Queen City **Waterfront**

Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative:
A Strategic Plan for Transportation Improvements

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UNITED STATES
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Final Report for the "Buffalo
Corridor Management Plan"
(NYSDOT PIN 5756.29)
April 2007

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DEVELOPED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning

AND

The City of Buffalo Department of Public Works

DEVELOPED WITH THE CONSULTING SUPPORT OF:

The prime contractor
Wendel Duchscherer Architects and Engineers

AND

The Urban Design Project, University at Buffalo
State University of New York

WITH

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
(formerly Friends of the Buffalo Niagara River)

VOLUME I: "QUEEN CITY WATERFRONT" PREPARED BY

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Queen City Waterfront

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Vol. 6 Expanded Project Proposal – Erie Street
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Wendel Duchscherer, Architects and Engineers served as the prime contractor to the City of Buffalo for the NYSDOT Buffalo Corridor Management Plan and its related implementation campaign known locally as the Waterfront Corridor Initiative. They were lead consultant on the following report volumes in association with the Urban Design Project and the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper:

Volume 3: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
Volume 6: Expanded Project Proposal – Erie Street
Volume 7: Expanded Project Proposal – Porter Avenue

The Urban Design Project was lead consultant on the following report volumes in association with the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper and Wendel Duchscherer:

Volume 1: Queen City Waterfront
Volume 2: Waterfront Planning Inventory and Analysis
Volume 4: International Waterfront Gateway Neighborhood Improvement Program
Volume 5: Waterfront Gateway Node Description, Analysis, and Design Guidelines

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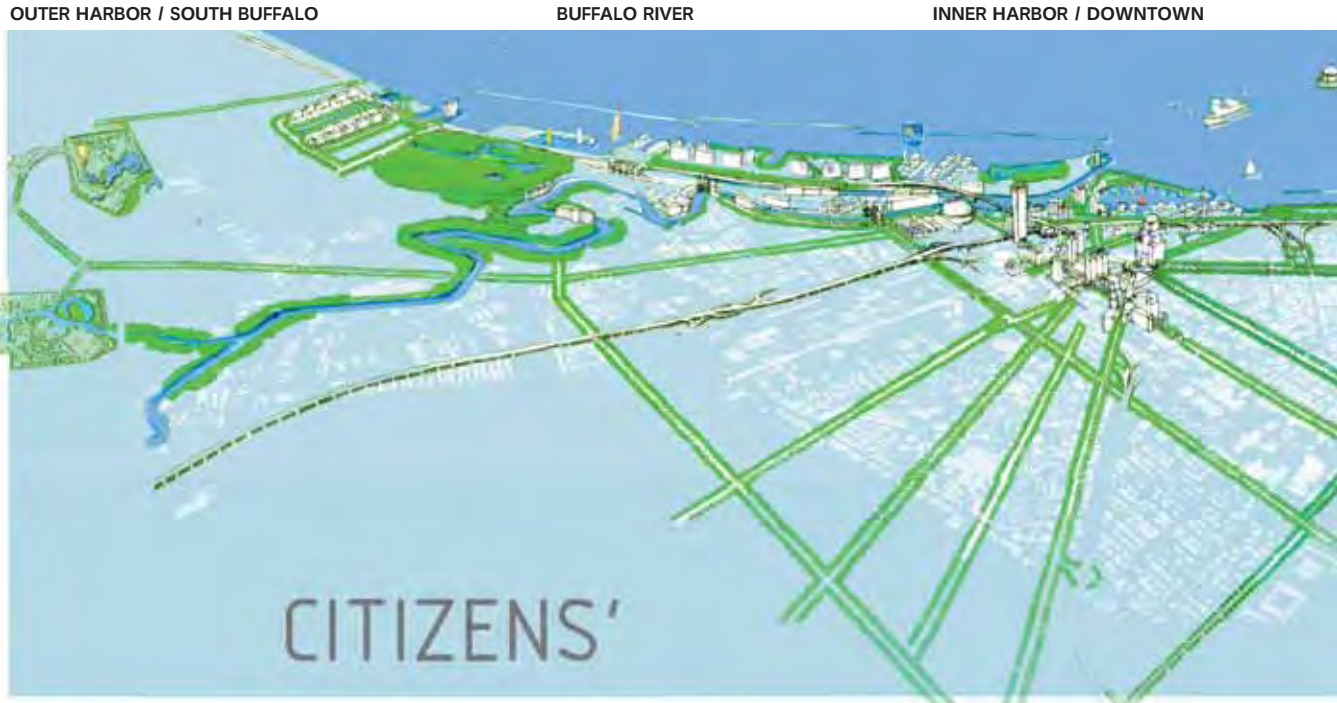
All graphics in Volume 1 that are not specifically credited are produced by the Urban Design Project.

Executive Summary



Citizens' vision of the waterfront shows a continuous greenway with tree-lined streets connecting the waterfront to the Olmsted Park and Parkway System and adjacent neighborhoods.

The *Queen City Waterfront* plan is based on a clear and simple vision that Buffalo, once a waterfront city, will be a waterfront city once again. As a community, Buffalo is committed to making its waterfronts more accessible and environmentally healthy, to reconnecting neighborhoods to our waterfronts and getting best possible economic use from them, and to improving the efficiency of our waterfront transportation corridor and making sure it serves all our other goals.

This plan is based on a great legacy of over 120 plans on over eighty sites, all aimed at achieving the great potential of our waterfronts. It incorporates detailed analytical and creative effort, the work of thousands of citizens active in planning, and dozens and dozens of durable proposals for action to improve our waterfronts developed over the past thirty years. The vision is grounded in a methodical assessment of three important bodies of work: what we have done; plans we have made; and policies we have set.

For the first time in three decades, community aspirations for healthier, more prosperous and more accessible waterfronts are supported by a draft Comprehensive Plan for Buffalo, *Queen City in the 21st Century*, in its final stages of review and approval. Even more importantly, they are supported by a proposed *City of Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program* (Volume 3), also under

final review. The foundation for the *City of Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program* (LWRP) was established, in part, by the inventory of projects (analyzed in Volume 2) influencing the strategic plan for transportation improvements, as well as by the comprehensive engagement of citizens, agencies, and other stakeholders. The robust legal framework of the LWRP can carry the hopes and dreams of Buffalonians for the transformation of its waterfront lands in concert with the transportation infrastructure.

The NYSDOT Buffalo Corridor Management Plan, known as the *Queen City Waterfront* was developed with the LWRP as a complementary implementation guide reinforcing the LWRP policies. It contains an enumeration of the projects both from our legacy of plans and out of current work that can help us move toward achieving our shared waterfront vision. The projects are organized by four categories: recent achievements, emerging projects, projects that need a push, and longer term visions. The vision for the waterfront is embodied in the full range of projects.

This report also contains more detailed work on key nodes not already strongly addressed in current planning reports. Proposals for the improvement of our *International Gateway Neighborhood Improvement Program* (Volume 4) were developed, addressing both interim

Projects identified in the inventory to be integrated into the Buffalo Corridor Management Project: *Queen City Waterfront.*

infrastructure and neighborhood improvements as well as presenting the long range vision for this important international gateway. Volume 5 includes a description and analysis of four other sites: Erie Street and Porter Avenue as primary nodes also have accompanying design guidelines, and the Virginia/Carolina/Niagara intersection and the Niagara Street/Scajaquada area as secondary nodes. *Expanded Project Proposals* volumes were developed for the primary nodes.

The *Expanded Project Proposal* volumes offer alternatives to establish Erie Street (Volume 6) as a primary physical and visual connection between downtown and the waterfront and to transform Porter Avenue (Volume 7) as part of the Olmsted Park and Parkway system from Niagara Street down to the water's edge. The Erie Street reclamation is seen as a part of the "Great Streets" program of the

An aerial view of the Buffalo Waterfront that follows the skyway across the Buffalo River. (Source: City of Buffalo)

The transportation projects identified and evaluated in the project inventory.

Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo, which was published in 2004 as part of the program of work implementing the city's comprehensive plan.

Achieving the full potential of Buffalo's waterfronts is dependent on the quality of the transportation connections from the neighborhoods to the water, such as an integrated Peace Bridge Plaza, Porter Avenue and Erie Street. It is also dependent on the reduction of negative impacts on waterfront access and development created by Interstate 190, Route 5 "Skyway," the west side rail corridor, and Fuhrmann Boulevard, all being addressed as projects at very different stages of planning.

The *Queen City Waterfront* Strategic Transportation Plan also presents a simple but powerful way for us to organize and act on our priorities for Buffalo's waterfront corridor. We must always hew to the core values of this plan outlined by the LWRP and articulated by citizens over the last thirty years. Because we know we cannot do everything all at once, we know we must finish what we have already started, build on the strength of past patterns of successful development, and make new changes visible to the public. We also know that we cannot afford to spend all of our resources in one place, and must focus our efforts strategically.

Finally, this plan suggests a framework for accounting for the implementation of priority projects selected by the community. We have built this strategy with an interagency group led by the City of Buffalo that includes local, regional, state, and federal participants who are responsible for regulating and implementing the projects. The current multi-agency cooperation on waterfront implementation includes a process of information sharing, coordination, problem solving, and mutual accountability for promised progress. It also builds on the activities of non-governmental organizations like Buffalo Place, Inc. on waterfront issues related to Downtown, and the Greater Buffalo Niagara Partnership's Waterfront Action Program for a more regional reach on waterfront development.

Buffalonians know what they want for their waterfronts. They have expressed it time and time again. The *Queen City Waterfront* expresses these aspirations through vision, policy, projects, designs, and a framework for setting priorities and managing implementation. Following this strategic plan for transportation improvements, Buffalo will be a waterfront city again.

A Community Vision: Recapturing Buffalo's Waterfront

The mouth of the Buffalo River circa 1853 illustrating its status as a great intermodal center. (Source: Courtesy of Henry Baxter)

Buffalo emerged from its waterfront and it is determined to return.

This is the simple, powerful, and incontrovertible fact that informs everything we as a community do about our waterfronts. It is the foundation beneath any plan we might make. It is the inspiration running through any vision we have for the future of our waterfronts.

Ordinarily, an action program would start with a planning process, and a planning process would start with talking about a vision. That's not necessary for Buffalo's waterfront now. We have already done that part. We have had the conversation – over and over again. We have made plans on top of plans. The vision is clear. It is time to act.

The elements of the vision are clear.

People want access to the waterfront. They want to see it, touch it, smell it and hear it. They want to put their boat or their fishing line in it. They want to jump in and swim. Residents want these things. So do all of our visitors.

People who live in waterfront neighborhoods – Riverside, Black Rock, the West Side, Lower West Side, Waterfront Village, and the Old First Ward, the Valley, and South Buffalo – want the places where they live to be better connected to the waterfront.

Buffalonians want the waterfronts to be a great international gateway. All of the public interest in a new Peace Bridge testifies to that. But the waterfront has several additional gateways to Buffalo – along Niagara Street in Riverside, from the south along the Outer Harbor, in Downtown, as well as on Porter Avenue near the Peace Bridge.

We all want the quality of the environment along Buffalo's waterfronts to improve. This includes the quality and character of lands along the waterfront as much as it means the purity of the water itself so that it is safe to swim and fish. When we arrive at the waterfront we want it to be safe and wholesome.

People want the waterfronts to contribute to the greater prosperity of the City. It always has. But while its economic role in the past was in commerce and industry, in the future it will be in recreation, tourism, and amenities for living. There is also room for water-dependent industrial and commercial development consistent with the waterfront's other values.

People enjoying the waterfront at Erie Basin Marina.

Finally, the waterfront is a vital corridor for local, regional, national, and international transportation with all of the economic value that provides. Buffalonians want to improve those functions while protecting all of the other important values of the waterfront. Transportation efficiency is an essential ingredient to the success of the waterfront even as it has been defined by the citizens as the single greatest obstacle to a better relationship between the city and the waters of the Buffalo River, Lake Erie, and the Niagara River. Achieving the full potential of the waterfront in Buffalo is dependent on the quality of the transportation connections from the neighborhoods to the water and the reduction of negative impacts on waterfront access of Interstate 190, Route 5 "Skyway," the west side rail corridor, and Fuhrmann Boulevard.

It's a beautiful, active, public waterfront.

Altogether, the community has a vision of a waterfront that is the beautiful, active, public edge of our City, continuously accessible from Riverside Park to Gallagher Beach and inland along the Buffalo River and Scajaquada Creek. It is a vision of a city in which residents go down to enjoy the water as a part of daily life, and whose neighborhoods are better off for being there.

It is a vision of a waterfront in which visitors arrive and immediately see and understand what is so special about this place. It is a vision of a waterfront that is a safe and healthy place to visit.

It is a vision of a waterfront that is an important part of our economy, providing an impetus for new development while we protect what is most valuable about it.

It is a vision of connections between our City and the world, but also between the City and the waterfronts, braided carefully to accommodate the needs of transportation and safeguard the precious resources of the waterfront.

Where did the vision come from?

How do we know that this is Buffalo's community vision for its waterfront? Just ask your friends about what they want for our waterfront. Ask your neighbors. Read in the paper what people have to say. Listen to our elected officials. They will talk about this vision.

But this is not a vision based on hearsay. The vision described here is grounded in a methodical assessment of three important bodies of work: what we have done; plans we have made; and policies we have set.

As a community, we have been expressing a clear, consistent, and powerful vision for our waterfront for decades. Every chance we have had to speak about the future of the waterfront, we talked about this vision. Every time we organized ourselves to act, we manifested this vision. By now, the vision is too obvious to be denied.

The geography of the vision encompasses a larger land area than the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program in order to accommodate the connection of the neighborhoods throughout the City to its waterfronts. By identifying key developments in this larger area, some of which are not explicitly waterfront, we are able to illustrate the interconnection of commercial and cultural life with the points of waterfront access and development potential, and to better discuss the role of transportation corridors connecting such life to the water.

The vision is already partly fulfilled.

There is an extraordinary array of projects that have actually been done over the past quarter century, and there are many more happening now. It is not very difficult to extrapolate from the positive changes we have already made to a vision for the future changes we still want to make.

The boardwalk at Gallagher Beach State Park.

The Riverwalk, Scajaquada Path, and Buffalo River Greenway, while not totally complete, have already fulfilled some of the public aspiration for direct access to the waterfronts. So have the Erie Basin Marina, the Small Boat Harbor, Gallagher Beach, and the Ontario Street boat launch.

A variety of public efforts have improved water quality in Lake Erie, cleaned up Hoyt Lake in Delaware Park, and addressed the problem of contaminants in the Buffalo River. Damaged lands have been repaired on Squaw Island and the Outer Harbor, and still-wild lands preserved at Tifft Farm, Seneca Bluffs, and Old Bailey Woods.

Ongoing redevelopment of old industrial lands on the Union Ship Canal and in the Tonawanda Corridor speak to our need to grow our economy in ways that protect our most valuable waterfront lands. Work on the Erie Canal Harbor exemplifies the ways we can redevelop our waterfront for new economy sectors in recreation, tourism, and heritage.

We have a great legacy of planning on which to draw.

There has been a massive amount of waterfront planning conducted over the past several decades. It is true that the ratio of planning to action has been too high. But the library of plans we have reviewed – 120 in all – is eloquent testimony to what Buffalonians have said – over and over again – about what they want on their waterfront.

These plans clearly demand the completion of a continuous and uninterrupted waterfront path from City line to City line, including Scajaquada Creek to Delaware Park, and the Buffalo River all the way to the West Seneca border and Cazenovia Park. Likewise, they seek the restoration of the city's parks, especially the Olmsted waterfront parks, Riverside, The Front, and South Park, along with LaSalle Park and the establishment of a new State Park on the Outer Harbor.

The planning legacy, likewise, envisions continuing work to improve housing, revitalize commercial districts, and make new direct links between neighborhoods and the waterfront. The plans also speak of new waterfront neighborhoods on the Outer Harbor and elsewhere.

There must be continuing work to clean up the Buffalo River through implementation of the Remedial Action Plan. Further work is necessary to clean up spoiled lands on the Outer Harbor and elsewhere. And the consolidation of the Buffalo River reserve suggested by Old Bailey Woods, Seneca Bluffs, and Ogden Estates should be pursued.

The vision demands that we continue work on plans to redevelop old industrial lands, where appropriate, for continued industrial use, such as the South Buffalo Redevelopment area. We can foresee new development along Niagara Street that will be appropriate to that waterfront location. Certainly the development of tourist oriented attractions at the Erie Canal Harbor, Outer Harbor, Broderick Park, and elsewhere are faithful to the vision.

The plans share the vision for a great Peace Bridge gateway – not just a wonderful bridge, but a great park and entrance to our City. There are other gateways to consider as well, in the web of connections in Black Rock to the north, and at the entrance to Downtown from the south.

Finally, the plans express the vision that transportation infrastructure must move people and goods, but also make the waterfront more accessible and protect waterfront values. Work on a new Southtowns Connector proceeds in this spirit. Proposals as big as replacing the Skyway and as small as building a new pedestrian bridge at Riverside Park are all embodied in this vision.

The Queen City Hub is a plan for downtown Buffalo that places the center of the city in the context of the region.

The vision is expressed in emerging policy.

Our collective vision for the waterfront is also visible in the emerging body of official City policy and the evolving legal framework for planning in Buffalo. The Buffalo Comprehensive Plan, The *Queen City in the 21st Century*, is the master legal document for planning in Buffalo and it puts great emphasis on the role of the waterfront in our City's revival and codifies all of the values expressed above.

The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo makes the waterfront one of three organizing principles for continuing redevelopment of Downtown, along with the Ellicott radial and grid street plans and the Olmsted parks and parkway system. Without the elaboration of new connections between Downtown and the waterfront, neither Downtown nor the waterfront can reach their fullest potential.

Finally, the draft *City of Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program* (LWRP) will tailor New York State Coastal Zone Management policies for waterfront protection and development for specific application in Buffalo. Once adopted, these will be City law governing Buffalo's entire waterfront. Both the LWRP and the downtown plan are incorporated in the new Buffalo Comprehensive Plan.

It is time to take our waterfront back.

It is often said that nothing has been accomplished to create the waterfront we all want. The frustration that people feel is certainly understandable. There is much still to be done. But it is simply not true that we have made no progress. There is much to celebrate: cleaner water, expanded access, and the beginnings of responsible efforts to take economic advantage of our waterfront resources. We should celebrate.

Likewise, it has long been popular to read that many "plans are gathering dust on a shelf" and to present this as evidence of our own incompetence, inertia, and failure. That also is inaccurate. A much more positive – and more useful – interpretation is possible. This surfeit of plans reflects our collective persistence in expressing community desires that would build on what has already been done.

Finally, there are some who would like to say we lack a vision for the waterfront. Yet, Buffalonians have repeatedly spoken, written, and drawn their vision for the waterfront. We have done it in many different venues, and in many different ways. We have even built several elements of the vision, and there is no confusion about the essential meaning of our vision. Buffalonians want our waterfront back from the non-waterfront uses, pollution, and transportation infrastructure decisions that currently deny us access.

The Queen City Waterfront represents a tested approach to organizing for action. It requires translating our clear vision and well-developed plans into immediate community priorities for implementation. Then it asks all of those who have the power to get projects done to work together, solve problems, and hold each other accountable. If we do this, we will get our waterfronts back.

the approach

Methods of Work

The *Queen City Waterfront* (Buffalo Corridor Management Plan) was a complex and diverse planning effort that included many tasks, from environmental analysis to the management of agency participation. For each task, the project team developed an approach to best accomplish the objectives. In some instances, such as the work required for the Expaned Project Proposals (EPPs) and nodal analyses, we employed traditional transportation and environmental planning methods to describe, analyze and develop alternative proposals. Yet other tasks, such as the planning legacy, used an archival methodology, and in the case of the Peace Bridge, we employed interactive computer technology along with intense design charettes to respond appropriately to the questions poised. There is a more elaborate description of the methods of these two tasks below.

The diverse approach taken to this plan also recognized the need to involve members of the public – residents, community organizations, public agencies, businesses, not-for-profits, and other stakeholders – in a continuous process of participation. This has included opportunities for citizens to learn about the work in progress, to discuss the vision and goals of waterfront planning, and to review and comment on emerging proposals. These efforts have included a series of large-scale public meetings, meetings of agency representatives, special sessions with stakeholder groups and individuals, publication of a regular newsletter, and updated web-postings. A more detailed summary of these activities follows.

The Planning Legacy

The *Queen City Waterfront's* strategic plan for transportation improvements, represents an unconventional approach to planning. A more conventional method would involve an orderly process, moving from visioning and goal setting, to project identification and alternatives evaluation, to programming and implementation. A less conventional approach is required because Buffalo has already done most of that work. We don't need to start over again; we need to affirm what has been done, fill in the pieces and carry it forward.

The current plan is the product of the Waterfront Corridor Initiative (WCI) an effort to integrate past planning work, emerging policy development, and ongoing project implementation within the framework of a coherent vision, accompanying goals, and priorities for action. The plan incorporates a careful analysis of more than 120 planning documents containing nearly 700 individual project proposals. It integrates policy content from *The City of Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, The Queen City Hub: A Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo,* and The *Queen City in the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan.* It also includes ongoing work on projects that have already been approved and funded.

The analysis of planning documents produced for Buffalo's waterfront over the past quarter century suggests a number of important conclusions:

- Many of the community's aspirations for the waterfront have already been achieved or will be achieved in the near future, and there is a strong constituency for further action.
- The community vision and goals for the waterfront are clear, coherent, and consistent based on thorough and continuing citizen participation, the manifest values of plans and projects, and explicit public policy language.
- There are a large number of viable projects, ready to go or nearly so, that can tangibly advance the cause of waterfront transformation.

Recent Achievements

A careful accounting of completed projects contradicts the common complaint that "nothing is getting done" on the waterfront. Over the course of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, many important accomplishments have been made on the waterfront:

- Water quality in Lake Erie, the Buffalo River, Scajaquada Creek, and Hoyt Lake has been improved.
- Public access has been expanded along the Riverwalk and the Scajaquada Creek Pathway and at Erie Basin Marina, Gallagher Beach, Broderick Park, Bird Island Pier, Smith Street, Squaw Island, Ontario Street, and Towpath Park.
- Natural habitats have been preserved at Tifft Farm, Smith Street, Old Bailey Woods, and Seneca Bluffs.
- Access for boaters has been expanded at the Small Boat Harbor, Erie Basin Marina, and the Ohio Street boat launch.
- Transportation facilities have been improved with projects like the removal of the Father Baker Bridge.
- Phase I of Erie Canal Harbor was complete in 2003. Phase I includes $15.5 million in improvements, including Veterans Park, relocating and repairs to the three naval vessels, and construction of the new Naval Basin.

Bird Island Pier remains one of the most successful waterfront projects in the city.

Tifft Nature Preserve was saved as a wildlife reserve in the 1970s.

The Small Boat Harbor on Lake Erie represents a success story for recreational uses of the waterfront.

Just as importantly, work on Buffalo's waterfront has generated a powerful record of citizen participation and a growing organized waterfront constituency. The Buffalo Waterfront Master Plan, the Horizons Waterfront Plan, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, and many other efforts have created a clear record of public demand for a better waterfront.

Likewise, the growth of citizen advocacy groups including the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, Southtowns Walleye Association, the North District Waterfront Advisory Committee, the League of Women Voters, the Common Council Waterfront Task Force, the Buffalo Development Council's Waterfront Action Program, the LaSalle Park Steering Committee, and many others continue to contribute to the process of defining a community waterfront vision.

Vision, Goals and Policy

There is a powerful alignment within the waterfront vision as expressed in public discussion over many years, as explicitly stated in official City policy, and in the intent of active projects for Buffalo's waterfronts. An analysis of this diverse body of evidence shows a strong convergence around six fundamental goals for continuing development of the Buffalo waterfront:

- Develop the economic strength of neighborhoods, the community, and the region;
- Extend direct access to our waterfront from Riverside to South Buffalo and everywhere in between;
- Revitalize our waterfront neighborhoods and connect them to the water;
- Protect and repair the health of our water, land, and wildlife along the waterfront;
- Create a magnificent International Gateway at and around the Peace Bridge; and
- Manage waterfront transportation resources to support these goals.

Further testimony to the consistent and long-standing support for these goals is the fact that all of the projects reviewed here support at least one, if not more, of the goals outlined. Our review of projects in eighty-eight waterfront sites revealed that:

- Seventy-two projects provide public access to the City's waterfront resources;
- Sixty-seven projects support economic development goals;
- Fifty-six projects revitalize the City's neighborhoods, connecting them to the waterfront;
- Forty-three projects protect and repair the ecological health of the waterfront areas;
- Ten projects celebrate the City's position as an International Gateway; and
- Fifty-five projects relate to the management of waterfront transportation.

Further documentation on these points is available in the following section of this report, in the summary of projects and sites below, and in the appendices of this plan.

Projects and Proposals

As noted above, more than 120 different planning and project documents were gathered from government agencies, public and university libraries, organizations, individuals, and elsewhere. Any document, from the most thorough comprehensive plan to the most rudimentary project proposal, has been included as long as it has dealt with ideas for change in the geography of the Buffalo waterfront.

These documents were reviewed, one by one, with an eye toward identifying every discrete project proposal put forward in them. Some of the documents produced only one project proposal. Others, typically the broad-scale master plans, produced dozens of proposals. In all, nearly 700 project proposals have been listed, including many projects that have been proposed repeatedly in different documents.

To make this review more manageable, these proposals were organized first by project site and then by regions of the city. There were a total of eighty-eight individual sites considered in the review organized in five regions and "transportation connections." These include:

- Transportation Connections
- Inner Harbor/Downtown
- Outer Harbor/South Buffalo
- Buffalo River
- Gateway/West Side
- Riverside/Black Rock/Scajaquada

For each site, the project team prepared an abstract summarizing the documented plans and project proposals. Each abstract (see Volume 2: Project Site Abstracts) includes a discussion of the dominant and alternate concepts proposed for each site; a comment about how the dominant concept serves City goals and policies; a brief description of public outreach and community support for each proposal; a listing of public agencies relevant to the project; an assessment of overall project feasibility; a description of the level of concept development for the proposal; and a note on any additional factors that may deserve consideration.

Five sub-areas were created to facilitate the planning of the waterfront in addition to the overall Transportation planning.

Based on the information collected in each abstract, each dominant concept proposed was assessed in terms of:

- consistency of project goals with the overall City policy;
- evidence of public involvement and support;
- evidence of agency involvement and support;
- general assessment of overall feasibility; and
- level of technical documentation.

Based on an assessment of all five factors, each project was given a provisional ranking of "A" through "D." (See Volume 2: *Waterfront Planning Inventory and Analysis* for complete analysis). This assessment is different from a priority ranking, which would attempt to determine the relative *importance* of each project, because this exercise is intended to assess the general *readiness* of each project proposal. The assessment of readiness continues to require careful technical review by agency staff and others.

The four categories of readiness are:

Recent achievements – projects that are complete or already under construction.

Current work – projects that are moving forward with clear sponsorship, funding, and support.

Emerging projects – projects that are consistent with vision and goals and are otherwise well-developed, but may need assistance in terms of funding, technical development, public consensus formation, problem solving or otherwise.

Long term work – projects that are consistent with vision and goals, but which will require longer term work.

Projects that have been proposed but are not consistent with vision, goals or policy were not included. A listing of projects by category and a brief description of each project follows in this volume in the section, "Achieving the Vision."

Peace Bridge Gateway Improvements Methodology

This plan involved the formulation of a vision for Buffalo's international gateway at the Peace Bridge. The proposed Peace Bridge and landing have been the subject of intense public debate in the city. These debates, however, have been conducted in the absence of any physical representations of what the various proposals might actually look on the ground and how they would impact the neighboring parks and communities.

After years of contention about the form and style of the proposed bridge, the City of Buffalo did have a vision for the neighborhoods abutting the bridge and plaza that would assure a grand gateway into the city, restore park land, protect neighboring property from the negative effects of bridge and plaza traffic, and provide economic as well as community development of the areas surrounding the plaza and Front Park. The implementation of this vision was, to a large extent, dependent on the decision between the United States and Canada as to whether or not there would be a shared border management strategy. If this agreement could not be reached, then there would have to be duplicate customs processes on both sides of the border with the consequential use of more land.

The Waterfront Corridor Initiative (WCI) project team was requested to develop conceptual designs for the three major alternatives – the South Plaza, the North Plaza, and the Shared Border Management Plaza, as well as to prepare a critique and alternatives to the Peace Bridge Authority's proposal for interim improvements. This work had a very tight timeframe from the City's perspective; they made their request in April 2004 and requested the alternatives within three months. This obviously influenced the methods of work.

Since 1996, Mayor Anthony Masiello had consistently argued for shared border management to minimize the footprint of the plaza and to improve the efficiency and the security of the border crossing. Yet, in the spring of 2004, there was still no shared border accord. A design inquiry into the implications of all the proposals was needed in order to argue for a shared border resolution given the uncertainty of the political context in 2004.

The Peace Bridge Plaza and Neighborhood visions were initially developed during intense charettes.

The team employed an intense urban design charette format to test alternatives. On May 11 and 12, 2004, a diverse team of professional landscape architects, planners, transportation engineers and city officials met to make major planning and design decisions within the two-day window. These decisions were later be flushed out and developed by the project team. The charette was held at the University at Buffalo's Center for Computational Research (CCR) where interactive computer technologies enabled us to develop proposals, to overlay them to scale over existing maps, and to "fly over" these areas to actually see the consequences of various actions. Comparisons could be made quickly between the various alternatives and different design strategies could be evaluated.

This task was completed by June 2004 and was instrumental in convincing many stakeholders in the City of Buffalo and Erie County of the appropriateness and benefits of the shared border strategy. When an agreement to proceed with shared border was announced by the U.S. and Canadian governments in 2004, Buffalo was already underway in planning both the interim and long term changes to its waterfront international gateway.

Stakeholder and Public Participation[1]

As useful as the analysis of the planning legacy has been for framing the community's waterfront vision, setting goals, and evaluating the merits of individual projects, ongoing and current participation by a wide range of stakeholders has also been vital to the Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative. The analysis of planning documents has provided a great deal of information about citizen aspirations over the course of several decades. Still, it has been necessary to involve stakeholders and citizens in general in the continuing conversation about matters both general and specific.

Toward that end, this project has included a wide range of participatory processes and events which are summarized below. (More details are available in Electronic Appendix D with this volume.) The goals of the participation component were:

1. To inform the public of the successes and challenges of Buffalo waterfront development over the last twenty years – outlining projects completed, ready to be done, and long range;
2. To facilitate inter-agency communication regarding current planning and design efforts, and working toward implementation;
3. To set priorities for short term and long term transportation and economic development projects on the waterfront; and
4. To gather input and comment regarding agency and stakeholder interests in upcoming projects.

Elements of the participation process included open public meetings, coordination and policy review meetings involving personnel from multiple agencies involved in waterfront work, targeted meetings, focus groups and interviews with stakeholders in waterfront nodes, newsletters, and web postings.

[1] The public participation outlined in this volume includes all of the work done specifically under contract for the Buffalo Corridor Waterfront Initiative. However, this outline does not reflect the thousands of hours of public review about waterfront issues: it does not include the series of public meetings and review cycles of material that were a part of the 120 planning documents produced by the various agencies responsible for the regulation, development and implementation of any of the historic plans and projects.

Over 150 people actively participated in the May 2003 "Buffalo Waterfront Conference.

Major Conferences and Public Events

- "State of the Waters" conference, April 6, 2002 at the Buffalo Convention Center, providing a kick-off for the Waterfront Corridor Initiative, a report on recent work and upcoming challenges, and displays of ongoing projects. Attendance: 150.
- "Buffalo Waterfront Conference," May 17, 2003 at The Pier, including presentations by area public officials, lessons from waterfront planning in Louisville, Kentucky, and an interactive workshop to help prioritize elements of the emerging waterfront plan and the identification of key nodes. Attendance: 150.
- "Buffalo Waterfront Workshop," May 15, 2004 at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, to present the draft Local Waterfront Revitalization Program for review and comment, offer Erie Street and Porter Avenue design guide and Expanded Project Proposals for review, present the draft strategic plan for transportation improvements, and review ongoing work on current projects. Attendance: 75.

Inter-Agency Meetings for Coordination and Policy Review

- Interagency review of LWRP process, proposals and policies, January 17, 2002 at the Buffalo Yacht Club, including participation by public agencies and community organizations. Attendance: 40.
- Interagency Coordination Meeting, January 7, 2004 at Buffalo City Hall, presenting plans and designs from both LWRP and WCI to impacted agencies and stakeholder groups and initiating coordination process. Attendance: 50.
- Interagency Coordination Meeting, March 8, 2004 at Buffalo City Hall, presenting updates of LWRP and WCI including emerging EPPs for Porter Avenue and Erie Street. Attendance: 40.
- Buffalo Waterfront Projects Update meeting, November 19, 2004 at Buffalo City Hall, including updates by WCI and LWRP teams to multi-agency audience and presentations by other agencies on various projects. Attendance: 47.
- Buffalo Waterfront Projects Update meeting, June 20, 2005 in the Erie County Industrial Development Agency board room, providing an update on seventeen key projects on the Outer Harbor and Inner Harbor by multiple agencies and an overview of the full seven volumes of the Queen City Waterfront. Attendance: 41.

Meetings, Focus Groups and Interviews for "Gateway Node" Proposal Development

- Erie Street gateway node stakeholder interviews, March and April 2004. More than ten interviews with key stakeholders and property owners along the Erie Street corridor.
- Erie Street proposal review meeting, April 29, 2004 at Buffalo Place Inc., to receive comment on urban design analysis and proposed guidelines. Attendance: 12.
- Porter Avenue preliminary meeting with West Side Community Collaborative, April 2004 at Niagara Branch Library, to organize for broader participation. Attendance: 6.
- Porter Avenue neighborhood meeting, May 11, 2004 at First Presbyterian Church, to present and discuss proposed design guidelines for Porter Avenue. Attendance: 10.

- Porter Avenue meeting with Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy advisory committee, May 2004 at Parkside Lodge, to present and discuss proposed design guidelines for Porter Avenue. Attendance: 20.
- Porter Avenue property owners meeting, June 9, 2004 at Chief Petty Officers' Club, Porter Avenue, to present and discuss proposed design guidelines for Porter Avenue. Attendance: 20.

Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative Newsletters

- Spring 2003, Vol. 1, Issue 1: Introduction of the WCI project, review of LWRP work ahead and review of key projects from the planning inventory.
- Summer 2003, Vol. 1, Issue 2: A review of the results of the May 2003 "State of the Waters" conference.
- Spring 2004, Vol. 2, Issue 1: Announcing May "Buffalo Waterfront Workshop" and presenting an update of work on the LWRP.

In addition, information about the Waterfront Corridor Initiative, the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, and ongoing waterfront project work was posted to the City of Buffalo waterfront website available at the link: www.city-buffalo.com.

The WCI and LWRP were often presented to the public and discussed jointly at agency meetings. The two efforts are intimately connected through a shared geography and also through their complementary roles: the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program represents policy and regulation, and the WCI frames projects and an implementation strategies. Therefore, when appropriate, meetings were coordinated with the LWRP planning efforts to reflect the relationship between the emerging policies and the transportation strategic implementation plan.

Conclusion

In an era of diminished public resources and growing disenchantment with planning processes, starting from scratch with each new planning effort is a luxury that we cannot afford. The Buffalo Corridor Management Project has demonstrated an alternative to conventional planning approaches.

The work has taken advantage of both the technical analyses and the participatory work that went into past plans, and reconstituted this legacy through continuing agency review and public participation. The approach understands this plan not as a new attempt to succeed where others have failed, but as a continuation and an upgrade of an iterative and interconnected process of planning, action, and evaluation leading to revised plans as well as strategic project implementation.

By building this plan on the foundation of more than a quarter century of concerted planning efforts for Buffalo's waterfronts, we have anchored it to the long term and deeply-felt aspirations of the community. At the same time, this project has worked hard to renew the vision, goals, and project priorities of the community through conscientious public participation. Finally, the plan uses the transportation corridor as its basic unit of analysis, explicitly recognizing the strengths and limitations of present corridor management and the array of projects required to better balance the transportation needs of the region and community with local waterfront revitalization.

The Policy Framework: Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

The City of Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) is the official policy framework for planning along the waterfronts of the Queen City. It applies federal coastal zone management policies that are tailored to local needs and circumstances through a state-administered coastal management program. When approved by the Mayor, adopted by Common Council and accepted by the Department of State, the LWRP will be the authoritative policy framework for Buffalo's waterfront development and preservation.

The boundaries of the LWRP and Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative are similar, but the transportation corridor requires a larger area to address the adjoining network of local roads.

Background

The State of New York coastal management program already provides for the administration of waterfront areas according to a generic set of thirteen policies aimed at enhancing the character of waterfront communities, promoting appropriate economic development, protecting and restoring natural resources, protecting and improving environmental quality, and promoting use of waterfronts and protecting cultural resources there. (See Volume 3 for the final draft of the *City of Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.*)

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program allows the City of Buffalo to tailor those broad policies to respond to specific circumstances and meet local needs in the coastal zone along the Niagara River, Lake Erie shoreline, Scajaquada Creek, Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek. These policies will provide the framework for an action strategy to help make the City's vision for the waterfront a reality. This action strategy will include proposals for changes in land use, revisions to municipal zoning, prioritization of capital projects for waterfront improvement, and a comprehensive listing of public and private actions required to implement the strategy.

The LWRP was developed by the City of Buffalo with the assistance of outside planning consultants and in close collaboration with waterfront communities, stakeholders and citizens-at-large. It was based on a careful analysis of existing land use and zoning, cultural and historic resources, water quality, natural resources, other environmental constraints, public access and recreational opportunities, concerns about flooding and erosion, and navigational requirements along Buffalo's waterfronts.

This analysis has helped identify specific opportunities or areas of concern on the waterfront, with an emphasis on identifying abandoned or underutilized areas that need revitalization, and assessing where and how we can improve the connections between land and water. This analysis attempted to balance proposals for land use with protection of natural resources and always to emphasize the promotion of land uses on or near the water to be "water-dependent uses."

Benefits of an LWRP

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program provides an array of benefits for local sponsors. In the case of Buffalo, it will provide the City greater control over state and federal actions proposed along the waterfront and better coordination with those agencies. It will increase Buffalo's ability to attract development along the waterfront and assure that this development is appropriate to the waterfront location.

The LWRP will also improve Buffalo's chances for winning both public and private grant funding for waterfront projects. Funders usually want to know that their resources are being directed according to a larger planning framework. Overall, the LWRP will promote changes in the Buffalo waterfront that will help revitalize it and improve community and environmental quality of life.

Policies

The LWRP includes a comprehensive and detailed set of policies, policy rationales and policy standards specifically tailored to local circumstances along Buffalo's waterfronts. These begin with the generic policies stipulated by federal and state governments but extend into far greater detail as they are applied to the Buffalo local waterfront revitalization area. A full understanding and appreciation of the depth of policies and policy standards requires a close of the LWRP itself (See Volume 4). What follows is a brief summary of the policies with highlights of what each one will mean for Buffalo's waterfronts.

Policies for the Developed Waterfront

1. *Foster a pattern of development in the coastal area that enhances community character, preserves open space, makes efficient use of infrastructure, makes beneficial use of a coastal location, and minimizes adverse effects of development.* For Buffalo, this means to:

   - Concentrate development and redevelopment in order to revitalize deteriorated and underutilized areas of the waterfront, and strengthen and prioritize the traditional waterfront focus of these areas.
   - Ensure that development or land uses make beneficial use of their coastal location, promoting water-dependent and water-enhanced uses.
   - Maintain and enhance natural areas, recreational areas, and open space.
   - Minimize the potential adverse environmental, land use, or economic impacts of development and redevelopment through zoning revisions, enforcement, and other appropriate measures.
   - Protect and strengthen the quality of life in waterfront residential areas including Riverside and Black Rock, sections of Front Park, and the Seneca Babcock neighborhood.
   - Develop and adopt a waterfront transportation plan that addresses local access, as well as access to Canada.
   - Lend focus to the waterfront as an International Gateway.

2. *Preserve historic resources*, including efforts to:
   - Maximize preservation and retention of historic resources in general, using the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification, Restoration and Rehabilitation as a guide.
   - Protect and preserve archaeological resources in the vicinity of the inner harbor, along the Buffalo River, and in other areas of the waterfront.
   - Protect and enhance resources that are significant to the coastal culture and maritime, industrial, and political history reflected in Buffalo's harbor, grain elevators, Erie Canal, and Underground Railroad sites.
   - Protect and promote historic shipwrecks in the waters off the Buffalo waterfront.
   - Preserve and enhance historic lighthouses and other navigational structures situated in the Buffalo Harbor.
3. *Enhance visual quality and protect outstanding scenic resources,* including measures to:
   - Protect, enhance and improve visual quality throughout the local waterfront revitalization area.
   - Identify and protect aesthetic values associated with recognized areas of high scenic quality.
   - Protect the aesthetic quality of locally recognized scenic areas.

Policies for the Natural Waterfront

4. *Minimize loss of life, structures, and natural resources from flooding and erosion*, including measures to:
   - Minimize the loss of human life and structures from flooding and erosion hazards.
   - Protect public lands and public trust lands and the use of these lands when undertaking all erosion or flood control projects.
   - Manage navigation infrastructure to limit adverse impacts on coastal processes.
   - Expend public funds for the management or control of flooding or erosion hazards only in areas of the waterfront that will result in a proportionate public benefit.
5. *Protect and improve water resources,* including measures to:
   - Prohibit direct discharges that would cause or contribute to the contravention of water quality standards and targets in local surface waters.
   - Minimize non-point source pollution of coastal waters and manage activities causing non-point source pollution.
   - Protect and enhance the quality of surface waters in Buffalo.
   - Protect and conserve the quality and quantity of potable water.
   - Support efforts to develop a common system for the management of the use, withdrawal, and diversion of water from the Great Lakes basin.

6. *Protect and restore ecological resources, including significant fish and wildlife habitats, wetlands, and rare ecological communities,* including measures to:

- Protect State-designated Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats.
- Support and manage the restoration of significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats, wherever possible, so as to foster their continued existence as natural, self-regulating systems.
- Protect and develop areas as locally significant fish and wildlife refuges and/or habitats, where appropriate, including portions of the Buffalo River, Scajaquada Creek and Hoyt Lake, northern Squaw Island, the Ogden Estate Property, and lands connecting the Tifft Nature Preserve with the Buffalo River.
- Protect, restore, and create freshwater wetlands in appropriate areas, including Seneca Bluffs, Ogden Estates, and Times Beach.
- Manage harbor operations, including vessel speed limits and no wake zones, to protect ecological resources from disturbance.
- Limit bank disturbance and dredging and filling activities, particularly along the Buffalo River.
- Manage dredging of designated navigation channels in the Buffalo Harbor area in a manner consistent with the protection of significant fish and wildlife habitats and other important resources.
- Support the remediation, to the greatest extent possible, of contaminated Buffalo River, Niagara River, Scajaquada Creek and Hoyt Lake bottom sediments as per the Buffalo and Niagara River Remedial Action Plans.
- Remediate inactive hazardous waste sites, particularly in Sub-Areas 3 and 4, which adversely impact significant environmental resources, water quality, or important habitat areas.
- Encourage community awareness and stewardship of natural resources along the waterfronts through citizen work and public education.
- Prohibit purchase by the City of Buffalo products containing, in whole or in part, wood from tropical or temperate rainforests excepting those woods that are proven to have been harvested in an environmentally sound manner as certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

7. *Protect and improve air quality*, including measures to:

- Control or abate existing and prevent new air pollution.
- Limit discharges of atmospheric radioactive material to a level that is as low as practicable.
- Capture and recycle chlorofluorocarbon compounds during service and repair of air conditioning and refrigeration units to the greatest extent possible.
- Limit sources and remediate the impacts of the atmospheric deposition of pollutants to Lake Erie and the Niagara River, particularly from nitrogen sources.

8. *Minimize environmental degradation from solid waste and hazardous substances and wastes,* including measures to:

- Encourage the management of solid waste to protect public health and control pollution.
- Manage hazardous wastes to protect public health and control pollution.
- Protect the environment from degradation due to toxic pollutants and substances hazardous to the environment.
- Prevent and remediate the discharge of petroleum products.

- Transport solid waste and hazardous substances and waste using routes that protect the safety, well-being, and general welfare of the public and the environmental resources of the State, and using methods that provide for the continued use of all transportation corridors, highways and facilities.
- Prohibit waterfront siting of solid and hazardous waste facilities, including automobile scrap facilities, transfer stations, and concrete recycling facilities, as inappropriate uses for the waterfront and phase out such facilities as already exist when possible.

Policies for the Public Waterfront

9. *Improve public access to and use of public lands and waters,* including measures to:

- Promote appropriate physical public access and recreation throughout the waterfront areas.
- Provide public visual access to waterfront lands and waters at all sites, where practical.
- Preserve public interest in and use of lands and waters held in public trust by the State.
- Assure public access along public trust lands above the line of mean low water mark.
- Provide access and recreation that is compatible with natural resource values.
- Where feasible, establish and maintain ownership of the waterfront to ensure public use and access.
- Where feasible, utilize conservation easements to provide public access and greenway trail development along the waterfront.

Policies for the Working Waterfront

10. *Protect existing water-dependent uses, promote the siting of new water-dependent uses in suitable locations, and support efficient harbor operation,* including measures to:

- Protect and improve the economic vitality of water-dependent uses along the City of Buffalo waterfronts, including marinas, transshipment facilities, water and wastewater treatment plants, and other land uses that require a waterfront location to effectively operate.
- Promote the siting of new water-dependent uses at suitable locations and provide for their safe operation.
- Protect and improve the economic viability of water-dependent uses.
- Allow water-enhanced uses that complement or improve the viability of water-dependent uses.
- Promote the efficient management of surface waters and underwater lands.
- Support efficient harbor operations.
- Enhance the City's waterfront as a quality of life amenity to attract potential businesses, laborers, and visitors to the City and region.

11. *Promote the sustainable use of fish and wildlife resources,* including measures to:

- Ensure the long term maintenance and health of living marine resources in Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and the Buffalo River.
- Provide for commercial and recreational use of Lake Erie and Niagara River fisheries.

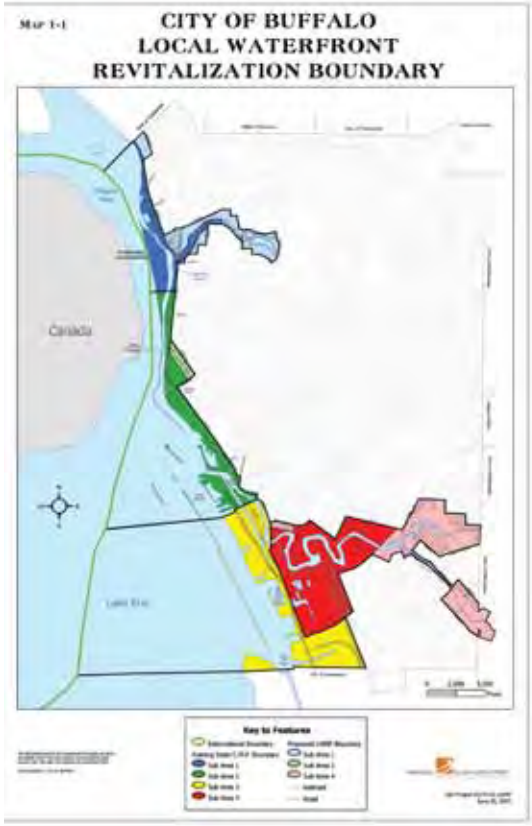
12. *Protect existing agricultural lands* – not applicable to Buffalo.

13. *Promote appropriate use and development of energy and mineral resources*, including measures to:

- Conserve energy resources in transportation, building design and construction, landscaping, and recycling.
- Promote alternative energy sources that are self-sustaining, including solar and wind powered energy generation.
- Do not site energy generating and transmission facilities along the Buffalo waterfront that utilize non-renewable resources because they are considered inappropriate uses that would not provide significant public benefit.
- Minimize adverse impacts from above ground and underground fuel storage facilities, particularly in Sub-Area 3 and along the Buffalo River corridor in Sub-Area 4.
- Prohibit commercial mining and other mineral or gravel extraction activities as inappropriate uses for the Buffalo waterfront.
- Conduct ice management practices that do not interfere with infrastructure systems, impair significant fish and wildlife and their habitats or increase shoreline erosion or flooding.
- Discourage development of energy resources on the outer continental shelf in Lake Erie.

Land Use by Sub-Area

The LWRP for the Buffalo waterfront also provides a broad framework for revitalization and restoration of waterfront lands through an overall proposal for appropriate land uses consistent with the policies of the LWRP as well as with the goals for the *Queen City Waterfront*. Ultimately, this proposal will be translated into land use and zoning maps to govern ongoing development in the LWRP. This section provides a brief overview of that proposal.



The sub-areas used for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program helped structure the City's plan. (Source: Wendell Duchscherer)

SUB-AREA 1: Riverside, Black Rock, Squaw Island North, and Scajaquada Creek

This area of the LWRP now has a mix of commercial and residential land uses, including water-dependent marine-oriented commercial uses, with some important areas of parkland and cultural uses and a large area of industrial and former industrial uses. Proposals for continued and new land uses include:

- Keep mix of neighborhood commercial and residential uses along the east side of Niagara Street.
- Water-dependent and marine commercial uses should be continued and expanded, where appropriate, along the waterfront, west of the Interstate 190 and Niagara Street.

- Consider existing residential building on the waterfront for multiple-use, with commercial and neighborhood retail and service uses on the ground level.
- Keep mix of neighborhood commercial and residential uses on Amherst Street.
- Revitalize old industrial lands in Tonawanda Street industrial corridor and south of Scajaquada Creek by improving existing infrastructure and aesthetics and creating a fifty foot riparian buffer along the creek.
- Protect, preserve and enhance Olmsted-designed Riverside Park and Delaware Park.
- Reserve land at mouth of Scajaquada Creek to complement the Scajaquada Pathway.
- Promote conversion of the Scajaquada Expressway to boulevard or parkway as consistent with these proposals.
- Keep wastewater treatment plant on Squaw Island as a water-dependent use.
- Redevelop north end of Squaw Island as a public park.
- Reestablish northern tip of Squaw Island as a protected wildlife habitat.
- Connect Squaw Island Park with Broderick Park by public pathway.
- Continue exploration of means to mitigate negative impacts of highway infrastructure on neighborhoods and to reconnect residential areas to the water.

SUB-AREA 2: West Side, Peace Bridge Gateway, Lower Niagara Street, Downtown and Northern Outer Harbor

This area has an extraordinary variety of land uses including mixed commercial and light industrial along upper Niagara Street, residential near the Peace Bridge, important park lands, waterfront residential, and significant vacant lands on the northern Outer Harbor. Proposals for continued and new land uses include:

- Keep mix of commercial and light industrial uses along Niagara Street, from Forest Avenue to the Peace Bridge.
- Take advantage of historic brick building stock for light industrial, office and loft residential uses.
- Improve the aesthetic quality of this area to compensate for limited opportunities for immediate water-side development.
- Take advantage of views of the Niagara River, Squaw Island and Canada.
- Improve streetscape to enhance this neighborhood and increase its value as a segment of the New York State Seaway Trail.
- Improve Riverwalk multi-use pathway system to facilitate better public access to the waterfront and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Redevelop the Peace Bridge Plaza as an international gateway with shared border management and minimum negative impact on surrounding community from demolitions, truck traffic or other nuisances.
- Revitalize the gateway area adjacent to the Peace Bridge Plaza through reinvestments in Front Park and LaSalle Park.
- Revise Porter Avenue as an Olmstedian boulevard connecting the park and parkway system to the waterfront.

- Reinforce residential areas with infill and rehabilitated housing.
- Promote new and refurbished water-related uses at Cotter Point including the West Side Rowing Club, Buffalo Yacht Club, Buffalo State College waterfront campus, and the Great Lakes Research Center.
- Restore the landscape connection across Interstate 190 from The Front to Cotter Point and LaSalle Park.
- Maintain and expand mixed-use and residential uses in the Waterfront Village/Erie Basin Marina area.
- Realign and re-establish Erie Street as a direct radial connection from Downtown to the waterfront.
- Develop new mixed-use commercial office, residential, and retail uses along a redeveloping Erie Street – in effect, extend Downtown toward the water-front.
- Establish a setback of fifty feet along the Buffalo River and from the Erie Basin Marina to the Inner Harbor and beyond.
- Establish tourism, heritage, recreation, and maritime uses at the Erie Canal Harbor, Veterans Park, and Naval and Servicemen's Park projects.
- Improve boat, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access to the Inner Harbor developments.
- Promote mixed-use commercial, retail, and office uses to complement visitor-oriented uses in this area and create a public space and public "edge" to the Downtown.
- Redevelop shoreline areas south and east of the Erie Canal Harbor as mixed-use commercial and residential areas.
- Preserve and reuse the DL&W terminal building and promote redevelopment and reuse in the Cobblestone Historic Preservation District.
- Maintain General Mills and other commercial and light industrial activities on Kelly Island as important water-dependent industrial uses.
- Zone Kelly Island to shift emphasis from heavy industrial uses to marine commercial and marine industrial uses.
- Relocate the U.S. Coast Guard Station at the mouth of the Buffalo River fur-ther upstream or southward to the Outer Harbor, and redevelop the origi-nal site in support of increased public access to the historic Buffalo Lighthouse.
- Redevelop Seaway Piers area with marine commercial uses and support facilities.
- Provide a pedestrian and multi-use bridge connection from the Inner Harbor and Erie Street to the Outer Harbor as consistent with safe and efficient passage of recreational and commercial vessels along the Buffalo River.

SUB-AREA 3:
Southern Outer Harbor, Kelly Island and the Union Ship Canal Area

With the exception of Gallagher Beach and the NFTA Small Boat Harbor and a scattering of private marinas and industrial uses, much of this sub-area includes former industrial lands left underused and abandoned. However, the potential for revitalization and redevelopment in this area of the waterfront is very substantial. Proposals for continued and new land uses include:

- Promote water-dependent marine commercial and light industrial uses along Kelly Island and the western shoreline of the Buffalo Ship Canal.
- Rebuild the Michigan Avenue Bridge to reestablish vehicular access to the Outer Harbor.

- Allow mixed-use development of the 120-acre NFTA-owned Outer Harbor site including housing, entertainment, and tourism uses, making sure to provide public access and greenspace along the water's edge.
- Promote establishment of a new state park on the Outer Harbor to support expansion of marine recreational and other water-related activities.
- Connect these uses to the Inner Harbor and Downtown via the Greenway Trail System.
- Promote commercial and light industrial uses on environmentally remediated lands along the Union Ship Canal.
- Connect Union Ship Canal redevelopments to the overall Greenway Trail System.

SUB-AREA 4: The Buffalo River Corridor

The Buffalo River Corridor includes a range of land uses along the winding watercourse, including long-established residential neighborhoods such as the Old First Ward, The Valley, Kaisertown, South Buffalo and others; a range of active and inactive industrial operations; a large ensemble of concrete grain elevators; extensive vacant and environmentally damaged former industrial lands; and natural areas immediately adjacent to the river itself. Proposals for continued and new land uses include:

- Emphasize land uses that will support protection and restoration of natural resources and water quality.
- Develop new uses along the river, respecting a twenty-five foot open space corridor along the shore.
- Restore important wetlands areas and maintain the natural shoreline.
- Promote transition from heavy industry to cleaner light manufacturing and warehouse uses on reclaimed brownfield sites.
- Maintain the Old First Ward and other residential neighborhoods as stable residential areas enhanced by commercial and residential uses along the river shore.
- Redevelop the Katherine Street peninsula and adjacent areas with a mix of marine and light industrial uses and residential where appropriate.
- Preserve lands on the Concrete Central peninsula as open space and incorporate this area as part of the Tifft Farm Nature Preserve.
- Maintain and improve the county-owned Smith Street waterfront access point for passive recreational use and possible small-craft river access.
- Maintain the contaminated area east of the Smith Street site as open space.
- Promote the former LTV/Republic Steel site for light manufacturing activities, replacing the legacy of heavy industrial uses that previously were dominant.
- Prepare for a long term phase out of the Mobil Oil facility and provide for less intensive uses, obviating the need for dredging upriver and allowing the waterway to recover from years of pollution.
- Use shoreline properties around the Bailey Avenue Bridge crossing for parks and passive recreation.
- Maintain residential and mixed commercial uses in neighborhoods beyond Bailey Avenue along Stachowski Park, Cazenovia Park, and Seneca Street.
- Preserve shore lands in the Seneca Bluffs area as a natural habitat.

Achieving the Vision: Projects in the Buffalo Waterfront Corridor[1]

Elements of the Vision

The community vision for Buffalo's waterfronts will be achieved step by step, one project at a time. The policy framework for the waterfront is being put in place in the same manner, step by step. This section describes many of the discrete steps in that process by identifying and detailing individual projects that have been proposed, planned and, in many cases, fully implemented on Buffalo's waterfronts.

As described in the Approach section, this accounting of projects has been derived from a careful review and analysis of more than a quarter century of planning work for the Buffalo waterfront. Described below are the projects that have been persistently proposed as critical to the appropriate development of the waterfront and which, according to current analysis, are consistent with the vision, goals and policy framework that have emerged.

The waterfront projects are organized into four categories according to their status:

- **Recent achievements** are projects that have been completed, or in some cases, are currently under construction. It is important to acknowledge the many achievements that have already been made.
- **Current work** contains projects that have a defined concept, public support, clear agency leadership, and are moving toward funding and construction.
- **Emerging projects** are consistent with vision, goals and policy and have strong public support, but are not yet ready to move forward.
- **Longer term visions** includes projects that are consistent with vision, goals, and policy but which require much more work, both technical and procedural, before they can become viable projects. This category also includes important waterfront sites for which no clear concept has yet been put forward but which clearly merit attention for the broader benefit of the waterfront.

This kind of categorization of projects can be useful in the community-wide process of priority-setting. The final section in this plan suggests a framework for making decisions about priorities. In brief, it advises that we finish what we start; build from strength; make change visible; hew to core values; and avoid spending all of our available money in one place. These principles won't make our decisions for us, but they can be a guide for implementation that will proceed in a reasonably orderly, predictable, and transparent fashion.

[1] Abstracted from Volume 2.

Elements of the Vision

	Recent Achievements	Current Work
Inner Harbor/ Downtown	• Erie Basin Marina & Waterfront Village Development • Naval Park Relocation	• Erie Canal Harbor Development • Foot of Main Street Development • War Memorial Auditorium Reuse • Buffalo Inter-modal Transportation Center • Inner Harbor Greenway
Outer Harbor/ South Buffalo	• Lighthouse Preservation & Promenade • Small Boat Harbor • Tifft Nature Preserve • Gallagher Beach Phase I • Riverwalk Greenway, most segments	• Union Ship Canal Redevelopment • Times Beach Nature Preserve Expansion • Gallagher Beach Phase II • Southtowns Connector • Outer Harbor Greenway
Buffalo River	• Buffalo River Greenway • 100' Setback Adopted • Old Bailey Woods Park Designation • Seneca Bluff's Habitat Restoration • Smith Street Habitat Restoration • Ohio Street Habitat Restoration • Confluence Point Habitat Restoration • Stachowski Park Improvements	• Cazenovia Park Redevelopment • South Park Restoration • Ogden Estates • Buffalo River Sediment Remediation • BSA Combined Sewer Overflow Remediation
Gateway/ West Side	• Broderick Park Improvements • Bird Island/Nowak Pier Construction • Lakeview/Hope VI Housing Redevelopment • Lower Niagara Street Tops • Riverwalk Greenway, most segments	• Peace Bridge Improvements • Great Lakes Center • Frank Lloyd Wright Boathouse
Black Rock/Riverside/ Scajaquada	• George Washington Park/ Niagara Street Reconstruction • Ontario St. Boat Launch & Cornelius Creek Park • Harbour Place • Towpath Park (Phase I) • North Squaw Island Park (Designation & Remediation) • Scajaquada Pathway (Phases I & II from River to Elmwood Avenue) • Riverwalk Greenway, most segments • Riverwalk Greenway, most segments	• Tonawanda Street Industrial Corridor Redevelopment • Towpath Park (Phase II) • Scajaquada Pathway (Phase III) • Scajaquada Corridor Study • Richmond Avenue

	Emerging Projects	Long term Vision
Inner Harbor/ Downtown	• Erie Basin/Waterfront Village Build Out • Erie Street Redesign • Downtown-Outer Harbor Water Taxi • West of City Hall • Gateway Bridge	• Cobblestone District Development • City Ship Canal Redevelopment • Kelly Island Redevelopment • Niagara Thruway Mitigation Downtown • Michigan Street Lift Bridge • Inner Harbor Transit Improvements
Outer Harbor/ South Buffalo	• OPUS Master plan – Seaway Piers Development – North Outer Harbor Development – Bell Slip Development	• Outer Harbor Point Tourist Facility Development • South Outer Harbor Industrial Development • Small Boat Harbor Expansion • Cargill Pool/South Marina Development • Independent Cement Commercial Development • Tifft Nature Preserve Expansion • Hopkins Street Redevelopment • South Buffalo Landfill Golf Course Development • South Buffalo Greenway, South Park to Outer Harbor • Offshore Areas
Buffalo River	• Seneca St Business District • Buffalo River Greenway – Grain Elevator Preservation – Industrial Heritage Trail – Multi-Use Trail Development – Creation of Greenway Park – Smith Street Entrance	• Buffalo River Watershed Management Plan • Katherine Street Peninsula Redevelopment • Republic Steel/LTV Industrial Redevelopment • Concrete Central Peninsula • Old First Ward • The Valley Community
Gateway/ West Side	• Broderick Park Completion • Front Park Restoration • LaSalle Park Restoration • Lower Niagara Street Revitalization • Massachusetts Avenue Project • Connecticut Street Revitalization • Porter Avenue Streetscape Improvements • Broderick to N. Squaw Island Park Trail	• Grant/Ferry International Marketplace Revitalization • Virginia-Carolina Exchange Redesign • Lower West Side Redevelopment and Traffic Calming • Lower West Side Trail Connections • Mid-Niagara Street Redevelopment
Black Rock/Riverside/ Scajaquada	• Delaware Park Master Plan • H.H. Richardson Renovation • Scajaquada Expressway Redesign • Scajaquada Creek Cleanup • Riverside Park	• Harbour Place – Further Development • Niagara Street – Revitalization North of Forest • Tonawanda/Ontario Commercial District Revitalization • Canal Locks – Mixed-Use and Public Access Development • Niagara Thruway Relocation in Riverside

Transportation Projects in the Vision

	Recent Achievements	Current Work
Inner Harbor/ Downtown		• Buffalo Inter-Modal Transportation Center • Inner Harbor Greenway
Outer Harbor/ South Buffalo	• Riverwalk Greenway, most segments	• Southtowns Connector • Outer Harbor Greenway
Buffalo River	• Buffalo River Greenway • 100' Setback Adopted • Old Bailey Woods Park Designation • Seneca Bluffs Habitat Restoration • Smith Street Habitat Restoration • Ohio Street Habitat Restoration • Confluence Point Habitat Restoration	
Gateway/ West Side	• Riverwalk Greenway, most segments	• Peace Bridge Improvements
Black Rock/Riverside/ Scajaquada	• Riverwalk Greenway, most segments • George Washington Park/ Niagara Street Reconstruction • Ontario St. Boat Launch and Cornelius Creek Park • Scajaquada Pathway (Phases I & II from River to Elmwood Avenue)	• Tonawanda Street Industrial Corridor Redevelopment • Scajaquada Pathway (Phase III) • Scajaquada Corridor Study

	Emerging Projects	Long term Vision
Inner Harbor/ Downtown	• Erie Street Redesign • Downtown-Outer Harbor Water Taxi • Gateway Bridge	• Niagara Thruway Mitigation Downtown • Inner Harbor Transit Improvements
Outer Harbor/ South Buffalo		• South Buffalo Greenway, South Park to Outer Harbor
Buffalo River	• Buffalo River Greenway – Grain Elevator Preservation – Industrial Heritage Trail – Trail Development – Creation of Greenway Park – Smith Street Entrance	• Virginia-Carolina Exchange Redesign • Lower West Side Redevelopment and Traffic Calming • Lower West Side Trail Connections • Niagara Thruway Relocation in Riverside
Gateway/ West Side	• Broderick to N. Squaw Island Park Trail • Porter Avenue Streetscape Improvements	
Black Rock/Riverside/ Scajaquada	• Scajaquada Expressway Redesign	

The project descriptions that follow are organized into six categories: (1) transportation connections that span more than one region; (2) the Inner Harbor area and Downtown; (3) the Outer Harbor area and South Buffalo; (4) the Buffalo River; (5) the Gateway and West Side; and (6) Riverside, Black Rock and Scajaquada. Like the chart above, they are also organized through the four tiered planning framework of Recent Achievements, Current Work, Emerging Projects, and Longer Term Visions.

Tow Path park in Riverside sits on the Niagara River.

The Scajaquada Bike Path winds under a railroad bridge as it approaches the Black Rock Canal.

The Queen City Waterfront Transportation Project map shows the connections between the city and the region.

Transportation Connections

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Riverwalk in Riverside

The portion of the Niagara Riverwalk traversing the Riverside community provides direct public access to the Niagara River and bicycle/pedestrian linkages to municipalities just north of the City of Buffalo. This project represents a huge success story and a major addition to the waterfront.

Scajaquada Pathway

Phases I and II of this project, including links through Delaware Park, and from Elmwood Avenue to the west, were completed some time ago. Most recently completed was one final segment to connect the Scajaquada Path directly with the Riverwalk. While short, this segment was very expensive on a per foot basis and involved difficult engineering to cross the creek, bypass a marina, and pass beneath a railway bridge. Construction on this project began in 2003 and the segment was opened in 2005.

CURRENT WORK

Outer Harbor Access Project

While the "Southtowns Connector" was originally proposed as a super-highway to connect Buffalo with its southern suburbs, the current project proposal includes improving road access to specific developable sites (Republic Steel Site, Union Ship Canal, Bethlehem Steel Site, and the Buffalo Outer Harbor); reconfiguring the Route 5/Fuhrmann Boulevard/Ohio Street Complex as a waterfront arterial system consistent with proposed land uses; and providing adequate service for commuter/commercial traffic between the Southtowns and Downtown Buffalo. Incorporation of Seaway Trail design elements has also been proposed.

One important element of the proposal involves construction of an arterial connection along Tifft Street, through the LTV/Republic Steel site, across the Buffalo River, and connecting with I-190. This will improve access to industrial sites while relieving traffic from a slower-speed waterfront complex. Mayor Masiello and Assemblyman Higgins have requested $35 million in federal funding to develop Route 5 between the Skyway and Ridge Road as a tree lined parkway. Depending on the final designs and alignments, the project will help achieve goals for public waterfront access and environmental improvement. The project will promote economic development and transportation enhancement goals in any case.

A greenway trail runs along the Inner Harbor.

A shoreline trail runs parallel to Lake Erie on the Outer Harbor.

Inner Harbor Trails

This riverfront "esplanade" connecting the Buffalo River with the rest of the waterfront has been a key recommendation of several planning efforts, beginning with the work of the Horizons Commission. The project's essential goal is to provide public access to the waterfront. Much of this will be developed as part of the Erie Canal Harbor development.

Outer Harbor Greenway

Numerous plans reference this greenway trail as a top priority for the Outer Harbor and Western New York region. The trail would improve public access and open up opportunities for commercial development. The City has invested $100,000 in an Outer Harbor Point promenade. In the fall of 2002, the NFTA received $980,000 in state funding for an 8.5-mile bike and pedestrian pathway extending from the former DL&W rail terminal at the foot of Main Street to Gallagher Beach on Fuhrmann Boulevard. Stage 1 is complete as of June 2005, and work is ongoing.

Scajaquada Expressway Redesign

The original proposal to transform the Scajaquada Expressway from a highway to a low speed boulevard or parkway was made over a decade ago. More recently it has been revived and a dedicated study of the possibilities commissioned. Consultants have produced a preliminary report on alternatives that define the possibilities of mediating between demands for transportation capacity enhancement, public access, and neighborhood connections. The corridor's redesign will strongly influence the success of the Olmsted Crescent, a coordinated marketing effort for arts, culture, and heritage attractions geographically concentrated along the Expressway.

EMERGING PROJECTS

Gateway Bridge/Water Taxi

There has been an extraordinary array of proposals over the years for improving connections between Downtown Buffalo and the Outer Harbor and other points south. These have included low-level bridges, pedestrian bridges, tunnels, tramways, lift bridges, swing bridges, drawbridges, and transit bridges with approaches along Genesee Street, Erie Street, Church Street, Main Street, and Michigan Avenue, and water taxis to take people across the Buffalo River between the Inner and Outer Harbors. Incorporation of Seaway Trail design elements and clear markers from the Niagara Street to Route 5 segments of the trail have been proposed. All proposals have implications for related infrastructure investments, including Fuhrmann Boulevard and Route 5, the downtown Niagara Thruway, and elsewhere.

The potential investments, even for maintenance of existing structures, are enormous. The NYS DOT has allocated funding to study alternatives to the Skyway from 2003 to 2005. These projects have major implications for all of the waterfront goals.

South Park-Outer Harbor Greenway

A multi-use path from South Park to the Outer Harbor would connect a significant part of Buffalo to the overall Greenway system. The route would run in an arc from South Park north to Tifft Street, then west past the Tifft Nature Preserve to the Small Boat Harbor/Gallagher Beach area. It would capitalize upon existing site constraints to improve public access while respecting City economic development goals for the LTV/Republic Steel and Union Ship Canal areas. Wetland and landfill site limitations on development in the area make this project logically feasible. Further concept development is needed, but this project should be a future priority.

Seaway Trail Development

The New York State Seaway Trail is a 454-mile scenic route paralleling Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence River. The trail offers spectacular views of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway, access to historic sites from the Underground Railroad and the War of 1812, and numerous other recreational, cultural, and heritage areas. The Seaway Trail is the only U.S. Department of Transportation National Scenic Byway located in New York.

National Scenic Byways possess outstanding qualities that exemplify the regional characteristics of specific regions. Both the State and Federal Scenic Byway programs encourage travelers to get off of major interstate routes to experience the unique scenic, cultural, historic, and heritage amenities located along local roadways. The programs offer designated byways marketing assistance, project funding, and legal protection from new billboard construction (federal byways only). Within the City of Buffalo, the Seaway Trail follows Niagara Street south through the Inner Harbor to Route 5. Further development of the trail and support for this program should be a priority.

Buffalo River Greenway

The Buffalo River Greenway is a multi-purpose open space corridor and trail system designed to improve access and management of the Buffalo River's recreational, cultural, and ecological assets. This fully developed plan provides public access to the City's waterfront amenities through a multi-use trail and the creation of a Greenway Park System. The Industrial Heritage Trail segment and interpretive materials celebrate the Buffalo River's Native American, industrial and architectural heritage. Components of the plan also address environmental concerns with provisions for wildlife habitat, pollution filtration, and flood retention capacities. This project is an implementation priority.

Lower West Side Riverwalk Link

There is a need for improved public access between LaSalle Park and the Erie Basin Marina. The existing Riverwalk bike path is rarely used due to its isolation and perceived vulnerability to criminal activity. There is no specific plan for this area, but clearly marked trails, street furnishings, and landscaping might help to encourage its use. A clear, safe pedestrian path is also needed to connect neighborhoods east of I-190 to Downtown.

Mid-Niagara Street Riverwalk Link

Currently, Riverwalk travelers follow an unclear path along Niagara Street from the Porter Avenue segment to the Scajaquada Pathway. Streetscape improvements are needed along Niagara Street from Porter Avenue to the Scajaquada Pathway to clarify the pedestrian route amidst busy industrial traffic on the corridor. Enhancements to this part of Erie County's Riverwalk System would facilitate public access to the waterfront and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. Concept plans were proposed in the Buffalo Greenway System Plan. This project has strong public support and would move forward with the necessary public funding.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

Buffalo "Big Dig" Downtown

A variety of proposals have been made over the years to mitigate the effect of the Niagara Thruway, that separates Downtown Buffalo from the waterfront. These have ranged from an improvement in bridges over or underpasses beneath the highway, to removal of the highway, to burying the highway in a tunnel. Other proposals have highlighted the potential for extending the Downtown street grid – especially along Erie, Genesee, Church, Court, and Virginia Streets – from the city across the highway right-of-way to the water.

While discussion of such proposals has recently been revived, there is no action plan for such changes. Clearly, the proposals would each improve public access to the waterfront. It would be possible to argue that removing the Thruway as an obstacle to the waterfront would promote economic development through property redevelopment. Proposals to "bury" the Thruway would also need to be evaluated in relation to proposals to replace the Skyway with a tunnel.

West Side Thruway Revisions

Several proposals have focused on improving the section of the Niagara Thruway that travels along the Black Rock Canal on Buffalo's West Side. These have included removal of the Breckenridge Street toll barrier, creation of a canal-side park, improvement of Squaw Island access at Ferry Street, and various attempts at screening I-190 from view by neighborhoods. These proposals make a strong gesture toward accommodating needs for public access, neighborhood connections, and environmental protection, while also promoting economic development and transportation improvements. They deserve continued consideration.

Riverside Thruway Mitigation

A variety of proposals have been made over the years to repair or reverse the damage done to the Riverside neighborhood by the construction of the Niagara Thruway. Some of these have proposed to cover or deck I-190 as a means of extending Riverside Park toward the river itself. Another proposal advanced some years ago envisioned the rerouting of the Thruway at the Scajaquada interchange and continuing along the CSX railroad right-of-way into Tonawanda. A preliminary feasibility study for this concept concluded that the cost for such a proposal would be prohibitive. There remains, however, a strong voice in the community calling for addressing the impact of the Thruway on the Riverside neighborhood, and further investigation is required.

Downtown/Cobblestone/ First Ward Transit Improvements

Several proposals have been made to (a) locate a transit station near the foot of Main Street, and (b) extend the transit line from there to the south, and/or (c) construct a transit or vintage trolley loop through the Cobblestone District. Although the three proposals are different in scope and direction, each would help improve access to these areas and support efforts at economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

Inner Harbor / Downtown

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Naval and Serviceman Park

The U.S.S. Little Rock, The Sullivans, and The Croaker have been part of the downtown waterfront landscape for roughly two decades, providing a significant tourist attraction, but also obstructing some public access to the river. The relocation of the vessels and the construction of a new naval museum will improve the heritage tourism attraction and rationalize waterside access. Other project elements will enhance inter-modal circulation via pedestrian and transit routes. Although contractors encountered difficulty in moving the vessels because of accumulated river sediments, the relocation and the veteran's park construction has been completed. The Naval and Serviceman's Park represents the first completed element in a much more ambitious Inner Harbor development. Phase I work represents $15.5 million worth of work.

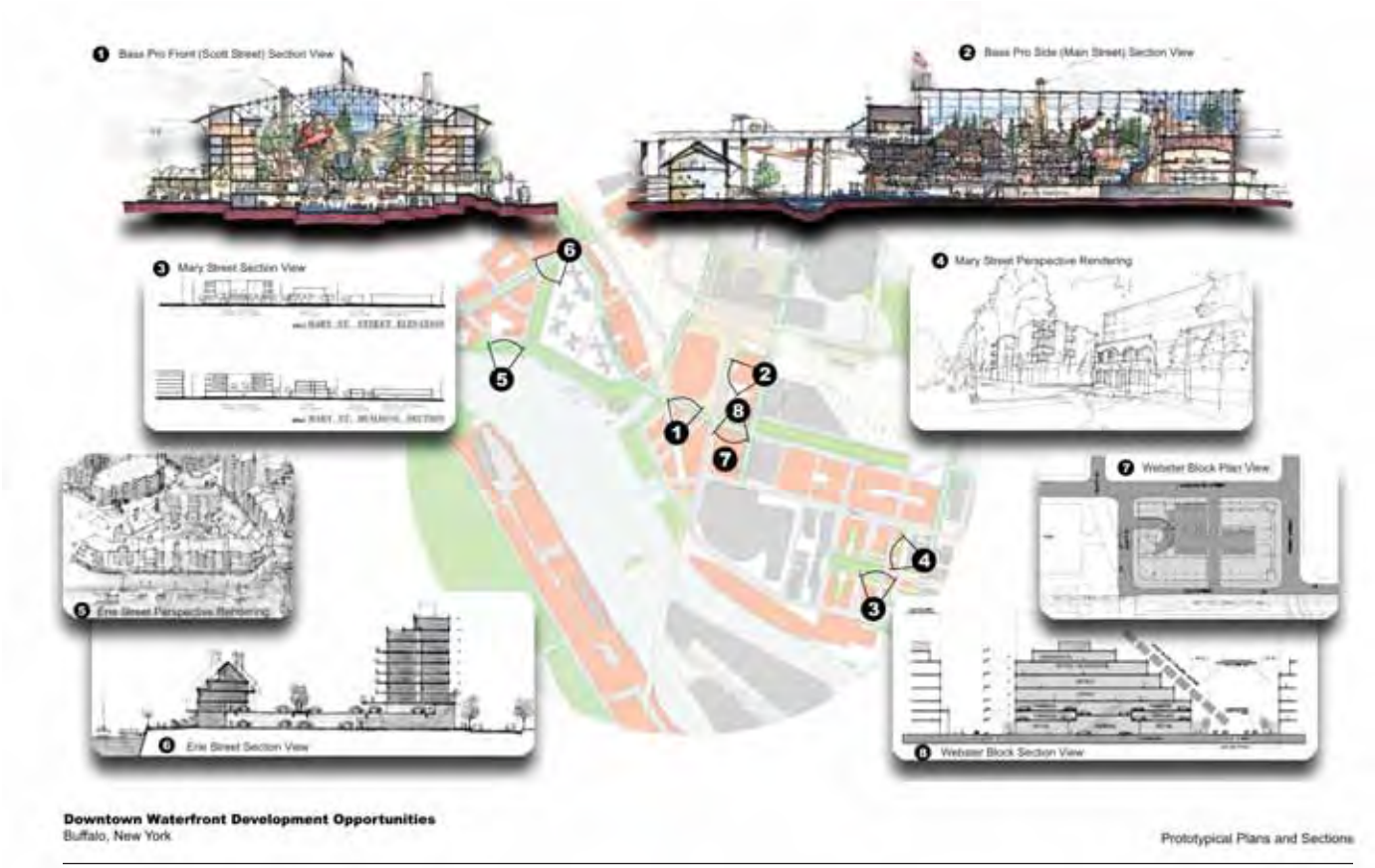
Shanghai Red's restaurant

The long-awaited restaurant to take the place of the former Crawdaddy's Restaurant on the Erie Basin Marina is now open. The restaurant will provide an additional magnet for activity on the waterfront, and one that can be expected to draw visitors well beyond the summer months and sailing season.

Many projects in the Inner Harbor have been recently completed.

The Navel and Serviceman Park has been relocated to accommodate the new Erie Canal Harbor development.

Shanghai Red's is a new restaurant on the Erie Basin Marina.



Concept drawings illustrate some of the promise of downtown waterfront development opportunities. (Source: ECIDA)

The Erie Canal Harbor Project uses the historic street pattern for development parcels. (Source: Flynn Battaglia Architects PC, & the Western New York office of Empire State Development Corporation)

CURRENT WORK

Erie Canal Harbor

Long the object of dreaming and planning, Buffalo's historic Erie Canal district is now undergoing a great transformation. The inventory for this plan cataloged an amazing forty-three separate proposals for this twelve acre site. But the range of ideas was surprisingly coherent, encompassing a consistent mixture of waterfront access, heritage development, tourism attraction, and mixed use-proposals. Plans now in implementation are highly consistent with that planning history.

Plans include new direct access to the Buffalo River waterfront; new infrastructure for transportation improvements by boat, bike, foot, and transit; and groundwork for future preservation and heritage tourism attractions. $46 million has been committed to the project's waterside improvements, including

relocation of the Buffalo & Erie County Naval and Serviceman Park and work to preserve historic Erie Canal features.

The remaining project budget, including Donovan Building demolition and the construction of the intermodal transportation center, is approximately $100 million, with $31 million in federal funding earmarked for the project. The project has strong implications for economic development and transportation as well as access. The Erie Canal Harbor has been subject to intensive public scrutiny on the disposition of the historic Commercial Slip and Central Wharf. New project concepts and redesigns led to cost increases and delays. Construction on Phase II of the Erie Canal Harbor project began in August 2005.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield HealthNow Headquarters

Blue Cross and Blue Shield's parent company, Health Now, initiated construction on a 431,000 square foot corporate headquarters in late November, 2005 at 249 W. Genesee Street. The former brownfield site will include a preserved façade from the 1848 coal to gas conversion factory that previously dominated the site. In September, the company was projecting that the project will bring in approximately 1300 employees and will spend just under $100 million with and additional $25 million in site remediation.

The L shaped structure includes an eight story tower, seven story atrium and a six story block of offices as well as an on site parking structure. Its controversial design presents itself from the I-190 in the shadow of the Buffalo's City Hall. It is the largest office complex in the downtown since Fountain Plaza was constructed in the 1980s.

One approach to parking supports for the proposed reuse of the Memorial Auditorium. Alternatives involve the distribution of smaller parking facilities throughout the area. (Source: Buffalo Urban Development Corporation)

Bass Pro Retail Attraction/Buffalo Intermodal Transportation Center

Plans for Buffalo's proposed Erie Canal Harbor Entertainment District were to make the former Buffalo Memorial Auditorium home to Bass Pro Shops and other retailers. An accompanying plan provides for construction of a new waterfront parking ramp immediately to the east on the site of the General William J. Donovan State Office Building, which will be demolished. A new intermodal transportation center was also to be incorporated, including a combination Amtrak, Metro Rail, Metro Bus hub, and street level retail shops. About $8.1 million in federal transportation money has been pledged to create the transportation hub that will occupy the first floor of the new midrise building, giving travelers access to local, regional, and national trains and buses. Contributions to economic development and transportation improvement goals are clear, but the project will also contribute to waterfront access by drawing visitors to the vicinity of canal and river. Much of this planning is now being revised as alternative sites are explored in the same area.

EMERGING PROJECTS

Erie Street Waterfront Gateway

A key project to emerge from the Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative (Buffalo Corridor Management Project) has been the proposed realignment and redevelopment of

Erie Street from the center of Downtown, beneath the Skyway approaches and the Niagara Thruway, to the Erie Basin Marina opposite the historic Buffalo Lighthouse. The essence of the proposal is to create a direct and dramatic vista along Erie Street, straightened to conform to its historic alignment. These changes would create new direct visual and physical access to the waterfront. The realignment would also allow the delineation of new waterfront development parcels to promote creation of a new urban arm of Downtown reaching down to the water.

Erie Basin Marina/ Waterfront Village Projects

A number of projects are being discussed that would take advantage of the proposed Erie Street Waterfront Gateway. These include new residential and mixed-use developments, possible new office buildings for major tenants, additional restaurant and commercial development, a new hotel, added boat launch capacity, and other developments. These are appropriate projects for an urban section of the Buffalo waterfront and will bring new people down to enjoy the water. For all of these possibilities, careful attention to design issues is required, including site design, building height and mass, setback, and direct waterside access.

DL&W Terminal Reuse

The "foot of Main Street," sometimes known as the "crossroads site," is one of Buffalo's most planned-for locations. City of Buffalo planning focused on a sports and entertainment concept for the area, building on the completion of the HSBC arena, and reflecting the potential for tourism at the Erie Canal Harbor. The most recent major proposal was for the Adelphia Communications National Operations Center, now abandoned. The site remains an attractive opportunity for a range of uses, as does the former DL&W railway terminal for an adaptive reuse development. One potential use, frequently mentioned in the planning legacy, would be a Great Lakes museum. New specific use proposals and tenants need to be identified for this site. As of fall 2005, the DL&W is being considered as a site for Buffalo's casino and negotiations are under way between NFTA and the Seneca Nation.

Cobblestone District Developments

A wide range of proposals has been put forward from various quarters for the area immediately to the east of the new arena, but the future of this location is far from clear. A preservation-inspired effort to rebuild cobblestone streets bore fruit several years ago. Recently, Cobblestone Development, a local entrepreneur, purchased the sprawling 1.5 acre Benlin Distribution Services complex at 26 Mississippi Street for $1.1 million, with plans to create a new mixed-use development. Proposals for extending light rail or vintage trolley service have been discussed. One noteworthy residential conversion – the Elk Terminal – has taken place. An earlier proposal envisioned a business park in the vicinity. The concept is unclear, but the potential is substantial for economic development, building neighborhood connections to the waterfront, and improving transportation. Further work is clearly warranted.

West of City Hall

The area of downtown west of South Elmwood and east of the Niagara Thruway has received little attention and has unexplored potential for waterfront oriented development. Among the proposals made in the past was one to create a Lake Shore Parkway. The proposed route was similar to one envisioned recently as part of reconnecting Genesee Street to the water. It is not to be confused with references to a Lakeshore Parkway on the Outer Harbor. Rehabilitation of the Waterfront Elementary School and creation of a new waterfront school are also part of the picture. The potential for restoring historic street patterns is also significant. The path of the Seaway Trail through this area also requires reinforcement. This area deserves further attention.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

City Ship Canal

The City Ship Canal/Kelly Island site – especially locations directly across the Buffalo River from Downtown – has been the subject of a variety of proposals. Many of these are likely in conflict with each other and with existing uses. Prominent proposals include expanded boat launch facilities, industrial retention and expansion, residential development, passive recreation areas, and tourism attractions. No clear concept has emerged, but the potential demands to be explored.

The South Buffalo / Outer Harbor sub-area includes projects south of the Buffalo River.

Outer Harbor / South Buffalo

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Times Beach Nature Preserve

While a large number of alternative uses had been advanced for Times Beach over the years (a boat harbor, bathing beach, aquarium, windmills, and other uses), the development of the site as a nature preserve and bird-watching area seems most appropriate. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project included repair of the dike that encloses dredging spoils, repair of the overall ecosystem, and construction of a network of boardwalks to allow visitors safe and unintrusive access to the site. The project has advanced environmental goals by limiting the disturbance of contaminants, preventing contact with them, and preserving crucial wildlife habitats. The construction of walkways promotes public access and, insofar as it promotes birding and other visitation, economic development through tourism. Work was completed in 2004.

The Times Beach nature area preserves habitat for the internationally designated Important Bird Area along the Niagara Corridor.

Small Boat Harbor

Governor Pataki's proposal in 2004 to designate the NFTA Small Boat Harbor as part of a new waterfront State Park confirmed years of planning work and responded to continuing strong market demand for marina facilities. Most project proposals for the site have focused on further development of its current use as a boat launch and docking facility through expansion, upgrade or addition of support facilities, services such as restaurant and retail sales, and improved linkages with the Route 5 Seaway Trail segment. Other project concepts over the years have included nature preserves, industrial uses, and waterfront trail expansion. A major expansion of boating facilities was completed in the 1990s, creation of new waterfront parkland is under way, and further expanded docking facilities are being reviewed. All of this work advances overall goals of providing public access and supporting economic development.

The Small Boat Harbor will become a part of the new Buffalo Waterfront State Park.

The newly made Gallagher Beach is close to downtown.

Gallagher Beach State Park

The development of Gallagher Beach has been one of the waterfront's most recent success stories. While previous plans suggested use of this site for marina expansion, or as a fish spawning area, the recent development of the site as a windsurfing and boat launch site has been met with general acclaim. This was confirmed by the Governor's 2004 proposal to incorporate the site in a new waterfront State Park. A second phase of work is under way. Gallagher Beach represents an important victory for the public access goal. Improved linkages to the Seaway Trail Route 5 segment are also proposed.

Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park

Work has begun on the first of four phases of development of a master planned office, industrial, and recreation area surrounding the Union Ship Canal. Subsequent phases of development may include a boat launch, dock, and other uses. Voluntary clean-up agreements have been completed for the two parcels that make up the first phase. Demolition and right-of-way design was completed in the spring of 2003, with road and utility construction following immediately afterward. The project represents a major step toward meeting the economic and development goals of providing "shovel ready sites," while also advancing environmental repair and public access goals. Important transportation improvements, including a new access road system and improved access from Route 5 with Seaway Trail design elements, are important elements of the project.

CURRENT WORK

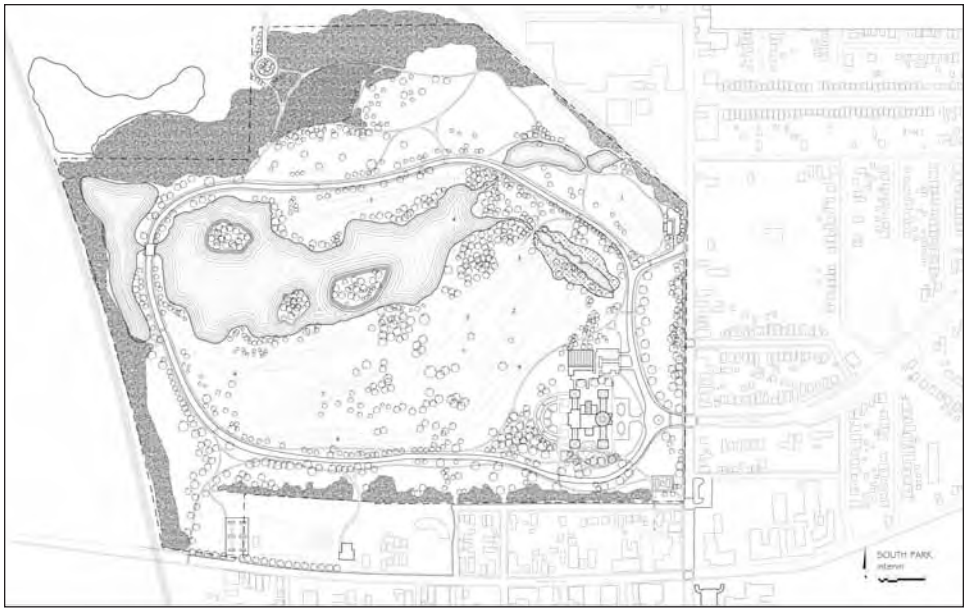
South Park Restoration

Originally proposed by Frederick Law Olmsted as a waterfront park, South Park remains an important site in Buffalo's Waterfront Corridor. Major renovations have been completed for the botanical gardens complex in the park. The goal of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is to leverage investments by Erie County in the Botanical Gardens and recreate Olmsted's arboretum to give visitors a complete indoor and outdoor horticultural experience. A portion of the park's pinetum collection has been replanted and more than 15,000 plants will be installed as the park's wetland garden reemerges.

Future funding will pay for interpretive signage, species markers, guidebooks, a docent training program, and a horticulturalist to care for the collections. Related proposals include new street and bicycle connections from South Park to the Lake Erie waterfront and an expansion of the South Park coastal zone review area. Taken together, this work promises to advance public access, environmental restoration, transportation improvement, and to some extent, economic development goals for the waterfront.

Republic Steel/LTV Redevelopment

The former Republic Steel/LTV site has long been the target of redevelopment efforts. The most celebrated was the "Tomato Republic" hydroponics facility, which ceased operations in 2002. Redevelopment for industrial use continues to be a priority. With approximately 1,200 acres, this property will provide an enormous reserve of land for industrial development and expansion for Buffalo and save waterfront sites for more appropriate uses. An additional concept in the planning legacy calls for creation of an Environmental Center and Park on the Buffalo River at this site, but no entity is currently working towards its creation. LTV Steel and Hanna Furnace recently agreed to a $16.5 million clean-up and to transfer the site to Steelfields Ltd. for clean-up and commercial redevelopment. The planned new arterial road that is part of the Southtowns Connector project will provide enhanced access to these sites.



An early draft alternative of the master plan for Buffalo's South Park. This park along with the other Olmsted Parks, is slated for restoration by the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. (Source: The Urban Design Project and Trowbridge & Wolf, PC)

EMERGING PROJECTS

North Outer Harbor Developments/ Buffalo Lakefront Development

Much of the Outer Harbor is owned by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority. In 2004, they advertised a request for proposals, selected three consultant teams, and had these teams propose waterfront development strategies for the area from the Seaway Piers to the Inlet north of Harvest Queen including the Bell Slip. A team lead by OPUS, with Uniland and VOA, were selected for a scheme that included marinas, a new convention center, hotels, a sports complex, cultural institutions, and commercial and residential development. Public support for action at this site is intense; public preferences for open space and direct waterfront access are unequivocal, and hence there are serious reservations from the environmental and quality of life community regarding the extent of development in OPUS's approved proposal.

Because it is a large, mainly vacant, and single-ownership parcel directly on the waterfront, this site has drawn intense interest through a long series of planning processes. Past proposals are contained in the NFTA Outer Harbor Development Plan (1988) and include public access, open spaces, residential, retail, and office uses. Other proposed uses have included light industrial facilities.

Work on a waterfront pedestrian and bike trail is moving forward. Improved access to the site is dependent on Route 5 and Fuhrmann Boulevard improvements. Park elements of any development at this site might be incorporated in the State Park approved in 2004. Improved use of Seaway Trail design elements is also being considered, along with transportation improvements to Fuhrmann Boulevard.

Tifft Farm Nature Preserve Expansion

The creation of the Tifft Farm Nature Preserve in the 1970s was one of the earliest and most celebrated waterfront developments in recent history. Subsequent proposals called for an expansion of the nature preserve as part of the South Buffalo Redevelopment Plan. Related concepts envisioned campgrounds, playfields nearby, and a series of transportation improvements including improved design and physical linkages to the Seaway Trail. The main proposals serve goals for public access and environmental repair. Other concepts also support recreation goals, economic development, and transportation. Expansion of the nature preserve is already occurring, in a sense, by default. Poor drainage to the east of the preserve in the former Lehigh Valley Railroad yards has caused the formation of new wetlands, making the property unsuitable for other uses.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

Outer Harbor Point

Leading proposals for this site call for a "Lighthouse Park," providing access to the historic China Light and necessitating some accommodation by the U.S. Coast Guard. Other proposed uses have included an education, research, or science center, and a center for wood boat design. The Coast Guard has leased the lighthouse to a citizen group to facilitate restoration, and they provide limited access to the structure. However, more extensive access to the lighthouse, and additional development, seem desirable. Continued collaboration with the Coast Guard, additional planning, and fund-raising will be necessary to fulfill potential for public access and economic development.

South Outer Harbor

This site encompasses the former Port of Buffalo terminal area, currently home to the Euro United facility, and the Freezer Queen facility to the south. The South Outer Harbor site has most often been projected for some kind of industrial development, including research, warehouse, light industrial, and power generation. Alternate proposals call for an "events park" or open space uses with potential inclusion in recent Outer Harbor State Park initiatives and increased linkages to the Seaway Trail. Continued and expanded industrial uses would serve project economic development goals. However, non-water-

dependent or enhanced industrial uses would be inconsistent with LWRP policy. The planning documentation suggests some public opposition to additional industrial development on the waterfront. This may be a moot issue, given the likelihood that existing uses will continue in the foreseeable future, but continued consideration of future uses is warranted.

Cargill Pool Elevator

Several different and competing concepts have been proposed for the small peninsula on which Cargill Pool Elevator sits adjacent to a small, NFTA-owned inlet area. Suggested uses range from continued use for industrial storage and shipping, preservation and interpretation of the grain elevators on site, use as a marina and boat storage facility, and a passive park. There are no current plans for the development of this site. However, potential exists to incorporate the inlet/boat launch into the State Park proposed to the north of the site and to improve linkages to the Seaway Trail.

Independent Cement

Independent Cement owns several large parcels between the NFTA's property south of Cargill Pool and adjacent to Bethlehem Steel at the lake entrance to the Union Ship Canal. In two planning documents that mention the site, continued industrial use is anticipated. However, development of a waterfront trail linking Bethlehem Steel with development at the northern end of the property (adjacent to NFTA harbor area) for marina and water-enhanced uses is proposed. Current uses and market conditions suggest no new development in the near term, but the strategic location of this site suggests a long term opportunity.

Off Shore Area

The Off Shore Area encompasses several discrete sites including (a) inside the break wall where an Olympic standard rowing course has been proposed; (b) the Buffalo water intake, proposed as a site for hydropower generation; (c) outside the break wall where creation of a new island for recreation was proposed; and (d) various sites proposed for wind power generation. Although these would variously serve public access, recreation, and economic development goals, none is under active consideration at this time.

Hopkins Street

Hopkins Street is, in a sense, the back door of the waterfront, forming the eastern boundary of the South Buffalo Redevelopment Area. A proposal for its rehabilitation is motivated by a desire both to improve the quality of waterfront land as well as to protect adjacent residential areas. One recent plan envisions infrastructure investments and high-density residential or extended care facilities. Some development activity is already taking place in the area, including expansion of Sorrento Cheese. Redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites would be straightforward. While the site is not a public priority at this time, its redevelopment would serve economic development, neighborhood connection, and transportation improvement goals.

South Buffalo Landfill

Several plans have included proposals for the redevelopment of property adjacent to active rail yards in South Buffalo. These sites include a large landfill used for disposal of slag from steelmaking and an active auto wrecking yard. One prominent proposal was for redevelopment of the area as a golf course. The area is also seen as a potential site for wind power generation. It is not known what obstacles – legal, environmental, or otherwise – might exist to redevelopment. But, as a "visionary" proposal, a golf course has the potential to transform the image of the area, and facilitate public access, economic development, and environmental goals. Use of the area might also enable elaboration of Olmsted Parks concepts, and allow removal of the golf course from South Park.

Buffalo River

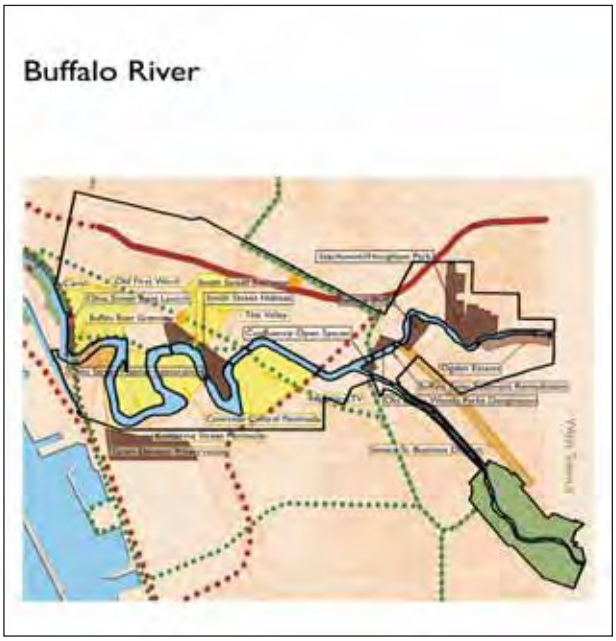
RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Bailey Avenue/Confluence Open Spaces

Under the Buffalo River Greenway Plan, several pieces of open space, including Old Bailey Woods Park, Confluence Point County Park, and the proposed Mongovan Park Parcels and Southside School, located at the confluence of the Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek, would be connected to develop a waterfront public access park. This project would advance goals for increased public access, passive recreation, public education and neighborhood-to-waterfront linkages, as well as environmental goals of habitat protection, flood control, and non-point source pollution prevention.

Seneca Bluffs

A project to restore and protect the Seneca Bluffs, including a flood plain forest and emergent wetland, is under way with the support of a broad coalition of grassroots organizations plus the City of Buffalo, County of Erie, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It is an important component of the Buffalo River Greenway open space system and is part of the implementation of the Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan. The Seneca Bluffs Restoration supports goals for increased public access, passive recreation, and neighborhood-to-waterfront linkages, as well as environmental goals of habitat protection, flood control, and non-point source pollution prevention.



The Buffalo River runs through the City and its strategic location is the reason for its designation as a sub-area.

Fishing at the Bailey Avenue habitat site is a favorite past time for neighborhood folks.

Seneca Bluffs is the latest habitat restoration site along the Buffalo River and it protects swallow nesting in the banks along the river.

Parts of Stachowski/Houghton Park are very pastoral.

Stachowski Park/Houghton Park

Buffalo River Greenway plans have suggested the expansion of Stachowski Park to include adjacent City owned properties along the Buffalo River to the West Seneca border and the extension of park trails to and along the Buffalo River. Improvements to Houghton Park were recently completed. Like the other Buffalo River Greenway projects, extension of Stachowski Park would support goals for increased public access, passive recreation, and neighborhood-to-waterfront linkages, as well as environmental goals of habitat protection, flood control, and non-point source pollution prevention.

Smith Street Public Access

The state Department of Environmental Conservation constructed a wetland restoration area with a small passive park/riverside public access point at the foot of Smith Street in 1996. Additional proposals for improved access from the Valley neighborhood have also been completed. While much more ambitious concepts have been floated for marina-related mixed-use residential development, market limitations make such activities unlikely. Current open space and public access plans advance public access, neighborhood connection, and environmental restoration goals.

The Smith Street Habitat site sits across the Buffalo River from the Concrete Central Grain Elevator, an important industrial building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Ohio Street

Ohio Street in the Old First Ward is a crucial waterfront site, offering opportunities for expanded public access, but also implicated in the planning of the Southtowns Connector. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and Erie County constructed a public boat launch at Ohio Street in the mid 1990s at the head of the urban canoe trail. Additional proposals for the area include further open space protection and restoration. Detailed plans for improvements to Ohio Street itself are now in preparation. Proposals for connecting the Buffalo River Greenway through this site to Downtown and the Riverwalk are impeded by private ownership of key parcels. Further attention is warranted in order to maximize advancement of public access as well as transportation improvement goals.

The Ohio Street Boat Launch was the first habitat and public access site developed after the acceptance of the Remedial Action Plan (1988) to clean up the river.

How Would YOU Grade the Buffalo River?

We want to hear from you! This Citizens' Report Card will help us understand your concerns as we work to restore the river.

Buffalo River Citizens' Report Card

"Class"	Grade
Access Is it easy to get to the shoreline? Is there public land to enjoy?	
Fishing Are fish abundant? Are there many species? Are they healthy?	
Swimming Would you swim in the River? Should neighborhood kids?	
Wildlife Do you see many different kinds of animals? Do they have habitat?	
Aesthetics Is the River beautiful? Are there trash, odor or other problems?	
Other _____ What other conditions of the River would you find worth grading?	

The process of cleaning up the Buffalo River continues with public involvement. (Source: Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper)

CURRENT WORK

Buffalo River Clean-up

There are a large number of current proposals for the clean-up of the river channel itself, including remediation of contaminated sediments, remediation of inactive hazardous waste sites, mitigation of non-point sources, improving stream water quality monitoring, control of municipal and industrial wastewater facilities, elimination of combined sewer overflows, restoration of fish and wildlife habitats, and expansion of the coastal review zone. In 2002, the Buffalo River Partnership was established to coordinate efforts to address the River's contaminated sediments. Currently, the Buffalo Sewer Authority is developing a remedial action plan for the City's Combined Sewer Overflow System, a major source of river pathogens. Funding for implementation of a Remedial Action Plan under the direction of the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper has greatly improved coordination of remediation efforts. Restoration projects will advance not only environmental goals, but also broad public access and economic development goals as the River affects Erie Canal Harbor restoration efforts.

Seneca Street Business District

The Seneca Street business district and the surrounding residential neighborhood have been the subject of planning and programming for revitalization. Buffalo "Live Zone" and Empire Zone designations are in place, and a neighborhood plan was released by South Buffalo Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) in 2002. Formation of the Greater South Buffalo Chamber of Commerce with its Seneca Street sub-committee and a façade program funded by the district council member has given a jump-start to revitalization on Seneca Street. Hillery Park Academy has also been designated for renovation. The confluence of these efforts suggests an opportunity to advance goals of economic development and neighborhood/waterfront connections.

EMERGING PROJECTS

Cazenovia Park & Greenway

A full-fledged restoration plan for Cazenovia Park was completed in 1997 and the Buffalo Olmsted Park Conservancy hopes to begin construction on Casino renovations in 2005 based upon community programming goals. The Conservancy is also working with South Buffalo Alive, which painted the interior of the Cazenovia Park Shelter House in 2002 and is raising funds for the building's restoration. In addition, the Buffalo River Greenway and the Seneca Plan call for the creation of a greenway trail system linking the Park to the Buffalo River. Some editions call for the restoration of Cazenovia Creek's natural banks as a habitat, erosion control, and non-point source pollution prevention project. The park restoration and Greenway development projects would advance goals for improved public access and recreation opportunities. Moreover, the restoration of the park would facilitate the City's efforts to market the Olmsted system as a destination. Creek bank restoration would meet Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) and LWRP habitat and erosion control environmental goals.

Grain Elevator Preservation and Interpretation

Buffalo's ensemble of grain elevators has been the subject of a variety of proposals, including an industrial heritage museum, preservation, and for continued industrial use. Since they are located along the river and on the harbor, these comprise not so much an individual site as they do a collection of a type of building. The State Preservation Board and National Park Service approved the creation of a multiple property listing for the Grain Elevator District in 2003. In addition, the Concrete Central and Wollenberg Grain Elevators were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Development of interpretive sites, materials, and programs would involve relatively modest investments. Preservation or adaptive reuse of structures

would be expensive, but potential for advancement of economic development goals through heritage tourism is clear. More attention is needed.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

Concrete Central Peninsula

An unusual variety of proposals have been advanced over the years for the Concrete Central Peninsula, including "exclusive residential" development, passive open space, wind energy generation, and development as an industrial heritage site. A variety of problems constrain these proposals, including lack of access, lack of utility service, floodplain location, and conflicts with existing rail service. Strongest public support exists for designation, preservation, and interpretation of grain elevators as industrial heritage resources, combined with open space preservation. Public ownership would seem to facilitate such a development. Promotion of economic development and environmental protection goals would go hand in hand in this case. Much further development will be required.

Katherine Street Peninsula

A large number of proposals have been made for this site but within a narrow range of concepts, including mixed-use development, open space conservation, a nature preserve, and a beach. Alternative concepts have included retaining industrial activity as well as development of wind power generation. The limited space needs of existing industries may accommodate open space conservation and Buffalo River Greenway trail development in the short term. However, the peninsula's remote location, industrial legacy, and lack of local development pressure may inhibit long term mixed-use development.

Old First Ward

The Old First Ward is a crucial waterfront neighborhood. One only needs to visit there to understand how close the relationship to the waterfront is. With the exception of the proposal, now abandoned, to relocate the Buffalo Zoo to a site including the Father Conway playground, there is little in the planning legacy that deals with the Old First Ward. The neighborhood was the topic for a University at Buffalo graduate student investigation in the spring of 2003, but otherwise has been neglected. Within the framework of resident desires for neighborhood stability, however, it is possible to imagine a range of projects including improved waterfront access, support for housing rehabilitation, and heritage interpretation, among others.

The Valley

Like the Old First Ward, The Valley is intimately a waterfront neighborhood and its community center connects directly with the Smith Street Habitat Restoration site. One of the main streets of The Valley, Smith Street, terminates at the bank of the Buffalo River. It is also directly connected to and impacted by Buffalo's central inter-city transportation corridor, I-190. This neighborhood, too, has drawn little attention from planners, and like the Old First Ward seeks stability and protection. The only current proposal for The Valley involves one pending school renovation. However, it is also possible to imagine improvements to housing, waterfront access, and transportation access in The Valley.

Ogden Estates

The Buffalo River Greenway plans and the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Inventory have both identified a large tract of undeveloped land west of South Ogden Street as a floodplain forest in need of conservation. Because it is a floodplain, other forms of development are considered infeasible. Including this site in the emerging system of

Buffalo River open spaces has strong public support. Like the others, it would support goals for increased public access, passive recreation, neighborhood-to-waterfront linkages, flood control, and non-point source pollution prevention. Recent sale of the parcel to a private party has compromised this possibility. However, the Trust for Public Land is exploring the new owner's interest in dedicating some portion of the site for conservation. Additional information needs to be developed to proceed with this project.

The West Side of Buffalo is the Gateway to Canada because of the location of the Peace Bridge.

Gateway / West Side

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Lakeview Hope VI

A large-scale clearance and redevelopment of the pre-war public housing project, and areas immediately to the east, is nearing completion. This federal Hope VI housing redevelopment is part of a national program to improve public housing through de-concentration and redevelopment. Pre-war public housing units have been largely demolished and new mixed-income housing has been constructed. Additional infill construction and rehabilitation is to follow. The project offers the potential of economic redevelopment and a vastly improved residential environment in a near-waterfront neighborhood. Amenities envisioned in other plans included improved connections across the I-190 to LaSalle Park. Incorporation of Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway design elements should also be considered.

The Lakeview Project near LaSalle Park is a part of the HUD sponsored Hope VI initiative.

Broderick Park Improvements

Broderick Park at the south end of Squaw Island is both an important point of public access to the waterfront and an historic site of high significance. Some recent investments have been made to improve public access to the park, but much more work needs to be done. Plans are in place for commemorative interpretation of Underground Railroad events at Broderick Park. Phase I of the project received $80,000 from the City in July 2000. Phase II, awaiting funding, will include a "Freedom Walk," an interpretation time capsule, a life size "Escape Scene," bronze statuary, a meditation garden and an extension toward Bird Island Pier. In addition, several past planning efforts have identified the desirability of providing access to the north of Squaw Island along the east shoreline to complement the Riverwalk along the west side. Conflicts with the Buffalo Sewer Authority need to be resolved to implement a proposed multi-use trail to the north.

Bird Island Pier

Bird Island Pier remains one of the great successes of Buffalo waterfront development. It protects commercial and recreation maritime traffic in the Black Rock Channel, provides fishing, birding, and walking opportunities for visitors, and offers extraordinary direct access to the river with views of the lake, Downtown, the Peace Bridge, and Canada. Swimming, however, is not permitted. The current proposals call only for maintenance of the pier.

Bird Island Pier separates the Black Rock channel from the Niagara River.

CURRENT WORK

Peace Bridge Gateway

Plans for expansion or replacement of the Peace Bridge have been heavily contested within the Buffalo region and across the international border. Four major issues are intertwined in this planning process: what kind of bridge should be built and how wide should it be; where will the bridge land on either side; where the plaza and related facilities will be located; and how and where customs and immigration functions will be handled. Responsible agencies are leading the decision-making process on these matters. In December of 2005, the specific bridge alternative was recommended by the Peace Bridge Selection Jury to the Buffalo and Fort Erie Partnering Group and, in turn, to the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority. The recommendation, ratified by the Partnering group was for a two tower cable stay companion bridge. The form includes two needle shaped towers that straddle the roadway, supporting a main span. Its design frames the Niagara River as a gateway to the binational region to the north of Buffalo and Fort Erie even as it provides a portal to Buffalo from Fort Erie just south of the existing Peace Bridge. The existing structure will continue to serve as the gateway to Ft. Erie from Buffalo. Formal approvals on the bridge concept recommendations are subject to the normal course of environmental impact reviews on the project.

The choice of a bridge, location, and design are central to the Waterfront Corridor Initiative's goal of making a great international gateway. Connections to I-190 for through traffic are essential, and connections with Niagara Street will all have important consequences for neighborhood and economic development. (Note: This project is explored more fully in Volume 4 of this report.)

An early draft vision of the Peace Bridge Interim Plaza Improvements led to a Memorandum of Agreement on plaza and neighborhood improvements pending the construction of the new bridge and plaza.

The bridge concept, designed by Christian Menn was recommended by the Peace Bridge Design Selection Committee. (Source: Dr. Christian Menn and the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority)

Improvements to Cotter Point will open the area for public use. (Source: Hamilton Houston Lownie Architects, PC)

Cotter Point Developments

A variety of proposals have been developed for the area sometimes known as Cotter Point, just north of Porter Avenue and west of the I-190. These include a well-developed proposal for a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed boathouse for the West Side Rowing Club; a similarly well-developed proposal for a Great Lakes research station including a proposal for creation of a wetland; and a recent call for the protection of the site as a significant ecological resource area. Other possibilities raised in the planning documentation include improvements at the Buffalo Yacht Club and mixed-use waterfront development. In the short term, the construction of the boathouse is a priority, with $3.5 to $4 million in funding for construction of the boathouse needed. All of the above projects are generally compatible and would promote waterfront goals for public access, environmental improvement, and economic development. Sponsoring organizations have established relationships to promote coordination among the projects.

An illustrated view of Porter Avenue to demonstrates its importance as a waterfront access point.

Porter Avenue Waterfront Gateway

A number of past plans recognize the significance of Olmsted's Porter Avenue as a gateway – symbolic, aesthetic, and functional – between the city and the waterfront. Alterations to roadway configurations, improvements to the streetscape, including the use of Seaway Trail design elements, and new residential and mixed-use developments have been featured in these proposals. All of these can help rationalize traffic flow, stimulate investment in the vicinity, create more attractive routes to the waterfront, and promote the image of our international gateway. The design of such improvements will be fairly straightforward, especially in the immediate vicinity of the Peace Bridge and plaza, once final decisions have been reached about the design and location of the bridge and plaza themselves. Such designs should avoid, however, directing bridge traffic directly on to Porter Avenue, where park and waterfront values might be compromised. The City has received $150,000 in State funding to develop a public access point at the foot of Porter Avenue at the convergence of the Niagara River with Lake Erie. The proposed observation point will serve as a gateway to LaSalle Park and will include lighting, signage, and street furniture.

Richmond Avenue

Olmsted-designed Richmond Avenue marks the eastern boundary of the City's mid-Niagara waterfront neighborhood, and the corridor is a major access route for the Buffalo State/Richardson complex. To stabilize the overall neighborhood and meet the housing needs of employees in expanding local businesses, a recent program has focused on providing better incentives for middle-income home ownership in the Richmond Avenue corridor. High quality housing for middle-income families will provide an important economic development tool and help stabilize neighborhoods and connect them to the waterfront. Reengineering the bike path, street improvements, signage, and restoration of historic traffic circles have enhanced these efforts.

Richmond Avenue, one of Olmsted's boulevards, has already seen improvements that add bike lanes while ensuring efficient traffic movement.

Massachusetts Avenue is one of the City's waterfront street slated for improvements. (Source: Wendel Duchscherer Architects and Engineers)

Massachusetts Avenue

A series of grassroots planning efforts in recent years have mobilized residents around projects in neighborhood redevelopment, social services, and micro-business enterprise. As a near-waterfront neighborhood – Massachusetts Avenue ends at Niagara Street, opposite the Peace Bridge – development here can contribute to economic development and neighborhood-to-waterfront connection goals.

EMERGING PROJECTS

LaSalle Park Restoration

As Buffalo's most prominent waterfront park, it should not be surprising that an extraordinary number and variety of waterfront planning efforts have focused on its improvement. Most of these proposals have focused on two major objectives: first, to improve the facilities in the park, including roadway circulation inside the park, and second, to strengthen the physical connections from the City to the park across or over the I-190 and to the Erie Basin Marina. Incorporation of Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway design elements is also recommended. The City of Buffalo has a fully developed master plan for LaSalle Park that addresses these objectives. Likewise, improvements would meet the WCI goals of improving public access, natural environment, and transportation efficiency. The project is planned to be implemented in phases and is partially complete.

Front Park Restoration

Restoration of this historic Olmsted Park has been a recurrent proposal in the planning legacy with strong public support and obvious payoffs for dramatic waterfront visual access. Views of Lake Erie from Front Park are spectacular, described by Olmsted as "approaching art." The long term vision for Front Park includes the restoration of the park and contiguous Fort Porter, the return of the landscape connection to the waterfront, and the cultural tourism marketing of this historic Olmsted landscape. Consistent with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy 20-Year Restoration and Management Plan, the brick park building that impeded the view of Lake Erie and the Niagara River was demolished in 2004. Replanting of the Commodore Perry statue grounds is pending. In conjunction with National Scenic Byway Seaway Trail design elements, interpretive signs have been created for the park, which will give residents and visitors a sense of the area's history.

Niagara Bluffs Redevelopment

The stretch of Niagara Street from the Peace Bridge north to Forest Avenue presents some important development opportunities, as identified in several planning processes. The position of Niagara Street atop a high bluff overlooking the river offers breathtaking waterfront views. The historic brick building stock, reasonably priced, provides an opportunity for commercial development, as suggested in some of these plans. Current transportation access is good. Some specific proposals have been made to deal with traffic and parking. In addition, incorporation of Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway design elements is proposed. However, most proposed

industrial uses would conflict with the LWRP, which suggests the development of "water-dependent" or "water-enhanced" uses in the area to capitalize upon scenic views. This concept needs much further development, although private sector plans may already be well-advanced.

Grant/Ferry Business District

The viability of the Grant/Ferry business district is closely linked to the waterfront's mid-Niagara corridor and the Scajaquada Expressway Grant Street interchange. The district has significant potential for development as an important neighborhood-to-waterfront gateway. It is already an important shopping area with more than ninety stores and 300,000 square feet of retail space, similar in size to a small suburban shopping mall. Investments in this area could both create a needed linkage with the waterfront (the entrance to Broderick Park on Squaw Island is just a few blocks away) and build the local retail economy. Several studies have been conducted and some programs are in place. Additional efforts in this area are warranted.

Connecticut Street Business District

The Connecticut Street business district and its adjacent neighborhoods are the subjects of intense planning by the West Side Planning Collaborative. The Connecticut Street Association has forged alliances with the Collaborative, neighborhood block clubs, West Side Neighborhood Housing Services, and D'Youville College to encourage housing initiatives and economic development. Currently designated as a City of Buffalo "Live Zone," Connecticut Street is also in the Empire Zone and the Federal Renewal Community. While the most recent public investments there have been residential, new street lights are forthcoming. The basic infrastructure of a neighborhood shopping street remains, with some remaining retail activity. A Market Analysis has been completed by BERC and is being used as a blueprint for future economic development. A push-cart pilot project called the New World Street Market will be held this summer to capture the diversity of the area by offering ethnic food and wares. Connecticut Street, like Massachusetts Avenue, connects almost directly to the Peace Bridge/Front Park area. Its redevelopment is expected to strengthen neighborhood links to the waterfront.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

Virginia/Carolina Interchange Revisions

The Virginia/Carolina interchange of the Niagara Thruway is often seen as an unfortunate rupture in the neighborhood fabric of the Lower West Side. A variety of proposals have been made to repair that rupture, including reconfiguration of on- and off-ramps, reestablishment of perpendicular streets, and development of a new park. Reconfiguration of the interchange would facilitate improved access to the waterfront across the Niagara Thruway, and would calm traffic entering and exiting the neighborhood. Improvements should capitalize upon Niagara Street's status as part of the Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway. Modifications to the interchange could be accomplished without major changes in the alignment of the Thruway itself. Significant further development of this concept is required to move forward.

Lower Niagara Street Redevelopment

The section of Niagara Street between Porter Avenue and City Hall, and especially the section between Carolina and Maryland, has been the focus of a very large number of proposals focusing on commercial revitalization and streetscape improvements, with some residential development. The centerpiece of these proposals, a new Tops Market, was opened in 2003. However, further commercial development, new housing construction, and public infrastructure amenities are needed to fulfill goals of waterfront economic development, neighborhood revitalization, and rationalization of city

center transportation infrastructure. As with other Niagara Street projects, incorporation of Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway design elements is encouraged.

Lower West Side Neighborhood Improvements

A variety of proposals have been made for the residential areas of the Lower West Side focusing on housing rehabilitation, infill construction, public infrastructure investments, and traffic calming. The Lower West Side is another important near-waterfront neighborhood that will benefit from physical revitalization, economic development, and stronger connections to the waterfront. Housing design guidelines have been fully developed, but need stronger implementation. Traffic calming proposals have been discussed extensively in the community. Some public investments have been made. However, both short term coordination and longer term development of improvement concepts are needed.

Projects for the Black Rock/ Riverside / Scajaquada sub-area connect the Scajaquada Creek bike path to the Black Rock Canal.

Black Rock / Riverside / Scajaquada

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

George Washington Park/ Niagara Street Reconstruction

This linear park, with accompanying streetscape improvements, is a great example of a modest project that has made a major difference in how the City connects to the waterfront. George Washington Park provides an opportunity to look across the barrier that is the I-190, providing visual access to one of the great vistas on the Niagara River. Redesigned crosswalks on the busy main thoroughfare civilize the street and strengthen the connection between the neighborhood and the water. The incorporation of Seaway Trail design elements such as daffodil planting has also been proposed.

George Washington Park is a linear green strip that separates the I-190 from Niagara Street in Riverside.

Ontario Street Boat Launch/ Cornelius Creek Park

A range of improvements has been made at this site over the past ten years, expanding public access and enhancing public amenities. These include investments in the Ontario Street boat launch, the Niagara Street/Ontario Street intersection, and extensions of the Riverwalk at Cornelius Creek Park. These have helped take great advantage of a modest opportunity to provide public access to the waterfront and connection to the adjacent neighborhood. Further improvements, especially better landscaping and more sensitive paving at the boat launch, are worth investigating, particularly where such elements reinforce the Park's entrance from the Seaway Trail.

The Ontario Street Boat Launch is one of the few public boat access points in the City.

The north end of Squaw Island is one of the newest parks in the city, built on a remediated site between the Niagara River and Black Rock Canal.

Squaw Island Park

Development of a park on the north end of Squaw Island has been a persistent demand by waterfront advocates for more than fifteen years and a frequent proposal in the waterfront planning legacy. In 2001, the City of Buffalo designated the property as public parkland. The DEC has completed the remediation of contaminants associated with the use of the island as a landfill. Investments in parking and pathways have been made. Additional funding stabilized surface soils with vegetation, limited unauthorized vehicular access to the site, provided limited passive park furnishings, provided improved access from and design improvements to the Seaway Trail/Niagara Street corridor. Public access to the park through Buffalo Sewer Authority property is also desired. Completion of this project is a major victory for waterfront public access, environmental quality, and recreational opportunity.

Towpath Park its at the foot of Hertel Avenue along the Niagara River.

CURRENT WORK

Riverside Park Restoration

Planning work spanning two decades has repeatedly recognized the importance of Olmsted's Riverside Park in providing physical and visual access to the Niagara River, as well as the need to mediate the relationship between the park and I-190. Significant progress has been made between 1995 and 2002 in implementing a master plan for redevelopment of the park, Olmsted's last design in Buffalo. The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy 20-Year Restoration and Management Plan calls for the restoration or interpretation of the historic minnow pond area of the park and the creation of an amphitheater near the original center axis of the park. A number of proposals have also been made to improve connections between the park and the Riverwalk on the other side of the I-190. A large-scale deck might be too costly, but an improved pedestrian bridge would be very welcome. Finally, incorporation of Seaway Trail design elements has been proposed.

Foot of Hertel Avenue

This site encompasses the Watergate apartment towers, the publicly owned Towpath Park, and Rich Marina. Both the apartments and the marina are owned privately. The first phase of work on Towpath Park is complete and partial funding for the completion of the park master plan has been received. Extensions of the Riverwalk at this site are also complete. This is another example of how public access to the waterfront has been achieved by piercing the "wall" that is the I-190 Thruway. However, past planning work identifies much greater potential for this site. Park development needs a push; physically integrating housing, a marina and public park uses demands exploration; and more intensive development should be considered. Incorporation of Seaway Trail design elements has also been proposed.

Tonawanda Street Corridor

Considerable planning work has gone into redevelopment of old railway and industrial properties along Tonawanda Street. These would appear compatible with other projects, such as the River Rock industrial park. More importantly, development of this land will provide an opportunity for uses that are not water-dependent or water-enhanced to relocate away from the immediate waterfront. These will be predominantly industrial, but some opportunity for residential development also exists. This site is central to meeting the economic development and transportation improvement goals of the Waterfront Corridor Initiative.

Riverside Park, one of Olmsted's last parks for the city, is undergoing restoration. This draft plan for interim improvements is one of a series of alternatives being explored by the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy. (Source: The Urban Design Project and Trowbridge & Wolf, PC)

Delaware Park

Delaware Park straddles both the Scajaquada Expressway and its namesake, the Scajaquada Creek, some distance inland from the Niagara River. A fully developed master plan has been prepared for Buffalo's greatest Olmsted park and implementation is ongoing. Preliminary restoration of the 1914 Parkside Lodge and the creation of the signature Rose Garden playground have been completed. In 2004, the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy began improvements to the "Parkside Perimeter" designed to "create a beautiful Olmstedian landscape first impression to visitors to Delaware Park and its neighboring cultural institutions and to demonstrate the visual impact of park improvements to those who travel this corridor as part of their daily routine (more than 20,000 cars drive on Parkside Avenue every day)."

Restoration of the Rumsey Woods shelter is expected to follow. The park is a participant in the Olmsted Crescent, a coordinated marketing effort for geographically concentrated arts, culture, and heritage resources. In addition, the Scajaquada Corridor Study and possible redesign may have major positive impacts on both the park environment and transportation efficiency.

Plans are also being developed for the restoration of Delaware Park, the largest of Buffalo's Olmsted Parks. The Urban Design Project and the UB Center for Computational Research have developed large interactive computer models of all the parks to assist in the planning effort.

EMERGING PROJECTS

Scajaquada Creek Clean-Up

Because Scajaquada Creek is located along a heavily developed transportation corridor and has been highly manipulated, water quality, hydrologic regime, wildlife habitat, and overall stream health have been seriously degraded. Two projects have been completed to improve the health of the Creek channel: the separation of the Creek from Hoyt Lake in the late 1970s to reduce the amount of raw sewerage entering the lake, and the remediation of contaminated sediments located beneath the Scajaquada Expressway in 1999. Today, the Creek remains an impaired water body with much work to be done. The 2002 Scajaquada Creek Management Plan developed by a Watershed Advisory Council provides management strategies, goals, and action items to restore and protect the ecological quality of the watershed. In addition, some consideration has been given to extending coastal zone management regulation to Scajaquada Creek, and this should be pursued.

Tonawanda/Ontario Business District

The business district surrounding the intersection of Tonawanda and Ontario Streets has been designated by BERC as a city "Live Zone." Redevelopment of commercial uses in this near-waterfront location can help achieve the goals of economic development and improved neighborhood/waterfront connections. A program is in place and action is pending. The potential for the neighborhood is worthy of further effort.

H.H. Richardson Restoration

Located between the Scajaquada Expressway Grant Street and Elmwood Avenue exits, the Buffalo State College and H.H. Richardson-designed Buffalo State Hospital complex constitute an important regional heritage and educational resource area. This area has a number of pending projects that can help contribute to meeting economic development, neighborhood improvement, and public access goals.

Governor Pataki allocated $100 million in his 2003-2004 budget to rehabilitate the historic twin-tower Buffalo State Hospital complex and support efforts to find new uses such as a combined Frederick Law Olmsted School Complex, a new Burchfield-Penny Art Center, and a Buffalo architectural museum. In addition, the State Dormitory Authority has announced a $4 million down payment on court-ordered preservation of the facility. Renovations to McKinley Vocational High School and Campus West are included in the Joint Schools Construction program. The economic revitalization of the site is connected to the success of the Olmsted Crescent, a coordinated marketing effort for geographically concentrated art, cultural, and heritage resources generally located along the Scajaquada Creek and Expressway.

Niagara Street

Several different plans have offered the suggestion that the section of Niagara Street between Tonawanda and Austin has significant potential for redevelopment. It is currently a mix of industrial, commercial, retail, and residential uses with some vacancies. Some of the businesses are marine-related (and therefore water-dependent) and the segment is a portion of the City's Seaway Trail route. BERC has designated the strip as a "Live Zone" and action is pending. The potential is worthy of further effort.

LONGER TERM VISIONS

Harbour Place

Successive planning efforts have identified the boating facility now known as Harbour Place Marina as an important site for development, including high-density residential and mixed-use, as well as maritime uses. Now home to a popular riverside restaurant, the site is privately controlled, and so are future development opportunities. However, Harbour Place Marina holds further potential for expanding both water-dependent and water-enhanced uses, including housing. The Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative has a potentially fruitful role to play in building the public-private relationships required to integrate private developments into a public waterfront.

Canal Locks

Several major waterfront plans have proposed expanding public access to the Black Rock locks area through extensions of the Riverwalk and connecting across the canal to Squaw Island. These development concepts have also included residential and mixed-use projects at the site. Improved site and trail design could mitigate the current isolation of the site from Niagara Street and local neighborhoods, serving economic development, public access, neighborhood/waterfront linkage and recreation goals. Involvement of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who operate the locks, would be crucial. Recently the Army Corps of Engineers repaired the Canal wall along Squaw Island to seal leaks along with other minor improvements. A canal locks interpretive facility should be given serious consideration.

Grant/Ferry Neighborhood

There are no projects proposed in the planning legacy for the neighborhood that extends north of Forest Avenue and west of Grant Street toward the Scajaquada Expressway and Scajaquada Creek. In recent years, the neighborhood has suffered significant housing deterioration, abandonment, and demolition, as well as conversion of property for surface parking for Buffalo State College. In the City of Buffalo classification system, Grant/Ferry is a "rebuild" neighborhood. Given the proximity of the site to both the creek and the highway, as well as the opportunities for industrial and educational campus development, a longer term look is warranted.

peace bridge gateway improvement

The Shared Border Alternative sketch, looking east from the Niagara River, was developed to illustrate how this option would bring visitors into Buffalo through a large welcoming park.

A Great Neighborhood and Grand Gateway for Buffalo

A Community Vision for the City of Buffalo

When England's Prince of Wales came to Buffalo in 1927 to help dedicate the Peace Bridge, the newly-constructed span connected a grand and prosperous city with a magnificent scenic route to Niagara Falls. In the nearly eight decades since then, commerce and tourism have expanded, traffic has increased, and the Peace Bridge plaza has become a harsh, harried, and unhealthy portal to our city, region, and nation. Past investments in public infrastructure have too often advanced transportation efficiency at the expense of community quality of life. But as we contemplate further such investments, we recognize that it doesn't have to be that way. We can have efficient transportation across the Peace Bridge to facilitate trade and access within and through our bi-national region, as well as create and maintain great neighborhoods and a grand gateway to Buffalo and the United States.

The Peace Bridge Expansion Project is one of extraordinary importance for Canada and the United States, for Southern Ontario and Western New York, and for Fort Erie and Buffalo. Facilitating the flow of goods and visitors and promoting investment and our bi-national region's economic health depends in significant degree on the success of this project. For the City of Buffalo, as for our neighbors in the Town of Fort Erie, the stakes are even higher. The bridge and its operations greatly affect the environmental quality and community character of adjoining neighborhoods, as well as the health of our interrelated economics.

As a partner with the Town of Fort Erie and the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority (PBA), the City of Buffalo has a responsibility to make sure that both short term and long term investments in bridge and plaza meet the needs of not only those who will cross the bridge, but of the immediate neighbors of the bridge and plaza and, indeed, of our entire community. In short, bridge expansion must provide both a grand international gateway and great neighborhood for the City of Buffalo. Nothing less will do.

A Great Neighborhood

Making a great neighborhood at the Peace Bridge Plaza means taking the first steps needed to restore a distressed area, including: reducing the negative air quality impacts of bridge and plaza operations, particularly caused by idling trucks; reversing the damaging health impacts related to degraded air quality; reducing traffic and noise levels or mitigating their impacts; and providing an attractive and effective buffer between bridge operations and the neighborhood. It also means minimizing the amount of land that bridge-related facilities take up in our city's parks and residential areas, limiting displacement of residents and businesses, avoiding demolition of homes and buildings, and minimizing the loss of taxable property.

A Grand Gateway

Creating a grand gateway means choosing a bridge and plaza scheme that provides an opportunity to make a bold statement in architecture and landscape and to announce to arriving visitors that they are coming to a great city. It also means preserving and opening great vistas to Downtown, neighborhoods, parks, and waterfronts for those who come to our city. Just as importantly, creating a grand gateway means making efficient links to the regional highway network and providing connections to the local street system that are clear, legible and inviting.

The best scheme for the U.S. Peace Bridge Plaza will also ensure greatest protection of historic architecture and cultural resources, including: the recovery and interpretation of the site of Fort Porter; maximum preservation and recovery of public parkland, especially Front Park; and improvement of connections between neighborhoods and parks, parkways, and recreational pathways.

"Vintage Buffalo" photographs of the Peace Bridge as gateway to the United States reveal a scenic route to Fort Erie and Niagara Falls from a prosperous Buffalo. (Source: The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy)

Finally, ensuring that a new Peace Bridge and plaza contribute to making a great neighborhood will mean maximizing the opportunities for local economic development by capturing bridge-related business potential at or near the plaza, reinforcing Niagara Street as a gateway to the city and especially Downtown, preserving land and building stock nearby for redevelopment, and providing efficient transportation.

The Goal: Shared Border Management (SBM)

Our collective future in a global economy based on trade and transportation will be shaped by the marriage of cooperation and technology that is already taking place at the Peace Bridge border, transforming how we manage one of the busiest U.S./Canada borders. Both the U.S. and Canada have concluded that Shared Border Management is superior to the old way of doing things, not only for those who live near the U.S. Peace Bridge Plaza, but also for those across Southern Ontario and Western New York, and indeed, for people across our two nations.

Expanded bridge capacity alone will not solve our cross-border transportation problems. This has been clearly demonstrated by the recent experience at the Blue Water Bridge linking Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, where traffic volumes outstripped capacity soon after completion of an expansion project. What is critically needed is cooperation, reform, and modernization of border management facilities and operations. Therefore we need to plan for the inevitability of Shared Border Management. While we don't know when Shared Border Management will be accomplished or even exactly how it will work, we need to choose a course of action that best preserves our options for achieving our vision and goals under SBM.

In keeping with the request by the City of Buffalo to prepare alternative plaza scenarios, we developed designs for three alternatives: North Plaza, South Plaza and SBM. The North and South Plaza alternatives replicate customs on both sides of the border and each has severe drawbacks. However, the South Plaza will preserve more of the existing neighborhood while we continue to work for Shared Border Management. Choosing the North Plaza option would not foreclose the possibility of a Shared Border Management solution in the future, but it would destroy one of the main reasons for pursuing it – to preserve and improve our neighborhoods.

The Peace Bridge is the International Gateway in the Buffalo Corridor.

Interim Plaza and Neighborhood Improvement Plan

Reconciling Short Term Needs and Long Term Vision

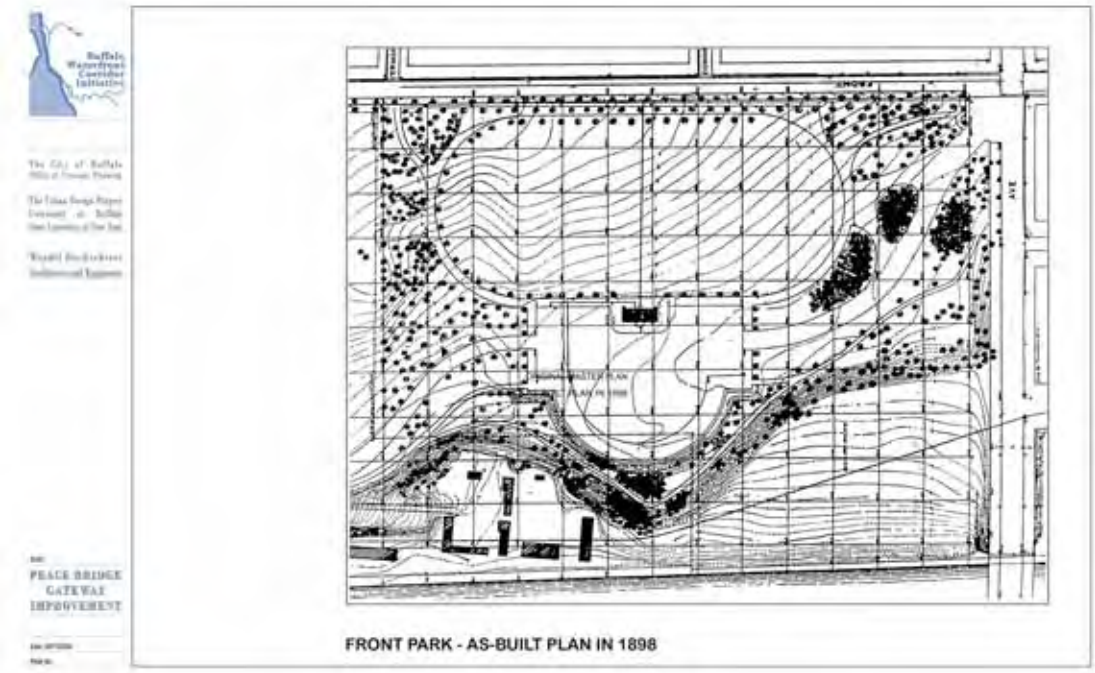
The Peace Bridge holds a strategic position in the region, connecting the United States and Canada, the Niagara Peninsula and Western New York, and the Town of Fort Erie and the City of Buffalo. The connecting highway network joins the economic and population centers on the two sides of the bridge. The current plaza condition, however, is a harsh environment composed of paved surfaces. It has virtually no landscaping and lacks any feature to screen the neighborhood physically and visually from the plaza operations.

This aerial shows the existing conditions at the Peace Bridge in 2002.

Time is of the essence for our neighboring city and town, for our greater bi-national Niagara region, and for our two nations, in building a great bridge and plaza. Yet, we also must remember that the decisions we make today will be with us for the rest of this century. We have time to make the right decision and that time is now.

Changes need to be made immediately on the bridge while longer term decisions are being made. Nevertheless, short term decision making must be consistent with the pursuit of the long term vision. Specifically, the investment and design decisions made in conjunction with interim improvements must not impede long term efforts to achieve the ultimate goal of Shared Border Management and must ensure that all actions have minimal negative impacts on communities adjacent to the bridge plazas.

Our community's vision for a great neighborhood and a grand gateway can be advanced in the short term within the framework of interim plaza improvements planned by the PBA. Improved landscaping on the plaza, added landscape features between bridge plaza operations and Front Park, removal of excess pavement from the park, development of an architecturally attenuated wall to provide a visual screen between bridge operations and the neighborhood, and creation of a new Busti Avenue boulevard and linear park are practical ways for the City and the Public Bridge Authority, working in cooperation, to achieve the community vision.



As-built drawing of Olmsted's Front Park illustrates the park design prior to the construction of the Peace Bridge and the creation of the I-190. (Source: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy)

Toward this end, the City crafted its vision for a greener, safer, and more attractive interim plaza with related neighborhood improvements. This work formed the basis for reaching a consensus on the interim improvements, formalized by a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the PBA and the City. What follows is graphic description of the accepted enhanced design concepts and consensus plan for interim improvements to the U.S. Peace Bridge and plaza accepted by the City and the PBA. As indicated earlier, the modest investments planned for the interim plaza should not be used to justify long term choices for the design and location of the plaza. They are intended to be temporary.

Interim Improvements

The City has worked with the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority to reach consensus on a strategy for interim improvements to plaza, bridge operations, facilities, and the neighborhood. These improvements will be in place until the time a new bridge and plaza are completed. As presented in detail in of Volume 4 of the *Queen City Waterfront* (Part 1: Interim Plaza), the strategy temporarily leaves the plaza in its current location, would require no additional acquisition of property, and would make no major changes in highway access to and from the bridge on the U.S. side.

The improvements to the existing Peace Bridge Plaza, demonstrated in this plan, are the basis for the Interim Strategy as outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Buffalo and the Public Bridge Authority.

The existing bridge-related operations occupy 14.2 paved acres in the City of Buffalo, directly adjacent to a vital urban neighborhood. Directly south of the bridge plaza is historic Front Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The "As-Built" plan for the park (dated 1898) shows that the park originally sloped down to the Erie Canal before the highway, I-190, took its place. Baird and Moore Drives did not exist, there were no tennis courts, and the park was connected to the neighborhood at Vermont Street.

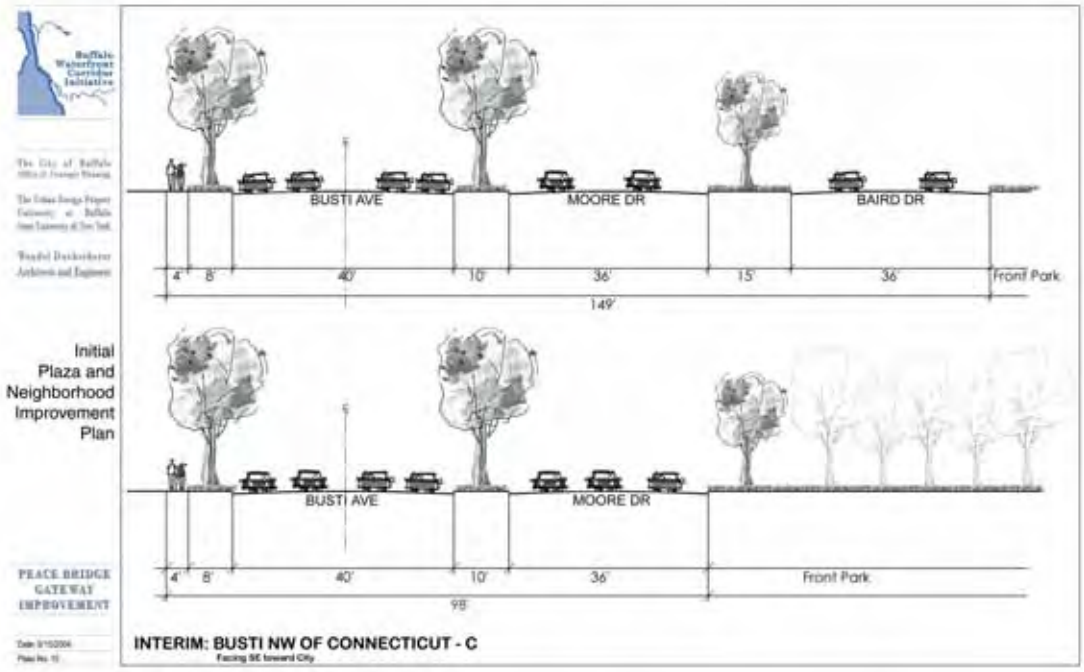
The consensus plan provides for modest landscaping improvements on the bridge plaza, a reconfigured intersection at Moore Drive and Vermont Street, and the development of a new duty free shop along the west side of Busti Avenue near the Vermont Street intersection. These PBA improvements are confined to the bridge plaza itself.

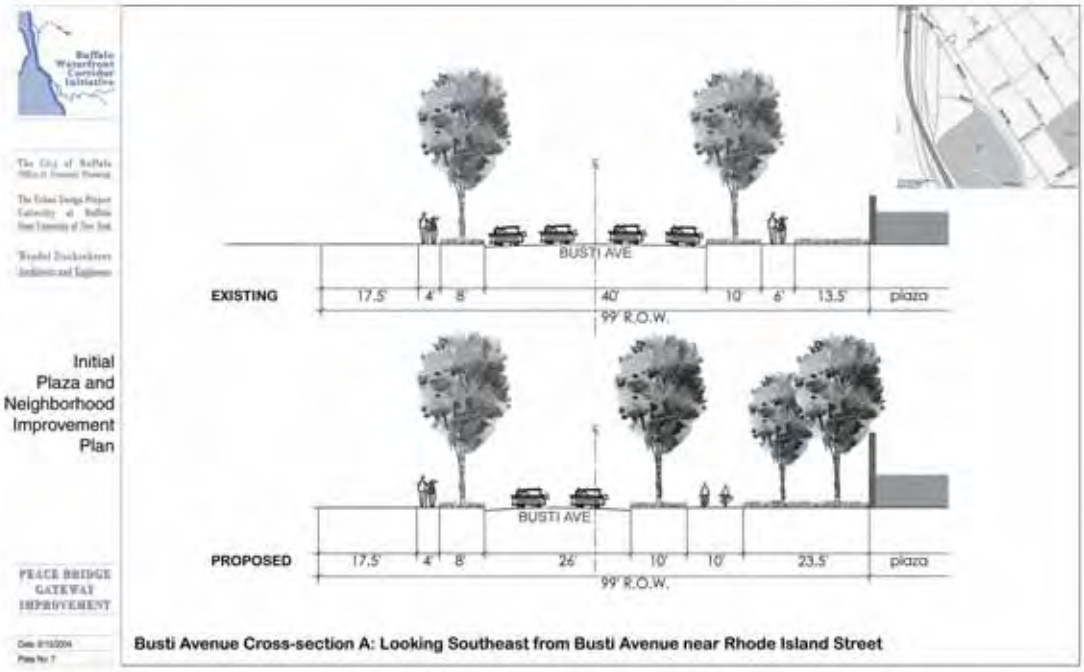
The City of Buffalo's vision for the interim plaza includes a continuous linear park screening the plaza along Busti Avenue, connecting Front Park to Massachusetts Avenue and north to Olmsted's Bank, and reclaiming more of Front Park.

The City's Neighborhood Improvement Plan area covers lands adjoining the bridge plaza along Busti Avenue as well as Front Park. The initial proposal for enhancements leading to the City's plan would remove redundant roadways connections in and around the bridge area, and eliminate the tennis courts at the northeast corner of Front Park. The plan calls for a slender wall along the western side of Busti Avenue to create an attractive and complete visual buffer between the plaza and the adjoining neighborhood. It also calls for the buffer to serve as a linear park, using a narrower Busti Avenue north of Vermont Street with enhanced landscaping and a recreation path.

The improvements to Front Park would be significant. There would be green space recovered by the consolidation of Moore and Baird Drives. Discussions since the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement indicate a preference for consolidating Baird and Moore Drives, employing the western road (Baird Drive) in lieu of Moore Drive to offer a further buffer to the neighborhood in the interim period. Those discussions also suggest an intention to retain two of the four tennis courts.

The Neighborhood Improvement Plan also calls for a tree-lined boulevard on Busti and Porter Avenues. It also calls for the demolition of existing vacant and boarded housing lining Busti Avenue between Rhode Island and Vermont Streets. This allows for the development of an effective landscaped separation between the neighborhood and the plaza in the area of the most intensive bridge-related operations.





These section studies compare the existing and draft proposed conditions on Busti Avenue near Porter Avenue (top) and Busti Avenue at Rhode Island Avenue (bottom) leading to the final agreed alignment.

Long Term Plaza and Neighborhood Improvement Alternatives

The *International Waterfront Gateway Neighborhood Improvement Program* (Volume 4 of the Buffalo Corridor Management Project report) includes a detailed description of the three long term plaza alternatives as developed schematically by the PBA and as further refined by the City of Buffalo design team.

Adjustments to these basic infrastructure diagrams generated the PBA were made by the City of Buffalo design team to include: additions to buffer areas; improvements to buffer treatments; concepts for arrival buildings; improvements to adjacent parks; and changes in local street connections, including schematic designs for traffic circles, boulevards, and other celebratory street elements.

The decision to adjust each of the PBA alternatives was driven by a desire to make sure that each one was as good as it could be on its own terms in order to provide a clear and fair comparison. We are basing our comparison on only those schemes developed in the Buffalo Corridor Management Project as refined by the City design team to simplify the evaluation and avoid any confusion among different versions of basic schemes offered by the PBA. All of these changes were made explicitly to fulfill the community vision and goals as enunciated by Mayor Masiello.

Shared Border Management Alternative

The Shared Border Management alternative will provide a dramatic gateway for visitors in which they arrive simultaneously in both the city and in a park. The alignment developed

The draft shared border site plan above was developed to demonstrate some of the advantages of a shared border accord including a smaller plaza footprint, good integration with local roads and the I-190, and substantial reclamation of Front Park. The final shared border alignment will depend on continuing design development.

for this alternative was provided by the PBA. In this version, travelers would come directly off the bridge and into a grand ceremonial circle at Rhode Island and Niagara Streets. Meanwhile, to the south or to their right would be visible a recovered Fort Porter site and a rehabilitated Front Park.

Land Area: Of the long term alternatives considered, the Shared Border Management alternative makes by far the smallest footprint on the City – about fifteen acres with its buffers – occupying only the north end of the existing plaza and extending just to Seventh Street between Massachusetts Avenue and Rhode Island Street. There would be only ramps and connecting roadways – no plaza facilities – with the exception of a possible auxiliary truck parking area and a U.S. duty free shop.

Building Program: The City of Buffalo design team has proposed that the duty free shop and a visitor center building, along with possible bridge-related office space, be constructed as paired, linked, or integrated buildings at the corner of Busti Avenue and Rhode Island Street. These buildings would frame the urban gateway into the city at a proposed "Friendship Square." The duty free shop would be accessible from the plaza; the visitor center would be entered around the block on Busti Avenue.

Circulation system: As in all three long term alternatives, connections to the city street system through Front Park on Baird and Moore Drives would be eliminated. Other highway connections would be similar to existing arrangements. Ramps from I-190 northbound and to I-190 southbound would be shifted slightly to the north. A new ramp

The view of Buffalo at the gateway to the United States from the Peace Bridge as proposed in the initial shared border proposal.

from I-190 southbound would cross the Thruway at about Rhode Island Street, enter the plaza area, and provide access to local streets as well as to the bridge.

Park and Buffer Improvements: The Shared Border Management alternative would make possible the full recovery and interpretation of the site of the historic Fort Porter. It would also allow for the most thorough restoration and replanting of Frederick Law Olmsted's Front Park including reestablishment of Sheridan Drive; providing a full roadway loop into the park at Porter, through the park and out of it at Busti Avenue and Rhode Island Street; restoration of the historic Hippodrome; construction of a new Lake View House in the center of the park; and development of a full network of pedestrian trails and bikeways through the park and connecting it to adjacent neighborhoods.

This alternative would also allow for creation of a new park area just north of the duty free site between Busti Avenue and Seventh Street just south of Massachusetts Avenue. It is possible that The Bank, an Olmsted designed partial circle at the northern end of Busti Avenue, could also be rehabilitated. It would no longer connect with Busti Avenue, although it would with Massachusetts Avenue, and it remains to be demonstrated whether views from the spot would be obstructed by the new or the existing bridge.

An alternative version that is currently under development by the PBA is a Shared Border Management scenario with a more northern landing for the plaza. This alternative will be reviewed by the City design team when made available by the PBA.

South Plaza Alternative

The South Plaza alternative without a shared border accord provides a gateway into the city, an urban arrival, but without the recovered open space in Fort Porter offered by Shared Border Management. Travelers would enter the plaza much as they do now, but would join the city street system along a new boulevard on Vermont Street connecting directly to Niagara Street opposite the northwest corner of the Connecticut Street Armory.

The South Plaza Alternative without the benefit of shared border management requires the use of more land to handle border security and customs.

The view of the South Plaza Alternative without shared border management.

Land Area: The South Plaza alternative would make the second largest footprint of the long term alternatives, at about thirty-five acres with buffers, more than twice the size of Shared Border Management. The South Plaza would occupy all of the existing plaza plus most of two city blocks facing Busti Avenue between Vermont Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The City design team has proposed taking at least one additional half-block – the west side of Seventh Avenue between Vermont and Rhode Island Streets – and approximately three additional acres to serve as buffer between the neighborhood and the plaza. There is a difference between the PBA and City's design team on the Buffalo footprint. The City's concepts for the South Plaza alternative are elaborated in site plan and bird's eye view perspective format.

Building Program: Similar to the Shared Border Management scheme, the City design team has proposed the construction of paired, linked, or integrated duty free and visitor center buildings with possible bridge-related office space to be located at Busti Avenue and Vermont Street. These would also frame the urban entry into the local street network, in this case at Vermont Street.

Circulation System: The northeast and south-east corners of the Vermont Street/Niagara Street intersection are occupied by a church and the Armory, respectively. The entrance into the City in the South Plaza scheme would be a boulevard with direct view of the neighborhood and these historic structures. Construction of the connecting boulevard along Vermont Street would also require the demolition or relocation of a number of sub-stantial and architecturally significant homes.

Connections to and from the highway system would be similar to the existing arrangement. However, a ramp from the southbound I-190 will loop over the Thruway just short of the Porter Avenue bridge and enter the plaza from the south. From there it would be possi-ble to reach both the bridge and the city street system along Vermont Street. Commercial traffic would be directed onto Niagara Street.

Park Improvement: Recovery of the Fort Porter site will not possible under the South Plaza alternative and only a partial restoration of Front Park can be accommodated. It will be possible to restore original plantings, construct a replacement for the Lake View House, and restore the Hippodrome. The drive through the park can only be partially restored to connect with Busti Avenue at Vermont Street instead of Rhode Island Street. It seems unlikely that The Bank can be rehabilitated under this alternative.

Buffer and Landscaping Improvements: There are some enhanced buffer treatments in the South Plaza alternative, including a City-proposed buffer of secondary truck parking along the eastern edge of the plaza, and improved plantings between the south end of the plaza and Front Park.

North Plaza Alternative

The North Plaza alternative provides what we might think of as a gateway into the park. Visitors arriving in Buffalo would travel through inspection facilities and around a ceremonial traffic circle in a new park element before entering either the local street system or the highway network.

Land Area: The total footprint of this project, including the plaza and associated park buffer areas, would be approximately fifty-two acres, and would occupy a roughly triangular site north of Rhode Island Street, west of Prospect Avenue, and extending all the way to the Thruway. In addition, a narrow strip of land between Niagara Street and the Thruway north to Albany Street, now occupied by industrial warehouse buildings, would be included for secondary truck parking. This would require the demolition of these 19th century structures.

Building Program: The City design team has proposed a new visitor center that would be located at the new circle at Rhode Island and Niagara Streets and punctuating the Niagara Street axis that runs all the way from downtown Niagara Square. A new duty free store would be constructed within the bounds of the plaza. Both visitor center and duty free store, however, would be designed to a high standard intended to provide identity and character to the maximum extent possible.

Circulation System: The North Plaza option, as enhanced by the City design team, would create a new traffic circle inside the plaza at Massachusetts Avenue and the current Niagara Street. Most traffic to and from the bridge would be routed around this circle. The plan would also create a new ceremonial circle at Niagara and Rhode Island Streets and establish a new Niagara Parkway in the Olmsted tradition northwesterly from there along the current alignment of Prospect Avenue. This new parkway would form the eastern edge of a new park space about two city blocks in size that would serve as a buffer between bridge and plaza infrastructure and the adjacent neighborhood.

Highway connections to and from the plaza would remain much as they are now. However, a new ramp from the southbound I-190 to the plaza would be created to replace the Porter Avenue exit, which would be removed. Entrances to the plaza from the northbound I-190 would be simplified and relocated slightly to the north, expanding the margins of Front Park to the west.

Park and Buffer Improvements: Under the North Plaza alternative, as with the Shared Border Management option, Frederick Law Olmsted's Front Park would be fully rehabilitated including replanting; reestablishment of Sheridan Terrace Park Drive; providing a full roadway loop into the park at Porter, through the park and out of it at Busti Avenue and Rhode Island Street; restoration of the historic Hippodrome; and development of a full network of pedestrian trails and bikeways. The full footprint of historic Fort Porter would also be recovered for interpretation under this scheme, although the restoration of The Bank seems unlikely. There are also opportunity costs for the North Plaza alternative. It would occupy the Niagara Bluffs on Niagara Street and preclude the reuse of that industrial building stock.

The North Plaza Alternative without shared border management requires the largest land area to accommodate border security and customs as seen in the plan (top) and sketch (bottom).

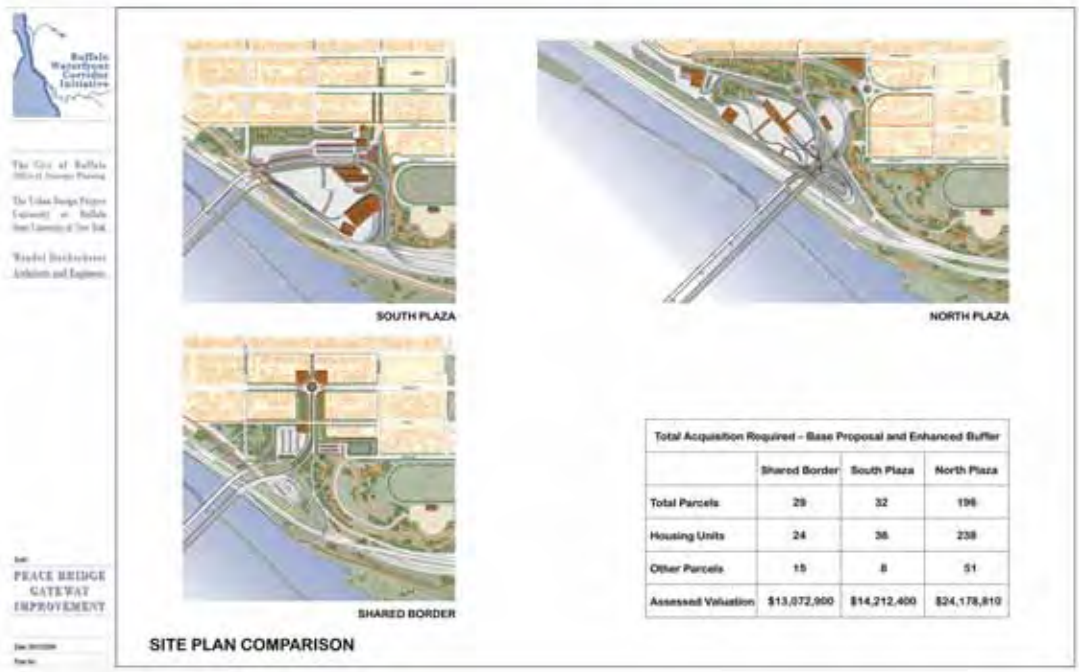
Evaluation of Alternatives

The three long term alternatives can be evaluated point by point against the goals enunciated by Mayor Masiello in outlining our community vision for a new bridge, plaza, and international gateway. In general and specifically, the new arrangements must help us make a great neighborhood and create a grand gateway.

Make a Great Neighborhood

Occupies the least land area: Minimizing the amount of land area required for Peace Bridge-related activities on the U.S. side, including the footprint of the plaza and enhanced buffer areas, is a basic goal of the City for three fundamental reasons. First, the amount of available land is very limited on the U.S. side (about seventeen acres compared to fifty-one on the Canadian side). Second, the plaza is already directly adjacent to and encroaches on a densely populated and vibrant residential neighborhood. Third, the area contains highly sensitive park and historic resources.

Shared Border Management is clearly the best option for minimizing the amount of land consumed by the Peace Bridge Project. The footprint for the Shared Border Management option is about fifteen acres. The footprint for the South Plaza alternative is roughly thirty-eight acres, including several acres added by the City design team for enhanced buffering. The North Plaza alternative would consume the most area, about fifty-two acres, including nearly six acres added to provide a deeper buffer between the bridge and plaza and the neighborhood.



Total Acquisition Required – Base Proposal and Enhanced Buffer			
	Shared Border	South Plaza	North Plaza
Total Parcels	29	32	196
Housing Units	24	36	238
Other Parcels	15	8	51
Assessed Valuation	$13,072,900	$14,212,400	$24,178,810

The site plan comparison of the alternatives demonstrates the benefit of a shared border accord for the City of Buffalo.

Minimizes acquisition and preserves local tax base: Likewise, the Shared Border Management alternative is superior in terms of costs of acquisition and impact on the tax base of the City of Buffalo and Erie County. Shared Border Management will require the taking of only one block that is now occupied by the Episcopal Church Home, and will allow the renovation and resale of vacant buildings already acquired by the PBA on Busti Avenue between Vermont and Rhode Island Streets. The South Plaza alternative will require acquisition of two full blocks, including one of very solid housing. The North Plaza alternative will require acquisition of all or part of eight city blocks.

Actual acquisition and demolition costs can only be roughly estimated at this point. However, loss of assessed valuation of property could be used as a surrogate for at least order of magnitude costs. In any event, the relative loss of tax base is clear in the comparison. As shown in Table 2, the total assessed valuation lost under Shared Border Management is about $13 million. The lost in the tax base under the South Plaza option is somewhat higher, at $14.2 million. Implementation of the North Plaza option would cost nearly twice as much in lost tax base – about $24.2 million. The loss in annual property tax revenues for the City of Buffalo alone ranges from a low of about $162,000 in the Shared Border Management Alternative to $299,000 in the North Plaza Alternative (constant fiscal year 2004 dollars). Adding in the losses to the school district doubles these figures.

Table 2: Loss of Assessed Valuation by Long Term Alternatives

	Total Loss in Assessed Valuation[1] ($ millions)		
	Shared Border Management	**South Plaza**	**North Plaza**
Base PBA proposal	$12.7	$12.9	$21.9
Enhanced buffer	$0.4	$1.3	$2.3
Total value	**$13.1**	**$14.2**	**$24.2**

Source: City of Buffalo, Office of Strategic Planning.

[1] Fiscal Year 2004-05 data.

Preserves housing: Parallel with the discussion above and as shown below in Table 3, the Shared Border Management alternative would have the least impact on housing, requiring the demolition of about twenty-four units. The South Plaza option would require demolition of about fifty percent more housing – a total of thirty-six units in all. The North Plaza option would require far more demolition and cause far more displacement, with an estimated 238 units razed.

Table 3: Housing Unit Loss by Long Term Alternative

	Number of Housing Units Demolished		
	Shared Border Management	**South**	**North**
Base PBA proposal	15	11	161
Enhanced buffer	9	25	77
Total units	**24**	**36**	**238**

Source: City of Buffalo, Office of Strategic Planning.

It may be argued that the housing to be eliminated in the North Plaza scheme is in poorer condition and has a relatively short economic lifespan, especially in relation to the housing to the south, which is in good condition and has relatively high value. On the other hand, the housing to the north is more affordable to lower income families who are likely to have fewer options in housing than their more affluent neighbors to the south. Whatever ranking is given to the North and South Plaza alternatives in this criterion, they suffer by comparison with the Shared Border Management option.

Improves air quality: While a growing flow of both trucks and automobiles and their exhaust is expected at the Peace Bridge over time, the greatest threat to air quality is believed to be from diesel-powered trucks forced to idle their engines while waiting in lines for processing. The impact of idling trucks is distinctly local, while the overall impact of exhaust may be more broadly distributed. In short, ensuring a free flow of trucks is the most important factor in improving neighborhood air quality.

In this regard, we are confident that detailed technical studies of air quality impacts will show that Shared Border Management will be vastly superior to the other alternatives in improving air quality in neighborhoods adjacent to the Peace Bridge. When trucks are inspected on the Ontario side of the border, local air quality impacts on Buffalo's West Side should be negligible. Even with improvements in processing under the North or South Plaza schemes, diesel trucks will still spend significant time idling in a plaza immediately adjacent to densely-populated Buffalo neighborhoods. The Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement will indicate whether the North or South Plaza alternative is preferable in this regard. The South Plaza option would hold trucks on the far west side of the plaza while the North alternative would move these further to the north, away from one neighborhood and toward another.

Improves parks and connects them to neighborhoods: An evaluation of the impact of the alternatives on parks and their connections to neighborhoods depends on a judgment of whether more is always better and a consideration of the relative costs of additional park land. The Shared Border Management alternative would allow a full restoration of The Front, full recovery of the site of Fort Porter, and a thorough connection of parks to neighborhoods via trails and pathways. It would also make possible the creation of a relatively small new green space near Busti Avenue and Massachusetts Street.

The North Plaza option would likewise provide restoration of The Front and recovery of Fort Porter. It would also create a new park space about two blocks in size located between the proposed Niagara Parkway and the plaza infrastructure. This space would provide additional neighborhoods with direct connections to a park-trail system, although at the cost of razing parts of those same neighborhoods.

The South Plaza option does not allow recovery of any of the Fort Porter site and would limit restoration of The Front to the current acreage. Among other things, this would mean that Sheridan Drive could not be restored to its full original length. On balance, the Shared Border option seems best because it provides the most parkland at the least cost to neighborhood fabric.

Protects historic assets: Four categories of historic assets are affected by the several plaza alternatives: historic architecture, historic streets, neighborhood fabric, and Fort Porter. In this regard, Shared Border Management is, again, clearly preferable. It allows for full recovery of the Fort Porter site, requires demolition of the fewest historic structures, preserves historic street patterns (except for part of Busti Avenue), and leaves the most neighborhood fabric intact.

The North Plaza also promises full recovery of the Fort Porter site and avoids most of the National Register eligible properties in the neighborhood. It would also allow for the preservation of the Episcopal chapel at Busti Avenue and Massachusetts Street. However, it does threaten to remove up to eight blocks of city fabric and would disrupt the historic route of Niagara Street.

The South Plaza would require the demolition of the chapel and won't allow recovery of the Fort Porter site, which would remain covered with asphalt. Moreover, the South alternative would take many historically significant residential structures. In this calculation, the Shared Border Management option is clearly preferable.

Provides economic development opportunities: Much of the new economic development potential to be generated by Peace Bridge expansion is expected to be regional in nature. It won't only be captured in the immediate neighborhood of bridge and plaza, but it will occur to the benefit of the larger metropolitan area. There are, however, three local sites where economic development opportunities may present themselves: at the point where local streets connect with the plaza; along the bluffs just to the north on Niagara Street; and along Porter Avenue. The impact on two of these sites is approximately the same under each alternative. All three long term schemes will allow for limited bridge-related commercial development at the point where the plaza connects to the local street network. All three will allow for mixed-use and residential development consistent with the Olmsted theme along Porter Avenue. Only the Shared Border Management and South Plaza alternatives, however, protect the substantial redevelopment potential in buildings and sites along the bluffs above the Niagara River just to the north of the bridge. The North Plaza option would obliterate this valuable industrial-warehouse building stock and the mixed-use potential now being explored by several developers.

Make a Great Gateway

Ensuring that visitors arriving from Canada experience a great gateway as they enter Buffalo will depend heavily on the quality of architectural and landscape design that will follow schematic design of the plaza itself. That said, the alternatives provide distinctly different opportunities for shaping a great international gateway.

The South Plaza alternative, as discussed above, provides for a distinctly urban gateway, with no expansion of open space, a constrained street connection to the city, and a small footprint for new architecture to accommodate the duty free shop and visitor center.

The North Plaza alternative, in contrast, provides for a gateway in a park, with a new expanse of green space, as well as the recovered Fort Porter site. Although landmark architecture for the duty free and visitor center are possible, this gateway would be marked more by the new Niagara Parkway and associated open space. But this alternative also faces a special challenge. Because the North Plaza alternative requires a different configuration of ramps and roads, its infrastructure would have a significantly higher profile and require special efforts to mitigate a "wall of concrete" image.

The Shared Border Management alternative, meanwhile, with a direct connection to Niagara Street and a fully recovered Fort Porter site, provides both an urban and park-like entrance to the city. While these are aesthetic judgments, Shared Border Management seems preferable to either the North Plaza or South Plaza alternatives.

Opens or preserves great views of the city: Bridge crossings are memorable for the sweeping and sometimes surprising views they offer the traveler. Such views can contribute immensely to the image of the city that newcomers hold in their minds. A detailed analysis of potential views for arriving visitors must await more detailed designs of bridge, ramp, and plaza infrastructure.

Even a preliminary assessment, however, can identify some of the differences in views offered by the three alternatives. The South Plaza alternative would provide visitors with views to the south, including Downtown, pieces of the waterfront, and some of The Front. It is likely, however, that plaza structures as well as landscape buffers will obscure views of the park and neighborhood once visitors descend to grade. The North Plaza, for reasons discussed above, would provide potentially higher-altitude views of the city, but because automobile passengers would turn to the north off the bridge, no views of Downtown or the waterfront would be available. The Shared Border Management alternative is preferable because it would provide views to the south similar to those provided by the South Plaza alternative, but without plaza buildings in the way.

Provides clear connections to the City: Mayor Masiello's vision for the bridge and plaza includes a goal that visitors be able to come to the city as easily as possible. This means that clear and direct connections between the plaza and the city street grid are important. Shared Border Management would provide a simple, visible, and direct entrance to the city along Rhode Island Street and marked at Niagara Street by a grand circle. The South Plaza alternative would provide a similar parkway-like entrance along Vermont Street. The North Plaza alternative requires a rather circuitous route from the bridge, through inspections, around an interior traffic circle and then into the street system at several points along Niagara Street. It is likely that many visitors would find the North Plaza alternative a confusing – if not dizzying – way to enter Buffalo.

Provides efficient links to highway network: All three alternatives provide direct connections to and from I-190 in both directions. Only the circuitous connections of the North Plaza option hold any significant drawbacks.

Comparison Summary

The Shared Border Management alternative fully meets all of the goals of the community vision. It consumes the least amount of land, homes, and businesses; improves the quality of life in the neighborhood by substantially lowering the air pollutant levels, especially asthma-causing particulates; allows for recovery of the Fort Porter site and restoration of The Front; provides a dramatic entry to the City; and protects historic resources in the neighborhood. All of the other alternatives suffer by comparison.

The South Plaza option causes significantly more damage than Shared Border Management. It displaces additional neighborhood areas, prevents the recovery of the Fort Porter site, and routes local car and truck traffic through the neighborhood. However, it does leave open the potential for the inevitable Shared Border Management without the destruction of multiple blocks of Buffalo neighborhoods and without occupying a large expanse of Buffalo waterfront.

The North Plaza alternative allows for a full restoration of The Front and recovery of the Fort Porter site, and it provides a broad landscape buffer between the plaza and adjacent neighborhoods. It does so at a cost of all or part of eight city blocks of existing neighborhoods. It also would occupy the bluffs above the Niagara River on the west side of Niagara Street all the way to Albany Street – a site which has some of the most compelling views and some of the most promising economic development possibilities of any place in the City. In many ways, it would be the most costly of all the alternatives, including in terms of construction dollars.

Table 4

Evaluation criteria	South Plaza	North Plaza	Shared Border Management
MAKE A GREAT GATEWAY			
A grand entrance	Poor	Good	Good
Great views	Poor	Fair	Best
Good links to city streets	Fair	Poor	Best
Good links to highways	Good	Good	Good
Transportation efficiency	Fair	Fair	Best
Way-finding	Good	Fair	Best
MAKE GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS			
Protect housing	Good	Poor	Best
Preserve tax base	Fair	Poor	Fair
Improve air quality	Fair	Good	Best
Protect historic assets	Poor	Fair	Good
Improve parks	Fair	Good	Good
Connect parks, neighborhoods	Fair	Best	Good
Develop the economy	Fair	Poor	Fair

Conclusion: Shared Border Management

The governments of the U.S. and Canada have signed an agreement to have Shared Border Management at the Peace Bridge and are currently negotiating how this can be implemented. SBM is a reasonable and viable goal for handling the movement of people and goods across the United States/Canada border, and it could be argued that SBM should be the only acceptable and justifiable course of action. The heavy burden of any negative effects of an international bridge crossing of far-reaching economic significance for both the U.S. and Canada falls squarely and inequitably upon the shoulders of the residents of the adjoining urban neighborhoods in the City of Buffalo and Fort Erie. The adverse environmental effects of the bridge and plaza operations on the health and quality of life of our city's neighborhoods are unacceptable now, and if not ameliorated, will continue into the future. The U.S. environmental review process does not limit project alternatives to those that are currently allowed by national legislation, but embraces alternatives that serve as catalysts for changes in federal legislation to further environmental goals.

Shared Border Management, like the open borders ushered in by the formation of the European Union (EU), is vastly superior from local, national, and international perspectives. Shared border management was one of the first milestones achieved by the EU and the agreements addressed the needs of fifteen diverse member countries. In contrast, such an agreement for the Peace Bridge requires the cooperation of only two very similar countries. Many of the impediments to Shared Border Management – including legal

restrictions, administrative differences, and funding issues – have been self-created. Conversely, many of the factors which promote an integrated border management approach can be developed as the new agreement demonstrates.

There is another bridge called the Peace Bridge. It crosses the Jordan River just south of the Sea of Galilee and links Israel and Jordan. This Peace Bridge shares customs facilities for the movement of goods across the border. This fact should give us pause. The success of shared border management in this much more challenging political environment, with diverse cultures and different languages, shows us that it can be done.

Shared Border Management is well within our reach. We have the opportunity to put Western New York and Southern Ontario on the cutting edge of cross border management between our two great nations. And what better place is there to show the world a new model for cooperation than our own Peace Bridge?

Next Steps

As of August 2005, there appears to be a consensus: Shared Border Management will be pilot tested at the Peace Bridge International Gateway. Alternative design development by the Public Bridge Authority has progressed to now include three design alternatives that will be evaluated in the U.S. environmental review process. That review, together with a bridge selection process, will lead to the creation of the grand international border that citizens of Canada and the U.S. will be proud of for generations to come. Each of the proposals illustrated in August of 2005 are subject to further revisions and public discussion as the Public Bridge Authority concludes its design and environmental review process.

Draft North Alignment: A draft proposal (August 2005) for the Shard Border Management Alternative moves the bridge landing to the north of the initial City of Buffalo investigation. (Source: Fort Erie and Buffalo Public Bridge Authority)

Draft South Alignments: Two alternatives (August 2005) for the Shared Border Management Alternative leaves the bridge landing to the South. (Source: Fort Erie and Buffalo Public Bridge Authority)

Waterfront Gateway Nodes: Analysis, Design Guidelines and Proposals

Introduction

One of the primary transportation aims of the Queen City Waterfront is to improve access to the waterfronts of the City of Buffalo for cars, trucks, bicycles, and pedestrians. The City is blessed with miles of waterfront, but there are too few places where people can actually access and experience it.

As part of the scope of work in the *Buffalo Corrifdor Management Plan*, five "gateway nodes" were selected for analysis and development of design guidelines and project proposals. The first was the International Gateway at the Peace Bridge, which, because of its central importance for the future of Buffalo's waterfront, has been called out for in-depth inquiry and the development of alternatives for public discussion. (See Volume 4).

Four other nodes were identified that warranted an initial analysis of the potential for expanding transportation access to the waterfront and development of conceptual proposals. Two of these were also proposed for the development of an Expanded Project Proposal (EPP) – a required step for any project proposal to be considered for funding. (See Volume 6 and Volume 7 for more detailed information on this work). These gateway nodes were selected because they met many, although not necessarily all, of the following criteria:

The waterfronts in Buffalo are lined with highways; the access points over and under these major roadways are limited as seen in the above graphic.

- They hold potential for increasing waterfront accessibility;
- Their conditions are susceptible to change and ready for implementation;
- They show potential for improving transportation efficiency;
- They have potential to support economic and/or community development;
- Potential projects are supported by community input; and/or
- Projects were identified in the history of plans.

A systematic analysis of the City's western edge allowed planners to identify a number of locations that met the criteria outlined above and warranted further analysis for the development of transportation-oriented projects consistent with expressed community priorities. Four sites were selected for this study, and two of these – Porter Avenue and Erie Street – were assessed as most likely to be implementable in the immediate future.

There were two primary nodes and two secondary nodes explored as a part of the Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative Project.

Primary Nodes for EPP Development

Porter Avenue is a key location for waterfront accessibility transportation improvements. It is adjacent to proposed improvements in the Peace Bridge area, which will be reinforced by investments in the Porter Avenue gateway and further economic development of the area. Porter Avenue connects the City to the very edge of the water. As one of Olmsted's parkways, it is also an integral part of the long-planned Front Park rehabilitation. There have been a long series of proposals for improvement; it is time to implement them.

Erie Street is a crucial link between Downtown Buffalo and the waterfront. Indeed, it had connected the waterfront with Main Street at Shelton Square from the first platting of the city until the early 1970s, when the two blocks between Franklin and Main were closed to vehicular traffic and converted into a pedestrian-only zone. Now, in support of ongoing redevelopment of the waterfront and in response to the demand for improved access, it is proposed that these two blocks of Erie Street be reopened to traffic to provide a restored visual and physical connection to the waterfront. It is also proposed that the outer sections of Erie Street, west of the I-190, be realigned along their original axis as a means to enhance the visual connection from city to water and to rationalize the delineation of development parcels in the Waterfront Village.

Secondary Nodes for Conceptual Development

The Virginia/Carolina Interchange from I-190 to Niagara Street presents another important opportunity to improve transportation efficiency and waterfront access. Traffic flow to and from the Interstate needs to be improved, especially for traffic leaving the Thruway and turning onto Niagara Street. This interchange will become even more important if access to and from I-190 is eliminated at Porter Avenue as part of Peace Bridge Plaza reconfigurations. Too many

factors are still in flux to warrant development of an EPP. However, initial analysis and conceptual proposals suggest that modest changes in the configuration of the interchange could improve traffic flow, preserve pedestrian environments, and allow for new connections from the neighborhood to the waterfront.

The Scajaquada Creek/Niagara Street Interchange also holds significant potential for improvements in transportation and access. It includes part of the new bike trail and the site of Squaw Island Park. The location is still in transition and in need of temporary and long term improvements of transportation infrastructure. A proposal from a private developer to build an international bridge at this site suggests that decisions about public improvements be held in abeyance. Site analysis and proposal development, however, suggest that some minor improvements can be made to improve access.

Community Participation

The selection, analysis and proposal development for the gateway nodes was embedded in a larger process that included the analysis of past plans and their community participation components, as well as an ongoing process of community engagement conducted as part of the development of *Queen City Waterfront*. The latter process included three large-scale public meetings which brought attention to the waterfront agenda, helped set priorities for action, and reviewed specific projects for near-term implementation.

A more specific review of work in progress toward EPPs for Erie Street and Porter Avenue was conducted with stakeholders in each of those areas. In the case of Erie Street, consultant staff interviewed individual property owners or their representatives to hear their general concerns about the concept, and later reviewed a more developed proposal before a small group meeting to which these same stakeholders were invited.

For Porter Avenue, the process involved an initial meeting with a coalition of neighborhood associations and another session with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy to discuss the starting concept. This was followed by a second meeting to invite this same range of stakeholders to review and critique the proposals.

Urban Design Guidelines for Buffalo's Waterfront

Four basic goals for gateway nodes were established. These goals are consistent with LWRP policies, and are based on a review of past plans and guided by public participation in this project. Design guidelines for each of the four nodes are intended to support achievement of these goals to:

- Improve **access** to the waterfront;
- Promote community **and economic development**;
- Enhance **transportation efficiency**; and,
- Support **historic preservation** efforts.

These guidelines are intended to supplement existing guidelines and City regulations. For example, guidelines here for Porter Avenue are based on the Olmsted Parks Conservancy guidelines for historically appropriate design and site features. These guidelines are also consistent with the city's Tree Ordinance and relevant sections of the City of Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan The *Queen City in the 21st Century,* and *The Queen City Hub* downtown plan.

Node Analysis and Proposals

Work on all four nodes included both description and analysis, a brief description and history for each site. Historic maps and photographs were collected to identify the extent of change over the years, and photographs of the current conditions were taken. For each of the sites, maps were generated to display information in the following categories:

1. Existing conditions
2. Land use (commercial, residential, cultural, parks, vacant, and military)
3. Open space (parks, designated open space, vacant land, and brownfields)
4. Historic sites, landmarks, and cultural resources
5. Location of projects from the planning inventory
6. Distribution of public, quasi-public and private lands
7. Opportunities and constraints

These maps are available in Volume 5 of the final report.

Goals for the Gateway Nodes

Based on this analysis and in collaboration with stakeholders in each area, specific goals were established for each of the two primary nodes, Porter Avenue and Erie Street.

For Porter Avenue, the goals are to:

- Reinforce Porter Avenue as one of Buffalo's great Olmsted parkways;
- Connect Buffalo's park system to Front Park and beyond to the water's edge; and
- Create a grand civic street that acknowledges its educational, cultural, and public amenities.

For Erie Street, the goals are to:

- Connect Downtown to the waterfront for cars, pedestrians, and bicycles;
- Restore the historic Ellicott radial street plan; and
- Expand the City across and under the Skyway bridge approach and I-190 to the water's edge.

Specific design guidelines were developed for the primary nodes consistent with the site-specific goals above, and in keeping with the overarching goals of the project, including improvements in **access**, support for **economic development**, improvements in **transportation efficiency,** and **preservation of historic resources.**

Porter Avenue: Guidelines and Concept Proposals

Porter Avenue has the potential to be one of Buffalo's primary access points to the waterfront. It crosses I-190 at a critical point and offers an opportunity to connect neighborhoods to parks and to the water's edge. A bike path along the shoreline already exists, but it needs to be connected to the City – specifically to bike lanes that run along Richmond Avenue as part of the Olmsted Park and Parkway system.

Porter Avenue also presents an opportunity both to highlight the public or civic character of the activities along its right-of-way, and to connect these activities to each other. As shown in the map of "Opportunities and Constraints," Porter Avenue features extensive public lands, institutional uses, and waterfront parks. Appropriate treatment of the streetscape can do much to connect and enhance these uses.

Porter Avenue is adjoined by significant green space and civic structures.

Porter Avenue runs from the Niagara River to Symphony Circle at Richmond. (Source: NYS Orthoimagery Program, 2002)

Porter Avenue could be designed to look as gracious as Richmond Avenue, one of Olmsted's great streets.

Urban Design Guidelines for Porter Avenue

Access:

- Reinforce connections from Symphony Circle at Richmond Avenue and North Street through the International Gateway at Niagara Street and continue Porter to the water's edge through clearly marked access for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- Use trees, lighting plan, and street walls to frame the vista to the water with uninterrupted sight lines.
- Maximize public access directly to the water along the Black Rock Canal at the foot of Porter Avenue with a small urban park and at Cotter Point through increased activity such as boating and fishing access and through development such as the Great Lakes Research Center.
- Define the bridge over I-190 as a gateway through the use of bridge art, lighting, and landscaping.

Community Development:

- Reinforce Niagara Street where it intersects with Porter Avenue as the international gateway to Downtown through streetscape improvements, directional signage, and urban-density redevelopment.
- Over time, promote the replacement of low-density auto-oriented businesses on Porter Avenue with urban street-front development, including multi-story and mixed-use buildings with ground floor commercial and upper housing and offices.
- Develop water-dependent and water-enhanced uses within the coastal zone as consistent with the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

Transportation:

- Explore eliminating Thruway on- and off-ramps and Peace Bridge access through Front Park to enhance the Olmsted character of Porter Avenue.
- Connect DAR Drive from LaSalle Park with access road to Cotter Point to create a clear four-way intersection with Porter Avenue.
- Minimize further expansion of surface parking lots, allow on-street parking and eliminate existing lots where possible, and add parking near the foot of Porter Avenue.
- Provide clear vehicular access from highways to the local street network through improved signage to I-190, the Peace Bridge, and routes to Downtown.
- Provide alternative access along street connections to the waterfront including transit connections, designated bike-ways, and safe and friendly pedestrian paths.

Historic Preservation:

- Reestablish the Olmsted parkway pattern and connections to and from historic Front Park through reconfiguration of pavements, sidewalks, and landscaping.
- Reinforce Olmsted design standards through the use of historically appropriate lighting fixtures and patterns, street furniture, paving, etc.
- Celebrate and interpret Porter Avenue's Olmsted history, its Erie Canal history including the route of the canal and the canal bridge foundations, along with other historical elements, including the West Side Rowing Club, the Colonel Ward Pumping Station, and the Bird Island Pier.

Concept Design Proposals

Three alternatives were considered by stakeholders and planning staff. First was to "do nothing." Second was to provide a three-lane roadway with one moving lane in each direction, a center lane for turning, and no on-street parking. The third was to create a four-lane road with one lane of traffic in each direction and one lane of parking on each side.

The wider boulevard with parking was deemed to be most in keeping with the Olmstedian character of Porter Avenue. The four lane configuration is proposed to be combined with an off-road recreational path extending from the Shoreline Trail and along Front Park to Busti Avenue. At Busti Avenue, the off-road path would connect to an on-road bike lane which continues until it connects at Symphony Circle to the dedicated on-street bike lanes that extend down Richmond Avenue.

The overall plan for the right-of-way between the waterfront and Niagara Street was developed by looking carefully at five segments that had a different enough character to demand a slightly different treatment. The segments are identified as:

A. Waterfront to DAR Drive

B. DAR Drive to I-190 Bridge

C. I-190 Bridge

D. I-190 Bridge to Busti Avenue

E. Busti Avenue to Niagara Street

A multi-use trail system is proposed for Porter Avenue.

Different conditions along Porter Avenue demanded that it be divided into segments for design proposals.

Segment A – Waterfront to DAR Drive

Features include terminus at end of Porter Avenue, perpendicular parking on Colonel Ward's Pumping Station side, and an improved bike path.

Segment B – DAR Drive to I-190 Bridge

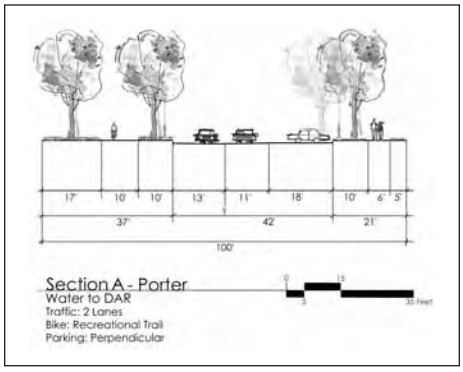
Features include rationalized connection between DAR Drive and access road to Cotter Point, narrowed road with two rows of trees, and a bike path.

Porter Avenue Segment A Plan

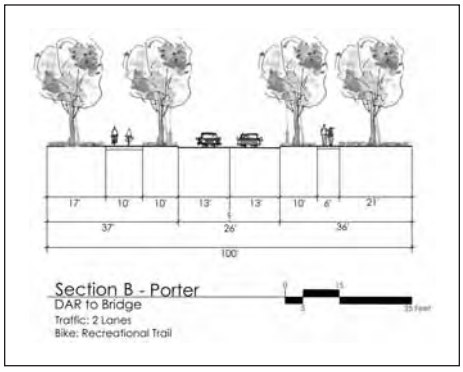
Porter Avenue Segment B Plan

Porter Avenue Segment A Rendering

Porter Avenue Segment B Rendering



Porter Avenue Segment A Section



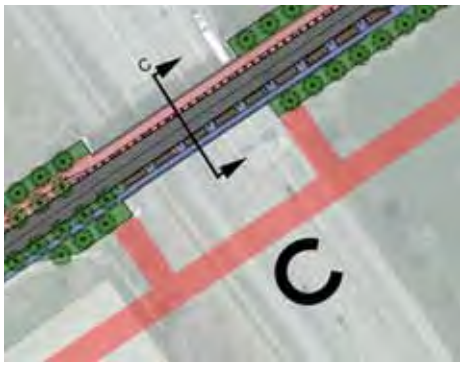
Porter Avenue Segment B Section

Segment C – I-190 Bridge

The bridge is built on a historic foundation that was a part of the Erie Canal, and access to the lower level would make the foundations visible. The roadway on the bridge would be narrowed and the space used for bikeway and walkways with historic lighting features.

Segment D – I-190 Bridge to Busti Avenue

We developed two alternatives in this area: D-1 has a three travel lanes, while D-2 has two lanes of moving traffic and two lanes of parking. Both have a recreational trail and a walkway. Public input and Olmsted guidelines suggest that option D-2 is preferable.

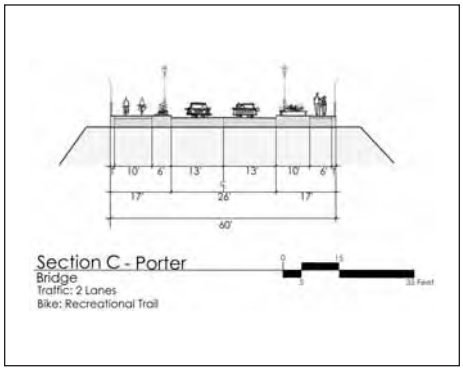


Porter Avenue Segment C Plan

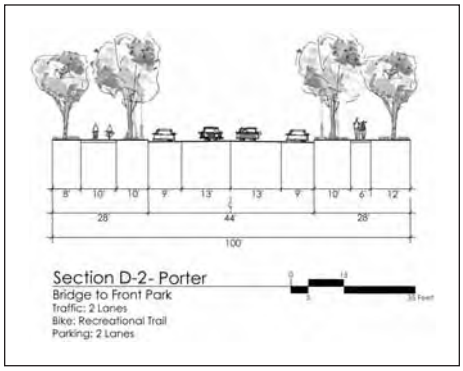
Porter Avenue Segment D Plan

Porter Avenue Segment C Rendering

Porter Avenue Segment D Rendering



Porter Avenue Segment C Section

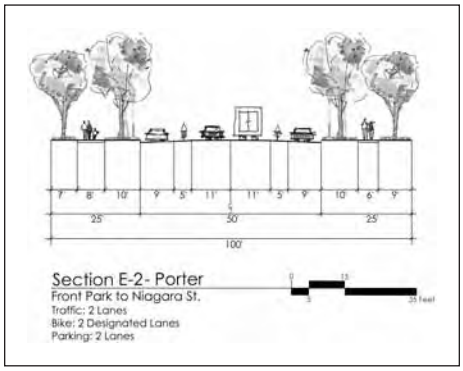


Porter Avenue Segment D Section

Segment E – Busti Avenue to Niagara Street

The road bed here, like in Section "D," has two alternatives: E-2 has four lanes (two moving traffic and two parking), and E-1 has a three lane option. As in the last section, we suggest that alternative E-2 is preferable.

Porter Avenue Segment E Plan



Porter Avenue Segment E Section

The proposed design for Porter Avenue between the Niagara River and Niagara Street maintains the historic street width.

Erie Street: Guidelines and Concept Proposals

One of the primary goals of the Erie Street proposal is to reopen the connection between Main Street in Downtown and the waterfront. The proposed design opens a vista directly from Main Street to the waterfront so that Buffalo is reminded that it is a waterfront city.

The straightening of the western end of Erie Street is suggested to restore the historic radial street pattern and to provide new urban development sites along the realigned street. This proposal for new development, including a modification of the current urban renewal plan, brings the city grid to the water's edge and actually "moves" the city to its waterfront.

An aerial view of Erie Street shows the curve west of the I-190 and the pattern of the original Urban Renewal plan.
(Source: NYS Orthoimagery Program, 2002)

Urban Design Guidelines for Erie Street

Access:

- Provide continuous public access to the water's edge by proposing a fifty foot setback;
- Create a continuous public realm by expanding the urban grid and promoting ground floor commercial development;
- Provide a direct connection from Main Street along Erie Street straight to the water's edge with provision for cars, bicycles and pedestrians;
- Create uninterrupted sight lines from Downtown to the water and frame the vista with trees, lighting and street walls;
- Improve safety and security by improving lighting for cars and pedestrians (especially under bridges) and by promoting ground level activity and round-the-clock occupation of the public realm; and
- Transform bridge underpasses from barriers to gateways through the use of lighting, artwork, signage, and use of a recognizable waterfront marker.

Economic Development:

- Expand development opportunities by extending the urban street grid west beyond the Thruway, creating urban-style development parcels;
- Promote urban densities with multi-story buildings, zero-lot line design, mixed uses, ground floor commercial, and housing or offices above; and
- Develop water-dependent and water-enhanced uses within the coastal zone as consistent with the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

Transportation:

- Create clear vehicular access and provide clear signage to highway connections, including the Buffalo Skyway and I-190;
- Provide clear access for cars along direct street connections from the central business district to the waterfront;
- Minimize parking in surface lots by allowing on-street parking and promoting development of structured parking in mixed-use buildings;
- Provide alternative access along street connections to the waterfront including transit connections, designated bike-ways, and safe and friendly pedestrian paths; and
- Maintain future possibilities for pedestrian bridge or other connections from a reconfigured Erie Street to the Outer Harbor.

Historic Preservation:

- Re-establish Ellicott radial and grid plan and use the historic Erie Street right-of-way from Main Street to the water's edge;
- Reference the Olmsted parkway pattern, where possible, through the use of characteristic double rows of trees;
- Reinforce the Ellicott historic district designation on upper Erie Street through the use of appropriate lighting fixtures, street furniture, and other design details;
- Celebrate and interpret Erie Canal history, including the site of the canal intersecting Erie Street, connections to ongoing Erie Canal Harbor developments, and landscape or water feature treatments of the historic Evans Slip; and
- Maintain urban proportions through zero-lot line development and appropriate ROW to building height relationships.

Concept Design Proposals

Erie Street was divided into three segments for purposes of design:

A. The Buffalo River to I-190 and Perry Boulevard

B. I-190 and Perry Boulevard to Franklin Street

C. Franklin Street to Main Street

The proposal is to return Erie Street to its historic alignment that would require restructuring the Urban Renewal plan.

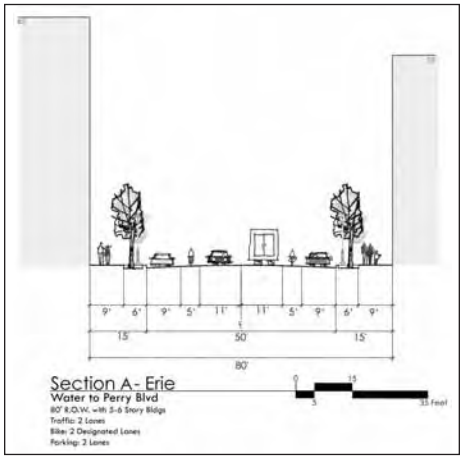
For purposes of design, Erie Street was divided into three segments.

Segment A – The Buffalo River to I-190 and Perry Boulevard

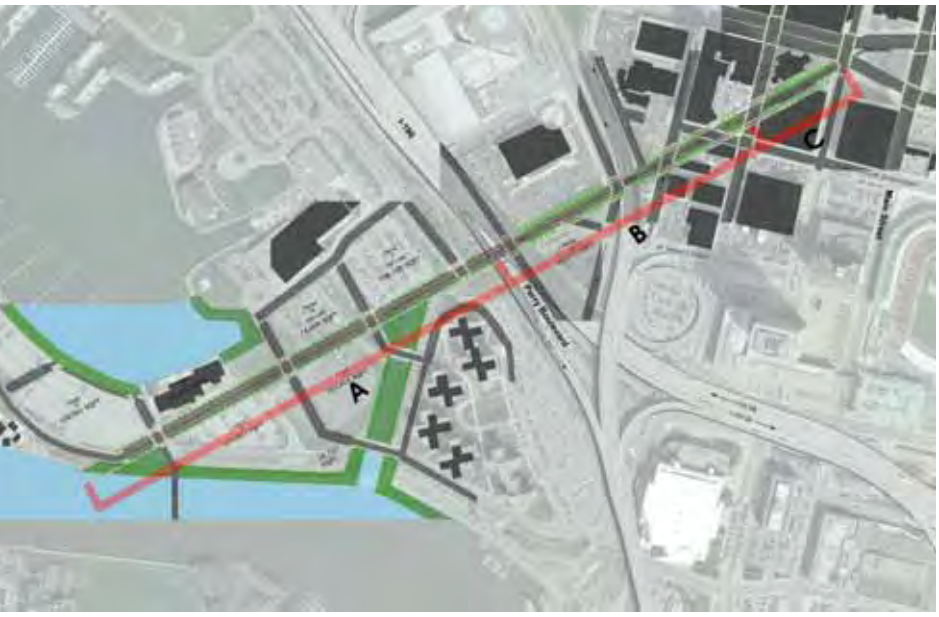
This area has been an Urban Renewal Area with a plan specifying development in a sub-urban manner. The intention is to revise the Plan to facilitate more urban, dense, and taller structures along the newly aligned Erie Street.

Erie Street Segment A Plan

Erie Street Segment A Rendering



Erie Street Segment A Section

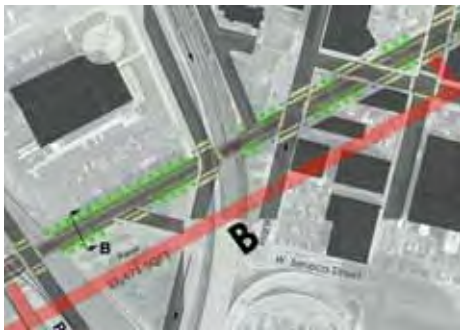


The proposal for Erie Street is to return it to its historic path and directly connect Main Street to the waterfront.

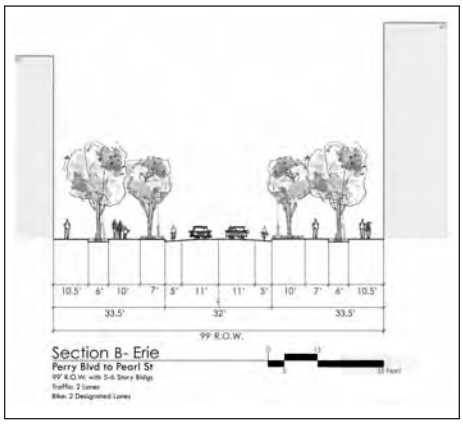
Segment B – I-190 and Perry Boulevard to Franklin Street

The street between the Thruway and Pearl Street includes the area under the bridges. We are proposing that these spaces be redesigned to give a sense of a gateway between Downtown and the waterfront, rather than the current sense of being "nowhere" spaces. This space under I-190 was the former Erie Canal and can be interpreted as such.

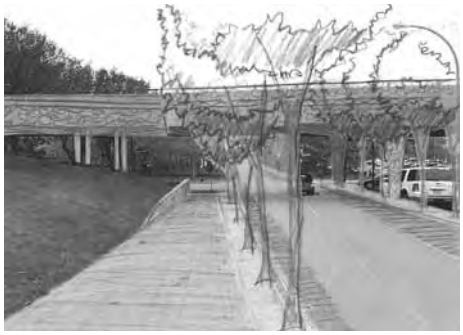
Because of the I-190 and the ramp up to the Skyway, this area is quite complex from a traffic and way-finding perspective. The proposal clarifies traffic movement and also provides signage to ease movement onto I-190.



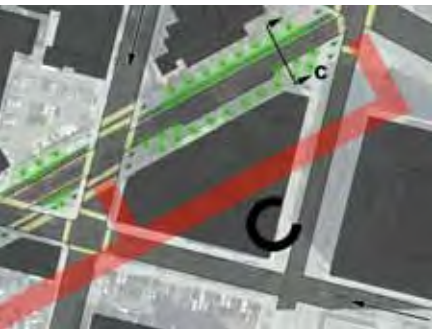
Erie Street Segment B Plan



Erie Street Segment B Section



Erie Street Segment B Rendering



Erie Street Segment C Plan

Erie Street Segment C Rendering

Segment C – Franklin Street to Main Street

This section of Erie Street is the former Sheldon Square where a number of streets intersect and a small urban park, Cathedral Park, is located. Any proposal must address the park-like quality of the street, while at the same time making a clear directional statement about the location of the waterfront.

This area also has commercial property on the south side of the street which require access. This has been addressed with a pull off lane.

Erie Street Segment C Section

The proposal to return Erie Street to its original alignment would permit uninterrupted public access from Main Street to the water's edge. The photograph shows the existing vantage point looking west from the top of the parking garage east of Main Street on Division Street.

A concept sketch looking east from the west end of Erie Street illustrates the proposed density of development due to parcels created north and south of a straightened Erie Street. (Source: Charles Gordon, Architect)

Secondary Nodes

The identification of secondary nodes supports the ongoing transportation planning for the city in a phased manner. These critical intersections should be in the process of preparation for improvements once the primary nodes are underway. Both the Scajaquada intersection and the Virginia/Carolina interchange are important to the efficient traffic flow of the city and offer opportunities for both public access and economic development.

Scajaquada/Niagara Street

The area surrounding the interchange between the Scajaquada Expressway, the I-190 and Niagara Street is extremely complex and demands in depth planning for transportation and urban design. National and international rail lines, limited access highways, local streets, and bike trails all converge in the vicinity of the mouth of the Scajaquada Creek where it enters the Black Rock Channel, former location of the Erie Canal. Here, too, Niagara Street – the city's defining water's edge street – veers to the northwest, while Tonawanda Street heads north into a key industrial, warehousing and transportation district.

Key opportunities identified in the analysis of this area include the potential to:

- Expand public open space and improve access to the bike path, Scajaquada Creek, and the new Squaw Island Park;
- Identify historic resources including the Erie Canal, International Railroad Bridge, and rail-oriented industrial buildings;
- Convert the Scajaquada Expressway to a parkway;
- Improve access from I-190 to industrial areas;
- Rationalize the intersection at Niagara Street, Tonawanda Street, and the on-ramp to the Scajaquada; and
- Improve bike lanes.

The complexity of the Scajaquada Node at the meeting of the I-190, the Scajaquada Expressway (198) and Niagara Street requires ongoing study even while offering opportunities for more traffic efficiency and public access.

Virginia/Carolina Interchange

The interchange between Niagara Street and I-190 along Virginia and Carolina Streets occupies a large swath of the city and provides a key access point from the region to Downtown and the Lower West Side. Already important, this interchange is likely to become even more so if connections to and from I-190 at Porter Avenue are implemented as proposed. A number of opportunities are available to achieve the goals of this project.

Systematic description and analysis of this node suggest the possibility to:

- Remove the I-190 on-ramp from Virginia Street west of Niagara Street;
- Recapture land between the current on- and off- ramps and reconnect it to the neighborhood fabric;
- Rationalize the intersection of the ramps and Niagara Street, currently the site of significant traffic jams;
- Develop safe pedestrian crossings where I-190 ramps meet Niagara Street; and
- Create new connections between Niagara Street, local neighborhoods and LaSalle Park.

Summary

Buffalo, Queen City of the Lakes, has been cut off from its waterfront for many years: first through the industrialization of the waterfront, and more recently by highways. These proposals for gateway nodes offer concrete and attainable ways to reconnect the city and water to improve public access, generate new development opportunities and to improve transportation effectiveness.

The Virginia/Carolina Interchange is one of the busiest I-190 on/off ramps and it offers the potential of a greenway from Niagara Street to the water's edge.

Implementation

Introduction

All Buffalonians who care about the future of their waterfronts know that implementation has been the great stumbling block to achieving the community vision. Many plans have been made, but fewer have been put into action as the review of the planning legacy in this project has shown. As a result, no one who knows the history of Buffalo waterfront planning and development would disagree that implementation is the key to success of the LWRP and to the *Queen City Waterfront,* this strategic plan for the transportation corridor.

At the same time, it is critical to understand the true links between planning and action. Sometimes the issue is framed as one of planning versus action. Instead, we ought to understand planning as the necessary – but not sufficient – prelude to action. Even better, we could understand the entire process as a series of interrelated steps, with clear planning analysis and strong citizen participation leading to good plans which are, in turn, connected to strong public policy, clear budgetary priorities, and well-established processes of coordination among public and private implementing agencies.

The current plan incorporates years of systematic planning analysis and persistent citizen participation to produce consensus planning proposals translated through strong public policy. What remains to be discussed is a process for setting clear priorities, budgetary and otherwise, and to build on the recent experience of interagency coordination toward waterfront plan implementation.

Setting Priorities

It should be obvious that the City of Buffalo can't do everything it wants all at once. Nor can we even do everything we would someday like to do. There won't be enough money under any circumstances to do it all. For these reasons alone it will be necessary to set some priorities about what things are more or less important to accomplish and which things should be done first and which set aside until later.

Beyond the simple limits on action imposed by the scarcity of resources there are other reasons why we should do some things now, others later and still others not at all. Inevitably, these choices about priorities will be made in a political way by elected officials and their designees or, in some cases, by private parties acting on their own. Yet we can identify some principles that can guide our deliberations about priorities.

Finish What We Start

There are many projects identified within this plan that are consistent with its vision, goals and policies, that are well developed in terms of concept, design and development and that will contribute substantially to the improvement of Buffalo's waterfront corridor that are stalled for lack of money or attention. Some, like the LaSalle Park master plan or the Riverside Park restoration are, in fact, partly done. For any and all projects that are in progress or ready to go we must resolve to finish what we start.

Build from Strength

The impact of public investments in the waterfront will be greatest when we connect those investments to one another. This will create the greatest public amenity and leverage the greatest private sector investment. The alternative is to scatter investments in a way that diminishes their impact. This does not mean we should put all of our investments in one place, only that we should think strategically how we move geographically from one success to another.

Make Change Visible

Even small investments can have a huge impact on public perceptions and public use of the waterfront. The creation of the Riverwalk, Scajaquada Path, Buffalo River Greenway, and soon the Outer Harbor Greenway have and will change how Buffalonians see their waterfront. Yet, altogether, these projects will have cost far less than more expensive and ambitious projects.

Hew to Core Values

There will be temptations to use waterfront lands for purposes not recommended by this plan nor allowed by the LWRP. Use of waterfront lands for uses not related to the water will both consume finite resources and spoil other investments. Priority projects must hew to the core values of *public access, environmental improvement, neighborhood connections,* and *water-appropriate economic development.*

Don't Spend It All in One Place

There is a hunger in some quarters for the big project that can change everything. But really big projects can also consume all of our resources and make it impossible to pursue the full breadth of this project agenda. Maybe a "Big Dig" Downtown or an Outer Harbor tunnel are needed. But we must be sure we don't spend all of our money in one such place.

These principles won't tell us in every case what's most important or needs to be done first. But they can discipline our thinking and discussion about priority-setting. They need to be applied in an open and deliberative process that involves relevant decision-makers and the general public.

Next Steps

Although public frustration with implementation of waterfront proposals and projects is deeply justified, there are two elements to the conventional wisdom about waterfront planning that are demonstrably wrong.

First, it is *not* true that nothing has been done to achieve the community vision for Buffalo's waterfront. The inventory of planning and action that is included in this work spells out in great detail the specific steps that have been taken to transform our waterfront in accordance with the community vision.

Second, it is also *not* true that agencies in the region have failed to work together. Recent progress on waterfront projects has been made in large part because of systematic, albeit ad hoc, coordination among municipal, county, state and federal agencies. Project staff at all four levels of government have built strong working relationships and methods of communication that have paid off in tangible achievements.

What is required now is to institutionalize these working relationships so that coordination among cooperating agencies becomes routine. The recent decision to create a special-purpose waterfront agency gives a strong focus to work on Buffalo's Inner and Outer Harbor. This is especially true because the new organization has revenues dedicated to it through the New York State Power Authority Reliscensing Agreement. But all this cannot eliminate the need for ongoing interagency coordination first, because municipal, county, state and federal interests will continue to be involved in waterfront developments, and second, because Buffalo's waterfronts encompass far more than the Inner and Outer Harbor.

The implementation of proposals included in this plan require continued institutionalization of interagency coordination. The agencies that have already been involved in these processes – the City of Buffalo, County of Erie, Empire State Development Corporation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and many others are critical to the success of plan goals.

Conclusion

Buffalo emerged from its waterfronts and Buffalo insists that it will return to the water. Recent history has been marked both by great frustrations and significant achievements. But the future ought to be bright, for the city has much of what is needed to create positive change on its waterfronts: a clear community vision for the future, a strong plan incorporating consensus projects, and a working cadre of implementing agencies.

Appendix A.

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(Taken from Volume 2 of the *Queen City Waterfront* based on the inventory completed in March 2003)

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