

*Town of Royalton Comprehensive Plan
Inventory of Existing Conditions*

INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

LAND USE & ZONING

Existing Land Uses

The Town of Royalton is dominated by agricultural and rural land uses. These uses include agricultural lands, forested areas, fallow fields, vacant lands and large rural residential lots. State agricultural districts cover the majority of lands in the Town, with the exception of the northwest corner. In contrast to the rural uses characterizing most of the Town, there are several areas which are more densely developed with a traditional mix of residential, commercial, industrial and community uses. These include the Village of Middleport and the areas in the Town immediately adjacent to the Village, and the hamlets of Gasport and Wolcottsville. In addition, there are other, smaller hamlet areas in the Town. These include McNalls, Royalton Center and Terrys Corners, and the area along Route 31 west of Gasport near the intersection of Canal Road. These traditional rural centers represent the original settlements in the Town. The Tonawanda State Wildlife Refuge area is located in the southeast portion of the Town, and the Tonawanda Indian Reservation is located in the extreme southeast portion of the Town. (See Map 1: Existing Land Use).

Agricultural Lands: According to State assessment data, the Town has over 300 parcels categorized as agricultural lands. The most common agricultural uses are field crops and fallow lands (productive vacant agricultural lands). Other agricultural operations in the Town include dairy farms, horse farms and cattle/hog farms and orchards. A total of 53 percent of the Town's land area is in agricultural use, according to assessment data.

Residential Uses: Most residential development in Royalton is rural in nature, with homes located along Town roadways on large lots. As noted above, there are some hamlet areas and lands near the Village where homes are closer together. The majority of homes in the Town are single-family units, although there are some two- and three-family homes.

Commercial and Industrial Uses: Most commercial lands in the Town of Royalton are clustered either near the Village of Middleport or in the hamlet of Gasport. There are also commercial uses along Route 31 (Rochester Road). Most commercial users are small businesses, located on small parcels. Industrial uses are located in and around the Village of Middleport, including the FMC facility and the former mining operation located on Route 31. There are two former landfills within the Town, one along Route 31 just outside of Middleport and one along Griswold Road, which is a NYSDEC cleanup site. There is former landfill on Mackey Road directly across from the airport, and a potential brownfield located at the Gasport Cold Storage.

Public Uses: Public uses are primarily located near the Village or the hamlets. Public uses in the Town of Royalton include the library, the school, Town facilities and several fire stations. There are also several cemeteries and churches in the Town. Further discussion of public uses is included in the section on community facilities.

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The total breakdown of uses by percentage of land in the Town is as follows:

	Acres	Percent
Agricultural/ Rural	29,371.3	78.0%
Residential	1670.1	4.4%
Commercial	187.6	0.5%
Industrial/ Public Utilities	1,835.0	4.9%
Government/ Community Facilities	163.2	0.4%
Parks/ Forested Lands	3,323.4	8.8%
Vacant Lands *	1,119.3	3.0%
Total	37,669.8	100.0%

Note: figures based on Town assessment records and exclude acreage in Town dedicated to rights-of-way, surface water and other lands not included in property valuation system.

Zoning

The Town of Royalton adopted its current Zoning Code in 1999. The code establishes the following six zoning districts (See Map 2: Existing Zoning):

- Agricultural District (A)
- One and Two Family Residential District (R)
- Multiple Family Residential District (MR)
- Business District (B)
- Light Industrial District (LI)
- General Industrial District (GI)

The vast majority of the Town is zoned Agricultural (A) which is intended primarily for agricultural and rural residential uses. The Agricultural zoning district essentially includes all lands starting at a distance 300 feet back from the street right-of-way, unless the parcel is zoned for multiple residential, business, light industrial or general industrial use. Lands in the first 300 feet from the right-of-way are zoned Residential. Given typical parcel depths in the Town, most parcels have dual zoning (Residential for the frontage and Agricultural for the remainder of the parcel).

The Agricultural zoning district establishes a 45,000 square foot minimum lot size with a minimum 150 foot of frontage required for all uses. The code also specifies required front, rear and side yard setbacks, depth and height requirements. Maximum lot coverage for dwellings and accessory structures is 35 percent of the total lot area. Only one dwelling is allowed on a lot.

Uses permitted by right in the Agricultural zoning district are one and two family dwellings, accessory apartments and agricultural operations and uses. Certain setback requirements are specified for agricultural uses. The code specifies uses which are allowed only with Special Use Permits. This list includes certain agricultural uses, such as pig farms and industrialized poultry farms, in addition to a range of other types of uses.

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The One and Two Family Residential District (R) is intended “to provide a stable environment for one and two family residential developments free from incompatible uses.” Although the code states that the district is intended for higher density areas that are serviced by public water or where densities are high enough to support public water in the future, in practice most frontage lands in the Town are zoned as the One and Two Family Residential District. Allowed uses by right are one or two-family dwellings, accessory apartments, family day care home (day care for no more than six children provided in a family home), gardening and certain agricultural uses, and home occupations.

The minimum lot size in the R district is 45,000 square foot with a minimum 150 lot of frontage for all uses, except when public water and sewer service is available. For lots with public water and sewer, the minimum lot size is 15,000 square feet with a minimum 100 foot of frontage. The code specifies required setbacks and maximum lot coverage, which are the same as in the Agriculture district.

The Multiple Family Residential District (MR) allows denser development, including multiple family dwellings (apartments). The district is intended for areas with public water and sewer, or where densities are high enough to support such facilities. Allowed uses are the same or similar to the R district, except that accessory apartments are not allowed, and rooming houses are allowed. Minimum lot size is 45,000 square feet, unless there is a lot is connected to public water and sewer, in which case the minimum lot size is 15,000 square feet. Minimum frontage is 150 feet on lots without public water, and 100 feet for lots with public services. The code establishes required front, side and back setbacks and maximum lot coverage. In addition, there are additional standards for multiple dwellings. These include maximum gross density (8 units per acre); minimum gross floor area requirements (by unit type); road access and parking requirements; and different standards for setbacks and aggregate lot coverage. Plans submitted for site plan approval for apartments must indicate provisions for sewage disposal, water supply, storm drainage, parking, garbage disposal and landscaping and lighting.

The Business District (B) is intended to provide business establishments servicing the needs of area residents and visitors, especially in the nature of retail and service businesses. Permitted uses represent a range of general business, services, retail, warehousing and commercial uses. Uses requiring special use permit are specified. There is a 45,000 square foot minimum lot size with a minimum 150 foot of frontage required for all uses, except when public water and sewer service is available in which the minimum lot size is 15,000 square feet with a minimum 100 foot of frontage required. Setbacks and maximum lot coverage is also specified, with expanded setbacks for business uses or structures if the lot line abuts a residential district. All business uses are subject to site plan review prior to obtaining a building permit or making any change of use of the premises.

The Light Industrial District (LI) is intended to provide for light manufacturing, assembly, and storage facilities as well as research and development activities and office uses. Permitted uses include all uses permitted as of right in the Business district, subject to the same regulations in the B district; and a variety of light manufacturing uses. Additional uses are allowed with a

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special use permit, with restrictions to avoid negative impacts on adjoining uses (setbacks, buffers, restrictions on noise, etc.) Site plan approval is required. The minimum lot size is one acre, with a minimum 150 feet of frontage required for all uses. The code establishes minimum side, front and rear yards, and maximum height restrictions.

The General Industrial District (GI) provides for industrial activity in the Town “helpful in the development of a balanced economy.” Permitted uses include industrial or agri-industrial businesses, as long as they are “not detrimental to the environment, not inherently unsanitary, not a menace to the public health, not a nuisance in law or in fact and . . . not noxious or offensive by reasons on the emission of odor, dust, smoke, gas, fumes or unusual, continuous or vexatious noise.” Signs, storage and off-street parking are allowed as accessory uses. Certain uses, such as junk yards, animal sales lots and bulk storage of certain products are allowed with a special use permit. Residential uses are explicitly prohibited. The code includes certain standards to control impacts, such as the requirement that all industrial processes occur within an enclosed building, and industrial structures must be a minimum of 100 feet from any non-industrial district. Site plan approval is required. There is a 3 acre minimum lot size required for all uses.

The following table summarizes required bulk standards, including setbacks for front, side and back yards, minimum lot frontages and depths, height regulations and minimum lot size. For the Multiple Residential and Business Districts, the bulk regulations vary, depending on whether there is public water and sewer available to the lot. Lots in areas with public services can be built at a higher density.

Bulk Standards by Zoning District

	A	R	MR*	B*	LI	GI
Front Setback	50'	50'	50'/40'	50'	50'	70'
Side Setback	10'	10'	10'/5-10'	15'	50'	50'
Rear Setback	35'	35'	40'/25'	20'	50'	50'
Min. Frontage	150'	150'	150'/100'	150/100'	150'	--
Min. Depth	300'	300'	--	300'	--	--
Max. Height**	35'	35'	35'	35'	35'	--
Min. Lot Size (sf)	45,000	45,000	45,000/15,000	45000/15000	1 acre	3 acres
Max. Lot Cover	35%	35%	35%	35%	--	--

* without public water & sewer/ with public water and sewer

** certain structures are exempt from height restrictions (silos, personal wind towers, etc.)

Article III of the Town of Royalton Zoning Code provides for the application of the regulations, including greater detail about dimensional and use regulations; minimum dwelling size; signs; temporary uses; parking; off-street loading; fences; ponds; camping trailers and recreational vehicles; slopes of yards; alternate energy systems (private solar and wind energy); telecommunications towers; personal wireless telecommunications service facilities; home occupations; satellite parabolic antennae; and seasonal roadside stands. It also specifies regulations for non-conforming uses, lots and structures.

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The Zoning Code establishes procedures for Special Use Permits and Site Plan review. Article VII of the Zoning Code (“Special Conditions and Safeguards for Certain Special Uses”) provides supplemental regulations for a number of uses including:

- Airports and landing strips;
- Animal husbandry;
- Automobile laundry;
- Bed and breakfast establishment;
- Clubs, lodges, fraternal organizations;
- Day care centers;
- Excavation and mining;
- Farm labor camps;
- Fur Farms
- Home businesses;
- Hotels and motels;
- Industrialized poultry farm;
- Kennels and animal hospitals;
- Multiple family dwellings;
- Livery and commercial stable;
- Mobile home parks;
- Motor vehicle/ heavy equipment repair shops;
- Motor vehicle sales;
- Permanent roadside stands;
- Pig farms;
- Planned commercial industrial park;
- Planned residential development;
- Public and semi-public buildings and grounds;
- Public utility substation;
- Retail gasoline outlet/ service station; and
- Seasonal tent, trailer, or recreational vehicles camp.

These additional regulations are intended to avoid conflicts between land uses. They include provisions for greater setbacks, requirements for landscaping or screening, regulations specific to a particular use and similar provisions. Excavation and mining for any and all materials, including clay, is explicitly prohibited in all zoning districts, except for soil excavating as part of the Town ditching program.

The Zoning Code also describes the required processes for obtaining permits, and for the Zoning Board of Appeals, and establishes the process for amending the code.

Land Subdivision Regulations

The subdivision regulations for the Town of Royalton were adopted in 1975. The subdivision regulations control the division of land into smaller lots, blocks, sites or parcels. The intent of these regulations is to ensure for the “orderly, efficient and economical development of the Town.” The subdivision regulations ensure that when new parcels are created, their lay out takes into consideration issues of needed improvements (water, wastewater), traffic, safety, grading, and other physical features, while taking into consideration ‘harmony with the development pattern of the neighboring properties.”

Subdivision is defined by the Royalton regulations as “the divisions of any parcel of land into two or more lots, blocks, or sites, with or without streets or highways and includes re-subdivision.” Subdivisions can be categorized as “major” or “minor”. Major subdivisions consist of 10 or more lots, or any subdivision that requires a new street or the extension of any municipal facilities, such as water lines. Minor subdivisions are any subdivisions that have not been categorized as major. They generally consist of more than four lots but not more than ten

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lots, all of which front on an existing road. Any split of land that creates less than four lots is not categorized as a subdivision, as long as the action does not require a new street, “easement for purpose” or the extension of municipal facilities. Subdivision of any land into parcels for agricultural purposes is also not subject to subdivision regulations, as long as the parcels are larger than five acres and no new streets, easements or extensions of municipal facilities are involved.

The regulations provide for the required procedures for filing subdivision applications. The owner first submits a sketch plan for Planning Board review. The Planning Board classifies the action as a Minor or Major subdivision. The Planning Board also has the authority to make recommendations regarding the layout of the proposed subdivision to the applicant.

For subdivisions classified as minor at the sketch plan stage, the applicant may directly submit a plat for approval. For major subdivisions, the applicant must follow a two-step process after the sketch plan, first submitting a preliminary plat for Planning Board review and approval, and then submitting the final plat for approval.

The regulations specify specific submittal requirements for each stage of the process (information to be included on the sketch plan, the preliminary plat and the final plat). They also outline time frames for the approval process. For any subdivision (minor or major), the applicant must attend a Planning Board meeting to discuss the plat and a public hearing is required. The Planning Board has the option of approving, approving with modifications or disapproving the Subdivision Plat.

The subdivision regulations outline the requirements for general requirements and design standards for improvements. The design standards provide the applicant with guidance regarding street layout, block size, street design (widths, required improvements, grades, curve radii, etc.), and street names. They provide standards for the configuration of lots and set forth required drainage improvements. Applicants are required to provide at least 3 acres of recreation space per 100 dwelling units, up to 10% of the total area, although the Board may accept a recreational fee for each lot in lieu of land. The regulations promote the preservation of natural features “wherever possible”. Planning Board approval is required prior to the removal of any mature trees (8 inches in diameter or more). The regulations also provide minimum standards for required improvements, such as streets, sewer lines and water lines.

Agricultural Protection

The vast majority of the Town of Royalton falls within a designated State Agricultural District, subject to the regulations set forth in Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law (See Map 3: Agricultural Districts). Portions of three separate Agricultural Districts fall within the Town of Royalton.

Lands within the State Agricultural District have additional protections and incentives to encourage continued agricultural use of these lands. These include favorable tax assessments,

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protection against unreasonable laws and other provisions. To qualify to be included within an Agricultural District, the lands must meet certain criteria, and each Agricultural District must go through periodic recertification.

There are a number of benefits for agricultural landowners located within an Agricultural District. Agricultural land is assessed on its value as farmland, not on its potential development value, which reduces the tax burden on agricultural lands, especially in areas that are experiencing growth. Local laws may not unreasonably restrict farm operations within an Agricultural District and existing and proposed laws are subject to review by the State Department of Agriculture and Markets to ensure that they comply with the law and are not overly restrictive. Real estate agents are required to disclose to potential buyers that the property they are about to acquire is located in an Agricultural District or within 500 feet of any farm operation and/or farmland. In addition, any application for special use permit, site plan approval, use variance, or subdivision on lands within an Agricultural District or within 500 feet of any farm operation and/or farmland must submit an agricultural data statement to the reviewing authority.

The Agricultural Districts Law mandates that governmental agencies must avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts to farming operations when undertaking, acting upon or advancing funds for projects within an Agricultural District that involve the acquisition of land or the use of public funds for construction purposes. Such projects must be reviewed by the staff of the State Department of Agriculture and Markets to assess its impacts on farmland. They may recommend actions designed to minimize negative impacts.

The State has also established a Right-to-Farm Law. The State Right-to-Farm Law provides that agricultural practices conducted on farmland shall not be found to be a nuisance if these agricultural practices are reasonably and necessary to the particular farm operation, conducted in a manner that is not negligent or reckless and consistent with accepted and sound agricultural practices. Agricultural practices, to be protected, also must not violate any local, state, and federal laws or constitute a threat to public health, safety, or welfare, or unreasonably obstruct the use of navigable waters or public roadways. Any disputes of farm nuisances are resolved by the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board.

The Town of Royalton adopted a Right-to-Farm law in the 1990's and Niagara County adopted a Right-to-Farm Law in 2007. These laws provide additional support to the protection and encouragement of agricultural interests within the Town of Royalton.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic background, including population, housing, income, and economic data for the Town of Royalton is based on the 2000 U.S. Census. Although this data is already eight years old, it provides the most comprehensive data for the area. For the purposes of developing the comprehensive plan, the analysis includes the Village of Middleport, unless otherwise noted.

Population

The most current available population count for the Town of Royalton indicates that the Town has a total of 7,710 residents. Of those residents, 1,816 live within the Village of Middleport, and the remaining 5,577 persons live in the Town outside the Village. Population in the Town experienced a slight increase between 1990 and 2000, with an increase of 3.4%. Over the same period, population in the County decreased by 0.4%. The hamlet of Gasport, while it has no legal status as a municipality, is categorized by the Census as a 'place'. In 2000, there were 1,248 residents of Royalton who lived in Gasport. Together, population in Middleport and Gasport represents 41 percent of all Town residents, and Gasport represents 21 percent of all Town residents who live outside the Village.

Recent population estimates indicate that the population of the Town is essentially stable. The estimates suggest that the Town has seen a slight decrease in population (-1.4%), but the decreases are so small that they could fall within the margin of error for the estimate. For example, total population loss for the Town outside the Village represents a total of only 10 persons. Population losses within the Village are projected to have been greater than in the Town outside the Village, with an estimated decrease of approximately 5 percent. Niagara County is estimated to have decreased in population by 1.7 percent between 2000 and 2006.

Population

	1990	2000	2006 (est)
Total Town	7,453	7,710	7,599
Town Outside Village	5,577	5,793	5,783
Village of Middleport	1,876	1,917	1,816
Niagara County	220,756	219,846	216,130

	1990-2000		2000-2006	
Total Town	257	+3.4%	-111	-1.4%
Town Outside Village	216	3.9%	-10	-0.2%
Village of Middleport	41	2.2%	-101	-5.3%
Niagara County	-910	-0.4%	-3,716	-1.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

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Age Composition

The Town's population aged slightly between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, senior citizens aged 65 and over represented 13.1 percent of the population, a slight increase over the 12.3 percent of the Town's residents who were seniors in 1990. At the same time, the Town is significantly younger than the County, where over 15 percent of the population in 2000 was aged 65 or older. Median age for the Town was 37.4 years in 2000, compared to 38.2 years for Niagara County.

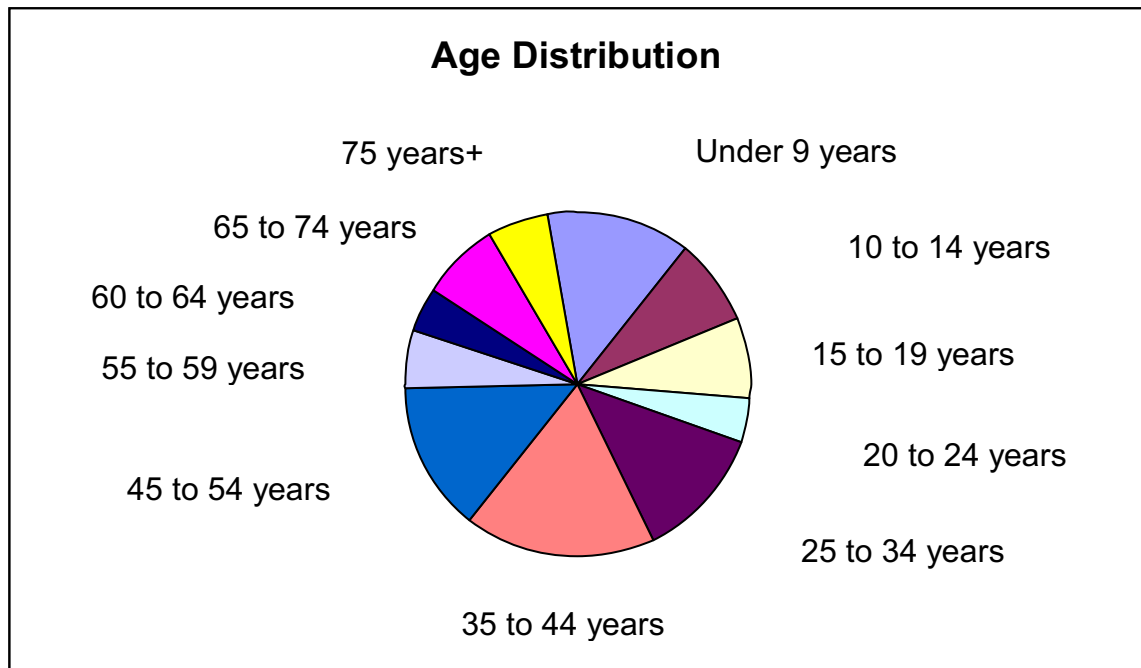
There were 2,041 persons in the Town of Royalton under the age of 18, making up 26.5 percent of the population, up slightly from the 2,023 under the age of 18 in 1990, which represented 27.4 percent of the population. The proportion of adults aged 18 to 64 remained unchanged between 1990 and 2000, at 60.4 percent.

Royalton has a slightly larger proportion of minors than the county, with 26.5% of the population under the age of 18, compared to less than 25% for the County.

Age Distribution

	Royalton, 1990	Royalton, 2000	Niagara County 2000
Under Age 18	27.4%	26.5%	24.7%
Age 18 to 64	60.4%	60.4%	59.9%
Age 65 and older	12.3%	13.1%	15.4%

Source: US Bureau of the Census



Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

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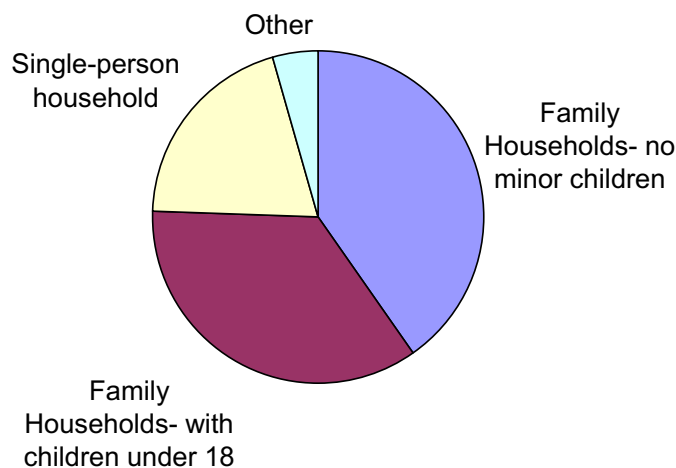
Household Trends

In contrast to population trends, the number of households in the Town of Royalton grew between 1990 and 2000. There were 2,624 households in 1990 and 2,810 in 2000, which represents an increase of 186 households (7.1 percent). This is because, in conformance with national trends, the size of households in Royalton has been decreasing. In 1990, the average household size in the Town was 2.81. In 2000, the figure had decreased 2.71. This figure is significantly higher than the County, where the average household size was 2.56 in 1990 and 2.45 in 2000.

The majority of households in Royalton are categorized as families. Fully 75.5% of all households in the Town are families. About 20% of households are single-person households.¹ The remaining 4.5% of households are unrelated persons living in the same home (roommates, unmarried couples, etc.) In Niagara County, only 66.7% of households are families, while close to 29% are single-person households.

Close to two-fifths (38.0%) of all households in Royalton include children under the age of 18. At the other end of the spectrum, approximately one-quarter of households (24.0%) include persons aged 65 years or older.

Household Type, Royalton



Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

Housing

The number of housing units in the Town of Royalton has also been increasing. At the time of the 2000 Census, there were 2,994 housing units in the Town, which represents an increase of 251 units, or 9.2 percent since 1990. New housing growth is taking place primarily in the Town outside the Village, which accounted for nearly 88 percent of new housing units in the Town between 1990 and 2000. Because the number of new units exceeds the number of new

¹ Under Census definitions, a person living alone is not categorized as a family household.

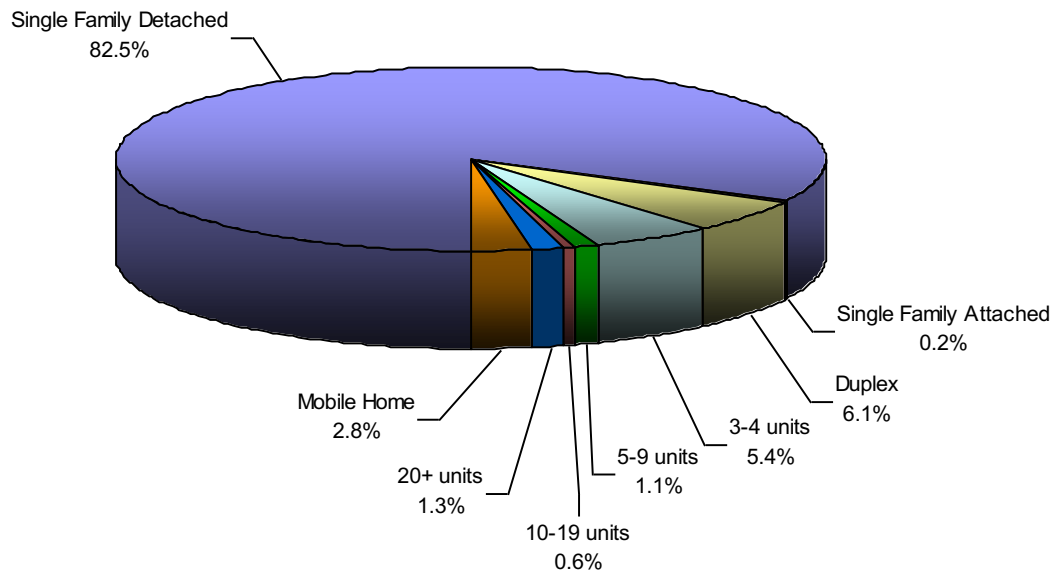
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households, however, housing vacancy rates have also increased in Royalton. In 1990, vacancy represented 4.3 percent of all housing units in the Town. In 2000, 6.1 percent of housing units were vacant. Much of the vacancy is located within the Village of Middleport, which had a vacancy rate of 8.7 percent in 2000. Vacancy rates for Niagara County as a whole were 8.2 percent. Homeowner vacancy in Royalton is particularly low, at only 1.4 percent. Rental vacancy rates in the Town are higher, at 7.8 percent.

The majority of housing in the Town of Royalton is owner-occupied. Fully 81 percent of the Town's housing units are owner occupied, and only 19 percent are rental units. In comparison, approximately 70 percent of the County's housing stock is owner-occupied. Rental housing in the Town of Royalton tends to be concentrated within the Village. Of the 533 occupied rental units in the Town, nearly half (254 units) were located within the Village of Middleport.

The majority of housing units in the Town (85.3 percent) are single-family homes. Mobile homes account for 85 housing units, 40 of which are outside the Village. Just over 6 percent of the housing stock consists of doubles and 8.3 percent of the housing stock is in buildings with 3 or more units per structure).

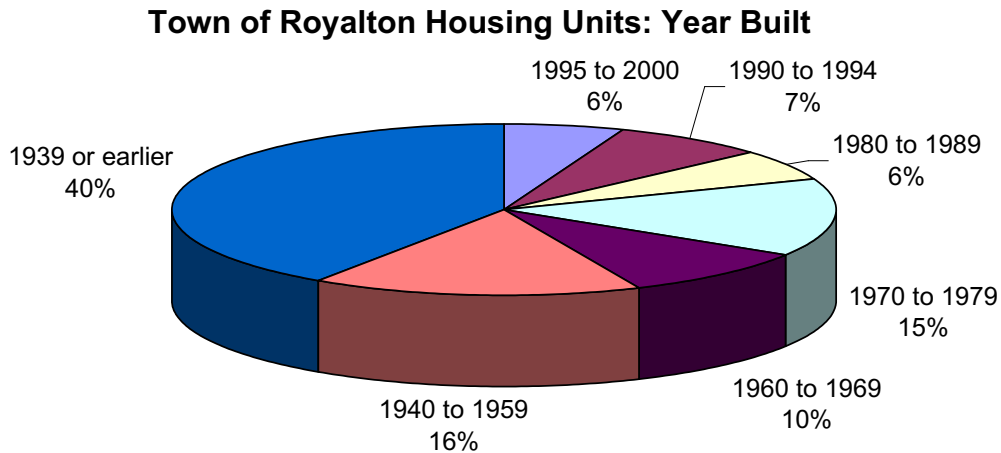
Town of Royalton Housing Units: Unit Type



Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

Slightly more than 40 percent of the housing units in the Town were constructed prior to 1939, with another 16 percent constructed between 1940 and 1959. Approximately 15 percent of the Town's housing stock was built in the 1970's and 13 percent of the housing stock was constructed between 1990 and the time of the Census in 2000.

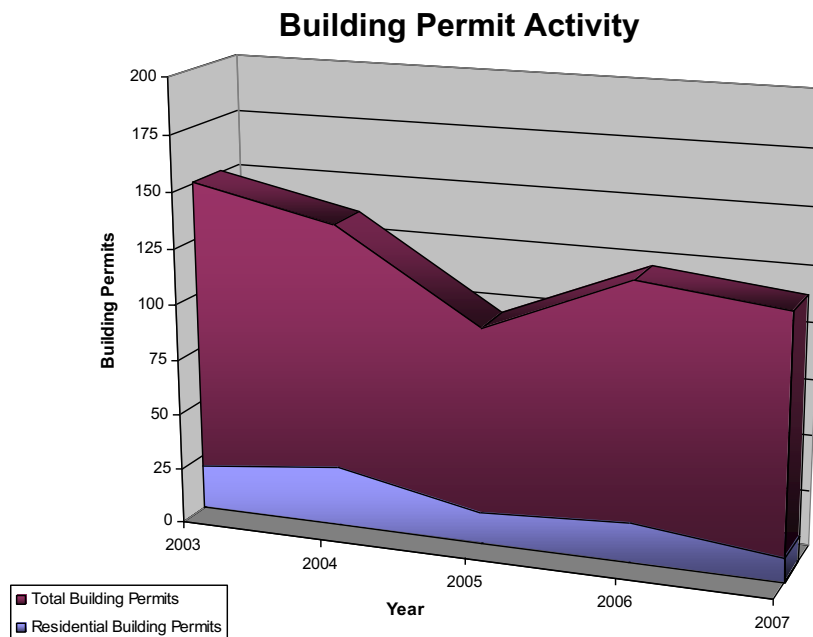
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Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

Building Permit Trends

There has been continued growth in housing development in the Town. There were a total of 536 building permits issued in the Town between January 1, 2003 and December 31, 2007. Most of these permits were for repairs or modifications to existing buildings, but 90 of the permits issued were for new residential construction, representing an average of 18 new homes per year. The year 2003 saw the highest total number of building permits issued (131). The greatest construction value was experienced in 2004 (\$5,717,800), which includes both new construction and repairs and renovations. The following chart shows the building permit activity in the Town between 2003 and 2007.



Source: Town of Royalton Building Department

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Economic Profile

In 2000, approximately 60 percent of the Town's population over the age of 16 was employed, with the unemployment rate hovering around 3.3 percent. This represents very low unemployment; by comparison, unemployment in the County was 6.1 percent. Nationally, unemployment in that year was 5.8 percent.

The manufacturing industry has continued to leave its mark on the Town of Royalton as 22.5 percent of the Town's workforce is employed in that sector. Some of the larger industries include Barden Homes, Middleport Cold Storage, FMC Corporation, and Lafarge- Gasport Aggregate. The educational, health, and social services sector accounts for an additional 19.7 percent of the Town's workforce. Other strong employment sectors include construction, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and utilities, finance, insurance, and real estate, and professional services, with each employing greater than 5 percent of the labor force. Nearly 3 percent of the Town's workforce makes their living from agriculture. The following table is a breakdown of employment in the Town.

Occupation:	Employed in 2000	% Employed in 2000
Agriculture	100	2.8%
Construction	310	8.7%
Manufacturing	801	22.5%
Wholesale Trade	163	4.6%
Retail Trade	344	9.6%
Transportation, Warehousing & Utilities	212	5.9%
Information	67	1.9%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	189	5.3%
Professional, Management & Administrative	202	5.7%
Educational, Health & Social Service	701	19.7%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	153	4.3%
Public Administration	170	4.8%
Other Services	155	4.3%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

Commuting Patterns

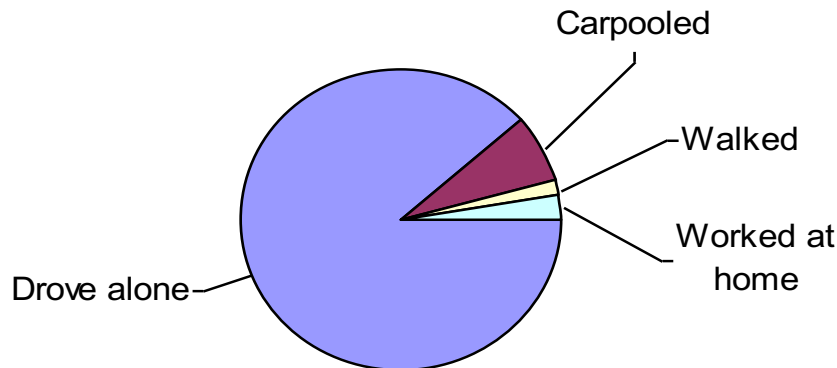
Consistent with trends across the region, in 2000, 88.6 percent of Royalton workers drove alone to work, with 7.6 percent carpooling. Only 1.4 percent walked, and 2.4 percent worked from home.

Nearly one quarter of Royalton workers who do not work from home have a commute that is less than 15 minutes to work. Slightly more than 44 percent of workers have a 15-30 minute

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commute, about 17 percent commute 30-45 minutes, about 10 percent commute 45-60 minutes, and slightly less than 4 percent have a commute that is more than an hour each way. Nearly 40 percent of Royalton residents who were employed worked outside of Niagara County in 2000.

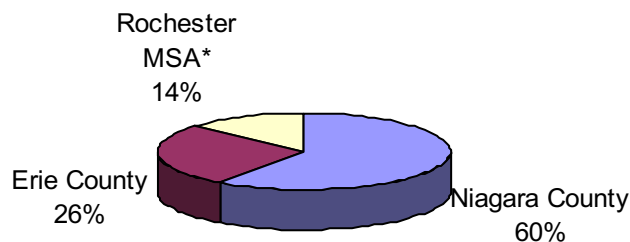
Commuting Patterns, 2000



Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

According to Census data from 2000, approximately 60 percent of employed workers aged 16 or older in the Town of Royalton worked at businesses located in Niagara County. Another 26 percent work in Erie County. Approximately 14 percent of employed workers work within the Rochester metropolitan area, which includes Orleans and Genesee Counties, in addition to Monroe, Livingston, Ontario and Wayne Counties. Less than one percent of the workforce (0.3%) work outside these counties. Given available Census data, it is not possible to determine where in Niagara County employees from Royalton are working, although data on commuting suggest that many are not working far from home.

Place of Work



** Note: Rochester MSA includes Orleans County.*

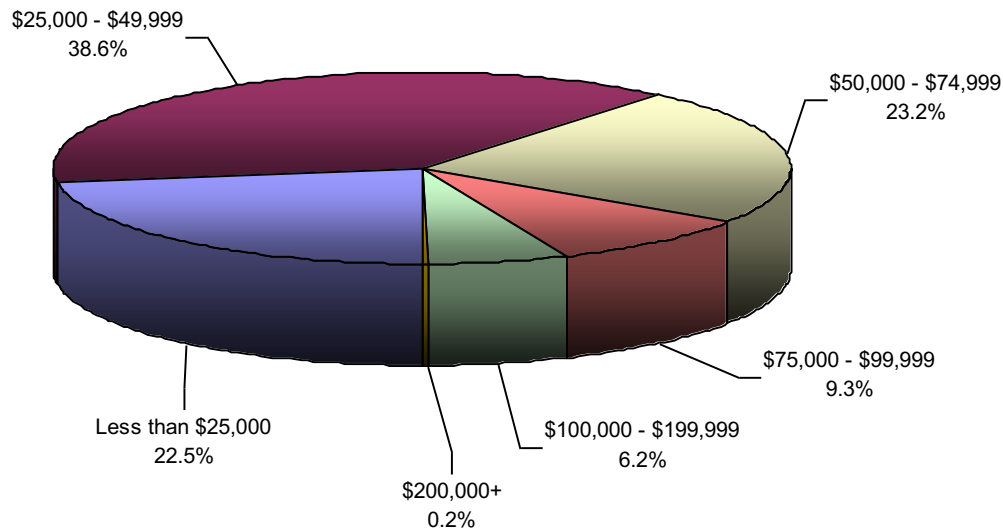
Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

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Income

In the year 2000, nearly one out of every five households in the Town of Royalton earned an income less than \$25,000, slightly less than two out of five households earned between \$25,000 and \$50,000, and about one out of every five households earned between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The median household income in 2000 was \$43,516, up from \$34,972 in 1990 (dollars not adjusted for inflation). In comparison, the 2000 median household income for the Village of Middleport was \$36,464 and for Niagara County was \$38,136. The following chart shows the breakdown of household income for the entire Town (including Village) in 2000.

Income Distribution, 2000



Source: US Bureau of the Census, 2000

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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Topography

The topography of most of the Town of Royalton ranges from relatively flat to gently rolling. The most prominent topographical feature in the Town is the Niagara Escarpment, a geological ridge that runs from west to east across the northern part of the Town, paralleling the Erie Canal and Route 31. The Escarpment's drop off is much less steep through Royalton than is seen in places west, but the drop is still between 100 and 150 feet. At 667 feet, the highest point in Niagara County is located in the Town of Royalton, just north of Bunker Hill Road.

Soils

The primary generalized soil units in the Town of Royalton include the following (noted in order of their location in the Town from north to south):

1. Niagara-Canandaigua-Collamer – These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained to poorly drained, medium textured soils. These soil can be found north of the Escarpment and in the southern portion of the Town along Tonawanda Creek.
2. Darien-Cazenovia-Nunda – These soils are well drained to moderately drained, medium textured soils. These soils can be found throughout the northern and central portions of the Town.
3. Hudson-Rhinebeck-Collamer – These soils are deep, moderately drained to well drained, medium textured to moderately fine textured soils. These soils can be found in the northern part of the Town near the Escarpment and in the southern part of the Town.
4. Honeoye-Ontario-Lima – These soils are deep, well drained, medium textured soils. These soils can be found along the eastern portions of the Town.
5. Wassaic-Farmington-Lairdsville – These soils are shallow to moderately deep, well drained to moderately well drained, medium textured soils. These soils can be found in the northern portion of the Town south of the Escarpment.
6. Teel-Wayland-Hamlin – These soils are deep, poorly drained to very poorly drained, medium textured soils.
7. Madalin-Rhinebeck-Canadice – These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, or very poorly drained, medium textured soils. These soils can be found in the extreme southeastern portion of the Town.
8. Minoa-Arkport-Lamson – These soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained, poorly drained, and very poorly drained, medium textured to moderately coarse soils. These soils can be found along portions of Tonawanda Creek.

Many of the soils in Town are categorized as prime agricultural soils, including many areas where the soils are farmland of statewide importance. The areas of prime agricultural soils are depicted on Map 4.

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Drainage/ Water Features

The water features in the Town of Royalton account for less than a half percent of the total surface area in the Town. Water features include a number of creeks and lakes and the Erie Canal. The Town also contains a vast amount of wetlands.

Water in the Town is conveyed to two distinct drainage systems. The northern portion of the Town drains northerly, down the Escarpment, eventually emptying into Lake Ontario. The southern portion of the Town drains southerly to Tonawanda Creek, which empties into the Niagara River, upstream from Niagara Falls. Tonawanda Creek generally forms the southern border of the Town. Mud Creek originates in the eastern portion of the Town and is the major tributary that conveys drainage from the southern portion of the Town to Tonawanda Creek. Mud Creek empties into Tonawanda Creek in the Town of Pendleton. The northern portion of the Town drains northerly to the East Branch of Eighteen Mile Creek, Johnson Creek, or to Jeddo Creek, all of which originate in the Town and eventually convey water to Lake Ontario. Various other tributaries and intermittent streams throughout the Town convey water to one of these major creeks.

There are a limited number of lakes or ponds in the Town. Mirror Lake is located along East Branch of Eighteen Mile Creek in Gasport and the Middleport Reservoir is located along Jeddo Creek, south of the Village of Middleport. The Reservoir used to supply water for the Village of Middleport's water system, but is no longer used for that purpose.

The Erie Canal runs east-west through the northern portion of the Town. The Canal acts as a recreational and shipping channel and not as a drainage system. Many creeks are grade separated from the Canal.

Wetlands

A substantial portion of the southeast portion of the Town is inundated with state and federal wetlands, known collectively as the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area. There are also numerous state and federal wetlands scattered throughout the Town, especially along many of the creeks and tributaries. See Map 5: Environmental Features.

State wetlands are those under jurisdiction of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and are identified by the existence of certain species of vegetation that grow well in wet soils. The Freshwater Wetlands Act protects all wetlands of 12.4 acres (5 hectares) or larger. The State also regulates the land area within 100 feet of protected wetlands. Wetlands smaller than this may be protected if they are considered to be of local importance. State wetlands are ranked in four classes ranging from Class I, which is a wetland of greatest importance and contains the highest restriction, to Class IV. Regardless of the wetland class, a permit is required to conduct any regulated activity within a wetland area or the 100 foot buffer that surrounds a wetland.

Federal wetlands are regulated under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, irrespective of their size, and Section 10 of the

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Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. Many wetlands that are state wetlands are also federal wetlands; however, many smaller wetlands that do not meet the state's minimum size requirement are only under federal jurisdiction. Under the law, a permit is required for any structure or work that takes place in, under, or over a navigable waterway or wetlands adjacent to navigable waters (such as dock construction, dredging, and shoreline protection). In addition, any activity that involves a discharge of dredged material or fill material into navigable waters or associated wetlands requires a permit, as well as activities that would drain or flood wetlands or significantly disturb the soil, such as land clearing, ditching, stream channelization, and excavating. Currently, wetland mapping for the Town is being redone. The environmental map included in this document is based on most recent available information, but may not be fully accurate as wetland areas are remapped.

Floodplains

There are two types of floodplains that exist within the Town: 100-year floodplains and 500-year floodplains. The 100-year floodplain is the area surrounding a water feature that is inundated with water during a 100-year flood event, or a flood that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. The 100-year flood is more technically referred to as the 1 percent annual chance flood. The 500-year floodplain is the area surrounding a water course that is inundated with water during a 500-year flood event, or the 0.2 percent annual flood. The 100-year floodplain is divided into the floodway and the floodway fringe. The floodway is the portion of the floodplain which includes the stream's channel and any adjacent areas that must be kept free of encroachments that might block flood flows or restrict storage of flood waters. The flood fringe is the area covered by flood waters but that does not carry strong currents of flood waters.

The extent of 100-year floodplains throughout the Town is confined to the areas along Tonawanda Creek, Mud Creek, East Branch of Eighteen Mile Creek, and Jeddo Creek, and to areas within the Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area. The extent of the 500-year floodplains in the Town is confined to an area in the southwestern portion of the Village of Middleport, near Jeddo Creek. FEMA is currently in the process of amending the flood maps for Niagara County, and preliminary maps issued in late September 2009 suggest that there will significantly more lands in the Town of Royalton that fall within the "special flood hazard areas subject to inundation by the 1 percent flood." The preliminary maps are currently subject to public review and comment. Final maps are tentatively scheduled to be established by December 2009. Based on the preliminary maps, additional lands subject to flooding are located along Tonawanda Creek, Black Creek, Mud Creek, Johnson Creek and the East Branch of 18-Mile Creek within the Town of Royalton.

Habitats

The Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area, located in the southeastern portion of the Town, is a 5,600 acre designated habitat for waterfowl that straddles the Niagara-Orleans-Genesee County lines. The area acts as a large resting ground for migrating birds and as a nesting area for resident birds.

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Eighteen Mile Creek and Johnson Creek are both designated as Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats upstream near Lake Ontario, although none of the designations reach into the Town of Royalton.

Aquifers

There are two aquifers located within the Town of Royalton. One is in the northwest portion of Town and extends westward into the Town of Lockport. The other is in the south central portion of Town, and extends southward into the Town of Newstead.

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TRANSPORTATION

Highway Network

The transportation system in the Town of Royalton consists of a series of north-south and east-west roads that transect the Town. The majority of roads within the Town are hard surfaced. See Map 6: Transportation Network.

The following major state and county roads are located in the Town of Royalton:

- State Route 31 runs between Lockport and Medina, passing through Gasport and Middleport, and paralleling the Erie Canal in the northern portion of the Town. The route is functionally classified as a Rural Minor Arterial and handles 7,000-8,000 vehicles per day.
- State Route 31E branches off SR 31 and runs through Downtown Middleport and extends east to Medina. This corridor is classified as a Rural Major Collector that handles about 3,000 vehicles per day.
- State Route 77 runs through the center of the Town, extending from Lockport southeast to Corfu and Java Center. This roadway is classified as a Rural Major Collector and handles about 2,000-2,500 vehicles per day. South of the Town of Royalton, Route 77 contains an interchange with the New York State Thruway in the Town of Pembroke.
- State Route 93 runs through the southern portion of the Town, running from Youngstown and Lockport to Akron. The road is classified as a Rural Major Collector, except for the portion west of Akron Road, which is classified as a Minor Arterial. This corridor experiences 2,500-3,000 vehicles per day.
- State Route 271 begins in Middleport and runs north to State Route 104 in the Town of Hartland. This road is classified as a Rural Major Collector and handles about 1,400 vehicles per day.
- Akron Road, northwest of SR 93 is classified as a Collector and handles about 1,300 vehicles per day.
- Bunker Hill Road (County Route 136) is classified as a Collector and experiences about 1,700 vehicles per day.
- Gasport Road, (County Route 10) is classified as a Rural Major Collector that handles anywhere from 3,500-4,000 vehicles per day.
- Griswold Road (County Route 905) is a Rural Major Collector between SR 77 and SR 31 that handles 1,400 vehicles per day.
- Hartland Road (County Route 108) is classified as a Rural Major Collector that handles close to 2,900 vehicles per day between Gasport and the Hartland Town Line.
- The remainder of the road system in the Town consists of two-lane county and local roads that handle less than 1,000 vehicles per day.

Railroad

There is one railroad line that runs through the Town, parallel to the Erie Canal. The line is operated by the Falls Road Railroad, a Class III Short Line that provides access between the CSX railroad line in Lockport and Brockport. The railroad line is used primarily for shipments to and from the ethanol plant in Medina.

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Public Transportation

The Niagara County's Rural Niagara Transportation operates a fixed route between Middleport and Lockport with buses servicing the route twice a day. The closest NFTA Metro Bus stop is in Lockport.

Airport

The Royalton Airport, located on Mackey Road, is a small general aviation airport owned by Tanger-Aire, Inc. that is primarily used for private single engine aircraft. The airport averages 116 operations per week.

Water

The Erie Canal runs east-west through the northern portion of the Town, and is part of the New York State Canal System that is under authority of the New York State Thruway Authority. The Canal consists of a varying width of about 120 feet and a draft depth of approximately 12 feet. Although once used as an important shipping channel, the Canal is primarily used today for recreational boating. There are no locks located along the Canal in the Town.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

Sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities in the Town are limited mainly to the Village of Middleport and hamlet of Gasport. The Erie County Heritage Trail along the north side of the Erie Canal offers walking, hiking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing opportunities. Royalton also has a State-designated on-road bicycle route: State Bicycle Route 5 is located along Route 31 through the Town. It continues west to Niagara Falls and east to the New York-Massachusetts border.

Trails

Erie Canal is designated as the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and is paralleled by the Erie Canalway Trail. The trail consists of portions that contain a dirt surface, a gravel surface, and a paved surface.

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UTILITIES

Public Water

Public water in the Town of Royalton is provided by the Royalton Townwide Water District. The source of District water is purchased surface water, which it buys from the Niagara County Water District. A major Niagara County Water District line runs along Route 31. There have been unauthorized tap-ins into the County line within the Town of Royalton. Town plans are to extend a parallel town line so these tap-ins can be relocated to the town system. According to the Town district's annual water quality statement, the Town's water meets all State and federal drinking water health standards. There are 2,195 active service connections to the system, and the district delivered 207,529,000 gallons of water to its customers in 2007.

The Town sponsored a study to investigate improvements to the district and extend water lines to additional parts of the Town. Due to funding limitations, no action is currently in place to extend additional water lines.

Public Sewer

The Town of Royalton does have public sewers available in portions of the Town. Sewers are available in and around the Village of Middleport and in the vicinity of Gasport. The Town's sewerage lines are older, and there are significant problems with inflow and infiltration (I/I) in the pipes. The lines are a combined system, with sanitary and storm flow all using the same pipes.

The Town's wastewater treatment plant is located at 4244 Bolton Road in Gasport. The system is currently operating essentially at capacity, creating difficulties for any future developments that would want to tie into the sewer system. A study is planned beginning in the spring of 2009 to investigate the I/I problem and devise potential solutions.

Map 7: Utilities depicts the location of the Town's water and sewer lines.

Other Utilities

There are other utility mainline easements through the Town. Major gas and electric utility distribution lines cross the town of Royalton. There are also inactive utility rights-of-way. Natural gas lines are available to many homeowners, with approximately 40 percent of households using natural gas as the primary means to heat their homes. There are some areas where high-speed internet is available, but much of the town does not have access to this service.

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Municipal Buildings

The Royalton Town Hall and highway garage are located at 5316 Royalton Center Road. The wastewater treatment plant is located at 4244 Bolton Road in Gasport.

Schools

The majority of students in the Town of Royalton attend the Royalton-Hartland Central School District. This school district covers most of the Towns of Royalton and Hartland, and also extends into areas of the Town of Lockport and Orleans and Genesee Counties. Royalton-Hartland Middle School and High School are located in the Village of Middleport, while Royalton-Hartland Elementary School is located in Gasport. The southern portion of the Town is served by the Akron Central School District.

Fire, Police & Emergency Services

The Town of Royalton is serviced by 4 fire departments, Gasport Fire Company, Terrys Corners Fire Company, Middleport Fire Company, and Wolcottsville Fire Company.

The Niagara County Sheriff provides police coverage for the Town and the Sheriff's Marine Division patrols the waters of the Erie Barge Canal. The New York State Police can assist the Sheriff Department on calls within the Town. The County operates an E911 system that dispatches emergency personnel.

Garbage Pickup/ Recycling

Garbage pickup and recycling in the Town is done by contracted waste management services through Modern Disposal. Large garbage items and recycling can also be taken to the Niagara County Landfill & Recycling Center in Lockport.

Parks & Recreation

The Niagara County Parks & Recreation Department operates the 146 acre Royalton Ravine Park on Gasport Road just south of Gasport. The Park offers picnic shelters, a baseball field, a fishing pond, nature trails, waterfalls, and restroom facilities. The Park also contains the historic homestead ruins of where Belva Lockwood was born. Veterans Park, located in Gasport, offers softball, picnic, and restroom facilities. There is a small park, sometimes known as "Flame Park" on the canal in Gasport, and a public boat launch located along the Erie Canal east of Middleport along Route 31E.

The Tonawanda State Wildlife Management Area, located in the southeastern portion of the Town, is a 5,600 acre designated habitat for waterfowl that straddles the Niagara-Orleans-Genesee County lines. The area acts as a large resting ground for migrating birds and as a nesting area for resident birds and also offers recreational opportunities such as canoe and kayaking, camping, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, picnicking, hiking and nature trails, hunting, fishing, and bird watching.

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Historic and Cultural Sites²

Royalton has a number of sites that are locally significant, including historic houses and cemeteries. The following list summarizes these sites:

- Orangeport Christian Cemetery: the oldest cemetery in Royalton, it has been in use since 1804.
- Orangeport Union Cemetery: established in 1885, it is the site of the first public house of worship on the Holland Land purchase between the Genesee River and the Niagara River.
- Bugbee Brick House: built around 1818 at 7928 Slayton Settlement Road. This home competes with the McNall house as the oldest brick house in Royalton.
- Mabee Mill (ruins): although exact dates are uncertain, the Mabee Mill was probably built prior to 1852. A fire on February 20, 1880 destroyed the mill but the massive stone walls still stand to this day.
- Lewiston and Chestnut Ridge Road: the old Lewiston Trail/ Niagara Road was the first and most historic trail/ road in Niagara County. The road ran from Batavia in Genesee County, all the way to Lewiston, New York. The French missionary priests used the road until 1759 and the road was later used by the English. In 1775, the entire Mohawk Indian Nation traveled to Lewiston on the trail. Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant and his warriors, along with Butler's Rangers, attacked American settlements on the western end of the trail. During the Revolutionary War, thousands of captives and bushels of scalps were brought to Fort Niagara along this route. On December 19, 1813, American refugees fled eastward along the trail to Batavia and beyond to escape the English-Indian raids. This left most of Niagara County completely depopulated. The route has served as a stagecoach and wagon train route, and was used as early as 1787 for cattle drives from New Jersey to Fort Niagara.
- Terry Homestead: built in 1835. This home is rumored to have been a stop along the Underground Railroad. The abolitionist Frederick Douglass stayed at the house for a while when he was in the area giving speeches. Mr. Terry wintered his bees in the attic.
- McNalls Tavern, Lewiston Road: built around 1818. This part brick and part cobblestone building was a tavern on the old stagecoach route.
- Brick home: Built in 1831. This home was the probable site of early meetings for the Masons after the Morgan affair.
- First Universalist Church: cobblestone building.
- Cobblestone Houses:
 - Griswold Street (gingerbread trim)
 - Freeman Road
 - 9065 Chestnut Ridge Road (formerly known as Colonial Ridge Stables)
 - Dewhirst Road
 - Bunker Hill Road (Dysinger homestead). This home was also the site of the Dysinger Post Office.
- Belva Bennet McNall Lockwood birthplace: Griswold Street. Belva Lockwood was probably the most famous person from the Town of Royalton. She was the first woman permitted to practice law before the Supreme Court (1879). She was also the first woman

² Information provided by Town of Royalton Historian, Jesse Bieber

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to run for President of the United States (in 1884) who received officially recognized votes.

- State Street: oldest frame house in Gasport. Built around 1824, the building was formerly used as a telephone company office.
- Gas well: the Town's park is located on the site of the first gas well in Gasport (circa 1880's)
- Sunset Drive-In: built in 1950, the Sunset Drive-In remains in operation.

Other Community Facilities

The Middleport Free Library in Middleport is available for use by Town residents. The Library contains a collection of 17,000 volumes along with other media.

Major community facilities are shown on Map 8.