

## Congratulations 2008 Award Winners!

Every year, the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association recognizes outstanding achievements that advance the art and science of planning. The selection criteria consist of quality, originality, transferability, implementation, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness/results. Each of the plans, projects, and individuals honored with an award has made significant contributions toward improving the quality of life for residents and businesses throughout Upstate New York.

This year the Chapter will be handing out seven planning awards in five different categories. Each of the seven plans receiving a 2008 award at the Chapter's Awards Luncheon here in Rochester are well deserving of their recognition. Congratulations to all.

The Awards Committee consisted of the following Chapter members:

Judy Breselor, AICP, Awards Co-Chair

*Circuit Ride Planner, Lake George Watershed Conference*

Rocco Ferraro, AICP, Awards Co-Chair

*Executive Director, Capital District Regional Planning Commission*

Frank Evangelisti, Southern Tier Section

*Chief Planner, Broome County Dept. of Planning & Economic Development*

Arnie Hausler, AICP, Capital District Section

*Sr. Project Manager/Planner, Stantec*

Kerry Ivers, AICP, Genesee/Finger Lakes Section

*Senior Planner, Clark Patterson Lee*

Jeff Lebsack, P.E. PTOE, AICP, Western New York

*Project Manager, Hatch Mott MacDonald*

Scott Shannon, AICP, ASLA, Central NY Section

*Associate Professor, SUNY-College of Environmental Science & Forestry.*

Many thanks to the Awards Committee for a very difficult job well done!

The following is a brief description of each of the 2008 award winners selected by the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association. The PDF file for each of these Award winning projects will be posted on the Chapter Web site at [www.nyupstateplanning.org](http://www.nyupstateplanning.org).

OUTSTANDING PLANNING AWARD: COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING  
(Honorable Mention)

***Town of New Hartford Comprehensive Plan.*** The Town of New Hartford is located in the Mohawk Valley. It is the largest suburb adjacent to the City of Utica and has a population of approximately 21,200 persons. The Plan applies a neighborhood concept approach in order to preserve New Hartford's historic and small town charm. In addition, the Plan recognizes the importance of the natural beauty of the Mohawk Valley offering strategies that conserve natural resources while advancing objectives that will allow New Hartford to remain competitive for economic development.

The Comprehensive Plan goes beyond the creation of a future road map for growth management in the community; it explains the "Why, What, and How" of a Plan. It also includes a thorough analysis of the local economy, history, land use, local development controls, natural resources, water quality, tourism infrastructure, and transportation routes. The Plan provides a series of scenarios and identifies a future land use plan that establishes neighborhood centers and characteristics that distinguish one neighborhood from the other. The Plan also includes policies that encourage the creation of a continuous greenway and the preservation of open space and opportunities to improve regional competitiveness through cooperative economic development ventures and strategies.

By summarizing the salient points of the Plan in the implementation matrix, the Town has an easily understandable and handy reference tool as it moves forward to implement the Plan's recommendations. The matrix is subdivided into like categories allowing the Town to identify and readily access specific actions by topical area.

The ***Town of New Hartford Comprehensive Plan*** was prepared by peter j. smith & company, inc.

## OUTSTANDING PLANNING AWARD: COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

***Village of Pelham Comprehensive Plan.*** The Village of Pelham is a community of approximately 6500 persons located in southern Westchester County, New York. The Village, predominantly residential in character, is relatively dense and nearly built out. There is a central commercial business district that includes retail, professional, and services primarily directed to the Village residents. The Metro North Pelham Railroad Station is also located in the Central Business District. Recent trends show that new businesses have been bypassing Pelham in favor of nearby communities and the downtown area has not maintained the level of vibrancy seen in adjacent communities. A desire to alter this trend and to define new economic development strategies to reenergize its downtown area served as the impetus for the Village Board of Trustees to update its comprehensive plan which was last updated in 1989. Working closely with the Village Board of Trustees, the project team analyzed existing conditions, trends, and opportunities, addressing issues such as design guidelines, zoning, code enforcement, parking, and retail development.

The Plan identifies appropriate development patterns and policies that will strengthen the Village's assets and identify new ones. The nicely formatted document includes an Implementation Matrix made up of five sub sections: Ongoing Actions, Immediate Actions, Short Term Actions (to initiate within the next six months), Intermediate Range Actions (to initiate six months to two years), and Long Range Actions (to initiate within two to five years). The matrix is essentially a cross reference of the recommendations within the plan and the assignment of responsibility for its implementation.

The style of the plan lends itself to be used as a marketing tool to attract the types of stores and services for which there appears to be local demand. The Plan was prepared within a one year time period and has been fully endorsed by a number of stakeholders including the Westchester County Department of Planning which will incorporate the Plan's findings as part of their own county wide Plan.

The ***Village of Pelham Comprehensive Plan*** was prepared by Saratoga Associates.

## PLANNING EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR BEST PRACTICE

***Queen City Waterfront, Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative: A Strategic Plan for Transportation Improvements.*** The Waterfront Plan comprises an unusual array of planning products. It begins with the vision "Buffalo emerged from its waterfront and is determined to return". However, rather than starting from the beginning and undertaking a traditional planning process, there was recognition to join the discussion

that had been in progress for decades. As described in the plan itself: *"A more conventional method would involve an orderly process, moving from visioning to goal setting, to project identification and alternatives evaluation, to programming and implementation. A less conventional approach was required because Buffalo has already done most of the work. We didn't need to start over again; we needed to affirm what had been done, fill in the pieces, and carry forward"*. The result is a Plan whose vision rests on a review and analysis of the more than 120 planning documents produced for the Buffalo waterfront during the last several decades.

The study area for the Waterfront Plan encompasses all of Buffalo's waterfronts, not just those prominent in downtown and Outer Harbor sites. The Plan spans at least two decades in each direction from the past and toward the future with a focus on the present. Though it celebrates recent accomplishments, it concentrates its attention on discrete projects for immediate implementation. The Plan is part of a much larger body of work including the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, the Buffalo Olmsted Park System Plan, and the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan. It has provided an endorsement for a wide range of projects, an acknowledgement for others, and offers an approach to manage the implementation of many other projects.

The Plan was also successful in bringing together an array of stakeholders to collaboratively construct priorities and outcomes for Buffalo's waterfront. It has turned around a skeptical public attitude and created a level of excitement and enthusiasm about what has been achieved, work in progress, and what can be accomplished in the future. The overall design of the document, replete with locator maps, artist renderings, architectural sketches and photography is clean, inviting and easy to navigate.

The **Queen City Waterfront Plan** was prepared under the direction of the Urban Design Project, School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo, in Association with Wendel Duchscherer Architects and Engineers and the City of Buffalo, New York State Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration.

#### PLANNING EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR GRASS ROOTS INITIATIVE

***Black Rock-Riverside Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance.*** The Black Rock-Riverside Good Neighbors' Alliance is a citizen led community planning initiative established in partnership with the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning in 2001. The Black Rock Canal Park is the Alliance's new vision for the existing Ontario Street Boat Launch and adjacent Cornelius Creek Park on the northwest shore of the City of Buffalo. The efforts of the alliance is a clear example of a "citizen activist group advancing and

promoting the cause of planning in the public arena". The proposal represents a citizen conceived vision, taking two parks that are in a state of disrepair and defining a vision to remedy the many deficiencies that currently exist. The Plan offers a compelling opportunity to turn an unattractive and underutilized site into a cohesive appealing amenity. The objective is to create a family friendly environment by adding amenities that will draw a diverse population to the northern most point of Buffalo's waterfront.

The Plan and presentation materials are clear, attractive and easy to understand. There has been an extensive public outreach effort that has drawn the attention of a range of stakeholders in the public and private sector. It has strong support from the Legislative bodies of the City of Buffalo and Erie County both of which have agreed to provide financial support to implement several of the Plan's elements. This planning initiative undertaken by the Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance should serve as a model and inspiration to other grassroots organizations to marshal public support in order to improve the quality of life in their community.

The Black Rock Canal Park Plan was prepared by the *Black Rock-Riverside Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance* with staff support provided by Bill Parke, a community planner with the City of Buffalo Planning Department.

#### PLANNING EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR PUBLIC OUTREACH

*The East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance.* The East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Alliance is in the eastern part of Buffalo and is one of eleven that was created in 2001 by the Mayor to facilitate quality community planning throughout the City. The East Buffalo Alliance includes the neighborhoods of Babcock, Broadway-Fillmore, Emerson, Lovejoy, and Kaisertown. Between 2002 and 2007, volunteer citizen planners and stakeholders with support from the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning undertook an extensive program of public participation, research, analysis, prioritizing, and writing to create the Neighborhood Plan.

The Plan is East Buffalo's vision of community renewal and provides insight into the specific needs of East Buffalo. Through open summits, speaker engagements, and community meetings, a number of ideas and interests were shared. These community voices are reflected in the formulation of the goals, strategies, and priorities which now stand as the foundation for policy decisions made in East Buffalo.

The neighborhood plan, in addition to detailing its public participation efforts, provides a comprehensive neighborhood and demographic trends analysis for each of its five neighborhoods. Recommendations are made for each of seven topic areas: Police & Public Safety; Parks & Environment; Public Works; Economic Development and Historic

Preservation; Schools, Libraries, & Youth; Housing & Vacant Lots; and Transportation. Recommendations for each topic area are made for all of East Buffalo and for each of the five neighborhoods that comprise the Alliance area. The Plan has already significantly contributed to planning success in East Buffalo including:

- A successful Weed and Seed application to the Department of Justice leading to over \$375,000 in funding support to the Lower East Side.
- Advocacy to save School 43 from closing and to be included in the Joint Schools Construction Project, a \$14 million investment.
- \$500,000 in funding became available through the Affordable Housing Corporation of NY for owner occupied home improvements.

As a result of the neighborhood being directly involved in its preparation and its extensive Public Outreach effort, the East Buffalo Neighborhood Alliance has fully embraced the document guaranteeing continued success as it moves forward to implement its many recommendations.

The East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance Neighborhood Plan was created by the *East Buffalo Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance* in cooperation with the City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning.

#### OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECT (Honorable Mention)

***Niagara Falls International Airport: A Bi-National Air Cargo Gateway.*** The Niagara Falls International Airport has been an underutilized asset serving the region for a number of years. Despite its underutilization, the airport features substantial physical infrastructure, room for growth, a strategic geographic location, and access to the logistics and international trade resources that the region has to offer. This study takes a realistic look at the airport and presents on and off site development improvements that can provide tangible economics benefits to the region by promoting international cargo operations and charter passenger flights. The study also emphasizes promoting the region's "soft" assets and coordinating the marketing of the facility among several local government agencies.

The study incorporates a comprehensive review of the International Airport. Included in the study are overviews of industry trends, location, available labor force, physical facilities, the competitive landscape and potential expansion possibilities. In addition, several case studies are presented for three markets similar to the Buffalo-Niagara region (Columbus, Ohio; Ypsilanti, Michigan; and San Antonio, Texas), with lessons learned taken from each with regards to expanding air cargo and freight operations. The study emphasizes the urgent need for aggressive action to reassert Buffalo-

Niagara's historic role as a logistics center and a positive economic generator for the region. It strongly emphasizes a need for bi-national cooperation, regional intergovernmental coordination, cooperative land use planning and creative approaches to marketing as a starting point for implementation.

The Study is a high quality document featuring many photos, charts, and graphs and is presented in a logical and easy to read format.

***The Niagara Falls International Airport: A Bi-National Air Cargo Gateway*** was prepared by students enrolled in the University at Buffalo's Department of Urban & Regional Planning, School of Architecture and Planning and the School of Law.

## OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECT

***Genesee Land Trust Land Conservation Plan.*** The Genesee Land Trust territory encompasses 1.3 million acres of glacially formed terrain that includes Monroe County, Wayne County, and parts of Orleans, Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Seneca, Cayuga Counties. The Genesee River flows north through the region's center and into Lake Ontario. Notable features also include the Erie Canal, the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge, and migratory bird habitat along the lake shore. The lake moderated climate and rich glacial till create some of the state's most fertile cropland and orchards.

Despite the region's diverse natural and cultural landscapes, the greater Rochester area, similar to other regions in Upstate New York, has experienced "Sprawl without Growth". A 2003 Brookings study found that between 1982 and 1997, the urbanized land in the Rochester/Finger Lakes region increased by 50,000 acres despite a slight decline in population. In order to efficiently focus their protection efforts on lands that best meet their mission statement and resources conservation criteria, the Genesee Land Trust engaged the services of the Department of City & Regional Planning at Cornell University to prepare a Land Conservation Plan.

As an initial, step, the Cornell Team researched the history, demographics, and natural resources of the region. They prepared a scenic resource inventory and used it to methodically document this resource, a tool that can be use by the Land Trust for future updates. Using spatially represented resource data and the Land Trust's conservation priorities, the students developed a series of overlay analyses, designed and implemented a land conservation suitability model, and developed and analyzed two conservation focus areas using GIS. The study team also identified alternative tools for conservation, models for measuring success, and suggestions for the Land Trust to improve its organizational structure including fundraising strategies and collaborating with similarly minded organizations.

The high quality document with its attention to detail provides a solid base of information and analysis that is suitable for integration in the Land Trust's strategic planning effort. The visuals and graphics are of high quality and, as noted by the Executive Director of the Land Trust, capture the mission and priorities of the Land Trust's work. According to the Executive Director, the Plan's maps and associated GIS Data has resulted in the formation of several Board committees "to address distinct conservation initiatives across the region's varied landscape that seem most relevant based on the data compiled by the students".

The *Genesee Land Trust Land Conservation Plan* was prepared by graduate students who participated in a client based workshop offered by the Department of City & Regional Planning at Cornell University.