

Interview & Questionnaire Summary

Erie-Niagara Framework for Regional Growth



Draft for Public Review | 09.30.03

This paper provides a summary of feedback from the interviews and focus group meetings held during the Spring and Summer of 2003 and offers an interim report on the results of the web-based questionnaire through September 2, 2003.

Additional feedback from stakeholders and the general public will be gathered through the Fall of 2003 via the web-based questionnaire and additional public meetings and workshops. As future engagement events are scheduled, announcements will be posted on the project web site at www.regionalframework.com.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interview Objectives & Process

As an early step in the planning process, the HOK team completed a series of one-on-one and small group interviews with regional stakeholders. The one-on-one and small group interview provided the team an opportunity to introduce the project and learn about attitudes and perceptions regarding growth and development in the Erie-Niagara Region. The 45-60 minute interviews and small group meetings were organized as informal sessions organized around a series of open-ended questions about regional assets, liabilities, growth and development dynamics, and regional collaboration. (A list of interview dates and participants and a one-page list of the questions used to guide discussion are provided at the end of this section of the paper.)

Overall Impressions

Participant comments lend themselves to summarization under the following broad headings:

- Concerns about Competitiveness
- Barriers to Collaboration
- Cost Implications of Development Pattern
- Absence of Vision & Visionaries
- Capitalizing on Assets
- Poor Perceptions

Concerns about Competitiveness. The majority of participants in the interviews and focus groups expressed concerns about the region's competitiveness and inability to attract investment and retain talent. Participants cited taxes, energy costs, parochialism, external image, and inefficiencies in the provision of public services as the region's most pressing problems. Several suggested ways the Counties could help improve the region's competitive position, most of which centered on achieving greater efficiencies in the delivery of services and infrastructure through increased collaborations and consolidations of services. As many argued, achieving greater efficiencies could result in lower tax burdens, thus improving the Region's attractiveness.

Barriers to Collaboration. Participants identified a number of conditions working against the Region's ability to more effectively collaborate and thus achieve greater efficiencies in the delivery of public services and infrastructure. Mentioned by participants were the following: 1) governmental structure—fragmented, overlapping systems of local governments and independent district and authorities, 2) parochialism, 3) contentiousness of local politics, 4) competitiveness for resources, and 5) lack of a consistent or credible platform or platforms to promote cooperation. While many participants offered examples of effective collaborations and appreciate that the long-term fate of individual towns, villages and cities is tied to the health of the total Region, most said that disincentives to collaborate still outweighed incentives.

Cost Implications of Development Pattern. Many participants argued that the region's competitiveness is closely tied to the public sector's efficiency in providing infrastructure and public services. A few went a step further, drawing a connection between the pattern of development and the efficiency of delivering public services. Recognizing that lower density residential and commercial development generally requires more public resources to support than higher density development, a few participants argued that encouraging reinvestment and more compact forms of development could result in lower per capita costs for public services. While population has declined over time, the amount of land dedicated to development has significantly increased. As several participants mentioned, the resultant abandonment and underutilization of private lands and public facilities, increase in vehicle miles traveled, isolation of low income populations, jobs-housing disconnect, utility extension and maintenance costs results in increased costs to local government.

Absence of Vision & Visionaries. Many participants expressed concern about both the lack of visionary leaders and the lack of a vision for the region or for each county. Many participants were critical of local leaders, citing examples of parochialism and politically-motivated decision-making. Several participants argued that the absence of a larger context for local planning has led to interjurisdictional conflicts and conflicting local plans. Others argued that the lack of a regional plan or vision makes planning for major infrastructure investments particularly difficult.

Capitalizing on Assets. When asked about the region's best qualities, participants identified its location on the international border, the low housing costs, infrastructure (sewer, water, and roads) capacity, good public schools, quality work force, and short commute times as primary assets. Many also mentioned the Region's history as an important contributor to livability along with arts and cultural offerings and access to

outdoor recreation. Niagara Falls, downtown Buffalo, and the Region's historic villages and hamlets also were mentioned as contributors to local livability.

Poor Perceptions. Interview participants shared their concern about the ways the region is perceived elsewhere. Participants cited examples of national news reports focusing on the Region as an expensive place to do business, a declining industrial center, and a very cold place in the winter. According to interviewees, such images hurt the Region's ability to attract investment and new residents.

Participant Comments by Topic

This section of the summary provides a review of interviewee comments. The comments are directly drawn from interviewer notes and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of team members. Participant statements of fact have not been checked for accuracy.

Leadership/Civic Culture/Image

Issues

- *The Region's Inferiority complex hurts its competitive position.*
- *External perceptions of bad winters, however incorrect or overstated, hurts the Region's image.*
- *Local political and business leaders lack creativity and tend to avoid engagement in particularly controversial issues.*
- *Local opinion leaders are stuck in old ways of thinking.*
- *Local leaders don't think beyond their boundaries or far into the future.*
- *Politics is parochial and highly adversarial.*
- *History of collaborative action is limited. The collapse of the Regional Planning Board and Horizons Commission were cited as examples of the leadership's inability to collaborate across jurisdictional boundaries.*
- *Failed urban redevelopment projects in Buffalo and Niagara Falls hurt current revitalization efforts.*
- *Local media is not supportive of Town governments.*

Assets

- *Successful models for future collaborations exist among towns and between towns, counties, and cities.*

Pattern, Pace & Quality of Development

Issues

- *Disinvestment and decline has spread outward from the inner city to the inner-ring suburbs.*
- *Many rural towns and villages are experiencing population declines and patterns of disinvestment similar to those experienced by the cities.*
- *Permitting small lot subdivisions and extended water service in rural areas runs counter to policies calling for the conservation of farmland and rural character.*

- *The lack of a regional vision for development was cited by Town officials in both counties as presenting a challenge to local planning efforts.*
- *The market tolerates the poor quality new development.*
- *An “any growth is better than no growth” attitude is common.*
- *239 L and M reviews are not conducted in a consistent manner.*
- *Residents have little sense that their livability is linked to the Region’s overall vitality. “Moving from the problems” is a common*
- *Close-in communities have experienced significant population and employment declines in past 10-15 years.*
- *Current development pattern places new demands on the transportation system with reversed commuting, increases in vehicle miles traveled and job-housing disconnect.*
- *Disinvestment along older commercial strips is a concern.*
- *Rural communities look to development as a means to raise revenue to support increasing demand for services associated with declining tax base and aging populations.*
- *School quality reports have a significant effect on housing values and development patterns.*
- *Enforcement of existing environmental regulations is inadequate.*

Assets

- *The area offers a high quality of life to most residents. Participants cited as positives affordable housing, clean air and water, short commute times, good schools, and recreational amenities.*
- *The region’s rich history and historic resources contribute to livability. The legacy of Olmsted and Wright were cited as especially positive and potential draws for tourists.*
- *Historic villages and hamlets serve as cultural, social, and economic centers for the region’s rural areas.*
- *The waterfront was mentioned often as a very positive and underappreciated regional asset.*
- *Access to outdoor recreational activities—hiking, biking, boating, skiing and fishing—were mentioned often as contributing the region’s quality of life.*

Ideas

- *Push factors—school quality, crime, housing conditions, etc.—are as important to address as pull factors—new housing, schools, access to open space, etc.*
- *Model codes and ordinances may help spark innovation in local planning.*
- *Revitalization of inner-city neighborhoods and first ring suburbs should be a regional priority, as should the conservation of villages and hamlets.*
- *Additional financial and technical assistance should be provided to promote the preservation and improvement of traditional commercial centers, main streets, and town/village centers throughout the region.*
- *Future plans should encourage development in settled areas rather than on greenfield sites.*
- *Higher minimum lot standards in rural areas may decrease likelihood of well and surface water contamination from failed or failing septic systems.*
- *Counties can realign spending and capital programs to support private investment in developed areas.*
- *Development of a regional trail system is a popular idea (except with adjacent property owners).*
- *An incentive-based approach to promoting more compact development may prove effective.*

Governance & Regional Collaboration

Issues

- *Region has a “top-down” history of planning and problem-solving.*
- *An effective “standing” platform for regional collaboration does not exist.*
- *The number of layers, overlapping responsibilities of governments is problematic. With power distributed among numerous localities, districts and authorities, responsibility for inefficiencies can be difficult to assign.*
- *The corporate community is not an active partner or leader.*
- *Aging population and increasing number of children-in-need likely to result in increases costs for cities, first ring suburbs, and rural villages.*
- *Compliance with federal and state mandates (Medicare/Medicaid, schools, etc.) has resulted in significant cost increases for Counties.*
- *Region has a very high number of public employers per capita.*
- *Officials from across the region said the Counties have avoided direct engagement in controversial planning and development issues. Conversely, several officials expressed concern about the possibility of County intervention in local matters.*
- *Towns do not always welcome County efforts to collaborate. Several Town officials cited their mistrust of County motivations as a barrier to increased collaboration.*
- *Town officials said the lack of a vision for the region and or for each county made their planning efforts more difficult. Similarly, the lack of a regional plan or vision leads to less well uncoordinated planning for major infrastructure investments .*
- *The lack of a central source for development and environmental information makes analysis of regional conditions difficult.*

Assets

- *Important issue (heritage tourism, economic development, infrastructure planning) and resource-based (waterfront) planning collaborations are underway.*
- *Towns, villages and cities are exploring other kinds of sub-regional collaborations to increase efficiency and achieve economies of scale. Cited as examples were agreements to share equipment and staff for snow removal and water distribution system maintenance.*

Ideas

- *Explore alternatives for merging city, town and county governments.*
- *Explore additional mergers of program and services between the Counties. (The proposed merger of Erie and Niagara County Community Colleges was cited as an example.)*
- *School district consolidation could result in greater efficiencies and more even quality.*
- *Consolidation of IDAs, CVBs and Chambers should be considered.*
- *Some form of regional revenue sharing may be required if new investment is concentrated only in close-in communities.*

Competitiveness/Economy

Issues

- *Region has highest per capita taxes in country.*
- *As economic engines, agriculture remains an important and tourism is increasing in relevance.*
- *High utility/energy costs in the state and region are a disadvantage.*
- *Unionization of work force perceived as disadvantage.*
- *Stagnant economy and population loss affects ability to attract new investment to the region.*
- *State tax structure slowing transition from manufacturing-economy to service/knowledge-based economy.*
- *Many believe that developing communities are poaching businesses from developed communities.*
- *Higher education facilities are not doing enough to assist in promoting business and economic development.*
- *Education assets are not being leveraged effectively.*
- *Automotive industry and manufacturing in general are no longer competitive.*
- *“Brain drain” is a growing problem. Talented high school and college graduates are drawn to job opportunities in other areas of the state and region.*
- *Current focus on new business recruitment detracts from efforts to promote formation and expansion of local businesses.*
- *State and regional promotional activities are inconsistent, unsuccessful, or non-existent.*
- *Existing incentives for growth and investment are inadequate compared to other regions.*
- *Liability, clean-up costs, a soft real estate market and competition from greenfield sites remain significant barriers to brownfield development.*
- *Too much focus on intra-regional competition for investment and too little on the region’s competitiveness in the world.*

Assets

- *Proximity to Toronto—ranked as 3rd largest office market and 4th largest industrial market in North America—is of central importance.*
- *Air, rail, and truck access to major North America markets and population centers is considered a very strong asset.*
- *Position on the border viewed as critical if somewhat unexploited asset.*
- *The Air Force Base is an important participant in the Niagara County economy and should be considered a regional asset.*
- *Low housing costs were cited often as a selling point in business expansion and recruitment efforts.*
- *Agricultural industry is strong but in decline due to costs, environmental regulations, and lack of descendant interest in taking over operations and ownership.*
- *The Region enjoys a high quality labor force with a strong work ethic.*
- *The labor force possesses the skills to support advanced manufacturing activities.*
- *Presence and quality of higher education institutions mentioned often as a central asset.*
- *Productivity of existing manufacturing operations.*

Ideas

- *Establish a “One Stop Shopping” platform for economic development recruitment and marketing efforts.*
- *Permit standardization may ease barriers to investment.*
- *Increase focus on brownfield redevelopment efforts.*
- *An aggressive national marketing campaign to address image issues.*
- *Need additional focus on the needs of small, locally-grown business—technical assistance from universities and governments, better access to capital, etc.*
- *More focus on tourism development could help attract visitors and increase tax revenues.*
- *Increase support for biotech sector.*
- *Strengthen efforts to ease cross-border movement and support cross-border commerce.*
- *Prepare retooling, repositioning plans in anticipation of further employment losses in heavy manufacturing.*
- *Encourage international immigration to the region to rebuild population base and foster entrepreneurship.*

Infrastructure—Transportation

Issues

- *Regional road connections weak.*
- *Cross border access important but poor.*
- *The light rail system was a good idea but not well-executed.*
- *The jobs-housing disconnect (employment centers are locating away from population centers) results in increased vehicle miles traveled and increased demand for transit service for transit-dependent workers.*
- *Niagara Falls Airport’s future is in question. Failure in attracting investment and current lack of plans for increased use is problematic*
- *Maintenance of aging road and bridge infrastructure in rural areas limits availability of funds for improvements in developed and developing areas.*
- *Niagara County stakeholders believe Erie County receives a disproportionate amount of transportation investment.*

Assets

- *Road network in developed and developing areas is in relatively good condition with only a few areas identified as having low levels of service.*
- *Policies in the GBNRTC regional transportation plan favor investment in areas with existing infrastructure over investments in new facilities in developing or rural areas.*
- *Many mentioned that lack of congestion contributes to the dispersal of the population.*
- *The Niagara Falls Airport is an important regional asset and its future should be a top regional priority.*

Ideas

- *Explore a truck-only border crossing location.*
- *Finish Routes 231 and 219.*
- *Institute fast ferry service between Niagara County and Ontario.*

- *To cut costs, the Counties should consider reducing levels of maintenance for the rural road network or shedding segments. (Erie County maintains 1,200 centerline miles of roads in the County)*
- *Explore the development of joint facilities for regional road maintenance.*
- *Developing an inter-urban rail system would help link destinations in Buffalo and Niagara Falls.*
- *Revisit long-range plans for the extension of the light rail system.*

Infrastructure—Sewer and Water

Issues

- *New and future environmental and bioterrorism regulations may increase complexity and costs of operating systems.*
- *Pressure increasing to provide water service to low density areas in southern Erie County.*
- *Town operation and maintenance of distributions systems limits ability to realize economies of scale—administrative costs, equipment purchasing and maintenance, fleet management, etc. Likewise, economies of scale may be realized if water and sewer authorities were to be merged into a single authority.*
- *The lack of a single long range plan for growth and development makes planning for system improvements more difficult.*
- *Failed septic systems and well contamination are increasingly significant problems.*
- *Two factors limit the likelihood of merging city and county water and sewer systems—many older communities rely on their water systems as a revenue source and the condition of many of the older systems does not meet standards established by regional authorities and districts.*
- *Sewer treatment transmission lines, pump stations, and treatment facilities are in relatively good condition across the region and have excess capacity. However, combined sewers and water infiltration in older systems result in occasional overloads and untreated discharge.*
- *The lack of a centrally operated and maintained system influences the region's bond ratings and increases the costs of borrowing for capital projects.*

Assets

- *Wide availability and generally low cost of potable water is considered a particularly strong asset but storage to maintain pressure during peak use periods is an issue in Niagara County.*

Ideas

- *Institute surcharges on lower density services areas to account for additional costs to provide service and maintain system outside more densely developed areas.*
- *Counties should more closely monitor well water quality, surface water quality and incidences of failed septic systems.*
- *Discounts or waivers in the cost of service connections for infill development should be considered.*
- *A single authority providing water and wastewater services to the region should be the long term goal.*

Interview Questions

The following questions were used as a general guide for the interviews and focus groups:

- What are the region's best and worst qualities? Let's say a company was looking to relocate to the region, what would you present as the region's competitive advantages? What are the biggest disadvantages?
- What are your top two or three concerns about growth and development in the Erie-Niagara region?
- What's your sense of the public's perceptions of regional growth and development? What are people most concerned about? Do people understand how planning and public investment decisions affect their quality of life, tax rates, commute times, etc.? How might we raise awareness?
- What role does your organization play in shaping regional growth? Does your organization's mission or strategic plan explicitly address growth, development, or conservation-related issues? How might your constituents or members judge your general effectiveness?
- How effective do you believe the Counties have been in shaping regional development given limits on their powers and authorities—no zoning authority, for example? What role do you believe the Counties should play in shaping development and conservation?
- One of our jobs is to identify existing efforts that may serve as models for the region. Can you offer any suggestions about local, regional, or national best practices?
- What's the best way to encourage regional cooperation on economic development, natural and cultural conservation, and infrastructure investment programs and initiatives?
- What are the existing roadblocks—regulatory, institutional, structural, historic, perceptual—to greater levels of regional cooperation on growth and development? How do these roadblocks affect your organization's actions related to growth and development?
- We have plans for a series of meetings with regional groups and organizations. Can you offer suggestions about which organizations or groups we should try to meet?
- In the next few years, if we could change 2-3 things about how the Counties' influence patterns of development, what would you like to see changed?

Interview Participants

March 24-25, 2003

Laurence Rubin, Commissioner; Andrew Eszak, Deputy Commissioner, Planning and Economic Development, and Charles Alessi, Deputy Commissioner, Sewerage Management; Erie County, Dept. of Environment and Planning

Bruce Fisher, Chief of Staff, Erie County Executive's Office

Glenn Nellis, Supervisor, Town of Eden

Maria Lehman, Commissioner and Wayne Scibor, Supervisor of Engineering, Erie County Department of Public Works and Hal Morse, Executive Director, GBNRTC

Robert Mendez, Executive Director and Wesley Dust, Executive Engineer, Erie County Water Authority

Rick Gillert, Town of Amherst Planning Director

John Finster, Senior Public Health Engineer and Thomas Casey, Assoc Public Health Engineer, Erie County Department of Environmental Health Services Administration

April 7-9, 2003

Kevin O'Brien, Commissioner and Robin Devoe, Deputy Commissioner, Niagara County, Dept. of Public Works

Kurt Alverson, Chamber of Commerce of the Tonawandas

David J. Burgio, Mayor and Michael Carney, Comm. Dev, City of North Tonawanda; Irene J. Elia, Mayor and Nancy Joseph, Comm. Dev, City of Niagara Falls; Thomas C. Sullivan, Mayor and William J. Evert, Community Development, City of Lockport; John Austin, Supervisor, Town of Lockport; Timothy Demler, Supervisor, Town of Wheatfield *[Need to confirm list.]*

Paulette M. Kline, Director of Public Health and Daniel Stapleton, Director of Financial Operations, Niagara County Health Department

Fred Caso, Vice President, Niagara USA Chamber; Lawrence Witul, Assistant Director, Niagara County IDA

Frank A. Nerone, Chief Operator, Niagara County Sewer District No. 1; Ronald C. Johnson, Administrator, Niagara County Water District; Andrew Casiloni, Wendel

Ken Frasiak, President, Calamar, Inc.

Gordon Knapp, Niagara Frontiers Builders Association

Sean J. O'Connor, Chair, Niagara County Legislature; Samuel M. Ferraro, Commissioner and Michael A. Casale, Deputy Commissioner, Niagara County, Dept. of Planning, Development & Tourism, Deputy Commissioner

Wright H. Ellis, Chair, Niagara County, Town Supervisors Assoc. ; Sandra Jo Maslan, Town of Lewiston; Wright Ellis, Town of Cambria; Steven Richards, Town of Niagara; Lloyd Westcott, Town of Royalton; Eric Krueger, Town of Newfane

Lewis L. Staley, Administrative Director, Paul Haber, and Alan Hamilton, Town of Lockport IDA

June 17-18, 2003

David Rosenwasser President, Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation

Gregory Lewis, Niagara County Manager

Gary Praetzel Dean, Niagara University, College of Hospitality & Tourism Mgmt.

Thomas Cotton, Supervisor, Town of Aurora

Chuck Thomas, City of Buffalo Strategic Planning and Joseph Giambra, Commissioner, City of Buffalo
Department of Public Works Commissioner.

Gerald Summe, Supervisor, Town of Newstead

Joseph Martin, VP of Legislative Affairs, Buffalo Niagara Builders Assn, Inc. and Mark Aquino, General
Counsel, Patrick Development

Kate Foster, Associate Professor and Chair, University at Buffalo Dept of Urban and Regional Planning

George Grasser, Partners for a Livable Western New York

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Purpose and Format

The web-based questionnaire, one of several tools for the solicitation and collection of information from stakeholders and the general public, is being used to solicit public opinions and perceptions on a range of development and conservation related topics, from land use and transportation to economic development and environmental issues. The questionnaire, designed to take less than 5 minutes to complete, is organized in two sections: one to collect general demographic data and the other to collect opinions and perceptions on growth, development, and conservation. Results from the demographic questions will help the team and Steering Committee determine if the voices of certain groups in the community are under or over represented.

While the questionnaire responses provide valuable information for the team and Steering Committee, there are limits to its utility. As the results are not drawn from a random sample of the region's residents, findings may not be presented as representative of general public opinion. Also, results may not be cross-tabulated to isolate relationships between different variables. For example, we cannot compare the opinions of those indicating their place of residence as rural with those indicating their place of residence as urban. Despite these limitations, we believe the results provide useful information, especially as preparations are underway for public engagement activities and presentations in the Fall.

The questionnaire is available on-line on the questionnaire page of the project web site. The address of the page is <http://www.regionalframework.com/surveySh.asp?surveyID=101>.

First Report on Results

Questionnaire responses through September 2, 2003 have been tabulated and are reported on the following pages. These results represent the opinions of 144 individuals who completed the questionnaire since the project web site went live in late June 2003.

1) Overall, how would you rank the quality of life in Erie and Niagara Counties, with 1 being a very poor quality of life and 10 being an excellent quality of life?

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-------|
| 1) 1 (Very Poor) | . | 0% |
| 2) 2 | . | 0% |
| 3) 3 | . | 4.89% |
| 4) 4 | . | 2.79% |
| 5) 5 | . | 12.5% |
| 6) 6 | . | 23.0% |
| 7) 7 | . | 25.8% |
| 8) 8 | . | 21.6% |
| 9) 9 | . | 4.89% |
| 10) 10 (Excellent) | . | 4.19% |

Total Responses: 143

2) What are the biggest advantages to living and working in Erie and Niagara Counties. Select up to five answers.

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---|-------|
| 1) access to recreation facilities and natural areas | . | 65.7% |
| 2) arts and cultural offerings | . | 70.6% |
| 3) cost of living | . | 54.5% |
| 4) housing costs | . | 61.5% |
| 5) job opportunities | . | 0.69% |
| 6) proximity to rural areas | . | 21.6% |
| 7) quality of neighborhoods | . | 34.9% |
| 8) quality of public schools | . | 13.2% |
| 9) short commute time | . | 55.2% |
| 10) strong family ties | . | 44.7% |
| 11) no major disadvantages | . | 3.49% |
| 12) other, please specify in comments box below: | . | 6.29% |

Total Responses: 143

3) Please review the following list of problems in Erie and Niagara Counties and indicate how important each is to you.

| | Not Important | Not Very Important | Neutral | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Don't Know/No Answer | Total Responses |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| inadequate public transportation | 4.9% | 7.7% | 16.8% | 29.4% | 39.9% | 1.4% | 143 |
| lack of cooperation among local governments | 0.0% | 0.7% | 5.6% | 10.4% | 82.6% | 0.7% | 144 |
| loss of farmland | 1.4% | 6.9% | 20.1% | 27.8% | 41.7% | 2.1% | 144 |
| population loss | 1.4% | 3.5% | 8.3% | 29.9% | 56.3% | 0.7% | 144 |
| traffic congestion | 17.5% | 28.7% | 22.4% | 21.0% | 10.5% | 0.0% | 143 |
| deteriorating urban areas | 0.7% | 0.0% | 0.7% | 9.7% | 88.2% | 0.7% | 144 |
| high taxes | 2.8% | 5.6% | 6.9% | 16.0% | 68.8% | 0.0% | 144 |
| others | 4.7% | 0.0% | 25.9% | 7.1% | 16.5% | 45.9% | 85 |
| lack of access to parks and recreation facilities | 10.2% | 13.1% | 32.8% | 28.5% | 15.3% | 0.0% | 137 |
| lack of waterfront access | 1.4% | 2.8% | 8.3% | 21.5% | 65.3% | 0.7% | 144 |
| poor quality of newer development | 4.2% | 5.6% | 10.4% | 20.8% | 53.5% | 5.6% | 144 |
| scattered development pattern | 2.1% | 1.4% | 4.2% | 23.6% | 68.1% | 0.7% | 144 |
| unattractive landscaping | 2.8% | 11.1% | 19.4% | 32.6% | 33.3% | 0.7% | 144 |
| vacant commercial and industrial buildings | 0.7% | 0.0% | 7.6% | 31.3% | 59.7% | 0.7% | 144 |
| weak job market / few job opportunities | 0.7% | 1.4% | 2.8% | 17.4% | 77.1% | 0.7% | 144 |
| no major problems | 21.4% | 2.0% | 22.4% | 3.1% | 3.1% | 48.0% | 98 |
| long winters | 29.8% | 24.1% | 26.2% | 12.1% | 6.4% | 1.4% | 141 |

4) Please indicate whether you disagree strongly, disagree somewhat, agree somewhat, or agree strongly with the following statements. You may also indicate whether you are neutral, don't know or don't have an answer.

| | Strongly Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neutral | Somewhat Agree | Strongly Agree | Don't Know/No Answer | Total Responses |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Commercial development should be encouraged near close-in neighborhoods. | 5.0% | 11.3% | 9.9% | 29.1% | 41.8% | 2.8% | 141 |
| Development of new housing and commercial uses in outlying areas | 4.9% | 9.0% | 4.9% | 26.4% | 54.9% | 0.0% | 144 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|
| should be discouraged. | | | | | | | |
| Revitalization of older neighborhoods is an important regional priority. | 2.1% | 2.1% | 2.1% | 12.8% | 79.4% | 1.4% | 141 |
| New neighborhoods should have a mix of housing, shops, offices, and public uses like libraries. | 1.4% | 1.4% | 10.4% | 22.2% | 63.9% | 0.7% | 144 |
| I am not worried about where new development is located. | 55.4% | 18.0% | 6.5% | 9.4% | 9.4% | 1.4% | 139 |
| Planning for the protection of sensitive natural resources like wetlands, floodplains and fish and wildlife habitat is necessary if we are to maintain our quality of life. | 2.8% | 0.7% | 6.3% | 19.6% | 69.2% | 1.4% | 143 |
| Market conditions and the preferences of individuals should be the most important factors in determining development patterns. | 27.8% | 29.2% | 13.2% | 20.1% | 7.6% | 2.1% | 144 |
| Encouraging the reuse of vacant commercial buildings and sites is more important than encouraging commercial development in outlying areas. | 2.1% | 5.6% | 3.5% | 13.2% | 75.0% | 0.7% | 144 |

5) How important do you think it is for public officials to focus on the following planning goals:

| | Not Important | Not Very Important | Neutral | Somewhat Important | Very Important | Don't Know/No Answer | Total Responses |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| build more affordable housing | 4.2% | 16.0% | 27.8% | 33.3% | 17.4% | 1.4% | 144 |
| improve access to lakes and rivers | 0.7% | 2.1% | 7.7% | 28.7% | 60.8% | 0.0% | 143 |
| increase the attractiveness of public transportation as an alternative to driving | 2.8% | 4.9% | 8.4% | 30.1% | 53.8% | 0.0% | 143 |
| preserve agricultural uses | 1.4% | 3.5% | 12.7% | 24.6% | 57.0% | 0.7% | 142 |
| preserve of historic sites and buildings | 2.1% | 4.2% | 4.2% | 23.9% | 65.5% | 0.0% | 142 |
| protect natural resources, including wetlands, rivers and streams, and forested lands | 0.7% | 1.4% | 4.9% | 26.6% | 66.4% | 0.0% | 143 |
| promote tourism | 2.8% | 2.8% | 8.4% | 34.3% | 51.7% | 0.0% | 143 |
| attract new business | 0.0% | 2.1% | 2.1% | 21.5% | 74.3% | 0.0% | 144 |
| encourage the revitalization of inner city neighborhoods | 0.0% | 2.8% | 1.4% | 16.1% | 79.7% | 0.0% | 143 |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----|
| improve and protect village centers and hamlets | 2.1% | 5.6% | 17.4% | 28.5% | 46.5% | 0.0% | 144 |
| limit development in rural areas | 2.1% | 6.3% | 7.0% | 26.1% | 57.7% | 0.7% | 142 |

6) How would you describe the level of information you have about development, transportation, and environmental issues in Erie and Niagara Counties? (Select one answer)

- 1) very well informed . 40.5%
- 2) somewhat well informed . 41.9%
- 3) not too well informed . 9.79%
- 4) not at all informed . 4.19%
- 5) don't know/no answer . 3.49%

Total Responses: 143

7) Where do you get your information about planning, development and conservation issues in Erie and Niagara Counties?

- 1) local television news . 49.2%
- 2) radio . 40.8%
- 3) daily newspaper (specify below). 74.6%
- 4) weekly newspaper (specify below). 37.3%
- 5) friends and neighbors . 32.3%
- 6) other (specify below) . 50.7%

Total Responses: 142

8) Please indicate your place of residence:

- 1) Erie County . 79.1%
- 2) Niagara County . 13.1%
- 3) in a surrounding county . 2.08%
- 4) outside the region . 5.55%
- 5) Ontario Province . 0%

Total Responses: 144

9) How would you describe where you live?

- 1) urban . 51.3%
- 2) suburban . 32.6%
- 3) rural village or hamlet . 4.86%
- 4) rural but changing to suburban. 6.94%
- 5) rural . 4.16%

Total Responses: 144

10) If your place of residence is in Erie or Niagara County, how many years have you lived there?

| | | |
|------------------|---|-------|
| 1) under 5 years | . | 17.7% |
| 2) 5-9 | . | 11.8% |
| 3) 10-19 | . | 12.5% |
| 4) 20+ | . | 57.7% |

Total Responses: 135

11) What is your age?

| | | |
|-------------|---|-------|
| 1) under 18 | . | 0% |
| 2) 18-34 | . | 34.0% |
| 3) 35-49 | . | 36.1% |
| 4) 50-64 | . | 21.5% |
| 5) 65+ | . | 8.33% |

Total Responses: 144