

# The Queen City Hub

A Regional Action Plan for **Downtown Buffalo**

Volume 2 – The Work Plan



Anthony M. Masiello, MAYOR  
WWW.CITY-BUFFALO.COM

November 2003



Working Together...Making It Work!

Downtown Buffalo 2002!



**DEDICATION**

To people everywhere who love Buffalo, NY  
and continue to make it an even better place  
to live life well.

**Program Sponsors:** Funding for the Downtown Buffalo 2002! program and *Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo* was provided by four foundations and the City of Buffalo and supported by substantial in-kind services from the University at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning's Urban Design Project and Buffalo Place Inc.

**Foundations:** The John R. Oishei Foundation, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, The Baird Foundation, The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

**City of Buffalo:** Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency



**Published by the City of Buffalo**

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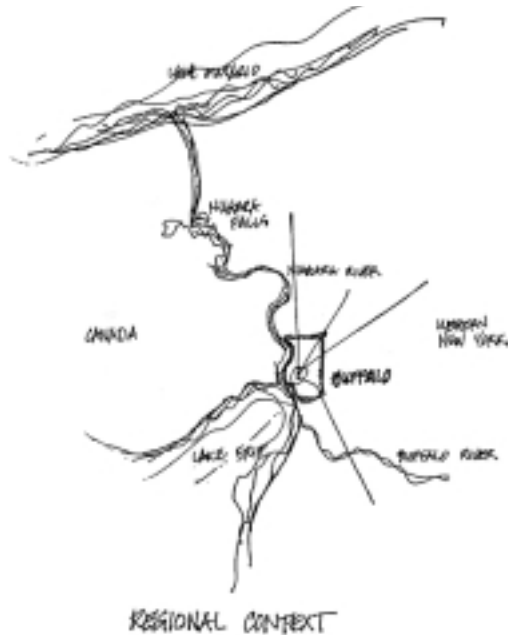
PREFACE TO  
VOLUME II:  
THE WORK PLAN

*The Queen City Hub* plan is incorporated by reference in the *Queen City in the 21st Century: City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan*. As such, it will serve as the basis for the additional work needed to give the Downtown strategy the force of law in zoning ordinances and design review procedures. To be fully effective, it is tied to the City's capital program and budget. It will also be part of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) review process to be developed for the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan as specified in the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). *The Queen City Hub* plan tells us what to do and where – as well as what not to do – to advance Downtown as a regional center and as the neighborhood of neighborhoods for our city.

*The Queen City Hub* builds on its predecessor, the 1999 *Strategic Plan for Downtown Buffalo*, as well as the extensive public review of that plan managed by the Downtown Buffalo 2002! implementation campaign. The campaign set clear priorities for work on living, working, and accessing Downtown. *The Queen City Hub* strategy responds to a number of concerns that were raised in the review of the 1999 plan, the vast majority of which were not part of what the original plan was commissioned to address. For example, the authors of that plan were not supported to develop the detailed plans related to activity programs for Downtown or for policy development. They also were not tasked with identifying performance measures such as those represented in this plan. Perhaps even more important, the initial plan was not intended to address the structure of implementation. The vision, organizational structure, implementation plans, and resources described in *The Queen City Hub* will all be critical to the future success of Downtown Buffalo.



While it is possible to overstate the role of Buffalo in the region, plan reviewers and plan development team members agree that the role has been understated for far too long. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team visiting Buffalo in 2001 believed Downtown can provide unique urban living opportunities not available in the rest of the region. (Source: The Blueprint for Living in a Downtown: Buffalo R/UDAT, 2001)

## The Vision for Downtown Buffalo

*The Queen City Hub* envisions Downtown as a place where citizens of the City and the surrounding region choose to live, work, and play. *The Queen City Hub* sees a strong urban core as a regional center for culture and entertainment, heritage, education, health care and life sciences research, and commerce. It understands that Downtown's role as the upstate center for government, finance, banking, and legal services makes it part of the backbone of the regional economy. The vision presents Downtown as the diverse neighborhood of neighborhoods for the whole region and it celebrates Buffalo as an historic waterfront city in a bi-national region.

### DOWNTOWN IS A REGIONAL CENTER

Downtown Buffalo has to be a specific type of regional center, one that builds on its strengths as the hub of each of several regional economies. The vision for Downtown emphasizes these basic assets and completes the infill elements necessary to make it a great place to live, work, and play. The existing regional economies at the core of the vision include our culture and entertainment base, our medical services and research base, and our commerce and government center status.



Buffalo sits at the mouth of the Buffalo River and the headwaters of the Niagara River. Water from three other great lakes flows through Lake Erie, moving north and east over Niagara Falls and on to Lake Ontario. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

Shea's Performing Arts Center, The Irish Classical Theater and Studio Arena are among the seven live theater venues that help anchor culture and entertainment offerings Downtown. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



### Culture and Entertainment

Downtown Buffalo is a regional center for culture and entertainment. Substantial recent investments in Shea's Performing Arts Center, Studio Arena Theatre, the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum, Sphere Entertainment Complex, Mudpies, Dunn Tire Park, Andrews Theatre of the Irish Classical Theatre Company, and nearby Kleinhans Music Hall help confirm Downtown's role as a regional center. The \$14 million invested in Shea's enabled it to move from thirty relatively modest shows to sixty first-rate shows a year. As a result of these and other investments, employment in the restaurant business in Downtown is growing at a faster rate than anywhere else in the region. Plan proposals for additional investments in the Erie Canal Harbor, for heritage sites along Michigan Avenue, and for continued investment in the historic stock of Downtown buildings and districts all add to this economy.

### Health Services

The creation of a world-class Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus on the northeast corner of Downtown reinforces the branding of Downtown as a regional, if not global, center. It begins with the Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the Buffalo Life Sciences Complex with its collaboration among the University at Buffalo's Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics, the Roswell Park Cancer Institute Center for Genetics and Pharmacology, and the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute Structural Biology Research Center. These projects are setting the standard for the success of the campus. The combination of research and medical technology facilities and programs will further reinforce the regional prominence of Downtown.

Artist rendering of the future Buffalo Life Sciences Complex. (Source: The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus)





Five strategic investment areas for *The Queen City Hub*. (Source: The Urban Design Project).



Commerce and Government represent the largest sector of the Downtown Economy and have a significant federal and state as well as regional presence. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### Commerce and Government Clusters

Downtown Buffalo is already the center for government, finance, banking, and legal services in the region. The infrastructure is well established and reliable, there are quality sites for infill development and there is a surplus of existing structures appropriate for adaptive reuse to provide adequate space to build up these commerce clusters. A new building code, simpler procedures for permit acquisition, and a clear vision of Downtown as a center of regional commerce reinforce its appeal as a location for business. Of course government, finance, insurance, and real estate operations should already consider a Downtown location first.

This will become increasingly true as the rest of the strategy is implemented, addressing parking, access, residential life, neighborhood services, and retailing along with culture and entertainment.

All of these sectors of the economy fit within the five strategic investment areas outlined in the Overview and detailed in this volume of the plan. *The Queen City Hub* envisions the continued reinforcement of the existing sectors of the Downtown economy and adds an emphasis on education.



The health of Downtown depends in part on the health of neighborhoods like the one pictured above on the 200 block of Prospect Avenue in the Lower West Side. The picture on the top shows the neighborhood as it looked in 1996 and the image below it shows it today. (Source: The Lower West Side Neighborhood Stabilization Demonstration Project: Housing Design Review Guidelines, Mayor Anthony Masiello's Housing Design Advisory Board, second ed., 2002)

## DOWNTOWN IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Building on strengths also means building on the over \$500 million that have been and are continuing to be invested in stabilizing the inner ring of neighborhoods surrounding Buffalo's central business district. Buffalo will not have a great Downtown unless its inner ring of neighborhoods is also great.

In the Lower West Side, housing developments under the Hope VI program of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, a new Tops Supermarket, and a focus on Niagara Street as a gateway boulevard into Downtown will further improve the quality of life and property values in that neighborhood. Investments in Kleinhans Music Hall, the Allendale Theatre, and housing on Delaware Avenue further strengthen Allentown. Additional reinforcement in the inner ring has been provided by the Roswell Park Cancer Institute complex and will continue with implementation of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus plan and new plans for investment in the Fruit Belt. Investments in Willert Park and the Michigan Avenue historic area bolster other investments in new market rate and affordable housing to the south and east of the CBD. The

same is true for other investments in the Home Ownership Zone on the near East Side of Downtown and past investments in neighborhood stabilization to the southeast.

Downtown as a regional center is bigger than the central business district. The vision demands that Downtown serve both the adjoining neighborhoods and the region. As such, the regional center we are calling Downtown is loosely defined on the north by Porter Avenue and North Street, on the east by Jefferson Avenue and on the south and west by the Buffalo River, Lake Erie and the Niagara River. It is a Downtown with a current population of about 18,000 residents and well over 60,000 workers. It has the spending power to help fuel residential services and regional attractions. It is the neighborhood of neighborhoods for the region.



Downtown and the inner ring of neighborhoods looking north from the HSBC office tower on Main Street (Source: The Urban Design Project)

**“Stabilize the core city of each region because in no place is there evidence of regions doing well when their core city has deteriorated.”**

**THEODORE HERSHBERG, PH.D.**  
*Director*  
Center for Greater Philadelphia

The inner ring of neighborhoods



The central business district



A greater Downtown



Downtown is a place where very large crowds gather for special events like the Taste of Buffalo pictured above, or the Allentown Art Festival, Curtain Up and Thursday at the Square. Successful Downtowns are designed to accommodate large crowds at such events, while comfortably hosting more routine residential, business, and entertainment activity. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

## DOWNTOWN IS FOR EVERYONE

Downtown Buffalo has the capacity to attract the world, the region, and nearby residents. The 1999 Strategic Plan envisioned a Downtown with life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, twelve months a year. The plan also envisions a growing number of residents and expanded related services in the core of Downtown. It reinforces restaurant, entertainment, theatre and cultural venues. And it expands the number of employees working a full range of jobs Downtown.

Buffalo is a central actor in many powerful and world-famous stories. We need to tell these stories of our region's natural heritage, architecture and cultural history. The western gateway of the Erie Canal was here. The Underground Railroad ran through here. Important battles of the War of 1812 were waged here. Some of the best architects in the world built here. These are important stories to tell, not only to strengthen our visitor-based economy, but also to enrich the lives of all who live in the region and in the city.



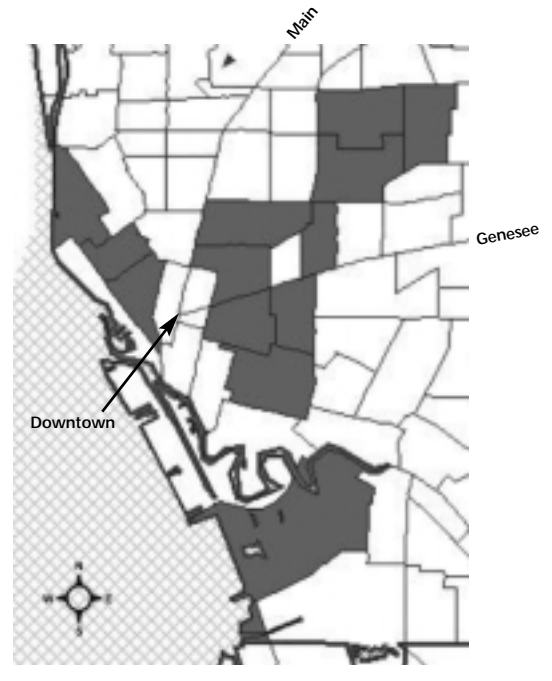
Several factors contribute to the current separation of the central business district from its abutting neighbors. *The Queen City Hub* plan is designed to reconnect the CBD to the inner ring of neighborhoods. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

The “live, work, and play” activity program will achieve its full potential when Downtown employees and residents of the inner ring of neighborhoods choose Downtown as their place for specialized neighborhood retail services, entertainment, and work. It is not possible or desirable to build enough Downtown housing to support such retail services. But the combination of more than 15,000 residents in the inner ring neighborhoods with the growing Downtown residential population and the workforce of what will be more than 60,000 people is sufficient to provide the market for retail services. Becoming a preferred retail venue, in turn, requires an inner ring of neighborhoods with strong connections to Downtown.

All entrances to Downtown require travel through the inner ring of neighborhoods. All of our visitor-based economies depend on a Downtown and neighborhoods that are clean, safe, friendly and beautiful. All of our retention and new business development efforts depend on these same qualities. The vision for Buffalo is an inclusive one that brings the full diversity of the City and Region to Downtown. As the city goes, so goes the region. As the inner ring of neighborhoods goes, so goes Downtown.

**DOWNTOWN IS WHERE THE ELLICOTT PLAN, THE OLMSTED PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM, AND THE WATERFRONT CONVERGE**

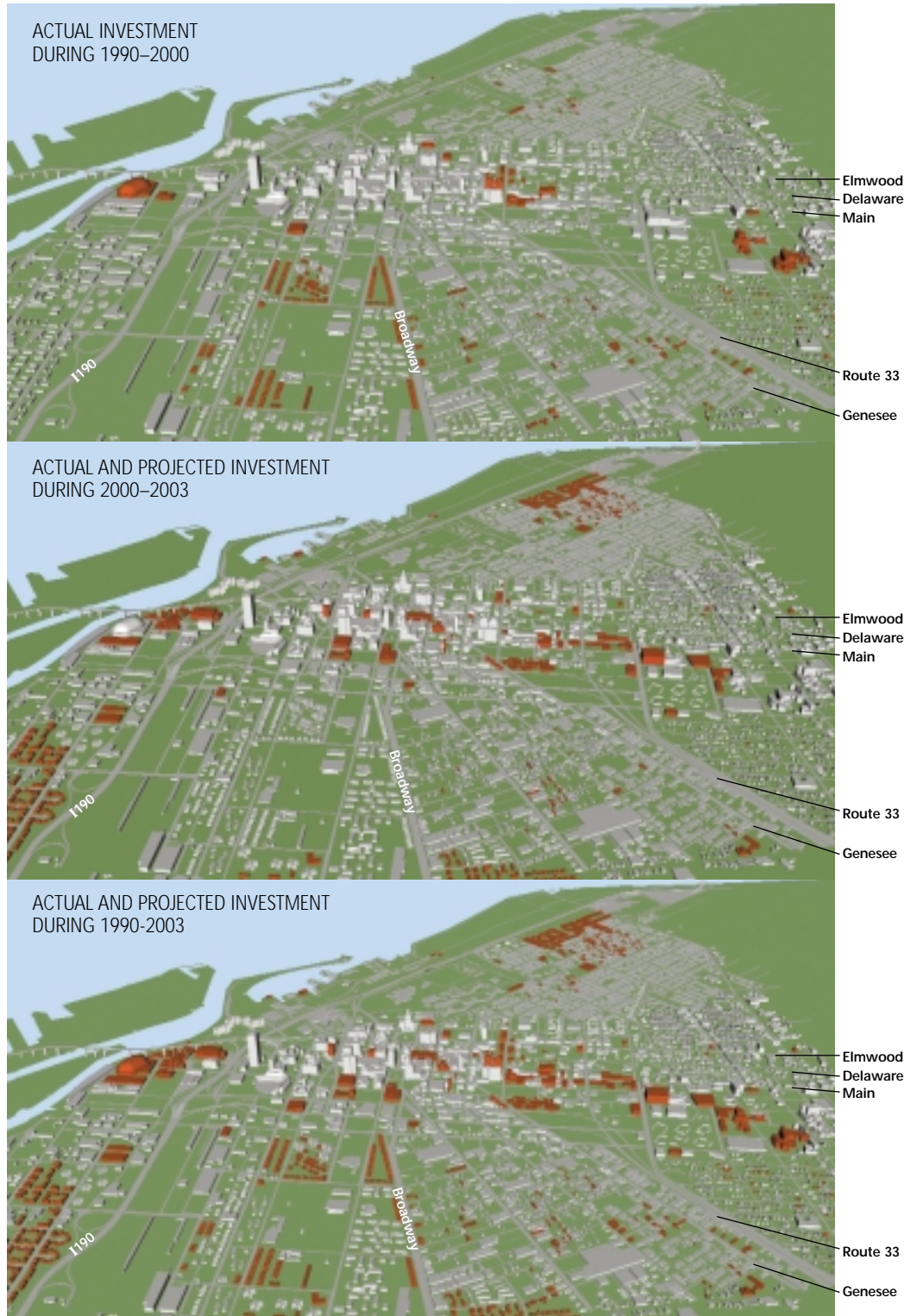
The most basic elements of the vision are already in place – embedded in Joseph Ellicott’s 1804 radial plan for the city and reinforced by Frederick Law Olmsted’s park and parkway system. Taken together, these historic plans link all the neighborhoods to Downtown and both the neighborhoods and Downtown to the waterfront. The Queen City was, according to Olmsted, “...the best planned city in America.” It needs no new grand physical vision,



Some of Buffalo’s most distressed neighborhoods surround the Downtown Core.  
(Source: Empowerment Begins with a Job, City of Buffalo, 1997)

only respect for the one that helped make it great, along with a commitment to build on the strategic investments already made Downtown, a dedication to the development of a new regional economy, and a creative response to our contemporary problems.

*The Queen City Hub* envisions the Ellicott radial plan and the Olmsted Park and Parkway system as key elements of a 21st-century city. It provides a system of great streets and parkways fully integrated with strategic economic clusters, neighborhoods, and the waterfronts of the Buffalo River, Lake Erie, and the Niagara River. Embedded in the work of Ellicott and Olmsted is the understanding of an urban core which concentrates investments and provides the heart of the city and region. The historic plans also provide the basic clues to a system of gateways that announce entry into the city, to the Downtown core, and to the waterfronts.



**Top:** 1990-2000 – New investment completed in the decade of the 90s.  
**Middle:** 2000-2003 – New investment completed and pending in the first half of this decade.  
**Bottom:** 1990-2003 – A composite illustrating investment occurring Downtown and in the inner ring of neighborhoods since 1990.  
(Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002! Patterns of Investment, The Urban Design Project)



DOWNTOWN CBD BOUNDARY COMPARISON



**DOWNTOWN BUILDS ON DECADES OF PROGRESS**

*The Queen City Hub* builds on decades of investment Downtown. The patterns of investment analyzed and published as part of plan development reveal core expenditures in the financial center on Main Street from Huron to Chippewa and investments from Chippewa to Tupper Street in the Theatre District. There has been significant development on almost all parcels in the past two decades. The city has rebuilt two full blocks in the heart of Downtown.

In addition, substantial new investments have occurred along Chippewa from Main to and across Elmwood Avenue adding an additional four blocks of significant improvement to the core. To this base the plan seeks to further establish “bookends” by building on the investments in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus to the immediate north and on the waterfront to the south. Infill is designed to occur between the bookends with new investments in education, office structures, and mixed-use residential and retail developments.

The geography of *The Queen City Hub* builds on and fully respects the traditional boundary of the central business district. It also acknowledges that the base is small when compared to several peer cities. When it includes the strategic investment areas, it becomes more comparable to the CBDs of such cities and when it extends to the inner ring of neighborhoods, it surpasses them.

Buffalo's CBD size comparison to five peer cities. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

## Priorities

Implementing the vision of *The Queen City Hub* requires that hard choices be made about strategic investments in priority areas. It requires the creation of new residential communities within and among the priority areas, and it requires the mending of the urban fabric by reinforcing Joseph Ellicott's radial street plan and relating it to Frederick Law Olmsted's park and parkway system and to the waterfronts. Doing such work requires a continued focus on how work is done: the relationships among participants, procedures, and the quality of design and planning. It will require hundreds of acts of sound physical design and improved maintenance standards. It will require leadership from all sectors of our community and improved enforcement of the laws governing development and maintenance.

As discussed in the *Overview* (Volume 1), the obstacles to achieving the vision represent serious challenges. The vision can be achieved, however, with a concerted effort that builds on progress we have already made, organizes commitment to practical improvements, and demands continuing accountability to the plan. Achieving the vision will require a few bold moves, but mostly it will require incremental capital investments that build on current

assets. It will also require specific policy initiatives and administrative reforms that develop institutional capacity. This will include developing a strong planning and design capacity in City Hall, and creating clear and enforceable design guidelines that produce the best urban environment possible.

*The Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan*, incorporates *The Queen City Hub* and also describes ways to fix the basics and leverage strengths and past investments throughout the City. It also connects to a larger and still developing regional and economic planning framework without which neither Downtown nor the city will achieve their full potential.

## THE VISION HAS FIVE STRATEGIC INVESTMENT AREAS

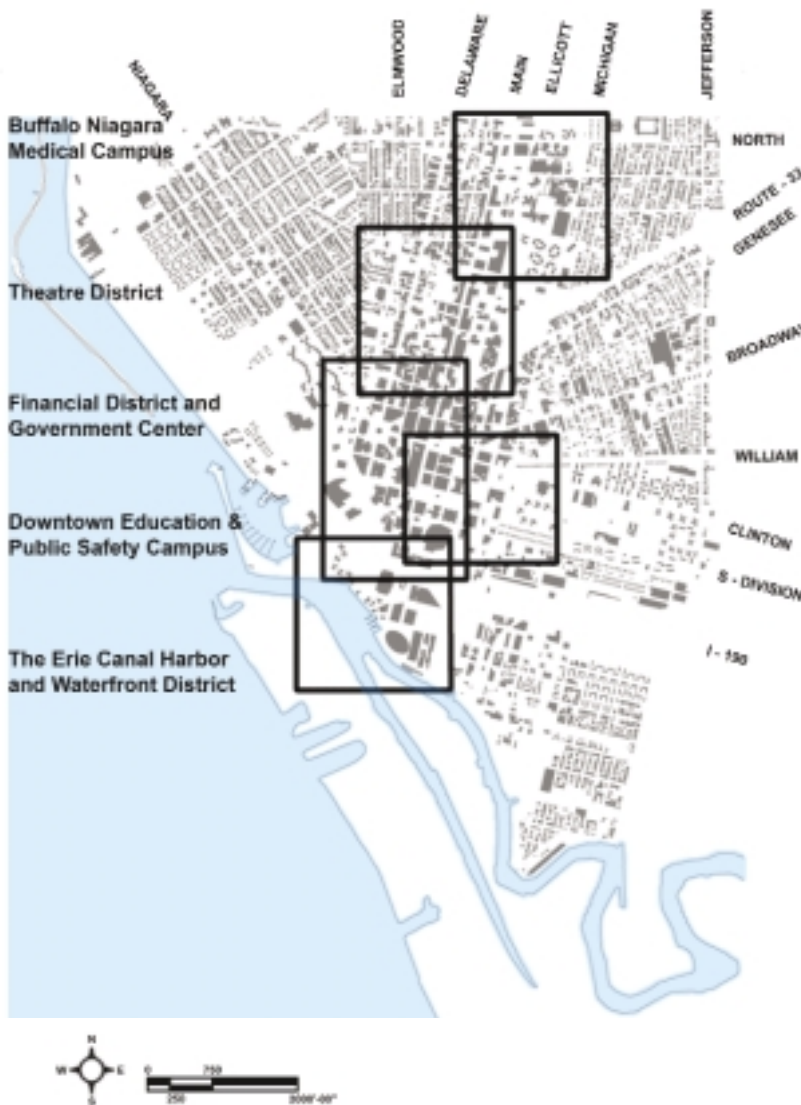
Strategic investments in five core areas Downtown provide the foundation for the vision. All five areas represent employment centers and business development opportunities joined with the potential for residential communities, retail services, and entertainment venues. All five areas are intended to take full advantage of the decades of significant investment that have

already occurred in both the Downtown and inner ring of neighborhoods. It will be essential to further establish the critical mass of development and adjacent employment, residential life, and entertainment venues in and related to these districts. Cities that isolate or “strand” their assets by failing to build on their strengths also fail to create viable urban centers.

The top priority investment areas for Downtown are the two that are projected to continue to receive significant investment: the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and the Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District. The waterfront has been consistently rated as a top priority in public forums and surveys conducted by the Downtown Buffalo 2002! program over the past three years and the BNMC is slated to generate at least twice the investment of any other strategic investment area in the next few years. As such, these two areas are described in more detail than the other three although all five are ultimately critical to the success of the plan.

### From South to North, the Key Investment Areas Are:

- The Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District
- The Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus
- The Financial District and Government Center
- The Theatre District
- The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus



The Queen City Hub strategic investment areas. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### The Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District

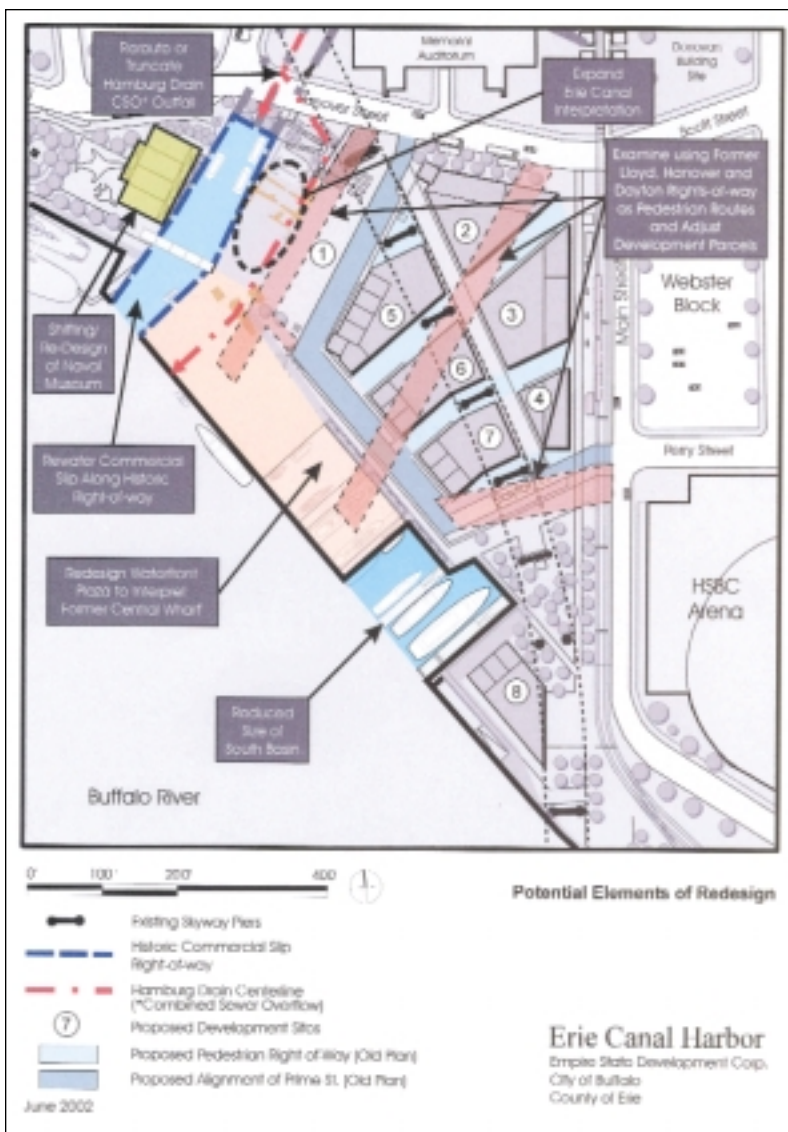
An ambitious set of initiatives emphasizes development in Downtown Buffalo at the waterfront and in the historic Erie Canal Harbor District at the foot of Main Street. Taken together, the implementation of an emerging Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District, the reuse of Memorial Auditorium, the creation of a new inter-modal transportation center, the completion of the esplanade and Naval Park Museum, the development of the nearby Cobblestone District and new housing all promise to transform the historic birthplace of Buffalo.

The cornerstone for development is the Erie Canal Harbor master plan for the 12-acre site that includes the Commercial Slip as the historic western gateway to the Erie Canal and site of the Central Wharf. Though initially surrounded with controversy, we now see progress that will combine basic infrastructure investment for public access, new commercial maritime facilities, and historic interpretation, with ancillary commercial, retail and entertainment developments.

The project will build on and improve existing assets at the site, including the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Museum and Servicemen's Park with its ensemble of historic naval ships and military memorials. Although construction on much of the project has been delayed to allow for redesign based on public demands to retain the Commercial Slip in its historic location, the creation of a new moorage for the USS Little Rock, USS The Sullivans, and the submarine the USS Croaker, and creation of the "Heroes' Walk" was completed in the summer of 2003.

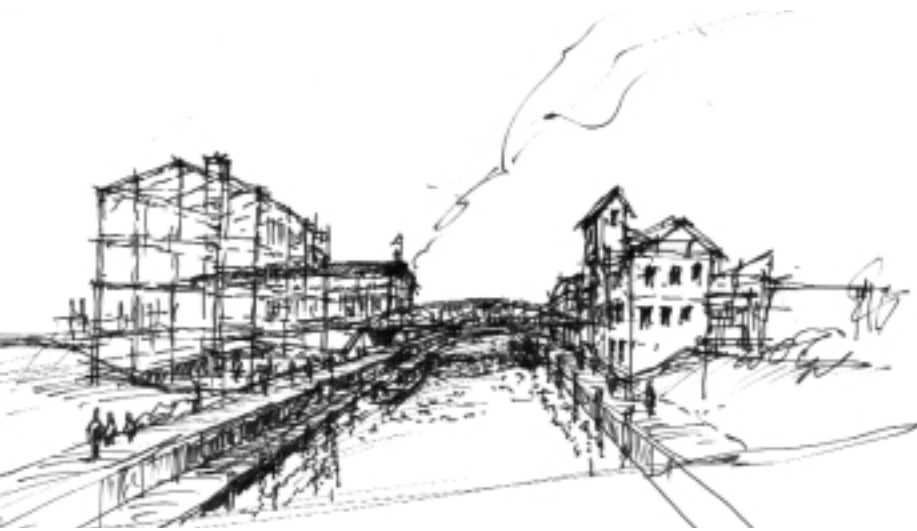
Meanwhile, project sponsor Empire State Development Corporation is continuing work on a revised site plan that will allow the Commercial Slip to be re-watered within its original bounds. The waterfront plaza and a new commercial boat basin are also being reconfigured in recognition of the historic location of the Central Wharf.

The overall project concept depends on creating significant heritage attractions, maritime activity, enhanced waterfront access, and new development to produce a place of activity and excitement. The design includes a continuous pedestrian esplanade and public plaza with unobstructed views of river, historic grain elevators, and maritime traffic. Direct links to rail transit, as well as improved access to the site by car, bus, bicycle, and foot traffic will be provided. Provisions for water taxi, tour boats, transient boaters and "Tall Ships" in a new South Basin, along an improved bulkhead, and in the Canal Basin of the Commercial Slip will significantly improve access by boat to the Inner Harbor.



Multiple alternatives have been considered as planners explore the full program of historic interpretation, sports and entertainment, and commercial development for the Downtown waterfront district. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

New master plan proposals for the Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District are currently underway and focused on the changes outlined in the above diagram. (Source: Empire State Development Corporation)



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Conceptual sketch from the current commission to develop a revised master plan for the Erie Canal Harbor and Commercial Slip. (Source: Courtesy of Empire State Development Corporation and Flynn Battaglia Architects, PC Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects; John Milner Associates; Chermayeff & Geistner, Inc.)

A new waterfront esplanade is complete. This recreation path links the entire Inner Harbor development along the waterfront north to the marina and Gull Landing. Regionally the esplanade is part of a 26 mile "Riverwalk" that extends north from Downtown along the waterfront and east along the Buffalo River linking the evolving Buffalo River Greenway and Industrial Heritage Trail to the path system.

Public investments estimated at over \$46 million in infrastructure, direct waterfront access, maritime accommodation, and heritage interpretation will make the remainder of the 12-acre site more attractive to potential commercial development. The plan anticipates over three thousand new jobs in this strategic investment area with well over \$100 million of private investments leveraged by the public sector funding currently in place.



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Buffalo's inner harbor prior to the relocation of naval vessels and the opening of the new Veteran's Park on the waterfront. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

**ERIE CANAL HARBOR HIGHLIGHTS**

Historic/cultural interpretation of the harbor area, new transit plaza, waterfront esplanade, maritime facilities, vehicular and bicycle infrastructure.

Construction of new Veteran's Park and new Naval and Servicemen's museum.

Restoration/reconstruction and interpretation of archaeological resources related to Erie Canal.

Links to waterside and landside transportation networks.

**Project Schedule:**

- Naval Basin & Vessel Relocation: *Complete*
- Veteran's Park: *Complete*
- Supplemental EIS Began: *Spring 2003*
- Public Information/Review: *June, September, and October 2003*
- Final Design Begins: *Spring 2004*
- Start Construction: *Fall 2004*
- Completion: *Summer 2006/07*

A related element of the plan for the area involves the adaptive use of Memorial Auditorium. Public officials envision attracting a major experience-oriented use for visitors.

An inter-modal transportation center is also planned for the area and would ultimately connect Amtrak passenger rail service with NFTA Metro Rail and bus service. The current proposal calls for the Amtrak station to be developed as part of the inter-modal facility with 800 to 1000 parking spaces in a related parking ramp facility. Funding for the ramp project at \$16.3 million as well as the \$14.5 million for the inter-modal facility is in place.

A subsequent phase of work around the Erie Canal Harbor would involve demolition of the Gen. William J. Donovan State Office Building with relocation of current tenants to office accommodations in the Government and Financial District Downtown. This has the dual effect of reducing the inventory of poor quality office space Downtown and leasing up still more space in the Government and Financial Districts.

The waterfront development planning will benefit the nearby Cobblestone District, which currently consists of a few blocks of original cobblestone paving and a small ensemble of buildings. But opportunities for development immediately to the east of the Erie Canal Harbor are expansive and some market demand has been demonstrated by the early success of the new Elk Terminal loft apartments.

**INTER-MODAL TRANSPORTATION CENTER AND WATERFRONT PARKING STATUS**

**Goal: Comprehensive Transportation Facility**

Relocates the Downtown Amtrak Station (currently on Exchange Street) providing direct connections to Metro Rail, Erie Canal Harbor, Riverwalk, Greenway Trail System and other transportation modes with additional parking capacity.

Provides supporting 800 car parking ramp facilities to serve the Erie Canal Harbor, Intermodal Transportation Facility, central business district, and associated development projects.

**Project Schedule: Memorial Auditorium Site**

- Environmental Review: *Completed*
- Federal Grant Applications: *Approved*
- 30% Design: *Completed*

The Memorial Auditorium had been designated as the preferred site for the intermodal center and was to be integrated with a proposed multi-use development with up to 270,000 square feet of entertainment retail. The project is on hold pending the final determination of the remainder of the Auditorium building program. The project team is reviewing the feasibility of relocating the project to the Donovan site to the immediate east.

**Project Schedule: Waterfront Parking Ramp**

- Completion of Environmental Review/ Preliminary Design: *Spring 2004*
- Completion of Final Design and Construction Start: *Fall 2004*
- Completion of Project: *Fall 2006*



Concept sketch illustrating one idea for the redevelopment of the cobblestone district as a mixed use residential and entertainment district. (Source: University at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning urban design studio)



The DL&W terminal at the foot of Main Street needs a creative reuse like that being considered by the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. They are currently evaluating its potential as a future home for much of their collection. (Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)



Illustrations of potential exhibitions for the DL&W terminal. (Source: Hadley Exhibits and the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)

As *The Queen City Hub* plan goes to press, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society (BECHS) is exploring the potential to relocate to the historic DL&W terminal at the foot of Main Street on the waterfront. The move would provide additional space to exhibit more of the BECHS collection and a prime location to enrich the interpretation of the surrounding area with related exhibits including the manufacturing of steel, the transshipment of grain, the Erie Canal, the railroad era, and the war, peace and freedom themes that are already part of the interpretive potential of the waterfront district and Erie Canal Harbor.

*The Queen City Hub* projects an integrated mixed use waterfront environment connecting an emerging urban village around the Elk Terminal project to the historic Cobblestone District, the Erie Canal Harbor, the Naval and Servicemen's Park, and 600 units of housing in the Marine Drive Apartments. These developments link with the Erie Basin Marina and future investments north of Erie Street. Urban design guidelines are to be developed as part of plan implementation and should assure the uniqueness of individual areas even as they employ basic principles of pedestrian friendly waterfront access, mixed use programming, and respect for the preservation district and site designations.



This 1890 photo of Buffalo's Main Street illustrates its historic connection to the waterfront. (Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)



### Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus

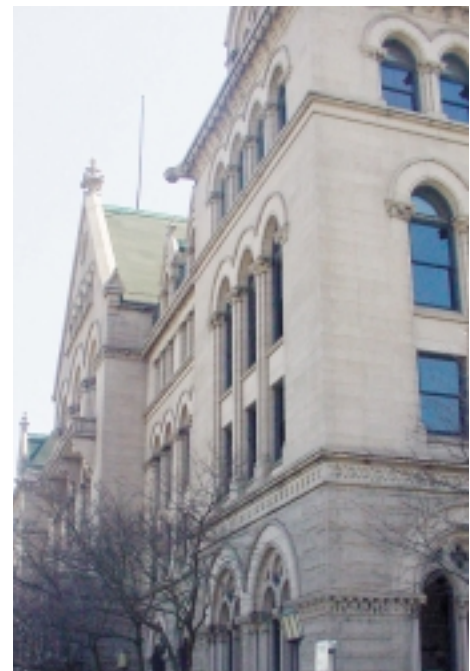
The most recently emerging focus area in the Strategic Plan update is a new Downtown Education Campus in the vicinity of current Erie Community College (ECC) facilities in the old U.S. Post Office on Ellicott Street at South Division and the Flickinger Athletic Center one block to the east. County Executive Joel A. Giambra has proposed consolidating the

three Erie Community College campuses into a single complex Downtown. If implemented, the concept would bring 8,000 additional students Downtown and see tens of millions of dollars invested in facilities as part of a new campus development. The development concept also includes a proposal for a “public safety campus” to include training facilities for fire, police and emergency services communications, information systems, and a new forensics laboratory for Central Police Services.

County officials expect that the Erie Community College consolidation could help them avoid anticipated renovation costs at the North and South Campuses totaling nearly \$20 million, not to mention the possible proceeds of the sale of either property. In addition, the potential of the project to revitalize an underutilized district of Downtown is substantial. City of Buffalo officials have promoted the idea of building the campus toward Main Street to link it to transit and other activities. Others have



The Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus can develop both east and west of the current Erie Community College Campus linking investments in the near east side residential communities to the Downtown. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Erie Community College. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

pointed out the opportunities to reuse an array of vacant or underutilized buildings to the east. It may be that the demand for space will allow a consolidated Erie Community College campus Downtown to do both, linking westward toward Main Street and reaching eastward toward recent residential developments in the Ellicott District. New investments in the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library further add to the concept of an education campus as part of Downtown.

There are many elements of the emerging campus plan and it is by no means complete. Even so, the vision is to establish a campus environment supporting Erie Community College and a new public safety campus with all their student, staff, and faculty. Other educational venues and attendant retail and commercial office venues are also possible, establishing an important activity center Downtown.



Artist's rendering of the new \$33 million Erie County Public Safety Center. (Source: Image courtesy of Erie County and Cannon Design)



Massing model exploration of the Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus concept. (Source: Image courtesy of Erie County and Barton, Hovey, Nardini, Tries Architects)

The creation of the concept of a Downtown Education Campus does not preclude educational venues throughout Downtown. The Emerson High School culinary arts and hospitality management programs and their planned expansion in new facilities attached to the Root Building on Chippewa Street are a good example of the mixed-use venues envisioned throughout Downtown.

As *The Queen City Hub* goes to press, some of the initial explorations of the consolidation of ECC campuses are being explored for financial feasibility and impacts on ECC enrollments into the future. The decision could go either way. Even so, the idea for the Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus remains an important part of the vision. The proposal for a concentration of educational activities does not depend on any one capital effort but rather on a mix of compatible educational programming that will benefit from collocation through shared facilities (library, auditoria, athletic facilities, classrooms, education related retail services, transportation hubs, and more) as well as from its proximity to the residents, employers and employees Downtown. Consideration should be given to additional educational venues in this campus environment including a stronger Downtown presence for local colleges and universities who could “hotel” seminar and classroom spaces, services, and other facilities in collaborative arrangements.



### The Financial District and Government Center

Downtown Buffalo is the financial and government center of Western New York, with primary concentrations of banking, finance, legal, and professional services as well as the largest concentration of City, County, State, and Federal courts and administrative offices in upstate New York. These combined activities constitute the bulk of about 50,000 employees in the CBD and well over 7.5 million square feet of occupied office space they provide the foundation for the continued expansion of entertainment development, residential growth, and retail revival. Indeed, for the first time in eight years, the total assessed valuation of all property in Buffalo increased in 2001 – mainly because of growth Downtown.

Downtown Buffalo is the location of choice for nearly all government offices. Despite heightened security concerns prompted by the attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. General Services Administration selected a new site for the U.S. Federal Courthouse. Updated security guidelines eliminated a plan to locate the facility on the site of the parking lot on Court Street north of the Fernbach parking ramp. No new federal buildings will be constructed adjacent to public parking structures. But GSA planners still see Downtown Buffalo as the logical site for a “signature” Federal Courthouse building to open in 2004 and have selected an infill site that will complete the urban fabric of Niagara Square.



The Financial District and Government Center Downtown form the core of the employment base.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



The proposed Federal Court on Niagara Square.  
(Source: U.S. General Services Administration; Kohn Pederson Fox Associates, Architects and Planners)

GSA is also relocating offices currently in the 492,000 square feet Thaddeus J. Dulski Federal Office Building into a variety of buildings in the Central Business District. The first of such relocations involves the development of a new six story office building at 150 S. Elmwood Ave. The 190,000 square foot building will be the largest new office building in over a decade and expects to lease 61,000 square feet for the Internal Revenue Service. This project is an example of good public policy regarding the development of an inventory of contemporary private office buildings available for lease by government agencies thus assuring the property is on the tax rolls. It is also consistent with *The Queen City Hub* plan goal to locate new investment in strategic investment areas. In addition, the GSA actions in Downtown balance new construction with renovation activity. For example, the new Federal Courthouse to be built on Delaware at Niagara Square will vacate the Michael Dillon Federal Courthouse on Court Street and that building will be renovated to house other court-related tenants.

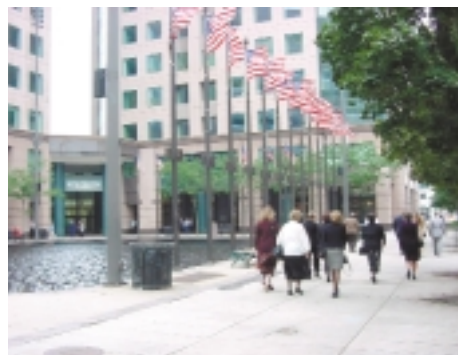
In the near term, additional Dulski building tenants to be relocated into renovated existing buildings or new-builds Downtown include the Social Security Administration, military recruiters, the National Labor Relations Board, and the Customs Service. The empty Dulski building will then be either renovated or cleared for future development.

Erie County is also in the midst of an \$85 million construction and renovation program for its offices Downtown. The new Erie County Family Court, recently opened on Niagara Street at Pearl, has provided greater dignity and security, as well as spaciousness, to court operations. Renovations of the Old County Hall, the annex at 25 Delaware Avenue, and older offices at 77 W. Eagle Street are pending. Private sector interests are also reinvesting in Downtown office space. Key Center finished the build-out of its South tower in 2000 with the relocation of Delaware North Companies from their old headquarters at Main and Court Streets, and the complex is now more than 85 percent occupied.

The completion of the 67,000 square foot building at 665 Main Street was the first new office space constructed in Downtown Buffalo since 1990. Construction has begun on another new building at Main and Chippewa next to City Centre (three stories-27,000 square feet). Meanwhile, the law firm of Hodgson Russ recently purchased Louis Sullivan's landmark Guaranty Building at Church and Pearl Streets. It will become the firm's headquarters following a \$4 million renovation supported in part by historic tax credits and an easement donation of the façade of the building to the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier. There is still more development



Acquest Development's proposed new project at 150 S. Elmwood Ave. is in a strategic investment area, removes a surface parking lot from the inventory of excess surface lots, provides for retail and restaurant space on the street, as it adds additional tax base to the City. (Source: Acquest Development)



Fountain Plaza. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

under construction as Emerson High School expands its culinary and hospitality education program in the newly renovated Root Building at Chippewa and Franklin.

Office space is the productive capital of an office economy. Ongoing investment in buildings in Downtown Buffalo is crucial to maintaining and building the employment base. That employment base, in turn, is important to developing new residential districts Downtown, building a visitor and entertainment economy and building the market for retail and services. Some of the class B and C office buildings Downtown lack the floor plate, floor to ceiling heights, floor load capacity, or parking support to compete in the contemporary market. As a result, the plan strategy calls for the conversion of such buildings to mixed uses and a measured addition of class A space consistent with market demand.



The view from Niagara Square to the south east of Niagara Street. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



The Theatre District (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### The Theatre District

Twenty-five years ago, the 600 Block of Main Street was a depressing strip of vacant storefronts, diners, and struggling retail shops anchored by the Greyhound bus station. The Market Arcade was closed and the historic Shea's Buffalo Theater was a candidate for the wrecking ball. Twenty-four years ago the "Theatre District" was an idea in a graduate architecture studio at the



Theatre Place and Shea's Performing Arts Center in the heart of the Theatre District. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

University at Buffalo and a seemingly quixotic policy initiative embraced by a recently elected Mayor. Today, Buffalo's Theatre District is an established reality in Downtown Buffalo with multiple live theater and entertainment venues and a still maturing mix of office, residential, restaurant, and institutional uses.

Since the 1999 *Downtown Strategic Plan* was released the, "B" District police station was completed, new apartments above the Irish Classical Theater were occupied, a new office building was constructed and opened, and Shea's Performing Arts Center has expanded to accommodate larger traveling shows, opening more nights and drawing bigger crowds.



Tent City is a candidate for up to 20 units of housing above the store on Main Street. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

Proposals to renovate the upper floors of the building which houses Tent City in the 600 block of Main Street, the Saturn Building nearby on Pearl Street, and the new office building at Main and Chippewa will add further population, activity, and strength to the district. Indeed, there are fewer and fewer buildings or sites on Main Street to redevelop, which means that the next expansion of the Theatre District will need to take place on Washington and Pearl Streets where large parking lots present substantial opportunities.

A revised traffic pattern Downtown combined with a new policy to reduce surface parking will help turn the “backs” of buildings on Washington and Pearl into “fronts.” In addition, active first floor uses will be supported by improved multi-modal access to Main Street, created by returning vehicular traffic. Both of these activities provide additional life on the streets and improve access throughout the Downtown servicing not only the Theatre District but all five of the strategic investment areas.



“Curtain Up” kicks off the fall theatre season every year in Buffalo. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Computer rendering of existing conditions on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. (Source: IBC Digital and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus)

### The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

Often, when people hear the phrase “master plan,” they tend to assume one of the following things: that the effort is far off into the future, that it is filled with lots of promises and hopes unlikely to come to fruition, or that the plan is a good idea but better left to start at a later date. Like *The Queen City Hub* plan, the master plan for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) is not just about starting something. In addition, it is about taking something that is already there and strengthening it, giving it greater vitality and preparing it to flourish into the future.

The “it” in the BNMC case is a nationally renowned collection of health care, research and educational institutions that are determined to maintain and expand their excellence through increased collaboration. The plan comprises nearly 100 acres of land a few blocks north of the Theatre District. In the spring of 2000, five medical institutions – Buffalo Medical Group, Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute, Kaleida Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the University at Buffalo – joined forces to create a world-class urban medical center. The collaborators in the campus are dedicated to supporting clinical, research and academic excellence. The member institutions are improving and adding to the infrastructure of the current medical campus and fostering further economic development opportunities for the region. This could mean as many as 3,000 more employees over the next decade. In order to accomplish its vision, the BNMC Master Plan creates an environment conducive to excellence in education, clinical care, and scientific discovery.

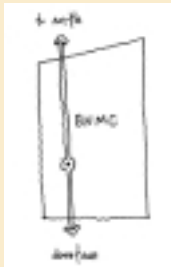


As the institutions constantly seek to improve themselves, advance their work, and maintain and attract talent, so must they also make sure to improve their host community. The Master Plan and Implementation Strategy for the BNMC is about facilitating collaboration, in part through physical planning, but also through the establishment of a forum for collective decisions. As one of the five focus areas in

*The Queen City Hub* plan, the ultimate goal of this endeavor is to help build economic growth and social capital for Downtown. It also strives to create a premier place attracting premier people that can improve the health care of the city, the region and the nation. The BNMC Master Plan is fully incorporated into *The Queen City Hub* plan by reference.

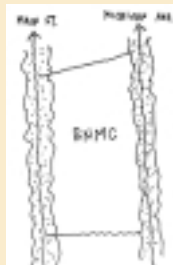
## BNMC MASTER PLAN PRINCIPLES

The Master Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus centers around four principles.



### PRINCIPLE #1 Establish a Common Campus Address

Capitalizing on the historic significance of Ellicott Street – named for Joseph Ellicott, Buffalo’s first surveyor and designer of the radial street pattern – each institution can assume an identity along the street. By concentrating new clinical and research development along Ellicott Street, vital adjacencies can be fostered and sites knitted together. A 25-foot continuous setback from the property line along the East Side of Ellicott Street will help foster a common identity and signify an important axis for the campus.



### PRINCIPLE #2 Improve Physical Integration Between the Campus and Neighborhoods

To increase interaction with neighbors to the east and west, the BNMC Master Plan identifies Michigan Avenue and Main Street as “seams” rather than borders. Commercial and residential development on

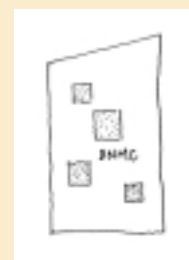
these streets will help integrate the medical campus with both the Fruit Belt and Allentown.

**Fruit Belt:** Michigan Avenue has the potential to become an active commercial street that serves the needs of both the campus and the neighborhood. A mix of commercial and residential development will reinforce the role of Michigan Avenue as a shared asset and not the “back door” to the campus.

**Allentown:** Extending Allen Street through the Allen/Hospital NFTA transit station – past Washington Street to Ellicott Street – fosters east to west connectivity through the BNMC. It is possible to extend the street through the station without demolishing critical infrastructure that supports the station (i.e. elevator or escalators).

### PRINCIPLE #3 Foster Community and Economic Development

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is already one of the major engines of Western New York’s economy, and its role will only expand as the campus grows. The major public and private investments planned for the campus will not only have effects on the regional economy as a whole; they will also spur significant opportunities for redevelopment in the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. The campus lies at the edges of three distinct areas: Downtown Buffalo, Allentown and the Fruit Belt neighborhoods. The plan for the Medical Campus recognizes the unique opportunities for and challenges to redevelopment presented by each of these three different areas.

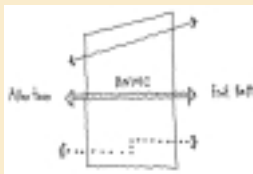


### PRINCIPLE #4 Enhance the Open Space Network

The design of open spaces on the BNMC – in combination with the character of building architecture – will help establish a powerful identity. A collection of distinct open spaces will support an orderly growth of the

medical campus by unifying dissimilar building types and styles, greatly enhancing the quality and consistency of the public realm.

This design strategy aims to supplement the public rights of way established along city streets with additional pedestrian-only open spaces and new city streets to facilitate public interaction, pedestrian circulation and development of an attractive campus. If the campus can balance vehicular use and public transportation use, the pressure for wider roadways and more parking can be lessened and buildable land can be maximized.





The Main Street seam (on the left of the above perspective) as envisioned by the BNMC Master Plan includes a new streetscape plan for Main Street with a tree lined median and extensive street trees. (Source: The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, Chan Krieger & Associates)

### The BNMC Street Program

The BNMC Master Plan advocates the reinforcement of the three primary north-south streets: Main Street, Michigan Avenue and Ellicott Street. Streetscape improvements will extend east and west along High Street, Carlton Street and Virginia Street.

#### Main Street

Main Street is a regional resource for the city and must be capitalized on as an investment opportunity. In order to achieve this end, the following steps should be undertaken:

#### Short-term

- Facilitate private development of the 700 and 800 blocks of Main Street.
- Facilitate acquisition and revitalization of the Red Jacket building at the corner of Main Street and Allen Street.

#### Long-term

- Extend Allen Street east into the campus, helping to connect the BNMC to Allentown and the Fruit Belt.
- Incorporate a tree-lined, Main Street median to calm traffic and focus streetscape improvements from Goodell Street to North Street.



Concept sketch of Allen Street extending east into the campus. (Source: The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, Chan Krieger & Associates)

### Michigan Avenue

Michigan Avenue is well positioned to become a community-based, neighborhood street. Residents have expressed a need for local shops and commercial developments in this area that can benefit both the neighborhood and the medical campus. The creation of a shared space between the BNMC and the Fruit Belt neighborhood along Michigan Avenue will reinforce the role that the campus could play in terms of neighborhood revitalization and ease the legitimate concern about erosion of the neighborhood. In order to achieve this end, the following steps should be taken:

#### Short-term

- Encourage infrastructure and landscape improvements eastward into the Fruit Belt.
- Shield the campus parking areas with additional landscaping and streetscape enhancements.
- Consolidate underutilized and available land.
- Foster “art-in-public-spaces” programs with neighborhood art institutions.
- Focus commercial development at the intersections of Michigan Avenue with High and Carlton Streets.

#### Long-term

- Explore possibilities for joint-redevelopment projects with St. John Baptist Church.



Ellicott Street is destined to be the main entrance to the BNMC. As such, the intersection at Ellicott and Goodell will help calm the Goodell traffic and link the campus to Downtown. (Source: The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, Chan Krieger & Associates)

### Ellicott Street

If development along the edges of Michigan Avenue and Main Street provide the physical linkages necessary to tie the BNMC into its neighborhoods, the potential for Ellicott Street lies in its ability to link the medical related facilities along an efficient, interconnected and beautiful boulevard. Capitalizing on this north-south axis will create a “new address” for the institutions and foster an identifiable campus image by aligning the structures along a single axis. The alignment of research and clinical care facilities along Ellicott alleviates pressure for large-scale, medical related construction along Michigan and Main, promoting spin-off renovation opportunities more to scale with the neighborhoods. In order to achieve this end, the following steps should be taken:

### Short-term

- Begin relocation of utilities on Virginia and Ellicott Streets to facilitate construction of the Life Sciences Complex (LSC).
- Focus streetscape improvements and landscape design initiatives strategically – unique lights, layered building setback, tree plantings and furnishings.
- Design BNMC gateway markers and finalize signage and wayfinding plans.
- Return Ellicott Street and Washington Street to two-way traffic.

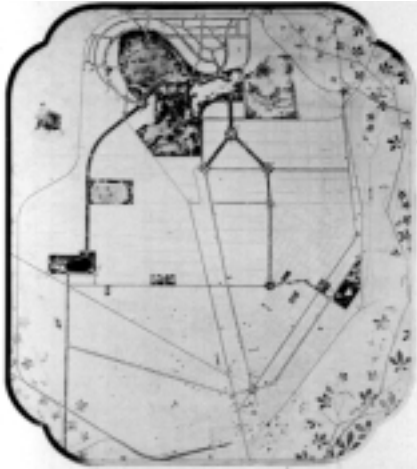
### Design Guidelines and Review Process

In 1999, the City of Buffalo Planning Board adopted a Citywide Design and Site Plan Review process. The development of BNMC design guidelines builds upon this work. The addition of these design guidelines helps to underscore the importance of a consistent campus image. A planning council for the medical campus will provide oversight to assure that development is commensurate with the aspirations of a world-class medical center and its neighbors. The area’s 1960 Urban Renewal Plan will be amended to reflect the BNMC design guidelines and included as part of the Master Plan & Implementation Strategy.



The BNMC viewed from Goodell Street looking west. (Source: Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, Chan Krieger & Associates)





Reconnecting Olmsted's historic park and parkway system to the radial street plan is also central to the plan's success. (Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)



**Top right:** A great streets program will help restore the Ellicott radial and grid street pattern. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

*The radial plan, a mixed-use core district, residential communities and a series of gateways define Downtown.*

Each of the five investment areas is thematically and geographically distinct but each also allows for a fully mixed-use program throughout Downtown. In addition, a great Downtown must be more than a collection of districts. It must provide an interconnected environment, overlapping activities, and continuous experience.

To achieve this goal, Downtown needs to emphasize, and where possible restore, the interconnections provided by Joseph Ellicott's historic radial and grid street plan; it needs to announce this special Downtown environment with gateways; and it needs to foster the development of fine-grained mixed uses that define the pattern of the urban fabric. All of this must be done in concert with the historic stock of existing

buildings, the designated historic districts, and Frederick Law Olmsted's intentions to use his parkways and Ellicott's radials to bring people around the City to Downtown and to the waterfronts.

For those who seek the grand vision for the City of Buffalo and the Downtown, this is a major part of it: Ellicott's radial street plan, Olmsted's park and parkway system, and the waterfronts will be united in a cohesive system of pedestrian-friendly great streets, avenues, and parkways.

### The Radial and Grid Plan

The street system of any city is what allows or impedes its life, pedestrian movement, and exchange. Downtown Buffalo's street pattern, now nearly 200 years old, once made it possible for a vibrant urban life to flourish. Interruptions of that pattern, and the introduction of many one-way streets, coincided with the waning of that life.

Current work in implementing the *Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan* has emphasized the restoration of two-way traffic to many streets, including Chippewa, Franklin, Ellicott, Huron, and Washington. Current planning work has also focused on options to improve Main Street and reopen it to automobile traffic in addition to transit and pedestrians. Recent proposals have also identified the potential

benefits of reestablishing major radial connections such as Genesee Street through Downtown and on toward the waterfront.

All of these initiatives have the potential to connect the different focus areas of Downtown and to help it become more than the sum of its parts. The radial and grid street plan connects Downtown with its surrounding neighborhoods, the waterfront, the rest of the city, and all of upstate New York. The historic Native American "first people's" trail, now known as Main Street, deserves special emphasis, as do Genesee Street, Broadway, Delaware Avenue, Court Street, Church Street, Erie Street and Niagara Street. These radials help integrate the historic Black Rock, Riverside, and Main Street grids that make up modern Buffalo.



On the left is the street pattern as it existed in 1971 and on the right is the proposed street pattern in the 1971 master plan. Changes to the street pattern made in the 80s retained Goodell, Tupper, Elm and Oak as city streets and not highways, although the speed and volume of traffic on these streets tend to separate the CBD from its neighbors. (Source: The 1971 Buffalo Regional Center Plan)



Church Street should become a beautiful east-west boulevard connecting the Adam's Mark Hotel and Conference Center to Main Street. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

Gateways that celebrate the connections between Downtown and the city can help define and announce the Downtown core. A well designed gateway can improve the image of Downtown both through physical improvements and by creating a sense that positive things are happening.

A long neglected area of Downtown is the Church Street link connecting the Adams Mark Hotel and the waterfront beyond it to Downtown. Currently the street has six lanes of forbiddingly fast-moving traffic and an unattractive streetscape. The objective is to make Church Street a truly great street, taking full advantage of the spectacular architecture including historic structures such as the old U.S. Post Office, The Ellicott Square Building, St. Paul's Cathedral, the Guaranty Building and the modern M & T Bank Building and Plaza. There is also the potential to reinvigorate the commercial and entertainment assets of the south end of Main Place Mall. The result will make Church Street a beautiful east-west boulevard. Work on Erie Street as part of Ellicott's historic radial plan would contribute to Church and enhance the relationship of Downtown to Lake Erie by opening up a strong vista to the water from Main at Church.

The health of Downtown is partially dependent on the inter-modal transportation options created for the citizens of the region. A solid program of quality options that are well integrated will reduce the pressure on parking and increase the desirability of Downtown as a business location. Downtown must support and be supported by walking, biking and bus riding, as well as intercity and intra-city rail in a fully integrated system of transit. The same development of inter-modal transit options will also help reduce the social, economic, and environmental costs of suburban sprawl.

#### A Mixed Use Core Area

What the radial, grid, and gateways connect, however, must be a dense and finely woven fabric of mixed uses. There must be big uses: Shea's Buffalo Performing Arts Center, HSBC Arena, a new Inner Harbor, Courthouses, and a Community College. But there must also be small uses: first floor shops, street vendors, restaurants, second floor offices, loft apartments, coffee shops, drugstores, dry cleaners, taverns, and more. Some of this fabric has been repaired in recent years, in the Theatre District and along Chippewa Street, for example. Now it is possible to imagine over the ensuing years that the entire core, from Elmwood to Michigan, and extending north and south from Genesee Street, might be knit together in a continuous fabric, and that ultimately Downtown might be stitched together with the Near East Side, Fruit Belt, Medical Campus, Allentown, Lower West Side, and the waterfront to make a single greater Downtown. *The Queen City Hub* envisions a city that grows its core area in phases, taking advantage of current strengths, creating critical mass, and then expanding again.

Part of understanding the mixed use core requires the city to revise its Downtown zoning ordinance, retaining the mandate for transparency (no blank walls) and adding the requirement for 1st floor retail in the traditional retail core areas of the city, especially on Main Street from Church to Huron where the pedestrian density on the sidewalks make first floor space suitable for retail and service uses. On a typical summer day, pedestrian volumes in this area range from 7,000 to 40,000 trips per day.

### Downtown Residential/ Mixed-use Communities

From the 1994 Downtown Summit forward, members of Downtown constituency have been clear about the importance of making Downtown Buffalo a place where people live. They saw Downtown living as a valuable housing choice for citizens of the area. More importantly, they understood the development of a full-time Downtown population as a means to accomplish many of their other goals for Downtown. Full-time residents could give Downtown life twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. It could help all Downtown users feel safer at all times of the day and night. Conversion to housing could soak up underutilized space in old office buildings. A new Downtown resident population could also help lay the groundwork for the resurgence of retail.

Over the years, attention has focused consistently on the Theatre District and vicinity as the most attractive and logical place to develop new housing Downtown. The 1993 Urban Design Project/Buffalo Place Inc. study *A New Downtown Neighborhood in Buffalo* envisioned new housing spreading from the Theatre District, north along Main Street, and east along Genesee Street. The American Institute of Architects-sponsored Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team visit to Buffalo in March 2001 identified many of these same areas as likely targets for new housing, in addition to a few others. Now, as the idea of housing Downtown continues to gain credibility as well as support, the extent of the geographic focus for development has expanded and new areas have emerged. Focus areas for development of residential communities are essential for directing incentive resources in ways that reinforce the key investment areas even as they build out historic districts and give emphasis to the radial streets linking to the surrounding ring of neighborhoods.

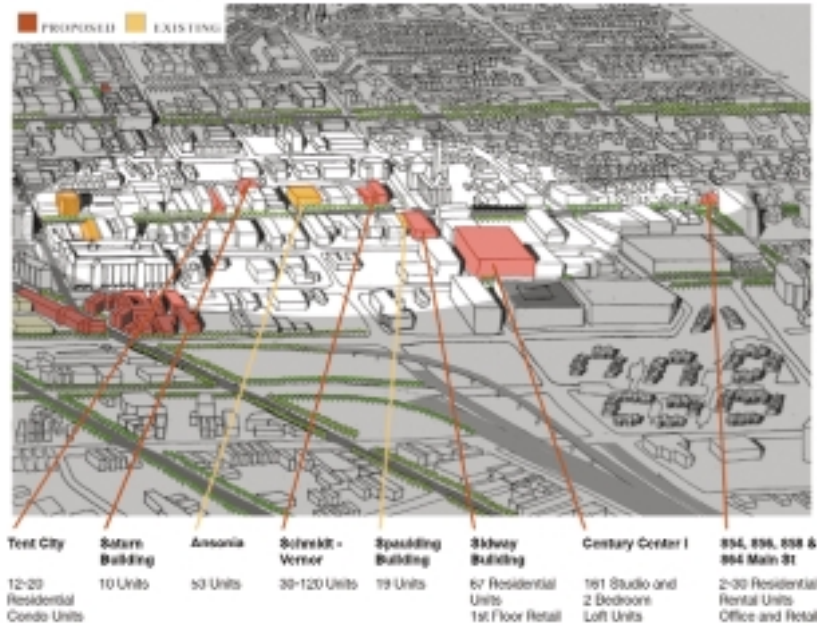
### DOWNTOWN CORE DEVELOPMENT



It will be important to focus investments in core areas of Downtown even as we expand the size of the core. The diagram above suggests three core areas where we 1. develop the entertainment focus, 2. build out the financial district and government center, and 3. expand eastward to include Michigan Avenue. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



**The 600-800 Block of Main Street**



The 600 to 800 Block of Main Street neighborhood. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Sidway and Spaulding Buildings pictured above along with the Ansonia to the west and south are providing 144 units of housing to anchor the neighborhood. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Vernor Building, in the 700 Block of Main, is a contributing building to the historic Theatre District and an important redevelopment site on the block. (Source: A Blueprint for Living in a Downtown: The Buffalo R/UDAT, 2001)

The top priority areas for new neighborhoods Downtown outlined below are selected according to their critical relationship to strategic investment areas, the existing base of residential units Downtown, and current developer interests.

**1. The 600 – 800 Blocks of Main Street**

In the heart of the Theatre District, the 600 block of Main Street, Theatre Place became the pioneer for new housing in the 1980s. Around the same time, a six-unit apartment house on Franklin Street was renovated. Development of City Centre (also related to the Genesee Street radial) came next, with 32 high-rise, high-end condominiums. More recently, 10 new units were created in the floors above the new Irish Classical Theater. To the north, the 700 block of Main Street has long seemed a likely place for new housing. It is a short walk to the Theatre District and light rail station. And it is close to the south end of Allentown.

The first publicly supported residential development was the renovation of the glazed terra cotta Ansonia building for ground floor office and retail and 58 upper-floor residential units. A smaller privately funded project saw the 19-unit Spaulding Building renovated for new occupancy. Plans for 160 loft apartment units in Century Center I, the former Trico plant, are on hold while the developer reevaluates the market. Meanwhile, Clover Development is constructing 67 new units in the red terra-cotta Sidway Building at Main and Goodell Streets. The project is a prime example of how housing conversions can reduce the glut of underutilized older office space in Downtown and provide a new benefit at the same time. Future projects like Sidway will benefit from aggressive programs of tenant relocation in their conversion and a clear process of incentive awards.

Across the street on the west side of Main Street are the vacant site of the old Teck Theater, the long-vacant Vernor and Schmidt's buildings, together long considered to be one of the most logical sites for new housing on this end of Downtown. The linkage north to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus continues in the 800 block where new units are planned for the existing structures on the west side of Main. In the shadow of these other projects, and with the support of an Urban Renewal designation amendment that enables site acquisition, these properties can be redeveloped.

### The Genesee Street Radial



The Genesee Street radial is part of larger aspirations for the redevelopment of the street linking Martin Luther King Park to the waterfront. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

Further south and west, the Ellicott Development Corporation is now developing a plan to renovate the former Greystone Hotel, a long-troubled property, to create 30 units of market rate housing between Delaware and Elmwood adjacent to Johnson Park. These complement other developments on Pearl, Franklin and Delaware north of Chippewa in what is the historical site of residential concentration in Downtown.

### 2. Genesee Street Radial

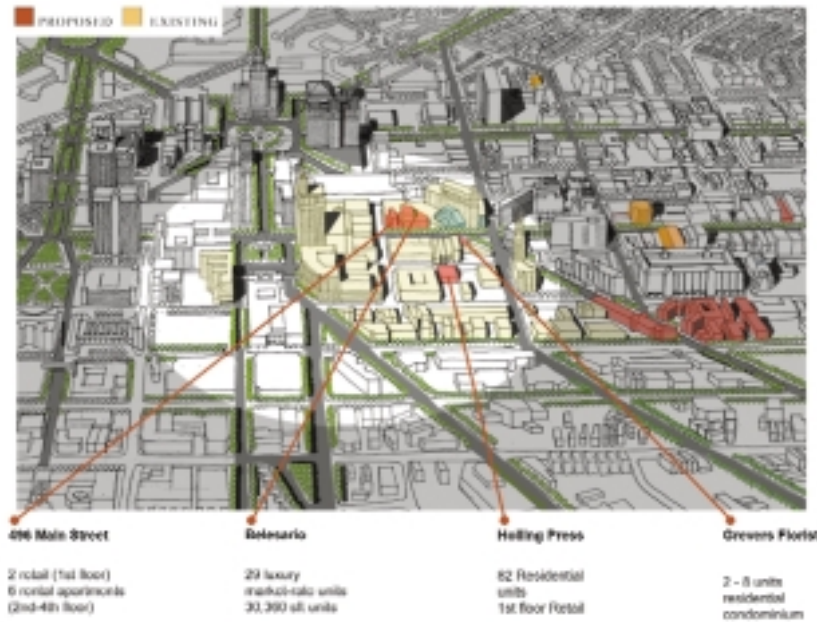
Nearby on Ellicott Street, just north of Genesee Street, Burke Development Corporation is redeveloping a complex of old commercial and warehouse structures known collectively as the Ellicott Lofts project.

Just across Genesee Street to the south of the Ellicott Lofts is the historic Genesee Village stretching from Ellicott to Elm, one of the largest intact ensembles of late 19th century commercial buildings remaining in Buffalo. This is another logical site for housing redevelopment “above the store” or in a “live-work” or other mixed-use complex that builds on the Genesee Street radial.



The Genesee Street block from Ellicott Street to Elm Street is a candidate for mixed-use retail and residential development and a key gateway site into the central business district. (Source: A Blueprint for Living in a Downtown: The Buffalo R/UDAT, 2001)

### The 500 Block of Main Street and Electric District

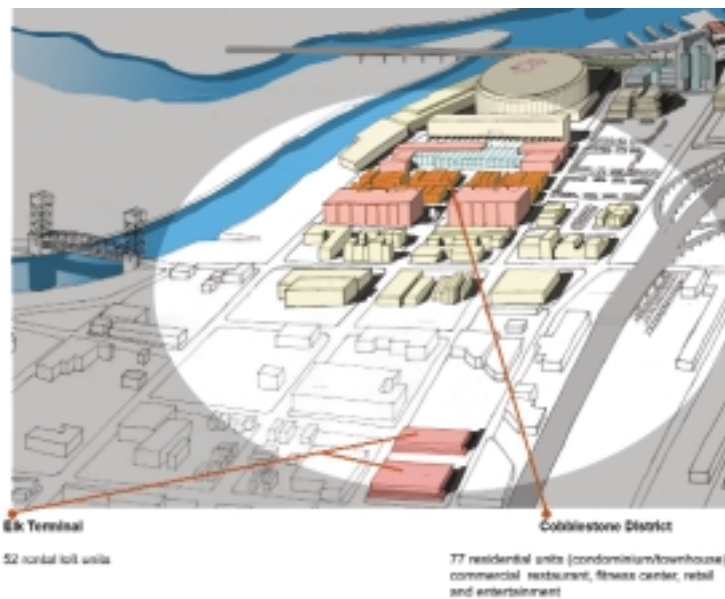


The 500 Block and east through the Electric District embraces a large stock of existing buildings worthy of renovation and alternative uses. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### 3. The 500 Block and East Through the Electric District

Just south of the Theatre District, starting in the 500 block of Main Street, is another potential cluster of new housing. Ellicott Development's Belesario project in the former L. L. Berger buildings is under construction. The adjacent Gamler's building has been incorporated in the project and new residential work is proposed on the northwest corner of Mohawk and Main. This represents the complete renovation of the west side of the block from Huron to Mohawk on Main. On nearby Washington Street, a developer is exploring the feasibility of an adaptive use of the former Holling Press building, perhaps the first of many efforts to create housing in the industrial and commercial stock of buildings in the Electric District. This residential concentration will help animate the financial and government centers to the west, immediate north, and south with the twenty-four hour, seven-day week life of a residential population.

### The Cobblestone District and Perry Street



The Cobblestone District and the area surrounding the newly renovated Elk Terminal form a fourth residential neighborhood in the Plan. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### 4. Scott Street and the Cobblestone District

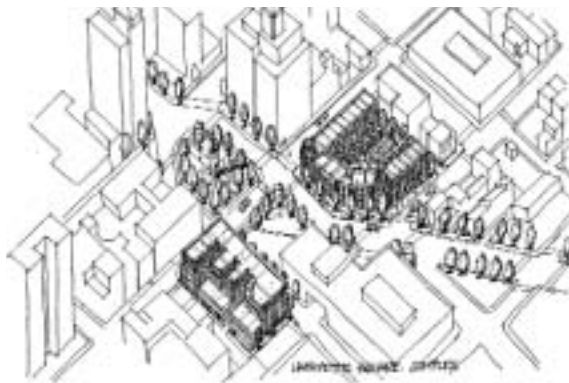
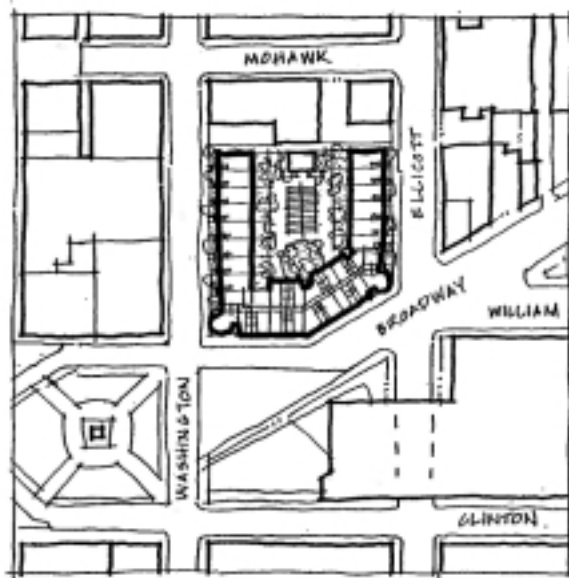
Developer Bernard Oblatz is now renting 72 units of loft-style housing in the Elk Terminal on Scott Street near Michigan on the northern edge of the Cobblestone District. Other developers have expressed significant interest in the possibility of mixed-use development in the historic Cobblestone District to the west. This district is least well understood as a core neighborhood, but infill between the Elk Terminal and Cobblestone could become a significant urban village. Possibilities also exist for the village to grow east of the Elk Terminal site as well. All of this builds on the emerging strengths of investments in the Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District.

**Other Sites: The Niagara Street Triangle, Lafayette Square, and Delaware Avenue**

The Regional Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) identified two other possible neighborhood clusters, including one centered on the triangle bounded by Niagara, Huron, and South Elmwood which is now appropriately slated for the development of a new office structure for the IRS and other tenants. The other R/UDAT site was on the east end of Lafayette Square. Future renovation of the Lafayette Hotel and development of the parking lot on the northeast corner of the square could bring the new Downtown neighborhood right into the center of the city.

Another mixed-use neighborhood cluster (Delaware Avenue) builds on the strengths of Allentown to the North, Elmwood and the Lower West side to the West, the Theatre District to the East, and the Government and Financial District to the South. An action plan developed by the "Avenue Association" calls for specific work in all of the activity areas and most of the principle areas of *The Queen City Hub* work plan. For example, strategies for the full geography of the plan (three blocks wide by six blocks long) call for protecting historic resources, ensuring appropriate parking design, advancing the work of the Downtown Neighborhood Development Corporation, increasing the health of existing businesses, improving lighting as well a public safety and policing, and enhancing the pedestrian experience.

The idea of developing more Downtown housing has been advancing now for at least a quarter of a century. Some of the initial steps have been small halting ones. But as one project after another falls into place it becomes possible to see how these small clusters of residences will generate further new activity, draw neighborhood retail support services, and generate new confidence from other developers. Given this slow and steady progress, and the fact that developers have yet to produce enough housing to meet even the most conservative estimates of potential market demand, a new Downtown neighborhood in Buffalo will happen. In the near term, over 700 units are planned with rental rates from a low of \$400/ month to as high as \$2,500/ month. These prices accommodate very affordable roommate flats as well as lofts and luxury housing. They also complement a mix of very affordable housing already available Downtown.



Plan and perspective sketch of Lafayette Square development opportunities. (Source: A Blueprint for Living in a Downtown: The Buffalo R/UDAT, 2001)

Also consistent with Downtown Buffalo 2002! and the R/UDAT recommendations, a Downtown Neighborhood Development (DND) Corporation is now being charged to implement a housing delivery system that will coordinate the efforts of Buffalo and Erie County governments, lenders, real estate developers and professional service firms, New York State and Federal government participants, the business community and Downtown residents.

The new DND has the mission to create residential neighborhoods with an urban lifestyle. Its structure will be as a not-for-profit corporation coordinating the capacity of all its cooperating organizations. It will be the one-stop source for assistance in housing development Downtown.

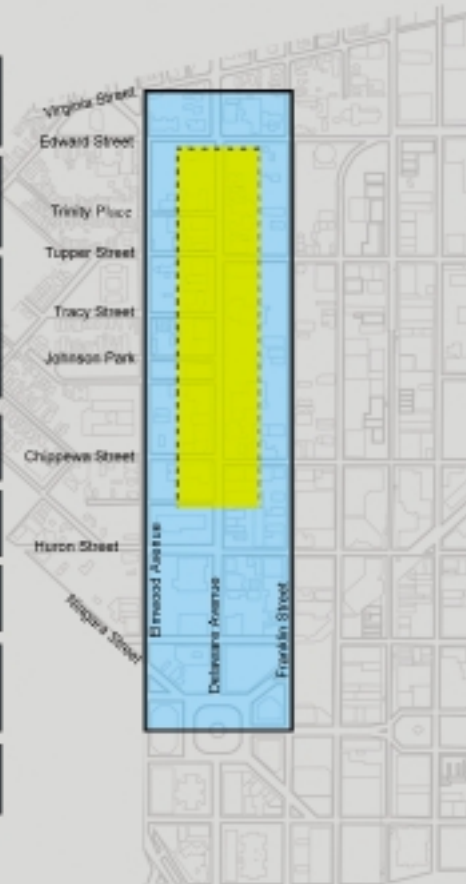
**Avenue Association Action Plan**

**Overview**

Strategies and Projects

**Area Wide Strategies and Projects**

- Protect Historic Resources**
  1. Demolition moratorium
  2. Local history district
- Ensure Appropriate Parking Design**
  3. Surface parking lot/ramp moratorium
  4. Design guidelines related to parking
- Ensure Appropriate Development**
  5. No casino in downtown
  6. Design guidelines
  7. Sounding board for design
  8. Zoning limits for bars/restaurants
- Work w/Downtown Housing Association**
  9. Inventory and advocate
- Increase Health of Existing Businesses**
  10. Joint promotional activities
- Improve Lighting**
  11. Parking lot lighting program
- Public Safety and Policing**
  12. Special police patrols
  13. Noise ordinance
- Enhance the Pedestrian Experience**
  14. Public Signage improvements



**Focus Area Strategies and Projects**

- Enhance the Pedestrian Experience**
  15. Public art and pedestrian amenities
- Increase Green Spaces/ Plant Materials**
  16. Hanging flower baskets
  17. Green oasis system
  18. Street tree improvements
- Market the Community to Retailers**
  19. Retail marketing packet
- Improve Lighting**
  20. Storefront illumination program
  21. Pedestrian level luminaries
- Improve Transportation Network**
  22. Through block connector
  23. 30 minute parking meters
- Work to Foster Specific Businesses**
  24. Business development program

These projects (which are not in priority) are concentrated within this focus area to ensure that they have a strong and immediate impact. Once projects are well established, they can be expanded to the wider project area.

This focus area was chosen because of its intact urban fabric, existing visual appeal, and diverse mix and range of businesses, residences, and other uses that could produce the largest gains in the shortest time.

Delaware Avenue action recommendations (Source: The Urban Design Project based on the Delaware Avenue Action Plan prepared by Flynn Battaglia Architects PC)

**A DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (DND) CORPORATION DRAFT VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT**

Downtown Buffalo is a regional destination attracting visitors, residents and new businesses to its colorful and inviting environment. The opportunity to walk to work, a host of creative eating options, the best of live theatre, and ample boutique and convenience shopping make Downtown housing the most desirable and the fastest appreciating in the region. Visitors are struck by some of the best-preserved examples of classical American architecture and the diversity of a hip population living in award-winning neighborhoods designed by exemplary architects.

**Mission Statement**

Acting as the city's lead agency for Downtown housing, the mission of the DND is to convert areas of Downtown into neighborhoods with the amenities and look which create a unique urban lifestyle.

To that end it is perfecting a series of functions:

- Organization of a fair and predictable development process through policy and procedure
- Expertise in the blending of public and private incentives
- Facilitation through the city development approval processes
- Mixed-use urban planning and design, targeted public improvements, and preservation of historic and architecturally interesting buildings
- Public relations and marketing to developers and residents
- Guidance and coordination of supportive functions like parking, transportation and public safety

## A Progress Report on Planning and Implementation

The Queen City Hub action Plan is an important next big step in a continuous process of planning, action, and evaluation. It is the outgrowth of the strategic plan published in 1999. After four years and much additional work, it is time to look back on what has been accomplished, reassess the current situation, and adjust the course for the future.

In the past, there has often been too much of a time lapse between reviewing progress, sharpening the vision, and updating priorities. When the Downtown Buffalo

Strategic Plan was published in 1999, it had already been 14 years since the previous plan, The Buffalo Regional Center Update, was published in 1985. It had been another 14 years since the original *Buffalo Regional Center Plan* in 1971.

The agenda for Downtown has moved forward. On the date of this publication five of an original eleven priority projects have been retired. They are complete. Four other projects were added in 2001 and three of those are completed. All the others except one are moving forward. A full accounting of all 15 of the priority projects is included as part of this description of current status.



- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>HOUSING</b> |  |
| <b>1</b>       | CENTURY CENTER I (OLD TRICO BUILDING)  |
| <b>2</b>       | WATKINS BUILDING: RENOVATION   |
| <b>3</b>       | L. L. BERGERS: ADAPTIVE REUSE  |
| <b>4</b>       | NYS BUILDING CODE  |
| <b>WORKING</b> |  |
| <b>5</b>       | CENTURY CENTER II (M. WILE BUILDING)   |
| <b>6</b>       | HAMPTON INN (JACKSON BUILDING)   |
| <b>7</b>       | 655 MAIN STREET  |
| <b>8</b>       | ADELPHI NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTER- WEBSTER BLOCK DEVELOPMENT  |
| <b>ACCESS</b>  |  |
| <b>9</b>       | CONVERSION TO 2-WAY STREET<br>HURON STREET<br>ELLCOTT STREET<br>FRANKLIN STREET<br>WASHINGTON STREET |
| <b>10</b>      | LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS<br>::: ON MAIN STREET  |
| <b>11</b>      | PARKING PLAN IMPLEMENTATION  |
| <b>12 A</b>    | INNER HARBOR INFRASTRUCTURE  |
| <b>B</b>       | NEW NAVAL AND MILITARY PARK AND MUSEUM   |
| <b>C</b>       | PLAZA AREAS: RETAIL  |
| <b>D</b>       | INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION CENTER   |
| <b>13</b>      | METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION CENTER   |
| <b>14</b>      | CHIPPEWA STREET IMPROVEMENTS ::::  |
| <b>15</b>      | AUGSPURGER AND ADAMS PARKING RAMP EXPANSION  |

An inventory of living, working and access projects tracked by the Downtown Buffalo 2002! implementation campaign from 2000 through 2002. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

A progress report on Downtown Buffalo would not be complete without mentioning the priority issue that went away. At the first Downtown Buffalo Summit in October 1994 the number one priority issue was "Feeling Safe." As a result, the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Place Inc., the Buffalo Police Department, and building owners and tenants went to work, and by 1999 the issue of crime and feeling safe in Downtown Buffalo had dropped to sixth place in the priority issue ranking. At the December 1999 Summit, a session was organized to discuss the issue. No one showed up wanting to discuss it.



**PRIORITY ISSUE:  
LIVING DOWNTOWN**

Developing Downtown Buffalo as a vibrant and inviting residential neighborhood has been a top priority for Downtown since the very first Downtown Summit in 1994. Downtown constituents now clearly understand that people living Downtown can bring life to the streets weekdays and weekends, day and night, year-round.

**1. Century Center I**

160 market-rate units were also planned for the fifth, sixth, and seventh floors of the former Trico building at Goodell and Ellicott Streets. The developer is now applying for historic preservation tax credits, working on the building shell and core, and has prepared construction drawings for the residential elements of the mixed-use project. Given the viability of the site for other commercial uses the decision to go with housing or not has been placed on hold for the short term while Signature Management Corporation reviews its options and the market.



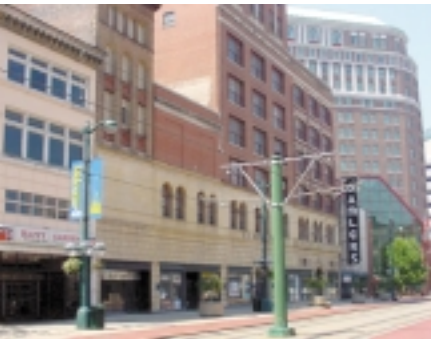
Signature Management Corporation is rehabilitating the historic Trico factory building for mixed use occupancy. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

**2. The Watkins Building**

Three new housing projects went on Downtown Buffalo 2002! agenda for "Living Downtown." The first was a small, six-unit, Pan-American era apartment building on Chippewa Street just west of South Elmwood, purchased and rehabilitated by Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc., a not-for-profit housing organization. Construction on the Watkins Building was completed in summer 2001 and the property is now occupied.



The Watkins Building is a restored Pan-American era apartment building completed in 2001. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Belesario involves the rehabilitation of both the former L.L. Berger's Department Store and Gambler's adjacent to the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Main Street. Construction is ongoing and expected to conclude by the end of 2003. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### 3. The Belesario

The adaptive re-use transformation of the former L. L. Berger department store to a mixed-use residential and commercial project is well under way. The third through the eighth floor of the buildings will be rental housing. The first two floors are now in commercial use. Demolition, asbestos remediation, and design are all complete. Ellicott Development Corporation has indicated that construction of 30 loft-style residential units is ongoing and currently advertises them as ready for occupancy by the end of 2003.

### 4. New York State Building Code

A fourth project was added to the "Living Downtown" agenda in 2001 – reform of the New York State Building Code. Downtown constituents identified the building code as an important barrier to the adaptive use of older buildings for housing. When a review by the State Fire Prevention and Building Codes Council was commenced, the City of

Buffalo staff worked hard on the technical subcommittee for existing buildings. In addition, Robert Shibley, the Director of Downtown Buffalo 2002!, was appointed to the Council and together with several City staff worked to deliver the international code to New York State, to help develop a rehabilitation code for the State, and to work with the Council to minimize more stringent local standards by individual municipalities.

The result was the adoption of the International Building Code by New York State in January 2003 with a "Schedule K" on existing buildings, both of which will reduce the cost of the adaptive use of existing buildings by three to eight percent. Local code overlays are replaced by the new code and there is further simplification of code review and permit processes now in place that is based on the new code.

#### **BUFFALO R/UDAT 2001**

Part of the Downtown Buffalo 2002! campaign progress on Living Downtown involved the American Institute of Architects Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) visit to Buffalo. The team included nationally recognized architects, planners, designers, and developers, who were invited to take a fresh look at a housing strategy for Downtown Buffalo. They emphasized the need to build clusters of housing to create life on the street and generate attendant service retail. They stressed the need to make links between Downtown housing and surrounding inner neighborhoods.

The members of the R/UDAT team saw that subsidies, permit reforms, and technical assistance to developers would be necessary to "prime the pump" for new projects. They thought a mix of housing prices for a mix of incomes would help create a better Downtown neighborhood. And they stressed the importance of quality. The team identified a number of potential clusters: the Theatre District, the 700 Block of Main Street, and E. Genesee Street as well as the triangle bound by Niagara, Elmwood, and Mohawk, and the east end of Lafayette Square (see [www.buffalorudat.org](http://www.buffalorudat.org)).

The effort to develop an exciting, attractive Downtown neighborhood seems to be gaining momentum. Developer interest is growing. New projects are on the horizon. And the demand for Downtown housing is still bigger than supply. A report of progress was published a year after the initial visit in "Buffalo Responds to the R/UDAT" by Downtown Buffalo 2002! and is largely incorporated in *The Queen City Hub* plan (see [www.downtownbuffalo2002.org](http://www.downtownbuffalo2002.org)).





Downtown Buffalo 2002!  
Priority Status projected to the  
end of 2003 – Working  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



The former M. Wile daylight  
factory on Goodell Street  
has been transformed into  
modern office accommodations  
called Century Centre II.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)

**PRIORITY ISSUE:  
WORKING DOWNTOWN**

While Downtown takes on new roles, the constituents of Downtown understand that its historic role as a center of employment also needs to be reinforced. At the 1999 Downtown Summit the issue of “Working Downtown” was a strong number-two priority issue and developing a business growth strategy was the number-two priority project. Office space is a key part of the productive capacity of any Downtown. Changing functional and technological requirements for office users require that Downtown Buffalo improve its office space product in order to grow the employment base.

**5. Century Centre II**

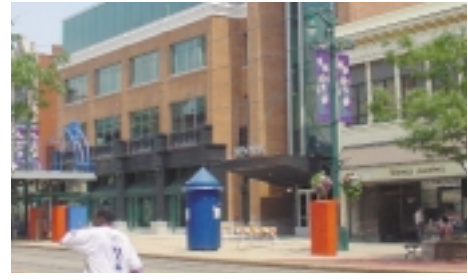
If closure of the former M. Wile plant on Goodell Street was a blow to the economy, the almost immediate renovation of this building must be seen as a recovery. The adaptive use of the historic 172,000 square foot daylight factory building was completed in 2001.

**6. Hampton Inn and Suites**

What had been one of Downtown Buffalo’s old and underutilized office buildings opened in mid-2001 as one of the city’s most luxurious hotels. Benderson Development reconfigured the former Jackson Building into a 138-room hotel and suites complex. The project also included the demolition of the troubled 210 Delaware Avenue apartment building once known as The Ford Hotel.



Jackson building renovation: What was a class C office building on Chippewa Street between Delaware and Elmwood Avenues is now home to a new Hampton Inn, reducing vacancy rates in the office market and retaining existing building fabric on Chippewa Street.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



A new office building with leasable ground floor retail space at 655 Main Street now replaces a long-empty one story fast food restaurant. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

**7. 665 Main Street**

Although not added to Downtown Buffalo 2002! agenda until 2001, this new office building on a site previously occupied by a vacant single story fast food restaurant is already complete. Its first tenants, the Wolf Group, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership and Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, have already moved in.

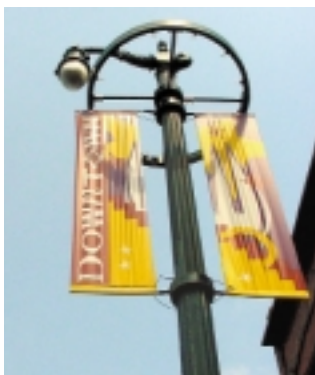
**8. Webster Block Development Site**

The recent turmoil surrounding Adelphia Communications has had impacts on the Western New York community far beyond the shelving of plans for the Adelphia National Operations Center near the foot of Main Street. Adelphia’s employees remain, but the prospect of a new headquarters building has dimmed. Yet the crucial fact is that a prime site surrounded by recent or planned developments remains an important resource. The factors that led Adelphia to choose the “Webster Block” for its operations center – proximity to the Erie Canal Harbor, waterfront retail developments, the Inter-modal Transportation Center, HSBC, and the HSBC Arena – all still apply. New developers are already lining up to consider the potential of the site.

Other projects are on the horizon including a new office building now under construction on the vacant parcel at the corner of Chippewa and Main Street. Work on a notable Summit priority – a business development strategy for Downtown – is proceeding. Total Downtown employment will rise by as much as ten percent with the full implementation of the Inner Harbor plan and with full build-out of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. Still additional employment may result from the completion of new Federal court facilities.



Downtown Buffalo 2002! Priority Status projected to the end of 2003 – Access (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Main Street is better lit, making it even more secure. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

**PRIORITY ISSUE:  
ACCESSING DOWNTOWN**

Downtown constituents understand that the attractiveness of Downtown Buffalo as a place to work, live, and play is partly a factor of how easy it is to get there, move around, park, and walk the streets. "Accessing Downtown" was the third ranked priority at the 1999 Summit and five of the top ten priority projects were about access, including a revision of street circulation, parking improvements, and a new look at cars sharing Main Street.

**9. Street Circulation Revisions**

Although the system of one-way streets Downtown simplified travel at intersections, it also made it necessary for motorists to drive long and confusing loops to get to places that were actually nearby. A pioneering phase of street circulation revisions made Chippewa Street two-way from Elmwood all the way to Ellicott. The first phase of additional conversions made Ellicott two-way from Swan Street to Goodell. Conversion of Huron Street was

completed in summer 2002. The phase three conversions of Franklin and Washington Streets to two-way traffic were completed in the spring of 2003. Projected for completion in 2003 is the extension of two-way circulation on Washington and Ellicott Streets from Goodell Street through the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

**10. New Lighting On Main Street**

To borrow a phrase from the centennial celebration of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, "the light has returned to Main Street." Long-term inadequacies in street-level lighting have been rectified through the cooperative efforts of Erie County, the City of Buffalo, and Buffalo Place Inc. Brighter light fixtures and bulbs have been installed for both upper levels and pedestrian levels. The City of Buffalo has also installed similar fixtures along Pearl and Washington Streets.

**11. Short-Term Parking Plan**

Implementation of a new short-term parking plan is producing the equivalent of more than 2,000 new parking spaces for Downtown. This includes 700 commuters using the expanded Park n' Go shuttle service; a targeted 500 monthly parkers converted to transit use through a new Metro Advantage incentive program supported by the NFTA and Downtown employers; the addition of 505 new on-street parking spaces; and 450 meters that allow \$2/day parking.

**12. Erie Canal Harbor and Intermodal Transportation Center**

Despite substantial delays due to the controversy over the fate of the historic Commercial Slip, investments in Inner Harbor infrastructure are back on track. A Supplemental Environmental Impact Study is complete; additional archaeological investigation has been undertaken; and a new budget for the project to accommodate the re-watered canal slip has been drawn up. Meanwhile, construction of the new Naval Ship basin and the Veteran's Park has continued and is expected to be complete this year.

As part of a more comprehensive approach to the inner harbor, plans have called for the Amtrak Station to be relocated in the northern portion of the Memorial Auditorium where it would be co-located with the NFTA Metro Rail. The project has gone through its environmental impact reviews and thirty percent design development with all the funding in place to proceed to construction. A subsequent phase of the project would involve

demolition of the Gen. William J. Donovan State Office Building to better accommodate the inter-city bus facilities. As the Erie Canal Harbor plans evolve, however, so also do the plans for the inter-modal facility and Memorial Auditorium. As this plan goes to press the intermodal transportation center is on hold pending the results of additional development plans for the Memorial Auditorium as well as a final determination of what should occur at the Ellicott Street Metropolitan Transportation Center.



Progress on the Erie Canal Harbor project includes still more in-depth investigations into how best to interpret and take full advantage of its rich history. This image of the Canal is a detail of a sketch done in 1853 (Source: A Canal Conversation, 2001 courtesy of Mr. Henry Baxter)



Study sketch suggesting a reconstructed Central Warf. (Source: Empire State Development Corporation and Flynn Battaglia Architects, PC; Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects, PC; John Milner Associates, Inc.; Chermayoff & Geismer, Inc.)



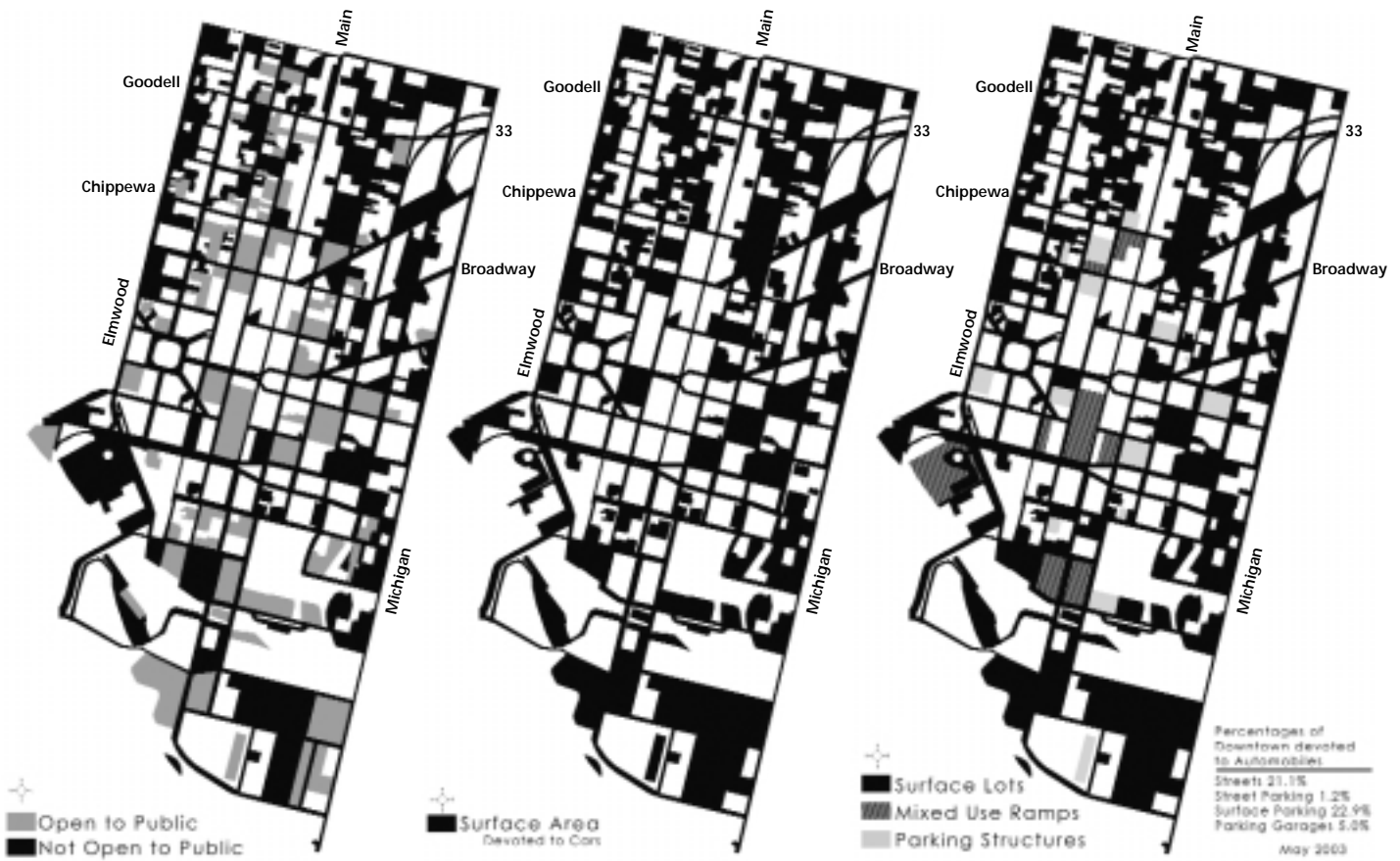
Proposed improvements to the Metropolitan Transportation Center promise to greatly enhance the streetscape on Ellicott and Division Streets. (Source: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority)

### 13. Metropolitan Transportation Center

The proposed renovation of the bus terminal of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority also includes renovating the office portion of the complex. All of the work is on hold pending lease negotiations and budget issues. The full program has been approved by the NFTA Board pending such resolution. If implemented, the project would greatly enhance the streetscape on Ellicott and Division Streets.

### 14. Chippewa Street Improvements

Upgrades in basic lighting on Chippewa Street, as well as paving and streetscape improvements, are in design and are awaiting approval of bonding authority before proceeding to construction.



**Top left:** Parking available to the general public shown in grey.

**Top center:** The amount of surface area devoted to the automobile endangers the urban environment as it measures over 50%.

**Top right:** Surface parking lots represent a large percentage of the available parking in the core. *The Queen City Hub* plan calls for surface lots to be replaced with urban infill and structured parking with commercial uses on the ground floor. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### 15. Adam and Augspurger Parking Ramp Expansion

Construction to add additional levels to the Robert Adam ramp at Washington and North Division Street is underway. Expansion of the Owen Augspurger ramp on Pearl Street north of Huron is also under construction and will include a mixed-use retail and commercial space on the first two floors.

### OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Besides these projects, there are many other developments on which to report. Within the Downtown core, the new Erie County Family Court Building has recently opened at Franklin and Niagara Streets. A major renovation of the historic Erie County Courthouse is ongoing. And planning has begun for a new U.S. Federal Courthouse.

Beyond the Downtown core, a wide array of new investments is planned, underway, or recently completed. In the Waterfront

Village, a second phase of the Gull Landing residential development has recently been constructed. On the Lower West Side, the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority is in the midst of a massive redevelopment of a seven-block area under the federal Hope VI program. The project will replace many of the units in the Lakeview Apartments – one of the oldest public housing projects in Buffalo – with new one- and two-family homes. Comparable work is occurring in the near East Side as affordable housing replaces the “projects” of the 1960s.

Nearby, construction on the long-awaited new Tops Supermarket on Niagara Street has concluded and funds have been earmarked to renovate the Father Belle Community Center. Ten new homes have been constructed nearby on Prospect Avenue, and Hispanos Unidos de Buffalo has completed its headquarters building. A new grocery store on the East Side reinforces commercial service on Jefferson Avenue.



The Robert Adam Ramp on Washington Street is receiving additional levels to increase its total capacity. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

In Allentown, the restoration of the Allendale Theater has provided a new activity anchor for that popular street. Restoration of the historic reflecting pool, as well as other renovations at Kleinhans Music Hall, is well underway on Symphony Circle. The Mansions hotel has opened in the renovated Sternberg House (more commonly known as the former location of Victor Hugo's restaurant) at Delaware and Edward. Also, luxury apartments are renting in the renovated former University Club at Allen and Delaware.

The Pillars Hotel has opened to provide accommodation for long-term hospital patients and their families. And work on implementing the master plan for the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is advancing. Across a twenty-year horizon, it is anticipated that much as 2.6 million square feet of space will be constructed to house bio-medical research and bioinformatics-related facilities on the northeast corner of Downtown.

### RETURN OF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC TO MAIN STREET

Planning work is underway on the future of the Main Street pedestrian mall and transit way. An environmental review process has been concluded by the City of Buffalo, NFTA, Buffalo Place Inc., Erie County, the New York State Department of Transportation and the Greater Buffalo Regional Transportation Council resulting in the selection of a preferred alternative, the phased sharing of the train way by automobiles. The phased program will involve approximately a year's work in final planning and design and three stages of implementation if the consortium of interested parties is successful in acquiring Federal funding. Design and construction will be phased so that no block of Main Street will suffer through more than one construction season.

## The Work Plan

*It will be a great Downtown when every project is measured against the strategic plan prior to approval.*

The Queen City Hub forms the basis for the implementation of the Vision for Downtown described in Volume 1. The Action Plan systematically identifies action items in four activity areas (Living, Working, Visiting and Shopping) and five principles. The activity areas should be delivered in accordance with the principles of Access, Energy and the Environment, Urban Design and Management, Preservation, and Image.

Within each of the four activity and five principle areas, action items are further broken down by classification (Policy, Analysis, and Implementation) and time frame (short-, medium- and long-term). The long-term outlook is defined as three to five years, though some aspects of implementation may span 8-10 years. While that time frame is long, it does not mean that the work can wait. On the contrary, it is imperative to act now to create neighborhoods Downtown and complete investments in strategic areas in order to establish Downtown as the regional center for all of Western New York.

The Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning will identify agency team leaders for each of the nine activity and principle areas and coordinate relationships among them. The lead positions may shift as the work progresses based on different project requirements, priorities and circumstances. Team leaders in the activity and principle areas will work to refine and complete the work tasks and account for the progress of the work.

## FOUR ACTIVITIES

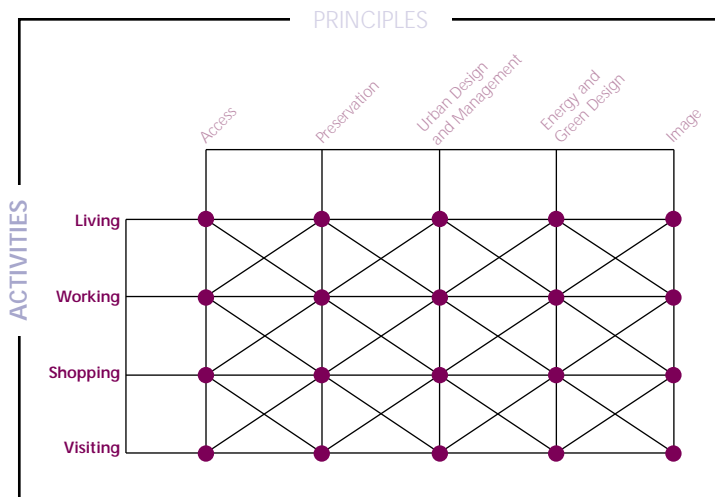
A major focus of the vision is to create a Downtown where people live, work and play. Towards that end the work tasks in activity areas relate directly to:

**Living Downtown:** building diverse and mixed-use neighborhoods Downtown that interconnect strategic investment areas and the inner ring of neighborhoods. An important part of living Downtown is the ability to shop Downtown, meeting retail demand for new residential populations as well as the Downtown worker population.

**Working Downtown:** retaining existing jobs and adding new jobs in all five strategic investment areas by stressing our regional role as the upstate center for government, finance, insurance, real estate, law and life sciences. To this we add the development of a Downtown education campus building on the strength of the Erie Community College and library and a new public safety campus.

**Visiting Downtown:** supporting diverse venues for the broad cross section of visitors to Downtown with further investments in venues like hotel and conference accommodations. Visiting Downtown requires improved signage, "wayfinding" and interpretation of significant attractions Downtown, making them visitor friendly with a full complement of amenities. It also requires both better marketing and coordination of "visitor ready" attractions as well as better product development for those visitor attractions that are not yet available.

**Shopping Downtown:** creating an environment that invites small businesses to fill vacant or underutilized ground floor space. Shopping Downtown needs a competitive mix of goods that cater to Downtown workers, visitors, new Downtown residents, and residents of the inner ring of neighborhoods.



Each of the activity areas is implemented through the application of five principles. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### HOW TO READ THE ACTIVITY AND PRINCIPLE WORK PLANS

Each theme area provides a **“Snapshot”** of the current state of this issue in Downtown (number of housing units, major employers, parking spaces, number of visitors, etc.) These data and other relevant information help establish baseline indicators, or **“Measures of Success.”** Complementing the Measures of success are the **“Top Rules”** or guiding principles that should govern action on the topic.

Each topic also has a **“Work Chart”** that tentatively identifies participants according to tasks. The charts are based on the work of the focus groups that initially developed the tasks and have been reviewed by the agencies participating in the Downtown Buffalo 2002! Action Team and Implementation Council. Many other participants could add value to the tasks at hand and the tasks could also be performed with less extensive multi-party collaborations. The initial designation of participants is meant as a place to start in building action teams required to get the task completed; it is not the final word.

All of the participants in plan implementation are grouped according to their status as public, not-for-profit (NGO), or private agencies. Within the public sector, the City of Buffalo refers to a broad range of potential participants including the Department of Public Works, the Office of Strategic Planning, The Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency, the Common Council, and the Preservation Board. The Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning will coordinate City Hall participants.

All of the tasks are given two priority numbers in the charts to give action teams a sense of the relative importance assigned the work by the participants in a Downtown Buffalo 2002! web-based survey of the draft plan issued in April of 2002. The first number indicates the importance of the task within the prescribed short-, medium-, and long-term time frame. The second number identifies the importance of the task relative to all the tasks in the theme area.

Some items in the charts have a **“B”** rather than a number to identify a basic requirement needed to implement the vision of the *The Queen City Hub*. Other items have an **“NR”** indicating not ranked. Those items not ranked were derived from plan review and were not part of the survey.

Each chapter concludes with an inventory of **“Recently Completed Projects”** relevant to the topic as well as lists of **“Projects under Development”** and **“Work to Date.”**

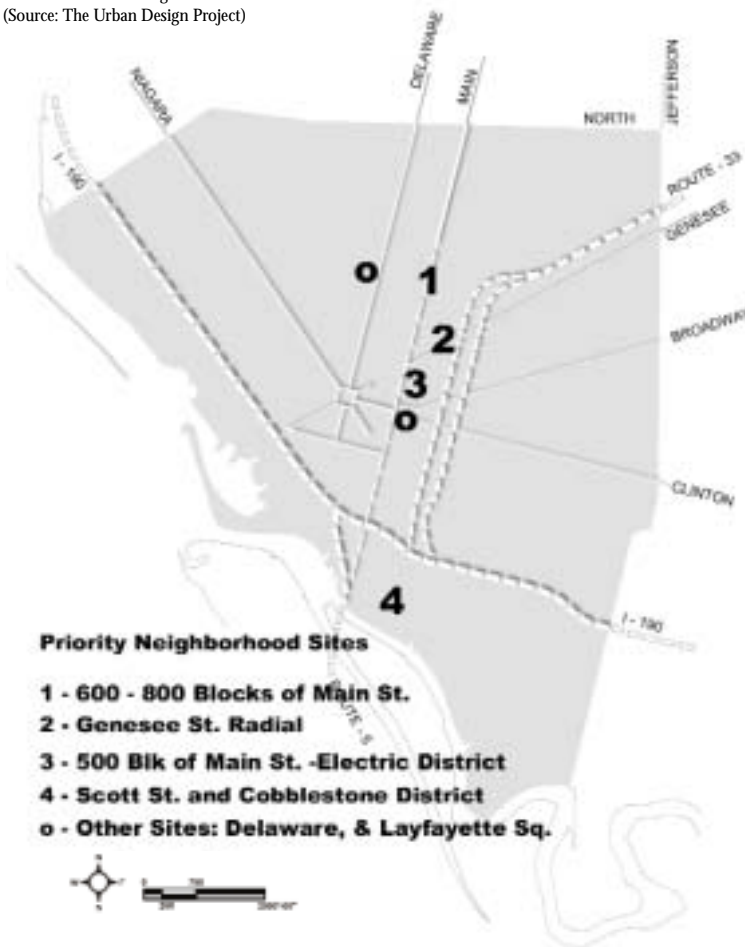
## LIVING DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- there is residential activity in Downtown Buffalo, day and night, evenings and weekends, summer and winter.
- there is a substantial supply of both affordable and higher end housing meeting a still growing demand for both.
- the new diverse Downtown neighborhoods knit together the five strategic investment areas and reinforce our existing assets such as the radial plan and our connections to our waterfront and inner ring of neighborhoods.

**The work plan goal** is to outline a strategic approach to develop new Downtown neighborhoods and strengthen existing surrounding neighborhoods.

Below: The Living work plan should lead to the transformation of the top three priority areas for residential neighborhoods. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



## Problem Statement

There is a spatial and emotional disconnect between Downtown and the surrounding ring of neighborhoods. The residential population Downtown is too sparse to activate the needed supporting retail and service venues to make it a great place to live and to keep it alive after the Downtown workforce goes home. In addition to being sparse, the existing housing is not in areas of concentration that give the critical mass needed to establish quality neighborhoods.

There is no Downtown-wide neighborhood association and no clear voice for Downtown residents. This may in part be due to the confusion surrounding the definition of Downtown. To some, the Central Business District bounded by Elmwood, Edward/Goodell, Michigan and the Waterfront is Downtown; others have a broader definition. *The Queen City Hub* plan envisions Downtown as extending to the 1832 boundaries of the City encompassing 4.5 square miles, including the waterfront housing on Lake Erie, the West Village, the Lower West Side, Allentown, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, the Fruit Belt, Willert Park, Ellicott Town Center and near East Side communities all the way to the Buffalo River. Understanding Downtown this way would establish a political voice for Downtown of over 18,000 residents and the capacity to address the important quality of life issues crucial to the success of the Living Downtown activity program.

There are many reasons for promoting living in Downtown Buffalo. More people mean more activity in the evening, more patrons for restaurants and shops, a better sense of security, and the possibility of an urban lifestyle not available anywhere else in the region. It also means a stronger tax base for the City and a better ability to deliver services citywide.



Until now, the greatest inhibitor of the development of new housing stock in Downtown Buffalo has been the lack of gap financing, generally defined in terms of the difference between the cost to rehabilitate the existing building stock or to build new and the amount of revenue that can be generated by a project. Finding the dollars to fill this gap is difficult given current market conditions in a city that is losing approximately 3,000 people every year and has thousands of vacant housing units.

A second inhibitor has been the lack of a clear delivery system to allocate the appropriate incentives for Downtown housing while sustaining a level playing field for all developers and engaging the powers of the municipality in site acquisition, development, and the provision of key infrastructure.

**Current Status**

- Current housing developments are scattered and occur on an ad-hoc basis. They are not serving to create Downtown “neighborhoods.” There are no detailed urban design and neighborhood development plans describing in the necessary detail how the targeted neighborhoods should be developed.
- Developers often have their hands out before exhausting all other sources of funding. There is also a real or perceived lack of a “level playing field” for those who seek to develop housing Downtown.
- There is no formal process for housing development in the Downtown core. The chain of command or responsibility for housing development is unclear and answers to developer questions are found in multiple locations with multiple people. As a result the development process is unpredictable and difficult for local developers and even more so for out-of-town developers.

- Current parking requirements are a deterrent to residential development. Many existing and potential buildings that are suitable for residential conversion do not have the required number of parking spaces to meet market demand or current zoning requirements.
- Fear of loss of equity discourages investment in housing stock.
- There is an emerging demand documented but the depressed price of housing in the city makes it difficult to develop market rate housing with sufficient rents to offset development costs. Banks and other lenders remain largely unwilling to loan against the full promise of the emerging market.
- Data indicates that Downtown could absorb as many as 300 units a year in market segments with ability to pay rents ranging from \$350 to over \$2,500 a month. It is not clear how deep this market is and it will not be clear until it is tested over time.
- Several tax incentives are now available that add greatly to the potential to fill the gap in financing.
- A new Downtown Neighborhood Development Corporation is in the process of being formed. It will work in close cooperation with the City, finance community, and developers.

**Strategies**

- Expand the geography of Downtown while retaining traditional definitions for the Central Business District.
- Focus on target areas, create a critical mass of neighborhoods and connect strategic investment areas in Downtown.
- Standardize incentives and “level the playing field” for all developers.
- Deliver incentives until the market can deliver the needed product without help.



The 700 block of Main Street is in the first priority area for neighborhood development. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Genesee Street at Ellicott Street, where mixed use development remains both very important and challenging. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The former LL Berger's Department Store now becoming the mixed use Belesario. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

## Living Downtown Action Items

### Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)

- **Identify and commit to primary, secondary and tertiary development areas and direct incentives accordingly.**

In order to maximize the impact of any development, it is recommended that new residential target zones be established (600-800 block of Main Street, Genesee Village/ Flower District, the 500 block of Main Street and east to Elm Street, the Cobblestone District). The purpose of the development areas is not to discourage development throughout Downtown, but to encourage the creation of new neighborhoods with sufficient critical mass rather than a series of stand-alone buildings. Establishment of the zones will also help prioritize the investment of public dollars to support neighborhood development that leverages already substantial investments in strategic investment areas. Restrict other than as-of-right public incentives to only these target areas.

- **Establish and adopt a policy position that all public incentives be leveraged with adequate developer equity contribution.**

Exclusive of as-of-right incentives such as Empire Zone, mixed use Urban Exemption Program, and Historic Preservation Tax Credits, all developments seeking public support should have a minimum percentage of developer contributions. Adopting this policy will better leverage public investments and ease over-reliance on public dollars. Once this incentive policy is established it will make the entire process of housing development more predictable for all concerned.

## LIVING DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT: CURRENT STATUS...

### Downtown Residents

- There are 3,210 residents in the Central Business District, another approximately 15,000 reside in the surrounding neighborhoods
- The CBD represents 1.1 percent of Buffalo residents and 0.34 percent of Erie County residents
- The median age of Downtown residents is 45
- 93 percent of Downtown residents are 18 years and older
- Only 5.3 percent of Downtown households are families with children under 18, compared to 29 percent of the City and 30 percent of the County  
(*US Bureau of the Census, 2000*)

### Downtown Housing Stock

- There are 1,207 occupied housing units in the CBD. This represents 0.98 percent of all occupied units in Buffalo and 0.031 percent of Erie County. The total number of residential units is 1,233, representing an occupancy rate of 98 percent.
- There are 927 rental units in the CBD with average rents of \$508.
- There are 306 owner-occupied units (condo and traditional homeowner) in the CBD that have an average assessed values of \$187,734. The total assessed value of the units is \$57,446,771.
- In 2001, there were an estimated 2,250 new residential permits issued in Erie County. 265 of those were issued in the City of Buffalo.

Source: *US Bureau of the Census, 2001; Buffalo Place Inc., 2002*



The Holling Press Building on Washington Street adds balance to the current market rate apartments with the addition of affordable units meeting the needs of Downtown workers with annual incomes below \$35,000. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

• **Develop a project ranking system to guide decision-making.** Before any public dollars are invested, projects should be reviewed and assessed to determine compatibility with defined goals and objectives for Downtown housing development. Projects that incorporate more desired goals and objectives will receive a higher ranking, thus increasing eligibility for public support. Among the factors that could be used to rank a project are:

- Percent Developer Equity
- Location in or near Target Zone
- Type and Number of Units
- Mixed vs. Single Use
- Mixed Income
- Uniqueness of Product
- Environmentally Responsible / Efficient Systems
- Use of Good Urban Design Standards
- Exterior Amenities
- Proximity to Transit

**Short Term Implementation  
(6 months to 1 year)**

• **Support the creation of a Downtown Neighborhood Development Corporation (DND) to provide one-stop service on housing delivery and marketing.** The need for a “one-stop-shop” for Downtown housing development has been repeatedly mentioned. The Mayor has taken the first step through the establishment of a Board of Directors for the DND. They will spend the next 6 to 12 months establishing the corporation. In the interim, agencies that have previously provided support for Downtown housing development should continue their work while coordinating their efforts to support the new corporation. The DND should then convene a housing development gap financing task force to help further coordinate all resource possibilities.

- Federal Government: Meet with congressional / senate delegations to request assistance in identifying and obtaining federal monies.
- Banks and Private Lending Institutions: Work with banks and private lending institutions to develop a venture loan fund for Downtown housing.
- Private Foundations: Across the country, private foundations are taking new roles in community development by providing soft loans and matching grants. These private dollars often leverage additional private and public dollars for development programs.
- Renewal Community: As businesses in the Downtown area begin to realize benefits from the Renewal Community designation, ask them to consider earmarking a portion of their tax savings (10 percent) for a Downtown Development Fund. Portions of this fund could be used to leverage gap-financing dollars.
- Regional Employers: Exploring especially the potential for Employer Assisted housing options. These options are an effective tool in encouraging residential development in targeted areas. Assistance can come in the form of grants or low-interest loans. Working with Fannie Mae, the City of Buffalo and Canisius College have each developed and adopted Employer Assisted Housing programs that could serve as models.

- **Develop detailed urban design guidelines** to support neighborhood development in the 600-800 block of Main Street establishing it as the first priority residential development area in the Downtown.
- **Create a Downtown Neighborhood Association as a participant in the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance.** This will become a voice for quality of life issues for residents in Downtown comparable to the voices now heard for business concerns and resident concerns in the remainder of the GNPA.

**Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)**

- **Revise zoning code to decrease parking requirements for new Downtown residential development.** Current City of Buffalo zoning law mandates one permanent off street parking space for each dwelling unit (§511-96, A). Current exceptions to that requirement include public and senior housing and lodging/rooming houses. The density and land-use patterns of Downtown are different than traditional residential areas. Many buildings that are prime candidates for conversion to residential use have limited access to on-site parking. To facilitate residential development Downtown, this ordinance should be revised to allow for fewer spaces or alternative arrangements (evening ramp space, on-street residential permits, etc.).

- **Explore the development and implementation of an Equity Insurance Program to guarantee investment/property values in housing.** Used in places such as Chicago, IL and Syracuse, NY, Equity Insurance Programs protect homeowner investments through the creation of an insurance pool funded by a special local tax that protects against a decline in home values. If a homeowner cannot sell their house at its

assessed value, the insurance will cover the difference. Participating owners must own and occupy their home for at least five years before they are entitled to file a claim. This program can minimize risk and encourage investment in newer markets converting from rental to condominium or cooperative housing options.

**Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)**

- **Facilitate the development or redevelopment of 1500 housing units in the Downtown area over the next five years.** Several housing market studies conducted over the past few years (Danter, R/UDAT, Downtown Worker Survey, BNMC survey) have determined an average absorption rate of at least 300 units per year for new Downtown housing. Taking into consideration local market and macro-economic conditions, that goal has been modified. The new goal for housing development is 50-100 units per year in the CBD and 100-200 units in the greater Downtown area. This number includes the rehabilitation / upgrade of existing housing units as well as apartments or lofts created by the adaptive reuse of existing structures.

**Work to Date**

- Legislative / Policy Completed
  - 700 Block Urban Renewal Plan
  - 800 Block Urban Renewal Plan
  - City of Buffalo Permit Fee Reform
  - Extension of Empire Zone Credits to Residential Mixed Use
  - NYS Mixed Use Urban Tax Exemption Program for commercial space conversions to mixed use
  - City of Buffalo Mixed Use Urban Tax Exemption Program
  - Reform of the NYS Building Code

**LIVING IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

**Indicators**

- Increase in total residential population in neighborhood focus areas
- Increase in total number of units
- Increase in diversity of product
- Increase in occupancy rates
- Increase in number of new or renovated units per year
- Increased/stabilized property values
- Increase in median rental rate

**Top Rules for Living Downtown Action Plan**

- Density and concentration
- Diversity – all cohorts, all types
- Green design / connect to transit
- Historic District / Infill
- Mixed-use, service retail
- No parking requirements
- Public/private participation
- Quality of architecture
- Unique product

Activities: Living	Contributor		Importance within time frame		Importance across time frame		Public and Quasi-Public		Non-Profit (NGO)										Private		
	City of Buffalo	Good Neighbors Planning Alliance	Housing and Urban Development	NYSED/CA	State Historic Preservation Office	Access Infrastructure Task Force	AIA and APA	Black Leadership Forum	Buffalo Niagara Enterprise	Buffalo Niagara Partnership	Buffalo Place Inc.	Community Preservation Corporation	Foundations	Landmark Society and Preservation Coalition	National Historic Trust & Neighborhood Associations	Theatre District Association	Banks and Financial Institutions	Family Man	Private Building Owners	Real Estate Community	
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>																					
Commit to priority development areas	B	B	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Leverage public incentives	1	1	●	●	●	●															
Develop Project ranking system	3	6	●																		
Support Downtown Neighborhood Development Corp.	B	B	●	●																	
Develop detailed urban design guidelines	B	B	●	●	●	●	●	●													
Create Downtown Neighborhood Association	2	2	●	●					●												
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>																					
Decrease parking requirements	2	5	●					●													
Establish Equity Insurance Program	1	3	●																		
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>																					
Create 1500 housing units	1	4	●	●																	

Living Downtown working draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

- Legislative / Policy Under Development
  - Proposed Historic Tax Credit Legislation
- Planning / Organizational Completed
  - Buffalo R/UDAT 2001
  - Downtown Buffalo Housing Sourcebook
  - The Danter Report – A Downtown Multifamily Housing Analysis
  - The Dennison Study – The City of Buffalo Housing Delivery Study
- Planning / Organizational Under Development
  - Buffalo Downtown Housing Development Corporation
  - Buffalo Niagara Now Initiative
- Capital Projects Completed
  - Gull Landing Phase II
  - The Bellasara
  - Watkins Building
  - Lofts at Elk Terminal
  - Ellicott Lofts Phase I
- Capital Projects Under Development
  - Century Centre I
  - The Belesario
  - Sidway Building
  - Tent City Building
  - Ellicott Lofts Phases II and III
  - Holling Press
  - Saturn Building
  - Greystone
  - Hope VI

## WORKING DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- Downtown is established as the new business incubator for the region and continues to serve as the regional center for finance, insurance, real estate, law, health and life sciences, and government.
- the total building vacancy rate is 10 percent.
- there are quality buildings and a public streetscape that matches tenant needs.
- there is sustained employment growth.

**The work plan goal** is to develop a collaborative and consistent approach to business development and retention in Downtown. The goal includes establishing the role for Downtown in the local and regional economy using quantifiable factors such as the size of workforce, occupancy rates, corporate expansion potentials and longevity rates, and the availability of product by type.

**Below:** The number of Downtown employees per block is highest in the Financial District and Government Center.  
 (Source: Buffalo Place Inc., 2000 Downtown Buffalo Business and Employment Trends)

### 2000 Downtown Buffalo Employment



## CONTEXT

### Problem Statement

Downtown is currently home to more than 50,000 workers with an estimate of over 7,000 more in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The CBD numbers must be seen in the light of what some analysts describe as a 25 percent Downtown vacancy rate for class A and B office facilities. They also describe the continuing difficulty to retain as well as recruit tenants into Downtown. There is no business plan for Downtown development that will assure retention and new recruitment and there is no clear understanding of the Downtown economy, particularly in the regional context.

At the moment there is no single agency or person focused solely on economic development in Downtown. There is no business plan for Downtown development outside the efforts of the overall strategic action plan. Current efforts to consolidate work in the Erie County Industrial Development Agency are promising, as is the fuller integration of the functions of the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation with the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning. There is much work to be done in the development of easily accessible information on available space Downtown. Much work also needs to be done to create further efficiencies in the development process and in the way in which urban design, management, parking and access programs assure that Downtown acquires the status of the premier location to do business in the region.

The current regional economic development strategies either ignore or do not favor Downtown as a place to do business. This is largely due to real and perceived problems regarding parking, an outdated building stock (inappropriate floor plate, floor load capacity, and floor to ceiling heights in class B and C office buildings), perceived suburban cost advantages, perceived problems with the security of Downtown, and the lack of Downtown amenities such as convenient shopping and quality streetscape.

### Current Status

Downtown Buffalo is the historic center of commerce in Western New York. Being located in Downtown Buffalo offers many advantages to businesses. Downtown has a large concentration of Class A office space, and is the preferred 'front door' address for many businesses. Government, banking and business and legal services dominate the current landscape in Downtown. Other important industries include restaurants and entertainment services. These and other businesses benefit from proximity to clients, other businesses, ease of regional access, and a central location for employees. For the Downtown worker, advantages include availability of services and events such as restaurants, dry cleaners, Farmer's Market, Thursday at the Square, etc. Downtown is a popular place to work, but the demands for traditional retail and inexpensive parking are issues that have to be addressed. Finally, the interdependence between the state of the economy in Downtown and the region as a whole cannot be understated. While there may have been a dispersion of economic activity into the rest of the region, the symbolic nature of the state of Downtown affects the entire region's ability to attract new business and retain existing business.

Office uses are the heart of the Working Downtown market, but other sectors should not be ignored. There are important industrial, and visitor based entertainment, restaurant, and cultural-heritage employment markets. The economy is diversifying and should be encouraged to continue to do so.



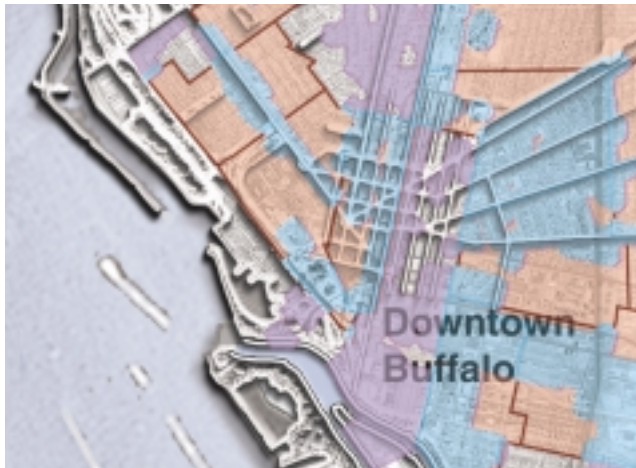
The Family Court Building on Niagara Street between Pearl Street and Franklin Street.  
(Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



The strategy for Working Downtown must address other employment options in addition to office  
(Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

### Strategies

- Consolidate and improve delivery of services and information related to potential business locations Downtown.
- Clarify the demand for and availability of light industrial space within the Western New York region, especially in the smaller floor plate range. Downtown has a surplus of light industrial building types that can easily be converted to new light industrial space or to loft housing.
- Assure that *Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan* land use strategy for business development is consistent with the realities of contemporary land use demands and define the importance of Downtown locations. All city and regional planning efforts need to take better advantage of the positive attributes of the Downtown building stock.
- Market Downtown as the regional incubator for office and light industry and demonstrate its competitive advantages.
- Reduce the vacancy rate in existing class B and C office buildings by redeveloping strategically located structures for use as residences and work to relocate existing tenants to better locations and facilities.
- Assemble land for campus settings in the BNMC and in the Downtown Education Campus to accommodate demands for future development.
- Formalize retention, relocation, and expansion support for those who wish to do business Downtown, making the process clear, equitable, and consistent with developing a more diverse and robust economy.



- Key:**
- Empire Zones
  - Renewal Communities
  - Renewal Communities and Empire Zones

Empire Zone and renewal community designations in the greater Downtown area should be further aligned to support concentrations of development in strategic investment areas or, as appropriate, in the key neighborhoods that connect them. (Source: The Buffalo Economic Development Corporation and the Office of Strategic Planning)

## WORKING DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT: CURRENT STATUS...

### Employment

Downtown Buffalo Central Business District (CBD) Employment = 50,046

This is:

- 39.3 percent of Total City Employment of 127,264
- 11.7 percent of Total County Employment of 429,515
- 9.5 percent of Total Buffalo-Niagara MSA Employment of 529,578

### Business Sectors

- 1,375 Businesses are located in the CBD
- 28 percent of CBD employees work for government
- 35 percent of employees work in the Service Industry Classification
  - Administration and Support, 9 percent
  - Legal, 8 percent
  - Information, 5 percent
- 18 percent of employees work in FIRE (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate) Industry Classification
  - Banking, 13 percent

### Company Size

- 50 percent of CBD employees work for large companies with more than 250 employees
- 2 percent of CBD businesses employ more than 250 people
- 90 percent of CBD businesses employ fewer than 50 people
- 60 percent of CBD businesses employ fewer than 10 people

## Action Items

### Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)

- **Agree on a regional approach to economic development that acknowledges the central role of Downtown Buffalo within the region.**

A common understanding of the role of Downtown will help focus economic development activities. Downtown Buffalo is a central player in the Western New York economy. Finance, insurance, real estate, legal, government, business, and entertainment/sports services are among Downtown's dominant industries. All the major economic development agencies should define a shared approach to economic development in Downtown and incorporate that vision into their programs. Part of the regional approach involves the consolidation of services among the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning, and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency.

Another part involves the commissioned work by Erie and Niagara County on the development of the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth due to offer its recommendations by 2004. This effort is focused on growth management in the two-county region.



Acquest's Niagara Center contributes to the Financial Center and Government District area of strategic investment. (Source: Acquest Development Corporation)



- **Focus incentives on the five strategic investment areas in the plan.** This will create the critical mass of development needed to build on the strengths of Downtown and improve its retail and office market share in the region. One element of incentive may be the establishment of a fast track permit program for those projects that reinforce the implementation of *The Queen City Hub* plan.



Main Street must remain a central site of reinvestment to achieve the goals of the Working Downtown work plan. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

#### Short Term Analysis (6 months to 1 year)

- **Conduct a full-scale analysis of the Downtown economy.** To better understand the existing and future state of the Downtown economy and to identify niche opportunities, a full-scale analysis should be undertaken. Factors to be studied include space and business inventory, employer and employee perceptions, business mix, trade area definition, local economic analysis, office market, retail market, restaurant and business services, entertainment, lodging, and opportunities for niche development, clustering, and mixed use development.

#### Short Term Implementation (6 months to 1 year)

- **Organize and centralize Downtown economic development efforts.** There are many economic development agencies active in promoting Downtown Buffalo. However, it is not one person's or agency's sole focus. Having one entity or individual working solely on Downtown will help coordinate information about sites, programs, incentives and other resources.



Downtown needs a web-based inventory of sites, square footage, lease options, and contact information. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

- **Develop a comprehensive online inventory of available space in Downtown Buffalo.** Access to information about available space for lease or purchase in Downtown should be easy to locate. A central database identifying sites, square footage, lease options and contact information should be developed and incorporated into a stand-alone website. This site could also offer preliminary information about the multiple incentive programs available for Downtown businesses. Initial work toward this end was developed by BERC in 2002 and needs to be further developed and released.

- **Implement the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan.** The next five years will bring significant developments and changes to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus located at the north end of Downtown. Advocates for Downtown and the campus should maintain regular communication and whenever possible, coordinate marketing, economic development, and transportation programs to maximize the impact of the development.

#### Medium Term Policy (1 to 3 years)

- **Establish greater collaboration between the economic development and real estate communities.** The real estate community is often the first point of contact for a company interested in relocating Downtown. Economic developers and real estate agents should collaborate to develop an agreed upon system that would allow agents the opportunity to identify and share basic program information with prospective tenants and owners. This would speed up the flow of information and improve communication between the real estate and economic development communities.



The area in and around Michigan Avenue south of Eagle Street includes a number of opportunities for further reinforcing the new Pierce Arrow museum and for commercial and light industrial development. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)



Large pockets of vacant and underutilized land south and east of the Downtown offer opportunities for recreation, industrial history interpretation, and urban office park development. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

### Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)

- **Create a Business Incubator in Downtown Buffalo.** Many of the smaller, but potentially valuable, spaces in Downtown Buffalo are overlooked because they are in poor condition. Many of these properties are in violation of City code and potential tenants are often asked to take on the additional financial burden of bringing space up to code as part of the cost of a triple-net lease. Most of the business incubators in Buffalo are located in somewhat remote areas of the city on large parcels of land. While they are successful, there is a shortage of larger land areas within the city that are required by large office developments and medium to heavy industries. These are businesses that generally will not locate in the Downtown area. There are many spaces in Downtown Buffalo that have smaller floor plate and load ratings that make them ideal for conversion to small business incubators. Through eminent domain or other public acquisition, one or two small but high profile properties should be developed into shared office with ground-floor retail incubator space.

- **Promote Downtown Buffalo as a center for small, clean, light industrial development.** Similar to the previous action item is a recommendation that more effort be made to encourage small, clean, light industrial companies to locate in Downtown Buffalo, particularly in Class B and C space. The Buffalo Niagara Enterprise reports that there is a “substantial shortage” of warehouse, distribution, manufacturing, and high-tech R&D space in the 5,000 to 39,000 square foot range. New construction costs for this type of space ranges from \$37.00 to \$42.99 per square foot, while rehabilitation of existing space can be less expensive. Lease rates for similar space in the suburbs are one third more expensive than the central city. Although parking is often a concern, there are many locations on the periphery of Downtown that include on-site parking.

- **Develop a comprehensive and collaborative business development plan for Downtown.** Based on the results of the full-scale analysis of the Downtown economy, a comprehensive and collaborative business development strategy should be developed and implemented.

### Long Term Policy (3 to 5 years)

- **Advocate development of lower Michigan as low- to mid-rise building site.** Michigan Avenue is important as a historical and cultural development area. Most of this attention is focused on areas north of Eagle Street. South of Eagle Street there is a significant amount of vacant and underutilized land. It is an ideal location for single or two story large-floor plate buildings that companies often seek out when expanding their operations. New construction must be contextually designed to enhance the area. Land uses should be compatible with the new Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus and the proposed historic district and its visitor-based economy.

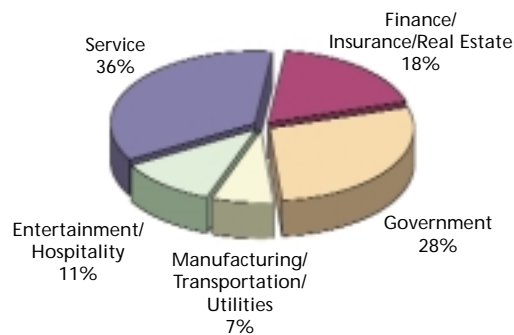
### Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)

- **Develop former industrial areas into urban office parks.** There are several large pockets of vacant or underutilized land that may be suitable as urban office parks. Strong design guidelines and compliance with the Buffalo Coastal Special Review District (§ 511-67) standards including the 100 foot minimum setback from the riverfront, and Buffalo’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, would ensure sensitive development while still providing the ability to develop low-level, larger floor plate buildings with parking that could attract larger companies into the area.

Activities: Working			Public and Quasi-Public					Non-Profit (NPO)					Private						
	Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Erie County Industrial Development Agency	Empire State Development	Erie County	Federal Reserve Board	INYSERDA	Black Leadership Forum	Buffalo Niagara Enterprise	Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus	Buffalo Niagara Performing Arts Center	Buffalo Place Inc.	Building Owners and Managers Association	Convenience and Visitors Bureau	Urban League	Banks and Financial Institutions	Private Building Owners	Real Estate Community
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>																			
Regional approach to economic development	1	1	●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Focus incentives on strategic investment areas	3	4	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Full-scale analysis on downtown economy	2	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Organize and Centralize Economic Development	4	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Online inventory of available space	6	10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Implement BNMC Plan	5	9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>																			
Economic development and real-estate collaboration	1	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Business Incubator	3	6	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Promote downtown as light industrial development center.	4	7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Collaborative business development plan	2	5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>																			
Michigan as low-rise building site	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop former industrial areas into urban office parks	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

Working Downtown draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

2000 Downtown Employment by Industry



Downtown employment by industry. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

**WORKING IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

Increase in Square Footage of Desirable (Class A/R1) Product

Increase in Overall Occupancy Rate

Increase in Size of Workforce

Corporate Longevity – Retention and Expansion Rates

Increase in Number of Companies by Type and Percent of City and Region

Increase in Number of Employees by Type and Percent of City and Region

Square Footage by Type and Percent of City and Region

**Top Rules for Working Downtown Action Plan**

Accountability

Bring the Real Estate Community on Board

Empower and Educate a Broad Cross-section of Ambassadors for Downtown

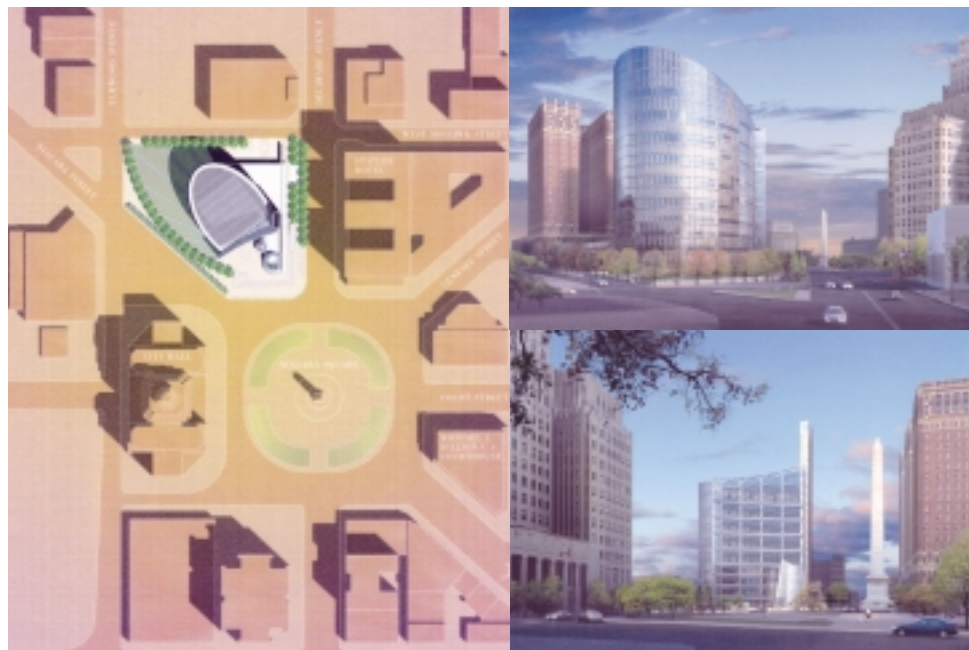
Recognize the Reality of Existing Conditions

Stick to the Plan

Build on Strengths and Tap into Existing Resources

**Work to Date**

- Legislative/Policy Completed
  - Empire Zone
  - One-On-One Retention Program
  - Renewal Community Application and Designation
- Planning /Organizational Completed
  - Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan
  - 2003 BNMC Employee Survey
  - 1998 and 2000 Downtown Buffalo Business and Employment Trends
  - 1998 Downtown Employee Survey
  - CB Richard Ellis Office Occupancy Report
  - BOMA Office Occupancy Report
  - Militello Office Occupancy Report
  - TCN Worldwide Market Reports
- Planning/Organizational Under Development
  - BNMC Economic Development Plan
  - Buffalo Niagara Now
  - Coordinated Local Development Process
  - Permitting Reform
  - Renewal Community Marketing Plan
- Capital Projects Completed
  - 665 Main Street
  - Century Centre I
  - New Barrister Headquarters
  - The Stokes Seed Building
- Capital Projects Under Development
  - The Guaranty Building
  - New Federal Courthouse
  - Waterfront Entertainment District
  - 598 Main Street
  - Center for Bioinformatics
  - Hauptman-Woodward Institute
  - Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus



The Federal court house project taken with the proposed architecture in the Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus and that on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus sets a new standard for contemporary 21st century architecture in a City already famous for its great 20th century architecture. Part of this work involves the renovation and reuse of the existing Federal court house on Niagara Square. (Source: The US General Services Administration; Kohn Pederson Fox Associates, Architects and Planners)

## VISITING DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- Downtown is one destination with multiple attractions.
- there is something for everyone covering a diverse range of incomes, interests and lifestyles.
- it is user friendly to new and repeat visitors.
- hotels, restaurants, cultural and entertainment venues are thriving.



**BUFFALO NIAGARA  
CONVENTION &  
VISITORS BUREAU**

The Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitor Bureau is engaged in an aggressive marketing campaign to attract new visitors to Buffalo. (Source: Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau)

**The work plan goals** are to understand the needs of visitors to Downtown, enhance their experience, and to encourage increased visits and economic spin-off. Doing this will require establishing new ways to bring visitors to Downtown and enhancing the experience of the existing visitor base.



The Greater Downtown has a substantial number of significant cultural and heritage venues that reinforce its position as a regional center for visitors of all kinds. The sites with stars reflect some of the key contributing venues to the Rethinking Niagara themes of War, Peace and Freedom, Enterprise and the Arts, and The Wealth of Nations. (Source: Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan)

## CONTEXT

### Problem Statement

The existing Downtown visitor base is poorly understood and the potential for associated economic impacts is not clearly quantified. Information is difficult to obtain because the needs of visitors vary by purpose of visit. What data there are tend to reflect nighttime activities over daytime venues.

Retaining the visitor base and increasing it will require improved coordination among attractions with a focus on the quality of visitor experiences and the capacity of organizations to produce such experiences. New destinations like the Erie Canal Harbor and waterfront sports, entertainment and retail venues need to be fully integrated, with the Theatre District and convention venues, into the Downtown visitor experience.

Visitors sometimes find Downtown difficult to navigate. Signage, map materials, and interpretive streetscapes that reflect city history, identify significant districts, and locate key attractions are critical to Downtown wayfinding.

Downtown programming related to festivals and special events needs to be expanded to include more events in the winter months and designed to extend the stay of visitors before and after work and after evening events.

### Current Status

One of Downtown's greatest strengths is its ability to attract residents and visitors to special events, entertainment venues, sporting events, and restaurants and bars. Downtown is the special event hub of the region, drawing over 2.2 million visitors annually. An additional five million visits are made to Downtown for sports, theater, libraries, conventions, and religious services, making Downtown the core of our identity as a regional community.



There are multiple venues Downtown including events like First Night, Taste of Buffalo, and Thursday at the Square. The plan calls for more and multi seasonal events. (Source: The Urban Design Project and Buffalo Place Inc.)

Also important to Downtown, but not as well understood, are business travelers, conventioners, jurors, and heritage and cultural tourists. The Buffalo Convention Center is completing a \$4 million upgrade and in 2003 has booked events projected to spin off \$50 million into the Buffalo economy. Along with different types of visitors, Downtown offers several different entertainment districts. These districts include the Theatre District, Chippewa Street, the sports district, and the waterfront. There are also Downtown-wide attractions including public art, cultural and architectural destinations. Each district has different amenities and visitors.

**Strategies**

- Sustain an inclusive and diverse array of venues.
- Coordinate venues, events, and marketing to maximize impact.
- Enhance wayfinding.
- Make the case for cultural tourism as an economic engine and enhance its potential.

**VISITING DOWNTOWN  
SNAPSHOT: DOWNTOWN  
ATTRACTIONS...**

**Attendance at Downtown Attractions  
(Buffalo Place 1999/2000)**

Sporting events	2,020,260
Special Events	2,172,557
Theatre District	895,905
Waterfront	606,264
Buffalo & Erie County Library	482,104
Churches	378,599
Other Events	79,913
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7,110,871</b>

**Number and Type of Downtown  
Venues**

Sporting	3
Live Theaters	7
Art Galleries	1
Movie theaters	1
Churches	7
Ice Skating Rinks	1
Public Libraries	1

**Action Items**

**Short Term Analysis (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Conduct a multi-venue attitudinal survey.** The purpose of this survey will be to develop a baseline understanding of visitor attitudes about Downtown and their experiences there. Survey questions should include general demographic information, reasons for coming Downtown, cross-use of venues, impressions of the area and frequency of visits. The survey should also determine how a visitor's use of Downtown affects their opinion.

**Short Term Implementation  
(6 months to 1 year)**

- **Develop visitor-specific information packets** targeted to groups including jurors, business travelers, conventioners, and heritage tourists. Each of these groups uses Downtown in a different way and needs different types of information.

**Medium Term Policy (1 to 3 years)**

- **Encourage outdoor performance art to increase street vitality.** Performance art and art displays can bring life to the street. While there are organized musical performances such as the M&T Plaza series, more effort should be given to encouraging other types of performances and exhibits throughout Downtown.

**Medium Term Implementation  
(1 to 3 years)**

- **Create pedestrian level "You Are Here" maps.** Many of the buildings in Downtown are known more by their names than their addresses. This makes it difficult for visitors to find their destination. Pedestrian maps will assist with wayfinding and highlight places of interest.



Outdoor performance art increases street vitality. WaterFire in Providence, RI is an art venue in the city center that employs a combination of music, street theatre, fire in braziers on the water, and hours of operation that extend stays Downtown. (Source: WaterFire, Providence and the Bruner Foundation)

- **Begin programming for events at the waterfront.** Public access to water is a theme that has been repeatedly called for by the public. The Erie Canal Harbor is several years from completion. However, there are already several events in the area that have become popular. These events should be expanded to increase public enjoyment and access to the waterfront.

- **Facilitate cross and joint marketing of the entertainment districts.**  
The primary entertainment districts (Waterfront/Sports and Theatre/Chippewa) that make up Downtown are physically separated. To create stronger connections and strengthen cross-use by visitors, joint marketing of attractions should be increased.

- **Create additional attractions.** There are several types of venues or attractions that could be added to the Downtown portfolio and would attract additional visitors. Three of the suggested attractions are an outdoor performance space in the Theatre District, a carousel, and public art installations.



Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco mixes child and adult venues providing a multi-generational experience for its visitors. (Source: *Commitment to Place: Urban Excellence and Placemaking*, 1999)



Nightlife on Chippewa Street. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

Activities: Visiting	Contributor		Public and Quasi-Public		Non-Profit (NGO)			Private				
	Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Empire State Development	Erie County	Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County	Buffalo Place Inc.	Convention and Visitors Bureau	Theatre District Association	Area Cultural Organizations	Bars and Restaurants	Theatre and Entertainment Venues
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>												
Attitudinal survey and Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative collaboration	2	6	●	■	●	■	●	●	●	●	●	●
Visitor-specific information	1	5	●	■	●	●	■	●	■	●	■	●
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>												
Outdoor performance art	4	4	●	■	●	●	■	■	■	■	■	■
You Are Here Maps	3	3	■	■	●	●	●	●	●	■	●	●
Events at the waterfront	2	2	●	●	●	■	●	■	■	■	■	■
Cross market the entertainment districts	1	1	■	■	■	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Create additional attractions	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	■	●	■	■	■	●
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>												
Another multi-venue attitudinal survey	NR	NR	●	■	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Visiting Downtown draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

### Long Term Analysis (3 to 5 years)

- Conduct another multi-venue attitudinal survey to measure progress. Several years after the first survey is completed a follow up should be done to see if and how attitudes have changed about visiting Downtown.

### Work to Date

- Planning/Organizational Complete
  - Convention Center Feasibility Study
  - DK Shiffrin Study
  - Convention Center Site Selection Study
  - Canal Conversation Report
  - Working for Downtown Forum on the Convention Center Report
  - Re-Thinking the Niagara Frontier
  - Economic Impact Analysis of Events (Thursday at the Square, Taste of Buffalo)
- Planning/Organizational Under Development
  - Buffalo-Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative
- Capital Projects Completed
  - Shea's Performing Arts Center Expansion
  - Andrews Theatre
  - Pfeiffer Theatre Renovation – Sphere Nightclub
- Capital Projects under Development
  - Convention Center Renovations
  - Erie Canal Harbor

### VISITING IN BRIEF

#### Measures of Success

- Increased Attendance at Attractions
- Increase in Hotel Nights
- Increase in Occupancy Rates
- Increase in Number of Convention Attendees
- Increase in Number of Venues
- Improved Visitor Experience as Indicated by Survey
- Increase in Number of Theater Performances
- Increase in Visitor Cross-Use of Establishments

#### Top Rules for Visiting Downtown Action Plan

- Act fast on low cost and high visibility projects.
- Make ease of circulation and a pedestrian-friendly environment top priorities.
- Create wayfinding signage.
- Cross-market and coordinate venues twelve months a year.
- Place parking where and when it is needed.
- Create gateways to celebrate entry to Downtown.
- Focus on diversity of product.



## SHOPPING DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when .....*

- residents, workers and visitors are able to purchase clothing, gift items, groceries, and other merchandise days, nights and weekends.
- it is more exciting because ground floor retail space is fully occupied and thriving.
- retail mix is competitive with other options in the region.
- retail adds economic value and tenant amenities to the building stock.

### The work plan goal for shopping

Downtown is to meet the demands of retail consumers in the workforce, in new residential communities as well as the inner ring of adjacent neighborhoods, and those of visitors of all kinds to Downtown. Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation estimates place this combined unmet demand at close to three hundred million dollars of buying power a year. Buffalo Place Inc. estimates an unmet office employee demand for retail of \$75 million.

### Problem Statement

To be a good place to live, work and play, Downtown must have a full complement of service retail. To be a good place to visit it must have at least boutique retail supporting niche market retailing consistent with visitor demand. There is no one organization designed to promote this array of retail need through marketing, identifying available space, quantifying the business opportunity, and proving the market.

Downtown has essentially lost its retail core, traditionally north and south of Lafayette Square on Main Street. However, it has the available space, ease of access to suburban markets, plans for new residential life, solid office employee base, and the opportunity created by the development of healthy inner ring neighborhoods to bring a significant amount of retailing back into the life of the core. Doing so will require enforcement of existing zoning requirements that animate

ground floor uses by requiring transparency. It will also require revisions to these requirements in order to ensure there are retail use opportunities on the ground floor in high pedestrian traffic areas Downtown.

There is a substantial unmet demand for retail in Downtown. Current employees describe retail opportunities as the number one amenity they want to see created in Downtown. If new neighborhoods Downtown are to thrive they will need service retail. If our aspirations to make a Downtown for everyone are to become real, we will need to connect retail to the inner ring of neighborhoods and to the region.

Most of the basic infrastructure to make retail happen is not in place. Short-term parking to support retailing is in short supply and expensive. The streetscape needs capital maintenance and refurbishment

### Current Status

The current perception is that retail does not work Downtown. A nearly empty mall and well-publicized store closings have reinforced this. However, several specialty and destination stores are thriving. Many of the stores that were in the mall had the highest sales per square foot in the region, even with limited hours typical of a CBD location. More often than not, these closings had more to do with macro corporate failure or landlord tenant relations rather than micro store performance.

Special events and street activity during the summer workday bring large volumes of pedestrians to the street and past the shops. On a typical summer weekday, 15,000 to 20,000 pedestrians walk past underutilized Main Street storefronts. National studies have indicated that pedestrian volumes over 1,000 people per hour are sufficient to support retail development. Four locations along Main Street meet this standard throughout the entire day.



Postcard image from 1920 at Main and Eagle Streets, Downtown. (Source: Library of Congress)



Shopping Downtown 2003. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



Specialty retail stores are an important part of the market for shoppers Downtown. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



Basic services for residents provided by this convenience store are frequently requested by both employees and residents of Downtown. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

The Downtown workforce has \$100 million of buying power available for retail markets Downtown, only a fourth of which is actually spent there. There is also another estimated \$300 million in buying power from residents in and directly adjacent to the CBD and a total of \$3.88 billion throughout the City.

**Strategies**

- Concentrate on existing unmet demands in promotion of retail including worker, Downtown resident, visitor, and inner ring resident markets.
- Seek opportunities to support retailing through incubators and entrepreneurial training.
- Coordinate agency support for retail recruitment and retention.
- Start with local small business that can appreciate peak weekday shopping with limited labor expenses.
- Expand to evenings and weekend retailing consistent with new entertainment and visitor venues as the market and confidence returns to retailing Downtown.

- Develop a strategy to address the required retail mix related to demand Downtown recognizing that office worker, visitor, resident and inner ring resident markets have different needs.
- Educate landlords about the opportunity to attract and retain tenants.

**Action Items**

**Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Develop a multi-agency focus on retail.** Increased retail opportunity could provide economic growth for Downtown. Unfortunately, it gets little or no public attention. Many groups working together could unify the community to push for more retail choices in the core.
- **Encourage retailers to validate parking.** Short-term parking in ramps, lots and at parking meters puts Downtown retailers at a disadvantage when compared to suburban locations with large tracts of free parking. Retailer validated parking would improve customer access to Downtown retail.
- **Modify the Downtown Opportunity Zoning District** to require first floor retail fronting from Huron Street to Church Street.

Existing retail in the core is fragmented and needs concentration even while the entire core should be zoned to require mixed use development. Special attention should be given to assure retail ground floor uses and transparency in the traditional retail core indicated in red. (Source: The Urban Design Project/ data from the 1999 Strategic Plan for Downtown)



Ground floor retail and restaurant services are a key ingredient for a successful Downtown. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



The Farmer's Market should follow the trend in thousands of other US Cities and create a Downtown public market that can service both the Downtown workforce and residents. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

**Short Term Analysis (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Conduct a full assessment of existing retail.** There is an existing base of retail in Downtown. A study of the type, customer base, merchandise, price range and level of success would expand the knowledge of retail. The results from this study could be used to determine the niche, identify gaps and help market to new retailers.
- **Conduct market research of Downtown employees.** In 1998, Buffalo Place Inc., along with the GBNRTC and the City of Buffalo, conducted a study to determine demographic and market data about the Downtown worker, including demand for retail goods and services. This study should be updated in 2003.
- **Identify available retail space.** Currently there is no single source of information about available retail space in Downtown. Data should be collected and housed in one place to facilitate attracting retailers.
- **Identify local and national retail prospects.** Retailers that are looking to expand publicize their market requirements. Using the retail assessment data, matches can be determined and contacted to consider Downtown Buffalo as a location.

**Short Term Implementation (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Seek ways to improve marketing of Downtown retail.** The existing base of retailers does not have a strong marketing program. Working with the existing retailers to develop a marketing plan will strengthen the local market.

- **Prepare marketing materials and an education program** identifying the retail opportunity. Property owners, realtors, and retailers could use these materials to attract new tenants.
- **Develop entry-level retail opportunities.** These opportunities can include expanded sidewalk vending, participation in the Farmers Markets, kiosk markets, and a holiday market. These opportunities will help start-up retailers by keeping costs down and will expand the retail opportunity for the Downtown shopper.
- **Hold a series of focus groups to determine strategies and opportunities for Downtown retail.** A neutral group should host three separate focus groups, one each for realtors and developers, retailers, and economic development agencies and financial institutions. Information collected can help identify current weaknesses and strengths and make recommendations for future action.
- **Hold a retail seminar to reinvigorate interest in Downtown retail.** Feature a retail development expert. Invite property owners and managers, retailers and others.



High pedestrian counts on Main Street represent part of the untapped retail market potential. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

**Medium Term Implementation  
(1 to 3 years)**

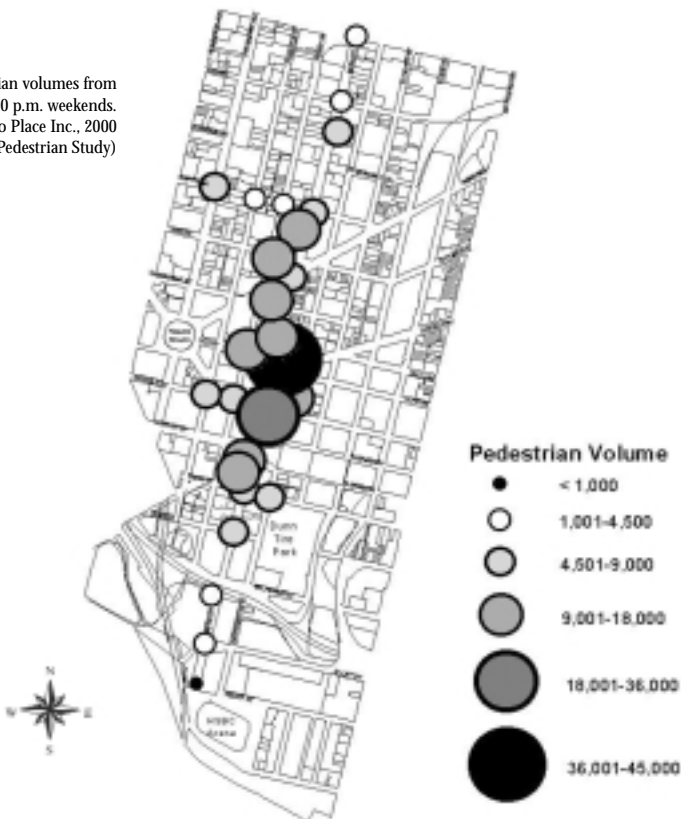
- **Explore revolving loan fund for existing retailers.** Obtaining financing for expansion and other capital costs is often difficult for small retailers. A well-managed revolving loan fund could provide a source of capital that would be used to support retailers.
- **Promote Downtown as an expansion/new market area for local retailers.** Due to the limited shopping time, retailers in Downtown have fewer employee and operating expense needs. This is an ideal situation for existing retailers to expand their sales base. Local retailers also understand the market better than national retailers who base location decisions on standard data.
- **Develop retail incubation space.** Starting a retail venture is risky. Incubation space that provides low rents and support services such as marketing could increase the success rate of start-up businesses.

- **Test the market with special programs.** Special programs would provide better understanding of the true retail market. Examples of special programs are street fairs, holiday markets and overstock sales.

**Long Term Implementation  
(3 to 5 years)**

- **Develop a year-round indoor Public Market.** The Tuesday and Thursday Downtown Country Markets are great successes that provide additional retail opportunities for shoppers and expand the market for farmers and specialty food vendors. Expanding this into a year-round market will increase shopping opportunities, provide convenience retail for residential populations, and provide retail incubator space. There has been a dramatic increase in public market popularity in the US concurrent with increased interest in living Downtown.

Pedestrian volumes from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. weekends. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc., 2000 Downtown Pedestrian Study)



**SHOPPING DOWNTOWN  
SNAPSHOT: CURRENT STATUS...**

**Number of Stores by Category**

Bicycle Shop	1
Book Stores	3
Confectionery Stores	1
Cigar Store	1
Clothing Stores	10
Convenience Stores	3
Eating and Drinking Establishments	108
Electronics	1
Florist	7
Furniture and Household Accessories	3
Gift Stores	5
Jewelry Stores	9
Newsstands	10
Office Supplies	1
Pawn Shops	3
Shoe Stores	5
Stamp/Coin Shop	1
Variety Stores	2
Vitamins/Supplements	1

- Retail employment in 2000 was 452.
- Eating and drinking establishments employment in 2000 was 1,846.
- Downtown workers have an unmet retail demand of \$75 million.
- The city has an unmet retail demand of \$307.8 million.

**SHOPPING IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

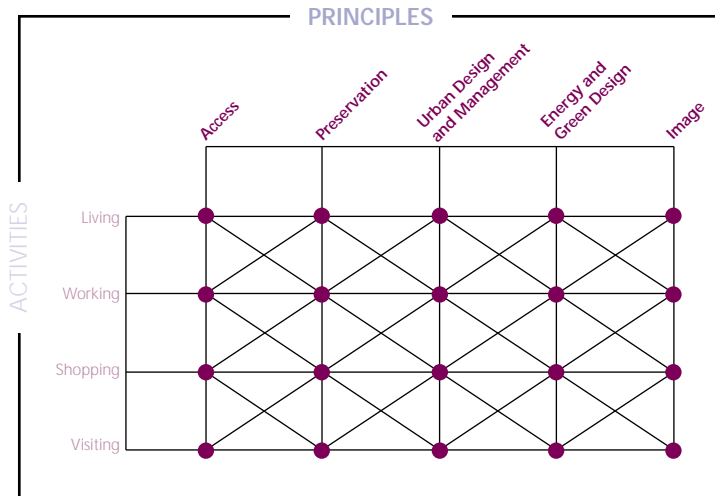
- Increase in Number of Stores by Category
- Increase in Square Feet of Ground Floor Retail Space
- Increase in Retail Employment
- Increase in Employee and Resident Spending Downtown

**Top Rules for Shopping Downtown**

- Do whatever it takes to get space available and ready.
- The quality of retail spaces and pedestrian realm are key to retail success and the "look" of Downtown.
- Identify and incubate the niche markets.
- Build a critical mass of retail in strategic investment areas.
- Perception is reality; address the problems of perception.
- Promote advantages of being a Downtown retailer.
- Promote Downtown as a center for retail for all Downtown neighborhoods.
- Make the case for the importance of retail in Downtown – live, work, and play venues are reinforced by retail opportunities.
- Tap into existing resources to make it happen – SBDC, BNE, BEREC, BPI, ESD.

Activities: Shopping	Contributor		Public and Quasi-Public						Non-Profit (NPO)		Private	
	Importance within line items	Importance across line items	Buffalo Civic Alliance	City of Buffalo	Erle County Industrial Development Authority	GBEREC	Small Business Administration	Urban League	Buffalo Niagara Partnership	Buffalo Place Inc.	Small Business Assistance Center	Banks and Financial Institutions
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>												
Multi-Agency focus on retail	7	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Retailer validated parking	4	6	●	●					●		●	
Modify Downtown Opportunity Zoning District	NR	NR	●									
Full assessment of existing retail	3	5	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●
Employee market research	6	9	●			●			●	●		
Identify available retail space	5	7	●	●					●	●		●
Identify retail prospects	1	1	●	●					●	●	●	●
Improve marketing of downtown retail	B	B							●	●	●	●
Develop and use prepared marketing materials	B	B	●		●				●	●		●
Entry level retail opportunities	2	2	●					●	●	●		●
Series of focus groups	B	B	●						●	●	●	●
Retail Seminar	NR	NR	●	●				●	●	●	●	●
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>												
Revolving Loan Fund	3	10	●	●			●				●	
Promote as an expansion market	1	3	●	●					●	●	●	●
Retail incubation space	2	8	●	●	●				●	●	●	●
Special programs	4	11	●						●	●	●	●
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>												
Year-round Public Market	1	4							●		●	●

Shopping Downtown draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)



The five principles establish the policy environment for the core activity program for Downtown.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)

## FIVE PRINCIPLES

Each of the four activity programs should be implemented in accordance with five key principles for Downtown: access, urban design and management, preservation, energy and green design, and image.

**Accessing Downtown:** making the Downtown Hub easy to understand and user friendly with fully integrated pedestrian, bike, car, bus and rail services. It must be an access system that is well connected to the neighborhoods and the waterfront while it supports all the activities Downtown.

**Urban Design and Management Downtown:** creating a quality pedestrian environment; one that is both beautiful and urban.

**Preservation Downtown:** assuring the preservation of historically significant buildings and related urban fabric and districts. A preservation approach designed to use history as a significant economic development tool, balancing a reasonable demolition policy with building re-use and restoration.

**Energy and Green Design Downtown:** achieving energy efficiencies and related cost savings, improving our ecology with sustainable design, and adding to the quality of life in Downtown.

**Image Downtown:** representing an accurate picture of Downtown, its current life and future potential.



## ACCESSING DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- access is easy to understand and user friendly.
- parking is no longer an issue.
- there is an intermodal system for train, bus, bikes, pedestrians, etc.
- we are connected to the waterfront on the south and west.
- the access system supports all the activities of Downtown.

**The work plan goal** for access Downtown is to create an integrated access and transportation system supporting all of the activity programs Downtown.

### Problem Statement

Access is a comprehensive issue encompassing many different modes of transportation. Quality access is not an end in itself; but is a service supporting all the other activities that occur Downtown. The challenge is to balance price, availability, and management of the various access options to best support Downtown activities.

For example, workers rely on convenient transit, affordable parking, and pedestrian friendly connections to move to work. Perceived and real deficiencies result in employers choosing to relocate, affecting the Downtown economy. Visitors require understandable street patterns, accurate signage, and convenient access or parking to encourage trips to Downtown for entertainment. Downtown housing also requires access to transit and parking in order to secure tenants. Housing developments near established transit lines may reduce the demand for parking by residents. At the same time, residential units near the office core find it difficult to secure parking due to daytime use by office tenants.

Roads and rails represent only a small part of critical access and urban design infrastructure. Parking, pedestrian access, and bike circulation, also need to be addressed in a manner that mitigates the negative effects of the current infrastructure. (Source: The Urban Design Project – Photo courtesy of the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)



Access to Downtown is constrained by many factors. There are multiple agencies responsible for management which leads to a lack of cooperation. Traffic control has been designed to favor automobile trips in or out of Downtown over multi-modal circulation through Downtown. Management and pricing of parking has been the subject of extensive study, ongoing refinement, and is of continuing interest to both public and private sectors as well as Downtown advocates.

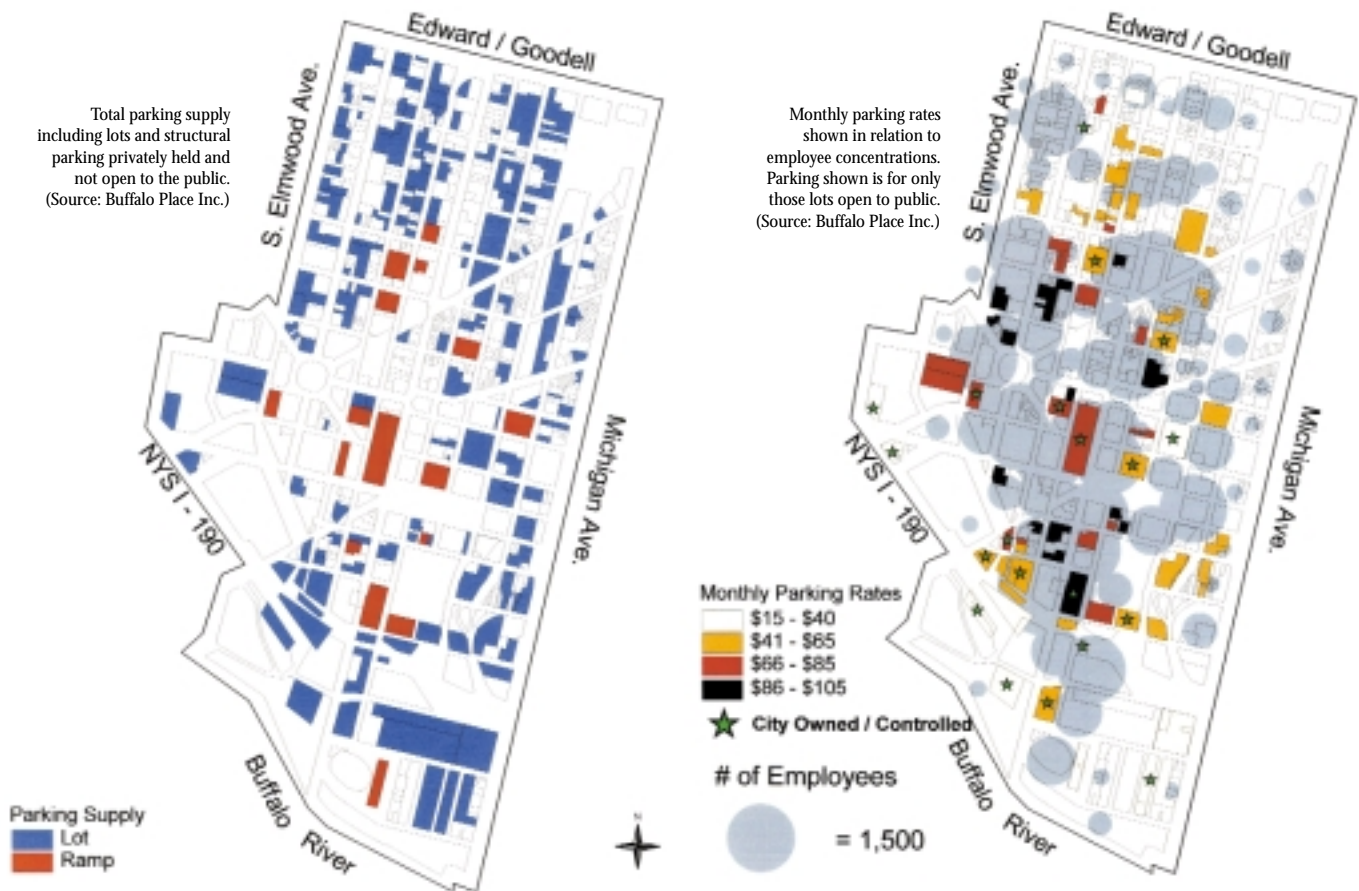
**Cooperation:** There are at least ten agencies involved in providing access in the Downtown area: New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), New York State Thruway Authority, Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps (BCAR), Buffalo Place Inc., City of Buffalo Department of Public Works Traffic Engineering and Street Design

divisions, the Buffalo Division of Parking Enforcement, City of Buffalo Parking Board, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), and Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC). The numerous agencies involved increase confusion and reduce coordination.

As a result there is no comprehensive access plan for Downtown that acknowledges the various modes of access and their interdependence. There is no coordinated pedestrian, bike, bus, rail, car pool, shuttle, and parking management system. Finally there is no single reliable source of data to determine demand and potential use for Downtown access programs and modes of transit.

Total parking supply including lots and structural parking privately held and not open to the public. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

Monthly parking rates shown in relation to employee concentrations. Parking shown is for only those lots open to public. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)







It is critical to find a dedicated source of revenue for Buffalo's Metro Rail.  
(Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



Ten hour/\$2.00 parking is part of a larger strategy to revamp parking rates and access.  
(Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

**Transit:** Mass transit ridership is declining and operating deficits, as a result, are increasing. Recent transit fare increases were understandable but encourage those with access to an automobile to drive and park Downtown. The community supports Metro Rail expansion but a lack of dedicated operating funding inhibits progress.

**Signage, wayfinding and marketing:** There is a lack of awareness about access options. Downtown is a destination, yet information about getting to and around it is hard to locate. This is even truer regarding access to the waterfront. While there are multiple routes to the water there is little announcement of them Downtown and none of the urban design supports that would define them as special gateways. Existing Downtown visitor signage is in need of updating. Pedestrian "You Are Here" signage tied to directory maps has been a long-term goal that needs to be implemented.

**Traffic speed and pattern:** The remaining one-way streets Downtown are effective at rapidly moving high volumes of traffic. One-way patterns make it difficult to travel within Downtown and are not user friendly to Downtown visitors or pedestrians. The one-way streets linking the Kensington Expressway (Route 33) and the I-190, while preferable to the originally planned grade separated highway, divide Downtown from the BNMC, the 700–800 block of Main St. and the East Side of Buffalo. The relatively high speed and one-way street patterns that result contribute to an unfriendly pedestrian environment and frequently unsafe driving conditions due to excess speeds.

The Buffalo Place pedestrian/transit mall on Main Street limits access to the major properties Downtown and has contributed to the loss of first floor occupancy and Main Street property values. As the "image center" for our region, the "vacant look of Downtown" has been found to inhibit regional efforts to attract new employers even to suburban locations. Main Street's

over-wide sidewalks often seem empty, resulting in security concerns, although actual pedestrian volumes are quite high. Vehicular traffic would add vitality to Main Street and bring sidewalk widths down to a more appropriate, comfortable pedestrian scale.

**Parking:** Parking is important to the issue of access. There have been five studies focused on parking in the last ten years. Many of the recommendations in these studies have been implemented, or are in progress. There is still work to be done to make the best use of existing parking resources and to coordinate the seven public entities which have parking responsibility. Management of these agencies' diverse agendas requires ongoing attention.

The demand for parking exceeds the current supply in the core of Downtown, according to both the multi-agency Destination Downtown 2002 report and the ongoing work of Buffalo Place Inc. In addition, approximately 28 percent of the surface area of Downtown is dedicated to off street parking with less than 5 percent of that in structured parking. Only 27 percent of the surface area of Downtown has buildings on it. The result endangers aspirations for a dense, urban, and pedestrian friendly Downtown.

However, office tenants, who constitute the major economic engine of Downtown, require parking before they will commit to lease space. The inaccurate perception that parking is free in the suburbs creates a problem in attracting new business Downtown. The reality is that such parking is incorporated into commercial rent structures and not passed on to individual users, as it is Downtown.

### Current Status

- There is a shortage of structured parking in the core relative to current market demands. Inexpensive parking charges designed to support office occupancy result in overuse of limited parking in the Downtown core while there is a surplus in the periphery.
- The NFTA Strategic Transit Assessment completed in April of 2000 indicates that there is potential to leverage public/private opportunities to support improved transit even as federal sources are increasingly constrained.
- A final environmental assessment was completed for multi-modal access and revitalization of Main Street. The preferred alternative was for vehicular traffic to share the trainway with Metro Rail. Metro stations will be redesigned to be smaller and thinner and around 125 short term curb parking spaces will be provided. These changes will result in Main Street sidewalk widths in the 19 to 25 foot range, similar to Court Street; wide enough to accommodate Main Street's impressive pedestrian volumes and pedestrian amenities, but small enough to feel comfortably occupied throughout the year.
- North/ south connections in Downtown are strong – east/ west connections are weak. There is a need to facilitate the movement of people between the periphery and the core.
- The Elm-Oak corridor is not pedestrian friendly and acts as a barrier to the East Side neighborhoods.
- Parking is still essential in securing office tenancies and countering the continued movement of business to suburban locations that offer easy parking. Much work has been done to help address the imbalance of parking in the CBD. Many of recommendations of the Destination Downtown Buffalo 2002 Study have been implemented, and gains have been made. But until the question of the management of the parking system is addressed problems will continue.
- Downtown access solutions involving public transit cannot proceed due to lack of funding. These potential solutions include extension of Metro Rail south to Mississippi Street or Michigan Avenue, a Downtown free-fare bus zone, and circulator bus service linking employment in the core and available parking at the periphery of Downtown.

### Strategies

- Create a single access management system that includes all of the access service providers.
- Build on the strength of previous work.
- Encourage the use of car-pools, bicycles, and Live-Near-Your-Work programs that reduce single occupant vehicle trips.
- Encourage the use of transit while providing an opportunity to use a car for those who may need to do so during the day.
- Express the gateways to Downtown and access points to the water with quality signage and streetscape amenities.



The Park n' Go shuttle offers another access option for the Downtown workforce. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)



The Park n' Go lot near the Arena. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

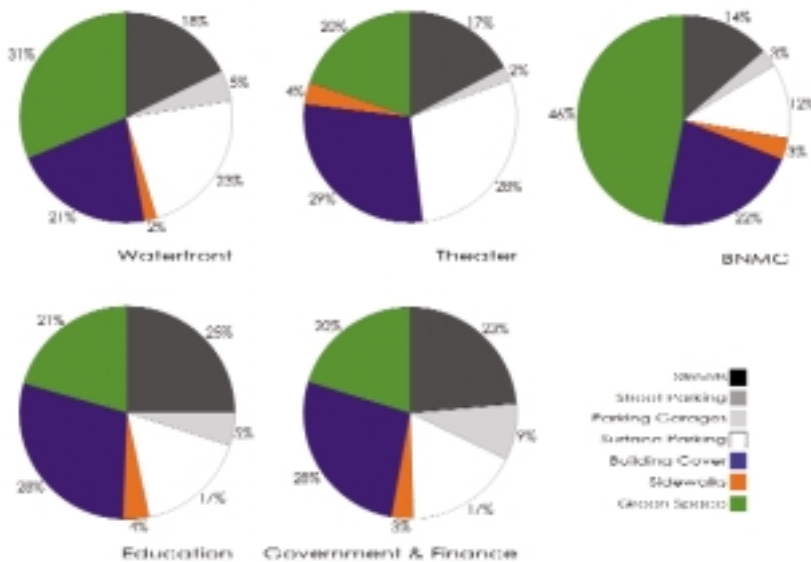
**ACCESSING DOWNTOWN  
SNAPSHOT: CURRENT STATUS...**

- Three expressways lead into the CBD.
- Approx. 43,000 cars enter the CBD daily.
- 39.6 percent of the linear feet of Downtown streets are one-way.
- Daily Metro Ridership to/from Downtown
  - Bus 13,400
  - Rail 9,950
- One light rail line
- 17 local bus routes
- 17 express bus routes
- Buffalo Place Park 'n Ride has 1500 registered parkers.
- 25,175 off-street parking spaces exist in the CBD.
- 1,881 on-street parking spaces exist in the CBD.
- 28 percent of the surface area of Downtown is devoted to off-street parking.

**Action Items**

**Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Use the Access Infrastructure Task Force as a forum** for identifying issues, coordinating access providers and implementing solutions. Membership should be expanded to include all access providers and groups that focus on bicycle and pedestrian access.
- **Open closed streets and convert the majority of one-way streets to two-way.** Streets closed for the pedestrian mall should be opened. There are many reasons to convert one-way streets to two-way streets. The conversion can improve pedestrian access, increase safety, eliminate confusion in traffic patterns, and enhance accessibility to businesses. Currently 39.6 percent of streets in Downtown are one-way. This should be reduced to less than 10 percent.
- **Research systems for integrating transit costs into commercial rents.** Suburban office parks have free parking, or so it seems. Parking spaces and the maintenance of the lots is built into the commercial rent; therefore it is not passed on to the worker or customer. In Downtown, the cost of parking or transit is paid by the worker or customer. If commercial rents included the cost of transit for workers it would eliminate the pass on of cost and encourage more people to take transit.
- **Insure public access to the waterfront from Downtown and from the waterside.** Access needs to be improved for boats, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and commercial traffic.
- **Promote and expand the Park and Ride programs.** Assess the market demand and create more frequent rail or shuttle bus service.



The pie charts above indicate the "urban carpet" as it currently exists Downtown. One objective is to reduce the amount of surface area consumed by parking. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The speed of traffic moving to and from the I-190 ramp on the south and from route 33 on the north separates Downtown from the near East Side neighborhoods. The plan calls for improved pedestrian friendly crossings on the Elm/Oak corridor and other traffic mediation measures. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

**Short Term Implementation**

**(6 months to 1 year)**

- **Continue to implement the recommendations of the Destination Downtown Buffalo 2002 Report.** The report focused much of its attention on parking and public transportation. Many of the recommendations have been implemented or are underway. One recommendation, which is a public priority that has not been implemented, is the expansion of Metro Rail.
- **Complete two-way conversions of Franklin Street from Court to Church and Washington and Ellicott Streets between Goodell and the BNMC.**
- **Secure funding and complete preliminary design for Multi-modal Access and Revitalization of Main Street.**
- **Develop a Downtown Access marketing campaign** including a comprehensive access map – online and hard copy. There is often confusion about parking (how much and where), Metro Bus and Rail, Amtrak, pedestrian and bicycle routes. A comprehensive campaign and physical improvements could help to eliminate the perception that it is hard to get around.
- **Create an Access Fund to support Downtown transportation-related projects.** An alternative funding source that could be used for innovative transportation projects such as a circulator bus or free-fare bus zone is needed. This fund could be supported through public and private resources. The goal is to use the money for improvements to the transportation system that cannot be financed through traditional budget lines.
- **Increase focus on bicycle and pedestrian access.** This includes creating new bicycle lanes and parking options, working with the NFTA to get bike racks on buses, enhanced crosswalks and other walkability enhancements.

- **Encourage car-pooling/ride sharing.** Incentives to people agreeing to car-pool can include reduced rates for parking, preferred parking spaces, decreased time on wait lists for ramp spaces or other ideas. The goal is to make car-pooling/ride sharing not only an option but also something that has a tangible benefit.

**Medium Term Analysis (1 to 3 years)**

- **Conduct transportation study on Elm-Oak Corridor for potential improvements.** The Elm-Oak corridor is an excellent way to move cars quickly through Downtown. It is designed and timed so that a car traveling 30 miles an hour will not be stopped by a red light. Unfortunately, the corridor often has cars traveling significantly faster than 30 miles an hour. The timing of the lights is not conducive to pedestrian crossing. the corridor is also a significant barrier both visually and physically between the East Side and the Downtown core. A study that analyzes how the road is used and how the community wants it to be used would include recommended improvements.
- **Determine the demand for access services and infrastructure.** This study should look at the optimum price for parking, the demand for circulator buses, free fare zones, additional parking spaces, expanding metro rail, and other improvements to the access system that could be undertaken. This study could form the foundation of a comprehensive Downtown Access Master Plan.
- **Explore creating a Downtown free fare bus zone using existing Metro Bus routes.** This would serve to move people around the Downtown area as well as to periphery parking lots. Consider this in concert with the circulator bus program.



The Metropolitan Transportation Center is slated for refurbishment improving its exterior relationship to the streets and the quality of public spaces and offices on the interior. (Source: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority)



One of the alternatives explored as a way of returning cars to Main Street involved creating separate lanes. The review process has led to the selection of a phased program where the track bed would be shared. (Source: Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority)



The preferred alternative to cars sharing Main Street is for cars to share the track bed. (Source: Buffalo Place Inc.)

- **Develop a comprehensive Downtown Access Master Plan.** A comprehensive plan would determine needed improvements for all modes of transportation including automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, bus and light rail. Many transportation and access agencies prepare capital budgets five years in advance. Working with the necessary agencies to prepare a plan that can then be worked into their capital budgets is the best way to move most projects forward.
- **Develop a study of the feasibility of intra-city passenger rail linking Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and Toronto.**

**Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)**

- **Convert selected one-way streets to two-way.** Continue the program of two-way street conversions with Seneca Street west of Washington Street, Swan, Pearl, Tupper, and Goodell Streets.
- **Secure funding, complete final design and build Phases 1 and 2 of the Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization Project.** Phase I includes converting the 700 block of Main Street to a two-way street, and shared vehicular use of the train way between Tupper and Huron Streets. Phase 2 would be design and construction between Huron and Church Streets.

- **Coordinate transportation efforts with the BNMC.** There are many opportunities for the traditional Downtown core and BNMC to cooperate including a circulator bus, expanded parking opportunities and coordinated traffic patterns.
- **Create one coordination entity responsible for managing Downtown's access system** including on- and off-street parking and a shuttle or circulator bus system. Currently there are at least ten organizations that are directly involved in managing parking and access.

One entity that could coordinate and manage the various aspects of the system would increase efficiency, decrease duplication and reduce costs.

- **Develop and implement a circulator bus program.** A circulator bus would be used to both move people around Downtown and to move people to periphery parking lots. Consider using compressed natural gas or other alternative fuels. Use of alternative fuels increases the opportunity to obtain funding from alternative sources such as the U.S. Department of Energy and makes the service more marketable to environmentally conscious users.
- **Improve HSBC event station.** This light rail rapid transit station is used only during events at HSBC Arena. Expanding availability and improving this station will enhance access to the waterfront and lower Main Street.
- **Begin renovations of Metropolitan Transportation Center.** This center for intra- and inter-urban transportation is long overdue for renovations to improve the look and efficiencies. Renovations will make this arrival point to Buffalo more attractive, modern and inviting.

**Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)**

- **Implement recommended changes to the Elm-Oak corridor.**
- **Complete the final design and construction phase of the Main Street Multi-modal Access and Revitalization project between Church and Division Streets and Scott Street.**
- **Complete Erie Canal Harbor infrastructure and inter-modal transportation center project.**

Principles: Access	Contributor		Public and Open Public										Non-Profit (NPO)				Private		
	Important within time frame	Important across time frame	Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps	City of Buffalo	Engle State Development	Erie County	Erie County Industrial Development Authority	GH&P/C	NFTA	NYSDOT	Access Infrastructure Task Force	Arbush	Buffalo Niagara Enterprise	Buffalo Niagara Memorial Campus	Buffalo Place Inc.	Citizens for Rapid Transit	Partners for a Livable Downtown New York	Wellness Institute	Private Building Consent
<b>SHORT TERM (0-12 MONTHS)</b>																			
Access Infrastructure Task Force as a Forum	2	5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Open Closed Streets and Convert One-way Streets to Two-Way	8	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Research Integrating Transit Costs into Commercial Rent	3	9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Increase public access to the waterfront	8	10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Promote and Expand NFTA Park and Ride Programs	1	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue Implementation of Destination Downtown Buffalo 2002?	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Complete next phase two way street conversions	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Secure Funding and Complete Design for Multi-modal Access on Main Street	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Downtown Access Marketing	5	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Creating an Access Fund	4	11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Focus on bicycle and pedestrian access	P	P	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Encourage carpooling/ride sharing			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>																			
Study on Elm-Oak Corridor	P	P	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Demand study of access and infrastructure	P	P	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Free Fare Bus Zone	5	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Downtown Access Master Plan	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Study of intra-city passenger rail	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Convert next phase of selected one-way streets to two-way	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Finalize design and financing for Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization	3	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Coordinate Transportation efforts with the BMMC	10	16	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Coordinated management of downtown access	4	6	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Downtown Circulator Bus	6	10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Improve HSBC events station	7	13	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Begin Renovations of Metropolitan Transportation Center	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>																			
Implement Recommended Changes to Elm-Oak Corridor	1	7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Complete Main Street Intermodal Access	8	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Complete Erie Canal Harbor	8	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Access Downtown draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

**Work to Date**

- Planning/Organizational Completed
  - Short-Term Parking Plan
  - Destination Downtown Buffalo 2002
  - Desman Associates Report
  - Report of the Mayor's Parking Advisory Committee
  - Report of the Downtown Parking Committee
  - Feasibility of Cars Sharing Main Street
  - 1995 Central Business District Parking Study
  - Cars Sharing Main Street Staff Analysis
  - Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization Project Final Environmental Assessment
  - Park N' Go Shuttle
- Planning/Organizational Under Development
  - Implementation of the Access Infrastructure Task Force Work Plan
- Capital Projects Completed
  - Improve Lighting Downtown
  - Two-way Street Conversions of Huron, Ellicott, Franklin and Washington
- Capital Projects Under Development
  - Expansion of the Adam Parking Ramp
  - Expansion of the Augspurger Parking Ramp
  - Chippewa Street Improvements
  - Erie Canal Harbor
  - Street Circulation Revisions
  - Metropolitan Transportation Center
  - Intermodal Transportation Center
  - Main Street Multi-Modal Access and Revitalization Project

**ACCESSING IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

- Increased Metro Ridership Into Downtown
- Increased and Better Use of On-Street Parking
- Maintain High Ramp Occupancy
- Decrease Percentage of One-Way Streets
- Increase in Park 'N Go Ridership
- Ratio of Parking Spaces to Occupied Square Feet, City vs. Suburbs
- Reduced Total Area of Surface Parking
- Reduced Single Occupant Vehicle Trips to Downtown Through Car-Pool, Transit Use, Bicycle, Walking, etc.

**Top Rules for Accessing Downtown Action Plan**

- Use common sense approach that recognizes fiscal reality.
- Create an intermodal system.
- Make more efficient use of real estate and infrastructure.
- Access brings mobility brings opportunity.
- Establish access priorities; parking is not the only issue.
- Seek better coordination between access providers and modes, inter- and intra-agency.
- Emphasize relationship between access and business development.
- Improve signage, wayfinding, and gateways.
- Reduce surface parking and increase use of multi-use/pedestrian friendly parking facilities.

## URBAN DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- aesthetics are understood as part of the performance in each activity and principle.
- the success of Downtown is measured by urban qualities instead of suburban standards.
- people want to get out of their vehicles and walk.
- quality urban design is understood as a prerequisite to a good return on investment.

**The work plan goal** is to institutionalize the requirement to make every act of infrastructure and new development in Downtown contribute to the quality of the public realm and its maintenance. Downtown is a unique asset to the region. With an impressive stock of historic buildings, a unique working atmosphere, and a large employment base, Downtown is and will continue to be the symbolic heart of the region. It is therefore vital to adequately manage Downtown and ensure its attractiveness.



Below: A great Downtown requires a cohesive system of open spaces defining the public realm. A comprehensive urban design action plan will develop such a system for *The Queen City Hub*. (Source: The Urban Design Project with GIS data from the Office of Strategic Planning, Data Analysis Section)





Another aspect of an urban design action plan would establish design review procedures that ensure future architecture can take its place along with the best of Buffalo's current stock of buildings. (Source: The Urban Design Project and Buffalo Place Inc.)



The 1892 Market Arcade links Main and Washington Streets with equal attention to detail for both streets. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

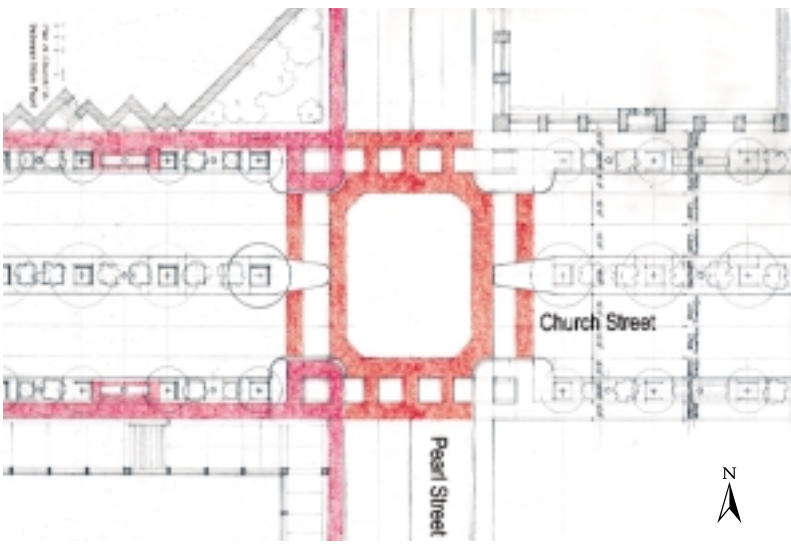
**Problem Statement**

The public realm of Downtown needs basic capital improvements, higher maintenance and landscape design standards throughout Downtown, and higher expectations in the architectural design of new infill construction. In addition, Downtown has become separated from the neighborhoods and the waterfront through buildings, high speed roads, and poor streetscape design. Portions of historic districts are in disrepair and lack consistent enforcement of their design standards or even basic code compliance. Buffalo is also a city that has some extreme snow conditions, while Downtown in particular often experiences strong winds. However, there seems to be little attention to making Buffalo an excellent winter city. There is no comprehensive plan or system to identify and address urban design issues.

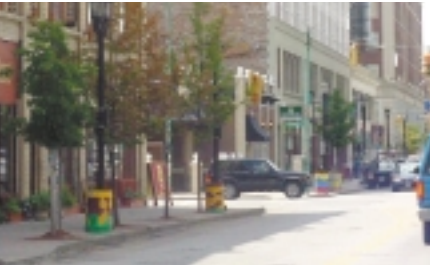
Outside of the Buffalo Place district of Main, Washington and Pearl Streets there is no one organization that focuses on maintenance and Buffalo Place does not have the structure or authority to focus on needed capital improvements or design guide compliance.

**Current Status**

- Pearl and Washington are the main vehicular entrances to Downtown and have been ignored. Their appearance needs to be dramatically improved.
- Existing ramps and surface parking lots are some of the main detractors from the appearance of Downtown.
- It is often unclear to visitors how to access the waterfront.
- Some sidewalks are broken and cracked and in need of replacement.
- There are no signs or gateways that celebrate the arrival into Downtown.
- There are a number of vacant buildings that are improperly mothballed. The negative look of these buildings affects the image of Downtown.



**Right:** The Urban Design Action Plan will also need to develop the details of *The Queen City Hub* great streets program. The concept above is intended to illustrate the adjustment of six lanes to four on Church Street leaving room for significant landscape treatment and improving the pedestrian experience at the crossing. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Chippewa entertainment strip.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



Blending downtown living with active entertainment presents several design challenges that should be addressed in the Urban Design Action Plan.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



A comprehensive Urban Design Action Plan will also help assure transparency at the street level and active first floor uses. We should avoid the blank wall architecture of the 70s like this Pearl Street façade for the Buffalo Convention Center.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)

### Strategies

Create an Urban Design Action Plan that defines the standards for a quality public realm, identifies priority areas, makes Downtown greener, and identifies joint funding opportunities. The plan should address:

- Changing what have been the “backs of buildings” on Washington and Pearl Streets into fronts.
- Using key streets like Genesee, Church, Erie and Main to emphasize relationships to water.
- Working on the street infrastructure to insure that needed sidewalk, crosswalk, and basic infrastructure standards are fully met.
- Connecting Downtown to the neighborhoods through a system of “great streets” based on the key elements of Joseph Ellicott’s radial and grid street pattern and Olmsted’s incorporation of the pattern in his park and parkway system design.
- Developing detailed design guides for neighborhood areas, historic districts, and strategic investment areas so there is variety Downtown even while a consistent standard of quality is maintained. We need one Downtown with many attractions.

### Action Items

#### Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)

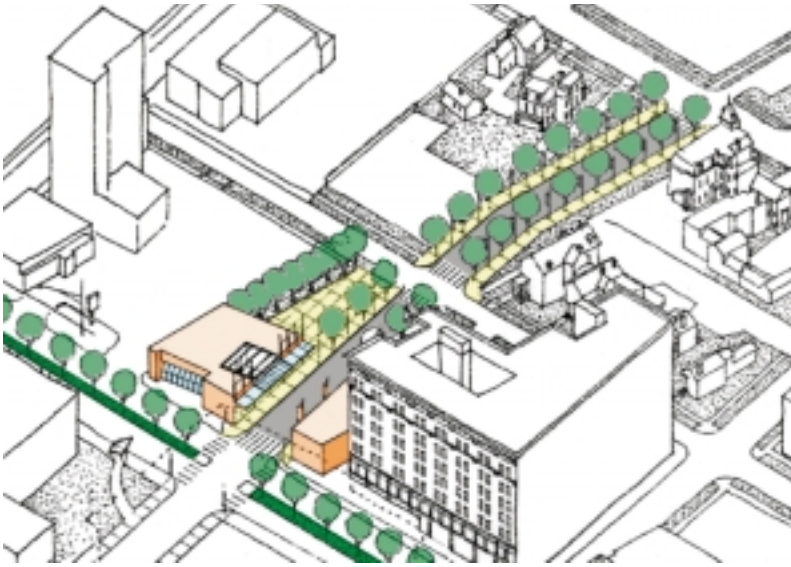
- **Increase focus on the importance of Washington and Pearl Streets.** The Main Street pedestrian mall is a quality pedestrian environment that many enjoy. However, due to Main Street’s lack of vehicular traffic, Washington and Pearl Streets have become the primary entrances into Downtown. The pedestrian mall has been well maintained and developed. More of this type of attention needs to be given to Washington and Pearl because although they are the “back door” to Main Street, they are the doors that are used most.
- **Establish a moratorium on permits for new surface parking lots.** In order to create a new surface parking lot, an existing building has to be taken down. Much of the urban fabric has been sacrificed to surface parking and additional lots would only further erode the character and uniqueness of the area.
- **Enhance public access to the water.** The history of Buffalo is based on its connection to the water. The public has repeatedly expressed a desire to enhance and maintain waterfront access whenever possible.

#### Short Term Implementation (6 months to 1 year)

- **Develop an Urban Design Action Plan.**
  - Conduct urban design inventory – public and private spaces.
  - Develop urban design guidelines with special standards for strategic investment areas, historic districts, and priority residential areas.

#### URBAN DESIGN DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT: THINGS THAT AFFECT URBAN DESIGN...

- Scale
- Density: building height, full corners, infill of vacant lots
- Landscaping
- Streets/ streetscape
- Lighting (street, sidewalk, on buildings, from buildings)
- Building design
- Cleanliness



The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan calls for greening the connections along Allen Street through the Allen Street transit station. (Source: The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, Chan Krieger and Associates)

• **Focus on the greening of Downtown.**

Adding green space to the urban environment has both visual and ecological benefits. Public and private entities should collaborate on landscape planning to soften the edges, mark special passages, and beautify the Downtown area.

• **Develop and enforce surface parking lot and parking ramp design standards.**

City code currently mandates screening standards for new parking lots. However, there are no design standards for new or existing parking ramps. New standards are required to enhance screening and ensure designs and mixed-use spaces to retain pedestrian friendly and animated streetscapes. Remove grandfathering of existing lots to require they install adequate screening consistent with modern standards.

**Medium Term Analysis (1 to 3 years)**

• **Develop winter city design standards.**

A realistic assessment of what other cities have done to celebrate winter through architecture and urban design must be undertaken. Buffalo winters can be harsh and can create extreme wind conditions on Main Street. An investigation and recommendations of ways to mitigate these problems will enhance the year-round life of Downtown.

**Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)**

• **Enhance connections to the neighborhoods and waterfront.**

Public access to the waterfront is a priority for the community. Make existing connections more inviting through simple improvements. Visual improvements such as banners, lighting, improved sidewalks and landscaping will greatly enhance existing connections to the waterfront.

• **Dedicate a code officer to Downtown.**

Currently, code enforcement for Downtown is not as aggressive as it needs to be. A code enforcement officer has Downtown as part of his responsibilities. However, due to the unique needs of the area, one officer needs to be assigned solely to the CBD. Included in the responsibilities for this officer would be sidewalks, parking lots, signage, and buildings.

**Medium Term Policy (1 to 3 years)**

• **Develop a mixed-use land use plan for Downtown.** Current land use patterns within the CBD are based on a single zoning standard (DO – Downtown Opportunity). This standard may not reflect the variety of uses and development needs that Downtown is now facing. Focusing future development where it will be complementary will build on the current success of the areas and will strengthen them further. A land use plan and revised DO zoning standards will recommend locations for retail, office, residential, open space and other physical developments including transportation along with design standards consistent with the range of uses.



The Robert Adam Parking Ramp and street frontage (top) compared with a parking structure on the main commercial street in Downtown Denver, CO (bottom). Note how the Denver facility is animated with ground floor retail. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Sites like this underpass connecting the waterfront to Main Street on Erie Street deserve special landscape and streetscape design to enhance the connection between Downtown and the waterfront. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

- **Revamp Downtown signage.** On any street corner there are likely to be at least three or four signs including way-finding, street names, traffic regulations and other information. However, the signs were developed at different times and without respect for each other. This gives the impression of a disorganized and cluttered area. A new system for signage that has a unified design theme will make the streets look better, improve wayfinding, and give the area a more cohesive feel.

- **Require and enforce capital replacement of sidewalks.** Many Downtown sidewalks are uneven and crumbling, and in some cases have holes. Property owners are responsible for sidewalk maintenance. The City must work with owners to encourage sidewalk upgrades and, when necessary, fine uncooperative properties.

- **Improve all gateways into Downtown.** Gateways are used to celebrate the arrival to a special place. Signage and landscaping at the primary entrances into Downtown will improve the look and image of the area.
- **Create live/work art space in vacant storefronts** to provide street-level activity. A program like this will benefit both the artists and the property owner – the artist has a quality place to work and gets greater exposure for his or her work. Additionally, the artist establishes life and

interest in vacant places that currently detract from the urban feel of the streetscape. Finally, buildings that are underutilized will be occupied and deterioration may be prevented. Various grant programs can be used to implement this type of program such as those from the New York State Council on the Arts.


- **Enforce and strengthen code requirements for boarding up vacant buildings.** Section §341-13 of the City code requires that vacant buildings be closed so that they are not accessible to unauthorized persons. It also requires that the boarding up of the building be done so that it is not harmful to the surrounding area. Greater definition of what is visually harmful and strict enforcement would help to alleviate the visual harm done by vacant buildings.

### Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)

- **Reconnect Downtown to the neighborhoods by enhancing the radial pattern.** The radial street plan from which Buffalo grew is one of the things that make the city unique. In places, buildings or high capacity streets have disrupted this street plan. Through visual improvements such as trees, banners and landscaping greater connection between the neighborhoods and Downtown can be established.
- **Offer an advocacy category of membership in Buffalo Place.** Issues that affect the Central Business District do not respect artificially drawn lines. Currently there is no unified voice for Downtown to advocate for issues locally or at a state level. Expanding Buffalo Place through different categories of membership would provide a single voice for Downtown property owners, tenants, and residents.

Below: All of the gateways to Downtown require special attention with landscape, signage, and traffic calming. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)



<b>Principles: Urban Design</b>   Contributor		Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	Public and Quasi-Public						Non-Profit (NGO)				Private
				City of Buffalo	Empire State Development	Erie County	GBNHRC	NFTA	NYSDDOT	Access Infrastructure Task Force	AIA and APA	Arts Council for Erie County	Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus	
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>														
Focus on Washington and Pearl Streets	3	8	●									●	●	●
Moratorium on surface parking lots	1	3	●											
Enhance Access to Water	NR	NR	●											
Urban Design Action Plan	2	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Dedicate a Code Officer	4	13	●											
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>														
Develop mix-use land-use plan	4	7	●	●								●	●	●
Greening of downtown	2	2	●	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Develop Parking design standards	5	9	●	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Develop Winter city design standards	NR	NR	●	●				●	●	●		●	●	●
Enhance connections to waterfront and neighborhoods	1	1	●	●	●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Revamp signage	6	10	●		●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Replace sidewalks	8	12	●											
Improve gateways	3	6	●	●	●							●	●	●
Live-Work art space	7	11			●					●		●	●	●
Enforce boarding up buildings			●											
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>														
Enhance the Radial Street Pattern	1	5	●		●			●	●	●		●	●	●
Advocacy campaign in Buffalo Place	2	14										●	●	●

Urban Design draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

### Work to Date

- Capital Projects Completed
  - Improved lighting on Main Street
  - Washington street trees
- Capital Projects Under Development
  - Buffalo Place gateway project
  - Chippewa Street improvements

### URBAN DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT IN BRIEF

#### Measures of Success

- Change in Number of Code Violations Issued in Downtown
- Increase in the Number of Urban Friendly Trees Downtown
- Increase in the Number of Parking Lots that are Adequately Screened and Landscaped
- Number of Restored Storefronts/Buildings
- Decrease in the Percentage of Downtown Covered by Surface Parking
- Increase in the Percentage of Downtown Covered by Greenscape
- Increase in the Percentage of Streets Adequately and Properly Signed According to Standards

#### Top Rules of Urban Design and Management Action Plan

- “It’s Simple Stuff”
- Ensure ongoing and systematic code enforcement (maintain assets by protecting them).
- Adopt a sense of stewardship and advocacy for Downtown.
- Create a Downtown block club for soft advocacy.
- Stop demolitions for surface parking.
- Plant trees; greenscape Downtown.
- Improve gateways.
- Conduct urban design inventory.
- Make the economic argument for aesthetic improvement.



Part of good urban design is taking full advantage of the important vistas our street plan and relation to water afford. This image illustrates some of the potential of the Erie Street Vista. (Source: UB’s School of Architecture and Planning Urban Design Studio, 2003)

## PRESERVATION DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- there is consensus that preserving historically significant buildings, spaces and districts is an important component of redevelopment.
- preservation is understood as essential to economic development and sustainability.
- preservation is balanced with demolition and new construction according to enforced procedures.
- all developments incorporate respect for our history.

### Purpose

The work plan goals are to: 1) establish a practical and powerful system for protecting and rehabilitating historic structures, districts and related neighborhoods and 2) develop an appreciation of historic preservation as a tool in Buffalo's economic and cultural development.

### Problem Statement

The problem with historic preservation Downtown is best described in terms of the opportunity. Buffalo, and especially Downtown, delivers a history of American architecture to all who would visit, whether tourists, workers, or residents of the region. The resources beg for protection, interpretation, marketing, and creative but viable economic use.

There is an unfortunate history of significant building demolition based on a failure of the advocacy organizations, property owners, and governmental officials to see and realize the economic opportunity. There is no systematic inventory of historic structures except for those with formal designation. There is limited venture capital, foundation funding and public money available for restoration or reuse activity.



The Mansion on Delaware represents a recent victory for preservation.  
(Source: The Urban Design Project)



Shelton Square at the turn of the century shows the relationship between Church and Erie Streets related to Main Street.  
(Source: The Library of Congress)



A number of serious challenges to preservation exist Downtown. The Schmidt's Garage property (top) and the Vernor Building (bottom) on the 700 Block of Main Street, for example, are contributing buildings to the historic district, but years of neglect make them vulnerable. Even so, planning continues to discover ways to preserve important elements of the structures as part of the 700 block renewal. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

In addition, there is a weak framework of policies and educational tools in place that would relate the historic resources to other development priorities using each to support the other. Restoring individual properties should spur investment in neighboring properties. Capital projects for historic structures that ignore long term structural viability and maintenance are flawed. There is no program devoted to mandating how buildings should be stabilized to prevent deterioration while they await viable use proposals. Current lack of inventory analysis and enforcement of standards results in uncertainty for developers and preservationists.

**Current Status**

The history of Buffalo and Western New York is, perhaps, best expressed through Downtown Buffalo's stock of historic buildings.

- There are four historic districts in the Downtown area but they are constantly at risk of losing the resources that led to their designation.
- Several key historic properties have been saved from the wrecking ball or historically inappropriate development and form the nucleus of Downtown revitalization in several of the strategic investment areas. For example, The Shea's Buffalo Theatre and the Market Arcade in the Theatre District; the Guaranty Building, McKinley Monument, the M&T Bank Gold Dome and the Old County Hall, in the Government Center and Financial District; and the old U.S. Post Office (now Erie Community College) anchoring the newly developing Education and Public Safety Campus.

- Other resources in the 700 and 800 block of Main Street relate to the Theatre District and Allentown historic district designations linking Downtown to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. After years of neglect by private owners, they are now being considered for appropriate redevelopment, yet they are still at risk for developer-supported demolition.
- Another preservation and historic interpretation opportunity lies in the Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District where resources like the western gateway of the Erie Canal, the Commercial Slip and Central Wharf, the Cobblestone Historic District, the USS The Sullivans, the Edward M. Cotter fire boat, and several historically significant grain elevators.
- Additional work is underway to create a Michigan Avenue Historic Area related to the resources like the Michigan Avenue Baptist Church, the Jesse Nash House, and the Colored Musicians Club.

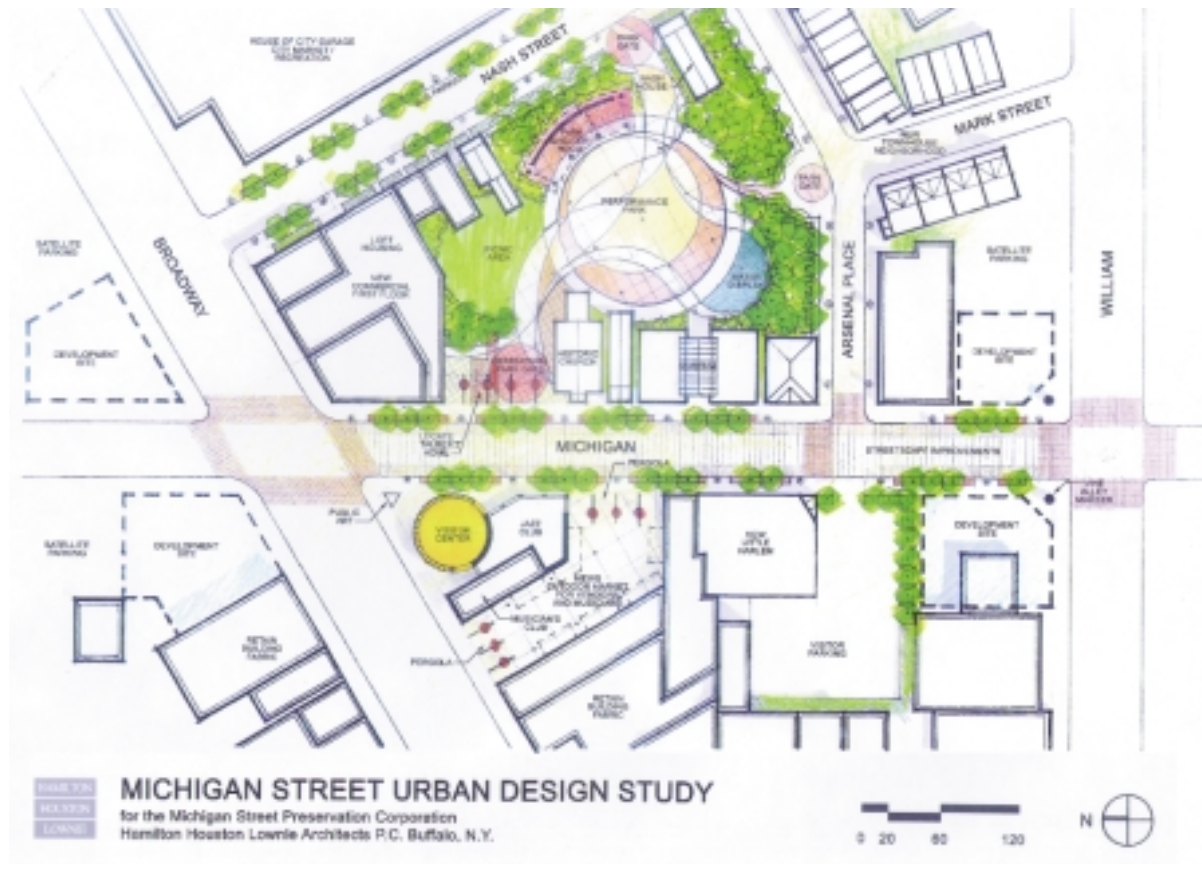


The proposed elevation for Michigan Avenue illustrates a creative interpretation of the lost building fabric on the Avenue without actually replacing in kind. The approach holds the street edge and invites the visitor into an interior court. (Source: Hamilton Houston Lowrie, Architects, PC)

Another challenge being confronted is the Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District. Current thinking on the master plan for interpretation is to recognize the range of history on the site from the pre-canal era through the heyday of the Erie Canal and the railroad era that followed. (Source: The Urban Design Project Archives, German Post Card Image, undated)







Master Plan concept for the proposed Michigan Avenue Historic District. (Source: Courtesy of the Hamilton Houston Lownie, Architects, PC)



Rev. Jesse Nash House  
36 Nash Street  
Restored View

Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects

Current organizational work builds on the recently completed National Trust for Historic Preservation Pittsburgh Exchange trip facilitated by the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier. That trip resulted in three core recommendations that are in different stages of development:

- The development of a land and building management strategy to improve the equity and efficiency of the City's approach to such management.

Sometimes history is made in humble places like the Jesse Nash house within the Michigan Avenue historic area. (Source: Courtesy of the Hamilton Houston Lownie, Architects, PC)

## THE MICHIGAN AVENUE CORRIDOR



It is important to place historic preservation projects in the context of larger community preservation and rehabilitation efforts. The diagram above indicates a number of projects in different stages of development that will help revitalize communities along Michigan Avenue from North Street in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus all the way to the Buffalo River. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

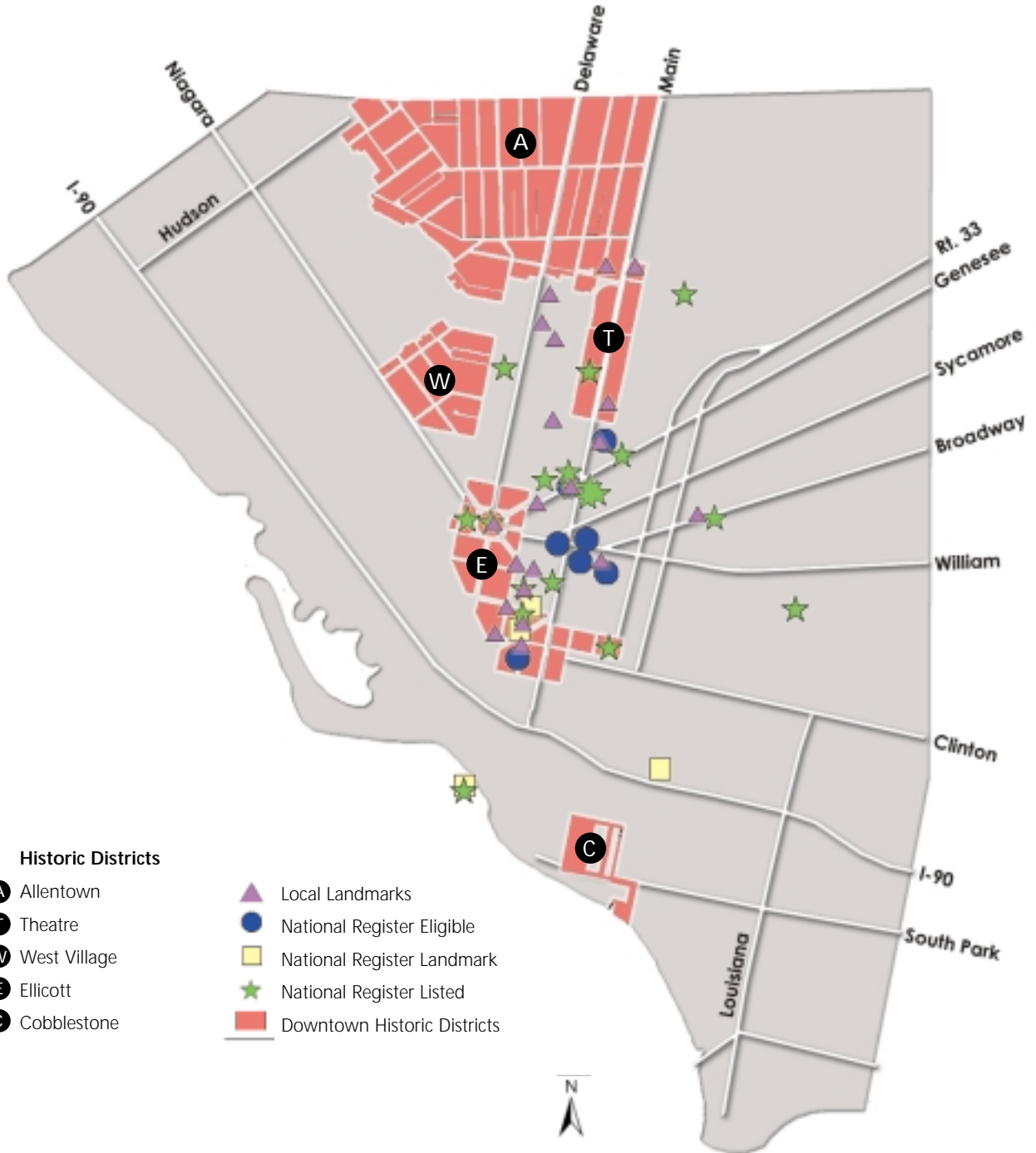
- A preservation plan effort under the auspices of the City Preservation Board. This effort, also facilitated by the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier, will work with a full complement of preservation advocates to achieve a consensus vision, review and prioritize historic resources, and review and improve municipal procedures based on analysis of recent successes and failures.
- Development of a strategic investment fund devoted to the creating the financial base to implement the preservation vision.

### Strategies

- Engage the full complement of community based organizations, private developers, foundations, financial institutions, and governmental agencies in the preservation enterprise.
- Do the necessary inventory, emergency stabilization, and policy work to assure the vitality of historic resources. If done, surrounding communities will make increasingly larger contributions to the quality of life Downtown.
- Develop and implement the city-wide "community preservation" program currently underway with the Preservation Board.

**PRESERVATION DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT: DOWNTOWN TREASURES...**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Local Landmark</b>	<b>National Register Eligible</b>	<b>National Register Listed</b>	<b>National Register Landmark</b>
Ashbury Methodist Church	80 W. Tupper	x			
Ashbury Methodist Church	80 W. Tupper Street	x			
Brisbane Building	395 Main Street		x		
Calumet Building	46-58 W. Chippewa Street	x			
City Hall	65 Niagara Square			x	
Colored Musicians Club	145 Broadway Street	x			
The Diocese of Buffalo	795 Main Street	x			
Dun Building	110 Pearl Street	x			
Durham Memorial AME Zion Church	174 East Eagle Street			x	
Erie Community College – City Campus	121 Ellicott Street			x	
Edward M Cotter (Fireboat)	Michigan Street Lift Bridge				x
Greystone Building	24 Johnson Park			x	
J.A. Webb Company	92 Pearl Street		x		
L L Berger Department Store	500-520 Main Street			x	
Lafayette Hotel	391 Washington Street	x	x		
Liberty Building	416 Main Street		x		
M & T Bank (Gold Dome)	1 Genesee Street	x	x		
M. Wile and Company Factory Building	77 Goodell Street			x	
Macedonia Baptist Church	511 Michigan Avenue			x	
Market Arcade Building	615 Main Street	x			
McKinley Monument	Niagara Square	x		x	
Niagara Mohawk Building	20 Huron Street			x	
Old County Hall	95 Franklin Street	x		x	
Prudential Building	28 Church Street			x	x
Shea's Buffalo Theater	642 Main Street			x	
Soldiers and Sailors Monument	415 Main Street	x	x		
St. Joseph's Old Cathedral	50 Franklin Street	x			
St. Louis Roman Catholic Church	780 Main Street	x			
St. Paul's Episcopal Church	128 Pearl Street	x			x
Trinity Episcopal Church	371 Delaware Avenue	x			
USS The Sullivans (Destroyer)	1 Naval Park Cove			x	x
Young Men's Christian Association – Central Building	45 W Mohawk Street			x	



Location map of historic properties Downtown. (Source: The Urban Design Project with data from the Buffalo Preservation Board)

**Action Items**

**Short Term Actions (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Take full advantage of the National Trust Historic Exchange** program to frame a preservation agenda for the city and outline implementation procedures. Recently, representatives from the City of Buffalo visited Pittsburgh, PA to observe current historic preservation practices. This type of activity increases awareness of opportunities and resources to facilitate historic preservation, and should occur regularly.
- **Initiate a comprehensive inventory** of the condition, ownership, and potential of historic structures throughout the city, starting with Downtown. First phases of this work are currently under contract to the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning.
- **Develop an emergency stabilization plan** for historic structures that are in immediate danger of structural damage.

- **Develop guidelines for building demolition** when that is the only remaining choice, saving facades whenever possible.

**Medium Term Action (1 to 3 years)**

- **Work to infill historic districts** in Downtown with compatible developments, with a focus on using surface parking lots as building sites.
- **Work with existing advocacy organizations**, financial institutions and foundations to establish a consolidated approach to financing the adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings and spaces.
- **Conclude work on the Citywide Preservation Plan.**

**Long Term Action (3 to 5 years)**

- **Create a financially viable Historic Buffalo Foundation** charged with the acquisition and rehabilitation of structures identified as important to Buffalo's history.



The Lafayette Hotel is a Local Landmark and is National Register Eligible. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

<b>Principles: Preservation</b>				Public and Quasi-Public		Non-Profit (NPO)			Private		
		Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Downtown Neighborhood Development Corp	Landmark Society and Preservation Coalition	Local Initiative Support Corporation	National Historic Trust	Banks and Financial Institutions	Fannie Mae	Foundations
Contributor											
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>											
Use National Trust Historic Exchange program	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Inventory of structures	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Emergency stabilization plan	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Building deconstruction guidelines	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>											
Infill historic districts	3	5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Establish financing reuse of historic buildings	2	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conclude Citywide Preservation Plan	1	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>											
Historic Buffalo Foundation	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Preservation draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)



The photo above is Buffalo in 1853 illustrating the historic importance of Main Street and the location of the Central Wharf to its immediate left. The wharf, in turn, borders on the Commercial Slip, the western gateway to the Erie Canal. The new Erie Canal Harbor master plan seeks ways to interpret this historical condition even as it prepares Downtown for a viable 21st century program of activities on the waterfront. (Source: Courtesy of Mr. Henry Baxter as published in *A Canal Conversation*, 2001)

**Work to Date**

- Capital Projects Completed (recent)
  - The Mansion
  - The Bellasara
  - M. Wile – Century Centre II
  - The Stokes Seed Building
- Capital Projects under Development
  - Erie Canal Harbor
  - Old County Court House renovation
  - Asbury Methodist Church
  - The Greystone
  - Trico – Century Centre I
  - The Sidway Building
  - The Guaranty Building

**PRESERVATION IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

- Number of historic structures preserved for active re-uses
- Clear and enforced design standards for historic districts
- Clear and enforced policy on neighborhood development abutting historic properties and districts

**Top Rules for Preservation Action Plan**

- Do not tear down historic structures.
- Establish coordinated public/private sector plan for historic properties and districts.
- Fabric, not just historically significant buildings, is important.
- Make the economic case for preservation and “take it to the bank.”
- Create a financing capacity for renovation in collaboration with an alliance of preservation organizations and foundations.
- Continue to refine changes to building codes to promote preservation.

## ENERGY AND GREEN DESIGN DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- increased usage of energy-efficiency and green design strategies reduces the use of energy in Downtown Buffalo.
- the ecology of Downtown is sustainable.
- the quality of life is improved through better environmental practices.
- the importance of this issue is understood and accepted as general practice.

**The work plan goals** are: 1) to increase awareness and encourage the utilization of the best available energy efficient and environmentally sustainable practices, and 2) to emphasize the substantial economic and environmental advantages of employing green design practices, with a primary focus on reducing operating costs and improving amenities which increases the competitive demand for space.

The strategies are primarily tied to educational programming and new policies to increase attention to the relationships among energy, environment and economic development.

### **Problem Statement**

One of several obstacles to business retention and new business recruiting in Downtown is the high cost of energy compared to competing regions. In addition, local government facilities and operational practices do not take advantage of either immediate or longer-term potentials to save energy and thus reduce the cost of energy used.

Environmental quality is closely related to both the costs of energy and the quality of life Downtown. There is no organizational process that integrates the energy, environmental and community (quality of life) concerns necessary to assure a sustainable Downtown.



The and density of the Downtown core invites exploration of shared energy infrastructure including the potential for district heating. (Source: City of Buffalo)

### Current Status

Energy is an important part of the history of Buffalo and Western New York. Beginning over 100 years ago when electric power was harnessed from Niagara Falls to the current discussions of developing new sources of energy from Lake Erie winds, the ability to produce energy has helped to define our region and economic viability. The importance of electrical energy to Western New York is reemerging as a central issue, as power becomes more expensive and its availability becomes more problematic. Currently, New York State imports in excess of 90 percent of its energy needs. A decreased reliance on energy imports translates directly to greater local economic activity and wealth.

The positive economic impacts of an increased focus on energy efficiency and green design are real. At a micro level, improving energy efficiencies leads to significantly higher rental margins and

results in substantially lower annual maintenance expenditures. The marketing and public relations benefits of promoting ourselves as “green” are incalculable. At a macro level, the environmental benefits will be felt for many years.

New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) can play a significant role in advancing a Downtown energy and green design program. NYSERDA recently opened a regional office in the Market Arcade Complex and at the urging of Erie County has designated Main Street in Downtown Buffalo as a Rebuild New York Community Energy Target Zone. Other significant participants include the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New York Power Authority, and the University at Buffalo Green Office and School of Architecture and Planning.



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The 1901 Pan American Exposition described Buffalo as the “City of Light.” It was a celebration of energy creation and consumption. The Buffalo of the 21st century could be described as a leader in energy conservation. (Source: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)



Locally, Erie County government is taking the lead in actively promoting energy efficiency and incorporating green design and construction practices into many of its facilities including the newly completed Family Courthouse and the Youth Detention Center. The County has committed both staff and resources towards increasing the awareness and implementation of this important strategy. Niagara Mohawk and National Fuel are also important corporate participants in this effort.

Adding to this is Governor Pataki's Executive Order Number 111 that mandates improved energy efficiency in existing state owned and occupied buildings, green design standards for new construction, and increased reliance on alternative sources of power for all state agencies. The impact of this order is considerable, as it will have far-reaching effects on properties that New York State leases. State agencies occupy numerous offices Downtown and are expected to increase occupancy over time.

**Strategies**

- Inform policy makers of the relationship between economic and environmental concerns.
- Focus on comprehensive environmental approaches to Downtown development and management. A comprehensive energy efficiency and green design policy will require a blend of economics, environmental design and active public and private partnerships.
- Leverage NYSERDA's interest in support of the acquisition of energy related grant resources to enhance proposed office, residential development and transportation projects.
- Energy conservation and efficiency will have modest short-term and dramatic long-term effects on Downtown – some of these effects will be felt years into the future.



Alternative and conventional energy resources all benefit from energy conservation measures. Downtown becomes a more competitive destination in which to do business as energy costs are minimized. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



The Fleet Bank Building in Fountain Plaza pays special attention to daylighting and energy conservation, earning Cannon Design national recognition in energy efficient design. (Source: Owens Corning Design Awards Program, 1981)

## ENERGY AND GREEN DESIGN SNAPSHOT:

Because this principle has not been part of significant Downtown planning for decades, a brief review of available technologies and organizational strategies follows:

### WHAT IS...?

**Bio-diesel:** A renewable, biodegradable fuel that can be made from any fat or vegetable oil. It can be used in any diesel engine with few or no modifications and can be blended with diesel at any level or used in its pure form.

**Bio-mass:** a renewable energy source composed of materials such as sawdust, tree trimmings, rice straw, alfalfa and switchgrass, animal wastes, industrial waste, and the paper component of municipal solid waste.

**Clean Power:** Energy produced from renewable sources such as wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, hydropower, and ocean energy

**Cogeneration:** The simultaneous production of heat and power in a single thermodynamic process.

**Commissioning:** An analysis performed in new and existing buildings to ensure that heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, lighting, and other building systems perform optimally according to design intent and owner needs.

**District Heating:** District heating systems distribute steam or hot water to multiple buildings. The heat can be provided from a variety of sources, including geothermal, cogeneration plants, waste heat from industry, and purpose-built heating plants.

**Energy Star:** A program of the Environmental Protection Agency that helps businesses and consumers identify and utilize programs, appliances, and systems that can reduce energy costs.

**Energy Target Zone:** A joint program between NYSERDA, Rebuild America and the Western New York Energy \$mart Communities partnership. The goal of the program is to increase awareness of energy efficiency and conservation programs and to work with developers to increase energy efficiency in both rehab and new-buildings in Downtown Buffalo.

**Green Gold:** A strategy developed by the City of Buffalo designed to attract and promote companies that offer environmental services.

**LEED:** Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. A performance based building rating system designed by the U.S. Green Building Council designed to promote better use of green and sustainable strategies in building construction and renovation.

**NYSERDA:** The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) is a public benefit corporation created in 1975 by the New York State Legislature. NYSERDA derives its basic research revenues from an assessment on the intrastate sales of New York State's investor-owned electric and gas utilities, and voluntary annual contributions by the New York Power Authority and the Long Island Power Authority.

**Rebuild America:** A program of the U.S. Department of Energy. The goal of the partnership is to utilize renewable and energy-efficient technologies to preserve and improve structures, attract and retain businesses, improve residential affordability, and educate communities throughout the region by demonstrating the numerous benefits of energy efficiency.

**Action Items**

**Short Term Policy (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Require the use of energy efficiencies and green design standards** in projects seeking public subsidy.
- **Encourage all new construction or major building renovations to adopt LEED** or similar green building design standards.
- **Encourage local government to adopt LEED** or similar green building design standard for owned and leased spaces.
- **Promote awareness and better use of green space within buildings.** Good day lighting, use of plants and other improvements to the atmosphere improve productivity and employee satisfaction.
- **Set energy improvement goals for Downtown.** Improve efficiencies by adopting a percent reduction goal, e.g. reduce aggregate energy usage by 20 percent over the next five years as measured by BTU per kilowatt-hour per square foot.
- **Support efforts to determine the feasibility of developing alternative sources of power,** such as an urban wind farm and/or distributive co-generation/district-heating program, through marketing, education and appropriate land use planning.

**Short Term Analysis (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Research “Energy Star” equipment bulk buying program.** The cost of upgrading office equipment can be prohibitive to small businesses. Partnering with larger companies through a bulk-buying program can reduce unit costs and increase use of Energy Star and other efficient products.
- **Determine impact of Governor Pataki’s Executive Order Number 111** on state-occupied and state owned buildings and begin developing an implementation plan.
- **Research and develop a baseline data set of energy use to measure future progress.**

**Short Term Implementation (6 months to 1 year)**

- **Organize an Energy/Green Design Task group** (multi-disciplinary with a point-person) to develop and monitor implementation of a full-scale energy policy for Downtown and the City of Buffalo. Rely on work done in other cities (Portland, Berkeley, etc).
- **Create an Energy Office within the City of Buffalo** to help coordinate and facilitate internal and external initiatives. Consider asking one of the energy companies to loan an executive on a short-term basis.
- **Set up pilot recycling stations on Main Street** to determine effectiveness.
- **Develop an energy efficiency improvement guide for Downtown** similar to the UB Campus Ecology/Green Computing Guides. These guides offer suggestions ranging from equipment purchasing to reducing paper waste and conserving energy.

**2002: THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE DOWNTOWN BUFFALO AREA**



Any green design strategy must include the wise use of public outdoor spaces and landscape to help moderate wind and dissipate heat islands in urban spaces. (Source: The Urban Design Project and the Friends of the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers)

- **Encourage all commercial and residential property owners to conduct NYSERDA Flex-Tech or similarly approved building energy audits.** Set an initial goal of ten buildings per year.
- **Enroll building owners in the Rebuild America Energy Target Zone** project to obtain better access to energy-efficiency resources.
- **Hold a series of Energy and the Environment education workshops** over the next year for property owners, property managers, developers and tenants.
- **Tap into Green Gold Initiative** to identify companies or agencies that can provide environmental services to Downtown property owners and businesses.

#### **Medium Term Policy (1 to 3 years)**

- **Consider allowing greater code variances** when systems that are more efficient are installed.
- **Encourage one major new building and one major redevelopment of a model green building in the Downtown area.** Allow local architects, property owners and developers to review the process to increase awareness.

#### **Medium Term Analysis (1 to 3 years)**

- **Explore using permeable parking lot surfaces** to improve storm water drainage and reduce runoff.
- **Analyze the use of photovoltaics (solar panels) on Downtown rooftops and parking structures** to provide additional sources of alternative energy.

#### **Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)**

- **Develop an “Energy Usage/Green Practice Audit” for Downtown buildings and businesses** to examine recycling, Energy Star usage, written policies, waste reduction, energy conservation, buying recycled products, etc. Identify one or two smaller entities that can serve as a pilot program.
- **Develop a district-wide multi-material (computers, paper, construction debris, etc.) recycling program** organized by a neutral agency. Seek in-kind donations from energy providers and corporations (e.g. trucks, manpower, etc).
- **Encourage commissioning, re-commissioning, and improvements to buildings.** Market this as preparation for conversion to alternative energy systems.
- **Continue annual Energy and the Environment education workshops** for property owners and developers. Use local results to highlight benefits.

#### **Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)**

- **Construction and implementation of alternative sources of power** to serve Downtown such as a district heating system and/or an urban wind farm.
- **Conduct Downtown-wide Energy/Green Practice Audit** and establish schedule for follow up.

**ENERGY AND GREEN DESIGN IN BRIEF**

**Measures of Success**

- Percentage of buildings that have made improvements (scaled ranking)
- Total value of grant money issues by NYSERDA, DOE and other agencies
- Measures of kWh, BTU's used
- Number of buildings incorporating green design and higher LEED ratings (e.g. Bronze to Gold)
- Value of energy saved
- Cost/benefit ratio
- Dollars spent vs. energy saved
- Improved emissions standards
- Use of distributive/renewable generation
- Number of alternative fuel vehicles employed
- Reduction of energy use in select or all buildings (BTU per square foot)

**Work to Date**

- Legislative / Policy Under Development
  - NYS Draft Energy Plan
- Planning / Organizational Completed
  - NYSERDA Promotional Materials
  - LEED Green Building Rating System Version 2.0
  - Think Green: a UB guide to campus ecology
  - The University at Buffalo's Green Computing Guide

Principles: Energy and Environment			Public and Quasi-Public							Non-Profit (NPO)	Private				
	Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Empire State Development	Erie County	Erie County - Rebuild America	Housing and Urban Development	Erie County Industrial Development Authority	NFTA	NYSERDA	Buffalo Place Inc	Green Coat Corporation	Bank and Financial Institutions	Private Building Owners	Utilities
	Contributor														
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>															
Efficiencies requirements for public subsidy			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Construction to LEED standard	6	7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Local government adopt LEED standard	7	8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Promote green space in buildings	2	2	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Energy improvement goals	1	1	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Develop alternative power	4	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Energy Star bulk buying	9	11	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Impact of Executive Order #111	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Baseline data set	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Organize Energy Task group	NR	NR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
City Energy Office	5	6	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Recycling stations on Main Street	3	3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Energy efficiency improvement guide	10	12	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Conduct building energy audits			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Enroll in Rebuild America Energy Target Zone			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Energy and the Environment workshops			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Tap into Green Gold Initiative	8	9	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

The energy and Green Design draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)  
 Chart continued on page 102.

<b>Principles: Energy and Environment</b>				Public and Quasi-Public							Non-Profit (NPO)		Private		
		Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Empire State Development	Erie County	Erie County - Buffalo Area	Housing and Urban Development	Erie County Industrial Development Authority	NFTA	NYSED/DA	Buffalo Place Inc	Green Golf Corporation	Bank and Financial Institutions	Private Building Owners
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>															
	Allow variances for efficient systems			●											
	One model Green Building	1	5	●		●				●		●	●	●	●
	Permeable parking lots			●								●	●	●	●
	Solar panels on roofs									●		●	●	●	●
	Green Practice Audit	2	10	●						●		●	●	●	●
	District-wide recycling program			●			●			●		●	●		●
	Commission buildings						●					●	●	●	●
	Continue Energy workshops						●			●		●	●	●	●
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>															
	Construct alternative power source			●		●	●					●	●	●	●
	Downtown-wide Energy Audit	1	13	●		●				●		●	●	●	●

Continued from page 101.



Imagine Downtown as a place where the details matter. (Source: Architectural Detail from the Erie Community College/Old Post Office, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)

## IMAGE OF DOWNTOWN

*It will be a great Downtown when...*

- the mention of Downtown elicits the response “I love Downtown!”
- accurate, objective reporting clearly identifies Downtown as a prosperous, clean, safe, friendly place to live, work and play.
- Downtown is for everyone and that diversity is understood as essential to economic vitality and quality of life.

**The work plan goal** is to create an image of Downtown consistent with the vision of *The Queen City Hub* plan. Downtown Buffalo should be understood to be a clean, safe, friendly place in which it is great to live, work and play. The strategies include coordinating marketing activities, celebrating current success and promoting realistic potential. The strategies also include programming to educate media, community based organizations, and businesses on Downtown’s role in the region and in the city.

## Problem Statement

Downtown has a negative public image that is no longer an accurate reflection of its health and potential. The reality is that Downtown remains the economic core and cultural heart of the region. Yet perceptions of crime, the high cost of parking, and the lack of activity are pervasive even as crime is no longer a serious problem, parking is easier to manage than ever before, and significant new venues deliver over 7 million visitors to Downtown every year.

The perception is that “nothing is happening Downtown,” but the reality is that Downtown has had significant levels of reinvestment, is increasingly vibrant, and already deserves a far better reputation than it enjoys. Even so, the history of announced projects that did not occur has created a climate of skepticism.

The work in progress in *The Queen City Hub* should alter the reality even more to the positive and the image needs to improve in like fashion. There is a lack of understanding about who is marketing Downtown, at what level and for what purpose.

## Current Status

- As Western New York gains a better understanding of its interdependence, it also gains a better sense of the need for cooperation. At a macro level, this has been expressed through the creation of the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise.



Imagine Downtown as a place that is supported by and supports solid neighborhoods and a great waterfront. (Source: Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation)



Imagine Downtown as on the waterfront. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Imagine Downtown as up to the challenge of restoring historic structures in a way that contributes to the quality of life and economic stability of the region. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Imagine Downtown as a place of "great streets" and as a great place to play. (Source: The Urban Design Project)



Imagine Downtown as a great place to live. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

### Strategies

Develop a fully coordinated image campaign based on creating:

- An inventory of current marketing efforts
- A benchmark survey of current attitudes about Downtown
- A program to manage communications on *The Queen City Hub* implementation program
- A case for marketing Downtown and seeking funding support
- Training for local leadership in both the business and government sectors to ensure a broad cross section of representatives speaking clearly and positively about Downtown
- Make the plan the basis for a full image campaign branding Downtown as the hub of the region

### Action Items

#### Short Term Analysis (6 months to 1 year)

- **Examine current marketing inventory.** Determine what organizations advertise events, destinations or products in Downtown. Examine the budget spent, target audience and method of advertising. Look for overlap and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Conduct an attitudinal study.** There is subjective evidence that Downtown has an image problem. However, there has not been detailed research into the validity of this claim. A study that examines perceptions of users and non-users of Downtown will help identify problems. A survey of Western New York and Southern Ontario residents is recommended to determine if we understand the image correctly.



Imagine great architecture in the past challenged by even greater architecture in the future. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

#### Short Term Implementation

(6 months to 1 year)

- **Develop an approach to managing communications on the details of *Queen City Hub* implementation.**

Manage expectations and realistically project potential. There needs to be an active publicity campaign to inform the public about the status of initiatives and projects.

#### Medium Term Policy (1 to 3 years)

- **Showcase success stories and challenges Downtown in an annual accounting of progress on plan implementation for broad distribution.**



VISION

**Project Participants**  
 The City of Buffalo  
 Buffalo Plans Inc.  
 The Urban Design Project at the School of Architecture and Planning, State University of New York at Buffalo

**Funding Partners**  
 The Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency  
 The Margaret C. Walsh Foundation  
 The John B. Childs Foundation  
 The Ward Foundation  
 The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

**Homeowner Districts 2007**  
 City Buffalo Plans Inc.  
 612 Water Street  
 Buffalo, NY 14203  
 phone: 716.846.5140  
[www.buffaloplans.com](http://www.buffaloplans.com)

**1864 Joseph Ellicott Rural Plan**

Working Together... Making it Work!

Imagine Downtown as a regional center where residents, employees and visitors live, work and play. Imagine it as a Downtown for everyone. (Source: The Urban Design Project)

**Medium Term Implementation (1 to 3 years)**

- **Institute training/capacity building for local leaders to better work with the media.**
- **Formalize an Image Campaign that will:**
  - Convene groups that market Downtown.
  - Approach businesses, foundations and others for donations.
  - Create an umbrella organization to design and implement the campaign.
  - Focus on local audiences, Downtown users, children and others.

**Long Term Analysis (3 to 5 years)**

- **Conduct follow-up on the attitudinal benchmark study.** The intent of the follow-up is to help measure progress on local and regional attitudes about Downtown and to adjust the image program based on data.

**Long Term Implementation (3 to 5 years)**

- **Promote the successful progress in Downtown growing out of the implementation of the strategic plan.**


Principles: Image  Contributor			Public and Quasi-Public		Non-Profit (NGO)				Private	
	Importance within time frame	Importance across time frame	City of Buffalo	Buffalo Niagara Enterprise	Buffalo Niagara Partnership	Buffalo Place Inc.	Convention and Visitors Bureau	Theatre District Association	Working for Downtown	Private Sector
<b>SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)</b>										
Examine marketing inventory	2	5								
Attitudinal study	3	6								
Communicate on The Queen City Hub Implementation	1	1								
<b>MEDIUM TERM (1-3 YEARS)</b>										
Showcase success stories	2	4								
Media training for local leaders	3	7								
Develop an image campaign	1	2								
<b>LONG TERM (3-5 YEARS)</b>										
Follow up Attitudinal Study	2	8								
Promote success of downtown from the plan	1	3								

Image draft tasks, participants and schedule. (Source: Downtown Buffalo 2002!)

**IMAGE IN BRIEF**

**Measures of success**

- Improved results from attitudinal survey
- Revised inventory of marketing products that are more effective and comprehensive in promoting Downtown assets

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The following list of reports has formed the base for *The Queen City Hub*. The plan has grown out of work implementing the *Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan* produced by Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects PC, Wallace Roberts & Todd, Hammer Siler George Associates (1999) for the City of Buffalo. That plan is available on the web at [www.downtownbuffalo2002.org](http://www.downtownbuffalo2002.org). In April of 2002, a revised draft plan was issued for comment with an interim report. Results from the comment period were published in the Fall 2002 Downtown Buffalo 2002! newsletter. Additional comments were acquired through December from participants in the Implementation Council. Survey results from both a paper and web based survey on priorities and invitations for comment continued to inform *The Queen City Hub* through May of 2003.

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- Downtown Buffalo 2002! 2000. *Downtown Buffalo Strategic Plan Review*.
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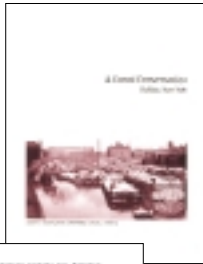
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Founding Members

#### The Downtown Buffalo 2002! Implementation Council

These are the chief executives who have responsibility for the projects in the implementation campaign. They met quarterly to assess progress and address obstacles to action under the leadership of Anthony M. Masiello, Mayor

Keith M Belanger, M & T Bank \* Randall Benderson, Benderson Development Company  
 ★ Anthony J Colucci III, Colucci & Gallaher PC ★ Brian C. Davis, Buffalo Common Council, Ellicott District ★ Albert DeBenedetti, Erie County Legislator, District 6 ★ Alan H. DeLisle, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation ★ Bruce Fisher, Erie County Executive's Office  
 ★ Joel A. Giambra, Erie County Executive ★ Joseph N. Giambra, City of Buffalo Commissioner of Public Works ★ Eva M. Hassett, City of Buffalo, Commissioner of Administration & Finance  
 ★ Luiz F. Kahl, NFTA, Board of Commissioners ★ Vincent J. Lovallo, City of Buffalo, Office of the Mayor ★ Steve McGarvey, Signature Management Group ★ Carl P. Paladino, Ellicott Development Co. ★ James W. Pitts, Buffalo Common Council ★ Lewis D. Rich, Empire State Development WNY Region ★ Laurence K. Rubin, Commissioner, Erie County Department of Environment & Planning ★ Joseph E. Ryan, City of Buffalo, Office of Strategic Planning.



#### The Action Team

The Action Team met monthly to advance projects and record learning from the experience for use in the revised strategy.

Brian C. Davis, Buffalo Common Council, Ellicott District ★ David Stebbins, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corp ★ Bruce Fisher, Erie County Executive's Office ★ Richard Franco, Benderson Development Company ★ Thomas Gallagher, City of Buffalo Board of Parking ★ Joe Giusiana, Signature Management at Century Centre II \* Paul Gregory, Ellicott Development Co.  
 ★ Bonnie Kane Lockwood, City of Buffalo, Office of Strategic Planning ★ Dan Kreuz, City of Buffalo, Department of Public Works, Park and Sanitation ★ Thomas A. Kucharski, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise ★ Richard Morrisroe, Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. ★ Hal Morse, GBNRTC ★ Richard Ogorek, City of Buffalo ★ James W. Pitts, Buffalo Common Council  
 ★ Laurence K. Rubin, Erie County Department of Environment & Planning ★ Michael T. Schmand, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ Leonard G. Sciolino, Parking Enforcement \* W. Morgan Smith, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ Sean P. Spiesz, M & T Bank ★ Chuck Thomas, City of Buffalo, Office of Strategic Planning ★ Craig W. Turner, Erie County Legislature, Majority/Republican Office  
 ★ Walter D Zmuda, NFTA, Surface Transportation.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
(CONTINUED)

**The Downtown Buffalo 2002! Project Team**

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Tim Wanamaker, Executive Director June 2003; Joseph Ryan, Executive Director; David Sengbusch, Acting Executive Director; Bonnie Kane Lockwood, Downtown Buffalo 2002! Coordinator; Charles Thomas, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning.

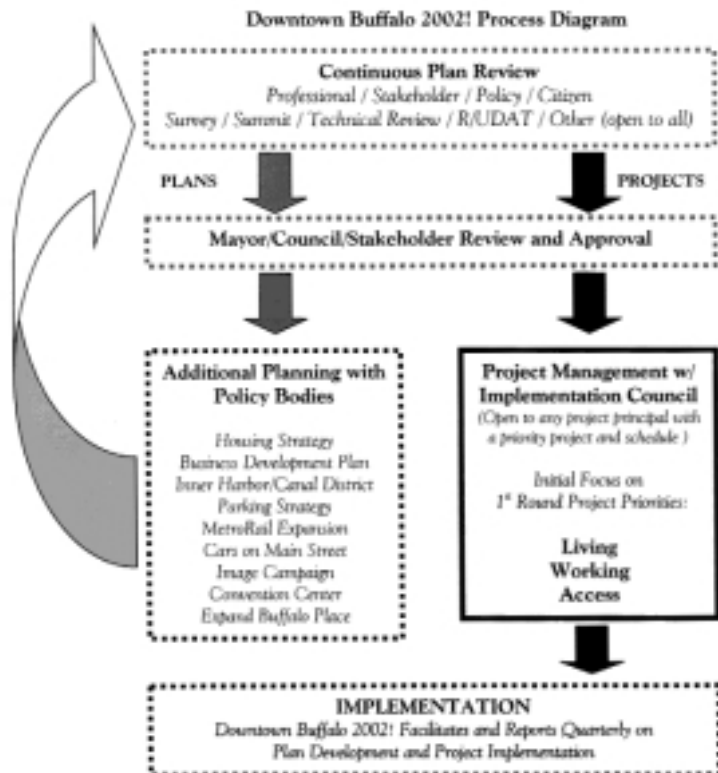
**Buffalo Place Inc.** Keith Belanger, Chairman; Michael T. Schmand, Executive Director; JoAnne E. Loughry, AICP, Associate Manager of Planning and Downtown Buffalo 2002! Project Manager; Debra L. Chernoff, Manager of Planning; Nadine Marrero, Project Planner; Margaret Beardsley, Associate Director.

**The Urban Design Project, School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo, State University of New York.**

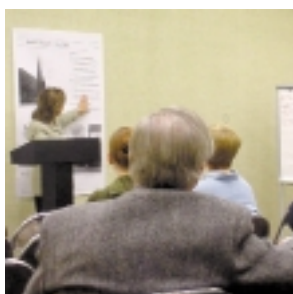
Robert G. Shibley, AIA, AICP, Director; Bradshaw Hovey, Ph. D., Associate Director; Jocelyn Dolby and Laura Scarisbrick, Project Assistants; the urban design, photography, graphics and web site team: Anirban Adhya, Rishawn Sonubi, Marie Carone, Amy Darin, Jessica Jamroz, Eric Shepherd, Justin Steinbach, Steven Watchorn, Kenneth Vail.

**Focus Group Participants**

Sixty-five people worked with the Downtown Buffalo 2002! team in the initial framing of the work plan associated with both the activities and principles of *The Queen City Hub*. Their participation in focus group meetings and in plan review helped to solidify the final planning framework. Many of these same participants worked to deliver the December 1999 and April 2002 Downtown Summits which were used to help set priorities and review key features of *The Queen City Hub* vision and work plan.







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### Activity Focus Groups

**Living:** Robert Bannister, Fannie Mae of Western New York ★ Michael Clark, Local Initiatives Support Corporation ★ Kent Kleinman, University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning ★ Richard Morrisroe, Heart of the City Neighborhoods Inc. ★ Joseph E. Ryan, City of Buffalo ★ Brian Smith, Community Preservation Corporation ★ Gerald Strickland, American Institute of Architects / Buffalo RUDAT 2001 ★ Jenna Strazzulla, Heart of the City Neighborhoods Inc. ★ Fechner A. Stecker, City of Buffalo ★ Suzanne Taylor, New Millennium Group of WNY ★ Paul Gregory, Ellicott Development ★ Bonnie Kane Lockwood, City of Buffalo ★ Jennifer Gorczynski, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ Fred Heinle, City of Buffalo ★ Danielle Paladino, Ellicott Development.

**Working:** Alan DeLisle, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation ★ Matthew Enstice, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus ★ David Gamble, Chan Krieger & Associates ★ Ramon Garcia, Federal Reserve Bank of WNY ★ Thomas Kucharski, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise / ECIDA ★ James Militello, Militello Real Estate ★ Laurence K. Rubin, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning ★ James Allen, AIDA/ECIDA ★ Jennifer Gorczynski, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ Debra Chernoff, Buffalo Place Inc.

**Visiting:** Margaret Beardsley, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ Alan Dewart, Theatre District Association ★ Steven Joseph, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ David Lacki, Greater Buffalo Convention and Visitor Bureau ★ Ken Neufeld, Studio Arena Theatre ★ Rick Serra, Theatre District Association ★ James Sandoro, Buffalo Transportation Museum ★ W. Morgan Smith, Buffalo Place Inc.

**Shopping:** Sam Gullo, Crinzo and Gullo Jewelers ★ Florine Luhr, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise ★ Joan Miller, Definitely Buffalo ★ Donna Gonser, Working For Downtown / Lumsden and McCormick ★ Julie Salvo, Allee King Rosen & Fleming ★ Debra Chernoff, Buffalo Place Inc.

### Principles Focus Groups

**Accessing:** Justin Booth, Wellness Institute ★ Thomas Gallagher, City of Buffalo Board of Parking ★ Paul Knab, New York State Department of Transportation ★ Timothy Trabold, Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council ★ Vito Sportelli, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority ★ William Leslie, New York State Thruway Authority ★ David Stebbins, Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation ★ Debra Chernoff, Buffalo Place Inc

### Energy/Green Design

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### Urban Design and Management

Colby Smith, Ciminelli Development ★ W. Morgan Smith, Buffalo Place Inc ★ Thomas Harmon, National Fuel ★ Jennifer Gorczynski, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ David Sengbusch, City of Buffalo

### Image

Margaret Beardsley, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ Steven Joseph, Buffalo Place Inc. ★ Jocelyn Dolby, New Millennium Group of WNY ★ Carolyn Murray, Working For Downtown ★ Jennifer Gorczynski, Buffalo Niagara Partnership

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### R/UDAT Participants



### Urban Design Assistance Team

**Pictured from left to right:** Alan Mallach, ACIP Municipal Housing, Buffalo R/UDAT Project Team Leader ★ Joe Champeaux, FAIA Planning / Urban Design, Champeaux Landry, Lake Charles, Louisiana ★ Curtis Davis, AIA Municipal Urban Design, Rebuildit Collaborative, Boston, Massachusetts ★ Todd Lee, FAIA Urban Designer, Mixed Use, TCR Associates, Boston, Massachusetts ★ Jack Hambene, Finance, Housing, McCormack Baron & Associates Inc, St. Louis, Missouri ★ Jim Lindemon, RA Architecture Housing ★ Lindemon Winkelmann Depree, Millville, New Jersey ★ Paul Kitsakos Transportation and Parking, Parsons Transportation, Chicago, Illinois ★ Mickey Zeppelin, Developer, Housing, Zeppelin Development, Denver, Colorado ★ Marta Borsanyi Market Analyst, Housing, The Concord Group, San Francisco, California.

### Steering Committee Members

Matthew Meier, AIA Buffalo Small Business, Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects, Buffalo R/UDAT Steering Committee Chair ★ Gus Pratchett, African American Community, NAACP ★ Gerald Strickland, Jr., AIA Buffalo Chapter of AIA, AIA Buffalo / Western New York ★ Don Erb, RPA Buffalo Building Owners, BOMA of Buffalo ★ Laura St. Pierre, Buffalo Business Development, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ Laura Gang, Buffalo Business Development, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ Debra Chernoff, Buffalo Downtown Business, Buffalo Place, Inc. ★ JoAnne Loughry, Buffalo Downtown Business, Buffalo Place, Inc. ★ Celeste Lawson, Buffalo Cultural Institutions, Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County ★ Sister Denise Roche, GNSH Buffalo Universities, D'Youville College ★ Jacquelyn Ross Brown, Buffalo Schools, Buffalo Board of Education ★ Tom Scime Buffalo Schools, Buffalo Board of Education ★ Laurence K. Rubin, Government: Region, County of Erie Department of Environment & Planning ★ Tom Dearing, Government: Region, County of Erie Department of Environment & Planning ★ Chuck Thomas, Government: City, City of Buffalo Department of Planning ★ Andres Garcia, Hispanic Community & Medical Institutions, Kaleida Health ★ Rich Morrisroe, Buffalo Housing, Heart of the City Neighborhoods ★ Patricia Pitts, Parking & Charter Schools, Buffalo Niagara Partnership ★ Brenda McDuffie, Urban Work Force, Buffalo Urban League, Inc. ★ Charles Grieco, Young Buffalo Business People, New Millennium Group ★ Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP Buffalo Master Plan, Downtown Buffalo 2002! ★ Maria Gambacorta, Buffalo Development Activism, Working For Downtown ★ Joe McIvor Builders – Housing Development, Niagara Frontier Builders Association

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (CONTINUED)**

**Additional Contributions to *The Queen City Hub***

Literally thousands of people participated in Downtown Buffalo 2002! and *The Queen City Hub* development effort. In some cases the participation was as simple as organizing presentations of the plan in process and offering comments, in other cases the involvement offered technical or professional reviews of the work in process. In still other cases they involved participation in summits, focus groups, surveys, or workshops. Each of eight Downtown Buffalo 2002! newsletters were mailed to over 7,000 people who kept tabs on the process. And traffic on the [www.downtownbuffalo2002.org](http://www.downtownbuffalo2002.org) web site continues to be brisk.

**A special thanks is offered to individuals representing the following organizations:**



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Access Infrastructure Task Force                              | City of Buffalo Government                       |
| Amherst Industrial Development Agency                         | Board of Parking                                 |
| Allee King Rosen & Fleming                                    | Common Council                                   |
| American Institute of Architects,<br>Western New York Chapter | Department of Administration & Finance           |
| American Planning Association,<br>Western New York Section    | Department of Public Works,<br>Parks and Streets |
| Arts Council for Buffalo and Erie County                      | Office of the Mayor                              |
| Benderson Development Company                                 | Office of Strategic Planning                     |
| Black Leadership Forum  | Preservation Board                               |
| Buffalo Civic Auto Ramps                                      | Colucci & Gallaher PC                            |
| Buffalo Convention and Visitors Bureau                        | Community Preservation Corporation               |
| Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation                      | Crinzo and Gullo Jewelers                        |
| Buffalo Niagara Enterprise                                    | Definitely Buffalo                               |
| Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus                                | Downtown Neighborhood Development<br>Corporation |
| Buffalo Niagara Partnership                                   | Ellicott Development Co.                         |
| Buffalo Place Inc.  | Empire State Development WNY Region              |
| Buffalo Transportation Museum                                 | Erdman Anthony Associates / NYSERDA              |
| Burke Brothers Development                                    | Erie County Government                           |
| Cannon Design   | County Executive's Office                        |
| Chan Krieger & Associates                                     | Department of Environment & Planning             |
| Ciminelli Development   | Industrial Development Agency                    |
| Citizens for Rapid Transit                                    | Legislature, District 6                          |
|   | Legislature, Republican Majority                 |
|   | Rebuild America                                  |
|   | Fannie Mae of Western New York                   |

**Special thanks (continued)**

Federal Government

Amtrak  
Department of Transportation  
Housing and Urban Development  
Federal Highway Administration  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Federal Railroad Administration  
Federal Reserve Bank of WNY  
Federal Reserve Board

Good Neighbors Planning Alliance

Greater Buffalo Convention  
and Visitor Bureau

Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional  
Transportation Council

Green Gold Corporation

Hamilton Houston and Lownie,  
Architects, PC

Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc.

HSBC Bank

Key Bank

Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier

Leadership Buffalo

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Lumsden and McCormick

M & T Bank

Militello Real Estate

National Fuel Gas Company

New Millennium Group of WNY

New York State Government

Department of Transportation  
Energy Research and  
Development Authority  
Historic Preservation Office  
Thruway Authority

Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

Board of Commissioners  
Surface Transportation

Niagara Mohawk

Partners for a Livable Western New York

Preservation Coalition of Erie County

Signature Management Group

Small Business Administration

Small Business Assistance Center

Studio Arena Theatre

Theatre District Association

University at Buffalo, The State University  
of New York

Center for Urban Studies

Institute for Local Governance  
and Regional Growth

School of Architecture and Planning

The Urban Design Project

Urban League

Wellness Institute

Working for Downtown

## APPENDIX

### *The Queen City Hub and "A new story about Downtown Buffalo"*

Published as "Upbeat About Downtown," Reprinted from the Buffalo News Sunday Viewpoints Cover, May 25, 2003, Special to the News, Robert G. Shibley

**It is time to start telling a new story about Downtown Buffalo.** We know the old one. We have told it to each other over and over again. Downtown is dead. Nobody goes there. Everyone is leaving. There is no plan or vision for Downtown.

There are just two problems with the old story. First, it's not true anymore. Second, continuing to tell this out-of-date story works against efforts to make Downtown better because it discounts work already accomplished and in progress.

Civic stories are self-fulfilling prophecies. If we tell a story that only emphasizes problems and failures, then we make our work even more daunting. But if we also tell a new story about recent accomplishments and opportunities along with the challenges, we make our success more likely.

This is not a call for wishful thinking or denial. It's a call for a new attitude. Portland, Oregon's subway has about the same ridership per capita as Buffalo's, but theirs is seen as a success, ours a failure. Why? Some of the answer is in our attitude, and attitude makes a difference.

Yes, there are serious problems to overcome to make Downtown the place we all want, like an office vacancy rate of about 25 percent. But, we have a much better chance of whittling that number down if we acknowledge the strides we have taken and work together to build on that positive energy.

### Planning and action

Contrary to stories you may have heard, Mayor Masiello has established a consensus plan for Downtown Buffalo and business and government are working together to implement it. It is a plan that makes difficult choices about where to invest public resources, builds on a successful history of past investments, and is expanding the critical mass of mixed-use places we need for a great Downtown.

The new *Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo*, to be released early next month, was built on a foundation laid by the *Strategic Plan for Downtown Buffalo* issued by the Mayor in September of 1999. The new *Queen City Hub* plan was created by *Downtown Buffalo 2002!* even as its participants implemented the earlier plan. The planning team worked with 18 public and private sector organizations and the broader Downtown constituency to identify and implement priorities on "Living," "Working," and "Accessing," Downtown. For example:

- **Living:** More than \$90 million is being invested in priority neighborhoods to create more than 600 housing units in existing buildings and related infrastructure; a new Downtown Neighborhood Development Corp. is linking private and public action; local and State codes and permit procedures have been revised to make it easier to rehabilitate and reuse existing buildings. Recent construction includes Ellicott Lofts by Burke Brothers Development, the Elk Terminal lofts by First Amherst, work on several sites by Ellicott Development Corporation, and work in progress on many other projects.



Main Street pedestrian area (Source: The Buffalo News/Robert Kirkham)

## APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

- **Working:** Adaptive reuse projects are helping create new vitality through the reincarnation of the old Jackson Building as the new Hampton Inn and Suites at Chippewa and Delaware and the rehabilitation of the former M. Wile facility as the Century City I office building at Washington and Goodell. The historic Guaranty Building is under restoration for renewed occupancy. There are two new office buildings in the Theatre District, one completed last year and one breaking ground this spring.
- **Access:** Several one-way streets are now two-way; Main Street will be opened to automobile traffic; there is new lighting on Main; the intermodal transportation center is moving ahead; and a comprehensive approach to parking has already freed up 2,000 spaces in the core through revised on-street parking zones, shuttle system implementation, and the creation of new incentives for transit users; and, new capacity in the core is coming on line in a mixed use facility on Huron.

Based on the pace of public and private sector development in the first three years of this decade, the 2000s are projected to see well more than twice the level of investment that occurred during the 1990s. Such concrete action is heartening precisely because it adheres to the strategic vision of *The Queen City Hub* plan.

### Strategic investment areas Downtown

The new *Queen City Hub* plan directs investment to five strategic areas that represent our current economic base and best potential for future job growth.



The Roswell Park Cancer Institute (Source: The Buffalo News/Robert Kirkham)

**The Theatre District** is one of Downtown's most continuous successes. The District from Chippewa to Tupper on Main has been almost completely reconstructed with 15 significant projects in two decades. Nearby blocks on and near Chippewa continue to attract investments following ten significant projects from 1990 to 2002. All of these build on the Fountain Plaza redevelopments of the 1980s.

**The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus** on the northeast corner of Downtown is one of the region's most important economic ventures. Investments by partner institutions will exceed \$250 million in this decade. They promise to generate 3,000 to 5,000 new jobs, related economic spin-offs, and help adjacent neighborhoods improve. This is in addition to \$250 million invested in the 1990s at places like the Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the Pillars Hotel.

**The Downtown Education and Public Safety Campus**, an initiative announced just last year, already in the planning stages, will bring thousands more regular daytime visitors to Downtown and boost markets for housing, restaurants, entertainment, and shopping. This investment will enable the redevelopment of a large corner of Downtown and help further connect it to near eastside neighborhoods.

**The Erie Canal Harbor and Waterfront District**, with a combination of heritage, recreation, sports, entertainment, transportation, housing, and retail attractions will leverage over \$100 million in private investment and provide another economic anchor in the tourism industry.

**APPENDIX (CONTINUED)**

**The Government and Finance District**, long the mainstay of the regional center economy, is the site of several hundred million dollars of reinvestment. The new Erie County Family Court Building, a planned U.S. Federal Court, a new office building and renovations to the Rath Building, Old County Hall, the historic Guaranty Building and 25 Delaware are important reinforcements of Downtown's role as a regional government and business center.



The newly constructed Erie County Family Court Building (Source: The Buffalo News/Robert Kirkham)

### **Strategic Activities and Principles for Action**

The plan also calls for investments in key Downtown activities that link the strategic investment areas to the surrounding ring of neighborhoods and to the waterfront.

Buffalonians understand that new residents are required for Downtown to be great. The plan identifies four priority areas for neighborhood development – and that's exactly where developers and the City are investing.

Shopping has suffered a long-term decline. The plan says how to rebuild shopping by attracting daytime workers, nighttime residents, visitors, and residents of adjacent neighborhoods as the combined market for new stores in the core. Strategies for investing in "Working Downtown" and visitor-based economies will support this growing retail market. For example, new restaurants were more numerous Downtown than anywhere else in the region last year.

Likewise, the plan sets down other principles for making a good Downtown including making it accessible for pedestrians, transit riders, and cars; reusing our valuable stock of historic buildings and carefully infilling our historic districts; promoting good urban design and management; implementing strategies for energy conservation and green building design; and, promoting a positive image.

## APPENDIX (CONTINUED)

The key to continued success is disciplined and detailed planning, implementation, and monitoring endorsed by the people that are responsible to make it happen. They will carry each one of these principles forward. Every strategic investment area, key activity, and principle for making a good Downtown is connected to action items, schedules and key participants.

Finally, *The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo* is a key part of the *Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan*. As such it will be part of the legal framework for planning in our city and builds on relationships among the waterfront and our access to it, a 21st century interpretation of the 1804 Ellicott radial street plan as well as the Olmsted Park and Parkway System.

### Challenges Ahead

Downtown Buffalo has some difficult challenges ahead: filling empty buildings, implementing an integrated parking and access strategy, improving the pedestrian experience, as well as improving its planning and economic development delivery system. Increased office tenancy in the center city requires available space in desirable locations and configurations. So, we need a judicious expansion of technologically up-to-date space combined with the reuse of older office buildings all tailored to meet new demands. This approach is helping reduce the vacancy rate without stunting economic growth. It is what happened with the Hampton Inn transformation on Chippewa, and it is what is happening right now with the renovation of the Sidway building at Main and Goodell for apartments. The approach is reinforced with new office space at several other sites.

Downtown Buffalo suffers from an overabundance of surface parking, something that threatens to suburbanize what should be a uniquely urban and pedestrian environment. Twenty-eight percent of the land area of Downtown is parking, mostly surface lots and a few parking structures. Buildings only cover twenty-seven percent of the land area. This means that the reasons to come Downtown – offices, shops, restaurants, theaters, and other places – are dominated by the places to put your car when you get there. Parking lots don't make for a very appealing Downtown environment.

The solution is to redevelop our expansive surface parking lots as mixed-use buildings that incorporate structured parking with retail, entertainment, offices, and housing. Such buildings use Downtown property much more efficiently, make it possible to create lively streetscapes, and put parking capacity where it is needed. In concert with a new emphasis on transit, this will create a new urban density and improve access.

All of Downtown faces a continuing shortfall in the resources needed to maintain a quality public realm. While Main Street gets special care from Buffalo Place Inc., Metro Rail capital improvements and cars sharing Main Street will also reinforce it soon. Even so, much of Downtown needs additional capital and maintenance attention. Sidewalks, crosswalks, bus shelters, street lights, sidewalk lighting, building lighting, benches, landscaping, trees, flower baskets, banners and trash receptacles – all high-quality – are needed both for those who live Downtown and those who visit for any reason. Imagine such investments on key radial and grid streets in the Ellicott plan – all as envisioned in the call for different levels of "Great Streets" in *The Queen City Hub* plan.





Inside the Market Arcade  
(Source: The Buffalo News/  
Robert Kirkham)



Construction at Main  
and Chippewa  
(Source: The Buffalo News/  
Robert Kirkham)

## “A NEW STORY ABOUT BUFFALO”

### A Shared Responsibility

There will always be people who want to know “who lost National Fuel?” or whatever institution has decided to relocate from Downtown. Part of telling a new story about Downtown has to involve an end to simplistic finger pointing and blaming. The process of city making is too complicated and involves too much multi-party collaboration to allow for that.

Instead, we need to embrace a shared responsibility for the future of our city center. We need to learn from and accept responsibility for our collective successes and failures. We also need to continue to implement the structural reforms that support collaboration and efficiency in economic development, business retention and planning. Finally, we need to stop greeting success with the cynical, “It is about time!” and start cheering while we work still harder on the challenges.

Those of us who support Downtown think institutions that choose other locations will miss the identity, excitement, centrality, and conveniences of Downtown. Some decision-makers have obviously made a different calculation. Downtown isn’t for everyone. Still, some also believe that departing corporations often leave with unmet civic responsibilities.

Even as National Fuel departs, we see new commitments by M&T and by Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and by all levels of government to find new space Downtown. Sensing this enthusiasm, developers have provided the first new office buildings in more than a decade.

Concentrating on making Downtown increasingly competitive with other business locations means not demanding charity from governments or companies. Downtown is a unique product and must compete in the market on its own merits. We need to increase our uniqueness as a regional center instead of trying to be more like our suburban campus and car culture alternatives.

Urban analysts from Toronto’s Jane Jacobs to Charleston’s Mayor Joe Riley agree: Downtowns are vital to the fate of their regions. Case after case around the country shows that healthy regions have healthy central cities, and healthy central cities have strong and vibrant Downtowns.

Downtown remains the economic core of the region. Forty percent of all business activity in the city occurs there. It is the heart of our job base and tax base. It is also the hub that holds together an array of regional cultural entertainment resources and revitalizing neighborhoods. Downtown is the neighborhood of neighborhoods for all of Buffalo Niagara.

Downtown is the special event capital of the region, drawing over 2.2 million visitors annually. More than seven million a year visit Downtown for sports, festivals, theater, libraries, conventions, religious services, and special events. Downtown is the core of our identity as a regional community.

So, we have a new story to tell about Downtown. It is that things are changing. Downtown is reviving and restructuring to meet the demands of the new century. We have a plan and we are working together to make it real. “We” is a full consortium of business, government, colleges and universities, and citizen organizations. No one of us can do it alone. All of us need to do it better.

“Beauty is universal... everybody needs it and there’s never any excuse for anyone, certainly in government, to ever build anything that doesn’t add to the beauty of a city.”

**JOSEPH E. RILEY,**

*Mayor, Charleston, SC*

in a speech to the Buffalo Renaissance Foundation

NOVEMBER, 2001

