

- *Town of Wheatfield Greenspace Master Plan*

The Wheatfield Greenspace Master Plan was developed to help the Town preserve and incorporate greenspace into future development to maintain the ambiance and character of the community. The Plan includes an inventory of all parklands and greenspace for public access; identifies future greenspace areas for public access, emphasizes passive and active recreational needs and defines the quality of life in Wheatfield. This Plan, which is currently being updated, recommends capitalizing on the abandoned railway corridor to create a trail connection between Niagara Falls and North Tonawanda (at the east and west ends of Sub-Area #1) and other areas of the Town. It also recognizes the undeveloped Town-owned property located on the Niagara River shoreline, which proposed for use as public parkland.

2.4 Demographics and Economic Considerations

2.4.1 Population and Household Characteristics

The waterfront areas in the Town of Wheatfield cannot be captured easily by Census geography. Accordingly, the following discussion is based on Town-wide data, and is intended to provide the general context of the Town and how it may affect waterfront planning.

The population of the Town of Wheatfield was 18,117 persons in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The Town is the fastest growing town in Western New York, with very strong growth in population over the past decades. Since 1990, the population has increased by nearly 7,000 residents, an increase of almost 63 percent. This strong growth suggests growing development pressure throughout the Town, including the waterfront areas. It also suggests increasing demand for recreational assets in the Town.

Town of Wheatfield Population 1990 – 2010

	Population	Change	
		Number	Percent
1990	11,125	n/a	n/a
2000	14,086	+2,961	+26.6%
2010	18,117	+4,031	+28.6%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Median age of Wheatfield’s residents in 2010 was 42.4 years, which is slightly older than Niagara County, where the average age was 41.9 years. Age distribution is similar for the Town and the County. Wheatfield has a higher proportion of older residents (age 65 or older) than the County, and slightly fewer very young residents (under age 5). Correspondingly, the Town has more residents in the middle age ranges, both minors age 5 to 19, and adults aged 18 to 64. The following table shows the comparison of the Town and the County.

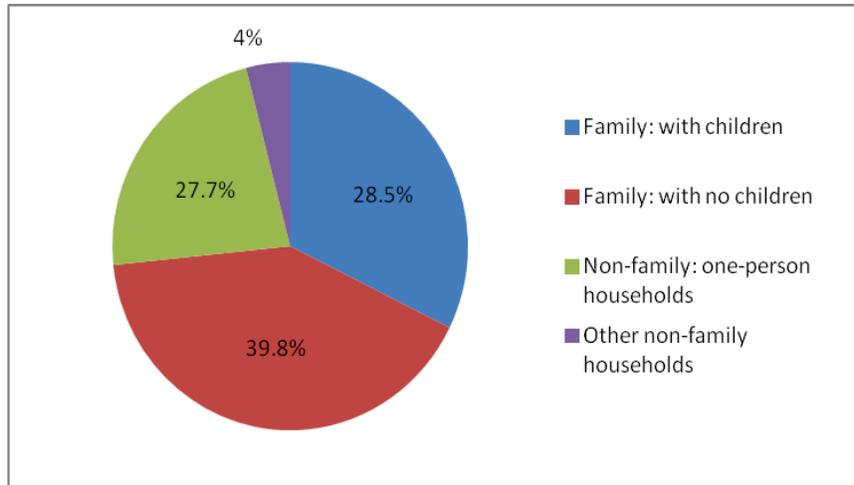
Age Distribution - Wheatfield and Niagara County, 2000

	Wheatfield		Niagara County	
Less than 5 years	920	5.1%	11,580	5.4%
5 to 17	3,441	19.0%	41,243	19.3%
18 to 64	10,346	57.1%	127,258	59.3%
65 or older	3,410	18.8%	34,388	16.0%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

There were a total of 7,180 households in the Town of Wheatfield in 2010. The average household size was 2.47 persons. The majority of households were family households (related persons), which made up 68.34 percent of all households. Single person and non-family households comprised 31.7 percent of households.

Household Composition



2.4.2 Housing

Most housing in Wheatfield consists primarily of single-family dwellings. U.S. Census data from 2010 indicates a total of 7,602 housing units in the Town. Nearly three-quarters (77.1 percent) of the housing stock is single-unit structures. Another 3.4 percent is mobile homes, which generally accommodate a single-unit. Housing along the waterfront is generally one-family dwellings. There is also a mobile home park located on the Niagara River in the Town of Wheatfield. Nearly all homes in Wheatfield are occupied on a year-round basis; according to Census data, seasonal units comprised only 0.5 percent of the housing stock (37 units).

Compared to many Western New York municipalities, the housing stock in Wheatfield is relatively new, reflecting the very strong growth trends in the Town. Only about 5.2 percent of houses in the Town were built prior to 1940, compared to 34.5 percent of housing structures in Niagara County. According to 2000 Census figures (most recent available) approximately 45 percent of residential structures in Wheatfield were built after 1990; only 13.2 percent of residential buildings across the County were built over the same time frame. Most new residential

construction in Wheatfield has occurred in areas outside the LWRA. While there has been some new construction along the waterfront, it has generally been replacement housing, not net new units.

Wheatfield has a high home-ownership rate. Of the total occupied housing units in the Town, 75.5 percent are owner occupied and 24.5 percent renter occupied. In comparison, only 69.7 percent of units in Niagara County are owner-occupied. In 2010, the Census reported an overall vacancy rate of 5.6 percent for the Town. The County’s vacancy rate was nearly twice that, at 8.6 percent. In 2010, the median value of a home in Wheatfield was relatively high, at \$164,600, compared to the County’s median home value of \$102,300. Again, this figure reflects the fact that a significant proportion of the housing stock in Wheatfield consists of new construction.

These strong housing trends in the Town suggest there will be increasing demand for waterfront properties in the Town. There have been some conversions taking place on the waterfront in Wheatfield, where older units are extensively renovated or replaced with newer units. This trend is likely to continue. In particular, it is anticipated that the mobile home park located off River Road on the Niagara River will eventually convert to either higher value residential or other uses over time as waterfront land values increase.

2.4.3 Income and Employment

Historically, the Wheatfield waterfront has been a residential area, with a few scattered businesses, with limited opportunities for employment. There are employment centers in the Town in relatively close proximity to the waterfront, including the Niagara Falls Boulevard corridor, which has a range of commercial and retail uses; the industrial park along Liberty Drive north of River Road; and the western portion of Town, where the Niagara Falls airport and other major employment centers are located, as well as Vantage Point and the Woodlands Corporate Center. Waterfront-related uses have not been strong employers in the Town, although the

Income Distribution by Household - Town of Wheatfield

Income	Number	Percent
Less than \$10,000	251	3.7%
\$10,000-14,999	298	4.4%
\$15,000-24,999	710	10.5%
\$25,000-34,999	636	9.4%
\$35,000-49,999	756	11.2%
\$50,000-74,999	1,413	20.9%
\$75,000-99,999	1,001	14.8%
\$100,000-149,999	1,163	17.2%
\$150,000-199,999	325	4.8%
\$200,000 or more	204	3.0%

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 - 2011

Town’s Comprehensive Plan supports economic development activities associated with waterfront, recreational and tourism uses. There have been various plans to redevelop vacant lands north of River Road in the Town for recreational/tourism uses, although there are no active proposals for this land at this time.

Based on available Census data for the Town, 63.8% of Town residents age 16 or older participated in the labor force in 2010. Median household income was \$61,889, which compares very favorably to the County, which has a median household income of \$43,991.

2.4.4 School Enrollment and Education Levels

Most of the Town of Wheatfield is within the Niagara-Wheatfield School District. The eastern portion of Wheatfield is in the Starpoint Central School District. No schools are located in or near either waterfront area in the Town of Wheatfield.

Based on available Census data (2010), 90.5 percent of residents of the Town of Wheatfield were high school graduates, and 30.4 percent had achieved a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 2010, there were 4,224 residents aged 3 years or older who were enrolled in school.

Town of Wheatfield School Enrollment, 2000

	Number	Percent
Nursery school, Preschool	210	5.0%
Kindergarten	219	5.2%
Elementary School (grades 1-8)	1,755	41.5%
High School (grades 9-12)	1,138	26.9%
College or graduate school	902	21.4%

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

2.5 Existing Land and Water Uses

2.5.1 Existing Land Use

Land use along the waterfront in the Town of Wheatfield is primarily residential in nature, with some commercial uses found along River Road in Sub-Area 1. There are no agricultural or industrial uses in either sub-area. Parkland is also very limited, with only one park found in Sub-Area 2 and one Town-owned parcel that is destined for future parkland development in Sub-Area 1. Sub-Area 1 has some areas of vacant land and open space, while Sub-Area 2 is well built out, with very little land available for further development. The land uses found in the LWRA are shown on [Map 3A](#) and [Map 3B](#) and described as follows.