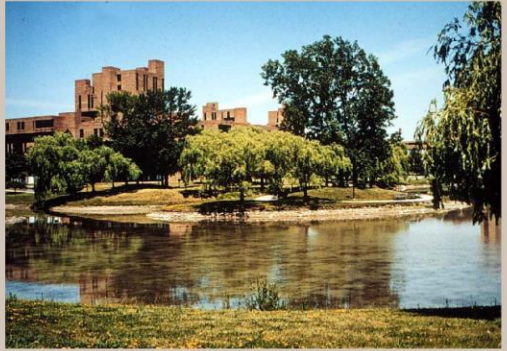


**Town of Amherst
Bicentennial
Comprehensive Plan**
1818
2018



AMENDED DECEMBER 2020



**Town of Amherst
Bicentennial
Comprehensive Plan**

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Summary

In the year 2018 the Town of Amherst will celebrate its bicentennial anniversary. Over the past two centuries, Amherst has grown from an historical pattern of small settlements surrounded by farmland to a “bedroom” suburb of Buffalo to its present status as a premier residential community and activity/employment center in Western New York, due in large part to the establishment of the University at Buffalo’s North Campus and the Audubon New Community in the 1970s. In recent years Amherst has undergone a fundamental transition from a growing community to one that is mature and largely built out, in which managing change to maintain and enhance the established character and quality of life will be the primary challenge for the future. Developed through a two-year planning process that involved extensive citizen participation, this Comprehensive Plan lays out a positive vision of Amherst’s future and a guide to managing change to achieve the vision as the Town looks forward to its bicentennial anniversary.

In the Vision of Amherst in 2018, the Town is renowned for an **exceptional quality of life** that is based upon three fundamental attributes:

- ***Livability***, encompassing healthy neighborhoods, outstanding public facilities and services, and an active community life.
- ***Community Character***, through the management of growth and change to preserve natural and cultural resources, maintain green space throughout Amherst, and revitalize older neighborhoods and commercial corridors while accommodating quality new development.
- ***Shared Direction***, with Amherst as a partner in the renewed prosperity of the Buffalo-Niagara region, working to balance its roles as a premier residential community and a complementary center of regional activity.

As an expression of citizen expectations and directions for the future, the Vision Statement establishes the mandate for the policies and action programs contained in the Comprehensive Plan. These policies and action programs, in turn, are designed to produce incremental progress towards achieving the Vision over the two-decade time horizon of the Plan. Four Key Initiatives, or major changes of direction from current policies, are proposed to provide a focus for action as the Town works to move towards a position of excellence as articulated in the Vision Statement. These Key Initiatives are:

- ***Aesthetic/Community Character***: To be renowned for the beauty, character, and environmental quality of Amherst.

- **Education:** Capitalizing on the presence of the University at Buffalo, other institutions of higher learning, and outstanding public school districts, to become known as one of the nation’s leading “knowledge-based” communities.
- **Revitalization:** To become a model for effective reinvestment and revitalization of older neighborhoods.
- **Governance:** To exercise leadership by providing excellent services and facilities, ensuring fiscal balance, and managing development to promote predictability, fairness, and quality.

The Vision Statement and Key Initiatives establish the conceptual framework of the Comprehensive Plan. The remainder of the Plan details specific policies, strategies, and actions in support of this framework:

- The **Plan Elements** provide goals, objectives, and policies for the following subject areas:
 - Land Use and Development
 - Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Economic Development
 - Transportation
 - Infrastructure
 - Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Community Facilities

While presented in separate elements, the policies are interrelated and are designed to be mutually supportive in guiding the Town towards achieving the Vision Statement through the Key Initiatives.

- The **Focal Area Planning Strategies** describe the application of the town-wide policies contained in the Plan Elements to six smaller geographic areas within the Town with special planning challenges.
- The **Implementation** chapter establishes a strategy for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, including 12 “action programs” and a system for monitoring plan progress.

Land Use and Development

The Land Use and Development Element is designed to guide new development, redevelopment, and preservation activities within the Town to achieve:

- Revitalized older neighborhoods and commercial corridors
- Quality new development
- A network of parks, open spaces, and greenways throughout the community

Policies for **development patterns** are intended to promote more compact, pedestrian-friendly development forms focused on mixed-use activity centers. **Development character** policies emphasize the application of context-sensitive design standards to enhance community appearance and sense of place. To spur **reinvestment** rather than new greenfield development, the Plan proposes tax and other incentives and zoning revisions focused on infill and redevelopment in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors. **Public investment** in visual improvements and community amenities is identified as a way to enhance aesthetic character and support desired private investment. A town-wide **open space system** linked by trails, greenways, stream corridors, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities along scenic roadways is proposed as a major priority of the Plan. Finally, policies for the **development review and approval process** are designed to achieve a greater level of predictability and certainty of outcome for both citizens and developers.

Natural and Cultural Resources

This element addresses preservation and enhancement of Amherst's rich natural and cultural resources for the future. Policies for **open space** reinforce the directive of the Land Use and Development Element to establish a town-wide system of open space and greenways that incorporates sensitive natural and cultural resources. Improved regulations, policies, and management strategies are presented to protect **sensitive environmental resources**, including water resources and wetlands, trees and woodlands, and historic properties. An important new initiative is a community-wide "**Greening Amherst**" program of tree planting and re-vegetation.

Economic Development

This element sets forth policies to promote sustainable, quality economic development and redevelopment that respects the character and quality of life of Amherst's residential communities. These policies address the following issues:

- Promoting a healthy **tax and employment base**
- Increasing economic development **partnerships** with governmental agencies and private businesses and institutions, particularly the **University at Buffalo**
- Preventing adverse commercial development impacts on **community character and quality of life**
- Working to promote **regional economic development**

Greater cooperation with the University at Buffalo (UB) is an important focus of the Economic Development Element. Towards this end, it is proposed that the Town and University establish a formal, collaborative planning structure to address issues such as opportunities for business/employment growth related to

University research functions, land use planning for the “town/gown” edge, and increased social and cultural ties.

Transportation

The Transportation Element is intended to encourage a more balanced, multi-modal transportation system that emphasizes alternative means of travel, including walking, biking, and public transportation. Specific policies address the following:

- Targeted capital and operational improvements to the **road network** to increase mobility and address severe congestion problems
- Investments in creating a town-wide **bicycle/pedestrian network** comprised of on-street and off-street facilities
- Improved **transit service** linked to mixed-use activity centers proposed in the Land Use and Development Element

Although the Transportation Element proposes that the Town develop a long-term capital improvement program to address the most serious congestion problems on local roads, it also recognizes that a certain level of congestion is inevitable. Thus the transportation policies balance functional efficiency for the automobile with other community objectives, such protecting neighborhoods from the adverse impacts of insensitive roadway improvement projects. The Element designates functional classifications (i.e., the types of service town roads are intended to provide for vehicular circulation) while identifying certain roadway corridors for the application of context-sensitive design standards to maintain their character. A key principle is to coordinate transportation and land use policies to promote compact, mixed-use development patterns that reduce automobile dependency and encourage pedestrian activity.

Infrastructure

The goal of the Infrastructure Element is to ensure that Amherst is provided with well-maintained and cost-effective public water, sewer, stormwater, and other utility infrastructure systems that support other Comprehensive Plan elements. The infrastructure policies focus on issues related to stormwater management and sanitary sewer:

- The policies for **stormwater management** call for the Town to develop a comprehensive program integrating measures to address flooding problems with standards and techniques to reduce water quality impacts from existing and new development.
- The **sanitary sewer** policies emphasize maintaining and upgrading infrastructure that serve existing development rather than extending new lines to currently undeveloped areas.

A new boundary for Sewer District No. 16 in the northern part of Town is proposed to exclude areas designated for rural and open space uses and to include areas designated for more intensive development by the Land Use and Development Element.

Housing and Neighborhoods

The goal of the Housing and Neighborhoods Element is to ensure that quality affordable housing and healthy and diverse neighborhoods are available to all Amherst residents. *Affordable housing* policies focus on continuing existing housing programs that promote homeownership and affordability. Policies for *housing diversity* are designed to encourage a variety of housing types, including higher density residential uses in locations such as mixed-use activity centers. The *neighborhood conservation* policies propose initiation of a program to promote revitalization of older neighborhoods through measures such as code enforcement, capital improvements, and design standards. This program would be accomplished through Neighborhood Improvement Plans developed in a collaborative planning process with neighborhood residents and businesses.

Community Facilities and Services

This element seeks to maintain the excellence and contributions of Amherst's community facilities and services to quality of life in a fiscally responsible manner. Specific policies address:

- Establishing an on-going system to objectively identify *community facility and service needs* for use in planning and programming by town providers
- Identifying opportunities to locate community facilities to achieve Comprehensive Plan objectives, for example strengthening neighborhoods or *reinforcing mixed-use activity centers*
- Pursuing a variety of strategies to ensure that *community facility and service costs* are reconciled with the fiscal capability of the Town

One of the key policies calls for using the capital improvement programming process to set realistic priorities for funding projects over a long-term timeframe, based upon needs as determined by the proposed community facility planning system and the Town's projected fiscal capacity.

Focal Planning Areas

The Focal Planning Areas chapter sets forth overall urban design concepts and accompanying strategies to provide direction for the future of the following seven areas:

1. Northwest Amherst
2. North Amherst
3. University
4. Eggertsville
5. Snyder
6. Williamsville
7. Boulevard Central District

The concept plan and strategies for **Northwest Amherst** address quality of life for residential neighborhoods, in particular enhanced access to parks, recreational facilities, and pedestrian networks. The focus for **North Amherst** is on preservation of rural character. The concept plan and strategies for the **University** focal planning area emphasize physical and programmatic connections among uses and activity centers, supporting the “Education” or “Knowledge-Based” Key Initiative. The **Eggertsville** plan and strategies highlight the physical distinctiveness and social diversity of the community as strengths to build on for the future. For **Snyder**, the concept plan and strategies focus on the long-term viability of the established commercial centers. The **Williamsville** concept plan and strategies seek to strengthen Main Street as a destination for persons attracted by its special character and sense of place. The **Boulevard Central District** plan provides urban design concepts and strategies for revitalization of commercial centers along major arterials such as Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road, and Sheridan Drive. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03*)

Implementation

The Implementation section of the Comprehensive Plan proposes 12 action programs as high priorities for implementation within or beginning in the next several years. These are intended as areas for the Town to focus its resources in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, either through initiation of a new program or an increase in the level of commitment to an existing one. Following Town Board formal acceptance of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town should undertake these programs:

1. Comprehensively revise the Town’s ***development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes*** to implement the policies of the Land Use and Development Element.
2. Provide expanded incentives for ***reinvestment/revitalization***. Eggertsville and Snyder are designated as priority locations for application of such incentives.
3. Implement a coordinated strategy to achieve a ***town-wide open space and greenway network***, including a public acquisition program.
4. Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program (***Greening Amherst***).
5. Establish a ***collaborative planning structure*** with the ***University at Buffalo***.
6. Pursue ***partnerships*** with educational institutions, private businesses, and others to ***promote economic development***.
7. Develop a strategy to identify and ***implement targeted improvements to roadways*** with identified level of service deficiencies, consistent with the “context-sensitive” design policies.
8. Develop a strategy to implement a comprehensive ***bicycle and pedestrian network***.

9. Implement a comprehensive *stormwater management strategy* to address flooding and water quality protection.
10. *Limit future sewer service extensions* to support the Future Land Use Map. Revise the boundaries of Sewer Service District 16 and establish a *septic system maintenance district* for areas not designated for public sewer.
11. Initiate a *Neighborhood Conservation Program*, including a collaborative process to develop Neighborhood Improvement Plans. Southeast Amherst is designated as the highest priority for development of such a plan.
12. Establish an objective system of *planning for community facility and service needs*. Link this system to a *long-range capital programming process* to reconcile needs with the Town's fiscal capacity.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended as a working document to be used as a policy guide for day-to-day decision-making and as a “to do” list as the Town sets priorities for effective action over the short and long terms to realize the Vision. To help ensure successful implementation, a plan monitoring process should be established, consisting of periodic (annual) reviews to 1) assess progress and 2) make adjustments to the action programs based upon the progress made to date, new priorities, and changes in the internal and external environments of the Town.

The background of the page is a soft, out-of-focus photograph of a park. It shows a wide, light-colored path or road that curves through a landscape filled with trees. Some trees have yellow and orange leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. In the foreground, there are some green and brown leaves, possibly from a bush or tree branch, which are also slightly out of focus. The overall lighting is bright and diffused, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

Introduction

1

Introduction

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1.0 Introduction

The Town of Amherst is located in Erie County in Western New York, abutting the City of Buffalo to the southwest (Figure 1). As the Town looks forward to a new century and celebration of its two hundredth anniversary in 2018, this Comprehensive Plan provides a strategic policy framework and a guide for action by town decision-makers and citizens to manage growth and change over the next two decades. The Town of Amherst recognizes that comprehensive planning is a dynamic process which requires the prudent use of a number of resources to accomplish its purposes. The Comprehensive Plan of the Town of Amherst consists of this written plan along with the materials written and/or graphic, including but not limited to maps, charts, studies, resolutions, local laws and ordinance reports and/or other descriptive materials utilized by the Town Board that identify the goals, objectives, principles, guidelines, policies, standards, devices and instruments for the immediate growth and development of the Town located outside the limits of any incorporated village or city. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-2*)

1.1 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND AMHERST

Amherst has a long history of formal planning that began with the establishment of its Planning Board in 1949, and continued with the formulation of four comprehensive plans completed in 1955, 1961, 1968, 1975, and two sector plans for Southeast and Northeast Amherst in 1985 and 1993 respectively. Through this comprehensive planning program the Town has successfully guided its development into a prosperous and desirable community. The importance of planning to the success of Amherst cannot be understated, and the role of the comprehensive plan has been a key factor. The following section describes what a comprehensive plan is and its role in guiding the future of Amherst.

A. The Comprehensive Plan and Why it is Important

- The Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan is an official document that serves as a guide to the long-range physical development of a community. A reflection of the community's preferences for future development, the formulation of a comprehensive plan combines technical analyses of past and future trends and highly interactive public involvement. Amherst's plan is a

product of a process called Values-Based Planning which seeks to attain the desirable environment stakeholders value while maintaining high quality of services delivered by the Town and promoting the economic health of the community.

- The Plan is comprehensive in that it deals with the entire geographic area of the town not individual neighborhoods, districts or sectors. It is also comprehensive in that it guides all of the responsibilities or functions of the town. The Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan also features Focal Area Plans that are provided to add another more specific layer of recommendations and policies to address the unique opportunities and issues of smaller geographic areas. As indicated in the preamble to Chapter 10 (Focal Area Plans) these smaller plans are meant to compliment, not supersede the Plan's town-wide policies and recommendations.
- The Plan is long-range. It does not suggest that all policy and action recommendations can or should be implemented immediately. It does however, provide guidance as to the order or priority in which policies and action items should be undertaken. It also implies that many of the goals will be accomplished over an extended period of time. Some will be accomplished as opportunities arise.
- The Plan is a policy plan intended to describe such community objectives as quality, character, location, and rate of growth and how those objectives are to be realized. As such, all appropriate policies affecting a specific decision must be viewed, understood and analyzed during the decision making process. No one policy should govern the outcome of a specific decision.
- The Plan is a framework upon which other administrative and regulatory documents relating to land development are based. The Plan is not a zoning code, subdivision regulation, building code, capital improvement program or official map. It does however, present the town's growth and development policies and should guide the development of these and other regulations.
- The Plan should guide decision making by the Amherst Town Board, Planning Board and the numerous committees and boards that deal with growth and development issues.
- The Plan is dynamic. In order for it to be effective, it must be an evolving document that responds to a rapidly, ever-changing community. According to NYS Town Law, periodic reviews and updates are a necessary element of a comprehensive plan (Section 272-a 10). The Amherst Plan calls for an annual review, and updates every five-years as a

mechanism for keeping it current with changing environmental, social, and economic conditions. It also provides for short-term reviews that respond to specific development opportunities.

B. How the Plan is Used by the Town

The Plan is organized into a series of elements that cover community functions such as Land Use, Transportation and Infrastructure. Each element describes a set of goals, objectives and policies that are designed to achieve that aspect of the Vision Statement. Policies and action statements are coordinated and mutually supportive across all plan elements. In order to understand the conformity of a prospective action with the plan, the user must read all of the appropriate policy statements. No one policy is intended to override another. This is particularly true of the land use policies that tend to receive more attention than other policies that are equally important.

The Plan represents a long-range guide for short-term decision making by the Town. Specific uses, decisions and actions that are appropriately guided by the goals, objectives, and policies of the Plan include, but are not limited to the following.

- Consideration of proposed amendments to the Town Zoning Code, Subdivision Regulations and other growth management regulations
- Completion of environmental assessments required under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- As the primary resource for reviewing public and private development applications, such as site plans
- As the basis for decisions by the Planning Board on proposed subdivisions and for recommendations on actions referred to them by other agencies including the Town Board
- Development of priorities for capital projects proposed by town agencies and community groups for inclusion in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- As the policy framework for preparing facilities plans for infrastructure and all plans for capital projects proposed within the community by other governmental agencies.
- As a general guide for the activities of town departments that involve regulating aspects of growth or whose programs or service delivery are driven by the location, characteristics, numbers and density of residents
- As policy level guidance to the design of regional infrastructure within Amherst particularly those constructed and maintained by higher levels of government

In addition to its role in guiding the formation of policies and decision making, the Comprehensive Plan represents an expression

or statement of the desired future by the Town to outside agencies and interests.

- The Plan represents a local expression of growth and development patterns. Although not binding on County, State and Federal agencies, it is incumbent upon them to avoid local controversy and accommodate the provisions of the Plan.
- As a reflection of the community's preferences for future development, the plan is a powerful tool that can provide the town with an advantage in obtaining grants and funding from outside agencies. Grants applications that are supported by policies and actions defined in a comprehensive plan routinely receive higher priority scores and are funded more frequently.

Development of the Plan was led by a citizens' group (the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, or CPAC) and included extensive opportunities for public input. Based upon this input, community values were identified and expressed in a Vision Statement describing the positive attributes of the Town of Amherst as citizens wish it to be in the bicentennial year of 2018.

Alternative choices for achieving the desired future were considered and a preferred direction defined in the form of specific policies to be followed by the Town with respect to topics such as land use, transportation, and community facilities. These policies are described in the Comprehensive Plan, which contains the following sections:

- **Chapter 2.0 (Plan Concept)** describes the conceptual basis of the Plan, including the planning process, the Vision Statement, and key initiatives to be pursued by the Town to realize the Vision.
- **Chapters 3.0 to 9.0 (the Plan Elements)** establish goals, objectives, and policies to guide decisions and actions by the Town in the following areas:
 - Land Use and Development
 - Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Economic Development
 - Transportation
 - Infrastructure
 - Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Community Facilities

While the policies are organized into separate elements, they are designed to be interrelated and mutually supportive in guiding the Town toward achieving the Vision Statement. Because individual policies can contribute to achieving goals and objectives for more than one topical element, there are numerous cross-references between elements. (For example,

<p><i>Plan Structure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision Statement• Key Initiatives• Plan Elements• Focal Planning Areas• Implementation
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Policies 3-13 to 3-15 of the Land Use and Development Element and 4-1 to 4-3 of the Natural and Cultural Resources Element address establishment of a town-wide network of parks, open spaces, and greenways.)

- **Chapter 10.0 (Focal Planning Areas)** describes the application of the town-wide policies contained in the Plan Elements to seven “focal planning areas.” Smaller geographic areas within the Town identified for more detailed evaluation in the Comprehensive Plan, the seven focal planning areas are (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03*):
 - Northwest Amherst
 - North Amherst
 - University (UB’s north campus and surrounding area)
 - Eggertsville
 - Snyder
 - Williamsville (the Main Street corridor)
 - Boulevard Central District
- **Chapter 11.0 (Implementation)** lays out a strategy for implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

To provide a sound basis for policies and actions recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, existing conditions and trends that are shaping Amherst’s future were documented as part of the planning process. The results of this work are contained in the *Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan Inventory and Analysis Report* (December 2001), which is considered part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Several **concurrent planning initiatives** provide recommendations that are incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan policy framework. These initiatives include:

- ***Eggertsville Action Plan:*** This plan identifies short-term actions needed to revitalize commercial areas in the vicinity of Eggertsville. The Plan identifies barriers to redevelopment that have constrained investment and revitalization. Recommendations for code amendments, conceptual capital projects, and financing options are provided to encourage public and private investment.
- ***Amherst/Pendleton Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program:*** This project will provide the Towns of Amherst and Pendleton with a coordinated plan for the future of the Erie Canal waterfront and its adjacent upland area. It will ensure protection of its natural, recreational, and historic resources and maximize waterfront opportunities for visitor use.
- ***Recreation and Parks Master Plan:*** This update to the 1992 *Recreation and Parks Master Plan* will establish requirements to meet the parks and recreation needs of Amherst residents.

Concurrent Planning Initiatives, such as the *Eggertsville Action Plan* and *Amherst/Pendleton Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program,* contain recommendations that are incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan policy framework.

- **Transit Road Arterial/Access Management Study:** This joint project between the Towns of Amherst and Clarence will define strategies for land use and access management along Transit Road and other highways to foster continued economic development while preserving surrounding character and enhancing the efficient and safe movement of traffic.

In addition to the above plans, the *Guiding Principles for Countywide Land Use Planning*, published by the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning in 1999, is an important regional planning initiative that has been taken into consideration in developing the Comprehensive Plan. Resources of countywide significance identified by the County for Amherst that are addressed by the Comprehensive Plan include:

- **Farmland Protection:** Erie County Agricultural District #17 in North Amherst
- **Rural Service Centers:** Swormville, located in Amherst and Clarence
- **Utility Service Areas:** Amherst Consolidated Sanitary and Stormwater Management Districts.
- **Historic and Cultural Resources:** Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village, Musicalfare Theater at Daemen College
- **Environmental Preservation:** Wetlands, floodplains, watersheds
- **Parks and Open Space:** Erie Canal Trail, Ellicott Creek Bike Path, Great Baehre Conservation Area
- **Stream Corridor Preservation:** Ransom Creek, Tonawanda Creek/Barge Canal, Ellicott Creek
- **Waterfront:** Resources along Tonawanda Creek/Barge Canal, including the Canal Trailway, Crystal Cove, Amherst Veterans Park, and the Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village.

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

Plan policies that apply directly to these resources are discussed throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Readers should consult the County report for discussion and recommendations for these resources.

Plan Concept



2

Plan Concept

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2.0 Plan Concept

2.1 PLANNING PROCESS

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan was prepared using a planning process that responded to the issues and values expressed by the community as the basis for the Plan's concepts, strategies, and actions. The process was structured around a community involvement program consisting of the following components:

The **Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)** provided overall policy direction for preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. Comprised of Planning Board members and representatives of the various community systems that operate within the Town (neighborhood, business, environmental, and other civic interests), the CPAC met approximately once a month throughout the planning process.

Community meetings were held at key junctures in the planning process to provide for broader public input into Comprehensive Plan development. Three series of open meetings were held in locations throughout the Town in September 2000, February/March 2001, and November 2001. The meetings featured presentations of materials related to the Comprehensive Plan and opportunities for citizens to provide input and explore ideas in large and small group settings.

Early in the planning process, interviews were conducted with a broad range of **stakeholders** to learn about the community and the range of perceptions regarding key issues. Persons interviewed included:

- Neighborhood association representatives
- Representatives of key agencies and organizations (e.g., school district administrators, regional transportation agencies)
- Environmental and historic resource advocates
- Business leaders and development interests
- Housing advocates
- Town officials
- Representatives of surrounding communities

In addition to the above components, the Town has maintained an active Comprehensive Plan website to further disseminate information and receive input on the Plan. Functions of the Comprehensive Plan website include:



Residents comment on the Draft Plan at a Public Hearing.

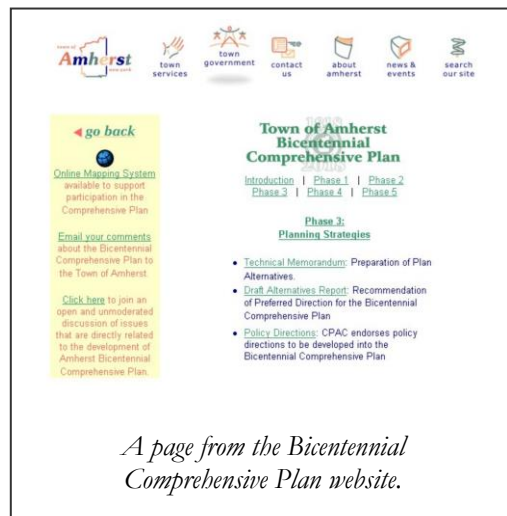
- Providing information on scheduled meetings and events
- Providing interim reports and products for citizen review
- Allowing users to view and query planning analysis maps of the Town using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology
- Providing an email address for citizens to send ideas and comments
- Providing an online forum for discussion of planning issues

The planning process itself consisted of the following major phases of work:

- **Current Conditions/Future Vision:** This phase involved two major tasks. First, current conditions and trends that will affect Amherst’s future were evaluated and documented in the *Inventory and Analysis Report*. Second, a Vision of Amherst’s future at its bicentennial anniversary (2018) was prepared based upon the issues and values expressed by citizens.
- **Plan Alternatives:** Alternative scenarios for Amherst’s future were considered to provide a basis for defining preferred policies and directions to guide plan development. Alternatives considered included:
 - The **Trend Growth Scenario**, which assumes a continuation of current development trends without changes to the Town’s regulatory and investment policies.
 - Potential responses to Trend Growth to achieve the desired future for Amherst defined in the Vision Statement. These responses took the form of **Key Initiatives** and **Policy Choices** for the topical elements of the Comprehensive Plan (Land Use and Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Economic Development, etc.).

The Plan Alternatives phase culminated in the selection of **Final Policy Directions** to be developed into a full Comprehensive Plan.

- **Comprehensive Plan Preparation:** The Comprehensive Plan was developed in this phase of work and included town-wide policies for the Plan Elements and strategies that apply the town-wide policies to seven focal planning areas. In accordance with the requirements of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR), a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) was prepared to assess impacts associated with the Comprehensive Plan. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03*)
- **Plan Implementation and Review:** After issuing a Findings Statement as required under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act, the Town Board



A page from the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan website.

Steps in the Planning Process

- Determine current conditions and trends
- Articulate a Vision of Amherst’s future
- Evaluate trend growth and alternatives to trend growth in comparison to the Vision
- Define Preferred Policy Directions
- Prepare Comprehensive Plan

“accepted” the Comprehensive Plan as its policy guide for growth and development in February of 2004. Between 2004 and 2007, major plan-consistent revisions to the Zoning Code were drafted and adopted. In early 2007, the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan was formally adopted by the Town Board in compliance with New York State Town Law Section 272-a. During 2007, the Town Board adopted two Opportunity Review Plan Amendments in accordance with Section 11.6. Later that year, the Planning Board was designated as the agency responsible undertaking the first Annual Review of the Plan and recommending amendments to the Town Board for their consideration. Those amendments and the Opportunity Review amendments adopted during 2007 have been incorporated into this document.

From a conceptual standpoint, the key organizing components of the Comprehensive Plan are the Vision Statement and the Key Initiatives. As a shared expression of community values and aspirations, the **Vision Statement** (Section 2.2) defines community expectations and directions for the future; frames the mandate for Comprehensive Plan policies and action programs; and provides the benchmark to measure progress in implementing the Plan. The **Key Initiatives** (Section 2.3) are major changes in direction that the Town should pursue to move towards a position of excellence in support of the Vision Statement. They provide a focus and means to prioritize the policies contained in the Plan Elements.

Visioning is the process by which a community envisions the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it. It brings people together to develop a shared image of what they want their community to become. Once a community has envisioned where it wants to go, it can begin to consciously work towards that goal.

A vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future.

A vision statement is the formal expression of that vision. It depicts in words and images what the community is striving to become. The vision statement is the starting point for the creation and implementation of action plans.

Source: Oregon Visions Project, “A Guide to Community Visioning”

2.2 VISION STATEMENT

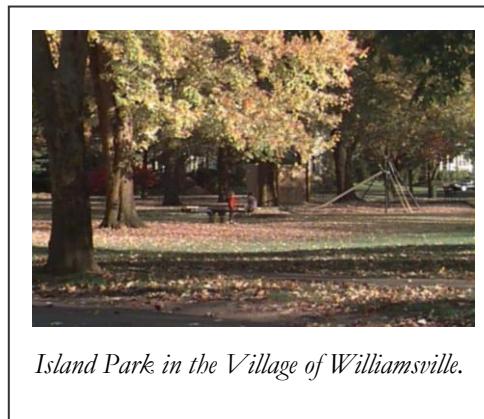
In the Vision of Amherst in the Year 2018, the Town is renowned for an **exceptional quality of life** that derives from three fundamental attributes:

- **Livability:** Our healthy neighborhoods, outstanding public facilities and services, and active community life make Amherst an exceptional place to live and raise a family.
- **Community Character:** We wisely manage growth to preserve natural and historic resources, maintain green space throughout the community, and revitalize older neighborhoods and commercial corridors while accommodating quality new development.
- **Shared Direction:** As partners in the renewed prosperity of the Buffalo-Niagara region, we work together with neighboring communities and institutions and balance our multiple roles as a premier residential community and a complementary regional center of economic, cultural, and educational activity.

In this Vision of the Future, we define our quality of life by the following valued **characteristics of community**:

LIVABILITY

- Our **livable neighborhoods** offer a range of lifestyle and housing choices in urban, suburban, and rural settings.
- Pedestrian-friendly, interconnected, mixed-use **development patterns** provide citizens with convenient access to services and facilities and encourage walking, biking, and use of public transportation as alternatives to automobile trips.
- A safe, functionally efficient, and well-maintained **transportation system** provides choices for citizens through interconnected roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use and natural trails, and transit options.
- The **community facilities and services** offered by the Town and other providers such as accessible parks and recreational programs, outstanding public schools, and public safety services that help maintain our reputation as one of the safest communities in America, are an integral part of our exceptional quality of life.
- Our active **community life** – culture and entertainment, sports and recreation, programs for people of all ages, and other activities, events, and places for people to gather – provides opportunities for all citizens to participate and enjoy shared experiences.



COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Vibrant **older neighborhoods**, such as Eggertsville, Snyder, Swormville, Getzville, and Williamsville, and the **commercial areas** serving them are revitalized and attract continuing investment.
- We protect and preserve valued **open spaces** and **natural and scenic resources** throughout the community.
- We respect our **history and heritage** by preserving historic resources and by remembering and interpreting Amherst’s history for future generations.
- We maintain a clean, **healthy environment** by dedicating resources to protect against noise, light, air, and water pollution.
- We set high standards for the **quality of development and redevelopment** to complement our established community character.

- The **visual character** of the Town is enhanced by landscaping, protection of woodlands and tree canopy, and careful attention to the design of roadways, scenic corridors, and public places.

SHARED DIRECTION

- The Town takes a leadership role in promoting **intergovernmental cooperation** and in pursuing partnership initiatives to address issues shared with our neighboring communities.
- Our healthy, **diverse economy** provides a strong tax base and good job opportunities, contributing to the retention of our talented youth and attracting others to live, work, and invest in our community.
- In **carefully managing growth**, we **balance** the benefits of economic development with the need to maintain livability and preserve community character.
- The Town, together with the **University at Buffalo and other educational institutions**, work together to address issues of common concern, such as retaining young people in the community, diversifying the economy, and strengthening neighborhoods around the campuses.
- **Town government** exercises leadership, responds to the concerns of citizens, and challenges them to become positively involved in community affairs.

2.3 KEY INITIATIVES

Comprehensive Plan Key Initiatives

- Aesthetic/Community Character
- Education
- Revitalization
- Governance

Four “Key Initiatives” are proposed to provide a focus for the Town’s efforts to achieve the Vision Statement. These initiatives represent areas in which the Town will “raise the bar” in order to move towards a position of excellence consistent with the Vision

- ***Aesthetic/Community Character:*** To be renowned for the beauty, character, and environmental quality of the Town – its parks, greenways, tree canopy, and protected open space; a diverse environment, including areas with rural character; walkable, livable neighborhoods; and high aesthetic standards for commercial development. Examples of Comprehensive Plan policies that will support this initiative include:

3-5 Apply design standards to enhance community character and sense of place

3-6/6-1 Designate “special character roads” as scenic corridors and apply design standards to maintain their appearance

3-13 *Designate a town-wide open space and greenway network to be achieved through a variety of mechanisms*

4-11 *Implement a “Greening Amherst” planting initiative consistent with a program to manage the “Town Landscape”*

- **Education:** To become known as a leading national "knowledge-based" community that has set high standards for public education and fully integrated a major university into the life of the community. Areas of potential focus include economic development, sports and culture, information and research-based technologies, and life-long learning initiatives. The following Comprehensive Plan policies will support this initiative:

5-4 *Work with educational institutions on lifelong learning and other programs to train, attract, and retain a skilled workforce*

5-7 *Work with UB to create mixed-use activity centers around the periphery of the campuses*

5-8 *Work with UB to promote more educational, social, and cultural ties to the Town and to reinforce the role of both campuses as activity centers.*

5-9 *Establish an ongoing, collaborative planning structure with UB*

- **Revitalization:** To become a model for effective reinvestment and revitalization of older neighborhoods and commercial areas, though creative use of investment incentives targeted toward revitalization and reduced pressure for the development of raw land at the suburban-rural fringe. Examples of relevant Comprehensive Plan policies include:

3-8 *Provide tax incentives for reinvestment, revitalization, and redevelopment of commercial properties and housing in older areas with significantly less emphasis on new “greenfield” development*

3-9 *Rezone and/or provide incentives for reuse of underutilized/obsolescent land for economically viable uses*

3-10 *Tailor commercial zoning districts to the unique physical characteristics of older commercial areas in need of revitalization*

8-7 *Initiate a neighborhood revitalization program to promote revitalization of designated neighborhoods through measures such as code enforcement, capital improvements, and design standards*

- **Governance:** To exercise leadership at the local and regional levels by:
 - Retaining the Town's reputation for excellent services and facilities while ensuring fiscal balance
 - Establishing a framework for managing development that promotes predictability, fairness, and quality and eliminates conflicts over development decisionsExamples of relevant Comprehensive Plan policies include:

- 3-16 Improve the predictability and consistency of the zoning and other development approval processes through the application of clear town-wide land use policies*
- 3-17 Set clear standards for development quality to increase the level of certainty in the development review and approval process*
- 9-1 Establish an on-going system to identify and prioritize community facility and service needs*
- 9-8 Reconcile needs for community facilities and services with the fiscal capacity of the Town through the capital programming process*



*Land Use
and
Development*

3

Land Use and Development

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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 Study¹ 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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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:

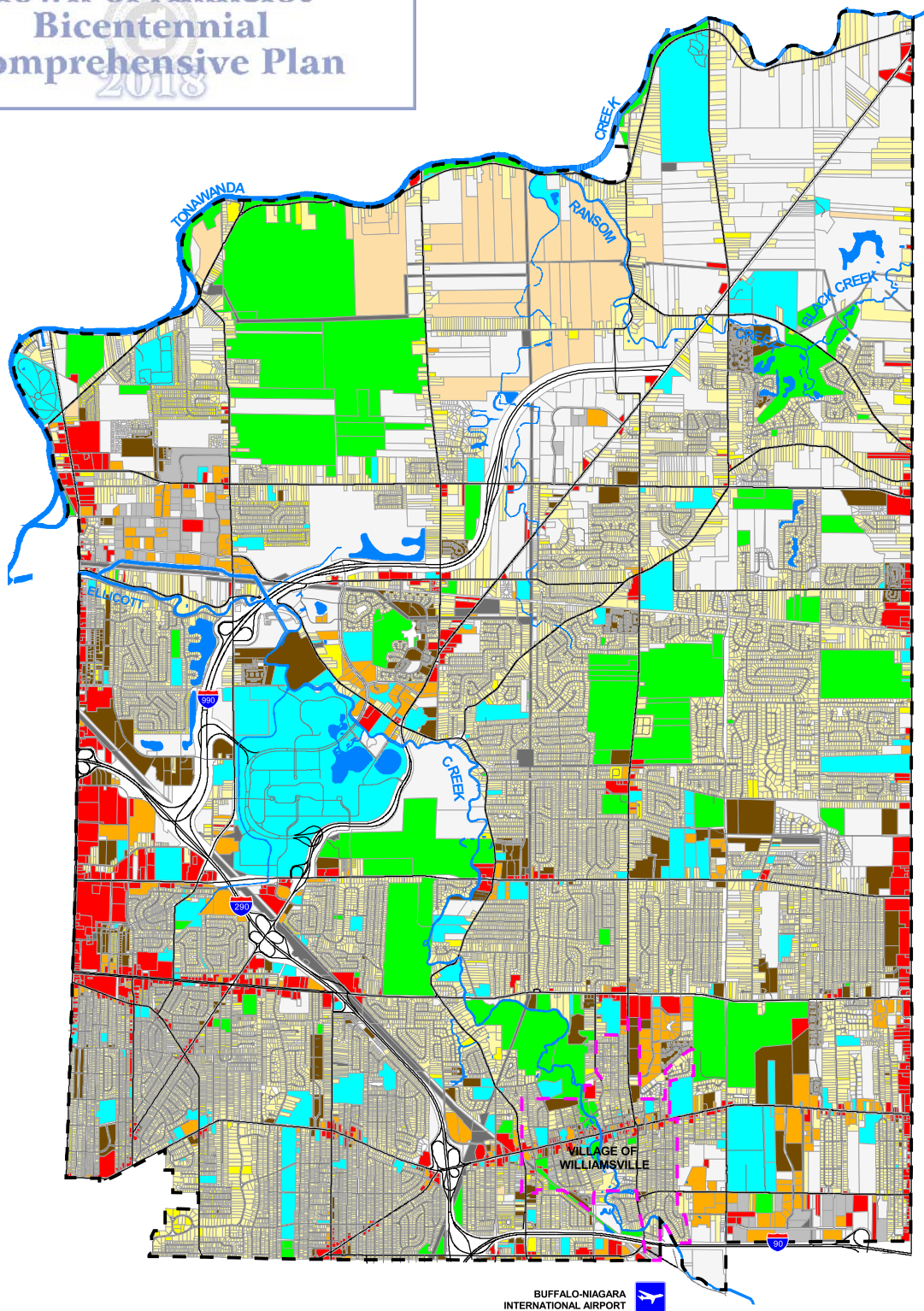
- There is a growing supply of underutilized space in the Town’s office and industrial parks
- Suburban retail corridors and business parks that comprise much of Amherst’s employment and commercial base are losing favor among residents and workers who are expressing preferences for “downtown” or mixed-use 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

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.

¹ See the Town Amherst Economic Study (2016) for documentation of population and development projections (Available at: www.amherst.ny.us use keyword: Economic).

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		

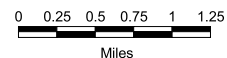
SOURCE NOTES :

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

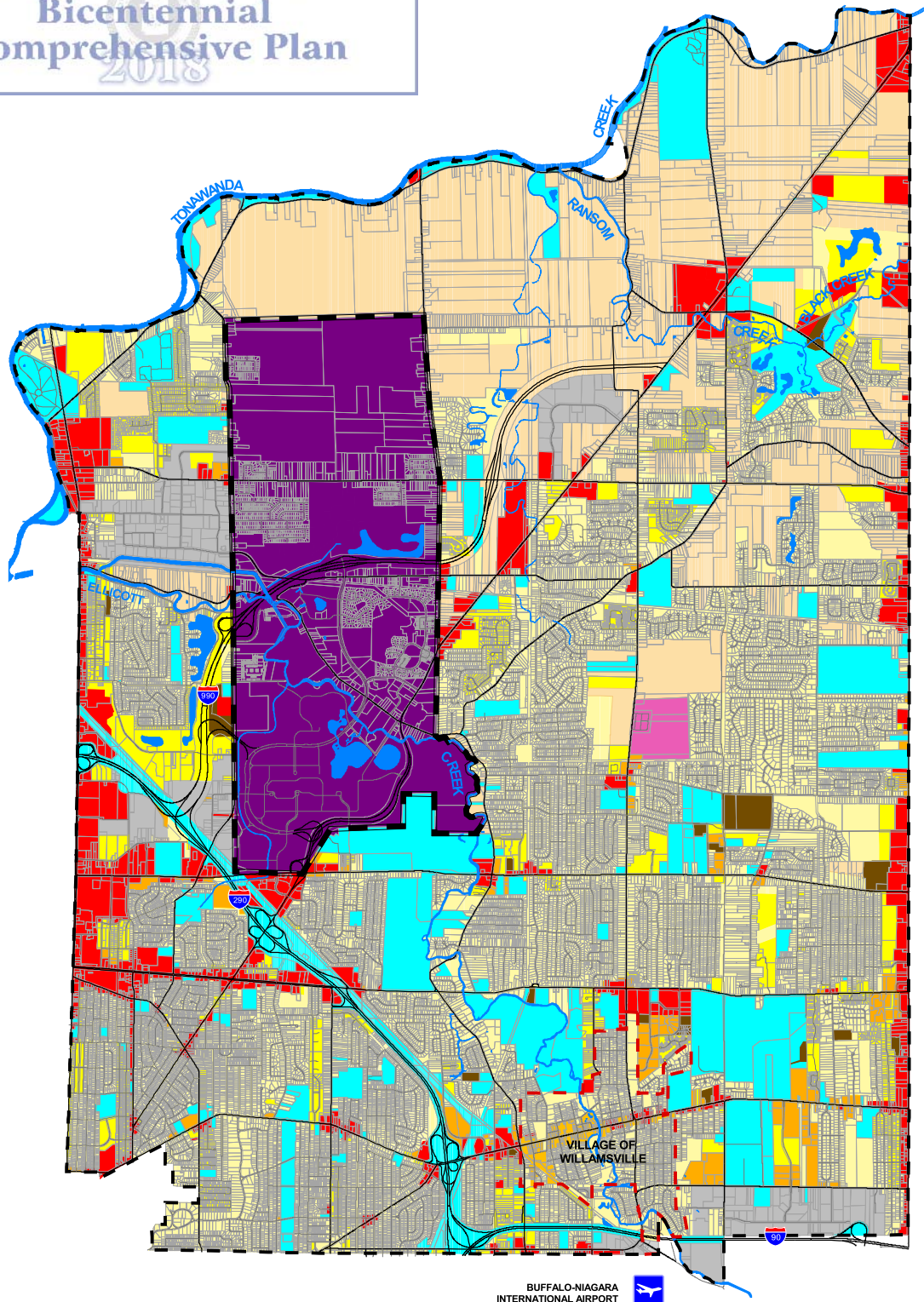
Land use data as of September 2000

Map Compiled by URS Corporation

Date: February, 2004



1818
Town of Amherst
Bicentennial
2018
Comprehensive Plan



BUFFALO-NIAGARA
 INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

GENERALIZED EXISTING ZONING

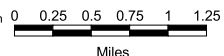
FIGURE 3

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



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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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.

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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 (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*):

- 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 (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*):

- **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.

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.



*Traditional residential neighborhood development.
Source: www.pedbikeimages.org*

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, although there are some areas set aside to accommodate more intensive growth (see Section 10.2, *North Amherst Focal Planning Area*). 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 small scale 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. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)

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 or special purpose centers and retail nodes designated at key locations such as major intersections rather than being allowed to proliferate along arterial roadways. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)

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

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

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 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 (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*).
- ***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 include²:
 - *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*)

² National Crime Prevention Council website

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 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:** Traditional commercial areas are often connected by an existing network of walkable streets within an already established neighborhood with an existing “sense of place” and architectural characteristics that are valued and should be preserved. They are typically characterized by small, shallow lots with limited amounts of parking and possibly older 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 through infill or when

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.

separate parcels are assembled to accommodate larger uses. These areas may also present opportunities for smaller, start-up, or specialty businesses which may incorporate live-work arrangements. (*Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A*)

- ***Suburban Centers and Corridors:*** Suburban areas typically include larger parcels connected by higher speed thoroughfares without many walkable connections and may have little existing place identity. These centers and corridors may not be able to accommodate contemporary forms of retail and other commercial uses and may require revitalization through reinvestment, redevelopment, or retrofitting existing buildings/sites to remain competitive. Goals for revitalizing these areas include 1) creating opportunities for incremental change, 2) improving the relationship between streets and buildings, 3) improved accessibility through accommodation for multiple modes of travel, and 4) managing vehicular access on major roadways. (*Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A*)
- ***Light Industrial / Research and Development:*** The first light industrial and research and development parks in 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 existing industrial parks, there are some large tracts of open land in northeast Amherst which present an opportunity for development of new e-commerce/logistics businesses that rely on good transportation access to major arterials and interstate highways and are not directly adjacent to residential neighborhoods. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)

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:

- **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



*Well designed landscaping, signage, and pedestrian elements enhance visual character.
Source: www.pedbikeimages.org*

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

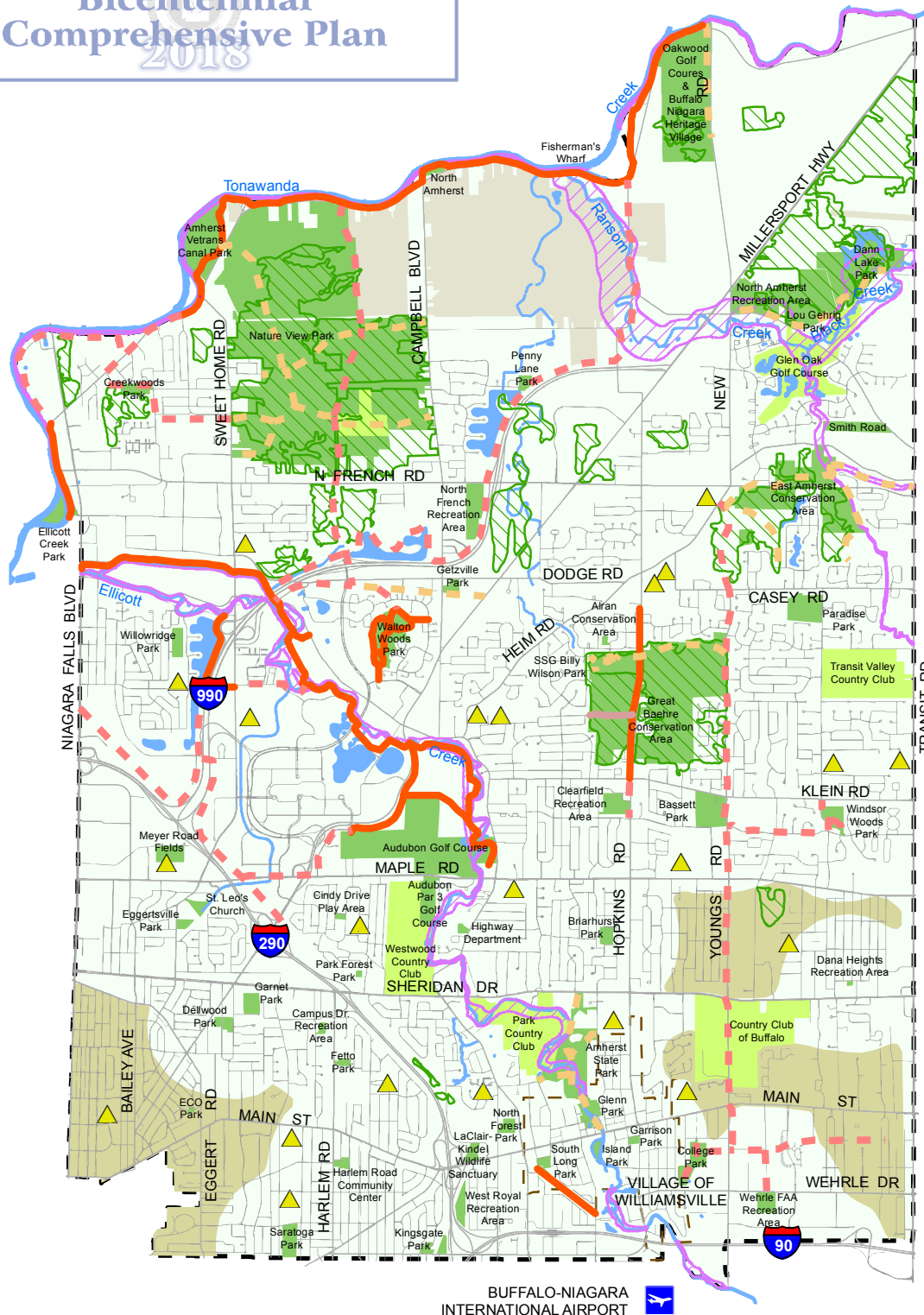
Open space preservation was one of the primary issues identified by citizens throughout the process of preparing the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement emphasizes the importance of open space preservation to Amherst’s community character. Thus an open space system is conceived as an integral part 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:

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



BUFFALO-NIAGARA
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL MAP

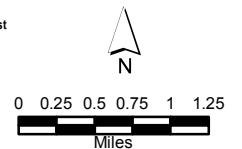
FIGURE 4

LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park and Recreation Area Private Recreation Area Agricultural Area Areas Lacking Local Parks/Open Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FEMA Floodway NYSDEC Regulated Wetland Surface Water Body Public School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-Use Trail (Existing) Multi-Use Trail (Proposed) Natural Trail (Existing) 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

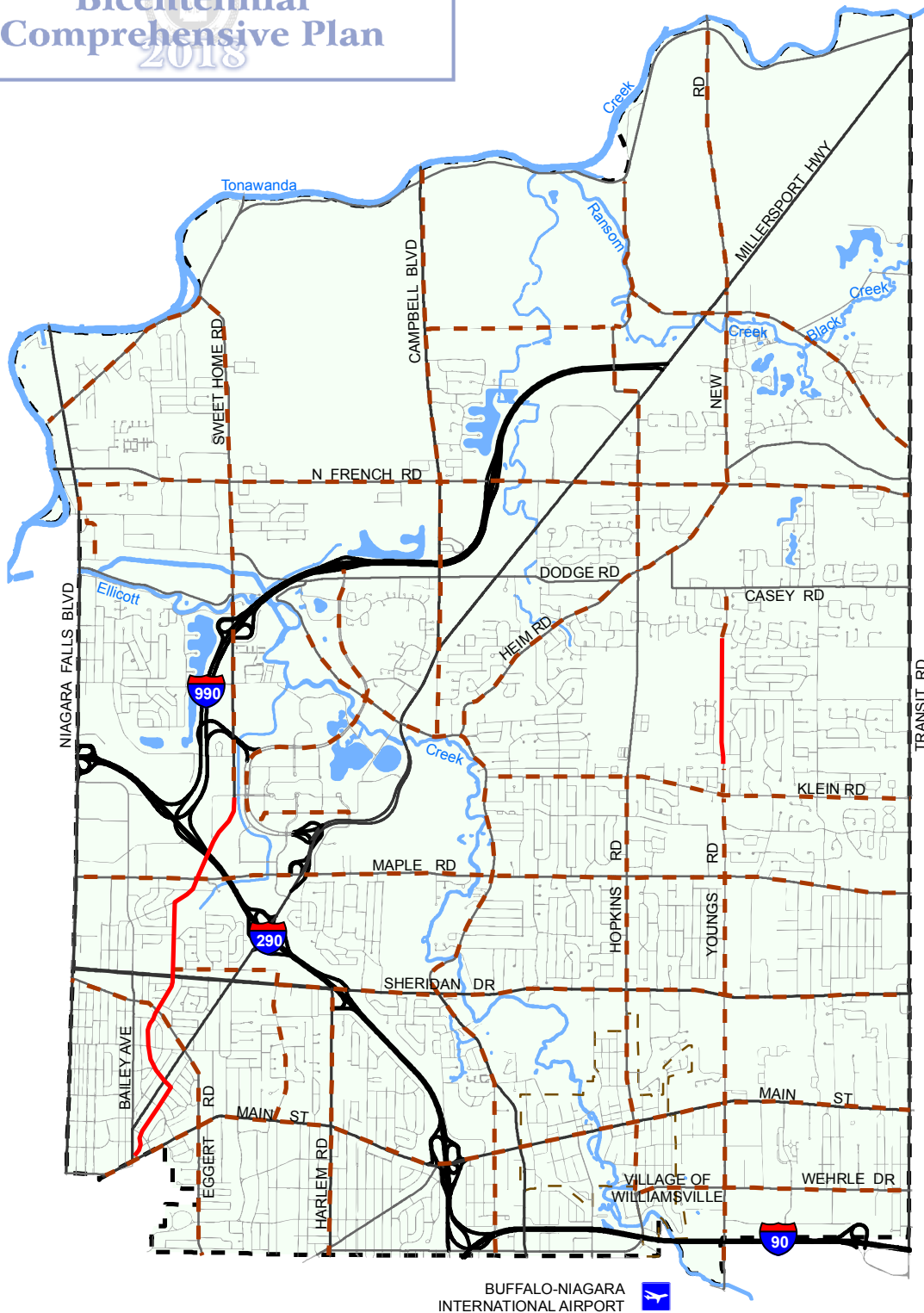


FIGURE 5

ON - STREET BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

LEGEND	
	On-Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Network (Designated)
	On-Street Bicycle/Pedestrian Network (Proposed)
	Roads - Local Road
	Roads - County Road
	Roads - New York State Route
	Roads - 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

- **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:
 - **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.

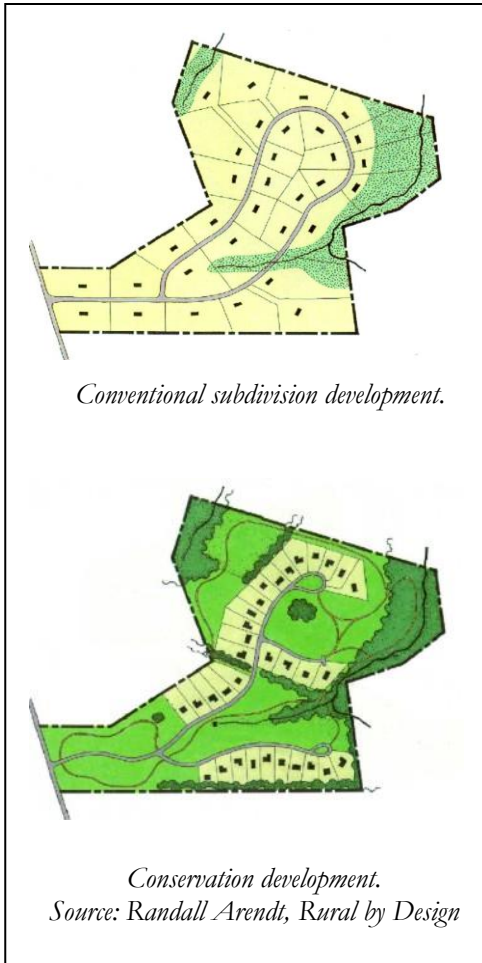
Safe, clearly demarcated pedestrian crossings should be added where components of this network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities cross major roadways.

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 (zoned Suburban Agriculture District) and designated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan should not be rezoned to higher intensity uses. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)
- Rezoning should help implement other comprehensive plan policies, for example:

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

- 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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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	2,345	6.9%
Commercial – Office	962	2.8%
Industrial – Office	1,167	3.4%
Rural Residential	1,455	4.3%
Single Family Residential	13,828	40.4%
Mixed Residential	1,219	3.6%
Medium Residential	801	2.3%
Special Use Center	343	1.0%
Recreation & Open Space	7,672	22.4%
Community Facilities	521	1.5%
Educational Campus	1,334	3.9%
Transportation	788	2.3%

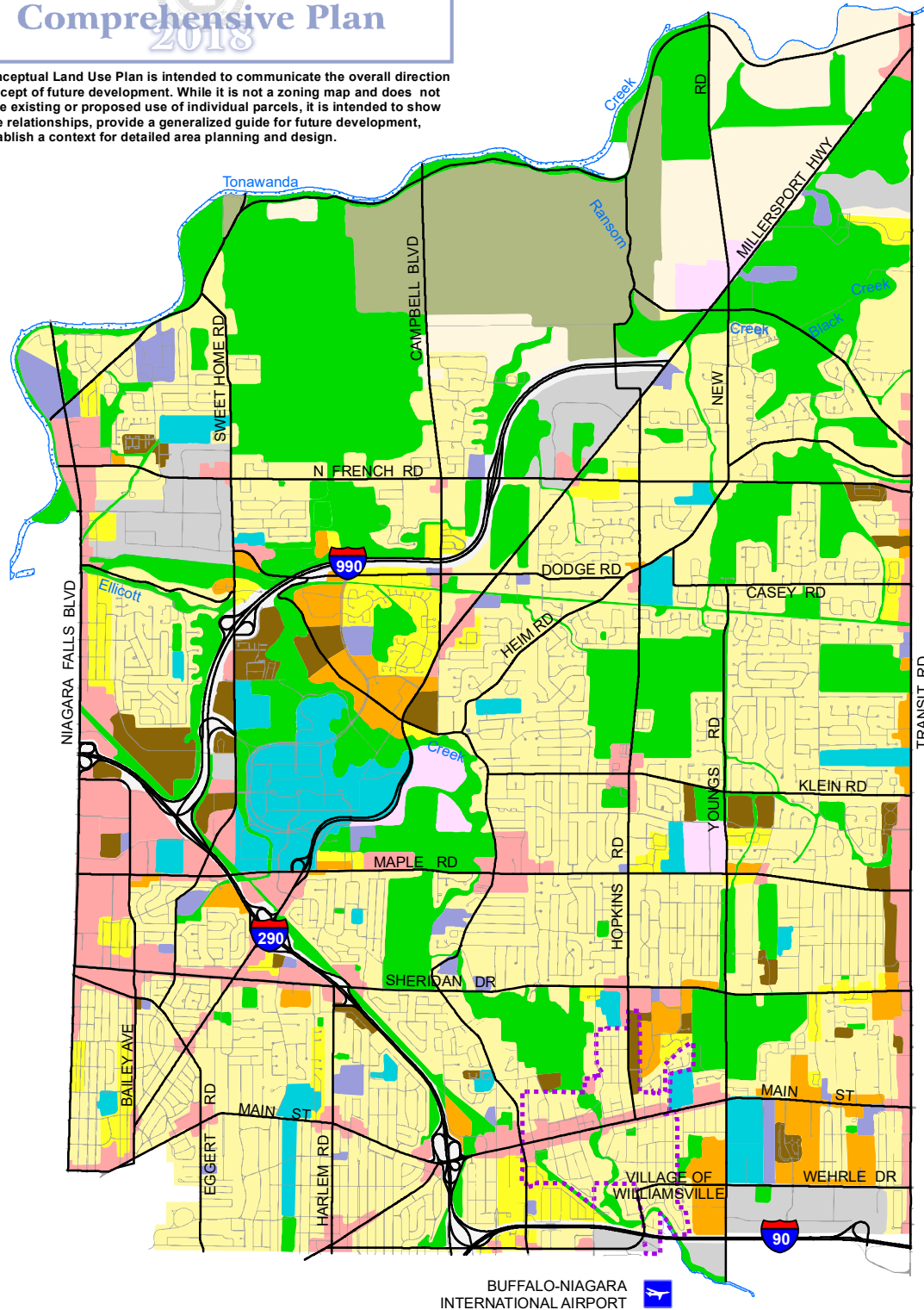
Source: Figure 6, Conceptual Land Use Plan
(Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04)

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

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

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

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

* See Map Figure 6-A for Additional Designations

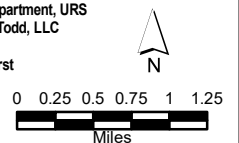
SOURCE NOTES:

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: December 2020

FIGURE 6



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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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.

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)

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.



Suburban scale single-family homes.

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 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

(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)

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 revitalized and complement their surroundings. Form, type, and scale of development form the basis for organizing and guiding commercial and mixed-use center revitalization.

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 must focus more significantly on the built form in each of Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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 of development which are described below. Map Figure 6-A displays the recommended locations for different commercial and mixed-use centers by form and scale. The following sections describe these form and scale classifications.

FORMS AND SCALES OF DEVELOPMENT

Amherst's commercial and mixed-use centers have historically been built in one of two forms: "traditional" which represents established areas of Town that will likely see infill development within existing neighborhood context and "suburban" which will likely see retrofitting of existing commercial areas to allow for inclusion of new aspects of development and to create a "sense of place."

The following are characteristics or elements of form that influence how the site and buildings relate to one another:

- 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)

Within these two forms of commercial and mixed-use centers are various scales of development that have been influenced by the surrounding neighborhood context and physical environment. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

The following are characteristics or elements of **scale** which influence how the site relates to its surroundings:

- 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

As centers are infilled or retrofitted, 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.

One key technique for achieving improved walkability is to set a standard for the size of a block to ensure there are connections through large tracts of land. As large tracts are redeveloped, new streets should be required within them to provide access. Development adjacent to these new streets should be more traditional in form, with buildings pulled up to new internal streets and parking located in the center of blocks, and not facing streets. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

The Town's commercial and mixed-use centers have been generally categorized by form and type (applied only to suburban areas) and are designated on Map Figure 6-A. More description of the forms and varying scales that apply within each form are described in the sections below. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

Traditional Form & Scale

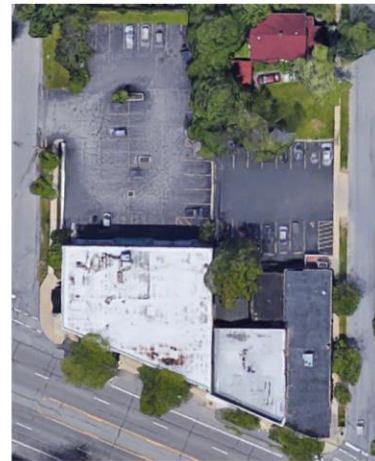
The *traditional* form of development in Amherst is that of a "Main Street." In this form, buildings are typically built next to the sidewalk, with little or no front setback. Street trees are often planted in grates within the sidewalk and pedestrian amenities, such

as benches and bike racks, are typically available. 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

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



speeds at or about 30 MPH. (Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)

Traditional areas have evolved within a given neighborhood context, and generally have shallow, constrained parcels with a smaller scale of development that immediately abuts single-family homes. Therefore, these areas are likely to experience infill and adaptive reuse of existing structures on developed parcels with a more compact building pattern. Traditional areas deserve the highest level of attention to transitions in order to successfully accommodate infill redevelopment while protecting neighborhood context. Therefore, buildings are typically shorter, from 1 to 2.5 stories in height.

The traditional form is walkable and pedestrian-friendly and tends to attract and serve residents from the surrounding neighborhood. Traditional areas usually have a network of human-scaled streets lined with smaller, niche businesses that have established architectural characteristics and design, creating a “sense of place.” Roofs of new development should mimic the style and material of pitched roofs in the surrounding neighborhood.

Revitalization of traditional areas requires careful consideration of both land use and building design to ensure compatibility with the surrounding community – new development should complement existing buildings and neighborhood character.

(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)

The traditional form is most common in older portions of Amherst such as Eggertsville, Snyder, and the areas surrounding the Village of Williamsville. In most cases, these areas are located at an intersection of two roadways to form a “node” of activity, although a few take a more linear form such as Bailey Avenue and Main Street east of the Village of Williamsville. The majority of traditional areas are located in the southern portion of Town, although a few exist in the northern portion such as Swormville, Getzville at Campbell and Dodge, and along Old Niagara Falls Boulevard.

Traditional Form and Scale



In some places, traditional areas can accommodate a larger scale of redevelopment. Some examples include University Plaza, the northwest corner of Eggert and Main, and some parcels just to the west of the Village of Williamsville. These areas tend to have larger parcels which allow them to accommodate higher and larger buildings with wider transition areas to adjacent residential uses. The traditional form in these areas is still desired, with buildings pulled close to the street and a walkable pedestrian realm, yet the scale is able to be intensified slightly because of their unique characteristics.

Map Figure 6-A identifies areas of the Town have been designated as traditional form. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

Suburban Form & Scale

The *suburban* form of development in Amherst is that of a “Shopping Center.” Buildings are typically set back further from the street, often with 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 has generally been automobile-oriented and attracts people from outside the surrounding area. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

SUBURBAN FORM: "SHOPPING CENTER"



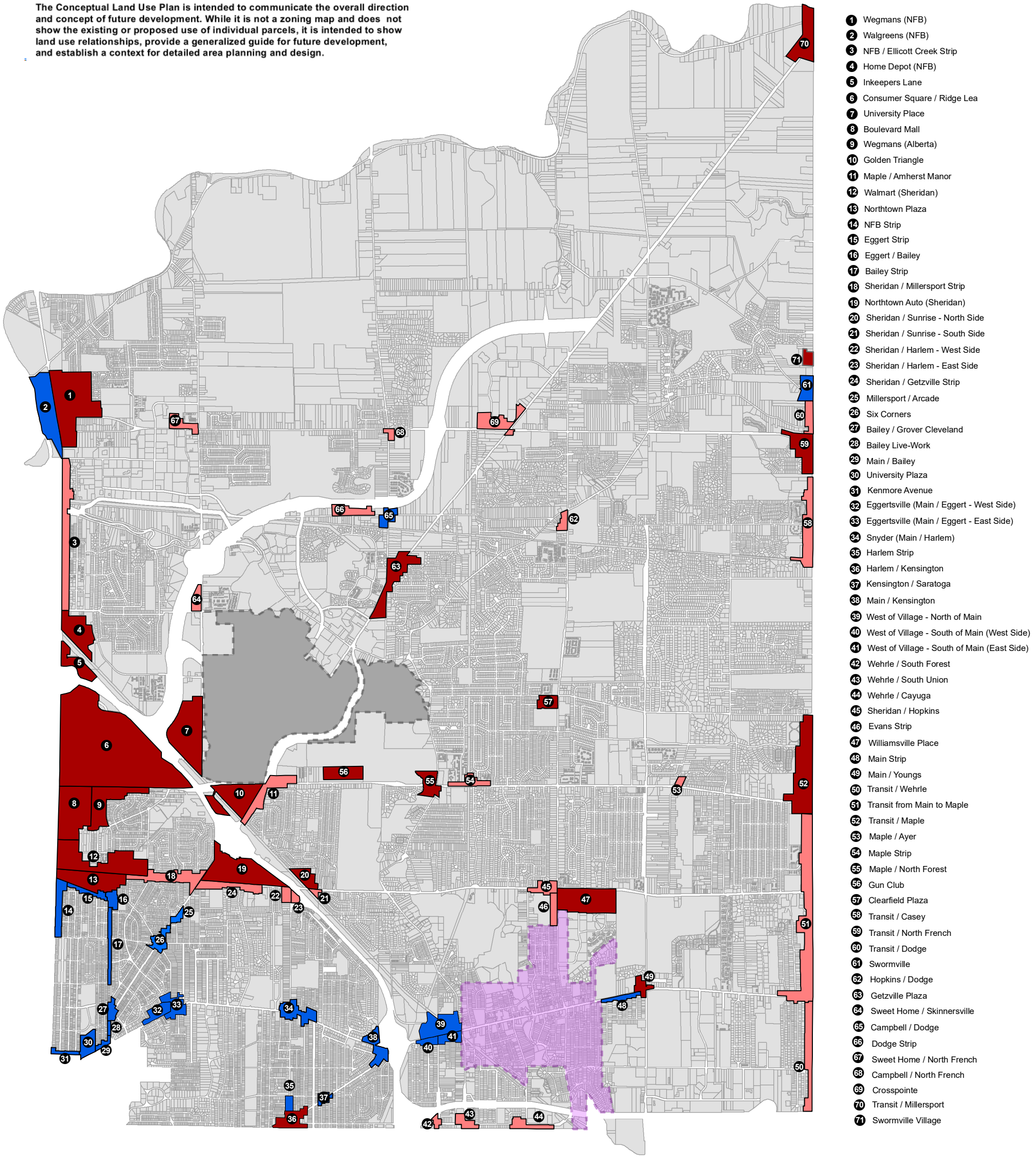
- Set Back From Street
- Front Setback Includes Landscaping, Parking
- Street Trees in Lawn
- No On-Street Parking
- Parking in Front, Side and Rear
- Monument Signs at Street, Wall Signs on Building
- Adjacent Road Posted Speed 35-45 MPH



Suburban areas typically include larger parcels connected by major thoroughfares without many walkable/bikeable connections. The major mode of transportation is the automobile and development patterns are dominated by accommodation for cars. Therefore, there is a lack of pedestrian access, use of public spaces, and streets have little to no place identity. As shopping trends change, suburban areas experience retrofitting of existing development to meet new demands. Retrofit goals should include improving the relationship between streets and buildings, creating opportunities for phased or incremental redevelopment, managing access along major roadways, and creating a vibrant “sense of place” with accommodations for pedestrians and other forms of transportation.

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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 Walmart (Sheridan)
- 13 Northtown Plaza
- 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 - West Side)
- 33 Eggertville (Main / Eggert - East Side)
- 34 Snyder (Main / Harlem)
- 35 Harlem Strip
- 36 Harlem / Kensington
- 37 Kensington / Saratoga
- 38 Main / Kensington
- 39 West of Village - North of Main
- 40 West of Village - South of Main (West Side)
- 41 West of Village - South of Main (East Side)
- 42 Wehrle / South Forest
- 43 Wehrle / South Union
- 44 Wehrle / Cayuga
- 45 Sheridan / Hopkins
- 46 Evans Strip
- 47 Williamsville Place
- 48 Main Strip
- 49 Main / Youngs
- 50 Transit / Wehrle
- 51 Transit from Main to Maple
- 52 Transit / Maple
- 53 Maple / Ayer
- 54 Maple Strip
- 55 Maple / North Forest
- 56 Gun Club
- 57 Clearfield Plaza
- 58 Transit / Casey
- 59 Transit / North French
- 60 Transit / Dodge
- 61 Swormville
- 62 Hopkins / Dodge
- 63 Getzville Plaza
- 64 Sweet Home / Skinnerville
- 65 Campbell / Dodge
- 66 Dodge Strip
- 67 Sweet Home / North French
- 68 Campbell / North French
- 69 Crosspointe
- 70 Transit / Millersport
- 71 Swormville Village

FIGURE 6-A

Commercial and Mixed-Use Designations

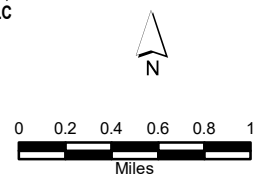
- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suburban Center Suburban Corridor Traditional Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village of Williamsville University at Buffalo |
|--|---|

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: December 2020



Commercial and mixed-use centers in Amherst with a suburban form have historically been built in one of two types: center and corridor. These are depicted on Map Figure 6-A. These have varying scales which are described in the following sections.

Suburban Types



Suburban Centers

Centers come in varying scales, but at their largest they are the most intense type of commercial or mixed-use development in Amherst. Large suburban centers are typically located away from single-family homes, along major roadways, at higher volume intersections, or near interstate interchanges. The parcels located in these centers are typically large and deep. Parcels can also be combined for substantial redevelopment projects. Given these large parcel sizes, and their distance from surrounding residential areas, buildings can reach up to 8 stories in height. There are a couple of existing buildings taller than 8 stories located along the Interstate 290, however, buildings up to 8 stories or taller should only be permitted where they already exist or in designated locations along the Interstate 290 or within the Boulevard Mall area. Tenant spaces in this scale of center are typically the largest and are intended to serve a regional market. *(Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A)*

The majority of suburban centers in Town fall into a slightly less intense scale of development. These centers will have many of the same characteristics of the larger center scale –large parcels, located on major roadways and at higher volume intersections– but buildings may be up to 5 stories in height. Some of these less intense centers abut residential areas and need to be scaled down to lower heights to fit within the surrounding context, including the use of building stepbacks above a certain height as a method to scale down building mass.

Center Model



The smallest scale of suburban center is meant to produce a small, more traditional feel but with suburban characteristics and form. Buildings will range from 1 to 2.5 stories on smaller, new interior streets. These small scale centers are typically located the closest to single-family homes and therefore need the most attention given to transitions both in regards to landscaping and building height. Portions of larger scaled suburban centers may utilize this smaller scale of center to transition to residential areas.

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

Suburban Corridors

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 features a linear pattern of parcels along a roadway. Depending on the commercial corridor, parcel depths can be 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. *(Amended 9-3-2019; BCPA-2017-01A)*

Buildings may range from 1 to 5 stories in height. Parcel sizes can vary and are generally either deep or shallow. Shallow corridors have smaller parcels and less land available for redevelopment, therefore affecting adjacent residential properties more directly. These corridors can accommodate heights up to 3 stories. Transition space is smaller but buffering and buildings setbacks should still be provided to reduce the site impact. Smaller businesses tend to locate here and serve the surrounding neighborhood.

Deep corridors have larger parcels and therefore can dedicate more space to landscaped transition areas. These corridors can accommodate heights up to 5 stories, larger building footprints, and larger tenant sizes. Despite the larger scale, building setbacks and landscaped transitions adjacent to residential uses are required. To improve both pedestrian and vehicular access from adjacent commercial roadways and between parcels in deep corridors, new shared access driveways and drive aisles should be provided.

Corridor Model



Typical examples of suburban corridors include Niagara Falls Boulevard near Ellicott Creek, portions of Sheridan Drive, Transit Road near Wehrle Drive, and portions of North French Road.

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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 setback. A setback 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 setback 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).

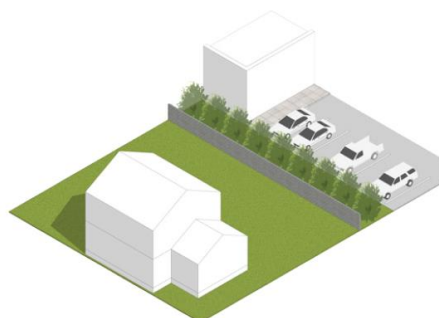


These conceptual models illustrate both building articulation along the street, and modified upper story height using a setback.

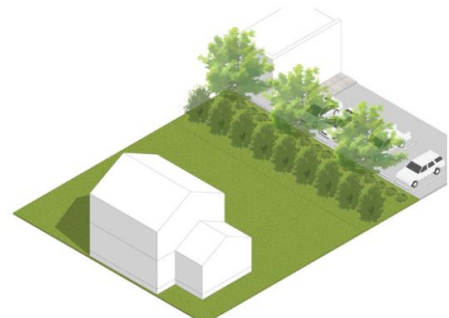
Other concepts used to manage building mass focus on breaking up the building as viewed along the street. This is often accomplished by articulating the building (setting some portions back, using different materials, and often highlighting entrances with architectural features). Another key feature 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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*



A transition option for shallow sites with a wall and landscaping.



A transition option for moderate-depth sites with more substantial buffer depth and landscaping.

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).
(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)

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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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

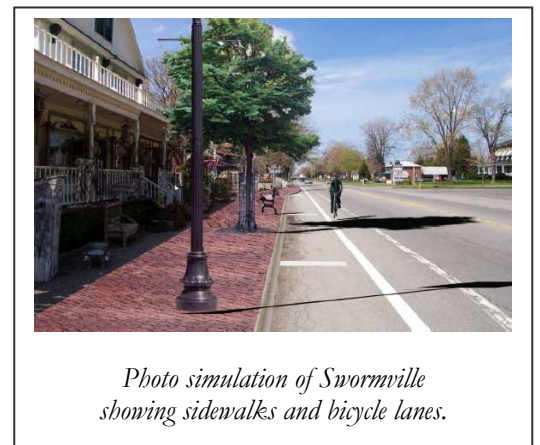
protect rural road corridors and reduce the traffic and other impacts of commercial strip development. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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. *(Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01)*

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

3.3.4 Office and Industrial

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 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.

Educational campuses are important community assets and 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:

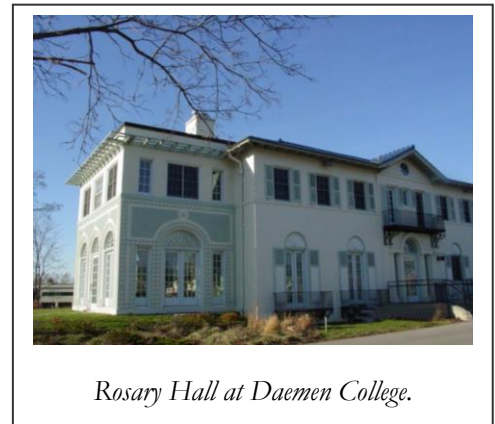
- Community recreation facilities and athletic fields
- Location for a youth and family center in Williamsville/Southeast Amherst
- Mixed-use activity center with office, neighborhood commercial, science technology, and educational uses

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

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:

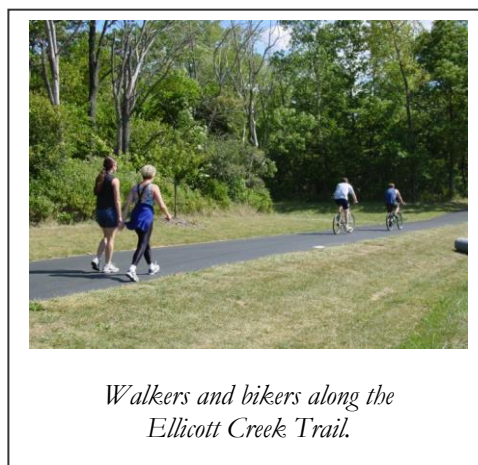
- The total proportion of open space within the Town
- The abundance of open space in north Amherst
- Opportunities to link open spaces as community-wide form-givers and as components of mixed-use centers

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 Policies 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.

A scenic view of a river with rapids, a concrete dam with a metal railing, and a red brick building in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white filter. The river flows from the left towards the center, with white water rapids. A concrete dam with a metal railing runs across the middle ground. In the background, there are trees and a red brick building.

*Natural and
Cultural Resources*

4

Natural and Cultural Resources

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4.0 *Natural and Cultural Resources*

4.1 OVERVIEW

***Priority Action Program:
Natural and Cultural Resources***

- Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program (Greening Amherst)

Amherst’s rich environmental and cultural resources contribute greatly to the Town’s quality of life and community character. Although much of the Town is developed, many valuable sensitive lands and historic resources have been preserved. Important resources within Amherst include:

- ***Surface water resources:*** Amherst has a number of significant surface water resources, including the Tonawanda Creek (Erie Canal), Ellicott Creek, and Ransom Creek. These waterways provide recreational opportunities, irrigation, options for stormwater management, and important wildlife habitat.
- ***Floodplains:*** Floodplains have been mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA). The floodway and 100-year floodplain are important demarcation areas for planning due to special construction requirements within these sensitive areas. Due to level terrain, abundant water resources, and poorly drained soils, a significant part of the Town (including most of Northeast Amherst) lies within the 100-year floodplain.
- ***Wetlands:*** Several large wetland areas exist within Amherst, many of which are protected as part of the Town’s existing public open spaces. Wetlands are important due to their value as habitat and their ability to reduce the impacts of flooding and enhance water quality.
- ***Woodlands:*** While much of Amherst’s natural vegetation has been cleared for development or agriculture, significant amounts of woodland remain, particularly along stream corridors, in wetland and conservation areas, and in the northern part of Town. In addition to providing environmental benefits such as habitat for wildlife and improved air and water quality, woodlands make important contributions to Amherst’s visual character.
- ***Soils:*** Much of Amherst is underlain by poorly drained soils that were formed from silts and sands deposited at the bottom of a glacial lake. Most of the soils are deep, nearly level, and have the potential for saturation. In addition, many of the soils

have the ability to produce high yields and are designated as agriculturally significant soils at the state and federal levels.

- **Historic and cultural resources:** Due to its location along the Erie Canal and its role in the growth of Western New York, Amherst has many potentially significant historic structures. Currently, there are six local historic landmarks within the Town and ten within the Village of Williamsville. Two surveys of historic resources within Amherst have identified other potentially valuable historic resources in the Town. In addition, the cultural, visual, and performing arts offered by institutions such as the University at Buffalo and Daemen College are important community resources. Musicfare Theatre at Daemen College is identified as a “resource of county-wide significance” in Erie County’s *Guiding Principles for Countywide Land Use Planning*.

The Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement speaks to the importance of preserving natural, historic, and scenic resources throughout Amherst. The goals, objectives, and policies of this element are designed to promote the preservation and management of these critical resources for the benefit of present and future generations and the surrounding region. These resources have significance beyond Amherst, and Erie County has identified many as having countywide importance. Planning for these resources should be regional in perspective, involving the County and surrounding municipalities.

***Vision Statement Directions:
Natural and Cultural Resources***

- Preserve open space, natural, and scenic resources
- Preserve historic resources
- Protect against noise, light, air, and water pollution
- Protect woodlands and tree canopy

4.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL

Sensitive environmental and cultural resources identified and preserved as part of the physical fabric of the community

OBJECTIVES

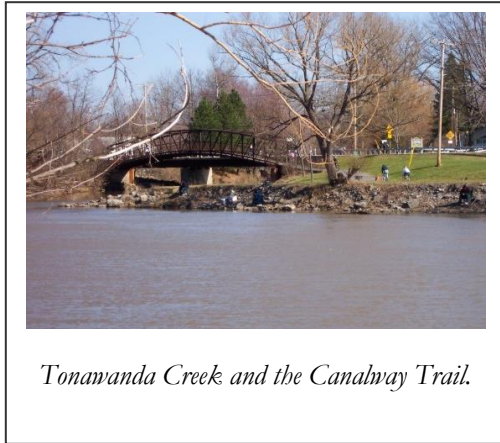
- Establish an interconnected open space network that incorporates significant natural and cultural resources
- Protect sensitive environmental resources through improved regulations, policies, and management, including:
 - Water resources and wetlands
 - Air quality
 - Trees and woodlands
 - Historic and cultural resources

POLICIES

A. Open Space System

Establishment of a town-wide network of parks, open spaces, and greenways is one of the organizing principles of the Land Use and Development Element, as described in Policies 3-13 to 3-15. This

network is envisioned as a primary means of accomplishing preservation of sensitive natural and cultural resources.



Tonawanda Creek and the Canahway Trail.

4-1 Establish greenway corridors along streams as part of a town-wide open space system.

Land Use and Development Policy 3-13 proposes establishment of a town-wide open space and greenway network to be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including public acquisition, conservation development options, and private landowner conservation. As illustrated in the accompanying Parks, Open Space and Trail Map (Figure 4) and Conceptual Land Use Plan (Figure 6), greenway corridors along streams and associated water resources (100-year floodway and wetlands) are essential components of this network.

4-2 Provide conservation development options to encourage dedication of significant habitat as permanent open space.

Conservation development is a technique that groups houses and roadways closer together in compact patterns, thus accommodating development while preserving valuable open space and environmental resources. As described in Policy 3-14, the Town should enact new regulations to encourage use of this option for new developments where public sewer is available or soils are conducive to on-site sewage disposal. The regulations should include standards for the dedication of significant natural resources and habitat areas as permanent open space.

4-3 Acquire land or development rights on land with environmental resources of local significance, consistent with an open space plan or determined to be in the public interest.

Policy 3-15 proposes that the Town initiate a public acquisition program to help develop an open space and greenway network. The presence of sensitive natural or historic resources should be one of the basic criteria used to identify properties for potential acquisition as part of the network.

B. Water Resources and Stormwater Management

Figure 7 depicts water resources within the Town of Amherst. Water quality and stormwater management issues have been documented for all of the Town’s three major streams. Policies 4-4 to 4-8 are designed to promote improved protection and management of the Town’s water resources. The Joint Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plan (JLWRP) also provides guidance and policies for environmental protection and preservation along the Tonawanda Creek/Erie Canal corridor.

4-4 Establish buffer/setback standards for new development to help protect streams of significance.

Riparian or streamside buffers comprised of native vegetation are one of the most effective methods of protecting water quality. Instituting setback standards for all new development along

waterways designated as Class C or above by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) will contribute to improving the water quality of Amherst's streams.

Stream banks and associated natural buffer zones are extremely important to the health of the stream. A buffer will help ensure that vegetation along the streambank remains healthy and provides shade, food, and nutrients to the system. The roots from the vegetation help to stabilize the streambank and reduce erosion and siltation, a particular problem for Amherst's waterways. The leaf litter, roots, and ground cover in riparian buffers also act to filter sediment and other pollutants that would otherwise enter the waterway. Lastly, a buffer increases visual quality and provides for increased recreational potential and wildlife habitat.

In addition to setback standards, the Town should consider instituting management guidelines for different types of buffer zones. These guidelines would establish acceptable and unacceptable uses within the buffer and could address vegetation goals for each zone within the buffer. Residents and landowners should be encouraged to maintain the natural vegetation of riparian areas, which often are mowed and maintained as lawns. Mowing destroys native vegetation and prevents new plants from taking root. Private lawns are often treated with fertilizer and pesticides that can contaminate surface water. Signage could be installed along buffer boundaries to educate the public and encourage proper usage. These preservation standards should be applied to significant stream corridors as identified by Erie County in the *Guiding Principles for Countywide Land Use Planning* (1999).³

As a long-term goal, streamside buffer areas could be incorporated into the Town's open space network.

4-5 Support protection of designated wetlands and implement best management practices to maintain Town owned wetland areas. Work with regulatory agencies to encourage permitted wetland mitigation of an equal or higher level of function and quality to be located near impacted areas or within the Town. (Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)

Wetlands are unique assets that contribute to Amherst's overall economic, social, and environmental health. They provide numerous benefits such as water quality improvements, stormwater control and storage, filtering of contaminants, provision of wildlife habitats, and recreational and open space opportunities. While federal and state regulations provide the

³ This report designates stream corridors having countywide significance as identified by the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning.

regulatory framework for wetland protection, local efforts to support wetland preservation by encouraging best management practices can also improve quality and prevent loss of quantitative and qualitative wetland characteristics.

As of 2012 there are over 2,800⁴ acres of wetlands regulated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) located in the Town. Other wetland areas are under federal jurisdiction and regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Federal wetland delineations are conducted on a case-by-case basis; their locations and extent are not compiled on a single map by the USACE. Wetlands are likely to continue to grow and change over time, creating the potential for future designated or jurisdictional wetland areas. Guidance about wetland information, permits, and regulations should be sought from the appropriate regulatory agency. Figure 7 illustrates the location of Town-owned and NYSDEC designated wetlands in Amherst. It also identifies the corresponding NYSDEC wetland classifications: Class 1 (most valuable) to Class 4 (least valuable).

While designated wetlands are protected by federal and state regulations, development demands may arise that affect them. Regulatory agencies issue permits to manage wetland impacts, and determine compensatory mitigation measures to offset impacts or loss of the wetland. When wetland impacts are considered, the following sequence of permitting criteria from the USACE or a similar sequence by the NYSDEC is used to manage potential loss:

1. *Avoid* - Adverse impacts to designated wetlands are to be avoided and no discharge shall be permitted if there is a practical alternative with less adverse impacts.
2. *Minimize* - If impacts cannot be avoided, appropriate and practical steps to minimize adverse impacts must be taken (such as project reconfiguration or minimization).
3. *Compensate* - Appropriate and practical compensatory mitigation is required for unavoidable adverse impacts to wetlands which remain (such as wetland degradation or loss). The amount and quality of compensatory mitigation may not substitute for avoiding and minimizing impacts.

When regulatory agencies determine that compensatory wetland mitigation is required, the Town should encourage that mitigation be located within Amherst whenever feasible. The following mitigation hierarchy should guide decisions on the

⁴ Based on updated NYSDEC designated wetland information

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

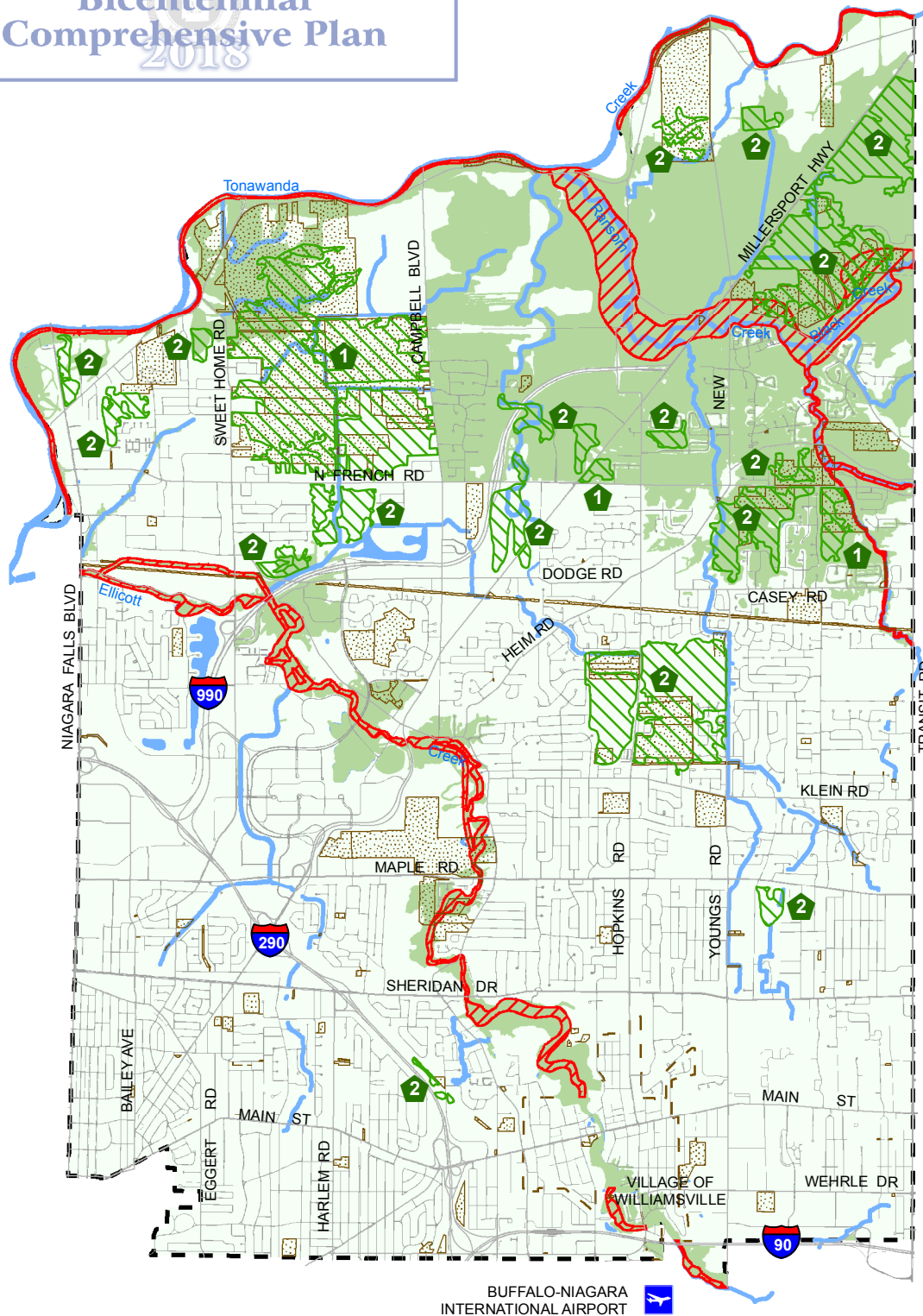











FIGURE 7

WATER RESOURCES

LEGEND

-  NYSDEC Regulated Wetland*
*Wetland boundaries are approximate. Wetlands are surrounded by a 100 foot wide regulated adjacent area.
-  NYSDEC Wetland Class
-  FEMA Floodway
-  FEMA 100 - Year Floodplain
-  Surface Water Body
-  Town Owned Property
-  Significant Stream Corridor
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Village of Williamsville Boundary

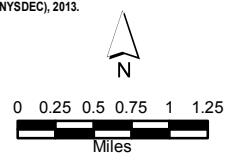
SOURCE NOTES:
Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

NYSDEC Regulated Wetlands:
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), 2013.

Map does not illustrate Federal Jurisdictional Wetlands.

Floodplains and Floodways:
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 1992
Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Erie County, New York.

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department
Date: September 2015



location of mitigation sites. Wetland mitigation sites should be located as follows:

1. On the project site, within the same watershed, and within the Town's boundaries (Best Case Scenario).
If not, then;
2. On land adjacent to or near the project site, within the same watershed, and within the Town's boundaries. If not, then;
3. Wherever possible within the same watershed and within the Town's boundaries. If not, then;
4. In a municipality that shares the same watershed from which the wetlands are being impacted.

Acquiring regulated wetlands can help to protect the quality and function of wetland resources. Many of Amherst's larger wetland areas are protected as part of existing public open spaces. Whenever feasible, the Town should continue its acquisition of regulated wetland property. Funding for open space, natural resource, and agricultural land acquisitions may be available through state initiatives and programs. Acquisition of these wetlands should be guided by Comprehensive Plan land use recommendations and the application of qualitative and functional criteria related to the wetland characteristics.

The Town should also consider mechanisms to manage Town-owned wetlands. First, the Town could encourage the acquisition of conservation easements to prevent future alteration or decreased quality of wetlands. Second, the Town should consider the need for management, removal, and prevention of invasive species—vegetation not native to Amherst that can diminish wetland quality and function. Third, the Town should consider reviewing its ditch maintenance practices. If not properly maintained, ditches can cause excessive and inordinate growth and contamination of wetlands.

The Amherst Conservation Advisory Council should collaborate with the Town Highway Department and other departments to formulate wetland protection and management strategies.

4-6 Initiate watershed management plans in cooperation with the County and other municipalities in the watershed.

Due to Amherst's location near the Niagara River and on the Tonawanda Creek, most streams enter the Town after flowing through several other municipalities and a large part of Erie County. Therefore, many of the water quality and stormwater management problems in Amherst's waterways are initiated upstream. Ransom Creek and Tonawanda Creek both have documented water quality issues before entering Amherst and many of the actions taken upstream affect water quality and flooding in Amherst. Amherst partners with several local

municipalities and government agencies through participation in the Western New York Stormwater Coalition, Tonawanda Creek Watershed Committee and Erie County Water Quality Committee in watershed-based management planning to protect and improve water quality and stormwater management. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Erie County has designated both the Ellicott Creek and Ransom Creek watersheds as environmental features of countywide significance.⁵ Watershed management planning for these creeks in cooperation with other municipalities and possibly Erie County would be an effective way to address watershed-wide water quality and stormwater management issues. Several watershed studies have been completed or are currently underway in Amherst. These efforts could be the starting point to engage other communities and would provide an important information base. The Ransom Creek Improvement Study has been recently completed and focuses on flooding and stormwater management in northeastern Amherst. Other studies include a reconnaissance study of the Ellicott Creek watershed by the Army Corps of Engineers and a Flood Mitigation Plan. Amherst will also likely begin stormwater management planning in order to comply with federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NYSDEC regulations.

The watershed management planning process should begin with an identification of the major issues within the watershed and the goals of the planning process. This will help to focus planning efforts and ensure that the major benefits of the resource are identified and addressed. After the initial scoping, the planning process should include an inventory of the watershed and collection of all relevant available data. All inventory information should be analyzed by engineers, hydrologists, ecologists, and economists.

After the initial assessment, resource standards and management strategies can be developed based on the initial goals of the plan. Management strategies should address issues on a watershed-wide basis, including opportunities for intergovernmental coordination. Resource standards should reflect the integrated nature of the watershed. Specific actions should be developed to address the strategies and ensure that resource standards are met over time. An implementation schedule should be devised to ensure that the actions of the plan are carried out and have adequate funding. The watershed management planning process should be revisited every five to ten years to measure progress towards goals and to incorporate changes in priorities.

⁵ *Guiding Principles for Countywide Land Use Planning*, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, 1999

Several guides and references exist on how to develop a watershed management plan. The Center for Watershed Protection in Maryland, the EPA Office of Water, the United States Geological Service (USGS), and the New York DEC all have published guides on watershed management planning. Watershed Plans could also be coordinated with the New York DEC, USGS, or the regional EPA office for guidance and potential funding.

4-7 Apply “best management practices” (BMPs) to reduce water quality impacts of development.

Development typically results in an increase in impervious cover and removal of natural vegetation. An increase in impervious cover creates more overland flow, causing water to be unable to infiltrate into the ground and be filtered of sediment and contaminants. An overall increase in impervious surfaces throughout the Town exacerbates stormwater quality problems. At a specific construction site, stormwater can remove a considerable amount of sediment. Several best management practices can be recommended to improve stormwater quality from new development.

Best management practices are measures designed to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff from land development on water quality. Examples include erosion control during construction, preservation of buffers of natural vegetation, and on-site detention of stormwater to filter out pollutants.

- ***Preserve natural vegetation and institute clearing limits for new construction:*** Vegetation can be one of the most effective and cost effective methods of improving stormwater quality. Where possible, natural vegetation should be retained in new developments. On sites where existing vegetation has been removed and replanted rather than maintained, it will likely take a number of years for the replanted areas to remove contaminants and sediment at the same rate as the original vegetation. Developers should be encouraged to establish maximum areas to be cleared at a time. Large cleared areas can result in much higher erosion and sedimentation rates and corresponding impacts on water quality.

The benefits of preserving natural vegetation are many. Vegetation decreases water temperature by shading stormwater ditches, waterways, and pavement. Vegetation captures and absorbs water and helps to keep soils permeable. It provides stability to soils that would otherwise erode at a faster rate. It traps and filters potential contaminants and provides habitat.

- ***Protect or restrict development on steep slopes:*** Although not likely a major problem in the level terrain of Amherst, the protection of unstable or steep slopes will decrease sedimentation in stormwater runoff. Methods of slope protection include mulching, matting, seeding, and installation of retaining walls combined with native plantings. Other methods include piping concentrated

runoff from the top of a steep slope to the bottom and creating parallel grooves or terracing the slope to make it more stable.

- **Detention/retention:** One Best Management Practice currently utilized by the Town is to retain stormwater on-site, thus reducing downstream flooding and allowing pollutants to filter out over time. Several methods can be used to detain or retain stormwater. Wet detention ponds have outlets higher than the bottom of the pond, allowing sediment to filter out before the stormwater is released. Establishment of a wetland area in conjunction with a detention pond allows nutrients to be removed by the vegetation and will supplement the sediment controls.

Wetland creation can help retain stormwater and decrease water quality impacts. Vegetation helps to absorb excess nutrients and sediment. Created wetlands can also provide habitat and recreational opportunities.

- **Sediment collection:** A number of techniques are used by the Town to prevent sediment from leaving construction sites or recently cleared areas. These include silt fences, buffer strips, temporary drainage swales, temporary berms, and temporary storm drain diversions.
- **Limit impervious cover:** As previously stated, impervious cover (pavement and roofs) increases the rate and water quality impacts of stormwater runoff. Limiting the amount of impervious cover can reduce the amount of runoff coming from a site. To the greatest extent possible, vegetation should be kept intact and buffer strips and wetlands maintained or established to offset the impacts of impervious surfaces on stormwater runoff. One technique to reduce impervious cover is “low impact development” (Policy 4-8).

Low impact development is an approach to managing stormwater runoff that minimizes disturbance of natural areas, reduces the amount of impervious surfaces (buildings and pavement), and, to the extent possible, infiltrates stormwater on the site.

4-8 Implement “low impact development” standards and techniques designed to reduce the quantity and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from development.

Low impact development is an alternative to conventional stormwater management. The intent of this approach is to control stormwater runoff in a cost-effective and ecologically sound manner. It minimizes the disturbance to natural systems, reduces the coverage of impervious surfaces, and infiltrates stormwater on site with the goal of retaining pre-development hydrologic conditions. Low impact development techniques include permeable pavement, bioretention areas (wetlands), and grass swales. Redirecting runoff from rooftops away from storm sewers and into grass swales or irrigation ditches is also

an effective method of mitigating the effects of stormwater runoff.

Several street design strategies also can reduce the impact of development on stormwater flows. Streets can be designed at the minimum width necessary to accommodate traffic. Center islands can be incorporated into cul-de-sacs to absorb stormwater runoff. Parking areas and driveways can be shared. Setback standards for homes can be reduced. These strategies are consistent with the pedestrian-oriented, compact development patterns described in the Land Use and Development Element.

Conservation development is another low impact development strategy (see Policies 3-15 and 4-2). By maintaining substantial open space areas in natural cover, this approach maintains natural drainage patterns and reduces development impacts on stormwater runoff and water quality.

The Town should consider revising its existing stormwater management standards to incorporate low impact development techniques. Further research should be conducted on which areas have the most suitable conditions for application of low impact development techniques, as certain site characteristics are more appropriate. In addition, some low impact development techniques require continual maintenance. Individual homeowners might not have the ability or will to maintain these areas. Therefore, these techniques might be more successful if they are implemented by the Town or other public agencies (e.g., on school properties) or through private development/management organizations, such as homeowner associations.

C. Air Quality

The Greater Buffalo-Niagara region is classified as a “Marginal Non-Attainment Area” for air quality because it slightly exceeds the EPA standard for ozone. The region is in attainment with the other EPA air pollutant standards. The Town of Amherst has no specific air quality designation within the region. Air quality is related to several causes; the primary contributor to local air quality is automobile use. Automobile use is directly tied to local land use and transportation patterns. Social dependency on the automobile will continue to impact air quality for the foreseeable future. However, a number of strategies are available that can help reduce the number of automobiles on the road and vehicle miles traveled.

Implementation of a number of Comprehensive Plan policies will contribute to *improving air quality*.

4-9 Reduce air quality emissions by pursuing Comprehensive Plan strategies such as compact, mixed-use development patterns; tree planting; transit and other alternatives to automobile use, etc.

Several of the transportation policies outlined in Chapter 6.0 will contribute to ameliorating the impacts of private automobiles on air quality. These policies include:

- Enhance system capacities and undertake a capital program to maintain or improve the efficiency of the existing road system (6-4, 6-5)
- Develop a comprehensive bicycle network, using a rating system to identify and prioritize improvements (6-7)
- Develop a comprehensive pedestrian network of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails (6-8)
- Work with NFTA to improve transit service and provide connections to activity centers (6-9)

The compact, mixed-use development patterns proposed by the Land Use and Development Element (Policies 3-1 and 3-2) will also contribute to reduced automobile dependency by providing opportunities to walk, bike, or take public transit (or shorter automobile trips) to retail and service areas and possibly to work. Other strategies to improve air quality in Amherst include tree preservation and planting (Policies 4-10 and 4-11), encouraging energy efficiency in new and existing buildings, and discouraging the burning of brush and leaves.

D. Tree Preservation

Trees and wooded areas improve aesthetics and contribute to community character. They provide numerous benefits including reducing flooding impacts and soil erosion, improving air quality, reducing water and noise pollution, and providing shade and habitat. The Vision Statement notes the importance of woodlands and tree canopy to the visual character of the Town. Consistent with the Vision Statement, tree canopy and woodlands should be preserved where possible and tree plantings encouraged on public and private lands.

4-10 Support the Town of Amherst Tree Law.

The Town of Amherst Tree Law was adopted in May 1992 as Chapter 179 of the Town Code. The main focus of the Tree Law is to maintain and improve the aesthetics and ecological systems of the Town. The Tree Law generally requires a permit to remove trees greater than 4 inches in caliper and prohibits trees from being removed from public land. Several exceptions to this law address trees that are a danger to public welfare or might inhibit operations of public utilities, farms, and other businesses. The Tree Law also enforces the management of trees on private property that may be affecting public areas such as road intersections and rights-of-way. The Tree Law permits the Town to plant trees in parks and along streets. Limited guidelines for planting trees are included.

Amherst should support the Tree Law and the Town Forester who is charged with permitting and enforcing tree removal. Support of the Tree Law will ensure that private landowners do not remove



Street trees enhance visual character, provide shade and habitat, and reduce noise and air pollution.

trees that are of great benefit ecologically and aesthetically. In addition, it protects the natural integrity of public places. The following changes should be implemented to strengthen the effectiveness of the Tree Law:

- Appoint a Certified Arborist to act as Town Forester and to lead the Town’s Division of Forestry
- Provide the Town Forester with increased enforcement powers to address illegal tree removal
- Provide continuous training and education for Forestry Division/Parks Department staff to foster better maintenance and management of town tree and landscape resources

4-11 Implement a “Greening Amherst” planting initiative consistent with a program of managing the “Town Landscape.”

“Greening Amherst” is envisioned as a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program encompassing both public and private action. Article V of Chapter 179 of the Town Code authorizes the Town to plant trees to enhance the beauty of public places and ensure public safety. Criteria should be developed to guide planting of trees and shrubs on streets and in parks consistent with Article V. This article sets standards as to how close trees can be planted to the curb and sidewalk. It also mandates that an official tree species list be developed and that only trees on the list be planted. The criteria should also designate priority areas for planting. Possible priority areas include roads as they enter the Town, parking lots, drainage areas, cemeteries, and major thoroughfares. The “Greening Amherst” initiative can be coordinated with other Plan initiatives. For example, consistent with Policy 3-13, which calls for on-street sidewalk/bike lane connections along public roadways, these facilities should be treed and landscaped to provide users with a pleasant recreational experience.

The “Greening Amherst” initiative should be coordinated with secondary schools, UB, and neighborhood and environmental groups. This would create a community sense of pride as well as ensure greater coverage and lower costs. Potentially using grant funding sources, a “tree endowment fund” could be established with tree planting “vouchers” available to neighborhood residents. American Forests, a national organization that is sponsoring a “Global ReLeaf” initiative, is a potential resource and source of information. If volunteer groups are used, the Town should actively manage their efforts to ensure that correct species and locations are chosen.

The “Greening Amherst” initiative should be expanded over time to address the proper management of existing vegetation in Amherst’s parks and public places and to provide information on the management and planting of vegetation on private property.

Greening Amherst is designed to involve the entire community in a tree planting and re-vegetation program in support of the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative.

New standards should be developed for plantings in subdivisions and new developments. Lastly, the initiative should be coordinated with neighboring towns to ensure that community entranceways are improved.

E. Historic and Cultural Resources

Amherst has a rich historical legacy stemming from its location on the Erie Canal and role in the growth of Western New York. Amherst’s historic resources should be preserved because they promote pride in historical achievements and enhance the Town’s character and quality of life.

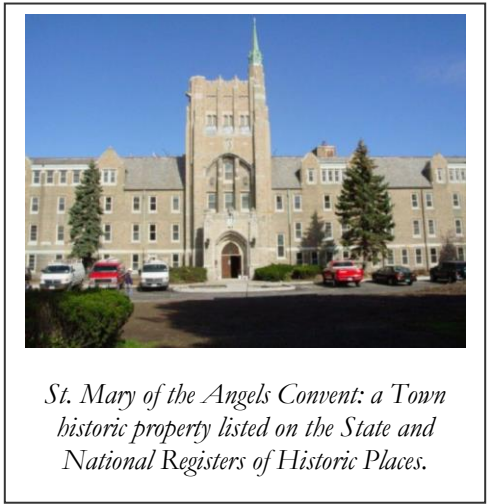
4-12 Encourage designation of historically significant resources for protection and provide incentives available through the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Amherst should encourage the nomination of the highest ranked historically significant resources to the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The Town’s pursuit of grant monies to further investigate high priority sites for inclusion on the National Register will aid in determining eligibility. The recently completed *Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources* and *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources* identifies those resources that may be of greatest importance and provides much of the background information that is necessary when completing the application process. Resources that do not meet the criteria for the State or National Registers, but do have local historical significance, should be considered for designation as local landmarks. These sites should be brought to the attention of the Historic Preservation Commission and eventually submitted to the Town Board for designation.

The Historic Preservation Commission should also consider identifying areas of the Town where a local historic district might help in protecting historic character. The Historic Preservation Commission has this authority under Chapter 121 of the Town Code. The Town should work with and inform property owners when developing proposals for historic districts.

Amherst should also encourage the use of incentives for historic property rehabilitation. Designated historic properties are eligible for a variety of federal and state preservation benefits such as rehabilitation financing and tax credits. The Town should also encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and their incorporation into redevelopment plans per Policy 3-9. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

Amherst should further maximize the benefits of being part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program under the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Under the CLG program, Amherst is



St. Mary of the Angels Convent: a Town historic property listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

eligible for technical assistance in writing applications for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and for grants that can be used to fund a variety of preservation activities. Amherst is also eligible for grants from the federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), the New York State Council on the Arts, and other agencies.

4-13 Support the cultural, visual, and performing arts as part of the Education Key Initiative.

Art, music, drama, literature, and other cultural arts are important to the quality of life, community heritage, and identity of the community. As part of the effort to position Amherst as a “knowledge-based” community, the Town should work with institutions such as UB and Daemen College to promote opportunities for residents to experience the cultural arts.

F. Resource Management

Sound management is critical to ensure that Amherst’s natural and cultural resources are maintained for future generations. Policies 4-6 and 4-7 describe management strategies designed to enhance the Town’s water resources and to reduce the water quality impacts of development. The Town should also consider developing management plans to address specific resources, such as historically significant resources or parks with a concentration of sensitive natural resources.

4-14 Develop management plans for public natural and historic resources of local significance.

Nature View Park, which contains extensive wetland areas, is an example of a town-owned resource that would benefit from a management plan to define both compatible uses and strategies to preserve and protect sensitive natural areas. The Town’s Capital Improvement Program includes development of a master plan for this park as an approved project. Management plans for similar natural areas and public parks should be considered.

Significant historic resources within Amherst would also benefit from management plans that define strategies to maintain their historic character in the future. Amherst’s significant historic resources are identified and rated in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources* and the *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources*. The Town could consider developing a comprehensive management plan for all identified resources of local historical significance or, more likely, a subset of the most important resources as documented in the *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources*. The success of such plans would be enhanced if developed in cooperation with property owners. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)



*Economic
Development*

5 *Economic Development*

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5.0 Economic Development

5.1 OVERVIEW

**Priority Action Programs:
Economic Development**

- Establish a collaborative planning structure with UB to address issues such as business/ employment growth, land use planning, and social/cultural ties
- Pursue collaborations with educational institutions, private businesses, and other partners to promote economic development

Over the past 20 years, Amherst has led the Western New York region in job creation and commercial development. During this time period, the number of permanent at-place jobs in the Town expanded from 38,800 to 75,600, an increase of nearly 37,000 jobs. The overall change in employment in Western New York during this period was about 47,000, meaning that Amherst alone accounted for over 75 percent of the region’s job growth, despite having less than 10 percent of the region’s jobs in 1980.

Taking a closer look at the types of jobs coming to Amherst, about 68 percent of the Town’s employment falls into the “All Other Employment” category, which excludes Manufacturing, Retail, and Wholesale jobs.⁶ These jobs, which number over 50,000, are primarily office jobs. Projections of employment conducted for the Comprehensive Plan show that, of the 28,000 new jobs expected to be created in Amherst from 2000 to 2020, 25,000 (89 percent) will be in the “All Other Employment” category. Clearly, Amherst is and will continue to be a center for office employment in Western New York.

Knowing that efficient office space will continue to be the linchpin of economic growth in the Town of Amherst, the Comprehensive Plan must clearly define how Town policies will influence office growth over the next 20 years. The majority of Amherst’s existing office inventory is housed in campus-style office parks developed since 1980, and not in urban-style downtowns. Although Amherst has several traditional commercial districts like Williamsville, Eggertsville, and Snyder, it lacks a downtown area with a critical mass of office space, such as downtown Buffalo. As projections for the Town indicate that about 4.9 million square feet of office space will be added from 2000 to 2020, the development of this space must be conducted with an understanding of the existing context.

Since the Town’s industrial and retail sectors are expected to grow more modestly than the office employment sectors, steps must be taken in the coming years to ensure that these sectors remain stable. Manufacturing, retail, and wholesale users alike desire flexible space that allows them to keep up with changing technologies and markets. For this reason, the Town’s existing inventory of industrial and retail space must be kept up to date, a

⁶ Employment trends in Amherst and the Western New York region are more fully documented in the *Inventory and Analysis Report*.

process that will include both the rehabilitation of existing buildings as well as the construction of new space that allows flexibility for tenants.

Another element of the economic development program is the preservation of the Town's strong tax base. Although continued commercial development and redevelopment will help to strengthen the tax base, it is equally important that residential property values remain strong. In other words, future commercial development and redevelopment in Amherst must be conducted in a manner that is beneficial to its residential communities, by minimizing negative impacts such as traffic congestion, the reduction of open space, and the loss of community character.

The Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement defines the desired characteristics of future commercial development in the Town. These characteristics include:

- Pedestrian-friendly, interconnected, **mixed-use development** patterns
- **Preservation of open space** throughout the Town
- A **balance** between economic growth and livability
- Revitalized **older neighborhoods and commercial corridors**

The goals, objectives, and policies of the Economic Development Element are designed to guide future decision-making by the Town regarding the direction of economic growth and the balance between growth and community character. Recommendations include programs for the attraction and retention of employment, adjustments to zoning and development standards, partnership programs, and regional development initiatives.

***Vision Statement Directions:
Economic Development***

- Strong tax base
- Good job opportunities
- Mixed-use development
- Balance between economic growth and livability, including protected open space
- Revitalized neighborhoods and commercial areas

5.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL

A Town with a strong tax base and ample economic opportunities for a diverse base of employers and employees, housed in attractive, state-of-the-art commercial developments in convenient and accessible locations

OBJECTIVES

- Maintain Amherst's strong tax base
- Attract more high-paying jobs to the Town
- Ensure that economic development and redevelopment respect the character and quality of life of Amherst's residential communities
- Capitalize on the presence of the University at Buffalo to leverage University-related economic development opportunities

- Build partnerships with development agencies, private industry, and educational and research institutions to promote economic development in Amherst and throughout the region

POLICIES

A. Tax Base and Employment

A healthy tax and employment base are essential not only to Amherst's economy, but also to the Town's quality of life. Studies have shown that commercial retail, office, and industrial development partially subsidize the cost of providing high-quality community facilities and services to residents. Without such development, the burden on residential taxpayers would be significantly higher. Competitive employment is also important in providing economic opportunities to Amherst residents.

5-1 Target economic development policies, programs, capital expenditures, and incentives to attract and retain higher paying employment and promote desired forms and locations of development and redevelopment.

While Amherst has emerged as a regional center for office and industrial employment, a major challenge is to increase the number of high-paying jobs in proportion to low to middle-level jobs like production/assembly, data processing, and administrative. Western New York did not fully participate in the national economic boom of the 1990s, with relatively few "new economy" or other high-paying technology jobs created in the region. However, as the national economy has slowed, it affords Amherst and the rest of the region the opportunity to prepare for the next upward cycle. A number of factors contributed to limiting economic expansion in Amherst and the entire Buffalo region during the 1990s. These factors, and how the Town and its economic development partners can respond to them, are as follows:

- ***Cost of doing business:*** Western New York (and New York State in general) is known for its high tax burden. Although the tax incentives offered by the Amherst IDA have been helpful in overcoming this problem to some degree, more can be done. In accordance with the Erie County Industrial Development Agency's Eligibility Policy for Redevelopment, the Amherst IDA is broadening its incentive programs to include more types of uses, as well as to address reinvestment in older parts of town (see Land Use and Development Policy 3-8). The available incentives should be targeted to support developments/businesses that meet the following basic criteria:
 - Provide higher paying job opportunities
 - Locate on sites consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Development policies (e.g., to support reuse of existing, vacant buildings)

- Promote forms of development that are consistent with the Land Use and Development policies (e.g., mixed-use, providing transit and pedestrian connections)

Tax abatement programs should be supplemented with other steps to reduce the cost of doing business, particularly in the area of utility costs. The Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation, for example, offers businesses that locate or expand in an Economic Development Zone up to ten years of deep discounts on increased or new electricity and natural gas consumption through its Economic Development Zone Rider (EDZR).

- **Regulatory environment:** Another hurdle to development in Western New York is a perception that the zoning/development review process is difficult, time consuming, and potentially expensive. While Amherst's regulatory environment is certainly among the best in Western New York, more can be done to attract quality employers to the Town. As described in Policy 5-2 below, one of the most important criteria to employers when choosing locations is the ability to grow in place. As a business grows, it needs to expand its physical space, and it is important that the Town have in place flexible regulatory policies that can accommodate the various stages of business development. One possible strategy is to secure approvals on appropriate sites prior to development and make them available to prospective businesses.
- **Loss of educated professionals:** Metropolitan areas that gained the most during the 1990s (i.e., Washington, DC, Atlanta, San Francisco, Dallas) were generally those with large numbers of highly educated professionals who possess the skills needed for the new economy. These cities have, among other advantages, access to graduates from top-notch engineering and/or science programs from universities in their regions. The University at Buffalo (UB) has made strides in improving its profile, but many of its brightest graduates leave the area, often citing the lack of good jobs. This creates a chicken-egg situation, as educated workers leave to find good jobs, while employers with good jobs cannot find qualified employees. The Town can address this problem by promoting better coordination between private businesses and educational institutions (see Policy 5-3).
- **Lower-level job skills:** In addition to highly educated professionals, technology employers must also employ workers with high school diplomas or associates' degrees, but certain skills are required of these lower-level workers. Since Buffalo's economy has traditionally been rooted in

manufacturing and distribution, many less educated workers have skills that have become out-of-date, and these workers must be retrained. Additionally, high school students who do not show interest in attending college often enter the workforce with limited job skills. Policy 5-4 below describes how the Town and its partners can address the issue of developing a skilled workforce.

- ***Climate:*** While Buffalo is known as a cold weather city, this does not need to be an overly negative influence. During the 1990s, other cold weather metropolitan areas like Minneapolis, Chicago, and Boston grew substantially, despite their climates. A great deal of mythology has developed around the harshness of the Buffalo winter, and that mythology can be put to rest with a few simple facts. In selling Amherst to potential businesses, putting together a weather fact sheet may be useful. This fact sheet could demonstrate how Buffalo’s winter is offset by its mild, sunny summers. It can also show that its average January temperature is 24 degrees, which compares well with those of Minneapolis (12), Chicago (22), and Boston (29).

Economic development efforts should build on Amherst’s ***positive assets***, many of which relate to the Town’s outstanding quality of life.

From the standpoint of attracting businesses that offer higher-paying jobs, Amherst already has a number of positives that can be built upon to help with economic development efforts. These positives include:

- Low cost of living
- Affordable housing options
- Good schools and other community facilities
- Low crime
- Variety of cultural and recreational opportunities
- Good transportation network
- Presence of the University at Buffalo
- Location close to the center of the Buffalo metropolitan area
- Location within the New York/Ontario “Golden Horseshoe” (region and world-class city of Toronto, Ontario)

With changing consumer purchasing patterns brought on in large part by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the above characteristics can support the Town’s efforts to take advantage of new commercial opportunities. The most obvious of these is in the realm of E-commerce. It is recognized that the region’s lack of available industrial and warehousing space constrains its competitive position to attract emerging and growing product manufacturing and E-commerce businesses. Large shovel-ready sites are considered desirable by firms seeking to expand warehousing operations that can readily serve surrounding populations. Some select sites in Amherst,

which offer direct access to major transportation routes, locations away from residential neighborhoods, and large tracts of land that can be buffered from surrounding uses, provide opportunities for this changing trend (see Section 3.3.4, *Industrial Uses*). By accommodating E-commerce, Amherst can build on its existing reputation as a regional employment hub, as well as add to its tax base. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)

Many of the policies contained in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan are designed to maintain and enhance these strengths, thus supporting the goals of livability, community character, and economic health that are central to the Vision Statement and which are closely related.

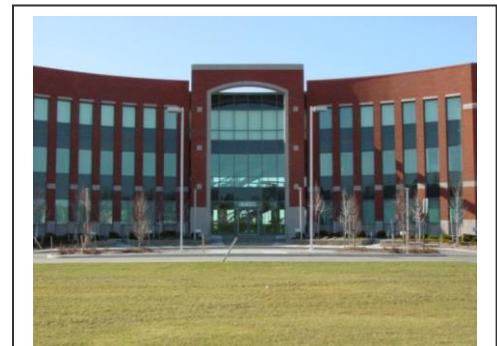
5-2 Build flexibility into non-residential zoning so that options are available for the various stages of business development.

In the technology economy, firms grow rapidly and therefore must be able to find spaces into which they may grow. Technology firms can often shift from incubator space to multi-tenant space to single-tenant, build-to-suit facilities in the space of five years or less. At each stage of development, a firm not only has particular needs; it will also have particular preferences for the age and character of its space, the characteristics of its surrounding areas, and the types of amenities available to its employees.

Of all the communities in Western New York, Amherst is among the best equipped to accommodate firms as they undergo the transition from start-up to multinational. Amherst’s commercial areas bridge the gap from traditional centers to post-World War II highway commercial corridors to modern office parks. However, at the present time, most office businesses wanting to locate in Amherst are limited to office parks, as there are few older office buildings and commercial zoning in older commercial areas is often not conducive to modern office development.

In response, the Town should build flexibility into zoning categories in both generations of its older commercial areas: traditional centers such as Eggertsville and Snyder, and commercial corridors such as Sheridan Drive and Niagara Falls Boulevard. More flexible zoning categories would accomplish two goals. First, office businesses of all types and sizes could find appropriate locations for development. Secondly, underutilized retail sites could be re-used for office and other commercial development.

5-3 Promote economic development through collaborations between government, educational institutions, health care organizations, and private industries.



Existing office development at Sheridan Meadows.

Policy 5-3 supports the **Education Key Initiative** to position Amherst as a leading national “knowledge-based” community.

While the Western New York economy is generally characterized as stagnant and the region has lost population over the last several decades, these actually present opportunities for future growth. As a long-established urban hub, the Buffalo area contains many educational, medical, cultural, and community service organizations, the likes of which are not typically found in less established, growing areas. In addition, the area is home to many high-profile corporations, both old and new, with strong interests in improving the area's future economic situation.

At the regional level, partnerships for economic development and information exchange already exist (see Policy 5-10), but more can be done to address the core of the challenge. As mentioned in Policy 5-1, a major obstacle to economic development in Amherst and other Western New York communities is an exodus of much of the area's brightest young talent. The chief goal of any cross-institutional collaboration for economic development should be to slow and ultimately reverse this exodus. The points below describe some of the reasons for the loss of young professionals, and potential opportunities for counteracting it.

- ***Lack of quality career opportunities:*** While there is a perception among young professionals that quality job opportunities are limited in the Buffalo area, this perception is not necessarily true. A number of leading employers in Amherst interviewed for the *Inventory and Analysis Report* spoke of not being able to find talent locally to fill high-skill, technical jobs. A large part of the problem is communication, as younger workers are not aware of quality employment opportunities, and employers do not know how to access qualified employees. As the home of both UB (the source of many prospective employees) and many major employers, the Town should collaborate with the Amherst IDA, UB, other higher education institutions (Daemen, Canisius, Buffalo State), and major employers to address this situation. Examples of potential initiatives include:
 - Sponsoring an Amherst “Career Fair”
 - Establishing an Internet-based career placement service

- ***The importance of cultural and entertainment opportunities:*** For young professionals, an active urban environment is often a more important factor in choosing a career path than the job itself. From this standpoint, Buffalo has difficulty competing with cosmopolitan centers such as New York or Boston, or even mid-sized cities like Pittsburgh and Cleveland. However, Buffalo's standing as a place with an active entertainment scene has

greatly improved in recent years, aided by the resurgence of commercial areas like Elmwood Avenue, Chippewa Street, and the theater district. Beyond nightlife, the City has a variety of cultural and recreational opportunities that are both more affordable and more readily available than are similar outlets in larger cities. As part of a program of selling the merits of the Buffalo area to young professionals, partnerships should be pursued that bring employers in Amherst together with professional sports teams, arts and cultural institutions, restaurants and nightclubs, and similar “excitement building” entities to market Buffalo’s allure to young professionals.

- ***Absence of growth industries:*** For young professionals looking at starting careers, long-term prospects in the chosen industry are always a consideration. Currently, few of the larger employers in Amherst are in popular growth fields like biotechnology or software and Internet development. Recent investment by the State of New York indicates that this trend is likely to change, particularly in the medical and biotechnology industries. The State of New York is investing over \$250 million to establish a Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics at the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus in Buffalo. Since the Medical Campus itself has limited opportunities for real estate development, Amherst could be an important partner in this effort. In this respect the Town has two advantages: its proximity to the University at Buffalo’s campuses and its reputation as a viable location for research and development facilities. To take advantage of this opportunity, the Town should work with the University and the Medical Campus to market sites to companies seeking to capitalize on the establishment of the Bioinformatics Center.

5-4 Work with educational institutions on lifelong learning and other programs to train, attract, and retain a skilled workforce.

Of all Western New York communities, Amherst has the greatest concentration of educational resources. In addition to the University at Buffalo, Daemen College, Erie Community College, and a number of top-level parochial and private schools, the Town’s three public school districts are among the best in Western New York.

With such a depth of educational institutions, the infrastructure is already in place to achieve the goal of training, attracting, and retaining skilled workers. However, one of the challenges faced by the Town of Amherst is to provide its labor force with appropriate job skills for future careers. As stated earlier, the Buffalo region suffers from a mismatch of job skills, as a significant portion of its workforce is trained for

jobs that no longer exist in this region. In order to ensure that the entire workforce is prepared for careers in tomorrow's industries, a number of initiatives should be undertaken:

- ***Identify future needs of employers:*** The Amherst IDA conducts an annual survey of businesses located in Amherst's industrial and business parks. As part of this survey, each company's workforce needs should be identified, so that educational institutions at all levels can continually offer the proper training to prospective workers.
- ***Tailor programs to objectives of workers:*** Even in top-flight high schools like those in Amherst, not all students intend to continue on to college. Instead, many graduates from these schools choose to enter the workforce directly. In order to ensure that these new members of the workforce can be of service to businesses in Amherst, the Town's public school districts should use the results of the business survey to create and adapt vocational training programs aimed at keeping graduates employed close to home.
- ***Expand adult education programs:*** In addition to the public schools, the presence of UB, Daemen College, and Erie County Community College is a key asset. Established workers and professionals are able to continue and enhance their education at these institutions and others with satellite campuses in the Town.

To address the problem of older workers with obsolete job skills, the high schools, Erie Community College, and other vocational schools have programs to help such workers acquire the training they need to remain competitive in the workforce. However, not all workers have the time or the money for college courses. For this segment of the workforce, the Town can work with Erie County and non-profit community service agencies to offer one-time training seminars in particular job skills. Furthermore, the Town could coordinate these seminars with employers and provide them with the opportunity to use such training sessions as mini job fairs.

- ***Provide co-op positions for students:*** In many technical fields, companies allow students to gain real world experience by working as "co-op" employees for a semester or a summer. If companies in Amherst create more co-op positions, they can give students a taste of the work environment prior to graduating. Co-op positions can also help address the loss of young persons, as they

can show students that they need not leave the area to obtain quality employment.

B. Community Character and Quality of Life

As expressed in the Vision Statement, which emphasizes the need for balance between economic development and livability, Amherst’s attractiveness as a place for business depends upon its quality of life and community character. In the past, some land use decisions have resulted in intense non-residential uses located next to established residential areas, creating the potential for adverse impacts. Future decision-making must address the need to safeguard the character and quality of life of Amherst’s residential communities as a fundamental principle, through application of the land use and development policies described in Chapter 3.0. Specifically, commercial retail, office and industrial development should be designed to minimize impacts on residential areas through complementary site locations and development patterns (Policy 5-5) and quality design features that address “edge conditions” and relationships to public roadways (Policy 5-6).

Amherst’s *attractiveness as a place for business* depends upon its quality of life and community character.

5-5 Promote commercial development patterns that reduce neighborhood impacts.

The Conceptual Land Use Plan and related land use policies are designed to focus more intensive development in mixed-use areas that function as centers of activity for the community. By guiding commercial development to these centers, the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods can be maintained and traffic impacts reduced through access management and coordination with transit service and pedestrian/bicycle facilities. A primary goal of both the Land Use and Economic Development Elements is to promote reinvestment in existing commercial centers and corridors in older parts of Amherst, where roads and other infrastructure are available and such reinvestment can contribute to maintaining the health of adjacent residential areas. In developing parts of central and northern Amherst, mixed-use centers are designated in strategic locations to accommodate commercial development in compact rather than dispersed patterns, providing convenient access without infringing upon residential areas and encouraging the formation of commercial strips.



5-6 Adopt commercial development standards for neighborhood compatibility with context sensitive design guidelines.

The Land Use and Development Element proposes the establishment of standards to improve the quality of development. As described in Policy 3-5, these standards need to address the impacts of commercial development on adjacent residential uses, including:

- Landscaping, buffer/edge treatment, and screening

- Access management
- Building design elements sensitive to the surrounding context (scale, height/mass, orientation, façade treatment)

In addition, enhanced standards should be put in place to address the appearance of commercial development from public roadways (landscaping, signage, placement of signage, etc.). These standards would help to improve the visual character of neighborhoods adjacent to commercial corridors.

C. University at Buffalo

One of the Town’s outstanding assets from the standpoint both of the economy and quality of life, the University at Buffalo (UB) is central to the Comprehensive Plan initiative to become known as a leading “knowledge-based” community. However, UB’s North Campus has functioned as a largely self-contained entity that has little interaction with the surrounding community. In addition, there has been limited coordination between the University administration and the Town on land use/development and other issues of mutual concern. However, this has begun to change through initiatives such as the University Community Initiative and the Amherst IDA’s partnership in the Office of Science, Technology Transfer, and Economic Outreach and significant opportunities exist for additional collaboration. Such collaboration would yield positive benefits for both entities and help achieve the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

5-7 Work with UB to create mixed-use activity centers on the periphery of the campuses.

The number of students living on UB’s North Campus is projected to increase from 4,600 in 2000 to 8,500 in 2005. To accommodate this expansion, the University is constructing student housing near the perimeter of the campus and plans to construct additional housing along with a commercial center located within the campus. In addition, demand will increase for off-campus rental housing oriented towards students in areas around the campus. As currently conceived, the University’s plans do not address the isolation of the North Campus from Amherst or the potential for ancillary impacts (e.g., increased traffic, demand for public services, effects on neighborhoods).

A significant opportunity exists for the University and the Town to work together to accommodate development associated with North Campus expansion in ways that better integrate UB into the Town and promote Comprehensive Plan policies related to land use and economic development. Specifically, development should be focused in university-related mixed-use activity centers strategically located around the periphery of the campus. Specific components of these centers could include:

The *University at Buffalo* is a major community asset and provides opportunities for increased collaboration to promote economic development and other goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

- On- and off-campus student/faculty housing and activities
- Small-scale commercial retail and services oriented towards the UB community and nearby neighborhoods
- Incubator and research-related employment parks that help achieve the objectives of the Economic Development Element

Potential activity center locations are designated in the Land Use and Development Element. This concept is further addressed in Section 10.3 of the Focal Planning Area chapter.

The University is currently preparing 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 same 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 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 Town and University planning efforts to create a second University related mixed use activity center. This concept may be explored with the University as their physical planning efforts progress and considered as part of future annual plan reviews.

In addition to working together on development around the North Campus, the Town and UB should continue to pursue initiatives to strengthen older neighborhoods around the South Campus (located in the City of Buffalo adjacent to Amherst) to address the impacts of the shift in students and academic functions to the North Campus. With respect to economic development, one possible strategy is to seek opportunities to locate University-related incubator/research facilities within nearby commercial/mixed-use areas. Medical-related research and development is a potential focus that would capitalize on proximity to the Medical School on South Campus and the emerging Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and center for bioinformatics and medical research in downtown Buffalo.

As described in the *Inventory and Analysis Report* (pages 6-20 to 6-25), there are many examples of colleges and universities acting as partners in programs to promote economic development in their communities. Typical activities carried out by these programs include:

- Community development (stabilizing neighborhoods, creating retail opportunities, providing access to capital for reinvestment, etc.)

- Research and development (establishing incubatory/research facilities to encourage startup businesses and to provide research for transfer to entrepreneurs)
- Real estate development (acting as developers/managers of off-campus projects with office, retail, and/or housing components)

The University has already indicated a commitment to its host communities through initiatives such as the University Community Initiative and the existing incubator facility near the North Campus. Additional steps in this direction could help secure its growing reputation as a major academic institution while positioning Amherst as one of the nation's leading university towns. Potential focuses of a collaborative, town/gown approach to securing Amherst's status as a "knowledge-based" community with a skilled workforce and high quality of life include:

- Educational and lifelong learning opportunities
- Economic development and job creation
- Partnerships with multiple institutions and businesses
- Neighborhood and commercial area revitalization, including urban design improvements consistent with Comprehensive Plan objectives

5-8 Work with UB to promote more educational, social, and cultural ties to the Town and to reinforce the role of both campuses as activity centers.

Over the past 25 years, the University at Buffalo has used its North Campus as a means of growing the institution, both physically and in academic stature. As the core of the University has shifted from the South to the North Campus, the institution itself has been transformed into a major presence on the national academic scene. The University today boasts a large, modern campus with many state-of-the-art facilities, as well as a smaller-scale, traditional campus to the south for programs such as the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, and Architecture.

A consequence of the shift to the North Campus is that the bulk of University operations are no longer located in the City of Buffalo; the University's central area is now located several miles north, in the Town of Amherst. In fact, there has been some support within the institution to change its name to the State University of New York at Amherst, in order to differentiate it from the older Buffalo campus.

Despite this shift to the North Campus, the University has yet to establish the types of connections with Amherst typically seen between "town and gown" at older, more established academic institutions. In fact, when people think of and refer

to many universities, simply saying the name of the town serves as a proxy for the university itself (Chapel Hill, Boulder, Ann Arbor, etc.). Even with respect to campuses in urban areas, there are districts that serve the university population first and foremost: Harvard Square, Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, High Street in Columbus, etc.

However, for a new campus located in a residential, suburban area, it is often difficult to establish a meaningful relationship between town and gown. While the future development of mixed-use activity centers around the periphery of the campuses (Policy 5-7) is designed in part to help knit the North Campus into the fabric of Amherst, the ties that should be developed between UB and the Town of Amherst go beyond land use. In order to truly establish the psychological connections that tie the University and Town together and help position Amherst as a superlative “knowledge-based” community, day-to-day reminders are needed that both exist in harmony. The following outlines some ways in which the ties between town and gown should be strengthened through programs at both campuses:

- ***Educational programs:*** As with any university, the core function of UB is educating students. For the most part, students at UB are working towards a bachelor’s or master’s degree. However, for adults going back to school to learn new skills (Policy 5-4) or advanced high school students looking for more challenging courses, the typical destination is a community college. To help further integrate UB with the community, the Town should encourage the University to offer more programs for non-degree residents as well as one-time or short-term seminars in particular professional skills.
- ***Social/recreational activities:*** Athletics represents one of the primary means by which universities integrate themselves into the community. The University at Buffalo competes in Division I athletics in the Mid-American Conference, but its athletic teams do not have a very strong profile. Even within its conference, some other schools, such as Miami of Ohio, Marshall, and Ball State, have stronger support from their communities than does UB. In a mutually beneficial arrangement, the Town could organize “UB Days,” when large groups of Amherst residents would get together to attend games. Such an arrangement would benefit the Town, as residents would become more involved in the University. It would also benefit the University, which is looking for ways to raise the profile and fan base of its teams.



UB's Center for the Arts.

- ***Cultural programs:*** In recent years, many people who are able to choose their places of residence, either because they are retired or self employed, have gravitated to college towns. The primary attraction of such locations is the concentration of cultural activities. Many academic institutions have come to recognize the importance of offering first-class cultural opportunities to students, faculty, and the community. For example, as an effort to strengthen both its arts programs and its ties to the community, the University of Cincinnati – like UB, a former commuter school – has invested millions of dollars in state-of-the art cultural facilities (a new museum and a new performing arts center). As a result, these facilities have become draws for not just the University community, but also for the Cincinnati region as a whole. Citing such examples, the Town should encourage the University to expand the cultural opportunities it makes available to Amherst residents.

5-9 Establish an ongoing, collaborative planning structure with UB.

A strong cooperative relationship between the Town and UB is necessary if implementation of Policies 5-7 and 5-8 is to be successful. The following planning structure is proposed to facilitate formal and informal collaboration on issues of mutual concern:

- An “Executive Committee” should be established, comprised of high-level representatives from both the Town and University. This committee would meet periodically (e.g., quarterly or more frequently if needed to address specific issues) to discuss town/gown policy and issues.
- A “Staff Committee” should also be established, comprised of senior professional staff from both parties. This committee would meet regularly (e.g., bimonthly) to provide briefings and discuss development projects, infrastructure, and environmental issues.
- There should be a policy of cross-representation on Town or University planning projects that affect both parties. Precedence for this policy has been set by the University’s representation on the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee.
- The Executive Committee should establish ad hoc groups as needed to work on specific joint projects, such as the University Community Initiative.

As a general rule, both the Town and University should share information on an on-going basis and provide opportunities for input before plans that could potentially impact the other party are implemented.

D. Regional Economic Development

A healthy regional economy is key to Amherst's future prosperity. The Comprehensive Plan strongly endorses the adage that "a rising tide lifts all boats," as Amherst's success will only continue if the region around it remains strong. Towards this end, the goals, objectives, and policies contained in this element are directed to promoting economic development in the Town in the context of the Western New York region as a whole.

Amherst's future prosperity is closely tied to the economic health of the *Buffalo-Niagara region* as a whole.

5-10 Work with area municipalities and economic development agencies to promote regional economic growth.

Given Amherst's position as an established leader in the region's economic development, there has, in the past, been the perception that the Town has operated in competition with its neighbors. However, as evidenced by the newly strengthened partnership between the Amherst IDA and the other IDAs in Erie County, this attitude is changing. Also in the past few years, communities in the area have begun to eliminate parochial thinking, and Amherst has been a regional leader. At the present time, Amherst is actively working with the City of Buffalo and the Towns of Tonawanda, Cheektowaga, and Clarence on local-area planning for neighborhoods and corridors around its borders.

Beyond local-area planning initiatives, the Town is also becoming increasingly involved in a number of regional economic development efforts led from within Amherst by the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth at the University at Buffalo. This Institute sponsors the State of the Region report, a comprehensive statistical analysis of Western New York and how it compares with other regions in a number of demographic, economic, and quality of life indicators. The Institute also maintains the Western New York Regional Information Network (<http://rin.buffalo.edu>). WNYRIN is a storehouse of data, contacts, and web links regarding all aspects of regional growth and economic development, and Amherst has been an active participant in its efforts.

Amherst is already taking steps to become more involved with its neighbors in promoting economic growth, at both the community and regional levels. In order to continue to promote regional economic growth, the Town should keep current with future efforts in this direction and build on its collaborative planning efforts with its neighbors. The Town has experienced the value of cooperative projects with UB, the City of Buffalo, Clarence, and Cheektowaga. These projects and relationships will continue to serve Amherst well in the future.

Amherst's relationship with the City of Buffalo is key to the objective of promoting regional economic growth. The initial growth of Amherst in the 20th century was due to its status as a bedroom community to Buffalo, with commercial districts serving suburban population centers like Eggertsville and Snyder. As development in Amherst continued, the Town became more than a residential suburb: it emerged as a center of retail, office, and light industrial employment as well. In growing metropolitan areas, suburban employment centers like Amherst have proven to coexist well with older, central cities, as is evident by the continued vitality of cities like Boston, Washington, and New York.

However, as is well documented, the economy of the Buffalo region has seen little growth over the past several decades. As a result, real estate developers and municipalities often find themselves in competition to attract the same employers. Today, Amherst and Buffalo stand as the two largest employment centers in the region, with Amherst having significant advantages when it comes to attracting new and/or relocating businesses. To many of today's office employers, the most important factors in choosing locations are: modern, efficient space, technology infrastructure, good highway access, available parking, and room to expand.

Since Buffalo, like other central cities, is at a competitive disadvantage compared to Amherst and other suburban locations, it must rely on other factors to attract employment. The urban environment of downtown Buffalo is an "intangible" factor that is attractive to many employers, as is its proximity to Lake Erie, HSBC Arena, the Theater District, and many restaurants. For certain types of employers, downtown Buffalo's shortcomings as an office location are outweighed by its other benefits.

Within this context, it is not in the interest of Amherst or the region to compete with Buffalo for business and employment. Downtown Buffalo is the historic commercial center of the region, and the public face of the city to the rest of the world. If downtown Buffalo remains in decline, the entire Buffalo region will suffer. A healthy, exciting, attractive downtown benefits everyone – employers, employees, and residents alike. Even for those who do not live or work downtown, it is a cultural amenity for the whole region.

Given the above, Amherst's economic development efforts should focus on attracting new businesses to the region and on growing existing businesses within the Town. It is also worth noting that, as Amherst is built out in the future, it could become susceptible to the loss of business and employment. Amherst should therefore continue to set a

positive example for the region by acting in a cooperative and positive manner in regard to its neighbors.

5-11 Position Amherst as a regional technology center.

Within the regional context, Amherst must cooperate with its neighbors, but still should strive to build its own identity as a center of technology business and employment in the region. Pursuing this goal will consist of a three-pronged strategy that balances capital investment, workforce development, and marketing:

- **Capital Investment:** Amherst already possesses a significant network of so-called “Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure,” including fiber optic and other telecommunications lines. In addition, Amherst has excellent “standard municipal infrastructure,” such as roads, water and sewer lines, and electrical power. From the standpoint of capital investment, the Town’s main challenge is in maintaining existing networks of both types of infrastructure in good condition, while encouraging continuing investment in new technological infrastructure by private providers of high-speed Internet and other technological services.
- **Workforce Development:** As outlined in Policies 5-3 and 5-4, the Town of Amherst can take a number of steps to reverse the exodus of young workers. As part of the efforts to grow and retain a strong workforce, the Town needs to continue to participate in efforts to help the skills of its workforce keep pace with the needs of private industry. The two major partners in this effort should be the companies themselves, which will identify needed skills, and UB and other institutions of higher education, which can help design appropriate training programs.
- **Marketing:** With the proper infrastructure in place and a strong workforce, companies and employees need to be made aware of Amherst and its advantages. The Amherst IDA has long served this role on behalf of the Town, and will continue to do so. Thus it is important, that, as part of the Comprehensive Plan implementation, the Town build on IDA’s marketing efforts. Over the course of 25 years, the IDA has built up an international network of contacts, as well as an image of Amherst as a center of “Place-Based Innovation.” While this theme continues to be appropriate for the Town, it should be expanded to explicitly reflect Amherst’s role as a regional technology center.

A photograph of a street scene with people walking and cars parked, overlaid with the word "Transportation" in a large, italicized font. The scene shows a paved road with a crosswalk, a sidewalk, and several people walking. There are cars parked on the left side of the road. The background is filled with tall, thin trees without leaves, suggesting a winter or early spring setting. The overall image has a slightly faded or semi-transparent appearance.

Transportation

6

Transportation

6.1 Overview.....	6-1
6.2 Goals, Objectives, and Policies.....	6-3
A. Road Network.....	6-4
B. Bicycle/Pedestrian Network.....	6-15
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6.0 Transportation

6.1 OVERVIEW

**Priority Action Programs:
Transportation**

- Develop a strategy to implement targeted improvements to roadways with identified level of service deficiencies
- Develop a strategy to implement a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network

Growth and development in the Town of Amherst over the last several decades have resulted in increasing levels of automobile traffic, creating the desire and necessity to improve mobility. As a part of the comprehensive planning process the Town’s transportation system has been evaluated with respect to vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation and public transportation.

Amherst’s existing transportation network is highly dependent upon private automobiles due to the Town’s history of typical suburban style development. Improvements to streets and highways have impacted other transportation modes, including transit, bicycling, and walking. This automobile dependency has caused congestion along major roadway corridors and decreased safety for pedestrian and bicycle users. As streets are widened and lanes added to existing thoroughfares, pedestrian/automobile conflicts and impacts on adjacent neighborhoods increase.

Improvements have been made to Amherst’s transportation system as a result of funded programs through New York State, Erie County, and the Town. Major capital improvement projects are identified by the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC).⁷ These include preferred projects with funding identified as part of the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and longer range projects that have merit but for which funding has not yet been identified. Even with implementation of the five-year TIP and long-range projects, segments of the Town’s roadway network are projected to experience Levels of Service (LOS) of E or F during peak PM hours during the time horizon (± 20 years) of the Comprehensive Plan. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Programmed and non-programmed (long-range) improvements to existing roadways contained in GBNRTC’s TIP and Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) are shown on Figure 8 and listed in Table 3. Roadway segments projected by GBNRTC to have deficient (E or F) levels of service during the Comprehensive Plan time horizon, and through 2040 (the time horizon for the 2040 MTP) even with implementation of the programmed and

⁷ Formerly the Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee (NFTC). As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Buffalo-Niagara region, the GBNRTC is responsible for regional transportation planning.

unprogrammed roadway projects, are shown on Figure 8 and listed in Table 4. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

Table 3. GBNRTC Long-Range Transportation Plan Programmed & Unprogrammed Roadway Improvements⁸

5-Year TIP (funded) Projects	Description
N Forest Rd; John Muir Dr to Audubon Pkwy	Reconstruction
Kenmore Ave: Starin Ave to Main St	Reconstruction
Sweet Home Rd; Maple Rd to UB North Campus entrance	Reconstruction
I-990; I-290 to North French Rd	Highway Rehabilitation
MPO Long Range Projects	Description
I-90/I-290 Interchange Improvements; Exit 50	Reconfigure interchange at Blue Water tower
Toll Barrier and toll collection modernization	Consider toll collection locations and methods
Buffalo-Amherst Corridor Transit Enhancements; University Station to Crosspointe	Amherst – Buffalo Corridor Study underway (2014-2016)

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

Table 4. Roadway Segments with Projected Deficient Levels of Service⁹

Roadway	Segment
I-290	Niagara Falls Blvd to I-90
Niagara Falls Blvd (NY 62)	Ellicott Creek to Niagara County Line
N French Rd	Millersport Hwy (NY 263) to Hopkins Rd
Transit Rd (NY 78)	Dann Rd to N French Rd
Millersport Hwy (NY 263)	I-290 to Maple Rd
Millersport Hwy (NY 263)	North Forest Rd to Sylvan Pkwy
Main St (NY 5)	I-290 to Union Rd
Sheridan Dr (NY 324)	I-290 to North Forest Rd
Youngs Rd	Sheridan Dr (NY 324) to Main St (NY 5)
Transit Rd (NY 78)	Maple Rd to Sheridan Dr (NY 324)
Transit Rd (NY 78)	NYS Thruway to Wehrle Dr

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

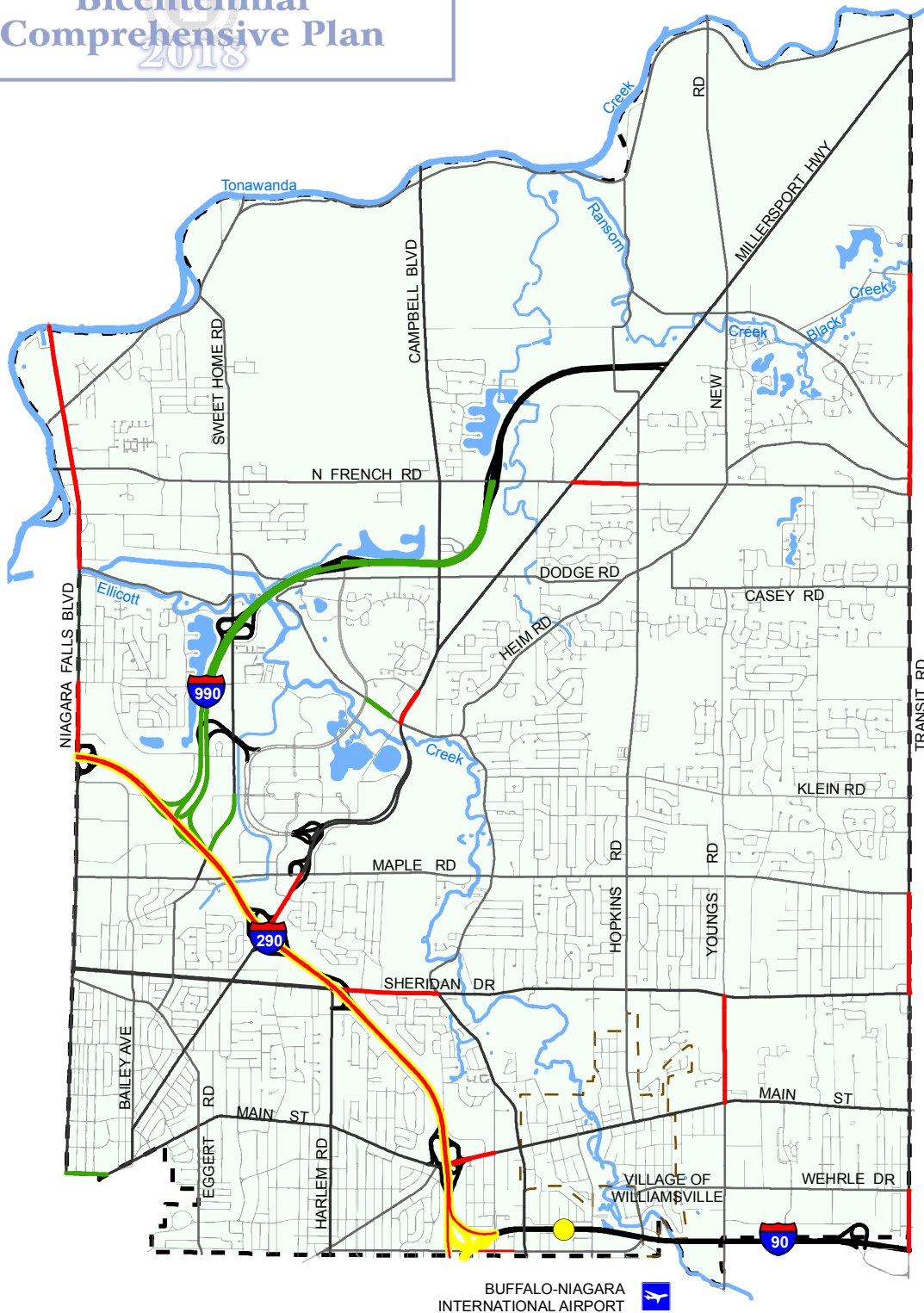
To create a more efficient and sustainable transportation system in the Town of Amherst, the following issues must be addressed:

- Lack of a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation capital improvement program

⁸ As programmed in the GBNRTC 2014-2018 TIP

⁹ As reported by the GBNRTC in July 2014

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



BUFFALO-NIAGARA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS/PROJECTED FUTURE DEFICIENCIES

FIGURE 8

LEGEND

Proposed Roadway Improvements

- 5 - Year TIP (2014-2018)
- 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

2040 Roadway Deficiencies

- LOS 'E' or 'F'

Roads

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

- Municipal Boundary
- Village of Williamsville Boundary
- Surface Water

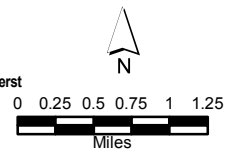
SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

GBNRTC – Draft 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department

Date: September 2015



Level of Service (LOS)

The LOS is the best indicator of the operation of a roadway. It is a qualitative measure of a driver’s comfort and safety perception as related to speed, travel time and delay, traffic interruptions, freedom to maneuver, driver frustration, comfort, convenience and safety. LOS is measured on a scale of A to F as follows:

- **LOS “A”** represents free flow, where drivers are unaffected by others in the traffic stream.
- **LOS “B”** represents stable flow, however the presence of others in the traffic stream is noticeable.
- **LOS “C”** is in the limit of stable flow, where maneuvering within the traffic flow requires significant vigilance.
- **LOS “D”** represents high density but stable flow. Freedom and speed to maneuver are highly restricted. This condition usually warrants improvement.
- **LOS “E”** represents operating levels at or near capacity. Comfort and convenience levels are very low, driver frustration is high, and very long delays ensue.
- **LOS “F”** is used to define a breakdown of flow. The amount of traffic arriving at a point exceeds the amount departing and queues begin to form. Extreme delays are encountered.

- Need for more connections among neighborhoods (e.g., sidewalks, paths, roadway linkages, etc.)
- Need for more bicycle and pedestrian routes, sidewalks, and trails
- Need to address safety issues and conflicts between pedestrian/bicycle and vehicular traffic
- Need to address the effects of roadway improvement projects on adjoining neighborhoods

In planning for future improvements, the Transportation Element should be used in conjunction with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including Land Use and Development (Chapter 3.0) and Infrastructure (Chapter 8.0). When implementing the policies set forth in this chapter, it is important that the Town consider the regional context of Amherst’s transportation challenges. Increased congestion on the Town’s roadway corridors is tied to growth and commuting patterns in Erie and Niagara Counties. Studies relevant to the Town of Amherst that should be consulted include:

- Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan *Inventory and Analysis Report* (December 2001)
- Town of Amherst *Traffic Study Final Summary Report* (February 1997)
- GBNRTC *2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Erie and Niagara Counties* (May 2014) (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)
- Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee *Regional Bikeway Implementation Plan* (April 1998)
- Niagara Frontier Transportation Committee *Regional Pedestrian Master Plan* (December 1997)

6.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL

An efficient, multi-modal transportation system that accommodates the automobile, maintains neighborhood character, and emphasizes alternative means of travel, including walking, biking, and public transportation

OBJECTIVES

- Create a roadway network that improves efficiency and connectivity while preserving neighborhood character
- Develop the existing bicycle/pedestrian system into a town-wide, interconnected network that facilitates connections between vehicular and non-vehicular transportation

- Work with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to provide adequate public transit service, particularly to mixed-use activity centers identified in the Conceptual Land Use Plan
- Establish a town traffic assessment and planning capability to manage and maintain local highways

POLICIES

A. Road Network

Figure 9 illustrates the following characteristics of the Town’s future road network:

- **Functional classifications** of roadways
- **Roadway connections and completions** to enhance the connectivity and efficiency of the network

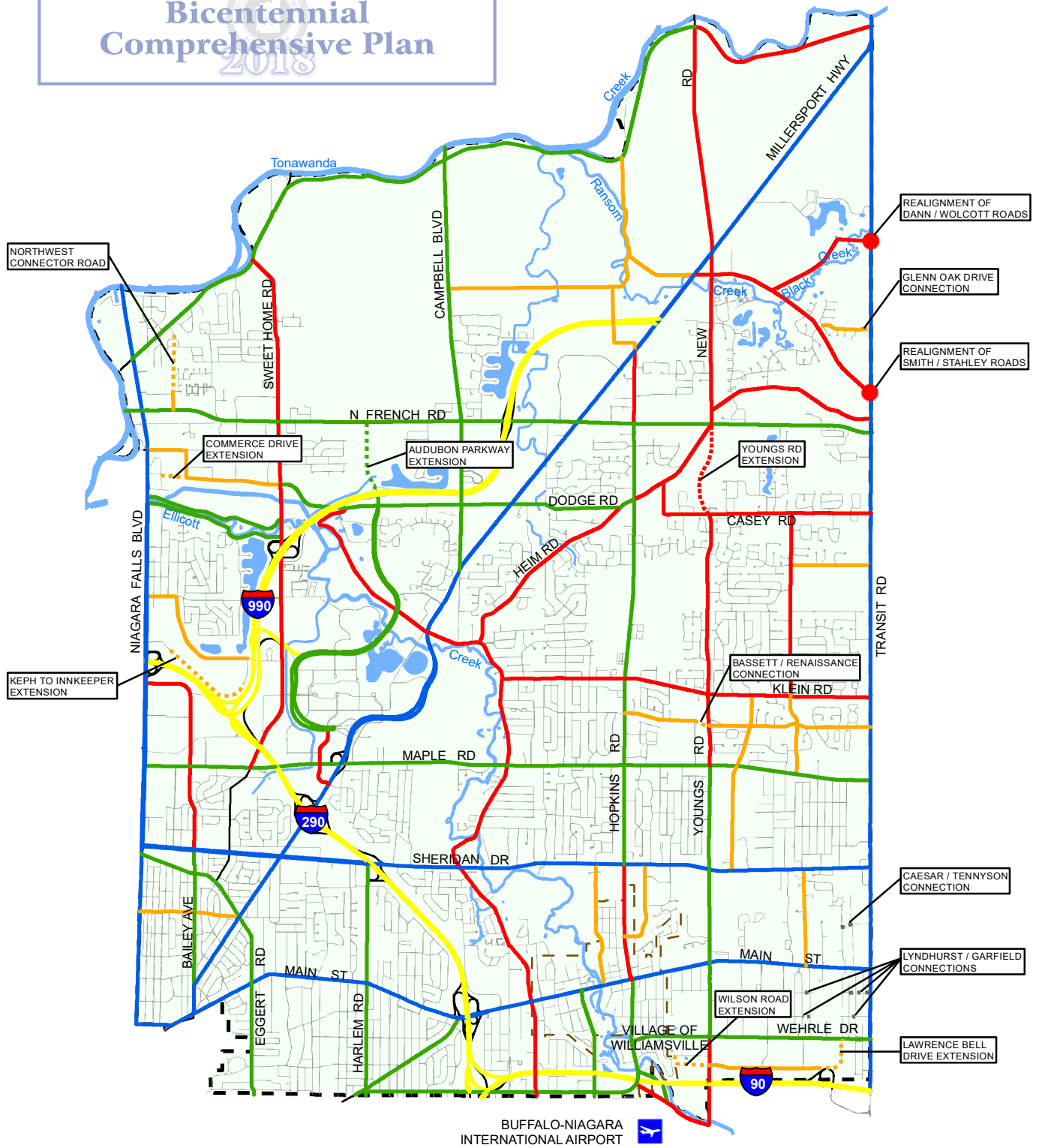
Functional Classifications

“Functional classifications” refer to the grouping of streets and highways into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the recognition that roads do not function independently, but rather as a system-wide network. The classifications shown in Figure 9 are based upon projected land uses, traffic volumes, and roadway configurations during the time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan. In general, the classifications are defined as follows:

- **Expressways:** Roadways devoted entirely to traffic movement with little or no direct land service function. Expressways are multilane, divided roads with controlled access and few, if any, intersections at grade. Expressways serve large volumes of high-speed traffic and are primarily intended to serve commuters or long trips within and between metropolitan areas.
- **Major Arterials:** High volume roadways that carry the major portion of daily trips to centers of activity in the metropolitan area. Major arterials (also called principal arterials) place a greater emphasis on mobility rather than access to land and include fully and partially controlled access. A major arterial serves major through movements between important centers of activities in a metropolitan area, and a substantial portion of trips entering and leaving the area. It also connects expressways with major traffic generators.
- **Minor Arterials:** Streets that connect and augment the major arterial system. Although its main function is still traffic mobility, a minor arterial performs this function at a somewhat lower level and places more emphasis on land access than does a major arterial. A system of minor arterials serves trips of moderate length and distributes travel to geographical areas smaller than those served by a major arterial.

<p><i>Vision Statement Directions: Transportation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional, safe, efficient transportation system • Multi-modal choices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interconnected roadways – Sidewalks – Bike lanes – Trails – Transit

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



Future Thoroughfare System

FIGURE 9

LEGEND

- Functional Classification**
- Local Collector
 - Collector
 - Minor Arterial
 - Major Arterial
 - Expressway

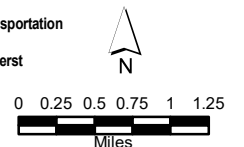
- Roadway Connections & Completions**
- Local Collector
 - Collector
 - Minor Arterial
 - Local Street
 - Intersection Realignment

- Municipal Boundary
- Village of Williamsville Boundary
- Surface Water

SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst
New York State Department of Transportation
Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst
Planning Department

Date: May 2016



- **Collectors:** Streets that distribute trips from and channel trips to arterials. Additionally, these roadways provide access and circulation within residential neighborhoods. Collector streets provide for both access and circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Their access function is more important than that of arterials, and unlike arterials, their operation is not always dominated by traffic signals.
- **Local Collectors:** Streets that distribute lower volumes of traffic from predominantly residential developments to collector streets and arterials. Local collectors carry through traffic, but at lower volumes than collectors.
- **Local Streets:** Streets that provide for local traffic with the highest level of property access and the lowest level of mobility. Through traffic movement is discouraged on local streets.

The road network consists of routes owned and maintained by local, county and state agencies. A high level of coordination between these agencies is required when considering improvements to any roadways within the Town.

Roadway Connections and Completions

Roadway connections/completions shown on Figure 9 include:
(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)

- Youngs Road extension from Casey Road to North French Road
- Northwest Connector Road from Wegmans Access to Tonawanda Creek Road
- Glen Oaks Drive connection to Transit Road
- Bassett Road/Renaissance Drive connection to Youngs Road
- Smith Road / Staley Road / Transit Road intersection realignment
- Dann Road / Wolcott Road / Transit Road intersection realignment
- Keph Drive to Innkeepers Lane extension parallel to I-290
- Wilson Road extension loop to Youngs Road at Lawrence Bell Drive
- Lawrence Bell Drive extension loop to Wehrle Drive
- Lyndhurst Road connection from Berkley Road to Transit Road
- Lyndhurst Road connection from Amherston Drive to Oakwood Road
- Garfield Road connection from Ferndale Road to Harding Road
- Garfield Road connection from Amherston Drive to Oakwood Road

- Caesar Boulevard connection to Tennyson Terrace
- Commerce Drive extension to Irvington Drive

These improvements are designed to increase the connectivity and efficiency of Amherst’s local road network by providing drivers with alternative ways of reaching their destinations, thus helping to reduce congestion along major corridors. In general, connections should be provided in the Town’s overall road network and within/between subdivisions to enhance vehicular circulation and reduce congestion. Traffic calming measures should be used where needed to protect neighborhoods from non-local, “cut-through” traffic (see Transportation Policy 6-2). It should be noted that levels of service on some of the roadway segments shown on Figure 8 to have projected future deficiencies may be improved by the roadway connection/completion projects.

Traffic calming refers to physical or operational measures to reduce vehicular speeds or volumes of “cut-through” traffic. Examples of physical traffic calming measures include traffic circles or roundabouts, textured pavements, raised crosswalks, and mid-block street narrowings or “chokers” (often in conjunction with pedestrian crossings).

While Figure 9 emphasizes the function of town roads in terms of moving vehicular traffic, the Comprehensive Plan policies for Amherst’s future road network are **not** designed to dramatically increase levels of service for the automobile through a capital-intensive program to widen existing roadways and construct new ones. Even if funding were available for such a program, experience has shown that increasing capacity tends to attract additional automobiles, often resulting in even more congestion while impacting adjacent neighborhoods, pedestrians, and bicyclists. As a fundamental principle, enhancing mobility for automobiles must be balanced with other considerations, such as protecting neighborhood character and providing for safe pedestrian and bicycle movement. Thus the first two policies below (6-1 and 6-2) address the need for a context-sensitive approach to planning and design of roadway improvements in coordination with adjacent land uses. Policy 6-3 involves establishing a town planning capability to manage the local road network. Policy 6-4 focuses on operational (as opposed to capital-intensive) measures to enhance roadway capacities. Policy 6-5 proposes a targeted capital program by the Town to address congestion problems on local roads. Recognizing that it is unrealistic to expect that operational and capital programs will eliminate traffic congestion in the Town of Amherst, Policy 6-6 emphasizes the need for a broader strategy that includes investment in alternative travel modes and coordination of transportation and land use policies.

6-1 Designate roadway corridors for application of context-sensitive design standards to maintain their character.

The Vision Statement expresses the importance of Amherst’s diverse physical environment – including distinct urban, suburban, and rural areas – to community character. Growth in recent decades has resulted in the lessening of distinctions between these areas, due in large part to the proliferation of automobile-oriented residential subdivisions and commercial strip development typical of suburbanizing communities. To help reestablish and reinforce physical diversity and sense of

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 (e.g., neighborhood quality), while maintaining safety and mobility (as opposed to “one-size-fits-all” engineering solutions).

place within Amherst, the Town should develop and adopt roadway design standards that are sensitive to the established context. These standards should address the treatment of the public right-of-way, the form and appearance of adjacent development, and land use in an integrated fashion. The standards should incorporate flexibility consistent with the approach to planning for transportation improvements known as “Context Sensitive Design,” which emphasizes collaborative planning with stakeholders to develop solutions appropriate to local conditions (see Policy 6-2). The Town should work with the Erie County Department of Public Works and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to implement the standards on highways under their jurisdiction.

Four types of character appropriate to different contexts have been identified:

- Traditional character
- Suburban character
- Commercial character
- Rural/special character

Figure 10 illustrates the locations of corridors within each of these types.

Traditional character: “Traditional” refers to corridors located within higher intensity centers and older neighborhoods such as Williamsville, Eggertsville, and Snyder. Design standards for these areas should promote a pedestrian-friendly environment through crosswalks and sidewalks, trees and other landscaping, commercial buildings located at established centers and pulled to the front of the lot with parking to the rear, and interconnected (grid) street patterns. Main Street between Kenmore Avenue and Kensington Avenue and through the Village of Williamsville is an example of a traditional corridor. Other traditional corridors include:

Main Street between Kenmore Avenue and Kensington Avenue and through the Village of Williamsville is an example of a **traditional corridor** with commercial buildings pulled to the sidewalk and parking located to the rear.

- Bailey Avenue from Main Street to Maple Road
- Eggert Road from the City of Buffalo line to Bailey Avenue
- Grover Cleveland Highway
- Harlem Road
- Kensington Avenue
- Union Road from Main Street to North Forest Road
- South/North Forest Road from Wehrle Drive to Union Road
- Niagara Falls Boulevard from Kenmore Avenue to Eggert Road
- Kenmore Avenue from Niagara Falls Boulevard to Main Street

- Garrison Road/Evans Street
- Wehrle Drive from Harlem Road to Cayuga Road
- Wehrle Drive from Aero Drive to the Village of Williamsville Line
- Cayuga Road
- Park Club Lane
- Getzville Road
- LeBrun Road

Suburban character: “Suburban” refers to corridors serving newer residential subdivisions and arterial or collector roadways serving non-local traffic and which typically support automobile-oriented development. Standards for residential subdivision roads should provide appropriate (not excessive) street widths, planting strips with street trees, sidewalks, and connected (not necessarily grid-like) patterns. Standards for arterial or collector corridors should balance the movement of traffic with the protection of adjacent residential areas. Segments of North Forest Road provide examples of a suburban roadway with unique characteristics that can be protected through standards. Desired treatments of suburban character corridors include controlled access as opposed to multiple curb cuts; treed planting strips, medians, and/or buffers adjacent to the roadway; and bike lanes and sidewalks. Consistent with Land Use and Development Policy 3-4, land use strategies for arterial and collector roadways should focus commercial development in centers with residential uses maintained between the designated center locations. Suburban character corridors include:

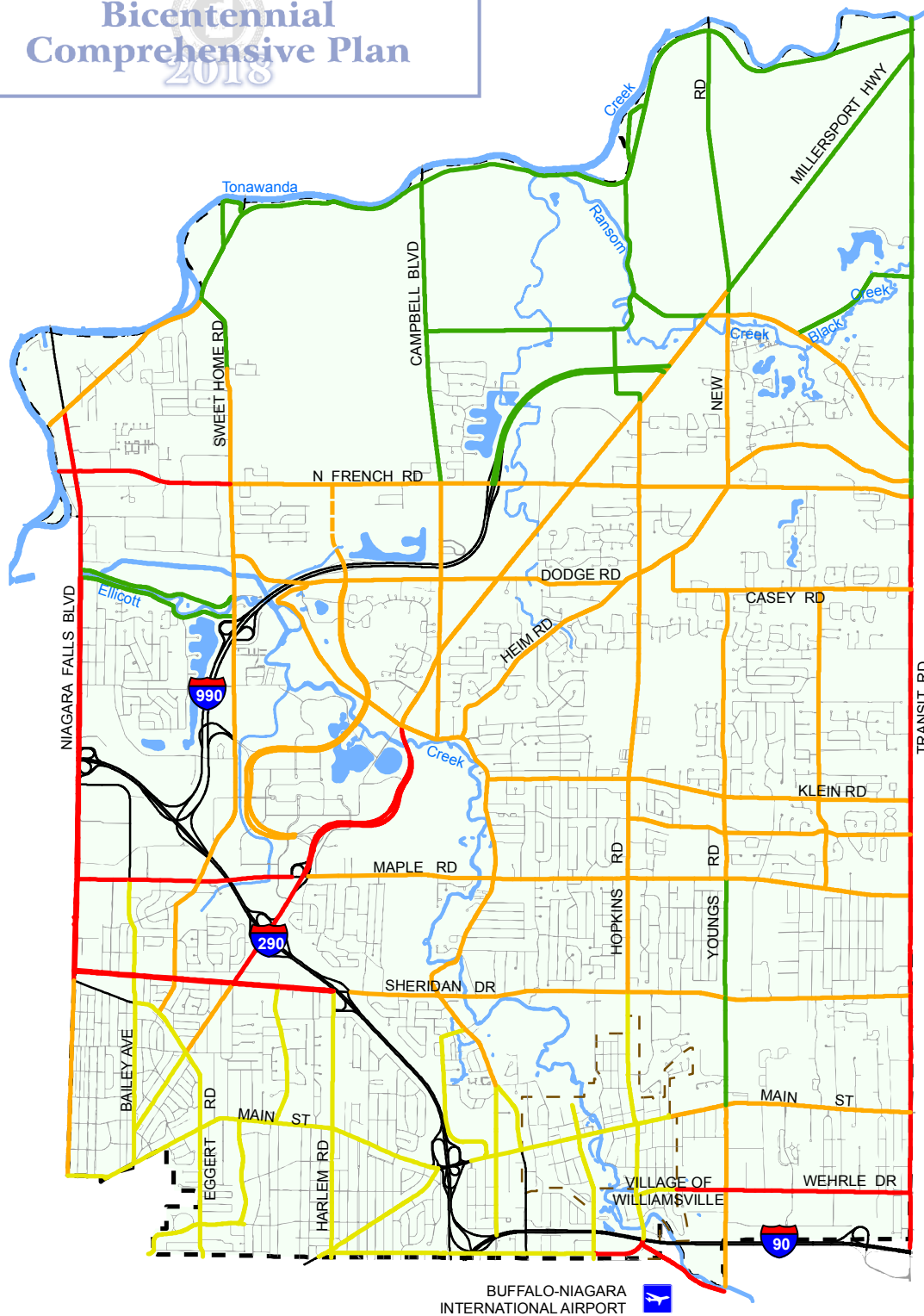
- Maple Road east of Millersport Highway
- Sheridan Drive east of I-290
- Youngs Road from Maple Road north to Casey Road (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)
- Hopkins Road from Sheridan Drive to Millersport Highway
- North Forest Road from Union Road to Dodge Road
- John James Audubon Parkway
- North French Road from Sweet Home Road to Transit Road
- Casey Road
- Heim Road
- Klein Road
- Dodge Road
- Sweet Home Road from Eggert Road to North French Road
- Covent Garden Lane/Paradise Road
- Renaissance Drive/Bassett Road
- Millersport Highway from Eggert Road to New Road

Standards for **suburban character corridors** should balance vehicular movement with streetscape enhancements (landscaping and tree planting projects, bike lanes and sidewalks, etc.) and the protection of adjacent residential



Youngs Road: a suburban character corridor, limited access arterial with reverse frontage residential lots.

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



CHARACTER CORRIDORS

FIGURE 10

LEGEND

Corridor Type

- Traditional
- Suburban
- Commercial
- Rural

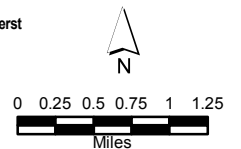
- Municipal Boundary
- Village of Williamsville Boundary
- Surface Water

SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst

Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst
Planning Department

Date: September 2015



- Smith Road

Commercial character: Several of Amherst’s roadway corridors have an established linear commercial development pattern. These corridors include:

- Niagara Falls Boulevard from Eggert Road/Sheridan Drive north to Tonawanda Creek Road
- Transit Road south of North French Road
- Maple Road west of Millersport Highway
- Sheridan Drive west of I-290
- East Robinson Road/North French Road from Niagara Falls Boulevard to Sweet Home Road
- Wehrle Drive east of the Village of Williamsville
- Main Street east of the Village of Williamsville
- North Bailey Avenue from Maple Road to Niagara Falls Boulevard
- Youngs Road from Aero Drive to Main Street
- Aero Drive from Wehrle Drive to the Town boundary and Youngs Road

Standards for **commercial character corridors** should emphasize access management, visual improvements, and increased pedestrian access.

Standards for commercial character corridors should emphasize access management, visual improvements (e.g., signage controls, landscaping, etc.), and introduction of pedestrian elements such as sidewalks and connections to building entrances. The Town will need to continue to work with adjacent municipalities to ensure that roadway corridor standards and related land use policies for Niagara Falls Boulevard and Transit Road are coordinated.

Standards for **rural character corridors** should help maintain the special visual character of these roadways.

Rural character: “Rural” character corridors possess a unique visual character within Amherst due to their rural and/or scenic qualities. Typical characteristics include:

- Predominantly undeveloped, with significant open space, tree cover, or other vegetation along the road frontage
- Developed uses generally limited to residences with direct access to the road; “backlands” are undeveloped
- Lack of modern road improvements (narrow widths, no curb/gutter and sidewalks, etc.)
- Fit into/provide views of the rural landscape or significant visual resources (e.g., follow creeks)

The following rural character corridors have been identified:

- Campbell Boulevard between North French Road and Tonawanda Creek Road
- Dann Road between Smith Road and Transit Road
- Smith Road between Hopkins Road and Millersport Highway

- Hopkins Road between Millersport Highway and Tonawanda Creek Road
- New Road between Smith Road and Tonawanda Creek Road
- Orbit Drive (Entire loop off Tonawanda Creek Road)
- Sweet Home Road between North French Road and Tonawanda Creek Road
- Tonawanda Creek Road
- Brenon Road (access to Veterans Park)
- North and South Ellicott Creek Roads between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Sweet Home Road
- Transit Road between North French Road and Tonawanda Creek Road
- Youngs Road between Main Street and Maple Road
- I-990 corridor north of North French Road
- Schoelles Road
- Millersport Highway between New Road and Transit Road

Standards should be established for both roadway design and the treatment of adjacent land uses to help maintain the visual character of rural corridors. Roadway design standards should limit roadway width, provide natural rather than structural drainage controls (e.g., drainage swales rather than curb and gutter), and maintain tree cover and vegetation. With respect to land use, past development practices have resulted in individual homes lining rural roadways within the Town, impacting visual character and isolating larger properties behind the frontage house lots. To address this trend, land use standards for rural corridors should encourage development setbacks and clustering to maintain open character and scenic views from the roads.

6-2 Modify the Town’s engineering standards for roadways to reduce neighborhood impacts.

Consistent with Policy 6-1, the Town should review existing engineering design standards with the intent of incorporating measures that reduce impacts of roadway improvement projects on adjacent neighborhoods and promote a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Examples include:

- Emphasis on targeted improvements (e.g., turning lanes at intersections) rather than extensive widening that will adversely affect adjacent land uses
- Traffic calming measures (i.e., changes in street alignment and other physical measures such as roundabouts and medians to reduce traffic speeds, cut-through volumes, or other negative impacts of automobiles on neighborhoods)
- Reduced lane widths and turning radii
- Provisions for landscaping (e.g., planted medians, street trees, etc.) and sidewalks



In revising the engineering standards, the Town should incorporate flexibility to address local conditions consistent with a nationally emerging approach to transportation planning referred to as “context-sensitive design.” This concept has been defined as:

A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.¹⁰

Applied to Amherst, this approach means that top-down engineering standards emphasizing movement of vehicular traffic will be replaced by a design approach that involves residents and other stakeholders in developing solutions to achieve locally defined objectives (e.g., promoting pedestrian character and reducing impacts on neighborhood and environmental resources).

Information on revisions to roadway design standards should be conveyed to the Erie County Department of Public Works and the NYSDOT. The Town should work with these agencies to apply the concept of context-sensitive design to county and state roadway improvements within the Town. The agencies should be asked to keep the Town informed of future improvement projects and to incorporate the Town’s standards and approach into these projects. NYSDOT’s Highway Design Manual contains a section on traffic calming measures that can be applied to state highways. All agencies contemplating reconstruction or realignment of major roadways should hold public workshops prior to initiating conceptual design as a means of identifying local concerns and expectations. The public comment period for environmental review of road projects will provide another forum for improving roadway improvement design and reducing impacts on neighborhoods within the Town.

6-3 Establish a town highway planning capability to manage the local road network.

The GBNRTC tracks current and projected future conditions of state and county roads in the Town of Amherst for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. However, GBNRTC’s programs do not address local roads within the Town not included in the Federal-Aid system. The Town should work with GBNRTC to establish a planning capability that addresses the entire network of state, county, and local roads within Amherst. This capability will be used to plan for operational and capital improvements in accordance with Policies 6-4 and 6-5. (Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)

A town highway planning capability is needed to proactively plan for operational and capital improvements to Amherst’s entire road network, as well as to assess the traffic impacts of major developments.

¹⁰ Project for Public Spaces website, www.pps.org/CSS/cssonline.htm

As part of the highway planning capability, the Town should institute a comprehensive approach to the review of site plans for future developments to assess the impacts on the transportation network. This will involve the application of traffic impact analyses and mitigation requirements to developments projected to generate large amounts of traffic. Mitigation requirements exceeding the feasibility of a single project to implement may provide a substantial benefit if the costs were shared by several projects. As an example, continued growth in the Ransom Oaks area may eventually lead to the requirement of a traffic control device along New Road. Developers could be required to share in the costs of such traffic improvements as part of the development review and approval process.

6-4 Enhance transportation system capacities through operational improvements, including improved access management and a comprehensive signal-timing plan.

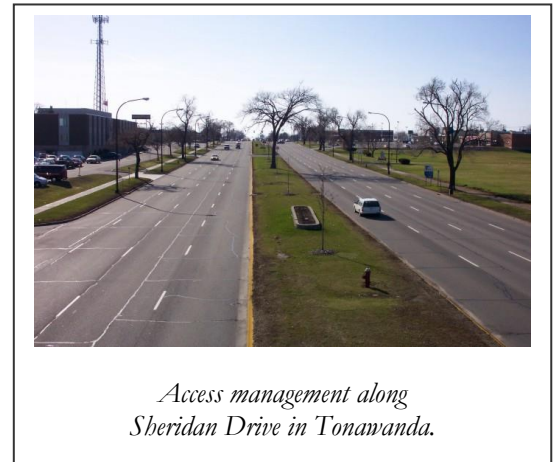
Access management strategies should focus on coordinated roadway design and land use practices such as the following:

- Limiting the number of driveways and intersections on major and minor arterial highways
- Constructing medians and other devices to control turning movements
- Encouraging compact development patterns, shared curb cuts, and internal connections and service drives

The Towns of Amherst and Clarence have developed collaborative access management concepts along Transit Road. Similar access management strategies should be applied to all major roadway corridors within Amherst. Design standards and incentives should be provided for commercial and residential developments to implement access management plans consistent with the Town's overall strategies.

In addition to access management strategies, a signal-timing plan should be developed to improve the coordination of the traffic signal system throughout the Town. Coordinating traffic signals means connecting them so that they work together to create the smoothest possible operational conditions and traffic flow along major corridors. The plan should address the following¹¹:

- Adequate time for cross-traffic to clear intersections
- Provisions for pedestrians and emergency vehicles



¹¹ Information based on the Ames, IA traffic signal coordination program: <http://www.cityofames.org/index.aspx?page=959>

- Motorists’ expectations of a “no-stop” progression with as little delay as possible
- Increased safety by reducing the number of red-signal violations and rear-end collisions
- Changing signal timing for different periods during the day to serve varying demands

A significant amount of information must be collected to develop such a plan, including:

- Information related to the present signal timing and physical layout of the street system
- Current turn movement counts at signalized intersections

The plan could be developed and applied to selected intersections/corridors on a trial basis and gradually extended throughout the Town.

Components of a *capital program* for roadways:

- Local highway capital improvement program
- Targeted intersection improvements
- Improved pedestrian/vehicular connectivity between neighborhoods
- Provisions for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit movement

6-5 Undertake a capital program to maintain or improve the efficiency of the existing road system.

The Town should work with NYSDOT, GBNRTC, Erie County, and other agencies involved in transportation planning to develop a long-range program to address identified problems through targeted improvements. Components of this program should include:

- ***Develop a local highway capital improvement program.*** Amherst’s road system is in need of a capital program that identifies ways to improve capacities by:

1. Targeting improvements to address traffic congestion problems on local roads
2. Promoting a more interconnected (grid) roadway system through roadway connections/completions as shown on the Future Thoroughfare System Plan (Figure 9)

Local roads not eligible for funding under the Federal-Aid system would benefit from a program addressing level of service improvements. As an example, simply adding a left turn lane and modifying the traffic signal could correct low level of service resulting from congestion at intersections. Such improvements can be rated and weighed against similar improvements on local roads throughout the Town, and implemented through the new capital program funding.

Greater connectivity would be promoted by developing a hierarchy of streets (arterial, collectors, and local collectors), combined with a standard for the streets to be spaced approximately ½ mile or less apart from each other. This spacing will increase the efficiency of transit

operations, reduce the time allotted for access trips along local streets, and relieve congestion and the pressure to widen major thoroughfares. While implementation of this concept will depend upon the availability of funding and will need to be sensitive to neighborhood impacts, the Youngs Road Extension, Northwest Connector Road and other roadway connections/completions shown on Figure 9 are good examples of the opportunities that exist within the Town. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

- ***Implement improvements to improve traffic flow at congested intersections.*** Congestion is a problem at many intersections within the Town of Amherst. Strategies that could be used to address this problem include addition of turn lanes, other measures to reconfigure the intersection (e.g., reviewing turning radii, encouraging four-way alignment of streets at intersections), and improved signalization (see Policy 6-4). As an example, recently completed highway improvements along Niagara Falls Boulevard and Transit Road include the addition of a landscaped island/raised median in place of continuous left-turn lanes, thereby eliminating a source of congestion from queued vehicles in the center lane that currently conflict with busy oncoming travel lanes.
- ***Improve pedestrian/vehicular connectivity between neighborhoods.*** Providing street linkages would allow local traffic to move between neighborhoods without having to use high traffic volume roadway corridors. This would help to diminish corridor congestion and improve vehicular and pedestrian safety. Also, future trail and bikeway projects could include spurs and thus access to neighborhoods, and commercial/mixed-use activity centers.
- ***Accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and transit service in roadway improvements.*** While this policy focuses on road improvements, the overall goal for Amherst's future transportation network is to develop an interconnected, multi-modal system, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit service. Thus roadway improvement projects should be designed to accommodate other modes of travel by incorporating features such as pedestrian sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and dedicated bus pull-off lanes and shelters.

6-6 Accept a certain level of traffic congestion as a “given” and expand investments in alternative transportation modes and compact, mixed-use development patterns.

Given the limits placed on future roadway improvements by funding constraints and the need to preserve neighborhood character, combined with Amherst's established and growing

function as a regional employment center, it is not expected that the above policies will “solve” congestion problems in the Town. Instead, the Comprehensive Plan transportation policies involve a shift away from an emphasis on functional efficiency for the automobile towards a more balanced transportation system that achieves other community objectives. As described in Sections B and C below, this shift includes expanded investment in facilities to support alternative travel modes (e.g., trails, sidewalks, bikeways, and transit). Equally important is the coordination of transportation and land use policies to promote compact, mixed-use development patterns that reduce automobile dependency and encourage walking.

B. Bicycle/Pedestrian Network

The Town of Amherst is actively developing a system of off-road trails to support both bicycle and pedestrian use. The existing Ellicott Creek Trail and proposed Lehigh Valley Trail are examples of quality projects that support non-vehicular transportation. The Town also continues to construct or support construction of sidewalks within Amherst, although there are significant gaps in the connectivity of the system. On-street bicycle facilities are relatively limited, with only two bicycle routes currently designated. Future projects to expand the coverage and connectivity of the bicycle/pedestrian network and provide additional amenities should be supported. The concept for developing an interconnected bicycle/pedestrian network as part of a town-wide greenways system is described in Land Use and Development Policy 3-13 and illustrated in Figure 4 (Parks, Open Space and Trail Map) and Figure 5 (On-Street Bicycle/Sidewalk Network).

Bicycle level of service is a system that evaluates the suitability of roadway corridors for bicycle travel and which can be used to identify and prioritize needed improvements.

6-7 Develop a comprehensive bicycle network, using a rating system to identify and prioritize improvements.

As part of the capital improvement program discussed under Policy 6-5, an ongoing program to identify and prioritize improvements to achieve a town-wide bicycle network should be established. Both on-street bicycle lanes and off-street trails should be developed consistent with Figures 4 (Parks, Open Space and Trail Map) and 5 (On-Street Bicycle/Sidewalk Network). GBNRTC’s *Regional Bikeway Implementation Plan* for the Buffalo-Niagara Region can be consulted for guidance in planning for on-street facilities. The GBNRTC Plan establishes a Bicycle Level of Service rating system that evaluates the suitability of roadway corridors within the Town for bicycle travel based upon vehicular traffic, number of travel lanes, average outside lane width, posted speed limit, pavement surface condition, and land use. This rating system can be used to help identify and prioritize on-street improvements needed to accommodate bicycle travel. Future developments should be required to provide connections to the town-wide pedestrian/bicycle network. Provisions for such connectivity could be incorporated into the existing process for site plan, subdivision, and/or special use permit review.

6-8 Develop a comprehensive pedestrian network of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails.

A comprehensive network of pedestrian facilities should be developed and safety improvements made to roadways that are recognized pedestrian hazards. As with the bicycle network, an on-going program to identify and prioritize improvements to achieve this network should be established. This program should focus on eliminating discontinuities in the current network and providing linkages between neighborhoods and major pedestrian destinations, such as schools and mixed-activity centers. For example, Federal/State funding can be available to complete the sidewalk networks near schools. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

Improvements to Amherst's **pedestrian network** should focus on eliminating discontinuous sidewalks and on providing linkages to schools and other major pedestrian destinations.

Discontinuous sidewalks may result from varying development standards applied to different highway functional classifications and requirements. For example, sidewalks may not have been required for a road with a lower function or classification, and thus development occurred without sidewalks. As traffic levels increase and the road takes on characteristics of a higher function road, development may occur with sidewalks, resulting in a discontinuous pattern. The Town should consider providing for continuous sidewalks along roadway segments as road classifications change. The Engineering Department uses its GIS capabilities to identify discontinuous sidewalks. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The goals set forth by GBNRTC's *Pedestrian Policy Statement* (Spring 1997) should be used as a guideline in implementing this policy. These goals are:

- Increase pedestrian mobility by meeting pedestrian demands with improved infrastructure
- Improve safety and comfort of the pedestrians
- Encourage pedestrian activity
- Provide pedestrian accessibility to all destinations
- Educate bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists

Achieving these goals will improve the quality of life of residents of Amherst.

To address existing needs the Town should consider the feasibility of creating sidewalk improvement districts to repair and maintain sidewalks in established and new neighborhoods. Pedestrian improvements also need to be coordinated with land use and development policies to promote more compact, walkable development patterns. Such policies include promoting the establishment of mixed-use activity centers that increase opportunities to walk between home, shopping, and/or employment. Multiple uses should be encouraged

within many of the Town's industrial and office parks to offer residents and employees the opportunity to complete necessary errands at lunch or after work hours without impacting the external road system.

C. Transit Service

Public transit is a vital component of the Town's transportation system, both to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and to serve segments of the population who do not have access to private automobiles. Annual demand for public transit service has seen both declines and increases since 1995. Currently, the number of Amherst residents who choose to ride on the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's Metro Bus system is increasing as a result of creating routes that access industrial parks within the Town. There has also been an increase in ridership of City of Buffalo residents traveling to retail and employment centers located in Amherst.

6-9 Work with NFTA to improve transit service and provide connections to activity centers (e.g., UB and Eggertsville).

Utilization of the NFTA Metro Bus system is limited, primarily due to the relative affluence of the community and the corresponding absence of need to use public transportation, and the perceived inconvenience of the present system. Establishing more extensive and frequent service that connects to mixed-use activity centers as described in Land Use and Development Policy 3-1 will increase the benefits and utility of public transit service.

Transit service should be provided to existing and new *mixed-use activity centers* established in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan land use policies.

Better-defined activity centers established in accordance with Policy 3-1 will result in better utilization of public transit, particularly as projected increases in congestion on Amherst's road network occur. Encouraging a variety of activities in these locations combined with compact residential development within walking distance will create nodes for transit service. Traffic flows would be enhanced through dedicated bus pull-offs. In addition, better service and bus shelters within industrial and office parks would increase ridership.

Light rail currently extends to the south campus and has been proposed for extension to the north campus in the past. Transit service in this corridor, whether light rail or other option such as dedicated bus service, would support Comprehensive Plan policies related to alternative transportation modes, mixed-use activity centers, and better integration of UB into the community.

The above policies establish a coordinated strategy to improve vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit mobility for Town of Amherst residents. To assess progress in implementing these policies, bi-annual transportation surveys should be conducted

through collection of data (e.g., traffic counts and transit ridership) and distribution of questionnaires to residents. The results of these surveys should be used by the Town in prioritizing and modifying transportation programs to address citizen needs.

Infrastructure



7

Infrastructure

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7.0 Infrastructure

7.1 OVERVIEW

**Priority Action Programs:
Infrastructure**

- Implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy to address flooding and water quality protection
- Limit future sewer service extensions to support the Conceptual Land Use Plan
- Establish a septic system maintenance district for areas not designated for public sewer

This section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the Town of Amherst’s non-transportation related infrastructure such as sanitary sewer, storm sewer, water, electric, natural gas, and fiber optic cable. The existing infrastructure generally has adequate capacity to serve existing and projected future development within the Town.

The current condition of the water system in the Town of Amherst is above average and is capable of providing for adequate fire protection for all property in the Town and adequate potable water supply for residents. The sanitary sewer system has recently undergone a substantial upgrade and is generally capable of operating at a higher level of capacity. In 2011 the Town created the Amherst Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District (CSSD) by combining former districts 1 and 16 into a single district that serves much of Amherst. The district is served through a single water pollution control facility (WPCF), the facility also serves areas in the Town of Clarence. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Division of Sewerage Management operates Sewer District 5, which serves small portions of Amherst next to the Town of Clarence. Sewer District 5 and Clarence Sewer District 2 serve extensive areas outside of the Town but discharge to the Amherst interceptor sewer network and Amherst WPCF on Tonawanda Creek. The Town should work closely with Erie County and the Town of Clarence in considering major improvements to the sewer trunks conveying flows from Clarence. Limits in the sanitary sewer network are established through an existing agreement between the two towns as part of a growth control measure for future development in Clarence. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The Town of Amherst has an extensive system of open ditches, closed pipes, detention ponds, and creeks in place to manage stormwater runoff. While this system is in place, stormwater drainage is a concern to many residents as localized nuisance flooding from rain events affects certain areas of the Town. The water quality impacts of stormwater runoff are another important issue. In 2011 the Town consolidated its three stormwater drainage management districts (1, 16, and 26) into a single district. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The Refuse Control Office and the Town Highway Department are responsible for the collection, recycling, and hauling of solid

waste, as well as spring brush pick-up and fall leaf pick-up. No significant concerns regarding the quality of service have been raised. Most of the solid waste collected by the Town is transported to American Refuel, a waste-to-energy company in Niagara Falls. Yard waste is transported to a privately owned and operated organic recycling center located in northeast Amherst. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

Private utility companies address other infrastructure needs of the residents of the Town of Amherst, for example:

- A lease management agreement with the Erie County Water Authority (ECWA) provides the Town with water.
- National Fuel Gas provides natural gas.
- Niagara Mohawk and New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) provide electrical service.
- Adelphia Cable, Verizon, MCI, Telergy and TC Systems provide the Town with communications infrastructure to support high technology.

The main concern facing the Town of Amherst with regard to the current status of infrastructure is the cost of extending lines to unserved areas and associated impacts on community character. Other infrastructure-related needs include:

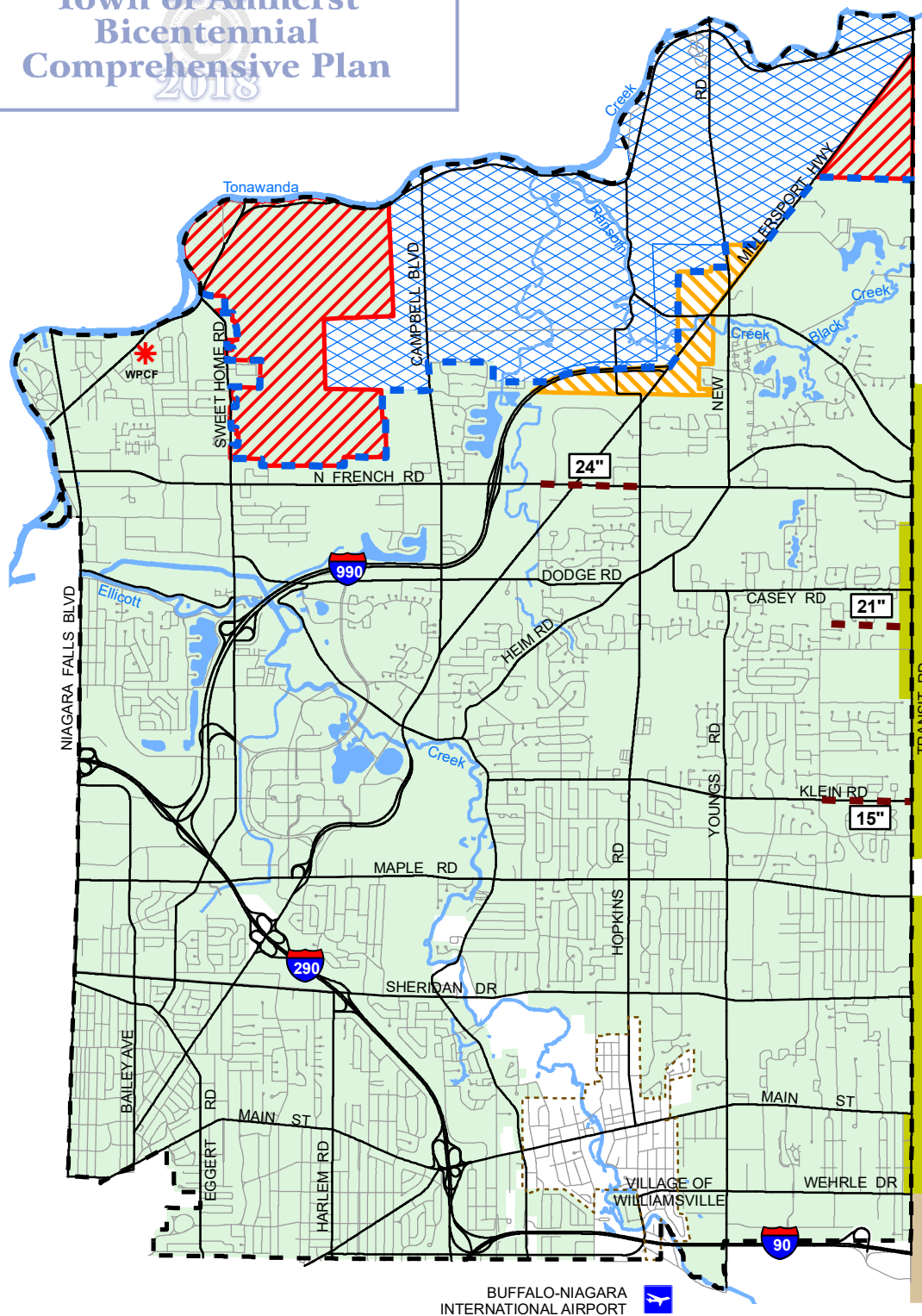
- Upgrading and efficiently maintaining existing infrastructure
- Developing a comprehensive stormwater management plan
- Working with surrounding municipalities to evaluate, upgrade, and/or rebuild shared infrastructure
- Addressing the role of infrastructure in economic development (i.e., high technology infrastructure and high utility costs. These issues are addressed in Chapter 5.0, Economic Development)

As previously indicated, the existing infrastructure generally has adequate capacity to support existing and future development. The two major issues of concern relate to stormwater management and sanitary sewers. For this reason, the goals, objectives, and policies presented below focus on Amherst's stormwater and sanitary sewer systems.



While Amherst's existing infrastructure generally has adequate capacity for existing and future development, the two major issues of concern relate to ***stormwater management and sanitary sewer.***

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



BUFFALO-NIAGARA
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

FUTURE SANITARY SEWER SERVICE

FIGURE 11

LEGEND

Existing Sanitary Sewer Districts

- Town of Amherst Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District (CSSD)
- Erie County Sewer District No. 4
- Erie County Sewer District No. 5
- No Sewer District

Future Sanitary Sewer District

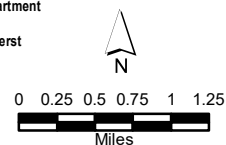
- Add to Amherst CSSD
- Delete from Amherst CSSD
- No Expansion of Amherst CSSD
- No Expansion of Amherst CSSD Limit of Future Sanitary Service

Planned Interceptor Improvements

- 24" Interceptor / Diameter
- 21" Interceptor / Diameter
- 15" Interceptor / Diameter
- Water Pollution Control Facility
- Municipal Boundary
- Village of Williamsville Boundary
- Surface Water Body

SOURCE NOTES:

Original Source Data Provided by the Town of Amherst Engineering Department
 Map Compiled by the Town of Amherst Planning Department
 Date: December 2020



7.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL

Well-maintained and cost-effective infrastructure systems that provide public water, sewer, stormwater, and other utility services within the Town of Amherst, consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies to promote sustainable land use and economic development and protect natural resources

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a town-wide program with plans and policies to effectively manage stormwater runoff, including flooding and stormwater quality
- Maintain and upgrade existing sanitary sewer infrastructure to support existing and projected needs. Limit future service extensions to those needed to serve development areas designated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan

POLICIES

A. Stormwater Management

The Town of Amherst has developed a stormwater management plan to comply with new regulatory programs at the federal and state levels. The Plan is comprehensive in scope in order to address multiple issues related to stormwater management and water resource protection in an integrated manner. In addition, the stormwater management plan addresses the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, including policies set forth in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element for the protection of water resources and quality. Through its collaboration with the Western New York Stormwater Coalition the Town hosts educational seminars for interested parties on an annual basis, informing them of the changing stormwater management program and regulations as well as ways to comply with the new regulations. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

7-1 Develop a program to address flooding and other stormwater management issues in coordination with other responsible agencies.

The Town should implement flood mitigation measures as recommended in the *Town Flood Mitigation Plan Report* and the *Ransom Creek Improvement Study*. Recommendations include improving the hydraulic efficiency of the creek and ditch channels in the lower reaches to drain storm water from the local watersheds more quickly, as well as flood damage reduction through floodplain management planning and retrofitting. More specific flood mitigation recommendations include addition of rip rap at the tip of Seven Sister's Island (located just west of Lehn Springs Drive), replacement of the Castle bridge with a new bridge that can convey the 100-year flood stream flow, and utilization of vacant land for additional

flood storage capacity. The “Best Management Practices” discussed in Natural and Cultural Resources Policy 4-7 should be incorporated into future stormwater management projects and developments on an on-going basis.

As discussed under Natural and Cultural Resources Policy 4-6, the Town coordinates stormwater management efforts with other governmental agencies, including adjacent municipalities and other municipalities within the watersheds, Erie County, FEMA, EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the NYSDEC. Amherst participates in the WNY Stormwater Coalition, Tonawanda Creek Watershed Committee and the Erie County Water Quality Committee with a focus on watershed-based management planning to protect and improve water quality and stormwater management. Consistent with Chapter 4.0 policies, future stormwater management projects should be designed to provide the additional benefits of open space, improved water quality, and preservation of riparian vegetation, trees, and woodlands. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

7-2 Implement “low impact development” standards and techniques designed to reduce the quantity and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from development.

An alternative to conventional stormwater management that reduces development impacts on natural drainage systems, “low impact development” is addressed by Natural and Cultural Resources Policy 4-8. Conservation development that retains more area in natural cover to absorb runoff is an example of a low-impact development technique. Per Policy 4-8, the Town should consider revising its existing stormwater management standards to incorporate principles of low impact development.

B. Sanitary Sewer System

The Town of Amherst owns and operates a water pollution control facility and collection system. Policies for future sanitary sewer service should emphasize maintenance of existing infrastructure and include the elimination of sanitary sewer overflows (SSO’s) as mandated by the EPA. Coordination of future service extensions with the Conceptual Land Use Plan should be undertaken to limit development in areas designated to remain in farmland and rural uses. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

7-3 Give priority to repairs to existing infrastructure systems, rather than extensions to serve new greenfield development.

Sanitary sewer capital programming should place the highest priority on repairing existing infrastructure in older areas of Amherst in the southwestern part of town. This policy will contribute to encouraging reinvestment in these areas. Priority should also be given to updating existing components of the

system in order to meet existing and projected demands. The lowest priority should be given to extensions of new lines to serve currently undeveloped areas. Any extension into these areas should result from a comprehensive consideration of growth and definition of new policy direction. In accordance with this policy, the condition and capacities of the following existing sanitary sewer interceptor lines should be improved before public money is used to construct the proposed Smith Road/New Road lift station to accommodate anticipated growth in the Millersport/New Road/Smith Road area. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

- Ensure necessary sewer improvements are made to maintain facilities in southwest Amherst , including elimination of SSO's
- Continue with the North French interceptor upgrade project by completing the replacement from I-990 to Millersport Highway
- Further relieve the North French interceptor sewer by expanding the Peanut Line interceptor from Transit Road to Paradise Road

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

The entire sanitary sewer system should be modeled and evaluated every five years as needed to maintain a high level of service.

7-4 Redefine the boundaries of the Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District in the northern part of the Town to exclude rural and agricultural areas designated for protection and include areas designated for more intensive development. Promote the importance of proper maintenance of private disposal systems or septic systems to limit sewer extensions into protected areas. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

The Town should reevaluate and redefine the boundaries of the sewer district so that the best possible service can be provided to customers without unnecessary extensions and associated costs. Limiting sewer extensions should be utilized as a land use control measure to prevent higher density development in areas designated for rural and agricultural uses. Proposed new boundaries for the CSSD that are consistent with the Conceptual Land Use Plan are displayed in Figure 11. The major changes include the elimination of the area designated for agricultural, rural residential and open space uses north of North French Road and between Sweet Home Road and Campbell Boulevard, as well as the area generally north of Dann Lake between Millersport Highway and Transit Road where the development impacts on designated wetlands and/or prime agricultural soils can be avoided. A new service area has been added near New Road and Ransom Creek and

Limiting sewer extensions in North Amherst will protect rural and environmentally sensitive areas designated by the Conceptual Land Use Plan to remain in low-density uses.

south to I-990 to serve future mixed-use and other development shown on the Conceptual Land Use Plan. *(Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04)*

Private disposal systems or septic systems in the Town are mainly located in areas outside the Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District, such as along Tonawanda Creek Road and Schoelles Road. The responsibility for their maintenance is with the property owners. Sewer extensions are sometimes requested when these systems fail. The Town should promote the importance of maintaining private disposal systems to ensure that failing systems do not create a need for sewer extensions to those areas outside current districts. Utilizing available resources and educational practices from State and County Department of Health agencies can provide residents with the knowledge of best practices to maintain their systems, reducing the risk of failures or problems. New and advancing technologies such as mound and aerobic treatment systems can be used as alternatives for failing systems rather than pursuing sewer extensions. *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*



*Housing
and
Neighborhoods*

8

Housing and Neighborhoods

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8.0 Housing and Neighborhoods

8.1 OVERVIEW

***Priority Action Program:
Housing and Neighborhoods***

- Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program, including a collaborative process to develop Neighborhood Improvement Plans

Amherst has a variety of neighborhoods and housing types reflecting the development of the Town through the 20th century. Affordable housing is an important issue in the Town. In 2000, the median value of owner occupied housing was \$116,400, almost \$30,000 more than in Erie County as a whole. Median rental unit costs were also more expensive in Amherst than in Erie County by over \$150 a month.

Based on the 2000 Erie County median family income of \$49,490, approximately 23% of Amherst's families are classified as low income (i.e., having annual incomes 80% or less of the County's median income). Housing affordability can affect others as well, including the elderly, college students, and some middle income families. In 2000, 20.4% of Amherst's owner-occupied households and 40% of renter-occupied housing units spent over 30% of their household income on housing expenses, a level considered burdensome according to Department of Housing and Urban Development standards.

Housing diversity is also a significant issue in Amherst, from the standpoint of affordability and due to the potential effects of new development on the character and stability of Amherst's neighborhoods. In recent decades, the predominant trend has been a conversion of open space and vacant lands into single-family homes, resulting in a more suburban setting throughout the Town compared to traditional neighborhoods like Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville. More recently, there has been a pronounced increase in the amount of multi-family housing, largely to accommodate the demand for off-campus housing by UB students. Multi-family units accounted for 76% of new housing in the 1990s.

While not currently a major problem, the deterioration of homes is a potential future threat to the stability of Amherst's older neighborhoods. A substantial proportion of Amherst's housing stock was built prior to 1970 and will be 50 years or older by 2020, the approximate time horizon of the Plan. This trend will create the potential for an increase in the number of substandard housing units, particularly if owners lack the means to make the proper investments in property maintenance and repairs.

8.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOALS

Decent and affordable housing choices available to all residents

Healthy and diverse neighborhoods, including conserved and revitalized older parts of Amherst

OBJECTIVES

- Ensure the availability of housing affordable to all socioeconomic groups in Amherst
- Promote a diverse housing stock, with higher density housing focused on mixed-use activity centers
- Implement a coordinated program to conserve and revitalize Amherst's neighborhoods

POLICIES

A. Affordable Housing

Ensuring that affordable housing is available to all residents is a priority of the Town of Amherst. Due to the large number of residents who pay high housing costs relative to their income levels, the Town should support all initiatives that increase affordable housing.

8-1 Continue existing housing policies that promote home ownership and affordability.

The Consolidated Plan prepared by the Amherst Cheektowaga Tonawanda Consortium in 2000 identifies a number of policies that should aid in improving the affordability of housing in Amherst. One priority of the Consolidated Plan states that the Consortium should encourage maintenance of an adequate supply of standard affordable existing and new rental housing, especially for the elderly. To accomplish this, the Plan recommends rehabilitating substandard housing units and replacing uninhabitable units through the construction of affordable housing for low to moderate-income households. In 2000, approximately 9% of Amherst's occupied housing units were found to be in substandard condition and nearly all were considered suitable for rehabilitation.

Another priority of the Consolidated Plan is to provide and promote homeownership assistance for low-income families and first time homebuyers. The Town presently uses programs such as the HOME Investment Partnership Program to provide assistance to low-income families seeking to purchase and rehabilitate a home. It also provides funding for counseling and training new homebuyers. Amherst has applied for and received its third Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Grant. This 2003-04 funding, using more flexible income guidelines, is available in the form of grants providing

***Vision Statement Directions:
Housing and Neighborhoods***

- Healthy, livable neighborhoods
- Range of housing choices in urban, suburban, and rural settings

closing cost assistance to a greater number of low to moderate income applicants wishing to purchase a home in the Town. Additional funds will be available to lower income families to help them receive a more affordable mortgage rate within the Town.

Amherst also has a home resale program for first time homebuyers. Most often this program buys one and two-family homes and rehabilitates them for future resale. The intent is to maintain the rate of owner occupancy in Amherst.

Amherst should further promote the priorities of the Amherst Cheektowaga Tonawanda Consortium Consolidated Plan. In addition, Amherst should educate the public about the need for affordable housing and the impact of not providing housing opportunities for lower income families and first time buyers. Many of the policies of this chapter are intended to increase the diversity of housing in Amherst, which will also serve to promote more affordable housing. The Town should inform the public of the connection between its housing diversity initiatives and housing affordability.

B. Housing Diversity

The Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement speaks of the need to offer a range of housing choices in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Preserving and providing a variety of housing opportunities will maintain the quality and stability of existing neighborhoods while increasing housing affordability. To ensure that housing development and redevelopment complement rather than detract from established residential areas, standards and criteria addressing location and quality are an important part of this strategy.

8-2 Promote the development of a variety of housing types.

Approximately two-thirds of Amherst’s current housing stock consists of single-family detached homes, with the remainder comprised of a mix of duplexes, townhouses, apartments, and other living arrangements (e.g., dormitories and assisted living).

Recent housing development has consisted mostly of multi-family units and single-family detached, suburban subdivisions. Demographic trends will reinforce the need for a more diverse housing stock to accommodate groups such as the elderly, empty nesters, and students. As previously noted, housing diversity enhances affordability and, if properly managed, can contribute to neighborhood stability and character. Older neighborhoods like Eggertsville, for example, could benefit from decreasing household sizes and the increasing appeal of traditional development, which make smaller homes in pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods more attractive.

The Town should encourage the proportional development of diverse housing types and price levels, including single-family detached (at a variety of lot sizes), townhouses, condominiums, apartments, and housing as part of mixed-use developments. Higher density housing should be located to complement established residential areas through appropriate standards for location and design (see Policies 8-3 and 8-5).

8-3 Encourage higher density residential uses in mixed-use developments and other appropriate locations.

During the 1990s, approximately two-thirds of new housing constructed in Amherst consisted of multi-family housing, indicating a shift away from the historic pattern of predominantly single-family development. While this trend has generated concerns regarding the impacts of multi-family development on the single-family character of the Town, two major points should be noted. First, even if the current rate of multi-family development were to continue in the future, Amherst will remain a predominantly single-family community. In fact, current market conditions and the decreasing amount of available land make it unlikely that the current rate will continue. Second, if properly managed, higher density housing will contribute to achieving a number of Comprehensive Plan objectives. Examples include increasing housing diversity and affordability, decreasing automobile dependency, and reducing consumption of open space through more compact development patterns.

The Conceptual Land Use Plan (Figure 6 in Chapter 3.0) maintains Amherst’s predominantly single-family detached residential character while designating appropriate locations for higher density development (i.e., single-family attached, condominiums, and apartments). These locations are primarily focused on mixed-use centers and residential areas to include the following:

- Housing as part of mixed-use centers (e.g., apartments above ground floor retail or offices)
- Higher density housing next to commercial centers
- Mixed developments designed to integrate single-family with other housing types

Establishing higher density residential uses in these locations will decrease the potential impacts of development on sensitive lands and promote housing affordability and diversity. Providing housing in conjunction with commercial and retail centers will also decrease automobile dependency. Incorporation into mixed-use activity centers will help maintain and reinforce the character of established neighborhoods. In some areas, redevelopment of obsolete commercial and other properties for multi-family use could

The Conceptual Land Use Plan focuses **higher density housing** on mixed-use activity centers.

contribute to neighborhood revitalization. Land Use and Development Policy 3-1 further addresses the potential for high-density residential development as part of mixed-use activity centers.

8-4 Work with UB to establish mixed-use centers around the periphery of both campuses.

The growth in the number of students at UB's North Campus is generating increased demand both for on-campus housing and for off-campus rental housing in the area around the North Campus. At the same time, the shift in the core of the University from the South to the North Campus is affecting residential areas in southwest Amherst that contain a high proportion of student rental housing.

The Town should work with UB to accommodate demand for student housing in mixed-use centers located near both campuses. In addition to enhancing housing diversity and affordability, this strategy would help reduce automobile traffic, enhance the sense of community for the students, and better incorporate the North Campus in particular into Amherst's community structure. The creation of such mixed-use "University-Related Centers" is more fully described in Policy 5-7 of the Economic Development Element.

Provision of new housing opportunities will be focused in the vicinity of the North Campus because it is the primary source of demand for new student housing. Student housing opportunities along the Sweet Home Corridor in the Rensch Road area, further north on Sweet Home Road across from the High School, and along Chestnut Ridge Road will assist in accommodating the demand for additional off-campus student housing. Strategies near the South Campus should focus on reinforcing the viability of existing neighborhood centers and nearby residential areas. In establishing a new mixed-use center or centers next to the North Campus, Amherst should work with UB, especially its Off Campus Housing Office, to ensure that the University's and students' special needs are met. Retail and dining establishments catering to students as well as town residents should be encouraged. The area should be designed to be pedestrian-friendly so that students can walk or bike safely to school. The Town and UB should work with the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to ensure that neighborhood centers are served by the bus system and to provide shuttle service from nearby neighborhoods to the University.

Lastly, the new housing opportunities provided by the centers should be listed with the Off Campus Housing Office and made available to students.

8-5 Establish standards for multi-family housing to promote high quality design and neighborhood compatibility.

Policy 8-3 addresses the need to manage the location of higher density housing to ensure that it does not negatively affect the overall character of Amherst’s neighborhoods. Equally important is the establishment of standards addressing the design and appearance of multi-family housing and its relationships to adjoining land uses. In addition to improving the quality and livability of multi-family developments for residents and improving the “fit” of these developments into the community, design standards will also help to create a more positive public perception of multi-family housing. A greater public tolerance of multi-family housing will ultimately aid the Town in preserving open space and providing alternatives to single-family detached units that are dependent on automobile use.

Design standards should address the creation of multi-family housing via renovation or redevelopment of existing properties as well as new development. Design standards should also address the creation of multi-family housing for the elderly and other special needs residents. The standards should address all forms of multi-family housing including apartments, townhouses, and mixed-use developments. Specific direction regarding the establishment of standards for multi-family development is provided in Land Use and Development Policy 3-5.

C. Neighborhood Conservation

The Vision Statement identifies healthy neighborhoods, ranging in diversity from urban to suburban to rural, as key to Amherst’s quality of life. The Town’s neighborhoods are generally in good shape, with the exception of isolated pockets of substandard housing. Nevertheless, there appears to be a perception that older neighborhoods near the City of Buffalo are experiencing decline or, if they are not declining now, are likely to decline in the future. While there is no present basis to predict that significant deterioration will occur in such areas in the future, it is possible that the combination of flat housing values, an aging housing stock, deterioration in older commercial areas, and a continuing emphasis on greenfield development in the Town and surrounding communities could ultimately affect the stability of Amherst’s older neighborhoods. The following policies are directed towards maintaining the stability and viability of Amherst’s neighborhoods and the important contributions they make towards the Town’s quality of life.

8-6 Provide incentives for residential property repairs and improvements on a town-wide basis.

Present housing conditions in Amherst are generally good. According to the Amherst Cheektowaga Tonawanda Consortium Consolidated Plan, only 9% of Amherst’s current



*High quality design multi-family housing complex.
Source: www.pedbikeimages.org*

Maintaining the *stability and viability of older neighborhoods* is important to the Revitalization Key Initiative.

housing stock is in need of rehabilitation. However, more than half of Amherst’s residential structures were built between 1950 and 1979. In addition, the construction of new housing has declined significantly over the last twenty years. While currently less than 20% of the housing stock is over fifty years old, over the next 20 years a majority of the housing will cross that age threshold and comparatively few new homes will be built. This leaves the possibility of a decline in Amherst’s housing and, as a result, its neighborhoods if older housing is not maintained properly.

As one strategy to preserve the integrity and character of its neighborhoods, the Town should provide incentives for property owners to maintain and repair their homes. Incentives will promote investment in existing housing, help reduce maintenance costs, and contribute to the provision of decent, affordable housing affordable to low income families and the elderly. Potential incentives include:

- A home improvement loan program (low interest or deferred payment loans)
- Rehabilitation tax credits (see Policy 3-8 in the Land Use and Development Element)
- Housing rehabilitation grants
- Deferrals in property tax increases on value added by home improvements

The Town should continue to utilize funding programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal as potential funding sources for local incentive programs. HUD programs include rehabilitation and repair home loans, property improvement loans, and the HOME program. The Town should also encourage homeowners to investigate funding programs by these and other organizations. Tax incentives are also available for the rehabilitation of designated historic resources (see Policy 4-12).

8-7 Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program to promote revitalization of designated neighborhoods through measures such as code enforcement, capital improvements, and design standards.

Most of Amherst’s neighborhoods are in good shape, with isolated pockets of housing in need of repair. A major factor in the health of Amherst’s neighborhoods is that the housing is of a similar age. However, some older neighborhoods do exist in Amherst. In the southern portion of the Town containing the Snyder, Eggertsville, and Williamsville neighborhoods approximately 75% of the housing is over 40 years old. To address the potential for decline as greenfield development



A housing redevelopment project in Eggertsville.

A **Neighborhood Conservation Program** should be initiated to address the conservation and enhancement of targeted neighborhoods.

continues in Amherst and surrounding communities, these and other older neighborhoods could benefit from an active Neighborhood Conservation Program. This program would address the conservation and enhancement of targeted neighborhoods through such coordinated strategies as:

- Providing incentives for property repairs (Policy 8-6)
- Promoting revitalization of neighborhood commercial centers (Policy 8-8)
- Focusing code enforcement efforts on substandard properties that threaten neighborhood stability
- Making physical improvements to enhance neighborhood quality and stimulate private investment (e.g., compatible improvements to local roadways, new curbs and sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, etc.)
- Improving and developing parks, recreational, and community facilities in neighborhoods where such opportunities are deficient
- Identifying compatible development/redevelopment opportunities that would both strengthen existing neighborhoods and decrease the pressure for new greenfield development
- Instituting regulatory changes and design standards to protect and enhance neighborhood character (e.g., special overlay districts with design guidelines to preserve neighborhood character, mixed-use options to promote neighborhood-serving commercial development, street design standards to promote pedestrian accessibility)
- Encouraging neighborhood identity initiatives (e.g., neighborhood identification signs, neighborhood watch programs, community events, etc.)

The specific strategies to be applied in each neighborhood should be identified through Neighborhood Improvement Plans developed jointly by the Town and local residents (Policy 8-9). The Town could establish a neighborhood planning position responsible for working with residents, property, and business owners on the Neighborhood Improvement Plans, disseminating information on funding programs and incentives, assisting homeowners in applying for grants and funding, and coordinating code enforcement. In addition to identifying outside funding sources, the Town could provide funding or other resources to help implement the plans, possibly on a “match” basis with local residents or businesses.

Southeast Amherst is designated as the priority area for development of a Neighborhood Improvement Plan (see discussion of Southeast Amherst in Section 3.3., Conceptual Land Use Plan).

The condition of *older commercial areas* is important to sustain the health of the neighborhoods they serve.

8-8 Promote the revitalization of older commercial areas as a focus of neighborhood activity and include support for building and property maintenance code enforcement.

As the traditional business and retail centers of the community, older commercial areas are of major importance to the health of Amherst’s neighborhoods. Decline in commercial areas affects the visual appearance and image of the Town and possibly deters investment in nearby residential areas. Revitalizing these areas and reinforcing their traditional role as retail and employment centers with residential uses nearby will stimulate business and investment and provide centers of activity for surrounding neighborhoods.

A number of strategies are available to improve the viability and attractiveness of older commercial areas. Improved street and sidewalk layouts can increase accessibility while maintaining pedestrian character, making the commercial area more appealing to surrounding residents. Building code enforcement can help prevent deterioration. Tailoring zoning requirements to the unique physical characteristics of older commercial development and encouraging the redevelopment of obsolescent properties, historic buildings, and community resources can help accommodate new viable uses (see Land Use and Development Policies 3-9 and 3-10). In addition, the Town could assist and support business owners through such measures as:

- Instituting traffic and parking studies and making the results available to business owners
- Suggesting building designs that might be most attractive to potential customers or compatible with local architecture
- Providing loans or tax incentives to business owners who upgrade their storefronts, signage, landscaping, or lighting
- Providing streetscape and landscaping improvements in commercial areas
- Providing demographic information and available market analyses to business owners so that they may better accommodate Town residents
- Promoting recently renovated commercial areas or nearby neighborhoods
- Encouraging the establishment of business improvement districts as a mechanism to finance improvements

Commercial revitalization will provide many tangential benefits. Healthy commercial centers positively affect overall neighborhood character and could encourage local residents to renovate their properties. Improving the layout of commercial areas could reduce congestion and encourage residents to walk or bike instead of driving to shops. Improved retail areas with a “village character” could become destinations attractive to

customers beyond the local neighborhoods. Strengthened commercial facilities would also increase Amherst's tax base and employment opportunities. Lastly, capitalizing on infill development and redevelopment opportunities in existing centers could reduce pressures for development of vacant lands and strip retail development. (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

8-9 Encourage participation from residents when the Town is developing action/improvement plans for specific neighborhoods.

Neighborhood needs are best determined by local residents working through a collaborative planning process. Neighborhood Improvement Plans should be a centerpiece of the Neighborhood Conservation Program (Policy 8-7). The Eggertsville Action Plan and the current plan for the Harlem-Kensington commercial area have set a precedent for such plans. In the future, the Town should establish and provide resources for a formal neighborhood planning process, encourage residents to participate in the development of Neighborhood Improvement Plans, and publicize the benefits of the program. Action plans should be developed for the oldest neighborhoods first. Ultimately, the Town should strive to have neighborhood improvement plans initiated by neighborhood residents and/or neighborhood organizations. The Town's role would be to ensure that these plans are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan while providing resources, technical assistance, and support to the neighborhoods in developing such plans.

The Neighborhood Conservation Program should be implemented through **Neighborhood Improvement Plans** developed collaboratively by local residents and the Town.

Typically, neighborhood improvement plans address issues in the following areas:

- Transportation/vehicular and pedestrian traffic
- Access to commercial and retail areas
- Community facilities and services, including parks and recreation areas
- Neighborhood conservation and beautification, including potential regulatory changes and physical improvements

However, improvement plans should be focused on residents' concerns and needs. Therefore, public participation is essential to guarantee a successful plan. The plan should be used to establish consensus on neighborhood issues, provide guidance to town officials, and establish eligibility for funding. The steps of a typical neighborhood planning process include:

- **Neighborhood Self-Evaluation:** This step involves identification of neighborhood boundaries and an assessment of neighborhood strengths, weaknesses, and issues that should be addressed in the Plan.

- ***Plan Development:*** In this step, a plan of action is developed to address the issues identified in the self-evaluation phase. To assist in this process, the Town could develop a “toolkit” of potential neighborhood improvement actions as a resource for neighborhood residents.
- ***Implementation:*** This step involves coordinated action by neighborhood residents and the Town to implement the Plan. To be successful, neighborhood plans will require the active participation of residents in activities such as fund raising, organizing special events, and mobilizing volunteers for maintenance and improvement projects. Town involvement could include actions such as regulatory changes and targeting of funds for physical improvements.

Amherst’s residents should be made aware of the incentives that are available through the neighborhood improvement planning process. Potential incentives include access to funding and loan programs, town incentives and support, and the incorporation of neighborhood concerns into town planning initiatives. The neighborhood improvement planning process will help to instill community pride, especially if residents participate in or initiate a plan for their neighborhood.



*Community
Facilities and
Services*

9

Community Facilities and Services

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9.0 Community Facilities and Services

9.1 OVERVIEW

***Priority Action Program:
Community Facilities and Services***

- Establish an objective system of planning for community facility and service needs. Link this system to a long-range capital programming process to reconcile needs with the Town’s fiscal capacity

Amherst has excellent community facilities and services that are consistently rated by residents as major contributors to the Town’s high quality of life. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the following facilities and services provided by Amherst or other public agencies for the benefit of Town residents:

Town Owned or Provided

- Parks and Open Space
- Recreation
- Police Protection
- Libraries
- Senior Services
- Youth Services
- Other Municipal Facilities

Owned and Provided by Other Entities

- Public Schools
- Fire Protection
- Health Care Facilities

While the quality of the Town’s community facilities and services is generally excellent and is expected to remain so in the foreseeable future, some significant issues will need to be addressed if this quality is to be maintained. Key issues include:

- ***Effects of population growth:*** The population growth projected for the Town will create increased demand for community facilities and services. The moderate rate of increase (9% to 19% projected over a 20-year timeframe) will result in this effect being felt gradually over time. Nevertheless, the need for new or expanded facilities and services to serve a larger population distributed over a larger geographic area is likely.
- ***Shift in geographic focus:*** As a byproduct of the projected population growth, there will likely be growing emphasis on locating facilities and providing services in the central and northern parts of the Town.

- **Cost implications:** As Amherst grows and matures, the costs of constructing and operating high-quality community facilities to serve the larger population will affect the Town’s fiscal situation. This issue applies both to town facilities and services, such as parks and recreation and police protection, and to facilities and services provided by others but supported by taxpayers, such as public schools.

9.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

GOAL

Community facilities and services that meet residents’ needs and contribute to the Town’s high quality of life

OBJECTIVES

- Establish standards or performance criteria to determine community facility and service needs
- Enhance the role of public facilities as centers of neighborhood and community activity
- Provide quality facilities and services cost effectively by managing expenses and diversifying revenue sources

POLICIES

A. Community Facility and Service Needs

Figure 12 identifies existing community facilities and new facilities proposed in the Town of Amherst Capital Improvement Program. (See Figure 4 for existing parks and open spaces. Park and recreational facility needs are being addressed in the Recreation & Parks Master Plan Update.)

9-1 Establish an ongoing system to identify and prioritize community facility and service needs.

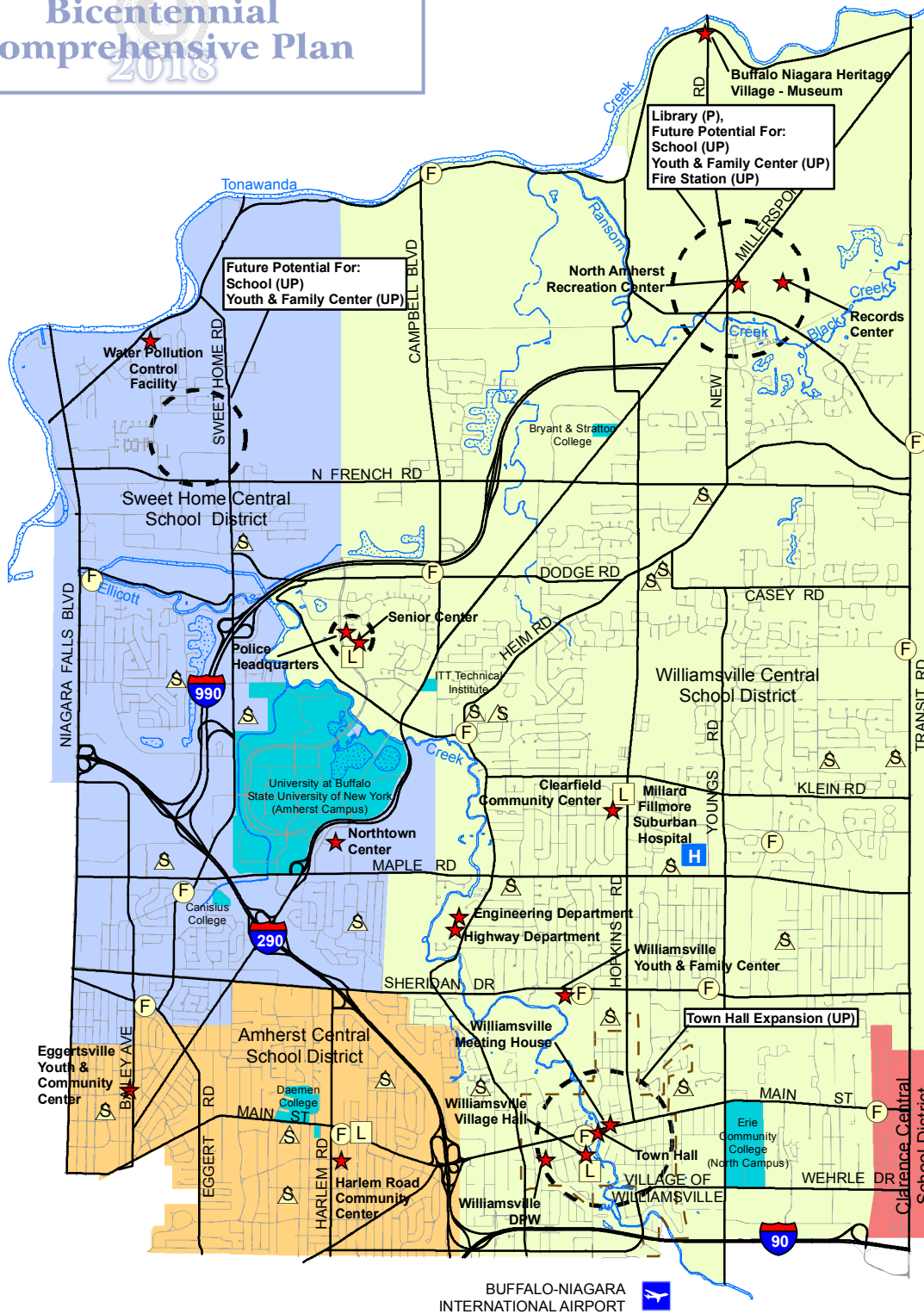
A proactive approach is required if Amherst is to maintain the high quality community facilities and services expected by residents at affordable costs. Planning for future community facility and service needs should to the maximum extent possible be based upon objective level of service standards or performance criteria for each type of facility. Taking into account existing and projected population characteristics, the current and future provision of community facilities can then be compared to the standards or criteria, providing the basis for short- and long-range planning for capital improvements or other ways of meeting identified needs. This systematic approach should be part of the on-going planning and programming activities of town departments that provide facilities and services through the capital improvements budgeting process (see Policy 9-8).

***Vision Statement Directions:
Community Facilities and
Services***

Community facilities and services are integral to the Town’s exceptional quality of life:

- Accessible parks and recreation
- Outstanding public schools
- Public safety

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan



COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

FIGURE 12

LEGEND

Existing Facilities		New Facilities		School Districts	
★	Town/Village Facilities	□	Type of Facility	Amber	Amherst Central
L	Library	○	General Location	Sweet	Sweet Home Central
F	Fire Station	(P)	Programmed	Willam	Williamsville Central
△	Public School	(UP)	Unprogrammed	Clare	Clarence Central
■	Educational Campus			Blue	Surface Water Body
		---		---	Municipal Boundary
		---		---	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: September 2015



The Town’s Planning Department can play an important role in this process by helping to define the basic structure of the community facility planning system, sharing information on population and growth trends, and coordinating among the different providers. Coordination should extend to providers outside of town government, such as the public school districts.

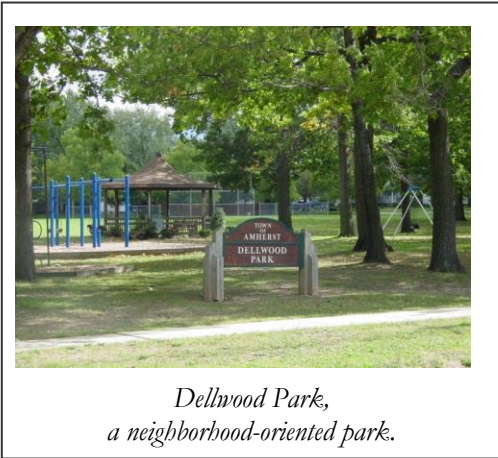
The following text provides an overview of strategies for the future related to the different types of community facilities and services.

Parks and Recreation

In 1992, the Town completed a *Recreation & Parks Master Plan* that established standards for the provision of recreational facilities (ballfields, courts, playgrounds, etc.) and parkland acreage per 1,000 residents. The Master Plan was updated in 2003 with new standards and requirements to meet parks and recreation needs. The Town should perform a routine monitoring protocol to determine its performance in accomplishing plan objectives. As conditions warrant, the plan should be periodically updated. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Future planning for parks and recreational facilities should strive to achieve the following:

- ***Integrate parks and recreational facilities into an interconnected open space system of parklands greenways and trails.*** Although the Town has made considerable progress in developing a system of off-road recreational trails, most existing parks are isolated from each other. The predominantly developed nature of most of Amherst makes it more difficult to establish a truly connected system. Nevertheless, opportunities should be actively sought to connect public parks and open spaces through pedestrian and bicycle trails, sidewalks, and lanes along streets (see Land Use and Development Policy 3-13 and the accompanying Parks, Open Space and Trail map).
- ***Provide a more even distribution of parks and recreational facilities throughout the community.*** While the existing supply of neighborhood and community parkland (3.83¹² acres/1,000 residents) is slightly lower than the standard established by the 2003 *Recreation & Parks Master Plan* (4.25 acres/1,000 residents), parkland is not evenly distributed throughout the Town. In order to correct the parkland deficit between the existing and proposed standards, future planning



*Dellwood Park,
a neighborhood-oriented park.*

¹² Ratio based on 2012 inventory of parkland and 2008-2012 American Community Survey estimate of total population.

activities should seek to establish more neighborhood level park and recreational facilities in under-served areas. Creative approaches will be necessary in the southern and central parts of the Town where the availability of land is limited. Possibilities include use of other publicly owned land that may be suitable for development of neighborhood-oriented park and recreational facilities, joint use agreements (see below), and evaluation of infill/redevelopment sites for potential acquisition and park development. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Where vacant land is available for development, conservation development can be used to encourage dedication of parkland and open space in new subdivisions (see Chapters 1.0 and 2.0). The Town currently requires new developments to contribute fees to a recreation and open space trust fund, with the proceeds used for open space acquisitions or recreational facility development. As part of this regulation, the Town may accept land within the development instead of fees. In certain situations, this provision could be used to meet needs for neighborhood-level parkland.

- ***Pursue joint-use agreements with other providers.*** Joint-use agreements with entities such as the public school districts and non-profit organizations can be a cost-effective way of providing recreational opportunities for residents in areas where acquisition and development of new parkland by the Town is not feasible (see Policy 9-7). The Town should explore such arrangements with other educational/civic organizations that maintain recreational facilities. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Police Protection

Amherst is known for its low crime rate and is rated the “Safest City in America” by researcher Scott Morgan of *America’s Safest Cities*. The Town’s police force of 151 sworn officers is substantially lower than the number in many communities of the same size. Constructed in 1979, the Town’s police station is considered generally adequate for current space needs. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Amherst has an exceptionally low crime rate and has been rated as the “Safest City in America.”
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Future planning for police protection should monitor the adequacy of the size of the present police force and station. More officers, a larger police station, and/or new substations may be needed in the future to serve a larger residential population and more employment and retail development distributed over a larger area.

Libraries

The Amherst Main Library and three branch libraries are owned and maintained by the Town and operated by the Erie County library system. The Town’s Capital Improvement

Program previously included construction of a fourth branch library in Northeast Amherst to serve residents of this growing area. This project is consistent with projections that indicate significant future population growth in this area, which contains a large proportion of the Town's remaining vacant land available for development. The new facility should be located to support establishment of a mixed-use activity center (see Policy 9-4) in the area.

Senior Services

Opened in August 2000, the Town's Center for Senior Services is expected to accommodate the facility needs of seniors for the foreseeable future. The Center replaced and consolidated the functions of multiple sites previously located throughout the Town. The consolidation of services at one location was in response to national trends toward: providing facilities capable of accommodating the programming needs of two generations of seniors; the need to eliminate administrative costs associated with multiple sites; preferences of seniors; and the increased revenue generating potential of single site service delivery. Van service is available to seniors who are unable to drive to the Center. Senior services planning and programming should continue to address the need for outreach services and accessibility for all seniors.



Amherst Center for Senior Services.

Youth Services

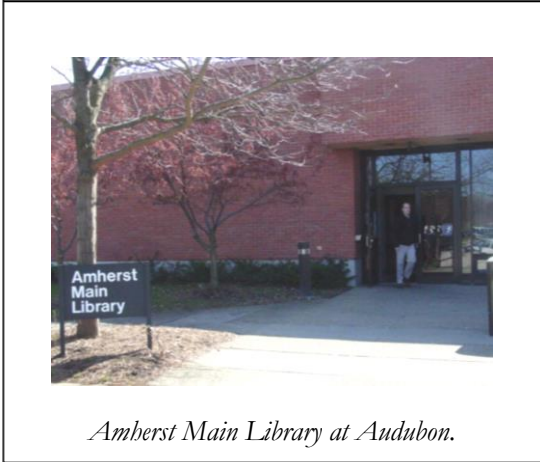
The Amherst Youth Board offers varied services in support of the Town's children, youth, and families, including after-school child care and after-school, evening, and weekend programs. Over the long term, a potential need has been identified by the Youth Services Department for new facilities in Northeast and Northwest Amherst to serve the increasing number of families in the northern part of Town. If it is determined to be needed in the future, these could be developed as part of joint use facilities in accordance with Policy 9-6 (e.g., in conjunction with construction of new schools).

Other Municipal Facilities

Other Town of Amherst facilities include the Town Hall in Williamsville and the Engineering/Highway Department administrative and operational facilities on North Forest Road. The Amherst Town Hall Expansion Study completed in 2000 identified the need for an additional 20,000 square feet of space because of overcrowding of the administrative functions that occupy the building. No project to comprehensively address space shortages in Town is included in the Capital Improvement Program; such a project will be needed in the future.

Public Schools

The great majority of the Town of Amherst is served by three public school districts: Amherst Central School District, Sweet



Amherst Main Library at Audubon.

Home Central School District, and Williamsville Central School District. These districts consistently rank above average in New York State in student performance, make an important contribution to the Town's quality of life, and are potentially key players in the Comprehensive Plan initiative to establish Amherst as a leading national "knowledge-based" community.

Projected population increases are likely to ultimately result in demand for expanded or new school facilities, particularly in the Williamsville School District, which includes Northeast Amherst and portions of the Town of Clarence.¹³ The Town has no direct involvement in providing public education, but can assist the school districts in planning to accommodate long-range facility needs based upon projected population growth. If a new school(s) is required, it should be located to provide a "neighborhood anchor" and/or support establishment of a mixed-use activity center (see Policies 9-3 and 9-4). The Town should also encourage and support school district efforts to maintain academic excellence and provide public outreach and lifelong learning programs, thus enhancing Amherst's reputation as a "knowledge-based" community.

Amherst's *public schools* are highly rated and have an important role to play in the Education Key Initiative.

Fire Protection

The Town of Amherst has no direct role in fire protection services, which are provided by 10 volunteer fire departments that operate a total of 13 fire stations in the Town. The fire stations are generally well distributed within the Town, and no need for new facilities has been identified. Given that only two stations are located north of North French Road, the potential need for an additional fire station to serve growth in Northeast Amherst should be monitored in the future.

The key performance standard for fire protection planning, emergency response time, is generally good throughout the Town. Response times are influenced by fire station locations and by road network conditions. From the latter standpoint, traffic congestion should be monitored for its potential effects on future response times.

Health Care Facilities

The Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital is a privately operated health care facility of regional significance located in Amherst. While not analogous to the publicly provided facilities and services previously discussed, this highly rated facility makes important contributions to the Town's quality of life and

¹³ Population in the Amherst Central School District is expected to remain flat or slightly decline by 2020. Much of the projected population increase in the Sweet Home District is attributable to projected growth in the UB student population, and an overall trend towards an older population is expected to reduce the number of school age children as a proportion of the total.

economy. The hospital was expanded in 1995 and due to growing demand for health care services from a surrounding suburban population that is increasing in both numbers and age, the hospital was again expanded in 2008. The Hospital is the central feature of the mixed-use activity center located at Maple and Youngs Roads (see Section 3.3). Designation of this center supports the Hospital and ancillary uses.

The Town should continue to support the Hospital in providing quality health care for residents of Amherst and surrounding communities. In addition, research and development programs, particularly those that link to other area institutions and reinforce Amherst’s status as a “knowledge-based” community, should be encouraged.

9-2 Encourage transportation and outreach programs for persons who find it difficult to get to particular facilities.

Amherst’s size and population make it impractical to provide community facilities in close proximity to all those who use them, a situation that will be compounded as growth continues towards the north. Providers should address the needs of users who need assistance in getting to their facilities (e.g., elderly or children). The Senior Services Department, for example, offers van service for users. To maximize their accessibility, community facilities should be provided with transit, sidewalk, and bicycle connections as part of the integrated transportation system described in Chapter 6.0.

B. Community Facilities as Activity Centers

In addition to meeting community needs for specific facilities and programs, community facilities provide centers of neighborhood and community activity. In this capacity community facilities can play an important role in promoting other Comprehensive Plan policies, such as neighborhood revitalization and establishment of mixed-use activity centers.

9-3 Identify opportunities to strategically locate certain facilities to strengthen neighborhoods and serve local needs.

Public facilities such as parks, schools, and libraries are centers of community activity that contribute to the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods. Opportunities should be pursued to increase the contributions of existing facilities to neighborhoods (e.g., by providing sidewalk connections, hosting community meetings and events, etc.). In addition, certain new facilities, such as neighborhood parks and youth/family centers, could be located to both meet identified needs and serve as “anchors” that enhance neighborhood life. In the event that a public facility is closed or relocated, redevelopment of the facility and surrounding lands should be pursued pursuant to Policy 3-9.

Contribution to neighborhood vitality should be taken into consideration as a factor in planning for community facility and service needs by the Town and other providers (Policy 9-1). (*Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-1*)

9-4 Integrate community facilities within mixed-use activity centers.

A key concept of the Comprehensive Plan is establishment of mixed-use centers that integrate different types of land uses (see Land Use and Development Policy 3-1). Mixed-use centers are intended to provide focuses of community activity, convenient access to services and facilities, and encourage walking, biking, and use of public transportation as alternatives to automobile trips. As destinations and places for communal activities, community facilities are a potentially vital ingredient in the mix of uses that can be included in these centers. Where possible, mixed-use centers should include or provide connections to existing community facilities. In addition, mixed-use centers should be the preferred location for new community facilities. (Northeast Amherst in the vicinity of the Millersport Highway/New Road/Smith Road intersection is a logical location given the programmed or potential needs identified for facilities such as a library, youth and family center, and school.) The Town should coordinate internally and with other providers in planning for future community facilities to encourage their inclusion in designated mixed-use centers.

Mixed-use activity centers should wherever possible include existing or new community facilities.

C. Community Facility and Service Costs

Continuing to provide high-quality community facilities and services to a growing population will have significant implications for the Town's fiscal situation. A variety of strategies are proposed to manage the future provision of community facilities and services in a cost-effective manner that allows the Town to maintain the high levels of service that residents expect.

9-5 Allow continued growth of the nonresidential tax base consistent with the Comprehensive (Land Use) Plan.

Amherst's nonresidential (commercial retail, office and industrial) development partially subsidizes the costs of providing community facilities and services to residents. National studies have shown that commercial development derives excess revenues as compared to residential development. Results from a similar local study by the AIDA confirm these findings for Amherst. Thus growth in the nonresidential tax base is needed if the Town of Amherst (and other providers such as the public school districts) is to continue to provide quality facilities and services at rates affordable to taxpayers. Nonresidential development and redevelopment should be managed to be consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals, objectives, and policies for Land Use and Development and other elements, and with the

concept of balance between economic development, livability, and community character expressed in the Vision Statement.

9-6 Pursue cost efficiencies in the provision of public facilities and services through the sharing of resources and the elimination of service duplications.

As is typical of the Buffalo-Niagara region, Amherst's public infrastructure and services are provided by multiple entities in stand-alone, single-use facilities. While this pattern is likely to persist in the foreseeable future, opportunities should be sought to realize cost savings where possible by sharing resources and eliminating service duplications between different providers. Multi-use facilities (e.g., public schools with community recreation facilities) are one way to achieve this objective. Northeast Amherst is a logical location to apply this concept, given the programmed or potential needs identified for facilities such as a library, youth and family center, and school. Cost-saving opportunities should be pursued at the regional as well as the local level.

9-7 Expand partnerships with other service providers, private organizations, and businesses to provide community facilities and services.

A strategy related to Policy 9-6, partnerships with other public and private service providers to provide community facilities and services can meet a portion of identified needs, thus relieving some of the fiscal burden on town government. For example, joint-use agreements can be executed with public schools or other educational institutions for use of recreational or other school facilities during off-hours. Potential partners include public school districts and other educational institutions; non-profits such as churches, scout and "Y" organizations, and athletic leagues; and private businesses.

9-8 Reconcile needs for community facilities and services with the fiscal capacity of the Town through the capital programming process.

The community facility planning system described in Policy 9-1 is designed to objectively identify the needs of Amherst's current and future population for the various types of public facilities and services provided by the Town and others. By comparing the current and programmed provision of community facilities to levels of service or other identified performance standards, capital improvements or other means of meeting future needs can be planned for.

The Town's present capital programming process is characterized by short-term decision-making and would benefit from a longer-term perspective based upon realistic evaluation of the Town's fiscal capability to fund major projects. Currently, the Capital Improvement Program offers little guidance on how to fund worthwhile projects that are

programmed to occur in the next several years but which are competing for limited dollars. The proposed new approach would include:

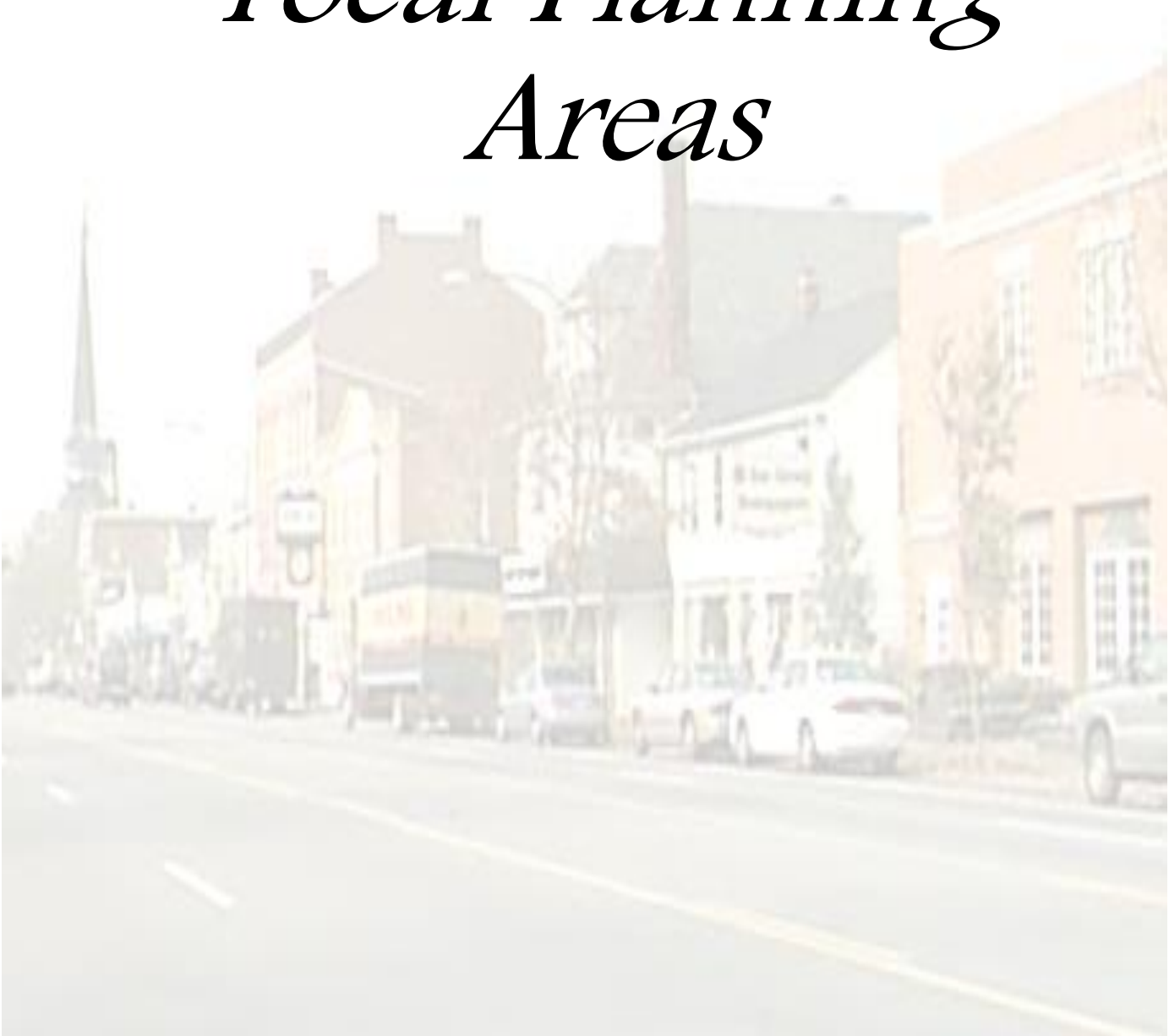
- Staging of projects to occur in the short, mid, and long-term (e.g., 0-2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, 10+ years)
- Reconciliation of project costs with the Town's projected fiscal and bonding capacities over the specified timeframes

Cost-benefit analyses must be conducted for each project as part of this process, taking into account construction, operating costs, and debt service; any offsetting revenues to be generated by the facility; and outside sources of funding (e.g., grants or corporate sponsorships).

9-9 Re-evaluate funding of special purpose or “high level of service” programs or facilities.

Many community facilities, programs, and services are generally available to residents as a public service, with no expectation of recovering their costs. Conversely, certain facilities (e.g., golf courses) are more specialized in nature and/or require more intensive investment by the Town to meet the needs of specific user groups. Where possible, funding of such special purpose or “high level of service” facilities and programs should be reevaluated to shift the burden away from the general fund to greater reliance on user fees and partnerships with non-profit organizations. Exceptions to this policy should be allowed where necessary to make facilities and programs available to low to moderate income families or other special needs groups.

*Focal Planning
Areas*



10 *Focal Planning Areas*

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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.¹⁴ 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

Seven 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
7. Boulevard Central District (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03*)

The following process was used to address the seven 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.

¹⁴ 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.).

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.

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 (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*), 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

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 Bicentennial
 Comprehensive Plan**
2018

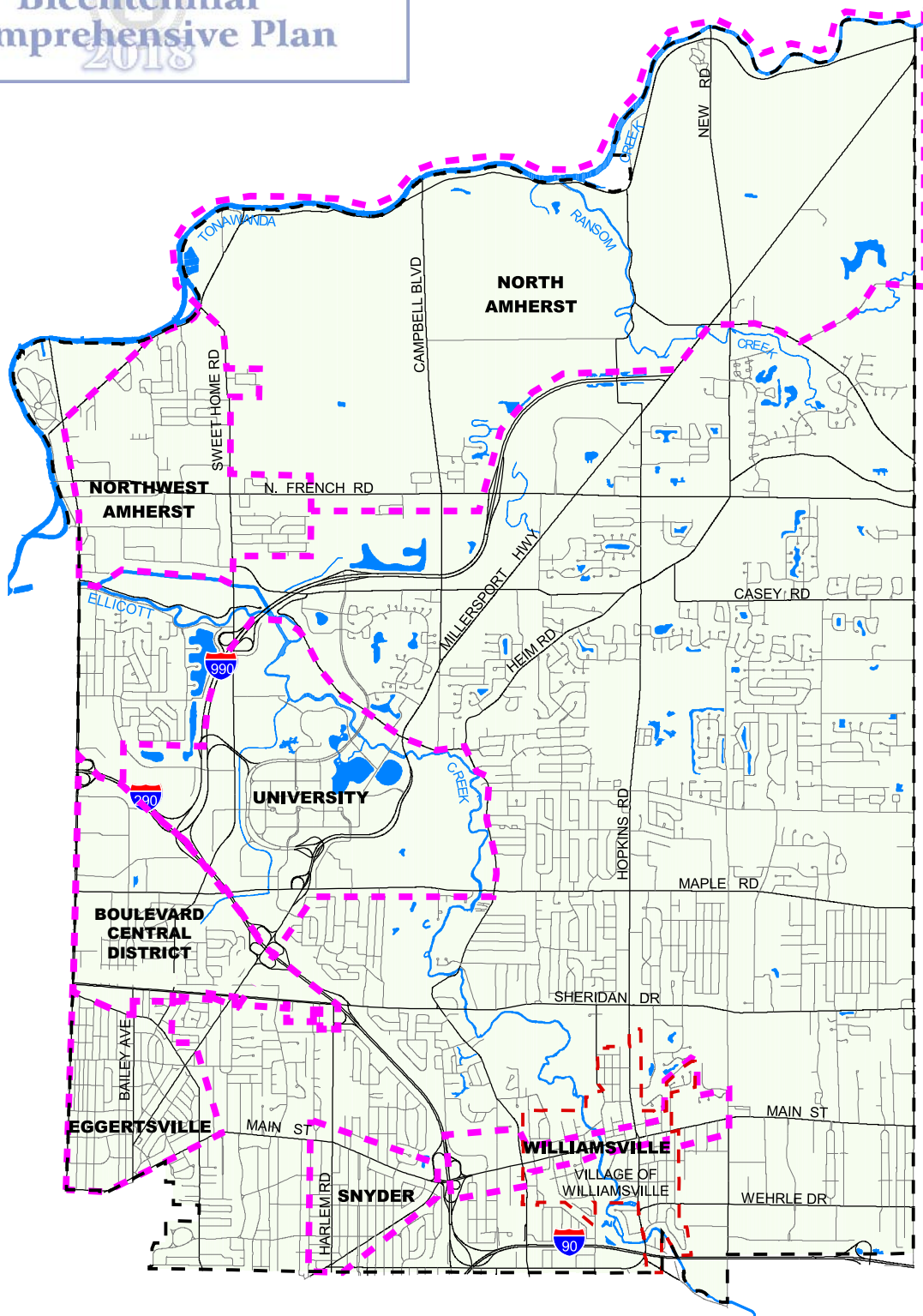

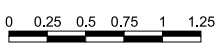


FIGURE 13

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: December 2020



 Miles

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 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 Erie 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



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

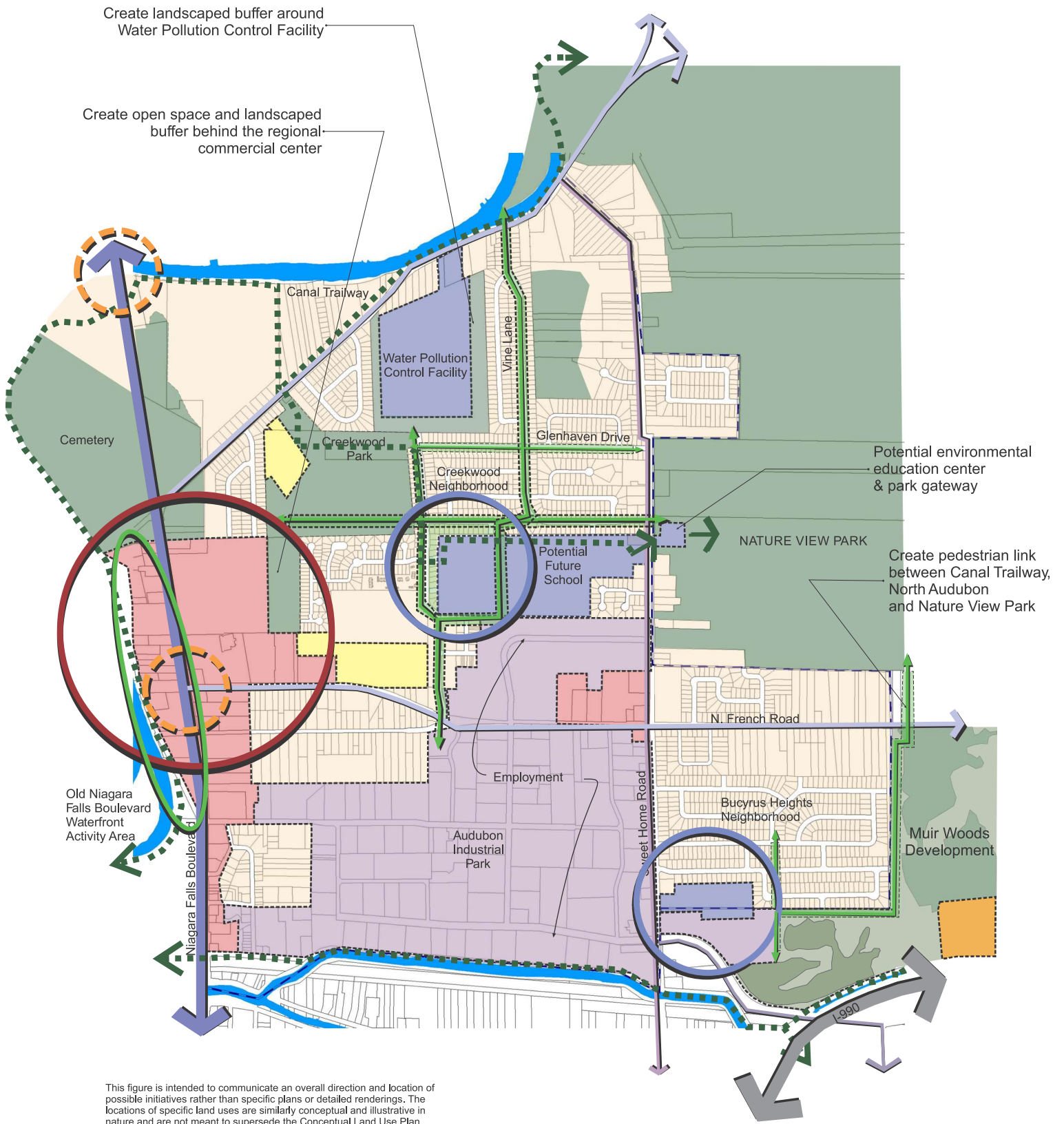


to parks and schools should serve as the foundation for the area's future, increasing the attractiveness and marketability of the area for a mix of incomes.

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.

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



NORTHWEST AMHERST FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT

May 2017

Figure 15

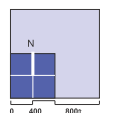
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

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

(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-stripping 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.
- 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 seven 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, and contains some commercial uses in a traditional form. 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 Road. This area represents an opportunity to provide services in a smaller, traditional form that maintains the area's overall rural character. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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 an E-Commerce/Logistics Center north of the Dockside Village residential community and adjacent agricultural parcels to provide opportunity for e-commerce development that can be separate from residential areas and can accommodate the new trend in consumer activity that requires large distribution facilities and good transportation access to efficiently reach surrounding regions. These lands should not contain prime agricultural soils in order to preserve this valuable resource. Providing opportunities for e-commerce/logistics businesses will position Amherst to take



Tonawanda Creek Road



Boat launch on Tonawanda Creek



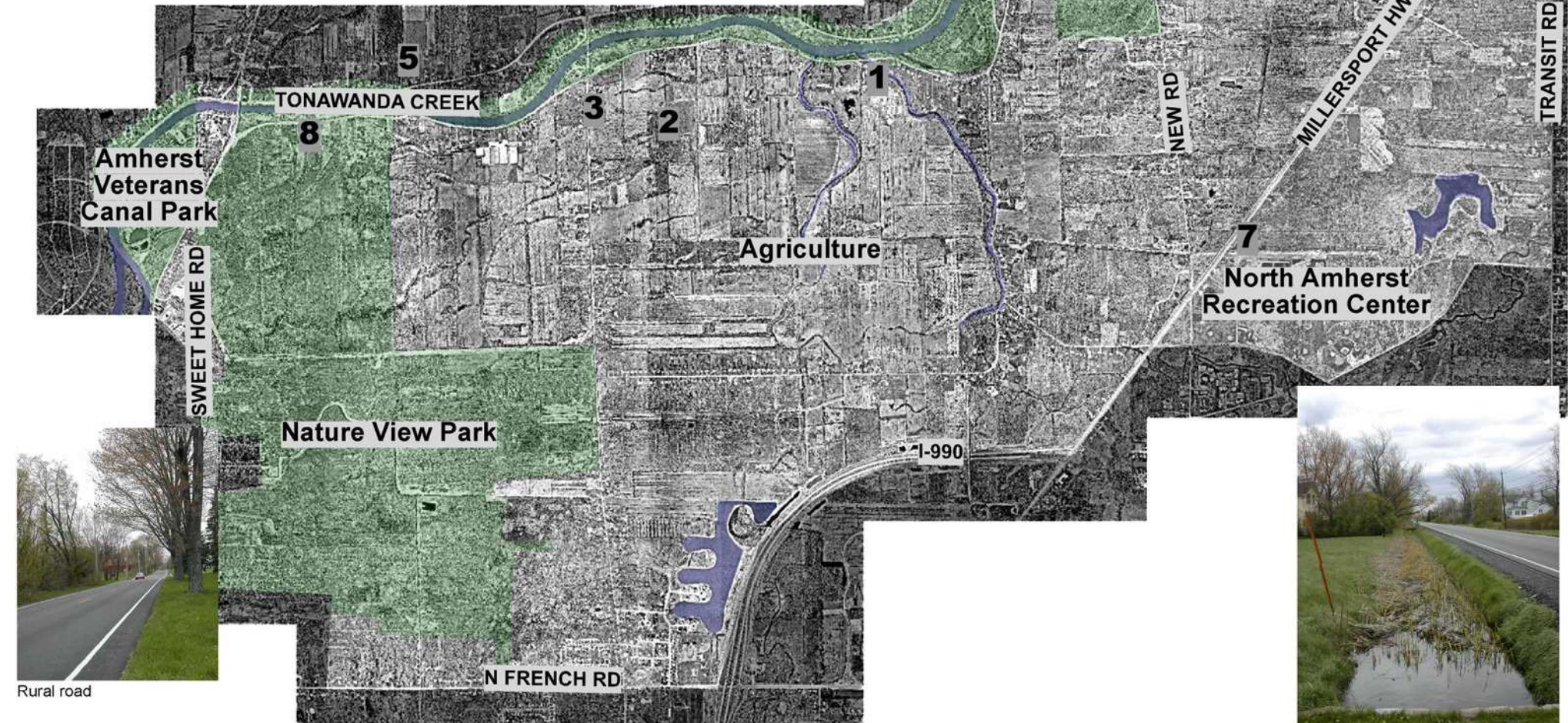
North Amherst Recreation Center



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

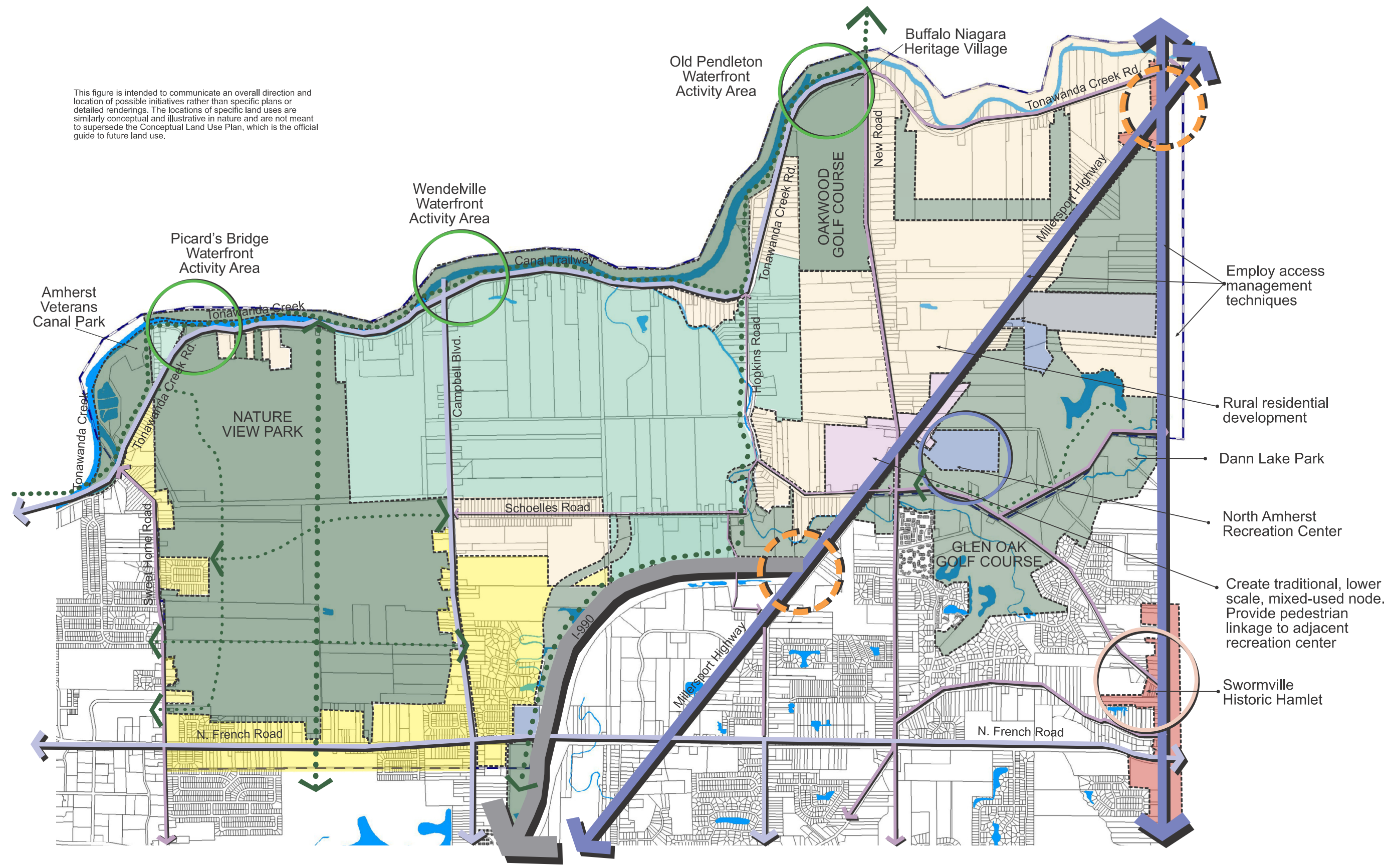
TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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

December 2020 **Figure 18**

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

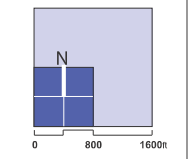
LEGEND

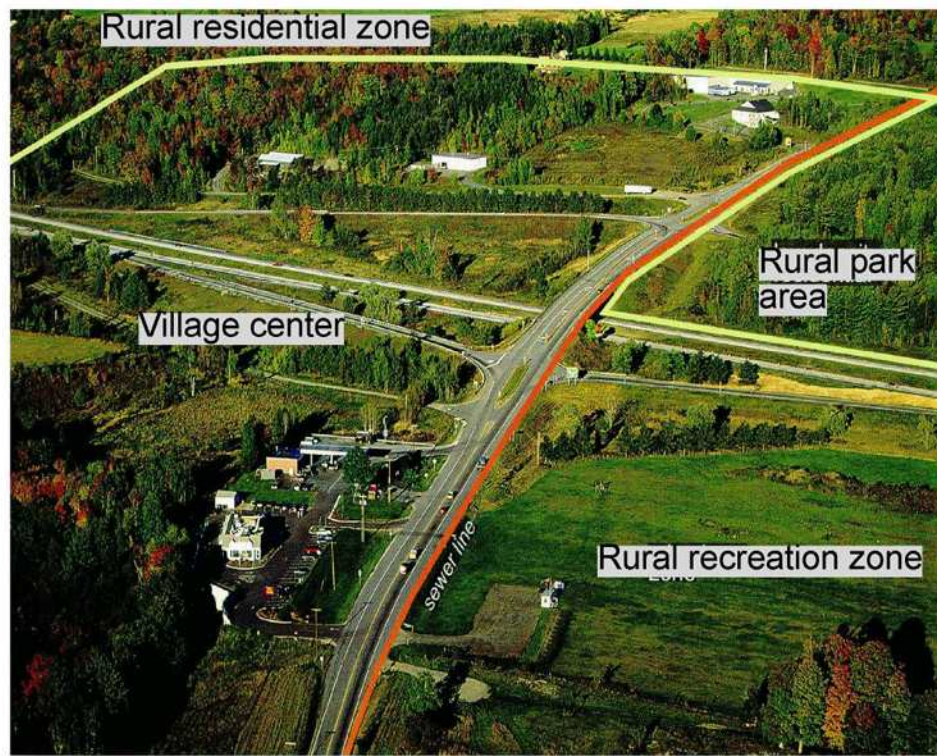
- ↔ Expressway
- ↔ Major Arterial
- ↔ Minor Arterial
- ↔ Collector
- ↔ Major Recreational Trail
- ↔ Minor Recreational Trail

- Rural residential
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- Community Use
- E-Commerce / Logistics Center
- Special Use Center

- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways
- Agricultural land
- Commercial / Mixed-Use
- Neighborhood anchor / community service

- Gateway
- Waterfront activity area
- Rural "village" center





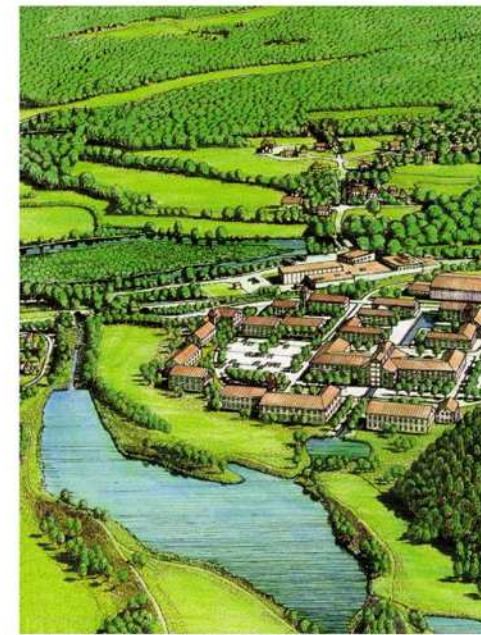
Village center in rural setting



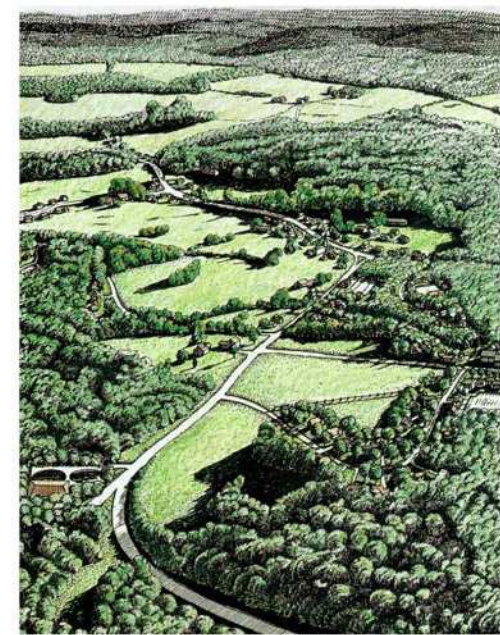
Waterfront trail



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

advantage of evolving consumer patterns and be proactive in a changing retail economy. Any development will need to give special consideration to providing substantial buffers to the surrounding area to maintain the overall rural character of North Amherst. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-04*)

- 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 smaller 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 small, traditional area 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 smaller 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 traditional form and 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.



1
Ellicott Creek trailway



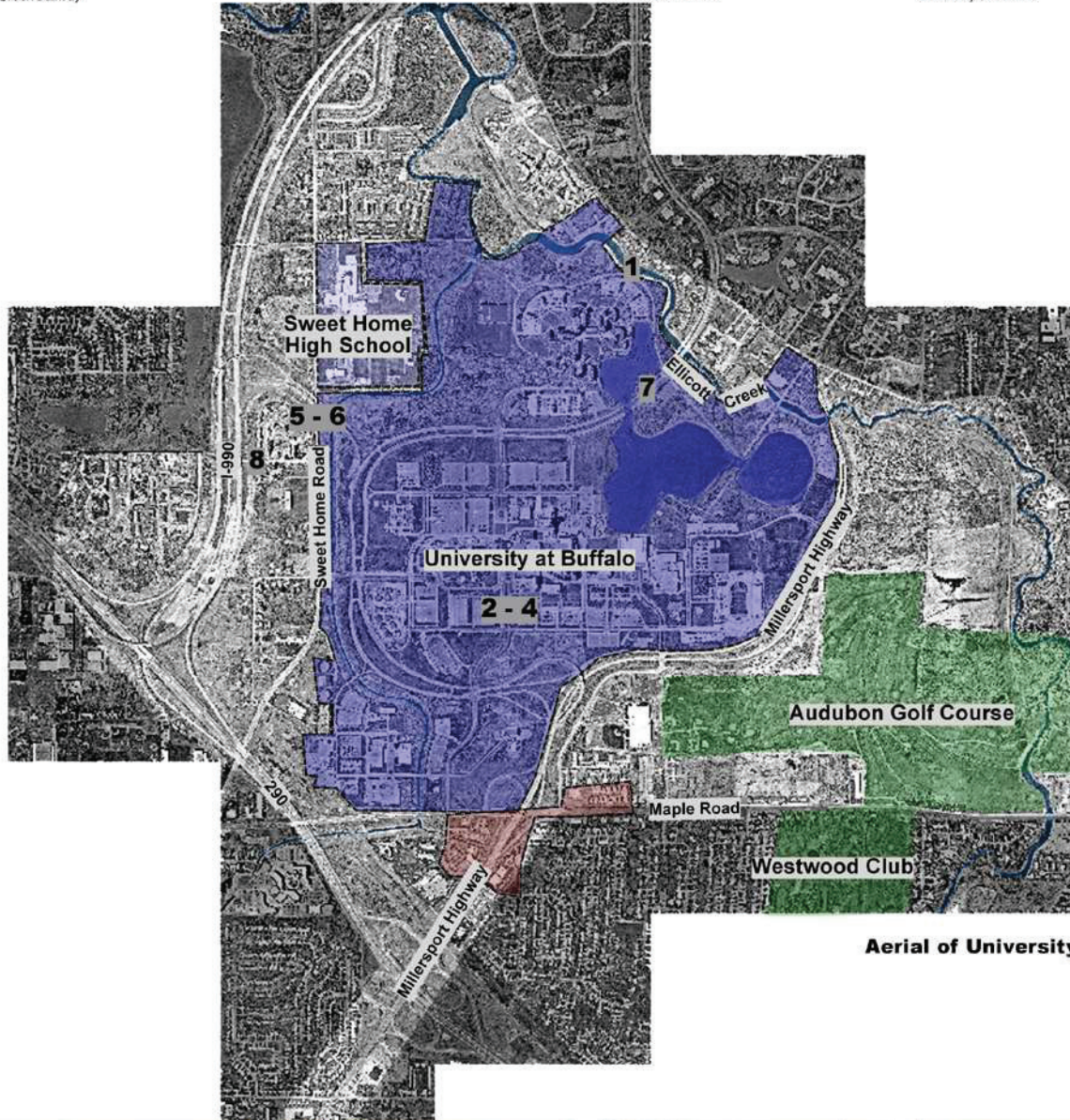
2
University housing



3
University at Buffalo



4
University at Buffalo



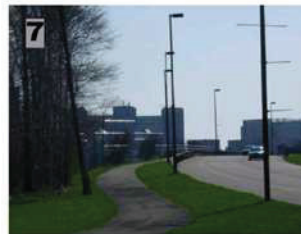
Aerial of University



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

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.
- 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.

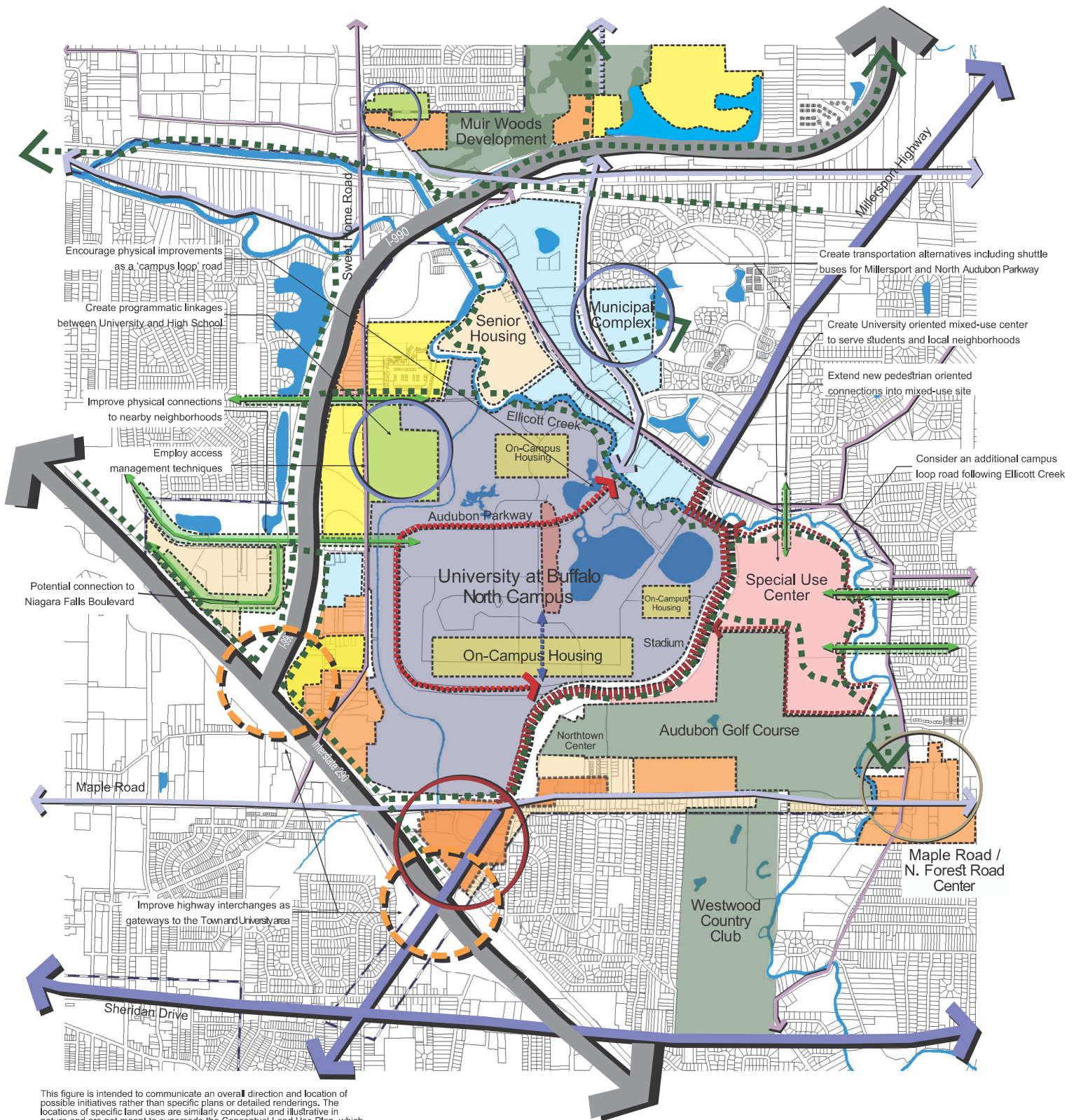
Connecting the uses is a somewhat disjointed network of roads and highways. Millersport Highway directly connects the north campus to the University's south campus to the southwest. John James Audubon Parkway is a main link into the north campus, but neither the parkway nor Millersport Highway is distinguished 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*.



UNIVERSITY FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN

December 2020 **Figure 21**

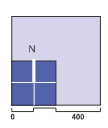
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

LEGEND

- Expressway
- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Neighborhood Connector
- Campus Loop
- Multi-use Trail
- Natural Trail

- Special Use Center
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- Medium Residential / Student Housing
- Commercial / Mixed-Use
- Office / Research
- School / Community Facility
- University at Buffalo
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Regional Commercial Center
- Neighborhood Commercial Center





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

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 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 Skiddersville 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.¹⁵ 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.
- 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

¹⁵ 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).

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.

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,

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



1
Northtown Plaza



2
Northtown Plaza / Eggert Rd.



3
Marion Road



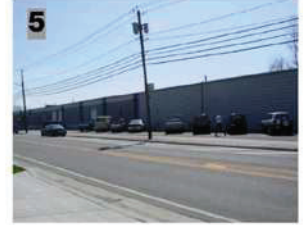
4
Allenhurst Apartments



8
University Plaza



Aerial of Eggertsville



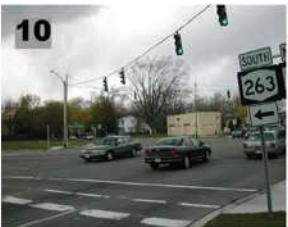
5
Bailey Avenue



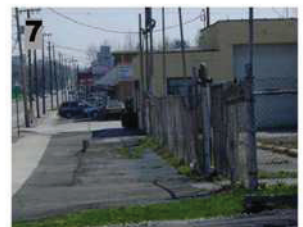
9
University Plaza



6
Bailey Avenue



10
Six Corners



7
Bailey Avenue



11
Windermere School



12
Windermere Boulevard



13
Springville Avenue



14
Main Street and Eggert Road

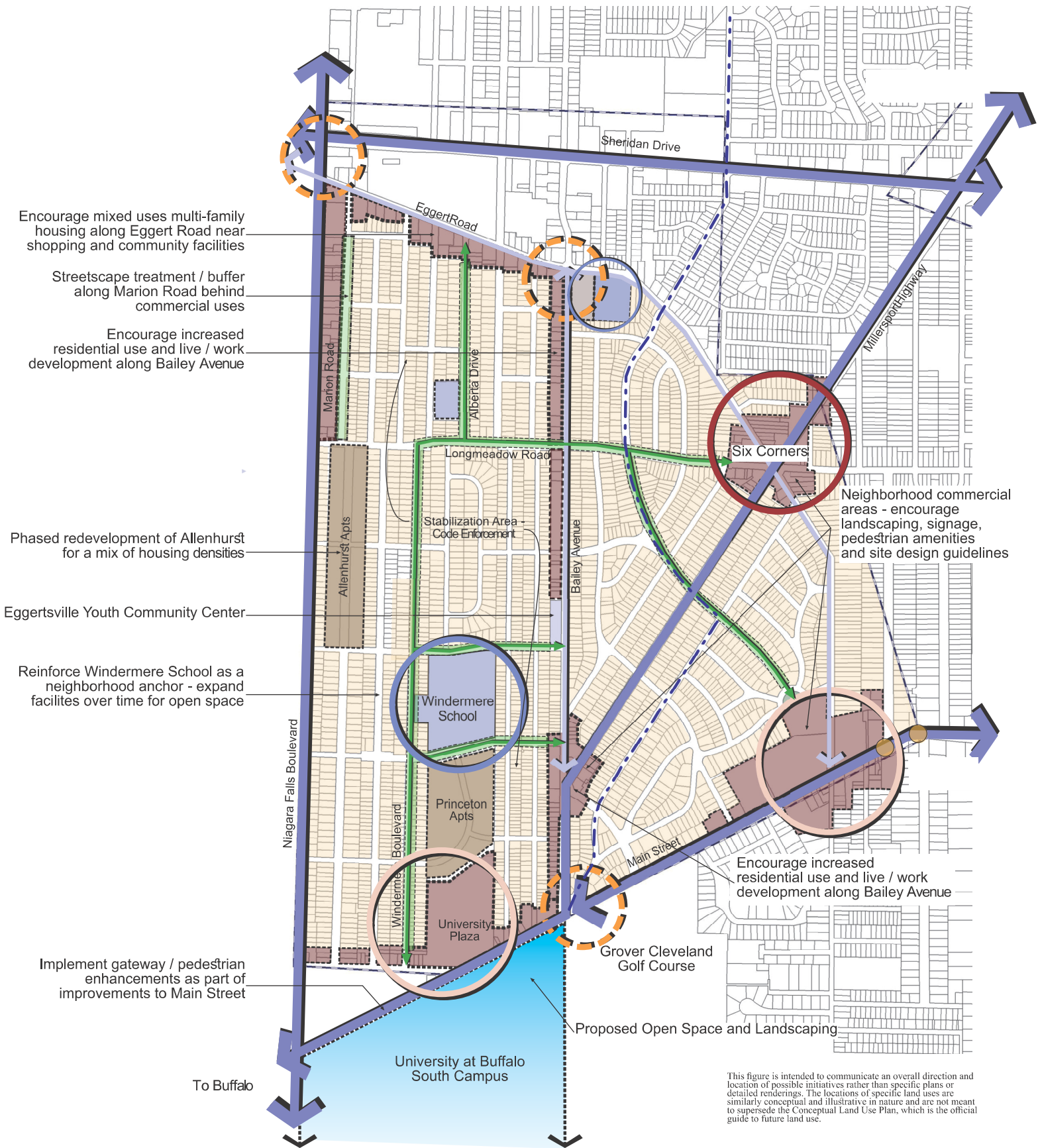
EGGERTSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Figure 23

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC



EGGERTSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN

December 2020 **Figure 24**

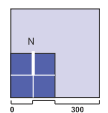
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

LEGEND

- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Neighborhood Connector
- Inter-campus Bikeway

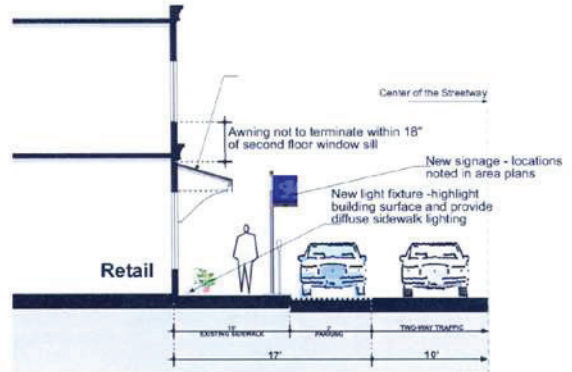
- Traditional Commercial / Mixed Use Area
- Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric
- School / Community Facility
- Recreation / Open Space / Greenways
- Multi-family Residential

- Gateway
- Neighborhood Anchor / Community Service
- Regional Commercial Center
- Urban / "Village" Center
- Historic Entranceways - restore where applicable & create lighting plan for Main St

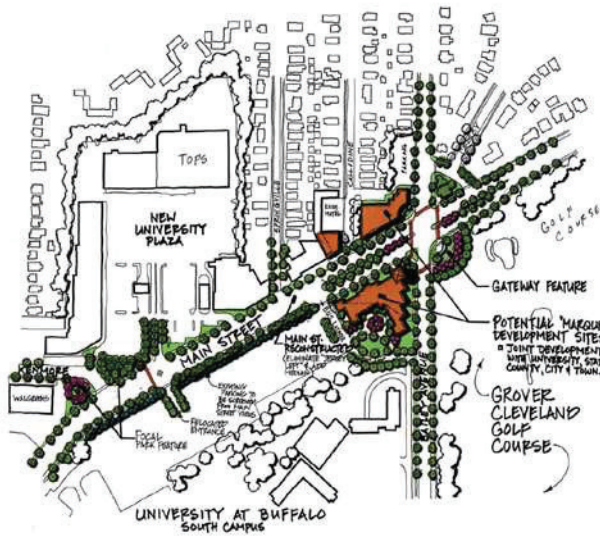




Lake Oswego, Oregon
 Phased redevelopment for mixed housing density with side parking



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

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 (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*) 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 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 as discussed in Section 3.3.2 and shown on Map Figure 6-A . (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*) 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 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*)

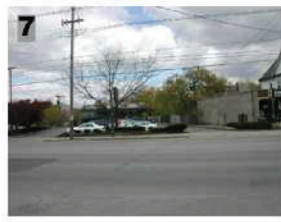
The intersection of Main Street and Kensington Avenue comprises the third commercial center in the Snyder focal planning area. Located adjacent to I-290. The commercial center there is of traditional form and this area represents an opportunity to strengthen a gateway to Amherst coming out of the Village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



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



10
Main Street and Harlem Road



14
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road



15
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road



16
Kensington Avenue and Harlem Road

Aerial of Snyder

SNYDER FOCAL PLANNING AREA - EXISTING CONDITIONS

TOWN OF AMHERST BICENTENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Figure 26

WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC

Williamsville along Main Street, Amherst’s traditional commercial corridor. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*)

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 form as discussed in Section 3.3.2 and shown on Map Figure 6-A. (*Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A*) 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*)

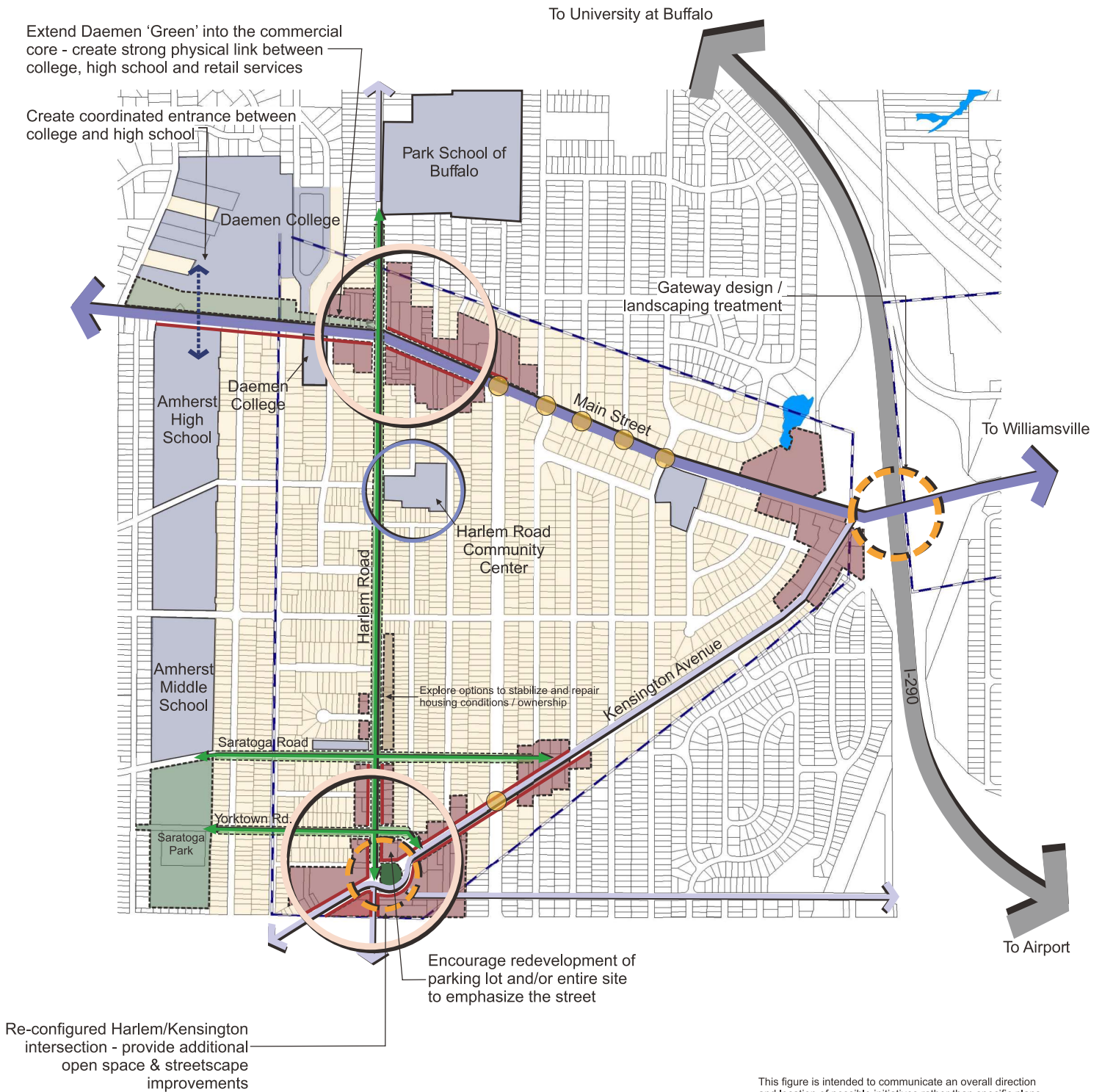
10.5.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

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. (*Amended 12-11-17; BCPA-2017-01*) 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.



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

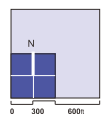
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

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

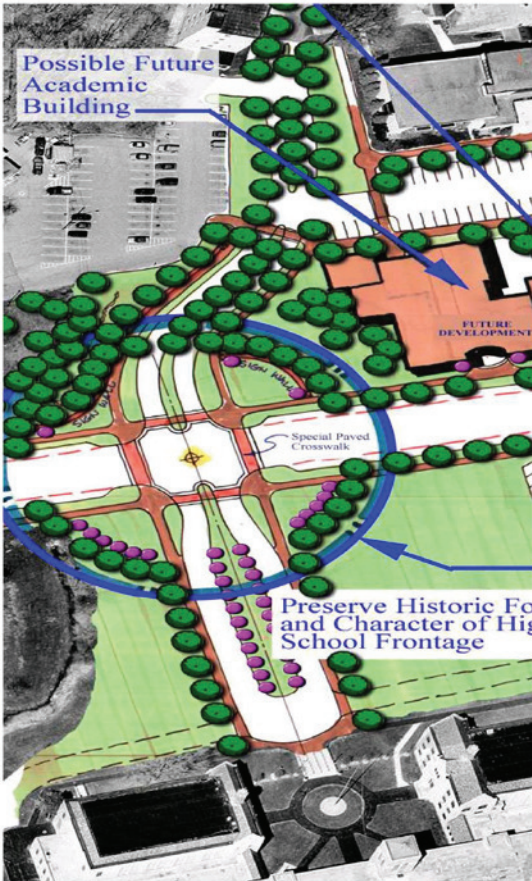




Bethesda, Maryland
Streetscape improvement



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

- 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.
- 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



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

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. All of this area is traditional in form as discussed in Section 3.3.2 and shown on Map Figure 6-A (*Amended 9-3-19; BCPA-2017-01A*). 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.

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 as shown on Map Figure 6-A. 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*)

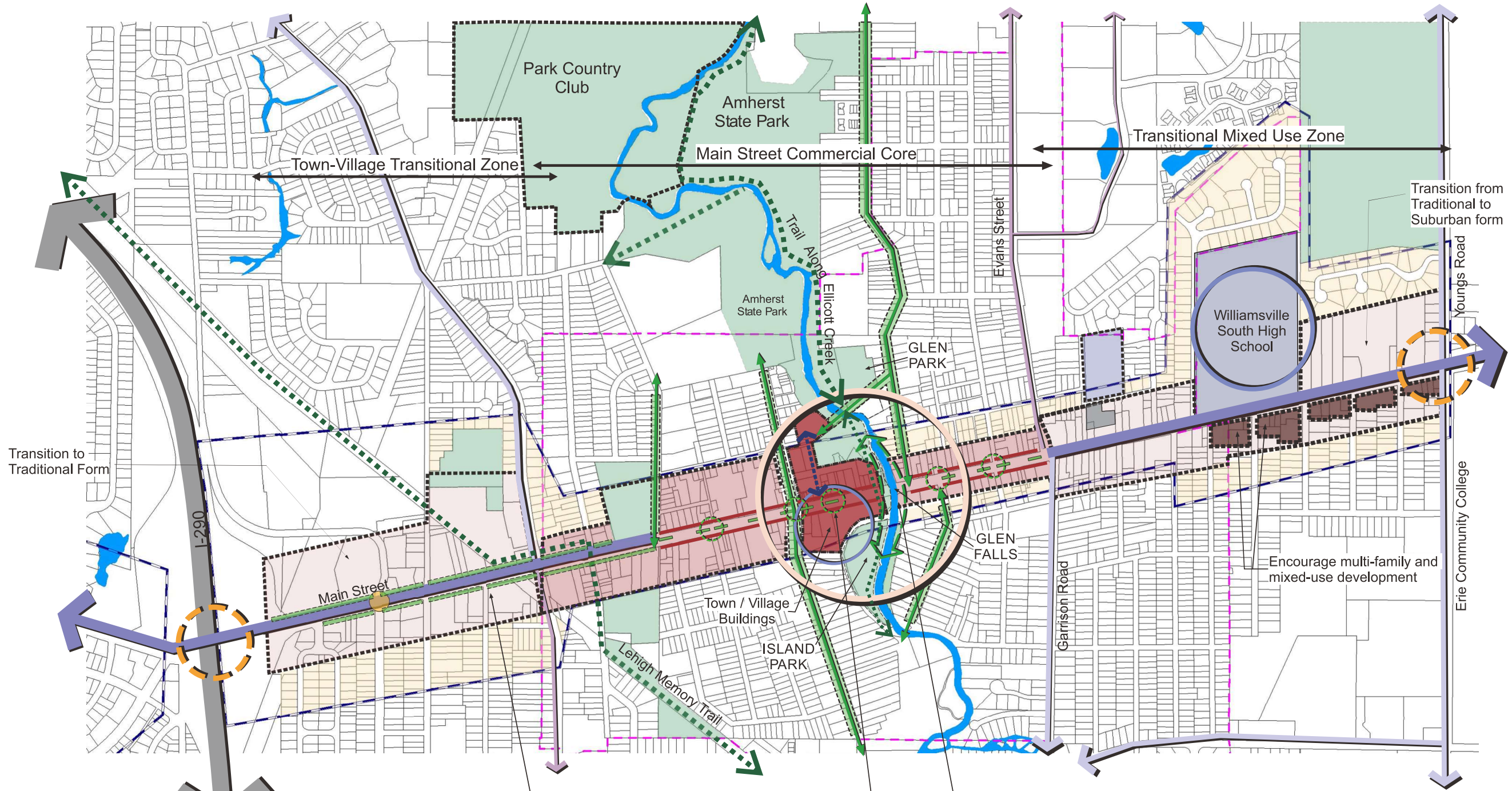
- In 2011 the Village adopted a new mixed-use zoning district for the Main Street corridor. The new district establishes a set of graphic standards to guide development of the corridor.
- In 2013 the Village began an initiative called Picture Main Street. Picture Main Street envisions a revitalized corridor 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

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.



Transition to Traditional Form

Town-Village Transitional Zone

Main Street Commercial Core

Transitional Mixed Use Zone

Transition from Traditional to Suburban form

Williamsville South High School

Encourage multi-family and mixed-use development

Soften the street edge with landscaping - encourage site design guidelines for new development

Improve pedestrian safety with new landscaped 'islands' on Main Street - these should be designed to work with existing curb cuts

Improve streetscape on Main Street to strongly mark the location of Ellicott Creek and park system through traffic calming and landscaping

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.

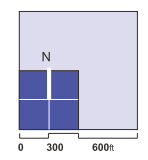
WILLIAMSVILLE FOCAL PLANNING AREA - CONCEPT PLAN

May 2017

Figure 30

Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

LEGEND





Neon Forest Circle, Longmont, Colorado
Multi-family development



EXISTING



PROPOSED

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

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. 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.

10.7 BOULEVARD CENTRAL DISTRICT (BCD)

(Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03)

10.7.1 Overview and Urban Design Analysis

Located in the western side of the Town and home to many of its largest commercial centers, the Boulevard Central District Focal Planning Area is bounded on the west by Niagara Falls Boulevard, on the north by Interstate 290 (I-290) and on the south by Sheridan Drive. The area has been designated as a Federal Opportunity Zone, and many of its non-residential land parcels

have been rezoned in accordance with the Town's mixed-use zoning regulations. The Town envisions the revitalization of the Boulevard Central District (BCD) as a walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented district, with its existing suburban commercial areas retrofitted incrementally over time to more effectively meet contemporary retail commercial demands.

The Town has collaborated with urban designers to formulate redevelopment concepts for several sites, recommendations for transportation enhancements, and improvements to major highways in the area. Concepts and transportation recommendations are described and depicted in more detail in the Boulevard Central District Action Plan (2020). The Action Plan and other materials related to the District are available on the Town's website.

Key issues and opportunities identified for the Boulevard Central District's planning efforts include:

- Employ mixed-use zoning and financial incentives to foster a predictable development review path to encourage investment.
- Redevelop aging traditional plazas and big box retail sites emblematic of suburban retail development through the early 21st century.
- Re-imagine a declining suburban mall (Boulevard Mall) into a new mixed-use center with buildings of varying scales, walkable streets and open spaces that serve as hubs of activity and vibrancy for the area.
- Introduce new street connections to provide more ways to circulate, and encourage 'complete street' treatments to enhance mobility.
- Expand market rate and mixed income residential offerings to support future neighborhood vibrancy and a base for area workforce and commercial markets.
- Several major highways traverse the BCD and play a key role in defining its identity. Major arterials such as Niagara Falls Boulevard, Sheridan Drive and Maple Road serve important transportation functions, but their design, physical size and design speeds make them inhospitable to bicycle or pedestrian travel. If the BCD is to transform from an automobile oriented area to a walkable live, work, and shop destination, measures to transform segments of these major highways are necessary.
- The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is planning a future light rail or bus rapid transit extension corridor that will traverse the BCD. The corridor will connect the three University at Buffalo campuses, downtown Buffalo and the Buffalo waterfront.
- The future transit corridor has three planned enhanced transit stops identified within the BCD. The corridor and stops will feature improved multi-modal transportation mobility and



Niagara Falls Boulevard



Boulevard Shopping Center



Sweet Home Road



Harlem Road and Sheridan Drive



Senior Housing



Boulevard Towers



Meyer Road Senior Apartments



Imperial Drive and Windsor Avenue



Station 12



Emerson Drive and Manser Drive



Recreation field behind the Middle School



Eggerstville Community Park

Boulevard Central District Focal Planning Area - Existing Conditions



support mixed use centers by allowing greater connectivity within and outside of the BCD.

The Town and other agencies have undertaken several planning initiatives to advance the revitalization of the BCD:

- The Town has prepared a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) to determine potential environmental impacts that may occur as a result of new development under the mixed-use zoning regulations. Two advantages of the GEIS are to anticipate potential impacts and mitigation measures, and to serve as the basis for the developer's required environmental review. By accepting the Town's environmental review findings, the developer may pay pre-determined mitigation costs. This approach provides the development community predictability and the Town assurance that impacts can be mitigated. Future potential impacts identified through the preparation of the environmental impact statement and application of mitigation fees include:
 - Transportation impacts that result in impacts to various road intersections and road segments that may require improvements.
 - Impacts to utilities – projected growth will impact existing potable water distribution infrastructure and sanitary sewer infrastructure that may require upgrades.

The GEIS will be an enduring tool to assist with revitalization in the BCD.

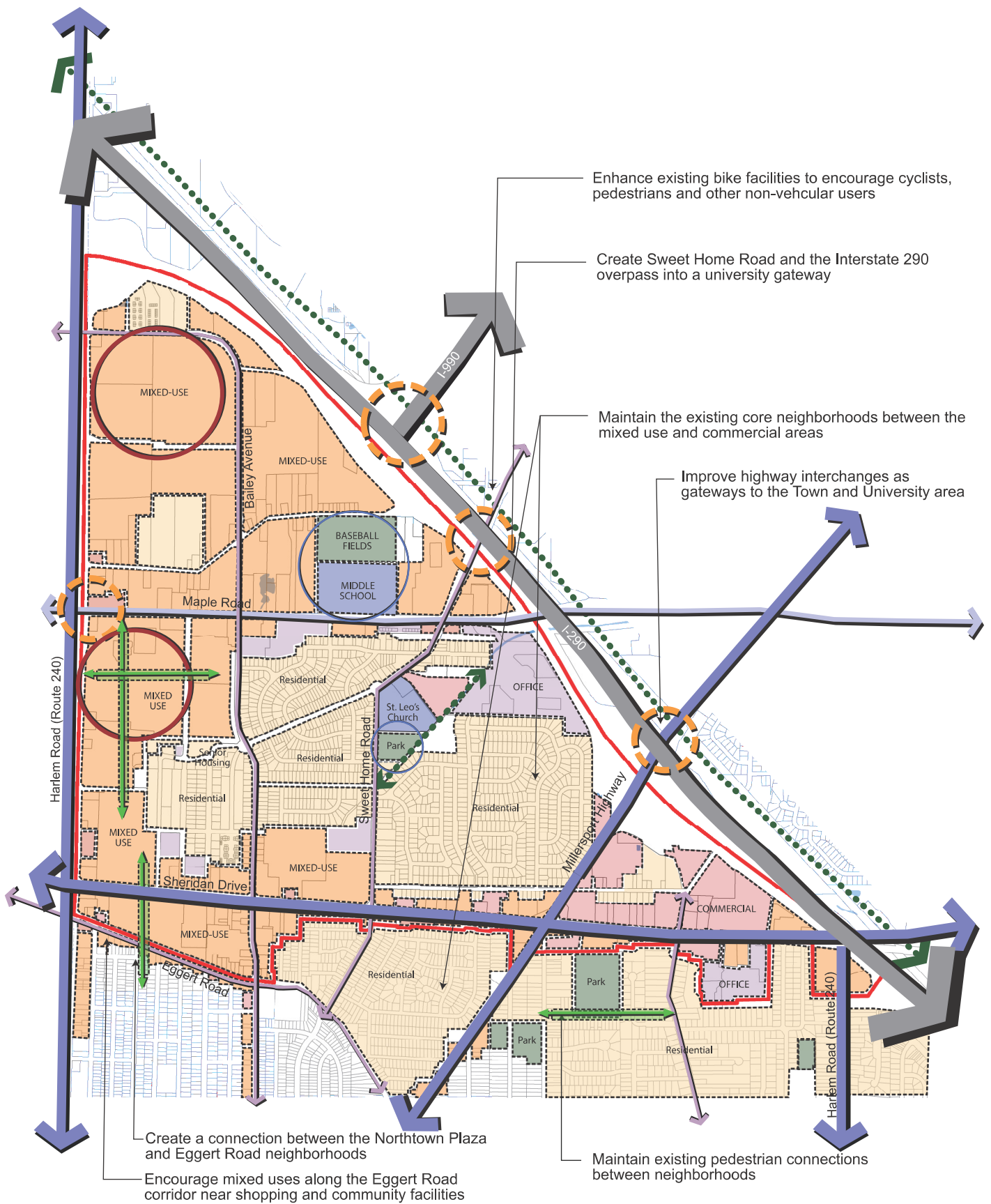
The Town recently adopted new mixed-use zoning regulations. The majority of land within the Boulevard Central District is now CTR-2.5, CTR-5 and CTR-8; these account for 445.41 acres or 88% of the land area. The center mixed-use district regulations require the formation of traditional blocks by introducing internal streets on a north-south and east-west grid pattern and the creation of open space as organizing features. Over time the large expanses of existing land developed for big box retail and its parking spaces will be reshaped into a traditional block structure with greater connectivity and opportunities for pedestrian mobility and social gathering.

- The Boulevard Central District area is located within Census Tract 92, which has been designated as a Federal Opportunity Zone, making qualified development projects eligible for certain incentives. These Zones are a tool designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities. Under certain conditions, investors and developers may be eligible for preferential tax treatment.

10.7.2 Concept Plan and Strategies

The Town has established a vision for future development in the Boulevard Central District. The vision proposes a walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented district, with its existing commercial areas retrofitted over time. In addition, adopted building standards promote objectives such as improved visual character. The Plans and conceptual renderings shown in Figures 33 and 34 illustrate what the Boulevard Central District could become.

- Several concept plans illustrate how incremental change could occur. Concepts for sites are illustrated in Figure 34 for the following areas:
 - The northwest corner of Maple and Sweet Home Roads (Maple Ridge Center)
 - Bailey Avenue and Ridge Lea Road (Ridge Lea)
 - The northwest corner of Sheridan Drive and Sweet Home Road (Sheridan Center)
 - The Boulevard Mall site
- Streets play a significant role in shaping redevelopment, and the existing context can be reshaped by introducing a new, more connected street network framed by building frontages that creates an environment with smaller, walkable blocks. Public open spaces such as parks and community gathering places are integrated into the overall pattern of development. Enhanced transit travels along tree-lined multi-modal thoroughfares. A future conceptual street network is illustrated in Figure 34.
- The District's large blocks and limited alternatives for circulation result in the need for extra-wide streets and an auto-oriented street design that is counter to Town goals for pedestrian safety and connectivity of other modes (such as transit, bicycles and other micro-mobility devices). Introducing new street connections on future redevelopment sites provides more ways to circulate.
- The design of streets should be guided by the overall vision for the future land use and urban design. Streets should be "Complete Streets" that support a safe environment and network connectivity for users of all modes (walking, biking, driving and transit).
- The rights-of-way for Niagara Falls Boulevard, Maple Road and Sweet Home Road may need to be adjusted to accommodate transit and appropriately-sized sidewalks and bikeways that should be separate from moving vehicles. The Town should coordinate with NFTA on the sizing and configuration of transit facilities to confirm that the right-of-way needed to ensure ultimate street design accommodates all users. This includes the southeastern corner of Maple Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard as a potential future transit station



University Focal Planning Area - Concept Plan

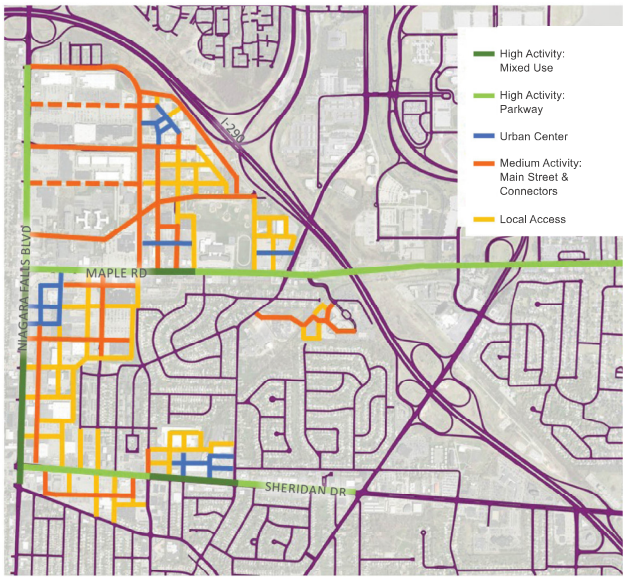
December 2020

Figure 33

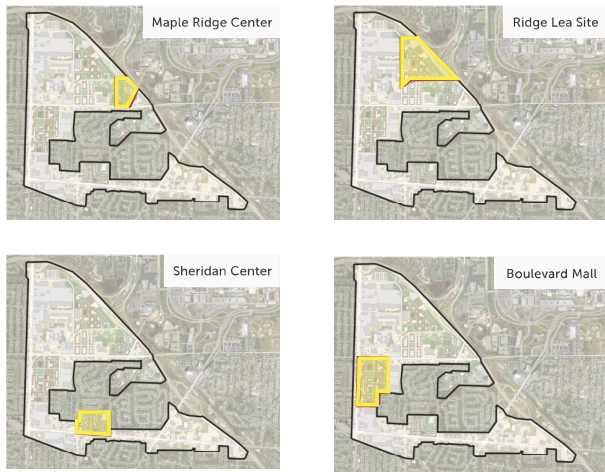
Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan

LEGEND

	Expressway		Institutional Use / Research / Office		Gateway
	Major Arterial		Stabilize and maintain existing residential fabric		Neighborhood anchor / community service
	Minor Arterial		Business / Commercial Area		Regional commercial center
	Collector		School / Community College / University of Buffalo		
	Neighborhood Connector		Park / Green Space		
	Recreational Trail		Mixed-Use Development		
	Boulevard Central District				



Street network



New mixed-use areas



Mixed-use Town Center



Street treatment: facades, planting, lighting, art, site furniture and park space

or multi-modal interconnection point for transportation infrastructure.

- To fully realize the development potential of the District the Town will have to pursue some major infrastructure projects. The Town must continue its emphasis on reducing inflow and infiltration (I/I) in existing sewers. Sanitary sewer capacity needs to be upgraded and diversion facilities may be necessary. Water lines will have to be replaced to improve network pressures and flow. The Town will need to use a combination of its capital improvement program, mitigation funds, its I/I relining program and grant funding to make these improvements.
- To capitalize on investments in transit and infrastructure, and implement the multi-modal, connected vision for this part of Town, a parkway design is envisioned for Maple Road that extends east to the area of the proposed Amherst Central Park. Maple Road is a 5-lane auto-oriented street that can be unsafe and uncomfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists. A multi-modal design should be implemented on the segment of Maple Road between Sweet Home Road and Ellicott Creek providing a better approach to the park site that could be extended further east.
- Increased residential development with a variety of market offerings are necessary in the District to ensure success of the desired transformation and support the preferred commercial and office markets, plus serve anticipated workforce demands. Mixed use developments with residential upper floors, condo complexes, and multifamily complexes providing mixed-income units, interspersed with lower-density townhomes, can provide the variety of housing offerings necessary to serve the neighborhood.
- Redevelopment of the BCD will require successful public-private cooperation and financing. The Town must work with public entities such as New York State, Erie County and public authorities to make needed improvements to infrastructure. The Town and Amherst Industrial Development Agency must also work with developers, financial institutions and the State's economic development agencies to identify strategic investments and key catalytic projects that advance the Town's vision for revitalization of the area.

Visualizing Incremental Change

Revitalization and redevelopment of large commercial sites in the District are expected to occur incrementally through public and private efforts, the largest of which is the Boulevard Mall site.

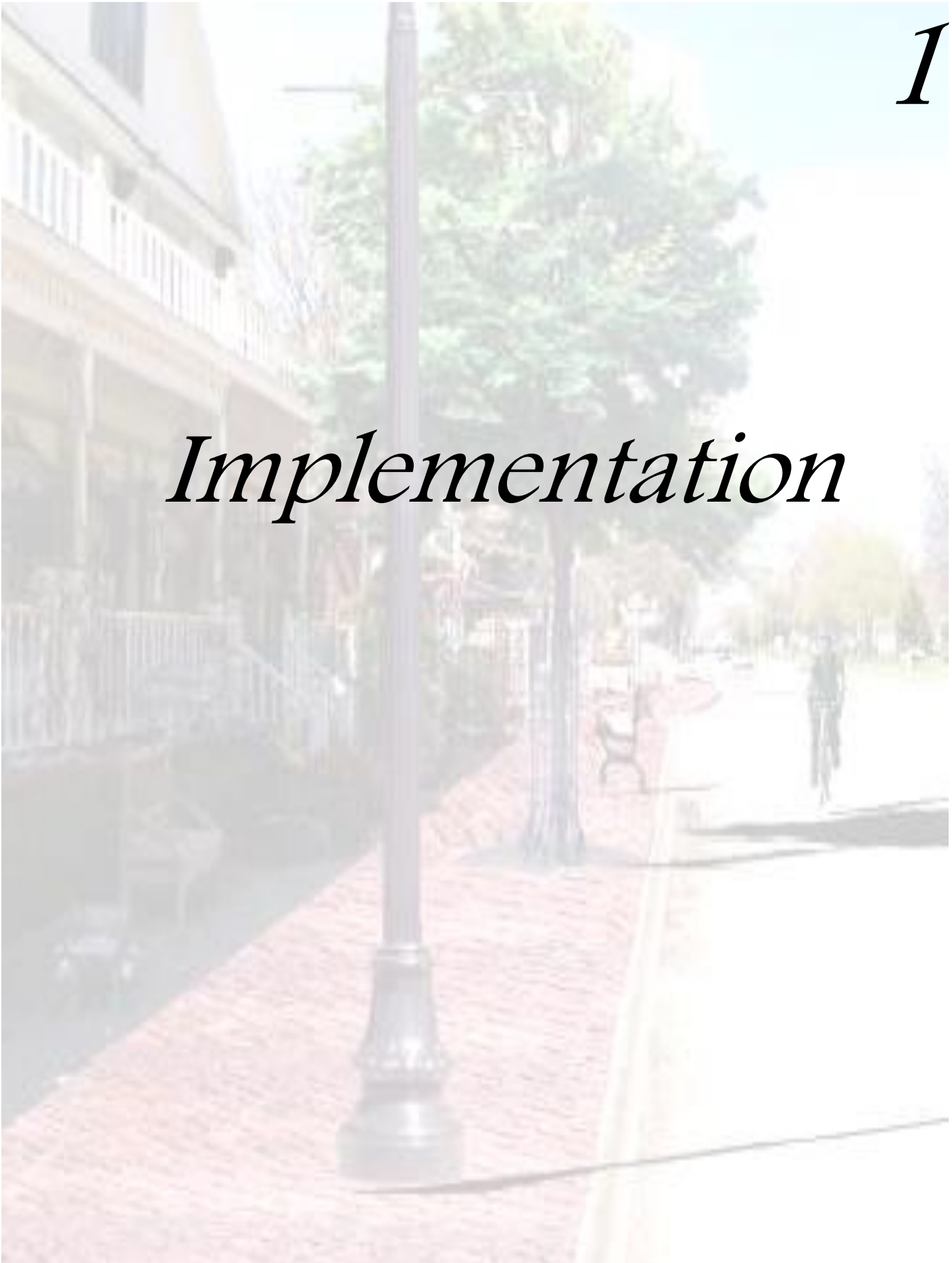
Changing retail formats and consumer shopping habits have made large indoor malls less successful or obsolete.

The Boulevard Central District Action Plan and Figure 34 illustrations model how recently adopted zoning and transportation infrastructure can guide incremental change leading to significant transformation. Figure 34 specifically includes an illustrative example of how change might occur at the Mall site (illustrations 1-4). Mixed-use zoning districts establish standards and set rules to meet the preferred transformation through:

- A network of pedestrian-oriented streets
- A variety of building uses of varying height and placement
- Public open spaces
- Different parking locations and quantities
- Standards that can deliver a walkable mixed-use environment
- Introduction of enhanced transit service

Incremental redevelopment of the Boulevard Mall site will need coordinated actions among property owners and consideration of timing for portions of the Mall and its outparcels to be replaced. Timing and implementation of enhanced transit on Niagara Falls Boulevard and Maple Road could also play a key role. (*Amended 12-14-20; BCPA-2020-03*)

Implementation



11 *Implementation*

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11.0 Implementation

11.1 OVERVIEW

Primary Functions of the Comprehensive Plan

- Policy foundation for town decision-making
- The community’s “to-do” list

Plans are turned into reality by taking action. The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a working document that will guide community leaders in making decisions, establishing priorities, and committing to actions that will affect the future of the Town. Plan implementation will focus on the two primary functions of the Comprehensive Plan:

1. ***It provides the policy foundation for all town decisions regarding land use, transportation, and the other plan elements.*** The question “What does the Comprehensive Plan have to say about this?” should be asked and answered in ongoing activities of the Town such as reviewing rezoning requests and setting capital budgets.
2. ***It is the community’s “to do” list.*** The Plan’s influence on Amherst’s future will be a product of the motivating power of the shared vision it communicates and the effectiveness of actions taken to realize the vision. However, the vision will not be achieved simply because the community agrees with the sentiments it expresses. Rather, it will be realized by steady progress in adhering to a well-defined “game plan” that sets priorities for effective short and long-term actions.

If the Comprehensive Plan is to effectively guide Amherst in moving towards achievement of the Vision Statement, **it is vitally important that the Town Board adopt it.** The benefits of adopting the plan are many, including:

1. ***Adopting a Comprehensive Plan establishes a common vision for the future that is attained over time through coordinated action by all agencies of town government.*** Without a unifying vision and “game plan” that focuses all of the Town’s resources in a common direction, it will not be possible to attain the goals for the future that have been clearly expressed by Amherst residents. As an added benefit, there is a synergy that occurs when all agencies work together – the cumulative impact of their efforts will be greater than the sum of their individual contributions.
2. ***The Plan reflects the values of the community.*** Citizens have placed particular emphasis on quality of life and quality of development issues. By adopting the Plan the Board endorses the importance of these issues and sets the stage for

implementing regulations and other actions to secure the quality of community that citizens say they desire.

3. ***Having a plan in place provides a greater level of confidence and assurance to both town residents and the development community.*** By adopting the Comprehensive Plan the Board makes a statement that the Plan reflects the pattern of development that is desired and needed to achieve the Town's collective vision of the future. This statement provides a level of certainty as to what is in the best interest of the community in the Town's day-to-day decision-making. Throughout the planning process, residents have consistently voiced a desire for some level of assurance for the future.
4. ***When adopted as official town policy, the Plan provides a clear statement of expectations for the actions of outside agencies undertaking projects within Amherst.*** The Plan provides not only the basis for day-to-day decision-making by the Town but also a firm statement of development policy to guide the actions of federal, state, regional, and county agencies as they affect Amherst. An example is the Plan's endorsement of "context-sensitive" design principles in relation to roadway improvement projects that could have deleterious effects on Amherst neighborhoods if constructed to normal state highway engineering standards.
5. ***An adopted plan provides the community with a significant advantage when applying for federal, state, and county assistance for local projects.*** Grant applications for projects that are demonstrably consistent with an up-to-date, adopted Comprehensive Plan characteristically receive greater consideration than those that are not consistent with a plan or where an adopted plan is absent.

With the Comprehensive Plan adopted as official town policy, setting priorities is of prime importance due to the complexity of the policies contained in the Plan Elements. The Plan defines an ambitious agenda commensurate with the bold mandate of the Vision Statement. The selected policies range from revised regulations to broad policy initiatives; from specific capital programs to changes in overall processes and procedures. It is readily apparent that the Town lacks the resources that would be needed to implement all of these policies simultaneously. Thus an ongoing implementation program is needed to prioritize the Comprehensive Plan policies and develop short and long-term strategies for their realization.

The four Key Initiatives identified as part of the Plan Concept provide a framework for prioritizing the actions the Town will take to move towards achieving the Vision Statement. These initiatives are summarized as follows:

- ***Aesthetic/Community Character:*** To be renowned for the beauty, character, and environmental quality of the Town.
- ***Education:*** To become known as one of the nation’s leading “knowledge-based” communities.
- ***Revitalization:*** To become a model for effective reinvestment and revitalization of older neighborhoods.
- ***Governance:*** To exercise leadership by providing excellent services and facilities, ensuring fiscal balance, and managing development to promote predictability, fairness, and quality.

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will focus on 12 ***priority action programs.***

Based upon consideration of the Vision Statement and the Key Initiatives, 12 action programs have been identified as high priorities in the short term (to be implemented or implementation to begin within the next several years). Presented in Section 11.2 in the order they appear in the plan elements, these represent proposed areas of focus for the Town in implementing the Comprehensive Plan, either through initiation of a new program or an increase in the level of commitment to an existing one.

11.2 PRIORITY ACTION PROGRAMS

Action Program #1

Comprehensively revise the Town’s development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes to implement the policies of the Land Use and Development Element.

This program is essential to successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. It has implications for three of the four Key Initiatives:

Aesthetic/Community Character: Improved regulations, standards, and incentives will promote higher quality development of the patterns and types envisioned by the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative (e.g., open space preserved as part of the pattern of development).

Revitalization: More flexible, context-sensitive regulations and standards will facilitate reinvestment in and revitalization of Amherst’s older neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Governance: Consistent policies and standards will improve the predictability and fairness of development review and approval processes.

The Town has committed to revising the current development regulations as a short-term action to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Beyond the immediate task of revising the regulations, an ongoing commitment to establishing and following clear, objective standards, criteria, and processes supportive of Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives for the management of development is needed. Relevant policies include:

- 3-1 *Promote mixed-use development*
- 3-2 *Encourage compact, pedestrian-friendly development*
- 3-3 *Modify Suburban Agricultural District zoning*
- 3-4 *Reduce new commercial development (zoning) in North Amherst and along highway strips*
- 3-5 *Employ design standards for non-residential and multi-family development*
- 3-6/6-1 *Designate character roads for application of context-sensitive design standards*
- 3-7 *Designate special places/ design guidelines*
- 3-9 *Advance the revitalization of underutilized/ obsolescent properties*
- 3-10 *Establish context-sensitive commercial zoning districts*
- 3-14 *Encourage conservation development*
- 3-16 *Improve predictability/ consistency of development review processes*
- 3-17 *Set clear development standards to increase certainty*
- 3-18 *Periodically review/ revise the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations*
- 4-4 *Establish stream buffer/ setback standards*
- 5-5 *Protect neighborhoods from commercial development impacts*
- 5-6 *Establish commercial development standards for neighborhood compatibility*
- 6-3 *Establish a town highway planning capability, including traffic impact analyses and mitigation*
- 8-5 *Establish standards for multi-family housing*

Action Program #2

Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment/revitalization.

This program is intended to help “level the playing field” by increasing the attractiveness of reinvestment, infill development, and redevelopment of Amherst’s older neighborhoods and commercial areas compared to new development on “greenfield” sites. It is a major vehicle for implementing the Revitalization Key Initiative. In addition to evaluating and revising internal regulatory and fiscal policies in order to remove barriers to and provide incentives for reinvestment, the Town will need to work closely with the Amherst IDA and its tax abatement program. Eggertsville and Snyder should be targeted as key areas for application of incentives. Relevant policies include:

- 3-8 *Provide tax incentives for reinvestment*
- 3-9 *Advance the revitalization of underutilized/ obsolescent properties*
- 3-10 *Establish context-sensitive commercial zoning districts*
- 3-12 *Initiate public investment to stimulate private investment*
- 7-3 *Give priority to infrastructure repairs rather than extensions to serve new development*
- 8-6 *Provide incentives for residential property repairs*
- 8-8 *Promote revitalization of older commercial areas*

Action Program #3

Implement a coordinated strategy to achieve a town-wide open space and greenway network, including a public acquisition program.

Beginning with the 1988 *Open Space Acquisition Plan*, the Town of Amherst has committed significant resources to acquiring public open space and parkland. This program would build upon this legacy, directing the Town's future efforts towards establishing a network of parks and open spaces well distributed throughout Amherst and linked by trails, greenways and scenic roads. This action program supports the Aesthetic/ Community Character Key Initiative. Relevant policies include:

3-13/4-1 Establish a Town-wide open space and greenway network

3-14/4-2 Encourage conservation development

3-15/4-3 Initiate a public acquisition program

Action Program #4

Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program (Greening Amherst).

Tree canopy and woodlands are important to Amherst's visual and environmental quality, supporting the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative. This program will involve the Town leading a community-wide effort to plant trees and other vegetation on public and private properties. Other visual improvements (e.g., gateway treatments, public art, signage) could be combined with the tree planting program as part of a town beautification program. Relevant policies include:

4-11 Undertake a "Greening Amherst" planting initiative

3-11 Target capital investments to improve aesthetic character

4-10 Support the Amherst Tree Law

Action Program #5

Establish a collaborative planning structure with the University at Buffalo (UB).

The presence of UB is central to Amherst's identity and a cornerstone of the Education Key Initiative. UB's North Campus is physically isolated from Amherst and a formal coordination structure between Town and University has been lacking in the past. However, establishing such a structure, to address issues such as business and employment growth, planning for the "town/gown" edge, and social and cultural ties, will work to the benefit of both parties and will facilitate implementation of Comprehensive Plan goals, objectives, and policies. Relevant policies include:

5-9 Establish a collaborative planning structure with UB

5-7/8-4 Establish mixed-use activity centers on the periphery of the campuses

5-8 Increase educational, social, and cultural ties between the Town and UB

Action Program #6

Pursue collaborations with educational institutions, private businesses, and other partners to promote economic development.

This program is related to and builds upon Action Program #5. It involves increased efforts by the Town and Amherst IDA to promote formal and informal collaborations between public sector, institutional, and private sector partners to implement Comprehensive Plan policies. The potential involvement of educational institutions, including UB, the colleges, and public school districts, as well as Kaleida Health Care, is of particular significance for the “Education” Key Initiative. Relevant policies include:

5-3 Encourage collaborations between government, educational institutions, health care organizations, and private industries

5-4 Promote life-long learning/worker training programs

Action Program #7

Develop a strategy to implement targeted improvements to roadways with identified level of service deficiencies.

While not directly related to any of the four Key Initiatives, vehicular mobility and traffic congestion constitute an important Comprehensive Plan issue with quality of life implications for Amherst residents. The direction set by the Transportation Element accepts certain levels of congestion as inevitable while endorsing increased investment in alternative transportation modes rather than widespread roadway improvements (widening or new roads). Nevertheless, a number of town roadways are projected to operate at unacceptable levels of service within the time horizon of the plan and are not currently programmed for improvement under the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council’s (GBNRTC) Long Range Transportation Plan. This program involves developing a long-term strategy with GBNRTC to alleviate the most serious congestion problems through targeted capital and operational improvements such as signal-timing, turn lanes, and access management. This program must be consistent with the policies regarding “context-sensitive” design of roadway improvements. Relevant policies include:

6-1/6-2 Apply context-sensitive design standards to roadway improvements

6-3 Establish a town highway planning capability

6-4 Undertake operational improvements to improve system capacities

6-5 Target capital improvements to maintain the efficiency of the roadway system

Action Program #8

Develop a strategy to implement a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network.

The Town of Amherst has made significant strides in developing a system of off-street recreational trails for bicyclists and pedestrians. The Town has been relatively less successful in developing an on-

street network of designated bikeways and sidewalks. This action program builds on the Town's current efforts through a long-term strategy to implement a comprehensive network of off-street and on-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities as designated on the Open Space and Greenways Plan (Figure 4). It is related to and complements Action Program #2 (town-wide open space and greenways network), similarly supporting the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative. Relevant policies include:

- 6-7 *Develop a comprehensive bicycle network*
- 6-8 *Develop a comprehensive pedestrian network*

Action Program #9

Implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy to address flooding and water quality protection.

The Town of Amherst is developing a stormwater management program to comply with federal and state regulations. This program should incorporate innovative measures to protect the quality of Amherst's water resources, including maintenance of natural vegetation and drainage patterns. These measures will contribute to the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative by enhancing environmental quality. Relevant policies include:

- 7-1 *Implement a stormwater management program*
- 3-13/4-1 *Establish a town-wide open space and greenway network*
- 3-14/4-2 *Encourage conservation development*
- 4-4 *Establish stream buffer/setback standards*
- 4-5 *Support protection of designated wetlands and implement best management practices. Work with regulatory agencies to encourage permitted wetland mitigation within the Town.*
- 4-6 *Initiate watershed management plans*
- 4-7 *Apply best management practices to promote water quality*
- 4-8/7-2 *Adopt low-impact development standards and techniques*

Action Program #10

Limit future sewer service extensions to support the Conceptual Land Use Plan. Establish a septic system maintenance district for areas not designated for public sewer.

The Conceptual Land Use Plan calls for a large area in North Amherst to remain in open space and rural uses. This action program supports this policy directive by redefining the boundaries of Amherst Sewer District No. 16 to support designated development areas and preclude extension into areas to remain in rural uses. In conjunction with this change, a program to repair and maintain failing on-site septic systems in areas not earmarked for public sewer service is needed. This program supports the Aesthetic/Community Character Key Initiative by maintaining rural character and addressing septic system impacts on water quality. It will also contribute to the Revitalization Key Initiative by limiting future extension of sewer service to support "greenfield" development. Relevant policies include:

7-2 Give priority to infrastructure repairs rather than extensions to serve greenfield development

7-3 Redefine the boundaries of Sanitary Sewer District No. 16

7-4 Redefine the boundaries of the Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District. Promote the importance of proper maintenance of septic systems to limit sewer extensions into protected areas.

Action Program #11

Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program, including a collaborative process to develop Neighborhood Improvement Plans.

Maintaining and enhancing the quality of Amherst's older neighborhoods is a major focus of the Revitalization Key Initiative. This program involves a more proactive approach to neighborhood conservation and revitalization by the Town, through a collaborative process with residents to plan for and implement strategies to address neighborhood needs. Southeast Amherst is the highest priority for development of such a plan. Relevant policies include:

8-7 Initiate a neighborhood conservation program

8-8 Promote revitalization of older commercial areas as a focus for neighborhood activity

8-9 Encourage public participation in neighborhood action/improvement plans

Action Program #12

Establish an objective system of planning for community facility and service needs. Link this system to a long-range capital programming process to reconcile needs with the Town's fiscal capacity.

Whereas the focuses of previous action programs range from regulatory changes to collaborative partnerships to public investments, Action Program #12 involves changes to the Town's internal procedures for planning and programming of capital projects. It calls for facility and service providers to assess needs based on objective level of service standards or performance criteria for each type of facility. This assessment will provide input to a capital improvement programming process that reconciles identified needs with fiscal capacity and stages projects over the long term (as opposed to current short-term decision-making). This action program is central to the Governance Key Initiative. Relevant policies include:

9-1 Identify and prioritize community facility and service needs

9-8 Revise the capital programming process

11.3 SEQUENCING OF ACTION PROGRAMS

While all of the action programs identified above are considered important Comprehensive Plan priorities, they will not be accomplished simultaneously but instead will be staged over a period of years. The action programs can be divided into three general categories:

- Programs which involve changes to town policies and regulations (#1, #2, #9, #10, and #12)
- Programs which involve partnerships with other agencies and organizations (#5 and #6)
- Programs with significant capital implications (#3, #4, #7, #8, and #11)

In general, the action programs involving policy changes and partnerships will be initiated first because they do not require significant capital expenditures. Five of these programs have been identified as being especially high priorities to set the stage for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan through both day-to-day decision-making and long-term action:

- #1 Revise the Town's development regulations, standards, and processes*
- #3 Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment/ revitalization*
- #5 Establish a collaborative planning structure with UB*
- #10 Revise the sewer service extension policy*
- #12 Establish a community-facility planning/ capital programming system*

Implementation of programs with significant capital implications will be a longer-term proposition because of the need to phase them over a number of years consistent with the Town's fiscal capability. The initial stages of planning for implementation of these programs should focus on defining the scope of capital investments to be made and the sources of funding. Based upon the values expressed by residents during the planning process and the relatively small amount of available undeveloped land remaining in the Town, the highest priority should be placed on acquisition of land to establish a town-wide open space and greenways network (#3) in conjunction with establishing a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network (#8).

11.4 FISCAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PLAN

A number of the action programs described in this Section 11.2 will require increased funding to be successfully implemented. Action programs with significant capital implications include:

- #3 Implement a coordinated strategy to achieve a town-wide open space and greenway network, including a public acquisition program*

- #4 *Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program (Greening Amherst)*
- #7 *Develop a strategy to implement targeted improvements to roadways with identified level of service deficiencies*
- #8 *Develop a strategy to implement a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network*
- #11 *Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program, including a collaborative process to develop Neighborhood Improvement Plans*

While the combination of these programs may seem daunting given present fiscal constraints, it is important to put them in perspective by considering several points. First, the Town has already made substantial investments in excellent facilities and services for the benefit of residents, investments that have contributed to its reputation as a premier community in western New York. Second, there is a need for continued investment if Amherst is to retain its competitive advantage and the high quality of life its residents enjoy into the future. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan has a long-term (20-year) time horizon, meaning that it is intended to be accomplished not all at once, but through incremental action over a period of years to achieve the Vision Statement.

Given the above, a comprehensive and creative funding strategy is needed to implement the priority action programs. Several factors to be considered in developing this strategy include:

- ***Make maximum use of alternative revenue sources.*** The Town is already making good use of programs such as the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) to finance recreational trail projects. Federal and state funding sources to defray the costs of action programs should be pursued to the greatest extent possible. The private sector, including foundations, businesses, institutions, and individuals, is another potential source of funding for particular programs or projects.
- ***Set priorities among capital programs and projects.*** With many worthwhile projects competing for limited dollars, prioritization according to relative importance in achieving Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives is essential. Action Program #12 is intended to provide a rational basis for prioritizing capital programs and projects, including a long-term strategy to incrementally implement capital improvements over a period of 10 to 20 years.
- ***Consider operating and maintenance as well as capital costs.*** Planning for capital improvements needs to take into consideration future operating and maintenance costs to the Town. Revenue sources such as user fees and corporate sponsorships can defray some of these costs.

- ***Ensure that the Town maintains a strong tax base to help support the cost of Comprehensive Plan programs.*** Community Facilities and Services Policy 9-5 speaks to the need for continued growth of the nonresidential tax base, consistent with the Comprehensive (Land Use) Plan, to help subsidize the cost of providing community facilities and services to town residents. A strong nonresidential (commercial retail, office, and industrial) tax base is essential if Amherst is to be in a fiscal position to implement Comprehensive Plan programs. This statement is not, however, an endorsement of indiscriminate nonresidential development, which would be counter productive by eroding the quality of life on which Amherst’s economic prosperity depends. Rather, it supports quality development consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, which are designed to create and maintain “value” throughout the Town.

The final bullet raises an important issue for plan implementation: the economic impacts of the Comprehensive Plan. These impacts can be considered from two perspectives:

1. Is the plan ***economically viable?*** Does it provide adequate capacity for the residential and non-residential growth projected in Amherst over the 20-year time horizon?
2. Is the plan ***fiscally beneficial?*** Will the plan policies result in economic development that supports the community’s goals as expressed in the Vision Statement?

The answer to both of these questions is yes. Projections of residential and non-residential (commercial retail and industrial) development over the next 20 years were conducted for the *Inventory and Analysis Report* as part of the comprehensive planning process. The Conceptual Land Use Plan designates sufficient land in the various land use categories to accommodate projected development over the next 20 years and beyond. Moreover, the plan sets the policy direction that much of the future non-residential (and higher-density residential) growth be accommodated in designated mixed-use centers. Additional policies promote infill development, redevelopment, and reuse of older commercial areas to accommodate a portion of the projected growth.

The Comprehensive Plan policies will also positively affect the Town’s fiscal situation. The Plan’s economic policies are designed to promote the types of ***quality development*** that will contribute to a healthy tax base to support community facilities, services, and other town investments. Equally important, the Plan’s emphasis on ***quality of life*** will serve to strengthen Amherst’s reputation as a premier community, enhancing residential property values while attracting the desirable types of business that are drawn to places with a high quality of life. While implementation of the Plan will

require increased spending for certain programs, in essence what is proposed is an investment in the future of the community, one that enhances Amherst's intrinsic value as a place to live as well as its economic well being. As a well-defined guide to building the community that residents desire for the future, the Comprehensive Plan sets the framework for fiscally responsible decision-making that will ultimately conserve fiscal resources through prudent management of town assets and of growth and development within Amherst.

11.5 PLAN MONITORING

The Comprehensive Plan should not be viewed as a static document, but rather as one that will evolve in response to changing circumstances. New York State Planning and Zoning law requires regular review of adopted Comprehensive Plans. Ongoing monitoring and assessment should be conducted to support regular plan review. A Plan monitoring report assessing the Town's progress toward achieving its goals and implementing its policies should be prepared biennially. The Report may include recommendations for a formal plan review. A review of the Plan's goals, objectives, policies, and/or implementation programs should be undertaken when the monitoring report identifies changes in internal and external forces that have significantly altered conditions within the Town. A diagram depicting the monitoring program and plan review schedule is provided in Appendix B. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Plan Monitoring

Plan monitoring involves the following activities:

- Measuring progress in meeting the Plan's goals and objectives
- Identifying trends that may influence planning objectives and policies

Data related to Plan policies and objectives should be collected and analyzed on an ongoing basis along with indicators of demographic, economic, development and planning trends. The Town Planning Department will develop an routine monitoring protocol so that Town departments capture and report relevant data. Data collection activities must be consistent with available resources and staffing levels in the Town departments. The indicators and their associated data will be reviewed annually by the Planning Director and may be adjusted year-to-year as deemed necessary. The resulting information will form the basis of a biennial "Comprehensive Plan Review Report." The Planning Department will prepare the report and the Planning Board will consider its findings and make any recommendations for further study to the Town Board at the end of the first year. The Town

Board may initiate a review of individual polices or direct preparation of a Plan Review that could result in proposed amendments to the Plan. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Comprehensive Plan Reviews

Reviews may take one of the two following forms:

- ***Policy Reviews*** that consider trends and shifts affecting specific policies and actions
- ***Vision Statement Reviews*** that reconsider the fundamental guiding principles of the Plan such as the Key Initiatives or the Vision Statement (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Policy Review: Each chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes specific goals, objectives and policies that guide implementation of the Plan. Based on the ongoing Plan monitoring program, the Planning Department will assess whether changes and trends have occurred that warrant review of any of these specific Plan policies. The Planning Board may recommend the review of a Plan Policy based on its analysis of the biennial “Comprehensive Plan Review Report.” They may also solicit public input to assist with this recommendation. The Planning Board then will provide its recommendations to the Town Board, which will determine if selected Plan amendments will be initiated. The Town Board may also solicit public input before making its final decision. The scope of a Policy Review and any associated budget must be approved by the Town Board. (*Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01*)

Vision Statement Review: This is the most comprehensive type of review and may include activities that emulate the Comprehensive Plan development process, albeit at a reduced level of effort and cost. As a result of its review of the biennial Comprehensive Plan Review Report, the Planning Board may recommend, and the Town Board may authorize initiation of a Vision Statement Review based on any of the following criteria:

1. Approximately eight years after adoption of the Plan or adoption of Vision Statement amendments.
2. When three or more Plan policies or Action Programs have been substantially amended within a two year period and the Planning Board finds a need to recommend a higher level review.
3. When, in the judgment of the Planning Director with endorsement by the Planning Board, a review and amendment of the Vision Statement is warranted as a result of:
 - a. Emerging trends or new ideas regarding development, community services, or governance that were not considered or adequately captured in the Vision Statement;

- b. Any significant national, regional, or local change that impacts the physical and/or economic development of the Town in such a manner that the Vision Statement, or portions thereof are no longer applicable or relevant;
- c. The adoption of a Comprehensive Plan or amendments by an adjacent community that could result in significant changes to the growth and land use policies of Amherst;
- d. A significant number of requests for use variances or zoning changes that are inconsistent with the adopted Plan, as amended; and
- e. Significant changes to policies or regulations by outside agencies such as the NYSDEC, NYSDOT or the University at Buffalo that have significant implications on land use or major infrastructure systems in the Town. Examples include: alterations to wetland regulations; sewer service extended beyond the area recommended in the adopted Plan; or significant transportation improvements (for example, toll barrier relocation or transit extension). *(Amended 09-08-15; BCPA-2014-01)*

If a Vision Statement Review is warranted or recommended, resource needs should be considered with the proposed Planning Department budget for the upcoming fiscal year. *(Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-2)*

11.6 PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

Conduct of the monitoring and review processes will result in possible amendments to respond to the ever changing social, physical, regulatory and environmental conditions in Amherst. Flexible amendment procedures are necessary to respond to these changes.

Recommended amendments resulting from a Policy Review or Vision Statement Review will be completed through a formal review and hearing process by the Town Board pursuant to New York State Town Law Section 272-a. The Planning Board is designated as the agency to oversee the review process and prepare proposed amendments to the Plan. At the completion of their review, the Planning Board may, by formal resolution, recommend Plan amendments to the Town Board for their consideration. The Town Board will conduct its required public hearing and act on the proposed amendments. The Planning Department will be responsible for incorporating any amendments into the text and mapping of the Comprehensive Plan. *(Amended 2-28-11; BCPA-10-2)*

Appendix A
Glossary

Glossary of Terms

Access Management: A process for providing access to land development while preserving traffic flow on surrounding roadways in terms of safety, capacity, and speed. This is achieved by managing the location and design of access to a roadway.

Activity Centers: A development area that provides a focus for surrounding neighborhoods and promotes land use objectives such as compact, pedestrian-friendly development. Such centers are higher in density and incorporate a wider range of uses than the lower density, predominantly residential areas surrounding them.

Affordable Housing: Housing where the occupants pay no more than 30 percent of their gross income for housing expenses, including utilities. Affordable housing programs are generally targeted to families earning 80 percent or less of the area's median income.

Agricultural District: An area where the continued use of farmland for agricultural production is encouraged through a combination of landowner incentives and protection that are intended to forestall the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law authorizes the creation of local agricultural districts pursuant to landowner initiative, county review, state certification, and county adoption.

Airport Approach Zone: An area surrounding an airport that must be kept free of obstructions to aircraft takeoff and landing.

AIDA: Amherst Industrial Development Agency.

Amherst Tree Law: The Town of Amherst Tree Law adopted in May 1992 as Chapter 179 of the Town Code. The focus of the Tree Law is to maintain and improve the aesthetics and ecological systems of the Town.

Assisted Living Housing: Housing for the elderly that offers services such as daily assistance with personal and household tasks. Also known as long-term care.

Best Management Practices (BMPs): Measures designed to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff from land development on water quality. Examples include erosion control during construction, preservation of buffers of natural vegetation, and on-site detention of stormwater to filter out pollutants.

Buffer: Landscaping or land use designed to separate or provide a transition between incompatible land uses. See also “Screening.”

Bumpout: A bend in the curb line intended to narrow the travel lane and thereby reduce the speed of vehicles. See also “Traffic Calming.”

Capital Improvements: Permanent additions to the Town’s physical assets including structures, infrastructure (sewer and water lines, streets), and other facilities such as parks and playgrounds. May include new construction, reconstruction or renovation that extends the useful life of these assets.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP): A six-year schedule of major capital improvements based on studies of available fiscal resources. Capital Improvement Programs are an essential part of Amherst’s Debt Management Plan.

Character Corridor: A roadway designated in the Comprehensive Plan as having aesthetic characteristics appropriate to a specific land use and neighborhood pattern: traditional, suburban, commercial, or rural.

Clearing Limits: The maximum area of vegetation to be removed from a site being developed. Clearing limits are intended to minimize the loss of natural vegetation, thus contributing to erosion control, soil retention, and corresponding impacts on water quality.

Cluster Development: Refers to a residential development designed to preserve open space by grouping the homes on a portion of a property only, leaving the remainder as open space. Clustering also allows a developer to develop lots that are smaller than those specified in the zoning ordinance, provided that the land saved is reserved for permanent common uses such as open space or recreation.

Collaborative Planning: An approach to planning that involves numerous groups or individuals working together on planning issues or to prepare a plan.

Collector: A street that collects traffic from local streets and connects with arterials. Collector streets provide for both access and circulation within residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Their access function is more important than that of arterials.

Community Character: The distinguishing identity or elements of a place, neighborhood, or any other part of the Town. See also “Sense of Place.”

Community Commercial Center: An area of development and community activity located at intersections along suburban and commercial highways. These centers are automobile-oriented, serving several neighborhoods and usually providing goods and services that supplement those found in neighborhood centers. These centers are the preferred locations for moderately sized businesses that provide shoppers goods in addition to convenience goods and services, professional offices, and specialty items.

Community Facilities: Services or facilities provided by the Town of Amherst or other public agencies for the benefit of town residents. Examples include parks, police protection, and public schools.

Comprehensive Plan: Refers to this plan, or any portion thereof, as adopted by the Amherst Town Board to manage the quantity, type, cost, location, timing, and quality of development and redevelopment.

Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC): Committee comprised of Planning Board members and representatives of the various community systems that operate within the Town (neighborhood, business, environmental, and other civic interests) that provided overall policy direction for preparation of the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan.

Connectivity: Term used to describe the number, quality and quantity of connections in the roadway network, which influences the accessibility of potential destinations in a community. Depending on how it is designed, a roadway network may provide one connection or many connections, direct connections or indirect connections, connections for all modes or for selected modes of travel.

Conservation Development: An innovative form of residential development that reduces lot sizes so as to set aside a substantial amount of the property as permanently protected open space.

Differs from Cluster Development in several ways, particularly in its higher standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of the resulting open space.

Conservation Easement: A voluntary legal agreement entered into between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or a government entity. The easement permanently limits a property's uses in order to protect the land's natural resource values.

Context-Sensitive Design: An approach to urban design that emphasizes collaborative planning with stakeholders to develop solutions that are in keeping with the scale, massing, use, and location of existing conditions.

Density: Gross density refers to the number of families, persons or housing units allocated per gross unit measure of land. Net density is the maximum density permitted to be developed per unit of land after deducting any required open space, easements and publicly dedicated rights-of-way.

Design Standards: A set of criteria established to guide certain aspects of development such as site planning and building design, in order to protect and enhance the character of the area where the development is taking place, as well as of the Town as a whole.

Development Pattern: The configuration or organization of the built environment.

Development Regulation: Governmental regulation of the use and development intensity of land, including zoning, subdivision regulations, site plan, official map, or floodplain management.

Development Review Process: The process by which development regulations are applied to specific proposed development projects.

Development Standards: Site design regulations such as lot area, height limits, frontage, landscaping, and yards – as distinguished from use restrictions.

Diverse Economy: Economy in which employment is generated by multiple economic activities.

Diversity: Refers to the differences among groups in terms of age, gender, culture, race, ethnicity, income, religion or disability.

Eggertsville Action Plan: Plan prepared in 2000 that identifies short-term actions needed to revitalize commercial areas in Eggertsville. The Plan identifies barriers to redevelopment that have constrained investment and revitalization. Recommendations for code amendments, conceptual capital projects, and financing options are provided to encourage public and private investment. Many of these recommendations have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Expressway: Roadway devoted entirely to traffic movement with little or no direct land service function. Expressways are multilane, divided roads with controlled access and few, if any, intersections at grade. Expressways serve large volumes of high-speed traffic and are primarily intended to serve commuters or long trips within and between metropolitan areas.

Farmland Protection Program: Program authorized under Article 25-AAA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law in which state assistance payments are available to municipalities to assist with the total costs for the purchase of development rights on viable farmland.

Fill: Soil that has accumulated or is disposed of at a site and has the effect of raising the ground elevation, or that is deliberately added to a site to improve its suitability for construction.

Fiscal Impact Assessment: An analytical technique used to determine the effects of a particular proposal on the local government's revenues and expenditures.

Floodplain: Low and generally flat land areas adjoining a body of water that often floods or has the potential of flooding. The 100-year floodplain is the area that has a one percent probability of flooding in any given year.

Floodway: The portion of a one hundred-year floodplain consisting of a river channel or other watercourse and any adjacent land area required by federal, state, or local requirements to remain open and unobstructed. In Amherst, floodways are designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Focal Area: An area within the Town of Amherst that has been identified as in need of special attention due to a combination of unique characteristics, susceptibility to change, and importance to the future of the Town. The Comprehensive Plan identifies six

such areas: Northwest Amherst, North Amherst, University, Eggertsville, Snyder, and Williamsville.

Focal Area Plan: A plan prepared as a guide for public policy regarding land use and development in a specific planning area of the Town.

Functional Classification: The hierarchy of road classes that divides roads by purpose and design. The determination of classification is a combination of the function of the road, control of access, spacing of roads of a similar nature, length and linkages to other roads and major land uses. See “Expressway,” “Major Arterial,” “Minor Arterial,” “Collector,” “Local Collector,” and “Local Street.”

Gateway: Refers to any major points or course of arrival into the Town or into a particular area of the Town, such as a neighborhood or business district or coastal area. Gateways can mark the physical entrance to the area, or the location where most people would feel they have entered an area.

Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC): Interagency transportation planning group that establishes policies and programs for Erie and Niagara Counties.

Goal: Refers to a concise but general statement of a community’s direction in addressing a problem or an opportunity, in terms of a desired state or process toward which implementation programs are oriented.

Greenfield Development: Development on land that has previously never been built on.

Greenway: A continuous linear corridor of open space that links recreational, cultural, and natural focal points and lands. Greenways may be undeveloped or may feature walking/biking paths or town and utilities rights-of-way. See also “Open Space.”

Historic District: An area defined by its historic, prehistoric, architectural and/or cultural significance. In Amherst, the term refers to a National Historic Register-listed district.

Historic Resource: Sites, structures, properties, or districts that are important to the cultural heritage of the community.

Household: A household includes all the persons who are current residents of a housing unit. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or a group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements.

Housing Choice: Refers to the availability of a variety of types and locations of housing. Housing can vary according to size (e.g., number of rooms or stories), styles (e.g., construction frame, etc.), type (e.g., single-family versus duplex or multi-family), location, price, and other characteristics.

Housing Unit: A house, an apartment, a group of rooms or a single room occupied as separate living quarters or, if vacant, intended for occupancy as separate living quarters.

Impervious Cover: Surfaces such as concrete or asphalt-paved streets or parking lots that prevent rainfall from infiltrating the soil and can increase the amount of runoff.

Incentive: An inducement provided by the Town or other government agency to encourage development of a certain type or in a certain area. Examples include special status for processing applications, providing land, paying for infrastructure, density bonuses, etc.

Indicator: A measurement of particular conditions or specific actions that reflect the status of a larger system's operation. Commonly used to monitor progress in achieving plan development objectives.

Infill Development: Development of vacant or underutilized properties within a predominantly built-up neighborhood or commercial area.

Infrastructure: The basic facilities and equipment necessary for the effective functioning of the Town, such as the means of providing water service, sewage disposal, electric and gas connections, and the street network.

In-Lieu Payment: Refers to a regulatory provision whereby a developer of a project may make a financial contribution to meet the goals of certain Town programs, instead of constructing the project itself to meet these goals.

Intensity: The degree to which land is used, generally a ratio that measures the type and amount of land used by the total amount of land devoted to that use.

Inventory and Analysis Report: Report prepared in 2001 during Phase 2 of Comprehensive Plan development that documents and evaluates current conditions and trends that will affect Amherst's future. Available at: www.amherst.ny.us (keyword: comprehensive)

Joint Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (JLWRP): Program that provides the Towns of Amherst and Pendleton with a coordinated plan for the future of the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek waterfront and its adjacent upland area. It will ensure protection of its natural, recreational, and historic resources and maximize waterfront opportunities for visitor use.

Landscaping: The practice of arranging plant materials – including ground cover, shrubs, and trees – along with other natural or man-made elements, such as rocks and fencing, as a means of enhancing some portion of the built or natural environment.

Land Use: A description and classification of how land is occupied or utilized, e.g., residential, office, parks, industrial, commercial, etc.

Level of Service (LOS): The quality and quantity of existing and planned public services and facilities, rated against an established set of standards to compare actual or projected demand with the maximum capacity of the public service or facility in question. Typically applied to highways.

Local Collector: Street that distributes lower volumes of traffic from predominantly residential developments to collector streets and arterials. A local collector carries through traffic, but at lower volumes than collectors.

Local Street: Streets that provide for local traffic with the highest level of property access and the lowest level of mobility.

Low-Income Housing: Housing which is affordable to households with incomes 50 percent or less of the median income of a given area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Low Impact Development: An approach to managing stormwater runoff that minimizes disturbance of natural areas, reduces the amount of impervious surfaces (buildings and pavement), and, to the extent possible, infiltrates stormwater on site. See also “Stormwater Management.”

Major Arterial: High volume roadway that carries the major portion of daily trips to centers of activity in the metropolitan area. A major arterial places a greater emphasis on mobility rather than access to land and includes fully and partially controlled access facilities.

Minor Arterial: Street that connects and augments the major arterial system. Although its main function is still traffic mobility, a minor arterial performs this function at a somewhat lower level and places more emphasis on land access than does a major arterial.

Median Family Income: The median income of any group of two or more people who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who reside together in one housing unit.

Median Household Income: The median income of an individual or a group of people, whether related or not, who share a housing unit.

Median Income: Income distribution that is divided into two exactly equal parts, one having incomes above the median and the other having incomes below the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of units including those with no income.

Mitigation: Actions or measures taken to lessen, alleviate or decrease the impacts or effects of certain development activities.

Mixed-Use: Refers to development projects or zoning classifications that provide for more than one use or purpose within a shared building or development area. Mixed-use development may allow the integration of commercial, retail, office, medium to high-density housing, and in some cases light industrial uses. These uses can be integrated either horizontally or vertically in a single building or structure.

Mode: Refers to each of the various forms of transportation, such as automobile, transit, ship, bicycle and walking.

Multi-modal Transportation: A transportation system that uses a variety of modes to transport people and goods. Components of the system may include vehicular roadways, transit (bus, rail), bikeways, pedestrian paths (sidewalks, trails), freight railways, and airplanes.

Multi-Use Trail: 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.

Natural Trail: 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.

Neighborhood Commercial Center: An area of development and activity located at highway intersections along traditional, suburban and commercial highways. These centers are primarily pedestrian-oriented with accommodations for automobiles and are the preferred locations for smaller businesses that provide goods and services to meet the daily needs of residents in one or more surrounding neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Conservation: Policies and actions taken to maintain or enhance the stability and viability of Amherst's neighborhoods and the important contributions they make towards the Town's quality of life.

New Community District (NCD): Town of Amherst land use classification 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 New York State University at Buffalo North Campus.

NYSDEC: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

NYSDOT: New York State Department of Transportation.

Open Space: Publicly or privately owned land that is not intensively developed devoted to uses characterized by vegetative cover or water bodies, such as agricultural uses, pastures, meadows, parks, recreational areas, lawns, gardens, cemeteries, ponds, streams, etc.

Peak Hour: Morning and afternoon time periods when the highest number of vehicles found to be passing over a section of road or through an intersection during 60 consecutive minutes.

Pedestrian-Friendly: Term used to describe development patterns and roadway systems that are conducive to walking by providing safe and efficient accommodations for pedestrians. Also known as pedestrian-oriented.

Permanent Open Space: Undeveloped land protected from future development through dedication as open space or other legal mechanisms, such as conservation easements.

Planned Residential District (PRD): Town of Amherst residential zoning district intended to promote more creative, flexible design than is generally possible under conventional residential zoning districts, including variety in housing types, mixed uses, and open space preservation.

Property Maintenance Code: Amherst Town Code Chapter 151, Property Maintenance, which establishes a procedure for securing or removing damaged or deteriorated buildings and structures and ensuring property maintenance.

Public Land: Refers to land owned by the Town of Amherst, or any other governmental entity or agency thereof.

Public Transportation: Transportation by bus, rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, which provides to the public general or special service on a regular and continuing basis. Also known as “mass transportation,” “mass transit” and “transit.”

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR): A voluntary program typically used by governmental jurisdictions to maintain land in agricultural or conservation uses by compensating private landowners for the value of the development rights on the property. PDRs allow properties to remain in private ownership without being developed in the future.

Quality of Life: The total experience of community life consisting of a series of factors, both tangible and intangible, such as: economic vitality, public safety, education, housing, environment, recreation, arts and culture, and community character.

Redevelopment: Refers to public and/or private investment made to re-create the fabric of an area, replacing or rehabilitating old buildings or infilling development on vacant parcels. Redevelopment can help to meet market needs for residential and/or commercial development in older parts of the Town, but needs to be carefully managed.

Regional: Pertains to activities or economies beyond those of Amherst's borders, and affecting a broader geographic area which, for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, include all of the cities, towns, and villages in Erie and Niagara Counties.

Regional Commercial Center: Commercial center that provides retail goods and services in full range and variety, drawing from a large population base. Land uses in these centers are generally automobile-oriented, including full-line department stores, grocery stores, auto-oriented businesses, automobile sales and service, and other larger-scale single building businesses, and offices.

Rezoning: Process by which the Amherst Town Board changes or modifies the authorized zoning district designation of a property.

Right-to-Farm Laws: Laws intended to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits. The statutes help support the economic viability of farming by discouraging neighbors from filing lawsuits against agricultural operations.

Sanitary Sewer System: A sewerage system designed to receive, carry, and treat wastewater from homes, businesses, and industry.

Scale: Term that describes the size of a project as it relates to its surrounding environment. Appropriately scaled development is consistent or complementary in terms of size and mass with the existing surroundings and highways.

Screening: The use of landscape planting, fences or other structures to obscure vision of an unsightly or undesirable land use, to prevent outdoor lighting from intruding on neighboring property or to create privacy. See also "Buffer."

Sediment: A solid material, such as dirt or minerals, that tends to collect in certain areas, particularly in water bodies, causing damage, pollution, or the need for expensive maintenance.

Sense of Place: The sum of attributes of a locality, neighborhood, or property that give it a unique and distinctive character. See also "Community Character."

Setback: The required distance between the structure and each of the property/lot boundaries.

Snyder Business District Plan: Study undertaken in 2002 of the historic business area centered at the intersection of Harlem Road and Main Street. The Plan is intended to identify a number of key areas where stakeholders can focus their attention to obtain maximum results over the short term.

Stormwater Management: Refers to the natural and/or constructed features of a property which function to treat, collect, convey, channel, hold, inhibit, or divert the movement of surface water.

Strategy: The approach and/or methods through which problems are solved or minimized, and objectives are achieved.

Tax Abatement: A partial or total tax exemption for a particular development project for a specified number of years, aimed at providing indirect financial assistance to an organization or individual in order to gain a public benefit.

Tax Base: The total value of real property within the Town or other taxing district on which a property tax can be levied.

Traditional Commercial Center: An established commercial area that is pedestrian-oriented and defined by its close proximity to surrounding highways and residences.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND): An approach to design that is emerging as an alternative to single-use, automobile-oriented development. 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; and coordination with transit service. Also known as neo-traditional design.

Traffic Calming: An integrated approach to traffic planning that seeks to maximize mobility, while reducing the undesirable effects of that mobility. To achieve this goal, Traffic Calming applies a variety of techniques such as altering road design to change the psychological feel of the road and reduce travel speed; providing incentives for more people to use public transportation; and focusing planning on the creation of viable, compact communities.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): A regulatory technique designed to protect sensitive land areas by allowing the development rights on properties in such areas (“sending zones”) to be transferred to properties in designated “receiving zones,” which are allowed to be developed at a higher density than otherwise would be permitted by the underlying zoning.

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21): Enacted by Congress in June 1998, TEA-21 continues and expands a wide range of federal-aid programs that have encouraged trails, as well as other elements of the transportation policies begun in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA).

Urban Design: A design process that treats the development of the built environment in a comprehensive manner as a means of achieving a unified, efficient and aesthetically appealing physical setting.

Use: The specific activity or function for which land, a building, or a structure is designated, arranged, occupied, regulated or maintained.

Vision Statement: A shared expression of community values and aspirations. The Comprehensive Plan’s Vision Statement provides a “word picture” that defines community expectations for the future, frames the mandate for Plan policies and action programs, and provides the benchmark to measure progress in implementing the Plan.

Waterfront Activity Center: Location along the Erie Canal and Tonawanda Creek 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 Development Plan (JLWRP) for Amherst and Pendleton.

Watershed: A catchment area defined by the topography of the ground surface that drains to a watercourse or contributes flow to a body of water.

Wetland: Land area that is sufficiently saturated by surface water or groundwater as to be able to support vegetation or aquatic life requiring saturated soil conditions for at least part of the year. In Amherst, the NYSDEC has designated and regulates over 1,500 acres of wetland. In addition, Federal jurisdictional wetlands (U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) are delineated on a case-by-case basis.

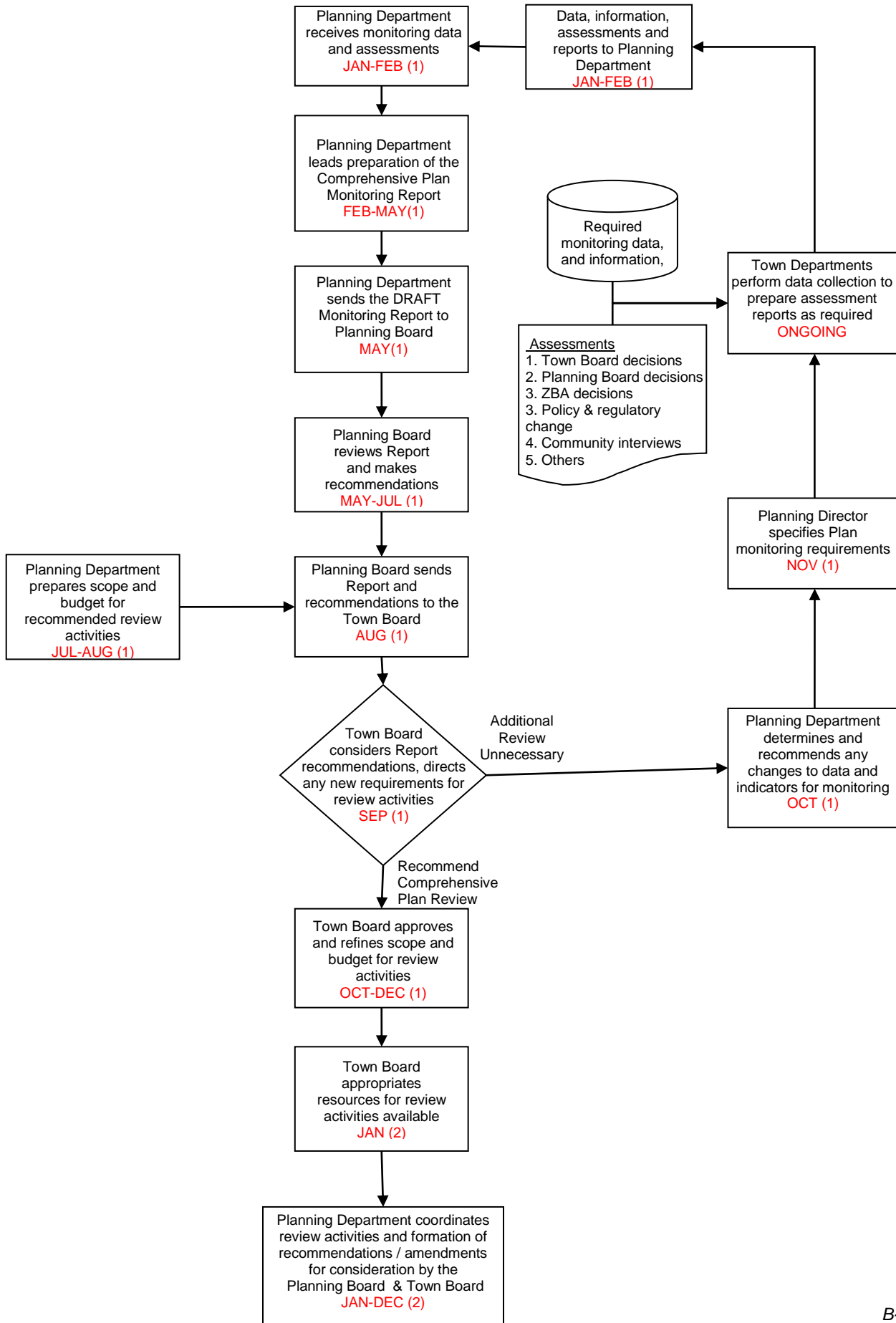
Wetland Mitigation: Creation of a new wetland of equal or greater value when an existing wetland must be filled. This can either be done directly through the creation of a new wetland or by the purchase of credits from a party that has already established a wetland (referred to as a wetland mitigation bank).

Zoning: Regulatory mechanism through which the Town regulates the location, size, and use of properties and buildings. Zoning regulations are intended to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community, and to lessen congestion, prevent overcrowding, avoid undue concentration of population, and facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage, schools, parks, and other public service.

Appendix B
Monitoring Program
& Schedule

Comprehensive Plan Monitoring Program & Schedule

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



Appendix C
Summary of
Goals & Policies

**Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
Summary of Goals and Policies**

Goal/Objective	Element	Relevant Policies	Priority Action	Actions
1. Promote the development / redevelopment of walkable higher density, mixed-use centers surrounded by lower density development.	Land Use and Development	3-1: Expand provisions and incentives for mixed-use development in designated activity centers. 3-2: Encourage compact, pedestrian-friendly development through Planned Residential options, including but not limited to neo-traditional design. 3-3: Modify provisions of the Suburban Agricultural District to reduce conversions of rural to suburban development patterns. 3-4: Reduce future new commercial development in North Amherst and along highway strips.	1	- Comprehensively revise the Town's development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes.
2. Implement context-sensitive standards and incentives to improve the quality and appearance of development.	Land Use and Development	3-5: Apply design standards to enhance community appearance and sense of place. 3-6: Apply context-sensitive design standards to designated roadways. 3-7: Protect and retain the identity of special places through design guidelines.	1	- Comprehensively revise the Town's development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes.
3. Encourage reinvestment in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors in Amherst.	Land Use and Development	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. 3-9: Rezone and/or provide incentives for reuse of underutilized/obsolescent properties for economically viable uses. 3-10: Tailor commercial zoning districts to the unique physical characteristics of older commercial areas in need of revitalization.	2	- Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment / revitalization
4. Target capital improvements to leverage private investment and enhance community appearance	Land Use and Development	3-11: Target capital investments to improve the aesthetic character of key locations within the Town. 3-12: Initiate public capital investment projects to encourage/support private investment.	2, 4	- Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment / revitalization - Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program.
5. Establish a town-wide network of parks, open spaces, and greenway corridors	Land Use and Development	3-13: Designate a town-wide open space and greenway network to be achieved through a variety of mechanisms. 3-14: Encourage conservation development with incentives for the dedication of open space in private developments. 3-15: Initiate a public open space acquisition program consistent with the open space, recreation, and greenway network.	3, 9	- Implement a coordinated strategy to achieve a town-wide open space and greenway network - Implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy.
6. Improve the predictability and consistency of the development review and decision-making process	Land Use and Development	3-16: Improve the predictability and consistency of the rezoning and other development approval processes through the application of clear town-wide land use policies. 3-17: Set clear standards for development quality to increase the level of certainty in the development review and approval process. 3-18: Periodic review and revision of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.	1	- Comprehensively revise the Town's development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes.

**Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
Summary of Goals and Policies**

Goal/Objective	Element	Relevant Policies	Priority Action	Actions
7. Establish an interconnected open space network that incorporates significant natural and cultural resources	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-1: Establish greenway corridors along streams as part of a town-wide open space system. 4-2: Provide conservation development options to encourage dedication of significant habitat as permanent open space. 4-3: Acquire land or development rights on land with environmental resources of local significance, consistent with an open space plan or determined to be in the public interest.	3	- Implement a coordinated strategy to achieve a town-wide open space and greenway network
8. Protect water resources and wetlands through improved regulations, policies, and management	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-4: Establish buffer/setback standards for new development to help protect streams of significance. 4-5: Support protection of designated wetlands and implement best management practices to maintain Town owned wetland areas. Work with regulatory agencies to encourage permitted wetland mitigation of an equal or higher level of function and quality to be located near impacted areas or within the Town. 4-6: Initiate watershed management plans in cooperation with the County and other municipalities in the watershed. 4-7: Apply “best management practices” (BMPs) to reduce water quality impacts development. 4-8: Implement “low impact development” standards and techniques designed to reduce the quantity and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from development.	1, 9	- Comprehensively revise the Town’s development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes - Implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy. - Encourage wetland mitigation in the Town. Continue acquisition of regulated wetland property. Consider mechanisms to manage town-owned wetlands.
9. Protect air resources through improved regulations, policies, and management	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-9: Reduce air quality emissions by pursuing Comprehensive Plan strategies such as compact, mixed-use development patterns; tree planting; transit and other alternatives to automobile use, etc.	--	
10. Protect trees and woodland through improved regulations, policies, and management	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-10: Support the Town of Amherst Tree Law. 4-11: Implement a “Greening Amherst” planting initiative consistent with a program of managing the “Town Landscape.”	4	- Initiate a community-wide tree planting and re-vegetation program.
11. Protect historic and cultural resources through improved regulations, policies, and management	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-12: Encourage designation of historically significant resources for protection and provide incentives available through the Historic Preservation Ordinance. 4-13: Support the cultural, visual and performing arts as part of the Education Key Initiative.	--	
12. Protect sensitive environmental resources through improved management.	Natural and Cultural Resources	4-14: Develop management plans for public natural and historic resources of local significance.	--	
13. Maintain Amherst’s strong tax base and attract more high-paying jobs to the Town.	Economic Development	5-1: Target economic development policies, program, capital expenditures, and incentives to attract and retain higher paying employment and promote desired forms and locations of development and redevelopment.		- Pursue collaborations with educational institutions, private businesses, and

**Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
Summary of Goals and Policies**

Goal/Objective	Element	Relevant Policies	Priority Action	Actions
		5-2: Build flexibility into non-residential zoning so that options are available for the various stages of business development. 5-3: Promote economic development through collaborations between government, educational institutions, health care organizations, and private industries. 5-4: Work with educational institutions on lifelong learning and other programs to train, attract, and retain a skilled workforce.	6	other partners to promote economic development.
14. Ensure that economic development and redevelopment respect the character and quality of life of Amherst’s residential communities.	Economic Development	5-5: Promote commercial development patterns that reduce neighborhood impacts. 5-6: Adopt commercial development standards for neighborhood compatibility with context-sensitive design guidelines.	1	- Comprehensively revise the Town’s development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes.
15. Capitalize on the presence of the University at Buffalo to leverage University-related economic development opportunities.	Economic Development	5-7: Work with UB to create mixed-use activity centers on the periphery of the campuses. 5-8: Work with UB to promote more educational, social, and cultural ties to the Town and to reinforce the role of both campuses as activity centers. 5-9: Establish an ongoing, collaborative planning structure with UB.	5	- Establish a collaborative planning structure with the University at Buffalo.
16. Build partnerships with development agencies, private industry, and educational and research institutions to promote economic development in Amherst and throughout the region.	Economic Development	5-10: Work with area municipalities and economic development agencies to promote regional economic growth. 5-11: Position Amherst as a regional technology center.	--	
17. Create a roadway network that improves efficiency and connectivity while preserving neighborhood character.	Transportation	6-1: Designate roadway corridors for application of context-sensitive design standards to maintain their character. 6-2: Modify the Town’s engineering standards for roadways to reduce neighborhood impacts. 6-4: Enhance transportation system capacities through operational improvements, including improved access management and a comprehensive signal-timing plan. 6-5: Undertake a capital program to maintain or improve the efficiency of the existing road system. 6-6: Accept a certain level of traffic congestion as a “given” and expand investments in alternative transportation modes and compact, mixed-use development patterns.	7	- Develop a strategy to implement targeted improvements with identified level of service deficiencies.
18. Develop the existing bicycle / pedestrian system into a town-wide, interconnected network that facilitates connections between vehicular and non-vehicular transportation.	Transportation	6-7: Develop a comprehensive bicycle network, using a rating system to identify and prioritize improvements. 6-8: Develop a comprehensive pedestrian network of sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails.	8	- Develop a strategy to implement a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network.
19. Work with the NFTA to provide adequate public transit	Transportation	6-9: Work with NFTA to improve transit service and provide connections to activity centers (e.g.,		

**Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
Summary of Goals and Policies**

Goal/Objective	Element	Relevant Policies	Priority Action	Actions
service, particularly to mixed-use activity centers identified in the Conceptual Land Use Plan.		UB and Eggertsville).	--	
20. Establish a town traffic assessment and planning capability to manage and maintain local highways.	Transportation	6-3: Establish a town highway planning capability to manage the local road network.	1	- Comprehensively revise the Town’s development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes.
21. Establish a town-wide program with plans and policies to effectively manage stormwater runoff, including flooding and stormwater quality.	Infrastructure	7-1: Develop a program to address flooding and other stormwater management issues in coordination with other responsible agencies. 7-2: Implement “low impact development” standards and techniques to reduce the quantity and improve the quality of stormwater runoff from development.	9	- Implement a comprehensive stormwater management strategy to address flooding and water quality protection.
22. Maintain and upgrade existing sanitary sewer infrastructure to support existing and projected needs. Limit future service extensions to those needed to serve development areas designated on the Conceptual Land Use Plan.	Infrastructure	7-3: Give priority to repairs to existing infrastructure systems, rather than extensions to serve new greenfield development. 7-4: Redefine the boundaries of the Consolidated Sanitary Sewer District in the northern part of the Town to exclude rural and agricultural areas designated for protection and include areas designated for more intensive development. Promote the importance of proper maintenance of private disposal systems or septic systems to limit sewer extensions into protected areas.	10	- Limit future sewer service extensions to support the Conceptual Land Use Plan. Utilize new and advancing technologies for failing systems.
23. Ensure the availability of housing affordable to all socioeconomic groups in Amherst.	Housing and Neighborhoods	8-1: Continue existing housing policies that promote home ownership and affordability.	--	
24. Promote a diverse housing stock, with higher density housing focused on mixed-use activity centers.	Housing and Neighborhoods	8-2: Promote the development of a variety of housing types. 8-3: Encourage higher density residential uses in mixed-use development and other appropriate locations. 8-4: Work with UB to establish mixed-use centers around the periphery of both campuses. 8-5: Establish standards for multi-family housing to promote high quality design and neighborhood compatibility.	1, 5	- Comprehensively revise the Town’s development regulations, standards, and review/approval processes - Establish a collaborative planning structure with the University at Buffalo.
25. Implement a coordinated program to conserve and revitalize Amherst’s neighborhoods.	Housing and Neighborhoods	8-6: Provide incentives for residential property repairs and improvements on a town-wide basis. 8-7: Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program to promote revitalization of designated neighborhoods through measures such as code enforcement, capital improvement, and design standards. 8-8: Promote the revitalization of older commercial areas as a focus of neighborhood activity and include support for building and	2, 11	- Provide expanded incentives for reinvestment / revitalization - Initiate a Neighborhood Conservation Program, including a collaborative process to develop

**Town of Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan
Summary of Goals and Policies**

Goal/Objective	Element	Relevant Policies	Priority Action	Actions
		property maintenance code enforcement. 8-9: Encourage participation from residents when the Town is developing action/improvement plans for specific neighborhoods.		Neighborhood Improvement Plans.
26. Establish standards or performance criteria to determine community facility and service needs.	Community Facilities and Services	9-1: Establish an ongoing system to identify and prioritize community facility and service needs. 9-2: Encourage transportation and outreach programs for persons who find it difficult to get to particular facilities.	12	- Establish an objective system of planning for community facility and service needs. Link this to a long-range capital programming process to reconcile needs with the Town's fiscal capacity.
27. Enhance the role of public facilities as centers of neighborhood and community activity.	Community Facilities and Services	9-3: Identify opportunities to strategically locate certain facilities to strengthen neighborhoods and serve local needs. 9-4: Integrate community facilities within mixed-use activity centers.	--	
28. Provide quality facilities and services cost effectively by managing expenses and diversifying revenue sources.	Community Facilities and Services	9-5: Allow continued growth of the nonresidential tax base consistent with the Comprehensive (Land Use) Plan. 9-6: Pursue cost efficiencies in the provision of public facilities and services through the sharing of resources and the elimination of service duplications. 9-7: Expand partnerships with other service providers, private organizations, and businesses to provide community facilities and services. 9-8: Reconcile needs for community facilities and services with the fiscal capacity of the Town through the capital programming process. 9-9: Re-evaluate funding of special purpose or "high level of service" programs or facilities.	12	- Establish an objective system of planning for community facility and service needs. Link this system to a long-range capital programming process to reconcile needs with the Town's fiscal capacity.

