

Chapter 2: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the process of preparing this Comprehensive Plan, the issues in the community and the constraints to and opportunities for future development presented in this section were discussed and analyzed. These issues were addressed in the Residents Survey, Focus Group meetings, interviews with public officials, and CPC meetings.

This Chapter presents the issues, needs, opportunities and constraints identified and discussed during the planning process. The opportunities and constraints are presented in the following categories:

- Housing and Residential Neighborhoods
- Downtown Revitalization and Commercial Development
- Industrial Development
- Agriculture/Agribusiness
- Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
- Recreation, Culture and Tourism
- Transportation
- Public Utilities and Telecommunications
- Intergovernmental Cooperation

The policies and actions recommended to address these issues will be presented in Chapter 4.

A. HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

A range of housing options are available in western Orleans County. The majority of the rental housing is located in the Village of Medina. Rents and housing values are similar to the Orleans County average.

Village residents enjoy the small-town, neighborhood camaraderie, as well as the closeness of shopping and services.

Appearance of residential neighborhoods

The quality and appearance of residential neighborhoods in the Village of Medina are very important to residents' quality of life.

Members of the Tourism Focus Group suggested planting street trees in residential neighborhoods and commercial districts in the Village of Medina. Funding should be pursued which would not only purchase the trees, but would also provide on-going funding for maintenance. Partnerships with non-profit organizations, such as garden clubs, may be helpful in attracting grant funding. Partnerships with BOCES classes may also be appropriate. The Village of Medina completed an inventory of its street trees approximately 10 years ago.

Members of the Code Enforcement/Property Maintenance Focus Group cited both the lack of adequate property maintenance regulations and the ambiguity of the property maintenance regulations contained in the NYS Fire Prevention and Building Code as obstacles to ensuring the maintenance of property. The new Fire Prevention and Building Code, which became effective in January 2001, contains more comprehensive and extensive property maintenance regulations. It is anticipated that the new Code will provide municipal Code Enforcement Officers with the regulations necessary to ensure that properties are properly maintained.

An obstacle to improving property appearance is the limited income of many of the families who own and live in housing that is deteriorated. Even with strict enforcement of property maintenance regulations, many families may not be able to afford to keep their properties in good repair. Small Cities grant funding to provide low and no interest loans may offer an opportunity for the municipalities in western Orleans County to capitalize a housing repair revolving loan fund. Such loans will improve property appearance when the root cause is low income.

Another obstacle identified by the Code Enforcement/Property Maintenance Focus Group is the lack of adequate code enforcement staff in relation to the workload. Gaining compliance with property maintenance regulations is time consuming. Currently, the Village of Medina is the only municipality in western Orleans County that has a full-time Code Enforcement Officer with clerical support. The remainder of the municipalities use part-time Code Enforcement Officers and provide no clerical support. Even in Medina, the workload exceeds the capabilities the full-time Code Enforcement Officer due, in part, to the large number of periodic fire inspections the Code Enforcement Officer must perform. Moreover, the Code Enforcement Officers in each municipality are also responsible for enforcing zoning regulations. Both activities detract from the amount of time Code Enforcement Officers can spend on addressing property maintenance problems.

Multi-family conversions

The conversion of single-family homes into multiple-family apartments, especially where lots are small or narrow, is a significant issue in Medina. In addition, the condition of certain properties, particularly non-owner-occupied rental housing, warrants attention and are in need of improvement. Conversions, as well as the deterioration of properties, have had a significant impact on the quality of life in certain residential neighborhoods in the Village.

Senior citizen housing

Senior citizen apartments would be appropriate in areas within walking distance of stores and services in downtown Medina. As relatively few residents of senior citizen housing own cars, parking would be less of a concern than with other multi-family dwellings.

Rural house lots

Residential neighborhoods in the Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates outside the Villages include farmsteads, homes on large lots in the countryside, and houses stretched along roads or clustered in rural hamlets. These residents value the easy access to jobs and services that a well-maintained road system provides, and also seek to preserve the open spaces and rural environment of these areas.

The lack of an adequate individual water supply affects many households. New construction is constrained by the uncertainty of providing an on-site water supply. Recent extensions of public water service to areas within the Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates have brought a reliable supply to these residences and have eliminated serious health and safety concerns.

The availability of public water has enabled rural homesites to become more attractive. Continuing growth and development may threaten the rural character of the countryside in Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates, may lead to excessive "strip" residential development, and may lead to increased costs for local government.

As many large areas in the Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates are both undeveloped and accessible to public water supplies, homesites may be "clustered" on smaller lots to reduce costs for infrastructure and to limit "strip" development along existing roads. Mobile home parks may also be appropriate in these areas. Retaining open space and vistas, as part of the subdivision or mobile home park design, would help to retain rural character within these developments.

Undeveloped areas in Villages

Planned residential development would also be appropriate in undeveloped areas in the Villages of Medina and Lyndonville. Such developments may incorporate smaller lots, open space, and a variety of housing types.

B. DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Medina Central Business District

The downtown area of the Village of Medina is a vital business, service and government center. Assets include the Canal Basin, small businesses, historic architecture, annual festivals and small town charm.

The central business district is designated by the Village as a Historic District and proposed modifications are subject to architectural review by the Planning Board. Retaining the historic character of the downtown business district is crucial to maintaining a distinctive atmosphere for commercial activity.

The downtown has abundant conveniently located parking space (both on-street and off-street) making the business district easily accessible by motor vehicle. The recently constructed Church Street parking lot has greatly increased downtown parking availability.

The downtown area benefits from cooperation among businesses. The Merchants Association sponsors events and encourages communication among business owners to promote the area as a unique alternative to larger-scale stores. In addition, clearly delineated physical linkages from the Canal to the downtown business district would help to revitalize downtown.

Constraints to continued revitalization of the business district include competition with larger stores in highway-oriented commercial areas, such as the Maple Ridge Road corridor, and the need for physical improvements.

Erie Canal

The Tourism Focus Group addressed several issues related to attracting boaters to Medina. The Canal Corridor initiative (CCI) will provide enhancements to the Canal Basin area, such as docking slips, electrical hookups, and shower facilities that are necessary to attract boaters.

There may be the need for a more visible police presence. With completion of the loop trail, the Medina police may need to conduct more patrols using bicycles.

The State needs to improve law enforcement along the Canal trail. There is concern about the use of snowmobiles on the Canal trail. It is not clear whether the Canal trail is or should be open to snowmobilers. It has been officially available to snowmobilers on a trial basis between Bates Road and Knowlesville.

The mooring area is not as visible from the street as it is in other communities. In contrast, boaters are attracted to Middleport because the grass looks very inviting, people shop at the Basket Factory, and it is closer to Buffalo. The Village is considering constructing a docking area near the lift bridge and the canal trail. This project would be in addition to those funded through the CCI grant.

Although several buildings in downtown Medina abut the Erie Canal, it is the rear of the buildings that face the Canal. The rears of many of these buildings are uninviting to boaters as

many are not well maintained and the signage, if any, is not visible or legible from the Canal. The sole business directory sign located in the Canal Basin is poorly oriented for viewing and is not kept current. Moreover, no clearly delineated walkways exist to guide people from the Canal Basin to Main and Center Streets in downtown. Boaters unfamiliar with Medina may be unaware of how close and convenient the downtown business district is to the Canal.

Lyndonville

The Village of Lyndonville's downtown business district consists of a 600 foot strip of Main Street, bounded on the north by the dam and on the south by Eagle Street. Public buildings located on the west side of Main Street include the Lyndonville Public Library, the Town and Village Halls, and the Post Office. Businesses on the east side of Main Street include a coffee shop, pharmacy, and hardware store. Members of the community who participated in a "walking tour" of the downtown area on October 30, 1999 made several observations and suggestions about maintaining and improving the character and function of the downtown area.

Maintaining the attractive appearance and the historic character of the area is the primary issue. A recent storefront renovation was noted as an exemplary improvement to the area. Additional improvements to facades would further improve the appearance of the downtown area. Certain structures may be structurally deficient, limiting options for renovation. Improvements to the exterior of the Village Hall would be welcome.

Power lines should be relocated to the rear of buildings, or buried underground. The sidewalk on the east side of Main Street slopes in such a way that it is not consistent with the horizontal line formed by the facades of the storefronts.

Highway-Oriented Commercial Development

Commercial development on Maple Ridge Road in the Village of Medina and the Town of Shelby benefits from good highway access and sufficient parking. The planned reconstruction of Route 31 will include access management improvements such as new turning lanes and combining of driveways. This project presents opportunities to identify access points for future commercial development, and to plan future parallel access roads and other improvements.

Commercial development along Route 104 has traditionally favored automobile-oriented businesses such as gas stations, restaurants, and automotive parts and supplies (including junkyards). Concerns include maintaining attractive appearances for travelers, and minimizing conflicts between businesses and residents.

Additional opportunities for commercial development are available along Route 63, 31, and 104 in the Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates. However, such development may lead to reductions in speed limits along the highway, thus reducing the road's efficiency for carrying through traffic. Commercial areas along these corridors should be clearly delineated to focus activity in contained areas.

C. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Village of Medina offers industrially zoned land with rail access, good highway access, proximity to markets and suppliers, water and sewer service, and a relatively low cost of doing business.

Orleans County has established a revolving loan fund to use to assist “micro-enterprises” to expand, relocate, or locate in the area. The County of Orleans Industrial Development Agency (COIDA) is also working to re-establish a revolving loan fund for industrial companies. Low interest loans provided through the revolving loan program will provide an incentive for industrial expansion, however, the limited amount of available loan funds will limit the impact of this incentive. In addition, the Village of Medina has its own revolving loan fund for making small loans to Medina businesses.

Industrial development efforts in Orleans County as a whole and in western Orleans County specifically do not occur in a comprehensive, coordinated way. Although COIDA is charged with fostering economic development within Orleans County, COIDA must rely to a great extent on the local municipalities and schools. It is the municipalities that provide the land, the zoning, the infrastructure and the property tax incentives for industry. It is the local school districts and training agencies that provide the educated and skilled labor force and employee training for industries. Currently, each municipality operates independently. This lack of unity results in inconsistent policies and programs across Orleans County. The inconsistencies can and do create an atmosphere of confusion which may discourage, rather than encourage, economic development.

Examples in which inconsistencies are problematic include zoning regulations, building permit fees, and property tax incentives. The land uses permitted within industrially zoned districts vary from municipality to municipality. A land use that is permitted in the industrial district of one municipality may not be permitted in the industrial district of a neighboring municipality. Industrial companies searching for suitable sites in Orleans County must review the individual zoning regulations of each municipality to ensure that the type of businesses they are considering are permitted in those municipalities where prospective sites are located.

Property tax incentives also vary from municipality to municipality. Under Section 485-B of the NYS General Municipal Law, municipalities are permitted, at local option, to provide reduced property taxes on newly constructed or expanded business facilities. Under this incentive program, the property tax liability is reduced by 50 percent in the initial year. The incentive is gradually phased out over ten years. Some municipalities provide this incentive, others do not. Building permit fees also vary from municipality to municipality. Sometimes the permit fees vary significantly. Building permit fees can add substantial expense to the construction costs of new industrial facilities or expansions. Companies considering sites in various locations in western Orleans County must review the building permit fees of each municipality to determine these costs.

The lack of a single employee or official in each municipality who has been designated as the key industrial development contact person could also discourage industrial development. Companies that express interest in western Orleans County may not be familiar with the governmental review and permitting processes and those agencies that may be involved.

Without a key contact person to guide and facilitate businesses through the governmental review and permitting process, prospective new businesses must expend time and money to become familiar with the processes. Moreover, any errors that they may make due to their lack of familiarity may further delay and frustrate their efforts. The existing situation may encourage prospective new industrial businesses to look for other locations in municipalities that are willing to provide guidance and assistance to facilitate the processes.

Today's companies are eager to quickly implement and finish their relocation and expansion projects. Consequently, companies are seeking out "shovel-ready" sites on which to build, i.e., sites that are already served by water, sanitary sewer, gas and electric and have existing access roads. Many companies will not even consider a site if it is not shovel-ready. Unfortunately, western Orleans County lacks shovel-ready sites. Even in the Medina Industrial Park, the infrastructure serves only existing facilities. The lack of shovel-ready sites places western Orleans County at a great disadvantage. The lack of shovel-ready sites would be less of a hindrance if the infrastructure could be quickly installed when needed and requested by COIDA. Western Orleans County municipalities should take measures to ensure that they are able to expeditiously install infrastructure, without delay, when it is needed.

Industrial development is constrained by competition from other sites, both within and outside of the region, especially from sites that are "shovel-ready." The Medina Industrial Park, the only "greenfield" industrial park in western Orleans County does not contain infrastructure beyond what was installed to service the two existing buildings in the park. In addition, the undeveloped portions of the Medina Industrial Park are overgrown with vegetation and contain no access roads. Most of the "brownfield" industrial sites contain old, functionally obsolete buildings. In either case, these sites are not "shovel-ready." Companies would have to first clear the vegetation and install infrastructure (on greenfield sites) or demolish existing buildings and dispose of the debris (on brownfield sites) before the sites would be suitable for constructing new facilities. This preparatory work adds time and cost to new development and serves as a disincentive for industrial development.

Zoning regulations in western Orleans County vary from municipality to municipality. This inconsistency may create confusion for companies that are considering locating or relocating in the area. Specific land uses that are permitted in the industrially zoned district of one municipality may not be permitted in the industrial zoned district of the other municipalities. Companies considering several sites, may have to become familiar with the zoning regulations of more than one municipality. Building permit fees also vary from municipality to municipality. Finally, municipalities have not designated a key contact person in each charged with the responsibility to assist and guide companies through the governmental review and permitting process. Combined, these conditions make it difficult for companies to locate or relocate in western Orleans County.

D. AGRICULTURE/ AGRIBUSINESS

Farming benefits from good agricultural soils, favorable climate for fruit, and a diverse agricultural base. The Agricultural District Program provides some protection to farmers from public use of land as well as offering property tax assessments based on agricultural use value. The agricultural industry also benefits from good access to markets and suppliers.

Increasing residential development in rural areas may present constraints to agriculture, as it tends to conflict with agricultural operations. Water service extensions are likely to make outlying areas more attractive for residential development and provide pressure to convert farmland to other uses.

A subcommittee of the Comprehensive Plan Committee met in February 2000 to discuss the issues facing agriculture in western Orleans County communities. The objectives of the subcommittee were to:

- describe the agricultural resources in western Orleans County;
- clarify the issues and opportunities associated with agriculture in western Orleans County;
- discuss options available to local government and other entities to encourage the continuation of agriculture; and
- recommend specific actions that could be taken by the five communities and other organizations.

According to data from the 1997 Census of Agriculture, most of the land in farms in Orleans County and most of the market value of agricultural products are generated by very large farms, with more than 1000 acres. Such farms have grown in size between the 1992 and 1997 Censuses. There are also a large number of (about 200) “hobby farms,” also known as “gentleman’s farms,” in Orleans County, where a landowner may raise a few beef cattle or sell hay. These farms have less than \$10,000 in annual sales.

Many of the most serious concerns facing agricultural operations, such as prices for crops, are well outside the scope of local government. Many of the constraints facing farmers in the community are related to taxes, state labor regulations, the difficulty in finding good quality employees, the high cost of insurance (especially for direct market activities such as U-Pick or “haunted hayrides”), and the availability of “agriculture-friendly” banking institutions. Local governments or a local agricultural advisory committee could help lobby for changes in such regulations and practices. Statewide organizations such as Farm Bureau are active in trying to make changes in these areas.

Public support and understanding of the benefits of agriculture needs to be stronger. The Residents Survey showed that only 64% of respondents think that encouraging agriculture is “essential” to the economic health of the community. Education of the public would help to maintain support for agriculture.

The community benefits of a strong agricultural industry include food production, jobs and other economic impacts, maintaining the rural landscape, and fiscal benefits (low cost of local

government services in relation to property tax revenue.) Studies in similar communities have shown that residential development in the countryside eventually results in an increase in taxes, as residents require services such as schools.

State and County economic development agencies should be encouraged to consider agriculture and “industry” that is eligible for assistance under economic development programs.

The potential for conflict between agriculture and residential uses is a concern. Farming is more difficult in close proximity to houses.

The extension of public water service has the potential to encourage incompatible development in agricultural areas. However, lateral restriction policies adopted by the Towns prevent new development from hooking into water lines within designated agricultural districts.

Public water service also provides benefits to farmers, primarily in the form of improved fire protection. Cost prohibits the use of public water for irrigation purposes.

Linking agricultural district programs with future water hook-ups may encourage some farmland owners to exclude their land from the Agricultural District program. The policy of Orleans County has been to include land in the program only if the landowner requests to be included. Although the Agricultural District program represents a County policy to keep designated land in agricultural use for periods of eight (8) years, it was never intended to be a farmland protection program. Its primary purpose is to protect farmers.

Western Orleans towns should consider adopting local “Right to Farm” laws. Such laws make a statement that the local government supports agriculture in the community. Protections afforded are similar to those provided to farmers within Agricultural Districts that are enforced by NYS Agriculture and Markets. The advantage of a local law is that enforcement is “closer to home.”

Another activity that could be taken by local government is to form an advisory committee of local farmers to advise the Town Board on actions that affect agriculture. Such actions may include determining those agricultural practices that are “reasonable,” and thus protected by a Right to Farm Law.

Local zoning regulations should be amended to provide for farm-related businesses on agricultural parcels. This applies primarily to some of the newer Amish and Mennonite farms in the area, as traditional farms are more specialized and unlikely to branch out into other businesses.

“Agricultural tourism” offers the potential for additional economic development. The Mennonite farmers may attract tourists to their farms and shops. There may also be opportunities for agricultural bed and breakfast inns.

Agricultural support businesses, such as suppliers or processing and packaging operations, need to be included in the community. Zoning needs to be reviewed to provide for such businesses, either in established industrial areas or elsewhere in the countryside.

Zoning regulations affecting agricultural operations within Agricultural Districts must be carefully worded. The NYS Agriculture and Markets has issued rulings indicating that certain regulations may unreasonably restrict standard agricultural practices. However, such rulings are not transferable to other municipalities.

E. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Priority Water Problem List

The NYS Department of Conservation's draft priority water problem list has identified possible impairments of primary uses of Johnson Creek and Oak Orchard River. In Oak Orchard River and its tributaries, aesthetics are "stressed," and fishing and fish propagation are "threatened" due to pathogens and nutrients carried from on-site septic systems and from agricultural runoff. Recreational fishing in Johnson and Jeddo Creeks appear to be threatened due to silt runoff from agriculture.

The NYS DEC's Priority Water Problems (PWP) list notes that several barnyards along Johnson Creek cause silt and nutrient problems that threaten the aesthetics and fishing use of this stream. At the time the list was created, two dairy farms appeared to be the primary source of this concern. An inactive hazardous waste site in the Village of Lyndonville discharges leachate that may be affecting water quality in Johnson Creek stream downstream of the dam. Contaminated sediment has accumulated at the bottom of the pond behind the Lyndonville Dam.

The PWP identifies potential impairments along three segments of Oak Orchard River. Within the 13.5 mile segment between Medina and Waterport Road in the Town of Carlton, fishing and aesthetics are impaired due to nutrient runoff from agricultural operations. Cows at a dairy farm directly on the creek were allowed access to the stream. Urban runoff also may be contributing pollutants.

This segment of Oak Orchard River has a lower water flow than the downstream segment. As a result, the fishery is generally limited to northern pike and walleye.

The PWP noted that fishing in the Barge Canal is threatened due to the temperature of the water and the policy of draining the canal in the winter. The Canal supports a diverse fishery. There is some concern about toxins in the water coming from Niagara County.

(Source: NYC DEC Region 8, Priority Water Problem List, provided to Ontario Lake Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council, September 1999)

Inactive hazardous waste sites

Four inactive hazardous wastes sites in western Orleans County are identified in the NYS Department of Conservation's Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Report. This section summarizes the status of remediation of these sites.

FMC Corp - Dublin Road, Shelby

A former hazardous waste site, located on Dublin Road in the Town of Shelby, was remediated in 1996 by its owner, FMC Corp, pursuant to a consent order and Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study. The site is approximately 50 feet from the Erie Canal and 75 feet from Jeddo Creek. The on-site waste piles and contaminated soils were excavated and contained in an on-site cell. Site fencing was installed to minimize access by area residents. Ground and surface water was treated and discharged into Jeddo Creek, and a wetland was restored. A sampling of residential wells by the NYS Department of Health in 1993, 1994 and 1996 identified no contaminants in excess of drinking water standards. Monitoring will continue through 2001.

Dupont -- West Ave., Lyndonville

A former agricultural dust/ spraying formulating facility and inactive landfill is located in the Village of Lyndonville, north of Monroe Electronics, within the railroad right-of-way. The site was used to dispose of lime and sulfur residue from the Barre Lime Sulfur Com., as well as DDT, carbon tetrachloride, and methoxychlor from DuPont Company. US EPA completed a site inspection and some soil sampling in 1988. Additional sampling in 1993 confirmed the migration of pesticides and arsenic from the site. In April 1992, the DuPont Co. excavated 41 one-gallon containers of waste along with several cubic yards of contaminated soil from the site, and disposed of the materials in an off-site facility. The DuPont Company signed a Consent Order in 1997 for additional investigation. The results from the 1997 field investigation were evaluated by NYS DEC in 1998.

An April 1998 investigation indicated that surface water drains through the landfill into a storm sewer, which then drains to a wetland and then to Johnson Creek, which is a significant fish habitat. Groundwater contamination has not been evaluated. As homes within the Village of Lyndonville use Lake Ontario as a drinking water source, exposures to contaminated groundwater are not expected. However, residents located in the Town of Yates, as close as 2400 feet from the site, depend on groundwater as their drinking water supply.

Residents near the site have complained of recurring sulfur odors. Air samples collected by the NYS DOH at the storm sewer opening on West Avenue revealed slightly elevated levels of hydrogen sulfide and volatile organic compounds; however, levels diminished significantly with increasing distance. In summer 2000, the DuPont Corporation replaced the West Avenue storm sewer to drain an existing ditch located south of the former landfill and to reroute the existing drainage ditch. This project has resulted in the elimination of residents' complaints of recurring sulfur odors.

Fisher Price, Medina

Fisher Price, a manufacturer of children's toys, reportedly dumped spent solvents into an on-site sump near one of the buildings during the early 1980's. Samples collected in 1991 revealed that groundwater was contaminated by freon and soils were contaminated by freon and other organic chemicals. As an "Interim Remedial Measure," storm sewers leading from the site to a nearby pond at the end of Beach Drive were thoroughly cleaned. However, this did not reduce the concentration of contaminants in the groundwater. As the Village operates a municipal

water system Village residents are unlikely to be affected. No contaminants were detected in private wells located within one mile of the site following testing in 1992 and 1994.

J.I. Case -- Allis Road, Ridgeway

The J.I. Case property, located at 3922 Allis Road in Ridgeway, contains an old warehouse that was used as a manufacturing and storage facility for many different agricultural chemicals, including arsenic-based products. An environmental audit conducted by J.I. Case Corp. disclosed the presence of fuel oil, arsenic, lead, copper and pesticide contamination in isolated areas of the facility. Accumulated water in the basement was found to contain arsenic and subsurface soils were contaminated by petroleum hydrocarbons. In 1992, the contaminated water and soils were removed and taken to an approved disposal facility. In 1997, additional soil was removed and groundwater was found to be contaminated by arsenic, copper, lead and mercury. There is concern that contamination of a nearby tributary to Oak Orchard River could occur. Within 1000 feet of the site, two private residences and a church use groundwater as a drinking water source. However, samples taken from these wells in 1992 and 1994 did not show any contamination.

F. RECREATION, CULTURE AND TOURISM

The natural, historic and cultural resources of western Orleans County offer recreational and cultural opportunities to residents of western Orleans County. In addition, these resources have significant potential to attract tourists to the area and to improve the area's overall quality of life. This section describes the issues and opportunities relating to enhancing the area's natural, historic and cultural resources.

Public Parks and Recreation Programs

Residents of western Orleans County have access to a variety of parks and recreational facilities. The Canal has the potential to add a new element of recreation to the Village, as a focus for downtown activities. Area residents benefit from organized recreation programs in Medina and Lyndonville, and cooperation among several municipalities in financing youth programs.

Limited financial and human resources constrain the delivery of recreational services and facilities to western Orleans County residents.

Natural Resources

Lake Ontario

Public access to Lake Ontario is limited to the land in Shadigee, located at the end of Route 63 in the Town of Yates. The Village of Lyndonville water treatment plant is located at the lakeshore on the east side of Route 63. A small restaurant, now closed, is located on the west side of Route 63.

The appearance of the area could be softened to make it a more appealing place to observe the lake. Due to a steep bluff, there is no way to access the water. A chain link fence restricts access to the Lyndonville water plant property. Picnic tables and/or benches could be installed to allow visitors to enjoy the lake views.

During the 1800's, this site was used to transport apples and other agricultural products by boat, and is believed to be a stop on the Underground Railroad. Interpretive signage would be appropriate at the site to commemorate its history.

Glenwood Lake/ Oak Orchard River

Glenwood Lake offers opportunities for boating and fishing. Public access is available at a park developed by Orleans County, located east of Route 63 just north of the Village of Medina. The Glenwood Lake Association has received a grant to acquire a parcel of land along the south side of Glenwood Lake and to develop a park at this location.

The Oak Orchard River is a regional attraction for canoeists and kayakers. Canoeists park their cars on the shoulders of Slade Road and Route 63. The Town of Ridgeway recently widened the shoulder at Slade Road to improve safety. The system is working adequately for canoeists, but improvements would be welcome. For example, there are no restroom facilities or trash receptacles available. No sign identifies the area as a location to park and launch boats. There have been minor problems with trash along the stream bank.

Much of the land along Oak Orchard River was owned by Niagara Mohawk and was recently sold, along with the hydro-electric dam and the land adjoining Glenwood Lake, to Orion Power Corporation. Much of this land had been leased to the original landowners. Following the recent change in ownership, some of the land may be repurchased by adjoining landowners. Opportunities to increase public access to Oak Orchard River may be available by approaching Orion. Orion may be interested in donating land to a municipality or a private entity such as the Glenwood Lake Association.

Village of Lyndonville -- Mill Pond and Johnson Creek

The public fishing area behind the fire hall is a significant resource. A gravel driveway and parking lot provides access for fishermen, who fish along the south bank and within Johnson Creek. The site attracts fishermen from a large area, especially in the fall, when the salmon are "running." During the walking tour held on October 30, 1999, approximately 12 vehicles were parked in the lot; 9 of these had out-of-state license plates.

The site adjoins the sewage treatment plant and the Village Department of Public Works' compost pile. The compost pile is considered a community resource, as residents are encouraged to take compost for their use. The fishing locations are removed from the rest of the site, sheltered by trees, and provide a peaceful site in a natural setting.

Possible improvements to the fishing park include renovating a former railroad bridge for pedestrian use, and installing a sign for the park. Some concerns were raised about weeds. It was suggested that a stockade fence be constructed around the existing storage building to the rear of the fire hall.

Land adjoining the sewage treatment plant has the potential to be utilized for athletic fields. This area is the site of a former apple orchard.

Historic Resources

The Erie Canal and historic buildings in the Village of Medina are significant cultural resources in the community. The Canal Basin area, and the historic Downtown Business Districts, make the Village of Medina an attractive place to visit. Tourists, County residents, neighbors, and business patrons enjoy the historic charm of the downtown area. Revitalization efforts that focus on the Canal and the historic character of the downtown are critical to ensuring that downtown retains a unique identity, in contrast to the more automobile-oriented shopping and service areas along major highways.

The Tourism Focus Group acknowledged that the historic character of existing villages and hamlets are a significant resource. Design standards would help ensure that the historic character of the Villages of Medina and Lyndonville is not compromised by new development. The Village of Medina Planning Board has drafted a Historic Preservation ordinance for the Village Board to consider. Educating the public is important. The Planning Board intends to be actively involved in educating the public on the need to maintain standards, and to identify funding sources to help property owners make historically-compatible improvements to their buildings. Formal documentation of historic resources along Main Street may be undertaken by DOT in preparation for the work on Routes 63 and 31.

In order to make the most productive use of these historic resources, the use of second stories in downtown buildings needs to be encouraged. The NYS Uniform Code presents the biggest impediment to re-using these spaces. Examples of reuse include the Opera House in Fredonia. For many buildings in the Village of Medina, the rear building line is the same as the property line. This makes it difficult to construct a second exit to the rear of a building, in order to comply with fire safety requirements.

Re-use of the opera house in Medina has been considered by the Arts Council. However, renovation would be extremely expensive, as structural repairs would be needed. Fleet Bank may be willing to transfer ownership, but the Village may not want to accept the liability. The original stage remains, but the seating has been removed. The balcony remains, but is not safe to use.

There may be potential for the reuse of industrial buildings in the downtown area for commercial or residential uses.

Historic buildings are also significant aspects of the character of the downtown business district in the Village of Lyndonville and in several of the hamlets of western Orleans County.

Signs and facilities that offer interpretation of historical resources help to attract tourists. For example, the Medina Historical Society is developing a multi-media presentation about the history of Medina sandstone. The project has been partially funded by GO-Art! and will be housed in the Medina Historical Society building. A walking tour of downtown, illustrated by photographs, will be promoted by the Medina Chamber of Commerce.

Cultural Resources

Opportunities for additional cultural programming and folk art programming are available through GO-Art!. However, Orleans County would need to contribute matching funds. Orleans County supports the Arts Council modestly, with \$1,000 annually. In contrast, Genesee County provides \$12,000/ year for cultural programming. Such programming typically includes concerts, theater events, arts and crafts exhibits, and other events.

Participants in the Focus Group noted that there is considerable interest in the arts among Orleans County residents. They noted the popularity of the Buffalo Philharmonic concerts, and the appeal of “open mike” poetry readings at the local coffee bar. There is also interest in establishing additional space for theatrical performances, concerts, studios, and art exhibits.

A project suggested by representatives of the GO-Art! is an adaptation of the “cows project” that originated in Chicago. Sculptures of cows were painted and decorated by selected artists and placed at various locations throughout the city. A similar project was implemented in Buffalo (with buffaloes) and in Batavia (horses.) Such a project would require participation by businesses and municipalities. Municipal participation would include finding spaces to exhibit the works, finding business sponsors, and providing a financial contribution.

Tourism Promotion

Enhancing tourism in western Orleans County would benefit from improved communication among businesses and organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, GO-Art!, and the Orleans County Department of Planning and Tourism. For example, several organizations offer calendars of events. The Orleans County web site provides links to other tourism-related organizations and businesses.

There is a need to raise awareness locally about tourist attractions. Wayne Hale with the Orleans County Department of Planning suggested distributing “tent cards” to local restaurants in order to publicize other activities and businesses.

Improved directional signage would help orient visitors to the area. Such signs could be color coordinated, perhaps using the green and yellow color scheme used for Glenwood Lake.

The appearance of entrances, or “gateways” to the communities in western Orleans County should be improved. Signs, such as those at the entrances to the Village of Lyndonville, could be installed in Medina. The vacant property, owned by Nice ‘N Easy and located on the southeast corner of Route 63 and Maple Ridge Road, could be used for welcome signs, or possibly for a farmers market.

Beautification is important. Municipalities could buy wildflower seeds or bulbs and plant them along major thoroughfares or at entrances to communities. Plantings arranged to spell “Welcome” or the name of the municipality could be a significant positive feature.

One of the major constraints to additional tourism development in Orleans County is the lack of accommodations. No motel in the County is large enough to accommodate a motor coach tour. Local governments could encourage the establishment of bed & breakfast inns.

Zoning requirements may need to be more flexible regarding the establishment of businesses in homes. For example, the bed and breakfast provisions in the Village of Medina allow the accommodation of overnight guests, but do not allow restaurants. Town regulations restrict certain small-scale manufacturing business that could become tourist attractions.

G. TRANSPORTATION

Regional Highway Network

The extension of the Route 531 Expressway would have significant influence on development opportunities in western Orleans County. By reducing travel times to Rochester, residences in western Orleans County may become more attractive to commuters. Certain businesses and industries would also benefit from improved access to Rochester.

The State highway system provides an effective transportation network, which is used in transporting supplies and products for industries as well as agriculture in the community.

Public Transportation

The lack of public transportation limits the mobility of the community's senior population, as well as others who do not drive. The maintenance of the sidewalk system in the Villages of Medina and Lyndonville is important to Village residents as well as visitors to the downtown area and elsewhere.

Medina Highway Reconstruction

The New York State Department of Transportation has scheduled major reconstruction and new construction along Routes 31, 31E, and 63 throughout the Village of Medina in 2002. The project will be administered as a “pass through” grant; the funds will be provided to the Village, and the Village will be responsible for completing the project. The preliminary design report was initiated in September 2000, with the final Design Plan completed in Summer 2001.

The project will include reconstruction of the road, down to the base, selective widening, new lane markers, and the addition of bicycle lanes. On-street parking may be eliminated in certain segments. Sidewalks will be added along several segments, including Maple Ridge Road (Route 31) between the entrance to the High School and Route 63.

The project will result in changes in jurisdiction of several street segments within the Village. North Main Street between Prospect Street and Route 31 (Center Street), which is currently a Village street, will become a State highway (Route 63). Prospect Avenue between Commercial Street and Route 31 (West Center Street), which is currently part of Route 63, will become a Village street.

The reconstruction project has the potential to significantly improve the appearance of the downtown area. The Village plans to replace all of its sewer and water mains along the length of the project, and to separate the storm and sanitary sewers. During the design process, the Village will have the opportunity to incorporate additional enhancements into the project.

The project will also incorporate provisions for access management along Route 31 (Maple Ridge Road) between Route 63 and Salt Works Road. This will provide opportunities to manage access to existing and future commercial development along Maple Ridge Road. The Town of Shelby and the Village of Medina will have the opportunity to designate specific points of access for future development, as well as to suggest design features such as turning lanes and combining driveways.

H. PUBLIC UTILITIES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

This section evaluates the opportunities and constraints related to the area's water and sewer systems and telecommunications facilities and services. Background information about the capacities and limitations of the water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater drainage systems in the Villages of Medina and Lyndonville and the Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates is presented in Part 1 of this Plan.

Public Water Service

Village of Medina

The Village of Medina Water System has the capacity to provide additional water to new customers in the Village or in Town Water Districts. The Village currently uses approximately 850,000 gallons per day; its allotment from the Niagara County Water Authority is 10 million gpd. As current usage is primarily residential, peak usage occurs in the early morning and late afternoon. Additional industrial users, which would use the maximum amount during the daytime hours, could readily be served.

The Village is, however, somewhat constrained by limited water storage capacity. The Village has only one storage tank which is located east of the Village on Route 31A. Although the limited storage capacity, to date, has not caused any problems, there is some concern about increasing demand during peak periods as the Village supplies water to more Town of Ridgeway and Shelby households.

The Medina Public Works Director recommends that planning begin now for the construction of a second storage tank so that preparations can be finalized before the storage tank is actually needed. The Public Works Director also recommends that the new tank be sited at some other location, such as on the property on Salt Works Road that the Town of Shelby recently acquired. Doing so will provide the Village water system with the redundancy needed to minimize service disruptions in the event that one of the transmission lines should fail in the future.

Village staff have identified the following issues as priorities for improving the water system in the Village:

- eliminate leakage at pipe intersections;
- replace undersized pipes (many are 2", 4" and 6" in diameter);
- improve fire flows and pressure;

- provide additional cross-connections (“looping”) of water mains to ensure a continuous supply of water to all areas of the Village; and
- interconnect with the Town of Ridgeway water system.

Village of Lyndonville

In 1993, the Village, in cooperation with the Town of Yates, replaced the water intake structure. The two communities replaced the existing intake pipe and constructed new 16-inch pipe to a distance of 1250 feet. An older 10-inch pipe connects the new intake pipe with the “low lift” pump in the intake structure.

Four new sand filter cells were installed at the treatment plant in 1994. In 1996, automated monitoring equipment was installed, the chlorination system was improved and a baffling system was installed in the clearwell.

Several breaks have occurred on Main Street. On side streets, no breaks have been reported, but most of the lines are undersized (primarily 2-inch and 4-inch; 6-inch along Lake Avenue).

Upgrading is needed in order to support future residential development in the southern portion of the Village.

The Town of Ridgeway is installing a new water line along Route 63 to the southern boundary of the Town of Yates. The Village of Lyndonville would like to interconnect to this system through a new line extending south of the Village along Route 63. Currently, just 5-6 properties immediately south of the Village in the Town of Yates receive water from the Lyndonville system. Extending water service along Route 63 south to the Town of Ridgeway would give additional properties along Route 63 in the Town of Yates access to public water service.

Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates

Town water districts have the capability of providing water to additional areas. Additional residential development could be accommodated in areas served by public water.

The Towns of Shelby, Ridgeway and Yates have each completed extensions to their water service areas during the past several years. Nearly all of these improvements have been financed through grants from the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Small Cities Grant Program and/ or Rural Development. Federal funding is provided through a competitive grant process, to projects that solve serious health and safety problems and that benefit people with low and moderate incomes. The locations of the water extension projects have been selected based on these two criteria.

There may be additional areas within these towns where on-site water supplies are deficient, but where the residents would not qualify for federal assistance due to income limitations. However, the cost of constructing the improvements would not be affordable to these residents without grant assistance.

In areas within Agricultural Districts, the Towns permit access to the federally funded water lines only to existing residences and existing and new agricultural uses. New residential development

within designated Agricultural Districts is not permitted to receive public water. This provision is intended to avoid new residential development in farming areas, and to minimize future conflicts between agriculture and residential development.

There may be opportunities to streamline the administration of water service. For example, municipalities could implement joint billing services.

Sewage treatment

The Village of Medina Wastewater Treatment Plant has sufficient capacity to serve additional customers. The Village has the capacity to process wastewater from additional sources. The Village of Middleport could install a force main along the Erie Canal to transmit wastewater to the Village of Medina's plant. The Village of Medina would need to replace sanitary sewers along Stork Street and North Gravel Road in order to eliminate storm water infiltration. The pipeline could connect to the treatment plant at Stork Street.

The Village of Lyndonville's sewage treatment plant was constructed in 1980. As it is now 20 years old, it requires some updating. The Village has been working with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to test new technology for processing sludge using reeds. The plant has sufficient capacity to serve additional customers.

Telecommunications

The Telecommunications Focus Group identified several issues and opportunities associated with telecommunications infrastructure and opportunities for economic development utilizing such infrastructure. Constraints are associated with current and potential limitations to the access to necessary infrastructure.

Opportunities

Businesses that rely on internet technology have the potential to contribute significantly to economic development opportunities in Western Orleans County. Such businesses attract educated entrepreneurs who appreciate the small town, rural environment offered by Western Orleans communities. Such businesses do not typically depend on traditional infrastructure, such as public water and sewer service. Shipping is often done using UPS and other small truck delivery services. Internet businesses are typically small businesses; small businesses represent a significant portion of recent and projected job growth in Orleans County and New York State.

Concerns of area residents who rely on the internet for business use include slow speeds of conventional telephone lines, and the lack of access, in certain areas of the County, to cable (RoadRunner), DSL, T-1 and other high speed services.

Constraints

The major constraints to the expansion of internet-related businesses are related to access to necessary high speed internet connections.

I. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION / CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Intergovernmental Cooperation/Consolidation of Services Focus Group identified certain existing intergovernmental structures that could be used to facilitate increased intergovernmental cooperation. For example, the Niagara-Orleans BOCES coordinates a purchasing cooperative known as the Purchasing Council. The GLOW Solid Waste Management Committee also coordinates a purchasing cooperative. Municipalities in Orleans County are eligible to participate in both at no cost. These purchasing cooperatives coordinate the joint bidding and purchasing of supplies, materials, and equipment for member agencies. Joint cooperative purchasing enables member agencies to obtain volume discounted pricing on the supplies, materials, and equipment.

The Niagara-Orleans BOCES Intergovernmental Relations Council was formed by BOCES to develop an integrated strategy to reduce the cost of electric and long-distance telephone service in the BOCES service area. The Intergovernmental Relations Council was formed in response government deregulation of the electric and telephone industry. Municipalities and other governmental agencies within the BOCES service area are eligible to participate at no cost.

The municipalities in western Orleans County have a history of working together cooperatively both formally and informally. The existing intermunicipal cooperation can be used as a basis for further expanding cooperative efforts.

Consolidation of Services

There may be public opposition to the efforts of the municipalities in western Orleans County to merge governmental functions and services. It is not unusual for the public to oppose governmental consolidation for fear of losing local control and/or community identity.

Intermunicipal contracting for services provides a means by which municipalities can benefit from the efficiencies that would result from consolidation without actually consolidating. One municipality can perform one or more governmental functions or provide governmental services for another municipality through contractual agreements. The public may have less opposition to such arrangements. Moreover, municipalities can pick and choose which services they want to provide using their own employees and which they want to contract for with other municipalities.

The Intergovernmental Cooperation/Consolidation of Services Focus Group identified two immediate opportunities for intermunicipal contracting. One opportunity involves water meter reading and billing. The Focus Group determined that it would be beneficial for the Village of Medina to read the water meters and do the billing for the Towns of Ridgeway and Shelby. Meter reading and billing is somewhat problematic for the two Towns. Neither Town has enough water customers to warrant assigning an employee full time to read meters. Consequently full-time employees from each of the Town's respective highway departments are assigned to read the meters a few days each month, which disrupts the work of the highway departments. As the Village of Medina has many more water customers, the Village has one employee dedicated to reading water meters. The Village's meter reader could easily read water meters for both Towns. The Village could also do the water billings for the Towns, thereby eliminating the need for the Towns to maintain separate computer billing software.

The other opportunity the Focus Group identified involves the provision of primary ambulance service. It has been recently reported in the newspapers that Rural Metro, the primary ambulance service provider in western Orleans County, is having severe financial difficulty. The Village of Medina's Fire Department currently provides backup ambulance service not only within the Village, but also in the Towns of Yates, Ridgeway, and Shelby. Therefore, if Rural Metro ceases to provide ambulance service, the Village of Medina's Fire Department would be best positioned to assume that responsibility with little or no disruption of service. The Focus Group was cognizant of how the City of Batavia Fire Department assumed responsibility for providing ambulance service county-wide in Genesee County and has operated the service profitably according to newspaper reports.

In the event that Rural Metro discontinues providing primary service, an areawide ambulance corporation or service district could be created. However, providing this service with Village Fire Department personnel may not be the best way to provide such an areawide service. There is significant concern about the increased cost to the Village of Medina that may result from the Village becoming a primary ambulance service. Such costs are likely to include disability benefits, liability insurance, personnel, equipment, and administration.