



5 Year Strategic Plan

This document includes Narrative Responses to specific questions that grantees of the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership, Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS and Emergency Shelter Grants Programs must respond to in order to be compliant with the Consolidated Planning Regulations.

GENERAL

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is required. Include the objectives and outcomes identified in the plan and an evaluation of past performance.

5 Year Strategic Plan Executive Summary:

Introduction:

(pages 1-7 and 19-21 from City of Niagara Falls NY - 2009 Comprehensive Plan)

Over the past four decades, the City of Niagara Falls has suffered from economic and industrial decline, and serious employment and population loss. As well, a number of misguided renewal initiatives that removed residential and commercial stock in the heart of the city and have fragmented the downtown core and the communities that traditionally supported it. Today, many urban neighborhoods are in decay, large areas of the city's industrial corridors are abandoned, and many residents, community and business leaders have lost their sense of pride in their city. In fact, many former residents have chosen to move out of Niagara Falls. Many visitors are disappointed and clearly unimpressed by the quality of the urban environment and the tourism offering that is not what they would expect adjacent to a world-class natural heritage destination such as the Falls. Tourists prefer to visit Niagara Falls, Ontario than remain in Niagara Falls, New York for more than a couple of hours.

While these conditions have taken their toll, the future need not be that of continued decline. A number of recent positive initiatives have renewed interest in the city, including the establishment of USA Niagara and the introduction of the Seneca Nation's Casino in the heart of Niagara Falls. The re-licensing agreement with the New York Power Authority (NYPA) is providing the municipality with new sources of revenue, which should be used for carefully considered 'catalyst' projects. The recent streetscape improvement program along John B. Daly and Rainbow Boulevards has demonstrated the positive impact that carefully chosen and executed capital projects can bring to the city.

Niagara Falls did not fare well in the post-industrial era, but the 21st century will see different global economic and social forces that may serve to fundamentally change the prospects of the City looking out over the next twenty years. Niagara Falls for all its current cosmetic faults still has great bones. Niagara Falls still possesses a number of existing assets and key opportunities that can be positioned and leveraged to improve the overall social and economic circumstance of the city; support and strengthen new and emerging economic, employment and cultural sectors; and achieve, over time, the renewal of the city as an attractive and desirable place to live, work, invest, visit and play. The Comprehensive Plan places a strong emphasis on the quality of the urban experience for both visitors and residents. By supporting improvements to the whole community – main streets, parks, heritage neighborhoods and local business establishments – the intent is to enhance the quality of

life for Niagara Falls residents living here today, residents that will come to live here in the future, as well as, enticing tourists to come, stay longer, and visit again and again.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DRIVERS

All urban places undergo a continuous process of change, evolution, growth and decline. Successful communities are able to understand and mediate their unique challenges and build on opportunities to improve their overall circumstances, quality of life, economic vitality and livability. To be successful, positive change must be based on a realistic understanding of contemporary challenges, opportunities and economic drivers that must be addressed and/or leveraged to improve the city's quality of life and potential for the future.

The Decline of Industry and Manufacturing:

Over the past 40 years, both the region and the city have experienced significant changes, resulting from the steady decline of the city's industrial and manufacturing base. In the 20 years between 1970 and 1990 alone, total employment in the region's manufacturing sector fell from 170,000 to 90,000, a decline of 53%.

The loss of industrial jobs has had numerous widespread impacts that are outlined below. As in many industry-based cities in North America, expansion of this sector in the future is not likely due to global shifts in the manufacturing economy. However, there is a huge built-in locational value here which can revive new production, but additional manufacturing production without high-tech, value adding employment, and without more competitive residential markets can never produce the same level of economic impact it did in the 1950's.

Public and private sector initiatives aimed at generating and strengthening new employment 'growth sectors' must be supported and encouraged by the municipality to stabilize and ultimately expand the economic and residential bases of Niagara Falls. Key growth sectors include tourism and hospitality generally, and heritage and nature-based tourism, specifically; professional services, including emerging "green" technology and research; regional health services; arts, culture and entertainment; and regional and bi-national transport of goods and services.

High Unemployment:

For decades, Niagara Falls has relied almost solely on one employment sector – heavy industry – with very little in the way of economic or employment diversification. The transformation of local, regional and national economies has resulted in reductions and consolidations that have minimized the presence of corporate head offices in the city. In addition, major government offices have not located in the city, and tourism has only very recently been considered an important sector for future economic growth. As a result, the eggs have been in one basket and Niagara Falls has become 'a single resource town'. Personnel reductions and the out-right closure of large-scale industrial operations by major employers have consequently had a debilitating effect on the city. High unemployment, averaging 10.5% in the 1990s – almost twice the state and national averages⁸ – continues.

The capital-intensive nature of chemical and other heavy industries in Niagara Falls has made it next to impossible for former employees to start their own companies.

Consequently, closures have not led to new businesses or related spin-off activity.

Furthermore, Niagara Falls' industrial base has not traditionally been engaged in research and development – an important component for continued economic growth and business development. The rare introduction of new industrial operations has not been of sufficient scale to replace lost jobs. Manufacturing closures have instead resulted in a large number of workers competing for the few remaining jobs or leaving the region altogether for new opportunities elsewhere.

Programs, institutions and activities aimed at the promotion and development of retraining programs, facilities and satellite facilities within key growth sectors should be actively supported by the municipality to:

- Stabilize and retain the city's workforce and population base
- Support economic diversification
- Reduce unemployment
- Better equip potential employees to participate and contribute in the service and knowledge-based economy

A Declining and Aging Population

Diminishing economic opportunities, high unemployment associated with steady industrial decline and new employment opportunities occurring within the region have caused many residents to relocate elsewhere. The city, built to support a population of just over 100,000 at its post-war peak, accommodates a current population of close to 50,000. Not surprisingly, the majority of those who have left Niagara Falls have been young adults and families with young children. The number of family households in the city fell by 13% in the 1990s. This decline in population has impacted neighborhoods, diminished the strong sense of community once found here and resulted in inner city school closures and reduced community support services and facilities. The ultimate result is inner city neighborhoods that are less desirable to existing and potential new residents.

The decline of the young adult population is not only detrimental to stabilizing the population, but in particular to the emergence of an entrepreneurial culture in Niagara Falls. A young adult demographic typically promotes and supports a willingness to venture in new directions, exhibits a willingness to take informed risks, and supports cultural development and renewal. In the absence of strong representation by these younger age cohorts, the city's cultural and entrepreneurial potential will not be fully realized and its available workforce will continue to be reduced, leaving employers with fewer options for new employees. The presence of an educated and available workforce is a significant factor, which cannot be over-emphasized in attracting new employers to locate their operations in the City.

While the population of Niagara Falls is declining, it is also aging. A growing elderly population will place increased demands on health care services and already stretched social agencies over time. The burden of these demands will intensify if the city's tax base continues to fall due to a declining population, high unemployment, an absence of new development, and a lack of growth in key industry sectors.

To retain and attract a broader population to Niagara Falls, including young families and young adults, the municipality must pursue a range of activities and programs aimed at improving the overall quality of life experienced in the city. These initiatives should:

- Improve the condition of residential housing stock and neighborhoods, and the range of housing types
- Support high-quality, specialized inner city educational opportunities.
- Improve the physical and visual quality of the urban environment and experience
- Support specialized retail/commercial development and business opportunities
- Provide for arts, cultural and entertainment development
- Promote employment opportunities within key industry growth sectors
- Improve community, health care and recreational amenities and services

Competitive Suburban Growth and the Decline of the Core City

While the suburban communities surrounding Niagara Falls have experienced the impacts of decline in the region as a whole, they have fared somewhat better than the city itself. Seen by many as attractive, safe and affordable alternatives to living in Niagara Falls, many surrounding municipalities have experienced both population and employment growth. New housing developments and commercial activities are concentrated in these areas. A prime example is the array of new format retail developments found along Military Road. These developments, along with new regional shopping centers, are marketed on convenience and the presence of national retailers. With their selection of shops and easy access from major regional transportation routes, commercial offerings in nearby suburban areas have pulled consumers away from the city's traditional shopping streets, namely Main Street and Pine Avenue, and refocused much of the retail activity outside of the core.

The municipality should address the imbalance between suburban growth and the decline of the Core City through targeted policies and actions focused on making the Core City a unique, high value, attractive place to developers, residents and visitors. Initiatives should focus on enhancing quality of life, as well as:

- Providing tax or incentive programs to kick start positive change in the city
- Re-configuring suburban style offerings and amenities currently found in the Core City to urban development typologies that support a high-quality urban identity
- Offering and marketing unique elements and amenities not available in suburban locations, such as: entertainment, cultural and shopping precincts; niche boutique and specialty retail areas;
- Heritage district preservation and interpretation;
- High-quality education and resources;
- Regional services;
- Convention and healthcare services;
- A high-quality of design excellence in the built and natural environments;
- Greater employment and economic opportunities.
- Creating and marketing a distinct and high-quality urban identity and shopping experience

The Residential Market, Neighborhoods and Housing

The growth of Niagara Falls and its neighborhoods occurred largely in response to the city's pre-war economic and industrial expansion. As a result, many working class neighborhoods developed quickly and were located immediately adjacent to existing or former industrial areas and the infrastructure serving them, such as train tracks. While this provided quick access to employment areas, many neighborhoods were not sufficiently buffered from heavy industry or became surrounded by industrial uses over time and isolated from neighboring residential areas. This situation continues today; few of these neighborhoods enjoy connections to the river, as industry and/or transportation routes occupy this land base. The destructive impact of Urban Renewal initiatives of the 1960s and 70s further fragmented neighborhoods.

These difficult physical relationships, combined with de-industrialization, loss of population, suburban flight, and the decline in the overall economic circumstance of Niagara Falls have resulted in systemic deterioration of many neighborhoods, making the city unattractive to many home-builders and homebuyers. As a result of these conditions, Niagara Falls has a tremendous oversupply of (lower-density) pre-World War II multifamily dwellings of two, three or four units; houses built two to a lot; and stately single-family homes converted into multiple units.

Oversupply of this older residential stock and a continuing decrease in family size, together with population out-migration has meant that the overall housing market is low. Resale values in the

Core City are extremely weak, where one would typically expect to find the most desirable and upscale housing, given proximity to the core and the extent of original or heritage housing stock.

The city's vacancy rate has increased in recent years to 13%, while the rates for the county and state have fallen to 8%. Within the current oversupplied market, there is no incentive for the repair and upgrading of rental units and many homes are abandoned and in significant need of repair, updating or replacement. Due to the oversupply of this obsolete older housing, and the built-out nature of most parts of the city, construction of new market-rate housing units has been nonexistent.

Today, the healthiest neighborhoods are those located furthest to the east, north of the Core City, and away from major industrial areas. The areas in greatest state of decline are generally found in the Core City or immediately adjacent to the city's primary industrial areas. School closures and reduced community support facilities resulting from population decline and the lack of medium and high-density housing alternatives offer very limited choice for those wishing to live in the city. The widespread dilapidation of under-occupied neighborhoods is clearly noticeable and speaks of a city in dire need of renewal and change.

The municipality will need to pursue a residential renewal and reinvestment strategy comprised of a number of ongoing programs to:

- Stop and reverse the decline in the residential housing market
- Reduce the oversupply of derelict housing units to stabilize the market at more normative and regionally competitive values
- Address the education and community needs within stable neighborhoods to begin to attract residents back to the city and provide a support base for business and economic development
- Position new housing alternatives to support and reinforce existing and anticipated commercial and tourism developments.

Weak Market Conditions

The market in Niagara Falls is weak, due to a cascading series of problems following industrial decline that have affected the employment base and by extension real estate value and property-tax rates. Erosion in the quality of life; loss of population; physical deterioration of neighborhoods and community support facilities; infrastructure in obvious need of repair; and unattractive built form and vacant parcels in the tourism precinct make the city unattractive to residential, and business development interests, and unattractive to financial and lending institutions necessary to support these interests. It is this fundamental economic shift and the lack of a consistent economic strategy or investment in tourism that have created the current weak market conditions.

In addition, while tourism is increasingly seen as an important new economic driver for the city, the current visitation numbers indicate a profound inability to capture a significant portion of an otherwise strong market. The dearth of new or upgraded lodging or attractions also presents a weak market case. These factors, coupled with the existing poor quality, appearance, and physical condition of tourist areas in Niagara Falls, must be addressed to advance the tourism industry and provide the necessary growth, which then supports growth in other commercial and residential sectors.

Yet, the unrealized opportunity is for additional and upscale lodging development and for expanding the existing 'tourism program' and recreational offerings. It is the city's latent ability to expand its offerings with new attractions, quality lodgings, restaurants, boutique shopping, entertainment,

family and educational destinations and other amenities, and, at the same time, improve the visual or physical quality of the urban environment, which has the greatest potential to yield positive economic growth for Niagara Falls and encourage new growth in other sectors.

The municipality must establish a clear vision for the Core City tourism sector. Its programs and activities must reflect a demonstrated commitment to positive change, whereby the City of Niagara Falls leads critical catalyst initiatives that can induce private sector investment and renewal of the city.

Excess Infrastructure

Niagara Falls is a city built to accommodate a population of approximately 100,000 people, and its land base includes a significant amount of employment/commercial land intended for large industrial operations. With the continuing decline of both its residential and industrial bases, the city is now 'oversized', with an excess of infrastructure and developed land in relation to actual use and municipal tax return. Despite the reduced tax base due to population and business losses, the municipality continues to be responsible for maintaining and repairing the same amount of infrastructure once necessary to support the city of 100,000. Clearly, the City of Niagara Falls' ability to maintain this infrastructure, provide continued support for community facilities, and/or develop new programs intended to halt and reverse decline, is severely challenged.

A number of difficult decisions are necessary to determine where infrastructure investment, maintenance and improvements will have the greatest positive impact, in order to pursue programs and strategies necessary to begin the city's renewal and support critical economic sectors. It may become necessary to defer maintenance, and even provisionally retire infrastructure in underused areas of the city until the market once again calls for growth and resources become available for projects that are not currently a priority. Immediate and ongoing investment in priority areas of the city will allow Niagara Falls to tap new sources of revenue, attract more residents and provide momentum for revitalization of the entire city.

The municipality must focus its expenditures on projects that will encourage the desired and necessary private sector reinvestment and enhance the quality of life and quality of experience offered to residents and visitors. New infrastructure projects should enhance the livability of existing urban areas, rather than expanding into new areas, while strengthening the city's role as an important international crossing and tourism destination.

Brownfields

The City and its industry were founded on the locational advantage offered by the Falls and the Niagara River. With the decline of industrial activity, the city is left with a large collection of contaminated sites that cannot be remediated easily or quickly. The majority of these sites sit vacant and/or abandoned with neglected buildings dotting the landscape. These conditions further depress real estate values, prevent public access, and often preclude reuse. Many residential neighborhoods adjacent to these areas have been negatively affected by their proximity to abandoned sites, which has contributed to neighborhood disinvestment and decline. Clean-up costs, perceived regulatory inflexibility, and issues of liability and responsibility often hinder remediation efforts.

Across North America, many cities are actively engaged in remediating and redeveloping brownfield sites, to re-establish connections to previously industrialized waterfronts and initiate a new era of economic development and growth focused on transforming these areas into vibrant, mixed use waterfront communities. In Niagara Falls, many industrial uses will continue to be located within existing industrial corridors; however, over the long term, the City should pursue existing brownfield remediation programs to begin to prepare priority sites for future use, particularly those adjacent to

the city's waterfront. These areas represent the next era of city building in Niagara Falls and municipal resources, including Transportation funds, should be directed toward the identification of priority remediation areas, in the Core City, along the riverfront and entrances to the city, for redevelopment. In the short term, improvements aimed at reducing the visual impact of prominent brownfield sites, consolidation of industrial uses, re-use where appropriate, as well as, developing industrial heritage sites should be the most viable investment in brownfield sites.

The municipality should anticipate brownfield redevelopment over the long-term and identify sites located within or adjacent to the Core City and/or the waterfront for preliminary scoping and feasibility analysis.

A Propensity to Look Outward for Solutions

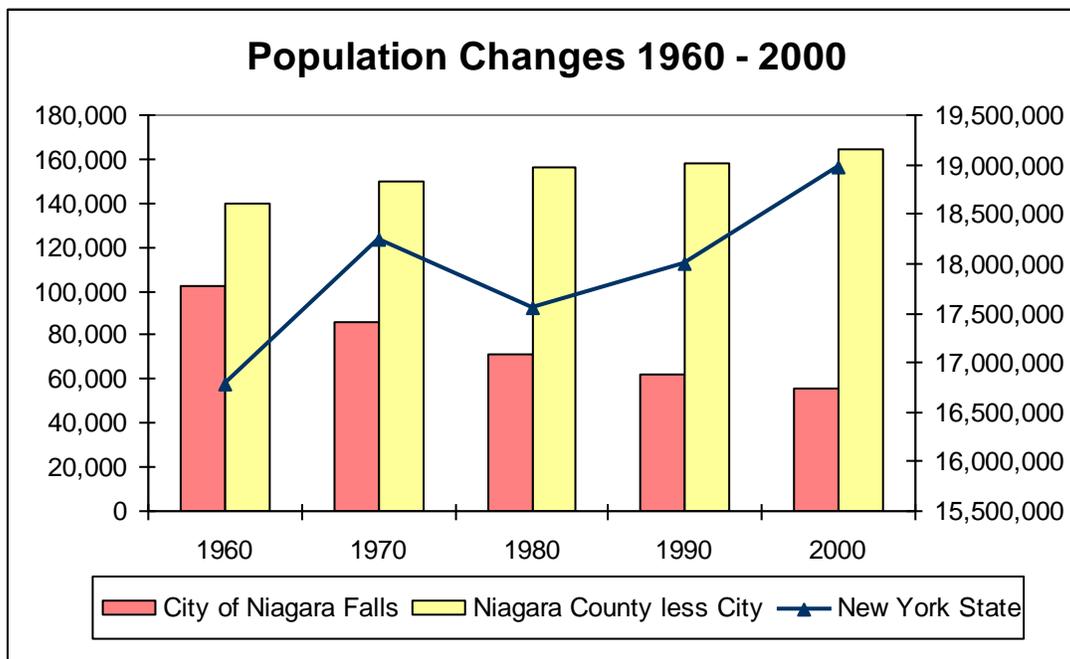
The continued decline of Niagara Falls, the lack of a clear vision forward and few indications of positive municipal-led change have left the community with a sense that the challenges are insurmountable and that citizens themselves cannot influence positive change. The signs of decline – broken windows, littered streets and decrepit buildings – convey an underlying message that the community has become used to decline and that this is the normative condition. Compounding this is a propensity to look outward for 'the one big project' that will turn Niagara Falls around as opposed to focused community action aimed at incremental change for long-term positive benefit. The history of failed mega-projects in the city's core has left many residents cynical about the future and the municipality's ability to direct and negotiate success. Despite these conditions, there are people who recall the city's success and who are searching for new directions that have the potential to bring the city back to the same levels of growth and achievement Niagara Falls once knew

COMMUNITY PROFILE and CONDITIONS

Population

Since 1960, the City of Niagara Falls has continuously lost population. The graph below shows the changes in total population from 1960 – 2000 for the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County less Niagara Falls, and New York State. In 1960, there were a total of 102,394 people living in the Niagara Falls. By 2000, that number dropped 45% to 55,593. The Niagara County less City population, on the other hand, saw an increase in total population during that same time period. In 1960, almost 140,000 people lived in the County, not including the City population. By 2000, the County minus City population had increased to over 164,000 people. New York State, in contrast to the city, increased its total population.

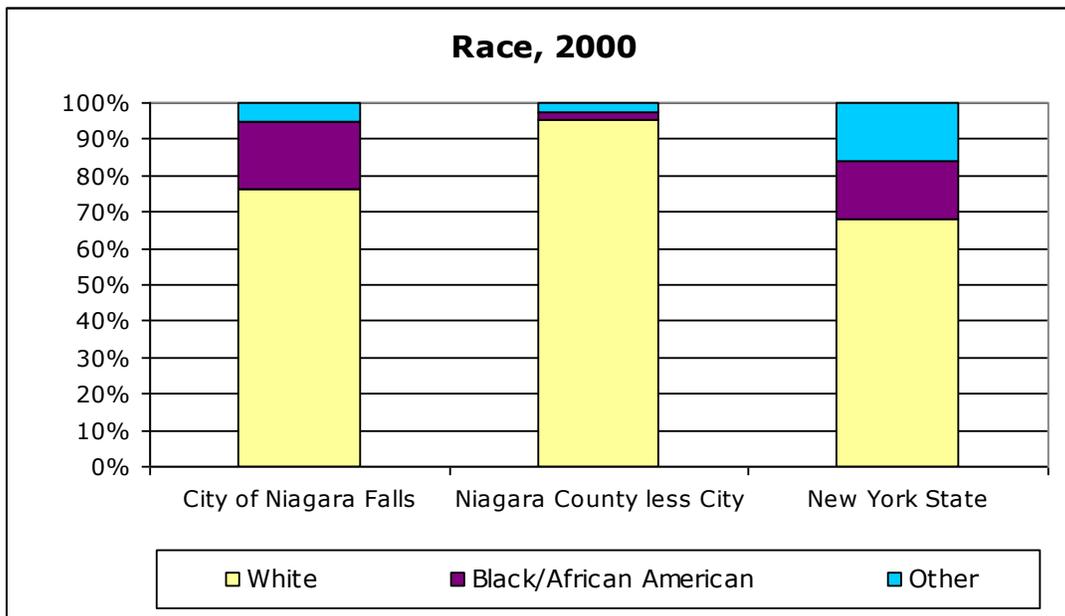
Until 1960, the State population had been rising. From 1970 to 1980, there was a slight decrease of less than 4%, but continued to increase through 2000. Since 1960, the New York State population has increased 13% to almost 19 million residents. The total population of the United States also increased over the same time period. The population increased almost 39%. So while the County less City, New York State, and the U.S.’s population was increasing, the City of Niagara Falls was losing population.



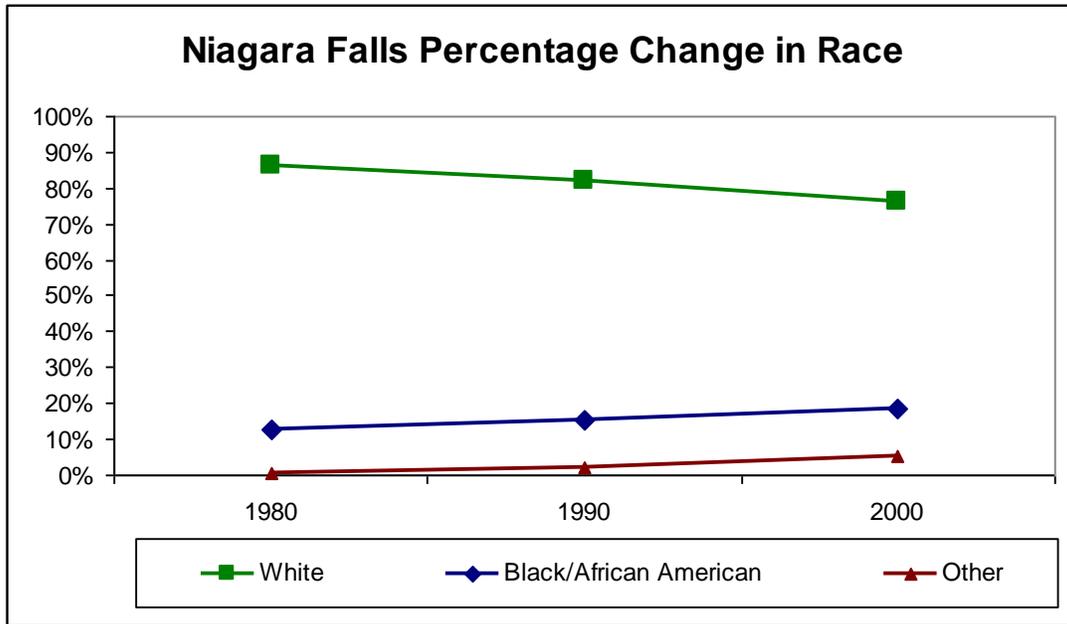
Race

In the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County less Niagara Falls, and New York State, the majority of residents are white. In the City of Niagara Falls, white people comprise 76.2% of the population. African Americans comprise 18.7%, and all other races are 5.1%. In Niagara County not including the City population, there are a higher percentage of white people, 95.6%. African Americans are 1.9% of the total population, and 2.5% are other races. New York State has a percentage of African Americans comparable to Niagara Falls. The percentage of residents comprising the other category is much higher in New York State compared to Niagara Falls and Niagara County, over 16%.

The City of Niagara Falls has a more diverse population than Niagara County, and a higher percentage of African Americans than New York State. In Niagara County less City population, the majority of its residents are White. New York State has the highest percentage of other races. The City has a very similar racial makeup compared to the nation as a whole. The City has a slightly higher percentage of African Americans, and slightly lower percentage of others.



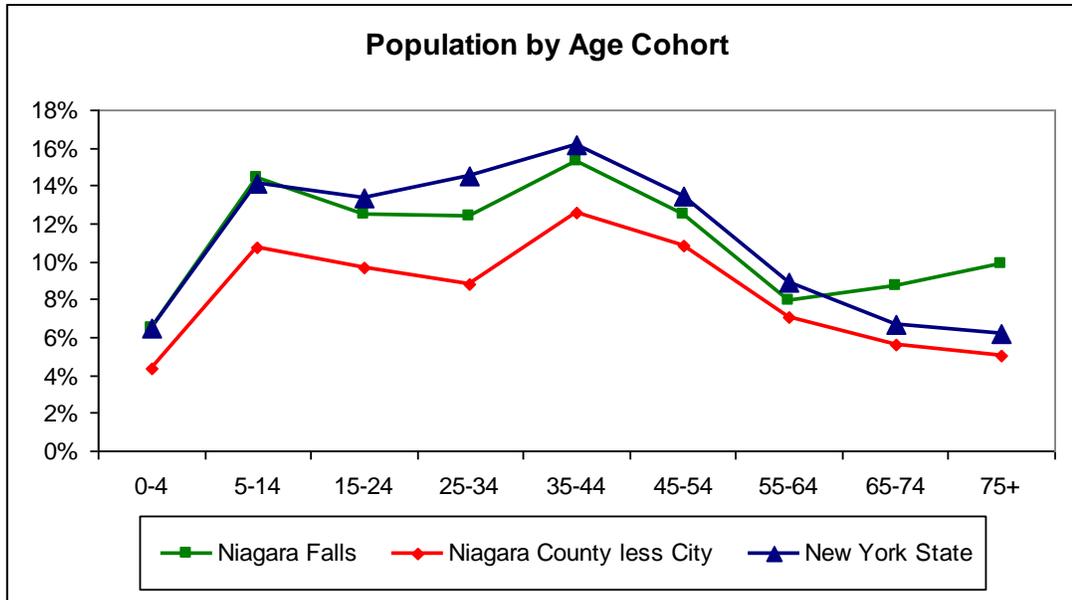
The graph below illustrates the percent changes in racial composition in the City of Niagara Falls from 1980 to 2000. Over that 20-year period, Niagara Falls became more diversified. In 1980, 86% of the city’s population was white. By 2000, the white population had decreased to 76%. The African American and Other category increased over that period. In 1980, African Americans comprised 13% of the population, and in 2000 it reached almost 20%. The Other category also saw a significant increase in population, from less than 1% in 1980 to over 5% in 2000.



Age

The breakdown of population by age cohort for the City of Niagara Falls is consistent with New York State in 2000. In Niagara Falls, Niagara County-less City, and the State, the 0-4-year-old cohort comprises between 5%-6% of the total population. The 5-14-year-old age group and the 15-24-year-olds group each comprise 13%-14% of the total population. In the 25-34-year-old age group, New York State had a slightly higher percentage, almost 15%. Niagara Falls and Niagara County less-City fared slightly lower, between 12%-13%. The 35-44-year-old age group had the highest percentage of all the age cohorts, between 15%-16%. The 45-54-year-old cohort had the next highest percentage, with 12%-14% for the three study areas. Between 8%-9% of the population is between the ages 55-64 years. The 65-74 cohorts and the 75-and-over population each comprise between 7%-10% of the population for Niagara Falls, Niagara County, City, and New York State.

Of the three areas studied, the population distribution of Niagara County less the City is the most evenly distributed between all age groups. New York State, in general, has a higher percentage of people between 25-64-years-old. The City has a lower percentage of people between 15-64-years-old, but a higher percentage of people over 64 years. It is evident that the residents leaving the City are in the 25-64 age range. Compared to the U.S., the City of Niagara Falls has a slightly lower percent of people between the ages of 15-64, but has a slightly higher percentage of people over the age of 64. This indicates the loss in population has been a loss in people under the age of 64-years-old.



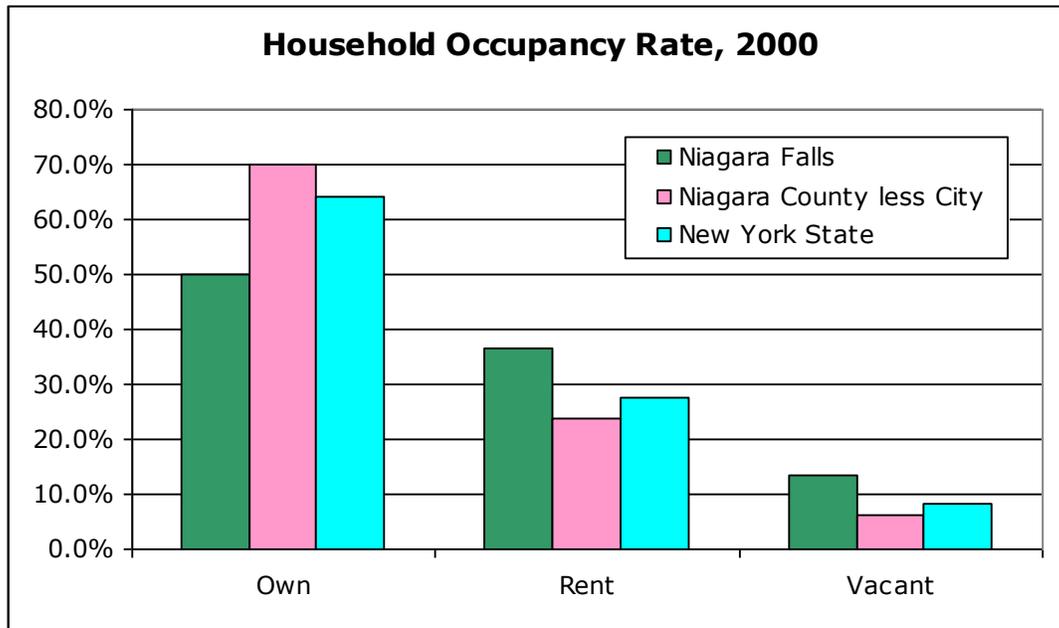
The age composition of the City of Niagara Falls population has seen trends similar to those of New York State. The graph below illustrates this trend. The 0–4-year-old age cohort in the city saw a decrease of 63% from 1950 to 2000. In 1950, it comprised almost 10% of the total population. By 2000, it dropped to only 3%. The 5–19-year-old group and the 20–34-year-old cohort both saw a loss of almost 50% of their populations from 1950 to 2000. The 5–19-year-old group still comprises 25% of the total population in 2000, and the 20–34-year-old groups comprise almost 18%. The 35–64-year-old cohort lost almost 40% of its population over the same time period, but still comprises 33% of the population in 2000. The 65-and-older cohort was the only group that saw an increase in the population. In 1950, it comprised 5% of the population. It increased 79% to total 17% of the population in 2000. New York State in general is seeing a decrease in the number of people under 65, and an increase in the number of people over the age of 65. This trend is evident in the City of Niagara Falls.

Households

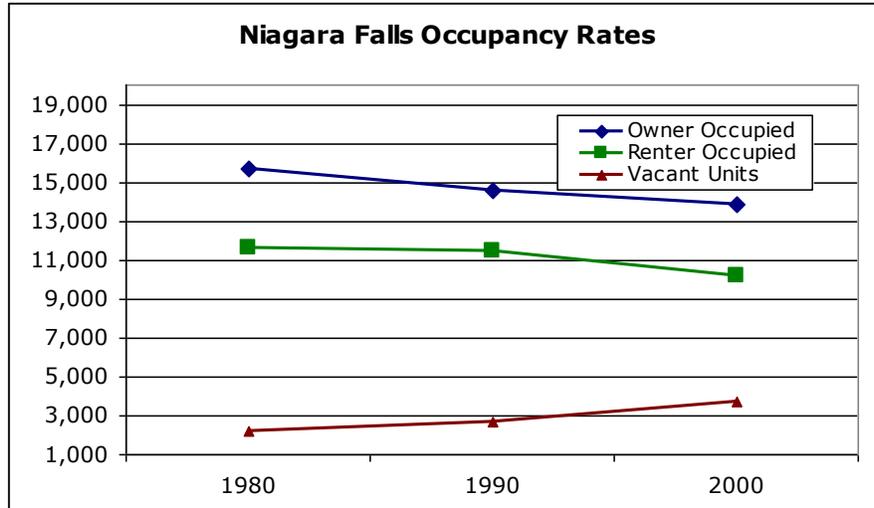
The number of owner-occupied houses in the City of Niagara Falls is significantly lower than Niagara County less City and New York State. The graph below shows the occupancy rate in 2000. About 50% of the residents in Niagara Falls own and live in their homes. Niagara County less City has the highest rate, at 70%, with New York State at 65%. Niagara County less City rated the lowest in renter-occupied housing, with 24%. Niagara Falls was next with 37%, and New York State was slightly higher at 43%. Niagara Falls has the highest vacancy rate of the three areas studied,

with 13% of the households being vacant. Niagara County less City and New York State both have about an 8% vacancy rate, comparable to the national average.

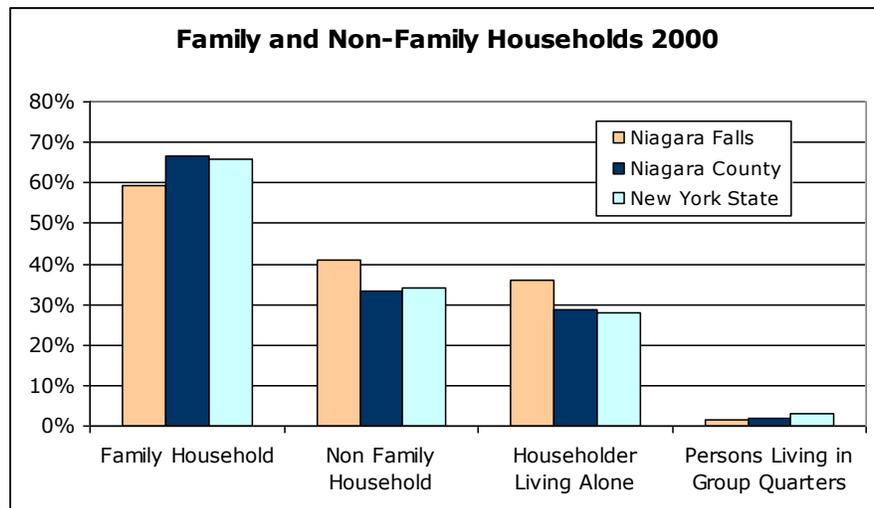
Compared to the U.S., the City of Niagara Falls has 15% less owner-occupied housing units. Overall, Niagara County less City has the highest owner-occupied housing rate, and the City of Niagara Falls has the highest rate of renter-occupied housing and vacant housing.



Over the past 20 years, the City of Niagara Falls has seen a loss in owner- and renter-occupied housing units, and a rise in vacant units. In 1980, the City had almost 16,000 owner-occupied units. That number dropped by almost 1,800 units (12%) by 2000. Renter-occupied units also dropped by 12% to 11,500 housing units in 2000. The number of vacant units increased by almost 70%, to 3,700. Although the number of total housing units has decreased by 2,000 units over the 20 year period, the number of vacant units increased. The graph below shows the occupancy rates from 1980 – 2000.



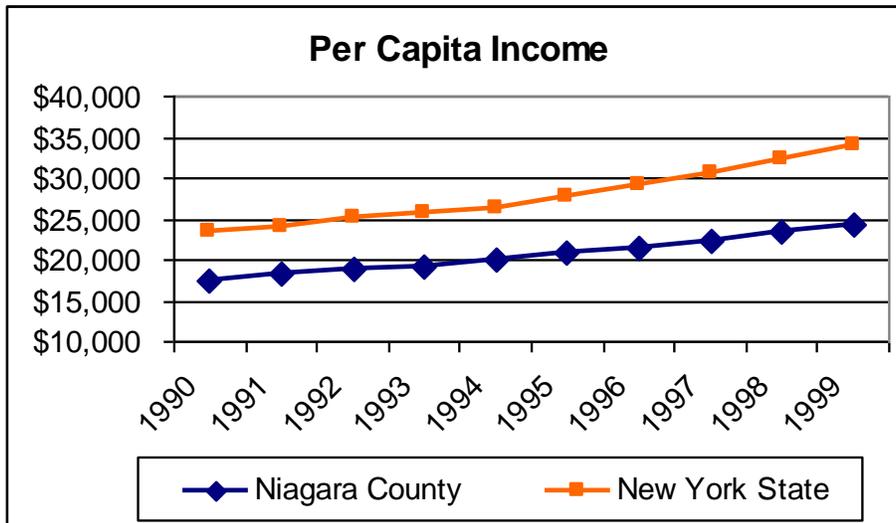
The graph below compares the family and non-family households in the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, and New York State. The rate of family versus non-family households in the City of Niagara Falls is pretty consistent with Niagara County and New York State. The rate of family households is slightly lower in Niagara Falls, but the rate of non-family households and householder living alone is slightly higher than the other two regions. Niagara County and New York State are relatively the same for all four categories.



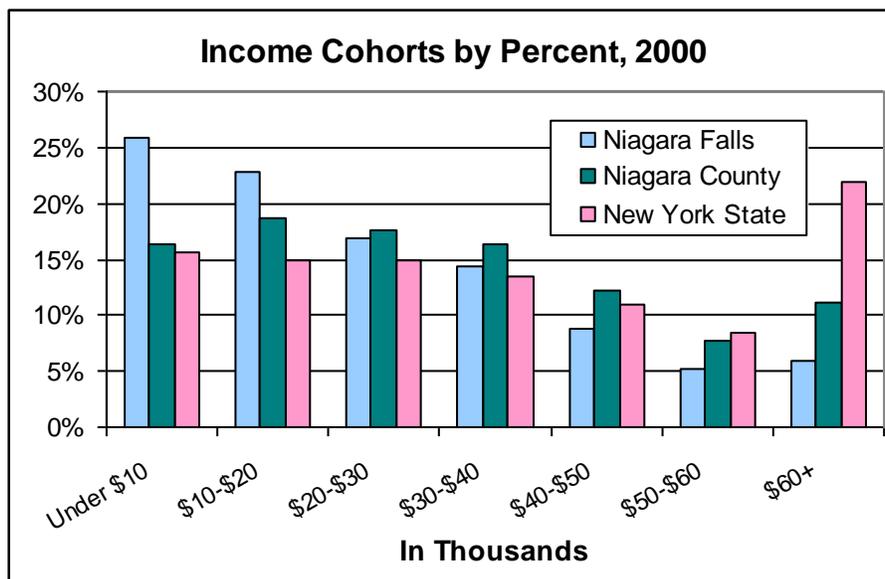
Income

The graph below illustrates the change in per capita income from 1990 – 1999 in Niagara County and New York State. In 1990, per capita income in Niagara County was around \$17,000. By 1999, it had risen 40% to over \$24,000. New York State per capita income rose at a higher rate, 45%, to almost \$40,000 in 2000. In 1990, the difference between Niagara County and New York

State's per capita income was around \$7,000. By 1999, the difference had grown to \$9,000. Niagara County residents' incomes are not rising at a comparable rate to the rest of New York State.

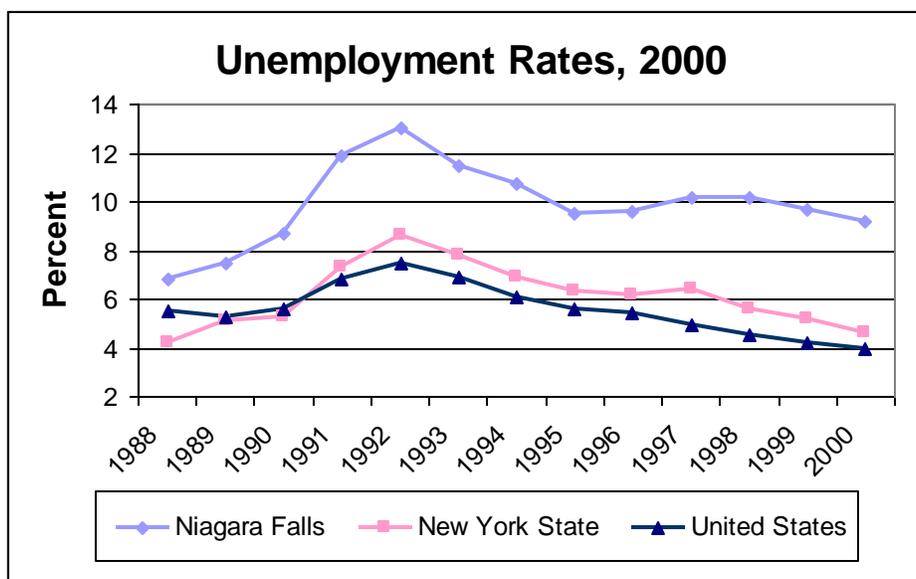


The graph below shows the inconsistency in income between the City of Niagara Falls and New York State. Almost 50% of the residents in Niagara Falls make less than \$20,000 annually. Only 30% of New York State residents make less than \$20,000. Over 22% of New York State residents make over \$60,000 annually. Niagara County is more uniformly distributed among the income brackets. 10% to 20% of county residents fall into each income bracket. The highest percentage is in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 bracket, with almost 19%. Niagara Falls, Niagara County, and New York State all have the lowest percentage in the \$50,000 to \$60,000 bracket, 6%, 11%, and 22%, respectively.



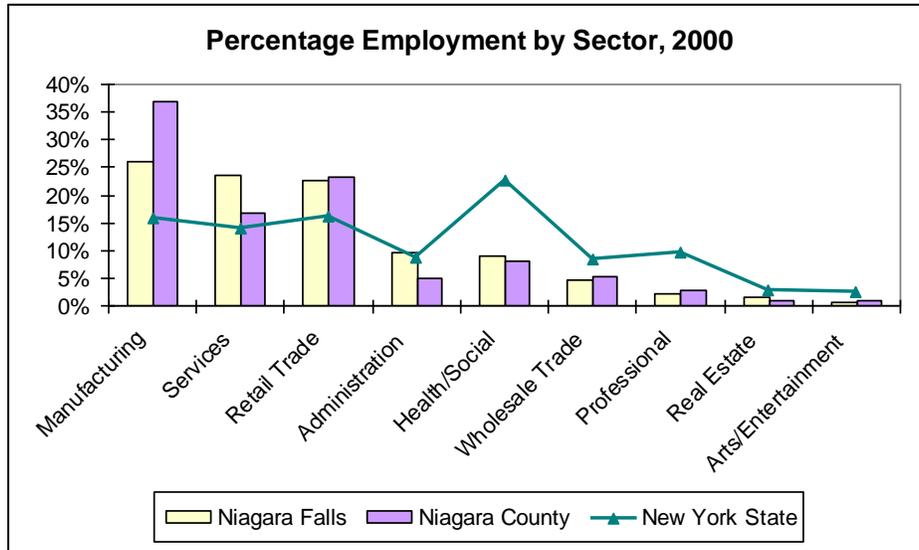
Unemployment Rates

The graph below shows the unemployment rates for the City of Niagara Falls, New York State, and the United States. All three regions followed the same trend, but Niagara Falls was significantly higher than New York and the U.S. New York State and the U.S. had comparable unemployment rates. All three regions reached their peak percentages in 1992. In 1988 New York State had the lowest rate and the city had the highest. By 2000, the U.S. unemployment rate was the lowest, with the city still having the highest average. The City’s unemployment rate is statistically skewed downward by the high percentage of elderly not in the work force and , perhaps, that segment of the population that is not employed but no longer counted by the NYS Department of Labor as seeking employment.



Employment by Sector

The graph below shows employment by sector for the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, and New York State in 2000. Niagara Falls and Niagara County have comparable percentages, except for Manufacturing and Services. Niagara County has 10% more employees in Manufacturing than the city, but has 7% fewer employees in the Service sector. New York State has lower percentages in Manufacturing, Services, and Retail Trade, but has significantly higher percentages in the Health/Social Services and Professional sectors. Administration, Wholesale Trade, Real Estate, and Arts/Entertainment have similar averages for all three regions.



Conditions

Migration and birth trends between 1950 and 2000 are such that virtually every age group but seniors lost population, but the loss has been greatest among those between the ages of 0 and 24: there are fewer births and young people are leaving the City in search of employment or simply never returning after completion of their higher education or military service. The migration patterns suggest that many of the out migrants are part of family households. The reduction of household size contributes to an imbalance between unit size and household size that makes it difficult to fill existing units.

Market Conditions

As Niagara Falls' household size and absolute size of the City's population continues to decline, the high housing unit vacancy rate continues to be a problem, creating a buyers market for housing, keeping rents low, and discouraging housing rehabilitation and other forms of investment. As household size continues to drop, the match between dwelling unit size and household size will worsen. The median room size of housing units today is 5.1. As one and two-person households become more common, units with five or more rooms are becoming less and less attractive, with higher quality, energy efficient, small units, and handicapped units at a premium. Converting to smaller units will solve individual problems, but by adding housing units, vacancy rates will remain high. Lack of sufficient units in the right size ranges could favor suburban migration and further aggravate the City's housing problems.

THE VISION

Principles for City Renewal

1. Build on core assets

Niagara Falls must build and capitalize on its existing assets and leverage these to initiate social, economic and cultural renewal. These include the city's role in the regional economy as the tourism destination; the Niagara River and its vast riverfront setting including the Falls and the Gorge; regional health care facilities and other institutions, including the Memorial Medical Center, Niagara Arts and Cultural Center, Niagara University and Niagara Community College; the city's collection of heritage buildings, neighborhoods and traditional commercial districts; and existing industrial clusters, transportation infrastructure, and locational incentives.

2. Develop the waterfront: recreation, adjacencies, and cultural potential –

"The Big Move" - The Niagara River waterfront is the city's defining feature and premier asset. The Niagara River Greenway should encompass all public areas and these areas should be reconfigured into world-class park or public space. This collection of redefined assets should support an array of year round activities, cultural programming, events, high-quality tourism and educational destinations. This is the wise long-term investment. The frayed urban edge on the riverfront must also be reclaimed and encouraged to evolve into the city's open front door and its premier address. Current confusion between 'fronts, backs and sides' of buildings that form 'the built edge' must be clarified through design guidelines, land use controls and Greenway build-out. The land along this city/park interface has the potential to become the most highly valued real estate in Niagara Falls. Districts adjacent to re-defined riverfront will offer a visually interesting, attractive urban/park environment showcasing high-quality built form, beautiful pedestrian streetscapes and a vibrant range of urban uses and amenities that will entice residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the city while adding

3. Create green streetscape connections that link the riverfront amenities to the City, its neighborhoods and main streets. Major tourism destinations such as the riverfront and its attractions, including the Niagara Aquarium and the Niagara Reservation, should be better connected to the city, local places and established main streets, to promote visitation of neighborhood districts, local establishments and cultural destinations. These attractions should be linked to other regional and local parks and public spaces to create a continuous green framework that reinforces and supports community-based tourism. Greening public spaces and improving the public environment will extend the value of the riverfront's edge into larger areas of the Core City.

Many new connections are needed within the downtown and along the eastern neighborhoods (east of downtown, adjacent to the Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor, and in LaSalle). These "connections" should be at every opportunity, introduced through the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway. Strengthening these linkages depends on rethinking local streets as attractive pedestrian-oriented tree-lined places that accommodate people and activity, not just cars. A well-designed network comprised of the riverfront, streets, parks, squares and other open spaces will not only advance the purposes and intent of developing the Niagara River Greenway¹⁴ and the Niagara National Heritage Area, ¹⁵ but play a key role in enhancing the city's image and its quality of life, while creating an attractive setting for high-quality private sector reinvestment. A network of green public spaces and improved public environments will extend the value of the City's riverfront edge into larger areas of the Core City.

4. Prioritize residential development: revitalize neighborhoods and make living in the Core City attractive. Revitalizing and increasing the residential population in the Core City is key to the creation of a vibrant urban center. The traditional downtown must evolve to become not just a place for visitors, but an authentic urban core where people live, work, shop and recreate, and where the

ability to walk or bike to work or to cultural, retail, recreational and entertainment amenities is considered a quality of life advantage. From a market perspective, current demand for existing housing may be low and many neighborhoods are under-occupied and in need of repair. Other areas are truly blighted, making them unattractive for reinvestment. Targeted public realm improvements; local heritage preservation incentives; improvements to community facilities and to the quality of the school system; the removal of blight and the retirement of derelict housing will strengthen some neighborhoods and serve to increase options to create demand for new residential options in the city.

Alternative housing forms catering to a variety of income levels and housing market sectors, such as young professionals, single adults and empty nesters, can bring more households to support retail and business expansion within the Core City. Higher density and alternative housing should be carefully located in the core, including the existing tourism area, to support renewal of the core and build the critical mass necessary to create and support a vibrant city center and tourist area.

5. Plan to become a more compact, attractive and manageable city by stabilizing and revitalizing neighborhoods, retiring derelict housing and industrial uses, holding land in reserve, developing interim land uses, and increasing the amount of green space within the city, it is possible for Niagara Falls to become a more attractive and manageable city that is better able to meet the needs of its current residents and effectively plan for future growth. Niagara Falls will be most successful in the future, the same way it was in the past, as a much more dense and compact city, with an identifiable core surrounded by thriving neighborhoods and commercial precincts that are attractive to and supported by residents and visitors.

6. Commit to sustained small-scale incremental change, design excellence, and authentic place making - The desire for immediate change often encourages people to look for big, 'one-off' project solutions. These rarely deliver what they promise and can overshadow a diversity of smaller scaled projects throughout the city that can fuel many fires of renewal and revitalization. The reuse of historic buildings, streetscape improvements and infilling of small vacant parcels are examples of small-scale actions that can greatly contribute to revitalization efforts. Attention to design quality and place making that complement the city's unique character and built form, heritage fabric and pattern of urban development will create attractive, inspiring places for people and activity, to encourage continued reinvestment and renewal in Niagara Falls.

7. Carefully target 'catalyst projects' to ignite renewal efforts and encourage private sector interest and reinvestment. While a sustained program of incremental change is necessary for renewal, a few carefully selected larger projects can result in dramatic changes in the short term and signal an area's rejuvenation, furthering interest by the private sector. These projects should complement their existing context and contribute to place making by including residential components as often as possible and not obscuring traditional urban patterns and uses. For example:

- Create a Cultural District by incorporating both State and City waterfront open space resources including, for instance, an expanded Aquarium of Niagara, a new outdoor performance and festival area, the Gorge Discovery Center, Niagara Experience Center, in addition to beautifully landscaped parkland new tourist facilities and other high-quality educational and tourism amenities and attractions.

The intent should be to create attractive pedestrian-oriented places complementary to the natural and cultural resource along the Gorge and in so doing re-define the City/Park edge and interface. An expanded park setting and re-configured roadway connections will not only greatly enhance the potential of all secondary attractions along the lower river corridor, but also provide many new opportunities for private sector investment in the corridor.

- Create a downtown 'Festival Square,' perhaps between Prospect Street and Rainbow Boulevard. The City should influence the development of an attractive activity node, venue for cultural and entertainment programming, and visitor orientation, while weaving the Niagara Reservation and the Falls Street Promenade into a more successful pedestrian mall and coherent open space feature.
- Create a downtown entertainment center/theater, perhaps on Niagara or Third Street. This street/center should be designed to encourage street related uses, provide business development assistance by targeting entertainment uses, and provide architectural design guidance to improve the quality of the public realm, while reinforcing connections to other nearby attractions.
- Build strategic partnerships and promote a common agenda to undertake 'catalyst' projects. The active and ongoing participation of all those with a stake in the future of Niagara Falls must be sought and encouraged to achieve renewal and the City must work to ensure benefits are shared with the entire community. Achieving the many projects and initiatives recommended in the Comprehensive Plan will require the City to pursue a number of partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sectors. Partnerships represent a new way to plan, achieve, prioritize and implement city-building initiatives while strengthening support for renewal within the community and helping to overcome the history of isolated decision-making and self-contained, stand-alone projects.

Strategic Plan

Due every three, four, or five years (length of period is at the grantee's discretion) no less than 45 days prior to the start of the grantee's program year start date. HUD does not accept plans between August 15 and November 15.

General Questions

1. Describe the geographic areas of the jurisdiction (including areas of low income families and/or racial/minority concentration) in which assistance will be directed.
2. Describe the basis for allocating investments geographically within the jurisdiction (or within the EMSA for HOPWA) (91.215(a)(1)) and the basis for assigning the priority (including the relative priority, where required) given to each category of priority needs (91.215(a)(2)). Where appropriate, the jurisdiction should estimate the percentage of funds the jurisdiction plans to dedicate to target areas.
3. Identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs (91.215(a)(3)).

3-5 Year Strategic Plan General Questions response:

The City's Strategic Plan covers a five year period from 2010-2014. The following priority needs are derived from 2000 Census data, special tabulations provided by HUD for the CHAS, and public forums/coordinating committee meetings held from July - September 2009.

Niagara Falls is committed to providing opportunities for safe, decent and affordable housing for all of its citizens. Unfortunately, housing needs in the City far outweigh the means by which the needs may be addressed. Therefore, it is the City's intention to implement a redevelopment strategy that focuses on targeted development in the blighted neighborhoods. By offering a comprehensive strategy of code enforcement, demolition, rehabilitation, public improvements, new construction, rental assistance and homeownership opportunities we will be able to maximize the limited resources available and create a significant impact in the targeted neighborhoods, though homebuyer assistance may not be as "targeted" as the other interventions.

The primary means by which these activities will be carried out are with funds from the federal Community Development Block Grant, HOME, New York State Affordable Housing Corporation, New York State Housing Trust Fund, Low Income Housing Tax Credits and private investment.

The supply of standard, affordable housing must be increased if the quality of life in Niagara Falls is to be improved. Niagara Falls is experiencing a dwindling economic and social base. There have been large out-migrations of the population in the last several decades, deteriorating infrastructure, and poor housing stock conditions (the majority of which was built prior to 1940).

To begin to address the housing needs, programs designed to provide affordable housing opportunities will be prioritized, especially "homeownership". This policy will continue from 2010 to 2014 as the City, Neighborhood Housing Services, Highland Community Revitalization and Center City Development Corp. continue to develop and implement diversified homeownership programs, housing rehabilitation and new construction programs for low and moderate income households in the City. Programs have been tailored to meet the needs of various income groups by providing low cost financing, deferred loan payments, matching grants, interest subsidies combined with state and private funds to best maximize limited federal resources.

Affordable homeownership opportunities will be a primary focal point of our five-year strategy. Many low and moderate income families are able to afford the monthly cost of owning their own home, but are unable to afford the required downpayment and related mortgage financing costs. Specific homeownership opportunity programs will be implemented which require little or no down payment, provide closing cost assistance, provide rehabilitation assistance, and which provide for low interest mortgage financing and /or mortgage write-down assistance. First-time Homebuyer Education and Housing Counseling will be central elements of the total homebuyer assistance program. Additionally, homeownership opportunities may be further enhanced through the utilization of City owned tax foreclosed properties which reduces overall property development costs and resulting mortgage financing costs.

The construction of new, single family housing units will continue as a priority during the 5 Year Strategy period, providing additional affordable homeownership opportunities on a limited basis. Federal HOME and NYS HOME Funds combined with other State and private funds enable a new unit to be subsidized to levels affordable to low and moderate income persons.

Rental assistance programs offered by the Section 8 Leased Housing Program alleviates rental cost burden and severe cost burden experienced by low income families and individuals. Federal preferencing allows priority to be given to elderly, disabled and displaced persons. Rental assistance for landlords to improve their properties for low and moderate income renters will provide renters with better housing choices.

The Niagara Falls Housing Authority continues to provide rental assistance to very low income and other low income renters based on Federal preferences which include severe cost burden (those persons paying over 50% of their income for rent and utilities), those persons living in substandard housing and those who are involuntarily homeless. The NFHA is also seeking Hope VI funds for both the building of new rental units and the replacement of some rental units with new single family housing. City support of this and other modernization programs for subsidized housing can be anticipated. As stated in the needs assessment, overcrowding is not a problem in the City. The average household size is 2.30 persons per household.

The City's housing rehabilitation programs incorporate several elements that reduce overall housing costs by reducing energy costs. The City, NHS and Center City prioritize rehabilitation activities in the following order: reduction of lead hazards, correction of code violations, energy conservation measures, and general property improvements/incipient violations. Lead Risk Assessments are done first on every job. Lead hazard reduction is a required first priority based upon the assessment report.

Energy efficient furnaces and hot water tanks, insulation, energy efficient window and doors are all standard work items incorporated into the rehabilitation specifications. The City also coordinates its rehabilitation programs with NiaCap, a local non-profit agency providing weatherization items to low income households. This coordinated effort allows CDBG funds to be utilized for other essential work that might not be addressed due to limited funding.

The Section 8 Leased Housing Program will continue to operate a Family Self Sufficiency Program whereby low income renters receive additional support services with the eventual goal of achieving an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle.

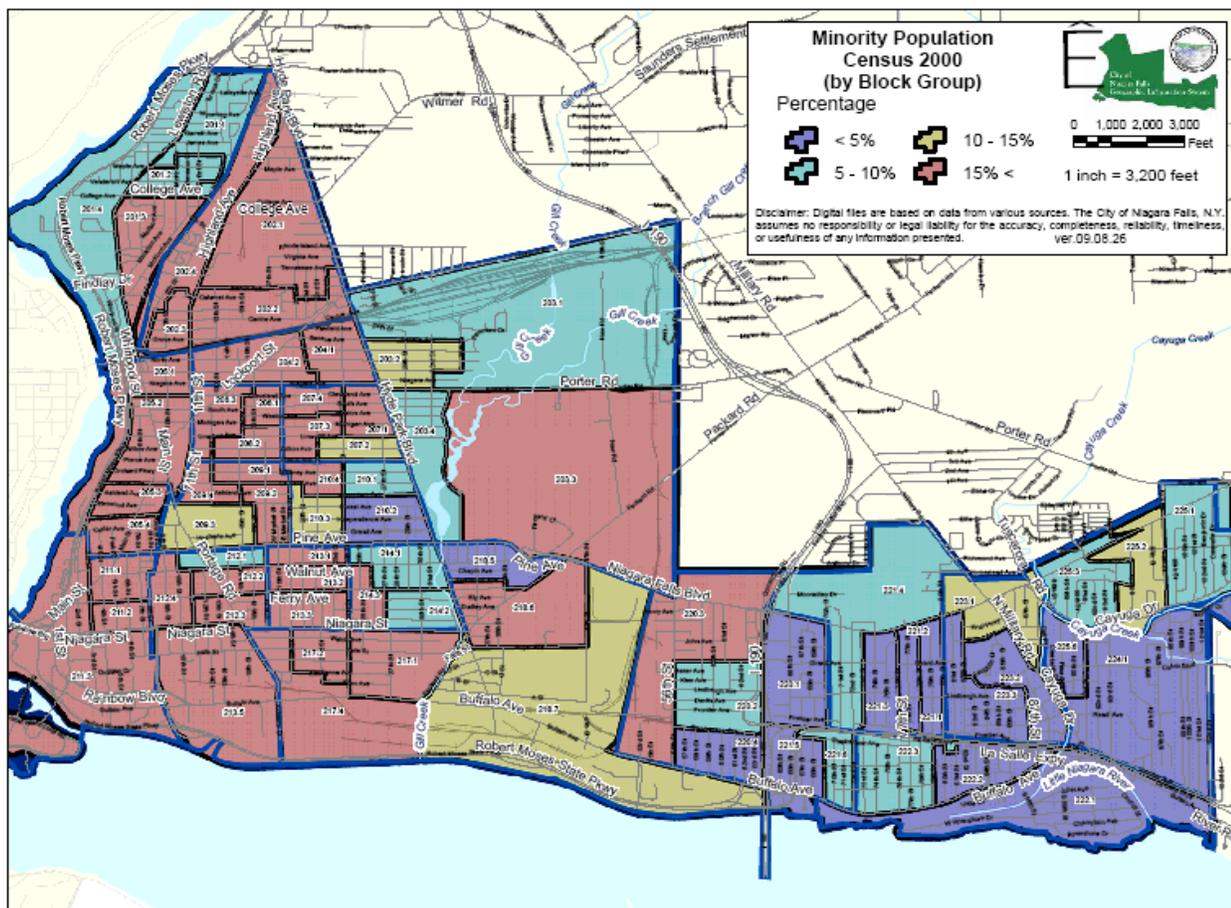
The needs of homeless families with children and homeless individuals will be addressed through the City's participation in the Emergency Shelter Grant Program. This program has proven to be an invaluable resource in adding additional emergency shelter units in the City. Past priorities have included shelters for battered women with children, runaway youth, homeless families, and homeless veterans. Additionally, Niagara Falls is particularly vulnerable to homeless refugee problems being an international border community without sufficient shelter space. Priority will be

given to securing funding for essential services through the emergency shelter grant program in excess of the 30% limit imposed by regulation. This strategy is a direct result of consultations held monthly with homeless service providers and the City.

Based on 2000 Census Data, the City of Niagara Falls has a population of 55,593. 76.2% Of the population is white, 18.7% is Black or African American, 1.6% American Indian, and 3.5% Other Races. On a City-wide basis over 58.7% of households are of low and moderate income. The highest concentration of low/mod income households are found in CT 202 (82.7%), CT 206 (75.7%), CT 205 (71.5%), CT 211 (74.7%) and CT 212 (73.2%). Minority population concentrations are primarily found in CT 202(88.7%), CT 206 (63.3%), CT 204 (53.6%), and CT 205 (40.5%).

The City is committed to funding projects with HOME and CDBG funds in areas with high concentrations of low and moderate income households and high concentrations of minorities. The City’s designated target areas are directly correlated to these concentrations and reflect the City’s desire to improve the quality of life for its most disadvantaged citizens. This commitment is evidenced in our annual performance reports. In 2006, 60% of households assisted through our housing programs were e low income and 40% low/mod income. Of the total households assisted, 48.7% were minority.

It is anticipated that 90-95% of all projects funded in 2010-2014 will benefit low and moderate income households. The City’s target areas were designed to maximize that benefit. All housing programs directly benefit households at or below 80% of median income, while all other community development activities such as public services, demolition and public facilities are prioritized in low/mod census areas.



Managing the Process (91.200 (b))

1. Lead Agency. Identify the lead agency or entity for overseeing the development of the plan and the major public and private agencies responsible for administering programs covered by the consolidated plan.
2. Identify the significant aspects of the process by which the plan was developed, and the agencies, groups, organizations, and others who participated in the process.
3. Describe the jurisdiction's consultations with housing, social service agencies, and other entities, including those focusing on services to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, and homeless persons.

*Note: HOPWA grantees must consult broadly to develop a metropolitan-wide strategy and other jurisdictions must assist in the preparation of the HOPWA submission.

5 Year Strategic Plan Managing the Process response:

Lead Agencies/Required Consultation - the City of Niagara Falls Department of Community Development is the lead agency in the coordination and development of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan and Strategy. While the Department of Community Development is the lead agency, several other public and private agencies participated in its development as listed below:

Niagara Falls Department of Community Development
Niagara Falls Department of Planning & Economic Development
Niagara Falls Housing Authority
Niagara Falls Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.
Center City Neighborhood Development Corporation
Highland Community Revitalization Committee
Main St. Business & Professional Association
Niagara Street Area Business Association
Niagara Falls Block Club Council
Niagara Falls Weed and Seed
Niagara Community Action Program
Niagara Arts & Cultural Center
New Jerusalem Boy's Reporting Center
Safe Haven Supervised Visitation
Niagara County Healthy Neighborhoods Program

Community Development convened several forums to initiate the 5-year planning process starting with a series of four meetings commencing in May, 2009. The general structure of the consolidated planning process was discussed and copies of the prior 5-year plan were distributed. The objective of these meetings was to oversee the development of the 5-year plan, to understand the process by which community needs and priorities would be identified, to attend the scheduled neighborhood planning sessions and to discuss as a group the comments and suggestions received from the public. Four (4) general neighborhood planning sessions were convened at various locations in the City. The sites were selected to afford a wide cross section of the community the maximum opportunity to participate in the planning process. This effort provided a unified and comprehensive planning framework that afforded new opportunities for collaboration and collective problem solving.

Citizen Participation (91.200 (b))

1. Provide a summary of the citizen participation process.
2. Provide a summary of citizen comments or views on the plan.
3. Provide a summary of efforts made to broaden public participation in the development of the consolidated plan, including outreach to minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities.
4. Provide a written explanation of comments not accepted and the reasons why these comments were not accepted.

*Please note that Citizen Comments and Responses may be included as additional files within the CPMP Tool.
3-5 Year Strategic Plan Citizen Participation response:

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The City's citizen participation process regarding the development of the 5-Year Strategy affords citizens, non-profit organizations and other interested parties adequate opportunity to review and comment on the plan.

The City's goal for citizen participation is to ensure broad participation of residents, service providers, and business associations in housing and community development planning, program development and program assessment.

STANDARDS OF PARTICIPATION: The City shall provide for citizen participation in the Consolidated Plan and Submission process at both the neighborhood and community wide levels. Citizen participation opportunities will be conducted in a manner so as to be in full compliance with the following standards:

- a. All aspects of citizen participation shall be conducted in an open manner, with freedom of access for all interested persons.
- b. There shall be involvement of low and moderate-income persons, members of minority groups, residents of public or assisted housing, and residents of areas where a significant amount of activity is proposed or ongoing, the elderly, the handicapped, the business community, and civic groups who are concerned about the program. Where the City chooses to establish or recognize neighborhood advisory committees in areas where low and moderate-income persons or member of minority groups reside, there shall be substantial representation of such persons;
- c. The City shall make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of involvement of citizens or citizen organizations throughout all stages of the program;
- d. Citizens shall be provided adequate and timely information, so as to enable them to be meaningfully involved in important decisions at various stages of the Program; and
- e. Citizens, particularly low and moderate income persons and residents of blighted neighborhoods and residents of public or assisted housing shall be encouraged to submit their views and proposals regarding the Consolidated Plan.

DEVELOPMENT OF CONSOLIDATED PLAN: The City shall provide for the continuity of citizen participation throughout all stages of the planning process and will make available to citizens, public agencies and other interested parties, prior to adoption of the Plan, the following information:

- a. The amount of assistance the City expects to receive, and;
- b. the range of activities that may be undertaken, and;
- c. needs assessment, statement of objectives, and geographic distribution of programs, and;
- d. the estimated amount that will benefit persons of low and moderate income, and;
- e. the City's plan to minimize displacement of persons, and;
- f. the City's plan to assist persons displaced.

A. Participation - The initial steps taken to ensure adequate representation and participation in the planning process by all segments of the community involved the formation of a coordinating committee comprised of various agencies as described in Part I of this plan (Coordination and Management). Valuable and insightful input was received from coordinating committee members regarding the format, content and scheduling of neighborhood meetings designed to expand citizen participation opportunities. Recommendations were discussed, analyzed and the following format was developed and implemented

- 1) Four meetings were held beginning in May 2009 and ending in June 2009 with service providers, business associations and block club council officials... Representatives discussed priorities that were established for the previous 5-year plan and they provided recommendations and suggestions as to the current priorities in our community.
- 2) Four(4) neighborhood strategy hearings were scheduled at convenient, neighborhood locations to initiate consolidated planning discussions, to outline the framework by which the plan would be developed, and to emphasize the importance of citizen input into the process. The meetings were advertised in the local print media and were open to all interested parties. Broad areas of community needs were discussed at these sessions with the intent of assigning relative priorities to the needs identified at each session.

The neighborhood strategy hearings were held at the following locations:

July 1, 2009	@NFHA Resource Center	5:30 P.M.
July 2, 2009	@ Presti Apartments	5:30 P.M.
July 7, 2009	@ Department of Community Development	5:30 P.M.
July 9, 2009	@ St. John's Parish Center	5:30 P.M.

- 3) The results of the focus group meetings were utilized to prepare a list of priority needs, proposed projects and budget and a first draft of the 5-Year Consolidated Plan. The 5-Year Strategy & Plan will be presented at a public hearing on September 17, 2009. Comments received from the first public hearing and during the 30 day public comment period will be incorporated, where appropriate, into the final plan. A second public hearing will be scheduled to review performance when the City has prepared the Grantee Performance Report.
- 4) The public will have a 30 day review and comment period after the first public hearing prior to the submission of the final document to HUD.

B. Access to Meetings - as previously described, all meetings are to be advertised in the local print media providing timely notification to citizens of scheduled meetings. Additionally, the meetings were scheduled in convenient neighborhood centers and facilities affording maximum access to interested citizens.

C. Access to Information - citizens, public agencies, and other interested parties, including those most affected will be afforded ample opportunity to review and comment on the proposed plan and all associated backup data, records, etc. pertaining to the submission. In addition to the public planning sessions and focus group meetings, two (2) public hearings will be held with public comment periods in conformance to the regulations.

D. Access to Records - the City's Citizen Participation Plan provides reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the consolidated plan.

E. Publishing the Plan - the jurisdiction will publish a summary of the proposed plan in the local print media and will afford adequate opportunity for affected citizens to review and provide comments on the plan. Copies of the consolidated plan will be available at the following locations:

Niagara Falls Dept. of Community Development
1022 Main Street, Niagara Falls, New York

Earl Brydges Public Library
1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, New York

The jurisdiction will provide citizens a 30 day review period to comment on the Consolidated Plan prior to the submission to HUD. The jurisdiction will consider the comments received and incorporate comments when applicable. A summary of the comments received and a written explanation of those not accepted will be included in the final submission to HUD.

F. Public Hearings - The first of two public hearings will be held on September 17, 2009. This meeting will be conveniently timed and located for people who might benefit from program funds; will be accessible to people with disabilities; and will be adequately publicized. The second public hearing will be held subsequent to the CPS submission to HUD at least 15 days prior to the City's submission of the CAPERS Report.

1. The intent of the public hearings will be to obtain views of the citizens, public agencies and other interested parties and to be responsive to proposals and comments at all stages of the consolidated submission process.

2. Notice of Hearings - adequate notice (15 days) will be given to citizens for each of the two public hearings.

G. Technical Assistance will be provided to low, very low, and extremely low income groups that request assistance in developing proposals under the consolidated submission.

I. Complaints - the City will provide a timely and substantive written response to every written citizen complaint within 15 days, where practicable. The City's procedure to handle complaints is more adequately described in the Citizen Participation Plan.

J. Amendments - prior to the submission of any substantial change in the proposed use of funds, citizens will be given reasonable notice of and opportunity to comment on changes

Institutional Structure (91.215 (i))

1. Explain the institutional structure through which the jurisdiction will carry out its consolidated plan, including private industry, non-profit organizations, and public institutions.
2. Assess the strengths and gaps in the delivery system.
3. Assess the strengths and gaps in the delivery system for public housing, including a description of the organizational relationship between the jurisdiction and the public housing agency, including the appointing authority for the commissioners or board of housing agency, relationship regarding hiring, contracting and procurement; provision of services funded by the jurisdiction; review by the jurisdiction of proposed capital improvements as well as proposed development, demolition or disposition of public housing developments.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Institutional Structure response:

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

1. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

City Of Niagara Falls Dept. Of Community Development

The Director of Community Development leads the City's housing and community development efforts from policy development and program design to program implementation and assessment. The City's Housing Rehabilitation Falls has directly administered housing programs since 1977. Over 2,000 units have been rehabilitated during that period providing assistance to low income and moderate income families. Housing programs administered by the City include assistance to existing owners, investor owners and first time homebuyers. The City will continue to administer these housing programs during the 5-Year strategy period of 2010-2014.

Neighborhood Revitalization

specific goals of the neighborhood revitalization functional areas are:

- Increase community participation in the Block Grant process.
- Increase the transparency and accountability of the CDBG program.
- Strengthen the Neighborhood Development Corporations.
- Strengthen the role of the Block Club Council.
- Create more effective service delivery systems.
- Eliminate duplication and overlaps in services.
- Increase revitalization work productivity.
- Increase the emphasis on creating new homeownership opportunities for the citizens of the community

Proposed Service Delivery:

Residential Code Enforcement and Inspections

One inspector will be assigned to the Community Development Department to perform the City's residential inspections and code enforcement. The Community Development Department will be responsible for residential inspections and code enforcement in CD target areas in support of ongoing revitalization efforts.

Clean Neighborhood Team

The Community Development Department will identify specific geographic target areas where the clean neighborhood program will operate. This will be performed to reinforce ongoing housing and economic development efforts. This action will allow the CD Department to show more visible results in their target areas.

Clearance of Blighted Structures

The demolition initiative will be contracted out by the CD Department in support of neighborhood revitalization efforts and the City will retain the obligation for scattered non- CDBG target areas and emergency demolitions. The CD Inspectors will initiate the condemnation actions in target areas and rely, by mutual agreement” on the Inspections Division at City Hall for completing the stub search and other condemnation steps that would conclude with a CD-let demolition contract.

Initiative for Improving Inspections Enforcement

Over time, it has become apparent to many of the City’s Inspections and Clean Neighborhood Enforcement Officers, as well as many citizens, that there are many defects in the laws and other legal resources that can be used to force compliance with inspection mandates and penalties. A thorough review of our housing and clean neighborhood laws will be conducted to make them tougher and more enforceable.

The Homeownership Center

Homeownership assistance will continue to be the highest program priority. *Creating homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income families with federal incentives and providing other funding (casino revenues) for middle income families that do not qualify for federal assistance is the most important revitalization activity we can undertake for the future of the City.*

2) NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS:

i) Niagara Falls Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. - a non-profit housing organization and subgrantee to the City utilizing CDBG funds, this organization has been in existence since 1978 and has developed an extensive track record in providing rehabilitation loans and affordable housing opportunities for low and moderate income households. NHS was designated as a CHDO in 1992 and has implemented first time homeownership assistance programs with HOME funds provided by the City and New York State. In addition, NHS is funded by New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) as a neighborhood preservation company. NHS will administer the following programs during the 5-Year Strategy period:

N.F. Neighborhood Housing Services

Activity	Description	Income Group	Tenure Type
Rehabilitation	High Risk Revolving Loans & Grants	Very Low/ Other Low	Existing Owners

	Rental Housing	very low	renters
Homebuyers Assistance	Acquisition/Rehab/Resale closing cost assistance	Very Low/Other Low	First Time Homebuyers
Home Center	Credit counseling, mortgage education, homeownership workshops		
Lead Hazard Control Program	very low, low & Mod owners, renters		

ii) Center City Neighborhood Development Corp. - a non-profit housing organization and subgrantee to the City utilizing CDBG funds, this organization has also been in existence since 1978 and has also been extensively involved developing and implementing housing programs for low and moderate income households. Center City NDC became a CHDO in 1994 and has developed several innovative new housing and first time homebuyer’s assistance programs. Center City is also funded by DHCR as a neighborhood preservation company.

Center City Neighborhood Development Corp.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Income Group</u>	<u>Tenure Type</u>
Rehabilitation	Exterior Home Improvement	Very Low/Other Low	Existing Owners
	Homeowner Rehabilitation	Very Low/Other Low	Existing Owners
Homebuyers Assistance	Acquisition/Rehab/Resale Closing cost	Very Low/Other Low	First Time Homebuyers

Home Center Credit counseling, mortgage education, workshops

Lead Hazard Control Program - very low, low & Mod owners, renters

iii) Highland Community Revitalization Committee (HCRC)
 HCRC represents and serves the Highland Avenue area community in Niagara Falls. This faith based organization is the recognized neighborhood development corporation serving Census Tract 202. The City will support HCRC during the 5-Year Strategy period and will also support and encourage their efforts to be designated as a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO). This will allow the City to reserve HOME funds for use by HCRC in future years. The following program initiatives to be administered by HCRC will be supported by the City:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Income Group</u>	<u>Tenure Type</u>
Minor Home Repair	emergencies	low income Moderate income	owners

Fair Housing	coordinator	low/mod income	owners/renters
Home Center	Credit counseling mortgage education	low/mod income	owners/renters
Lead Hazard Control Program		very low, low & Mod	owners, renters

3) Public Housing Agencies

i) City of Niagara Falls - Section 8 Leased Housing Program

The City serves as a PHA administering the Section 8 Rental Voucher Program, Moderate Rehabilitation and Substantial Rehabilitation Programs, the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS).and the Welfare to Work Program. Rental assistance is currently provided at the following levels:

Section 8-Leased Housing

<u>Program</u>	<u># clients</u>	<u>income level</u>
City Vouchers	670	very low income
County Vouchers	345	very low income
FSS (City)	5	very low income
FSS (County)	.5	very low income
Welfare to Work	65	very low income
Homeownership (City)	12	very low income
Homeownership (County)	4	very low income

ii) Niagara Falls Housing Authority

The Niagara Falls Housing Authority manages approximately 849 units of public housing in the City (five development projects): Jordan Gardens 24 buildings, 100 units; Spallino Towers - 15 stories, 196 units; Wrobel Towers - 13 stories, 250 units; Packard Court - 32 buildings, 166 units; and Center Court - 25 buildings, 134 units and 3 scattered site single family homes. The Niagara Falls Housing Authority has seven commissioners of which five are appointed by the Mayor of Niagara Falls and two elected by the tenants.

The jurisdiction has no formal relationship with the PHA regarding hiring, contracting or procurement procedures. The City does however review proposed development sites when funding applications specifically require City certification of consistency with the Consolidated Plan or when zoning and land use requirements must be obtained. Additionally, the NFHA took part in the City’s Consolidated Planning process by serving as a member of the Coordinating Committee.

Overcoming Gaps - Assessment

The City continually strives to encourage an increased role for citizen participation in guiding both the neighborhood revitalization and economic development functions of City

government. The City's primary mission is to create greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the delivery of all municipal services. The City's commitment to increasing the supply of affordable housing and its commitment to prioritizing homeownership opportunities is a major strength.

Innovate Tools: The City has been recognized by HUD for creating an innovate partnership to ensure compliance with lead based paint requirements in the housing rehabilitation program. Lead based training workshops are conducted with homeowners prior to the start of rehabilitation to provide helpful knowledge about lead safety in the home and for future home repair projects.

The City's homestead/non-homestead tax structure continues to have a negative effect on the development of affordable housing in the community and is recognized as a public policy that needs to be re-visited. The ramification of this two-tier tax structure extends beyond its effect on affordable housing development by also negatively impacting economic development projects. City Council has debated this issue for the past several years and has issued resolutions to bring the homestead and non-homestead rates into closer harmony.

Monitoring (91.230)

1. Describe the standards and procedures the jurisdiction will use to monitor its housing and community development projects and ensure long-term compliance with program requirements and comprehensive planning requirements.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Monitoring response:

Program compliance personnel and financial management staff conduct formal on-site monitoring of CDBG/HOME funded housing subgrantees on an annual basis. Project files are randomly tested for compliance with federal, state and local guidelines and regulations. Housing projects are reviewed for compliance with occupancy requirements, income qualification, housing rehabilitation standards and lead based paint compliance. Payment vouchers are reviewed and traced for 1 to 1 correspondence to drawdown requests.

Additional components of the project monitoring include compliance with National Objectives, project eligibility, HUD program rules and administrative requirements and progress against production goals using performance measurements identified in contract agreements.

Other subgrantees are monitored by desktop review, examining annual performance reports submitted by subgrantees. Desktop review includes compliance with national objectives, timeliness of obligating and expending funds and assessment of expenditures as eligible and reasonable.

The City's Director of Community Development also serves as an ex-officio board member for the housing service providers funded by the department.

Long term compliance with property management and occupancy requirements are reviewed as outlined in contracts with the various subgrantees including reviews of rent rolls and verification of tenant income.

Priority Needs Analysis and Strategies (91.215 (a))

1. Describe the basis for assigning the priority given to each category of priority needs.
2. Identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Priority Needs Analysis and Strategies response:

5-year Consolidated Plan and Strategy Priorities

Based on input received during the 5-year planning process from the coordinating committee members and from the neighborhood based strategy meetings, the following needs have been identified as community priorities. These priorities are reflected in the both the 5-Year Strategy Statement and in the FY' 2010 Action Plan. In those sections of the 5-Year strategy that focus on specific community needs and priorities, an analysis of need is explained and a priority ranking is assigned to each activity.

- Homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income, first time homebuyers
- Rehabilitation of owner occupied and investor owned residential properties. including lead safe practices
- Clearance/Demolition of blighted structures.
- Public Service needs: Youth Services, clean neighborhoods, employment training, and crime prevention
- Public Improvements such as streets, walks, alleys, sewers and public facilities such as parks and parking ramps.
- Development of the downtown tourism area and neighborhood commercial districts,
- Building a new inventory of middle class urban housing to induce middle income families to live in the urban center of the City.

Lead-based Paint Needs (91.215 (g))

1. Estimate the number of housing units that contain lead-based paint hazards, as defined in section 1004 of the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, and are occupied by extremely low-income, low-income, and moderate-income families.
2. Outline actions proposed or being taken to evaluate and reduce lead-based paint hazards and describe how lead based paint hazards will be integrated into housing policies and programs, and how the plan for the reduction of lead-based hazards is related to the extent of lead poisoning and hazards.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Lead-based Paint response:

Lead Based Paint Needs Needs/Extent of the Problem

Perhaps no community in America is more infamous for residential environmental health hazards than Niagara Falls, NY. Contamination present at Love Canal, a City neighborhood now known as Black Creek Village, caused significant health effects among the residents and forced the emergency evacuation and subsequent demolition of many homes. These health effects continue to plague

many of those who still live in the community, including City staff assigned to lead hazard control. It was Love Canal that forced government officials and the public in general to think seriously about the relationship between the environmental hazard and the home.

Housing conditions and socio-economic circumstances in Niagara Falls, NY are such that lead poisoning continues to have a significant impact on the community. According to US census data, the vast majority (+80%) of housing was constructed prior to 1960, and almost 20% of the population lives in poverty.

Evidence of this continued danger is reflected in blood lead testing data supplied by the State Health Department and Niagara County. The Niagara County prevalence rates of children under age 6 with elevated bloods level for the most recent year for which official data is present (1999) indicates that 4.2 % of children tested had levels greater than or equal to 10ug/dl. This compares unfavorably with the Federal level of 2.2%. A total of 3,419 children were tested in 1999, 176 had elevated blood levels. (We have no explanation for the stated 4.2 percentage when the actual calculation of EBL's to tested children is actually a higher 5.1%.)

The limited number of children tested could mask an even larger problem. In spite of Federal and New York State efforts, the majority of pediatricians are not prescribing lead testing for infants. Niagara County Health Department officials estimate that approximately 20% of pediatricians are conducting these tests and this only because one, intercity clinic insists that testing is conducted. State regulations requiring testing at first and second year checkups, and as condition of kindergarten enrollment in the school district, are widely ignored. The enclosed report titled "Protecting Our Children from Lead, The Success of New York's efforts to prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning", a NYS DOH publication, optimistically indicates that approximately 55% of children are tested annually in Niagara County.

These statistics also mask a discrepancy between housing conditions in public and private housing. The City Housing Authority properties are relatively new (post-1960) and have already completed extensive lead hazard control management, via HUD PHA LBP initiatives dating back to the 1980s. Many of the children tested through subsidized medical program reside in this public housing. Children living in low-income private housing have not experienced benefits of PHA lead hazard control are less likely to participate in subsidized blood lead testing programs.

These hypotheses underscore the need for additional research. City officials encourage and will actively participate in research activities that address this and other environmental health concerns.

The City of Niagara Falls Department of Community Development has reviewed available local, State and Federal data regarding residential characteristics to complete the attached Factor 1 form. This includes discussion with local officials, and analysis of State Health Department and US census 2000 data. Supplemental research on income levels and population data was also completed internally using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Consolidated Plan documentation. The Niagara County Department of Health has advised that their extensive field research leads them to believe that only 40% of Niagara Falls children are tested, leaving the potential for a very high EBLL number to be discovered.

LEAD BASED PAINT - NEED/EXTENT OF PROBLEM									
A. Blood Lead Level (BLL)									
B. Housing Age and Tenure									
C. Very Low and Low-Income Population									
Name of Jurisdiction: Niagara Falls, New York									
A. Documented Blood Lead Level (BLL)									
A.1 Total Number of Children <6 Years (72 months) of Age <i>in Jurisdiction:</i> 4,766 <i>% of Total Population:</i> 8.6%					A.2 Total Number of Children <6 Years (72 months) of Age <i>in Target Area:</i> 4,766 <i>% of Total Population:</i> 8.6%				
Blood Lead Level	Number of Children Under 6 Years	% of Total			Blood Lead Level	Number of Children Under 6 Years	% of Total		
< 10 µg/dL	3,243	94.8%			< 10 µg/dL	3,243	94.8%		
≥ 10 µg/dL and < 20	133	3.9%			≥ 10 µg/dL and < 20	133	3.9%		
≥ 20 µg/dL	43	1.3%			≥ 20 µg/dL	43	1.3%		
Total Tested		100%			Total Tested		100%		
Source and Date Documented (indicate Period Covered)*		NYSDOH, 1999			Source and Date Documented (indicate Period Covered)*		NYSDOH, 1999		
B. Housing Age and Tenure									
B1. Jurisdiction					B2. Target Area(s)				
Year		% of	Owner	Renter	Year		% of	Owner	Renter
Pre-	8,771	36.39	5,521	3,250	Pre-	8,771	36.39	5,521	3,250
1940-	4,965	20.55	2,814	2,141	1940-	4,965	20.55	2,814	2,141
1950-	5,793	24.03	3,886	1,907	1950-	5,793	24.03	3,886	1,907
1960-	1,733	7.19	764	969	1960-	1,733	7.19	764	969
1970-	1,800	7.46	606	1,194	1970-	1,800	7.46	606	1,194
1980 or	1,049	4.35	311	738	1980 or	1,049	4.35	311	738
TOTAL	24,101	100.00	13,902	10,199	TOTAL	24,101	100.00	13,902	10,199
C. Very Low and Low-Income Population – As Determined by HUD									
C1. Jurisdiction					C2. Target Area(s)				
Number of Families	%	Number of Families	%		Number of Families	%	Number of Families	%	
[2] - 1,298	27%	[2] - 1,872	48%		[2] - 1,298	27%	[2] - 1,872	48%	
[3] - 300	13%	[3] - 459	36%		[3] - 300	13%	[3] - 459	36%	
[4] - 209	11%	[4] - 488	37%		[4] - 209	11%	[4] - 488	37%	
[5+] - 217	19%	[5] - 361	31%		[5+] - 217	19%	[5] - 361	31%	
Total	20%	Total	4,147	41%	Total	20%	Total	41%	

HOUSING

Housing Needs (91.205)

*Please also refer to the Housing Needs Table in the Needs.xls workbook

1. Describe the estimated housing needs projected for the next five year period for the following categories of persons: extremely low-income, low-income, moderate-income, and middle-income families, renters and owners, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, including persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, single persons, large families, public housing residents, victims of domestic violence, families on the public housing and section 8 tenant-based waiting list, and discuss specific housing problems, including: cost-burden, severe cost-burden, substandard housing, and overcrowding (especially large families).
2. To the extent that any racial or ethnic group has a disproportionately greater need for any income category in comparison to the needs of that category as a whole, the jurisdiction must complete an assessment of that specific need. For this purpose, disproportionately greater need exists when the percentage of persons in a category of need who are members of a particular racial or ethnic group is at least ten percentage points higher than the percentage of persons in the category as a whole.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Housing Needs response:

A. Housing Needs

Current Estimates/Five Year Projections

1) Very Low Income - According to the 2000 Census, there are 27,836 housing units in the City. Of these, 24,101 units are occupied and 3,735 are vacant. This is a vacancy rate of 13.4% which is significantly higher than the 9.3% reported in the 1990 Census. Of the total vacant units 1,978 (53%) are rental units, 403(1.1%) are for sale only, 271(.07%) are rented or sold but unoccupied and 929 (25%) are classified as other vacant. These vacancy rates reflect an extraordinary loss of population in the City from 1960 to 2000 (102,394 to 54,874).

2000 Census tabulations indicate that 5,890 renter households are very low income <50% MFI and 3,671 are below 30% MFI. These figures represent 76% of all renter households in the City. Furthermore, 46.2% of all renter households have housing problems, while 76.3% of very low income households have housing problems. Minority, very low income households, experience a greater percent of incidence of housing problems (83.5%).

54.2% of very low income renter households experience cost burden (costs exceeding 50% of gross income) and 15.4% experience severe cost burden (costs 50% of gross income). Small related and large related households represent, quantitatively, the groups experiencing the greatest housing problems and cost funding. Over 96% of large related, very low income renters have housing problems; 60% of small families similarly have housing problems. Small related families now constitute the majority of households waiting for rental assistance through the Section 8 Program.

Overcrowding in renter units is not a major problem due to the low renter household size in the City; 2.10 persons/household.

According to 2000 Census data, there are 13,342 total owner households in the City. Very low income owners number 2,634 of the total households in the City (19% of the total). Most households in this category are elderly, regardless of race. However, large related

households constitute the greatest percentage of households with housing problems and cost burdens > 30% of income

Income distribution of Niagara Falls owner households is as follows. 8% of all households are at 0-30% of median income, 11% are at 31-50% of median income and 29.7% are at 51-80% of median income.

Minority very low income households have a greater percentage of housing problems than non minority households (renter households and owner households). 74% of white, non Hispanic renters and 76% of owners have housing problems while black households have 75.6% and 84% respectively.

Overcrowding in owner units is not a problem with the average household size at 2.40 persons.

The above data indicates a need to continue housing rehabilitation programs for very low income households in the City and to expand and enhance Section 8 vouchers to assist very low income renters. Grants and deferred loans should be offered to households in this income category so as to not significantly alter the cost burden for these households, but at the same time minimize housing problems.

The City does not anticipate a significant change in the needs assessment in this category for the five year period.

2. Other Low Income

Other low income renters, or renters with income between 51-80% of median income represent 19% of all renter households in the City. The total number of renters in this category is 1,862. Of this total, 14.9% have housing problems; 10% have cost burdens exceeding 30% but less than 50% of gross income. Small related households and other households comprise the largest segment of other low income renters. The two groups experience housing problems at 16% and 13% respectively. However, large households have the greatest % of housing problems (37.4%) Renters experiencing cost burdens exceeding 30% of gross income follow similar patterns with small related and other households at 11.6% and 10.8% respectively. Once again large related households have the greatest percentage of cost burden at 22.9%

Other low income owner households number 2,973 or 22% of all owner households. 24.2% of other low income owners have housing problems and 27% have cost burdens exceeding 30%. Minority black households have a significantly greater incidence of housing problems at 44% versus white households at 28.2%.

Homeownership opportunity programs for first time buyers are needed for households with other low income. Households in this category could afford homeownership but have limited resources to pay closing costs and other related mortgage financing costs. Homeownership programs have been successfully implemented in the past and should be expanded and enhanced as a high priority. Homeowner rehabilitation programs also are required to improve aging housing stock and provide families with decent, safe and affordable housing. Census tracts with the highest concentrations of minority households should be targeted for rehabilitation assistance as a high priority

3) Moderate income - households are defined as household with total gross income between 81% and 95% of median income. Moderate income renters represent 21% of all renter households in the City. Naturally, as income increases, housing opportunity chances also increase, thus relatively few households in this category experience housing problems or cost burdens. Over 60% of moderate income renters are elderly one and two member households and small related households.

Moderate income owners represent only 57% of the total Owner households in the City and few experience housing problems or cost burdens (4.4% and 3.1% respectively).

Homeownership and housing rehabilitation programs have historically been targeted to income groups not exceeding 80% of median. The City utilizes Community Development Block Grant and New York State Affordable Housing Corporation funds to meet these goals and will continue to target funds to those income groups. Therefore, households in this income category will ranked as a low priority.

Priority Housing Needs (91.215 (b))

1. Identify the priority housing needs and activities in accordance with the categories specified in the Housing Needs Table (formerly Table 2A). These categories correspond with special tabulations of U.S. census data provided by HUD for the preparation of the Consolidated Plan.
2. Provide an analysis of how the characteristics of the housing market and the severity of housing problems and needs of each category of residents provided the basis for determining the relative priority of each priority housing need category.

Note: Family and income types may be grouped in the case of closely related categories of residents where the analysis would apply to more than one family or income type.

3. Describe the basis for assigning the priority given to each category of priority needs.
4. Identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Priority Housing Needs response:

Housing Rehabilitation Strategy for the 5-Year Plan 2010-2014:

1) Strategy Development

a. Housing providers receiving CDBG & HOME funds from the City must identify specific target areas where programs will be implemented, and provide goals and objectives for a one-year (2010) plan and a five-year (2010-2014) strategy. The target areas must be limited in size geographically to enable the agency to adequately address neighborhood needs and to measure results in meeting the stated goals and objectives. Agencies must identify where they plan to expand to on an annual basis for the five-year period.

b. Housing strategies will not be developed or operated in a vacuum. Rather, other factors contributing to neighborhood blight should be accounted for in developing a comprehensive program designed to meet a variety of neighborhood needs.

- c.** A comprehensive, door-to-door code enforcement policy should be implemented in specific target areas, identified on an annual basis. Initial inspections will identify housing problems and follow-up compliance inspections must be strictly adhered to. Owners will be provided adequate information regarding financial assistance that is available through NHS/CCNDC/HCRC
- d.** All problem properties in the target areas should be addressed in some fashion either through federally assisted programs or code enforcement. Financial incentives should be structured to increase in direct proportion to need. Assistance should be provided to all income groups up to 80% of median income.
- e.** Paint programs, electrical service repairs, lighting programs etc. used as grants or matching grant programs should be eliminated on a "stand alone" basis, except for emergency services under unique circumstances
- f.** Duplication of services must be eliminated or minimized to the greatest extent feasible.
- g.** Clean neighborhood programs should be implemented in a concentrated manner in target areas only to reinforce investment in housing.
- h.** Public improvements, i.e. sidewalks, curbs, street pavement, tree planting should be implemented in target areas to reinforce investment in housing.
- i.** Local lending institutions should be brought in as partners to participate in re-investment programs. Local banks will provide homeowner grants, service fees, and/or low interest loans to supplement federal funds.

2. Housing Goals:

- Strive for adequate housing in a decent living environment for all Niagara Falls residents
- Revitalize older residential areas by working towards eliminating non-conforming uses, removing substandard buildings, and improving existing housing.
- Create new housing opportunities for families and individuals of varying age, income, and size by encouraging the development of a variety of housing types on appropriate underutilized and vacant land.
- Encourage home ownership for families, particularly in residential areas with a mixture of one, two, and three family structures. (one family priority)
- Try to increase the City's overall racial, social, and economic development through measures designed to reverse out-migration of middle income families and to enhance the incomes of the resident population.
- Preserve and enhance the character and integrity of existing single-family and low density residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage fully tax paying development in residential areas, wherever a market for such development already exists or can be created or expanded by the use of all available forms of assistance.
- Where appropriate and feasible, redevelop substandard and obsolete areas in a way that would enable them to compete with neighborhoods outside the City, thereby making it possible for the City to attract higher income families.

Utilize federal and state resources to the fullest degree possible by (1) using public funds to leverage the greatest achievable supplementary private investment in housing rehabilitation; (2) applying imaginatively for all appropriate forms of assistance; and (3) trying to impress upon federal and state legislators the necessity to target Niagara Falls

A) PRIORITY HOUSING NEEDS

**1. Priority : All Very Low Income Renters
0-30% MFI and 31 - 50% MFI¹**

i. Analysis

2000 Census data shows that there are 27,836 housing units in the City. Of these, 24,101 are occupied and 3,735 are vacant. This is a vacancy rate of 13.4% as opposed to 9.3% in 1990. Homeowner vacancy rate is approximately 1.0%. There are 9,837 renter households in the City, of which 46.2% have housing problems. In the 0-30% MFI category, 76.3% have housing problems and 60.5% in the 31-50% MFI category. Although there is a high rental vacancy rate, there is not a sufficient stock of rental housing in standard condition or suitable for rehabilitation. Without rehabilitation subsidies, a developer is less likely to invest in substandard units. Small related families and large related families represent the renter households with the greatest incidence of housing problems, especially very low income families. 37% of all rental households are in the 0-30% MFI category and 23% are in the 31-50% MFI category. Section 8 Leased Housing Statistics indicate that 345 people are on the waiting list for one bedroom apartments, 316 for two bedroom and 179 for three-bedroom. Public Housing statistics indicate a waiting list of 41 for one bedroom, 84 for two bedroom and 54 for three-bedroom. An imbalance between the number of available one and two bedroom units and low household size exists with high levels of severe housing problems and low levels of assistance.

Priority Ranking: high priority for very low income renters at 0-30% MFI and 31-50% MFI for small related and large related households. Very low income elderly renters 0-30% and 31-50%, are ranked as a medium priority.

**2. Priority - Other Low Income Renters
51 - 80% MFI**

i. Analysis

According to 2000 Census data, other low income renters comprise 18.9% of the total rental households in the City and 14.9% of those have housing problems. 39% of the total other low income renters are small related families and 16.5% experience cost burdens exceeding 30% of gross income. Large families comprise a relatively small portion of the income group (7%), however 37.4% have housing problems and 22.9% have cost burdens <30% to >50%. Other rental households in the 51-80% MFI income category represent 35% of the total. 13.5% of this group experience having problems and 10.7% experience cost burden > 30%.

Other low income rental households are largely comprised of elderly one and two member households, small related families, and other unrelated households. There is a mismatch between the supply of standard, affordable smaller units and amount of elderly and one and two member households. The percent incidence of housing problems and cost burden decreases with this income group.

Priority Ranking: medium priority for large related households, and medium priority for elderly one and two member households, small related households and all other households.

¹MFI signifies Median Family Income (Current area MFI for a family of 4 is \$53,000)

**3. Priority - Existing Owners, Very Low Income
0-30% MFI and 31-50% MFI**

i. Analysis

2000 Census data shows that there are 13,902 owner occupied housing units in the City as opposed to 15,150 in 1990. The 13,902 units represent 58% of the total occupied units in the City, meaning 42% are rental units. 19.9% of the total households have housing problems. Very low income households at 0-30% MFI however experience housing problems at 78.4% and 46.3% at 31-50% of MFI. 20.1% of the elderly owners, 15.6% of small related owner and 23.3% of large related households have housing problems. Family type distribution of very low income owners is overwhelmingly elderly at 57.6%, small related 18.9% and large related are 4%.

There is a high level of severe housing problems for very low income elderly and small related owners at 0-30% MFI combined with high levels of cost burden 49.3% and 68.8% respectively. Limited ability to pay mismatches with housing costs and is increasing due to continued unemployment and an aging population on fixed incomes.

Priority Ranking: *high priority for rehabilitation of housing with existing owners at 0-30% MFI.*

Very low income existing owners at 31-50% of MFI experience similar housing problems at every level. 11% of all owner households are in the 31-50% MFI category of that total, 46% have housing problems, 29% have cost >30% to <50%. High levels of housing problems and mismatches between ability to pay and housing costs are combined with limited levels of assistance.

Priority Ranking: *high priority for rehabilitation of housing with existing owners at 31-50% MFI.*

**4. Existing Owners - Other Low Income
51 - 80% MFI**

i. Analysis

According to 2000 Census data, 2,973 owner households in the City have incomes between 51-80% of MFI (22.2%). Of that total, 24.2% have housing problems (a substantial increase from 1990), 17% experience cost burden >30% to <50%. Elderly households represent 55.4% of the total other low income households.

Households in the 51-80% MFI category are less likely than other very low income households to have severe housing problems and cost burden. However, due to the high percentage of elderly households and continued high unemployment in the area, reinvestment in properties has been limited. Owner households in this income category defer housing improvements due to other living costs which are essential to every day life and capital reserves are either non-existent or insufficient to make needed repairs to bring properties up to acceptable building code compliance. Mismatches between housing costs and ability to pay are very prevalent at this income category.

Priority Ranking: *high priority assigned to rehabilitation of housing for existing owners at 51-80%.*

**5. Homeownership Assistance
(all income categories combined)**
i. Analysis:

2000 Census data shows that there are 9,837 renter households in the City representing 42% of the occupied housing units in the City. Of that total, 37% are very low income (0-30% MFI), 22.9% are very low income (31-50% MFI), and 18.9% are other low income (51-80%). Over 78% of all renter households therefore are either very low income or other low income. As previously stated, although the City's vacancy rate is very high (13.4%), many of the units are functionally obsolete, substandard and not suitable for rehabilitation.

Of the 3,735 total vacant units 1,978 are for rent and only 403 are for sale. 929 are classified as other vacant that may include vacant units not suitable for rehabilitation or units not on the market. 37% of the housing units in the City were constructed prior to 1940. Female headed households represent 15.5% of the households in the City and female headed households with children represent 9.5% of the total. First time homebuyers are defined as individuals or families who have not owned a home during the three year period preceding the HUD assisted purchase, excluding displaced homemakers or single parents. Very low income households 0-30% MFI and 31-50% MFI that meet the definition of first time homebuyers are severely undercapitalized and, combined with the general lack of available, affordable housing units for sale, prohibits their opportunity to become homeowners. In many cases, rental costs exceed monthly housing costs associated with subsidized owner units. One of the major obstacles to homeownership is the lack of sufficient capital to cover downpayment and other related mortgage closing costs.

High levels of severe housing problems, lack of affordable owner units for sale and increasing numbers of families with children unable to pay housing costs lead to a City policy that emphasizes increased opportunities for homeownership through acquisition, rehabilitation and/or new construction.

Priority Ranking: a high priority is assigned to potential first time homebuyers at all income levels

Housing Market Analysis (91.210)

*Please also refer to the Housing Market Analysis Table in the Needs.xls workbook

1. Based on information available to the jurisdiction, describe the significant characteristics of the housing market in terms of supply, demand, condition, and the cost of housing; the housing stock available to serve persons with disabilities; and to serve persons with HIV/AIDS and their families. Data on the housing market should include, to the extent information is available, an estimate of the number of vacant or abandoned buildings and whether units in these buildings are suitable for rehabilitation.
2. Describe the number and targeting (income level and type of household served) of units currently assisted by local, state, or federally funded programs, and an assessment of whether any such units are expected to be lost from the assisted housing inventory for any reason, (i.e. expiration of Section 8 contracts).
3. Indicate how the characteristics of the housing market will influence the use of funds made available for rental assistance, production of new units, rehabilitation of old units, or acquisition of existing units. Please note the goal of affordable housing is not met by beds in nursing homes.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Housing Market Analysis responses:

G. Market and Inventory Characteristics

1. Community Description

i. Background and Trends

In 2000, the City had 55,593 people making up 24,099 households or about 2.30 persons per household. Examination of migration trends between 1970 and 2000 indicates that virtually every age cohort except seniors lost population. Working age people are leaving the City in search of employment and/or suburban housing conditions. On the other hand, the continuing trend of shrinking household size contributes to an imbalance between actual unit size (City median of 5.1 rooms) and household size that makes it difficult to fill existing units.

Niagara Falls has experienced a decline in household size going from 3.45 in 1950 to 2.58 in 1980, to 2.27 in 2000, or 34% in 50 years.

Even with the shrinking household size, the City will continue to face a major problem with residential vacancies: currently at 13%. Since population trends are likely to continue with little change, vacancy rates may grow through the next decade and is symptomatic of the increased out migration and increasing elderly population.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE

YEAR	Niagara Falls	United States
1940	---	3.67
1950	---	3.37
1960	3.29	3.33
1970	3.02	3.14
1980	2.58	2.76
1990	2.35	2.93
2000	2.27	

If Niagara Falls' household size continues to decline at a faster rate than that of the nation as a whole, the City could have more households at a given population, but as long as the absolute size of the City's population continues to drop rapidly the decline in household size will not significantly add to a growth of households. The high housing unit vacancy rate will continue, creating a buyers market for housing, keeping rents low, and discouraging housing rehabilitation and other forms of investment.

As household size continues to drop, the match between dwelling unit size and household size will worsen. The median room size of housing units today is 5.1. As one and two-person households become more common, units with five or more rooms will become less and less attractive. Converting to smaller units will solve individual problems, but by adding housing units vacancy rates will remain high.

Finally, despite the overall problems with vacancies, demand for some types of units should grow. Higher quality, energy efficient, small units, handicapped units, and large family units may be at a premium. Lack of sufficient units in the right size ranges could favor suburban migration and further aggravate the City's housing problems.

As the City's population has declined, the composition of its population has changed. The City's elderly and minority populations are increasing proportionally despite out-migration in both sub groups. Housing needs have understandably changes as well. Current problems with vacancy rates will continue. The median household size will continue to fall but not as fast or as much as the in past decades.

2. Market and Inventory Conditions
i. General Market and Inventory Housing Conditions

Niagara Falls is a built-up city with a relatively old housing stock. 51% of its housing units were built before 1940. It was estimated in 1978 that nearly 50% of all rental units, as opposed to 23.7% of all owner-occupied units were substandard. 6% of all units were estimated to be totally deficient and in need of demolition. Total dilapidation was more prevalent in renter-occupied rather than owner occupied housing (10.8% versus 3.3%). 28% of all housing units were sound and another 40% required only minimal improvements.

Attention must be paid to the changes which have occurred in the City since the 1978 housing survey. Since 1978 there has been a limited amount of new housing construction (200 units of Section 8 New Construction, and smaller projects, including single-family residential), Off setting the minimal new construction was demolition of substandard units, and the loss of homes, mostly in good condition, in the Love Canal area, where 800 homes were acquired by the Love Canal Revitalization Agency and demolished. During this period, 345 units were built and 1,555 were demolished.

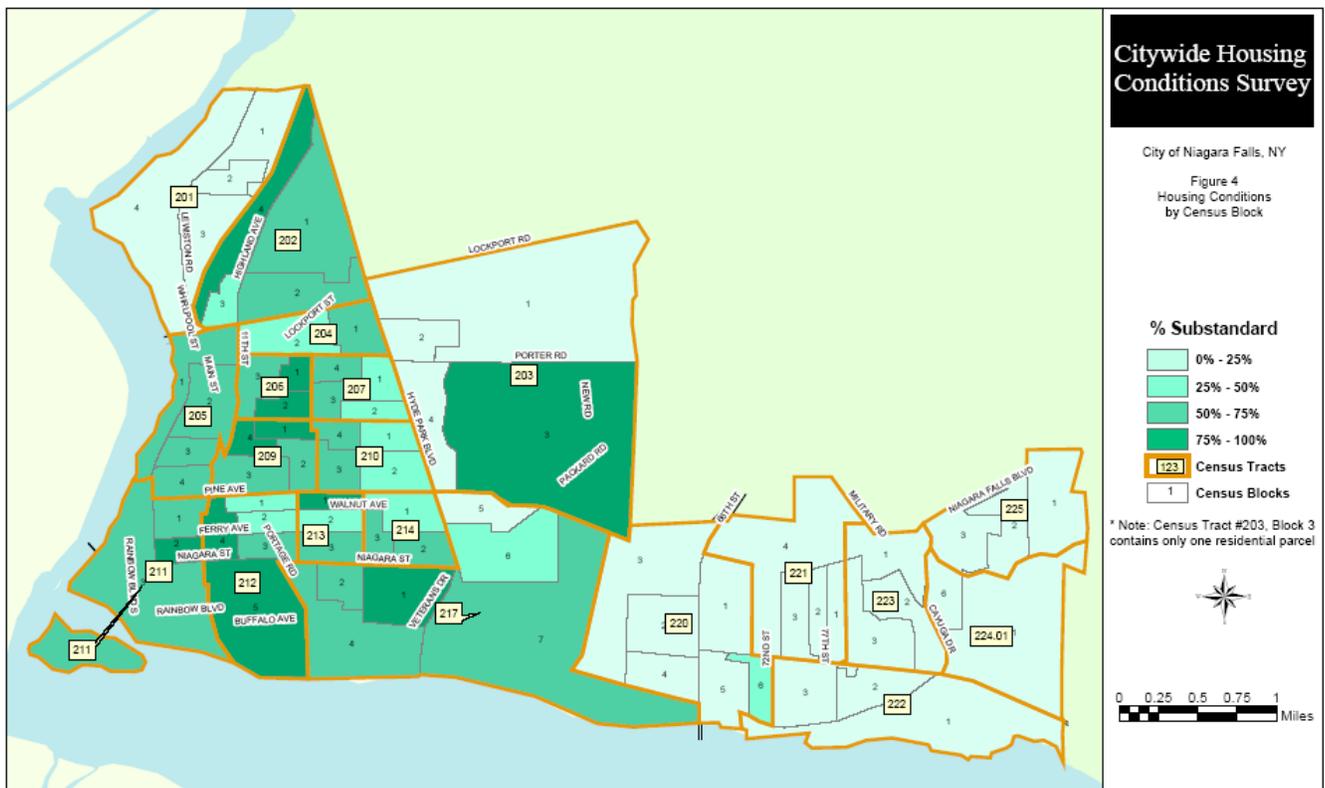
Another survey of City housing conditions was carried out in 1989. The percentage of standard versus substandard housing appears to have improved significantly since the 1978 survey. However, the two surveys used different definitions of "housing." The 1978 survey quantified housing based on the condition of each "dwelling unit." The 1989 survey quantified the condition of residential "structures", regardless of the number of units in the structure. This difference in definition and measurement accounts for the apparent increase in the percentage of standard versus substandard housing in the City, going from 68% in 1978 to 83% standard in 1989.

1978, 1989, 2004 HOUSING CONDITION SURVEYS

Year of Survey	Totally Deficient	Major Deficiencies	Minor Deficiencies	Sound
1978	6%	26%	40%	28%
1989	4%	13%	39%	44%

see 2004 housing conditions map and data after this section

The 2004 study shows a different picture based upon another evaluation format, but one that seems to reflect actual housing conditions. Simply put, there are three areas of sound housing:
 Census Tract 201 (DeVeaux)
 Census Tracts 220, 221, 222, 223, 224 and 225 (LaSalle)
 Scattered block groups east of Hyde Park Blvd.



The older urban center exhibits a range of conditions from over 25% substandard to over 75% substandard (see attached map and Census Tract data). The darker shading on the map reflects a rising percentage of substandard structures. The attached map reflects and interpretation of the data that shows high levels of substandard ratings (called reduced scores_)

Whether one wishes to accept either the high rating (called reduced) or the more lenient standard, both data sets show significant substandard housing conditions in the urban center census tracts (202-217, with one block group anomaly in Census Tract 203)..

Block No	Average	Average Reduced	Substandard	Substandard Reduced
201-1	3.36	3.36	13.80%	13.80%
201-2	3.26	3.26	15.35%	15.35%
201-3	3.24	3.24	20.09%	20.09%
201-4	3.72	3.72	4.89%	4.89%
202-1	2.83	2.68	45.14%	72.22%
202-2	2.89	2.74	46.47%	68.82%
202-3	3.09	2.94	32.38%	44.76%
202-4	2.64	2.49	51.61%	87.10%
203-1	3.23	3.05	3.03%	61.62%
203-2	3.38	3.23	5.47%	43.49%
203-4	3.34	3.19	1.50%	43.45%
204-1	3.13	2.98	11.68%	64.60%
204-2	3.13	2.98	20.38%	48.64%
205-1	2.90	2.75	48.15%	66.67%
205-2	2.99	2.84	32.84%	57.84%
205-3	2.96	2.81	31.17%	68.83%
205-4	3.04	2.89	31.18%	55.88%
206-1	2.99	2.84	22.29%	78.98%
206-2	2.95	2.80	25.26%	77.37%
206-3	2.97	2.82	39.09%	65.84%
207-1	3.25	3.10	8.30%	50.90%
207-2	3.09	2.94	10.27%	74.11%
207-3	3.04	2.89	13.21%	74.64%
207-4	3.05	2.90	15.89%	68.22%
209-1	2.96	2.81	33.33%	63.89%
209-2	3.03	2.88	18.23%	67.00%
209-3	3.05	2.90	15.13%	61.84%
209-4	2.88	2.73	37.64%	76.97%
210-1	3.06	2.91	8.03%	73.09%
210-2	3.13	2.98	5.88%	63.40%
210-3	3.03	2.88	15.14%	71.71%
210-4	2.96	2.81	21.76%	77.31%
211-1	2.87	2.74	40.09%	70.97%
211-2	2.71	2.58	47.71%	77.12%
211-3	2.83	2.68	38.46%	73.63%
212-1	3.25	3.10	18.09%	45.74%
212-2	3.25	3.08	12.77%	39.36%
212-3	3.11	2.95	11.59%	67.63%
212-4	2.92	2.77	27.46%	76.17%
212-5	2.69	2.51	42.94%	89.57%
213-2	3.38	3.23	13.83%	38.34%
213-3	3.18	3.03	9.33%	63.85%
214-1	3.38	3.23	10.38%	25.16%
214-2	3.12	2.97	6.57%	71.53%
214-3	3.15	3.00	7.98%	63.30%
217-1	2.91	2.76	21.65%	81.50%
217-2	2.87	2.72	35.16%	72.60%
217-4	3.10	2.95	25.66%	59.87%
217-5	3.46	3.31	2.58%	15.13%
217-6	3.29	3.14	9.27%	35.14%
217-7	2.99	2.84	14.67%	87.50%
220-1	3.15	3.15	9.15%	9.15%
220-2	3.16	3.16	12.38%	12.38%
220-3	3.28	3.28	8.67%	8.67%
220-4	3.27	3.27	7.81%	7.81%
220-5	3.21	3.21	10.31%	10.31%
220-6	2.97	2.97	27.23%	27.23%
221-1	3.15	3.15	10.87%	10.87%
221-2	3.12	3.12	13.47%	13.47%
221-3	3.37	3.37	4.18%	4.18%
221-4	3.24	3.24	12.06%	12.06%
222-1	3.26	3.26	8.26%	8.26%
222-2	3.07	3.07	3.14%	3.14%
222-3	3.00	3.00	7.63%	7.63%
223-1	3.24	3.24	8.43%	8.43%

223-2	3.12	3.12	19.20%	19.20%
223-3	3.33	3.33	7.99%	7.99%
224-1-1	3.46	3.46	5.28%	5.28%
224-1-6	3.45	3.45	4.46%	4.46%
225-1	3.63	3.63	1.48%	1.48%
225-2	3.60	3.60	2.37%	2.37%
225-3	3.51	3.51	3.82%	3.82%

According to the City Assessor’s records, the median sale price of single family and two family homes in 2003 was \$64,000. While compared to national and state medians, this is a very low number. Examining the geography of the location of sales, one sees that sales were more prolific in the “good” neighborhoods and lower in the older urban areas, thus skewing the median upward. For example, an analysis of sales in the area bounded by Portage on the west and 39th Street on the East between Pine and Buffalo Avenues (an older area) shows the median sale price to be approximately \$30,000 with a small number of sales reported.

With a falling population, an out-migration of working age persons, a currently high vacancy rate of 13%, and an aging housing stock that is not the best “fit” for the existing population, by type, size, and condition, clearly the City of Niagara Falls has some very serious housing issues with which to contend. The housing conditions can be linked with the economic distress of the City. Persons who are unemployed or under-employed have difficulty paying rents to landlords that are adequate for debt, maintenance, taxes and profit. Lack of employment opportunities induces out-migration. The stagnant or dropping market value of houses discourages both new investment and re-investment.

Specific Housing Objectives (91.215 (b))

1. Describe the priorities and specific objectives the jurisdiction hopes to achieve over a specified time period.
2. Describe how Federal, State, and local public and private sector resources that are reasonably expected to be available will be used to address identified needs for the period covered by the strategic plan.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Specific Housing Objectives response:

Strategy Development - Investment Plan

A) Activities: Rental Rehabilitation and Rental Assistance

Rental rehabilitation assistance and moderate/ substantial rehabilitation programs are identified as high priority activities for all very low income renters - elderly, small related, large families and other households. Rental assistance can be an effective tool to address the needs of households paying more than 30% of income to rent. Moderate rehabilitation can address the needs of very low income renters experiencing housing problems and cost burden.

The lack of available smaller units to address the needs of small related and elderly one and two member households places additional constraints on the rental market. Therefore, Section 8 rental subsidies are a high priority for this income group. In addition HOME funds combined with Low Income Housing Tax Credits will be utilized for new construction projects particularly for the small related households.

Moderate and substantial rehabilitation and new construction of low income elderly units are identified as primary activities for other low income renters. The incidence of housing problems and cost burden decreases with other low income renters versus very low income renters. As previously stated, the relatively low level of affordable, standard smaller units is a problem in the City and creates a significant imbalance in the rental market.

Rental assistance will effectively meet the needs of other low income renters experiencing cost burden > 30% (elderly at 23% and small related at 28%). Moderate rehabilitation will also assist other low income renters by providing incentives to investors to bring substandard units into compliance with building codes

Priority Ranking: high priority for rental rehabilitation assistance programs financed with HOME and CDBG funds and for rental assistance programs and investor owned programs.

Rental Rehab/Rental Assistance Program Objectives:

The following programs and resources (Federal, State, Local and Private) will be pursued for the 5-year period 2010-2014. The jurisdiction will generally support applications for these programs and resources.

<p><u>Rental Assistance</u> Projected Funding Sources</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Section 8 Rental Vouchers</p>	<p>Five Yr. Objectives</p> <p>(units) 100 (u)</p>
<p><u>Rental Rehabilitation</u> Projected Funding Sources</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">CDBG - rental rehab HOME - rental housing Low Income Housing Credits, Local Lenders Housing Trust Fund</p>	<p>75 (u)</p>

B) Homeownership

Central to the philosophy that increasing homeownership opportunities is the primary mission that the City should pursue during the 5-year strategy period is the creation of a Homeownership Center:

The Homeownership Center

The homeownership assistance program is the highest program priority of the City's neighborhood revitalization strategy.

Homeownership assistance is currently defined as assistance provided to low and moderate income families who seek to purchase their first home. This assistance can take one or more of the following types of assistance:

- First-time Homebuyer Education Class

- Credit Repair Counseling for Mortgage Eligibility
- Closing Cost Financial Assistance
- Mortgage Write-down Financial Assistance
- Home Rehabilitation Financial Assistance
- Post-purchase support.

The revitalization of the City's neighborhoods is dependent on stopping the out-migration of working age people and actually reversing this forty year trend. There are two essential means of accomplishing these goals: creating jobs and attractive housing. Job creation will be discussed in the economic

development section of the 5-Year Plan. Creating attractive housing will mean the construction of new housing and the stabilization and improvement of our existing housing stock. It is well understood in the world of real estate that homeownership is the foundation of stable neighborhoods. Increasing the percentage of homeownership in a neighborhood is the most effective method of neighborhood revitalization. Decreasing homeownership is an almost certain sign of neighborhood distress.

At the time of the 2000 census, the City of Niagara Falls had 13,902 owner-occupied housing units, 10,199 renter occupied housing units, and 3,735 vacant units, yielding an owner-occupied percentage of 49.9%. Currently, the national homeownership average is 64 percent. Niagara Falls is more than 14 percentage points below this. More problematic is a recent study of the NHS East-side neighborhood that revealed 56 % of its existing owners are senior citizens. Over the next ten years it is probable that many of these seniors will not retain the ownership of their homes. This generates the question of "Who will replace these senior homeowners?"

The market for our existing homes is weakened by the current out-migration of working age persons. As we have yet to create enough jobs or attractive housing, generally speaking, persons from outside our community are not pouring into Niagara Falls to absorb our overly-vacant housing stock. This means that, in large part, we must rely on our own population to purchase our homes or the percentage of homeownership to rental units will fall still further.

The good news for our community is that we can create ample opportunities with financial and educational incentives for most of our renter families to become homeowners:

- The positive side of our economic distress is that homes in our community are affordable with many sale prices in the older, core neighborhoods at \$40,000 and below.
- Mortgage interest rates are currently low, yielding mortgage payments that look much like ordinary rents.
- Down payment requirements are minimal.
- First-time Homebuyer Classes are available to inform people about how to buy a home.
- Credit counseling is available to help people repair their credit to make them mortgage eligible and financially literate.
- There is substantial help available from Community Development and other public resources for closing cost assistance and after purchase home rehabilitation needs.
- There is significant assistance being given by the banks themselves to income eligible families to meet closing cost needs.

With affordable prices, low mortgage rates, low down payments, closing cost assistance, mortgage write-down assistance, home rehabilitation assistance, homebuyer education, and credit

counseling, many families in our low and moderate income population are able to become future homebuyers.

As noted above, there are many resources to help low and moderate income families become homeowners. Yet many of these families do not know of these resources or simply do not believe they can become a homeowner. Helping families believe that *they* can actually achieve homeownership is the hardest mission to achieve. They erroneously believe they will never have enough cash assembled for a down payment or closing costs, or they believe their credit is a hopeless obstacle, or they simply don't know how to go about the purchase of a home, or they simply can't conceive of themselves as persons who would buy a home.

The proposed Homeownership Center is vital to the future of our neighborhoods. In order to make homebuyers out of our low and moderate income population, the Homeownership Center will be developed as a highly visible symbol of homeownership opportunities. The Center will become a beacon for those families who want to become owners but may not know how or who may need additional resources to make it possible.

The Center will become a one-stop home shopping site that will be able to connect prospective owners with all the homeownership resources and information available. It will become a source of assistance to even middle income families who may need Homebuyer Education Certification to qualify for certain mortgages, or to access credit counseling, or to someday access low interest-rate mortgage lending through the Center itself.

The proposed Homeownership Center will be a joint venture of the Community Development Department, the Center City Neighborhood Development Corporation, the Neighborhood Housing Services Corporation, and the Highland Community Revitalization Committee, Inc.

In addition, a consortium of local banks has pledged financial support to assist with the cost of operations. In the future, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (the NHS corporate parent) and other grant sources will be looked to for Homeownership continuation and growth funding. The local banks will also be providing the Center fee income for every Center participant who becomes certified through Homebuyer Education and then takes a mortgage from one of the participating banks.

The proposed Center will be located at the Carnegie building on Main Street, the location of the Community Development Department. The Homeownership Center will be assisted with staff from Community Development and the three Neighborhood Corporations

Neighborhood Reinvestment/NeighborWorks Homeownership Centers all across the country provide a successful model for the development of the Niagara Falls facility. These centers across the country have helped thousands of families invest over a billion dollars in the purchase of their first homes.

Homeownership Program Objectives:

The following programs and resources (Federal, State, Local and Private) will be pursued during the 5-year strategy period. The jurisdiction will generally support application for these programs and resources.

Homebuyer Education client certifications & mortgage qualification Projected Funding Sources Home Center HUD Counseling Grants	5 Yr. Objectives (persons) 400 (p)
Housing Counseling repair of credit mortgage qualification counseling Projected Funding Sources: Home Center HUD Counseling Grants	200 (p)
Closing Cost/Downpayment Assistance Projected Funding Sources: HOME CDBG HUD Housing Counseling Neighborhood Reinvestment Affordable Housing Corp. Private Local Lenders	125 (p)
Purchase/Rehabilitation Projected Funding Sources HUD Foreclosures CDBG HOME Housing Trust Fund In Rem Tax Foreclosures	20 (units)
New Construction Projected Funding Sources HOME CDBG Affordable Housing Corp. SONYMA Local Lenders Local - In Rem Tax Foreclosure	20 (units)

C) Owner Occupied Rehabilitation

Moderate and substantial rehabilitation is identified as a primary activity to address the needs of very low income existing owners. The overwhelming majority of very low income owners (0-30% MFI) are elderly one and two member households (68.3%) and small related 16.3%). The housing rehabilitation programs offered through Federal, State and local programs can best address the needs of existing owners if implemented in concentrated target areas, with specific programs designed to particular income levels. Low interest loans, deferred loans, grants and interest subsidies are the best suited, most cost effective activities to address rehabilitation needs of very low income existing owners. Homeownership assistance and homeownership counseling and education, also are likely to be cost effective means to address the need for

homeownership for those households that qualify as first time buyers. New construction is less likely to be affordable to this group.

2000 Census data indicates that 22.2% of all owners are at 51%-80% MFI and 24.2% have housing problems. Moderate Rehabilitation is identified as a primary activity to address the needs of this group. A high percentage of elderly households combined with high unemployment rates in the City create a situation where home improvements are deferred. The Federal, State and local rehabilitation loan programs, designed as low interest loans, subsidies and matching grants are the most cost effective and appropriate activity to be undertaken

Program Objectives:

The following programs and resources (Federal, State, Local and Private) will be pursued in the 2010-2014 strategy period. The jurisdiction will generally support application for these programs and resources.

	5 Yr. Objectives (units)
<u>Rehabilitation</u>	250 (u)
Projected Funding Sources	
CDBG-deferred loans, NHS HRL	
CCNDC existing owner rehab	
Housing Trust Fund	
Affordable Housing Corp.	
Local Lender/Owner	
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp.	

Needs of Public Housing (91.210 (b))

In cooperation with the public housing agency or agencies located within its boundaries, describe the needs of public housing, including the number of public housing units in the jurisdiction, the physical condition of such units, the restoration and revitalization needs of public housing projects within the jurisdiction, and other factors, including the number of families on public housing and tenant-based waiting lists and results from the Section 504 needs assessment of public housing projects located within its boundaries (i.e. assessment of needs of tenants and applicants on waiting list for accessible units as required by 24 CFR 8.25). The public housing agency and jurisdiction can use the optional Priority Public Housing Needs Table (formerly Table 4) of the Consolidated Plan to identify priority public housing needs to assist in this process.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Needs of Public Housing response:

B. Public Housing Needs

SECTION 8 ELIGIBLE WAIT LIST APPLICANTS

Head of Household Only

<u>PREFERENCES</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>RACE/ETHNICITY</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Preference 1:	0	0	White:	328	50.31
Preference 2:	0	0			
Preference 3:	0	0	Black:	330	50.61
Preference 4:	0	0			
Preference 5:	0	0	Asian:	2	0.31
Preference 6:	0	0			
Preference 9:	652	100	American Indian/ Native Alaskan:	24	3.68
Total Eligible:	953		Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander:	4	0.61
			Hispanic:	22	3.37

<u>ELDERLY</u>	<u>0 BDRM</u>	<u>1 BDRM</u>	<u>2 BDRMS</u>	<u>3 BDRMS</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
All Elderly:	0	47	5	1	53	8.13
Dis./Handicapped:	0	29	4	1	34	64.15

DESCRIPTIONS

ABOVE:

Preference 1:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 2:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 3:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 4:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 5:	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 6:	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Preference:	0	47	5	1	53	100

NON-ELDERLY	0 BDRM	1 BDRM	2 BDRMS	3 BDRM	4 BDRM	5+ BDRM	TOTALS	PERCENT
All Non-Elderly:	0	274	207	102	14	2	599	91.87
Dis./Handicapped:	0	109	50	23	2	1	185	30.88

DESCRIPTIONS

ABOVE:

Preference 1:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 2:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 3:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 4:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 5:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preference 6:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No Preference:	0	274	207	102	14	2	599	100

AVERAGE INCOME	0 BDRM	1 BDRM	2 BDRMS	3 BDRM	4 BDRMS	5+ BDRMS
	\$	\$8,204	\$10,741	\$12,066	\$12,321	\$14,517

AGE	Under 18	18 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60-69	70 - 79	80+
Number:	0	169	161	137	117	42	20	6
Percent:	0	26	25	21	18	6	3	1

INCOME	0 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	10,000 - 14,999	15,000 - 19,999	20,000 - 24,999	25,000 ±
Number:	162	211	134	93	37	10
Percent:	25.04	32.61	20.71	14.37	5.72	1.55

SEX	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	176	26.99	Female	476 73.01

2. Public Housing Authority

The total number of households on the Niagara Falls Housing Authority's waiting list is as follows:

	PREFERENCE	NON-PREFERENCE
1 BR	18	19
2 BR	20	7
3 BR	30	8
4/5 BR	3	0
Total	71	34

The Authority's waiting list is open and ongoing; preferences are determined according to the following factors each carrying equal weight:

1. Persons paying over 50% of gross income for rent and utilities.
2. Persons living in substandard housing.
3. Persons who are involuntarily displaced or homeless.
4. Victims of domestic violence/hate crimes

C. Assisted Housing Inventory

1) Public Housing

The following table summarizes the Public Housing Inventory in the City:

Bedroom Size

Project	Type	0	1	2	3	4	5	Total	
Jordan Gardens	24 bldgs			8		52	34	6	100
Spallino Towers	15 stories		140	56					196
Wrobel Tower	13 stories			250					250
Packard Ct.	32 bldgs			14	106	46			166
Center Ct.	25 bldgs			10	94	30			134
Scattered Sites	1 bldg.					1			1
TOTAL*			140	338	200	129	34	6	847

*There are no units expected to be lost from the public housing inventory and there are currently no vacancies.

All NFHA units are in excellent physical condition having undergone extensive renovations during the period of 1995-1999. The following is an outline of modernization projects at the various NFHA sites:

Harry S. Jordan Gardens NY 11-2

Restoration and revitalization was completed in 1993-1994 bringing this project into compliance with Section 504 regulations. Jordan Gardens has five (5) one-bedroom handicapped accessible units and two (2) units fully modified for sensory handicapped. The Authority continues to make other various accommodations to facilitate mobility impaired residents use of accessible units.

Anthony Spallino Towers - NY 11-3A

Section 504 restoration and revitalization needs have been completed or are underway at this project including modification of elevators, new building entrance doors to comply with ADA requirement. The individual units cannot be made fully accessible without structural modifications to the building, however, many accessibility features have been incorporated into the rehabilitation project.

Harry E. Wrobel Towers - NY 11-5

Similar to Anthony Spallino Towers, various 504 restoration and revitalization needs have been completed or are currently underway. Modernization of elevators for accessibility issues was completed in 1995. New exterior building entrance doors have been replaced making the doors fully automatic in compliance with ADA requirements. In 1996 the Authority completed work involving a hardwired smoke detection system in each individual unit. All units ending in a "08" or "09" within Wrobel Towers are designated as handicapped accessible with only minor modifications necessary to bring them into full compliance. In 1996 these units were equipped with window lift assists to facilitate operation in compliance with ADA rules. The units will be brought into full compliance on an as needed basis or through the Comprehensive Grant Program.

Packard and Center Courts - NY 11-7A and 7B

In 1998 the Authority completed a contract making 5% of the units mobility impaired accessible and 2% of the units sensory impaired accessible. To make any other units accessible for mobility would require structural modifications to the buildings.

Scattered Site - NY 11-8

No work is intended for the scattered site unit.

2. Section 8 – Leased Housing

The City serves as a PHA administering the Section 8 Rental Voucher Program, Moderate Rehabilitation and Substantial Rehabilitation Programs, the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS).and the Welfare to Work Program Rental assistance is currently provided at the following levels:

<u>Program</u>	<u># clients</u>	<u>income level</u>
City Vouchers	670	very low income
County Vouchers	345	very low income
FSS (City)	5	very low income
FSS (County)	5	very low income
Welfare to Work	65	very low income

3) Other Section 236 Housing

Section 236 Housing was a rental and cooperative housing program for moderate income households in newly constructed or rehabilitated multi-family units which was authorized by the Housing and Development Act of 1968, but is now inoperable, and has not been funded in several years.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Section 236 Units</u>
Carpenters Pension Fund (Monteagle Ridge)	150
Total Units	150

Monteagle Ridge development has been relatively successful. It has full occupancy, 10% elderly, and a more balanced racial mix of tenants. The City's Section 8 Program has had ongoing dialogue with the property management firm for Monteagle Ridge Estates regarding the expiring Section 8 ACC Contracts. The project is broken down into two contracts, one contract expiring 8/31/99 for 31 units and the second expiring on 9/30/99 for 103 units.

HUD has renewed each contract and combined both into a single contract expiring on 9/30 of each year. The remaining units can be occupied by Section 8 Certificate or Voucher holders. If HUD contracts are not renewed on an annual basis management has expressed a desire to retain as many families as possible through the voucher program. Section 8 staff will monitor this situation closely and remain in contact with management of Monteagle.

The following is a list of other Section 8 ACC Contracts not administered by the City with HUD contract expiration dates indicated:

<u>Address</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>ACC Expiration</u>
Monteagle Ridge	30	9/30/00
Monteagle Ridge	102	9/30/00
1643 18th Street	11	8/7/00
942 Niagara Avenue	20	7/29/01
1028 South Avenue	20	8/15/05
Niagara Towers	200	9/11/10

The City will continue dialogue in order to assist those low income families that would ultimately be affected by the expiration of the ACC contract.

Public Housing Strategy (91.210)

1. Describe the public housing agency's strategy to serve the needs of extremely low-income, low-income, and moderate-income families residing in the jurisdiction served by the public housing agency (including families on the public housing and section 8 tenant-based waiting list), the public housing agency's strategy for addressing the revitalization and restoration needs of public housing projects within the jurisdiction and improving the management and operation of such public housing, and the public housing agency's strategy for improving the living environment of extremely low-income, low-income, and moderate families residing in public housing.
2. Describe the manner in which the plan of the jurisdiction will help address the needs of public housing and activities it will undertake to encourage public housing residents to become more involved in management and participate in homeownership. (NAHA Sec. 105 (b)(11) and (91.215 (k))
3. If the public housing agency is designated as "troubled" by HUD or otherwise is performing poorly, the jurisdiction shall describe the manner in which it will provide financial or other assistance in improving its operations to remove such designation. (NAHA Sec. 105 (g))

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Public Housing Strategy response:

Section 8 Leased Housing Mission Statement:

The Section 8 PHA's mission statement is to promote adequate and affordable housing, economic opportunity and suitable living environments free from discrimination. The goals and objectives of the Section 8 PHA that will enable the PHA to serve the needs of low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income maintain and increase families for the next five years are:

- Maintain and increase the availability of decent, safe and affordable housing through landlord outreach and counseling
- Continue to increase utilization of HCV program funds and apply for additional funding when available
- Improve SEMAP score to high performer status
- Continue to administer a homeownership program in conjunction with federal, state, and local resources
- Continue to ensure equal opportunity and affirmatively further fair housing by undertaking measures to ensure access to assisted housing regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and disability

Niagara Falls Housing Authority - Mission and Value Statement:

Mission: We Empower. We enrich. We build strong communities!”

Values: We value resident satisfaction amount our highest priorities and strive to ensure a compassionate resident-centered environment. We nurture highly skilled housing professionals and encourage multi-faceted collaboration. We strive to provide an environment that supports and encourage the active participation of both full time, regular and voluntary personnel. We seek to be responsive to the needs of individuals of all backgrounds and serve as a vital resource to the local community. We believe that each staff member is responsible for the continuous improvement of quality in all aspects of the services we provide. We strive to set the standard of excellence in cost effective, quality housing and quality of life programs. We commit to establishing mutually supportive visions with other agencies in service deliver.

- Core Values:** - There is no growth without change.
- All people can make a difference.
- Everyone has value.
- Understanding and appreciating diversity is essential to understanding and appreciating our world.
- People are empowered by taking responsibility for their choices.
- A family, in all its forms, is the foundation for the development of an individual.

- Strategies:** - Recruit, screen select and maintain personnel who are qualified and enthusiastic to carry out our mission.

- Create and maintain a culture of trust and mutual respect among residents, program participants and employees.

- Utilize our human resources and diverse talents of our staff and community to achieve our objectives.

Barriers to Affordable Housing (91.210 (e) and 91.215 (f))

1. Explain whether the cost of housing or the incentives to develop, maintain, or improve affordable housing are affected by public policies, particularly those of the local jurisdiction. Such policies include tax policy affecting land and other property, land use controls, zoning ordinances, building codes, fees and charges, growth limits, and policies that affect the return on residential investment.
2. Describe the strategy to remove or ameliorate negative effects of public policies that serve as barriers to affordable housing, except that, if a State requires a unit of general local government to submit a regulatory barrier assessment that is substantially equivalent to the information

required under this part, as determined by HUD, the unit of general local government may submit that assessment to HUD and it shall be considered to have complied with this requirement.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Barriers to Affordable Housing response:

Housing Vacancy Rate:

Niagara Falls has an overabundance of housing units far exceeding the City's population. As detailed in the housing market analysis section of the plan, Niagara Falls reached a peak population of over 100,000 residents in the early 1960's. Since that time there has been a steady out-migration of residents from the City. The City's infrastructure and available housing units were constructed to accommodate over 100,000 residents. According to the 200 Census, the City's population is approximately 56,000 and current estimates project that when the 2010 Census is completed the figure will be below 50,000. Niagara Falls had a total of 27,837 units per 2000 Census tabulations. 24,099 were occupied units and 3,738 were vacant units. Vacant housing units in 200 represented 13.4% of the total units (2.7% homeowner vacancy rate and 16% rental vacancy rate

American Community Survey Estimates for 2005-2007 project that the City's vacancy rate is currently at 20%. This is an extremely high vacancy rate that is further compounded by the condition of the units. The overwhelming majority of the City's housing units were built prior to 1970 and there is an affordability mismatch for all income groups. The general condition of the older housing stock, particularly vacant units has continually deteriorated from lack of investment and rehabilitation.

Municipal Tax Policies:

The City's municipal tax rate is among the highest in Western New York. Due primarily to the exodus of the chemical and manufacturing industry from the City and the out-migration of the City's population base, the City's tax base has been substantially reduced requiring the burden to fall on commercial and residential property owners. The City's homestead tax rate is currently set at \$44.01 per thousand of assessed valuation and the non-homestead rate is at \$60.04 per thousand of assessed valuation. This has a negative effect on both new housing construction and on rehabilitation/expansion of existing housing. The direct result is that those neighborhoods with the oldest housing stock, lowest per capita income and greatest blight continue to deteriorate. Additionally, the City's in-rem tax foreclosure policy has had the positive effect of providing the City with much needed revenue, while negatively perpetuating the recycling of blighted properties that re seized in tax foreclosure, purchased at very little cost by investors and put back on the market with little or no reinvestment.

Vacant Land/Brownfields:

There is virtually no available land in the City that is suitable for large scale development of housing. Although the Seneca Nation Casino has rekindled the desire to provide opportunities work-force housing in the City, vacant land is limited to brownfields sites that require varying degrees of remediation and blighted areas of the City with severely deteriorated housing that requires substantial demolition and clearance.

Strategy to Remove Negative Effects:

Housing Rehabilitation Incentives/Policies

The City's intends to fully support rental housing rehabilitation initiatives and homeowner occupied housing initiatives during the 5-year strategy period. Community Development Block Grant funding, HOME funding and New York State affordable housing grants will be utilized to continue to rehabilitate the City's housing stock and provide low and moderate income homeowners and investors renting to low income tenants the necessary financial assistance to rehabilitate their homes. The City will need to pursue a residential renewal and reinvestment strategy comprised of a number of ongoing programs to:

- Stop and reverse the decline in the residential housing market
- Reduce the oversupply of derelict housing units to stabilize the market at more normative and regionally competitive values
- Address the education and community needs within stable neighborhoods to begin to attract residents back to the city and provide a support base for business and economic development
- Position new housing alternatives to support and reinforce existing and anticipated commercial and tourism developments

Code Enforcement

The City began a concentrated code enforcement initiative in 2004, selecting target neighborhoods on an annual basis and conducting door-to-door inspections to enforce code.

Homeownership Assistance

The creation of a one-stop homeownership center has encouraged first time homebuyers to purchase housing in the City. Combined with rehabilitation incentives and closing cost grants this initiative has been very successful

Tax Abatement Policies

The City has adopted real property tax abatement programs that provide tax exemptions for certain capital improvements to real property according to New York State Real Property Tax Law. The programs adopted are as follows:

- Section 421 f – exemptions for capital improvements to residential property
- Section 421j – capital investment in multiple dwellings
- Section 485a – residential/commercial urban expansion
- Section 485b – exemption for commercial, business, industrial property
- Section 485j- residential investment new construction exemption subsequent to 4/1/06

Brownfield Remediation

The ability of the City to attract new commercial/industrial development has been hindered by the lack of available sites. The City chemical manufacturing legacy has left the City with enormous amounts of brownfield sites that require remediation. The City has embarked on ambitious plans to remediate these sites by applying for both federal and NYS grant funds.

New York State, Department of State's Brownfield Opportunity Area Grant program (NYSDOS BOA) is underway in two areas of the City: The Highland Area Community and the Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor.

The Buffalo Avenue Industrial Corridor BOA Step 1 is in the final stages of completion. Part of the final portions of the Step 1 includes application for Step 2 BOA. Step 2 will include feasibility studies for the proposals outlined in Step 1.

The Highland Area Community BOA Step 2 is in the final stages of completion. Part of the final portions of the Step 2 includes application for Step 3 BOA. Step 3 includes an implementation plan. In conjunction with the Highland BOA, a very successful "Brownfield Mini-Course" was held during the summer of 2008.

The City has an environmental assessment PILOT grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The funds from this program are being used in conjunction with the City's BOA grant programs. The BOA programs are indicating which potential brownfield sites are lacking in information and are in need of assessment. The City is in process of investigating 20 brownfield sites under this grant.

Brownfield Waterfront Showcase (EPA Funded) and Niagara Region Brownfield Coalition (consisting of Erie & Niagara Counties plus the Cities of Buffalo & Niagara Falls) have implemented the Waterfront Plan that was developed through the grant. TVGA Consultants are administering this grant.

The former Niagara Vest property on College Ave along with the former Hazorb property, also on College Ave, have been sold to SantaRosa Holdings Inc. SantaRosa Holdings has entered into New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) for remediation and reuse of the properties. An Interim Remedial Measure (IRM) work plan has been approved and a Remedial Investigation / Alternatives Analysis Report (RI/AAR) work plan has been submitted.

Globe Corporation is reopening the former plant on College Ave with new clean technology producing silicon metal. Globe will be remediating a portion of the property and building a new facility to refine the silicon metal into solar grade silicon metal. Globe has applied to NYSDEC for entry into the BCP in relation to the proposed new facility.

One of the properties that now comprise the new Public Safety building property, 915 Cleveland Ave, was impacted from previous use as a dry cleaner. This impacted property entered the Brownfield Cleanup Program, was remediated, and is in the final stages of reporting.

An application to NYSDEC for a BCP was submitted and approved for the proposed Northern Ethanol Site at 137 47th St. Although Northern Ethanol has since been sold, the site is now part of the BCP, and the BCP status can be moved to another party with little change.

NYSDEC has declared the former Tract II site on Beech Ave a Superfund site and will be undertaking full remediation in the near future. In combination with NYSDEC, the EPA is undertaking remediation of the lead, PCB, arsenic and asbestos issues related to the property. A portion of the property has a proposed end use of a public park. The site is currently being fully secured in preparation for the upcoming remediation.

The EPA is undertaking remediation of the lead, PCB, arsenic and asbestos issues related to the former Power City warehouse site at 3123 Highland Ave. The site is currently being fully secured in preparation for the upcoming remediation.

A Phase 2 Environmental Assessment was performed for 555 39th St (the former 39th St school) in order to answer the questions that arose from the outcome of the prior Phase I Environmental Assessment. The Phase 1 Assessment was prepared a little while ago indicating potential issues in one area of the site, along with lead, mold and asbestos issues throughout the building. This property is now in process of being sold in order to become the eastern portion the Sherwood East & West project, which just received a Restore NY grant. The proposed use is as garden apartments and some retail.

The status and inventory for all Brownfields within the City is currently under review, including GIS location updates of former potentially polluting industries and businesses.

Older Brownfield Operations:

○ Union Carbide Site	3625 Highland Ave.	5.53ac Completed- SOLD
○ Maryland/Maple Site	4025 Highland Ave.	1.29ac Completed / remediated
○ Maryland/James Site	4318 Hyde Park Blvd.	4.03ac Completed; remediation.
○ 3416-3502 Highland Site	3416-3502 Highland	0.57ac Completed
○ 9th Street- UDC Site	2530 9th Street	27.95ac Completed
○ Cerrone Site 1	1524 Pennsylvania, etc.	7.50ac Phase I completed;
○ Cerrone Site 2	3622 Hyde Park Blvd.	2.01ac Phase I completed; Phase II
○ Wendt’s Dairy Site	8450 Buffalo Ave.	4.03ac SI work compl. remediated
○ 20 Iroquois Street	20 Iroquois Street	6.00ac SI Work Completed

Establishment of Land Bank /Clearance of Blighted Structures

The City has embarked on a plan to step up the clearance of vacant blighted structures utilizing both federal Community Development funding and 99-H Casino Revenue funding. The clearance of blighted properties will have the positive effect of supporting ongoing neighborhood revitalization efforts in the poorest areas of the City. Additionally, in the context of establishing a sizeable parcel of municipally owned property within close vicinity of the Casino to support work force housing, the City has adopted a land bank policy to retain the vacant parcel once a structure has been demolished. The intent being to amass enough property to entertain proposals from prospective developers to construct new single family homes, market rate rentals and low income rentals, and urban style townhouses.

HOMELESS

Homeless Needs (91.205 (b) and 91.215 (c))

*Please also refer to the Homeless Needs Table in the Needs.xls workbook

Homeless Needs— The jurisdiction must provide a concise summary of the nature and extent of homelessness in the jurisdiction, (including rural homelessness and chronic homelessness where applicable), addressing separately the need for facilities and services for homeless persons and homeless families with children, both sheltered and unsheltered, and homeless subpopulations, in accordance with Table 1A. The summary must include the characteristics and needs of low-income individuals and children, (especially extremely low-income) who are currently housed but are at imminent risk of either residing in shelters or becoming unsheltered. In addition, to the extent information is available; the plan must include a description of the nature and extent of

homelessness by racial and ethnic group. A quantitative analysis is not required. If a jurisdiction provides estimates of the at-risk population(s), it should also include a description of the operational definition of the at-risk group and the methodology used to generate the estimates.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Homeless Needs response:

D. Homeless Needs

1. Needs of Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless

Niagara County utilizes a housing inventory “point in time” survey as a data collection method to assess the need for facilities and services for homeless persons and homeless persons with children. The survey indicated an unsheltered count, and also utilizes other local studies, non-HMIS data sources and housing provider opinions. The purpose of the count is to assess the nature of homelessness, identify available resources and services and ascertain unmet needs of the homeless in Niagara Falls. The homeless survey was performed to assess community needs for emergency, transitional and permanent housing. Specific goals to be achieved are as follows:

- Assess the service and housing needs of homeless persons and determine what led to homelessness
- Inventory the existing resources, and coordinate information referral network
- Collect unduplicated counts of homeless individuals, homeless families and services
- Assess unmet needs of the homeless and design a strategy to address the problem of homelessness

A sample of sheltered adults and unaccompanied youth were interviewed to gather subpopulation information and exploration techniques were applied to produce the sheltered homeless population. In addition, providers estimated the percentage of clients belonging to each subpopulation based on their knowledge of their client population as a whole. Each CoC Member continually solicits its population for service needs on a daily basis.

Niagara County Probation routinely checks with law enforcement regarding known abandoned buildings and follows up on alerts from the community about possible homeless individuals. In most cases those individuals are referred to appropriate service providers.

2) Subpopulations

The following needs have been identified for homeless subpopulations:

- a) severely mentally ill - Community Missions Inc. current inventory includes the capability to serve 64 seriously mentally ill patients, 40 dually diagnosed, 6 veterans, 9 victims of domestic violence, and 1 person with HIV/AIDS.
- b) alcohol dependent/other drug addicted - Fellowship House Inc. currently operates a community residence with 17 beds for chemically dependent homeless. In addition Community Missions of Niagara Frontier Inc. reports that 60% of their clients are alcohol/substance abusers. Both agencies cite the need for additional residences to house alcohol and drug addicted clients.
- c) severely mentally ill and alcohol/drug addicted - this subpopulation groups has not been separately identified, persons that are either severely mentally ill or alcohol/drug addicted have been included in (a) and (b) above.

d) victims of domestic violence - specifically, abused women with children have been recognized as requiring additional shelter and support services. The need for these services is expected to continue as dysfunctional, violent and abusive families persist. As women move into single parent situations, emergency shelters are a vital transitional step toward new lives. As emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence operate at full occupancy, additional referrals must be placed in less than ideal situations. Battered women with children require safe, secure shelters that are professionally staffed and able to provide additional support services.

e) homeless youth/missing persons

Cases Reported to the NYS Missing Children Register

Year	Runaway	Acquaint Abduction	Familial Abduction	Stranger Abduction	Lost	Unknown	Total
1990	335	1	2	0	1	51	390
1991	303	0	4	0	2	43	352
1992	320	0	4	0	1	39	364
1993	399	0	2	0	0	37	438
1994	413	0	1	0	1	26	441
1995	439	0	1	0	0	37	477
1996	374	0	4	0	6	34	418
1997	350	1	2	0	4	47	404
1998	394	1	1	0	14	37	447
1999	414	0	1	0	11	39	465
2000	397	2	0	0	6	28	433
2001	372	2	5	0	5	30	414
2002	391	0	2	0	4	13	410
2003	329	5	2	0	5	23	364

These numbers reflect the need for continued specialized services for runaway/homeless youth. The need is more greatly intensified in that placement with host families is sometimes not appropriate, shelters therefore would provide easier referral and accessibility. With the complex issues facing today's youth and with all indications that the numbers of homeless youth are increasing dramatically, there is a need for temporary shelter and support services.

f) diagnosed with AIDS and related diseases - data not available.

g) Vietnam Veterans with post traumatic stress disorder - increasing numbers of homeless Vietnam era Veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and related re-adjustment problems are appearing in the City. Currently, a shelter operated by the COPIN Foundation as a therapeutic residence is, at most given times, at full occupancy with 17 beds. Additional consideration for this growing need should be closely monitored and addressed as needed.

3. Needs of Persons Threatened with Homelessness

There are no specific, reliable sources of data that can be utilized to provide an accurate assessment of this category.

4. Populations with Special Needs - Other than Homeless

a. Need for Supportive Housing

Fellowship House Inc. operates a community residence for chemically dependent homeless, but in addition they also operate seven supportive living apartments with 22 beds for recovering chemically dependent clients. The Alcoholism Center of Niagara Falls similarly operates a facility for recovering alcoholics with a 15 person capacity.

Community Missions operates two facilities for the emotionally handicapped, each with a 40 bed capacity, while the Niagara Falls YMCA operates a 58 room single room occupancy facility serving various populations with special needs. All information reported to the City indicates that the facilities are operating at or near full capacity and occupancy.

The City's Section 8 Leased Housing Program has administered the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) program since 1992. The purpose of the program is to promote the development of local strategies to coordinate the use of Section 8 housing funds with private and public resources that can empower eligible families in achieving economic independence and self sufficiency.

A coordinating committee comprised of social service agencies, training/educational institutions, community organizations and leaders was established to link public and private supportive services to assist FSS participants in achieving economic independence with the ultimate goal of home ownership. Minimum program size is 25 and 20 families are under FSS contract. Continuous outreach is performed to meet minimum program size. To date, all FSS participants have been single parent, female head of households. Initially, most FSS participants received some sort of public assistance, i.e., cash, Medicaid, food stamps and/or Child Assistance Program (CAP) benefits. Of the 20 FSS participants, 80% are employed either part time or full time, 20% are participating in job training, GED training.

Case management of FSS participants is provided by the Leased Housing Special Program Coordinator. The Special Program Coordinator identifies the needs of program participants, obstacles to self sufficiency, short and long term goals, as well as assistance in accessing relevant resources.

The Leased Housing Program had a federal mandate to assist 25 Section 8 participants under the FSS Program. Current federal regulations have reduced the minimum program size requirement of FSS participants who successfully complete and graduate from the program. The commitment of the Leased Housing Program to administer this program will be diminished as program participants graduate.

Priority Homeless Needs

1. Using the results of the Continuum of Care planning process, identify the jurisdiction's homeless and homeless prevention priorities specified in Table 1A, the Homeless and Special Needs Populations Chart. The description of the jurisdiction's choice of priority needs and allocation priorities must be based on reliable data meeting HUD standards and should reflect the required consultation with homeless assistance providers, homeless persons, and other concerned citizens regarding the needs of homeless families with children and individuals. The jurisdiction must provide an analysis of how the needs of each category of residents provided the basis for determining the relative priority of each priority homeless need category. A separate brief narrative should be directed to addressing gaps in services and housing for the sheltered and unsheltered chronic homeless.

2. A community should give a high priority to chronically homeless persons, where the jurisdiction identifies sheltered and unsheltered chronic homeless persons in its Homeless Needs Table - Homeless Populations and Subpopulations.3-5 Year Strategic Plan Priority Homeless Needs response:

6) Homeless Persons - Individuals & Families (combined)

i. **Analysis**

The statistics listed in the following chart were compiled by the Niagara County Homeless Service Coordinator hired coordinated holes services in the County as part of the City’s Continuum of Care program. The figures represent an unduplicated count of the homeless population in the City and an inventory of emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and unmet gaps in service.

6. HOMELESS PERSONS

Continuum of Care: Housing Gaps Analysis Chart

	Current Inventory in 2003	Under Development in 2003	Unmet Need/Gap
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Individuals

	Emergency Shelter			
Beds	Emergency Shelter	49	0	18
	Transitional Housing	168	0	33
	Permanent Supportive Housing	126	0	31
	Total	343	0	82

Persons in Families w/Children

	Emergency Shelter			
Beds	Emergency Shelter	37	0	12
	Transitional Housing	38	0	46
	Permanent Supportive Housing	20	0	72
	Total	95	0	130

Continuum of Care: Homeless Population and Subpopulations Chart

Part 1. Homeless Population	Sheltered		Unsheltered	Total
	Emergency	Transitional		
1. Homeless Individuals	31E	11E		
2. Homeless Families w/Children	13E	38E		
2a. Persons in Homeless Families w/ Children	-	-	-	-
Total	44	149		

Part 2. Homeless Sub-Populations	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
1. Chronically Homeless	20E		
2. Seriously Mentally Ill	57		
3. Chronic Substance Abuse	63		
4. Veterans	17		
5. Persons w/HIV/AIDS	11		
6. Victims of Domestic Violence	13		
7. Youth	12		

Housing Activity Chart

Component: Emergency Shelter

Provider Name	Facility Name	Target Population		Bed Capacity			
				Individuals		Families w/Children	
Current Inventory		A	B	2002	2003	2002	2003
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Family & Childrens Service	Casey & Passage Houses	FC, YMF	DV	12	12	9	9
Community Missions	Crisis Services	FC, YMF	DV, MH	28	28	19	19
YWCA of Niagara	Alternatives to Domestic Viol.		DV, MH	9	9	9	9
		Subtotal		49	49	37	37

Component: Transitional Housing

Provider Name	Facility Name	Target Population		Bed Capacity			
				Individuals		Families w/Children	
Current Inventory		A	B	2002	2003	2002	2003
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fellowship House	Fellowship Manor	Sm, SF	SA	39	51	12	12
-	Madonna House	F&C	-	-	-	-	-
-	Somerset House	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Missions	Comp. Opportunites in Community Settings	SM, SF F&C, MH	-	104	108	0	0
YWCA of Niagara	Alternatives to Domestic Viol.	SW/C	DV	6	6	26	26
Odallam Inc.	Odallam	Males	Vets	3	3	0	0
		Subtotal		152	168	38	38

Component: Permanent Supportive Housing

Provider Name	Facility Name	Target Population		Bed Capacity			
				Individuals		Families w/Children	
Current Inventory		A	B	2002	2003	2002	2003
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Community Missions	Community Missions	SM, SF F&C, MH	MH	84	87	0	0
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Odallam Inc.	Odallam	V F&C, MH	-	23	27	0	0
Fellowship House	Fellowship	SA	MICA	12	12	20	20
		Subtotal		119	126	20	20

Codes: DV= Domestic Violence

VET= Veterans only

AIDS= persons w/HIV/Aids only

SM = Single Males 18+ yrs

SF= Single Females 18+ yrs.

SMF= Single Males & Females 18+ yrs

FC= Families w/ Children

YM= Young unaccompanied males

YF= Young Unaccompanied Females

Homeless Inventory (91.210 (c))

The jurisdiction shall provide a concise summary of the existing facilities and services (including a brief inventory) that assist homeless persons and families with children and subpopulations identified in Table 1A. These include outreach and assessment, emergency shelters and services, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, access to permanent housing, and activities to prevent low-income individuals and families with children (especially extremely low-income) from becoming homeless. The jurisdiction can use the optional Continuum of Care Housing Activity Chart and Service Activity Chart to meet this requirement.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Homeless Inventory response:

E. Inventory of Facilities and Services for the Homeless and Persons Threatened with Homelessness

Niagara Falls Family YMCA

Provides 58 SRO's in a clean, safe environment for indigent males who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Assisted persons are often dependent on physiological prescription drugs, recently released from incarceration, or struggle with some sort of disability. The YMCA services approximately 315 persons annually

Family and Children's Service

Passage House – provides emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, court advocacy, counseling and case management for homeless women and children. Passage House has a 15 bed capacity and serves 120 persons annually.

Casey House - provides emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, court advocacy, counseling and case management for runaway and homeless youth. Casey House has a 12 bed capacity and serves 135 persons annually.

Salvation Army

Acts as a referral agency for persons seeking emergency shelter assistance provides assistance to the homeless in the form of food, clothing, furniture, etc. In cases of extreme emergency provides temporary shelter in their building to disaster victims.

Community Missions Inc.

Hiawatha Manor/Ivanhoe: Crisis Housing accepts persons and families seeking emergency shelter assistance, provides shelter to abused women and abused women with children, including food and clothing. Also, provides transitional housing opportunities. The crisis shelter serves homeless and at risk men, women and children that require housing services including fire victims, homeless youth, persons applying for social services, mentally and emotionally handicapped, persons released from correctional facilities, evicted tenants, and persons discharged from hospitals. This facility has a 32 bed capacity and serves over 480 persons annually.

Onesimus House: short term residence for 16 - 21 year old youth seeking assistance with living arrangements, employment, education. Emergency shelter for homeless families, 2 shelters each with 15 person overnight sleeping capacity.

Fellowship House Inc.

Provides a residential program of recovery, preparing the recovering alcoholic for a productive life in society. Fellowship House serves those with addictions that are homeless, living on the streets and those that have been evicted from their apartments, those in need of supportive residential services, and those who need other habilitative or re-habilitative services. They provide community residence, intensive residential and supportive living and Shelter Plus Care. (21 bed capacity for chemically dependent homeless).

Odallam Inc

Homeless shelter for persons with chronic and persistent mental illness. A 3 bedroom and 4 bedroom house used as safe havens for the above populations. Odallam provides services such as crisis intervention, guidance education, medication management, money management etc., in a crisis shelter and transitional housing environment. Odallam has a 4 bed capacity and serves 12 persons annually.

God’s Woman – House of Hosea and House of Ruth

Provides emergency shelter, food, clothing, advocacy and assistance to women that are victims of domestic violence. Provides links to food pantries, medical services, counseling and mental health services. God’s Woman has a 10 bed capacity and serves 19 persons annually.

Carolyn’s House

Provides transitional housing for women with children with ongoing support services including case management, counseling, vocational culinary training, career training and placement, GED, child care, summer youth, financial literacy and individual development in a 50 bed (19 apartment) facility. Carolyn’s house serves over 45 persons annually

Inventory of Supportive Housing - Non-Homeless Persons w/Special Needs

Community Missions Inc.

Operates a facility on Ontario Avenue for mentally ill/non homeless persons (16 person capacity).

Alcoholism Center of Niagara Falls

15 person facility for recovering alcoholics

Niagara Falls YMCA

58 unit SRO facility for men provides transitional housing and permanent housing for persons with special needs, persons with disabilities.

Fellowship House Inc.

Operates seven supportive living apartments with 22 beds for recovering chemically dependent clients.

Homeless Strategic Plan (91.215 (c))

1. Homelessness— Describe the jurisdiction's strategy for developing a system to address homelessness and the priority needs of homeless persons and families (including the subpopulations identified in the needs section). The jurisdiction's strategy must consider the housing and supportive services needed in each stage of the process which includes preventing

homelessness, outreach/assessment, emergency shelters and services, transitional housing, and helping homeless persons (especially any persons that are chronically homeless) make the transition to permanent housing and independent living. The jurisdiction must also describe its strategy for helping extremely low- and low-income individuals and families who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

2. Chronic homelessness—Describe the jurisdiction’s strategy for eliminating chronic homelessness by 2012. This should include the strategy for helping homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing and independent living. This strategy should, to the maximum extent feasible, be coordinated with the strategy presented Exhibit 1 of the Continuum of Care (CoC) application and any other strategy or plan to eliminate chronic homelessness. Also describe, in a narrative, relationships and efforts to coordinate the Conplan, CoC, and any other strategy or plan to address chronic homelessness.
3. Homelessness Prevention—Describe the jurisdiction’s strategy to help prevent homelessness for individuals and families with children who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless.
4. Institutional Structure—Briefly describe the institutional structure, including private industry, non-profit organizations, and public institutions, through which the jurisdiction will carry out its homelessness strategy.
5. Discharge Coordination Policy—Every jurisdiction receiving McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care, or Section 8 SRO Program funds must develop and implement a Discharge Coordination Policy, to the maximum extent practicable. Such a policy should include “policies and protocols for the discharge of persons from publicly funded institutions or systems of care (such as health care facilities, foster care or other youth facilities, or correction programs and institutions) in order to prevent such discharge from immediately resulting in homelessness for such persons.” The jurisdiction should describe its planned activities to implement a cohesive, community-wide Discharge Coordination Policy, and how the community will move toward such a policy.

3-5 Year Homeless Strategic Plan response:

**ii. Strategy Development - Investment Plan
Activities:**

The Niagara County Continuum of Care is in the process of formulating a 10-year Plan that will identify objectives and action steps to end chronic homelessness. Included in the City’s 2010 Annual Plan is proposed funding to retain a consultant to assist the CoC with the development of the 10-Year Plan. In the interim, the CoC has identified the following action steps to address the five national objectives.

Objectives to End Chronic Homelessness and Move Families into Permanent Housing

- 1) Create new PH beds for chronically homeless persons
Actions Steps:
 - solicit more specific housing providers both public and private
 - utilize CoC point in time survey
- 2) Increase percentage of homeless persons staying at PH over 6 months to at least 71.5%
Action Steps:
 - effectively utilize HMIS system
 - utilize COPC
 - utilize homeownership center and habitat for humanity

3) Increase the % of homeless persons moving from TH to PH to at least 63.5%

Action Steps:

- organize current TH providers
- develop HMIS for PH statistics

4) Decrease the number of homeless households with children

Action Steps:

- utilize 2008 "point in time" survey to determine the number of relevant households
- contact DSS to coordinate data and services currently provided
- develop HMIS parameters around this status

Continuum of Care Discharge Planning Protocols

- Foster Discharge – youth exiting the foster care system meet with their case managers to review their individual needs for living arrangements, employment, education and medical benefits. In any case where youth does not have a plan or a place to live, that individual is referred to the Department of Social Services Homeless Prevention Liaison to explore options or obtain necessary referrals.
- Health Care Discharge – the County Hospital's Unit Social Worker contacts Community Missions to arrange a bed for a homeless patient at the time of discharge. If the homeless person is scheduled to transition to another level of care, referral is made directly to the receiving program as a bed becomes available. Patients requiring continued substance abuse treatment may also be referred to One Stop Center.
- Mental Health Discharge – the Department of Mental Health's housing staff refer homeless individuals to the next step in the hierarchy of treatment. From hospitalization, individuals are referred to a supervised living situation; from supervised living they move into supportive living and the final stage consists of individual living case management
- Correction Discharge – currently, the only protocol in place to handle homeless discharges from a correctional facility involves a discharge planner working with mentally ill individuals to assist them in completing Medicaid applications and then referring them to DSS for additional services

iii. Program Objectives:

The following programs and resources (Federal, State, Local and Private) will be pursued in the 2010-2014 strategy period. The jurisdiction will generally support application for these programs and resources.

5 Yr. Objectives

a. Essential Services

25 (essential service grants)

b. Rehabilitation

5 (u)

Federal

- Emergency Shelter Grant Program
- Low Income Housing Credits

Private

- Matching Funds from Agency

State

Office of Mental Health

Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)

(States only) Describe the process for awarding grants to State recipients, and a description of how the allocation will be made available to units of local government.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan ESG response:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development (91.215 (e))

*Please also refer to the Community Development Table in the Needs.xls workbook

1. Identify the jurisdiction's priority non-housing community development needs eligible for assistance by CDBG eligibility category specified in the Community Development Needs Table (formerly Table 2B), – i.e., public facilities, public improvements, public services and economic development.
2. Describe the basis for assigning the priority given to each category of priority needs.
3. Identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs.
4. Identify specific long-term and short-term community development objectives (including economic development activities that create jobs), developed in accordance with the statutory goals described in section 24 CFR 91.1 and the primary objective of the CDBG program to provide decent housing and a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

NOTE: Each specific objective developed to address a priority need, must be identified by number and contain proposed accomplishments, the time period (i.e., one, two, three, or more years), and annual program year numeric goals the jurisdiction hopes to achieve in quantitative terms, or in other measurable terms as identified and defined by the jurisdiction.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Community Development response:

C. Priority Non-Housing Community Development Needs **1. Public Facility Needs Analysis**

ENVIRONMENTAL AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

General Policy Statement:

It is the City's policy to preserve, conserve, and recognize the environmental and natural resources of the City in a manner that contributes to the City's overall quality of life, enhances public health, and fosters appropriate development. In order to achieve this, the City will:

Policy: Limit the potential for cumulative and secondary impact of development and other activities on water, air, and land quality and quantity.

Action 1 *Ensure that proposed development or redevelopment is subject to development review that seeks to protect important environmental areas or resources.*

Action 2 *Devise a citywide tree program for the protection, replacement, and maintenance of city trees.*

Action 3 *At a minimum, ensure that the City's thresholds and standards for evaluating impacts to natural resources are consistent with those set forth by the federal, county, and state agencies with jurisdiction over such resources.*

Policy Provide connections and public access, where appropriate, between development and natural areas, parks, and recreation areas within the City, as well as to regional connections of these resources outside of the City.

Action 1 *Devise an open space and recreation plan that outlines the City's goals for specific open spaces and recreational areas and looks to provide connections between these resources.*

Action 2 *Improve Gill Creek as an ecological connection* Gill Creek should be strengthened as an important environmental resource and connection between Hyde Park and the Upper Niagara River. The creek is one of only two water-based links from the river into the city and could be better integrated within the city's open space network with new plantings and a natural environment emphasizing its ecological functions. A walking and cycling route between Hyde Park and the river should be developed perhaps adjacent to the creek. New, designed open space connections can be created by extending Hyde Park to Gill Creek and extending the power conduit ROWs linking Hyde Park and Gill Creek to the waterfront.

Policy Ensure that there is an adequate supply of permanently protected natural areas, open space, and recreation resources.

Action 1 *Evaluate and consider the adoption of a development impact fee that is dedicated to the acquisition of open space and recreational resources.*

Policy Protect and enhance the city's waterfront from degradation and damage associated with new development. Guide development into the Core City to protect the city's natural resources and to provide an efficient level and cost of services to residents. Preserve important viewsheds and corridors with scenic views.

Action 1 *Continue to map and identify scenic views from specific highpoints within the city as well as along corridors and then prioritize these for protection.*

Action 2 *Create scenic overlay districts within the city's zoning to address the protection of scenic views and corridors.*

Policy Protect, maintain, and enhance the city's open space resources, parks, and natural environment.

Action 1 *Devise a citywide tree ordinance for the protection, replacement, and maintenance of city trees.*

Action 2 *Implement the strategies for open space connections as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.*

Action 3 *Identify opportunities for the use of natural open space areas for passive recreation uses.*

Action 4 *Undertake a DeVeaux Woods State Park Master Plan Study in partnership with State Parks* DeVeaux Woods is a remarkable asset to both the city and the State. It should be the subject of a Master Plan Study, undertaken in partnership with State Parks, to explore potential uses, economic feasibility and a broad range of partnership scenarios benefiting the municipality and the state agency. Areas of examination should include environmental and natural sciences education and research, an ecology park, interpretive and public outreach programs, conference facilities, State Park program headquarters and others. The City of Niagara Falls should work closely with State Parks to ensure that future

development/use proposals take advantage of the many positive features of the site and its location along the river corridor, result in a high quality of design and are not disruptive to the adjacent residential uses. More Comprehensive greenway planning is needed to include the parks assets at the northern end of the gorge - Hole/Whirlpool State Park, Earl Bridges Art Park.

Action 5 *Develop a Citywide Parks Plan* The City of Niagara Falls should complete a landscape and programmatic enhancement plan for Hyde Park that provides for phased improvements to the park aimed at accommodating a greater range of activities and increased community use to strengthen this amenity as a major community asset. As the primary citywide community open-space in Niagara Falls, Hyde Park should be well maintained with attractive landscaping, while ensuring the safety and comfort of park users. Opportunities and facilities for indoor and outdoor recreational, community and arts programming should be examined through the enhancement plan process.

Policy Acknowledge and enhance the city's primary open space network and resources as valuable new public infrastructure.

Action 1 *Develop a Citywide Parks Plan* The City of Niagara Falls should complete a landscape and programmatic enhancement plan for Hyde Park that provides for phased improvements to the park aimed at accommodating a greater range of activities and increased community use to strengthen this amenity as a major community asset. As the primary citywide community recreational open-space in Niagara Falls, Hyde Park should be well maintained with attractive landscaping, while ensuring the safety and comfort of park users. Opportunities and facilities for indoor and outdoor recreational, community and arts programming should be examined through the enhancement plan process.

Policy Support and advocate for the National Heritage Area Designation The potential designation of the Niagara River corridor as a recognized National Heritage Area is an excellent opportunity to begin the process of establishing the partnerships and resources necessary to maximize the potential of both the corridor and its urban edge that defines and contributes to the animation of the resource. To effectively participate in this initiative, the City of Niagara Falls will need to:

Action 1 *Lead and actively support efforts to designate the Niagara River corridor a National Heritage Area*

Action 2 *Establish partnerships with State Parks and Department of Transportation, the Niagara Aquarium, Ontario and Erie County tourism interests and others with a stake in the Heritage Area and future of the river corridor*

Action 3 *Lead the establishment of a management entity that includes representatives from the Federal and State Governments, the City and Niagara County, to oversee the National Heritage Area*

Action 4 *Participate in the identification funding mechanisms and partnerships for the Heritage Area*

Action 5 *As soon as possible, undertake a scoping study for preparation of a Heritage Area Master Development Plan, Management and Operations Guidelines and a Cost Recovery Strategy with other partner stakeholders*

Policy Establish agreements with State Parks and a management entity to implement the City Waterfront Programs and develop a Natural Heritage Area Master Plan and Programming Strategy In partnership with State Parks, a management entity should be established for the heritage area to implement the City Waterfront Programs plan and establish a Natural Heritage Area Master Plan and Programming Strategy to protect, enhance and maximize the value of this tremendous open space asset for the city, its residents and visitors and the state. The implementation strategy will involve creating a federal Heritage Area Plan designation to establish shared jurisdiction, developing a partnership with the State and collaboration between the two entities working in equal partnership to implement the plan for the riverfront. The City of Niagara Falls and State Parks should collaborate throughout the year.

The Master Plan should:

- Identify landscape, programmatic and physical improvements necessary to establish a series of linked destinations within the corridor creating a sequence of places, landscapes educational, recreational and interpretive opportunities equal in quality to lands maintained by the Niagara Parks Commission in Canada
- Identify opportunities for natural and cultural heritage interpretation
- Identify design parameters for the reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway to establish a new riverfront drive capable of successfully integrating and reconnecting Niagara Falls to its riverfront
- Include a landscape improvement plan along the corridor
- Identify areas along the riverfront that would benefit from buffering to minimize the impacts of adjacent uses, such as the industrial corridor along Buffalo Avenue. The strategy should incorporate four programmatic areas – history, culture, education and environmental awareness – to ensure that there is always something new and

different to see and experience as a means of encouraging return visits to the riverfront.

POLICY AREA 8 BROWNFIELD/GREYFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

Policy Statement:

It is the City's policy to encourage the reuse and revitalization of vacant and/or underutilized industrial properties through the re-establishment of industrial uses, or the conversion of such properties to new uses that further the City's land use and development vision. In order to achieve this, the City sets the following policies:

Policy Pursue existing federally funded brownfield remediation programs.

Policy Identify priority remediation areas, particularly along the riverfront and along entrances to the City, for remediation and redevelopment programs.

Policy Implement short term, improvements to reduce the visual impact of prominent brownfield sites.

Policy Improve the visual appearance of the edges of industrial areas adjacent to residential areas.

Policy Evaluate potential for alternative uses in industrial areas, such as residential, retail and office.

Policy Develop an aggressive targeted marketing program that matches available industrial properties and structures with potential users.

The Consolidated Plan Strategy forums and focus group meetings produced much dialogue regarding public facility needs in the City of Niagara Falls. The need for Youth Centers, Health Services, Job Skill Training Facilities and financially-supported Child Care/Day Care Centers generated considerable discussion. With single parent households and two parent working households increasing, residents indicated that high priority consideration be given to funding child care/day care /teen centers. Also, job skill training centers were ranked as a high priority item given the substantial unemployment rate in the City. To a lesser degree, the need for health services and senior centers were discussed in conjunction with the need for increased activities for both groups. A medium priority has been assigned to these public facilities.

Public Facilities Goals

Relate the community facilities of the City to the needs of all of its citizens.

Try to locate new facilities so that they are accessible to the segment of the City's population being served by it.

Improve and renovate existing facilities in order to increase utilization and adjust to the changing needs of the population.

Eliminate obsolete and underutilized schools and encourage consolidation of facilities if changing population and enrollment characteristics so indicate.

Integrate school and recreation sites wherever possible to avoid duplication of facilities

Consolidate and/or relocate fire fighting facilities by replacing obsolete facilities.

Centralize public offices and related services in the City Hall area.

ii. Investment Plan

Community Development Block Grant funds have been utilized in previous years to address public facility needs throughout the City. Public facilities that request funding consideration must provide adequate resource material to the City to demonstrate eligibility i.e., non-profit status, client income group served, viability of the organization etc. Additionally, funding proposals that include other sources of funding which will leverage CDBG funds are prioritized. Funding requests for public facilities has increased dramatically in recent years. Several newly formed organizations have outgrown their current facility space while other more established organizations are undergoing major capital fundraising campaigns to renovate and/or build additions to their current space. Increasingly, with other revenue sources diminishing, the use of Community Development funds will be expanded to address this need. It is imperative that other funding be maximized to leverage the limited federal resources that can be dedicated on an annual basis to this need.

Priority Ranking: *a medium priority is assigned to public facility needs*

iii. Program Objectives: **5-Year Objectives**
10 Facilities

Federal: Community Development Block Grant
It is estimated that approximately \$200,000 will be allocated annually to renovate and/or expand up to two public facilities per year. During the 5 -Year Strategy period approximately 10 facilities will receive Community Development funding with priority given to those organizations that can leverage Community Development funds with private or other public funding and those that serve an unmet need in the City.

3) Infrastructure Needs

i. Analysis

The City of Niagara Falls like most older Northeastern cities is experiencing the problems associated with a deteriorating infrastructure. Harsh winters in the Northeast providing a damaging freeze/thaw cycle heavily influences the condition and maintenance of our infrastructure. Deteriorating sidewalks, streets, sewer and water lines are commonplace and far too costly to adequately address with available Community Development resources. Only through the coordinated efforts of Federal, State and local government can this need be addressed and only in terms of future long range planning.

The consolidated planning sessions resulted in priority needs being established to address sidewalk, street and other infrastructure repairs.

ii. Investment Plan

Community Development Block Grant funds, combined with Consolidated Highway Improvement Project (CHIP) funds will be utilized to address sidewalk and street improvements in targeted Community Development areas. It has been the department's policy to target infrastructure improvements in support of other ongoing Community Development projects such as housing rehabilitation, commercial rehabilitation, economic development and new construction. Streets that are eligible for Federal Highway funding will be directed to that revenue source while CDBG funds will be utilized in support of neighborhood revitalization

efforts= in targeted low/moderate income areas of the City. Areas that are primarily residential in nature, in compliance with the intent of the I/m area benefit regulations will be prioritized.

It is estimated that \$500,000 in CDBG funds must be invested annually to address the infrastructure projects in the City that meet CDBG eligibility criteria. Replacement of broken sidewalks, curbs, street re-pavement and tree plantings are foreseen as the items that will be addressed with CDBG funding.

Priority Ranking: *a high priority is assigned to infrastructure needs.*

iii. Program Objectives: **5-Year Objectives**
10 Projects

4. Public Service Needs

i. Analysis

Public service needs, although eligible Community Development activities, have generally not received priority consideration in the budget process. The City has opted to concentrate on traditional physical improvement projects ("bricks and mortar activities") such as housing and commercial rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements and public facility needs. Devastating industrial cutbacks and subsequent high unemployment levels combined with an aging population and low median income area have made residents and City officials acutely aware of public service needs. The consolidated planning sessions provided an indication to the City that clean neighborhoods, job skill training, crime awareness (and prevention), youth services, child care services and homeless prevention activities should be considered for funding.

Priority Ranking: *A high priority has been assigned to public services indicating that funding through the Community Development program will be provided.*

ii. Investment Plan

It is estimated that \$200,000 will be allocated annually during the 5 Year Strategy period to address public service needs. Consideration for public service projects require that it be a new service or a quantifiable increase in the level of service provided by the City during the past twelve months. The City will pursue an investment plan that limits funding for public services to a three year period at which time organizations will hopefully have secured other funding resources.

5. Economic Development Needs

i. Analysis

Labor Force Trends 1976-1986

The economic and demographic factors of the Buffalo/Niagara Falls area have shifted dramatically since 1970 and have substantially changed the composition of the area's labor supply. Industrial contraction has added to the imbalance in the age, sex, and occupational structure of the area. The difficulty arose as skilled manufacturing workers became displaced

and migrated to other sections of the country in search of work. The remaining workers, usually older or less skilled, crowded the market for jobs and were forced to compete with the rising presence of women in the workplace during the decade.

Growth in the labor force during the first part of the period was strongly influenced by an expanding youth population. The labor force of the area responded by growing to a peak of 557,000 in 1979, (and then declined until 1985). Without a sufficient supply of jobs to meet the labor force growth, the area's jobless rates remained above the national average.

The recessions of the early 80's exacerbated an already difficult jobless situation and caused the area hard times. During the 1980-1983 economic downturns, out-migration continued especially of the young or better educated workers. During the period from 1985 to 1989, the economy recovered and absorbed much of the labor surplus. A declining supply of young workers helped to reduce further the area's labor force and contribute to lower unemployment rates in that period. Since 1990 however, labor statistics have again turned negative with the distressed regional economy.

The abrasive and chemical industries, which have been the traditional mainstays and barometers of economic vitality in the City, are in sharp decline.

While service employment has been gaining steadily for sometime, it must be noted that the service sector offers a wide variety of jobs. Janitors, laundry workers, guards, kitchen helpers, and maids work in the service industry as well as copy writers, business consultants, bankers, system analysts, entertainers, college professors, social workers, attorneys and medical professionals.

Unfortunately the higher paying jobs in service industries require education and training. In the service industries, the cost of entry into well paying jobs is high, equivalent to at least the cost of a baccalaureate degree. It used to be possible for millions of high school graduates to obtain jobs in manufacturing that paid very decent wages. Comfortable middle-class life styles were well within the reach of production workers. The opportunities for the good middle class life without the benefit of higher education would seem to have diminished in step with the diminishing number of jobs in manufacturing. More than ever before, the prerequisite for a moderately affluent life is education. Therefore, in order to take real advantage of the growth in the service sector of the economy, it will require attracting businesses that employ well educated professionals such as research facilities, legal services, banking, medical facilities, universities, etc. Industry sectors which do not exist to any sizeable degree in Niagara County will need to rely on greater job training and education.

The following objectives will have to be realized to achieve significant employment opportunities.

Traditional manufacturing will maintain a prominent place in the City's overall economy, but it will never post any significant gains in employment given existing trends.

Less traditional small businesses and light industrial development will continue to replace smokestack industries in number if not in size. Population should continue its decline, as well as its dispersion into the county. It is important for the City to identify its strengths and amenities and to capitalize on them. Tourism and tourism related commercial activity should become the City's best economic sector to build upon.

Retail and Service sectors of the economy should also provide areas of continued growth. Quality of Life improvements, and the improved image and perception of the community should

be a priority in order to maintain property values and attract residential and business investment.

Cross border commerce will also provide an area of job growth potential if the City can capitalize on them.

ii. Investment Plan

The City should continue to fund economic development activities administered by the Economic Development Department primarily through the use of 99-H Casino Revenue funding. This would include annual contributions to offset administrative costs associated with the City's Economic Development Department for administering the NFC loan program, the MBE/WBE loan program and the Micro-Enterprise grant program and the EDZ Renewal Community Programs...

Priority Ranking: *high priority for Casino funded economic development needs
Low priority for CDBG funded activities*

iii. Program Objectives:

**5-Year Objectives
200 full time jobs**

6. Planning & Capacity Building

i. Analysis

The Consolidated Planning process identified the need for non-profits and other community groups to receive training in grant writing and for the provision of information sharing among agencies. Consultants with expertise in areas such as federal tax credits, grant writing, board of directors training, etc. can provide essential information and technical assistance to both established and newly organized non-profits and other community groups. Additionally, Planning & Capacity building efforts should be directed to planning and environmental studies for use by the municipality.

Priority Ranking : *medium priority*

ii. Investment Plan

Approximately \$25,000 will be allocated to planning & capacity building on an annual basis for the 5-Year Strategy period.

Antipoverty Strategy (91.215 (h))

1. Describe the jurisdiction's goals, programs, and policies for reducing the number of poverty level families (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually). In consultation with other appropriate public and private agencies, (i.e. TANF agency) state how the jurisdiction's goals, programs, and policies for producing and preserving affordable housing set forth in the housing component of the consolidated plan will be coordinated with other programs and services for which the jurisdiction is responsible.
2. Identify the extent to which this strategy will reduce (or assist in reducing) the number of poverty level families, taking into consideration factors over which the jurisdiction has control.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan Antipoverty Strategy response:

The City's 5-Year Strategy includes a diversity of strategies and approaches to primarily assist households at or below 80% of median income. In making funding decisions the City assigns priority to programs designed to assist persons and households living in poverty. The basis of our funding evaluation process takes into account the degree that projects will benefit provided to low and moderate income households. As represented in our annual CAPERS report many of our programs provide benefits to households at the low and very low income levels (at or below 50% of MFI). Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership Program Funds (HOME) are targeted to City residents whose incomes are at or below 80% of median income. Within City government, the Department of Community Development is primarily responsible for coordinating and implementing programs designed to reduce poverty. The Department works in partnership with citizens, business associations, non-profit human service organizations and community block clubs to:

- Develop affordable housing opportunities for low and moderate income households
- Foster job growth and employment opportunities by providing economic development incentives designed to create and retain jobs for low and moderate income persons
- Support the delivery of public services provided by various non-profit human service agencies in the community
- Revitalize and maintain residential neighborhoods and business districts with comprehensive funding designed to address housing needs, public infrastructure needs, code enforcement, crime awareness
-

The City's (Section 8) Family Self Sufficiency program is a coordinated effort undertaken by the Section 8 program and various Niagara County agencies designed to provide support services to families that will enable them to progress towards a self-sufficient lifestyle. The participants are Section 8 clients, at or below the poverty level, and single parents with children residing in the home. Support services include housing, childcare, transportation, education, job placement, etc.

The City Section 8 Division has also received funding to administer a 100 unit voucher program for the Welfare to Work Program. The NF Housing Partnership Program (NFHPP) provides rental assistance to families who are or could be eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and families who have received TANF in the past two years. In connection with this criteria, the families must be working, in a training program or attending school in an effort to obtain family self-sufficiency. These families must also meet the eligibility requirements for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The NFHPP currently has seven partners committed to assisting these families with needed services. These partners are Community Child Care clearinghouse, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Literacy Volunteers of America, Niagara County Center for Independent Living, Niagara County Department of

Social Services, Niagara County Employment and Training, and NYS Department of Labor. The purpose of the partnership is to help families overcome or remove barriers that would hinder them from becoming self-sufficient.

In addition, affordable housing programs, particularly the first time homebuyer's assistance offered through the Homeownership Center provides affordable homeownership opportunities to low income persons. These families, without homebuyer's assistance would most likely never be able to afford a home. It has been our experience, that once the opportunity to own a home is provided to clients; they seek and find alternative employment and better paying jobs to maintain and upgrade their household.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Coordination (91.315 (k))

1. (States only) Describe the strategy to coordinate the Low-income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) with the development of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan LIHTC Coordination response:

NON-HOMELESS SPECIAL NEEDS

Specific Special Needs Objectives (91.215)

1. Describe the priorities and specific objectives the jurisdiction hopes to achieve over a specified time period.
2. Describe how Federal, State, and local public and private sector resources that are reasonably expected to be available will be used to address identified needs for the period covered by the strategic plan.

3-5 Year Non-homeless Special Needs Analysis response:

7) Non Homeless Persons with Special Needs

i. Analysis

Non homeless persons with special needs include frail elderly persons, persons with AIDS; disable families and families participating in organized programs to achieve self sufficiency.

A good indicator of the needs of families trying to achieve self sufficiency comes from the City's Section 8 Leased Housing Program. Beginning in 1992, the Section 8 Program has implemented a Family Self Sufficiency Program whereby eligible Section 8 Program participants are provided additional support services to enable them to progress towards a self sufficient lifestyle. Supportive services include housing, child care, transportation, education, job placement, etc. 95% of the respondents for the program were single parent households with dependent children.

Community Missions of Niagara Frontier provides housing for 80 emotionally handicapped adults, scattered supportive housing - single and double apartments for 24 adults with demonstrated living skills and the potential to live independently, and supported housing which provides permanent housing with permanent support services for 26 emotionally handicapped

adults. In 1992, Fellowship House, which works to rehabilitate homeless alcohol and substance abusers seeking independent living arrangements, reported 30 persons seeking permanent housing.

The Section 8 waiting list reveals the following statistical data regarding disabled/handicapped persons seeking rental assistance, both elderly and non-elderly. 50.6% of the elderly awaiting assistance are handicapped/disabled and 24/1% of the non-elderly are disabled/handicapped.

Community Missions reports that 60% of their clients are alcohol/substance abusers, 5% mentally ill and 5% physically disabled. Existing support services, including housing accommodations which are accessible or adaptable to persons with physical disabilities, are extremely limited. Available levels of assistance are relatively low to provide supportive housing to persons with special needs. A relative numerical priority of three is assigned to non-homeless persons with special needs.

ii. Strategy Development - Investment Plan
Activities:

Social Service Agencies dealing with non-homeless persons with special needs particularly emotionally handicapped adults, disabled handicapped persons, the elderly handicapped drug and substance abusers and single parent female headed households all report an increase in demand for housing accommodations and support services.

Support services, such as the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) administered by the Section 8 Leased Housing Program is identified as a cost effective means of addressing this need as is seen as a primary activity for this group.

5-Year Objectives

FSS Program Objectives: 20 individuals

Non-homeless Special Needs (91.205 (d) and 91.210 (d)) Analysis (including HOPWA)

*Please also refer to the Non-homeless Special Needs Table in the Needs.xls workbook.

1. Estimate, to the extent practicable, the number of persons in various subpopulations that are not homeless but may require housing or supportive services, including the elderly, frail elderly, persons with disabilities (mental, physical, developmental, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families), persons with alcohol or other drug addiction, victims of domestic violence, and any other categories the jurisdiction may specify and describe their supportive housing needs. The jurisdiction can use the Non-Homeless Special Needs Table (formerly Table 1B) of their Consolidated Plan to help identify these needs.

*Note: HOPWA recipients must identify the size and characteristics of the population with HIV/AIDS and their families that will be served in the metropolitan area.

2. Identify the priority housing and supportive service needs of persons who are not homeless but may or may not require supportive housing, i.e., elderly, frail elderly, persons with disabilities (mental, physical, developmental, persons with HIV/AIDS and their families), persons with alcohol or other drug addiction by using the Non-homeless Special Needs Table.
3. Describe the basis for assigning the priority given to each category of priority needs.
4. Identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs.
5. To the extent information is available, describe the facilities and services that assist persons who are not homeless but require supportive housing, and programs for ensuring that persons returning from mental and physical health institutions receive appropriate supportive housing.
6. If the jurisdiction plans to use HOME or other tenant based rental assistance to assist one or more of these subpopulations, it must justify the need for such assistance in the plan.

3-5 Year Non-homeless Special Needs Analysis response:

Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)

*Please also refer to the HOPWA Table in the Needs.xls workbook.

1. The Plan includes a description of the activities to be undertaken with its HOPWA Program funds to address priority unmet housing needs for the eligible population. Activities will assist persons who are not homeless but require supportive housing, such as efforts to prevent low-income individuals and families from becoming homeless and may address the housing needs of persons who are homeless in order to help homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing and independent living. The plan would identify any obstacles to meeting underserved needs and summarize the priorities and specific objectives, describing how funds made available will be used to address identified needs.
2. The Plan must establish annual HOPWA output goals for the planned number of households to be assisted during the year in: (1) short-term rent, mortgage and utility payments to avoid homelessness; (2) rental assistance programs; and (3) in housing facilities, such as community residences and SRO dwellings, where funds are used to develop and/or operate these facilities. The plan can also describe the special features or needs being addressed, such as support for persons who are homeless or chronically homeless. These outputs are to be used in connection with an assessment of client outcomes for achieving housing stability, reduced risks of homelessness and improved access to care.
3. For housing facility projects being developed, a target date for the completion of each development activity must be included and information on the continued use of these units for the eligible population based on their stewardship requirements (e.g. within the ten-year use periods for projects involving acquisition, new construction or substantial rehabilitation).
4. The Plan includes an explanation of how the funds will be allocated including a description of the geographic area in which assistance will be directed and the rationale for these geographic allocations and priorities. Include the name of each project sponsor, the zip code for the primary area(s) of planned activities, amounts committed to that sponsor, and whether the sponsor is a faith-based and/or grassroots organization.

5. The Plan describes the role of the lead jurisdiction in the eligible metropolitan statistical area (EMSA), involving (a) consultation to develop a metropolitan-wide strategy for addressing the needs of persons with HIV/AIDS and their families living throughout the EMSA with the other jurisdictions within the EMSA; (b) the standards and procedures to be used to monitor HOPWA Program activities in order to ensure compliance by project sponsors of the requirements of the program.
6. The Plan includes the certifications relevant to the HOPWA Program.

3-5 Year Strategic Plan HOPWA response:

Specific HOPWA Objectives

1. Describe how Federal, State, and local public and private sector resources that are reasonably expected to be available will be used to address identified needs for the period covered by the strategic plan.

3-5 Year Specific HOPWA Objectives response:

OTHER NARRATIVE

Include any Strategic Plan information that was not covered by a narrative in any other section.