

Queen City in the 21st Century

Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan



Byron W. Brown, MAYOR
WWW.CITY-BUFFALO.COM

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING
Timothy E. Wanamaker,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Adopted February 7, 2006

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PREFACE

The Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan is a bold statement by residents, businesses and political leaders about what kind of future Buffalo can expect if we plan together and implement with commitment.

Buffalo is the second largest city in the State of New York and the hub of the Buffalo-Niagara Region. As Buffalo goes, so goes the region. *The Queen City in the 21st Century* is based on that fundamental understanding.

The plan makes an unequivocal commitment to the use of smart growth principles as tools to revitalize the City and stabilize the region. By building on our cultural assets, increasing the economic base through strategic investments in infrastructure and business development, and enhancing the green environment, we are confident that we can reestablish Buffalo's position of greatness in the nation and world.

This is a bold plan with bold ideas. It is right for this generation as it works to establish itself in the 21st century. The success of this plan will ultimately be measured by the health and vitality of the Buffalo's neighborhoods. Our growth as an economic center will go hand in hand with the increasing strength of our neighborhoods.

The plan is based on the understanding that the past is history and the future is unwritten. Buffalo's past provides us with much to work with. This plan will help us seize the opportunity to write a future that realizes all of its possibilities. If we work together and stick with this plan we can write that bold future all of us want.

Timothy E. Wanamaker,
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan was created to guide Buffalo to achieve a shared community vision of our future. We intend to build a city that is a prosperous, green regional center providing livable communities for all its citizens. It will have a thriving, progressive economy with leading edge companies; inclusive community life and harmonious social relations; prestigious medical, academic, and public institutions; and fully restored and enhanced natural, cultural, and built heritage.

The more quantifiable goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to reverse Buffalo's long-term decline in population, employment and the quality of the physical environment through coordinated and strategic investments in economic development, neighborhood revitalization, and the infrastructure of the city, through the implementation of smart growth principles.

Buffalo is a city with its own needs, strengths, values and identity. It needs a plan of its own. But this plan also needs to respond to the larger regional context – one in which it is the center of an important metropolitan region, but also part of a much larger bi-national conurbation stretching from Toronto to Rochester around the “Golden Horseshoe.”

The analysis of current conditions that undergirds this plan shows that Buffalo faces great challenges: the long-term decline in population and jobs, deterioration in housing and neighborhoods, public schools under stress, great environmental damage to repair, and huge investments to make. The same analysis also shows what great assets we possess: great institutions of higher learning, good housing and strong neighborhoods, an extraordinary legacy of historic architecture, city planning and parks, a robust physical infrastructure, and much more.

Creation of this plan was guided by four key principles: Buffalo's future development should be sustain-able, integrating economic, environmental and social concerns, to make sure we preserve the opportunities of succeeding generations to live a good life. Physical development should follow

the patterns of smart growth that can help conserve our resources and make lively cities. We must “fix the basics” of the city to move forward. And we should always “build on our great assets.”

From the analysis of conditions and these key principles were derived seven policies for guiding our in-vestments. Buffalo must:

1. *Deliver quality public services*, applying best management practices, emerging technology and other cost cutting measures, and, where necessary relocating service delivery to other agencies more appropriate and better supported to deliver them.
2. *Maintain public infrastructure*, continuing and expanding work to monitor and manage streets, sewers, water and public buildings so that appropriate investments can be made on a timely basis and disposition of unneeded elements of these systems can be made.
3. *Transform Buffalo's economy*, hastening the city's transition to a modern mixed economy while working to maintain the base of manufacturing jobs, rationalizing the delivery of economic development services, investing in transportation, redeveloping land for economic expansion, leveraging the special regional role of Downtown, and developing local and regional heritage to attract skilled workers, capital and tourists.
4. *Reconstruct the schools*, providing the physical means to educate a high-quality workforce for the economy of the future, giving confidence to families with children to live in the city, and providing an element in a coordinated investment strategy to redevelop Buffalo's neighborhoods.
5. *Rebuild neighborhoods*, working with citizens to produce detailed neighborhood plans, striving to focus and coordinate investments for the greatest impact on physical conditions and investment environment, linking neighborhood development initiatives to jobs creation projects, and using demolition, rehabilitation and new construction to manage the housing stock to meet needs of a population expected to shrink further but then grow again.

6. *Restore Olmsted, Ellicott and the waterfront*, reinvesting in the unique physical structure of the city, restoring and expanding Frederick Law Olmsted's extraordinary system of parks and parkways, repairing and building on the Ellicott grid and radial system, and linking both to a greener and more accessible waterfront.
7. *Protect and restore the urban fabric*, instituting an Environmental Management System to safeguard the natural environment of the city, implementing a Community Preservation Plan to identify, protect and restore Buffalo's historic architecture, and adopting urban and regional design guidelines to make sure that newly built elements of the city are as good as the old.

These policies will be implemented in part through adoption of a new land use concept for the city and a revised Zoning Ordinance. The land use concept identifies three major corridors for focused investments in Buffalo's emerging mixed economy: a Tonawanda-waterfront corridor; a South Buffalo-East Side rail corridor; and a Main Street-Downtown corridor.

Most importantly, the plan will be linked to the City's Capital Improvement Program, which prioritizes and schedules all capital investments in Buffalo – those by the City and its agencies, as well as those by others at the County, State and federal levels. This program includes investments in water, sewer and streets infrastructure; public transit; land redevelopment and brownfields clean-up; economic development initiatives; new and rehabilitated housing; restoration of Buffalo's Olmsted and other parks; redevelopment of Ellicott plan radials; and more.

This investment program was guided by a selected development scenario entitled "Integrated Regional Center." This scenario strikes a balance between two other scenarios considered, one which emphasized large scale economic development initiatives, a second that focused on fine-grained revitalization of housing and neighborhoods. The chosen scenario says Buffalo must do both.

However, the reality of the Comprehensive Plan is clear: even after the City of Buffalo does everything it can to reform its operations and invests all the capital it has available, from municipal or other sources,

the total is still insufficient to effect the desired transformation of the city. It is not enough to meet the goal of reversing the decline in population, employment and physical environment.

Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan proposes a special Buffalo Development Program which combines the Capital Improvement Program constructed out of already available funds with an additional \$35 million per year from other sources. Over the ten-year course of the program an additional \$350 million would be invested.

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan is *the one plan* for the City of Buffalo. It will provide a framework for all other planning initiatives in the city including *The Queen City Hub: A Strategic Regional Action Plan for Downtown*; the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program; the Olmsted Parks Restoration and Management Plan; the Community Preservation Plan; Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan; and all the neighborhood plans created under the auspices of the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance.

With its review and adoption by the Common Council, Buffalo now has, perhaps for the first time ever, a truly comprehensive and authoritative plan to guide investments in the future of the city. This will be a powerful tool to stimulate growth, shape development, and measure our progress toward meeting our goal.

In the immediate future, much work needs to be done, including completion of component plans, creation of key implementing ordinances, reorganization of city and regional economic development services, and most of all, negotiation of the special Buffalo Development Program with our County, State and federal partners.

The City of Buffalo is in financial crisis. Its leaders, working under the supervision of the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority, have many difficult matters to attend to right now. But it is also important to look to our future in a longer view. What Buffalo must do in the short term to survive and what it must do in the longer-term to prosper need to be closely related to one another. They must be part of the same plan. As such, creation of this Comprehensive Plan is central to the work of leading Buffalo's recovery. There is no time to waste in its implementation.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

The Queen City in the 21st Century: the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan is the one plan for the City of Buffalo. It will be the preeminent legal document guiding all development in the City of Buffalo. It will provide the policy framework for all other local planning efforts including plans for downtown, neighborhoods, the waterfront, special districts and special purposes. There may be many plans in the city but they must be consistent with *the one plan for Buffalo*, the Comprehensive Plan.

To give it full effect, the Comprehensive Plan must have a direct connection to the City's capital improvement program and budget. Only then can the plan be tied directly to implementation. Indeed, only then can it be determined what resources are required to carry out the plan.

For these same reasons and according to the City's Charter and State legislation, the plan must be formally adopted by the City through vote of the Common Council.

The plan must also be subject to a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), as specified in the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). In addition, the City's zoning must be updated to be consistent with the plan.

Local plans already completed or in progress give significant depth through their incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan. These include The Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown, Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Program revitalization plans by the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, plans created through the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance and others.

The Comprehensive Plan has also been created to align with other planning efforts at the regional scale. It is intended to be consistent with: the 2030 Long Range Plan of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council; the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth; the Erie Niagara Regional Economic Development Strategy; the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative, and other plans at the regional scale.

The plan was created by the Office of Strategic Planning with the active involvement of all City departments and agencies and in consultation with officials of Erie County and other public bodies. It is based on extensive consultations with the public, including citizens who participated in the Neighborhood and Downtown Summit series, those working through the City of Buffalo's Good Neighbors Planning Alliance, and many others.

The plan is also based on thorough professional research into the current conditions of the city and on a solid understanding of planning and development precedents relevant to Buffalo's situation. An extensive bibliography of source documents is included in the appendix.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a traditional master plan. It is intended to be a general guide – not a detailed and rigid prescription – for land use, development, urban design, capital investment and related activities. Likewise, it is intended to be adaptable. The plan is also based on key Smart Growth Principles that present an opportunity for reestablishing the City as the HUB of the region. It should respond to new planning efforts or changing conditions that cannot be foreseen today. Toward this end, the City should review the plan every five years to ensure its continuing appropriateness and relevance and to make changes where necessary. Any amendments to the plan shall require a majority vote of the Common Council after a 30-day public review of the proposed changes.

I. Buffalo in 2030: A Vision

In 2030 Buffalo will be the Queen City of the Great Lakes once more, growing again, renewed, and rebuilt from its foundations, a model of smart growth and sustainability.

A citizen speaking at a public hearing on the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan eloquently expressed what Buffalonians want for the future of their city when he said: “We want Buffalo the way it is, only better.”

A century and a half ago, Buffalo became known as “the Queen City of the Great Lakes,” recognized by the nation for its spirit of entrepreneurship, economic vitality, its great public institutions and a rich civic culture. Its citizens were rightly proud.

The description “Queen City” was coined by Millard Fillmore in his 1847 address to the commencement ceremony of the Faculty of Medicine, the first department of the newly established University of Buffalo, of which Fillmore was chancellor. Buffalo had already built its economy on the basis of the “crowded wharves, glutted warehouses” and teeming tenements surrounding the Erie Canal terminus and harbor. Then, with the foundation of the University, Fillmore foresaw a new era for Buffalo, bringing benefits to the city, the surrounding countryside, and adjacent states.

Joseph Ellicott had laid out his celebrated radial street plan 43 years before Fillmore imagined Buffalo as the Queen City, but creating a city that lived up to the image did not happen overnight. It was 21 years later, in

1868, when William Dorsheimer took Frederick Law Olmsted driving on a Sunday afternoon and showed him the gently rolling farmland overlooking the city that Olmsted chose as the site for Delaware Park.

It took decades to shape and implement the plans, the architecture, the parks, parkways, enterprises and institutions that came to symbolize Buffalo. Piece by piece, layer by layer, the urban fabric was enriched, as Upjohn, Sullivan, Burnham, Richardson, Wright, Saarinen, Rudolph, Pei, Yamasaki and many others made their contributions

For the balance of the 19th century, and well into the 20th century, the brand name Queen City of the Lakes suited Buffalonians' image of their city and themselves. They rejoiced in the beauty and advantages of their location beside Lake Erie, the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers. They savored the success of their burgeoning manufacturing and trade, their connections to and influence on the region and the wider world beyond the Great Lakes. They celebrated their churches, parks, and neighborhoods, and the sophistication of their arts, learning and architecture. They took justifiable pride in their city, exemplified by the city's bravura in staging the Pan American Exhibition in 1901.

During the 20th century, Buffalo's fortunes fluctuated, influenced by changing international and national economic conditions, downward in the Depression, upward during the Second World War. In the last three decades of the century, the city endured a generation of hardship, loss and change. In 2004, however, there is new hope that Buffalo will emerge from this difficult period. The city's challenges will not end overnight, but the community's will to succeed is strong.

A new community vision is emerging as Buffalo enters the 21st century. It is a vision that connects the affection of the citizenry for the heritage of the physical city as passed down from preceding generations with an aspiration to meet the economic, environmental

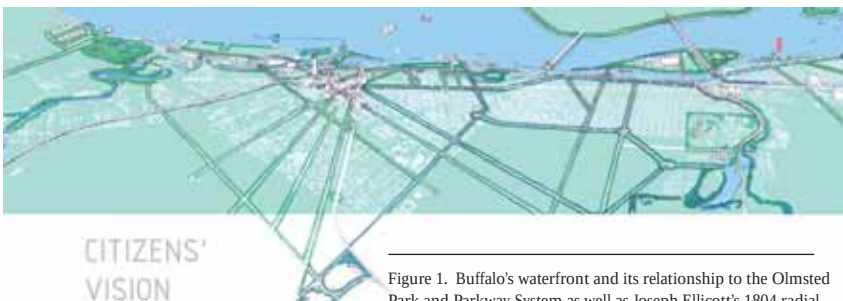


Figure 1. Buffalo's waterfront and its relationship to the Olmsted Park and Parkway System as well as Joseph Ellicott's 1804 radial street plan form the physical foundation for the Queen City of the 21st century.

and social challenges of the coming years. The vision is rooted in the determination of the people to recapture, restore and enhance the quality of their natural and built environments and their quality of life as they rebuild their economy. It is a vision of a prosperous green city with its own distinctive identity, re-branded as the Queen City of the Great Lakes.

In this future, Buffalo will be respected for its regional leadership; diverse, modern economy and transportation infrastructure; educated and skilled work force, fully employed; inclusive community life and harmonious social relations; comfortable and safe neighborhoods; and a unique natural, cultural, and built heritage that has been lovingly preserved, restored and enhanced. As Queen City of the Great Lakes, Buffalo will have also earned recognition for its leadership in ensuring the clean-up and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem and protecting the integrity and wise use of this immense water resource.

In working toward this new vision, Buffalo has many assets on which to build: the character, strength, knowledge and creativity of its people; great institutions of education, medicine and science; a rich cultural life; a great legacy in the physical city of streets, parks, buildings and homes; the city's position on the Great Lakes and its fresh water resources; its location in the bi-national Golden Horseshoe; its border with Canada and its relation to the rest of the world. All of these things will give Buffalo the economic leverage that the crowded wharves and glutted warehouses of its harbor and the Erie Canal provided in the 19th century.

Many urban planners say that the foundation of success for cities in the world of today and tomorrow is "beauty, brains, and culture." Buffalo has all of these. The challenge is to organize, manage and develop them to achieve the restoration and development of the city fabric for the benefit of all

residents of the city and the surrounding region. The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan is the City's response to that challenge.

The result will be a city that still looks much like it looks today – only greener and fresher, fuller and more vibrant. Much of its urban fabric and many of its buildings will have been refurbished, but with many new and different uses. Nevertheless, there will still be room and opportunity for the Ellicotts, Olmsteds, Sullivans and Wrights of the 21st century to make their contributions to Buffalo's tradition of excellence.

This vision for Buffalo translates into a single goal, which is no less than to transform Buffalo as the urban center of the Buffalo Niagara region through application of smart growth principles, targeted investments, and managed physical change to restore the economic well being, environmental health and sustainability of the city and promote an increase in its population.

Most plans have multiple goals. But given what Buffalonians want as a community, this goal is the only one that could be set. Just as important, this single, clear goal can provide the framework for organizing and coordinating many other important planning initiatives now ongoing in the region. It is a goal to which all other plans can be related and linked. Finally, this is an achievable goal against which we can definitively measure our progress.

It is an ambitious vision, but one that is backed by the commitment, creativity and hard work of the citizens of Buffalo. It is presented at a time when the prospects for Buffalo seem bleak. But a clear long-term vision and plan is part of what will lead us out of our current crisis. It may take 20 years or more to achieve the vision. But we must act now - aggressively, deliberately and strategically - if the vision is to be realized at all. The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan will provide the strategic guidance needed to achieve that vision.

PART ONE:

Challenges, resources and context

The research and consultations behind the Comprehensive Plan can help us paint a richly detailed portrait of the City of Buffalo, the challenges it faces, the resources on which it has to draw and the context in which it must move forward. The recommendations in part two of the plan are based, in large measure, on this portrait.

1.1 THE REGION

Understanding Buffalo's place in a regional context was fundamental to the development of this Comprehensive Plan. Urban regions, however, are often defined in different ways according to different purposes. Buffalo, too, has a place in several regions, variously defined. Each definition highlights particular challenges ahead, resources at hand and opportunities to come.

Buffalo is strategically located in a bi-national multi-polar urban region sometimes known as the "Golden Horseshoe" (see Figure 2). It is home to nearly ten million people and stretches from the Greater Toronto Area, around the western end of Lake Ontario, through the Niagara Peninsula and across Western New York, including the Buffalo and Rochester metropolitan areas.

The Golden Horseshoe is the fourth largest urban region in North America, and with a growth rate of 110,000 people per year, the region is the second fastest growing major urban region on the continent. Most of the growth is on the Canadian side of this bi-national region but the future potential for investment and economic growth in the U.S. parts of the region, because of our proximity to our Canadian economic partners, is substantial and should be exploited.

Figure 2. The golden horseshoe is a region rapidly growing. One of the comprehensive plan objectives is to participate in this larger region's growth and vitality.



Buffalo's region is also frequently defined in terms of five or eight Western New York counties, sometimes for political or administrative purposes, such as in the program of the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC). Their five-county region contains a population of 1,443,743 people. ESDC reports significant business investment and economic growth in this region, although mostly outside of core cities and older suburbs. This fact has important implications for regional planning and economic development.

The regional definition most relevant to this plan, however, is the two-county region comprising Erie and Niagara Counties, also known as the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area. This region defines not only a U.S. census unit, but the core of a regional labor market, a media market, a commuter-shed, a transportation planning area, and many other regional functions including ongoing efforts to improve metropolitan governance.

In all but the broadest definitions of this region, Buffalo has long been the dominant urban center, economically, politically, culturally and demographically. Over the past half century, however, Buffalo's predominant position in the region has deteriorated as the urban core declined in population and the suburbs grew. In 1950 nearly two-thirds of the people in Erie County lived in the City of Buffalo. By the turn of the century, less than one-third of the population lived there.

Not only the core cities suffered, however. The combined population of Erie and Niagara counties peaked at about 1.35 million around 1970. By 2000 the population had declined to 1.17 million – a net loss of about 180,000. Yet, even as population leveled off and then dropped, the total area occupied by urbanization continued to grow – by 132 percent between 1950 and 2000. Even in the period of overall population decline, from 1970 to 2000, the urbanized area grew by a third (see Figure 3).

Urban sprawl has brought huge economic, social, and environmental costs, particularly for the core cities. Operating expenditures for local governments in Erie and Niagara Counties have increased 65 percent in the last ten years – nearly triple the rate of inflation – with no appreciable increase in services. In Buffalo, taking inflation into account, local home prices have actually dropped 24 percent over that same period. As assessments have declined, municipalities have been forced to raise taxes to maintain current services. Today, the finances of the City of Buffalo are clearly under strain.

Despite all of this, the City of Buffalo, with only 41 square miles of land, remains the functional core of the region. No other community in the region can replicate this concentration of functions. Businesses and residents in suburbs throughout the region depend on these functions for their well being. They are what make Buffalo the region's central place. Any plan must determine how the city can take best advantage of its regional position.

Buffalo is Western New York's:

- Government and institutional center;
- Medical and life sciences research center;
- Business center;
- Service center;
- Transportation hub;
- Cultural and heritage center;
- Sports and entertainment center;
- Restaurant and niche retail center; and
- International trading center.

Given New York State's institutional and constitutional framework, there appears to be little prospect of expanding the city's boundaries to augment its population, obtain land for development, increase efficiency and enlarge its tax and revenue base. The Comprehensive Plan has been based on the

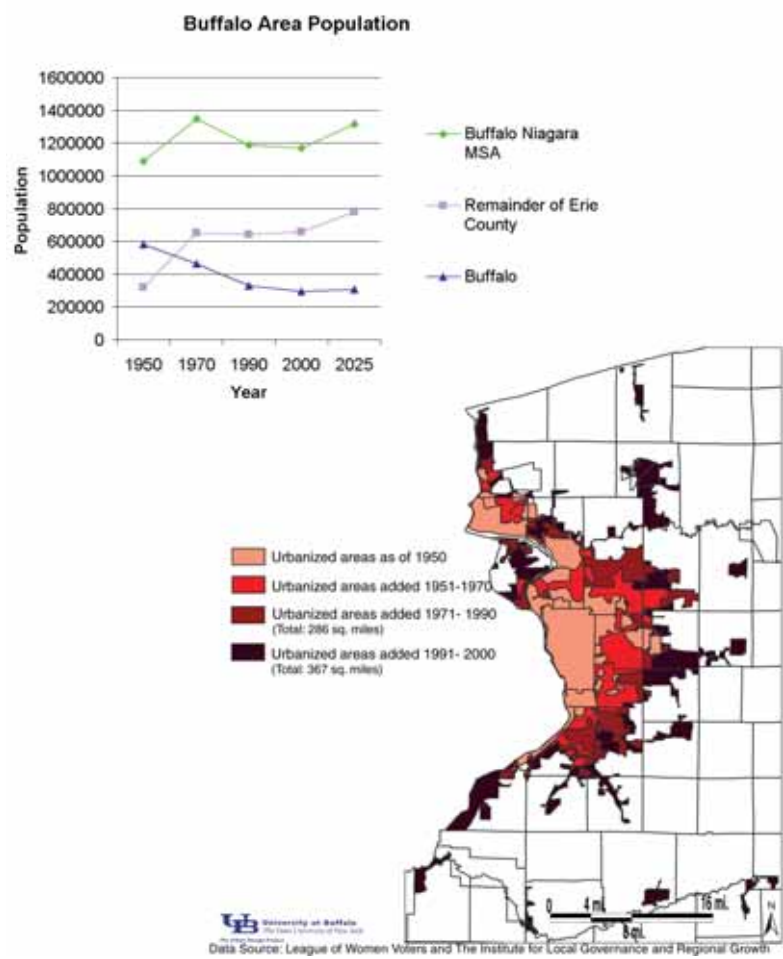


Figure 3. Metropolitan Expansion in Buffalo and Erie County

Table 1 | Buffalo Area Population

Jurisdiction	1950	1970	1990	2000
City Of Buffalo	580,132	462,768	328,123	292,648
Remainder of Erie County	319,106	650,723	640,409	657,617
Buffalo-Niagara MSA	1,089,230	1,349,211	1,189,288	1,170,111
New York State	14,830,192	18,241,391	17,990,455	18,976,457
United States	151,325,798	203,302,031	248,709,873	281,421,906

Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis

assumption that the city's boundaries, which have scarcely changed over the past 150 years, will not change significantly over the next 20 years. Recent proposals for the possible merger of the City and Erie County may render this assumption obsolete. However, the Comprehensive Plan would still be valid if such structural change were to occur.

Whatever else happens, Buffalo has assets to develop and use that are related directly to its position in its various regions. These include a strategic position in regional, continental and global trading networks; strong economic, administrative, cultural and other functions within the metropolitan area; and a potentially central political role in the regional institutions of what we now call Buffalo-Niagara.

1.2 POPULATION

Recent trends

The region's long-term downward population trend continued, albeit slowly, in the 1990s, led by continued migration from central cities. From 1990 to 2000, the population of the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA declined by fewer than 20,000 people – a change that could be read as a leveling off from the steeper decline in the twenty years previous. Compared with the broader state and national picture, however, these trends were evidence of deep distress.

In the same decade, Erie and Niagara Counties both lost population, at rates of 1.9 percent and 0.4 percent respectively, due mainly to decline in Buffalo and Niagara Falls. At the same time, suburban and outlying areas in each county experienced modest population growth: 2.7 percent in Erie County and 3.4 percent in Niagara County.

The trend of people moving out of the two main cities, meanwhile, continued unabated. By 2000, the population of Buffalo had declined by 35,475 or nearly 11 percent since the previous census. Buffalo's neighbor, Niagara Falls shrank by more than ten percent during the same period, from 61,840 to 55,593. Over the same period, the nation as

Table 2 | City of Buffalo Population and Housing

Categories	1950	1970	1990	2000
Population	580,132	462,768	328,123	292,648
White	542,432	364,367	212,449	159,300
All other races	37,700	98,401	115,674	133,348
Persons under 18	26.00%	30.80%	24.20%	26.30%
Persons 60 and older	13.30%	18.40%	19.40%	17.00%
Total housing units	165,538	166,107	151,970	145,574
Households	164,640	157,951	136,436	122,720
Households 5 or more persons	20.60%	17.00%	8.70%	8.50%
One person households	8.10%	25.60%	35.60%	37.70%
Persons per households	5.2	2.92	2.4	2.38
All families	149,420	112,508	78,245	67,053
Married couple families*	74.00%	54.90%	33.20%	27.60%
Families with female heads*		13.20%	20.20%	22.30%
Poverty**		15.20%	25.60%	26.70%

* Percent of total households

** Percent of all persons

Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis

a whole grew by more than 13 percent and New York State grew by more than five percent – nearly a million people (See Table 1).

A variety of factors have pushed the continued migration from the city. Some out-migrants seek better schools for their children, including programs in arts, physical education and computer science, and better libraries. Others want to live closer to work now that a higher proportion of regional jobs are located in the suburbs. Still others seek a broader range of choices in housing and neighborhoods.

The profile of those residents left behind is striking, although several long-term trends seem to have leveled off (see Table 2). Measured from the year 1970, however, the trends are dramatic. The percentage of larger households – with five or more people – dropped by about half between 1970 and 2000 while the percentage of one-person households rose by about 50 percent. The proportion of households living in poverty and those with a female head-of-household both rose sharply while the percentage of married family households declined by about half during the same period. None of these trends was reversed during the 1990s, but they each slowed significantly.

2030 Population projection

Whether the overall downward trend in Buffalo's population will continue, level off or be reversed is a matter of informed speculation. Population estimates for 2010 and 2020 prepared by the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning based on a straight-line extrapolation of the 1990-2000 trend suggest that the city's population may continue to decline to 250,000 or lower before growth resumes.

There is some evidence, however, that the trends of the past have already begun to level off. Moreover, this plan is based on an assumption that the strong interventions it recommends, combined with many policies already being pursued, will help turn around Buffalo's population trends much sooner. New City of Buffalo efforts to coordinate economic development; target investments in schools, parks, housing and infrastructure; to repair the overall urban fabric all suggest that population growth can be restored in Buffalo even earlier than some projections indicate.

Likewise, parallel efforts by County, State and federal governments, and by partners in the private sector to improve public service delivery, invest in education, manage land use, reinvest in key infrastructure, redevelop old industrial land and invest private capital in productive enterprises will all help produce a net increase in both jobs and population inside the city.

All of this supports the population projection on which the Comprehensive Plan is based. It suggests that the decline will have been stopped by no later than 2020 and that population and employment will begin to grow again so that by 2030 the city's population will have returned at least to its current level and begun to grow again at an annual rate of one percent or better.

1.3 ECONOMY

A strategy to promote economic growth and community redevelopment in the City of Buffalo must be based on a clear understanding of current economic trends – in terms of the rise or fall of economic sectors, shifts in employment location and the relation of each to ongoing local and regional policies and programs to promote growth. Along the way, a comparison of regional patterns with trends at the state and national level can help illuminate Buffalo’s situation.

National trends

A review of national data shows profound and broad-based trends in the sectoral makeup of the economy. Employment in traditional primary industry sectors such as manufacturing, mining and agriculture have declined significantly over time even as the relative dollar value of these activities has been sustained through improvement in productivity. Other economic sectors have grown to provide new jobs to replace the old, most notably in business services (especially information technology), finance, and tourism (entertainment, recreation, food, and accommodation combined).

Recent ten-year projections (1998 to 2008) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest that employment in the manufacturing sector as a whole will continue to decline, but at a much slower rate than in the previous decade. Projected trends within the sector, however, will be mixed, with some industries of interest to Buffalo projected to increase while others decline.

Meanwhile, the Buffalo-Niagara MSA remains significantly more reliant on manufacturing than New York State or the nation as a whole. Likewise, a greater proportion of regional employment is in retail trade, state and local government, health, and social services than the United States overall.

A recent paper by Empire State Development Corporation (September 2002) confirmed that manufacturing remains a key element in the region’s economy. Based on data from 1999, fully three quarters of “driver” employment – jobs in sectors that produce regional income by exporting products or services – was in manufacturing industries. Finance and services accounted for most of the remainder – 18 percent – of this primary employment.

Sectoral shifts in the region

Regional shifts in economic activity reflect the national trends, although with slower growth in expanding sectors. According to the Cluster Mapping Project of the Harvard Business School, the greatest gains in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls economy from 1990 to 1999 were in business services, transportation and logistics, distribution services, and education and knowledge creation. The traded clusters with the highest overall levels of employment in 1999 were education and knowledge creation, automobile manufacturing, business services, and food processing.

Table 4 | Public Sector Employment

Jurisdiction	1990	2000
Local government	14,364	13,158
State government	8,359	6,369
Federal government	3,397	2,653

Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Planning Analysis

An ESDC analysis (September 2002) of industry clusters across Buffalo-Niagara, metro Rochester and Ontario revealed that some of the industry clusters with the highest employment in Ontario are closely related to “driver” sectors in both upstate New York metropolitan regions. Such findings provide strong support for an emerging bi-national economic strategy aimed at further integrating the Western New York and Ontario economies.

**Table 3 | City of Buffalo, Employed Population
(16 years and older)**

Industry	1990	2000
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	720	165
Mining	31	7
Construction	4,855	3,694
Manufacturing	21,201	14,906
Wholesale trade	4,891	4,257
Retail trade	22,415	12,172
Transportation and warehousing	5,823	5,474
Utilities	2,527	749
Information		2,974
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental & leasing	9,282	6,509
Professional and related services	10,199	9,774
Professional, scientific and technical services	3,864	4,840
Educational services	13,286	12,166
Health care and social assistance	17,612	20,218
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,461	1,371
Accommodation and food services		8,166
Other services	5,933	5,498
Public Administration	6,901	6,012
Total	131,001	114,062

Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Planning Analysis

Jobs in public administration, meanwhile, declined absolutely and as a proportion of regional employment. There were nearly 4,000 fewer jobs in government in the region in 2000 than ten years before, and the proportion of regional employment in public administration declined slightly during that period from 4.44 percent to 4.26 percent.

For Buffalo residents – whether they worked inside the city or out of it – the trends were similar. Employment in manufacturing fell by a total of 6,000 between 1990 and 2000 (see Table 3). Once the leading economic sector, manufacturing jobs as a proportion of total employment shrank from 16 to 13 percent in that same period. Still, manufacturing

remains the second largest source of employment for city residents and is expected to continue as a vital part of Buffalo's new mixed economy, an important generator of wealth even at lower levels of employment.

The sector producing the most jobs for Buffalo residents, meanwhile, was health care and social services, which added roughly 2,600 jobs and increased its share of resident employment from 13 to 18 percent. Education and retail shared third place ranking behind manufacturing with 11 percent each, or more than 12,000 people employed in each sector, although this number had declined slightly since 1990. Professional and related services was the fifth largest source of employment for Buffalonians with about nine percent of the total or nearly 9,800 jobs and holding steady since 1990.

Industry sector employment figures as currently organized obscure the importance of tourism as a source of jobs for Buffalonians. Indeed, there is no category for tourism (see Table 3). Rather, employment in the visitor-based economy spans a number of sectors, including arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services. Although all income in these sectors cannot be attributed to tourism, combined employment in these sectors totaled more than 9,000 jobs in 2000.

Location of employment

A review of employment figures by location (see Table 4) shows some significant trends including a decline in total jobs, a decline in the proportion of regional jobs located within the City of Buffalo and an increase in the number of workers who commute from city to suburb. Nevertheless, Buffalo retains its status as the predominant employment location within the region.

Total employment in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA declined by more than eleven percent during the period from 1990 to 2000 – a loss of nearly 68,000 jobs, of which more than 50,000 had been located within the Buffalo city limits. As a result, Buffalo's proportion of total regional employment shrank from 36 to 31 percent. Such precipitous losses notwithstanding, Buffalo remains the most important employment center in the region.

The changes in job locations resulted in a significant shift in commuting patterns. The number of workers commuting into the city each day declined from nearly 121,000 in 1990 to fewer than 94,000 in 2000 – a drop of more than 22 percent. Meanwhile, the number of “reverse commuters” grew about 15 percent, from nearly 39,000 to almost 45,000. Nevertheless, the proportion of in-city workers who commuted from homes in the suburbs actually grew slightly, from 57 to 58 percent. Likewise, the number of in-bound commuters still exceeded the number of out-bound commuters by nearly 50,000 people a day.

Emerging policies, ongoing programs

The policy implications for Buffalo from this portrait are clear. First, the City and its allies in the County, State, and in the private sector, should do whatever is possible to maintain the region's manufacturing base even as they recognize its share of the economy will continue to shrink. Second, all of the relevant players should work together to foster the various elements of an emerging mixed economy.

In the latter case, this means providing strategic support in a range of economic sectors that already have a strong base, not only in the region, but within the city itself. These include: health care and social assistance, including medical research and bio-informatics, manufacturing, education, professional and related services, finance, insurance and real estate, retail, tourism, transportation and warehousing, information technology and other knowledge-based industry, and public administration.

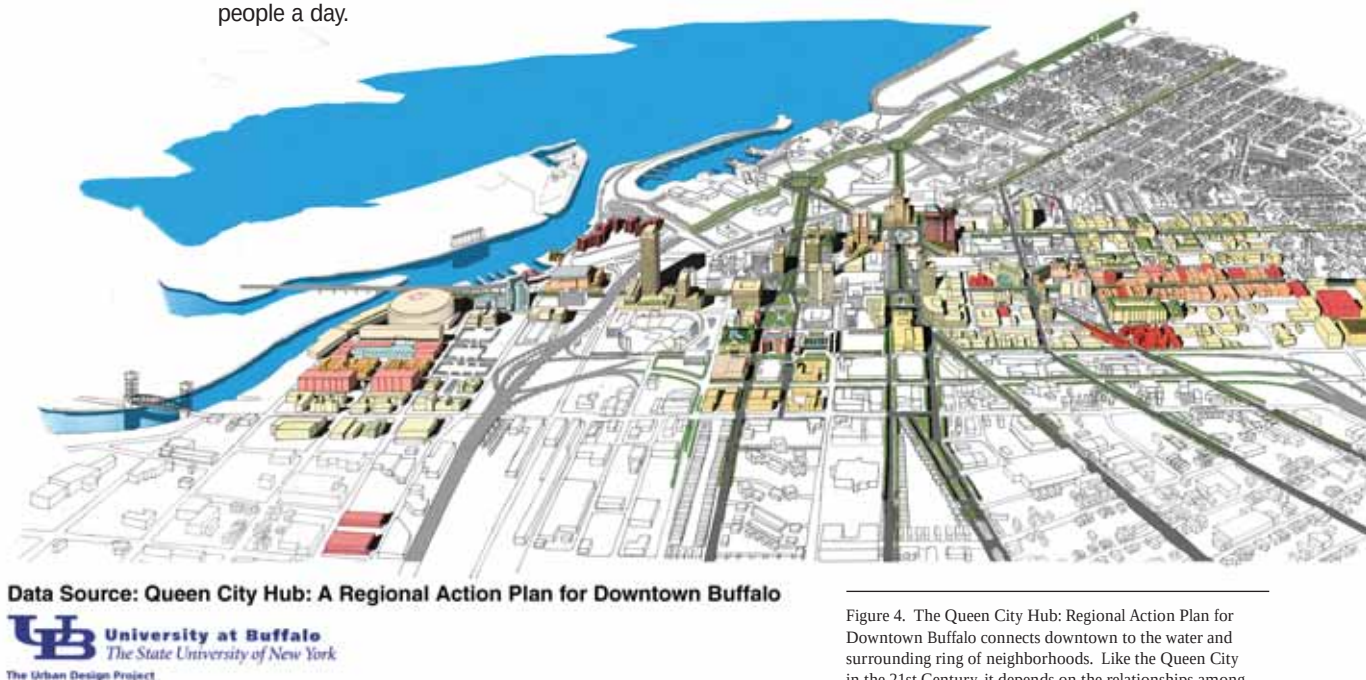


Figure 4. The Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo connects downtown to the water and surrounding ring of neighborhoods. Like the Queen City in the 21st Century, it depends on the relationships among the water, the Ellicott Radial Plan, and the Olmsted Park and Parkway System to create these connections.

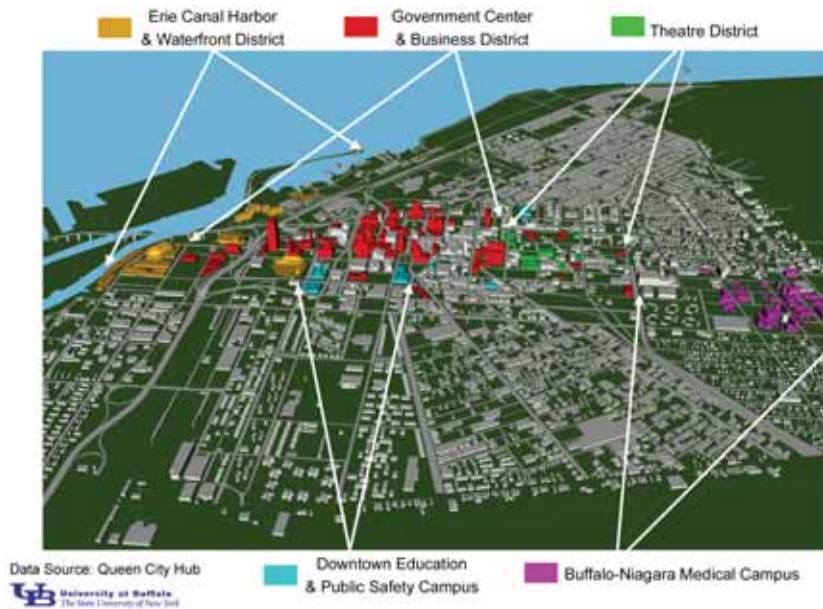


Figure 5. Five strategic investment areas make up the core of the downtown's regional action plan. In the decade of 2000 to 2010 the areas are accounting for over one billion dollars of investment creating a critical mass of mixed use in the downtown. According to the Queen City Hub, key residential neighborhoods will nest between the strategic areas.

A Brookings Institution study published in early 2004 confirmed such a strategy, urging policy changes that would help the region in “leveraging its strengths in higher education, health care and manufacturing into long-term growth and job creation in both established and emerging industries.”

Indeed, government officials at all levels and private sector leaders are already engaged in a continuing cooperative effort to enact such a strategy. These partners include the Western Region office of Empire State Development Corporation, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, Erie County Industrial Development Agency (the City's economic development arm), the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

The Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo's preeminent regional private sector economic development and business advocacy organization, has staked out a leadership position on these matters with its Partnership NOW program. They have identified eleven priority initiatives that map closely with public sector policies. These include advocacy for regional land use planning, city permit reform, downtown housing development, regional tourism development, cross-border facilitation, preparation of “shovel-ready” industrial land, workforce development, commercialization of life science technologies, and reform of regional economic development services.

The first steps in a reorganization of the delivery of economic development programs have already taken place. A number of functions previously performed by staff of the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation (BERC) have been shifted to the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) and Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE). BERC, meanwhile, has been brought under the umbrella of the Office of Strategic Planning.

In general, the ECIDA and BNE have taken responsibility for those functions that have a regional scope and impact including major regional development projects, real estate development, regional marketing, and coordination of major incentive programs. OSP and BERC have retained functions with a specific city focus including neighborhood commercial redevelopment, heritage preservation, downtown development and others.

The collaborative relationships established during this work remain active and all parties are receptive to further efforts to ensure efficient and effective delivery of programs and services and the coordinated pursuit of economic development planning and policy making.



Figure 6. The Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo connects downtown to the water and surrounding ring of neighborhoods. Like the Queen City in the 21st Century, it depends on the relationships among the water, the Ellicott Radial Plan, and the Olmsted Park and Parkway System to create these connections.

The Role of Downtown Buffalo

Downtown Buffalo plays a pivotal role in the Buffalo-Niagara economy and its continued development will be the largest and most important single contribution that the city can make to implementing the region's economic development strategy. It is the economic center of the region, with the largest and most diversified set of economic functions and the largest agglomeration of employment. It has the room and the opportunity to expand and diversify. It can accommodate both an expanded workforce and expanded residential development. Indeed, all of these things are already happening.

Downtown is best understood in a frame larger than the one that encompasses the traditional central business district. A greater downtown area bounded by North Street and Porter Avenue on the north, the Niagara River, Lake Erie and the Buffalo River on the

west and south, and Jefferson Avenue on the east is home to 18,000 residents and place of business for 60,000 workers – more than one of every ten workers in the region. The number of these residents and workers – and their collective buying power – is likely to grow as the development of Downtown continues.

Downtown's most prominent assets include both long-established and newly-emerging concentrations of economic activity including government, finance, banking, legal services, insurance, business services, real estate, commerce, retail, entertainment, sports, culture, medical research, health care services, and education.

Recent and pending investments in new private office space, government offices, medical research facilities, retail attractions, heritage tourism sites, sports venues, hotels, theaters, restaurants, transportation infrastructure and improvements in the pedestrian level urban environment provide a stout foundation on which to build further.

One of the most important recent developments in Downtown Buffalo has been the opening of new housing there, offering residents an environment that is unavailable anywhere else in the region. New downtown residents enjoy unique living spaces and immediate access to an urban environment and amenities that are convenient, attractive and exciting. The depth of this new market is not known, but the introduction of hundreds of new units of housing has already changed Downtown dramatically.

The historic fabric of the city itself is one of Downtown Buffalo's key assets. The Joseph Ellicott radial and grid street plan and its system of parks and public squares, Downtown's wealth of great historic and contemporary architecture, its proximity to close in residential neighborhoods and its immediate links to the Buffalo's expansive waterfront are all strengths on which the city can build.

Perhaps Downtown Buffalo's greatest asset, however, is an engaged, well-informed and well-organized constituency for its continuing development. Since 1994, a series of "Summits" have drawn attention to the potential of Downtown and helped set the agenda for action. The Downtown 2002! implementation management program brought key stakeholders together to make sure priority projects moved ahead. The same constituency helped move forward a new strategic plan for Downtown called The Queen City Hub, which will become part of this Comprehensive Plan.

If the future of the Buffalo-Niagara region is a more modern and mixed economy, it only makes sense to start working to achieve that future in the location that is already the largest and most diverse place of production in the this region.

Buffalo's Regional Assets

Buffalo possesses a range of other assets that need to be taken into account in any strategy aimed at redeveloping the city. These assets are both natural and human-made and span a range of categories including waterfront, landscapes, arts and culture, heritage, entertainment, infrastructure, technology, research and education. What these assets have in common is that they are unique to the region – in some cases to the world – or at least represent an attraction that is regional in scope. As such, these are major competitive assets for both the city and the region and they require development. For example:

- The waterfronts of Lake Erie and the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers which are increasingly accessible for boating, fishing, sightseeing and recreation;
- The historic parks and parkways system designed by the noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted;

- Major cultural institutions such as Shea's Buffalo Center for the Performing Arts in Buffalo's Theatre District; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society as the heart of the Elmwood Museum District; Kleinhans Music Hall, home of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra; the Buffalo Zoo in the Olmsted Crescent and others;



Figure 7. Buffalo's Lake Erie waterfront (Photo from the Western New York Regional Information Network).



Figure 8. The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society constructed originally as the New York State building of the 1901 Pan American Exhibition in Buffalo.



Figure 9. The Buffalo Psychiatric Center designed by H.H. Richardson in collaboration with Fredrick Law Olmsted and Sanford White was completed in 1881. (Photo: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)

- Important histories and related heritage sites including the Erie Canal Harbor and local Underground Railroad heritage sites;
- Historically significant architecture including H.H. Richardson's Buffalo State Hospital complex, Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin House, Sullivan's Guaranty Building and others;
- Major entertainment and sports venues including HSBC Arena, home of the Buffalo Sabres and site of major concerts; Dunn Tire Park, home of the Buffalo Bisons; and the Erie Community College Flickinger Aquatic Center, a magnet for amateur athletics competitions;



Figure 10. The Buffalo Niagara International Airport.



Figure 11. The HSBC Arena at Buffalo's Erie Canal Harbor.

- A robust multi-modal transportation system including major interstate highways (I-90, I-190 and I-290), an integrated bus and rail Metro system, the Peace Bridge crossing to Canada, and much more;
- A powerful technology and telecommunications infrastructure including the University at Buffalo “supercomputer” and a dense network of fiber-optic lines;
- Major educational institutions including the University at Buffalo, Buffalo State College, Canisius College and others; and
- World class medical research and clinical facilities in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus including the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Hauptmann-Woodward Medical Research Institute, and UB's Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics.

Together, these regional assets help create a quality of life for residents in the city and throughout the region that makes Buffalo a special place to live, work and play. They provide meaning and purpose to the daily



Figure 12. Perspective sketch of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus from the BNMC Master Plan, Chan Krieger Associates.

lives of residents. They should not be understood only as economic assets. Nevertheless, they provide motivation for visitors to come to Buffalo and for businesses to invest private capital here. They are irreplaceable economic development assets, especially in an economic era when quality of life, character of place, and the cultural opportunities a community can offer are key incentives for both labor and capital to locate. The protection, development and marketing of these assets should be an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Preparing Land for New Development

Economic development efforts can have only limited success unless the city has adequate developable land – sometimes referred to as “shovel ready” – available for business retention, expansion and attraction. Current marketing efforts are generating a strong demand for land and buildings from companies wishing to expand or locate in Buffalo. Sufficient acreage is essential if this demand is to be satisfied.

Much of the industrial land in Buffalo is “brownfield” – former industrial sites not immediately ready for new development due to environmental concerns, obsolete structures, or other impediments. Ongoing work is focused on the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park project and the City Smart Plan for Strategic Real Estate Investments. But the City does not have the resources needed to develop its industrial real estate inventory as quickly as is needed.

Preparation of industrial land in Buffalo for redevelopment should be seen as a regional priority. Making brownfields ready for market will bolster the economic health of the urban core, promote efficient use of land and existing infrastructure, and reduce the public burden of extending new infrastructure to undeveloped areas of the region. More rapid assembly and clean-up of brownfield sites is urgently needed to support the City's and region's economic development program.



Figure 13. Buffalo's I-190 trade corridor.

A new State Brownfield Clean Up Program went into effect in April 2004. This program provides for a significant expansion of State support for all aspects of brownfield reclamation, from assessment to clean up to reuse, including significant tax incentives for private sector owners. The program replaces the voluntary program and will provide the incentive and the means for the City to boost its brownfield clean up efforts immediately.

Improving Transportation

The City of Buffalo continues to support collaborative efforts to plan and implement an efficient regional transportation system that also improves the city's economy. The transportation network created for Buffalo was designed to serve the needs of a significantly larger population than is here today. Nevertheless, former industrial sites lack adequate access to make them viable for reuse. The transportation network needs to be extended to these areas to increase the integration and connectivity of the system across and between modes for people and freight.

The City should continue to promote the efficiency and the reliability of freight movement (truck and rail) within and through the region and improve multi-modal facilities and system connectivity to capitalize on growing international and trans-border trade opportunities. The City should also support legislative efforts for "smart growth" and "quality communities" initiatives that promote coordinated planning and encourage mixed-use development with multi-modal transportation connections.

Neighborhood Economic Development

Neighborhood business districts are a key asset across the city. Most of these business districts have suffered due to the decline in population in the city and trends towards large-scale retail. But they still serve an important role in promoting the vitality of the urban core. Others have prospered by finding a new role by combining local service retail with specialized or "niche" retail goods. The revitalization of these districts can play a key role in the stabilization and redevelopment of neighborhoods overall. Such districts are, by extension, important to the entire region. Overall, they represent a regional investment in building stock and infrastructure that needs to be used better.

The Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation runs the Commercial Area Revitalization Effort (CARE) Program. While its focus is on redevelopment of local business districts, it also serves to support broad City policy to help restructure those neighborhoods that are severely distressed; revitalize those neighborhoods experiencing some decline but that are still relatively stable and intact; and reinforce those neighborhoods that are strong and healthy.

Neighborhood commercial revitalization should focus on these goals:

- Stabilizing or establishing key retail anchors for neighborhood commercial districts;
- Supporting street, streetscape and other infrastructure improvements;

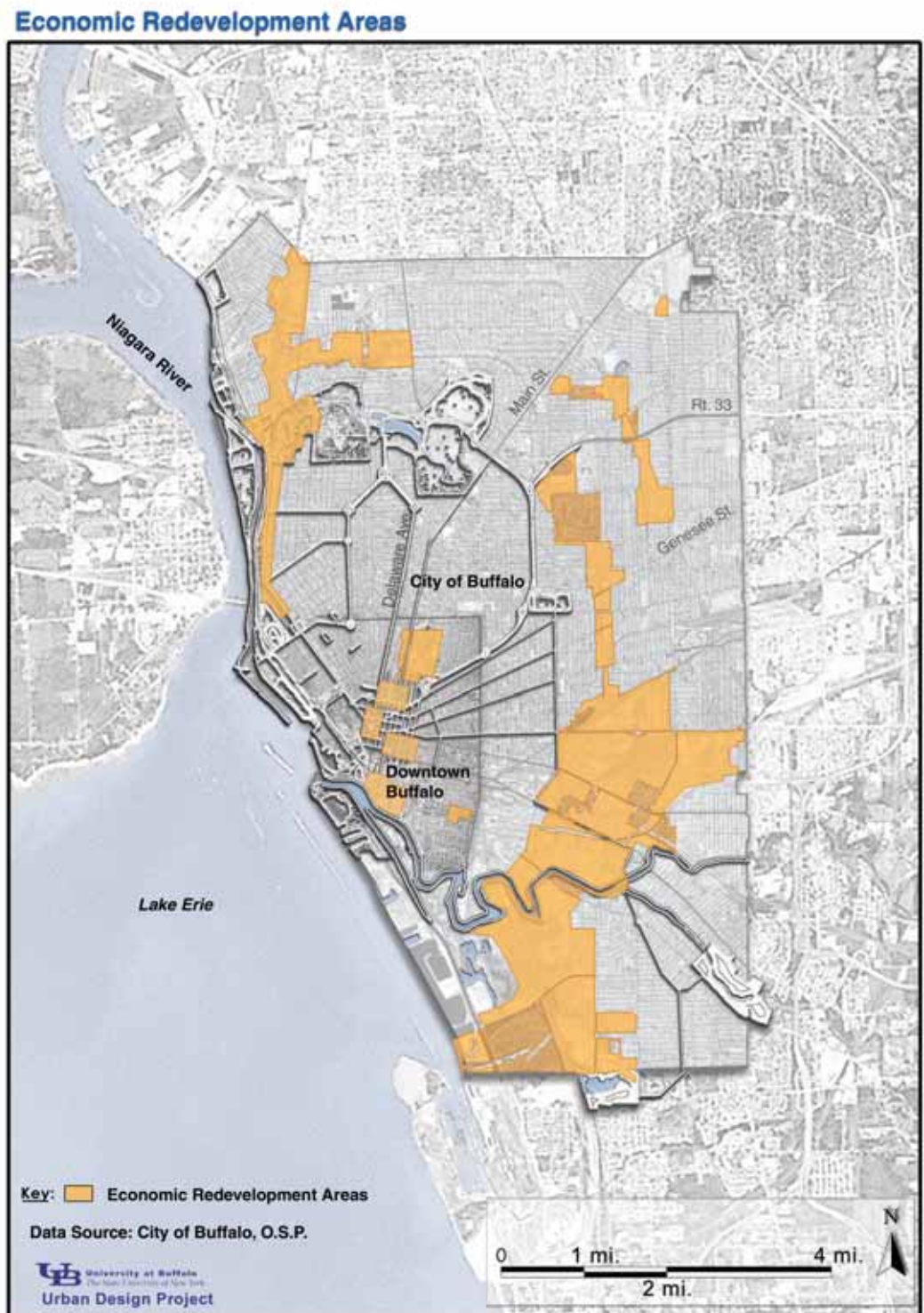


Figure 14. Land currently available for more intense economic (industrial and heavy commercial) uses in the City.

- Stabilizing existing major employers and attracting new businesses;
- Ensuring that neighborhood residents are prepared to step into existing jobs as they open up, and the new jobs that will be created; and
- Ensuring that neighborhood and small businesses have access to capital.

1.4 COMMUNITY

A wide range of community issues, including race, ethnicity and diversity, education, housing and neighborhoods, culture and heritage will have important implications for planning and development. The focus of the Comprehensive Plan is land use, but these community issues will have an impact on how land use decisions are made. The answers this plan provides will have a major influence on the quality of life in Buffalo.

Race, ethnicity and diversity.

Buffalo's racial and ethnic diversity represents both a challenge and a promise for the regeneration of the city. Throughout Buffalo's history, citizens have struggled to adapt to the changing ethnic and racial composition of the community. Through waves of 19th century immigration that brought Germans, Irish, Italians, Poles and others, to the great internal migration of African-Americans in the mid-20th century, to the more recent arrival of Hispanics, Asians and others, Buffalonians have often welcomed their new neighbors grudgingly. Consistently, however, the new arrivals have found a way to contribute to their new community and the community has found a way to accept them.

Table 5 | City Population by Race

	1990	2000
White	63%	51%
Black	30%	37%
Hispanic	5%	8%
Other	2%	4%

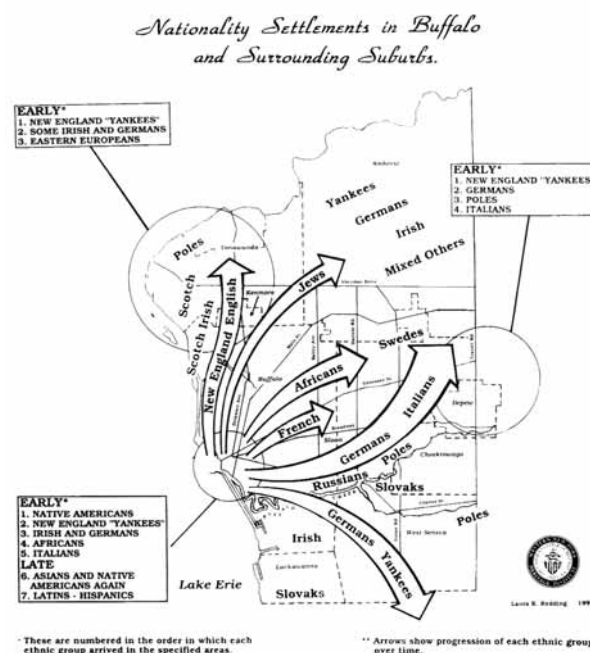


Figure 15. This graphic depicts settlement migration in ethnic categories emanating from the initial site of arrival in and around the Lower West Side. While not comprehensive, it illustrates some of the rich mix of ethnicities that settled Buffalo. (Source: Laura Redding for the Western New York Heritage Institute reprinted in *The Lower West Side: Strategies for Neighborhood and Community Development*, 1993).

A new round of adaptation is on the horizon. As Buffalo's population declined during the last decade the proportion of African-Americans, Hispanics and members of other non-white groups all increased to the point where a bare 51 percent majority of Buffalo residents were white. The proportion of blacks rose from 30 to 37 percent; the proportion of Hispanics increased from five to eight percent; and the proportion of others – Asians, Native Americans and other groups – increased from two to four percent.

If the trends of the 1990s continue in the current decade, it is possible that Buffalo's black population will exceed the white population by the next census. Hispanics will also have a much more significant presence. The proportion of other races such as Asians may also grow. It is clear that Buffalo will be a far more multi-racial and multi-ethnic community than ever before with profound implications for political life, inter-group

relations, and issues of social equity including residential segregation, discrimination, inequality and environmental justice. How Buffalo handles these issues will have an important effect on efforts to regenerate the city (See Table 6).

Issues of social equity, of course, go beyond race and ethnicity. They involve questions of the treatment of people because of their religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability. All of these must be factored into the rebuilding of the city by ensuring there is provision for all communities that physical as well as social barriers are removed, and inter-group contact fostered.

Buffalo remains a community marked by heavy residential racial segregation. The overwhelming majority – 86 percent – of African-Americans in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA lived in the two central cities in 2000, a fact which had changed little since 1980 when 91 percent of all blacks lived in Buffalo or Niagara Falls. More than two thirds of all Hispanics also lived in these two cities.

The region remains the eighth most segregated metropolitan area in the nation of 331 ranked in terms of the separation of white and black residents. (This is based on the commonly used dissimilarity index that measures the proportion of people who would have to move to a new census tract for each tract to have the same racial composition as the whole region). Segregation between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites and blacks was nearly as pronounced.

Many Buffalo residents also have limited personal exposure to people of other races, ethnic groups, religious faiths, and age groups. A survey by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (April 2002) showed a majority of metropolitan residents responding had little or no contact with Muslims, recent immigrants, Asians, gays and lesbians, American Indians, Jews, Hispanics, elderly people, and teenagers. While this may reflect the relatively small size of these communities in the region – Asians, for example, make up less than one percent of the population – it clearly indicates some level of isolation of groups from one another.

Opinions about the significance of discrimination and inequality, not surprisingly, diverged along racial, age group and gender lines. More than half of all respondents to the Institute survey agreed that gays and lesbians, blacks, Muslims, and people on welfare experience some or a great deal of discrimination. But black residents, younger people and urban dwellers were more likely to perceive discrimination. For example, 84 percent of black respondents compared to 58 percent of whites agreed that blacks face some level of discrimination. Sixty-five percent of respondents 24 to 35 years of age agreed with the proposition compared with only 45 percent of those 75 or older. Urban dwellers were more likely to perceive discrimination than rural residents (69 percent versus 48 percent).

Table 6 | Buffalo's Racial and Ethnic Mix (%)

Planning Community	1990				2000			
	W	B	H*	O	W	B	H*	O
Riverside	93	3	3	1	79	7	9	5
North Buffalo	91	7	2		82	13	4	1
North East	49	46	2	3	29	65	3	3
West Side	73	10	20		47	17	29	7
Masten	8	92			10	87	2	1
East Delavan	31	68	1		15	81	2	2
Central	50	36	16		48	40	19	
Ellicott	17	79	5		16	79	6	
East Side	73	25	2		57	38	3	2
Buffalo River	98	2			75	14	14	
South Buffalo	98	2			96	1	4	

Key | All figures are percentages. Numbers are rounded. W = White; B = Black; H = Hispanic; and O = Other

* Note that the census does not denote "Hispanic" as a race.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Statistics / OSP Information & Data Analysis

Similar patterns characterized views on equal opportunity. A majority of all respondents agreed that racial minorities do not have the same opportunities as whites in promotion to upper management, fair treatment by police and the media, and influence over public policy decisions. Blacks, women, persons from households with lower income, young, and urban residents were more likely to perceive disparities. Eighty-six percent of blacks, compared to 61 percent of whites, said blacks are not treated fairly by police. Only 18 percent of blacks, compared to 57 percent of whites, agreed minorities and whites have the same opportunities for quality education in the region.

A majority of all respondents also saw discrimination against women, but views on this question divided along gender lines. Only 38 percent of women, compared to 50 percent of men, said women have the same opportunities as men to influence public policy; 32 percent of women, compared to 46 percent of men, said women have the same opportunities to break into upper-level management. Such perceptions of unequal opportunity were even stronger among black females, only 21 percent of whom said women and men share the same chance to break into upper-level management or influence public policy decisions.

Taken together, the combination of residential segregation, low inter-group contact, and differing perceptions of discrimination and equal opportunity has produced division in the community over values, priorities, problems and their solutions. Despite the common ground of a shared experience of the region's history, environment, culture, economy, and allegiance to regional institutions and sports teams, blacks and whites, men and women, city-dwellers and suburbanites find themselves divided across a variety of issues that matter.

Diversity in culture and opinion is appropriate and worthy of celebration, particularly in a democracy. But without a strong set of institutions to foster cross-group interaction and deliberation, these divisions are likely to hamper the region's ability to solve problems and find consensus over a range of regional concerns. This needs to be addressed.

Yet the diversity of the community can still be an asset. Buffalo's history shows how the people of various ethnic groups – from the first German immigrants to the most recent Somalis – all found a place in the city where they could live, express pride in their identities, and share their culture with their neighbors. The city could be divided into ghettos and exclusionary enclaves or it could become a mosaic of neighborhoods where diverse ethnic groups and cultures flourish and visitors are welcome to enjoy the differences of their neighbors. It seems clear the latter course will better support the broad goals of this plan.

Public Safety

Crime and fear of crime is a key challenge for the Comprehensive Plan to meet. Public consultations for this plan confirmed the common understanding that city-dwellers are concerned about crime. If Buffalo is to reverse current downward trends in employment and population, effective action must be taken to ensure that Buffalo is a safe place to live and work – and that people feel safe in the city, too. Improving public safety is a precondition for renewed growth in Buffalo.

Fighting crime, however, is only one aspect of improving public safety. Other tasks on the agenda include improving fire protection, emergency response, traffic safety, and the prevention and response to threats of terrorism. Crime, however, remains uppermost in the minds of citizens. Approaches to crime-fighting have grown in sophistication in recent years. Some have demonstrated their effectiveness and might be implemented here.

Law enforcement on the “broken windows” theory of crime prevention has shown promise in practice, including during the tenure of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in New York City (1994-2001). The theory, advanced by professors at Harvard University, says that responding to minor crimes – like jaywalking, graffiti and vandalism – promotes an environment of public order and safety and may actually prevent more serious crimes. Fixing broken windows shows that someone cares about crime.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is based on a theory that the design of city streets, business districts, housing, parks and the whole urban environment can help inhibit criminal behavior. CPTED techniques range from the redesign of streets to reduce speeding to the reorganization of retail shops to place cashiers where they can be seen from the street to deter robbers. Improving street lighting, building design, landscaping, alarm systems and video surveillance are all important elements of CPTED practice.

Community Oriented Policing remains a popular approach to crime prevention. Community policing programs focus on building partnerships between law enforcement officers and community organizations and residents to respond to neighborhood level concerns in a timely and effective manner. There has been some tension between community policing approaches and the district reorganization of the Buffalo Police Department. Although this will continue to be a matter of debate, it should be noted that community policing and efficient organization and management of police forces are not mutually exclusive.

Situational Crime Prevention is an approach, closely related to Community Oriented Policing, being used successfully in Britain, Canada and the United States. In addition to police-community partnerships, Situational Crime Prevention also involves “action research” involving police, residents and researchers to analyze problems, try out solutions and repeat the process until satisfactory answers are found. The Good Neighbors Planning Alliance could be an appropriate organization to undertake such an initiative.

Problem-oriented policing, involving the flexible use of police resources to respond to emergent situations, is likely to become more sophisticated with the application of computer technology. Use of a community statistics software package to map crime and other public safety data on a real-time basis can help police identify, analyze and respond to problems as they arise. They can also help police identify problems on the basis of hard data rather than perceptions or political

pressures. Care must be taken that such data is not used for inappropriate purposes such as bank red-lining of crime-stressed neighborhoods.

Many other issues are just over the horizon. Technology will bring many changes to public safety practice. Concern for personal privacy will come in conflict with worries about public safety as technologies advance for biometric identification, DNA collection, high-tech surveillance, and personal data collection and storage. Information sharing between law enforcement agencies at every level of government will increase as technology improves and sharing methods and agreements are refined. Citizens will also have access to public safety information online. Innovations in police weapons that are less lethal will also be a topic of debate.

Public safety workers may face increasing competition from private security firms and consultants or even threats of outright privatization. Law enforcement personnel can respond by improving call handling and victim care. Public safety workers will also be challenged to deal with an increasingly diverse and better informed society. All will need to be better educated and trained to use advances in technology, social sciences and police sciences.

Meanwhile, crime in Buffalo is not necessarily as bad as people think. Buffalo has experienced the same overall decline in violent crime since the early 1990s as most other U.S. cities. Regional figures compiled by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth show a similar positive trend, with the exception of increases in arson and domestic violence.

Ongoing local responses to the challenges of public safety include efforts to combine selected public safety functions on a regional basis, including construction of a new joint County-City public safety building, and planning for a new Downtown public safety campus. Police dispatchers and 911 call-takers for City and County as well as both City and County police academies will be housed in the building. The City cellblock will also be relocated to County facilities. Plans for a new Buffalo headquarters remain to be resolved.

Especially since September 11, 2001, Homeland Security has become a major preoccupation for all law enforcement agencies. In the Buffalo-Niagara region there is much to protect, including the international border itself, major hydropower installations, chemical and other vital industrial plants, enormous water flow and supply, as well as important government and public buildings in the heart of the city. Regional cooperation among all law enforcement entities must be promoted to reduce the threat of terrorism.

Organized crime also presents a serious challenge. Criminals have the means and motivation to take advantage of all the latest technology and have no respect for political boundaries. Narcotics and weapons smuggling, money laundering, and illegal aliens are just a few of the threats we face because we are a border city. We must work more effectively with other agencies to protect the public from such crime.

Other public safety issues include fire protection, emergency response and motor safety. The incidence of fire in the region declined by ten percent from 1993 to 1997, according to data compiled by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. Civilian fatalities and firefighter injuries also declined. Insurance losses shrank from \$67.6 million to \$54.5 million. The City is currently preparing a detailed analysis of fire incidents and response times as well as an inventory of firehouse locations and physical conditions in order to develop long term plans for fire prevention.

According to Institute figures, urban areas enjoy better emergency response than suburban areas. In Erie County, roughly 55 percent of calls received responses within five minutes. Fewer than four percent took longer than 15 minutes.

Motor vehicle accidents have risen, however, along with the increase in the total number of vehicles, the total vehicle miles traveled, and traffic congestion overall. From 1993 to 1997 traffic accidents increased 11 percent – from 25,541 to 28,344. Indeed, more area residents are killed in traffic accidents each year than as a result of violent crimes.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Housing and neighborhoods is one of the most critical components of the Comprehensive Plan. The City has worked hard and invested heavily in their improvement. The Office of Strategic Planning and the City's housing agencies have monitored housing and neighborhood conditions and worked with neighborhoods, housing organizations and citizen groups to identify problems, create solutions, and deliver both remedial and developmental programs.



Figure 16. Prospect Park and neighborhood housing in the lower west side. (Photo from the Western New York Regional Information Network).

The city has a number of attractive, stable, well-built neighborhoods where conditions are good to excellent. But most neighborhoods have experienced loss of population and deterioration during the past ten years, despite the City's best efforts. The loss of jobs in the city, out-migration to the suburbs and beyond, and the increase in individuals and families living below the poverty line and depending on social assistance have contributed to these trends. Much of Buffalo's housing stock is both old and in poor condition. Fifty-eight percent of the

total housing stock – nearly 84,000 units – were built before 1940. Many are of frame construction and poorly maintained, leading to dilapidation, blight and abandonment.

In 2000 Buffalo had 145,574 housing units in its 54 City-designated neighborhoods. Only 43 percent of the occupied units were owner-occupied. Some 22,854 or 15.7 percent of the housing units were vacant or abandoned. There were 10,170 vacant residential lots and 8,684 abandoned structures, leaving the city with a substantial clearance and reconfiguration problem.

Table 7 | Buffalo- Niagara Falls MSA Housing Statistics

Jurisdiction:	1990	2000
City of Buffalo		
Total housing units	151,971	145,574
Total occupied	136,436	122,720
Vacant units	15,535	22,854
% Vacant	10.20%	15.70%
Remainder of Erie County*		
Total housing units	250,160	270,294
Total occupied	240,558	258,153
Vacant units	9,602	12,141
% Vacant	3.80%	4.50%
Total Erie County		
Total housing units	402,131	415,868
Total occupied	376,994	380,873
Vacant units	25,137	34,995
% Vacant	6.30%	8.40%
Remainder of MSA*		
Total housing units	340,545	323,145
Total occupied	325,367	366,009
Vacant	15,178	20,010
% Vacant	4.50%	6.20%
Total MSA		
Total housing	492,516	511,583
Total occupied	461,803	469,019
Vacant	30,713	42,564
% Vacant	6.20%	8.30%

*Remainder = Area specified minus the City of Buffalo
Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis



Figure 17. Williams Street housing on the near East Side of downtown built in the 1980s. Urban design guidelines for inner ring neighborhoods surrounding downtown now call for a more urban street front that these early housing starts. Garages set back from the street and porches are two of several features that add to the urban feel of neighborhoods.

Few new homes have been built over the past decade. From 1990 to 2000 only 3,656 new units were built. Many of these were delivered through public housing programs or with public assistance. There was little unsubsidized private sector investment. By comparison, the housing stock expanded by 20,134 units in the remainder of Erie County (See Table 7).

The city faces a series of housing challenges. Local government is required to continue provision of affordable housing, including emergency housing for those in need. It must assure the maintenance of rental housing and promote renovation and rehabilitation for both rental and owner occupied homes where it is cost effective to do so. It must provide incentives for increasing home ownership. It must demolish and redevelop vacant and abandoned properties that cannot be renovated or reconfigured. Importantly, the City needs to create the conditions for private sector residential investment.

All of these challenges must be met in a way that respects Buffalo's long and deep commitment to its neighborhoods, each with its distinctive identity, needs, resources, and aspirations, and in a way that meets our obligation to promote job creation and foster social equity.

Good Neighbor Planning Alliance

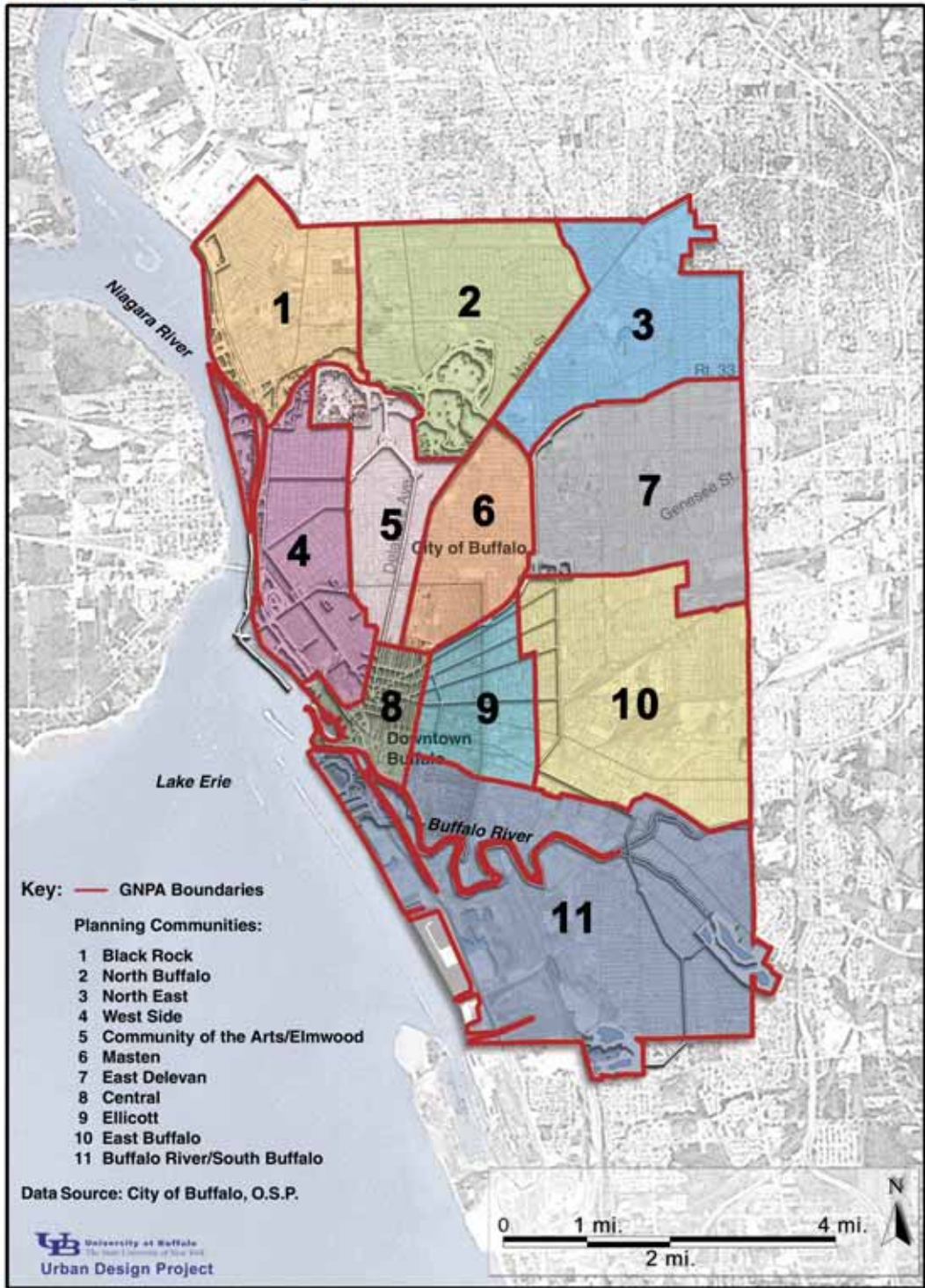


Figure 18. The Good Neighbors Planning Alliance forms a core of community-based involvement to make the plan, implement the plan, and sustain the local communities who live the plan.

To achieve these goals, the City has organized an elaborate set of planning and administrative arrangements and housing programs through its various agencies. The 54 neighborhoods have been grouped into 11 Planning Communities (see Figure 18). The boundaries of these Planning Communities follow census tract boundaries, thereby facilitating consistent socio-economic analysis over time.

More recently, the City set up the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance, a network of ten local, volunteer neighborhood planning groups, and is encouraging them to develop plans, in whole or in part, for their planning communities, within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan. Some of these groups have begun work. Others are still organizing themselves. The Office of Strategic Planning provides them with technical and administrative support.

Recently, The City has established 11 “Comprehensive Code Enforcement Areas” as part of a “Livable Communities Initiative,” to help focus local delivery of housing programs.

Federally supported programs for the repair, maintenance and renovation of residential property are funded through OSP’s Division of Residential Development and a network of not-for-profit Community Based Organizations. Their not-for-profit status allows them to own real or personal property, accept funds to carry out their mission, lend money, and hold and file mortgages. In the last five years, 1,454 loans amounting to a total of \$17.4 million have been processed through these organizations. They have provided assistance for emergencies, acquisition and rehabilitation, down payment and closing costs. They currently assist about 350 units a year.

These community based and faith based organization are the primary sponsor of the City of Buffalo’s homeownership initiatives. They act through public, private, and community partnerships as the City’s local development corporations. They provide assistance to buyers for down payment and closing costs associated with the purchase of new and existing housing, through a purchase price reduction program, and other programs that encourage and increase homeownership.



Figure 19. The HUD Hope VI project is helping to revitalize the Lower West Side of Buffalo. These dwellings are consistent with the urban guidelines for inner ring neighborhoods including porches, consistent set backs, and garages set back from the street wall.

These agencies have been instrumental in the development of affordable, newly constructed housing units sponsored by the private and public sectors. Over the past five years not-for-profits have coordinated investments totaling \$36 million in providing 358 new housing units – a rate of just over 70 units a year.

The Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority is a federally assisted public housing authority. BMHA owns, operates and manages more than 7,000 housing units in large developments and scattered sites throughout the city. The Authority is engaged in major initiatives to improve its housing stock and the overall

living environment of its clients, and in doing so, hopes to remove any remaining stigma associated with public housing. A key focus of the Authority's new work is to create mixed-income communities and alleviate concentrations of poverty.

The Lakeview HOPE VI project was designed to do this through density reduction, redevelopment and neighborhood infill and rehabilitation. Obsolete units have been demolished, replacement housing built, and parkland and open space developed. Improvements in the surrounding neighborhood are ongoing. HOPE VI establishes incentives for resident self-sufficiency through programs designed to help residents increase their income level and then move into housing of their own choice in traditional neighborhood environments.

BMHA is also developing master plans for three of its other major developments: A.D. Price Courts and Extension, Commodore Perry Homes and Extension, and Jasper Parish. These complexes contain several

hundred units each in physical configurations ranging from two and three story walk-ups to high-rise, serving client groups ranging from the elderly to families. Each project involves density reduction, site rationalization and redevelopment, including open space and other improvements.

The Authority has worked hard to build public-private partnerships that increase the leverage factor for public funds. Such partnerships have resulted in as much as a three to one ratio of private to public participation in Lakeview. Total capital investment there will exceed \$80 million.

Over the past five years, the City invested \$32.4 million annually in its neighborhoods, relying heavily on federal programs. In its most recent budget, however, the City's allocation has been reduced to \$28 million annually. Until now, these funds have been spent on a random geographical basis as clients and corporations made applications, or emergencies or crises occurred to families and individuals or their property. Although spot improvements have occurred, the positive effects of these investments in neighborhood redevelopment have been hard to discern.

Looking ahead twenty years, it is clear that the current level of public investment in housing and neighborhoods is too low, the current rate of activity too slow, and the pattern of investment too scattered, to meet the city's goal for recovery in a timely way. If other elements of the Comprehensive Plan are successful in reversing trends of economic decline and job loss, it is crucial that housing and neighborhoods offering an attractive environment and quality of life in the city be ready when new jobs are created. Otherwise, the executives, managers and staff of new or expanded enterprises will continue to choose homes in the suburbs, and Buffalo will lose the full benefits of its efforts.

Table 8 | City of Buffalo Population Densities (per square mile)

Planning Communities	1990	2000
Black Rock	7,719.20	7,530.00
North Buffalo	7,404.30	7,109.70
North East	10,052.10	9,726.60
West Side	15,862.40	12,707.50
Community of the Arts/Elmwood	10,170.9	10,888.40
Masten	10,620.40	9,056.90
East Delavan	10,585.90	8,741.60
Central	3,772.10	4,374.00
Ellicott	6,713.70	5,513.80
East Buffalo	8,332.20	6,487.10
Buffalo River/South Buffalo	8,239.30	7,546.20

Source: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis

Residential density is another important aspect of the city's structure. Population density is declining with overall population decline, overall and in the majority of the city's Planning Communities. Between 1990 and 2000 the city's density fell from 8,073 to 7,206 people per square mile. Only two Planning Communities, Elmwood and Central, had an increase in density (See Table 8), and only Central increased in total population during this period.

Loss of density has both positive and negative implications for the sustainability and character of Buffalo and the vitality of its neighborhoods. Medium and high densities are features of urbanity; they help to attract and sustain urban amenities and they bring life to urban streets. Reductions in density add strain to the city's capacity to maintain its amenities and infrastructure. Lower densities tend to be associated with suburban communities, often with quieter neighborhoods and greater open space.

Intelligent planning and redevelopment of Buffalo's neighborhoods should enable the city to minimize the negative aspects of density loss in some areas, while achieving higher densities in those parts of the city that need and will benefit from the greater density.

Downtown is the most obvious place density should be concentrated. The Queen City Hub plan calls for increased residential density through new housing construction and office-to-housing conversions. In other parts of the city, especially around concentrations of employment, commercial areas, and major arterials, densities should be protected or increased.

Redevelopment in select neighborhoods in other Planning Communities may benefit from lower urban densities (three to five units per acre), providing opportunities for "urban sub-divisions." These may include homes with gardens, community parks or naturalized open space, walkways, trails, and woodlots. As the members of the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance develop their plans, density will be one more factor to consider.

Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization

Buffalo has experienced a decline in its number of retailers, due in part to the decline in population, but also to restructuring in retail markets from smaller shops to larger ones. At the same time, Buffalo has experienced a modest real increase – above the rate of inflation – in retail sales.

Research shows that the increase in sales is attributable, in significant part, to consumers from the suburbs shopping and dining in the city. Focus groups confirm that shoppers are attracted to unique urban character of city shopping. Suburbanites enjoy the cultural diversity, architecture, history, and artistic institutions that the city has to offer. As consumers, they express strong interest in the small, independent, niche retailers located in the city.

Focus groups also confirm that city residents want to have "big box" retailing, such as Wal-Mart, Target, and other major discount department stores, nearby and available to them. The challenge is to incorporate these two divergent retail experiences into a unified theme within Buffalo's urban environment.

Three main issues affect neighborhood commercial districts and their revitalization. First, viable retailing requires high population density, whereas population density has declined in the city. However, the city retains significant areas of residential density as well as financial strength. These will expand as City plans are implemented.

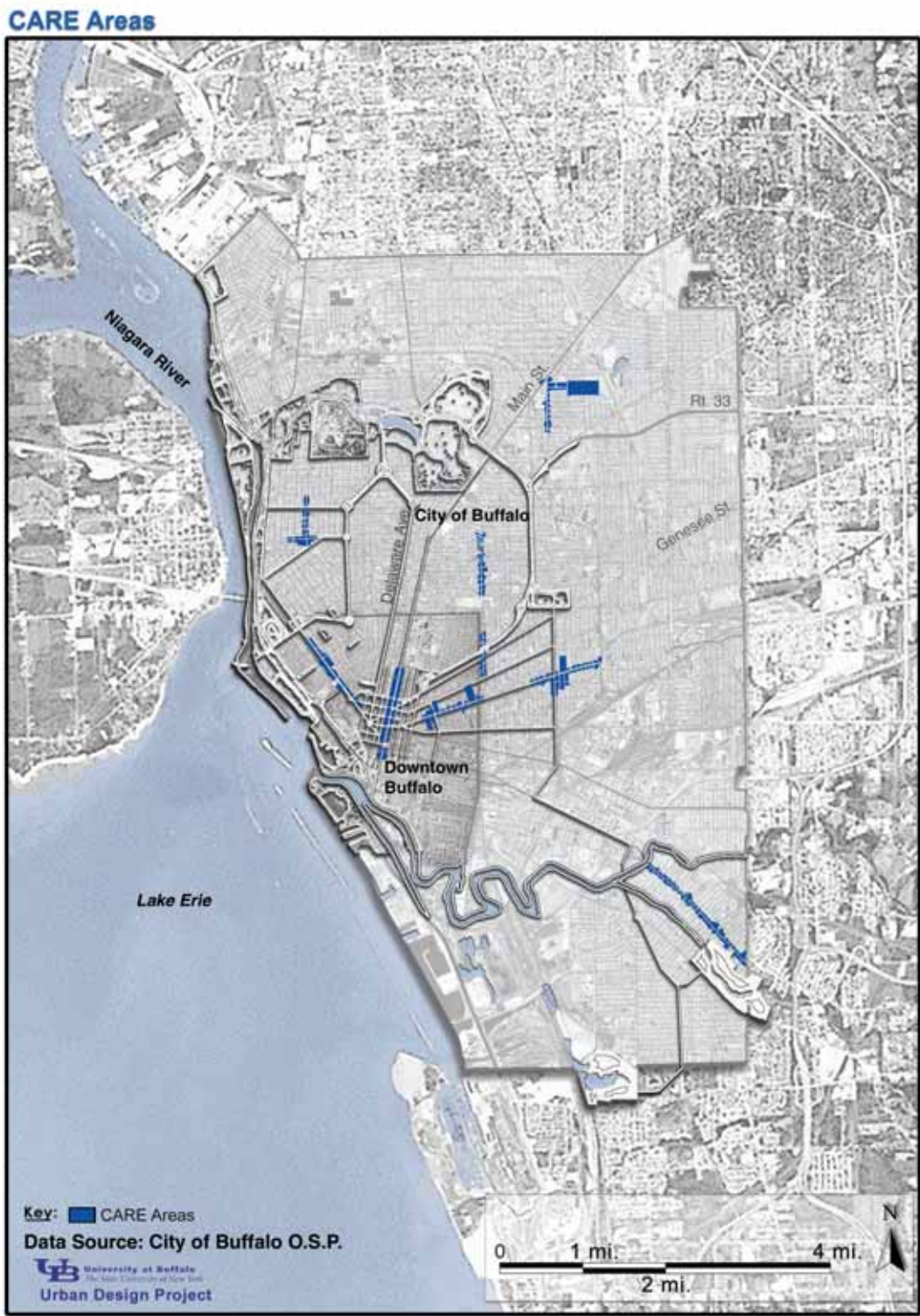


Figure 20. Buffalo's "Live Zones" are intended to help stabilize key neighborhood retail strips.

Second, viable retailing requires an environment that is compatible with emerging consumer habits. The environment of the city's neighborhood commercial districts corresponds to consumer habits that were dominant during the 1950's, when neighborhood commercial districts served as "mini-downtowns" with a wide variety of small independent retailers. Market research confirms that current consumer habits correspond to two ongoing retail trends: "big box" retailing composed primarily of retail chains and franchises, and small, theme-based retail districts.

Third, viable retailing requires a density of retail offerings that can serve as an attractor for additional stores. In retail, activity begets more activity. These retail clusters must be easily accessible for both local and regional shoppers. As its Downtown and neighborhoods are redeveloped, the revitalization of Buffalo's retail sector will depend on how successful the city is in shaping plans that respond positively to these trends.

Early in 2003, the Erie County Industrial Development Agency indicated it was considering providing assistance to strengthen neighborhood retail across the County. In response, OSP designated 38 neighborhood retail areas called "CARE Areas" (See Figure 20) to be eligible to receive assistance – one more way of strengthening and encouraging neighborhood vitality.



Figure 21. Buffalo's science magnet adjacent to the Buffalo Museum of Science and Martin Luther King park will form the nucleus that reinforces the surrounding neighborhood.

Public education

Improving public education and restoring confidence in Buffalo's public schools is a crucial element in efforts to reverse the economic and population decline of the city. Public consultations supporting the development of the Comprehensive Plan confirm the widespread perception that lack of confidence in the quality of public education in Buffalo has been a major factor behind the continuing migration of population from the city. While it is true that the Buffalo system has some excellent schools, failure to respond to the demands of "consumers" of public education will hobble all efforts to achieve the goal of the plan.

There were approximately 52,000 children enrolled in school in Buffalo in 2003-2004. Eighty percent of those – more than 41,000 – were in public schools housed in 71 different buildings. Nearly 15 percent – almost 7,700 students – attended private schools in 84 buildings. Eleven charter schools enrolled another 3,100-plus students – the remaining six percent of the total.

These numbers are expected to fall significantly in the coming years. Kindergarten through grade 12 enrollment in Buffalo public schools is projected to fall roughly 23 percent between in the decade from 2002 to 2012 – a loss nearly 10,000 students. The trend is driven, not only by population loss in the city, but also by a decline in both births and the number of women of childbearing age. Such a decline will require major adjustments in the district.

Otherwise, the Buffalo school system faces a series of tough challenges, including severe budget restrictions, inequitable state funding formulas, trouble in recruiting and retaining a qualified and socially diverse staff, and obsolete and aging facilities suffering from deferred maintenance. Physical conditions of most city schools leave them inadequate to deliver a 21st century education.

Phase I & II Schools and Neighborhoods

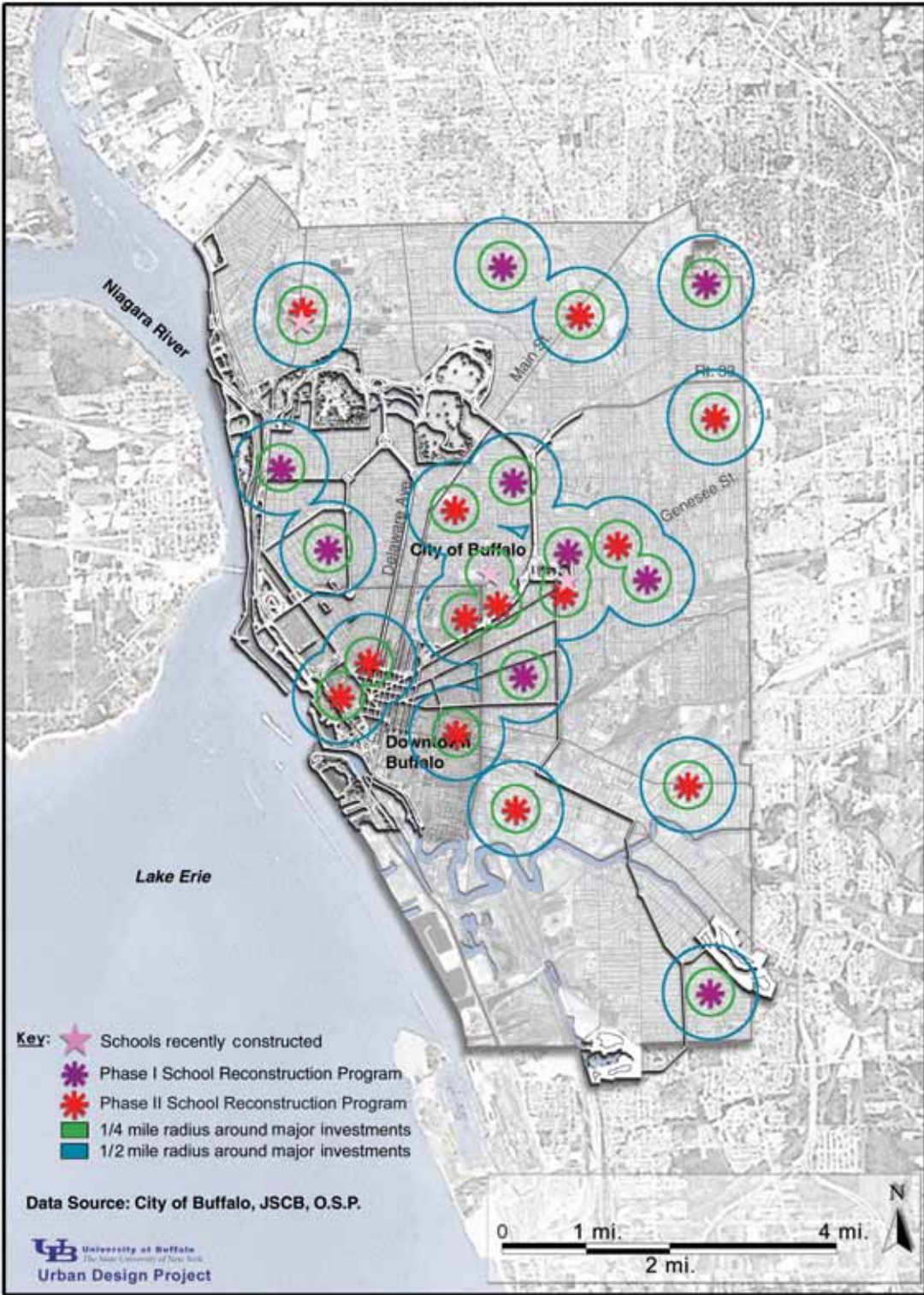


Figure 22. The Joint Schools Construction Board's phase one schools and one other new school form an excellent starting point for neighborhood revitalization. As the neighborhoods go, so go the schools. As the schools go, so go the neighborhoods.

Private and charter schools provide an element of “consumer choice” for parents. Many families stay in the city only because they can place their children in an educational environment apart from the public school system. Support, development and cooperative planning with these schools is needed to keep such families in the city.

Recognizing the critical nature of these issues for the future of the city, the Board of Education created the “Choice Committee” in January 2000. The committee was asked to produce a blueprint for the school system that would ensure high academic achievement for all children and allow parents greater choice over school placement while still reflecting district diversity objectives. School officials are now pursuing their plan to achieve these goals.

The reorganized school system will retain some citywide magnet schools but also create a new set of standard school types to be replicated in each of three newly drawn geographic zones across the district. These arrangements will facilitate choice, permit school populations to match the ethnic diversity of the different neighborhoods, and reduce the extent of busing across the city. New efforts to improve staff recruitment and retention and to measure school performance are being made to support the overall goal.

Extensive improvements in the physical plant of schools are required to fully implement the plan. The Joint Schools Construction Board has developed a district-wide program under which, over the next ten years, a number of obsolete schools will be closed, several new schools will be built, and the remainder reconstructed, upgraded and re-equipped to provide a 21st century quality education.

This sweeping schools reconstruction program, funded in large part by hundreds of millions of dollars in state capital reimbursements, will provide major new investments around which to focus other redevelopment efforts in Buffalo neighborhoods. Good schools will help to retain Buffalo's existing population and attract families back into the city. Workforce diversity and development initiatives will enhance economic opportunities for Women and Minority-Owned Business Enterprises.

The great opportunity is to coordinate schools reconstruction with neighborhood revitalization, including housing rehabilitation and new construction, maintenance of appropriate residential densities, good neighborhood design, promotion of public transit, and other smart growth principles. Such coordination of investments is all that much easier because the planned first phase of the schools reconstruction program has one school in each of the City's Planning Communities slated for improvements.

The alignment of these investments, however, won't happen by itself. It is important that the Joint Schools Construction Board, which combines membership from both the School Board staff and City Hall staff, remain in position. The schools reconstruction program and City neighborhood revitalization efforts must be planned and implemented together.

Arts, culture and heritage

Buffalo has enormous and unusual assets in the arts, culture and heritage. These have long been an important contributor to the quality of life for residents throughout the metropolitan area. In recent years, however, Buffalonians have also come to understand that these can contribute much to the economic and social revitalization of our city. Many new initiatives are now emerging to showcase the visual and performing arts in Buffalo and to tell the city's unique story.

Buffalo has been the regional center for arts and culture in all forms for more than 150 years. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo Museum of Science, and the Buffalo Zoological Gardens – all founded in the 19th century – have prospered and taken their places among the country's oldest and most respected of such institutions.

Cultural organizations founded during the 20th century have built upon and enhanced this legacy. These include the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Shea's Buffalo Center for the Performing Arts, the Community Music School, Shakespeare in Delaware Park, and the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. With Studio Arena, The Alleyway, Irish Classical, Kavinoky, Ujima, Theater of Youth Co. and others,

Buffalo stands second in the state only to New York City in the production of live theater.



Figure 23. An outdoor concert on Elmwood Avenue at Bidwell Parkway



Figure 24. Shea's Performing Arts Center in the heart of the Downtown Theatre District was saved from the wrecking ball in the late seventies and is now a major attraction.

Buffalo has a well-deserved reputation in the avant-garde with Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, CEPA Gallery, Buffalo Arts Studio, Squeaky Wheel, and just buffalo literary center. There is also great strength in multi-cultural and community based organizations such as the African-American Cultural Center, Buffalo Inner City Ballet, Los Caribes, El Museo Francisco Oller y Diego Rivera, Gardner's Pick of the Crop Dance, Locust St. Neighborhood Art Classes, Neto Hatinkawe Okwehowe, and many others.

Yet these are also times of extraordinary struggles for the arts, cultural and heritage organizations. The City government's own financial crisis forced the suspension of funding for dozens of arts and cultural organizations starting with the 2002-2003 fiscal year. With many organizations heavily dependent on public funding, the difficulties brought on by funding cuts have been severe.

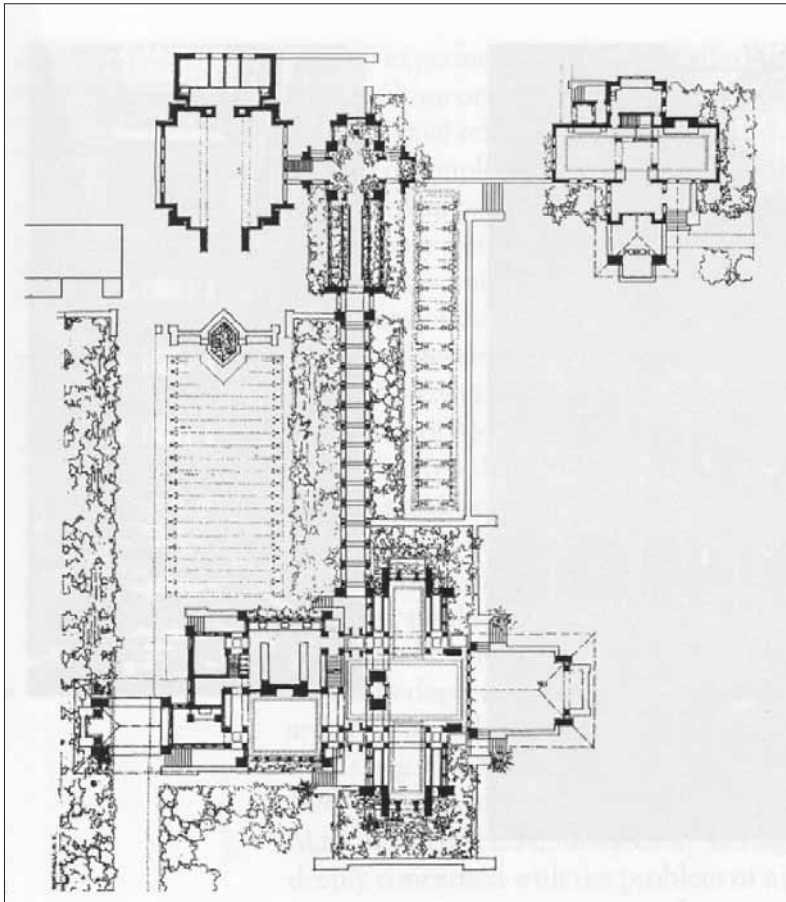


Figure 25. Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin D. Martin Complex (1903-06) is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently undergoing full restoration as a house museum.

It is not likely that cultural organizations will ever be totally self-sustaining and the search for broader and more reliable sources of funding must continue. Arts and cultural organizations will be forced to find more funding from both private gifts and earned income. Continued public support will be governed by clearly defined allocation criteria, requirements for the adoption of best business practices, and the formation of partnerships to lower costs, improve management and coordinate marketing. In any event, it seems unlikely that City of Buffalo funding will resume in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, the rationale for public support of arts and cultural organizations is strong because of the potential of these groups to contribute to community and economic development. These organizations make the community stronger. But they can also bolster ongoing efforts to develop the tourism industry by attracting visitors who want to experience an authentic cultural experience. These organizations are part of the Queen City brand. As such, they contribute to the prosperity of the region as well as the city.

Today a variety of organizations, including the City of Buffalo Arts Commission; the County Office of Arts, Culture and Tourism; the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County; the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau; and others in both the public and private sectors share an interest in the inherent worth and promotion of the brand.

This work extends beyond Buffalo to the region. The National Park Service is studying the feasibility of creating a Niagara National Heritage Area to help develop, manage and promote regional attractions. The State of New York is working to restore the Erie Canal and prepare canal communities to take advantage of tourism opportunities. The State has designated Buffalo's Theatre District as part of its Historic Districts Program. Efforts are also underway at the regional level to develop a comprehensive cultural tourism plan for the Erie and Niagara bi-county area.

Rethinking Niagara: Cultural Attractions in Buffalo

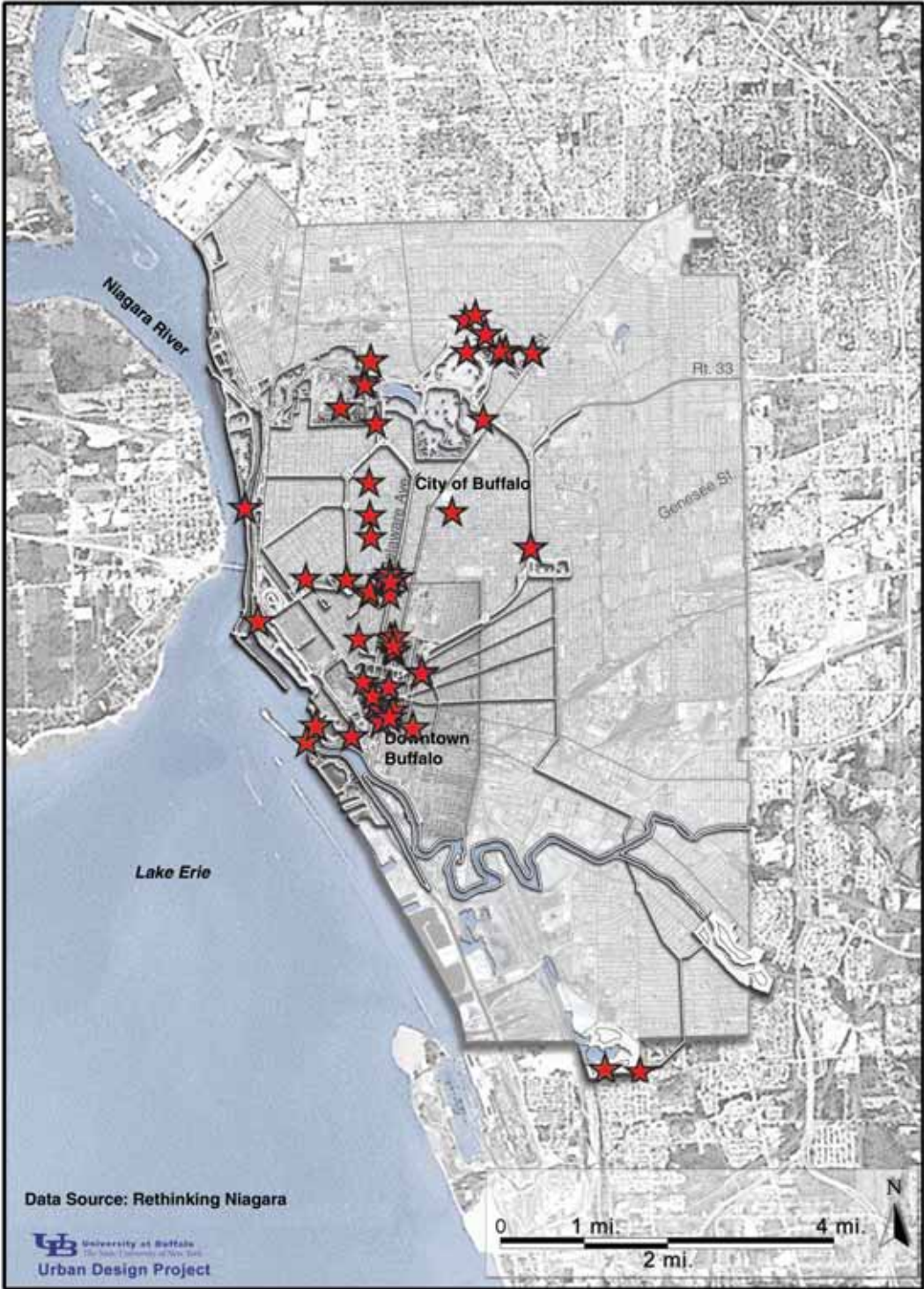


Figure 26. The Rethinking Niagara program in the region suggested several cultural and heritage themes relevant to making Niagara a single destination with multiple attractions. Buffalo plays a big part of this theme construction. Above is a map of selected sites from that program related to the regional "war, peace and freedom" stories, some key sites tied to "Enterprise and the Arts" and the "wealth of nations" as well as other attractions.

Historic architecture

Buffalo possesses an extraordinary wealth of historic architecture – from celebrated works of the masters to typical period structures – that give meaning to the lives of city residents and hold promise to attract new visitors. The range of assets is very wide, from churches to factories, office and commercial buildings, schools and other public buildings, monuments, residences, and parks.

The work of recognizing and protecting these assets has been going on for many decades. The City of Buffalo Local Landmark List has been in development for nearly thirty years, designating individual properties, ensembles, and Heritage or Historic Districts. Today there are 84 approved landmarks on the list and nine Local Historic Districts, including the Olmsted Parks system, and a total of some 7,000 buildings.

The Secretary of the Interior has designated seven properties, a warship, and a fireboat as National Historic Landmarks. Forty-one properties, including the fireboat and a tugboat, have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. New York State Historic Preservation Office has identified ten Historic Districts with historical periods represented ranging from 1814 to 1940.

More recently, major investments have been made in the renovation or restoration of some of the more significant properties. The City and its partners put \$16.2 million into the renovation of Shea's Buffalo Performing



The Michigan Avenue Baptist Church is part of a larger district under development that interprets Buffalo's role in the underground railroad and celebrates other aspects of the area. (Photo courtesy of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society).

Arts Center in the Theatre District downtown. Another \$6.2 million was invested in restoration of the Market Arcade, also Downtown. More than \$23 million in public and private contributions were invested in the ongoing restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin complex.

The renovation of Shea's is a striking example of positive economic spin-off. After its restoration, but before its recent backstage expansion, the theater staged 30 or so Class B productions annually. With capacity for larger productions, it now hosts 60 or more Class A productions each year. Expanded and upgraded theater activity has also had a noticeable impact on restaurant growth in the Downtown.

Buffalo's regional Office of Historic Preservation, the Preservation Coalition of Erie County, the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier, the New Millennium Group, and Buffalo

Vacant Land Around Historic Districts and Sites

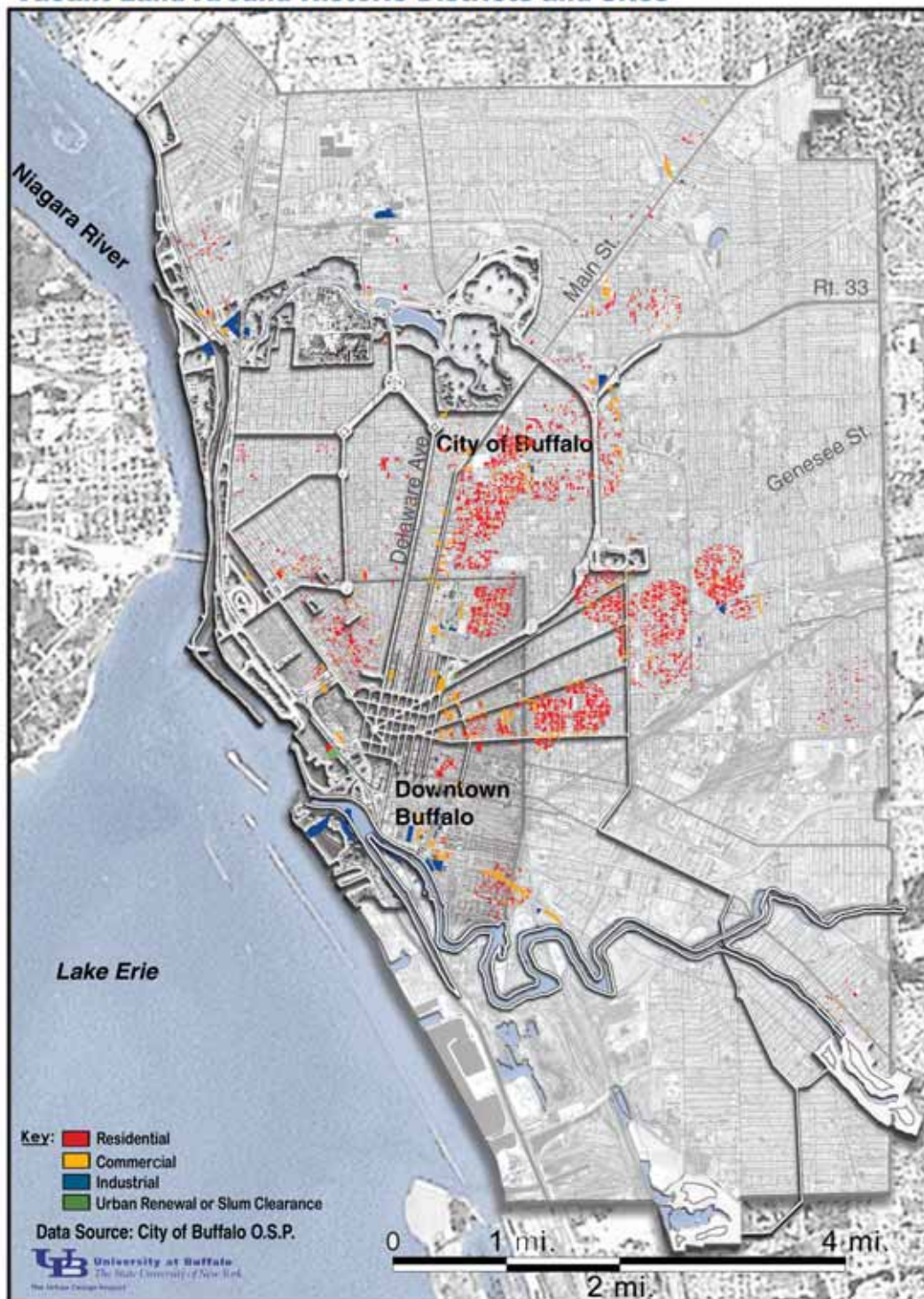


Figure 27. This map illustrates the land coverage within a quarter mile of every historic district boundary. A major portion of the city would be renovated if we took care of our cultural heritage and its immediate neighborhood context.

Architectural Salvage have acted together to stop the indiscriminate demolition of ordinary Buffalo buildings. These organizations have developed a civic preservation policy designed to protect and restore these numerous assets, going beyond individual buildings and Historic Districts to encompass adjoining neighborhoods.

They envision that all preservation activities should be grounded in a “web of urbanism.” This concept places individual heritage and preservation projects in the context of well-landscaped and pedestrian friendly streetscapes to ensure that the surrounding urban fabric is preserved along with specific historic structures and sites.

Weaving the “web of urbanism” also involves a moratorium on demolitions other than those necessary for the preservation of public health; pedestrian oriented (re)development; a moratorium on new surface parking lots in the Downtown area; unified landscapes and streetscapes; guidelines for new development in historic districts; “buttoning up” or “mothballing” important buildings until their restoration can be accomplished; and providing connections and public access to the water.

The City is taking steps to protect and preserve Buffalo’s uniqueness through a broad preservation strategy that understands preservation as part of looking after the city’s infrastructure and conserving the urban fabric. That fabric is what makes Buffalo unique. This policy will rely less on demolition and more on rehabilitation.

As a result of a 2002 Buffalo-Pittsburgh preservation exchange, former Mayor Masiello directed the Preservation Board, in cooperation with the Office of Strategic Planning, to prepare a citywide Community Preservation Plan. It was based on the principle that a broadly conceived and well-executed preservation strategy is also an economic development strategy, that preservation enhances the quality of life in the city and increases the attraction of the city as an interesting, unique place to live, and it augments property values and stimulates the real estate market.

The three-part plan will include a comprehensive land and building management program that will require advance notice of demolitions, procedures for reasonable appeal, and clear criteria for demolition. The second part directs the Preservation Board to convene organizations interested in preservation to establish a shared agenda and preservation program. This will include the updating of preservation materials, management of communications on inspections, recommended zoning restrictions, and guidelines for design standards. The Mayor has also asked local foundations to assemble a strategic investment fund to leverage the resources necessary to implement the Community Preservation Plan.

1.5 ENVIRONMENT

Buffalo, like most cities, faces a wide range of challenges in protecting and restoring the quality of the air, water, land, flora and fauna on which healthy lives for residents depend. These challenges include reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality, conserving energy, responding to impacts of global warming, reclaiming polluted industrial lands, improving sanitary sewage handling, cleaning up toxic Buffalo River sediments, preserving wildlife habitat, and many others.

In the face of such a daunting agenda, the city is fortunate to have both strong political leadership and active citizens engaged in this work. Organized environmentalists have helped identify the city's problems, inventory its assets and shape the environmental agenda. Political leaders have explicitly acknowledged the City's obligation to lead the work for environmental improvement.

The City administration and the Common Council, as well as numerous citizen groups, have cast their environmental policy in terms of an idea of "sustainability." The concept has gained enormous currency worldwide, especially since the publication of "Our Common Future," the 1987 report of the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development. Former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the leader of the panel, defined sustainable development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

The idea of sustainability has also been embraced in our region. The Buffalo Niagara Sustainability Council was formed in December 2001 to promote community dialogue on sustainability and focus attention on the links among the environment, the economy and society. Since then, the Council has worked at formulating sustainable development principles, increasing public awareness of these principles and their importance, applying sustainable development concepts in the region, and creating indicators to measure regional progress toward sustainability. The Council also intends to put in place a "Regional Sustainability Plan" by 2010.

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan should be a step towards that goal, explicitly integrating considerations of environment, economy and community. Smart growth principles, which should also be incorporated into the plan, are fully consistent with basic concepts of sustainability. In general, initiatives to be undertaken in the name of sustainability must work to reduce the consumption of energy, land and other non-renewable resources; minimize the waste of materials, water and other limited resources; create livable, healthy and productive environments; and reduce greenhouse gases in order to assist in alleviating the impact of global climate change.

The imperative to make sustainability real operates at two levels. The competitiveness of cities in the 21st century will depend heavily on how they deal with these common environmental challenges. Meeting them effectively will promote the quality of life which successful cities must manage. But we must make sustainability real because the quality of life on the planet depends on it. It is our global obligation.

Climate change and air quality

The gradual warming of earth's atmosphere is one of the most serious environmental issues we face worldwide. Like many such issues, however, the global problem has both local causes and remedies. Therefore, the issue of global climate change deserves consideration in Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan.

Although there remains much political debate in the United States over the causes of global warming, there is a broad scientific consensus that ongoing climate change is caused by the trapping of solar energy beneath a growing blanket of "greenhouse gases" – carbon dioxide and others – generated by the burning of fossil fuels.

Action in the United States, led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has focused mainly on the consequences of global climate change and remedial actions to counter them. The Great Lakes regional report of the U.S. National Assessment Climate Change Research Program (2000) concluded there may be drastic changes in store for Buffalo including significant variations in Lake Erie water levels, erratic weather patterns, changes in vegetation and wildlife, and a wide range of other impacts on human health, economy, society and environment.

Work through the United Nations has focused more on addressing the causes of global climate change. The 1992 UN Declaration on the Environment and "Agenda 21" acknowledged the link between atmospheric warming, "greenhouse" gases and the burning of oil, gas and coal. It also identified an important role to be played by local communities and regions in curtailing these emissions.

In that spirit, the City of Buffalo has joined with 143 other U.S. cities and hundreds of cities in other nations in support of the Climate Protection Campaign, organized by the UN's International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives. The campaign involves a five-step program by which localities inventory current emissions, set targets for reduction, establish action plans and carry them out.

Buffalo has completed the emissions inventory. Using 1996 as a baseline year, it showed that residential energy use is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Buffalo (34 percent), followed by industrial uses (24 percent), commercial establishments (20 percent) and personal vehicles (14 percent). A separate inventory for fiscal year 1997-1998 showed that the City's municipal operations contribute about 15 percent of total emissions in Buffalo. Further steps in the program remain to be taken.

Water Quality and the Great Lakes

Buffalo has an obligation to help safeguard both the quality and quantity of Great Lakes water and the health of the whole ecosystem, for the sake of all those living in the bi-national basin (See Figure 29) as well as for the good of the city.



Figure 29. The Great Lakes represent some twenty percent of the world's supply of fresh water. Buffalo occupies a strategic position on the Great Lakes basin and ecosystem. (Image Source: US Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District)

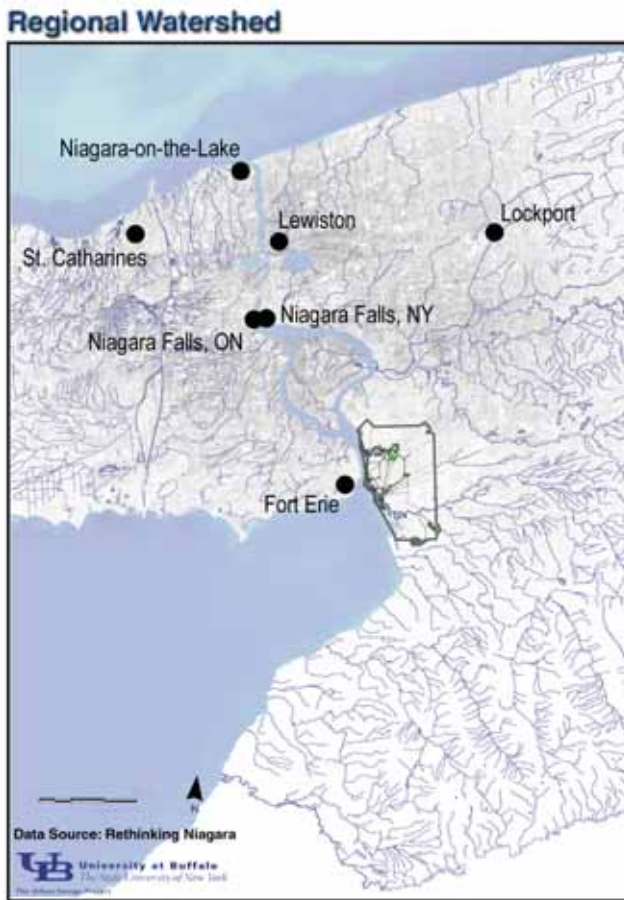


Figure 30. The watershed of the Niagara River (Source: Rethinking the Niagara Frontier, 2001).

The Great Lakes contain 20 percent of the world's total fresh water supply. This is a resource of immense and increasing global value. It is vital to the quality of life of more than 40 million people – ten percent of Americans and 30 percent of Canadians. It is also vital to the wide range of flora and fauna living in the basin. The wise use of water is important for maintaining biodiversity, for food production and drinking water, hydroelectric energy generation, marine transportation, economic enterprise, and recreation.

A 1998 Common Council resolution entitled “Buffalo as a Sustainable Great Lakes Community” committed the City to this effort. It identified the need for a watershed approach as a framework for local and regional action (See Figure 30). Among the initiatives to be taken were improvements in water management, upgrades in storm and

sanitary sewers, clean-up of contaminated river sediments, and expanded protection of urban wildlife habitat building on the success of Tifft Nature Preserve.

Slow progress has been made in cleaning up Great Lakes waterways. The U.S. and Canada signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 1985 that committed them to support Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) in 43 “areas of concern” – contamination “hot spots” – around the Lakes. This included the Niagara River and much of its watershed. Despite acceptance of the RAP process by governments at all levels, few of the areas of concern, including the Niagara River, have been addressed to the point where they could be “de-listed.” Work continues, and while there have been technical problems, the main obstacle to further progress continues to be a lack of resources for implementing agreed upon solutions.

Buffalo, however, is well-positioned to take a leadership role in issues of Great Lakes basin sustainability. Great Lakes United, a bi-national coalition of organizations dedicated to conserving the Great Lakes, well-represented in this region, has pushed the City of Buffalo to take part in the Great Lakes Mayors' Initiative to advocate for funding from Congress and the states to clean up and protect the Lakes.

The location of key research and policy development organizations here also supports Buffalo's leadership potential on Great Lakes issues. These include the Great Lakes Research Center at Buffalo State College, the Great Lakes Program at the University at Buffalo, the Great Lakes Education Center of Erie County, the Buffalo Niagara Sustainability Council and the Friends of the Buffalo Niagara Rivers. All are making important contributions to our understanding of these issues and promoting sensible policies to protect the Lakes.

The City of Buffalo and its agencies, however, should play a larger role in promoting the continuing protection and restoration of the Great Lakes. In so doing, the City can show it has earned its title *Queen City of the Great Lakes*.

The Waterfront

Buffalo's waterfront resources are enormous, encompassing a wide variety of landscapes and uses not only along Lake Erie and the Niagara River, but also on the Buffalo River, Cazenovia Creek, Scajaquada Creek and the Erie Canal. Its continuing redevelopment can be a leading quality-of-life factor in Buffalo's economic resurgence. It can also play a small but important part in the regeneration of the Great Lakes basin.

The characteristics of waterfront land and its uses vary widely from site to site. The waterfront includes re-naturalized areas like the Tifft Nature Preserve, architectural marvels such as the Buffalo River grain elevators, heritage sites like the Erie Canal Harbor and Underground Railway commemoration at Broderick Park, great public spaces like LaSalle Park and the Olmsted jewels, Riverside Park and Front Park, active industrial sites, recreational boating facilities, and many successful urban neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, citizens lament the loss of access to their waterfront over the years, cut off from neighborhoods and Downtown by the Niagara Section of the Thruway, blocked by industrial uses active and dormant, or frustrated by lack of appropriate facilities – pathways, docks, boat launches, parking and amenities. The single clear demand from the public is to restore full access to Buffalo's waterfront.

But if citizens are frustrated by a perceived lack of action on waterfront development, an inventory of plans and action suggests much has been – and is being – accomplished. Construction of the Riverwalk, creation of the Erie Basin Marina, new housing in Waterfront Village, expansion of the Small Boat Harbor, clean-up of Hoyt Lake, preservation of Tifft Nature Preserve and others have all been accomplished in the last three decades.

Many other projects are now coming to fruition, including the Erie Canal Harbor, Times Beach Nature Preserve, further expansion of the Small Boat Harbor, construction of Gallagher Beach, preservation of Buffalo River habitats, creation of the Outer Harbor Greenway Trail, restoration of LaSalle Park, construction of a Frank Lloyd Wright Boathouse and a Great Lakes Research Center at Cotter Point, development of a new Squaw Island Park and many others.

Citizens are more engaged than ever in enunciating a clear waterfront agenda and giving it active support. Work on Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), the Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative (WCI), the Peace Bridge Expansion Project, the Erie Canal Harbor development and many others have provided an opportunity for citizens to speak, over and over again, about what they want. This Comprehensive Plan, among other actions, is evidence that officials are listening.

The LWRP and WCI will become part of the Comprehensive Plan and they are discussed at greater length in part two of this document. The clear opportunity is to apply the basic principle of sustainability to waterfront redevelopment. That means integrating environmental, social and economic factors in one strategy to develop the waterfront for our use – and make it better for the generations to follow.

Waterfront Nodal Analysis

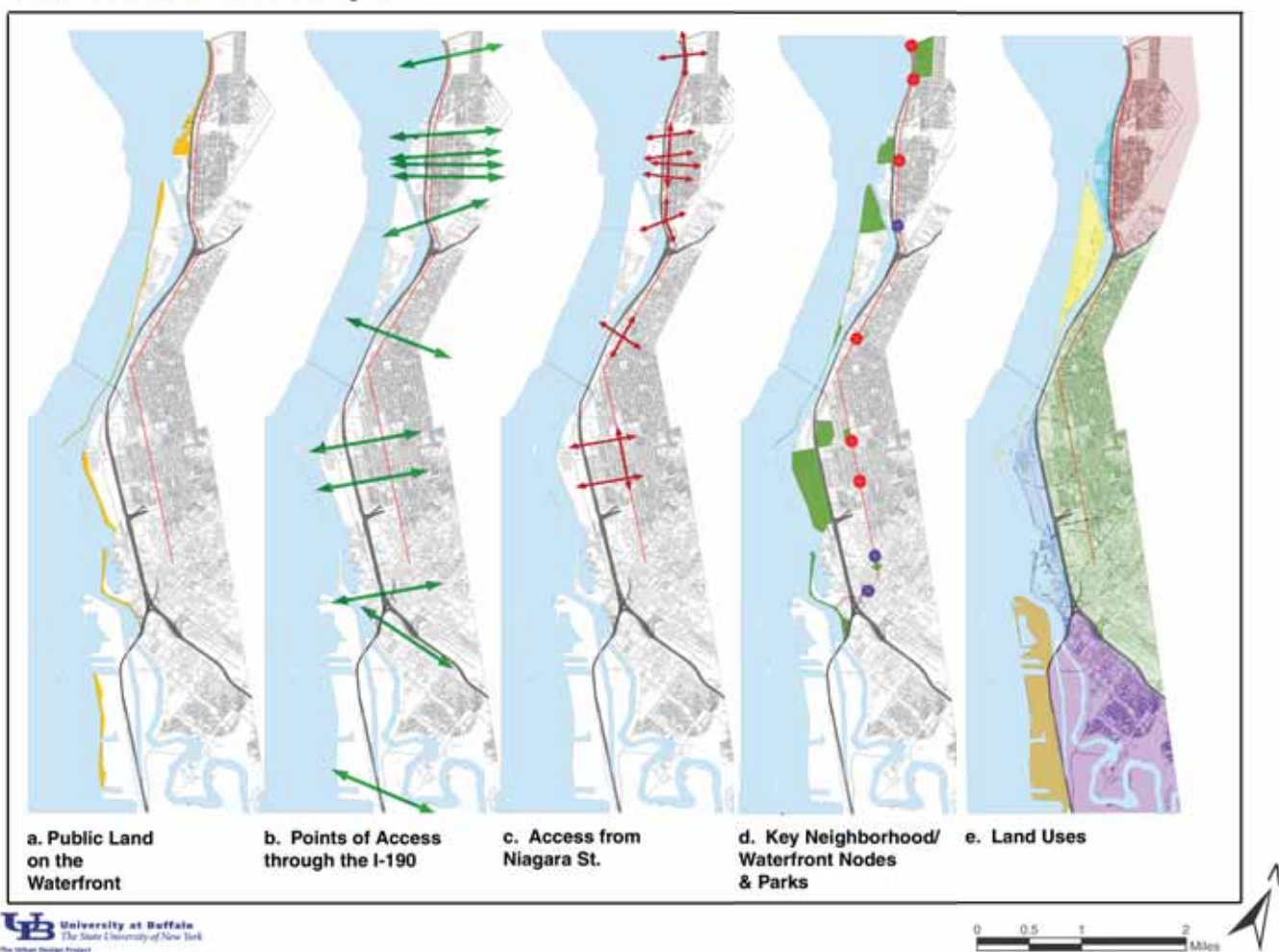


Figure 31. Waterfront analysis illustrating distinct access points to public lands on the water from Niagara Street and west to the adjacent neighborhoods. Source: "Lighting the Way to Buffalo's Waterfront," drawings by Rishawn Sonubi.

Reading from the left we see:

- a. Land owned by the public on our waterfront is substantial.
- b. Points of access to the public land through the I-190 Thruway.
- c. Access to the water from Niagara Street
- d. Access extends to the water from points east of Niagara Street.
- e. The neighborhoods adjacent to the water have distinct land uses and characters beginning from the Residential to the north, the industrial and heavy commercial uses in the middle, and the gateway and commercial strip character of lower Niagara Street. All three areas include substantial neighborhood populations.

Public parks

Buffalo's parks, playgrounds and public spaces are important both to sustaining the quality of the urban environment and the quality of life in the city. They provide not only recreational opportunities and public amenities but they also improve the physical environment and promote investment. In short, great parks in good order will be a crucial element in any strategy to turn the city around.

The city parks system represents an enormous resource for Buffalo. It includes 120 parks of all types and sizes and a large number of other green spaces. They range in size from 350 acres to less than one. They include 16 "destination parks" that are relatively large and draw users from around the city and the whole region for a wide variety of recreational uses. There are 50 neighborhood parks and playgrounds that support passive and active recreation and are used locally. Thirty more neighborhood parks support mainly passive recreation. Two dozen other facilities – community centers, pools, and ice rinks – support both local and regional activities (See Figure 32).

If the parks are a great resource, they are also a great user of resources. They require intensive management and maintenance, which are increasingly difficult to provide in a highly constrained municipal budget. Not surprisingly, the condition of these parks and facilities varies a great deal depending on intensity of use, availability of City staff, and the frequency of capital reinvestment.

A survey of 117 parks showed that four (about four percent) were rated in excellent condition; 36 parks (about 29 percent) were rated good; 49 parks (42 percent) were rated fair and 28 parks (25 percent) were rated in poor condition. A total of 15 park facilities, including three destination parks, ten neighborhood parks and playgrounds, and two passive parks, were reported to have health and safety issues.

Buffalo residents are substantially underserved by public parks. A 1999 study of 30 upstate New York cities showed Buffalo had 5.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents – well below the upstate average of 9.2 acres. Work on a new waterfront State Park on the Outer Harbor announced in 2003 and proposals for a new east side park will address the deficit only in part.

Olmsted's Historic Park and Parkway System

On the other hand, Buffalo residents can enjoy an extraordinary system of Frederick Law Olmsted parks and parkways. Designed by Olmsted, his partner Calvert Vaux and Olmsted's son John, and constructed between 1867 and 1903, it was the first attempt in the nation to create a truly city-wide system of parks. With six major parks – Delaware, Riverside, The Front, Martin Luther King Jr. (originally Humboldt), Cazenovia and South – connected by broad, tree-lined residential parkways, the system is a profoundly important element in the city's form and structure.

The true value of the historic Olmsted Park System is often misunderstood or overlooked. It is special on its own account, but also provides the setting for some of the city's most important cultural institutions, including the Museum of Science, the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. The system was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

These parks and parkways are well-loved and fiercely protected by the citizens of Buffalo. Proposals to use the parks for new purposes – for Peace Bridge access through Front Park, facilities for the Buffalo Zoo in Delaware Park, or for schools in Martin Luther King Park – have drawn staunch opposition. Likewise, there has been frequent tension between passive recreation, the historically intended purpose of the parks, and contemporary demands to accommodate active sports such as golf, tennis, soccer, softball and others.

Parks

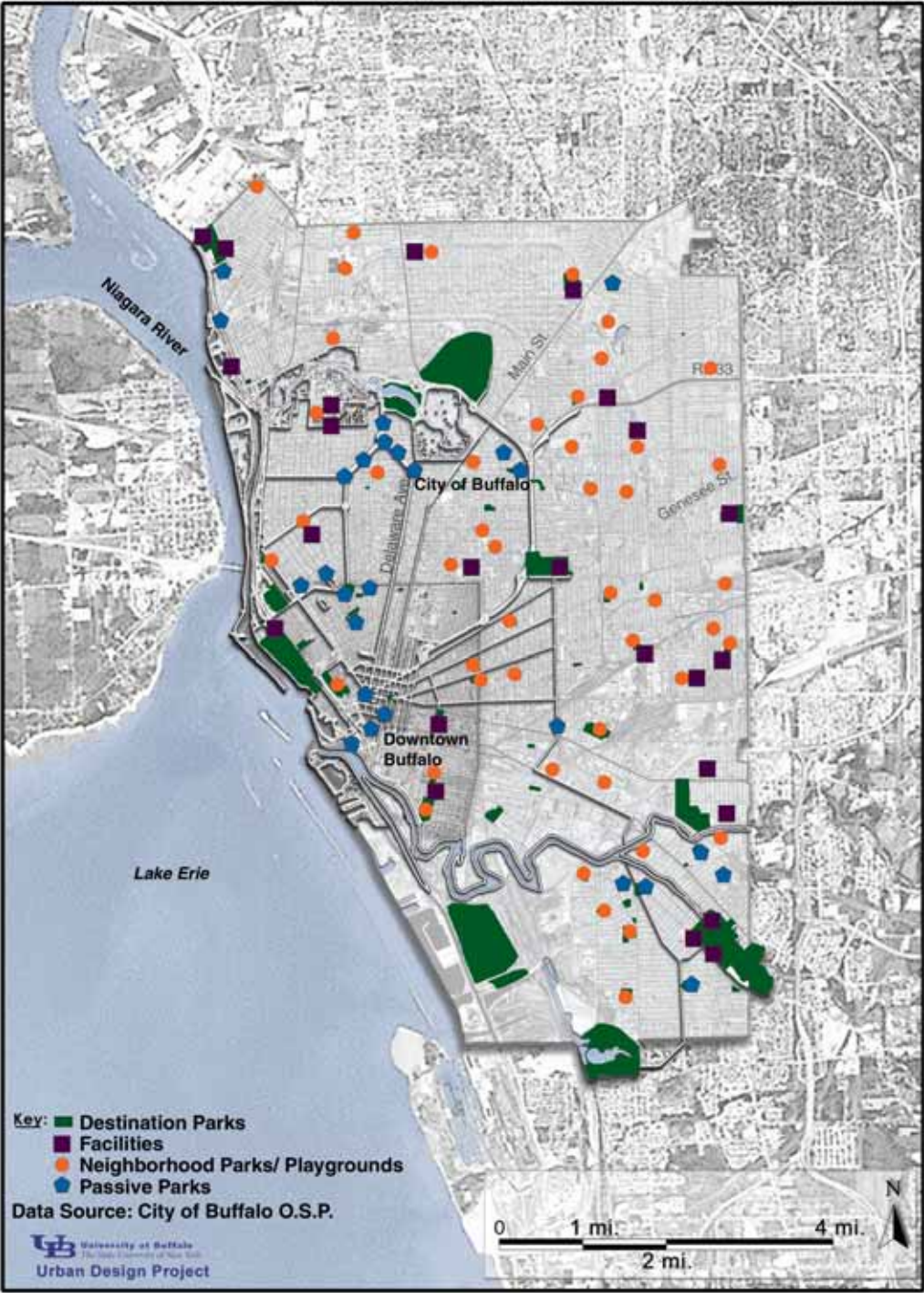


Figure 32. Key destination parks, facilities, neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

City government, along with park advocacy groups, including the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, park and parkway system citizen steering committees, and block clubs are working to find solutions to these issues. In any case, there is seldom any doubt about the commitment of Buffalo residents to their parks.

Parks Management

Good parks are a consistent priority among citizens. Due to its ongoing fiscal crisis, however, the City of Buffalo has lost the wherewithal to maintain its parks, parkways, playgrounds and public spaces to an acceptable standard. The City has been forced to consider a range of options for meeting the public demand, going well beyond internal reform and downsizing to evaluate the potential for regional consolidation. The County of Erie has taken over management of the City Park system and is using the Olmsted Conservancy to manage the Olmsted Parks.

Many of Buffalo's parks are regional assets and it makes sense to manage them as such. People from all over Erie County and beyond visit many of Buffalo's "destination parks" for a wide range of activities. Delaware Park and the Buffalo Zoo are truly regional attractions. Waterfront parks like Riverside, LaSalle and the Erie Basin Marina also attract users from far and wide. When Buffalo cannot carry the weight of maintaining these assets on its own, it makes sense for the burden to be shared more broadly.

There is also plentiful precedent for parks management to be conducted on a regional basis. County management of Grover Cleveland Golf Course and the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens in South Park are both well-established examples. Two new waterfront parks, Towpath and Squaw Island, will likely draw users from beyond the city line. Their management by Erie County also makes sense.

One of the new-found resources that should be considered in any solution to parks management problems is the growing cadre of committed parks volunteers. Groups like the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the Buffalo Green Fund, Rose Buddies, the Japanese Garden Committee, the AmeriCorps Program, Buffalo in Bloom, Keep Western New York Beautiful, and numerous park steering committees are ready to commit whatever time, effort, money and imagination they have to help maintain, protect and improve Buffalo's parks.

While the City struggles to maintain the parks that it already owns, there is continuing pressure to expand the system of greenways that connect parks to one another and to the Buffalo waterfront. Supporters of the Buffalo Greenways Implementation Plan, approved by Common Council several years ago, are pushing for development of a Greenways Ordinance that would provide predictable funding for long-term development. Such an effort to link our park assets makes sense, but the demand for resources for new facilities must be balanced with the need to take care of what we already have.

Further study of overall parks management should remain a priority, even in light of the June 2004 agreement for the County to assume management for all City parks. Likewise, much parks planning work accomplished in recent years should be carried forward under the new management structure.

Urban Forestry

Once known as “The City of Trees,” Buffalo has suffered a steady decline in tree canopy coverage over the past three decades, the result of disease, harsh environmental conditions, inadequate maintenance and simple aging. Like other elements of the urban environment, trees provide shelter, habitat, beauty and economic value to city life. Reversing the long-term trend in urban deforestation should be a key element in a quality-of-life strategy for Buffalo’s revival.

City resources are stretched thin in this realm, too. The Division of Forestry is responsible for the protection and care of 20,000 trees in city parks and 65,000 in street rights of way. Their first priority is to remove hazardous trees and branches, and clean up damage created by wind and weather. When no emergency conditions exist, forestry crews trim park trees and plant trees on City rights of way at the request of homeowners. Trees are also planted by private contractors when funds are available.

Figure 33. Street trees on Timon Street in the Masten District.



Private groups have joined the effort to make Buffalo a city of trees again. The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the Reforest Buffalo Committee, and the Buffalo Green Fund have all organized reforestation programs and are moving to implement them. More than 2,000 trees will be planted over the next three years. The Division of Forestry also works with these groups and others, including Forever Elmwood, Allentown Association, Parkside Community Association, and many smaller community associations and block clubs to plant trees in parks, greenways, and along streets.

Longer range planning is also taking place. A comprehensive survey detailing the condition of every tree in the city was completed in 2001 (See Figure 34). A Street Tree Master Plan has also been developed to provide a five-year management plan for street tree maintenance, hazard removal, and citywide reforestation, and a ten-year citywide routine tree-trimming rotation. The plan also includes removal, trimming and planting specifications, identification of appropriate species for planting, and a guide for construction around trees on City rights of way.

Staff in the Division of Forestry are among those who will be transferred to Erie County as part of the handover of parks management under the recent City-County agreement. The new Street Tree Master Plan should be carried forward and implemented as these staff are absorbed into a new organization.

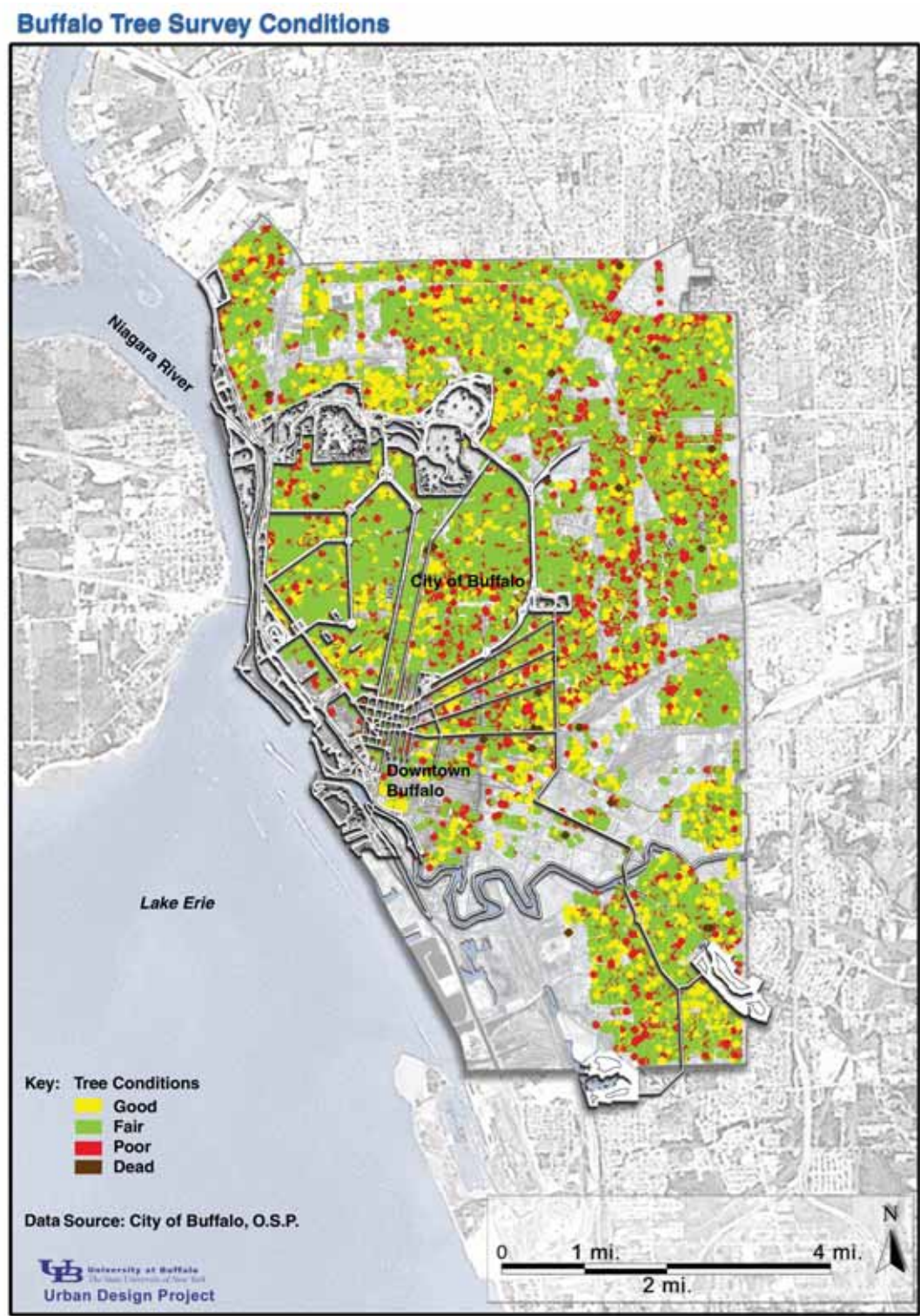


Figure 34. A tree condition survey recently completed by the City assesses the current condition of Buffalo's urban forest.

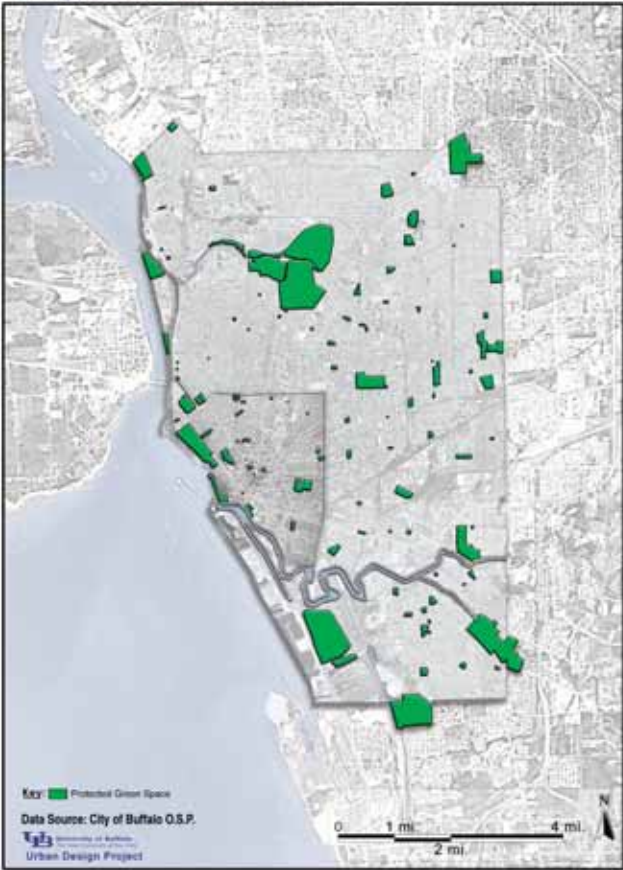
Green infrastructure

Public parks are only one part of what might be called the “green infrastructure” of a city. This “green infrastructure” includes not only public parks, parkways and playgrounds, but also institutional and private open spaces, rail and utility rights of way, highway margins, stream corridors, trailways, disused industrial land, vacant residential property and more. Because this infrastructure performs a range of ecological functions – providing wildlife corridors, urban habitat, support for biodiversity and more – it is important to the health of the ecosystem.

We can imagine a system of green infrastructure composed of several types of open spaces. The formally protected green spaces of the city such as parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities in public ownership, as well as dedicated green spaces such as cemeteries, constitute one layer of the green infrastructure (See Figure 35).

Existing Protected - Green Infrastructure

Figure 35



- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Public Piers, Wharves & Docks | Public Picnic Grounds |
| Public Golf Courses | Public Recreational Facilities |
| Public Marinas | Cemeteries |
| Public Parks | Water |
| Public Playgrounds | City / Town / Village Parks |
| Public Athletic Fields | |

Existing Non-Protected - Green Infrastructure

Figure 36



- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Private Piers, Wharves & Docks | Libraries | Transmission & Distribution Land |
| Private Marinas | Schools | Utility Corridors |
| Private Parks | Colleges & Universities | Water for Transportation |
| Private Playgrounds | Religious | Railroads |
| Private Athletic Fields | Welfare | Solid Waste Facilities |
| Private Picnic Grounds | Hospitals & Other Health Facilities | Landfills & Dumps |
| Private Recreational Facilities | Cultural & Recreational Facilities | Sewage Treatment |
| Outdoor Riding Stables | Roads, Streets & Highways | Water Pollution Control |

Green and open space that is not formally protected, such as land in private ownership like the buffers on transportation or utility corridors, constitutes a second layer of the infrastructure (See Figure 36). Such lands may serve ecological purposes although they are not necessarily all performing such a function today.

A third layer includes lands that might be added to the city's green infrastructure over time, including vacant residential, industrial and commercial properties (See Figure 37). The reality, of course, is that most of these properties ultimately will be redeveloped for uses other than green space. Nevertheless, they should be assessed in terms of their environmental value whenever re-use is

planned. Some may be needed to make connections in the infrastructure or perform functions vital to the larger system of green infrastructure, including re-use as parks, woodlots, greenways, or gardens.

One of the functions of planning is to preserve resources for future use when immediate action is not feasible. Implementation can be incremental, but the vision can be long-term. The Buffalo Greenway Plan is a good example of this concept (See Figure 38). Construction of some links in the Greenway system will require elements of the green infrastructure to be held out of other development. Developing our green infrastructure in the long term will require fidelity to these plans.

Potential - Green Infrastructure

Figure 37



Residential Vacant
Commercial Vacant
Industrial Vacant
Urban Renewal & Slum Clearance
Parking Lots
Junkyards
Billboards

Greenway Zones

Figure 38



Green Building

It is common to think of cars or factories as the primary enemies of the environment, consuming energy and emitting air pollution and other forms of waste. In reality, buildings consume more than half the energy used worldwide (compared with 25 percent by transportation and 25 percent by industrial uses) and 40 to 50 percent of the carbon emissions that cause global warming. As Buffalo approaches the management, renewal, and ultimately, the expansion of the city's building stock, it makes sense to think about how to make buildings less polluting and more energy efficient.

Building codes are evolving in ways that promote more efficient land use, energy conservation, air quality, water conservation, and material use. They are also working to promote pedestrian activity and public transit. Rating systems such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) are now being used to evaluate sustainable architecture. They define environmentally progressive architecture as an architecture that uses renewable energy sources; employs passive techniques for ventilation and illumination; recycles greenery, water and waste; and uses environmentally benign construction techniques. It supports a practice of architecture that combines new technology with inherited architectural vernacular.

Buffalo, led by the architects, planners, and engineers who work here, is in a unique position to use green building techniques as the city restores, preserves and reuses its building stock. Already, the award winning *Queen City Hub Action Plan* has included green building projects in its scope of work. Buildings in other parts of the city also lend themselves to these practices. Green building techniques and codes should also be used in the design and construction of new structures as well as the retrofitting of existing buildings.

1.6 INFRASTRUCTURE

Buffalo's physical infrastructure presents an important challenge as well as a great resource as the city plans for its future. It is a resource in that it represents an extraordinary investment in economically useful capital. It is a challenge because it is aging and oversized for Buffalo's shrunken population, and while the financial resources needed to manage and maintain it are greater than before, revenue from its users has declined. The needs are great because the City has underinvested for decades in systems they own and manage, deferring maintenance, replacement and necessary upgrades.

The infrastructure of the city includes City-owned roads, sanitary and storm sewers, water supply, and City-owned buildings, which the City must operate and maintain, plus other roads and highways, public transit, railroads, marine facilities, electric and gas utilities, and telecommunications and fiber optic networks, which are separately managed. Each of these was evaluated in support of this analysis except for telecommunications and fiber optics, which it is assumed will be adequate as the city develops.



Figure 39. Existing system of highways and rail transit in the region.

Transportation

Buffalo is the hub of a dense, complex and inter-modal transportation system that connects Buffalo to the region, the nation and the world. It encompasses the local street network, local and regional bus and rail transit, regional, national, and cross-border highway connections, mainline rail freight and passenger facilities, intercity bus service, marine connections to the state, the continent, and overseas, and scheduled passenger airline and air freight service through The Buffalo Niagara International Airport just beyond the city line in Cheektowaga.

The regional transportation system is owned, managed, and operated by a great number and variety of public and private entities. Because their facilities and services are inter-connected and Buffalo sits at the hub of the system, the City must collaborate with them all. It also works closely with the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, the cooperative association of area governments that conducts regional transportation planning.

Road Network

The City owns most of the streets within its corporate boundaries, about 675 miles of the regional total of 6,155 roadway miles. Of these 675 miles, 210 are eligible for federal aid, leaving the City to maintain almost 465 miles on its own account. It has struggled to do so. While maintenance of local streets in the federal aid system has improved in recent years, lack of municipal capital dollars for the rest of the system has resulted in some deterioration. For example, average scores denoting the condition of city streets declined from 6.31 in 1999 to 5.83 in 2001.

Meanwhile, automobile and truck traffic, already the dominant mode of movement for people and goods in the region, is growing sharply. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased from 16 million in 1984 to 19 million in 1999. Although population has declined slightly, vehicle ownership has risen. Congestion on urban streets and highways is also increasing, including some trouble spots in Buffalo.

Peace Bridge

The Peace Bridge is a key link in both the regional and North American transportation systems. It carries automobile and truck traffic across the Niagara River between Buffalo and Fort Erie, the U.S. and Canada. Since 1989, when the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect, truck traffic across the Peace Bridge has increased significantly. Automobile traffic, however, has declined from its previous level. Total traffic is unchanged since 1989 – about 21,000 vehicles per day.

Nevertheless, delays at the bridge have increased sharply in recent years, due in some combination to increased volume, stricter inspection routines prompted by security concerns, and the limits of inspection staff and facilities. Plans by the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority to double capacity in the corridor have been set back by local opposition in Buffalo over issues of bridge design, violations of environmental review procedures, air quality, and other neighborhood impacts of the bridge and plaza. While City policy is to promote increased efficiency of this international corridor for the economic benefit of Buffalo, the region and both nations, it also demands a bridge plaza design that will help reclaim parkland, minimize negative impacts on the immediate neighborhood, and help create a memorable international gateway.

Public Transit

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority provides public transit service in the region through its subsidiary NFTA Metro. They operate a fleet of 332 buses serving Buffalo and other communities in the region. Metro also operates the 6.4 mile long Metro Rail, which connects downtown Buffalo to the University at Buffalo's South Campus. Overall, the system carries 94,000 passengers daily; buses in Buffalo carry 55,000 of these; Metro Rail serves 20,000 passengers a day.

Annual ridership declined from 29 million in 1995 to 26.9 million in 1999, but increased in 2000 by three percent and again in subsequent years. Metro's route network has been significantly reorganized in recent years with 55 routes connected through a system of hubs that makes it easy to reach any part of the city and much easier to reach destinations throughout the suburbs. Fare box revenue provides about a third of the cost to operate the system with the remainder subsidized by government. Continued improvement in the system is crucial to the application of smart growth principles.

Air

NFTA also operates the Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BNIA) in Cheektowaga, which serves the operations of nine major and five regional passenger airlines, as well as general aviation and air cargo operations. Intensive efforts to attract new passenger carriers have helped increase competition and lower fares from BNIA. A new terminal and improved navigation systems have also boosted activity there. About four million passengers annually are now served.

Rail

Buffalo remains an important hub for rail transportation with mainline connections and expansive switching yards. Amtrak provides daily service to New York, Boston, Toronto and Chicago through three passenger stations in the region, including Buffalo's Downtown Exchange Street station. Passenger volume has been rising at about five percent per year. Freight service is provided by four major companies: CSX, Norfolk Southern, Canadian Pacific, and Canadian National. Rail traffic crosses the Niagara River to and from Canada via the International Bridge. Freight rail traffic has also been increasing.

Water

Waterborne shipping continues to be an important element in the regional transportation system. The Port of Buffalo provides links to other ports on the Great Lakes, St. Lawrence Seaway and beyond. The Buffalo Port Terminals (Gateway Metroport) in Lackawanna are privately owned and operated by Buffalo Crushed Stone and handle general bulk cargo. Several grain and utility companies have their own terminals on the Buffalo River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reports that from 1987 to 1996, the annual volume of marine cargo increased 37 percent to 1.6 million tons.

The Erie Canal connects Buffalo to New York via Albany and the Hudson River. Once Buffalo's primary transportation link to the world and long a major cargo route, the canal now carries mostly recreational craft and is becoming an important catalyst for tourism development.

Water and sewer

Although generally adequate, the city's water and sewer systems are quite old. The majority of all water lines were installed prior to 1930, and 93 percent of all sanitary sewers were installed before 1941. When the City-owned streets are reconstructed, underground services, including water and sewer, are replaced, but the backlog of needed improvements continues to be massive.

Water System

Water comes from Lake Erie into an intake out in the lake and flows through a 12 by 12-foot conduit to the Colonel Ward Water Treatment Plant and out to the city through 800 miles of pipe controlled by 25,000 valves. The system supplies an average of 99 million gallons per day to 82,000 service connections and 7,600 fire hydrants. A peak supply of 127.8 MGD was reached in 2001. This capacity is adequate to satisfy foreseeable future demands. Water quality is good and complies with all regulations.

Nevertheless, continued water line maintenance is needed. In 2001, a scant 1.3 miles of water main were renovated or replaced. Water pressure is good throughout the city, except for parts of the northeast section of Buffalo, where pressure is fair to poor. Overall, however, the Colonel Ward Water Treatment Plant has excess capacity.

The system is managed by a private utility firm, American Water Services, Inc., under contract to the Division of Water, Department of Public Works, and the delegated authority of the Buffalo Water Board. Costs to consumers average \$230 a year, the lowest in the region. A program is ongoing to convert flat-rate customers to metered accounts and to replace outdated meters with new ones that will allow automated readings. The program is designed to cut costs, encourage water conservation, and ensure that the system can operate on a full cost recovery basis.

Sewer System

The Buffalo Sewer Authority operates and maintains the city's public sewage collection and waste water treatment system. The Authority was created by an act of the State Legislature in 1935 to fulfill this mission. The system includes 845 miles of sewer mains and connectors, nine outlying pumping stations, a 17 million gallon storm water retention basin, and the Bird Island Sewage Treatment plant. The system is more than adequate to meet anticipated needs but requirements for maintenance and replacement of lines is very substantial.

The Bird Island plant has a capacity of 180 million gallons a day (MGD), sufficient to serve a population of 650,000 people. At present, it treats and disposes an average sewer flow of 145 MGD. This volume includes approximately 35 MGD sanitary sewage from suburban communities outside the City of Buffalo. The system provides limited capacity in the northern section of the city but has excess sewer capacity in the industrial area in the southwest section of the city.

Most of the system consists of lines that collect storm water and sanitary sewage together. The consequence of a combined sewer system is that total flow may exceed waste water treatment capacity during heavy precipitation. When this occurs, combined storm water and sewage is discharged into local waterways through combined sewer overflows. An average of 68 combined sewer overflow (CSO) events occur in Buffalo annually. Eliminating these polluting events will require separation of storm sewers from sanitary sewers.

The Authority's capital improvement program is intended to address these needs. Replacement and reconstruction of the collection system is ongoing. Sanitary and combined sewer lines are examined via remote television cameras to determine needs for repair, relining or replacement. New storm sewers are being added to the system on a phased basis to address the CSO problem.

The Authority continues to upgrade the Bird Island Treatment Plant. The Authority is working to construct a new grit collection system and replace the centrifuge at the plant. These two improvements will help reduce the amount of solids to be incinerated, thus reducing fuel costs. These projects are being funded through low interest loans from the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation.

Further improvements need to be considered. New pollutants such as hormones, antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals may threaten our water quality as they become more common in wastewater. However, the technical means for treating these pollutants have not yet been identified.

Municipal buildings

The City owns about 400 buildings, including community centers, police precincts, fire stations, and parks and maintenance buildings, as well as City Hall itself. This inventory is larger than is required to support the City's current and future needs. Money is being spent to keep buildings open that

are not needed when the same money could be better spent for other purposes, including neighborhood redevelopment.

Some of the excess properties could be sold or redeveloped for more productive uses, filling City coffers and revitalizing neighborhoods in the process. Yet, officials face stiff resistance from neighborhood organizations and other groups when facilities are proposed for closure and disposal. A clear rationale and strong evidence is required to meet these objections.

As part of implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Strategic Planning and Department of Public Works should undertake a complete review of City properties to determine present and future needs. Properties found to be surplus should be sold or exchanged for properties for which the City has a purpose.

Energy

Buffalo's energy utilities – electricity and natural gas – are provided by regulated private corporations, which generally provide adequate service. There are, however, serious concerns about the availability and cost of electricity, in particular. Because hydroelectric power is generated in Niagara Falls, in a sense, at our regional “doorstep,” many believe that Buffalo should have electricity available at more competitive rates. Instead, electric power is generally cheaper elsewhere.

National Grid (formerly Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation), is sensitive to these views. The company reports they have frozen or reduced domestic energy rates for a period while they work to create a competitive long term pricing structure, even in the face of a fluctuating market. National Grid is also negotiating more advantageous bulk rates for its largest industrial customers. National Fuel, the gas supplier for the local market, is pursuing a similar program. The impact on energy costs of these policies, however, is not yet clear.

The current re-licensing of New York Power Authority (NYPA) facilities, one of the sources from which National Grid gets its electricity, has been an opportunity for businesses and communities in the Buffalo-Niagara region to have input on the NYPA public project finding portion of the relicensing agreement. NYPA originally offered the Buffalo/Erie County area \$100 million spread over fifty years for waterfront enhancement projects. The current negotiated offer is worth a minimum of \$280 million over the same period.

The proposed NYPA funded projects included a lake-to-Niagara River Greenway Commission Master Plan, dedicated funding for projects undertaken by the Erie Canal Development Corporation, and relocation of the Ice boom storage site.

There is intense interest in energy in the city and region for both economic and environmental reasons. Energy conservation and development of alternative sources of energy can deliver benefits in both categories. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) recently opened an office in downtown Buffalo, and has designated Main Street as a Rebuild New York Community Energy Target Zone. Their partners 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.

Erie County has taken the lead locally in promoting energy efficiency and incorporating green design and construction practices into its facilities. The State of New York is applying a similar policy. The regional trades union council has proposed a district heating system for downtown Buffalo, and others have proposed an urban wind farm. The Queen City Hub Action Plan calls for two “Green Building” demonstration projects Downtown, one for a major new building and one for redevelopment of a major existing building.

Telecommunications

The city is well served by telecommunications infrastructure and holds a competitive edge in certain areas such as fiber optics. The Buffalo region has more than 80,000 miles of fiber optic line laid and managed by private companies, making it the fifth best-equipped region in the world. Fiber optic technology enables individuals to network with each other at high speeds – regionally, nationally, and globally – providing a useful tool for those whose business activities require such connections.

1.7 FINANCIAL CAPACITY AND CONTROL

The City of Buffalo is in a long-term fiscal crisis brought on by a structural imbalance between available sources of revenue and spending on municipal services and capital investment. The crisis had been deepening for many years until July 2003 when the State Legislature passed the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority Act, which placed the operations of the City under supervision of a State-appointed control board.

Like most city governments, Buffalo receives revenue from a variety of sources and could not survive on the proceeds of the local property tax levy alone. For example, in fiscal year 2002-03, only 29 percent of City revenues came from the local property tax – a small proportion but still above the national average municipal share of 27 percent. Proceeds of the Erie County sales tax accounted for 21 percent of total revenue. New York State provided 45 percent. Two percent came from the federal government and three percent from other sources.

The structural limits on local revenue include a property tax base that is, at best, stagnant, and excludes many from an obligation to pay such taxes. The property tax levy declined from \$154 million in 1996-97 to \$131 million in 2001-02 – a loss of \$23 million in revenue – simply because property in the city is assessed at a lower value than before. In 2002-03, the levy climbed slightly to \$131.8 million, but far from enough to close municipal operating deficits. Meanwhile, nearly 40 percent of city property is owned by organizations or individuals who are exempt from local property taxes. Of residential taxpayers who do pay tax only 35 percent, or 29,555, pay more than \$1,000 a year.

The result of this shrinkage in revenue, in the face of rising costs for salaries, health care and pensions, and in the absence of additional help from higher levels of government, has been severe cuts in City operations, elimination and downsizing of programs, transfer of operations to other units of government, and layoff of municipal personnel. Shrinking revenues and higher costs have also threatened implementation of Buffalo's capital reinvestment plans. Buffalo's 2003-2007 capital improvement program includes 46 projects with a total cost of nearly \$162 million. Even though more than \$82 million is reimbursable by federal and State governments, Buffalo must still generate the local shares for these projects.

Work is ongoing to improve capital planning, instigated by revisions to the City Charter approved by voters in 1999. These revisions mandated that capital budgeting be integrated into a new strategic planning function, supervised by a Citizens Planning Council and supported by the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning (OSP). Together, they review proposed projects and recommend to the Common Council a four year program and budget. In parallel, the City Comptroller is required to establish independently the amount of new debt the City can prudently incur. Capital projects, as before, are managed by the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (BURA). Implementation of the Charter revisions has brought a new level of discipline to

the process, but these efficiencies have not closed the City's structural budget deficit.

Enabling legislation for the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority gives the control board the difficult task of overseeing restoration of a balanced budget in ways "which preserve essential services to city residents while also ensuring that taxes remain affordable." Failing to meet these divergent goals, the legislation states, will "jeopardize the city's long-term fiscal health and impede economic growth for the city, the region and the state."

The mandate of the nine-member control board encompasses the City, all of its agencies, as well as the Buffalo Public Schools. The City is required to submit four-year plans and a one-year budget each May for the control board's approval prior to the start of the City's fiscal year on July 1. The board has authority to oversee all collective bargaining agreements, ensure that all actions taken are within approved budgets, close operating deficits, and to borrow on the City's behalf.

Creation of the control board is a welcome sign of the State's recognition of the city's grave financial situation. Over time, the board will contribute to the amelioration of the city's problems. So will implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. However, it is already clear that additional support from County, State and federal governments will be needed to mend the budget, deliver this plan, and turn Buffalo around.

1.8 PLANNING AND ZONING

It has been more than thirty years since the City of Buffalo last approved a comprehensive city-wide plan, and more than fifty years since it approved a city-wide zoning ordinance. Yet, much has changed in that time. As Buffalo entered the 21st century it was evident that a new Comprehensive Plan be adopted and given the force of law so that citizens, neighborhoods, companies and investors can plan and act with certainty, and the City itself can make decisions rationally and deliver its services efficiently and effectively.

Likewise, the Comprehensive Plan needs be based on a sound planning philosophy and sound planning principles. For Buffalo, that means taking a regional approach; integrating economic, environmental and community considerations under a concept of sustainability; and implementing principles of smart growth. Furthermore the Comprehensive Plan needs to be linked directly to the selection and prioritization of capital projects through the City's Capital Improvement Program.

The Comprehensive Plan also needs a revised zoning ordinance to give it full effect. Such an ordinance must reflect the Comprehensive Plan and its smart growth principles. As such, it can provide the measure of predictability and certainty that both investors and citizens require. Without a companion zoning ordinance the Comprehensive Plan will lack the enforceability that will make it credible and achievable.

The current ordinance and an official zoning map was adopted by the City in 1951. That ordinance included 12 zoning districts (five residential, four commercial and three industrial) specifying the use, height and area regulations in each case. Since its adoption, many amendments have been approved and a host of special use districts and Urban Renewal Districts have been created. As a result, the ordinance is difficult to comprehend and apply today.

The zoning now in effect embodies the thinking of the mid 20th century about appropriate land uses and regulations. But it also reflects efforts since then to respond to the changing needs of the city through a proliferation of new and special zoning districts and an increasing number of individually-zoned parcels. At the same time, there are many cases of unplanned intermingling of residential and industrial uses that were typical of the built environment prior to the adoption of the current ordinance. A new ordinance must take this history into account.

The city that grew up mostly before zoning had relatively high densities in mixed use areas. Buildings were built to the lot line in commercial strips and there was little parking. Away from commercial strips in residential districts overall density was significantly lower. Most homes were in detached one- or two-family structures on lots of 30 to 60 feet wide. Because people needed to live near employment centers in the period before widespread automobile ownership, residential neighborhoods often developed in the shadow of commercial or industrial uses. The urban landscape was pedestrian-friendly with shopping and other services close by residential areas. There was no apparent need for design guidelines for multi-story mixed uses or the protection of urban architecture. With a few exceptions, the city was built-out and the urban fabric whole.

In the half century since then, both the city and its regional context have been transformed. Buffalo has lost half its population to the suburbs. Major shopping is now located at the city's edge or in the suburbs, accessible mainly by car, but also by bus. The restructuring of the regional economy away from heavy industry and manufacturing has been accompanied by the demolition of many obsolete structures. This process has changed the urban landscape, with vacant areas in many neighborhoods and surface parking lots replacing buildings downtown.

Most post 1960's development outside the central business district has been single-story and single-use with buildings set back from the front lot line behind surface parking. Unfortunately, current zoning permits this kind of suburban style development rather than prescribing more urban solutions.

Revised zoning categories and districts and a revised zoning map to reflect and support the Comprehensive Plan and the principles of smart growth should be prepared by the Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) as soon as possible. It will be one of the City's principal tools for implementing the Plan.

PART TWO:

Policies, priorities and programs

The vision and goal

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan lays out a clear set of policies, development priorities and action programs aimed at achieving the community's overarching goal for the city: to reverse Buffalo's decline in population and employment and rebuild it for the 21st century. The plan is based on a powerful vision, clear principles and ordered priorities for taking action.

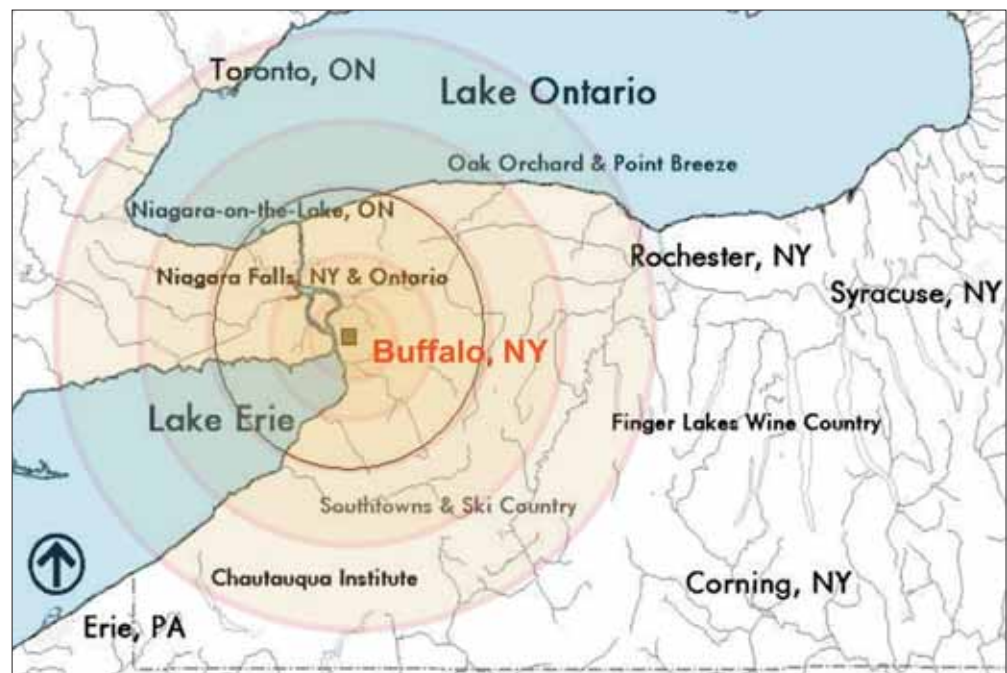
The community's vision for the city, as discussed in the introduction, is for Buffalo to be "the way it is, only better." In this future, Buffalo will be respected for its regional leadership; diverse, modern economy and transportation infrastructure; educated and skilled work force, fully employed; inclusive community life and harmonious social relations; comfortable and safe neighborhoods; and a unique natural, cultural, and built heritage that has been lovingly preserved, restored and enhanced. As Queen City of the Great Lakes, Buffalo will

have also earned recognition for its leadership in ensuring the clean-up and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem and protecting the integrity and wise use of this immense water resource.

Buffalo has many assets on which to build: the character, strength, knowledge and creativity of its people; great institutions of education, medicine and science; a rich cultural life; a great legacy in the physical city of streets, parks, buildings and homes; the city's position on the Great Lakes and its fresh water resources; its location in the bi-national Golden Horseshoe; its border with Canada and its relation to the rest of the world.

The result will be a city that still looks much like it looks today – only greener and fresher, fuller and more vibrant. Much of its urban fabric and many of its buildings will have been refurbished, but with many new and different uses. Nevertheless, there will still be room and opportunity for the Ellicotts, Olmsteds, Sullivans and Wrights of the 21st century to make their contributions to Buffalo's tradition of excellence.

Figure 40. As the City of Buffalo goes so goes the region. Each ring adds 25 miles of distance from downtown Buffalo (Source: Queen City Centre, 1999 and The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo, 2003).



The Comprehensive Plan promises to help Buffalo achieve this vision and meet its goal. It is a plan to transform Buffalo as the urban center of the Buffalo Niagara region through application of smart growth principles, targeted investments, and managed physical change to restore the economic well being, environmental health and sustainability of the city and promote an increase in population and employment.

The plan follows the common sense principles that Buffalo should “fix the basics” of municipal service delivery and maintenance of the urban environment and “build on the assets” of the community and its great urban heritage. It identifies a clear set of development priorities for restoring the physical heritage of the city, transforming the economy, rebuilding neighborhoods and creating a greener, healthier city. Likewise, it sets out the land use concept, planning and zoning regulations, and in Part Three of the plan, the strategies and mechanisms for implementing the plan.

2.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

The Comprehensive Plan is driven by a small and simple set of key principles that have helped identify the development priorities of the plan. These include the concept of sustainability, the planning and design ideas incorporated in the smart growth movement, and two other simple rules: fix the basics and build on the assets.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainability is woven throughout the fabric of the Comprehensive Plan and it should be a fundamental guiding principle, applied systemically, as Buffalo carries the plan forward to implementation. It is in the interests of the city, as well as the entire planet, that Buffalo pursue a strategy of development that satisfies the primary criterion of sustainability: “to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

This plan makes no false choices between protecting the environment, growing the economy, and developing the community. All three of these factors must advance together or they cannot advance at all in a sustainable way.

Both city government and citizens have already embraced the concept of sustainability, but the work has only begun. With this plan, the City of Buffalo continues the work of specifying what sustainability means in practical terms. The City should support efforts by the Buffalo Niagara Sustainability Council to expand public awareness, formulate and apply key principles, and create regional indicators to measure progress toward sustainability. The council’s anticipated “Regional Sustainability Plan” deserves encouragement, too.

In general, achieving sustainable development will require initiatives to reduce the consumption of energy, land and other non-renewable resources; minimize the waste of materials, water and other limited resources; create livable, healthy and productive environments, and; reduce greenhouse gasses in order to assist in alleviating the impact of global climate change.

For Buffalo, in particular, achieving sustainability will mean restoring the physical environment of the city, making the transition to a 21st century economy, promoting energy conservation and use of alternative energy sources, reclaiming old industrial lands, improving public transportation, managing land use for a more efficient urban form, strengthening Downtown as the center of the region, developing waterfront resources, preserving housing and strengthening city neighborhoods, improving water quality, reducing air pollution, and much more.

Smart Growth

Consistent with the idea of sustainability, the planning and urban design principles of smart growth have been fully integrated into the Comprehensive Plan. A movement of planners and designers has created principles of smart growth in recent decades as a means to limit urban sprawl and make better communities.

Followed carefully, smart growth principles can help conserve land, protect environmental resources, promote more efficient multi-modal transportation, create healthy neighborhoods and Downtowns, conserve energy, foster community involvement, support the creation of affordable housing and more.

Smart growth principles can be implemented by states, regions, cities or neighborhoods through planning and zoning ordinances, development regulations, public incentives, and regulations like urban growth boundaries. New York State has taken a less aggressive approach to smart growth than other states, but planners and policy makers here are exploring how to improve patterns of urban development.

Smart growth principles have most often been applied in regions where there is much growth to manage. But Buffalo-Niagara needs smart growth, too, to control sprawl on the suburban periphery, strengthen inner-ring suburbs, and redevelop neighborhoods in the urban core. The Comprehensive Plan calls for the City to adopt ten basic principles of smart growth:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Buffalo can set the example for the rest of the region by adopting these smart growth principles and by working with policy-makers at the regional and state levels to establish policies and programs that will promote more efficient and attractive patterns of development.

Application of smart growth principles is indispensable for Buffalo, both in implementing the Comprehensive Plan and preparing for its eventual success. Smart growth principles can help us guide investment decisions and stimulate development and it can help us better cope with new growth when it resumes.

Fix the basics, build on assets

Finally, the Comprehensive Plan is driven by two simple but interrelated common sense principles. First, the City must concentrate on fixing the basics in provision of municipal services and maintenance of the public environment. Second, the City must always try to build on the assets of the community. Applied as a dual decision rule for policy making and priority setting, the mantra of “fix the basics and build on assets” can help sort out what we must do from all the things we might do.

The first order of business for local government is to meet its primary obligation to provide basic services and maintain the urban environment to reasonable standards and at a reasonable cost. In times of crisis, and through periods of decline, there may be a temptation to reduce services or defer maintenance and reinvestment in public infrastructure and the urban environment. This may seem to make sense in the short term when the necessary resources are not available. But in the long run such practices serve only to exacerbate the dynamics of disinvestment, population migration, shrinking revenues and overall decline. In so far as possible within the current financial situation, the City of Buffalo must rededicate itself to fixing these basics.

Secondly, any strategy for the revitalization of the city must always consider Buffalo's extraordinary civic assets as the foundation of further action. We must always build on these assets: our Olmsted parks and parkways, our Joseph Ellicott city plan, our great waterfront, prodigious infrastructure, great public institutions of education, health care, art and culture, affordable housing and strong neighborhoods, and most of all the civic capital of active citizens and friendly neighbors.

Each element that the Comprehensive Plan addresses is in some measure one of the “basics” and almost always involves some kind of “asset.” Buffalo's sewer and water systems, streets and highways, parks and parkways, school system, utilities, housing,

bus and rail transit system, its supply of buildings and land, and many other aspects of the city are all part of what makes up the “basics” of quality urban living. At the same time, each is also an asset. What becomes clear is that where the “basics” and “assets” come together, the Comprehensive Plan sets a priority to act.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

In addition to research on precedents, conditions and trends, as well as broad-based public consultations, this plan was based on a thoughtful comparison of alternative development scenarios. This analysis was intended to estimate and compare the results likely to be achieved through effective implementation of several alternative approaches to the redevelopment of Buffalo.

Four general scenarios were compared:

- *A: “Trend”* – assuming that the City and region would continue with planning, capital investment and development policies and programs similar to those that have been pursued in recent years.
- *B: “Urban Revitalization”* – assuming that planning and redevelopment efforts would be focused on the revitalization of Buffalo's neighborhoods, house by house and block by block.
- *C: “Corridor/ Activity Center”* – assuming redevelopment efforts would be directed toward key economic generators such as major transportation corridors and the Downtown.
- *D: “Integrated Regional Center”* – assuming the City will pursue both repair of the urban fabric and redevelopment of key economic generators in an integrated strategy.



Figure 41

The alternative scenario analysis was based on one simple idea – that it is possible to change the direction of the city by changing the direction of Buffalo's planning, capital investment and development priorities, policies and programs. That means choosing the right scenario and strategy can make the difference between meeting the goal of this plan and failing to do so.

Alternative A: "Trend"

This scenario estimates what might happen if Buffalo continues with current policies of deferred maintenance and capital investment in the "basics" of the city, without reform of basic service provision and economic development programs, without stronger planning and coordination internal to City government, and in the absence of closer coordination of reinvestment policies with other governments within the region. Environmental review of pending investment decisions would continue to be cut short, sacrificing long term sustainability for short term economic returns. Implementation of smart growth principles would be spotty, at best. And the current level of effort in both maintenance and development programs would continue based on current streams of revenue.

Under this scenario, in 2030 it is likely that Buffalo would still be losing population to surrounding suburbs and beyond and that economic growth would continue to lag behind other parts of the nation and even other regions in upstate New York. There would be too few new jobs created to retain Buffalo's young people. City government would still be under severe financial pressure – perhaps still under the supervision of the control board – and taxes would still be high relative to other areas. Private sector investment would be inhibited and public investments would be made in a vain attempt to catch up with a decades-long backlog of basic infrastructure projects. The quality of the urban environment would continue to decline.

Given such circumstances, it seems reasonable to project a continuation of recent trends in population and employment for the City, the County and the MSA. Two more decades of gradual population loss would bring Buffalo's population to less than 240,000 – an annual loss of more than 2,000 residents. Meanwhile, Erie County and the larger Buffalo-Niagara MSA might be expected to have recouped much of the losses suffered by the City since 2000. However, they could not be expected to show a return to more healthy rates of growth because of the spillover effects of urban decline.

Alternative B: “Urban Revitalization”

This scenario estimates what might be the impact if the City were to place its strongest priority on preserving and rehabilitating housing stock, reinvesting in the overall physical fabric of the city, and attempting to revitalize most – if not all – of Buffalo’s neighborhoods. Such a strategy would respond to persistent demands to meet local needs and to provide assistance to those who have the least capacity to address these issues on their own. City government has direct control and responsibility for issues of housing and neighborhood development. The City would focus efforts of reform on those elements of the municipal administration that deal with these matters. However, the strategy would leave to other levels of government or the private sector the work of economic development.

Under this scenario, it is likely that Buffalo in 2030 would see many of its neighborhoods rejuvenated with an increase in housing occupancy and a modest upturn in population. In the absence of leadership and investment by City government, however, it is not clear who will have undertaken critical large-scale economic investment initiatives or environmental regeneration projects or whether they will have been done at all. Moreover, neighborhood revitalization efforts would likely have been limited by the lack of jobs the larger scale economic development initiatives would have generated. With a focus on needs at the local and neighborhood scale, it is also likely that the City will have neglected those relationships with others in the region that are necessary for it to advance. Smart growth and sustainable development strategies will have been undertaken at the neighborhood level but not broadly enough to make a major difference.

Under these circumstances, it is likely that Buffalo would be able to stop the long-term decline in population. But City residents would continue to go to work in suburban locations in increasing numbers and Buffalo’s regional functions would continue to erode to the periphery. Population loss in the city might be reversed by about 2020 and would increase modestly in the years following to reach a level of 250,000 to 260,000 by 2030.

Alternative C: “Corridor/Activity Center”

This scenario estimates what might be the impact if redevelopment efforts in Buffalo were to focus on the economic “big picture” and emphasize planning and investment in large-scale projects intended to generate new jobs in large numbers. Such projects would focus on improving transportation and utility corridors, promoting investment and job growth in Downtown, and making large investments in economic sectors understood to have strategic importance for regional growth. These initiatives would be accompanied by efforts to establish stronger relationships with public and private sector partners at the regional scale and beyond and to establish new arrangements for planning, development, and cooperation throughout the MSA.

Under this scenario, it is likely that job growth at the regional level will recover strongly, but the benefits for current residents of the city are less easy to predict. Certainly, significant municipal capital resources – as well as time and attention – that might have been directed to the redevelopment of Buffalo neighborhoods would be diverted elsewhere. The Downtown will likely have grown, but some of the city’s most distressed neighborhoods would have declined even further and, perhaps, ceased to exist. There is some danger that remnants of existing neighborhoods would face new land use conflicts with expanding industries, raising issues of environmental justice. Smart growth principles might be implemented Downtown or more broadly in the region, but in neighborhoods without new investment, such principles would be largely irrelevant.

Under these circumstances, it is possible that the long-term decline in city population would be reversed sooner than in the “Trend” or “Urban Revitalization” scenarios. But it is also possible that population increases attributable to new job growth would occur in suburban areas where residential environments and housing choices would be broader and more attractive. In the best case, the city population may rebound to 275,000 or 280,000 people by 2030.

Alternative D: "Integrated Regional Center"

This scenario estimates the impact of a strategy that integrates elements of the "Urban Revitalization" strategy and the "Corridor/Activity Center" strategy within a balanced program of investments in economic development and repair of the urban fabric. It would include efforts to improve housing and reinvest in neighborhood infrastructure, and revitalize the larger infrastructure of city life, including parks, schools, utilities and transportation. But it would also make critical investments in major economic development initiatives – to reclaim brownfields for redevelopment, invest in strategic growth industries such as health care and tourism, support Downtown redevelopment, and more.

This strategy would take to heart the concept of sustainability, making sure to integrate economic, environmental and social considerations in planning and development decisions. It would implement smart growth principles at the local as well as regional scale. Reform of municipal functions, such as planning and housing development, would go forward at the same time the City builds new relationships with regional partners for coordinated growth. Such a strategy would align the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan with other regional initiatives such as the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth, the Regional Economic Development Strategy, Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative and others. It would include establishment of an environmental management system and facilitate thorough execution of State SEQRA requirements.

Such a strategy is capable of fully achieving the goal of the Comprehensive Plan. If the strategy is effectively implemented the decline in city population can be expected to be reversed at the end of ten years and begin to grow again through 2030. At this rate it will have reached a level of 295,000 to 305,000 by the end of the planning period. However, such a strategy requires greater resources than are available to the City now. Even if City government does everything

within its power to control costs, improve efficiency, and leverage its resources, the plan cannot be implemented without additional resources. Success will require agreement among City, County, State and federal governments for a special Buffalo Development Program to deliver an additional \$35 million in capital investments annually for a ten year period. The program is described in detail on pages 109 to 111.

The "Integrated Regional Center" strategy under scenario D is the only one of the four examined that can fully achieve the goal of the plan, and then only with additional capital assistance as stipulated. It is the preferred scenario and the one on which the Comprehensive Plan is based.

Methodological assumptions

The population and employment projections for Alternative D were based on a series of key assumptions. Fulfillment of the projections require that local, State and federal governments continue cooperative efforts to promote the transition to a new economy for Buffalo and maintain support for existing industry; that economic development agencies are reorganized consistent with the report entitled One Stop Shopping; that the City of Buffalo implements the priority policies specified in this plan; and that the private sector responds to public policy and participates in the rebuilding of Buffalo as described here. These projections also assume that the overall U.S. economy and the economy of New York State will continue to recover and achieve long-term growth again.

Table 9 | Buffalo-Niagara MSA Population Projections

Area	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
City of Buffalo					
Scenario A	328,123	292,648	263,384	237,046	235,861
Scenario B			263,384	237,046	248,896
Scenario C			263,384	283,138	297,295
Scenario D			270,700	291,003	305,553
Buffalo and Erie County *					
Buffalo	328,123	292,648	270,700	291,003	305,553
Other EC	640,409	657,617	675,373	691,608	701,291
Total EC	968,532	950,265	946,073	982,611	1,006,844
Buffalo and Erie County **					
Buffalo	328,123	292,648	270,700	291,003	305,553
Other EC	640,409	657,617	690,498	742,285	779,399
Total EC	968,532	950,265	961,198	1,033,288	1,070,402
Buffalo and MSA *					
Buffalo	328,123	292,648	270,700	291,003	305,553
Other MSA	861,165	877,463	894,135	961,195	1,009,255
Total MSA	1,189,288	1,170,111	1,164,835	1,252,198	1,314,808

Notes for City of Buffalo population projections

Scenario A: Current population trend projected to 2030 at -10% per decade.
Scenario B: Current population trend reverses in 2020, and begins to increase by 5% in period 2020 to 2030
Scenario C: Current population trend reverses in 2010, increases by 7.5% from 2010 to 2020, then by 5% to 2030
Scenario D: Population declines by 7.5% from 2000 to 2010, then increases by 7.5% from 2010 to 2020, and by 5% to 2030

*City of Buffalo population projected as per Scenario D

Notes for Buffalo-Niagara MSA population projections

Remainder of area projected at present rate of increase; Erie County (other than Buffalo) at 2.7% per decade; MSA (other than Buffalo) at 1.9%, to 2030

**City of Buffalo population projected as per Scenario D

Remainder of Erie County and MSA (other than Buffalo) projected to increase by 5% from 2000 to 2010; 7.5 % from 2010 to 2020; and 5% from 2020 to 2030.

Table 10 | City of Buffalo Employment Projections

Scenario	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Scenario A	131,001	114,062	103,711	101,191	99,931
Scenario B			103,711	101,191	106,143
Scenario C			103,711	111,489	117,063
Scenario D			109,652	114,586	123,315
Participation	57.90%	58.40%	59.00%	59.50%	60.00%

Notes for employment projections.

Source: 1990 and 2000 figures: U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis

Employment projections: OSP Community Planning

Most of all, this projection is based on the assumption that investments called for in this plan will improve the economic competitiveness of Buffalo-based firms, enhance the quality of the urban environment, and strengthen local neighborhoods, thus promoting private sector investment and, hence, both job growth and population increase within the city. Even so, the decline in population will likely continue until about 2010. Once planned investments are put in place and begin to have an impact, slow growth in employment and population will begin gathering momentum as the Comprehensive Plan is further implemented. Population growth is projected to run at about 0.5 percent per year from 2010 to 2015 and about one percent from 2015 to 2030 (See Table 9). Total employment is projected to have recovered to a level of 120,000 to 125,000 (See Table 10).

2.3 PLAN RELATIONSHIPS AND STRUCTURE

Plan relationships

The Comprehensive Plan is the one plan for Buffalo. It incorporates within its framework all other plans for the city – for neighborhoods, districts, special functions, citywide systems, and otherwise. There has sometimes been confusion in Buffalo about the meaning and status of plans. With adoption of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan on February 7, 2006 such confusion has ended. It is the preeminent official and authoritative plan for Buffalo to which every other plan will be subordinate and with which every other plan will be consistent.

The Comprehensive Plan is the official policy of the City of Buffalo concerning land use, urban design, infrastructure investment, environmental management, housing and neighborhood development, Downtown development and all other aspects of the physical development of the city. With it adopted by the Common Council, it has the force of law in matters it covers.

Additional legislation must be adopted to fully implement an adopted Comprehensive Plan, including the ongoing Capital Improvement Program, a revised Zoning Ordinance, a Community Preservation Plan, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, and the *Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo*. These plans – all in development – should be adopted and incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan builds on and integrates the work of these plans and many others. These include neighborhood plans in development under the auspices of the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance, district plans like the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, system plans like the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Restoration and Management Plan, and special purpose plans by other agencies such as the Peace Bridge Expansion Project and the School Reconstruction Plan of the Joint Schools Construction Board.

Work to coordinate or align the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan with other emerging plans at the regional level is also central to this strategy. Close collaboration between the Office of Strategic Planning and other agencies has helped achieve this alignment between the Comprehensive Plan and other ongoing efforts. These include the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth, a new regional economic development strategy being devised by the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, and the 2030 Long Range Plan of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council.

Taken together, this emerging structure of policy and planning is intended to guide and coordinate the investment, management, and regulatory activities of a wide range of public agencies, citizen organizations and private business interests. The Comprehensive Plan occupies a central position in this structure. If implemented conscientiously and in concert with other plan elements, it should deliver the turnaround in the City of Buffalo that all desire.

Plan structure

As already noted, the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan pursues a vision of a green, prosperous and revitalized city and a goal of reversing the long-term decline in population and employment. It is driven by fundamental principles of sustainability, smart growth and the dual commitment to “fix the basics” and “build on assets.”

Based on this guiding framework, the plan also outlines seven key priorities for investment and development. To achieve the plan Buffalo must maintain city infrastructure; deliver quality services; transform the economy; reconstruct Buffalo schools; rebuild the neighborhoods; restore “Olmsted, Ellicott and the waterfront”; and preserve the fabric of the city.

These priorities are organized around a land use concept for 2030 that identifies three primary investment corridors on Buffalo’s waterfront, on the East Side rail corridor, and along Main Street. These areas would see concentrated investment and major change over the life of the plan while the remaining developed areas would be “like they are now, only better.” This land use concept is further elaborated by an outline for a new zoning ordinance and proposal for urban design guidelines.

Part three outlines the implementation mechanisms for the plan, most notably the City’s Capital Improvements Program and the proposed special Buffalo Development Plan, plus a strategy for intergovernmental relations, an outline of performance measures, and specific immediate next steps.

2.4 DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND PLANNING POLICIES

The Comprehensive Plan identifies seven major development priorities and planning policies necessary to meet the overarching goal of the plan. These are driven by fundamental principles of sustainability, smart growth and the continuing imperative to “fix the basics” and “build on assets.” These priorities and policies are to:

1. Deliver quality public services as the basis of a quality urban environment;
2. Maintain existing municipal infrastructure as fundamental to economic growth, environmental protection, and community development;

3. Transform the city’s economy to meet the needs and opportunities of the 21st century and to provide the material basis for the revitalization of the whole city;
4. Reconstruct the Buffalo Public Schools as a major factor in attracting population back to the city and in supplying the new economy with capable workers;
5. Rebuild Buffalo’s neighborhoods, rehabilitating housing and building new, and creating quality living environments that will also attract and keep city residents;
6. Restore the Olmsted park and parkway system, protect the Ellicott street plan, and develop the waterfront as those city elements that give Buffalo its unique shape and character;
7. Repair the broader fabric of the city consistent with Buffalo’s heritage and with principles of smart growth and sustainability.

City government has a role to play in advancing each one of these priorities, in some cases the leading or primary role, in others a supporting one. Other partners who have a responsibility and a capacity to contribute to implementation of these priorities and policies include County government, the State of New York, the federal government, private companies, not for profit community based organizations, and citizens’ groups.

Each level of government has a specific range of responsibilities in helping to build competitive cities, as suggested by a publication of the Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy of The Brookings Institution. The federal responsibility is to build wealth through management of the economy, income redistribution, support for homeownership and regulatory oversight. State responsibility is to manage metropolitan growth through land use, governance and transportation. The responsibility of counties and municipalities is to know the local context and manage the process of building and maintaining the urban environment.

Such a division of responsibilities can help define where and how the City should focus its own resources and what kind of assistance it needs from County, State and federal governments to meet the needs of the city. One of the basic arguments underlying this plan is that, even with thoroughgoing reforms, Buffalo will lack the capital resources necessary to turn the city around. That argument is the foundation for Buffalo's request for a special Buffalo Development Program. A knowledge of our federal system suggests that this request for support is well-precedented.

In short, the priorities and policies of this plan can only be fully and effectively implemented with the concerted support and coordinated investments of all levels of government and the private sector.

2.4.1 DELIVER QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

The success of the Comprehensive Plan requires that the City of Buffalo deliver basic public services at a higher standard of quality, more efficiently than now, applying current best management practices and emerging technology, and when necessary, shifting responsibility for specific services to levels of government better equipped to deliver them.

It is one of City government's most indispensable roles to deliver police and fire protection, emergency services, sanitation, street cleaning, snow plowing, parks and recreational services, and land and building management. All are fundamental to maintaining the kind of urban environment that attracts and keeps residents and employers. Although these are not strictly land use issues they must be addressed as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

City government should continue to examine current best management practices in service delivery and adopt these when they make sense for Buffalo. The use of one-officer patrol cars is an example of such management innovations that have already been implemented. The consolidation of municipal departments was another. Better management of overtime and monitoring of sick leave are issues that might be addressed in the future.

The City should also employ new technologies, especially information and telecommunications technology, to improve quality, increase efficiency and reduce the costs of public services provided. The "CitiStat" project is an example of technology application already being implemented. The system allows City departments to collect and map data about current service demands, complaints, and problems so that staff can respond quickly and appropriately. Providing current data and analysis on departmental performance can improve accountability, performance, and cut costs.

The City should consider technology applications like those used in Edmonton, Alberta where geographic information system technology allows staff plowing snow to regulate the amount of salt and sand applied to roads depending on precipitation and air temperature. They spend less on salt and sand and pay less to repair salt-damaged roads.

Table 11 | Phase 1 JSCB & Other Priority Buffalo Public Schools

School #	School Name	Community
38	Frank Sedita	West Side
66	North Park Middle	Parkside
80	Highgate Heights	North East
302	Emerson Vocational	East Side
307	Buffalo Vocational	East Delavan
31	Stanton Academy	Ellicott
67	Olmstead School	South Buffalo
19	Native American	West Side
74	Hamlin Park	Masten
79	William J. Grabiarz	Riverside

There are still other steps that can be taken simply to reduce the costs of providing municipal services. The agreement of City staff to accept a single health care plan, for example, helped reduce health insurance costs for the City while maintaining health coverage for employees and avoiding new layoffs.

Finally, when better management, technology application, and cost-cutting are not enough, the City must consider allowing other levels of government to provide necessary services. The transfer of parks maintenance functions to Erie County made sense, not only because Buffalo could no longer afford to take care of the parks, but also because Buffalo parks are, in large part, a truly regional resource.

Of course, the great “Catch-22” is that just when Buffalo most needs these services it is least able to pay for them. Public services delivered at a high standard of quality can give residents confidence in the future of the city, leave a positive impression with visitors, and provide the quality of urban environment that attracts people and capital. Failure to provide such services can lead to a failure of confidence among residents, damage the city’s reputation among visitors, and repel potential new residents and investors. Buffalo needs quality services more than ever and the City must endeavor to provide them against all obstacles. An important step toward that goal would be to create and implement a comprehensive citywide public services plan.

2.4.2 MAINTAIN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Managing, maintaining and reinvesting in Buffalo’s expansive public infrastructure – streets, sewers, water service, public buildings, parks and more – will be central to the success of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan. The City must implement a program that “right-sizes” this infrastructure, prioritizes needed investments in maintenance and replacement, and seeks additional resources where those needs are beyond the ability of city government to pay.

Public infrastructure is the backbone of the city. A strong infrastructure is central to achieving all the purposes of city living, supporting a healthy economy, managing the quality of the environment, and making daily life possible for the whole community. The quality of life that makes cities attractive for people and firms is not possible without a strong public infrastructure. As such, capital budget planning for streets, utilities, parks and other needs is rightly a basic element in any comprehensive plan.

The needs are enormous. First of all, Buffalo’s basic infrastructure is much larger than is required to serve the current population. In addition, decades of deferred maintenance and capital reinvestment have left Buffalo with a huge backlog of urgently needed improvements to be made. Now, with a shrunken capital budget, the City is even less able to catch up with the work that needs to be done.

The success of the Comprehensive Plan depends on improved public infrastructure, which, in turn depends on negotiation of a special Buffalo Development Program. The City will continue to make all necessary reforms in municipal management, but even when these are achieved, Buffalo will still lack the necessary capital resources to turn the city around. Additional help from Erie County, the State of New York and the federal government is required. This program is detailed in Part Three of the plan.

Meanwhile, the City must continue ongoing work to better monitor, manage and maintain key elements of the public infrastructure. The City should review its large inventory of publicly-owned buildings to determine which have municipal purposes and which might be disposed of for redevelopment by private entities. This will reduce the overall burden of maintenance and return otherwise obsolete structures to productive use. Likewise, the City should continue work to improve management of vacant land in its portfolio or dispose of it when appropriate. In every case, the City should be cautious about assuming responsibility for any new properties.

The City should maintain ongoing efforts to improve capital priority setting, budgeting and scheduling, as was specified in the City Charter revisions of 1999. It is crucial that limited capital dollars be invested where they are needed most or will have the greatest positive impact. Thorough and open public review of capital priorities is helping the City to make better choices. Ensuring predictability improves the efficiency of the capital development process, as well.

Recent improvements in management data are also supporting better capital investment choices. The City has better information than before about the condition of streets, sewer lines, water lines, street trees, public buildings and other infrastructure elements. The City should redouble these efforts.

The City is not directly responsible for other elements of public infrastructure including bus and rail transit, energy utilities, and telecommunications. The City should, however, work closely with these entities to coordinate improvements in all infrastructure in ways that maximize their development impact and promote efficiency.

The stark fact remains that the City of Buffalo lacks the capital resources to meet the needs of this plan. The same “Catch-22” that applies to municipal services applies to public infrastructure. Buffalo cannot afford by itself to reinvest in these basic assets because a significant proportion of city residents and employers have left, taking their tax dollars with them. But these residents and employers have departed in large part because the City has been unable to reinvest in the public infrastructure that is fundamental to quality urban living. The special Buffalo Development Program is essential to stop that cycle of decline.

2.4.3 TRANSFORM BUFFALO'S ECONOMY

Meeting the goal of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan means providing full support to the reconstruction and broad-based transformation of the economy of city and region to generate the jobs, income and wealth needed to turn Buffalo around. The Comprehensive Plan is not an economic development plan. But as a physical and land use plan it must provide the sites, buildings, infrastructure, and quality of life needed to support the economic transformation Buffalo needs.

Because the city's economy is part of the larger regional economy, and because regions are the most significant units in a competitive global economy, the city's economic development strategy must be consistent with the regional economic development strategy. Likewise, Buffalo must collaborate with both public and private sector partners throughout the region in implementing such a strategy. This is already happening.

The goal of the strategy is to hasten the ongoing transition of the city and regional economy from one concentrated in manufacturing to a broadly mixed economy that builds on regional strengths and emerging growth sectors. This does not mean abandoning the manufacturing economy. Rather, it means working to preserve manufacturing jobs while investing in other vital economic sectors. Buffalo's new mixed economy will build on strengths in manufacturing, government, health care, banking and education, and promote expansion in professional services, transportation and warehousing, medical research, information technology, tourism, and retail.

The strategy includes reorganizing the delivery of conventional economic development services so that potential business investors can deal with one entity to learn about the region, get information about sites and facilities, access available economic development incentives, and get help in navigating among local regulatory and administrative entities. The Comprehensive Plan does not recommend there be a single economic development agency for the entire region, but it does advise that all agencies concentrate on what they do best and be coordinated with all the rest.

Within the City of Buffalo, the Comprehensive Plan provides clear guidance for the development and use of land for new and expanding industries. Three major investment corridors are identified in the plan's land use concept (See Page 103-107) and acknowledged in a framework for new zoning. Within these corridors the City and its partners should work to prepare land for development, remediating "brownfields" where necessary, and creating "shovel ready sites." Investments in transportation infrastructure must be coordinated with the land use concept and ongoing land development work.

Consistent with the regional economic development strategy and the Comprehensive Plan, all partners must work to build on and strengthen the regional role of the City of Buffalo. It remains the largest municipality with the largest concentration of employment in the region. This includes a pivotal role for Downtown Buffalo, which remains the regional center in government, law, banking, business services, culture, and entertainment and is an emerging center in education, heritage tourism, health care and medical research.

All of the other priorities and policies identified in this plan contribute materially to execution of the economic development strategy in that they support the quality of life that contemporary analysts insist is central to the success of great cities. Municipal services and public infrastructure provide the basics of daily life. Good schools and strong neighborhoods are

critical to attracting the workers who will make new ventures go. The parks, streets, waterfront and overall fabric of the city are, likewise, crucial to maintaining the quality of life that can attract people and jobs.

Finally, the City and its partners must work to preserve, develop and market Buffalo's great assets of culture, architecture, history, and nature as an important element in the economic development strategy of the region. Attractions like the Erie Canal Harbor, the Theater District, Underground Railroad sites, and the recently restored Darwin D. Martin complex, by Frank Lloyd Wright, can plan a central role in the increase of the visitor related economy of city and region.

The city and regional vision

Regional leaders have enunciated a clear and compelling vision for the economic future of Buffalo-Niagara. Buffalo's own vision runs in parallel and the city and region together are well-positioned to speak with one voice on economic development, pursue a technically sound strategy, and work together to achieve it.

The vision, as specified in the work of the Erie Niagara Regional Partnership (December 2002), sees an emerging regional economy that has a strong base in established and emerging sectors and attracts leading edge industries with high-paying jobs. There is a strong labor market with a good mix of skills supported by education and training tailored to the needs of emerging industries. Economic development programs are coordinated on a regional basis, backed by strong land use and transportation planning and served by a successful regional public transit network.

The region has healthy, sustainable core cities, strong suburbs, and rural areas, all with financially stable local governments. Agriculture is revitalized as an economic sector and agricultural land is preserved and used for those purposes. The region's natural environment is increasingly healthy as a result of continuing efforts to reduce pollution and waste and clean up damaged land and water.

Among all the other growing sectors of the economy, the region is also growing as a prime tourism destination that leverages the region's waterfront, cultural, historic, architectural, and recreational assets. Waterfronts, especially, are accessible and green space is adequate and well-integrated into the urban fabric. The region has a positive image reflected through the media and a regional mindset that recognizes our assets and attractions and sees a positive future.

Buffalo's regional role

Buffalo remains the functional center of the Buffalo-Niagara region and any strategy to promote the economic revitalization of the city must take into consideration that regional role. Likewise, any strategy to foster development throughout the region must also recognize Buffalo's central role. The strength of one depends directly on the strength of the other.

The city is the center of the Buffalo-Niagara region for law and administration, banking and business, media and creative services, health care and medical research, culture and heritage, sports and entertainment, restaurants and retailing. It is the region's transportation hub and center of international trade. Other parts of the region may have two or three of these functions, but none brings it all together like the city does, especially Downtown.

Buffalo's regional role is also bi-national. In the multi-nucleated megalopolis known as the "Golden Horseshoe," Buffalo is the largest node on the U.S. side. It is the second largest port of entry on the U.S.-Canadian border, after Detroit, in terms of the volume and value of goods transported.

Development projects in Buffalo often have a regional as well as a local impact. The Erie Canal Harbor project, Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus, a new U.S. Courthouse, Intermodal Transportation Center, Peace Bridge expansion, and the Intermodal Freight Transfer Exchange will each produce benefits that extend far beyond the city line. Each will also reinforce Buffalo's central role in the region.

The City should work with its regional partners to strengthen this role. Doing so promises benefits to both the city and the region. Promoting Buffalo's multiple functions requires cultivating many different relationships around the region, in Southern Ontario and Western New York, and beyond. This means making Buffalo's functions accessible to the region in physical terms, through improvements in transit, parking, and way-finding. It also means Buffalo's leaders must participate fully in the affairs of the region and its institutions of governance.

A modern mixed economy

Work to support the transformation of Buffalo's economy from one dependent on manufacturing to one broadly based in a range of established and emerging sectors must continue. The loss of manufacturing jobs has continued for several decades now, but the growth of employment in new sectors has been slower than necessary to replace the factory jobs lost. Public policy, including this plan, must accommodate the needs of emerging industries at the same time it supports the retention of jobs in manufacturing. The result can be a local and regional economy that is more stable, prosperous and resilient than the current one.

Buffalo's emerging modern mixed economy will include jobs retained in manufacturing, public administration, education, health care, and social assistance, as well as jobs in growing sectors such as medical research and bioinformatics, tourism, transportation and logistics, information technology, and other knowledge-based industries. Continued growth in finance, insurance and real estate, retail and restaurants, and professional services will accompany the broader growth of the economy.

Manufacturing will continue to be a vital part of the region's economy. Although its share of total jobs will not be as great as before, it will continue to generate wealth because manufacturing is a "driver" sector, creating products for export beyond the region. Although Buffalo lost more than 6,000 manufacturing jobs in the 1990s it remains the city's second largest employment category with 13 percent of the total. Manufacturing may continue to recede but it will continue to be a significant share of employment and income.

Meanwhile, employment in health care and social assistance grew during the 1990s; education and retail trade declined slightly but retained their share of total employment; and professional and related services held steady in total jobs, increasing slightly as a percentage of all employment. Other sectors, including medical research, information technology, transportation and trade, and visitor-related industries can be expected to grow in relative importance.

A variety of incentive programs are available from the different levels of government to assist existing and new business. These include financial assistance, loans, bonding, tax incentives and exemptions, job and skills training, and expert advice and assistance. These are necessary but not sufficient means to hasten the transition to the new economy. Targeted investments in specific industries – such as the State's support for bio-informatics or creation of primary tourism destinations like the Erie Canal Harbor – will be required to bring a modern mixed economy into being.

Land for the new economy

It is beyond the means and outside the appropriate role of the City of Buffalo to make those strategic investments in new economy industrial sectors. Those tasks will fall to County, State and federal governments. It is, however, an appropriate role for local government to plan and manage the redevelopment of land and infrastructure to accommodate the new economy as it emerges.

The Land Use Concept of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, described in Section 2.5, identifies three Strategic Investment Corridors (See Figure 58 and 59) where most new economic activity will be directed through zoning, land reclamation, and infrastructure investment. These three corridors already contain a significant proportion of the city's economic enterprises. Industrial uses are long-established there by zoning and practice. They are well-connected to transportation in all modes. A large proportion of Buffalo's disused industrial land – "brownfields" – is also located in these three corridors.

The Strategic Investment Corridors are:

- The Waterfront/ Tonawanda Corridor;
- The Main Street/ Downtown Corridor; and,
- The South Park/ East Side Rail Corridor.

These corridors must be re-engineered to provide "shovel ready" industrial and commercial sites as well as space in move-in condition at competitive prices for businesses ready to invest now. In Buffalo, which was fully developed more than half a century ago, this necessarily excludes "greenfield" sites and requires redevelopment of land and buildings. This may involve remediation of environmental hazards, reconstruction of roads and utilities, renovation of old buildings or construction of new ones, and other improvements.

The Tonawanda Corridor, for example, is already identified in the region's 2030 Long Range Plan for coordinated investments in transportation and economic development. This project should serve as a model for how the City of Buffalo, Erie County Industrial Development Agency, the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, and others can coordinate planning and investment in these corridors to obtain maximum leverage on their dollars.

Not all of these sites will be redeveloped for new industrial uses. Some will find better use for warehousing, logistics and transportation, or commercial, mixed-use or residential use and green space. The future composition of the emerging economy cannot be foreseen with exact precision today, but it is possible in these three corridors to provide land and facilities in a variety of configurations to meet a wide range of needs.

Large scale manufacturing plants require large lots for single story buildings with low density employment. These can be located in South Buffalo as the former Republic Steel site is cleaned up. At a projected density of 15 employees per acre, Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park is also a model for this type of development.

Other firms that require less land but more intensive use of it can locate elsewhere depending on their needs. In the East Side Corridor, for example, sites of five to ten acres may be assembled from small brown-fields and adjacent vacant or underused parcels. The City and ECIDA should begin work to identify and assemble such sites now. An inventory of vacant and reusable industrial and commercial buildings is also needed. There are already plenty of success stories in rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, including the Root Building, Tri-Main Center, and the LCo warehouse-to-office conversion.

Service industries employing staff in denser concentrations are more likely to take advantage of commercial or special purpose buildings and locate in the core or closer to it. The employment density of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus for example, on the north eastern edge of the downtown, is 80 employees per acre, a much more intensive use of land than projected for the Union Ship Canal.

Strategic Investment Corridors will also be targets for the restoration, protection, and enhancement of natural and built heritage. For example, the full restoration of the Buffalo River, which meanders through South Buffalo on its way to Lake Erie, is vital to the future of the city. New and existing enterprises should respect and benefit from the green setting that a restored river and buffer zone will provide. Similarly, the Concrete Central Peninsula, with its monumental grain elevators, should be designated and preserved as a wild nature area.

Renewal Communities and Empire Zones

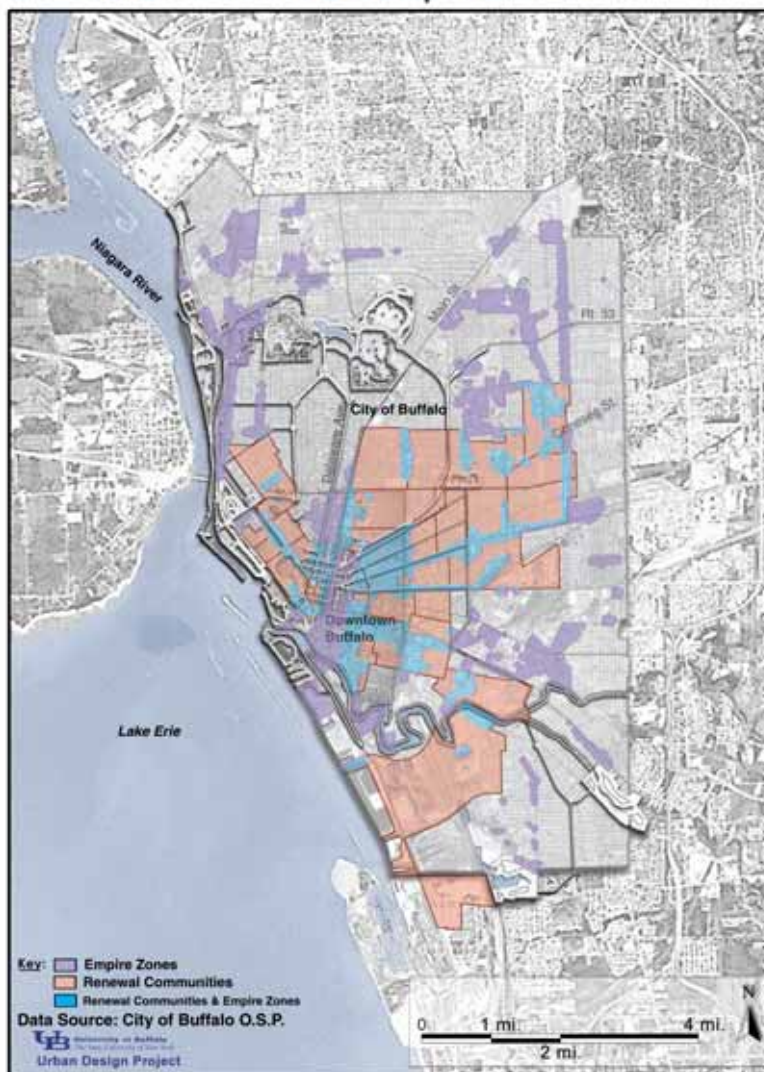


Figure 42. The incentives provided by the New York State Empire Zone and Federal Renewal Communities designations enhance the climate for reinvestment. The apparent fragmentation of Empire Zones becomes a strength when seen related to school and neighborhood reinvestment areas, landmark sites, and renewal community boundaries, and strategic investment areas.

Major public incentive programs are already focused largely on the Strategic Investment Corridors (See Figure 49). The federal government's Renewal Communities, the State of New York's Empire Zones, and the City of Buffalo Live Zones are well-positioned to contribute to the redevelopment of these corridors.

Finally, these Strategic Investment Corridors and their associated transportation connections can only reach their greatest economic potential if the City of Buffalo works closely and cooperatively with its neighboring municipalities, including Tonawanda, Lackawanna, Cheektowaga, Amherst, West Seneca, Kenmore, and Fort Erie, Ontario across the Niagara River.

Clean up brownfields

The redevelopment of old industrial lands is, of course, central to the investment corridor strategy. Here, the task is daunting but the opportunity enormous. Forty-nine of Buffalo's 56 brownfields of five acres or more are located in the three Strategic Investment Corridors (See Figure 50). They range in size from just over five acres to nearly 160 and comprise a total of almost 1,500 acres. The city's goal is to bring 50 acres of cleaned-up brownfield land onto the market each year – a thirty year pace. Enabling the delivery of this goal will be a key challenge for OSP, ECIDA and Buffalo Niagara Enterprise.

A detailed survey and analysis of brownfield potential, with specific recommendations for short, medium and long-term reinvestment locations should be undertaken. This examination should identify not only sites with potential for industrial enterprise but also those that might serve recreational, commercial, or heritage uses, such as lands in the Outer Harbor area. In order to ensure creation of "critical mass," priority should be given to development sites where public or private investment is already taking place.

Additional investment will be required as specified in the special Buffalo Development

Program. Beyond that, the New York State Brownfield Cleanup Program introduced in April 2004 will provide a powerful new tool to facilitate brownfield clean up. The program will allow localities to apply to be designate as Brownfield Opportunity Areas to be eligible for State grants and tax incentives to support clean-up and redevelopment. The Strategic Investment Corridors, along with Comprehensive Code Enforcement Areas would be logical candidates for designation. The City should move quickly to take full advantage of this new opportunity.

Implement key transportation projects

Achieving the economic goals of the Comprehensive Plan – indeed, all of its goals – will require the implementation of key transportation projects in accordance with the 2030 Long Range Plan of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), the region's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization. In effect, the Council's plan is Buffalo's plan.

The vision of the 2030 plan is to promote transportation policies and projects that will help create an economically and environmentally healthy region, reverse current negative economic, land use, social and demographic trends, foster growth in areas with existing infrastructure, and promote equitable services for all residents. The goals of the plan are to:

- Improve regional mobility and accessibility;
- Support existing and future economic development activities;
- Improve transportation and land use coordination;
- Preserve existing infrastructure; and,
- Improve quality of life for all residents.

The plan, based on substantial public input and comment, projects investments of \$4.7 billion through 2030, of which \$3.1 billion – about 70 percent – are targeted to rebuild and maintain existing infrastructure. The capital costs will be shared between the federal, State and local governments. In Buffalo, this applies to the 210 miles of streets in the federal aid highway system.

The first phase of the plan is being implemented through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a five-year plan that schedules federal funds for highway, transit, and other transportation projects in Erie and Niagara Counties. In the period 2002 to 2006, there are forty projects scheduled for the City of Buffalo. They include actions for congestion relief and mobility improvements, transit improvements, access improvements to support economic development, signalization upgrades, and measures to improve the

quality of life through beautification and landscaping, and safety improvements (See Figure 47).

The goals of the 2030 Long Range Plan provide a clear framework for Comprehensive Plan objectives. The City of Buffalo will work to:

Improve regional mobility and accessibility through development of the Buffalo Intermodal Transportation Center. Long-term priorities include implementing quality transit

Gateways



Figure 43. Gateways to the City of Buffalo should announce arrival at key traffic routes.

Main Street Corridor

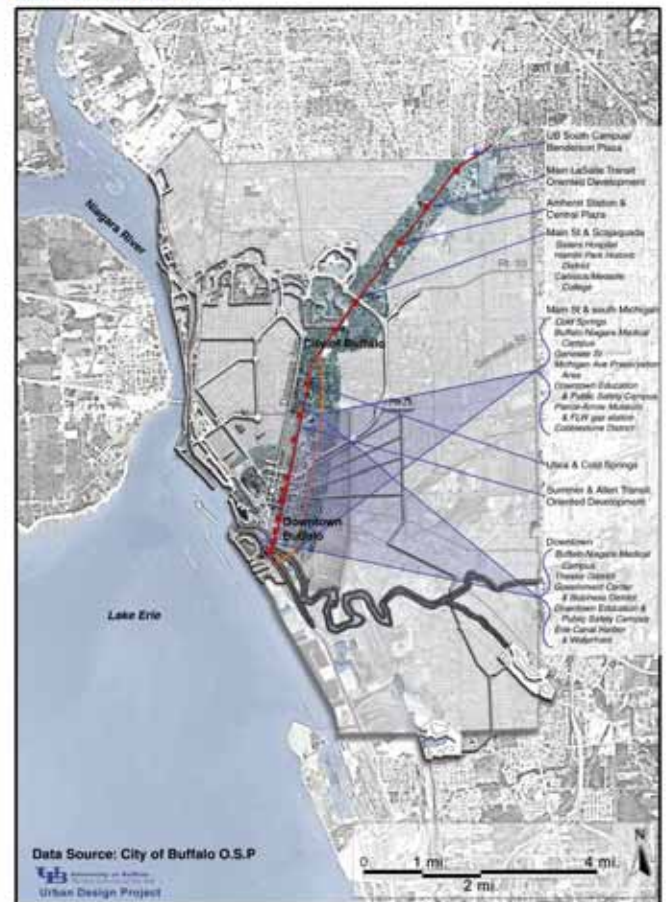


Figure 44. Main Street has enjoyed significant reinvestment at both its north end at the UB Entrance to the City and in the Downtown. Increased investment east and west across the corridor will be critical to stitching the City back together again along what has been a "Main Street Divide."

extensions, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, “reverse commute” programs, alternative mode programs, and programs to increase demand for public transportation.

Support economic development activities including the Buffalo Inner Harbor redevelopment, Southtowns Connector Access Redevelopment, William Gaiter Parkway access roads from Route 33, Tonawanda Street Corridor enhancements, and Peace Bridge and International Gateway development. Long-term priorities include I-190 boulevard realignment, the Outer Harbor Bridge, Skyway Bridge removal, removal of the Breckenridge and Ogden Street Toll barriers, and access improvements for brownfield sites and assembled land.

Improve transportation/land use coordination through mixed-use corridor development; regional “Smart Growth” policies; CBD land use policies that complement public transit infrastructure and reduce dependency on parking; less reliance on new CBD surface parking lots; consolidation of surface lots to assemble development sites or structured parking; and provision of additional parking for neighborhood commercial areas.

Preserve existing transportation infrastructure by prioritizing maintenance and reuse of existing water, rail and road infrastructure, and by providing adequate pavement and bridge maintenance.

Improve the quality of life for residents through priority projects such as the Scajaquada Expressway enhancements and signalization upgrades. Long term priorities include quality public transportation, Skyway Bridge removal, removal of the Breckenridge and Ogden Street toll barriers, Kensington Expressway enhancements, neighborhood traffic calming measures, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and streetscape improvements.

Public transit

Public transit is a key issue for the Comprehensive Plan. High quality public transit service is a critical element in Buffalo's economic development work and in the

implementation of the principles of sustainability and smart growth. Successful cities and regions have good transit. The public demand for significant improvement is acknowledged in the 2030 Long Range Plan.

The bus and rail transit system operated by NFTA Metro provides satisfactory service to the city. In terms of comfort, convenience, frequency, regularity, dependability, adaptability and affordability, public transit service in Buffalo can be rated as “good.” Virtually all neighborhoods in the city are within easy reach of bus stops, and the transfer system allows people to move around the city, connecting homes, schools, work places, and other destinations.



Figure 45. Proposed extensions of the metropolitan transit system include a corridor connecting the Buffalo – Niagara Airport to Downtown and a second Tonawanda – Niagara Falls corridor. Both are part of the GBNRTC 2030 plan.



Figure 46. Metro Rail in the Theater District.

Metro's Buffalo route structure, with its Metro rail and 17 primary, 15 supporting, and 17 express bus routes already fits well with the proposed investment corridors defined in the Comprehensive Plan. But it will be important to continue to improve and extend the system throughout the planning period.

The 2030 Long Range Plan includes a series of significant improvements in transit, although not all are funded in the plan. The GBNRTC proposes high quality transit improvements in two transportation corridors, the Airport Corridor and the Tonawanda-Niagara Falls Corridor. These proposals are based on assessments of their importance for increasing ridership, supporting economic development, and the degree of public support for each.

NFTA defines the Airport Corridor as a high priority. It would connect the Inter-modal Transportation Center in downtown Buffalo with the Greater Buffalo International Airport, thereby improving regional intermodal connectivity and providing relief for congestion on the Kensington Expressway.

The Tonawanda-Niagara Falls Corridor (Phase I) is also included in the long-range plan. The NFTA owns a right-of-way in this corridor that could be used either for a busway or for light rail. This project would be the first stage in implementing a high quality public transit connection between Buffalo and Niagara Falls and their associated tourism opportunities.

Selection of the preferred transit option(s) is dependent on further studies by the NFTA, as well as on decisions about local funding of transit operating costs. The capital costs – \$250 million for the Airport Corridor and \$70 million for the first phase of the Tonawanda-Niagara Falls Corridor – have been included in the "constrained" portion of the GBNRTC plan but not in the TIP. That is, they are not expected to be funded within the next five years.



Figure 47. City of Buffalo sponsored federal transportation aid projects through 2006. (Map: GBNRTC)

Other transit improvements have been placed on the "illustrative" list. These are projects that have merit but cannot be implemented with current levels of funding in the plan. These include the second phase of the Tonawanda-Niagara Falls Corridor and the Southtowns Corridor. Although these are very long term items, it is important for the City to protect these corridors in the Comprehensive Plan and associated plans, for the day when the desired transit connections are approved for funding.

Reducing dependency on parking in general and on surface parking in particular are long-term propositions. The provision of well located, priced, designed, managed, and coordinated parking is critical to Buffalo's regional role and economic prospects. In recent years, several parking studies have documented the action needed, including the construction of two new parking ramps in the Downtown, and increased coordination with public transit.

It is important for the various public agencies involved in parking to continue their coordination efforts. At the same time, it is important for those responsible for parking to understand, respect and respond to the city's urban design needs, particularly for Downtown, existing and emerging (cultural) tourism areas, and historic preservation areas.

The bicycle is another mode of transportation that is gaining in popularity, is environmentally friendly and deserves support. The city has a modest but growing network of bike paths (See Figure 81). Bike paths should be taken into account in the plans of City Public Works, GBNRTC, and the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance in all neighborhoods.

Implement the Downtown plan

Implementing *The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo* is the single most important initiative that can be taken, not only to achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, but to achieve the region's economic development goals, as well. It is, by reference, an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Based on the *Strategic Plan for Downtown Buffalo* (1999), *The award winning Queen City Hub Plan* is an ambitious plan, and much more than an economic initiative. It fully integrates social, environmental and economic considerations in a plan to revitalize Downtown as the functional center of the region. Moreover, The Queen City Hub is central to facilitating the emergence of Buffalo's modern mixed economy.

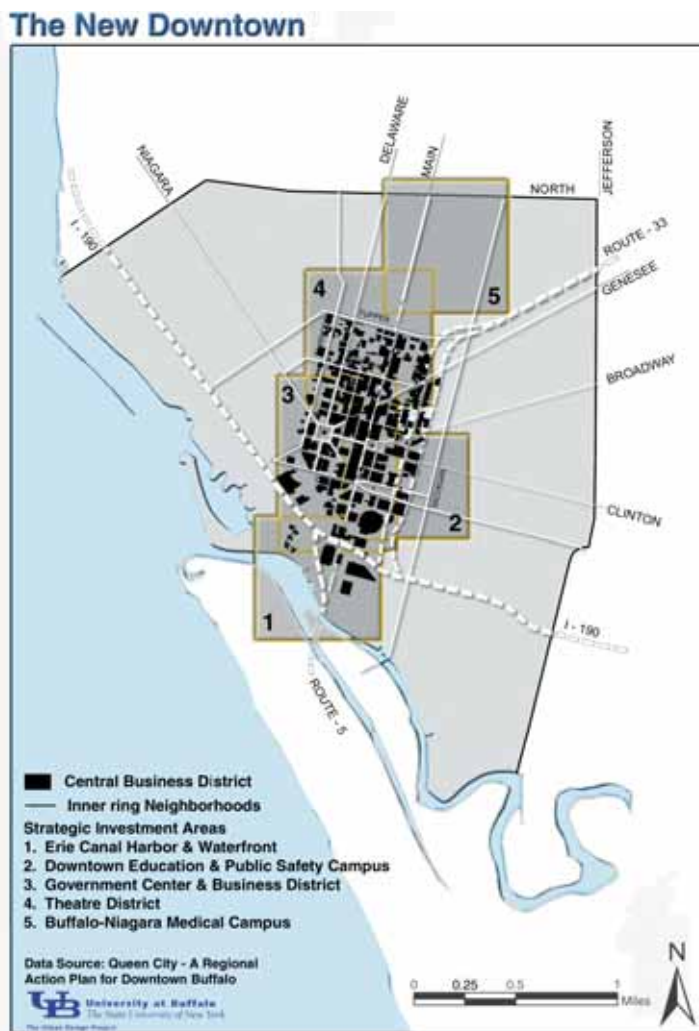


Figure 48. The Queen City Hub calls for strategic investment in the core area of the downtown that currently generates approximately 40% of the economic activity in the City (Source: The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo).

The plan envisions a Downtown with a vitality that epitomizes Buffalo's quality of life 24 hours a day, seven days a week and twelve months a year. It will be a place where people come to live, work and play, a Downtown that is easily accessible to the whole region and to visitors from far and wide. It will be a Downtown reconnected to the waterfront,

with a physical and cultural heritage that has been fully preserved, restored and reused.

The plan recognizes that the Downtown is bigger than the Central Business District and includes adjoining neighborhoods. Prospect Avenue and North Street loosely define its boundaries on the north, Jefferson Avenue on the east, and the lake and rivers on the south and west. This area houses a resident population of 18,000 and 60,000 workers. Their spending will grow as the plan is implemented and their numbers and incomes increase.

The plan defines five major investment areas (see Figure 48) to support new and existing economic functions downtown including government, finance, banking, legal services, insurance, business services, real estate, commerce, retail, entertainment, sports and culture, medical services, research and education. Interspersed with new housing, retail and entertainment, these investment areas represent real centers of employment and business development opportunities. The five are:

The Erie Canal Harbor and waterfront district, near the foot of Main Street and the historic center of economic activity in Buffalo. The cornerstone for development is the Erie Canal Harbor project. Cultural facilities including the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Museum and Servicemen's Park, maritime, sports and entertainment venues, new development, including an inter-modal transportation center will fill the area encompassing the Cobblestone District and lower Main Street.

Financial District and Government Center in the center of Downtown. Public and private sector actors are reinvesting in key projects to reinforce the area. These include the restoration of the Old County Hall by Erie County as part of an \$85 million construction and renovation program for its downtown offices; restoration of Louis Sullivan's landmark Guaranty Building by the law firm of Hodgson Russ; and completion of the South Tower of the Key Center, occupied by Delaware North Companies in 2000.

The Theater District, already substantially transformed into a lively entertainment district, with the restoration and later expansion of Shea's Performing Arts Center, redevelopment of the Market Arcade, a new police station, and other investments, including restaurants, cafes and bars, residential, office and institutional uses.

The Downtown Education Campus, the most recently emerging area, is near Erie Community College on South Division Street. County Executive Joel A. Giambra has proposed consolidating three Erie Community College campuses into a single complex, bringing 8,000 students downtown. The concept could include a "public safety campus," incorporating facilities for police training; fire, police and emergency services communications; information services; and a new forensics laboratory.

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC), comprising nearly one hundred acres just a few blocks north of the Theater District. Five medical institutions – Buffalo Medical Group, Hauptmann-Woodward Medical Research Institute, Kaleida Health, Roswell Park Cancer Institute and the University at Buffalo – have joined forces to create a world-class urban medical center. A master plan for the campus, by Chan Krieger of Cambridge, MA, is aimed at integrating the campus with surrounding neighborhoods, the Fruit Belt, Allentown and the Home Ownership Zone, and strengthening each, in turn. The plan aims to improve street environments, connecting member institutions with a system of public spaces and with adjacent neighborhoods.

Other important attributes of the Downtown Strategic Plan include attention to the restoration of Ellicott's radial street plan, a mixed-use core district, residential development, public squares, and more.

Downtown Neighborhood Development, a new not for profit organization, has been established to help spur downtown residential development. Overall, the pace of development is picking up, with some 20 projects underway, and 19 agencies actively collaborating to bring the plan to fruition through carefully calibrated public and private capital investments.

The Downtown Strategic Plan builds on and adds to the city's strengths. It respects the traditional historic fabric and scale of the area. It provides a clear sense of direction for redevelopment, and provides a sound framework for investment. It is robust, yet flexible enough to accommodate additional complementary development ideas. As is stated in the document *Downtown Buffalo 2002!* News, Vol. 3 Number 1, "There are many ways to achieve the vision."

Other proposals are on the table, including those to cut and cover I-190, remove the Skyway, build a casino, and to redevelop the Outer Harbor. Such ideas are not alternatives to The Queen City Hub. Rather they should be judged on their merits and assessed for the degree to which they would add to the plan. This should also take into account whether they would divert resources away from other elements of the plan judged by the community to be of higher need, value or priority.

Develop heritage and culture

Developing Buffalo's great heritage and cultural assets must be part of the broader economic development strategy and program for the city and region. There is a growing recognition among economic development experts that historic architecture and landscapes, institutions of the visual and performing arts, the sites and stories of who we are as a community and as a nation and how we came to be, and other aspects of our heritage and culture can be a crucial part of strategies for economic growth in the 21st century.

First of all, heritage and culture is already part of Buffalo's real economy. Those engaged in generating, protecting, restoring, celebrating and promoting any aspect of the city's heritage and culture are creating value, economic and otherwise.

Second, heritage and culture are local assets in the increasingly national and global competition for people and capital. The creative workers who play a leading role in the economy – designers, entrepreneurs, scientists, engineers, financiers, researchers and others – are attracted to the quality of life and character of place that heritage and culture can reinforce. Investors, likewise, are attracted to the same kind of places because they can attract that kind of labor. Both have lots of choices about where to locate or invest.

Third, city and regional leaders recognize that Buffalo's heritage and culture provide the foundation for tourism development here. Cultural tourism is the most rapidly growing segment of one of the world's biggest industries. It is a truism among tourism experts that what cultural tourists want most is an authentic experience. Buffalo's heritage and culture can provide just that.

The Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative has created a strategy for the development of heritage and cultural tourism throughout the region, including Buffalo. It proposes coordinated programming to be created around "centerpiece" attractions likely to draw national and international attention,

connected to venues in related "experience clusters," and promoted through coordinated campaigns to carefully targeted markets. "Centerpieces" include Frank Lloyd Wright and related architecture, the Erie Canal, the Albright Knox Art Gallery, the history of the Underground Railroad and others.

The strategy also proposes that each program cycle help build the cultural tourism system, improving venues, organizations, and infrastructure in a phased and focused development of the Buffalo Niagara brand of experiences. This will require filling serious gaps in current work: coordinated programming and promotion, marketing, research, long range planning, impact assessment, infrastructure improvements, education and training, technology application, and provision of shared administrative and technical services.

The City of Buffalo should support the implementation of this plan to the greatest extent possible and pursue other initiatives to help leverage the community's heritage and cultural resources for economic development. Other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Preservation Plan, the Olmsted Parks Restoration and Management Plan, and The Queen City Hub, are all consistent with this goal.

Restructure economic development agencies

Achieving the goals of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan will require a coherent and coordinated regional approach to the delivery of economic development services including regional marketing, business recruitment, real estate services, financial and tax incentives, workforce development, regulatory guidance, and technical assistance. This plan, therefore, endorses ongoing work to establish a "one stop shop" approach to economic development.

Buffalo's economic development goals must always be pursued within the context of a broader regional strategy. The fate of the city depends on the success of the region and vice versa. That means the City must take a leadership role in strategy development. City economic development efforts must always be coordinated with regional initiatives, too. City programs must also be part of a seamless regional economic development delivery system with the potential to expand to all eight counties in Western New York and extend coordinating links to Southern Ontario.

The City of Buffalo has already merged some of its economic development functions with Erie County under the umbrella of the ECIDA. Some staff members of the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation have been incorporated into the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning where they will focus on business retention and small business development at the neighborhood scale. Others have been reassigned to the ECIDA to concentrate on brownfields redevelopment, business attraction, and other larger scale efforts.

The result will be a stronger and more sharply focused economic development program that takes into account Buffalo's importance as the region's primary city. The reorganization will enable the city and region to achieve the transition from a manufacturing to a mixed economy more quickly than without it.

2.4.4 RECONSTRUCT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

It is crucial to the success of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, as well as for the success of public education in Buffalo, that the schools reconstruction program of the Joint

Schools Construction Board be effectively implemented, on its own terms and in close coordination with other elements of this plan. Although the schools plan was created and will be implemented under independent auspices, it must be understood as an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan and carried out in that manner.

Improving public education is central to achieving the Comprehensive Plan goal of reversing the economic and population decline of the city. Restoring confidence in Buffalo's public schools is essential to stemming the migration of families with children to suburban school districts. The quality of public education in Buffalo is also important for achieving the plan's economic development goals. A well-educated workforce is crucial to economic growth.

The reconstruction of public schools throughout the city can also play an important role in reinforcing other efforts called for in this plan to preserve housing, revitalize neighborhoods, improve the public environment and enhance the overall quality of life in Buffalo. We should not miss the opportunity to coordinate these investments for maximum impact and leverage of private investments.

The schools reconstruction plan is an outgrowth of the Board of Education's "Choice Committee" that devised a blueprint for school system reform intended to ensure high academic achievement for all children and to allow parents greater choice over school placement while still reflecting district diversity objectives.

A reorganized school system will retain some citywide magnet schools but also create a new set of standard school types to be replicated in each of three newly-drawn geographic zones across the district. These arrangements will facilitate choice, permit school populations to match the ethnic diversity of the different neighborhoods, and reduce the extent of bussing across the city. New efforts to improve staff recruitment and retention and to measure school performance are being made to support the overall goal. Workforce diversity and development initiatives will also enhance economic opportunities for Women and Minority-Owned Business Enterprises.

Extensive improvements in the physical plant of schools are required to fully implement the plan. The Joint Schools Construction Board has developed a \$950 million district-wide program under which, over the next ten years, a number of obsolete schools will be closed, several new schools will be built, and the remainder reconstructed, upgraded and re-equipped to provide a 21st century quality education.

The first phase of the program, scheduled to begin in 2004 and extend through 2006, will involve the reconstruction of nine schools at an estimated capital cost of \$155 million dollars. Reconstruction of a tenth school was recently completed. The remainder of nearly \$800 million will be reinvested in schools over the remaining life of the program.

The great opportunity is to coordinate schools reconstruction with neighborhood revitalization, including housing rehabilitation and new construction, maintenance of appropriate residential densities, good neighborhood design, promotion of public transit, and other smart growth principles. Such coordination of investments is all that much easier because the planned first phase of the schools reconstruction program has one school in each of the City's Planning Communities slated for improvements.

The alignment of these investments, however, won't happen by itself. It is important that the Joint Schools Construction Board, which combines membership from both the School Board staff and City Hall staff, remain in position. The schools reconstruction program and City neighborhood revitalization efforts must be planned and implemented together. The City of Buffalo is committed to working in close cooperation with the Buffalo Board of Education to make sure this happens.

2.4.5 REBUILD NEIGHBORHOODS

Achieving the overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan requires a new strategy for rebuilding Buffalo's neighborhoods and managing its housing stock. This strategy includes mobilizing the resources of residents through neighborhood planning, investing scarce public dollars in more concentrated and better coordinated ways, working to link housing programs with economic development initiatives, and managing the size and quality of the housing stock in relation to housing targets and population projections.

Conditions in Buffalo neighborhoods vary widely. Some are in good shape, attractive as living environments, and competitive as housing markets. Some are in desperate condition, with many dilapidated structures, high vacancy rates, low home-ownership rates, and a proliferation of vacant lots. The rest are somewhere in between, with residents struggling to maintain aging structures against decades-long trends of population decline, disinvestment and deterioration. The worst of these conditions map closely with patterns of poverty, unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, single-parent households and other indicators of social and economic distress.

Along with the other challenges identified in this plan, Buffalo must address the needs of its neighborhoods if the city is to survive, let alone meet the goal of the Comprehensive Plan. The physical, social and economic fabric of these neighborhoods must be repaired to a standard of quality that Americans expect of their residential environments. Yet the scale of this challenge is clearly beyond the financial, managerial and human resources of the City without additional assistance from higher levels of government, active involvement by private sector investments, and a real mobilization of neighborhood residents themselves.

The Comprehensive Plan specifies a four-part strategy for rebuilding Buffalo's neighborhoods. It begins with the active participation of neighborhood residents through the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance to plan and implement change where they live. It continues with coordination of economic development initiatives that have the potential to attract new residents with housing programs that can offer those people an attractive place to live in the city. It requires that scarce housing subsidies and other neighborhood investments be better focused to produce more tangible results. Finally, it involves a combination of housing demolition, rehabilitation and new

construction to manage the size and quality of Buffalo's housing stock in anticipation of continued population decline followed by an eventual resurgence.

Plan with neighborhoods

The Comprehensive Plan provides a broad framework for neighborhood redevelopment across the city, but depends on neighborhood residents themselves to create and help implement more detailed local plans. In this way, residents can work with City staff to tailor overall policies to local needs, values and visions. Participatory neighborhood planning can also take advantage of local knowledge in applying city-wide policies and help mobilize local resources for implementation.

The City has created the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance (GNPA) to support this process of neighborhood planning. Residents have been invited to participate in planning for eleven Planning Communities or districts around the city. Staff from the Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) provides guidance and technical assistance to create usable plans consistent with city-wide policies. All neighborhood plans produced through the GNPA will be submitted to the Planning Board for review and then forwarded to Common Council for adoption.

Figure 49. Much of the renewal of the city will come in reclaiming streets like this one. The bottom shows a portion of the 200 block of Prospect Avenue in 1996. The top shows the same street in 2001 after the entire block of homes was replaced or renovated. The demonstration project that developed the block involved voluntary compliance with urban design guidelines and had mixed results, although the improvements to the neighborhood are dramatic (Source: The Lower West Side Neighborhood Stabilization Demonstration Project: Housing Design Review Guidelines, 2nd Ed., 2002).



Although housing is the core of any neighborhood, these plans must take into consideration all other land uses. Residents are encouraged to plan for a broad range of functions and amenities, including community services, neighborhood shopping, schools, churches, parking, street-lighting, sidewalks, trees, parks, gardens and more.

In general, every plan developed through the GNPA is obliged to address the four guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan. Plans should provide for sustainable development to achieve the interdependent goals of economic growth, environmental regeneration, and greater social equity. They should also incorporate principles of smart growth to repair or reinforce Buffalo's typically compact and efficient urban environments. In addition, they should follow the basic principles of "fix the basics" and "build on assets" in all their proposals.

More specifically, GNPA neighborhood plans should:

- Build on the assets of the Ellicott plan, Olmsted park system, and Buffalo's waterfront;
- Concentrate resources and integrate neighborhood and housing development with school reconstruction, economic development initiatives, preservation projects and transit corridors;
- Restore and maintain public infrastructure such as buildings, streets, sidewalks, water and sewer, trees, parks and greenways;
- Incorporate the remediation and reuse of brownfields to meet neighborhood and citywide goals;
- Shed the excessive number of city-owned vacant properties. Consider appropriate reuse or disposition of City-owned land and public buildings, make homesteading a priority using a quicker, easier process;
- Redevelop vacant land and property with infill housing or other appropriate uses;
- Apply urban design, planning and environmental management guidelines, and the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design;

- Promote energy conservation and use of alternative sources of energy;
- Dramatically improve the welcoming of immigrants to Buffalo, and in the process breathe new life into our city. Collaborate with local resettlement agencies that bring diverse newcomers to the Buffalo area to provide immigrants with housing, education, social, and employment services. We need to strategically improve how these people are served and expand this inflow, as other cities like Utica, Minneapolis, and Cleveland have done.

In addition, all neighborhood plans should identify the opportunities for private sector involvement and investment; work to increase social integration through participation, planning and implementation; and consider local proposals in light of regional and city wide needs to promote job creation, social equity, and environmental quality.

This "checklist" is not a straightjacket for neighborhoods and Planning Communities. Each will have considerable flexibility in defining how neighborhood plans apply citywide policies. Each neighborhood will be able to express its own distinctive identity, needs, resources and aspirations through the plan. But each plan should be specific about what is proposed, how it will be accomplished, and how it advances progress to the citywide goal.

Focus investments for maximum impact

The neighborhood redevelopment strategy also requires that investments be focused and concentrated to achieve maximum impact. Investments in housing and neighborhood-related infrastructure have typically been made in a scattered and uncoordinated manner. From 1998 through 2003 the City invested an average of \$32.8 million a year – mostly from the federal government – in housing and neighborhoods. Indeed, going back to the beginning of the federal Community Development Block Grant program in the mid-1970s, Buffalo has received the better part of a billion dollars in housing subsidies. Although improvements have been made, a proportionate impact is difficult to discern.

A variety of decision/rules have applied to the allocation of housing and neighborhood subsidies. In some cases, emergency situations or concerted demands by citizens have shaped investment decisions. More generally, an imperative to provide a share to every part of the city regardless of need has contributed to the scattering of these funds. Inefficiencies in the delivery system for housing programs have also diminished the impact of these investments.

The Comprehensive Plan strategy for housing and neighborhoods is based on an explicit assumption that scarce subsidy dollars can have a greater impact if they are invested in strategic concentrations, consistent with citywide policies and neighborhood plans, coordinated with other investments, and aimed to leverage private participation. With the annual federal subsidy projected for the period 2003-2008 at only \$28 million, the need to focus investments is even greater.

More specifically, the strategy calls for housing and neighborhood redevelopment investments to be focused on and coordinated with school reconstruction sites, economic development projects, historic preservation initiatives, transit corridors, and investments in the restoration of elements of the Olmsted Parks and Parkway system and other municipal parks. When these investments come together in a way that is strategic, coordinated and predictable private interests, large and small, will have confidence to invest in these neighborhoods, too. Such a “critical mass” of investments will have the ability to transform these environments.

An example of how multiple investments can come together to change the city is visible along Main Street. For generations, Main Street has been the great divide between the West Side and the East Side. In recent years, however, a series of public and private investments have begun to bridge this gap, with developments spanning this corridor, integrating the land uses and neighborhoods on either side (See Figure 59).

Although the role of Main Street as an economic and transportation corridor is unique in

Buffalo, this approach to redevelopment can serve as a model for other areas. Main Street is on its way to becoming a place where different parts of the city are connected, not divided. The continuing coordination and concentration of investments is providing tangible physical testimony of the possibility of greater social equity and integration.

Link housing and economic development

This strategy also requires that investments in housing and neighborhoods be linked to key economic development initiatives. This is related to the approach of concentrating and coordinating resources for maximum impact. But it is a distinct element in the strategy. When the economic development initiatives specified in this plan begin to bear fruit in the form of new jobs it is crucial that new employees be able to find housing in the city. If they cannot, Buffalo will lose a major part of the benefit of its own efforts to grow the economy.

Housing for new employees must be readily available in a range of types, prices and unit configurations and in a variety of neighborhoods, all with a high quality physical environment and urban amenities. If this kind of choice is not provided, even those who would prefer to live in an urban setting will look elsewhere, and the executives, managers and staff of new and expanding enterprises will locate their homes in the suburbs.

The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (BNMC) Master Plan provides a good example of how neighborhood redevelopment and economic development initiatives can be closely linked. The master plan specifies how the expansion of a world-class health care and medical research district can be integrated with revitalization of its adjacent neighborhoods. It recommends new infill housing, transit-oriented mixed-use development, streetscape, lighting and landscape improvements, pedestrianization and “place making” as a way of connecting the Medical Campus with stronger Allentown and Fruit Belt neighborhoods. New housing should be created, in the neighborhood as well as citywide, to fit the needs, means and lifestyles of those who work on the campus.

Manage the housing stock

Finally, the strategy for housing and neighborhood redevelopment requires that the City manage Buffalo's housing stock in difficult and even contradictory circumstances. The City must work to eliminate or rehabilitate vacant and unmarketable units during the projected period of continued population decline, but at the same time, lay the groundwork for an expanded and improved citywide housing stock when population growth resumes, as projected, after 2016. Throughout the period, the City must also work with its partners to maintain and improve the physical environment and quality of life in neighborhoods across the city. The ultimate goal is strong neighborhoods that are also strong housing markets supported by consumer demand and private investment.

In the meantime, the City is required to continue the provision of public housing, including emergency housing, for those in need. It has a responsibility to protect and assure maintenance of rental housing and promote renovation and rehabilitation for rental and owner-occupied homes where it is cost effective to do so. It must also provide incentives for increasing home ownership. Finally, it must demolish and redevelop vacant and abandoned properties that cannot be renovated or reconfigured.

It is crucial to find the right balance. If there are too many housing units, or the wrong kind of units, the market will weaken. If there are too few or the wrong type of housing units, the city will lose further population to the suburbs. There are reasons to be optimistic. In recent years, residential real estate prices have risen in two neighborhoods by as much as ten percent. Unfortunately, there is also anecdotal evidence of demand for city housing that cannot be met with the current supply.

Achieving the right balance between housing and households, and preparing for the projected population increase from 2016 through 2030 will require using all the tools at hand for the City. To manage the housing stock to meet quantifiable targets (See Table 12) will require demolition, rehabilitation assistance, home-ownership incentives, new construction, code enforcement, planning, zoning, and infrastructure investment. Projections for some of the baseline parameters include:

- Total housing units, continuing to decline through 2010 and then increasing through 2030 back to roughly the same level as in 2000;
- Percentage of vacant units, to be reduced from 15.7 percent to 7.2 percent by 2016 and further reduced in subsequent years to an even healthier rate of five percent;
- Average household size, continuing to decline from 2.29 persons per household but leveling off at about 2.25 persons per household;
- Proportion of home owners, gradually increasing as the economy improves from 43.5 percent to about 50 percent;

Table 12 | City of Buffalo Housing Performance Targets

Category	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Housing units	151,971	145,574	126,720	135,802	142,471
Occupied units	136,436	122,720	118,210	129,335	135,687
Persons per Household	2.33	2.29	2.25	2.25	2.25
Vacant	15,535	22,854	8,510	6,647	6,784
% vacant	10.20%	15.70%	7.20%	5.00%	5.00%
Own/occupied	58,858	53,323	53,195	62,081	67,844
BMHA		7,000	6,000	5,000	5,000
Rental	77,578	62,397	59,015	62,252	62,844
% Owned	43.10%	43.50%	45.00%	48%	50%
% Rental	56.90%	56.50%	55.00%	52%	50%

Source: (1990 and 2000 figures) U.S. Census Bureau / OSP Information & Data Analysis
Housing Targets: 2010 to 2030: OSP Community Planning

Responding to these trends so that the housing stock temporarily contracts with the population, then grows again as population grows, will mean meeting a series of annual and ten year targets, starting in 2004 and going forward. These include:

- One thousand units of new, converted, or rehabilitated housing completed each year for ten years or a total of 10,000 units. Of these, 500 a year, or 5,000 total, would be rehabilitated units. The other half would be new or converted units;
- One thousand units vacant, dilapidated or unrepairable housing to be demolished each year until households and housing units come back into balance at a vacancy rate of five percent;
- Half of new, converted and rehabilitated housing units to be targeted to Downtown and its immediate first ring of neighborhoods with 300 units new or converted and 200 units rehabilitated each year;
- The remainder of new, converted and rehabilitated housing targeted to areas of concentrated neighborhood investment (in schools, jobs, parks and waterfront) with 200 units new or converted and 300 units rehabilitated each year;
- A gradual reduction in units owned and managed by the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority from 7,000 to 5,000 units, as tenants find work and move into privately owned housing;

These targets will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. The ratio of rehabilitation to new construction, for example, will depend on specific local circumstances. The logical sequence of work when the public sector leads redevelopment will be to rehab as many units as possible, demolish dilapidated non-historic structures, then provide for new builds.

The ultimate goal of the ten-year housing program is to create a healthy private residential real estate market. It is intended that private investment will drive housing development in Buffalo beyond the ten-year program through

Table 13 | Major Ellicott Radial Plan Streets

Niagara	Elmwood
Delaware	Genesee
Broadway	Clinton
Main (Rt. 5)	

2030. This will require, however, that the public sector increase its investment and delivery of housing in the first ten years (2004-2013). As with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, the City of Buffalo lacks the necessary resources to implement all of its provisions. At the current level of capital investment (now reduced to \$28 million per year through 2008) the delivery of new housing will be too slow to help the city's recovery in a timely way. The special Buffalo Development Program would be required to provide approximately \$7.5 million more per year to accomplish these goals.

2.4.6 RESTORE
ELLICOTT, OLMSTED
AND WATERFRONT

Buffalo's Ellicott radial and grid street plan, its Frederick Law Olmsted-designed system of parks and parkways, and its breathtaking waterfront along Lake Erie, the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers, Cazenovia and Scajaquada Creeks, constitute the great physical structure of the city and together define its unique character and sense of place. The Comprehensive Plan calls for the elements of this urban structure to be preserved, restored, expanded and reconnected as a central task in the revitalization of Buffalo.

The waterfront was the birthplace of Buffalo and central to its existence through subsequent periods of economic and social change, including today. The street plan Joseph Ellicott laid out in 1804 framed the structure of the human-made city that was to come and continues today to define the city, its traffic flows, and its connections to that waterfront. Olmsted's parks and parkways, created across the second half of the 19th century, completed the structure, connecting the city to green spaces that could – and still do – “refresh and delight the eye, and through the eye, the mind and the spirit.”

Preserving and strengthening what is most characteristic of a unique city means protecting, restoring and expanding the urban structure that is Buffalo's past, present and future. In the absence of this Comprehensive Plan, that might happen anyway, but only slowly and in piecemeal fashion. But achieving the overall goal of the plan requires a more concerted and aggressive approach. Repairs and improvements to these structures can help leverage other investments important to reversing Buffalo's decline.

Ellicott, Olmsted, and the Water



Figure 50. The Olmsted Park and Park Way System together with the Ellicott Radial Plan connect the city to its destination parks, to downtown, and to the waters of the Buffalo River, Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and Sacajawaga Creek.

To be fully effective, these initiatives must be extended to the city boundaries, and connected to the region as appropriate. They will prod and shape the rebuilding of the city over the next twenty years, producing affects that spill over to the areas around them. As in the past, they will provide the structure and framework for rebuilding the city, moving to the new economy and promoting social integration of the community.

Restore Ellicott radials and grid

Each of the radial streets that emanates from Ellicott's original radial and grid plan should be redeveloped from end to end, from the center of the city to the waterfront or city line. This includes Niagara, Delaware, Main, Genesee, Broadway, William and Seneca. Appropriate treatments would include new pavements, where needed, landscaping, new trees, and traffic calming. Where necessary, plans for the redevelopment of property along these radial boulevards should be detailed.

As the plan for restoration of radial streets is further developed, opportunities to enhance or expand the network should be embraced. South Park Avenue, for example, was not originally a part of Ellicott's scheme. But making it a part of the contemporary system would reinforce the City's proposed strategy for the South Park/ East Side Rail Investment Corridor.

Given some relief from the barrier that is the Niagara Thruway, restoration of the Ellicott plan in the longer term may also include

projects to reconnect Downtown streets to the waterfront. These might include Genesee Street, Court Street, Georgia Street and others. Erie Street is already the focus of a project to strengthen Ellicott street connections from Downtown to the waterfront.



Figure 51. The Hiker's Monument in Roosevelt Plaza, a place where the Radial and grid street join in downtown.



Figure 52 A historic image of Olmsted’s Delaware Park in the late 1800s.



Figure 53. Botanical Gardens in Olmsted’s South Park. (Photo: Western New York Regional Information Network)



Figure 54. Riverside Park overlooking the Niagara River. (Photo: Mark Mistretta, Wendel Duchscherer Architects and Engineers)

Beyond the lifespan of this plan, care should be taken to recognize opportunities to restore elements of the Downtown street plan that have been severed over the years. These include Genesee between Main and Franklin; Genesee near South Elmwood; and Eagle Street between Main and Pearl.

The proposed special Buffalo Development Program (See Part Three) includes funding for rebuilding the Ellicott radials. At an estimated unit cost of \$4.5 million per mile there is sufficient funding in the program budget to ensure that restoration of the radials reflects both their heritage and 21st century arterial function.

Restore Olmsted Parks and Parkways

The same approach is needed for the restoration of the nine parks, seven parkways and seven circles of the Olmsted Parks and Parkway system. When Olmsted connected Buffalo’s parks, using more than seven miles of tree-lined parkways and turfed walkways, he also connected to Ellicott’s radial streets and extended them. In the 21st century Ellicott’s and Olmsted’s radials, parks and parkways should be treated as a single system.

Discussions among the City, Erie County, and the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy on how to restore the complete Olmsted Park system, and how to fund that work, need to be brought to a successful conclusion. The Conservancy is developing a full restoration and management plan, expected to be complete in 2004. The plan will include a fundraising program to assist with the cost of restoration. Implementation of the Olmsted Parks and Parkway Restoration and Management Plan is expected to take up to 20 years.

A comparable plan is needed for the restoration and extension of the Ellicott radial and grid system. This will require a combination of road engineering, urban design and landscaping skills. The City’s Office of Strategic Planning and Department of Public Works should develop the plan, with the participation of the County and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council.

What Buffalo needs is “Ellicott and Olmsted for the 21st Century.” While we conserve our heritage we should take opportunities to expand the radial, park, and parkway system, consistent with 19th century traditions and appropriate for 21st century uses. For example, there is a need for a new park on the East Side. One possible location for such a park is the triangular 150-acre brownfield parcel north of William Street, west of Bailey Avenue and bounded by the railroad at its northern tip.

Table 14 | Olmsted Parks & Parkway

Parks	Parkways	Circles
Riverside	Lincoln	Soldiers
Delaware	Bidwell	Gates
Parkside	Chapin	Colonial
Martin Luther King Jr.	Richmond	Ferry
Front	Porter	Symphony
Columbus	Red Jacket	McClellan
South	McKinley	McKinley
Heacock		
Cazenovia		

An “Olmsted Park” at this location would serve East Side neighborhoods and help to complete the ring of Olmsted parks around the city. It would also help attract visitors and new investment to this part of Buffalo. New parkways would link it to its northern and southern neighbors, just as the two southern parks, South Park and Cazenovia, are connected by McKinley and Red Jacket Parkways.



Figure 55. The Buffalo River and view to the historic Concrete Central grain elevator (Photo from the Friends of the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers-Lynda Schneekloth).

Coastal Management Policies

1. Foster a pattern of development in the coastal area that enhances community character, preserves open space, makes efficient use of infrastructure, makes beneficial use of coastal location, and minimizes adverse effects of development.
2. Protect water- and border-dependent uses, promote siting of new water-dependent uses in suitable locations, and support efficient harbor operation.
3. Protect existing agricultural lands in the coastal area.
4. Protect and restore ecological resources, including significant fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, woodlands and rare ecological communities.
6. Protect and improve water resources.
7. Minimize loss of life, structure and natural resources from flooding and erosion.
8. Protect and improve air quality.
9. Protect appropriate use and development of energy and mineral resources.
10. Minimize environmental degradation from solid waste and hazardous substances and wastes.
11. Provide for public access to, and recreational use of coastal waters, public lands, and public resources of the coastal area.
12. Enhance visual quality and protect outstanding scenic resources.
13. Preserve historic resources of the coastal areas.

Source: City of Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Reconnect to the waterfront

Two interlocking waterfront planning efforts are already under way, developing in parallel with the Comprehensive Plan. Together they specify how Buffalo can reconnect to its waterfront, improve public access to the lake, rivers and creeks, link neighborhoods to the water's edge, leverage waterfront assets for appropriate economic development, and improve water quality, waterfront lands and habitats in the process.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) provides for the local application of federal Coastal Zone Management policies under State supervision. Thirteen broad policies stipulate local action to protect environmental, historic, and visual characteristics of local waterfronts, promote their appropriate economic uses, and expand public waterfront access (See inset). The planning process involves analysis of local conditions and community participation to tailor the policies to local needs.

Once approved by the Planning Board, the Buffalo Common Council, New York's Secretary of State and the federal Office of Coastal Resources Management, the LWRP will serve as a waterfront strategy to help coordinate state and federal actions needed to achieve Buffalo's goals for its waterfront. The LWRP is not a new layer of regulation on the waterfront; rather it tailors existing state regulations to Buffalo's needs; but it also gives these policies the force of law. It will help make New York State's Consistency Reviews more responsive to local projects.

Waterfront Corridor Initiative

The Buffalo Corridor Management Project, also known as the Waterfront Corridor Initiative, is being developed to serve as implementation management plan for the policies and projects identified in the LWRP. The Waterfront Corridor Initiative (WCI) will work to coordinate achievement of Buffalo's overarching waterfront goals (access, environmental quality, economic development, neighborhood connection) with the need to provide efficient transportation through the waterfront corridor. As such, the WCI is funded by a grant under the federal TEA-21 program.



Figure 56. Artist's rendering of Peace Bridge plaza under shared border management concept. EBR Professional Rendering.

Work on the WCI has included extensive public consultations on waterfront priorities, an inventory of a quarter century of planning work for Buffalo's waterfront, timely analysis of Peace Bridge gateway plaza alternatives, development of pre-design proposals for Porter Avenue and Erie Street waterfront gateways, and preparation of a strategic plan for transportation improvements to serve as a guide for ongoing project implementation.

Analysis of alternatives for the U.S. Peace Bridge plaza shows, not only that a shared border management would be most beneficial to Buffalo neighborhoods, but also that border management practices in general are moving quickly toward greater collaboration and technology application in pursuit of greater efficiency and security (See Figure 56).

The strategic plan accepts ongoing projects as established community priorities. These include the Erie Canal Harbor, Times Beach Nature Preserve, Outer Harbor Greenway, and reuse of the Auditorium for a destination retail attraction. Beyond these current projects, the plan attempts to set general principles for project prioritization as well as to establish new project priorities in specific.

Capital funding to support implementation of these initiatives is provided in the Capital Improvements Program of the Comprehensive Plan. The special Buffalo Development Program proposed in Part Three would provide additional funding to trigger these initiatives and move them forward to full implementation.

2.4.7 PROTECT AND RESTORE THE URBAN FABRIC

Buffalo must protect and restore the physical fabric of the city as an essential step in achieving the overall goal of the Comprehensive Plan. If the Ellicott plan, Olmsted parks, and the waterfront are the character-defining structure of the city, its historic architecture and landscapes, and the overall natural environment are the fabric of the city. This policy, of course, overlaps with policies on housing and neighborhoods, economic development, infrastructure and services. But our built and natural heritage deserve specific attention.

Work on both of these issues is fundamental to the overall strategy of the comprehensive plan. Progress in these areas will advance the sustainability of development in Buffalo. Preservation of the built environment will be wholly consistent with smart growth principles. Both take seriously the call to "fix the basics" and "build on assets." Together, attention to historic architecture and the natural environment will improve the quality of life in Buffalo and help attract both people and capital to the city.

This policy involves three major action items.

1. Establishment of clear regional and urban design guides for the continuing development of the city.
2. Creation and implementation of a Community Preservation Plan, for which the first major phase of work is complete.
3. Development an Environmental Management System, building on the work of the Environmental Management Council, and sharpening the ability of the City to implement policies for the protection and repair of our environment.

Regional and urban design guides

Because even cities in decline are also growing and changing, protecting and restoring the urban fabric requires controlling the quality and character of new development. Toward this end, the Comprehensive Plan includes a set of broad regional and urban design guides. These are taken from the work of the Congress of New Urbanism (CNU), an international organization of urban designers, architects, landscape architects, planners and developers that has codified principles for the design of regions, cities and neighborhoods.

In many ways, these principles are already woven throughout the Comprehensive Plan. They are visible in the principles of sustainability and smart growth, approaches to environmental regeneration, and philosophies of neighborhood revitalization. However, they deserve emphasis on their own as a comprehensive set of design principles adapted for use in Buffalo and its region.

Principles for the region - metropolis, city and town:

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, water-sheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges. *Buffalo will become a vital urban center in the region if it invests in the core elements of*

this plan, also consistent with the creation of vital urban centers as a part of the Erie Niagara Planning Framework developed jointly by Erie and Niagara Counties.

2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality. *Buffalo is committed to work with Erie County and Niagara County and the Municipality of Niagara in the planning and economic development of the bi-national Niagara Region.*
3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house. *Buffalo will help relieve the pressure for growth in agricultural and rural areas when it reinvests in itself as a vital urban center and implements the ten principles of smart growth.*
4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion. *Buffalo will define its edges through clear and well interpreted gateways and a denser development pattern than its suburban neighbors established through zoning.*
5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs. *Buffalo supports the work of the Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth and the GBNRTC to promote compact and contiguous suburban development.*

6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries. *Buffalo is committed to expanding regional and inter-municipal cooperation on issues of policy, planning and service delivery, while it respects the prerogatives of other municipalities in the tradition of home rule.*
7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty. *Buffalo helps establish the conditions of social equity throughout the region by assuring the best quality of life possible for its citizens, developing a range of dense, diverse and mixed income communities within its boundaries, and establishing ways for the region to contribute to regional services provided by the City such as on the waterfront, in the park system, and in regional cultural attractions.*
8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile. *Through support of the 2030 Long Range Plan of GBNRTC, and through its own policies and programs, Buffalo supports the continuing development of public transit and expanded bicycle facilities on the waterfront, through the Olmsted parks and elsewhere.*
9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions. *Buffalo will continue to cooperate with a coordinated Erie County Industrial Development Agency in promoting the*

region, work with neighboring municipalities in a mutual gains approach to economic development, support regional transportation planning, and search for increased efficiencies in public services, housing and community institutions.

Principles for the city: neighborhood, district and corridor:

1. The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution. *Buffalo works through its Good Neighbors Planning Alliance, organized in ten communities and many more neighborhoods, and through the Comprehensive Plan to reinforce the historically well-defined elements of the city.*
2. Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways. *Buffalo supports the revitalization of neighborhood commercial areas such as Hertel Avenue or Elmwood Avenue, maintenance of special purpose districts like the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus or East Side rail facilities, and primacy of major corridors such as Main Street, the waterfront, the Olmsted parkway system, and many others.*
3. Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy. *Buffalo works to maintain walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods like Elmwood, Allentown, Grant-Ferry, Seneca Street and Hertel*

Avenue and to support residential and commercial growth in neighborhoods like Jefferson Avenue, lower Niagara Street, and Fillmore Avenue to make them more walkable.

4. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community. *The Queen City Hub calls for just such neighborhoods surrounding the downtown. The same sort of diversity is built into the guidelines for the HUD-funded Home Zone in the near east side and HOPE VI in the lower west side.*
5. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers. *Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan supports continued mixed-use development along Main Street, which is a designated corridor for both transit and strategic investment, as well as future development of Airport, Tonawanda and University transit corridors to give greater coherence to the metropolitan structure.*
6. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile. *The Comprehensive Plan calls for a renewed emphasis on the development of the Main Street transit corridor and enforcement of its overlay district, along with coordination of recent and new investments along the length of the rail line.*
7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them. *The Comprehensive Plan policy to coordinate*

investments in housing and neighborhoods, parks and public infrastructure with reinvestment in public schools goes a long way to meeting this principle. So does support for neighborhood commercial districts.

8. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change. *The Lower West Side Neighborhood Stabilization Demonstration Project Housing Design Review Guidelines are an illustration of the type of context sensitive design guides proposed to be developed for each neighborhood in the city through the Office of Strategic Planning and the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance.*
9. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ball fields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts. *Buffalo is blessed with an extraordinary system of Olmsted parks and parkways but, even so, has less park land per capita than other cities with its population and size. Additions to park infrastructure should address the principle above with specific attention paid to areas of the city that are underserved or not connected to the Olmsted system.*

Principles for the neighborhood, the street, the building:

The remaining nine principles are specific to the design of good neighborhoods and will be part of future zoning revisions, site plan review, and neighborhood design guides for all of Buffalo's neighborhoods.

1. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.
2. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.

3. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.
4. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.
5. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.
6. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.
7. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.
8. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.
9. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.

Community Preservation Plan

The Comprehensive Plan needs to incorporate a Community Preservation Plan to identify and protect historic urban resources in Buffalo and to educate public officials and citizens about the value of our built heritage and what is needed to protect it. A first-phase Preservation Plan Program Report suggests a four-part strategy for achieving these goals, including:

- Continuous emphasis on the inventory of historic resources required by local, State and federal law;
- A multi-part effort designed to protect those resources;
- Education of a broad range of audiences that influence our ability to inventory and protect historic resources; and,
- Creation of the administrative, financial and technical capacity to do the first three tasks well.

Preservation of the city's historic resources is important for at least four reasons. Preserving and restoring historic structures, districts and landscapes helps sustain what we might call the "web of urbanism," the physical environment that supports daily life in the city. Recognizing and interpreting these resources and the stories that go with them gives us an understanding of who we are as a community and gives meaning to life in Buffalo. Preservation also supports the community's economic development goals, attracting tourists and contributing to the quality of life that draws people and capital. At a finer grain, investments in historic properties add value to neighborhoods and encourage further investment.

Work to date on a Community Preservation Plan has been led by a broad-based stakeholder group involving leaders of key preservation organizations, foundation executives, public officials and others. The effort has also involved intensive research on national precedents and local resources by a consultant team; an educational exchange with city and preservation leaders from Pittsburgh; and work on a land and building management program by the Office of Strategic Planning.

The Preservation Plan Program Report recommends a hybrid approach to preservation planning and implementation. Other cities typically follow one of three models: preservation plans that stand alone and have strong impact on public education about preservation; preservation plans that are elements of more

Historic Landmarks and Districts

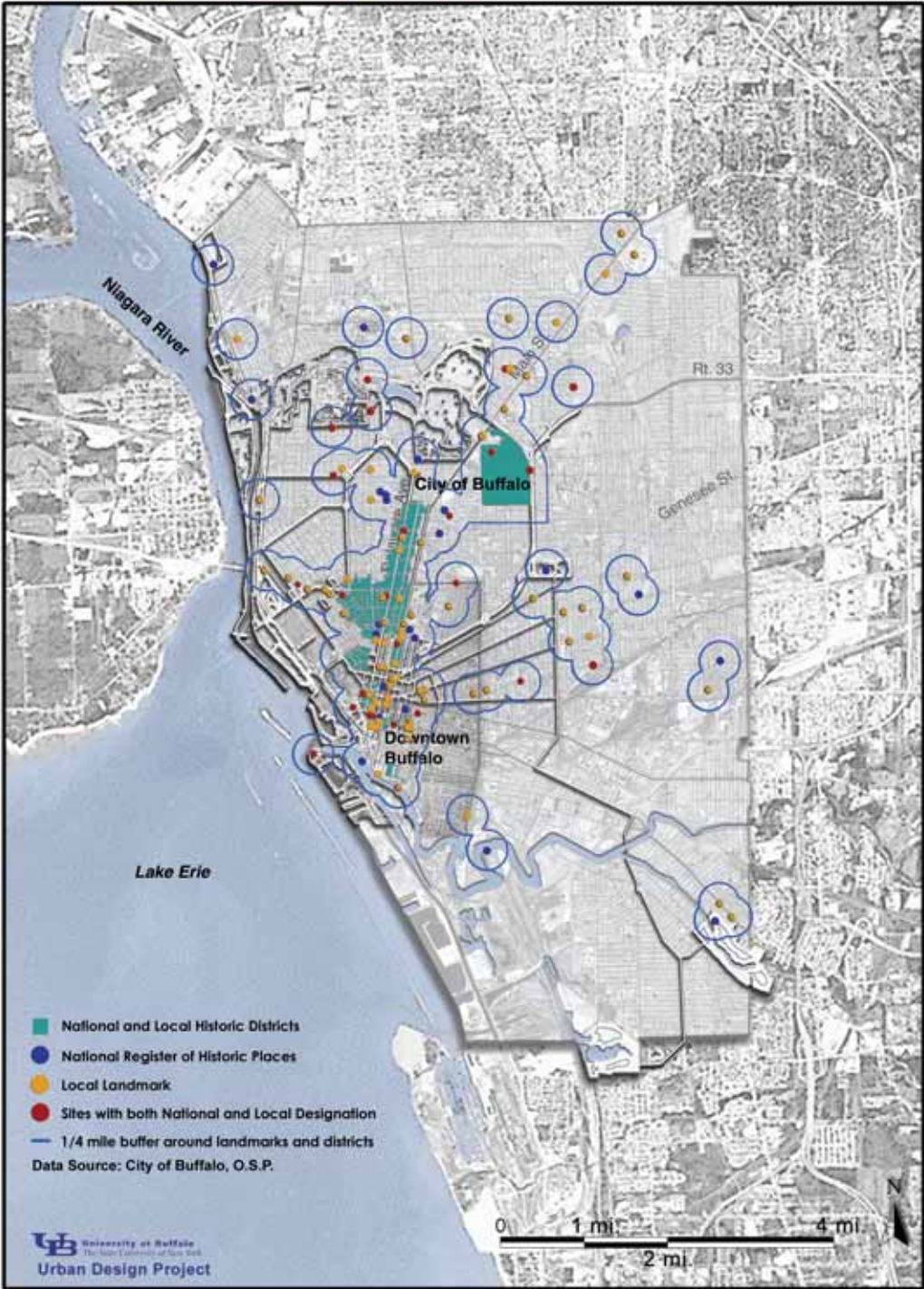


Figure 57

authoritative comprehensive plans and have the force of local policy; and preservation plans that emerge incrementally through the development of historic district designations. The report suggests that an approach synthesizing all three models is possible for Buffalo.

Similarly, the report recommends a plan strongly rooted in public policy and public agencies but also involving responsible action by a large constituency of private and not for profit interests, including the local foundation community and leadership from the historic preservation community. The report also calls for creation of a Preservation Leadership Council made up of the presidents of preservation organizations who will facilitate the private sector component of the Preservation Plan.

Table 15 | Historic Preservation Districts

Name	Designation & Time Period	Planning Community
Allentown	Local, State & National: 1814 - 1935	Elmwood
Cobblestone	Local	Central
Delaware	Local, State & National: 1859 – 1920	Elmwood
Erie Canal	Local, State: 7/1/77	Multiple
Hamlin Park	Local	Masten
Joseph Ellicott	Local, State: 1833 – 1940	Central
Linwood	Local, State: 1850 - 1940	Elmwood
Michigan Street	Urban Renewal	Ellicott
Olmsted Parks	Local, State & National: 1858 - 1903	Multiple
Parkside East	Local, State & National: 1876 - 1936	North Buffalo
Parkside West	Local, State & National: 1876 – 1936	North Buffalo
Theater	Local, State: 1880 – 1940	Central
West Village	Local, State & National: 1854 - 1914	Central

The elements of the preservation strategy include:

1. A complete **inventory** of Landmarks, Districts, residential and other properties, streets, pedestrian ways and other urban and landscape features to be incorporated into the plan through the land and building management program of OSP. The inventory should catalog the heritage designation of each individual property and district, the measure of protection afforded to it, and its ownership, use, age and physical condition.

It should also consider for designation properties based on their association with the life of a significant member of the community; their role in an important historic event; the significance of the building type, architectural style, period, builder or architect; or its significance in the context of surrounding urban fabric. New districts should be considered if they contain a group of buildings that are significant due to workmanship, age, beauty or uniqueness; the area has historical significance related to an important person, event or community activity; or the area offers a definite sense of place and time through common elements, focal buildings or landscape features.

2. An approach to **protection** of historic resources that emphasizes maintaining the “web of urbanism” through a moratorium on demolitions other than those necessary for the preservation of public health; pedestrian-oriented approaches to redevelopment; a moratorium on the creation of surface parking lots; unifying landscapes and streetscapes; providing guidelines for new development in historic districts; and, “buttoning up” or “mothballing” important buildings until their restoration can be accomplished. The protection strategy also calls for a focus of resources on historic districts in Allentown, the West Village, and Hamlin Park because of their proximity to concentrations of other investments in the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Downtown, and the Canisius College area, respectively.

3. A program of **education** that addresses the wide variety of constituencies that are needed to support the identification, designation, preservation, interpretation, marketing and promotion of Buffalo's historic resources. This work should include revision and republication of *Protecting Buffalo's Best...Operations and Procedures* of the Buffalo Preservation Board (1990), a comprehensive guide to the substantive, legal, regulatory and procedural work of preservation in Buffalo. Other educational programs should be developed for the benefit of front-line tourism industry workers who are the first line of contact for heritage and culture visitors; staff of courts and public agencies who deal with preservation matters; and tours, conferences, workshops and publications for the general public, including school-age children.
4. Improving the **capacity** of preservation agencies and organizations to provide financial and administrative support and technical assistance to implement the inventory, protection and education elements of the strategy. The ultimate aim is for the community to develop a self-sustaining preservation organization that educates, advocates, acquires sites and properties, and sells developed sites for preservation investments.

A key element of this capacity will be to create a strategic resource fund gathering resources from government, foundations, and financial institutions. Such a fund will give the preservation community the ability to stabilize historic structures that are not ready for commercial or public investment as well as to carry out the work of inventory, designation, and education.

To make the greatest impact, preservation work must be coordinated with initiatives aimed at improving housing and neighborhoods, restoring Olmsted parks and Ellicott

radials, reconstructing schools, creating new jobs, and rebuilding infrastructure. Given the volume and broad distribution of Buffalo's 74 landmarks and ten Historic Districts, the potential for combining preservation initiatives with other investment programs touches nearly half the city (See Figure 28).

Environmental Management

Implementation of Comprehensive Plan policies regarding a range of environmental issues, as well as a concern for the protection and repair of the broad fabric of the city, requires creation of an Environmental Management System (EMS) to manage a process of comprehensive environmental quality review (as per the State's Environmental Quality Review Act) with attention focused on operational efficiencies, physical development activities, and the quality of community life.

An Environmental Management System that would facilitate target setting and performance evaluation and provides a stronger basis for assessing sustainability is clearly needed as a foundation for a full-fledged Environmental Plan, and should be developed as a part of the City's and the region's planning processes. This may take several years of effort. The Environmental Management System would include a comprehensive database, and a set of indicators that would allow the City and citizens to understand environmental conditions so that they can plan for restoration and enhancement of Buffalo's ecosystem within the Great Lakes and global context.

In the meantime, and in keeping with this proposal, the intent of the Comprehensive Plan is to integrate full consideration of environmental implications into every project covered by the plan. Each City project and each project requiring City approval would be assessed by the Office for the Environment, and modified if necessary to take into account environmental requirements and perspectives.

This recommendation emerged from the Environmental Management Commission that was mandated through the City Charter, established by Mayor Masiello in 1995, and endorsed by the Common Council. The EMC was created in recognition of the fact that resolving the community's environmental problems would be a substantial, multi-year challenge.

The Commission, supported by the Office of the Environment, developed and proposed a Buffalo Environmental Policy aimed at achieving "a safer, more attractive, more productive, more suitable environment for Buffalo." This policy defined three critical issues: the care and protection of the city's urban natural resources, recognition of linkages between environment and human health, and respect for environmental justice. Resolution of these latter two issues requires remediation of general concerns relating to land, water, and air quality and specific contaminants such as asbestos, lead, radon, pesticides, and other hazardous substances in active use or in waste products.

Also in 2001, the Commission submitted a report to the Common Council listing a wide variety of recent and current specific actions of the City and its agencies contributing to environmental improvements. At about the same time, the Buffalo Niagara Sustainability Council developed an environmental vision to establish the City of Buffalo as a sustainable community. The group defined sustainability as putting equal emphasis on environmental quality, economic health, and social equity.

Meanwhile, Friends of the Buffalo Niagara Rivers, researched and mapped Buffalo's "green infrastructure." The resulting inventory documented open spaces in four categories: significant ecological areas, environmental problem areas, recreational opportunities, and areas of distinctive character. The inventory provides a valuable planning and monitoring resource for the city's physical planning and development and should be adopted accordingly.

This initiative was based on the work of the national Green Infrastructure Working Group, formed in 1999 and composed of local, state, and national government agencies and non-government agencies. The Working Group defines "green infrastructure" as a community's natural life support system. It is a strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to health and quality of life.

Through these and other efforts, a long and challenging agenda of possible municipal environmental initiatives has been put forward that includes regulation, operations, and capital works. The proposed Environmental Management System could go a long way toward implementing such an ambitious agenda.

2.5 A LAND USE CONCEPT FOR 2030

Most of Buffalo's land uses will remain the same as implementation of the Comprehensive Plan proceeds, but there will be some important changes in land use as the city pursues its future. Buffalo's urban form and structure were established with Ellicott's radial and grid plan in 1804, reinforced by Olmsted's park and parkway plan in the late 19th century, and set early in the 20th century when the city reached full build-out. Most of the city's land uses have been stable since then, and will stay in their present configurations as the rebuilding of the city proceeds over the next twenty years. However, key changes over the duration of the Comprehensive Plan (See Figure 58) will include the following:

- Expansion of the Downtown to include inner ring neighborhoods, as already defined in The Queen City Hub plan;
- Changing land uses Downtown to implement key investment initiatives, including infill housing and mixed use;
- Redevelopment of the three Strategic Investment Corridors: Waterfront/ Tonawanda, Main Street/ Downtown, and the South Park/ East Side Rail;
- Changes in land use for some former industrial sites (brownfields) as their redevelopment provides for a broader diversity of uses including new industrial, commercial, open space and mixed uses;

- Possible changes in use around the Peace Bridge to accommodate the expansion of the bridge and reconfiguration of the U.S. Plaza, reinforcing the commercial character of Niagara Street and possibly allowing recovery of park land and historic Fort Porter.
- Changes in use to accommodate the regional transportation plan, particularly in transit corridors;
- Changes in use to accommodate the new Buffalo Waterfront, as the LWRP and Waterfront Corridor Initiative are implemented;
- Changes in use in the eastern part of the city to provide for the expansion of park space needed to bring Buffalo up to State standards for park land;
- Changes in use in the eastern or southern parts of the city to facilitate the provision of big box retail (power centers) in Buffalo; and,
- Changes in use for individual buildings or sets of buildings (blocks or precincts) where new uses are identified and implemented for existing buildings designated to be preserved under the City's forthcoming Preservation Plan.

As the rebuilding of the city proceeds, densities in certain Planning Districts will gradually begin to increase back to levels previously existing in the city, and in one or two areas possibly higher. The increase in density will be greatest in and around the expanded downtown, and in certain areas close to the transit corridors and arterials such as Main Street. The restoration of density in these areas will be helpful for land values and will stimulate the restoration of the real estate market. It will also augment the sense of urbanity in the city.

Strategic Investment Corridors

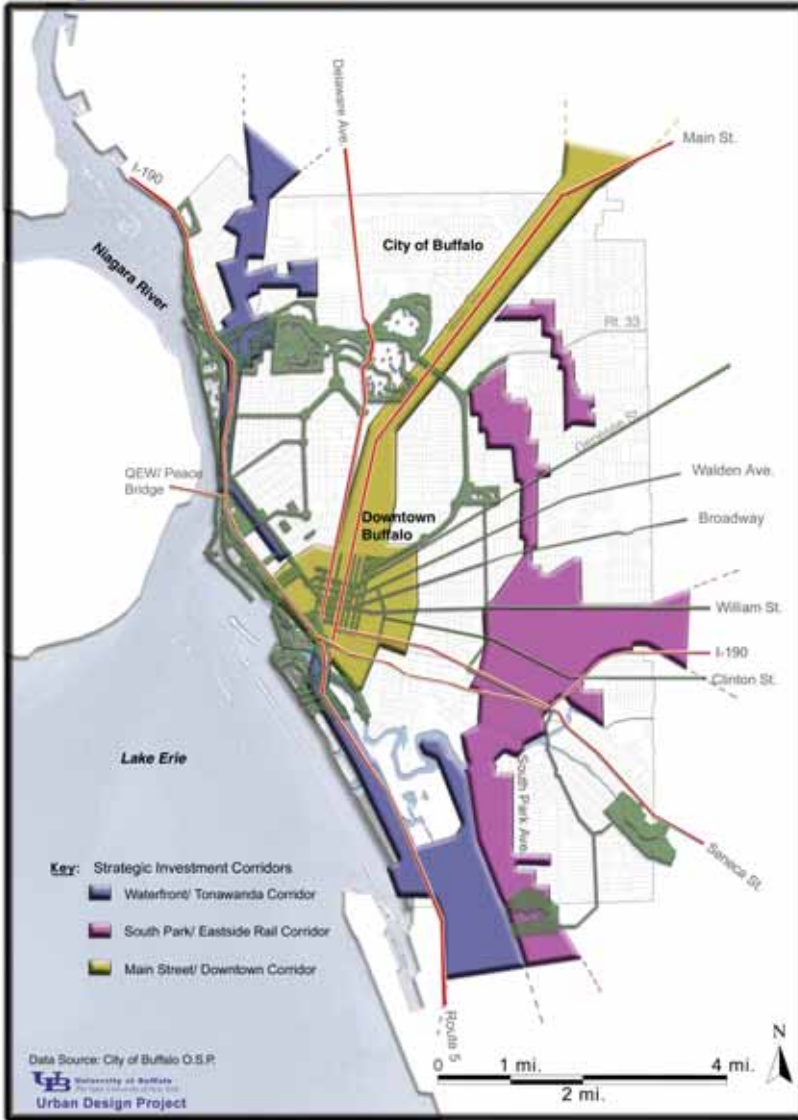


Figure 58. Three primary investment corridors tie the city together, overlap with many of the Joint Schools Construction Board phase one sites, build on the Ellicott Radial and Olmsted Park and Parkway System links to downtown and the water, and offer significant available land for much of Buffalo's 21st Century economy.

The Comprehensive Plan has been developed on the premise that every capital project implemented under its authority will integrate economic, environmental and community considerations. From the environmental perspective, this means that every project should be planned and carried out in an environmentally benign manner. The end result should be a city that has a healthy ecosystem with clean air, land and water that sustains both human and non-human life.

To give full effect to this concept plan, the City's zoning ordinance needs to be revised in keeping with it, urban design guidelines need to be introduced, and secondary plans for the City's Planning Districts need to be completed.

2.6 FRAMEWORK FOR REVISION OF THE CITY'S ZONING ORDINANCE

To support the implementation of the Buffalo Comprehensive plan and the smart growth principles on which it is based, the City's zoning ordinance needs to be revised and updated. The structure of zoning should be reorganized to fit the Comprehensive Plan. Little change is required for Residential Zoning Districts, but changes will be required for Commercial and Industrial Zoning, and the addition of some new zones is also needed.

A framework for the revised zoning ordinance is recommended along the following lines:

Residential

The current Residential Zoning Districts (R1-R5) range from "R1 One Family," the most restrictive district and least dense, to "R5 Apartment Hotel," the least restrictive and the most dense. We do not anticipate major changes within these districts other than amplifying design guidelines.

New home construction design should incorporate ten design features:

1. Urban density (thirty foot minimum frontage and a ten-foot set back;
2. Area improvements must mix a combination of Rehabilitation and New Construction;
3. Continuous sidewalk / streetscape amenities;
4. Usable front porches;
5. Garages with a thirty-foot (30') minimum setback from the sidewalk;
6. Wood and/or brick construction;
7. Vertical windows;
8. Landscaped frontages;
9. Consistent roof pitch and elevation locations; and
10. Attention to details.

Figure 59. The investment corridors.

Investment Corridors



An additional layer of regulation should be provided in Preservation Districts to guide restoration and protection of the architectural quality and character of individual buildings and groups (blocks or precincts) of buildings.

Commercial

The current Commercial Zoning (C1-CM) including downtown zoning (DO & RR) should emphasize mixed-use development, built to the front lot line, multiple stories, surface parking restricted to side and rear yards, with specific Floor Area Ratios to Lot Area that allow structured parking to contribute to FAR. Mixed-Use Commercial Districts will prohibit single-family detached housing in favor of residential upper stories above retail/commercial uses and row house type configurations. District definitions will specify residential unit range and non-residential development square area requirements.

Typical district types might breakout as follows:

- *Mixed-Use Neighborhood Commercial – Lower to Moderate Density:* Minimum FAR 0.75 to 1, in not less than two stories; allow mixed residential use 8-16 units per acre with accessory ground floor non-residential development permitted up to 10,000 square feet per acre.
- *Mixed Use Transit Station Area (Outside of CBD) – Moderate Density:* Minimum FAR 1 to 1, in not less than two stories; allow mixed residential use 8-16 units per acre with non-residential development permitted up to 20,000 square feet per acre.

- *Mixed Use Downtown (Outside of CBD) – Moderate to Higher Density:* Minimum FAR 2 to 1, in not less than two stories; allow mixed residential use 16-24 units per acre with non-residential development permitted up to 40,000 square feet per acre.
- *Mixed Use Medical - Moderate to High Density:* Minimum FAR 2 to 1, in not less than two stories; allow mixed residential use 8-20 units with non-residential medical related uses and accessory ground floor retail use up to 80,000 square feet per acre. Hospitals are permitted up to 176,000 square feet per acre.
- *Mixed Use Downtown CBD-Higher Density:* Minimum FAR 4 to 1, in not less than four stories; allow residential use 24 units and up per acre, non-residential development 80,000 square feet and up per acre with 50 percent of the parking in a structure.

Open Space/Conservation

Open Space/Conservation is a new classification for public/ private open space and natural areas. This zoning would apply to large tracts of public and private open space. This is designated space for resource protection and conservation; this may apply to land assembly areas designated for future redevelopment. It applies to wetland, riparian, floodplain, and brownfield passive conservation areas. In exchange for developing in specified areas developers may contribute to the management of these areas (e.g., the Wetlands Mitigation Program).

Recreation/Public Facilities

Recreation/Public Facilities District is a new district intended to provide a special zoning classification for passive and active recreational facilities (including both public and private properties) to ensure the proper location and protection of recreational resources. It is also for public and semipublic uses, including governmental, educational and other civic uses, to ensure the proper location of such uses in relation to transportation facilities, the compatibility of such uses with adjacent development, and proper site design and land development.

This zoning would also protect uses that should always remain as recreational or public uses and should not be zoned for residential use or anything other than what they are, e.g., Olmsted parks, schools, community buildings, museums, etc.

Marine Commercial

Marine Commercial: The intent of this new district is to permit and encourage a range of water-dependent and water-enhanced uses in order to make the best use of certain lands along the City's valuable waterfront, to provide for a mix of water-oriented commercial uses, to ensure an attractive setting for a variety of appropriate maritime uses, to promote balanced and beneficial use of coastal lands without diminishing public access, to strengthen the City's economic base by encouraging traditional water-related uses and promote water-related recreational industry.

This zoning strengthens the marine character of the waterfront, and provides for and promotes marinas and other water-related uses that need to be on the water (i.e. water-dependent and water-enhanced).

Industrial

The current *Industrial Zoning Districts* (M1-M3) range from "M1 Light Industrial District," being the most restrictive industrial district, to "M3 Heavy Industrial District" as the least restrictive. We do not anticipate major changes within these districts other than reducing the total area zoned for heavy industrial use.

Special Zoning

Special Zoning Districts (principally neighborhood commercial strips) and Urban Renewal Districts will be reduced in number in favor of new zoning and site plan design controls as previously described in the Commercial Zoning section.

PART THREE:

Implementing the Plan

Achieving the goal of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan – to reverse the long term decline of the city's population, employment and physical environment – will require a well-organized and disciplined approach to implementation over the next decade and beyond. This section of the plan describes the specific actions needed to do that.

The implementation program is based on an understanding that even after the City of Buffalo does everything it can to reform and rationalize the operations of city government, and after it invests all the capital funds available to it within the State constitutional limits for municipal taxing and borrowing, the resources to be applied to the redevelopment of the city will be insufficient to meet the goal of this plan by 2030.

Implementation of the plan will come, in large part, through the management of Buffalo's Capital Improvement Program as augmented by a special Buffalo Development Program to be negotiated among City, County, State and federal governments. The estimated additional need to be met through the Buffalo Development Program is \$35 million a year for a period of ten years.

The implementation program assumes an ongoing improvement in both intergovernmental relations and expansion of cooperation among public, private, and not-for-profit sector entities. County, State and federal governments have a significant stake in the success of the plan. Likewise, business, citizen, and community-based organizations have much to contribute.

Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will also require continued elaboration of an emerging framework of planning and policy for the city. The Comprehensive Plan provides a broad framework for plans and policies that require much greater detail. Further, it is essential that the Comprehensive Plan, and all of its subelements to come, be adopted by Common Council and treated as having the force of law that they do.

Implementation of the plan needs to be accompanied by a program of continuous monitoring and measurement against objective and quantifiable standards of performance. Data on housing, employment and population can help City policy-makers adjust the strategy on a continuing basis.

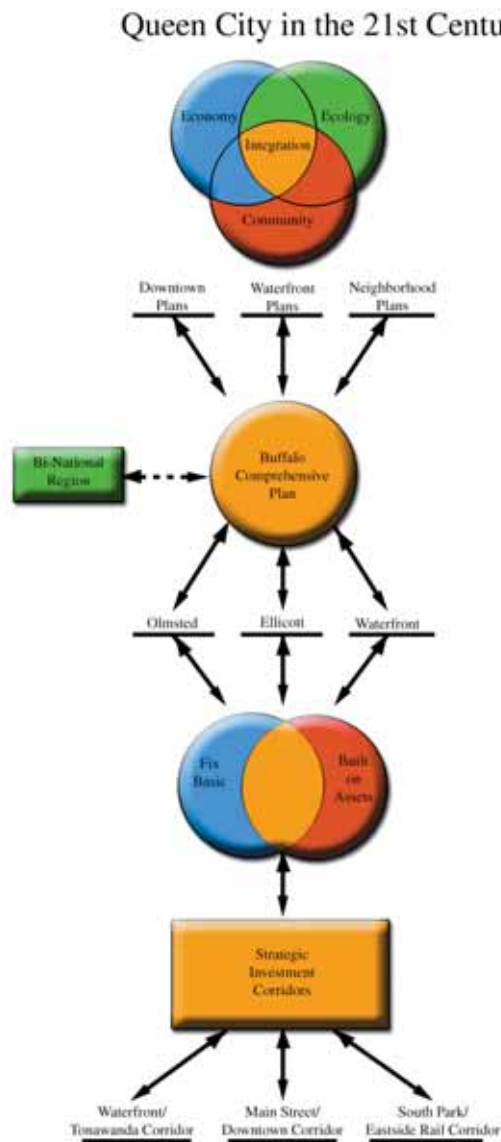


Figure 60

Finally, a specific array of next steps must be taken now, starting with work on the special Buffalo Development Program. The restoration of Buffalo's built and natural environment, the transition to a growing, mixed economy, and the reversal of current employment and population trends will require everything Buffalo can do for itself and more. We need to start right away.

3.1 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The key to implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which prioritizes and schedules all capital investments to be made with City resources and with those from any other source. This section outlines how Buffalo's base CIP should be combined with the proposed special Buffalo Development Program over the initial ten-year implementation period of the plan, 2010-2020.

The base CIP includes resources already available to the City. The Buffalo Development Program includes the additional resources from County, State and federal sources needed to fulfill the goal of the plan. The elements of the base CIP include:

- Investments of \$25 million per year over the ten year period out of annual municipal operating budgets and capital borrowing already available to it.
- Other capital funds that support the Comprehensive Plan, including funds to the Joint Schools Construction Board, the Water and Sewer Authorities, and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Transportation Council.
- Capital funding from existing State and federal programs at levels for which it already qualifies, including those from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, Empire State Development Corporation, and other transportation and education programs.

All of this together will bring the City close to its borrowing limit under the New York State constitution. Yet the total remains inadequate to fully implement the Comprehensive Plan. A special Buffalo Development Program (See Table 17) is required to bridge the gap. This program would provide an additional public investment of \$35 million annually over ten years, for a total of \$350 million.

Federal and State contributions to the special Buffalo Development Program could be drawn from the full array of government agencies. Based on a long-term U.S. bond rate of five percent and a ten year schedule of roughly even expenditure of these funds, the program would have a net present value of \$257.4 million.

When the special Buffalo Development Program is combined with the City's base Capital Improvement Program, the total annual public investment made would be \$253 million dollars. Over the implementation period 2010-2020, the total public investment would exceed \$2.5 billion.

Table 16 | Buffalo Development Program 2010 – 2020

Base City Capital Improvement Program	Annual Allocation	10 Year Total
Federal Entitlement – HUD Program	\$28,516,000	\$285,160,000
City Capital Budget	\$25,000,000	\$250,000,000
Water Authority	\$15,000,000	\$150,000,000
Sewer Authority	\$8,000,000	\$80,000,000
GBNRTC*	\$37,800,000	\$378,000,000
JSCB Capital School Building Program	\$95,000,000	\$950,000,000
Private Investment Leverage	\$6,000,000	\$60,000,000
Total	\$203,094,000	\$2,030,940,000
* GBNRTC funding estimate based on historical analysis		
Source: OSP Comprehensive/Community Planning		

Table 17 | Buffalo Development Program 2010 - 2020

Special Buffalo Development Program		Annual Allocation	10 Year Total
Community Preservation Goals		\$2,500,000	\$25,000,000
Housing Restoration Goals		\$7,500,000	\$75,000,000
Ellicott/Olmsted/Waterfront		\$5,000,000	\$50,000,000
Economic Development Goals		\$2,500,000	\$25,000,000
Street Infrastructure Goals		\$10,000,000	\$100,000,000
Water & Sewer Goals		\$5,000,000	\$50,000,000
Non- Olmsted Park Goals		\$2,500,000	\$25,000,000
Subtotal		\$35,000,000	\$350,000,000
Private Leverage	Ratios		
Community Preservation	2:1	\$5,000,000	\$50,000,000
Housing Restoration - Neighborhoods	1.5:1	\$7,057,500	\$70,575,000
Housing Restoration - Downtown	3:1	\$14,115,000	\$141,150,000
Ellicott/Olmsted/ Waterfront	3:1	\$15,000,000	\$150,000,000
Economic Development	2:1	\$15,510,000	\$155,100,000
Non- Olmsted Park	2:1	\$5,000,000	\$50,000,000
Subtotal		\$61,682,500	\$616,825,000
Total of Public & Private		\$96,682,500	\$966,825,000

Source: OSP Comprehensive/Community Planning

This plan assumes that investments of this magnitude carefully targeted to economic development, basic infrastructure, transportation, housing, education, parks and public amenities are substantial enough to change the investment environment of the city and stimulate an increased level of private investment. Therefore, the implementation program assumes that leverage of private capital by public investment will increase, ranging from 1.5 to 1 to 3 to 1 (See Table 17).

This plan also projects that the assessed valuation of all Buffalo real estate will begin to grow again as a result of the combined impact of the base CIP and special Buffalo Development Program. It is estimated that annual local property tax revenues will have increased by \$1.9 million annually by the end of the ten year investment program in 2020. By the fifteenth year of the program annual tax revenues will have increased \$9.45 million annually over the current year (See Table 18).

All of these funds would be directed according to the key principles of sustainable development, smart growth, “fix the basics” and “build on assets.” All would be targeted to seven policy areas – improving public services, rebuilding public infrastructure, transforming the economy, rebuilding schools, revitalizing housing and neighborhoods, reinvesting in the Ellicott-Olmsted-waterfront structure of the city, and working to protect and repair the fabric of the city. (See Table 18 for a conceptual annual and 10-year allocation).

Well-targeted public investments can spur a virtuous cycle of improvement in the urban environment, increasing private investor confidence, growing tax revenues, promoting further public investment, attracting more private investment, and so on. The improvement in the climate for private investment will have a double benefit for public finances: growing tax revenues and a decreasing need to provide property tax exemptions as investment incentives.

3.2 SHARED INTERESTS, COMMON WORK

Achieving the goal of the Comprehensive Plan requires a new level of cooperation between City government and other levels of government, and between the City and private and not-for-profit organizations in Buffalo and the region. The City of Buffalo, Erie County, the State of New York, the federal government and businesses and community organizations of all types have a shared interest in the success of this plan and an obligation to undertake common work.

The returns on the full Capital Improvement Program including the special Buffalo Development Program will be substantial, not just for the City but also for the Buffalo-Niagara region, the State, and the U.S. government. For the City and Erie County, the returns will be particularly significant.

State legislation setting up the Buffalo Control Board acknowledged that the City of Buffalo has been more severely impacted by economic misfortune than other New York communities. The additional assistance proposed in the form of the special Buffalo Development Program is a companion initiative to the establishment of the Control Board that would materially assist the City to overcome its adverse economic circumstances and build a more prosperous future.

The redevelopment strategy at the heart of the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan will still be valid if there is no special Buffalo Development Program. It outlines a sensible way to invest in Buffalo. But if it is impossible to reach an agreement on the special Buffalo Development Program, progress toward achieving the goal of the Comprehensive Plan will be much slower and the possibility of achieving the goal within the time frame of the plan will be more remote. The special Buffalo Development Program is indispensable.

Of course, the City has a fundamental responsibility to improve the management of its affairs and to chart its own future. But, as argued throughout this plan, the City by itself lacks the resources to fully implement the plan and turn the city around. Other levels of government have both a responsibility and institutional self-interest to contribute to that work. Private and not-for-profit sector organizations, likewise, have an interest and an obligation to pitch in.

If Buffalo continues on its current trajectory of economic, demographic and physical decline, it will harm the County, New York State, and the federal government, as well as the city itself. The same is true for business and community organizations. All are needed to work together to reverse negative trends as quickly as possible by coordinating and concentrating necessary new investments.

Erie County, especially, has a major stake in the Comprehensive Plan and has been cooperating with the City in its preparation. The County has multiple and increasing responsibilities in the city. It is:

- A major employer and property owner in the City;
- A major source of revenue for the City's budget, providing 29 percent of the City's operating budget through sales taxes;
- The primary economic development agency for the area through the ECIDA; and,
- Manager of a variety of public facilities in the city, such as destination parks that are regional in character.

Table 18 | Combined Ten Year Funding Allocations

Proposed Goal Accomplishments		Annual		10 Years	
Community Preservation Goals			\$15,201,00		\$152,010,000
Public Service	25.00%		\$3,800,250		\$38,002,500
Vacant Land Management	25.00%		\$3,800,250		\$38,002,500
Vacant Building Stabilization/ Management	50.00%		\$7,600,500		\$76,005,000
Housing Restoration Goals	\$/Unit	Units	\$40,787,000	Units	\$407,870,000
Downtown (CBD & Inner Ring Neighborhoods)					
Unit Conversions/ New Units	\$100,000	160	\$16,000,000	1,600	\$160,000,000
Rehabilitation of Units	\$50,000	100	\$5,000,000	1,000	\$50,000,000
Neighborhoods					
Unit Conversions	\$100,000	110	\$11,000,000	1,100	\$110,000,000
Rehabilitation of Units	\$50,000	160	\$8,000,000	1,600	\$80,000,000
Demolition	\$4,000	1,358	\$5,431,000	13,578	\$54,310,000
Ellicott/Olmsted/Waterfront Restoration Goals			\$20,000,000		\$200,000,000
Ellicott Street	33.30%		\$6,660,000		\$66,600,000
Olmsted Parks & Parkways	33.30%		\$6,660,000		\$66,600,000
Waterfront Access	33.30%		\$6,660,000		\$66,600,000
Economic Development Goals			\$56,621,000		\$566,210,000
Commercial Strip Programs	33.30%		\$18,850,000		\$188,500,000
Business Retention	33.30%		\$18,855,000		\$188,550,000
New Business Start-up	33.30%		\$18,855,000		\$188,550,000
Street Infrastructure Goals			\$17,934,000		\$179,340,000
Street Overlays/ Reconstruction	80.00%		\$14,347,200		\$143,472,000
Sidewalks	10.00%		\$1,793,400		\$17,934,000
Street & Pedestrian Lighting	4.40%		\$789,096		\$7,890,960
Tree Planting	5.60%		\$1,004,304		
GBNRTC Goals			\$37,800,000		\$378,000,000
Water & Sewer Goals			\$10,778,000		\$107,780,000
Water Line Replacement	25.80%		\$2,778,000		\$27,780,000
Sewer Line Replacement - CSO	74.20%		\$8,000,000		\$80,000,000
Non-Olmsted Park Facilities Goals			\$12,500,000		\$125,000,000
Park Maintenance/ Enhancements	33.30%		\$4,162,500		\$41,625,000
Playground/Pocket Parks	33.30%		\$4,162,500		\$41,625,000
Facilities Maintenance	33.30%		\$4,162,500		\$41,625,000
JSCB Schools Reconstructed		5	\$95,000,000	49	\$950,000,000
Program Delivery - % of Total	0.87%		\$2,724,500		\$27,245,000
Total			\$314,776,500		\$3,147,765,000

Source: OSP Comprehensive/Community Planning

3.3 THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Comprehensive Plan is the one plan for Buffalo – a strategic, broad-scope or “big picture” physical land use plan that will serve as a framework for all current and future planning in Buffalo. The plan is comprehensive because it is concerned with the whole city and articulates a common vision for the future of Buffalo. It is strategic because it focuses on key development priorities and policies, and it identifies and organizes the financial and other resources needed to convert the vision into reality.

The Comprehensive Plan will provide the substantive legal and policy framework for all other planning efforts for Buffalo. As such, it will incorporate area or sector plans that are already being implemented, as well as additional geographically or thematically focused plans now being completed or to be developed in the future.

Plans already in place include the Queen City Hub; a Regional Action plan for Downtown Buffalo and the school reconstruction plan of the Joint Schools Construction Board. A number of smaller scale plans dealing with specific areas or sites are also in development. Those that fall within the geographical ambit of the Queen City Hub plan, such as the Erie Canal Harbor Development and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Master Plan, are covered in that Plan. Others outside the Downtown area, such as the Union Ship Canal redevelopment, are not mentioned specifically in any detail, but their proposed land uses are included in the accompanying land use maps.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic framework for continuing planning. Its vision, priorities, and policies are intended to guide decision making by all levels of government and the private sector. But it will be required to grow and adapt to changing circumstances. In particular, implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require completion of a number of more specific and detailed plans, as well as constant measurement and monitoring.

The City will seek the County's participation in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, and request the County join the City in seeking support from State and federal legislative delegations for a special Buffalo Development Program.

State and federal governments are also powerful influences in Buffalo, both in terms of their policy and program responsibilities, and their employment in the city. The State is the largest contributor to the City's revenues, providing 45 percent of the City's operating budget. Government in general is crucial to the City's employment base. More than 26,000 people in Buffalo were employed in public service jobs in 2000. The city is heavily dependent on this level of employment being sustained.

As work on the Buffalo Comprehensive Plan goes forward, the Mayor, Common Council, and City staff will continue to reach out to leaders at the County, State and federal levels, and to leaders in business and in community based organizations.

These component plans include the following:

- A Plan for the Ellicott Radials
- The Olmsted Parks and Parkways Restoration and Management Plan
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
- The Strategic Plan for Waterfront Corridor Transportation Improvements (WCI)
- The Peace Bridge Expansion Plan
- The Community Preservation Plan
- Good Neighbors Planning Alliance plans for Planning Communities and Neighborhoods
- An Environmental Management System and Environmental Plan

Linking the Comprehensive Plan to the City Capital Improvement Program will also facilitate implementation of plans developed and managed by City departments and agencies, such as the Street Reconstruction Plans of the Public Works Department, the Urban Reforestation Plan of the Forestry Division, and the Parks Restoration Plans of the Parks Department.

The Comprehensive Plan will also provide a vehicle to coordinate planning for the City with planning at the County and regional scale. It connects itself with regional planning efforts that are already in place, such as the 2030 Long Range Plan by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, and others in preparation. These include:

- The Erie Niagara Framework for Regional Growth;
- The Erie Niagara Regional Partnership economic development strategy;
- The Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative; and,
- The Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP)

The Comprehensive Plan should be approved by the Planning Board and Common Council and formally adopted as the official plan of the City. The City's Zoning Ordinance should also be reviewed to determine how best to implement land use patterns defined in the Plan. A generic Environmental Impact Statement for the plan should be prepared.

The Office of Strategic Planning and City Departments and agencies, the Planning Board and Common Council should each review the plan every five years to correspond with the charter required five-year strategic capital allocation plan and the regular decennial census. Most important of all, the Plan should be regarded as a "living" document, providing continuity of vision for the process of city development, but allowing flexibility to incorporate supplementary or complementary plans as they are developed.

3.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Specific, objective and quantifiable performance measures must be established so that the City and others can determine if Buffalo is making progress toward achievement of the Comprehensive Plan goal, and to inform choices about adjustments to the plan on a continuing basis.

The Office of Strategic Planning should monitor and measure how the plan is implemented, both in terms of the plan's economic, social and environmental impacts and in terms of land use, housing targets, investments made and development achieved.

A useful array of performance measures has already been developed as part of the *Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo*. Many of these can be adapted for the Comprehensive Plan to minimize the considerable workload involved in applying these measures consistently and regularly. The State of the Region indicators developed by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth should also be assessed for use in this regard. City Departments and agencies should be requested to report achievements against targets on a timely basis.

Key performance measures should be monitored at multiple levels – the Planning Community, City, County, and MSA or regional. It is important for the City's leaders to know not only how the various parts of the city are faring, but also how Buffalo is doing in relation to the County and the region. OSP should have the comprehensive ability to make those comparisons.

At a minimum the performance measures should track:

- Land use
- Housing targets
- Development changes (by neighborhood)
- Investments
- Population
- Employment
- City services
- Environmental and energy targets

If the Comprehensive Plan is to be both effective and a truly “living document” continuous monitoring of performance measures is critical. We cannot measure our progress or correct our course if we don't have the kind of information provided by effective performance measures.

3.5 NEXT STEPS

The plan is based on the contributions of City departments and agencies, other stakeholder organizations, and extensive public consultations carried out over a number of years through the Buffalo Neighborhood Summits and the Downtown Buffalo Summits. A final round of agency, stakeholder, and public review was undertaken between the summer of 2003 and early 2004. In addition the plan was posted on the City's website (www.city-buffalo.com). The plan was submitted to the Common Council in July 2005 and adopted February 7, 2006

Part One of the plan, “Issues, Resources and Challenges” showed clearly that, while Buffalo has good prospects, immediate steps must be taken and continuing effort must be sustained if the goals of the Plan are to be achieved by 2030.

Among these steps are the following:

- Negotiation with Albany and Washington to establish the special Buffalo Development Program;
- Reorganization of the Economic Development structure of the City and the Region as recommended in the One Stop Shop report done for the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership;
- Continued effort by the City Administration to identify and implement best management practices that permit cost savings and redeployment of city resources to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan;
- Continuing negotiation with the County and region on inter-municipal service sharing and agreements that permit more effective and efficient use of resources, or shared acceptance of common responsibilities;
- A review of the City organizational structure and responsibilities, within the context of the City Charter, to provide for effective delivery of the planning policies set out in the Comprehensive Plan, including reform of the approval process for private sector development proposals;
- A revised Zoning Ordinance consistent with the Land Use concept of the Comprehensive Plan, and
- Implementation of the Urban Design Guidelines contained within the plan.

The work plan outlined above should proceed immediately.

CONCLUSION

The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan strikes a balance between the visionary and the practical, between what Buffalonians hope for their city in the future and what must be done right now to save it, between what is possible over the next quarter century and what is necessary now. Even as Buffalo struggles to answer its current crisis, it is essential to act as if the city will be here a hundred years from now and beyond. Buffalo can do both and the Comprehensive Plan shows how.

A city must have a plan for its future, and as the one plan for Buffalo, the Comprehensive Plan will provide the binding legal framework for all of our future-focused work, including plans for Downtown, the waterfront, for its historic assets, and for all of Buffalo's neighborhoods. The Comprehensive Plan will provide a policy direction that is clear, unequivocal, consistent over time, official and authoritative.

A city must have a vision for its future, and the Comprehensive Plan expresses that clearly. Buffalonians don't want a different city; they want a city that is everything Buffalo was and could be again, that reclaims our past greatness and finds its place in the 21st century world at the same time.

A city must always follow basic principles in building its future and the Comprehensive Plan shows the way. The principles of sustainability and smart growth, and the common sense advice of "fix the basics" and "build on assets" animate every part of this plan.

Any vision and plan must be put into action behind clear policy priorities. For the Comprehensive Plan these include providing quality public services, maintaining public infrastructure, transforming the city's economy, rebuilding its schools, and revitalizing its housing and neighborhoods. It also means reinvesting in essential structure of the city – the Ellicott street plan, the Olmsted parks and parkways, and the waterfront – as well as the whole of our urban fabric, old and new.

A plan must also have a clear goal, and this plan does – to reverse the long-term decline in the city's population, economy and physical environment. Such a goal, like the entire plan, is visionary. But at the same time, it is nothing more than what absolutely must be done.

Finally, an effective plan must link vision and policy directly to capital investment. The Comprehensive Plan does that, as did the City Charter revisions of recent years. Expressing Buffalo's vision, plan and policies through its Capital Improvement Program, however, demonstrates that the City lacks the resources on its own to do everything that needs to be done and makes the case for the special Buffalo Development Program.

With the help of County, State and federal partners, however, Buffalo can implement this plan and achieve the goal. To paraphrase Buffalo Bills coaching great Lou Saban, we can achieve what this plan describes. But, even more than that, we must achieve it.

Acknowledgements

City of Buffalo

Bryon W. Brown, Mayor

Anthony M. Masiello, Former Mayor

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Marc A. Coppola, Delaware District

Brian C. Davis, Ellicott District

David A. Franczyk, Fillmore District

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		Erie County	Ken Swanekamp
Buffalo Board of Education	Mel Alston	Planning	Laurence Rubin Michael Krasner
Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation	Michael Ball Alan DeLisle David Stebbins	Buffalo Arts Commission	David Granville
Buffalo EMC	Bruce Coleman	Friends of the Buffalo Niagara River	Julie O'Neill Lynda Schneekloth
Buffalo Green Fund	David Colligan	Government Representative	Jeffrey Williams
Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority	Charles J. Priore Lawrence Seneear Sharon West	Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council	Richard Guarino Hal Morse
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus	Matt Enstice	Joint School Construction Board	Justine LeFauve Valerie Nolan
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	Sandy White		
	Gary Witulski		

ADDENDA

Plans Incorporated by Reference

- _ Queen City Hub: Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo
- * A Plan for the Ellicott Radials
- * An Olmsted Parks and Parkways Plan
- * The Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan
- * The Waterfront Corridor Initiative
- * The Peace Bridge Expansion Plan
- * The City-Wide Community Preservation Plan
- _ Environmental Commission Plan
- * City of Buffalo Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan –
City of Buffalo All Hazards Mitigation Plan
- _ Facilities and Vacant Land Management Plan
- * Good Neighbors Planning Alliance – Community/Neighborhood Plans
- * Four Year Strategic Plan

Regional Planning Links

- * Buffalo-Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative
- * Erie County Planning Framework
- * Erie Niagara Regional Economic Development Strategy
- _ GBNRTC 2030 Long Range Plan for Erie and Niagara Counties

_ = Complete in draft

* = Under development

REFERENCES AND SOURCE DOCUMENTATION

The Queen City in the 21st Century builds on literally decades of work by a broad cross section of public agency staff, consultants, and citizens. Peter J. Smith Inc. added to the mix with their diagnostic review of the city with policy framework proposals reported on in 2000 for the Office of Strategic Planning (see City of Buffalo Comprehensive Plan: Citywide Neighborhood Inventory and Assessment).

The list of sources below references the work products prepared over several months in 2002 for a series of weekly meetings with the OSP planning team, updating and analyzing current conditions, identifying issues, developing policy positions, and, in another series of meetings in 2003, developing the comprehensive plan. All of the documents are compiled in a large notebook maintained in the Office of Strategic Planning.

The plan also builds on the ongoing work of the Good Neighbors Planning Alliance and a history of public engagement in a series of downtown and neighborhood summits documented in the Downtown Buffalo 2002! Program (www.downtownbuffalo2002.org) and in Experiments in Democracy: The Buffalo Summit Series, 1994-98, produced by The Urban Design Project, School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo, State University of New York (1998)

Demographic Analysis and Trends:

Information Presented by David DiSalvo (OSP) [Printed Material];

TABLE DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Trends: 2000, Geographic Area: Buffalo City, NY
(Source: US Census Bureau)

City of Buffalo, New York Population Comparison Graphics 1990 to 2000 (Prepared By: City of Buffalo, Planning Analysis, October 30, 2001)

June 1977 "Buffalo City Plan" (Prepared By: Division of Planning: Paul Barrick, Richard H. Gennuso, and Daniel J. Guminiski)

Demographic Profile 1990 and 2000, City of Buffalo / Erie County (Source: US Census Bureau)

School Situation and Outlook:

Information Presented by Mel Alston (BPS) (Report & PowerPoint Presentation Print-Out);

Buffalo Public Schools Executive Committee for Building Usage, Presentation to the Board, March 13, 2002 (Power Point)

CHOICE COMMITTEE, February / March 2002. Current Structure of Schools, Background, Choice Proposal, Demographic Data, Phase I Reconstruction Plan, Enrollment Projection Study, Districtwide Technology Projects. (Board of Education Committee formed January, 2002, Mission: School placement choices that reflect district diversity objectives.)

Neighborhood and Housing Conditions and Outlook:

Information Presented by Joanne Kearns, Mary Lesniak, Fred Heinle, Chuck Thomas [Printed Material].

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