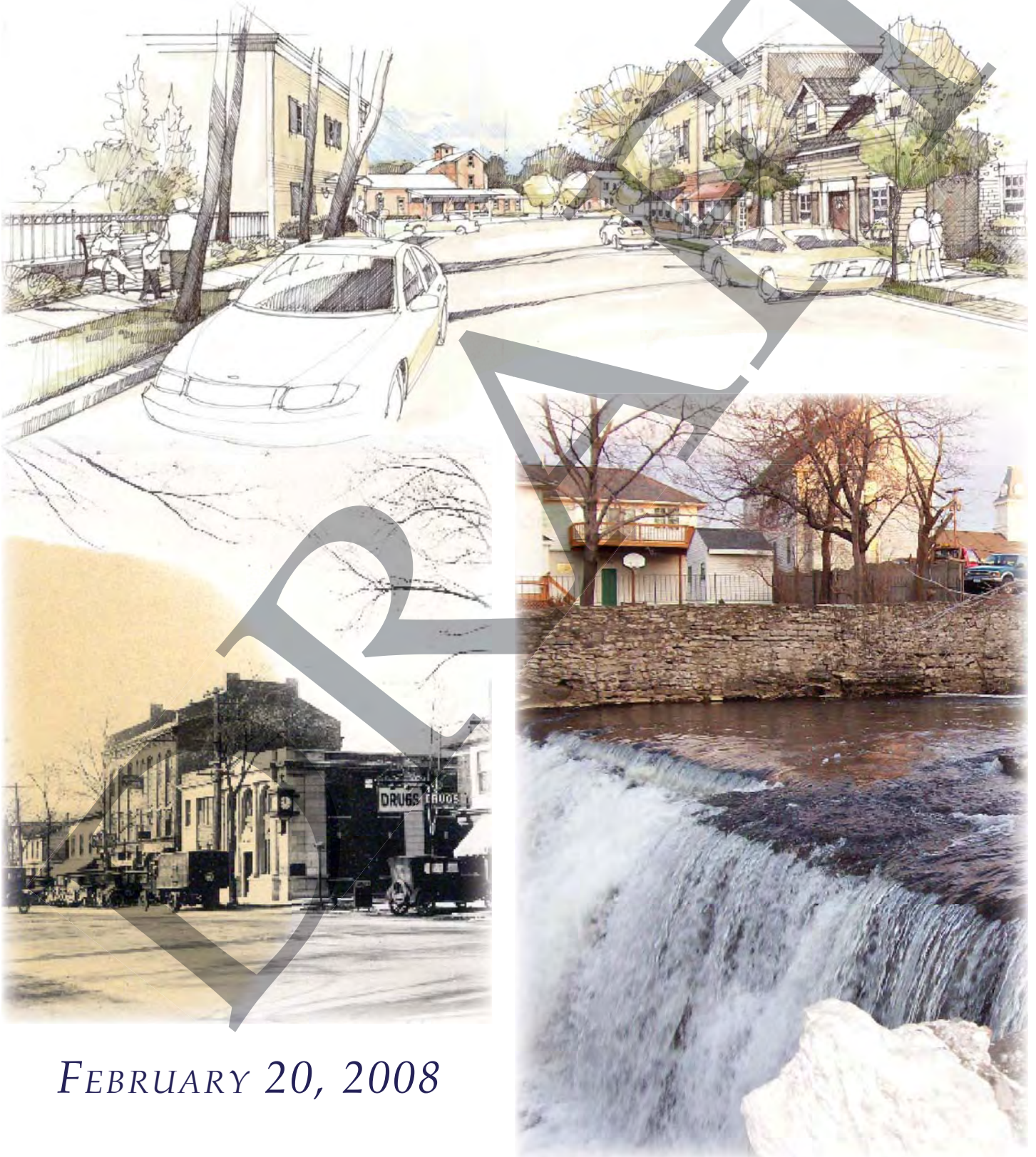


# VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE COMMUNITY PLAN

AND

## DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



FEBRUARY 20, 2008



**DRAFT**

**(FEBRUARY 20, 2008)**

**VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE COMMUNITY PLAN**

*AND*

**DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT STATEMENT**

Prepared by:

*Behan Planning Associates, LLC*

*SRF Associates, Inc.*

*Devonomics, Inc.*

*Environmental Design & Research, P.C.*





## **WILLIAMSVILLE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

*Mary E. Lowther, Mayor*  
*Brian J. Geary, Trustee*  
*Jeffrey L. Kingsley, Trustee*  
*Brian J. Kulpa, Trustee*  
*Basil J. Piazza, Trustee*

**Date of Acceptance: INSERT DATE**



**TO BE INSERTED IN THE DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT STATEMENT (DGEIS)**

**Name of Action:** Village of Williamsville Community Plan

**Location of Action:** Village of Williamsville, Erie County, New York

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**Date of Acceptance:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Public Hearing:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments Due:** \_\_\_\_\_

INSERT ADOPTION RESOLUTION DOCUMENTING COMPLIANCE WITH  
SEQR AND NYS VILLAGE LAW



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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### **Special thanks to:**

Town of Amherst  
Amherst Museum  
New York Department of Transportation  
Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Commission (GBNRTC)  
Amherst Industrial Development Agency  
Partners for a Livable Western New York

*Preparation of the Williamsville Community Plan was partially funded by:*

Community Development Block Grant Program  
New York State Department of State under the Quality Communities Grant Program  
Amherst Industrial Development Agency



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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Summary

The historic Village of Williamsville occupies a unique niche within the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area. Within easy commuting distance to Buffalo, regional shopping and transportation infrastructure, including the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, the Village is both an attractive place to live and in which to do business. However, over time, lifestyle and land use trends have conspired to weaken the Village fabric and the



Although congestion is evident, Main Street in the 1950s had not yet fully capitulated to the automobile. Note the wider sidewalks and diagonal parking.

very character and qualities that make Williamsville special.

The demands of the automobile have had, perhaps, the biggest impact. As traffic on Main Street increased from year to year, improvements such as road widening and turning lanes were made to avoid complete gridlock. Unfortunately, these changes came at a cost to pedestrians and village character. Wider streets temporarily solved traffic problems temporarily, but ultimately facilitated more and faster moving traffic.

As the streets got wider, pedestrian movement became increasingly marginalized: wider, busier streets became more difficult to cross; narrower sidewalks

became less pleasant to walk along; and the replacement of diagonal parking spaces with parallel spaces reduced the on-street parking supply.

The erosion of Williamsville's pedestrian friendliness over the years is particularly troubling given the Village's changing role within the larger economic picture of metropolitan Buffalo: Surrounded today by suburban malls and big box retail developments, Williamsville, more than ever, occupies a niche market where village charm, walkability and uniqueness are its chief competitive advantages. This plan provides a series of strategies that can be implemented to mitigate traffic impacts and leverage the potential of the Village's pedestrian environment to its fullest.

This plan also focuses on land use in the Village. Early on in the public process, it became clear that Village residents valued the historic character of Main Street and the mix of uses that are the hallmarks of a vibrant village center. At the same time, Village residents were largely content with the character and scale of existing one and two family neighborhoods. This plan sets forth land use classifications that derive from this vision for the Village. Such land use classifications will help to guide decision making and action by the Village, and set the stage for possible future changes to Village regulations and policies. Two special "Focus Areas" were also identified during the course of the project: South Long Street and "Mill Village". For these areas, both of which present unique opportunities and challenges, a deeper level of analysis and recommendations is

provided. The South Long Street neighborhood offers possibilities for future redevelopment of industrial properties and improvement of Long Street Park. “Mill Village” – is a concept for reclaiming a vibrant and well-defined village center for Williamsville at Spring and Main that draws inspiration from a rehabilitated Williamsville Mill and improved park connections.

The plan also presents economic development strategies that will help make the land use vision for Williamsville a reality. Understanding Williamsville’s role in the larger economic setting of the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area is key. This plan charts a course that advances the Village’s vision for itself within the context of these economic realities.

In the end, this plan represents a concerted effort on the part of Williamsville’s citizens and leaders to take a proactive role in shaping the growth and development of the Village. While the plan alone will not transform the Village, it provides a framework for future actions and decisions. Its comprehensive approach ensures that decisions are not made in a vacuum. At the same time, by focusing on key areas and issues in a strategic manner, the plan sets the stage for positive outcomes where change is most expected and or desired.

## **1.2 Project History**

This plan is the culmination of a multi-year effort that commenced with a Village wide survey and the establishment by the Village Board of the Community Plan Committee (CPC) in May, 2005. Members of the CPC were chosen to provide a broad representation of perspectives, expertise and experiences. CPC members included Village residents with backgrounds as business and property owners and stakeholders. The CPC provided policy guidance to the consultants hired by the Village to prepare this plan; the CPC directed the consultant team and served as a sounding board for consultant work products and ideas. Equally important, the CPC played a substantial role in the public outreach process and were actively involved in the facilitation of public workshops and meetings. Throughout the course of the planning project, the CPC held approximately 20 working sessions that were open to the public.



Committee members, consultants and Village residents discuss economic development at the April, 2007 public workshop.

Public involvement has been critical to the development of this plan. In addition to the CPC meetings that were open to the public, a series of larger, Village-wide public meetings and hands-on workshops were held to gather additional public input and advance and develop plan ideas and concepts. Smaller stakeholder meetings and interviews were also conducted to better understand the needs of the community.



## **1.3 Organization of the Plan Document**

### **1.3.1 Organization**

The basic components of the plan are as follows:

- ❖ Village Land Use;
- ❖ The Main Street Business District;
- ❖ Transportation;
- ❖ Village Focus Areas; and
- ❖ Plan Implementation.

The discussion and recommendations organized under these subject areas speak to those issues that emerged through the course of the planning process as most important to the community and thereby meriting the highest level of attention. A series of “Objectives and Actions” are set forth for each of these subject areas, as well as a priority list that pulls together the highest priority items from these subject areas in the Implementation chapter of this plan. For almost every Objective and/or Action specified, responsible/involved parties are identified, a suggested time-frame for implementation is set forth (short-, -mid-, -long), and where possible, costs are estimated.

It should be noted here that the Village is served by a host of committees comprised of dedicated residents that, at the behest of the Village Board, provide input on a wide range of important Village issues. While the Village Board is generally cited as the “responsible” party with respect to many of the recommended actions in this plan, many recommendations relate directly to the work of a particular committee. The plan serves as guidance for the important work that the committees undertake on behalf of the Village.

This approach sets the Village up for successful plan implementation by focusing on a finite list of priorities that work towards common, clearly articulated goals. In addition to specific strategies and actions, the plan lays out a series of overarching principles and objectives that can guide the development and implementation of future actions and strategies that may not be specifically referenced in this plan. The plan concludes with an implementation section, including an implementation table that contains the highest priority actions for the Village.

#### *Environmental Impacts*

The Williamsville Community Plan was reviewed and adopted in conformance with New York State Village Law and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). To this end, a single document combining both the analysis required by SEQRA and the Community Plan itself, was created -- a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS). The DGEIS, on file at the Village, provides additional background information on the Village (Inventory & Analysis – see below) and discussion on the alternatives and impacts that were considered in the creation of the final Community Plan. According to *The SEQRA Handbook*, which is published by the New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), “a generic EIS is a type of EIS that is more general than a site-specific EIS and typically is used to consider broad-based actions...the generic EIS can examine the environmental effects of programs or plans that have wide application or restrict the range of future alternative policies such as agency regulations or permit programs, master plans, or resource management plans”.

A comprehensive plan, by its very nature, takes a comprehensive look at the environment and setting of a community and identifies and examines potential impacts of land use and planning decisions and policies, as well as an investigation of alternatives. These elements are present throughout this plan, but are also addressed specifically in the DGEIS document, under Sections 7 *DGEIS Impact Analysis* and 8 *DGEIS Alternatives*.

#### *Inventory & Analysis*

The Inventory & Analysis was completed as a first phase of the Community Plan and serves as the required “environmental setting” in the DGEIS, pursuant to SEQR. As noted above, the DGEIS is on file at Village Hall. The Inventory & Analysis documents the Village’s setting and characteristics under the following subject headings:

- ❖ Community;
- ❖ Land Use;
- ❖ History;
- ❖ Circulation & Infrastructure;
- ❖ Parks & Nature; and
- ❖ Economy

The Inventory & Analysis should be consulted by anyone seeking a detailed inventory and data on existing Village conditions, as well as basic observations derived from the data.

## **1.4 Village of Williamsville Vision Statement**

The Vision Statement was developed as an important first step in the preparation of this plan. It is an overarching statement that sets forth the community’s shared vision for Williamsville, back to which the concepts and ideas that are set forth in the Community Plan can all be traced. Because of its breadth and scope, the Vision Statement can be consulted with respect to evaluating virtually any action proposed to be undertaken within the Village for consistency with the community’s vision. The two-part Vision Statement (“Introduction to the Vision” and “The Vision Statement”) is provided below.

### ***1.4.1 “Introduction to the Vision”***

The Vision of Williamsville is one of inclusive diversity, in which the best elements of the Village’s rich historical, cultural, and natural heritage have been conserved and sensitively enhanced for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The residents of Williamsville have worked in cooperation to construct the following “Vision” to represent their collective future. The Vision has been developed as the result of a varied public input process and an analysis of existing conditions. The physical design and planning policy, prepared as a part of Williamsville’s Community Plan, must incorporate

all elements of this Vision. The Vision represents both a rationale and series of guiding principles to ensure that future planning moves the Village forward in a direction its residents are willing to take. In shaping its future, the Village of Williamsville is ever cognizant of its place within the Town of Amherst and Western New York. The Village and Town are partners in mutually supportive endeavors to manage growth, promote economic development, and provide facilities and services for residents. Within the Region, Williamsville offers living, business and shopping opportunities for residents, workers and visitors in an historic setting that reflects its heritage and role in the renewal of Western New York.

### **1.4.2 “The Vision Statement”**

Williamsville’s future builds upon its present as a unique and historic place. Our Village functions as an integral part of the Town of Amherst and the surrounding region. Ideally, the future Village will enhance this unique character by building upon our defining characteristics:

- ❖ Our Diverse Neighborhoods;
- ❖ Our Main Street Shopping District; and
- ❖ Our Physical Setting.

Our Vision ensures that Village neighborhoods remain safe and secure, with a range of housing available to all socioeconomic groups. Each neighborhood has its own identity, derived from a strong sense of community and active participation by residents in civic life. Residents respect the history of their homes by maintaining and enhancing their unique character. Our neighborhoods connect to each other, to the historic center of the Village, to a responsive government, and to the surrounding Town of Amherst by modes of movement that emphasize pedestrian accessibility and safety. Our economy is focused along Main Street and its environs. Our Main Street Business District is enhanced by the presence of civic institutions, housing opportunities, historic and cultural assets located at the crossroads of the historic Buffalo Road and Ellicott Creek. Business, government, and residents work together to promote economic prosperity while protecting the valued Village quality of life. The positive effects of coordinated public and private investments are evident along the Main Street corridor where residents and visitors stroll amongst vibrant businesses and splendid civic spaces. The Village’s residents have ready access to local and regional job opportunities and to education and training programs that prepare them for the changing workplaces of the future.

The **physical setting** of Williamsville is defined by our natural resources, places of commerce, open spaces and civic activity. Our environment is built to a human scale and is comprised of a natural waterfront environment, a vibrant and walkable business district, historic buildings and assets, comfortable spaces for civic celebration, attractive neighborhoods, and a network of parks and open spaces. Amherst State Park, Glen Park and Island Park are linked by Ellicott Creek to form a green corridor that intersects with the Main Street Business District and historic Water Mill Complex to form the crossroads of Village life. A high quality of design is reflected in the built environment throughout Williamsville, especially along its defining corridors and at “gateway” entrances. While our Village welcomes future growth in the form of new jobs, new assets and new living

opportunities, we also demand that each is sensitively developed within the context of the natural setting our current residents enjoy. We welcome change, yet choose to embrace that change within an adopted planning policy that protects the quality of life for both residents and visitors.

## **1.5 How to Use the Plan**

The Williamsville Community Plan establishes the community's vision for the future. This vision is expressed in many ways, starting with the official Vision Statement crafted by the community. Throughout the document, this vision is further developed and clarified into specific goals, strategies and projects. The overall goal of the plan is to be both visionary and comprehensive, while providing detailed guidance for concrete actions and projects. The strength of the plan lies in the overriding principles and vision that it conveys, which in turn are applied to evolving circumstances and conditions. In the end, the plan will inform decision making by the Village and the people who live and do business in the Village. The plan will also serve as a guide to agencies or organizations that partner with the Village on projects and plans, or have a jurisdictional interest in an element of the Village, such as NYSDOT with respect to Main Street. Specific uses, decisions, and actions that are appropriately guided by the goals, objectives, and policies of the Community Plan include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Consideration of proposed amendments to the Village Zoning Code and other growth management and land use regulations;
- ❖ Completion of environmental assessments required under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA);
- ❖ As the primary resource for reviewing public and private development applications, such as site plans;
- ❖ As the basis for decisions by the Planning Board development applications, in conjunction with the Village's applicable zoning and land use regulations;
- ❖ Development of priorities for capital projects proposed by Village agencies and community groups for inclusion in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP);
- ❖ As the policy framework for preparing facilities plans for infrastructure and all plans for capital projects proposed within the community by other governmental agencies;
- ❖ As a general guide for the activities of town departments that involve regulating aspects of growth or whose programs or service delivery are driven by the location, characteristics, numbers and density of residents;
- ❖ As policy level guidance to the design of regional infrastructure within the Village, particularly those constructed and maintained by higher levels of government.



In addition to its role in guiding the formation of policies and decision making, the Community Plan represents an expression of the desired future of the Village to outside interests and agencies. Although not binding on County, State and Federal agencies, it is incumbent upon them to avoid local controversy and accommodate the provisions of the plan. As a reflection of the community's preferences for future development, the plan is a powerful tool that can provide the Village with an advantage in obtaining grants and funding them from outside agencies. Grant applications that are supported by policies and actions defined in a comprehensive plan routinely receive higher priority scores and are funded more frequently. In some cases, a plan is a pre-requisite to applying for grant monies. Additional guidance on how to use the various components of the plan is provided within the text of the plan in connection with the discussion of such components.

## **1.6 Regional Context**

The Village of Williamsville does not, of course, exist in a vacuum. The Village lies within the Town of Amherst, and is also part of the larger Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area. Throughout this plan, therefore, regional partners and relationships are highlighted wherever they dovetail with Village goals. For instance, the Niagara Greenway plan is referenced in connection with the Village's parks, and strategies for linking them together both within the Village, and to a larger, regional park system (see Section 2.2.3). In the transportation section of this plan, many of the Village's transportation issues and solutions are discussed within a regional context. Lastly, much of this plan is based on leveraging the unique qualities and advantages of the Village of Williamsville, within the larger regional context that it is located. Walkable neighborhoods, historic character, a concentration of services and shopping, are all distinct offerings that Williamsville brings to metropolitan Buffalo, and that distinguish it from many of the newer, suburban environments that surround it. Finding ways to both protect and leverage these qualities, while searching for new opportunities within the Village's largely built-up environment that meet current lifestyles, is key to keeping the Village healthy and relevant for years to come. This theme of retaining the Village's unique qualities and assets, while continuing to position the Village as a center for activity, services and vibrant, mixed-use environments, is a theme that runs not only through this plan, but through a number of plans recently completed or underway in the region, each of which are briefly summarized below:

### **1. *Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (2004)***

The Town of Amherst plan acknowledges Williamsville as a key component of the Town's quality of life and identity. The Town's vision statement acknowledges the importance of the Village's "vibrant older neighborhoods" and envisions the Village's commercial areas as places that are "revitalized and attract continuing investment." Williamsville is designated as a "Mixed Use/Activity Center" on the Town's *Conceptual Land Use Plan* (Figure 6). As noted in the plan, this designation entails the strengthening and provision of mixed-use, walkable environments that are "higher in density and incorporate a wider range

of uses than the lower density, predominantly residential areas surrounding them” (pages 15, 16). While woven throughout the plan, in connection with proposed strategies and policies, the plan recommends the following specific qualities of a mixed-use environment (page 44):

- A mix of uses at a higher density and in closer proximity to one another than what is typically found in surrounding, lower density areas;
- Urban design amenities such as sidewalks, landscaping and other elements to create pedestrian-friendly environments;
- A concentration of public and community facilities, including schools;
- Vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle connections to surrounding neighborhoods; and
- Transit service.

Williamsville is also featured as one of six “Focal Planning Areas” within the Town (page 162). For these Focal Areas, a more detailed analysis and set of recommendations are set forth, that respond to the unique opportunities and issues presented in the area. Key observations and recommendations focus around strengthening the Village as a vibrant, mixed-use destination; improving the pedestrian experience; and linking together assets, such as the Village’s parks. Many of the concepts and recommendations set forth for the “Williamsville Focal Planning Area” are included and expanded upon in the Williamsville Community Plan.

## 2. *Framework for Regional Growth: Erie + Niagara Counties, NY (2006)*

The Framework examines the “thinning” of population density and investment from the center of the Buffalo-Niagara region outwards, as new development continues to occur at the margins of the region. This trend is exacerbated in the Buffalo-Niagara region, because it occurs in the context of declining population. Disinvestment that was formerly limited to the urban core – namely the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, is now extending to first ring suburbs. In one sense, Williamsville has experienced this phenomenon on a micro-scale for the past several decades. As suburban development sprouted up around Williamsville during the past several decades, and lifestyles and transportation modes evolved, the Village lost its role as a center for basic shopping needs to new plazas, strip development and malls. However, if development continues to migrate to the edges of the metro area, while population remains stagnant, suburbs adjoining Williamsville may find themselves dealing with similar issues of disinvestment.

The Framework looks at regional approaches to successful growth that channel new development in a way that strengthens the region as a whole and reinvests in existing centers, such as Williamsville. The Framework specifically identifies

Williamsville as a “Regional Center” (page 35). Regional Centers are highlighted in the Framework as places “that are recognized for their existing and potential economic vitality, diverse mix of land uses, concentrations of public facilities and services, and potential as locations for higher intensity, mixed use development and enhanced public transportation service.

The Framework also locates Williamsville within the “Developed” area of the Buffalo-Niagara Region (page 34) and sets forth reinvestment targets and strategies in this area for accommodating regional growth through 2025.

3. *UB 2020: Framework for the Future* (underway)

The UB 2020 Framework is currently underway. Four “pillars” of UB 2020 have been established:

- Achieving Growth;
- Excelling in Academics;
- Building UB: The Comprehensive Physical Plan; and
- Transforming Operations.

Perhaps of most relevance to Williamsville is the Framework’s prediction that the university will grow by as much as 40% and add up to 10,000 new students by 2020. Williamsville could potentially absorb some of this growth with respect to housing for students, faculty and staff of a greatly expanded university. By leveraging and strengthening its unique, pedestrian environment, the Village can also be in a position to attract more visitors from the university, particularly those who are looking for an antidote to the largely suburban, low-density surroundings of the North Campus. Establishing reliable, user-friendly transportation links is one way in which the Village can make itself more accessible to the university population. The Village may also provide an ideal setting for certain university facilities or venues that are located “off campus.”

One core focus of the UB2020 Plan is “Civic Engagement and Public Policy” – with a goal of “creating resilient communities and sustainable economies.” Moving forward, the Village should partner with UB to find where the respective goals of each correspond and offer opportunities for collaboration.

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## 2.0 VILLAGE LAND USE

Like many established, historic villages, the Village of Williamsville consists of a largely built-up environment with relatively few areas of undeveloped land. In the course of the planning process it became clear that residents were almost universally content with the character and state of the Village's existing, traditionally scaled residential neighborhoods, some of which date back to the earliest days of the Village and many of which date to the Village's growth as an early suburb in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the land use recommendations in this plan focus more on commercial and multifamily areas of the Village where change is expected and/or desired. By focusing on areas of the Village where change is likely to happen and developing a land use vision based on community values, the Village can be prepared to proactively manage change as it occurs.

### 2.1 Village Land Use Vision

The Village of Williamsville is an attractive community consisting of traditionally scaled, walkable neighborhoods in close proximity to an historic and vibrant Main Street core. The Village's established one- and two-family neighborhoods should be preserved and maintained for future generations as they are central to the Village's quality of life and offer an alternative to the suburban style subdivisions that are characteristic of areas outside the Village. New and varied housing types should also be pursued to ensure that residents have adequate housing options within the Village to meet changing needs over the course of a lifetime. Lastly, Main Street should be a pedestrian friendly, mixed-use destination that draws both residents and visitors to its unique stores and services, nearby parks and historic mill district.

### 2.2 Village Land Use Classifications

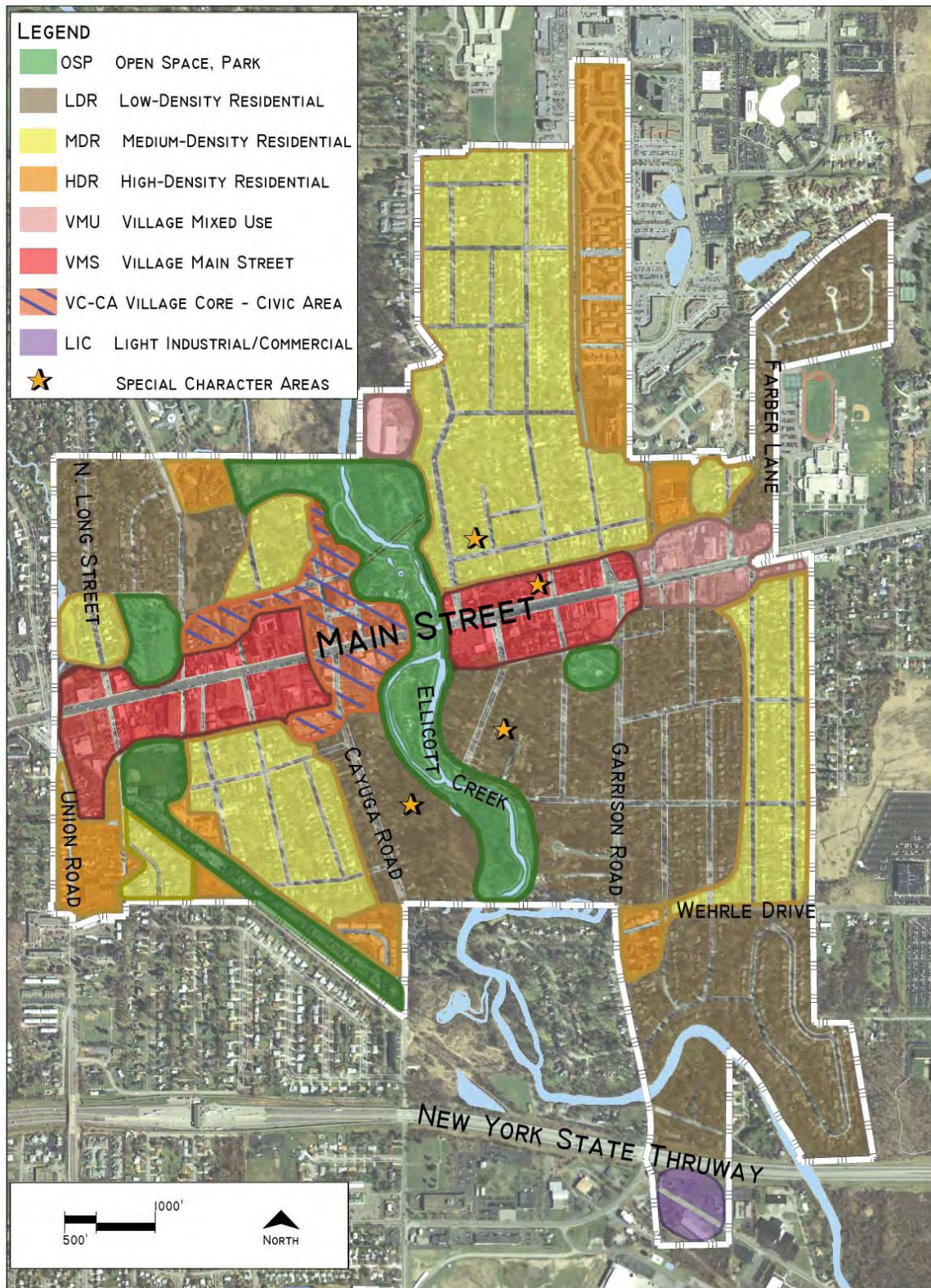
The *Conceptual Land Use Plan* (Figure 1) depicts the following four major land use classifications:

- ❖ Residential (*Low Density, Medium Density, High Density*);
- ❖ Mixed-Use ( *Village Core-Civic Area, Village Main Street and Village Mixed Use*);
- ❖ *Light Industrial-Commercial; and*
- ❖ *Open Space, Parks.*

The above land use classifications, which articulate the vision for land use within different areas of the Village, are intended to guide future decision making and actions. As such, they are not parcel specific, but indicate approximate areas within the Village that possess common existing or future desired characteristics. Residential and mixed-use classifications are further broken down into sub-classifications to account for variations within the Village's residential and mixed-use commercial areas.



Figure 1 – Conceptual Land Use Plan



The exact boundaries of the land use classifications are not as important as their general locations and extent relative to one another within the Village. Additional analysis and public discussion will be necessary in connection with any future decisions involving specific parcels, such as site plan review or potential zoning amendments.

Most notable, perhaps, is the absence in the Land Use Plan of a dedicated “Commercial” or “Office” land use classification, despite the fact that commercial and office uses are prevalent within the Village. Rather, such uses are accounted for in the Village Core-Civic Area, Village Main Street and Village Mixed Use land use classifications. This is in acknowledgment of the fact that in a traditional village setting such as Williamsville, a fine grained mix of uses that includes both residential and commercial is a recipe for vitality and provides flexibility for entrepreneurs and business owners. In fact, in the Main Street setting, the quality of the built form is often as important, if not more so, than the exact nature of specific uses.



In the Main Street setting, the quality of the built form is often more important than the nature of specific land uses.

The land use classifications depicted in Figure 1 are discussed immediately below. For each classification the following items are provided:

- ❖ Location and Character Description;
- ❖ Recommended Uses;
- ❖ Recommended Density; and
- ❖ Design Principles.

It should be noted that the uses, densities and design principles recommended for each land use classification are intended to guide general decision making and should be interpreted as approximate ranges and benchmarks appropriate to a village-wide plan. More precise use and density regulations and design principles can be established in connection with potential future amendments to the Village’s zoning code and the establishment of new and/or modified zoning districts.

Additionally, in the course of the planning process two “focus areas” emerged, South Long Street and the area of the Village surrounding the Williamsville Mill – “Mill



Village”. These areas of the Village possess unique characteristics and opportunities that merit an extra level of attention. They are discussed in greater detail in Section 5. At the conclusion of this section is a list of specific Land Use Objectives and Actions derived from the Land Use Classifications and Focus Area analysis.

### **2.2.1 Residential Classifications**

As noted above, Village residents are largely satisfied with the scale and character of the one and two family residential neighborhoods that comprise much of the Village. As such, this plan does not recommend any major land use changes in these areas of the Village. Rather, it defines the qualities that the community values with respect to these areas and establishes a set of design principles that are intended to strengthen and protect them in the future.

In addition to its one and two-family residential areas, the Village also contains areas of higher density housing, such as the concentration of apartments along Evans Street, at Wehrle Drive and Garrison Road, and along South Cayuga Road. The presence of multifamily housing is not atypical of village settings. In fact, a diversity of housing types is a hallmark of the “traditional” village and translates directly into a diversity of residents – another hallmark of the traditional village. Apartments, patio homes, condominiums and other alternatives to the traditional one family detached housing enable young singles, empty nesters and elderly members of the community to transition into living arrangements suitable to their lifestyle needs without having to seek housing outside the Village.

#### **2.2.1.a Low Density Residential (LDR)**

##### Location

The Low Density Residential (LDR) land use classification corresponds roughly to the Village’s existing R-1 and R-2 zoning districts. As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, the largest area of LDR classified lands in the Village are located in the southeast portion of the Village, bounded to the north by Main Street businesses, to the south by the Thruway, and to the west and east by Ellicott Creek and Columbia Drive/Pfohl Place respectively. Other pockets of LDR classified lands can be found in the southwest (along Cayuga Road and Ellicott Creek, south of Main Street), northwest (north of Williamsville Cemetery), and northeast (along Farber Lane) portions of the Village.



Uniform home setbacks and mature trees are the building blocks of this Village neighborhood (Monroe Drive).



### Character

LDR classified areas of the Village consist of both older, well-established, village scale neighborhoods, as well as neighborhoods with a more typically suburban form added in more recent decades. Older neighborhoods, in particular, maintain consistent front yard setbacks, are pedestrian scaled and possess sidewalks and a treed planting strip between the sidewalk and street. Within the LDR classified areas of the Village, there are several neighborhoods possessing unique qualities that bear mentioning:

#### *South Cayuga Road*

The South Cayuga corridor contains many fine examples of early domestic architecture in the Village. Also located here is the Cayuga Road Schoolhouse, built in 1840 and a locally designated landmark. Larger homes on broad lawns, and deep lots that extend far back to Ellicott Creek set the tone of this corridor until one approaches Main Street, where more modestly scaled structures are largely utilized for non-residential uses are more compactly situated. From an historic standpoint, as well as aesthetic, the South Cayuga corridor serves as a gateway to the Village core, greatly contributing to the Village's character. The 1997 Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources in the Village of Williamsville recognized the distinct character of this area by identifying it as suitable for designation as an historic district.

#### *Oakgrove Drive*

The portion of Oakgrove Drive west of Garrison Road contains many fine examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic architecture, with Colonial Revival and American Foursquare styles predominating. While house styles are eclectic, consistent setbacks, tree-lined streets that respond to the curves of Ellicott Creek, and landscaping, create a cohesive feel that sets this area apart. The *1997 Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources in the Village of Williamsville* recognized the distinct character of this area by identifying it as suitable for designation as an historic district. As Oakgrove Drive crosses over Garrison Road and intersects with Monroe and Columbia Drives, the character of the neighborhood transitions to a slightly more compact pattern of development that uses the street grid as an organizing principal. Architectural styles, dating from the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, are representative of the eclectic styles popular at the time, with a notable concentration of Spanish Revival. Consistent setbacks, street trees and sidewalks further define this area of the Village as cohesive and distinct.

### Proposed Density

The actual, existing built density within LDR classified lands, including roads, is approximately 2 to 3 dwelling units/acre. Development and/or redevelopment in these areas should not exceed this density. Therefore, no change to this existing density is proposed.

### Proposed Uses

One-family detached dwelling units and other uses typically ancillary to residential uses, including in-law apartments that are provided internally to the primary residential structure.

## Design Principles

Future development in the LDR land use category should maintain the scale and character of existing neighborhoods. Where new streets or dwelling units are proposed, the following principles should be applied:

- ❖ Culs-de-sac are prohibited where connections between streets can be made, except where such connections cannot be reasonably made or do not serve the overall public good of the Village. The public good served by connecting streets includes, but is not limited to: 1) The safety and convenience conferred on pedestrians and drivers by providing more connectivity and options for movement through the Village; and 2) by building on the established character of the Village, which derives in large part from an interconnected street grid.
- ❖ Streets should be appropriately scaled to neighborhood dimensions.
- ❖ Residential and garage structures should be appropriately scaled to their respective lots.
- ❖ Setbacks of structures should be consistent from lot to lot.
- ❖ Treed planting strips between the sidewalk and the street should be provided where feasible. Tree plantings should be appropriate to the constraints of their setting, including width of planting strip and existing utilities.
- ❖ Lighting should be provided in the planting strip between sidewalk and street, and should be appropriately scaled and shielded. Lighting sources should be appropriate to residential settings and avoid harsh lighting conditions.
- ❖ Porches and windows are preferred over large, flat expanses of blank walls and/or street facing garages.
- ❖ In general, backyards should not face public streets.
- ❖ Large expanses of asphalt, concrete or other impervious surface treatments should be minimized, particularly within front yards.
- ❖ All new overhead utilities should be buried. When opportunities present themselves, existing overhead utilities should also be buried .

### **2.2.1.b      *Medium Density Residential (MDR)***

#### Location

The Medium Density Residential (MDR) land use classification roughly corresponds to the Village's existing R-3 zoning district. As shown in the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, the largest area of MDR classified lands are found in the northeast portion of the Village.

In addition to this large area, substantial pockets of MDR classified land are located in every quadrant of the Village.

### Character

As with the LDR land use category, MDR classified lands consist of both older housing stock as well as newer. However, taken together as a group, both older and newer homes within MDR areas are older than those in the LDR areas. With the exception of some of the oldest neighborhoods, such as those described above, residential neighborhoods in the MDR category possess similar defining characteristics as those of their counterparts in the LDR category: sidewalks (in some areas), street trees, and consistent setbacks.

#### *Swan/Eagle/Orchard*

A particularly large concentration of some of the oldest homes in the Village can be found just north of Main Street on such streets as Swan Place, Eagle Street and Orchard Street. This area of the Village was identified by residents as having a unique feel and flavor that is worth conserving. Here, a more “organic” development pattern that evolved over time prevails. This organic pattern involves varied and typically smaller setbacks than can be found in other parts of the Village, as well as an eclectic mixture of housing styles and sizes.



As evidenced by the “Historic House For Sale” sign in front of this North Ellicott Street home, the historic character of the home and the neighborhood is a prime selling point.

### Proposed Density

The actual, existing built density within MDR classified lands, including roads, is approximately 3 to 4 dwelling units/acre. No change to existing density is proposed.

### Proposed Uses

One- and Two-family detached dwelling units and other uses typically ancillary to residential uses, including in-law apartments.

### Design Principles

Future development in the MDR land use category should maintain the scale and character of existing neighborhoods. Where new streets or development is proposed, the following principles should be applied:

- ❖ Culs-de-sac are prohibited where connections between streets can be made, except where such connections cannot be reasonably made or do not serve the overall public good of the Village. The public good served

by connecting streets includes, but is not limited to: 1) The safety and convenience conferred on pedestrians and drivers by providing more connectivity and options for movement through the Village; and 2) by building on the established character of the Village, which derives in large part from an interconnected street grid. Streets should be appropriately scaled to neighborhood dimensions.

- ❖ Residential and garage structures should be appropriately scaled to their respective lots.
- ❖ Setbacks of structures should be consistent from lot to lot, except in the oldest sections of the Village where varied and smaller setbacks, among other characteristics, contribute to the historic character.
- ❖ Treed planting strips between the sidewalk and the street should be provided where feasible. Tree plantings should be appropriate to the constraints of their setting, including width of planting strip and existing utilities.
- ❖ Lighting should be provided in the planting strip between sidewalk and street, should be appropriately scaled and shielded. Light sources should be chosen to prevent glare and harsh lighting conditions.
- ❖ Porches and windows are preferred over large, flat expanses of blank walls and/or street facing garages.
- ❖ In general, backyards should not face public streets.
- ❖ Large expanses of asphalt, concrete or other impervious surface treatments should be minimized, particularly within front yards.
- ❖ All new overhead utilities should be buried. When opportunities present themselves, existing overhead utilities should also be buried.

### **2.2.1.c      *High Density Residential (HDR)***

#### **Location**

The High Density Residential (HDR) land use classification roughly corresponds to the Village's existing R-3M zoning district and existing multi-family developments, with the exception of the South Long Street area, which is zoned C-3 General Commercial. A key component of this land use classification conveys the important role that well designed, publicly accessible open spaces play in creating and organizing high quality higher density residential neighborhoods. Such spaces, be they a park or simply a well designed Village street that invites the public to stroll its length, can ensure that higher density housing is sensitively knitted to the larger fabric of the Village.

As shown in the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, the largest area of HDR classified lands are concentrated in the southwest and northeast portions of the Village. The HDR land use classification has also been applied to the Beechwood Blocher Adult Care Facility and the St. Francis Skilled



This multifamily driveway is roughly the width of Main Street. A more appropriately scaled and designed service drive would do a better job of knitting this residential area with the fabric of the Village.

Nursing Facility to provide maximum flexibility for these properties given current trends in the “deinstitutionalization” of elder care (see Objective 2 under *General Land Use Objectives*, below).

### Character

Areas of the Village classified as HDR consist of both existing higher density residential areas and areas that have been identified as appropriate for higher density residential development in the future. The Focus Area case study below (Section 5.2) for the South Long Street neighborhood is utilized to convey the principles that should be adhered to with respect to higher density residential development in the Village. Principles established in the South Long Street focus area can also be applied to other areas of the Village where higher density housing is contemplated, or where existing higher density housing is redeveloped.

### Proposed Uses

A variety of housing types including townhouses, patio homes, condominiums and garden apartments. Quality open spaces (both passive and active) and streets that are accessible to the public.

### Proposed Density

Approximately 4 to 16 dwelling units per acre. Approximately 1 to 3 stories.

### Design Principles

Development and improvements in the HDR land use category should abide by the following principles:

- ❖ Culs-de-sac are prohibited where connections between streets can be made, except where such connections cannot be reasonably made or do not serve the overall public good of the Village. The public good served by connecting streets includes, but is not limited to: 1) The safety and convenience conferred on pedestrians and drivers by providing more connectivity and options for movement through the Village; and 2) by

building on the established character of the Village, which derives in large part from an interconnected street grid.

- ❖ Housing should be provided in concert with well defined, functional public spaces. Such spaces can vary in size and function from a park to a street, but should clearly address the public realm.
- ❖ New high density housing should be sensitively integrated into the fabric of the existing Village, rather than consisting of isolated and self contained pods surrounded by surface parking.
- ❖ Parking facilities associated with higher density housing should be hidden behind or under buildings, and adjacent public streets should be available for on-street parking.
- ❖ Transitions from existing lower density housing to higher density housing should be gradual.
- ❖ Residential structures fronting along public streets should include “public” components that actively address the street and public realm such as porches.
- ❖ Traditional parking and circulation techniques, such as alleyways, should be encouraged, to enable parking to be provided in the rear of residential structures.
- ❖ New streets laid out in connection with higher density housing should blend with the character and scale of existing Village streets.
- ❖ All new overhead utilities should be buried. When opportunities present themselves, existing overhead utilities should also be buried.

## **2.2.2 Mixed-Use Classifications**

**2.2.2.a**      *Village Core – Civic Area (VC-CA)*

**2.2.2.b**      *Village Main Street (VMS)*

**2.2.2.c**      *Village Mixed Use (VMU)*

Just as Williamsville’s residential areas offer alternatives to the suburban subdivisions that largely surround it, so too does Williamsville’s commercial core – Main Street – offer an alternative to surrounding big-box and strip style suburban shopping areas. The Village’s evolving role within the larger regional context and the possibilities that it presents are discussed in more detail in Section 3. The land use vision for the three mixed use land use classifications depicted in the *Conceptual Land Use Plan* and discussed in

more detail below have been established to respond to a different set of characteristics and opportunities that exist in the Village's commercial areas.

The Village-Core – Civic Area (VC-CA) land use classification comprises the heart of the Village where parks, the historic mill district and public institutions such as the library and municipal offices all come together. The Village Main Street (VMS) land use applies to the majority of Main Street outside of the core area and seeks to reinforce and enhance the historic charm and scale of Main Street. Lastly, the Village Mixed Use (VMU) land use classification applies to areas of the Village that are less well defined or “traditional” – but where quality of design are still of the utmost importance.

In short, the goal of the land use classifications for Williamsville's commercial areas is to ensure that they are able to remain relevant and economically healthy well into the future, while preserving, enhancing and leveraging the character and charm that has been handed down from the past.



Williamsville's Main Street offers an alternative experience to the suburban shopping districts that largely surround it.

### 2.2.2.a Village Core – Civic Area (VC-CA)

#### Location

As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, VC-CA classified lands are found at the axis of Main Street and Ellicott Creek, west of the creek, encompassing municipal uses on the south side of Main Street, the “Mill” quarter along Spring Street, areas behind Main Street businesses along Glen Avenue up to the cemetery and areas along Ellicott Creek, on the north.

#### Character

The VC-CA lies at the heart of the Village. Here, there is equal importance between public/municipal uses and private uses, all of which should positively contribute to the pedestrian, Village scaled context of the core area.

The focal point of the Village “Core” is the mill. Restoration of the mill would bring a sense of history and excitement to this important area of the Village. The surrounding Spring Street area represents an opportunity to “thicken” the strip of Main Street by creating interest and activity off of Main Street. Facilitating pedestrian circulation across Main Street and between Glen Park to the north and Island Park to the south is critical.



The area should provide many cues to the fact that it lies at the Village heart and that significant parkland and historic resources are a stone's throw away from Main Street. The "Mill Village" Focus Area (Section 5.1) conveys in more detail the principles that should be adhered to with respect to creating a more cohesive village center, potentially with a restored mill as its focal point. Key to this is to build upon the historic character and surroundings of the mill, including direct access to the Glen, as well as an active and publicly engaging use in the mill itself that respects the historic character of this important structure.

Opportunities for higher density housing are also present in the VC-CA area, located as it is at the center of the Village, within easy walking distance to goods, services and attractions. The character of this housing would be village scaled and oriented, taking advantage of water and mill views and enhancing the street level with high quality design, and where appropriate, additional retail and other public uses.

### Uses

Land uses within the VC-CA classification should facilitate a vital, pedestrian friendly village center. A mix of retail, office, and service uses are appropriate for both the ground floor and upper floors, to maintain a consistent and active experience at the street level. Residential uses are appropriate on upper stories, although first floor residential may be appropriate for some residential projects at the perimeter of this area away from established commercial areas such as along the south side of Glen Avenue, the east side of North Cayuga Road -- north of Glen Avenue, and South Cayuga Avenue -- north of Milton Street and south of the public parking lot behind Village and town offices.

Appropriate commercial uses in the VC-CA include but are not limited to galleries, boutiques, restaurants and specialty shops. However, built form is more important than the specific nature of individual uses. Key public uses, such as municipal offices, libraries, post offices, etc., are also appropriate, but should be designed to strengthen and add to the street level experience.

Parking supply in the VC-CA area will need to be increased to accommodate both the existing and future levels of activity. A mix of uses with complementary peak traffic hours that are spread out over the course of the day and evening would reduce the number of parking spaces needed at any given time. Automobile related uses, such as gas stations, drive-throughs and car washes, as well as other larger scale commercial and retail uses that require large areas of open land, or large single-story floorplates, are not appropriate in the VC-CA.



Attached residential without a retail component, such as this example from North Cayuga Road, is appropriate at the periphery of the VC-CA, particularly where it abuts 1 and 2 family residential areas.



Proposed improvements related to the street and transportation network and parking supply that support the vision for the VC-CA area are discussed at length in Section 3, *Transportation*.

### Proposed Density

Village scaled, with lower intensity use on side streets off of Main Street, 2 to 4 stories in height. Floor Area Ratios for a 2 to 4-story, mixed-use main street district typically range from 0.5 to 2.0. Floor Area Ratio (FAR - see the Glossary for an explanation) is an additional tool that can be employed to control density and development patterns, in addition to the more traditional tools, such as height and setback regulations. In the Village Core area, an appropriate FAR would be one that strengthens the existing built form, while providing some opportunity for additional density on less intensely developed properties.

A specific FAR appropriate to the VC-CA areas of the Village should be established as part of any future decision to implement this tool. Implementation would most likely come in the form of a zoning amendment. An appropriate FAR will be one that yields development results that are consistent with community's vision for the VC-CA areas of the Village, as expressed in this plan. One method for determining the appropriate FAR is to apply various FARs to existing Village parcels under hypothetical redevelopment scenarios to see what kind of built form they would permit and/or encourage. A detailed analysis of *existing* VC-CA and Main Street FARs can also be undertaken by calculating the FAR for each parcel in the VC-CA, as well as for the entire business district for a more generalized business district-wide FAR.

### Design Principles

In general, development in the VC-CA land use category should abide by the following principles:

- ❖ Street level facades should be devoted to retail, service and office uses that are open to the public.
- ❖ Street level facades should be inviting and maximize window area. Highly tinted windows should be discouraged.
- ❖ Every side of a building should be designed attractively and engage the public realm, including both the built environment and parklands, to the maximum extent practicable.
- ❖ Landscaped areas should be well contained and appropriate to a more urban setting (i.e., they should not consist of “left-over” grass areas, or follow a suburban landscaping model). Pocket parks and small greens may also be appropriate.



An overly wide parking lane (left) and overly narrow pedestrian walkway (right) in the same Village parking lot. More detailed regulations governing parking and landscaping, and ongoing professional review of parking and circulation elements of site plans should yield safer, more efficient and attractive results in the future.

- ❖ Pedestrian amenities, such as ample sidewalks, buffer landscaping, and crossing aids, should be provided where appropriate and feasible.
- ❖ Multi-story buildings are preferred over single story buildings.
- ❖ Parking should be located behind or underneath buildings so that the pedestrian level “streetwall” is not broken up by expanses of parking.
- ❖ Shared parking facilities and/or cross access between privately owned parking facilities should be encouraged.
- ❖ Lighting sources should not create glare or excessively harsh lighting conditions (i.e., “white light”). Lightpoles should not be taller than the buildings that they serve.
- ❖ The scale and style of architecture should complement the historic character of this area; however, quality of design and materials is more important than superficial attempts to recreate historic styles.
- ❖ Maximum permitted setbacks should be employed to ensure that buildings respect and strengthen the streetwall. However, greater setbacks may be entertained in order to widen inadequate sidewalks and provide a larger pedestrian realm.
- ❖ The circulation network should strike a balance between pedestrian and automobile needs on Main Street, and tip the scale strongly in favor of pedestrians on side streets.

### 2.2.2.b Village Main Street (VMS)

#### Location

As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, lands classified as VMS flank the Village Core both to the west and east along Main Street. This area contains some of the Village's most charming, intact stretches of Main Street.

#### Character

Key characteristics of this area include multi-story buildings, a consistent building edge, inviting ground floor facades, and a mix of uses and architectural styles handed down to the Village through history. Another key characteristic is the area's close proximity to established, residential neighborhoods. In a word, the VMS area of the Village is "fine-grained", containing a mix of spaces and uses that have enabled various portions of the corridor to evolve over time, at their own pace building-by-building, in response to changing lifestyles and needs. Williamsville's Main Street, typical for its day, is now a unique asset in a time when commercial development takes the form of malls, plazas and stand-alone big-box stores. Key to the success of Main Street is preserving and enhancing its uniqueness, while providing the infrastructure necessary to keep it competitive and attractive well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Uses

Similar uses as those envisioned for the Village Core should be permitted, although areas classified VMS currently possess a wider range of uses and built forms than in the more cohesive Village Core where consistency in character and density is more evident. Moreover, particularly in the stretch of Main Street from the Village Core west to Union Road. In general, the Village Main Street area contains deeper commercially zoned lots with more flexibility to reconfigure existing lower-density retail and commercial along more village-scaled lines. Opportunities to relocate parking to the rear of commercial buildings and to consolidate such parking, could make such properties more attractive to regional and national retailers. However, design guidelines and zoning should be in place to ensure that the form these new businesses take strengthens the charm and uniqueness of the Village.

#### Proposed Density

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is an additional tool that can be employed to control density and development patterns, in addition to the more traditional tools, such as height and setback regulations. FARs for a 2- to 4-story, mixed-use main street district typically range from 0.5 to 2.0 . A specific FAR appropriate to the VMS areas of the Village should be established as part of any future decision to implement this tool. Implementation would most likely come in the form of a zoning amendment. An appropriate FAR will be one that yields development results that are consistent with community's vision for the VMS areas of the Village, as expressed in this plan. One method for determining the appropriate FAR is to apply various FARs to existing Village parcels under hypothetical redevelopment scenarios to see what kind of built form they would permit and/or encourage. A detailed analysis of *existing* VMS and Main Street FARs can also be

undertaken by calculating the FAR for each parcel in the VMS, as well as for the entire business district for a more generalized business district-wide FAR.

### Proposed Maximum Height

Approximately 2 to 4 stories.

### Design Principles

In general, development in the VMS land use category should abide by the following principles:

- ❖ Street level facades should be devoted to retail, service and office uses that are open to the public.
- ❖ Street level facades should be inviting and maximize window area. Highly tinted windows should be discouraged.
- ❖ Every side of a building should be designed attractively and engage the public realm, including both the built environment and parklands, to the maximum extent practicable.
- ❖ Street level facades should be devoted to retail, service and office uses that are open to the public.
- ❖ Landscaped areas should be well contained and appropriate to a more urban setting (i.e., they should not consist of “left-over” grass areas, or follow a suburban landscaping model).
- ❖ Pedestrian amenities, such as ample sidewalks, buffer landscaping, and crossing aids, should be provided where appropriate and feasible.
- ❖ Multi-story buildings are preferred over single story buildings.
- ❖ Parking should be located behind or underneath buildings so that the pedestrian level “streetwall” is not broken up by expanses of parking.
- ❖ Shared parking facilities and/or cross access between privately owned parking facilities should be encouraged.
- ❖ Lighting sources should not create glare or excessively harsh lighting conditions (i.e., “white light”). Lightpoles should not be taller than the buildings that they serve.
- ❖ The scale and style of architecture should complement the historic character of this area; however, quality of design and materials is more important than superficial attempts to recreate historic styles.

- ❖ Maximum permitted setbacks should be employed to ensure that buildings respect and strengthen the streetwall. However, greater setbacks may be entertained in order to widen inadequate sidewalks and provide a larger pedestrian realm.
- ❖ The circulation network should strike a balance between pedestrian and automobile needs on Main Street, and tip the scale strongly in favor of pedestrians on side streets.

#### *Mill Street to Evans Street*

Village residents identified a stretch of the north side of Main Street between Mill Street and Evans Street as a unique area of the Village that contributes to the overall character of the Village. In this stretch of Main Street one finds a number of historic residential structures that have been tastefully readapted for commercial purposes. These residentially scaled structures were perceived by many to contribute to the historic, village scaled quality of Main Street. Currently there are no measures in place to protect these structures. Possible measures and approaches are explored in Section 2.3 of this plan. However, it should be noted that at the same time that Village residents expressed a desire for “critical mass” and mixed-uses in the Village exemplified by other historic



To stay healthy and economically relevant, Williamsville’s Main Street has reinvented itself over the years. The former Iroquois Gas Building (right) has become a successful retail building (left).

structures and stretches of Main Street. In essence, Main Street’s historic character is comprised of a mix of densities, heights and styles that have been layered over the years resulting in a textured, visually appealing environment.

### **2.2.2.c Village Mixed Use (VMU)**

#### Location

As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, VMU classified lands are found on the eastern edges of Main Street and at the site of the Village Glen property.

#### Character

VMU classified areas consist of a wider mix of uses and scales, from low intensity land uses to some of the tallest buildings in the Village. Increasing design standards in these areas, while allowing them to continue to receive a variety of land-uses and built forms

and scales that are not appropriate in the VC-CA or VMS, is key to positive growth for the VMU area, as well as the Village as a whole. Future use of the Village Glen property should take advantage of its creekside location while being sensitive to its natural setting and adjacent residential uses.

#### Proposed Height

Approximately 2 to 6 Stories.

#### Proposed Density

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) – see Glossary -- is an additional tool that can be employed to control density and development patterns, in addition to the more traditional tools, such as height and setback regulations. A specific FAR appropriate to the VMU should be established as part of any future decision to implement this tool. The optimal FAR will help to ensure that the desired proportions of building and open areas are achieved in this area of the Village. One method for determining the appropriate FAR is to apply various FARs to existing Village parcels under hypothetical redevelopment scenarios to see what kind of built form they would permit and/or encourage. A detailed analysis of *existing* VMU and Main Street FARs can also be undertaken by calculating the FAR for each parcel in the VMU, as well as for the entire business district for a more generalized business district-wide FAR.

#### Proposed Uses

Drive-through facilities are allowable, although they should be developed in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Slightly taller office buildings and residential structures would be permitted here than in the VC-CA and VMS areas. Single structure uses, such as a residential apartment building with no ground floor retail, would also be permitted in this area. The overall character of the VMU is one that is less well defined than either the VMS or the VC-CA, but that achieves aesthetically pleasing results through landscaping and building placement on lots. Drive-through windows should only be permitted when they are located and designed in such a manner that they do not negatively impact the visual character of the Village or pose traffic safety concerns. In no case should drive-through facilities be located directly in front of the building they serve. Additionally, parcels on which drive-through facilities are proposed must have enough space to buffer impacts to adjoining residential uses. Such impacts include, but are not limited to: noise from speakers and transaction windows; light pollution; late night activity; and other negative impacts associated with queues of cars and outdoor business transactions.

#### Design Principles

In general, development in the VMU land use category should abide by the following principles:

- ❖ The majority of parking facilities should be located in the rear portion of lots, although drop-off areas, or smaller areas of parking in the front of buildings are acceptable.



- ❖ Structures should be encouraged to locate at consistent setbacks from the street to provide continuity and define the streetwall, particularly along Main Street. The amount of setback should be informed by the locations of adjacent buildings that conform to the preferred development pattern described immediately above.
- ❖ Opportunities for providing pedestrian amenities, such as ample sidewalks, buffer landscaping, and crossing aids, some of which may not currently be feasible in the more constrained sections of Main Street, should be provided where appropriate.
- ❖ Drive-through facilities should be permitted only on parcels that can adequately accommodate them, and should be located to the rear of buildings or otherwise out of view of the public realm.

### **2.2.3 Open Space, Parks (OSP)**

Open Space, parks and recreation land uses are generally dedicated to recreational activities or environmental preservation. Williamsville has a significant amount land dedicated to parks and open space that

include six major park facilities that include a portion of Amherst State Park. As illustrated in Figure 1, Williamsville’s parks are located throughout the Village, intersecting in various places with Main Street and Ellicott Creek. Yet some areas, particularly in the southeast portion of the Village, remain without close access to a park or with little or no connection to these recreational opportunities. The plan for Open Space and Parks proposes to form a “Green Highway” around the Village that connects the existing parks with

Main Street and Ellicott Creek, and proposes connections with underserved areas of the Village. Some connections worth pursuing include new connections to existing parks such as Glen Park and Amherst State Park to the north, Island Park to the south, and a connection to open space in the College Park area located in the Town of Amherst. These enhancements and connections should be part of a system of parks and open spaces that consist of new pathways and connections to link resources together. In addition to public parks, the Open Space, Parks land use category also contains areas of the Village that are in a relatively “natural” state, such as areas adjacent to Ellicott Creek. Of course, some of these areas are privately owned and it must be noted that there are no special regulations or protections placed on these properties by inclusion in the Open Space category – inclusion merely acknowledges their current undeveloped state, their proximity to Ellicott Creek, and that the Village and owners of property in these areas



The privately owned Cambria Castle on Dream Island is a unique and romantic Village landmark.

may wish to pursue cooperative, mutually beneficial partnerships that leverage the benefits of these undeveloped areas, as opportunities may present themselves.

Perhaps no other American park system captures the idea of the “green highway” than Boston’s “Emerald Necklace” (right), a 1,100-acre chain of nine parks linked by parkways and waterways that wend their way through the city. The park plan was conceived by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead and implemented in phases. Notable are the various elements that Boston’s greenway pulls together – natural, cultural and historic. Lastly, its continued success and use as a well utilized and beloved public space is due largely to the way the park successfully engages the city around it. Like Boston, many of Williamsville’s most important environmental and historic resources can be found in and around its open

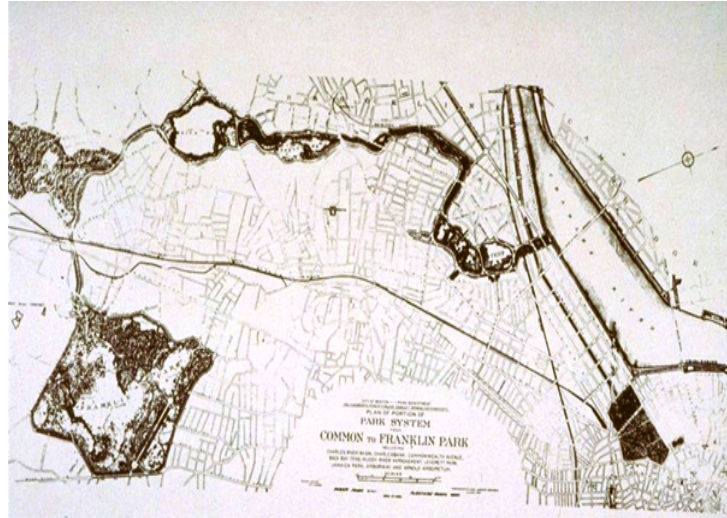


Figure 2 - Historic map of Boston’s “Emerald Necklace”

spaces and parks. Linking these parks and open spaces together coherently, both within the Village, and to a larger regional greenway system (i.e., Niagara Greenway), will strengthen the contribution that these valued spaces and places make to Village life.

Village residents were very supportive of a greenway concept for recreational walkers and cyclists as an alternative to busy Main Street. This greenway concept, depicted in Figures 3 through 5 on the following pages, utilizes Village streets, parks and green spaces to provide a continuous village activity path. The relationship of such a greenway to potential Main Street improvements is discussed in more detail in the Transportation section of this plan. The proposed greenway would not be isolated from the rest of the Village. Rather Main Street and the greenway would intersect at numerous points and the facilitating a synergistic relationship between the two that, in the end, would make the Village a more pleasant place to be – both on and off Main Street.

The linked parks of the Green Highway constitute a larger, more valuable resource than could any one park on its own. Figure 3 illustrates the Green Highway as part of the overall plan for Open Space and Parks. The Green Highway provides a meaningful link between Glen Park and the adjacent Amherst State Park to the north, linking Williamsville’s park network to a much larger regional park network. An opportunity for expanding the park system to the south exists to Dream Island along Ellicott Creek.



Figure 3 - Village-Wide Greenway Concept

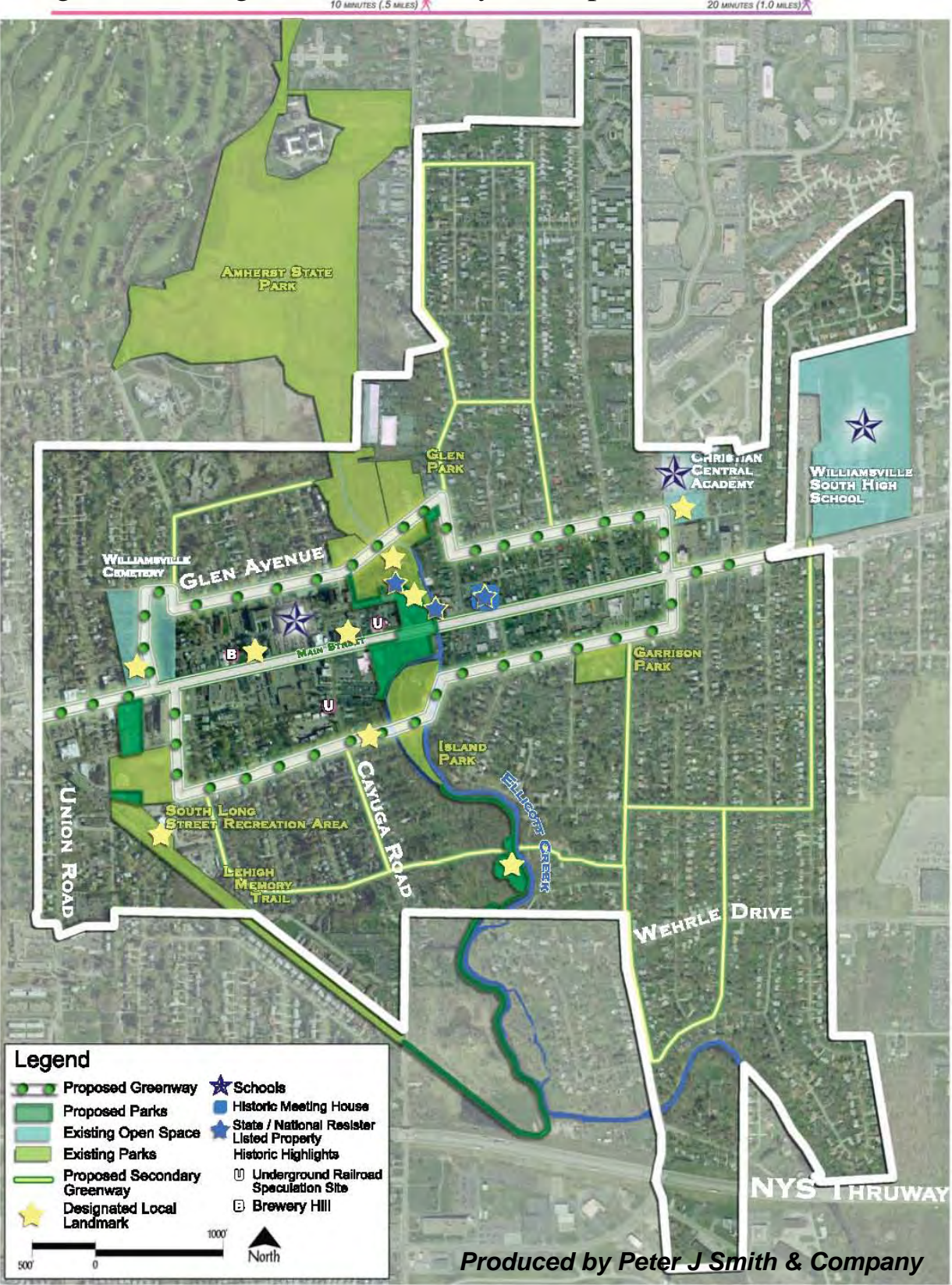




Figure 4 - Greenway Concept: Glen Avenue

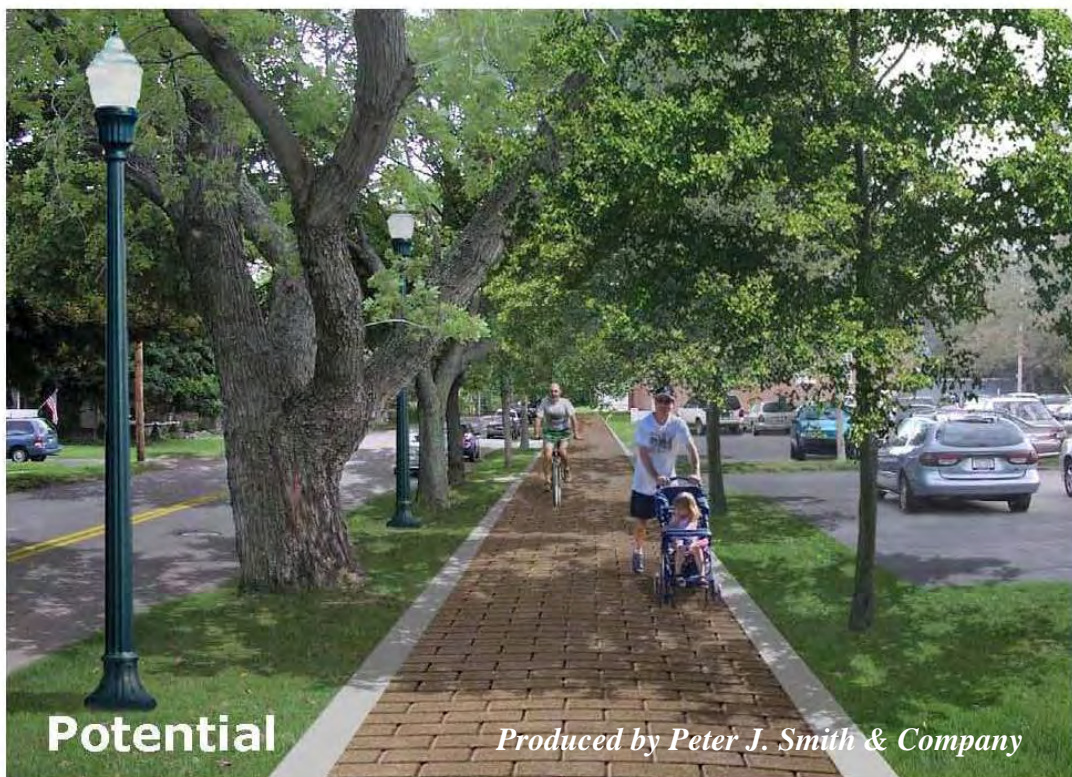




Figure 5 - Greenway Concept: Milton Street



Should the privately owned island ever become available, the Village should consider integrating it into its park system. The Village should also consider exploring formal recreational arrangements and connections with the Town of Amherst and Erie County to connect east to the College Park Open Space and the playing fields at Erie Community College.

### Location

As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, OSP classified lands consist of Village parks and both parkland and privately and publicly undeveloped lands surrounding Ellicott Creek, which is part of the Niagara Watershed. According to the New York Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Niagara watershed is about 514,810 acres and includes five counties, Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Wyoming and Orleans. Ellicott Creek in Williamsville serves as a tributary in the Niagara Watershed draining into the Niagara River.<sup>1</sup>

### Character

Opportunities exist for enhancing and better connecting many of Williamsville's parks, both internally within the Village, and to the larger network of parks and greenways outside the Village. Currently, these resources are scattered and often relegated to the leftover portions of the Village, behind Main Street buildings. A particularly obvious opportunity for connection exists between Glen Park and Amherst State Park, which are physically contiguous, but do not provide any meaningful connection for people.

### Proposed Uses

Village owned land classified as open space and parks should continue to be utilized for both active and passive recreational uses, as well as for undisturbed natural areas within the Village. The value of privately owned open space land within designated OSP areas should be taken into consideration with respect to future development. Specific improvements, which are sensitively undertaken to make parks more accessible, visible and user friendly are encouraged. As indicated in the Village's Inventory & Analysis document, it is the quality of the Village's parks that is more critical than the quantity.

### Design Principles

The existing and proposed role and design of parks in Williamsville is discussed in more detail in the Land Use and Focus Areas sections of this plan. However, in general, development of land within the OSP land use category should abide by the following principles:

- ❖ Parks should provide opportunities for both passive and active recreational activities.
- ❖ Parks should actively engage the built environment that surrounds it. Engagement includes attractive landscaping, and prominent and easily identifiable park entrances and edges.

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<sup>1</sup> Williamsville "Inventory & Analysis Report," September 2005, prepared by peter j smith & company, inc.

- ❖ Wherever possible, the built environment, be it residences or commercial buildings, should face onto a park. The interplay between the active sides of residential and commercial buildings and the active sides of parks has mutual benefits for both use types. Clear relationships between the built and open spaces raise the value of each and make for a safer, more lively and high quality environment. In general, parks should not be tucked away behind buildings and private lots. Such spaces, out of the eye of the public, invite unwanted activity, and the backing up public spaces to the private sides of residential structures often creates conflicts and privacy issues residents.
- ❖ Park uses and configurations should be sensitive to surrounding residential uses.
- ❖ Where OSP land is privately owned and proposed for development, the property's open space values and characteristics should be factored into the overall development plan.
- ❖ Opportunities to extend the Lehigh Memory Trail and to connect the Village's assorted parks through additional parkland and greenway connections should be pursued. The Village could actively solicit interest from the current landowner and potentially secure a right of first refusal if the landowner is not interested in selling at present. Grant funds also exist for the acquisition of parkland, which the Village could pursue.

#### **2.2.4 Light Industrial Commercial (LIC)**

##### Location

As shown on the *Conceptual Land Use Plan*, LIC classified lands are found on property located south of the Thruway, along Aero Drive.

##### Character

The area is currently a hodge-podge of uses. Future use of the area should take advantage of its proximity to the airport and the Thruway. Garrison Road frontage of this area should be spruced up to provide a more attractive gateway to the Village and to the War of 1812 Cemetery, that lies to the east along Aero Drive, in the Town of Cheektowaga.

##### Uses

Light industrial uses. Due to the area's proximity to the airport, airport related activities and businesses that are compatible with light industrial uses are also appropriate.

## **2.3 Land Use Objectives and Actions**

The following section distills the discussion above into a focused list of priority objectives and actions. Where applicable, responsible parties and timeframes are provided for recommended actions.

### **Objective 1: Ensure that Village Zoning is Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan**

The Village should revisit its Zoning Ordinance and other regulations used to guide and regulate development to ensure that they are consistent with the ideas and concepts set forth in this plan. Changes to these regulations will likely center around areas of the Village where change is expected and/or desired. Such changes will likely consist of revisions to regulations governing building and lot configurations, as well as those governing uses. For instance, to ensure that the scale of Main Street is preserved, regulations such as maximum setbacks and minimum height should be explored. Changes to use regulations will also likely be needed to support the vibrant, mixed use vision for Main Street. Current zoning on Main Street is unnecessarily permissive in some regards, for example, allowing automotive and drive-in uses along large portions of its length, including the historic heart of the business district; while at the same time unnecessarily restrictive, limiting some portions of Main Street to office uses.

In addition to addressing areas of the Village where change is expected or desired, some zoning revisions will need to address areas of the Village where residents do not want to see change. For example, there was almost universal agreement among residents that the character and scale of the Village's existing one and two family neighborhoods (R-1, R-2 and R-3 zoning districts) are a major contributor to the Village's high quality of life and should be protected and strengthened. In recent years, market pressures have been increasingly exerting themselves on the Village's existing stock of homes and lots. Because of the Village's attractiveness as a place to live within the Buffalo Niagara Region, these pressures are expected to continue into the future.

There are a number of zoning and development tools that the Village can utilize to address this issue, from adjustments to lot size and setback requirements, to more nuanced tools that address the bulk and appearance of new residential structures, such as height-setback ratios. Where the historic character of individual structures is the issue, tools such as design guidelines can ensure that new residential development "fits in". Preservation districts (see Objective 3 below) offer the most protection.

In general, revised zoning should place a greater emphasis on the quality of the built environment rather than worrying about the specific nature of uses (i.e., "form-based" zoning – see Glossary). Design guidelines should also be developed to clearly articulate the Village's vision for itself, particularly in those areas of the Village, such as Main Street, where site and building design is of the utmost importance. Revised zoning and new design guidelines will serve as a tool for the Village staff and boards in the review and approval process, as well as the applicants, who will have a much clearer understanding of expectations at the beginning of the review process.



This plan sets forth the general desired characteristics of the Village’s various residential and commercial areas in the form of a Conceptual Land Use Plan and Land Use Classifications. Additional detail and guidance is provided throughout the plan.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short Term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$60,000 -- \$100,000

**Objective 2: Ensure that Williamsville Provides Opportunities to “Age in Place”**

As the population of Williamsville and the greater Buffalo Niagara Region ages, mirroring national trends, efforts should be made to ensure that options exist in the Village for “aging in place.” While the zoning should continue to ensure that institutional care, such as that provided at Beechwood Blocher Adult Care Facility and the St. Francis Skilled Nursing Facility, continues to be permitted in the Village, Village zoning and policies should also reflect the move to “de-institutionalize” elder care facilities. The hallmark of such facilities is that they are more integrated into the fabric of the daily life of the community. Other concepts in this plan, such as looking at alternatives to traditional single-family housing, and making Main Street a more walkable environment, dovetail with the needs of elderly citizens. Lastly, the Village should work with regional and local public transportation providers to ensure that the transit needs of its citizens, including the elderly, are being met. The Village should engage elder care service providers and consumers as it looks to revise its zoning to ensure that future land uses take the needs of this segment of the community into consideration. Moreover, addressing the needs of the elderly in the community inevitably translates into a better community for people of all ages.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Ongoing
<u>Cost:</u>	\$60,000 -- \$100,000

**Objective 3: Protect and Celebrate the Village’s Historic Assets**

A number of areas of the Village (South Cayuga Street, Main Street between Mill and Evans, Swan/Eagle/Orchard, and Oakgrove) were identified by the public and past village studies as having unique, irreplaceable qualities that contribute significantly the character of the Village. Additional regulations and protections above and beyond zoning regulations and design guidelines may be necessary to ensure that these areas remain intact, particularly where the existing structures themselves are the defining characteristic and resource.



The historic charm of these North Ellicott Street houses derive not only from their individual characteristics, but from the collective characteristics of the houses surrounding it – i.e., the neighborhood

Williamsville currently possesses a number of local landmarks that have been officially designated by the Village's Historic Preservation Commission. But the Village has not taken any steps to establish historic districts. Establishing new historic districts, of course, requires the broad support of the community and, even more so, the support of those who own property or live in a proposed district. Generally, historic districts are embraced where individual property owners perceive an individual benefit to the value of their property via the collective historic integrity of the entire neighborhood. In a historic area of the Village, such as the Swan/Eagle/Orchard neighborhood, the loss of only a few historic homes can severely impact the historic context, and by extension, the historically derived value of the remaining homes. The Village's 1997 "Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources" provides a comprehensive overview of the Village's historic resources.

Specifically, the following historically oriented planning implications have been established<sup>2</sup>:

- ❖ The Village has the opportunity to better highlight several historic areas of interest including War of 1812 involvement and potential connections to the Underground Railroad.
- ❖ Garrison Road and its connections to the War of 1812 offers one area of untapped potential that should be further explored.
- ❖ Several historic districts have been proposed and documented. Official designation could provide a significant avenue for funding elements of the Community Plan. Their designation would also improve the chances of maintaining the historic character of the Village.
- ❖ Existing historical strengths in the Village are not comprehensively connected to create a visitor experience. Specific events and places, such as the War of 1812, the historic cemetery, and Village Underground Railroad participation, should be further developed in order to "tell a story" to visitors.
- ❖ Sensitive development of the Williamsville Water Mill Complex would contribute to a visitor experience and enhance the overall historic character of the Village.
- ❖ The presence and documentation of numerous significant architectural styles could strengthen a position to establish design guidelines for future Village development and preservation.

Because the Village's identity and competitive advantage over surrounding suburban locations derives in large part from its historic context, the preservation of this context is very important. However, as Williamsville's historic, village character continues to attract residents, it is likely that associated development pressures will be exerted on the

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<sup>2</sup> Williamsville "Inventory & Analysis Report," September 2005, prepared by peter j smith & company, inc.



village and its historic resources with increasing force. Therefore, the Village should explore the creation of historic preservation districts in key areas of the village.

Too often historic preservation districts are regarded as “anti-growth”. In fact, preservation districts can be a funnel for grants and other financial resources and often stimulate economic growth and revitalization. Designation of a district along Spring Street, for instance, could pave the way for more investment and resources that would preserve and rehabilitate existing historic structures and landscapes (Glen Park), while attracting new investment and construction that builds on the existing historic character. The village can craft preservation districts to respond to its unique set of circumstances and historic resources, while providing flexibility for property owners. In the end, a preservation district is about more than simply preserving, it is about revitalization and leveraging historic resources for the economic benefit and quality of life of the community.

An additional historic preservation issue that should be noted is the future disposition of churches in the Village, if and when such churches’ congregations decline and the churches are no longer used for religious purposes. Many older church structures, both in Williamsville and across the country, are defining landmarks that add to the character of the community. To ensure that such churches do not disappear from the Village fabric, flexibility in the Village’s land use regulations should be considered to allow for appropriate adaptive re-use of historic churches that would otherwise be shut down and potentially demolished.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Historic Preservation Commission
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Medium-Term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined

#### **Objective 4: Create a Village Wide “Green Highway”**

A ribbon of green flows through the center of the Village connecting Island Park to the south and Glen Park and Amherst State Park to the north. However, these parks are not readily visible or easily accessible from Main Street. And although they are virtually contiguous, each park in practice functions in relative isolation from the other. Providing better physical and visual connections between these parks would allow them to function as a larger unit and tie the Village into a regional system of interconnected parks. Ideally this would take place in the context of an overall Village park plan. Additional context for the recommended actions that follow can be found in the “Mill Village” Focus Area discussion in Section 5.1 of this plan.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Medium-Term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined

**Action 1: Prepare a Park Improvement Plan**

While this plan sets forth a detailed vision for a Green Highway and park corridor for the Village, a unified park plan that draws together all the various recommendations and components into one document, along with feasibility and fiscal analysis, will help to ensure that the Village can properly plan for park improvements. However, this does not preclude the Village from moving forward with any of the park ideas and improvements presented in the Community Plan.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short Term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$40,000 to \$85,000

**Action 2: Connect Amherst State Park and Glen Park**

Although Amherst State Park and Glen Park abut one another, there is no connection between the two parks. Establishing a connection would mutually improve the parks and create a better connection between the parks and the center of Williamsville. The connection could come in the form of a trail, as well as shared parking facilities.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-Term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

**Action 3: Carry Park Across Main Street**

Currently, Main Street acts as a barrier between parks to the north and parks to the south. A safe, attractive pedestrian crossing of Main Street should carry the park theme across the street.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short Term. See Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this plan for more on a pedestrian crossing in the center of the Village.
<u>Cost:</u>	Part of Main Street Improvement Costs

**Action 4: Consider Incorporating Dream Island into Parks System**

Dream Island, site of the romantic and unique Cambria Castle, is privately owned. However, should the property become available, the Village should consider integrating this property into its parks system. Doing so would extend the park corridor further south, along Ellicott Creek, protecting the natural beauty of this area and providing more opportunities to connect the Ellicott Creek “park corridor” to other parts of the Village and Village park and greenway system.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Willing Landowner
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Ongoing and/or Short Term as Opportunity May Arise
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

**Action 5: Create a Recreational Greenway**

A greenway that links Williamsville's parks and open spaces would function as an alternative to busy Main Street for recreational walkers, joggers and bicyclists. This concept is depicted in Figures 3 through 5 of this plan. Such a plan should be implemented in advance of or in conjunction with Main Street improvement plans, which are discussed in more detail in Section 3 of this plan. The recreational greenway would interface with Main Street at numerous locations (ideally where new, pedestrian friendly crosswalks are provided) and would provide an overall better and more safe pedestrian network that would encourage more activity both on and off Main Street. Opportunities for connecting the Greenway to Williamsville South High School should also be considered. The creation of the Greenway could take place in phases, beginning with relatively easy steps, such as signage and distinctive pavement markings that indicate the location of the Greenway, to more concrete improvements that establish the Greenway in the built environment. Carrying the Greenway across Main Street will be an important facet. A Greenway Plan could be prepared to pin-point the exact location of the Greenway, identify the potential users of the Greenway and their needs, and establish the look, form and function of this important element to the Village's multi-layered circulation network.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	In advance of or in conjunction with Main Street Improvement Plans.
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

**Action 6: Explore opportunities for new access to open space and recreation**

The Village should seek to enhance recreational opportunities for residents in the southeast area near Wehrle Drive by exploring joint recreational arrangements and linkages to Town of Amherst parks and playfields at Erie Community College.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst, Erie County
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short Term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

**Objective 5: Ensure that the Village continues to be a primary location for important community institutions and uses.**

The Village of Williamsville has traditionally served as the home to many of the Village's and Town of Amherst's important community institutions, such as municipal buildings, the Williamsville branch of the Amherst Library System, churches and schools, to name but a few. Many of the same forces that have acted to disperse business and retail activity to "more suburban" areas outside the Village, have also had a similar influence on community institutions in the Village. Nor is this trend unique to Williamsville. Villages across the country have seen important community resources and uses, such as post offices and schools, relocate outside of traditional downtowns into more suburban locations. Often, such new locations are less accessible to Village

residents, further encourage automobile dependence, and do not have the “visibility” and public presence of their former, village locations, with the result that the bonds between such institutions and the public they serve can often feel weakened. For instance, school buildings that once proudly fronted on main streets across the country have often relocated to the edges of communities. While space needs and other practical considerations factor into such moves, a balance must be struck between such factors and the importance of retaining public institutions in highly visible, walkable traditional downtown locations. It should therefore be the Village’s policy to actively support the concept of the Village as a central location for important community and public institutions.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Ongoing
<u>Cost:</u>	None

## 3.0 TRANSPORTATION

Housing, businesses, open spaces, natural resources and community activity areas physically define Williamsville. The natural waterfront, business district, historic buildings, civic celebration spaces, neighborhoods, parks and open spaces create a human scale environment. The Village's traditional "grid street pattern" not only defines its neighborhood character, it also provides safe and efficient access to all areas of the community for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. The streets that traverse the Village are used by Village residents and regional commuters; their maintenance falls under several different jurisdictions and their function as transportation corridors varies. The Community Plan for transportation seeks to establish or reinforce those circulation functions, while seeking to enhance the character and sustain the viability of Village land uses. While Williamsville's neighborhoods and side streets embody its form, in many ways, Main Street plays the prominent role in defining the identity and character of the Village and Village life. The presence of Main Street presents challenges and opportunities for planning development and redevelopment in the Village.

As a transportation corridor, Main Street is the primary east-west traffic corridor for the Village of Williamsville as well as a main commuter route for people living both east and west in the Town of Amherst and neighboring communities. During peak commuter times the traffic on Main Street backs up and is congested creating difficulty for both drivers and pedestrians. This congestion, in turn, impacts circulation and parking throughout the Village and affects the quality of life and commerce for Village residents and businesses. Alternatively, the character and scale of development along Main Street are valued assets that are viewed as the cornerstone of its "Village Character". Village Stakeholders consistently cited a need to "strike a balance" between mobility and character so that a revitalized Main Street could fulfill its role as a transportation corridor while enhancing its character and sustaining its role as a center of civic business, commerce and social life for both the Village and the Town of Amherst; to achieve this balance, a "context sensitive approach" to transportation planning was employed to form a vision for Main Street and its Business District.

Regional travel patterns on highways that are adjacent or connect to the Village also have a significant influence on traffic along Main Street and other Village streets. There are currently several regional transportation initiatives that involve these highways; these initiatives also have potential to play an increasingly important role in managing transportation and traffic in the Village.

### 3.1 Transportation Vision

The community envisions a Main Street that provides greater balance between function and form to create a renewed center of civic activity with a more vibrant business district. Redesign of the street will create an attractive walkable boulevard that reinforces Main Street as the social and economic center of the community. The corridor is envisioned to support a diverse mix of pedestrian-oriented retail, office, civic and entertainment. One of

the main objectives for transportation in the Main Street area is to transform an auto-oriented and dominated arterial that serves as the Village Main Street into a more balanced, walkable and pedestrian-oriented boulevard that supports and encourages economic revitalization.

### Objectives for Main Street

- ❖ Encourage non-auto-mobile travel
- ❖ Create an environment supportive of business/community
- ❖ Create a signature street identity
- ❖ Create a safe environment for all users
- ❖ Create an environment that supports economic development

## 3.2 Context Sensitive Solutions – the “CSS” Approach

Context sensitive solutions, or CSS, is a way of involving the community in the planning and design process to achieve a balance in the competing needs of the stakeholders involved. It is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves *all* stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits within its physical setting, and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers *the total context* within which a transportation facility exists. The CSS approach was applied to the consideration of Main Street for the Community Plan, integrating traffic considerations within the context of Main Street and its physical and economic characteristics. The preliminary analysis of existing and potential future traffic and circulation characteristics of Main Street provided parameters and context for the community discussions on land use and economic development in the Village.

### ‘Context Sensitive Solutions’

*“A philosophy wherein safe transportation solutions are designed in harmony with the community”.*

- New York State Department of Transportation

Land uses and the built environment often create a sense of place along highways, and the most important places are usually located near the center of a settlement or built up area. The importance of movement of motor vehicles can vary along the length of a highway and can change over time. Movement and place considerations are important in determining the appropriate design speeds, speed limits, and road geometry. Similarly,

the form and character of the adjacent context must also be considered. The chart below illustrates where various types of roadways fall within the spectrum of movement and place. As the importance of movement increases, the emphasis on place can take on less importance. Alternatively, as the importance of place and character increase, the emphasis on vehicular movement diminishes and becomes secondary to maintaining the qualities and features of a place.



To address this challenge, traffic engineers and planners have developed the concept of “context zones” to help characterize places and design the corresponding transportation features that strike the balance between facilitating movement and preservation of “place”. The following section describes the context of Main Street and its traffic characteristics.

### **3.2.1 Context Appraisal and Characteristics**

Context zones are used to characterize areas from rural to urban and from lower to higher density. Each context zone has associated guidelines, characteristics and parameters that are used to inform associated design guidance for buildings, streetscape features and pavement features. Through the public involvement process Main Street was evaluated and sections of the roadway were characterized according to context zones and associated design parameters. Figure 6 below illustrates typical context zones and their associated character. Based on community discussion and consensus, Figure 7 below illustrates the context zones that currently comprise the Main Street corridor through Williamsville, and determined through public involvement were used to identify appropriate streetscape and highway design parameters and tools that can be utilized to achieve the desired context



within the corridor. Table 1 below summarizes the current and proposed design parameters that are specific to the two future context zones identified for the Main Street corridor.

Figure 6 – Typical Context Zones

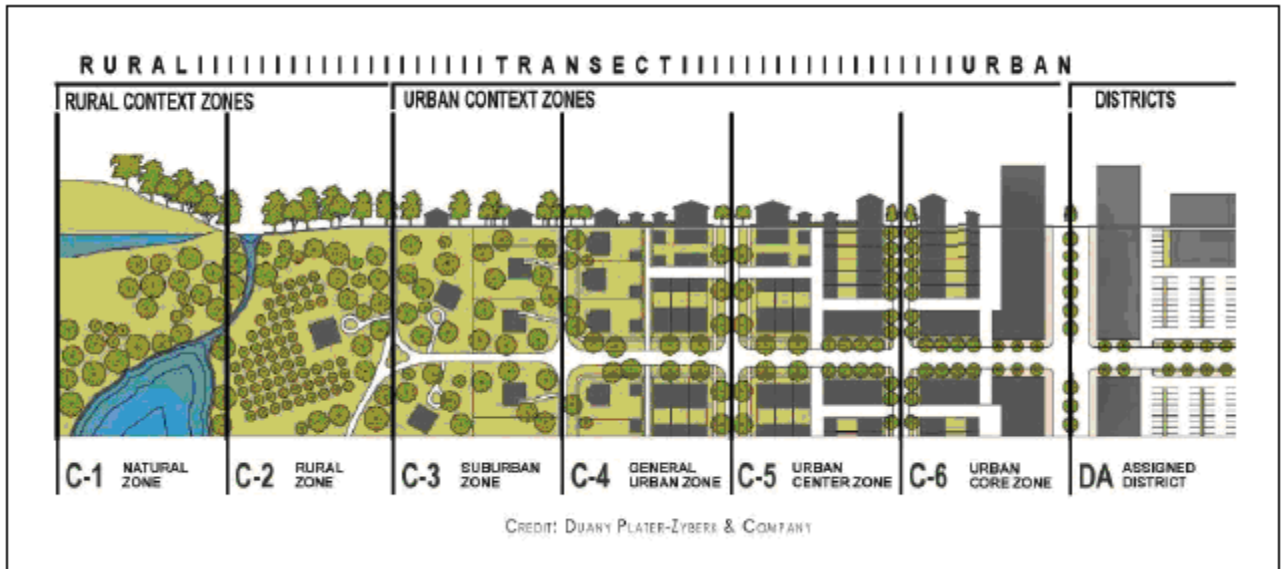


Figure 7 - Main Street Context Zones

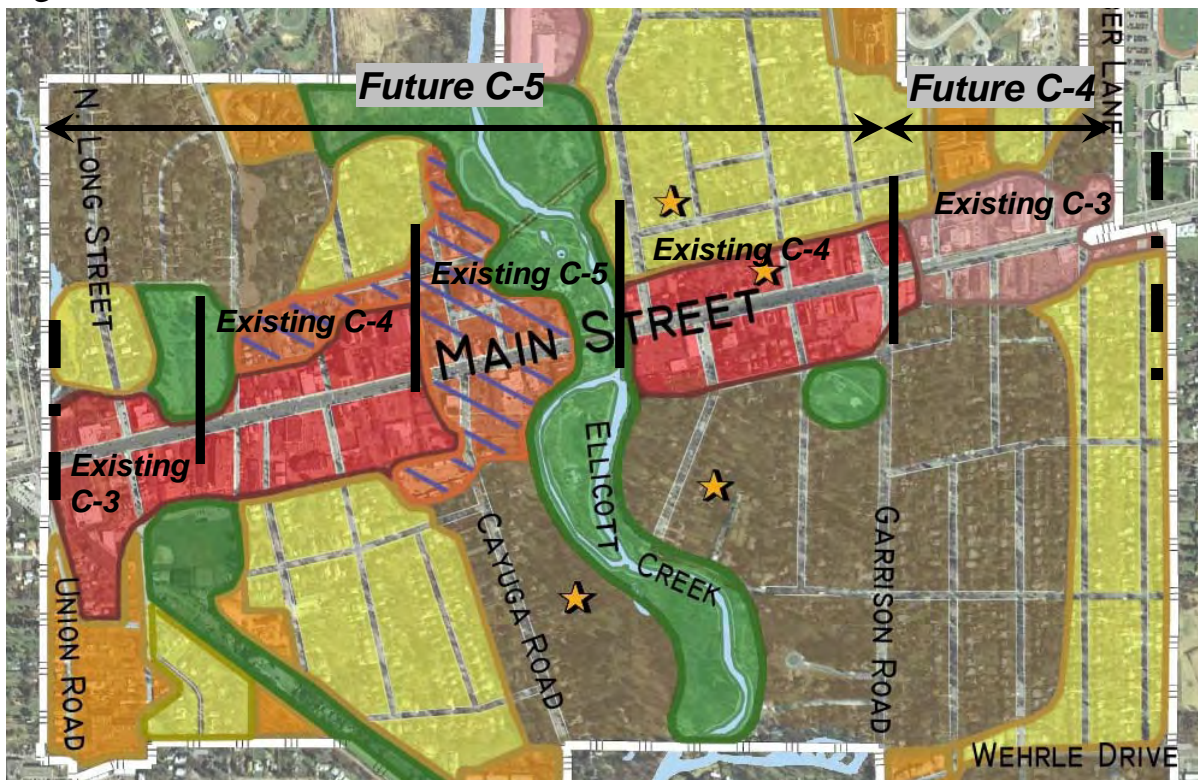


Table 1 - Main Street Context Zone Design Parameters

<b>Design Parameters</b>	<b>C-4 Commercial Blvd</b>	<b>C-5 Commercial Blvd</b>	<b>NYSDOT Design Criteria</b>	<b>Existing Main Street (typical)</b>
Edge & Furnishing Zone	4 ft	4 ft	13 ft	Varies
Clear Pedestrian Travel Way/Throughway Zone	6 ft	6 ft	5 ft	4-6 ft. (sidewalk)
Frontage Zone	2 ft	2 ft	NA	Varies
Total Minimum Roadside Width	12 ft	12 ft		9-15 ft
Target Travel Speed	35 mph	30 mph		35-40 mph
Travel Lane Width	10 ft - 12 ft	10 ft - 11 ft	11 ft 12-14 ft w/bicycles	10 ft - 11 ft
Medians (min. when constrained)	10 ft	10 ft	11 ft	None - 12 ft center turn lane
Parallel On-street Parking Width	8 ft	8 ft	8 ft	9 ft
Parking/Bike Lane Minimum Width	13 ft	13 ft		N/A
Bike Lane Minimum Width	5 ft	5 ft	5 ft	N/A
Access Management	High	High		None

Table 1, above, establishes the typical characteristics and parameters for a commercial boulevard located within a C-4 and C-5 district. As shown in Figure 7 above, the community determined that the C-4 and C-5 context zones were currently applicable to much of Main Street within Williamsville. The “typical” characteristics of the C-4 and C-5 zones should be stressed, insofar as they must also be compatible with the unique circumstances and constraints of the Main Street corridor. A comparison of existing characteristics with the design parameters indicates some of the opportunities to adjust the physical characteristics and behavior of drivers in the corridor to more closely match the desired character of the street. The character and context of Main Street is highly influenced by the existing transportation setting that reflects current traffic trends and travel behavior.

### **3.3 Main Street Characteristics**

Main Street, also known as New York State (NYS) Route 5, is an arterial highway under the operational and maintenance jurisdiction of New York State. The roadway features a five-lane undivided pavement section with the following characteristics.

- Functional classification: Principal arterial
- Right-of-way: 100 ft. typical
- Sidewalks both sides: 4ft. - 6ft.
- On-street parking: 9 ft. wide parking lane on both sides
- Center turn lane: 12 ft. two-way left turn lane
- Travel-way width: 72 ft. with four 10 - 11 ft. travel lanes
- Speed limit: 35 - 45 mph
- Transit: Bus service on a regional route
- Bicycle facilities: Not a designated bicycle route

Current traffic along Main Street can be characterized by consideration of the actual speeds, traffic volumes and composition of vehicles, these characteristics include:

- 85th Percentile Speed during peak traffic times: 35 mph
- 85th Percentile Speed during off-peak traffic times: 40 mph
- Average Annual Daily Traffic: 36,000  $\pm$  vehicles per day
- Peak hour volume: 750 vehicles per hour per lane
- Traffic composition: 3% trucks

The volume of traffic traversing Main Street through the Village of Williamsville is among the highest of any similar highway in New York State and higher traffic volumes are typically constant throughout the day. During the morning and afternoon peak hours, intersections along Main Street operate at 61.5% to 106.3% and 58.0% to 107.0% of their capacity respectfully. During the PM peak hour in particular, many of the intersections approach capacity. Main Street is the primary east-west traffic corridor for the Village of Williamsville as well as a main commuter route for people living both east and west of the Village in the Town of Amherst and neighboring communities. During peak commuter times the traffic on Main Street backs up and is congested creating difficulty for both drivers and pedestrians in the corridor. This congestion, in turn, impacts circulation and parking throughout the Village, adversely affecting the quality of life for Village residents and vitality for businesses.

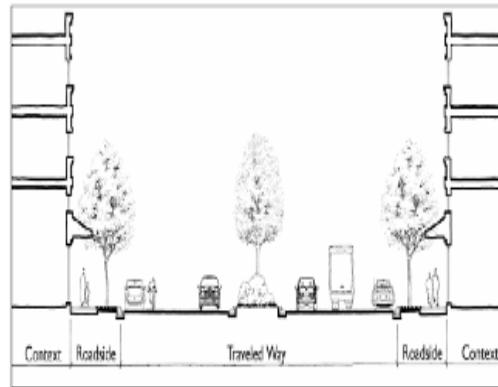
Pedestrian circulation along Main Street is significantly constrained by vehicular congestion and the resulting difficulty for pedestrians at crossing locations. There are sidewalks along both sides of Main Street throughout the Village, however, they are too narrow to be used efficiently in many locations. Bicycle trails exist throughout the Village with no connection to Main Street. There are no provisions on Main Street for bicyclists other than to travel with the motor vehicles sharing the travel lanes.



Main Street is wide (approximately 72 ft.), and the long crossing combined with high traffic volumes and vehicle speeds makes crossing Main Street difficult for pedestrians. A reduction in the number of lanes at the intersections without reducing the existing traffic volumes would result in over-capacity conditions and significantly greater congestion throughout the corridor. Pending changes to regional traffic patterns or reduction of traffic volumes along Main Street, it would be challenging to undertake significant changes to roadway width and lane configurations to better accommodate pedestrian traffic. The CSS approach focuses on consideration of improvements to both the highway and the roadside as a means of improving conditions for pedestrians, businesses and motorists.

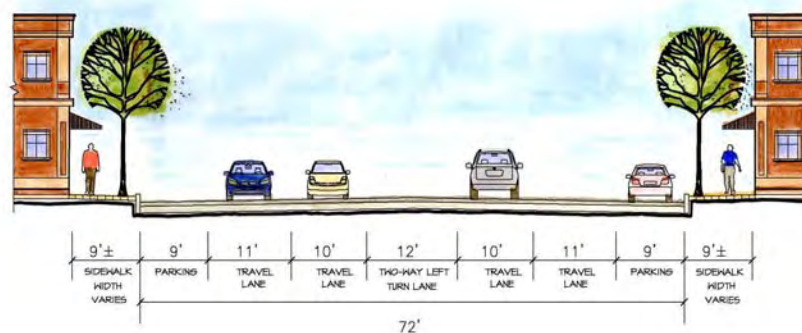
### 3.3.1 Existing Main Street Profile

As illustrated in the adjacent diagram, a street can be subdivided into three main areas: the “Traveled way”, the “Roadside” and the “Context”. The Traveled Way is defined as the public right-of-way between the curbs. It includes parking lanes, travel lanes for all types of wheeled vehicles (including bicycles), and medians. The CSS approach calls for highway planning to work from the edges, or context, into the highway, or the Traveled way. The “Context” of Main Street is established and sustained through land use planning and the application of appropriate development regulations.



Land Use recommendations that propose guidance for scale, massing, and character of development along the Main Street Corridor were discussed in Section 2. Plans to guide the development of the Roadside and Traveled Way often take the form of profiles and cross sections. Figure 8 illustrates the existing profile or cross section of Main Street. The following sections describe the plan and illustrate the desired form and characteristics of Main Street’s Roadside and Traveled Way.

Figure 8 - Existing Main Street Profile





### *The Roadside*

The “Roadside” is where the “pedestrian realm” is located, and as illustrated in Figure 9, this is the area of the street where business and social activities of the corridor can occur. The pedestrian realm is comprised of four zones. The Edge Zone is the area between the curb and adjacent furnishings zone that is used to provide a clearance area between parked vehicles (or travel lanes) and landscaping/furnishings. The

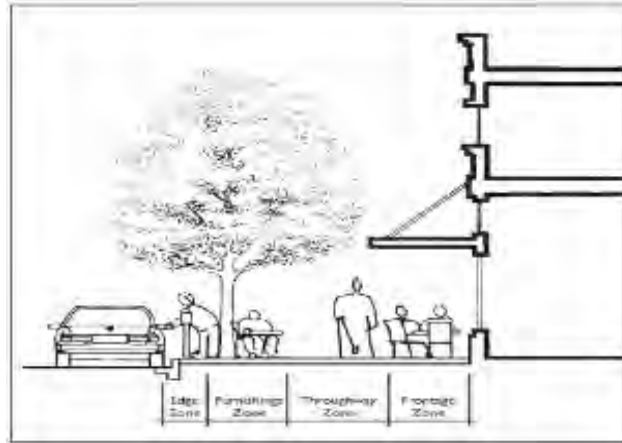


Figure 9 - Pedestrian Realm

landscaping, street furniture, transit stops, utilities, etc. The Throughway Zone is the area for walking and must remain clear both vertically and horizontally. Finally, the Frontage Zone is the area between the Throughway and the building edge. It is mainly used to buffer pedestrians from window shoppers and doorways. This area is not to be confused with sidewalk widths, which are much narrower with typical widths of 4 to 6 feet. As indicated in Table 1, the Pedestrian Realm in context zones C-4 or C-5 are typically 12 ft. wide, along Main Street the width of this area varies but is typically 9 ft – 15 ft wide. Figure 10 below shows the areas (highlighted in pink) along Main Street where the Pedestrian Realm is considered constrained – less than 12 ft wide. Opportunities exist throughout the corridor for improving the Pedestrian Realm. Alternatives enhancement to the pedestrian realm were considered and are presented with recommendations for the entire corridor below.



Figure 10  
Constrained  
Pedestrian Realm  
Along Main Street

## Parking

Provision of conveniently located, adequate and safe parking is a key component to the success of a village business district. On-street parking along Main Street is provided within a 9 ft. continuous parking lane that is located along both the north and south sides of the street. The width of the parking lane is adequate for the C-4 and C-5 context zones, however, individual parking spaces are not delimited, and this leads to inefficiencies with regard to the use and location of on-street parking.

Parking inventories completed for the Inventory and Analysis indicate that much of the Village's off-street parking is located within private lots associated with nearby businesses and housing. As shown in Figure 11 and Table 2 below, the greatest parking deficiencies occur in "Area 6" which roughly corresponds to the core area of the village (VC-CA land use classification). An increase in activity in this area of the Village, potentially around a revitalized Main Street Business District and Mill Village would further exacerbate the shortage of parking. Methods for addressing off-street parking needs are set forth in the objectives and actions recommended for the Business District in Section 4, with additional analysis and recommendations for parking needs in the center of the Village contained in the discussion of Mill Village in Section 5, Village Focus Areas.

Table 2 - Main Street Parking Surpluses and Deficiencies

Area	Floor Area	Parking Need	Off-Street Parking	On-Street Parking	Total Parking	Surplus/Deficiency Not Including Street Parking	Surplus/Deficiency with Street Parking
1	110,987	434	360	24	384	-74	-50
2	134,174	718	655	34	689	-63	-29
3	80,341	410	363	25	388	-47	-22
4	43,141	233	277	0	277	44	44
5	75,977	435	431	34	465	-4	30
6	177,781	964	644	37	681	-320	-283
7	53,254	272	242	26	268	-30	-4
8	78,784	487	349	0	349	-138	-138
<b>Total Commercial Deficiencies Based on Current Zoning Code</b>						<b>-632</b>	<b>-452</b>

Source: peter j. smith & company

Figure 11 - Parking Inventory Map

Figure 2.4.2 Parking Inventory Map (Excluding Residential)



### *The Traveled Way*

As noted in the discussion above, Main Street's "Traveled Way" is wide, frequently congested, noisy, and often intimidating to motorists and pedestrians who visit and work in the Village. The heavy volumes of traffic along Main Street are a day-long phenomenon and generally subside in late evening after the daily commuting period has ended. The Traveled Way along Main Street has been designed to facilitate vehicular movement, often at the expense of pedestrian movement and convenient access to businesses that line the corridor.

The configuration and context of Main Street presents both issues to confront and opportunities to pursue. Many issues and opportunities were identified through the public involvement process, they include:

- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Excessive through traffic volumes
- ❖ Lack of Parking
- ❖ Challenges for pedestrian crossing
- ❖ Lack of shared parking
- ❖ Lack of bicycle lanes

As noted in the discussion above, Williamsville's Main Street must fulfill many roles. For instance, while pedestrian mobility and amenities are desired, this street must continue to facilitate safe and efficient movement of traffic through the Village. Based on an analysis of the existing and projected conditions, alterations to Main Street that reduce the number of lanes would result in significant congestion that would lead to high levels of frustration for drivers and pedestrians alike. At the same time, Williamsville's Main Street is a destination for goods and services and an environment that is attractive for pedestrian access and movement. Efforts to "tip the scale" back to a more equitable balance between pedestrians and automobiles involve choices and trade-offs, these include the following.

- ❖ Refuge for pedestrians on a median refuge vs. wider sidewalks and pedestrian realm
- ❖ Unrestricted accommodation of left-turns vs. restricted left-turns with medians and access management
- ❖ Short medians vs. longer medians
- ❖ Provision of maximum on-street parking vs. median, bulb-outs and wider roadside pedestrian realm
- ❖ Accommodate transportation needs within existing right-of-way vs. right-of-way acquisition to accommodate desirable features
- ❖ More convenient automobile travel in an auto-oriented right-of-way vs. less convenient automobile travel in a pedestrian friendly right-of-way
- ❖ Bicycle lanes vs. wider pedestrian realm and parking



### 3.4 A Plan for Main Street

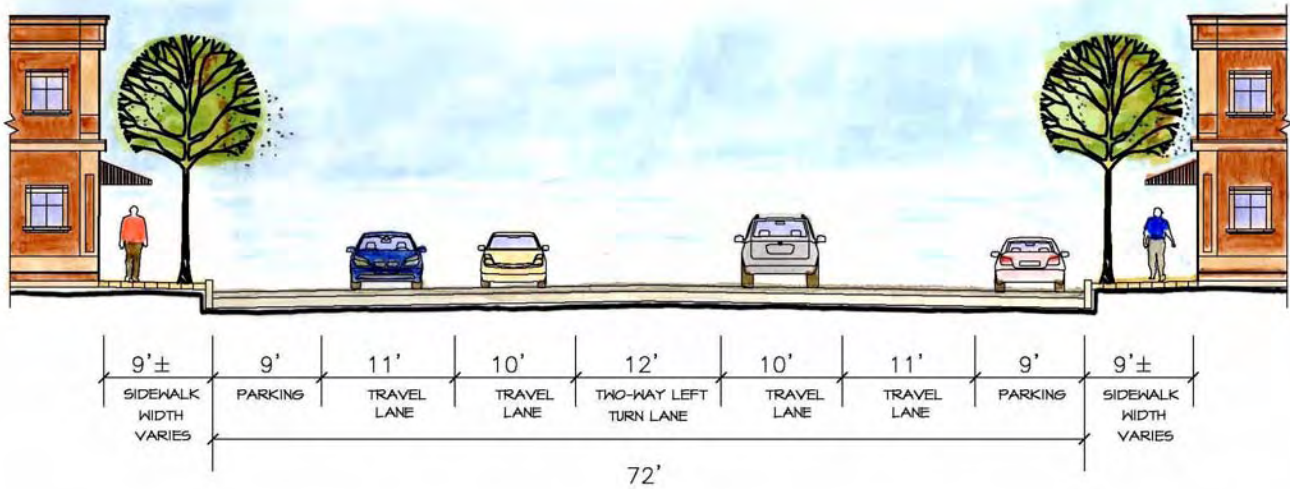
A plan for the Main Street must address traffic and transportation issues; it must also address opportunities to compliment and enhance the entire “street”, not just the Traveled Way. The following alternatives were formed to address the issues discussed above and capitalize on the opportunities identified along the Main Street corridor. Four alternative designs for Main Street, depicted in Figures 13 – 16 on the pages that follow, were identified that place differing levels of emphasis on the various design solutions along the corridor. Each alternative, seeks to reclaim Main Street for the pedestrian, while preserving Main Street’s ability to safely and efficiently handle the large volumes of traffic that traverse the Village each day. These alternatives represent physical alterations to the configuration of the Traveled Way and the Pedestrian Realm along the Main Street corridor. A number of modifications to Main Street circulation involving changes to traffic light signalization, turning movements and the installation of a traffic signal at Spring Street and Main Street are also discussed in more detail at the conclusion of this section. These supplementary modifications can occur in conjunction with any of the highway alternatives discussed below.

Figure 12 - Photo-simulation of a “bulb-out”



Bulb-outs reduce the distance that pedestrians must cross to get from one side of Main Street to the other, and provide more area for landscaping or the pedestrian realm in certain locations. The exact location and design of bulb-outs and other potential Main Street improvements are shown conceptually in this plan. Determining exact locations and design will require further consideration and analysis.

Figure 13 - Alternative 1: *Bulb-outs*



Alternative 1 consists of providing intersection *bulb-outs* at key pedestrian intersections, including a proposed new traffic light at Spring and Main. Bulb-outs reduce the distance that pedestrians must travel to cross Main Street, as well as provide larger pedestrian buffers and areas for landscaping and signage at key intersections.

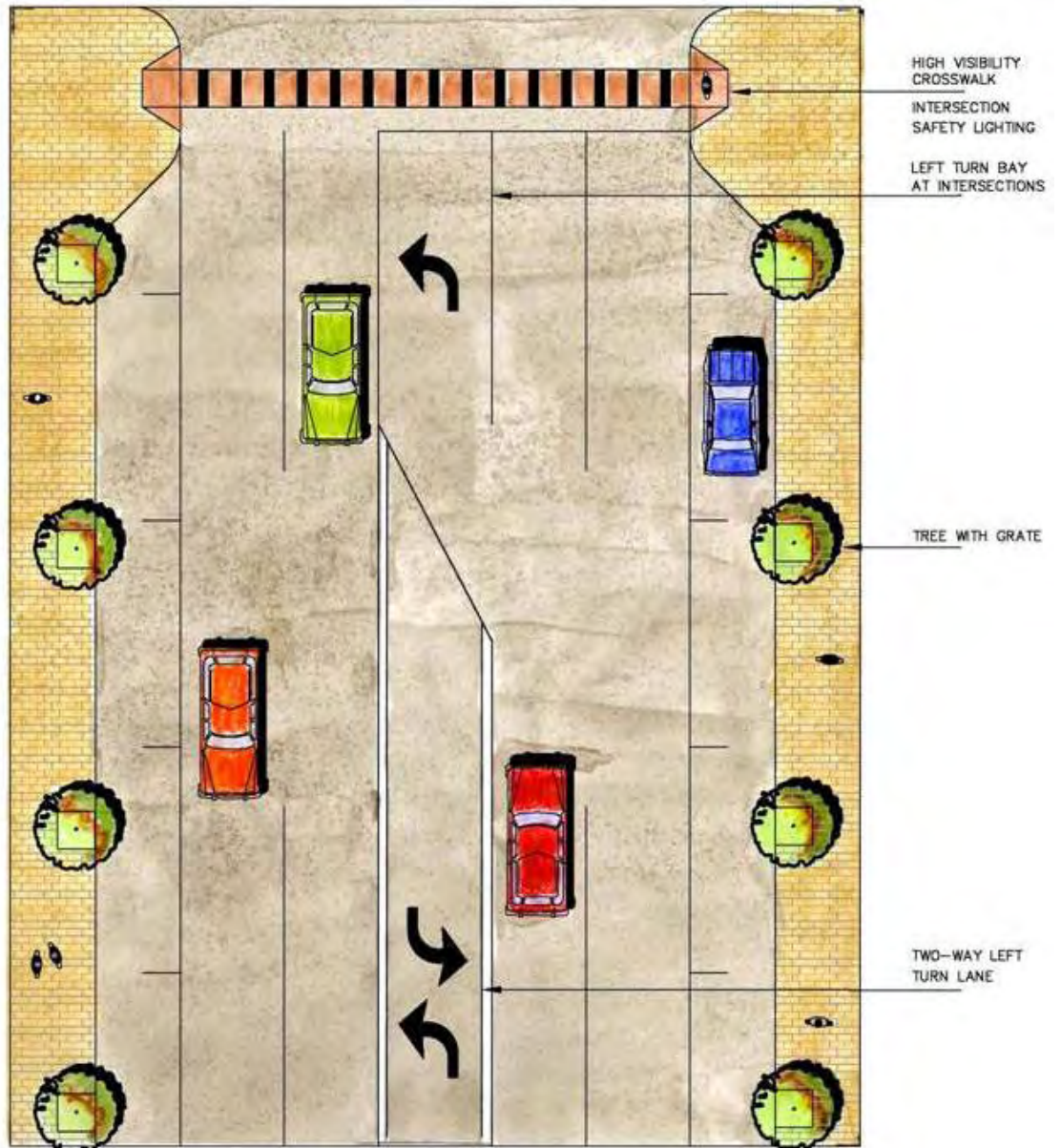
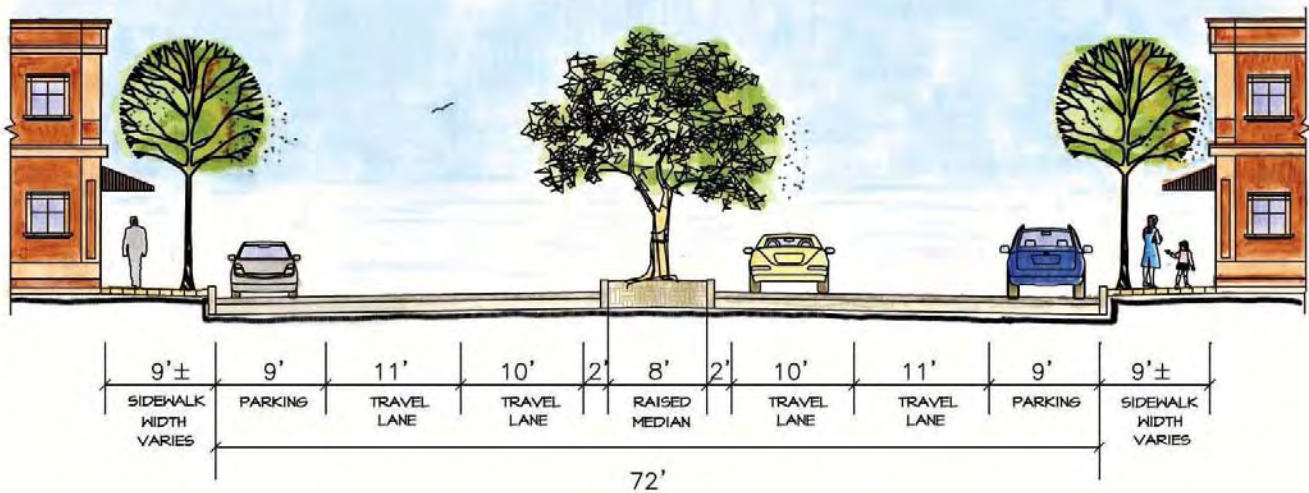




Figure 14 - Alternative 2: *Bulb-outs & Wide Median*



Alternative 2 takes Alternative 1 a step further by providing a landscaped median at strategic locations, in addition to bulb-outs at key pedestrian crossing points. The landscaped median would provide a pedestrian refuge; eliminate the use of the existing, continuous Main Street 2-way turning lane as an additional travel lane; create a safer environment for automobile turning movements; and bring more trees and landscaping to the center of Williamsville. The wide median in Alternative 2 comes with a tradeoff in that it precludes the widening of Main Street sidewalks and the pedestrian realm.

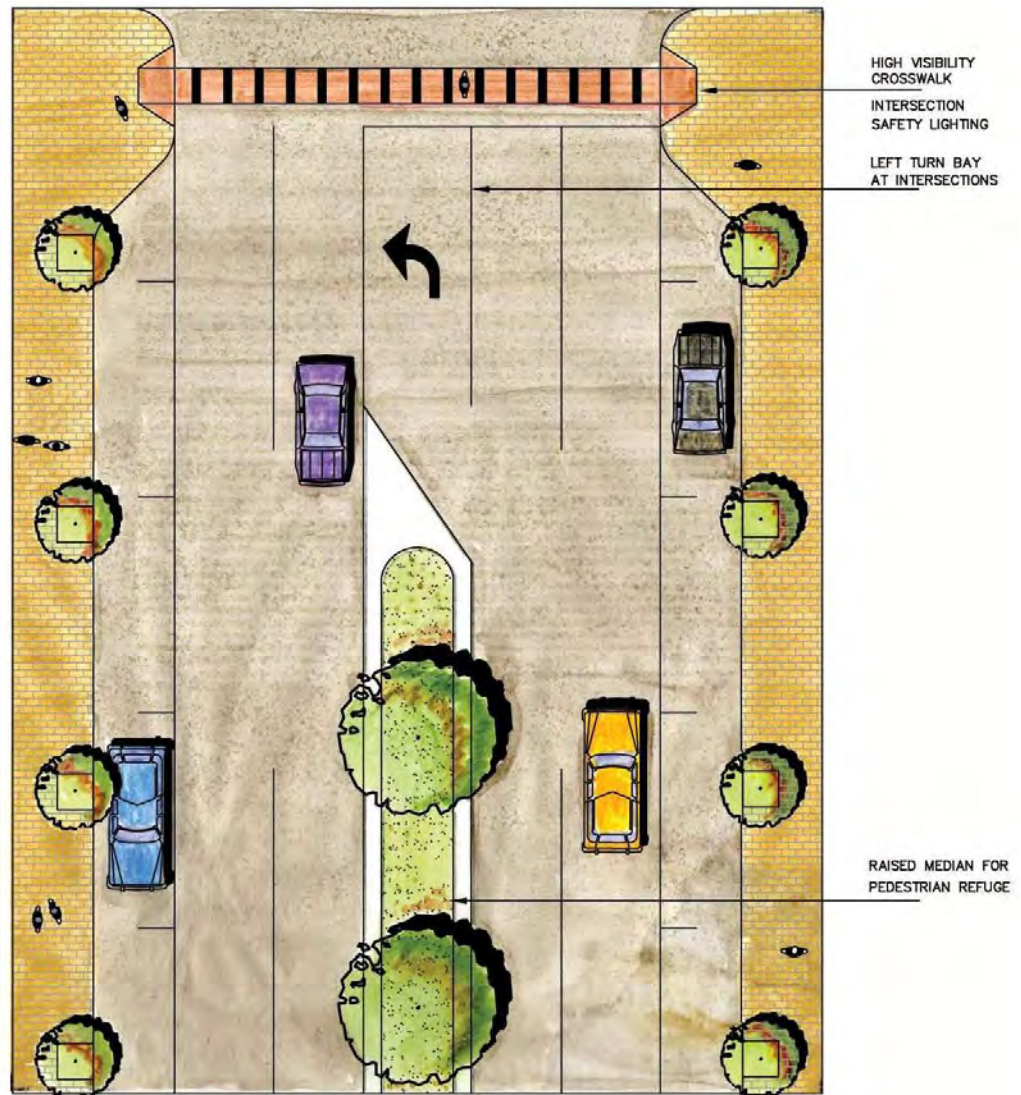
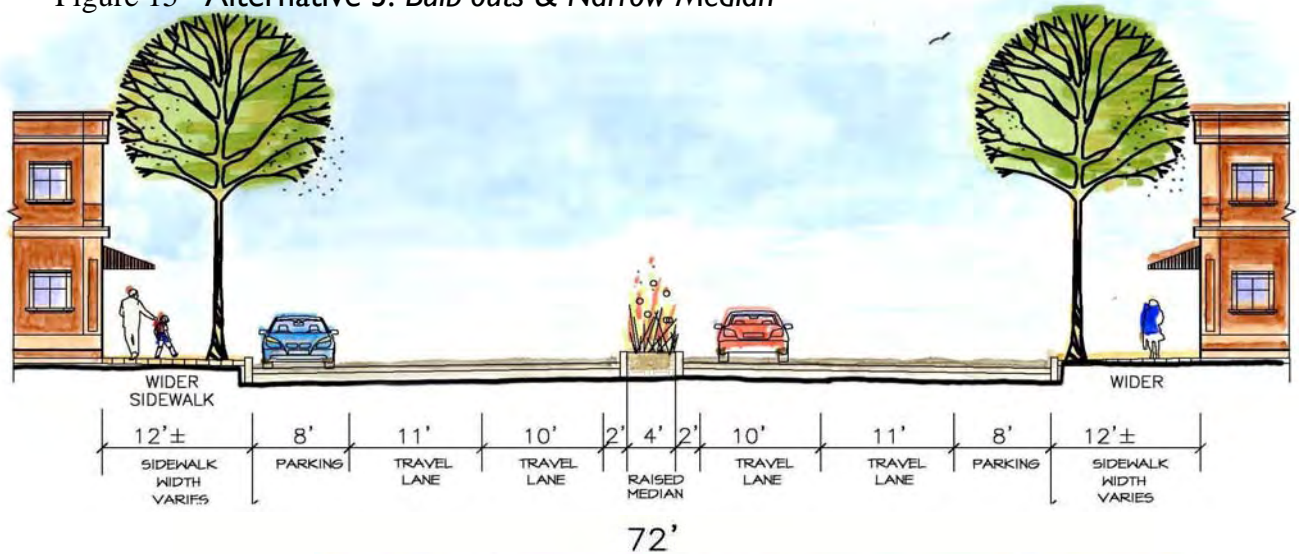




Figure 15 - Alternative 3: Bulb-outs & Narrow Median



Alternative 3 provides a narrower median than that shown in Alternative 2. The narrower median frees up more space – approximately several feet on each side of Main Street – for a wider pedestrian realm, including potentially wider sidewalks. However, the narrower median in this alternative would not constitute a sufficient pedestrian refuge (although some pedestrians would likely still attempt to utilize it as such); nor would it provide room for substantial plantings, such as trees.

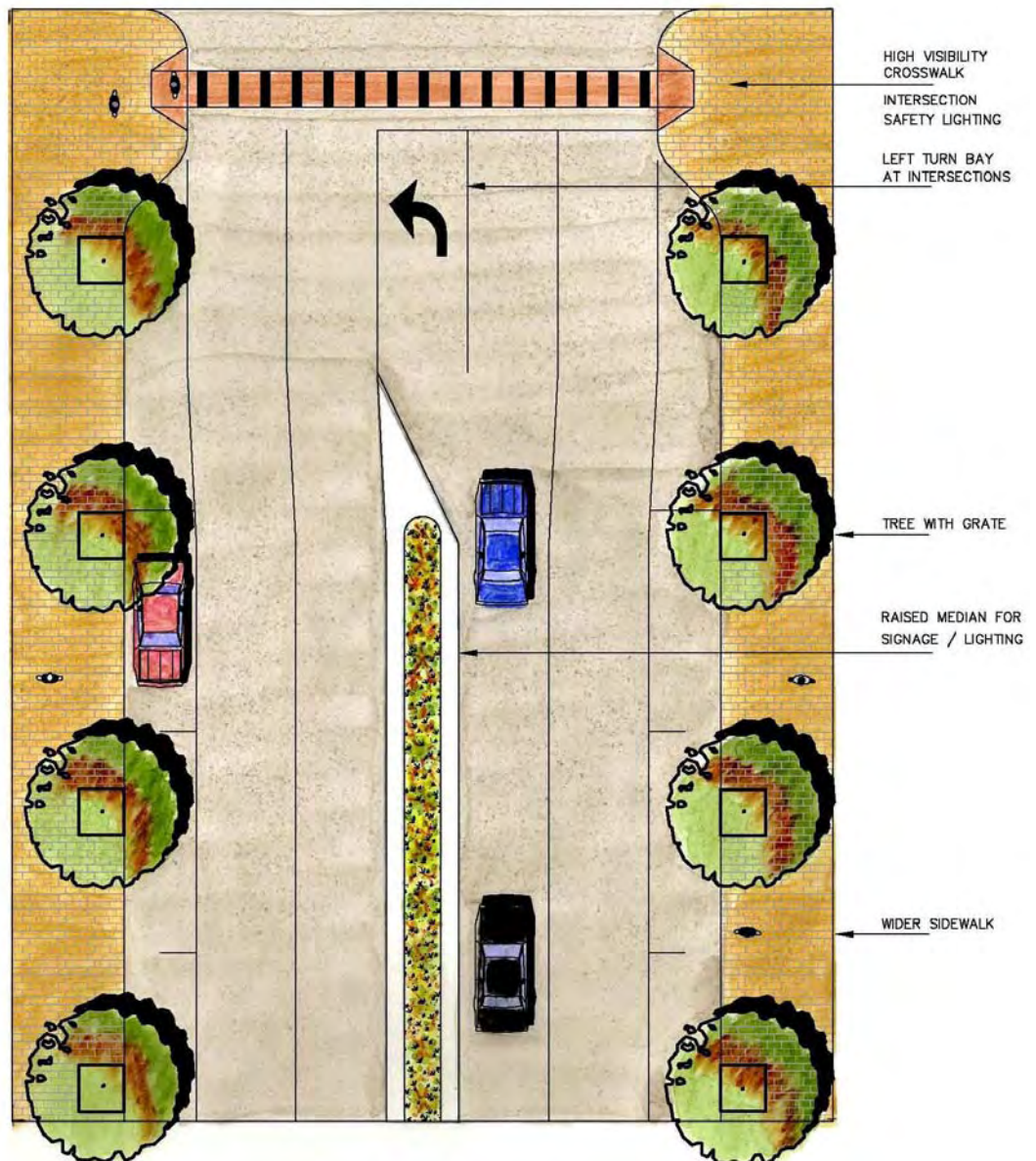
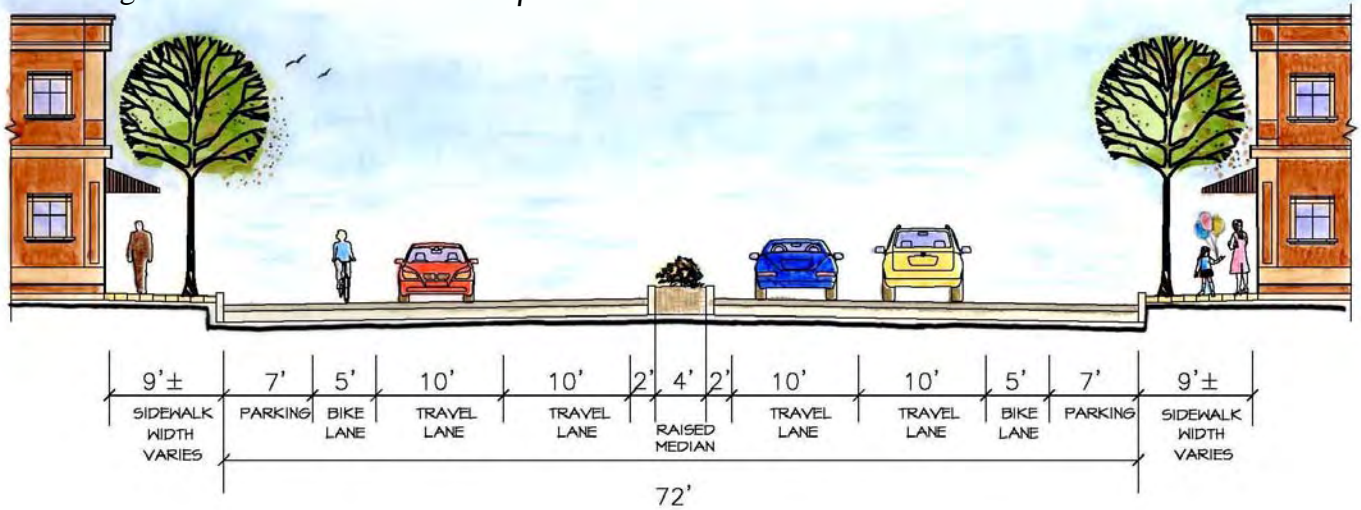
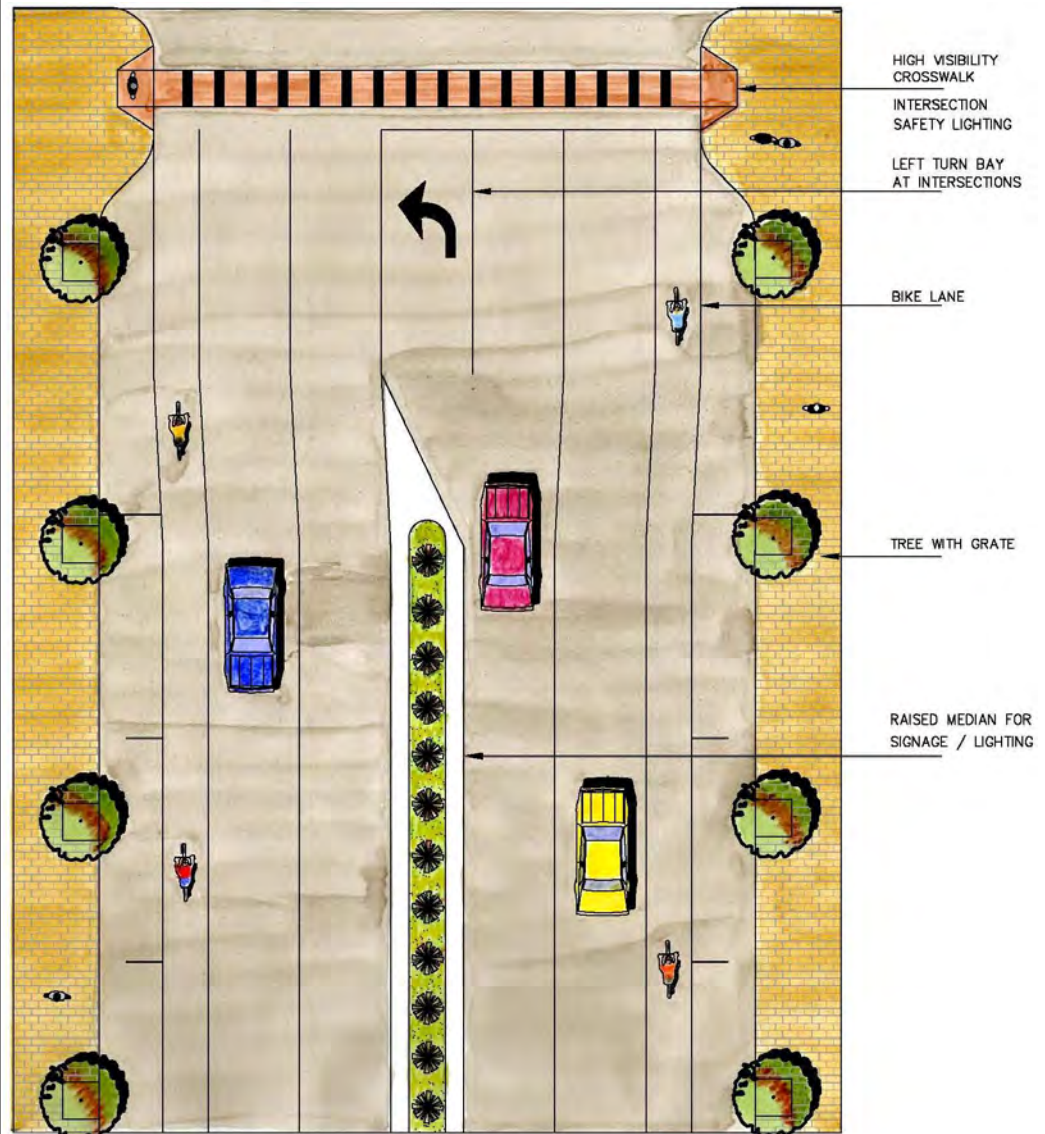




Figure 16 - Alternative 4: "Complete Street" with Bike Lanes



Alternative 4 provides bike lanes, which would be located between on-street parking spaces and the vehicular travel lane. The space utilized for bike lanes is "borrowed" from existing 9-foot parking spaces, which have been reduced to 7 feet, and by providing a "narrow" median, similar to that proposed in Alternative 3. Narrowing on-street parking space may be problematic. Moreover, a number of residents also expressed safety concerns with the current on-street parking width of 9 feet, particularly in winter, when snowbanks occupy a portion of the area devoted to on-street parking. Many also questioned the wisdom of providing bike lanes on an already constrained Main Street and one of the region's busiest roads, particularly in light of the proposed Greenway trail that would provide bicyclists with an alternative route through the Village largely off Main Street.



### 3.4.1 Preferred Corridor Alternative Analysis

Each of the alternatives presented above involves trade-offs. Pedestrian improvements may come at the expense of parking or vehicular delay. Bicycle lanes require removal of on-street parking; wider sidewalks equate to no median. The community must decide which alternative best fits the Vision for Williamsville's Main Street. To aid in this decision, "Community Values" matrices (see Figure 17) were used to weigh how each alternative achieves or fails to achieve objectives related to the Vision Statement. Seven community values were gathered from the Village's Vision Statement. Based on this evaluation, Alternatives 2 and 3 scored the same for achieving the community objectives. Each alternative was then further evaluated based on strictly transportation related objectives. The tables in Figure 17 below show the relative comparison of scores for each alternative and each community value.

Figure 17 - Community Values Matrices

Relative Comparison of Community Values								
Community Value*	Community Character	Uniqueness	Walkability	Safety	Traffic Calming	Business-friendliness	Aesthetics	OVERALL SCORE
ALTERNATIVE								
Existing	--	-	--	+	--	+	-	-5
Alternative 1	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	3
Alternative 2	++	+	+	++	++	+	++	11
Alternative 3	+	++	++	+	+	++	++	11
Alternative 4	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	7
Score (relative to other alternatives)								

Relative Comparison of Transportation/Traffic Objectives												
ALTERNATIVE	Parking	Sidewalk Width	Roadside Buffer	Vehicular Capacity	Large Vehicle Accommodation	Pedestrian Crossing Width	Left-Turn Lanes	Landscaped Medians	Bike Lanes	Speed Reduction	Pedestrian Safety	TOTALS
Existing	++	-	-	++	++	--	++	--	--	--	-	8+ / 11-
Alternative 1	+	+	-	++	+	+	++	--	--	+	+	10+ / 5-
Alternative 2	+	+	-	++	+	++	+	++	--	++	++	14+ / 3-
Alternative 3	+	++	++	+	+	+	-	--	--	+	+	10+ / 5-
Alternative 4	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	--	++	+	+	8+ / 6-
Score (relative to other alternatives)												
++ Good (achieves objectives)      + Fair      - Poor      -- Fails to meet/achieve objectives												
Alternative 1 bulb-outs optimum on-street parking no raised median/ ped refuge on-street parking			Alternative 2 bulb-outs wider median/ ped refuge on-street parking			Alternative 3 bulb-outs narrower median/ no ped refuge on-street parking wider sidewalk/ public realm			Alternative 4 bulb-outs narrower median/ no ped refuge on-street parking narrower travel lanes bicycle lanes			

\* Economic Development is an inherent community value that is served by all other values.

### **3.4.2 Preferred Alternative – Alternative 2**

Based upon an analysis of community and transportation values, Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative for application on Main Street within the Village of Williamsville. Alternative 2 provides bulb-outs and a wider pedestrian refuge median; maintains on-street parking and the existing Pedestrian Realm and sidewalk. Alternative 2 is also the most flexible option; allowing for modifications should future regional transportation improvements and conditions reduce traffic volumes on Main Street. This flexibility derives from the fact that the majority of modifications, particularly the wide median, are proposed to occur inside the existing street curblines. This means that with the exception of the bulb-out areas, little alteration to street curbs and utilities will be required. By contrast, in Alternative 3 the relatively small gains to the sidewalk area (several feet on each side of Main Street) and the narrow median would need to be completely “redone” under the potential future scenario of less traffic on Main Street. The preferred Alternative 2 is shown in greater detail in Figure 14. Figure 18 is a conceptual rendering of how the center of Williamsville, i.e., “Mill Village”, could look under Alternative 2. Distinctive gateway treatments and treed medians shown in this illustration, along with a new pedestrian crossing/light at Spring and Main which are not visible in this rendering, all contribute to the sense of place in the Village. It should be noted that the location and design of the improvements shown in this image are conceptual in nature and are meant to communicate an overall feel and look that could be provided at not only this location of the Village, but along much of Main Street. In reality, the exact location and design of Main Street improvements will vary along its length. Further analysis will need to be undertaken as part of a build-plan in order to finalize these details.

Bicycle lanes or bikeways were considered for each alternative design however given the high volume of traffic on Main Street, providing bicycle lanes was considered neither feasible nor prudent from a safety standpoint. Moreover, because of the constrained Main Street environment, providing bike lanes would come at the cost of providing much needed pedestrian safety improvements. Alternative 4 included bike lanes, but this was felt to be too high a price to pay given that it would result in a narrowed central median and reduced width of the parking lane. In the place of Main Street bike lanes the “Green Highway”, as recommended in the Land Use Section, is proposed as an alternative recreational and traffic safety improvement that provides for a continuous bicycle pathway parallel to Main Street, connecting the Village’s neighborhood streets and open spaces (see Section 2.2.3 and Figures 3-5).

### **3.4.3 Main Street: Circulation and Streetscape Plan**

Alternative 2 depicts a “typical” section of Main Street. The specific locations of bulb-outs, medians, high visibility crosswalk treatments and other improvements would vary along the length of Main Street and will be determined through a detailed design process that will involve Village stakeholders, Village Officials and the NYSDOT. Figures 19 – 23 on the pages that follow illustrate how Alternative 2 could be implemented along the Main Street corridor. The series depicts median treatments at select locations with minimal impact to adjacent streets and driveways. One location of note is at the Ellicott Street intersection shown in Figure 22. In order to provide a raised median and crosswalk



treatment on Main Street east of Ellicott Street the existing westbound left turn lane must be removed. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that the Village stakeholders and Officials consider converting the segment of Ellicott Street between Park Drive and Main Street to one-way northbound flow. Motorists wishing to travel on south from Main Street could continue to do so via Oakgrove Drive or Garrison Road. The intent of this series of figures is to provide initial guidance in developing a more advanced and detailed plan with greater use of median treatments and complimentary access management components (e.g. shared use driveways, cross access between parking areas, unified site circulation and access). Factors that were considered in arriving at preliminary locations for Main Street improvements include the density of existing curbcuts, turning movements on Main Street, and the locations of key land uses, such as the fire station. As shown in the figures, bulb-outs and medians are located at places where they will enhance the safety and mobility for pedestrians crossing Main Street. These “Traveled Way” improvements will serve to lower speeds and calm Main Street traffic, while supporting Main Street aesthetics with more robust landscape treatments. Where medians are not possible or desired, more robust planting zones and trees can be provided along the sidewalks where existing widths permit. It should also be noted that over time, as the number of curbcuts on Main Street are reduced and properties utilize shared driveways and parking, there may be more opportunities to create longer, more continuous medians along Main Street.

A more detailed and comprehensive plan will identify the exact location and configuration of Main Street circulation, parking, streetscape, and access management improvements. The process to arrive at such detailed plans will likely involve key stakeholders and users of Main Street, as well as Village residents. Emergency service providers will also need to be involved, such as the fire department, for which Main Street is a critical route for the delivery of services. The plan should also set forth a phasing plan for Main Street improvements that could potentially allow for key priority areas along Main Street to be improved in a shorter window of time. One such priority area is “Mill Village” (Spring and Main). Starting at this key stretch of Main Street and working outwards over time could be one sensible approach. Such a phasing plan should also take into consideration the timing of other planned transportation projects and improvements. Lastly, any plan for large-scale improvements on Main Street would take into consideration potential impacts to Main Street business owners, Village residents, and other users of Main Street. A detailed plan for mitigating such impacts during construction would be developed, working with stakeholders and business owners to ensure that disruptions to Main Street business activity were minimized. Moreover, the improvements to Main Street are likely to be undertaken in phases, rather than in one phase involving Main Street from end-to-end. Such a phased approach would likely entail fewer impacts to businesses and allow for more flexibility in mitigating unavoidable impacts. In short, a mitigation plan will ensure that short-term impacts are minimized to the greatest extent practicable, so that all Main Street businesses are in a position to reap the benefits of an improved Main Street.

Figure 18 – Conceptual “Mill Village” at Main and Spring Street



### **3.4.4 Additional Proposals for Main Street**

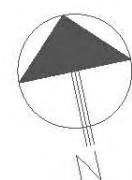
In addition to the four alternative scenarios presented above, including the preferred Alternative 2, a series of additional changes to Main Street changes were evaluated with respect to the Village's land use and economic development vision and objectives. These include changes to operating conditions at the Cayuga Street intersection, and two potential circulation changes. Changes to the operations at Cayuga Street could enhance the potential for economic development in the Spring Street area on the north side of Main Street as follows:

- ❖ Changing pavement markings on Cayuga Street south of Main Street (i.e. northbound) allows removal of the northbound advance phase which provides more green time for southbound traffic.
- ❖ Southbound capacity is increased by approximately 125 vehicles during the PM peak hour
- ❖ Based on existing traffic patterns, approximately 60% of any new traffic generated by development in the Spring Street and/or Cayuga Street area, would travel south to Main Street benefiting from the increased capacity at the Cayuga Street intersection
- ❖ Based on the existing travel patterns in the Spring Street area, capacity analyses, and the Cayuga Street intersection modifications, the Spring Street area could support approximately 210 additional PM peak hour trips
- ❖ The additional capacity created by the Cayuga Street improvements could support approximately 90,000 s.f. of new retail/commercial uses in the Spring Street area.
- ❖ As previously identified, new development in the Spring Street area would require additional nearby parking. In addition to the currently estimated deficit of approximately 300 parking spaces, applying the Village's parking standards, an additional 450 parking spaces would be needed to support an additional 90,000 s.f. of development (see preceding bullet).

Installation of a new traffic signal at Spring St with one-way traffic entering Spring Street from Main Street could also have a beneficial impact on traffic flow in this area of the Village. The location of such a signal is spaced almost equidistant from both Cayuga Street and Mill Street. The Spring Street location is also a key location for pedestrian crossings in the corridor given the location of parking and uses on both the north and south sides of Main Street, and the desired future state of this area as a vital, Main Street hub. The improvements to the Cayuga Street intersection could be postponed until such time as increased activity and development in Mill Village require improvements to this intersection.



**Figure 19.** Main Street Conceptual Overview: *Union Road to Village Square Lane*



**MAIN STREET - ROUTE 5**  
**ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT**  
**VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK**

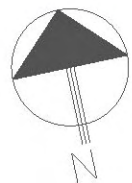








Figure 20. Main Street Conceptual Overview: *Los Robles to Rock Street*



MAIN STREET - ROUTE 5  
ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT  
VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK

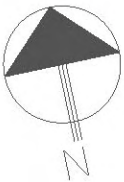








Figure 21. Main Street Conceptual Overview: *Village Core*



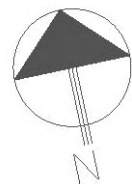
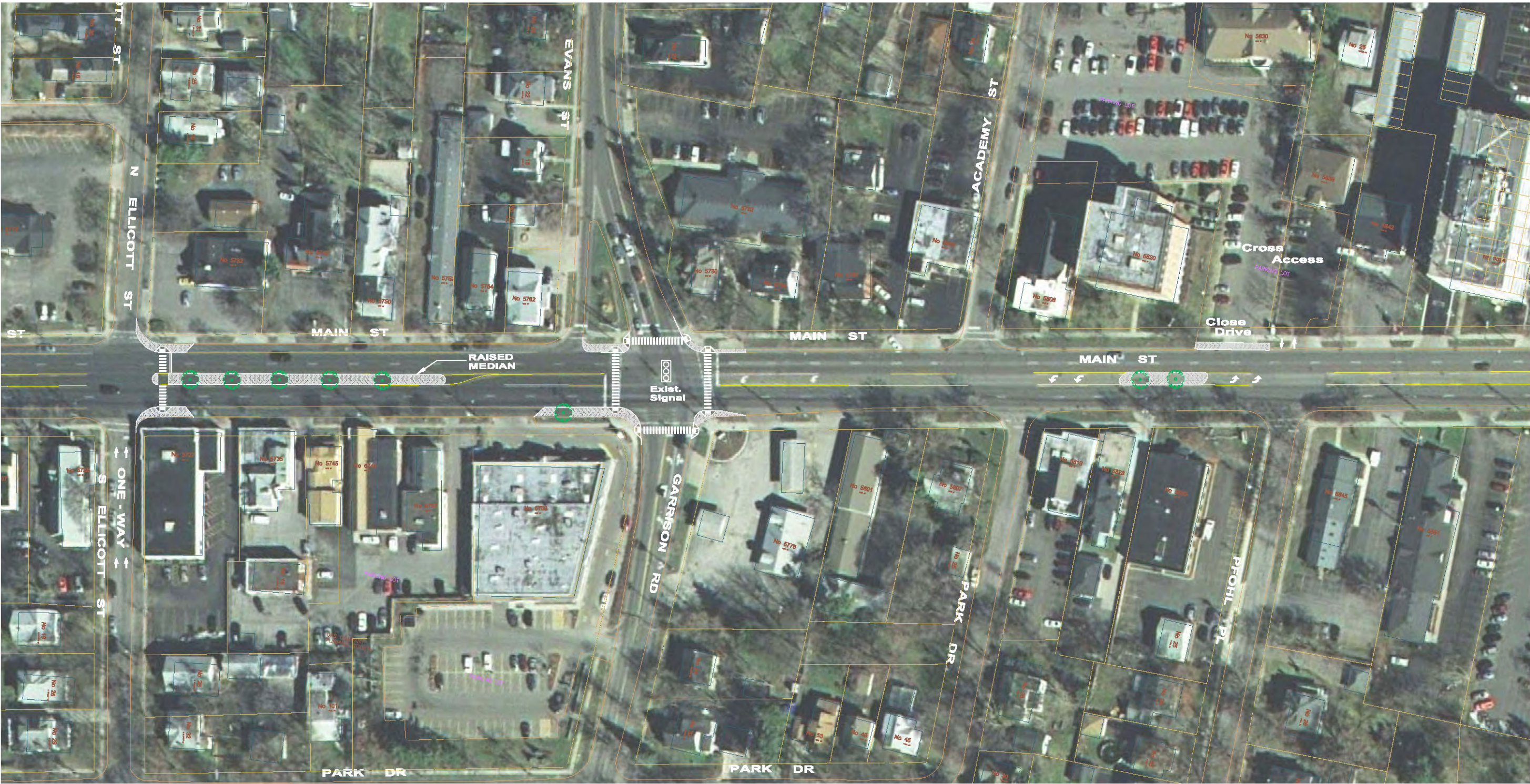
**MAIN STREET - ROUTE 5**  
**ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT**  
**VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK**







Figure 22. Main Street Conceptual Overview: *Ellicott Street to Pfohl Place*



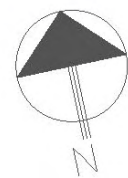
**MAIN STREET - ROUTE 5**  
**ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT**  
VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK







**Figure 23.** Main Street Conceptual Overview: *Rhinewalt Street to Williamsville High School*



MAIN STREET - ROUTE 5  
ALTERNATIVE 2 CONCEPT  
VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE, ERIE COUNTY, NEW YORK







### **3.5 Wehrle Drive**

Although the focus of this section has been Williamsville's Main Street, which reflects the importance the community placed on this corridor through the planning process, Wehrle Drive also emerged as an area of concern, particularly for residents living south of Wehrle Drive, some of whom felt that they were "cut off" from the Village. Plans for Wehrle Drive improvements are already in place and will be put out to bid by Erie County at the end of 2007. The main emphasis of the project is safety and capacity improvements. The Erie County Department of Public Works is letting the Wehrle Drive Reconstruction Project, PIN 5755.19, at the end of 2007. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2008 and it is anticipated to be a two-year project. The project limits involve 2.3 miles of Wehrle Drive, County Road 290, from the Wehrle Drive Bridge over Ellicott Creek to Transit Road (NY Route 78). Within the Village of Williamsville the roadway will be reconstructed and paved to provide three lanes – two travel lanes and a center turn lane. The project will provide enclosed drainage and curbing. The project does *not* involve any widening within the Village – all of the work will be completed within the existing roadway width which currently includes some areas with wide gravel shoulders. The pavement will be approximately 40-42 feet wide. The County considered a roundabout at the Wehrle/Garrison intersection but steered away from that option due to concerns over children and elderly pedestrians. There will be a new traffic signal at the Wehrle/Garrison intersection with crosswalks as appropriate. Pedestrian count down signals with push buttons will also be provided and the existing slip ramp intersection configuration between Wehrle and Garrison will remain.

### **3.6 Regional Transportation**

While Main Street is the primary transportation corridor through the Village, there are other highways that traverse the Village and have significant influence on the quality of life for Village residents. Williamsville is situated adjacent to the crossroads of major highways of regional importance that could have a significant influence on traffic within the Village. The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) has prepared a Long Range Plan for 2030 that includes some significant transportation improvements that have the potential for removing or altering traffic along Main Street and other roadways within the Village. Improvements and projects under consideration include relocation of the Williamsville Thruway toll Barrier, removal of the Thruway toll barriers at Transit Road and construction of a new interchange at Youngs Road, and reconstruction of the I-90 / I-290 interchange. The schedules for completion of studies and beginning of construction have not been developed. It is recommended that Village officials work closely with the GBNRTC, the NYSDOT and other regional transportation agencies to ensure that the Vision and plans for Main Street and other Village streets are considered and reflected in plans for regional transportation.

### **3.7 Transportation Objectives and Actions**

**Action 1: Implement preferred "Alternative 2" Main Street Plan with the development of a detailed "pre-build" plan and inclusion in the NYSDOT capital improvement budget.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short term – potentially in segments through a phased approach
<u>Costs:</u>	\$500,000 - \$1.5M depending upon length and choice of detail on median treatments and intersection bulb-outs.

**Action 2: Convert Spring Street to one-way northbound only to provide additional on-street parking.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$15,000

**Action 3: Install a new traffic signal at the Main Street/Spring Street intersection.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$125,000

#### **Action 4: Pursue “Package” of Short Term Pedestrian Improvements**

The Village does not need to wait for a complete overhaul of Main Street to begin the process of making it more pedestrian friendly. The following short term changes would yield relatively quick results and could be designed to be compatible with and folded into longer term plans for Main Street:

- ❖ Signal timing changes for Main Street traffic lights
- ❖ Leading pedestrian interval phasings
- ❖ Countdown signals at pedestrian crossings
- ❖ High visibility crosswalks.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT, Town of Amherst, GBNRTC
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	To be Determined

**Action 5: Work with neighboring communities and regional transportation agencies to reduce the volume of through-traffic on Main Street.**

As noted in the discussion above, Williamsville's location within the Town of Amherst and at the crossroads of an interstate highway system has profound influence on local traffic patterns. Ongoing studies of regional traffic initiatives will be completed in the near future and should take into account the Vision and objectives articulated in this Community Plan. Village officials need to closely monitor these project and activities from their origin to ensure that they account for the recommendations of this plan.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst, NYSDOT, GBNRTC
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Immediate and Ongoing
<u>Costs:</u>	None

**Action 6: Implement the recommended changes in operations at the Cayuga Street intersection to improve operating conditions at this intersection.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-term to Long-term
<u>Costs:</u>	None (Changes could be made by either NYSDOT maintenance forces or under the annual traffic signal contract agreement)

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## 4.0 THE MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT

The history of economic growth and change in Williamsville's Main Street business district can be encapsulated into four separate stages, each of which is directly tied to the regional land use and transportation patterns of the day:

1. The construction of the Williamsville Water Mill in 1811 took place where a wagon trail (the Buffalo Road) crossed a waterfall at Ellicott Creek, spurring the development of a small industrial Village.
2. The completion of a trolley line connecting Williamsville to Buffalo in 1892 began a period of transition in which Williamsville's Main Street would become a commercial corridor serving commuter families.
3. The early automotive age from the 1920s to the 1960s saw Williamsville become an automobile-oriented commercial strip that served residents of the growing suburban areas of Amherst, Cheektowaga and other nearby towns.
4. Since the 1960s the development of shopping malls, big box centers, and business parks has spread the traditional functions of Williamsville across a large suburban area. In response the Village's Main Street has transitioned into a specialty/niche destination that provides more luxuries than necessities.



*From the collection of Amherst Museum, Amherst, NY*

Main Street in the 1960s/70s, when it was still the place to shop for basic staples such as food and clothing.

Williamsville's modern-day Main Street business district reflects all four periods of its history, making it a truly unique location within metropolitan Buffalo. Its

early history is epitomized by the Williamsville Water Mill complex, still sited at the heart of the community. The trolley era's influence is readily apparent in the architecture and pedestrian environment along Main Street, and the early automobile era is evident in both the commercial development on Main Street's fringes and the surface parking lots that surround the trolley-era buildings. The influence of the past thirty years is expressed mainly in the mix of businesses found in the Village: its restaurants, salons, boutiques and office businesses serve much more of a regional function while most convenience goods and services must now be obtained elsewhere.

Land use and transportation patterns continue to shape economic growth and change in Williamsville's Main Street Business District. Today, the District is on the cusp of a fifth era. As the demographics of the Village and its surroundings continue to evolve, new



residents and businesses continue to find Williamsville to be an attractive place. Through the Community Plan the Village has an opportunity to define a vision for Main Street's next period of growth and change in Williamsville's Main Street business district. A recommended overall pattern of land use and appropriate design principles, emphasizing mixed-use and pedestrian-scale development, is established in the Land Use Section. The Transportation Section includes recommendations to improve the walkability of Main Street and includes short-term pedestrian improvements. This review of the Main Street Business District is intended to both inform the process on the economic realities facing the District, as well as the opportunities for future economic growth to support the land use and transportation goals of mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development.

## **4.1 Main Street Economic Vision**

Williamsville's Main Street Business District is a vibrant retail, office, and residential hub serving both nearby residents and visitors from all over the Buffalo-Niagara region. Its attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment invites people to stroll around and experience its shops, restaurants, parks and the historic Water Mill. New retail and housing opportunities along Main Street add life to the district while reinforcing the Village's historic character. The Village's land use and transportation policies should support this vision for economic development to ensure that the Village can secure a place in the region as a unique shopping and entertainment destination that leverages historic charm and village scale, while remaining relevant and economically strong in the 21<sup>st</sup> century commercial and retail environment.

## **4.2 Economic Conditions**

A review of current real estate market conditions indicates that generally speaking, Williamsville presents the same challenge for all types of land uses: the Village is a popular place but there is little developable land and existing structures are small and/or obsolete. The Village is a mature office market and there are few options available for prospective office users seeking large and/or modern office spaces. Office rental rates are not strong enough at this time to encourage major reinvestment in existing office properties. In terms of the retail market, many national retailers would like to have Williamsville locations, given the area's strong demographics, but there are shortages both of leasable space and of buildable land for such users. Much of the existing inventory is small, lacks convenient parking and has limited accessibility for truck loading, thus limiting its appeal to many tenants.

A market analysis reveals that Williamsville is a very strong regional draw as a retail destination for its specialty shops and boutiques, as well as for its salons and day spas. For restaurants and other types of retail, its draw is more strongly focused on the Amherst/Williamsville market. There also appears to be sizable unmet demand for retail goods and services in Williamsville, though not for restaurants or personal service businesses. There is however, little, if any, unmet demand for office use in the Village. In addition, given the success of the Hampton Inn, there may be more interest in Williamsville for additional lodging development. There may also be opportunities to convert historic homes into Bed & Breakfast properties.

Significant analysis, as well as input from the public and key stakeholders, informed the development of the recommended actions for the Main Street Business District, including a Market Analysis and a Comparable Villages study, which were undertaken to better understand the existing economic picture for both the Village and the region. These reports are provided in the Appendices of the Community Plan.

### **4.3 Business District Objectives and Actions**

#### **Objective 1: Use new development to reinforce the Village's visual and historic character**

Williamsville's Main Street business district can expect to experience substantial development pressure in the next few years. The Village remains a very desirable address for retail and office businesses, as well as an attractive and relatively affordable place to live. Given the lack of readily developable sites and very high value of land along Main Street, Williamsville can expect the recent investment by national retailers and high-profile developers in the Village to continue.

As Williamsville seeks to reinvent Main Street as a pleasant, walkable Village environment, it must do so with the knowledge that much of the investment that will spur its transformation will be done by the private sector. Developers, business owners and homebuyers will be the ones to actually make the vision a reality. For this reason, the Village government must take bold and deliberate steps to ensure that new development activity is done in a manner that protects and reinforces the character of the Village and that the Village's ordinances, policies and regulations are supportive of such activity.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Long-term
<u>Costs:</u>	N/A

#### **Objective 2: Implement a system of incentives that offers flexibility for the development and redevelopment of properties**

In concert with the regulation of new private investment in the Main Street business district, the Village government must also understand that attracting appropriate development can be bolstered by establishing certain incentives. Through these incentives Williamsville can improve its competitive position in the marketplace with investors, developers and businesses that may otherwise pursue projects in other locations.

The actions listed below include both relaxing zoning requirements for appropriate development and offering both direct and indirect financial support for new development.

**Action 1: Offer density and/or building height bonuses in exchange for the provision of desired amenities and features, such as well-designed off-street structured parking and residential uses on upper levels.**

Bonuses and incentives – “the carrot” – should be used to supplement the regulatory tools – “the stick” – to ensure maximum flexibility and desired development outcomes. By providing incentives, the Village is essentially meeting developers and investors mid-way, permitting an acceptable increase above and beyond minimum standards, in order to receive desirable amenities and development features that might not otherwise be provided. Such bonuses work best when the base regulations, i.e., what can be achieved pursuant to the regulations alone, are set at an appropriate level. Finding this appropriate level for the base regulations can be undertaken as part of a zoning implementation project and will require a solid understanding of the real estate and development market. It is also important to ensure that the end result achieved through the bonus is consistent with the community’s vision for the Village.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administrative only)

**Action 2: Reduce on-site parking requirements if shared parking arrangements are negotiated by developers**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administrative only)

**Action 3: Aggressively promote the tax abatement and loan programs offered by the Amherst IDA**

The Amherst Industrial Development Agency (IDA) offers certain businesses in the area sales tax exemptions for construction materials and mortgage tax exemptions. Williamsville is designated by the IDA as an Enhancement Zone, which extends these incentives to retail businesses, not just office/manufacturing. The IDA also works with the federal Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to offer micro-loans to qualifying small businesses. To date, only a handful of businesses in the Village have taken advantage of these abatements and loans. An aggressive campaign to raise awareness of the IDA’s programs is needed to broaden their use. This could include direct mailings, workshops, public forums and advertising.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Williamsville Business Association, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administrative only)

**Action 4: Consider the use of a tax-increment financing (TIF) district to help pay for parking, streetscaping, lighting, utility and other public improvements**

Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool that works by freezing the General Fund assessment of a property or group of properties and then setting aside all new tax revenues generated over a period of time (typically 20 years) to a special revenue fund. These set-aside revenues are used to fund public improvements needed to help spur redevelopment in the area surrounding the targeted properties. Though TIFs have been used to support literally thousands of redevelopment efforts all over the country for more than 40 years, they have been used sparingly in New York State due to two restrictive provisions in its TIF statutes that are not found in most other states:

1. New York State allows school districts to opt out of TIF agreements (which they typically do). Without the ability to set aside school tax revenues, the majority of tax dollars that would otherwise go into a TIF fund is not available; and
2. TIFs may only be used for properties that have been found blighted under state redevelopment law.

For these two reasons, it may be difficult to make use of TIF as a redevelopment tool in Williamsville. However, if it can be arranged, a TIF could be a very useful way to fund parking, utility and streetscaping investments in the business district, particularly in the Mill Village area. The mill itself and a number of buildings around it would likely qualify as blighted, as would several other properties along the Main Street corridor.

Discussions should be pursued with the Williamsville Central School District on this issue with an eye towards compromise. For example, if the Village is able to use school tax funds to help redevelop the Water Mill, the school district could be granted certain use rights at the mill in exchange.

A “PIF” is an alternative to the TIF in that it relies on a “payment-in-lieu-of-taxes” instead of a tax. This alternative should be explored but will require further coordination and the establishment of a mechanism to implement the PIF.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Williamsville Central School District, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$25,000-50,000 for TIF plan Administrative costs

#### **Action 5: Amend Main Street zoning to allow for outdoor dining and other active uses along building frontages**

This action is discussed in more detail in the Land Use section. It is worth noting here that such active outdoor uses must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Board. Outdoor uses should only be approved if adequate room is available in the pedestrian environment to allow both the outdoor use and the safe movement of people and vehicles.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Planning Board
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Immediate
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administrative only)

### **Objective 3: Improve the operation and management of the business district**

The past 40 years of the history of Williamsville's Main Street have been intertwined with the growth of shopping centers, malls and power centers in surrounding suburban areas. These automotive-oriented locations now house many of both the daily conveniences and specialty items that were once found in places like Williamsville. More importantly, regional malls like the Boulevard Mall and Walden Galleria are owned, managed and operated by single entities that can control the appearance of the properties and their grounds, choose the mix of businesses, conduct unified marketing efforts, offer one large parking area, and efficiently conduct road repairs and snow removal.

Historic downtowns like the Main Street business district operate very differently. The property along Main Street is owned by literally dozens of different entities. The streets, sidewalks, landscaping and on-street parking are owned and maintained by government agencies. Off-street parking is scattered and operated by many different entities, each with different policies and procedures. Snow is plowed to the curb edge by New York State DOT plows and piles up several feet high. Each business must conduct its own marketing and advertising campaign. Under these conditions it is not hard to see why Main Street may be at a disadvantage with regional malls.

While Main Street cannot (and should not) attempt to compete head-on with regional malls and power centers, it certainly can learn a great deal from the efficiencies and economies of scale achieved under the mall model. An effort to bring together Main Street property and business owners under a single umbrella would have the effect of improving Williamsville's competitive position in the region while maintaining its visual environment and its unique mix of businesses.

#### **Action 1: Work towards establishing a Business Improvement District**

The starting point for organizing the business district is to establish an entity charged with managing, operating, and marketing Main Street. The recommended model is a Business Improvement District (BID). Under this model, property owners located within the business district pay a voluntary tax assessment (after approval by a majority vote of property owners) into a special fund, and this revenue is used to pay for management, maintenance, marketing and event planning functions in the district.

Establishing a BID will require buy-in and support from the property owners, as they must be the ones to decide that it is in their best interest. A dialogue should begin immediately among property owners, the Village of Williamsville, the Williamsville Business Association and neighborhood leaders to discuss what the BID's function and budgetary needs would be and to determine how to build support for its establishment.



Should a BID prove to not be feasible after these discussions, another model to explore that of the Elmwood Village Association ([www.foreverelmwood.org](http://www.foreverelmwood.org)) which fulfills a similar function for the Elmwood Avenue Business District in Buffalo. This organization, which was formed by a consortium of business owners and residents, is funded mainly through voluntary donations, rather than a dedicated assessment. Accomplishing this model in Williamsville would likely be done by expanding the role and scope of the Williamsville Business Association.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association, Neighborhood leaders
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administration only)

### **Action 2: Establish a comprehensive snow removal system**

One of the biggest problems faced on Main Street is the large snowbanks that form as winter progresses. These snowbanks make it difficult for on-street parkers to safely walk to Main Street businesses; they also limit visibility of stores and oncoming traffic, thus causing safety hazards. An immediate and effective role that the BID can fulfill will be to manage the removal of snow from Main Street in winter months, as is already done by Buffalo Place and many other BIDs. Under this system the BID would manage the removal of snow from Main Street and its disposal at a remote location.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Business Improvement District (or alternative entity), Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Long-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$20,000-30,000 in startup costs \$10,000-20,000 in annual operating costs

### **Action 3: Implement a storefront management program**

The appearance of storefronts is critical to the image of a Main Street area. Presently, building exteriors and storefronts are very uneven throughout the corridor, a fact that reinforces Williamsville's lack of identity. Improving storefronts will require working on both building exteriors through a façade management program and on technical assistance to shop owners on window displays. The window display program can be conducted by BID staff who should receive training from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), New York Main Street program or other source. The Town of Amherst IDA has assisted some Village businesses with obtaining and utilizing façade improvement grants. It should be noted that Main Street projects that seek to improve the aesthetics of Main Street businesses are still subject to the permits and approvals required by the Village.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Business Improvement District (or alternative entity), Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA
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Time Frame: Short-term  
Costs: \$50,000-\$100,000  
(To be partially funded by NY State and BID)

**Action 4: Expand marketing activities to promote the Main Street district and its businesses throughout the region**

The existing marketing and publicity activities of the Williamsville Business Association have been very effective at maintaining a presence in the Amherst/Williamsville area. However, the continued vitality of the district will depend on attracting customers from a broader geographic area. Retooling marketing materials and the [www.willvill.com](http://www.willvill.com) website to reflect the mill, arts and cultural activities and destination businesses will communicate Williamsville's appeal to a broader audience.

Responsibility: Business Improvement District (or alternative entity), Board of Trustees  
Time Frame: Short-term to Long-term  
Costs: \$10,000-20,000  
(To be funded by BID)

**Action 5: Work with businesses to ensure that employees do not park on Main Street or in priority off-street lots**

Providing parking for customers is a top priority in the business district, but the supply of conveniently located spaces is very limited. While additional enforcement by the Village may be of use, an aggressive campaign to motivate business owners and employees to park in alternative locations would be more effective. A proactive campaign by the BID (or other entity) to coordinate with the business community is recommended. This can include newsletter articles, discussions at meetings, flyers and even self-policing by businesspeople. Some communities have used "warning" parking tickets to shame fellow workers into parking off-site in order to free up priority spaces for customers. This method has also been utilized as a goodwill gesture to warn other users of Main Street parking spaces, such as shoppers, on their first violation without issuing a "true" ticket. This effort could also be part of a larger effort to prepare a Village-wide parking plan (see Section 5.3, Objective 1, Action 2).

Responsibility: Business Improvement District, Board of Trustees  
Time Frame: Short-term to Long-term  
Costs: Minimal (printing and administration costs)

**Action 6: Stripe Main Street Spaces**

Striping defined parking spaces along Main Street would increase the number of available on-street parking spaces by eliminating wasted space that occurs when spaces are not defined.

Responsibility: Board of Trustees, NYSDOT

<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$3,000 to \$5,000

#### **Objective 4: Establish Gateways and Pathways**

A stronger sense of arrival is needed in Williamsville to alert motorists that they have entered a place that is not just another commercial strip, but a vibrant Village. A system of highly visible and attractive gateway signage placed at either end of Main Street that signal this can be accomplished through north-south approaches like Cayuga Road, Mill Street, Evans Road, Union Road and Garrison Road. Additionally, uniform and visible wayfinding signage is needed to point motorists to key locations (particularly the Water Mill) and off-street parking lots. A good model for gateway and wayfinding signage is the system used in the Village of Lewiston. (Photos of Lewiston are included in the review of comparable Villages.)

Through the use of attractive gateways along Main Street, the locations of attractions and the access points to reach them can be indicated. For instance, a number of streets, parking lanes and alleyways currently provide access from Main Street to both Glen Park and Island Park. However, for most



*Gateway treatments can signify the location of attractions off the main drag. The above gateway (Hamburg, NY) transforms an alley into an inviting path.*

pedestrians, these connections are either not apparent or are not perceived as available for public or pedestrian use. Providing gateway treatments at these locations constitutes an invitation to step off Main Street and explore.

However, for gateways to be effective, they have to connect to publicly inviting, “legible” pathways that connect with a destination. Currently, most areas of the Village directly behind Main Street consist of large expanses of disconnected parking areas and service lanes. This land use pattern effectively isolates Main Street from other portions of the Village. The area behind the Town and Village offices is one such example of this; while Island Park is only a stone’s throw away from Main Street, the patchwork of parking lots and service drives behind the Village and Town offices act as a barrier. Carving attractive streets and/or publicly inviting pathways out of this area would help to knit Island Park back into the fabric of the



*This parking lot in Albany, NY includes a safe, quality pedestrian connection between parking and office buildings.*

Village. Even through relatively simple improvements, such as landscaping, signage and strategically placed sidewalks and lighting, a parking lot can be transformed into a meaningful and attractive extension of the Village. Doing this on a Village-wide basis would widen the Main Street “strip” and help to create that sense of a Village center that residents want. In the end, it’s all about transforming “space” into “place”.

### **Action 1: Design and install uniform gateway and wayfinding signage**

Responsibility: Business Improvement District (or alternative entity)

Board of Trustees

Time Frame:

Mid-term

Costs:

\$50,000-\$100,000 (To be partially funded by NYSDOT and BID)

### **Action 2: Develop Gateways along Main Street to Off-Main Street**

#### **Destinations**

Responsibility:

Board of Trustees

Time Frame:

Mid-term

Costs:

To be determined

### **Objective 5: Enhance the Walkability of the Main Street corridor**

Efforts to improve the Village atmosphere in Williamsville must address the fact that, compared to other historic Villages in the region, Williamsville is simply not very inviting for pedestrians. Traffic whizzes by at high volumes and high speeds. Sidewalks are narrow and in substandard condition. Streetscaping is uneven and occasionally not well maintained. There are few public open spaces in which to sit and relax. Crossing Main Street is hazardous and unpleasant.

Making Main Street more pleasant to both walk along and across is critical. Creating better connections between and along Main Street effectively increases the physical size of the shopping district by making movement between its parts more accessible. To the average pedestrian, the two sides of Main Street may as well be miles apart because the street that divides it is so difficult to cross. The psychological size of the district can be reduced by making it easier and more pleasant to experience as a pedestrian. For example, parking areas in the Village are no further away, and in many cases closer to the businesses they serve, than are the parking areas in a mall setting. By making the journey from the parking space to the destination more pleasant and convenient, the pedestrian’s perception of distance is greatly reduced.



Many of the recommendations in the Transportation and Land Use sections of this plan are aimed at bringing the balance between land use and transportation into better balance. Additional actions to be considered for improving the walkability and visual environment of Main Street include:

**Action 1: Enact and maintain streetscaping improvements**

Attractive streetscaping is a very important element in successful Village area. At the present time streetscaping in Williamsville is uneven, with few plantings in many areas and a lack of maintenance in others. Street lighting is unattractive and there are few benches, trash cans and other amenities needed in an urban Village. The BID, working with the Village, should assemble a long-range plan for building improvements all along Main Street and should budget each year for the maintenance of these improvements.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Business Improvement District (or alternative entity), Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Mid-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$20,000-30,000 for plan Unknown capital costs resulting from plan Unknown annual operating costs (To be partially funded by NY State, private developers)

**Action 2: Consider stationing crossing guards at key crossing points**

Williamsville's Main Street is a very wide and very busy thoroughfare. Even with the construction of bulb-outs and other improvements, the distance to cross Main Street will still be 56 feet, a substantial distance for children, senior citizens and others who cannot dash across the road. While several key intersections already have traffic signals (or may in the future), there are other key points that will remain hazardous for pedestrians even if traffic can be somewhat calmed. The BID should investigate hiring part-time staffers to assist pedestrians with crossing Main Street at such locations during peak activity times.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Business Improvement District (or alternative entity), Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-term
<u>Costs:</u>	\$25,000-50,000 (To be partially funded by NY State, grants, BID)

**Action 3: Bury utilities**

Tall utility poles, heavily draped with multiple bundles of cables and wires march down much of Main Street. Aside from their negative visual impact, they also take up valuable sidewalk space. The Village should work with utility companies and the State of New York to explore possibilities. Such an effort could be coordinated with potential improvement projects on Main Street.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Mid-term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

**Objective 6: Balance new investments along Main Street with the needs of surrounding residential neighborhoods**

The Main Street business district does not exist in a vacuum: Williamsville’s residential neighborhoods are located in very close proximity to the commercial core. This condition is far from being a negative; in fact, the proximity of homes to businesses is an essential feature of any successful Village area. As the Village of Williamsville looks to reinvent its business district for a new era, however, it must take great care to ensure that the evolving business district is respectful of nearby residential neighborhoods.

Through a combination of sensitive regulation of commercial land uses and proactive public outreach to nearby residents the Village can ensure that its commercial and residential areas continue to exist in harmony.

**Action 1: Conduct ongoing public outreach efforts with neighborhood residents regarding the impacts of parking on their streets**

A unique aspect of Village life is that business district employees and visitors often park on residential side streets. Though this has long been the case in Williamsville many residents do not like having strange vehicles parked in front of their homes. While this parking pattern may seem to be an inconvenience (particularly to newcomers), it is actually essential to the success of Main Street. If employees and visitors are willing park on side streets and walk, it frees up closer-in spaces and adds pedestrians to the sidewalks—both of these things reinforce the desired character of the Village.

It is therefore important for the Village to make sure that residents understand the need to allow on-street parking. It is equally as important for the Village to be aware of any problems resulting from such a parking pattern. Establishing an ongoing dialogue with neighbors regarding side street parking will help maintain the balance in these areas. A Village wide parking plan would provide more context for this dialogue (see Section 5.3, Objective 1, Action 2).

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Long-term
<u>Costs:</u>	None

**Action 2: Mitigate impacts of cut-through traffic on residential streets**

Another unique feature of Village life is the interconnectivity of neighborhoods. While interconnectivity has benefits for walkability and the distribution of local traffic, it also results in the diversion of cut-through traffic onto several seemingly quiet residential streets in Williamsville like California Drive and Oakgrove Drive. Residents of such streets have long complained about motorists speeding and driving recklessly through their neighborhoods; the Village should work

proactively to address this problem. Tasks could include stronger policing, better signage or traffic calming infrastructure (raised crosswalks, speed bumps, planted bulb-outs, traffic circles, etc.)

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$5,000-10,000 for study Capital and operational costs to be determined

**Action 3: Solidify the Conditions of Housing on the Fringe of the Main Street Corridor.**

Occasionally, housing that is located at the seam of a residential and commercial area may over time become less attractive for residential uses and fall into disrepair. This is particularly true where the adjoining commercial district is perceived to be auto-oriented and not conducive to pedestrian activity. In essence, where there is no perceived value to residential proximity to a commercial district, a downward pressure on the value of the residential uses is exerted. Eventually, a point is reached where the residential uses are perceived to be unsupportable and commercial zoning is extended, ironically, creating the same issue a point further into the same residential neighborhood. Overall, extending commercial zoning and uses deeper into Williamsville's residential neighborhoods was not deemed an acceptable solution by the community.

Looking well into the future, it is envisioned that many of the proposed improvements to Main Street, the mill and the Village's park system will increase the value of residential proximity to the commercial core. Moreover, improved techniques for mitigating commercial impacts on residential uses will have a positive effect. However, this transition will not occur overnight. The Village should take steps to solidify and stabilize the condition of housing at the residential-commercial seam if it wishes to maintain the existing boundary between residential and commercial uses. The first step in this process would be to assess housing conditions and the second step would be to devote funds to those areas where improvement is most needed. Grant monies are also available for these purposes, but many such grant programs may not be available to Williamsville due to its relatively healthy economic and social conditions.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-Term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be Determined

**Action 4: Ensure that best practices are followed for mitigating negative impacts of commercial uses to adjoining residential areas.**

Williamsville's business district and residential areas are in close proximity to one another. This is a hallmark of the traditional village form and what makes Williamsville a special place in which to live. As noted elsewhere in this plan, when commercial areas, such as Williamsville's Main Street, are developed in a

high quality fashion that respects the surrounding residential areas, such commercial areas exert an upward influence on the value of the adjoining residential areas. As Williamsville's business district continues to evolve and reinvent itself in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond, it is important that new retail and business uses are good neighbors. At the same time, it is unrealistic to require suburban scaled buffers between commercial and residential properties in the Village setting. The Village's zoning and development regulations should be reviewed with respect to buffer requirements to ensure that best practices are consistently applied. Additional design guidelines that specifically address the Village's "commercial/residential seam" may also be a useful tool.

Responsibility:	Board of Trustees
Time Frame:	Short-Term
Cost:	To be Determined, Potentially undertaken as part of a comprehensive review and update of the Village's zoning (See Section 2.3, Objective 1).

**Objective 7: Realize appropriate redevelopment of priority sites and buildings**

Many of the sites in the business district that are ripest for redevelopment are also the most challenging. Such sites may be too small, lack parking, have limited site access, be too close to incompatible uses, be controlled by uncooperative interests or simply carry a stigma of being "bad locations."

For such parcels, the incentives and zoning changes outlined above may simply not be sufficient to stimulate reinvestment and more aggressive action may be needed. The actions under this objective are designed to add an extra layer of incentives that will hopefully address the greater needs of such priority sites.

**Action 1: Identify priority redevelopment sites, including any Village-owned parcels**

Village leaders will need to continually work over time to identify properties that are most in need of redevelopment in order to meet the overall vision for Main Street. Identifying priority redevelopment sites well ahead of proposed development allows the Village to develop relationships with business and property owners and communicate the goals of the plan while better understanding the specific needs of a given property owner. The goal is to ensure that the Village and property/business owners are working toward a common vision and can both be ready to seize opportunities and meet change proactively. This effort can also dovetail with proposed changes to the Village's zoning. By identifying priority redevelopment sites and understanding their limitations and potential will help to ensure that any proposed new zoning facilitates desired change and improvement.

There are three general types of sites that should be considered for future redevelopment:



1. **Economically “failing” properties** that can no longer support their current/past uses. The Village could identify those and then work with property owners to determine what needs to change to make them more economically feasible. This is particularly important for historic structures that the Village wants to see retained.
2. **Properties that do not meet the Village vision.** There may be some aspect of the property that does not meet an objective of this plan. For such properties the Village should work with owners, zoning, etc., to figure out how could be redeveloped or improved.
3. **Underutilized properties.** There are many suburban-scaled properties in the Village with deep lots, large expanses of parking in front of buildings, and single-story buildings. The Village should work with landowners and figure out how these properties could be improved and meet the spirit of the plan. This may involve increasing density by expanding one-story buildings vertically, possibly by adding additional incentive bonuses to property owners.

A survey of individual businesses along Main Street could be undertaken to identify the above types of sites. Methods utilized to determine potential redevelopment sites could include, but are not limited to: observation of building conditions; analysis of vacancies and frequent occupancy turnover; interviews with business and property owners; and comparison of existing building conditions/layout to the land use and economic development vision and goals established in this plan.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short -term
<u>Costs:</u>	To be determined

## **Action 2: Work with Amherst IDA to create a package of incentives for redevelopment sites**

The current slate of economic incentives specifically targeted at investors and developers in Williamsville is essentially limited to the Amherst IDA’s sales and mortgage tax exemptions. While New York state law limits the utility of other types of incentives (see discussion on tax-increment financing under Objective 2) and Williamsville’s relatively high income level excludes it from a number of different grant programs, there may be other ways to spur redevelopment of key properties. The Village, in tandem with the Amherst IDA, should explore the possibility of offering grants or low-interest loans for prospective investors in priority sites. Local lenders should also be approached about supporting such developments, perhaps through relaxing loan qualification requirements or lowering interest rates and/or waiving closing fees.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA, local lenders
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (administrative only)

**Action 3: Consider acquisition of highest priority sites by the Village and/or Amherst IDA**

Should the above mix of regulatory and economic incentives prove ineffective at spurring redevelopment of key sites, the Village's fallback position would be to acquire such sites and pursue their disposition through a public Request for Proposal (RFP) process. The Amherst IDA would be the appropriate agency for managing the RFP process and overseeing the selection process. This approach should only be used as a last resort should all other options be exhausted and/or current ownership shows no interest in taking action.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-term
<u>Costs:</u>	To be determined (depends on need and individual parcels)

## 5.0 VILLAGE FOCUS AREAS

As noted above, in the course of the process that led up to the creation of this plan three areas of the Village emerged as meriting an extra level of attention. These “Focus Areas” – South Long Street and “Mill Village” – each possess a unique set of challenges and opportunities. In the discussion that follows, these challenges and opportunities are elaborated upon in greater detail, supplemented with illustrations and concept plans. The “conceptual” nature of such visualization should be stressed. As opportunities present themselves and concepts are turned into realities, it is the guiding principles that matter most, not the specific detail of a particular sketch or plan.

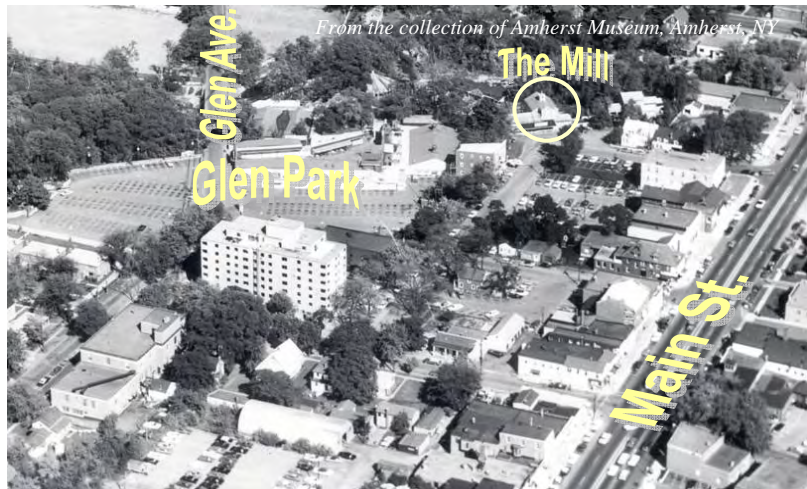


The Williamsville Village seal – a testament to the important role that the mill has played in the history and identity of the Village.

### 5.1 “Mill Village”

In need of repair and vacant for a number of years, the Williamsville Mill remains a powerful symbol of the Village’s history. Built in the 1820s by Jonas Williams, the individual from whom the Village takes its name, the mill has continuously reinvented itself over the years, producing at one time or another flour, timber, concrete (including for the Erie Canal) and cider.<sup>3</sup> Today, the mill presents an opportunity to reinvent itself yet again by playing a key role in the establishment of an attractive, pedestrian friendly and recognizable Village center located in the heart of Williamsville.

The mill lies at the heart and crossroads of the Village. It functions as a “seam” between the past and the present, between nature and industry, between high ground and low ground, between Williamsville’s Main Street and the “Green Street” of parks that run through its center. Unfortunately, the mill and falls, Village parks, and Spring Street are not well



The parking lots and structures of “Harry Altman Casino and Amusement Park” are visible in this 1960s view of Glen Park. The green landscape of ponds, mature trees and meandering paths one sees today was installed in the mid-1970s.

integrated with Main Street and the public fabric of the Village. Instead, these special

<sup>3</sup> Bero Architecture, P.C., “Historic Structure Report: Williamsville Water Mill,” 12/29/06. pp. 5 – 32.

resources and places are largely hidden from view and underutilized. “You can drive down Main Street without ever knowing that the parks and the mill are there,” was a common refrain heard during the planning process leading up to this plan. However, many residents are old enough to remember when Glen Park was home to the popular Harry Altman’s Casino and Amusement Park. While the casino and amusement park eventually succumbed to a series of devastating fires in the 1960s and 70s, in its day the entertainment complex drew large crowds and featured national acts such as Sammy Davis Jr., Ike and Tina Turner and The Three Stooges, to name a few.<sup>4</sup> The well established landscape of quiet streams, meandering trails and mature trees that one finds in Glen Park today was, in fact, created in the mid-1970s after the amusement park closed its doors.

Village residents are nearly unanimous in their appreciation for the mill – the “jewel” of Williamsville – and their desire to see it restored. But a restored mill existing in isolation will not live up to its fullest potential; it requires a proper setting to truly shine. In the case of Williamsville, this setting is the pedestrian friendly, vibrant and identifiable Village center that residents have said they want. By being part of a greater whole, i.e., “Mill Village”, the restored mill can be more than just a novelty. And the restored mill, in turn, can be a catalyst and star attraction for a reclaimed Village center.

The Mill Village concept is depicted in Figure 24 on the following page. The improvements and strategies that it illustrates derive from the following principles:

- ❖ Create a Destination and Sense of Arrival; and
- ❖ Celebrate the Mill; and
- ❖ Integrate Resources.



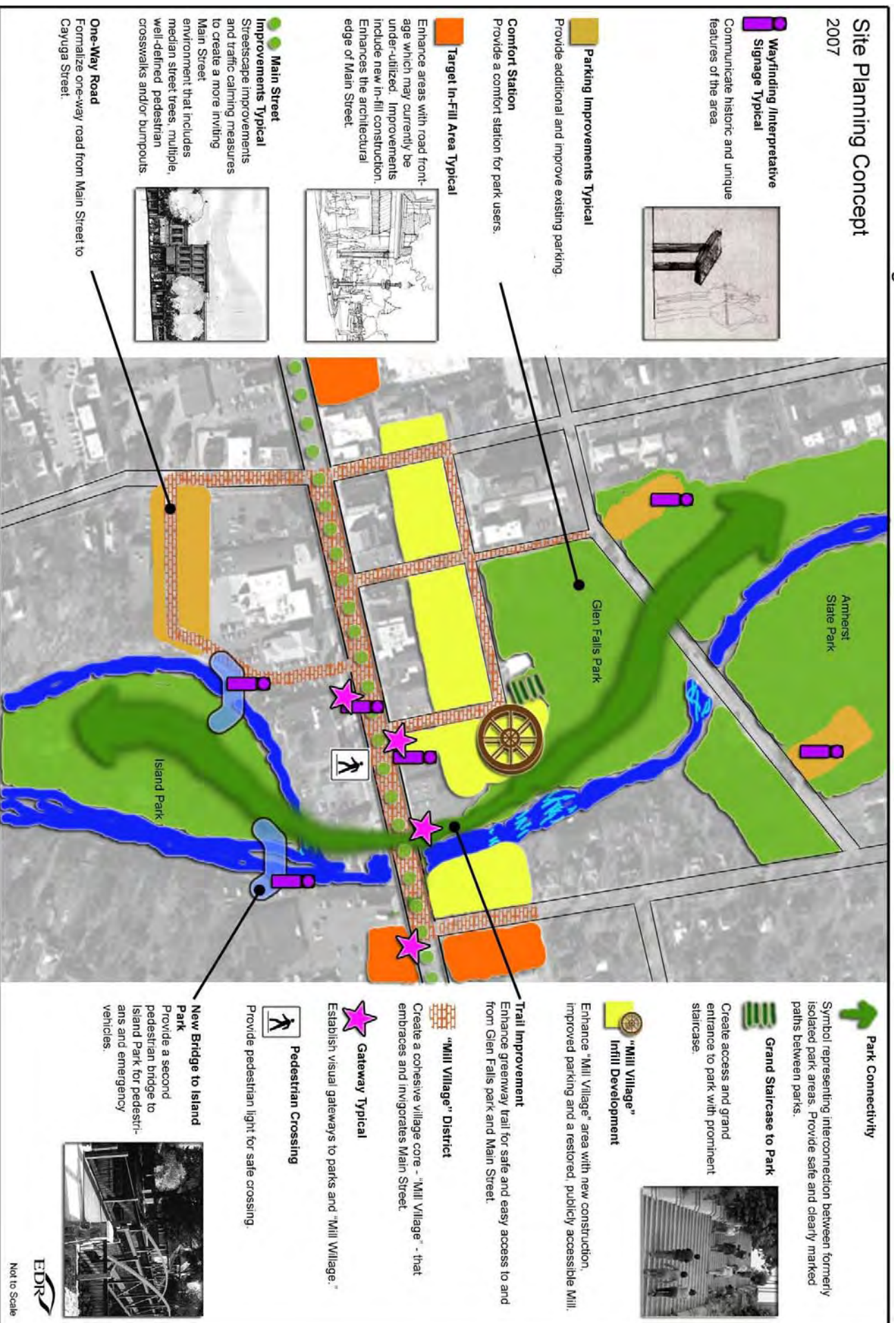
A rehabilitated, publicly accessible mill in the heart of “Mill Village”.

While each of these themes represents a particular aspect of the Mill Village concept, their strength is collective in nature. A holistic approach ensures that Williamsville’s Village center is a multi-textured, vibrant environment that is geared for long term value and success.

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glen\\_Park,\\_Williamsville,\\_New\\_York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glen_Park,_Williamsville,_New_York), accessed 7/20/07.



Figure 24 -- “Mill Village” & Park Corridor



### ***Principle 1: Create a Destination and Sense of Arrival***

A common thread running through the public meetings and committee discussions was the observation that there is no readily discernible center to Williamsville. Techniques for creating a cohesive Village center focus around establishing a “Mill Village” on both the north and south sides of Main Street. A more cohesive center is created by transforming unorganized, “left over” areas of the Village center into coherent public streets and pathways off of Main Street that are inviting to visitors and which link many of the Village’s attractions and uses, such as municipal buildings, parks and the historic mill. Visually appealing and prominent gateways along Main Street would indicate the presence of the parks, the mill and other attractions. Improvements to the look and function of Main Street, covered in more detail in Section 3 of this plan, would further enhance the feeling of a Village center.



Spring Street currently has the air of a forgotten, leftover area of the Village.

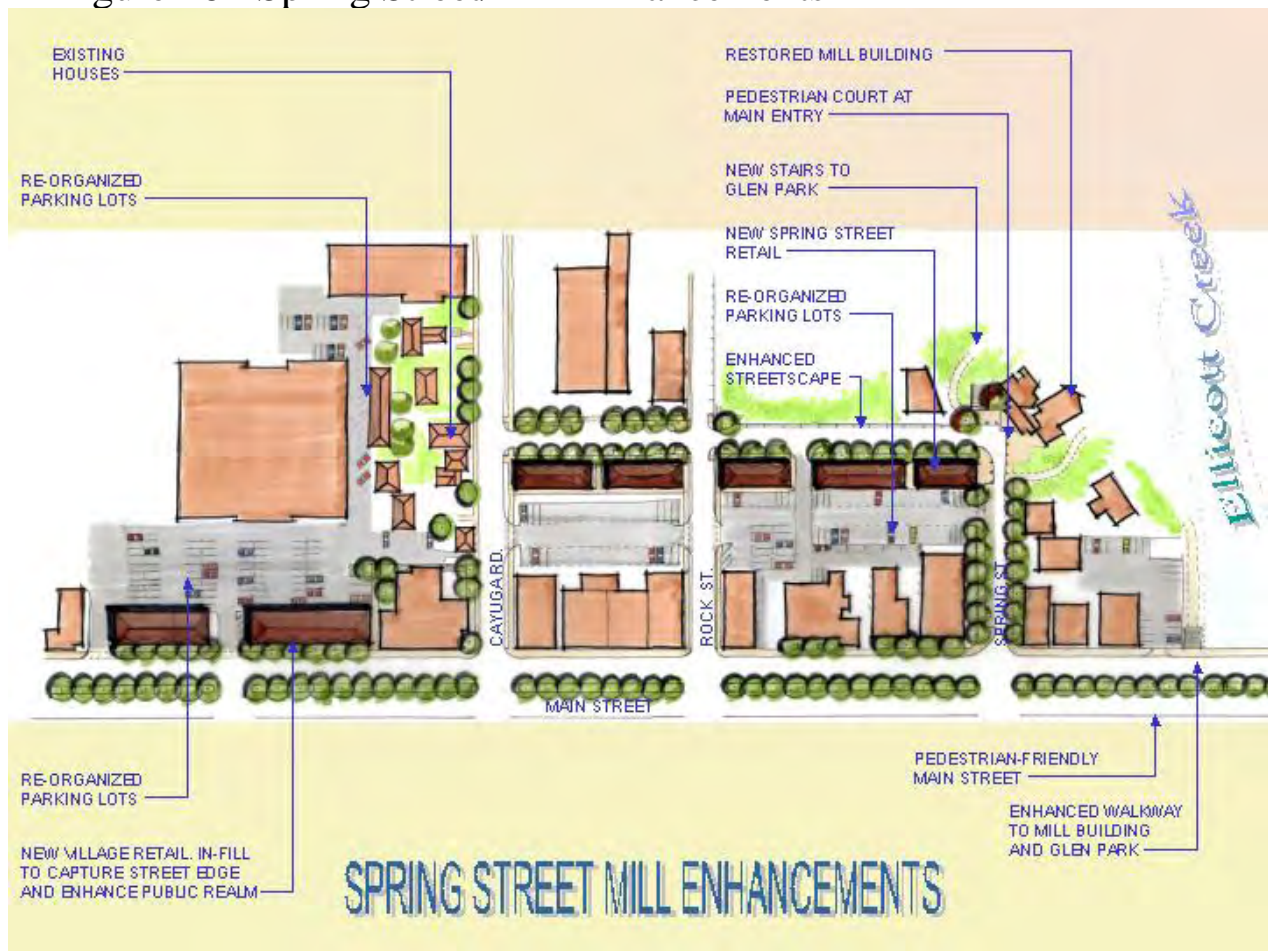
At the heart of it all are the mill and a revitalized Spring Street. Building on its proximity to Glen Park and Glen Falls and the mill, Spring Street truly has the potential to be a destination. Figure 24 indicates in yellow highlighting areas where additional stores and shops could be built to fill in the gaps of Spring Street. The Mill Village concept is also depicted in Figure 25 below. A more detailed concept plan for Spring Street is depicted in Figure 26, *Spring Street Mill Enhancements*, on the following page. With the addition of new structures, streetscape improvements and landscaping, a forgotten area of the Village can be transformed into an identifiable destination.



Figure 25 - Conceptual “Mill Village” – Spring Street



Figure 26 - Spring Street/Mill Enhancements



### *Parking*

In order to support increased vitality in Mill Village, let alone current levels of activity, parking will need to be included. As discussed in the Main Street section of this plan, the Mill Village area of Williamsville has a particularly acute parking shortage under existing conditions. Ways to increase parking include consolidating the current patchwork of individual parking lots that are found throughout the district; striping parking spaces on Main Street; and investigating the feasibility of a parking structure. A number of potential locations for a parking structure were explored, such as the existing parking area behind Main Street facing businesses and along North Cayuga, at the terminus of Spring Street. Every location had its advantages and disadvantages. Ultimately a feasibility study should be undertaken to determine the potential need, location and short- and long-term costs of such a structure. It must be stressed that a parking ramp would require the cooperation and support of business and landowners. Moreover, any parking structure would need to be designed to be aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the character of the area. Ground floor retail around the perimeter of the parking structure could be provided to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the streetscape.

The transition of “Mill Village” is not expected to occur overnight, but rather, incrementally over time. As such, it is anticipated that the Village can adjust to increased

demands for parking and other impacts as conditions warrant. However, some reasonable effort should be made to anticipate and accommodate future demand earlier enough so that a short-term “parking crisis” does not negatively impact the chances for success. A 5- to 10-year window for accomplishing major parking improvements, including a potential parking structure, may be reasonable

### *Principle 2: Celebrate the Mill*

The Williamsville Mill continues to capture the imagination of Village residents. In the course of the public outreach for this plan, the importance of the mill to residents was apparent. Many viewed the mill as an underutilized resource and felt that it could play a much larger role in Village life. The idea of rehabilitating the mill and getting the water wheel turning again, was warmly received. Ideas for the use of the mill building focused around such uses as a museum or venue for public events such as art exhibits. Another suggestion was that the mill could generate power for the Village power grid. Many felt that a “green” energy component could potentially attract the interest and resources of environmentally minded individuals and organizations.

While most Village residents wished to see the mill remain in some form of public ownership or control, residents also saw a key private sector role in rehabilitating and revitalizing the remainder of the Spring Street district. New stores and

businesses at an appropriate scale would help to reinforce the Mill Village character and ensure that the rehabilitated mill is well integrated into a vibrant, attractive neighborhood context.

Spring Street could also play a role at times of public festivals, where it could be shut down for exclusive pedestrian use. The mill and surrounding historic buildings, including the Ely House, could potentially frame an expansive courtyard that might be used for live entertainment or special events. The design of the courtyard could be integrated with a link to



The Williamsville Mill and surrounding historic structures – site of a potential courtyard for Village gatherings.



the existing pathway to Glen Park from Main Street (shown in Figures 24 and 26) as well as a proposed second entrance to Glen Park from Spring Street – a “grand staircase” (also shown in Figures 24 and 26) that is discussed in more detail below. The important principal here is that Spring Street be designed with flexibility in mind so that it can function both in its everyday mode as a Village street and as a public gathering place at special times. Moreover, while accessible to the automobile, the character and design of the street should be tipped heavily in the favor of the pedestrian.

### *Integrate Resources*

The mill...Glen Falls and Park...Island Park... historic Main Street...community facilities such as the library and Town and Village offices – they all come together at the center of the Village. Providing better links between these resources and making them more visible and accessible from Main Street would constitute a large step in the direction of creating the town center atmosphere that so many residents want to see in Williamsville.

### *The “Grand Staircase”*

Currently, the only access to Glen Park from Main Street occurs via a narrow creekside path that is temporarily closed to pedestrian traffic pending repairs. While this path is intimate and located directly adjacent to the creek, eventually taking the pedestrian down into the park and past spectacular views of Glen Falls, it is not highly visible from Main Street and is too narrow to accommodate larger groups of pedestrians. As shown in Figures 24 and 26, a second point of access is proposed to the park via Spring Street,



A “grand staircase” would exploit the drama of a change in grade and provide a direct, visually appealing connection between Glen Park and both Spring Street and Main Street.

located approximately between the Williamsville Mill and an existing apartment building. Most successful, well-utilized parks derive their success from a close relationship to an actively used retail or residential environment. In the case of Glen Park, the location of the staircase would transform a currently underutilized corner of the park into an exciting gateway area. Likewise, the proposed Mill Village and revitalized Spring Street would benefit greatly from direct access to the park. Lighting, landscaping, tables and chairs at both the top and bottom of the staircase would further emphasize the importance of this gateway and the park itself.



Lastly, a second entrance to the park that is more public and linked to Main Street will make for a more secure and inviting park environment.

## 5.2 South Long Street

### Context

The Long Street Recreation Area, located in the southwest portion of the Village, roughly bounded by Village Square Lane to the north, California Drive to the east, Union Road to the west, and the Lehigh Memorial Trail to the south represents an exciting opportunity for the Village to greatly improve existing parklands and to create new housing that is close to and supports the Main Street corridor. Such housing should be provided in an attractive

setting that adds long term value to the Village. Most exciting of all is the way in which housing and parkland can be woven together to create a vibrant, compatible neighborhood that complements the existing Village scale and development pattern and provides improved places to recreate and relax.



The Village should be prepared for a time when industrial uses choose to relocate away from the South Long Street area.

Currently, the South Long Street area is underutilized, containing a mix of low intensity industrial uses as well as Long Street Park, which, while valued as an open-space within the largely built-up Village setting, could be improved upon in a number of ways. Existing industrial uses prevent the Lehigh Memory Trail, a well utilized and valued Village resource, from connecting with Long Street Park. Yet it is the presence of these industrial uses that provide the Village with a prime redevelopment opportunity. Including the Village DPW property, there are nearly 10 acres of industrially used land in the neighborhood. With rising land values, it is likely that lower intensity industrial uses, particularly those requiring relatively large areas of land, may some day relocate outside of the Village.

Vacating industrial uses in the South Long Street area would free up substantial areas of land and provide the Village with flexibility and space to develop a more organized, attractive pattern of land use that retains or even augments the current amount of open space, and improves its function and appearance; while also creating new housing choices for current and future residents. By planning for change in the South Long Street Area today, the Village will be ready to seize opportunity as it presents itself in the future. Without a clear plan, redevelopment of the area will likely take place in a scattered, parcel-by-parcel fashion.

Lastly, while the context of the following discussion is South Long Street and by extension other higher-density residential areas of the Village (both existing and planned), the principles and concepts therein are largely applicable to any portion of the Village where open space and the built environment “rub shoulders” or where substantial areas of Village land become available for redevelopment.



Figure 27 - South Long Street Focus Area



*For Conceptual Planning Purpos Only*



## Guiding Principles

While the ultimate look and feel of the South Long Street Area depends on many factors, there are three basic “guiding principles” that should be abided as part of any redevelopment and/or improvement plan for this area:

- ❖ Incorporate Village Character;
- ❖ Provide Dynamic Open Spaces; and
- ❖ Create Appealing Living Environments.

These guiding principles, and their relationship to one another, are depicted in Figure 28 and described in more detail below. The key message is that all three elements are necessary for success.

### *Incorporate Village Character*

A Village-inspired South Long Street area is an area that residents from other parts of the Village can not only walk to, but walk through – that feels like and truly is a part of the Village. Too often, today’s development patterns resemble a series of isolated islands, each a separate entity unto itself. These development “islands,” repeated on a large scale, are inconsistent with the traditional Village scale and development pattern, which stresses connectivity and integration.

Weaving new development into the Village at a scale and manner that builds on traditional, time-tested Village qualities should therefore be a guiding principle. At the same time, care and sensitivity must be taken to ensure a sensitive transition between existing built-up areas of the Village and newer areas.



Opportunities exist to improve the look and functionality of Long Street Park

Buildings, public open spaces, streets, all of the elements that go into making a place, should take their cues from the existing Village. Buildings should be arranged along public streets or usable open spaces. Streets, in turn, should be Village scaled, and connected, where appropriate and feasible, to the existing Village street grid. At their edges, public open spaces should engage the public realm, with clearly defined entrances, attractive landscaping and a well-defined relationship to neighboring structures and land uses; while at their centers, they should contain a sufficient variety of activities and environments to make them vibrant and secure places for recreation and relaxation.



### *Provide Dynamic Open Spaces*

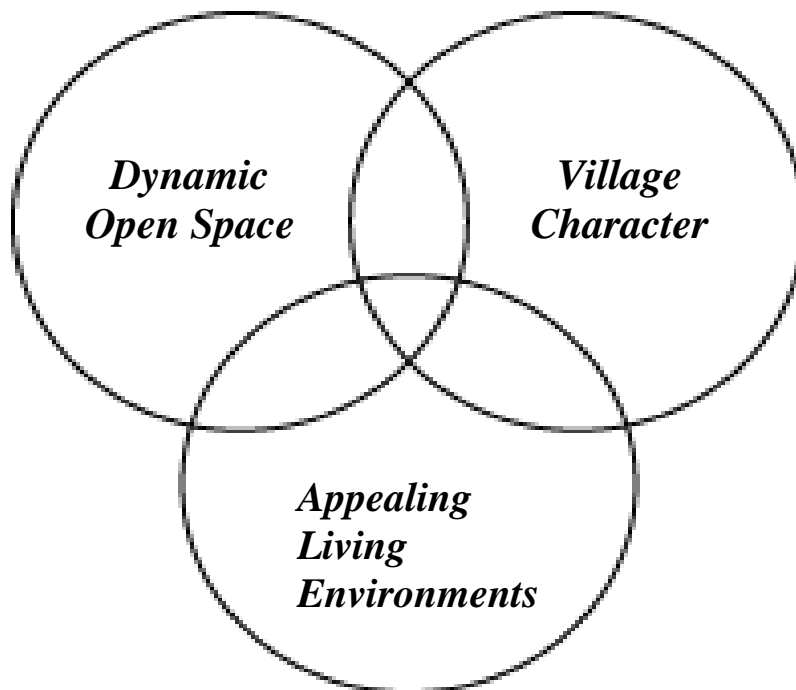
As noted above, Long Street Park, while appreciated for the sense of open space that it lends to the largely built-up Village, is in many ways an underutilized resource.

Should land currently utilized for low intensity industrial uses become available in the future, an opportunity exists to improve the look, feel and function of this open space resource. An improved Long Street Park would make a significant contribution to the quality of life in the Village.



South Long Street ballgame, ca. 1950s.

Figure 28 - Three Guiding Principles for a Quality Environment



Quality public spaces, just like the Village itself, are most vital when they contain a mix of uses and activities. Therefore, improved park facilities in the Long Street Area should contain a mix of activity areas and components to appeal to different users over the course of a park's daily operating hours. An improved, enlarged baseball diamond, with

public seating facilities, could be a part of an improvement plan for the park. Other components to consider include, but are not limited to: walking paths; informal lawn areas; playgrounds and sports courts; and more formalized, “ornamental” spaces, such as a landscaped garden with benches, for example. In short, a healthy mix of uses helps to ensure that a park is well-utilized, secure and aesthetically pleasing throughout the hours of the day and seasons of the year.



Open space can be a venue for both “active” and “passive” recreation activities.

In the Village setting, open space should be well integrated with surrounding uses and address the public streets that it abuts. Residential structures should, wherever possible, “front” a park; that is to say, the public side of the residential structure should be oriented toward the park, not the private, backyard side. Public streets and the public sides of private buildings not only represent a dynamic seam between parkland and the built environment, but act as “eyes on the park,” creating a sense of security for park users.

#### *Lehigh Memory Trail and Railroad Station*

Special mention must be made of the Lehigh Memory Trail and its current and potential relationship to Long Street Park. Currently, these two open space resources are separated from one another by industrial uses. Establishing a connection between the two would have mutually beneficial impacts for each. The Lehigh Trail, a popular, well used stretch of trail would benefit from a better connection to an improved South Long Street Park. An improved park would provide trail walkers, joggers and cyclists alike with an exciting destination and a greenway route back into the heart of the Village that avoids busy roads. For example, a loop trail in the park could be provided that builds upon the existing linear trail. At the same time, an improved South Long Street Park would benefit tremendously from a connection with the well-utilized Lehigh Trail.



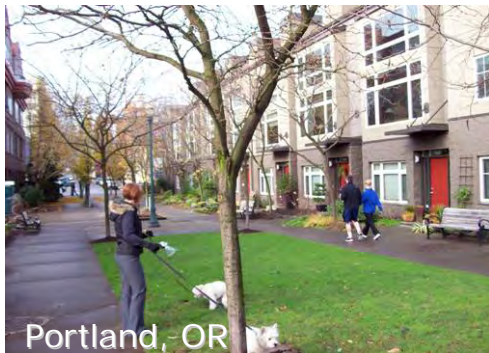
Strolling the Lehigh Memory Trail – a popular Village pastime.

A locally designated landmark directly adjacent to the trail is the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station, a Village treasure that should be incorporated sensitively into any plan to improve the area. The history and unique quality of the structure, and its proximity to the trail, suggest that it could play a leading role as a focal point of activity in an improved park.



Lehigh Valley Station – a strategically located Village gem.

Such a focal point, regardless of whether it directly involves the train station or not, could focus around a public gathering spot for Village residents, possibly oriented around refreshments and relaxation, such as a snack bar or open-air cafe.



Portland, OR



Rochester, NY

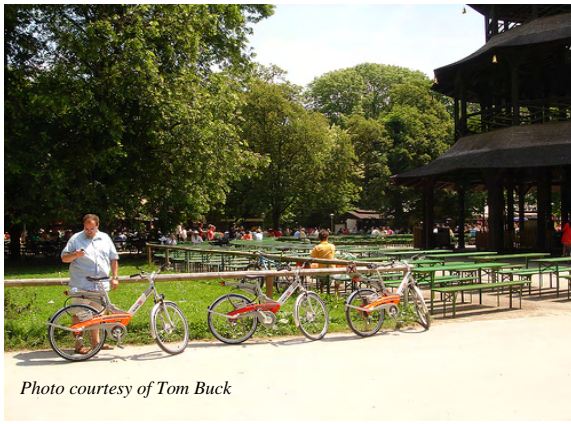
Some examples of successful pairings of public open space and higher density housing.



Geneva, NY

Courtesy of the Geneva Historical Society





Refreshments and a place to relax and people watch, lend another dimension to the park experience.

### *Create Appealing Living Environments*

Changing lifestyles, a maturing population, and smaller household sizes in Williamsville point to demand for new and varied housing alternatives to the traditional single-family detached model, as documented in Section 3 of this plan. This trend is not unique to Williamsville, but rather, mirrors a national trend as a generation of baby boomers ages. Therefore, the South Long Street area presents an opportunity to provide additional housing stock in the Village that includes not only new single-family detached units, but attached and multifamily units as well. Such housing would appeal to not only “empty nesters”, but to young professionals, smaller households, and anyone seeking a “Village” lifestyle as an alternative to the suburban subdivision or apartment “complex.” Designing such housing in a manner that builds on the strengths of the Village – the qualities that make it a special and unique place, should be a guiding principal. Such an approach would ensure that new housing responds to and takes advantage of its proximity to Main Street and the shops, restaurants and services that it offers. Creating attractive, safe and logical pedestrian connections that encourage walking would be of mutual benefit to both Main Street businesses and the new housing and reduce the need for car trips.



Attention to detail, including landscaping and architectural features enable these townhouses to make a positive contribution to the public realm while maintaining privacy for residents.



## **Putting it All Together – a Long Street Vignette**

In the end, it's all about creating "place." Putting together the three ingredients, the "Guiding Principles" discussed above, what sort of environment could be created? How would it feel to walk through and experience an improved South Long Street neighborhood and park? The following vignette offers one possible interpretation...

*The scene is a summer evening. It is still light out. A ballgame is being played in one corner of Long Street Park. From the nearby Lehigh Memorial Trail, cyclists and strollers can hear the crack of the bat and the cheering of the crowd. As the trail approaches the Lehigh Valley Train Station, the landscape "opens up" to reveal an active, attractively landscaped park.*

*Some trail users take a detour in the park to watch the ballgame, or make the loop on new park trails. Still others stop at the new outdoor café that is anchored by the Lehigh Valley Train Station adjacent to the trail. Tables and umbrellas are set up – the perfect place to sit with an ice cream and watch the people on the trail go by.*

*Meanwhile, other residents approach on foot from California Drive and Milton Street with no firmer plans in mind than to take a stroll and see whom they might bump into, be it at the game, along a new Village street, or down by the "Station Café." The parkland and pedestrian connections allow these same people to continue on to Long Street, up to Main, and back home again along a route that is safe, stimulating and convenient.*

*There are new residents too. They live in newly built housing that is both close to the activities and excitement of Main Street, and the improved parkland, upon which they front. Residents of these new homes, coming, or going, or simply sitting out on the front porch, inject the neighborhood with activity and interest. As the light gives way to dusk, the windows of the homes light up, "eyes" on the park that lend a sense of security to the scene.*

*The ballgame concludes and parents and children make their way home. A good many families have walked to the park and return the same way, some using the Lehigh Valley Trail, others taking the neighborhood streets. A more pedestrian friendly, "crossable" Main Street has also encouraged a substantial number of "northside" residents to make the journey on foot to the park and back.*

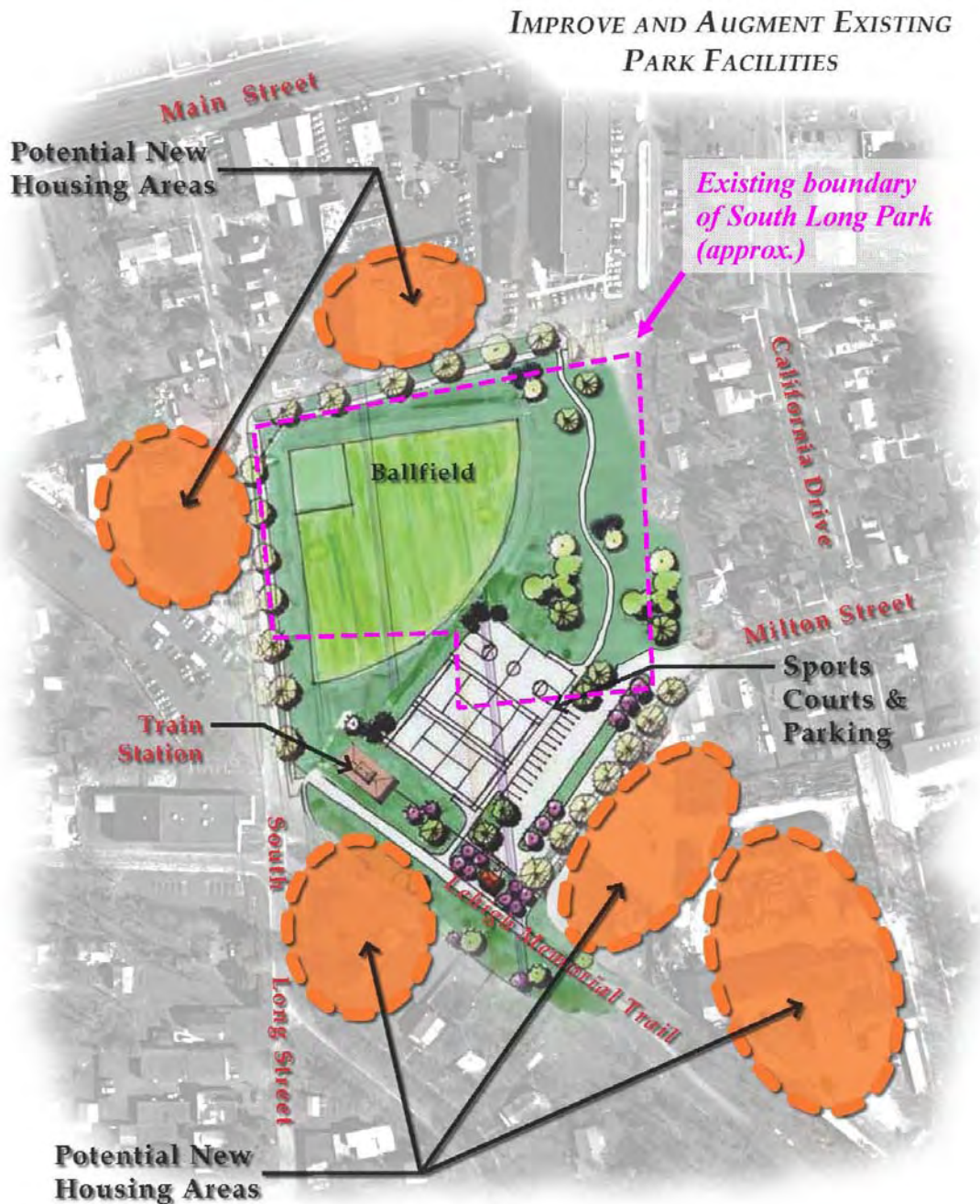
*But many parents do not get away so quickly; more than a few children have successfully pled for ice cream at the Station Café. Here at the cafe, the parents run into other parents and neighbors, and soon the adults settle into drinks and conversation while the children, having quickly eaten their ice cream, decamp to a small playground nearby.*

*As dusk gives way to night, the park gradually empties out and hunkers down to rest, in anticipation of another busy day.*

## Conceptual Area Plan

The conceptual area sketch plan for Long Street below offers an interpretation of how the “guiding principles” discussed above – *Incorporate Village Character*, *Provide Dynamic Open Space* and *Create Appealing Living Environments* – could potentially be applied with respect to one another and with respect to the larger context of the Village. The conceptual plan should not be regarded as a blueprint for development. Its value lies in visually representing the application of the “guiding principles” to the Long Street area and informing any future plans that may be developed for the area as opportunities arise.

Figure 29 - South Long Street Conceptual Land Uses



## 5.3 Focus Areas Objectives and Actions

### *“Mill Village” Objectives and Actions*

#### **Objective 1: Create a Destination and Sense of Arrival at the Center of Williamsville**

Many residents and Main Street business owners expressed a desire to see a more well-defined and welcoming Village center that would be pleasant to visit and do business in. Strengthening a Village center feeling involves tipping the scale back in the favor of the pedestrian, creating interesting and textured environments to visit and explore, and signaling through physical improvements that the Village center is a distinct place with a unique identity.

#### **Action 1: Prepare/Approve an Area Site Plan**

The transformation of Williamsville’s Village center will not and should not occur overnight. Lasting change occurs gradually and is rooted in the day-to-day positive actions of individual community members and business owners. Preparing a plan that supports these positive actions is critical. A well considered, area site plan that specifies building in-fill sites, circulation and parking improvements, streetscape enhancements, and adjacent park improvements can provide a framework in which these decisions can occur. The plan should be detailed and grounded in analysis, but can also be flexible in the details to meet changing circumstances and on-the-ground realities. Lastly, the plan should be able to be implemented in phases and sections as opportunities present themselves. The success of the plan will lie in the strength of the collaborative relationships between the public sector and the private sector.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$30,000 -- \$50,000 for plan

#### **Action 2: Prepare a Detailed Parking Study and Plan**

Main Street shoppers and merchants have long contended that Main Street suffers from a lack of parking. This is borne out by the parking analysis in the Inventory & Analysis prepared for the Plan. To support the community’s vision of an active, vibrant Village center focused around the mill, additional, convenient and sensitively designed parking will need to be provided. Parking strategies and recommendations are also discussed in the Economic Development and Transportation sections of this plan, as they relate to those topic discussions.

The following phased approach for parking could be taken:

a. *Encourage Main Street Employees to park “off site”*

Employee parking competes with customer parking. Encouraging employee parking off-site frees up more spaces for shoppers and visitors. The Village’s existing street network off Main Street is one source of ample parking. However, outreach to residents and education will need to be undertaken to inform residents and address concerns. It should be noted that on-street parking on residential streets is the hallmark of the majority of vibrant, destination Villages.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	Minimal

b. *Professionally Review Parking and Circulation*

As future site plans come before the Village, both in “Mill Village” and where ever parking and circulation issues are part of a development plan, the parking and circulation components of the site plan should be reviewed by a professional to ensure that maximum efficiencies are achieved and that parking lots are both safe and attractive. In conjunction with this action, the Village code should be revised to provide more detailed regulations for parking, including guidance for layout and configuration of lots, appropriate widths for circulation aisles, and provisions for cross-access easements between adjoining lots.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Planning Board, Professional Reviewer
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	To be determined.

c. *Improve and/or Consolidate Parking Lots*

Consolidating the patchwork of individually owned parking lots in the Village core into larger, common lots, would increase the overall number of parking spaces available. This shared parking approach is another hallmark of the vibrant, mixed-use Village center. Since many of these parking lots are on individual, privately owned lots, the Village will need to seek out willing land/business owners to partner with. There are also many existing Village parking lots, under single ownership that present opportunities for reorganization to increase efficiency and the number of parking spaces. These parking lots can be improved incrementally, as these properties are redeveloped and improved in the future.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
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Time Frame: Short-term  
Cost: To be determined.

d. *Provide Structured/Decked Parking*

Once shorter term parking improvements are implemented, it may still be necessary to provide additional parking. A tastefully designed, small-scale parking structure is one opportunity for providing more parking. There are a number of Villages and small cities across New York State, including Fairport, NY and Saratoga Springs, NY, where such structures have been successfully woven into the community fabric. A feasibility study would need to be conducted to determine a suitable location and both short- and long-term costs.

Responsibility: Board of Trustees  
Time Frame: Long-term  
Cost: To be determined.

**Objective 2: Transform the Mill area into a regional draw for cultural and arts activity**

The Williamsville Mill is a landmark that is central to the Village's identity, its past and its future. Village residents overwhelmingly support rehabilitation of the mill, but are equally adamant that it remain publicly accessible.

The Williamsville Mill has long served as the iconic image of Williamsville's past and present identity. Over time, as Williamsville evolved into a bedroom suburb of Buffalo and later into a suburban downtown in its own right, the mill's role has steadily faded into the background. Driving down the five-lane wide Main Street today at 40 miles per hour, a motorist who is not familiar with the Village and its history would probably not even see the mill or the dramatic waterfall that once powered it.

Revitalizing the mill presents a major challenge, as the property has been underutilized for many years and a full stabilization of the mill building has been estimated to cost around \$600,000 alone (not including site improvements or any interior or exterior finish work.) Additionally, parking on the site is very limited and the mill is located in the area of the business district that already has an acute parking shortage.

Despite these challenges, the mill possesses a number of key attributes:

- ❖ It is one of a very few intact structures in the Buffalo area dating from the early industrial period and therefore has great value as an historic asset;
- ❖ It is located just one block (and a short walk) from Main Street;
- ❖ It is situated above the falls and Glen Park;

- ❖ Its water wheel and cider milling equipment are largely intact and could potentially be restored to use;
- ❖ The property is owned by the Village of Williamsville; and
- ❖ There are several properties in the vicinity of the mill that are ripe for redevelopment.

Participants in the community planning process overwhelmingly agreed that the mill is an important asset to the whole community and must be improved with an eye towards transforming it into a true cultural asset. The community also understands the need to establish attractions in Williamsville that will draw in visitors from all over the Buffalo-Niagara region as a means of generating additional activity in the Main Street business district.

With these two goals in mind, the Community Plan recommends focusing on remaking the mill area – i.e., “Mill Village” – as a regional hub of arts and cultural activity. This effort will begin with the mill itself but will also include properties along the two blocks of Spring Street between the mill and N. Cayuga Road. This area, located behind Main Street, is now mostly comprised of privately-owned parking lots and dilapidated residential and commercial buildings. It also presently acts as a barrier between Main Street and Glen Park—a barrier that the community would like to overcome.

The actions below are focused on revitalizing both the mill and establishing a “Mill Village” destination along Spring Street.

#### **Action 1: Stabilize the Mill**

The mill structure, while largely intact, is in need of immediate stabilization. A recently completed report estimated the cost of stabilizing the mill at \$600,000.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Immediate
<u>Costs:</u>	\$600,000

#### **Action 2: Attract a use to the mill**

The mill is perhaps the only intact, historic mill in upstate New York that still contains much of its mill equipment and infrastructure. Attracting a use that incorporates as much of the function and infrastructure of the original mill as possible, would be one way to celebrate the mill’s history. The key to any new use in the mill is that it respects the history of the mill structure and is publicly accessible – either as a public use (museum), or a private use that caters to a broad spectrum of public patrons.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Costs:</u>	To be determined

### **Action 3: Install interpretive/historic exhibits explaining the history of the mill**

The level of public awareness about the history of the Water Mill needs to be improved. One simple and relatively inexpensive way to raise awareness would be to install a series of interpretive panels both inside and outside the facility to briefly tell the story of the Water Mill. These panels should be full-color with historic photos/images. Text and photos for the panels should be readily available from the Historical Society and funds for the panels can likely be raised from private sources.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Historical Society, Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, in conjunction with mill redevelopment
<u>Costs:</u>	No public costs (private funding)

### **Action 4: Hold arts and cultural events at the mill and/or at nearby parks**

Arts-related events are a key component of attracting outside visitors and tourism-related business activity in other historic Villages in Western New York.

Destinations like Lewiston's Artpark and the Roycroft Campus in East Aurora are critical to the success of those places at attracting business from regional residents and tourists. The Water Mill, in combination with the outdoor spaces available at Glen Park and Island Park could become a true destination for arts and culture.

Whatever events are held at and around the mill should be aimed at a regional audience, in order to draw more people to Williamsville.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, ongoing
<u>Costs:</u>	None (can be financed by event revenue)

### **Action 5: Work with the Amherst IDA to explore funding and operating options for the Mill and its surrounding area**

The Amherst IDA has expressed interest in partnering with the Village of Williamsville to assist with the redevelopment of the Water Mill and Mill Village area. Though the exact nature of this partnership needs to be defined, it could take a number of forms, including land assembly, parking development and management, developer RFP management, grantwriter, lender, or others. Regardless of the relationship, discussions should be pursued on this front.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, ongoing
<u>Costs:</u>	To be determined

### **Action 6: Explore grant opportunities for historic preservation and heritage development**

There are a variety of grant programs available for the rehabilitation of the Water Mill and its surrounding area. The Village should work with the Amherst IDA to

identify and pursue potential grants to support historic preservation activities. Grants that may be applicable include:

- **NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation** ([www.nysparks.state.ny.us](http://www.nysparks.state.ny.us)) has a Historic Preservation Matching Grant program that offers funding support to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and restore properties that are listed on the National Register for Historic Places.
- **NY State Council on the Arts** ([www.nysca.org](http://www.nysca.org)) offers grants under its Architecture/Planning/Design program to support two types of activities: community design and planning; and contemporary design and technology.
- **Heritage New York** ([www.heritageny.org](http://www.heritageny.org)), which is an arm of the state Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, has a program specific to the Underground Railroad. Given Williamsville's history with this movement, and the lack of interpreted sites in the region, it may be a candidate for funding support under this program.
- **Quality Communities Initiative** ([www.qualitycommunities.org](http://www.qualitycommunities.org)) is a program of the NY State government that has provided funding support through the Quality Communities Grant program for millions of dollars of downtown planning and redevelopment. This program is presently being re-evaluated by the new administration, but is expected to be funded again for 2008.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, ongoing
<u>Costs:</u>	Minimal (grantwriting and administration only)

### **Objective 3: Integrate Resources**

Providing links and connections throughout the Village core and between key resources and attractions is critical. By its very nature, a vibrant Village center consists of a concentration of many of the community's most important assets. The following actions all involve making Williamsville's Village center a more cohesive, user friendly environment. While any one action on its own could provide benefits, it is through their collective impact, as part of an overall vision and plan, that they will be most effective.

#### **Action 1: Create a "Grand Staircase" into Glen Park from Spring Street**

Plans for reuse and rehabilitation of the mill should also include consideration of Grand Staircase down into Glen Park, in the space between the mill and the existing apartment building to the west. This more visible, inviting entrance to the park would supplement the existing path off of Main Street that runs along Ellicott Creek and create positive synergy between the Park and Spring Street, and Main Street only a block away. Large landings provided with landscaping, benches and lighting at both the top and bottom of the stairs would make for attractive and inviting gateways.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
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<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, as part of improvement plan for Spring Street and the mill.
<u>Cost:</u>	\$200,000 -- \$450,000 (rough estimate)

### *South Long Street Objectives and Actions*

#### **Objective 4: Ensure that the Village is Prepared to Meet Change in the South Long Street Area**

Substantial amounts of land in the South Long Street neighborhood currently house low intensity industrial uses. With rising land values, it likely that such industrial uses may eventually relocate outside the Village. Such vacated properties present an enormous opportunity to improve the South Long Street neighborhood and park, for which the Village should be prepared with a vision and a plan to ensure that redevelopment occurs in a manner that creates long-term value and benefits for the Village.

##### **Action 1: Review and Revise Village's Zoning and Development Regulations**

Review and, as necessary, revise the Village's zoning to ensure that it is compatible with the long-range vision for the South Long Street neighborhood as expressed in this plan. This can be done separately, or as part of a larger, Village-wide zoning project (see Objective 1 under *General Land Use Objectives and Actions* below).

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$20,000 -- \$50,000

##### **Action 2: Establish an Area Site Plan**

Consider establishing a community approved area site plan for the neighborhood that can guide development decisions in the neighborhood and be used to communicate the neighborhood vision to private investors.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Mid-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$15,000 -- \$25,000

##### **Action 3: Develop design guidelines for the South Long Street neighborhood.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Mid-Term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$10,000 – \$15,000

#### **Objective 5: Improve the Appearance and Function of Park and Open Space in the South Long Street Area**

Land in the South Long Street area that is vacated by industrial uses presents an opportunity to reconfigure and improve existing and potential future parkland. It is

critical that the existing acreage devoted to parkland be at the very least maintained, if not increased. Moreover, park improvements could potentially be tied to and made in conjunction with the redevelopment of the area for residential uses.

**Action 1: Prepare a Long Street Park Improvement Plan that can be implemented in phases, as opportunities present themselves.** Such a plan could provide a springboard for accessing state grant programs for park improvements and for potentially implementing the park plan via a private-public partnership in connection with new residential development.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term
<u>Cost:</u>	\$10,000 -- \$25,000

**Action 2: Explore options for improving the existing Long Street ballfield.** This should involve collaboration with the Town of Amherst to determine mutual Village/town needs and ensure that an improved ballfield would be well utilized.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, as part of the Long Street Park Improvement Plan
<u>Cost:</u>	Part of Park Plan

**Action 3: Consider and be prepared to purchase, if it should become available, industrial land to foster a connection between Long Street Park and the Lehigh Memory Trail.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term to Long-term
<u>Cost:</u>	Dependent on land appraisal/value

**Action 4: Implement a short-term landscaping plan for Long Street Park, as an initial phase of a longer-term improvement plan.**

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Short-term, as part of the Long Street Park Improvement Plan
<u>Cost:</u>	\$5,000 -- \$10,000

**Action 5: Consider utilizing the Train Depot as the centerpiece of a trailside café or meeting place, while retaining and enhancing its historic value.** This would likely involve a private-public partnership.

<u>Responsibility:</u>	Board of Trustees
<u>Time Frame:</u>	Mid-term, as part of the Long Street Park Improvement Plan

Cost: To be determined

**Action 6: Investigate Opportunities for Extending the Lehigh Memory Trail.**

The Village should investigate opportunities for extending the Lehigh Memory Trail and work with the Town of Amherst on portions outside the Village boundaries. Opportunities for trail extensions should also be considered during the site plan review process for properties that abut portions of the Lehigh Valley right-of-way. Lastly, efforts should be made to link the Lehigh Trail to the Greenway Concept proposed in this plan, both symbolically, and where possible, physically.

Responsibility: Board of Trustees  
Time Frame: Ongoing  
Cost: To be determined.

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## 6.0 CONCLUSION & IMPLEMENTATION

The Village Community Plan sets forth a broad array of recommendations and actions for Williamsville. Some actions are sustained efforts that require an on-going commitment, while others are more finite in nature with clearly defined beginnings and endings. Furthermore, some actions cannot take place until others are completed, such as many of the proposed streetscape improvements, which are dependent on the reconfiguration of Main Street. The concluding section of the Community Plan identifies the priority projects and actions that the Village can focus on to catalyze positive change. This by no means undermines the importance and value of all recommended actions included in this plan. Rather, it sets forth a “digestible” priority list that can be easily understood and tracked, and which can be added to and modified as opportunities present themselves and circumstances evolve.

### 6.1 Priorities

The Priority Implementation Table (Table 4) establishes priority actions under each of the three plan sections in which they are discussed: (2) Land Use; (3) Transportation and (4) the Main Street Business District. The table is intended to simplify and aggregate priority actions into one easy to use table which can be used to track implementation progress.

For each priority action listed, a generalized timeframe – short term (up to one year from the adoption of this plan), medium term (1 to 3 years from adoption), and long term (more than 3 years from adoption). The general nature of these timeframes should be stressed. Rough cost estimates are also provided for many of the actions, which can help guide the Village budgeting process, as well as cost/benefit analyses. However, it should be stressed here as well, that such estimates are by necessity rough. More detailed cost estimates can be developed as proposed actions are moved from a concept level, as presented in this plan, to the design and implementation level.

Many of the recommendations in this plan will require substantial coordination and proper timing to become reality. For instance, many of the recommendations for the Village’s business district and Main Street are interrelated and mutually dependent on one another. The proposed “makeover” of Main Street, for instance, will likely take some years to develop into an actual build plan and to move through the NYSDOT budgeting processes. However, there are a number of actions that do not need to wait for the completion of large-scale projects. Such actions can yield up-front results, are generally less costly, and are instrumental in building community support and enthusiasm for the plan as the Village gears up for more ambitious projects. These priority short-term actions are highlighted in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3 - SUGGESTED PRIORITY SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

*Transportation Related*

1. Implement a Main Street Snow Removal Program
2. Stripe On-Street Main Street Parking Spaces
3. Prepare a Village Parking Plan
4. Improve and/or Consolidate Parking throughout the Village
5. Pursue Package of Pedestrian Improvements
6. Pursue Phased Implementation of Main Street Improvements, beginning with the Mill Village area (Spring and Main)

*“Mill Village” and Village Core Related*

7. Stabilize the Mill and Attract a Use
8. Pursue a Connection of Amherst State Park and Glen Park
9. Prepare Comprehensive Park Plan and/or Implement Selected Park Improvement Recommendations Set Forth in this Plan, such as the “Grand Staircase”

*Village Wide*

10. Revise Village Development Regulations to be Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Table 4. Land Use Implementation Table

Objective/Action	Time Frame			Responsibility	Estimated Costs
	<i>Short-Term (1- 3 Years)</i>	<i>Mid-Term (3-5 Years)</i>	<i>Long-Term (5+ Years)</i>		
2.3.1 -- Ensure that Village Zoning is Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan	X			Board of Trustees	\$60,000 -- \$100,000
2.3.2 -- Ensure that Williamsville Provides Opportunities to Age in Place	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	To be determined
2.3.3 -- Protect and Celebrate the Village's Historic Assets	X	X	X	Board of Trustees, Historic Preservation Commission	To be determined
2.3.4 -- Create a Green Highway		X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
2.3.4.1 -- Prepare a Park Improvement Plan	X			Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst	\$40,000 to \$80,000
2.3.4.2 -- Connect Amherst State Park and Glen Park	X			Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst	To be determined
2.3.4.3 -- Carry Park Across Main Street	X			Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	Part of Main Street Improvement Costs
2.3.4.4 -- Consider Incorporating Dream Island into Parks System	X	X	X	Board of Trustees, Willing Landowner	To be determined
2.3.4.5 -- Create a Recreational Greenway	X	X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
2.3.4.6 -- Explore Opportunities for New Access to Open Space and Recreation	X			Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst, Erie County	To be determined
2.3.5 -- Ensure that the Village Continues to be a Primary Location for Important Community Institutions	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	None





Table 5. Transportation and Main Street Implementation Table

Objective/Action	Time Frame			Responsibility	Estimated Costs
	<i>Short-Term (1- 3 Years)</i>	<i>Mid-Term (3- 5 Years)</i>	<i>Long-Term (5+ Years)</i>		
3.7.1 -- Implement preferred "Alternative 2" Main Street Plan	X			Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	\$500,000 -- \$1,500,000
3.7.2 -- Convert Spring Street to One-Way Northbound		X		Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	\$15,000
3.7.3 -- Install New Traffic/Pedestrian Signal at Main/Spring Intersection	X			Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	\$125,000
3.7.4 -- Pursue Package of Short Term Pedestrian Improvements	X	X		Board of Trustees, NYSDOT, Town of Amherst, GBNRTC	To be determined
3.7.5 -- Work with Neighboring Communities and Regional Transportation Agencies to Reduce Volume of Main Street Traffic	X	X	X	Board of Trustees, Town of Amherst, NYSDOT, GBNRTC	\$40,000 to \$80,000
3.7.6 -- Implement recommended changes to Cayuga Street Intersection			X	Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	To be determined



Table 6. Main Street Business District Implementation Table

Objective/Action	Time Frame			Responsibility	Estimated Costs
	Short-Term (1- 3 Years)	Mid-Term (3- 5 Years)	Long-Term (5+ Years)		
4.3.1 -- Use New Development to Reinforce Village's Visual and Historic Character	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	N/A
4.3.2 -- Implement a System of Incentives for Development and Redevelopment	X			Board of Trustees	Minimal
4.3.2.1 -- Offer Bonuses in Exchange for Desired Amenities	X			Board of Trustees	Minimal
4.3.2.2 -- Reduce On-Site Parking Rquirements w/ Shared Parking Agreements	X			Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association, Amherst IDA	Minimal
4.3.2.3 -- Aggressively Promote Amherst IDA Tax Abatement and Loan Programs	X	X	X	Williamsville Business Association, Amherst IDA	Minimal
4.3.2.4 -- Consider Use of TIFs or Similar Altnernatives	X			Board of Trustees, Williamsville Central School District, Amherst IDA	\$25,000 -- \$50,000 for TIF plan, Administrative costs
4.3.2.5 -- Amend Main Street zoning to allow for outdoor dining and other active uses along building frontages	X			Board of Trustees, Planning Board	Minimal
4.3.4.1 -- Establish a Business Improvement District	X			Board of Trustees, Williamsville Business Association, Neighborhood leaders	Minimal
4.3.4.2 -- Organize and Promote Special Events	X	X	X	Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	None (can be financed by event revenue)
4.3.4.3 -- Establish a Comprehensive Snow Removal System	X	X	X	Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	\$20,000 to \$30,000 startup costs; \$10,000 to \$20,000 annual operating costs
4.3.4.4 -- Implement a Storefront Management Program	X			Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA	\$50,000 to \$100,000
4.3.4.5 -- Expand Marketing Activities to Promote Main Street	X	X	X	Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	\$10,000 to \$20,000
4.3.4.6 -- Work with Businesses to Ensure Employees do Not Park on Main Street	X	X	X	Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	Minimal
4.3.4.7 -- Stripe Main Street Spaces	X			Board of Trustees, NYSDOT	\$3,000 to \$5,000
4.3.5.1 -- Install Uniform Gateway and Wayfinding Signage		X		Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	\$50,000 to \$100,000
4.3.5.2 -- Develop Gateways Along Main Street		X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.6.1 -- Enact and Maintain Streetscaping Improvements	X	X		Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	\$20,000 to \$30,000 for plan
4.3.6.2 -- Consider Crossing Guards		X		Business Improvement District and/or Board of Trustees	\$25,000 to \$50,000
4.3.6.3 -- Bury Utilities	X	X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.7.1 -- Conduct Outreach on Parking on Residential Streets	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	None
4.3.7.2 -- Mitigate Impacts of Cut-Through Traffic on Residential Streets	X			Board of Trustees	\$5,000 to \$10,000 for study (or as part of larger traffic/parking study for village)
4.3.7.3 -- Solidify Conditions of Housing on Fringe of Main Street		X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.7.4 -- Ensure Best Practices for Mitigating Impacts of Commercial on Residential	X			Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.8.1 -- Identify Priority Redevelopment Sites	X			Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.8.2 -- Create Incentive Packages for Redevelopment Sites	X			Board of Trustees	To be determined
4.3.8.3 -- Consider Acquisition of Highest Priority Sites by Village and/or Amherst IDA		X		Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA	To be determined





Table 7. Focus Area Implementation Table

<b>Objective/Action</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>			<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
	<b>Short-Term (1- 3 Years)</b>	<b>Mid-Term (3- 5 Years)</b>	<b>Long-Term (5+ Years)</b>		
5.3.1.1 -- Prepare/Approve "Mill Village" Area Site Plan	X			Board of Trustees	\$30,000 -- \$50,000
5.3.1.2 -- Prepare a Detailed Parking Study and Plan	X			Board of Trustees	Minimal
5.3.2.1 -- Stabilize the Mill	X			Board of Trustees	\$600,000
5.3.2.2 -- Attract a Use to the Mill	X			Board of Trustees	To be determined
5.3.2.3 -- Install Interpretive/Historic Exhibits at the Mill	X			Historical Society, Board of Trustees	Privately funded
5.3.2.4 -- Hold Arts and Cultural Events at the Mill and/or Parks	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	None (can be financed by event revenue)
5.3.2.5-- Work with Amherst IDA to Explore Funding for Mill and Surrounding Area	X	X	X	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA	To be determined
5.3.2.6 -- Explore Grant Opportunities for Historic Preservation	X	X	X	Board of Trustees, Amherst IDA	Minimal
5.3.3.1 -- Create a "Grand Staircase" into Glen Park	X			Board of Trustees	\$200,000 -- \$450,000
5.3.4.1 -- Review and Revise the Village's Zoning and Development Regulations with respect to the South Long Street Area	X			Board of Trustees	\$20,000 to \$50,000
5.3.4.2 -- Establish a South Long Street Area Site Plan	X	X		Board of Trustees	\$15,000 to \$25,000
5.3.4.3 -- Develop South Long Street Guidelines	X	X		Board of Trustees	\$10,000 to \$15,000
5.3.5.1 -- Prepare a Long Street Park Improvement Plan	X			Board of Trustees	\$10,000 to \$25,000
5.3.5.2 -- Explore Options for Improving the Long Street Ballfield	X			Board of Trustees	To be determined -- potentially included as part of park plan
5.3.5.3 -- Consider Land Purchase with Willing Landowner to Connect Long Street Park and the Lehigh Trail	X	X	X	Board of Trustees	Dependent on Land Appraisal/Value
5.3.5.4 -- Implement a Short-Term Landscaping Plan for Long Street Park	X			Board of Trustees	\$5,000 to \$10,000
5.3.5.5 -- Consider Utilizing Train Depot as Trailside Meeting Place		X		Board of Trustees	To be determined
5.3.5.6 -- Investigate Opportunities for Extending the Lehigh Trail		X		Board of Trustees	To be determined



## 6.2 Funding

Funding for implementation of the ideas and actions presented in this plan will invariably come from a variety of sources, including the Village budget. The following agencies and organizations also have funds available that the Village could apply for in connection with plan implementation:

- **NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation** ([www.nysparks.state.ny.us](http://www.nysparks.state.ny.us)) has a Historic Preservation Matching Grant program that offers funding support to protect, preserve, rehabilitate and restore properties that are listed on the National Register for Historic Places.
- **NY State Council on the Arts** ([www.nysca.org](http://www.nysca.org)) offers grants under its Architecture/Planning/Design program to support two types of activities: community design and planning; and contemporary design and technology.
- **Heritage New York** ([www.heritageny.org](http://www.heritageny.org)), which is an arm of the state Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, has a program specific to the Underground Railroad. Given Williamsville's history with this movement, and the lack of interpreted sites in the region, it may be a candidate for funding support under this program.
- **Quality Communities Initiative** ([www.qualitycommunities.org](http://www.qualitycommunities.org)) is a program of the NY State government that has provided funding support through the Quality Communities Grant program for millions of dollars of downtown planning and redevelopment. This program is presently being re-evaluated by the new administration, but is expected to be funded again for 2008.

## 6.3 Capital Improvement Plan

The Village's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process should be utilized to establish priorities and rationally program funds to move projects and actions recommended in this plan to implementation. The Priority Implementation Table provided in this plan can be used as a guide in this process. The Capital Improvement Plan process should also be coordinated with efforts to secure outside funding for projects, such as through the numerous grant programs that are available for community development. Proper coordination between the CIP and the securing of grant monies will ensure that the Village can utilize such monies in a timely fashion without running into expiration deadlines that often accompany grant awards.

## 6.4 Plan Monitoring

The Community Plan is a living document that can and should evolve to respond to changing circumstances and new and unexpected challenges and opportunities. In fact, New York State Planning and Zoning law requires that adopted plans be reviewed on a regular basis. To ensure the success and longevity of the plan, the Village should establish a process for monitoring progress made in implementing the objectives and

actions set forth in this plan. This process should involve periodic reviews to 1) assess progress and 2) make adjustments to the implementation program to reflect progress, new and revised priorities and changing circumstances, both internal and external to the Village. Ideally, these reviews should occur on an annual basis, with a more comprehensive review and reassessment every 5 years.

## **6.5 Plan Amendment Process**

The Williamsville Community Plan is not a static document. It will require periodic review and possible amendment to respond to the ever changing social, physical, regulatory and environmental conditions in the Village. Amendment procedures are necessary to respond to these changes. Annual reviews based on an assessment of development applications should be accomplished each year and more comprehensive amendments based on more detailed study and community input should be scheduled as 5-year reviews.



## 7.0 DGEIS IMPACT ANALYSIS

### 7.1 Introduction

The Williamsville Community Plan was reviewed and adopted in conformance with New York State Village Law and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). To this end, a single document combining both the analysis required by SEQRA and the Community Plan itself, was created -- a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS). The DGEIS, on file at the Village, provides additional background information on the Village (Inventory & Analysis – see below) and discussion on the alternatives and impacts that were considered in the creation of the final Community Plan. According to *The SEQRA Handbook*, which is published by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), “a generic EIS is a type of EIS that is more general than a site-specific EIS and typically is used to consider broad-based actions...the generic EIS can examine the environmental effects of programs or plans that have wide application or restrict the range of future alternative policies such as agency regulations or permit programs, master plans, or resource management plans”.

A comprehensive plan, by its very nature, takes a comprehensive look at the environment and setting of a community and identifies and examines potential impacts of land use and planning decisions and policies, as well as an investigation of alternatives. These elements are present throughout this plan, but are also addressed specifically in the DGEIS document, under Sections 7 *DGEIS Impact Analysis* and 9 *DGEIS Alternatives*.

The Williamsville Community Plan sets forth a community established vision for the future of the Village. It contains a comprehensive overview of the Village’s existing conditions and opportunities, as well as focused strategies for the issues and opportunities that are most important to the Village and where land use change is most likely and/or desired. The overriding theme of the plan centers on strengthening the qualities that make Williamsville special and leveraging them for economic success and a continued high quality of life. While reclaiming the Village’s Main Street as a walkable, inviting and economically thriving environment is central to this theme, the plan focuses on a number of other opportunities such as rehabilitation and reuse of the Williamsville Mill and the Spring Street district (i.e., “Mill Village”), and potential land use change for industrial areas in the South Long Street neighborhood.

The plan itself will not directly result in any physical changes to the Village. Rather, it establishes a vision for the Village and strategies for implementing this Village subsequent to plan adoption. Moreover, the plan is a living document. Within the bounds of the general planning principles that the plan sets forth, there is flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and new opportunities that the future may present. The plan can and should be revisited periodically to ensure that it continues to accurately reflect the goals and vision of Village residents and the evolving state of the Village itself.

The following discussion is an evaluation of the impacts of this plan pursuant to its adoption. Since adoption of the plan does not directly result in any physical changes to

the Village, or constitute any changes to the regulations and laws governing the Village, this discussion is necessarily generalized in scope.

## **7.2 Land Use and Demographics**

Overall, the Williamsville Community Plan does not propose significant changes to Village land use patterns. Rather, the plan seeks to support and reinforce the Village's traditional Village scale in both its residential and commercial areas.

South Long Street is one area of the Village where land use change is both expected and desired. Currently this area of the Village contains approximately 10 acres of low intensity industrial uses, as well as the underutilized Long Street Park. The community plan sets forth a vision for this area of the Village, should such industrial uses relocate outside the Village. The plan does not seek to relocate such industries, but rather, to be prepared for desired land use change if and when they relocate. This vision of South Long Street is comprised of a residential neighborhood based around an improved Long Street Park. The number of new housing units in this proposed scenario could range from approximately 60 to 150, depending on the balance between traditional one-family detached units and higher density housing types, such as garden apartments, patio homes and/or condominiums. Using an average household size of 2 persons, this equates to approximately 120 to 300 residents, or a 2% to 5% increase in the Village's population of 5,573 (year 2000). Of course, new housing in this area of the Village would be constructed and occupied over a period of years, so increases to Village population would occur over time and would potentially be counterbalanced by projected downward trends in average household sizes across the Village (see Inventory & Analysis Report – Appendix A).

Significant adverse impacts are not expected in connection with a transition from industrial to residential uses in the South Long Street neighborhood. The number of new residents in connection with such development would not be large enough to significantly impact Village services, Village-wide traffic volumes, or the overall character of the Village. In fact, the proposed South Long Street neighborhood would be integrated into the fabric of the existing Village and its proximity to Main Street would allow residents of new housing to walk to shops and services without the use of an automobile.

With respect to the "Mill Village" concept and the desired increase in activity in this part of the Village, impacts resulting from increased demands on existing parking and intersection capacities would likely ensue. To this end, the plan recommends a number of strategies for increasing the parking supply, ranging from relatively simple measures, such as striping on-street parking spaces, to more ambitious undertakings, such as the provision of structured parking. Additional changes to the traffic patterns have also been recommended to accommodate additional activity in this area of the Village (Spring Street to a one-way, northbound street, and modifications to the Cayuga/Main signal timing). The transition of "Mill Village" is not expected to occur overnight, but rather, incrementally over time. As such, it is anticipated that the Village can adjust to increased demands for parking and other impacts as conditions warrant. However, some reasonable effort should be made to anticipate and accommodate future demand earlier enough so

that a short-term “parking crisis” does not negatively impact the chances for success. A 5- to 10-year window for accomplishing major parking improvements, including a potential parking structure, may be reasonable. And should a large project come before the Village that may change conditions in a shorter window of time, the Village can require additional environmental analysis and mitigation in connection with the specific details and impacts of the project.

### **7.3 Parks, Recreation and Open Space**

The Williamsville Community Plan envisions a Village park network that is interconnected, more publicly accessible and interwoven into the fabric of Village life. A new residential neighborhood in the South Long Street neighborhood would have an improved Long Street Park, with a new connection to the Lehigh Memory Trail, as its focus. Closer to the center of the Village, connections across Main Street would join Glen Park and Island Park. And a proposed connection between Glen Park and Amherst State Park would tie the Village into an interconnected regional park system. New and better access to Glen Park as part of a general improvement plan for the Mill and Spring Street would make this park more user friendly and active. A proposed secondary bridge to Island Park would improve accessibility and safety, especially during high use periods, such as the annual Old Home Days festival. Lastly, the plan envisions a Village-wide greenway trail that links the Village’s open spaces and provides an alternate route off of Main Street for bicyclists, joggers and recreational walkers. No significant adverse impacts are anticipated with respect to the Village’s parks and open spaces.

### **7.4 Community Character**

All of the recommended actions and objectives contained in the Williamsville Community Plan seek to enhance the character of the community. Improvements to Main Street, a revitalized mill and “Mill Village,” and the proposed land use classifications all support the qualities of the Village that its residents identified as key to the Williamsville quality of life.

The plan also identifies a number of areas in the Village that are particularly important to the overall character of the Village. The plan recommends further community dialogue on how best to preserve these important areas.

No significant adverse impacts are anticipated with respect to community character.

### **7.5 Economy**

The Williamsville Community Plan seeks to ensure that the Village remains economically healthy. The approach is two-part: (1) Strengthen the Village’s unique qualities and characteristics; and (2) Seize opportunities to make Williamsville a convenient and economically relevant place to do business. A proposed business improvement district (BID) organization will help to implement many of the plan recommendations and ensure that Williamsville’s Main Street can live up to its fullest potential.

No significant impacts are anticipated with respect to the economy. However, the Village should be cognizant of the long term maintenance and operating costs of improved and expanded park facilities, which costs should be evaluated and planned for in conjunction with more detailed park plans that further develop the concepts and ideas presented in this plan.

## **7.6 Transportation**

The Williamsville Community Plan sets forth recommendations for mitigating the impacts of the large volumes of traffic that utilize Main Street everyday. Such mitigation involves the provision of pedestrian amenities such as bulb-outs, a median, and improvements to traffic signal phasing. At the same time, the plan acknowledges the importance of allowing Main Street to continue to handle large volumes of traffic. However, the proposed recommendations have built-in flexibility so that they can be adapted with relative ease should future traffic volumes on Main Street decrease in connection with potential changes to the larger regional transportation network.

Potential impacts in connection with the transportation recommendations include reduced speeds and capacity on Main Street, and impacts to businesses in connection with the provision of medians that restrict turning movements and bulb-outs that can potentially eliminate on-street parking spaces. Such impacts, however, can be mitigated to a large extent. For instance, the likely locations for many of the bulb-outs (a flared curbline at key intersections to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians) on Main Street are currently off limits to parking, such as areas in the vicinity of fire hydrants. And while medians can obstruct some turning movements on Main Street, they can be strategically located to improve the overall traffic flow on Main Street to the benefit of all businesses and users. With respect to reduced Main Street speeds, it is not anticipated that significant reductions will occur, partly because the provision of medians will help to better organize turning movements on Main Street with the potential to result in overall improvements to traffic flow. Moreover, should changes on Main Street increase the number of cut-through trips through neighborhood streets, measures to slow traffic down, such as speed bumps, speed enforcement, and street pattern changes can be implemented.

Specific mitigation measures would be developed in connection with the preparation of detailed “pre-build” street improvement plan. The Village will work closely with New York State Department of Transportation, the agency responsible for implementing Main Street improvements, to ensure that such improvements faithfully carry out the vision and goals of the plan.

As noted above, with respect to Mill Village, the plan also sets forth a number of strategies for increasing the parking supply, ranging from relatively simple measures, such as striping on-street parking spaces, to more ambitious undertakings, such as the provision of structured parking. Additional changes to the traffic patterns have also been recommended to accommodate additional activity in this area of the Village (Spring Street to a one-way, northbound street, and modifications to the Cayuga/Main signal timing).



No significant impacts are therefore anticipated with respect to transportation.

## **7.7 Other Environmental Impacts**

### **1. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts**

Because the proposed action is the adoption of a comprehensive plan, it will not result in any direct unavoidable adverse environmental impacts. In fact, the comprehensive plan and the recommendations it sets forth can be periodically reviewed and, as necessary, revised by the community to reflect changing conditions, opportunities and community values.

### **2. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources**

The proposed adoption of the Community Plan, in and of itself, would not entail any physical changes or improvements to the Village, and would not therefore entail any irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources.

Typical irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources associated with development and human activity include the commitment of land resources; manpower for the construction of structures; building materials such as wood, concrete and stone; energy resources such as gasoline, diesel fuel, and electricity; and water for domestic use and irrigation. These resources would be used whether or not the Community Plan were adopted. Since any proposals for development would be subject to individual site-specific environmental reviews at the time of application for approval, irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources cannot be fully quantified at this time.

### **3. Growth Inducing Impacts**

The Proposed Action is not expected to induce a significant change in overall growth. Even the proposed transition of the South Long Street neighborhood from low intensity industrial to residential and open space, would not have a significant impact within the larger context of the Village and neighboring communities. Proposed improvements in the Village, however, are expected to increase the Village's attractiveness as a place in which to live and do business. In this sense, implementation of the Community Plan will induce positive economic growth. The proposed "Mill Village", with a rehabilitated mill at its heart, is also anticipated to bring more vitality and activity to the Village core. The plan discusses traffic and parking improvements that could be undertaken to meet additional demands on the street network and parking supply. It is anticipated that transformation of the Village core will not occur instantly, and that such improvements and mitigation measures can be provided in phases.

### **4. Effects on the Use and Conservation of Energy**

The proposed adoption of the Community Plan, in and of itself, would not entail any use of energy. Rather, the vision it sets forth is one of interconnected, Village

scale neighborhoods that encourage walking. And ideas for rehabilitation of the mill include the use of the mill to provide “green energy” by making a contribution to the Village’s power grid.

## **5. Issues of Controversy**

No major, Village-wide issues of controversy have been raised in connection with this plan. However, in the course of the planning process, the sanctity of Long Street Park to a number of Village residents was made clear. To this end, this plan specifically recommends that any future plans for the South Long Street neighborhood would preserve, if not increase, the size of the park. Some Village residents in the neighborhoods abutting the park expressed concern that new residential areas be sensitively integrated into the Village at an appropriate density and scale. A number of conceptual development scenarios were presented to the public that show a range of options. These are provided in the Alternatives section of this DGEIS (Section 8.0 below). A more generalized concept map for the area is presented in the main body of the Community Plan (see Figure 29) that features both housing and an improved park. One of the recommendations of this plan is for the Village to adopt an area-wide conceptual site plan that can guide future development decisions in this important opportunity area, as well as potential zoning amendments to implement the vision.

## **6. Criteria for the Undertaking and Approval of Future Actions**

Any proposed Village action, legislation, approval or any physical improvement, change or development within the Village discussed in this DGEIS will be subject to its own environmental review under SEQRA when such development or action is proposed. Through that process, the potential impacts described above would be mitigated to the maximum extent practicable. While those potential impacts have been described conceptually herein, reference to them in this DGEIS is not intended to serve as a substitute for a site-specific environmental review which will still be required on a case-by-case basis at the time that an application for development approval is submitted or the Village seeks to adopt new legislation or undertake any other action requiring public review.

## 8.0 DGEIS ALTERNATIVES

Pursuant to Section 617.9 (b)(v) of New York State Environmental Conservation Law, SEQRA requires that alternatives be examined as part of the environmental review process. The planning process leading up to the creation of the Williamsville Community Plan, and the very plan itself, is an exercise in alternatives. The discussion below considers alternatives, including a “No Action” alternative, under the three major topic areas of this plan – Land Use, The Main Street Business District, and Transportation.

### 8.1 Land Use Alternatives

There was strong community consensus over the future land use vision for the Village, namely a vision that strengthens the mixed-use, traditional scale and character in the Village’s business district, and the scale and quality of the Village’s established one- and two-family detached residential neighborhoods.

The main areas of land use “change” in the Village are centered on the South Long Street neighborhood and the Spring Street “Mill Village” area.

#### *SOUTH LONG STREET ALTERNATIVES*

Several alternatives (depicted in Figures 30 - 32) were considered for the conceptual land use vision to show varying mixtures of housing types and park configurations and uses. These alternatives were generated for discussion purposes, to illustrate a range of possibilities using the “guiding principles” (Figure 28) for Village development.

##### Alternative 1. Improve Existing Parkland: Active Recreation

Alternative 1, depicted in Figure 30, illustrates an “Active Recreation” scenario where the existing ballfield and sports courts are upgraded, a connection is made between the Lehigh Memory Trail and the park, and new residential units consist of an even balance of detached single-family, attached single-family and apartment units.

##### Alternative 2. Relocated Parkland: Active Recreation

Depicted in Figure 31, Alternative 2 shows a relocated, slightly larger park area that blends seamlessly into the Lehigh Memory Trail. A loop trail system within the park links with the Memory Trail. The residential component in this scenario is tipped more toward attached single-family and multifamily housing.

##### Alternative 3. Improve Existing Parkland: Active Recreation

Depicted in Figure 32, Alternative 3 emphasizes “Passive Recreation”, such as trails, open meadows and a “Village green”. Similar to Alternative 2, the improved Long Street Park has been relocated south and blends into the Lehigh Memory Trail. Also similar to Alternative 2 is the emphasis that is placed on attached single-family and multifamily housing.

Figure 30 - South Long Street Alternative 1

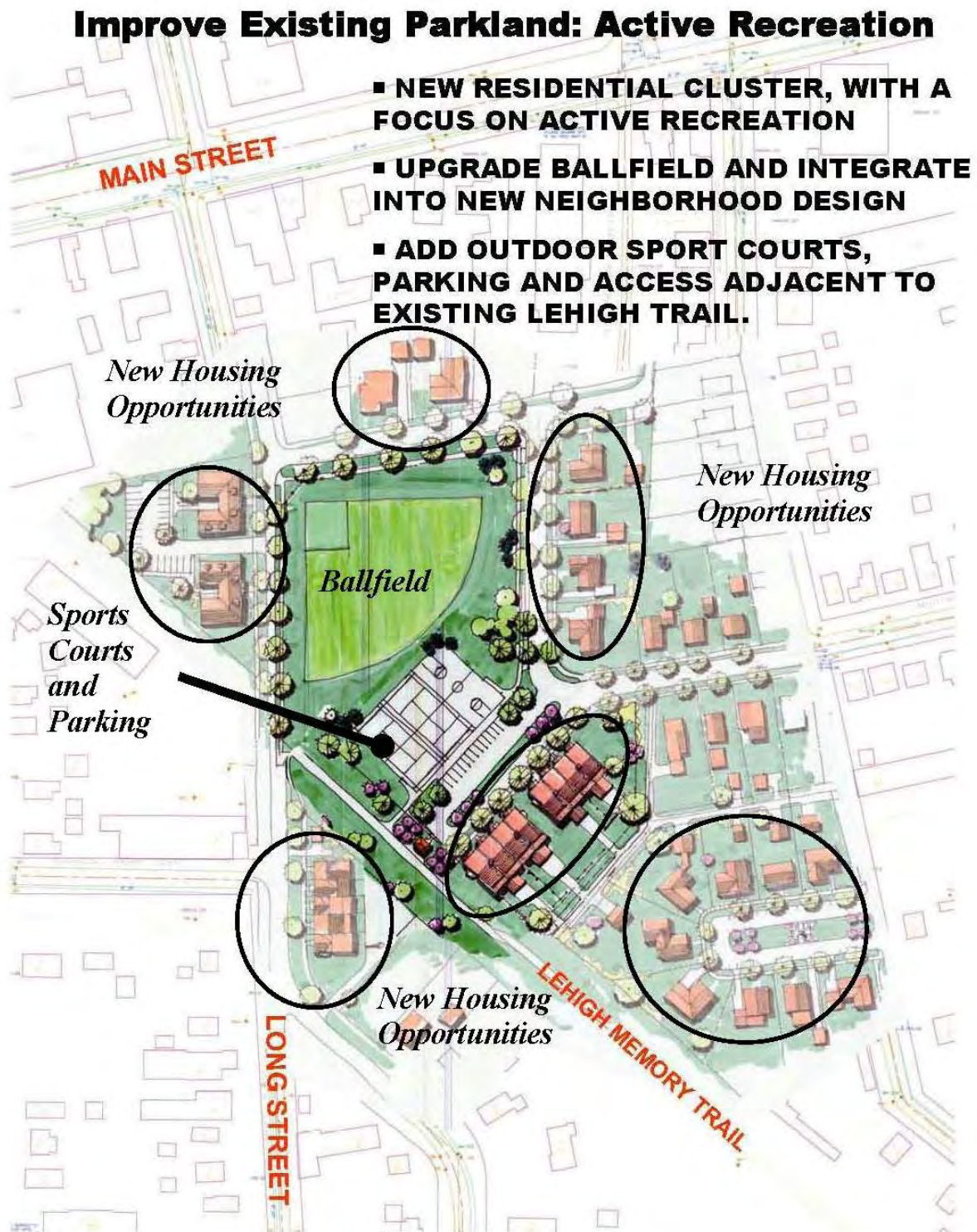




Figure 31 - South Long Street Alternative 2

## Relocated Parkland: Active Recreation Scenario

- RETAIN BALLFIELD
- TRAIN DEPOT AS FOCAL POINT
- MEMORY TRAIL INTEGRATED WITH  
OPEN SPACE
- LOOP TRAIL SYSTEM

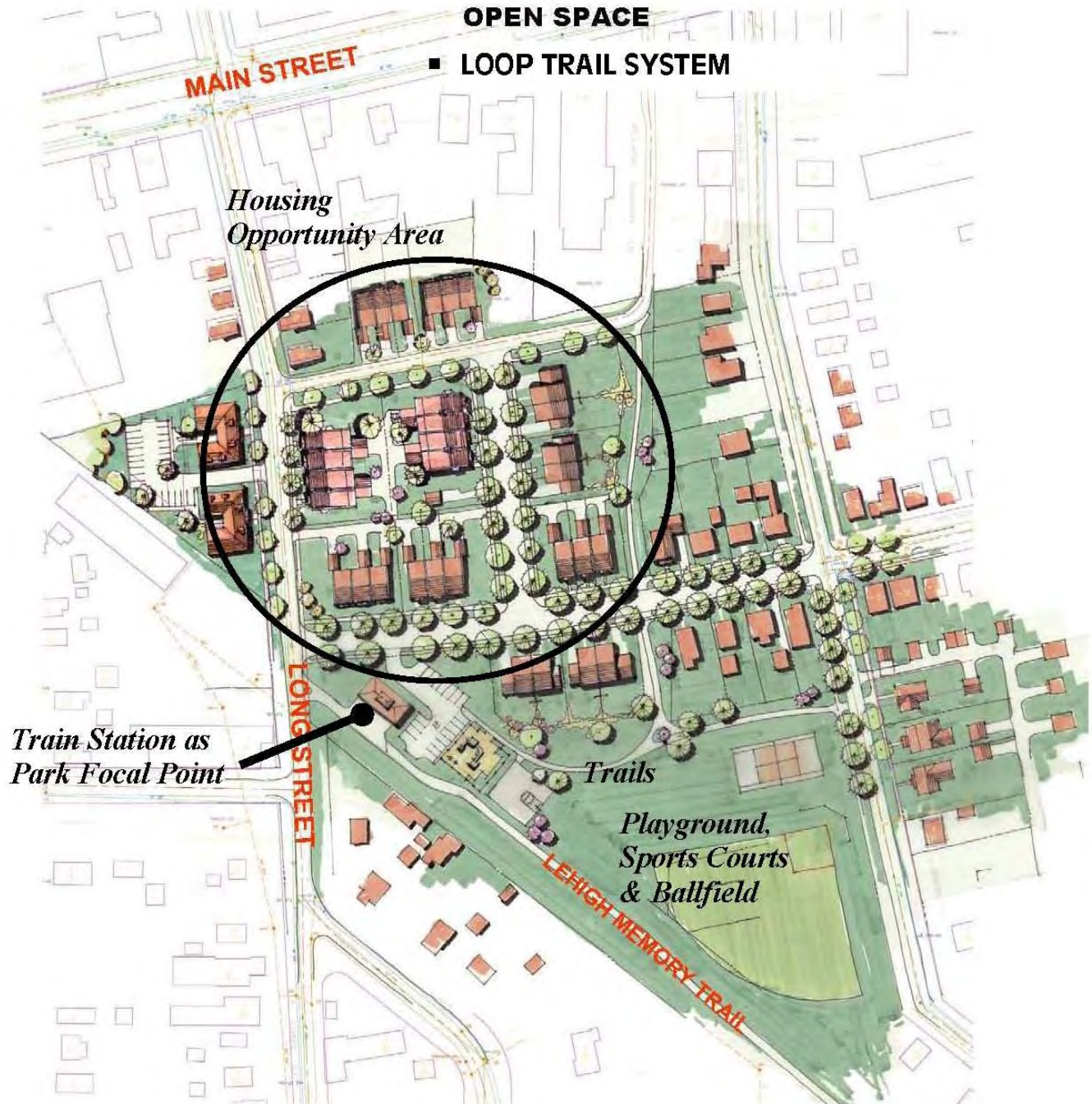
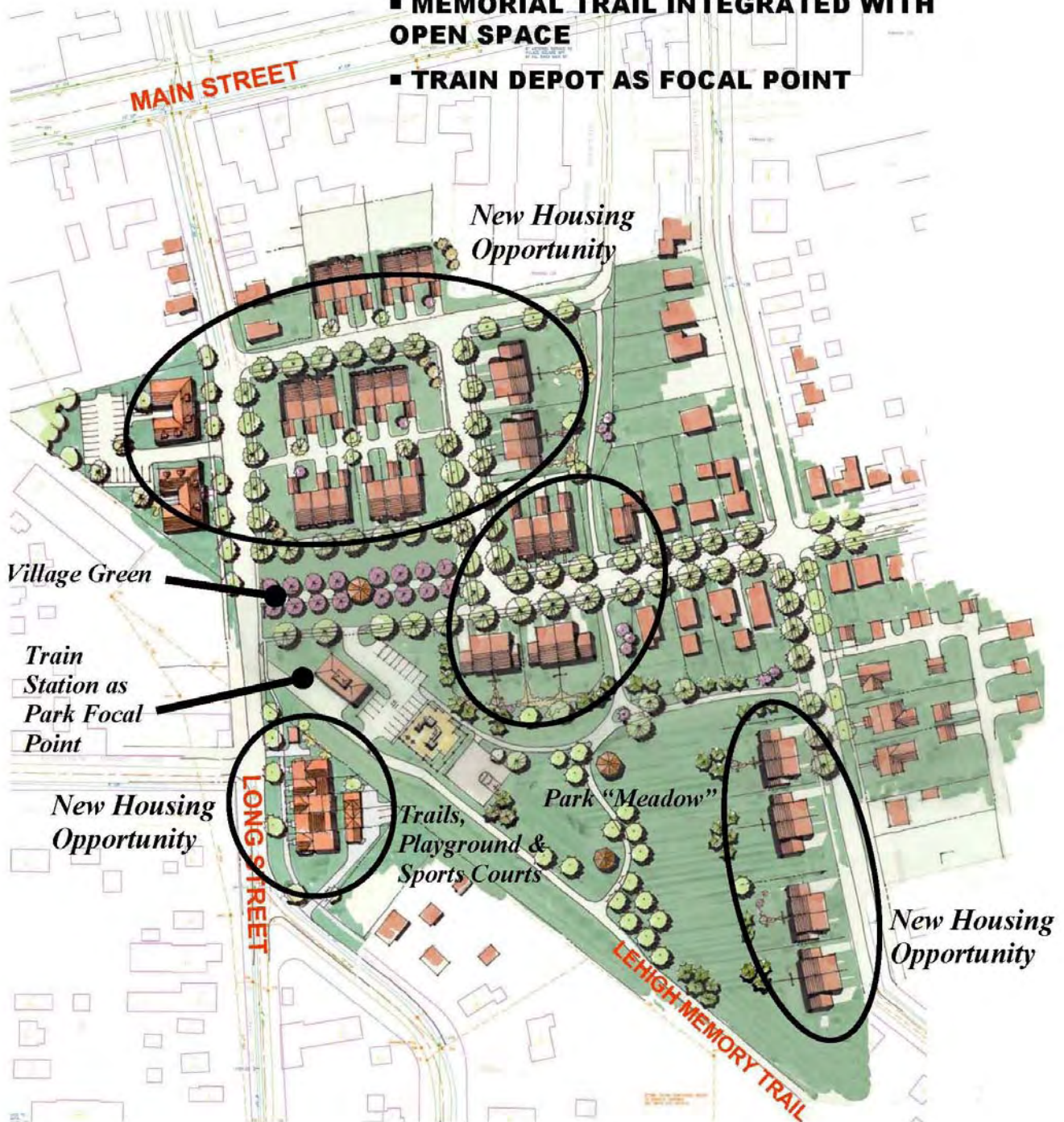




Figure 32 - South Long Street Alternative 3

### Relocated Parkland: Passive Recreation Scenario

- TWO AREAS OF PASSIVE RECREATION – FORMAL AND INFORMAL
- MEMORIAL TRAIL INTEGRATED WITH OPEN SPACE
- TRAIN DEPOT AS FOCAL POINT



The alternative concept plans for the South Long Street neighborhood are not meant to be interpreted as stand alone plans. Nor was any single alternative endorsed over another. Rather, the various elements that the alternatives depict can be mixed and matched and further refined in the future. All three of these concept plans are represented more generally in the single Figure 29, *South Long Street Conceptual Uses*. One alternative that was discussed, but not depicted in the preceding figures, is an “all park” scenario. In this scenario, all industrial zoned lands would be purchased by the Village and converted into parkland. This alternative could be costly for the Village, and an opportunity for augmenting the Village’s stock of housing, particularly alternatives to the single-family detached unit, would be lost. Moreover, as noted in the Inventory & Analysis (Appendix A), it is the quality and connectivity of the Village’s parkland, not the quantity, that is the primary issue.

#### *MILL VILLAGE ALTERNATIVES*

Alternatives with respect to Mill Village focused mainly on how to provide additional parking in the area, as the public was nearly unanimous in the general concept for this area of the Village. An early concept depicted a parking garage along North Cayuga Street at Spring Street, however this location could potentially impact the existing residential scale of this portion of North Cayuga, currently the site of a number of residentially scaled, but largely commercially used structures. Another alternative depicts a potential parking ramp between Spring Street and Main Street, behind existing businesses. A parking study and improvement plan will ultimately need to be conducted to determine whether a parking garage could or should be provided and where it should be located. Regardless, any parking structure would need to be built at an appropriate Village scale and make financial sense.

With respect to the Mill itself, the public strongly supported the concept of a publicly owned and/or accessible mill that was fully accessible to the public. An alternative to this would be to transfer the mill into private ownership and rely solely on the marketplace to determine the ultimate use and disposition of this important structure.

#### *“NO ACTION” ALTERNATIVE*

Under the No Action alternative, no land use planning or concepts would be developed for the Village. In the South Long Street neighborhood, industrial zoning and uses would continue. Should a current industrial use leave the Village, a new and unknown industrial use would likely take its place. Redevelopment of the neighborhood, even if industrial uses were eventually rezoned residential, would occur piecemeal without a plan, and opportunities for improving Long Street Park, making a connection with the Lehigh Trail, and creating a high-quality, Village scale neighborhood – a rare opportunity in a built-up environment such as Williamsville – would be lost. With respect to Spring Street and “Mill Village” – without a vision and plan, while individual improvements could be made in the area, the cohesive, vibrant Village center that residents want, might not emerge. Lastly, the land use vision set forth in this plan is the basis for the Main Street and transportation and economic visions and recommendations and ensures that they are working toward the same overarching goals.

## **8.2 Business District Alternatives**

There was community consensus over the fact that Williamsville's Main Street should retain and strengthen its historic Village scale and character, while at the same time, taking measures to make sure that it remains economically relevant in today's retail environment. The recommended economic approach for Main Street is to leverage this Village character and develop Williamsville's business district as a unique, walkable shopping and services destination that offers a different experience than can be had in the big box and commercial strip environments that surround it. Two alternatives to this approach – "No Action" and "Suburban Development Alternative" are discussed below.

### ***SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE***

Williamsville's Main Street is a key regional transportation corridor. As noted elsewhere in this plan, over 36,000 vehicle trips per day are made along this road. The high volume of traffic, access to regional transportation infrastructure, and the high purchasing power of the Village and surrounding towns, make Williamsville's Main Street an attractive location for retail uses. Under the Suburban Development Alternative, Williamsville's Main Street would cater to the more typically suburban retail model that surrounds it. Large, street facing parking lots, expanded commercial zoning \*some lots/commercial zoning boundaries may not be deep enough), and site design that accommodates or even favors automobile movement would facilitate this transformation.

In the end, this alternative is not realistic, given the vision expressed by Village residents that centers on celebrating and building upon Williamsville's historic, Village-scaled character. Moreover, the economic analysis and vision for the Village establishes the Village as a niche market and unique, historic destination within the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region. Under the Suburban Development Alternative, Williamsville would become just another suburban retail strip at best. More likely, due to the constraints of the existing historic development pattern of the Village, a strip of suburban retail along Main Street would not be as competitive with suburban retail developed in less constrained environments. However, the plan does acknowledge the need to keep Williamsville economically relevant and recommends such actions as the formation of a Business Improvement District (BID), better parking supply and configuration, and the use of design guidelines and form based zoning that would permit chain retail uses, albeit in a Village friendly form.

### ***"NO ACTION" ALTERNATIVE***

If no action were taken and the Main Street Economic vision were not adopted by the Village, the Main Street economic environment would not, of course, collapse. Entrepreneurs and business people would continue to invest in and improve the community and shoppers and visitors would continue to be attracted to the unique Williamsville environment. However, lacking a plan and focus, the continued success of Williamsville in the long-term would be less certain. In the face competition from suburban environments and comparable Villages in the region that have a clearly articulated vision and plan, the Village could potentially lose ground. Without the formation of a BID, important marketing and improvement activities may be less likely to



occur, such as a much desired and supported plan to initiate a snow removal program during winter months.

### **8.3 Transportation Alternatives**

Transportation alternatives are discussed at length in Section 3 of this plan as part of the “Context Sensitive Solutions” approach. The identified alternatives depict different approaches to making Williamsville’s Main Street a more pedestrian friendly environment that supports the community’s land use and economic development vision.

#### ***“NO ACTION” ALTERNATIVE***

Under the No Action” alternative, no changes would be made to Main Street to support the community’s land use and economic development vision. The Village’s quality of life and the economic environment on Main Street would consequently suffer and the community’s vision for itself could not be fully implemented.

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## 9.0 Glossary of Terms

**Access Management:** A process for providing access to land development while preserving traffic flow on surrounding roadways in terms of safety, capacity, and speed. This is achieved by managing the location and design of access to a roadway.

**AIDA:** Amherst Industrial Development Agency

**Buffer:** Landscaping or land use designed to separate or provide a transition between incompatible land uses.

**Bump-out:** A bend in the curb line intended to narrow the travel lane and thereby reduce the speed of vehicles. See also “Traffic Calming.”

**Business Improvement District (BID):** A special assessment district in which property owners agree to pay a voluntary tax assessment to create a fund that is used to pay for management, maintenance, marketing, and event planning functions in the district.

**Capital Improvements:** Permanent additions to the Village’s physical assets including structures, infrastructure (sewer and water lines, streets), and other facilities such as parks and playgrounds. May include new construction, reconstruction or renovation that extends the useful life of these assets.

**Capital Improvements Program (CIP):** A schedule of major capital improvements based on studies of available fiscal resources.

**Community Character:** The distinguishing identity or elements of a place, neighborhood, or any other part of the Town. See also “Sense of Place.”

**Community Plan:** Refers to this plan, or any portion thereof, as adopted by the Williamsville Board of Trustees to manage the quantity, type, cost, location, timing, and quality of development and redevelopment.

**Complete Streets:** Streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

**Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS):** An approach that considers the total context within which a transportation facility exists by involving stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits within its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.

**Density:** Gross density refers to the number of families, persons or housing units allocated per gross unit measure of land. Net density is the maximum density permitted to be developed per unit of land after deducting any required open space, easements and publicly dedicated rights-of-way.

**Design Standards:** A set of criteria established to guide certain aspects of development such as site planning and building design, in order to protect and enhance the character of the area where the development is taking place, as well as of the Village as a whole.

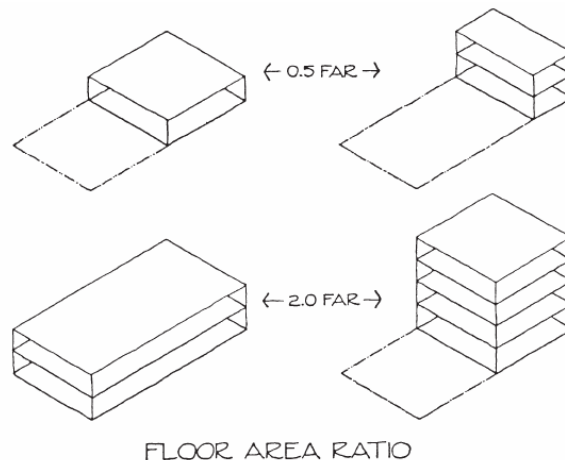
**Development Pattern:** The configuration or organization of the built environment.

**Diversity:** Refers to the differences among groups in terms of age, gender, culture, race, ethnicity, income, religion or disability.

**Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS):** As defined by 6 NYCRR Part 617, a type of Environmental Impact Statement that is more general than a site-specific EIS and typically is used to consider broad-based actions.

**Form-Based Zoning:** A method of zoning in which market demand determines the mix of uses within the constraints of building type set by the community.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR):** The ratio of gross building floor area to the total lot area.



Source: A Planner's Dictionary, Planning Advisory Service Report, American Planning Association, April 2004.

**Functional Classification:** The hierarchy of road classes that divides roads by purpose and design. The determination of classification is a combination of the function of the road, control of access, spacing of roads of a similar nature, length and linkages to other roads and major land uses.

**Gateway:** Refers to any major points or course of arrival into the Village or into a particular area of the Village, such as a neighborhood or business district. Gateways can mark the physical entrance to the area, or the location where most people would feel they have entered an area.



**Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC):** Interagency transportation planning group that establishes policies and programs for Erie and Niagara Counties.

**Greenway:** A continuous linear corridor of open space that links recreational, cultural, and natural focal points and lands. See also “Open Space.”

**Historic District:** An area defined by its historic, prehistoric, architectural and/or cultural significance. In Amherst, the term refers to a National Historic Register-listed district.

**Historic Resource:** Sites, structures, properties, or districts that are important to the cultural heritage of the community.

**Incentive:** An inducement provided by the Village or other government agency, to encourage development of a certain type or in a certain area. Examples include special status for processing applications, providing land, paying for infrastructure, density bonuses, etc.

**Infrastructure:** The basic facilities and equipment necessary for the effective functioning of the Village, such as the means of providing water service, sewage disposal, electric and gas connections, and the street network.

**Inventory and Analysis Report:** Report prepared in 2005 as part of the Community Plan. The report documents and evaluates current conditions and trends that will affect the Village’s future.

**Landscaping:** The practice of arranging plant materials – including ground cover, shrubs, and trees – along with other natural or man-made elements, such as rocks and fencing, as a means of enhancing some portion of the built or natural environment.

**Land Use:** A description and classification of how land is occupied or utilized, e.g., residential, office, parks, industrial, commercial, etc.

**Level of Service (LOS):** The quality and quantity of existing and planned public services and facilities, rated against an established set of standards to compare actual or projected demand with the maximum capacity of the public service or facility in question. Typically applied to highways.

**Major Arterial:** High volume roadway that carries the major portion of daily trips to centers of activity in the metropolitan area. A major arterial places a greater emphasis on mobility rather than access to land and includes fully and partially controlled access facilities.

**Minor Arterial:** Street that connects and augments the major arterial system. Although its main function is still traffic mobility, a minor arterial performs this function at a

somewhat lower level and places more emphasis on land access than does a major arterial.

**Mixed-Use:** Refers to development projects or zoning classifications that provide for more than one use or purpose within a shared building or development area. Mixed-use development may allow the integration of commercial, retail, office, medium to high-density housing, and in some cases light industrial uses. These uses can be integrated either horizontally or vertically in a single building or structure.

**NYSDEC:** New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

**NYSDOT:** New York State Department of Transportation

**Open Space:** Publicly or privately owned land that is not intensively developed devoted to uses characterized by vegetative cover or water bodies, such as agricultural uses, pastures, meadows, parks, recreational areas, lawns, gardens, cemeteries, ponds, streams, etc.

**Pedestrian-Friendly:** Term used to describe development patterns and roadway systems that are conducive to walking by providing safe and efficient accommodations for pedestrians. Also known as pedestrian-oriented.

**Quality of Life:** The total experience of community life consisting of a series of factors, both tangible and intangible, such as: economic vitality, public safety, education, housing, environment, recreation, arts and culture, and community character.

**Redevelopment:** Refers to public and/or private investment made to re-create the fabric of an area, replacing or rehabilitating old buildings or infilling development on vacant parcels. Redevelopment can help to meet market needs for residential and/or commercial development in older parts of the Town, but needs to be carefully managed.

**Regional:** Pertains to activities or economies beyond those of Williamsville's borders, and affecting a broader geographic area which, for the purposes of the Community Plan, include all of the cities, towns, and villages in Erie and Niagara Counties.

**Scale:** Term that describes the size of a project as it relates to its surrounding environment. Appropriately scaled development is consistent or complementary in terms of size and mass with the existing surroundings and highways.

**Sense of Place:** The sum of attributes of a locality, neighborhood, or property that give it a unique and distinctive character. See also "Community Character."

**Setback:** The required distance between the structure and each of the property/lot boundaries.

**State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA):**

**Tax Abatement:** A partial or total tax exemption for a particular development project for a specified number of years, aimed at providing indirect financial assistance to an organization or individual in order to gain a public benefit.

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF):** An economic development tool that freezes the General Fund assessment of a property or group of properties and then sets aside all new tax revenues generated over a period of time to a special revenue fund. The set-aside revenues are used to fund public improvements needed to spur redevelopment of the targeted area properties.

**Traffic Calming:** An integrated approach to traffic planning that seeks to maximize mobility, while reducing the undesirable effects of that mobility. To achieve this goal, Traffic Calming applies a variety of techniques such as altering road design to change the psychological feel of the road and reduce travel speed; providing incentives for more people to use public transportation; and focusing planning on the creation of viable, compact communities.

**Use:** The specific activity or function for which land, a building, or a structure is designated, arranged, occupied, regulated or maintained.

**Vision Statement:** A shared expression of community values and aspirations. The Comprehensive Plan's Vision Statement provides a "word picture" that defines community expectations for the future, frames the mandate for Plan policies and action programs, and provides the benchmark to measure progress in implementing the Plan.

**Zoning:** Regulatory mechanism through which the Town regulates the location, size, and use of properties and buildings. Zoning regulations are intended to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community, and to lessen congestion, prevent overcrowding, avoid undue concentration of population, and facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks, and other public services.

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## **APPENDICES**

*A. Inventory & Analysis Report*

*B. Village Economic Studies*



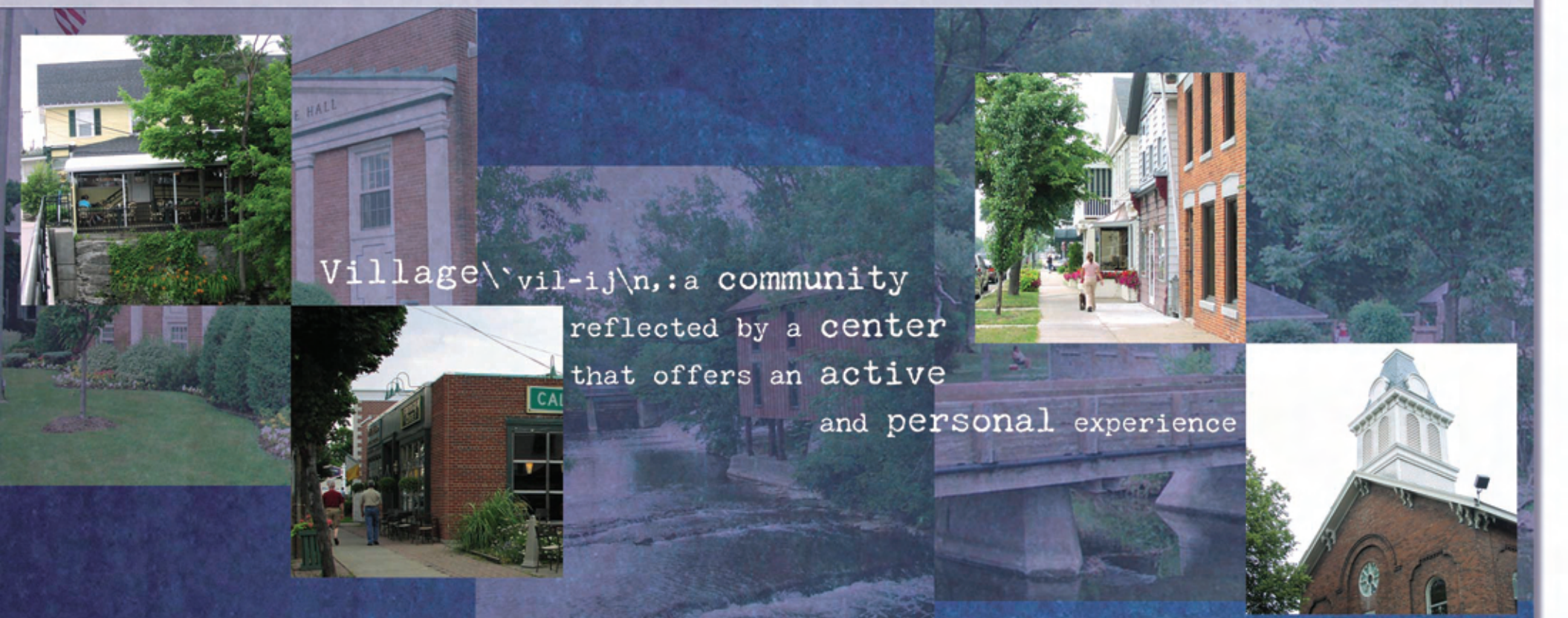
**APPENDIX A**  
*Inventory & Analysis Report*



# DRAFT

## PART ONE INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

# A COMMUNITY PLAN FOR THE VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE



Village\`vil-ij\`n,: a community  
reflected by a center  
that offers an active  
and personal experience





# Village of Williamsville Community Plan

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 *The Village, Defined*

What defines a village? Technically, the dictionary describes a village as: “a collection of households linked by culture, custom and association with the land”. Historically, villages existed to provide individuals with a sense of community. The physical design of a village, which typically includes one main commercial corridor, fosters social interaction and provides a human living environment. A village is a place where local merchants might know their customers by name, where children play freely on residential blocks lined with quaint homes and foliage, where seniors can rest on historic porches and experience the rhythm of community life and where local celebrations can be held in a central gathering space that all residents might reach on foot. A true village then, by its most honest definition, enables its residents to live in a community reflected by a physical center that offers an active and personal experience. A Village offers its residents the feeling of being a meaningful part of a larger system of people and places.

Before 1950, the “streetscape” of the main commercial corridor in most villages was shaped by general design standards and less influenced by automobile requirements. These standards were unofficially accepted and widely applied. At its best, the street consisted of a walkable, comfortable civic space lined with a regular arrangement of building facades designed to express each building’s function and the owner’s pride.

In the United States, the evolution of villages was interrupted by suburbanization and the accompanying shifts in economic development and social patterns that occurred during the second-half of the twentieth century. As these changes reorganized American society, many of the traditional functions were removed from cities and villages. Over the last fifty years many villages have decayed, shrunk or assimilated into the broader community.

After 1950, the emphasis in both planning and architectural design increasingly emphasized efficiency and the accommodation of vehicular transportation. As the pre-auto planning principles were abandoned, the quality of the civic and pedestrian environment found in most communities declined.



A Historic Village Impacted by the Automobile  
Main Street, Williamsville



## 1.2 Williamsville, A Village Interrupted

Western New York contains numerous examples of Villages developed upon the historic principles of community living. These Villages have all, to some degree, experienced a disruption in their evolution as suburban living became a modern reality. The Village of Williamsville, formerly a population center for its surrounding rural environment, has been placed under more pressure to endure the by-products of suburbanization than most. The rich agricultural soils of Williamsville's parent Town of Amherst now accommodate a modern first ring suburb that includes more than 47,000 households and nearly 75,000 employees. The City of Buffalo, just three miles from the Williamsville border, is the region's urban metropolis and a major employment center; commuter traffic from both Amherst and Buffalo place Williamsville squarely in the center of a transportation impasse.

Williamsville's historic Route 5, or "Main Street", while lined with unique shops, offices and service retail, is now a traffic artery that handles more than 35,000 vehicles every day. The widening of Main Street in recent years has increased the overall speed of traffic and reduced the safety and overall quality of the pedestrian environment. In addition, the popularity of Main Street itself as a commercial destination has overwhelmed the Village's ability to comfortably accommodate parking.

Other Village roads, including nearby Wehrle Drive and Garrison Road, have become "shortcuts" for commuters attempting to avoid tolls and delays on the New York State Thruway. In total, the automobile and its current dominance over Village roads has compromised the quality of life for the Village's 5,500 residents.



Elements of Beauty and Calm Remain  
Ellicott Creek, Williamsville



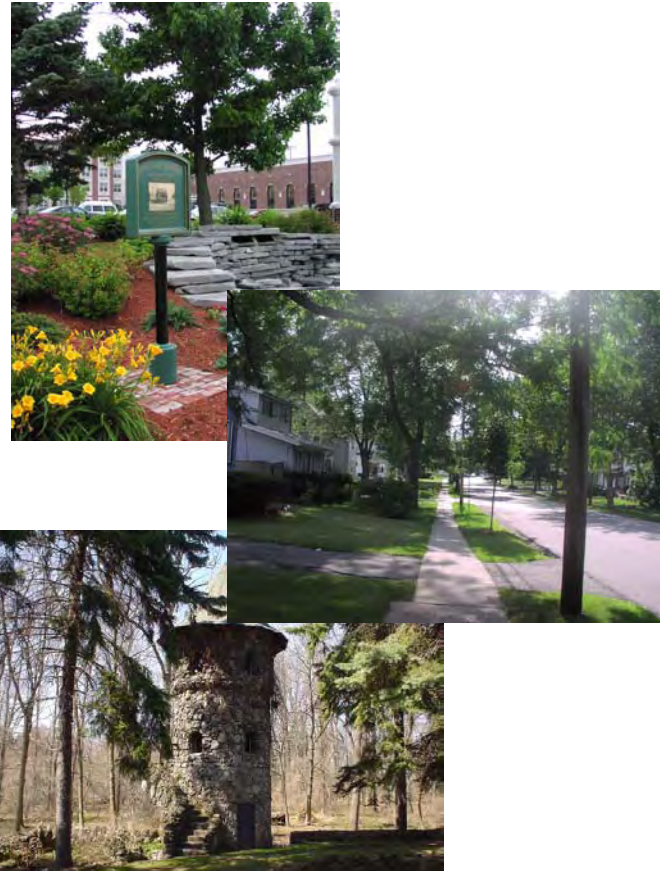
Unique Shops and Stores Welcome Pedestrians  
Main Street, Williamsville



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Despite issues of traffic, parking and the automobile in general, the Village of Williamsville remains a very desirable place to live in Western New York. A Village must indeed be a special place to continue to thrive and dominate despite complex transportation issues. Housing values in Williamsville have risen more than 16% between 2001 and 2004. This figure is significantly higher than the surrounding Town of Amherst and Western New York as a whole. The Williamsville School District was rated number one of sixty-three school districts in Western New York in an annual survey conducted by a respected regional news journal. Six unique parks are located within Village boundaries. The small physical scale of the Village, just one square mile in size, enables residents to consider walking as a realistic mode of transportation.

Diversity is a real and meaningful term in Williamsville. Housing options range from historic bungalows constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to upscale condominiums just a stone's throw from a glorious waterfall and walking trail, to brand new single-family residential properties, to comfortable senior apartments. The average resident of the Village is becoming older - and becoming younger, too. As seniors are attracted to more manageable accommodations, so younger adults with growing families are moving into "starter" homes located in quaint, historic Village neighborhoods.



Village Scenes of Diversity  
Historic Main Street, Milton Street, and Dream Island

### 1.3 Document Purpose

This *Community Plan for the Village of Williamsville* includes the elements of both a Comprehensive Plan (as defined in Village Law under Section 7-722) and a Strategic Plan. The Comprehensive Plan element considers and evaluates the various elements that contribute to the diverse nature of this historic, yet modern, Village. Issues of demographics, housing, circulation, nature and economics will be examined to understand Williamsville's evolution. Significant history will also be evaluated and historical facts will be combined with public input, planning research and design sensibility to create a Plan that unifies Williamsville and redefines the definition of "Village" for its residents. Policy will be developed within the Plan to guide the course of future decision making in the Village.

The Strategic Plan element will focus specifically on the Main Street Corridor and include recommendations for its enhancement. Main Street is the virtual spine of Williamsville. The Street provides a physical focus for Village residents, professional offices, retail and municipal services. Main Street also connects the community physically to its neighboring municipalities. The overall economic strength of Main Street goes hand in hand with the strength of Village's network of neighborhoods. An economic decline along the Main Street corridor will have a significant negative economic impact within neighborhoods adjacent to the Corridor. A healthy Main Street makes these same neighborhoods a desirable place to live.

Finally, in an environment with little vacant land in reserve for future development, Main Street represents the Village's mechanism for establishing a future direction for growth in Williamsville. Adopting a physical plan for Main Street will arm the Village with the tools it needs to ensure that the pedestrian, the visitor, the resident and the businessperson take precedent over the needs of Western New York's commuter population.

An adopted Community Plan will accomplish the following for Williamsville and its residents:

- Provide a current resource documenting Village-wide trends in demographics, housing, economics, circulation and nature
- Document current patterns of Village development, integrate these patterns, and establish functional "systems" for future development that build upon existing Village strengths.
- Provide the Village with a physical plan illustrating these systems
- Provide a benchmark for evaluating the compatibility of individual development proposals with the long range development objectives of the community
- Serve as a marketing package to attract new business, new developers and new entrepreneurs
- Provide leverage for obtaining State and Federal funding for various capital improvement projects
- Lay the foundation for future cooperative efforts between the Village of Williamsville and the Town of Amherst



## 1.4 Methodology

The direction of the Community Plan is guided by a specific methodology that progressively builds a rationale for each recommendation. The end product will be a comprehensive product that examines the community as a whole, yet contains a focus for the implementation of specific projects.

The Project Methodology can be described as follows:

- Evaluate existing patterns of Village development in the areas of Community, Land Use, History, Circulation, Nature and the Economy
- Complete public input initiatives including focus groups, interactive public meetings and a community-wide survey to develop guiding principles and a community Vision Statement
- Establish “systems” for future development that integrate existing demographic, land use, historic, and economic patterns of existing Village life and build upon their strengths to create a more cohesive Village
- Aggregate these systems into a comprehensive planning “model” that examines several planning Alternatives for consideration
- Establish a preferred Course of Action
- Prepare Design Concepts for the Main Street corridor to illustrate the preferred course of action
- Develop step-by-step Action Statements to guide the implementation process



Village Pavilion  
Island Park, Williamsville





## *1.5 Goals and Objectives for the Village Community Plan*

Recommendations offered in the Community Plan are guided by specific Goals and Objectives developed in conjunction with the Community Plan Committee, public input from residents and businesses, and regional experts. The following Community Goals are divided into four specific categories. Each category represents an area of existing strength upon which the Plan is intended to build upon and enhance: Village Identity, Village Form, Village Business, and Village Life.



Meeting House  
Main Street, Williamsville

### ➤ Village Identity

- Strengthen Williamsville's identity for the benefit of both residents and visitors
  - Establish the Village of Williamsville as a regional destination with a cultural, historic and physical focus
  - Adopt a physical plan, in principle, to design the future of the Village of Williamsville
  - Recognize the Main Street Corridor as the foundation for Williamsville's future growth and development
  - Transform the perception of Main Street from a congested transportation route to a historic, pedestrian friendly business corridor
  - Attract new and enhance existing diverse, unique, and high quality retail uses to Main Street
  - Establish a presence and central focus on Main Street unlike any other in the Western New York region
  - Preserve, protect and connect Williamsville's existing network of neighborhoods

➤ **Village Form**

- Identify existing patterns of Village development and establish functional systems for future growth
  - Promote the development of “green infrastructure” to establish an interconnected Village that enables alternative transportation options and economic development
  - Enable Main Street to evolve as a traditional social, economic and cultural center
  - Establish a distinct sense of entry into the Village from all municipal boundaries and establish sensitive transitions between the Village and the Town of Amherst
  - Create a visitor experience in Williamsville that highlights and interprets the physical aspects of Village history
  - Plan for improvements that consider the changing demographics of the Village; more families with children, and a growing elderly population
  - Develop creative ways to connect and interpret Williamsville’s intrinsic resources for the public
  - Enable passive enjoyment of the natural environment while protecting vital resources
  - Promote quality design to improve the overall quality of the Village built form

➤ **Village Business**

- Promote the growth and development of existing businesses and targeted future business
  - Enable Main Street to evolve as an economic center by accommodating the spatial needs of modern business while maintaining a Village-appropriate scale of development
  - Ensure sufficient, sensitively located parking is available to all businesses along the Main Street Corridor
  - Adopt a strategic plan for the physical development of Williamsville to present to regional funding and financing agencies
  - Improve the physical appearance of the buildings and streetscape that comprises the Williamsville Business District
  - Address the concerns of local business owners by improving circulation patterns in the Village

➤ **Village Life**

- Enhance Williamsville's sense of community and provide a high quality of life for residents of all ages
  - Actively improve the Village's quality of life by focusing its physical transformation over the next 20 years
  - Support the efforts of the Williamsville Central School District and enhance the excellent quality of education
  - Establish physical linkages within the Village to promote community life and social interaction
  - Reclaim the Village for its residents and establish Main Street as a walkable commercial district
  - Promote additional Village-hosted events and celebrations and establish a high profile location for their occurrence.



## 2.0 Village Inventory

- Community
- Land Use
- History
- Circulation & Infrastructure
- Parks & Nature
- Economy





## 2.1 Community

The Community section examines the following elements related to Village community life: current population characteristics, housing trends, educational resources and existing community and cultural amenities. Changing demographic trends, housing values and recent property sales, educational achievement milestones and the makeup of Village community life form an existing pattern of community development to serve as a baseline for future planning recommendations. The pattern will be used to develop a planning system to guide the future direction of Village community life.

Analysis of population characteristics in Williamsville includes an assessment of the Village in relation to five comparison communities. These communities include: the Town of Amherst, the Town of Clarence, the Village of Lancaster, Erie County and New York State. Amherst and Clarence are newer communities, with more developable land, in geographic proximity to Williamsville. The Village of Lancaster is an Erie County Village with similar physical and economic characteristics, and Erie County and the State provide a regional context for the Village of Williamsville.

### Population Change

The following table illustrates population changes that occurred in Williamsville and all comparison communities between 1990 and 2000.

**Table 2.1.1 Change in Population 1990 to 2000**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
1990 Population	5,583	111,711	20,041	11,940	968,532	17,990,455
2000 Population	5,573	116,510	26,123	11,188	950,265	18,976,457
Numeric Change	-10	4,799	6,082	-752	-18,267	986,002
Percent Change	-0.2%	4.3%	30.4%	-6.3%	-1.9%	5.5%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Population in the Village of Williamsville remained stable between 1990 and 2000; a population loss of ten residents lowered the Village's 2000 resident total to 5,573. The surrounding Town of Amherst increased during this same time period by 4,799 residents to bring the 2000 total to 116,510.

### Age Distribution

The following table illustrates the median age of the Village of Williamsville and all comparison communities in 2000.

**Table 2.1.2 Median Age in 2000**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

Median Age	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Both Sexes	44.2	39.6	39.8	39.2	38	35.9
Male	40.6	37.2	39.2	36.6	36.2	34.5
Female	47.9	41.6	40.4	41.3	39.6	37.2

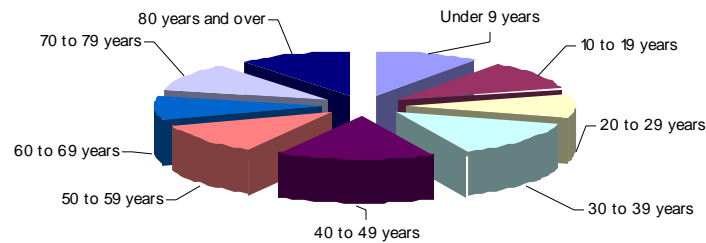
Source: US Bureau of the Census

The median age of the Williamsville population in 2000 was 44.2 years; this figure was significantly higher than each of the selected comparison communities.

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Age distribution of all Williamsville residents in 2000 is illustrated in the following figure.

**Figure 2.1.1 - 2000 Population Age Group Percentages**  
*Village of Williamsville*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

Age distribution of the Village of Williamsville as well as all comparison communities in 2000 is illustrated in the following table.

**Table 2.1.3 - Percent of 2000 Population by Age Group**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

Age Group	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Under 9 years	10.1%	11.6%	14.6%	12.2%	13.0%	13.7%
10 to 19 years	11.0%	14.6%	15.4%	12.4%	13.9%	13.8%
20 to 29 years	8.4%	11.7%	6.5%	11.4%	11.8%	13.4%
30 to 39 years	13.6%	12.7%	13.7%	15.5%	14.4%	15.9%
40 to 49 years	15.4%	15.3%	18.0%	15.6%	15.5%	15.0%
50 to 59 years	11.7%	12.4%	13.2%	11.2%	11.4%	11.3%
60 to 69 years	8.5%	8.2%	7.9%	8.1%	8.0%	7.5%
70 to 79 years	10.7%	7.9%	6.7%	8.6%	7.6%	6.0%
80 years and over	10.7%	5.7%	3.9%	5.0%	4.4%	3.5%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

Significantly, in 2000 Williamsville had a higher percentage of residents over the age of 60 (30%) than each of the

comparison communities. The New York State average of total residents over age 60 in 2000 was 16.9%. Both Williamsville (8.4%) and Clarence (6.5%) had lower percentages of young residents between the ages of 20 and 29 years of age, when compared to the New York State average of 13.4%.

To illustrate trends over time, it is helpful to study the change in age distribution between two Census periods. The following table illustrates this change between 1990 and 2000.

**Table 2.1.4 Percent Change in Age Distribution 1990 to 2000**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

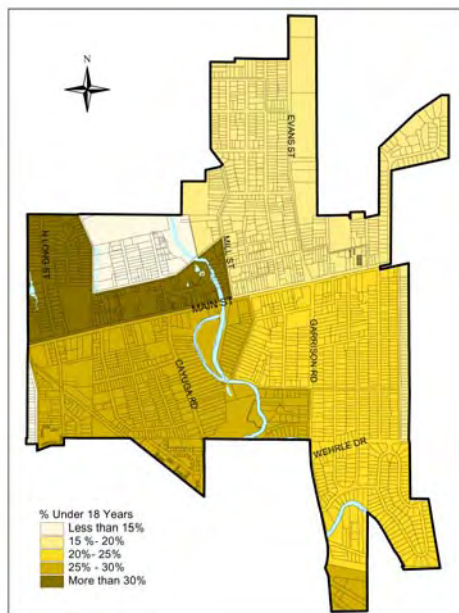
Age Group	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Under 9 years	-7.8%	-3.3%	34.8%	-7.4%	-5.1%	6.5%
10 to 19 years	30.6%	13.5%	48.1%	5.5%	6.8%	10.5%
20 to 29 years	-28.1%	-15.7%	-20.1%	-27.6%	-26.5%	-14.3%
30 to 39 years	-9.1%	-14.5%	13.6%	-6.7%	-11.9%	0.6%
40 to 49 years	25.1%	14.0%	55.2%	29.8%	24.6%	21.7%
50 to 59 years	43.2%	31.0%	57.1%	26.6%	19.3%	27.4%
60 to 69 years	-26.0%	-13.5%	1.9%	-22.1%	-22.7%	-10.6%
70 to 79 years	-11.4%	23.2%	41.6%	12.2%	6.7%	7.4%
80 years and over	4.9%	58.2%	43.3%	33.1%	33.2%	18.9%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

In Williamsville, similar to most of Erie County, the 20 to 29 age group had the greatest percentage decrease between 1990 and 2000 with a 28.1% population loss. The 50 to 59 age group experienced the largest increase at 43.2%. The increase in the 50 to 59 age group in Williamsville is balanced by a decrease in the 60 to 69 age

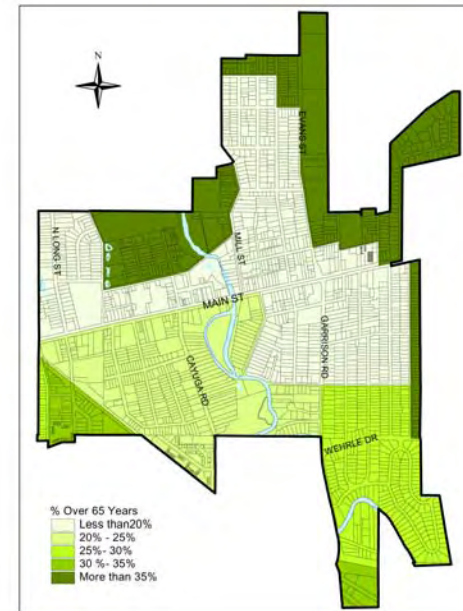
group and the 70 to 79 age group and a small increase in the age group 80 years and over. Although the three oldest age groups are either decreasing or increasing at a slow rate, there will be a future surge of older population as the group of 50 to 59 years ages. The 10 to 19 age group in Williamsville showed a significant increase of 30.6%. This increase was greater than the New York State average (10.5%), though significantly less, for example, than the neighboring Town of Clarence (48.1%).

**Figure 2.1.2 – Percent of the Population Under 18 Years in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

**Figure 2.1.3 – Percent of the Population Over 65 Years in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

### Age Characteristics Mapping

The following maps show the general age characteristics of different portions of Williamsville divided by block groups. The first map shows the percent of the population under 18 years while the second map shows the percent of the population over 65.

## Race and Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic composition of a community is one indicator of its overall diversity. Race refers to the physical characteristics of residents while ethnicity refers to their cultural origin. For our analysis, individuals of Hispanic or Latino ethnic origin were subtracted from all other racial groups and treated as a racial group to assess their influence on population in the Village of Williamsville.

At 97.3%, the majority of Williamsville's population was White, making the Village of Williamsville the most racially homogeneous of all comparison areas except the Village of Lancaster which was 98.6% White. While the State average of African Americans was 15.9%, and Erie County's average was 13%, Williamsville reported less than 1% of its residents as African American. Similarly, the Statewide Latino population was 15.1% while Erie County (3.3%), Williamsville (1.1%) and all other comparison communities were significantly lower.

The following table outlines the 2000 racial and ethnic composition of the Village of Williamsville and all comparison communities in detail.

**Table 2.1.5 Racial and Ethnic Profile – 2000**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

Race or Ethnicity	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
White alone*	97.3%	89.3%	97.0%	98.6%	82.2%	68.0%
Black or African American alone*	0.7%	3.9%	0.7%	0.3%	13.0%	15.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone*	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%
Asian alone*	1.0%	5.2%	1.4%	0.1%	1.5%	5.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone*	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Some other race alone*	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	1.4%	7.1%
Two or more races*	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%	0.5%	1.3%	3.1%
Hispanic or Latino	1.1%	1.4%	0.8%	0.8%	3.3%	15.1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

\*Does not include individuals of Hispanic or Latino Origin



## Population Projections

According to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, (GBNRTC), all comparison area households are expected to grow. Williamsville is expected to increase by 451 households (17.9%). Although the number of households is expected to increase, persons per household is expected to decrease, with Williamsville's average household size falling from 2.1 to a predicted 2.0. The smaller household size is likely related to the increase in older age groups within the Village of Williamsville.

The following table indicates 2025 population projections for each comparison area. The GBNRTC completes projections for Traffic Area Zones (TAZ) that are smaller than an individual community. The following figures represent the combined total of all TAZ that comprises a comparison community.

**Table 2.1.6 Household Projections for 2025 based on 2000 Population Census Data**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County
Household Size in 2000	2.1	2.4	2.8	2.3	2.4
Number of Households in 2000	2,522	45,076	9,154	4,726	380,873
Projected Household Size in 2025	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.34
Projected Number of Households in 2025	2,973	54,300	11,900	5,340	429,300

Source: GBNRTC projections based on 2000 US Census Data

## Housing Characteristics

This section provides an assessment of Williamsville's existing housing stock through an examination of the number of housing units, units in structure, occupancy, age of structures, monthly costs and housing values. Actual housing sales figures for Williamsville and comparison communities are included, along with Census information, to provide a more realistic picture of the present housing situation.

### Housing Occupancy

The total number housing units in the Village of Williamsville in 2000 was 2,673; this was a 2.3% increase, or 61 new units, built between 1990 and 2000. Only the Village of Lancaster had a smaller percentage increase in housing units with a 0.5% increase from 1990 to 2000. The four other comparison communities had greater increases than Williamsville, largely because these communities have more room for new single family home development. The largest growth was in Clarence which had a 31.6% increase. Erie County had a 3.4% increase in total housing units. Of the total housing units in Williamsville 96.1% were occupied and only 3.9% were vacant. The vacancy rate for Williamsville was similar to that of Amherst, Clarence and Lancaster. The vacancy rates for the County and State were much larger than that of Williamsville, with 8.4% and 8.1% respectively.

In 2000, renters occupied 38.5% of the total housing units in Williamsville. This figure was higher than totals in Amherst, Clarence, Lancaster and Erie County. Only the State had a higher percentage (47%) of total renter occupied housing.

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The following table illustrates occupancy characteristics for the Village of Williamsville and all comparison communities in 2000.

**Table 2.1.7 Housing Units and Occupancy in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

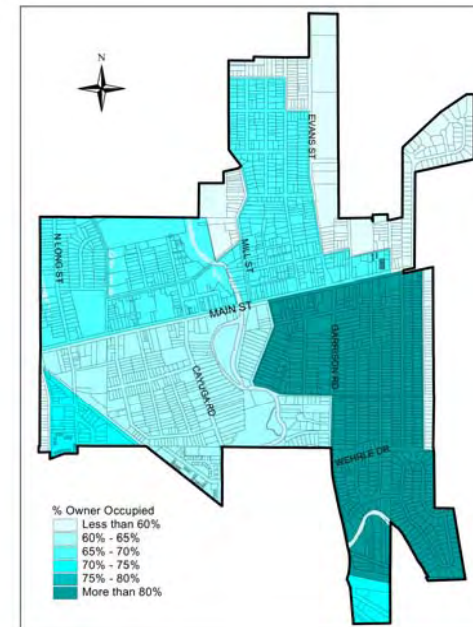
	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Total:	2,673	46,803	9,497	4,908	415,868	7,679,307
Occupied	96.1%	96.3%	96.4%	96.3%	91.6%	91.9%
Vacant	3.9%	3.7%	3.6%	3.7%	8.4%	8.1%
Tenure of Occupied Housing						
Total:	2,568	45,076	9,154	4,726	380,873	7,056,860
Owner occupied	61.5%	74.0%	87.9%	69.1%	65.3%	53.0%
Renter occupied	38.5%	26.0%	12.1%	30.9%	34.7%	47.0%

Source: US Bureau of the Census SF3 – 2000

### Housing Occupancy Characteristics Mapping

The following map shows the housing occupancy characteristics of portions of Williamsville divided by block groups. The chart clearly illustrates that the areas with the highest renter population are located in the north-eastern quadrant of Williamsville.

**Figure 2.1.4 – Percent of Owner Occupied Housing in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

## Housing Density

The number of units in a housing structure indicates a community's character and overall density of development. Of all Williamsville housing units, 52.9% were single-family detached homes. This figure was nearly the lowest of all comparison areas. In 2000, 44.9% of all housing structures were comprised of two or more units. With the exception of the County and State, the Village of Lancaster has the second greatest percentage of housing structures comprised of two or more units with 33.4% of the total units in 2000.

The following table indicates the density of the Village of Williamsville and all comparison communities in 2000.

**Table 2.1.8 Units in Structure in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

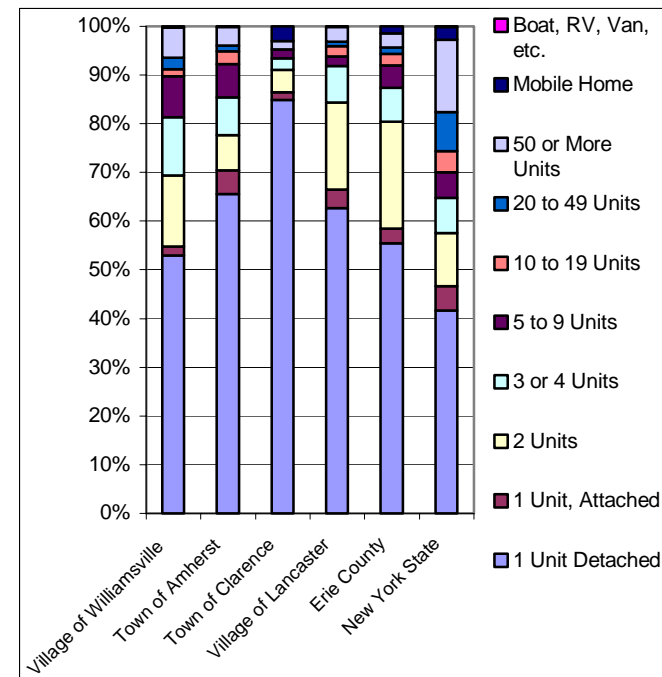
	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Total:	2,673	46,803	9,497	4,908	415,868	7,679,307
1-Unit, detached	52.9%	65.6%	84.9%	62.7%	55.4%	41.7%
1-Unit, attached	1.9%	4.9%	1.5%	3.8%	3.2%	5.0%
2 Units	14.6%	7.2%	4.6%	17.8%	21.9%	10.9%
3 or 4 Units	12.0%	7.7%	2.4%	7.5%	7.0%	7.3%
5 to 9 Units	8.4%	6.9%	1.8%	2.0%	4.6%	5.3%
10 to 19 Units	1.4%	2.5%	0.0%	2.1%	2.4%	4.3%
20 to 49 Units	2.5%	1.3%	0.1%	0.9%	1.3%	8.1%
50 or more Units	6.1%	3.8%	1.6%	3.1%	2.9%	14.8%
Mobile home	0.3%	0.1%	3.1%	0.1%	1.5%	2.7%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census SF3 - 2000

An important factor contributing to community density is the group quarters population. People living within group quarters are defined as those not living in individual housing units. In Williamsville there are 218 people reported as living in group quarters. Of these 207 people live in nursing homes and 11 people live in non-institutionalized housing.

The following figure indicates more clearly the specific types of housing units that comprised the Village of Williamsville and all comparison areas in 2000.

**Figure 2.1.5 Units in Structure in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

### Housing Age

Of all the communities analyzed, Williamsville, with 33.4%, had the second highest percentage of housing built in 1939 or earlier. The only comparison community with a higher percentage of housing built in 1939 or earlier was the Village of Lancaster with 34.8% of the total housing. This figure is indicative of the historic nature of housing in Williamsville and Lancaster in 2000. Both Villages also had the lowest percentages of housing built between 1995 and March 2000 with only 0.9% of the total housing. In contrast, 16.7% of the housing in the Town of Clarence was built between 1995 and March of 2000. The age of housing, and the availability of land for development, illustrates the contrast between a newer community such as the Town of Clarence and older communities such as the Villages of Williamsville and Lancaster. The following table details housing age in Williamsville and the comparison areas in 2000.

**Table 2.1.9 Age of Housing in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

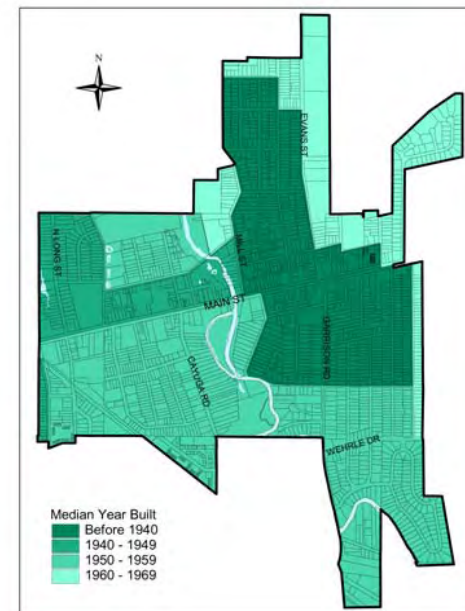
	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Total:	2,673	46,803	9,497	4,908	415,868	7,679,307
Built 1999 to March 2000	0.4%	1.2%	4.4%	0.2%	0.7%	0.9%
Built 1995 to 1998	0.5%	3.2%	12.4%	0.7%	2.6%	2.6%
Built 1990 to 1994	0.3%	5.4%	9.8%	0.3%	3.6%	3.4%
Built 1980 to 1989	4.8%	13.5%	12.7%	1.4%	6.0%	7.7%
Built 1970 to 1979	12.4%	21.1%	8.8%	12.2%	10.5%	11.3%
Built 1960 to 1969	13.3%	18.9%	15.4%	17.9%	12.5%	14.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	23.0%	17.8%	17.8%	23.5%	19.5%	16.4%
Built 1940 to 1949	12.0%	8.8%	6.7%	9.0%	12.7%	11.9%
Built 1939 or earlier	33.4%	10.0%	12.1%	34.8%	31.9%	31.2%

Source: US Bureau of the Census SF3 – 2000

### Housing Age Characteristics Map

The following map illustrates the general character of housing in different portions of Williamsville by block groups. The characteristics portrayed are the age of housing by median year built. The chart indicates that the oldest housing in the Village of Williamsville is located in the north and south central portions of Williamsville.

**Figure 2.1.6 – Median Year Built for the 2000 Housing Stock**  
*Village of Williamsville*



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

### Housing Values

In 2000, 46.7% of housing in Williamsville was valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999. 53.4% of the housing in Williamsville was valued at \$100,000 or more. Only 1.4% of housing in Williamsville is valued at less than \$50,000. The median value of housing in Williamsville in 2000 was \$102,000.

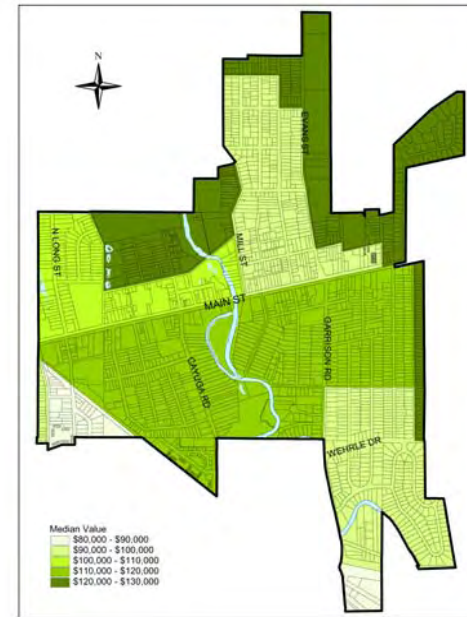
The following table indicates housing values of Williamsville and all comparison areas in 2000.

**Table 2.1.10 Housing Values in 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Less than \$50,000	1.4%	1.0%	0.4%	4.2%	8.1%	5.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	46.7%	31.3%	13.1%	76.2%	52.5%	26.6%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	24.8%	22.1%	16.8%	16.2%	15.2%	9.2%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	11.8%	18.7%	15.4%	2.0%	9.8%	9.1%
\$150,000 to \$174,999	6.1%	10.0%	10.8%	0.8%	5.3%	9.0%
\$175,000 to \$199,999	4.5%	6.8%	8.8%	0.3%	3.2%	8.4%
\$200,000 or more	4.8%	10.2%	34.7%	0.2%	5.9%	32.1%
Median Value	\$102,000	\$120,000	\$159,900	\$86,300	\$90,800	\$148,700

Source: US Bureau of the Census SF3 - 2000

**Figure 2.1.7 – Median Home Value in 2000**  
Village of Williamsville



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

### Housing Value Characteristics Map

The following map shows the value characteristics of the Village of Williamsville by block group using the 2000 median value of housing.



### Average Home Sale Price

According to the Greater Buffalo Board of Realtors, average sale prices increased between 2002 and 2004 in all four communities surveyed: Williamsville, Amherst, Lancaster Village and Clarence. Comparison data was not available for Erie County and New York State. The average real estate sale price in Williamsville for 2004 was \$158,809. This average price is greater than the Town of Amherst, but less than the Town of Clarence. The discrepancy in price between Williamsville and Clarence is understandable; most Clarence homes are newer, larger, typically single family, and “suburban” in style and character. More similar in price, character and diversity are homes offered in the Village of Lancaster. However, homes in both Williamsville and Clarence appreciated at a similar rate between 2002 and 2004. Clarence’s 18.2% rate of appreciation was the highest in Western New York during this time period.

### Housing Trends

According to a local real estate specialist, there is substantial demand for new housing in Williamsville, yet little land remaining. The Village of Williamsville is reported to be stable, not transient, regardless of the higher than normal rate of rental property. Currently, there are many established families with high school age children in Williamsville. Due to the wide variety of housing types, the value of housing varies greatly. Attractions to Williamsville include the parks, schools, services, places of worship, tree-lined streets and historic nature.

**Table 2.1.11 Average Real Estate Sale Price 2002-2004**

*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Towns*

Year	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Village of Lancaster	Town of Clarence
2002	\$136,900	\$129,746	\$131,433	\$231,183
2003	\$148,425	\$138,691	\$144,582	\$261,204
2004	\$158,809	\$146,331	N/A	\$273,298
Percent Change from 2002 to 2004	16.0%	12.8%	N/A	18.2%

Source: Greater Buffalo Board of Realtors

## Educational Attainment

Education enrollment and attainment levels are important and useful community characteristics. Businesses can use these statistics as indicators of the age and skill levels of the community's workforce while public officials and school districts can use these numbers to identify current and future service needs.

The Village of Williamsville had fewer residents enrolled in school (21.4%) than any comparison community in 2000. The surrounding Towns of Amherst and Clarence indicate higher total enrollment figures (31.2% and 31.3%, respectively). Erie County total enrollment figures (28%) correspond more closely with the State average (28.6%). The following table details enrollment figures for Williamsville and all comparison communities in 2000.

**Table 2.1.12 School Enrollment – 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
Nursery school, preschool:	1.3%	2.0%	2.7%	2.5%	1.8%	1.8%
Kindergarten:	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	0.8%	1.4%	1.5%
Grade 1 to grade 4:	5.0%	5.4%	7.4%	5.3%	6.1%	6.1%
Grade 5 to grade 8:	2.9%	5.3%	6.7%	6.3%	6.0%	6.0%
Grade 9 to grade 12:	3.9%	5.4%	7.2%	5.1%	5.8%	6.0%
College, undergraduate years:	4.0%	8.9%	4.3%	4.3%	5.4%	5.6%
Graduate or professional school:	2.8%	2.8%	1.4%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%
Nursery to 12 Private School	3.1%	4.4%	5.1%	4.6%	3.7%	3.7%
Not enrolled in school	78.6%	68.9%	68.7%	74.6%	72.0%	71.4%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

More than half of Williamsville residents over age 25 had received an Associates, Bachelor's, Master's, Professional or Doctorate degree in 2000. Of all the comparison communities, Williamsville has the highest percentage of the population having attained the minimum of Bachelor's degree (28.3%). This figure was nearly twice as high as Erie County (14.44%) and New York State (15.6%).

The following table details educational attainment levels in Williamsville and all comparison communities in 2000.

**Table 2.1.13 Educational Attainment – 2000**  
*Village of Williamsville and Comparison Communities*

	Village of Williamsville	Town of Amherst	Town of Clarence	Village of Lancaster	Erie County	New York State
No Schooling Completed	0.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.8%	1.8%
Nursery to 8th Grade	1.8%	2.4%	1.6%	3.5%	4.4%	6.2%
9th thru 12th Grade (No Diploma)	5.9%	5.2%	3.7%	11.2%	11.9%	12.9%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	20.4%	18.7%	23.5%	34.8%	29.9%	27.8%
Some College (No Degree)	17.8%	17.3%	18.7%	21.4%	19.0%	16.8%
Associate Degree	8.7%	8.5%	10.5%	10.8%	9.5%	7.2%
Bachelor's Degree	28.3%	24.8%	23.1%	12.5%	14.4%	15.6%
Master's, Professional or Doctorate Degree	16.9%	22.6%	18.6%	5.2%	10.1%	11.8%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

## Schools

The only schools located within the Village of Williamsville boundaries are two private schools: Saints Peter and Paul Elementary at 5480 Main Street and Christian Central Academy at 39 Academy Street. Williamsville students in public school attend the Williamsville Central School District schools. Williamsville Central School District's 2005 *Business First* ranking as the number one school district in Western New York illustrates the District's commitment to education.

The Williamsville Central School District operates 13 public schools and maintains a District Office located in East Amherst at 105 Casey Road. The District received its Certificate of Admission on February 9, 1893. Serving students from the Town of Amherst, the Town of Clarence, the Town of Cheektowaga and the Village of Williamsville this suburban school district is the largest in Western New York. The enrollment for 2004-05 in the District was 10,648 students in K-12.

Educational information and statistics were gathered from the Williamsville Central School District website as well as from the New York State Department of Education including two reports: New York: The State of Learning, A Report to the Governor and Legislature on the Educational Status of the State's Schools (2004) and the Williamsville Central School District Report Card (2005).

## Public School Facilities

Within the Williamsville Central School District there are 6 elementary schools, 4 middle schools and 3 high schools.

The schools and addresses are listed below:

- County Parkway Elementary School - 35 Hollybrook
- Dodge Elementary School - 1900 Dodge Road
- Forest Elementary School - 250 North Forest Road
- Heim Elementary School - 155 Heim Road
- Maple East Elementary School - 1500 Maple Road
- Maple West Elementary School - 851 Maple Road
- Casey Middle School - 105 Casey Road
- Heim Middle School - 175 Heim Road
- Mill Middle School - 505 Mill Street
- Transit Middle School - 8730 Transit Road
- Williamsville East High School - 151 Paradise Road
- Williamsville North High School - 1595 Hopkins Road
- Williamsville South High School - 5950 Main Street

The schools that serve the Village of Williamsville are Forest Elementary School, Mill Middle School and Williamsville South High School. Williamsville residents are able to choose any school within Williamsville Central School District to attend, but transportation is only provided for schools serving Williamsville.

## Public School Teaching Staff

In the 2003-2004 school year there were a total of 809 teachers in the Williamsville Central School District. According to New York Department of Education data, in 2003-2004 the median salary for Classroom teachers was \$61,500. This is higher than both the County median teacher's salary in 2003-2004 of \$50,660 and the State median teacher's salary in 2003-2004 of \$55,050.

The total expenditure per pupil in Williamsville, at \$10,570 in 2004, was less than in Erie County (\$11,100) in 2004.

The median years of experience for classroom teachers in Williamsville was 14 years; while in the County the median years experience was 12 years. In addition, the Williamsville Central School district had an annual turnover rate of 9% in 2004 while the County annual turnover rate was 14%. The pupil/teacher ratio in the Williamsville Central School District in 2004 was 13.9, slightly more than the County ration of 13.5.

### Student Performance

Eighty one percent of June 2004 Williamsville Central School District graduates received New York State Regents diplomas. This rate was considerably higher than the State average rate for 2003-2004 of 57%. The percentage of 2003-2004 graduates going on to college in Williamsville Central School District was about 92%, while in the State the percentage of graduates going on to college was 79%.

The dropout rate for the Williamsville Central School District was only 0.6% for 2004; this was compared to the County dropout rate of 4.0% for 2004.

### Cultural Activities and Facilities

The Village of Williamsville Historical Society sponsors guided historic walking and trolley tours throughout the year. Annual Williamsville cultural events include Old Home Days, the Taste of Williamsville, an Easter Egg Hunt at Island Park, Summertime Concerts at Island Park, Winterfest at Glen Park, a Memorial Day Parade, the Williamsville Garden Walk, the Halloween Parade and Christmas Caroling at Island Park. Active local civic organizations who sponsor, plan and promote these annual events include the Williamsville Business Association, the Jolly Boys of Williamsville, the Village of Williamsville Youth and Recreation Committee, the Williamsville Preservation Foundation, and the Glen Park Joint Board.

The Amherst Public Library's Williamsville Branch is located on 5571 Main Street adjacent to Village Hall; County funding cuts have tentatively placed this facility on the schedule for permanent closure.

The historic Meeting House, at 5658 Main Street, once served as a Village church. The Meeting House, currently owned by the Village of Williamsville, functions as a museum and a location for concerts, weddings and business meetings.

### Senior Facilities

The Village of Williamsville has one senior program, an exercise program that meets twice a week at the Williamsville United Methodist Church on Main Street. For additional programming, Williamsville seniors use the Town of Amherst senior facilities including the Amherst

Center for Senior Services at 370 John James Audubon Parkway. There is a \$25 annual registration fee and the Center is open to all Town and Village residents age 55 years or older. Amherst Senior Transportation Services (ASTS), a non-profit organization, provides transportation to and from the Senior Center and medical appointments. The ASTS service also provides shopping transportation from ASTS member housing facilities. There are several member-housing facilities in the Town including the Village Square Apartments, the Jewish Federation and Presbyterian Village, all located in or around Williamsville. According to a Village representative, there is little demand for more senior services at this time because programs at Town facilities are so comprehensive and convenient.

Senior housing within the Village of Williamsville is all privately operated and includes the Village Square Apartments, St. Francis of Williamsville and Blocher Homes. Just outside the Village are several other senior housing facilities including Holly Family Home, St. Mary's Apartments, Williamsville View Manor and Elderwood. The closest public senior housing facility is the County Home in Alden.

### Youth Activities

The Village of Williamsville has several activities, as previously mentioned, including a Halloween Party, Winterfest with sledding and hayrides, a Petting Zoo and a Christmas sing-a-long, all geared towards youth. These youth-based activities have been well received by the community. There is a possibility of adding a movie night in the park for the Village to the list of Youth and

Recreation Activities. In addition, the Village is able to use and participate in all of the Town's youth activities.

### Fire

The Hutchinson Hose Company, a 100% volunteer fire department, serves the Village of Williamsville and areas of Amherst. According to the Village Reconnaissance Survey, a 1997 document providing individual descriptions of potential historic Village sites, the fire fighting efforts started as a bucket brigade and its first fire engine was purchased in 1835. The Reconnaissance Survey details the bucket brigade's evolution to become the Rough and Ready Fire Company #1 in 1856. By the late 1890's, when running water became available, the Williamsville Hose Company was born. In 1908, the Company was renamed Hutchison Hose and was moved to its current location in 1949. The Hutchison Hose Company also has a station located at 5005 Sheridan Drive that was built in 1972.

According to a Hutchinson Hose Company Chief, the company currently has approximately 55 active volunteers. Equipment includes three pumpers, one ladder truck, one heavy rescue, two EMS vehicles and three Chiefs vehicles. For emergencies, Village residents call 911 where they are sent to the Amherst Central Fire Alarm Office. This office dispatches calls for fire, rescue and emergency medical units for sixteen volunteer fire companies including Hutchinson Hose. In 2004 there were 468 total alarms reported in Williamsville.



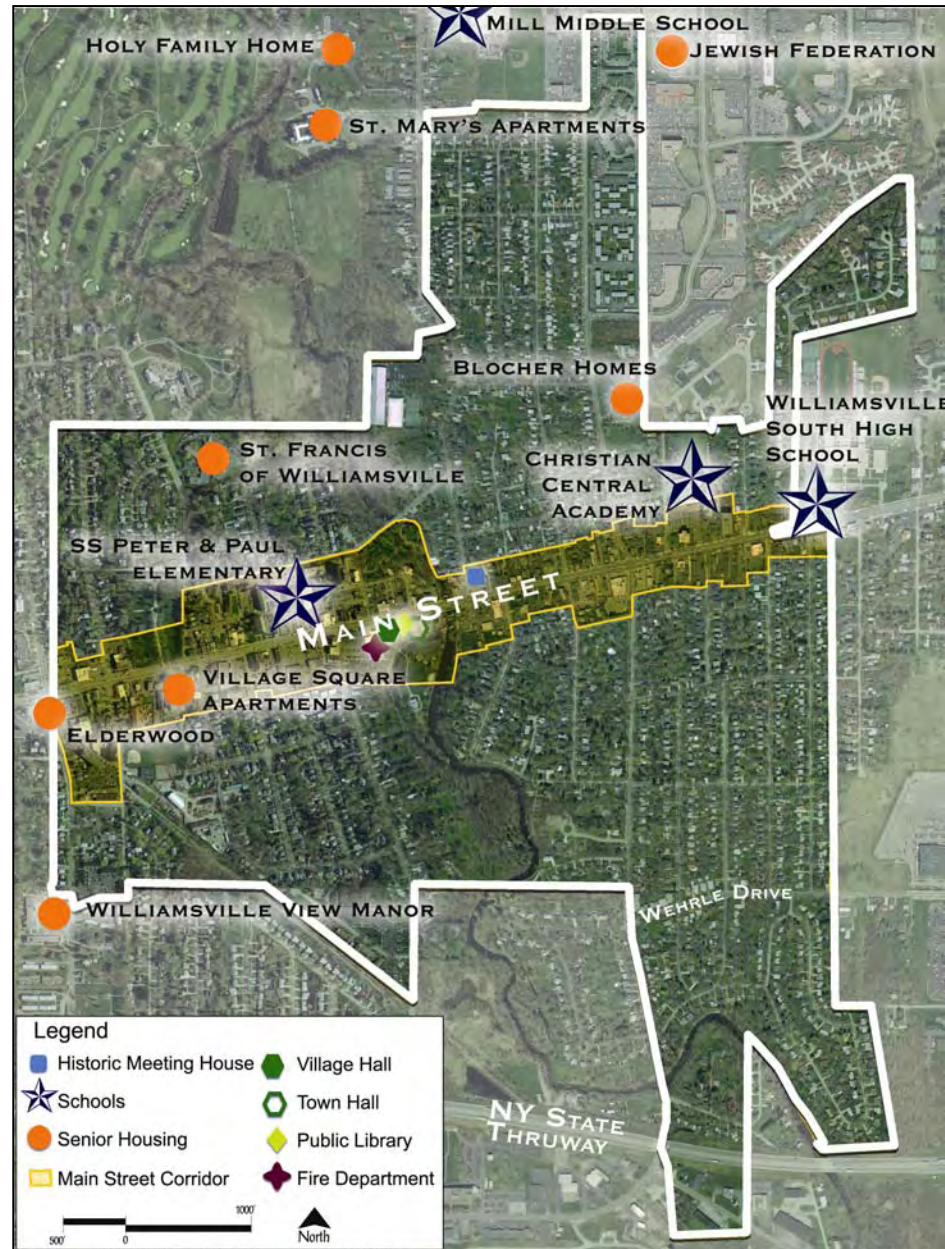
## Police

The Village is served by the Amherst Police Department, a New York Accredited Agency with 151 sworn officers and 35 full and part-time civilian employees. From January 1, 2004 to January 1, 2005 the Amherst Police Department logged 2,242 calls within the Village of Williamsville of which 171 had official Police Reports written.

## Community Patterns Map

The Community Patterns map illustrates the location of community-oriented facilities in and around Williamsville.

Figure 2.1.8 Community Facilities Patterns



## Community Planning Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of collected inventory to date, primary research, personal and telephone interviews, input, several implications can be identified for the Plan.

As recommendations are prepared for the Community Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- The median age of the Williamsville population in 2000 was significantly older (44) than Erie County (38) and all comparison communities. Recent Census data and real estate sales information indicates, however, that young families with children have begun to repopulate neighborhoods that were formerly comprised of older residents.
- The racial and ethnic profile of Williamsville in 2000 was primarily white (97%). This figure was significantly higher than the surrounding Town of Amherst (89%) and New York State as a whole (68%). This limited diversity could impact the marketable variety and composition of new retail development.
- Williamsville's renter population (39%) was significantly higher than the surrounding Town of Amherst (26%) and most comparison communities. A higher renter population does contribute to a diversity of socioeconomic levels in the Village. This diversity could have a positive impact on the marketable variety and composition of new retail development.
- GBNRTC Population projections for Williamsville indicate that the Village's projected household size will drop from 2.1 to 2.0, yet the number of households will increase from 2,522 to 2,973. The existing density of the Village will impact the type, size and location of these new households.
- Williamsville's housing stock was significantly older than most comparison communities in 2000, yet similar in age to Erie County and New York State as a whole. The replacement of some of these homes over the next twenty years must be considered in future planning efforts.
- Williamsville's 2004 average home sale price (\$158,809) was more than the surrounding Town of Amherst (\$146,331). Williamsville's 16% rate of appreciation between 2002 and 2004 was second only to Clarence (18%) in Western New York during this time period.
- The Williamsville School District is ranked by Business First as the number one school district in Western New York. Williamsville's educational attainment rate was significantly higher than most communities in New York State. In 2004, 92% of students both graduated from high school and moved on to college. The State average was 79%.
- Williamsville has valuable cultural institutions, yet not in the same number many other communities with similar education and income composition offer. These needs can also not be easily met in the surrounding Town of Amherst.

## 2.2 Land Use

This land use inventory provides an overview of existing land use patterns, zoning law and current development trends within the Village's one square mile of land. Preliminary future land use projections have also been prepared to generate future planning implications. The general composition of this small Village is residential with a commercial corridor bisecting the community. An investigation of land use patterns will more closely detail Village development history. This information will serve as a basis for strategic land use planning recommendations.

### Village Land Use Patterns

The land use data used to create our presentation of existing conditions was obtained from the Amherst Planning Department and from a compilation of existing GIS data. A windshield survey was also completed to ensure accuracy. Land use areas represent only parcels. They do not include the area occupied by road right-of-ways. Current Village land use data is outlined in the following table.

**Table 2.2.1 2005 Land Use**

*Village of Williamsville*

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Low Density Residential	421.9	68%
High Density Residential	38.4	6%
Commercial	67.5	11%
Open Space, Park and Recreation	31.5	5%
Community Service	43.7	7%
Light Industrial	4.0	0.6%
Vacant	15.5	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>622.8</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Town of Amherst and peter j. smith & company, inc.

The following section describes each Village land use category and highlights pertinent land use information within each category.

### Low-Density Residential

Low-density residential land uses include single-family detached dwellings and two family duplexes. The majority of land in the Village, 68%, is low density residential. This land use is prevalent in the majority of the Village except around the Main Street Corridor and the small portion of the Village surrounding the former Lehigh Valley Railroad right-of-way. The average lot size for low-density residential is approximately 11,000 square feet.



### **High-Density Residential**

High-density residential property consists of apartment complexes, townhouses, condominiums and surrounding common areas. The high-density residential land use covers 38 acres, or 6%, of Village land area. This land use is located intermittently along or around Main Street with two complexes on Main Street and five locations just off the Main Street corridor. In addition, there are five high-density locations in the Village away from the Main Street corridor including two near the former Lehigh Valley Railroad, one on either side of Wehrle Drive, and one on Evans Street. The largest concentration of high-density residential property is located on Evans Street in the northern portion of the Village.

### **Commercial**

Commercial uses include retail sales and services, auto sales and service, hotels, food and beverage establishments, financial institutions and offices. Commercial land use is the second largest designation in the Village with 11%, or 68 acres, of total land. Almost all of the commercial land in Williamsville is located along Main Street. There are some commercial land uses along the old Lehigh Valley Railroad corridor and on the southern-most portion of the Village along Aero Drive. There is also a commercial area along Mill Street containing a private Fitness and Tennis Club.

### **Community Service**

Community services are organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life for community residents. These uses include government agencies, police and emergency services, schools, churches, cemeteries and utilities. In most cases, the lands on which these uses operate are exempt from taxes. Community Services in the Village comprise 7%, or 44 acres, of Village land. Most of these uses are concentrated along Main Street including the Village and Town Hall, the Williamsville Fire Department, Christian Central Academy, Saints Peter and Paul Elementary School and the Williamsville Cemetery.

### **Light Industrial**

Light Industrial land uses include small manufacturing operations completely contained within a structure. Warehousing operations are also classified as a light industrial use in this analysis. The Village contains less than four acres of industrial land, or less than 1% of Village land. The main industrial land use in the Village is the Herbert F. Darling Construction Company at 121 California Drive.

### **Open Space, Parks and Recreation**

Open space, park and recreation land uses are dedicated to recreational activities or environmental preservation. The Village has a significant amount of park and open space with 5%, or 31.5 acres, of total land area. The Parkland includes Williamsville's six major park facilities, Glen Park, Island Park, Garrison Park, the Lehigh Memory Trail, South Long Park, and a portion of Amherst State Park.

## Vacant

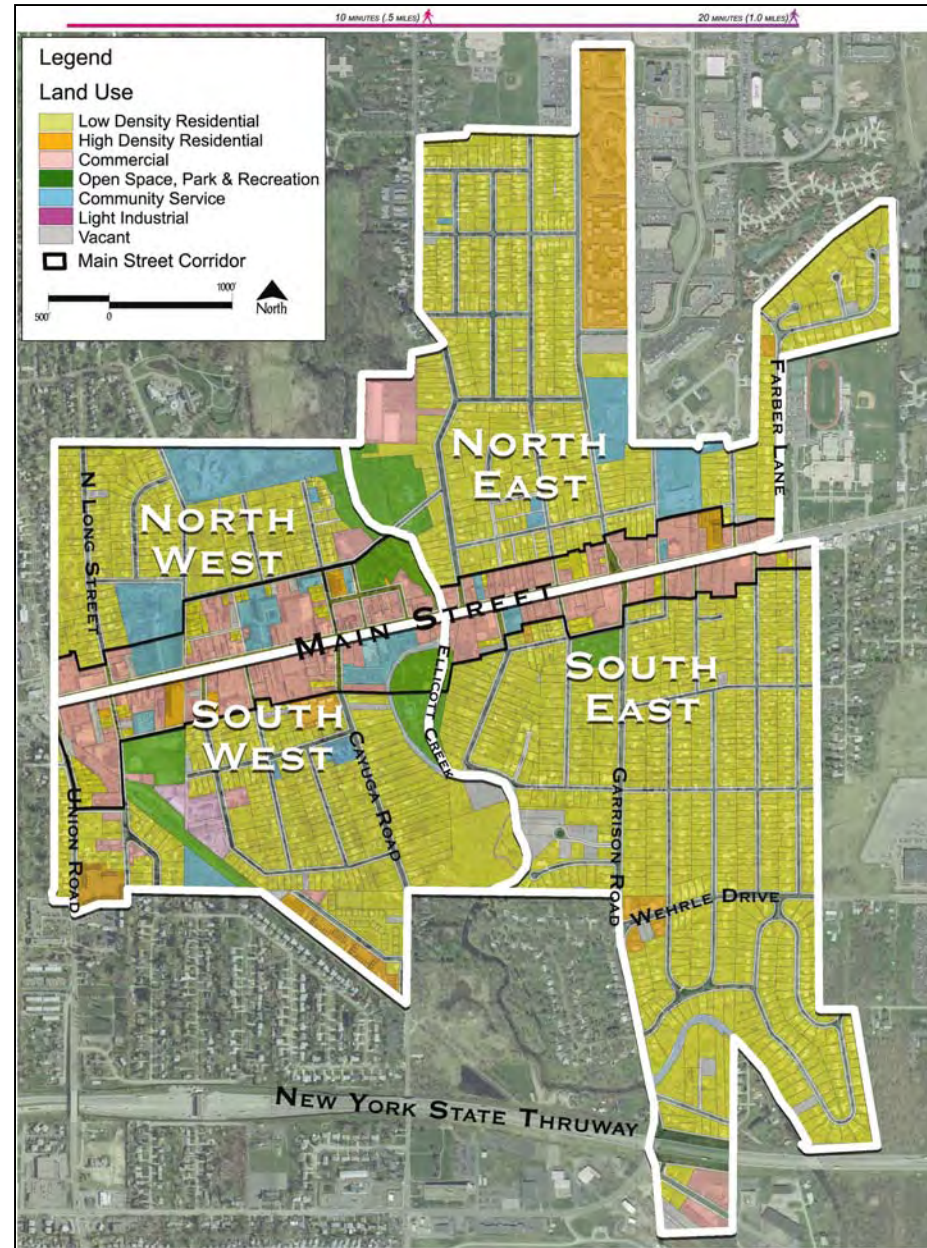
Vacant land is any land that is currently not being used and is not set-aside for the purpose of preserving open space. Vacant land has the potential for future development even if that development requires the mitigation of environmentally sensitive areas like wetlands. Only 2% of total Village land area is vacant.

## Land Use Patterns Map

The following map illustrates existing Village land use patterns. This aerial view shows the Village in relation to its location within the Town of Amherst. The majority of Village land uses are compatible with adjacent Town lands; Low-density Residential neighborhoods are buffered primarily by similar neighborhoods or green buffer zones. Centerpointe Office Park, located in Amherst off Evans Street north of Main Street and South of Sheridan Drive, is buffered from surrounding residential zones by a significant natural escarpment.

For the purposes of this document, Village “neighborhoods” will be simply defined by natural and man-made boundaries, and overall walkability. Main Street bisects the north and south portions of the community. Ellicott Creek is a natural boundary that delineates the quadrants to the east and west. Each of these quadrants is approximately one half mile in length. This distance can be comfortably covered during a leisurely ten-minute walk.

Figure 2.2.1 Land Use Patterns





## Zoning

The zoning in the Village of Williamsville determines how the land is regulated. While the land use shows what the land is actually being used for, the zoning illustrates what the Village has determined is allowable in a particular zone. With land use some structures may have already existed before the zoning was put into place making them nonconforming uses in the zoning code.

In addition to regulating use, zoning controls building issues such as the height, yard and bulk as well as regulating parking, landscaping, signage, etc., on a parcel. The Village is currently divided into eight different zoning districts as listed below:

R-1	Single-Family Residential District
R-2	Single-Family Residential District
R-3	Single-Family or Two-Family Residential District
R-3M	Multiple-Dwelling Residential District
C-1	Professional and Administrative District
C-2	Restricted Commercial District
C-3	General Commercial District
M-1	Light Manufacturing District

Unlike land use areas, zoning areas include all land area in the Village, including rights-of-way. Current zoning acreage, updated in 2005, is summarized in the following chart.

Table 2.2.2 Current Zoning Allocations  
*Village of Williamsville*

District	Acres	Percent
R-1	26.4	3.5%
R-2	266.7	35.0%
R-3	278.6	36.6%
R-3M	54.7	7.2%
C-1	26.5	3.5%
C-2	69.8	9.2%
C-3	31.0	4.0%
M-1	7.5	1.0%

Source: Village of Williamsville  
and peter j. smith & company, inc.

The following brief descriptions summarize current Village Zoning Districts as detailed in the Williamsville Code:

### R-1 Single-Family Residential District

The R-1 Single Family Residential District is for one single-family dwelling or community facility with minimum lot area of 10,000 square feet.

### R-2 Single-Family Residential District

The R-2 Single Family Residential District permitted uses are the same as in R-1 but have smaller minimum lot area of 6,250 square feet allowing for denser development.

### R-3 Single-Family or Two-Family Residential District

The R-3 district includes the permitted uses in the R-1 district with the smaller minimum lot area of 6,250 square feet as in the R-2 district. In addition the district allows two-family residential with a minimum lot area of 7,500 square feet.

R-3M Multiple-Dwelling Residential District

The R-3M district allows for all of the permitted uses in R-3. Also allowable in this district are multiple family dwellings with a 7,500 minimum lot area for the first two units and 2,500 square feet for each additional unit over two.

C-1 Professional and Administrative District

The C-1 district allows all of the permitted uses in the R-3M District as well as office and more extensive community facility uses such as a medical center. In this district there are no lot restrictions for nonresidential or mixed occupancy buildings.

C-2 Restricted Commercial District

Permitted uses include those allowed in district C-1. The C-2 district also allows for restaurants, commercial residence and some retail businesses. Lots are as permitted in the C-1 Districts

C-3 General Commercial District

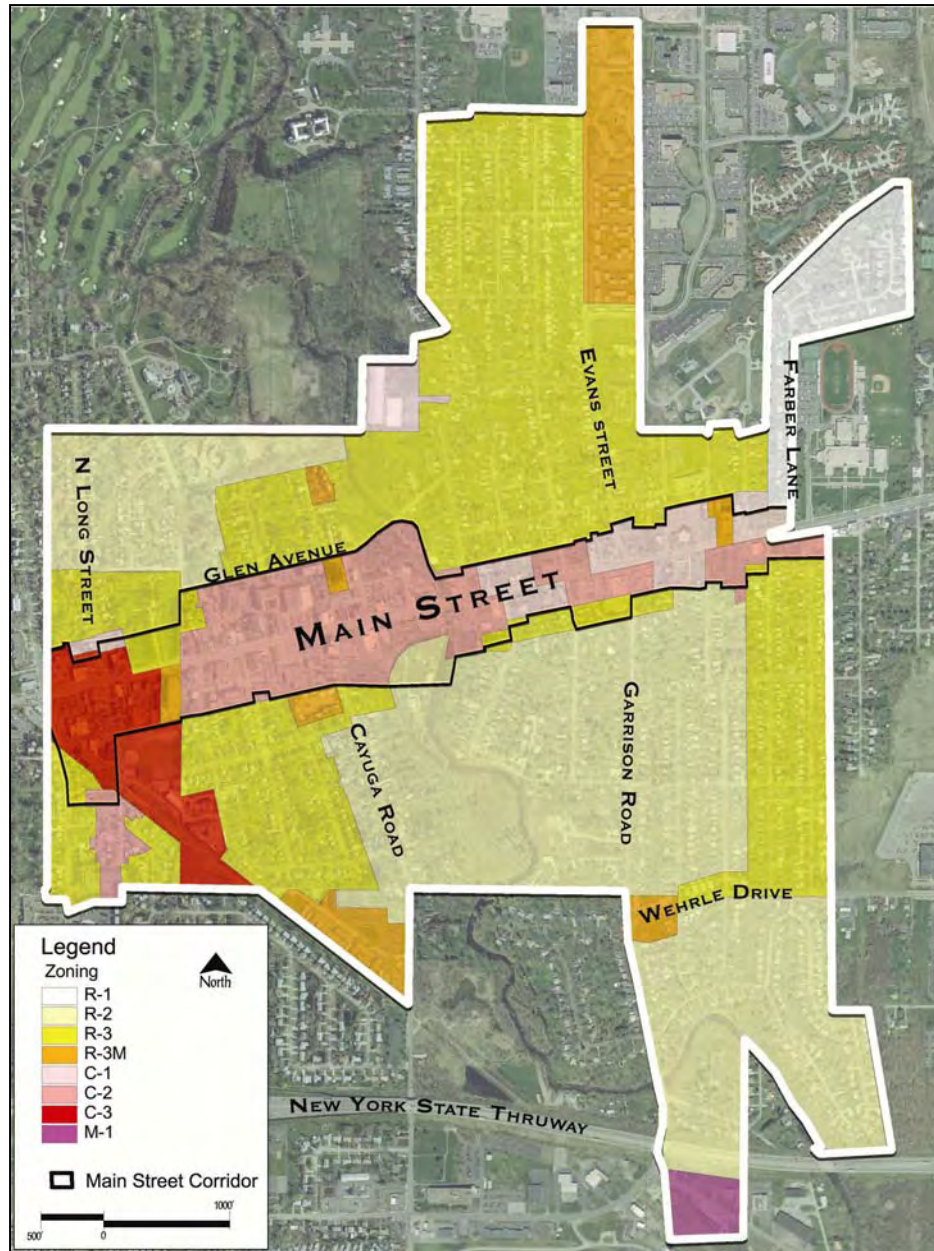
Permitted uses include those allowed in district C-1 and C-2. This district also allows for more commercial uses that C-2 such as gas stations and car washing establishments. Lots are as permitted in the C-1 Districts

M-1 Light Manufacturing District

Permitted uses include those allowed in district C-1, C-2 and C-3. This district also allows for manufacturing or industrial businesses with performance standards regarding issues such as pollutants, noise, glare and odor. Lots are as permitted in the C-1 Districts

In addition to these district regulations, the C-1, C-2, C-3, R-3M, and M-1 all require site plan, Planning Board, and architectural review for new structures, reconstructed buildings or alterations to existing buildings. Complete zoning regulations are to be found in the Code of the Village of Williamsville, NY.

Figure 2.2.2 Zoning Patterns



### Zoning Patterns Map

The preceding map illustrates current zoning patterns in the Village of Williamsville.

### Potential Zoning Issues

The majority of Main Street is zoned Restricted Commercial (C-2). The district permits drive in service, restaurant and retail business. The district allows mixed-use but does not encourage mixed-use on individual parcels. The C-2 district permits auto-related uses along most of the Main Street Corridor. There are two issues related to the revitalization of Main Street in the C-2 District. The first is the continuity of the street wall and its impact on continuous pedestrian circulation along the street. The second is the appearance of some auto related facilities including garage doors, parking and lack of landscaping.

Most of the remainder of Main Street is zoned Professional and Administrative (C-1) except for two parcels zoned Multiple Dwelling Residence (R-3M). The C-1 district prohibits restaurant and retail land uses. The issue related to the revitalization of Main Street in the C-1 District is the continuity of retail land use along the Main Street corridor.

A General Commercial District (C-3) is located at the western gateway to the Village. The C-3 District permits gasoline service stations and motor vehicle service. The issues are the continuity of the streetscape and the apparent impediment to pedestrian circulation.

### Recent Development Trends

The Village Building Inspector notes that there is virtually no undeveloped land remaining in the community; only few scattered lots remain. Most recent residential improvements include renovation and upgrades to existing properties. The few new builds in the Village in between 2002 and 2005 included several single-family homes on Castle Creek Trail priced between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Two new homes were built on Pfohl Terrace priced between \$200,000 and \$250,000. Townhouses currently being built on Essjay Road and Evans Street are in the \$400,000 to \$500,000 price range.

### Future Land Use Needs

Williamsville - like all communities - should proactively design, not react to, evolving land use needs. Future land use projections serve to prepare for the likely composition of the community in order to plan accordingly. Planning in light of projections also enables funding to be responsibly distributed to expected community needs. The following section compares current conditions with approved land use standards developed by the American Planning Association and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development:

#### *Residential*

To determine the number of housing units required in the Village of Williamsville, the projected population (prepared by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council in 2005) for the year 2025 (6,065) was used. This population was divided by the projected mean (average) household size; the mean household size for the Village in

2000 was 2.1 people and is assumed to decrease to 2.0 over the next 20 years. The number of new housing units required to meet the projected increase in household population is determined by the following formula:

Projected Household Population

-----=Projected Units Needed

Mean Household Size

Using this formula, the Village could require **3,032** total housing units by the year 2025. In 2000, there were 2,673 total housing units in the Village. According to GBNRTC projections, the Village could require an additional **359** new housing units to accommodate the 2025 population.

#### *Rental Units*

Renters account for 38.5% of the housing units in the Village of Williamsville compared to 34.7% in Erie County. Should trends continue, the rental rate would remain stable. At this rate, **136** of the 359 projected housing units would be required as rental units.



### *Commercial*

The amount of commercial land that should be available in each community varies considerably. Changes in land use patterns over the past decade have a great impact on the percentage of land that is designated for commercial use. Retail malls and plazas include extensive parking to meet the needs of its customers. The acreage required for commercial uses seems inflated because of the large amount of space needed for modern commercial parking areas.

In 1992, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) adopted updated land use ratio information for communities. According to this information, approximately “10% of lands in a community could be designated for commercial uses.” This percentage has increased from 2% in 1955 to 7% in 1983 to 10% in 1992 due to changes in commercial land use development.

In the Village of Williamsville, there are approximately 71 acres of land devoted to commercial use. This accounts for 11.4% of the Village’s total land area. This percentage is greater than the 10% standard ratio found in planning literature.

Does the Village have “too much” commercial space? Research indicates the answer is no. Significant vacancy rates, significant decline in general property maintenance, and low rental/lease rates would indicate the presence of “too much” commercial Village land. A visual inventory of the Main Street Business District, combined with research and personal interviews with Main Street business owners, indicates that some of these negative characteristics are

present in their early stages. However, they do not accurately describe current Village conditions, particularly when compared to other older, established commercial districts within the Town of Amherst such as the Harlem Road corridor.

While there are some vacancies and some retail business owners report struggling sales, rental/lease rates remain at competitive levels. General demand for high quality office space is also reported to be high. Research also indicates that there are particular spatial demands for modern retail business that cannot currently be met on Main Street. For instance, many older storefronts have structural columns that are undesirable to potential tenants who prefer open floor plates. For this reason, some older storefronts on the street remain vacant for significant time periods. Some business owners also report that some retail spaces on the Main Street Corridor have insufficient parking.

### *Industrial*

The Planning Advisory Service and American Planning Association provided information on industrial land uses. The guidelines are based on communities nationwide to create a balance of industrial land uses. The standard industrial guidelines recommend that 12 acres of land per 1,000 residents should be allocated for industrial development. In addition, 12 acres per 1000 residents should also be set aside for future reserve.

Less than 1% of Williamsville, or approximately 0.7 acres, is devoted to industrial use. The dense residential nature



of the Village makes future industrial development a largely incompatible use in most neighborhoods.

### *Recreation/Open Space*

According to national recreation guidelines, the following are recommended standards for parks and recreational facilities within a community:

**Table 2.2.3- Standard Park Recommendations**  
Village of Williamsville

Park Type	Recommended Acreage (per 1000 residents)	Existing Village Acreage *	Recommended Village Acreage 2025
Neighborhood Park (Including Playfields and Playgrounds)	2.0	6.6	12.2
Community Park (Mix of Passive & Active Use Parks, Sports Complexes)	8	20.7	48.9
Special Use Parks (Golf Courses, Museums, Trails, Interpretive Sites)	4.5	12.2	27.5
Total	14.5	39.5	88.7

Source: Town of Amherst Recreation & Parks Master Plan 2004; peter j. smith & company, inc., National Parks and Recreation Association

\*Dimensions given are approximate

According to the NPRA standards, approximately 88.7 acres of total parkland should be available to Village residents in 2025. According to Village land use statistics, approximately 31.5 acres is currently devoted to Parks and Open space. Additionally, there are several “special use parks” (as defined in the Town of Amherst 2004 Master Plan) in the Village currently allocated to the Community Service land use designation. Examples include the Williamsville Meeting House and the historic cemetery.

Adding these special use parks to the equation would add more than 20 acres to the existing inventory of Village park space.

In addition, the surrounding Town of Amherst places special emphasis on meeting the recreation needs of its residents. Recreation Master Plans were completed in 1992 and updated in 2004. The existing inventory of Amherst recreation land, and the planned implementation of additional facility development and land acquisition, must be considered when calculating Village need.

Further, the Nature section of this inventory indicates that the overall quality and connectivity of parkland in Williamsville is an issue, not the quantity. Improving accessibility and usability of existing parkland is a top priority for the Community Plan.

## Land Use Planning Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of research to date, several land use implications were identified. The recommendations prepared for the Community Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- Existing Village land use regulations do not include specific methods to ensure that buildings are developed and/or restored in a historically sensitive manner
- There is very little developable land remaining in the Village. The acreage remaining for development is scattered in small parcels throughout the community
- The majority of Village land uses are compatible with adjacent Town lands
- Drive in Service in the C-2 district may impede pedestrian circulation due to excessive curb cuts and traffic volume. The location, orientation and appearance of auto related facilities is due to a lack of design control.
- The exclusion of restaurant and retail business from the C-1 district breaks the street façade and the continuity of pedestrian accessible uses with less intensive uses and may impede continuous pedestrian flow.
- The permitting of gasoline service stations and motor vehicle service in the C-3 District may discourage pedestrian circulation due to excessive curb cuts and traffic volume.
- Extended gaps, of both retail and service, in the street wall and the resulting impacts on pedestrian circulation could be a factor in extended retail vacancies on Main Street.
- There are some vacancies in the Business District and some retail business owners report struggling sales. However, rental/lease rates remain at competitive levels. General demand for high quality office space is also reported to be high. Research also indicates that there are particular spatial demands for modern retail business that cannot currently be met on Main Street. For instance, many older storefronts have structural columns that are undesirable to potential tenants who desire open floor plates. For this reason, some older storefronts on the street remain vacant for significant time periods.
- Some business owners report that insufficient parking is available to accommodate customers.
- While national standards recommend 88 acres of parkland for a community like Williamsville, the Village contains 39 acres. However, several mitigating circumstances reduce this outstanding need including “special use” parks and available parkland in the surrounding Town of Amherst. The overall quality and connectivity of parkland in Williamsville is an issue, not the quantity.

## 2.3 History

This section seeks to outline current patterns of historic development and highlight significant structures, places and events that make Williamsville unique. The historic structures that remain standing represent the Village's legacy of community culture. The collection of significant sites reflects the different historic aspects including community life, culture, industry and commerce upon which the Village was built. The overall objective of the history inventory is to begin to create a functional system from the historic patterns to strengthen, connect and enhance the story of Williamsville. A functional system of historic resources will provide physical accessibility to the relics of the past for residents and visitors.

### Architectural Styles in the Historic Village

According to the 1997 Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources in the Village of Williamsville, the Village contains examples of numerous architectural styles. In the early nineteenth century, vernacular building traditions and Greek Revival Style were popular. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Gothic Revival and Italianate were among the popular styles used in the Village. By the twentieth century, the architectural styles began to vary more and included Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, American Foursquare, Bungalow and Craftsman.

### Historic Preservation Resources in the Village

The Village maintains multiple sources of historic information. In addition, the Village has created codes to preserve the historic significance of Williamsville.

One important repository of these resources is the **Williamsville Historical Society**. The Historical Society maintains a museum located in the Village Meeting House that is open the second Sunday of each month from September through June. The Historical Society has also produced a document that is a great resource to the community - a walking tour of the historic structures in the Village. The walking tour is called "**Where the Past is Present**" and provides a tour of the east side of the Village and the west side of the Village complete with a map of the two tours and descriptions of each site on the tours.

Another detailed source of information regarding the history of the Village is the "**Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources**" prepared by Bero Associates in June 1997. This survey includes both a description of the overall history of the Village and individual descriptions of the potential historic sites in the Village.

In order to protect the historic resources the Village has developed a **Historic Preservation Code** that was first adopted on May 9, 1983 to protect the quality of the historic characteristics of the Village that have cultural and architectural significance. The Historic Preservation Code is Chapter 47 of the Village Code and was last amended in 2005.

The Village's Historic Preservation Commission manages the Williamsville historic resources by designating historic landmark sites.

### Village Landmarks

Historic resources in the Village include State/National Register listed sites, designated local landmarks and highlighted historic sites along the Village walking tour. There are four National and State Register listed sites in the Village.

### National and State Listed Historic Resources

For a property to be listed on the National Register it must first be listed on the State Register. Once on the State Register the property is nominated to the National Register. The purpose of placing properties on the National Historic Register is to receive recognition and financial assistance in the form of grants and/or loans.

#### Williamsville Water Mill Complex

The Water Mill was the first site in the Village to be placed on the National and State Register. Listed in 1983, the Water Mill Complex includes 56 and 60 Spring Street. The Mill is located at 56 Spring Street, on the edge of Ellicott Creek in commemoration of the early history of the Village's milling industry. Built in 1811 by Jonas Williams, the mill has functioned as a gristmill and a hydraulic cement mill. The Mill is reported to be the oldest continuously run business in Western New York. Also part of the mill complex is 60 Spring Street, constructed circa 1836. This structure has a gable-roof frame and was used as a business office. At one time there was a sawmill attached to the

building at 60 Spring Street, but the sawmill fell into the Creek due to heavy ice build-up in 1903.

The Village recently purchased the Water Mill and a Request for Expressions of Interest for the redevelopment of the Mill. Although both 56 Spring Street and 60 Spring Street are on the National and State Registers, only 56 Spring Street is locally designated as a landmark. Nonetheless, 60 Spring Street is also recognized as historically significant and is to be added to the locally designated landmarks. Although not listed on the National or State Register, 80 Spring Street is also associated with the mill. Built in 1844 by mill owners, it is a Greek Revival home that was located on Main Street till 1949 when a section of it was moved to the current location.

#### Williamsville Meeting House

In 2002, the building at 5658 Main Street was recognized for its historic significance with a designation on the National and State Register. Presently known as the Williamsville Meeting House, this building was originally a church for the Disciples of Jesus Christ. The church was built in 1871 when the Disciples of Jesus Christ congregation had about 200 members. The congregation was an early part of the Village culture and Ellicott Creek was used as a place for baptisms. Eventually the building was obtained by the Village as the Church lost membership and sold the building to the Village for \$1 in 1976. As the Village's Meeting House the building now serves as a museum, a space for concerts, community theatre, weddings and meetings. In addition, the Meeting House is the headquarters for the Williamsville Historical

Society. The Meeting House is also locally designated as a historic landmark.

### **Designated Local Landmarks**

The Village of Williamsville's Historic Preservation Commission designates historic sites after a survey is completed and a public hearing by the Board of Trustees is held.

#### Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church

The church at 5480 Main Street was designated a local landmark on November 25, 1991. The church was built from 1863 to 1866 using native limestone and was fashioned in the gothic revival style. The exterior of the church remains largely unchanged with its tall steeple a focal point along Main Street.

#### Ronecker Building

At 5550 Main Street stands a three-story red brick building that is a reminder of the changing market in Williamsville through history. Built in 1854, the building first served as a carriage shop. Throughout the years the building was used as a schoolroom, a general store, grocery store, a location for the telephone switchboard for Amherst, a Village Post Office and the Ronecker's Men's and Boys' Wear. The third floor, now offices, was once the location of a courtroom, offices, meeting rooms, and apartments during the WWII housing shortage, an entertainment hall, and the Odd Fellows Social Hall.

#### The 72 South Cayuga Road School House

This schoolhouse was built in 1840 from locally quarried limestone. The Greek Revival one-room school was the

third facility used to provide elementary education to Village children. The building has since been used as a gathering spot for the Bachelor Arms Club during the Great Depression. In 1964 it was converted to the Town's first Senior Citizens Center, then later to into the headquarters of the Amherst Historical Society and the location for Amherst Youth Board programs. The old schoolhouse is now privately owned.

#### Lehigh Valley Railroad Station

Located at 86 South Long Street, the Lehigh Valley Railroad Station marks the history of transportation in the Village. The Station was designated as a local landmark on March 14, 1990. The building is of "board and batten" siding with a hip roof, overhanging eaves and rafter tails and brackets. The Station served the Lehigh Valley Railroad that gave suburban residents service to Buffalo till the post WWII auto industry boom, after which the station was transformed into freight terminal service only. Today the rail service is gone and the tracks have been removed making way for the Lehigh Memorial Trail along the former right-of-way. The Western New York Historical Railway Society owns the Depot and has a long-term lease on the land owned by the Village.

#### Cambria Castle

Ignatz Oechsner, a German native, originally constructed this intriguing residence in 1917. The building, located on Williamsville's Dream Island in Ellicott Creek, was made of stone and built with a replica of a medieval carrier pigeon tower. The building remained incomplete at the time of Oechsner's death in 1942 but was later completed



in the late 1950's. This residence at 175 Oakgrove Drive was designated a local landmark on August 26, 1985.

#### 39 Academy Street (Formerly Williamsville Classical Institute)

The site at 39 Academy Street remains a location of great importance for the Village of Williamsville. This is the site of what was once the Williamsville Classical Institute that was built in 1853. The original building was demolished in 1921 and became the location of the Williamsville High School, which was built in 1922-23. Though the school is no longer public, it serves as a reminder of the strong public dedication to education. The current building is an example of twentieth-century standardized school design and houses the Christian Central Academy.

#### Glen Park

Glen Park has served the inhabitants of the Town and Village for more than 150 years. The Park was the center of the Town and Village milling industry in the nineteenth-century. Opened in the 1930's the park was home to a casino and amusement park hosting many musical entertainers. Scarred by fires, Glen Park was subject to a community controversy over its future development. In 1976 the area was designated to become a scenic park; the Park's 10 acres provide passive recreational and natural resources for the community.

#### Williamsville Cemetery

This site, located on Main Street between North Long Street and Reist Street, was designated as a local landmark on March 23, 1992. The cemetery has a park-like setting and was originally a small private cemetery for the Long family. It eventually became the Williamsville Cemetery and is now

owned and maintained by the Forest Lawn Group. The oldest marker in the Cemetery dates back to 1810.

### **Historic Events and Happenings**

In addition to those happenings mentioned in the landmark inventory of the Village, there are several events and accomplishments that deserve specific notation as well. Of these points of interest are the Village's significance in the War of 1812, the speculation around involvement with the Underground Railroad and Brewery Hill.

#### **War of 1812**

The military had a presence in the settlement of what is now the Village of Williamsville for nearly the entire War of 1812. For a short time, in the spring of 1814, the settlement served as a base for five to six thousand men as the headquarters of the local war effort. Along Ellicott Creek, south of Main Street, former military barracks were converted into a hospital for over 250 sick and wounded.

Today, Garrison Road is a reminder of the Village's involvement in the War of 1812. The street is named after the encampment that was stationed along Ellicott Creek. In addition, soldiers were located north of Main Street conducting drills for the barracks and arsenal on the land near what is now Saints Peter and Paul Church.

### Underground Railroad Speculations

While Underground Railroad involvement is not confirmed, it is widely speculated that Williamsville was a stop for runaway slaves escaping the States en route to Canada. There are two notable locations in the Village linked to Underground Railroad. The first is the Eagle House, located at 5578 Main Street. Built in 1832, the Eagle House was an inn, stagecoach stop and tavern; the site still functions as a popular restaurant and tavern. The building is believed to have the oldest hotel license in New York State. Beneath the Eagle House lie cellar caverns and a passageway leading to the Glen Park quarry. These caverns are thought to have housed runaway slaves prior to the Civil War.

A second possible location for Underground Railroad involvement is 41 South Cayuga Road. This structure, built in 1836, has separate outside cellar entrances. The Village also has numerous underground tunnels in the area that are thought to be either related to natural limestone caverns or quarrying activities.

### Brewery Hill

In addition to Williamsville's milling industry, there is a history of the brewing industry in the Village. Brewery Hill, bordered by West Spring Street, Main Street and Grove Street, was an active part of the business composition until 1890. Urban and Blocher established the brewery in 1845. The brewery changed hands three times; first to John Daul, then J. Batt and Co., and finally the Williamsville Cooperative Brewery. After the brewery was closed it was used to store cut ice, used for refrigeration, from a nearby pond. The brewery eventually burned down and the

foundation was used for a cement block business that was in operation until the 1960's. A portion of the original wall can be seen on the rear of the building on the corner of Main and Grove.

### Proposed Local Landmarks & Historic Districts

The 1997 "Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources" proposed 83 potential sites for local landmark designation and several potential historic districts in the Village. The purpose of these proposed sites and districts was to highlight areas worthy of intensive survey. The designation of a landmark or district serves to recognize areas of importance and protect this resource through the Historic Preservation Code. The proposed local landmarks are scattered around the Village with concentrations of local landmarks in the proposed districts including South Cayuga Road Historic District (39 primary buildings), Oakgrove Drive Historic District (including 31 primary buildings), Monroe Drive Spanish Colonial Revival District (including 5 primary buildings) and East Spring Street Historic District (including 4 primary buildings). The Village has taken no action to designate these areas as historic districts. The area with the greatest potential for designation is the proposed East Spring Street District, which already has two national and state registered historic landmarks. The designation of other Village Historic Districts has raised concerns about restrictions on residential properties. Therefore, no action has been taken for formal designation at this time.

## Historic Patterns Map

The historic patterns map illustrates the Village's historic assets. Included in this map are the national, state and local landmarks. The map also shows the potential historic sites and districts listed in the Reconnaissance Survey compiled for the Village. In addition, the map shows several historic highlights mentioned in this section including sites with purported Underground Railroad involvement, Garrison Road and Brewery Hill.

Figure 2.3.1 Historic Patterns





## History-Oriented Planning Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of research to date, the following implications were identified. The recommendations prepared for the Community Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- The Village has the opportunity to better highlight several historic areas of interest including War of 1812 involvement and potential connections to the Underground Railroad. Garrison Road and its connections to the War of 1812 offers one area of untapped potential that should be further explored.
- Several historic districts have been proposed and documented. Official designation could provide a significant avenue for funding elements of the Community Plan. Their designation would also improve the chances of maintaining the historic character of the Village.
- Existing historical strengths in the Village are not comprehensively connected to create a visitor experience. Specific events and places, such as the War of 1812, the historic cemetery, and Village Underground Railroad participation, should be further developed in order to “tell a story” to visitors.
- Sensitive development of the Williamsville Water Mill Complex would contribute to a visitor experience and enhance the overall historic character of the Village.
- The presence and documentation of numerous significant architectural styles could strengthen a position to establish design guidelines for future Village development and preservation.





## 2.4 Circulation & Infrastructure

The circulation in Williamsville is greatly affected by heavy traffic flow on Main Street. As the Village's primary corridor, movement on Main Street impacts transportation access to the rest of the community. This section examines the Village in its larger regional context, specifically how it connects with adjacent municipalities and the greater metropolitan Buffalo region. This section reviews the existing transportation system including roads, public transit, air access, rail access, water access, bicycle and pedestrian access and streetscape elements. Every effort has been made to document the most current planning status of the numerous local, regional and state transportation systems in Williamsville. Communication and cooperation with these various agencies will become a critical component of preparing transportation recommendations that can truly be implemented in the Village.

This section also includes an assessment of the Village's existing infrastructure system including water, sewer and utilities. The assessment documents the public services Village residents receive, and any current issues related to the delivery of these services.



Typical Village Street

### Regional Transportation Organizations

There are six main organizations that retain ownership of roads and/or planning interests in and around the Village of Williamsville. These include the New York State Thruway Authority, the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Erie County, the Town of Amherst, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) and the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO) Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC).

### NYSDOT Road Classifications

As with most Villages in Erie County, the Williamsville road network consists of streets and highways classified by various functional uses, by their ownership or maintenance responsibility (state, county or local governments), and by their funding eligibility.

All streets and highways are classified in terms of their functional importance. Within the Village there are five official street classifications: Interstate, Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Collector and a Local Collector. The classifications and definitions for the roads in Williamsville are derived from current NYSDOT classifications. Although the Village may contend the validity of some NYSDOT classifications for some roads within the Village, they are used here to promote consistency. The GBNRTC uses NYSDOT classifications to complete traffic counts, and they are also used to characterize NYSDOT's funding schedule.

Road classifications express the function of a particular road. In The Village, the **Interstate** is the New York State Thruway, which travels through the southeast portion of the Village. A **Principal Arterial** is a road that serves to move traffic between metropolitan centers of activity. Main Street and Union Road are Williamsville's Principal Arterials. The **Minor Arterials** are typically for shorter distances of travel than principal arterials aiding in the Principal Arterial System; Cayuga Road, Garrison Road, Aero Drive and Wehrle Drive serve as Minor Arterials in the Village. The **Collector** classification is defined as a road that distributes traffic from local streets and neighborhoods and channels it to the arterial roads; Evans Street is a Village Collector. The **Main Street Corridor** is defined as a road that serves to move traffic between metropolitan centers of activity.

### Circulation Patterns Map

The following figure illustrates the various GBNRTC road classifications.

Figure 2.4.1 Circulation Patterns



### Existing Traffic Conditions

Existing heavy traffic conditions on Main Street, Wehrle Drive, Garrison Road, Mill Street and Evans Road, affect the character and quality of life of the entire Village. Implementing a successful Community Plan will depend on controlling issues that affect local circulation conditions.

### Village Owned Roads

The Village owns all of the roads in Williamsville except for one road that is owned by NYSDOT and three roads that are owned by Erie County. The NYSDOT road in the Village is Main Street. The three Erie County roads are Wehrle Drive, Garrison Road and Evans Street.

### Traffic Volume

Traffic Counts for Main Street between Union Road and Evans Road, as reported by the GBNRTC, was 35,700 in 2003. Additional Traffic Counts for other selected roads in Williamsville are outlined in Table 2.4.1 – Traffic Counts and Road Scores.

### Level of Service (LOS)

Roadway and intersection Levels of Service (LOS) for roadway segments and intersections can be calculated through analytical procedures established for determining highway capacity. With regard to roadway segments, LOS is a qualitative measure that describes motorist satisfaction with factors influencing the degree of traffic congestion. These factors include travel time, speed, maneuverability, safety and delay. Levels range from “A,” describing traffic operations with little or no delay to “F,” describing conditions with substantial delay. Level of service “D” is

perceived to introduce mobility concerns with LOS “E” or “F” defined as undesirable and deficient roadway capacity.

According to the GBNRTC’s 2025 Traffic Congestion Null Network Plan, the section of Main Street that travels through the Village, between I-290 and Transit Road, is classified with an “E” rated Level of Service (LOS). Wehrle Drive is a second poorly rated road with a rank of “D” near the intersection of Wehrle and Hopkins.

### Pavement Conditions

NYSDOT has adopted a procedure for “scoring” the pavement conditions of all highways owned or maintained by the State of New York. The GBNRTC has adopted the same system for assessing the condition of all the roadways that are part of the Federal Aid Highway System but are not part of the state highway network. In recent years, the Erie County Department of Public Works has likewise adopted the same road condition scoring system to assessing the condition of County owned roadways that are not part of the regional Federal Aid System.

The highway condition scoring system rates segments of roadways on a “1” to “10” score with a “1” defined as a roadway in poor condition and a “10” essentially being defined as a newly constructed/reconstructed roadway. Current road scores of selected Village roads are outlined in the following table.



**Table 2.4.1 Traffic Counts and Road Scores**  
Village of Williamsville

Route Name	Route Segment	Lanes	Speed (MPH)	Functional Class	Count	(YR)	2003 Road Score	Level of Service
NYS Thruway	I-290 to Transit	4	55	Interstate	54,000	2003	9	D
Main Street	Union to Evans	5	35	Principal Arterial	35,700	2003	6	E
Main Street	Evans to Youngs Road	5	40	Principal Arterial	24,400	2001	7	>C
Union Road	Wehrle to Main Street	4	40	Principal Arterial	11,700	2001	7	>C
Aero Drive	Wehrle to Youngs	2	35	Minor Arterial	6,400	2002	8	>C
Cayuga Road	California to Main	2	30	Minor Arterial	8,100	2004	8	>C
Evans Street	Main to Sheridan	2	30	Collector	12,500	2004	9	>C
Garrison Road	Wehrle to Main Street	2	30	Minor Arterial	8,500	2004	6	>C
Wehrle Drive	Garrison to Youngs	2	35	Minor Arterial	13,700	2002	5	D

Source: GBNRTC Traffic Data 2001-2004

## Planned Improvements

Planned circulation improvements in the Village include two 5-year Transportation Improvement Projects (TIP) projects and one MPO long-range project detailed in the GBNRTC's Long Range Transportation Plan Programmed & Unprogrammed Roadway improvements. The 5-year TIP projects include widening of Wehrle Drive from 2 lanes to 5 lanes and bridge replacement on Glen Avenue over Ellicott Creek and Diversion Channel.

The long-range project is a relocation of the Williamsville Toll Barrier. At the time of this writing, an Environmental Impact Study is underway to determine the long-term impacts of relocating this toll barrier.

Other possible improvements analyzed in the Williamsville Mill Traffic and Parking Study in 2005 by the GBNRTC include:

- Changing Spring St. from two-way to one-way for westbound traffic
- Adding diagonal parking on Spring Street
- Closing Rock Street from Spring Street to Glen Street
- Closing Rock Street from Main Street to about 100 feet North from Main Street

These changes were proposed by the GBNRTC to improve access and parking around the Williamsville Water Mill in preparation for planned redevelopment of the site. The GBNRTC did not find any significant traffic issues with these changes. Recommendations by the GBNRTC to augment the Village changes include installing all-way stop signs at intersections without signals, improving signal timing and increasing signage, sidewalks and curbs.

### Character of Village Corridors

The Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan expresses the importance of designing transportation corridors according to “context sensitive design standards”. The Plan specifies four different characters to address the context of each corridor. These characters include Traditional Character, Suburban Character, Commercial Character and Rural/Special Character. All of the corridors characterized in Williamsville, including Main Street, Wehrle Drive, Garrison Road/Evans Street and Cayuga Drive, were defined as Traditional. The Traditional Character depicts corridors that are in major centers located in older neighborhoods. The recommendation for the Traditional Character is to apply pedestrian friendly design to the corridors.

### Toll Barrier Improvement Project

The New York State Thruway is conducting the Toll Barrier Improvement Project to study the mainline toll barrier on the New York State Thruway between interchanges 49 and 50. Issues of excessive noise and disruption to surrounding residential areas reported by Village residents have prompted the investigation. Relocation of the Barrier could also reduce existing traffic levels on Main Street. The project consists of environmental and engineering studies as well as a public input program. The project is considering the movement of the toll barrier from the current location in Amherst to possible locations along the Thruway between interchange 49 and 49A. There is currently a Draft Environmental Impact Statement being prepared, which will undergo public review upon completion. For more

information regarding this project, the NYS Thruway has a website dedicated to the project.

### Buffalo Corridor Study

A Long range-planning project that the New York State Thruway is conducting with the New York State Department of Transportation and in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration is the Buffalo Corridor Study. This study focuses on two major corridors in the region, the NYS Thruway and Youngmann Memorial Highway (I-290). The Study deals with capacity, structural, safety, and operational needs for the next 30 or so years. Although the project is not directly involved with the Village, the regional affects of such a project may influence the Village.

### Erie County Projects

The County is currently in the process of purchasing the rights-of-way for the widening of Wehrle Drive. The Wehrle Drive project has been underway since 1998 and is expected to begin in 2006. The widening project will include making Wehrle three lanes with a center turning lane from Garrison Road to the Village boundary. Wehrle is being widened into five lanes from the Village boundary to Transit Road. The project includes curbs, drainage improvements and pedestrian enhancements.

Erie County is currently replacing the Glen Avenue Bridge; a December 2005 completion date is expected.



## Bus and Rail Transportation

The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) operates bus service in Williamsville. Routes traveling within Williamsville include the 48, 49 and 66. The adult fare for the bus ranges from \$1.50 to \$2.25 depending on the number of zones crossed in the trip. The child, senior citizen, disabled and Medicare fare range is \$0.65 to \$0.95. A monthly metro pass can be purchased that may reduce the fare for frequent riders.

The most active bus stop within the Village on weekdays is Main Street at Cayuga Road. The NFTA calculated aggregated averages for total weekday riders from March 27, 2005 to June 26, 2005. At Main Street and Cayuga Road there was an average of 15 people boarding and 14 people alighting daily.

A second stop with substantial patronage, not officially within Village boundaries, is located on Main Street at Union Road. This bus stop averages 55 people boarding and 41 people alighting on weekdays. This stop is located adjacent to a park-and-ride facility. Ridership at both bus stops mentioned significantly decreases on Saturdays and Sundays.

In addition to the bus service, the Metro Rail (LRRT) station at the University at Buffalo's South Campus is located four miles from Williamsville center; bus service connects light rail passengers with the Village.

## Airport Service

The Village of Williamsville is located two miles from the Buffalo Niagara International Airport. The airport can be reached from the Village by automobile from Cayuga to Route 33 or from Wehrle Drive. The airport can also be reached by bus on the NFTA's #30 bus route.

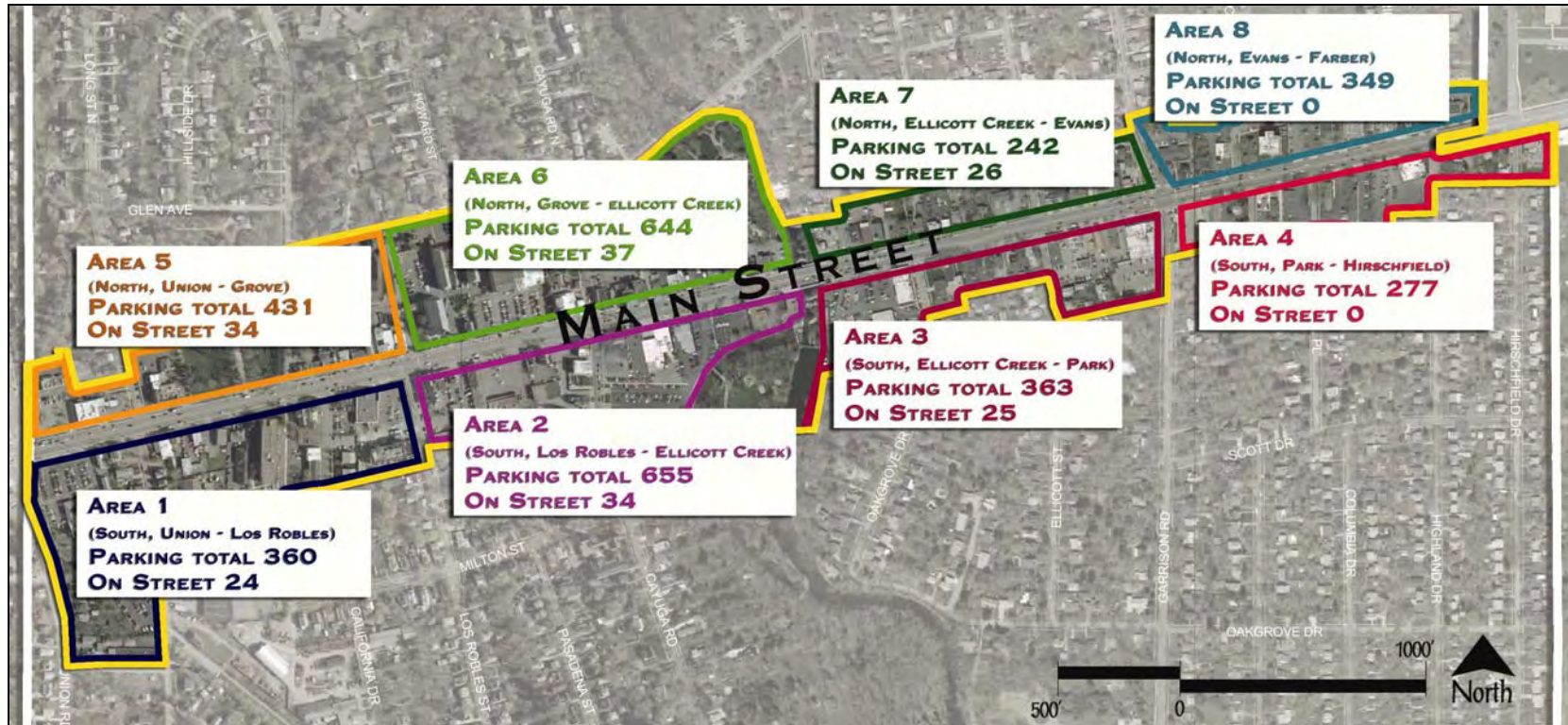
## Sidewalks

The reported condition of the majority of sidewalks in the 2000 Village Master Plan was "adequate". Research, including a community windshield survey, indicates that the majority of the Village is serviced with +/- 4-foot wide sidewalks. In general, their condition is sufficient to provide efficient pedestrian circulation. However, some of the older areas, particularly around the Water Mill Complex, have sidewalks that are in poor shape or non-existent.

The GBNRTC Study for the Williamsville Water Mill Complex indicates that more sidewalks are needed in the area of the Mill including Spring Street east of Rock Street to the Williamsville Water Mill, the south side of Glen Avenue from Cayuga Road to the Scenic Overlook of Glen Falls, and on the north side of Glen Street between the two public parking areas.

As a courtesy, the Village generally removes snow from all public sidewalks. Residents are still required to keep sidewalks clear from obstruction so that plows are able to get through.

Figure 2.4.2 Parking Inventory Map (Excluding Residential)



### Pedestrian and Bike Circulation

Village trails include the Lehigh Memory Trail in the southwest corner of the community and short trails located within some Village parks. The Lehigh Memory Trail is approximately one-half mile long. The parks with trails include Island Park, Glen Park and Garrison Park. Each park trail is contained within park boundaries. There is no coherent trail system that links the Village for non-motorists. There is no current connection or planned connection with any existing bike trails located in the Town of Amherst or Town of Cheektowaga.

### Existing Business District Parking

The above Parking Inventory Map illustrates existing commercial parking spaces in the Main Street Business District. For inventory purposes, the District was separated into eight different areas. Each area and its boundaries are outlined on the Map.

There are a total of **3321** off-street commercial spaces. There are 180 total on-street parking spaces. Public parking within the Village is located along the street or in two municipal lots. The municipal parking lots include one behind Town Hall/Village Hall and one on South Long Street. The parking lot behind Village Hall has 131 spaces.

The 2000 Master Plan details selected parking and visibility issues, the majority of which remain unresolved in 2005:

- Union Road to Long Street has limited parking to meet current demand
- Reist to Cayuga has inadequate on-street parking and visibility on the north side and inadequate off street parking on both sides of the street.
- Cayuga to Ellicott Creek has inadequate on-street parking and visibility issues at side streets and driveways.
- Ellicott Creek to Ellicott has an inadequate supply of off-street parking to accommodate local businesses.
- Garrison/Evans to Academy has visibility issues and an inadequate off-street supply of parking. Parking spaces and egress are needed for offices and retail at Academy
- Academy to the Village Line has inadequate rear parking for office buildings
- According to the GBNRTC Williamsville Water Mill Traffic and Parking Study, private parking along Main/Spring/Rock Streets “needs to be improved”.

### Business District Parking Supply Analysis

To substantiate noted parking issues and determine if a parking deficiency indeed exists, a parking supply analysis

was completed. The following methodology was used to complete the analysis:

- Square footage for buildings were generated from the building inventory, which were sorted by use. Multiple floor buildings were accounted for in the building inventory. Building areas were derived by taking 80% of the footprint area to compensate for wall space and common areas. Residential structures, churches, libraries, firehalls, schools, and cultural facilities were eliminated from the analysis. (Parking for these facilities were also eliminated).
- Zoning regulations established parking demand:
  - Commercial office, government office, retail establishments: Divided floor area by 200
  - All medical office facilities: Divided floor area by 100
  - All manufacturing buildings: Divided floor area by 300
  - Number of Hotel Rooms where estimated: Allotted 1 space per room + 3
  - Service stations where estimated to have 2 bays = 6 parking spaces
  - All Miscellaneous buildings: Divided floor area by 200

The Floor areas and Parking spaces were then summarized by zone.

**Table 2.4.2 Parking Surplus and/or Deficiencies**  
Village of Williamsville

Sector	Floor Area	Parking Need	Off-Street Parking	On-Street Spaces	Total Parking	Surplus /Deficiency Not Including Street Parking	Surplus /Deficiency with Street Parking
1	110,987	434	360	24	384	-74	-50
2	134,174	718	655	34	689	-63	-29
3	80,341	410	363	25	388	-47	-22
4	43,141	233	277	0	277	44	44
5	75,977	435	431	34	465	-4	30
6	177,781	964	644	37	681	-320	-283
7	53,254	272	242	26	268	-30	-4
8	78,784	487	349	0	349	-138	-138
Total Commercial Deficiencies Based On Current Zoning Code						-632	-452

The above table indicates the results of the parking analysis. Overall, according to the existing Village code, there is a shortage of 632 total parking spaces in the Village. Subtracting the 180 existing on-street parking spaces, this figure can be reduced to a deficiency of 452. Sector Number Six, as outlined on the Parking Inventory Map, has the greatest total need for parking (964) and the greatest total deficiency (681). Some of this outstanding need can be accommodated in other areas of the Business District.



## Village Infrastructure

The Village of Williamsville maintains a five-year Capital Plan for infrastructure, including the roads, the sanitary sewers and the water system. The Plan outlines capital improvements, schedule, capital costs and is reviewed annually.

## Water

The Village owns, operates and maintains its own water system. There are approximately 25 miles of distribution water main.

A Leak Detection Survey was completed in July 2005 for the Village water system, which showed that the water system has no major leaks. In addition an annual inspection of the water supply is conducted with the Erie County Department of Health and New York State Department of Health. Williamsville is able to meet both drinking water and fire fighting water supply needs.

The Village of Williamsville purchases water from the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA). ECWA water bound for Williamsville comes from the Niagara River and is cleaned and purified at Van De Water Treatment Plant in Tonawanda. The Village receives a bulk water service from the ECWA at a 2005 rate of \$3.96 per 1000 gallons.

## Stormwater and Sanitary Sewer

The stormwater and the sanitary sewer are separate facilities; both are maintained and owned by the Village. There are approximately 18 miles of sanitary sewer pipe and 7.6 miles of stormwater pipe.

The Western New York Stormwater Coalition provides regulations for the stormwater in the Village. The Village maintains monitoring stations for stormwater and is compliant with the regulations of the Western New York Stormwater Coalition.

Wastewater from the sanitary sewer is conveyed from the Village to District #16 in the Town of Amherst. The Village purchases this service from the Town based on the number of gallons treated. The District treats an average of 24.5 million gallons per day while the capacity of the system is 36.0 million gallons per day. The Village reports no unusual issues with this system and no problems fulfilling demand capacity for the community.

## Utilities

The Village is part of the Amherst Utility Cooperative (AUC). Members of the AUC include the Village of Williamsville, the Town of Amherst, three school districts and three fire departments. The AUC, formed in 1998, is a way of reducing costs by joint purchasing utilities.

The gas provider for the Village is National Fuel Gas Company. The electricity provider for the Village is Niagara Mohawk, a National Grid Company. Homeowners individually contract gas and electric utilities.



## Circulation and Infrastructure Planning Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of collected inventory to date, personal and telephone interviews, and public input, several implications were identified. The recommendations prepared for the Community Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- The involvement of numerous transportation organizations with interests in Williamsville demands strong communication and coordination as planning recommendations are proposed.
- Current GBNRTC annual daily traffic counts on Main Street between Union Road and Evans Road (35,700 in 2003) are significantly over recommended capacity and create issues related to traffic congestion, excessive speed, safety and a loss of historic community character. Heavy traffic conditions on Wehrle Drive, Garrison Road, Evans Street and Mill Street also detract from community quality of life.
- Heavy traffic on Main Street bisects the community and makes pedestrian crossing a dangerous and time consuming issue.
- There is a deficiency of approximately 452 total parking spaces in the Main Street Business Corridor based on calculations using the current Village Zoning Code. The Community Plan should seek a parking solution to accommodate more cars without further compromising the visual character of Main Street.
- The relocation of the Williamsville toll barrier could have positive implications for Main Street. If accomplished, more commuters could use the Thruway rather than drive directly through the Village to reach their home or office.
- The expansion of Wehrle Drive, while already funded by the County, is a controversial project that is not favored by several local interests. By widening the road, existing neighborhoods near the area may become isolated and “cut off” from the rest of the Village. In addition, traffic congestion, excessive speed and safety could also become significant issues.
- Issues related to circulation, parking, and access to the existing Williamsville Water Mill must be addressed if the development is to become an economic success.
- Village bicycle and pedestrian trails are short and disconnected. There is no coherent trail system that links the Village for non-motorists.



## *2.5 Parks & Nature*

This section highlights various park and open space resources and environmental characteristics, within the Village. The healthy evolution of Williamsville must incorporate the enhancement and evolution of the park system as a strategic element of the future land use plan. Furthermore, the Community Plan must exhibit sensitivity to environmental issues and maintain a delicate balance between man and nature.

### **Village Parks**

Williamsville's six major parks include: Island Park, Glen Park, the Lehigh Memory Trail, Garrison Park, South Long Park and Amherst State Park. Each facility is described below:

- Island Park – Island Park is surrounded by Ellicott Creek and is accessible from the Amherst Town Hall parking lot. The park serves as a place for gatherings and festivals with playground facilities, barbecue grills, a wading pool, creative play equipment, paved trail, benches and picnic tables, drinking fountains, public restrooms and rentable picnic shelters. The 5.6-acre park hosts the Old Home Days festival, the Taste of Williamsville Food Festival, the Music in the Park Series and Christmas festivities. The park is well maintained and currently serves the needs of the community as a natural setting for civic functions.
- Glen Park – A picturesque 10.2-acre park owned jointly by the Town and Village and managed by the Glen Park Joint Board, Glen Park features a cascading waterfall and a series of interconnecting ponds of Ellicott Creek. Glen Park also includes gravel and paved trails, benches, an enclosed pavilion building and parking facilities. The park can be accessed from Main Street adjacent to the bridge over Ellicott Creek. Glen Park is adjacent to Amherst State Park on the north side and the Williamsville Water Mill on the south side, bounded by Rock Street and the properties along Mill and Main Street and bisected by Glen Avenue.
- Lehigh Memory Trail – A Village-owned walking/cycling trail that extends from South Cayuga Road to South Long Street. The trail is approximately one half-mile long. Along the trail is the Williamsville Depot, a historic railroad depot of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. A Village sponsored program enables the public purchase and dedication of trees and commemorative plaques; the Village maintains the trees in perpetuity.
- Garrison Park – Bounded by Garrison Road, Park Drive, South Ellicott Street and property lines south of Park Drive this 2.3-acre park is owned by the Village. This Park provides playground equipment, a wading pool, a small gazebo, a full basketball court, a creative play structure, a lighted paved path, portable restrooms with privacy fence, benches and picnic tables, barbecue grills and a Memory Garden.

- South Long Park – Offerings include a baseball diamond, tennis courts, basketball court, playground equipment and a climbing apparatus. The Park is Village-owned, bounded by South Long Street and adjacent to properties along Main Street, California Drive and Lehigh Memory Trail. The Park is not currently linked to this Trail.
- Amherst State Park – This 77-acre park, owned by the State of New York, links Williamsville and the Village's park space to a vast amount of open space. The park is currently undeveloped. The Town of Amherst has completed a master planning process that will maintain the park as a passive recreational area. There are currently no plans in place to establish a physical connection between the Village and Amherst State Park.

**Table 2.5.1 Park Acreage**

*Village of Williamsville*

Park Name	Acres
Amherst State Park (Village Portion)	5.8
Garrison Park	2.4
Glen Park	9.4
Island Park	5.5
Lehigh Memory Trail	4.2
South Long Park	4.2
Total	31.5

Source: Amherst Planning Department and peter j. smith & company, inc.

## Park Classifications

The Town of Amherst Recreation & Parks Master Plan characterizes all of the parks in Amherst including some in the Village of Williamsville. These classifications include passive parks, neighborhood parks and community parks. A passive park is one that provides an area for passive recreation for the region. A neighborhood park is a

recreational and social space for the local community. A community park is an area for the whole community providing both active and passive recreation. The passive parks in the Village include Amherst State Park and Glen Park. The neighborhood parks in the Village include Garrison Park and South Long Park. The community parks in the Village include Island Park.<sup>1</sup>

The Lehigh Memory Trail is not part of this classification, but it provides a specific linear trail function.

## Existing Park Planning Initiatives

As part of the Amherst Park system, the Williamsville Parks were involved in the Amherst Recreation and Parks Master Plan completed in 2004. The Master Plan made recommendations for each park studied, a general statement of recommendations is given in the park descriptions. Recommendations included maintenance recommendations for Glen Park, Garrison Park and South Long Park, replacement of the wading pool with a spray pad/water play apparatus in Island Park and Garrison Park, addition of washrooms in Glen Park and South Long Park, and the removal of a ball diamond in South Long Park.

## Park Patterns Map

The following Park Patterns Map illustrates the location of all Village park facilities.

<sup>1</sup> Monteith Planning Consultants. "Town of Amherst Recreation and Parks Master Plan: Background Report" June 21, 2004.



Figure 2.5.1 Park Patterns



## Geology

As detailed in the Village Reconnaissance Survey the Village of Williamsville is located on the western segment of the Onondaga Escarpment. The Onondaga Escarpment is a bedrock ridge of Late Devonian Dolomitic limestone that extends from Albany in the east to Niagara Gorge in the west. In the Village the Escarpment divides the community just north of Main Street where the falls are located. The escarpment separates two plains left behind by glacial lakes, Lake Huron in the north and Lake Erie in the south.

Onondaga limestone is resistant to erosion resulting in the escarpment as the surrounding rock erodes away. Under the limestone bed is hydraulic limestone and above is a rich soil that formed along the fall line of the Escarpment.

## Topography

The Village of Williamsville is generally flat with some slopes occurring along the Onondaga Escarpment that travels across the Village just north of Main Street. There is some substantial sloping of the land along the Onondaga Escarpment north of Lake Ledge Drive at the Village line.

## Soils

An overview of soils in a community gives a sense of how suitable for development the land is and what type of construction and maintenance is needed in a given area. Soil properties that affect how developable an area is include permeability, depth of soil and slope. In the Village of Williamsville, according to the General Soils Database of Erie County Department of



## A Community Plan for the Village of Williamsville Draft Inventory & Analysis Report – September 2005

Environment and Planning, 83% of the land is urban land or an urban land complex. According to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service streets, parking lots, buildings and other structures of urban areas are the general composition of urban land. The slope of urban land ranges from 0% to 45%.

Of the remaining types in the Village, the largest non-urban land is a Teel-Middlebury complex with 8% of the total soil area located around the flood plain. This is an area that may have development issues due to the soil properties.



Flood Plain  
Island Park, Williamsville

### Hydrology Watershed

The Village of Williamsville is located in the Niagara Watershed. According to the New York Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Niagara watershed is about 514,810 acres and includes five counties, Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Wyoming and Orleans. Ellicott Creek in Williamsville serves as a tributary in the Niagara Watershed draining into the Niagara River. The annual rainfall in the Niagara Watershed is 35 to 40 inches and the annual snowfall in the northern portion of the watershed where the Village is located is about 75 inches per year. The

presence of Lakes Erie and Ontario in the region help moderate the climate.

### Streams

Ellicott Creek is the only significant body of water within the Village. According to the New York USGS, the annual mean stream flow in 2002 was 154 ft<sup>3</sup>/s. The Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan Inventory and Analysis Report states that, according to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Ellicott Creek is Class B water, meaning the best usage is for primary and secondary contact recreation and fishing. If there is a problem with the water quality the NYSDEC designates the resource according to how much it affects the best usage. The designation is in four categories: Precluded, Impaired, Stressed or Threatened. Ellicott Creek has been categorized as Stressed due to hydrologic modifications. There was an Ellicott Creek Improvement Project conducted from 1988 to 1991 to improve the restoration and management of the resource. In 2000, the Army Corps of Engineers noted that the water quality of Ellicott Creek had generally improved in recent years.

### Wetlands

There are no federal or State designated wetlands located within the Village of Williamsville.

### Flood Hazard Areas

100-year flood plains are designated as flood hazard areas because they are areas that have a 1% chance of flooding within a given year. There is a 100-year flood plain within the Village of Williamsville; it surrounds Ellicott Creek as the Creek travels through the community.

### Groundwater

Groundwater is taken from underground aquifers in the area's water basin. The Village is a part of the Lake Erie-Niagara River drainage basin. According to the Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan and the Ground Water Atlas of the United States the aquifers in the Lake Erie-Niagara River drainage basin consist of particularly hard water. The groundwater the drainage basin aquifers generally need treatment for most uses.

### Wooded Areas

The major wooded areas of the Village are located along the flood plain.

### Plants and Wildlife

As stated in the Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, Ellicott Creek is home to a warm water fishery, many seasonal bird species as well as mammal and reptile species. As Ellicott Creek crosses the Village boundary this plant and animal habitat enters the Village as an asset to the quality of life.

### Hazardous Materials

There are no sites in Williamsville listed on the DEC Division of Environmental Site Remediation Database.

### Air Quality

The Clean Air Act requires the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The standards measure six principal pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (PM10), particulate matter (PM 2.5), ozone and sulfur oxides. There are ambient air quality monitoring stations across New York State to assess the air quality conditions each day. There are several monitoring

stations in the Erie County region including one in Amherst. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation the region is in compliance with all air quality standards except ozone. The Amherst monitoring station recorded an average maximum of 0.091 ppm for an 8-hour period, which was slightly higher than the current state standard of 0.08 ppm. However it did fall within the federal standard of 0.12ppm, which is to be the revised New York State standard as well.

### Noise

The Village of Williamsville regulates the noise level in the Village by prohibiting certain acts. The Village does not allow any loud noise, which disturbs the public peace in anyway, including construction work and lawn mowing, after 11:00 pm. Before 8:00 a.m., lawn mowing or any other loud noise is prohibited. In addition, before 7:00 a.m. no construction or repair of a building exterior or excavation of any site is allowed.

The Buffalo Niagara International Airport is located just south of the Village of Williamsville. When the Crosswind Runway is in use the Village is directly in the path of planes traveling in and out of the airport. Also a noise consideration is from the Thruway toll barrier and bridge, which causes a substantial amount of noise in the southeast quadrant.

### Tree Board

The Village of Williamsville has over 2,000 trees and has been designated a Tree City USA for 2005. Most of the trees in the Village are maple trees. Although trees along



Main Street have been lost due to street widening, the side streets are substantially treed.

The designation of Tree City USA means that the Village met all four required criteria including having a tree board for the Village, a tree care ordinance, a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day proclamation and observance. The Village also has a survey of all the trees in the Village completed by students at Cornell University. The tree survey makes recommendations for tree planting specific to the Village's urban community including better planting procedures. These recommendations will help alleviate the Village's problems with dying trees, as has occurred with plantings on Main Street.



Typical Village Sidewalk

### Nature Patterns Map

The Nature Patterns Map shows the major natural elements in the Village. These include the Onondaga Escarpment and the flood plain surrounding Ellicott Creek.

Figure 2.5.2 Nature Patterns



## Nature Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of collected inventory to date, personal and telephone interviews, and public input, several implications were identified. The recommendations prepared for the Community Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- The Village has six attractive parks but no connected system of green spaces that link these parks and enable a non-automobile alternative
- Many trees have died over the past decade due to environmentally unfriendly conditions for street trees including excessive salt and pollution. The 25 Year Tree Replacement Plan already in place is a positive step in addressing tree preservation for the future. Although a portion of funding has been obtained for the implementation of the 25 Year Tree Replacement Plan, further funding is needed to accomplish the goals of the Plan. The Community Plan should investigate methods of funding the continued implementation of this 25 Year Plan.
- There are currently no plans in place to establish a physical connection between the Village and Amherst State Park.
- While national standards recommend 88 acres of parkland for a community like Williamsville, the Village contains far less than this figure. However, several mitigating circumstances reduce this outstanding need including “special use” parks and readily available parkland in the surrounding Town of Amherst. The overall quality and connectivity of parkland in Williamsville is an issue, not the quantity.





## 2.6 Economy

The objective of this section is to construct a realistic portrait of current economic life in the Village using a variety of existing data sources. As a small economy operating within the larger context of the Town of Amherst, Williamsville has established a successful “niche” market of office, retail, and commercial activity. The recommendations in the Community Plan will seek to capitalize on existing economic strengths and address weaknesses in an effort to enhance and expand this “niche” market. Since the Village and Town operate within the larger economic context of Western New York, regional economic changes will greatly affect their ultimate economic success.

The inventory contains current Census data that compares the Village to the surrounding Town of Amherst and Erie County. Additional information sources include the 2002 and 1997 Economic Census, Business First of Buffalo, data from the Amherst Industrial Development Agency and the Amherst Chamber of Commerce. Personal interviews with selected local developers and real estate agents were also completed to provide additional insight. To establish a more specific portrait of the Village economy, some Village economic statistics are presented on a “stand-alone” basis without comparison to other communities.

### Income Characteristics

A comparison of 2000 income figures for the Village of Williamsville, Town of Amherst and Erie County are listed in the following table:

**Table 2.6.1 Household Income Distribution 2000**  
Village of Williamsville, Town of Amherst and Erie County

	Village of Williamsville	Percent	Town of Amherst	Percent	Erie County	Percent
Total Households	2573	100%	45,052	100%	380,890	100%
Less than 10,000	159	6.2%	2,657	5.9%	41,325	10.8%
10,000-14,999	225	8.7%	2,432	5.4%	29,626	7.8%
15,000-24,999	222	8.6%	4,281	9.5%	53,865	14.1%
25,000-34,999	314	12.2%	4,493	10.0%	49,316	12.9%
35,000-49,999	388	15.1%	6,431	14.3%	61,760	16.2%
50,000-74,999	549	21.3%	9,482	21.0%	71,848	18.9%
75,000-99,999	379	14.7%	6,204	13.8%	37,429	9.8%
100,000-149,999	238	9.2%	5,623	12.5%	24,537	6.4%
150,000-199,999	58	2.3%	1,779	3.9%	5,900	1.5%
200,000 or more	41	1.6%	1,670	3.7%	5,284	1.4%
Median Household	47,557		55,427		38,567	

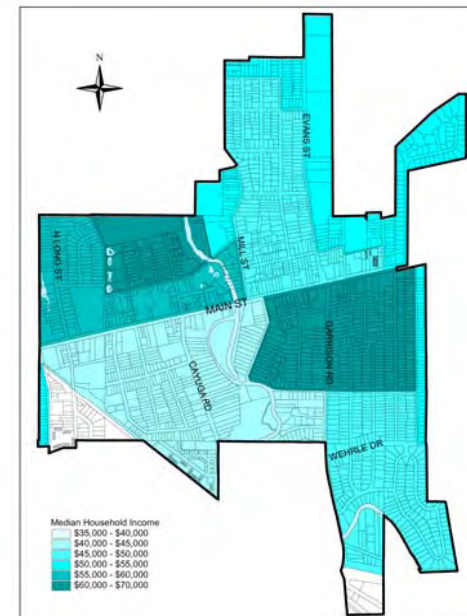
Source: US Bureau of the Census

The 2000 income statistics for the Village of Williamsville, the Town of Amherst and Erie County illustrate that in the Village of Williamsville, 6.2% of the households earn less than \$9,999 compared to 5.9% for the Town of Amherst and 10.8% in Erie County. A total of 13.1% of the households in the Village earn over \$100,000 compared to 20% for the Town and 9.4% in Erie County as a whole. The median household income for the Village of Williamsville (\$47,557) is higher than the County (\$38,657) but somewhat lower than the Town (\$55,427).

### Income Characteristics Map

The following map illustrates the income characteristics by block groups in the Village using the median household income characteristics. The highest levels of household income are concentrated in the northwest and southeast quadrants of the Village.

Figure 2.6.1 Median Household Income in 2000  
Village of Williamsville



Source: US Bureau of the Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

### Individual Poverty Status

The following Table illustrates the poverty status for the Village of Williamsville, Town of Amherst, Erie County and New York State.

**Table 2.6.2 Individual Poverty Status – 2000**

Village of Williamsville, Town of Amherst, Erie County and  
New York State

Municipality	Below Poverty Level
Village of Williamsville	240 (4.5%)
Town of Amherst	7,015 (6.4%)
Erie County	112,358 (12.2%)
New York State	2,692,202 (14.6%)

Source: US Bureau of the Census – 2000, peter j. smith & company, inc.

The U.S. Census Bureau uses an established income threshold that varies according to family size and structure to determine who is poor. If a family's total income is less than their threshold, then that family and every individual of that family is considered poor. In 2000, a family of four that includes two related children under 18 would have a weighted average threshold of \$17,463 and if that family's total income is below this they are considered poor.

Poverty levels for 2000 indicate that the poverty level for the Village of Williamsville, at 4.5%, is well below that of

Erie County (12.2%) and New York State (14.6%). This low poverty level indicates that federal and state funding for programs like housing redevelopment or community revitalization may be more difficult to acquire for the Village. Public funding typically requires designated need and proof that dollars will be spent to improve the quality of life for local impoverished.

## Village Business Patterns

The Economic Census offers one way to create a clear picture of the types of active businesses that comprise the Village economy and how these businesses have grown and changed over the past five years. The following tables and descriptions detail changes that have taken place in the Village between 1997 and 2002.

The total number of businesses have increased from 329 to 395. The number of employees has also increased from 4,065 to 5,515.

Significant Village businesses include those in the fields of Health Care, Professional/Scientific/Technology, Finance/Insurance, Retail Sales, Construction, Hotel/Food Service, Administrative Support and Management of Companies. From a growth perspective, the number of overall retail establishments grew from 63 to 128 while employment figures grew from 575 to 1,787. Accommodation and Food Services also grew from 19 to 30 total establishments with an increase in employment from 398 to 766. In decline was the number of Health-Care oriented businesses; the numbers have fallen from 69 to 45. Administrative Support businesses have also declined significantly from 143 in 2000 to 113 in 2002.

In total, the number of establishments increased by 20.1% and the total number of employees increased by 35.7%.

**Table 2.6.3 – Establishments & Employees 1997-2002**  
Village of Williamsville

NAICS Industry Code	Industry Description	# Establishments		Number of Employees	
NAICS INDUSTRIES		1997	2002	1997	2002
42	Wholesale trade	28	25	135	194
44-45	Retail trade	63	128	573	1,787
53	Real estate & rental & leasing	13	13	133	196
54	Professional, scientific, & technical services	68	73	294	360
56	Administrative & support & waste management & remediation svces.	32	31	1,469	1,399
61	Educational services	4	4	50	50
62	Health care & social assistance	69	45	829	500
71	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	8		N/A	
72	Accommodation & food services	19	30	398	766
81	Other services (except public administration)	30	38	184	263
<b>Total</b>		<b>329</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>4,065</b>	<b>5,515</b>
<b>Total Increase in # of Establishments</b>			<b>20.1%</b>		
<b>Total Increase in # of Employees</b>					<b>35.7%</b>

Source: Economic Census 1997-2002

**Table 2.6.4 – Total Payroll and Sales 1997-2002**  
Village of Williamsville

NAICS Industry Code	Industry Description	Annual Payroll (\$1,000)			Shpmts/Sales/Recpts (\$1,000)		
NAICS INDUSTRIES		1997	97Adj	2002	1997	97Adj	2002
42	Wholesale trade	5,716	6,407	7,411	110,437	123,789	87,216
44-45	Retail trade	7,726	8,660	24,590	59,559	66,760	225,305
53	Real estate & rental & leasing	3,220	3,609	6,643	26,931	30,187	49,456
54	Professional, scientific, & technical services	10,161	11,389	12,771	33,987	38,096	33,743
56	Administrative & support & waste management & remediation svcs.	26,356	29,542	14,086	36,193	40,569	24,952
61	Educational services	334	374	334	N/A		N/A
62	Health care & social assistance	40,746	45,672	30,000	N/A		N/A
71	Arts, entertainment, & recreation	N/A		N/A	N/A		N/A
72	Accommodation & food services	3,289	3,687	9,404	10,209	11,443	26,757
81	Other services (except public administration)	3,664	4,107	5,243	9,967	11,172	15,056
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101,212</b>	<b>113,449</b>	<b>110,482</b>	<b>287,283</b>	<b>322,016</b>	<b>462,485</b>
<b>Overall Annual Payroll Decline 1997-2002</b>				<b>-2.6%</b>			
<b>Overall Increase in Shipments/Sales/Receipts 1997-2002</b>							<b>43.6%</b>

Source: Economic Census 1997-2002

The Retail Trade and Professional sectors increased significantly in both payroll and overall sales. The Administrative/Support and Health Care/Social Assistance sectors took serious declines during this same time period.

According to the table above, while overall sales increased by nearly 43.6% between 1997 and 2002, total payroll declined by 2.6%. This trend, combined with a significant increase in employees during the same time period, indicates that new jobs created in some sectors pay significantly less than existing jobs or jobs that may have been lost during this time period.



### Main Street Business Composition

Most Williamsville business occurs on Main Street. The following table outlines current building uses in the Main Street Business District. Boundaries of this District include Main Street between Union Road and Hirschfield Street. The District also extends slightly off of Main Street in some cases to accommodate ancillary businesses.

**Table 2.6.5 - Main Street Composition 2005**  
*Business and Commercial Uses*

	Total Establishments	Square Footage	Percentage of Total Space
Total Square Footage in Use	484	1,096,643	100%
Total Vacant Space	29	60,840	5.5%
General Office Space	180	253,857	23.1%
Medical Office Space	50	71,628	6.5%
Insurance Office Space	12	24,439	2.2%
Retail – Restaurant	18	60,159	5.4%
Retail – Apparel	19	33,824	3.1%
Retail – All Other Retail	47	45,452	4.5%
Services– Beauty Salon/Spa	30	36,165	3.5%
Services – Financial	9	17,127	1.6%
All Other Services	30	48,233	4.4%
Residential (High Density)	27	276,167	25.1%
Residential (Low Density)	20	41,076	3.4%
Government & Institutional	6	65,270	6.0%
Manufacturing/Processing	4	15,388	1.4%
Education/Other	3	47,000	4.3%

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department; peter j. smith & company, inc.

The preceding table illustrates the significant amount of current commercial and residential activity within the Main Street Business District. All dimensions reported are approximate; square footage estimates are based on 80% building coverage per parcel. There are 484 establishments and 1.1 million square feet of total space are currently in use. Of this total, only 60,840 square feet are currently classified as vacant.

The majority of space in the District is devoted to Commercial/Office space. There are approximately 180 locations for and 253,857 square feet of General Office Space. Medical Office Space comprises 71,628 square feet and has 50 locations, and Insurance Office Space comprises 24,439 square feet with 12 locations.

Retail uses are prominent in the Main Street Business District, yet not nearly as prominent as office presence. Establishments classified as Restaurants comprise 60,159 square feet with 18 locations. Apparel-oriented retail encompasses 33,824 square feet with 19 locations. All other retail on the Street includes 47 additional establishments and a total of 45,452 square feet of operational space.

Beauty Salons and Spas are a significant service-oriented building use in the District. There are a reported 30 establishments comprising 36,165 square feet. Financial services comprise 17,127 square feet with nine locations. All other services combined, a reported 30 establishments, comprise 48,233 square feet.

Residential, Government/Institutional, and Manufacturing comprise the remaining major categories of use in the District. High Density Residential comprises 276,167 square feet with 27 establishments, Low Density Residential comprises 41,076 square feet with 20 establishments, Government & Institutional comprises 65,270 square feet with 6 establishments, and Manufacturing/Processing comprises 15,388 with four establishments.

### Business Composition and Location Patterns

The following Figure charts the location of all building uses on the Main Street Corridor in 2005. If a building has a single use it is characterized with that use; if a building contains more than one use per floor it is characterized as Mixed Use. The map illustrates several characteristics of the Main Street Business District:

#### District Walkability

The pedestrian walking scale indicates that the entire District can be comfortably walked in approximately 20 minutes. There is nearly 1.1 million square feet of built space on and around Main Street; many of the 5,515 reported employees in Williamsville work here. The District also houses hundreds of residents, and is within a ten-minute walking distance of virtually the entire Village population. Yet Main Street on most days has little, if any, pedestrian population. The organization of land use patterns on the street contributes greatly to the pedestrian experience.

#### Organization of Land Use Patterns

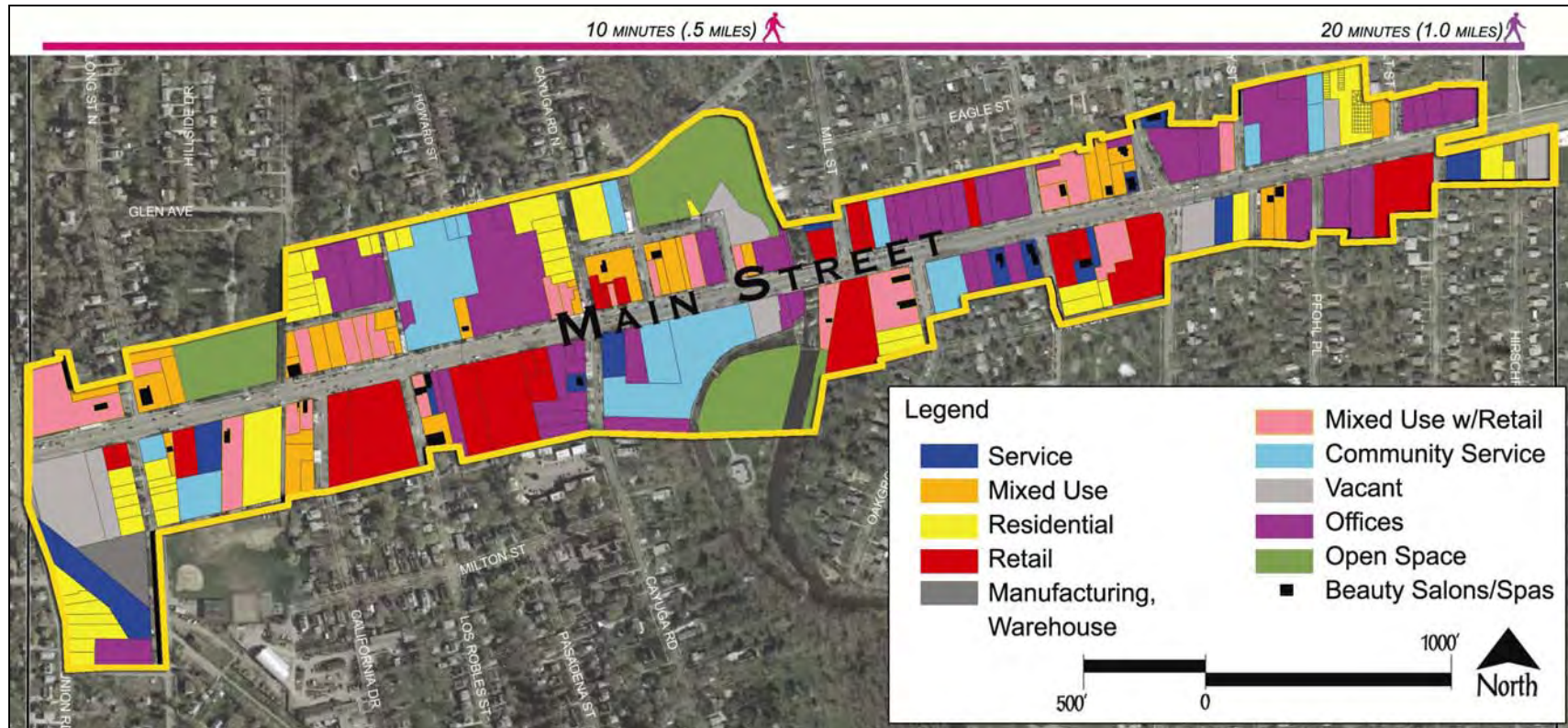
The map illustrates a disconnected pattern of land uses. Pure **Retail** uses, colored red, are sporadic along Main Street. **Mixed Uses** are colored orange, and Mixed Use w/Retail is Pink. **Beauty Salons/Spas** are highlighted on the map to illustrate their prominence in mixed-use locations. While their presence is welcome in Williamsville, their prominence in mixed-use locations reduces the connectivity of the retail experience. Further, **Streetscape Gaps** indicate areas when buildings are set back from the street and create unattractive “holes” in the streetscape. These “holes” also detract from

the shopping experience. **Offices, Community Service, Service and Manufacturing** uses are sprinkled throughout the District. Their presence, combined with Streetscape Gaps, Beauty Salons/Spas, and heavy traffic that deters “back and forth” shopping, further degrades the pedestrian experience. **Open Spaces** on the street, while a welcome asset, are typically set back from the streetscape and are not connected to one another.

#### Lack of Central Gathering Space

Successful Villages throughout history offer a visible, and welcoming, Central Gathering Space for residents and visitors to enjoy. This space might be used for public markets, concerts, and festivals. During the workday, it serves as a locale for lunch, coffee, and people watching. At all times, it is a four-season destination for pedestrians. While Island Park and Glen Park serve some of these purposes, they are not prominent, immediately apparent, nor a magnet for the many workers and residents who populate the District.

Figure 2.6.2 Land Use Location Patterns





## Regional Significant Employers

The following table provides an overview of Western New York's largest employers. Locations with reported Amherst/Williamsville headquarters are highlighted in yellow:

**Table 2-5 Selected Largest Employers in WNY 2004**  
Amherst/Williamsville Locations Highlighted

Company	Full-Time Employees	Business Description
1. State of New York	15,000	State Government
2. United States of America	11,000	Federal Government
3. Erie County	7,529	County Government
4. Buffalo City School District	6,829	Public School District
5. University at Buffalo	6,231	State University
6. Kaleida Health	5,876	Health Care Provider
7. HSBC Bank	5,155	Commercial Bank
8. M&T Bank	5,130	Commercial Bank
9. Delphi Thermal & Interior	5,000	Climate Control Manufacture
10. Catholic Health Systems	4,670	Catholic-sponsored Health Care Delivery System
14. Tops Markets, LLC	3,200	Supermarkets and Convenience Stores
21. People, Inc.	2,000	Services to People with Developmental Disabilities
33. Goodyear Dunlop Tires North America Ltd.	1,400	Tire Manufacture
34. Ingram Micro	1,500	Microcomputer Distributor
41. ElderWood Affiliates	1,231	Long Term Care Facility Operator
44. Williamsville School District	1,173	Public School District
67. Independent Health	859	Managed Care Organization

Source: Business First Book of Lists 2004; peter j. smith & company, inc.

According to the publication Business First of Western New York, the four largest employers within Western New York are the State of New York (15,000 employees in 2004), the United States of America (11,000), Erie County (7,529), and the Buffalo City School District (6,829). A close number five is the University at Buffalo with a reported 6,231 employees. The University's Main Campus is located in the Town of Amherst with a satellite location three miles south of Williamsville on Main Street in Buffalo.

Six additional companies in the top 70 have an Amherst/Williamsville headquarters location. People, Inc., which services people with developmental disabilities, employs 2000 people. Goodyear Dunlop, a tire manufacturer, employs 1,400 people. Ingram Micro, a microcomputer distributor, employs 1,500 people. ElderWood Affiliates, a long-term care facility operator, employs 1,231 people. The Williamsville City School District employs 1,173 teachers and support staff. Independent Health, a Managed Health Care organization, employs 859 people.

The Amherst/Williamsville location of these firms presents planning implications both positive and negative. While many are significant traffic generators, they also represent local employment opportunities that contribute to the potential quality of life for a Williamsville resident. Commuters who use Main Street also represent a "captive market" to tap for additional retail enhancement on Main Street.



### Fast Growing Local Companies

In addition to several headquarter locations for the region's major employers, 11 of the top 40 fastest growing companies in Western New York also have an Amherst/Williamsville location. The following table highlights these businesses and their overall rank in Western New York:

**Table 2.6.6 Selected Fastest Growing Companies 2004**  
Amherst/Williamsville Headquarter Locations

Company	2002 Sales 2001 Sales	Business Description	Year Founded
2. Lantrax Inc	\$1.2 million \$453,137	Professional consulting services	1994
6. Kanoodle.com	\$6.9 million 3.4 million	Internet pay-per-click search engine	1999
7. Fetch Logistics, Inc.	\$11.3 million 5.3 million	Trucking-oriented Freight Brokerage	1997
13. Hunt Real Estate IRA	\$44.8 million 23.6 million	Full Service Real Estate Firm	1911
15. Realty USA	\$58.2 million 51.4 million	Full Service Real Estate Firm	1962
17. Stampede Presentation Products	\$31.5 million 25.3 million	Value Added Distribution of Meeting Room Products	1997
19. Ronald O'Mara PC	\$2.9 million 2.4 million	Chemical Engineering	1992
20. WNY Surgical Supply	\$1.8 million 1.5 million	Surgical Equipment Distributor	1977
21. SKM Group*	\$11.5 million 8.7 million	Marketing Services	1986
28. G&G Fitness Equipment	\$13.6 million 11 million	Fitness Equipment Dealer	1997
37. RobsenWoese, Inc.	\$12.6 million 12.8 million	Consulting Engineering	1933

Source: Business First Book of Lists 2004; peter j. smith & company, inc.  
Figures Based on percentage growth in sales and number of worldwide employees  
\* Recently relocated to a Depew Headquarters Location

The diverse businesses on the list include Lantrax, Inc. (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in Western New York), a professional consulting service for business solutions. Kanoodle.com (#6), an Internet "target marketing" firm, Fetch Logistics, Inc. (#7), a trucking-oriented freight brokerage, Hunt Real Estate IRA (#13) and Realty USA (#17) are full service real estate firms. Other businesses comprising the list include engineering and marketing consulting services, and product distributors.

The location of these fast-growing companies in Amherst/Williamsville indicates a diverse economy and the Town/Village's high profile as a business location in Western New York.

### Current Village Development Initiatives - Williamsville Water Mill Complex

A cornerstone of Williamsville's economic revitalization initiative will include an appropriate restoration and redevelopment of the existing Historic Water Mill Complex located on East Spring Street by the banks of Ellicott Creek. The complex consists of the Williamsville Water Mills building and two single-family structures, whose historic status and detailed description are provided in the History chapter of this document.

The Village purchased this complex in the winter of 2005 with the hope of holding the property until an appropriate developer with a sensitive reuse plan for the complex can be found. Enhancing historic significance, enabling continued public access in and around the site, and facilitating economic development define the characteristics of this sensitive reuse plan. An Expression of Interest was made public in March of 2005; the Village is currently reviewing developer proposals.

One proposed use for the complex would include a small bakery/café with continued cider production on the first floor. Office space would be located on the second floor. The Ely-Zent house would be converted into a bed and breakfast/conference center to meet the demands of the local business community.

Another proposal suggests restoring full waterpower to the mill to provide a source of renewable energy. Completing significant historic restoration, developing a museum, a potential restaurant, new retail and other commercial offerings are other components of this development proposal.

All proposals to date suggest that the primary source of financing would be public in nature; the NY State Office of Historic Preservation was cited as an example of public funding opportunity. Varying levels of private investment would complement the public funding in each proposal.

## Economic Implications for Williamsville

Based on the results of collected inventory to date, personal and telephone interviews, and public input, several implications were identified. The recommendations prepared for the Economic Plan will give special consideration to the following elements:

- The Village's high median household income in 2000, \$47,557 compared to Erie County at \$38,567, could make funding future projects based on demonstrating community need difficult. The low poverty rate, 4.5% compared to 12.2% in Erie County, compounds this issue. The Village may have to pursue less traditional funding and financing resources for individual projects.
- While overall Village sales receipts increased by nearly 43.6% between 1997 and 2002, total payroll declined by 2.6%. This trend, combined with a significant increase in employees during the same time period, indicates that new jobs created in some sectors pay significantly less than existing jobs or jobs that may have been lost during this time period.
- The Business Composition Map illustrates the disconnected and unorganized nature of existing businesses on Main Street. Combined with difficulty crossing Main Street due to heavy traffic, and the lack of a physical focus such as a central gathering place, there is a clear lack of a cohesive shopping experience for retail customers.
- Parking lots on Main Street intended to serve local businesses have created unattractive "holes" in the streetscape that contribute to this disconnected appearance.
- Retail uses are prominent in the Main Street Business District, yet much less prominent than office presence. In total, the Business District offers approximately 140,000 square feet of retail space. By contrast, there is nearly 350,000 square feet of general office space.
- The presence of nearly 350,000 square feet of office space represents a "captive audience" for potential retail shoppers in the Main Street Business District.
- The presence of nearly 40,000 square feet of hair salons and day spas in mixed-use locations detracts from a cohesive pedestrian retail shopping experience. While their presence is not undesirable, the retail potential of the street is compromised.
- Heavy traffic on Main Street, combined with a lack of off-street parking to service the commercial district, deters commuters from using the Business District.
- The 14221 zip code, which encompasses Williamsville proper and a portion of Amherst, enjoys status as a "headquarters" location for prominent and fast growing companies. This status can aid in an overall marketing program for the Village proper.
- The Williamsville Water Mill Complex, with its historic significance, prominent location, and economic potential make sensitive redevelopment a cornerstone for the economic revitalization of the entire Village.



**APPENDIX B**  
*Village Economic Studies*





# **MARKET ANALYSIS OF MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT**

**March 19, 2007**

## **Introduction**

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This report presents an analysis of the potential for Williamsville's Main Street Business District to support various retail, commercial and residential uses over the next ten years. The results of this analysis will be instrumental in determining the business district's future needs for land and building space to accommodate demand and will directly inform proposed zoning and regulatory changes along Main Street.

This report is divided into six sections:

1. Regional Economic Trends and Outlook
2. Real Estate Market Conditions
3. Resident Market Area Profiles
4. Summary of Comparable Village Area Review
5. Potential Market Capture
6. Findings and Recommendations

# 1. Regional Economic Trends and Outlook

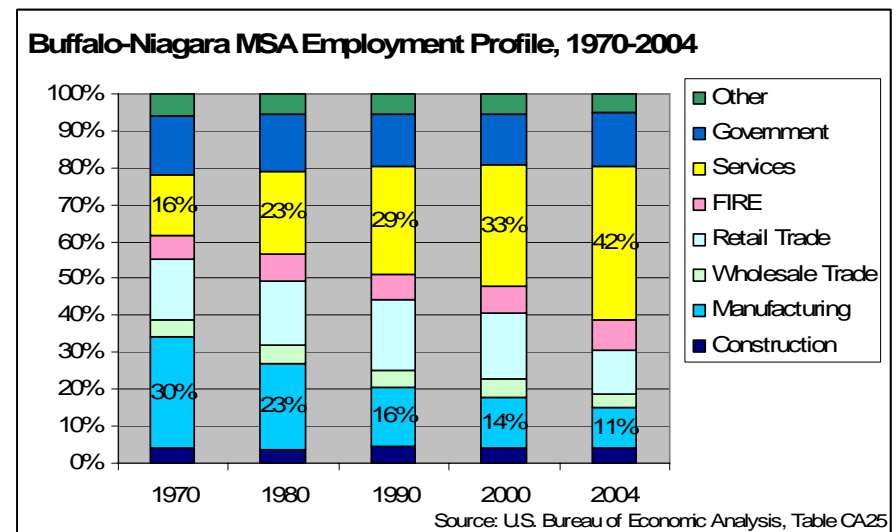
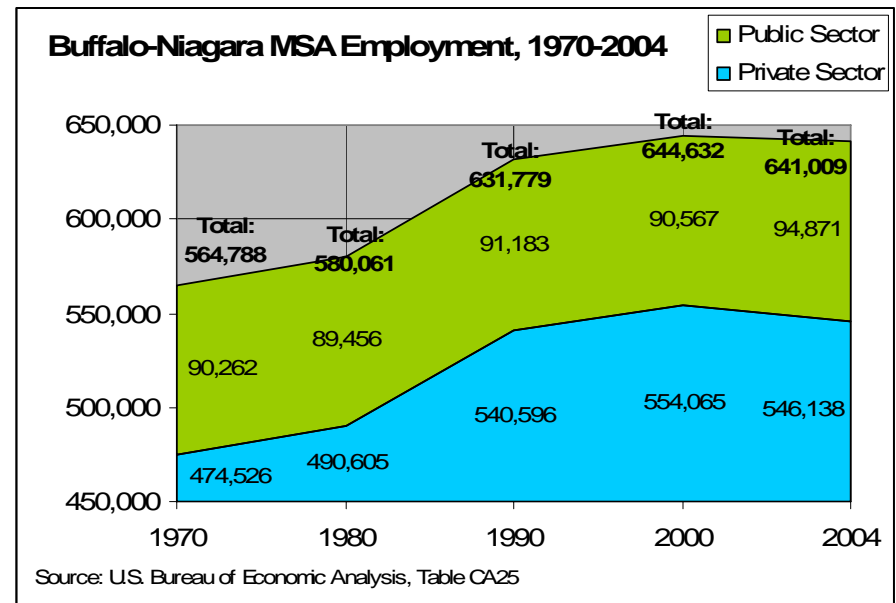
## Employment Trends

The common perception in the Buffalo-Niagara region is that its best economic days are in the past and that the regional economy is shrinking. A brief examination of the past few decades provides contradictory insight into that perception.

In 1970 the total non-agricultural job base of the Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was 564,788. Between 1970 and 2000 the region actually added 80,000 jobs to its employment base; there were 644,632 non-agricultural jobs in the region as of 2000. All of the job growth came in the private sector (the level of government employment remained virtually the same). Employment dipped during the recession of 2001, but the region's job base climbed back to 641,009 by 2004.

While this growth does appear to be significant, two things must be considered: 1) the annual job growth rate for the region from 1970-2004 of 0.4 percent was four times slower with the national growth rate of 1.6 percent during the same period; and 2) the region experienced a dramatic shift in its employment profile.

As the chart to the right shows the regional economy has experienced a complete transformation from one based on manufacturing to one based on service industries. From 1970 to 2004 the manufacturing sector's share of jobs in the MSA dropped from 30 percent to 11 percent. During the same period, the share of jobs in the services industries jumped from 16 percent to 42 percent. Remarkably the shares of all other major sectors remained stable.



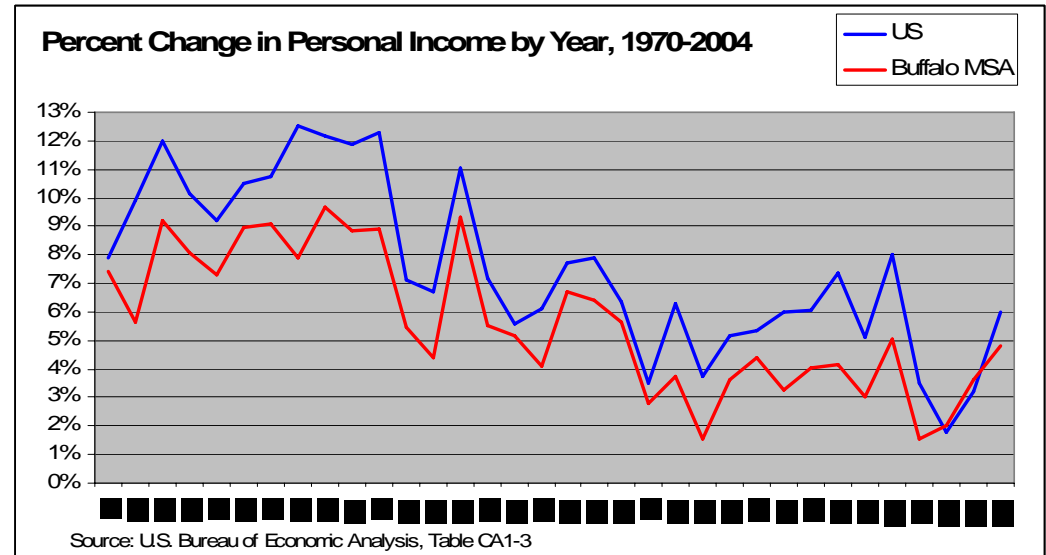
## Income and Retail Sales

A major effect of the shift from manufacturing to services jobs has been the slow growth of personal income in the Buffalo-Niagara region. As illustrated by the chart to the right the Buffalo region's personal income growth has trailed far behind national income growth over the past 35 years. The gap was particularly large during the boom of the 1990s, when national income levels increased by around 6-8 percent each year, but the Buffalo-Niagara region's total personal income only increased by about 4-5 percent.

A secondary effect of the slow growth in personal income in the Buffalo-Niagara region has been slow growth in retail sales. The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance collects data on retail sales by county, based on sales tax receipts.

This information, shown in the table at the right, documents that Erie County (which comprises the overwhelming majority of the MSA) has experienced very slow growth in its retail sales volume over the past decade. The total volume of retail sales for the 12-month period ending in February 2004 of \$11.60 billion only represents an annual growth rate of 2.31 percent from the volume of \$9.23 billion posted ten years earlier. By comparison statewide retail sales increased by 3.60 percent annually over this period.

This retail sales growth trails regional personal income growth and is actually less than the inflation rate. The slow growth of retail sales in Erie County is particularly problematic in light of the fact that the Canadian dollar has gained considerable strength against the U.S. dollar since the mid-1990s, a trend that should drive up retail sales in a border region like Erie County. As with the rest of the country, Erie County has also lost some at-place retail sales to Internet commerce.



## Retail Sales in Erie County, 1995-2004 (\$000s)

Period	Taxable Sales & Purchases	Change from Previous Period	
		Amount	Percent
3/95 - 2/96	\$9,231,016	\$326,035	3.66%
3/96 - 2/97	\$9,475,403	\$244,387	2.65%
3/97 - 2/98	\$9,673,990	\$198,587	2.10%
3/98 - 2/99**	\$9,519,264	(\$154,727)	-1.60%
3/99 - 2/00	\$10,403,729	\$884,465	9.29%
3/00 - 2/01	\$10,999,837	\$596,108	5.73%
3/01 - 2/02	\$11,009,803	\$9,965	0.09%
3/02 - 2/03**	\$11,327,361	\$317,558	2.88%
3/03 - 2/04*	\$11,601,121	\$273,760	2.42%
<b>Total/Avg Change</b>	<b>\$2,370,105</b>		<b>2.31%</b>

Source: New York State Department of Taxation & Finance

## **Regional Outlook**

A number of different agencies study the economy of the Buffalo-Niagara region. The general consensus is that the area's economy is still not done with its transition from manufacturing to services and that the region will, as a result, continue to lag the rest of the United States in terms of real income growth.

The January 2007 quarterly publication, *Western New York Economic News* (which is published by the Economics Department at Canisius College) puts Buffalo's outlook in blunt terms: "The declines in relative real earnings may also be a contributing factor as is the out-migration of young people from the region. Lower real wages in the upstate metropolitan areas compared to the rest of the nation, translates into fewer local career opportunities." The publication does offer a more optimistic take, though, suggesting that Buffalo's lower wages and lower housing costs make it an attractive location for expanding and/or relocating companies.

The Buffalo-Niagara region should therefore expect continued slow growth in its economy on the regional level, though the area does have the potential to post stronger growth given the right conditions.



## 2. Real Estate Market Conditions

Market conditions are summarized in this section for the regional office, retail and housing markets. Regional information is taken from various *MarketView* reports published by the Buffalo office of CB-Richard Ellis, as well as from the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors. Local information was obtained from the Village of Williamsville's property database and personal interviews with real estate professionals.

### Office Market

As of Year-End 2005 (the latest available report) the Buffalo region's office market contained a total of 24 million square feet, of which 16 million were classified as Class A or Class B by CB-Richard Ellis (Class C properties are not surveyed). Among Class A and Class B space in the region, 1.63 million square feet of space (10.2 percent of the total inventory) were available for lease at the end of 2005. Overall vacancy rates were somewhat higher in Downtown Buffalo than in suburban areas, though Downtown's Class A vacancy rate was actually quite low, at 3.9 percent.

The East submarket, which includes Williamsville, East Amherst, Cheektowaga, and Lancaster, contains 3.6 million square feet of space, of which 2.9 million is either Class A or Class B. The East submarket had a lower vacancy rate than the region as a whole at year-end 2005 (8.4 percent), and just 244,800 square feet were available in the whole submarket area. Lease rates in the East submarket were slightly lower than downtown for Class A, but comparable for Class B. There has been little recent development activity in the East submarket and little pressure exists for more development in the near future, as rents have been flat and vacancy rates have remained fairly steady.

Office demand in Williamsville is, according to local commercial brokers, primarily from small professional office users looking for reasonably priced spaces of 2,000 square feet or smaller. Due to the small size of most tenants and the modest rents being achieved (about \$16-17 per square foot), there is little incentive for developers to conduct extensive renovations of existing office buildings in the village. In the absence of larger and/or higher-paying tenants, additional incentives may be needed to spur reinvestment in aging office properties. Given Williamsville's strong concentration of existing office space relative to retail and other commercial uses, there may also be opportunities to redevelop existing office properties for other purposes.

**Buffalo Region Office Market Data, Year End 2005**

	Inventory	Available	Vac Rate	Net Absorp.	Quoted Rate
<b>Downtown Buffalo</b>					
Class A	3,481,605	137,000	3.9%	234,230	\$19-23
Class B	3,553,963	794,000	22.3%	(9,392)	\$14-17
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,035,568</b>	<b>931,000</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>224,838</b>	
<b>Regional Total</b>					
Class A	6,283,017	335,467	5.3%	198,412	\$17-21
Class B	9,784,607	1,298,045	13.3%	377,496	\$13-16
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,067,624</b>	<b>1,633,512</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>575,908</b>	
<b>East Submarket</b>					
Class A	715,243	56,713	7.9%	31,637	\$18-21
Class B	2,205,161	188,087	8.5%	(46,280)	\$14-16
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,920,404</b>	<b>244,800</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>(14,643)</b>	

Source: CB Richard Ellis

## Retail Market

The Buffalo regional retail market contained 26.2 million square feet of retail space as of year-end 2005, of which 5.4 million was in regional malls and 20.8 million was in shopping centers and in-line spaces. The overall regional vacancy rate at the end of 2005 was 13.5 percent; non-mall space was 13.9 percent vacant.

Williamsville is classified by CB-Richard Ellis as being in the Eastern Hills Mall submarket. Eastern Hills, at 6.1 percent, has the lowest vacancy rate of the region's six submarkets and the change in supply of occupied square feet (net absorption) increased by more than 250,000 square feet in 2005, though much of this was due to the opening of the Wal-Mart SuperCenter on Transit Road.

All retail space in Williamsville is housed in small strip centers and historic commercial buildings, and most retail spaces are very small (5,000 square feet or smaller). The going rate for retail space in Williamsville is about \$11, triple net (excluding maintenance, taxes and insurance), and the issues unique to an older village (small floorplates, limited parking, no truck loading) limits the appeal of many spaces to retailers. Given Williamsville's very strong demographics and substantial base of office workers, the village holds strong appeal for many chain retailers. Since chains can afford higher rents, there may be mounting pressure from such tenants to tear down old retail structures and replace them with modern structures, as has already begun to happen on the edges of the village.

## Residential Market

Williamsville remains a desirable address within the Buffalo region, and its older housing stock is fairly affordable relative to nearby suburban areas. For 2005-2006 there were 795 units sold in Williamsville (an average of 33 per month), with a median sale price of \$149,000. This median compares favorably to the median of \$117,900 in the Snyder/Eggertsville area but is considerably less than the median prices in the rest of Amherst (\$171,000) and especially Clarence (\$266,090).

## Buffalo Region Retail Market Data, Year End 2005

	Inventory	Available	Vac Rate	Net Absorp.
<b>Regional Totals</b>				
Malls	5,471,102	649,840	11.9%	(22,742)
Excluding Malls	20,769,147	2,883,331	13.9%	1,021,985
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,240,249</b>	<b>3,533,171</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>999,243</b>
<b>Eastern Hills Submarket</b>				
Malls	996,728	20,000	2.0%	17,000
Excluding Malls	3,058,438	226,269	7.4%	252,288
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,055,166</b>	<b>246,269</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>269,288</b>

Source: CB Richard Ellis

## Home Sales Summary, 2005-2006

	Units Sold	Median Price	Average Price
<b>Williamsville</b>			
All Units	795	\$149,000	\$164,236
Single-Family Only	609	\$155,000	\$170,887
<b>Snyder/Eggertsville</b>			
All Units	827	\$117,900	\$134,367
Single-Family Only	802	\$118,000	\$135,880
<b>Balance of Amherst</b>			
All Units	1,192	\$171,000	\$89,387
Single-Family Only	891	\$201,000	\$219,007
<b>Clarence</b>			
All Units	654	\$266,090	\$297,298
Single-Family Only	636	\$269,950	\$300,097

Source: Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors, Inc.

Of the homes sold in Williamsville during 2005-2006 just 186 were townhomes or condos. Thus, just 7.75 such units sold per month during this period, despite local realtors' reports of very strong demand for this product in the area.

The single-family housing market in Williamsville is very stable, with families typically holding on to their houses long into their "empty nest" years. Homes that do come on the market are very popular with young families and have been selling in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000, which is considerably lower than the prices of both older homes in closer-in locations like Snyder and in new suburban developments in East Amherst or Clarence. The small size of much of the existing housing stock has led many new homeowners to build additions. A local architect comments that Williamsville homeowners tend to spend about \$50,000 to \$100,000 on renovations and additions, compared with \$150,000 to \$200,000 for homeowners in Snyder.

The scarcity of new building lots makes such lots extremely valuable when they do become available. Units in a new townhome development in the village are selling for upwards of \$500,000. There has not yet been enough market pressure in Williamsville to lead to a wave of tear-downs, but there is mounting concern among residents that demand will eventually increase to the point that more historic homes will be torn down to make way for larger new homes.

Much of the rental housing product in the Village of Williamsville is located either in the older complexes along Evans Road or in two to four-unit buildings that are integrated into the village's neighborhoods. Demand for rental housing in Williamsville is driven primarily by young professionals who are not yet ready to buy homes but are drawn to Williamsville as an interesting alternative to suburbia. Local realtors believe that demand exists for new multi-family (especially condominium) units in the village's business district, but that garage parking would be a necessity for such units.

## **Summary of Real Estate Market Review**

Generally speaking, Williamsville presents the same challenge for all types of land uses: the village is a popular place but there is little developable land and existing structures are small and/or obsolete. However, due to the weak regional economy, achievable market prices do not tend to support the costs of redevelopment from a developer's perspective. Each land use type presents its own unique conundrum:

- Williamsville is a mature office market and there are few options available for prospective office users seeking large and/or modern office spaces. Office rental rates are not strong enough at this time to encourage major reinvestment in existing office properties.
- Many national retailers would like to have Williamsville locations, given the area's strong demographics, but there are shortages both of leasable space and of buildable land for such users. Most of the existing inventory of retail space is small, lacks convenient parking and has limited accessibility for truck loading, thus limiting its appeal to many tenants.

- The single-family housing stock in Williamsville sees little turnover, so sale prices are strong. However, many older units are very small and require additions and renovations to remain usable.
- New multi-family development is in demand but would require on-site, garaged parking. Given the limited lot sizes and the very high cost of building parking, the economics of this product may not work at this time, despite the demand.

### 3. Resident Market Area Profiles

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The resident market area for Williamsville can generally be broken down into three categories:

1. **Neighborhood market:** those living within a mile of the village center. The neighborhood market encompasses nearly all of the Village of Williamsville, plus surrounding neighborhoods of Amherst located just outside the village limits. Residents of the neighborhood market are very likely to make use of the everyday goods and services offered in Williamsville's business district and are more or less located with a 10-minute walking time from Main Street.
2. **Sub-regional market:** those living within 1-5 miles of the village center. The sub-regional market for Williamsville consists of those living between one and five miles away from the center of the village. This primarily suburban area takes in much of the Town of Amherst, including both the University at Buffalo's Main Campus and South Campus, and nearby areas in Clarence, Cheektowaga and Tonawanda. This market area does not use Williamsville as its primary destination for everyday purchases, but is likely to make relatively frequent trips to Williamsville for meals, salon appointments, shopping trips to specialty retailers and doctor appointments. This market is located within a 15-minute drive time from Williamsville.
3. **Regional market:** those living elsewhere in the Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), encompassing all areas of Erie and Niagara Counties located more than five miles from the center of Williamsville. Since the Regional Market is geographically vast, it includes households located as little as a ten-minute drive away from the center of Williamsville and those located as much as an hour away. Regardless of the proximity, regional market residents are likely not drawn to Williamsville for everyday convenience goods and services and, unless they work in or near the Village, are generally only inclined to visit Williamsville for destination retail and entertainment purposes. In this context Williamsville is competing for economic activity from this market with Buffalo, as well as with East Aurora, Lewiston, Hamburg and other village areas in the MSA.

The demographics and buying power of each of these market areas is discussed in detail below. Data for the ring study areas were generated by Easy Analytic Software, Inc. (EASI), which produces demographic and economic reports for areas throughout the United States. Regional data were compiled from U.S. Census information and the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC).

Data for each of the three markets are presented below for the following four categories: 1) Population and Age; 2) Households; 3) Income; and 4) Labor Force and Commuting



## Population and Age

### Neighborhood Market

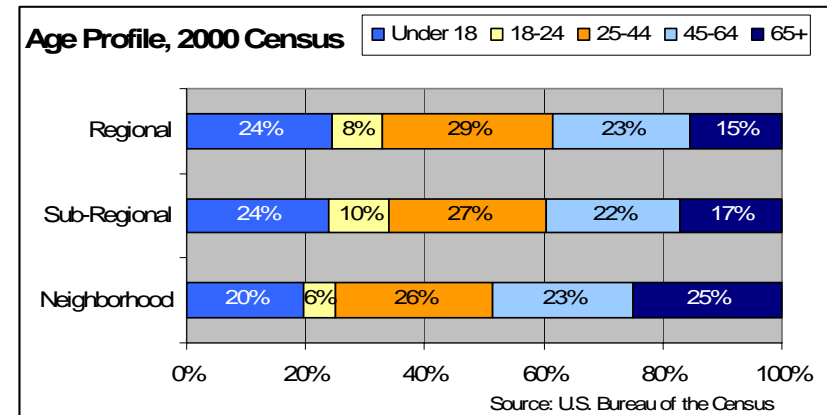
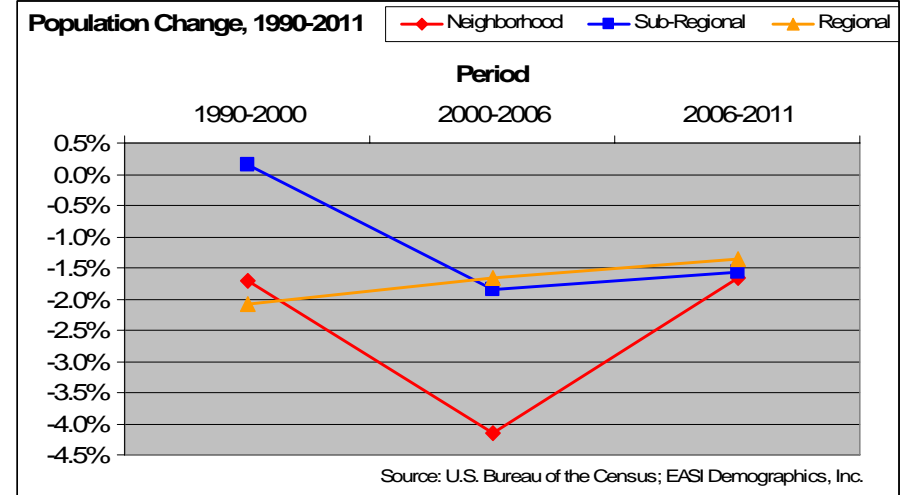
As of 2006 there were an estimated 7,404 residents living within one mile of the center of Williamsville. This is down slightly from the 2000 Census count of 7,725, and continued population losses are expected over the next several years. The median age of the neighborhood market is 44.0 years, and 25.1 percent of its residents are age 65 or older. The share of residents in the 65 or older age cohort is identical to the share aged under 25. About 1,700 residents are enrolled in school (22 percent of all residents).

### Sub-Regional Market

The 2006 estimate for the sub-regional population is 242,647, meaning that this market area accounts for about 21 percent of the total Buffalo-Niagara regional population. The sub-regional market is considerably younger than the neighborhood market: twice as many of its residents (34 percent) are under the age of 25 than are 65 or older (17 percent). The youth of this market area is due in part to the University at Buffalo's presence, as there are 23,000 college students living in this area, but there is also a strong share of families with school-age children: 18 percent of all residents are enrolled in primary or secondary school. The median age of the sub-regional market is 37, seven years younger than that of the neighborhood market.

### Regional Market

The regional market, as with the other two, has also been shedding population. The 2000 Census count for this market area of 915,145 represents a 2.0 percent decline from the 1990 population total of 934,673. The 2006 estimate for the regional market of 900,001 suggests that another 1.6 percent decline has taken place since 2000. The projected 2011 population count of the regional market are of 887,729 would further extend the decline. The age profile of the regional market is similar to that of the sub-regional market, which is to say considerably younger than the neighborhood market. The regional market's median age is 38.



## Households

### Neighborhood Market

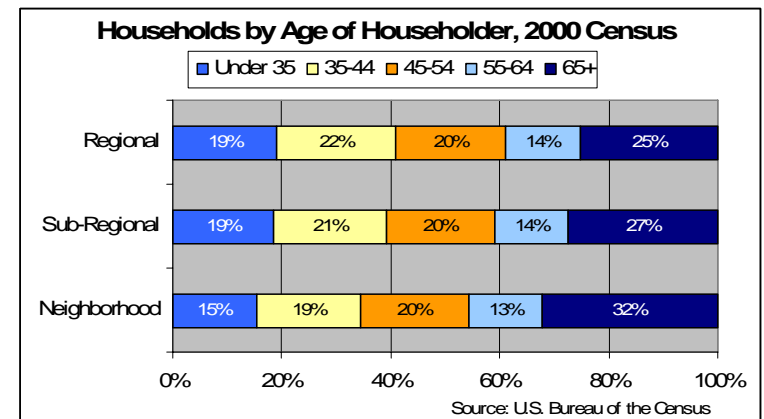
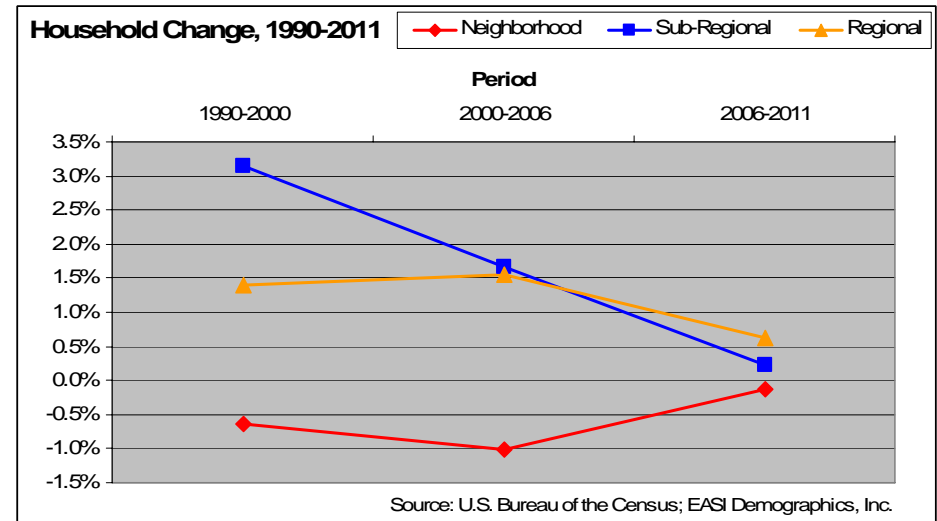
The neighborhood market contained an estimated 3,253 households as of 2006, down only very slightly from the 2000 total of 3,286. The number of households is projected to remain almost flat through 2011, despite projected population losses, which is indicative of the village area's declining household size. As of the 2000 Census, the average household size in the neighborhood market was 2.22 persons, and 69 percent of all households had either one or two occupants. Householders in this market tend to be quite old: 32 percent were 65 or older and 33 percent were between the ages of 45-64.

### Sub-Regional Market

As with the sub-regional market, the recent decline in population has not resulted in a decline in households. The 2006 estimate for households in the sub-regional market of 98,988 is actually up by two percent from the 2000 Census count of 97,376. This market area's population is projected to continue to show a slight decline through 2011; accordingly, its household count is expected to remain relatively flat in the near future. The average household size for this market area was 2.42 persons in 2000, making it somewhat larger than the neighborhood market. This difference can be explained in large part by the higher concentration of children under 18. The difference between population and households is also be partly due to the fact that about 9,600 of this area's residents live in group quarters; the majority of these individuals lives in college dormitories.

### Regional Market

Reflecting the national trend of household decline, the regional market has also experienced modest gains in the number of households while losing population. The estimated 2006 number of households in the regional market of 373,789 represents a 1.6 percent increase since 2000—exactly the same percentage by which the regional market's population has declined.



## Income

### Neighborhood Market

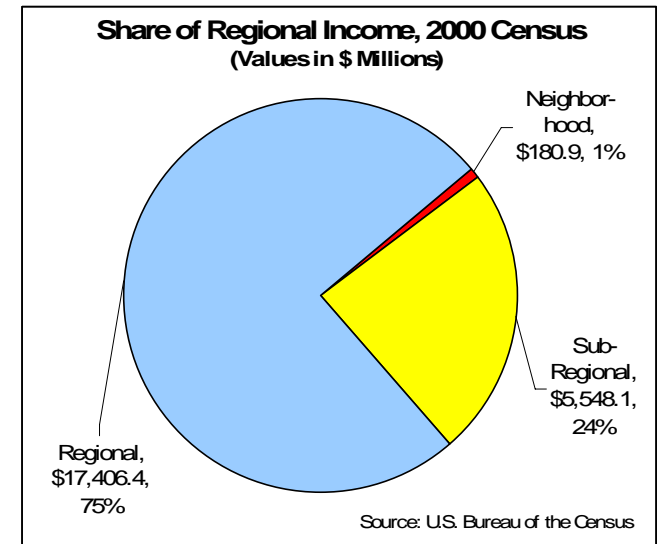
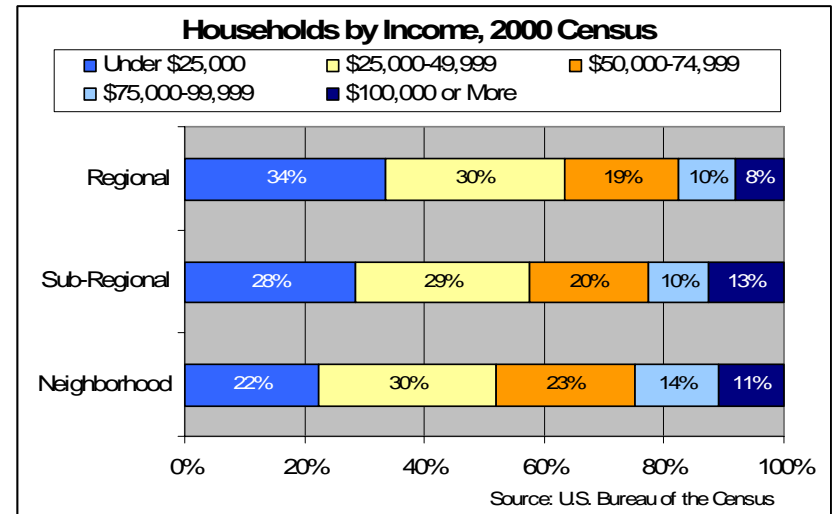
The 2000 median household income in the neighborhood market was \$48,230 and 25 percent of its households earned more than \$75,000 per year. Households in the neighborhood market headed by younger people are far more likely to be affluent than those headed by an older individual: 32 percent of households headed by a person under 55 earn more than \$75,000 per year, compared with just 16 percent of households headed by a person 55 or older. The aggregate income of the households in the neighborhood market as of 2000 was \$180.9 million.

### Sub-Regional Market

Household income levels for the sub-region are somewhat lower than for the neighborhood market; the median household income is about \$44,000 and just 22.6 percent of households earned more than \$75,000 per year. Unlike with the neighborhood market, households headed by older individuals in the sub-regional market tend to be more affluent than those headed by younger people. Among households headed by persons aged 45-64, 35 percent earn \$75,000 or more per year, compared with just 25 percent of households headed by persons under 45. As of the 2000 Census the aggregate household income of the sub-regional market was \$5.55 billion. This income level represents 24 percent of the region's total household income, which is indicative of the concentration of wealth in this area.

### Regional Market

Income levels for the regional market are considerably lower than those of the neighborhood and sub-regional markets. The median household income in 2000 for the regional market was about \$37,000, more than \$10,000 less than the neighborhood market's median income level. Nearly two thirds (64 percent) of households in this market area earned below \$50,000 per year, while just 18 percent earned more than \$75,000. The total income level of the regional market in 2000 was \$17.41 billion.



## Labor Force and Commuting

### Labor Profile, 2000

Market	Unemployment Rate	Participation Rate	% Blue Collar	% Commuting 30 min+
Neighborhood	2.6%	61.4%	13.1%	11.9%
Sub-Regional	8.7%	63.7%	17.0%	19.1%
Regional	7.1%	58.0%	24.3%	25.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

### Neighborhood Market

As of the 2000 Census there were 3,919 members of the labor force living in the neighborhood market, of which just 103 were unemployed (2.6 percent unemployment rate). Among employed persons living in the market area 87 percent held white collar office or service jobs and just 13 percent held blue collar jobs. Working residents had short commutes; 39 percent commuted less than 15 minutes to work and 88 percent had less than a 30 minute commute. Eight percent of working residents either worked at home or walked or bicycled to work, a strong share that is indicative of a village area.

### Sub-Regional Market

The sub-regional labor force included 124,006 persons as of the 2000 Census. Unemployment among this work force was, at 8.7 percent more than three times higher than in the neighborhood market. While a higher share of workers in this market held blue collar jobs than in the neighborhood market, 83 percent of the workforce was employed in white collar positions. Commuting times were longer among sub-regional market workers, just 32 percent had a commute of less than 15 minutes and 19 percent commuted 30 minutes or more to work. Only five percent worked at home or walked or bicycled to work, a share that is typical of a suburban area.

### Regional Market

The regional market's labor force of 416,123 persons represents just 58 percent of the total working age population; the neighborhood and sub-regional markets each have participation rates in excess of 61 percent. The regional unemployment rate of as 2000 was 7.1 percent. Workers in the regional market are far more likely to hold blue-collar jobs; 24 percent have such jobs. Workers in the regional market are likely to have longer commuting times to work, with 25 percent of workers in this market traveling 30 minutes or more to work.

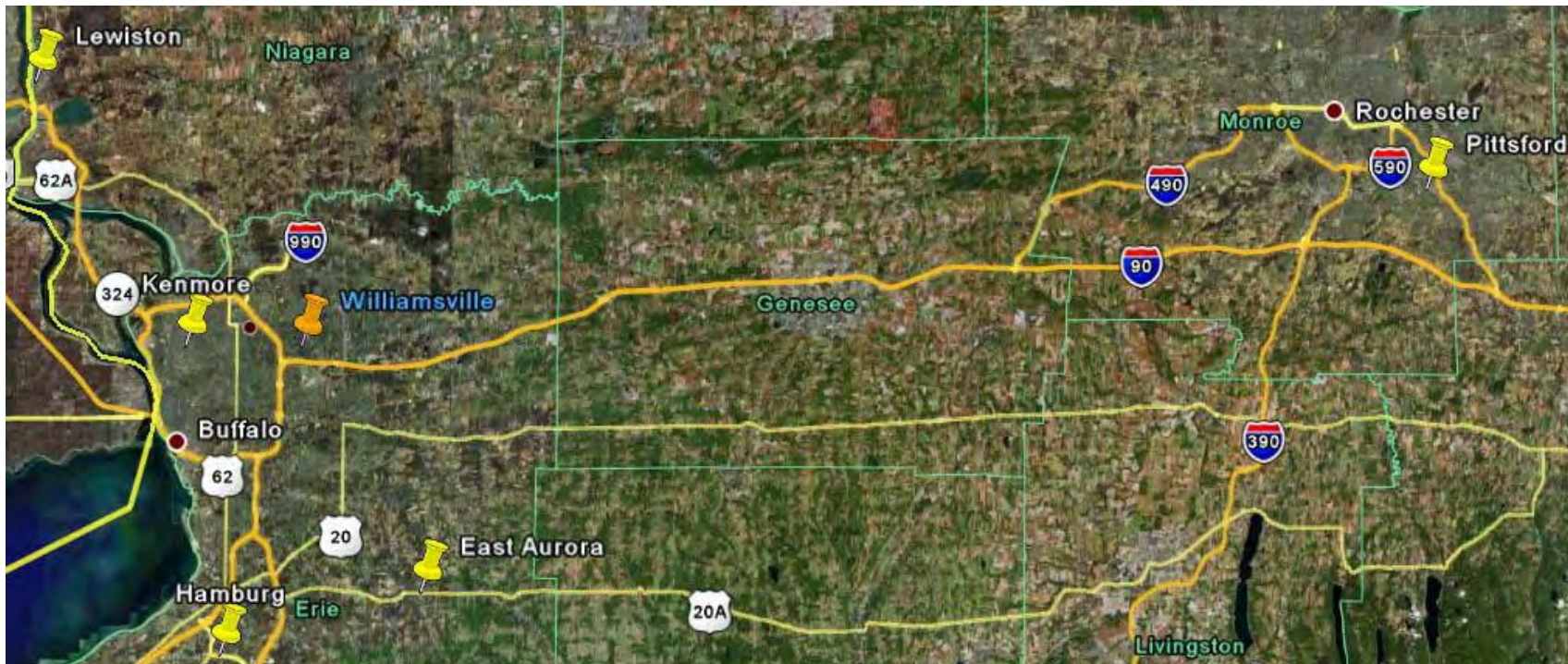
#### **4. Summary of Comparable Village Area Review**

Williamsville is one of many historic commercial village centers in the Western New York region. While Williamsville does have a unique history and function, it is still useful to examine other similar village centers to better understand the broader regional context and to glean ideas to help Williamsville plan for its future.

As part of this market analysis, five comparable villages in Western New York were examined: 1) East Aurora; 2) Hamburg; 3) Kenmore; 4) Lewiston; and 5) Pittsford.

## Location of Comparable Villages

Map Made with Google Earth™





All of these villages share commonalities with Williamsville: historic architecture, a mix of retail, office and residential uses, civic and cultural amenities and the presence of a major regional traffic route in the village center. However, each comparable village has its own quirks that make it different from Williamsville:

- East Aurora and Lewiston are both home to major tourist attractions, thus providing them with access to broader markets.
- Hamburg's downtown is more of a crossroads than a linear strip.
- Kenmore is in a far denser and more urban location
- Pittsford is oriented towards the historic Erie Canal and benefits from being adjacent to a permanently preserved agricultural property.

Despite these differences, there is still much that Williamsville can learn from all of these other village centers. Information was gathered on these villages from a variety of sources, including Census data, data from the Erie County Assessor's office, tours of the villages by the consulting team, and consultant interviews with officials from governments of each of the comparable villages.

With this in mind, the following information was reviewed regarding the five comparable villages:

- Business activity profile
- Urban design issues
- Traffic and parking issues
- Planning and development activities
- Marketing activities

A summary of findings from this review is included at the end of this section. The full Comparable Villages report is provided as an appendix to this report.

## Business Activity Profile

The Census Bureau's Economic Census program profiles business activity at the municipal level for most towns and villages in New York State. Data from this program (last produced in 2002) allow for a comparison of the business composition of Williamsville with the five comparable villages. Due to its small size, Pittsford had no data produced; instead, data from the Village's website about active businesses were substituted for comparative purposes.

Relative to the other villages

Williamsville has strong concentrations of both Retail Trade and Professional Services businesses—63 percent of

Williamsville's businesses are in these two categories, while the other villages range from 42 percent (Kenmore) to 52 percent (Pittsford). Williamsville trails most of the other communities in the Educational & Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality (including restaurants, bars, hotels, arts and entertainment uses) and Other Services (including personal, business and other types of non-professional services) categories.

## Urban Design Issues

The urban design environment of varies widely among the five villages. All five, like Williamsville, have a strong inventory of historic commercial buildings in their business districts, though protection of historic structures is often uneven. The most successful of the comparable villages, Lewiston and Pittsford, have made major capital investments in pedestrian infrastructure, streetscaping and signage. While East Aurora, Hamburg and Kenmore have not yet made such improvements, all three are actively planning for and/or in process of building new downtown infrastructure. Large shares of the funding for urban design improvements in all of the villages have come from federal or state sources.

## Business Profile

### Share of Total Businesses by Sector

	East Aurora	Hamburg	Kenmore	Lewiston	Pittsford*	Williamsville
Manufacturing	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Wholesale trade	3.9%	6.1%	9.7%	2.9%	1.3%	6.1%
Retail trade	27.5%	25.5%	21.5%	30.8%	23.6%	31.2%
Professional Services*	24.0%	23.2%	20.7%	18.3%	28.4%	32.2%
Educational & Health Services	14.4%	19.4%	19.0%	18.3%	13.3%	12.0%
Leisure & Hospitality	11.8%	14.1%	13.1%	19.2%	8.0%	9.3%
Other services	13.5%	11.8%	16.0%	10.6%	25.3%	9.3%

\* Pittsford data are from the Village's own inventory; the Economic Census only reports data for the Town of Pittsford, so this was the most comparable dataset available.

\*\* Includes Information, Real Estate, Professional/Scientific/Technical Services, and Administrative Services

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002 Economic Census; Village of Pittsford

## **Traffic and Parking Issues**

While Williamsville does have a greater volume of traffic passing through its downtown compared to the other villages, all do struggle with finding the right balance between moving vehicles through downtown and protecting the village character. Hamburg's traffic level is the most comparable and it is in the midst of a major reconstruction project of Route 62. This project grew out of a community planning process between NYSDOT and the Village of Hamburg and will result in an innovative end product that will include four roundabouts and extensive bicycle and pedestrian improvements. NYSDOT will be closely monitoring the effects of this reconstruction as it considers future interventions in similar village areas.

The treatment of parking has largely been treated as a management problem in the comparable villages. None of the five has a parking structure and four of the five (all except Kenmore) have put some effort into improving wayfinding, shared parking and other parking management techniques. Pittsford's village government has taken an active role in working with private property owners to improve connectivity among existing parking lots and to work out shared parking arrangements for mutual benefit.

## **Planning and Development Activities**

New development is rare in the comparable village downtowns, as little land is available for development. For this reason, regulation of development has historically not been very strong; only Pittsford has a longstanding historic preservation program in place, and Pittsford has resisted periodic pushes to expand the size of its commercial district in order to protect adjoining residential areas.

All of the other villages have taken recent steps to protect village character. Lewiston enacted historic preservation regulations in 2001; Kenmore overhauled its commercial zoning to better protect adjoining residential areas in 2003; Hamburg enacted a form-based design ordinance for its downtown in 2005; and East Aurora split its downtown into a core and "Mid-Main" districts with different use and bulk standards.

East Aurora provides an interesting example of how regulation and development can be balanced. Though it does not have an historic preservation ordinance, East Aurora does have a commission that makes advisory recommendations to the Planning Board for all development in historic areas. This commission's work was instrumental in ensuring that a recent shopping center in the "Mid-Main" district was developed in harmony with the surrounding historic downtown.

## **Marketing Activities**

Special events and destinations have formed the core of the marketing programs in the five comparable villages. Lewiston has experienced tremendous benefit from the 50 concerts each year at the nearby Artpark and East Aurora has used the Roycroft Campus as a marketing tool—it has remade the village’s image and website in an “arts and crafts” design to match Roycroft. None of the five villages has historically had a formalized group aimed at managing or marketing downtown, but Hamburg is heading in that direction—a committee that was formed to help local businesses weather the Route 62 reconstruction project is now being envisioned as a permanent vehicle for improving and marketing downtown Hamburg.

## **Summary of Findings from Comparable Village Review**

- New development has been rare in most of the comparable villages, except for East Aurora. As a result, there has not been a great deal of attention placed on regulation in the past, but recent investment has led to a renewed focus on the character of new development.
- Relative to the other villages Williamsville has a very strong concentration of office and retail uses, but lags on dining and entertainment uses. This helps explain why Williamsville does not have the broader appeal that others like Lewiston, Pittsford and East Aurora do.
- All of the other villages either have or are about to undertake major streetscaping efforts, both as a means to beautify their downtowns and as a way to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.
- Investments in the urban environment have been very positive in the other villages, but must be effectively managed to ensure that they do not unduly impact existing businesses.
- If a community has a strong Planning Board, increased regulation is not always necessary. East Aurora has been able to effectively guide new development without imposing aggressive regulations. However, this approach is tied to personalities, and membership on local boards often changes very quickly.
- The answer to downtown parking problems is usually not to add more public parking, but instead to effectively manage the existing inventory and to work with developers and landowners to ensure that private parking has some public benefit.
- The best marketing for other villages has been special events and major attractions that bring people into their downtowns.

## 5. Potential Market Capture

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This section estimates the potential for Williamsville's Main Street business district to capture different types of development demand. There are four different types of land uses discussed here:

- Retail
- Office
- Lodging
- Residential

Of the five property types, retail is the most straightforward to analyze, as retail spending is directly tied to the ability to capture spending from the trade area. The other three types are influenced by numerous external factors and therefore cannot be easily measured. For this reason the retail section is a detailed market capture analysis while the others are more strategy driven.



## Retail Market Capture

In a Main Street village such as Williamsville there are five general categories of retail businesses. The definitions of each are taken from the sales categories as reported in the U.S. Bureau of the Census' *2002 Economic Census*. The categories are:

- 1. General Merchandise, Apparel, Furniture and Other (GAFO)** – General Merchandise; Furniture & Home Furnishings; Clothing & Accessories; Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music; and Miscellaneous Store Retailers.
- 2. Home Improvement** – Building Materials & Garden Supplies; and Electronics & Appliance Stores.
- 3. Food & Drugs** – Food & Beverage Stores; and Health & Personal Care Stores.
- 4. Eating & Drinking Places** – Full-Service Restaurants; and Limited-Service Eating Places.
- 5. Personal Service Businesses** – All types of beauty salons, spas, dry cleaners, and other personal care businesses.

The retail capture analysis begins with understanding Williamsville's existing competitive position in the regional market for each of these five categories. The table to the right presents sales data from the *2002 Economic Census* on the Buffalo-Niagara MSA, the Village of Williamsville and the Town of Amherst in order to understand Williamsville's present function in the regional retail market.

This information essentially compares Williamsville's contribution to regional retail sales with its relative size in the regional market (based on its share of the region's households and jobs). For example: 4.51 of all GAFO sales in the Buffalo

### Estimated Retail Sales Draw by Category

	Buffalo MSA	Williamsville	Balance of Amherst
Households, 2000 Census	468,719	2,534	42,542
Jobs, 2000 Estimate <sup>1</sup>	530,376	10,228	65,397
Total Households + Jobs	999,095	12,762	107,939
Percent of MSA Total	100.00%	1.28%	10.80%

	% of MSA Total	Draw Factor	% of MSA Total	Draw Factor
<b>RETAIL SALES DRAW BY CATEGORY</b>				
<b>General, Apparel, Furniture &amp; Other (GAFO)</b>				
Furniture & home furnishings stores	2.32%	1.82	21.53%	1.99
Clothing & clothing accessories stores	7.02%	5.49	24.10%	2.23
Sporting goods, hobby, book, & music	7.62%	5.96	27.32%	2.53
General merchandise stores	3.10%	2.43	15.26%	1.41
Miscellaneous store retailers	na	na	17.13%	1.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.51%</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>19.25%</b>	<b>1.78</b>
<b>Regional Draw</b>				

<b>Home Improvement</b>				
Electronics & appliance stores	1.20%	0.94	37.57%	3.48
Building material & garden	na	na	15.01%	1.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.20%</b>	<b>0.94</b>	<b>20.87%</b>	<b>1.93</b>
<b>Sub-Regional Draw<sup>2</sup></b>				

<b>Food &amp; Drugs</b>				
Food & beverage stores	1.01%	0.79	18.07%	1.67
Health & personal care stores	1.50%	1.18	9.53%	0.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.15%</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>15.62%</b>	<b>1.45</b>
<b>Neighborhood Draw</b>				

<b>Eating &amp; Drinking Places</b>				
Full-service restaurants	na	na	19.77%	1.83
Limited-service eating places	1.52%	1.19	18.27%	1.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.52%</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>19.06%</b>	<b>1.76</b>
<b>Sub-Regional Draw</b>				

<b>Personal Services</b>				
	2.59%	2.02	12.53%	1.16
<b>Regional Draw</b>				

1. Employment estimates for taken from Amherst Comprehensive Plan, which uses data originally generated by GBNRTC.

2. Building material stores are not reported in the Economic Census due to dominance of Ted Youngs Hardware, which is a well known draw for the Amherst/Williamsville area. Williamsville's market draw for this category is therefore likely much stronger than reported by these data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2002 Economic Census*; Town of Amherst; devonomics

MSA were to Williamsville businesses; Williamsville's 12,762 households and jobs represent 1.28 percent of the MSA's totals; therefore, Williamsville's regional draw for the GAFO category is 3.53 (4.51 / 1.28). From this analysis, Williamsville is assumed to have a strong regional draw for GAFO and Personal Services, a sub-regional draw for Home Improvement and Eating & Drinking Places, and a mostly neighborhood draw for Food & Drugs.

Williamsville's different draw levels for the different retail categories is critical to understanding who shops in the business district and how strong its pull is on the three different resident markets described in Section 3 above. Based on this retail draw factors, "capture rates" were estimated for each of the five retail categories and three resident market groups. These rates estimate how much of each category's spending can be realistically captured in Williamsville, given its appeal (or lack thereof) to each of the three resident markets. Additional inflow factors, representing additional sales from visitors from outside the Buffalo-Niagara MSA beyond sales to regional residents, have been estimated as well.

The table below shows the assumed capture ranges for each category and market area.

### Estimated Capture Range by Market for Williamsville

Retail Category	Neighborhood (0-1 mile)		Sub-regional (1-5 miles)		Regional (5+ miles)		Inflow Potential	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
<b>CAPTURE RATES</b>								
GAFO	5.0%	7.5%	1.0%	2.0%	0.5%	0.7%	5.0%	10.0%
Home Improvement	15.0%	20.0%	5.0%	7.0%	0.2%	0.3%	2.0%	3.0%
Food & Drugs	10.0%	15.0%	2.0%	3.0%	0.1%	0.2%	1.0%	2.0%
Eating & Drinking Places	15.0%	20.0%	5.0%	7.0%	0.2%	0.3%	5.0%	10.0%
Personal Services	15.0%	20.0%	5.0%	7.0%	1.0%	1.5%	3.0%	5.0%

### Average Annual Retail Spending per Household Buffalo-Niagara MSA, 2007

GAFO	<b>\$7,371</b>
Home Improvement	<b>\$2,738</b>
Food & Drugs	<b>\$8,010</b>
Eating & Drinking Places	<b>\$2,395</b>
Personal Services	<b>\$680</b>
Total	<b>\$21,193</b>

The next step is to apply these capture rates to the total amount of potential retail spending for each category and market area. These figures were calculated by applying per-household sales in the region from 2002 *Economic Census* to the number of households in each market area and inflating this number by three percent annually to account for inflation. From this methodology, it is assumed that the average household in the Buffalo MSA spends \$21,193 per year on these types of retail goods and services (see table at left.)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census,  
2002 *Economic Census*; devonomics

Sales amounts are adjusted based on the variance between household income levels in each market area relative to the region's overall income level. For example, the Neighborhood Market's average household income in 2000 was 11.5 percent higher than the MSA's average, so per household spending has been adjusted upward by 11.5 percent for the Neighborhood Market.

The following table shows the total amount of retail spending by category for the three resident market areas.

#### Potential Retail Spending by Market Area

Average Household Income, 2000	Avg HH Income	% of. Reg Average
Buffalo-Niagara MSA Total	\$49,359	100.0%
Neighborhood Market	\$55,015	111.5%
Sub-Regional Market	\$60,579	122.7%
Regional Market	\$46,340	93.9%

	Households, 2006	GAFO	Home Improvement	Food & Drugs	Eating & Drinking	Personal Services	TOTAL
<b>Annual Retail Spending per Household</b>							
Buffalo-Niagara MSA		\$7,371	\$2,738	\$8,010	\$2,395	\$680	<b>\$21,193</b>
Neighborhood Market		\$8,215	\$3,051	\$8,928	\$2,669	\$757	<b>\$23,622</b>
Sub-Regional Market		\$9,046	\$3,360	\$9,831	\$2,939	\$834	<b>\$26,011</b>
Regional Market		\$6,920	\$2,570	\$7,521	\$2,248	\$638	<b>\$19,897</b>
<b>Total Potential Spending (\$000)</b>							
Neighborhood Market	3,253	\$26,724.8	\$9,926.0	\$29,043.9	\$8,683.2	\$2,463.9	<b>\$76,841.7</b>
Sub-Regional Market	98,988	\$895,474.4	\$332,592.5	\$973,183.3	\$290,949.0	\$82,557.4	<b>\$2,574,756.6</b>
Regional Market	373,789	\$2,586,619.4	\$960,708.8	\$2,811,085.1	\$840,419.7	\$238,470.8	<b>\$7,437,303.8</b>
<b>Total Potential Spending</b>		<b>\$3,508,818.6</b>	<b>\$1,303,227.2</b>	<b>\$3,813,312.4</b>	<b>\$1,140,051.8</b>	<b>\$323,492.1</b>	<b>\$10,088,902.0</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; devonomics

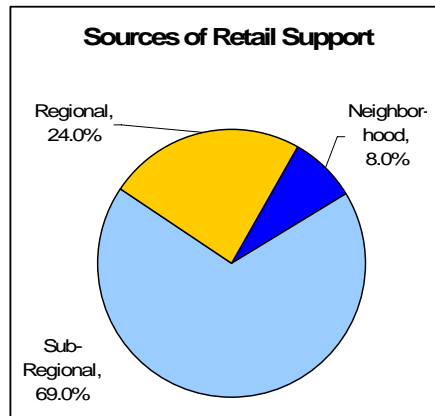
The total retail "pie" for the resident market is estimated at \$10.09 billion, broken down as follows:

- Neighborhood Market: \$76.8 million
- Sub-Regional Market: \$2.57 billion
- Regional Market: \$7.44 billion

The next step is to apply the capture rates to the available spending for each retail category and market area and then to add inflow spending. This step results in a range of supportable sales for each retail category in Williamsville. Its results are displayed on the next page.

## Potential Retail Capture by Market for Williamsville

Retail Category	Neighborhood (0-1 mile)		Sub-regional (1-5 miles)		Regional (5+ miles)		TOTAL POTENTIAL	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
<b>CAPTURE POTENTIAL BY MARKET AREA (\$000)</b>								
GAFO	\$1,336.2	\$2,004.4	\$8,954.7	\$17,909.5	\$12,933.1	\$18,106.3	\$23,224.1	\$38,020.2
Home Improvement	\$1,488.9	\$1,985.2	\$16,629.6	\$23,281.5	\$1,921.4	\$2,882.1	\$20,039.9	\$28,148.8
Food & Drugs	\$2,904.4	\$4,356.6	\$19,463.7	\$29,195.5	\$2,811.1	\$5,622.2	\$25,179.1	\$39,174.3
Eating & Drinking Places	\$1,302.5	\$1,736.6	\$14,547.4	\$20,366.4	\$1,680.8	\$2,521.3	\$17,530.8	\$24,624.3
Personal Services	\$369.6	\$492.8	\$4,127.9	\$5,779.0	\$2,384.7	\$3,577.1	\$6,882.2	\$9,848.9
<b>Total Potential</b>	<b>\$7,401.6</b>	<b>\$10,575.5</b>	<b>\$63,723.4</b>	<b>\$96,531.9</b>	<b>\$21,731.1</b>	<b>\$32,709.0</b>	<b>\$92,856.1</b>	<b>\$139,816.4</b>



Source: devonomics

INFLOW POTENTIAL	Inflow Factors		Potential Inflow (\$000)	
GAFO	5.0%	10.0%	\$1,161.20	\$3,802.02
Home Improvement	2.0%	3.0%	\$400.80	\$844.46
Food & Drugs	1.0%	2.0%	\$251.79	\$783.49
Eating & Drinking Places	5.0%	10.0%	\$876.54	\$2,462.43
Personal Services	3.0%	5.0%	\$206.46	\$492.44
			<b>\$2,896.80</b>	<b>\$8,384.84</b>

TOTAL POTENTIAL CAPTURED SPENDING (\$000)	Potential Spending	
GAFO	\$24,385.28	\$41,822.20
Home Improvement	\$20,440.73	\$28,993.26
Food & Drugs	\$25,430.93	\$39,957.74
Eating & Drinking Places	\$18,407.30	\$27,086.75
Personal Services	\$7,088.62	\$10,341.29
	<b>\$95,752.87</b>	<b>\$148,201.24</b>

The total amount of supportable retail spending in Williamsville's business district is estimated to be between \$95.8 and \$148.2 million. The bulk of demand for retail goods and services appears to originate from the Sub-Regional market, which includes all people living within 1-5 miles of the center of the village and takes in the most affluent areas of Amherst and Clarence. This market area accounts for an estimated 69 percent of the total retail demand in Williamsville, compared with just eight percent for the Neighborhood market.

The final step in the retail capture analysis is to determine how much additional square footage of space can be reasonably filled based on the levels of supportable sales. Using industry standards for sales productivity per square foot, Williamsville's business district should be able to support:

- 236,000 to 369,000 square feet of general retail and service space (including GAFO, Home Improvement and Food & Drugs);
- 46,000 to 68,000 square feet of eating and drinking places; and
- 24,000 to 34,000 square feet of personal services spaces.

According to information collected by the Village, the business district currently contains:

- 144,636 square feet of general retail/service space;
- 60,159 square feet of restaurant space; and
- 36,165 square feet of personal service business space.

The conclusion of the retail market capture analysis is therefore that Williamsville is currently meeting market demand for eating & drinking places and personal service businesses, but that there is still significant unmet demand for general retail and service uses (anywhere from 91,000 to 232,000 additional square feet).

This conclusion is supported by reports from local commercial brokers that many retailers, both locally-owned and national chains, are actively seeking locations in Williamsville, but often struggle to find suitable spaces or have concerns about the limited amount of convenient parking.

### Potential Need for Retail Development by Type Williamsville Main Street Business District

	Low	High
<b>TOTAL POTENTIAL CAPTURED SPENDING (\$000)</b>		
GAFO	\$24,385.28	\$41,822.20
Home Improvement	\$20,440.73	\$28,993.26
Food & Drugs	\$25,430.93	\$39,957.74
Eating & Drinking Places	\$18,407.30	\$27,086.75
Personal Services	\$7,088.62	\$10,341.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$95,752.87</b>	<b>\$148,201.24</b>

<b>AVERAGE SPENDING PER SQUARE FOOT</b>	
GAFO	\$350
Home Improvement	\$250
Food & Drugs	\$300
Eating & Drinking Places	\$400
Personal Services	\$300

<b>ESTIMATED SUPPORTABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE</b>		
<b>General Retail/Service</b>		
GAFO	69,670	119,490
Home Improvement	81,760	115,970
Food & Drugs	84,770	133,190
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>236,200</b>	<b>368,650</b>
Eating & Drinking Places	46,020	67,720
Personal Services	23,630	34,470
<b>Total</b>	<b>305,850</b>	<b>470,840</b>

<b>ESTIMATED CURRENT INVENTORY OF SPACE (SQ. FT.)</b>	
General Retail/Service Space	144,636
Eating & Drinking Places	60,159
Personal Services	36,165
<b>Total</b>	<b>240,960</b>

<b>ADDITIONAL SUPPORTABLE SPACE</b>		
General Retail/Service Space	91,564	224,014
Eating & Drinking Places	0	7,561
Personal Services	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,564</b>	<b>231,575</b>

Source: Village of Williamsville; devonomics



## **Office Market Capture**

According to the Village Assessor, Williamsville's Main Street business district currently has about 350,000 square feet of occupied office space, with 242 separate business establishments operating in these spaces. The average size of office users in the village is therefore about 1,450 square feet, a fact that bolsters the assertions by local commercial brokers and developers that office demand in Williamsville is driven almost exclusively by small professional office users. Also of note is that 50 of the 242 establishments (21 percent) are medical practices and these offices average 1,430 square feet—a nearly identical size to the total office inventory.

A second noteworthy fact is that commercial vacancy in Williamsville is very low. Of the 1.1 million square feet of space in the Main Street corridor, just 61,000 were vacant as of 2005, a vacancy rate of 5.5 percent. This vacancy percentage includes all space in the business district (retail, office, residential and industrial), so the amount of available office space is even lower. Given that office uses are dominated by small, professional users, particularly doctors, Williamsville's present office market is largely driven by the sub-regional market. The prevailing lease rates for office space reinforce this notion; office rents in the village top out at \$17/square foot, while newer space in nearby business parks in Amherst achieves as much as \$21/square foot. If demand for space in Williamsville were outpacing supply there would be greater upward pressure on office lease rates in the village.

Since demand in Williamsville is locally driven, it responds largely to the needs of the sub-regional market, the population of which has plateaued and is likely to decline slightly in the future. For this reason continued market demand for office space in Williamsville is not likely to be significant. The only exception would be for larger, modern spaces with adequate parking and the types of amenities that could draw corporate office users that would otherwise be drawn to downtown Buffalo or suburban business parks, as these users segment is not dependent on growth in the local residential market. However, drawing these users would more than likely require significant redevelopment of existing commercial properties.

## **Residential Market Capture**

Two trends in Williamsville's demographics point to a strong need for high-density housing in the business district:

1. Aging families in the village's residential neighborhoods have few options for trading down their single-family homes without leaving the village, so they typically remain put; and
2. The already-low average household size in Williamsville and surrounding areas continues to decline, driving demand for smaller housing units.

One of the chief complaints of residents, prospective residents and real estate professionals alike is that there are no attractive, high-end apartment or condominium units available in Williamsville. While many empty-nesters from Williamsville (as well as from surrounding suburban areas) would love to downsize and find a low-maintenance place in the village, they are presently not able to do

so. The recent sales of new townhome units in the village for upwards of \$500,000 (more than three times the going rate for nearby older homes) illustrates how strong demand is for new, higher-density housing in Williamsville. Local realtors feel very confident that a new luxury condominium or apartment development on or near Main Street would be very successful—so long as it had garaged parking.

## **Lodging Market Capture**

The lodging market in Williamsville is driven by three markets: 1) business visitors to Williamsville; 2) business visitors to suburban locations in Amherst who are looking for a more interesting place to stay; and 3) family members and friends visiting local residents. Until very recently there were no quality options for lodging in Williamsville and the strong success of the new Hampton Inn on Main Street has proven that Williamsville is a viable location for lodging. The Hampton Inn is currently reporting occupancy rates of about 90 percent during the week, an indication of the strong demand from business travelers, and somewhat lower but still strong occupancy on weekends. The Hampton Inn is also achieving strong room rates, with typical rates ranging between \$125-150 per night.

Aside from the Hampton Inn, the closest hotels to Williamsville are generally clustered in two locations: near the Airport and near the University at Buffalo North Campus. None of these hotels is located within two miles of the village. Prices for these properties range from as low as \$50 per night (Motel 6, Red Roof Inn, Microtel) to \$150 per night (Hilton Garden, Homewood Suites). What is important to note is that these properties are all located in automobile-oriented, suburban locations. Visitors often seek out hotels in village areas so they are not isolated during their visits.

Given the success of the Hampton Inn, it is likely that other hotel operators will at least consider Williamsville as a potential location. Hotel developers look very closely at the market performance of competitive properties when determining the feasibility of a new project, so the Hampton Inn will undoubtedly produce at least some exploration of lodging opportunities from other major operators.

There are presently no inns or Bed & Breakfast properties in Williamsville—the closest are the Asa Ransom House in Clarence and the Sassafras B&B in Lancaster. There may be opportunities to convert one or more grand old homes on or near Main Street for such a purpose.

## 6. Findings

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- The Buffalo-Niagara region's economic picture is not as bleak as it is often portrayed—the region's job base has actually grown fairly steadily over the past 35 years. However, the gradual replacement of manufacturing jobs with lower-wage service jobs during that period has dampened the region's growth in personal income and, by extension, retail sales. In the long term, the regional economy is likely to continue to experience slow growth.
- The commercial real estate market in the Buffalo region is characterized by fairly strong occupancy, low rents and little demand for significant new construction. This pattern holds true for both office and retail space.
- Williamsville's office and retail markets are facing different challenges. The office market is stagnant and prevailing rents are generally not sufficient to support new development or reinvestment. The retail market has much stronger potential but is hemmed in by a lack of quality space and a perception of a parking shortage.
- The residential market in Williamsville is strong, as demand is high for building lots and both single and multi-family units. Relative to other villages in Western New York Williamsville has a very strong concentration of office and retail uses, but lags on dining and entertainment uses.
- Several other villages in the region have made or are making major investments in pedestrian and streetscaping projects and have had success using special events as marketing tools for downtown businesses.
- Williamsville has a very strong regional draw as a retail destination for its specialty shops and boutiques, as well as for its salons and day spas. For restaurants and other types of retail, its draw is more strongly focused on the Amherst/Williamsville market.
- There appears to be sizable unmet demand for retail goods and services in Williamsville, though not for restaurants or personal service businesses. Retailers that would like to locate in the village struggle to find suitable spaces; small floorplates, limited parking and poor truck access are all impediments to such businesses.
- There is little, if any, unmet demand for office use in the village.
- Strong demand exists for multi-family development in the village, but any such product would require garage parking.
- Given the success of the Hampton Inn, there may be more interest in Williamsville for additional lodging development. There may also be opportunities to convert historic homes into Bed & Breakfast properties.

## Summary of Comparable Village Review

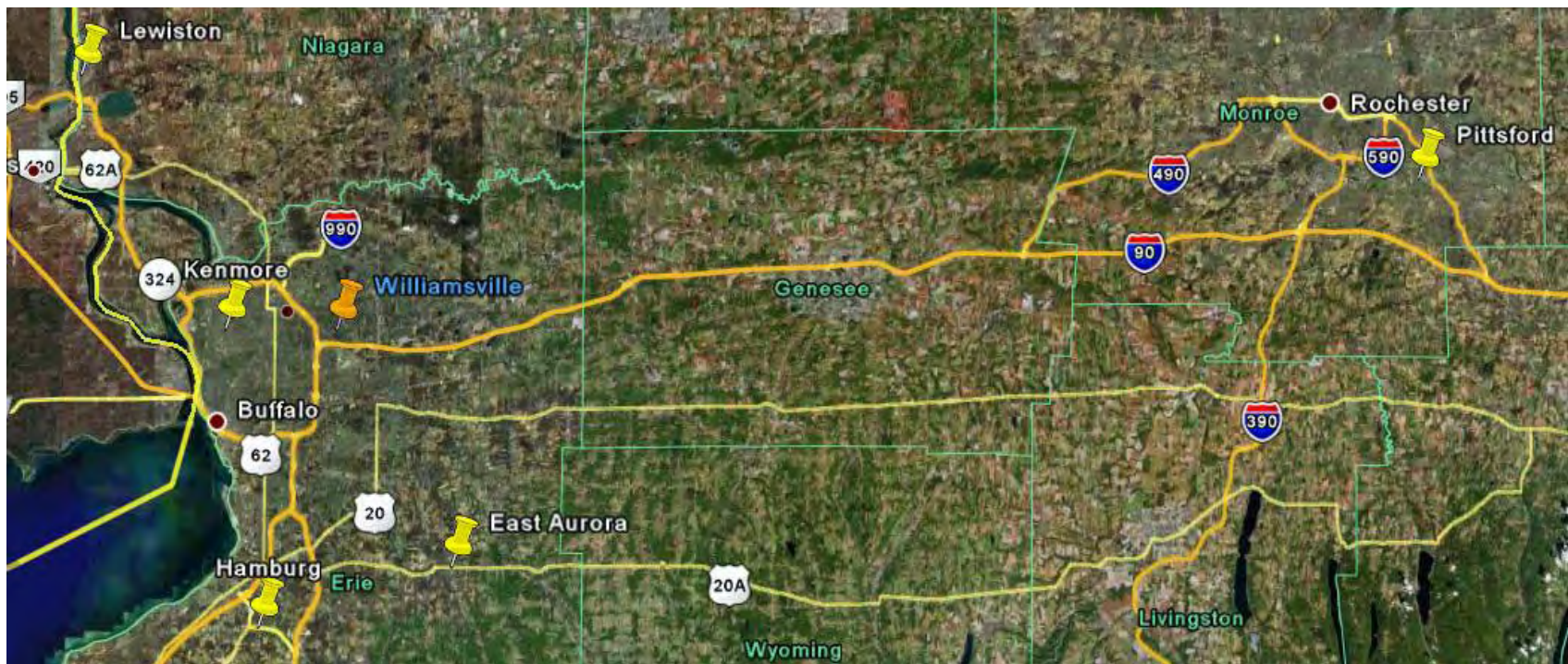
## Purpose

Williamsville is one of many historic commercial village centers in the Western New York region. While Williamsville does have a unique history and function, it is still useful to examine other similar village centers to better understand the broader regional context and to glean ideas to help Williamsville plan for its future.

Five comparable villages have been examined as part of this review: 1) East Aurora; 2) Hamburg; 3) Kenmore; 4) Lewiston; and 5) Pittsford.

## Location of Comparable Villages

Map Made with Google Earth™



All of these villages share commonalities with Williamsville: historic architecture, a mix of retail, office and residential uses, civic and cultural amenities and the presence of a major regional traffic route in the village center. However, each comparable village has its own quirks that make it different from Williamsville:

- East Aurora and Lewiston are both home to major tourist attractions, thus providing them with access to broader markets.
- Hamburg's downtown is more of a crossroads than a linear strip.
- Kenmore is in a far denser and more urban location
- Pittsford is oriented towards the historic Erie Canal and benefits from being adjacent to a permanently preserved agricultural property.

Despite these differences, there is still much that Williamsville can learn from all of these other village centers. With this in mind, the following information is presented on the five comparable villages:

- Demographic and housing profile
- Business profile
- Land use profile
- Urban design issues
- Traffic and transportation issues
- Planning and development activities
- Marketing activities
- Summary of findings

Information was gathered on these villages from a variety of sources, including Census data, data from the Erie County Assessor's office, tours of the villages by the consulting team, and consultant interviews with officials from governments of each of the comparable villages.



## Demographic and Housing Profile

As of the 2000 Census the six villages ranged in size from 1,427 (Pittsford) to 16,426 (Kenmore), with Williamsville being in the middle at 5,545. Williamsville's population is considerably older than most of the other villages; only Lewiston has a comparable share of residents aged 55 or older. Williamsville also has the lowest share of people enrolled in school as a percentage of its total population.

Williamsville is attractive for its proximity to employment; 63 percent of its working population commutes less than 20 minutes (only Lewiston has a higher share.) Only 1.5 percent of Williamsville residents commute 45 minutes or more to work; all of the others have at least four percent of residents making such long commutes, with East Aurora (8.9 percent) having the greatest share of long commuters.

Williamsville, Hamburg and East Aurora all have very balanced income structures and median household incomes just under \$50,000. Williamsville has a very high per capita income level relative to its household income level, which is a result of having smaller households than most of the other villages. Pittsford is by far the most affluent village and Kenmore and Lewiston both have lower income levels.

Somewhat surprisingly Williamsville has the greatest share of renters and of multi-family units of all of the villages (even more so than very urban Kenmore). Just 53 percent of Williamsville's units are single-family detached; three of the others are more than 90 percent single family. Williamsville has a younger housing stock than the all of the others except Lewiston (the majority of Williamsville's units was built between 1940 and 1979). Other than East Aurora, none has experienced much housing construction since 1980.

Comparison of Williamsville and Other Communities, 2000 Census

	East Aurora	Hamburg	Kenmore	Lewiston	Pittsford	Williamsville
Population	6,585	10,107	16,426	2,781	1,427	5,545
Households	2,577	4,001	7,092	1,276	640	2,573
<b>Age Profile</b>						
Under 18	26.1%	26.2%	23.2%	17.4%	20.7%	17.9%
18-34	16.3%	17.7%	21.2%	17.7%	21.8%	17.5%
35-54	28.7%	29.9%	31.3%	28.2%	28.2%	27.7%
55+	28.8%	26.1%	24.4%	36.8%	29.4%	36.9%
Households with Children <18	35.0%	34.6%	29.6%	20.8%	25.5%	20.3%
School Enrollment as % of Pop	31.3%	30.3%	30.6%	24.1%	26.6%	23.8%
<b>Commuting Time of Residents</b>						
Worked at Home	3.4%	3.8%	1.2%	1.8%	7.3%	5.0%
<20 minutes	43.7%	46.0%	51.1%	69.2%	50.9%	58.5%
20-44 minutes	44.2%	44.6%	43.6%	23.1%	36.5%	35.0%
45+ minutes	8.7%	5.6%	4.0%	5.9%	5.2%	1.5%
% Using Public Transportation	1.0%	0.3%	3.9%	0.0%	0.7%	2.7%
<b>Income Profile</b>						
Under \$25,000	24.8%	21.2%	27.7%	31.7%	17.2%	23.6%
\$25,000-49,999	26.1%	27.4%	32.8%	31.7%	21.1%	27.3%
\$50,000-74,999	23.4%	25.0%	22.7%	21.2%	23.4%	21.3%
\$75,000+	25.6%	26.4%	16.9%	15.3%	38.3%	27.8%
Median HH Income	\$49,028	\$51,239	\$42,252	\$37,598	\$60,543	\$47,557
Per Capita Income	\$22,753	\$23,371	\$21,695	\$21,482	\$32,637	\$27,177
<b>Housing Tenure</b>						
% Owner Occupied	70.7%	72.7%	66.6%	62.4%	71.2%	61.5%
% Renter Occupied	29.3%	27.3%	33.4%	37.6%	28.8%	38.5%
<b>Units in Structure</b>						
1, detached	92.1%	91.0%	78.7%	61.4%	98.9%	52.9%
1, attached	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%	4.4%	0.0%	1.9%
2-4	5.0%	4.9%	15.3%	17.8%	1.1%	26.6%
5+	2.1%	3.8%	5.4%	16.4%	0.0%	18.4%
Other	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
<b>Year Housing Unit Built</b>						
1980-99	14.3%	6.6%	4.7%	6.6%	1.1%	5.9%
1960-79	13.9%	27.8%	15.0%	26.6%	4.5%	25.7%
1940-59	21.5%	32.0%	52.2%	47.2%	9.3%	35.0%
Pre-1940	50.3%	33.6%	28.1%	19.6%	85.2%	33.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

## Business Profile

The Census Bureau's Economic Census program profiles business activity at the municipal level for most towns and villages in New York State. Data from this program (last produced in 2002) allow for a comparison of the business composition of Williamsville with the five comparable villages. Due to its small size, Pittsford had no data produced; instead, data from the Village's website about active businesses were substituted for comparative purposes.

Relative to the other villages Williamsville has strong concentrations of both Retail Trade and Professional Services businesses—63 percent of Williamsville's businesses are in these two categories, while the other villages range from 42 percent (Kenmore) to 52 percent (Pittsford).

Williamsville trails most of the other communities in the Educational & Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality (including restaurants, bars, hotels, arts and entertainment uses) and Other Services (including personal, business and other types of non-professional services) categories.

### Business Profile

#### Share of Total Businesses by Sector

	East Aurora	Hamburg	Kenmore	Lewiston	Pittsford*	Williamsville
Manufacturing	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Wholesale trade	3.9%	6.1%	9.7%	2.9%	1.3%	6.1%
Retail trade	27.5%	25.5%	21.5%	30.8%	23.6%	31.2%
Professional Services*	24.0%	23.2%	20.7%	18.3%	28.4%	32.2%
Educational & Health Services	14.4%	19.4%	19.0%	18.3%	13.3%	12.0%
Leisure & Hospitality	11.8%	14.1%	13.1%	19.2%	8.0%	9.3%
Other services	13.5%	11.8%	16.0%	10.6%	25.3%	9.3%

\* Pittsford data are from the Village's own inventory; the Economic Census only reports data for the Town of Pittsford, so this was the most comparable dataset available.

\*\* Includes Information, Real Estate, Professional/Scientific/Technical Services, and Administrative Services

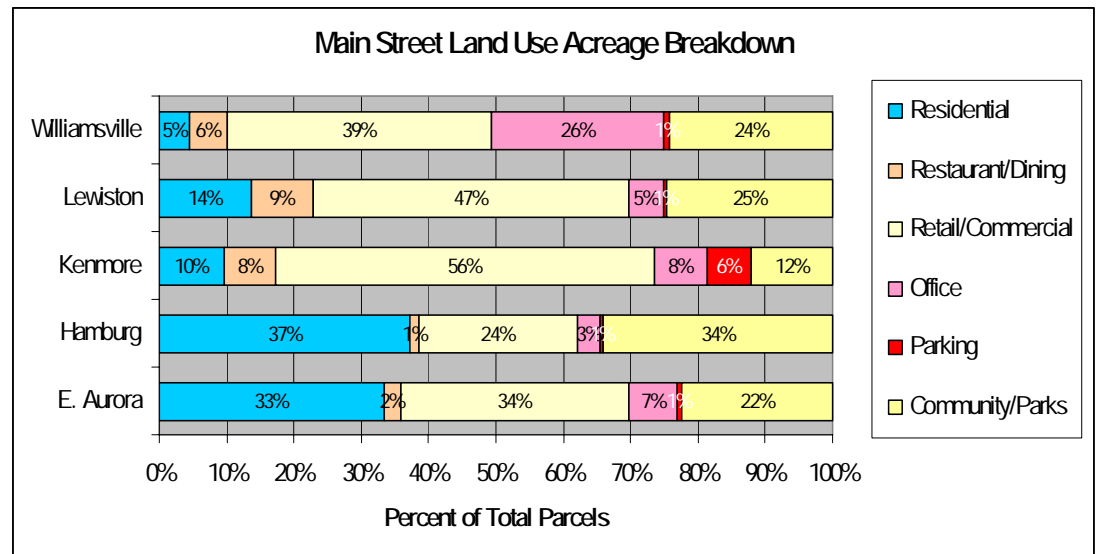
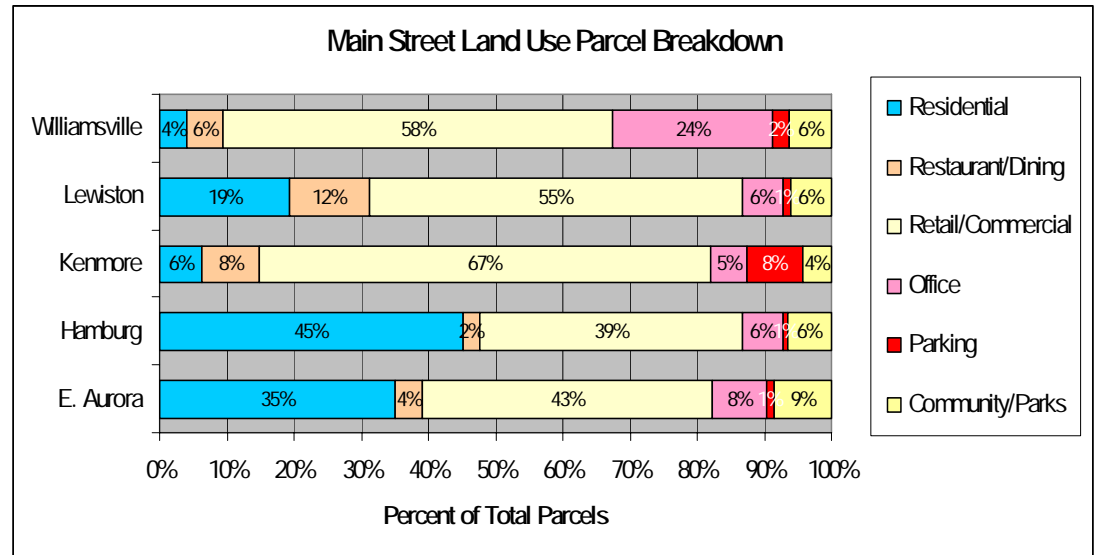
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002 Economic Census; Village of Pittsford

## Land Use Profile

The tables to the right were assembled by the Town of Amherst's Planning Department using data maintained by the Erie County Office of Real Property Tax Services. Information is presented for all villages except for Pittsford, for which such information was not readily available (Erie County provides this service for Niagara County, so Lewiston's information was available).

The information presented here shows the breakdown of land uses by parcels and by gross acreage for the Main Street/downtown areas in each of the villages. Looking at the parcel breakdown, Williamsville has a very heavy concentration of office uses (24 percent of parcels) but a very low concentration of residential uses (four percent). Williamsville has an above average share of retail/commercial parcels at 58 percent, but a fairly low share of restaurant/dining uses (six percent)

Looking at the share of acreage, Williamsville's separation from the other villages relative to concentration of office space grows even more, as does its gap on residential uses. Interestingly, only 39 percent of Main Street Williamsville's acreage is in retail/commercial use, compared with 58 percent of its parcels. The difference in share of parcels and share of land is much smaller in the other villages. This clearly suggests that Williamsville's individual commercial parcels are quite small relative to those in the other villages.



## Urban Design Issues

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In preparing this research the consulting team visited each of the five comparable villages to get a clearer sense of the urban design initiatives undertaken in each location as part of their improvement strategies. This section presents annotated photographs for the comparable villages to illustrate some of the ways that urban design issues are being addressed.

## East Aurora



East Aurora's historic Main Street village area is comprised mostly of two to three-story commercial blocks is located on a ridge, with residential streets sloping down from Main Street, providing for a smooth transition from the commercial area to nearby residential streets. Though its wide sidewalks emphasize pedestrian usage, there are no dedicated public spaces in heart of village



Despite its attractive and historic architecture, East Aurora's urban environment is very uneven, with the quality of development varying greatly from block to block. Poorly defined and maintained crosswalks in the village area take away from an otherwise attractive environment.



The village has worked with developers to ensure that new projects reinforce village identity. A new shopping center at east end of village has a faux second story above retail stores, though buildings are mostly set far back from the street. This property also features extensive landscaping and historic-style lighting.





## Hamburg

Hamburg is a crossroads village, with commercial buildings stretching down two different streets, one of which is the very busy U.S. Route 62 (Buffalo Avenue). It is mostly comprised of undistinguished two to three-story commercial buildings, with just a few architectural gems sprinkled in. The commercial center is in very close proximity to high density residential neighborhoods.



There is little streetscaping and sidewalks are not well maintained, but there are many attractive street trees. There are some well designed signs and urban design features that connect to parking lots at the rear of buildings. A positive contributor to the village is Memorial Park, which is located at its northern edge, and is similar in size and scale to Island Park, though much more visible.



Some newer developments in downtown make good use of shop windows and use of the sidewalk environment, including dining tables.





## Kenmore

Kenmore is, like Williamsville, an historic trolley-car commercial strip, consisting mostly of one and two-story buildings dating from the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There are a few larger civic buildings as well, including Village Hall and churches. The maturity and scale of the commercial area makes for very smooth transitions to surrounding residential neighborhoods, with rear drives and alleys usually separating the two use types.



The Village Green is unattractive and poorly maintained with 1960s-era globe lights alongside it. The Village is planning to improve this park but does not currently have funding for this project. Delaware Avenue's street environment is presently undergoing a transformation, with new street lighting, plantings and benches being installed.



There has been little recent development along Delaware Avenue. The only relatively new building is a 4-5 story apartment building that is out of scale with existing development and architecturally inconsistent. The village did recently enact better development regulations, but there has yet to be much significant investment to test the viability of these regulations.





## Lewiston

Lewiston is a low-density, small town Main Street comprised mainly of historic homes and small commercial buildings. The wide Main Street, combined with the predominance of one and two-story buildings, makes it feel very spacious. Main Street is lined with a row of mature street trees and most properties fronting on it are well kept.



The Village of Lewiston underwent a wholesale landscaping and streetscaping project in 2001. Today, there is very extensive streetscaping including grass strips, brick sidewalks, historic-style lighting and uniform signage for welcoming, wayfinding and traffic. There are several attractive public parks and open spaces of varied sizes and public art is stationed in visible locations, tying the downtown to the nearby Artpark.



There are many attractive renovations of historic Main Street properties in Lewiston. Several projects have resulted in the creation of attractive “outdoor rooms” at the streetfront, which greatly enhance the village environment.

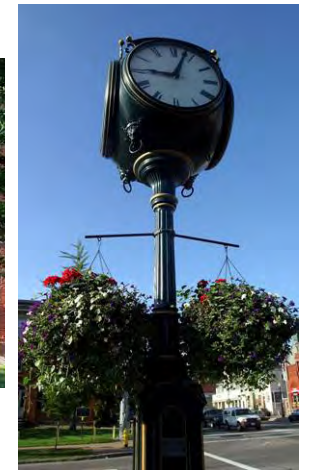




## Pittsford

Pittsford is an historic canal village, located a few miles southeast of downtown Rochester. It contains a very well-preserved inventory of historic commercial and civic buildings and is an oasis of sorts from nearby suburban highways. Longstanding preservation efforts in Pittsford have resulted in a very attractive urban environment that includes high-quality gateway, wayfinding and historical signage, attractive street lighting and sidewalks, uniform street trees and plantings and buried utility lines.

Downtown Pittsford benefits greatly from its proximity to the historic Erie Canal and the Village has gone to great lengths to knit its commercial center into the greenway trail along the canal.



Another unique feature of Pittsford is the agricultural preserve located just across the canal from the village center (shown at left). This rural landscape provides a very attractive and memorable backdrop to the bustling commercial area.



## Traffic and Parking Issues

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Williamsville undoubtedly hosts more traffic, particularly through traffic than do any of the comparable villages. However, even with lower volumes, all of the other villages do have traffic issues at certain peak times and several of them have taken bold steps to help address these issues.

**East Aurora** is in the process of improving its downtown area to allow for a better pedestrian environment and easier access between parking lots and Main Street. The new shopping center on Main Street (pictured on Page 7) provides an attractive, privately owned, off-street lot in close proximity to the rest of Main Street.

**Hamburg** is in the midst of the Route 62 reconstruction project. This \$24 million improvement project will begin this spring and will occur in stages over a three-year period. The project will include a complete overhaul of the corridor through the heart of the village and will encompass four roundabouts, making it the first location in New York State that is using a comprehensive system of roundabouts to improve transportation flow and safety in a village area. The plan also includes bicycle lanes on both of the major streets. The final design of the Route 62 project emerged from an intensive community planning process spanning three years. The final plan received a Livable Communities award in 2005 from Partners for a Livable Western New York and its design has been adopted as a best practice by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Hamburg has also done a good job of creating attractive environments around its public parking lots, by investing in attractive walkways and public art projects in front of its lots.

**Kenmore** has, in addition to its ongoing streetscaping program, worked to think strategically about parking. Recent changes to its downtown zoning resulted in a requirement that parking must be behind buildings and that front parking must be on-street. Parking for Delaware Avenue businesses is allowed on side streets, which greatly aids the parking situation.

**Lewiston** used an ISTEA grant to leverage a \$3.0 million investment in its downtown (only \$150,000 in local match was needed.) The project ultimately entailed reducing the number of travel lanes from four to three (with a center turn lane), installing brick sidewalks and crosswalks, planting 100 street trees and installing historic-style lighting and signage. Many business owners initially opposed the plan, thinking that it would lead to traffic bottlenecks, but the village leadership pushed forward regardless, insisting that it would not harm traffic flow. Since the project's completion in 2001, traffic has moved smoothly, with the only tie-ups occurring immediately before and after major events at the Artpark. There are about 50 arts, music and other special events in Lewiston each year, and traffic is only a minor concern.

The extensive system of streetscaping and related infrastructure is maintained through a combination of village staff and volunteer support. The village's public works department maintains all of the trees, plantings, sidewalks and fixtures, and its work is



supplemented by volunteers from the village's Beautification Committee. After six years of maintaining the infrastructure, everyone is happy with it. The brick pavers have held up very well and have not resulted in an unreasonable amount of maintenance or replacement.

**Pittsford** has accepted its traffic congestion as a sign of its attractiveness, and has instead worked to improve the pedestrian environment and to better manage its parking to improve walkability. Choosing not to rezone residential sites to build new off-street lots to support commercial areas, Pittsford has instead worked to join and consolidate lots that were formerly fenced off from each other. As part of the new library project, the village acquired several adjoining private parking lots and assembled them to form a new public lot to support the library. The village has also worked with NYSDOT to reclaim on-street spaces in the downtown area. Finally, the village has worked with its residents to educate them that allowing on-street parking in neighborhoods near downtown is a positive thing, as it helps slow traffic through the area.

## Planning and Development Activities

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**East Aurora** has not taken a proactive role with the use of zoning and regulation to guide development. Instead the village government has relied on the advisory role of its Historic Preservation Commission and a very professional Planning Board to guide new development. The recently-built shopping center at the roundabout at the end of Main Street is a perfect example of how East Aurora's approach has worked. Knowing the Planning Board's reputation for encouraging historic architecture and village design, the developer proposed a plan featuring faux second stories on the new buildings, ample landscaping and even a building that holds the corner at the front of the property. This project has been universally well received in the community. East Aurora also has a different zoning designation for the historic CBD from the nearby "Mid-Main" zone that reaches to the roundabout.

**Hamburg** has taken a very active role in planning for improvements to the central business district. An economic development plan was completed in 2005, laying the groundwork for further improvements. In 2006 the village enacted a new set of building design standards in the downtown area that very specifically illustrate what design features can and cannot be built. This visually-based document gives very clear direction to the Planning Board and code enforcement office regarding many different physical elements of new construction and rehabilitation, including: façade design, storefronts, signage, awnings, lighting, and handicapped accessibility.

Another village government initiative was the successful pursuit of a \$200,000 grant from the New York State Main Street Program to fund façade improvements in the downtown area. The village is actively working to distribute these funds and intends to pursue additional funding for 2008. This program will augment an existing joint façade improvement program with the Town of Hamburg that has been in place for the past 15 years.

**Kenmore** altered its zoning in 2001 to distinguish between the central business district along Delaware Avenue and the restricted business district along its other major streets. This classification is seen as a way to ensure that new development along the secondary streets fits in better with nearby residential neighborhoods.

**Lewiston's** downtown area development is controlled through the Historic Preservation Commission (the village is a certified local government). The historic ordinance places strong controls on colors, signage and building materials in the downtown area and has proven to be very effective at maintaining the consistent appearance of the area.

**Pittsford** designated its entire downtown as a historic preservation district in 1971. Since that time the village has placed a strong emphasis on maintaining the scale and functionality of its historic downtown through a combination of investment, regulation and cooperation. The village has worked to keep key civic functions in their historic locations, and recently spent \$7 million to build a new library that serves both the village and Town of Pittsford. Major investments have also been undertaken along the historic Erie Canal waterfront—the proximity of the commercial district to the waterfront has made Pittsford the preferred place for people of all ages

from the Rochester area to go for a stroll or a leisurely day out. The village has also made major investments in its pedestrian environment, including a partnership with businesses that has resulted in the private donation of 25 benches in the downtown core.

The village has resisted pressure to expand the size of the commercial core, and has chosen to keep the zoning boundaries intact. This has led to very strong demand for the existing commercial inventory and to a continued healthy stock of historic homes in the area immediately surrounding the commercial core. Downtown zoning has been in place for many years to control the nature of new development and rehabilitation projects. All buildings in downtown must be at least two stories, and no office or residential uses are permitted at street level—all storefronts must contain retail, dining or service businesses. All new restaurants are subject to special exception permits, as parking is a major concern in the village.

## Marketing Activities

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**East Aurora** has used its two major destinations (the Roycroft campus and the Toy Museum) as marketing vehicles for the village itself. Beyond that, little has had to be done to market the village, as it is already popular destination for local residents and tourists alike.

**Hamburg** has used the Route 62 project as a means of building marketing capacity for the village. Since the reconstruction will result in major disturbances of traffic patterns and business activities during its construction period, a consortium of government (village and town), business, civic and economic development groups have come together under the name Village Business Advisory Council (VBAC). Though this group has formed to help the community effectively manage the road reconstruction, it is being built as a long-term effort with a mission of acting as a permanent venue for discussions of community issues. A major issue with the reconstruction is its effect on small businesses: of the 430 businesses in the Village of Hamburg, 270 are located within the Route 62 project area. VBAC has secured support from the Small Business Development Center at Buffalo State and all 14 lending institutions with branches in Hamburg to work with local businesses to provide assistance with business planning, financing and real estate issues related to the reconstruction.

**Kenmore** has struggled to market itself, due to a fairly inactive merchants association and local Chamber of Commerce. The village is hoping to increase marketing activities in the future.

**Lewiston** does not have a formalized downtown management group, but it does have an ad hoc group called Service Organizations of Lewiston (SOL) that coordinates event planning, publicity and management for a variety of local organizations. SOL was first convened by the Mayor, but is now mostly self-run, with occasional staff support from the Chamber of Commerce. The organization meets quarterly and plans three months of efforts at a time. Lewiston also benefits greatly from the 50 or so concerts and other events held at the Artpark each year.

**Pittsford** has also thrived on special events. The Town of Pittsford's Events Committee is the umbrella organization under which village events are held—this arrangement is critical to success. Events are planned via a partnership among the village, the town and the Pittsford Merchants Association.

## Summary of Findings

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- New development has been rare in most of the comparable villages, except for East Aurora. As a result, there has not been a great deal of attention placed on regulation in the past, but recent investment has led to a renewed focus on the character of new development.
- Relative to the other villages Williamsville has a very strong concentration of office and retail uses, but lags on dining and entertainment uses. This helps explain why Williamsville does not have the broader appeal that others like Lewiston, Pittsford and East Aurora do.
- All of the other villages either have or are about to undertake major streetscaping efforts, both as a means to beautify their downtowns and as a way to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety.
- Investments in the urban environment have been very positive in the other villages, but must be effectively managed to ensure that they do not unduly impact existing businesses.
- If a community has a strong Planning Board, increased regulation is not always necessary. East Aurora has been able to effectively guide new development without imposing aggressive regulations. However, this approach is tied to personalities, and membership on local boards often changes very quickly.
- The answer to downtown parking problems is usually not to add more public parking, but instead to effectively manage the existing inventory and to work with developers and landowners to ensure that private parking has some public benefit.
- The best marketing for other villages has been special events and major attractions that bring people into their downtowns.