

SECTION 4.0

EXISTING CONDITIONS OF THE COMMUNITIES

4.1 Existing Land Use

For the purpose of studying existing land use patterns within the study area a land use classification map was created. The map was created by first obtaining digitized tax parcel data from the Genesee County Department of Planning. These data were placed into a geographic information system (GIS) and sorted by the property classification attribute fields within the database. By doing this, it is possible to see how the respective Town and Village assessors classify the parcels for taxation purposes. Each property class number within the database represents a different land use type (i.e. - 201 = single family residential). For the purposes of taxation, land use categories are broken down into very specific uses. For example, agricultural uses are broken down into such categories as poultry and poultry products; dairy products; cattle, calves, hogs; sheep and wool; honey and bees wax; and so on, until all possible uses are covered. For the purposes of this study, this represents too much detailed information. Therefore, we grouped all those individual uses into the category of agricultural. This same technique was used for all categories found on Map 3: Existing Land Use. We can now easily sort, reproduce, and edit land uses within the study area. Past experiences have shown that these type of land use maps are 90 percent± accurate and can be easily modified by field visits, public input, etc., to increase the level of accuracy. At such a small scale, this level of accuracy performs very well in portraying existing land use patterns.

Another aid in studying land use and development patterns is digital orthoimagery (see Map 2). Digital Orthoimagery is simply vertical aerial imagery that has had all distortions caused by ground elevation changes and camera distortions removed through computer processing and placed in a digital format that can be used with computer applications. By looking at an area from above, it is possible to gain unique perspectives on land use and development patterns, especially if there are older orthoimages available for comparing different time frames. Utilizing digital orthoimagery allows you to see things that might otherwise go unnoticed.

4.1.1 Community Land Use

Town of Alabama

The Town of Alabama is very rural in nature. There are three predominant land uses within the Town of Alabama that help to keep the rural nature of the community intact: agriculture, wildlife conservation, and the Tonawanda Indian Reservation.



A typical rural landscape in the Town of Alabama

Agriculture is by far the most prominent land use in the Town making up almost 50 percent of the Town. Unlike some areas of Western New York, where farming is no longer a viable economic option, it remains very much intact in the Town of Alabama. A drive through the Town will yield many views of large farming operations, as well as small family farms throughout the countryside. The wildlife conservation areas include the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area (in the northern portion of the Town), the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area in the western portion, and the New York State White Memorial Game Farm in the center of the Town. Other land uses are found scattered throughout the Town in less abundance. In a much denser land use pattern, single family and multi-family residences, commercial uses, and public uses are found in the hamlets of Basom, Alabama, Wheatville, and South Alabama.



Examples of denser, mixed use developments in the hamlets of Alabama.

This type of development pattern is very typical of rural/agricultural communities. The majority of the land is used for the production of agricultural products, while these small pockets of development serve the surrounding area. These hamlets most often contain small stores, churches, gas stations, and similar uses. In general, these hamlets are found along major roads or at major intersections. The following is a table containing the breakdown of land uses within the Town of Alabama by total percent.

Figure 1A Town of Alabama Land Use Percentages

Land Use	Percentage
Agriculture	47.01 %
Commercial	0.02 %
Government/Public	0.09 %
Indian Reservation	17.52 %
Industrial	0.68 %
Multi-Family Residential	0.05 %
Multiple Residential	0.71 %
Single Family Residential	4.19 %
Unknown	0.84 %
Utilities/Infrastructure	0.26 %
Vacant/Undeveloped/Open Space	2.69 %
Wildlife Conservation Areas	25.94 %

Source: Map 3 Existing Land Use

Town of Oakfield

The Town of Oakfield is much like the Town of Alabama in that it is rural and agricultural in nature. The Town of Oakfield also has three land uses that cover the majority of the Town. Over 80 percent of the land is either agriculture, vacant/undeveloped/open space, or a wildlife conservation area. Agricultural land uses however are the most predominant, covering 58 percent of the Towns. Large lots and vast tracks of land in agricultural production typify the landscape outside of the Village. There are, however, areas of road frontage residential development along South Pearl Street Road, Town Line Road, and Drake Street Road in the southeastern portion of the Town. The majority of denser residential and mixed-use development within the Town of Oakfield takes place in and around the Village. Industrial development can be seen along Judge Road, just west of the Village with the largest tracts of land belonging to the U.S. Gypsum Company. Starting in the early 1900's, U.S. Gypsum conducted subsurface mining operations in the vicinity of their facility in Oakfield, with mines extending to the west, into Alabama, and further east (see Map 10).

The Oakfield – Alabama Central Schools are located in the Town, just northwest of the Village on Lewiston Road. The following table offers a breakdown of land uses by percentage of the total area for the Town of Oakfield.

Figure 1B Town of Oakfield Land Use Percentages

Land Use	Percentage
Agriculture	58.02 %
Commercial	0.20 %
Government/Public	0.62 %
Industrial	1.47 %
Multi-Family Residential	0.41 %
Multiple Residential	0.11 %
Parks	0.27 %
Single Family Residential	8.23 %
Unknown	7.77 %
Utilities/Infrastructure	0.21 %
Vacant/Undeveloped/Open Space	11.56 %
Wildlife Conservation Areas	11.13 %

Source: Map 3 Existing Land Use

Village of Oakfield

The Village of Oakfield is the central hub for the three-community study area. It is a destination for residents from the surrounding area. People come to shop, do business, go to school, and more. The Village is the most densely populated and developed area in the three municipalities. The Village is developed mostly with residential uses, along with a mix of other community-oriented uses. Commercial uses are located primarily along North Main Street and South Pearl Street, although other commercial properties and some industrial uses can be found in other areas in the Village. The following table provides a break down of land uses by percentage of the total area for the Village.

Figure 1C Village of Oakfield Land Use Percentages

Land Use	Percentage
Agriculture	7.01 %
Commercial	2.96 %
Government/Public	3.77 %
Industrial	0.81 %
Multi-Family Residential	5.12 %
Multiple Residential	2.16 %
Parks	2.16 %
Single Family Residential	38.81 %
Unknown	25.07 %
Utilities/Infrastructure	3.77 %
Vacant/Undeveloped/Open Space	8.36 %

Source: Map 3 Existing Land Use

As is illustrated by Map 3 and the table above, the Village is developed with a mixture of land uses. Residential uses make up the largest portion composing just under 50 percent of the area. The Village also contains the largest mixture of residential housing types. The Towns of Alabama and Oakfield each have less than one percent of their land uses comprised of multi-family (two and three -family homes) and multiple (apartments, group living facilities, etc.) residential units. The Village has approximately 15 percent of its housing stock as multi-family and multiple residential. Large unclassified tracts of land at the south and west end of the Village account for nearly 25 percent of the land area. The rest of the Village is divided rather evenly between a mix of other uses that include churches, parks, government offices, businesses, and cemeteries, among others.

4.1.2 Farmland and Agriculture

Because so much of the land within the study area is in agricultural production it is useful to take a closer look at these properties. Two maps are provided to aid in the study of these areas - - Map 4 Agricultural Data and Map 5 Prime Farmland Soils. Map 4 was generated by taking the existing land use file and displaying parcels that were known to be in agricultural use and then overlaying New York State Agricultural Districts.

Agricultural Districts are areas that are voluntarily formed by landowners and adopted by county legislative bodies, following state certification. Agricultural districts allow landowners the opportunity to receive real property assessments based on the value of their land for agricultural production rather than on its development value. In addition, these landowners gain protection from local regulations that would unreasonably restrict farming operations, and receive greater protection from development under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process. Properties located in Agricultural Districts in Genesee County are enrolled for 8-year periods, at the end of which time they are reviewed and can either remain in the district or be removed. The purpose of the Agriculture District is to encourage the land to remain in agricultural production and contribute to the agricultural economy of the area. The second map provided to help analyze existing farmland and agricultural use (see Map 5). This map examines digital soils information obtained from the Genesee County Planning Department (which was produced and distributed by the USDA, NRCS, and GCSWCD). One of the features shown on this map is the prime farmland soils classification. The data displayed on Map 5 falls into one of three categories: not prime, prime when drained, and prime. The USDA defines prime farmland soils as,

“Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management. In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.”

It is also important to note that agriculture not only has an affect on the economy of the study area, but on their character, as well. Rural landscapes such as farm fields, woodlands, and picturesque farmhouses create an identity for the communities in addition to supporting the local economy. By preserving farming not only are jobs being preserved, but so is the rural quality of life.

Town of Alabama

In the Town of Alabama just over 47 percent of the land is classified as agricultural, as defined by the real property survey. The majority of this land falls within Genesee County Agricultural District #2. This district in the Town encompasses nearly all of the land south of Casey and Roberts Road, west of Macomber Road, and east of the Tonawanda Indian Reservation. The district also encompasses a small portion of land in the southwest corner of the Town. The key omissions from the district include the Alabama hamlet, the New York State White Memorial Game Farm, and the Buffalo Crushed Stone industrial property on Ledge Road. Map 5 indicates that a large portion of the land within the Town has prime farmland soils. As noted above, these soils have the best properties for agriculture uses. The combination of factors including protection of farming by the agricultural districts, proper soils for good agricultural production, and the critical mass of farms in one location helps to maintain the stability of agriculture in the area. Genesee County has also implemented a Smart Growth Plan that guides the expansion of water services to currently non-serviced areas of the County. This plan calls for minimizing the number of hookups in areas of agricultural districts. It is the intent of this plan to discourage hookups to the County portion of the water system in these areas that will, in theory, help to keep development pressure down, which in turn helps to preserve agriculture. Other issues affecting agriculture are the economics of farming and the desires of future generations to farm.

Town of Oakfield

The Town of Oakfield is similar to the Town of Alabama regarding the area dedicated to agriculture. It too, has the majority (58 percent) of its land involved in agriculture and is also mostly located within one agricultural district. Genesee County Agricultural District #2 takes in nearly 75 percent of the Town, covering much of the land area south of the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area. A few of the obvious omissions from the District are the Village of Oakfield, the US Gypsum property on Judge Road, and some vacant undeveloped lands just southwest of the Village. Oakfield also contains nearly 50 percent prime farmland soils with the largest concentration located in the vicinity of Lewiston Road northwest of the Village. In the Town of Oakfield, much of the land is either owned or operated by Lamb Farms, or the land is owned by the U.S. Gypsum Company and leased to farmers. Lamb Farms is the largest dairy farm in the County and one of the largest in Western New York.



Lamb Farms, one of the largest dairy farms in Western New York, is located on Albion Road

Another critical aspect to maintaining farming is the concept of critical mass. This concept relates to having enough agricultural related operations in one location to support the necessary businesses needed to maintain farming. By looking at Map 4 for at the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield it is obvious that this critical mass is obtained in these two communities. The presence of agriculturally related businesses is also an indicator of critical mass.

Village of Oakfield

The Village of Oakfield only contains three parcels of land that are listed as agricultural by the real property survey. There are no agricultural districts located within the Village boundaries, however, Genesee County Agricultural District #2 surrounds the entire Village. The Village may not have agricultural land use to the extent that the surrounding Towns do, but it still plays an important role



An agricultural related business in the Town of Oakfield (Goodridge Farm Supply)

in the agricultural economy of the area. It acts as the hub of the communities where farmers can go to purchase necessary supplies and goods to maintain their farming operations. It should be noted that the property in the southwest corner of the Village, which is listed as unknown on the existing land use map, is comprised almost entirely of prime and prime when drained farmland soils.

4.2 Land Use Regulation

The Town of Alabama, Town of Oakfield and Village of Oakfield all regulate land use through the application of zoning regulations. Land use is also regulated through the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the requirements of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law for those properties located within an agricultural district. Zoning classifications for each of the municipalities are shown on Map 6. The following paragraphs provide a brief synopsis of each communities zoning laws. Please refer to each individual zoning law for specific regulations and requirements.

4.2.1 Zoning

Town of Alabama

The Town of Alabama has six zoning classifications identified within its zoning law. The majority of the Town falls within two zoning classifications, Agricultural-Residential and Land Conservation. The Residential and Commercial zoning classes are found mostly (although not entirely) within the three hamlet areas of the Town. Industrially zoned land is found on Ledge Road (at the Buffalo Crushed Stone property) and on Wright Road in the southwest corner of the Town. The final zoning class, Planned Unit Development (PUD), is not identified anywhere on the zoning map (sometimes referred to as a floating zone). It is a zoning district that is available for use if a development proposal for a particular piece of property is determined to meet the intent of the regulations. The site would then be rezoned to PUD. The table below highlights the permitted uses allowed within each zoning class; for specific uses please refer to the Town of Alabama Zoning Law.

Figure 2A: Town of Alabama Zoning Districts and Permitted Uses

District	Permitted Uses
A-R: Agricultural-Residential	Farms and all related agricultural operations, single and double family dwellings, single mobile homes, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings.
R: Residential	Single family dwellings, farms and all related agricultural operations excluding stabling of farm animals, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings.
C: Commercial	General commercial uses (i.e. restaurants, motels, professional offices, banks, etc.)
I: Industrial	General industrial uses (i.e. manufacturing, warehousing, trucking terminals, etc.)
LC: Land Conservation	Wildlife refuge areas, farms and related farming activities.
PUD: Planned Unit Development	Permitted uses will vary. Each PUD is looked at on an individual basis.

Source: Town of Alabama Zoning Law June 8, 1987

Within the zoning law, each zoning class is listed with all actual permitted uses by right, as well as those uses that are allowed by Special Use Permit. Special Use Permits are required for certain uses because they may not generally be appropriate and may require additional regulations and/or restrictions. Bulk regulations regarding lot size, street frontage, yard setbacks, height, and lot coverage for each individual zoning classes and certain specified uses within those zoning classes are outlined in the Town of Alabama Zoning Law.

Many times a community is faced with an application for development that is difficult to regulate through standard zoning laws. The Town of Alabama has addressed needs and requirements of some of these uses through Article VI of its zoning law, supplementary regulations. Some examples of uses that require supplementary regulations within the Town of Alabama are home occupations, adult uses, and cellular communication towers. By having these supplementary regulations in place the Town is able to address issues specific to these uses without placing undo hardship on other allowable uses within a zoning class.

It should be noted that the Town of Alabama does not have any separate subdivision regulations in effect although the subdivision of land is regulated through Section 401C. of the Zoning Ordinance.

Town of Oakfield

The Town of Oakfield has five zoning classifications (see Map 6), which are very similar in nature to those of the Town of Alabama. The following table contains a list of the zoning classifications and general permitted uses. The table is just an overview and generalization of the zoning class, specific inquiries should refer to the Town of Oakfield Zoning Law.

Figure 2B: Town of Oakfield Zoning Districts and Permitted Uses

District	Permitted Uses
R & A: Residential Agricultural	Single family dwellings, mobile homes, farms and related agricultural operations, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings
R: General Residential	Single and double family dwellings, farms and related agricultural operations, churches, schools, and other public uses and buildings
C: Commercial	Motor vehicle sales and service, retail shops, offices and banks
I: Industrial	General industrial uses (i.e. manufacturing, warehousing, research and development facilities, distribution facilities, etc.)
LC: Land Conservation	Farms and related agricultural operations

Source: Town of Oakfield Zoning Law August 11, 1981

The Town of Oakfield’s zoning law also lays out each zoning class and lists all actual uses permitted by right, as well as those uses that are allowed by Special Use Permit. Bulk regulations for each zoning class and certain specified uses within those zoning classes are outlined in the Town of Oakfield Zoning Law. The Town of Oakfield adopted a Land Separation Local Law and Land Subdivision Regulations in June of 1992. Although the Land Separation Law, which regulation minor splits of four lots or less, was repealed in 1997, the major subdivision regulations remain in effect. Subdivision of land is also addressed under Section 411.3 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Village of Oakfield

The Village of Oakfield has six separate zoning classifications. Similar to the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield, the zoning classifications outline actual uses permitted by right, as well as those permitted by special use. The

following table provides a generic overview of the zoning classifications and the uses permitted therein. Please refer to the Village of Oakfield zoning law for specific regulations. Bulk regulations for zoning classifications within the Village can be found in Sections 301, 305, and 504 of the Zoning Law, Sections 306 through 311. Certain issues and uses that require a higher level of scrutiny have been individually addressed under Article V, Supplementary Regulations. Examples of these include adult uses, mobile home parks, light industrial uses and cellular communication towers. Similar to the Town of Alabama, the Village does not have separate regulations for subdivision; it is regulated under Section 301 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Figure 2C: Town of Oakfield Zoning Districts and Permitted Uses

District	Permitted Uses
R-1: Residential	Single family dwellings
R-2: Residential	Single and double family dwellings
C-1: Neighborhood Commercial	Small to medium sized commercial uses (i.e. bakeries, retail stores, restaurants, etc.)
C-2: Central Commercial	Concentrated commercial development (i.e. business and professional offices, hotel/motel, banks, etc.)
I: Industrial	General Industrial Uses (i.e. manufacturing, warehousing, freight or trucking terminal, etc.)
PUD: Planned Unit Development	Permitted uses will vary. Each PUD is looked at on an individual basis.

Source: Village of Oakfield Zoning Law

4.3 Natural Environment

4.3.1 Topography and Steep Slopes

The majority of the study area is extremely flat with very gently sloping land. There are a few areas of steep slopes although they are small and limited. Areas of slopes can be found in the Town of Alabama along Ledge Road and in the northeastern portion of the Town of Oakfield along Fisher Road.

4.3.2 Hydric Soils

Map 7 shows the location of hydric soils within the study area. Hydric Soils are defined by the USDA as, "...a soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part." Essentially hydric soils are those soils that may be wet during parts of the year and typically support wetlands. The majority of these soils are concentrated in the northern portion of the two Towns, in the vicinity of the wildlife conservation areas. There is another concentration of these soils along the south side of Ledge Road in the Town of Alabama.

4.3.3 Stream Corridors and Watersheds

There are four watersheds located within the study area: Mud Creek, Ledge and Tonawanda Creeks, Murder Creek, and Oak Orchard Creek (see Map 8). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines watersheds as the area of land that catches rain and snow melt, which drains or seeps into a marsh, stream, river,

lake or groundwater. Two watersheds drain approximately 96 percent of the land within the study area, the Ledge and Tonawanda Creek, and Oak Orchard Creek Watersheds.

The smallest of the watersheds in the study area is Murder Creek, in the southwest corner of the Town of Alabama. The Murder Creek Watershed represents less than one percent of the land area drained.

The Mud Creek Watershed is located in the northwest corner of the Town of Alabama and represents three percent of the land drained. It drains the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area.

The Ledge and Tonawanda Creeks Watershed drains the majority of the land in the southwestern portion of the Town of Alabama. This watershed represents just under 23 percent of the total land area. The land area that is drained by this watershed is dominated by agricultural land uses, the Tonawanda Indian Reservation, a small portion of the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area, and the hamlet of Basom. Tonawanda Creek runs almost directly through the center of the watershed boundary parallel to Meadville/Sand Hill Road with Ledge Creek being located in the southwest portion of the watershed, running parallel to Wright Road.

The Oak Orchard Creek Watershed is by far the largest watershed in the study area, covering just over 73 percent of the land area. This watershed covers almost the entire central and eastern portions of the Town of Alabama along with the entire land area of the Town and Village of Oakfield. Oak Orchard Creek runs along the northern portions of the Towns of Alabama and Oakfield through the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Because of the size of this watershed, it encompasses a myriad of land uses from agricultural, residential, forested lands, commercial and industrial, among others.



Oak Orchard Creek

4.3.4 Flooding and Wetlands

The region contains flood zones that have been designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as areas subject to flooding. These areas are depicted on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The

flood zones are established based upon the degree to which an area is susceptible to flood damage. There is one flood zone that exists within the study area:

- 100 – Year flood zone, base elevations unknown – (also called the “A” Zone and the area of special flood hazard) is that area of land that would primarily experience still water flooding, without significant wave activity, during the 100-year storm event.

These natural flood zones or plains are flat areas surrounding streams that are periodically inundated with water due to overbank flow. As shown on Map 9: Environmental Features, most floodplains are located in the northern portions of the study area, within the wildlife conservation areas and along Tonawanda Creek within the Tonawanda Indian Reservation. Another small area of 100-year floodplain is contained primarily within the Village along the creek corridors.

By examining Map 9, it is easily apparent why the northern portions of the study area have been designated wildlife conservation areas. These lands contain an inordinate amount of environmental features. These areas covered by the 100-Year Floodplain and are also dominated by wetlands.

Wetlands are defined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) as transition areas between uplands and aquatic habitats. They are identified by a variety of factors including the presence of standing water, vegetation type, and soil type. Map 9 shows that wetlands, both state and federal are located throughout the entire study area. State-designated wetlands are defined and regulated as any wetlands area measuring 12.4 acres or larger. Regulated federal (or non-jurisdictional wetlands) can measure between 0.1 acre and 12.4 acres and require association with a navigable waterway.

Wetlands are an extremely important environmental resource that performs numerous functions. The NYSDEC has listed some of these functions as flood and storm water control, surface and groundwater protection, erosion control, pollution treatment and nutrient cycling, and fish and wildlife habitat, as well as public enjoyment.

4.3.5 Wildlife Conservation Areas and Significant Wildlife Habitats

Map 10 shows the location of the wildlife conservation areas within the study area. There are four such areas, which include the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area, which together are known as the Alabama Swamp Complex. The fourth is the New York State John White Memorial Game Farm. In total, the wildlife conservation areas cover approximately 19,000 acres of land area and occupy approximately 25 percent of the land within the study area (excluding the Tonawanda Indian Reservation). These areas serve as important wildlife habitat and provide permanent protection for important environmental features. They are also important recreation areas for the residents of, and visitors to, the communities, as well as a regional resource.



4.3.6 Scenic Resources

In general, there are many scenic resources within the study area. The wildlife conservation areas, farms, and rural residences throughout the area are all important resources. Particular views of interest include Fisher Road overlooking the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area and



Above are views of the Oak Orchard SWMA, Kenyon Road looking north, and a sweet corn field Kenyon Road looking north to the Somerset Power Plant. The Village also offers quaint visual appeal, with its historic structures and small town charm. The scenic landscape contributes significantly to the rural character of the three communities.

4.3.7 Historic and Archaeological Features

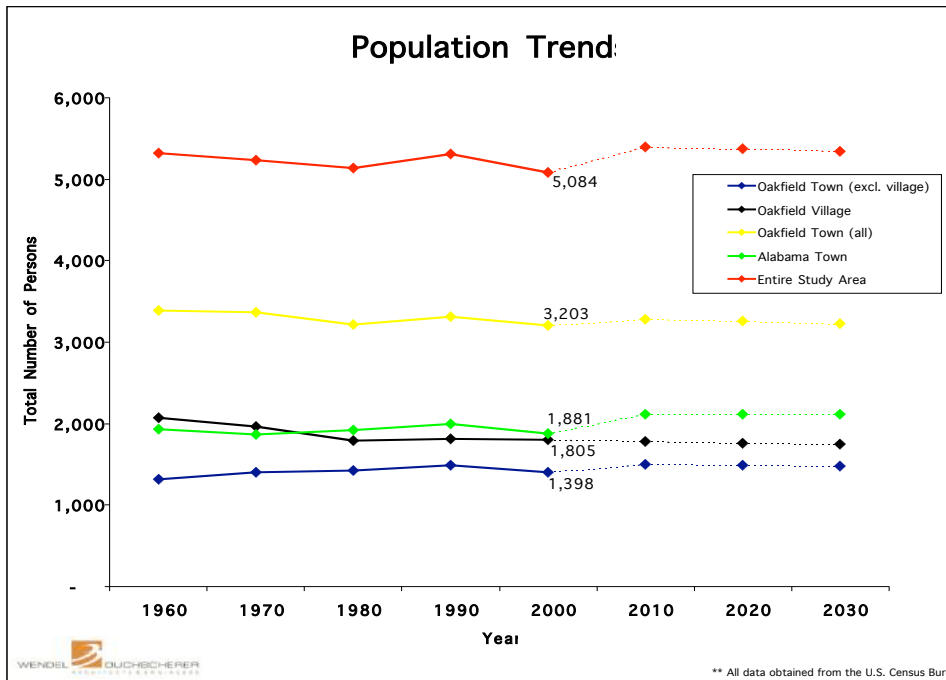
The Oak Orchard Creek Marsh was designated as a National Natural Landmark in May of 1973. The marsh is located within the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the Oak Orchard State Wildlife Management Area. The marsh is one of only 26 areas in New York State designated by the National Park Service (NPS) as a National Natural Landmark. It is described by the NPS as an area that is a relatively undisturbed marsh, which is rare for this part of New York State.

4.4 Demographics and Socioeconomic Conditions

4.4.1 Existing Population and Projections

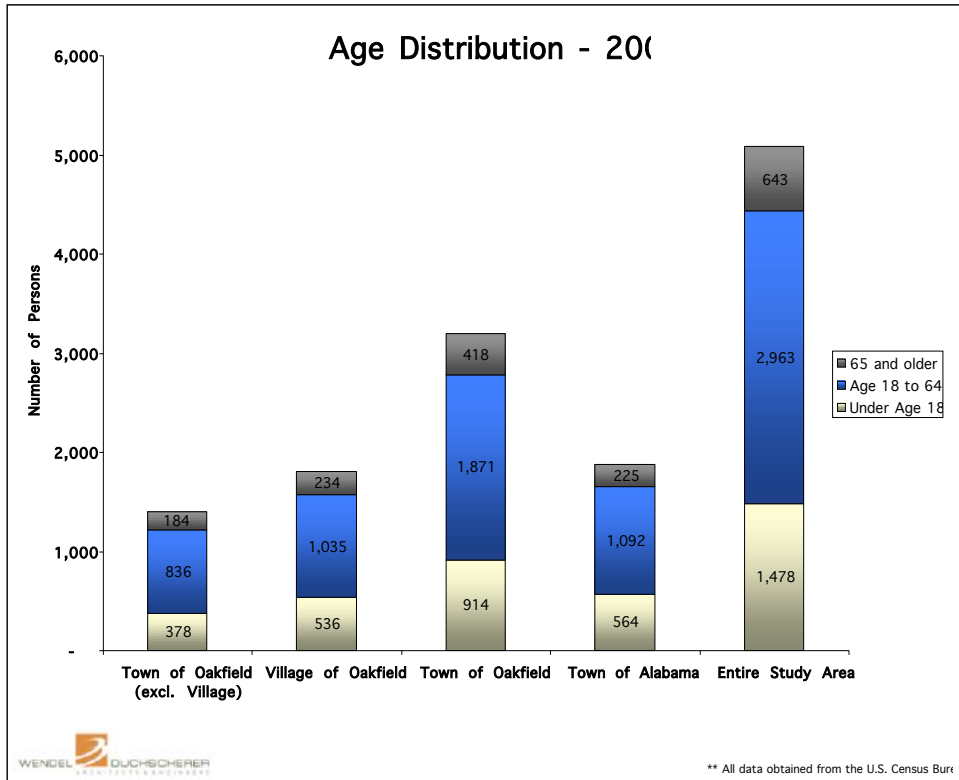
The Oakfield-Alabama area has experienced some modest decreases in population over the past ten years. The population in the Town of Alabama declined by 117 persons, representing 5.9 percent of the population. Oakfield, Town and Village, lost a combined 112 persons between 1990 and 2000, or 3.4 percent of the total population. Over the same time period, Genesee County was essentially unchanged, with an increase of 310 persons, or about 0.5 percent.

Figure 3



The composition of the population in the Oakfield-Alabama study area tends to be somewhat younger than that of Genesee County. Approximately 30 percent of the population is under the age of 18, compared to 26.6 percent in the County. Persons aged 65 and older make up about 13 percent of the population in the Town and Village of Oakfield, and 12 percent of the population in Alabama. Fourteen percent of the population of the County is aged 65 or older. This age distribution pattern is very similar to the age distribution of ten years ago, with only a very slight increase in the numbers of seniors, and a slight decline in the number of children under age 18.

Figure 4



The Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Board has prepared projections for the area, showing population trends to 2030. Overall, the Oakfield-Alabama region is expected to grow slightly over the next thirty years, increasing to 5,347 persons by 2030. Most of the growth is expected to occur in the Town of Alabama, which is projected to increase by 12.5 percent. The Village of Oakfield is expected to lose about three percent of its population, whereas the Town outside the Village is expected to grow by approximately six percent. The net effect in the Town of Oakfield, including the Village, is to remain essentially stable. The projections were prepared prior to the release of the 2000 Census. They overestimated growth in the Towns between 1990 and 2000, and underestimated growth in the Village. It is projected, however, that growth over the next thirty years will be relatively modest and easily absorbed within the communities.

4.4.2 Household Characteristics

The number of households in the Towns and Village has remained essentially stable. The Town and Village of Oakfield had 25 fewer households in 2000 than in 1990, and the Town of Alabama lost four households between 1990 and 2000. Household growth was stronger in Genesee County, with an increase of 5.7 percent (1,225 households) between 1990 and 2000.

Following national trends, the average household size in each of the communities declined between 1990 and 2000. There are an average of 2.77 persons per household in Oakfield, and 2.84 persons per household in Alabama. This is modestly higher (almost 10 percent) than the County, where there is an average of 2.59 persons per household.

The majority of households in Oakfield and Alabama are family households. Between 72 and 75 percent of households in each community are families. Slightly more than half of all family households include children under the age of 18 who are living at home. The majority of non-family households are one-person households. On average, roughly five percent of all households in the study area are “non-traditional” households, consisting of non-related persons living together. This proportion is slightly higher in the Village of Oakfield. These data indicate that the households in the study area communities are families, unlike the entire U.S. where non-family households are predominant.

4.4.3 Housing Characteristics

There are a total of 1,950 housing units in the study area, which essentially is unchanged since 1990, when there were 1,944 units. Vacant units total 136, or 7 percent of the housing stock. The Town of Alabama has the lowest vacancy rate of the three communities, with 5.3 percent of the housing stock unoccupied. The Town of Oakfield, outside the Village, has the highest vacancy rate, at 8.2 percent.

Most residents own rather than rent - - 78.7 percent of all households in the study area are owner-occupied. The Village of Oakfield has the largest proportion of renters, where 30.6 percent of all households are in rental units. About 19.5 percent of the housing in the Town of Alabama is renter-occupied, as is about 12 percent of the housing in the Town of Oakfield, outside the Village.

4.4.4 Employment Statistics

Approximately 2,500 persons in the Oakfield-Alabama study area are employed. The unemployment rate is about six percent in each of the individual communities. In comparison, unemployment in Genesee County is 4.3 percent.

In terms of the composition of the workforce, roughly one-quarter of employees classify themselves as in management or professional occupations, with a similar proportion in sales or office occupations. About 18 percent of Oakfield residents and 20 percent of Alabama residents work in production or transportation occupations.

The industrial category that employs the most residents in Oakfield is education, health and social services, with approximately one-quarter of the workforce falling into this category. In Alabama, the largest share of employment is in the manufacturing industry, which employs 24 percent of the Town’s workers. Oakfield Town, outside the Village, is the most agriculturally oriented, with 18 percent of the workforce working in agricultural, forestry, fishing or mining industries, compared to seven percent in Alabama, and just three percent in the Village of Oakfield.

4.4.5 Income

Median income in Oakfield and Alabama is comparable to the County median, which is \$40,542. In the Town of Alabama, median household income is \$40,223. Oakfield Village has a median income of \$40,580, while the Town, including the Village, has a slightly higher median income of \$41,579.

Because households tend to be somewhat larger in Oakfield and Alabama and there are slightly more children under the age of 18, per capita income lags the county somewhat, ranging from about \$14,800 in Alabama to approximately \$16,400 in the Town of Oakfield, including the Village. In Genesee County, per capita income is approximately \$18,500.

About 7.8 percent of residents of the Town of Oakfield, and 6.3 percent of the residents of the Town of Alabama, are classified as living in poverty status. Poverty in the Town of Oakfield is heavily concentrated in the Village, where 211 of the 248 individuals in the Town classified with poverty status are located. The poverty rate is comparable to that of the County, where 7.6 percent of the population is below the poverty line. Statewide, 14.6 percent of the population is under the poverty level.

4.5 Transportation

4.5.1 Roadways and Highway Access

There are three major New York State roads that make up the backbone of the roadway system within the study area, Routes 77, 63 and 262 (see Map 11). Route 77 runs north to south, between the northwest corner of Alabama and its southern boundary with the Town of Pembroke. It's here in the Town of Pembroke, on Route 77, that access is gained to the State Thruway system, via exit 48A. Exit 48, in the Town of Batavia (just off of Route 63), provides a second point of access to the Thruway.

State Route 63 runs from the north central portion of Alabama, where it borders the Town of Shelby, east to the Village of Oakfield, exiting the study area in the southeast corner of the Town of Oakfield. State Route 262 runs from the center of the Village of Oakfield east to the Village of Elba, and points beyond. The following table provides traffic counts for certain points along these major thoroughfares within the study area.

Figure 5: NYS Route Traffic Counts

Route #	Where to Where	AADT
77	Niagara County Line to Route 63	2750 vehicles
77	Judge Road to Bloomingdale Road	8300 vehicles
77	Bloomingdale Road to southerly Town line	5900 vehicles
63	Northerly Town line to Route 77	3900 vehicles
63 & 77	Lewiston Road to Judge Road	4950 vehicles
63	Route 63 and 77 intersection to Macomber Road	4750 vehicles
63	Route 262 to southerly Town line	7300 vehicles
262	Route 63 to easterly Town line	1600 vehicles

Source: Genesee Transportation Council

*AADT – Average Annual Daily Traffic taken in 2000

A brief analysis of these data shows where the majority of the traffic is headed within the study area. The majority of traffic appears to be headed to and from the NYS Thruway via Routes 77 and 63 or to the Tonawanda Indian Reservation. The AADT's increase significantly along these portions of roadway system as compared to other roadways within the study area (see Map 11).

There are no roadway construction and improvements projects within the study area that are listed on the transportation improvement program (TIP) for the NYSDOT or the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC). The TIP is a long-range plan that outlines upcoming work that is in various stages of the planning process. The TIP for the NYSDOT is for work on State roadways and, similarly, the TIP for the GTC is for work on roadways receiving Federal funding. It is possible, however, that State Routes 63 and 262 in the Village of Oakfield will be reconstructed in 2006, but it has yet to be placed on the NYSDOT's TIP for various reasons. The Village has been regularly replacing and repairing its roads and will continue with these upgrades in the foreseeable future.

4.5.2 Railroad Service

As shown on Map 11, the only railroad lines that run through the study area are abandoned. There are no active lines in the three communities, although there are active lines in other parts of the County.

4.5.3 Public Transportation Services

The Batavia Bus Service (B-Line, BBS) provides limited bus service in the study area. The Batavia Bus Service offers “curb to curb” service from Alabama and Oakfield to Batavia and back on Tuesdays. This service costs \$3.00 for adults and \$1.50 for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. To use this bus service, however, you must call 24 hours in advance.

4.5.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes

No formal multi-use trails for pedestrians, bicycles or horses were identified in the study area. Although conversations with various local agencies confirmed that the abandoned Penn-Central railroad corridor is used informally by walkers/hikers, bikers, snowmobiles and farmers, it has not been formally designated as such.

4.6 Utilities

4.6.1 Water Supply

Currently public water is available to the Village of Oakfield and an area immediately surrounding the Village within the Town of Oakfield. Water is provided to these areas through a line that extends from the City of Batavia along Route 63, Galloway Road and South Pearl Road into the Village. The Village water treatment plant is located in the Town of Batavia on Route 63, just south of the Village. In 1994, the entire water system in the Town of Oakfield, outside the Village, was replaced. Water is also available in the western portion of the Town of Alabama. The remaining portions of Oakfield and the Town of Alabama receive potable water from private wells.

Although large portions of the study area do not currently have access to public water, an informal plan is in place to provide service to some of the more densely developed areas, particularly areas in Alabama that are experiencing well contamination problems. These areas are identified in the Genesee County Smart Growth Plan and include the hamlets of South Alabama, Alabama, and Basom. Initial plans call for water to be routed along State Routes 77, 63 and 262 to serve these areas. The possibility of extending this water service is presently several years off, however. According to the Genesee County Department of Health problems with

private wells and on-site septic systems are due to soils that are not suitable for conventional sewage disposal systems, the age of the existing stormwater collections system that does not remove standing water fast enough, and the small size of the lots in the hamlet areas (R. Garney, GCHD, November 17, 2004)

4.6.2 Wastewater Disposal

Similarly to water service, the only portion of the study area that has sanitary sewer service is the Village of Oakfield and a very limited number of properties just outside the Village. Unlike water, where there are numerous properties outside the Village that receive service, only a few of those same properties are provided sanitary sewer service. The remaining areas outside of the Village in the Town of Oakfield, and the entire Town of Alabama, utilize on-site septic systems. The Village has a sewage treatment plant, which is located at the north end of Irving Parkway, which is privately operated by Valley River Inc. The plant has a capacity of 500,000 gallons per day but operates at about half its capacity, or approximately 225,000 gallons per day.

4.6.3 Solid Waste Management

The Town of Oakfield does not pick up solid waste, it is handled by private haulers, mainly Modern Disposal. The Town operates a recycling center and garbage composting and yard waste facility.

4.7 Community Facilities

4.7.1 Parks and Recreation

The Towns of Alabama and Oakfield host large tracts of publicly owned wildlife and conservation areas, which are available for both active and passive recreation such as hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, boating (non-motor), nature programs, limited camping, dog training and cross-country skiing. Due to their size (over 19,000 acres, including areas in neighboring towns), these open space features dominate the land in the northern sector of both towns. They include the two NYSDEC Wildlife Management Areas (Oak Orchard and Tonawanda) and the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. As previously noted, these features are characterized by state and federal wetlands and are located in a floodplain. A fourth conservation area is the John White Memorial Game Farm on Route 77, north of Route 63, which is closed to the general public. However, the game farm is leased to environmental and hunting organizations for training and education programs. The wildlife and conservation areas together provide important open space, wildlife habitat and recreation areas, as well as limiting future development in the northern twenty percent of the study area.

Within the Village of Oakfield are three recreation areas each offering different amenities. Located on Church Street is the Oakfield Fire Department, which has a ball diamond. In the center of the Village is the Village Park, which is the site of the annual Labor Daze Festival. This park is passive in nature with benches and walks spread throughout, and provides a pleasant venue for taking a stroll or just sitting and enjoying the Village scenery. The Town of Oakfield also owns and maintains a park on Drake Street in the Village.

4.7.2 Schools

There are actually five school districts within the study area - - Royalton-Hartland, Akron, Medina, Elba, and Oakfield-Alabama (see Map 12). Royalton-Hartland, Medina, and Elba all make up small portions in northwest

Alabama, northeast Alabama, and eastern Oakfield, respectively. Akron Central school district covers a large area of the western portion of the Town of Alabama, including the entire Tonawanda Indian Reservation. The remainder of the communities are served by the Oakfield-Alabama Central school district. This district also serves four other municipalities, including the Towns of Pembroke, Batavia, Elba and Barre. The school district facilities are located just northwest of the Village on State Route 63.

4.7.3 Emergency Services

Police services are provided by the Genesee County Sheriff's Office. None of the three communities has an individual police department. The Village of Oakfield, in the past, had contracted out police services from other agencies, but the process was deemed too costly and ineffective. Fire services are provided volunteer fire departments. The Town of Alabama is served by the Alabama Volunteer Fire Department Inc., which is located on Judge Road, adjacent to the Town Hall. The Town and Village of Oakfield are served by the Oakfield Volunteer Fire Department, located on Church Street in the Village.

4.7.4 Government Facilities

Town of Alabama

The Town of Alabama local government offices are located on Judge Road, east of Knowlesville Road, in South Alabama hamlet. The town hall is home to the Town Clerk's office, Town Court, and services a variety of other municipal needs. The Town of Alabama also has a facility located on the corner of State Route 63 and Ham Road. This building houses the Town's Highway Department.

Town of Oakfield

The Town of Oakfield municipal offices are located just east of the Village of Oakfield on Drake Street (State Route 262). The building houses the municipal offices and the Highway Department. The Town also owns and maintains the Haxton Memorial Library, as well as the Park located on Drake Street, both of which are situated in the Village.

Village of Oakfield

The Village of Oakfield municipal offices are located in the heart of the Village on Main Street. The Village also owns and maintains a public works building on South Pearl Street, the sewage treatment plant on Irving Parkway, the park in the center of the Village, and a water treatment plant located in the Town of Batavia (which is currently not in operation).