



New Opportunities for the Audubon Community

Audubon Development Plan Update

Town of Amherst Planning Department

Town of Amherst Senior Center
June 17, 2025

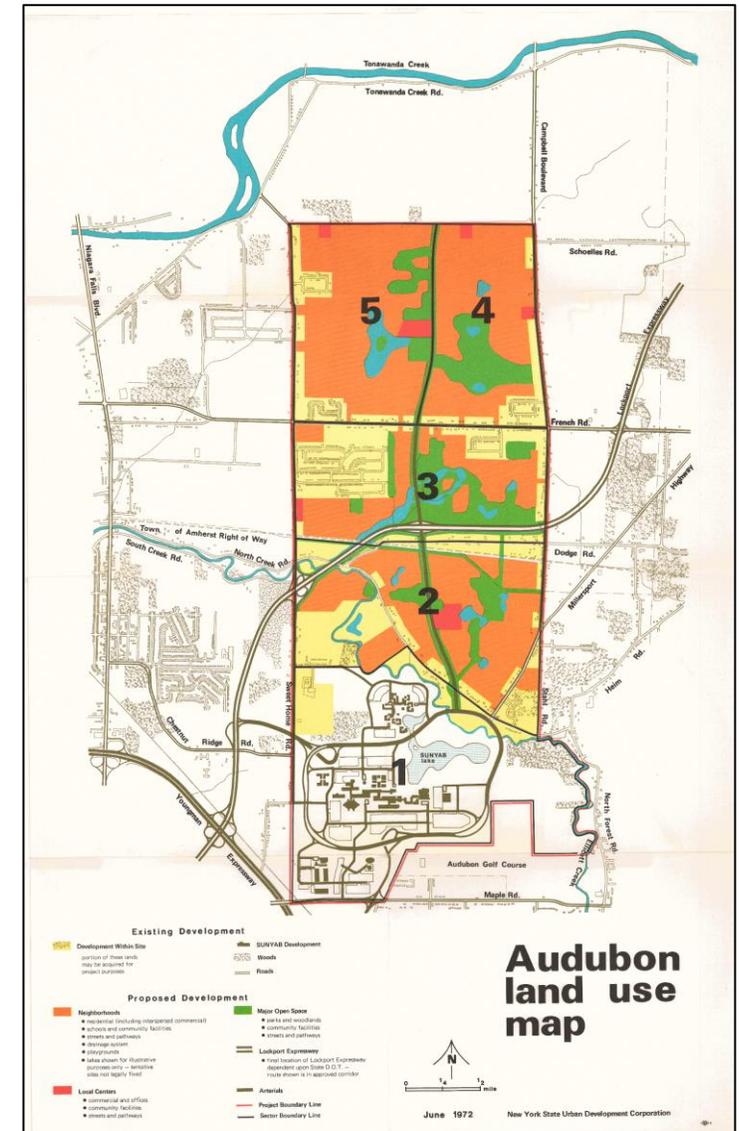
Meeting Agenda

- Introductions
- Purpose of this Project
- History of the Audubon New Community
- Economic Analysis and Best Practices
- UB Connection and Investment
- Potential Redevelopment
- Municipal Center Infill Potential
- Improvement to the Public Realm
- Evolving Neighborhoods and Strengthening Character
- Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets
- Transportation Improvements
- Next Steps and Recommendations



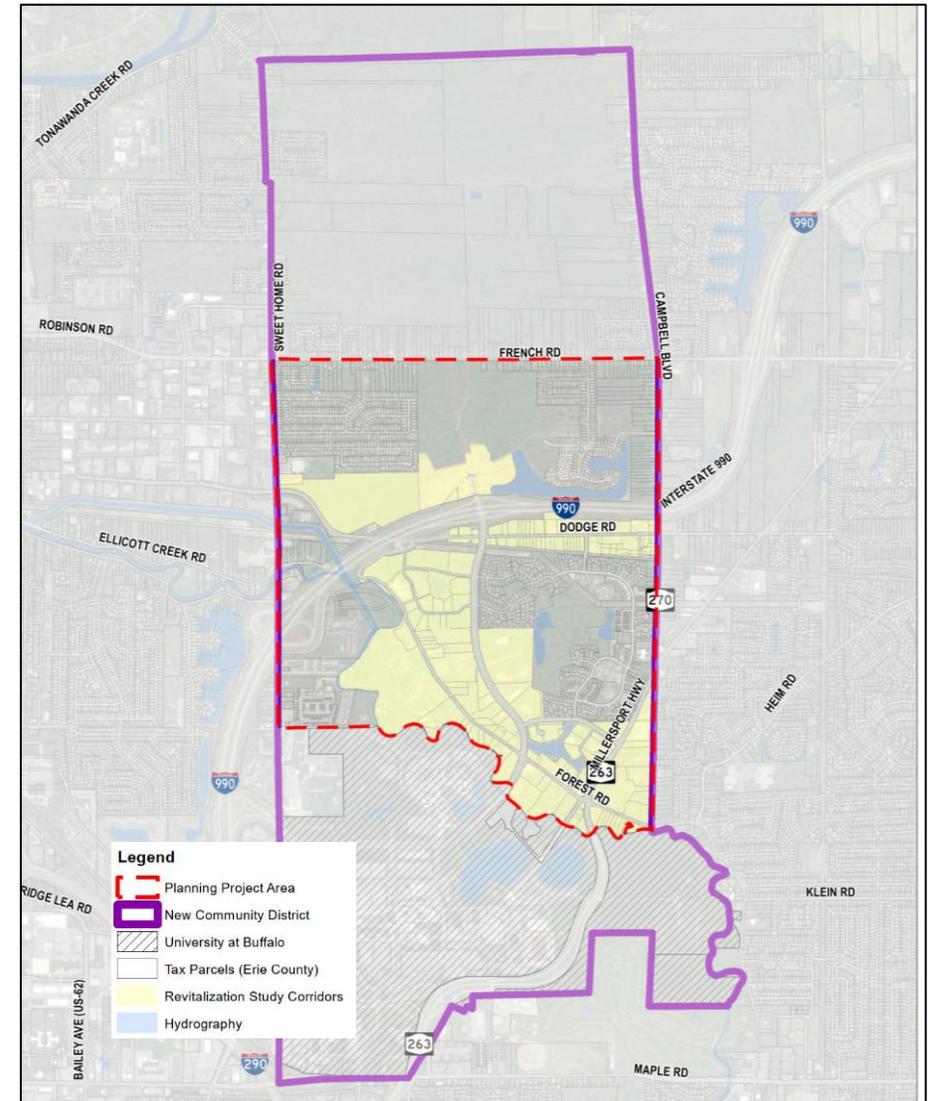
History of the Audubon New Community

- New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) developed a planned community in the early 1970s to support and compliment anticipated growth related to the UB North Campus
- The “Audubon New Community” was conceived as a mixed-use area of the Town north of the University
- Created through a 1972 Contract Agreement between the UDC and the Town. The original contract expired in 1987 and a new contract was executed in 1992
- The planned community was intended to be implemented through the Audubon Development Plan, which was approved by the Town Board in December 1972
- At the same time, the Town also adopted the New Community District (NCD) as an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance



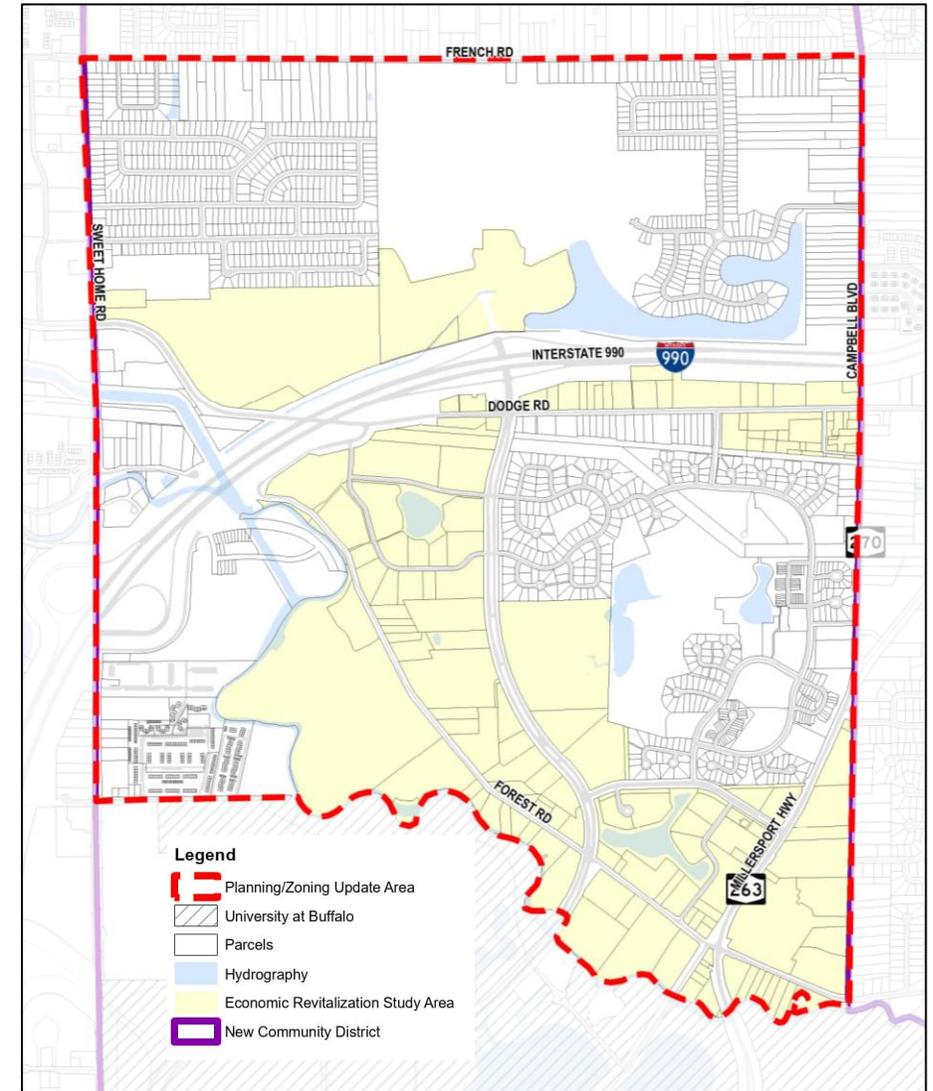
Audubon New Community Boundary and Development

- The area includes 1,200 acres of the UB North Campus
- The Audubon New Community boundary:
 - National Grid utility right-of-way just beyond Schoelles Road to the north
 - The southern boundary of the UB North Campus to the south
 - Campbell Boulevard and the Ellicott Creek corridor to the east
 - Sweet Home Road to the west
- Mostly developed between 1972 and the late 1990s as a low-density community with uses separated into distinct planning sectors
- The initial intent was mostly residential; however, demand for office out-paced residential uses
- Uses are primarily dependent on the use of automobiles



Audubon Study Area

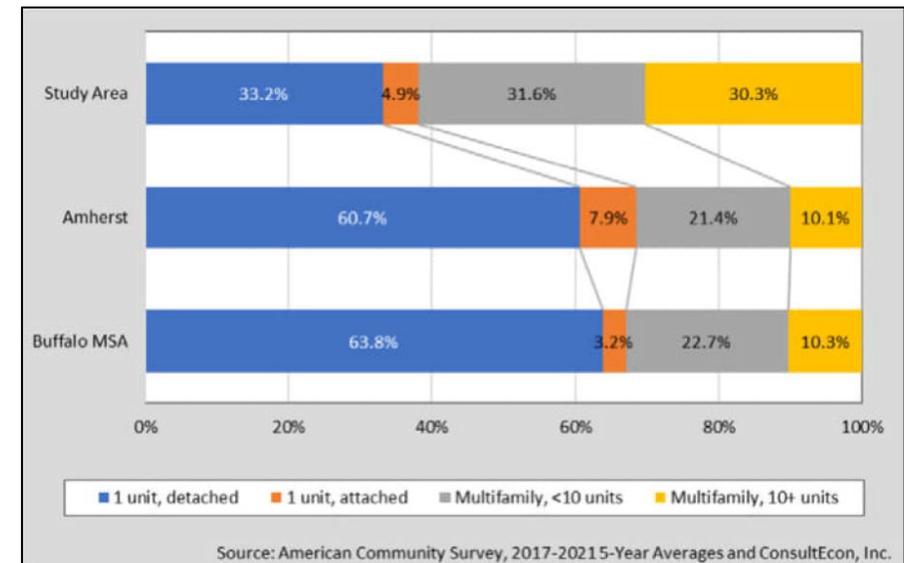
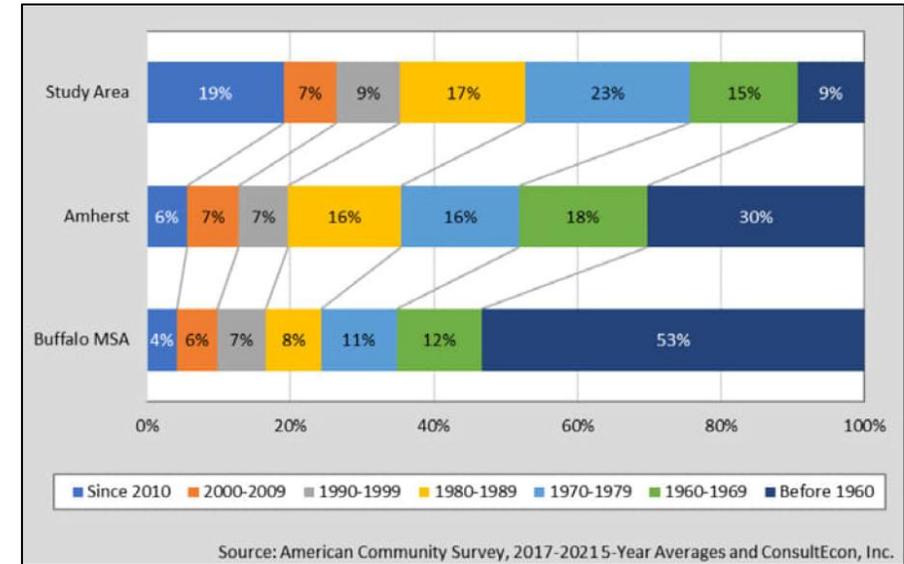
- Over the past 50 years, the most developable portions of the Audubon Community have reached near-buildout conditions
- In 2023 the Town began a study to identify locations for potential redevelopment, greater connectivity, and improved accessibility
- The approximately 1,400 acre Study Area is focused on the core development area of the Audubon Community. The boundaries are:
 - North French Road to the north
 - Ellicott Creek (excluding UB) to the south
 - Campbell Boulevard to the east
 - Sweet Home Road to the west
- Previous supporting studies included:
 - Office Study (2022) – understanding the utilization of office space (Town and AIDA)
 - Land Use Study (2023) – inventory and analysis of existing land uses





Economic Analysis

- An market analysis was conducted to evaluate economic and real estate market opportunities in the Audubon area. For residential land uses in the Study Area, it found:
 - The majority of the housing was built after 1979 and is aging
 - The inventory of available homes is extremely low
 - There is also a higher concentration of recent multi-family housing developments in the Study Area as compared to the rest of the Town
- The off-campus student housing market has emerged to provide housing for students at UB. However, the University anticipates enrollment to remain constant over the next decade; therefore the demand for dedicated student housing is likely satisfied



Economic Analysis

- For non-residential land uses in the Study Area, the economic analysis found:
 - The office market vacancy rate continues to trend towards higher vacancies
 - There is a need for more variation in size and location for office space in the area and the region
 - There is presently limited retail activity within the Study Area and retail that does exist is clustered along Millersport Highway, outside of the core of the community
 - The Boulevard region submarket, which includes the Amherst area, has higher office vacancy rates than the City of Buffalo, showing the relative demand for alternatives such as retail or residential redevelopment
 - The economic analysis helped to inform specific market needs and identify redevelopable sites



Figure 5: Buffalo Region Office Market Vacancy Rate
(Source: CBRE Buffalo, Q4 2022)

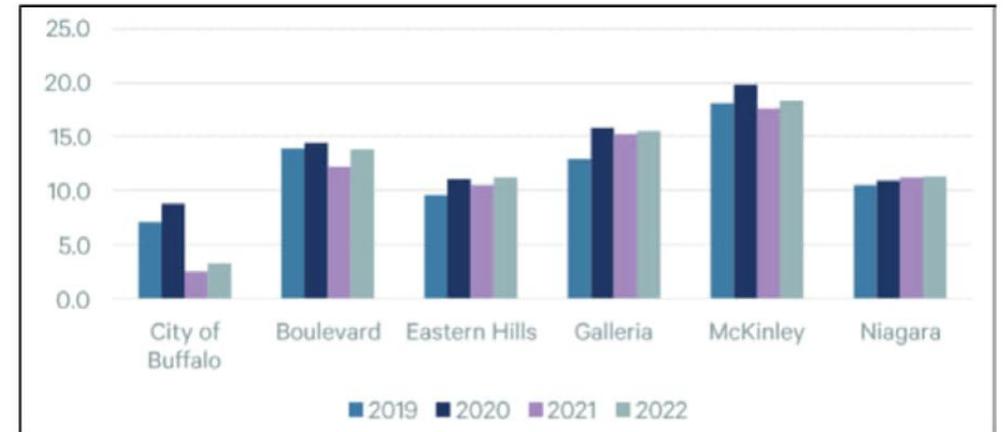


Figure 6: Buffalo Region Retail Market Vacancy Rate
(Source: CBRE Buffalo, Q4 2022)

Best Practices in Suburban Office Park Redevelopment

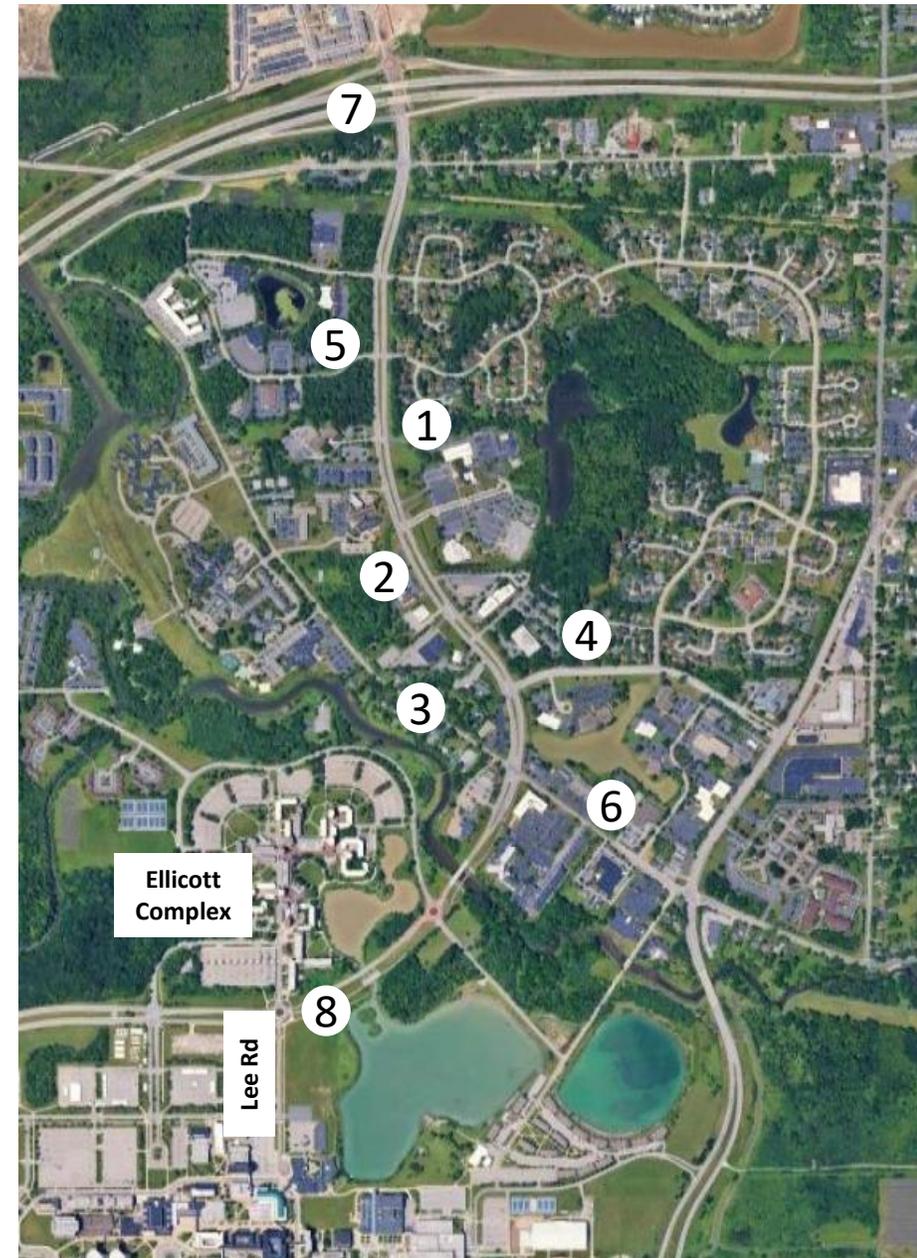


- Most models have chosen to infill around existing buildings over wholesale demolition and redevelopment
- Projects typically require public-private partnerships due to the complexity and high infrastructure costs
- Housing has been a key component of all models, but densities and product types have differed
- Structured parking is usually necessary to support the density of uses required to justify redevelopment
- Centralized ownership of properties makes redevelopment far easier – assembling properties can be expensive and time consuming
- High capacity transit is not a necessity – none of these models are on rail lines

Redevelopment Potential

Based on the economic analysis, the following seven locations were identified as having potential for redevelopment, mainly located along John James Audubon Parkway:

1. Town of Amherst Municipal Campus (Police & Court, Senior Center, and Audubon Library)
2. West Side of John James Audubon Parkway, north of North Forest Road
3. West Side of John James Audubon Parkway, south of North Forest Road
4. Pinchot Court
5. Bryant Woods parcel
6. North Forest Road and St. Rita's Lane
7. Dodge Road corridor
8. **UB Key Sites for Reinvestment*



UB Connection & Investment

Campus Planning

- Strengthen Spine
- Develop Lee Road
- Celebrate Lake LaSalle

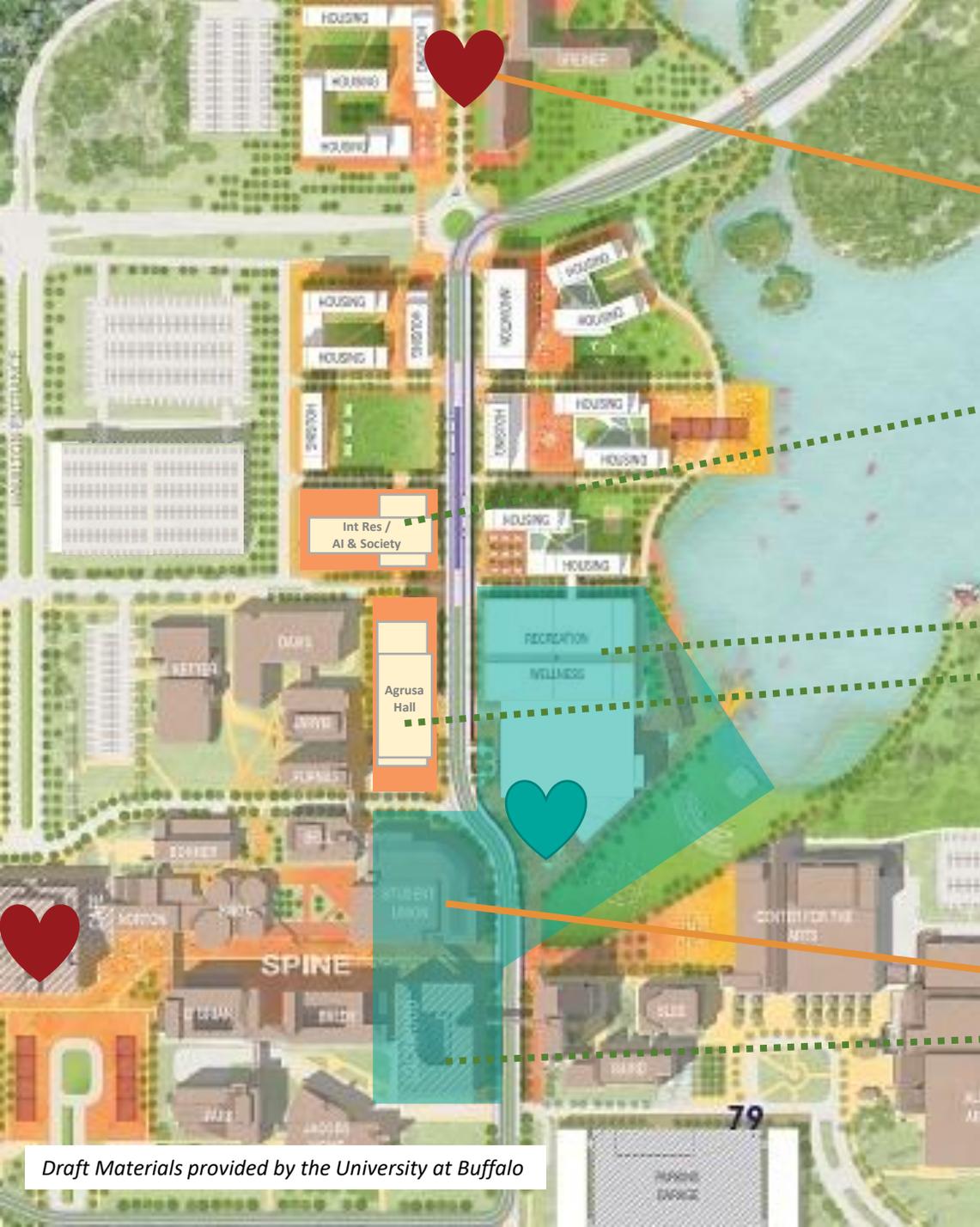
Architectural | Landscape Architectural

- Wellness & Recreation Center
- Renovate Brutalist buildings w/ SHPO standards
- Rejuvenate the Promenade
- Rethink Mary Talbert Way
- Create Student Oval
- Connect Pathways to Baird Point
- Rethink Greenspaces and Parking Lots

Programmatic

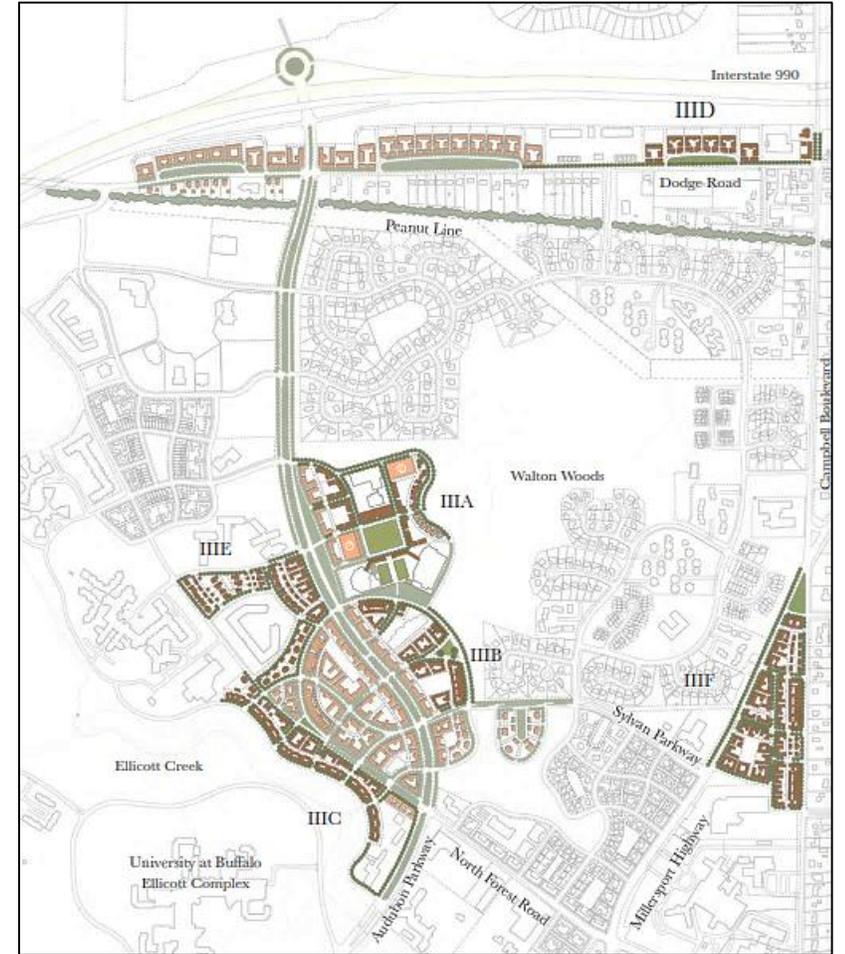
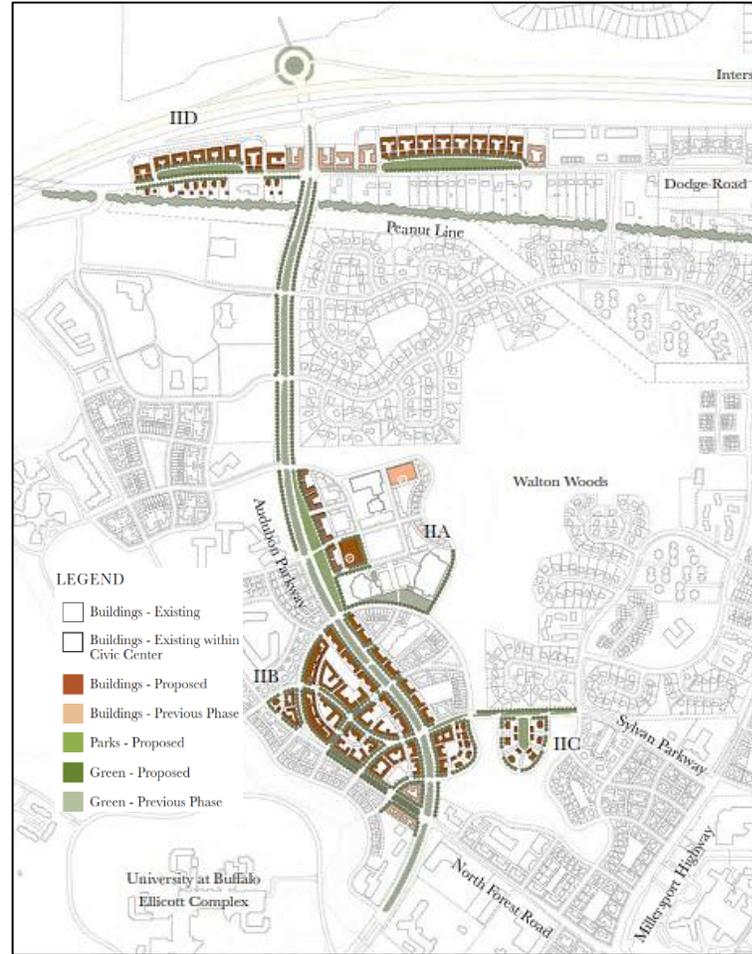
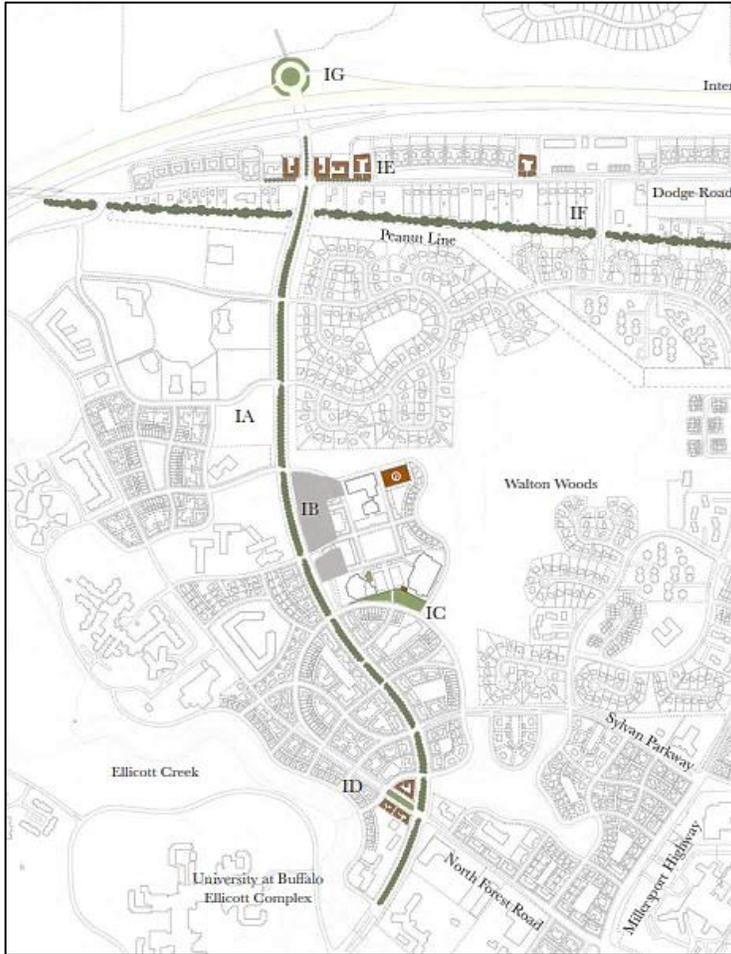
- Create a “Heart of the Campus”
- Consolidate and Strengthen University Libraries
- Grow CAS | SEAS | SOM | Law
- Modernize Athletics Facilities





Draft Materials provided by the University at Buffalo

Build Concepts



Build Out Potential



Program	Phase IV	Total
• New Development Land Area:	32 ac	101.5 ac
• Residential Units:	200 units	760 units
• Commercial/Office Area - Net:	200,000 sf	240,000 sf
• Commercial/Office Area - Removed:	- 200,000 sf	
• Commercial/Office Area - Proposed:	+200,000 sf	
• Commercial/Mixed Use Area:	0 sf	65,000 sf
• Park Area:	1.0 ac	9.4 ac
• Parking (In Civic Center):	0 spaces	640 spaces



Infill Potential at the Municipal Center

- Incrementally-implemented “park-once” environment in the Town’s Municipal Center - placing many destinations within easy walking distance of one another, reducing parking demand
 - Elements of a traditional village design – a fine-grain mix of land uses, a network of small blocks, and the design of pedestrian-friendly streets
 - Creating new and enhancing surrounding neighborhoods within walking distance also allows households to make trips on foot or by bicycle, further reducing parking demand
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed Park b. New Surface Parking Lot (350 cars) c. New Parking Structure 1 (300 cars) d. Police Station and Courthouse Buildings Retained e. New Green and Frontage Road f. New Mixed-Use Development g. New Parking Structure 2 (300 cars) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> h. New Plaza i. New Arcade to define Plaza j. Single-family Housing (self parked) k. Multi-Family Housing (self parked in lot and in rear) l. Police Station/Courthouse Extension to define Plaza m. Future Housing around Civic Center |
|--|--|



Improvements to the Public Realm

- Encouraging new development projects that assume their own unique character through the design of street networks, public and open spaces, building forms, and relation to its surroundings.
- Improvements to local roadways including:
 - Continuous and regular spacing of public street trees close to the curb to reduce the perceived width of the street and provide shade to pedestrians
 - Installation of sidewalks where they are missing and desired
 - Enhancing safety by providing pedestrian accommodations and reducing speed
 - Creating a better sense of walkability
- Provide for additional opportunities to enhance and infill the Municipal Center to contain a greater variety of uses and services for residents



Evolving Neighborhoods and Strengthening Character

- Neighborhood character is an important objective as is the provision of a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment
- Seeking to evolve the auto-centric nature of the area into one where the pedestrian is the priority
- There are several strategies that can be applied towards making the Study Area more walkable:
 - A mix of uses that encourages interaction
 - A network and variety of types of interconnected streets with sidewalks
 - Carefully located retail and mixed-use centers within walking distance of residential neighborhoods
 - Development blocks not exceeding 300 feet in length
 - A network of trails and pathways
- Goal to create “places” with their own building characteristics that distinguishes the Audubon area
- The NCD zoning allows for flexibility in design already and enables redevelopment to meet the goals of the Plan

Single-Family Residential



Mixed-Use



Public “Rambla”



Multi-Family Residential



Municipal Center Redevelopment



Conservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets

- Conservation and enhancement of natural assets includes consideration of waterways and water quality, wetlands, parks and open spaces, wooded areas, and other natural assets and how they serve the community
- Planning opportunities regarding conserving and enhancing valuable natural assets in the Study Area include:
 - Conserving and enhancing natural and open spaces
 - Protecting wetlands
 - Creating an integrated network of open spaces
 - Linking new development (where feasible) to existing bike paths or trailways
 - Introducing new natural features in existing areas and on existing and new streets
 - Encouraging the use of “green infrastructure”



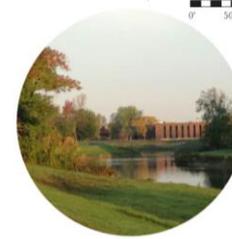
Freshwater Emergent Wetlands



Nature View Park



Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetlands



Ellicott Creek



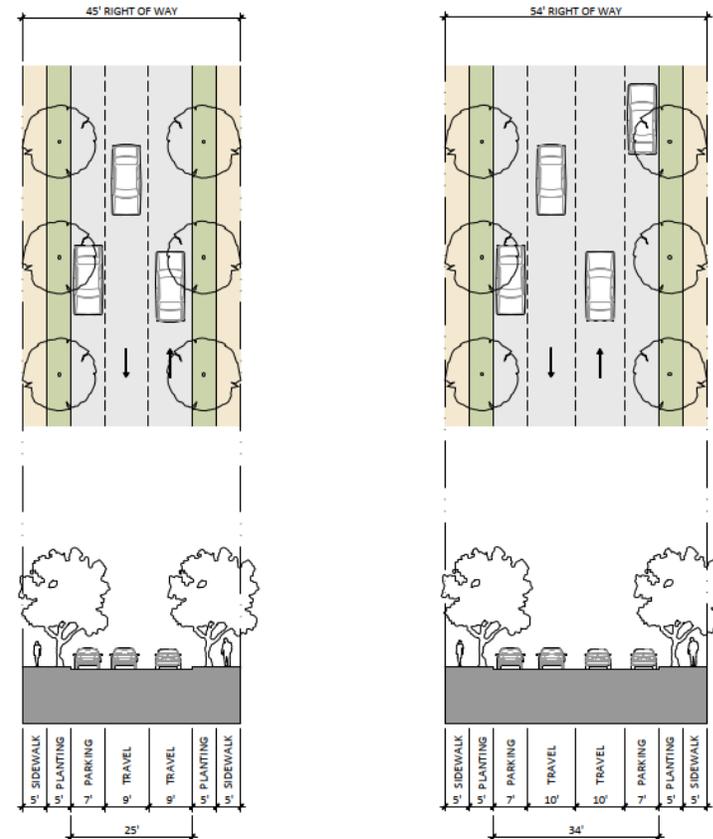
Lake La Salle



Walton Woods

Transportation Improvements

- Pedestrian improvements and creation of more connections throughout the area to increase safety and walkability
- Complete Street principles on local streets where feasible – providing multi-modal options
- Requiring new streets and smaller blocks within proposed development projects
- The NFTA’s potential transit extension into the area was considered, but redevelopment in Audubon can occur without depending on a transit extension





Next Steps and Recommendations

- Plan Finalization in Summer 2025
- Utilize the Plan concepts to inform the Town's future Comprehensive Planning process
- Utilize the plan and economic feasibility and market demand analysis to guide redevelopment
- Work with Empire State Development (ESD) regarding:
 - Direction for the current Contract Agreement with the Town and ESDs future role
 - Sale or transfer of remaining ESD-owned properties in the Audubon area
- Consider redevelopment initiatives for the Town Municipal Center
- Examine the need for updates to the New Community District (NCD) zoning
- Explore options for expanding and enhancing multi-use paths and trail connections throughout the neighborhoods
- Implement street and pedestrian improvements, where feasible
- Continue to collaborate with the University at Buffalo



THANK YOU FOR COMING!

Boards are located around the room to further explore the concepts, and to provide input and ask questions to Town staff and the consultants.

Comment sheets can be turned in tonight or emailed, mailed and/or brought into the Planning Department by July 1st. See comment sheets.

The Audubon Project webpage can be found on the Town's website below or by using the keyword search "Audubon"

https://www.amherst.ny.us/content/projects.php?dept_id=dept_15&proj_id=proj_20&neworder=00