

Section 4
Findings and Recommendations



TOWN AND VILLAGE OF WILSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



SECTION 4.0 - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the Comprehensive Plan identifies critical themes and key findings, outlines specific recommendations and establishes the vision plan for the Town and Village. Based on a thorough analysis of the Inventory of Existing Conditions (Section 3.0), consultation with the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, and public input, the following assessment was developed. Centered around the themes identified in the Goals and Objectives (Section 2.0), an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was conducted. The following analyses identify existing and future issues of concern and potential constraints, as well as opportunities for improvement, which can be addressed to help the community achieve its future vision.

For each focus area, the SWOT analysis is followed by some specific findings and recommendations that provide guidance on how the Town and Village can move toward achieving the goals and objectives. These recommendations attempt to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities that exist in the area, while recognizing the potential weaknesses and threats that may impact future successes. The recommendations can be best thought of as a toolbox of ideas for possible use by the Town and Village. They do not represent things that must be done; they are provided for guidance to steer the community toward achievement of its vision.

4.1 Analysis of Existing Conditions

Community Character:

Strengths:

- Rural bedroom community atmosphere.
- Village possesses quaint character and charm.
- Waterfront community with excellent views of Lake Ontario.
- Many historic structures (cobblestone homes).
- Abundant open space.
- Agricultural uses that add character.
- The Twelve-Mile Creek corridor.
- Strong community support and commitment.





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Weaknesses:

- Zoning that encourages standard Euclidian style development that results in “cookie cutter” subdivision development.
- Lack of design criteria and standards to protect community character.

Opportunities:

- Use of comprehensive plan to manage growth and development.
- Use of zoning overlay districts to protect and enhance community character in certain areas.
- Adoption of development standards to protect community character and open space.

Threats:

- Long-term urban sprawl.
- Inconsistent development styles that change character of the area.

Findings and Recommendations:

The Town and Village of Wilson are rural in character, with the Village of Wilson functioning as the Town center. Land use in the Town is primarily agriculture, low-density residential development (single-family homes on larger lots and/or associated with farm properties) and open space. The Village is more densely developed with a small commercial district. The community has expressed a significant interest in maintaining the character and “community feel” that exists in the area. There is a need to strengthen the role of the Village as the Town center, allowing future growth to occur in and around this area, where infrastructure and other public services are available.

1. Implement Rural Development Guidelines and Practices

In an effort to preserve the rural character of the Town, rural development guidelines and practices should be implemented by the Town and Village. In the Town, conservation subdivision development practices (clustering) help preserve open space and important natural features by allowing for a denser arrangement of housing, thereby retaining those resources. Open development areas, which allow for shared driveways and fewer frontage lots and buffering also help minimize visual impacts of development. In the Village, neo-





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traditional development guidelines can encourage new development that is in character with the grid street pattern and housing styles that currently predominate. “Complete streets” standards that encourage sidewalks, street trees and other similar features also help to continue and enhance the characteristics of a small village. In addition, consider the adoption of rural roadway design standards or guidelines for various roadways in the Town to preserve their rural character (context sensitive design standards and revised signage regulations).

2. Encourage in-fill development and the implementation of hamlet development guidelines in and around the Village

To protect the rural character of the Town and Village, emphasis should be placed on focusing denser development in and around the Village where infrastructure exists or could be more easily extended. New in-fill development in these areas should strive to continue the existing street pattern grid. Locating development in and around the Village helps to maintain the Town center concept, encourages and continues walkability and connectivity and is a more sustainable means for long-term growth and development. Adopting hamlet development guidelines that focus on architectural character, facades, scale and massing of structures, windows, roof lines, etc., can help maintain the character of the Village and adjacent areas in the Town, and prevent development styles and designs that do not support and continue the quaint and bucolic character of the area.

3. Protect historic structures in the community.

Part of what adds character to the Town and Village is the abundance of historic structures. A first priority should be to encourage the continued viability of these structures, through adaptive reuse and continued investment in the buildings. In the case of new development, the Town and Village should encourage a scale and style that fits into and complements the quaint and historic character of the surrounding area. Consideration should be given to developing design or architectural guidelines as an educational tool to help encourage building owners to be sensitive to historic character in remodeling efforts. Historic preservation guidelines can protect the historic characteristics of these structures, whether or not they are officially designated as an historic resource. Over the long term, the municipalities could consider establishing an architectural preservation committee as an option for ensuring that existing structures are protected and new structures or development is in keeping with the character of the area.





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4. Consider the use of other local land preservation mechanisms to protect open space and agricultural resources that enhance the rural character of the community.

In addition to the neo-traditional land development practices such as conservation subdivision and open development areas, there are additional mechanisms that can be considered. These include development of a local farmland protection plan that more specifically focuses on the Town of Wilson, conservation easements, purchase of agricultural conservation easements and leasing of development rights. Conservation easements are a tool for permanently preserving land that contains open space and environmental or cultural resources of value to the Town. Purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE) is a tool used similarly to conservation easements, except that the landowner can voluntarily agree to sell their development rights to permanently limit the use of the land to agricultural. Leasing of development rights is another mechanism for preserving open space or environmental/cultural resources for a specified period of time (e.g., 25 years). This allows for the long-term preservation of resources but does not restrict the landowner from ever developing or selling the property for development purposes. This tool can also be used to restrict the long-term use of land for agricultural purposes only and can be a viable alternation for farmers not willing to enter into a permanent conservation easement.

Downtown Revitalization and Economic Development:

Strengths:

- The Village commercial district is the Town center and has retained its traditional downtown character.
- The Village commercial district retains a prominent place in the community: unlike many communities, there are no competing retail districts at the outskirts.
- Both Town and Village residents strongly support the value of the commercial district.
- There are existing community anchors, such as the library, the school, the post office and the municipal building, that help bring traffic to the area.
- There is adequate parking.
- There are a number of attractive buildings that add to the character of the area, including several historic buildings.





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Weaknesses:

- Lack of identity.
- Need to establish a stronger sense of place.
- Commercial district does not have an identifiable niche.
- The central commercial zoning district corresponds to existing commercial properties in the Village and there is little potential for expansion.
- The fire hall occupies a large proportion of the available space within the commercial zone, limiting the amount of property available for commercial or retail redevelopment.
- The area could benefit from improved aesthetics (new facades, streetscapes, public improvements).
- The large parking lot adjoining fire hall could be better integrated with downtown.
- The configuration of buildings and/or floor plans may not satisfy the current needs of small businesses.
- There is limited economic activity and need for a greater diversity of small businesses.
- The Village lacks of a business plan for the downtown.
- There is limited infrastructure and utility services in the downtown (cable, wifi, etc.)

Opportunities:

- Improvements to the commercial district to enhance role as the community center.
- Proximity to NYS Route 18 (Great Lakes Seaway Trail).
- Taking advantage of the proximity of the downtown to the waterfront.
- The potential for greater connectivity between waterfront and downtown.
- Canadian investment.
- The potential exists to rebrand the downtown with a theme.
- Developing artist lofts and studios in the downtown.
- Grant funding opportunities exist.
- The backside of Young Street can be updated to enhance activity in the downtown.

Threats:

- The general economic climate is a threat to the viability of existing businesses and impedes new start-up business.
- Local businesses must compete with venues outside Wilson (local and on-line).

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Findings and Recommendations:

The Village of Wilson is the activity center for the Town, with a commercial district that contains some attractive and historic structures. This area is developed with a small assortment of businesses, including the Municipal Hall, library, post office and public schools, which are important central services that are easily accessible to residents. However, there is a need for a greater mix of uses in the downtown and revisions to existing zoning requirements to help achieve this goal. The Village center lacks identity and a sense of place, and is in need of economic revitalization. Its proximity to the waterfront and harbor and NYS Route 18 (the Great Lakes Seaway Trail), as well as Wilson Tuscarora State Park, provides opportunities for improvement and for boosting tourism.

1. Develop updated Central Commercial district zoning regulations

The Village should update the zoning regulations for the central commercial zoning district (C-C Central Commercial). The updated regulations should allow mixed uses, but also explicitly permit single-family homes to prevent existing residences from becoming non-conforming uses. The uses that are currently allowed as-of-right under the zoning should be carefully assessed to target the types of uses the Village would want to allow in this limited area. It is also recommended that the Village consider extending the size of the district to provide opportunities for increased commercial activity. The intent of these recommendations would be to promote adaptive re-use of existing buildings, protect and promote the traditional character of the village downtown area, and ensure the zoning regulations help the Village maintain a vital and attractive business district. Such revisions to the local zoning would also help to prevent commercial “strip” development by encouraging mixed use development and smaller-scale multi-story structures.

2. Develop design guidelines and standards for the Village to improve and maintain community character and address other aesthetic concerns.

In an effort to protect and promote the downtown and advance it as an attractive location, the Village should develop design guidelines and standards to preserve and enhance the character of the community. Such standards would be aimed at maintaining the existing look and style of historic structures through preservation of existing structures and through new designs that emulate and continue the community character. This involves attention to architectural design, facades and rooflines, building placement and materials, landscaping, signage, lighting and other design elements that lend to the appearance and use of





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development and redevelopment. Utilizing design standards will help the Village to enhance the aesthetic quality of the area, as well as its position and identity as a tourist destination.

3. Investigate the feasibility of moving the fire station, over the long term, to another location to free up the valuable downtown properties for higher and better usage.

There is limited area for new development in the downtown and the Village should take advantage of every opportunity to capitalize on prime locations for growth and improvement along the main thoroughfares. The fire station occupies prime real estate that could be utilized for more prosperous commercial activities. Therefore, the relocation of the fire station to a nearby location, outside the downtown, is recommended. The fire station does not require a location on the primary commercial street and the fire department could still effectively service the area from a less prominent location. Relocation of the station would open this property up for redevelopment as a use or uses that would provide greater economic benefit to the area. A study should be undertaken to evaluate available sites that could accommodate the fire station and at the same time provide for adequate response time and service.

4. Create better a connection (physical and wayfinding) between the downtown commercial district and the waterfront.

The Town and Village benefit from the significant assets of a vibrant harbor and waterfront and an active downtown business district. However, these assets are not directly connected and, therefore, the community cannot take advantage of their full potential for commerce and tourism. The Wilson Harbor area is an important activity center in the community. Its proximity to the Village center is also important to the prosperity of the business district. Having a connection between these key community features is essential to the improved vitality of the area. A physical connection, by way of a multi-use pathway, would enable boaters and other visitors who come to the harbor area to more readily access the downtown. Establishing a jitney service, bike rentals or a similar means of transport between these areas could also be beneficial. Improvements of this nature could be the start of a larger system of connections that could tie Wilson Harbor and Village center with other locations in the Town, as well as with the Niagara River Greenway and Great Lakes Seaway Trail systems and the region at large.





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- 5. Create an organizational entity, such as a business district advisory committee, to manage activity and be a champion for the downtown.**

In an effort to improve economic activity in the downtown and manage the growth and development/redevelopment of this area, the Town and Village should collaborate to establish a business district advisory committee. This body would champion the downtown business district and work to fulfill the vision for this area, including working to clarify and strengthen this vision. The committee could sponsor and plan events and activities to attract customers. It could encourage investments in businesses and properties, and carry out joint promotional campaigns. Without such an entity, the Town and Village cannot capture and realize the full potential of this area. There needs to be a guiding force to oversee current and future efforts to improve the downtown and help achieve the goals and objectives for this area.

- 6. Improve the physical configuration of the downtown with streetscaping and improve signage to direct visitors to the area (wayfinding).**

Another part of protecting and improving the character and quality of the downtown involves improving the value and appearance of the public realm and strengthening the sense of place. Upgrading the physical form and configuration of the “streetscape” can build upon other actions taken to improve the character of the community. Improving pavement design and curbing, and adding landscaping, upgraded street lighting, public amenities (such as benches) and other aesthetic features can make a significant difference. The addition of public plaza space, gardens or other gathering spots can also improve life on the street. All of these efforts are aimed at improving the quality of life in the downtown for residents and visitors to the area. Moreover, an improved wayfinding system should be put in place, with signage and other visual elements, to help make visitors to the area more aware of the harbor and downtown districts, and their proximity to one another.

- 7. Investigate business support services such as low interest business improvement loans.**

An important aspect of improving economic activity and bringing new business to the downtown is ensuring the availability of support services. The Town and Village should investigate possible sources of financing and economic support for new and existing businesses to improve and diversify the downtown business community. Capitalizing on resources, such as the Niagara County IDA, government programs and local legislative





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support, to gain an awareness of what may be available for small businesses in the way of technical support, low interest loans or other support or services, can help to establish what is needed to improve the vitality of the downtown and lay the foundation for achieving the goals for this area. Another consideration is the use of incentives, such as the 485(b) program, to encourage redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized properties in the Village.

8. Update buildings to meet Code requirements.

To promote reuse and redevelopment of existing structures in the downtown, certain structures need to be brought into compliance with building code requirements.

9. Investigate the feasibility of redeveloping vacant apartments into art lofts and studios in the downtown area.

In an effort to revitalize the downtown and develop a niche for commerce, the Village should investigate the possibility of allowing redevelopment to support art lofts and studios. This ties in with the necessary revisions to the local zoning to encourage more mixed use development and redevelopment. This also enhances opportunities for improving tourism and economic activity in the downtown.

10. Prepare a "Business Plan" for the business district.

A business plan should be developed for the downtown core area that establishes and reinforces the vision for the downtown as the center of the community. This plan would outline desired uses for the area and identify uses that are key to improving diversity in the business district. All of the recommendations noted above should be included and evaluated in this plan to determine what issues are of greatest priority and to develop a financial strategy for achieving these objectives. A plan of this nature is the best way to ensure that the Village and Town are successful in revitalizing the downtown and helping to establish the identity and sense of place desired for this area.

Wilson Station Area:

Strengths:

- Central location in the Town and proximity to the Village
- Presence of historic structures available for adaptive reuse.

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- The Wilson Historical Society.
- Available lands and building for development and redevelopment, with space to accommodate a variety of uses, parking, landscaping, etc.
- Existing activity in the vicinity to build on in creating a destination.
- Enthusiastic ownership of property and willingness to invest.

Weaknesses:

- Relative distance from the waterfront makes it more difficult to coordinate with other destinations in the Town and Village.
- Older properties require significant investment for renovation and there could be potential environmental concerns due to former usage.
- Vacant businesses/lack of investment

Opportunities:

- Potential to create an historic destination, with tourism-related benefits.
- Capitalize on Niagara County Wine Trail (brewery is consistent with wine trail theme)
- The area is well located to be a gateway to the community.
- Potential for redevelopment and economic development spin-offs (restaurants, retail, etc.).
- Abandoned rail line could be used for limited rails-to-trails opportunities.

Threats:

- General economic conditions.
- Potential to compete with downtown commercial district.
- Need to ensure any industrial uses do not detract from the character of the area.

Findings and Recommendations:

The Wilson Station area is a gateway area to the Village of Wilson. It contains a small mix of commercial uses, which differ from what exists in the downtown, and offers opportunities for development and redevelopment. The area includes some former industrial structures that can be revitalized for commercial uses. Opportunities also exist for linkages with the downtown and other key features in the area. Future revitalization efforts in this area should complement activity in the downtown.

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- 1. Rezone the Wilson Station area to encourage commercial and tourism oriented uses.**
The zoning for this area should allow and encourage the types of uses proposed for development or redevelopment. The Village should consider being more selective with allowed uses for this area. For example, uses currently allowed by right include automobile sales and gas stations. The Town should also review the zoning for the lands surrounding the area to ensure the promotion of development that is in line with the goals and objectives for this area.
- 2. Treat the area as a gateway to the community and develop effective wayfinding.**
Wilson Station is a natural gateway into the Village and visitors must pass through this area to reach the downtown and harbor destinations. The physical and visual character of this area should be addressed through design standards and public improvements that enhance its functioning as a gateway location. Furthermore, the wayfinding system proposed for other areas in the community needs to start here, helping to guide visitors to the other important destinations in the area.

Waterfront Resources and Revitalization:

Strengths:

- On the shore of Lake Ontario.
- Well-established harbor, with a strong identity outside of Wilson.
- A strong local recreational boating and fishing industry in Lake Ontario.
- An abundance of marinas and yacht clubs for recreation boating and fishing.
- Available support services for boaters.
- Attractive upland services and establishments surrounding the harbor area (Wilson boathouse and shops).
- Numerous Canadian visitors.
- The Twelve-Mile Creek corridor.

Weaknesses:

- Limited locations for public access to the lake and other local waters.
- The location of the wastewater treatment plant at entrance to the harbor.
- Shoaling in the harbor, particularly away from the navigation channel.

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- Lack of connection between Wilson Harbor, Wilson-Tuscarora State Park and downtown.
- Lack of transient slips and temporary dockage in the harbor.
- Lack of public boat launching sites.
- Limited lands zoned for waterfront commercial use.

Opportunities:

- Potential for the establishment of pedestrian connections between the waterfront and surrounding resources (State Park, downtown, other waterfront recreational resources).
- Potential for improved / increased public access.
- NYS Seaway Trail designation for Route 18.
- Long-term reuse of mobile home property for waterfront commercial use.

Threats:

- Ongoing coastal erosion.
- Watershed-wide water quality issues.
- Alternate locations for recreational boating activity, such as Olcott Harbor.
- Competition from other regional recreational assets.
- Long-term potential for off shore wind turbines.

Findings and Recommendations:

Wilson benefits from a waterfront location along Lake Ontario, which offers opportunities for recreational boating and fishing. The Wilson Harbor complex supports a number of yacht clubs and marinas, which capitalize on the close proximity of Tuscarora Bay to the lake. Wilson Harbor is an important node of activity for tourism, but locations for public access to Lake Ontario and the bay are limited. The Wilson Harbor area is contiguous with Wilson Tuscarora State Park, but aside from water access for boaters, direct connections are lacking. Wilson Harbor is a key feature in the Town and Village and planning efforts for the future must be focused on this area, in terms of the potential for connections with the Village downtown and the State Park, its location along the Great Lakes Seaway Trail and its position as a recreational resource.

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1. Develop a multi-use trail between the waterfront (Wilson Harbor area) and Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.

Wilson Harbor and Wilson-Tuscarora State Park are two key waterfront assets in the Town of Wilson that offer recreational opportunities, but there is no direct physical connection between these resources: traveling on NYS Route 18 or by boat provides the only direct connection, which means visitors must travel south from the harbor and then follow Rte. 18 around the south side of the park to reach this destination. A direct connection between the harbor and the State Park could improve the use and enjoyment of both areas. Such a connection could be established at the site of the former Red Bridge, which crossed the east branch of Twelve-Mile Creek to connect O'Connell Island with the park (which was formerly +a private golf course). Re-establishing this as a feasible route will require an effort by the Town and Village that could benefit both visitors and residents alike. As the right-of-way is now held privately, ownership issues and the potential for easements would have to be investigated.

2. Investigate the feasibility of moving the sewage treatment plant, over the long term, to another inland location to free up the valuable waterfront properties for higher and better usage.

The Town and Village own very little property around Wilson Harbor. The wastewater treatment plant occupies the largest parcel in public ownership. This facility greets boaters who enter and exit the harbor and restricts physical and visual access to Lake Ontario. The facility also is reaching an age where significant investment may be required to improve its operations. In lieu of making large capital investments in an obsolete facility, the Village and Town should explore alternatives, such as relocating the plant or entering into agreements with an adjacent community for a shared facility. Removing the plant from this location will open this strategic parcel up for better public use.

3. Work with DEC on coastal erosion and harbor shoaling issues.

The Wilson waterfront is exposed to the forces of Lake Ontario, which are slowly eroding the shoreline. Development along the waterfront, in certain locations, is compromised by this continued threat and regulations are in place to restrict shoreline use. Regulations also restrict how erosion can be controlled along the shoreline. The Town and Village must work with the NYSDEC to collectively manage shoreline erosion and find a balance between the need to protect private investment and natural resources and shoreline processes.





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4. Navigational access throughout Wilson Harbor should be maintained.

Wilson Harbor is a significant waterfront asset that contributes to the local economy. Effective access to Lake Ontario is essential to the success of existing marinas and yacht clubs. Therefore, the Town and Village must work with the Army Corps. of Engineers to ensure that the navigation channel is maintained on a regular basis. In addition, the channels and water corridors that connect to the main channel to provide secondary access to private clubs and marinas must also be navigable. These areas, which are not maintained by the federal or state governments, are subject to shoaling and require dredging to ensure effective use and operation.

5. Evaluate the long-term potential for additional waterfront commercial development around Wilson Harbor.

Wilson Harbor is one of the areas greatest attractions. The Wilson Boathouse facility and its accessory uses are popular with visitors to the area, but there is limited room for the expansion of this commercial activity. The Town should evaluate possible rezoning and the long-term use of other lands in the vicinity for waterfront commercial use. For instance, the existing mobile home park is not a water-dependent or water-enhanced use and does not require a location on the harbor. This land offers the potential for the development of additional marine commercial and retail uses that could expand and enhance the area as a tourist attraction. This would also provide the opportunity for the Town to increase its extent of commercial property.

Cultural, Historic and Recreational Resources and Tourism:

Strengths:

- Wilson-Tuscarora State Park (Excellent asset for the Town and Village).
- Waterfront - Wilson Harbor and associated features (Wilson Boathouse, Pier Park, Village Overlook, etc.).
- Lake Ontario and the recreational fishing industry.
- Existing marinas and yacht clubs.
- Great wealth of attractive, historic structures, including a number of cobblestone houses.
- Strong history of cooperation between the Town and the Village.
- Existing snowmobile trails through communities.

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Weaknesses:

- Lack of a strong identity/niche/ theme.
- Off the beaten path – need to actively attract visitors because there is very little ‘pass-through’ traffic to capture.
- Lack of adequate connections between amenities and resources.
- Limited waterfront access opportunities for the general public.
- Lack of awareness of the area on the part of people who are not familiar with Wilson.
- Lack of information/ marketing to promote the community.
- Seasonality.
- Lack of lodging and accommodations for visitors, including campsites closer to the Village and State Park.

Opportunities:

- Stronger waterfront – boating, fishing, sight-seeing, sailing, etc.
- Stronger downtown.
- Re-established connection between the harbor and the State Park.
- Better coordination between downtown and the harbor.
- Recreational opportunities at the southern portion of Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.
- Local management of Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.
- Improved usage of Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.
- Events and activities to attract visitors and support local economic activity.
- Niagara County Wine Trail.
- Agri-Tourism.
- Great Lakes Seaway Trail.
- Snowmobile trails and ice fishing (off-season recreation).

Threats:

- State funding for Wilson-Tuscarora State Park (for maintenance and improvements).
- Competing with other regional destinations.

Findings and Recommendations:

The Town and Village are home to a number of significant cultural resources that have the potential to provide greater benefit to the community. The presence of Wilson Tuscarora State Park, numerous historic structures, the active harbor, and existing access to a regional and





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State-wide trail system offer opportunities for increasing tourism and economic activity on a year-round basis. To realize these opportunities, improvements are required to strengthen connections between resources, gain greater recognition of the area as a destination and take advantage of the quaint character and interesting attractions that exist in the area. Such improvements tie in with the community's desire to revitalize the downtown, attract more visitors to the area and enhance overall economic vitality.

1. Investigate feasibility of local management of Wilson-Tuscarora State Park

Wilson-Tuscarora State Park is a major recreational asset in the Town and provides significant opportunities for public access to Lake Ontario in the community. It is the primary location for public recreation and supplements the boating opportunities that are provided by Wilson Harbor, where public access is more limited. In light of economic constraints that are adversely impacting the use and maintenance of the park on the part of New York State, the opportunity exists for the Town and Village to collaborate to assist with the management of this park. Local control would allow for the continued operation of the park to ensure that it remains available as a recreational resource for the public. Ultimately, it may be feasible for the community to regain local ownership of the parkland, but at present, local management helps ensure that it remains open for public usage.

2. Improve use and availability of resources at Wilson-Tuscarora State Park.

Wilson-Tuscarora State Park offers a number of recreational uses, including picnicking, swimming, hiking and boating. The park covers almost 500 acres, much of which remains undisturbed. There is potential to expand use of the park to include camping, which could enhance tourism opportunities in the area. Recreational camping is growing in popularity and the addition of campsites to the park would attract more visitors to the area and further diversify resources available in the community. Recognizing that the State has limited funding for parks improvements, the addition of camping as a new amenity in the park is a long-term recommendation, but one that warrants consideration.

3. Create a "Friends of Wilson-Tuscarora Park" to help direct usage and generate revenues to make park improvements.

In support of local management and operations of the park, a local entity should be established as the "Friends of Wilson-Tuscarora Park." to help support the care and use of this facility. This arrangement would enable the community to generate revenue to offset the costs of park maintenance to guarantee that the park remains open for use. "Friends"





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operations can organize volunteers, promote fund raisers and sponsor events to provide additional support for the facility. The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is an example of a very organized version of this type of arrangement; in Wilson, a simpler version would be more likely.

4. A multi-use trail should be established along State Route 18 (the designated segment of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail and National Scenic By-Way), connecting Wilson with neighboring Newfane and Porter.

To support better connections and build upon the potential of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail, a multi-use pathway should be established along Route 18 through the Town and Village of Wilson. This trail could act to connect Wilson Harbor, Wilson Tuscarora State Park and the Village (via Pettit Street or Youngstown Road). It could also provide a connection with the Niagara River Greenway system.

5. Create a connection between Wilson Harbor and Wilson-Tuscarora State Park

There is a strong need to link the waterfront (and Village center) with Wilson Tuscarora State Park. The entrance to the State Park is located off of State Route 18, west of the Village and the waterfront, at the south end of the park. There is no direct connection between these areas. At present, residents and visitors to the Wilson Harbor area must travel away from the harbor, following Route 18 around the southern portion of the State Park, to utilize facilities in the Park. Access could also be achieved by boat, but there is limited transient dockage at the park. A former connection (the Red Bridge) was removed in the late 1960's. This bridge provided a direct connection between the O'Connell Island (part of the inner harbor area) and the park. Having this connection re-established could improve use of both areas, making it easier for visitors and residents to move between the two areas. Therefore, there is a desire to have the Red Bridge reconstructed. This connection would tie in with other improvements that the Town and Village desire to make in this area.

6. Develop a multi-use walkway for the "Inner Harbor" area

In the area situated south of Tuscarora Bay and Wilson Harbor, where O'Connell, Clarks and Treasure Islands are situated (which could be referred to as the inner harbor area), the Town and Village have growing concerns for pedestrian safety. In particular, the area in the vicinity of Veterans Memorial Park and Shore Road, which circles O'Connell Island. The park is located at the end of Park Avenue, where it connects with Shore Drive (which





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provides access to O'Connell and Clark Islands and the marinas and other resources located in that area). Veteran's Memorial Park and the adjacent Greenwood Cemetery attract a large number of visitors each year. Improvements for pedestrian access and safety in this area could tie in with the connectivity improvements recommended above. The desire is to have a walkway or trail system that would run along Park Street, starting at Route 18 (Seaway Trail), and extend along Shore Drive. It would link the memorial park, cemetery, marinas and Sunset Grille Restaurant together. It could also be directly linked with the proposed Red Bridge connection to Wilson Tuscarora State Park. This walkway, together with the other improvements for connections in the area, would advance the Community's vision for providing access to the well-traveled Route 18 and help enhance the area as an inviting destination.

7. Develop a multi-use trail to connect Route 18 via Prospect Street.

Another opportunity to improve recreational opportunities, as well as tourism, is to develop formalized public access to NYS Route 18 from Prospect Street (on the eastern side of the Village). A multi-use trail could be extended along the Prospect Street right-of-way (paper street), from the vicinity of the Wilson Central School District property north to Route 18. The multi-use pathway would provide direct access to the resources at Krueger Park from the school facilities and surrounding residential area. It could also provide an additional connection to the Great Lakes Seaway Trail system and a supplement to the overall scheme for multi-use pathways in the community.

8. Develop a park master plan for Krueger Park to evaluate best options for recreational amenities in the park.

Calvin Krueger Park is another important recreational asset in the Village. It provides opportunities for passive and active recreation. This park covers approximately 15 acres, much of which remains as open space. A master plan should be developed for this park to evaluate what it can offer and how its existing use might be improved to offer more for residents and visitors to the community. This plan would evaluate the best options for recreational uses in order to gain full advantage of strategic location of the Park along the Great Lakes Seaway Trail, near the Village center, and across from the Lake Ontario waterfront. As a part of this effort, it should be determined if the existing ball fields could be relocated and potential alternative sites should be identified for these facilities. Furthermore the Wilson Highway Garage facility should also be relocated, freeing up





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additional area in the park for greater public benefit. Among the potential uses for the park, camping should be a consideration.

- 9. Town and Village need to collaborate on a wayfinding system that provides better direction to visitors and others to local amenities, the harbor, the State Park, etc. This system could also tie in with the County's shoreline trail signage initiative.** Visitors to Wilson do not have clear guidance about where resources are located. Better signage and directional information will help people find their way from one destination in the Town to another. This effort should be coordinated with the County's signage and trailway initiatives.

- 10. Capitalize on the abundance of historic and cultural resources in the community and develop a marketing strategy for promoting the resources in the area to help provide better identity for Wilson.**

The Town and Village of Wilson are home to a number of historic homes and resources that are worthy of recognition. The community should find ways to capitalize on these resources with techniques such as the development of a map of local cobblestone homes. In addition, establishing a local designation for homes 100 years old or older can add to this effort (these resources could be added to the map and promoted). The Town and Village should also capitalize upon, and make better use of, the Wilson Historical Society. All of these efforts are a way to help bring identity to the area and celebrate part of what makes Wilson special.

- 11. Develop a year-round tourism program that includes events in all four seasons.**

A present, the Town and Village of Wilson see the strongest tourism activity occurring during the spring, summer and fall, when recreational boating is prominent and agricultural pursuits provide greater opportunities to attract visitors. The Wilson community needs to develop programs and opportunities for continued tourism activity in the off-season. Winter festivals, ice skating activities, snowmobiling or cross-country skiing, and similar pursuits, are ways to attract visitors to the area during winter and help boost local economic activity.





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Agriculture

Strengths:

- Strong and vital basis for agriculture in the community.
- Prime farm soils and well established agricultural districts.
- Established markets for produce.
- Community support for agriculture.
- Limited development pressure.
- Good climate for agriculture.

Weaknesses:

- Absence of a farmers market.
- Unwillingness on the part of the next generation to continue farming as a career.
- Agricultural land not in use.

Opportunities:

- Greater diversification.
- Value-added through agri-tourism, vertical integration.
- Potential for the development of new crops and products (e.g., hops).
- Growing equestrian industry in Western New York.
- Agri-tourism is a growing market in the region.

Threats:

- Potential development pressure.
- Weakness of agricultural markets (general economics of farming).
- Movement toward a less diverse agricultural industry.
- Changing economics of farming as a business.

Findings and Recommendations:

Agricultural activity in the Town is an important element of the local economy that enhances the character of the community. Existing agricultural activities should be protected and enhanced. The Town has areas with prime farm soils that benefit agricultural pursuits; protection of these resources is important to the continuance of farming in the area. There is a

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need to diversify agricultural activities and create opportunities to increase the benefit of farming in the community.

1. Implement and coordinate with the recommendations of the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

In an effort to protect agricultural resources, the Town and Village should implement the provisions of the Niagara County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, including the adoption of a local right to farm law, the use of non-traditional residential development techniques, and habitat preservation. Over the long term, if development pressures increase, the Town could evaluate the benefit of using a Transfer of Development Rights program or Purchase of Development Rights program to preserve important farmland. In situations where there is significant pressure for development, farmers can be compensated for the value of the

2. Establish an agricultural advisory committee to function on an as needed basis.

Agriculture is a prominent industry in the Town that should be protected and supported. It is important to the local economy and adds to the character of the community. In an effort to recognize the importance of this industry and encourage the wise use and management of agricultural lands, the Town should establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee. This committee would help the Town Board handle potential issues related to agricultural activity. This committee could operate on an as needed basis to assist with grievances between farmers and non-farm neighbors, serve as a vehicle for communication between the Town Board and the agricultural community, and assist with any proposed zoning, policy change or development action that may affect agricultural activity in the Town. It is also recommended that a representative from the Village be a part of this committee to address occasional issues that impact the Town center.

3. Support local agriculture by promoting the sale of locally grown produce at a local farmers market, festivals, restaurants, wholesalers and schools.

Promoting the purchase and use of locally grown produce is an effective way to support agricultural activity in the community. As the agricultural industry in Wilson is an important part of the local economy, efforts such as this are essential for continuing and expanding markets.





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Additional Findings and Recommendations:

In addition to what is noted above, there are other actions that should be considered to help improve the quality of life in Wilson. Consideration should be given to the following.

- Improve prominent entry points into the Town and Village as gateways to welcome visitors to the Town and Village, and establish community identity for visitors and others entering these areas. Gateways demonstrate a sense of “destination” and pride in the community.
- Establish a minimum green/open space requirement of 25 percent for building lots for all non-residential and non-agricultural development within commercial zoning districts (35% for industrial). This minimum requirement will help to preserve natural vegetation and increase the amount of landscaping or seeded lawn area on developed sites. This is a way to help maintain and improve community character.
- Implement “dark sky” lighting requirements for all new or redeveloped properties (particularly commercial or light industrial) to avoid light pollution. Requiring reduced light intensity, screening and shielding, use of flat or recessed lenses and similar measures will help to maintain the natural darkness of the night time sky and eliminate the glow cast by light that spills outward and up from outdoor lighting.
- Ensure sufficient screening and buffering of commercial uses from adjacent non-commercial uses. Maintaining planted buffers, using minimum open space requirements (as noted above) and/or requiring the use of fencing or vegetative screening improves compatibility of uses, protects quality of life for existing uses and helps with the introduction of new development to certain areas of the community.
- Review and re-evaluate certain aspects of the zoning for the Town to ensure that existing zoning regulations support the goals and objectives of the community, in particular the five residential zoning districts. Consider reducing, by number, and refining these districts to better reflect existing and proposed land uses.
- Rescind the Town SEQR regulations and defer to the State regulations. The State’s SEQR regulations are sufficient and generally parallel Town standards. In addition, use of State standards eliminates the need to amend and update Town and Village regulations when the State regulations are periodically changed.
- Reuse the landfill for passive recreation or another appropriate activity that puts this property back in use.

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- Promote programs that identify and mitigate failing septic systems to protect groundwater quality. Local residents should be educated on the importance of maintaining septic systems to extend their life and protect water quality.
- Identify funding and other resources to enable the extension of sanitary sewer service to the Roosevelt Beach area, as well as the need for upgrade and maintenance for the system on Sunset Island.
- Continue a cooperative and collaborative relationship between the Town and Village. Identify and actively pursue opportunities for shared services and facilities between the Town and Village. Also, coordinate municipal planning efforts and consider opportunities for shared services with adjacent communities.
- The Town will look to future opportunities that are economically responsible in terms of where they are headquartered.
- Maintain a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee to assist with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and to reevaluate the Plan every five years and update as required, to conform to changing conditions and to ensure that action items recommended in the Plan are achieving the goals and objectives.





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4.2 Community Vision Plan

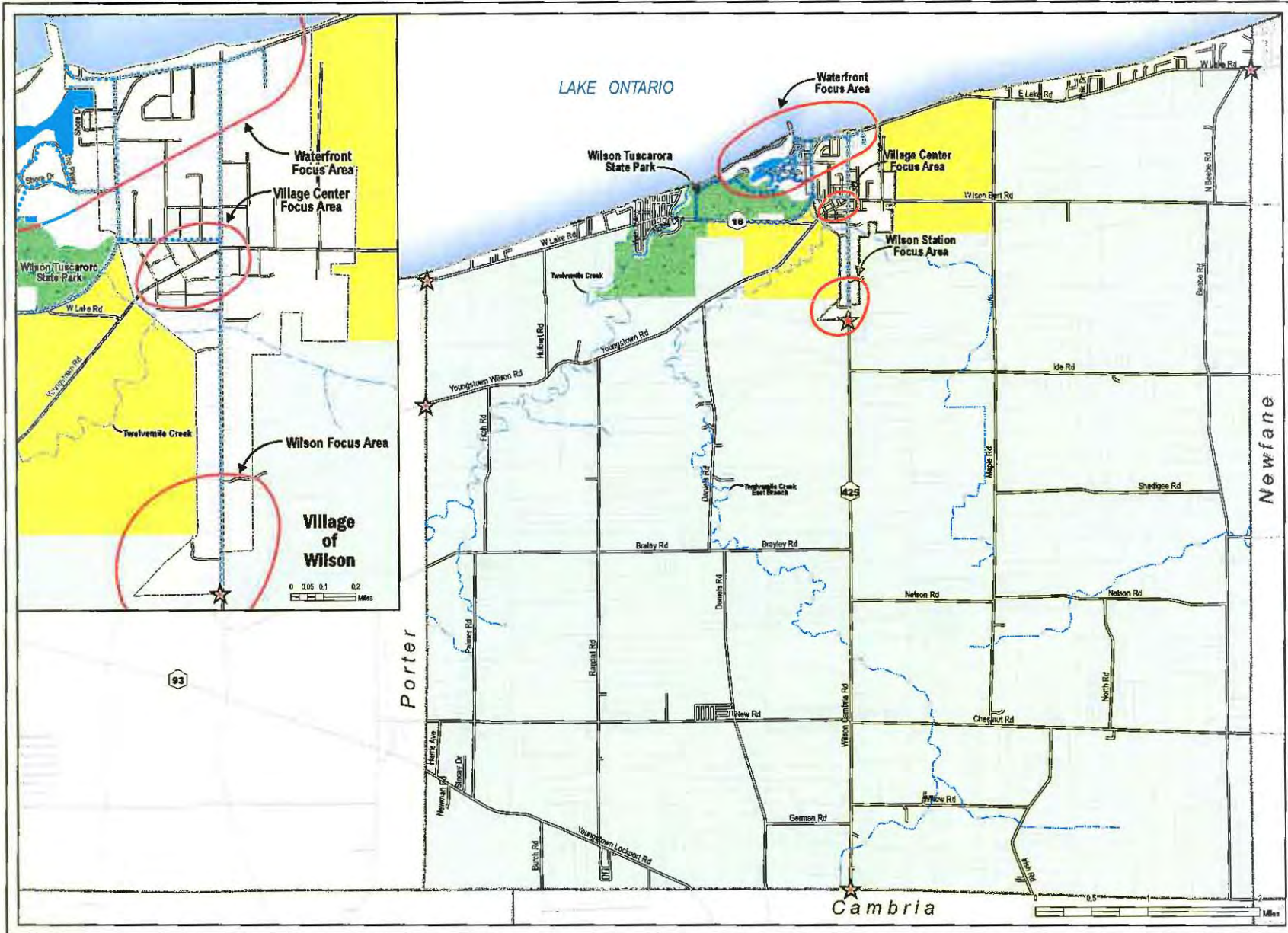
The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats provides a clearer picture of the direction that should be taken to help the Town and Village of Wilson achieve the goals and objectives for the future. To portray the overall vision for the Town and Village, and help visualize the recommendations set forth above, a Community Vision Map was created. This map identifies specific planning areas to illustrate how the recommendations can be implemented to enhance and preserve the character of the community (see Map 11). Focus areas include the Village center, the waterfront/Wilson Harbor, and Wilson Station, as well as the Rural Residential/Agricultural area and a Village Transition area. Vision is also set forth for gateway entrances to the Town and Village. The following offers greater insight into the vision areas; the objective is that, once implemented, the recommendations for these areas will guide the community toward realizing its future vision.



Village Center Focus Area

The vision for the Village Center is to improve overall vitality and economic activity in the area. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the number and variety of commercial and retail businesses in the area, strengthening the sense of place and Village identity, and improving economic activity throughout the year. Consideration should also be given to the possibly expanding the commercial district to provide greater opportunity for growth.





**TOWN
OF
WILSON**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**MAP 11
Community Vision**



NIAGARA COUNTY - NEW YORK

LEGEND

- Municipal Boundary
- Parcel Boundary (2009)
- Gateway
- Focus Area
- Connectivity
- Stream / Creek
- Village Transition
- Agricultural / Rural Residential

WENDEL COMPANIES
 WD Project 4 220920
 Map Created: August, 2011

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Guiding Principles for the Village Center Focus Area

1. Focus small-scale retail and other commercial development along Young and Lake Streets to strengthen the downtown area to meet daily needs and services.
2. Prepare a "Business Plan" for the downtown that establishes and reinforces the vision for this area as the Town Center, and create and maintain a Business District Advisory Committee to champion the downtown, focus on securing financing and economic support, and implement the vision (business plan) for this area.
3. Continue to utilize incentives, such as the enhanced 485(b) program, to encourage adaptive re-use (redesign with lofts and studios, etc.) and redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized properties.
4. Use incentive zoning techniques to allow for an increase in development density, particularly to achieve more sustainable development.
5. Re-evaluate existing zoning to ensure that land use regulations support the type, size and density of development that is desired for the downtown, including mixed use and flexibility of restrictions.
6. Evaluate the expansion of the commercial Central-Commercial zoning district to enlarge the downtown business district and create greater opportunity for growth.
7. Address Code compliance issues and encourage the updating of building to meeting existing requirements.
8. Enhance the physical configuration and appearance of the downtown area with streetscaping improvements and incorporate access management standards into the design for commercial projects to improve traffic flow and safety.
9. Hold development and redevelopment to high quality design and aesthetic standards that preserve and enhance the traditional character of the Village. Corporate building designs and images should be discouraged, requiring development to take on a quality unique to the area.
10. Adopt design standards to ensure that the design and aesthetics of new development and redevelopment is in keeping with community character.
11. Improve signage and wayfinding to promote connectivity and walkability to other activity centers, particularly Wilson Harbor, the State park and Wilson Station.
12. Implement dark sky standards for commercial development to preserve the quality of the night sky.
13. Evaluate the feasibility of relocating the fire station to increase the amount of valuable downtown property and ensure the highest and best uses in the area.





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Existing structures can be redeveloped to maintain the historic character of an area.



Redevelopment and new development can be designed to continue and recreate small-town character.



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Wilson Station Focus Area

Wilson Station is an important gateway area to the Village of Wilson. This area has a history of industrial use and was previously supported by an active rail line. It now has the potential to be redeveloped and revitalized with commercial and light industrial uses to foster economic development in the Village and Town.

Guiding Principles for the Wilson Station Area

1. Utilize design guidelines and standards to improve the design of new or rehabilitated buildings, signage and aesthetics, to recognize this area as a gateway to the Village of Wilson and welcome visitors and others to the area.
2. Promote connectivity and walkability with the Village downtown district.
3. Implement dark sky standards for commercial development to preserve the quality of the night sky
4. Consider improvements to the physical environment configuration and appearance of the area with streetscaping improvements.
5. Incorporate access management standards into project design to improve traffic flow and highway safety along State Route 425.
6. Zone lands in Village and Town appropriately to promote a mix of commercial and light industrial uses to achieve the goals and objectives for development in this area.
7. Encourage uses in this area that will supplement activities and uses in the Village business district so as not to create a competitive situation that could adversely impact economic recovery and vitality in the Village center.

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Village Transition Area

The vision for the Village Transition Area is to concentrate potential future growth to areas adjacent to the Village of Wilson, creating a hierarchical transition from the Village center to the rural agricultural countryside of the Town of Wilson. The areas adjacent to the Village have already exhibited some degree of change through the creation of smaller residential lots and overall increased residential use, particularly to the west. These areas are where additional residential growth should occur in the Town in a manner that supports and enhances the Village. It is best to focus growth closer to the Village, where denser development already exists, rather than allow growth in the Town to sprawl across vaster areas of prime farmland. As there is no development pressure from the Town at present, this is considered a pro-active and sustainable approach for managing growth and steering it to appropriate areas in the future. The Village of Wilson also may have the potential to extend sanitary sewer service into this area to support more intensive development.

Guiding Principles for the Village Transition Area

1. Focus retail, mixed use and other commercial development in or immediately adjacent to the Village center to compliment and support the Village.
2. Locate denser residential development where public sanitary sewer infrastructure may be available.
3. Ensure adequate buffering between agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses to protect the viability of farming and minimize the impacts of one use on the other.
4. Promote connectivity and walkability, with connections to the Village center.
5. Support adaptive reuse and redevelopment of existing structures.
6. Utilize design standards and guidelines to ensure that the character of development is in concert with the surrounding area, particularly in the vicinity of the Village center.
7. Implement dark sky standards for commercial development to preserve the quality of the night sky
8. Re-evaluate the zoning district(s) in this area to ensure that the land use regulations support the type and density of development desired; use of a zoning overlay district is a consideration.
9. Locate senior housing and multi-family (higher density residential development) housing in this area.
10. Coordinate planning efforts in the Village Transition area with the Village of Wilson.





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The following images depict how development in the Village Transition Area could include mixed uses designed in a denser fashion that are in keeping with the character of the surrounding community. Note the architectural elements, which move beyond standard franchise design, as well as a denser style of residential development that would fit well into a village setting.



Waterfront/Wilson Harbor Focus Area

The Wilson Harbor area is an important activity center in the Town. This area supports the recreational fishing and pleasure boating industry on Lake Ontario, and is home to a number of yacht clubs and marinas. It offers opportunities for shoreline fishing and scenic viewing and

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receives considerable visitation throughout the year, particularly during the summer. It also enhances the quality of life in the Sunset Island residential community, as well as the surrounding Village. The harbor area is situated immediately east of Wilson Tuscarora State Park, with direct waterside connections.

Guiding Principles for Waterfront /Wilson Harbor Focus Area

1. Improve connections between the harbor area and Wilson-Tuscarora State Park, including a multi-use trail and reconstruction of the Red Bridge.
2. Lend emphasis on maintaining navigational access throughout Wilson Harbor and Tuscarora Bay.
3. Support the highest and best use of lands surrounding the waterfront to enhance commercial and tourism activity.
4. Improve opportunities for public access to Lake Ontario and Tuscarora Bay.
5. Increase the availability of transient dockage.
6. Encourage the establishment of additional lodging opportunities.

Agricultural Preservation/Rural Residential Area

The Town possesses some large areas of productive farmland and prime farmland soils that are important to the character of the area, as well as the local economy. The majority of the Town is included in a State-designated agricultural district. There is public support for the protection of these uses and resources. There are also creek corridors and wetlands areas that are of local significance. The vision for this area is to encourage continued farming and discourage denser residential uses (which should occur in the vicinity of the Village of Wilson) in an effort to protect and preserve the important natural resources that exist throughout the area.

Guiding Principles for the Agricultural Preservation/ Rural Residential Area

1. Continue to support and comply with the Niagara County Right-to-Farm Law and explore the adoption of a companion local law.
2. Consider the creation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee to help mediate and alleviate potential conflicts and promote farming in the Town.
3. Consider strategies to permanently preserve environmentally sensitive areas, important open space areas and areas of prime farmland soils.





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4. Encourage continued development of agricultural operations and facilities, and agribusinesses or establishments that compliment agricultural operations in the Town.
5. Institute farmland protection mechanisms to preserve and enhance agricultural operations, such as a local farmland protection plan, conservation easements and/or leasing of development rights.
6. Utilize rural development guidelines and encourage non-traditional styles of development, including open development areas, conservation subdivisions and clustered development for residential subdivisions of greater than four lots to foster efficient use of land and reduce impacts to agricultural uses and transportation infrastructure.
7. Promote the sale of locally grown produce at local farmers markets, festivals, and wholesalers, and the use and purchase of local produce at area restaurants, businesses and schools.
8. Encourage home based businesses and other low-impact enterprises that enhance the viability of farming and help support farmers in the off-season.
9. Encourage the commercial and non-commercial harnessing of alternative energy sources, such as wind, solar, biomass and photo-voltaic, as long as their impacts on agricultural operations, residents, sensitive and environmental resources, and the character of the area are minimal and/or mitigated.
10. Ensure adequate buffering between agricultural uses and non-agricultural uses to uphold the viability of farming and to minimize the impacts of each use on each other.
11. Consider the use of lateral restrictions for potable water supply where public water infrastructure exists or is proposed in agricultural areas to diminish growth pressures on prime farming and vineyard areas.
12. New development should be located in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to viable farming activities or farm soils.
13. Implement dark sky standards for commercial development to preserve the quality of the night sky.
14. Adopt rural roadway design guidelines or standards for local roadways throughout the Town to preserve their rural character (context sensitive design/signage).
15. Institute strategies to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, important open space and areas of prime farmland soils.





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Below is a sample farm developed as a traditional subdivision with 33 large acreage lots. There is no preservation of farmland or open space; all the land has been subdivided for rural residential lots.



SOURCE: Arendt, Randall G. (1996). "Conservation Design for Subdivisions, a Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks." Island Press. Washington, D.C. and Covelo, CA.

Below is the same farm developed as a cluster residential development which affords the developer more flexibility in exchange for preserving the farmland and open space.



SOURCE: Arendt, Randall SOURCE: Arendt, Randall G. (1996). "Conservation Design for Subdivisions, a Practical Guide to Creating Open Space Networks." Island Press. Washington, D.C. and Covelo, CA.

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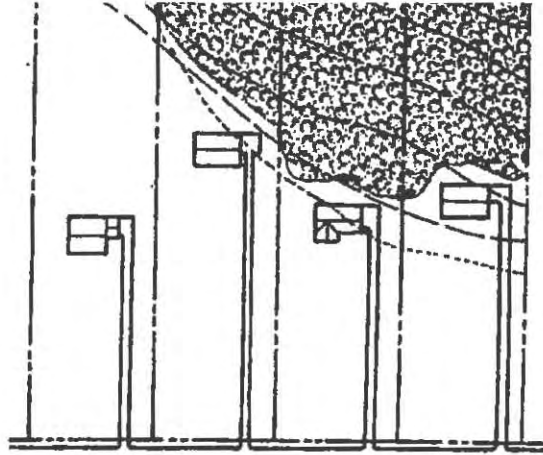




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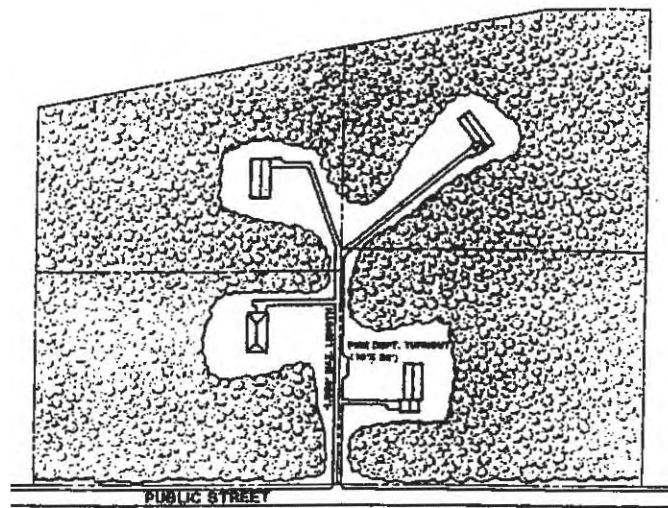


The image below shows a typical rural residential development along road frontage that preserves little forested area.



SOURCE: Heyer, F., (1990). "Preserving Rural Character". Planners Press. Chicago

The image below shows the same rural residential subdivision developed under conservation residential development regulations, with the majority of the forested area preserved.



SOURCE: Heyer, F., (1990). "Preserving Rural Character". Planners Press. Chicago

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Adapting the conservation design principle and trimming lot size and lot width can result in the same number of homes accommodated on half the available land, thereby preserving farmland or open space resource to maintain rural character.



Source: Arendt, Randall G. (May 2009). "Visualizing the Options: Choosing Among our Alternative Futures – Chautauqua County Design Principles Guidebook".

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Here is a conventional yield plan for an 18 unit residential subdivision.



Here is a conservation subdivision design for the same 18 lots.



Source: Arendt, Randall G. (May 2009). "Visualizing the Options: Choosing Among our Alternative Futures – Chautauqua County Design Principles Guidebook".

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Gateways

In addition to the vision areas identified on the Vision Map, there are a number of important entryways or “Gateways” into the Town and Village of Wilson. Entryways that have been identified as important include:

Town and Village Gateways

1. West Lake Road (State Route 18), at the boundary with the Town of Porter; East Lake Road, at the entrance with the Newfane; and at the west and east boundaries (or in the vicinity of the boundaries) to the Village of Wilson.
2. Wilson-Cambria Road (State Route 425), to the south, at the boundary with the Town of Cambria, and in the Wilson Station area, at the boundary between the Town and Village of Wilson.
3. Youngstown Wilson Road, to the west, at the boundary with the Town of Porter, and at the boundary between the Town and Village of Wilson.
4. .

These areas should be improved in a manner that enhances the sense of identity and informs the public that they are entering the Town or Village. Improvements could range from simple signage to more decorative plantings, monuments or other features that are aimed at emphasizing the local pride of the community. Also consider using exit signs “thanking” travelers for visiting the Town or the Village. Signage should identify the area(s) without dominating the landscape (ground level or monument signs, not pole signs).

The following are examples of gateway treatments for villages and hamlets, entry points or other key locations in communities.



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