



3. Guiding Growth & Investment

FRAMEWORK *for* REGIONAL GROWTH

At the heart of the Framework, this chapter sets forth principles for the region’s growth, development and conservation; a description of planning areas and sub areas; and county policy and strategy statements designed to advance a regional agenda for improving community livability, economic vitality and

environmental sustainability. The policy and strategy statements will form the basis for specific actions by Erie and Niagara County government and assist local government and regional agencies in formulating their plans, programs, and capital budgets.

3.1 PRINCIPLES

As the broadest, biggest picture statements regarding the region’s future, the following principles serve as the primary foundation for the Framework’s policies and strategies.

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

A Vital Economy

Improving the competitive position of the region’s centers of commerce, industry, and education is among the highest priorities of Erie and Niagara Counties. The region’s prosperity is dependent on the vitality of its downtowns and urban waterfronts; commercial, industrial, and institutional districts; and emerging centers of employment and commerce.

Sustainable Neighborhoods

To serve the increasingly diverse needs of the region’s households, Erie and Niagara Counties promote efforts to improve the livability of the region’s urban neighborhoods and create more compact, walkable communities in developing areas. Through carefully planned reinvestment, infill development, and new compact development, the region can accommodate anticipated growth on a smaller “footprint,” slow the pace of rural land conversion, ease pressure on the road network, lessen demand for new public infrastructure and facilities, and reduce long-term infrastructure operation and maintenance costs.

Strong Rural Communities

Erie and Niagara Counties support the stabilization and conservation of the region’s rural communities by encouraging rural economic development; the revitalization and modest expansion of rural villages and hamlets; the conservation of agricultural lands; and the protection of sensitive scenic and natural areas, wildlife habitat, and open spaces.

Improved Access & Mobility

The region’s transportation infrastructure should be designed to promote reinvestment in developed areas, improve interstate and cross-border connectivity, strengthen alternative modes of transportation, and enhance the livability of neighborhoods. The counties favor development that supports transit use, walking, ride-sharing, and more efficient commuting patterns.

PRINCIPLES (continued)

Efficient Systems & Services

The location, quality and capacity of the region's public infrastructure and facilities has a powerful influence on the pattern and pace of development. Erie and Niagara Counties support public investment to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and facilities, improve the competitive position of underutilized lands and buildings, promote the reuse of brownfield and grayfield sites, and encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic sites and buildings.

Effective Regional Stewardship

Erie and Niagara Counties recognize as a liability the absence of a forum for addressing the pace and quality of regional development, the fiscal health of county government, the efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure investment and service delivery, and the conservation of sensitive resources. County and local governments; federal, state, and regional agencies and authorities; property owners and developers; interest groups; and residents are encouraged to work together to support actions consistent with the Framework.

Conserved Natural & Cultural Assets

The region's unique natural, historic, and cultural heritage represents an important though under-appreciated asset. Erie and Niagara Counties support efforts to preserve historic sites and landscapes, conserve and improve access (as appropriate) to natural systems and resources, and interpret history, and celebrate regional culture. The counties encourage the conservation and protection of the region's most sensitive natural systems—the lakefronts and escarpments; rivers, creeks, and streams; wetlands and floodways; and forested lands are recognized as regionally significant resources worthy of protection and conservation.

3.2 GEOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORK

The Framework’s core policies and strategies offer guidance regarding the type and pattern of development for three broad geographic areas—developed, developing and rural—as well as more specific direction for the future of sub areas—centers and corridors and conservation overlays. For each geographic area, the Framework offers:

- high level policy direction for regional decision-makers;
- guidance for municipal officials and community stakeholders regarding regional

preferences for future development and conservation; and

- a baseline to compare future conditions with existing conditions and Framework growth targets.

Unlike a conventional land use plan, with detailed maps specifying permitted uses and intensities for individual properties, the boundaries of the geographic areas in the Framework are conceptual, intentionally drawn loosely, and do not follow municipal boundaries or property lines.

Planning Policy Areas—Developed, Developing & Rural

The policy areas shown in Figure 14 provide overall direction for the Framework, defining in broad terms where county policies encourage development and public investment, where development and public investment may be appropriate subject to careful evaluation, and where conservation strategies generally take precedence over plans for development and public investment.

- **Developed Area.** The region’s Developed Area extends outward from the cities of Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Lockport and includes contiguous blocks of urban and suburban development served with public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure.
- **Developing Area.** The Developing Area includes both recently developed and sparsely settled areas experiencing development pressure and increasing demand

for the extension of public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure.

- **Rural Area.** The Rural Area includes the region’s least intensely developed areas with large, contiguous blocks or farmland and forested property as well as the compact commercial, public and residential uses clustered in incorporated villages and hamlets.

The limits of these areas were established based on the review of several sources, including land cover data from the U.S. Geological Survey’s National Land Cover Dataset (The National Land Cover Dataset reports generalized land use based on an interpretation of Landsat satellite imagery from 1992); land use and development data available through the counties’ Geographic Information Systems; and data from the 2000 census.

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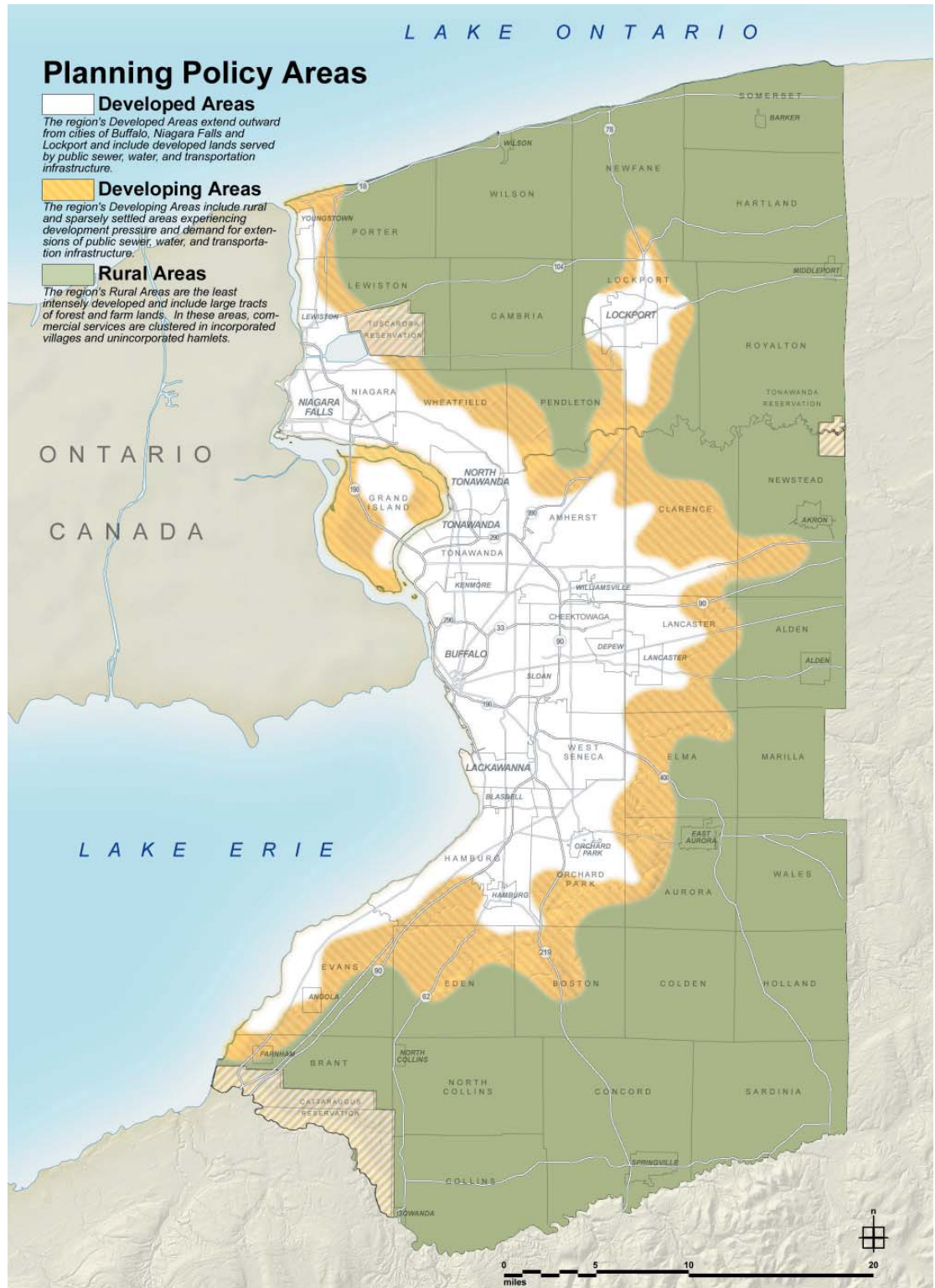


Figure 14. Planning Policy Areas.

Centers & Corridors—Regional Centers, Growth Corridors, & Rural Centers

Within the primary policy areas, the Framework defines sub areas most favored for future development and public investment. For these areas, defined as Regional Centers, Growth Corridors, and Rural Centers and shown in Figure 15, county planning and growth management strategies are designed to promote appropriate reinvestment, redevelopment, conservation, adaptive reuse, and infill development. As envisioned by the Framework, the Regional Centers and Growth Corridors will capture a high percentage of growth projected for the Developed and Developing Area, and Rural Centers will capture a high percentage of growth projected for the Rural Area.

- **Regional Centers.** Regional Centers include the downtowns of the region’s major city centers—Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Lockport, and the Tonawandas—along with a number of regionally significant centers of activity in the Developed Area. Though accounting for only a small percentage of the region’s land area, these places are home to most of the region’s residents and jobs, and virtually all of the region’s most important cultural and educational institutions. Regional centers are recognized for their existing and potential economic vitality, diverse mix of land uses, concentrations of public facilities and services, and potential as locations for higher intensity, mixed use development and enhanced public transportation service.

- **Growth Corridors.** Growth Corridors include the region’s existing and emerging areas of commerce and industry. Designated Growth Corridors have relatively high employment densities; the presence of vacant, underutilized, and shovel-ready sites; concentrations of brownfield property; and good access to regional road and rail networks.

Regional Centers

Downtown Buffalo
 Downtown Niagara Falls
 Downtown Lockport
 Tonawanda/North Tonawanda
 Kenmore
 Amherst
 Williamsville
 Lancaster/Depew
 Lackawanna

Growth Corridors

Niagara River Corridor (North/South)
 Niagara Falls Airport
 West Lockport
 Amherst/990 Corridor
 Main Street/UB Corridor
 Buffalo-Niagara Airport/Cheektowaga
 Walden/Broadway Corridor
 Seneca/400 Corridor
 Erie Lakefront/ Route 5 Corridor
 219 Corridor

- **Rural Centers.** Rural Centers include the rural area’s incorporated villages as well as several unincorporated hamlets that serve as the social, cultural, economic, and often historic heart of the region’s rural communities. These designated centers provide varying combinations of essential commercial and public services—post offices, branch banks, libraries, schools, and government offices, some level of public infrastructure, and clusters of historic sites and buildings.

The Framework recognizes 15 villages and 17 hamlets as having regional significance as Rural Centers. The unincorporated centers include those with at least two of the following characteristics or uses: sewer district, post office, bank, government center (Town or Village Hall), or library and at least one of the following characteristics or uses: retail use, highway intersection, or historic buildings.

Niagara County Rural Centers

Barker (Village)
Lewiston (Village)
Middleport (Village)
Newfane
Ransomville
Sanborn
Wilson (Village)
Wrights Corner
Youngstown (Village)

Erie County Rural Centers

Akron (Village)
Alden (Village)
Angola (Village)
Athol Springs
Boston Center
Clarence Hollow
Clarence Center
Colden Center
Collins Center
East Aurora (Village)
Eden Center
Evans Center
Farnham (Village)
Gowanda (Village)
Hamburg (Village)
Holland Center
North Boston
North Collins (Village)
Orchard Park (Village)
Chaffee
Springville (Village)
Swormville
Wanakah

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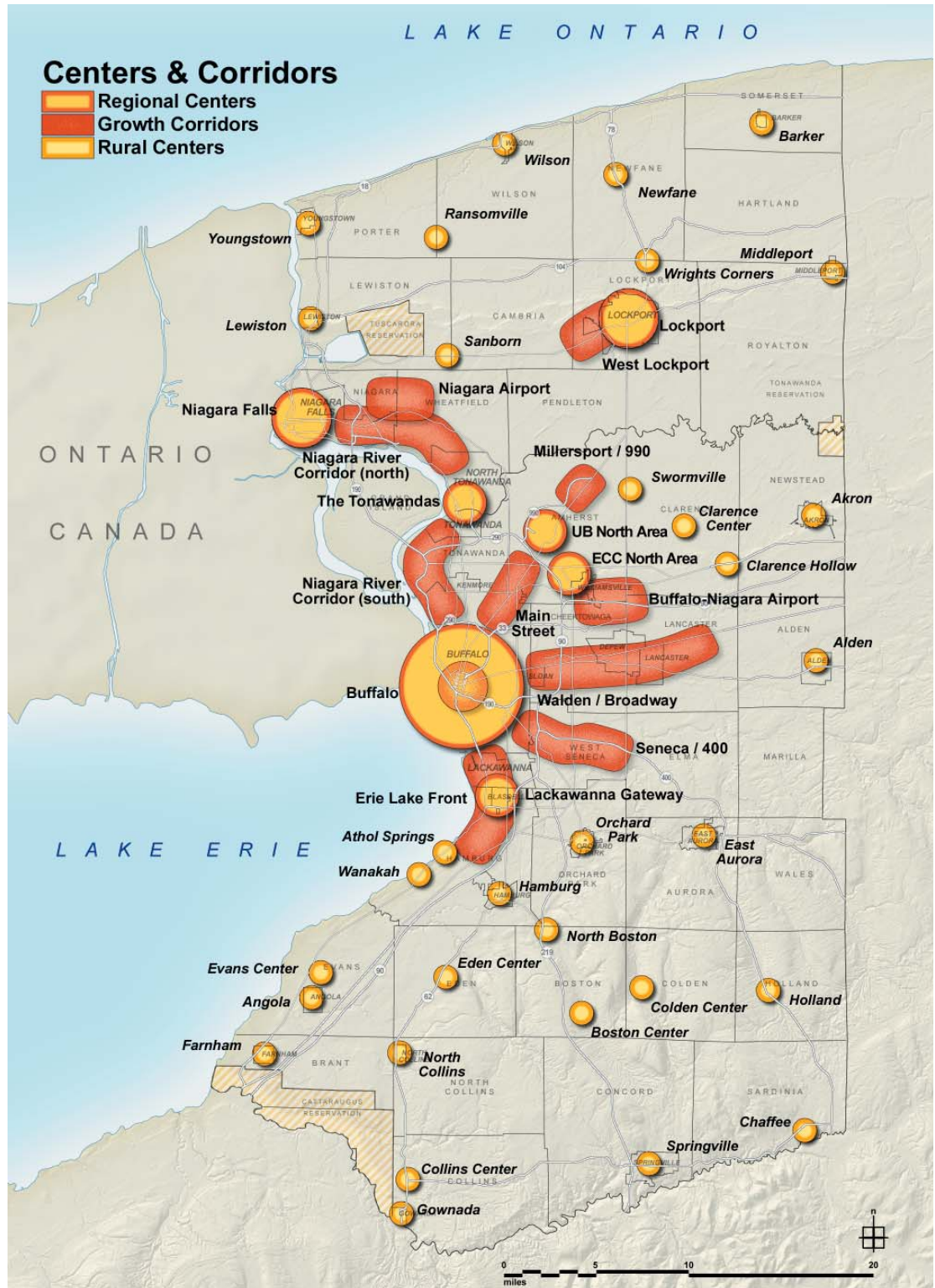


Figure 15. Centers & Corridors.

Conservation Overlays—Natural Systems & Heritage Assets

In addition to the Primary Policy areas and Policy Sub areas, the plan defines two kinds of conservation overlays: a Natural Systems and a Heritage Assets Overlay. The Natural Systems Overlay (Figure 16) identifies sensitive environmental resources—wetlands, floodplains, streams, and steep slopes—and

adjacent lands. The Heritage Assets Overlay (Figure 17) provides a preliminary definition of areas with unique concentrations of natural, recreational, scenic, and cultural resources. These areas include major lake and riverfronts, the Erie Canal Corridor, and the Niagara Escarpment.

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Figure 16. Conservation Overlay: Natural Systems

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Figure 17. Conservation Overlay: Heritage Assets

3.3 GROWTH TARGETS & ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

To advance the vision and ideas expressed in the principles, the Framework establishes broad targets for future development in the region. These targets, if achieved, could result in increased reinvestment in the Developed Area, controlled growth in the Developing Area, substantially lower rates of land consumption in the Rural Area, and significant savings for the region’s localities and tax payers.

Below is a review of the Framework growth targets followed by a summary of comparisons between alternative concepts for regional development.

*Targeted
Distribution of
New Households
from 2000 to 2025*

70%
DEVELOPED AREA

15%
DEVELOPING AREA

15%
RURAL AREA

Reinvestment Targets

Framework recommendations are designed around a broad vision for a region with strong urban and rural centers; safe, sustainable neighborhoods; compact forms of new development; and conserved rural landscapes and natural systems. To achieve this vision, the Framework calls for a significant shift in the region’s development trends. Rather than have most new households locate outside existing developed areas, as has been the case during the past 30 years, Framework policies and strategies calls for most new housing to occur in the developed area with only modest increases in households in the developing and rural areas. Specifically, the Framework target for the distribution of new households, consistent with the Reinvestment Concept discussed below, calls for 70% to locate in the

Developed Area, 15% in the Developing Area, and 15% in the Rural Area.

Table 9 shows the preferred distribution of new households in the region and the effect on the overall regional distribution of households. The following sections of the chapter show how the preferred reinvestment concept compares to two alternative concepts for the region’s development.

Alternative Futures

The growth targets described above were based on an assessment of three alternative concepts for the regional distribution of households—a trend concept, a strategic investment concept, and a reinvestment concept. The three alternative concepts were prepared to reflect different assumptions regarding the distribution and density of development in the planning policy areas and explore differences in the region’s potential urbanized footprint and the costs of infrastructure.

As a basis for the concepts, GBNRTC’s forecasts of population and households were used. These forecasts, developed and refined in collaboration with county and local officials, have served as the foundation for a range of local and regional planning studies, including the region’s 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan and many local government comprehensive plans. GBNRTC’s forecasts call for the region to add 58,553 households by 2025, an increase of 12% over

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Review of Alternative Development Concepts

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Development Pattern</i>	<i>Distribution of New Households by Area</i>	<i>Density of New Development by Area</i>	<i>Relative Concentration of Development</i>
Trend	Concept assumes the continuation of recent development trends. In developed areas, the concept assumes continued declines in older urban centers and new moderate density development in newer suburban areas with public sewer and water service. In developing and Rural areas, the concept assumes the continuation of low density, dispersed development resulting in the conversion of rural and agricultural lands and continued demand for extensions of public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure.	25% Developed Area 40% Developing Area 35% Rural Area <i>(Distribution derived from analysis of 1980-2000 change in households)</i>	4 HH/a Developed Area 2 HH/a Developing Area 0.5 HH/a Rural Area	Density assignments based on a review of development densities between 1980 and 2000 with highest densities achieved for infill projects in developed areas, lower average densities in the developing area, and very low densities in rural areas.
Strategic Investment	Concept assumes most new households would locate in the developed and developing areas with 25% locating in rural areas. Concept assumes moderate density development in developed areas (areas currently served with public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure). In the developing area, the concept assumes moderate density development resulting in the need for only modest extension of public sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure. In rural areas, the concept assumes a mix of 1) compact development in and around rural centers and 2) dispersed low density development requiring modest investment in public sewer, water and transportation infrastructure and modest disturbance of rural and agricultural lands.	50% Developed Area 25% Developing Area 25% Rural Area <i>(Distribution based on the average distribution under the Trend and Reinvestment Concepts)</i>	6 HH/a Developed Area 4 HH/a Developing Area 1 HH/a Rural Area	Density assignments assume modest increases in densities in Developed areas and developing areas and new housing in and around rural centers in rural areas.
Reinvestment (Preferred)	Concept assumes most new households would locate in existing developed areas with modest increases in developing and rural areas. Concept assumes moderate density development in developed areas (areas currently served with public sewer, water and transportation infrastructure) and assumes development in developing and rural areas occurs in and around areas with sewer and water service requiring minimal investment in infrastructure and minimal disturbance of rural and agricultural lands	70% Developed Area 15% Developing Area 15% Rural Area <i>(Derived from GBNRTC projections)</i>	6 HH/a Developed Area 4 HH/a Developing Area 2 HH/a Rural Area	Density assignments assume modest increases in densities in developed and developing areas and concentration of new housing in and around rural centers in rural areas.

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Table 9. Existing & Targeted Distribution of Households Under Reinvestment Concept

	<i>Households 2000</i>			<i>Households 2000-2025</i>		<i>Dist of Total HH</i>
	<i>2000 HH</i>	<i>Dist of Total</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>% Chg</i>	<i>2025 HH</i>	
Developed Area						
Erie Co	330,480		37,155	11.24%	367,635	
Niagara Co	60,803		4,690	7.71%	65,493	
Subtotal	391,283	83.46%	41,845	10.69%	433,128	82.13%
Developing Area						
Erie Co	19,496		4,965	25.47%	24,461	
Niagara Co	10,525		3,259	30.97%	13,784	
Subtotal	30,021	6.40%	8,224	27.40%	38,245	7.25%
Rural Area						
Erie Co	30,897		6,307	20.41%	37,204	
Niagara Co	16,630		2,177	13.09%	18,807	
Subtotal	47,527	10.14%	8,484	17.85%	56,011	10.62%
TOTAL	468,831	100.00%	58,553	12.5%	527,384	100.00%

Source: The HOK Planning Group, GBNRTC Forecasts of Population and Employment, 03.11.03.

the year 2000 or an average annual increase of 0.50%. According to the rationale provided in the 2025 Long Range Plan, the increase in households is based on projections that the region will reverse job and population losses experienced during the 1980s and 1990s and average household sizes will continue to modestly decline from 2.41 persons per household in 2000 to 2.34 in 2025.

Each concept was based on a different spatial distribution of the same number of new households. The trend concept was based on an assumption that the distribution will follow the pattern experienced between 1980 and 2000, the strategic investment concept is based on the average distribution under the trend and reinvestment concept, and the reinvestment concept generally follows the distribution employed by GBNRTC.

Basing the concepts on different regional distributions and densities of households was recommended for several reasons. For

regional analyses, households are a useful proxy for housing units—one household equals one occupied housing unit—and housing often is a leading indicator of shifts in a region’s pattern of commercial development. Commercial and industrial land uses not dependent on ready access to rail or highway, especially retail and office uses, tend to follow trends in housing development. As development economists often advise: “retail follows rooftops.” In addition, housing uses have much lower occupancy levels and much higher land consumption rates than commercial and industrial uses, thus making housing the central subject of many regional planning efforts. While a typical 10,000 square foot residential lot may generate two workers or 5,000 square feet of land per worker, only 1,000 square feet of land per worker may be required at the employment site. As residential densities decline or employment densities increase, the ratio of residential land consumption to commercial and industrial land consumption becomes even greater.

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Table 10. Density Assignments & Land Area Requirements

	Trend Concept			Strategic Investment Concept			Reinvestment Concept		
	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Land Need (acres)	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Land Need (acres)	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Land Need (acres)
Developed Area									
Erie County	12,235	4.00	3,059	21,106	6.00	3,518	37,155	6.00	6,193
Niagara County	2,203	4.00	551	7,035	6.00	1,173	4,690	6.00	782
Subtotal	14,439		3,610	28,142		4,690	41,845		6,974
Developing Area									
Erie County	14,057	2.00	7,029	11,733	4.00	2,933	4,965	4.00	1,241
Niagara County	9,006	2.00	0	3,911	4.00	978	3,259	4.00	815
Subtotal	23,063		7,029	15,644		3,911	8,224		2,056
Rural Area									
Erie County	13,914	0.50	27,828	11,076	1.00	11,076	6,307	2.00	3,154
Niagara County	7,137	0.50	14,275	3,692	1.00	3,692	2,177	2.00	1,088
Subtotal	21,051		42,103	14,768		14,768	8,484		4,242
TOTAL	58,553		57,244	58,553		23,369	58,553		13,272

Source: The HOK Planning Group, GBNRTC Forecasts of Population and Employment, 03.11.03.

Land Consumption Comparison

Once the regional distribution was established, density factors (expressed as households per acre or HH/a) were applied to determine land area requirements. For each concept it was assumed that the density of new households would be highest in the developed area and lowest in rural area, with the highest overall densities assigned for the Reinvestment Concept and the lowest

for the Trend Concept. (Refer to the Review of Alternative Development Concepts inset for a summary of assumptions regarding the relative concentration of development for each concept.) This exercise resulted in projections of demand for 57,000 acres of land under the Trend Concept, 23,000 acres under the Strategic Investment Concept, and 13,000 acres under the Reinvestment Concept.

Table 11. Estimated Infrastructure Costs by Concept

	Trend Concept			Strategic Investment Concept			Reinvestment Concept		
	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Infra-structure Costs (\$ millions)	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Infra-structure Costs (\$ millions)	New Households 2000-2025	Density Factor (HH/acre)	Infra-structure Costs (\$ millions)
Developed Area									
Erie County	12,235	4.00	28	21,106	6.00	25	37,155	6.00	43
Niagara County	2,203	4.00	5	7,035	6.00	8	4,690	6.00	5
Subtotal	14,439		32	28,142		33	41,845		49
Developing Area									
Erie County	14,057	2.00	74	11,733	4.00	26	4,965	4.00	11
Niagara County	9,006	2.00	47	3,911	4.00	9	3,259	4.00	7
Subtotal	23,063		121	15,644		35	8,224		19
Rural Area									
Erie County	13,914	0.50	501	11,076	1.00	199	6,307	2.00	33
Niagara County	7,137	0.50	257	3,692	1.00	66	2,177	2.00	11
Subtotal	21,051		758	14,768		266	8,484		45
TOTAL	58,553		911	58,553		334	58,553		112

Source: The HOK Planning Group, GBNRTC Forecasts of Population and Employment, 03.11.03.

Infrastructure Cost Comparison

The chart above compares expected infrastructure costs associated with the three development concepts, expressed in millions of current dollars. For all three concepts, potential costs associated with the provision of roads, water and sewer/septic systems, schools, parks, recreation facilities, and libraries, were assigned relative to anticipated densities of development. Generally, where household densities are lowest, per household infrastructure costs, including those paid the homeowner or builder for on-site septic systems, are highest. Where household densities are higher and existing infrastructure is

available, per household costs are lower. Consequently, the costs borne by the regional economy, regardless of whether paid by developers, homeowners or localities, tend to be lower where infrastructure is readily available and densities are relatively high.

The source data underpinning the infrastructure cost estimates reflect a compilation of findings from fiscal impact analyses performed on residential developments proposed in similar regions. The figures include both costs clearly related to a specific site—roadways, water mains, sewer lines/septic

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systems—and the capital burdens associated with increasing capacity off-site, as with schools, public safety facilities and treatment plants. For the sake of this assessment, costs of approximately \$18,000 per household were used for densities of 1 household per acre or less. At higher densities associated with urban and suburban infill opportunities, generally at 6 households per acre and higher, the infrastructure cost per new household used in the calculations stands at around \$6,000. (To simplify the analysis and conservatively estimate impacts, other costs associated with regional development patterns—facility operating and maintenance costs, personal costs associated with congestion and commuting times, and the economic impacts associated with resource losses—were not included in the assessment.)

As shown in Table 11, the savings available to the regional economy increases as the footprint of regional development shrinks and infill development and redevelopment predominate. In the areas where these op-

portunities are typically found, infrastructure costs associated with new development shift from building new to refurbishing dated or outmoded facilities. So while costs in urban areas decrease as density increases, the amount of decrease become less and less substantial at densities greater than 6-8 households per acre. Who bears the initial costs of sprawl varies based on local government practices and density. In general, taxing jurisdictions are typically responsible for all of these costs except those passed through to the first round of homebuyers as developers recapture site preparation expenditures.

As the chart reveals, expected infrastructure costs associated with the strategic investment and reinvestment concepts pale in comparison to the trend concept. The approximately \$800 million in capital costs available to the regional economy if it can exert discipline in its development patterns is a potentially important resource available to Erie and Niagara Counties.

3.4 FRAMEWORK POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The following policy and strategy statements, organized by policy area, provide guidance to county decision-makers as they consider actions and investments affecting the region’s growth, conservation, and development.

The actions subject to Framework review are often major in their scope. Erie and Niagara Counties strongly recognize the need for citizen involvement in these actions and support the continued adherence to public notice and review timetables within existing regulatory statutes.

Developed Area Policies & Strategies

Spark reinvestment, attract new households and businesses, and improve the livability and economic vitality of the region’s existing communities. Support a) the conservation and stabilization of existing neighborhoods; b) new compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development on vacant and underutilized sites; and c) higher density, employment intensive, mixed use development in Regional Centers and Growth Corridors

Economic Development & Public Investment Strategies

- Expand on previous “shovel-ready site” assessments and develop a regional inventory and marketing strategy for vacant, underutilized, and brownfield properties; and support the preparation of conceptual development plans and marketing strategies for sites best positioned to support regional economic development objectives.
- Encourage localities to preserve and properly zone larger-scale vacant and underutilized sites with potential to accommodate research and development, technology, manufacturing, and distribution enterprises.
- Explore the feasibility of creating a regional “Main Street” organization modeled after successful programs of the National Main Street Center.
- Identify a mechanism for generating and deploying a shared source of revenue to support regional initiatives to improve neighborhood livability and support reinvestment.
- Encourage major government and educa-

tional facilities, sport and entertainment venues, and cultural facilities and attractions to locate in Regional Centers.

Mobility & Accessibility Strategies

- Support GBNRTC’s “maintenance first” policies focusing on the preservation, repair, and restoration of existing infrastructure to provide safe and efficient transport and continued economic development and do not support major capacity expansions nor the construction of new highway facilities on new right-of-way, unless such projects are identified on GBNRTC’s Long Range Plan.
- Support efforts to a) plan and zone for employment-intensive commercial and industrial development on sites with ready access to the region’s highway and rail networks, b) recognize areas well served by public transportation as catalysts for higher density development and reinvestment in regional centers and growth corridors; and c) improve access to, between, and within

regional centers and growth corridors.

- To improve local accessibility, a) encourage localities to develop networks of interconnected local streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian/bicycle trails; b) ensure pedestrian facilities and aesthetic enhancements are considered as part of all transportation improvement projects; and c) continue to work with the GBNRTC, NFTA, and localities to promote public transit/bus use, walking, and biking as alternatives to automobile use.
 - Support efforts to improve the efficiency and reliability of truck and rail freight movements within and through the region and improve multi-modal facilities and system connectivity.
 - Review criteria for the approval of curb cuts on county roads and revise if necessary to encourage effective access management and parcel-to-parcel connectivity.
 - Employ context-sensitive design principles for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of county roadways.
 - Support mixed land uses that encourage walkable neighborhoods and mixed income housing. This will reflect the region's diversity and changing demographics.
- Favor the development of vacant and underutilized sites with existing sewer and water service over those where extensions are required.
 - Support local policy and planning provisions that channel growth to areas with existing sewer and water service.
 - Encourage new public facilities and services to locate close to existing and planned bus and light rail transit corridors, and expand efforts to encourage ridesharing and transit/bus use, especially among public employees.
 - Identify isolated capacity deficiencies and condition issues in the Developed Area, especially in locations where higher density residential and commercial/industrial development is encouraged.
 - Continue support for intermunicipal agreements that increase cost savings in the delivery of public services.
 - Support the rehabilitation and improvement of existing parks, recreation and community facilities and cultural institutions in Developed Areas over the development of new facilities in Developing and Rural Areas.
 - Assist localities in the assessment of economic, fiscal, and environmental costs and benefits of extending sewer and water service beyond current limits.

Public System & Service Strategies

- As part of the counties' annual budget review processes, evaluate the consistency of proposed capital and operating expenditures with Framework policies and assess the geographic distribution of proposed

Developing Area Policies & Strategies

Support a balance of conservation and quality development in the developing area. Align policies and investments to encourage a) the conservation of agricultural and rural lands; b) new compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development on vacant and underutilized sites and c) higher density, employment intensive, mixed use and transit oriented development in regional centers and growth corridors.

Economic Development & Public Investment Strategies

- Encourage public investments in existing infrastructure and public facilities and services—schools, roads and public transportation systems, parks, and sewer and water systems—to support commercial and industrial development in regional centers and growth corridors and the modest expansion of existing residential communities.
- Limit capacity improvements to roads and sewer and water infrastructure.
- Support protection of right-of-way for future infrastructure but discourage investment until warranted by demand.

Development Guidance Strategies

- Support local comprehensive planning policy that designates areas appropriate for development and conservation, minimizes conversion of agricultural lands and natural areas, and avoid leap frog patterns of development.
- Work with localities to identify and minimize regulatory and planning barriers to mixed use, pedestrian oriented development.
- Minimize conversion of significant open space, agricultural lands, and natural systems.
- Support mixed land uses that encourage walkable neighborhoods and mixed income housing. This will reflect the region's

diversity and changing demographics.

- Support local planning and zoning to protect sites deemed most suitable to employment-intensive uses.

Mobility & Accessibility Strategies

- Support GBNRTC's "maintenance first" policies focusing on the preservation, repair, and restoration of existing infrastructure to provide safe and efficient transport and continued economic development and do not support major capacity expansions nor the construction of new highway facilities on new rights-of-way, unless such projects are identified on GBNRTC's Long Range Plan. The GBNRTC shall be encouraged to analyze the impact of traffic calming measures to State and County roads on adjacent local street traffic volumes. In certain cases this may warrant local street capacity improvements within the developing area.
- Support efforts to a) plan and zone for employment-intensive commercial and industrial development on sites with ready access to the region's highway and rail networks, b) recognize areas well served by public transportation as catalysts for higher density development and reinvestment in regional centers and growth corridors; and c) improve access to, between, and within regional centers and growth corridors.
- To improve local accessibility, a) encourage localities to develop networks of

interconnected local streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian/bicycle trails; b) ensure pedestrian facilities and aesthetic enhancements are considered as part of all transportation improvement projects; and c) continue to work with GBNRTC, NFTA, and localities to promote public transportation use, walking, and biking as alternatives to automobile use.

- Review criteria for the approval of curbs cuts on county roads and revise if necessary to encourage effective access management and parcel-to-parcel connectivity.
- Work with localities to restrict “strip” commercial and industrial development along arterials and highways in the developing area.

Public System & Service Strategies

- Favor the development of vacant and underutilized sites with existing sewer and water service over those where extensions

are required.

- Support local policy and planning provisions that channel growth to areas with existing sewer and water service.
- Encourage authorities to evaluate the feasibility of contracting sewer district boundaries where such boundaries extend into areas designated for conservation or agricultural use.
- In cases where the extension of public sewer and water service is recommended to address health issues associated with failing wells or septic systems, restrict tap-ins for new development in areas designated for conservation or agricultural use.
- Continue support for intermunicipal agreements that increase cost savings in the delivery of public services.
- Assist localities in the assessment of economic, fiscal, and environmental costs and benefits of extending sewer and water service beyond current limits.

Rural Area Policies & Strategies

Encourage limited development and reinvestment in rural centers and discourage the conversion of rural and agricultural lands. Align policies and investments to strengthen rural economies, conserve agricultural and rural lands, and revitalize rural centers.

Economic Development & Public Investment Strategies

- Expand efforts to strengthen the region’s rural economy, including efforts to support conservation of agricultural lands, protection of rural character, and enhancement of initiatives targeted toward rural economic development.

Development Guidance Strategies

- Identify and conserve agriculture and forested lands and in areas designated for “rural” and “agricultural” use in local plans, support zoning that reduces permitted development densities, requires cluster development to maintain rural character and protect resources, and discourages continued subdivision of rural road frontages.

CHAPTER 3. GUIDING GROWTH & INVESTMENT

- Where limited expansion of a rural center is deemed appropriate, encourage development as seamless extensions to the existing center rather than as isolated projects with poor connections to surrounding development.
- Work with localities to identify regulatory and planning barriers to infill development and the preservation and adaptive reuse of older and historic buildings.

Mobility & Accessibility Strategies

- Work with localities to restrict “strip” commercial and industrial development along arterials and highways in rural areas.
- For county roads in rural areas consider revising access management, bridge maintenance, and road design standards, and assess the feasibility of decommissioning facilities in areas with little development potential.
- Support efforts to improve mobility within rural centers and explore the feasibility of providing public transportation service

between rural centers and developed area destinations.

Public System & Service Strategies

- Favor the development of vacant and underutilized sites within villages and hamlets with existing sewer and water service.
- Encourage authorities to evaluate the feasibility of contracting sewer district boundaries where such boundaries extend into areas designated for conservation or agricultural use.
- In cases where the extension of public sewer and water service is recommended to address health issues associated with failing wells or septic systems, restrict tap-ins for new development in areas designated for conservation or agricultural use.
- Continue support for intermunicipal agreements that increase cost savings in the delivery of public services.
- Assist localities in the assessment of economic, fiscal, and environmental costs and benefits of extending sewer and water service beyond current limits.

Natural & Cultural Overlay Policies & Strategies

Encourage local, county, regional, and state investments that advance the planning, management, and conservation of waterfront lands, river and stream corridors, regional greenways, and significant natural and cultural sites and resources.

- Establish priorities for the conservation of regionally, nationally and internationally significant natural and cultural heritage resources including the Lake Erie and Lake Ontario waterfronts, the Niagara River Greenway, the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, and the Buffalo Olmsted Parks System.
- Establish priorities for the conservation of regionally significant riparian corridors and related wetland areas including Eighteen Mile Creek (NC); Tonawanda Creek; Buffalo River and Creeks; Eighteen Mile Creek (EC); Cayuga Creek; and Cattaraugus Creek.

CHAPTER 3. GUIDING GROWTH & INVESTMENT

- Support regional initiatives to identify potential greenway, open space, and trail linkages within and between regionally significant natural and cultural heritage corridors; support public and private efforts to preserve rights-of-way and complete appropriate improvements (trail and trail heads, interpretive stations, etc.); and encourage communities to incorporate policies and priorities the conservation of regionally significant trail and greenway corridors in local comprehensive plans.
- Investigate opportunities to provide public access to private lands that contribute to the development of a region-wide system of open space, trails, and wildlife movement corridors.
- Encourage localities to identify in their comprehensive plans policies and priorities for the preservation and improvement of regionally significant trail and greenway corridors.
- As part of the SEQR and 239 review processes for private development and public actions, evaluate impacts and identify potential enhancements to natural and cultural resources of county and regional significance. Assemble a Natural & Cultural Resources Inventory to support regional decision-making, conservation investment, and awareness-building.
- Expand partnerships, intermunicipal agreements, and other efforts to attract resources and assistance, including continued support for volunteer efforts by citizens and community organizations.

Regional Stewardship Policies & Strategies

Support effective local and regional decision-making through the integration of data systems, development of region-wide assessment and reporting systems, and expanding public knowledge of planning and development issues. Align public investments in facilities, services and amenities to support regional planning, conservation and economic development initiatives.

- As part of the counties' annual budget review processes, evaluate the consistency of proposed capital and operating expenditures with Framework policies and assess the geographic distribution of proposed expenditures and levels of planned support for revitalization, neighborhood stabilization, and economic development efforts.
- To ease fiscal stress on municipalities and capitalize on economies of scale, continue support for intermunicipal agreements that increase cost savings in the delivery of public services.
- Continue efforts to integrate county and regional data systems to provide for the analysis, tracking, and reporting of physical, environmental, demographic, socio-economic and market conditions.
- Raise public awareness of the environmental, fiscal, and social benefits of promoting reinvestment, stabilization, infill development, and appropriate redevelopment in developed areas of the region; and encourage the region's educational, community service, and philanthropic institutions to support planning education initiatives.