DRAFT
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BUFFALO
greencode

Draft Land Use Plan

City of Buffalo
Byron W. Brown, Mayor

Table of Contents

Mayor's Message	
Introduction	1
Context	4
Vision	11
Principles	20
Next Steps	43

Mayor's Message

The Buffalo Green Code is a historic revision of Buffalo's land use and zoning policies that will promote investment, facilitate job creation, and improve the urban environment. The work to create a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous community is already underway, spurred by countless residents in neighborhoods across the city. The Green Code is designed to support and build upon these efforts.

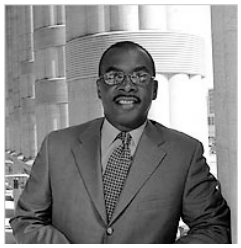
The first step in this process is a draft land use plan that, when finalized, will guide the city's development over the next two decades. The second step will be a new zoning ordinance – the first in over six decades – that will promote investment in Buffalo by making the development process simple, transparent, and in line with the goals we all share for our city.

Today we face some daunting challenges – vacant land, declining population, environmental damage, an economy in transition. But the good times have left us with a legacy of great neighborhoods, parks, streets, architecture, and – as always – our people. The Green Code will give us another tool to confront these challenges and build on our legacy.

Work to date has taken place through a broad-based community process involving thousands of residents and business people. The process continues with the release of this draft document. Please keep sharing your thoughts with us as we finalize the land use plan and begin work on developing the zoning ordinance.

Our goal is nothing less than the economic resurgence, community renewal, and environmental repair of Buffalo. Let's keep working together to make this goal a reality.

BYRON W. BROWN
Mayor



Introduction

The Buffalo Green Code is a place-based development strategy designed to implement Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan. The plan, adopted in 2006, is the master document for all policy and investment decisions in the city. It outlined four fundamental principles: fix the basics; build on assets; implement smart growth; and embrace sustainability.

The Green Code is a two-part process. The first translates the Comprehensive Plan principles into Buffalo 2012/32: Future Land Use Plan, which establishes the vision for the city's physical development over the next 20 years. The second part is a new zoning ordinance, the "DNA" that determines what gets built and where in Buffalo.

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

Jane Jacobs

The zoning ordinance will be one of the primary tools for implementing the community's vision. It won't just be a new zoning ordinance, it will be a new type of zoning ordinance that builds on the best of Buffalo and helps transform those areas of the city that are most in distress.

It is built around the idea of "place types" – characteristic development patterns that citizens wish to promote. Some of these are already found in the city; while others are new patterns that the community would like. Either way, the zoning ordinance will be written to encourage development that reinforces these patterns.

What is the land use plan?

- A place-based development strategy tailored to Buffalo's unique strengths, challenges, and opportunities.
- A call for reinforcing great places across the city by integrating land use, urban design, transportation, and environmental elements.
- A guide to strengthening Buffalo's economic engines through smart development and placemaking to attract talent, create value, and increase productivity.
- A community vision dedicated to achieving triple bottom line returns: economic, social, and environmental.
- A necessary step toward the restoration of our neighborhoods, economy, and way of life.
- A commitment that by 2032, Buffalo will be healthier, wealthier, and more beautiful than it is today.
- A draft document – as the community continues the conversation about the goals and values it should enact.

FIGURE 1 Mayor Brown looks on as residents discuss their neighborhoods at planning workshops.

What will the new zoning ordinance do?

- Implement the principles of the Comprehensive Plan and the land use plan through a new zoning code and zoning map.
- Consolidate development regulations into one simple, intuitive, and user-friendly document that provides transparency, predictability, and clarity.
- Integrate land use and urban design into objective form-based standards that provide firm guidance for zoning administration.
- Set flexible standards that allow investors to respond creatively to market demand while meeting public expectations for future development.
- Increase transparency for administrative review of routine development applications; and set predictable timelines for approvals.
- Develop clear provisions under which the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals may grant conditional use permits, minor exceptions, and variances.
- Phase out Urban Renewal Plans as regulatory documents, incorporating relevant provisions into the zoning ordinance.
- Provide an open and participatory process to periodically review, update, and amend the zoning ordinance.

How was the community involved?

The Green Code offers the first opportunity residents have had in almost 60 years to re-imagine Buffalo's future to match the community's vision. Over the past decade, citizens and government have begun working together to craft a coherent, comprehensive, and forward-looking vision to restore the city and advance Buffalo as a model for urban regeneration.

Residents contributed initially through a series of citywide meetings in 2010 that began the conversation about the future of Buffalo; then in 2011 at land use workshops across the city, where close to 1,000 persons shared their knowledge and insights about their neighborhoods. Still others have expressed their hopes and concerns through surveys and with comments on the Green Code website.

FIGURE 2 Newsprint sheets await citizen input at a neighborhood workshop.

FIGURE 3 The workshop at Lafayette High School attracted an overflow crowd.

FIGURE 4 Planners and volunteers helped facilitate citizen input.

A Community Advisory Committee, composed of stakeholders from across the city, was tasked with defining community goals and values. The committee produced the following as a basis for the effort:

> The Buffalo Green Code is a strategy, a plan, and a body of rules to govern the continuing physical development of the city toward its regeneration, now and over the decades to come. As concerned and active citizens, listening to our fellow Buffalonians, and understanding the evolving context of planning Buffalo, we offer this outline of goals and values to guide the further development of the Green Code. The eventual plan and code will be detailed. In general, however, the Green Code should:
>
> - Establish clear and simple rules, fairly and consistently applied, respectful of the diversity of communities, derived through a participatory process, incorporating existing community plans, and revised in democratic fashion.
> - Encourage investment by making rules for development predictable, setting aside land for job creation in key districts and corridors, supported by cost-effective infrastructure, and allowing for the productive and timely reuse of vacant land.
> - Promote land use and transportation patterns that encourage compact development and promote a full array of transportation choices to help us conserve energy, protect the quality of air, water, and soil, preserve and expand our "green infrastructure," and support access to wholesome food, promoting healthy living for all citizens.
> - Respect the traditional pattern of the city and help repair existing neighborhood fabric, or help citizens reinvent urban neighborhoods where the fabric is beyond repair, and preserve our architectural heritage and the physical context which supports it.
> - Create the conditions for Buffalo to grow again, making the city attractive to newcomers by meeting the aspirations of those who live here now, sharing the benefits of city life equitably, with this generation and those to come.

FIGURE 5 Nine workshops attracted nearly 1,000 people.

Context

Cities are constructed step-by-step, year-by-year, through thousands of individual acts of building, planting, paving, demolishing, repairing, maintaining, and renewing. In the sum total of these acts an urban environment – the city – is produced, one that residents share. Every one of these acts matters, as each either contributes to – or subracts from – a city's quality of life.

Buffalo has been the site of continuous settlement for more than 200 years. It began as a simple trading post on the banks of Buffalo Creek near the shore of Lake Erie. Over the succeeding decades it grew up as a village of houses, workshops, stores, and farms cast upon the ambitious framework of Joseph Ellicott's 1804 grid and radial street plan.

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 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 were stitched across the land and cityscape. Passenger and freight lines connected Buffalo to New York City and then to Chicago. Railways and later streetcars crisscrossed the city. The energy source for the city changed almost 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. As the century turned, the city was increasingly an industrial power as well, making steel, then cars, then airplanes, then chemicals.

Civic leaders organized to build bridges and viaducts to rid the city of railroad grade crossings, recruit Frederick Law Olmsted to develop a park and parkway system, erect civic monuments, and stage an international exposition. As in cities across the nation, Buffalonians embraced the idea that change in their city might be planned.

Buffalo's neighborhoods grew up dense, active, and whole – in the memorable words of one writer, "a climax forest of two-and-a-half-story frame dwellings." Bustling commercial districts on Niagara, Broadway, William, and Clinton grew up along the spokes of Ellicott's hub. The quarters of the city took on the identities of ethnic groups that gathered there, first German and Irish, then Italian and Polish, later African American and Puerto Rican.

Throughout the mid-1900s – and especially during World War II when the city's population swelled with industrial workers – Buffalo's prosperity seemed assured. But still more changes were underway. The automobile emerged as transportation for the average family and cities were revamped to accommodate its needs. Downtown was hollowed out to make room for cars. New neighborhoods grew up beyond the city line. Thruway Plaza – the first suburban shopping center – opened in 1952. New highways were built to the suburbs, and Olmsted's Humboldt Parkway was dug out to build a new expressway. As Buffalo grew on its periphery, it receded at the center.

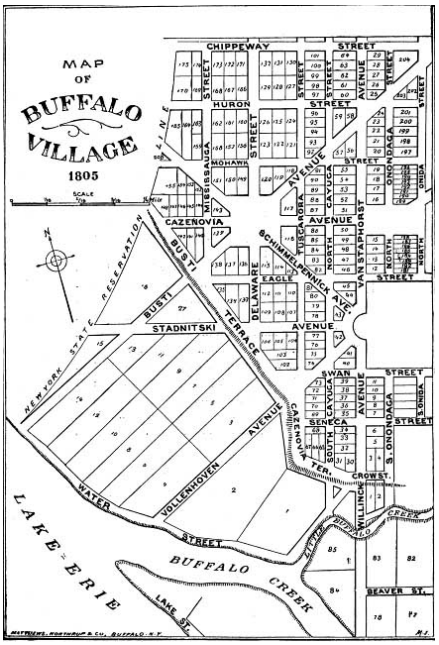


FIGURE 6 The 1804 Ellicott Plan.

In 1970, the Buffalo metropolitan area reached its population peak, with more than 1.3 million residents. But the fundamental structure of the global economy was already changing. Jobs began disappearing, first to automation, then to the Sunbelt, eventually offshore. Bethlehem Steel, Trico, and other industrial giants closed and a long and painful restructuring of our economy began.

These events and decisions shaped the city we inherit today. Our forbearers have left us a complex legacy of assets and challenges. For better or worse, this is the context in which we must create a vision for Buffalo's future – and act on it.

Buffalo since 1800: Where we've been

1804 Holland Land Company surveyor Joseph Ellicott completes the radial and grid plan for the Village of New Amsterdam

1825 Governor Dewitt Clinton ceremoniously opens the Erie Canal, connecting Buffalo to the Hudson River

1832 Buffalo is incorporated as a city

1836 Buffalo & Niagara Falls Railroad, city's first steam railroad, opens for business

1843 Attica & Buffalo Railroad establishes the final link in a chain of railroads (later subsumed into the New York Central Railroad in 1853) connecting Buffalo by rail to the Hudson River

1853 City of Buffalo annexes the Village of Black Rock

1860 Buffalo Street Railway Co. establishes a citywide horse-drawn streetcar system

1870 Buffalo Park Commission retains Olmsted, Vaux & Co. to design Buffalo's park and parkway system

1873 International Railway Bridge connects Buffalo by rail to Fort Erie

1883 New York Central & Hudson River Railroad completes the Belt Line, a 15-mile freight and commuter line circling the city

FIGURE 7 Gov. Clinton departs to christen the Erie Canal in 1825.

FIGURE 8 Railroads first supplemented, then nearly supplanted, the canal system.

FIGURE 9 The streetcar system served downtown, connected neighborhoods, and linked residents to job opportunities.

FIGURE 10 The Olmsted park and parkway system designed great civic spaces for neighborhood residents.

1888 Grade Crossings Commission is established to eliminate railway grade crossings in Buffalo through the construction of bridges and viaducts

1890 Buffalo Railway Co. establishes city's first electric streetcar service

1896 Niagara Falls Power Co. transmits electric power to Buffalo, giving the city unprecedented advantages in attracting manufacturers

1901 Buffalo hosts the Pan American Exposition

1922 The Plan of Buffalo is delivered to the City Planning Committee by Edward Bennett and William Parsons

1923 International Bus Company establishes the first bus transit in Buffalo

1925 City's first Zoning Ordinance is adopted, with one residential, one apartment-hotel, one commercial, and three industrial districts

1927 Peace Bridge opens to traffic

1929 New York Central Terminal opens on Buffalo's East Side

1946 New York State Department of Public Works publishes the Buffalo Urban Area Report, indicating the approximate routes for thruways within Buffalo

1950 Buffalo General Plan is adopted, setting the agenda for a radical transformation of Buffalo's urban form; Niagara Frontier Transit shuts down Buffalo's last streetcar line

1953 City's second Zoning Ordinance is adopted, with five residential, four commercial, and three industrial districts

1955 Skyway, a high level bridge over the Buffalo River, opens for traffic

1957 Ellicott Urban Renewal Project is adopted, with demolition starting in 1959

1959 St. Lawrence Seaway opens, allowing Great Lakes freight to bypass Buffalo's port and link directly to the Atlantic Ocean

FIGURE 11 The 1922 Plan proposed redeveloping Niagara Square as a civic center.

FIGURE 12 The Italian Colony was demolished during the Waterfront Urban Renewal Project, displacing 3,750 residents.

1961 I-190 is completed along the Niagara River through Buffalo

1962 Scajaquada Expressway is completed, cutting through Delaware Park

1963 Waterfront Urban Renewal Project commences

1964 Buffalo Master Plan is adopted, calling for a second round of urban renewal and highway building

1965 Downtown Urban Renewal Project, an attempt to remake the region's shopping and financial center, begins construction

1967 Kensington Expressway is completed, displacing Humboldt Parkway

1968 Groundbreaking occurs at the University at Buffalo's Amherst campus

1976 Landmark and Historic Preservation Ordinance is adopted

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

1979 Amtrak vacates the New York Central Terminal

1986 Metro Rail, a 6.4-mile light rail rapid transit line, begins operation

2006 Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan is adopted

FIGURE 13 The 1971 downtown plan called for the construction of a light rail rapid transit line along Main Street.

FIGURE 14 The Downtown Urban Renewal Project proposed remaking Shelton Square into "Main Place," an indoor shopping mall.

FIGURE 15 The mixed-use redevelopment of the Larkin District signifies a regeneration of the city's economy.

Buffalo in 2012: Where we are

Buffalo is known as "The City of No Illusions." It doesn't hide from harsh realities, and doesn't shrink from showcasing its strengths.

Over the past decade, the city's population continued to decline, falling to its lowest level since 1890. Some neighborhoods have deteriorated, while others have come back from the brink. The loss of manufacturing jobs has been countered by a more diversified and resilient economy.

Buffalo remains a poor city, where too many are unemployed and undereducated, the public education system is under extreme stress, deep inequalities of wealth and poverty prevail, and many residents lack ready access to healthy food or the mobility to take part in the broader economy.

Planning for Buffalo's future must confront these realities honestly. Yet there are also a number of positive trends that should be acknowledged and built upon:

- Immigration is rising. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of foreign-born residents increased by 6,760 – or 53 percent. These new arrivals contribute to the city's diversity while bringing an entrepreneurial spirit to its neighborhoods.
- Wealth is growing. Per capita incomes in the region grew 39 percent between 2000 and 2010, from $27,100 to $37,500; significantly faster than the national increase of 28 percent.
- Talent is increasing. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of persons in the region with a graduate degree grew by over 22,000, going from 10 to 13 percent of the population.
- Housing is holding its value. Unlike many parts of the country, housing values in Buffalo have continued to rise, bringing added security to what is typically a family's largest investment. While property values have risen, tax rates have been reduced, providing added benefits to homeowners and businesses.
- The economy is diversifying. The transition to a more resilient, knowledge-intensive economy is taking shape as new engines such as life sciences, professional services, leisure and hospitality, education, and finance drive job growth.

FIGURE 16 The Central Terminal has been stabilized through volunteer efforts, and now awaits a permanent reuse.

FIGURE 17 Buffalo's population, and its share of the regional population, has declined for six consecutive decades.

Buffalonians 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 half-billion dollars is currently being invested in a new medical campus at its edge. Citizens 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. Citizens are getting involved. Residents are reaching out to each other. Neighborhood revitalization has become a do-it-yourself phenomenon. Expatriates are returning to their beloved hometown. Young, college-educated people are deciding that Buffalo is a great place to live, and they are investing their time, energy, and money to make it even better.

Challenges remain, but as these are faced, there is also an extraordinary legacy on which to build. Buffalo's neighborhoods are compact and walkable. The remaining housing stock is strong and a great value. The public transit system is still robust. Old industrial sites – brownfields – can be a future asset. The city's parks are incomparable. A public research university and many other distinguished institutions of higher education call the city home. The elements of the new economy are well-established.

In a world threatened by peak oil and climate change, the cities that will thrive will be compact, walkable, and transit-friendly. They will have a strong sense of place and provide options for sustainable lifestyles. In the words of Jane Jacobs, they will be "lively, diverse, and intense."

Buffalo starts with a strong foundation in each of these categories:

- Neighborhoods remain compact. Despite losing over half of its population from 1950 to 2010, Buffalo's 6,436 persons per square mile makes it more densely populated than the leading green cities of Milwaukee, Denver, and Portland.
- Walking, cycling, and transit are viable options. Buffalo's traditional, mixed-use neighborhoods make it possible to use a range of transportation alternatives. In 2009, 13 percent took transit to work, 6 percent walked, and 1 percent biked. These are among the highest rates of non-car commuting in the nation.
- Automobile dependency is low. People can get around Buffalo without relying on a car. As of 2009, 30 percent of households were car-free, which is comparable to Chicago and San Francisco (at 27 and 30 percent, respectively).

FIGURE 18 Coe Place is representative of many compact, walkable neighborhoods.

FIGURE 19 Manufacturing still plays an important role in Buffalo's economy.

FIGURE 20 Vibrant, healthy neighborhoods is a goal for every part of the city.

FIGURE 21 Revitalizing neighborhoods takes time, persistence, hard work.

Buffalo in 2032: Where we're headed

The land use plan seeks to build on the solid foundation that has been laid, and guide the city in taking the next steps to prepare for its future growth and development.

When Mayor Byron W. Brown announced the start of the Buffalo Green Code project on Earth Day 2010, the imperative of smart growth and sustainability was the underlying message. As the Mayor noted, "Our zoning reform effort will act as the foundation for a new place-based economic development strategy for Buffalo's neighborhoods in every section of the city. It will embody 21st century values about economic development, sustainability, and walkable, green urbanism."

The Green Code aims to create great places built upon great bases:

- Great places are the mixed-use neighborhoods, transit and bicycle network, heritage and environmental assets, and civic spaces and parks that create value and attract and retain a talented workforce
- Great bases are the downtown hub, employment centers, industrial and retail districts, medical and education campuses, cultural resources, and a network of entrepreneurs that are the engines of the regional economy

Cities concentrate talent, knowledge, and assets. They encourage economic and cultural cross-pollination, fueling innovation and creativity. They nurture social and economic networks vital to wealth production. The Green Code will build these attributes through assertive placemaking and smart growth policies. To grow wealthier, Buffalo will compete more effectively by building upon place-based strengths.

In a global and knowledge-intensive economy, place matters more than ever. The quality of place is a key element for creating jobs, attracting a talented workforce, and enhancing the tax base. Reinforcing great places to live, great places to invest, and great places for getting around is the mission of the Green Code.

FIGURE 22 The Avant, a redevelopment of the former Dulski Federal Building, is one of Buffalo's greenest structures.

Vision

The Buffalo Green Code will help implement the vision, strategies, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan by establishing the rules under which development can take place in the city. If the rules are consistent with the plan and policies, over time the city will evolve according to the community's vision.

The Green Code employs place-based planning – a new approach to guiding development that puts Buffalo on the cutting edge of city-making. Place-based planning is a way to shape the future of the city by concentrating on the look, feel, form, and character of places instead of focusing on conventional categories of land use. In general, the Green Code will be organized around "place-types," the characteristic patterns of development that citizens live with every day.

Place-based planning and development regulation represents an important evolution in the practice of land use and zoning. Conventional zoning divides the city into mutually exclusive single-use zones. Place-based planning recognizes that great places typically have a mix of uses – residential, retail, office, employment, institutional, recreational, natural, and more. It's the mix of activities that makes neighborhoods lively, interesting, and safe.

The form and character of development are critical to the process of making great places. The Green Code will be a form-based code, which governs the height, intensity, and design characteristics of development. How buildings meet the sidewalk, where parking goes, and the kind of landscaping required all help determine whether places are attractive or unwelcoming. The zoning ordinance will create a set of regulations to encourage development that fits with the desired character of these places.

Existing place-types

The Green Code is built around three place-types: neighborhoods, districts, and corridors. These place-types help foster well-designed, functional environments for residents, investors, and future generations. As Apple co-founder Steve Jobs noted, "It's not just what it looks like and feels like – design is how it works." Place-based planning preserves what works best while allowing for new and innovative ideas to take root and flower.

Neighborhoods are functionally integrated places where people live, ranging in character from most to the least urban. Traditional neighborhoods tend to share similar attributes:

- There is both a center and an edge; with the ideal size a quarter-mile from one to the other.
- Streets are designed to account for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles.
- There is a balanced mix of activities – work, schools, recreation, shopping – and a range of housing types.
- Priority is given to creating public space and locating civic buildings.

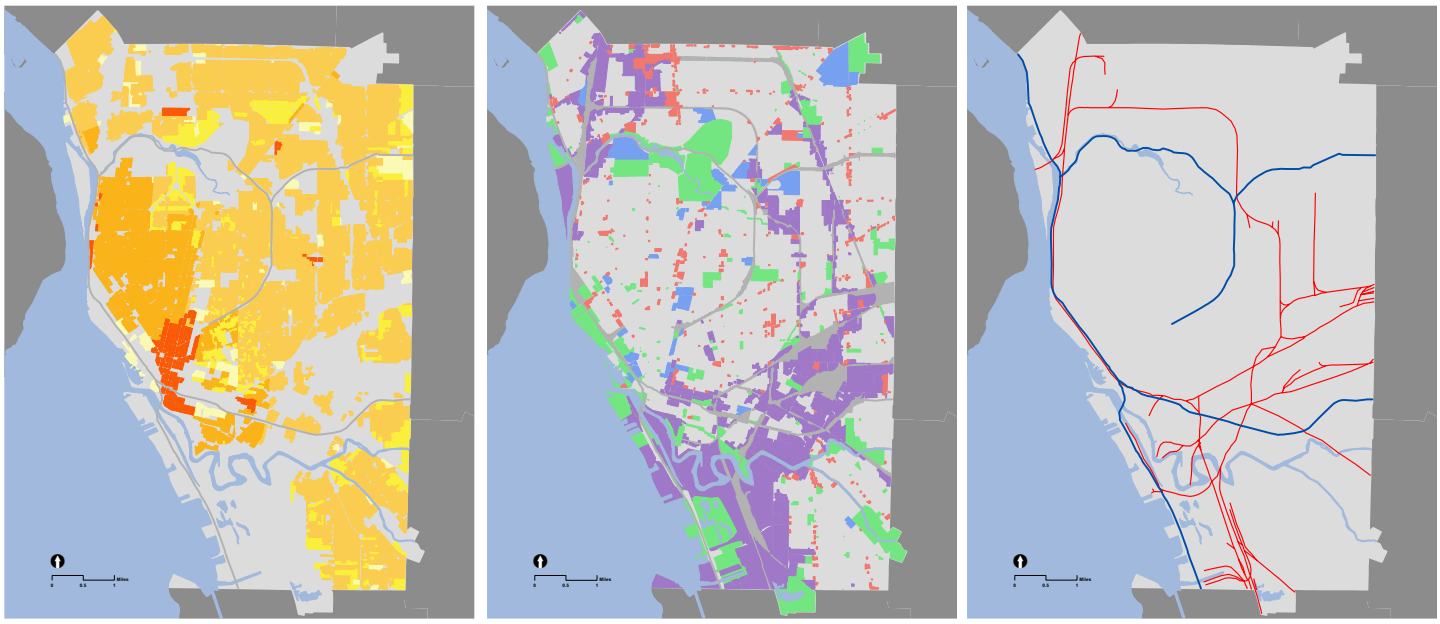


FIGURE 23 Neighborhoods (left), districts (center), and corridors (right).

Districts are specialized places serving a predominant use, such as a college campus or industrial park. Although districts preclude the full range of activities of a neighborhood, they do not need to be suburban in character. The structure of the district parallels the neighborhood, with an identifiable focus that provides orientation and identity, as well as clear boundaries.

Corridors are linear systems of transportation, green space, or water that both form the borders of and connect neighborhoods and districts. Corridors are composed of natural and man-made components, ranging from wildlife trails to railways and transit lines. The corridor is not the haphazardly residual open space buffering suburban enclaves, but a deliberate civic element characterized by its continuity.

To initiate this process, the entire city was mapped by existing place-type. Each parcel was identified as part of a neighborhood, district, or corridor. These existing development forms will provide the framework for rebuilding Buffalo into a greener, more walkable, more resilient city.

Future place-types

The future place-types proposed in the Green Code are largely derived from what already exists. As the Comprehensive Plan states, residents want Buffalo to be what it is – only better. So planners looked at historical records to see when different parts of the city were developed, examined property maps to understand street patterns and lot sizes, and surveyed the city visually to determine how building form and design contributed to the character of specific neighborhoods.

The future place-types assigned to each area of the city 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.

FIGURE 24 The transect is used to determine the various types of neighborhoods that exist across a metropolitan scale.

FIGURE 25 Neighborhood (left), district (center), and corridor (right).

It was also important to hear what residents want for their neighborhoods – sentiments that were clearly expressed by participants in the 2011 neighborhood workshops. Finally, the assignment of place-types had to contribute to meeting citywide goals for smart growth and sustainability.

The Green Code is being applied to the entire city through the combination of a new land use plan and a new place-based zoning ordinance. Every parcel in the city has been assigned a place-type, which will correspond to a specific set of rules and regulations governing its use, form, and development character.

The resulting ordinance will guide what can or cannot be built and where. Because the rules are clear and simple, the development process will be predictable and transparent, and more attractive to private investment.

Neighborhoods

The five neighborhood types will be familiar to residents because they are based on existing neighborhoods. They developed during different eras in the city's history and have evolved over time, ranging from old to new, dense to open.

- Urban Core Neighborhoods include downtown and employment centers like the Larkin District. These neighborhoods house a full range of uses – shops, offices, restaurants, theaters, and apartments; and structures are large and built to the sidewalk. They work best when there is activity on the ground floor that attracts pedestrians and helps to keep streets safe.

- Urban Center 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. The Lower West Side, Historic Black Rock, Fruit Belt, Old First Ward, and Hydraulics are examples of these neighborhoods.

- Urban General Neighborhoods were largely developed along streetcar lines at the turn of the 20th century, and so have strong commercial districts at their cores. These neighborhoods tend to have larger lots, more space between houses, and deeper setbacks. Hamlin Park, Kaisertown, University Heights, North Park, Riverside, and South Buffalo are examples of these neighborhoods.

- Urban Edge Neighborhoods are characterized by large lot sizes, spacious front yards, and single-family homes. They are often developed around parks and parkways and lack significant commercial activity. Central Park and Kensington Heights are examples of these neighborhoods.

- Suburban Neighborhoods are typically suburban forms inserted into urban contexts. Some, like Ellicott Town Center or Marine Drive Apartments, are remnants of 1950s public housing; while others, like Waterfront Village or Rebecca Park, were privately developed as "suburbs within the city."

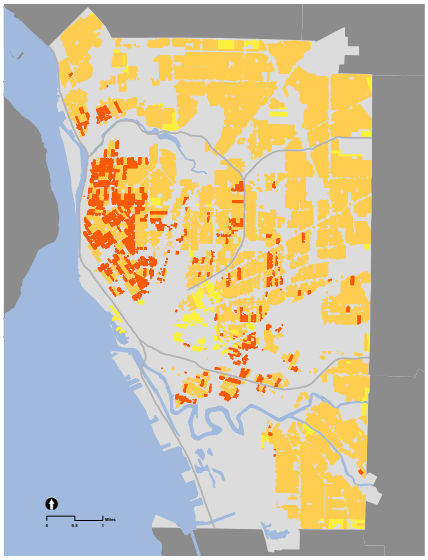


FIGURE 26 The average age of housing by block (darker colors signify older stock).

Districts

Districts are areas that are separate from the prevailing grid pattern of streets, mainly dedicated to a single use, and often with a single owner. These include shopping centers, business and industrial parks, college campuses, hospital complexes, and public parks and open space.

- Retail Districts include automobile-oriented shopping areas, in either strip plazas along major arterials or in shopping centers providing large amounts of surface parking. Retail strips are prevalent throughout the city, while Consumers Square on Delaware Avenue and Wegmans on Amherst Street are examples of retail centers.

- Industrial Districts are employment centers for manufacturing, light industrial, warehouse, and office activity. The sub-category of heavy industrial includes activities that generally occur both inside and outside of a building and require storage on site. Light industrial includes activities that typically occur within a building that sits within the street grid or in an industrial park.

- Institutional Districts are areas where multiple buildings provide health care or educational services, function separately from surrounding activity, and are often served by an internal circulation system apart from the surrounding street grid. The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Erie County Medical Center, Mercy Hospital, University at Buffalo, Canisius College, and Buffalo State College are examples of this type.

- Open Space Districts include natural conservation areas like Tifft Nature Preserve; the Olmsted park and parkway system; parks and recreational spaces like Houghton, Schiller, or Shoshone parks; and civic spaces like Lafayette Square and Viola Park.

Corridors

Corridors include the linear connections that make it possible to get from one place to another, but are also places in their own right. They help define the city as much as link its neighborhoods and districts.

- Transportation Corridors include highways such as the Kensington Expressway, railways such as the Belt Line, and greenways such as the Jesse Kregal Pathway. Transportation corridors have long been organizing elements for the city, serving as both connectors and boundaries that define neighborhoods.

- Waterfront Corridors are bodies of water such as Lake Erie, the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers, the Black Rock Canal, and Scajaquada and Cazenovia Creeks which connect neighborhoods, industrial areas, and employment centers. They also define the edges of neighborhoods and give identity to the city.

Neighborhood Place Types

Place Type	Variant		Description
N-1 Urban Core Neighborhood		N-1D Downtown/Regional Hub	Downtown or regional hub of substantial scale with an intense mix of office, residential, and retail uses
		N-1E Downtown Edge	The edges of downtown composed primarily of connected, moderate-scale commercial block structures with consistent pedestrian-oriented frontages
		N-1S Secondary Employment Center	High-intensity centers containing a mix of light industrial, office, residential, and retail uses and many tall and large-footprint structures
N-2 Urban Center Neighborhood		N-2P P-Zone	Mixed-use neighborhood centers composed primarily of commercial block structures of varying height
		N-2O Open	Secondary neighborhood centers containing a mix of houses and commercial block structures, typically on the edges of more intense neighborhood centers
		N-2R Restricted	Compact areas beyond the centers of neighborhoods containing a wide range of housing types generally restricted to residential uses
		N-2A The Avenue	Mixed-use, primarily residential areas with a mix of houses, stacked unit structures, and some tall apartment blocks and hotels

Neighborhood Place Types

Place Type	Variant		Description
N-3 Urban General Neighborhood		N-3P P-Zone	Mixed-use neighborhood centers composed primarily of commercial block structures rarely taller than two or three stories
		N-3O Open	Secondary neighborhood centers containing a mix of houses and commercial block structures, typically on the edges of intense neighborhood centers
		N-3R Restricted	Moderately compact areas beyond the centers of neighborhoods composed mostly of detached houses generally restricted to residential uses
N-4 Urban Edge Neighborhood			Large lot residential areas composed primarily of single-family detached houses
N-S Suburban Neighborhood		N-ST Tower Block/Superblock	Residential areas typically composed of towers and/or garden apartments organized within “superblocks”
		N-SS Suburban Subdivision	Low density, residential-only subdivisions typically organized within limited-access block networks or culs-de-sac

District Place Types

Place Type	Variant		Description
D-R Retail District		D-RC Retail Center	Retail campuses with prominent parking areas centered around one or more “big box” format buildings
		D-RS Retail Strip	Linear retail strip developments typically located at conventional suburban arterials, highway access points, or adjacent to existing retail centers
D-I Industrial District		D-IO Office Park	Multiple-building office campuses
		D-IL Light Industrial	Light industrial parks or sites
		D-IH Heavy Industrial	Heavy industrial campuses or sites
D-H Healthcare District			Integrated research and medical campus consisting of multiple buildings either on several contiguous blocks or within a “superblock”
D-E Education District			Education campus consisting of multiple buildings either on several contiguous blocks or within a “superblock”

District Place Types

Place Type	Variant		Description
D-O Open Space District		D-OO Olmsted	Large, meadow-like parks typically designed by Olmsted with a primarily passive, pastoral, or picturesque character
		D-OR Recreational	A open space designed to accommodate, in whole or in part, structured recreational and active uses
		D-OC Civic	A formal space that takes on the character of a civic green or plaza, usually of small to medium scale
		D-ON Natural	Naturalized open space or conservation area with no, or few, active uses aside from walking or biking trails

Corridor Place Types

Place Type	Variant		Description
C-W Waterfront Corridor			Lakes, rivers, and other waterbodies
C-T Transportation Corridor		C-TR Rail	Rail lines and yards
		C-TG Greenway	Pedestrian and bicycle trails
		C-TH Highway	Limited access highways or regional boulevards
		C-TM Metro Rail	Designated areas within the pedestrian sheds of Metro Rail stations

Principles

One of the purposes of the land use plan is to identify detailed and specific principles that provide a context for the new place-based zoning ordinance. Zoning is an important tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, but not the only one. To shape development, it needs to work in concert with other plans, programs, policies, and processes that govern infrastructure, transportation, housing, historic preservation, urban design, land management, and energy conservation.

All of these need to be guided by principles that are detailed, specific, and rigorous. Based on the effort in preparing this plan, and in identifying future place-types for all parcels in the city, it is possible to recognize the direction and interrelationship of an increasingly comprehensive range of topics, some of which will bear directly on the work of writing the new zoning ordinance.

Sustainability is the overarching theme supporting implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, but it is often mistakenly understood solely in terms of protecting the environment. The United Nations Sustainable Cities Program defines a sustainable city as one "where achievements in social, economic, and physical development are made to last."

Sustainability in the urban context includes a concern for economic well-being, social equity, and environmental quality. As a way to reflect this triple bottom-line approach, principles are organized by themes that run in parallel with the elements of true sustainability: economy, neighborhoods, and environment.

The principles leading to the realization of the Comprehensive Plan's vision are largely derived from public input. As with everything this draft document, these principles are subject to further public review and discussion.

ECONOMY

Planning for a sustainable economy means helping ensure that both current and future businesses are able to successfully operate and grow. The plan aims to promote place-based economic development by targeting downtown investments, fortifying employment centers, reclaiming brownfields, and improving accessibility.

The principles support downtown as a regional center by introducing strategies to reinforce its density, accessibility, compact form, and range of uses. The plan will help diversify the city's employment base by supporting emerging industries that need places to grow. It will define the "knowledge corridor" that stretches along Main Street from the University of Buffalo to the heart of downtown, and help capture the city's share of consumer and visitor dollars.

Convenient shopping is an amenity for visitors, a necessity for residents, an anchor for neighborhoods, and an economic benefit to the city's economy. The recognized principles encourage mixed-use centers in every neighborhood, protect the intimate and pedestrian-oriented character, and allow for the transition of conventional suburban arterials to mixed-use centers where appropriate. The plan also locates additional destination retail where it is possible to cluster big box development.

The plan and its principles will help maintain the city's employment base. It supports development of employment centers, such as those along the Belt Line. The plan also reinforces ongoing work to reclaim industrial land in Brownfield Opportunity Areas in South Buffalo, Black Rock, the East Side, and the Inner and Outer Harbors.

DEFINING THE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR

Main Street from downtown to the University at Buffalo's South Campus features clusters of knowledge-based institutions and industries:

- Canalside is a burgeoning center for waterfront and tourism activities.
- the Central Business District is the hub of the financial district, with thousands employed in professional services.
- the Entertainment District draws patrons from across the region and beyond.
- Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus has over 8,000 health care employees, life science researchers, and the emergent UB Medical School.
- Canisius and Medaille colleges serve thousands of students and faculty.
- Sisters of Charity Hospital is a significant health care institution.
- the Tri-Main Center houses dozens of creative companies and organizations.
- the University at Buffalo has a historic campus and serves as the center of the University Heights neighborhood.

The Knowledge Corridor is distinguished from other economic centers by the Metro Rail transit line that defines it and offers excellent prospects for businesses, organizations, and residents to locate in a dense, mixed-use, walkable environment.

Highlighting the significance of the Knowledge Corridor illuminates Main Street as the city's premier high-density corridor connecting a significant array of institutions and businesses critical to the success of Buffalo's emerging knowledge economy. It also changes the image of Main Street from a geographic and demographic divide, to a shared space that draws the East and West sides together around economic and employment opportunities based on knowledge and the institutions that foment that knowledge.

FIGURE 27 Downtown remains the civic heart of Western New York.

1 Reinforce downtown as a regional hub.

1.1 Activate the downtown core.

- Permit the full range of uses, such as office, residential, hospitality, civic, retail, and entertainment, to activate the streets of downtown.
- Accelerate development of emerging neighborhood clusters within the Central Business District to create a mixed-use, 24/7 downtown.
- Encourage centralization of regionally significant government facilities to downtown Buffalo.
- Support the continued growth and intensification of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and the University at Buffalo's Downtown Campus.
- Focus structures of the greatest height and intensity near the Main Street Transit Mall.
- Support regional development policies that attract residents and employers back to transit-serviced locations of the urban core.

1.2 Enhance connections between the CBD and adjacent neighborhoods.

- Enhance linear connections to adjoining neighborhoods with pedestrian-oriented frontages along radials such as Erie, Niagara, Delaware, Main, Genesee, Broadway, and Seneca.
- Support enhanced transportation connections between the CBD and adjacent neighborhoods wherever possible.
- Encourage mid-rise redevelopment within the downtown edge to provide appropriate transitions in scale from the CBD to adjoining neighborhoods.
- Improve connectivity between the Inner Harbor/Erie Basin Marina and the Downtown core under the 190.

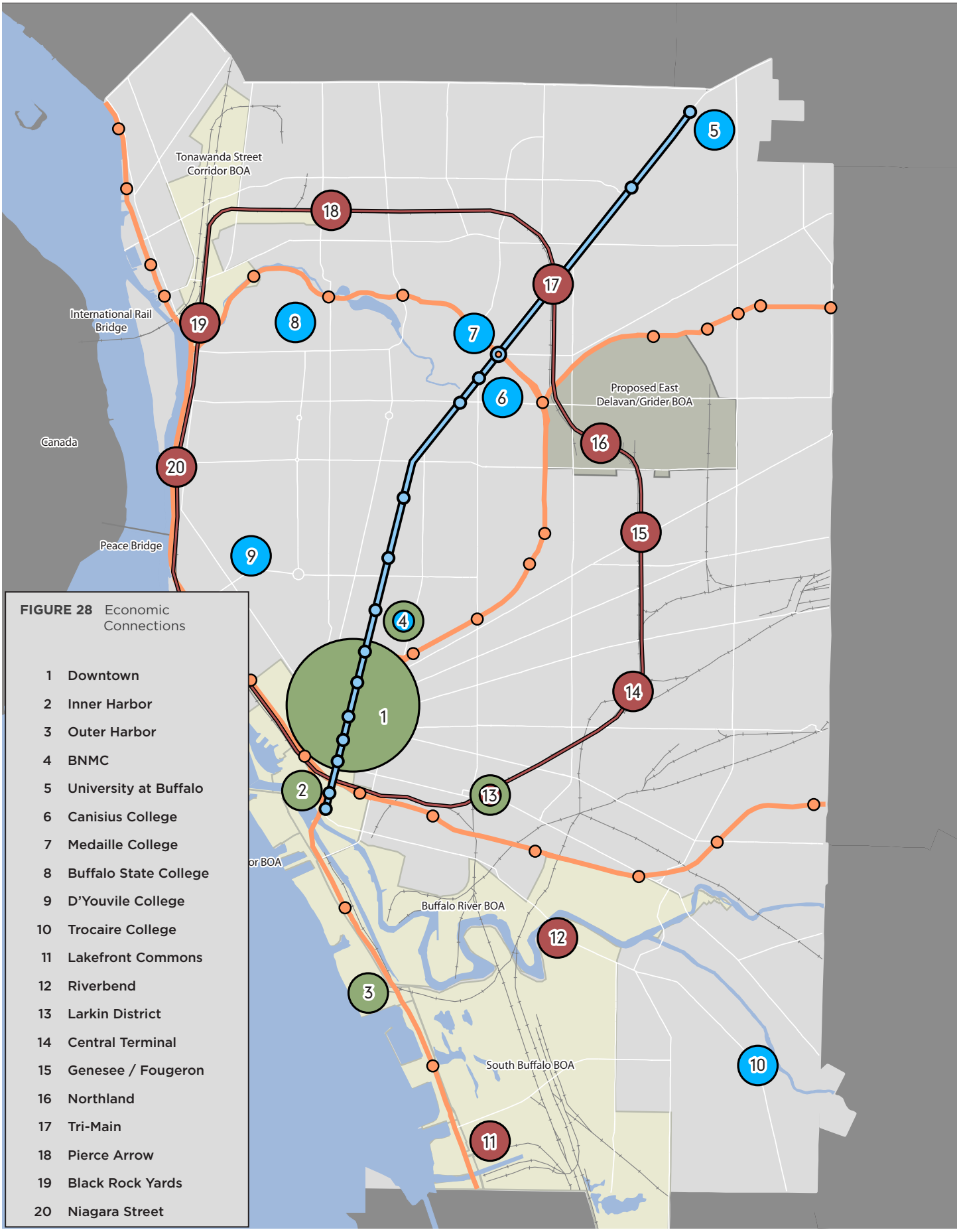


FIGURE 28 Economic Connections

1 Downtown
2 Inner Harbor
3 Outer Harbor
4 BNMC
5 University at Buffalo
6 Canisius College
7 Medaille College
8 Buffalo State College
9 D'Youvile College
10 Trocaire College
11 Lakefront Commons
12 Riverbend
13 Larkin District
14 Central Terminal
15 Genesee / Fougeron
16 Northland
17 Tri-Main
18 Pierce Arrow
19 Black Rock Yards
20 Niagara Street

FIGURE 29 ECC's City Campus offers important opportunities for city residents.

1.3 Reintroduce a high quality public realm.

- Establish a street grid within the CBD where pedestrian-oriented frontages will be aligned.
- Prioritize road diet initiatives on downtown streets to properly allocate space for motor vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Reestablish two-way traffic on streets that are currently one-way.
- Avoid new surface parking lots within the CBD core; allowing development of structured parking that meets design, use, and environmental standards.
- Limit skywalks and tunnels that divert pedestrian traffic from sidewalks.
- Complete the Cars Sharing Main Street Project.
- Continue improving Niagara Square into a more beautiful, comfortable, and pedestrian-friendly public space.

2 Support the emerging knowledge economy.

2.1 Support the growth of regional educational and medical anchors.

- Encourage multi-building educational and medical institutions to establish or update campus plans to facilitate development with the benefit of public input.
- In consultation with surrounding residential neighborhoods, develop strategies that address town and gown conflicts.

2.2 Embrace arts and culture as economic drivers.

- Recognize cultural tourism uses such as the Martin House Complex, Richardson Olmsted Center, and Michigan Street Baptist Church.
- Support public art installations in strategic locations.

FIGURE 30 The River Rock Industrial Incubator shows how old structures can be redeployed for new uses

2.3 Improve the visitor experience in Buffalo.

- Facilitate the development of visitor accommodations, including hotels, inns, hostels, and bed-and-breakfasts, in appropriate places across the city.
- Develop strategies for improving the appearance of "first impression" corridors and entry points into the city.
- Support Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation's efforts to reestablish the historic street grid and canal network of Canalside.
- Support improved transit connections to the Buffalo Niagara International Airport.
- Work with Amtrak on an improved downtown train station.
- Support NFTA plans for improvements to the Metropolitan Transportation Center.

3 Grow employment centers.

3.1 Facilitate office and industrial park development.

- Reserve land for office campuses and industrial uses, encouraging such environments to develop in an urban character where possible.
- Accelerate provision of shovel-ready land and reuse-ready structures.
- Capitalize upon highway, rail, and Peace Bridge access points for cargo-oriented development.
- Minimize conflict between employment districts and residential neighborhoods through appropriate edge treatment design.

FIGURE 31 The former Northland Rubber Co. factory is a mixed-use redevelopment opportunity in waiting.

3.2 Facilitate mixed-use redevelopment along the Belt Line.

- Continue to act upon the economic potential of existing and emerging employment centers, such as the Larkin District, Tri-Main, and Northland.
- Permit the widest range of adaptive reuse options, including office, residential, and light industrial, to facilitate reinvigoration.
- Integrate adjacent neighborhood centers into Belt Line employment areas.
- Support ongoing service improvements to transit routes that connect to Belt Line employment centers.

3.3 Support a working waterfront.

- Protect marine commercial and water-dependent and enhanced industrial uses in the zoning code.
- Facilitate repurposing of vacant waterfront land and structures for employment uses through ongoing brownfields planning and heritage preservation efforts.

3.4 Devote resources toward brownfield and greyfield reclamation.

- Incorporate planning efforts to reclaim brownfields across the city through New York State's Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program.
- Actively seek out development solutions for underperforming retail sites, such as Central Park Plaza.
- Support infrastructure investments that reintegrate brownfields and greyfields back into the regional economy.

FIGURE 32 Hertel Avenue in North Buffalo.

4 Increase retail activity.

4.1 Facilitate development of retail centers.

- Reserve sites for retail centers in appropriate locations.
- Establish guidelines for retail centers that provide for the safety and comfort of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists alike.
- Establish edge treatment guidelines for retail centers that allow for appropriate transitions to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Mitigate the environmental impacts of car-dominated retail centers.

4.2 Identify appropriate sites to cluster retail strip development.

- Focus retail strip development on the outskirts of neighborhoods.
- Target locations along high-volume arterials; proximate to highway access points; industrial sites no longer marketable for their original purpose; and adjacent to established retail centers.

4.3 Support neighborhood retailers and entrepreneurs.

- Encourage walkable retail development in neighborhood centers.
- Establish legal clarity for corner shops and small-scale retail uses in residential areas.
- Develop transparent and predictable regulations for mobile food vendors, including food trucks, wagons, bikes, and carts.

FIGURE 33 The LaSalle Metro station area is one of the city's brightest prospects for transit-oriented development.

5 Optimize access and circulation.

5.1 Reinforce Metro Rail ridership.

- Create great places at Metro Rail station areas by emphasizing mixed-use, high- density neighborhood centers.
- Prioritize traffic calming and walkability improvements that would help humanize and activate Main Street.
- Pursue efforts to provide public safety through environmental design.
- Strive for the maximum population and employment densities near Metro Rail stations.
- Support further study of Metro Rail expansion alternatives and encourage the development of "light rail ready" neighborhoods along these routes.

5.2 Support efficient movement of goods.

- Protect corridors for rail and water freight transportation.
- Support infrastructure improvements that increase freight movement efficiencies and reduce carbon emissions.
- Review designated truck routes to ensure consistency with both economic development and neighborhood stability objectives.
- Protect excess roadway, rail, air cargo, and port capacity to attract economic development.

5.3 Connect with Canada.

- Promote the International Railway Bridge as a cross-border freight connection.
- Support efforts to improve traffic flow over the Peace Bridge, while minimizing the impacts on Front Park and surrounding neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Planning for sustainable neighborhoods means preserving the character of neighborhoods while encouraging redevelopment consistent with the prevailing pattern. The plan identifies five major neighborhood types that have been identified based on their character, form, and mix of uses.

The principles encourage integrated mixed-use development at the center of neighborhoods. Neighborhood centers provide important services to residents and create a greater sense of place. The plan identifies a mixed-use center in every neighborhood – where one already exists or where one might be developed – to promote pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest.

The plan will expand use and development options in distressed neighborhoods. It is important that vacant land is managed creatively, keeping it in active uses in the short term, and making the most of its development potential over the longer term. Where areas are predominantly vacant, the plan will allow transitional uses such as community gardening , side and back lot programs, or urban agriculature , while keeping open longer-term options for redevelopment.

In strong neighborhoods or ones where vacancies are less severe, infill programs will be facilitated. Where "superblocks" are in transition – places where the street pattern has been disrupted to create district or campus-like areas – the plan will allow redevelopment consistent with an adjacent neighborhood to reconnect with the city-wide street pattern once again.

GREEN DEVELOPMENT

While Buffalo has many strong neighborhoods, there are others that suffer from abandonment. This has created areas in the city where most of the housing stock has been demolished, leaving large tracts of vacant land. This situation is particularly apparent in the Broadway- Fillmore neighborhood.

Vacant land created by abandonment can become an asset. The pending zoning ordinance will allow the land to be used for its potential to:

- employ local residents in activities such as silviculture, growing ornamentals, and other forms of urban farming;
- expand recreational amenities;
- provide areas for producing new forms of renewable energy; and
- address the city's stormwater problems.

Even left as green space, the land holds value given its proximity to downtown, secondary employment centers, and major transportation corridors.

While permitting new activities such as those listed above, the city must also protect the traditional development patterns in these neighborhoods for future housing or commercial reuse. However, until its demographic trends improve, Buffalo must encourage development towards neighborhoods where the majority of the urban fabric remains intact.

To the extent that housing and commercial development is permitted in neighborhoods with significant vacancy, the city must ensure that it meets the highest standards. As part of the zoning ordinance, the city will consult with residents about adopting standards such as LEED-ND in these areas to ensure high quality development.

FIGURE 34 The Five Points has emerged as a neighborhood center, providing new retail options for West Side residents.

6 Reinforce walkable neighborhoods.

6.1 Support efforts to revitalize neighborhood centers.

- Identify the mixed-use, walkable neighborhood centers – from major centers such as Seneca/Cazenovia and Jefferson/Utica, to pedestrian pockets or four-corners such as Clinton/Baitz and Five Points – and target their regeneration as focal points for daily life.
- Prioritize revitalization efforts within neighborhood centers located on transit routes with strong market potential and stakeholder commitment.
- Coordinate transit planning with efforts to rebuild neighborhood centers.
- Rebuild weak market neighborhood centers through focused infill and rehabilitation within the pedestrian shed.
- Safeguard the economic potential of neighborhood centers with zoning provisions that protect their intimate, pedestrian-oriented character.
- Remove regulatory barriers to smart, compact development.

6.2 Build on existing neighborhood strengths.

- Identify and support the form and character elements of traditional neighborhoods according to Buffalo's distinct urban transect.
- Reinforce the distinctive roles of neighborhood centers, where economic and social activity is concentrated; and neighborhood edges, intended as places of less intense activity.
- Recognize the role of neighborhoods in providing a balanced mix of shopping, work, schooling, recreation, and all types of housing.
- Reinforce and enhance traditional networks of straight streets and short blocks that provide equally for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles.
- Locate and design civic buildings to promote their public status on prominent, visible, and accessible sites, including important street intersections and sites that terminate a street view or face an important natural or cultural feature.

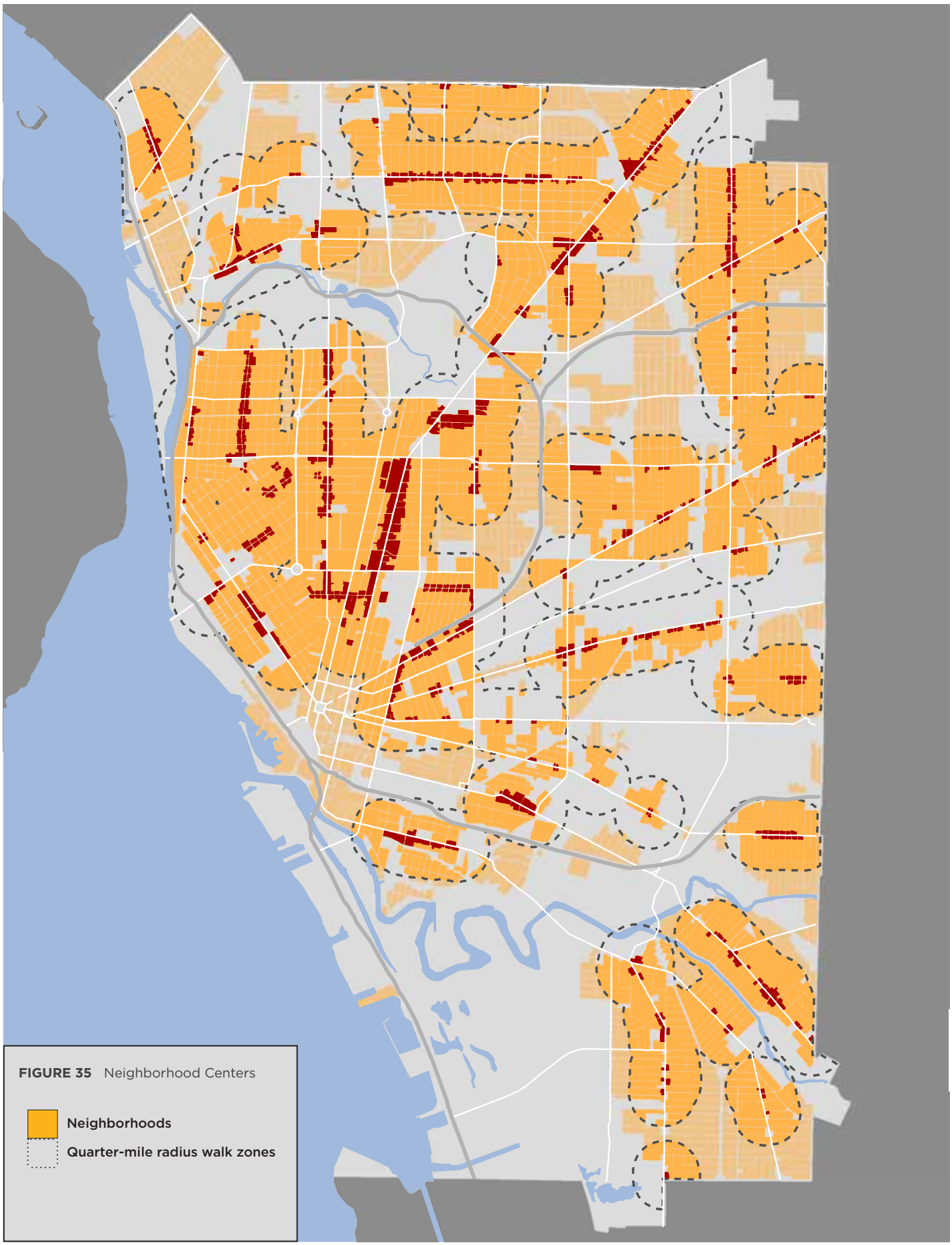


FIGURE 35 Neighborhood Centers

FIGURE 36 The Fillmore/Leroy neighborhood has historic buildings, transit access, and proximity to employment.

- Introduce regulatory tools to protect Buffalo's existing and desired neighborhood character, including guidelines on building type, height, disposition, permeability, parking, signs, landscaping, and ancillary structures.

6.3 Capitalize on neighborhood assets.

- Focus infill development near schools, community centers, and senior centers to recognize their value as community hubs.
- Focus public realm improvements within walking distance of reconstructed schools, particularly those that increase the safety and comfort of children walking and cycling to school.
- Permit productive reuses of historic school buildings scheduled to close.
- Build upon neighborhood planning efforts such as the Larkin District Plan, Allentown Neighborhood Strategy, and Fruit Belt Neighborhood Strategy.

6.4 Maximize housing choice and affordability.

- Allow housing types of every variety in their appropriate locations, taking into special consideration the needs of the elderly, children, and the mobility-impaired.
- Remove barriers to housing affordability, such as restrictions on granny flats, minimum parking requirements, excessive lot area standards, and limits on multifamily housing.
- Focus affordable housing initiatives around priority transit routes to foster combined housing and transportation savings.
- Reintegrate "superblock" developments back into neighborhoods.
- Establish legal clarity for home-based businesses and workshops.
- Establish legal clarity for residential renewable energy systems, such as small wind, solar thermal/photovoltaic, and district geothermal systems.

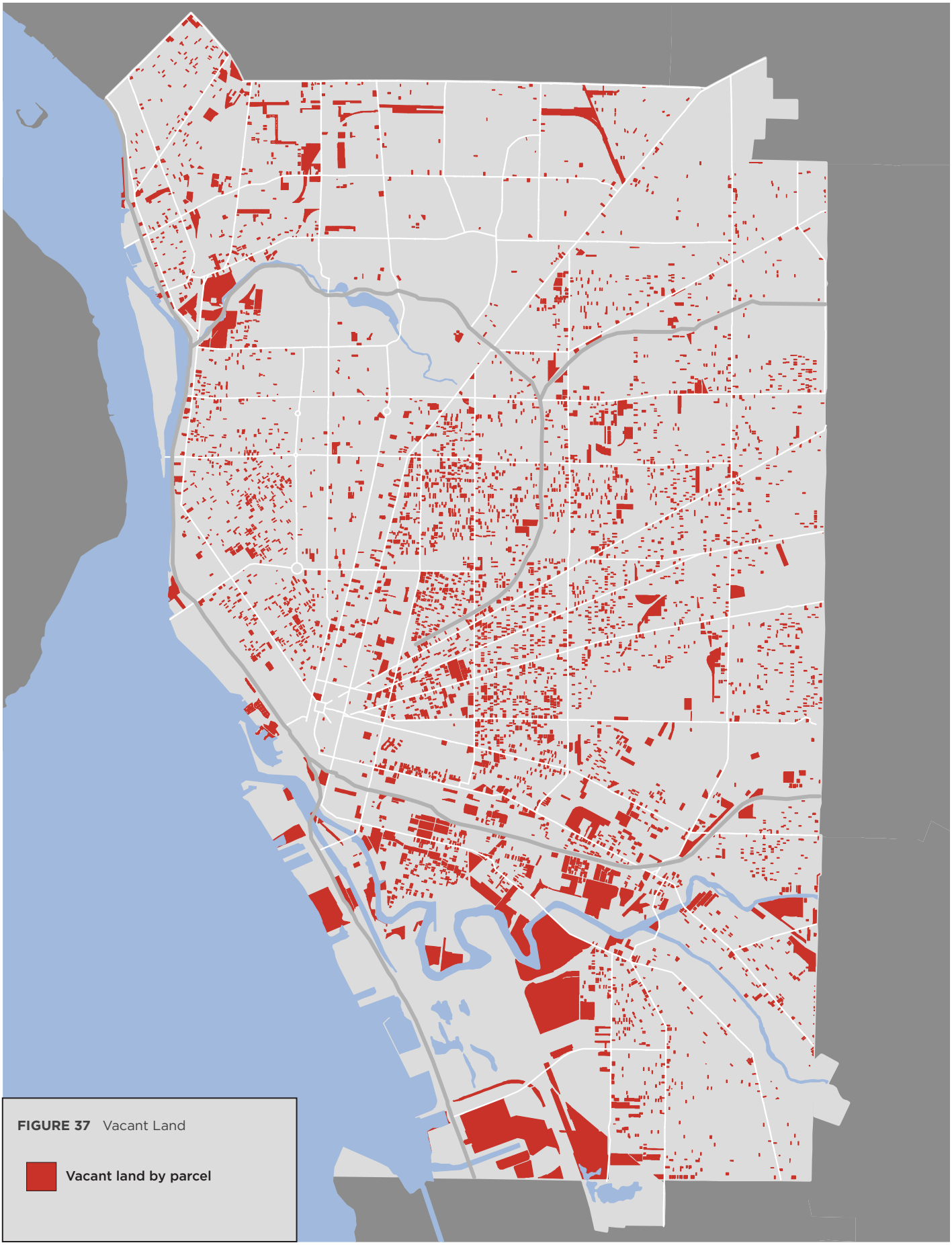


FIGURE 37 Vacant Land

FIGURE 38 A West Side home shows how infill development can cater to modern tastes while fitting in with its surroundings.

6.5 Establish interim uses for vacant land.

- Support the use of vacant land to expand parks, recreation, gardens, and habitat areas, and other innovative uses.
- Develop a typology of interim reuse strategies for vacant land, including corner gateways, cut-throughs, multiple parcel connections, split lot greening, and rain gardens, among others.
- Permit the development of community gardens on public lands, with landscaping and beauticiation standards that ensure community benefit.
- Allow pilot projects for aesthetically-pleasing constructed wetlands, forest reserves, municipal orchards, and urban agriculture within high-vacancy blocks to reduce City maintenance expenses.
- Minimize regulatory barriers to adaptive reuse of vacant properties to prevent blight and abandonment.

7 Improve transportation options

7.1 Improve street design.

- Provide sidewalks along both sides of all general access streets, with the exception of alleys.
- Maximize on-street parking and consider dedicated spaces for car-sharing initiatives.
- Strive for reasonable design speeds for general access streets that calm traffic, reduce pedestrian crossing distances, and promote efficient motor vehicle movement.
- Introduce features that have been shown to effectively improve roadway safety, such as timed pedestrian signals and curb extensions.
- Craft maximum block size standards to facilitate a connective street network, and avoid cul-de-sacs.

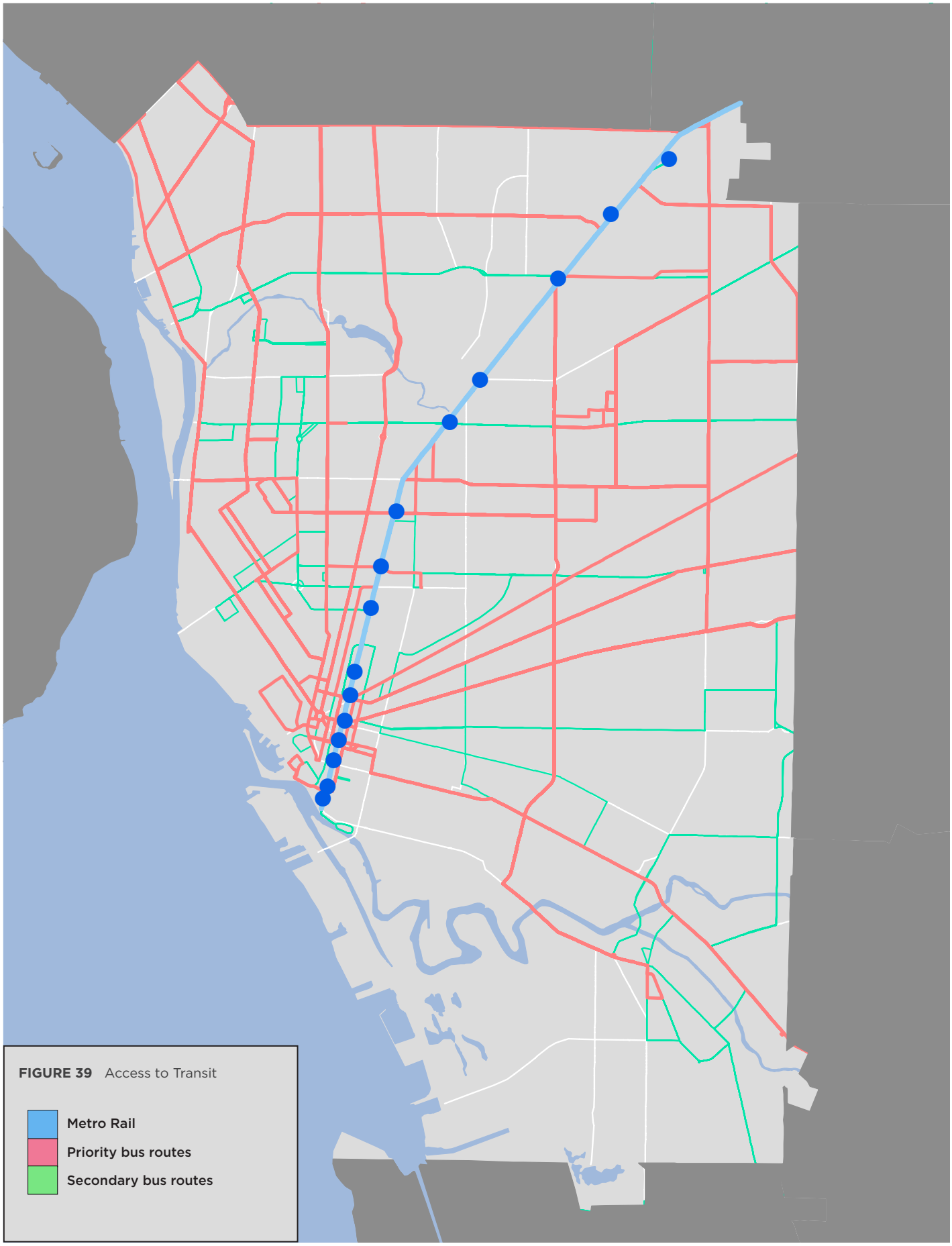


FIGURE 39 Access to Transit

FIGURE 40 Walking to school is one of the healthiest activities children can enjoy.

- Plant and maintain native shade trees along all neighborhood streets.
- Ensure street lighting of the proper scale, aesthetics, and intensity.
- Reduce the negative effects of highways on adjacent neighborhoods.

7.2 Encourage walking and cycling.

- Use road construction and reconstruction projects as opportunities to create great pedestrian environments, focusing investments around neighborhoods, employment centers, parks, and schools.
- Complement walkability investments with land use policies that encourage mixed uses within close proximity to each other.
- Furnish sidewalk widths to facilitate maximum pedestrian use, and install pedestrian ramps at all street corners.
- Plan for and implement a phased series of road diets in response to reduced traffic volumes, increasing space for pedestrians, cyclists, and tree lawns wherever possible.
- Embrace Mayor Brown's Bicycle Mobility Project by continuing to install bicycle facilities as part of routine roadway construction projects.
- Continue installation of bicycle racks in neighborhood centers through ongoing implementation of Mayor Brown's Commercial District Bicycle Rack Program.
- Encourage sidewalk cafes to enhance street activity and attract more pedestrian traffic.

FIGURE 41 Bicycle commuting in Buffalo increased by 158% from 2000 to 2009.

7.3 Promote transportation alternatives.

- Protect rail-to-trail opportunities and incorporate vacant rail corridors into greenway plans where appropriate.
- Support a robust transit system by focusing compact neighborhood development and employment density in areas with high transit accessibility.
- Revisit policies that give undue preference to automobile use at the expense of transit, such as minimum parking requirements.
- Support the NFTA's efforts to rationalize schedules and fares, increase service frequency, and create a priority bus network.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning for a sustainable environment means creating compact neighborhoods and districts that will save energy and protect the quality of air, water, and land. Natural systems become part of the solution to lessen the impacts of urban living, while protecting against the abuse of resources that threaten the city's long-term development objectives.

Parks and open spaces provide tangible economic, environmental, and social benefits. The plan will protect open space, support an accessible and integrated network of open spaces, and work to ensure that no residence is located more than a quarter-mile from an open space.

Consistent with these principles, the plan applies to areas that can support the long-term goals of both open space expansion and riparian setbacks. Principles will help conserve water as recreational, economic, and habitat resources by fitting the ecological function of locations on the water's edge, while working to expand access to the water. Stormwater and snow melt management and the emerging response to Buffalo's combined sewer overflow problem will be addressed by using vacant lands to reduce runoff into the sewer system.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: UNDER DEVELOPMENT

In order to reduce the volume and frequency of overflow events from the city's combined sewer system, the Buffalo Sewer Authority (BSA) is currently developing a Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) in accordance with the national Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Control Policy issued by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) in 1994. The LTCP identifies the necessary improvements to comply with the requirements of the Clean Water Act, including attainment of current or revised water quality standards.

The BSA is also in the midst of Consent Decree negotiations with the USEPA and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regarding the updated LTCP. The final LTCP will be a multi-million dollar, multi-year program to abate impacts of CSOs and improve water quality.

The LTCP will ultimately recommend a combination of traditional or gray infrastructure improvements, along with more innovative green infrastructure improvements. While the gray infrastructure solutions will primarily be located underground, in the right-of-ways, or on publically-owned properties, the potential green infrastructure solutions may require use of private properties such as vacant lots or brownfield sites.

The BSA is represented on the Buffalo Green Code Technical Advisory Committee. At this point it is too early in the LTCP process to be able to identify specifically how the Green Code can assist BSA's LTCP process. When the LTCP is completed next year, the city will work to incorporate comprehensive green infrastructure strategies into the zoning ordinance.

FIGURE 42 The best forested environments in cities also tend to be the most valuable.

8 Enhance natural resources

8.1 Protect and restore sensitive habitats.

- Reconnect fragmented ecosystems with linear open space systems and establish buffer requirements for protection.
- Encourage native landscaping and tree planting.
- Preserve and enhance the urban forest by providing suitable growing environments for trees; and increasing tree canopy coverage and diversity.
- Incorporate old growth tree protection and replacement-in-kind provisions into the zoning code.
- Restore the night sky by basing permissible levels of brightness on the type of place being lit.

8.2 Enhance riparian environments.

- Create controls to protect slopes, flood plains, wetlands, and coastal waters and streams from inappropriate development.
- Establish standards for maintaining stream and river banks, including the removal of overgrowth.
- Restore naturalized edges on nonworking waterfronts.
- Allow on-site and district stormwater and snow melt management practices tailored to urban context.
- Minimize impervious surfaces and allow the use of permeable pavement.
- Continue to test green infrastructure solutions, such as constructed wetlands, green streets, downspout disconnection, rain gardens, bioswales, and green

FIGURE 43 Construction to restore the wading pool of Martin Luther King Jr. Park is well underway.

and blue roofs, to minimize combined sewer overflows.

9 Reinvigorate public health

9.1 Promote active living.

- Support the scheduled, phased implementation of the Complete Streets Policy.
- Prioritize ongoing sidewalk maintenance to encourage walking, taking into special consideration the needs of the aged and the mobility-impaired.
- Support plans for Safe Routes to Schools and Safe Routes for the Elderly.

9.2 Enable healthy food production and distribution.

- Remove barriers to developing grocery stores, healthy corner stores, outdoor markets, and farmer's stands at convenient locations throughout the city, while preventing vendors from selling individual items and stolen property.
- Allow small-scale urban agriculture, with appropriate guidelines on the design of greenhouses, hoop houses, and the like.
- Allow urban agriculture in high-vacancy neighborhoods as a long-term use, with guidelines for quality design and strict standards governing safety and aesthetics.
- Allow produce sales as a temporary use with appropriate limitations on location, size, and time of operation.

10 Preserve natural, cultural, and historic resources

10.1 Protect and enhance open spaces.

- Inventory permanent open spaces in the city and create protections for them.
- Identify the typological characteristics of various open space types and reinforce these characteristics through provisions in the zoning code.

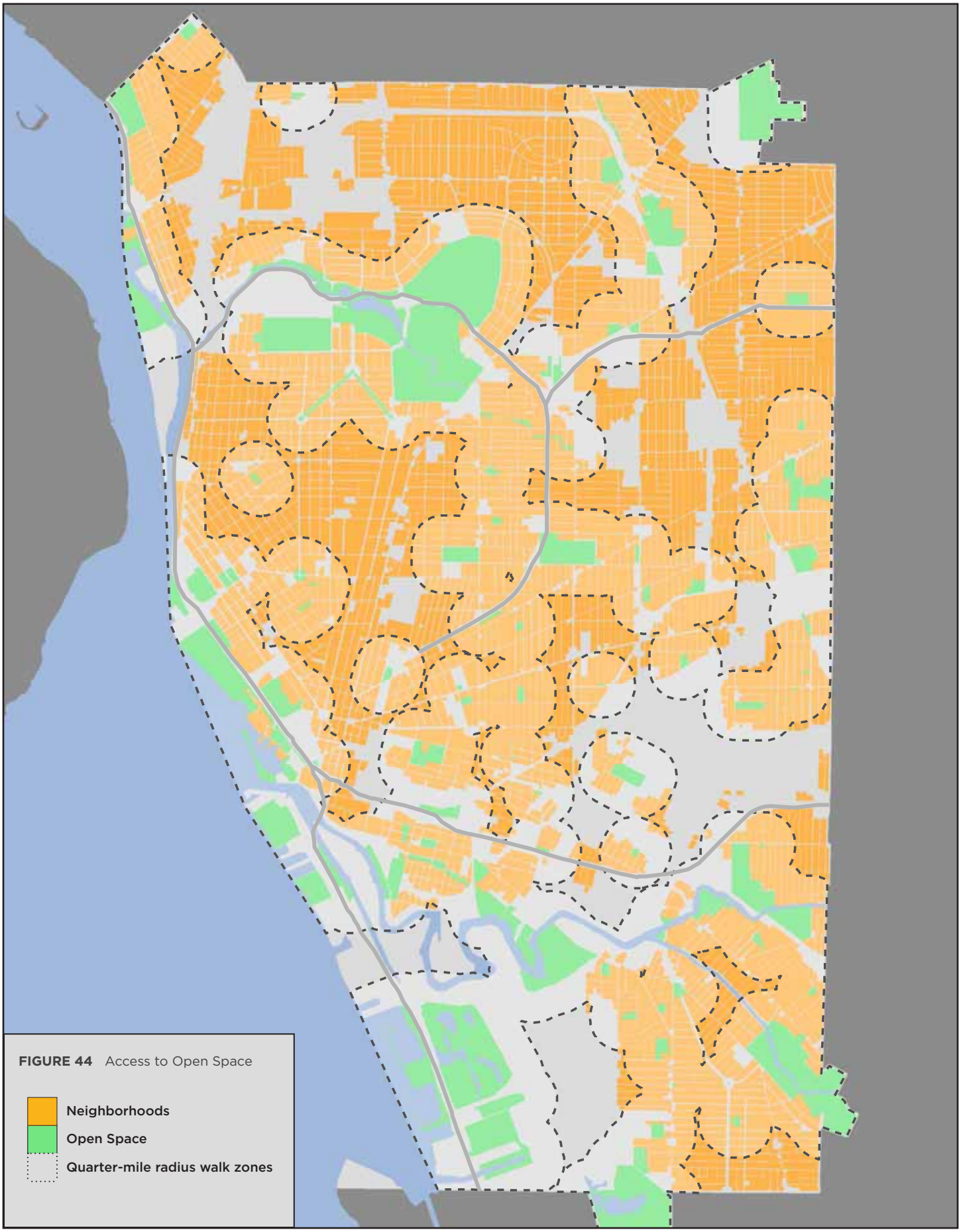


FIGURE 44 Access to Open Space

FIGURE 45 The Wilson Street Urban Farm has brought new life to an abandoned block.

- Prioritize open space investments within neighborhoods with a park or public space deficit.
- Ensure high-quality design of open spaces to promote user comfort, safety, accessibility, and year-round use; enhance the quality of place; and increase value to adjacent properties.

10.2 Support waterfront access and usage.

- Support planning initiatives for the Niagara River Greenway, Buffalo River Greenway, Black Rock Channel Greenway, the DL&W (The Del) Greenway and Outer Harbor Greenway.
- Support on-going efforts to restore the health of the city's water bodies.
- Establish a pedestrian-scaled framework of streets, blocks, and development parcels at the foot of Erie Street.
- Recognize Scajaquada Creek's ecological and recreational potential.
- Integrate the land use policy framework of the City of Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) into the zoning code.
- Consider a buffer zone along nonworking waterfronts into the zoning code to ensure public access.
- Require development to acknowledge both the water and the street as principal frontages, to avoid treating either entrance as a "back door."

10.3 Preserve cultural and historic resources.

- Reestablish lost elements of the Ellicott street network, and reserve former rights-of-way for restoration.
- Reestablish lost elements of the Olmsted park and parkway system, and reserve its borders for the highest grade of development.
- Align land use and zoning efforts with the forthcoming Buffalo Preservation Plan.

Next Steps

Much work remains to be done with respect to the Green Code. This land use plan – which is currently in draft form – takes us only half-way home. The final version will incorporate community feedback received on this draft, and tie up loose ends with respect to more clearly identifying neighborhood centers and edges, adjusting and finalizing place-types across the city, and ensuring that related factors such as transportation and environmental sustainability are more fully integrated into the document.

The most important next step, obviously, is to prepare the zoning ordinance that will implement the Green Code. Consultants will soon begin technical work on detailed codes for a variety of place-types. This work will be carried out over the next 12 months with the continued involvement of the Community Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, key stakeholders, and residents.

For now, it is important to understand that the Green Code remains a work in progress. We will continue to develop its concepts based upon community input and in relation to ongoing work on projects such as the city's Brownfield Opportunity Areas. Public review and comment on this draft will help guide our efforts on both the land use plan and zoning ordinance.

We need to understand where we are on the right track, and where adjustments are required. Please don't hesitate to share your thoughts, in any of the following ways.

- Post a comment on our web site: www.buffalogreencode.com

- E-mail a comment to: info@buffalogreencode.com

- Send a written comment to:

  Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning
  920 City Hall
  Buffalo, NY 14202

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