



2 Development History

To support analyses of existing conditions and trends, the region has been divided geographically into two broad categories—developed areas and rural areas—and a region-wide overlay highlighting natural systems. The definition of the areas and overlay provides a starting point for the exploration of regional planning issues as well as a foundation for the projection of alternative growth and redevelopment scenarios.

This section of the report provides a review of the region's development history and explanations of how the Framework team defined the limits of the developed areas, rural areas, and the environmental overlay.

Evolution

Since the turn of the last century, the regional pattern of development has changed dramatically. As population doubled, the pattern evolved from a loose network of relatively independent city and agrarian centers into a single metropolitan community of interconnected urban, suburban, and rural communities.

19th Century Settlement. As illustrated in historic maps, the region's early settlements were established at strategic locations on the region's rivers, lakes, and the evolving network of canal, rail, and surface travel routes. The earliest settlements developed as compact centers of commerce, industry, and culture with relatively dense neighborhoods surrounding main street and crossroad mixed-use cores. By 1900, the region's population reached 500,000, with residents clustered in early settlements and on small farmsteads distributed across rural areas in Niagara County and northern Erie County.

1900-1940: Early 20th Century. During the early years of the 20th century, the region's population boom continued but at a slightly slower pace. From 1900 to 1940, the combined populations of the counties increased by 88%, from 509,000 to 958,000. Growth during this period was accommodated in compact extensions to traditional settlements, including early 20th century residential neighborhoods with a mix of housing

This 1804 Holland Land Company map shows major natural features, Indian settlements, Fort Niagara, and early wagon and foot trails.



types; industrial, civic and institutional districts; and neighborhood-serving “main streets” or commercial centers and corridors.

1940-1960: Mid Century Suburban Expansion. The region’s earliest suburban neighborhoods developed to meet rising demand for housing following World War II. From 1940 to 1960, the region added 348,000 residents and reached a total population of just over 1.3 million. The post war population boom coupled with the first wave of flight from inner-city neighborhoods fueled the development of the region’s

earliest suburban neighborhoods. During this period, new neighborhoods were built as extensions of adjacent urban neighborhoods and generally followed traditional street and block patterns but at lower densities than older neighborhoods and without the benefit of direct access to central business districts and traditional commercial corridors. The region also witnessed the first wave of suburban commercial development—strips of commercial uses along major roads with buildings setback from the road, front yard parking, and minimal provisions for pedestrians.

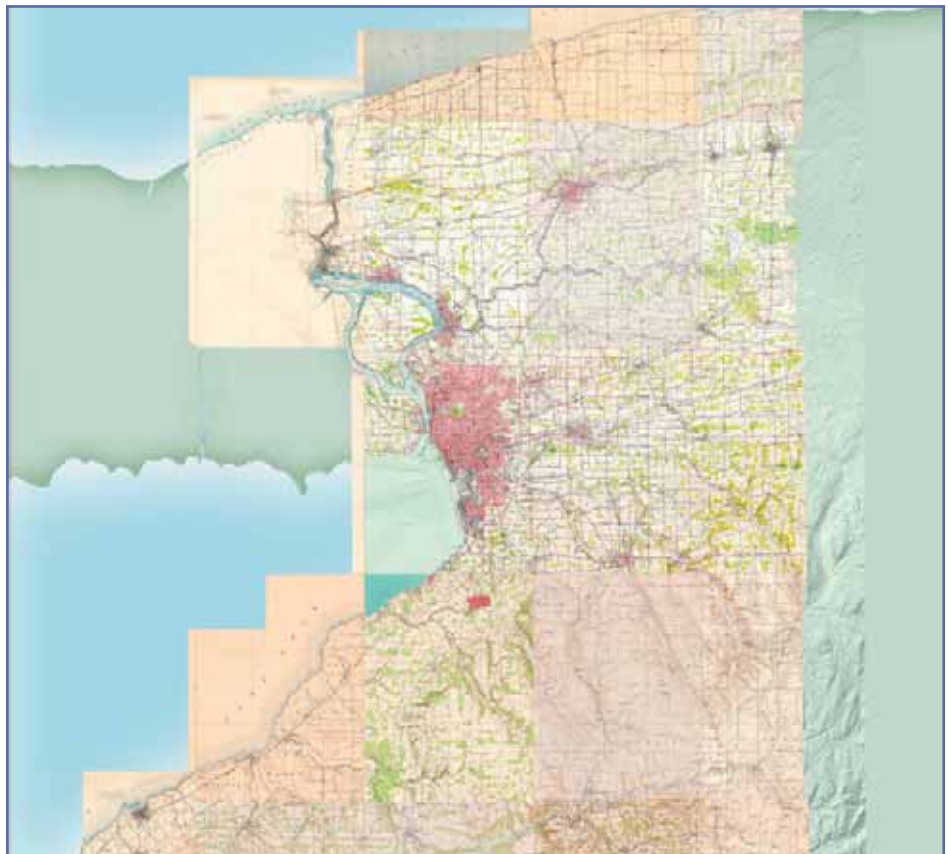
1960-2000: Late Century Growth & Decline, Continued Expansion. Suburban areas of the region continued to expand through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s despite an overall decline in population. Between 1960 and 2000, the region lost 137,000 residents or 10.5% of its total population, with cities and villages experiencing significant losses.

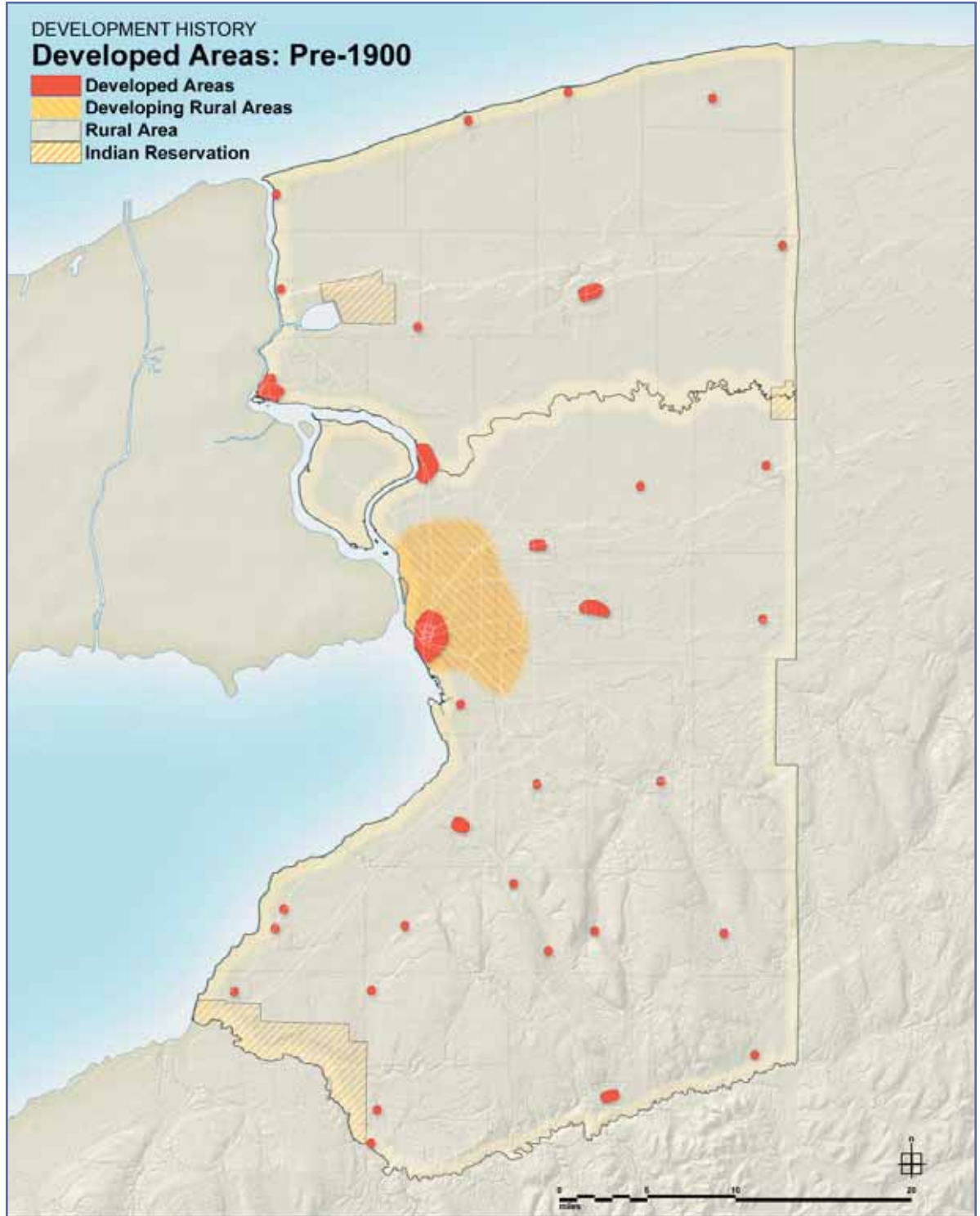
Late-century development followed conventional suburban patterns with curvilinear streets, segregated commercial and residential uses, few interconnections between adjacent neighborhoods, and little diversity in housing. These newer neighborhoods are served by commercial, civic, and institutional uses lining major roads. Unlike traditional commercial districts, with mixed uses and buildings oriented towards public sidewalks, newer suburban developments tends to be less dense, less well connected to adjacent commercial uses and surrounding residential areas, and more reliant on automobile travel for access.



Atlas

*Mosaics of early USGS
Quadrangle maps showing
early century (top)
and mid century) settle-
ment patterns.*

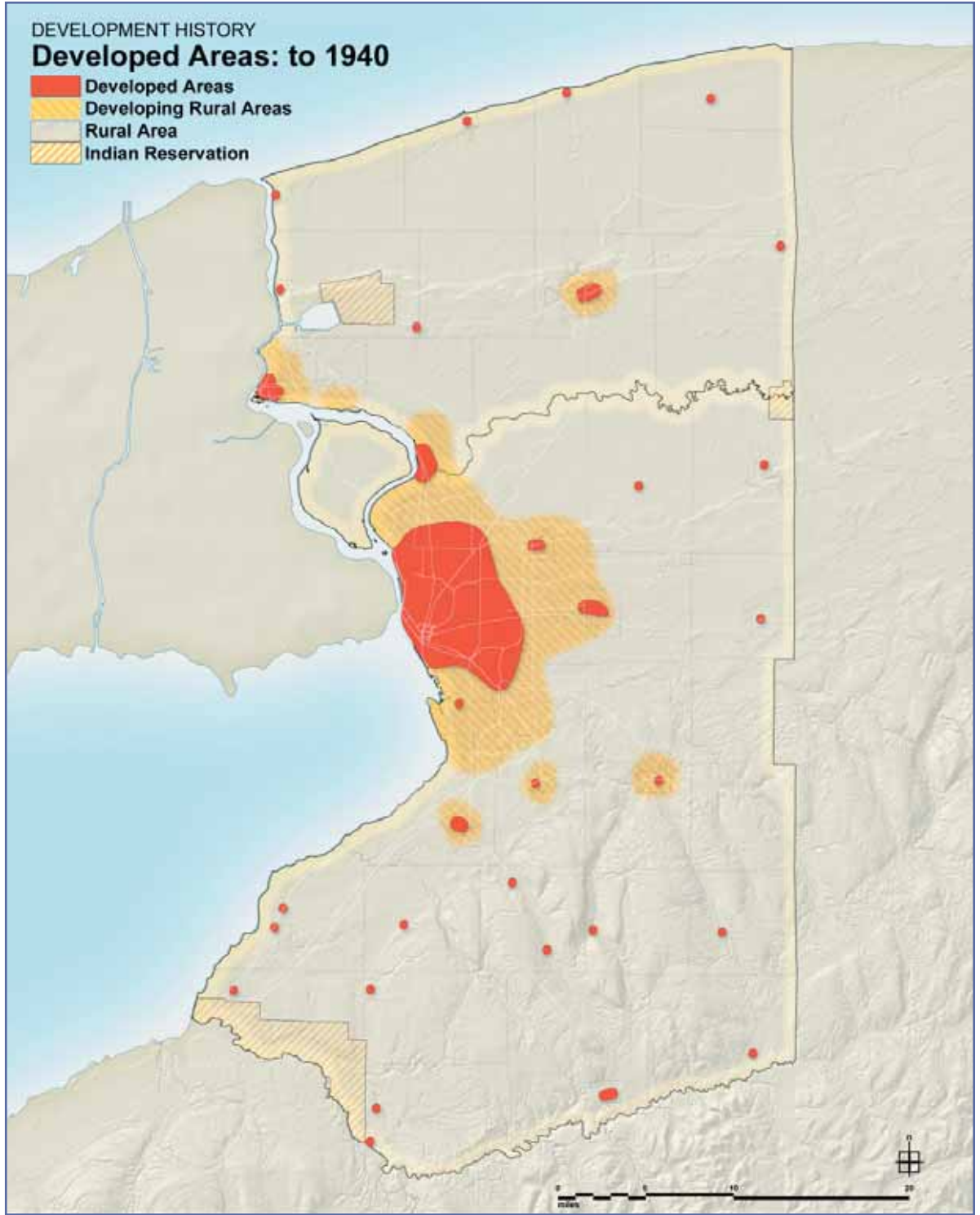




Population Change by Development Era, 1900-1940, 1940-1960, and 1960-2000

	1900 #	1940 #	% 00-40	1960 #	% 40-60	2000 #	% 60-00
Erie County	433,686	798,377	84.09%	1,064,688	33.36%	950,265	-10.75%
Niagara County	74,961	160,110	113.59%	242,269	51.31%	219,846	-9.26%
Region	508,647	958,487	88.44%	1,306,957	36.36%	1,170,111	-10.47%

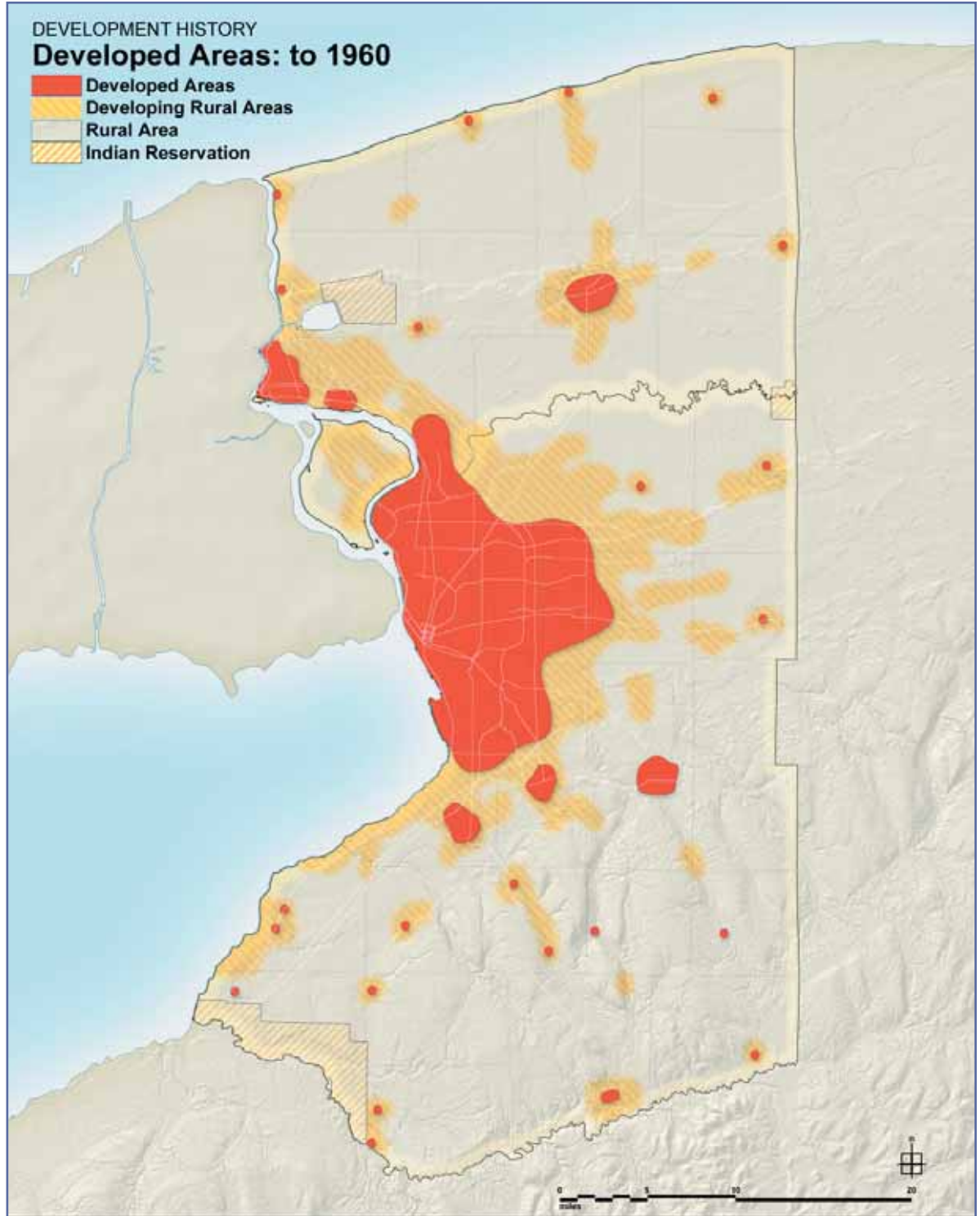
Source: US Census Bureau.



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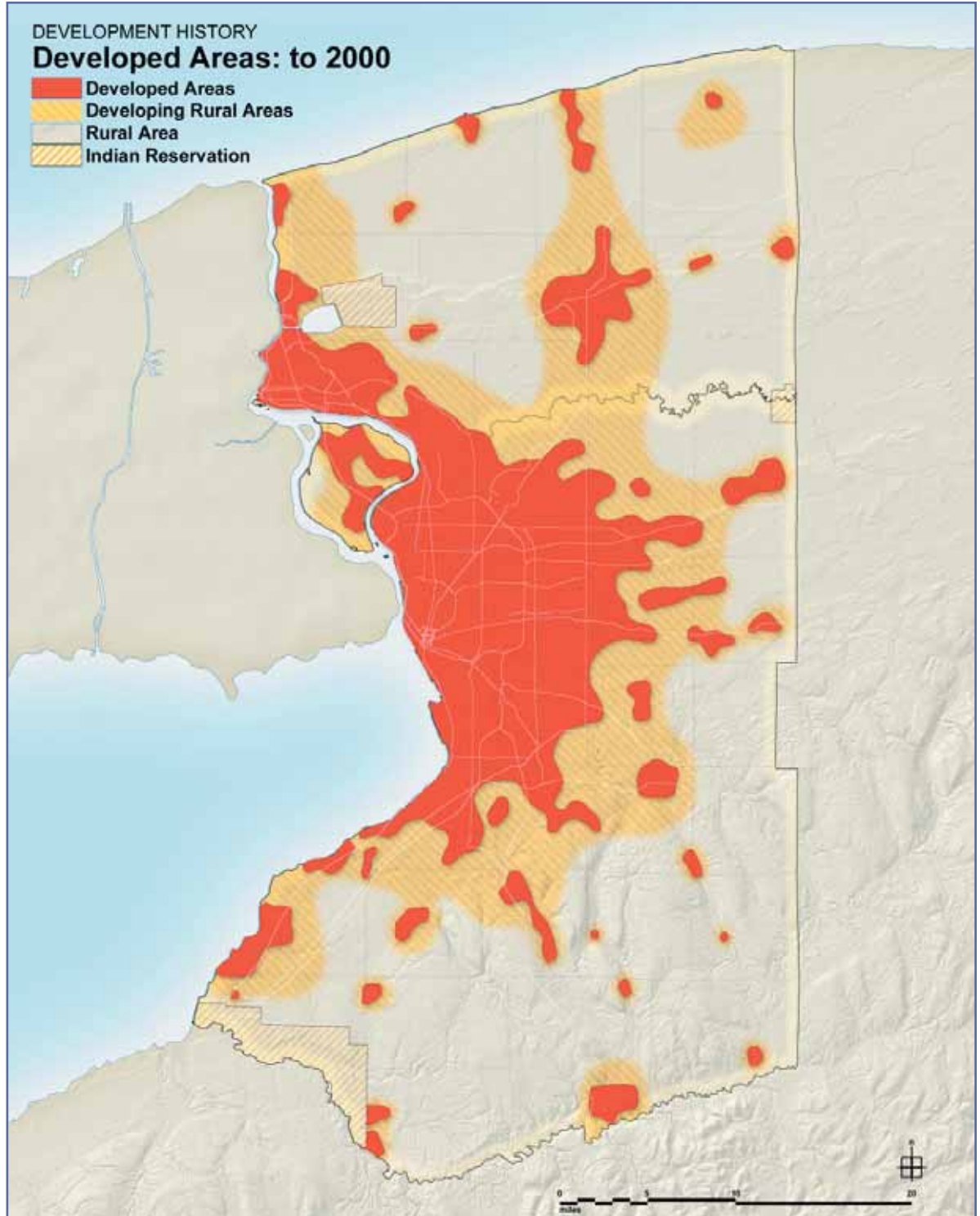
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