



# THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN



THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

Prepared for CityView Properties



Prepared by



With



JULY 2006

Front Cover Images Include:

*The Larkin District Market Plan 2010* (Source: *The Urban Design Project with Kevin Connors & Associates*)

*A Postcard of the Larkin Soap Company complex* (Source: *The History of Buffalo*)

*Historic construction photo of the Larkin at Exchange Building* (Source: *CityView Properties*)

*Completed Larkin at Exchange Building* (Source: *CityView Properties*)

*The Larkin at Exchange Building after its renovation by CityView Properties* (Source: *CityView Properties*)

*All photos in the Larkin District Plan are courtesy of The Urban Design Project, Kevin Connors & Associates, or CityView Properties, unless otherwise noted.*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

## Overview

<b>Chapter 1: The Larkin District Plan Recommendations.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>A. Create a Strong Identity.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>B. Make Distinctive Gateways and Street Themes.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>C. Improve Transportation Systems.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>D. Create a Network of Green Spaces.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>E. Land Use Plan.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<b>Chapter 2: Plan Implementation.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>A. Sequencing and Responsibilities.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<b>Chapter 3: Funding.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>A. Funding Sources.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>B. Funding Programs.....</i>	<i>31</i>

# LIST OF FIGURES

## After Page

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Historic Resource Plan.....	4
Recommended Transportation Improvements.....	14
Planned Land Use 2010.....	20
Larkin District Market Plan 2010.....	22

# OVERVIEW

## Project Initiation

CityView Properties commissioned the Urban Design Project at the University at Buffalo's School of Architecture and Planning, working with Kevin Connors & Associates, to assist the company in developing a strategic plan for the area in the City of Buffalo centered at Exchange and Van Rensselaer Streets, the site of its highly successful Larkin at

Exchange commercial redevelopment project. CityView Properties sought recommendations for potential future projects that would help it to best capitalize on its past and ongoing investments in the District, as well as take advantage of the existing assets of the area and the opportunities they create.

Overview



The Larkin District study area is outlined in red in this 2005 aerial photograph. (Source: New York State GIS Clearinghouse <http://www.nysgis.state.ny.us/>)

## Geographic Area

The project area includes all properties under the direct control of CityView Properties and adjoining lands within approximately ¼-mile of the intersection of Exchange and Van Rensselaer Streets. However, recognizing that changes in the project area will affect and be affected by the community surrounding it, a larger study area is used to define the Larkin District. This study area, and the Larkin District, is contained by North and South Division Streets to the north, the I-90 NYS Thruway to the south, Hamburg Street to the west and a rail right-of-way to the east.

## The Goals of the Plan

The project team developed a set of fundamental goals, or guiding principles, early in the planning process. These overriding goals created the framework for the specific objectives, ideas, and concepts detailed in this plan regarding proposed

## OVERVIEW: THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

potential investment and redevelopment activities in the Larkin District. These planning principles include the following:

- Market the Larkin District “brand name” so that it becomes recognizable and identified with by the public.
- Base the “image” of the district on its past and help brand the District with future design features.
- Allow for flexibility and change in the Plan.
- Whenever possible, preserve, restore and/or reuse important historic features.
- Blend new features with old to enhance the appeal of both. This does not mean imitating the architectural features of historic buildings.
- Capitalize on the proximity of the Larkin District to downtown through physical connections and visual design features.
- Improve physical, visual, and way finding connections between the Larkin District, its businesses, and its residents and the region.
- Encourage a vital urban neighborhood by developing vibrant streets and public spaces.
- Make the district safe and easy to get around for all people using different modes of transportation—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, car drivers, and truck operators alike.

### Background Studies

The *Larkin District Plan* draws upon an extensive analysis of the Larkin District conducted by the Urban Design Project and Kevin Connors & Associates. This analysis focused on the area’s history, land use and public policies, community demographic profile, urban design characteristics, and transportation system.

### Outline of the Plan

Within this plan are three chapters. Chapter I, “The Larkin District Plan Recommendations,” presents the heart of the

Plan, a series of action steps to help guide and enhance the growth of the Larkin District. Chapter II, “Plan Implementation,” describes the recommended sequencing of future development and identifies the organizations responsible for the implementation of the development projects. Chapter III, “Funding,” describes funding sources and programs potentially available to help implement future development projects in the Larkin District.



A 1901 illustration of the Larkin District area. The Larkin Soap Company had not yet constructed the Larkin Administration building. (Source: The Library of Congress)

CHAPTER I: THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

# CHAPTER 1: THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

## Introduction

The Larkin District has a unique past and a rapidly changing future. This once thriving industrial area is becoming a progressive economic center for the entire Western New York region, as well as a high quality, eclectic urban neighborhood. This plan for the Larkin District seeks to enhance and guide these changes, as well as create a better environment for economic and residential growth.

In the past, before the area was called the Larkin District, it was the land of the Seneca, a member of the Iroquois Confederation. The Seneca were restricted to the Buffalo Creek Reservation, just south of the Larkin District, in the 1800's. As Buffalo developed into an industrial center on the Great Lakes, the Larkin District benefited and contributed to the city's growth. In the early 1800's, a series of canals were developed and used to create a source of power for industries in this neighborhood which was then named the Hydraulics. In the late 1800's, the Larkin Soap Company developed much of the land in the Larkin District and was the owner of the Larkin Administration Building - a Frank Lloyd Wright designed office building. Now and in the future, the Larkin District will become a vibrant commercial center and neighborhood in Buffalo. New progressive firms as well as creative and innovative employees will be attracted to the District because of its historic character and modern urban amenities.

This first chapter, entitled The Larkin District Plan Recommendations, is a series of recommendations for the District that have been based on

the goals and objectives that were developed early in the planning process by the planning team. These recommendations have also been based on the historic and current context of the neighborhood that the District is within.

The plan includes five separate yet cohesive groups of recommendations. These five groups are recommendations that will help create a strong Larkin District identity, create distinctive gateways and street themes, improve transportation systems, develop a network of green spaces, and develop a land use plan. Implementation of the plan, as well as possible sources of funding for the plan's features, are described in the following chapters of this plan.



*A historic postcard of the Larkin Soap Company in full operation. (Source: The History of Buffalo <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/h/larkin/admin/index.html>)*

## A. CREATE A STRONG IDENTITY

Successful urban districts typically have trademark features, creating a unique identity that sets them apart as special places within the larger city and region. The plan recommends that the identity promoted for the Larkin District draws from the area's greatest strengths:

- Its layered and multi-faceted history goes back to the days of the Buffalo Creek Reservation when it was the land of the Iroquois Confederacy, and to the early industrial era when the area was known as the Hydraulics. In its heyday, the District was the world headquarters of the mail order giant Larkin Soap Company.
- The cache created by the architectural legacy of the legendary Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Larkin Administration Building. This legacy has the drawing power to attract a creative class of entrepreneurs and innovative commercial firms.
- The district's mixed-use land use pattern and eclectic character.

### Goal

Creating a distinct identity for the Larkin District is an important prerequisite to attracting investment in the area. "Branding" the District with a desirable and recognized name and image creates a tangible business asset. This is because its "trademark" identity makes marketing the area to potential corporations, residents, and visitors more efficient and successful. Developing a unique identity will make it easier to promote targeted types of development and businesses. The dual work plan goals are for the Larkin District to become a defining cultural tourism destination in the region that is well connected with other destinations in the area, as well as to become an eclectic urban neighborhood.

### Problem Statement

The study area currently lacks name recognition amongst residents, businesses, and tourists in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

### Current Status

The highlight of the Larkin District is the renovated Larkin at Exchange building campus. Once used by the Larkin Soap Company for warehousing and shipping, this project is a highly successful example of urban redevelopment. Many important historical sites and buildings remain, providing the opportunity for more unique adaptive reuse projects. Close proximity to downtown Buffalo and good access to the I-190 NYS Thruway further enhance the potential for further redevelopment which follows the lead of the existing Larkin at Exchange building campus project.



*The adaptive reuse of the Larkin at Exchange building, formerly part of the Larkin company complex, serves as a catalyst for other investment in the Larkin District.*

### Strategies

#### Interpret The History

The history of the Larkin District is closely related to the history and development of the City of Buffalo and the larger region. From before Buffalo's importance as a shipping and manufacturing center to its subsequent industrial decline, many important people—including Wright, Iroquois leader Red Jacket, and Roycroft-founder Elbert Hubbard—have influenced not only the patterns of development in the district, but also cultural trends in the region and the nation. Interpretation of the Larkin District should include sensitive descriptions of its history and its links with other historic sites in Western New York.

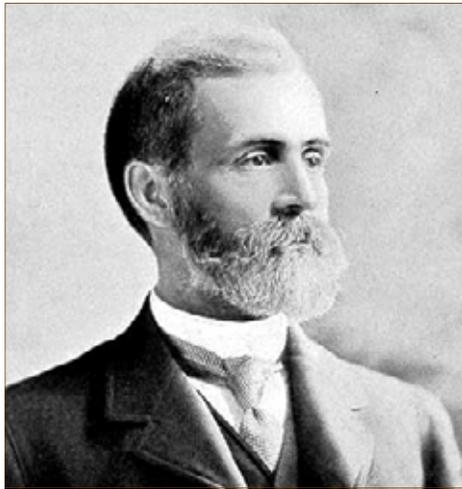
## An Interwoven History

The District's fascinating past revolves around three major historic periods or themes:

- *The Hydraulics*

After the completion of the Erie Canal, a group of local businessmen sought to capitalize on the potential of water power. The Buffalo Hydraulic Association was created in 1827 with the goal of making Buffalo a center for the textile industry.

For various reasons, the industry did not thrive, but remnants of the Canal infrastructure still remain, most notably reflected in an unusual street pattern in the Larkin District today. "Mill Race Park," on the south side of Exchange Street opposite the Larkin at Exchange building, is a green space which lies atop the historic location of the mill race. Some of the neighborhoods created during "The Hydraulics" time period still exist. St. Patrick's Friary, located on Seymour Street, is a vestige of this old neighborhood.



A photograph of John D. Larkin (Source: *The History of Buffalo* <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/h/larkin/index.html>)

- *Larkin Soap Company*

The Larkin Soap Company, founded by John D. Larkin, was once one of the world's largest mail order retailers, with the motto "Factory to Family". In 1892, the business was incorporated as a stock company, and renamed the Larkin Soap Manufacturing Company. Elbert Hubbard, a former senior manager at the company and son-in-law of John D. Larkin, went on to found the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora. Darwin Martin, a patron of Wright who commissioned important buildings designed by the world-renowned architect, worked for Larkin as a senior executive.

- *Frank Lloyd Wright and The Larkin Administration Building*

Frank Lloyd Wright, an experimenter in design, has had a tremendous influence on the Buffalo region. Between 1903 and 1927, Wright designed 10 structures that were built in Western New York. Currently, the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum, located on Michigan Avenue and Seneca Street, is planning on building the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed (but never constructed) "Filling Station" on their property, which is just west of the Larkin District.

John D. Larkin commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design the Larkin Administration Building in 1904 and it was built in 1906 at 680 Seneca Street. The building rose five stories and drew international attention for its many innovations. The project cost four million dollars, a startling



The Frank Lloyd Wright designed Larkin Administration Building.

sum at the time. Fountains flanked the entranceways and the roof, which was paved with brick, served as a recreation area for the employees, their families and guests. The upper level of the building contained a kitchen, bakery, dining rooms, classrooms, a branch of the Buffalo Public Library, restrooms, a roof garden and a conservatory. Natural and artificial light was used in the building, and an air conditioning system that cooled the building provided fresh air for the people within it. After years of ownership transfers, the building was demolished in 1950. Only one exterior concrete pier remains.

As an innovator, Frank Lloyd Wright's reputation and ideas will help attract potential development and will foster the creation of new technologies and new ideas amongst the progressive firms in the Larkin District.



*The last remnants of the Larkin Administration Building with existing interpretive signage.*

- *Olmsted Parkway System*

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks System includes six large destination parks, several smaller spaces and a larger connecting system of circles and parkways. Although Olmsted intended the northern and southern portions of the park and parkway system to be connected, a link was never constructed. Olmsted had planned on using the southern half of Fillmore Avenue from the Parade (known today as Martin Luther King, Jr. Park) to Seneca Street, the stretch of Seneca Street to Bailey Avenue, and Bailey Avenue to McKinley Parkway to connect the northern and southern systems. Although these roads exist today, they were never constructed as the parkways Olmsted intended with broad streets lined with green spaces and a double row of trees.

This stretch of streets should be redesigned to create the connection Olmsted intended. A consistent double row of trees should be planted on both sides of these streets. A lighting style consistent with the other Buffalo Olmsted Parkways should be utilized along this stretch. The central feature of the redesign would be the construction of a traffic circle at the intersection of Fillmore/Smith and Seneca Street. This circle will perform as a traffic calming measure - and will also be the gateway into the Larkin District.

### The Historic Resource Plan

The Historic Resources Plan highlights the important historic features of the Larkin District.. Key elements of the Plan include:

- Evaluating and seeking local, state, and federal historic designation of individual properties from the Hydraulics and Larkin eras.



*A draft of the Buffalo Olmsted Park and Parkway System with additional connections is shown here with Larkin Circle and the Seneca Street corridor.*

# LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

## HISTORIC RESOURCE PLAN

### Historic Features

-  Site of the Larkin Administration Building
-  Path of Historic Waterways
-  Remaining Larkin Company Buildings
-  Existing Red Brick Roads
-  Larkin Company Structure circa - 1925
-  Larkin Company Structure circa- 1900
-  Larkin Company Structure circa - 1893

### Plan Features

-  Potential Olmstedian Circle
-  Potential Larkin Historic District
-  Seek Listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places
-  Potential Hydraulics Interpretive Trail Route
-  Potential Olmsted System Link
-  Temporary Larkin District Welcome Center and Museum
-  Existing Railroads
-  Larkin District

\*SPATIAL INFORMATION - 1873, 1900, 1925

 **University at Buffalo**  
The State University of New York

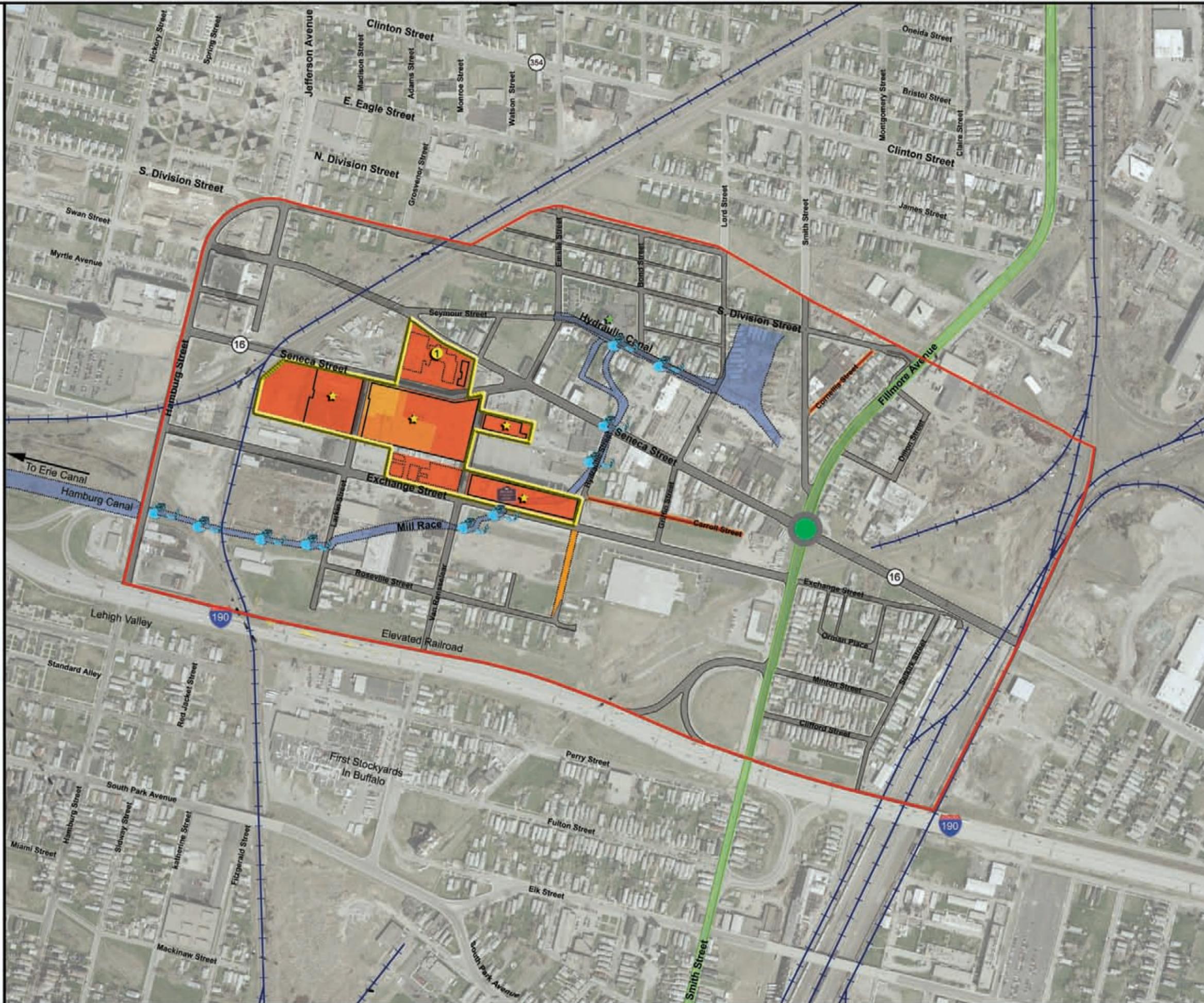
The Urban Design Project

Kevin Connors & Associates

0 250 500 750 1,000 Feet



10.01.08







*The Roycroft Inn in nearby East Aurora is part of the Roycroft Campus Historic District. Although the Inn was not designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, architectural details of the Inn resemble Wright designs.*



*An image of a 1932 Pierce Arrow. (Source: Classic Auto Gallery <http://www.classiccarclub.org/Auto%20Gallery.htm> histindex.html)*

- Evaluating the possibility of creating a Larkin Historic District. The remaining structures of the Larkin Soap Company (including the pier and other possible subsurface remnants of the Larkin Administration Building) have the potential to be listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places (S/NR) and designated a local City of Buffalo landmark district;
- Creating an interpretative trail along the path of the Hydraulics waterway;
- Interpreting park designer Frederick Law Olmsted’s original plan for an interconnected Buffalo park system by completing the missing stretch of parkway through the southern edge of the Larkin District;
- Establishing a “Larkin District museum,” perhaps initially in the lobby of the Larkin at Exchange building;
- Developing historic interpretation materials, including a set of informational brochures, maps, booklets, and CDs describing the district’s history; walking and bus tour packages; marketing links to other regional sites with a “Larkin connection”;
- Designing and displaying signage marking individual historic and archaeological sites, historic districts, and museums.

Historic designation can be used as a marketing tool to promote cultural tourism, bringing recognition and prestige to the address, and attracting potential investors and residents. Highlighting the rich heritage of the Larkin District would complement the tourism development initiatives of other historic sites around Western New York including the Wright-designed Graycliff Estate in nearby Derby, NY and Darwin Martin House in North Buffalo, and the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, NY. Financial and tax incentives often come with the designation as well.

### Promote the Legacy of Innovation

- *Early Industrial Innovation*

The Larkin District has a strong heritage of early industrial innovation. Creative ways of harnessing water power were developed here through the Hydraulics canal system. New marketing strategies were developed at the Larkin company by Elbert Hubbard and John D. Larkin. Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the most creative figures in American architecture and design developed the “precedent-shattering” Larkin Administration Building whose design embodied the corporate culture. The innovations that have originated in the Larkin District serve as an inspiration for the future development of the District. The history and esteem of the area will attract firms that are intent on matching and surpassing these historical accomplishments.

- *WNY Innovations in Industrial Design*

Western New York also has a strong industrial heritage, and was the location of many innovations in industrial design. In 1842, Joseph Dart built the world’s first grain elevator on the Buffalo River. In 1906, Willis Havilland Carrier of the Buffalo Forge Company patented the first air conditioning system. The Concrete Central elevator was the largest in the world when built in 1918. The Pierce Arrow Auto Company was located in Buffalo in the first half of the 1900’s and designed automobiles that were used in presidential motorcades and by European royalty. The redevelopment of the Larkin District will help return Western New York to its innovative past.

- *Progressive Firms and Creative Employees*

In the past, employees relocated where industries were established. It is more common now for firms to seek out their prospective employees and locate near them. These employees make location decisions based on the area’s lifestyle amenities and distinctive qualities. A “creative class” of workers is often attracted to urban districts with intact historic character. Successful examples of redeveloped historic districts include SoHo in New York City and Bay Front in Savannah, Georgia. Each of these districts is a vibrant neighborhood and commercial center. Light industry and service sectors in these districts have been propelled towards success with innovations in communications and computer technology. The districts offer a mix of uses and architectural styles, which make them attractive to potential development and residents.

Modern firms and their employees benefit and grow from interactions with other firms and employees. Creating spaces in the Larkin District for interaction among people, including cafes, restaurants and parks, can help encourage knowledge transfer among these people. Innovations and new businesses are often created from contact and dialogue amongst creative decision makers. A critical mass of progressive firms and their creative employees will help promote a productive interface that will generate further development in the District. These firms will also be able to share facilities, reducing the cost of business, increasing the attractiveness of the Larkin District.

### Propose Mixed Uses

The creative class of workers, residents, and tourists attracted to the Larkin District will enjoy being in interestingly designed environments with a mix of amenities. Eclectic and historic architecture is suited for the Larkin District theme, residential neighborhoods and public spaces.



The American Can Company in Baltimore, Maryland, is an example of a mixed use development, with both offices and restaurants. It is also a good example of adaptive reuse. (Source: [www.cantonrealestate.org](http://www.cantonrealestate.org))



Employees and visitors of the Larkin at Exchange building enjoy amenities such as this café that allow for contact and communication.



**Shared parking can reduce the need for surface parking in the Larkin District.**

- *Allow Mixed Uses Within a Building*

Rather than separating buildings by use, encouraging a mix of uses in buildings can enhance the vitality of those buildings. This was an idea championed by Frank Lloyd Wright in his designs for the Larkin Administration Building which included a restaurant and a library.

- *Encourage Adaptive Reuse*

The historic structures that create the character and image of the Larkin District should be renovated and occupied by a variety of uses. Museums, offices, homes, retail, entertainment, civic uses, and other uses should be encouraged to occupy these buildings through flexible zoning.

- *Allow for Shared Parking*

Use of parking lots should not be restricted to only one business or building, but should be shared amongst the many uses in the Larkin District. Certain businesses will need parking on certain days and certain times of the day, while other businesses will have different schedules of parking needs. These needs should be incorporated into the design of proposed parking spaces, so as to reduce the number of total parking needed in the District. Reducing the space taken up by parking will enhance the image and character of the Larkin District. Shared parking alternatives will allow more space to be used for other productive uses, while accommodating the needed parking requirements.

- *Prohibit New Incompatible Uses*

New heavy industry will not be compatible with the emerging character of the Larkin District. Stationary heavy industrial processes emit pollutants that would detract from the environmental quality of the District. As an area with commercial, light industrial, civic, recreational and residential uses, heavy industry and other incompatible uses will disrupt the quality of life for residents, tourists and workers in the District.



**Residential neighborhoods, like the one on Roseville Street, would be negatively affected by heavy industry.**

## B. MAKE DISTINCTIVE GATEWAYS AND STREET THEMES

Gateways and street themes help to create, retain and reinforce unique features in urban districts. They are key tools closely related to the District identity. They can create well functioning transportation systems, networks of green spaces and neighborhoods. In the Larkin District it is especially critical to both define and strategically locate key gateway conditions and to delineate key street themes. Both of these actions will strongly reinforce the District’s opportunity to interpret history, promote the District, and maintain the eclectic mixed use look and feel of the area. All that, in turn, establishes the District as a good place to invest, work and live.

### Goal

The work plan goal for gateways and street themes is to create a set of general guidelines that will be used to influence street and gateway developments. The guidelines are aligned with the fundamental strategies in the City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan.

### Problem Statement

The amenities, potential for historical interpretation, locational advantages, and existing building infrastructure are all at risk in the Larkin District if they are not protected and reinforced through the mechanisms of zoning that incorporates basic design and development guidelines. These positive characteristics will get lost in typical modern developments that dilute the District’s ability to attract higher and better uses for the site which maximize the potential and profits of development. A balance must be struck between these highest and best use visions for the District and the necessity to have short term success to build on the energy already created by CityView Properties investments, City of Buffalo infrastructure improvements, and other investments. The District should avoid speculative demolition except

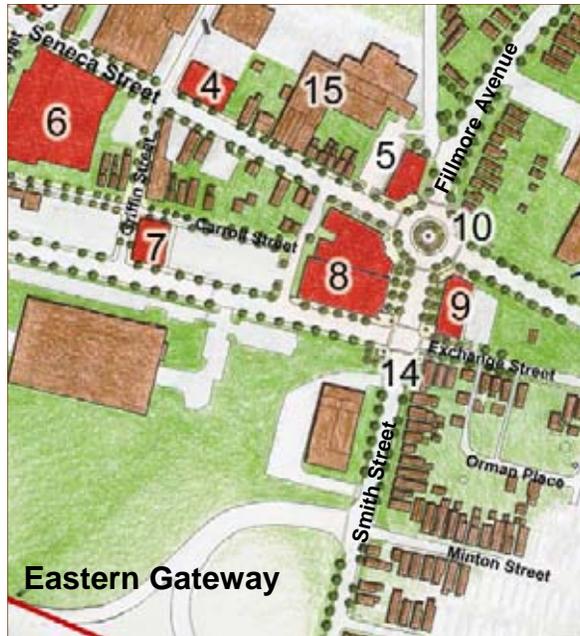
where appropriate, as in obsolete, non-historic structures. The reuse of structures that contribute to the historical character of the area should be promoted, as well as inviting new developments consistent with the strategies contained herein.

### Current Status

Current zoning and other regulations affecting future development in the District do not promote mixed use development. These regulations have discouraged non-industrial uses from developing, leaving much of the District feeling empty. The City of Buffalo’s *Comprehensive Plan* has been approved and does address the needed investments in specific strategic areas. The Larkin District is part of “The East Side Rail Corridor” described in the *Comprehensive Plan*. The *Queen City Hub* plan focuses Comprehensive Plan policies on both the Downtown and the immediate inner ring of neighborhoods reaching the Larkin District. Both documents call for a system of great streets connecting Downtown Buffalo to its adjacent neighborhoods.



*Exchange Street connects downtown Buffalo to the Larkin District and serves as a gateway between both areas.*



A proposed Olmstedian circle at the Fillmore and Seneca Streets Gateway.



An image of the proposed Exchange and Hamburg Streets Gateway.

## Strategies

### Make Gateways at Key Entry Points to The Larkin District:

The arrival to the District should be well marked with signage provided at several locations on the I-190, the Kensington Expressway, and throughout downtown. Dramatic arrival points should then be established marking vehicular entrances off of the I-190 at Smith Street, at the intersection of Fillmore and Seneca Streets, at the intersection of Hamburg and Exchange Streets, and at Swan Street.

- *Smith and Exchange Streets*

This intersection is one of the eastern gateways to the District. It is the most used intersection to enter or leave the site due to the I-190 exits along Smith Street along the edge of the District. This site has great potential for a signature gateway into the District. One potential structure for the gateway could be a series of electronic poles on each of the intersection corners, welcoming visitors into the site. These could designate the District and promote it as a place of innovation and design. The pylons should be designed to be read from the automobile, and actually seen as a dramatic feature from both the I-190 and from the railroad overpass after Hamburg on Exchange Street. At the same time, the gateway should be visible and interesting to pedestrians, with detail in the artifact and landscape emerging as one approaches them.

- *Fillmore and Seneca Streets*

This is also a major eastern edge gateway drawing traffic from the north along Fillmore Street. What differentiates this gateway from Smith and Exchange Street is its history as part of the designed, but never fully executed, Olmsted Park and Parkway System. The twenty year restoration and management plan for this part of the Park and Parkway System calls for Fillmore and Seneca Streets to be developed as the originally planned Parkway, and will propose a circle to allow for the Parkway to extend both down Fillmore to the south and east along Seneca Street. This would be maintained either by the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy or by the New York State Department of Transportation. While Olmsted envisioned several ways to cross the Buffalo River, the Fillmore/Smith Street route and the Seneca route were two that remain viable today. As an Olmstedian circle, this intersection should be an interpretive historical gateway with perhaps a water feature or unique centerpiece in the Circle. Like the pylons proposed to the South, additional detail and opportunity for interpretation should emerge as pedestrians approach the circle.

## CHAPTER I: THE LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Exchange and Hamburg Streets*

This represents a third gateway condition entering the District from the west on Exchange Street. This entry is likely dependent on paint, signage, landscape and good maintenance. Exchange Street offers a vista to the Larkin District from downtown as well as a dramatic industrial building stock that precedes and follows the rail crossing.

- *Swan Street and the Railroad Overpass*

This gateway on Swan Street is currently poorly maintained and uninviting. Users of Swan Street must travel beneath a railroad underpass that has a low clearance, is poorly maintained, and is not well lit, in order to enter into the District. This underpass is long, forcing roadway users below ground, and the roadway itself is in disrepair. As an entrance into the District, especially given its location near the former Larkin Administration Building and potential green space, this underpass should be redesigned to be friendlier, more inviting, and cleaner. The industrial character of the overpass can be preserved to enhance the distinctiveness of the gateway. However, lighting, improved and maintained sidewalks, and a repaved road surface as well as interpretive signage for the gateways, will create a better experience for all - whether they are on foot, on a bicycle, or in a car or bus.

- *Secondary Gateways*

Several secondary gateways or entry points compliment and reinforce the primary gateways into the Larkin District. It is necessary to recognize the importance of the multiple ways into the District. All such gateways would benefit from directional signs that announce the District, and special care with landscape features.



**Hamburg Street crosses over Exchange Street at this gateway into the Larkin District. Paint, banners, landscape, and signage should be used to enhance this entrance.**



**The railroad overpass on Swan Street is dark and deteriorating. New lights, signage, landscape and maintenance would significantly enhance this arrival experience.**

### Let Historic Land Uses and Scale Establish “Street Themes”

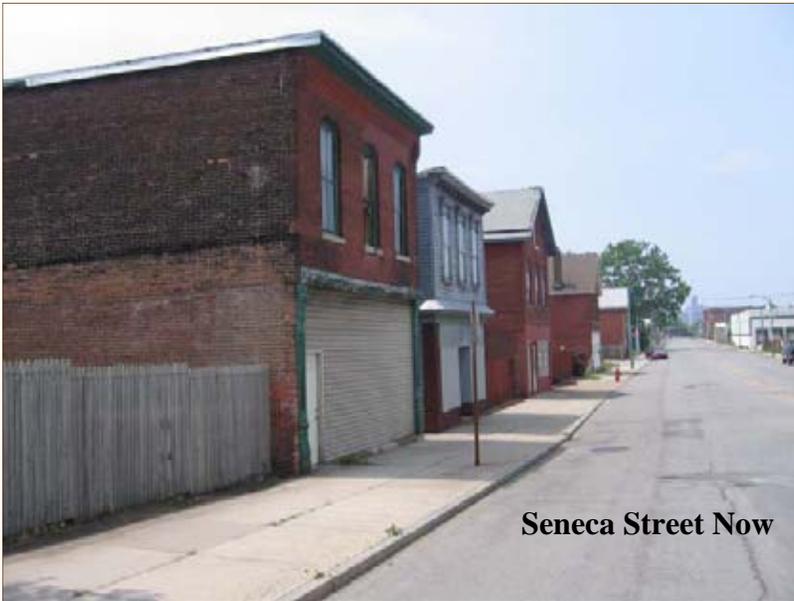
Seneca and Exchange Streets have historically served very different purposes in the District and provide the basis to implement the aspiration for the mix of uses proposed for the District’s future.

- *Seneca Street*

With its many storefronts, smaller parcel size and narrow roadway, Seneca Street lends itself to being developed with a pedestrian orientation. Increasing the sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting, street amenities like benches, planters, garbage cans, and banners can help to transform Seneca street into a place where people will enjoy the walk to lunch or for a drink after work. Incorporating housing and some green spaces to create a center around the already unique street configurations of Seneca and Swan Streets will help to tie neighborhoods together in a manner consistent with their development history. Development here should avoid the curb cuts and set backs characteristic of suburban development and concentrate on the “9 minute to retail” crowd that will be working in the District as well as the residential enclaves that will rely on the area as a commercial service area. Where such setbacks and parking establishments are required, every effort should be made to hold the street wall with fencing and landscape elements including street trees on 30 foot centers where possible.

- *Exchange Street*

Unlike Seneca Street, Exchange Street has many parking lots and setbacks to its buildings that promote a development style that is more car or vehicular oriented. While not doing anything to prohibit pedestrians from this area, this is a good place to put the types of development that thrive on the adjacency to the Thruway and the immediate access to and from downtown. Even in these conditions, however, there should be an effort to avoid “stranded” retail or commercial service establishments. The pedestrian environment complete with street trees, benches, nodes of access connecting building entries, bus stops, benches, and green park like areas related to parking lots should connect these car oriented businesses and allow for them to experience the benefits of foot traffic from employment centers in the area even as they accommodate the automobile. Metered parking should be allowed along Exchange Street. This will have a traffic calming affect, slowing vehicles down and increasing pedestrian safety.



**Seneca Street Now**



**Seneca Street in the Future**

*Seneca Street reconstruction will help enhance the vibrancy of the street. New design features such as benches, trees, and pedestrian scale lighting, can be seen in the bottom rendering of a concept design for the street. This section of Seneca Street, looking towards downtown, is just west of a future CityView Properties redevelopment site.*

## C. IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

The transportation infrastructure is one of the first features of a place that people will notice and judge on their visit. Bumpy roads, broken sidewalks or an unattractive streetscape can influence how a person perceives an area. A transportation system that frustrates or confuses those who use it does not promote return visits or pleasant stays. On the other hand, a system that informs users to where they are or allows them to easily find their way to destinations, no matter what their mode of transportation, will create an experience many would enjoy to repeat. These points are just some of the reasons that attention and focus must be given to the roadways, pathways and sidewalks that make up the transportation system within the Larkin District.

### Goal

The work plan goal is to provide guidelines and options that will create a transportation system for the District that is inclusive, logical and unique.

### Problem Statement

The transportation system of the Larkin District is not well suited for the intentions of an eclectic modern neighborhood. Many of the roadways throughout the District act as thoroughfares between downtown, the I-190 thruway and surrounding neighborhoods. For the District to bring businesses and people into the area as a destination, the transportation amenities must be designed differently than they have been in the past.

Much of the District's roadways are considered fair at best with many considered poor, with Exchange Street as a notably better exception. This indicates that there has been a lack of

transportation investment over the years and much more is needed to create a pleasant transportation experience.

The industrial nature of the District in the past has produced a transportation system that was designed to meet certain functions and level of services while excluding or limiting others. This system had served the area well as being a hub of industry and commerce, but leaves the area feeling uninviting or inaccessible to many. Sidewalks, crosswalks or streetscape features that promote pedestrian use and create a unique destination are in dire need of repair or are missing altogether.

### Current Status

The transportation infrastructure in and around the Larkin District reflects the City of Buffalo's historic relationship between the radial street system laid out by Joseph Ellicott, the park and parkway system designed by the firms of Olmsted & Vaux, and the Water - the Niagara and Buffalo Rivers and Lake Erie. Swan, Seneca and Eagle Streets are original names and street alignments from Joseph Ellicott's designs for the Village of Buffalo in 1804. These roadways have been largely preserved in their path and purpose.



*Roadways in the Larkin District were designed for truck traffic and not for pedestrians or bicycles.*



*An inactive rail line through the Larkin District is part of the District's transportation system.*



*There are several public bus routes serving the residents and businesses in the Larkin District.*



*A typical bus stop in the Larkin District.*

The location of the I-190 thruway along the southern edge of the District and the proximity to the Smith Street and Hamburg Street on/off ramps is a great asset for regional access to the District with the potential to draw people off of the thruway and into the District. This opens up a larger customer base for the District's businesses. While the transportation system supports ample amounts of commuter traffic through the District, the District fails to identify itself as someplace worth stopping.

The District is also surrounded on three sides by active and inactive rail lines which provide amenities to the site for those industries using them. However, they also bring a problems associated with railroad noise and vacant land.

The sidewalk system in the Larkin District is in good to excellent condition along Exchange Street and fair to poor condition along Seneca Street, as well as throughout much of the remainder of the District. There are also no designated routes or facilities for bicyclists. There are a number of bus lines, but no centralized transfer point. There are few bus shelters and the existing shelters are poorly maintained.

## Strategies

### Bus Routes

There are several bus routes that move through the site bringing potential people and customers. Cooperation with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is encouraged to keep these routes running through the heart of the District while at the same time improving the ability for riders to transfer between differing routes within the District. These bus routes can create additional potential for site development. Work should also be done to improve upon the infrastructure of the transit routes. Bus stops and shelters can be designed and constructed in such a way as to reinforce and identify a vision of the Larkin District which would help to inform people that they have entered someplace special and worth visiting.

### Seneca Street Reconstruction

Seneca Street (NYS Route 16) was rated by the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) as in fair or poor condition based on the segment of roadway in the District. This makes the roadway eligible for a complete reconstruction. Being a NYS Route also makes this project a high priority for the GBNRTC.

The total reconstruction of this road which would serve as the heart of the District is overdue and

necessary to branding the District as a destination. This is an opportunity to redesign the road, sidewalks, lighting, trees, benches, signage and any other amenities to promote this District’s unique history and future. The improvements would enhance the experience of everyone, from the bicyclist to the worker gazing out their office window. It can become the place where people walk to lunch or to hang out after work.

Seneca Street not only can provide the District with a true backbone but can provide it with a grand gateway. With the Larkin at Exchange building in the backdrop, an Olmstedian circle, linking the north and south park systems at the intersection of Seneca Street and Fillmore Avenue, provides the potential to become a symbol of the District to emerge and stand tall, drawing people in. The circle also happens to fall in the same location as the intersection of two bus routes, providing a transfer point for passengers at the entrance to the District.

A push to get this project included in the GBNRTC’s new Transportation Improvement Plan for 2006-2010 is a smart way to ensure the project gets done.

**Bike Systems**

Another way to bring people into the area, and save money on infrastructure and parking, is to encourage people to commute or visit by bike. Bicyclists are more inclined to visit places where the infrastructure facilitates bicycling and they feel welcome. This can be done through designating bike routes or lanes into a newly constructed Seneca Street. Promoting or supporting the installation of bike routes along Exchange Street as well as the Olmsted Parkway System expansions along Fillmore, Smith and Seneca Streets will assure that the Larkin District is connected to the local and regional bike system through downtown, the waterfront and the Olmsted parks.

**Signage**

Once people arrive into the District, way finding can help to promote businesses and attractions. At the same time, signage should direct people to parking or other facilities. This has the ability to ease people’s frustrations when it comes to finding a parking space. It can also improve the efficiency of existing spaces, getting the most out of money already spent and saving money from building more.



*This is a typical bike lane design.*



*Signage can increase the visibility of the Larkin District, indicate the location of bus stops, and increase pedestrian safety.*

# LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

## RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

-  I-190 On/Off Ramps
-  Structured Parking Lot
-  Surface Parking Lot
  
- Improvements**
-  Potential Olmsted Parkway Link
-  New Olmstedian Traffic Circle
-  Seneca Street Reconstruction
-  Underpass Enhancements
-  Alternative Multimodal Transportation Hubs
-  Designated Bus Service Route
-  Dedicated Bike Lanes
-  Enhanced Pedestrian Crosswalks
-  Wayfinding Signage
  
-  Walking Time
-  Quarter Mile and Half Mile Radius
-  Existing Railroads
-  Larkin District




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### Traffic Calming

The experiences that people remember the most are those that occur outside of the car. It is therefore important to make these experiences pleasant. One way to do this is through signage. Another way is through traffic calming designs and incorporating pedestrian amenities into the streetscape. Cars moving along wide open roads will always drive faster than they should. This creates a street that is a barrier and not a connection. The solution to this problem does not have to be lights or stop signs, but can be accomplished through design features. Some examples of design features include designated bike lanes, tree plantings lining streets, identifiable pedestrian crosswalks, on street parking and narrow traffic lanes.



*Carroll Street is paved with brick, which adds to the areas historic character, and helps to slow down automobile traffic.*

### Long-Term Potential for Airport-Downtown Rail

There are several studies being done by the NFTA or independent organizations to provide a light rail connection from downtown to the airport. While many years away, most proposals focus on using the existing railroad right-of-ways to make the connection. This would bring the route through the District, perhaps just two blocks from the intersection of Swan and Seneca Streets. Promotion of such a route and a station within the District will not only better connect the Larkin District to potential area visitors and the Buffalo-Niagara region, but will enhance the region's livability and status as a unique destination.

### Recommended Transportation Improvements

All of the strategies described in this section of the Plan are included in the Recommended Transportation Improvements Plan, as well as:

- Creating a new Olmstedian traffic circle at the intersection of Fillmore Avenue, Seneca Street, and Smith Street. This added greenspace would serve as a gateway into the District, as well as a traffic calming measure.
- Enhancing underpasses which serve as gateways into the District will make the District more welcoming.
- Creating alternative multimodal transportation hubs at key locations in the District. These hubs should include public transit/bus stops, bicycling facilities, and pedestrian amenities.
- Enhancing pedestrian crosswalks at important and busy intersections will increase safety and enhance the pedestrian friendly character of the District.

## D. CREATE A NETWORK OF GREEN SPACES

A network of green spaces throughout the Larkin District would create strong visual assets and a welcoming, natural feel in an area with a scarcity of parks. It would also provide much-needed recreational amenities for office workers, visitors, and residents alike.

Green spaces can be places to bring children and can be places to relax. They can also provide people with access to the District through trails and pathways. The green spaces themselves can contain unique aspects of the site and preserve historical attributes of the District.

### Goal

The work plan goal is to create green spaces that reinforce the history and vision of the District, enhance the visual environment, provide special amenities that meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors, and serve as buffers between land uses.

### Problem Statement

The District contains large parcels of underutilized former industrial land. At the same time, there are only a few small green spaces for people to relax and meet. The lack of amenities for the residents of the area means that they must travel elsewhere to play and relax.

The lack of trees and other green infrastructure, which helps to provide shelter from sun, snow, wind and rain, can create a harsh environment for people in the District.

### Current Status

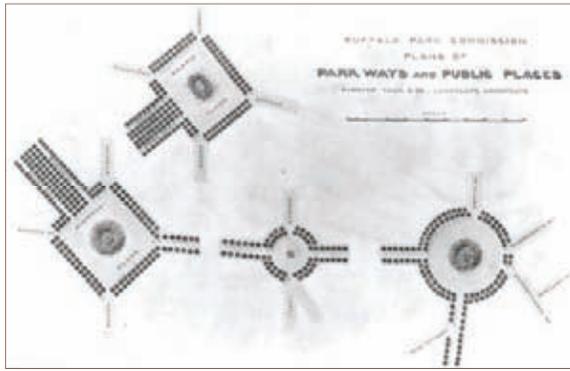
Within the study area, Erie County owns two small and unprogrammed public parks whose maintenance has suffered from a lack of investment. One is on the northern edge of the District and the other is on the southern edge. Both of these parks are placed in undeveloped spaces abutting the I-190 or an abandoned railroad track and both are seriously under maintained to the point that few people use them anymore.

CityView Properties now owns and maintains a small park in the Roseville residential neighborhood, and a park on Exchange Street that was once part of the mill race. The Roseville green space is utilized by local residents, while the mill race park is utilized by local employees and residents alike.

The Larkin District also has an overabundance of underutilized land. Much of the District is former industrial land. Other vacant land is in and around the railroad right-of-ways. The south eastern section of the Larkin District is empty for many acres through the center of which a railroad right of way runs. The I-190 thruway has very generous amounts of land on either side of it, providing for a buffer from the thruway for the neighborhoods surrounding it.



*One of the railroad Right of Ways in the District that can serve as a green space corridor.*



*Olmsted's original designs for the circles in Buffalo. (Source: The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy)*

## Strategies

The Plan recommends a system of open spaces at key intersections, gateways, and along the historic Hydraulic Canal route. It also calls for the completion of the unfinished Olmstedian connection between the North and South Buffalo park systems. Specific elements include:

### Larkin Square

A public gathering space should be developed in the vicinity of the area at the intersection of Seneca and Swan Streets which could become one of the main focal points in the District. This area would be designed as the heart of the District with direct links to the Larkin at Exchange building campus, the whole of Seneca Street extending both to downtown and Fillmore Avenue, and would act as a grand entrance to the Larkin Administration Building site and interpretation center. Its design would resemble a public square more than a public park, providing a place to gather, sit, eat lunch and relax close to the Larkin at Exchange building campus. The design of Larkin Square should enhance development around its edges. Parts of the site should be used for outdoor seating within the plaza creating a café like setting without the proximity of the roadway to bother anyone. This will enhance the vibrancy of the District and will create a marketable amenity to developable adjacent parcels. As significant buildings near this site, such as the fire house, age or become obsolete, green space should be given consideration as a subsequent use.

### Larkin Circle

The site at Fillmore and Seneca Streets is where Olmsted planned to connect the north and south park and parkway systems. The surrounding street right-of-ways are very wide, providing for the possibility of constructing an Olmstedian circle. Larkin Circle's design could be a reflection of the vision for the Larkin District, showcasing its history and providing a symbolic gateway into the District. At the new circle, the grand tree-lined Olmsted north and south parkways will converge and create a unique address and amenity to those sites along its edge. The buildings around the circle should, through design, reflect and reinforce the circle and the Larkin District. As with the other circles within the city of Buffalo and their surrounding buildings, Larkin Circle can and should be surrounded by unique, interesting and beautiful buildings and landscapes.



*This green space in Roseville is owned by CityView Properties.*

## Hydraulics Heritage Trail

The hydraulics Heritage Trail can be a system of signs, parks or interpretive features that allow users to walk and follow the path of the old canal system through the Larkin District, while at the same time see how it has and continues to influence the District today. Sites along the path should include the area just west of Larkin Street where some ruins of buildings that lined the edge of the old canal still exist. From Larkin Street looking east, one can see the influence of the canal on the ALP Steel building. An interpretive element can be added to the Mill Race Park creating another element to the system. Hydraulic Street was constructed partially on top of the old canal between Carroll and Seneca Street. This trail could not follow the exact path of the canal but can provide unique or interesting places to experience an element of the District's history. There may even be the opportunity for an archaeological investigation that could reveal some of the original canal infrastructure.

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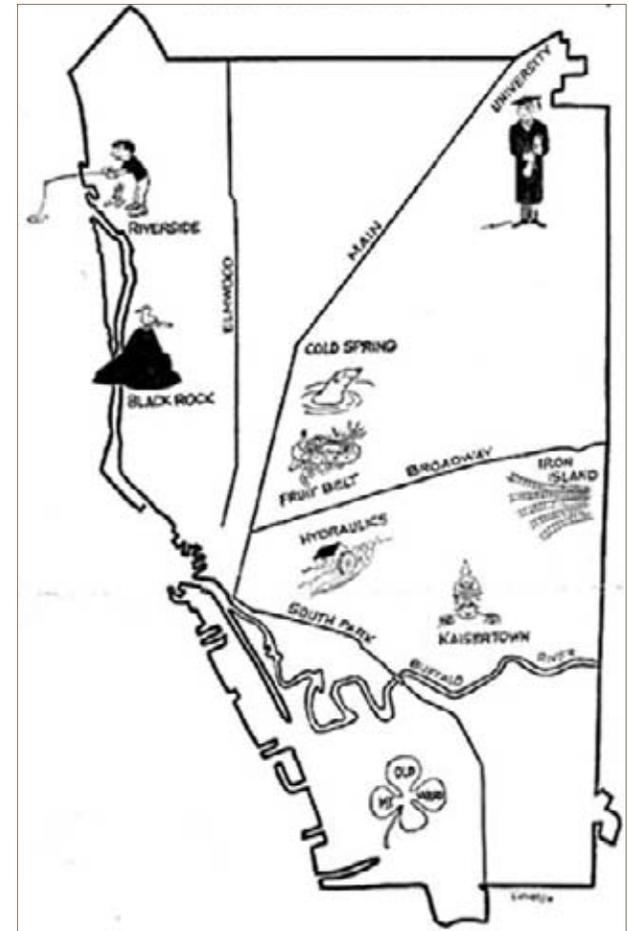
D. Create a Network of Green Spaces

- *Mill Race Park*

Mill Race Park is situated at the corner of Van Rensselaer and Exchange Street. This park is already in place and is a jewel in the area. It is one of the few places in the District where someone can sit down and relax. The well maintained gardens also help create a pleasurable experience for its users. There are potential development sites to the west and south of the park. Buildings in these locations will reinforce and frame the park while providing its users with some shelter from the wind. In the future, the demand for the park may increase. Therefore, a small expansion of the park may be necessary. The park lies on top of the site where the mill race from the Hydraulic Canal used to be. There is the opportunity for interpretation of the mill race within the park as part of an interpretive trail.



*Mill Race Park on Exchange Street is a gathering space for residents and employees in the Larkin District.*



*A map of historic neighborhoods in Buffalo, including the Hydraulics. (Source: History of Buffalo <http://ah.phpwebhosting.com/h/eastside/hydraulics.html>)*

## E. LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan translates the concepts, goals, and objectives developed for the Larkin District and vicinity into specific land use policies. The Plan applies many of the basic elements found in successful urban districts to the specific characteristics, needs, and constraints of the area.

This section identifies recommendations for land use patterns and provides the overall parameters for their development—including the function of the area as a part of downtown Buffalo and the larger citywide and regional setting, its general boundaries, allowed use groups and location of parking. The recommendations for the form that the build out of these land uses should take, including such characteristics as relative height and massing of structures, are provided in the implementation of the recommendations in this section. The “Land Use Plan” will require amendments to the City of Buffalo’s comprehensive plan, *Queen City in the 21st Century*. These comprehensive plan amendments, in turn, provide the foundation and planning rationale to support the proposed zoning map and text amendments specified below. The Planned Land Use Map shows the land use recommendations.

### Goal

The work plan goal for land use is to facilitate and encourage, through City policy and legislation, a land use pattern that includes a healthy mix of uses and provides for enough density to create a vibrant urban environment.

### Problem Statement

Vacant storefronts and storage facilities with few employees create stretches of seemingly dead street fronts. Surface parking and driveways add to the lack of vibrancy on some streets. New developments are out of character with the historic parts of the Larkin District. They detract from the dense, historic, urban

character of the Larkin District, and reduce the types of street front uses and the number of people on the streets. Current zoning laws prevent mixed use buildings and mixed use neighborhoods.

### Current Status

The existing land use pattern of the Larkin District study area is both eclectic and sparse. Existing uses include commercial office space, most notably along the Exchange Street spine; limited neighborhood retail and service businesses along Seneca Street; low density (one- and two-family) housing along the edges of the District to the north, south, and east; and large amounts of underutilized industrial and rail lands, other transportation-related rights-of-way, and surface parking.

While this list contains diverse use groups, the preponderance of parking and other unimproved open tracts of lands gives parts of the area a desolate feel. In addition, there are other uses typically represented in healthy urban districts that are precluded from much of the study area—most notably higher density housing, mixed uses within buildings, and community facilities.



**Underused industrial buildings are disconnected by vacant land in the Larkin District. These buildings and land should be redeveloped.**

## Strategies

### Planned Land Use 2010

The Planned Land Use 2010 embraces the area's mixed use character by:

- Preserving residential uses around the District's perimeter.
- Adding office use along Exchange Street and upper floors of Seneca Street.
- Recommending ground floor retail uses be enhanced along Seneca Street.
- Creating mixed use commercial/industrial areas.
- Creating mixed use residential/commercial areas.

The important gateway site at Exchange Street and Smith Street is a logical location for retail/dining uses. Additional community facilities, like the daycare center in the Larkin at Exchange building and the mill race park in the Larkin District, should be developed to meet the growing District's needs. A series of green spaces may be able to meet demand and enhance the District's quality of life and visual character. Development of greenspaces, in the short term and long term, are proposed. Future development of community facilities and greenspaces should be based on findings from Buffalo's Good Neighbors Planning Alliance, working with the Valley Community Association, and collaboration with other grassroots organizations.

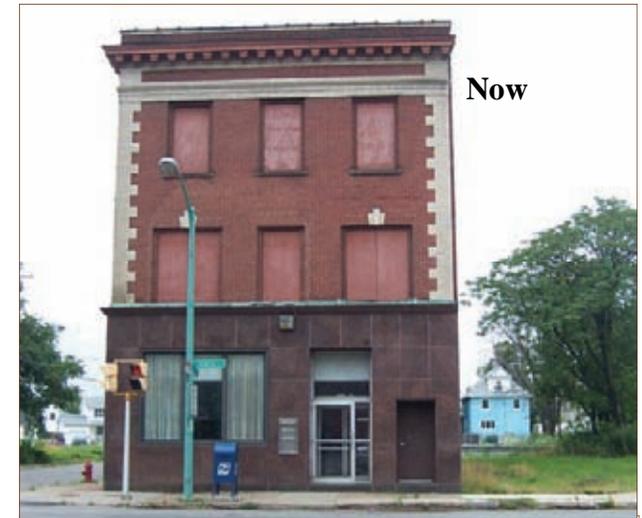
### Redevelop Strategic Underutilized Sites

The plan provides recommendations for contextually appropriate redevelopment of existing vacant or underutilized land in strategic locations which will include:

- A new commercial office structure opposite the Larkin at Exchange building on Exchange Street.
- Retail development at the northeast corner of Smith and Exchange Streets.
- An office/retail building at Carroll and Exchange Streets, which should be developed to meet aspired density increases based on market demands.

### Allow Mixed Use Development

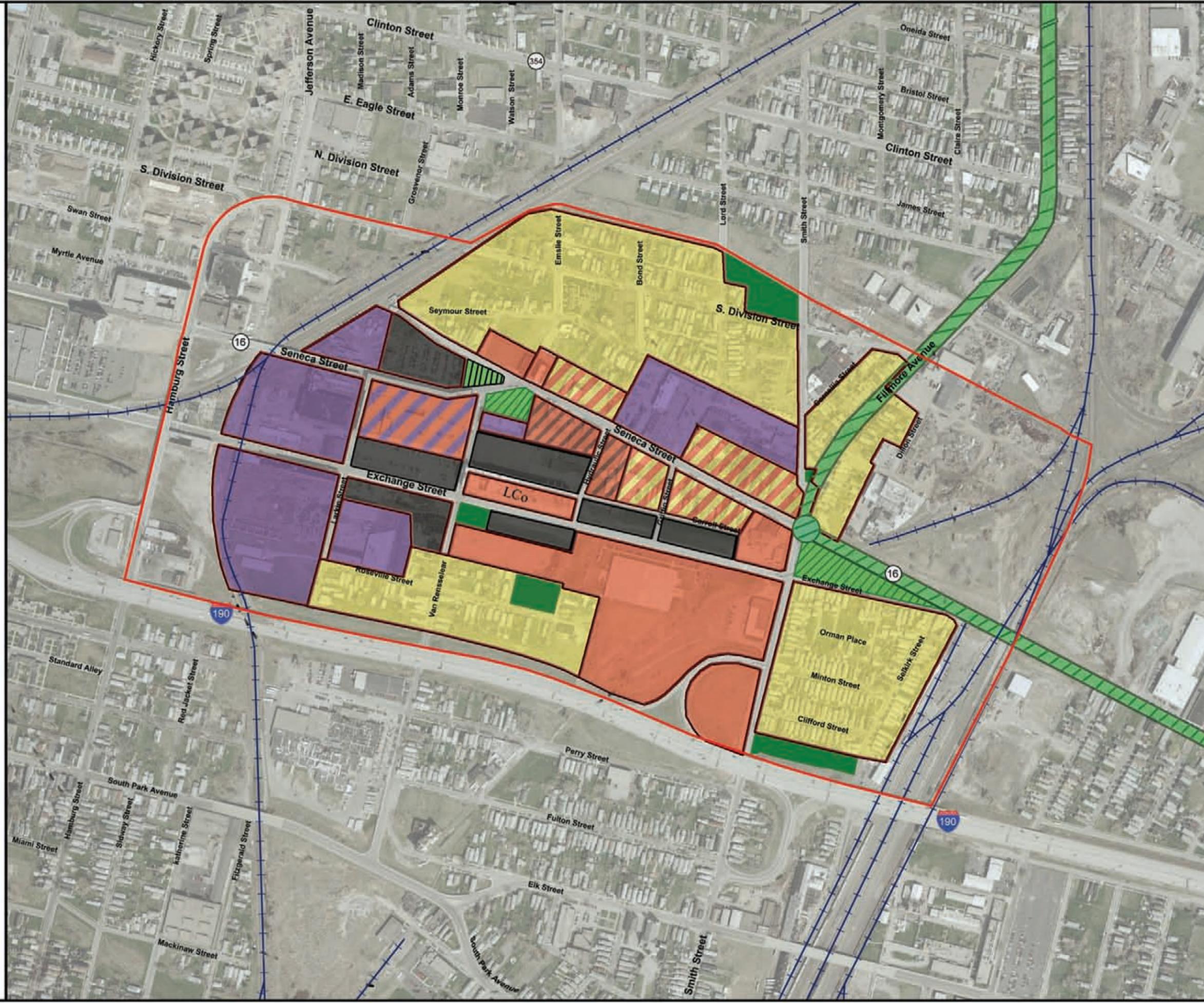
Neighborhood commercial uses may include restaurants, retail stores, small businesses and offices, personal serve establishments (e.g. dry cleaners, hair salons, barber shops), medical clinics, day care



*This building on Seneca Street, controlled by CityView Properties, is going to be renovated. The bottom picture illustrates how the building may look after renovation.*

# LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN

PLANNED LAND USE 2010



- Moderate Density Residential
- Major Parking Areas
- Proposed Green Space (Long Term)
- Proposed Green Space
- Existing Green Space
- Mixed Use-Commerical/Light Industrial
- Mixed Use-Residential/Commerical
- Low Density Residential
- Commercial

- Existing Railroads
- Larkin District

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*Commercial office development opposite the Larkin at Exchange building will help create a critical mass of firms, employees, and street activity.*

centers and other incidental uses which will not create or become a nuisance or hazard to the surrounding uses or neighborhood. Typically, the neighborhood commercial uses would be located at street level or above, with residential uses situated either above or to the rear of commercial uses. Care must be taken in the design of buildings to ensure that residents would not be impacted by commercial activities, especially service-type commercial and restaurant uses.

### Restrict New Incompatible Uses

Zoning revisions are needed to prohibit new heavy industrial or other noxious uses that would be incompatible with residential and other sensitive uses.

### Provide Incentives for Adaptive Reuse

The City of Buffalo should consider amendments to the zoning law which remove regulatory impediments and create incentives for property owners to take advantage of adaptive reuse opportunities for architecturally or historically significant structures.



*Existing structures adjacent to the Larkin at Exchange building are occupied by warehousing, shipping, and outlet retail businesses.*



*A design for the new Mill Race Commons.*

## Larkin District Market Plan 2010

The Larkin District 2010 Market Plan presents a vision for the revitalization of the area. The focus of the Plan's recommendations and the specific project list identified in the Plan is on properties controlled by CityView Properties. In addition, potential public investments in infrastructure and services to reinforce the private investment is provided. This represents the opportunities for the company's future investment in the area.

The project list includes:

- The potential long term creation of a greenspace at Larkin Square. This area may be a good location for public gathering space in the future if the location of the existing fire station changes. In the short term it represents a land holding strategy, anticipating housing development north of Seneca Street and east of Emslie Street.
- Potential developments on Seneca Street between Emslie Street and Lord Street, and approaching Smith Street.
- The redevelopment of a mixed use project on Seneca Street near the proposed Olmstedian circle.
- The redevelopment of a site on Hydraulic Street between Carroll and Seneca Streets for office/retail use.
- The opportunity for the development of multistory office/retail on Exchange Street between Griffin and Smith Streets.
- The construction of a new Olmstedian traffic circle and Olmstedian Parkway improvements.
- The Mill Race Park on Exchange Street and Van Rensselaer Streets.
- The development of Mill Race Commons on Exchange Street and Van Rensselaer Streets.
- The development of an outdoor recreation area in Roseville.
- The development of distinctive structures at the intersection of Exchange and Smith Streets to mark the entrance into the Larkin District.
- The possible adaptive reuse of a property on Seneca Street near the future Olmstedian circle.



*A fire station at Swan Street and Seneca Street.*

# LARKIN DISTRICT PLAN



- 1 - New housing at Larkin Square
- 2 - Develop contextual mixed-use development
- 3-4 - Potential development opportunity of key sites dependent on owners interest
- 5 - Develop contextual mixed-use development
- 6 - Redevelop site for office/retail use
- 7-9 - Opportunity for office/retail development
- 10 - New Olmstedian traffic circle and parkway improvements
- 11 - Mill Race Park and Hydraulics interpretation
- 12 - Mill Race Commons
- 13 - Outdoor recreational area
- 14 - Distinctive structures to mark entrance to the District
- 15 - Possibility for adaptive reuse

-  Existing Buildings
-  Proposed Buildings

-  Existing Railroads
-  Larkin District


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## CHAPTER 2: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

The objectives for the build out of the Larkin District that are outlined in the preceding chapters cannot be achieved through statements of goals and principals alone. Goals and principles provide ongoing guidance, but action-based strategies are necessary to achieve objectives.

The strategies described in this section have been developed to implement the objectives of the Larkin District Plan. Implementation of the Plan will involve the legislative and administrative branches of government, citizen groups, community organizations, CityView Properties, and other members of the private business community.

This chapter provides a summary of the implementation strategies. It groups and describes the action items and relative timeframes for completing projects. The implementation plan is also flexible enough to respond to opportunities that will arise over the course of time. In addition, the actions have been defined as short-term, mid-term, or long term—providing for phased implementation.



*Many of the local government agencies and officials work close to the Larkin District at City Hall in Downtown Buffalo. (Source: The Downtown <http://pluto.fss.buffalo.edu/classes/eco/sb56/SUMMER.html>)*

# A. SEQUENCING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## Organization of Plan Elements

Key elements of the Larkin District Plan are its guiding principles and strategies. The guiding principles are broad statements of intent that group aspects of the Plan into understandable goals (e.g., Create a Unique District Identity). The strategies are mechanisms selected to carry out the guiding principles. The principles and strategies listed in this chapter will govern actions and resource commitments needed to implement the Larkin District Plan. The purpose of this section is to:

- Provide an easily-understood and accessible summary of the action steps or strategies recommended in the Larkin District Plan.
- Indicate the relative timing sequences of specific implementation action steps.
- Define roles and responsibilities of project stakeholders including public agencies, private investors, not-for-profit organizations and other entities for specific action strategies, and define relationships between groups.
- Document project interdependencies with other initiatives.
- Define CityView activities and those of outside entities.

## Strategies

The strategies fall into three basic types of approaches:

- *Technical Capacity*

Strategies that define and design regulations, standards, programs and procedures to facilitate efforts to revitalize the District.

- *Development Activities*

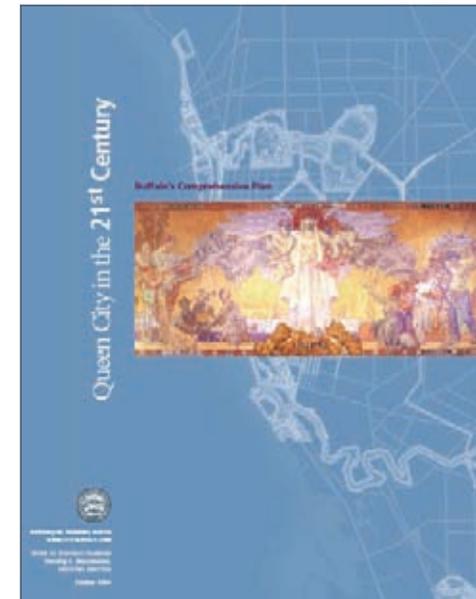
Direct investment of resources in the District for new construction or rehabilitation projects.

- *Partnership Building*

Assertive activities to strengthen the support structure for the needs of the District. This approach involves identifying individuals and groups with the ability to initiate change and working with them to effect that change.

## Relative Priorities and Timing

The Priorities of Plan Elements Table assigns the relative timing of strategies as short-term, mid-term, and long-term. The short-term strategies are defined as immediate action items that should be initiated in Year One. Mid-term action items are those to be implemented in Years Two through Five. Long-term strategies are those which would be expected to be implemented in Years Six through Ten.



**The Larkin District Plan incorporates many of the initiatives in The City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan.**

## CHAPTER II: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



*The New York State Department of Transportation would lead the Seneca Street reconstruction project.*



*The Valley Community Association is an important partner in developing neighborhood amenities in the Larkin District.*

It is important to note that some processes take longer than others do. For example, while the reconstruction of Seneca Street, including the creation of an Olmstedian “Larkin Circle” at Fillmore Avenue and Smith Street, is a high priority for the plan, it is recognized that this recommendation will take time to implement. Therefore, most capital improvements are seen as mid-term and long-term efforts, while most zoning amendments are designated for immediate implementation as short-term efforts.

The Priorities of Plan Elements Table provides the framework for putting the Plan recommendations into effect in terms of “what” and “when”, so that “who” can more easily be determined. Examples of strategies exemplifying the need to coordinate with a wide range of partners include: the regulatory review and amendment process (e.g., zoning and other legislative actions) and the authorization of public funding required to realize the capital investment plan.

The matrix identifies the recommendations in terms of action plan category, relative priority and timing considerations, responsible entities, and further description of required actions when appropriate. It proactively identifies assignments, accountability, and resources needed to implement the Plan.

Many elements of the Plan will depend on the support of several key agencies at the local and state level. These agencies include:

- The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning
- The City of Buffalo Department of Public Works
- The Buffalo Landmark Society
- The Erie County Department of Public Works
- The New York State Department of Public Works
- The New York State Department of Transportation
- The New York State Historic Preservation Office

In addition to these agencies, the cooperation of a number of local organizations will also be needed to implement this Plan, including the Valley Community Association and St. Patrick’s Friary.

## Priorities of Plan Elements

Plan Element	Relative Timing Sequence	Description of Required Action(s)
<b>I. Create a Strong Identity</b>		
<i>A. Capitalize on the History</i>		
1. Conduct cultural resource inventory	short-term	Determine potential S/NR eligibility of properties.
2. Seek historic designation	mid-term	Designate as local landmark and/or S/NR.
3. Publicly identify historic sites	mid-term	Design and install plaques, flags, banners, interpretive boards, art installations.
4. Develop interpretive programs	mid-term	Based on inventory, create educational materials for different groups and in different media, consider event programming opportunities.
5. Adopt new zoning regulations and design guidelines.	short-term	Zoning should promote adaptive reuse, contextual development, and historic preservation. Design guidelines should be developed specific to the historical context.
<i>B. Promote the Larkin "District"</i>		
1. Target marketing to design-related firms	short-term	
2. Adopt flexible zoning regulations	short-term	Encourage mixed-use within districts and buildings.
3. Restrict incompatible uses	short-term	Amend use groups allowed in study area zoning districts.
4. Use innovative design in streetscape	short- to mid-term	Seneca Street will follow NYS reconstruction schedule.
<b>II. DEVELOP DISTINCTIVE GATEWAYS AND STREET THEMES</b>		
A. Make streetscape improvements at key gateways	short-term	Oversee design of improvements, allocate funding.
B. Adopt zoning regulations consistent with street themes.	short-term	Adoption of base zoning amendments and design guidelines.
-Seneca Street "neighborhood" image	short-term	See above and connect as part of a larger Seneca Street Corridor plan.
-Exchange Street "corporate" image	short-term	See above and also connect as part of a larger Seneca Street Corridor plan.
C. Design and install streetscape features consistent with Seneca Street and Exchange Street themes.	short- to mid-term	Allocate funds in capital budgets and get infrastructure elements of broader Seneca Street Corridor Plan defined.

CHAPTER II: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

<b>III. IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS</b>		
A. Public transportation improvements.		
1. Improve bus service and facilities.	short-term	Make schedule and routing improvements as needed; develop distinctive Larkin District bus shelters.
2. Exchange Street trolley service	long-term	Design and construct surface light rail or street car between Main Street and Larkin Circle, expandable to a full Seneca Street Corridor Plan.
B. Reconstruct and enhance Seneca Street	long-term	Roadway and streetscape improvements.
C. Make enhancements for bicycles	short- to long-term	Shared bikeway signage, bike racks.
D. Way finding signage	short-term	Consistent with district identity and historic interpretation.
E. Traffic calming measures	short- to mid-term	Provide on-street parking, enhance pedestrian crossings and widen sidewalks.
F. Initiate downtown-airport rail service	long-term	Utilize existing rail lines or integrate with Exchange Street trolley service.
<b>IV. CREATE A NETWORK OF GREEN SPACES</b>		
A. Create new parks	continuous	Opportunities along rail lines and at Larkin Square.
B. Enhance existing parks	short- to mid-term	Invest in underutilized, undeveloped dedicated county park land.
C. Complete planned Olmsted parkway system connection	mid-term	Larkin Circle and parkway between north and south Olmsted park systems.
<b>V. BUILD OUT THE LAND USE PLAN</b>		
A. Invest in infill/new construction in the District.	short- to mid-term	Redevelop strategic underutilized sites. Consider housing infill as continuing sign of new life in the District according to the vision plan.
B. Restore and rehabilitate building stock.	short- to mid-term	Complete adaptive reuse projects for key sites to be identified in the vision plan.
C. Encourage mixed use development	short- to mid-term	Consistent with history, distinctive gateways, and street themes.
D. Restrict incompatible uses.	short- to mid-term	To remain consistent with history, distinctive gateways, and street themes.
E. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing building stock.	short- to mid-term	Consistent with remaining elements of historic fabric and good economic sense.



## CHAPTER 3: FUNDING

### Introduction

Funding is critical to the successful implementation of the Larkin District Plan. Continued investment by private property owners, including CityView Properties, is critical to the achievement of the vision for the District. Public investment is also a key element in the revitalization of the area. The largest public infrastructure project contemplated in the Plan is a recommendation for the reconstruction of Seneca Street and the adjacent streetscape. This project requires the sponsorship, approval, and funding allocation by regional, state, and federal transportation agencies. This section provides information on a number of additional potential federal, state, and local public funding sources, and non-profit funding sources including local and national private foundations.



*CityView Properties has and will continue to invest in the Larkin District. These corner properties between Seneca and Carroll Street will soon be redeveloped.*

# A: FUNDING SOURCES

## Public Sources

### Federal Agencies

A number of federal agencies have grant programs that offer potential sources of funds for various components of the Larkin District Plan. These agencies include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### New York State

New York State grant programs potentially available for the project are administered through the Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the New York State Department of Transportation, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). In addition to the agency-specific grant programs, state funds may be available through Local Initiatives (member item) grants provided on a year-to-year basis through local legislators.

### Erie County

Given its poor fiscal condition and outlook, Erie County's general fund is currently an unlikely source of special discretionary appropriations for planning, capital, or operating costs. This condition is likely to improve over time, at which point the County would become a potential source of funding for improvements to county-owned roads and parks.

### City of Buffalo

Support for capital or operating costs for the public amenities may be available through the City of Buffalo's capital budget or general fund. In addition, the City administers the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which may be a potential source of funding based on the Larkin District Plan's emphasis on economic development and neighborhood revitalization.



*Some parts of the Larkin District are included in a Buffalo Economic Development Zone.*

## B: FUNDING PROGRAMS

### Housing and Mixed Use Projects

In 2006, the New York State Department of Housing and Community renewal administered multiple funding and financing programs for which housing and mixed-use projects in the Larkin District may be eligible. These programs are listed below. A description of each of these funding opportunities is given in the appendix.

- Federal Low-Income Housing Credit Program (LIHC)
- New York State Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (SLIHC)
- Homes for Working Families Program (HWF)
- Low Income Housing Trust Fund Program (HTF)
- New York State HOME Program (HOME)
- New York State Main Street Program
- Access to Home Program
- Urban Initiatives Program (UI)
- Residential Emergency Services to Offer Repairs to the Elderly Program (RESTORE)

### Transportation and Streetscape

Transportation and streetscape projects within the Larkin District should be coordinated with The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). The GBNRTC is the interagency transportation planning group which establishes policies and programs for Erie and Niagara Counties. The organization provides a regional decision-making forum for the development of a multi-modal, integrated transportation system that best fits Western New York.

Funding for the GBNRTC is provided by both the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. The GBNRTC's Policy Committee guides the regional transportation planning process, assisted by its appointed representatives on the Planning and Coordinating Committee (PCC). Representatives of the GBNRTC Policy Committee are:

- Mayor, City of Buffalo
- County Executive, Erie County
- Mayor, City of Niagara Falls
- Chairman, Niagara County Legislature
- Chairman, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
- Commissioner, New York State Department of Transportation
- Division Director, New York State Thruway Authority



*Much of the new housing in the Larkin District was partially funded with Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHC)*

The PCC provides a forum for broad-based discussions of transportation issues and planning, including the programming of federal transportation funding for the region, and is a main avenue for public participation in the planning process. It is this group that Larkin

## CHAPTER III: FUNDING

District Plan sponsors should approach regarding the Seneca Street Reconstruction Project element of the District Plan.

### Historic Preservation

The Larkin District Plan recommends that a cultural resource inventory of the area be prepared to determine whether sites associated with the Buffalo Creek Reservation, the Hydraulic Canal, the Larkin Soap Company, and Frank Lloyd Wright are eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places (S/NR). S/NR listing is a prerequisite for a number of funding opportunities and financial incentives, as discussed in the appendix.

### Economic Development

There are several economic development programs in place that may be beneficial to the Larkin District and its businesses. These are listed below. A description of each is given in the appendix.

- Empire Zone
- New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)
- Community Development Entities (CDE)



*St. Patrick's Friary may be eligible for historic designation.*



**The Urban Design Project**



**University at Buffalo**  
*The State University of New York*

**The School of Architecture and Planning**



Kevin Connors & Associates