

Growing the Town's economic future



Town of Tonawanda
Economic Action Plan **2017**

Growing
the Town's
economic
future



Town of Tonawanda Economic Action Plan **2017**



This plan was launched through a collaborative process led by the Town of Tonawanda and its community partners. An advisory committee involving the Town, the Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology, the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, Erie County, and the Western New York Area Labor Federation, ALF-CIO met regularly to guide development of Tonawanda Tomorrow. The advisory committee was supported by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI) and the Delta Institute. UBRI oversaw the planning process and plan production, ensuring the work was shaped by the voices of Tonawanda residents and stakeholders, and grounded in objective data and information. The Delta Institute contributed their expertise on transitioning economic structures and provided inspirational examples from communities across the globe.

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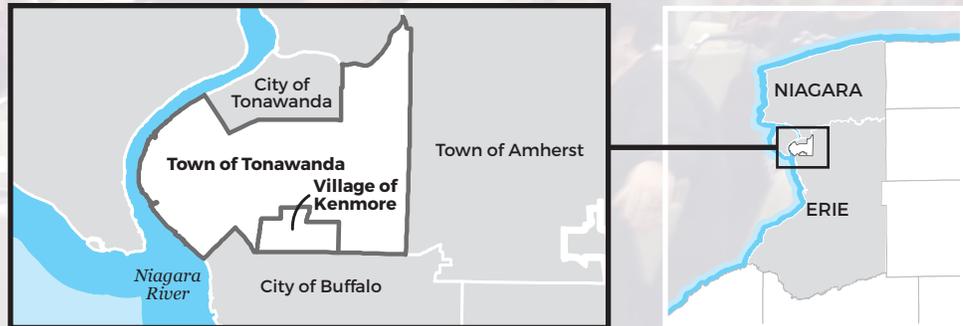
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Defining “Tonawanda”

The geographies of the Town of Tonawanda and Village of Kenmore are both included within the scope of this plan.

The Town of Tonawanda, located in Erie County, New York, is a first-ring suburb of the City of Buffalo. It is bordered on the north by the City of Tonawanda, east by the Town of Amherst, south by the City of Buffalo, and west by the Niagara River. The Village of Kenmore is located entirely within the borders of the Town of Tonawanda.

The Buffalo Niagara region consists of Erie and Niagara Counties in the western edge of New York State and includes the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls.

About the Plan

The work of Tonawanda Tomorrow



These three interconnected themes were central to the work and provided a lens to organize the work of creating an economic action plan grounded in data and shaped by the community.

Tonawanda Tomorrow is a **community-driven initiative for growing a 21st Century economy**. Developed by a broad community partnership led by the Town of Tonawanda, the plan charts a path for advancing Tonawanda as a key regional economic hub, with good-paying jobs, a workforce to fill them, and a vibrant community that builds on what makes Tonawanda a great place to do business and raise a family.

The plan is **grounded in data and shaped by the Tonawanda community**. It builds off a wealth of local planning and community organizing work, engaged hundreds of community members to shape community priorities, and charts out a series of actionable strategies that build on the Town's strengths and address its challenges.

As an economic action plan, this document is a **decision-making tool to advance a community vision** for the Tonawanda economy. It highlights economic sectors, initiatives, programs, and projects that support that vision, and offers decision-makers - local officials, businesses, county, state, and federal agencies, and more - a clear sense of Tonawanda's strengths and challenges, and what the community wants for Tonawanda's economy. Finally, it is a public document that can be used by the Tonawanda community to advocate for decisions and projects that have been lifted up through this process.



An Economic Action Plan shaped by the community every step of the way.

A Starting Point for Tonawanda Tomorrow

Community Values & Guiding Principles

Strategies for Action



Growing the town's economic base at a time of transition

A transitioning economy for the 21st Century

Our global economy is at a time of great transition. Technology and innovation are transforming the way products are made and the process by which we consume them. And the energy that fuels our businesses, homes, vehicles and public infrastructure is projected to continue to evolve as we move away from an economy fueled by fossil fuels.

This transition has impacted local communities around the globe. Here in Tonawanda, this shift has come to head with the closure of the NRG Huntley coal-fired plant. Responding to a range of market factors - the increased availability of cheap natural gas, declining costs for renewable energy, growing energy efficiency, etc. - NRG permanently decommissioned its facility in March of 2016. Though the NRG plant was not a significant employer in the Town, the closure of the Huntley facility has left a significant impact on the Town's industrial tax base and leaves 93 acres of Tonawanda's waterfront greatly underutilized.

Planning for Tonawanda's tomorrow today

Though the closure of the Huntley plant served as a catalyst for launching Tonawanda Tomorrow, this plan is about more than replacing the economic production of just one site. Re-imagining Huntley as an asset for the Town of Tonawanda will take years, if not decades to accomplish. Tonawanda Tomorrow is focused on expediting that process and growing the Town's economic base in the meantime so that Tonawanda can continue to offer the exemplary quality of life and public services that has been a hallmark of its 180+ years as a town.

Fortunately, the Town of Tonawanda, its partners in government, and the community at large, have been working on this for some time and are committed to the long-term growth of a sustainable economy for Tonawanda.

In 2014, the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York got the ball rolling by holding a series of community assemblies to begin envisioning what the community

wants to see for the Huntley site if/when the plant were to close. In 2016, on the heels of this closing, the Town of Tonawanda collaborated with local and regional partners to secure funding from the US Economic Development Administration to launch Tonawanda Tomorrow.

New York State has committed significant resources to ensure Huntley's closure does not impede Tonawanda's economic progress. In 2016, the Electric Generation Facility Cessation Mitigation program was launched to support NYS communities like Tonawanda that are impacted by power plant closures. The fund will provide the Town, the School District, and Erie County with significant financial support over the next seven years to help cope with budget shortfalls caused by the plant's closure.

With good planning in motion, resources to bridge budgetary shortfalls, and an energized community working together, Tonawanda is primed to address its challenges and build on its strengths toward creating a sustainable economy for the 21st Century.

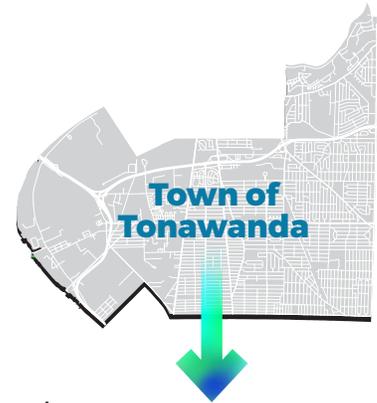




Tonawanda is addressing challenges, building on its unique strengths, and forging a path toward a sustainable economy for the 21st Century.

Photos courtesy of the Town of Tonawanda

Understanding where the community is today and where it's headed tomorrow



Tonawanda's roots

The Town of Tonawanda began as an agricultural community at the turn of the 19th century. As the region grew and streetcar lines extended development out from Buffalo, Tonawanda suburbanized, beginning with what today is the Village of Kenmore. In the Post-War era, development spread rapidly to the eastern side of Town as new middle-class housing sprouted up on former farmland. This development boom drove Tonawanda's population to double over the 1950s, surpassing 100,000 residents by 1960.

Unlike some other first ring suburbs, industrial development has been a signature part of how Tonawanda grew. In the early days, the proximity to the Niagara River, Erie Canal and the Buffalo-Niagara Railroad made the area attractive for lumber production. Then followed industrial growth in electrical power generation, steel, rubber, chemical and aircraft plants, and later oil refining and auto manufacturing.

These two converging growth factors – residential growth as a traditional first ring suburb and economic growth as a center of industry - helped shape Tonawanda's role in Buffalo Niagara's economy and its social fabric. It is also why the Town has long been heralded as a place with superior public services, a reputation that continues to this day. With a strong tax base supported by large industrial employers, Tonawanda has been able to offer services at a relatively low cost to residential taxpayers.

A shifting economy and regional landscape

Over the latter part of the 20th Century, deindustrialization, population decline, and a hollowing out of the region's urban cores became the dominant story of Buffalo Niagara. Though Tonawanda fared better than the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, Tonawanda saw its economic base weaken and population decline as development spread to the periphery of the region.

This transition posed several challenges for Tonawanda that continue to this day. How does the Town maintain high quality public services and address its aging mid-20th Century infrastructure as its tax base has declined? How can industry thrive in Tonawanda while not raising public health concerns? What can be done with vacant land from Tonawanda's industrial past to pave the way for the economy of tomorrow?

How does Tonawanda generate an economic vision for its future that is resilient, supports good jobs, and promotes equitable development?



Tonawanda is focused on Tomorrow

Tonawanda is primed to answer these questions and chart a path toward a cleaner, greener, and more innovative economy for the 21st Century. And while challenges remain, key assets and signs of progress are setting the stage for the Tonawanda of tomorrow.

Young families are moving to the Town and laying down roots. Large Town employers like Sumitomo Rubber USA and General Motors Tonawanda Powertrain are making investments in their facilities and expanding employment. Economic sectors specialized in Tonawanda, like trade and manufacturing, are being embraced as key economic priorities for the greater Western New York region.

This plan seeks to build on those strengths while addressing challenges to the Town's economic base, workforce needs, and how the built environment is used to promote economic growth.

What do people value about living, working, or operating a business in the Town of Tonawanda?

How does the Town maintain its high quality services and address its aging mid-20th Century infrastructure as its tax base has declined?

How does Tonawanda generate an economic vision for its future that is resilient, supports good jobs, and promotes equitable development?

How can industry thrive in Tonawanda while not raising public health concerns?

What can be done with vacant land from Tonawanda's industrial past to pave the way for the economy of tomorrow?

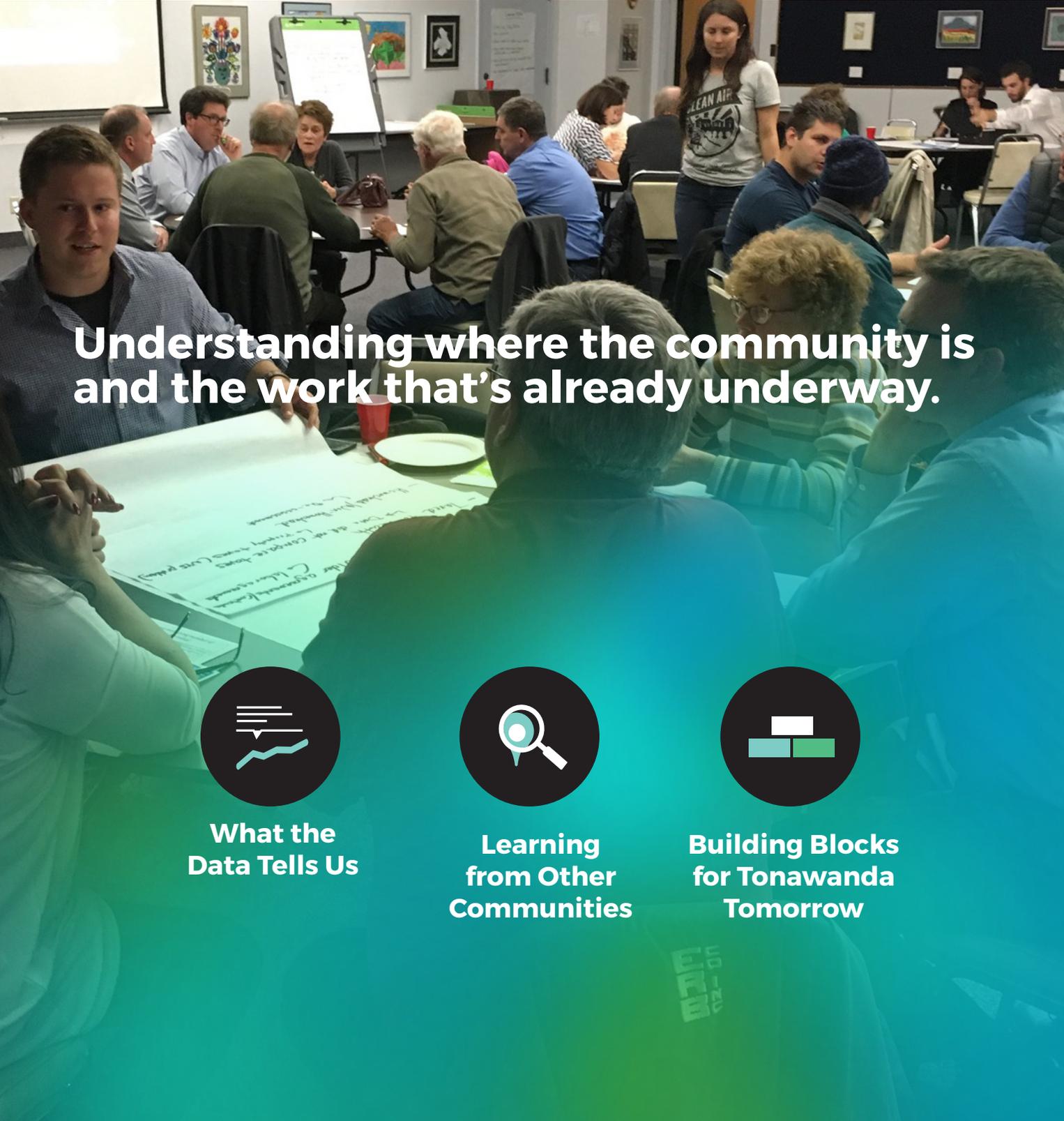
How the community answers questions about its future is an important step in creating a plan that advances community priorities.

A Starting Point for Tonawanda's Tomorrow

A look at objective data, lessons from other communities, local and regional planning, and strong partnerships is a good starting point.

This work doesn't start from scratch. It is grounded in data to understand existing assets, challenges, and opportunities for growing Tonawanda's communities. It is inspired by examples of economic revitalization from across the United States and the globe. And it is based in the Town's existing planning framework, builds off the Just Transition partnership, and reinforces Tonawanda's unique strengths in our regional economic growth and development plans. This body of work was critical to understanding community values and principles and identifying strategies that are based on objective data and aimed at advancing community values.





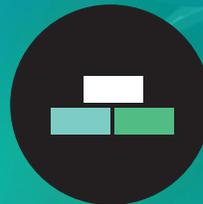
Understanding where the community is and the work that's already underway.



What the Data Tells Us



Learning from Other Communities



Building Blocks for Tonawanda Tomorrow



What the data tells us about what Tonawanda looks like today and where it might be heading

TONAWANDA BY THE NUMBERS

73,275
TOTAL POPULATION

1,300+
FIRMS

32,000+
JOBS

38,600+
LABOR FORCE

Sources: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014); Infogroup: Reference USA, Business Database (2016); U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, LEHD, LODES data (2014); U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics" (2016). Figures represent 2015 annual averages.

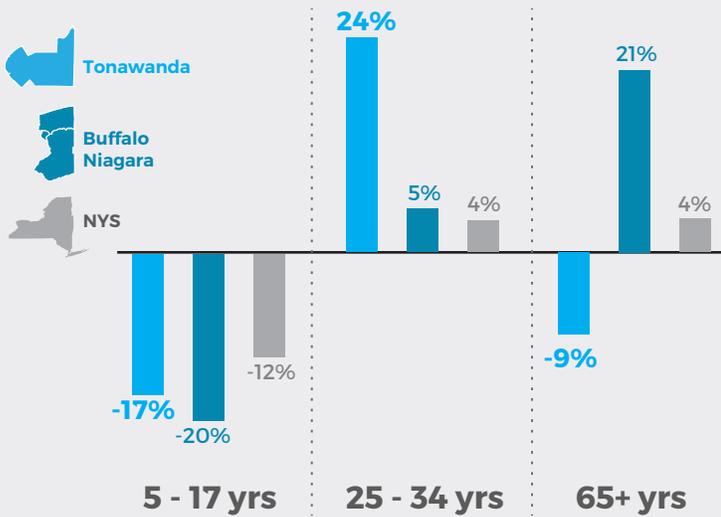
Informing Economic Strategies for Tomorrow

The following pages provide demographic, industry, workforce and land use data, benchmarked against regional, state-wide, and national trends, to provide a baseline for understanding what Tonawanda looks like today. Grounding Tonawanda's economic action plan in solid data helps identify existing assets, challenges, and opportunities, which combined with the needs and aspirations of the community, will guide strategic investments for the future.

From a data-driven perspective, today Tonawanda has a number of assets to build on, but also has challenges that can hinder economic growth. Tonawanda is still an employment center in the region and private sector job growth rebounded post-recession at a faster pace than the region as a whole. Tonawanda has a mix of small and mid-sized manufacturers and trade-related firms, as well as a number of large employers in these industries, like GM Powertrain, Dupont, Sumitomo, and Praxair which, combined with sizable health and professional services industries, still make it a destination for many regional workers. But, some of these larger industries also tend to have the greatest share of older workers; and employers may struggle in coming years to find skilled labor to fill jobs with looming retirements. Tonawanda has an aging population. But in recent years, the young adult population is growing, as they are attracted to Tonawanda's relative affordability for middle income families, quality of life, low levels of blight, and walkability.

Though older overall, **the population of young adults has been surging over the past 15 years, changing the demographic profile of the Town.**

% Change in Population by Age, 2000-2014



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2000); American Community Survey, 5-year estimates (2009-2014).

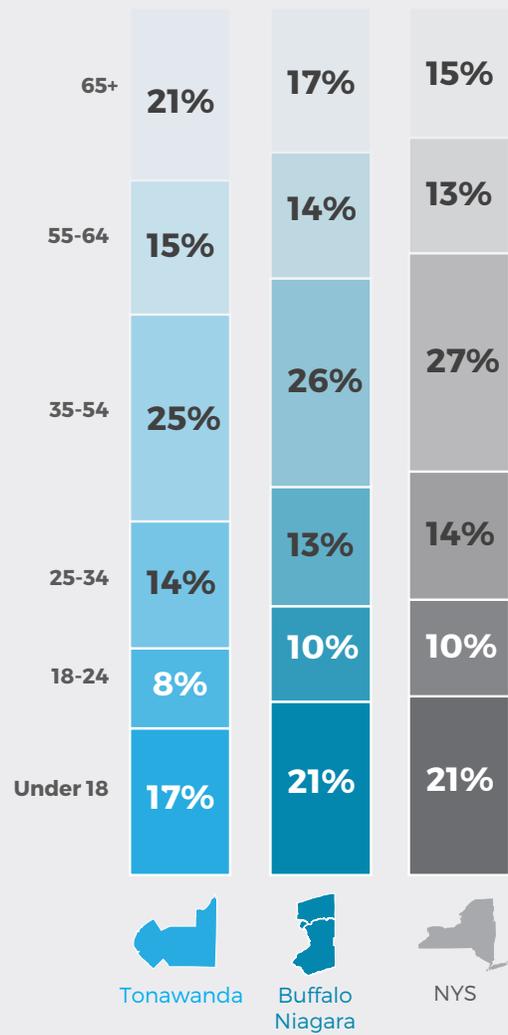
Despite an overall population decline, **the number of households in the Town of Tonawanda has actually grown since 1970.**

	1970	2015	% Change
Population	107,282	72,949	-32%
Avg Household Size	3.3	2.3	-30%
Households	32,030	32,230	1%
Housing Units	32,332	33,729	4%

Source: US Census, 1970; US Census American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015.

Tonawanda has a high concentration of older residents, with **more than a third of Tonawanda's population over the age of 55.**

Population by Age Cohort, 2014



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates (2014).

Residential real estate in Tonawanda remains a good investment

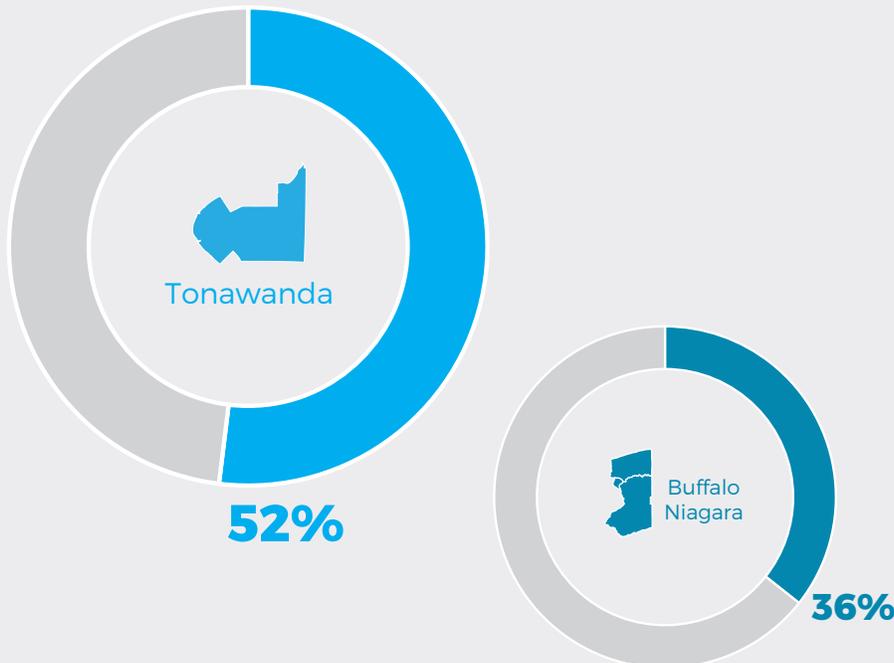
with low vacancy rates and modestly-sized, affordable, mid-century homes.

	Tonawanda	Buffalo Niagara
Housing Units	34,440	519,952
Avg Sales Price	\$120K	\$128K
Vacancy Rate	3.2%	6.4%
% of Homes built in 1950s	40%	18%
% of Homes larger than 2,000 sq. ft.	8%	22%

SOURCE: US Census, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2015 (Housing Units, Vacancy Rate, % of Homes Built in 1950s), Redfin Data, 2016 (Average Sales Price); Erie County Arcel Data, 2015 (% of Homes larger than 2,000 sq. ft.)

Tonawanda is attracting young adults who are buying homes.

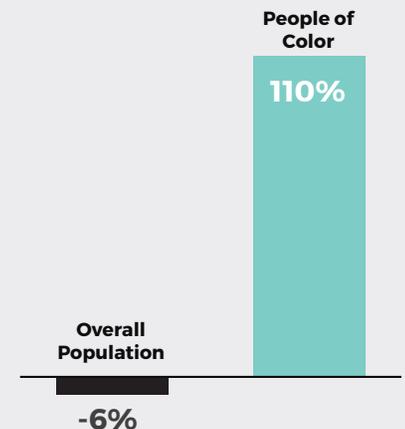
Homeownership Rates Among Young Adults Under 35



SOURCE: US Census, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, 2015.

Though the population fell by 6% between 2010 and 2014, the Town has **grown more diverse.**

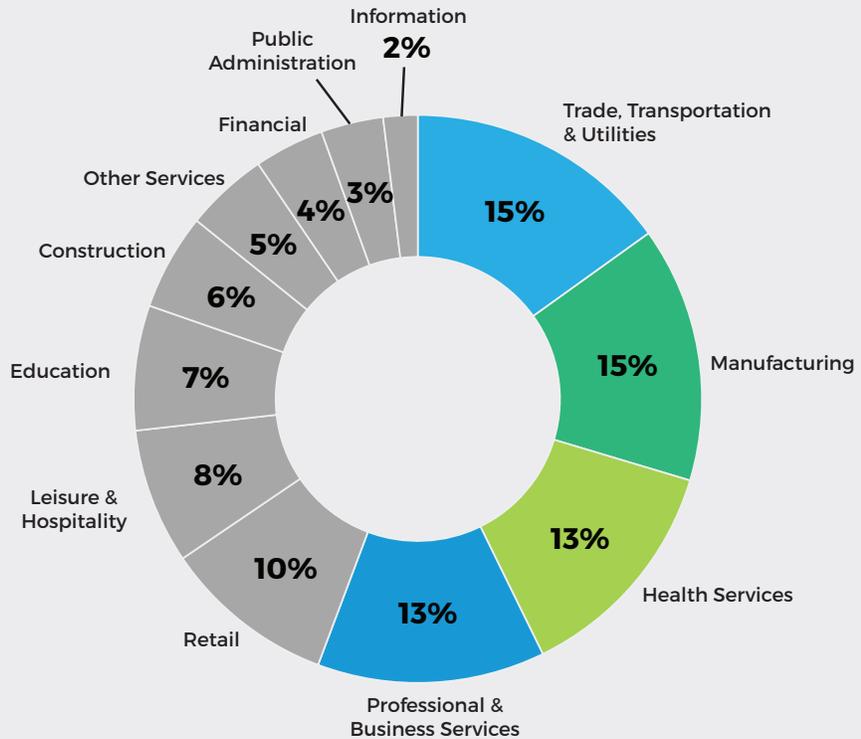
Population Change in Tonawanda, 2010 - 2014



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2000); American Community Survey, 5-year estimates (2009-2014).

More than half of all jobs are in **Trade, Transportation & Utilities, Manufacturing, Health Services and Professional Business Services.**

Town of Tonawanda Industry Composition



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, LEHD, LODES data (2002-2014)

Tonawanda draws **80% of its workers from surrounding municipalities.**

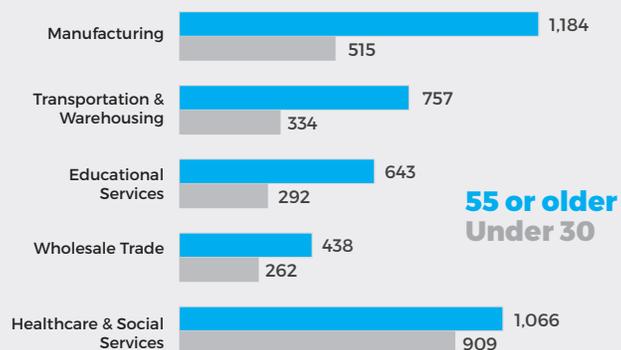
Where workers at Tonawanda firms call home...

Tonawanda or Kenmore	20%
Buffalo	15%
Cheektowaga	5%
North Tonawanda	4%
Tonawanda (City)	3%
Niagara Falls	3%
All other locations	51%

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, LEHD, LODES data (2013)

The largest, and in some cases, most specialized sectors also tend to have **the greatest share of older workers.**

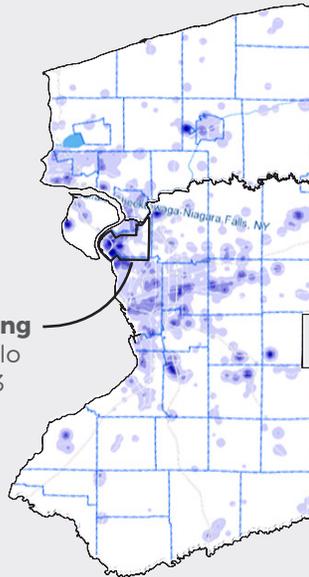
Top 5 Industries where Older Workers Outnumber Younger Workers



SOURCE: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, LEHD, LODES data (2013)

A Starting Point for Tonawanda Tomorrow

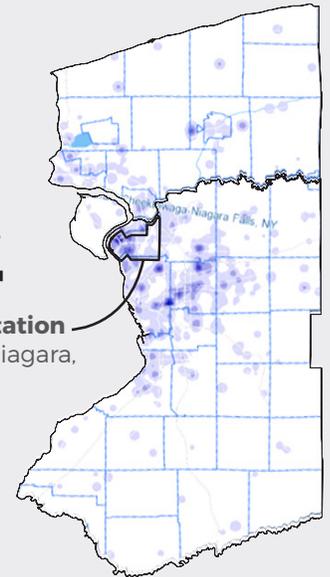
10%
of our metro
region's
Manufacturing
jobs are in
Tonawanda.



Manufacturing
jobs in Buffalo
Niagara, 2013

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, OnThe-Map Application, LEHD, LODES data (2013)

11%
of our metro
region's jobs
in Trade and
Transportation
are in Tonawanda.



Trade/Transportation
jobs in Buffalo Niagara,
2013

**Over 50% of
Tonawanda
residents
work in these five
industries.**

Healthcare &
Social Assistance **15%**

Retail **12%**

Education **10%**

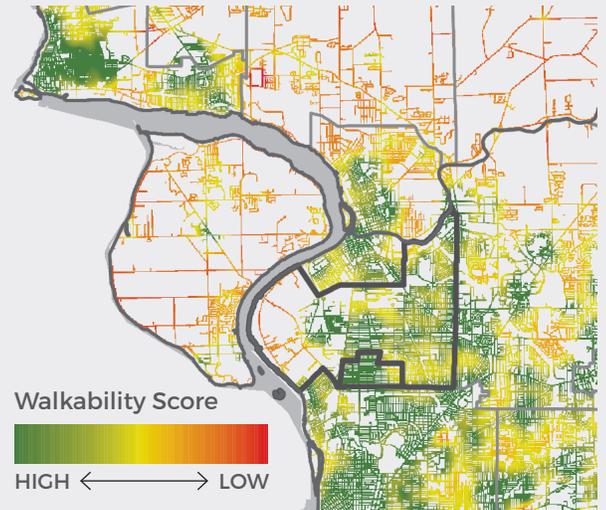
Accommodation
& Food Service **9%**

Manufacturing **8%**

TOTAL **54%**

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, OnThe-Map Application, LEHD, LODES data (2013)

**Tonawanda is
one of
the most
walkable
places in
the region.**



SOURCES: UBRI analysis of walkability for Local Impact study. Major factors evaluated include proximity to retail and services, parks, and intersection density.

**3,257
households in
Tonawanda
do not have cars and
have limited access and
opportunity.**



Households without cars:

71% spend 60+ minutes on their daily commute

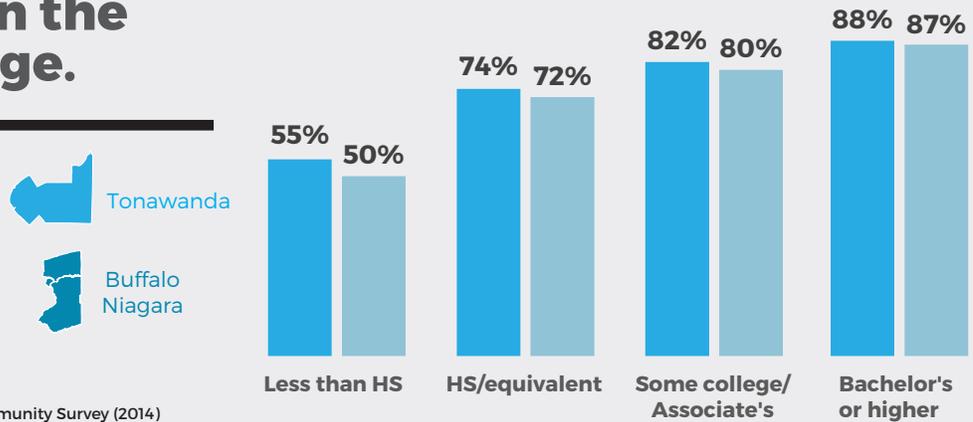
61% earn less than \$25,000/yr

86% do not have easy access to a supermarket

SOURCE: Commuting Times and Earnings: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2014); Supermarket Access: GIS analysis performed by UBRI, using ACS data and InfoUSA (2014).

At every educational level, **Tonawanda labor force participation rates are higher than the regional average.**

Labor Force Participation Rates by Educational Attainment, Age 25-64

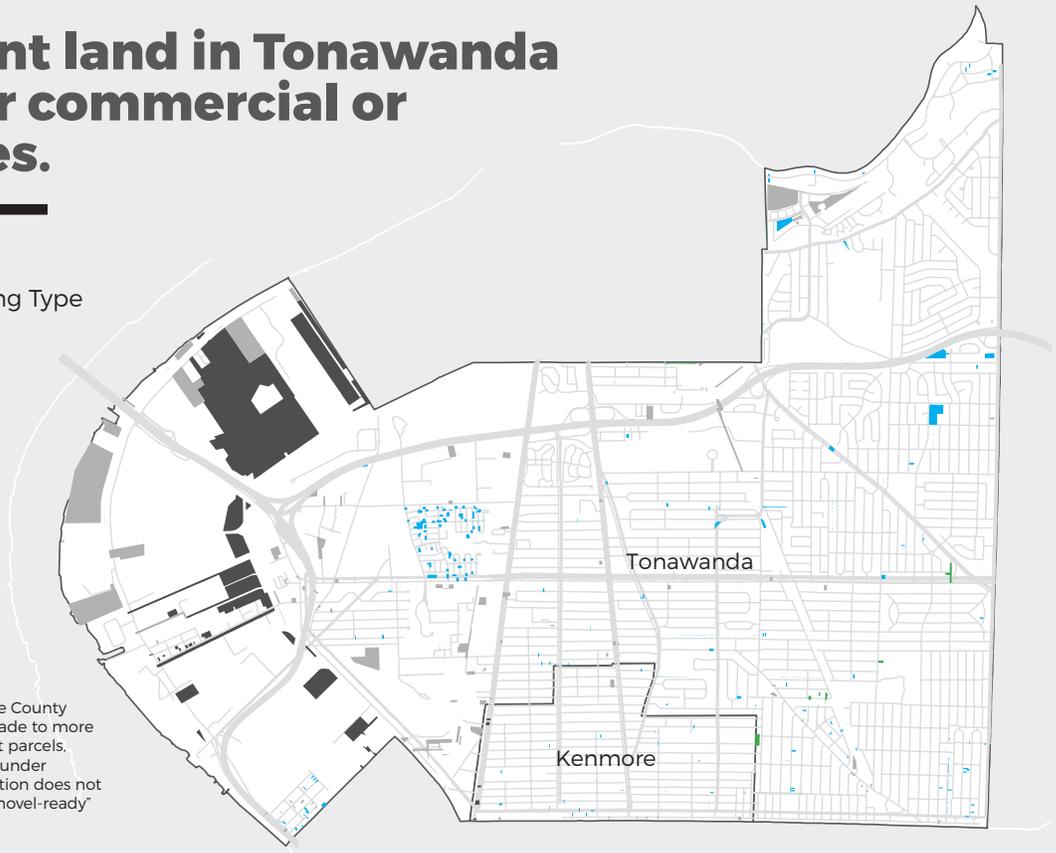


SOURCE: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014)

In 2015, **+90% of vacant land in Tonawanda was zoned for commercial or industrial uses.**

Vacant Land by Current Zoning Type

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Community and Public Service
- Residential



NOTE: Map and figures are based on 2015 Erie County parcel data. While adjustments have been made to more accurately reflect the current extent of vacant parcels, some of these sites may now be occupied or under development. Furthermore, a vacant designation does not necessarily suggest a parcel is unowned or "shovel-ready" for development.

SOURCE: Erie County Parcel Data (2015), Village of Kenmore Zoning Map (2012), Town of Tonawanda Zoning Map (Wendel-Duchscherer, 2006).



Learning from Other Communities: How are other communities across the world redefining economic revitalization?

Inspirations from other communities

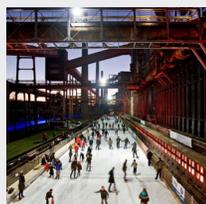
Tonawanda is not the first community to re-tool its economy in the face of a coal plant closure. Working with the Delta Institute, a national organization that helps communities transition toward sustainable economic development models, Tonawanda looked at how other communities reimagined decommissioned coal plants. Though only a part of the course charted out in this plan, a new productive use for the former Huntley plant is a critical element of creating a Tonawanda economy for the 21st Century.

The following are some of the re-uses that the Tonawanda community found most inspirational.



Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex

The Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial complex is located in Essen, Germany and is one of the largest examples of coal mine and coking plants in Europe. Powering heavy industry in Germany, it operated with multiple expansions and renovations from 1847 until 1986 when the coal mine was closed. In 1993 coking operations ceased. The property was purchased by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia for preservation purposes. In 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared both sites World Heritage sites. Today, the Ruhr Museum is located in the former plant and is the regional museum of the Ruhr Area. The museum has permanent exhibits showcasing geology, archeology, industrial and social history of the area, as well as offering tours, lectures, movies and hosting. Outdoor activities are also featured with winter ice skating on the former coking plant channel. This coal plant conversion was funded by the German federal government and by contributions to the Zollverein Foundation by public and private entities. Revenues are also generated from admission fees and special events.



Chester Power Station, Chester, PA

The Chester Power Station is located in Chester, Pennsylvania, roughly 18 miles south of central Philadelphia along the Delaware River. The power station was built in 1917 and decommissioned in 1981, but not remediated of its tar, ash, fuel oil, coal and coke remains until 1998. Excelon and Preferred Real Estate Investments spent \$10 million on environmental cleanup and demolition prior to conversion to an office building. The Wharf at Rivertown, as it is known now, has almost 400,000 square feet of office space, two marinas, restaurants, and a river walk. The redevelopment provided one half mile of access to the river for the first time in 100 years. The development cost \$60 million and was funded with support from state, local and private funding. Pennsylvania has designated this site a special Keystone Opportunity Zone, allowing tenants to receive tax incentives for locating on the site. Adjacent to the Wharf development is the stadium for the Philadelphia Union professional soccer team, helping to drive traffic to the area.





Municipal Power House, St. Louis, MO

The St. Louis Municipal Power House is located in downtown St. Louis. This less common location for a power plant can be an advantage for potential reuse options. Constructed in 1928, it is an architectural landmark on the National Historic Register and occupies an entire city block. The Power House supplied energy to a large portion of the downtown until it was decommissioned in 1980. After sitting vacant for almost 30 years, the building now houses an architectural design firm. The city sold the property to Canon Design in 2007, which renovated the structure for use as its regional offices and opened one year later. The entire interior was gutted and a new interior structure constructed within the walls.



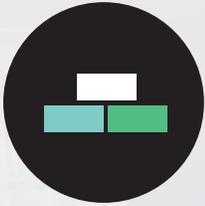
As downtown St. Louis began a resurgence, the demand for this location while preserving a historic structure, offered the city a new owner. The renovation cost of \$6 million was privately funded by Canon Design and won multiple awards for reuse of a historic structure, sustainable features such as water conservation and renewable energy features.



Widows Creek Power Plant, Jackson County, AL

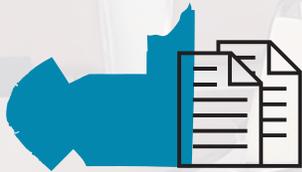
This former TVA power generating station closed in the fall of 2015, after operating for 63 years. Widows Creek was one of the TVA's largest sites, employing over 500 people at its peak. Several months before closure, Google announced its plan to build a global data center on the site of the former coal plant, providing an economic influx for the local community. The data center will be powered by 100% renewable energy and support green initiatives in the community that contribute to carbon reductions. The site will be cleared for new construction on a portion of the property. Remaining uses of the property are undetermined.





Building Blocks for Tonawanda Tomorrow

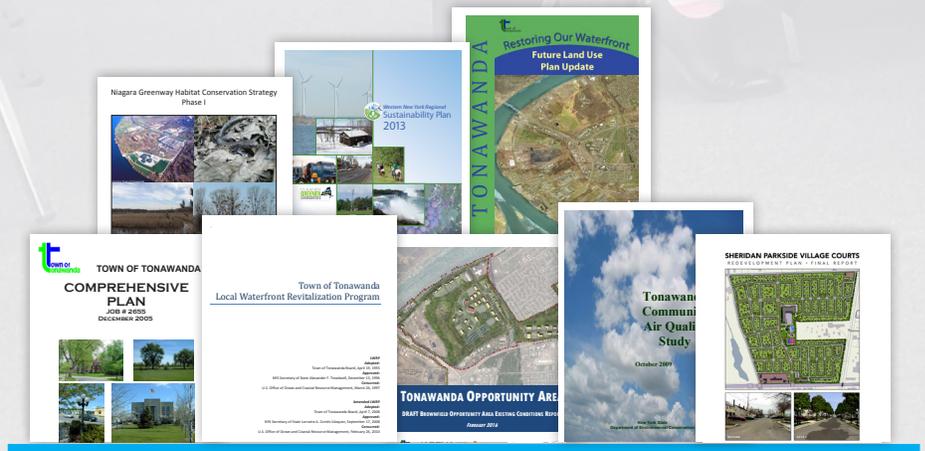
Tonawanda Tomorrow is designed to reinforce and strengthen the Town's planning vision, build off citizen-driven priorities for equitable and sustainable economic growth, and deepen Tonawanda's contribution to the region's economy. These three building blocks are an important part of Tonawanda Tomorrow's starting point and have shaped this plan every step of the way.



Grounded in the Town's local planning framework

This plan seeks to build on and reinforce past and ongoing planning work in Tonawanda including the Town Comprehensive Plan, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, the Brownfield Opportunity Area studies, and various neighborhood and park plans. Strategies and actions are aimed at growing Tonawanda's economy in ways that are compatible with the existing Town plans that guide decisions and investments.

Looking at the goals, objectives, priorities and vision statements expressed in Tonawanda's plans helped shape Tonawanda Tomorrow's perspective on what the community values. This sets up the strategies and actions of this plan to reinforce existing community priorities.



Building off community partnerships

Tonawanda Tomorrow developed as an outgrowth of the multi-year Just Transition Campaign led by the Clean Air Coalition of WNY. That process, engaged residents, workers, community groups, organized labor, and public officials to identify priorities for Tonawanda as it prepares for a local economy that is less dependent on the NRG Huntley coal plant. Through a series of community assemblies, the Tonawanda Just Transition Campaign identified community-level principles for the Town's economy, in particular, transitioning toward a more balanced and diversified economy. Those principles and the community partnership that created them help to frame the priorities for action in this plan.



Aligning with regional economic priorities and plans

From the start, Tonawanda Tomorrow has looked to the regional context to ensure this plan advances priorities for how Buffalo Niagara grows and develops. Special focus was paid to the WNY Regional Economic Development Council Plan and the Erie County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), whose strategies seek to ensure long-term job growth and prosperity in the region, and One Region Forward, a federally-recognized plan to promote more sustainable forms of development around a more unified region.



Aligning with regional planning helps the Town reinforce the unique attributes and strengths it contributes to the greater region.

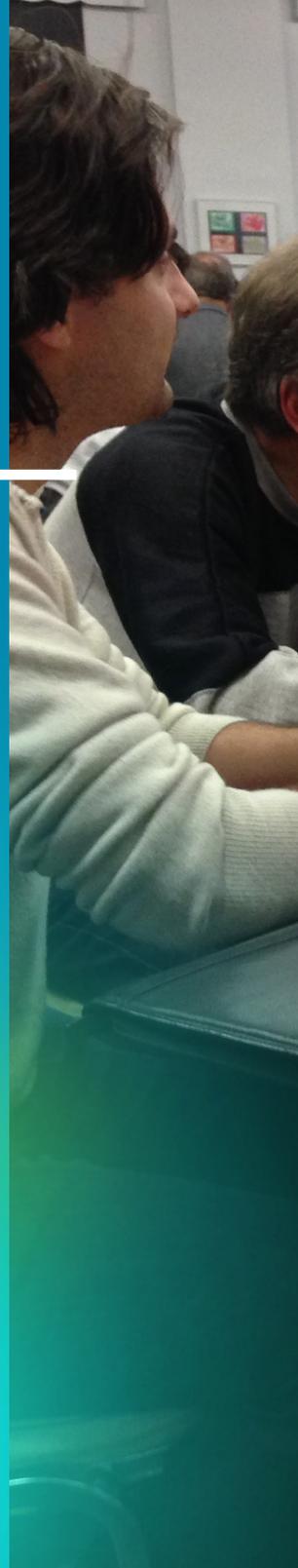


Community Values and Guiding Principles

Understanding What the Community Values

What do people value about living, working, or operating a business in the Town of Tonawanda? Answering this question is an important step in creating a plan that advances community priorities.

Tonawanda Tomorrow looked to past and ongoing planning and community development efforts, launched a wide-ranging community survey, and hosted a series of community workshops to understand what Tonawandans find most important about the Town. Taken together with objective data on the Town's economic strengths and challenges, this body of work provides an important foundation for developing strategies that can prepare Tonawanda for where the community wants to see it go in the 21st Century. Further, as these values reflect what people think is important to protect and invest in for the Town, they provide a solid foundation for evaluating policies, projects, or public or private investments.





300+
residents
sharing their ideas
and values across
4 public meetings.



728
Community Survey
Responses



**20 local
organizations**
represented throughout the process.



Healthy Community
Socially, Econ & Humanely
Walkable Blue Economy
Close Skills-age gap
keep small town feel balanced w/
new development
WATERFRONT TOURISM
Government and community
working together



What do you want Tonawanda to look like 20 years from now?

What we heard from
community members,
November 2016



15+

plans were reviewed to extract Tonawanda's community values. They include: 2014 Waterfront Land Use Plan, 2005 and 2014 Town Comprehensive Plan, 2012 and 2016 Tonawanda Opportunity Area Study, 2011 Town Economic Development Strategy, 2009 Old Town Neighborhood Plan, 2008 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, 2003 Sheridan Parkside Village Courts Redevelopment Plan, among others.

Eight value statements were identified by looking at the goals, objectives, priorities and vision statements expressed in Tonawanda's planning landscape.

As part of this exercise, a wide range of local and regional plans were reviewed including the Town Comprehensive Plan, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, the Brownfield Opportunity Area studies, and various neighborhood and park plans. The recurring ideas in these plans include reclaiming the waterfront, reducing contamination, creating more opportunities for outdoor recreation, and maintaining

vibrant residential and commercial areas.

Values were also informed by the extensive engagement process conducted as part of the Clean Air Coalition's multi-year Just Transition Campaign. Through a series of community assemblies, the Tonawanda Just Transition Campaign engaged residents, workers, community groups, organized labor, and public officials to identify priorities for Tonawanda as it prepares for a local economy that is less dependent on the NRG

Huntley coal plant. The process identified community-level principles for the Town's economy, in particular, transitioning toward a more balanced and diversified economy.

Together, the values describe what Tonawandans want to protect or invest in for the future. They align with priorities in regional plans like One Region Forward and the WNY Regional Economic Development Council Plan to grow Buffalo Niagara's economy, practice sustainable development patterns and improve quality of life and economic opportunity for all.

Tonawandans Value...



our sense of community, where neighbors look out for each other and have pride in where we live.

our waterfront, although we want to make it better, easier to get to, and of greater benefit to residents and visitors.

a clean and healthy environment that doesn't make members of our community sick.

our great work ethic that is passed on from generation to generation.

our schools and see education as critical to quality of life.

our industrial heritage, which is important to our identity and economy.

our neighborhoods and commercial areas and want to see them revitalized.

quality public services, programs and places to gather and recreate.

Guiding Principles for Tonawanda Tomorrow



Through a series of engagement opportunities, members of the Tonawanda community crafted a set of principles to guide economic action for Tonawanda Tomorrow.

As a starting point, a set of preliminary value statements were identified by looking at the goals, objectives, and aspirations expressed in past and ongoing planning or community organizing exercises. This included a look at the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the community priorities generated by the Just Transition Campaign, as well as a dozen other local planning documents.

At a public workshop and through a survey taken by more than 700 Town residents and stakeholders, these values were assessed and refined based on community input.

These broad value statements were then

applied to three focus areas for growing the Town's economy - Economy (how to support companies and job creation efforts); Workforce (how to support workers and residents to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow); and Placemaking (creating the quality of life and physical infrastructure to make Tonawanda thrive as a community).

A true community partnership, Tonawanda Tomorrow brought together government, residents, workers, and business representatives.



Translating value statements to Guiding Principles organized by the interconnected themes of Economy, Workforce and Placemaking



Guiding principles inform strategies and actions for Tonawanda



Jobs that embrace the future, especially renewable energy generation.

A balanced and resilient economy that isn't over-dependent on one or two companies or industries.

Keep our large employers in Tonawanda while growing opportunities for small businesses and new start-ups.

Good corporate citizens that are committed to their workers and the well-being of the community.

Competitive wages, benefits and working conditions.

Career pathways that contribute to positive impacts locally and globally.

Schools and local businesses working together to prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow.

Equip and re-train people for life-long career success.

Awareness among Tonawanda residents, workers and students about jobs of the future and resources that can advance career pathways.

Promote workforce opportunities for all people regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, or ability.

A vibrant and accessible waterfront that balances both industry and public access.

A connected Town that is walkable and served by high quality public transit.

A healthy, green, and sustainable environment.

Opportunities to celebrate Tonawanda's unique history, identity and sense of community.

Maintain affordability, but expand amenities that will keep young people and families in the Town for the long run.

Make Tonawanda an inclusive and inviting community that supports opportunity for all.

Repurpose former brownfield sites for re-use in the new economy.



Guiding Principles **Economy**

Principles that describe the economic sector mix Tonawanda wants to see for the future.



Guiding Principles **Workforce**

Principles for the types of jobs Tonawanda wants to attract and the tools and resources needed to make it happen.



Guiding Principles **Placemaking**

Principles for how Tonawanda should invest in its places and infrastructure to grow the economy and further enhance the Town's quality of life.

21st Century Strategies for Tonawanda's Tomorrow

Growing the Town's Economy for the Future

Preparing for Tonawanda's economy of tomorrow requires sound strategies informed by data and shaped by community ideas and values. Tonawanda Tomorrow worked with local partners and regional and subject-matter experts to craft strategies that can guide economic priorities for the Town and set a path toward advancing goals and aspirations expressed by community members.

The first set of strategies are organized around "Economy" and are aimed at attracting and growing businesses that support good-paying jobs, are prime for growth in the 21st Century, and build on the unique strengths of Tonawanda.

The second set of strategies deal with investing in the pipeline that brings qualified workers to the Tonawanda jobs of the future. These strategies look to address identified needs while also investing in opportunities that can inspire young people to fill the workforce gap some employers are facing due to changing demographics.

The final set of strategies are focused on actions the Town can take to better capitalize on the tremendous resource of its waterfront location and tourism assets, and invest in key approaches that can enhance quality of life to make Tonawanda an attractive community for young people and families.



Strategies Grounded in Community Planning and Values

Tonawanda Tomorrow strategies were developed with the input of nearly 30 stakeholders, representing a variety of government agencies and community groups. Stakeholders brought expertise in economic development, workforce, real estate, transportation, education, and environmental issues, to name a few.

From the beginning, stakeholders were equipped with data and analysis outlining some of the Town's economic strengths and challenges. Compiled by the UB Regional Institute, this information helped set the stage for informed decision making around strategy development.

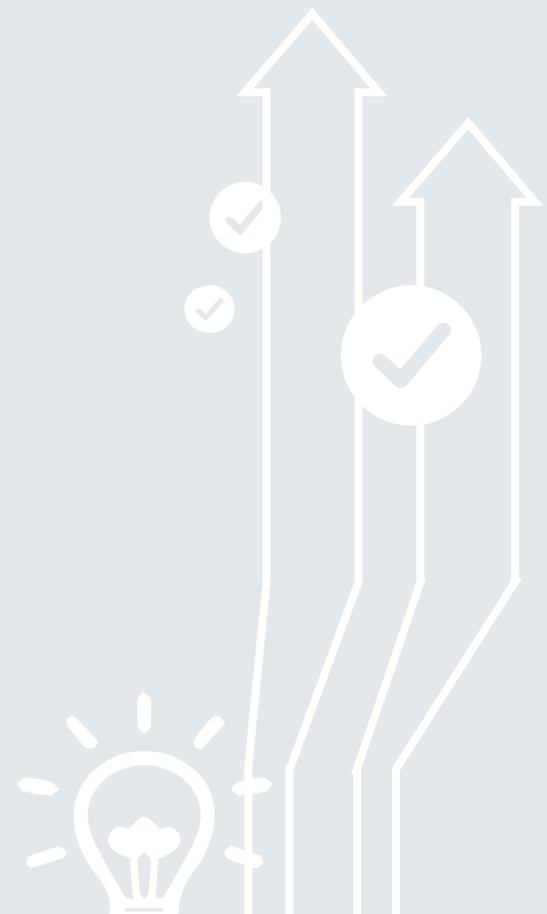
The strategies also considered the perspectives of approximately 1,000 town residents and area neighbors who came to public workshops or took the survey.

Bringing together data, community

values, and the expertise stakeholders brought to the table, a series of nine strategies were identified that mutually reinforce each other- integrating people, place, and economy. Action items and partnership opportunities help advise how to move these strategies into motion.



In groups organized around “Economy,” “Workforce,” and “Placemaking,” stakeholders met over eight months to develop and refine economic development strategies.



Strategies for Tonawanda Tomorrow



Economy

Position the town of Tonawanda as a regional center for sustainable manufacturing and trade

Extend support services to Tonawanda's small and medium sized businesses to export and expand

Connect businesses and entrepreneurs to our region's growing innovation ecosystem



Workforce

Help businesses with aging workforces cultivate talent and attract new workers

Strengthen the career pipeline for students to access jobs in Tonawanda

Create a local workforce network focused on the needs of Tonawanda workers and businesses and bringing together resources for increasing access to opportunities



Placemaking

Cultivate tools, programs, and ownership solutions that can pave the way for increased public access to the water

Revamp the Town's zoning code to emphasize walkability, diverse transportation options, mixed-use development, and other design principles attractive to young people and families

Connect Tonawanda's recreation and tourism attractions and niches to regional destinations and initiatives



What we heard from community meetings and workshops



“Make Tonawanda an example!

Green, sustainable, thriving, blue economy,

highlight green infrastructure to replace aging gray infrastructure. Make waterfront a destination.”

*Feedback from the Community Workshop
February 16, 2017*

“High tech industry, and clean energy can help create new jobs

and not further harm the environment.”

*Feedback from the Community Workshop
February 16, 2017*

Position the town of Tonawanda as a regional center for sustainable manufacturing and trade

Why it matters and what it means

Tonawanda historically served the Buffalo Niagara region as a center for industry and manufacturing. This legacy continues today as the Town is home to one in

ten of the region’s jobs in both manufacturing and trade/transportation. With both identified as target industries for Buffalo Niagara, Tonawanda plays a critical role in advancing our region’s economic development agenda.

Tonawanda possesses strengths and assets critical to maintaining and growing

its base as a center for manufacturing and trade. As highlighted in the 2016 Tonawanda Tomorrow survey, access to markets and transportation infrastructure attract businesses and workers to the Town. Tonawanda also benefits from large facilities

suitable to manufacturing and trade, as well as a strong base of workers living in the Town or nearby with experience working in these trades.

Maintaining this stronghold and expanding the Town’s role as a regional center for manufacturing and trade will require continual efforts to support large and small employers in these fields. The Town will also need to continue to work with regional economic development officials, site selectors, developers, and potential businesses to invest in Tonawanda as a place to do business.

Finally, emphasis needs to be placed on supporting and attracting businesses that employ technologies and production processes that are clean, healthy and sustainable. This positions the Town to be forward-looking, promoting opportunities that work for the community’s vision for clean air and water, and healthy work environments.

71%



of survey respondents agreed that the Town’s industrial heritage is important to the Town’s identity.



These actions emphasize the need to advance Tonawanda as a regional economic destination for industry and to work with the public and private sector to target job growth opportunities that meet community priorities.

Advancing this strategy will require collaboration with partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Work with the WNY Regional Economic Development Council (WNY REDC) to ensure Tonawanda’s industrial and trade assets receive support and investment.

Engage utility companies and other regional partners to proactively make large sites shovel ready for 21st Century manufacturing facilities.

Promote land and facility opportunities in Tonawanda in partnership with site selection and development financing agencies such as Invest Buffalo Niagara, Erie County Industrial Development Agency, and Empire State Development.

Become a designated “Clean Energy Community” by NYSERDA as a way to highlight the Town’s commitment to clean and renewable energy, qualify for grant programs, and attract investment from renewable industries.

Work with existing large manufacturing and trade/transportation employers to identify their supply chain needs and target potential industries that can benefit from close proximity.

Invest in appropriate renewable energy projects that align with community values, can create jobs, and provide energy to existing employers and residents.

Partnership Opportunities

- Town of Tonawanda
- Western New York Sustainable Business Roundtable
- Erie County Industrial Development Agency
- Empire State Development, Western New York office
- Invest Buffalo Niagara
- Buffalo Niagara Partnership
- Erie County Office of Economic Development
- Buffalo Niagara Manufacturers Alliance

Momentum to Build On

Manufacturers are betting on Tonawanda

In the last few months of 2016 alone, large manufacturers Sumitomo Rubber USA and General Motors Powertrain announced over \$400 million in planned expansions at their Tonawanda facilities. Investments in new machinery and technology at these sites will allow these employers to grow and retain jobs, deepen their commitment to the Town, and further cement Tonawanda’s role as a manufacturing center for the Buffalo Niagara region.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 

Extend support services to Tonawanda’s small and medium sized businesses to export and expand

Why it matters and what it means

Private sector jobs in Tonawanda grew much faster after the 2008 recession than in other parts of the region. Helping businesses

expand, particularly by strengthening export activity, will keep up that job creation momentum.

Tonawanda’s small and medium sized businesses are a prime target for expansion and export assistance, since four out of five employers in Tonawanda are a small or medium sized business.

Town residents also value small, worker-focused businesses that are embedded into the fabric of the community. As

expressed in the first public meeting and in the community survey, these businesses are perceived to contribute to the community’s sense of pride and provide sufficient

69%

of Tonawanda firms are considered small businesses, meaning they have fewer than 10 employees.

Of the manufacturing companies in Tonawanda, 48% are considered small businesses.

SOURCE: US Census Bureau, County Business Patterns

“With the surge in the population of young adults in the town, incubators can serve to keep them working and living in the town as their ideas and ventures take root.”

*Resident comment during the public draft review process
May, 2017*

“Help boost the size of local businesses, expand their customer base, etc.

Growth from within also creates strength.”

*Feedback from Stakeholder Meeting
October 20, 2016*

“Support small business.”

*Feedback from the Community Workshop
February 16, 2017*

diversity to protect the local economy from fluctuations in individual industries.

Public and private service providers in the areas of economic, business, and workforce development must mount a concerted effort to reach out to Tonawanda’s small and medium sized businesses. The goal is to create customized programs and tools that will strengthen companies and enable their growth.



Boosting exports is heralded by economic development experts as critical for increasing competitiveness and jobs. The priorities will help Tonawanda firms compete and trade on a global scale.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Mobilize international trade assistance groups (i.e. US Export Assistance Center, World Trade Center Buffalo Niagara, and Global NY) and local logistics and trade management companies to educate Tonawanda’s small and medium businesses about foreign markets, importing-exporting processes, and resources.

Market Erie County’s Foreign Trade Zone general purpose facilities to smaller manufacturers.

Assist manufacturers in partnering with supply chain providers in Southern Ontario, leveraging existing resources and programs that seek to promote bi-national trade.

Increase participation of small businesses in trade associations to connect businesses with best practices and shared knowledge from industry contemporaries.

Promote the Town’s re-established Low-Interest Small Business Loan Program.

A range of organizations and partners can help businesses grow exports and expand operations, especially given the region’s bi-national border location.

Partnership Opportunities

US Small Business Administration’s export assistance programs and loans

Global NY’s State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) grants

Buffalo Niagara Partnership

World Trade Center

Erie County Industrial Development Agency

Insyte Consulting

Fuzehub

Invest Buffalo Niagara

U.S. Department of Commerce

Momentum to Build On

Pine Pharmaceuticals begins expansion

Pine Pharmaceuticals, a Western New York-owned company that makes custom drugs shipped directly to doctors, is building a new facility six times the size of its current facility on Colvin Woods Parkway. The new 25,000 square foot office/lab/production/warehousing/distribution facility will be located at the Riverview Solar Technology Park, the state’s first solar-ready commerce park. The company, which has received tax incentives from ECIDA and the NYS Excelsior Jobs Program, is the first customer to buy its own parcel at the Park. In addition to its physical expansion, the company also expects to create 28 new high-paying positions by 2021.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 

Connect businesses and entrepreneurs to our region’s growing innovation ecosystem

Why it matters and what it means

Attracting and growing new businesses in Tonawanda, especially those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-intensive industries will become important

for sustainable economic growth. Young firms have the ability to create new jobs. In fact, in Buffalo Niagara in 2014, almost half of all new jobs were created by young firms. In recent years, the region also gained momentum in a diverse range of STEM-intensive industries that drive innovation, tend to employ more workers and pay higher wages. The Buffalo Niagara region is beginning to improve regional innovation performance

and attractiveness to entrepreneurs and investors through a number of different strategies and programs. These programs

“KenTon Chamber of Commerce is an asset for networking and advocacy, there are also a number of civic groups (Rotary, KVIS)... The WNY area colleges are also an excellent resource for assistance in research, internships, and employees.”

Feedback from the Community Workshop February 16, 2017

“Attract small businesses into a business park like an incubator. Need to maintain public access and retail development.”

Feedback from the Community Workshop February 16, 2017

Many survey comments called for creating jobs that involve technology, innovation, and solutions for the 21st century.



are helping to generate more start-up enterprises through greater connections with the region’s research-rich educational institutions to spark commercialization of new products and processes; enhanced mentoring, incubator space and other supports for aspiring entrepreneurs; networks for collaboration that help support early-stage firm growth; and an ecosystem to help existing manufacturers create a competitive advantage for their products through innovation. Connecting Tonawanda’s existing and emerging enterprises with these larger, more robust regional initiatives will help grow jobs locally.



Innovation springs from information sharing and experimentation. Actions can foster the type of networking that creates opportunity for businesses and entrepreneurs.

Some of the region's innovation leaders can be tapped for their expertise and connections with industry.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Market the offerings of 43North startups, Buffalo Manufacturing Works, and LaunchNY to Tonawanda firms looking to increase productivity, get new products to market, or expand their market.

Set-up business incubators, co-working spaces, and makerspaces in underutilized Tonawanda facilities.

Foster partnerships between universities, local businesses, and the Kenmore Tonawanda Union Free School District.

Partnership Opportunities

Western New York Incubator Network

43North

Buffalo Manufacturing Works

LaunchNY

Local technology companies, such as USitek

UB Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership

New York State Center for Excellence in Materials Informatics

Momentum to Build On

Tonawanda firm furthers the region's advanced manufacturing capacity

In 2003, Praxair—an industrial gas supplier and service provider to over a dozen industries across the world—opened a metal fabrication lab in Tonawanda with full research and development (R&D) capabilities. In 2014, it became a founding member of the Buffalo Manufacturing Works, a network of organizations that help the region's manufacturers connect with the latest research, take ideas to market, and improve production processes. Most recently, the company helped the network open a 3-D printing lab at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus to create a fun environment to generate interest in advanced manufacturing among high schools students and improve STEM literacy.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 



Help businesses with aging workforces cultivate talent and attract new workers

“Support older workers in second careers.”

Feedback from Community Strategy Workshop, February, 2017

“...it’s important to engage [companies] early on. To convince them to anticipate and prepare for the coming skilled worker shortage.”

Feedback from Stakeholder Meeting November 10, 2016

Why it matters and what it means

Although Tonawanda is a major source of jobs for the region, sustaining that role may soon be a challenge. Older workers in the town’s top five industries currently outnumber younger ones. Workforce stability and productivity could be compromised if there are lags replacing retired workers.

Planning to replenish talent can enable companies to mitigate the impact of structural workforce changes.

By looking in advance at the strengths and potential of their entire

employee base, they can explore mentoring and training needs for successful future reassignments as well as the need for new hires. And given that many older workers may continue to work beyond the age of 65, this type of intervention could also help

companies design alternative advancement opportunities to help retain talented younger workers.

Several of the area’s industrial powerhouses, like Sumitomo and the General Motors Powertrain facility have announced plans to expand. As large manufacturers grow, it is especially important to maintain strong collaborative relationships with industry, organized labor, workforce development agencies, etc. to see that company needs are met with the local labor force.

This same collaborative approach can support small and medium sized businesses as they seek to retrain employees, cultivate talent, and attract new workers.

30%

of workers in the three most specialized industries of Tonawanda - manufacturing, construction, and trade & transportation - are over the age of 55, and may be considering retirement in the next decade.

SOURCE: US Census On the Map.



These actions intend to change how workforce service providers approach local employers to develop customized succession plans.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Survey Tonawanda’s small and medium businesses to identify their projected workforce needs in terms of staffing, training, and other supports.

Illustrate and promote the career pathways that are possible with each company and how each job opportunity contributes to the “bigger picture.”

Work with regional workforce development agencies to promote sector-based workforce development strategies that support shared training and capacity building across employers in Tonawanda’s top industries.

Engage human resource professionals or hiring agents at local companies to inform them about training and education opportunities for employees, mentorship programs, and policies that help aging workers such as part-time and flexible work arrangements, and phased retirement plans.

Promote employer-facing training programs combined with staffing agreements as an incentive for workers to complete training and as an assurance to employers that candidates will have just the right skill set and experience they need.

Enlist and train retirees as training consultants to reduce the shortage of people that can teach highly specialized skills.

Tonawanda companies can work with the organizations to satisfy their anticipated workforce needs.

Partnership Opportunities

Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board

Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology

Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

United Way American Apprenticeship Program

Erie 1 BOCES - Kenton Career Technical Center

Local businesses

Buffalo Niagara Human Resources Association

Erie Community College

New York State Department of Labor



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 

Strengthen the career pipeline for students to access jobs in Tonawanda

Why it matters and what it means

Throughout this public participation process, many people voiced concern over local firms' difficulty finding qualified workers.

An often cited factor is that high school graduates have a limited knowledge of career options coupled with a negative perception of skilled trades and manufacturing jobs. Their perception, they say, does not align with the earnings potential and workplace conditions that these fields offer today.

One solution is school-industry collaboration. The intent is to align curriculums with industry

needs (particularly "soft skills" development), to expand student awareness of career options, and to allow students to "test drive" jobs before they leave school. Schools benefit from greater student retention, while

81%



of survey respondents identified K-12 schools as critical to the Town's identity. Further, 74% agreed that the quality of the schools make Tonawanda a great place to live.

"Expose youth to vocations. Market demand exists now

for vocational/skilled trades."

*Feedback from Community Strategy Workshop
February, 2017*

"Tonawanda's Big Picture School is a highly innovative program for youth that we need to celebrate.

We need to lift Tonawanda's educational innovation."

*Feedback from the Community Kickoff
November, 2016*

businesses save on training and create a pool of interested and more qualified entry-level workers. Students benefit by graduating with a better idea of potential career paths and having some work experience to add to their resumes. Educational institutions and employers could save time and money that would be lost when young people explore careers by frequently changing majors or job hopping.

As these collaborations take shape, it will be important to craft experiences for students ages 10 and up, rather than just for high school juniors and seniors. Students begin to connect their abilities to their schoolwork and what they want to do in the future at an early age. The positive experiences they get from these types of programs is often a motivator to stay in school past ninth grade, when many begin to drop out.



These actions aim to bolster school-industry collaboration through existing outreach and education programs.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Raise awareness among high school students of higher-paying jobs and career pathways that do not require a four-year degree, particularly ones that exist in Tonawanda and are currently hard to fill.

Engage the Buffalo Niagara Partnership and the Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance to encourage Tonawanda companies to develop Dream It. Do It. ambassadorships and to introduce schools and teachers to the Dream It. Do It. Educator Guide.

Develop internships or expanded learning time programs, such as Big Picture Schools and Citizen Schools, to connect students and volunteer professionals through hands-on, skill-building activities associated to STEM careers.

Invest in and grow partnerships across local employers, the Ken-Ton School District, and community-based youth organizations to expose students to local career opportunities through career fairs, summer career camps, job shadowing opportunities, and part-time and summer jobs.

Educational leaders can reach out to local businesses through the Town Chamber of Commerce to develop interesting programs collaboratively.

Partnership Opportunities

- Kenmore-Tonawanda Chamber of Commerce
- Kemore-Tonawanda Union Free School District
- Kenmore Teachers Association
- Erie 1 BOCES - Kenton Career Technical Center
- Dream It. Do It.

Momentum to Build On

School district offers innovative programs

The Kenmore Tonawanda Union Free School District offers a variety of innovative and nationally-recognized programs that enable high school students to connect their classroom learning with real world opportunities through internships with local employers. These programs include Project Lead the Way, Big Picture Schools, and the Twilight Program. The District engages industry leaders to understand their needs as employers and to ensure curriculums are up-to-date, and welcomes even greater school-industry collaboration to create opportunities that improve student outcomes and shapes the workforce of tomorrow.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops



Create a local workforce network focused on the needs of Tonawanda workers and businesses and bringing together resources to increase access to opportunities

Why it matters and what it means

Tonawanda does better than the region on labor participation, unemployment, and poverty indicators; but some of its residents still face barriers to work such as limited mobility and access to employment, training, and financial support services.

Improving workforce development outcomes will require a new approach that focuses on helping individuals succeed in a career that both matches their interests and abilities and is capable of sustaining families.

A local workforce development network could coordinate the efforts of the numerous but disjointed service providers across the region and ensure the programs are adapted to meet the needs of local workers and businesses. Non-traditional partners, such as

Only 23%



of survey respondents agreed that there are accessible workforce training opportunities in the Town.

“Connect employers to those looking for employment.”

*Feedback from Community Strategy Workshop
February, 2017*

“...affordable housing, getting back to work, senior services, affordable transportation and mental health services are somewhat hidden in plain sight. They are abundant and resource awareness is limited. For long-term success of the Town of Tonawanda community

supportive services...is essential.”

*Feedback from Community Survey
November 2016*

churches and human services non-profits, which work with the most disadvantaged populations, will be brought into the network. These organizations often provide low skilled workers with foundational knowledge and skills that enable them to succeed in traditional workforce development programs.

The network would also work to increase engagement of the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board in Tonawanda and advocate for changes in public benefit programs that are unintentionally discouraging workers from participating in workforce development programs or causing them to drop out, as well as advocating for improved public transit along major employment corridors.



The objective of these actions is to expand how Tonawanda residents access training and job opportunities.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Identify an organization that can lead this collaborative effort and recruit additional partners to regularly work together on unique workforce issues facing Tonawanda workers and businesses.

Develop a wide ranging inventory of potential training partners - educational institutions, employment agencies, labor unions, community organizations, etc.

Create a program that offers one-on-one assistance navigating online employment resources at a highly accessible public location in Tonawanda.

Identify policies that reduce or inhibit successful participation in workforce development programs, and work with local, state, and federal representatives to reform these policies or programs.

Engage the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board and the NYS Department of Labor to increase their regular presence in Tonawanda.

An array of agencies and non-profits can lead workforce development efforts in Tonawanda and get even more organizations on board.

Partnership Opportunities

- Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board
- Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology
- Buffalo Niagara Skills Partnership
- Erie County Department of Social Services
- Mobile Safety Net Team
- NYS Department of Labor
- United Way American Apprenticeship Program
- Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

Momentum to Build On

Providers take services into the community

The Town of Tonawanda Coalition Community Resource Hub kicked off in 2016 at the Kenmore Public Library to connect town residents with a wide range of providers to support their health, educational, and social needs. Held the third Thursday of every month, the Hub has made it easier for residents to speak for a couple of hours with these providers and make any arrangements necessary without having to drive or bus to Buffalo. An initiative of the John R. Oishei Foundation's Mobile Safety-Net Team, the Hub is a model Tonawanda Tomorrow stakeholders are considering to make career services more accessible to town residents.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 

Cultivate tools, programs, and ownership solutions that can pave the way for increased public access to the water

Why it matters and what it means

Tonawanda residents resoundingly want more access to their waterfront. The sentiment appears in numerous land use plans and waterfront policies, some going back decades.

Yet the majority of the nearly six miles of shoreline in the town are inaccessible. According to the draft Tonawanda Opportunity Area Nomination Study (2016), lack of roads and trails, environmental concerns, and private land ownership are some of the reasons why waterfront access in the town is limited.

A significant amount of work has taken place to prepare for implementing the community's vision for the waterfront: land use regulations were updated, several brownfields were remediated and

90%



of survey respondents cited the waterfront as a key town asset, but investments are needed to make it more accessible.

“Make Huntley and rest of waterfront a destination.”

Feedback from the Community Kickoff November, 2016

“Repurposing - it’s a great idea to take advantage of the spaces we are given

and turn it into something exciting for members of the community.”

Feedback from the Community Workshop February 16, 2017

redeveloped, and there are ongoing efforts to address other sites.

But to achieve full implementation within one generation, there must be a champion for the redevelopment of this area who can get all parties to the table. This work will require overcoming substantial ownership and liability concerns, making strategic infrastructure investments, lining up adequate funding support and incentives, and a spirited marketing campaign.



Numerous opportunities exist for advancing the community's vision for a waterfront that balances both industry and public access. Projects or initiatives listed will help set this in motion.

Solving the ownership challenges of key strategic sites will require both resources and partnerships. Several organizations can play an important role in this process.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Building off the momentum of Tonawanda Tomorrow, launch a community-based, collaborative partnership focused on developing ownership solutions so that the Huntley property can be transformed from a liability to an asset.

Re-develop the "Cherry Farm" site as Tonawanda's preeminent waterfront park, connecting it to Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper's emerging "Buffalo Blueway" as well as smaller access points along the Riverfront area.

Work through the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program to prepare strategic sites for sustainable manufacturing and trade activity.

Identify both passive and active recreation activities that are suitable for a waterfront environment that balances both industry and public access.

Partnership Opportunities

- Buffalo Niagara River Land Trust
- Delta Institute
- Clean Air Coalition of WNY
- Erie County Industrial Development Agency
- Empire State Development
- Niagara River Remedial Action Plan
- Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper

Momentum to Build On

Town intensifies waterfront redevelopment efforts

In 2012, the Town of Tonawanda entered the New York State Department of State's Brownfield Opportunity Area Program to better understand the challenges and opportunities of redeveloping the waterfront. In 2016, the Town moved to the second stage of the program and developed a strategy to tackle the biggest barriers to private investment in that area. Now in 2017, the Town and a suite of regional public and private partners are pitching target properties to local, national, and international developers willing to invest in this community and grow their businesses while transforming the waterfront into the vibrant mixed-use district with substantial public access and recreation opportunities which has been the community's vision for many decades.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops



“Making the streets - landscaping, building facades, streetlights, etc. - should be a priority.

We especially need an attractive town center...

A community needs an attractive and active place that feels like the hub of interaction... “

Feedback from Community Survey November 2016-January 2017

“Walkability and bike trails are a must for residents as we get younger/ active people.”

Resident comment during the public draft review process May, 2017

Revamp the Town’s zoning code to emphasize walkability, diverse transportation options, mixed-use development, and other design principles attractive to young people and families

Why it matters and what it means

Over a series of recent and ongoing planning efforts, the Town of Tonawanda has been crafting and sharpening a vision for developing sustainably in the 21st Century. Its Comprehensive Plan, updated in 2014, notes the need to promote walkability, diverse transportation options, and mixed use development. The Town’s Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2017, has been instrumental in leveraging projects like Rails to Trails and the region’s first pedestrian-friendly “HAWK” street crossing signal on Sheridan Drive. The range of waterfront planning - from the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) Plan to the Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) plans - all stress the need to increase public access and diversify

development.

Though Tonawanda has many pieces in place to promote a sustainable and walkable built environment in the Town, the zoning code currently reflects a previous era of development. Options like mixed-use development on many commercial corridors are limited, especially for creating dense transit-oriented development that maximizes tax revenue generation around the proposed Niagara Falls Boulevard Light Rail Extension. Public access to the water and other waterfront land uses promoted in the LWRP and BOA planning are not easily achieved without revised zoning. Further, residential options that can continue to attract and keep young people and families should be explored, while maintaining the town’s affordability and sense of community.

89%

of survey respondents said they can find the things they need at local stores and service providers. However, 39% have a hard time getting around town without a car.



Though funding is a critical need to re-imagine the zoning code in Tonawanda, a series of projects and other policy initiatives can occur to help Tonawanda better shape its built environment with contemporary trends.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Secure funding to upgrade zoning to meet objectives in the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, and the economic development priorities outlined in this plan.

Promote housing models that are currently lacking in the Town, including mixed-use developments near walkable centers, single family homes with 4+ bedrooms, and live-work spaces.

Partner with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) to support Transit Oriented Development (TOD) along Niagara Falls Blvd., so that land uses are compatible with Metro rail extension and promote higher tax revenues and new forms of development that caters to young and elderly Town residents.

Continue to activate Complete Street projects that can enhance walkability, safe bicycle travel, connectivity and community vibrancy across the Town. Specifically target streets that connect to the Rails-to-Trails project, the waterfront, business corridors, and employment centers.

Connect local businesses relocating to or expanding in Tonawanda with the NFTA to assess transit needs, advise on location and design of new facilities, and consider custom programs to get workers to the job site.

Identify opportunities to “re-imagine” existing auto-oriented corridors as areas where mixed use development, public transit, walking and bicycling can flourish.

The Town will benefit from closer relationships with the agencies and groups to align all the ongoing and upcoming planning projects.

Partnership Opportunities

- One Region Forward
- Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
- Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
- Clean Air Coalition of WNY
- Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
- New York State, Department of State
- New York State Energy and Research Development Authority
- Go Bike Buffalo

Momentum to Build On

Town begins to develop Complete Streets policy

After considering Tonawanda residents’ repeated calls for varied and safer transportation options throughout the 2014 comprehensive planning process, the Town Board resolved to move ahead with the development of a “Complete Streets” policy. With a Complete Streets Committee established in 2015 to lead the way, a lot of advances are underway. A survey was launched in 2016 to determine resident concerns about a variety of transportation issues and the first complete street pilot project is expected to be completed in early 2018.



What we heard from community meetings and workshops 

Connect Tonawanda’s recreation and tourism attractions and niches to regional destinations and initiatives

Why it matters and what it means

The Town of Tonawanda offers great recreational amenities. Town residents and visitors from nearby communities both remarked on the community survey how much they enjoyed the golf course, the new rails-to-trails, the parks, the pools, the skating rink, and the variety of activities for all ages.

Yet it was clear that there is appetite for more. Many suggested carving out space for pocket parks in neighborhoods and connecting them with trails. Others wanted bike trails

that linked the town from east to west and with the Niagara River Greenway Trail. Some saw great opportunities for highlighting industrial heritage opportunities, main street-style shopping areas, and opening up the waterfront for events, passive outdoor activities, and water-based activities.

88%



of survey respondents agree that the Town parks and trails are key attributes to the Town’s quality of life.

“Emphasize unique history and culture - we have a lot of culture.”

*Feedback from Community Strategy Workshop
February, 2017*

“...the town should capitalize on its beautiful natural resources.

...promote its parks, waterfront, bike and walking trails, and other natural amenities that other towns do not have.”

*Feedback from Community Survey
November 2016-January 2017*

Partnerships with community organizations may help bring some of these ideas to fruition. They can help develop design concepts, get the public and private support needed, and raise the funds to get it done. Coordination with other levels of government will also be critical as there are many ongoing projects that can be aligned to fulfill these goals.



Tonawanda's diverse recreation assets can benefit from better coordination with regional initiatives and programs.

Priority Actions and Next Steps

Work with Visit Buffalo Niagara to integrate Town of Tonawanda recreations and attractions into marketing and event recruiting activities.

In coordination with Erie County and nearby communities, invest in the Tonawanda portion of the Shoreline Trail to bring people to the Tonawanda waterfront from Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and other connected communities.

Pursue a "Playful City" designation to celebrate Tonawanda's commitment to family-friendly recreation activities and set Tonawanda up for grants to expand creative play spaces in the Town.

Build off the success of rails-to-trails as a regional recreation asset by fulfilling existing enhancement plans, connecting the trail to business districts, and creating spin-off opportunities at key access points.

Develop niche waterfront recreation opportunities that build on the Town's strengths, such as fishing.

Examine tourism-related re-use options for the former Huntley site, including art and performance venues, an industrial museum, commercial activities, or a sports and recreation complex.

Regional partners, as well as nearby municipalities can offer important partnership opportunities for elevating Tonawanda's tourism assets.

Partnership Opportunities

Town of Tonawanda Department of Youth, Parks, and Recreation
Visit Buffalo Niagara
Erie County
Clean Air Coalition of WNY
Cities of Buffalo and Tonawanda
Niagara River Greenway Commission

Momentum to Build On

People flock to Tonawanda trails

The Tonawanda Rails-to-Trails opened in 2016 after being in the works for the past 16 years. Built on top of an old rail bed owned by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority with support from the federal government, Erie County, and the New York State Department of Transportation, this 3.9-mile pedestrian and bicycling trail operated by the City and Town of Tonawanda has been a roaring success. With 13 different access points and connection to the North Buffalo Rails-to-Trails, town residents and visitors alike can move safely through town, enjoying the outdoors and local retail offerings.

Next steps for putting Tonawanda Tomorrow into action



Advancing the strategies and actions identified in this plan will require the same level of collaboration that went into creating Tonawanda Tomorrow. To this end, an immediate first step toward moving this plan into action is **forming an implementation team** to focus implementation efforts and provide accountability to community residents and partners. In addition, this group will pursue funding, build partnerships, and identify new opportunities and projects to advance this plan.

This partnership should include the Clean Air Coalition of WNY, the Delta Institute, and members from the business community, nonprofit groups, organized labor, the School District, and workforce development groups, of which many participated in the planning phase for Tonawanda Tomorrow. In addition, key Town departments should be represented including Planning and Development, the Comptroller's Office, the Technical Support Team, and Youth, Parks, and Recreation.

Present this plan and Tonawanda's economic priorities to regional economic development partners.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Workforce



Placemaking

This plan recognizes the importance of working regionally when cultivating economic development at the local level. Many of the economic strategies, particularly as they relate to advancing the Town's role as a regional center for sustainable manufacturing and trade, require working with regional organizations and site selectors. Tonawanda should seek to present this plan, the Town's unique strengths, and recommended actions to a wide range of economic development partners including the WNY Regional Economic Development Council, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership and Invest Buffalo Niagara, Empire State Development, the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, and more.

What to Accomplish First

Getting Started

Taking the Lead

Present on Tonawanda Tomorrow to the WNY Regional Economic Development Council to reinforce the importance of Tonawanda as a regional employment center.

Reach out to Empire State Development and the WNY REDC to schedule a meeting/presentation.

Town of Tonawanda

Identify opportunities that can bolster outreach and support for businesses in Tonawanda.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Workforce

Many of the action items related to fostering small business growth depend on supportive services that currently do not exist in Tonawanda. The Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce and the Town's Planning & Development office are well-positioned to connect local businesses with valuable service providers, but they require a dedicated resource to make that happen.

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Pursue additional funding for the Town of Tonawanda's Department of Planning and Development to implement this plan.	Explore funding options.	Town of Tonawanda
Create opportunities for innovative business ownership structures that encourage job growth, including co-operative, collective, not-for-profit and employee-owned businesses.	Create a working group, in partnership with the business community, to study models to pilot in Tonawanda.	WNY Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, United Steelworkers, Tonawanda Tomorrow Implementation Team

Build off the momentum of Tonawanda Tomorrow to create a sustained, collaborative effort to continue advocating for the remediation and redevelopment of the Huntley facility.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Placemaking

The conversation on how to transform the former Huntley site from a liability to a community asset is only beginning. As the Town and partners in government explore ownership issues for the facility, community partners can and should keep exploring the best opportunities for imagining what the plant could be in the future. Tonawanda Tomorrow offers a good outline of the values and guiding principles that are foundational to that conversation.

Because NRG owns the property, engaging them in the conversation is critical to moving forward long-term discussions on re-using the plant, as well as some immediate tasks that require specific attention.

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Assess contamination levels at the Huntley site to establish adequate mechanisms for protecting public health and to develop a clean-up strategy that enables full and unconstrained site redevelopment for the most diverse types of use.	Engage NRG and NYS DEC in conversations with the Tonawanda Tomorrow Implementation Team	Tonawanda Tomorrow Implementation Team
Develop a strategy to ensure long-term viability of water supply services to Tonawanda industries at the Huntley raw water intake, including obtaining municipal control of existing infrastructure or creating new infrastructure nearby.	Engage conversations with NRG to consider options.	Town of Tonawanda

Fast track implementation of the Brownfield Opportunity Area program along the industrial riverfront corridor.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Placemaking

Tonawanda’s Brownfield program, “Tonawanda Opportunities” has outlined detailed land use, infrastructure investment, and development recommendations for nearly 2,400 acres along the industrial waterfront. Through NYS’s Brownfield program, significant resources are available for cleaning up contaminated sites and building out shovel ready sites for economic and public use.

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Secure Brownfield Opportunity Area Step 3 funds to advance redevelopment of strategic sites along the waterfront.	Apply for funding through the NYS Department of State in 2018	Town of Tonawanda
Repurpose the landfill site on River Road, locally known as “Cherry Farm” to provide public access to the water.	Finalize the ownership agreement in partnership with National Grid and Honeywell.	Town of Tonawanda
Create access and infrastructure support to the Niagara River World site to open opportunities along Tonawanda’s waterfront.	Seek funding for needed infrastructure investments	Town of Tonawanda
Implement street reconfigurations on River Rd., along with the intersection of Riverview Parkway, to improve safety, open up access to strategic development sites, and provide an opportunity to build and expand public access to Isle View Park and the Riverwalk.	Work collaboratively with stakeholders and state agencies to secure resources to implement this project.	Town of Tonawanda

Promote projects and programs that enhance the Town’s sustainability, energy efficiency, and place-based values.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Placemaking

Throughout this planning process, the community has emphasized its commitment to creating a more sustainable Tonawanda that embraces energy efficiency, environmental stewardship, and renewable energy production. This plan recognizes that projects and initiatives that promote these values can strengthen Tonawanda’s unique place-based assets that make it a desirable community for families, young people, and the aging. They can also support sustainable types of industrial development, one of the key strategies tied to the Economy section of this plan.

Projects listed below are aimed at advancing the Town’s sustainability to help meet the Placemaking and Economy strategies outlined in this plan:

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Perform a comprehensive rewrite of the Town’s zoning code that reinforces walkability, transit-oriented development, mixed use neighborhoods, energy efficiency and strengthened economic centers.	Secure funding through the NYS Consolidated Funding Application to support this work.	Town of Tonawanda
Pursue actions related to the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program and NYSDEC Climate Smart Communities to help contribute to statewide renewable energy goals and be eligible for targeted grant dollars from NYS.	Complete four “High Impact Actions” to qualify for a NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities designation and secure a grant for \$250,000	Town of Tonawanda
Ensure the NYSDEC continues to operate air monitors in the Town and City of Tonawanda to protect the health of people who live near, or wish to access the waterfront.	Seek commitment from NYSDEC to continue this work on a bi-annual basis.	Clean Air Coalition of WNY
Explore implementing a community shared solar model on a River Road property to offset maintenance costs, reduce energy costs, and increase public access to the water.	Work collaboratively to identify a site and model, and secure resources to implement.	Town of Tonawanda
Replace existing streetlights with LED technology to improve nighttime visibility and safety, decrease carbon emissions, and reduce maintenance and operational costs to the Town.	Study the cost, potential funding sources, and return on investment of installing this technology.	Town of Tonawanda
Launch a “Solarize” campaign to increase interest in solar and advance community solar opportunities across the Town of Tonawanda.	The Town launches a Solarize campaign as part of its Clean Energy Community pursuits	Town of Tonawanda, Clean Air Coalition of WNY

Advance transportation projects that make it easier for Tonawandans to get to work, support the Town’s land use goals, and make Tonawanda a regional leader in diverse modes of transportation.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Workforce



Placemaking

Diversifying transportation options can offer benefits to businesses, workers and community residents. Through the Tonawanda Tomorrow process, a series of projects or initiatives have been proposed that can aid implementation of this plan’s overall vision. Some are projects in motion, others are in the planning phase, and some involve new opportunities for collaboration between residents, businesses, and the region’s transit agency, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA). These projects are outlined below:

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Parker Avenue between Sheridan and Englewood becomes Tonawanda’s first “complete street” project, with bike lanes, ADA sidewalk ramps and other pedestrian and bicycle amenities.	The Town works in collaboration with stakeholders and state agencies to secure resources to implement this project.	Town of Tonawanda
Advocate for efficient east-west bus route connections to be integrated into the bus operations plan of the proposed light rail extension along the western edge of the Town.	Conduct outreach to Town residents to participate in the public comment process for expanding light rail.	NFTA, Clean Air Coalition of WNY, Town of Tonawanda
Establish a regular relationship with the NFTA to engage with transit planners on business development moves to ensure alignment of public transit planning and new development in Tonawanda.	Start conversations with NFTA on cultivating this relationship.	Town of Tonawanda

Engage with local workforce partners to focus on the Workforce strategies and bring resources to Tonawanda.

Focus areas reinforced



Economy



Workforce

Many of the workforce strategies hinge on collaborative partnerships between the Ken-Ton School District, organized labor, local businesses, transportation agencies, and workforce development groups. The stakeholders who designed these strategies represent a strong nucleus for advancing this work. Moving this to the next level, that group should look to see if any additional partners are needed for implementation and identify an organization to assume leadership and responsibility for arranging meetings and keeping the group productively focused on implementable actions. Initial actions to focus on are outlined below:

What to Accomplish First	Getting Started	Taking the Lead
Advance the vocational education curriculum in 9-12 public education to create career pathways for skilled trades, manufacturing, healthcare, and other “high road” job opportunities.	Analyze existing curriculum and work with the Kenmore-Tonawanda Union Free School District to make changes.	Kenmore Teacher’s Association
Extend the Workforce Investment Board (WIB)’s Job Club program to the Northtowns.	Meet with the WIB to explore funding and operational strategies to make this happen.	Tonawanda Tomorrow Implementation Team
Create and fund a scholarship program for Ken-Ton students to access skilled trade and advanced manufacturing training and apprenticeship programs.	Identify a cost-effective mechanism for stewarding and administering the fund.	Committee of Ken-Ton Teachers, AXA
Explore bringing the Industrial Manufacturing Technician Apprentice program to Tonawanda.	Create a working group to explore how to bring this program to Tonawanda and the greater region.	United Steelworkers and the WNY Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
Assess the diverse transportation needs of Tonawanda residents and workers to access employment and career advancement opportunities.	Seek funding and support to perform assessment.	Tonawanda Tomorrow Implementation Team

Evaluation checklist for investments and developments in Tonawanda

A simple tool to help public decision-making

As part of implementing this economic action plan, the Tonawanda community will have to consider what public and private investment and development opportunities to pursue or support. The following list of questions offer a framework for making decisions for the Town and its community partners. They identify the **types of businesses the Town ultimately wants to attract** to Tonawanda, as well as the **types of projects that can advance the community's placemaking goals**. As these questions reflect the community values, goals and strategies of this document, they can be used to assess how well investments promote this plan. A potential business or development **project does not need to "check every box" on this list** in order for it to be considered a desirable pursuit for the community. However, businesses or projects that meet multiple criteria offer the greatest impact toward advancing the vision of Tonawanda Tomorrow.

Criteria for business attraction and expansion efforts

As the Town considers investing or supporting business attraction and expansion efforts, these questions can help evaluate how well a business promotes the overall goals of Tonawanda Tomorrow.

Does this business or investment opportunity...



...build on the Town's economic specializations and regional targets?

Business or investments in Tonawanda should play into the town and region's strongest industrial sectors and bolster their innovative capacities.

...compensate employees fairly?

Businesses in Tonawanda should offer living wages, preferably with health insurance and retirement benefits.

...offer workers opportunities to advance in their careers?

Businesses in Tonawanda should seek to offer workers defined career pathways and lifelong learning opportunities.

...practice inclusivity?

Businesses or investments in Tonawanda should demonstrate a commitment to workforce diversity in terms of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, and ability.

...protect public health and the environment?

Businesses or investments in Tonawanda should advance renewable energy goals, protect and conserve natural resources, and promote human health and well-being through their operations and the design and development of their landscapes and buildings.

...reinvest in the community?

Businesses and investments in Tonawanda should show commitment to the betterment of Tonawanda by investing in its transportation infrastructure, surroundings, buildings, schools, and community programs.

...source locally and export globally?

Businesses in Tonawanda should strive to hire from the local workforce and source from local vendors.

...promote workforce development?

Businesses provide regular opportunities for Tonawanda youth to learn about the industry and gain employability and technical skills, and collaborate with workforce development organizations to meet evolving workforce demands.

Criteria for physical projects

As the Town considers investing or supporting projects with some element of construction or installation, these criteria can help evaluate how well the project promotes the overall goals of Tonawanda Tomorrow.

Does this development or project promote...



...a healthy, green, and sustainable Tonawanda?

Developments or projects in Tonawanda should protect the area's natural resources (air, land, water, plants, and wildlife) and the health of its people.

...the reuse of land for economic growth?

Developments or projects in Tonawanda should help repurpose former brownfields for the new economy.

...local sourcing of labor, goods, and services for construction?

Local workers and suppliers should be the first choice for developments and projects in Tonawanda.

...public access to the waterfront?

Developments or projects in Tonawanda should strike a balance between the needs of industries and public access to the waterfront.

...walkability and diverse transportation options?

Developments or projects in Tonawanda should be compact, close to a variety of goods and services, and accessible by different modes of transportation. They should be planned in coordination with the regional transportation agencies to ensure that they are well-designed and served by supporting programs.

...the Town's history and industrial heritage?

Developments or projects should adaptively reuse buildings, tell the stories of Tonawanda's people and places, and embrace the Town's history and culture.

...revitalization and opportunity for underserved areas?

Developments and projects should seek to infuse investment into neighborhoods or areas of the Town that are currently underserved by goods and services.

...achievement of regional goals?

Developments and projects should advance the goals of regional plans such as One Region Forward, Strategy for Prosperity, Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy, and Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan.

...the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions per NYS's Clean Energy Plan goals?

Developments and projects should integrate or promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other elements that can contribute to NYS's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) goals for Greenhouse Gas emission reduction.

Data Sources & Notes

About the Plan

Understanding where the community is today and where it's headed tomorrow

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A Starting Point for Tonawanda Tomorrow

Tonawanda by the Numbers (p. 12)

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Graphs and Figures (p. 13 - 17)

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Laborforce Participation Rate by Educational Attainment: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014). Refers to the portion of the population between ages 25 and 64 that is employed or looking for employment. Results are grouped by people's highest level of schooling.

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Acknowledgements

Advisory Committee

Development of this plan was guided by an Advisory Committee convened by the Town of Tonawanda and the Clean Air Coalition of WNY. The Committee was instrumental in forming and guiding the stakeholder group and reaching out to the community and the media throughout the entire planning process. Its members and representatives include:



Town of Tonawanda led the Tonawanda Tomorrow planning process and co-chaired its advisory committee. Town leadership provided significant staff resources and support to ensure this plan advances the Town's priorities and economic goals.

Joseph Emminger, Supervisor
James Hartz, Director of Planning and Development



Clean Air Coalition of Western New York mobilized the community collaborators that launched this initiative and co-chaired the Advisory Committee. Clean Air staff helped design the public engagement process, led community outreach efforts, and guided strategy development.

Rebecca Newberry, Executive Director



Erie County actively participated in the planning process to ensure this plan is connected to County and regional priorities.

Tom Hersey, Commissioner of Environment and Planning



Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO provided perspective on organized labor interests, was instrumental in community outreach efforts, and supplied staff for events.

Richard Lipsitz, President



Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology shared service provider insights on workforce development issues and helped reconnect the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board to Tonawanda.

Stacey Watson, Chief Operating Officer



University at Buffalo Regional Institute staffed this planning process and oversaw the development and authorship of this plan.

Bart Roberts, Associate Director of Research and Faculty Engagement
Ana Hernández-Balzac, Associate Planner
Jared Parylo, Graduate Assistant



Delta Institute advised on coal power plant redevelopment strategies.
Cindy Winland, Director of Strategic Priorities

Stakeholders

Regional subject matter experts and representatives from local organizations met regularly throughout the process to develop strategies and priority actions for implementation. The Town of Tonawanda and its community partners thank its stakeholders and the significant time commitment they made to shape this work. Members of the stakeholder group include:

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper – Jill Jedlicka and Joel Bernosky; Buffalo State Small Business Development Center – Andrew Delmonte; Empire State Development – Lynn Marinelli and RJ Ball; Erie County – Ken Swanekamp; Erie County Industrial Development Agency – Steve Weathers; Kenmore Teachers Association – Peter Stuhlmeier; Kenmore Tonawanda Union Free School District – Dawn Mirand and Patrick Fanelli; Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce – Tracey Lukasik; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – Jim Strickland and Ben McPherson; New York State Department of State – Chris Bauer; Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority – Rachel Maloney and Darren Kempner; Niagara Global Tourism Institute – Roscoe Naguit; NYS Homes and Community Renewal – Elizabeth Burakowski; Town of Tonawanda – Jim Jones, Denis Uminski; Town of Tonawanda Residents – Diana Strablow; United Steelworkers – Dave Waisura; United Way – Michael Schraft; and the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board – Peter DeJesus.

Community Involvement

Tonawanda Tomorrow was shaped by more than 1,000 members of the community, including residents, business owners, and community stakeholders. 728 people responded to the survey; 307 community members signed up for email updates; and approximately 300 people joined us at community workshops. Though not everyone's name was captured during this process, those who shared their names included:

Don Abbott, Susan Aitken, Wayne Alt, Carol Battaglia, Robert Battaglia, Jenn Bauth, Ken Berlinski, Mary Lynn Bieron, Don Blowey, Brian Bonner, Bob Bostwick, Nathaniel Breeze, Donna Browning, Timothy Callan, Nicole Caputi, Chris Cavarello, Claire Cavarello, William Conrad, Lauren Contorno, Natalie Cook, Jackie Creedon, C Deer, Joseph A. Demske, Carlos Diaz, David Diaz, Trish Donohue, Gregg Emlinom, Bob Eschelmann, Diane Eshelman, Diane Evans, Nicole Fields, Michael Fiels, Nancy Fisher, Ed Flynn, Denise Grandits, Edward Gray, Susan Gregg, Philip Haberstro, Evan Haeick, Missy Hall, Jonna Hamann, Kevin Hardwick, Nora Hassan, Mary Jane Hayes, Jesse Herrera, Sandra Hoehn, Pat Hulse, Dave Hyny, Daryl Hyzy, Paul Jeorr, Jim Jones, Tyler Kiblin, Mike Kooshoian, William Krier, Greg Kuhaneck, John Lonc, Kevin Long, Walter Ludwig, John Lutz, Teresa Maciocha, Joel Maerten, Lucinda Malkiewicz, Carol Mancuso, Larry Martin, Brian

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Volunteers

Tonawanda Tomorrow was fortunate to leverage the dedication and talents of volunteers who helped register attendees and facilitate group discussions at the public workshops. They included: Nick Reed, Enjoli Hall, George Boger, Chris Borgatti, Cheryl Hughes, Sue Kelley, Andy Lueth, Ron Malec, Katie Sacco, Ron Scott, Rose Sickler, Maria Tisby, Sandi Wheaton, and Shihong Zhou.

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Clean Air Coalition of Western New York – in addition to working in the Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Working Group, they continued the Just Transition Campaign, coordinating various outreach and education events for the community and local leaders; Kenmore Teachers Association – in addition to participating in the Stakeholder Working Group, they hired canvassers to promote the survey and public workshops throughout the town; Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce – actively participated in the Stakeholder Working Group and promoted the public workshops; Town of Tonawanda – engaged several staff people and elected and appointed leaders to participate in the Advisory Committee, Stakeholder Working Group, and public workshops; Western New York Area Labor Federation – provided staff for outreach and event management throughout the entire process, including Just Transition Campaign events; Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology - participated in the Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Working Group; and UB Regional Institute – dedicated additional staff to help with project management, research and analysis, graphic design, and writing.

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300+ residents
sharing their ideas and values
across 4 public meetings.



728
Community Survey
Responses





Municipal area in respect to
 buildings re used, more access
 like Niawanda
 - Views of river
 - Restaurants (VIST)
 continuing to partner w/ other to
 we want clean energy training
 (would be good use of resour.)
 ↳ sustainable energy require
 own was rails to transit funds
 improved schools, retained w/
 restaurants! (we go to Buffalo
 ↳ locally owned
 ↳ shops/stuff to do
 ↳ activities
 getting small is okay! (bike/
 ped (bike paths, etc.) to other
 accessibility
 it launches on river (sm
 men-focused industries (mon



20 local organizations represented throughout the process.





Town of Tonawanda
Economic Action Plan **2017**