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| <b>Jurisdiction Type:</b>                 | Municipal   |
| <b>Municipality:</b>                      | Buffalo   |
| <b>Year (adopted, written, etc.):</b>     | 2003  |
| <b>Community Type – applicable to:</b>    | Urban; Suburban   |
| <b>Title:</b>                             | Comprehensive Plan; Transportation Goals                                |
| <b>Document Last Updated in Database:</b> | March 29, 2018  |

### ***Abstract***

A particular element of Buffalo, New York’s Comprehensive Plan 2030 is to redesign and repurpose their transportation network. Their goal is to promote transportation policies and projects that will help create an economically and environmentally healthy region, reverse current negative economic, land use, social and demographic trends, foster growth in areas with existing infrastructure, and promote equitable services for all residents.

In the first four years of the program, there are over 40 projects aimed at upgrading existing infrastructure. These include actions for congestion relief and mobility improvements, transit improvements, access improvements to support economic development, signalization upgrades, safety improvements, and measures to improve the quality of life through beautification and landscaping, .

After existing infrastructure upgrades, their resources will be devoted to intra-modal or multi-modal transportation networks. Increasing city access and convenience through pedestrian and bicycle pathways has the advantage of improving the local economy, mitigating traffic congestion, limiting environmental impact, and improving public health. They’re focusing their multi-modal transportation along and between key traffic routes and main street corridors.

### ***Resource***

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#### 2.4.9 Implement Key Transportation Projects

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

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

The goals of the plan are to:

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

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

The first phase of the plan is being implemented through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a five-year plan that schedules federal funds for highway, transit, and other transportation projects in Erie and Niagara Counties. In the period 2002 to 2006, there are forty projects scheduled for the City of Buffalo. They include actions for congestion relief and mobility improvements, transit improvements, access improvements to support economic development, signalization upgrades, and measures to improve the quality of life through beautification and landscaping, and safety improvements (See Figure 47).

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

*Improve regional mobility and accessibility* through development of the Buffalo Intermodal Transportation Center. Long-term priorities include implementing quality transit extensions, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, "reverse commute" programs, alternative mode programs, and programs to increase demand for public transportation.

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

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

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

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

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

You can find the Buffalo, New York's Comprehensive Plan Development Priorities and Planning Policies here:

[http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1\\_2\\_1/Mayor/COB\\_Comprehensive\\_Plan/section\\_24510\\_1657796.html](http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1_2_1/Mayor/COB_Comprehensive_Plan/section_24510_1657796.html)



# BUFFALO'S LAND USE PLAN

“Lively, diverse, intense cities contain  
the seeds of their own regeneration.”

*Jane Jacobs*

# BUFFALO'S LAND USE PLAN



CITY OF BUFFALO  
**BYRON W. BROWN, MAYOR**  
PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT, FEBRUARY 2014



**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING**  
BRENDAN R. MEHAFFY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**CONSULTANT TEAM**  
CAMIROS, LTD  
CODE STUDIO  
FISHER ASSOCIATES  
GOODY CLANCY  
URBAN DESIGN PROJECT  
WATTS ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING

## A message from the mayor

The Green Code is a historic revision of Buffalo's land use and zoning policies, designed to create jobs, strengthen neighborhoods, and repair the environment.

The first step in this process was the adoption of our Comprehensive Plan in 2006. Since then, we have worked on completing a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, assessing four separate Brownfield Opportunity Areas, and reviewing the various Urban Renewal Plans that remain active.

The final step is the adoption of a new land use plan and zoning ordinance, designed to promote investment by making the development process simple, transparent, and in line with the vision we share for our city.

Buffalo faces many challenges—economic transition, population loss, and environmental damage; but also has much to build upon—great neighborhoods, beautiful parks, and world-class architecture. Most importantly, we have a wealth of dedicated residents who have been working to create healthy, attractive, and prosperous neighborhoods across the city.

The Green Code will support and build upon these efforts. I look forward to working together to make our goals a reality.

**Byron W. Brown**

# I. INTRODUCTION

The Green Code is a place-based economic development strategy designed to implement the city's Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2006. The Comprehensive Plan provided a set of key principles to guide policy and investment decisions: fix the basics and build on assets; implement smart growth and sustainability; and target investments strategically.

The Green Code incorporates citizens' views expressed through a variety of planning initiatives, including a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Brownfield Opportunity Areas, and Urban Renewal Plans. The land use plan will take the direction outlined by citizens and merge it into a vision for the city's physical development over the next 20 years, while the zoning ordinance will serve as the "DNA" that determines what gets built and where.



*The Mayor has placed a strong emphasis on public input.*

## What will the land use plan do?

- ▶ Identify existing conditions, as well as trends, issues, and opportunities that are expected to unfold over next 20 years.
- ▶ Establish the foundation for revising the zoning code, setting capital improvement priorities, and guiding subsequent neighborhood planning efforts.
- ▶ Provide direction on land use, transportation, and physical development.

## What will the new zoning ordinance do?

- ▶ Integrate land use and urban design into form-based standards for both public and private realms.
- ▶ Consolidate development regulations into one simple, intuitive, and user-friendly document.
- ▶ Provide fair and transparent rules and procedures based on public consensus.

## How was the community involved?

The Green Code is the first opportunity residents have had in almost 60 years to match Buffalo's future with the community's vision. Over the past decade, citizens and government have worked together to craft a coherent, comprehensive, and forward-looking vision to restore the city.



Residents contributed initially through citywide meetings about the future of Buffalo; then at a series of land use workshops, where close to 1,000 persons shared knowledge and insights about their neighborhoods. Still others have provided valuable input through surveys and with comments on the Green Code website.

A Community Advisory Committee, composed of stakeholders from across the city, set the following goals and values as a basis for this effort:

- ▶ Use a participatory process to establish clear and simple rules that are fairly and consistently applied, revised democratically, respect community diversity, and incorporate existing community plans.
- ▶ Respect traditional development patterns and repair existing neighborhood fabric, help residents reinvent neighborhoods where the fabric is beyond repair, and preserve the city's architectural heritage and the physical context that supports it.
- ▶ Promote land use patterns that encourage compact development and transportation alternatives to conserve energy; protect air, water, and soil quality; preserve and expand green infrastructure; and support access to wholesome food and healthy lifestyles.
- ▶ Encourage investment by making development regulations predictable, setting aside land for

job creation, and allowing for the productive and timely reuse of vacant land.

- ▶ Create the conditions for the city to stabilize and grow, make it attractive to newcomers by meeting the aspirations of current residents, and share the benefits of city life equitably with both this generation and those that follow.



*Right and above: Nine neighborhood workshops in 2011 attracted nearly 1,000 people.*

## II. CONTEXT

Cities are constructed step-by-step, year-by-year, through thousands of individual acts of building, paving, planting, repairing, and removing. The sum of these acts produces a place that residents share and businesses operate within. Each act matters, as it either contributes to—or subtracts from—the resulting quality of life as determined by those living and working in the neighborhood.

At any moment in time, a city appears fixed and permanent to its inhabitants, but Buffalo's history has been one of constant change. The city has been the site of continuous settlement for more than 200 years, but prior to this the area served mainly as seasonal hunting and fishing grounds shared by various Native American tribes.

It remained tied to natural patterns, where the creeks—now either buried or channelized—that emptied into Lake Erie supported vast wetlands and marshes, and often changed course after major storms. The land beyond was generally flat and wooded, offering the first opportunity to

generate wealth by using the natural resources at the disposal of the first permanent settlers.

Buffalo began in 1758 as a French trading post on the banks of Buffalo Creek near the shore of Lake Erie. Over subsequent decades it grew up as a village of houses, workshops, stores, and outlying farms, cast upon the ambitious framework of Joseph Ellicott's 1804 grid and radial street plan.

The village was burned to the ground by British troops in the War of 1812, rebuilt in the years that followed, upgraded with a harbor to ensure that the Erie Canal would terminate in Buffalo, and expanded to meet the commerce that flowed through the canal after its opening in 1825.

The canal era was followed closely by the rail era as webs of steel connected Buffalo to New York City and then Chicago. Rail lines crisscrossed the city, providing access but also setting up barriers that would isolate and define many neighborhoods. The energy source for the city



*The Green Code, announced by Mayor Byron W. Brown on Earth Day 2010, intends to build on Buffalo's planning legacy.*

changed from decade to decade—horse power, water power, coal and steam, hydroelectric—with new technologies following behind.

Throughout the 1800s Buffalo's population seemed to double every decade as it grew from a frontier outpost to a provincial town to one of the leading cities in the nation. Midwest grain poured into the city's harbor, giving rise to a canyon of grain elevators and mills on the shore; iron ore from the upper Great Lakes and coal from western Pennsylvania converged to create the region's steel industry. As the century turned, the city was increasingly an industrial power, making cars, airplanes, and chemicals.

Civic leaders organized to build bridges and viaducts to rid the city of railroad grade crossings, recruited Frederick Law Olmsted to develop a park and parkway system, erected civic monuments, and staged an international exposition at the turn of the 20th century.

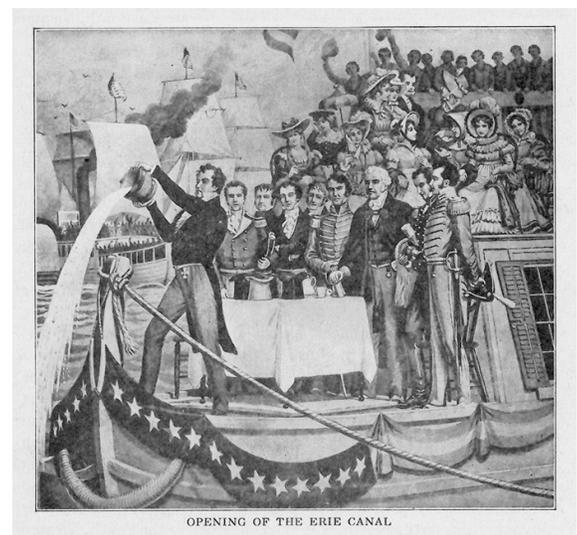
Buffalo's neighborhoods grew up dense, active, and whole. Bustling commercial districts on Niagara, Broadway, and William grew up along the spokes of Ellicott's hub. Neighborhoods assumed the identities of the ethnic groups they housed, first German and Irish, then Italian and Polish, later African American and Puerto Rican.

As the century progressed, Buffalo's prosperity seemed assured. But unanticipated changes were already underway. The automobile emerged as transportation for the average family and cities were revamped to accommodate its needs. Downtown was reconfigured to make room for moving and parking cars. Highways were built to the suburbs, leading to new neighborhoods and commercial destinations. As Buffalo grew on its periphery, it receded at the center.

The region's population peaked at 1.3 million residents in 1970, yet the structure of the global



The 1804 radial and grid street plan was designed by Joseph Ellicott.



Gov. Clinton ceremoniously opened the Erie Canal on October 26, 1825.

*Buffalo's canal and harbor facilities made it the world's leading grain port.*



economy was already changing. Manufacturing jobs began disappearing, first to automation, then to the Sunbelt, eventually offshore. Bethlehem Steel, Trico, and other industrial giants closed, initiating a long and painful restructuring of the regional economy.

These events and decisions shaped the city we inherit today—a complex legacy of assets and challenges. For better or worse, this is the context within which a vision for Buffalo's future must be created and carried out.

## Buffalo planning timeline

- 1804** Village of New Amsterdam street plan completed by Joseph Ellicott
- 1825** Erie Canal opened, connecting Buffalo to Hudson River and New York City
- 1832** City of Buffalo incorporated
- 1843** City linked by rail to Hudson River
- 1853** Village of Black Rock annexed by Buffalo
- 1860** Citywide horse-drawn streetcar system established
- 1870** Olmsted, Vaux & Co. hired to design park and parkway system
- 1873** International Railway Bridge opened, connecting Buffalo by rail to Canada
- 1883** Belt Line freight and commuter rail completed
- 1890** First electric streetcar service established



*Railroads first supplemented, then nearly supplanted, the canal system.*

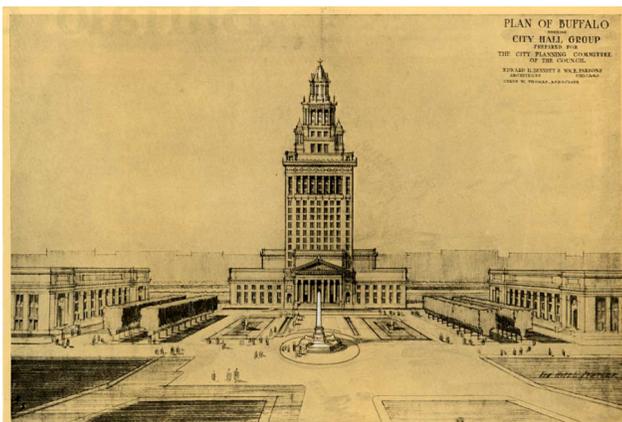
The streetcar system served, and helped create, downtown.

Olmsted's reflecting pool in Martin Luther King Jr. Park has been restored.



- 1896** Electric power from Niagara Falls transmitted to Buffalo
- 1901** Pan American Exposition held
- 1922** *The Plan of Buffalo* adopted
- 1923** First bus transit service established
- 1925** First Zoning Ordinance adopted; with one residential, one apartment-hotel, one commercial, and three industrial districts

- 1927** Peace Bridge opened, connecting Buffalo by car to Canada
- 1934** Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority established
- 1946** Buffalo Urban Area Report published, indicating approximate routes for thruways in city
- 1950** *Buffalo General Plan* adopted, setting agenda for radical transformation of city's urban form
- 1953** Second Zoning Ordinance adopted; with five residential, four commercial, and three industrial districts
- 1956** 426-mile main line of NYS Thruway opened
- 1957** Ellicott Urban Renewal Project adopted, with demolition starting in 1959
- 1959** St. Lawrence Seaway opened, allowing Great Lakes freight to bypass Buffalo's port
- 1964** *Buffalo Master Plan* adopted, calling for second round of urban renewal and highway building



The 1922 Plan proposed a new City Hall on Niagara Square.



*3,750 residents were displaced by the Waterfront Urban Renewal Project, 1963.*



*Shelton Square was removed in 1965 as part of the Downtown Urban Renewal Project.*

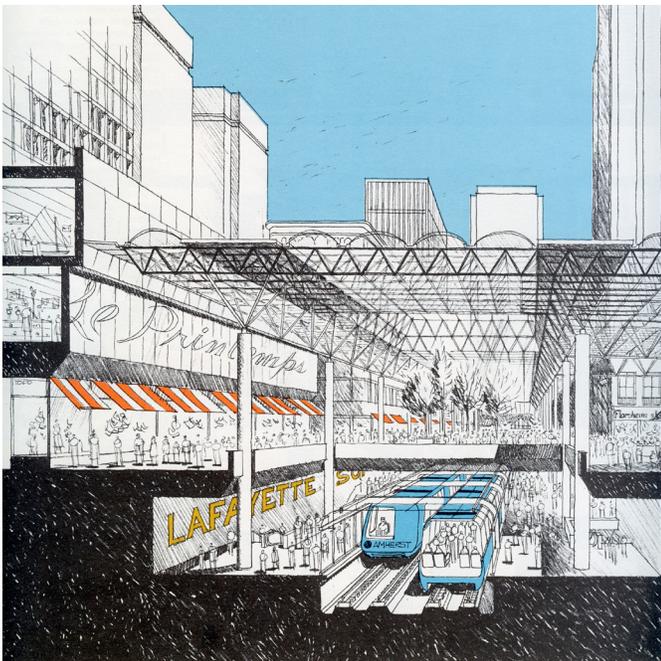
**1968** Ground broken on University at Buffalo's Amherst Campus

**1976** Landmark and Historic Preservation Ordinance adopted

**1977** Buffalo City Plan: A Land Use Plan for the Physical Development of Buffalo adopted

**1985** Metro Rail opened

**2006** Comprehensive Plan adopted



*The 1971 downtown plan called for the construction of a light rail rapid transit line along Main Street.*

# III. SETTING

Understanding Buffalo today is necessary for realizing a vision for the city. It must build its future upon its existing foundation, working with both the good and the bad inherited from prior generations. Buffalo shares the same challenges and attributes as many cities in the Northeast and Midwest—economic destabilization, vacancy, brownfields, and racial segregation. Yet too often the city has defined itself by these challenges, overlooking its many natural and manmade attributes.

Buffalo's economy is emerging from the difficult transition from a labor-intensive industrial city to a knowledge-based economy. This recovery is being driven by anchor institutions and businesses in the life sciences, higher education, advanced manufacturing, and leisure and hospitality sectors. It is making progress with respect to brownfield remediation, river cleanup, and air quality improvements. Unfortunately, some residents are still not benefiting, due to regional patterns of racial and economic inequality.

Residents have accomplished a great deal in responding to the changes that have come their way. A concerted effort has preserved and developed downtown Buffalo as the center of the region, and a medical campus has grown at its northern edge. Citizen movements have restored the Olmsted parks and preserved many outstanding architectural treasures. Public school buildings have been comprehensively renovated and modernized.

People sense that something is happening in Buffalo. Residents are reaching out to each other. Neighborhood revitalization is becoming a do-it-yourself phenomenon. Challenges remain, but as these are addressed there is also an extraordinary legacy on which to build. In many ways, what was old has become new again. Buffalo's neighborhoods are compact and walkable. The remaining housing stock is strong and a great

value. The public transit system is robust. Former industrial sites can be a future asset. A public research university and many other institutions of higher education call the city home. The elements of the new economy are well-established.

## Regional context

The city is the economic center of Erie and Niagara counties, a region that encompasses over 1,500 square miles. The population of the two counties grew by only 4 percent between 1950 and 2010; while the city lost over half of its residents and saw its share of the regional population decline from 53 to 23 percent during this period. Despite these shifts, Buffalo remains the region's largest municipality in terms of population. It also boasts the highest density, almost double that of almost every other community.

The two-county metropolitan region serves to define a common labor market, where workers can find employment within reasonable commuting distance of their residence. But while the economy is regional in nature, the housing market is decidedly local. Communities compete with each other to attract residents and the bundle of goods and services—schools, parks, stores, restaurants—that they require.

However, the land use and development framework that created the city's mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods was turned upside down when the post-war "Baby Boom" exploded. The pent-up demand for housing could not be met within the city, and government policies guiding mortgage underwriting and highway construction paved the way for suburban growth.

The initial reaction by city leaders at the time was two-fold: revise land use policies to encourage the type of low-density suburban development

## BUFFALO/NIAGARA FALLS MSA

| YEAR | POPULATION | CHANGE | URBANIZED AREA | CHANGE |
|------|------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| 1950 | 1,089,200  | --     | 123 sq. mi.    | --     |
| 1960 | 1,307,000  | 20%    | 160 sq. mi.    | 30%    |
| 1970 | 1,349,200  | 3%     | 214 sq. mi.    | 34%    |
| 1980 | 1,242,800  | -8%    | 266 sq. mi.    | 24%    |
| 1990 | 1,189,300  | -4%    | 286 sq. mi.    | 8%     |
| 2000 | 1,170,100  | -2%    | 367 sq. mi.    | 28%    |
| 2010 | 1,135,500  | -3%    | 380 sq. mi.    | 4%     |

that was driving the market; and accommodate highway expansion and clear land for parking to facilitate the commute into downtown to secure its status as the region's employment and retail center. This approach has met with limited success, as once households moved to the suburbs, retail quickly followed, and employers have gradually relocated as well.

The city currently has 28 percent of Erie County's population, yet only 9 percent of its retail inventory, and 19 percent of its industrial inventory—the rest having migrated to surrounding suburbs. It has managed to maintain its strength in the office market, influenced in part by its role as the region's governmental center, with 51 percent of the total countywide inventory, including almost 40 percent in the CBD.

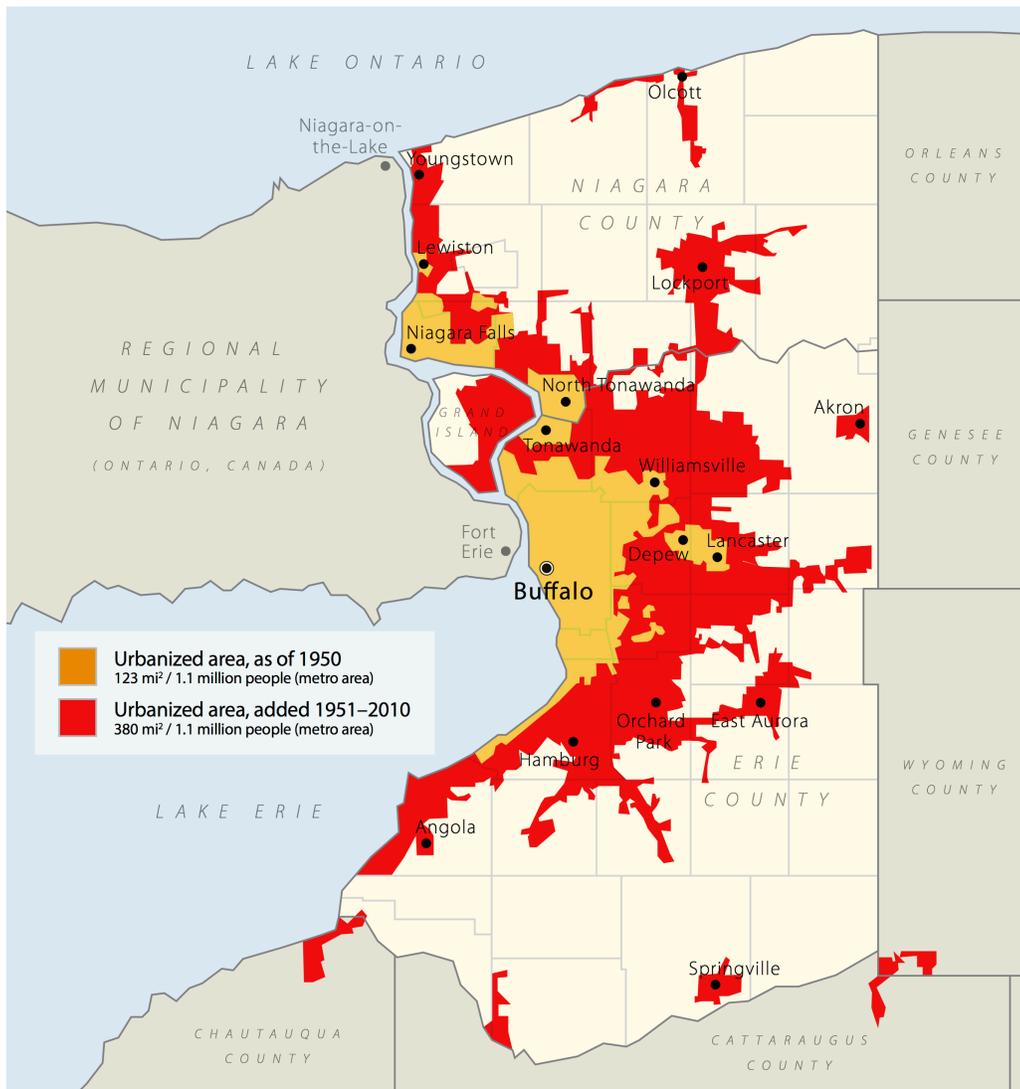
From 1950 to 2010, the urbanized area more than tripled, increasing by 257 square miles. Put simply, roughly the same number of people are now spread out over an area over three times as large. While this is a textbook example of sprawl, there is also good news. Over the past 10 years the region experienced its slowest rate of sprawl since 1950, with only 13 square miles in urbanized area added.

The city's Comprehensive Plan directs future land use planning to follow the principles of smart

growth and the concepts of neighborhood, district, and corridor as defined by the Charter for the New Urbanism.

Moving forward, Buffalo benefits from a number of positive trends, both national and local in scope:

- ▶ Job and population losses are trending downward, indicating that stabilization may be near.
- ▶ The city's economy has diversified from a focus on manufacturing, insulating it against future downturns in any single sector.
- ▶ A number of anchor institutions remain, and reinvestments by long-standing corporations are being made.
- ▶ It remains the center of a region of over one million residents, with excellent accessibility and the density that will drive innovation, knowledge sharing, and productivity.
- ▶ It has untapped potential for unlocking waterfront development.
- ▶ While clean-up costs often exceed the value of the resulting land, recovering markets and government support for brownfield remediation are making more sites viable.



*Population has stayed flat since 1950, while the region has sprawled.*

As well as issues that need to be addressed:

- ▶ The city suffers from a high poverty rate, which employment training and job creation efforts are designed to address.
- ▶ The lack of employment opportunities have led to population loss, which have resulted in housing abandonment and commercial vacancy.
- ▶ Racial and economic segregation, low educational levels, and the perception of crime affect redevelopment efforts.
- ▶ Aging infrastructure—roads, water, sewer, public facilities, housing—that will require reinvestment.

## Demographics

Analysis suggests that it may take until 2030 for the city's population decline to stabilize, although recent census data shows that the rate of decline has already begun to slow. From that point the population may stay level for a number of years before beginning a slow increase. It is impossible to project what size the city may ultimately become—in 1950 it seemed like its growth would never end; while by 1990 it was unclear whether there would be a bottom to its population loss.

The success of economic development initiatives and programs that can bring residents to new and rehabilitated housing will determine the timing

## DEMOGRAPHICS

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Population, 2012                     | 259,380   |
| Persons/square mile                  | 6,420   |
| Educational attainment (persons 25+) | Less than high school: 18%<br>High school: 27%<br>Some college: 29%<br>Bachelor's degree: 14%<br>Graduate degree: 12% |
| Median household income              | \$30,500  |
| Persons below poverty                | 30%   |
| Foreign born population              | 8%  |

and extent of the reversal of the current trend. Strong interventions to build the economy and revitalize neighborhoods will be needed to arrest the decline. State and federal commitments are needed, as the Comprehensive Plan clearly points out. Continuing efforts to coordinate economic development and target investments in schools, parks, infrastructure, and housing are essential to repair the overall fabric and realize Buffalo's turnaround, with the Buffalo Billion taking the lead in this regard.



## Land use

If Buffalo were to reach its population peak again, it would take many decades. But it's less important to focus on those who might live in the city as opposed to those already living here. The key is creating an environment and conditions for growth that will assure a high quality-of-life. With a commitment to establishing strong neighborhood centers and building out from there, it is likely that there will be excess land for many years to come.

There are approximately 40.6 square miles, within the city. About 81 percent of this land has been subdivided into parcels. Most is privately-owned, while some is publicly-held parkland or institutions. The remainder is largely right-of-way, which includes highways, local roads, and sidewalks. The goal is to encourage development that reinforces walkable development patterns, and tie these places together with great streets and public spaces.

## Emerging trends

It is undeniable that Buffalo has had difficulty competing for growth by attempting to imitate the suburban model. But emerging trends suggest that future development may be more in line with the city's historic land use patterns. Demographic projections indicate an upcoming shift towards the kind of mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods that the city is in a position to provide, as well as economic development that builds on density and proximity.

Buffalo must prepare to take advantage of these trends, so it can attract both residents and businesses. The land use plan will provide the necessary foundation for accommodating future development, although a variety of issues will also need to be addressed to ensure success—educational opportunities, public safety, and

*Between 2000 and 2010, the number of foreign-born residents increased by 9,070—or 71 percent.*

## LAND USE

|                              | PARCELS       | ACRES         |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Residential                  | 69,954 (74%)  | 7,760 (30%)   |
| Commercial                   | 4,411 (5%)    | 2,260 (9%)    |
| Industrial                   | 1,004 (1%)    | 1,960 (8%)    |
| Institutional                | 897 (1%)      | 1,830 (7%)    |
| Parks                        | 130 (0%)      | 1,850 (7%)    |
| Vacant                       | 16,119 (17%)  | 3,220 (12%)   |
| Transportation and Utilities | 259 (0%)      | 510 (2%)      |
| Rights-of-Way                | --            | 4,890 (19%)   |
| Unassigned                   | 1,418 (2%)    | 1,570 (6%)    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                 | <b>94,192</b> | <b>28,850</b> |

services needed to create and sustain a high quality of life for residents.

Cities concentrate talent, knowledge, and assets. They encourage economic and cultural cross-pollination, fueling innovation and creativity. They nurture the social and economic networks vital to producing both wealth and community cohesion. In a global, knowledge-based economy, place matters more than ever.

Studies show that if the market is allowed to integrate land uses, expand transportation options, and increase employment intensity, it will make an area more economically productive. Density is especially important to economic sectors such as retail and services. If density is too low, an area won't be able to support certain kinds of retail and services; if these are too far or inconvenient to access, spending will go elsewhere.

To benefit from these trends, communities need to make it easier to build infill and mixed-use projects. In a 2011 National Association of Realtors survey, 56 percent of Americans indicated a preference for

smart growth over sprawl, including 54 percent in peak child-rearing years of 35 to 54. Most of those choosing smart growth did so because of an ability to walk to shops and restaurants; and 40 percent of respondents would walk or bike to work or on errands if the destination was within a mile.

The post-war Baby Boom generation represented the end of America's youth movement. Conventional zoning, inexpensive land, and cheap gas combined to facilitate suburban residential developments to accommodate this demographic expansion. Western New York has approximated trends experienced by the nation, in which roughly half of all households had children in 1960; declining to 30 percent in 2010, and projected to be at 27 percent by 2030.

While the country will add over 26 million households by 2030, only 3.5 million of these will have children. Over half of the total growth will be in one-person households—young singles starting out, and older households losing members.

Boomers will continue to exert an overwhelming influence as they age. The share of the population 65 and older will increase from 13 to 20 percent between 2010 and 2030, and remain at that level for several decades. And although seniors will comprise 20 percent of the population, they will account for a third of housing demand due to their smaller household size.

With respect to younger generations, indications are that as the Millennials who grew up in isolated, single-use suburbs enter the period of peak housing needs and dominate housing market, they will be looking to live in downtowns and mixed-use neighborhoods.

As a result, housing options will need to more closely mimic life stages—young people need rentals, new families need starter homes, maturing families need larger homes, and empty nesters need small homes, often rentals. Preference surveys indicate that these shifting demographics will increase demand for attached units and small-lots, and nearly half of the housing demand between 2010 and 2030 will be for rental units.

# IV. OBJECTIVES

Planning is ultimately about preparing for the future, and using the information at hand to make informed decisions. Buffalo's Land Use Plan is designed to provide the framework for this decision-making. It establishes a clear direction, but is also flexible enough to accommodate changing conditions.

The plan outlines the community's expectations and preferences regarding future development to residents, property owners, developers, and businesses. It serves as a bridge to the city's zoning code by recommending the appropriate type, intensity, and character of development, without prescribing when it should occur.

As such, it acknowledges the challenge of planning for development opportunities that may be years in the making. Within this context, the market will determine the pace of change, and the city will ensure that these investments support the land use objectives agreed upon by the community.

The city's intent is to set the parameters and provide the guidelines for development, then step back and allow investment to flow. The city must be nimble and flexible to respond to changing markets and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

Reinforcing great places to live, great places to work, and great places to enjoy is the vision advanced by this plan.

# 1. FUEL ECONOMIC GENERATORS

The regional economy is in the midst of a transition that began in the 1960s and will likely continue for many years. Buffalo was not alone in seeing employment in the basic industries of the old economy disperse, initially to the South, then overseas. A painful relocation of jobs and workers has resulted, but that is not the whole story.

A new economy that builds upon the many positive assets that have been inherited has begun to emerge, supported by trade, financial and business services, and knowledge-based industries such as advanced manufacturing, higher education, and life sciences. The city can support this transition by encouraging actions that increase the suitability of sites for development and employment opportunities.

The Land Use Plan must address where new facilities can be located, taking into account the competitive marketplace in Western New York and Southern Ontario, the existing transportation system, and the community's preferred framework for redeveloping the city. There is sufficient raw land to accommodate the demand for new manufacturing, primary and back office space, and

facilities for biomedical and educational activities, although the city must continue its aggressive efforts to remediate sites and structures.

As the new economy takes hold, the needs, requirements and location for land to support it are also changing. The previous generation of industrial employers required a great deal of land area to support their activities. Less land is needed to support elements of the new economic structure. But location—in dense, mixed-use, lively places—is perhaps more critical given the need to build synergistic relationships in the knowledge-based economy.

It has been reported that there is sufficient demand for an average of 20 to 25 net acres of land per year in new manufacturing, flex-tech, and distribution facilities in Buffalo. In addition, there will also be demand to accommodate both primary and back office space use and other employment uses in the fields of education, medicine, and biotech. Office space for new primary facilities is low and such uses should be channeled to existing buildings or sites in the downtown. Back office users can also find newly adapted space in existing buildings in downtown, the Larkin District, or similar areas.

The total supply of land currently zoned for manufacturing is 7,075 acres, with about 1,460 acres vacant. Many parcels contain marginal to obsolete industrial buildings that do not have an economic future, enlarging this number even further. There is enough land zoned for manufacturing to supply demand for many years. The difficulty is that there is not an adequate supply of sites ready for immediate development, indicating the need for continued efforts in remediating brownfields.

The Land Use Plan takes direction from *Queen City Hub: a Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo*, published in 2003. It addresses both the

*Larkin Square is a symbol of Buffalo's new economy.*



*Delaware North is building a new headquarters building.*



physical and economic development of downtown, and puts forward four activities that need to be woven together into the development pattern of downtown: living, working, visiting, and shopping. The movement towards a mixed-use downtown needs to be nurtured and supported, as with the Buffalo Building Reuse Plan to repurpose underutilized buildings in the downtown core and along the Belt Line.

A strong economy is the basis for all successful planning efforts. The plan promotes place-based economic development by targeting downtown investments, fortifying employment centers, reclaiming brownfields, supporting local entrepreneurs, and improving accessibility.

A central theme is creating great places for investment. Knowledge is the engine of the new economy, and Buffalo's fuel will be compact regional centers, a wider variety of transportation choices, and higher quality public realm. To become more competitive, these place-based assets will be reinforced.

The following goals have been established for 2032:

- ▶ Continue to grow median household incomes faster than the national rate
- ▶ Reduce the office and industrial vacancy rates (currently 16 percent and 6 percent)
- ▶ Capture a larger share of local consumer dollars and a growing percentage of regional visitor dollars
- ▶ Achieve 8,000 downtown residents (currently 1,800)
- ▶ Increase Metro Rail weekday ridership to 40,000 (currently 22,600 in 2012)
- ▶ Reduce CBD land devoted to commercial parking lots to 30 acres (currently 40 acres)

### 1.1. Accelerate downtown's momentum

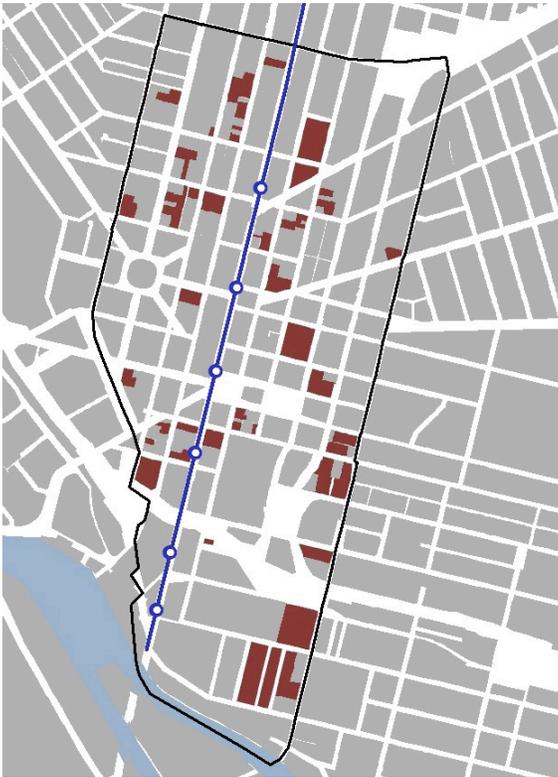
Downtown Buffalo is the regional center of Western New York, and its ongoing redevelopment must be encouraged to realize a lively, mixed-use neighborhood that takes advantage of its central location. Momentum is clearly building, with nearly \$1.7 billion of construction recently completed, underway, or in the pipeline. This growth is exemplified by projects such as the Avant, Lafayette Hotel, Conventus, and Tishman Building.

Indicators of downtown's progress are particularly strong in the residential and hospitality categories:

| UNITS       | 2000  | 2014  |
|-------------|-------|-------|
| Residential | 402   | 1,211 |
| Hotel       | 1,325 | 2,408 |

While this progress is encouraging, more work is needed to make downtown strong, vibrant, and whole. The Class A office vacancy rate, according to CBRE, soared to 21 percent in 2013 from 7 percent the previous year, following HSBC's downsizing at One Seneca Tower, and is now higher than the national rate of 15 percent. This is likely a temporary condition, as alternative uses for recently vacated properties are proposed.

Housing construction fell behind goals established in a 2004 market study, which called for 375 new units per year over five years. The inventory of existing structures available for renovation—largely aided by the use of historic tax credits—has nearly



*Commercial parking lots may be an infill development opportunity.*



*The Lafayette Hotel was renovated in 2012.*

been exhausted, but opportunities for infill housing have yet to be tapped. More than 40 acres of land in the CBD—equivalent to 31 football fields—is devoted to commercial parking lots, whose redevelopment would provide numerous benefits.

Although work has begun to bring cars back to Main Street, a long road is ahead to create the great streets called for in the downtown plan, and to put pedestrians first, calm traffic, and improve the urban environment. As work continues to slow and reverse regional population loss, we must double down on efforts to redirect economic activity and population back to the core.

- A.** Support regional development policies that attract residents and employers back to transit-served locations of the downtown core.
- B.** Limit new or expanded surface parking in the downtown core, and pursue mixed-use redevelopment of existing surface lots.
- C.** Encourage growth of regionally significant government facilities in downtown, including

the University at Buffalo and Erie Community College's downtown campuses.

- D.** Support improvements to the Metropolitan Transportation Center and Amtrak's Exchange Street Station.
- E.** Encourage transportation demand management strategies that shift single-occupant vehicle trips to other modes such as walking, cycling, transit, and ridesharing.
- F.** Prioritize traffic calming on streets that feed into limited access highways, such as Church, Elm, and Oak.
- G.** Restore the Ellicott street grid and public spaces, along with the historic street grid and canal network at the waterfront.

*The University at Buffalo is relocating its Medical School to downtown.*

## 1.2. Create great places along the Knowledge Corridor

Nearly three decades years after Metro Rail began operation, Main Street is finally experiencing spin-off development. The light rail line links the drivers of Buffalo's knowledge economy, including the University at Buffalo, Tri-Main Center, Sister's Hospital, Canisius and Medaille colleges, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, downtown, and the waterfront.

Metro Rail is well positioned to serve this emerging knowledge corridor—one centered on job density and the exchange of ideas—just as water and rail served the grain and steel industries. With 22,600 weekday passengers, it links employment centers, education and medical institutions, and mixed-use neighborhood centers.

Metro Rail can support economic growth by offering alternatives to driving and improved connections to jobs and destinations. Since work and school account for about 70 percent of transit trips, and studies show that concentrating employers and schools near transit is closely associated with high ridership rates, directing more jobs and educational opportunities to areas along the Metro Rail is a priority. This is the key to



achieving greater equity, reducing transportation costs, and increasing household spending power.

Main Street appears to finally be ready for transit-oriented development, but obstacles remain. The street has historically been a dividing line rather than a bridge between neighborhoods. This must be countered by encouraging higher density and improving the public realm, which can help generate public life, lure retailers, boost land values, and grow transit ridership. In short, Main Street must become a center again.

- A.** Complete the Cars Sharing Main Street Project.
- B.** Reinvent the area around Metro Rail stations as high-intensity, mixed-use neighborhood centers; and maximize population and employment densities.
- C.** Prioritize traffic calming and walkability improvements to make Main Street more active, attractive, and safe.
- D.** Support further study of transit alternatives, including expanded light rail, streetcar, bus rapid transit, and express bus service.



*The LaSalle Metro station area is one of the city's brightest prospects for transit-oriented development.*



*The Buffalo River is a boater's haven.*

### 1.3. Boost waterfront access and development

The city's waterfront historically developed around manufacturing and shipping. With the gradual decline of these activities, a vast amount of land has opened up for alternative uses. While waterfront revitalization has been a community priority for decades, progress is finally taking place, with an unprecedented number of development and public access projects underway.

This waterfront development spike goes far beyond the construction cranes at the foot of Main Street, where the \$172 million HarborCenter is under construction. Projects range from big to small, from a new state park slated for Gallagher Beach and the reconstruction of Ohio Street as a tree-lined parkway, to a "bark park" at Black Rock, and climbing wall at the Marine A elevator.

Efforts must focus on areas of the waterfront where infrastructure—roads, sewer, water—already exists and can support development. This smart growth approach strategically targets waterfront development to places like Black Rock Harbor, Erie Basin Marina, Canalside, the Cobblestone District, and along Ohio Street out to the Outer Harbor; while allowing for the reservation of vacant land for open space and habitat restoration.

A key prerequisite to development will be increased waterfront access. Multiple studies show that real estate premiums resulting from preservation of physical and visual access to the water far outweigh the costs. To ensure that maximum value is derived from future development, required waterfront setbacks must be extended to all waterfronts in the city, with exceptions allowed only for water-dependent uses. Waterfront access does not mean only parks and trails; it also means reserving space for the over 24,000 recreational boaters in the county to dock, maintain, and take out personal watercraft.

Access for manufacturers and shippers is also critical. Major employers like General Mills, Lafarge, and ADM rely on water access for transshipment. More broadly, Great Lakes shipping is still vital, with nearly 94 million tons of cargo having been carried in 2011. While Buffalo is no longer among the top ten Great Lakes ports in the U.S., its potential cannot be easily dismissed given rising energy costs. Transportation cost savings from \$10 to more than \$20 per ton of bulk cargo

*The Edward M. Cotter is reputed to be the oldest active fireboat.*



The former F.N. Burt Co. factory is slated for Class A office space.

The Belt Line contains 11.9 million square feet of reusable loft space.



are associated with use of lake transportation compared to rail or truck, so it is prudent to reserve waterfront land for shipping and manufacturing, particularly where such uses have long been viable, such as Kelly Island.

Over the long-term, it will be necessary to improve physical and visual access to waterfronts cut off by railroads and highways. Studying boulevard alternatives in highway reconstruction projects may be an essential next step in conversations about improving the relationship of neighborhoods to the water.

- A.** Target mixed-use, compact development to waterfront areas served by existing infrastructure.
- B.** Attract development that is enhanced by a waterfront location, while steering other uses to non-waterfront sites.
- C.** Support a working waterfront. Protect waterfront access for marine commercial and water-dependent uses, while minimizing impacts to wildlife and public access.
- D.** Improve pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and the water, and increase shoreline access, particularly on publicly-owned land. Enhance visual access to the water, and preserve view corridors.

#### 1.4. Repurpose industrial assets

Buffalo's industrial legacy is mixed. It has left a substantial amount of contaminated land, which will require environmental remediation to return to productive use. But many of these sites are well-positioned to help facilitate the region's economic recovery. It is critical that initial efforts focus on sites that offer the best opportunities for growth, whether for new manufacturing or other uses such as retail or recreation.

Buffalo may no longer be a major grain port or steel town, but industry—advanced manufacturing, in particular—must play a role in the growth of the local economy, growing the middle class, and improving wages. The term “post-industrial” cannot be applied to the region, where about 50,000 people are still directly employed in the manufacturing sector. While the region experienced a 40 percent decline in manufacturing jobs from 2000 to 2013, recent trends suggest the manufacturing employment base is stabilizing, while retirements are expected to open up opportunities for young workers.

The city and its partners have been aggressive and successful at remediating and redeveloping industrial assets, as evidenced by Lakeside Commerce Park and the Exchange Street Industrial Park. The state's Brownfield Opportunity Area

*Trico Plant No. 1, long a symbol of the old economy, may soon become a symbol of the new.*



Program has been instrumental in this effort by providing resources for the planning and redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Almost 12 million square feet of space exists along the Belt Line, much of which is vacant or underutilized. With the success of projects like the Houk Lofts and Tri-Main Center, evidence is mounting that this space represents an economic development opportunity. These locations can help in growing employment and attracting more residential and retail development.

- A.** Support remediation and reclamation of brownfields to reduce pressure on undeveloped land in suburban and rural areas.
- B.** Reserve industrial sites, particularly along rail and highway access points, and increase the availability of reuse-ready structures and shovel-ready land.
- C.** Reinforce employment centers along the Belt Line by encouraging a mix of uses to reactivate heritage structures.
- D.** Support infrastructure improvements that increase freight movement efficiencies and reduce carbon emissions. Review designated truck routes to ensure consistency with neighborhood livability, environmental justice, and economic development objectives.
- E.** Reserve corridors for rail and water freight transportation.
- F.** Protect existing manufacturing uses from conflicting land uses.

## 1.5. Empower small businesses and entrepreneurs

Small businesses and entrepreneurs are a critical component of any local economy. As population left the city for the suburbs, much of its retail followed. Many neighborhoods are no longer served by stores that once provided the necessities of daily life. As neighborhoods regain their footing, alternatives for meeting the needs of residents must be encouraged, and the small businesses that can provide these goods and services should be allowed to grow and thrive.

Small businesses represent about half of the private-sector economy and more than 99 percent

*Corner taverns like Scharf's Schiller Park are a Buffalo mainstay.*





*Farmers' markets, such as the Clinton-Bailey Market, provide a valuable service.*

of all businesses, per the U.S. Small Business Administration. They can be in shopfronts, office buildings, or even homes. In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their unique businesses and distinctive character enjoy a competitive advantage. Empowering local entrepreneurs must involve two strategies: removing regulatory barriers to entrepreneurship, and providing supportive environments for small businesses.

- A.** Encourage home occupations, artisan industrial uses, corner shops, bed-and-breakfasts, community and market gardens, farm stands, and other entrepreneurial enterprises.
- B.** Remove barriers to “micro-scale” retail, such as street vendors, newsstands, espresso shacks, outdoor markets, and food trucks, wagons, bikes, and carts.
- C.** Encourage all sectors of the local food economy, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery. Support enhanced access to fresh and affordable food, particularly in neighborhoods considered to be food deserts.

## 2. RESTORE NEIGHBORHOODS

Buffalo's most popular neighborhoods are often among its oldest. The city's development pattern reflects the strong foundation built during its first 120 years, as well as the challenges created by the social and economic changes over the last 50. Some neighborhoods have remained stable, experiencing continual investment in housing and commercial activities. Others have seen disinvestment and deferred property maintenance take a toll on quality-of-life and property values.

This dichotomy is at the heart of the challenge facing Buffalo. The city must preserve the assets that remain, while working to rejuvenate entire blocks or neighborhoods dominated by vacant lots and abandoned buildings.

Traditional land use planning tends to focus on the location of uses, regardless of the quality of the place that is created in the process. Buffalo's development pattern and the principles established in the Comprehensive Plan suggest a new way of thinking about land use. Planning for neighborhoods, and the vision that guides their future growth, should be based not only on an understanding of the market, but also on how those market forces work together to create places that will attract and retain residents.

Neighborhoods should be thought of as an integrated mix of housing, retail, schools, parks, places of worship, and other community services, all of which reflect the traditional character and function of Buffalo's fabric.

In the short-term, housing demand may continue to decline as the population seeks stasis. The plan encourages a development pattern in keeping

with the smart growth principles, with an average density of at least 8 to 10 units per net acre.

Local business districts are a key asset across the city. Most of these mixed-use centers have suffered due to population decline and the trend towards large-scale retail. But they still serve an important role in promoting neighborhood vitality.

Neighborhoods must also be compact to allow cost-effective and convenient transit services. Although higher residential and employment densities will not necessarily result in higher levels of transit use, they are a necessary prerequisite. As development densities increase, the number of potential passengers increases, helping to generate more ridership and higher revenues, which is important for income diversity in a city battling poverty.

Mixed-use development promotes more uniform and balanced levels of ridership along transit routes. A mix of residential, retail, employment, and entertainment uses along a route can generate riders throughout the day and evening and shorten periods of low ridership. Public safety is enhanced because the presence of people and

*Reviving neighborhoods takes time, persistence, and hard work.*





*Property values in many neighborhoods are rising, fueled by market demand for walkability.*

informal surveillance from surrounding buildings discourages potential criminal activity.

Cities with a fine-grained grid and block pattern populated by a diverse mix of uses and connected by complete streets also create healthier environments by offering their residents mobility choices, and allow them to reduce vehicle miles traveled per household.

Buffalo had 5.1 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents—well below the national average of 9.3 acres. A strategy aimed at bringing Buffalo up to the national average could mean developing as much as 1,100 acres of new parkland, almost doubling what the city has at present.

Population loss has created concentrated pockets of vacancy throughout many neighborhoods. It is not enough to reference the character that was once there. Guidance must be provided for the productive use of these areas within the remaining neighborhood fabric.

Vacant parcels represent over 10 percent of the city's land area, and reflect the decline in the regional economy, the resulting loss of population, and disinvestment in neighborhoods. Underlying this analysis is the assumption that there is and will continue to be an excess amount of land over the term of the plan. This decline in demand

leads to a decrease in neighborhood character if not addressed.

The city will need to add housing units to replace those removed from the inventory, and to accommodate new residents once it begins to grow again. But for the most part this growth may take place beyond the planning period, so the historic urban pattern in these neighborhoods will have to be maintained for the long haul. Following such a strategy will require patience and the need to manage vacant and distressed lots during the transition period. Pocket parks, community gardens, urban agriculture, and land banking for future redevelopment have a place in the overall management of these areas.

Buffalo has inherited a constellation of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, linked by public transit. These neighborhoods do not require reinvention, but they do require restoration. Repairing the city's walkable neighborhoods will be key to bolstering the tax base, attracting and retaining talented workers, and minimizing the carbon footprint.

To make neighborhoods complete again, development must be compact, mixed-use, and built at a pedestrian scale. It must provide a balanced mix of shopping, work, schooling, recreation, and a wide variety of housing. It must balance cars with walking, biking, and

A former Liberty Bank in Fillmore/Leroy awaits reuse.



Neighbors discuss gardening in the Five Points.

transit to support a rich public life. Three simple rules provide guidance for restoring walkable neighborhoods: leave what's working alone; build on positive attributes; and change what isn't working.

The plan will attempt to manage vacant land creatively, keeping as much as possible in active uses in the short-term, while maximizing its long-term development potential. Where areas

are predominantly vacant, the plan will allow transitional uses such as community gardening, side and back lot programs, or urban agriculture, while keeping open longer-term options for redevelopment.

The following goals have been established for 2032:

- ▶ Reverse declines in home values in weak-market neighborhoods, while continuing to achieve appreciation citywide
- ▶ Ensure that a typical household can keep combined housing and transportation expenses of 45 percent or less of income
- ▶ Reduce the housing vacancy rate to less than 8 percent (currently 16 percent)
- ▶ Raise Buffalo's Walk Score to at least 75 (currently 65)
- ▶ Increase the walk, bike, and transit commuter mode share to 35 percent (currently 20 percent)
- ▶ Achieve a Walkability Index grade of A or B for all neighborhood streets
- ▶ Achieve full compliance with federal right-of-way accessibility guidelines and standards

Coe Place is representative of the city's compact neighborhoods.



## 2.1. Reinforce neighborhood centers

Mixed-use neighborhoods, in which daily needs can be met within walking distance of home, are highly valued by residents across the city. As a result, the plan identifies a mixed-use center for every neighborhood—where one already exists, or previously existed and may be restored.

Historically, mom-and-pop stores opened at streetcar stops in the heart of a neighborhood. North Park and Grant-Amherst are examples that continue to thrive as mixed-use centers today, with shops and services that make the neighborhood attractive, long after streetcar service ceased.

Neighborhood centers based on good urban design principles have stronger chances of economic success. This means ensuring that buildings and public spaces work together to appeal to pedestrians and contribute to street activity, which in turn help improve safety, sales, and property values.

A 2009 study by CEOs for Cities revealed that walkable neighborhoods were associated with increases in home values. Applying this successful economic model is essential. Neighborhood centers that exhibit good urban design, still host

economic activity, possess high quality building stock, and are accessible by transit can be revived with focused efforts.

- A.** Cluster diverse land uses in neighborhood centers to minimize auto dependence and encourage walking, biking, and transit use.
- B.** Facilitate an active public realm by placing buildings close to the sidewalk, limiting blank walls, providing generous shaded sidewalks, and minimizing pedestrian conflicts with parking and loading.
- C.** Allow for incremental retrofit of single-use, auto-oriented retail plazas into more walkable, mixed-use developments.
- D.** Maximize on-street parking, discourage surface parking lots between buildings and streets, and remove minimum parking requirements.
- E.** Strengthen the network of continuous and interconnected public rights-of-way, and limit dead ends, gated streets, and culs-de-sac.
- F.** Improve public safety by using Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.



*Vibrant neighborhood centers is a goal for every part of the city.*

## HOUSING

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Total units                        | 135,620  |
| Persons per household              | 2.25   |
| Households                         | With persons under 18: 65%<br>With persons 65+: 20%<br>Living alone: 39% |
| Housing type                       | Single-family: 36%<br>Two-family: 40%<br>Multi-family: 24%               |
| Homeownership rate                 | 42%  |
| Median value, owner-occupied units | \$66,700   |
| Median gross rent                  | \$670  |
| Units built before 1940            | 64%  |
| Vacant units                       | 23,480   |

### 2.2. Maintain affordable and diverse housing options

Buffalo's housing market has tremendous potential for growth in the coming years, just as the two largest generations in American history—the baby boomers and millennials—reach a point where urban housing matches their life stage.

Outdated policies have made it difficult for Buffalo to respond to these changing demographics. The current zoning, which reflects the priorities of the 1950s, makes it challenging to do infill housing of any kind, and generally allows for only three basic housing types: detached houses, garden apartments, and towers in a park, each zoned for separate sections of the city.

This is in contrast to the wide variety of housing options available in Buffalo's historic neighborhoods, which typically include everything from detached homes to apartment buildings and even carriage houses, plus a range of building heights and yard sizes, providing choice for households of every type and income level.

To remain competitive, neighborhoods must offer housing choices that target various segments. By offering a housing mix, each neighborhood could potentially meet an individual's housing needs over a lifetime—or, for that matter, the needs of multiple generations over time. This adds to community character, and encourages social and economic diversity.

Buffalo is known for the stacked double, an economically efficient housing type that allows a homeowner to live in one unit while renting out the other to help cover expenses. This housing type makes up nearly 40 percent of all residential parcels in the city, compared to 54 percent for single-family and 6 percent for multi-family (three units or more). The city must encourage a range of housing choices, such as row houses, mid-rise multifamily, live/work units, and accessible housing to meet emerging market demand.

While providing this degree of choice, it is also important to focus affordable housing options near public transit, providing ready access to jobs and amenities while reducing the cost burdens associated with car ownership.

- A. Ensure neighborhoods where persons from a range of income levels, household sizes, ages, and abilities can reside.

*Buffalo has one of the oldest—and most charming—housing stocks in the country.*



# TRANSPORTATION

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Vehicles available, households     | No vehicle: 30%<br>One vehicle: 43%<br>Two or more vehicles: 27%   |
| Commuting mode, workers age 16+    | Drive alone: 67%<br>Carpool: 10%<br>Transit: 12%<br>Bicycle: 2%<br>Walk: 6%<br>Work from home: 2%<br>Other: 1% |
| Mean commute time, workers age 16+ | 20.4 mins  |

- B.** Continue the city’s inclusionary policies with respect to supportive housing for the disabled, seniors, and veterans.
- C.** Remove barriers to affordable housing, such as off-street parking requirements, restrictions on accessory dwelling units, and excessive lot area standards.
- D.** Locate workforce housing close to transit routes to foster combined housing and transportation savings.
- E.** Encourage green practices in construction and rehabilitation to support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes.

Residents participate in Bike to Work Week.



## 2.3. Encourage walking, biking, and transit

The number of persons using transportation alternatives is a good indicator of a city’s livability, which can have a profound impact on attracting investment and talent, as well as tourism. Making a range of transportation choices available can free up household income, improve physical health, and save energy. Consider the following:

- ▶ A typical Buffalo household will spend 22 percent of its annual income on transportation expenses, according to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, while a typical Clarence household will spend 31 percent.
- ▶ Studies show that life expectancy is rising faster in cities than in suburbs and rural areas; a person who lives in a walkable neighborhood will on average be healthier than a person who lives in a car-dependent location; and the likelihood of death and injury from automobile collisions is lower where pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders are prioritized.
- ▶ Transportation contributes an estimated 28 percent of America’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Simply put, people are drawn to people-friendly places. Pedestrian quality is a prerequisite for creating an attractive environment for cyclists and transit riders, as well. Towards this end, Buffalo was the first municipality in New York State to adopt a complete streets policy, which ensures that streets are designed to be safe, comfortable, and convenient for people of all ages and abilities, using a variety of modes.

Public transit ridership has never been higher in the history of the Metro system, which generated nearly 30 million passenger trips in 2013, 80 percent of which originated in the city. Transit can be made faster, more frequent, and more reliable only if supported by compact, walkable development.

Attracting more people to transportation alternatives is key to making Buffalo more location efficient, which is a way of describing the cost savings inherent in locations where homes are close to employment, there are multiples ways of



*Metro Rail enjoys one of the highest ridership rates in the country.*

getting around, and the distances to be covered to accomplish daily life are kept to a minimum.

- A.** Implement the Complete Streets policy in roadway construction, reconstruction, and reconfiguration projects. Prioritize sidewalk maintenance to encourage walking and provide support for Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes for the Elderly.
- B.** Design streets for safe target speeds that calm traffic, accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, and minimize the frequency and severity of collisions.
- C.** Prioritize road diets in response to reduced traffic volumes, and reallocate space for transportation alternatives.
- D.** Where right-of-way widths allow, convert one-way streets to two-way traffic to facilitate traffic flow and simplify wayfinding.
- E.** Install bicycle facilities as part of routine roadway construction projects, with a goal of establishing a complete network of on-street bicycle facilities.

- F.** Minimize block sizes to provide better connectivity and distribute vehicular traffic more evenly; add mid-block passages to break up long blocks.
- G.** Avoid selling public rights-of-way for development, and restore rights-of-way that were previously removed.
- H.** Incorporate best practice guides, such as the ITE's Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares and NACTO's Urban Bikeway Design Guide, into roadway improvement projects.
- I.** Support public transit by focusing compact neighborhood development and employment density in areas with high transit accessibility.

## 2.4. Enhance open spaces

Buffalo's wide variety of open spaces—including parks, squares, and natural habitat areas—must be protected, repaired, and enhanced. Work on a 20-year plan to restore the city's Olmsted parks and parkways is underway, following decades of degradation and neglect. As this process unfolds, Buffalo also has opportunities to expand its open space system, particularly on land that has become vacant in recent years.

Much work remains to ensure that all residents have access to open space. Given resource constraints, this will require a continued emphasis on public-private partnerships and low-cost solutions that maximize open space investment impacts. This may include tactical urbanism projects that are quick, inexpensive, and often temporary, to make small parts of the city more lively and enjoyable.

Well-designed civic space provides opportunities for physical activity, mental restoration, and social interaction, which are important assets for any city seeking to attract and retain residents, as well as to address obesity rates and medical complications due to inactive lifestyles. Whether they are public or private parks, market squares, community gardens, natural reserves, or simply enhanced



*The Richardson Olmsted Center opened as a public space in 2013.*

streets, these spaces are key to providing a high quality of life and improved home values.

A 2007 study by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors found that houses near parks and other civic spaces sell at prices five to 20 percent higher than comparable houses located further away. In Buffalo this is confirmed by assessed values per acre for blocks facing a civic space versus those a short distance away. Bidwell Parkway between Dorchester and Claremont has an assessed value

per acre 24 percent higher than a similar block on Potomac between Claremont and Ashland; and a block facing Scheu Park near Bailey Avenue commands a value per acre 35 percent higher than that two blocks away on Fay Street.

Streets are civic spaces in their own right. Buffalo used to be known as the “City of Trees” due to its street tree canopy, before Dutch Elm disease devastated the urban forest. Today over 60,000 street trees exist on 634 miles of city streets, or about one tree for every 55 linear feet. The restoration of Buffalo’s open space system will be incomplete without restoring the street canopy to at least one tree for every 20 linear feet.

The opportunity for open space expansion hasn’t been as great since Olmsted first toured Buffalo in 1868. Vacant land in public ownership can simultaneously serve as stormwater management facilities and open space assets. Disused rail lines have the potential to become multi-use paths and nature corridors, and the scaling back of industry on the water opens up opportunities for greater public access. Providing a wide variety of such spaces close to work and home will encourage time spent outdoors, which benefits both individuals and the community.

*Young folks say “hi” in Central Park.*



- A.** Design open spaces to promote user comfort, safety, accessibility, and year-round use; encourage active lifestyles; and increase property values.
- B.** Inventory permanent open spaces and create protections for them; prioritize open space planning in neighborhoods without sufficient parks or playgrounds.
- C.** Complete the greenway network, and protect potential rail-to-trail opportunities.
- D.** Strive to follow guidelines of the Sustainable Sites Initiative for new and rehabilitated public open space.



*Vacant land and structures are results of suburban sprawl.*

- E. Allow damaged ecosystems to repair naturally, and facilitate habitat regeneration at locations where redevelopment is unlikely due to inadequate access, wetlands or floodplain, market weakness, or other factors.
- F. Enhance the shade tree canopy in the public right-of-way to reduce wind velocity, offer cooling benefits, minimize heat islands, and enhance pedestrian comfort.

## 2.5. Reclaim vacant structures and land

Buffalo's population loss has led to an abundance of vacant buildings and land. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient growth to reclaim these assets over the next 20 years, so it is critical to identify uses for these parcels that will support neighborhood stability.

Vacancy and abandonment fuel outmigration by reinforcing perceptions of the city as hollowed out, in need of repair, and unsafe—all of which work in favor of suburban sprawl. Demolition has been successful in selectively removing blighted properties that threaten the health and safety of neighborhoods, with over 8,000 demolitions occurring between 2000 and 2013. Yet even after unsafe and abandoned properties are demolished, vacant land left behind presents its own challenges.

Currently over 16,000 parcels in the city are vacant, comprising 17 percent of all parcels, and 12 percent of the land. For neighborhoods where vacancy is concentrated, smart growth offers strategies on how to contract, rather than how to expand. New tools must be introduced to make



*A group of volunteers help at a community garden.*



*The Wilson Street Urban Farm has brought new life to an abandoned block.*

way for adaptive reuse of existing structures and appropriate management of vacant land. This will help ensure that vacant structures can be put back into productive use, and that vacant land adds value to surrounding neighborhoods.

Vacant land created by abandonment can become an asset, redeployed in productive uses such as urban agriculture, neighborhood open space, and stormwater management. For buildings that still stand, regulatory barriers to their reuse must be removed to preserve their embodied energy and cultural value.

A city is only as strong as its weakest neighborhoods. Efforts must continue to recycle vacant land and buildings, as the hard work continues to bring economic recovery to every section of the city.

- A.** Identify interim and permanent reuses for vacant land, such as sales to adjacent property owners, market or community gardens, stormwater management, habitat restoration, carbon forests, and open space.
- B.** Maximize flexibility for reusing buildings that are either locally landmarked or listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; and mothball heritage buildings that are salvageable but not market ready.

### 3. REPAIR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS

Buffalo's environmental quality shows continued improvement, due to the impact of the Clean Air and Clean Water acts adopted in the 1970s, ongoing remediation efforts along its waterways, and efforts to address contaminated sites through brownfield programs.

Development adds impervious surfaces such as roads, roofs, and parking lots to the landscape. This decreases stormwater infiltration, while increasing the speed of water run-off. Buffalo is served by a system where storm and wastewater are collected in combined sewers, transmitted to the treatment plant, and discharged into the Niagara River. During heavy rains, the combination of stormwater and sanitary sewage exceeds the capacity of the system to contain it, which leads to overflows into adjacent waterways.

The contamination of these waterways has significant social and economic consequences. Residents, particularly in poorer neighborhoods, often rely on the river for fishing. Sewage overflows impact recreation and tourism. The plan can further this dialogue by designating strategic areas where vacant properties can serve as filtration and detention sites.

An ecological inventory of the city's most important environmental resources was completed in 2002.

The Significant Ecological Areas index divides open spaces into four categories: significant ecological areas, environmental problem areas, recreational opportunities, and areas of distinctive character. The Land Use Plan can encourage compatibility between ecologically significant areas and surrounding development, to assign appropriate access to these environmental assets and to prioritize future acquisition.

The plan can also recognize the importance of compatible adjacent development patterns to the success of these greenway systems, explore new opportunities for greenway linkages, and recognize the long-term value of railroad rights-of-way in expanding the system.

The 2009 Queen City Gardens Plan recommends that community gardens be recognized as a permitted land use in all zones and that their definition remain consistent with state law. There are approximately 60 community gardens located on more than 100 lots in the city.

Buffalo has also suffered a steady decline in tree canopy coverage over the past three decades as a result of disease, harsh environmental conditions, inadequate maintenance, and simple aging. American Forests conducted an Urban Ecosystem Analysis in 2003 and found that Buffalo had 12 percent tree canopy cover, which is substantially less than the national average of 30 percent.

Buffalo was largely built out by 1950, during times when little thought given to the impacts of development on the environment. The city's growth was underwritten by draining wetlands and channelizing streams; using the air, water, and land to dispose of waste; and applying asbestos and



*The foot of Smith Street affords vistas of nature and industry.*

lead-based paint to buildings. These actions are now recognized as having caused serious harm to both the environment and the health of residents.

Although many of these abuses have been curtailed, the legacy from the past remains and must be addressed. The economic and social value created by strengthened neighborhoods and employment centers can be undermined due to ecosystem and human health impairment. That is why efforts must continue to tackle environmental challenges affecting the air, water, and land.

This is consistent with triple bottom line planning, which takes into account the intended returns on investment to profit, people, and planet. This approach recognizes that a healthy economy and social vitality depend on the environment, and that environmental initiatives must be socially relevant and cost effective.

Walkable, transit-served places have clear environmental benefits, yet are not enough in themselves to be environmentally responsive. By prioritizing energy efficiency, respecting the Great Lakes ecosystem, and lightening our carbon footprint, residents can ensure a city worthy of being passed on to future generations.

The following goals have been established for 2032:

- ▶ Delist the Buffalo River and Niagara River as Great Lakes Areas of Concern
- ▶ Eliminate the occurrence of health advisories for swimming and fish consumption
- ▶ Improve the city's score on the EPA Water Quality Scorecard
- ▶ Achieve at least 25 percent citywide tree canopy (currently 12 percent)
- ▶ Triple the number of stars that can be seen by the naked eye in night sky (currently 100)

### 3.1. Protect natural assets

Fostering greater integration of natural habitat with the built environment is a high priority. Preservation

of natural features, such as mature trees and shoreline buffers, give a sense of permanence and local character that bolster real estate values and quality of place. Multiple studies show that access to nature ranks high in the locational decisions of America's increasingly mobile workforce.

The restoration of native habitat is now a Buffalo tradition, dating at least as far back 1972 when the 264-acre Tift Nature Preserve was established on the site of a former landfill and coal and iron dock. The 265 bird species recorded at Tift Nature Preserve are evidence of why the Niagara River has been designated a Globally Significant Important Bird Area.

The city dedicated Times Beach Nature Preserve in 2006, and Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper began habitat restoration efforts at Seneca Bluffs and Riverbend in 2010, including management of invasive species and replanting of native vegetation.

Shoreline buffers of native vegetation must be expanded to make room for the wide variety of species that share the Great Lakes habitat. The benefits will be numerous: enhanced flood management, absorption of air pollution and pesticides, improved water quality, stabilized shoreline banks, and improved habitats for birds and fish.

Efforts must continue to regrow Buffalo's urban forest. A 2003 study by American Forests found that only 12 percent of the city is canopied with trees, compared to a national average of about 30 percent for urban areas east of the Mississippi River. The study also identified significant ecosystem services provided by the city's trees—every year they retain more than 17 million cubic feet of stormwater, remove more than 167 tons of air pollution, and store more than 66 tons of carbon.

Rarely considered, but equally important, are impacts of light pollution on bird migratory movement, neighborhood livability, and views of the stars and night sky. These impacts can easily be mitigated by directing artificial light downward

*The sewer authority constructed a wetland in the Valley neighborhood, providing onsite stormwater treatment and a riverfront park amenity.*



instead of upward and outward, and adjusting light intensity based upon need and context.

- A.** Locate development away from sensitive habitats, wetlands, water bodies, and floodplains.
- B.** Preserve areas for restoration and expansion of urban wildlife habitat, and reconnect fragmented ecosystems.
- C.** Increase tree canopy coverage and diversity, provide suitable growing environments for trees, and protect mature trees.
- D.** Work to address localized air quality concerns in neighborhoods.
- E.** Encourage native landscaping, and control and manage invasive plant species to minimize their impacts.

### 3.2. Restore water quality

The Great Lakes contain 21 percent of the world's surface freshwater. This resource is threatened by legacy contamination and stormwater overflows, affecting the health of people, fish, and wildlife. To address this threat, efforts must continue to clean Buffalo's waterways and minimize development impacts on the aquatic and riparian ecosystems.

Work is underway to clean up polluted sediment in the Buffalo River, one of 43 sites identified in 1987 by the International Joint Commission as a Great Lakes Area of Concern. The Buffalo River Restoration Project, which will remove up to 1.2 million cubic yards of sediment by 2015, is a giant step toward addressing legacy contamination and restoring habitat along the water.

Buffalo, like many older cities, has antiquated sewer infrastructure, which collects sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff in a single pipe system. What frequently results from this system

are combined sewer overflows, or CSOs. These occur during rain and snowmelt events, which cause the capacity of combined sewers to be exceeded and sewage to flow untreated into waterways. Combined sewer systems spill at least 41 billion gallons of untreated sewage into the Great Lakes every year, threatening public health, natural habitats, and recreational and development potential.

In 2012, the Buffalo Sewer Authority put in place a Long Term Control Plan that details how to bring its combined sewer system in line with environmental objectives of the Clean Water Act. The plan seeks to resolve Buffalo's sewer overflow challenge, employing a balance of conventional grey infrastructure and innovative green solutions.

While efforts are underway to address contamination and stormwater overflows through cleanups and infrastructure improvements, local development policies must also be retooled. Landscape, parking, and street design criteria must go hand-in-hand with stormwater management and watershed protection efforts if they are to be effective.

- A.** Coordinate policies to implement the Buffalo Sewer Authority's Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plan.



*This was the first New York State home to be certified under the NAHB's Green Building Program.*

- B.** Prioritize green infrastructure best management practices to infiltrate or recycle rainwater and snow melt.
- C.** Provide shoreline buffers of native vegetation to protect and restore wildlife habitat, limit erosion, filter pollutants, and control flooding.

### 3.3. Promote conservation

Buildings account for 36 percent of total energy use, 12 percent of potable water consumption, and 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions nationally. Even if a place is walkable and transit-served, it cannot have excellent environmental performance without buildings that use energy and water more smartly.

This imperative includes not only more efficient building systems, but an increasing focus on renewable energy production and water conservation and reuse. New York already generates 11 percent of its energy from renewable sources, thanks in part to the Niagara Power Project, the state's largest electricity producer. Renewables have the potential to meet as much as 40 percent of the state's energy needs by 2030. Buffalo can contribute to this goal by making it easier for businesses and homeowners to erect renewable and district energy systems.

Rainwater harvesting, through downspout disconnection and use of rain barrels or cisterns, can save energy associated with potable water

treatment, conveyance, and use. This allows potable water to be conserved, and rainwater to be recycled for irrigation and some indoor uses. Greywater can also be recycled, an emerging practice that reuses wastewater from dishwashers, sinks, tubs, and showers. In addition to water efficiency improvements that can be made in buildings, water harvesting and recycling can have a major positive impact, particularly if such practices become commonplace.

Improving energy and water efficiency is one way to create local jobs, increase household spending power, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions all at once. High performance buildings are a key element to achieving a more affordable, sustainable city.

- A.** Reuse existing buildings before new construction to conserve resources, minimize waste, and reduce adverse environmental effects.
- B.** Remove regulatory barriers to the design, construction, and retrofit of buildings that use green building practices.
- C.** Encourage the installation of energy and water efficient building systems and water-efficient native landscaping. Allow rainwater collection systems that recycle water for landscape and other non-potable purposes.
- D.** Orient blocks and rights-of-way to maximize solar access.
- E.** Allow for renewable energy generation systems, such as wind, solar, geothermal, or biomass, as well as district heating and cooling systems.

# V. LAND USE MAP

Place-based planning represents an important evolution in the practice of land use and zoning. The conventional approach divides the city into mutually exclusive single-use zones. Place-based planning addresses form and character, recognizing that great places typically have a mix of uses—residential, retail, office, civic, recreational, and natural—that make neighborhoods lively, interesting, and safe.

The subsequent zoning ordinance will be a form-based code, which addresses the relationship between the public and private realms, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. These design details all help determine the attractiveness of a given place.

The land use plan is built around three place types: neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. These help foster well-designed, functional environments. Every parcel in the city will be assigned a place-type that corresponds to a specific set of rules and regulations governing its use, form, and development character. Based on these place types, the zoning ordinance will specify what can or cannot be built and where.

To initiate this process, the entire city was mapped by existing place types. Historical records indicate when different parts of the city were developed, and property maps show street patterns and lot sizes. Proposed place types were determined by a combination of what was there in the past, what is there now, and what residents would like to see. The historic fabric that remains in any neighborhood—buildings, parks, streets—provides the foundation for future growth and was an important factor in assigning place types. It was also important to hear what residents want for their neighborhoods—sentiments that were clearly expressed by workshop participants.

## Neighborhood place types

Neighborhoods are functionally integrated places where people live, developed at a range of intensities. Traditional neighborhoods tend to share similar attributes:

- ▶ They are compact and walkable, typically encompassing no more than a quarter-mile from center to edge.
- ▶ Streets are designed to account for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles.
- ▶ There is a mix of activities—work, education, recreation, shopping—and a range of housing types.
- ▶ Priority is given to creating public space and locating buildings that serve the community.

Neighborhoods across Buffalo are readily identifiable by their intensity. Characteristics such as building type and height, lot occupancy, and mix of uses can be measured to provide an understanding of the different types of neighborhoods where we live, work, and play—going beyond simply how land is used.

Buffalo's neighborhoods are divided into four basic types, familiar to residents because they are based on existing neighborhood character. They developed during different eras in the city's history and have evolved over time, ranging from old to new, dense to open.

Downtown neighborhoods house a range of uses—offices, shops, restaurants, theaters, and apartments—with structures that are built to the sidewalk. They work best when there is activity on the ground floor that attracts pedestrians and keeps streets safe. Examples include the Central Business District and employment centers such as the Larkin District.

Central neighborhoods are Buffalo's oldest, first developed in the 1800s and mostly adjacent to downtown and the waterfront. The lots are small—typically 25 to 35 feet wide. Homes are close together and setbacks from the street minimal. Mixed-use, walkable centers are dense and have an array of uses in smaller buildings. Examples include Black Rock, Cold Spring, Fruit Belt, Lower West Side, and Old First Ward.

Streetcar neighborhoods were developed along streetcar lines at the turn of the 20th century, have strong mixed-use centers at their cores, and are located near the outskirts of the city. These neighborhoods have slightly larger lots—typically 35 to 50 feet wide. Homes have more space between them with deeper setbacks, and building heights rarely exceed three stories. Examples include Hamlin Park, Kaisertown, Riverside, South Buffalo, and University Heights.

Single-family neighborhoods are characterized by large lot sizes, spacious front yards, and single-family homes, often developed around parks and parkways. While they contain no retail activity, they are usually within walking distance of denser neighborhoods with a mix of commercial uses. Examples include Central Park, Kensington Heights, and Park Meadow.

### District place types

Districts are divided into three basic types, each of which serves a predominant use such as a college campus, shopping center, or industrial facility. Although districts are often separate from the prevailing street grid, their structure parallels the neighborhood, sometimes with an identifiable focus that provides orientation, identity, and clear boundaries.

Campus districts can be residential, medical, or educational. They function separately from surrounding activities, and are often served by an internal circulation system apart from the adjacent street grid. Examples include Ellicott Towne Center, Marine Drive Apartments, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Erie County Medical Center, Canisius College, and University at Buffalo.

Employment districts include auto-oriented shopping centers, office parks, and light and heavy industrial facilities. They are often separated from, but within walking or transit distance of, residential neighborhoods. Examples include Delaware Consumer Square, Lakeside Commerce Park, New Buffalo Industrial Park, and Aurubis.

Open space districts include natural conservation areas such as Tiff Nature Preserve; the Olmsted park and parkway system; parks such as Houghton and Shoshone; and civic spaces such as Lafayette Square and Viola Park.

### Corridor place types

Corridors are linear systems that form the borders of and connect neighborhoods and districts. Corridors are composed of natural and man-made components, including waterfronts, trails, and railways. A corridor is not haphazardly residual open space, but a deliberate civic element characterized by its continuity.

Transportation corridors have long been organizing elements for the city, serving as both connectors and boundaries that define neighborhoods. Examples include the Kensington Expressway, Belt Line railway, and Shoreline Trail.

Waterfront corridors are bodies of water that connect neighborhoods, industrial areas, and employment centers. They also define the edges of neighborhoods and give identity to the city. Examples include Lake Erie, the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers, Black Rock Canal, and Scajaquada and Cazenovia Creeks.

### A new land use vision

The proposed land use map matches the place types to Buffalo's physical development vision. Generated through a series of nine neighborhood workshops as well as dozens of smaller meetings with stakeholders, the map shows how we plan to accommodate change in city's place character over the next 20 years.

The existing land use map generalizes the city's land use vision as guided by the current zoning ordinance, which dates to 1953, and the proposed land use map generalizes the future land use vision as guided by the Green Code. The specific place types of both land use visions are grouped into the following general categories:

- ▶ **Downtown.** This category includes the areas of highest intensity in both the mix of uses and building scale. In the existing land use map, the DO, II, and C3 zones are grouped into this category. For the future land use map, the N-1D, N-1E, and N-1S place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Mixed-Use.** This category includes neighborhood-scale mixed-use and commercial areas. In the existing land use map, the C1, C2, CM, TS, and neighborhood business district overlay zones are grouped into this category. For the future land use map, the N-2C, N-2E, N-3C, and N-3E place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Residential.** This category includes residential areas with a mix of housing types. In the existing land use map, the R2, R3, R4, and R5 zones are grouped into this category. For the future land use map, the N-2R, N-3R, and D-R place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Single-Family.** This category includes residential areas that consist primarily of single-family, detached residences. In the existing land use map, the R1 zone is grouped into this category. For the future land use map, the N-4-30, N-4-45, and N-4-60 place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Education/Medical.** This category includes education and medical campuses. In the existing land use map, this category is omitted because the present zoning ordinance does not recognize these campuses as distinct place types. For the future land use map, the D-E and D-M place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Employment.** This category includes employment areas, including strip retail, flex commercial, and manufacturing districts,

which are often adjacent to, but separated from, traditional neighborhoods. In the existing land use map, the M1, M2, and M3 zones are grouped into this category. For the future land use map, the D-S, D-IO, D-IL, and D-IH place types are grouped into this category.

- ▶ **Open Space.** This category includes parks and other open spaces. In the existing land use map, the City's parks GIS layer is grouped into category, since the present zoning ordinance does not recognize parks and open spaces as distinct place types. For the future land use map, the D-OG, D-OS, and D-ON place types are grouped into this category.
- ▶ **Rail Corridor.** This category includes all rail lines and yards. In the existing land use map, this category is omitted because the present zoning ordinance does not recognize rail lines and yards as a distinct place type. For the future land use map, the C-R place type is grouped into this category.

The proposed land use map does not suggest radical changes to Buffalo's traditional form and character, but does recognize the evolving economic role of many areas of the city, especially downtown, the waterfront, and areas suffering from high vacancy rates. Major land use changes that are anticipated include:

- ▶ Expansion of downtown east to Michigan Avenue and Chicago Street, and north to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
- ▶ Recognition of medical and educational campuses as distinct environments with defined boundaries
- ▶ Reconceptualization of Belt Line manufacturing areas as mixed-use, high intensity employment centers (modeled after the Larkin District and Tri-Main Center)
- ▶ Assignment of a walkable neighborhood center, from a modest "node" or "four corners" to a main street, to every neighborhood
- ▶ Recognition of walkable neighborhood centers as being distinct in physical form and function from strip retail and flex commercial areas

- ▶ Allowance for creation of new neighborhood centers at Gates Circle and the LaSalle Metro station
- ▶ Conversion of the Outer Harbor from manufacturing to open space and downtown/neighborhood mixed-use
- ▶ Conversion of Black Rock Harbor and Ohio Street Corridor from manufacturing to neighborhood mixed-use
- ▶ Expansion of protected open space along the Buffalo River and surrounding Tiffit Farm
- ▶ Conversion of land area allocated for heavy manufacturing uses, in line with demand
- ▶ Recognition of rail lines and yards as protected transportation corridors, and conservation of former rail corridors as open space

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLACE TYPES

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| N-1D Downtown Hub                | The N-1D place type addresses the core of downtown Buffalo and will facilitate development of substantial scale with an intense mix of uses.  |
| N-1C Mixed-Use Core              | The N-1C place type addresses intense mixed-use centers, such as the edges of downtown, and facilitates mid-rise development.   |
| N-1S Secondary Employment Center | The N-1S place type addresses mixed-use industrial clusters, generally defined by mid-rise and large-footprint structures.  |
| N-2C Mixed-Use Center            | The N-2C place type addresses mixed-use centers in Buffalo's oldest neighborhoods.  |
| N-2E Mixed-Use Edge              | The N-2E place type addresses secondary centers, typically at the edges of more intense mixed-use centers, in Buffalo's oldest neighborhoods. These areas are defined by a mix of homes and stores.                     |
| N-2R Residential                 | The N-2R place type addresses areas adjoining the centers of Buffalo's oldest neighborhoods, generally defined by compact residential blocks with corners that are occasionally mixed use.                              |
| N-3C Mixed-Use Center            | The N-3C place type addresses mixed-use centers in Buffalo's streetcar neighborhoods, that developed in the early 20th century.   |
| N-3E Mixed-Use Edge              | The N-3E place type addresses secondary centers in Buffalo's streetcar neighborhoods, typically located at the edges of more intense mixed-use centers. These areas are defined primarily by a mix of homes and stores. |
| N-3R Residential                 | The N-3R place type addresses areas beyond the centers of Buffalo's streetcar neighborhoods, defined by moderately compact residential blocks with corners that are occasionally mixed-use.                             |
| N-4-30 Single-Family             | The N-4-30 place type addresses neighborhoods that are composed primarily of single-family homes on lots at least 30 feet in width.   |
| N-4-45 Single-Family             | The N-4-45 place type addresses neighborhoods that are composed primarily of single-family homes on lots at least 45 feet in width.   |
| N-4-60 Single-Family             | The N-4-60 place type addresses neighborhoods that are composed primarily of single-family homes on lots at least 60 feet in width.   |

## DISTRICT PLACE TYPES

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| D-R Residential Campus | The D-R place type addresses residential campuses composed of garden apartments or towers in a park, typically organized within large-scale superblocks.  |
| D-M Medical Campus     | The D-M place type addresses medical campuses.  |
| D-E Education Campus   | The D-E place type addresses educational campuses.  |
| D-S Strip Retail       | The D-S place type addresses retail centers and strips, often with prominent parking areas centered around one or more “big box” format buildings.  |
| D-C Flex Commercial    | The D-C place type addresses general commercial and mixed-use areas, which typically benefit from flexible form standards and are separate from, but within close proximity to, residential neighborhoods.            |
| D-IL Light Industrial  | The D-IL place type addresses light industrial sites.   |
| D-IH Heavy Industrial  | The D-IH place type addresses heavy industrial sites.   |
| D-OS Square            | The D-OS place type addresses civic squares, typically located at the intersection of important thoroughfares, enclosed by building facades along most of their circumference, and designed for intensive public use. |
| D-OG Green             | The D-OG place type addresses civic greens and parks, characterized primarily by trees and landscape, framed by landscape elements or building facades, and designed for passive use.                                 |
| D-ON Natural           | The D-ON place type addresses open spaces, such as the Tiff Farm and Times Beach nature preserves, that are maintained in a predominantly natural state.  |
| C-M Metro Rail         | The C-M place type addresses designated areas within close walking distance of Metro Rail stations that are intended to facilitate an elevated level of urban intensity and transit orientation.                      |
| C-R Rail               | The C-R place type addresses rail lines and yards.  |
| C-W Waterfront         | The C-W place type addresses all land areas within the Local Waterfront Revitalization Area, which is defined in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).  |

## CORRIDOR PLACE TYPES

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| C-M Metro Rail | The C-M place type addresses designated areas within close walking distance of Metro Rail stations that are intended to facilitate an elevated level of urban intensity and transit orientation. |
| C-R Rail       | The C-R place type addresses rail lines and yards.   |
| C-W Waterfront | The C-W place type addresses all land areas within the Local Waterfront Revitalization Area, which is defined in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).                             |

# VI. NEXT STEPS

## Adopt a new zoning ordinance

The new zoning ordinance is designed to provide the framework for the city's future development, in a manner that is consistent with the comprehensive plan and land use plan. The code—which will be a unified development ordinance combining zoning, subdivision, and public realm standards—will be the legal mechanism for achieving the community's vision.

With its form-based approach, the new ordinance will emphasize character-of-place, rather than merely how land and buildings are used, as its organizing principle. This means that the community's physical vision will be communicated directly through user-friendly illustrations, tables, and plain English text, helping create predictability for investors and residents alike. The new ordinance will also incorporate a Zoning Map that will detail the prescribed zone for every parcel.

## Terminate urban renewal plans

Like many cities across the nation, Buffalo began designating urban renewal areas in the late 1950s. Originally targeted as locations for the removal of slums and blight, these plans quickly became associated with the wholesale demolition of low-income neighborhoods.

Subsequent plans moved away from the focus on eminent domain and slum clearance, and began serving as overlays on the city's increasingly dated zoning code. The majority of the 30 active plans, the oldest of which dates back to 1968, outline performance standards and other zoning restrictions for the neighborhoods they encompass.

With the pending adoption of a new form-based code, the additional development controls contained in the urban renewal plans will no longer be needed. Maintaining 30 different plans that apply to 30 specific neighborhoods has added an unnecessary and confusing layer



*A new form-based code will employ illustrations to communicate the citizens' vision.*



*Urban renewal plans, including the waterfront urban renewal plan of 1963, will soon be history.*

to the development process. As a result, it is recommended that all but one of the remaining plans—the Homestead Urban Renewal Plan—be terminated.

The Homestead plan has two components: it allows the purchase of a vacant city-owned home for one dollar, if the purchaser agrees to fix it up and reside in it; and it permits homeowners to purchase a vacant city-owned lot for one dollar if they live next to it. The program is targeted to select neighborhoods as a development incentive, and has proven successful in attracting investment and encouraging property maintenance.

Terminating the other plans and applying the guidelines contained in the new zoning code will allow the city to turn the page on the urban renewal era, and simplify the process for redeveloping these areas.

### **Coordinate on planning initiatives**

The vision for a greener, healthier, and wealthier Buffalo does not stop with a land use plan and new zoning ordinance. Regional cooperation on planning initiatives will be essential in realizing Green Code goals. This includes ongoing work on efforts such as the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development, Western New York

Economic Development Strategic Plan, Metro Rail expansion alternatives, the Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation, and others. Coordination with partners such as Erie County, NFTA, GBNRTC, and ESDC will help assure that objectives are achieved.

Citizens have also identified potential planning efforts that are outside the scope of the Green Code, but may help achieve its smart growth and sustainability goals. These include:

- ▶ Neighborhood plans
- ▶ Historic preservation plan
- ▶ Parks and recreation master plan
- ▶ Bicycle master plan
- ▶ Street tree planting guidelines update

Some of these efforts are already underway. As the Green Code reforms land use and zoning policies that directly address development, complementary initiatives will only reinforce goals identified through this process.

### **Monitor progress**

Progress indicators have been included alongside many of the plan's objectives, and others may be introduced following the plan's adoption. This will

allow both city staff and residents to determine how well these objectives are being met. As management consultant Peter Drucker states, “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

To assist with this effort, an annual analysis will be conducted, and a report outlining trends and opportunities prepared. The following variables will be included in the measurements:

- ▶ Assessed property values
- ▶ Sales values
- ▶ Permit activity
- ▶ Affordability index
- ▶ Walk score index
- ▶ Income and poverty rates



