent to the Niagara River should be situated or constructed to avoid the impacts of flooding.

Similarly, development should be restricted near the Rattlesnake and Two Mile Creek areas. As noted in Figure 6, a 150 ft. buffer is recommended around Rattlesnake Creek because it traverses through potential development areas as well as brownfield properties. Fortunately, the few mapped wetlands present in the TOA are located in areas either not targeted for redevelopment or reserved for future park areas.

As the area was developed relatively late in western New York after 1900, there are not a lot of cultural or historic areas in the TOA. However, the Riverwalk is essentially built over the old bed of the Erie Canal. In addition, the majority of the TOA, likely because of its proximity to the Niagara River, is considered an archaeologically sensitive area.

ECONOMIC AND MARKET ANALYSIS

As part of the Step 1 TOA study a comprehensive economic and market analysis was performed to determine appropriate uses for underutilized properties. The analysis included a review of existing and projected economic conditions in the area complemented by an economic cluster analysis to identify current economic strengths, emerging economic strengths and retention targets in the Buffalo Niagara metropolitan area.

EXISTING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Buffalo Niagara area, including the Town of Tonawanda, continues to go through an economic restructuring as existing heavy industry contracts and new light manufacturing industries emerge. Between 1998 and 2008 Erie County industry employment in manufacturing, wholesale trade, construction and warehousing declined (Figure 14). Interestingly, these are the primary industries in the TOA. Manufacturing employment alone declined by more than 13,000 employees in the 10 year period.

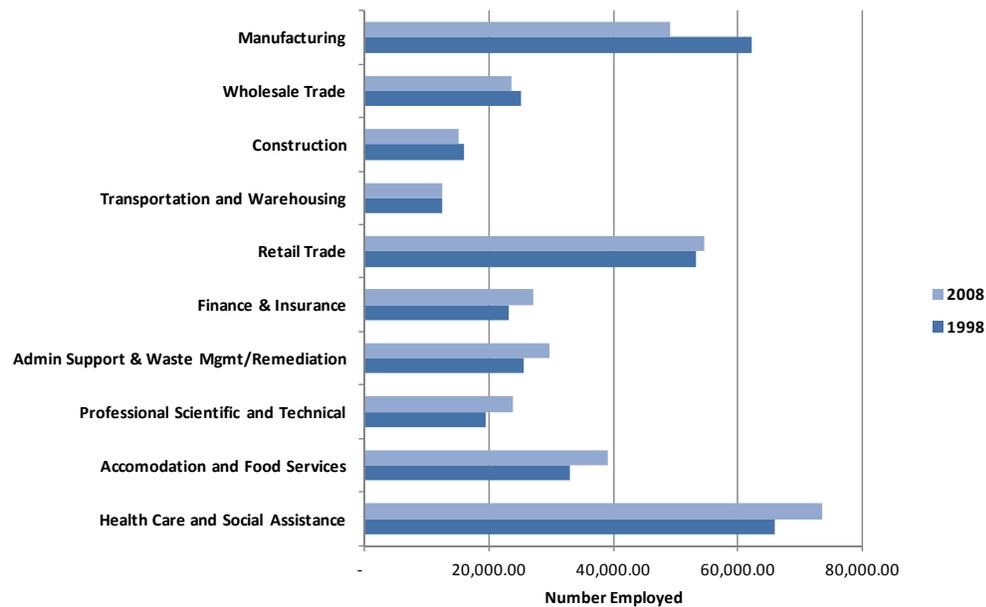


Figure 14. Industry Employment (establishment data), Erie County, 1998 and 2008 (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

On the other hand, employment grew in non-traditional industries not currently prevalent in the TOA. Employment in retail trade, finance, professional, accommodation, restaurants and health care grew during the same period in Erie County. There were more than 13,000 jobs created in the healthcare, accommodation and restaurant industries between 1998 and 2008, partly

compensating for loss in manufacturing employment at least in numbers, but likely not in income.

The transition from heavy industrial to professional and service employment is expected to persist into the next decade. Based on employment projections prepared by the New York State Department of Labor for western New York (Figure 15) employment will continue to increase in the health care, professional, accommodation and financial service industries between 2006 and 2016.

The loss of jobs in manufacturing employment is anticipated to continue as well based on the projections. Manufacturing employment is expected to decrease by another 19,000 jobs.

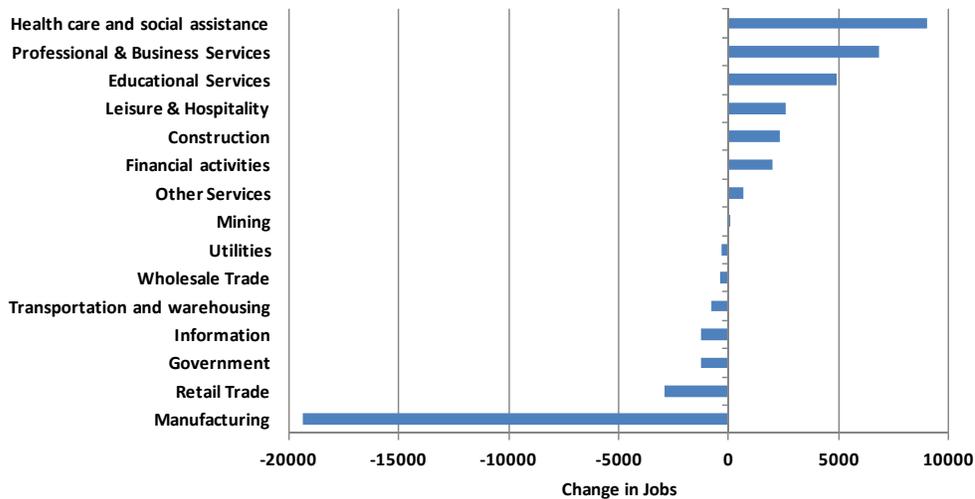


Figure 15. Projected Employment Growth, Buffalo Niagara region, 2006 to 2016 (Source: NYS Dept. of Labor)

The ramifications of the economic restructuring for the Tonawanda Opportunity Area is that buildings and sites currently occupied by traditional industries such as manufacturing may become significantly underutilized, vacant or abandoned in the future. At the same time, the TOA should be prepared to facilitate construction of new structures to accommodate emerging industries including healthcare, professional services and lodging.

INDUSTRY CLUSTER ANALYSIS

While the existing conditions provide a general overview of industry economic conditions in the TOA, an industry cluster analysis identifies industry strengths and weaknesses at the three digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) level. The cluster analysis, therefore, provides a more detailed picture of the strength of specific sub-industries within the major industry categories.

Figures 16 and 17 show industries that either have a high or low employment share within the Buffalo Metropolitan area. This is based on the location quotient for each industry which measures the industry employment share in the region relative to similar industry employment shares in the United States for the same industry. Those industries with a high location quotient not only have a high relative employment share, but they are exporting goods outside the region and also have a competitive advantage in the industry because they are in the Buffalo Niagara region.

Industries with a High Employment Share Buffalo Metro Area - 2008

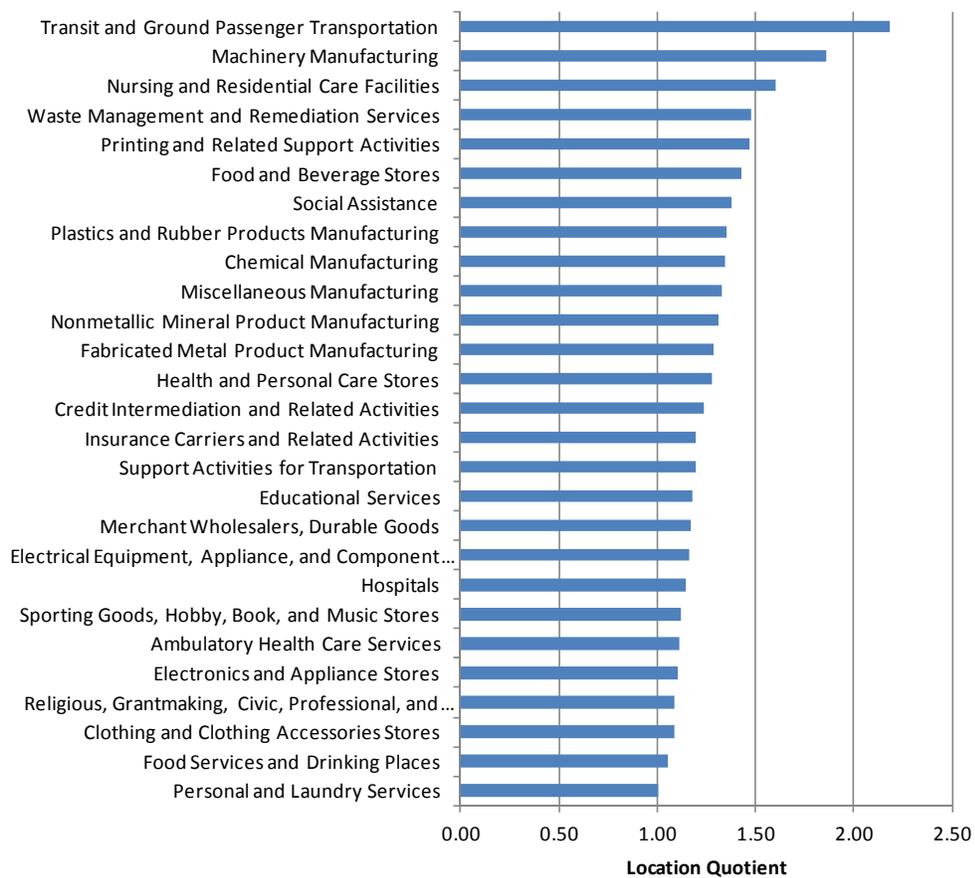


Figure 16. . Industries with a High Employment Share (Location Quotient) in the Buffalo Niagara region (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, LaBella Associates)

Industries with a Low Employment Share Buffalo Metro Area - 2008



Figure 17. Industries with a Low Employment Share (Location Quotient) in the Buffalo Niagara region (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, LaBella Associates).

Figures 18 and 19 measure industrial employment strength in a different manner. These figures show how much of the employment change in an industry is attributable to national, industry wide and regional growth factors. For instance some industries such as contracting are usually related to or dependent on how well the national economy is doing. Other industries, such as accommodation, are growing because they have a competitive advantage (tourism) in the Buffalo Niagara region. Figure 26 displays those industries that have a high regional growth rate (some may be losing employment, but that is due to national and/or industry wide factors). Figure 27 shows the opposite – those industries that are not growing regionally.

Industries Gaining Regional Employment Share Buffalo Metro Area - 1998-2008

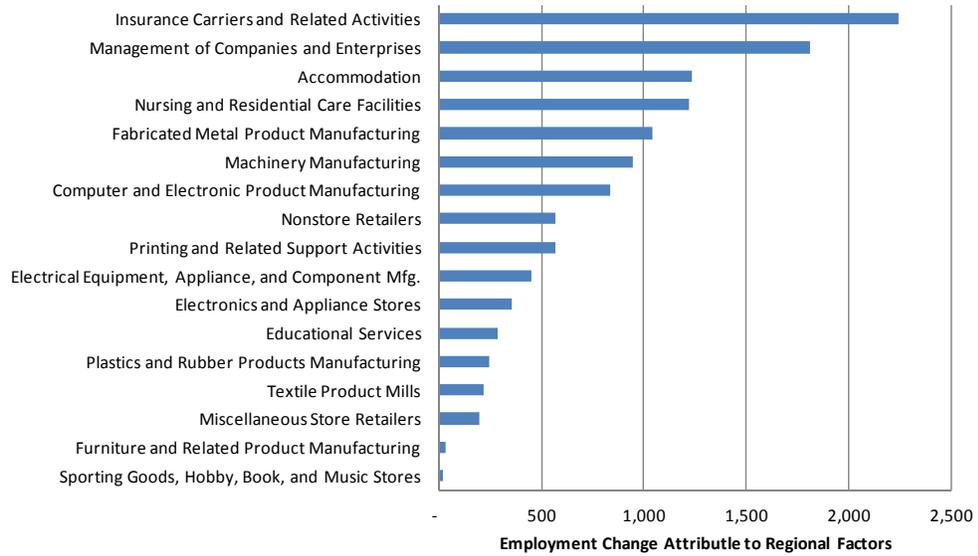


Figure 18. . Industries Gaining Employment Share in the region (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; LaBella Associates)

Industries Losing Regional Employment Share Buffalo Metro Area - 1998-2008

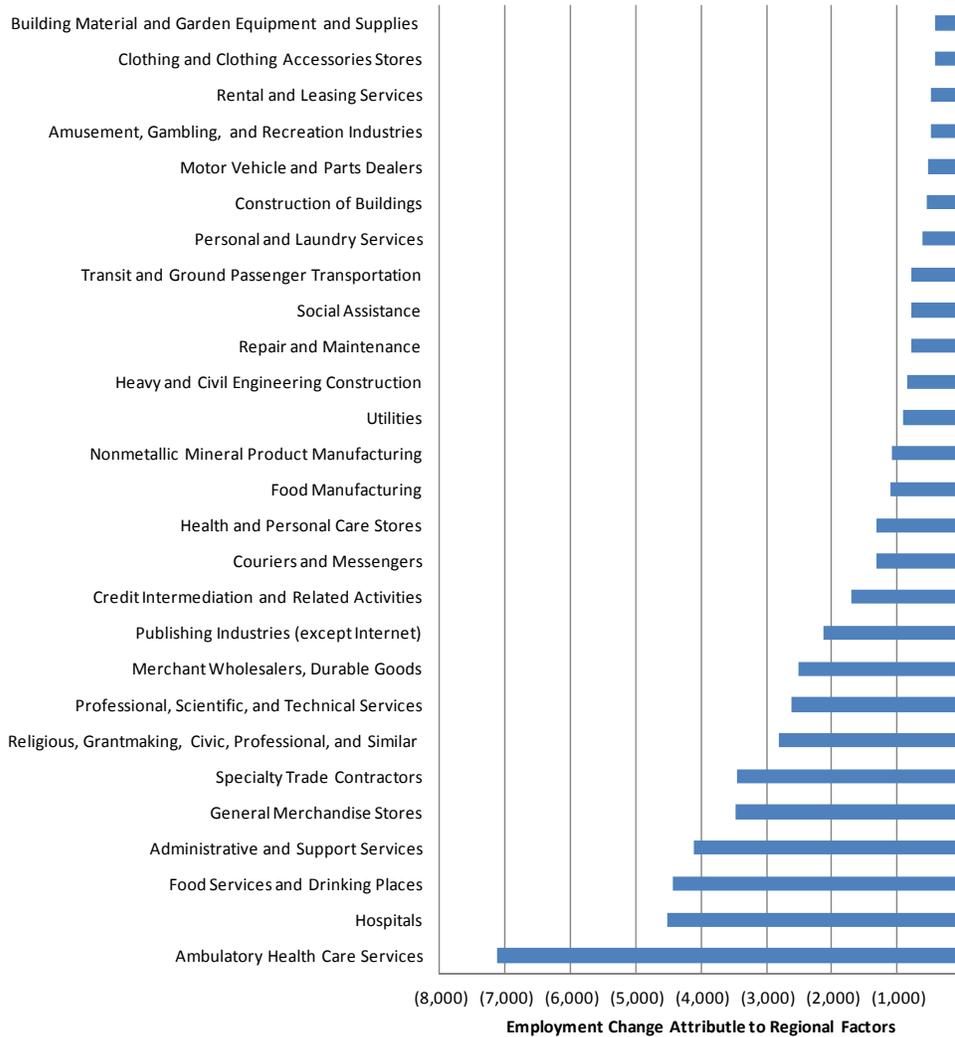


Figure 19. Industries losing employment share in the region (U.S. Bureau of the Census; LaBella Associates)

Combining the two factors together – current employment share and changes in employment share – a “menu” of potential companies to select for attraction, retention or expansion emerges. Similarly, a list of those industries that need significant efforts to re-establish or grow are listed as limited prospects. Table 5 provides that list and is divided into:

- *Current Strengths* – those industries that currently have a large employment share (relative to the U.S.) and also have strong regional growth.
- *Emerging Strengths* – those industries that currently have a relatively low employment share but have shown strong regional growth.

- *Retention Targets* – industries with a large employment share that are starting to lose their regional share of employment. Because of their significant employment base these industries should be targeted for retention.
- *Limited Prospects* – industries that have both a small employment share (relative to the U.S. overall) and are not growing significantly at the regional level. Significant economic development efforts would need to be focused on these industries to help them grow

Table 5. Economic Clusters in the Buffalo Niagara Region

Current Strengths	Retention Targets
Insurance Carriers & Related	Transit & Ground Transportation
Nursing & Residential Care	Waste Management & Remediation
Fabricated Metal Processing	Food & Beverage Stores
Machinery Manufacturing	Social Assistance
Printing & Related	Chemical Manufacturing
Electrical Equip., Appliance & Component Mfg.	Misc. Manufacturing
Electronics & Appliance Stores	Nonmetallic Mineral Product Mfg.
Educational Services	Health & Personal Care Stores
Plastics & Rubber Mfg.	Credit Intermediation and Related
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	Support Activities for Transportation
Emerging Strengths	Wholesale, Durable Goods
Management of Companies & Enterprises	Ambulatory Health Care
Accommodation	Hospitals
Computer & Electronic Product Mfg.	Religious, Civic, Professional Organizations
Non-Store Retailers	Clothing and Accessories Stores
Textile Product Mills	Food Services & Drinking Places
Misc. Store Retailers	Personal Services
Furniture & Related Mfg.	Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers
	Limited Prospects
	Administrative Support Services
	General Merchandise Stores
	Specialty Trade Contractors
	Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
	Publishing Industries
	Couriers and Messengers
	Food Manufacturing
	Utilities
	Heavy Construction
	Repair & Maintenance
	Construction of Buildings
	Amusement, Gambling & Recreation Industries
	Building Material and Garden Equipment
	Furniture & Home Furnishing Stores
	Truck Transportation
	Performing Arts, Spectator Sports
	Paper Manufacturing
	Wood Product Manufacturing
	Merchant Wholesalers, Non-Durable Goods
	Gasoline Stations

The industry cluster data suggests that the TOA could focus on the following types of jobs and users for attraction and retention.

1. **Professional Offices** – Offices for regional headquarters, banking, mortgage and insurance industries as well as educational facilities continue to show signs of strength for future job growth in the metro area. The high visibility of some of the TOA sites, including the proposed Youngmann Commerce Center, would provide significant exposure for regional companies.
2. **Light Industrial Uses:** Electrical equipment, electronics manufacturing, warehouses and vehicle/boat dealers are viable light industrial uses in the TOA that don't have the same impacts as heavy industrial uses.
3. **Accommodation & Food** – Hotels, motels and restaurants are feasible uses for the TOA that could provide vitality in the area and serve the office and industrial users in the TOA. Accommodation is an ideal use to take advantage of the TOA's central location between Buffalo and Niagara Falls and access to the Interstates.
4. **Heavy Industrial** – despite the eventual long term transition to non-industrial jobs, the TOA and areas adjacent to the TOA still are home to a high number of heavy industrial jobs, including the GM production plant on River Road just west and south of the TOA. Therefore heavy industrial jobs are a retention target that should be accommodated in the TOA with efforts to encourage more sustainable production processes and site improvements that are compatible with the new uses above.

It should be noted that flex buildings would provide an opportunity to located light industrial uses and professional offices in the same location. Based on community and stakeholder input, the preferred uses to attract to the TOA are professional offices, light industrial uses, lodging and restaurants. Attraction of new heavy industrial uses was not desired.

LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKET

The need to build or renovate space in the TOA partly depends on the overall market for office, retail and industrial space in the Buffalo Niagara Falls market. 2010 Annual Market Reviews from the Buffalo offices of CB Richard Ellis and Pyramid Brokerage Company (Cushman & Wakefield) provide real estate market data for region as outlined below:

- **Office** – The office market vacancy rate is between 10-11 percent and is increasing. The increase is partly due to a significant amount of new office construction in the region over the year, outpacing absorption which is also increasing. The Northtowns submarket, which Tonawanda is part of, has the highest overall vacancy rate for Class A space (14.34%), the second lowest vacancy rate for flex space (11.09%) and absorption of Class A space is negative. Common users of new office space include medical and educational organizations, reflecting the local job market.
- **Industrial** – The industrial market also had a vacancy rate around 11 percent and is continuing to decline. Unlike the office market, there was no new industrial space built in 2010 and absorption was over 700,000 square feet. Vacancy rates decreased in the Northtowns market and specifically for flex and manufacturing space. Manufacturing had a very low vacancy rate of 4.6 percent in the Northtowns.
- **Retail** – The overall retail vacancy rate in the Buffalo market was 13.47 percent and increasing. However, the Northtowns submarket only had a nine percent (9%) vacancy, the highest level of absorption in the region and some successful redevelopment projects in the Boulevard Mall corridor which includes the Town of Tonawanda.

There is clearly an alignment with the uses identified in the economic analysis and the local real estate market. Professional offices were identified as a target use, but with a strong competitor to the east in Amherst and a relatively high Class A vacancy rate the need for new Class A space in the TOA would likely be low. The industrial market, on the other hand, shows signs of demand and light industrial space was identified as a viable use in the TOA. Retail overall wasn't targeted for the TOA but the restaurant submarket for retail was strong and one of the major reasons for the Boulevard corridor retail recovery.

Given the market conditions, and the uses targeted for the TOA, the best approach would be a phased economic development approach. Attraction and expansion of light industrial uses (electrical equipment, electronics, etc.), with associated offices, would be successful initially. That could be followed by, or done simultaneously with, the attraction of restaurant uses, especially along River Road, emphasizing the Niagara waterfront location and regional access. Subsequently, as the Class A office market improves, a professional office attraction package could be developed for the TOA.

The phasing approach is ideal because the light industrial and restaurant market is somewhat established in and around the TOA and could be built upon. The Class A office market, in contrast, is a relatively new use for the TOA and consequently, a

unique marketing approach to a target market (i.e., the Canadian market with its location between the two international bridges; sustainable development) would need to be developed prior to any attraction efforts.

Similarly, while the data on accommodation real estate trends in western New York is limited, hotel occupancy rates in the region continue to increase according to Smith Travel Research. Hotels are a natural fit for the TOA with its access to the Interstates, central location and proximity to the Niagara River.

The housing market also continues to improve with the average price of homes sold increasing from 2010 to 2011 according to the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors. However, based on the decreasing and aging population in the Town and City of Tonawanda, and specifically in the TOA, building more traditional housing units would potentially lead to higher housing vacancy rates. Construction of non-traditional housing units, such as condos, may be a more feasible in the TOA as has been successful in downtown Buffalo and even in the cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda near the convergence of the Erie Canal and Niagara River.

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account all of the existing opportunities and constraints discussed above in the preliminary analysis, the Tonawanda Opportunity Area Steering Committee developed a set of recommendations and a preliminary master plan for the area. The recommendations and plan were also based on the goals articulated by residents and businesses during the public participation process that included waterfront access, inclusion of green infrastructure, economic development, an enhanced quality of life, increased tax revenues and an improved image. Recommendations from the Town's planning studies were also considered which mirrored the public's goals but also recommended the installation of an interior road network within the TOA.

LAND USE AND ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Fortunately, as was stated in previous sections, the Town's Zoning Code has been updated to reflect the recommendations of various land use and planning studies recently completed. All the current zones permit as of right or by a special use approval all of the uses identified as current strengths, emerging strengths or retention targets in the Economic and Market Analysis.

However, in many instances the current zoning would need to be adjusted to accommodate uses identified in the market analysis or to address issues raised during the community participation process. The changes recommended are generally illustrated in Figure 20 and include:

- **Extend the Waterfront Business Zone to the utility corridors, Youngmann Commerce Park** - The Waterfront Business Zone (with some minor adjustments described below) is the most appropriate zone to facilitate future development in the area bordered by the eastern Town line, River Road and the western and southern utility corridors near the I-290 and Seaway landfill. This is also the most suitable zoning for the planned Youngmann Commerce Center. The uses allowed are most consistent with the targeted uses identified the market analysis and community preferences.
- **Extend Waterfront Mixed Use Zone along waterfront; Permit Housing** – Most of the area north of River Road is appropriately zoned Waterfront Mixed Use which promotes mixed use and smaller scale development that is compatible with the waterfront location. However, a section between the Cherry Farm Park and the southern boundary of the TOA should be rezoned

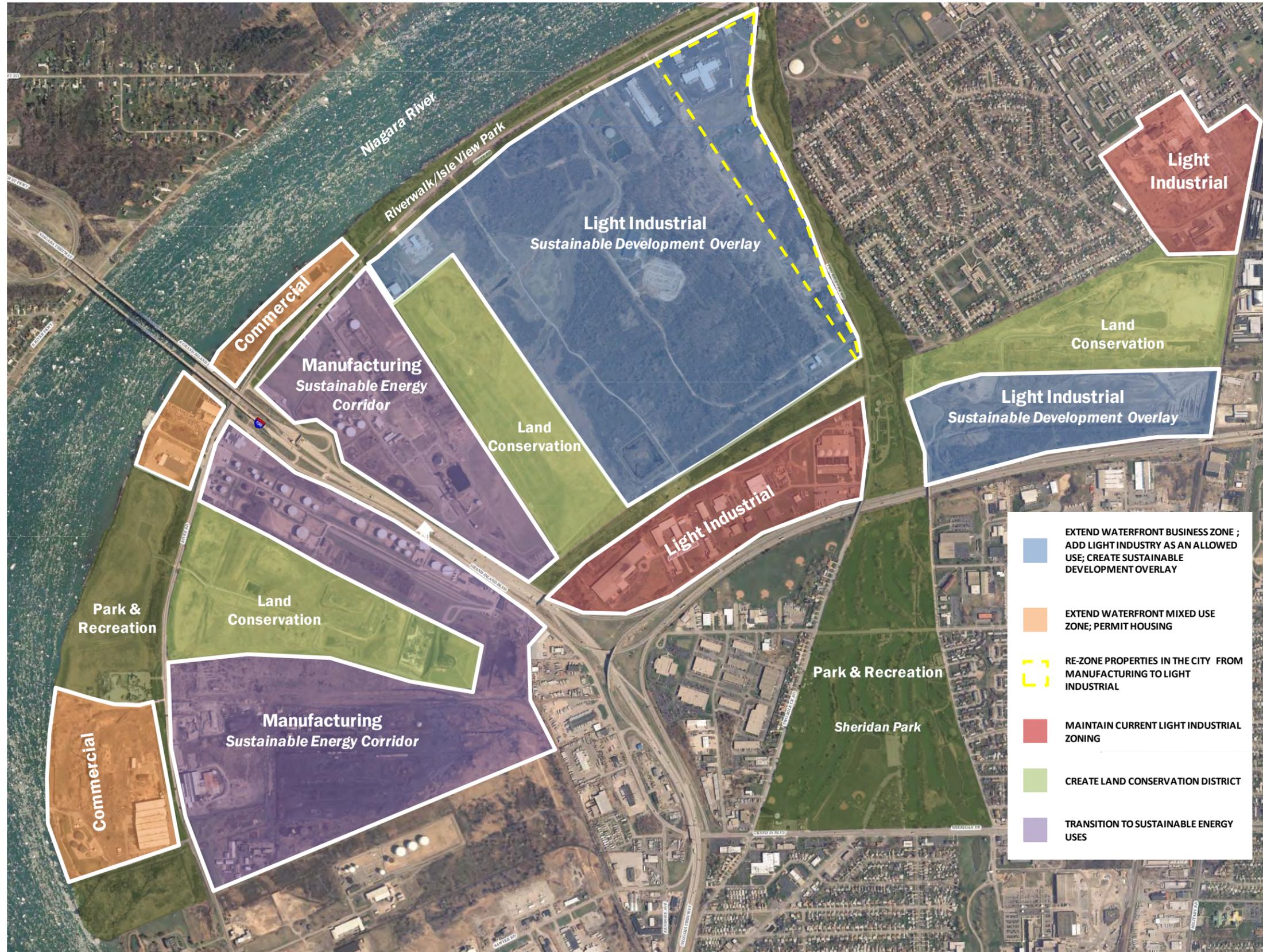
from Waterfront Industrial to Waterfront Mixed Use to disallow future expansion or development of industrial businesses on this prime waterfront location.

In addition, housing is not an allowed use within the Waterfront Mixed Use Zone. The zoning should be modified to permit non-traditional housing units such as condominiums or townhouses. Permitting housing in the zone should be addressed in the Restoring our Waterfront zoning study and the non-traditional housing market should be tested in the Step 2 application.

- **Add Light Industry as a Special Use to the Waterfront Business Zone** – Currently, light industrial uses are not a permitted use in the Waterfront Business Zone. However, light industrial jobs are an existing and emerging job growth sector in western New York and also compatible with community preferences if special use conditions are met.
- **Re-zone City properties near Two Mile Creek** – The City should either create a new zone similar to the Town’s Waterfront Business Zone or the new Spaulding Commerce zoning along Two Mile Creek. The existing manufacturing zone adjacent to Two Mile Creek would not be compatible with the Town zoning changes recommended nor would a typical manufacturing facility be acceptable in close proximity to City residential neighborhoods.
- **Maintain current zoning at the Fire Tower Industrial Park and Spaulding Fibre sites** – The Fire Tower industrial area is fully developed and the current uses are compatible with the current Waterfront Industrial Zoning. Zoning for the area around Spaulding Fibre was recently developed and subsequently adopted for re-zoning.
- **Development of a Sustainable Development Overlay** – To complement, advance and be consistent with the Town’s *Restore Our Waterfront* sustainability initiative (as well as private developer initiatives) a new overlay district should be developed for parts of the TOA designated as the Waterfront Business Zone. Any development constructed within the overlay zone that meets certain sustainability criteria (storm water management, energy efficiency, landscaping, etc.) or is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) “certifiable” would receive additional consideration by the Planning Board including, but not limited to:
 - Increased allowable densities
 - Increased allowable heights
 - Flexibility on setbacks
 - Flexibility on parking requirements

- Fast track permitting and review
- **Development of a Land Conservation District** – Currently the Town does not have a Land Conservation district as part of the Zoning Code. Adoption and application of an land conservation district may be a way to “land bank” those areas, such as the landfills, that are likely not going to be remediated in the near future while allaying fears from local residents that they will be developed.
- **Adopt Planned Unit Development Zoning** – The Town’s code also does not permit planned unit development (PUD) zones. PUD zones are floating zones that could potentially be used anywhere in the Town and provide a significant amount of flexibility. PUD zoning works especially well for large lots (common in the TOA) that may have constraints on them that prevent owners from maximizing development because they need to meet certain setback or coverage requirements.

In addition there are several areas within the TOA that are currently occupied by fuel storage facilities. As businesses on those properties have no current plans to relocate, perhaps the Town could work with them to transition parts of their parcels to production of sustainable energy alternatives, such as solar power or small wind, that could utilized locally as an incentive to attract environmentally conscious companies to locate in the TOA.



- EXTEND WATERFRONT BUSINESS ZONE ; ADD LIGHT INDUSTRY AS AN ALLOWED USE; CREATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OVERLAY
- EXTEND WATERFRONT MIXED USE ZONE; PERMIT HOUSING
- RE-ZONE PROPERTIES IN THE CITY FROM MANUFACTURING TO LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- MAINTAIN CURRENT LIGHT INDUSTRIAL ZONING
- CREATE LAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT
- TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY USES

Figure 20. Potential Land Use and Zoning Options

PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN AND ACTIONS FOR REVITALIZATION

A preliminary TOA master plan (Figure 21) was developed to synthesize all of the information evaluated as part of this study and to illustrate potential reuse and redevelopment options for the TOA as well as other necessary actions for revitalization. The plan is preliminary because it can be refined and built upon during the Step 2, Nomination phase of this project. Nonetheless, the plan provides sufficient detail to outline a feasible redevelopment program for the area and to depict individual projects that can be undertaken by the Town and City as well as local, regional and state partners.

As the plan's name suggests, the purpose of this study is to expose opportunities for reuse or redevelopment. In addition to the demographic, economic, land use, infrastructure, and natural resource information considered, there are several key elements that provided a framework for the master plan and related recommendations:

- *Development Opportunity Envelope* – The location of brownfield, vacant and abandoned properties presented opportunities or constraints as reflected in the Preliminary Development Opportunities Map (Figure 10). The map clearly shows an ideal “envelope” of development potential (yellow shaded properties) on the eastern section of the TOA.
- *Road Network* – The need for an internal road network is a critical element to advance development of elongated large parcels in the TOA.
- *Maximizing Development Potential* – The type of development in the past in the TOA did not maximize the full potential of the area's prime location next to the Niagara River and at the center of the Buffalo Niagara metropolitan area. One building on a large parcel, warehouse facilities, abandoned buildings and outside storage are just a few examples of the level of underutilization that did not contribute to the area's economy or quality of life. A denser development pattern with smaller buildings and more employees is preferable to not only maximize the benefits of the land, but also provides an opportunity to create a sense of place through appropriate placement and design of buildings.
- *Integration of Natural and Recreational Amenities* – A unique opportunity to develop a sustainable development community, characterized by existing open spaces and recreational areas, on more than three miles of Niagara River waterfront exists in the TOA that cannot be matched throughout western New York.

- *Synthesize and Build Upon Existing Plans and Projects* – There were several existing public and private development projects as well as planning concepts that have been proposed or are in the works within the TOA and the plan provided an opportunity to combine them into a master plan.

ACTIONS FOR REVITALIZATION

Based on those key elements, the recommendations listed below (as illustrated in Figure 29), are the preferred actions for revitalization and are considered priority sites or areas under the Brownfield Opportunity Area program.

- 1) **Riverfront Development** – Much of the area north of River Road was formerly part of the Erie Canal or developed prior to the Town having development policies and consequently the area is underutilized. This area is ideal for small scale mixed use development that takes advantage of and complements the Niagara River, Riverwalk and Isle View Park. Development should, however, provide or maintain public access to the River front if feasible.
- 2) **River Road “Parkway”** – River Road is a four lane highway in most of the TOA which contributes to the separation of the majority of the TOA land area from the Niagara Riverfront. As part of any future planned NYSDOT road construction projects, River Road should go on a “road diet” and be reduced to two lanes, which would provide an opportunity to install landscaping, streetscape items such as decorative lighting, and sidewalks on the south side of River Road. This would completely change the appearance and function of the roadway, provide opportunities for screening unattractive properties, calm (slow down) traffic, upgrade the image of the TOA and provide an appropriate gateway into the Town and City of Tonawanda from I-190.
- 3) **River Road Commercial Frontage** – As identified in the Economic and Market Analysis there are opportunities for restaurant development within the TOA. Development of well designed restaurants, with parking in the rear, would provide a sense of enclosure on River Road to make it more pedestrian friendly, while creating the vitality and experience of a new western New York neighborhood.
- 4) **Office/Light Industrial Zone** – This reinforces the zoning recommendation above to extend the Waterfront Business Zone. There is an area with approximately 300 acres that is largely vacant that could be developed on the east side of the TOA. Some of it is currently being developed by a private owner but additional development is possible in that area to

complement the private development. With appropriate site plan review a portion of the development could have the appearance of being in a park like setting if natural areas are preserved.

- 5) **New Boulevard** - The current alignment, dimensions and conditions of Two Mile Creek Road make it difficult to accommodate the volumes and types of traffic needed to attract development in the TOA. An opportunity exists to install a new signature boulevard by re-aligning Two Mile Creek Road over the top of the Town's sewer outflow property. The sewer outflow property is ideally situated in the TOA to provide critical internal access into the proposed Office/Light Industrial zone and to start the development of an interior road network.
- 6) **Two Mile Creek Multi-Use Trail** – If Two Mile Creek is realigned the old road bed could be used to create a multi-use trail network that provides pedestrian and bicycle access to the new buildings in the Office/Light Industrial zone, area parks, the Riverwalk and the City of Tonawanda sidewalk network.
- 7) **North Youngmann Commerce Center** – Plans for the future North Youngmann Commerce Center are integrated into the plan and the proposed roadway and multi-use trail system.
- 8) **Spaulding Commerce Center** – Plans for the Spaulding Fibre redevelopment area are also incorporated into the master plan including potential roadway and building arrangements.
- 9) **Cherry Farm Park** – A park plan was developed for a large Niagara Mohawk property known as Cherry Farm Park just west of River Road and southwest of the I-190 in the 1980's that has also been incorporated into the master plan.

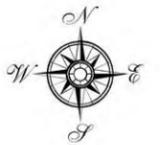
Other features of the master plan include conservation (no development) of areas that will not be ready for development in the near term including two landfill sites. Areas that are already developed would continue as is under the plan and sites with fuel storage would transition or include alternative energy options in the future as discussed above in the zoning recommendations.

**PRELIMINARY
MASTER PLAN**

SUSTAINABLE TONAWANDA
OPPORTUNITY AREA

ACTIONS FOR
REVITALIZATION

 Proposed BOA Boundary



0 500 Feet
1 inch equals 675.32 feet

**Figure 21. Preliminary
Master Plan**

PROJECT # 210683



- ① RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT
- ② RIVER PARKWAY
- ③ RIVER ROAD COMMERCIAL FRONTAGE
- ④ FLEX OFFICE / LIGHT INDUSTRIAL ZONE
- ⑤ NEW ACCESS BOULEVARD
- ⑥ TWO MILE CREEK MULTI-USE TRAIL
- ⑦ NORTH YOUNGMANN COMMERCE CENTER
- ⑧ SPAULDING COMMERCE PARK
- ⑨ CHERRY FARM PARK

ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE NOMINATION PHASE

The Tonawanda Opportunity Area Steering Committee met to discuss the next steps that should be taken in the Step 2 Nomination Study to advance redevelopment in the TOA. Fortunately, this pre-nomination document is detailed enough to allow a more detailed study of specific items during the Step 2 phase.

In addition to updating or providing more detail on the inventory, continuing community participation and involving partners that can help advance the project the committee decided to focus on specific studies to assess the following key issues:

- **Cherry Farm Park** – this significantly underutilized Niagara Mohawk property has the potential to be a new municipal and regional park that will provide access and views of the Niagara River. Detailed property, liability and legal issues need to be researched to move this project forward. Redevelopment of the property could provide an anchor and amenity to redevelopment of TOA properties southwest of the Grand Island Bridge along River Road. A site specific market analysis or pro-forma would also be conducted for the park to determine an appropriate development plan for the site.
- **Land Assembly Analysis** – As discussed in the Actions for Revitalization section of the report there is a large, approximate 300 acre, grouping of developable properties on the eastern section of the TOA. To advance redevelopment of those sites and to install appropriate infrastructure, there will need to be a feasible plan to acquire and assemble the properties by both private and public entities. A Land Assembly Study would assess the steps, costs, players and potential organizational structures needed to implement an aggressive land assembly strategy to promote redevelopment.
- **Sustainable Development Overlay Zoning** – Sustainable development in the TOA is a key element to fulfill the Town’s sustainability initiative and encourage more appropriate development in the TOA. The Step 2 study would provide an opportunity to develop a sustainable development overlay zoning category to be included in the Town’s Zoning ordinance.

Other items discussed included roadway design and traffic studies for the new roadways proposed, a Developer’s Forum to introduce the TOA to area developers, a rebranding marketing program, and a general assessment of infrastructure needs to serve the new development proposed.