

**Upstate New York Roundtable – Linking Community Revitalization and
Environmental Restoration in the Great Lakes Region**

September 18, 2007

Summary

Prepared by the Great Lakes Commission

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Background and Introduction

In 2002, the Great Lakes Commission launched a series of state roundtables to promote linkages between brownfields redevelopment and greenfields protection. Past work by the Great Lakes Commission to identify policy gaps and opportunities related to brownfield-greenfield linkages served as the basis for the roundtables. In 2001, the Great Lakes Commission released a report entitled *Linking Brownfields Redevelopment and Greenfields Protection for Sustainable Development*. (<http://glc.org/bridges/files/9-01BridgesI.pdf>). Known as the “Bridges Report,” it includes a series of 32 “strategic actions” for promoting brownfields revitalization, greenfields protection and ways to link them for more sustainable land use. The Great Lakes Commission adopted a resolution (<http://glc.org/about/resolutions/brownfields.html>) on October 11, 2001 to conduct policy roundtables in Great Lakes jurisdictions to facilitate a meaningful dialogue about implementation of these strategies.

With funding from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, state roundtables were conducted in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Indiana. Each roundtable was crafted to meet individual state needs and by build upon past accomplishments.

The New York Land Use Roundtable is part of the Great Lakes Commission’s state land use policy roundtable series. A Steering Committee comprised of more than 30 state, regional and local representatives guided the design and conduct of a policy roundtable to address emerging open space and land use planning issues and initiatives in New York with a particular focus on the Great Lakes basin portion of the state (refer to Appendix I for Steering Committee membership).

The Steering Committee developed the following goal and objectives for the roundtable:

<i>Roundtable Goal and Objectives</i>	
<u>Goal</u>	Plan and conduct a forum to showcase past successes discuss present challenges and identify a range of opportunities linking land conservation, development and redevelopment in order to improve the health and vitality of the Great Lakes region.
<u>Objectives</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Brief roundtable participants on the variety of existing and recommended programs, resources and strategies related to land conservation and development and redevelopment, including but not limited to coastal management, brownfields, open space, rural preservation, transportation management, greenways and canal ways, and related “smart growth” initiatives.2. Provide a forum for representatives from pertinent stakeholder organizations and government to network and discuss their experiences and needs in a collegial atmosphere.3. Improve information sharing by employing various communication techniques and technologies.4. Identify opportunities to enhance the benefits of regional and statewide programs, resources and strategies (identified in Objective 1), as they may apply within the Great Lakes basin portion of New York State.

Opening Remarks

Pete Grannis, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, and chair of the New York State delegation to the Great Lakes Commission, began by thanking the Great Lakes Commission staff, Tim Eder, Executive Director; Victoria Pebbles, Program Manager; and Rebecca Pearson, project leader, for their tireless efforts in putting this program together. Additionally, he

thanked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for its financial assistance to the Great Lakes Commission.

Grannis described the importance of this roundtable, noting that revitalizing upstate New York communities, in a way that achieves environmental restoration and economic development goals, is a cornerstone of Gov. Spitzer's administration.

New York has long been a leader among all the states in pursuing this goal, while pushing the envelope further. The following examples were noted.

- Beginning with construction of the Erie Barge Canal in 1825, linking communities across the state and playing the pivotal role in expansion and growth of the entire Great Lakes region. It was the largest construction project fully funded by a state for its time.
- Establishing the Adirondack Park Agency and its unique approach to protecting vast acreage of northern New York. As a model worldwide, it recognizes and allows for sustainable growth with the Park.
- Creating a system of state parks, historic resources, conservation areas, state forests, boat launches, and other important open spaces.
- Adopting smart growth principles, an aggressive brownfields revitalization program, green building goals, and many other efforts.

Grannis charged the roundtable participants to look at state programs from the 50,000 feet level, and consider ideas, trends and priorities for the future, in order to continually refine and improve the state programs. He presented the objectives for this Roundtable:

- Learn about the variety of existing and recommended programs, resources and strategies,
- Meet and network informally with colleagues from various state and local government agencies and stakeholder organizations,
- Employ innovative communication techniques and technologies for improving information sharing, and
- Identify opportunities to further enhance the benefits of regional and statewide programs, resources and strategies to achieve our land conservation, development and reuse goals.

Smart Growth Progress to Date in New York Session

Overview

Peter Manning, Department of State, Division of Local Governments, reviewed the definition, common principles and characteristics of “smart growth”. He provided an overview of New York State’s Quality Communities Program (2002-2006). The program developed from the report and recommends of Executive Order-created Interagency Task Force. The program included a local government grant program, outreach via newsletters, conferences and an online clearinghouse. For future state smart growth programs, the Quality Communities Program offers some lessons learned in advancing smart growth from its past successes and challenges:

- 2006 Report with 15 recommendations for consideration
- Increase interagency cooperation
- Enhance assistance to local governments
- More involvement from the State University of New York is needed.

Kenneth Smith, Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, gave an overview of priorities of his division related to smart growth:

- Revitalize water fronts as economic generators.
- Improve water quality.
- Protect open space and natural resources.
- Reclaim brownfields and established new uses.

He highlighted the programs that carry out the above priorities including the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, watershed planning and implementation and the Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) program.

Open Space Protection

Francis Sheehan, Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forest, described the characteristics of New York State’s portion of the Great Lakes basin which is more than 13 million acres - nearly half of New York’s land area. The region includes the great upstate cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Auburn, Watertown, Oswego, Potsdam, Ithaca and hundreds of smaller cities, towns and villages. It contains a diversity of open space resources including the shorelines, plains and tributaries of lakes Ontario and Erie, Finger Lakes, Western Adirondacks, Tug Hill, St. Lawrence River and valley, the Montezuma wetlands complex and many other important natural features. Additionally, the region is comprised of two million acres of lands protected by the state in state forests, wildlife management areas and state parks, as well as hundreds of municipal parks and other natural areas, and millions of acres of productive forests and thousands of farms that contribute to the economy and social fabric.

Sheehan described the origin and highlighted the importance of New York State’s Open Space Program. Since 1992, the state has worked cooperatively with local governments and other stakeholders in regional committees to identify regional open space priorities and strategies. Some of those priorities in the state’s Open Space Plan include:

- Northern Montezuma wetlands - an important waterfowl area for the North American migratory bird flyway
- Genesee Valley Greenway
- Knox Frame State Park
- Beechwood State Park - on the shores of Lake Ontario

- Braddock Bay - a partnership project among the state and local communities along Lake Ontario
- Harriet Hollister State Recreation Area overlooking Honeyoe Lake
- Salmon River corridor - an important fishery and outdoor recreational resource.

The chief source of state funding for open space programs is the State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Since the EPF was created in 1993, funding has increased steadily for state land acquisitions, the state farmland protection program, and the municipal park and historic preservation grant program administered by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Many conservation tools are available to assist the state, local governments, non-profit conservation organizations and private land owners conserve open space resources Those tools include:

- Purchase in Fee (State, Local, Not-for Profit)
- Article 49 Conservation Easement
 - > Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)
 - > Purchase of Recreation Rights
 - > Sustainable Forestry
 - > Conservation Easement Tax Credit
 - > Federal Tax Deductions
- Forest Tax Law (480 and 480a)
- Agricultural Districts
- New York State Conservation Partnership Program
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (DOS)
- Municipal Park Grants (OPRHP)
- Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (DOS)
- Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies/ State Wildlife Grants (DEC)
- Forest Legacy Program – Finger Lakes expansion
- Local Open Space Planning Guide

Sheehan noted that progress on open space conservation in the Great Lakes region of upstate New York is going to require all of the players in open space to enhance capacity.

Canal System Revitalization

Carmella Mantello, New York State Canal Corporation, gave an overview of the New York State Canal Corporation, its current accomplishments and the various revitalization projects it is leading. She noted that the canal system is comprised of four waterways - the Erie Canal, Champlain Canal, Oswego Canal and the Cayuga-Seneca Canal - linking the Hudson River, Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario, the Finger Lakes and the Niagara River with communities rich in history and culture.

To date, the Canal Corporation has implemented projects along the canal system totaling more than \$250 million. The following are examples of such projects:

- **Buffalo Erie Canal Harbor** –Nearly \$12 million investment, scheduled for completion in October 2007.
- **Tonawanda Twin Harbors** – Completed in 1999 with over \$3 million investment
- **Lockport** – Richmond Avenue Railing Project, completed in 2006 with nearly \$1 million investment
- **Brockport** – In 2003, a \$700,000 investment rehabbed the wall

- **Erie Canalway Trail** - 348 mile trail connecting Albany to Buffalo; 260 miles completed to date. Upon expected date of completion in 2010, trail will be the longest multi-use trail in the United States.
- **Erie Canal Greenway Water Trail** - Ideal for canoes and kayaks, more than 130 access points are already identified. Efforts are underway to improve access and develop amenities.

Additional projects include the Buffalo River Park Project, Town of Amherst Erie Canal Greenway Veterans Canal Park Rehabilitation Project, Village of Middleport Canal Park Enhancement Project, City of Lockport Erie Canal Flight of Five Site Furnishing Restoration, and the Tonawanda Sweeney Canal Wall Dock Project.

Mantello concluded by highlighting the key factor for the successful implementation of revitalization project: strong partnerships among federal and state agencies, local governments and non-profits.

Sustainable Economic Development

Christine Costopoulos, Empire State Development, presented an overview on the Empire State Development priorities under the new Upstate New York Agenda. The agenda is designed to improve the Upstate economy. It calls for the creation of regional teams in 7 upstate offices with expertise in building partnerships, the high tech industry, workforce preparation, community development, infrastructure and tourism. She focused on a new initiative called “Upstate Regional Blueprints” which is part of the Upstate Agenda created by the Governor. This initiative creates an opportunity for input through a series of 7 regional “blueprint sessions” to better align regional priorities for economic development in state and regional growth strategies. Sessions will be convened in Utica, Binghamton, Syracuse, Rochester, Albany, Buffalo and Potsdam.

She talked about the “I Live NY Summit” of 2007 which brought together business and community leaders, university representatives, elected officials, leaders of young professional groups, students and the public to examine key causes for the exodus of young adults. Key strategies that developed during the summit to retain young people are:

- Expand job opportunities through incentives for small business creation and entrepreneurial growth.
- Connect college students with Upstate employers
- Encourage participation in the revitalization of Upstate urban and cultural centers
- Affordable housing
- Strengthen communities through volunteering and civic engagement

Other initiatives/programs underway include the Restore NY Grant program to revitalize urban centers; the implementation of ecosystem-based management practices (e.g., research into creating a business plan for landfill to gas production); the Adirondack Smart Growth Grants and brownfield redevelopment.

Executive Chamber Remarks and Q&A

Paul Beyer, Special Assistant for the Environment in the Governor's Executive Chamber, discussed Governor Spitzer's goal to revitalize upstate New York, and highlighted how the appointments of several specially qualified individuals to key executive and senior state agency positions reflects the Spitzer Administration's commitment to smart growth. The following are examples of such appointments:

- Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner - Pete Grannis, a former New York State legislator who excelled in developing consensus support for innovative policies;
- Department of Transportation Commissioner – Astrid Glynn, has the first task of examining land use and transportation to improve institutional linkages;
- Empire State Development Upstate Chair – Dan Gundersen, worked with the Maryland Gov. Parris Glandening, the father of Smart Growth, and implemented many smart growth policies in Pennsylvania;
- Department of Agriculture and Markets Deputy Commissioner for Farmland Protection – Jerry Cosgrove, had previously worked as the Northeast Regional Director of American Farmland Trust, protecting New York's farmland for future prosperity; and
- Deputy Secretary of State for Local Government – Robert Elliot, as past Executive Director of the New York Planning Federation, will be working with the Governor's Commission on Local Government Efficiency.

Questions and Answers About Smart Growth In Upstate New York

Q: How do state programs link water quality and quantity?

A. Inter-municipal watershed planning is a tool to link state programs to water quality. The development of these watershed plans involves inventorying infrastructure and creating a strategy to protect water quality and quantity. The Department of Environmental Conservation works with Environmental Facilities Corps to provide funding for infrastructure. Governor Spitzer is advocating for an increase of federal funding for this infrastructure development as well as Senators Clinton and Schumer.

Q: Is Empire State Development looking at shipping transportation industry for further economic development?

A. Shipping will never be the same as it was historically in the canal system. Waterfront tourism seems to be the growing trend for Upstate New York. A new paradigm for waterfront redevelopment is needed one that focuses on mix uses e.g., commercial, industrial and residential.

Q: Are there any state protections for groundwater?

A. Yes, since 1988 New York has required all groundwater withdrawals from the Great Lakes basin to be registered, and permits are required for any groundwater taking on Long Island. Special regulations also exist for any deep well injection and monitoring of groundwater quality for drinking water is performed continuously by the State Health Department.

The Great Lakes Connection: Case Studies Linking Revitalization and Open Space Protection Session

Local Government Survey

John Bartow, Tug Hill Commission presented results of a survey conducted during the roundtable planning process to obtain local feedback on selected state programs. In the spring of 2006, the Great Lakes Commission and the roundtable steering committee worked with the New York State Association of Towns and New York Conference of Mayors to survey local government officials about state programs, how well those programs served their needs and how might locals be better served.

Surveys were distributed via e-mail by the associations and in hardcopy at their annual meetings. Participants were asked 4 questions pertaining to 24 state programs ranging from Agriculture & Farmland Protection Grants to Land Use Training to Water and Sewer Infrastructure Financing. Complete list of state programs and a summary of survey results were provided in the Briefing Book. Which was distributed to all roundtable participants and is available on the roundtable website at <http://www.glc.org/landuse/nyroundtable/>

Bartow noted that overall *awareness* of various state programs was relatively high in comparison to current *usage* of the programs among local communities. This demonstrates that communities are familiar with programs that are available to them, but that local officials are not putting such programs to use. Possible reasons for this trend could be:

- Most respondents were from small rural communities.
- Match requirements often are a challenge to communities with small budgets and tax base.

Survey results indicate that communities are most aware of the Community Development Block Grants and Small Cities program followed by some interest in Environmental Protection Fund programs. Brownfields programs were also noted frequently. Ranking last in familiarity were the state training programs on land use, despite recent state legislation mandating training for planning and zoning boards. When asked about additional training needs or information about state programs, the top priorities identified were: land use planning and zoning; open space planning and protection; brownfield redevelopment and community revitalization.

Overall, survey results showed that training in the area of land use planning is desired but that many communities were not aware that such training existed or have utilized it.

Niagara Escarpment

Ole Amundsen, Land Conservation and Planning and Patricia Szarpa, Western New York Land Conservancy, presented a case study on the Niagara Escarpment: a ridge of rock, over a hundred feet high in some locations, starts in Rochester, New York and runs for 650 miles north into Canada and ends in the Door County peninsula in the state of Wisconsin. The Canadian portion of the escarpment is a United Nation's Biosphere Reserve. The New York portion of the escarpment is highlighted a priority area within the state's open space plan for Region 8 of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Historical development of the town and city of Lockport is directly linked to the escarpment as this ridge system was a major barrier in the building of the Erie Canal. To allow barge traffic to pass over, the escarpment, a series of locks were built, making Lockport a major hub along the Canal. The land form of the Niagara Escarpment has brought together both ecological significant areas with the location of nearby industrial facilities that rose from the shipping industry. The land conservation efforts along the escarpment are connected to efforts to restore and use the Eighteenmile Creek as a recreational resource.

In 1985, the lower portion of Eighteenmile Creek was designated as an Area of Concern¹ by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency because of poor water quality and contaminated bottom sediments. As of January 1, 2005, the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District is coordinating the Eighteenmile Creek's Remedial Action Plan (RAP). Presently, Eighteenmile Creek is mainly characterized by activities like sports fishing and attracts approximately 15,000 anglers yearly, notably during fall salmon runs. Because of the popularity of the area, the habitat restoration was accomplished prior to cleanup. Additional priorities for Eighteenmile Creek include improved fishing and recreation access.

The goal for the Upper Eighteenmile Creek is to protect the high quality areas as well as to restore some of the contaminated areas to these high quality conditions.

New York Agricultural Land Trust

Jerry Cosgrove, Department of Agriculture and Markets, described the importance of agriculture in New York and the challenges facing it. The state has 35,000 farms and 25 percent of its land mass in agriculture (7 million acres). Agriculture creates \$3.6 billion in direct sales, which generates \$25 billion in economic impact. New York ranks #2 in apple and cabbage production and #3 in milk and grape production. The state's top agricultural counties are located in the Great Lakes watershed.

Despite its rich heritage, New York's working landscapes are threatened by poorly planned sprawling development. According to the American Farmland Trust, New York loses about 26,000 acres per year. According to 2003 Brookings Institute report by Professor Rolf Pendall, *Sprawl without Growth*, while upstate population growth from 1982-1997 was 2.6 percent, per capita land use increased by 30 percent. And a 1997 report by American Farmland Trust, *Farming on the Edge*, ranked the Western New York/Great Lakes region as the 11th most threatened agricultural region in the country (based on development pressure and soil quality).

Growth of Farmland Protection in NYS –

Funding for farmland protection in New York State has grown from \$4 million in 1996 to \$28 million in 2007. The funding comes from the state Environmental Protection Fund which receives a share of the state real estate transfer tax revenue. Federal funding has grown from \$35 million in the 1996 Farm Bill to appropriation levels of about \$100 million per year in the 2002 Farm Bill. The recently passed House version of the Farm Bill would increase that to \$300 million per year. Local programs have also provided funding – Pittsford, Penfield and Perinton in Monroe County as well as the town of Amherst in Erie County are some examples. State program provides funding for up to 75% of the project costs; federal program provides funding for up to 50% of the easement cost.

Future Challenges –

A recent report by American Farmland Trust (AFT), *Picking Up the Pace, A Road Map for Accelerating Farmland Protection in New York* highlights the need for increased capacity to protect farmland – both at the state level and locally, with the nonprofit land trusts that are facilitating the projects at the local level. For example, a number of nonprofit land trusts are working on farmland protection projects in

¹ Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs) are identified in the Water Quality Agreement (WQA) between US and Canada. AOC status is given to areas of severe environmental degradation within the Great Lakes watershed. Of the 42 AOCs, 25 were identified in US, and 17 in Canada. AOCs are defined as having at least one Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI). BUIs indicate watercourse has been subjected to activities that have led to significant changes in chemical, biological, physical characteristics. The goal of Water Quality Agreement is to restore and maintain chemical, biological, and physical integrity through delisting of BUIs

the Great Lakes watershed. These include the Western New York Land Conservancy, the Genesee Valley Land Conservancy, the Genesee Land Trust, the Finger Lakes Land Trust, Tug Hill Tomorrow and the newly formed New York Agricultural Land Trust.

The New York Agriculture Land Trust (NYALT) received its 501(c)(3) status in the summer of 2007 and was formed for farmers by farmers to help them utilize the state Farmland Protection Program as well as the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. NYALT will soon close projects on 5 farms that will protect 1,736 acres and has 15 projects in the pipeline that encompass over 8,000 acres. Presently, these projects are located in the counties of Cayuga, Cortland and Onondaga - all in the Great Lakes watershed.

The AFT report notes that the need for additional program funding as well as funding for technical assistance and organizational capacity building will be essential for the growth of the state's Farmland Protection Program in the Great Lakes watershed.

City of Oswego

Mary Vanouse, Oswego Community Development, discussed the various state tools/programs that the city of Oswego uses to address its environmental problems, most of which grew out of the city's historical industrial development. Industrial boom in Oswego was driven by the Erie Canal, railroads and hydropower. By the 1950s, manufacturing and grain transportation dominated the city's economy. From the 1960s through the 1980s the city became a center for hydro, steam and nuclear energy development.

The city uses two state tools/programs, in particular, to transform environmental problem areas into development opportunities: the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (adopted by Oswego Common Council in April 29, 1986) and the Oswego 2020 Vision Comprehensive Plan (adopted by Oswego Common Council in August 23, 2003). Also notable is that the Long Term Control Plan has driven the waterfront recovery by gaining extra points on state grant applications. The plan provides guidance for the demolition of the overflow retention facility. The Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan will guide future redevelopment for 7 sites along the waterfront.

Questions and Answers About Selected Case Studies in Upstate New York

Q: In regards to the Finger Lakes protection initiative, how is information being transmitted to local communities in the area?

A. Through internet portals regarding federal and state programs and land trusts (www.gflrpc.org/Links.htm).

Q: Why was fish the focus of the restoration efforts?

A. The anglers wanted a healthy fish population, and therefore, the support came from the bottom e.g., the angler community, up to local officials. The U.S. Geological Survey through its GAP program can prioritize areas based on fish communities, and would be a good resource for future Upstate New York restoration efforts.

Lunch Keynote: Healthy Waters, Strong Economy: The Benefits of Restoring the Great Lakes Ecosystem

John Austin, a Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution, talked about Brookings' Great Lakes Economic Initiative. Recent reports from this initiative include *The Vital Center* (released October, 2006); *Preserving the Vital Center – Renewing the Economy of the Industrial Heartland* (released February 2007) and *Great Lakes – A World-leading Bi-National Economic Region* (Fall 2007). Other Products from this initiative will include *Health Waters, Strong Economy: The Economic Benefits of Preserving the Great Lakes Ecosystem* (September, 2007); *Positioning the Great Lakes Region as a Global Center-point for Freshwater Research, Education and Technology Development* (forthcoming, December, 2007) and *Design of a Strategy for Great Lakes Regional Venture Capital Building* (forthcoming, February, 2008), among others. Access to these reports is available at <http://www.brookings.edu/projects/great-lakes/GLEI-about.aspx>. A world-leading economy that contributes to both counties positions, Austin's work has found that the Great Lakes region:

- Is a highly integrated economy which makes the region the third largest “country” by GDP in the world;
- Is the center of 30 percent of North America's corporate headquarters, and 11 percent of the world's;
- Is at the center of the largest bi-lateral trade in the world; \$1.8 billion annually with Canada, trade over the Ambassador Bridge is more than U.S.-China or Japan;
- Is a world center of talent generation, innovation and infrastructure for sustainable growth, conferring 944,677 of the 2,298,977 university degrees or 41 percent of all degrees in Canada and the U.S., while the region has 36 percent of the population.
- Is home to the largest concentration of research universities in the world; 20 of 100 top-ranked universities in the world are located in the region - more than any other region.
- Generates 32 percent of US patents.

Austin concluded his remarks by stating that national competitiveness concerns and an U.S. Presidential '08 election make now the time to advance understanding of how to best fuel the Great Lakes economy.

Moving Forward in New York State, Part I: Presentation of Selected Strategies for Consideration

Victoria Pebbles, Program Manager, Great Lakes Commission presented 18 Selected Strategies for addressing urban revitalization and open space protection, which were provided in the participants' Briefing Book.

These strategies were derived from a suite of recommendations from a 2001 Great Lakes Commission report entitled: “Linking Brownfields Redevelopment and Greenfields Protection for Sustainable Development in the Great Lakes Basin.” That report examined trends in urban revitalization and open space protection policy in New York as well as the other 7 states and 2 provinces that surround the Great Lakes. It identified those that were particularly successful and that could be applied more broadly to other states. It also identified gaps: opportunities for new policies to address unmet needs. Furthermore, the roundtable steering committee selected those strategies where progress has been slower, or those that mirror findings and recommendations from a variety studies and reports and generated by New York State agencies and stakeholder groups. They include:

- NY State DEC 2006 *Open Space Conservation Plan*
- NY Dept. of State 2006 *Five Year Quality Communities Report*

- NY State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources and Cornell University 2006 *A Vision for Rural New York*”
- New York State Canal Corporation’s Canal Recreationway Plan.
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 2002 *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

In short, the strategies were selected for the New York roundtable because of their potential to build on past successes and address needs that are particular to the Great Lakes portion of upstate New York.

Pebbles noted that not all the possible strategies to address community revitalization and environmental restoration in Upstate New York have been identified. The presentation of these strategies does not imply, or otherwise convey endorsement by members of the roundtable steering committee. Rather, these strategies were offered as a starting point to stimulate discussion and promote an ongoing dialogue about options and opportunities to address these issues in Upstate New York.

Moving Forward in New York State, Part II: Interactive Evaluation of Selected Strategies

Dean Solomon, Michigan State University Extension, facilitated an interactive exercise to evaluate selected strategies that address revitalization and environmental protection in New York, and to use these results to focus topics during the roundtable discussion session. A Turning Point® electronic voting/audience response system was used for this session. This system engaged all participants in the process, provided immediate feedback and allowed participants to assess the strategic actions and view their responses in unique ways.

To start, participants were asked to identify themselves into the following roles:

What is your role today?	Responses	
	percent	count
Local official/representative	15.00%	6
State agency/Assembly representative	47.50%	19
Non-profit organization	22.50%	9
Watershed/Planning organization	7.50%	3
Academic institution	2.50%	1
Professional association	2.50%	1
Not reporting	2.50%	1
Totals	100%	40

Next, participants used the electronic voting system to rate each of the 18 strategic actions according to the following criteria:

1. Does this action link conservation, development and redevelopment issues in upstate New York?
2. If implemented, will this action enhance collaboration between state agencies and municipalities?

Results

1. Does this action link conservation, development and redevelopment issues in upstate New York?

Strategic Action ¹	Average Score ²
12. Provide tax incentives for brownfields that are local redevelopment priority	6.47
16. Adopt flexible, local zoning regulations and design guidelines	6.18
2. Encourage and fund the development of local comprehensive plans	5.70
1. Enhance state agency coordination for state-funded projects	5.67
8. Make risk of development a priority eligibility criteria for acquisition programs	5.55
18. Encourage green technology to reduce fossil fuel use	5.53
3. Integrate green and blueways in community planning and growth strategies	5.47
7. Increase local funding for farmland protection	5.47
9. Enable local authority to use real estate transfer fees to fund conservation	5.38
14. Develop/disseminate community development guidebooks	5.27
5. Increase local capacity to inventory wildlife habitat, cultural and historic resources	5.15
10. Fund linkages between farms, farmers' markets and restaurants	5.05
13. Capacity-building workshops for economically challenged neighborhoods	4.78
17. Sponsor design competitions for redevelopment / smart growth	4.77
15. Promote small-scale infill development	4.59
6. Improve accessibility to state information for business location decisions	4.53
11. Designate historic districts and expand historic tax credit	3.59
4. Investigate the expansion of user and impact fees	3.54

¹Strategic actions are listed from highest to lowest average score. Numbers to the left of the actions refer to the order in which they were presented during the session.

²Scale is from 1=less so to 8=more so

2. If implemented, will this action enhance collaboration between state agencies and municipalities?

Strategic Action ¹	Average Score ²
12. Provide tax incentives for brownfields that are local redevelopment priority	6.56
2. Encourage and fund the development of local comprehensive plans	6.15
1. Enhance state agency coordination for state-funded projects	5.85
7. Increase local funding for farmland protection	5.32
6. Improve accessibility to state information for business location decisions	5.15
3. Integrate green and blueways in community planning and growth strategies	5.14
13. Capacity-building workshops for economically challenged neighborhoods	4.89
14. Develop/disseminate community development guidebooks	4.89
18. Encourage green technology to reduce fossil fuel use	4.84
5. Increase local capacity to inventory wildlife habitat, cultural and historic resources	4.62
16. Adopt flexible, local zoning regulations and design guidelines	4.49
9. Enable local authority to use real estate transfer fees to fund conservation	4.37
10. Fund linkages between farms, farmers' markets and restaurants	4.34
11. Designate historic districts and expand historic tax credit	4.11
8. Make risk of development a priority eligibility criteria for acquisition programs	4.10
17. Sponsor design competitions for redevelopment / smart growth	4.05
15. Promote small-scale infill development	3.84
4. Investigate the expansion of user and impact fees	2.66

¹Strategic actions are listed from highest to lowest average score. Numbers to the left of the actions refer to the order in which they were presented during the session.

²Scale is from 1=less so to 8=more so

The rating results were plotted on an x-y graph and displayed to participants (figure 1). Based on a combination of the two criteria, the 8 strategic actions that were highest in both criteria are shown below.

Top 8 Strategic Actions¹
12. Provide tax incentives for brownfields that are local redevelopment priority
2. Encourage and fund the development of local comprehensive plans
1. Enhance state agency coordination for state-funded projects
7. Increase local funding for farmland protection
3. Integrate green and blueways in community planning and growth strategies
18. Encourage green technology to reduce fossil fuel use
16. Adopt flexible, local zoning regulations and design guidelines
14. Develop/disseminate community development guidebooks

¹Numbers to the left of the actions refer to the order in which they were presented during the session.

Observations and Discussion

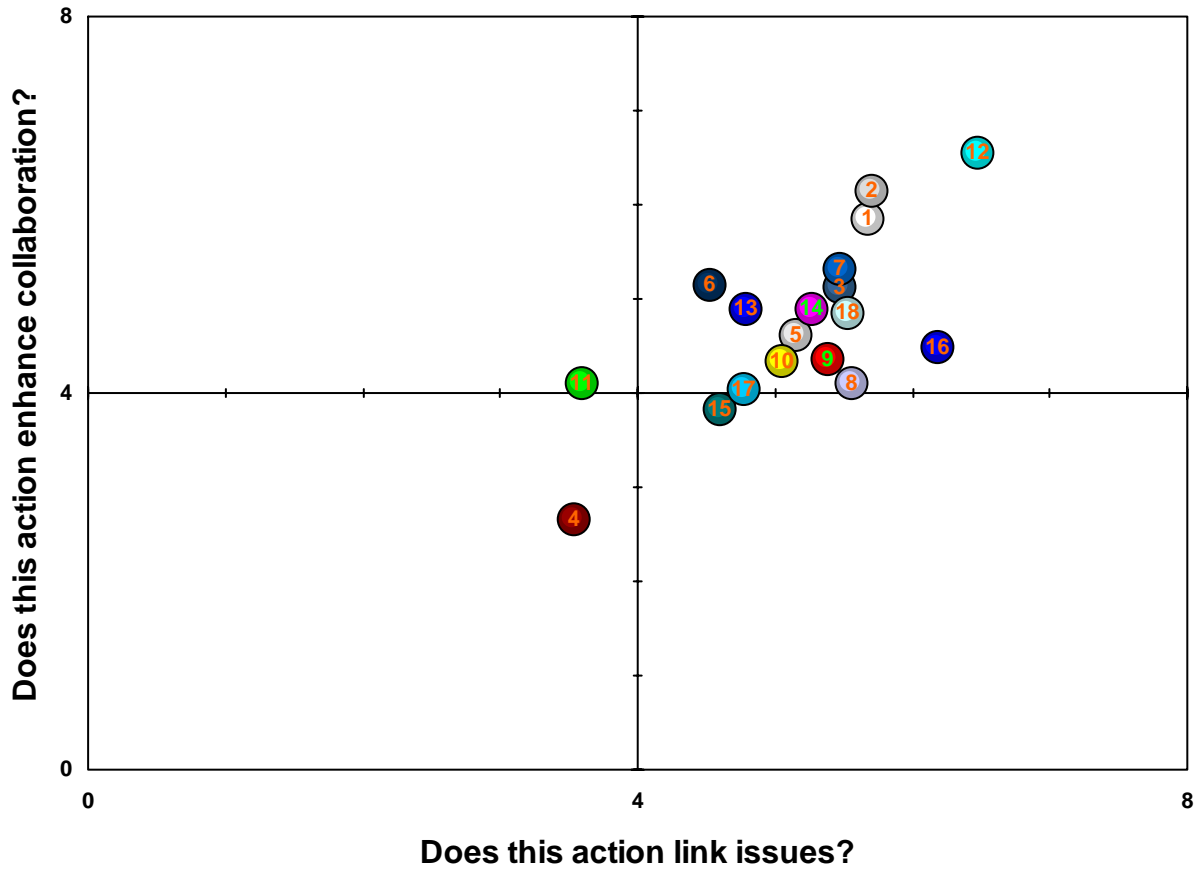
The 18 Strategies provoked a lively discussion among a diverse group of representatives of state agencies, local organizations and other interest groups regarding opportunities for future action. During the discussion, some participants expressed concerns that there was no dedicated discussion of selected strategies prior to the voting exercise, although they had the briefing books in advance and were provided with a detailed presentation of the strategies. Participants were familiar with most, if not all of the strategies. This highly-informed group noted that the most popular or successful strategies for addressing revitalization and open space issues were not on the list of selected strategies presented. Additional strategies mentioned by the participants are listed in the box below.

Additional State Strategies for Addressing Revitalization and Conservation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) • Growth Boundaries • Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances • Regional Planning • Encourage conservation easements on land with mixed uses • Increase outreach to local governments regarding state level smart growth initiatives • Build water quality and quantity measures into smart growth programs • Ensure that state and local infrastructure programs and expenditures are consistent with state and local smart growth goals

Further, participants suggested that “level of collaboration” or “linkages between issues” were weak criteria for evaluating the strategies and that different criteria may have been more helpful in evaluating the strategies. By comparison, previous roundtables conducted under this series employed criteria such as “importance” and “achievability.” For the New York roundtable, the steering committee observed that all the strategic actions were important wanted to reserve stronger judgment of the strategies in light of expected gubernatorial initiatives. There was additional discussion on the importance of implementing strategies and the key role of local units of government for successful implementation.

Finally, one municipal representative noted that in order to give the state feedback on its priorities, municipal officials needed greater capacity to know what is happening at the state level. This comment reinforces some of the findings from the local government survey discussed above.

Figure 1: Strategic Actions Evaluated by the Two Criteria



Strategic Actions

1. Enhance state agency coordination for state-funded projects
2. Encourage and fund the development of local comprehensive plans
3. Integrate green and blueways in community planning and growth strategies
4. Investigate the expansion of user and impact fees
5. Increase local capacity to inventory wildlife habitat, cultural and historic resources
6. Improve accessibility to state information for business location decisions
7. Increase local funding for farmland protection
8. Make risk of development a priority eligibility criteria for acquisition programs
9. Enable local authority to use real estate transfer fees to fund conservation
10. Fund linkages between farms, farmers' markets and restaurants
11. Designate historic districts and expand historic tax credit
12. Provide tax incentives for brownfields that are local redevelopment priority
13. Capacity-building workshops for economically challenged neighborhoods
14. Develop/disseminate community development guidebooks
15. Promote small-scale infill development
16. Adopt flexible, local zoning regulations and design guidelines
17. Sponsor design competitions for redevelopment / smart growth
18. Encourage green technology to reduce fossil fuel use

Roundtable evaluation

Participants used the audience response system to evaluate the event, with results as follows:

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Today's roundtable was a valuable tool to discuss and prioritize state strategies for upstate revitalization and open space. (32 responses)	9%	22%	25%	38%	6%
The background briefing book was helpful in preparing me for the roundtable. (34 responses)	6%	9%	38%	35%	12%
Electronic voting was a useful technique for prioritizing state strategies. (35 responses)	29%	26%	17%	17%	11%
The format (plenary presentations, discussions and time for networking) worked well for the roundtable.	3%	9%	14%	60%	14%
By participating today, I have a greater understanding of how NY can better link revitalization and open space protection.	6%	15%	24%	26%	29%
I will carry one or more of these strategies forward in my work responsibilities.	6%	9%	26%	29%	31%

Conclusion

The roundtable successfully achieved its goal to “showcase past successes, discuss present challenges and identify a range of opportunities linking land conservation, development and redevelopment in order to improve the health and vitality of the Great Lakes region”. It also met its four objectives as established by the roundtable Steering Committee. The objective of briefing “roundtable participants on the variety of existing and recommended programs, resources and strategies related to land conservation and development and redevelopment” (roundtable Objective 1) was clearly achieved by virtue of the actual panel sessions and their value is supported by the evaluation results where more than half (55%) of the participants indicated the roundtable improved their understanding of linking the issues. A solid majority (74%) of the participants agreed that the format was effective for balancing presentations, discussions and networking (roundtable Objective 2). The roundtable did employ various communication techniques and technologies, that improved information sharing and group interaction (roundtable Objective 3). While some participants had some concerns about the process and content of information used in the voting exercise, it did succeed in providing lively discussions around opportunities for future state action. Moreover, the participants were positive about the utility of the briefing book in preparing them for the roundtable; during the discussion at least one person noted that the briefing book was a good start to better inform municipalities and other interests about existing state programs related to smart growth. The roundtable enabled participants to start a dialogue in identifying opportunities to enhance the benefits of programs, resources and strategies as they may apply within the Great Lakes basin portion of New York State (roundtable Objective 4). Most participants (61%) indicated that they would carry the strategies forward in their future work activities, implying that this objective was also met.