



INTRODUCTION

The New York Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency (CLEAR) planning process addresses community vulnerability through forward looking approaches that complement or facilitate economic development. The initiative aims to help transition communities to more resilient and adaptable approaches to shoreline management, land use, and development/redevelopment.

The public will be engaged throughout the planning process with the goal of building (1) local understanding of future risks and impacts, (2) local ownership of adaptive strategies and actions, and (3) local agency to implement sustainable and resilient growth pathways.

This Public Engagement Plan (the PEP) has been developed in cooperation with the Niagara Orleans CLEAR Steering Committee to guide community outreach and activities in support of these goals. It identifies the specific level, type, format, and purpose of community engagement throughout the planning process that will encourage participation from a broad and diverse population. The PEP also identifies key partners, outreach mechanisms, and stakeholders. The PEP is a working document that is subject to change and will be updated throughout the process.

The PEP is organized into four sections:

- I. Roles and Responsibilities
- II. Public Engagement
- III. Outreach Methods
- IV. Schedule

I. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The CLEAR planning process will be led by a diverse group of project partners to facilitate local ownership and capacity building and to foster both horizontal and vertical collaboration. These include:

- **Project Consultant Team** and **State partners**;
- **The Steering Committee** comprised of key municipal elected officials and staff, regional organizations, and community leaders from various backgrounds and interest areas who will meet monthly to guide the development of the CLEAR plan; and
- Key **Stakeholders** from various community groups and interests.



A. PROJECT TEAM

The project team is comprised of the Ramboll-Elan consultant team and representatives from the New York Department of State (DOS). The project team will assist the Steering Committee throughout the CLEAR planning process. The primary roles of the Project Team are to:

- Facilitate the CLEAR planning process
- Produce program materials
- Provide technical expertise and analysis
- Produce public engagement materials (flyers, website, etc.)
- Facilitate knowledge sharing across the different CLEAR regions
- Ensure project processes and deliverable are consistent with other CLEAR regions
- Ensure the goals, priorities, requirements, and deadlines of the CLEAR initiative are met

The Project Team will be assisted in their responsibilities by staff from the New York State Department of State (DOS) and other state agencies.

B. STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is comprised of a broad range of elected officials, key local community leaders in the public and private sector, and regional entities who will guide the development of the CLEAR plan for the Niagara Orleans region. The contributions and leadership of Steering Committee members will help to create an innovative yet feasible CLEAR Plan that is grounded in evidence-based scenario planning and inspired by the vision and assets of the local community.

Purpose of the Steering Committee:

- Provide local and subject matter expertise to guide the development of the CLEAR plan,
- Inform key representatives about future coastal risks, scenarios, and development opportunities,
- Build local ownership of resilience growth principles and strategies,
- Develop local partnerships and capacity to implement CLEAR plan actions, and
- Empower community leaders and organizations to protect their communities and create new, more resilient paths for community growth.

Steering Committee Responsibilities:

- Work with municipal staff, consultants, State agency staff, and others to complete the tasks related to the development of the CLEAR Plan,
- Attend regular meetings and project events,
- Provide input on local conditions, concerns, opportunities, and resources,



- Review project materials and outputs,
- Keep municipal officials and community members informed about progress,
- Inform community members about how they can be involved in the project,
- Review risk assessment with community profiles, asset inventory, and projections,
- Provide input and review CLEAR vision, strategies, projects, and actions
- Review and provide input on Draft and Final CLEAR Plan

Steering Committee Members

The Niagara and Orleans Counties Steering Committee is composed of elected officials and key local stakeholders involved in lakeshore planning and development including:

- Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
- Orleans County Planning Department
- Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Niagara County Center for Economic Development
- Orleans County Chamber of Commerce
- Town of Kendall
- Town of Wilson
- Town of Lewiston
- Town of Somerset
- Town of Newfane
- Town of Porter
- City of Niagara Falls
- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
- Neighbor Works Community Partners Niagara Falls
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County Farm and Home Center
- Olcott Yacht Club

For the full list of members, see Attachment A.

Steering Committee Captain

The Steering Committee will choose “captain(s)” on an as needed basis to lead discussions on specific topic areas via a work group format. This will be done in coordination with the consultant team.



Work Groups

The Steering Committee may create work groups as needed to provide opportunity for brainstorming and technical input, ensure effective representation of the diverse community perspectives, build a sense of community ownership of the plan, and allow for better time management at Steering Committee meetings. Each subcommittee would be led by a Steering Committee Captain (if desired.) The Steering Committee may also choose to invite non-committee members with relevant technical or subject area expertise (e.g. from the pool of experts) to serve on the work groups. Work groups may be developed around any topic including, but not limited to public engagement, risk and resilience assessment, identification of projects and actions, and implementation of the plan.

Steering Committee Activities

Kick-off Meeting

April 27, 2021

The Steering Committee will convene virtually for a kick-off meeting in April 2021. The meeting will introduce the program goals, process, and expected outcomes; review the roles and responsibilities of the project partners including Steering Committee members; and present the draft public engagement plan. As a follow up, committee members will be asked to identify key individuals and groups that should be engaged in the planning process.

Monthly meetings

The Steering Committee will meet on a monthly basis to guide the development of the CLEAR plan. These meetings may coincide with other public or stakeholder activities. Steering Committee meetings will be working meetings for members to discuss scheduled topics. Meeting materials (i.e., PowerPoint presentations) and summaries will be made available and accessible to the public via the Niagara Orleans CLEAR project website.

Local outreach and engagement

Steering Committee members will support the public engagement activities described in section II below by disseminating project information and announcements to their networks, local communities, and participating in public events. Where possible, they may help to organize presentations and/or disseminate information at virtual or in-person community meetings and events.

Review of CLEAR Plan and optional local adoption

Toward the conclusion of the project, the Steering Committee will review the draft of the CLEAR Plan and provide comments and input. The Steering Committee members may work with their



respective municipal boards and councils to determine if the municipality will officially adopt the CLEAR Plan and integrate the relevant projects into their local plans.

Other

The project team may need to reach-out to the Steering Committee at times for targeted feedback on specific deliverables in between meetings. This communication will likely be via email and/or survey format to make it most expedient for the Steering Committee to respond.

II. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is a key component of the CLEAR planning process and fundamental to achieving co-developed resilience strategies. Toward this end, general public engagement activities and targeted outreach will be conducted throughout the planning process in order to ensure that deliverables reflect the diverse perspectives, needs, and interests within the region and that participation reflects socio-economic and geographic diversity including vulnerable and under-served populations.

The Steering Committee will advise on the most appropriate approach to community engagement for Niagara and Orleans Counties and take an active role in public outreach. Outreach will be used to both inform the public and to receive suggestions from the public. Outreach is particularly important while pandemic-related restrictions are in place that limit opportunities for public gatherings and in-person events. A minimum of one “Look-and-Listen” tour and three public workshops will be held in order to inform and develop the CLEAR plans.

Vulnerable and under-served populations

The Project Team will work with the Steering Committee to identify which groups are more vulnerable to lakeshore risks due to higher exposure to hazards, higher sensitivity to hazards, or low adaptive capacity to the potential impact of risks due to various socio-economic factors. Likewise, the project team will seek ways to engage underserved groups which may be underrepresented at public events including youth, seniors, seasonal residents, seasonal and migrant workers, offline religious communities (Amish, Mennonite), non-English speaking residents, minorities, refugees, and people with disabilities. Targeted outreach will be conducted to ensure both vulnerable and underserved populations are engaged in the CLEAR planning process, for example through community groups, religious congregations, and schools.

Public Meeting Materials

Meeting notices for public engagement sessions, presentation materials (i.e., PowerPoint), and meeting summaries will be posted on the Niagara Orleans CLEAR project website.



Activities and formats

Engagement activities will utilize a variety of virtual and in-person formats. These may include online and SMS surveys, roundtable discussions, webinars, tabling at local events, comment boxes at public parks, Zoom Virtual Town Halls or Community meetings, presentations at Town Board Meetings, interactive map tools (e.g. Social Pinpoint), and community activity stations. The Project Team will work with the Steering Committee and DOS to determine which formats will be best suited to the region and will promote both transparency and public safety during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The three primary engagement activities are as follows (as described in subsequent sections):

- Look and Listen Tour,
- Open House Events, and
- Public Presentation.

In addition, **interviews or work groups** may be held with key stakeholders, experts, and interest groups to gather targeted input on existing conditions and future strategies.

A. LOOK AND LISTEN TOUR

May 2021

The project team will organize a “look and listen tour” of affected areas in the region. Given COVID-19 guidelines this ‘tour’ will be held remotely using high resolution mapping tools. The ‘tour’ will be held with the Steering Committee who will provide input on areas most affected.

B. PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

A series of interactive public discussions will be organized on long-term community resiliency and economic development in the face of current and future anticipated conditions. These discussions will likely be held virtually. If restrictions during the pandemic ease, there may be a combination of virtual and in-person events.

Open House #1

June 2021

The first open house will introduce community members to the CLEAR initiative and ask them to provide input on risks and assets in the study area. . The open house will include a live online presentation that will be recorded and posted on the project website as well as a public survey (online and SMS).

Open House #2

July 2021

At the second open house, the public will be invited to comment on the CLEAR risk assessment and different shoreline development scenarios. Participants will be asked about their vision for the future of the region in the context of anticipated changes.



Open House #3

October 2021

The third open house will solicit public input on the draft vision, strategies, projects, and actions for the CLEAR plan.

C. PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The public will be invited to a presentation of the draft CLEAR plan ahead of a public comment period.

III. OUTREACH METHODS

Outreach methods will be refined with the Steering committee and project partners, considering what has worked (and what has not worked) in the past. In addition to general outreach, targeted methods may be used to reach vulnerable groups and those that are traditionally underrepresented at such public events. As a foundation, the approach will include all traditional media and online outreach tools.

- **Development of a Contact Database:** The public will be invited to subscribe to a project mailing list to receive information about the CLEAR planning process and events.
- **Development of Outreach Materials:** The project team will develop outreach materials for public engagement. These may include flyers, posters/infographics, info-maps, small ads, or social media ‘cards’. Media releases approved by DOS, will be forwarded to local news services.
- **Electronic Engagement Tools:** Project information, materials, events, and engagement opportunities will be available on the CLEAR project website. The following local social media outlets may be used for cross-posting: community Facebook Pages and websites.

Dissemination

The project team will work with the Steering Committee to disseminate outreach materials through appropriate local media channels, listservs, and community groups (see appendix A). Where possible, hard copies of materials may be posted at events and in high-traffic areas including public parks, local businesses, schools, and community centers.

Accessibility

Events and advertisement materials will be language accessible and ADA compliant for community members. Accommodations could include physical accessibility of meeting sites and parking, provision of materials and content as audio or video files; language interpretation; and use of



documents suitable for screen readers. These will be provided to the greatest degree possible given available time and resources. Outreach approaches, approved by DOS, will be discussed with relevant local organizations and revised as appropriate during the process.

IV. SCHEDULE

| | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Project Initiation/SC Kick-Off Meeting | April 27, 2021 | | |
| Look and Listen Tour | May 18, 2021 | | |
| SC1 - PEP input, review community profile, draft asset inventory, public mtg #1 | May 25, 2021 | | |
| Public Event #1 - Project introduction, draft community profiles and initial asset inventory | June 2021 | | |
| SC2 – Risk assessment draft results | June 2021 | | |
| SC3 – Outcomes of risk assessment, scenario visuals, needs & opps assessment with initial case studies | | July 2021 | |
| Public Event #2 - Projections, scenarios, risk assessment outcomes, needs & opps, community visioning | | July 2021 | |
| SC4 – Share final needs & opps assess., report on public event, discuss vision and strategies & actions | | September 2021 | |
| Working draft list of projects, programs, and actions | | September 2021 | |
| SC5 – Share draft vision & strategies, workshop list of potential projects/programs/actions | | September 2021 | |
| Public Event #3 - Visions, strategies, draft projects, programs, actions | | | October 2021 |
| Final Vision, Strategies / KPIs | | | November 2021 |
| SC6 - Report on final vision & strategies, share draft actions and project profiles | | | |
| Draft CLEAR Plan | | | December 2021 |
| SC6 - Present draft plan / project profiles & matrix | | | December 2021 |



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|-----------------------------------|--|--|---------------|
| Draft CLEAR Plan – Public Comment | | | December 2021 |
| Final CLEAR Plan | | | December 2021 |

ATTACHMENT A

COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER LISTS

- Steering Committee Members
- Media List
- Online and Social Media Channels
- Local Community Groups, Networks, Stakeholders, Venues

As of May 2021. These tables will be updated throughout the process as appropriate.

Niagara and Orleans Steering Committee Members:

- Jason Haremza, Senior Planner, Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
- James Bensley, Director, Orleans County Planning Department
- Darlene Hartway, Director, Orleans County Chamber of Commerce
- Katie Sommerfeldt, Manager, Orleans County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Michael Casale, Commissioner, Niagara County Center for Economic Development
- Mark Seider, District Engineer, Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Bruce Newell, Town Board, Town of Kendall
- Doyle Phillips, Supervisor, Town of Wilson
- Steve Broderick, Supervisor, Town of Lewiston
- Jeffrey Dewart, Supervisor, Town of Somerset
- Timothy Horanburg, Supervisor, Town of Newfane
- John “Duffy” Johnson, Supervisor, Town of Porter
- James Bragg, Planner II/Historic Preservation Specialist, City of Niagara Falls
- Jerome Nagy, Chief Executive Officer, Neighbor Works Community Partners Niagara Falls
- Kerrie Gallo, Deputy Executive Director, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
- Amanda Henning, Agricultural Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara Co. Farm & Home Center
- Andy Sharp, Director, Olcott Yacht Club

Media List – Print and Radio (non-exhaustive)

- Niagara Gazette
- The Vince Agnello Radio Show



- Lake Country Pennysaver (weekly)
- Niagara County SWCD summer newsletter
- LCTV public access television
- Buffalo News

Online and Social Media Channels:

- OrleansHub (digital newspaper)
- School webpages*
- Niagara County SWCD FB
- Municipal FB and websites
- One Region Forward Listserv
- The Action (FB), Niagara Falls Censored (FB)*
- Youngstown and Ransomville business association listserv
- Waterfront Communities listserv

Local Community Groups, Networks, Stakeholders, Venues (non-exhaustive list):

- Niagara Falls Peacemakers*
- Niagara Ministerial Council, Inc.*
- Niagara River Anglers Association
- LaSalle Yacht Club
- Niagara Falls Boys & Girls Club*
- Lake Ontario Riparian Alliance
- County Emergency Services
- Oak Orchard Neighborhood Association
- Shoreline Homeowner and Road Associations
- Charter Captains
- Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition
- Chambers of Commerce (incl. Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce)
- School Districts*
- Community and Senior Centers*
- Local religious congregations (including Amish & Mennonite)*
- Yates Town Park*
- Marinas
- State Campgrounds, Municipal Parks, Summer Concerts & Events*

**may be especially relevant to underserved communities*