

Town’s Comprehensive Plan supports economic development activities associated with waterfront, recreational and tourism uses. There have been various plans to redevelop vacant lands north of River Road in the Town for recreational/tourism uses, although there are no active proposals for this land at this time.

Based on available Census data for the Town, 63.8% of Town residents age 16 or older participated in the labor force in 2010. Median household income was \$61,889, which compares very favorably to the County, which has a median household income of \$43,991.

**2.4.4 School Enrollment and Education Levels**

Most of the Town of Wheatfield is within the Niagara-Wheatfield School District. The eastern portion of Wheatfield is in the Starpoint Central School District. No schools are located in or near either waterfront area in the Town of Wheatfield.

Based on available Census data (2010), 90.5 percent of residents of the Town of Wheatfield were high school graduates, and 30.4 percent had achieved a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 2010, there were 4,224 residents aged 3 years or older who were enrolled in school.

**Town of Wheatfield School Enrollment, 2000**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Nursery school, Preschool	210	5.0%
Kindergarten	219	5.2%
Elementary School (grades 1-8)	1,755	41.5%
High School (grades 9-12)	1,138	26.9%
College or graduate school	902	21.4%

*U.S. Census Bureau, 2010*

**2.5 Existing Land and Water Uses**

**2.5.1 Existing Land Use**

Land use along the waterfront in the Town of Wheatfield is primarily residential in nature, with some commercial uses found along River Road in Sub-Area 1. There are no agricultural or industrial uses in either sub-area. Parkland is also very limited, with only one park found in Sub-Area 2 and one Town-owned parcel that is destined for future parkland development in Sub-Area 1. Sub-Area 1 has some areas of vacant land and open space, while Sub-Area 2 is well built out, with very little land available for further development. The land uses found in the LWRA are shown on [Map 3A](#) and [Map 3B](#) and described as follows.

Sub-Area 1



- *Residential* - There are approximately 178 residential parcels, accounting for 129 acres of land in Sub-Area 1. This includes three larger parcels that contain mobile home parks, which encompass approximately 28 acres. Housing lines the majority of the river shoreline and extends through upland areas along River Road. The smallest residential properties occur in riverfront residential enclaves along Hird and York Roads, where property frontages range between 30 and 60 feet wide. The area also includes a small number of larger estate-sized properties.
  - *Commercial* - There are a limited number of commercial properties in Sub-Area 1, including approximately 12 parcels that comprise approximately 23 acres of land. These properties are located along River Road, mostly at the western end of the area, near the Niagara Falls City boundary. Commercial uses include motels and small shops. It is also noted that there are two billboards for commercial advertising that exist along River Road in Sub-Area 1.
  - *Industrial* – There are no industrial land uses in Sub-Area 1.
- Community Facilities* – The Frontier Volunteer Fire Company has a station located on River Road that services the surrounding area. The Fire Company owns and operates R.B. U-Ren Park, which is located on the north site of River Road on the fire company property. This park is open for use by the general public. Additional community uses include properties that support pipelines, outfalls or other appurtenances for public or private utility services (see [Map 7A](#)).

- *Parkland* – There are no conservation lands in Sub-Area 1; U.B. Uren Park is the only park. However, the Town owns 4.6 acres of property at the western end of the area that is proposed for future parkland development. In addition, River Road is a designated segment of the NYS Great Lakes Seaway Trail system.
- *Vacant* – Approximately 520 acres or 65 percent of Sub-Area 1 is vacant lands, including a combination of wooded lots and abandoned properties, as well as an abandoned railroad corridor located north of River Road.

### Sub-Area 2



- *Residential* – There are approximately 30 residential parcels, accounting for 16 acres of land area in this portion of the LWRA. The area east of Niagara Falls Blvd., which bisects the area, has housing on both sides of Lockport Avenue, while the area west of Niagara Falls Blvd. has a very narrow area of shoreline, with housing situated on the upland side of Lockport Avenue. Housing in this area consists of single-family dwellings that are suburban in nature.
- *Commercial* – There is one commercial property located in Sub-Area 2. There is one property that was formerly a hotel that is converting to residential use. There are also one or two properties that conduct home occupations in this area.
- *Industrial* – There are no industrial land uses in Sub-Area 2.

- *Parkland* – There is one park found in Sub-Area 2. Herman Baisch Park is a 3.7-acre parcel that is used solely for passive recreation. There are no conservation lands in this area.
- *Community Facilities* – There are no community services or facilities in Sub-Area 2.
- *Vacant* – Approximately 0.6 acres or just over one percent of Sub-Area 2 is vacant lands, which is essentially comprised of the parcel located at the northeast corner of Connecting Blvd. and Lockport Road., as well as a thin strip of land that lie between Lockport Road and Tonawanda Creek, west of Niagara Falls Blvd. (which are owned by the NYS Canal Corporation).

### **2.5.2 Water Dependent and Water-Enhanced Uses**

The only water-enhanced uses are residential dwellings located along the waterfront. There are no parks or other facilities for public access located along the waterfront in either sub-area. Baisch Park, in Sub-Area 1, is located inland, away from the shoreline. Waterfowl hunting is conducted from shoreline docks and properties along the Niagara River during the fall hunting season.

There are limited water-dependent uses in the Wheatfield LWRA. These consist of pipelines and outfall facilities for local utility companies. The Niagara County wastewater treatment plant and the water treatment plant each own narrow parcels where they have located their outfall system and water intake piping, respectively. There are also two locations where National Fuel Gas has routed pipelines for natural gas, which extend along the bottom of the Niagara River, from the upland areas of the Town of Wheatfield over to Grand Island, across of the Niagara River. Water-dependent uses are depicted on [Map 7A](#).

### **2.5.3 Abandoned, Underutilized and Deteriorated Sites and Structures**

The Wheatfield waterfront in Sub-Area 1 has a history of use for summer recreation. The shoreline once contained dance halls, cottages and lodging that supported tourism trade. Over the years, these cottages converted to year-round residential use and other uses were replaced with additional housing. Today, the western end of Sub-Area 1, south of River Road, contains mostly vacant property that is under a mix of public and private ownership. The Town of Wheatfield owns 4.6 acres of vacant land, which is comprised of one four-acre parcel with just under 250 feet of shoreline access and four smaller parcels totaling 0.6 acres that are located immediately west of the larger parcel, along River Road. The Town is proposing to utilize this vacant property for passive recreation and public access. Much of the site would remain wooded and undeveloped. There is an approximate 11-acre property located just east of the Town-owned land that is under private ownership. This site has potential for reuse and is envisioned to be redeveloped with a mix of uses. Any future use of this property should include public access along the almost 700 feet of shoreline along the Niagara River. There are also a few, small vacant properties located immediately west of the Town-owned lands, extending to the City of Niagara Falls municipal boundary. The Town's long-term vision for this area would include public access that spanned

from the private lands, across the Town-owned and private lands to the west, to ultimately connect with recreation facilities in the City of Niagara Falls.

There is an abandoned railroad corridor that extends along the north side of River Road, from Williams Road to the Town boundary with the City of North Tonawanda. West of Liberty Drive, the corridor accommodated two tracks; east of Liberty Drive the corridor services an active CSX line, with one area of abandoned track line. The western portion of this corridor was to be used for the extension of the LaSalle Expressway, but this project was never completed. Although the Town would have liked to see this project materialize in an effort to remove commuter traffic from River Road, the extent of the work required makes it cost prohibitive. As an alternative, the Town has proposed the use of the area for redevelopment as a multi-use trail. This trail would represent a connecting segment in the regional Niagara River Greenway trail system that would ultimately extend from Old Fort Niagara (to the north), following the waterfront through Niagara Falls, Wheatfield and North Tonawanda, to connect with the Erie County system of waterfront trails (all part of the overall Niagara River Greenway system). Portions of the waterfront trails system in Niagara County currently exist, but there are gaps, such as this area in Wheatfield. Completion of the Wheatfield section would link with trails in the adjoining Cities of Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda.

There are some other vacant or underutilized properties in Sub-Area 1 that have potential for future residential development. These properties are found primarily in the Hird Street and Sunset Drive areas, and on the north side of River Road to the east (single lots). There is one large property at the eastern end of Sub-Area 1, on the north side of River Road, which once supported a commercial business. Due to traffic safety issues along this section of River Road, this property is recommended for future residential use. There are no abandoned, underutilized or deteriorated properties in Sub-Area 2.

#### **2.5.4 Public Access and Recreation**

Public parkland and waterfront access is limited to a few facilities within the Town of Wheatfield LWRA. While no formal public park facilities exist in Sub-Area 1, the Town holds ownership to a 4.6 acres of vacant land with waterfront access that is proposed for future public access and limited recreational use.

The Town is also proposing the development of a multi-use trail that would provide linkages to Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda, enabling safe public access to nearby recreational facilities in those locations. In addition, the Frontier Volunteer Fire Company owns and operates R.B. U-Ren Park on their property, which is located on the north side of River Road in Sub-Area 1. Sub-Area 1 is also directly contiguous with Gratwick Park, which is located along the eastern boundary in the City of North Tonawanda (just outside of the Sub-Area). Sub-Area 2 is located

contiguous with the West Canal Marina and Park facility in the Town of Pendleton, which is situated just outside of the Sub-Area to the east.

Herman Baisch Park is the only public park in Sub-Area 2. This 3.7 - acre recreation facility, which is owned by the Town of Wheatfield, is utilized for picnicking and similar passive uses, but lacks sufficient amenities for full enjoyment. It contains a surfaced court area of basketball or tennis, with open lawn and some wooded area. There is a small, formalized parking area. This park has some drainage issues that need to be remedied. Additional amenities, such as picnic pavilions, picnic tables and grills, and some additional play equipment would vastly improve the public use and enjoyment of the park.

### **2.5.5 Zoning**

Within the Town of Wheatfield, land use is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 200 of the Wheatfield Town Code - Zoning) and by Subdivision Regulations (Chapter 169 - Subdivision of Land). Zoning in the waterfront area includes four classifications (R-2 Residential-2 District, R-3 Residential-3 District, C-1 Commercial District and M-1 Light Industrial District). Existing zoning along the waterfront is depicted on [Map 4A](#) and [Map 4B](#). Zoning regulations include provisions for site plan review, home occupations, cluster and planned unit development and signage. The zoning code establishes height and bulk regulations, site plan specifications, development standards, required improvements, and penalties. A summary of the zoning districts that occur within the LWRA is as follows:

#### Sub-Area 1

The majority of the waterfront, seaward of River Road is zoned R-2; a section at the eastern end of the sub-area, along the north side of River Road, is zoned R-3. A small area at the east end, and the western end of the sub-area are zoned C-1. The remainder of the area, north of River Road, is zoned M-1.

There are many residential lots in Sub-Area 1 that do not meet the zoning setback requirements for the R-2 Residential classification. This has created a situation where many of the properties are non-conforming and zoning enforcement is a more difficult issue; therefore, as the Town has long been allowing variances for development or redevelopment in this area. The use of a zoning overlay district or a new zoning classification that has setback requirements that are realistic for this area would be a practical way to address this problem.

#### Sub-Area 2

The east and west sections of this sub-area are zoned R-2. The area surrounding Niagara Falls Blvd. is zoned C-1. The central section of Sub-Area 2 is also located within the Niagara Falls Blvd. overlay district (NFBO). The intent of the NFBO is to enhance the positive image of the Town of Wheatfield and to preserve greenspace, while at the same time improving commercial business activity along this important roadway. The NFBO overlay district sets forth additional