

## *Chapter 3 • Affected Environment*

Chapter 3 describes the existing conditions found within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as a basis for preparation of the heritage area's management plan. This chapter also includes the affected environment information required under NEPA for the environmental assessment associated with the plan.

The Niagara River corridor is a complex landscape that has seen extensive human use and development over the past 300 years. The purposes and goals of the heritage area are intended to tell the stories of the region's development and to help address issues related to the region's future. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of conditions that affect the planning and implementation of the heritage area. For this reason, the chapter goes beyond what is required for the environmental assessment. Chapter 3 provides the background which was the basis for development of alternatives for the heritage area, selection of a preferred alternative, and crafting of strategies and programs for implementation.

Chapter 3 is divided into five broad categories that characterize the heritage area and its context:

**Natural Resources and Landscapes** – an overview of the environmental context of the heritage area including an outline of significant natural resources remaining today;

**Historic and Cultural Resources** – a broad look at the historic and cultural resources present within the heritage area with a particular focus upon the historic development of the City of Niagara Falls and the river communities of Lewiston and Youngstown as well as relationships with Tribal Nations.

**Socio-Economic Context** – a description of the socio-economic conditions within the heritage area including demographics related to population, race and ethnicity, income, employment, and education.

**Tourism and Visitor Experience** – a discussion of regional tourism, and community issues related to the visitor experience in the City of Niagara Falls downtown; a description of the attractions, interpretive programs, visitor services, and wayfinding systems.

**Regional and Community Planning** – an overview of the community planning organizations, initiatives, and plans that are in place both regionally and locally relating to the mission and objectives of the heritage area.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the conditions observed and summarizes issues that have been identified. It has been used to describe the broad range of resources and their significance to the heritage area, understand the issues facing communities today, identify organizations and initiatives addressing specific areas of interest, and identify sources of information as well as apparent gaps in existing information. In effect, two kinds of contexts are involved – the context that will have a significant effect on the development of the heritage area, and the context that will be affected by the heritage area. These impacts may be positive or negative.

For the purposes of the management plan's *Environmental Assessment*, the information outlined below (a) provided the background for the issues identified through scoping and the impact topics identified at the end of Chapter 1, *Purpose and Need*; (b) supported the development of alternatives outlined in Chapter 2, *Alternatives*; and (c) is used in the assessment of potential impacts in Chapter 4, *Environmental Consequences*.

The information summarized below has been gathered from documents, websites, consultations, and field observation. This information has been critical in providing the Niagara Falls Heritage Area Commission, partners, and consultant team with a broad understanding of the issues and opportunities facing the heritage area. Following the selection of a preferred alternative for the heritage area and completion of the *Environmental Assessment*, the information on existing conditions was used to shape recommendations and actions for implementation of the preferred alternative.

### **3.1 Natural Resources and Landscapes**

Niagara Falls and the Niagara Gorge form a breathtaking natural landscape that is world renown. The Niagara River from the Falls to Lake Ontario were well known by Native American peoples and have been a subject of broad international awareness since European explorers first arrived in the region. Historically, the Falls have been known for their power and awe inspiring beauty, a symbol of the sublime. Over the past two centuries, however, the Falls, river, and surrounding landscape have been vastly altered and overwhelmed by human use. Nonetheless, the river's landscape today retains vibrant ecosystems that are home to globally significant plant communities, bird populations, fish species, and other wildlife.

In Thomas Hart Barton's mural of *Father Hennepin at Niagara Falls* the mists rise to the edge of a rugged and heavily forested wilderness. [add photo of mural] This is the landscape known to the Native Americans for centuries and first encountered by Hennepin and the rest of Robert de La Salle's expedition during the late 1670s. It was a harsh and awe inspiring land traversed by waterways and, when the rapids of Niagara River made passage impossible, by an American Indian portage trail that led the explorers of 1679 over the Niagara escarpment and around the rapids.

The wilderness was tamed over the next two centuries with nations contesting control of the Niagara River and access to the interior of North American continent. Eventually, settlement moved westward, rail and ships moved people and goods, hydroelectric power transformed the nation, and chemical industries arose. Today, the ecosystems of the former wilderness are limited to a few isolated locations and to memory.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the Natural Audubon Society, and others provide detailed information regarding the at-risk or fragile condition of natural communities as well as the healthy ecosystems of the heritage area. The re-licensing process leading up to the 2007 approval of the Niagara Power Project produced several studies that summarize the condition of natural resources within the area. Additional studies are being spearheaded by several nonprofit partners with Greenway funding available as a result of the re-licensing. This information will be useful to the heritage area partners as they work to achieve the natural resource goals of the management plan and the heritage area's authorizing legislation.

#### **3.1.1 The Niagara Gorge and Escarpment, Unique Ecosystem (EA Impact Topic)**

The Niagara Escarpment is an extensive landform visible as a line of steep slopes and long bluffs extending from New York State through Ontario, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois. Niagara Escarpment is the edge of a thick series of dolomite layers of Silurian age. It formed 450 million years ago from layers of sand, silt, and clay that compressed into thick sedimentary rock and reef structures. The caprock or surface layer of sedimentary rock of the escarpment was dolostone and covered layers of softer or more easily eroded shale. Over time the different layers of rock eroded at different rates and created natural cliffs, including Niagara Falls (NPS 2005:24).

**[Map 1: The Niagara Escarpment (New York to Wisconsin)]**

The landform of the Niagara Escarpment is known as a *cuesta*, where a gently-sloping layer of rock forms a ridge. One side of the ridge has a long gentle slope, the *dip slope* that is essentially the surface of the rock layer. The other side is a steep bluff, the exposed edge of the formation. The Niagara Escarpment owes its prominence to both the resistance of the Silurian dolomite layers and the relative softness of the Ordovician and Devonian rocks on either side. Within the heritage area, the northern edge of the Niagara Escarpment is the steep bluff that overlooks Lewiston toward Lake Ontario. The dip slope is the gently sloping surface south of the bluff on which the City of Niagara Falls is located.

The Niagara Gorge is the channel cut through the escarpment by the Niagara River over time, and Niagara Falls is the present location of that erosive action. The Niagara Falls and Gorge may be the best known landscape features of the Niagara Escarpment. Other prominent features of the escarpment include waterfalls on the Genesee River in Rochester and the spine of several islands in northern Lake Huron.

Over 12,000 years ago, near the end of the Wisconsin glaciation, the last time in which glaciers advanced in North America, warming temperatures released water from Lake Erie that flowed downstream and over the escarpment. This formed the Niagara River and Falls. Originally, the Falls were located 10 miles north of its current location, plunging water almost directly into Lake Ontario. The face of the Falls has retreated southward as the differential erosion of rock layers continued. Over the course of thousands of years, the swift moving river wore through the underlying rock and formed the 7.1-mile-long Niagara Gorge seen today. From the mouth of the Gorge at the steep edge of the escarpment, the Niagara River flows north another six miles before reaching Lake Ontario. The diversion of water from the Niagara River for hydroelectric purposes since the early 1900s has slowed the erosion process (NPS 2005:24).

The Niagara Gorge has been identified as a particularly significant location retaining specific rare and endangered species and plant communities. Comprehensive and detailed studies were made of the vegetation along the Gorge and in the vicinity of the Falls between 1986 and 2004 by Patricia M. Eckel, a research scientist at the Missouri Botanical Gardens who studied at the University at Buffalo. She reviewed over 25,000 plant specimens collected over the last two centuries and conducted field work to document current plant species within the Gorge and adjacent to the Falls, particularly on Goat Island. In addition to Eckel's work, rare plants within the four state parks of the Niagara Gorge (Niagara Falls, Whirlpool, Devil's Hole, and Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Parks) were documented and summarized by the Natural Heritage Program in 2000. The Natural Heritage Program continues to update its rare plant records and publish its information annually online (TRC Engineering 2008). (Citation: TRC Engineering, LLC and Riveredge Associates, LLC, *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*, New York Power Authority, 2008)

A series of studies prepared in conjunction with the Niagara Power Project re-licensing summarize available information about plant communities in the vicinity of the Niagara Gorge. The *Final Environmental Impact Statement* for the project, completed in December 2006, and

related studies outline the range of water, aquatic, and terrestrial resources along with anticipated environmental effects and proposed mitigation measures related to the power project.

The *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*, prepared in January 2008 as a mitigation measure, reviewed Eckel's work in identifying and documenting rare plants. The purpose of the study was to assess the feasibility of large-scale and small-scale restoration of native plant communities. As documented by Eckel and confirmed through field observation, the native plant communities of the Gorge were found to have been significantly altered with the loss of a number of rare species and the introduction of invasive aliens. Even the woodland at the base of the Gorge is replacement woods, regenerating after having been cleared for construction of the Gorge railway.

Significant threats leading to the loss of rare species include human disturbance and the introduction of alien invasive species. Heavy recreational use over many years has led to trampling, compaction, and loss of the thin soil layers of the Gorge both on and off designated trails. Collecting over many decades by plant enthusiasts has contributed to the loss of species. Stormwater runoff and discharge from combined sewer overflows located in the Gorge have changed drainage patterns; introduced chemicals, petroleum products, and salts to the soils; and eroded soil layers. These conditions have resulted in changes in ecological conditions and modifications to plants species compositions. The study concluded that, while large-scale restoration of native plant communities is probably not feasible, small-scale restoration is not only feasible but would contribute significantly to our ability to manage and preserve remaining species and communities (TRC Engineering 2008).

The *Feasibility Study* also documented and mapped plant communities and land use types in the vicinity of the Gorge using Natural Heritage Program criteria. The range of existing plant communities and land use types identified included:

- Calcareous Cliff Community
- Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland
- Commercial
- Limestone Woodland
- Oak Hickory Forest
- Outdoor Recreation
- Successional Shrubland

Despite the degradation of its native plant communities, the vicinity of the Gorge and Falls remains exceptionally rich in rare plant species. The New York Natural Heritage Program states that “the combination of misting and wet seepage areas interspersed with dry open rock faces and calcareous bedrock produces one of the greatest assemblages of rare plants within New York State” (NPS 2005:24). The two most ecologically significant natural plant communities identified by the Natural Heritage Program along the Gorge are the Calcareous Cliff Community and Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland Community. A “significant” determination within the Natural Heritage Program system means that these two natural communities have high ecological and conservation values.

The Calcareous Cliff Community consists of “sparsely vegetated limestone cliffs along the east rim of the Niagara Gorge from Niagara Falls downstream roughly 8,000 meters” (NYSDEC 2011). The cliff community lines the Gorge, provides habitat for rare cliff nesting birds and rare plants, and likely harbors some of the oldest trees in the state. Northern white cedar trees (*Thuja*

occidentalis) 500 to 1000 years old have been located in cliff communities of the Niagara Escarpment.

The Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland Community is a steep slope woodland habitat, found below the Calcareous Cliff Community near the base of the gorge, which supports rare and common plant and animal species. It is of moderate size within the Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods at Whirlpool State Park. The New York Natural Heritage Program database notes that “as currently documented, the community extends the length of the Niagara Gorge from Niagara Falls downstream roughly 8000 meters to a large dam operated by the New York Power Authority” (NYSDEC 2011).

### **3.1.2 Topographic Features\***

The Niagara Escarpment, running east-west across Niagara County, is the county’s single dramatic natural topographic feature. The escarpment is experienced as a 260-foot ridge crossing the heritage area just south of the Village of Lewiston with dramatic views northward toward Lake Ontario.

To the north and south of the escarpment are two nearly flat plains separated by elevation but of similar topographic character. To the north is the Ontario Lake Plain, which is characterized by a gently rolling surface extending from the base of the escarpment to the bluffs of the Lake Ontario shoreline, which is 32 feet above sea level. To the south is the Huron Lake Plain, the dip slope, which extends from the high ridge of the escarpment and slopes gently in elevation towards the City of Niagara Falls’ southern shoreline on the Niagara River. This slope varies from 20 to 40 feet in elevation per mile and is barely noticeable.

#### **[Map 2: Topographical map of Niagara County w/ plains labeled]**

The level of Lake Erie is 326 feet higher than the level of Lake Ontario. Using the International Great Lakes Datum (IGLD), Lake Erie’s high water elevation is 573.4 feet and Lake Ontario’s high water elevation is 247.3 feet. The Niagara River runs for 35 miles between these two Great Lakes. The river flows from Lake Erie, divides at Grand Island and then Goat Island where it flows over the American Falls and Canadian Horseshoe Falls, and then continues for 13 miles through the Niagara Gorge and across the plain to Lake Ontario (NPS 2005:23).

### **3.1.3 Geology and Geological Features\***

The Niagara Falls region lies upon bedrock, the outward crust of the earth’s surface, that extends several miles deep and is generally not visible at the ground level. The bedrock within the heritage area is primarily composed of sedimentary rock layers known as Queenston shale, DeCew dolostone, Guelph dolostone, and Lockport dolomitic limestone. Although the bedrock is covered in most places by soil, the dramatic landforms of Niagara County expose the rock in several places. Queenston shale forms the rugged exposed rock cliffs along the Niagara Gorge. The Niagara Escarpment has areas of exposed Lockport dolomitic limestone (CHA 2009: III-8).

Niagara County’s *Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan* (2009) notes that the character of bedrock within the region can be a major consideration in development projects. “Depending on its stability, hardness and depth from the surface, bedrock could be a significant constraint to development and quite costly to overcome” (CHA 2009:III-8).

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\* Dismissed as an impact topic for the Environmental Assessment; provided as background information.

The soils, sand, and gravel that cover the region's bedrock are comparatively shallow. These accumulations are the result of water, ice, and wind eroding exposed bedrock over many centuries, the same forces moving the materials from place to place. The form and location of this layer were largely caused by glacial activity and are collectively known as glacial till. The last ice age in the region ended approximately 12,000 years ago. Receding glaciers radically changed the geography of the region and created a number of glacial till deposits, which occur in four types: (1) ground moraines (gently rolling hills or plains), (2) drumlins (an elongated whale-shaped hill), (3) elongated till ridges, and (4) terminal moraines (ridges) (CHA 2009:III-9). These glacial till deposits are visible on the landscape as gently rolling hills, mainly to the north of the escarpment, or plains, and ridges, located more to the south of the escarpment.

**[Map 3: Map of Four Types of Glacial Till Deposits as Visible on the Landscape Today]**

The glaciers also left behind three major glacial lakes: Lake Iroquois, Lake Lundy, and Lake Tonawanda. As these lakes shifted and disappeared over time, they left behind layers of silt and clay sediment which combines with glacial till to cover the bedrock and form the basis of local soils. (CHA 2009:III-9).

Soils evolve from the crumbling of the different bedrock types beneath the surface, as well as from the glacial lake sediments deposited during the last ice age. For example, within Niagara County, erosion from the bedrock Queenston shale formation created Lairdsville and Lockport soils, while Brockport soils are the product of the bedrock Rochester shale. The ancient glacial lakes left sediments of varying color and composition (CHA 2009:III-8,9).

The soils within the heritage area's boundaries primarily include lacustrine silt and clay or glacial till of variable texture (boulders to silt; "lacustrine" means deposited in a lake environment in geologic time). The northern neck of the heritage area from the Village of Lewiston to Fort Niagara as well as the southeast corner of the City of Niagara Falls sit atop silt and clay, which have almost no farming value due to poor the drainage conditions they create.

The remainder of the City of Niagara Falls up to the ridge of the escarpment and southern boundary of the Village of Lewiston have sand-rich glacial till. This till covers 33% of Niagara County and has historically supported dairy farming. There is an area of lacustrine sand just west of the Village of Youngstown and a pocket of lacustrine beach within the Village of Lewiston, which are good soils for growing fruits and vegetables. A stretch of bedrock either exposed or close to the surface lies atop the escarpment just south and west of the Village of Lewiston (CHA 2009:III 9-12).

### **3.1.4 Prime and Unique Agricultural Land\***

Agricultural lands were mapped for all of Niagara County as part of its 2009 comprehensive plan. The results show only a small amount of farmland located within the boundaries of the heritage area, located outside the Village of Youngstown. Good farmland supporting orchards, vineyards, and dairy farms is located to the east of the heritage area in the Towns of Porter and Lewiston and other areas of the county. Niagara County ranks high in the state overall in the total value of agricultural products sold and for fruit production in particular (CHA 2009:III 16-17).

Prime Agricultural Land is one of several designations made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to identify important farmlands in the United States that contribute to the nation's short- and long-range needs. This type of farmland has the best physical and chemical

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\* Dismissed as an impact topic for the Environmental Assessment; provided as background information.

characteristics for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, or oilseed. Characteristics include an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, an acceptable level of acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable content of salt or sodium, and few or no rocks. While there are soils designated as prime farmlands in the study area, the actions assessed in this document would not result in an irretrievable loss of these characteristics, therefore, the impact topic of Prime and Unique Agricultural Land was dismissed.

### **3.1.5 Hydrology\***

The Niagara River is 35 miles long and runs north/northwesterly from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The river is the primary drainage for the four upper Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Erie), and forms the boundary between the United States on the east and Canada on the west. The Niagara River flows from Lake Erie over the Niagara Escarpment, where centuries of water flow have carved out the Niagara Gorge. Rocky banks surround a relatively narrow and volatile riverbed. The upper section of the river, above Niagara Falls, is 22.5 miles long and flows through rapids as it approaches the Falls. [photo of the river]

Niagara Falls itself is divided into three sections: the American Falls, the Bridal Veil Falls, and the Horseshoe Falls. These Falls have a vertical drop of 70 to 110 feet, 181 feet, and 174 feet respectively. The American Falls, a wide cascade with an uneven edge, lies between Prospect Point and the tiny Luna Island. The Bridal Veil Falls is a small cascade from the narrow channel between Luna Island and the larger Goat Island. Both Luna Island and Goat Island are in the United States. The semicircular Horseshoe Falls are the largest and most spectacular sector of the falls and lie between Goat Island and the Canadian side of the Niagara River.

Below Niagara Falls, the river flows through the narrow, treacherous Niagara Gorge to the edge of the Niagara Escarpment at Lewiston. The Gorge is characterized by steep austere cliff walls above wooded slopes that stand over 200 feet above the river, which cascades through churning whirlpools and rapids. Beyond the escarpment, the river valley widens and the water calms on approach to Lake Ontario. Recreational boating is popular in the navigable lowermost portion of the river.

### **3.1.6 Climate\***

The heritage area has a temperate climate relative to its location in the northeastern United States, which is in part due to its location adjacent Lakes Erie and Ontario and overall within the Great Lakes region. Average temperatures range from 31 degrees in the winter to 82 degrees in the summer. The lakes help moderate seasonal temperatures as water absorbs heat and cools the air in the summer and retains that heat into the fall. Known as “Lake Effect”, the manner in which Lake Ontario moderates weather within Niagara County is conducive to growing fruit and helps create the successful fruit orchards and vineyards found in the central and eastern portions of the county. The Lake Effect also helps produce heavy snowfall during winter months. Western winds pick up the warmer air and moisture of the lake and as they pass over the colder land surface create heavy snows for the region.

### **3.1.7 Vegetation/ Endangered and Threatened Plant Species (EA Impact Topic)**

Broadly speaking, northwestern New York is part of the Eastern Deciduous Forest of the United States, a complex of forest communities that extends from the southern states north into New

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\* Dismissed as an impact topic for the Environmental Assessment; provided as background information.

England. The northernmost of these deciduous forest communities is the Northern Hardwood Forest, which covers much of New England and extends southwest to the Niagara River and eastern tip of Lake Erie. Broad-leaved deciduous trees are the dominant plant species of the Eastern Deciduous Forest, and Yellow Birch, Sugar Maple and American Beech are the dominant species of the Northern Hardwood Forest. Two conifers, Eastern Hemlock and White Pine often grow abundantly among the broad-leaved species, Eastern Hemlock in moist areas and on north-facing slopes and White Pine on exposed and/or disturbed sites (Kricher 1988:49),

In New York, ecologists have divided the state into various ecological zones according to the landscape's physical characteristics and the habitats they support. The ecological zone encompassing northwestern New York in the vicinity of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario has been identified as the Great Lakes Plain.

**[Map 4: ecozones from Reschke]**

Extending from the Niagara River on the west to vicinity of Rome on the east, the Great Lakes Plain is essentially a flat plain of horizontal rock formations with little local relief. The plain has a simple erosional topography of glacial till, modified by moraines, shoreline deposits, and drumlins. Its natural vegetation is comprised primarily of elm-red maple-northern hardwoods, with beech, white ash, basswood, sugar maple, hickory, hemlock, and tulip tree predominating on better drained sites. Because of its topography, soils, and climate, the region has been largely cleared for farms and orchards. Only about one-fifth of the land remains forested, mainly in a disrupted pattern related to soil conditions and drainage patterns. As noted above, the climate here is equitable, modified by Lakes Erie and Ontario (Dickinson 1979 and Andrie 1988: 45).

In the late 1600s when European explorers first explored the Niagara region then occupied by the Seneca of the Haudenosaunee, the area appears to have been largely forested. It can be surmised that the forest was largely composed of the natural vegetation ascribed today to the Great Lakes Plain ecoregion.

Human activity has drastically altered the landscape in the vicinity of the Niagara River over the past 250 years and with it the nature and extent of the vegetation that occurs here. Today, only small, isolated remnants of the region's pre-settlement plant communities remain. Almost all locations within the heritage area where natural vegetation has been allowed to grow are re-emergent secondary plant communities. While these plant communities may retain many of the characteristics of the pre-settlement ecology, the introduction of a variety of alien invasive species over the decades has affected the local species composition of this successional and secondary vegetative growth.

The National Audubon Society, who oversees an initiative to protect the Niagara River habitat for globally significant bird populations, notes that much of the forest and shrub habitat along the river corridor has been removed for "industrial development, power generation, commercial, and residential uses" and that more clearing will negatively impact the availability of habitat for migratory songbirds (NAS 2011). This is particularly true within the City of Niagara Falls. Most of the forest habitat that remains within the heritage area south of the Niagara Escarpment is located in the state parks along the edge of the Niagara Gorge. The particular significance of the plant communities found in the vicinity of the Gorge is discussed below. North of the Escarpment, between Lewiston and Fort Niagara, much of the land area along the Niagara River within the heritage area is successional woodland and provides excellent habitat. This area is predominantly residential but is not heavily developed. It has not been cleared for cultivation because of its silt and clay soils and resulting poor drainage.



Bruce S. Kirshner was a forest ecologist, environmentalist, and authority in old growth forests. He lived in Buffalo and authored a number of ecological studies and books, including co-authoring the *Sierra Club Guide to Ancient Forests of the Northeast* (2004) and *National Wildlife Field Guide to Tree of North America* (2008). Kirshner studied the vegetation along the Niagara River corridor and produced two hand-drawn maps documenting old-growth forest sites. The first map, titled *Bi-National Niagara Corridor of Forest Antiquity*, documents the locations of eight old-growth forest sites on the New York side of the river and seventeen sites on the Ontario side. The second map, titled *Ancient White Cedars of the Niagara Gorge*, documents the locations and numbers of ancient white cedars along the Gorge. Both maps and his writings on the subject provide a basis for further study, documentation, and conservation initiatives.

**[Maps 5 and 6: Kirshner mapping of old-growth trees, courtesy Marjorie Gilles]**

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation in partnership with The Nature Conservancy has developed the New York Natural Heritage Program to facilitate the conservation of rare plants, animal, and natural communities within the state. Initiated in 1985, the Natural Heritage Program maintains the state's most comprehensive database of rare and endangered species. In 1990, the Natural Heritage Program published the study *Ecological Communities of New York State*, by Carol Reschke, which is an extensive description of the types of plant communities found within the state. Updated in 2002, this study is used by biologists and plant scientists to identify plant communities in the field. The Natural Heritage Program website includes guides with information on each type of plant community.

**Threatened and Endangered Plant Species**

There are 14 state-listed threatened and endangered plant species identified for the heritage area. Ten of these are known to exist within the heritage area. Four of these were last documented between 1833 and 1886 and may or may not continue to exist within the heritage area. Table 3-1 lists the threatened and endangered plant species for the heritage area.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, there are also 14 other rare plant species that no longer occur within the vicinity of the Niagara Gorge. This list can be found in the *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*, 2008 (TRC 2008:3-4)<sup>2</sup>. There are no federal listings of threatened or endangered plants for the heritage area.<sup>3</sup>

The information about state listed threatened and endangered species was obtained from the NY Natural Heritage database in April 2011, which is managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and from the 2008 NYPA study entitled *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*. It is important to note that there are a few contradictions between the list of species provided by the state and the list of species established in the 2008 NYPA study and to describe how the final list for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was determined.

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<sup>1</sup> Endangered native plants in New York are those species in danger of expiration throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges within the state and requiring remedial action to prevent such extinction. Threatened native plants in New York are those species that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their ranges in the state. SX is a state code for species that are apparently extirpated from the state, meaning that they are thought to no longer occur within New York State, and that have a very low probability of rediscovery.

<sup>2</sup> The *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*, 2008 is available online at [www.niagara.nypa.gov/documents.htm](http://www.niagara.nypa.gov/documents.htm).

<sup>3</sup> The federal list of endangered and threatened species lists the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (scientific name: *Platanthera leucophea*) for Niagara County, however, the NYS DEC NatureExplorer mapping program shows that it is located outside the boundaries of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

The list of 14 threatened and endangered species present in the heritage area includes twelve from the NY Natural Heritage database and two additional species from the 2008 NYPA study.

The 2008 NYPA study included the Southern Blueflag (scientific name: *Iris virginica* var. *shrevei*), which is a NYS endangered plant species located just south of the City of Niagara Falls and outside the boundaries of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. However, no plants were included in the heritage area list of threatened and endangered species that were located outside its boundaries.

The 2008 NYPA study included the NYS endangered Ninebark (scientific name: *Physocarpus opulifolius* var. *intermedius*) species but its status has changed and as of 2010 it was no longer considered a threatened and endangered species. It is not included in the heritage area list of threatened and endangered species.

The 2008 NYPA study indicated that Puttyroot, Basil-balm, and Northern Pondweed are of the historical record and do not exist within the vicinity of the Niagara Gorge. The information from the NY Natural Heritage database indicated that these same three plant species are on the historic record, as they have not been documented since the 1800s, but that if appropriate habitat for these plants is present it is possible that they may still exist within the heritage area. They were thus retained in the list of 14 threatened and endangered plant species identified for the heritage area.

The full report from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regarding state-listed rare species is provided in Appendix XX of this document in a letter dated April 15, 2011. The 2008 research is provided in the *Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge*, which is available online at [www.niagara.nypa.gov/documents.htm](http://www.niagara.nypa.gov/documents.htm). The federal listing of species for Niagara County can be accessed at [www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm).

<b>Table 3-1: List of Endangered or Threatened Plant Species for the Heritage Area</b>					
	Common Name	Scientific Name	NYS Status	Location	Source*
1	Elk Sedge	<i>Carex garberi</i>	Endangered	Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods; Goat Island	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
2	Big Shellbark Hickory	<i>Carya iaciniosa</i>	Threatened	Lewiston, Hickory Stick Woods	NY NH Database
3	Lesser Fringed Gentian	<i>Gentienoposis virgata</i>	Endangered	Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods; Goat Island; Lewiston	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
4	Slender Blazing-star	<i>Liatris cylindracea</i>	Endangered	Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods	NY NH Database and NYPA Study

**Table 3-1: List of Endangered or Threatened Plant Species for the Heritage Area**

	Common Name	Scientific Name	NYS Status	Location	Source*
5	Four-flowered Loosetrife	<i>Lysimachia quadriflora</i>	Endangered	Goat Island	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
6	Ohio Goldenrod	<i>Oligoneuron ohloense</i>	Threatened	Lewiston Riverbank	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
7	Smooth Cliff Brake	<i>Pelaea giabella</i> ssp. <i>Glabella</i>	Threatened	Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
8	Sky-blue Aster	<i>Symphotrichum oolentangiense</i>	Endangered	Niagara Gorge Whirlpool Woods	NY NH Database and NYPA Study
9	Woodland Bluegrass	<i>Poa sylvestris</i>	Endangered	-----	NYPA Study
10	Mountain Death Camas	<i>Anticlea elegans</i> ssp. <i>glaucus</i> <sup>4</sup>	Threatened	City of Niagara Falls	NYPA Study
11	Lesser Fringed Gentian	<i>Gentianopsis virgata</i>	Endangered	Lewiston	NY NH Database
12	Puttyroot	<i>Aplectrum hyemale</i>	Endangered	Whirlpool Woods	NY NH Database
13	Basil-balm	<i>Monarda clinopodia</i>	Endangered	Goat Island	NY NH Database
14	Northern Pondweed	<i>Potamogeton alpines</i>	Threatened	Niagara Falls	NY NH Database

\*Source denotes the origin of the information and whether the species was listed in the 2011 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, NY Natural Heritage Database (NY NH) database and / or the 2008 NYPA Study (Feasibility Study for the Restoration of Native Terrestrial Plants in the Vicinity of the Niagara Gorge, 2008), which was prepared under the relicensing agreement for the Niagara Power Project.

### 3.1.8 Important Wildlife (EA Impact Topic)

Wildlife that typically inhabits the heritage area includes many common species of small and large mammals and amphibians, and common and rare reptiles, fish, and birds. No wildlife in the heritage area is federally listed as endangered or threatened ([www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm)). One turtle, several bird species, and a number species of fish are listed on the New York State list of Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Fish and Wildlife Species as noted below.

Small mammals found within the heritage area include mice and voles, Eastern cottontail rabbit and grey squirrels, woodchucks, and bats. Larger mammals include the red fox, coyote, skunk,

<sup>4</sup>The scientific name for Mountain Death Camas changed from *Zigadenus elegans* ssp. *glaucus* in 2008 to *Anticlea elegans* ssp. *glaucus* in 2010 according to the New York Rare Plant Status Lists, June 2010 (Young 2010).

muskrat, raccoon, and whitetail deer. Bullfrogs, the American toad, snapping turtle, and garter snake are common reptiles and amphibians found in the heritage area (NPS 2005:25). Blanding's Turtle is listed by the state as a threatened species, which means that it is a native species likely to become endangered in the not too distant future in New York State (NYSDEC ESU 2011). Endangered and threatened birds and aquatic life are discussed below.

With regard to birds in the heritage area and vicinity, the Peregrine Falcon is a state-listed endangered species and the Least Bittern and Common Tern are state-listed threatened species found within the heritage area. The federal government removed the Bald Eagle, which is present in the heritage area for portions of the year, from the U.S. Department of Interior's Endangered Species List in August 2007 ([www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/CountyLists/NiagaraDec2006.htm)).

The Niagara River corridor is designated as a globally significant Important Bird Area, overseen by Birdlife International and its Canadian and United States partners – the Canadian Nature Federation and the National Audubon Society. The Important Bird Area program works around the world to conserve habitats vital to birds to thereby sustain bird populations and other biodiversity threatened by global warming, habitat fragmentation, and the loss of habitat. The Niagara River corridor extends over 32 miles from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, the lower portion of which is within the heritage area.

The Niagara River is a migratory stopover and wintering site for a variety of gulls and waterfowl. It supports breeding colonies of herons, egrets, terns and other species, and the river's edge is a habitat for migrating songbirds during the spring and fall. The Important Bird Area site profile for the Niagara River corridor reports world-wide significant concentrations of gulls and a "remarkable diversity and abundance of waterfowl" (NAS 2011). One-day counts for Bonaparte's Gulls and Herring Gulls rise as high as 50,000, and one-day counts for the Ring-billed Gull range from 10,000 to 20,000. Bonaparte's Gulls landing on the river represent as much as 10% of the bird's world-wide population. Waterfowl include state-wide significant numbers of Canvasbacks, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneyes, and Common Mergansers (NAS 2011).

Joseph Davis State Park, one of seven state parks located in the heritage area, is a state designated Bird Conservation Area. The Bird Conservation Area program began in 1997 and is modeled on the Important Bird Area program, which began in 1996. A Bird Conservation Area is intended to protect and enhance bird populations and their habitats on state land and water. Northern Harrier, Horned Lark, and Savannah Sparrow are a few types of birds found at the park. Threatened species at home in these state lands located adjacent to the Niagara River include Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, and Common Tern. Other state listed species include the following species of special concern: Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Whip-Poor-Will, Horned Lark and Yellow-Breasted Chat (NYSDEC BCA 2011).

The varied and nearly year around availability of fish in the Niagara River attracts recreational and sport fishing enthusiasts. Ninety-two fish species have been found in the river, including Bass, Perch, Catfish, Carp, and Salmon (WD 2007:136).

Niagara Falls creates a physical barrier to aquatic life moving along the river creating two separate aquatic habitats. Cold water species such as Salmon and Trout are found to be more abundant in the Lower Niagara River, below the Falls, than in the Upper Niagara River. Cool and warm water species such as Walleye and Bass are found in larger quantities in the Upper Niagara River. The cool and warm water species of the Upper Niagara River are self-sustaining, while the cold water species below the Falls are largely supported by a New York State program that stocks

a variety of fish, including Trout, Salmon, and Steelhead in the Lower Niagara River and adjacent Lake Ontario (WD 2007:136).

There are several fish on the state's list of endangered and threatened species that are found in the Niagara River. The Silver Chub is endangered, the Lake Sturgeon and Mooneye are categorized as threatened, and the Black Redhorse Sucker and Redfin Shiner are species of special concern. Non-native species of mussels (Zebra and Quagga Mussels) may be responsible for the low number of native mussels, such as Hickorynut and Rainbow Mussels, present in the river (WD 2007:137). Hickorynut Freshwater Mussels existed in small numbers near Buckhorn Island and Goat Island in the Niagara River in the early 1990s before the mid-1990s Zebra Mussel outbreak, and it appears that the Hickorynut were killed by the Zebra Mussels (NYSDEC 2011).

There are two Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats (SCFWH) within and adjacent to the heritage area. They are part of the NYS Coastal Management Program, which is administered by the NYS Department of State. The state uses SCFWH designation to protect coastal habitats from harmful uses or development. The Department of State reviews proposed land and water use and developments for compliance with the Coastal Management Program when they may potentially impact habitats with the SCFWH designation. The two SCFWH sites are the Buckhorn Island and Goat Island Rapids immediately above the Falls and the Lower Niagara River Rapids immediately below.

**[Map 7: Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats]**

The Buckhorn Island and Goat Island Rapids is an 850-acre fish and wildlife habitat located on the Upper Niagara River just south of the City of Niagara Falls between the Goat Island bridge/Three Sisters Islands area and the Buckhorn Island water diversion structures.

The Lower Niagara River Rapids is a 4.5 mile segment of the Niagara River channel below the Falls in the Niagara Gorge. The deep and fast moving waters of the rapids provide habitat for one of the largest concentrations of steelhead in the state as well as for one of the state's largest winter concentration of gulls. It also supports a variety of other fish, including Coho Salmon, Chinook Salmon, and Brown Trout, and commonly occurring wildlife such as Blue Jays, the Downy Woodpecker, a variety of diving ducks, Eastern Cottontail, and raccoons (WD 2007:141).

### **3.2 Niagara's Historic and Cultural Resources**

In addition to the natural wonders of Niagara Falls and Gorge, the heritage area presents opportunities to visit incredible buildings (18<sup>th</sup> century Fort Niagara), beautifully designed landscapes (1.5 acre Great Lakes Region floral garden at Niagara Falls State Park), an ancient Native American burial mound (Lewiston Mound at Artpark State Park) and engineering marvels (power plant structures at the Gorge). The man-made landscape of the City and river communities is also a cultural experience in itself. On a regional scale, the bridges and boat landings of the heritage area are a portal to the lands and waters beyond the United States border – Canada and Lake Ontario – and provide the experience of being in a global, international community.

From another perspective, though suburban development has filled in some stretches of open land between the jurisdictions, visitors and residents still experience the space between and historic boundaries of the City and Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown. At the block level, pedestrians absorb the contrasts between the dense urban City center, the bustling Village of Lewiston, and the small and charming Village of Youngstown. The City of Niagara Falls has intact, walkable architecturally interesting urban neighborhoods and the Villages each have their own unique pedestrian-friendly, more modestly scaled, and historic character. Certainly there are challenges

to be faced in each community of the heritage area, however historic structures and a varied and intriguing landscape is present, can be experienced today, and will be strengthened over time.

### **Criteria and Categories**

The legislation authorizing federal recognition of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area uses the following criteria to identify cultural resources:

- Resources are those related to the “national importance” demonstrated in the Niagara National Heritage Area Study, dated 2005 (USC PL 110-229, Subtitle B, Section 421(1)). The study proposes four themes or stories to encompass and convey the national importance of the heritage area. These themes are briefly described below and discussed in more detail in the management plan’s Chapter 2, Niagara’s Interpretive Presentation:
  - Natural Phenomenon – the Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Falls and Niagara River Gorge and Rapids;
  - Tourism and Recreation – Niagara Falls as tourist destination and development of tourism and nature conservation in America;
  - Power and Industry – Development of hydroelectric power and heavy industry at Niagara Falls and Buffalo;
  - Borderland / Border Crossing – Niagara River – an international boundary; role in: Indian culture, colonial struggle to control North America, the American Revolution, War of 1812, and the Underground Railroad; and as a reflection of similarities and differences between United States and Canada (NPS 2005:35-44).
- Natural, scenic, cultural, and historic resources located within the boundaries set in Map 3.XX;
- Resources located beyond the mapped heritage area boundaries that are thematically related to the heritage area, located within Niagara and Erie counties, and identified in the National Heritage Area’s Management Plan (USC PL 100-229:Section 421 & 423).

The scope of history which the authorizing legislation recognizes is very broad, ranging from the prehistoric origin of the Falls to construction of the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day border relationship between the United States and Canada, and this essentially suggests that most if not all of the historic buildings, communities, and landscapes located within the heritage area boundaries are heritage area resources. Indeed, there are many properties, districts, monuments, historic transportation routes, cultural landscapes, and archeological areas that are designated or recognized as historic or culturally significant at the local, state and national level that are located within the heritage area. There are also significant sites that do not hold specific historic designations but may be deserving of such recognition. Designated resources and potential resources located within the heritage and thematically related resources located beyond the heritage area fall into the following categories:

- Historic Properties and Districts
- State and Municipal Parks
- State Heritage Area
- Native American Resources
- Archeological Resources
- Tours
- Education
- Interpretive Facilities and Collections

Below, cultural resources located within the heritage area are generally discussed before those thematically related cultural resources located beyond the heritage area. Interpretive facilities, collections, research, and education are discussed on a regional basis.

### 3.2.1 Historic Properties and Districts (EA Impact Topic)

The National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the National Park Service, is the official list of historic places for the United States. The National Historic Landmarks program, also managed by the National Park Service, recognizes historic properties that have significance to all Americans. Across the country, there are more than 85,000 National Register listings of historic places and fewer than 2,500 National Historic Landmarks. States also have their own lists of historic places, which generally include the properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the heritage area there are 30 New York State and National Register properties and districts, as shown in Map 3. There are three National Historic Landmarks – the Adams Power Transformer Building, Niagara Falls State Park, and the Colonial Niagara Historic District.

As of September 2011, there were two National Register nominations in the works. Under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's relicensing of the New York Power Authority (NYPA) operation of the Niagara Power Project, NYPA is preparing a National Register nomination for the former Schoellkopf Project, which is now a ruin, and one for the Robert Moses Niagara Project. Other nominations may result from the work being conducted by NYPA under their 2009 Historic Properties Management Plan for the Niagara Power Project.

<b>Table 3-2: National Register Properties and Districts located in the National Heritage Area</b>		
<b>Resource Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Multiple Names</b>
Frontier House	Lewiston	
Lewiston Mound	Lewiston	
Lower Landing Archeological District	Lewiston	
Adams Power Plant Transformer House	Niagara Falls	
Chilton Avenue-Orchard Parkway Historic District	Niagara Falls	
Deveaux School Historic District	Niagara Falls	
First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara	Niagara Falls	
Former Niagara Falls High School	Niagara Falls	
Hazard Sheldon House	Niagara Falls	
Holley-Rankine House	Niagara Falls	
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church Complex	Niagara Falls	
Jefferson Apartment Building	Niagara Falls	
Marshall, James G., House	Niagara Falls	
Niagara Falls Armory	Niagara Falls	Army National Guard Armories in New York State MPS
Niagara Falls City Hall	Niagara Falls	
Niagara Falls Public Library	Niagara Falls	
Niagara Reservation	Niagara Falls	
Niagara Hotel, The	Niagara Falls	
Park Place Historic District	Niagara Falls	
St. Mary's Nurses' Residence	Niagara Falls	

<b>Table 3-2: National Register Properties and Districts located in the National Heritage Area</b>		
<b>Resource Name</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Multiple Names</b>
Town of Niagara District School No. 2	Niagara Falls	
U.S. Customhouse	Niagara Falls	
United Office Building	Niagara Falls	
US Post Office – Niagara Falls Main	Niagara Falls	US Post Offices in New York State, 1858-1943, TR
Whitney Mansion	Niagara Falls	
Williams, Johann, Farm	Niagara Falls	
Carter, John, Farmstead	Youngstown	
Fort Niagara Light	Youngstown	U.S. Coast Guard Lighthouses and Light Stations on the Great Lakes TR
Old Fort Niagara – Colonial Niagara Historic District	Youngstown	
St. John's Episcopal Church	Youngstown	

Sources: National Register of Historic Places Database, and New York State, State Historic Preservation Office, Geographic Information System for Archeology and National Register, obtained March 23, 2011.

### **Inventories of Historic Properties**

The City of Niagara Falls and Village of Lewiston have inventories of historic resources. The properties included in these inventories are shown in Map 3 and listed in the appendices. The City's current inventory, updated last in August 2008, includes 174 local, State, and National Register and National Register eligible properties. More properties will likely be added as the City pursues the phased Historic Preservation Resource Survey, which was recommended in its 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Within the Village of Lewiston, there are 89 locally designated historic properties and one National Register property.

The Village of Youngstown and the Town of Porter do not have an adopted inventory of local historic resources, though the Village references properties included on the National Register of Historic Places. The Town of Lewiston's draft 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update recommends that the Town create an inventory of locally significant buildings that could have a local designation or plaque that highlights their historic character (TL 2011:40). (Town of Lewiston historian, Mark Davis, 984-6157, is going to call me back and tell me if there is a current listing of locally designated historic properties.)

There are properties in the heritage area that are marked as part of the Niagara Historic Trail, though these designations do not necessarily correlate with inclusion on local, state or national registers of historic properties and districts. The trail was originally created in 1975 to celebrate the 1776 Bicentennial, updated in 1991, and in 2009 for the 200th anniversary of Niagara County. The most recent update of the self-guided tour book was prepared by the North Tonawanda History Museum in collaboration with municipal historians and historical organizations throughout the county. (Possibly include map of tour in heritage area in report.) (Get copy from North Tonawanda History Museum, 716-213-0554.)

### **City of Niagara Falls**

The City of Niagara Falls has twenty properties on the State and National Register and three State and National Register historic districts, and these districts encompass the majority of the 174



properties included on the City's list of local, State, and National Register properties. The City's list of historic properties was last updated in August 2008. In November 2007, the City and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation completed the *Historic Preservation Industrial Reconnaissance Survey*, which includes tunnels, canals, offices, and manufacturing plants. This industrial survey identifies the structures that remain from when Niagara Falls was one of the largest industrial centers in the world, and places them in three districts – the High Bank Industrial District, Buffalo Avenue Industrial District, and the Highland Avenue Industrial District. The City published a guide entitled *Historic Walking Tour of Downtown Niagara Falls*, which shows largely residential, civic, and commercial (not industrial) buildings, and also the *Historic Walking Tour of the Niagara Reservation*.  
Historic Development of the City

The City of Niagara Falls was originally known as Schlosser after Fort Schlosser, which was once a French outpost known as Little Niagara that was destroyed in 1759, later rebuilt and occupied by the British until 1796, and used by American forces during the War of 1812. The State of New York first offered lands along the Niagara River for sale in 1805, and Augustus Porter was the first to purchase land and settle on the American side of the Falls. He built a saw mill and blacksmith shop in 1805. No buildings existed in the vicinity of the Falls prior to 1805. The area grew into a mill town, known as the Village of Manchester with a population of 550 by 1832. General Parkhurst Whitney was the first president of the village when it was incorporated as the Niagara Falls in 1848. Whitney was the owner of the Cataract House, a well-known hotel whose guests through the years included Abraham Lincoln, Grover Cleveland, and Winston Churchill. In 1892, New York State combined the Village of Niagara Falls with the Suspension Bridge area (Village of Bellevue), a village that had grown on the American side of the first suspension bridge, to form the City of Niagara Falls. The Sanborn-Perris Map Company produced an 1892 map of the newly minted City of Niagara Falls that records a population of 13,000 (Sanborn 1892). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a historian wrote that at the time of consolidation “in the middle distance, between the two villages...there were few houses. The old horse cars were just giving way to trolleys...” (Kowsky 2007:6). The Village of LaSalle was annexed by the City in 1927, which added 13 square miles and roughly 7,000 people.

By 1892, the Village of Niagara Falls had several small industries that relied upon water power from the Niagara River and had for decades been growing in popularity as a tourist destination. The 1892 Sanborn map shows the Cataract House Hotel and the International Hotel located just outside the present-day Niagara Falls State Park with a Cyclorama of the Battle of Gettysburg and Niagara Falls Museum found a block further west on River Road (Sanborn 1892). The Niagara Reservation, now known as the Niagara Falls State Park, replaced a private entertainment park and opened as a publicly owned park in 1885. The Suspension Bridge area grew in response to the rapid pace of trade between America and Canada, as serviced by the railroad bridge that crossed over the gorge (Kowsky 2007:6).

The City grew dramatically between 1892 and 1915 with a population increase of nearly 29,000 people. In 1881, the first hydroelectric power was produced at Niagara Falls and fifteen years later the first commercial hydroelectric power was transmitted from Niagara Falls to the City of Buffalo (NPS 2005:103). Since “hydroelectric power was cheapest...when consumed close to its source of production,” new and larger industries in need of abundant power moved to Niagara Falls (Kowsky 2007:15). Companies such as the Aluminum Company of America, Union Carbide, and the Carborundum Company, which produced synthetic abrasives, were some of the first large-scale manufacturers to locate in the City after the advancements in the production of hydroelectric power. The peak of Niagara Falls industry was reached in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kowsky 2007).

The City of Niagara Falls *Industrial Reconnaissance Survey* reveals that few structures remain from the globally significant industrial past. “Vanished are the major monuments that defined the industrial era here: the Hydraulic Canal and railroad line that came through the heart of downtown; the historic Schoellkopf Station; most of the Adams Power Plant; the great shed-like buildings at High Bank basin; the pioneering Carborundum plant; the mammoth Shredded Wheat plant; and nearly all of the early industrial structures on the land leased from the Niagara Falls Power Company” (Kowsky 2007:32-33). The survey also provides an inventory of the industrial structures and sites that remain within the city and locates them in following three geographical areas:

- High Bank Industrial District, which does not include buildings but does have a section of the hydraulic canal retaining wall from the Schoellkopf power plant;
- Buffalo Avenue Industrial District, which includes among others the former Shredded Wheat Company factory and elevator (816 Rainbow Boulevard), the 1912 Niagara Chocolate Company building (900 Buffalo Avenue), and the former transformer house of the Niagara Falls Power Company;
- Highland Avenue Industrial District, which includes but is not limited to part of the U.S. Light and Heat Corporation (3125 Highland Avenue), National Carbon Company factory complex (2001 College Avenue) and the 1919 Pittsburgh Metallurgical Company facility (College Avenue).

Several residential neighborhoods were constructed throughout the city during periods of growth. In 1893, the Niagara Falls Power Company built Echota for its employees. It was built as a model community on 84 acres just north of factories located along the Niagara River; north of Buffalo Avenue and between today’s Hyde Park Boulevard and Packard Road. Wealthy industrial executives built homes that remain today in the Rainbow Boulevard and Buffalo Avenue area located near and west of the Niagara Falls State Park and south of the Seneca Niagara Casino. The City has a large supply of houses built prior to World War II during economic and industrial expansion.

The interesting architectural fabric of these neighborhoods is challenged by the fact that many homes built as part of working class neighborhoods are bounded by heavy industrial sites or transportation corridors, and the economic decline experienced by the city in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has led to a deteriorating housing stock (CNF 2009:9). The Park Place Historic District and the Chilton Avenue – Orchard Parkway Historic District each recognize the architectural and historical significance of turn of the century homes and neighborhoods. These districts lie within walking distance of two of the city’s active commercial corridors – Pine Avenue and Third Street. Homes outside these two historic districts and also proximate to these walkable commercial corridors appear to have similar historic housing stock but with few visible repairs or restoration efforts.

The City’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan, a strategy and policy document for development of the City, was crafted in concert with on-going efforts to meet and overcome current economic and social challenges, which include: the decline of industry and manufacturing, high unemployment, a declining and aging population, competitive suburban growth and decline of the downtown, an oversupply of and deteriorating housing stock, weak market conditions, more infrastructure than it needs and can support, and contaminated land (brownfield sites). The City’s Comprehensive Plan recognizes that a sustained and focused strategy is needed to address the complex challenges facing the city. It recommends that revitalization strategies focus initially and primarily on the Core City, a planning district identified in Map 4, and also provides Citywide Policies that build

upon and complement the Core City Strategies. The Citywide Policies address “land use, historic resources, the built environment, environmental and open space resources, transportation, economic development and tourism, housing, brownfield/grayfield development and waterfront development” (CNF 2009:26).

The City’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan indicates that Niagara Falls has “extensive built heritage resources, neighborhoods and precincts” that are significant to the cultural and architectural history of the city but are not, in large part, designated in any cultural resource capacity (CNF 2009:23). The City’s comprehensive plan recognizes that the preservation of historically and architecturally interesting buildings and districts can help create unique areas that appeal to residents and tourists alike, and thereby encourage economic revitalization. To this end the City’s plan supports survey work to identify significant buildings and districts. It also recommends efforts such as establishing design and infill design guidelines that seek to enhance these structures and areas, designing zoning and building codes that support reuse of heritage structures, and making related streetscape improvements.

#### **Historically Significant Areas in the City of Niagara Falls**

The Core City Planning District (Map 4) includes several areas that the City has noted as having buildings and structures worthy of preservation and neighborhood renewal efforts. These are Pine Avenue, old Buffalo Avenue, Main Street, Third Street, and Niagara Street (CNF 2009:22). The City’s Comprehensive Plan sometimes uses specific precincts to discuss these areas, and these are noted where applicable below. The City’s Historic Preservation Industrial Reconnaissance Survey has recommendations for preservation and reuse of significant industrial structures and sites (see appendices). From preliminary field visits and available data it appears that there is also additional housing stock (as yet unsurveyed) both within and outside the Core City Planning District that may be historically and architecturally significant – namely early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential neighborhoods in the Core City Planning District and Echota in the western part of the city.

- **Pine Avenue, Main Street, Niagara Street, and Third Street Commercial Corridors** - These corridors have long-standing, active businesses and gathering places. The City notes that “communities throughout North America have realized the potential of these corridors and places, and are investing in them as authentic places that offer a glimpse of historical development and an understanding of local culture and everyday city life” (CNF 2009:22). For instance, the Little Italy portion of Pine Avenue has early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings that have a pleasing, densely built fabric. It has several interesting murals on buildings along Pine Avenue and neatly laid out blocks of residential buildings on either side of the commercial corridor. The City’s Comprehensive Plan celebrates and supports the conversion of old Niagara Falls High School into the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center, which is located along the Pine Avenue corridor (confirm location). For Little Italy, one of the challenges is the presence of gaps along Pine Avenue caused by newer buildings setback from the street and with parking lots that front Pine Avenue.
- **Rainbow Boulevard/Buffalo Avenue Area (Buffalo Avenue Heritage District)** - This area includes and is primarily defined by large historic homes (some now B&Bs) dating from the mid-1800s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of power company and industry executives and other community leaders, and also has historic churches, the 1928 United Office Building, Niagara Hotel, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century apartment building. Some homes have been restored while others are in need of extensive repair and restoration. Several homes and religious buildings in this area are listed on the local and/or State and National Registers of Historic Places. The City’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan recommends a Buffalo Avenue Heritage District, which primarily

encompasses the residential properties that the City has noted are of historic interest in its walking tour of downtown (CNF 2009:Figure 17). The purpose of a heritage district is “to protect and enhance the historic character of its buildings and streets” (CNF 2009:85).

- **Main Street North of Lockport Road (Customhouse and North-Main Loft Precinct)** - The City’s Comprehensive Plan notes that this area contains buildings deserving of preservation and enhancement, notably of which is the reuse of the Old Customhouse in the development of the Niagara Falls International Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center (IRS-ITC) at the Whirlpool Rapids International Bridge. “The 27,500 sq ft center would be a multi-modal transportation facility linking Amtrak, automobile, bus, trolley, bicycle and pedestrian transportation to prime tourist sites in the Core City. In addition to facilities for rail passengers, border security operations and general commercial activity, a Visitor Orientation Center would be incorporated into the IRS-ITC. The Customhouse is a signature building and an excellent gateway into the city for those arriving by rail or from the north” (CNF 2009:69).
- **Main Street (Middle Main Street Precinct)** - Located between Lockport Road and Pine Avenue, the Middle Main Street Precinct has “several professional and governmental offices and public institutions, including the Earl W. Bridges Public Library, the Trott Access Center, the Niagara County Court Building, the Carnegie Building and City Hall, many of which are designated historic buildings” (CNF 2009:72).

### **The Lower Niagara River Communities**

In addition to the two National Register properties and one National Register district located in the Town and Village of Lewiston, the Village of Lewiston has 89 locally designated historic properties. There are no locally designated properties in the Village of Youngstown or in the part of the heritage area that lies within the Town of Porter. There are four sites on the National Register of Historic Places in Youngstown, including Old Fort Niagara. At this time, there are no active survey projects in these jurisdictions.

Lower River Road is the primary connector between the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown and is historic roadway with mature shade trees and beautiful, well-kept, and likely historic houses of a variety of sizes and styles on large lots. Most houses are on the inland side of the road and the view to the river is generally open.

Both Youngstown and Lewiston are riverfront communities with significant numbers of 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial and residential buildings and structures. Given the Native American history of the land encompassing these villages, there are archeological sites throughout the area.

### **Village and Town of Lewiston**

The land within the Town of Lewiston located within the heritage area includes the Village of Lewiston, and woodland and open land as well as low-density residential development to the north of the Village of Lewiston. The Devil’s Hole and Artpark State Parks lie within the Town and heritage area boundaries. The Power Reservoir, a lake that stores water for power generation, and the Reservoir State Park are located within the Town but outside of the heritage area. The Tuscarora Reservation is located east of the reservoir and outside of the heritage area boundaries.

The Tuscarora had a village in Lewiston before the American Revolutionary War, and have occupied a reservation at Lewiston since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. European settlement began in the late 1600s as British and French traders established a trading post on the river banks of the present-day Village of Lewiston. Native Americans and traders could bring a boat to shore at a

landing at Artpark State Park, located south of the village, and so avoid the rapids of the river. Goods were carried from this point around Niagara Falls, and this portage route remained active through 1825 when the Erie Canal opened (Hauth 2011). It was the key portage route linking North America and the Atlantic seaboard until the opening of the Erie Canal in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century offered a favorable alternative (NPS 2005:26).

Incorporated in 1822, the village is named after an early 19<sup>th</sup> century New York governor, Morgan Lewis. The village played a significant role in military engagements – the United States left its shores to invade Canada in October 1812 at Queenston Heights, one of the earliest battles during the War of 1812. In December 1813 British forces captured Fort Niagara and marched along the eastern banks of the Niagara River to Buffalo burning almost every settlement in their path. American interests had invaded Canada earlier that year destroying settlements along the Niagara River on the Canadian side. Iroquois warriors fought each other at Lewiston in December 1813 dividing the Six Nations along the border.

In the mid-1800s, Lewiston was an important stop for the Underground Railroad where African Americans escaped slavery by crossing the Niagara River to Canada. The Freedom Crossing Monument stands on Lewiston's waterfront commemorating those who participated in this perilous journey. Also in the mid to late 1800s, the landing at Lewiston was a popular destination for steam ships sailing from Toronto and points east on Lake Ontario. During the 1901 Pan American Exposition, as many as 10,000 people arrived in Lewiston each day aboard steamships to attend the events in Buffalo and catch a glimpse of the Falls (Hauth 2011).

The village retains many of its historic homes, civic buildings and commercial structures, which support an attractive and vibrant community for residents and tourists alike. Summertime is the high season. The Village has invested in upgrades, including brick sidewalks and period lanterns with hanging planters, along the commercial corridor that runs through its center.

#### **Village of Youngstown and the Town of Porter**

The Village of Youngstown and the western end of the Town of Porter are located within the heritage area. The Town of Porter was historically an agricultural community and remains largely rural today. It encompasses the Village of Youngstown and is bordered on the west by the Lower Niagara River and on the north by Lake Ontario. Fort Niagara State Park and Joseph Davis State Park are located within the town's boundaries at the northern and southern points respectively. Open lands as well as low-density residential development of a suburban character surround occupy the area outside the village and within the town boundaries.

The Village of Youngstown was named for John Young, a settler who built a store on the landing in 1809. Before the War of 1812 the village consisted of log cabins for tradesmen and storekeepers who provided services and goods to the nearby Fort Niagara. The village suffered the same fate as the Village of Lewiston in the War of 1812, with the British burning all the buildings. People rebuilt and the village was incorporated in 1854. Rich soils and a moderate climate in the area supported a vibrant farming community, and farming continues in the area today. The John Carter Farmstead in Youngstown is included on the National Register of Historic Places. Other properties within Youngstown may be eligible for the National Register, such as The Stone Jug, also known as Ontario House, which is a hotel built in 1842.

#### **3.2.2 Native American Associated Sites (EA Impact Topic)**

In the eyes of the Haudenosaunee Grand Council, the governing body for the Six Nations consisting of fifty hereditary sachems, the Seneca or 'Onondowahgah' (meaning "People of the

Great Hill”) are known as the “keeper of the western door” having historically resided the furthest west in Iroquois Territory. Today, the Seneca people have the largest population among the Six Nations. Those residing in the United States are divided among the two federally recognized tribal nations described above and a third, the *Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma*. Some people of Tuscaroran ancestry are said to still reside in North Carolina while others live in the *Six Nations of the Grand River* reservation in Ontario, Canada. As required by federal regulations in the Environmental Assessment portion of this planning document, input from the three tribal nations described above was solicited during preparation of the heritage area management plan and incorporated herein. In addition, the successful implementation of the management plan will require the Native American perspective and ongoing participation by representatives of the three tribal nations.

The National Park Service has identified three federally recognized tribal nations that have associations and potential interest in the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area:

- *The Tuscarora Nation* – The sixth member of the Iroquois Confederacy, or Haudenosaunee, this tribal nation maintains a 9.3 square mile reservation just east of the primary heritage area boundary near Lewiston, New York where 1,150 tribal members live. The reservation is in the proximity of where their ancestral village was located in the Colonial era. A representative of this tribal nation serves on the federal commission appointed for the heritage area.
- *The Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians* – One of the original Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, or Haudenosaunee, the Seneca are recognized as the “Keepers of the Western Door.” During the 19th century the Tonawanda Band sought a separate identity from the other Seneca Indians in New York in order to preserve their traditional practices, including selection of their lifetime leaders by family lineage. The Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians is a separate tribal nation recognized by the United States government. Their reservation, located on the upper reaches of Tonawanda Creek at the eastern edge of Erie and Niagara counties and western edge of Genesee County, is one of three reservations granted to the Seneca Indians by the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. It is situated several miles from the primary heritage area boundary near Akron, New York where 483 tribal members live. A representative of this tribal nation has been authorized to serve on the federal commission for the heritage area, but the seat remained vacant during preparation of the management plan.
- *The Seneca Nation of Indians* – Forming a modern form of elected government in 1848, the Seneca Nation of Indians maintains five reservations in western New York. A combined estimate of 7,800 members of this tribal nation lives on both the Cattaraugus Reservation (Erie and Cattaraugus counties) and Allegany Reservation (Cattaraugus County) which were granted in the 1784 treaty. Two of the three other smaller reservations were acquired by the tribal nation for gaming operations including the Niagara Falls Territory on which the casino in the City of Niagara Falls stands. Both representatives appointed by this tribal nation passed away during preparation of the heritage area management plan.

An oral history project and an exhibit are focused on the history of Tuscarora Nation. Through the relicensing of NYPA Niagara Power Project and at the request of the Tuscarora Nation, oral interviews were conducted with members of the Tuscarora Nation regarding their memories from before and after construction of the Niagara Project. Historical photographs were collected during this oral history project as well. The NYPA, under the same 2007 relicensing agreement for the Niagara Power Project, also sponsored a permanent exhibit entitled “The Times of the Tuscarora Nation”. It is a timeline of the nation from 800 A.D. to the present, describes Tuscarora life and history, and displays artwork, beadwork, and other items that convey Tuscarora culture. It opened in April 2010 and is on display at NYPA Niagara Power Project Power Vista (NYPA 2010).

### **3.2.3 Indian Trust Resources and Sacred Sites\***

Secretarial Order 3175 requires that any anticipated impacts to Indian Trust Resources and Assets by a proposed project or action by Department of the Interior agencies be explicitly addressed in environmental documents. The federal Indian Trust responsibility is a legally enforceable obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal lands, assets, resources, and treaty rights, and it represents a duty to carry out the mandates of federal laws with respect to federally-recognized Native American tribes.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area involves resources of interest to three federally-recognized Native American tribes: the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians, and the Tuscarora Nation. Also representatives from two of these three tribal nations serve on the Commission. Tribal lands that are contained within the primary heritage area boundary include the Niagara Territory held in interest by the Seneca Nation of Indians for their casino and related operations in the City of Niagara Falls.

As outlined in Chapter 5, *Consultation and Coordination*, the National Park Service has been in communication with Native American tribes believed to have possible interest in the Niagara region about planning for the heritage area and tribal representatives for two nations currently serve on the Commission. There are no known Indian Trust Resources or Assets in the Niagara Fall National Heritage Area, and the lands comprising the NHA are not held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior for the benefit of Indians due to their status as Indians. Therefore, the impact topic of Indian Trust Resources was dismissed.

### **3.2.4 Archeological Resources (EA Impact Topic)**

There are many places of archeological sensitivity within the heritage area. Map 3 shows the general boundaries of archeological areas known to New York State (NYS SHPO 2011). The SHPO database of archeological and National Register sites does not identify paleontological resources or traditional cultural properties, though such resources could potentially exist within the known archeological sites. The Colonial Niagara Historic District includes Old Fort Niagara and the Lower Landing Archeological District and contains resources associated with Native American and European groups. The Lower Landing Archeological District is located at the base of the Niagara Escarpment in Artpark State Park on the historic portage route which took Native Americans and, from the 1600s onward, traders, explorers, and settlers around the Niagara Falls and Gorge.

Research regarding existing and potential archeological sites located on Power Authority-owned land was conducted as part of the Niagara Project’s 2006 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

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\* Dismissed as an impact topic for the Environmental Assessment; provided for information purposes..

A significant amount of this land is located within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and so the EIS archeological findings are pertinent to the heritage area's management plan and environmental assessment work (FEIS 2006:23). Keeping in mind that not all these sites are necessarily located within the heritage area boundaries, the following are the findings reported in the Niagara Project's 2006 EIS.

Eleven archaeological sites were found, with eight sites from the period of time before European settlement (precontact era) and three of the historic period. The EIS stated that these eleven sites would be evaluated to determine eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion D, in which properties have or are likely to yield information from the prehistoric or historic periods. The EIS also reported that 79 locations were found in which archaeological sites might be present and indicated that further work would be done to determine the extent and significance of archaeological resources (FEIS 2006:106).

Archeological resources associated with the early history of the Seneca and Tuscarora are likely present in the landscape of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. Efforts have been made to consult with the Seneca and Tuscarora tribes regarding possible archeological resources and traditional cultural properties. Currently known is the Colonial Niagara Historic District which includes the Old Fort Niagara and the Lower Landing Archeological District, with resources associated with Native Americans during the precontact period as well as European settlement. Also, research regarding archeological resources was conducted as part of the Niagara Project's 2006 Environmental Impact Statement, and sites from the precontact era as well as the historic period were found. More information regarding these results is presented in the Archeological Resources section of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area environmental assessment.

### **3.2.5 Interpretive Facilities and Collections (EA Impact Topic)**

Below is a list of interpretive facilities and collections related to the history of the: Niagara Falls, Rapids and Gorge; recreation and tourism; power and industry; and the Niagara River's position and significance as an international boundary – including the history of the Underground Railroad.

- Buffalo Museum of Science
- Niagara Falls Discovery Center
- Orin Lehman Visitor Center, Niagara Falls State Park
- Dare Devil Museum, Niagara Falls, NY (temporarily closed)
- Niagara University, Niagara Falls, NY:
  - Castellani Art Museum
  - Lewiston Digital Collections, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Niagara Guidebooks
  - Rare Books Collection
- NYPA Power Vista Visitor Center
- Motherland Connexions, Underground Railroad interpretive tours
- Murphy's Orchard, Burt, NY
- Old Fort Niagara
- Lewiston Public Library
- Youngstown Public Library
- Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society
- Niagara Falls Ontario Public Library:
  - Historic Niagara Digital Collections
- Niagara County Historian's Office
- Niagara County History Center, Lockport, NY



- Niagara Falls Public Library, Niagara Falls, NY:
  - Local History Collection
  - Art Collection
- Lewiston Historical Society
- Great Lakes Seaway Trail
  - Costumed interpretation (Lewiston Council for the Arts)
- Town of Porter Historical Society

The Niagara County Government is the repository of public record and contains census, deed, and church records as well as historical family records, such as documents pertaining to the Porter family, whose members first settled the City of Niagara Falls. The North Tonawanda History Museum was the lead for the 2009 update of the Niagara Historic Trail, which includes sites within all jurisdictions located in the heritage area.

### 3.2.6 Thematically Related Cultural Resources Outside of the Heritage Area Boundary\*

There are sites located outside of the heritage area, but within the Erie and Niagara Counties that potentially support and are related to the predominant themes of the heritage area. The enabling legislation of the heritage area allows for the possible inclusion of thematically related sites located beyond the heritage area boundary and the partnering with organizations that operate these attractions and facilities.

Below is a list of thematically related sites located outside of the boundary of the heritage area. They include properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Niagara and Erie counties, as well as the Tuscarora Reservation, parks, museums and other types of properties. This is not a closed or final list, merely an initial gathering of information about resources. No Canadian locations were included since Canadian properties cannot be included in an American heritage area. Canadian parks and sites can and should be part of a discussion on partnerships and management of heritage resources. The City of Niagara Falls supports bi-national initiatives that foster “collaboration between park agencies and shared management of heritage assets on both sides of the border” (CNF 2009:16).

<b>Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study</b>
Albright-Knox Art Gallery & Museum	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	Recreation & Tourism
Allentown Historic District	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Amherst Museum		Amherst, NY	
Beaver Creek State Park (Grand Island)		Grand Island	
Becker Farms & Vizcarra Vineyards		Gasport, NY	

\* Dismissed as an impact topic for the Environmental Assessment; provided for information purposes.

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
Berkeley Apartments	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Blessed Trinity Roman Catholic Church	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Broderick Park		City of Buffalo	Underground R.R.; Borderland/Border Crossing
Buckhorn State Park (Grand Island)		Grand Island	
Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society (Pan-American Exposition Hall)		City of Buffalo	Power & Industry; Borderland/Borderline Crossing
Buffalo and Erie County Naval Military Park	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo City Hall Building	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo Gas Light Company Works	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo Main Light, Buffalo River	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo Museum of Science		City of Buffalo	Natural Phenomenon
Buffalo North Breakwater South End Light	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo Olmsted Parks		City of Buffalo	
Buffalo State Hospital	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Buffalo Zoo		City of Buffalo	
Carnegie Art Center	N.R. Property	City of North Tonawanda	
Colonel William Kelly House	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
Colonial Niagara Archeological District			
Connecticut Street Armory	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Darwin Martin House and Complex	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Delaware Avenue Historic District	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Durham Memorial AME Zion Church	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Edward M. Cotter Fireboat	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Edwin M. and Emily S. Johnston House	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Emerson Place Row	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Engine House No. 28	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Erie Canal (Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor)			Borderland/Border Crossing
Erie County parks		To be determined.	
Ferry Landing Sites		To be determined.	Borderland/Border Crossing
Forest Lawn Cemetery	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Fosdick Masten Park High School	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Ghostlight Theatre		City of North Tonawanda	
Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum	N.R. Property	City of North Tonawanda	
Historic Palace Theatre		Lockport, NY	
Hull Family Home and Farmstead		Town of Lancaster, NY	

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
International Railway Bridge			Borderland/Border Crossing
James and Fanny How House	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Jesse Nash Home		City of Buffalo	Borderland/Border Crossing
Kibler High School	N.R. Property	City of Tonawanda	
Kleinhans Music Hall	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Lafayette High School	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Laurel and Michigan Avenue Row	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Lockport Cave & Erie Canal Cruises		Lockport, NY	
Lockport Trolley		Lockport, NY	
Lockport YWCA		Lockport, NY	Underground R.R.; Borderland/Border Crossing
M. Wile and Company Factory Building	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Macedonia Baptist Church (Michigan Street Baptist Church)	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	Underground R.R.; Borderland/Border Crossing
Martha Root House		Pekin, NY	Underground R.R.
Mary Talbert House		City of Buffalo	Underground R.R.; Borderland/Border Crossing
Murphy's Orchard		Burt, NY	Underground R.R.; Borderland/Border Crossing
NASH Harbor Tug	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
National Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA)			Natural Phenomenon
New York Central Terminal	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
New York State Erie Canal Museum at Locks 34 & 35		Lockport, NY	
New York State Heritage Areas – 2 in Erie County		Get names and locations.	
Niagara County Community College		Sanborn, NY	
Niagara County parks		To be determined.	
Old County Hall	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Parkside East Historic District	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Parkside West Historic District	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Peace Bridge			Borderland/Border Crossing
Pierce Arrow Factory Complex	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Power Distribution Lines			Power & Industry
Prudential Building (Guaranty Building)	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Queenston-Lewiston Bridge			Borderland/Border Crossing
Rainbow Bridge			Borderland/Border Crossing
Riviera Theater and Performing Arts Center	N.R. Property	City of North Tonawanda	
Seaway Trail (National Scenic Byway)		Get trail map.	Borderland/Border Crossing
Shea's Center for the Performing Arts	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
South Buffalo North Side Lighthouse	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Spaulding Sidway Boathouse	N.R. Property	City of Tonawanda	

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
St. Andrews Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
St. Paul's Cathedral	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Stone Farmhouse	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Suspension Bridge Site			Underground R.R.; Borderland/Borderline Crossing
Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Tonawanda (25th Separate Company) Armory	N.R. Property	City of Tonawanda	
Trico Plant No. 1	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Tuscarora Reservation		Town of Lewiston	
U.S. Navy & Marine Corps Memorials		City of North Tonawanda	
U.S. Post Office, Buffalo	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
U.S. Post Office, City of North Tonawanda	N.R. Property	City of North Tonawanda	
U.S. Post Office, Tonawanda	N.R. Property	City of Tonawanda	
University of Buffalo Regional Institute		City of Buffalo	
USS The Sullivans	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
West Village Historic District	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Western NY Land Conservancy (land owned or managed by them)		To be determined	
William Dorsheimer House	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	

**Table 3-3: Thematically Related Properties in Erie and Niagara Counties Located Outside of the National Heritage Area Boundary**

Site	National Register of Historic Places	Location	Theme – As determined in 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study
Woodlawn Avenue Row	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	
Young Men's Christian Association Central Building	N.R. Property	City of Buffalo	

Sources: 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study; JMA, Inc. and Heritage Strategies 2010 to 2011.

### 3.3 Socio-economic Context\*

The socio-economic environment provides an important context for considering and determining management goals and strategies for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. Below is a summary of population, economic health indicators, employment, and workforce information. Connections between the data and management of the heritage area are also highlighted. More statistical detail is provided in subsequent sections.

#### 3.3.1 Population

Table 3-XX reflects the population totals for the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA overall, Niagara and Erie counties, the largest jurisdiction in the heritage area – the City of Niagara Falls – and the four villages and towns of the heritage area – which are the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown and Towns of Lewiston and Porter. Niagara County is home to all the jurisdictions included in the national heritage area.

The Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA has experienced a 2.96 percent loss in population since 2000. Niagara County experienced a population decrease of 1.5 percent over the last decade. The Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown and the Town of Porter have lost population in the same time period as well – with the Village of Lewiston losing 80 people or 2.8 percent of its population and the Town of Porter losing 149 people or 2.15 percent of its population. These communities are losing population at a faster rate than Niagara County and at a pace comparable to that of the greater metropolitan area. The Village of Youngstown lost population at a slower rate, with a 1.12 percent drop. The Town of Lewiston saw little change in total population between 2000 and 2010. The major shift occurred in the City of Niagara Falls with a 9.8 percent drop in population and is a continuation of a decades-long trend.

Relative to the country as a whole, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA lost population over a 30 year period while the nation gained in population. The most significant population loss occurred in the 1970s, with rates slowing than rising again between 1990 and 2010. The Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA remains the second largest metropolitan area in New York State and is the 47<sup>th</sup> most populous out of 366 MSA's nationwide.

\* Most of the information presented in this section is intended to provide a demographic profile of the residents who live in the heritage area and Buffalo-Niagara region. The socio-economic impact for the Environmental Assessment is described in Section 3.3.8 below.

Niagara County is one of seventeen counties that lost population in New York State over the last decade (2000-2010) and all the counties in the Western New York region lost population during this time. The New York State Department of Labor estimates a steady decline in population for Niagara County through 2035.

**Table 3-4: Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA and Heritage Area Communities, Total Population, 2000-2010**

Total Population	2000 U.S. Census	2010 U.S. Census
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	1,170,111	1,135,509
Niagara County	219,846	216,469
Erie County	950,265	919,040
Niagara Falls, New York	55,593	50,194
Village of Lewiston	2,781	2,701
Village of Youngstown	1,957	1,935
Town of Lewiston	16,257	16,262
Town of Porter	6,920	6,771

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The NYS Department of Labor shares population projections that show the population of Niagara and Erie counties continuing a steady decline over the next 25 years.

**Table 3-5: Niagara and Erie Counties, Population Projections, 2020-2035**

Total Population	2020	2030	2035
Niagara County	203,000	189,888	181,637
Erie County	856,097	803,316	772,086

Source: NYS Department of Labor, New York State and County Population Projections by Age and Sex

Population loss occurred in Niagara County and most of the other counties located in the Western New York region, as shown in Figure 3-XX.

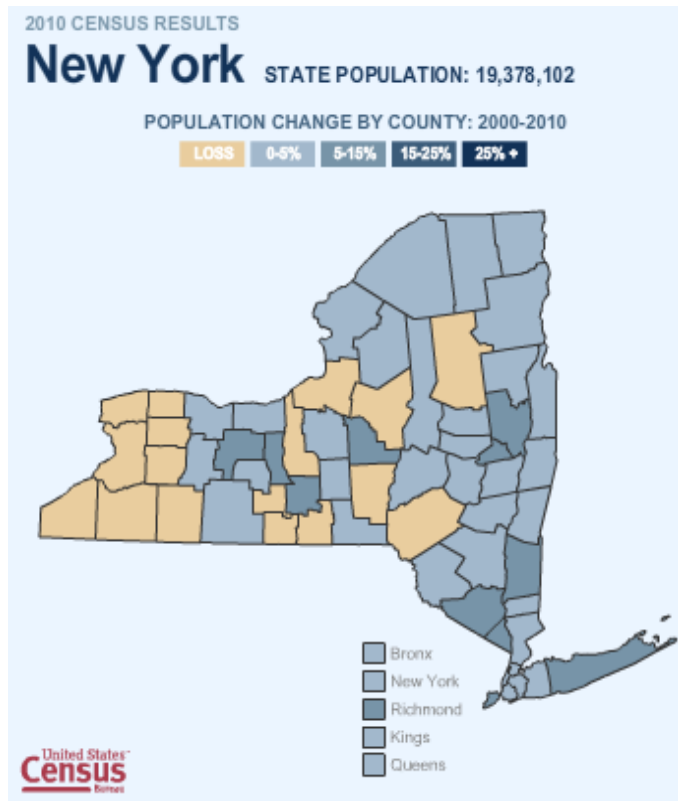
**Table 3-6: Buffalo-Niagara MSA, Population Growth 1980-2010**

Total Population & Growth	1980 U.S. Census	1990 U.S. Census	2000 U.S. Census	2010 U.S. Census
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	1,242,826 -7.9%	1,189,340 -4.3%	1,170,111 -1.6%	1,135,509 -2.9%
United States	226,545,805 11.5%	248,709,873 9.8%	281,421,906 13.2%	308,745,538 9.7%
Niagara Region, Canada	---	---	403,504 (1996 Canadian Census)	427,421 (2006 Canadian Census)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Census in Canada

**Figure 3-XX: New York State, Population Changes, 2000-2010**





Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census

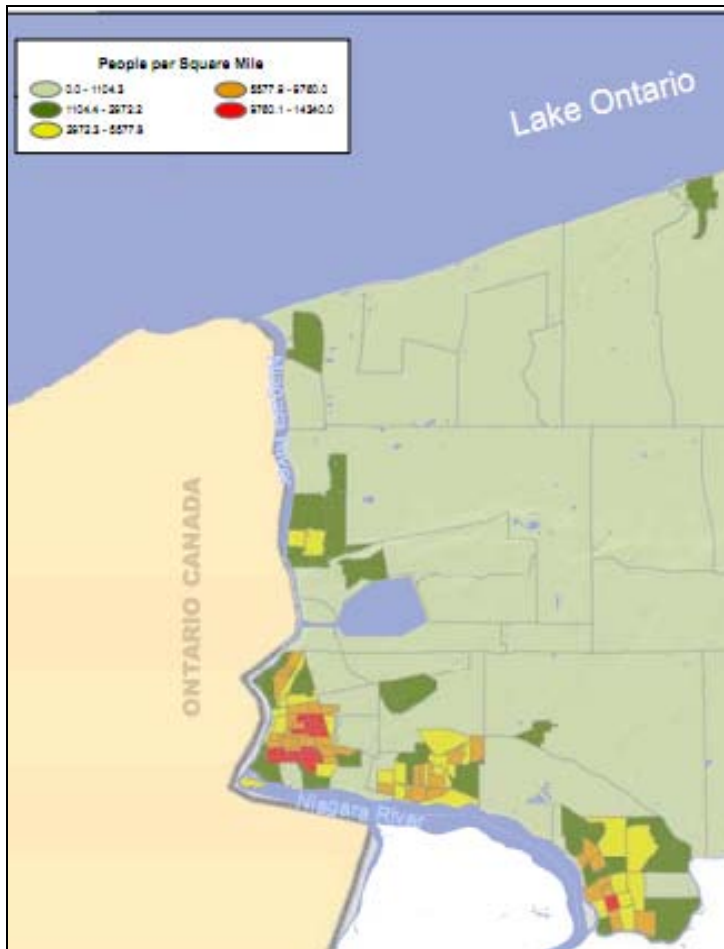
The Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA remains one of the nation's larger metropolitan areas as measured by total population. It is the 47<sup>th</sup> most populous out of 366 MSAs, with a population of 1,135,509. To provide a sense of scale, the metropolitan statistical areas of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are the top three in the country with 9 to nearly 19 million people, and Baltimore-Towson, Maryland is 20<sup>th</sup> with over 2,700,000 people. Buffalo-Niagara Falls is also the second largest MSA in New York State, with Rochester a close third.

Relative to the country as a whole, the Buffalo-Niagara MSA lost population over a 30 year period while the nation gained in population. The most significant population loss occurred in the 1970s, with rates slowing than rising again between 1990 and 2010. Over a ten year period between 1996 and 2006, Canada's Niagara Region, which includes the jurisdictions adjacent to Niagara Falls and the Niagara River, has increased in population by over five percent. The Census in Canada is taken every five years and is due to occur again in 2011.

### Population Density

Population density is the measure of average population per square mile. The Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA is the second-largest metropolitan area in the state of New York, and has a high concentration of high population densities (718 persons per square mile). According to 2009 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan, the highest population densities in the heritage area are in the City of Niagara Falls, and the highest population densities in Niagara County overall are in the City of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, and Lockport and in and around the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown. (Include Map of Population Density based on 2010 Population data for – just like map below from 2000, and write up results.)

**Figure 3.XX: Population Density, 2000 Census, Heritage Area**



Source: U.S. Census, 2000 Census Block Groups, Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan, 2009

According to 2010 Census data, the highest population densities in the heritage area are in the City of Niagara Falls and within the region are in Buffalo. The Census data from 2010 indicates that the City of Niagara Falls has a diverse population, with a 29.4 percent minority population.

### 3.3.2 The Local Economy

The communities of the Lower Niagara River are economically sound as measured by a higher than the national average per capita income and median household income and low percent of people living below the poverty level. The City of Niagara Falls is home to many of Niagara County's major employers yet its economic well-being is challenged, as reflected in the per capita income and median household income that are below that of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area and the nation with a high rate of poverty. Over 17 percent of families and 20 percent of individuals living in Niagara Falls are living below the poverty line, which as of January 2011 is \$22,314 for a family of four and \$11,136 for a person living alone. The heritage area lies within the boundaries of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, and the metro area as a whole is only slightly less well off as measured by per capita and median household income than the nation and follows the nation in rates of poverty (9.9% Families, 13.6% Individuals).

The largest sources of employment in the metro area as based on number of paid employees are (1) trade, transportation and utilities and (2) government. Other large employment sectors include Education and Health Services and Professional and Business Services. Over the past year,

private sector employment in the metro area grew by 3,800 jobs and government employment, among other types, decreased by 1,300.

The County has an unemployment rate that is lower than one-third of the counties in New York State. The top industries, as measured by number of employees 16 years or older, are (1) educational services, health care, and social assistance, and (2) manufacturing. Many of the county's major employers are located within the heritage area, and largely in the City of Niagara Falls. Each community of the heritage area located along the lower Niagara River generally has a well-educated workforce, with more people with high school diplomas, bachelor's degrees or higher education than the city, county, metro area and nation. A high percentage of the population in the City of Niagara Falls holds a high school degree (84%), and only 12.4 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

#### **Employment in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, 2000 to 2010**

The New York State Department of Labor provides labor statistics for the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, and in December 2010 produced *The Decade in Review: New York State's Labor Markets, 2000-2010*. Data from *The Decade in Review* provides information about employment changes between 2000 and 2010 for the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, New York State and the nation. During this time, job growth occurred in the government sector for the Buffalo-Niagara MSA as well as the state and nation. In fact, government jobs grew at a higher rate in the Buffalo-Niagara MSA than they did in the state overall. Significant job loss occurred in nonfarm and private employment in the Buffalo-Niagara MSA at a higher percentage than experienced at either the state or national level. Job growth did not offset the job loss in the metro area.

**Table 3-11: Employment Level – Metro Area, State, and Nation 2000-2010**

	Employment Level*		Change	
	2000	2010	Net	%
<b>Buffalo-Niagara MSA</b>				
Total Nonfarm	554,600	532,700	-21,900	-3.9%
Total Private	436,300	436,100	-27,200	-5.9%
Government	91,300	97,700	+5,400	+5.9%
<b>New York State</b>				
Total Nonfarm	8,557,700	8,459,500	-98,200	-1.1%
Total Private	7,078,900	6,944,300	-134,600	-1.9%
Government	1,478,800	1,515,200	+36,400	+2.5%
<b>United States</b>				
Total Nonfarm	130,953,500	129,556,800	-1,396,700	-1.1%
Total Private	109,929,800	106,710,000	-3,219,800	-2.9%
Government	21,023,700	22,846,800	+1,823,200	+8.7%

\*Average of January-June employment.

\*\*Nonfarm employment is the name given for goods-producing, construction, and manufacturing companies. It represents the number of jobs not related to the farming industry.

Source: NYS Department of Labor, *The Decade in Review: New York State's Labor Markets, 2000-2010*, December 2010

Table 3-XX [Employment Levels by Supersector] shows employment level by the Supersector classification of industry for the decade 2000-2010 in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA. For purposes of analysis, the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics has aggregated NAICS sectors into groupings called "Supersectors." NAICS is short for the North American Industry Classification System and is used to classify businesses by type of economic activity. As shown by the chart below, the largest

sources of employment in the metro area as based on number of paid employees are (1) Trade, Transportation and Utilities – with 97,000 and (2) Government – with 96,700. Other large employment sectors include Education and Health Services and Professional and Business Services.

**Table 3-XX: Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metro Area – Employment Levels by Supersector, 2000 and 2010**

Supersector	Employment Level*		Change:	
	2000	2010	Net	%
<b>Total Nonfarm</b>	<b>554,600</b>	<b>532,700</b>	<b>-21,900</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>
<b>Total Private</b>	<b>463,300</b>	<b>436,100</b>	<b>-27,200</b>	<b>-5.9%</b>
Natural Resources, Mining and Construction	19,400	18,100	-1,300	-6.7%
Manufacturing	83,000	47,400	-35,600	-42.9%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	108,000	97,000	-11,000	-10.2%
Information	9,900	8,000	-1,900	-19.2%
Financial Activities	29,600	31,100	+1,500	+5.1%
Professional and Business Services	61,400	71,300	+9,900	+16.1%
Educational and Health Services	83,300	89,600	+6,300	+7.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	45,800	49,100	+3,300	+7.2%
Other Services	23,000	24,500	+1,500	+6.5%
<b>Government</b>	<b>91,300</b>	<b>96,700</b>	<b>+5,400</b>	<b>+5.9%</b>

\*Average January - June job count.

Source: NYS Department of Labor, The Decade in Review: New York State's Labor Markets, 2000-2010, December 2010

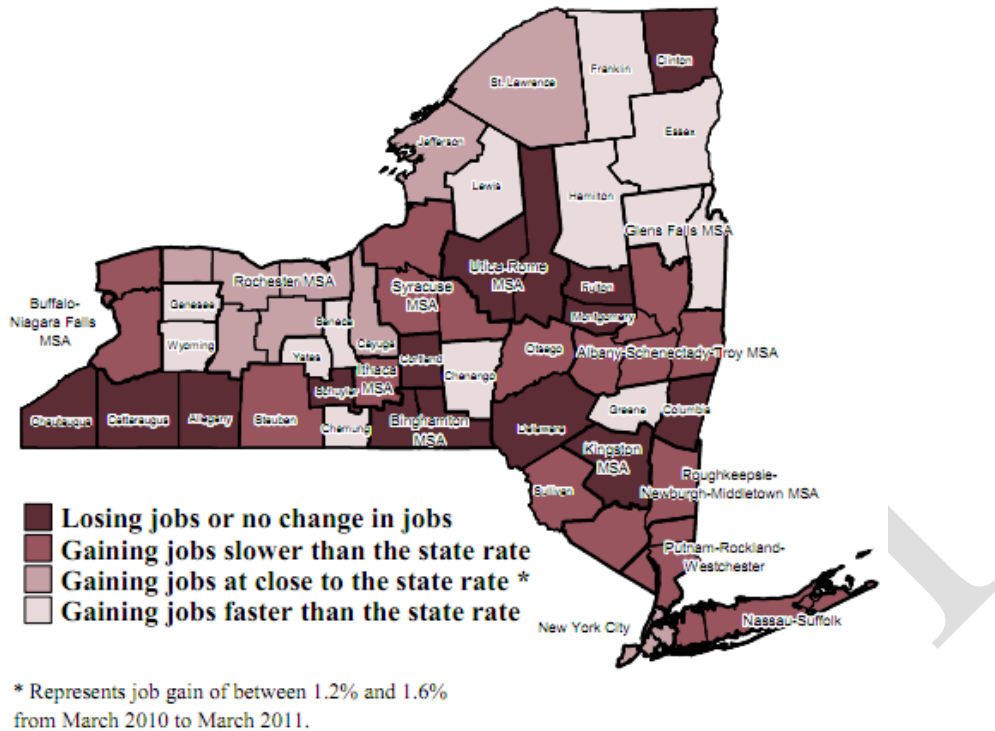
#### **Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, March 2010 to March 2011**

The information in the preceding section was released in December 2010 for change that occurred over ten years. In spring of 2011, the NYS Department of Labor released an analysis it completed for the Buffalo-Niagara MSA for a one-year period – March 2010-March 2011:

Private sector employment in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area increased by 3,800, or 0.9 percent, to 436,000 over the 12 months ending March 2011. Job gains were centered in trade, transportation and utilities (+2,500), professional and business services (+1,200), and educational and health services (+1,100). Losses were greatest in financial activities (-400) and information (-400). Government employment decreased (-1,300) over the year.

The NYS Department of Labor also looked at employment in the Buffalo-Niagara metro area in the context of the state and western New York region. From March 2010 to March 2011, the number of private sector jobs increased in all five of the largest metro areas in the Upstate New York region – including Rochester (1.2%), Syracuse (1.1%), Albany-Schenectady-Troy (1.0%), Buffalo-Niagara Falls (0.9%), and Poughkeepsie-Newburgh-Middletown (0.8%). As shown in the map below, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area is doing better than other counties in the Western New York region (Alleghany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua counties), which are losing private sector jobs or seeing no change in the number of these jobs, and is gaining private sector jobs at a rate slower than the state.

**Figure 3-XX: Percent change in Private Sector Jobs by Area, New York State, March 2010 – March 2011**



### Regional Business and Working Environment: Market Positives

The Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise, a private nonprofit focused on promoting economic development in the region, identifies several positive aspects of doing business in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA. The resources it references are located throughout the Western New York Region, which the Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise identifies as Erie, Niagara, Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Wyoming, Genesee, and Orleans counties.

- **Market Range:** It has access to a large market since it is located within 500 miles of 40% of the U.S. population and 59% of Canada's population.
- **Access and Transportation:** There are seven different ports of entry to Canada. It has "one of the most highly developed rail systems in the works".
- **Large and Educated Workforce:** Western New York has a workforce of 750,000, and 20,000 people graduating annually from 15 four-year colleges and universities and 20 two-year schools.
- **Affordable Cost of Living and Cost of Doing Business:** Low housing costs, average household incomes of \$53,000, and health insurance that costs 25% below the national average make the region affordable to employees and the regional workforce affordable to business.
- **Work Ethic:** The absenteeism and turnover rates are low compared to the rest of the country.

In July 2010, Forbes Woman magazine ranked the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metro area the 10<sup>th</sup> best place in the nation for working mothers based on women's income, cost of living, access to pediatricians, unemployment rates, crime levels, and spending by school systems per student.

Buffalo, N.Y.'s school system had the highest spending per student. The article assessed quality of life in the 50 largest metropolitan statistical areas in the United States. The top three MSA's on the list were (1) Minneapolis-St. Paul, (2) Washington, D.C., and (3) Boston. The above article is based upon U.S. Census data, which defines the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area as Niagara and Erie counties.

### **Niagara County and Municipalities in the Heritage Area**

Data released in March 2011 by the New York State Department of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics indicates that Niagara County has the 26<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate of New York's 62 counties, with a 9.0 percent unemployment rate. The nation's unemployment rate is 9.0 percent as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for April 2011. New York State has an 8 percent unemployment rate, as of March 2011.<sup>5</sup>

For the employed population 16 years or older, the top employers in Niagara County were: educational services, health care, and social assistance (23%); and manufacturing (15%).

The most common types of jobs were management, professional and related occupations (29%) and sales and office occupations (27%). Other typical jobs include: service (19%); production, transportation, and material moving (16%), and construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair (9%). Most employed people were private wage and salary workers (81%); 15 percent were employed by the federal, state or local government; and self-employed workers totaled 5 percent of the employed population (U.S. Census Bureau 2005-2009).

The *Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan* (2009) shows that many of the county's major employers, for instance the NY Power Authority, are located within the heritage area, mostly within the City of Niagara Falls. The major employers of the jurisdictions within the heritage area are listed below<sup>6</sup>.

#### City of Niagara Falls – Major Employers

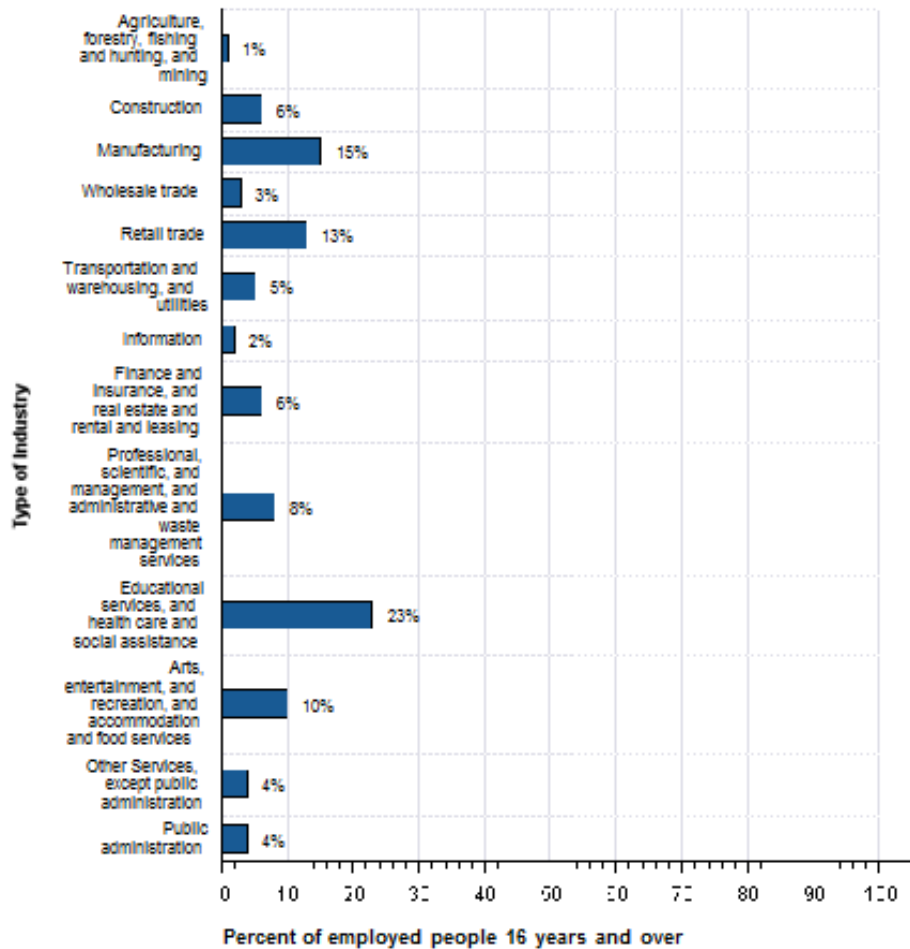
- Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel
- Niagara Falls City School District
- Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center
- DuPont Company
- Washington Mills Electro Minerals Corporation
- Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company
- Saint-Gobain Structural Ceramics
- Olin Corporation
- Ferro Electronic Minerals
- Stevenson Environmental Services
- Moore North America

**Table 3-12: Employment by Industry, Niagara County, 2005-2009**

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<sup>5</sup> National and state unemployment figures are seasonally adjusted.

<sup>6</sup> Source of major employer data is from the Niagara County Center for Economic Development's "Industrial and Business Directory 2008". No major employers are listed for the Youngstown, NY.



Source: American Community Survey, 2005-2009

#### Village of Lewiston – Major Employers

- Mount St. Mary's Hospital
- Waste Technology Services
- Edwin Mellen Press
- Lewny Tools

#### Town of Lewiston – Major Employers

- Mount St. Mary's Hospital/Our Lady of Peace Nursing Home
- Niagara University
- Modern Disposal System
- NY Power Authority
- Town of Lewiston
- D.F. Calkins Lumber, Inc.
- H2 Gro, LLC
- Ken Wendt's Propane Gas Service, Inc.
- Tuskewe Krafts
- Unit Step, Gamble, Inc.

#### Town of Porter – Major Employers

- Waste Management, Inc.

- J.F. Matching Co., Inc.

### 3.3.3 Growth Patterns

The 2009 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan found that between 1980 and 2000 household growth was concentrated in rural areas or on the fringes of its three cities: City of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, and Lockport. During these last few decades, there was a 33.4 percent increase in rural households versus a 1 percent increase in number of households located in urban or developed areas. The County Plan indicated that this trend of sprawling growth patterns was likely to continue (CHA 2009:III-22). Data collected from the 2010 census regarding urban and rural populations will be released by the U.S. Census Bureau in October 2012.

Growth in Niagara County between 1980 and 2010 was concentrated in former rural areas in the eastern portion of the county or on the suburban fringe of its three cities: Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, and Lockport.

### 3.3.4 Race and Ethnicity

The U.S. Census Bureau uses seven categories of race: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races. The Some Other Race category was provided as an option for people unable to identify with any of the five race categories. Responders choosing more than one of the six race categories are included in the Two or More Races population. In the U.S. Census, race and Hispanic origin are considered to be two separate concepts. People are asked to identify their race and answer whether or not they are Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino.

**Table 3-7: Percentage of Total Population by Race, 2000-2010**

Race & Ethnicity	United States 2000 / 2010		Buffalo-Niagara MSA 2000 / 2010		Niagara County 2000 / 2010		Erie County 2000 / 2010		City of Niagara Falls 2000 / 2010	
White	75.1%	72.4%	83.8%	81.6%	90.7%	89.94%	82.2%	82.4%	76.2%	70.5%
Black or African American	12.3%	12.6%	11.7%	12.2%	6.1%	6.61%	13%	13.62%	18.7%	21.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	.9%	.9%	.7%	.7%	.9%	1.15%	.6%	.71%	1.6%	1.9%
Asian	3.6%	4.8%	1.3%	2.3%	.6%	.9%	1.5%	1.94%	.7%	1.2%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	.1%	.2%	<0.1%	0.0%	0%	.03%	0%	.05%	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race	5.5%	6.2%	1.2%	1.3%	.4%	.35%	1.4%	.64%	.7%	.8%
Two or More Races	2.4%	2.9%	1.3%	1.9%	1.2%	1.11%	1.3%	.64%	2.0%	3.9%



Hispanic or Latino	12.5%	16.3%	2.9%	4.1%	1.3%	1.93%	3.3%	4.04%	2.0%	3.0%
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census

For the populations of the Buffalo – Niagara Falls MSA, Niagara and Erie counties, and City of Niagara Falls, the 2000 and 2010 census data reflects two consistent pieces of information: (1) like the United States, the majority population is white and the largest minority population is black or African-American; and (2) like the United States as a whole, minority groups are becoming a larger portion of the population.

Distinctions between localities in the region include the following: The white population is notably larger and the black population smaller in Niagara County relative to the nation, Buffalo-Niagara MSA, Erie County, and the City of Niagara Falls. Niagara County and the City of Niagara Falls have a higher percentage of American Indian or Alaskan Natives relative to Erie County, the Buffalo-Niagara MSA and the nation. Overall, multi-racial populations and people of Hispanic or Latino origin represent a small portion of the population in the heritage area and the region relative to the nation.

The 2009 Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan reported that the City of Niagara Falls is the most diverse locality in Niagara County. Based on census data from 2000, the City of Niagara Falls had 23.8 percent minority races whereas other county jurisdictions had minority populations of less than 10 percent (CHA 2009:22). Census data from 2010 indicates that the City of Niagara Falls continues to have a diverse population with a 29.4 percent minority population.

In the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, according to 2010 census data, minority groups represent 18.4 percent of the population. The Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise, a private nonprofit organization focused on regional economic development, estimated population by race and ethnicity for 2015 and these results show that: the percentage of minority populations will likely increase; the white population will probably continue to decrease its share of the total population yet remain the largest racial group; and the American Indian or Alaskan Native population may see a decline from .6 percent to .5 percent of the total population.

In the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, according to 2010 census data, minority groups represent 18.4 percent of the population. Like the United States as a whole, minority groups in the City of Niagara Falls and the metro area are becoming a larger portion of the population. In the City of Niagara Falls, the largest minority group is black or African American (20.9%) and the second largest is people of two or more races (3.9%), and American Indian or Alaskan Natives represent 1.9 percent of the population. According to 2005 to 2006 ACS data, only a very small percentage of people in the heritage area, Niagara County, and Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA are foreign born, and the majority of the native born population was born in New York State. The percentage of individuals, five years old and above, speaking another language besides English in the home is also small – ranging from 3 to 8 percent – though less than half of people in this group state that they do not speak English “very well.”

### 3.3.5 Foreign Born

The following information is gathered from the 2005-2009 ACS, which is produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of people living in Niagara County were born in the United States and 84 percent were born in New York State. Only four percent of the Niagara County population was born in other countries. About six percent of people five years old and older spoke a

language other than English at home, with less than half of this group speaking Spanish and 67 percent of this group speaking some other language. Twenty-five percent of people speaking another language in the home besides English noted that they did not speak English “very well”. The statistics for foreign born people and language in Niagara County are generally the same for the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA, City of Niagara Falls, Town of Lewiston, and Town of Porter with only slight variations in numbers. Foreign born populations in these jurisdictions range from 5 to 7 percent, and the percentage of people speaking a language other than English at home ranged from 3 to 8 percent. The Village of Lewiston has a higher percentage of people born in other countries (10%). Of the 90 percent native residents in the Village of Lewiston, 78 percent were born in New York State. The seven percent of the village population that speaks another language at home besides English, mostly speak a language besides Spanish. Twenty-four percent speak Spanish and 76 percent speak another language. Of the people in the heritage area and metro area that spoke another language in the home besides English, 22 to 41 percent reported not being able to speak English “very well.”

### 3.3.6 Income

Two good indicators of economic health are income and poverty. The U.S. Census provides data for per capita income, median household income, and the percent of population living below the poverty level.

#### Per Capita Income

Per capital income is the average income per person and is calculated by dividing the aggregate income by the total population of an area. Estimates from the 2005-2009 ACS were used to provide the per capita income for the heritage area, region and nation.

**Table 3-8: Per Capita Income, 2000-2009**

Per Capita Income	2000 U.S. Census	2005-2009, ACS Estimates, U.S. Census (in 2009 Inflation adjusted dollars)
United States	\$21,587	\$27,041
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	\$19,788	\$25,834
Niagara County	\$19,219	\$24,035
Erie County	\$20,357	\$26,256
City of Niagara Falls	\$15,721	\$19,059
Village of Lewiston	\$21,482	\$33,129
Village of Youngstown	\$23,705	\$29,148
Town of Lewiston	\$23,275	\$32,077
Town of Porter	\$23,951	\$29,450

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Per capita income is often used as an indicator of the economic well-being of residents of a particular area. According to the 2000 Decennial Census, the per capita income of the Towns and Villages of the heritage area was higher or nearly the same as that of the nation and the Buffalo – Niagara Falls metro area. The heritage area Towns and Villages maintain a higher per capita income than that of the nation and metro area in the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2005-2009 ACS estimates. The City of Niagara Falls, Niagara and Erie counties, and the Buffalo-Niagara Falls

metro area have in the past and continue to have per capita incomes lower than the nation and the communities along the lower Niagara River.

### Median Household Income

The median household income divides the household income information into two equal groups, one group having household incomes above the median and the other group having incomes below the median. Median household incomes in the City of Niagara Falls are significantly lower than in the towns and villages of the national heritage area. In 2000, the city had a median household income of \$26,800 and the towns and villages of the national heritage area had median household incomes between \$37,000 and almost \$51,000. In the 2005-2009 ACS estimates, the city's median house income was \$31,336 and that of the heritage area towns and villages was between \$58,000 and nearly \$60,000. The city has a low median household income in comparison to all other jurisdictions in the table below, including the nation, Buffalo-Niagara MSA and surrounding counties. The communities along the lower Niagara River generally do better on a household income basis than the nation, the metro area, and Niagara and Erie counties.

**Table 3-9: Median Household Income, 2000-2009**

Median Household Income	2000 U.S. Census	2005-2009, ACS Estimates, U.S. Census (in 2009 Inflation adjusted dollars)
United States	\$41,994	\$51,425
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	\$38,604	\$46,427
Niagara County	\$38,136	\$45,749
Erie County	\$38,567	\$46,609
City of Niagara Falls	\$26,800	\$31,336
Village of Lewiston	\$37,598	\$58,576
Village of Youngstown	\$48,333	\$58,008
Town of Lewiston	\$50,819	\$59,719
Town of Porter	\$50,425	\$59,338

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau establishes an income threshold to determine who is poor. This helps the government determine, among other things, who is eligible for assistance from various federal programs. If total income for a family or individual falls below the income threshold, then the family or individual is classified as *being below the poverty level*. The poverty threshold or poverty level used in the U.S. Census is the minimum income that the federal government has determined a family or person needs to adequately live in the United States. The average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2000 was \$17,603. The estimated average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2010, as released by the U.S. Census Bureau in January 2011, is \$22,314. The 2010 estimate may change slightly as the final threshold will be published in September 2011, along with the release of the official poverty estimates for 2010.

The poverty rate is the percent of the total population that lives below the poverty level. Between 1999 and 2009, the towns and villages of the heritage area have had a poverty rate lower and

often much lower than that of the nation, Buffalo-Niagara MSA, and Niagara and Erie counties. The Village of Lewiston notably had poverty rates for families drop from 8.1 percent to 0.0 percent and for individuals drop from 8.6 percent to 2.2 percent over the span of ten years. The village's population loss between 2000 and 2010 cannot account for this drop entirely. In the same timeframe, the rate of poverty in the City of Niagara Falls has far exceeded that of all other jurisdictions in the heritage area, the metro area, and the nation. The city is the largest jurisdiction in the heritage area and has also, over the last decade, had the lowest per capita income and median household income in the Buffalo-Niagara metro area. The poverty rate of the Buffalo-Niagara MSA and Niagara County, from 2000 to 2009, was the same as or very close to the poverty rate of the nation.

**Table 3-10: Rates of Poverty, 2000-2009**

Percent of Families and Individuals living below Poverty Level	2000 U.S. Census		2005-2009, ACS Estimates, U.S. Census	
	Families	Individuals	Families	Individuals
United States	9.2%	12.4%	9.9%	13.5%
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	9.0%	11.9%	9.9%	13.6%
Niagara County	8.2%	10.6%	9.2%	12.3%
Erie County	9.2%	12.2%	10.1%	13.9%
City of Niagara Falls	15.6%	19.5%	17.3%	20.9%
Village of Lewiston	8.1%	8.6%	0.0%	2.2%
Village of Youngstown	3.0%	3.9%	1.2%	4.5%
Town of Lewiston	4.3%	5.8%	2.9%	4.9%
Town of Porter	2.2%	4.1%	4.2%	7.4%

U.S. Census: 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### 3.3.7 Education

The information below compares educational attainment of jurisdictions in the heritage area, the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, and the nation. The metro area, Niagara County, and Town of Porter all have roughly the same level of educational attainment as the nation. Compared to the rest of the country, the City of Niagara Falls has a slightly higher percentage of people 25 years or older who hold a high school diploma or higher level of education. Yet, the percentage of people in the city with a bachelor's degree or higher is less than half that of the nation. Each community of the heritage area located along the lower Niagara River generally has more people with high school diplomas, bachelor's degrees or higher education than the city, county, metro area and nation.

**Table 3-13: Educational Attainment, Population 25 Years and Over, 2009**

Educational Attainment	High School Graduate or Higher	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
United States	84.6%	27.5%
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	87.9%	26.7%
Niagara County	87.8%	19.1%
City of Niagara Falls	83.7%	12.4%

Village of Lewiston	92.9%	27.2%
Village of Youngstown	91.8%	33.2%
Town of Lewiston	95.7%	37.4%
Town of Porter	87.9%	27.0%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, U.S. Census

### **Post-Secondary Educational Institutions**

There are two post-secondary institutions in the area: Niagara University located in the Town of Lewiston and Niagara Community College located in Sanborn. These schools are active in the community and offer continuing education programs and co-operative education options to students. The Comprehensive Plan identified the need for “continuing education and retraining programs linked to the local economy” and “a safe, accessible school system with magnet or specialized programs linked to industry and cultural resources” (CNF 2009:20-22).

The Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County provides educational opportunities to the county residents through workshops, seminars, publications, teleconferences and volunteer opportunities related to economic, societal, environmental, and agricultural needs and concerns.

### **3.3.8 The Impact of the Heritage Area on Socio-economic Factors (EA Impact Topic)**

The more affluent lower Niagara River communities and the larger, economically stable Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA provide a significant “home-grown” audience that can and does support tourism within the heritage area. Though the City of Niagara Falls is more densely populated than other parts of the heritage area, the high numbers of people living below the poverty line and the low median household income and per capita income indicate that city residents may be less likely to engage in spending on tourism related activities. It is helpful to note here that the City of Niagara Falls has outlined significant revitalization strategies for the areas within the core city, generally adjacent to the Niagara Falls State Park that would increase the local audience as well as attract more tourists.

The local audience in the heritage area, Niagara County, and Buffalo-Niagara MSA for marketing messages and interpretation efforts is largely native New Yorkers and a small percentage of people who speak another language besides English in the home – which is Spanish and other languages.

Development pressure is present in rural or less developed areas of the heritage area, as it is throughout Niagara County, and should be considered when determining need and measures for protecting natural and scenic resources (including farmland), open space, and landscape context of historic buildings, structures, and villages.

Government jobs have decreased in the metro area during the last year (March 2010- March 2011), and private sector jobs have increased. This may reflect a need to bolster publicly owned heritage sites through funding, technical assistance, and supporting increased collaboration among heritage sites and with tourism agencies. It also suggests consideration of programs to help develop or grow local businesses.

The region seeks to create a vision for the future that builds upon its assets and provides opportunities for its residents to improve the local quality of life. The heritage area can play a central role in implementing this vision. The socio-economic impact is anticipated to have a

positive effect on employment, income disparity, education including minority and low income populations.

### **3.3.9 Sources of Demographic Information**

Data collected for this section came from several sources, including: the U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; the New York Department of Labor; Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan; Niagara County Center for Economic Development; and the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise.

The U.S. Census provides data regarding population, race and ethnicity, employment, household income and education. The Decennial Census of population and housing, conducted once every ten years, was recently completed for 2010 and the results from this census either have been released in the early months of 2011 or are being released over the next months and years. When available, data from the 2010 Census is incorporated herein. Data for this report was also gathered from the American Community Survey (ACS) which takes places every year and provides annual and multi-year estimates of population and housing characteristics. Data presented in this discussion of the socio-economic environment relies upon the Decennial Census from 1980 to 2010 and the American Community Survey from 2005-2009.

The information below focuses upon the individual jurisdictions of the National Heritage Area and the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which consists of Niagara and Erie counties. Metropolitan Statistical Areas are geographic entities defined by the federal government for the purpose of collecting, tabulating, and publishing federal statistics. A metro area has a minimum core urban area population of 50,000 or more, and consists of one or more counties that contain the core urban area and any adjacent counties that are significantly integrated, socially and economically, with the urban core. In this case, the City of Buffalo is the core urban area and the MSA includes Erie County, where Buffalo is located, and adjacent Niagara County.

## **3.4 Regional and Community Planning\***

The purpose of this section is two-fold. (1) It describes plans and activities that may affect the possible range of heritage area activities – natural and historic resource protection, recreation, heritage tourism, community development, and economic development. This includes highlighting applicable land and water use plans. (2) It also outlines the physical infrastructure – transportation and utilities – of the communities located within the heritage area boundaries.

### **3.4.1 Niagara River Greenway Plan, 2007**

The *Niagara River Greenway Plan*, completed in April 2007, establishes a vision, principles, and priorities for actions for the Greenway. It includes an inventory of Greenway resources, and identifies transportation issues, funding sources, and potential partnerships. It makes supportive comments about the possible creation of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as the 2005 heritage area feasibility study had been completed and the designation process underway at the time the Greenway Plan was produced. The Greenway encompasses much of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and extends from Fort Niagara State Park on Lake Ontario to just south of

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\* Planning issues such as transportation and land use were dismissed as impact topics for the Environmental Assessment. This section is provided as background information to assist the heritage area organization with coordination.

the City of Buffalo on Lake Erie. Several of the natural, cultural and historic resources listed for the Greenway inventory are also included in the inventory of heritage area resources. The most recent update regarding Greenway projects completed and in progress was provided in March 2011 by the Niagara River Greenway Commission, as shown in Figure 3-XX. Many Greenway projects have been completed or are in progress in communities of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

**[Figure 3-XX: Map of Greenway Projects, March 2011; Table 3-XX: List of Greenway Projects, March 2011 - PDF files with map and chart are in “NF, Chapter 3, Images” folder]**

### **3.4.2 The Great Lakes Seaway Trail**

The Great Lakes Seaway Trail is a 518 mile long driving route that connects historic villages, cities and scenic landscapes along the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Niagara River and Lake Erie. The trail has kiosks with maps and information as well as interpretive panels, and was one of the first roads to be designated a National Scenic Byway. The mission statement of Seaway Trail Inc., the nonprofit managing organization, is “to increase tourism revenues and to enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for travelers, communities, and members throughout the Great Lakes Seaway Trail by managing and marketing it as the leading scenic byway” (GLST 2011). There are Tourism Development Plans for Seaway Trail regions, there is a Byway Interpretation Plan, and a Conservation Plan and a Bicycle Plan are under development. The Seaway Trail runs through the heritage area.

### **3.4.3 State and National Heritage Areas**

#### **New York State Heritage Areas**

New York State recognizes places with special, historic significance to the state through its Heritage Area System. The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area, Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor, and Buffalo are three places included in the NYS Heritage Area System. Plans are underway to include a visitor center for the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area in the future the Niagara Falls International Railway Station/Intermodal Transportation Center (IRS-ITC), which will occupy a renovated Customs House on Whirlpool Street. In February 2011, the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area Commission requested proposals for the preparation of a Management Plan for this state heritage area. The Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor runs southeast of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as the canal descends from Lockport to Buffalo. A visitor center is provided for the corridor and in Buffalo. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation oversees the NYS Heritage Areas Program.

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad State Heritage Area was designated by New York State in 2008. The legislation creating the state heritage area also established a Commission and tasked it with preparing and implementing a management plan. The Commission is in the process of preparing the management plan, which will document and interpret the history of the Underground Railroad, abolitionists, and other reform related activities. An Underground Railroad Interpretive Center is already planned for the historic Customhouse located in the City of Niagara Falls. The City hopes to convey, in part through the Interpretive Center, its own and the region’s historical connection to the Underground Railroad to 8 to 10 million annual visitors (CNF RFP 2010).

#### **National Heritage Areas in New York**

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is one of three National Heritage Areas located within New York State – with the other two being the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. One additional National Heritage Area, the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, includes lands of Vermont as well as New York. The portion of the Erie Canal that runs near and generally southeast of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is included in both the state’s Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor and the federally designated Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The two heritage corridors that are located nearest to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Corridor both have management plans:

- *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor: Final Preservation and Management Plan* (2006); and
- *Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Management Plan* (2006).

The *Heritage Development Resource Guide 2007* was created for the New York Heritage Development Forum held on November 13, 2007. The Forum celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New York State Heritage Program and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area, and focused on ways to carry out heritage development on a statewide level. The Resource Guide profiles organizations and agencies who work on a statewide or regional basis in heritage development throughout New York State.

### **3.4.4 Economic Development: Plans and Organizations**

#### **Economic Development Plans**

There are economic development documents and planning documents that include information about economic development:

- 2010, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Niagara County;
- 2009, Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan;
- 2009, City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan
- 2001, Rethinking the Niagara Frontier
- A Citizen’s Map for Niagara Falls

There are several tourism related plans:

- 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan, Niagara Tourism and Convention Center;
- 2010 – 2011 Marketing Plan, Niagara Tourism and Convention Center;
- 2008 Visitor Report;
- 2005, A Cultural Tourism Strategy: Enriching Culture and Building Tourism in Buffalo Niagara
- 2002, Revealing Niagara: Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Bi-National Niagara Region
- 2002, Cultural Tourism in The Buffalo-Niagara Region, Phase 1: Inventory of Cultural Tourism Planning Initiatives, Recommendations for Pursuing a Comprehensive Plan
- 2002, USA Niagara Development Strategy: A Blueprint for Revitalization of Downtown Niagara Falls

#### **Economic Development Organizations**

- USA Niagara Development Corporation – This organization is a subsidiary of Empire State Development Corporation and works to promote economic development initiatives in the City of Niagara Falls.



- Niagara Experience Center, Inc. – This nonprofit corporation was formed to lead development of the Niagara Experience Center (NEC), a cultural tourism attraction seen as an anchor for additional hospitality – hotel, food, and entertainment – development in downtown Niagara Falls. Educational and cultural leaders from the community sit on the board of the nonprofit and the USA Niagara Development Corporation serves as the NEC, Inc. staff.
- Downtown Niagara Falls Business Association, Inc.
- Main Street Niagara
- Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce
- Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce
- New York Power Authority
- Niagara Falls Bridge Commission
- Seneca Niagara Casino and Hotel

#### **3.4.5 Niagara Power Project, New York Power Authority – Relicensing**

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued the New York Power Authority a new 50-year federal license to operate the Niagara Power Project, which took effect September 1, 2007. Over 40 studies were conducted as part of the license-related applicant-prepared Environmental Assessment. These studies relate to aquatic resources, water use and quality, terrestrial resources, climate and geology, socioeconomic resources, recreational resources, and land management and aesthetics. The full list of these studies is included in the appendices of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Environmental Assessment and Management Plan. Through the relicensing process, NYPA made commitments to community stakeholders and is continuing to work with government and non-governmental organizations to fulfill those commitments – which address environmental, cultural, and recreational resources as well as a scholarship program for the Tuscarora Nation.

#### **3.4.6 Historical Organizations**

The following historical organizations are located in the Erie-Niagara region:

- Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society
- Historical Association of Lewiston, Inc.
- Niagara County Historical Society
- Preservation Buffalo Niagara
- Campaign for Buffalo History, Architecture and Culture
- Canal Society of New York State
- Preservation League of New York State

#### **3.4.7 Environmental Protection: Plans and Organizations**

##### **Environmental Protection Plans**

- 2009, New York State Open Space Conservation Plan – This plan includes descriptions of three Regional Priority Conservation Projects planned for land included in the heritage area: (1) protection of ecological corridors, (2) preservation of exceptional forest

communities, and (3) grassland preservation and restoration. The plan describes resources available for open space conservation.

- 2009, Western New York Environmental Alliance, Final Report – This report provides WNYEA’s mission statement, goals and objectives, and next steps. The document focuses upon Erie and Niagara counties, and includes profiles of environmental organizations, environmental public agencies and environmental plan for Western New York.

### **Environmental Protection Organizations and Agencies**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation includes the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, which oversees the New York Natural Heritage Program. It provides information about rare or state-listed animals, plants, significant natural communities and other significant habitats. Other organizations and agencies include:

- Niagara River Greenway Commission
- Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
- Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
- Buffalo Zoo
- Western New York Land Conservancy
- Niagara Heritage Partnership
- Niagara Frontier Wildlife Habitat Council
- Residents of Responsible Government
- Sierra Club, Niagara Group
- US Army Corp of Engineers, Buffalo District
- Buffalo Association of Professional Geologists, Inc.

### **3.4.8 State Agencies**

#### **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation manages the eight state parks and the Niagara Gorge Trail located in the heritage area and the state heritage areas program. The State Historic Preservation Office is operates within this state office, as it administers the Statewide Historic Resources Survey, New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit, the CLG program, grants programs, and a variety of other technical services.

#### **New York State Parks in the Heritage Area**

There are seven State Parks within the heritage area: Niagara Falls State Park, Whirlpool State Park, De Veaux Woods State Park, Devil’s Hole State Park, Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park, Joseph Davis State Park, and Fort Niagara State Park.

The Niagara Falls State Park, originally named the Niagara Reservation, is America’s oldest state park and was established in 1885. Frederick Law Olmsted, noted landscape architect, recommended that the reservation include land alongside and the islands above the Falls, and that any structures should be limited so as to preserve the natural scene. Olmsted and his associate designed and implemented the landscape plan for the park. The size of the original park has increased from 418 acres to 435 acres, and close to 140 acres of this land is under water. The park is a National Historic Landmark and the NHL Program reports that “while the Reservations vast surroundings have been compromised by intensive commercial development on the Canadian

side of the Falls, impacting its visual setting, Niagara Reservation itself is not in imminent danger of losing its integrity” (NPS NHLP 1963).

Whirlpool State Park, established in 1933 and approximately 109 acres large, offers observation areas for viewing the rapids and trails into the gorge that lead to fishing and connect to Devil’s Hole State Park, located further down the river. There are no historic attractions at the site, though interpretive materials (pamphlets and signage) offer historical information about the area.

De Veaux Woods State Park is 51 acres and purchased by New York State for the purpose of being a state park in 2000. The park includes ball fields, open space, five acres of old-growth forest, and historic structures. The De Veaux School, once the De Veaux College for Orphans and Destitute Children, includes 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Devil’s Hole State Park was established in 1927 and is 42 acres. It offers views of the gorge and overlooks the Whirlpool rapids. Trails from the park descend towards the river and are part of the Niagara Gorge Trail System. There is no visitor building and no historic attractions are present at the site, though interpretive signage is offered.

The Earl W. Brydges Artpark State Park is 200 acres just south of the Village of Lewiston, and includes the Performing Arts and Cultural Center, artist studios, outdoor amphitheater, access to the Niagara Gorge Trail, and a trail with interpretive signs to the Lewiston Mound and other features of the Lower Landing Archeological District. The park offers tours of its geologic and historic sites and nature trails. The Lewiston Mound and Lower Landing Archeological District are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Lower Landing Archeological District is part of the Colonial Niagara Historic District, which is a National Historic Landmark significant for extant resources associated with Native American and European groups.

Joseph Davis State Park is 388 acres and includes a fishing dock on the Lower Niagara River, nature trails, and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and snowmobiling trails. It allows small-game hunting. The park is a state designated BCA or Bird Conservation Area. There are no buildings or historic attractions.

Fort Niagara State Park is 500 acres and includes the Old Fort Niagara, a National Historic Landmark whose history spans more than 300 years, and the Fort Niagara Light, a lighthouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park offers recreational features, including two boat launches, trails, soccer fields, and picnic tables. The historic resources at the park are the most notable features at the park and – along with the Niagara Falls State Park and Niagara Falls, Gorge and Rapids – of the heritage area. The buildings of Old Fort Niagara are the oldest in the Great Lakes region, dating back to 1726. The Fort Niagara Light was built circa 1872.

#### **New York Department of State**

The Department of State, Office of Coastal, Local Government and Community Sustainability administers the state’s Coastal Management Program, which is important because the heritage area is located adjacent to two designated Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats (SCFWH). These are the Lower Niagara River Rapids SCFWH and the Buckhorn Island – Goat Island Rapids SCFWH. Projects which may impact the habitat are reviewed by DOS.

### **3.4.9 Regional Planning Initiatives**

#### **Framework for Regional Growth: Erie + Niagara Counties, New York, 2006**

Erie and Niagara counties prepared this document to facilitate coordinated and consistent decisions about growth and development. The document's mission statement indicates that *Framework* will "be used to inform state and local governments, private developers, and nonprofit organizations about the process and actions County government could undertake when making decisions affecting the region's development" (Framework 2006:2). It includes policies, programs, and projects.

#### **Urban Design Project, University of Buffalo**

The Urban Design Project(UDP) is currently involved with several ongoing projects in the City of Buffalo and Western New York State. With regard to planning in the heritage area, the UDP is working with the Waste, Pollution Prevention and Water Task Group from the WNY Environmental Alliance to clean up pollutants in Niagara, Erie, and Cattaraugus counties. They are mapping the hazardous waste environment of Western New York, with the intent of using it develop a comprehensive strategy and campaign for environmental cleanup and restoration.

The UDP is responsible for three significant reports about the Niagara Region including:

- 2001, Rethinking the Niagara Frontier – The report explores bi-national opportunities to stimulate economic growth and improve the quality of life in the region, and discusses tourism, redevelopment of industrial lands, and investment in the built and natural environment, trade and transportation, and knowledge-based industries.
- 2002, Revealing Niagara: A Citizen Vision for Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Bi-National Niagara Region
- 2002, Achieving Niagara's Future – This document focuses on waterfront planning in Niagara Falls.

Other documents include:

- 1997, Niagara's Future: A Citizens' Vision for Niagara Falls and Region

#### **National Trust Main Street Program**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation operates Main Street programs, which use historic preservation minded development strategies to revitalize neighborhoods and commercial centers. No Main Street program operates within the heritage area; one is located east of Rochester in Palmyra, New York and is the Western Erie Canal Main Street Program. The Erie Canal is a site thematically linked to the Borderland/Border Crossing theme for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, as offered in the 2005 Niagara National Heritage Area Study. The shared history and the fact that the Main Street's purpose is economic vitality for a heritage community may mean that the Western Erie Canal Main Street Program offers interesting insights for the City of Niagara Falls as it moves ahead with plans, as put forward in the City's 2009 Comprehensive Plan, to rejuvenate its own residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

#### **3.4.10 Tribal Nation Plans**

The Seneca Nation of Indians, the Tuscarora Nation, and the Tonawanda Band of Seneca live within the region. All are part of the Iroquois Confederacy and known as the Haudenosaunee, or People of the Longhouse. The Seneca Nation operates a large business, the Seneca Niagara Falls Casino, within the heritage area and the Tuscarora Nation Reservation is located near the heritage area, just west of the Village of Lewiston. Each Native American Indian Nation has its own governing body. The Seneca Nation has an elective, constitutional form of government. The Tuscarora Nation has the traditional Council of Chiefs and Clan Mothers form of government. Consultations regarding heritage area planning should engage the Seneca and Tuscarora Nations.

Representatives from the Seneca and Tuscarora Nations are on the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Federal Commission.

**Seneca Niagara Falls Casino and Hotel:** The casino and hotel are a major development in the downtown core section of the City of Niagara Falls and one of the city's largest private sector employers. The Seneca Nation plans to expand the complex and redevelop a large portion of downtown Niagara Falls. The Seneca Gaming Corporation, through its subsidiaries, operates three casinos in Western New York – Niagara Falls, Salamanca, and Buffalo. The Nation-State Gaming Compact of 2002 grants the Seneca Nation the exclusive right to “build and operate three Class III gaming facilities in Western NY” (NCCP 2009:IV 2-3).

#### **3.4.11 Planning by Local Governments**

The City of Niagara Falls, towns and villages of the lower Niagara River and Niagara County have comprehensive plans, waterfront plans, and zoning ordinances. Two jurisdictions are Certified Local Governments (CLGs). Through these plans, ordinances, and CLG status, the jurisdictions of the heritage area monitor and manage land and water use, and protection of natural and historic resources. These documents hold regulations and policies that affect heritage area resources and could be reviewed to determine adequacy of protection, conservation and support for heritage resources.

The City of Niagara Falls, the southern end of the heritage area, has a comprehensive plan (2009); a waterfront plan entitled “Achieving Niagara Falls’ Future: An Assessment of Niagara Fall’s Waterfront Planning (2002); and a draft City of Niagara Falls Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) from 1992. Moving northward of the City of Niagara Falls, the Village of Lewiston has a LWRP (1991), the Town of Lewiston is in the process of updating their comprehensive plan and a 2011 draft is under review, the Town of Porter has a comprehensive plan (2004), and the Village of Youngstown has a LWRP (1990). Niagara County prepared the Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan (2009).

In a comprehensive plan, a local government articulates a vision for how the community can develop. The local government exercises control over land use, through planning policies and zoning ordinances, in an effort to achieve the community’s vision.

#### **Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans**

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), overseen by New York State, includes a planning document prepared by the local community and a program to implement the plan. The LWRP plan is a land and water use plan and strategy for addressing coastal resources and issues such as waterfront development, historic and scenic resources, flooding and erosion, water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, public access and recreation, water uses and harbor management, and agriculture (NYSDOS, Division of Coastal Resources 2011). The Village of Lewiston and Village of Youngstown last produced a LWRP consistent with the New York state authorization program over twenty years ago, in 1991 and 1990 respectively which outline several capital improvement projects for the waterfronts of these two communities.

#### **Certified Local Government Program**

The CLG program is administered by the National Park Service and State Historic Preservation Office, and allows participating jurisdictions access to preservation-oriented technical assistance and to federal funding. To qualify for status as a CLG, the locality must (1) have legislation for the designation and protection of historic properties, (2) a historic preservation review commission, (3) an on-going effort to survey and inventory historic properties, and (4) allow for adequate public participation in the historic preservation program (NYS SHPO 2011).

Two jurisdictions within the heritage area, the City of Niagara Falls and the Village of Lewiston, are Certified Local Governments (CLGs). This status allows these communities to have unique access to technical and financial assistance for historic preservation from the State Historic Preservation Office. Through the CLG program the Village of Lewiston and the City of Niagara Falls may receive preservation-related technical assistance, legal advice, and training; be involved in identifying properties for the State and National Registers of Historic Places; network with other CLG communities; and access grants specifically designed for CLG communities (NYSHPO website 2011).

### **City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan, 2009**

The *Comprehensive Plan for the City of Niagara Falls, USA, 2009* presents a long-term strategy for rebuilding the city both economically and physically. It includes a vision for how the Core City Planning Area, which is essentially downtown Niagara Falls, should develop over the next twenty years through 2030, strategies to achieve the vision, and citywide policies that guide development in the other three Planning Areas as well (De Veaux Highland, Hyde Park, and LaSalle).

The major element of the plan is reinvestment in and redevelopment of the Core City Area. “The Core City is targeted because it has the greatest potential with regard to tourism development, residential and commercial renewal and intensification, the provision and growth of regional services and amenities, including education, and the creation of a more rich and diverse cultural and public realm” (NFC Comprehensive Plan 2009:2). The plan is premised on the idea that growth in the Core City will lead to renewal of the whole city.

The vision and policies put forth in the city’s comprehensive plan affect a large portion of the heritage area’s landmass and resources. The City of Niagara Falls is 16.8 square miles and contains, roughly, over half the land area of the National Heritage Area, adjoins four state parks of the heritage area (Niagara Falls State Park, NFSP Goat Island, De Veaux Woods State Park, Whirlpool State Park, and Devil’s Hole State Park), and includes historic districts and historic sites found on the inventory of resources for the heritage area.

The plan contains language and policy specific to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area including the statement that it could bring “exciting partnership opportunities, as well as projects and financial support to achieve significant change along the city’s riverfront” (NF Comprehensive Plan 2009:15). Specific opportunities mentioned include heritage interpretation programs, tourism infrastructure, a regional parks agency, and other economic development initiatives. Specific goals, objectives and policies that address issues relevant to the heritage area include:

- City Renewal Principle 3.0 - A well-designed network comprised of the riverfront, streets, parks, squares and other open spaces will not only advance the purposes and intent of developing the Niagara River Greenway and the Niagara National Heritage Area, but play a key role in enhancing the city’s image and its quality of life, while creating an attractive setting for high-quality private sector reinvestment. A network of green public spaces and improved public environments will extend the value of the City’s riverfront edge into larger areas of the Core City (NF Comprehensive Plan 2009:28).
- Core City Vision - By coordinating the establishment of the Niagara River National Heritage Area, the creation of a NYS Niagara River Greenway and URR Heritage Area, the creation of a ‘Gorge-View’ Cultural District, the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway, and other proposed waterfront projects, the city can create a riverfront corridor

- equal to, if not surpassing, the quality and diversity offered by the Niagara Parks Commission in Canada (NF Comprehensive Plan 2009:31).
- Core City Strategy 4.1.2 – Create the Cultural District: Establish the partnership arrangement necessary to undertake the Cultural District as a destination attraction within Niagara Falls”. “The National Park Service would become an important partner with the establishment of the National Heritage Area along the Niagara River corridor (NF Comprehensive Plan 2009:44-45).
  - General Citywide Policy 7.4.10 – Establish agreements with State Parks and a management entity to implement the City Waterfront Programs and develop a Natural Heritage Area Master Plan and Programming Strategy (NFCP 2009:105).
  - General Citywide Policy 7.9.1 – Develop the Niagara waterfront, the Falls, Gorge, and River as a great public space of international significance. Action 2: Lead in the development of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NF Comprehensive Plan 2009:116).

#### **Town of Porter Comprehensive Plan, 2004**

The Town of Porter’s Comprehensive Plan entitled ‘Connecting Our Past with the Future’ provides direction for growth and development in areas outside of the Village of Youngstown.

#### **Town of Lewiston, Comprehensive Plan, 2011 update**

At the time this report was prepared, the Town of Lewiston was in the process of updating its comprehensive plan.

#### **Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030**

Prepared in 2009, this is the county’s first comprehensive plan and it provides a vision and policy for county growth over the course of twenty years. The county’s overarching goals are to: “enhance Niagara County’s role as a world class destination, a center of commerce, a model for sustainable environments, and a premier place to live” (CHA 2009:2). It highlights concern over the adverse impacts of sprawl as growth patterns show development moving into formerly rural areas. It provides detailed information for each community in the heritage area and comments that the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is expected to have a “significant positive impact on the tourism industry” on the county (CHA 2009:III-38).

#### **3.4.12 Transportation**

The heritage area is served by interstate highway that connects to other interstates and the highway system in Canada, by way of three international bridges. State highways run north-south through the heritage area and east-west across the City of Niagara Falls. The Niagara Falls Transit Authority maintains a bus terminal and Amtrak is currently developing a multi-modal transit facility in the city. There are three public boat launch facilities in the heritage area. The Niagara Falls International Airport is located just east of the City of Niagara Falls, and can accommodate charter flights and the largest cargo planes. The Buffalo Niagara International Airport is in nearby Buffalo and has an average of 133 daily flights and nonstop service to 22 cities (NCCED 2011).

A multi-modal transportation facility with a new International Train Station is planned for the Whirlpool Rapids bridgehead in the City of Niagara Falls. It will be a border crossing facility as well as providing passenger rail service. The city also plans to reconnect its downtown and neighborhoods to the waterfront through reconfiguring the Robert Moses Parkway, altering the street pattern, and adding trails.

With regard to transportation, the Niagara County Center for Economic Development notes that nearly 70% of goods are moved by truck, and that the rail system network connects to ports on the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf of Mexico, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

#### **Robert Moses Parkway**

The Robert Moses Parkway extends from the Grand Island Bridge to the Village of Youngstown. It is managed by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, New York Power Authority, and the NYS Department of Transportation. The City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan states that the parkway should be reconfigured and some sections removed to allow pedestrian and street connections between the city and riverfront and to create new opportunities for economic development along the riverfront (NFCP 2009:36-37).

#### **3.4.13 Utilities**

Large utilities as well as small suppliers provide electricity and gas to Niagara County. The National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation provides natural gas and National Grid supplies electricity to the heritage area as well as other parts of the county. The New York Power Authority (NYPA) is one of the world's largest hydroelectric power plants. COVANTA Company of Niagara is a large waste to energy facility located in the City of Niagara Falls. Verizon, Sprint, Cingular, and other companies provide telecommunication services county-wide (CHA 2009:III-33).

### **3.5 Tourism and Visitor Experience (EA Impact Topic)**

In the past, the City of Niagara Falls and other communities in the region relied upon manufacturing industries as the primary driver of the local economy. The tourism experience on the American side of the Falls was the domain of New York State Parks, their selected vendors, and loosely organized private tourism interests. Meanwhile, public and private sector interests in Niagara Falls, Ontario, joined forces to unite behind a shared vision and plans leading to a dominant position as the regional visitor destination. This united approach to tourism by the Canadians has caused Niagara Falls, USA, to lose considerable market share. The revitalization of Niagara Falls, New York and increasing visitation regionally is dependent upon reversing this trend and creating a high-quality visitor experience based upon the assets and character in the heritage area.

#### **3.5.1 National Trends in Heritage Tourism**

The leisure market for travel and tourism directly contributed \$526 billion to the United States economy in 2010. Three out of four domestic trips (77 percent) are for leisure travel. Travel and tourism is one of America's largest employers, directly employing more than 7.4 million people and creating a payroll income of \$188.3 billion, and \$118 billion in tax revenues for federal, state and local governments. (*Source: U.S. Travel Association, 2011*)

In addition to creating new jobs, new business and higher property values, well-managed tourism improves the quality of life and builds community pride. According to a 2009 national research study on cultural and heritage travel in the United States by Mandela Research, 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling, which translates to 118.3 million adults each year. Cultural and heritage visitors spend, on average, \$994 per trip compared to \$611 for all U.S. travelers, and they stay longer than other U.S. travelers (*Source: Cultural & Heritage Traveler Study, Mandela Research, LLC, 2009*) Perhaps the biggest



benefits of cultural heritage tourism, though, are diversification of local economies and preservation of a community's unique character.

The *Cultural & Heritage Traveler Study* also identified activities of interest to cultural and heritage travelers. This study reconfirmed the findings of earlier national studies for this market segment, emphasizing that cultural heritage travelers are seeking a well-rounded visitor experience offering a variety of options and opportunities. Specifically, the study found that among cultural heritage travelers:

- 40% experienced local cuisine
- 39% visited historic sites
- 39% explored small towns
- 38% visited state/national parks
- 34% took a self-guided walking tour
- 33% visited historic buildings
- 32% shopped for local arts and crafts
- 31% visited history museums/centers
- 28% visited arts museums/galleries
- 25% visited natural history museums/centers

### 3.5.2 Tourism in Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is an established national and international tourism destination, attracting an estimated six to eight million visitors each year on the American side and an estimated 12 million visitors annually on the Canadian side of the Falls. Estimates for visitation to the United States side in 2009 dropped to 5.5 million, a drop attributed to the weaker economy. In recent years visitation on the U.S. side has been helped by the value of the Canadian dollar versus the U.S. dollar, which has attracted Canadian shoppers to the United States. In addition, tighter international border restrictions have kept American visitors without passports on the American side. It should be noted that as Niagara Falls is not a gated attraction, it is difficult to accurately track the exact number of visitors who come to see the Falls each year.

The *Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* states that citizens in Niagara Falls noted that while “Niagara Falls has been a major tourist attraction for almost 200 years, there is a feeling that on the American side of the Falls the presentation of the visitor experience has not kept pace with that of Niagara Falls, Ontario.” A number of stakeholders commented that while the Falls are a tremendous draw, once a visitor has seen the Falls, it is challenging to get them to stay for a more extensive experience in the region. Key goals for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area are encouraging longer stays in the Niagara River valley; extending visitation in the shoulder and off seasons; and improving the quality of the visitor experience on the American side.

Additionally, visitation is concentrated in the summer months, with major attractions reaching capacity on peak weekends such as the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, and Labor Day. Some key attractions, such as the Maid of the Mist and Cave of the Winds, are only open seasonally due to weather considerations.

While there are a number of entities focused on tourism *marketing* for the region, there are fewer entities with a focus on tourism *product development*. A notable exception is USA Niagara, which has focused on a number of key bricks-and-mortar projects in the City of Niagara Falls. Recently completed projects include the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation's visitor

center, and USA Niagara has provided \$13 million toward Niagara County Community College's culinary center now under construction in downtown Niagara Falls. USA Niagara helped coordinate a holiday market in December 2011 featuring "pop-up retail" in downtown along with bonfires, Santa, and the charm of cobblestone streets. It is hoped that this month-long event will become an annual opportunity to boost sales in the off season, and test out retail concepts that could grow into year-round businesses.

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area has some tremendous tourism strengths and opportunities, including:

- Niagara Falls is already a well-known international tourism destination that attracts a large number of visitors from all over the world.
- The designation as a National Heritage Area brings the credibility of the National Park Service to the American side of the Falls.
- Niagara Falls is actively promoted by Niagara USA as well as by the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau to both domestic and international travelers.
- The Niagara River valley experience on the American side offers spectacular natural areas along the gorge that are currently underutilized, since visitors tend to cluster at the Falls.
- The gorge offers a variety of nature based experiences, including the string of state parks along the river and the trails that will ultimately provide a continuous experience from the Falls to the fort through the efforts of the Niagara Greenway and others.
- There is an ongoing investment in the Niagara River valley through dedicated funding sources such as the bricks-and-mortar funding available through Niagara USA for projects in the City of Niagara Falls and grants through the Niagara Greenway.
- The proximity of attractions within the Niagara River gorge. Visitors can travel from one end of the National Heritage Area to the other (from Niagara Falls State Park to Old Fort Niagara) in less than 20 minutes.
- The Niagara River valley has a rich history with stories about the natural phenomena of the Falls, the history of tourism, the development of power and industry, and the role of the river valley as a borderland and border crossing.
- The current favorable exchange rate is drawing Canadians across the border to the Buffalo-Niagara area for activities such as shopping and dining. In addition, tighter border restrictions have meant that Americans lacking passports stay on the American side of Niagara Falls and are not able to get to the Canadian side.
- Buffalo is undergoing a renaissance and is investing heavily in promoting the city's architecture and arts attractions to cultural and heritage travelers. Buffalo's new cultural heritage travelers could be an attractive target market for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.
- Between the combined marketing efforts of the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation, the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Niagara Falls Tourism in Ontario, millions of dollars are already being invested to promote this region to travelers.

Key challenges include:

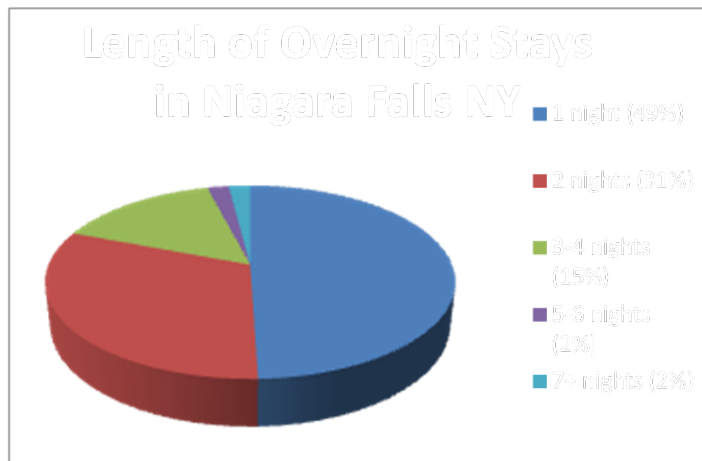
- Although Niagara Falls attracts a large number of visitors, those visitors typically do not have an extended stay in the area.

- The number of visitors to Niagara Falls, New York is about half the number of visitors attracted to Niagara Falls, Ontario.
- There is a lack of connections between sites in the Niagara River valley. This includes both physical connections (a comprehensive wayfinding system to link sites throughout the corridor as well as the lack of any kind of public transportation to link sites together) as well as thematic connections (the lack of tourism products that link together heritage sites in Niagara Falls into connected story experiences for visitors). As one Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commissioner observed “We have all the ingredients for success, what we currently lack is the way to put all the pieces together.”
- The City of Niagara Falls as seen from Niagara Falls State Park lacks visual appeal, which deters visitors at the state park from exploring outside the state park’s boundaries.
- While revitalization efforts are underway in the City of Niagara Falls, the city still lacks visitor services such as dining and retail. In addition, pockets of revitalization such as the Third Street commercial district are visually disconnected from Niagara Falls State Park, the primary attraction for many visitors.
- While the City of Niagara Falls has some lodging properties downtown within walking distance of the Falls, few can offer a view of the Falls the way many Niagara Falls Ontario lodging properties can, which limits what lodging properties on the U.S. side can charge. Many of the Niagara Falls lodging properties are on the “strip” outside of downtown, limiting pedestrian traffic downtown in the evenings.
- An existing history of competition rather than collaboration amongst many tourism partners. Tour operators compete for a share of the lucrative group tour market for Niagara Falls. There is also competition between Niagara Falls and Buffalo, as well as competition between the U.S. side and the Canadian side of Niagara Falls with each competing for their share of Niagara Falls visitors.
- Existing “turf” contests between the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara Falls State Park; between the City of Niagara Falls and other municipalities of the Niagara River valley; and between the Niagara River valley and the greater Niagara region including Erie County and Ontario, Canada, have all made partnership efforts challenging.
- Winter weather limits the season for some attractions, such as Maid of the Mist and Cave of the Winds.
- Poor economic conditions in the City of Niagara Falls, New York, resulting in areas of visual blight that signal a lack of community awareness and pride.
- Negative perceptions are also a barrier. For example, perceptions about Niagara Falls as a quick stop on the way to somewhere else instead of being a destination, or a once-in-a-lifetime stop rather than a destination for repeat visits; perceptions about harsh winter weather, and perceptions about the distance to other attractions in the Niagara River valley.

### **3.5.3 Profile of Visitors to Niagara Falls, New York**

According to a 2008 Visitor Report for Niagara Falls, NY completed by Longwoods, a little more than half (57 percent) of the 6 million person trips to Niagara Falls are day trips. While day trips generate tourism revenues, the economic impact of tourism goes up dramatically when visitors stay overnight, as lodging often makes up the single largest travel expense.

Among current overnight travelers to Niagara Falls NY, 32 percent come from New York, 8 percent come from Florida, 8 percent come from Pennsylvania, 7 percent come from California, 6 percent come from Ohio, 6 percent come from New Jersey and 4 percent come from Michigan. New York City is one of the top city markets for overnight trips to Niagara Falls, comprising 15 percent of overnight person trips. Other strong city markets include Buffalo NY (11 percent), Rochester NY (6 percent), Cleveland OH (5 percent), San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose (4 percent), and Tampa/St. Petersburg FL (4 percent) (*Longwoods 2008 Visitor Report for Niagara Falls*). The Longwoods study found that the majority (80 percent) of overnight travelers stay only one or two nights in Niagara Falls with the average nights spent in Niagara Falls being 1.9 nights. Overnight visitors spend on average \$167 per person overnight.



Other key findings in the 2008 Visitor Report include the fact that Niagara Falls visitors are more likely to use the internet to both plan and book their trip (20 percent more than the U.S. average for internet use for travel) and are most likely to arrive in Niagara traveling by car. These findings indicate that travelers within driving distance of Niagara Falls are a very strong target market. As indicated in the *NTCC Marketing Plan 2010-1011*, “The majority of domestic daytrip and overnight visitors to Niagara USA come from the Middle Atlantic states, within a 7-hour drive of the region. 65 percent of domestic visitors travel by car to the region, positioning Niagara USA as a great driving destination.”

### 3.5.4 Visitation at Niagara Falls, New York Attractions

Although the Falls attracts a large number of visitors, these visitors do not necessarily stay in the area to visit other attractions in the Niagara River valley (see Table 3-14).

Table 3-14: Annual Visitation at Attractions	
Attraction	# of Visitors/Year
Niagara Falls	6-8,000,000
Aquarium of Niagara Falls	233,000
Old Fort Niagara	80,000
Power Vista	60-70,000

The core boundaries of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area extend from Niagara Falls to Old Fort Niagara. These two “book ends” are both National Historic Landmarks – a designation provided by the National Park Service to designate the nation’s most historically significant

landmarks. While both sites have this designation and they are only twenty minutes apart, Old Fort Niagara attracts only one percent of the number of visitors who come to Niagara Falls each year.

### 3.5.5 Closest Markets for Niagara Falls, New York

Niagara Falls is within easy driving distance of several major metropolitan cities. Day tours are even available from New York City, including the short flight between New York City to Buffalo and guided bus transportation from Buffalo up to Niagara Falls.

City	Population	# Miles	Drive time	Flight Time
Buffalo, NY	276,059	25	30 minutes	NA
Toronto, Canada	2,480,000	80	1.5 hours	NA
Rochester, NY	208,123	73	1.25 hours	NA
Syracuse, NY	140,658	150	2.5 hours	NA
Cleveland, OH	444,313	214	3.5 hours	50 minutes
New York City, NY	8,214,426	409	7 hours	1.25 hours
Philadelphia, PA	1448,394	416	7 hours	1.25 hours
Boston, MA	590,793	475	7.5 hours	1.5 hours
Washington, DC	581,530	406	8 hours	1.25 hours

### 3.4.6 Tourism Partners in Niagara Falls

#### Niagara USA

The mission of the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NTCC), also known as Niagara USA, is “to expand the economic prosperity of the Niagara USA communities by generating individual and group visitation.” The organization has a 14-person staff and a 16-member board of directors. Funding for NTCC comes from the Niagara County bed tax, casino revenues, and earned income from tour bookings.

The Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation’s 2010-2011 marketing plan identifies 21 target and emerging markets for the region with specific marketing



actions designed to reach each target audience. Five target markets focus on specific interests (sport fishing, boating, biking/hiking, birding, and shoppers from southern Ontario). Five of these markets include people within a seven-hour drive (individual leisure travelers, median-income families with children, empty nesters, gaming-motivated travelers, and in-market visitors). Three focus on international target markets (Germany/UK, India, and China/Korea). Seven target markets focus on group tours (student/youth performance groups, national associations, NY state associations, NY state civic groups, military reunions, African American church/social groups, and domestic motorcoach operators). A final target market addresses destination weddings/honeymoons. While some of NTCC's target markets may include heritage travelers, the heritage tourism market is not currently specifically called out as one of the organization's target markets.

In the summer of 2010, Niagara USA opened a new \$2.4 million Niagara USA Visitor Center in downtown Niagara Falls. In addition to a staffed visitor information desk, the facility offers brochures and visitor information for the region and a touch screen computer with Internet access. Exhibits about the region are placed along the exterior wall of the facility.

Panels describe the area's history and heritage, arts and culture, and other regional efforts such as the panel pictured here describing the Great Lakes Seaway Trail. None of the panels currently on display describes the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, which was just being formed when these panels were created.



While NTCC's strategic plan includes an overall visitor profile study, attendance number for individual attractions is not broken down. NTCC plans to undertake visitor satisfaction research, though this has not yet been implemented.

### **Niagara Falls State Park**

America's oldest state park and clearly the anchor attraction for the Niagara Falls region, this state park welcomes between six and eight million visitors annually. The state park runs the Discovery Pass program, and has several concessionaires within the park who provide operational support under the direction of state parks. The largest of these concessionaires is Delaware North. Delaware North provides marketing assistance and operates the gift shops and food services within the state park. Delaware North hires over 300 seasonal employees to work in the park each year in addition to its year-round staff. New York State Parks operates the parking lots, trolleys, and the Cave of the Winds attraction. Destination Cinemas is the concessionaire for the Niagara Adventure Theater, and the Maid of the Mist Corporation is the concessionaire operating the Maid of the Mist.

### **Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce**

The Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce ([www.NiagaraRiverRegion.com](http://www.NiagaraRiverRegion.com)) is a membership organization that supports businesses in Lewiston, Youngstown, Porter, Sanborn, and Ransomville. The Chamber has about a thousand members county-wide, with about a third in the City of Niagara Falls, a third in Lockport, and a third in the rest of the county. While tourism

promotion is not its primary function, the Chamber does provide visitor information for travelers visiting the river communities north of Niagara Falls. It has launched a “shop local” campaign, worked with local restaurants on a farm-to-table program, offers professional development seminars, and generally serves as a business advocate.

### **Niagara University College of Hospitality and Tourism Management**

Niagara University has offered a bachelor’s degree in tourism since 1968, and faculty from this program have worked with both the Niagara Falls and Buffalo tourism agencies on a number of projects. The university has an ambassador program for the Niagara Falls conference center and has offered a number of hospitality training programs for front line staff.

“The National Heritage Area can be an umbrella to help us celebrate the uniqueness of our heritage.”

– Jan Van Harssel, Niagara University

### **Niagara 1812 Legacy Council**

This Canada-based bi-national council ([www.visit1812.com](http://www.visit1812.com)) has been working on plans to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812. Participating sites in the United States include Old Fort Niagara and sites in eleven U.S. states as well as sites in Canada. While Canada has allocated substantial funding for the War of 1812 bicentennial, to date very little money has been allocated or secured by sites in the United States.

### **Private Tour Operators**

A number of private tour operators in the Niagara Falls area offer guided tour experiences in and around Niagara Falls, many offering multi-lingual experiences. Some tour operators offer specialized experiences such as the African-American heritage focus of Motherland Connexions or the sailing tours offered by Liberty Excursions. Most tour operators work with both Niagara USA and the Buffalo Niagara CVB. Tour operators working in the region include:

- Bedore Tours, Inc.
- Club Tours
- Encounter Niagara Tours
- Gray Line Niagara Falls
- Horizon Tours
- Liberty Excursions
- Mirage Tours
- Motherland Connexions
- Niagara Christian Heritage Tours
- Niagara Frontier Scenic Tours
- Over the Falls Tours, Inc.
- Village Wine Tours

A number of tour operators offer a four-hour tour of the American side of Niagara Falls as well as a four-hour tour of the Canadian side. The standard tour of the American side of the Falls includes the Maid of the Mist and Cave of the Winds. As a number of tour operators offer a similar four-hour tour product, there is a highly competitive sales environment to capture a share of this lucrative market. Some tour operators collaborate with local hotels on exclusive arrangements whereby the hotel agrees to promote a specific tour product in exchange for a financial return from the tour operator. Some tour operators have a desk or even an entire “Niagara Falls Visitor Center” operation in lodging properties.



Because the standard four-hour guided tour of the American side of the Falls overlaps with the offerings of the Niagara Falls State Park Discovery Pass, tour operators and lodging properties collaborating with tour operators do not have an incentive to promote the Discovery Pass because it includes many of the same attractions in the guided group tour product they are trying to sell.

Some tour operators, like Motherland Connexions, also offer value-added experiences to help visitors learn more about other aspects of the region's heritage, such as the area's connection to the Underground Railroad. This includes living history experiences tailored for the interests and timetable for each group. Some attractions in the area, such as Artpark, are difficult for tour operators to include because the summer season schedule is not announced until May, which is too late for most group tours.

Due to the large number of group tour businesses in Niagara Falls, the tour operators serving Niagara Falls provide additional tourism marketing for Niagara Falls, although marketing efforts are focused on promotion of their own group tour products and services. Tour operators also have the opportunity for direct contact with a large number of the visitors coming to the area.

### **Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau**

The primary target market for the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (BNCVB) is domestic cultural tourism with a strong focus on arts and architecture. While Erie County is the BNCVB's primary service area, it markets attractions in Niagara County as well, due to the proximity and the draw of Niagara Falls for travelers. BNCVB CEO Dottie Gallagher Cohen explains, "We used to market Buffalo as a stop on the way back from Niagara Falls. Now we feel that there is a real story and an experience in Buffalo, so now we can lead with Buffalo and close with Niagara Falls." Funding for the BNCVB comes from an Erie County grant as well as other sources for a total annual budget for 2011 of more than \$3 million (*source: Buffalo Niagara CVB 2011 Marketing and Sales Plan*).

According to the *Buffalo Niagara CVB's 2011 Marketing and Sales Plan*, the organization's work plan includes sales, media relations, consumer advertising, visitor readiness and information (maintaining information centers and training local volunteers as Buffalo Ambassadors), and convention services. A key external sales and marketing strategy is to "develop and implement marketing strategies to promote arts, culture and history to external customers." In addition, the BNCVB plans to support local marketing efforts "through the implementation of a Convention Concierge Program (and) the creation of a Community Relations position (in) response to the cultural community's desire for a more aggressive dispersal of convention delegates throughout the community" (*source: Buffalo Niagara: A Vision for the Future/A Plan for Success, Five Year Strategic Plan 2009-2013*).

The BNCVB has received funding to work with the Bi-national Tourism Alliance and Niagara University on an analysis of visitor readiness as well as implementing training programs. The strategic plan also includes an action item for the BNCVB "to be more involved in regional projects that impact the tourism/hospitality sector" as well as being a strong advocate for "multi-modal linkages, asset improvements, and new systems to make connections among regional assets and amenities." Specifically, this would include "updated and user friendly transportation systems and assets (including) a comprehensive wayfinding system, linkages among transportation modes, visitor attractions and various amenities and improvements to ease-of-use of transportation systems/modes (i.e. NFTA, trolleys, Seaway Trail, Airport linkages, Bridges to Canada, etc.)."

According to a 2009 study by ArtsMarket, between 2006 and 2009 there has been a distinct shift in the visitors to Buffalo's cultural destinations. A study completed by ArtsMarket in 2006



indicated that the majority of visitors were in Buffalo because they were visiting family and friends whereas in a follow-up 2009 study, cultural destinations are attracting visitors who specifically traveled to Buffalo for the arts and architecture.

The *Buffalo Niagara 2011 Destination Planning Guide* for meeting and travel professionals includes information about attractions in both Erie and Niagara counties. Many of the sample itineraries in the meeting planning guide include sites in the Niagara River valley, such as:

- **Makin' Memories Tour** includes Old Fort Niagara, Power Vista, Niagara Falls, and Niagara Adventure Theater, and other sites in Erie and Niagara counties.
- **"Toss the Textbooks" Interactive Student Tour** includes Old Fort Niagara, Maid of the Mist, Power Vista, Niagara Adventure Theater, the Whirlpool Jet Boat, an in-depth educational program about "Niagara's Raging Rapids" and other sites in Erie and Niagara counties
- **Nature's Splendor Tour** includes Artpark, Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, Niagara Falls State Park, Cave of the Winds, Maid of the Mist, Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, Aquarium of Niagara, Niagara Falls, the Top of the Falls Restaurant, and other sites in Erie and Niagara counties.
- **Historical Treasures Tour** includes Old Fort Niagara, Freedom Crossing: The Underground Railroad at the Castellani Art Museum, and other sites in Erie and Niagara counties.
- **Experience Edu-Excursion** includes Niagara Falls, the Niagara Adventure Theater, the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, Niagara Gorge Trail Hikes, Old Fort Niagara, and other sites in Erie and Niagara counties.

### **Agricultural Tours**

The Niagara Wine Trail operates across the county to promote farms, and this helps sustain farms on the county's historically agricultural landscape. The Niagara Escarpment Wine Trail is one of two routes that run through the county and it is the only one that traverses part of the heritage area – as it follows the natural contour of the escarpment as it extends through the Village of Lewiston to the Falls. Vineyards are not located in the heritage area, and the closest wineries are clustered near the intersection of Highways 425 and 104 west of Lockport.

Another organization that helps sustain and thereby preserve the agricultural landscape remaining in the heritage area and county is the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County (CCE), which provides a *Pick Niagara Local Farm & Agri-Tourism Map* that shows the following farmers markets within the heritage area: the Niagara Falls City Market (at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and Pine Avenue), the Bradt Tree Farms in Lewiston and Shippy Orchards in Youngstown. The CCE notes that Niagara County is "first among New York counties in peaches, sweet cherries and plum/prunes, second in tart cherries and pears and fifth in apple and berry production" (CCE 2011).

### **Bi-national Economic & Tourism Alliance**

The mission of the Binational Economic & Tourism Alliance (BETA; [www.btapartners.com](http://www.btapartners.com)) is "to provide the platform for U.S. and Canadian businesses and organizations to work collaboratively on cross-border economic and tourism development initiatives, in order to raise the regional and national awareness of the importance of cross-border communities to the North American economy, and ensure strong, sustainable growth and job creation in these communities" (source: [www.btapartners.com](http://www.btapartners.com)). BETA is a not-for-profit tourism industry trade

organization with a two-person staff led by a volunteer board. BETA works in advocacy, professional development, and information sharing. Its primary focus area is the Niagara River corridor, although the hope is ultimately to expand to encompass the entire Great Lakes region. Since 2002, BETA has worked with a volunteer steering committee from Canada and the U.S. to coordinate an annual “Doors Open Niagara” event every fall. Heritage properties on both sides of the border are open free of charge during this weekend-long event. The 2010 Doors Open Niagara included sites such as Power Vista and the Town of Porter Historical Society Museum in Youngstown.

Due to a combination of funding challenges and a change in the date for the event from October to June to coordinate with upcoming Bicentennial events for 2012-2014, the Doors Open event was not held in 2011 but is scheduled to resume in June of 2012.

### **Greater Niagara USA**

Greater Niagara USA ([www.GreaterNiagaraUSA.com](http://www.GreaterNiagaraUSA.com)) promotes attractions within a five-county region in New York that includes Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming counties. The website includes suggested driving tours:

- **“Niagara River Magic Driving Tour”** which includes the Niagara Reservation State Park, Cave of the Winds, Maid of the Mist, the Niagara Discovery Center, Aquarium of Niagara, Power Vista, Castellani Art Museum, Historic Lewiston, and Artpark.
- **“Buffalo Niagara Heritage Trail North Driving Tour”** which includes Niagara Falls, Maid of the Mist, and Old Fort Niagara as well as other attractions in Canada, Lockport, and Buffalo.
- **“War of 1812 Driving Tour”** which includes Artpark and Old Fort Niagara as well as other attractions in Niagara County and Canada.
- **“Underground Railroad Driving Tour”** which includes the First Presbyterian Church and the Freedom Crossing sculpture in Lewiston as well as other sites in Niagara and Erie counties and Canada.
- **“Family Fun Driving Tour”** which includes Power Vista, Old Fort Niagara, and the Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours along with other attractions in Niagara and Erie counties and Canada.

### **New York State Division of Tourism**

New York’s state tourism website ([www.iloveny.com](http://www.iloveny.com)) includes two suggested itineraries in the Greater Niagara tourism region, one of which is the Wonders of Nature and Design itinerary. This three-day suggested itinerary includes Niagara Falls State Park, the Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, the Maid of the Mist Boat Tour, Top of the Falls restaurant, Cave of the Winds, Aquarium of Niagara, Daredevil Museum, the Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, and the Lockport Cave and Underground Boat Ride. The website also includes links to the Greater Niagara USA travel region and Niagara USA’s websites.

### **3.5.7 Lodging**

Lodging options for overnight visitors to the Niagara Falls region are primarily clustered in Niagara Falls NY, Niagara Falls Ontario, and Buffalo. In Niagara Falls NY, several lodging properties are downtown within walking distance of the Falls, including the Comfort Inn, Crowne Plaza, and several other lodging properties. A number of other lodging properties are on Niagara Falls Boulevard within a short driving distance from the Falls. There are a few lodging options

available in the river towns to the north of Niagara Falls. Given the large number of hotel rooms available across the river in Niagara Falls Ontario and in Buffalo, visitors also have the option of staying in those locations as their base and visiting New York's Niagara River valley as a day trip.

For travelers seeking a more intimate lodging experience, there are eight bed & breakfast businesses in Niagara Falls offering a total of 36 rooms. Many are located in historic homes:

- Butler House Bed & Breakfast
- Elizabeth House Bed & Breakfast
- Hanover House Bed & Breakfast
- Hillcrest Inn
- The Holley Rankine House
- Niagara House Bed & Breakfast (vacation rental)
- Park Place Bed & Breakfast
- Rainbow House Bed & Breakfast

Other historic lodging properties in Niagara Falls include the 31-room Red Coach Inn, which opened in 1923, and the Giacomo, a new boutique hotel located in the 1929 Art Deco-style United Office Building in downtown Niagara Falls, which offers 38 hotel rooms and 24 apartments. This historic building, listed on both the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, was renovated as part of a public-private partnership among USA Niagara, the City of Niagara Falls, and a private developer. After standing vacant since the 1980s, the United Office building completed renovations in 2010.

There are roughly 4,000 hotel rooms in Niagara County, about 3,000 of which are in the City of Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls Ontario across the river has approximately 20,000 rooms, and an additional estimated 8,000 hotel rooms are available in Buffalo, NY. Average room rates in Niagara Falls New York tend to be lower than the average room rates in Buffalo and Niagara Falls Ontario.

### **3.5.8 Fully Independent Traveler Market**

Visitors planning trips to the Niagara Falls area can consult a variety of tourism websites such as [www.niagara-usa.com](http://www.niagara-usa.com), the official website for Niagara Falls, USA or [www.niagarafallstourism.com](http://www.niagarafallstourism.com), the official website for Niagara Falls, Ontario. In addition, there is a section on the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau website devoted to Niagara Falls (<http://www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/visitors/niagarafalls/>). Many individual attractions, hotels, and tourism related businesses in Niagara County also have their own websites as well.

Individual travelers can visit attractions in and around Niagara Falls on their own, or they can buy the Niagara USA Discovery Pass offered by Niagara Falls State Park. It includes admission to selected attractions on the American side of the Falls (Niagara: Legends of Adventure Theater, Aquarium of Niagara, Cave of the Winds, Niagara Gorge Discovery Center, the Maid of the Mist, and the Niagara Scenic Trolley, a shuttle within the state park). The pass costs \$33/adult and \$26/child and also includes discount coupons for a number of other attractions in the region. Participating vendors pay a fee to be included. Approximately 200,000 passes are printed each year, and passes are available in a number of locations, including the tollbooths leading from Canada into Niagara Falls. Passes can also be purchased online; travelers purchasing the Discovery Pass online receive a voucher which can be redeemed for an actual Discovery Pass after their arrival in Niagara Falls. Because the Discovery Pass is a paper pass rather than an

electronic pass, it is difficult to determine exact numbers of tickets redeemed at each participating attraction.

As New York State government regulations prohibit selling the Discovery Pass at wholesale rates to tour operators who could then resell the passes, those working in the tourism industry have no incentive to market the Discovery Pass as an alternative to their guided experiences. Tour operators must purchase the tickets in advance at full price and are not able to return unsold passes at the end of the season. Niagara Falls State Park does permit tour operators and other reselling the Discovery Pass to add on a \$1 service fee to cover credit card charges and handling fees. Some tour operators have indicated that while they would prefer to offer the Discovery Pass because it includes attractions on the American side of the Falls, they sell the Canadian Power Pass instead because that pass is commissionable.

The binational Niagara Falls Power Pass includes entry to more than 20 Niagara Falls attractions in the United States and Canada. The Power Pass is offered as a one-day, two-day, three-day or five-day pass with prices ranging from \$69.99/person for a one-day pass to \$142.99 for a five-day pass. The Power Pass includes all the attractions in the Discovery Pass plus the following:

- Additional “Power Pass” attractions in the United States:
- Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum
- Old Fort Niagara
- Niagara's Wax Museum of History
- Greg Frewin Magic Show
- Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruise
- Martin's Fantasy Island Family Theme Park
- Special Offer for the Whirlpool Jet Boats
- Shopping Package at Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls
- Niagara Wine Train
- “Power Pass” attractions in Canada:
- Nightmares Fear Factory
- Bird Kingdom
- IMAX Niagara
- Konica Minolta Tower Centre Observation Deck
- Lundy's Lane Historical Museums
- Louis Tussaud's Waxworks
- Ripley's Believe it or Not! Museum
- Ripley's Moving Theater
- Waves Indoor Waterpark

Due to the sheer numbers of travelers visiting Niagara Falls, tour operators are able to offer a variety of guided tour offerings that individual travelers can sign up for after arrival in Niagara Falls. In addition, tour operators and the convention and visitors bureaus work to bring groups to the area for guided tour experiences.

The strong visitor appeal of Niagara Falls has drawn private sector tourism businesses that have created a competitive environment as they each work to capture their share of Niagara Falls visitors. Some businesses have created their own “Welcome Centers” in downtown Niagara Falls. This creates some confusion between the new “official” Niagara USA visitor center and these other unsanctioned satellite locations run by individual private tour operators to market their tour products.



The competitive nature of tourism in Niagara Falls means that visitors may not be given complete information about all of their tour options. While not sharing information about competitors’ products benefits individual tourism businesses seeking to gain greater market share, this can lead to frustration on the part of visitors looking for the official Niagara USA Visitor Center or wishing they had known about all their options before making a decision.

**Table 3-16: Comparison of Existing Tour Package Prices in Niagara Falls**

Package	Description	Cost/Adult
Discovery Pass	Includes attractions in/near Niagara Falls State Park and access to shuttle within the state park plus discounts for other attractions.	\$33
Power Pass	Includes 20 attractions in U.S. and Canada, including all attractions in Discovery Pass. Also includes access to Peoplemover in Canada.	\$69.99/1 day OR \$142.99/5 days
Guided Tour	Four-hour guided tour of Niagara Falls attractions in the U.S.	\$89
Private tour operator	One-day guided tour of Niagara Falls including round-trip airfare from New York City. Price includes lunch overlooking the Falls and the Maid of the Mist.	\$448

### 3.5.9 Visitor Transportation

The Buffalo Niagara International Airport is 25 miles from the Falls. Discussions are underway to open up the Niagara Falls Airport to private passenger travel. The Niagara Falls Airport has an especially long runway which is ideal for long haul flights with larger planes. Additional air travel opportunities include the Toronto airport, which is 78 miles from the Falls. There is an Amtrak train station in the City of Niagara Falls about ten minutes from Niagara Falls State Park; construction is planned and funded that will enable moving the station to a location across from the Rainbow Bridge. Public bus service (Trailways) also serves the City of Niagara Falls. The closest car rental business to downtown Niagara Falls is at the Niagara Falls Airport.

Public transportation within the National Heritage Area for travelers was cited by many local stakeholders as a major challenge for the current visitor experience, especially as a private car or guided tour is currently the only way to reach many of its attractions. Within Niagara Falls State

Park, a seasonal shuttle service provides transportation, included with the purchase of the Discovery Pass or purchased separately for \$2/pass. Across the river in Canada, there is a seasonal “Peplemover” shuttle service that provides air-conditioned buses that depart from attractions every 20 minutes, serving a 19-mile loop along the Niagara Parkway. The Peplemover includes commentary provided by the shuttle drivers. Like the shuttle service in Niagara Falls State Park, access to the Niagara Parks Peplemover is included with the purchase of the Canadian “Power Pass.” Currently there is no comparable public or private shuttle option to link attractions within the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area on the United States side.

One individual attraction, Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours, has developed its own shuttle service to and from Niagara Falls State Park, offering free pick-up and drop-off service for ticketed customers several times a day.

For travelers arriving in Niagara Falls without a car, or for those who prefer to avoid parking fees and congestion at Niagara Falls State Park, many tour operators do provide tour service from area hotels for tours of the United States and/or Canadian side of the Falls. In addition, the Niagara Falls Transportation Authority (NFTA) operates a trolley system which links a number of Niagara Falls motels and the Outlet Mall with Niagara Falls State Park. This service is supported in part by the Niagara Falls bed tax. While area residents can pay to ride this shuttle, the primary riders for this shuttle service are tourists. A number of lodging facilities offer coupons for free shuttle service to the Falls for their overnight guests. For travelers who drive their own car to the state park, parking lots in Niagara Falls State Park currently cost \$10/car, with additional pay lots available outside the state park. Parking fees decrease for lots further away from the entrance to the state park.

There have been a number of efforts to establish a hop-on, hop-off shuttle service to link attractions outside of Niagara Falls State Park, though to date they have not been successful. About five or six years ago the NTCC worked on developing a public-private partnership with a local tour operator to link attractions outside the state park. While the original intent was to underwrite the cost so that the shuttle could be offered free of charge for the first year, budget cuts prevented this plan from being implemented.

Private efforts to launch a hop-on, hop-off shuttle service outside of Niagara Falls State Park have had limited success to date. One pilot effort was tested by Grayline Tours in Niagara Falls several years ago. While Grayline has a successful track record of offering hop-on, hop-off shuttle service for many major destinations around the world, this private effort has had challenges generating ridership in Niagara Falls. The Grayline hop-on, hop-off shuttle tickets on the U.S. side of the Falls was priced at \$29 per day per person or \$39 for a two-day shuttle pass with half-price tickets for children.

Costs for the proposed Grayline shuttle were comparable with other hop-on, hop-off services offered by Grayline and substantially less than the per-person cost of a four-hour group tour ticket. However, ticket prices for the privately operated Grayline shuttle were significantly more expensive than the Canadian Peplemover operated by Niagara Parks. The Canadian Peplemover tickets currently cost \$8.85 for adults and \$5.35 for children (in Canadian dollars) for an all-day pass, and the Peplemover pass is included as part of the binational “Power Pass.” The Peplemover offers a 19-mile loop to connect key attractions on the Canadian side of the Falls.

Alternative modes of transportation have been tested by small businesses in the City of Niagara Falls to a limited extent. A new bike rental service for downtown Niagara Falls was launched

during the 2011 season with several bikes to rent from a facility on Falls Street, and there is at least one private vendor who offers pedicab services near Niagara Falls State Park. There are currently no comparable services operating in Lewiston or Youngstown.