

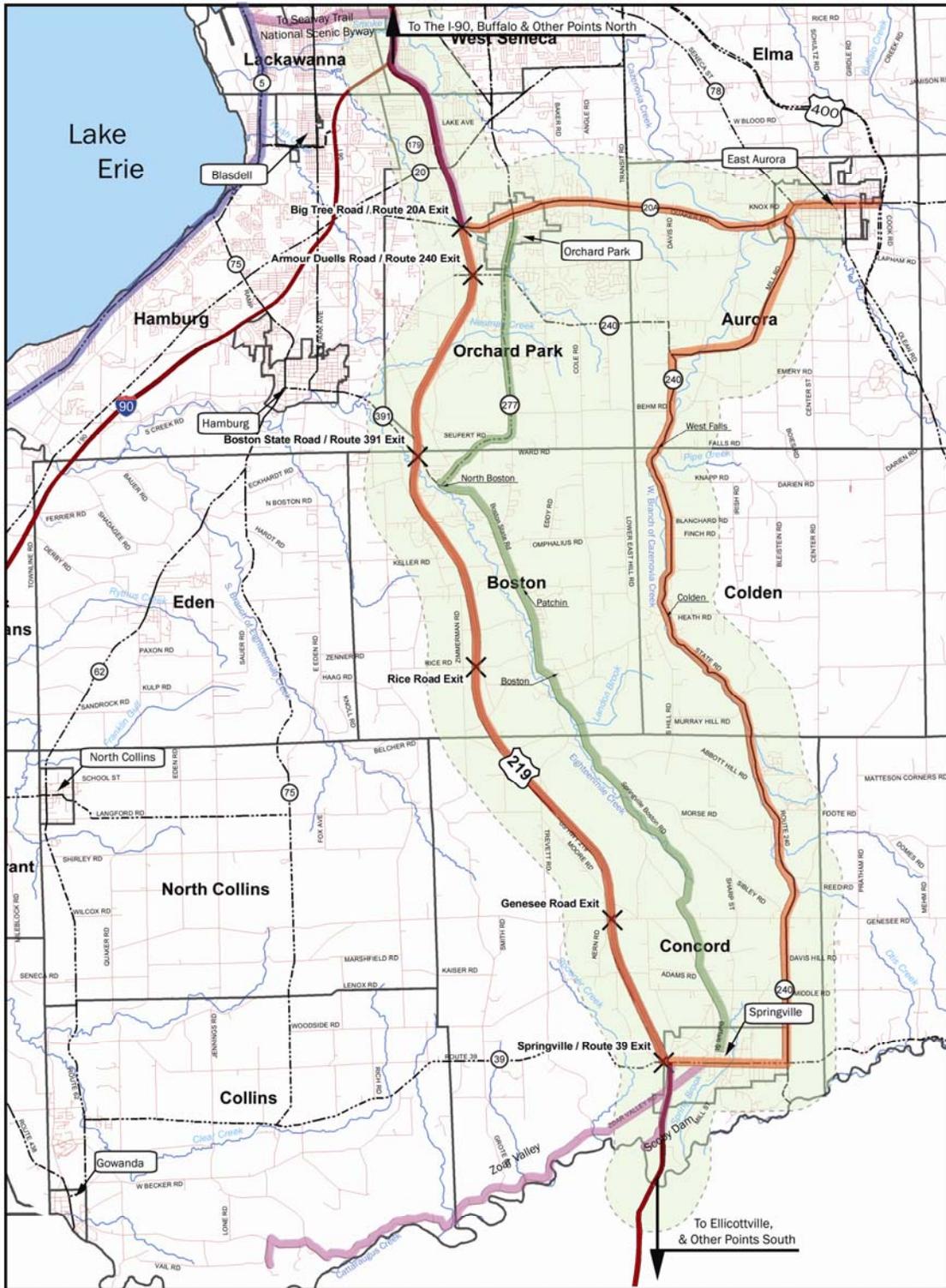
The Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway

Study Overview



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Scenic Byway Study Area
 Proposed Byway Route
 Byway Connections
 Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway
 Alt. Byway Route

Patchin - Hamlet
 Springville Villages
 Concord - Towns

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles

**Western New York
 Southtowns Scenic Byway
 Nomination Study**
 Figure 1 - Proposed Byway Route

The Urban Design Project
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A. The Byway Experience

For many years, the roads of the Southtowns of Erie County have held silent witness to the area’s rich heritage, stunning scenic viewsheds, and wide range of recreational and cultural activities. The Western New York (WNY) Southtowns Scenic Byway aims to turn these best-kept secrets into some of the most celebrated attractions of the region while preserving the quiet rural character of the Byway communities. Having embraced the prospect of designation as an official New York State Scenic Byway, the communities of the Byway study area stand eager to celebrate, protect, and refine the common experiences of the Southtowns which have been captured in this study.



Waterfall, Town of Colden

The Byway area features such regional attractions as the Roycroft Campus, Scoby Dam, and the expansive Chestnut Ridge Park, and is the historic home of several famous figures such as Pop Warner and Millard Fillmore. The view from the Byway features rolling farmland and vernacular architecture, while well-stocked fishing streams and critical wildlife habitats are hidden just beyond view. The combined effect of these features provides a rich visual experience for those traveling through the Byway.

The historic communities along the Byway corridor – the Towns of Orchard Park, Aurora, Boston, Colden, and Concord and the Villages of East Aurora, Orchard Park and Springville – represent the legacies of the original settlements that were established by the first wave of westward migration within the United States. These Towns and Villages have kept much of their heritage intact over the last two centuries; from the Town borders defined by Joseph Elliott to the railroad tracks and depots that reveal the regions mighty industrial history.



Heinrich Road Farm in Boston



U.S. 219 (View north in the Town of Boston)

The 50-mile byway route is a combination of two Federal roads, three State roads, and one local road. If driven clockwise, the route runs from US 219 east along US 20A to Aurora, south along Mill Road to NYS 240, south along NYS 240 through Colden to NYS 39, where the route heads west through the Village of Springville and back north through Concord and Boston via US 219 or NYS 277.

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The purpose of the *Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination Study* is to assemble an inventory of the historic, recreational, and natural features of the byway route, and to subsequently develop recommendations to both protect and share these intrinsic qualities. It is on these roads that most visitors enter, experience, and enjoy the area's scenery, recreational and cultural activities, and history. At the same time, the study promotes a public road system that is safe and accessible for all levels and types of traffic that will utilize it.

B. Themes, Vision, and Goals

Themes

The Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway's larger theme, "Heritage to the Hills" Encompasses two more specific themes. The 'heritage' draws on the great history of the Southtowns, from the Erie and Seneca Nations to the pioneers of the 18th century, to the birth of the Arts and Crafts movement in the midst of the region's industrialization. The 'hills' speak to the Byway's location at the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, where the terrain rises from the flatlands of Orchard Park to the hills of Boston.

The cultural and historical inventories in Volume One further explore the 'heritage' of the Byways. The Roycroft Campus and its historic Inn, located in the Village of East Aurora, exemplifies the cultural amenities of the Byway. Historic features found in the area include many preserved railways and train stations, such as the Buffalo and Susquehanna, running through the Town of Boston. Many other historical sites reflect the quest for religious freedom that accompanied the early settlements of the Southtowns.

The 'hills' of the Southtowns interlace functional recreational sites with nature's bounty. The area serves as an outstanding four-season center for recreation, offering skiing on the slopes in Colden, NFL games at Ralph Wilson Stadium outside the Village of Orchard Park, fishing in Cazenovia Creek in Concord, and horseback riding at Knox Farm State Park in Aurora. Visitors to the byway can enjoy scenic vistas and a range of wildlife, as many parks such as the expansive Chestnut Ridge Park in the Town of Orchard Park offer an escape to nature. The agriculture of the Southtowns offer yet another interpretation of the 'hills', with roadside vegetable stands a common occurrence on the roads of the Byway. The area also features several Farmers' Markets, such as the one in the Village of Springville, which bring the community together.

Vision Statement

As one of New York State's best kept secrets, the Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway seeks to better utilize the tremendous resources that the area has to offer. The vision is to create a mechanism for supporting knowledge, economy, and preservation of the local community and its many intrinsic qualities. Obtaining byway recognition will allow for the enhancement and marketing of the region's many attractions and events: thereby promoting tourism, fostering community pride, and providing opportunities for sustainable economic development.

Goals

The development of recommendations for the study was guided by the following goals:

- Identify, maintain and enhance the scenic, historic, and natural features along the rural roads.
- Support a vital year-round economy for the Southtowns, particularly tourism-related, and agricultural-related enterprises.
- Provide safe and easy access to the central Southtowns' historic, recreational, and natural features for pedestrians, bicyclists, motor vehicles, and others.
- Through education and outreach, foster community awareness, participation and support on the need for resource protection and preservation.
- Provide guidance to municipalities for managing and shaping future development.
- Promote a high quality of life and positive image of the Southtowns' communities.

C. Celebrating Intrinsic Qualities

The resources relating to scenic, natural, recreational, cultural and historic resources found along the roadways are what the National Scenic Byways program uses to evaluate roads for scenic designation, and this same framework has been utilized in this study to analyze the intrinsic qualities of the Byway area. These resources are collectively known as intrinsic qualities, and are documented in [Volume One: Resource Inventory](#). Definitions for each of these qualities are described below. Each section's numeral is cited in parentheses, and a listing of each section is included in the Table of Contents at the beginning of the study.

Recreational Quality (I)

Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of a roadway's landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences such as skiing, bicycling, fishing, and hiking. Some of these activities may be seasonal, yet the overall experience of the byway can be enjoyed year round. Primary examples along the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byways include ski resorts, prime hunting/fishing spots, and the 1213 acre Chestnut Ridge Park.



Winter Fun (Tubing at Kissing Bridge ski resort)

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Cultural Quality (I)

Cultural quality refers to the evidence and expression of a people’s customs or traditions. Cultural features – including crafts, music, dance, festivals, speech, food, special events, and vernacular architecture – are currently practiced with great pride and artistic integrity by the citizens of these towns and villages. Annual gatherings such as the Quaker Arts Festival in Orchard Park have remained a staple of the region’s cultural scene.

Historic Quality (II)

Historic quality reflects the legacy of the region’s people and include buildings, sites or settlement patterns that can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. Each of these historical features should possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Southtowns of the Niagara Frontier have a rich collection of such historical attributes, ranging from the rustic craftsmanship of the Quaker Meeting House in Orchard Park to the Scoby Dam in Springville.



The Original Roycroft Campus Coppersmith Shop



The Scoby Dam (During flood season, the old dam bows to raging rapids)

Natural Quality (III)

Natural features include geological formations, fossils, landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife. These natural jewels scattered throughout the realm of the byway system reveal little to no signs of disturbance, despite the human activity surrounding them. For example, Route 219 provides access to the nearby Zoar Valley State Multiple Use Area, a wild and scenic gorge with old growth forests, 300-foot cliffs, and whitewater rafting for thrill seekers.

Agricultural Quality (III)

The many farms of the Byways area boast the products of the region’s rich soil and temperate climate which allows for a range of farming activities. Agricultural features include active farms as well as land which has been preserved in Agricultural Districts (may or may not feature active farms). Features also include trade and tourism related to farming, such as farm/plant tours, roadside produce stands, and farmers markets.

Transportation Characteristics (IV)

The roadways of the study area are the foundation of the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway, as they provide access to all of its other intrinsic qualities. The Transportation Characteristics section includes a description, delineation, and classification of each roadway as well as a report of the maintenance and traffic conditions of each road. Connections to other roads, trailways, and destinations are analyzed, and a prospectus on planned roadway projects is included.

Scenic Quality (V)

Scenic quality describes the visual experience of the byway system's natural and man-made elements. The characteristics of the Southtowns' natural landscape are strikingly diverse, reflecting the varying topography of the area. Man-made scenery within the Southtowns is equally diverse because the history of the area has been so well preserved. All elements of the landscape (e.g. landform, water, vegetation, and man-made development) contribute to the quality of a roadway corridor's visual experience.



Well preserved church in Colden Hamlet

D. Protecting the Investment

The value of the sizable public investment in the road system of the Southtowns' communities extends beyond the purely transportation-related benefits they offer. Just beginning to truly develop in recent years, the region's growing tourism industry has the potential to increase substantially. This is, of course, if the investment is properly protected, managed, and marketed. Volume Two: Corridor Management Plan provides the means for protecting this investment, and the seven sections of the Plan are outlined below.

Needs Assessment (VI)

The first step towards managing a Byway involves a critical analysis of its needs. These needs can be grouped into three categories: functional needs of users, physical roadway needs, and the needs of the roadways' intrinsic qualities.

Within the Byway, some roads have been altered to accommodate traffic and safety concerns, and new housing challenges the rustic character of the area. These developments have the potential to harm sensitive environmental features and reduce scenic and cultural values associated with the Southtowns.

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Public Participation (VII)

The success of the Byway will be dependent on its use by local residents, as well as their feedback and participation. The participation of the steering committee thus far has shown the power of individual involvement in this project, and its value moving forward. In that spirit, several suggestions for educating and encouraging public involvement in the Byway are detailed in section seven.

Tourism Development Plan (VIII) and Tour Loops (X)

As a primary motivator behind byway designation, tourism offers a community the chance to share its greatest intrinsic assets with the rest of the world. In developing a marketable Byway, it will be important to celebrate the novel offerings of the area in a way that is easily understandable and immediately attractive to the visitor. These two sections devoted to tourism provide suggested tour packages which can be expanded upon. For clarity, the packages are arranged by both physical and thematic similarities.



Cycling the Rails (Mountain-bikers take advantage of the abandoned scenic railroads in the Town of Concord)

Roadway Improvements (IX)

Gauging current and future roadway needs is a process which requires considerable diligence, attention to detail and flexibility. In an effort to stay within the scope of this Nomination Study, route 240 was analyzed and used as a design template for roadway improvements. This template should be used as a guide towards further analysis and planning of physical investment within the Southtowns Scenic Byway.

Stewardship (XI)

The Byway, like an significant community initiative, will benefit greatly from clearly defined organizational management and prudent fiscal stewardship. Section eleven suggests the establishment of a not-for-profit Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway, Inc. in order to properly manage the Byway. The section outlines steps towards creating and managing the corporation, and suggests outside resources which will aid the goals of the Byway.

The Signage Plan (XII)

The Southtowns Scenic Byway would not be complete without a means of wayfinding. One of the simplest, yet one of the most crucial aspects of a successful byway is a system of clear, recognizable signs to identify the Byway and its related features. A complete signage plan will include signs that identify the Byway and its communities, direct the traveler to individual destinations, and interpret the features of the area.

E. Benefits of the Scenic Byways Program

The purpose of designating routes is not only to display the historic character and natural beauty of the Southtowns' communities, but also to allow them to take an active role in protecting their own resources, simultaneously creating new economic development opportunities along the corridor. Specifically, the benefits of a byway designation can be divided into five broad categories: recognition, interpretation assistance, promotion and marketing, planning for preservation, and technical assistance.

Obtaining Recognition

The recognition of a route by local and regional leaders, and the NYSDOT, will undoubtedly foster the area's local pride. While only designated roads will be marked with the New York Scenic Byways logo, the entire region will benefit from this recognition. The logo may also be used on state transportation maps to identify each designated byway and intrigue travelers to explore the different aspects of the corridor. In addition, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and other state agencies may produce marketing materials that showcase all the area's many attractions.



Interpretation Assistance

Scenic byways are gateways to New York's past. The buildings and landscapes along this corridor tell the compelling stories of the people who have lived and thrived among its hills and valley streams. From the Eries to the Quakers, the Southtowns of Erie County are fused with a rich history. Local byway organizers will research and interpret their stories in order to make them accessible and interesting to visitors. Upon designation, the New York Scenic Byways Program will be available to provide local groups with on-site technical assistance to interpret each unique section of the byway.

Promoting and Marketing

The New York Scenic Byways Program is linked to other promotional efforts throughout the state. The *I Love New York* advertising program may feature attractions along designated scenic byways, and New York State agencies may work with local groups to help develop their resources. In addition, businesses along designated corridors may also be permitted to use the New York Scenic Byways logo in their promotional materials.

Training and Technical Assistance

The NYSDOT will work with the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Steering Committee, and later the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Association to help localities through the Scenic Byways designation process and during implementation of the program.

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F. Outline of the Byway Loop

The Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway is located approximately twelve miles southeast from the City of Buffalo in the heart of Erie County. The five main roads of the byway connect five rural Towns, three historic Village centers, and number of hamlets — creating a loop that encircles the Boston Hills portion of the Appalachian foothills.

The main loop is 50.2 miles, and an alternative route (US 277) takes the traveler through the center of the Byway area. Beginning and ending in the northwest corner of the byway at the US 219 / US 20A interchange in the Town of Orchard Park and moving clockwise, the main and alternate Byway segments are laid out as such:

US Route 20A

Starting in the Town of Orchard Park, travel east for 3.6 miles. Entering the Town of Aurora, continue traveling east for 3.4 miles until intersection with Mill Road, turning right.

Mill Road

In the Town of Aurora travel southwest for 4.6 miles; road will become NYS Route 240.

NYS Route 240

Travel south for 2.1 miles in the Town of Aurora, and another 7 miles through the Town of Colden. Entering the Town of Concord, the route will continue south for 7.3 miles. Once in the Village of Springville, turn right onto NYS 39

NYS Route 39

Passing west through the Village of Springville for 2.6 miles, turn right onto US Route 219.

US Route 219

Head northwest out of the Village of Springville and through the Town of Concord for 8.1 miles and north through the Town of Boston for 6.5 miles. Continuing for 5 miles in the Town of Orchard Park will bring the driver full circle to US Route 20A.

Alternate Route

An alternate route of approximately 21 miles has also been designated through the middle of the byway loop. This is to provide visitors, especially hikers and bicyclists, with access to a more pedestrian friendly and rustic route through the heart of historic Erie County. The alternate route also allows for the incorporation of the expansive Chestnut Ridge Park and its many seasonal amenities into the Byway.

NYS 277

From US 20A in the Village of Orchard Park, turn right onto NYS 277. Head south through the Towns of Orchard Park and Boston for 5 miles, turning left at the intersection with NYS 391.

NYS 391

Head south through the Towns of Boston and into the Town of Concord, traveling for approximately 16 miles and ending at the intersection of NYS 39 in the Village of Springville.