

Chapter 6 • Community Revitalization.....	2
6.1 Vision and Goals for Community Revitalization.....	2
6.1.1 Approach for Sense of Place, Sense of Community	3
6.1.2 Approach for Economic Revitalization.....	3
6.2 Community Revitalization at the Regional Level.....	4
6.2.1 Regional Positioning	4
6.2.2 What is the Creative Economy?.....	5
6.2.3 The Great Lakes Megalopolis	6
6.2.4 The Toronto Metropolitan Area.....	6
6.2.5 Western New York Regional Economic Development Council.....	7
6.2.6 USA Niagara Development Corporation	8
6.3 Community Revitalization within the Heritage Area.....	9
6.3.1 Community Revitalization Objectives	9
6.3.2 Revitalization in the Heritage Area Communities	10
6.3.3 The National Trust's Main Street Program	15

Chapter 6 • Community Revitalization

If the information communicated during the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2011 Annual Conference held in Buffalo is an accurate indicator, the urban areas of the Buffalo-Niagara region are soon to emerge phoenix-like from decades of decline. The synergy of the public, non-profit, academic and business sectors joining forces in shared goals is reaching a critical mass. The investment of years of planning, resource advocacy and creative thinking is starting to payoff.

However, the hard work is not over. Like Buffalo, the City of Niagara Falls has had to contend with the loss of major business and industry, environmental contamination, and depopulation. Both cities are now looking to heritage tourism as a major component of the new regional economy. The bottom line is that the urban blight in Niagara Falls is one of the major hurdles the city has to overcome in order to position itself as a tourist-friendly city. An innovative approach using the tools and best practices available for local land use controls, historic preservation, and related financial incentives is a must to spur redevelopment of and reinvestment in the city's built environment.

This chapter addresses issues of community revitalization, planning, and economic development at the local, county, and regional levels. It outlines a framework for the heritage area organization that identifies possible partners and programs. The success of the heritage area in community revitalization will rely heavily on coordination and collaboration with these partners and programs. Also it is important for the heritage area organization to advocate for an economic development approach that integrates natural and cultural resource stewardship and heritage tourism principles and values.

6.1 Vision and Goals for Community Revitalization

The Environmental Assessment prepared for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area outlines the vision, mission, and goals that were developed for the heritage area as part of the planning process that preceded the preparation of this management plan. The vision for the heritage area specifically states that efforts of the heritage area organization are to enable "growth of a sustainable regional economy...in ways that benefit and unite its people and places." This lofty vision of sustainable growth balanced with responsible resource stewardship represents a reversal of previous development trends in Niagara County.

Nine goals were identified and adopted for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area addressing various areas of interest and potential action outlined in this management plan. Two of these goals address community revitalization and economic development:

Sense of Place, Sense of Community – Maintain and improve the sense of place and community in the Niagara region by assisting in the recognition and restoration of significant resources and landscapes and supporting their preservation, conservation and enhancement.

Economic Revitalization – Foster economic revitalization in the region by advocating the principles and best practices of heritage tourism.

The following approaches relating to community revitalization were identified for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as part of discussions with several special interest focus groups in a workshop setting and individual interviews. The information was then presented to the NFNHA Federal Commission for their consideration. During preparation of the management plan these ideas help to

further define strategies and objectives. The subsections below are organized under separate sense of Place, Sense of Community and Economic Revitalization headings whereas strategies for both are combined later in this chapter.

6.1.1 Approach for Sense of Place, Sense of Community

In the Preferred Alternative adopted by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission the following objectives were outlined in developing an approach for the goal entitled “Sense of Place, Sense of Community”:

- Assist in the recognition, restoration and enhancement of resources and landscapes.
- Support communities in using the Niagara River corridor to promote a regional sense of place.
- Integrate NFNHA Commission goals with the Niagara River Greenway Plan, City of Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan, planning documents of the Tribal Nations, and plans of the Village of Lewiston, Town of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown, and Town of Porter, along with other planning initiatives along the Niagara River corridor.
- Develop and assist heritage area communities and program partners in developing specific projects and events that create an unusual or unique sense of place along the Niagara River corridor.
- Place interpretive exhibits at regional transportation terminals such as the train station and airport to promote the heritage area.

6.1.2 Approach for Economic Revitalization

The following objectives were outlined in developing an approach for the goal entitled “Economic Revitalization”:

- Coordinate with and support local organizations in economic development initiatives focused on heritage tourism.
- Participate in a “Buy Local” initiative that encourages consumers to purchase locally made goods and services.
- Facilitate and promote locally made food products, arts, and crafts as part of the heritage tourism economy.
- Train local residents in skills and trades necessary to provide the goods and services associated with a strong heritage tourism economy.
- Working with local partners, implement an aggressive small business development program in commercial areas focused on providing high quality services to visitors and residents, with special attention to arts initiatives.
- Integrate interpretive programming into commercial districts serving both visitors and residents.
- Create a heritage tourism institute for the benefit of local residents in learning about local history, the natural environment, and heritage tourism.

In implementing these approaches the heritage area organization will assist its partners in developing and implementing projects and programs that contribute to economic revitalization of its communities using accepted best practices for preservation, conservation, and stewardship of significant cultural and natural resources in the heritage area and the region as a whole.

6.2 Community Revitalization at the Regional Level

Current fundamental changes in the global economy require that individual communities in metropolitan areas join forces in developing cohesive concentrations of industries, infrastructure, markets, and skilled workforce that work regionally and collectively in a connected physical and virtual landscape. In the “New Economy,” where city, county, state, and even national boundaries are diminished or irrelevant in the global marketplace, the statement ‘united we stand’ takes on a new and urgent meaning. American rustbelt cities, even though deteriorated and depopulated after years of decline, suddenly find that they have the proper density, infrastructure, and fabric to position themselves as competitive global communities. Communities with these physical assets, however, may still cling to yesterday’s ideas or inter-community grudges that will inevitably guarantee their continued decline. During the planning process in the development of this management plan it was readily apparent that the members of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission support the concept of regionalism. The coordinating entity for the National Heritage Area must maintain this perspective as it moves forward in implementing the management plan.

6.2.1 Regional Positioning

Globalization has forced the reconfiguration of communities, conferring value on the innovative, distinctive assets that have been historically formed and refined locally. Progress in technological development of transportation and communications over the past decades, particularly with changes in financing, outsourcing, and logistics, has greatly diluted competitive advantage for traditional industry in individual communities. Instead, larger metropolitan economies are competing globally in specialized sectors and fields tailored to their regional “clusters” (groupings of industries whose workforce, experience, and ideas flow among businesses and support formation of new businesses).

In the report *Metropolicy: Shaping a New Federal Partnership for a Metropolitan Nation* published by The Brookings Institution, this trend in clustering is further described:

More and more developed nations are becoming defined and fueled by their local, metropolitan economies. Before, analysis focused on what happens inside companies, how inputs of labor and capital are used for productivity of output. Now, what happens outside companies in the immediate business environment is just as important. With global competition in innovation of processes and products, the clustering of knowledge in the research community, consulting firms, skilled laborers, financial institutions, legal services, government entities, and specialized technology industries have become vitally important. Such agglomeration and diversity, unique to a metro area, catalyzes growth. Additionally, auxiliary industries in local services and trades evolve in such metropolitan areas, such as the production of wind turbines in the automotive industry of the greater Detroit and Cleveland areas. Cultural ambience even emerges with the area’s quality of place and historical heritage in the form of the arts (art galleries, music halls, publishing houses), non-profit venues (museums, performing arts theaters), and public assets (libraries, parks). Consequently, this new configuration of metropolitan economies requires equally new and adaptive government policymaking.

The heritage area organization must maintain a regional perspective while taking action locally. Strong partnerships with academia, tourism interests, the creative industries, “green” businesses, and other preservation and conservation organizations should be forged by the heritage area. This alliance then needs to promote a preservation and conservation agenda as a major component of community revitalization with local and regional economic development entities. Successful community revitalization

creates a high quality of life standard for residents, provides a pleasurable experiential environment for visitors, and serves to draw the workforce needed for the Creative Economy.

6.2.2 What is the Creative Economy?

Many observers of economic development believe that the world is at the beginning of an era of unprecedented global understanding and transformation. The actions needed to accommodate and manage balanced resource utilization, effective environmental protection, and sustained economic growth are increasingly apparent. The emergence of the Creative Economy is the means by which this will be achieved. Informed communities and regions will use to its best advantage quality design, technological innovation, responsible implementation, and comprehensive monitoring as the new model for economic growth.

At the heart of the Creative Economy is the concept that “human creativity is the ultimate economic resource” and that the industries of the 21st century will depend “increasingly on the generation of knowledge through creativity and innovation.” A definition for the Creative Economy has been adopted by the United Nations and features the following principles:

- Foster income-generation, job creation and export earnings while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development;
- Embrace economic, cultural and social aspects interacting with technology, intellectual property and tourism objectives;
- Advance knowledge-based economic activities with a development dimension and support linkages at macro and micro levels to the overall global economy; and
- Support feasible development options calling for innovative, multidisciplinary policy responses and intergovernmental action.
- The Creative Economy comprises eleven “Creative Industries” which include “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.” The eleven creative industries are:
 - Advertising
 - Architecture
 - Arts and antique markets
 - Designer fashion
 - Film, video and photography
 - Industrial design
 - Skilled trades
 - Software and computer game development
 - Music, visual and performing arts
 - Publishing
 - Television and radio

Physical geography is less important in the Creative Economy as virtual places, communities, and experiences are created in the online environment. However, clusters of physical and virtual communities that incorporate people and organizations associated with the creative industries work with less regard to traditional boundaries and organize in a flexible and responsive manner. Gradually, less importance will be placed on political boundaries, entities, and jurisdictions.

In a nutshell, the Creative Economy strives for the optimum delivery of an assemblage of products, services, and experiences using best practices promoted through an honest concept brand resulting in the transformation of the subject audience and an improved quality of life.

6.2.3 The Great Lakes Megalopolis

The Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Area is considered part of the Great Lakes Megalopolis, one of the world's largest economies incorporating 28 population centers in the United States and Canada that surround the five Great Lakes. This megalopolis encompasses the Great Lakes watershed with a total estimated population of 59 million people, including the globally competitive cities of Chicago and Toronto. It extends from St. Louis and Minneapolis on the west to Pittsburgh and Montreal on the east. It contains one-fifth of the world's surface fresh water and a combined shoreline of 10,210 miles along which an estimated 200 million tons of cargo are shipped annually.



Figure 6-1 The Great Lakes Megalopolis

There are many features and resources that communities within this mega-region share including similarities in climate, plant communities, wildlife, natural resources, history, cultural composition, transportation networks, and economy. It is also worthy of note that freshwater from four of the five Great Lakes passes through the Niagara region on its way to the Atlantic Ocean. These intra-region relationships should not only be acknowledged, but leveraged for maximum resource utilization efficiency and economic benefit for all of its communities. The mindset needs to be 'what happens in Sheboygan eventually finds its way to Niagara Falls' with the same attitude for an "upstream" trajectory as well.

ACTION: The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and its partners should consider the super-region for its shared macro-historical context, climate, environment, ethnic groups, and cultural traditions; hold in common the consumption and conservation of its resources; and regard it as a primary market area.

6.2.4 The Toronto Metropolitan Area

Toronto is at the center of the largest metropolitan area in Canada and is the eleventh largest in North America at 5.5 million people. By comparison, the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan area (Erie and Niagara counties) ranks 59th in North America with 1.1 million people and is the second largest metropolitan area in New York State (2010 census). Also the Toronto Metropolitan Economy generates one-fifth of Canada's gross domestic product, and is home to almost 40% of the headquarters for Canadian companies.

An extension of the Greater Toronto Area's economic sphere of influence that surrounds the western end of Lake Ontario up to Niagara Falls, Ontario is referred to by some economists and business executives as Canada's "Golden Horseshoe." This larger region represents a Canadian economic powerhouse which is highly integrated in terms of industry, trade, agriculture, and transportation networks. With a population of 8 million, the Golden Horseshoe is the sixth most populous urbanized area in North America, just behind the Baltimore-Washington-Northern Virginia Combined Statistical Area and is projected to grow to almost 12 million people by 2030.



Figure 6-2 Canada's Golden Horseshoe

Although not mandated by the federal enabling legislation that created the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, it is in the best interest of the heritage area organization and its partners to reach

across the river to coordinate and collaborate with Canadian interests. The Buffalo-Niagara region should take better advantage of its proximity to the Toronto Metropolitan Area and further integrate economically into Canada's "Golden Horseshoe."

ACTION: The National Heritage Area and its partners should coordinate and collaborate on programming with Canadian heritage tourism organizations and attractions establishing relationships with thematically related sites in Ontario, Canada.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area and its partners should consider developing a tourism product and outreach strategy that appeals to the Canadian market.

6.2.5 Western New York Regional Economic Development Council

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration has created the Regional Economic Development Council program to foster regional public-private partnerships for economic development. The councils are composed of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations who are charged with the preparation of a strategic plan. The program allows for streamlined state grant funding from multiple agencies for certain projects.

Erie and Niagara counties along with three other adjacent counties comprise the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council (WNYREDC), one of ten Regional Economic Development Councils in the State of New York charged with the preparation of a regional strategic plan for economic development. Among the goals stated in the WNYREDC plan is to develop high-quality tourism product for visitors. The Niagara Experience Center described in this management plan is showcased as a project in the strategic plan. Specific goals and actions from the plan are outlined below.

*******Start Callout**

Visitor spending in the Western New York region exceeded \$2.2 billion in 2009 – \$1.3 billion in Erie County and \$450 million in Niagara County.

*******End Callout**

Objectives for tourism outlined in the WNYREDC strategic plan include the following:

- **Improve visitor "gateway" experience/physical sense of entry to the Nation/State/Region –** The WNYREDC strategic plan proposes to develop design standards for several gateways into the country, state and region. Proposed locations include the NYS Thruway, the international bridges along the Niagara River, the Pennsylvania state border, and airports. A 1-800 number and website reference featured on the "welcome" signage would direct visitors to a centralized tourism information clearinghouse for the region. An example of a gateway project is the Ripley Gateway in Chautauqua County which will also provide traveler services.
- **Establish a regional wayfinding sign system –** The WNYREDC proposes to create a working committee comprised of federal, state and local agency representatives that would be responsible for developing a demonstration project for a regional wayfinding sign system. Cultural, natural, recreational, and other tourism-related destinations and attractions would be featured. Objectives for the committee would be to provide effective directional information; clearly mark the names and highway numbers of major roads and streets; promote an aesthetic and unique image for the region; and meet current standards for wayfinding signage. Standards derived from the demonstration project would be standardized and made available to state, county and local

agencies for use throughout the region. The committee could also facilitate a regional funding program to incrementally install the standardized signs throughout the region.

- **Create a concession arrangement to create new/enhanced Niagara Falls State Park attractions** – The WNYREDC proposes to work with New York State Parks on enhancing the visitor experience in Niagara Falls State Park. Objectives of the initiative would result in increased length of stay, more return visits, better utilization of existing park assets, and engaging more young people.
- **Support tourism asset development** – The WNYREDC plan outlines a proposal to create a Tourism Product Development Fund specifically earmarked for bricks-and-mortar tourism projects that could demonstrate significant increases in visitation.

Specific actions for tourism promotion outlined in the WNYREDC strategic plan include:

- Develop a centralized process and tools to share and direct information for use by all western New York destination marketing organizations.
- Cross-promote and collaborate through a digital marketing strategy to increase both tourism and business marketing attraction.
- Develop appropriate messages for different sectors, acknowledging the unique audiences and needs for each industry.
- Understand the layering of brand; reflect authenticity of the region.
- Conduct a brand assessment to determine attitudes and knowledge about western New York as a destination and business community.
- Target international markets in implementation, particularly the Canadian market, as well as regional communities to help define tourism as an industry locally.

One of the top priorities for the WNYEDC is the creation of a Hospitality and Tourism Center in Niagara Falls. The renovation of the former Rainbow Center is proposed and will include eight teaching kitchens and classrooms, a student restaurant, culinary theatre, Barnes and Noble college bookstore and retail center, bakery, deli, wine boutique and exhibition space. It will also include a small business development center to help support entrepreneurship in the hospitality and leisure industry with the Niagara County Community College providing training for students.

The new Regional Economic Development Councils established by the State of New York will play a substantial role in how state and federal funds are invested in communities for several years to come. The heritage area and its partners, including Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, can support economic development objectives by joining with progressive communities in the region, preservation and conservation interests, and the tourism industry in clearly communicating strategy, needs, and the benefits of community revitalization. Also the heritage area organization should demonstrate how best practices and recent innovations in the preservation of cultural resources, conservation of environmental resources, and related stewardship strategies strengthen community revitalization and the economic position of communities in the region.

6.2.6 USA Niagara Development Corporation

The Empire State Development Corporation (ESD) was established in 1995 as an effort to reduce the size of government and improve efficiency in the delivery of economic incentives. The functions of two state agencies were consolidated along with other State economic development entities to create jobs and prosperous communities. The organization maintains main offices in Albany, Buffalo and New York City

and is supported by a network of ten regional offices throughout the state including its subsidiary, USA Niagara Development Corporation, formed in 2001 to focus on reversing the decades-long decline in downtown Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area falls within the Western New York region consisting of the five westernmost counties in New York including Erie and Niagara. A board of advisors from the public and private sectors has been appointed to serve on the Western New York Economic Development Council (WNYEDC) providing focus, direction, and priorities for the regional program. New programs available statewide include the Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, the Excelsior Jobs Program and the New Market Tax Credits Program. Although not traditionally a preservation and conservation entity, the new attitudes and awareness of the benefits of heritage tourism along with the preservation and protection of cultural resources and assets is an emerging priority for the political and private sector leadership in the region.

From a regional perspective, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will serve in a leadership role for activities relating to interpretation, heritage tourism, and historic preservation. The interpretive program will embrace a regional perspective that will help strengthen community interaction and cooperation. Also the interpretive program for the heritage area will attract visitors which will enhance the economy in participating communities.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area and its partners should participate in a regional working group for community revitalization, heritage tourism and historic preservation that will assist the WNYREDC and USA Niagara Development Corporation in achieving the goals and objectives outlined in its strategic plan.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area and its partners should provide regional leadership by setting the standard for quality in tourism product development that encourages community revitalization and enhancing the region's attraction.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider partnering with the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, Preservation Buffalo-Niagara and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor to implement shared community revitalization objectives and collaborate on related programming.

6.3 Community Revitalization within the Heritage Area

To accomplish the goals outlined in section 6.1 above, the heritage area organization will assist its partners in developing and implementing projects and programs that contribute to the revitalization of communities in the heritage area and the region as a whole. Inherent in this effort is the understanding that the special sense of place for each community in the heritage area must not only be preserved, but substantially enhanced. It is also important to identify and develop a community's function, role, and contribution in the context of the larger region. In this period of governmental austerity it is important now more than ever to collaborate with both public and private partners to establish programs, incentives and standards that will improve the quality of life for the region's residents.

6.3.1 Community Revitalization Objectives

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area has adopted the following objectives with respect to community revitalization:

- Collaborate with national, state, regional, and local organizations in implementing regional strategies for economic development, environmental stewardship, and enhancement of quality of life.
- Craft heritage area programs so they support local community revitalization goals.
- Both regionally and locally, play a leadership role in activities related to interpretation, heritage tourism, and historic preservation.

For communities within the primary heritage area boundary, the heritage area organization will implement programs that encourage visitation. By focusing on the visitor experience in the historic commercial districts of Youngstown, Lewiston, and Niagara Falls, heritage area programs will directly support small business development and the enhancement of community character. Programs and projects will also be customized to the revitalization goals and strategies of each community.

6.3.2 Revitalization in the Heritage Area Communities

Heritage area programming in the areas of interpretation, heritage tourism, and historic preservation will combine to support community revitalization in accordance with each community's interests, needs, and goals. The heritage area will support each of its local community partners as outlined below.

Village of Youngstown

The Village of Youngstown is the smallest community in the heritage area with limited government capabilities, but an impressive cadre of volunteers. The community's layout consists of a charming village center surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Close proximity of the village center to the Niagara River and Fort Niagara State Park allows for easy access and interaction by visitors. A lack of resident population density limits development of community-oriented businesses, but there is opportunity for the growth of tourism oriented businesses if visitation increases and stabilizes. Recent and proposed waterfront improvements create an opportunity for river traffic interaction with Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario as long as concerns and issues expressed by the Department Homeland Security are addressed.

In interviews with village leaders, businesspersons, and residents support of the heritage area seemed strong. A desire exists to preserve and enhance existing village character through small-scale projects with several improvements either recently implemented or proposed. It is apparent that residents feel the quality of life standard in Youngstown is high. Discouraging large scale development and protecting community amenities and resources were communicated as community objectives. At the same time, increasing visitor access to and awareness of the village center and providing community-compatible lodging opportunities for overnight stays were expressed as needs for community revitalization.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should assist the Village of Youngstown with the following tasks as part of its interpretive program:

1. **A major landscape interpretive exhibit on the Battle of Belle-Famille in Falkner Park or at another appropriate location in Youngstown;**
2. **A series of landscape exhibits, heritage area publications, online media, and the Junior Rangers program that tell the story of Youngstown; and**
3. **Strengthen physical and interpretive connections to Old Fort Niagara through trails, wayfinding, and wayside exhibits.**

ACTION: The village center and Old Fort Niagara are proposed to be stations along the proposed National Heritage Area transportation network which should include the Niagara River water taxi between Youngstown and Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should support the development of small businesses in Youngstown that enhance and promote the heritage area experience and work with the Village and local businesses on a program of quality standards and hospitality training.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should collaborate with the Youngstown community on resource enhancements, historic preservation initiatives, heritage programming, and events.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider partnering with the Village of Youngstown to provide small matching grants for façade improvements in the downtown area.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area in partnership with the proposed Heritage Tourism Institute at Niagara University should consider involving Youngstown residents in the Heritage Area Ambassadors and Certified Guides programs.

Town of Porter

The Town of Porter was created in 1812 and is named after Augustus Porter, one of the early prominent families on the Niagara Frontier. The portion of the Town of Porter west of the Robert Moses Parkway is located within the heritage area boundary. The Town surrounds the Village of Youngstown and also includes the hamlet of Ransomville located to the east of the heritage area boundary. The Town offices are located in the Village of Youngstown and include the offices of the Clerk, Assessor, Supervisor and Justice as well as meeting space for the town's committees. Land uses within the Town of Porter, but outside of the Village of Youngstown that are located within the heritage area boundary include residential areas (including larger estate size lots that front on the Niagara River), farmland and undeveloped open space. Old Fort Niagara is located in the Town of Porter just north of the Youngstown village limits. A lack of resident population density limits development of community-oriented businesses.

In interviews with town leaders and residents, support of the heritage area seemed strong. A desire exists to preserve and enhance existing rural town character. Like others lower river communities, it is apparent that residents feel the quality of life standard in the Town of Porter is high. Discouraging large scale development and protecting community character were communicated as shared objectives.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should collaborate with the Town of Porter on resource enhancements, historic preservation initiatives, heritage programming, and events within the heritage area boundary including the Town's historical museum.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will coordinate with community leaders to provide information and updates about heritage area programs, projects and initiatives.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider developing partnerships with organizations that own and operate thematically related sites and attractions located outside of the heritage area boundary, but within the limits of the Town of Porter.

Village of Lewiston

The Village of Lewiston is strategically located between the Village of Youngstown and City of Niagara Falls at the foot of the Niagara Escarpment. It is a larger community than Youngstown with a few more

governmental capabilities and an engaged, active volunteer core of residents and civic organizations. Lewiston maintains some of the same village-like character as Youngstown and has a primary commercial district along Center Street that currently contains high-end businesses and services for both visitors and residents. The village center is surrounded by affluent and appealing residential neighborhoods and is in close proximity to Artpark at Earl W. Brydges State Park allowing easy access and interaction for visitors. Recent and proposed waterfront improvements create an opportunity for river traffic interaction. There are a few underutilized properties in community and the beginnings of a suburban style commercial strip.

In interviews with village leaders, businesspersons, and residents support of the heritage area also seemed strong. A desire exists to preserve and enhance existing village character through a list of proposed improvement projects. Like Youngstown, it is apparent that residents feel the quality of life standard in Lewiston is high. Although the character and street life along Center Street is very good and businesses are currently viable, increasing visitor access to and awareness of the commercial district to help support and maintain local businesses is a high priority. Discouraging large scale development and protecting community amenities and resources were communicated as community objectives. The Village is also currently working to promote interaction between Artpark and Center Street commercial district. Increasing visitor access to and use of the Lewiston waterfront as a focal point of the community and providing community-compatible lodging opportunities for overnight stays were expressed as needs for revitalization.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should assist the Village of Lewiston with the following tasks as part of its interpretive program:

- 1. Creating and installing exhibits on the Native American, African American, falls portage, and Niagara Escarpment stories;**
- 2. A series of landscape exhibits, heritage area publications, online media, and aspects of the Junior Rangers program that tell the story of the Village of Lewiston; and**
- 3. Creating and installing a comprehensive set of landscape exhibits at the Lewiston Landing waterfront interpreting community history, the *Borderland* theme, and programmatic connections between Lewiston as part of the Falls-to-the-Fort storyline.**

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will assist in supporting and enhancing programs and events led by the Village and local community organizations such as the Lewiston Council on the Arts and the Historical Association of Lewiston.

ACTION: Downtown Lewiston and Artpark are proposed to be stations along the proposed heritage area transportation network.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should support the development of small businesses in the Village of Lewiston that enhance and promote the heritage area experience and work with the Village and local businesses on a program of quality standards and hospitality training.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should collaborate with the Lewiston community on resource enhancements, historic preservation initiatives, heritage programming, and events.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should partner with the Village to provide small matching grants for façade improvements in the downtown area.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area in partnership with the proposed Heritage Tourism Institute at Niagara University should consider involving Lewiston residents in the Heritage Area Ambassadors and Certified Guides programs.

Town of Lewiston

The portion of the Town of Lewiston west of the Robert Moses Parkway is located within the heritage area boundary. The Town surrounds and includes the Village of Lewiston. The Town Hall is located west of the Village of Lewiston on ridge Road and includes the offices of the Clerk, Assessor, Supervisor, Justice, and Police department as well as meeting space for the town's committees. Land uses within the Town of Lewiston, but outside of the Village of Lewiston that are located within the heritage area boundary include residential areas (including subdivisions and larger estate size lots that front on the Niagara River), farmland and undeveloped open space. Joseph Davis State Park is located in the Town of Lewiston to the north of the Village of Lewiston. Earl W. Brydges Artpark is located to the south of the village on the Niagara Escarpment.

The town leaders and residents seem supportive of the heritage area. There are some interests that seek to further intensify development of the town while others seem to promote a slow or no growth agenda. Like others lower river communities, it is apparent that residents feel the quality of life standard in the Town of Lewiston is high.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should collaborate with the Town of Lewiston on resource enhancements, historic preservation initiatives, heritage programming, and events within the heritage area boundary.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will coordinate with community leaders to provide information and updates about heritage area programs, projects and initiatives.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider developing partnerships with organizations that own and operate thematically related sites and attractions located outside of the heritage area boundary, but within the limits of the Town of Lewiston.

City of Niagara Falls

The City of Niagara Falls serves as the anchor community for the heritage area in terms of population, public facilities, community-based services and visitor amenities. Downtown Niagara Falls is in the immediate vicinity of a world-class visitor destination. The community also has nationally significant heritage resources and stories of international importance to tell.

On the other hand, the city suffers from high unemployment, loss of industry, urban blight and extensive Brownfield and Superfund site remediation issues. The historic city center nearest Niagara Falls State Park was demolished as part of urban renewal and has struggled to regain vitality. The city has the infrastructure and building stock for a community three times larger than its current population.

It is readily apparent that the current city leadership is committed to community revitalization and economic restructuring. The City has adopted a strategic plan for revitalization which is being incrementally and steadily implemented with tangible results. The city government is skilled at pursuing grants to fund improvement projects.

The City is seeking support and assistance from local, regional and national entities to support the creation of a world class visitor experience which will encourage visitors to extend their stay and explore the entire heritage area. Goals and objectives outlined in the city's comprehensive plan and strategic

planning documents endeavor to create high quality interpretive exhibits, programming and visitor services. Local government, in partnership with a citywide network of organizations, is actively promoting historic preservation in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas and will implement a series of programs to engage the community's young people.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should support the design and construction of the Niagara Experience Center as an interpretive center introducing visitors to the heritage area experience and serving as a transportation hub.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider assisting the City of Niagara Falls with the following tasks as part of its interpretive program:

1. Installing high quality interpretive exhibits and public art in the downtown area, in particular in the vicinity of Old Falls Street and Rainbow Boulevard, presenting the heritage area theme *Tourism and Recreation* thereby enhancing the streetscape;
2. Engaging visitors at the site of the former Hydraulic Canal, Schoellkopf Power Station, and Aluminum Company of America plant on the edge of the Niagara Gorge to interpret the heritage area theme *Power and Industry*;
3. Developing plans for an extensive, world class landscape installation, such as a Power and Industry Plaza, as part of the city's newly envisioned Cultural District; and
4. Developing a phased interpretation plan for the Buffalo Avenue industrial corridor to interpret the heritage area theme *Power and Industry*.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should support the development of small businesses in the City of Niagara Falls that enhance and promote the heritage area experience and work with the City and local businesses on a program of quality standards and hospitality training.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should collaborate with the Niagara Falls community on resource enhancements, historic preservation initiatives, heritage programming, and events.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should partner with the City of Niagara Falls to provide small matching grants for façade improvements in commercial districts.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area in partnership with the proposed Heritage Tourism Institute at Niagara University should consider involving Niagara Falls residents in the Heritage Area Ambassadors and Certified Guides programs.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will coordinate and collaborate with the Underground Railroad State Heritage Area in achieving community revitalization goals and objectives featured in both management plans.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should assist the LaSalle neighborhood in interpreting the Love Canal story and its significance to the national environmental movement.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area in partnership with the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, Inc. should assist neighborhood associations in preparing histories, advocating resource stewardship, and implementing historic preservation programs.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area in partnership with the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, Inc. should assist in providing design consultation and technical assistance to owners of significant historic properties and should consider providing historic preservation training and certification for local trade workers and contractors.

6.3.3 The National Trust's Main Street Program

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Four-Point Approach™ is a highly successful, community-driven, methodology used to revitalize older, traditional business districts. It uses an incremental strategy to address the issues and problems that such business districts typically face. The Main Street approach encourages economic development within the context of historic preservation using sound business practices. This approach also embraces a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets. These assets frequently include distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, local ownership, and a sense of community pride.

The Main Street Four-Point Approach™ is not a "quick-fix" solution. Expensive infrastructure improvements such as streetscape projects, pedestrian malls, casinos and sport arenas, often do not generate the desired economic results because they fail to address the underlying causes of commercial district decline. The approach outlines a revitalization strategy that focuses on four key factors for success: Design, Economic Restructuring, Promotion, and Organization. These factors are combined to address most of the needs of the typical commercial district. This methodology, along with the Eight Guiding Principles (see sidebar), makes it an effective tool for community-based, grassroots revitalization efforts. The program has demonstrated considerable reinvestment and revitalization in communities of all sizes and in both rural and urban contexts.

*******SIDEBAR: The National Trust's Eight Guiding Principles for Main Streets**

The Eight Guiding Principles, as explained by the National Trust's Main Street Center, has assisted many communities in reviving their commercial districts. As communicated on the National Main Street Center's website (www.mainstreet.org) the eight principles are:

- **Comprehensive:** No single focus –lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events – can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is essential.
- **Incremental:** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that demonstrate that "new things are happening" in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants' understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.
- **Self-help:** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street – the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.

- **Partnerships:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality:** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process – from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.
- **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite – public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

*******END SIDEBAR**

In New York State the Western Erie Canal Main Street Program (WECMSP) has been established to revitalize traditional commercial districts within the Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridor. In March 2006, the Western Erie Canal Alliance was formed as a non-profit corporation to implement the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor Management Plan. The National Trust's Main Street Center, was hired by the alliance to assist with implementing the regional program. The Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council also assisted by providing a Regional Program Coordinator who provided program oversight and technical assistance. In its inaugural year (2008), three communities were selected: the Village of Albion in Orleans County, the Village of Lyons in Wayne County, and the City of Lockport in Niagara County.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should consider partnering with local governments within the heritage area to approach the National Trust's Main Street Center to create a revitalization program for commercial districts using the Main Street approach.