

## **Imagine Amherst**

### **Draft Amendments to Chapters 3 and 10 of the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan**

At their meeting of September 14, 2017 the Amherst Planning Board recommended amendments to the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan developed under the Imagine Amherst project. The DRAFT Amendments to the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan will provide policy and design guidance for the development of commercial districts within the Town.

The Plan Amendments were formulated by the Imagine Amherst Technical Review and Project Working Committees with the assistance of the project consultant, Code Studio Inc., and Town Planning Department staff. The Plan Amendments were subject to Public Hearing by the Town of Amherst Planning Board at its meetings on June 22, August 17, and August 31, 2017. At its meeting on September 14, 2017 the Board closed the Public Hearing and voted to recommend that the Town Board hold the required public hearing and approve the proposed Amendments.

**Proposed changes to the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan are noted in red text in the DRAFT Plan document.**

The Town Board held a public hearing on the DRAFT Plan Amendments on October 30, 2017. On December 11, 2017 the Town Board found that the requirements of SEQR had been completed and voted to adopt these amendments to the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan.

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## 3.0 Land Use and Development

### 3.1 OVERVIEW

#### ***Priority Action Programs: Land Use and Development***

- Comprehensively revise the Town's development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes to implement the policies of the Land Use and Development Element
- Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment/revitalization
- Establish a coordinated strategy to achieve a town-wide open space and greenway network, including a public acquisition program

Amherst has a mix and pattern of land uses reflecting the varied influences that have shaped the Town's growth. On a percentage basis, residential development (predominantly single-family) remains the Town's most widespread land use, at about 36.4% of the total. The next largest category, vacant land, represents about 18.9% of the Town's land area. Commercial, office, and industrial development together comprise about 7.4% of the total. Significant land use changes since 1975, when the Town's last Land Use Plan was prepared, include:

- In 1975, Amherst had a significant amount of undeveloped land remaining. Today, the Town is a maturing community with developed uses typical of medium-sized suburban communities. Between 1975 and 2000, approximately 55% of vacant and agricultural land in the Town was converted to other uses.
- In 1975, Amherst was predominantly a residential community. While residential remains the single most extensive land use in the Town, over the past 25 years Amherst has emerged as a center of regional activity that complements the City of Buffalo. Contributing land uses include significant commercial and office development and the major institutional presence of the North Campus of the University at Buffalo (UB).
- Continuing the predominant trend of post World War II growth, the path of new development has been away from traditional, close-in neighborhoods such as Eggertsville and Snyder towards the northern part of the Town. The establishment of UB and the Audubon New Community in the 1970s accentuated this trend.

Major characteristics of the current land use pattern are as follows:

- With the exception of the southeastern corner of town, southern Amherst is comprised of mature neighborhoods with grid-like street systems and traditional scale commercial centers and corridors.
- Central Amherst contains newer, more suburban style subdivisions with curvilinear street systems. Commercial centers range from neighborhood to regional in scale, and are generally found along suburban or commercial corridors.
- Transit Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard (which form the Town's east and west boundaries, respectively) continue as regional shopping destinations, as do nearby sections of east-west corridors such as Sheridan Drive and Maple Road.

- The northwestern and particularly the southeastern corners of Amherst have fragmented land use patterns featuring dissimilar uses (e.g., residential, office, and industrial) located next to each other.
- Northern Amherst remains largely rural in character, with large areas of restricted agricultural land, public open space, sensitive environmental resources, rural highways, and (mostly in the northeast) a large proportion of the vacant land remaining in the Town.
- Public and semi-public uses (parks, schools, educational institutions, etc.) are located throughout the Town, generally as isolated rather than as connected properties.

The generalized existing land use pattern is shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows generalized existing zoning, which has contributed to the development of the Town’s current land use pattern.

According to the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS), the Town’s population was 125,109. Population projections prepared for the 2016 Town of Amherst Economic Study<sup>1</sup> indicate that this figure may grow by a small amount by 2020, and increase to 141,000 by 2040. The Report states that most job growth in the Town will be concentrated in businesses that will need retail and office space, with little demand for new industrial space. It projects that the Town will need to increase its supply of commercial space by 4.1 to 5.9 million SF (square feet) to accommodate this growth. However, most of this development is expected to be achieved by redeveloping existing commercial sites, demand for newly developed commercial land will total less than 100 acres.

Findings from the “2014 Comprehensive Plan Review” and the “2016 Town of Amherst Economic Study” suggest that shifting demographic and economic trends are altering consumer behavior and related forms of commercial land use. Most notable are conclusions indicating that:

- There is a growing supply of underutilized space in the Town’s office and industrial parks
- Suburban retail corridors and business parks that comprise much of Amherst’s employment and commercial base are losing favor among residents and workers who are expressing preferences for “downtown” or mixed-use locations with a strong base of restaurants, retailers, salons, and recreational activities.
- Commercial areas with traditional form and a strong mix of uses can provide the critical mass of amenities desired by

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<sup>1</sup> See the Town Amherst Economic Study (2016) for documentation of population and development projections (Available at: [www.amherst.ny.us](http://www.amherst.ny.us) use keyword: Economic).

**Context-sensitive design** is an emerging approach to transportation planning that emphasizes collaborative planning with stakeholders to develop transportation improvements that preserve local values and resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. Four types of character corridors appropriate to different land use contexts have been identified (See 6-1 for a complete discussion):

- **Traditional character:** corridors located within higher intensity centers and older neighborhoods.
- **Suburban character:** corridors serving newer residential subdivisions, non-local traffic and automobile-oriented development.
- **Commercial character:** corridors with an established linear commercial development pattern.
- **Rural character:** corridors possessing unique visual character due to their rural and/or scenic qualities.

companies, workers and residents. For example, existing areas along Main Street through the Village of Williamsville, in Snyder and Eggertsville, and other areas can satisfy demand for mixed-use walkable environments that are accessible by several modes of transportation.

- Changes in the market represent a long-term trend, not a fad. In response Amherst must revitalize its older, single-use commercial areas in more attractive forms in order to remain competitive in the regional marketplace.
- In order to encourage contemporary mixed-use forms of development that promote energy and resource efficiency, the Town can incorporate form-based regulations at appropriate locations that focus on building form and context, rather than strict land use and site design.

To address these trends the Town's Comprehensive Plan must be periodically reviewed and updated to include specific guidance for revitalizing commercial and mixed-use zones, encouraging energy efficient forms of redevelopment, and employing development principles that focus development in areas served by existing infrastructure.

***Vision Statement Directions:  
Land Use***

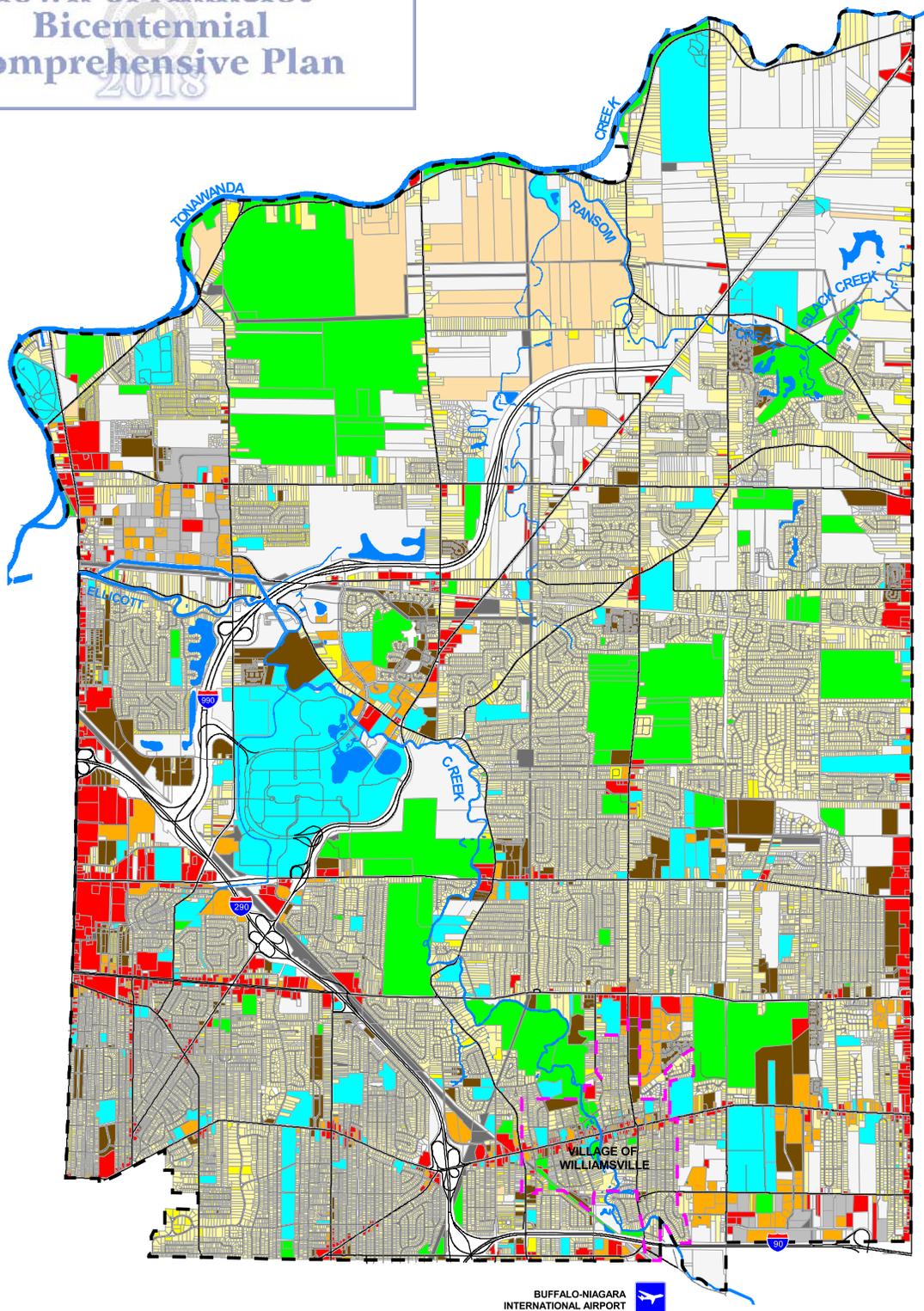
- Diverse neighborhoods
- Mixed-use development patterns
- Revitalized neighborhoods and commercial areas
- Improved development standards

According to the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement, distinguishing land use and development characteristics of Amherst in the year 2018 will include:

- **Diverse neighborhoods**, ranging in character from traditional to suburban to rural
- Pedestrian-friendly, interconnected, **mixed-use development** patterns
- Revitalized **older neighborhoods and commercial corridors**
- Open space integrated into the overall pattern of development
- **Development standards** that promote objectives such as improved visual character, revitalization of older neighborhoods, and mixed-use development

Together with the Conceptual Land Use Plan, the goals, objectives, and policies set forth in this element are designed to guide future land use and development/redevelopment within the Town. They include changes to development regulations and processes, public investment and incentive strategies, and other actions to achieve the intent of the Vision Statement.

1818  
**Town of Amherst  
 Bicentennial  
 Comprehensive Plan**  
2018



BUFFALO-NIAGARA  
 INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**FIGURE 2**

**GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE**

**LEGEND**

Agricultural Land	Office	Vacant Land	Municipal Boundary
Single Family Residential	Industrial	Parcel Boundary	Village of Williamsville Boundary
Low Density Residential	Recreation and Open Space	Surface Water Body	
Medium Density Residential	Public/Semi-Public		
Commercial	Utilities		

**SOURCE NOTES :**

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

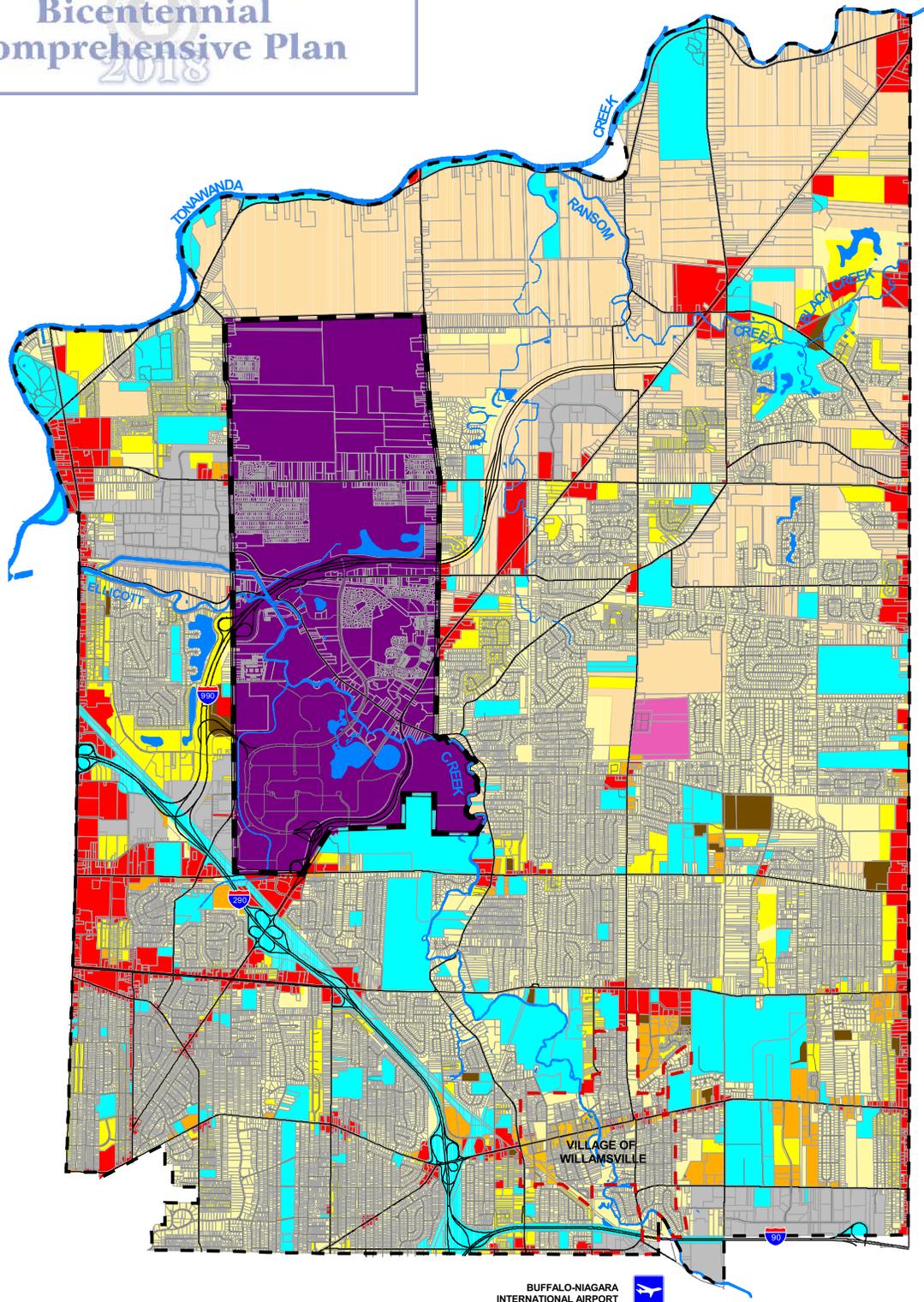
Land use data as of September 2000

Map Compiled by URS Corporation

Date: February, 2004



1818  
**Town of Amherst**  
**Bicentennial**  
2018  
**Comprehensive Plan**

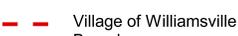
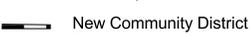


BUFFALO-NIAGARA  
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**GENERALIZED EXISTING ZONING**

**FIGURE 3**

**LEGEND**

- |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  Suburban Agricultural Residential |  Planned Residential District |  Municipal Boundary                |  Surface Water Body |
|  Single Family Residential         |  Commercial - Non-Office      |  Parcel Boundary                   |   |
|  Low Density Residential           |  Commercial - Office          |  Village of Williamsville Boundary |   |
|  Medium Density Residential        |  Community Facilities         |  New Community District Boundary   |   |
|  New Community District            |  Industrial                   |   |   |

**SOURCE NOTES :**

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst  
Zoning Data, September 2000  
This Zoning Map not officially adopted by the Amherst Town Board. Deed and other restrictions may apply to some parcels.  
For official zoning information contact the Town of Amherst Building Department  
Map Compiled by URS Corporation  
Date: February, 2004



## 3.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

### GOAL

*An interconnected mix of land uses that includes revitalized older neighborhoods and commercial **centers and corridors**, quality new development, vibrant activity centers, agriculture, and green spaces throughout the community*

### OBJECTIVES

- Promote the development/**revitalization** of walkable higher density, mixed-use centers surrounded by lower density development
- Implement context-sensitive **zoning** and incentives to improve the quality and appearance of **non-residential** development
- Encourage **revitalization and** reinvestment in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors in Amherst
- Target capital improvements to leverage private investment and enhance community appearance
- Establish a town-wide network of parks, open spaces, and greenway corridors
- Improve the predictability and consistency of the development review and decision-making process

### POLICIES

#### A. Development Patterns

The Comprehensive Plan land use policies **should guide the distribution of development**, but are not intended to alter the amount of development in Amherst. **The Plan is a tool** to redistribute densities to appropriate locations while maintaining lower density development in the surrounding areas. This will result in more sustainable land use patterns that help to implement objectives such as promoting pedestrian-friendly development; preserving open space; and establishing centers of community activity.

#### 3-1 Expand provisions and incentives for mixed-use development **of commercial centers**.

**Mixed-use** development consists of several types of activity, each of which could function independently, but which benefits from proximity to each other. For example, residential units could be located on upper stories above ground level stores or in a residential development within easy walking distance of a neighborhood commercial center, thus providing ready access to shopping and other services. Adding office space creates the opportunity to live, work, and shop in the same vicinity, while a public facility or facilities (e.g., a park or school) increases the range of activities **there**. The **resulting centers provide** a focus for surrounding



*Mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly development in the Village of Williamsville.*



*Vertical mixing of uses at Snyder Square.*

neighborhoods while promoting land use objectives such as efficient, compact, and pedestrian and bicycle friendly development. By definition, such centers are higher in density and incorporate a wider range of uses than the lower density, predominantly residential areas surrounding them. Development of these centers should incorporate design considerations such as scale, height, frontage, and transitions between land uses.

By definition, mixed-use development consists of a deliberate, mutually-supporting mix of housing, civic uses, and commercial uses, including retail, restaurants, and offices. There is significant physical and functional integration of project components, and thus a relatively close-knit and intensive use of land, including uninterrupted pedestrian connections. Mixed-use development is usually the result of a coherent planning process that emphasizes the connectivity and links among uses.

Mixed-use development should be designed to achieve two primary objectives:

- Provide a focus for new development and revitalization in the Town, consistent with protecting the character of adjacent residential areas
- Enhance the viability of surrounding neighborhoods by providing identifiable centers of community activities such as shopping, work, recreation, and meetings

The following strategies can be used to achieve mixed-use development:

- **Improve regulations to encourage mixed-use.** Clear regulations and standards should be established for commercial and mixed-use centers to address issues such as intensity/density, and the relationship of these uses among surrounding land uses (e.g., transition from the edge of a center to an adjacent residential area), and other center design elements.
- **Targeted public investments**, including infrastructure and urban design improvements to leverage desired private investment in mixed-use centers.
- **Coordination with other Comprehensive Plan policies**, for example: transportation strategies to support transit service and sidewalk/bike path connections to mixed-use centers; locating community facilities to increase center activity, etc.

***Strategies to Achieve Mixed-Use Development Patterns***

- Improve zoning districts to encourage mixed uses
- Target public improvements to promote private investment in mixed-use centers
- Coordinate with other plan strategies, such as transportation and location of community facilities

Encouraging mixed-use forms of development and revitalization of the Town's commercial centers has several advantages:

- To provide added economic incentive and flexibility for revitalization of aging and obsolescent commercial areas
- To preserve and enhance traditional commercial centers

- To provide additional housing opportunities and choices, including higher density and affordable housing in appropriate areas
- To provide a more compact livable and walkable alternative to the prevalent pattern of commercial strip development and separated uses
- To provide a focus for new development, infill, and redevelopment of commercial centers, as opposed to furthering strip commercial development along corridors such as Main Street, Sheridan Drive, Maple Road, North French Road, and Millersport Highway
- To promote development that supports pedestrian and bicycle travel as well as transit use, thereby reducing auto usage and resulting roadway congestion and air pollution
- To encourage higher density centers of activity that exhibit high-quality design and a sense of place

Depending upon its form and type, mixed-use development should exhibit the following characteristics and design features:

- **Mix of uses:** A mixed-use development should include a mix of compatible, appropriately scaled uses. The mix of uses may be achieved in one or more of the following ways:
  1. Vertical Mixed-Use. A single structure with the above floors used for residential or office use and a portion of the ground floor for retail/commercial or service uses.
  2. Horizontal Mixed-Use – Attached. A single structure which provides retail/commercial or service use in the portion fronting the public or private street with attached residential or office uses behind.
  3. Horizontal Mixed-Use – Detached. Two or more structures on one site which provide retail/commercial or service uses in the structure(s) fronting the public or private street, and residential or office uses in separate structure(s) behind or to the side.

It should be noted that certain types of use mixes offer little or no benefit and may exacerbate land use conflicts and traffic congestion. These may include, for example, disconnected “out parcels” for gas stations, fast food, or other forms of strip commercial development. Because such uses emphasize vehicular access, their use in a mixed-use development should be discouraged.

- **Connectivity and integration of uses:** Traditional zoning codes tend to emphasize buffering between uses. Successful mixed-use, by contrast, encourages linkages. This may be achieved through careful positioning of key project components around public spaces (for example, a street, park, plaza, or square), the interconnection of project components through pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and pathways, and through consideration of the layout/orientation of buildings and the location of parking relative to structures and

walkways. Connection should also be provided to the surrounding area.

- **Urban design amenities:** A variety of urban design amenities, such as sidewalks, landscaping, and public spaces are used to create recognizable, pedestrian-friendly activity centers with a sense of place.
- **Active street frontage:** First-floor street-frontage is generally reserved for more public uses, such as retail and restaurants. In addition, a maximum front yard depth is typically established and front yard parking is prohibited. Buildings may have an articulated façade by setting some portions back, using multiple entrances and architectural features, and adding windows and doors to eliminate long blank walls – these tend to make street frontages more pedestrian-friendly.
- **Compactness:** Mixed-use developments are typically denser than suburban-style and strip commercial development. Such compactness contributes to the walkability of the development.
- **Community-serving facilities:** A variety of civic and public uses, such as schools, libraries, day-care centers, and government buildings, may be provided as part of the mix of uses.
- Convenient **vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle access** from surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Transit service:** Because mixed-use development is typically more intense and offers a variety of uses, it is a desirable destination for transit service. If provided, transit service may decrease the amount of vehicular traffic to the development and the amount of parking needed on-site.
- **Modified parking layout:** In order to achieve a walkable, integrated development with an active street frontage, parking must be carefully designed. Parking is typically ancillary to the development, located behind or to the sides of buildings, with clearly defined pedestrian walkways that link parking to nearby buildings.

### **3-2 Encourage compact, pedestrian-friendly development through Planned Residential options, including but not limited to neo-traditional design.**

In contrast to older neighborhoods such as Eggertsville and Snyder, which are characterized by grid street systems connected to traditional scale commercial centers, the predominant pattern of new residential development in Amherst is one of automobile-oriented subdivisions that are typically isolated from each other and from other uses. Amherst's Zoning Code provides a Planned Residential District (PRD) option intended to promote more creative, flexible design, including variety in housing types, mixed uses, and open space preservation. However, this option has not been utilized.

The PRD regulations should be updated and expanded to meet Comprehensive Plan objectives of achieving compact, interconnected, pedestrian-friendly development patterns. Issues that should be addressed in this update include:

- ***Making this option a more viable alternative to conventional subdivision development.*** Techniques to achieve this objective include incentives (e.g., density bonuses, smaller lot sizes, narrow street widths to promote pedestrian scale) and clearer, more “user-friendly” regulations and approval processes.
- ***Establishing clear development standards tied to Comprehensive Plan objectives.*** These standards can draw upon principles of compact, efficient development such as neo-traditional design. Also referred to as traditional neighborhood development (TND), neo-traditional design is emerging nationally as an alternative to single-use, automobile-oriented subdivisions. Based upon characteristics predominant in pre-World War II communities, typical features of TND design include:
  - Interconnected, pedestrian-oriented street systems
  - Places to shop and work and public/institutional uses such as a school, park, or church within walking distance of residences, typically in neighborhood centers
  - Coordination with transit service

This concept is not new to Amherst. Older neighborhoods such as Eggertsville and Snyder demonstrate many characteristics of TND design and can be drawn upon as models in developing the standards.

- ***Better defining locations appropriate for application of Planned Residential options.*** With a minimum size limit of 50 acres, the current PRD option is oriented towards “greenfield” development on larger sites and thus is primarily applicable to northern Amherst. This size limit must be reevaluated and standards defined for application to infill and redevelopment sites in developed contexts. In addition, application of mixed-use options should be coordinated with mixed-use activity centers defined per Policy 3-1.



### **3-3 Modify provisions of the Suburban Agricultural District to reduce conversions of rural to suburban development patterns.**

The Town’s lowest density residential zoning district at one unit per acre, the Suburban Agricultural (S-A) District has traditionally functioned as a “holding zone” for rezoning to more intense residential and other uses. This trend has created uncertainty and contributed to the gradual erosion of the Town’s rural character. The Conceptual Land Use Plan shows certain areas in northern Amherst to remain in agricultural and rural uses. An agricultural zoning district should be

created and applied to areas that are farmed or are designated as part of the Town's Farmland Protection Program. To regulate residential development outside of these areas, a new zoning district (possibly renamed Rural Residential to more clearly identify the intent of the district) should be created with provisions added to promote rural development patterns. For example, the base density could be reduced to one unit per three to five acres except for conservation developments that preserve at least 50% of the property as open space, which would be allowed to develop at a higher density. For other S-A properties, rezoning must be consistent with the policies recommended in the Comprehensive Plan and the criteria stated in Policy 3-16. In locations designated as activity centers on the Conceptual Land Use Plan, higher density, mixed uses are appropriate. In other current S-A areas, the criteria should promote use of conservation development and other options to maintain rural character (see Policy 3-14).

**3-4 Reduce future new commercial development in North Amherst and along highway strips.**

In the 1975 Plan, the portion of Amherst generally located north of North French Road had been considered an area that would experience significant new population growth accompanying the expected conversion of this largely rural area to suburban uses. Consistent with policies in the 1993 Northeast Amherst Plan and this Comprehensive Plan to limit utility extensions and retain rural densities and agricultural uses, North Amherst now has reduced potential for development. Likewise, the regulatory restrictions imposed by the Ransom Creek floodway and NYSDEC regulated wetlands further reduce development potential below that depicted by present zoning designations. Policies to protect the scenic, largely agricultural and residential character of rural roads and to reduce the traffic impacts resulting from highway "strip" development suggest that commercial development in this area should occur in more compact, mixed-use forms at existing designated commercial nodes. As illustrated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan, these centers are in key, high accessibility locations.

As a general rule, future new commercial development (as opposed to redevelopment in existing commercial areas) should be appropriately scaled and limited to mixed-use centers and retail nodes designated at key locations such as major intersections rather than being allowed to proliferate along arterial roadways.

***Clear development standards***

are critical to the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative and will improve the predictability of the review and approval process for both citizens and developers.

**B. Development Character**

The Vision Statement emphasizes "high standards for the *quality of development and redevelopment*" and enhanced "*visual character*" through design as key to community character.

**Aesthetic/Community Character** is one of the four major Comprehensive Plan Initiatives, one that will contribute to maintaining and enhancing Amherst's status as a premier community in Western New York. Establishing standards and guidance for design to achieve high quality development is critical to achieving the goals of the Vision Statement and implementing the Aesthetic/ Community Character initiative. Clear standards will also help to improve the predictability of the development review and approval process, thus eliminating a source of frustration for citizens and developers alike. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

**3-5 Employ design standards to enhance community appearance and a strong identity and character.**

Design standards are effective tools to guide and shape new development and revitalization initiatives and are important in addressing such issues as impacts on the visual character of public roadways and on adjacent residential areas. Design standards should address the following considerations, especially for revitalization projects where complementing the surrounding context is important:

- **Landscaping and lighting:** The Town's current regulations provide specific guidance to petitioners and approval authorities regarding the Town's expectations for landscaping of new developments, including the percentage of the site that is landscaped, screening and interior landscaping of parking areas, rear and side yard buffers and screening, and preservation of existing trees (coordinated with the Amherst Comprehensive Tree Law). However, revitalization projects may require flexible landscaping standards to account for site constraints and provide for a more urban form of landscaping. Project lighting should be in accordance with an overall lighting plan and should avoid excessive illumination and light spread beyond the project limits.
- **Screening of visually obtrusive elements:** Elements such as outside mechanical equipment, dumpsters, rooftop HVAC equipment, and loading and service areas should continue to be screened from view from adjacent streets and properties.
- **Placement of building and parking areas in relation to each other and public roads:** Depending upon the surrounding context, the location of buildings and parking lots can have a significant impact on visual character. The pedestrian-friendly character of traditional commercial centers is directly related to buildings that are pulled up to the sidewalk/street with parking located behind or beside the buildings. In general, locating buildings closer to the street and parking to the sides and rear of buildings will decrease the visual impact of automobiles and create more of a pedestrian-friendly

***Development Considerations:***

- Landscaping and lighting
- Screening of visually obtrusive elements
- Placement of building and parking areas
- **Use and placement of land use transitions**
- General building design
- Scale
- Access and connectivity
- Public safety
- Signage

environment. This principle particularly applies to traditional commercial areas in Williamsville, Eggertsville, and Snyder. However, the visual character of automobile-oriented commercial corridors such as Niagara Falls Boulevard and Transit Road would be improved by policies that encourage **building placement closer to adjacent streets, requiring** a portion of required parking to be located to the side and rear of buildings in order to reduce the scale of front yard parking areas. **This objective can also be achieved by encouraging out-parcel or pad development to occur closer to streets.** Also important in reducing the scale of parking lots is decreasing the amount of parking required. The Town's Zoning Code provision for an alternative parking plan allows for flexibility in the quantity of parking required.

- ***Design and placement of land-use transitions:*** Many of Amherst's commercial and mixed-use areas are directly adjacent to residential areas with varying distances between them. When dissimilar land uses are located adjacent to one another undesirable impacts may result. These impacts can be mitigated through thoughtful design and purposeful placement of transitional space, landscaping, and screening. Guidelines for providing effective transitions should be included in the Town Zoning Code.
- ***Building design:*** While it is not appropriate to impose detailed architectural design requirements, guidelines should be established for certain issues to ensure complementary relationships to adjoining streets and properties. These issues include building orientation, façade articulation, **form**, and building mass/height in relationship to the surrounding context.
- ***Scale:*** The concept of scale can be incorporated into guidelines so that new development and revitalization is in harmony with **the surrounding** area. Appropriately scaled development is consistent or complementary in terms of size and mass with the existing surroundings and highways. Standards should provide measures of scale to help achieve such consistency.
- ***Streetscape, access and connectivity:*** The Town's Context-Sensitive Highway Design Report provides guidance on issues such as street geometry, sidewalks and bicycle use, and streetscape elements such as trees, lighting, and other aesthetic elements. Access and connectivity considerations include limiting the number of curb cuts, providing vehicular/pedestrian connections between adjacent developments, and providing pedestrian/sidewalk connections between adjacent neighborhoods and retail centers. The Town's report, Access Management Strategies for Major Corridors, provides guidance on these issues.

- **Public safety:** Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an approach to planning and design based upon the premise that design of the physical environment can positively influence human behavior to create a climate of safety and reduce crime. From a site design standpoint, three key strategies of CPTED include<sup>2</sup>:
  - *Territoriality:* Design to express ownership of a place, using elements such as fences, pavement treatment, signs, and landscaping.
  - *Natural surveillance:* Planning of landscaping, lighting, and other elements to facilitate the ability to observe activities in the space
  - *Access control:* Properly locating access points, combined with elements such as fencing, landscaping, and lighting, to direct traffic in ways that discourage crime.
- **Signage:** Signs can play an important role in defining the character and context of an area. Sign regulations and standards need to be more sensitive to the local context, improve aesthetic character, and reduce “visual clutter” along commercial corridors. In general, signage should be consistent with the architectural style and scale of buildings and be an integral component of the building and site.

While design standards are intended to address non-residential and multi-family development throughout Amherst, it is important that they not be applied through a “one-size-fits-all” approach, but rather be tailored as appropriate to address the unique characteristics of particular parts of town. For example, extensive interior landscape area/landscape buffer requirements may be appropriate for commercial development in a less dense (suburban) context in Central Amherst, but may be more difficult to apply to a smaller commercial lot in a more compactly developed area such as Eggertsville. In the latter context, reduced parking requirements and a narrower buffer with more concentrated screening (denser vegetation and/or a fence or wall) may be appropriate. Policies 3-6 to 3-8 further explore ways in which design standards should be adapted to local contexts. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

**3-6 Apply context-sensitive design standards to designated character roads.**

Varying from traditional streets in older neighborhoods to major commercial thoroughfares to rural roads, the diverse roadway corridors within Amherst are key to the Town’s character. Design guidance has been established to maintain

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<sup>2</sup> National Crime Prevention Council website

and enhance the character of different types of roadway corridors in the Town through coordinated treatment of the street/public right-of-way and adjacent land uses. (See Transportation Policy 6-1 for a full discussion of this concept, including roads designated for application of context-sensitive design standards.) (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

**3-7 Protect and retain the identity of special places through design guidelines.**

Certain places within the Town of Amherst have a special identity defined by factors such as historic character (e.g., former “hamlets” such as Getzville and Swormville), geographic location (e.g., at a highway interchange or gateway entrance to the Town), or presence of an important community resource (e.g., a major park, public or private buildings or open space, or an educational campus). These places are often well known, however, others may need to be identified through collaborative planning with local residents (i.e., through the Neighborhood Improvement Plans recommended by Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 8-9). Master site planning and context-sensitive design guidelines should be employed for both public improvements (e.g., road improvement projects) and private development or revitalization to complement and reinforce the established character of the identified areas. Design guidelines that address the considerations in Policy 3-5 should be developed for these special places to conserve existing character and scale (e.g., through treatment of building mass, orientation, and placement on the lot). Guidelines for key geographic locations should focus on context and reinforcing visual image and identity, for example through gateway and landmark treatments in accordance with Policy 3-11. Guidelines for community resources should be designed to complement and relate to the resource and surrounding context. Examples include preservation of key natural resources, the provision of pedestrian or visual access and buffers between dissimilar uses. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

**Reinvestment** in Amherst’s older neighborhoods and commercial areas is a Comprehensive Plan Key Initiative, both to ensure the health and vitality of these areas and to reduce pressures for development at the fringe.

**C. Reinvestment**

Spurring revitalization and reinvestment in Amherst’s older neighborhoods and commercial areas is one of four key Comprehensive Plan Initiatives, both to reinforce the health and vitality of these areas and to reduce pressures for “greenfield” development in fringe areas.

**3-8 Consider tax incentives for reinvestment, revitalization, and redevelopment of commercial properties and housing in older areas with less emphasis on new "greenfield" development.**

The Amherst Industrial Development Agency (IDA) has historically offered three different types of tax abatements for

commercial developments in the Town of Amherst: real property tax abatements (10 years for commercial, 15 years for industrial), an exemption on sales taxes for the purchase of materials for construction and business startup, and an exemption from the mortgage recording tax.

The Town of Amherst also has been able to offer exemptions that are limited both by their scope and their geography under Section 485-b of the New York State Code. Section 485-b exemptions only apply to the Town's share of property taxes, which is a small percentage of what property owners pay. These benefits are only available in certain redevelopment areas within the Town, including older commercial districts like Eggertsville and Snyder, as well as highway-oriented strips like older sections of Sheridan Drive and Transit Road. Recent policy changes by the Amherst Town Board (see below) may help, as they authorize the IDA to assist by offering abatements for sales taxes on construction materials and mortgage recording taxes to properties located in 485-b zones.

In the past, the bulk of these abatements have only been available for new construction; abatements for rehabilitation only applied to the value added by renovation, excluding the existing property assessment amount. However, recent changes in policy have broadened the scope of IDA abatements. The Amherst IDA has recently joined with the Erie County IDA and the other four local IDA's in the county to develop a standard, county-wide eligibility policy for tax abatements.

In addition to the "greenfield" industrial and commercial development, the new eligibility policy has broadened the horizons of the tax abatements to include:

- ***Multi-tenant commercial buildings:*** Multi-tenant office or industrial buildings are now included in the abatement program, provided that at least two-thirds of a given building's tenants are in one of the IDA's priority industry designations (manufacturing, distribution, business services, and arts/entertainment/recreation). This policy may allow for more multi-tenant, urban-oriented office developments, as such locations are likely to be more desirable for multi-user rather than single-user buildings.
- ***Long-term care/assisted living:*** Residential projects offering continuing medical care to senior citizens in need of such living arrangements are now eligible for abatements. Since it was determined for the *Inventory and Analysis Report* that the economics of assisted living facilities in Amherst are difficult, sales tax and property tax abatement (10-year) for such projects can help make them viable for private operators.

- ***Civic facilities:*** Three categories of civic facilities in particular are specified in the IDA eligibility criteria – dormitories, hospital facilities needed to uphold public health standards, and housing for adults over the age of 60. The third category is significant, as it applies to any housing aimed at senior citizens, and not just to assisted living or continuing care developments.
- ***Hotels/motels:*** This abatement applies to the capital costs of construction or rehabilitation of lodging facilities and may provide some help for older properties.

Beyond these particular uses, the new policy also states that any retail or health care businesses located in officially designated Neighborhood Redevelopment Areas will also be eligible for tax abatements. The policy clearly expresses that such areas may only be designated within the context of comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment strategies. According to these standards, neighborhoods with existing or in-progress redevelopment strategies, such as Eggertsville and Harlem-Kensington-Cleveland, should qualify.

The Town should work with the Amherst IDA to identify and pursue opportunities to apply the new tax abatement eligibility policy to projects that will spur reinvestment and revitalization of older parts of Amherst. Such projects should be considered a higher priority for tax abatements than “greenfield” development on vacant land.

It is important to note that, with the exception of the provisions for senior and assisted housing, the IDA abatements do not address housing construction or redevelopment. However, there are a number of federal programs aimed at making homeownership more attainable for first-time and/or low-income purchasers, as well as for rehabilitation of older housing units. Since some older areas of the Town of Amherst are in need of housing reinvestment, the Town should make sure that property owners, realtors, and homebuyers alike are aware of such opportunities. In addition, the Town could provide incentives such as deferrals in property tax increases on home improvements to encourage investment in existing housing for low and moderate income families (see Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 8-6).

**3-9 Advance the redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized, obsolete, and vacant properties for economically viable uses.**

As Amherst matures and market conditions evolve, some developed properties may no longer be economically viable as a result of changing economic conditions, obsolete buildings, or other market characteristics. Sustaining the economic viability and value of the Town’s neighborhoods and

commercial areas is critical to maintaining the Town's high quality of life and reducing pressure for "greenfield" development.

Depending on market conditions and other site and location factors, revitalization may feature one or more of the following approaches:

- **Reinvestment:** Existing buildings are updated or improved and continue to accommodate existing or similar land uses.
- **Adaptive reuse:** Existing buildings are retained but are converted or adapted for new uses. This approach has the potential benefit of retaining buildings with an established neighborhood presence or that are historic and valued assets within the neighborhood.
- **Partial to full redevelopment:** Existing buildings and land uses are either partially or fully replaced; this may also involve changes to the layout of the site. New uses may also be accommodated on the redeveloped site.

Following is a description of several land use scenarios in which revitalization may occur or be desired.

- **Residential:** As housing ages, property maintenance and reinvestment become critical. This is of particular concern when single-family housing is occupied by an aging population for whom resources may be limited. The strategy for single-family residential areas is to encourage reinvestment and strategic replacement as necessary per Policies 8-6 and 8-7. As market conditions change, existing multi-family housing may also undergo adaptive reuse or redevelopment, such as to provide new forms of housing.
- **Traditional Commercial:** Older traditional commercial areas are often characterized by small, shallow lots with limited amounts of parking and possibly outdated buildings and non-conforming structures. These areas also tend to be in close proximity to residential areas. Revitalization may occur through reinvestment, adaptive reuse, or through redevelopment that may be induced when separate parcels are assembled to accommodate larger uses in medium-scale nodes. These areas may also present opportunities for smaller, start-up, or specialty businesses which may incorporate live-work arrangements.
- **Suburban Centers and Corridors:** Larger than commercial nodes, some suburban centers and corridors may not be able to accommodate contemporary forms of retail and other commercial uses and may require revitalization through reinvestment, adaptive reuse, or redevelopment to remain competitive.
- **Light Industrial / Research and Development:** The first light industrial and research and development parks in

**Adaptive reuse** is the process of converting or adapting older structures for purposes other than those initially intended.

When the original use of a structure changes or is no longer required, as with older buildings from the industrial revolution, architects have the opportunity to change the primary function of the structure, while retaining some of the existing architectural details that make the building unique. In local communities, unused schools or post office buildings have been adapted for reuse as retail stores or offices.

*Encyclopedia of Community and Environmental Management.*

the Town were developed in the early 1980's and some of their oldest buildings are nearing functional obsolescence. Reinvestment is necessary for many parcels. In addition, the parks are often bordered by residential and commercial development, presenting an opportunity to redevelop single-use buildings to include residential and retail uses and create a mixed-used environment.

In addition to commercial and residential land uses, public and semi-public land uses, such as schools, churches, golf courses and other recreational facilities, may require revitalization in the event that their continued operation becomes difficult due to changing demographic, economic, or social trends.

- ***Community facilities:*** Community facilities, such as churches and schools, are typically integrated into neighborhoods, but may have building or site characteristics that pose challenges for their reuse, such as large existing buildings and parking areas. These facilities may be particularly well-suited for adaptive reuse.
- ***Recreation and other large-scale community facilities:*** Typically comprised of several acres, these facilities, such as private golf courses with club houses and public / semi-public recreation fields, may provide important open space or recreation assets to surrounding neighborhoods. Redevelopment of large tracts of former recreational land such as golf courses or playing fields requires careful master planning that maintains the essential character of the site while accommodating significant changes in use and density.

Whether involving reinvestment, reuse, or complete redevelopment, all revitalization projects should consider how the development contributes to and fits within the surrounding context of its block, street, neighborhood, and the community as a whole. Such considerations include: land use compatibility, building orientation and scale, vehicular access and pedestrian connectivity, and relationship to open space.

When existing land uses are continued on a site, greater design flexibility may be appropriate. For example, if existing commercial areas redevelop, flexibility in standards for density, building coverage, the mix of uses, and the amount of landscaping should be considered.

When redevelopment is proposed for a site, the following principles should be applied:

- New development should complement the surrounding neighborhood and existing land uses in terms of scale, form, and character.
- New development should positively address design issues identified in Policy 3-5, as well as take into account the criteria recommended in Section 3.3 of the Plan.

- New development should support adopted redevelopment and reinvestment policies and be consistent with relevant area plans or adopted regional plans.
- New land uses should not result in service requirements exceeding available infrastructure capacities unless mitigation measures are provided with the project or programmed through public sources.
- Site design should adequately address any issues that may arise with a change in the use of the property, such as changes to circulation or parking.

When redevelopment is proposed on land parcels exceeding five acres, the following principles, in addition to those previously described, should also be applied:

- In order to avoid a piecemeal approach and fragmented development pattern, a site redevelopment plan should be formulated that includes the entire parcel and considers the surrounding context. The site master plan should demonstrate that adjacent uses complement proposed uses and the cohesiveness among individual project components. In addition, the use of a planned unit development approach and corresponding zoning, such as the Planned Development District (PDD) or Master Planned Development District (MPD), that permits flexibility and strives for cohesive design, should guide the redevelopment of larger parcels.
- Design standards should be established to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses and to minimize impacts on residential areas. For example, standards should address, but not be limited to: buffer/edge treatment and transitional elements, landscaping, signage, and building design elements (scale, height/mass, orientation, façade treatment) per considerations discussed per Policy 3-5.
- Identified elements of the Open Space network, per Policy 3-13, should be continued along identified physical features, be integrated into the development design, and include connections between recreation and open space areas.
- Consistent with the goals and objectives of Chapter 6 (Transportation), connections should be provided within and between developments to enhance vehicular and pedestrian circulation and reduce traffic congestion. Roadway design should be consistent with context-sensitive principles, as expressed in the Town of Amherst Context-Sensitive Highway Design Report and Policy 6-1, and should also employ access management strategies in accordance with Policy 6-4.

A number of strategies are available to the Town to encourage the revitalization of underutilized, obsolescent, and vacant properties.

Because of the importance of addressing revitalization for a number of different land uses in multiple contexts as described above, and because of the complexity of issues involved in revitalization, the Town should pursue a coordinated approach that entails a variety of strategies. These strategies should be undertaken as part of a programmatic approach that includes the following elements:

- Coordination and negotiation with other agencies, including public participation facilitation, and monitoring the effectiveness of revitalization activities;
- Establishing business retention and technical assistance programs, providing public financing tools such as tax abatements (per Policy 3-8); preparing grants and/or providing management/ marketing programs.
- Formulation of neighborhood and small area redevelopment plans including market analyses to guide revitalization activities.
- Land development regulation revision (per Policy 3-10); enforcement of property maintenance codes; development of design guidelines and innovative regulatory mechanisms, such as incentive zoning.
- Building relationships through collaborative efforts that leverage public and private resources to encourage and sustain revitalization. Such initiatives could include: development of municipal parking; assisting with site acquisition or assembly; improved public services and infrastructure investments in targeted redevelopment areas and joint planning and redevelopment efforts. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

#### **D. Public Investment**

The Land Use and Development policies describe a range of regulatory and incentive-based approaches to achieve Comprehensive Plan objectives such as mixed-use, aesthetic quality, and revitalization. Strategic investment in physical improvements to public landscapes can also contribute to achieving these objectives, and is particularly relevant to the “Aesthetic/Community Character” and “Revitalization” key initiatives.

#### **3-10 Target capital investments to improve the aesthetic character of key locations within the Town.**

Targeted investment in visual improvements to public places (e.g., landscaping, streetscape improvements, public art, and signage) will help establish Amherst as a community with exceptional aesthetic character. In addition, it will help implement the “Greening Amherst” planting initiative proposed by Natural and Cultural Resources Policy 4-11. Towards this end, the Town should initiate a phased program of visual improvements in highly visible locations, including:



*Well designed landscaping, signage, and pedestrian elements enhance visual character.  
Source: [www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org)*

- **Gateway entrances** to the Town on major roadways. These gateways provide the initial visual impression of Amherst and should be developed with landscaping, distinctive signage, and other improvements to set a positive image signaling entry into a special community.
- **Major corridors** that define the visual experience of traveling through Amherst. While these corridors are generally state or county roads, the Town should work with these jurisdictions to establish and implement enhanced context sensitive design standards that address elements such as street tree planting and other landscaping, lighting, and pedestrian amenities.
- **Landmarks** such as public art installations or creative designs of landscapes or buildings can serve as visual focal points and sources of community identity. Opportunities should be sought to locate landmarks in visually prominent locations (e.g., gateway entrances to Amherst) as part of the phased program of visual improvements.
- **Public facilities and spaces** are important to civic life and to the visual identity of the community. Highly visible facilities such as town buildings and parks should incorporate a high level of design with regard to elements such as architectural design, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities.

Funds should be dedicated for continuing maintenance as well as installation of improvements. Both public and private sources of funding should be sought for these purposes.

### **3-11 Initiate public capital investment projects to encourage/ support private investment.**

Capital investment is a tool that can be used by the Town to support desired types and locations of private development, particularly in older, developed parts of Amherst that are targets for reinvestment. Examples include streetscape improvements to improve visual character and encourage business investment in older commercial areas; road and/or utility improvements to support particularly desirable developments; and parks and recreational facilities or other amenities to enhance property values and encourage investment in selected residential neighborhoods. Town investment could be leveraged by pursuing grants available from the state or other sources and by cost-sharing programs in which town funds are matched by private dollars (e.g., for façade improvements).

### **E. Open Space System**

Open space preservation was one of the primary issues identified by citizens throughout the process of preparing the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement emphasizes the

importance of open space preservation to Amherst's community character. Thus an open space system is conceived as an integral part of future land use in Amherst, providing "connective tissue" that helps define the Town's development patterns.

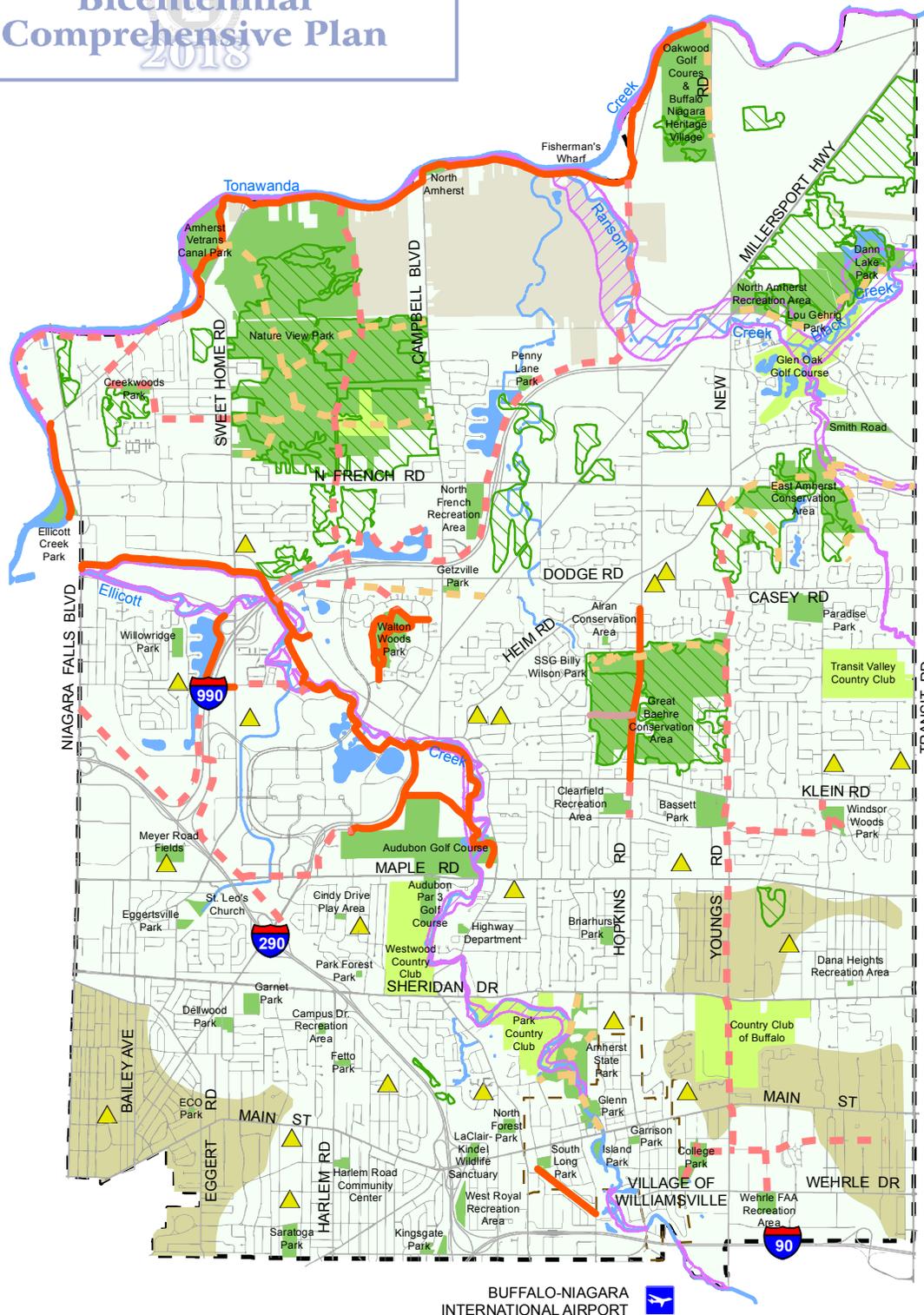
*Open space preservation* is one of the priority issues identified by citizens, as reflected in the Vision Statement and Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative.

**3-12 Designate a town-wide open space and greenway network to be achieved through a variety of mechanisms.**

The Town should work towards establishing an interconnected open space network within Amherst that integrates public parks and open spaces, private open spaces (e.g., country clubs and protected farmlands), and environmentally sensitive resources. Existing public and private open spaces can serve as the foundation of this network (see Figure 4). The network may include lands under private ownership that do not include public access, but provide desirable open space. Already protected open spaces should be augmented by additional properties protected through a variety of mechanisms. The Conceptual Land Use Plan (Figure 6) shows how these lands are added to the pattern of existing open spaces to create a more interconnected network. Techniques to protect privately owned land that should be included in the open space system include:

- **Regulatory approaches:** Conservation development is one regulatory technique proposed to help preserve open space (see Policy 3-14). Other ways to integrate open space into new development should be explored (e.g., by establishing requirements for easements when new developments abut greenway corridors identified on the Open Space and Greenways Plan).
- **Public acquisition:** See Policy 3-15.
- **Private landowner conservation:** Working with private, non-profit land organizations such as the Amherst Conservation, Parks, and Recreation Foundation, private landowners can preserve significant open space areas through voluntary actions, such as conservation easements that restrict future development, outright donations or bargain sale of properties, or limited (below market value or the intensity allowed by zoning) development. A variety of tax benefits are available to landowners pursuing these options. In addition, the Town should identify and pursue properties for acquisition in residential areas that are under served by existing parks and recreational facilities. Residential areas located more than ½ mile from a local or community park are shown on Figure 4. To enhance connectivity, two types of linkages between individual tracts of land comprising the open space network should be established:

# Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



**PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL MAP**

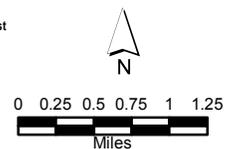
**FIGURE 4**

**LEGEND**

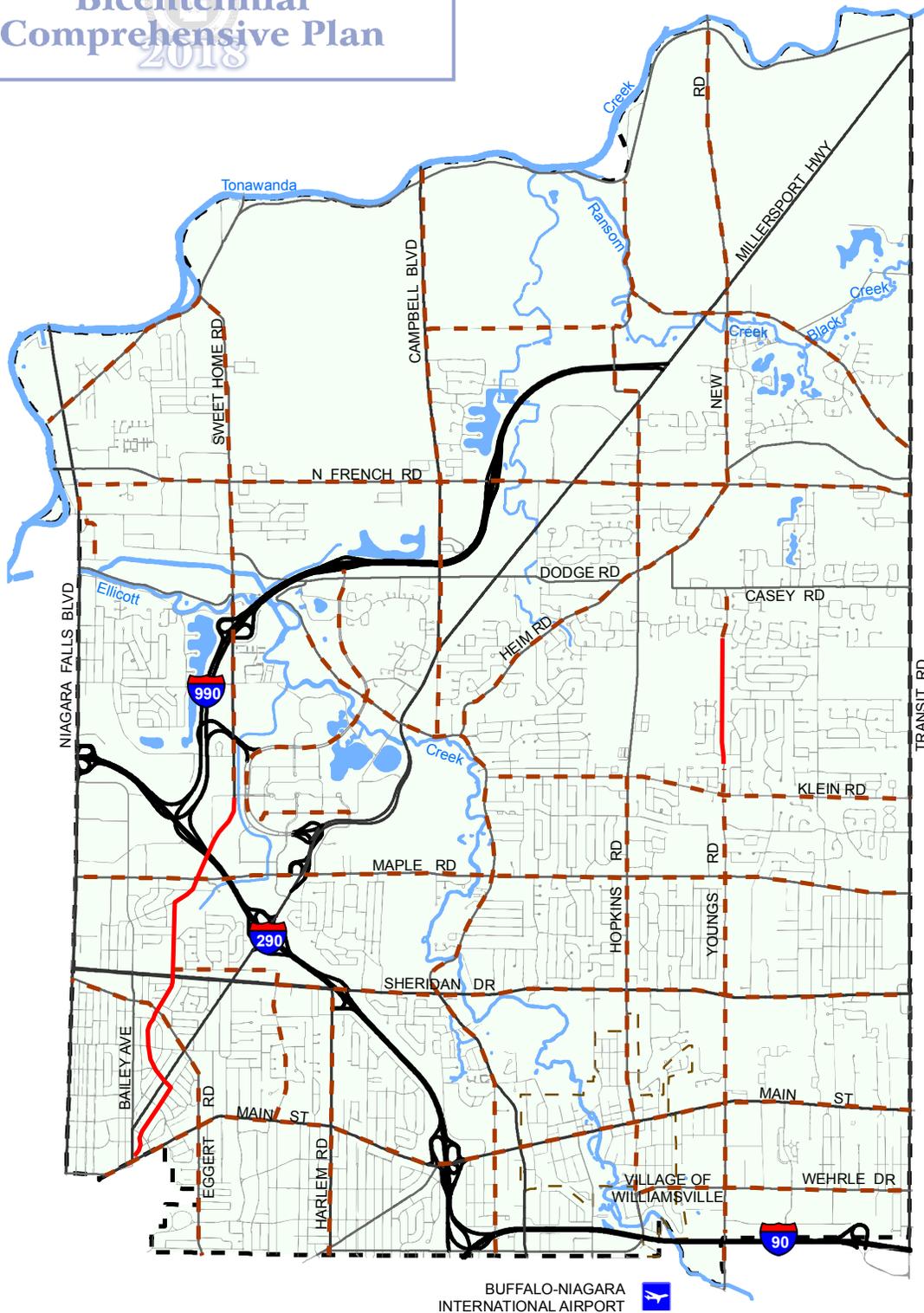
- |                                      |                          |                            |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Park and Recreation Area             | FEMA Floodway            | Multi-Use Trail (Existing) |
| Private Recreation Area              | NYSDEC Regulated Wetland | Multi-Use Trail (Proposed) |
| Agricultural Area                    | Surface Water Body       | Natural Trail (Existing)   |
| Areas Lacking Local Parks/Open Space | Public School            | Natural Trail (Proposed)   |

**SOURCE NOTES:**

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst  
 Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst  
 Planning Department  
 Date: September 2015



# Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



BUFFALO-NIAGARA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

FIGURE 5

## ON - STREET BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

### LEGEND

- On-Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Network (Designated)
- On-Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Network (Proposed)

### Roads

- Local Road
- County Road
- New York State Route
- Interstate Route

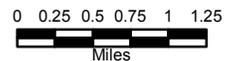
- Municipal Boundary
- Village of Williamsville Boundary
- Surface Water

### SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department

Date: September 2015



- **Off-street greenways or recreational trail connections** can be located along stream corridors, public rights-of-way, and other available routes where they do not negatively impact existing residential subdivisions. They can be established through acquisition, easements, or maintained under private ownership. Examples of such connections are illustrated on Figure 4. An overall greenway network is illustrated in Figure 6.
- **On-street sidewalk/bike lane connections** along public roadways, as shown on Figure 5.

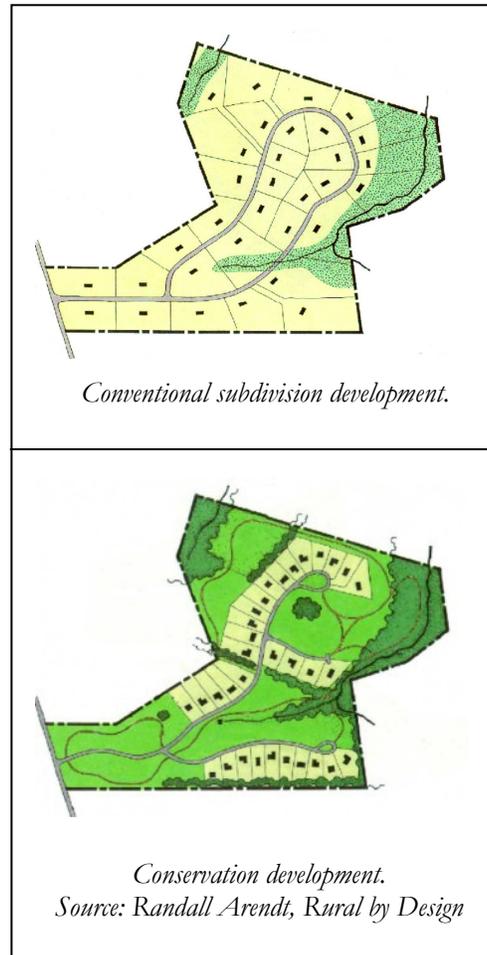
Safe, clearly demarcated pedestrian crossings should be added where components of this network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities cross major roadways.

It should be noted that while public access is a primary objective of the open space system, it is not intended that it be provided to all properties within the system. Privately owned and preserved properties may provide significant open space and environmental benefits without being open to the public.

**3-13 Encourage conservation development with incentives for the dedication of open space in private developments.**

Endorsed both by environmental interests and development organizations such as the National Homebuilders Association, conservation development is a “win-win” alternative to conventional subdivisions that both accommodates development and preserves valuable open space. Under this technique, houses and roadways are grouped closer together in compact development patterns to preserve valuable open space. Specific benefits of this approach include:

- Conservation development provides open space and recreational amenities for residents, increasing the value of the development. Studies have demonstrated that homes in conservation subdivisions typically have higher resale value than those in conventional subdivisions.
- Conservation development provides environmental benefits such as maintenance of habitat areas and natural drainage patterns. In doing so, it can save money by necessitating considerably less extensive site grading and less costly infrastructure improvements that do not compromise public safety or welfare.
- The more compact development patterns allowed by conservation development lessen the amount of streets and utilities required, reducing initial site improvement (developer) costs and long-term (taxpayer) costs for maintenance and services.



- Conservation development improves the visual quality of new development as seen from public roads by facilitating the maintenance of “green” buffers.
- Conservation development preserves open space for the community at little expense to the taxpayer while creating enhanced value for developers. With proper planning and design, the open space can form part of an interconnected, community-wide system of parks, greenways, and trails.

Conservation development differs from the cluster residential option provided by Section 203-3-7 of the Town’s Zoning Ordinance in its emphasis on design standards, flexibility, and incentives to accommodate development while achieving meaningful open space preservation in a variety of contexts. Current cluster residential provisions should be modified to provide the Town with the option to mandate the conservation development approach. The revised regulations should address the following:

- **Density:** The starting point for determining allowable density should be the maximum number of lots that could realistically be developed on the land per the requirements of the underlying zoning district, taking into consideration environmental limitations as demonstrated through a “yield plan.” The minimum lot size and dimensional requirements specified by conventional zoning would be reduced to allow appropriate areas to be dedicated as permanent open space.
- **Incentives:** Incentives in the form of density bonuses should be established to encourage use of this development option. The bonuses should be established on a sliding scale, increasing as the percentage of dedicated open space increases.
- **Standards:** Standards should be established for the design, use, ownership, and maintenance of dedicated open space areas. Most commonly, a private homeowner’s association assumes ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Other options include a private land conservation trust or, in cases where the open space would provide a key linkage in the town-wide open space system, it could be dedicated to the Town of Amherst.

The majority of vacant land available for conservation development is located in the northern part of Amherst. In areas not served by public sewer, use of this option may be constrained by poor soil suitability for on-site sewage disposal. (Erie County Department of Health guidelines call for three-acre minimum lot sizes on the soil types typically found in North Amherst.) Nevertheless, the Town should work with the County to identify creative ways to accommodate conservation development while

meeting on-site sewage disposal requirements (e.g., through use of common systems or disposal fields located in easements within dedicated open space areas). In addition, opportunities should be sought to apply conservation development principles to infill development of smaller properties throughout the Town (e.g., through relaxation of minimum lot standards to allow for establishment of common open space areas).

**3-14 Initiate a public open space acquisition program consistent with the open space, recreation, and greenway network.**

In addition to other protection mechanisms, commitment of funding for additional acquisition of open space by the Town of Amherst is key to successfully achieving a town-wide open space and greenway network. These efforts will build upon the Town's on-going open space acquisition program, which is derived from the 1988 *Open Space Acquisition Plan* and the 2002 *Recreation and Parks Master Plan*. The intent is to target town fiscal resources towards acquiring key parcels that can contribute to building the open space network based upon clear criteria. Proposed criteria include:

- **Connectivity:** Certain properties may fill critical “gaps” in the system (e.g., along a stream corridor), thus helping to create a continuous network.
- **Distribution within the Town:** As shown in Figure 4, the majority of protected open space is located in the central and northern parts of Amherst, with relatively little located in older areas in the southern part of town. While the relative absence of vacant land makes it difficult to provide additional open space in these areas, efforts should be made to provide smaller scale open space (e.g., neighborhood parks and commons) in under-served locations (see Community Facilities Policy 9-1 regarding parks and recreational facilities).
- **Protection of valuable natural and cultural resources:** Open space values are enhanced by the presence of significant natural (e.g., water resources and habitat areas) or cultural (e.g., recognized historic sites) resources.
- **Protection of visual resources:** Areas that reflect community or rural character are important resources to be preserved and enhanced where possible, including land along “special character” roads or around scenic natural and man-made features.

The Town currently has a Recreation and Open Space Fund derived from fees charged for residential and commercial land development. The proposed acquisition program will require funding well beyond the levels generated by this fund. Nevertheless, in evaluating options for funding land

acquisition, the Town should consider adjusting the fee schedule to more accurately reflect the value of the land being developed.

Another option is for land owners to consider providing the Town with the first option to purchase privately owned land shown on the Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan or as open space on the Conceptual Land Use Plan before it is offered for sale on the open market. This approach would not obligate the Town to purchase such properties but would allow it to act if preservation of a property as open space is deemed to be in the best interest of the Town and funding is available.

*Improving the predictability of the development review and approval process is an important part of the Governance Key Initiative.*

#### **F. Development Review and Approval Process**

Along with the revised regulations and standards enacted as part of Comprehensive Plan implementation, the Town's policies and procedures for reviewing and approving proposed developments are a tool that can be used to promote the goals and objectives of the Land Use and Development Element. Several points are of particular importance. First, the application of clearly defined principles and standards based upon the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan will improve the predictability of the review and approval process and increase certainty regarding project outcomes for both developers and residents. Second, review and approval policies and procedures can be used to facilitate desired types of development (e.g., reinvestment in older areas or conservation development can be encouraged through the application of incentives coupled with simplified and expedited reviews). Conversely, review standards and procedures could be more stringent where protecting the integrity of established residential areas is of paramount importance. As a general rule, development review and approvals would be enhanced by an open process, including:

- ***User-friendly regulations*** that are readily understandable and clearly convey the Town's objectives to both developers and residents
- ***Opportunities for informal interaction*** (developers/town staff, developers/neighbors) in the conceptual planning stages before development plans are finalized and applications are filed
- ***Use of digital technologies*** to allow for electronic submissions of applications and dissemination of information

#### **3-15 Improve the predictability and consistency of the rezoning and other development approval processes through the application of clear town-wide land use policies.**

Requests for changes in use or rezoning creates a climate of uncertainty regarding future land uses. A large proportion of the requests involve conversion of property from zoning

allowing lower intensity to more intensive uses. These rezonings generally involve conversions to higher density residential or retail commercial of land zoned S-A and to retail commercial, office, or multi-family residential of land zoned single-family residential. The predictability and consistency of development review and approval processes would be improved by the establishment of clear criteria for rezonings that are tied to the policies contained in this Comprehensive Plan. These criteria should include the following:

- Rezoning from single-family to higher intensity uses (commercial retail, office, and multi-family residential) should support the establishment of mixed-use centers as described in Policy 3-1 and shown on the Conceptual Land Use Plan.
- Land to remain in rural uses as described in Policy 3-3 and designated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan should not be rezoned to higher intensity uses.
- Rezoning should help implement other comprehensive plan policies, for example:
  - Providing alternatives to automobile use (transit, bicycle/pedestrian connections, etc.)
  - Advancing the revitalization of underutilized or obsolescent properties (see Policy 3-9)
  - Providing open space as part of the development
  - Consistency with the established character of the highway corridor
- The applicant should be required to address significant impacts on roads or other significant infrastructure systems. A traffic impact analysis should be required for projects above a certain size threshold.
- The applicant should demonstrate that the proposed rezoning would not cause adverse impacts on adjacent land uses with respect to scale, visual intrusion, light, noise, and other related impacts.
- The expansion of additional commercial zoning districts should be limited. Introduction of new districts should include public review and Town Board amendment of Map Figures 6 and 6-A. The form and type of development proposed for new districts should be consistent with the designations discussed in Section 3.3.2.

**Clear criteria** tied to Comprehensive Plan policies and the Conceptual Land Use Plan should be established and used in reviewing requests for rezoning.

Other development review and approval policies and procedures should be evaluated for opportunities to improve predictability and consistency. One possible change is to move towards administrative (staff) review of minor projects, which would expedite processing of routine applications and allow the Planning Board to focus on more significant matters. Having clear standards in place (Policy 3-17) will support this change.

**3-16 Set clear standards for development quality to increase the level of certainty in the development review and approval process.**

The absence of standards that clearly define the Town's expectations regarding development character and quality is an important contributing factor to the uncertainty of the development review and approval process. Policies 3-5 to 3-7 propose enactment of more explicit standards to address community appearance/sense of place town-wide and at the scale of individual corridors and districts with special characteristics. Establishing these standards will help to increase predictability for developers by clearly stating the development guidelines they need to follow, reducing the potential for protracted review processes with costly plan revisions. The level of certainty will also be increased for neighbors of proposed development projects.

**3-17 Provide for periodic review and revision of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.**

The Comprehensive Plan should be viewed not as a static document, but as a living plan that will evolve over time as the Town works to achieve the vision of Amherst's future through implementation of plan goals, objectives, and policies. Of particular concern for the Land Use and Development Element is the application of plan policies to the development review and approval process, including revisions to the Town's development regulations. To maximize the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Plan as a guide for town decision-makers, both the land use policies and the development regulations that implement the policies should be periodically reviewed and revised as deemed necessary to more effectively achieve Comprehensive Plan objectives. Such reviews should be conducted on an annual basis, with a major review of the Comprehensive Plan scheduled every five years.

### **3.3 CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN**

The Conceptual Land Use Plan ([Figure 6](#)) depicts a generalized future pattern of land use in the Town of Amherst. This pattern reflects a number of influences, including:

- The existing pattern of land use (Figure 2), which for much of the Town will change only slightly over the 20-year plan horizon
- The pattern of existing zoning (Figure 3), which is largely responsible for the present use patterns
- The policies set forth in Section 3.2 to encourage new land use patterns and characteristics

Tables 1 and 2 show the distribution of land within the various use categories shown on the Generalized Existing Land Use map and the Conceptual Land Use Plan (Figure 6). An exact comparison of existing and proposed land uses cannot be made because the use categories are defined differently on the two maps. However, the tables provide a general characterization of the proportional distribution of uses in 2000 and in the future as this plan is implemented. Since 2000, 53.9 acres of vacant land have been donated as Recreation and Open Space.

**Table 1. Existing Land Use - 2000**

Category	Acreage	Percentage
Agriculture	1,226	3.6%
Commercial	1,367	4.0%
Industrial	335	1.0%
Office	818	2.4%
Single Family Residential	10,685	31.1%
Low Density Residential	753	2.2%
Medium Density Residential	1,054	3.1%
Recreation and Open Space	3,678	10.7%
Public/Semi Public	2,578	7.5%
Utilities	515	1.5%
Vacant Land	6,484	18.9%
Roads, Utilities & Water	4,843	14.1%

Source: Figure 2, Generalized Existing Land Use

**Table 2. Proposed Land Use**

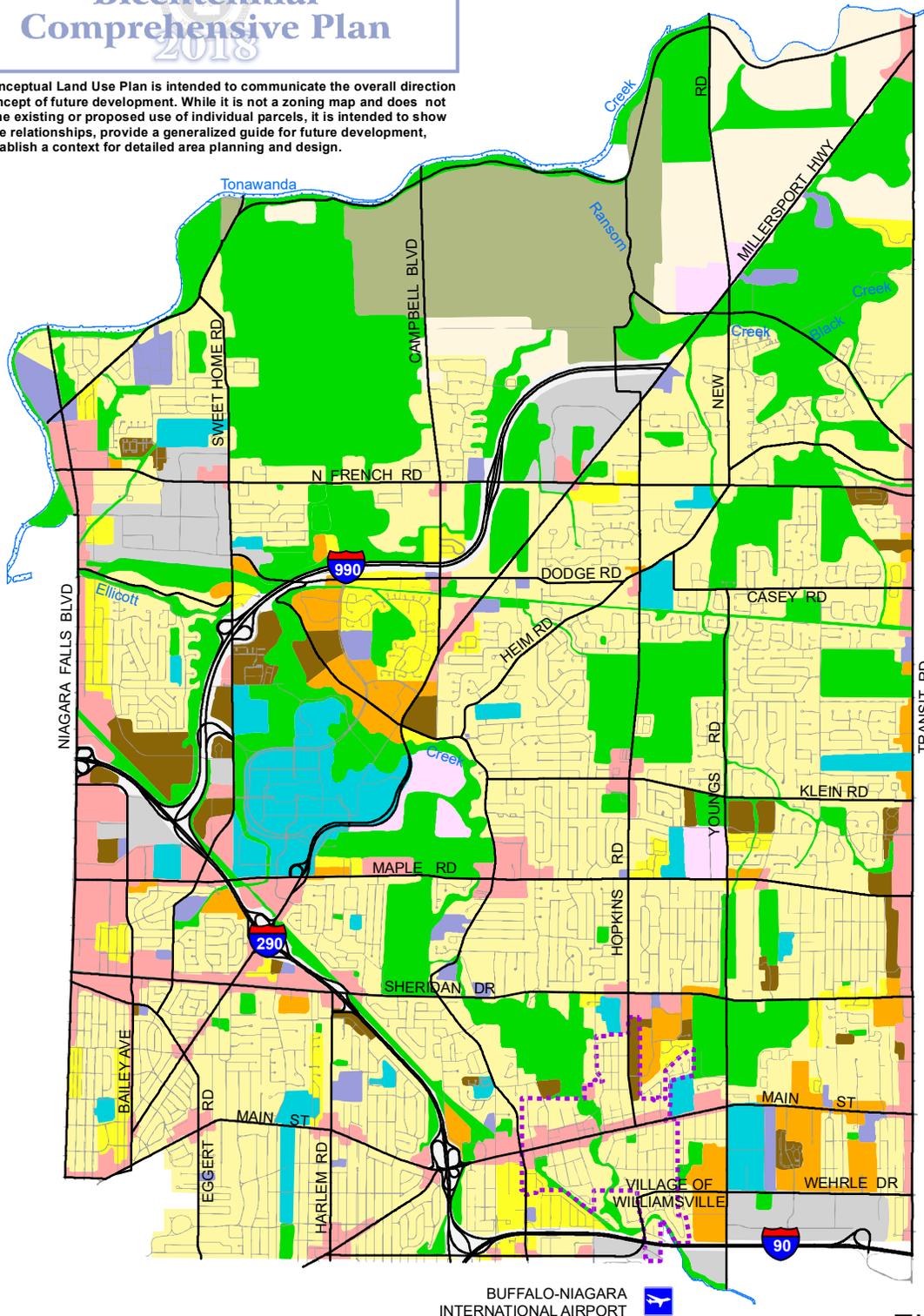
Category	Acreage	Percentage
Agriculture	1,787	5.2%
Commercial / Mixed-Use	2,203	6.4%
Commercial – Office	962	2.8%
Industrial – Office	1,185	3.5%
Rural Residential	1,548	4.5%
Single Family Residential	13,857	40.5%
Mixed Residential	1,219	3.6%
Medium Residential	801	2.3%
Special Use Center	343	1.0%
Recreation & Open Space	7,687	22.5%
Community Facilities	506	1.5%
Educational Campus	1,334	3.9%
Transportation	788	2.3%

Source: Figure 6, Conceptual Land Use Plan  
(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)

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The Conceptual Land Use Plan is intended to communicate the overall direction and concept of future development. While it is not a zoning map and does not show the existing or proposed use of individual parcels, it is intended to show land use relationships, provide a generalized guide for future development, and establish a context for detailed area planning and design.



## CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN

FIGURE 6

- |                           |                      |                                    |                                   |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Rural Residential         | Special Use Center   | Recreation, Open Space & Greenways | Village of Williamsville Boundary |
| Single Family Residential | Commercial - Office  | Agriculture                        |                                   |
| Mixed Residential         | Industrial - Office  | Transportation                     |                                   |
| Medium Residential        | Community Facilities | Surface Water                      |                                   |
| Commercial / Mixed Use*   | Educational Campus   |                                    |                                   |

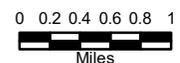
SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst Information Technology Department, URS Corporation and Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department

Date: May 2017

\* See Map Figure 6A for Form/Type Designation



In a maturing community such as Amherst, changes in the pattern of land use will occur in several ways: through new development at the rural fringe, infill development within largely developed areas, and as redevelopment and revitalization occurs in older parts of town. The Conceptual Land Use Plan map illustrates the desired pattern of land uses to attain the community's vision for the future. The future land use pattern is influenced by existing land use and zoning and the existing and planned network of roads, utilities, parks, greenways and other factors that shape development and act as form-givers within the overall fabric of the community.

The Conceptual Land Plan is neither a zoning map nor is it meant to show the existing or proposed use of individual parcels of land. It is not meant to dictate land use, nor is it meant to show any phasing or timing of development. The Plan is intended to communicate the overall direction and concept of future development. While it is intended to present a composite picture of the Town at full development, the Plan is designed to be flexible, to show relationships, to provide a generalized guide for future development, and establish a context for detailed area planning and design. Over time the Plan may be amended by the Town Board to reflect changes in social, economic, and cultural trends, so that it remains a relevant guide to community development.

The following text describes the various use categories shown in Figure 6, the Conceptual Land Use Plan. **Figure 6-A illustrates the designations of form and type for commercial and mixed-use areas.**

***Residential Use Categories***

- Rural Residential (1 unit/3 to 5 acres)
- Single-Family Residential (2 to 4 units/acre)
- Mixed Residential (4 to 12 units/acre)
- Medium Residential (12 to 60 units/acre)

**3.3.1 Residential Uses**

Residential land uses will continue to dominate the Town's landscape, accounting for nearly 50% of the total developed area. Acknowledging agriculture as an important component of the community, the Plan establishes a form of residential development that is consistent with and complementary to farming. Another important Comprehensive Plan policy is to maintain the economic viability and physical condition of existing residential uses along arterial and collector roadways, thus focusing commercial activity at key intersections and preventing strip development along highway corridors. New residential uses can be located along these corridors, however their design and development should incorporate principles of access management and reverse frontage to preserve highway capacity.

**Rural Residential (1 unit/3 to 5 acres)**

As described in Policies 3.3 and 3.15, the Comprehensive Plan reinforces and expands upon policies established in the 1993

Northeast Plan regarding the northern portion of the Town, which remains largely undeveloped and rural/agricultural in character. This area is predominately zoned “Suburban Agriculture” and has a permitted density of one dwelling per acre, which is not conducive to preservation of its rural character. Instead, the low-density pattern promoted by one-acre zoning could be described as sprawl, one in which the value of the scenic rural area will be lost and the efficiency and fiscal balance of a compact suburban pattern will not be achieved.

Consistent with limiting further extensions of public facilities such as highways and sewers (Infrastructure Policy 7-3), much of this area will remain rural in character. Contributing factors include the area’s extensive open space resources, environmental constraints such as wetlands and floodways, and low-density designation, coupled with the encouragement of conservation development (Policy 3-14) and the Town’s program to purchase development rights on agricultural lands. The Conceptual Land Use Plan identifies those areas that should no longer be considered in a “holding zone” for rezoning to suburban character residential or commercial use. They should be reserved for larger lot rural uses with an emphasis on preservation of open land where homes abut agricultural lands, maintaining rural character visible from the adjacent highways, and avoiding strip residential development. Recognition and adherence to right-to-farm practices that protect the long term viability of farming operations on lands surrounding rural residential uses should be emphasized in development design.

The density range of 1 unit/3 to 5 acres set for this category is based upon Erie County Department of Health guidelines that call for three-acre minimum lot sizes on the soil types typically found in the area. Consideration should be given to increasing the permitted net density as an incentive for conservation developments that preserve a substantial amount of open space if not precluded by soil suitability for on-site sewage disposal or other environmental constraints.

**Single-Family Residential (2 to 4 units/acre)**

Consistent with Amherst’s history as a suburban bedroom community, nearly one-half of the Town’s land area will remain in relatively low-density, primarily single-family detached residential use. Policies for Amherst’s single-family neighborhoods are to preserve the neighborhood fabric and quality of life by limiting undesired influences such as commercial intrusions.

Existing single-family residential lands located along traditional and suburban highways, such as Main Street, Sheridan Drive, Maple Road, Hopkins Road and other collectors and arterials help to preserve the residential character and appearance of neighborhoods in Amherst. These areas should be reinforced as residential through the use of design standards and context-



sensitive highway design solutions that will help protect them from commercial incursion.

While the bulk of the area depicted as Single-Family Residential on Figure 6 is fully developed, opportunities exist for new and infill development. Such development should be consistent with the scale and character of the existing surrounding residential areas. The design of new subdivisions should include housing and street patterns that complement the character of connecting streets and neighborhoods. New infill development should also be designed to be consistent with the established character of surrounding/connected neighborhoods. Single-family residential development should not be encouraged where its location or access is inconsistent with existing or planned non-residential areas proposed in the Conceptual Land Use Plan.

Where single-family residential land abuts agriculture or rural residential uses, development design connections should reflect a mutually beneficial transition from suburban to rural character. As an example, to the north of North French Road there exists a large area of large, deep frontage lots that reflects a rural development pattern. While this area is zoned for single-family development at higher densities, the pattern of **land** parcels does not lend itself to land assembly and efficient subdivision development. Therefore, in spite of the suburban zoning and the availability of utilities and public facilities, the area designated for single-family use north of North French Road should strive to retain much of its low-density rural pattern and character, avoiding long uninterrupted strips of housing.

**Mixed Residential (4 to 12 units/acre)** Within the older sections of the Town (generally south of Maple Road), Mixed Residential designations comprised of small lot single-family, duplex, and other attached dwelling types, represent much of the Town's stock of affordable housing. This type of housing is also attractive for infill development along high access suburban and commercial corridors served by public transportation. Typical locations for this residential category include areas of transition between commercial uses and lower density single-family neighborhoods, as well as along collector or arterial highways or other areas that are generally unattractive for large lot, single-family development. Other areas of the Town designated for concentrations of Mixed Residential use include underutilized areas near designated commercial **and mixed-use centers**.

**Medium Residential (12 to 60 units/acre)**

Medium Residential comprises the relatively small proportion of the Town's housing stock devoted to multi-family, largely rental apartment housing. Although longstanding policy has tended to favor low-density, single-family residential use, recent development trends **have seen** a substantial increase in the amount of new multi-family housing. The need for higher density housing

will grow along with the component of the population that will increasingly choose smaller housing types, including retirees, empty nesters, singles, and other smaller household types.

As with the Mixed Residential category, location criteria for higher density housing include high access corridors served by public transportation, areas near commercial centers and employment concentrations, areas next to educational campuses, and areas near community facilities. New medium residential development should ~~also~~ be focused in designated **commercial** or mixed-use centers. Properly designed, medium density housing can provide a useful **transition** between single family and non-residential uses.

A growing form of residence in Amherst is housing for the elderly. Although the density for the Medium Residential category is 12 to 60 units per acre, the more typical range is 12 to 20 units. The higher densities apply to senior housing and assisted living facilities. Many of the location criteria above also apply to this form of housing. Proximity to proposed mixed-use centers, shopping, libraries and other community facilities help to sustain the resident's active involvement in community life.

Housing for students attending Amherst's colleges and UB may also be developed at medium density. Student housing is best located within walking distance of these educational campuses or within designated mixed-use areas serving these schools.

### **3.3.2 Commercial and Mixed-Use**

A strong commercial base is necessary to support Amherst's quality of life and to provide community amenities. The maps and graphics in this section illustrate the Town's commitment to strengthening commercial and mixed-use opportunities in appropriate areas. In the future, Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers must be developed or reinvented in forms and types that are consistent with their surroundings. These two characteristics form the basis for organizing and guiding commercial and mixed-use centers.

Amherst's centers vary by scale and function. Their location also plays a significant role in shaping the size and character of buildings and parking areas, and providing satisfactory transitions to surrounding areas. Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers fall within two forms and four types of development, each of which are described below. Map Figure 6-A displays the recommended locations for different commercial and mixed-use centers by form and type. The following sections describe these form and type classifications.

## FORM OF DEVELOPMENT

Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers have historically been built in one of two forms: traditional and suburban. The following are characteristics or elements of form.

- Location of buildings on the land/parcel
- Relationship of the building to the adjacent street
- Location of parking on the parcel
- Types of signs
- Posted speeds on adjacent roadways
- Access (pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle)

Each of these two forms is discussed below, the Town's commercial centers have been categorized by form and are located as shown on Map Figure 6-A.

### Traditional Form

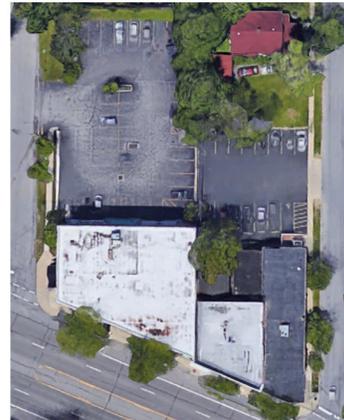
The *traditional* form of development in Amherst is that of a "Main Street." In this form, buildings are typically built next to the sidewalk, with little or no front setback. Street trees are often planted in grates within the sidewalk. There is usually some on-street parking along the curb, although this parking is often supplemented by side or rear parking areas on surface lots. Signs in the traditional form of development are typically mounted on the building wall. Adjacent roadways are typically posted for speeds at 30 MPH.

This form is pedestrian-friendly and tends to attract people from the surrounding neighborhood. Traditional forms have evolved within a given context, and their redevelopment requires careful

TRADITIONAL FORM: "MAIN STREET"



- Buildings Pulled Up to the Sidewalk
- No Front Setback
- Street Trees in Grates
- On-Street Parking
- Parking in Rear, Side
- Wall Signs On Buildings
- Adjacent Road Posted Speed 15-30 MPH



consideration of land uses and design to ensure compatibility with the surrounding community.

Examples of traditional form include older areas of Town such as Eggerstville, Snyder, and the Village of Williamsville.

### **Suburban Form**

The **suburban** form of development in Amherst is that of a “Shopping Center.” Buildings are typically set back further from the street. Often there is a deep front setback that includes landscaping along the street edge, and parking between that landscaping and the building. Street trees are often planted in a lawn area located between the sidewalk and the street. There is seldom any on-street parking, therefore larger parking lots are typically constructed. Parking is located on-site, either in front, to the side, or to the rear of the building. Signs in the suburban form of development often occur as monument signs at the street edge along with wall signs on the building. Adjacent roadways are typically posted for 35 MPH or higher. This form is generally automobile-oriented and attracts people from outside the adjacent area.

Examples of centers with suburban form include the Boulevard Mall, Northtown Plaza, Getzville Plaza, and Clearfield Plaza.

#### **SUBURBAN FORM: “SHOPPING CENTER”**



- Set Back From Street
- Front Setback Includes Landscaping, Parking
- Street Trees in Lawn
- No On-Street Parking
- Parking in Front, Side and Rear
- Monument Signs at Street, Wall Signs on Building
- Adjacent Road Posted Speed 35-45 MPH



The ability to walk and bicycle safely within both forms of development is critical. While traditional forms of development are typically seen as more pedestrian-friendly, improvements within suburban forms of development should enhance the pedestrian and bicycle experience. These improvements often include bicycle amenities and safe sidewalk connections through parking lots and from adjacent sidewalks to the front door of development. Development in suburban centers should ensure walkability within these sites as they develop or redevelop.

One key technique for walkability is to set a standard for the size of a block to ensure there are connections through large tracts of land. As these large tracts are redeveloped, they should be required to build new streets through the property to provide access. The development adjacent to these new streets can be traditional in form, with buildings pulled up to new internal streets and parking located in the center of blocks, and not facing streets.

## **TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT**

Commercial and mixed-use centers in Amherst have historically been built in one of four types: center, corridor, medium-scale node, and low-scale node. Each of these types can occur in both the traditional and suburban form. Each of the types is discussed below, and the types have been categorized and located on Map Figure 6-A.

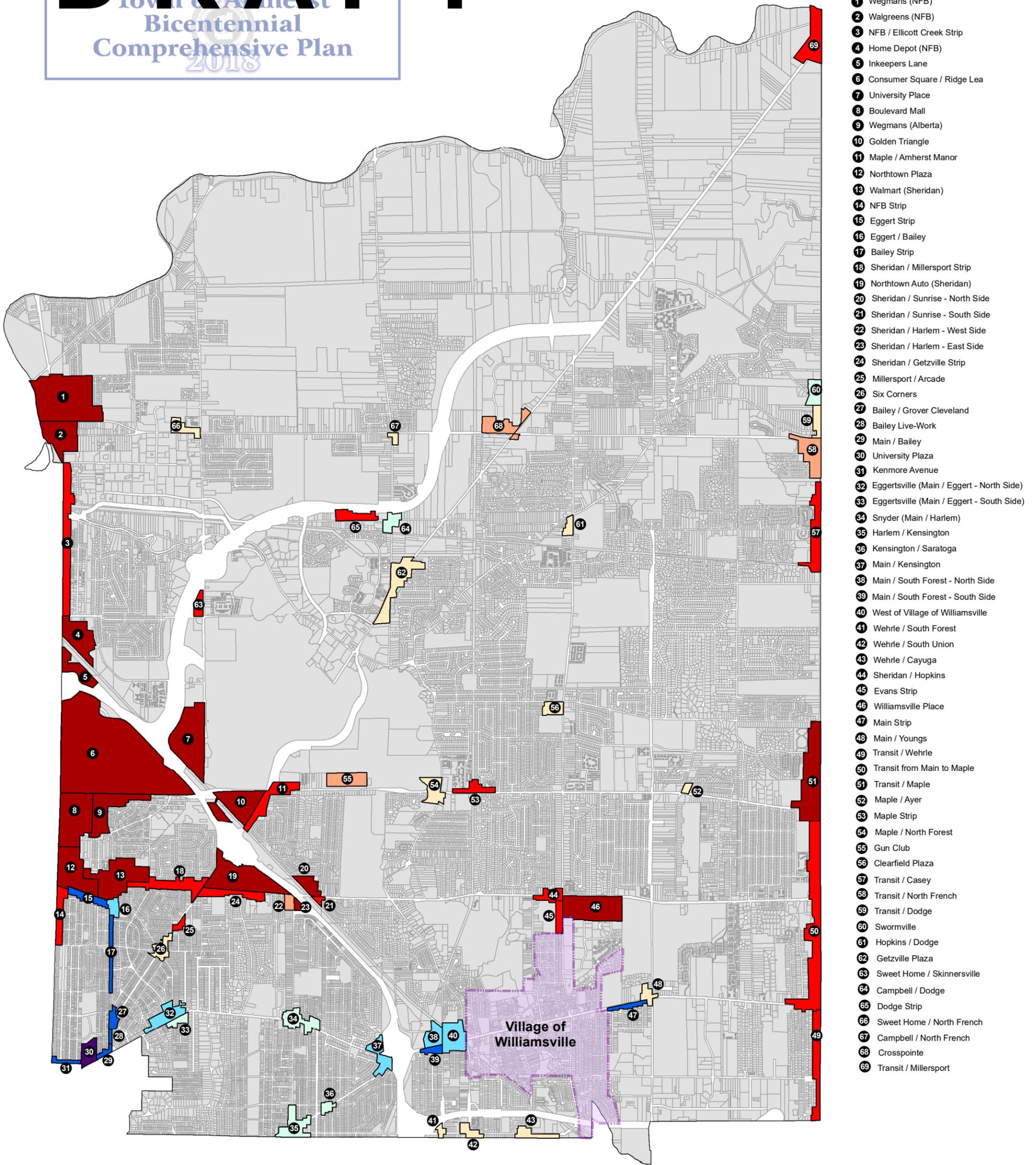
The following are characteristics or elements for type of development.

- General location within the Town
- Adjacency of single-family homes
- Type of roadway serving the site
- Size (both width and depth) of typical parcels
- Building height
- Tenant or center size

The success of a commercial or mixed-use center is increasingly related to access (which includes modes beyond automobiles), and quality of place. In addition, typical approaches to retailing are being significantly impacted by on-line shopping with free delivery. Due to these accelerating shifts in the market, zoning should focus more significantly on the built form in each of Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers.

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- 1 Wegmans (NFB)
- 2 Walgreens (NFB)
- 3 NFB / Ellicott Creek Strip
- 4 Home Depot (NFB)
- 5 Inkeepers Lane
- 6 Consumer Square / Ridge Lea
- 7 University Place
- 8 Boulevard Mall
- 9 Wegmans (Alberta)
- 10 Golden Triangle
- 11 Maple / Amherst Manor
- 12 Northtown Plaza
- 13 Walmart (Sheridan)
- 14 NFB Strip
- 15 Eggert Strip
- 16 Eggert / Bailey
- 17 Bailey Strip
- 18 Sheridan / Millersport Strip
- 19 Northtown Auto (Sheridan)
- 20 Sheridan / Sunrise - North Side
- 21 Sheridan / Sunrise - South Side
- 22 Sheridan / Harlem - West Side
- 23 Sheridan / Harlem - East Side
- 24 Sheridan / Getzville Strip
- 25 Millersport / Arcade
- 26 Six Corners
- 27 Bailey / Grover Cleveland
- 28 Bailey Live-Work
- 29 Main / Bailey
- 30 University Plaza
- 31 Kenmore Avenue
- 32 Eggertville (Main / Eggert - North Side)
- 33 Eggertville (Main / Eggert - South Side)
- 34 Snyder (Main / Harlem)
- 35 Harlem / Kensington
- 36 Kensington / Saratoga
- 37 Main / Kensington
- 38 Main / South Forest - North Side
- 39 Main / South Forest - South Side
- 40 West of Village of Williamsville
- 41 Wehrle / South Forest
- 42 Wehrle / South Union
- 43 Wehrle / Cayuga
- 44 Sheridan / Hopkins
- 45 Evans Strip
- 46 Williamsville Place
- 47 Main Strip
- 48 Main / Youngs
- 49 Transit / Wehrle
- 50 Transit from Main to Maple
- 51 Transit / Maple
- 52 Maple / Ayer
- 53 Maple Strip
- 54 Maple / North Forest
- 55 Gun Club
- 56 Clearfield Plaza
- 57 Transit / Casey
- 58 Transit / North French
- 59 Transit / Dodge
- 60 Swarmville
- 61 Hopkins / Dodge
- 62 Getzville Plaza
- 63 Sweet Home / Skinersville
- 64 Campbell / Dodge
- 65 Dodge Strip
- 66 Sweet Home / North French
- 67 Campbell / North French
- 68 Crosspointe
- 69 Transit / Millersport

## Commercial and Mixed-Use Designations

FIGURE 6-A

LEGEND

Future Center Designations

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="color: red;">■</span> Suburban Center                    | <span style="color: purple;">■</span> Traditional Center             |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Suburban Corridor               | <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Traditional Corridor             |
| <span style="color: lightorange;">■</span> Suburban Medium-Scale Node | <span style="color: cyan;">■</span> Traditional Medium-Scale Node    |
| <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Suburban Low-Scale Node         | <span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Traditional Low-Scale Node |

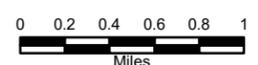
--- Village of Williamsville Boundary

SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst Information Technology Department, URS Corporation and Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department

Date: August 2017



#### LOW-SCALE NODE



- Located adjacent to single-family residential, typically at intersections
- Shallow parcel depth, compact form
- Buildings are 1 to 2½ stories in height

#### MEDIUM-SCALE NODE



- Located near single-family residential, typically at intersections
- Moderate parcel depth, compact form
- Buildings are 1 to 4 stories in height

#### CORRIDOR



- May or may not be located near single-family areas, typically along commercial roadways
- Consistent parcel depth, linear form, different corridors may have different parcel depths
- Buildings are 1 to 5 stories

#### CENTER



- Located away from single-family residential, typically along major roadways, at higher volume intersections, or near interstate interchanges
- Parcels are large and deep
- Buildings are 1 to 8 stories

### Center

**Centers** are the most intense type of commercial or mixed-use development in Amherst. Centers are typically located away from single-family homes, along major roadways, at higher volume intersections, or near interstate interchanges. The parcels located in centers are typically large and deep. Given these large parcel sizes, buildings are often 1 to 8 stories in height. There are existing buildings taller than 8 stories in Amherst, however, buildings this tall should not be allowed in the future. Tenant spaces in centers are typically the largest and are intended to serve a regional market; these often include large multi-tenant centers or malls, along with large single-tenant buildings. Typical uses in Centers include general retail, large restaurants and offices, institutional uses, and multi-family residential.

Examples of centers include the Boulevard Mall, Northtown Plaza, Niagara Falls Boulevard at North French Road, and Transit Road at the Maple Road intersection.

**Center Model (this model is only an example, it will be replaced)**



**Corridor**

***Corridors*** are a common commercial and mixed-use center type in Amherst. Corridors are typically located along commercial roadways throughout the Town. The typical corridor is usually a long linear pattern of parcels along a roadway. Depending on the commercial corridor, parcel depths can be very shallow or much deeper; this is evidenced by Sheridan Drive near Sweet Home Road where one side of the street has deep parcels while the other side has very shallow parcels. In many cases, corridors tend to have commercial development directly adjacent to single- or multi-family homes. Since most corridor parcels are not both wide and deep, buildings may range from 1 to 5 stories in height. Tenant spaces along corridors are typically intended to serve a large market in the immediate area, and often include multi-tenant shopping centers, and large single-tenant buildings. Typical uses in corridors include convenience and general retail, restaurants, offices, institutional uses, and multi-family residential.

Typical examples of corridors include Niagara Falls Boulevard near Ellicott Creek, Bailey Avenue, Transit Road south of Maple Road, and Sheridan Drive near Millersport Highway.

**Corridor Model (this model is only an example, it will be replaced)**



### **Medium-Scale Node**

**Medium-scale nodes** can be found in central and northern Amherst and many are immediately adjacent to single-family homes. In most cases, the node is located at an intersection of two roadways. The medium-scale node typically has a moderate parcel depth appropriate for neighborhood and community-serving uses. The medium-scale node will have a compact development pattern, without the large parking lots that are necessary to serve centers. Due to their proximity to single-family homes, medium scale nodes are typically 1 to 4 stories in height. While buildings may take up a half-block or more, large buildings are typically broken up to serve multiple tenants rather than a single tenant. Typical uses in medium-scale nodes include convenience and specialty retail, restaurants, smaller offices, institutional uses, and single- and multi-family residential.

Examples of medium-scale nodes include Eggertsville (north side of Main), Getzville Plaza, and Main/Kensington.

### **Medium-Scale Node Model (this model is only an example, it will be replaced)**



### **Low-Scale Node**

**Low-scale nodes** are most common in the older portions of Amherst, but are also present throughout central and northern areas of the Town and embedded within neighborhoods. Most of these areas immediately abut single-family homes. In most cases, the node is located at an intersection of two roadways. The low-scale node typically has a shallow parcel depth immediately abutting the rear yards of single-family homes. The low-scale node will have a compact development pattern, without the large parking lots that are necessary to serve larger nodes and centers. Due to their proximity to single-family homes, low-scale nodes are typically 1 to 2.5 stories in height. The tenant spaces in low-scale nodes are typically the smallest. Uses in these centers include small-scale convenience and specialty retail, restaurants, small offices, institutional uses, and single- and multi-family residential.

Examples of low-scale nodes include Eggertsville (south side of Main), Snyder, Maple Forest Plaza, and Clearfield Plaza.

Low-scale nodes deserve the highest level of attention to careful transitions in order to successfully fit them into their neighborhood context.

**Low-Scale Node Model (this model is only an example, it will be replaced)**



**FOCUS ON FORM**

There are ways that the unique characteristics for each form and type of commercial and mixed use center development can be shaped and managed.



These conceptual models illustrate both building articulation along the street, and modified upper story height using a setback.

There are a variety of tools for managing building mass that can be included in zoning, several are illustrated in the model of form above. In general, building height is one of the most frequently mentioned building characteristic that interest stakeholders and the public. Where appropriate, a key tool for reducing perceived height is the stepback. A stepback can be used to reduce the appearance of mass along the front sidewalk, and along rear and side lot lines near other structures. Often the stepback is above the second or third story of the building. Stepping back the upper floors at that level often means the perception of the height of the building from the street edge or adjacent areas is substantially diminished (see model on page 3-41).

Other concepts used to manage building mass focus on breaking up the building as viewed along the street. This is often accomplished by articulating the building (setting some portions back, using different materials, and often highlighting entrances with architectural features). Another key feature is the addition of windows and doors along the street edge, whether functional or not, eliminating long blank wall areas that are not as pedestrian-friendly. Larger, taller buildings in centers and corridors may require some of these techniques which should be incorporated in the zoning code.

### Managing Transitions

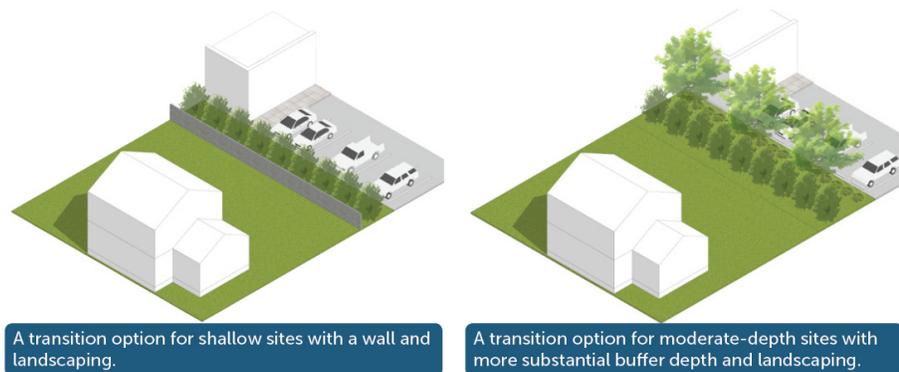
Throughout Amherst, commercial and mixed-use centers immediately abut low-density residential uses. Where this occurs, a variety of strategies to reduce the impact of these transitions are appropriate.

A land use transition illustrating the siting of townhouses (orange) to create a land use change, hiding commercial center parking and loading from view from adjacent residential properties.



For large and deep parcels, the best strategy is to create a gradual change in the intensity of land uses. As shown in the model above, the single-family detached homes (low density) could abut townhouses (a denser residential use) which screen the parking and loading areas of the center from view, and can decrease noise and light impacts. Where appropriate, buildings and parking on larger parcels can be pushed as far away as possible from residential uses, creating more green and landscaping space. However, this transition option requires parcels to be at least 200 feet deep.

For shallower parcels, options include more intense landscaping and screening walls or fences. Many corridors in Amherst have shallow parcel depths where the only meaningful transition option is a wall or fence along the property line because there is not much space on the site. Landscaping is placed on the commercial side of the wall, intending to grow up and screen any upper stories from view of adjacent properties (see model below). At moderate parcel depths (deeper than 100 feet), the wall/fence can be replaced by a wider buffer of green space and more intense landscaping. In these cases, the transition may also include a berm, which is a raised green area with shrubs or trees along it (see model below).



### **APPLYING MAPS FOR ZONING**

Figure 6-A is intended for use by the Planning Board and Town Board to guide decisions about future development in commercial and mixed-use centers. These maps delimit the intended geographic extent of the various centers.

#### **Expansion of Existing Centers**

The Town's commercial and mixed-use centers are generally well established; many of the residential neighborhoods have developed around these areas. Expansion and encroachment of commercial land uses into neighborhoods or extension along roadways should rarely occur. Amherst has adequate commercial and mixed-use zoning in place to accommodate anticipated future demand without expanding the amount of land zoned for these purposes.

As commercial market demands are changing it may be appropriate to expand mixed-use development with land currently zoned for office or multi-family purposes where such land abuts an existing center or is substantial enough to function as a center itself.

If additional land area is added to commercial and mixed-use centers in the future, the maps in this section must be amended by the Town Board prior to rezoning the property. This will allow for a community conversation about the proposed expansion of centers before any detailed conversation and design of specific development takes place.

### **New Centers**

Based on the pattern of existing commercial and mixed-use centers, there is little reason to designate new commercial or mixed-use centers in Amherst. If a new commercial or mixed-use center is desired in the future, map figures 6 and 6A in this section must be amended by the Town Board prior to applying new zoning to the property. This should only occur after thoughtful consideration.

### **LAND INTENSIVE USES**

There are businesses that have large market areas, have similar characteristics in terms of size, traffic and noise, but are not appropriately located within a conventional retail shopping center. These uses are primarily land intensive commercial uses that include automobile-related uses, hotels, and commercial recreation and entertainment facilities. These uses should be located within existing centers located along arterial and collector highways designated as suburban and commercial corridors (See Map Figures 9 and 10).

Also of note are areas not designated for future commercial or mixed-uses on the Conceptual Land Use Plan (Map Figure 6) despite present commercial zoning designation (See Map Figure 3). As noted in Policy 3-4, some areas along Transit Road and Millersport Highway north of North French Road are zoned for commercial use but designated on the Plan map for lower density residential or mixed-use. This change in land use classification stems from the likely reduction in population-driven demand for commercial development, the presence of community/regional scale commercial establishments in surrounding communities (i.e., Lockport and Clarence), and Comprehensive Plan policies to protect rural road corridors and reduce the traffic and other impacts of commercial strip development.

### **HISTORIC HAMLETS**

Getzville and Swormville are historic hamlets in the Town that once functioned as the commercial center for the rural residences and farms of central and northeast Amherst. Many original buildings remain in these areas, and despite their location near

contemporary commercial centers, they retain much of their original character. Revitalization of these areas needs to be in a form and type that is consistent with their traditional form.



*Photo simulation of Swormville showing sidewalks and bicycle lanes.*

**Swormville:** This historic hamlet is located along the west side of Transit Road north of North French Road. It possesses the attributes of a “village center” with small shops contributing to its character. Its traditional form and low scale buildings should be reinforced through pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements and encouragement of compatible mixed and commercial uses. Pedestrian and bicycle connections should be established to surrounding neighborhoods in Ransom Oaks, to the proposed greenway along Ransom Creek, to the shopping center and adjacent residential developments along North French Road to the south, and to the Town of Clarence to the east.

**Getzville:** Located at the intersection of Campbell Boulevard and Dodge Road, Getzville’s existing land uses include small-scale commercial development focused on the Port of Entry Square, residences, a fire station, and a small park. Designation of Getzville as an historic hamlet is intended to reinforce its traditional form, character and function as a low scale node that is distinct from nearby automobile-related suburban forms of commercial development along Millersport Highway. This character should be reinforced through pedestrian-oriented streetscape improvements and encouragement of compatible mixed and commercial uses typical of a traditional form. Pedestrian and bicycle links could be established to the Audubon Community along the Peanut Line right-of-way west of Millersport Highway.

### **3.3.3 Special Use Centers**

Section 3.3.2 provides design guidance for the Town’s commercial and mixed-use centers. Many centers in the Town fulfill specific roles within their neighborhoods or institutions. Commercial and mixed-use development within these areas should include consideration of these roles. The following guidance is provided for special use centers which have slightly different roles and characteristics. Special Use Centers contain a mix of ancillary uses related to a major civic or institutional presence. The form and type of development in these centers should complement and reinforce the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Special use centers shown on the Conceptual Land Use Plan include:

- Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital
- John James Audubon Parkway Municipal Complex
- University (East) Center
- Millersport Highway/New Road/Smith Road

***Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital:*** Located at the intersection of Maple Road and Youngs Road, the Hospital, assisted living facilities, and adjacent office and higher density residential uses constitute an established activity center. Designation of this area as a special use center is intended to recognize, reinforce, and integrate its medical functions, providing a focus for future medically-related development, and limit incursions into adjacent lower density residential areas.

***John James Audubon Parkway Municipal Complex:*** As with the Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital area, the municipal facilities located on the east side of the John James Audubon Parkway are designated as a **special use** center in recognition of its established function as a center of community activity. Future policy for this center should be directed toward increasing the integration of uses (e.g., shared use facilities) and improving accessibility and connections to surrounding land uses and to the Town as a whole, including a linkage to the open space and greenways network.

***University (East) Center:*** This area is located on the east side of Millersport Highway across from the UB campus in the University Focal Planning Area (see Section 10.3). It is envisioned as accommodating a mix of residential and non-residential development with a variety of activities serving both the University community and private businesses and residents. Open space and recreational trails should be an integral part of the development. Examples of other potential uses include:

- Off-campus student /faculty housing
- Other housing facilities catering to groups interested in living in a University environment
- Technology, research, and development functions
- Business development incubators
- Life-long and community outreach education programs
- Conference facilities
- Arts and athletic venues
- Hotels and other commercial uses typically found in a community center serving both the University and the Town

As proposed by Economic Development Policy 5-7, the Town should actively engage the University in planning for the appropriate development of this property. This should include shifting some present and planned activities from the campus academic core to off-campus, mixed-use edges where businesses and the community can benefit from the presence of the University.

***Millersport Highway/New Road/Smith Road:*** This proposed activity center is located at the intersection of three highways and Ransom Creek in the North Amherst Focal Planning Area (see Section 10.2). It represents one of the Town's most interesting

opportunities for creative, mixed-use development. The area is comprised of several parcels that had long been designated for larger-scale commercial development. Zoning of a large parcel there was changed to Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to encourage a planned unit development approach. The quantity of retail use permitted by existing zoning in the area may no longer be necessary or feasible to serve the population of the surrounding, largely rural area. However, this area has potential to develop in a low scale form comprised of mixed residential and commercial uses typical of traditional areas. It should be integrated with generous parkland and a greenway along Ransom Creek. This area is destined to become one of the Town's most significant and scenic gateways, marking the transition from “suburban” to “rural” Amherst.

### **3.3.4 Office and Industrial**

(Note: section 3.3.4 was relocated, no changes are proposed to the text)

#### **Office Uses**

While Amherst contains a growing proportion of office development, it is unlike many older communities that have a central business district anchored by high-density office use. As shown on the Conceptual Land Use Plan, there are two primary concentrations of existing/planned commercial office development in Amherst:

- The large suburban “corporate” office development along Audubon Parkway, planned as a key element of the Audubon New Community.
- Office infill development between Wehrle Drive and Sheridan Drive in southeast Amherst. Because office development in this area is occurring in close proximity to residential uses, close attention must be paid to site/design criteria pertaining to buffering and access management to avoid conflicts with established neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Appropriately scaled business and professional offices can be complementary components of designated commercial and mixed-use centers. These offices can vary in size, be upper story, feature pedestrian or automobile-orientation, and serve local residents, businesses, and institutions, as well as provide the employment component of live-work establishments in mixed-use centers.

The Conceptual Land Use Plan recognizes the location of commercial offices outside of designated office or business parks. These individual office developments may not require large parcels and can therefore be accommodated on sites at locations within Plan-designated Commercial, Office, Industrial and Mixed-Use areas. As existing office parks become filled and fewer large sites

are available for new office parks, there is expected to be increased pressure to locate individual offices on smaller sites in developed areas. In addition, the following principles should be used to assist in reviewing such office proposals:

- Located along arterial roads as identified on Figure 9 (Future Thoroughfare System).
- Mid-block locations should be avoided.
- Sited within close proximity to existing office or commercial sites.
- Sites should provide an opportunity for access management with adjacent properties.
- The site should produce minimal impact on residential neighborhoods or uses.
- The site should provide sufficient space for landscape buffers, especially to adjacent residential uses.

### **Industrial Uses**

Due in part to the industrial legacy of the Buffalo region, early planning for the Town designated significant areas for industrial use. With the contraction of primary industrial activity in the region, the nature of these uses changed to smaller-scale manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing activities. The primary existing industrial land concentrations are located in the southeastern corner of the Town near the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport (Wehrle Industrial Park) and in the northwestern corner of the Town north of the I-290/Sweet Home Road interchange (Audubon Industrial Park). Additional locations designated for industrial/office use include:

- The area north of North French Road next to the I-990/North French Road interchange (Crosspointe Business Park).
- North Audubon Parkway: the area generally located at the northern terminus of Audubon Parkway between Dodge Road, Sweet Home Road, Campbell Boulevard, and south of North French Road. This area is envisioned as a location for University-related and research business (see Economic Development Policy 5-7).

These locations exhibit desirable site characteristics necessary for location of industrial uses. These characteristics include: direct access to major transportation routes, location away from residential neighborhoods, and large tracts of land that allow for coordinated development of a park with ancillary uses that can be buffered from surrounding areas. These characteristics should also be used for the location of any new industrial areas.

While excellent truck access will continue to make these areas attractive for industrial, distribution and warehousing uses, office and "flex" uses will likely consume an increasing proportion of this industrially designated land. Design guidelines should be put in place to reduce conflicts in function and aesthetics between

industrial/warehousing and office uses, including the screening of storage areas, truck parking, and buffer requirements.

### **3.3.5 Community Facilities**

Community facilities include public schools, police and fire stations, libraries, community centers, post offices and other government and institutional services provided to meet the needs of the local resident population. Generally not included in this category are churches, which are incorporated into the land use designations for the surrounding neighborhoods. When proposed for location within a neighborhood, it is important to ensure that structures associated with churches and other community facilities are designed to maintain the scale and character of the surrounding area. Wherever possible, existing and new community facilities should be multi-purpose and integrated within mixed-use activity centers (see Community Facilities and Services Policy 9-4). In the event a community facility is closed or relocated, redevelopment of the facility and surrounding lands should be pursued pursuant to Policy 3-9. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

Community facilities are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9.

### **3.3.6 Educational Campuses**

*Educational campuses* are important community assets and key to the Comprehensive Plan initiative to position Amherst as a “knowledge-based” community.

Educational campuses designated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan include the UB North Campus, Erie Community College, Daemen College, and public schools. These institutions are important community assets and are key to the Comprehensive Plan initiative to position Amherst as a “knowledge-based” community.

Although colleges and universities typically retain control of use patterns within their campuses, these activities have very significant impacts on the Town. Not only are they centers of employment and major traffic generators, they also create demand for other uses, including off-campus housing and commercial development. In the past, there has been limited collaboration between the Town and these institutions on planning for well-designed edges to the campuses. Nevertheless, there exists a very significant mutual interest to expand such collaboration, particularly regarding the development of campus transition areas and off-campus housing (see Economic Development Policy 5-9).

#### **University at Buffalo**

The largest university center in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, UB’s North and South Campuses, are significant features on the town’s landscape. Progressive universities and host

communities throughout the nation are engaging in a wave of joint development activity to more seamlessly merge the “town-gown” transition at campus edges. The design of UB’s North Campus, with its internal organization and the “hard edge” at major highways, does not lend itself to such a seamless transition from campus to town development patterns. Nevertheless, there are a number of development opportunities surrounding the campus that could serve both the Town and UB. Despite the University’s development of on-campus student housing and efforts to strengthen campus life, a large proportion of students, as well as faculty and staff, will continue to live off-campus. Providing higher density housing available to these groups immediately adjacent to the campus will reduce commuting times, lower traffic levels in the Town, and reduce pressure on older neighborhoods where students seek affordable off-campus rental housing. Such housing can be accommodated in areas designated for Medium Residential and Mixed Residential to the north and west of the UB North Campus including the Sweet Home Road area immediately to the west of the University’s Rensch Road entrance.

Another major opportunity for development to serve campus and Town needs is on the presently undeveloped property owned by the University to the east, between Millersport Highway and Ellicott Creek. As discussed above, this designated mixed-use center could accommodate a well-planned “University Village,” including additional housing serving the University community. Locating campus functions such as bookstores in this center would take advantage of a much larger community-wide market and revenue potential when placed at University edges and also provide an opportunity for a much-needed University – Town interface. In 2007, the University began a planning process that may provide a campus development strategy that further defines uses that could benefit from such a campus edge location. In accordance with Policy 5-9, the Town should take the initiative to structure an on-going collaboration on campus edge development issues and other campus growth issues which impact the Town, its services and facilities, and its neighborhoods.

While not located within Amherst, UB’s South Campus exerts a significant influence on land use in the Eggertsville area of the Town. Because the movement of students and academic functions from the South to the North Campus will affect the stability of this area, the Town and UB should continue to work together on initiatives such as the Main Street/Bailey Avenue/University Plaza activity center to strengthen surrounding residential neighborhoods and businesses in the Town and the City of Buffalo (see Economic Development Policy 5-7).

### **Erie Community College – North Campus**

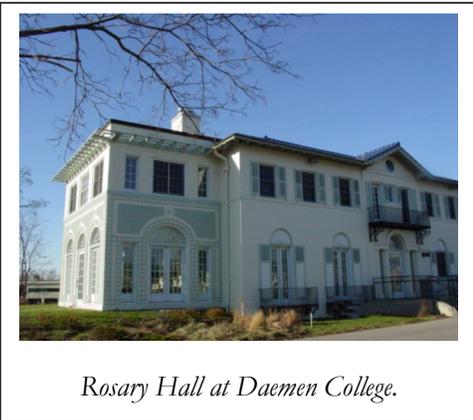
With the highest enrollment of the three campuses that comprise Erie Community College (ECC), the North Campus makes a

variety of educational, vocational, and recreational activities available to Erie County residents. Opened in 1960, the campus is situated among the office and industrial parks in Southeast Amherst in the vicinity of the Buffalo-Niagara International Airport. The campus provides numerous opportunities for knowledge-based activities and collaboration with surrounding businesses. This plan reflects a commitment to its current uses.

The County is conducting an institutional assessment to consider the future of ECC and its facilities. The assessment may conclude that the College should consolidate its facilities or relocate programs. As these discussions evolve, the public should be engaged in the decision-making process. If a decision is made to close the North Campus, the Town will consider the following recommended uses for the Campus property:

- Community recreation facilities and athletic fields
- Location for a youth and family center in Williamsville/Southeast Amherst
- Mixed-use activity center with office, neighborhood commercial, science technology, and educational uses

*(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*



*Rosary Hall at Daemen College.*

Redevelopment of the structures and surrounding lands should also be consistent with Policy 3-9. *(Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1)*

### **Daemen College**

Originally established as Rosary Hill College in 1947, Daemen College is the oldest institution of higher learning located in Amherst. Recent construction of new classroom facilities and replacement of student housing have enhanced the campus and student life. Located across from Amherst High School and within walking distance of the Main Street/Harlem Road activity center, the College is well positioned to support knowledge-based community education initiatives in the Eggertsville-Snyder area and mixed-use commercial activities at the center. The College and the Town should continue to work together to ensure that new development around the edges of the campus is designed to complement the surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Public Schools**

Public schools within the Town are operated by three school districts – Amherst Central, Sweet Home Central, and Williamsville Central – that consistently rank above average in New York State in student performance. Public schools are important resources as centers of community activity and for their educational contributions to Amherst’s status as a knowledge-based community. The Town should work with the school districts to develop arrangements for sharing facilities and programs that advance this status.

### 3.3.7 Recreation and Open Space

This broad land use category comprises a variety of lands that will remain predominantly undeveloped. These lands include:

- **Public Parks, Recreation and Open Space**, comprising primarily of active and passive parks
- **Private Recreation and Open Space**, of which private golf courses are a major component
- Lands subject to environmental regulations that will largely preclude their development, including the **Floodways** designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and **Wetlands** regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)

Policies 3-13 to 3-15 and the Parks, Open Space and Trail Map (Figure 4) focus on the planned pattern of parks, greenways and other land areas that will remain protected from development through a variety of techniques, as described in the text for these policies. Nevertheless, it is useful to view these resources in the context of other land uses. Several issues are worthy of note:

- The total proportion of open space within the Town
- The abundance of open space in north Amherst
- Opportunities to link open spaces as community-wide form-givers and as components of mixed-use centers

**Total proportion and distribution of open space:** The various categories of parks, open space, and environmental resources above represent some 22.5% of the total land area of the Town. This figure compares favorably with typical parks and open space ratios maintained in similar high quality communities. However, the distribution of these lands throughout the Town is uneven. A large proportion of the parks and open space resources lie within a relatively few very large sites, such as Nature View Park, the East Amherst Conservation Area, adjacent agricultural areas, Northeast Amherst between Millersport Highway Transit Road, and the Great Baehre Conservation Area. The bulk of these designated resources and protected wetlands and floodways lie north of Maple Road. Conversely, there are few parks and other open space resources in the older, more densely developed areas of south Amherst. This reinforces the policy direction to seek opportunities to establish parks in older parts of town and to pursue greater joint utilization of school recreation areas. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

**Open space in North Amherst:** Related to the distribution of parks and open space within the Town is the abundance of these uses in the northern part of Amherst. Comprising Nature View Park, the East Amherst Conservation Area, the Smith Road Open Space area, lands reserved for agriculture, the Ransom Creek Floodway, as well as several smaller parks, wetlands and golf courses, the remaining developable land east of Sweet Home

Road and north and west of North French Road/I-990/Millersport Highway is limited and highly fragmented. This reinforces the policy direction to retain low density, rural residential patterns with reduced commercial development along roadways that should remain residential in character. It should be noted that the Ransom Creek Floodway traverses areas partially developed and designated in present zoning for residential and commercial use. While the floodway will form a “gap” in the pattern of development, it also provides an opportunity for an important greenway “linkage element” and serves as a natural “edge” to the largely developed suburban patterns to the south. Conversely, the large areas in north Amherst that will remain undeveloped and not served by public sewer reinforce the policy direction to cluster compact, efficient mixed-use development at convenient, highly accessible centers. Examples include the mixed-use centers designated for the vicinity of Millersport Highway/New Road/Smith Road and the North Audubon Parkway property. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

***Open space linkage opportunities:*** Opportunities should be sought to link parks and open spaces via trails, greenways, stream corridors, and scenic roads, thus integrating open space as a key component of the Town's character and quality of life. These opportunities are comparable in importance to the total proportion of open space and its distribution throughout the Town. Such opportunities are depicted on Figures 4, 5 and 6. Open space linkages may be located on lands that are publicly or privately owned, or a combination of the two. Some of these lands may be publicly accessible, and others may continue to be privately held and inaccessible to the public. While such lands may not be publicly accessible, they contribute to the overall open space network through both environmental and aesthetic benefits. Publicly owned trails and public lands or rights-of-way that could potentially accommodate a trail should not be sold or otherwise disposed of by the Town.



*Walkers and bikers along the Ellicott Creek Trail.*

As shown in Figure 4, two types of trails are proposed as linkages. Multi-use trails, such as the Ellicott Creek and Canal Trailway, are improved, paved paths with amenities such as shelters, water fountains and signs. These paths are active recreational facilities that are regularly maintained and patrolled by public safety officials. A second type of trail, “natural trails,” is also proposed. Natural trails are unimproved, publicly accessible corridors that traverse the Town and can serve as connections between public facilities such as schools and parks, and within recreation areas and neighborhoods. Natural trails, though unimproved, may require basic signage and maintenance to ensure public safety.

### 3.3.8 Agriculture

Agriculture once played an important role in Amherst's economy and way of life. While its economic influences have diminished in recent years, farming and agriculture continue to play a significant role in defining the character of Northern Amherst. Coupled with Policy 3-3, which calls for modifying the use of Suburban-Agriculture (S-A) zoning as a holding zone and Polices 7-3 and 7-4, which call for limiting future sewer extensions and creating a special district to maintain septic systems outside the sewer district, designation of areas in North Amherst for agricultural use is an important component in the pursuit of diverse community character. Ensuring the long-term viability of agriculture and farming operations is key to maintaining diverse neighborhoods, including those with rural character. The Plan designates areas where agriculture and associated activities provide a unique setting in the town, including:

- Agricultural Lands, included in Erie County Agricultural District #17
- Lands acquired or designated for acquisition through the Town's purchase of development rights program, the Farmland Protection Program
- Lands adjacent to such areas where the long-term viability of agriculture may be threatened by inconsistent uses or infrastructure development that represents urban/suburban encroachment.

To support the agricultural area, the Town has developed a zoning district permitting agriculture and associated land uses that are complementary to farming. Additionally, a Rural Residential District designed for lands surrounding agricultural areas is intended to minimize impacts from incompatible uses on farming and are not adversely affected by farm operations. Although these districts are currently in the Amherst Zoning Code, they have yet to be applied in locations that are consistent with the Plan. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

### 3.3.9 Southeast Amherst

Although not identified as a focal planning area, Southeast Amherst has special planning issues due to the juxtaposition of intense office/commercial and residential uses. The area is surrounded by arterial highways (Sheridan Drive, Main Street, Wehrle Drive, and Transit Road) that have been improved or are programmed for improvement. The increased accessibility resulting from these roadway improvements will promote further pressures for growth and change in the area. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

***Southeast Amherst*** has special planning issues and is the highest priority area for development of a Neighborhood Improvement Plan.

A plan for Southeast Amherst was last prepared in the 1980s and is now out-of-date. In recognition of the special challenges facing the area, Southeast Amherst should receive the highest priority for development of a Neighborhood Improvement Plan as discussed in Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 8-9. Key issues that should be addressed by the plan include:

- Transitions and buffers/landscaping between residential and nonresidential uses
- Increased street and pedestrian connectivity within and between residential neighborhoods, combined with measures to prevent “cut-through” traffic associated with nonresidential uses
- Increased recreational opportunities, including neighborhood parks and greenway/trail connections

As a “model” for the Town’s Neighborhood Improvement Program, the plan for Southeast Amherst should address compliance with the Conceptual Land Use Plan and the goals and policies of the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan. It should contain an implementation element that specifies the actions to be taken to implement the plan and their time frames. These actions should include both regulatory changes and capital improvement projects to be implemented by the Town.

### **3.3.10 New Community District**

The Audubon New Community was established in the 1970s through a contract between the Town of Amherst and the New York State Urban Development Corporation (now Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) to accommodate development supporting the UB North Campus. Currently, New Community District (NCD) zoning extends north from the campus and undeveloped land across Millersport Highway to well north of North French Road between Sweet Home Road and Campbell Boulevard (see Figure 3). The Conceptual Land Use Plan indicates the proposed pattern of land uses within this area, including the establishment of University-related mixed-use centers on the two largest undeveloped properties in the District exclusive of Nature View Park. The proposed land use pattern is intended to update the original Audubon New Community Plan in response to current conditions and the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. As part of plan implementation, the Town should initiate discussions with the ESDC regarding the future status of the New Community District zoning and the termination of the current contract. A mechanism should be developed to ensure an orderly transition that eliminates the ESDC role in land use decision-making.



## 10.0 Focal Planning Areas

**Focal planning areas** are smaller geographic areas within the Town that present special planning challenges.

The preceding chapters of the Comprehensive Plan lay out a series of town-wide goals and policies designed to guide the Town of Amherst as it works to achieve the Vision Statement. This chapter examines smaller geographic areas within the Town (referred to as “focal planning areas”) for opportunities to apply the town-wide policies in more detail, with a particular emphasis on urban design.<sup>3</sup> Focal planning areas present special planning challenges as defined by the following criteria:

- Are experiencing or are likely to experience significant change, suggesting the need for more specific analysis and strategies to influence the direction of change
- Have significant planning opportunities or issues that could be positively influenced through targeted actions by the Town
- Are or could be a focus of community activity and identity

Six focal planning areas were selected by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee using the above criteria (Figure 13):

1. Northwest Amherst
2. North Amherst
3. University
4. Eggertsville
5. Snyder
6. Williamsville

The following process was used to address the six identified areas:

1. Existing conditions and key issues for each area were evaluated and documented in the Comprehensive Plan *Inventory and Analysis Report*.
2. Following completion of the town-wide Comprehensive Plan elements in draft form, workshops were conducted with local stakeholders to discuss the Inventory and Analysis findings and to explore how the town-wide policies might be applied to each area.
3. Based upon the results of the previous two steps, a conceptual urban design plan and strategies to address key issues were developed for each area.

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<sup>3</sup> Urban design seeks to influence the physical form of a municipality and the day-to-day role it plays in community activities. Urban design typically addresses three overlapping systems that, together, generally shape the physical environment of cities and towns: the fabricated (streets, buildings, etc.); the social (land use locations and relationships), and the environmental (topography, water, etc.).

## Structure of This Chapter

The discussion of each focal planning area consists of two components:

1. An “Overview and Urban Design Analysis” section that summarizes some of the key issues and opportunities for each area.
2. A description of an overall Concept Plan for each area and accompanying strategies that provide a direction for the area’s future.

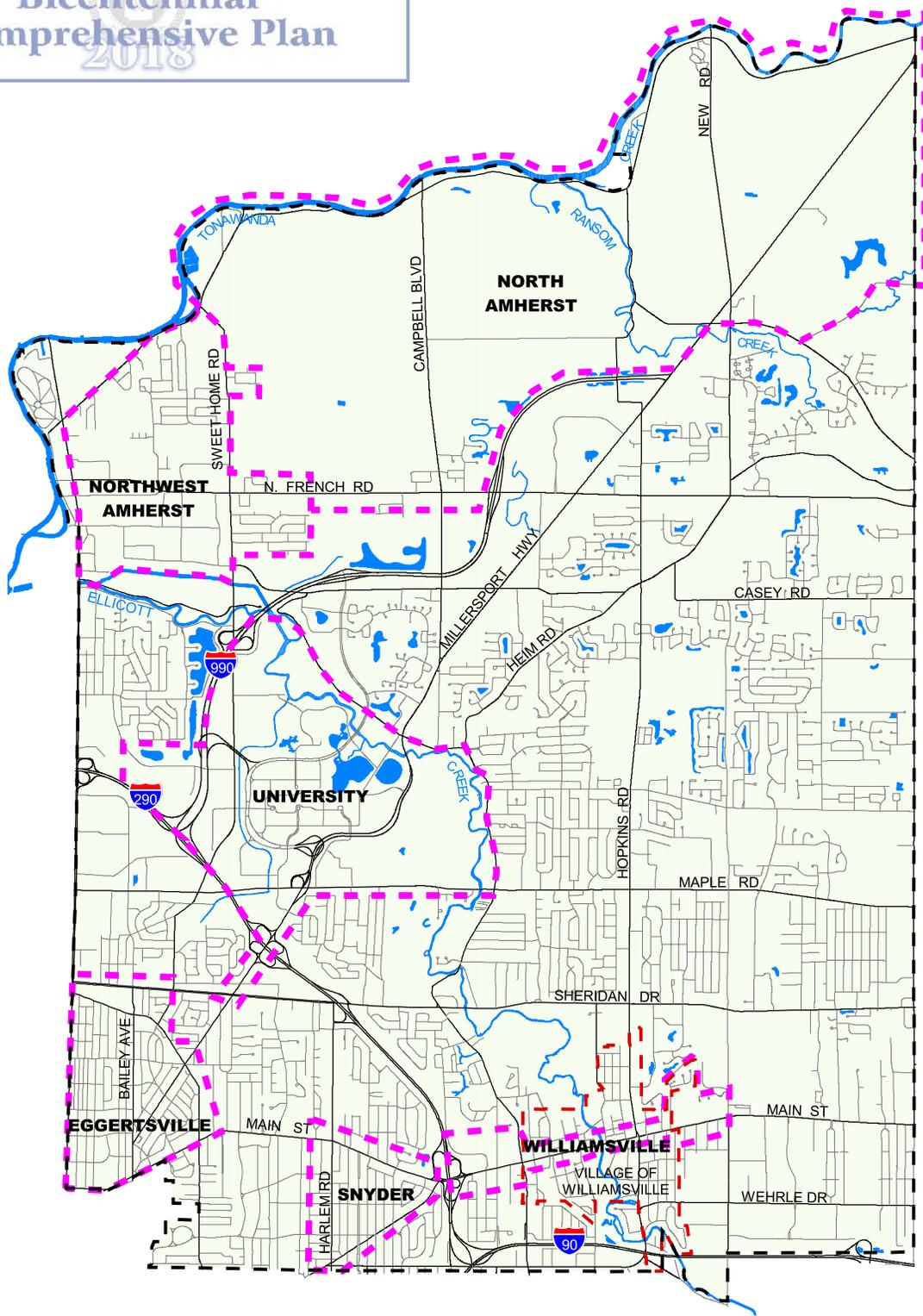
Three figures are provided for each focal planning area to help illustrate the ideas set forth in the text:

1. The first figure consists of an aerial map with representative photographs depicting existing conditions in the focal planning area.
2. The second figure is a map depicting the overall concept and recommendations for each area. Conceptual and diagrammatic in nature, the graphics are intended to communicate the overall direction and location of possible initiatives rather than providing specific plans or detailed renderings. The locations of specific land uses are similarly conceptual and illustrative in nature and are not meant to supersede the Conceptual Land Use Plan and Map Figure 6-A, which should be used as the official Comprehensive Plan guide to future land use.

The concept plan maps identify specific locations of concepts addressed at a town-wide scale elsewhere in the plan, such as arterial roadways, commercial areas, multi-use and natural trails, and urban or village centers. Several new concepts are shown as well, including:

- **Gateways** (see discussion below under Relationship to Town Urban Design Structure)
  - **Neighborhood connectors** are local streets that should be maintained or enhanced through tree plantings, sidewalks, or other improvements to provide pleasant and safe pedestrian connections within neighborhoods.
  - **Neighborhood anchors** are existing or potential focuses of neighborhood activity and identity, such as parks and schools.
  - **Waterfront activity areas** are locations along the Erie Canal where mixed-use development is encouraged that celebrates the waterfront and the area’s heritage, attracts local residents and visitors, and provides access to the water, including boating services. These locations are as defined in the Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (JLWRP) for Amherst and Pendleton.
3. The third figure consists of representative photographs drawn from examples elsewhere in the country to illustrate the ideas presented in the concept plan. These photographs have been chosen to reflect the potential character of, but not the final

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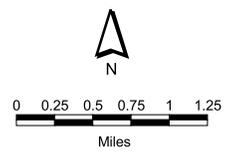


**FIGURE 13**

**FOCAL PLANNING AREAS**

- LEGEND**
- - - Focal Planning Area Boundary
  - Surface Water Body
  - - - Village of Williamsville Boundary
  - - - Municipal Boundary

**SOURCE NOTES**  
 Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst  
 Focal Planning Area Data provided by Wallace Roberts & Todd LLC.  
 Map Compiled by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC.  
 Date: February, 2004



result, of any recommendation contained in this chapter. In other words, they should be viewed as possibilities that provide examples of what is meant by specific ideas contained in the concept plans and strategies.

### **Relationship to Town Urban Design Structure**

Before considering each individual focal planning area, it is useful to consider how the areas relate to the overall urban design structure of the Town. Amherst, like many communities, contains multiple neighborhoods, employment, commercial and mixed-use centers, parks, and community facilities and services. These uses are connected by a system of roads and highways whose character varies depending upon their location and adjacency to specific uses. The complex experiences created by these land use and roadway networks highlight the need to establish a positive “image” and perception of Amherst’s developed character and infrastructure as a basis for marketing the Town’s quality of life advantages in an increasingly competitive, “place-based” environment.

The focal planning areas constitute a step in this direction by recognizing that portions of the Town should be considered in more depth to elicit specific themes and concepts that will help guide their future development. Strengthening the identity and image of specific districts and neighborhoods will reinforce the strengths of the Town as a whole.

The focal planning areas provide opportunities for *physical enhancements to gateways* as part of a town-wide initiative to strengthen Amherst’s identity and image.

One opportunity to reinforce the focal planning area component of the Comprehensive Plan is to engage and orient residents and visitors to important locations within the Town by defining and marking **gateways**. Gateways can be physical entries to the Town or to specific neighborhoods, commercial corridors and districts, or even “social” gateways where access to services, training, and community functions are available. As Amherst is a diverse physical environment, each gateway should not only represent the Town as a whole but the local context in which it is located. On the concept plan for each focal planning area, specific gateways are identified as opportunities for physical improvements that should be considered as part of a Town-wide effort to improve these critical transitional points. This concept supports and is a more detailed application of Land Use and Development Policy 3-11 (target capital investments to improve the aesthetic character of key locations within the Town.)

Reviewing the location of major service and employment concentrations as well as major arterials and other important corridors, the following specific opportunities exist to enhance the image of the Town through treatment of gateways and corridors:

- Along Millersport Highway as an entry to the Town and a connecting road between the University at Buffalo’s (UB) south and north campuses
- Along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Transit Road as highly traveled edges to the Town

- Along Sheridan Drive as an east-west major arterial street that draws people for its commercial services
- Along Maple and North French Roads from Niagara Falls Boulevard to I-990, where large-scale uses such as commercial activities, the Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital, and access to the Audubon Industrial Park are located
- Along Sweet Home Road abutting UB, as a critical north-south collector road and potential location of university-related housing, commercial and research activities
- Along Main Street, including traditional commercial **and mixed-use** centers in Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville (the Town’s traditional “village center”)

The above is an initial list of opportunities that recognizes the need to prioritize investments and initiatives to reinforce and strengthen the opportunities presented by highly traveled and visited areas of the Town. A number of the opportunities (for example, commercial **and mixed-use** centers along Main Street) are located within focal planning areas. Gateway treatments in these areas should seek to reinforce the special character of places such as Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville while relating to a unifying design concept for the Town as a whole.

Another theme that permeates the concept plans and strategies for all of the focal planning areas is that of integration **and mixing of land uses**. The gateways noted above, as well as other important institutions, amenities, and districts, should be mutually reinforcing. If the “on the ground” expression of various uses is one of physical separation and fragmentation, each use or district is by necessity self-sufficient and does not directly benefit from nearby, potentially supportive uses. The idea of integration **and mixed uses** recognizes that most uses benefit from seamless physical connections, offering residents, shoppers, and users more choice and services in each location within the Town. This principle is represented in the focal planning areas by proposed improvements to specific streets, pathways, or other forms of physical connections.

Planning studies are underway or have been completed for a number of the areas that are discussed below (e.g., the Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (JLWRP), Eggertsville Action Plan, Harlem-Kensington-Cleveland Economic Development Strategy, Village of Williamsville Community Plan, and the Snyder Action Plan). The concepts and strategies set forth in this chapter reflect the principles of many of these efforts. Thus the focal planning area concepts and strategies should be viewed as another step in the planning process to achieve the vision of the future set by the Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan. Local community organizations, which have been actively involved in planning efforts in places such as Eggertsville and Snyder, should continue to be involved as partners in implementing the focal planning area strategies.

## 10.1 NORTHWEST AMHERST

### 10.1.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis

Northwest Amherst is located in the northwest part of the Town in the general area defined by Tonawanda Creek to the north, Sweet Home Road to the east, the North Diversion Channel of Ellicott Creek to the south, and Niagara Falls Boulevard to the west. Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Condition, ownership, and value of housing stock, particularly in the vicinity of the Water Pollution Control Facility (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)
- A fragmented land use pattern, including the proximity of some residential uses with higher intensity, non-residential development
- A lack of pedestrian connectivity to centers of activity
- A lack of community identity and focus on a clearly defined activity center
- The availability of vacant parcels for development, suggesting the potential for change

In relationship to the rest of the Town of Amherst, Northwest Amherst is relatively isolated by large physical boundaries located at its edges (Figure 14). These boundaries – Tonawanda Creek, Nature View Park, Niagara Falls Boulevard, and the North Diversion Channel of Ellicott Creek – create a distinctive set of urban design issues to address in the Northwest Amherst focal planning area.

As noted in the *Inventory and Analysis Report*, Northwest Amherst lacks a defining center. In addition to the local population, commercial uses on Niagara Falls Boulevard serve commuters who use the corridor daily to reach regional employment centers and destinations further south. The lack of sufficient mass of housing units in the immediate area has negatively impacted the ability to create a small center that caters to the established neighborhoods.

Northwest Amherst is comprised of two primary neighborhoods: Bucyrus Heights east of Sweet Home Road and the Creekwoods neighborhood west of Sweet Home Road. These neighborhoods are separated from one another by the Audubon Industrial Park and Northpointe, which together comprise one of the Town's main employment centers. Due to the intensity of employment and the large commercial uses along Niagara Falls Boulevard, local roads such as Sweet Home Road and North French Road exhibit high traffic volumes, and local residents have noted problems with traffic congestion.

Internal neighborhood streets in the Creekwoods neighborhood surrounding the Town's Water Pollution Control Facility do not yet form a coordinated network with multiple access points to major roads. Their construction over time in conjunction with individual housing subdivisions has limited the ability to create an integrated, neighborhood street system. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

The key opportunities that can positively impact the future of Northwest Amherst relate to open space and recreation and the form and scale of new development. As noted above, Northwest Amherst is isolated by its physical boundaries. However, it is these boundaries that provide some of the strongest civic amenities the Town has to offer. Specifically, the historic Eric Canal (Tonawanda Creek) and Nature View Park are regional scale open space assets and are both on the doorstep of Northwest Amherst. The JLWRP will play an important role in the development of these recreational assets. Access ways to recreational and open space resources should be strongly considered in new housing developments and the designs of additional streets. Open space should be considered as a theme for the future development of the area through the provision of new open spaces and greenways, buffers from uses such as the Water Pollution Control Facility, strong neighborhood connections, and a marketable identity. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

As new development or revitalization occurs in Northwest Amherst sensitive designs are warranted to reinforce the established neighborhoods. These should include appropriate densities, physical form, and scale in relation to established uses; strong physical access to open space and recreation; and appropriately scaled commercial uses located in centers to serve residential development.

The Northwest Amherst concept plan emphasizes ***enhanced access for residential neighborhoods*** to parks, recreational facilities, and pedestrian networks.

### **10.1.2 Concept Plan and Strategies**

The concept plan for Northwest Amherst is based on integrating parks and pedestrian networks with existing and future housing developments and providing enhanced access to open space and recreation amenities. Neighborhood-based improvements relating to parks and schools should serve as the foundation for the area's future, increasing the attractiveness and marketability of the area for a mix of incomes.

In the Bucyrus Heights neighborhood, steps should be taken to buffer the area from the North Audubon Parkway development to retain its character, while enhancing access to Nature View Park and the Ellicott Creek Trail. Traffic calming measures on Sweet Home and North French Roads should be implemented to improve the pedestrian experience and the overall safety of the area.



Sweet Home Road



Sweet Home Road and North French Road



Audubon Industrial Park



Robinson Road



Sweet Home Road



Sweet Home and Dodge Road



Creekwood Park



North French Road



Sweet Home Road and Glenhaven Drive



Dodge Road



Wastewater Treatment Plant



North French Road



Pheasant Run Road



Sunshine Drive



Sundridge Drive

**NORTHWEST FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



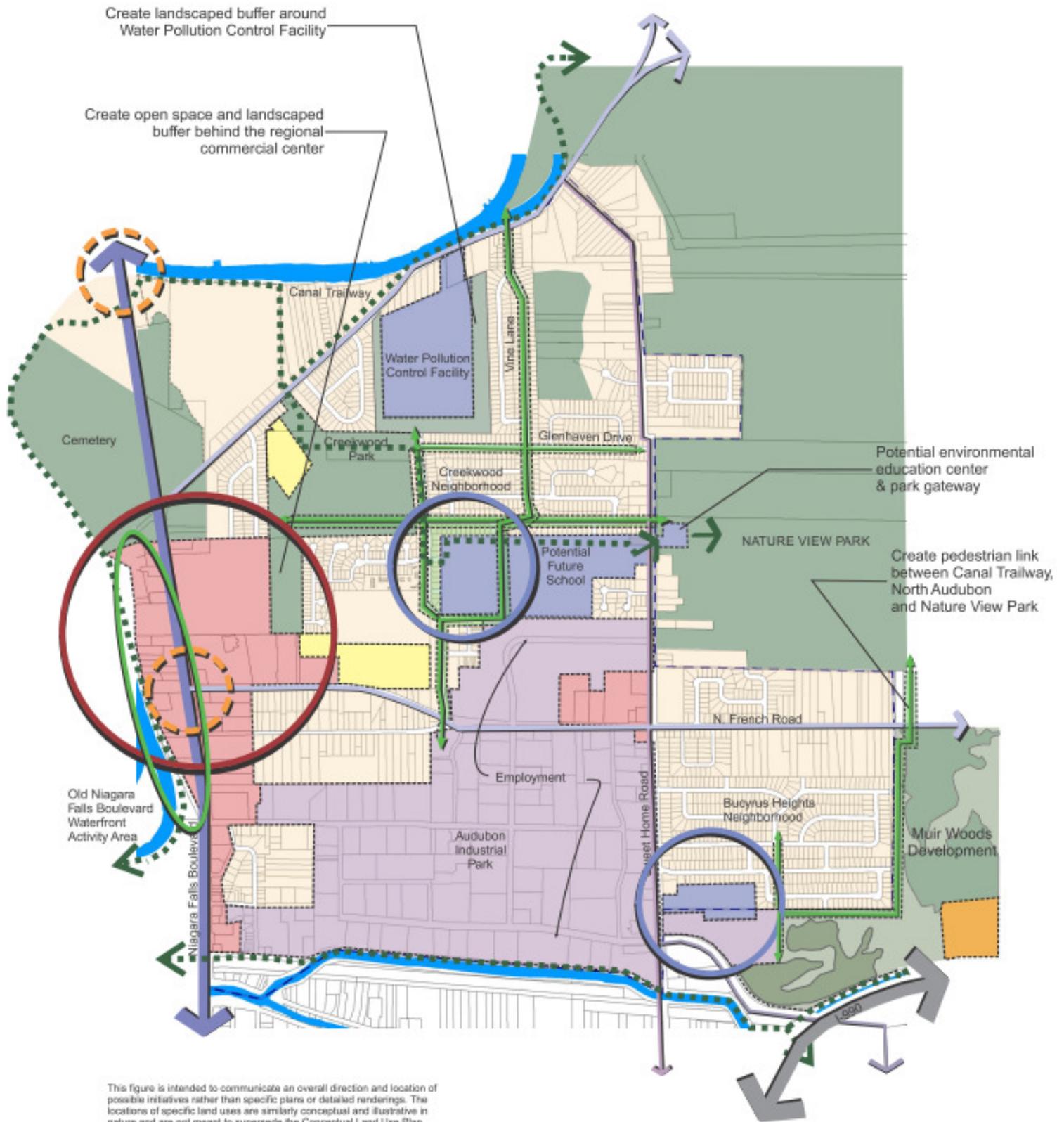
**Figure 14**

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC



Specifically, the concept plan for Northwest Amherst includes the following initiatives and strategies (Figures 15 and 16):

- Improve connections to Creekwoods Park, the potential entry to Nature View Park, North French Road, Sweet Home Road, and Tonawanda Creek Road. These “neighborhood connector streets” should receive priority consideration for tree planting and other improvements.
- Continue to focus resources on improving Creekwoods Park, an important neighborhood resource and focal point
- Extend a trail connection from Cascade Drive and Sundridge Drive along the stub streets into the Sweet Home School District property to connect areas west of Sweet Home Road with Nature View Park. Over the long term, a park could be developed in this area.
- Create a system of landscaped “buffers” that protect housing values and provide passive open space for neighborhood residents. These buffers should be considered surrounding the Water Pollution Control Facility and behind the commercial uses on Niagara Falls Boulevard.
- Better control noise, odor, and visual impacts on nearby residences caused by the Water Pollution Control Facility. This should include enhancing and extending the existing berm as part of the landscaped buffer system.
- Develop connections to fill-in gaps for links missing along the Canal Trailway.
- Establish site design guidelines for enhanced landscaping in conjunction with improved access management for commercial uses along Niagara Falls Boulevard to enhance the entry to Amherst from the north. To be implemented over time as uses are introduced/redeveloped, or through public/private partnerships with existing property owners, the guidelines should specify the location and amount of landscaping, appropriate locations for signage, pedestrian facilities, and the number and location of curb cuts.
- Per the JLWRP, develop Old Niagara Falls Boulevard along the Erie Canal as a Waterfront Activity Area. Streetscape/pedestrian improvements should be implemented to take advantage of this waterfront location. Redevelopment of appropriately scaled commercial uses should be encouraged (e.g., rehabilitation of the Lighthouse Point restaurant and boating oriented services).
- Initiate traffic calming measures and combine with character corridor design guidelines for arterial and collector streets, including North French Road, Sweet Home Road, Robinson Road, and Tonawanda Creek Road. Typical traffic calming measures include “bumpouts” at intersections, changes in pavement texture at pedestrian crossings, increased planting, re-striping of the road to delineate on-street parking areas if applicable, and potential reduction of lane widths. Depending



This figure is intended to communicate an overall direction and location of possible initiatives rather than specific plans or detailed renderings. The locations of specific land uses are similarly conceptual and illustrative in nature and are not meant to supersede the Conceptual Land Use Plan, which is the official guide to future land use.

### NORTHWEST AMHERST FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT

May 2017

Figure 15

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

#### LEGEND

- ↔ Expressway
- ↔ Major Arterial
- ↔ Minor Arterial
- ↔ Collector
- ↔ Neighborhood Connector
- ↔ Multi-use Trail

- Industrial / Office
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- Commercial / Mixed-Use Area
- School / Community Facility
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways
- New Housing
- Office

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Commercial Center
- Waterfront Activity Area





Landscape buffer treatment



Radburn, New Jersey  
Landscape buffer (residential area)



Traffic calming feature (bump out)



The West End, Hagerstown, Maryland  
Central park in neighborhood



Pattern Book, Celebration, Florida  
Neighborhood street: pedestrian oriented



Residential development along neighborhood street

upon the character of each street, a traffic study may need to be completed to arrive at the appropriate solution.

- Explore the potential development of an environmental education center and park entry to Nature View Park along Sweet Home Road near the intersection with Pheasant Run Road.
- Create a landscaped buffer surrounding the Bucyrus Heights neighborhood to the east and south, with a public right-of-way extending south to the Ellicott Creek Trail. Pedestrian and bicycle only connections into the North Audubon Parkway mixed-use center should be established.
- Develop lands directly south of the Heritage Heights Elementary School into appropriately scaled housing that takes wetland boundaries into consideration.
- Apply a neighborhood conservation program to stabilize and improve housing conditions, per Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 8-7. The program should address both increasing homeownership and encouraging enhanced property maintenance by landlords. Specific strategies that should be considered include enhanced code enforcement; low interest mortgages or assistance on closing costs for first-time homebuyers; grants or low interest loans for property repairs and improvements; and possible consideration of a licensing and inspection program for rental units (would need to be applied as a town-wide code). In a related strategy to improve the area's attractiveness as a place to live, opportunities for infill development should be pursued to introduce quality housing, extend existing street patterns, and create more coherent neighborhoods. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

## **10.2 NORTH AMHERST**

### **10.2.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis**

The largest of the six focal planning areas, North Amherst extends east from the Northwest Amherst focal planning area to Transit Road generally north of North French Road, the Lockport Expressway, and Dann Road. Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Rural/"green" character, as defined by undeveloped land, open spaces, and agricultural uses
- Presence of extensive natural resources and floodplain areas
- Potential growth in Northeast Amherst (projected to experience the greatest percent increase in population of any part of Amherst over the next 20 years)
- Growth of designated wetlands by approximately 37% to 1,382 acres. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

- Role of public sewer as a primary determinant of new development (much of North Amherst is not served by public sewer)

The physical image of North Amherst is very different from other portions of the Town. Its low density housing, rural roads, farms and open spaces stand in contrast to the denser, more urban or suburban uses and commercial services found in the southern portions of the Town (Figure 17).

Low-density housing in a rural setting extends along Tonawanda Creek Road, New Road, Schoelles Road, Hopkins Road, and Campbell Boulevard. Denser, suburban housing developments are located along and just north of North French Road west of I-990. The remainder of the area is primarily open space, parkland, and agricultural land. **There are few commercial or mixed-use centers in this focal area.** A few small stores are located at the intersection of Millersport Highway and Transit Road, which does not currently present the best overall image as an entryway to Amherst. The “village hamlet” of Swormville, located near Smith and Transit Roads, contains some commercial uses. Swormville, however, serves a specific niche with antique stores and associated shops. Basic daily commercial uses and services are located further south at Transit Road and North French Road.

The Oakwood Golf Course, Tonawanda Creek, North Amherst Recreation Center, Glen Oak Golf Course and Nature View Park represent the primary public amenities in the area, encompassing large amounts of land. Existing and new trails following Tonawanda Creek and along Hopkins Road north of I-990 could greatly help to physically connect these assets (see Land Use and Development Policy 3-13). The North Amherst Recreation Center is relatively isolated from housing and, due to its location adjacent to Millersport Highway, is difficult to access except by automobile. As part of the Town of Amherst and Town of Pendleton Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (JLWRP), three waterfront activity centers are proposed in the area.

The majority of the roads in North Amherst are rural in character. As scenic roadways, many are narrow with closely planted landscaping and trees. In some cases, surface drainage systems are located at the edge of the roadway in the form of ditches with standing water. These characteristics should be considered when evaluating any street improvements or potential addition of bicycle lanes (see Transportation Policy 6-1 re. context-sensitive roadway design).

Major arterials include Millersport Highway, which is designed for high traffic speeds and creates a large physical barrier. This condition is most problematic at the intersection with New Road, due to the presence of the North Amherst Recreation Center on the west side of Millersport and a private day care facility on New



Tonawanda Creek Road



Boat launch on Tonawanda Creek



North Amherst Recreation Center



Agricultural field



Agricultural landscape



Rural road



Rural road / drainage ditch



Millersport Highway / Transit Road



Amherst Museum



Rural landscape



Rural road



Ransom Creek

### NORTH AMHERST FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS

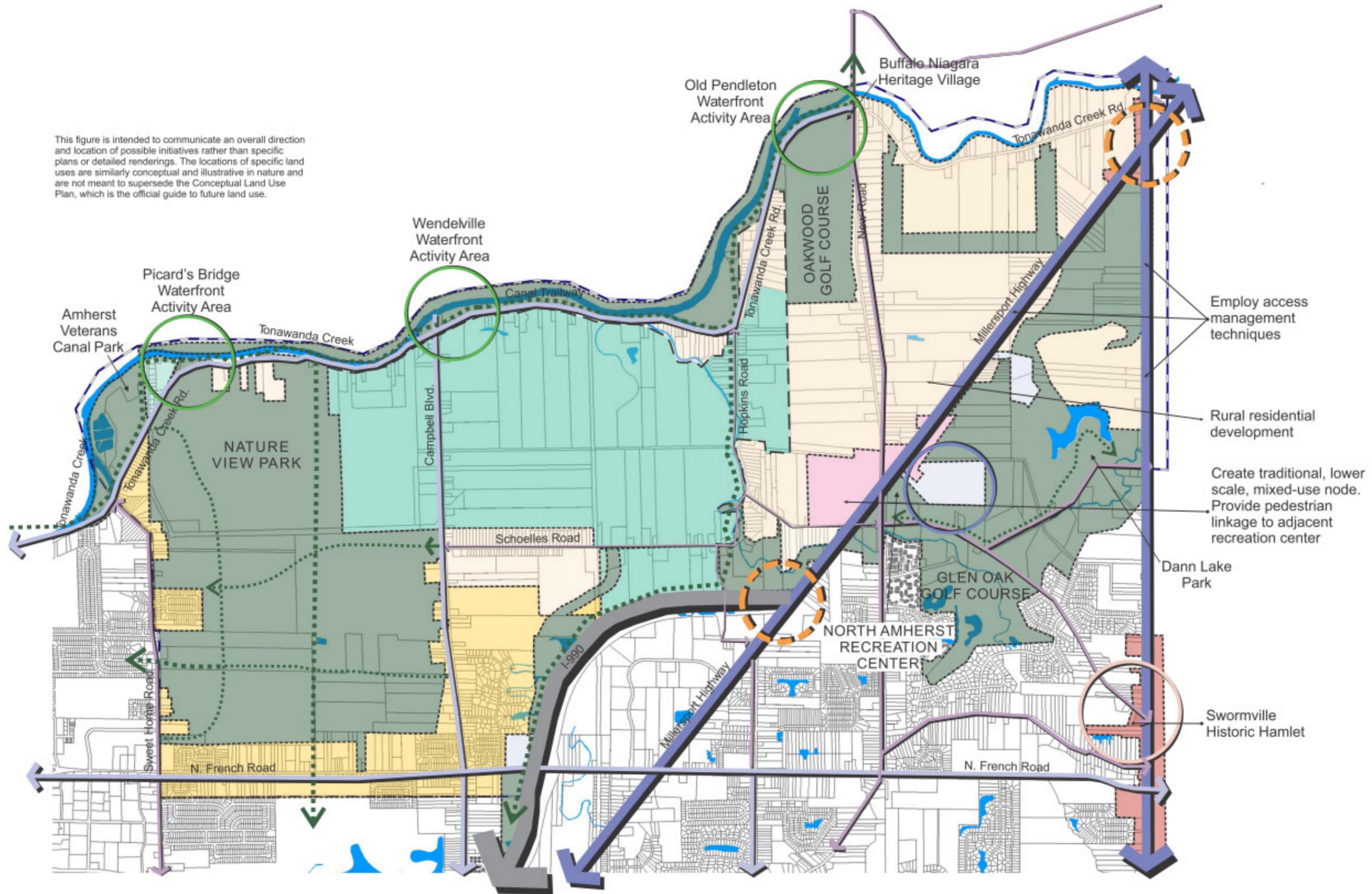
TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Figure 17

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC

This figure is intended to communicate an overall direction and location of possible initiatives rather than specific plans or detailed renderings. The locations of specific land uses are similarly conceptual and illustrative in nature and are not meant to supersede the Conceptual Land Use Plan, which is the official guide to future land use.



**NORTH AMHERST FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN**

May 2017

Figure 18

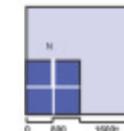
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

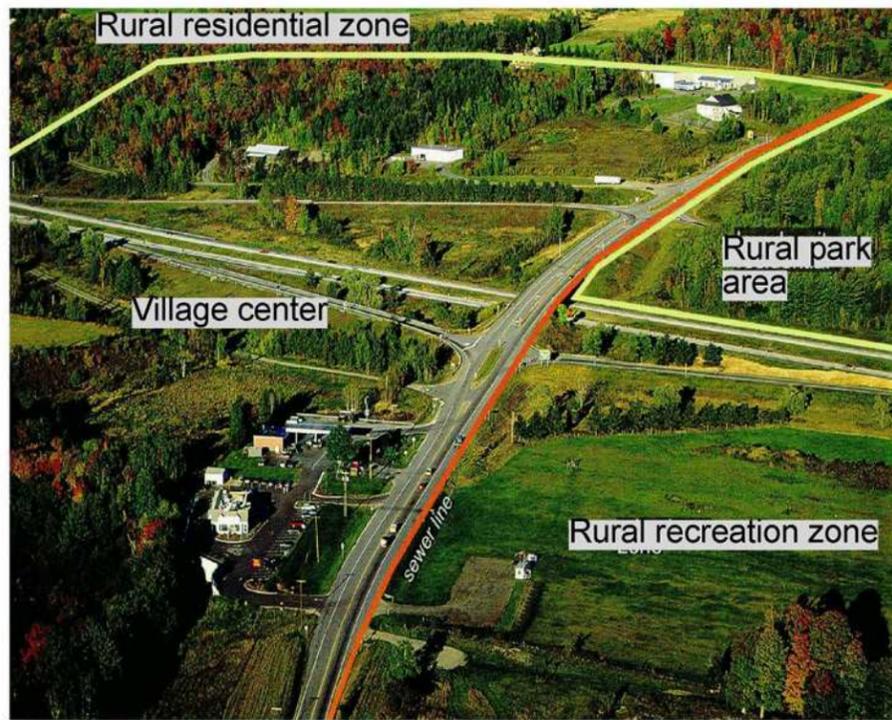
**LEGEND**

- Expressway
- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Multi-use Trail
- Natural Trail

- Rural Residential
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways
- Agricultural Land
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- Community Use
- Special Use Center

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Waterfront Activity Area
- Historic Hamlet





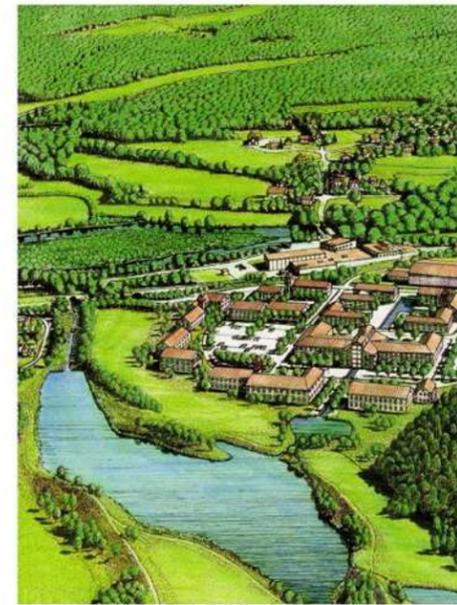
Village center in rural setting



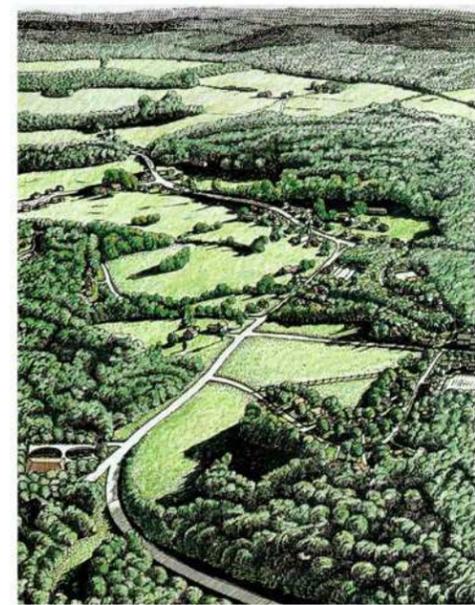
Waterfront trail



Greenway along stream



Randall Arendt, Rural by Design  
Conservation development



Randall Arendt, Rural by Design  
Low-density residential development



Rural road



Rural road / farmland



Champion Park, Winnebago, Illinois

Conservation development overlooking open space



Village center

Road. This area represents an opportunity to provide services **in a lower scale, traditional form that maintains the area's overall rural character.**

## 10.2.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

As noted above, the majority of the North Amherst focal planning area is comprised of low-density, single-family residential, agricultural, or park/open space uses. These characteristics contribute to a physical environment that is unique and an essential part of Amherst's character. As noted by residents, the rural character and low density housing in North Amherst reflects the ability to choose between radically different styles of living all within one town. A variety of lifestyle and housing choices ranging from urban to suburban to rural is one of the cornerstones of the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement.

The North Amherst concept plan emphasizes ***preservation of rural character.***

Thus the concept plan for North Amherst emphasizes stabilization and preservation of rural character. Major strategies include controlling the location and density of new development, initiating context-sensitive improvements (where applicable) to maintain the visual character of rural roads, and providing easy physical connections between the recreation amenities in the area through an extended network of pedestrian and bicycle lanes. Growth is directed to the intersection of New Road and Millersport Highway and east of Millersport Highway to Transit Road where sewer service can be extended.

Specifically, the concept plan for North Amherst includes the following initiatives (Figures 18 and 19):

- Create a mixed-use **traditional development** at the intersection of New Road and Millersport Highway within the existing parcels that are zoned Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and include **low scale** commercial **buildings**, clustered residential development, and significant open space (see "Conservation Development" as a strategy, policy 3-14). The overall scale of the development will provide a center for North Amherst, a recognizable gateway to Amherst from the north, and services closer to the existing population than currently available.
- Initiate traffic calming measures on Millersport Highway at the intersection of New Road to provide enhanced pedestrian accessibility and safety between the potential village center and the North Amherst Recreation Center. These measures could include stop signs or a stoplight, designated crosswalks, enhanced landscaping, and "bumpouts."
- Limit the area to the immediate north and west of the village center to rural residential uses.
- Extend trails along Tonawanda Creek and Tonawanda Creek Road. Mile markers and a signage program should be

integrated within the system to guide users to specific amenities and uses.

- Establish a new trail along Hopkins Road from Tonawanda Creek to the I-990. This trail should be integrated into a larger system that connects water features such as Tonawanda Creek, with a major element of the town-wide system along the north side of the I-990. Mile markers and a signage program should be integrated within the system to guide users to specific amenities and uses.
- Develop “Rural Character” roadway standards for the area’s rural roads (Comprehensive Plan Policy 6-1). These should include coordinated guidelines for landscaping and tree cover, building setbacks, site drainage, limited road widths, and potential bicycle lanes where applicable. Conservation development through clustering of homes (consistent with soil limitations on on-site sewage disposal) should also be explored to preserve views and open space.
- Initiate bicycle lanes and improvements to New Road, Hopkins Road, Campbell Boulevard, and Schoelles Road. These improvements should reflect the “Rural Character” roadway standards.
- Create a redevelopment plan for the Millersport Highway and Transit Road intersection to reinforce **suburban medium**-scale commercial activities and enhance the gateway to the Town.
- Enhance the signage and streetscape treatments along Millersport Highway and I-990 to orient visitors and commuters to the Town’s amenities. These should include landscaping, traffic calming (where appropriate), paving, signage and lighting.
- Incorporate recommendations from the JLWRP to improve the Waterfront Activity Areas near the Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village (Old Pendleton), Wendelville, and Picard’s Bridge near the Amherst Marine Center.
- As recommended by Natural and Cultural Resources Policy 4-13, develop a management plan to enhance the Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village as an educational/interpretive resource for residents and visitors. This plan should address connection of the museum to an area-wide trail system and to the Old Pendleton Waterfront Activity Area recommended in the JLWRP. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)
- Work with Clarence to preserve and strengthen the established village character of Swormville. Any future improvements to Transit Road should be designed to maintain this character.
- Develop design standards for the replacement of bridges over the Erie Canal.

## 10.3 UNIVERSITY

### 10.3.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis

The University focal planning area is located in west-central Amherst centered on the North Campus of the University at Buffalo (UB). Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Impacts of the ongoing expansion of the North Campus student population on the area surrounding the campus (increased traffic, demand for off-campus housing and services geared towards students)
- Need for coordination between the Town and University on growth/edge issues
- Potential for research/economic development spin-off from University activities
- The vacant property owned by the University east of Millersport Highway is one of the largest vacant properties in the Town potentially available for development

The University focal planning area and surrounding development contain some of the largest economic engines in the Town of Amherst (Figure 20). Most notably, the University at Buffalo's North Campus is in the heart of the focal area and is expecting a significantly larger student population due to internal restructuring of the academic programs and the locations where they are offered. To accommodate these changes, the University is implementing a master plan with the objective of increasing housing on the North Campus by 40%. This effort is reflected in new housing developments at the periphery of the traditional campus core adjacent to the academic spine and sports stadiums. Recognizing the need for additional commercial services for the students, the University is also planning a redevelopment initiative concentrated on Lee Road with a mix of housing, retail venues, a recreation and wellness center, and a hotel and conference center to create a new campus "Main Street." Thus the once insular campus is slowly extending to its edges, which provides the opportunity for more interaction and shared services with the Town of Amherst. This expansion is providing the potential for the development of student housing not accommodated on-campus and student-related retail/personal services in close proximity to the campus. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Surrounding the University is a number of other uses that provide employment and services, many of which serve the Western New York Region and the local community:

- The Ramada Hotel and Conference Center and Weinberg Campus for assisted living are located along North Forest Road.



1  
Ellicott Creek railway



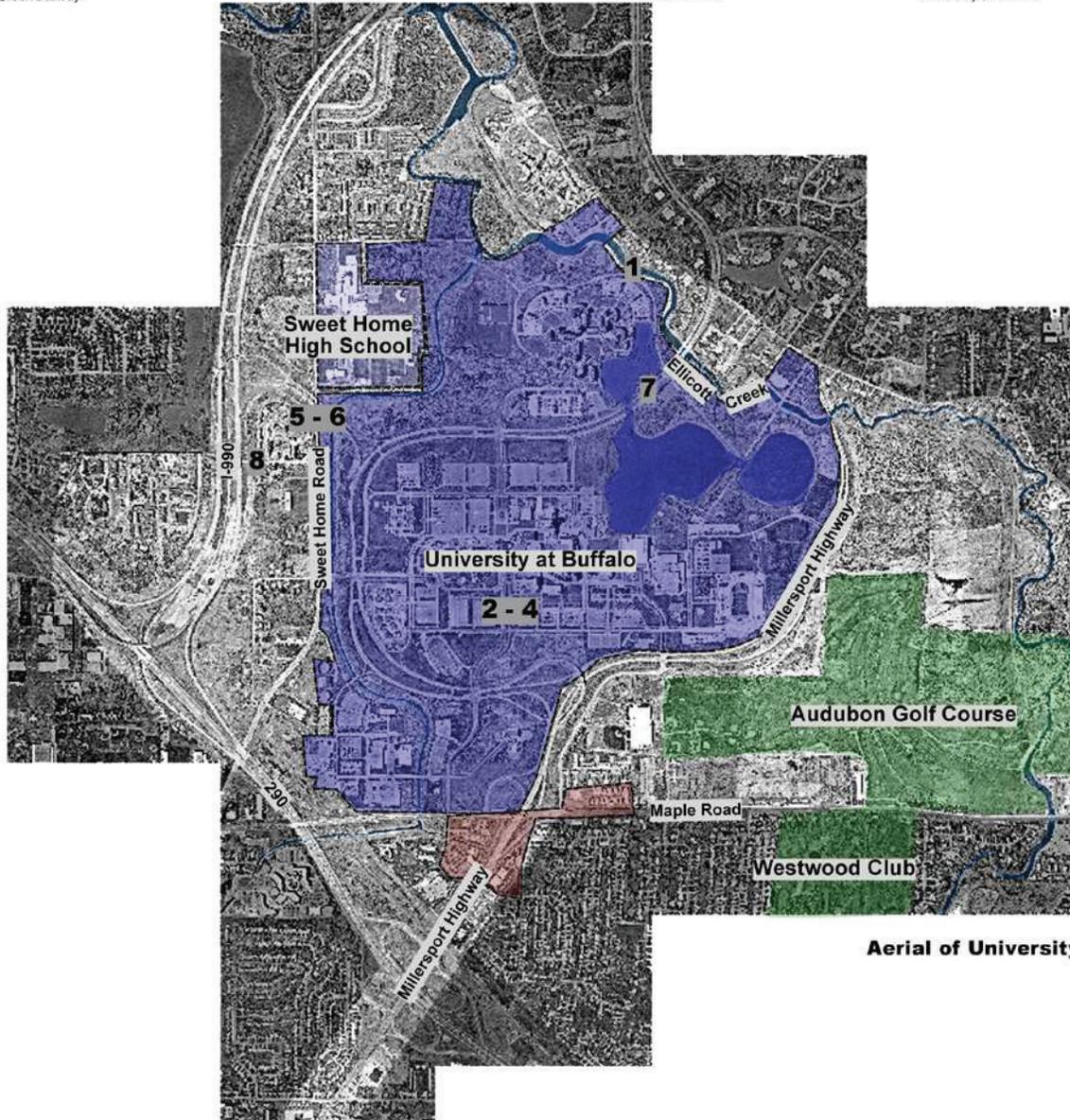
2  
University housing



3  
University at Buffalo



4  
University at Buffalo



**Aerial of University**



5  
Sweet Home Road



6  
Sweet Home School



7  
Audubon Parkway



8  
Chestnut Ridge

**UNIVERSITY FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Figure 20**

- A Town municipal complex is located along Audubon Parkway.
- A concentration of commercial services is located to the south along Maple Road.
- The Audubon Recreation complex, the Audubon Golf Course, and Northtown Center are located east of Millersport Highway and north of Maple Road.
- Condominium complexes are located to the west of I-290 along Chestnut Ridge Road.
- Approximately 3,000 beds of student housing located along Sweet Home and Chestnut Ridge Roads directly west of the North Campus are either developed, under construction, or have received site plan approval.
- Sweet Home High School located on Sweet Home Road adjacent to the University. This facility provides adult education in the evenings and the School District is looking to expand its programs to become more of a community center.
- The Audubon Industrial Park (described in further detail above in the context of the Northwest focal planning area) and several other employment/business parks are located within and adjacent to the University focal planning area.

*(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

While all of these uses are viable and critical to the economic prosperity of the Town, they currently do not benefit from their proximity to one another. Instead they are relatively isolated from other uses and assets. There is limited physical or social networking within this area, which impacts the possibility of it becoming an integrated, mixed-use district.

Connecting the uses is a somewhat disjointed network of roads and highways. Millersport Highway directly connects the north campus to the University's south campus to the southwest. John James Audubon Parkway is a main link into the north campus, but neither the parkway nor Millersport Highway is distinguished as a campus loop road or gateway as they pass through the University. Sweet Home Road exhibits peak hour traffic problems as a collector road. Finally, there are few connections through local streets to adjacent neighborhoods, many of which house students attending the University. The present state of the road network only furthers the limited physical connections between uses in the area and encourages automobile travel to fulfill daily needs.

Although much of the area is fully developed, there is no center for commercial services adjacent to the University. An opportunity to create a mixed-use center on the large University-owned parcel east of Millersport Highway currently exists. Its location along Ellicott Creek and near adjacent neighborhoods creates the potential for a center on this site to draw from both University students and employees as well as neighborhood residents. Approved in September 2009, the University adopted a new physical master plan

to implement the recently completed “UB 2020” academic plan. This effort, called “BuildUB,” is seeking to implement many of the concepts recommended above. Preliminary discussions with the University indicate they are seeking to soften the hard edges of the north campus to better integrate it into the Amherst community. The existing commercial-retail, student/senior housing, and research-development uses currently planned along the Sweet Home Road corridor in the area directly west of the North Campus may present a real opportunity to integrate populations of varying ages in the Town with University planning and private efforts to create a second University related mixed use center. This concept may be explored with the University as their physical planning efforts progress and considered as part of future annual plan reviews. (see discussion of this proposed “University Village” in Section 3.3). (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

### 10.3.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

The concept plan for the University focal planning area is centered on physical networking and shared resources. All of the existing institutions, offices, and neighborhoods can be viewed as “portals” that offer amenities and services that can potentially benefit the entire area. The objective is to find the physical linkages between them that will promote mutually reinforcing initiatives and social networks.

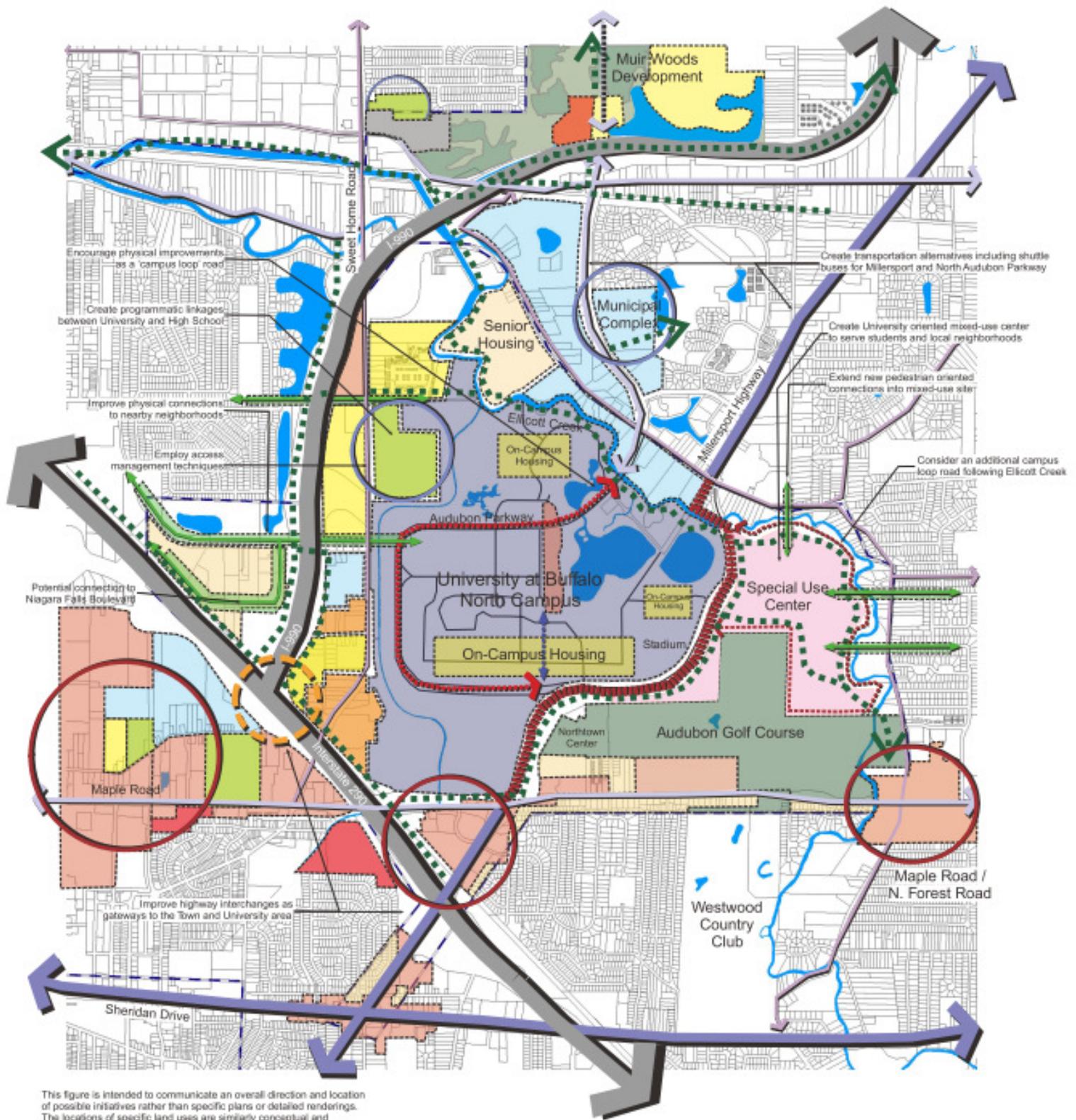
The University concept plan emphasizes *physical and programmatic connections*.

A long-term objective should be to set up a coordinating council among area entities (the Town, UB, and other major uses) to discuss ways of sharing services that benefit multiple institutions or uses. These services could be administered in existing facilities or in new, publicly accessible centers of community activity that are integrated with other commercial uses. The proposed “University Village” **mixed-use center** would be a good location for a facility of this kind. A coordinated marketing and outreach program should also be considered.

In the short term the concept plan encourages the physical improvement of the area’s roads and gateways. This strategy includes finding new connections between nearby neighborhoods and the University, providing alternative methods of transportation (transit, bicycle, and pedestrian), and extending the greenway trail along Ellicott Creek. Key physical gateways, such as critical intersections and highway interchanges, should be improved to reflect the dynamic mix of uses present in the area.

Specifically, the concept plan for the University focal area includes the following initiatives and strategies (Figures 21 and 22):

- Enhance pedestrian and physical connections to the University from surrounding neighborhoods by improving Chestnut Ridge Road, Rensch Road and Willow Ridge Drive. These “neighborhood pedestrian connectors” should receive priority



This figure is intended to communicate an overall direction and location of possible initiatives rather than specific plans or detailed renderings. The locations of specific land uses are similarly conceptual and illustrative in nature and are not meant to supersede the Conceptual Land Use Plan, which is the official guide to future land use.

### UNIVERSITY FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN

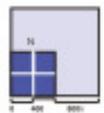
May 2017

Figure 21

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

#### LEGEND

	Expressway		Office		Residential
	Major Arterial		Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric		Commercial - Office
	Minor Arterial		Commercial / Mixed-Use Area		Industrial - Office
	Collector		School / Community Facility		Gateway
	Neighborhood Connector		University at Buffalo		Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
	Campus Loop		Recreation / Open Space / Greenways		Commercial Center
	Multi-use Trail		Special Use Center		
	Natural Trail				





Bethesda, Maryland  
New mixed-use center



Greenway trail



Open space



Greenway trail



Industrial / research development - pulled close to street



Centennial Park, Sydney, Australia  
University gateway statue



Street treatment: signage, wayfinding and banners



Neighborhood connector street:  
pedestrian oriented

consideration for tree planting and other improvements. Connections should be made to the pedestrian and multi-use facilities recently developed along Sweet Home Road.

- Employ access management techniques and traffic calming measures on Sweet Home Road.
- As part of development of a more integrated pedestrian/bicycle network, enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists at entrances to the UB campus from Maple Road, Millersport Highway, and North Forest Road. Pedestrian and bicycle access to the UB campus should be enhanced by the creation of a linkage between the proposed University West Multi-use Trail to the academic spine via Rensch Road.
- Research-oriented facilities related to the University should continue to expand along Sweet Home Road in proximity to the Baird Research Park. The introduction of the START-UP - NY program in June 2013 offers incentives to encourage new development in this area.
- The corridor along Sweet Home Road between Ellicott Creek and Maple Road is the focus of major off-campus university-related activities. Mixed-use, moderate density offices and university related residential uses have evolved within this corridor. This pattern is punctuated by a small commercial center centered on the Skinnersville Road Extension.
- Work with UB to promote development of a new, mixed-use “University Village” east of Millersport Highway (see discussion in Section 3.3). Uses should include research and office, University-related activities, housing, open space, and public trails and rights-of-way along Ellicott Creek. Housing should be designed to appeal to members of the academic community and “knowledge workers” drawn to an attractive, stimulating environment with a mix of activities.<sup>4</sup> A secondary campus “loop road” should be considered adjacent to the creek but outside of the floodplain to organize the main activities along an attractive environmental feature.
- Enhance physical connections to the University from surrounding neighborhoods by establishing a linkage or linkages across Ellicott Creek from North Forest Road. Klein Road could be extended across North Forest to provide a means of access to the proposed mixed-use center from the east, while extensions of Stahl Road and Heim Road would provide additional pedestrian and possibly vehicular linkages to the center.

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<sup>4</sup> If properly planned, this mixed-use center could enhance Amherst’s appeal to what economist Richard Florida terms the “creative class,” which he considers key to a community’s economic vitality. The creative class consists of scientists, engineers, architects, educators, writers, artists, entertainers, and other professionals whose economic function is to generate new ideas, new technology, and new creative content (Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, June 2002).

- Designate Millersport Highway and the Audubon Parkway from North French Road to Maple Road as a Campus Boulevard. Streetscape, landscaping, and signage should be distinctive and high quality, reflecting UB and its programs and services.
- Extend the Audubon Parkway north to the North Audubon Parkway property Research and Development Park, thus increasing the accessibility of this center to UB and other surrounding uses.
- Work with UB and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to encourage alternative transportation systems to better serve and connect uses in the area. Transit service should be explored that links the University at Buffalo's North and South campuses. Similarly, expanded services should be explored for the Weinberg Campus to extend the mobility of resident senior citizens.
- Encourage re-use or redevelopment of properties in the Maple Road/North Forest Road commercial center and other locations along Maple Road and Millersport Highway. The Amherst IDA should be involved in **these revitalization** efforts through programs such as tax abatements.
- Build programmatic connections between UB, Sweet Home High School, and other institutional, governmental, and business resources as part of the “knowledge-based” Comprehensive Plan key initiative. This strategy should link mutually reinforcing existing programs and create new ones in a way that fulfills the educational/training and job placement needs of residents as well as students.

*(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

## **10.4 EGGERTSVILLE**

### **10.4.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis**

One of the oldest neighborhoods in the Town, the Eggertsville focal planning area is located in the southwest corner of Amherst in the area generally defined by Sheridan Drive to the north, Eggert Road to the east, Main Street to the south, and Niagara Falls Boulevard to the west. Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Viability of older commercial areas, including effects of the predominant “one-size-fits-all” General Business (GB) zoning
- Neighborhood viability, including the impacts caused by the transfer of undergraduate programs and student housing from UB's South to North Campus
- Need/opportunity for positive collaboration between the Town and University **at Buffalo**
- Pedestrian character of older neighborhoods and commercial areas is an asset

- Lack of park and recreational facilities and center of community activity

As one of the older portions of Amherst, Eggertsville is characterized by a density and diversity unique to suburban environments. The area contains a number of different uses and institutions and is actively shaped by its relationship to five primary anchors (Figure 23):

- UB's South Campus across from the Town's municipal border
- Commercial uses in University Plaza along Main Street
- The traditional **form** commercial center at Main Street and Eggert Road
- **The mixed forms of commercial buildings** at Northtown Plaza along **Eggert Road and Sheridan Drive**
- Community services located in Windermere School located in the heart of the neighborhood

*(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

Due to the increasing ethnic diversity of the area's population, Windermere School has evolved into a community service center offering special education programs, English as a second language program, and health screenings. The success of the school and access to nearby commercial services has made Eggertsville attractive to many families moving to the area.

The popularity of the school and this area of town for new families has raised some issues with regard to housing in the area. Most notably, two subsidized projects, Allenhurst Apartments and Princeton Court Apartments, are viewed as having a negative physical impact on nearby property values. Allenhurst, the more visible of the two due to location and design, does not fit the character of the neighborhood. In general, the residential area to the east of Bailey Avenue is considered more stable than the area to the west of Bailey Avenue.

Given the density of residential development, a number of the area's commercial nodes have continued to be successful, although in some cases signs of decline are evident. Commercial areas include Bailey Avenue, Main Street and Bailey, Main and Eggert Road, Eggert Road and Bailey Avenue, and Six Corners. Each area **is of traditional form and** contains a different mix of services and associated issues regarding future land use. Eggert Road, for instance, includes vacant properties with only a few offices remaining. Bailey Avenue has commercial use on the west side of the street only, ranging from small stores and restaurants to a motorcycle dealership. Both located along minor arterial roads, these areas in particular provide the opportunity for introduction of **mixed-use and** multi-family housing that would actively support nearby commercial services.



1  
Northtown Plaza



2  
Northtown Plaza / Eggert Rd.



3  
Marion Road



4  
Allenhurst Apartments



8  
University Plaza



Aerial of Eggertsville



5  
Bailey Avenue



9  
University Plaza



6  
Bailey Avenue



10  
Six Corners



7  
Bailey Avenue



11  
Windermere School



12  
Windermere Boulevard



13  
Springville Avenue



14  
Main Street and Eggert Road

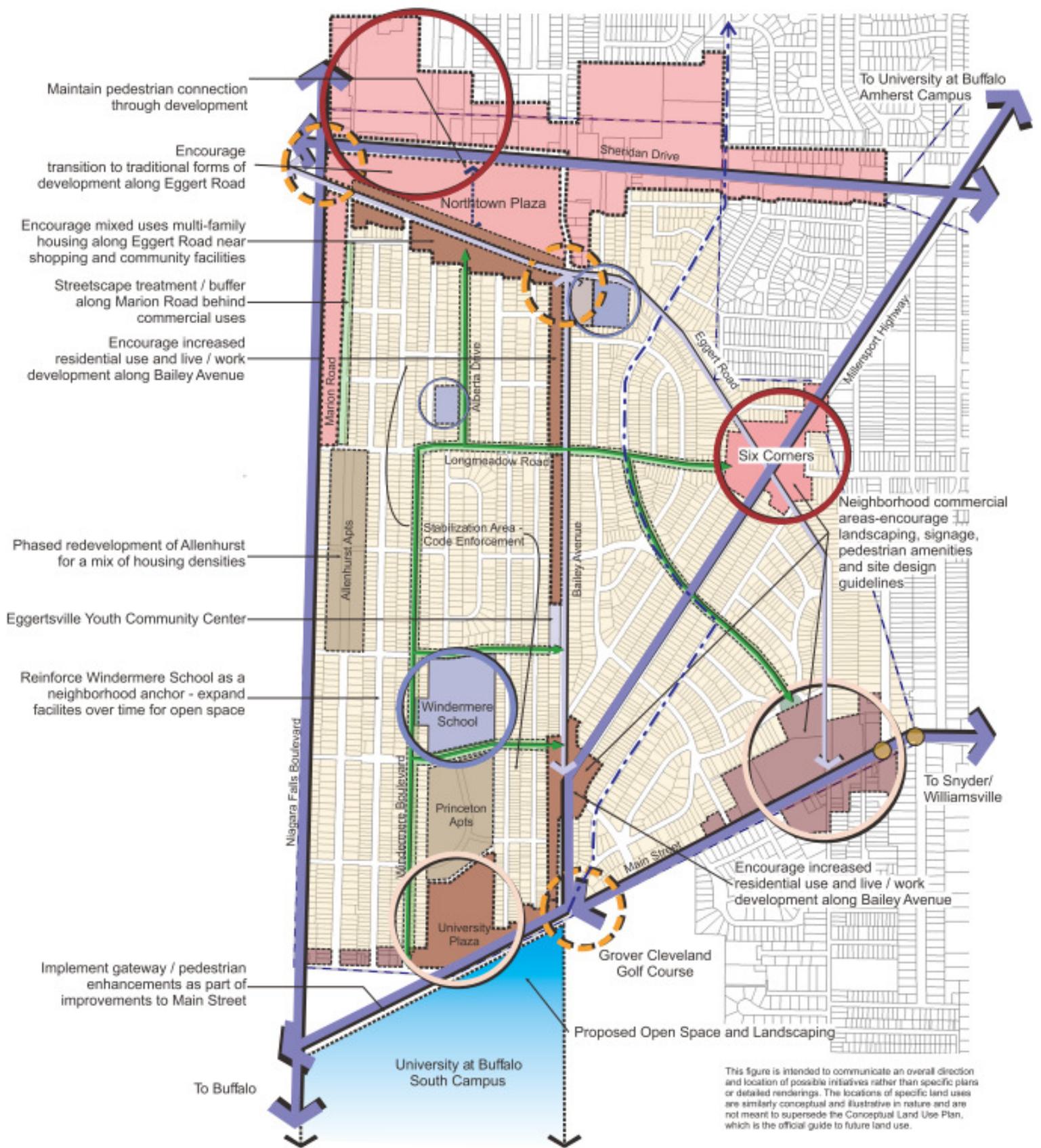
**EGGERTSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Figure 23**

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC



**EGGERTSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN**

May 2017

Figure 24

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

**LEGEND**

- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Neighborhood Connector
- Intercampus Bikeway

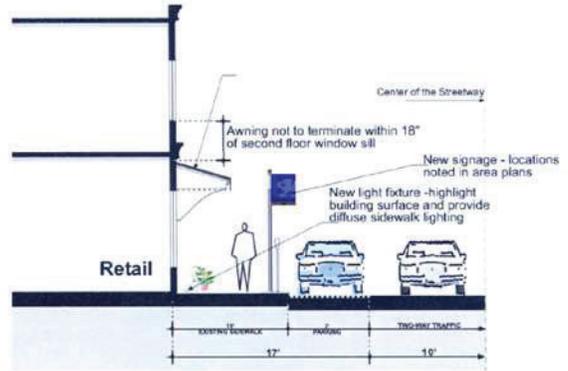
- Traditional Commercial / Mixed-Use Area
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- Suburban Commercial / Mixed-Use Area
- School / Community Facility
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways
- Multi-family Residential

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Suburban Commercial Center
- Traditional Commercial Area
- Historic Entranceways - restore where applicable & create lighting plan for Main Street

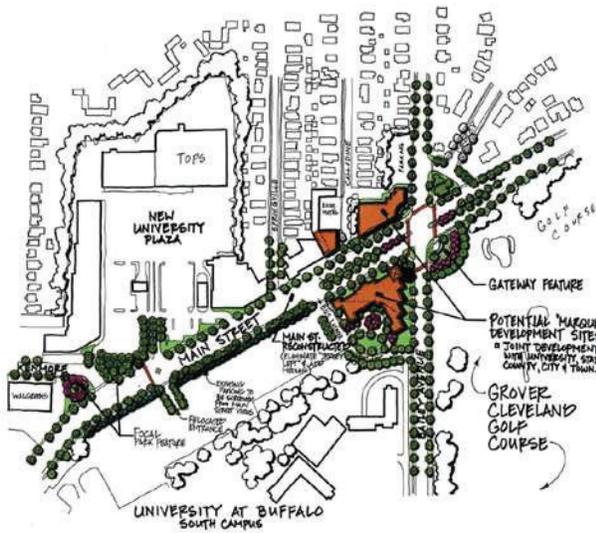




Lake Oswego, Oregon  
 Phased redevelopment for mixed housing density with side parking



Example of design guideline



Source: Parsons  
 Conceptual improvements to Main Street and Bailey Avenue



Lake Oswego, Oregon  
 Landscape buffer treatment



Miller Garden  
 Landscape buffer near university



Traffic calming



Anacortes, Washington  
 Streetscape improvement



Multi-family development with rear parking



Live-work/ mixed-use development with rear parking

Although Windermere Elementary School provides some community services, the needs of the population outweigh the services available. Potential needs that have been identified include a community recreational center; youth, family, and other social services; and possibly some level of a clinical relationship with the University. In 2006, the Town purchased the former church located at 4110 Bailey Avenue and converted it into a community center that is operated by the Boys and Girls Club of Buffalo. (Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)

## 10.4.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

The dynamic social and physical characteristics of Eggertsville provide an opportunity to create a distinctive and socially diverse district in Amherst. The concept plan proposes to “reinforce the diversity” with a long-term strategy to meet the needs of a changing population, encouraging established and new residents to remain and invest in Amherst.

Because the concept is ambitious, it must be followed through with multiple policies and redevelopment initiatives. Examples include regulatory changes to facilitate compatible development, housing programs and development, economic development incentives to small business enterprises, improvements to local streets to encourage people to walk to local services, and new community services in key locations. In addition to the items identified below, some of these strategies are detailed in the Eggertsville Action Plan; others are described in the town-wide policies related to the “Revitalization” initiative. Because of its importance to Amherst’s future, Eggertsville should be a priority location for the application of expanded incentives for reinvestment/revitalization per Priority Comprehensive Plan Action Program #2 (see Chapter 11).

Specifically, the concept plan for the Eggertsville focal area includes the following initiatives and strategies (Figures 24 and 25):

- Encourage commercial and mixed-use development in the area around Northtown Plaza north of Eggert Road. This may occur as a partnership with property owners when redevelopment is considered. For example, a strategy could be pursued to use a portion of the existing parking lot along Eggert Road for other uses in exchange for other assistance to the continued operation of the Plaza. If any redevelopment in this area occurs, a pedestrian connection should be provided to Sheridan Drive and Eggert Road.
- Encourage **transition to** mixed-use development **in a traditional form** with a significant multi-family housing component along the south side of Eggert Road between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Bailey Avenue. Building and site design for redevelopment of lands along Eggert Road should be sensitive to single family residences adjacent south. Guidelines should be established to encourage this development to be pulled to

The Eggertsville concept plan emphasizes the *physical distinctiveness and social diversity* of the community as strengths to build on for the future.

the front property line with parking facilities located in the rear. Lower floors should be considered for community facilities, housing, and/or office space.

- Encourage increased residential development along Bailey Avenue, including live/work units. Guidelines should be created to promote development that fits into the established neighborhood fabric (build-to lines, rear parking, etc.). Shared parking should be encouraged through more flexible standards that take advantage of the varying parking needs of residential, commercial, and other uses at different times of the day and week.
- **Apply new zoning provisions that ensure development of a mixed-use center in the traditional form and lower-scale type.** Appropriate site design guidelines should be created to maintain and enhance the character of these areas, addressing issues such as build-to lines, shared parking provisions, **transition and** landscaping requirements, signage, streetscape, lighting, and compatible architectural design.
- Stabilize the neighborhood west of Bailey Avenue through code enforcement and an assessment of housing needs and programs directed to the local population, in accordance with Housing and Neighborhoods Policy 8-7.
- Consider options for a phased redevelopment of the Allenhurst Apartments for uses such as senior housing, lower density housing, or units attractive to “empty nesters” and other non-traditional households. Any redevelopment of the property should incorporate varied housing and architectural styles compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Coordination with potential multi-family housing along Eggert and Bailey should be explored to provide relocation resources for tenants.
- Working with the Amherst IDA, establish a mechanism and management entity to prepare potential redevelopment properties for reinvestment and future development. This mechanism could be used to accomplish such activities as assembling parcels, demolishing existing buildings, and obtaining required regulatory approvals.
- Reinforce the Windermere School as a neighborhood anchor by expansion of facilities over time to provide more recreational opportunities or open space for the area.
- Reinforce neighborhood connections to local amenities by improving key streets as “neighborhood connector streets.” These streets should receive priority consideration for tree planting and other improvements.
- Initiate traffic calming initiatives for Bailey Avenue, Eggert Road, Grover Cleveland Highway, and Main Street. Traffic calming measures include “bumpouts” at intersections, changes in pavement texture at pedestrian crossings, increased planting, re-striping of the road to delineate on-street parking areas if applicable, and potential reduction of lane widths.

Depending upon the character of each street, a traffic study may need to be completed to arrive at the appropriate solution.

- Work with NYSDOT to incorporate gateway treatments and pedestrian enhancements into planned improvements to Main Street, which is a major gateway between the City of Buffalo and Amherst.
- Encourage **revitalization** of aging commercial properties along Sheridan Drive and Niagara Falls Boulevard. The Amherst IDA should be involved in this effort through programs such as tax abatements.
- Consider additional landscaping treatments for commercial uses along Niagara Falls Boulevard between Longmeadow and Eggert Roads to buffer residences along Marion Road from visible loading and parking areas.
- Prioritize needs for community facilities and services as a guide for future initiatives and investments. The development of these facilities and access to services in existing commercial areas should be encouraged and facilitated. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

## **10.5 SNYDER**

### **10.5.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis**

Like Eggertsville, the Snyder focal planning area is located in southwestern Amherst and is one of the Town's oldest neighborhoods. It generally corresponds to the triangular area formed by Main Street, Kensington Avenue, and Mt. Vernon Road. Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Deterioration of (two-family) housing stock along the east side of Harlem Road between Kings Highway and Saratoga Road
- Need to revitalize Harlem/Kensington commercial area
- Need to preserve established **traditional** development pattern and character along Main Street, including the commercial center at Harlem Road
- Lack of park and recreational facilities (other than Harlem Road Community Center)

The Snyder neighborhood is organized around three primary streets: Main Street, Kensington Avenue, and Harlem Road (Figure 26). All three of these streets would benefit from efforts to calm traffic speeds. The three main concentrations of commercial activity are associated with these corridors. The Main Street and Harlem Road intersection supports a viable commercial area with a mix of uses, including Snyder Square, which is notable as a good local example of pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development. Large institutions are located within easy walking distance, providing opportunities for additional uses and programs to further



1  
Daemen College



4  
Main Street and Harlem Road



7  
Main Street and Harlem Road



11  
Historic gateway on Main Street



2  
Amherst High School



5  
Main Street and Harlem Road



8  
Main Street and Harlem Road



12  
Historic gateway on Main Street



3  
Main Street and Harlem Road



6  
Main Street and Harlem Road



9  
Main Street and Harlem Road



13  
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road



Aerial of Snyder



14  
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road



15  
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road



16  
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road

**SNYDER FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Figure 26**

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC

the viability of the commercial center. Daemen College and the Amherst High School are both two blocks east of Harlem Road on Main Street. The Park School of Buffalo is located just to the north.

The Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road intersection also contains a mix of retail uses, including restaurants and shopping. An improvement plan has been prepared for Harlem Road and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) has approved a change in the street width to three lanes and included the addition of two roundabouts to better manage traffic. The project was completed in 2008 with additional lighting, signage, and landscaping. Harlem Road's location at a southern entrance to Amherst provides an opportunity to enhance the area as a Town gateway. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The intersection of Main Street and Kensington Avenue comprises the third commercial center in the Snyder focal planning area. Located adjacent to I-290. **The commercial center there is of traditional form and this** area represents an opportunity to strengthen a gateway to Amherst **coming out of the Village of Williamsville along** Main Street, Amherst's traditional commercial corridor.

A smaller, fourth commercial area is located at the intersection of Kensington Avenue and Darwin Drive. This area contains a traditional **form of** commercial uses.

Snyder's established neighborhood fabric contains physical assets that contribute greatly to the distinctiveness of the area. Along Main Street, the historic neighborhood gates accentuate the area's relationship to the street. In addition, some of the streets are lined with grand silver maple trees. These silver maples, however, were planted at the same time and due to their short life span and the extensive damage they sustained during the October 2006 storm, will soon be in need of replacement.

**All commercial and mixed-use centers in this focal area have been identified as traditional medium or low scale nodes, as shown in Figure 6-A.** The neighborhood fabric is predominantly owner occupied, single-family homes, with the exception of the previously mentioned two-family units along Harlem Road. Fetto Park, a 2.8 acre "pocket park" was recently developed just north of the Park School. In addition to Fetto Park, the Harlem Road Community Center, Saratoga Park and recreation fields associated with the Amherst Middle and High schools located nearby. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

## 10.5.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

The concept plan for the Snyder focal planning area emphasizes the existing commercial centers and their long-term viability. The approach for these centers is to capitalize on their locations and character to provide the widest array of uses for the local population. The commercial centers on Main Street should be distinguished as part of a larger network of linked commercial services extending across Amherst. Connections to existing parks and institutions should be reinforced as part of this strategy.

The Snyder concept plan emphasizes the *long-term viability of the established commercial centers*.

Specifically, the concept plan for the Snyder focal area includes the following initiatives and strategies (Figures 27 and 28):

- Similar to the recommendations for traditional commercial and **mixed-use centers** in Eggertsville, **the centers in Snyder should be of traditional form and low scale type**. Appropriate site design guidelines should be created that are sensitive to and enhance the character of these areas, addressing issues such as build-to lines, shared parking provisions, landscaping requirements, signage (size, location/configuration, style), streetscape, lighting, and compatible architectural design.
- Create guidelines for streetscape improvements and traffic calming measures along Main Street and Kensington Avenue. Traffic calming measures include “bumpouts” at intersections, changes in pavement texture at pedestrian crossings, increased planting, re-striping of the road to delineate on-street parking areas if applicable, and potential reduction of lane widths. A traffic study may be considered for Main Street across the Town to provide valuable information for Snyder, Eggertsville and Williamsville.
- Reinforce neighborhood connections to local amenities by improving key streets as “neighborhood connector streets.” Saratoga Road and Yorktown Road should be improved to enhance connections between commercial uses and Saratoga Park. Improvements should also be undertaken for Harlem Road, including tree planting, sidewalk repair, signage, and lighting. These streets should receive priority consideration for tree planting and other improvements.
- Create a strong, physical link to Daemen College by conceptually extending the existing “green” on Main Street east to Snyder Square through a consistent landscaping plan for the edge along Main Street. Discussions should be initiated with property owners to determine the landscaping right-of-way possible on the north side of Main Street between the College and Harlem Road. Designs should focus on landscaping as well as usable public space, such as small sitting areas with appropriate signage, lighting, and street furniture.
- Encourage a coordinated entrance between Daemen College and the Amherst High School as a gateway to Snyder and to improve traffic safety. This effort could be integrated into a Main Street traffic study.

To University at Buffalo

Extend Daemen 'Green' into the commercial core - create strong physical link between college, high school and retail services

Create coordinated entrance between college and high school



This figure is intended to communicate an overall direction and location of possible initiatives rather than specific plans or detailed renderings. The locations of specific land uses are similarly conceptual and illustrative in nature and are not meant to supersede the Conceptual Land Use Plan, which is the official guide to future land use.

### SNYDER FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN

May 2017

Figure 27

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

#### LEGEND

- Expressway
- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Neighborhood Connector

- Commercial Streetscape Improvement
- Traditional Commercial / Mixed Use Area
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- School / College / Community Facility
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Traditional Commercial Area
- Historic Entranceways - restore where applicable & create lighting plan for Main Street

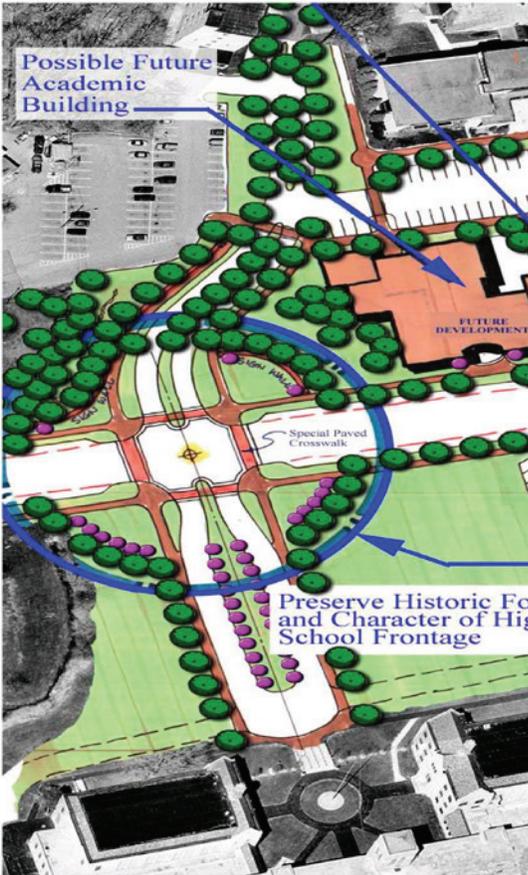




Bethesda, Maryland  
Streetscape improvement



Traditional commercial development:  
building pulled to street, mixed-use



Source: Parsons  
Potential gateway treatment at Daemen  
College / Amherst High School



Street with landscaped "round-about"



Seaside, Oregon  
Green buffer along street



Troutdale, Oregon  
Green buffers and plaza



Troutdale, Oregon  
Bumpout: traffic calming measure

- Redesign the Wehrle Drive/Harlem Road/Kensington Avenue intersection for increased pedestrian safety and to create an attractive gateway to the commercial area. Design principles articulated for the Harlem-Kensington-Cleveland Economic Development Strategy should be implemented, including bringing more buildings to the street with rear parking and creating a visual focal point for the area. The landscaped ‘round-about’ being constructed at this intersection will help in creating a visual focal point.
- Encourage the redevelopment of the parking lot at the northeast corner of Harlem and Kensington for new commercial uses. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)
- Consider physical improvements to the intersection of I-290 and Main Street as a gateway to Amherst and Main Street.
- Create a lighting plan for Main Street, including a consistent lighting treatment for the historic gates. An existing survey of the existing lighting and discussion with local neighborhood groups should be the first steps in the process.
- Consider options for addressing the two-family housing units along Harlem Road identified as a housing issue. Enhanced code enforcement, efforts to increase owner occupancy in the existing structures, or acquisition and redevelopment are options that could be explored.

## **10.6 WILLIAMSVILLE**

### **10.6.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis**

The Williamsville focal planning area is located along Main Street between the I-290 interchange to the west and Youngs Road to the east. It is unique among the focal planning areas in that it is mostly located within the Village of Williamsville, although it does include areas in the Town of Amherst east of I-290 and west of Youngs Road. Key issues identified in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* for this focal planning area include:

- Character and viability of the traditional village core:
  - Economic positioning of Main Street vis-à-vis regional shopping opportunities
  - Form and **type** of new development in relation to traditional village fabric (including impacts of automobile-oriented uses)
  - Design treatment of gateway entrances to village
- Geometry and function of Main Street as a major arterial creates “pedestrian-unfriendly” character and impacts small businesses
- Opportunity to relate master plan for Amherst State Park (under development) to other parks and land uses in the Village

The Williamsville focal area is centered on Main Street and its associated commercial activity. Although the focal area encompasses areas within both the Town of Amherst and the Village of Williamsville, the political boundaries cannot be identified “on the ground.”

The two mile stretch of Main Street (State Route 5) located between Interstate-290 and Youngs Road is the civic and social heart of both the Village of Williamsville and the Town of Amherst. Over this relatively short distance, the corridor includes both the Town and Village government buildings, the iconic Williamsville Water Mill, the historical commercial center of the Village, the North campus of the Erie Community College, and Williamsville South High School.

The Village of Williamsville Community Plan (2010) delineates three “context zones” along Main Street that characterize the form and scale of development and its relationship with surrounding places. The Community Plan further cites the need for a balance between mobility and character so that a revitalized Main Street could fulfill its role as a transportation corridor while enhancing its character and sustaining its role as a center for both the Village and Town. To achieve this balance a “context sensitive approach” to transportation planning was employed to form a vision for Main Street and its business district.

As noted in the *Community Plan*, Williamsville’s commercial core along Main Street offers an alternative to surrounding suburban-style shopping areas. The Plan’s vision for Main Street is comprised of three distinct zones which are characterized by their land use. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

The first zone is a Town-Village transition area extending from the I-290 to the Village line. **Most of this area is a traditional medium scale node, except for the southern side of Main Street between the I-290 and South Forest Road which is a traditional corridor (see Figure 6-A).** Most of the uses there are retail, set back from the street with highly visible parking places in front along the street. Its location near the I-290 provides the opportunity for improvements to the zone as a gateway from Amherst to Main Street and the Village.

The second zone can be characterized as the Main Street Commercial Core extending from the western Village line/Union Road to Evans Street/Garrison Road. The character of the commercial uses in this zone is radically different from the typical strip commercial uses and is rooted in its long history as a traditional village “downtown”. Key characteristics of this area include multi-story buildings, a consistent building edge near the street, inviting ground floor facades, and a mix of architectural styles that emerged through Village history. The majority of businesses offer parking to the rear of their properties.



1 Parking lot next to Ellicott Creek



3 Rear parking / Village Core



4 Rock Street



2 Ellicott Creek / Island Park



Aerial of Williamsville



10 Main Street



5 Main Street / Union Road



6 Main Street



7 Main Street / I-290



8 Main Street



9 Main Street / Village Core

**WILLIAMSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS**

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Figure 29**

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC

Within this zone is the Village Core-Civic area, located between Cayuga road and Ellicott Creek. This area is the heart of the Village and includes the Town and Village municipal buildings, Island Park, Glen Park, and the historic Williamsville Water Mill. The Village Core's proximity to Glen Park, Island Park and Ellicott Creek provides a unique opportunity to reinforce the open space and also the commercial activity with enhanced connections to the parks. Pedestrian safety related to heavy through traffic along Main Street and parking are issues that need to be addressed as they are major reasons why retailers choose to leave the area. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The final land use area extends from Evans Street/Garrison Road to Youngs Road and reflects a transitional mix of uses and forms from some of the tallest buildings in the Village to traditional and suburban forms approaching Youngs Road. This includes some retail, residential, offices, and Williamsville South High Schools. At Youngs Road is the North Campus of Erie Community College, which potentially provides a student population to support retail services on Main Street given a better walking environment and mix of uses closer to campus.

A primary issue affecting Main Street is the physical design of the street itself and the traffic speeds it promotes. Discussions have been ongoing to address this problem by encouraging the New York State Thruway Authority and NYSDOT to study the development of improved capacity at a toll barrier along the I-90 and improved toll operations at Williamsville. In addition, physical alterations to Main Street could "calm" traffic, particularly through the Village core.

The Village has taken several steps toward maintaining and improving the character of these three zones and calming traffic along Main Street. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

- In 2011 the Village adopted a new mixed-use zoning district for the Main Street corridor. The new district establishes a set of graphic standards to guide development of the corridor.
- In 2013 the Village began an initiative called Picture Main Street. Picture Main Street envisions a revitalized corridor that functions as the center of civic, business, and social life. The Picture Main initiative includes redevelopment of the Spring Street Corridor as the access to an improved and lively Water Mill district. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*
- The Town, Village and Amherst Industrial Development Agency collaborated to complete the Main Street Corridor Market study in 2013. The Study indicates that the Village is poised for higher-density redevelopment over the next

two decades; stressing the future market strength for housing and related commercial development.

## 10.6.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

Given the three distinctive character zones of Main Street, the concept for the Williamsville focal area is to strengthen Main Street as a backbone that connects different uses and developments while recognizing that each area has its own issues and opportunities for future development.

At the heart of the concept is to position Main Street as a destination for persons attracted by the village ambience and sense of place, “niche” shopping experiences, and restaurants. Connecting Ellicott Creek, Glen Park, Amherst State Park, and Island Park to Main Street is a key opportunity that will help to reinforce Main Street’s attractiveness. The bridge over the creek and adjacent uses provide the most obvious opportunities to “imprint” the park physically upon the character of the street, thus enhancing its distinctive character. This can be accomplished through landscaping; new and visible pathways that connect to the creek and parks; site design guidelines that ensure the sensitive layout of uses, parking, and loading; small plazas for sitting that provide space to take in the views; and changes in the texture of Main Street itself through different paving to slow traffic in the area. These initiatives need not be limited to the Village core and the bridge over the creek. A consistent landscaping approach and signage system can conceptually extend the idea along the length of Main Street through traffic islands created to slow traffic, “bumpouts” at key intersections, and other streetscape improvements.

Although the emphasis should be focused on the Village core to retain and enhance its character, improvements are also warranted to the other zones to create a more consistent, pedestrian-friendly image along the length of the Main Street corridor. These improvements should include landscape improvements along the edges of automobile-oriented commercial uses to soften their edge at the street and improved pedestrian connections to Main Street through new trails and designated neighborhood streets.

Specifically, the concept plan for the Williamsville focal area includes the following initiatives and strategies (Figures 30 and 31):

- Improve the streetscape on Main Street and the bridge in the Village core to strongly mark the presence of the creek and park system. Bumpouts, small plazas, and improved pathways to the parks should be considered to enhance the potential for the area as a civic gathering space.
- Similar to the recommendations for traditional commercial areas in Eggertsville and Snyder, encourage **traditional forms of commercial and mixed-use development/redevelopment.**

The Williamsville concept plan seeks to ***strengthen Main Street as destination*** for persons attracted by its sense of place, while recognizing the difference between distinctive “character zones” along the street.





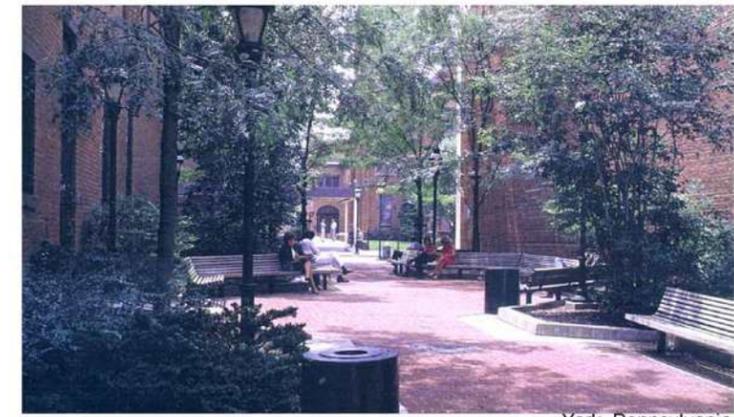
Neon Forest Circle, Longmont, Colorado  
Multi-family development



Source: Parsons



Conceptual Main Street streetscape improvements



York, Pennsylvania  
Small plaza



Troutdale, Oregon  
Landscape buffer treatment  
along auto-oriented street



Forest Park, St. Louis, Missouri  
Landscape buffer treatment for auto-oriented portions of Main Street



Portland, Oregon  
Streetscape enhancement:  
planting, lamp and banners



Lake Oswego, Oregon  
Outdoor seating on pedestrian-friendly street



Seaside, Oregon  
Landscape buffer treatment



Millwaukee, Wisconsin  
Water related space

Appropriate site design guidelines should be established to address issues such as build-to lines, shared parking provisions, **transition and** landscaping requirements, signage, streetscape, lighting, and compatible architectural design.

- Create a cohesive village center focus around the Williamsville Water Mill (“Mill Village”). This concept includes a restored Water Mill to include public uses, appropriately-scaled redevelopment of the area surrounding the Mill and along Spring Street, and links to Glen Falls and Park, Island Park, and historic Main Street.
- Encourage shared parking in the Village core to increase the parking supply.
- Designate public parking lots and provide a signage and marketing system to guide shoppers to these locations. The lots potentially include the Township parking lot, lots surrounding Rock Street, the lot used for Glen Park at the base of Rock Street, and the lot just east of Evans Street on the north side of Main Street.
- Develop enhanced pedestrian connections along Rock Street between the parking lot, parks, and Main Street. A sidewalk, railing, lighting, and signage should be considered.
- Create guidelines for streetscape improvements and traffic calming measures along Main Street. These should include consideration of traffic “islands” that function as medians but are not continuous, allowing opportunities for left turns into businesses while providing pedestrian refuges for safe crossings of Main Street. These features will also help to visually reduce the width of the roadway and contribute to slowing traffic.
- Revise local codes to encourage outdoor seating for restaurants.
- Encourage upper floor residential and office use above stores.
- Promote compatible infill development along Main Street and Spring Street with defined standards for building and parking locations; building height, scale, and mass; and streetscape treatment.
- Initiate physical improvements to the intersection of I-290 and Main Street as a gateway to Amherst and Main Street. Similarly, implement enhanced signage and lighting at Youngs Road and Evans/Garrison Road as entries to Williamsville and the Village core.
- Create design guidelines for the western zone along Main Street from I-290 to Los Robles/Grove Streets. These guidelines should address the location of buildings and parking, site layout, and landscaping requirements along the frontage to Main Street.
- Reinforce neighborhood connections to local amenities by improving key streets as “neighborhood connector streets.” These streets should receive priority consideration for tree planting and other improvements.

- Consolidate underutilized properties over time and encourage multi-family and appropriately scaled mixed-use development east of Evans Street along Main Street. This development should be planned to be sensitive to land uses adjacent to the Main Street corridor while reinforcing Williamsville as an activity center. Appropriate uses include upper floor residential above ground level stores and offices and residential buildings of a size and scale that fit into the local context. Guidelines should be created that encourage new development to be pulled towards the front property line with parking facilities located in the rear.

