

Snyder Action Plan

Prepared for:

The Friends of Snyder
(Snyder Business District)

In association with:

The Town of Amherst



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1. Introduction

The Snyder community is a unique place within the Town of Amherst. It is one of the oldest parts of the town and retains many of the attractive features typical of older traditional suburban communities. These include a “village-like” atmosphere, a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented collection retail stores and offices, and local institutions such as schools, churches, libraries and the post office, all contained in an interconnected traditional urban fabric of walkable neighborhood streets with sidewalks, large trees and well-kept homes. Today, developers around the country are building new communities with these features. Older communities, like Snyder, are now re-discovering and enhancing these features that have been there all along.



Snyder is located in the southern part of the Town of Amherst. It is generally bounded by Getzville and Brantwood Road on the west, Sheridan Drive on the north, I-290/I-90 on the east, and the Cheektowaga town line on the south. The main focus of this action plan, however, is more specifically the Snyder business district, which for the purposes of this study is defined as the Main Street corridor between Campus Drive and Burroughs Drive (See *Context Map*, page 4).

(See *Context Map*, page 4).



Fischer Brothers General Store, Main and Harlem c. 1906 (source: Snyderville: History of a Village, Portrait of a Family)

To provide some historical context, Snyder was first settled in 1804 by Timothy Hopkins, who had a large farm in the vicinity of Main Street and Washington Highway. Settlement progressed slowly in this area, as it was still very rural countryside between the more established communities of Buffalo and Williamsville. Buffalo, of course, was growing very quickly due to the prosperity brought on by the Erie Canal. In 1823, Abraham Snyder arrived from Pennsylvania with his family. By the late 1830s, they had moved into a spacious frame house at what is now the northeast corner of Main Street and

Harlem Road. Following Abraham’s untimely death (disappearance?), Abraham’s son, Michael, rose to prominence in the area, and his initial foray into business in 1837 is seen as the establishment of the “Snyderville” community.



Snyder grew slowly throughout the 19th century with small scale businesses catering to the surrounding farms and to the busy stagecoach traffic on the Buffalo-Williamsville Road (Main Street). An electric trolley opened in 1892 that extended the Buffalo streetcar system at Main and Bailey, and continued east to Williamsville. This made the area much more accessible, and the Eggertsville and Snyder areas of Amherst quickly began to develop as upper-middle class residential suburbs, as some wealthier residents from the city began to develop their “estates” in the country. It was in these early years of the 1900s that Snyder began to develop its unique character. The small business area at Main and Harlem also continued to expand as the neighborhood “downtown” for these new suburbs.



South side of Main Street between Bernhardt and Lincoln (source: Snyderville: History of a Village, Portrait of a Family)

Today, the residential areas within Snyder remain very desirable, especially when considered in the context of a stagnant regional economy. However, the community’s business district has undergone some recent changes. From its historic role as rural hamlet and stagecoach stop to an early 20th century suburban downtown to a regional destination for unique high-end goods, the focus of Snyder has changed. Over the past decade it has shifted again, and Snyder is at a point now where it is determining what it “wants” to become and what it “can” become. This study is a positive sign that the neighborhood is alive and well, and that the businesses in the area truly care about the future of the community and are determined to find their niche once again. This proactive approach of the local business community will help ensure that Snyder will not face the decline that is now becoming evident in many “first-ring suburbs” both locally and nationally.

Current Images of the Community





2. Project Objectives

The goals of this action plan were established through a series of meetings with town officials, Snyder area business people, and other key community stakeholders. Based on these discussions, this study will propose improvements to the physical attributes of the business area. Suggested improvements will build on Snyder’s historic strengths, seek to mitigate some of its current shortcomings, all while helping to attract new investment to this unique community and trying to “re-energize” the positive perceptions of the area. The recommendations will primarily focus on short term actions (*one to five years*) to revitalize the Snyder business area, although longer-range options may also be suggested.

Objectives

- *Solicit thoughts, ideas, and concerns about the Snyder business district from key area stakeholders.*
- *Reinforce existing community networks and institutional and business linkages.*
- *Recommend ways to improve the safety and walkability of the neighborhood.*
- *Recommend ways to improve the marketability of the Snyder business district. This includes creating or reinforcing a sense of place and the “imageability” of Snyder.*
- *Provide the business community with a “jumping off point” and direction for further action toward implementing/moving forward with the “vision.”*

3. Existing Conditions

The Snyder Business District is unique to the Town of Amherst and remains much healthier than other similar traditional business districts and residential neighborhoods throughout the region. An analysis of the area revealed a number of strengths that should be built upon. It also identified some of the challenges confronting the business district. The following findings provide a general overview of existing conditions within the Snyder Business District.

3.1 Location and Access

As they say in the real estate community, it’s “*location, location, location!*” Snyder enjoys a key location near the geographic center of the Buffalo metropolitan area. It is often said that in Western New York, everything is “twenty minutes away.” In Snyder that statement is especially true. Downtown Buffalo, Buffalo-Niagara International Airport, the Canadian border, Buffalo’s Museum District, both campuses of the University at Buffalo, major suburban shopping areas, and even Niagara Falls, Lockport and Orchard Park are all within an easy drive. The I-290 interchanges at Main Street and Harlem/Sheridan are less than a mile from the center of Snyder, and access to the I-90 at Cleveland Drive and the Kensington Expressway (NY33) at Harlem Road are only slightly further. In addition, the community is well served by public transportation on NFTA bus routes 30, 48, and 49, which link directly to the subway at South Campus Station and to downtown Buffalo.



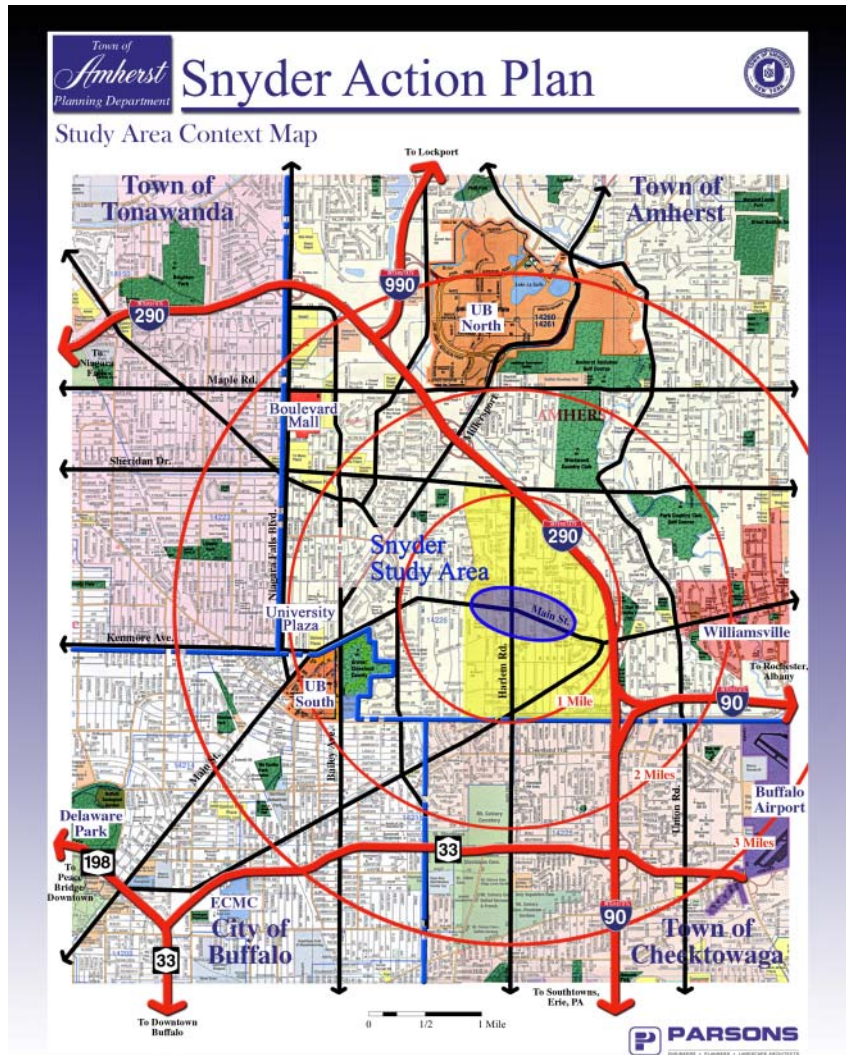
Regional Context Map

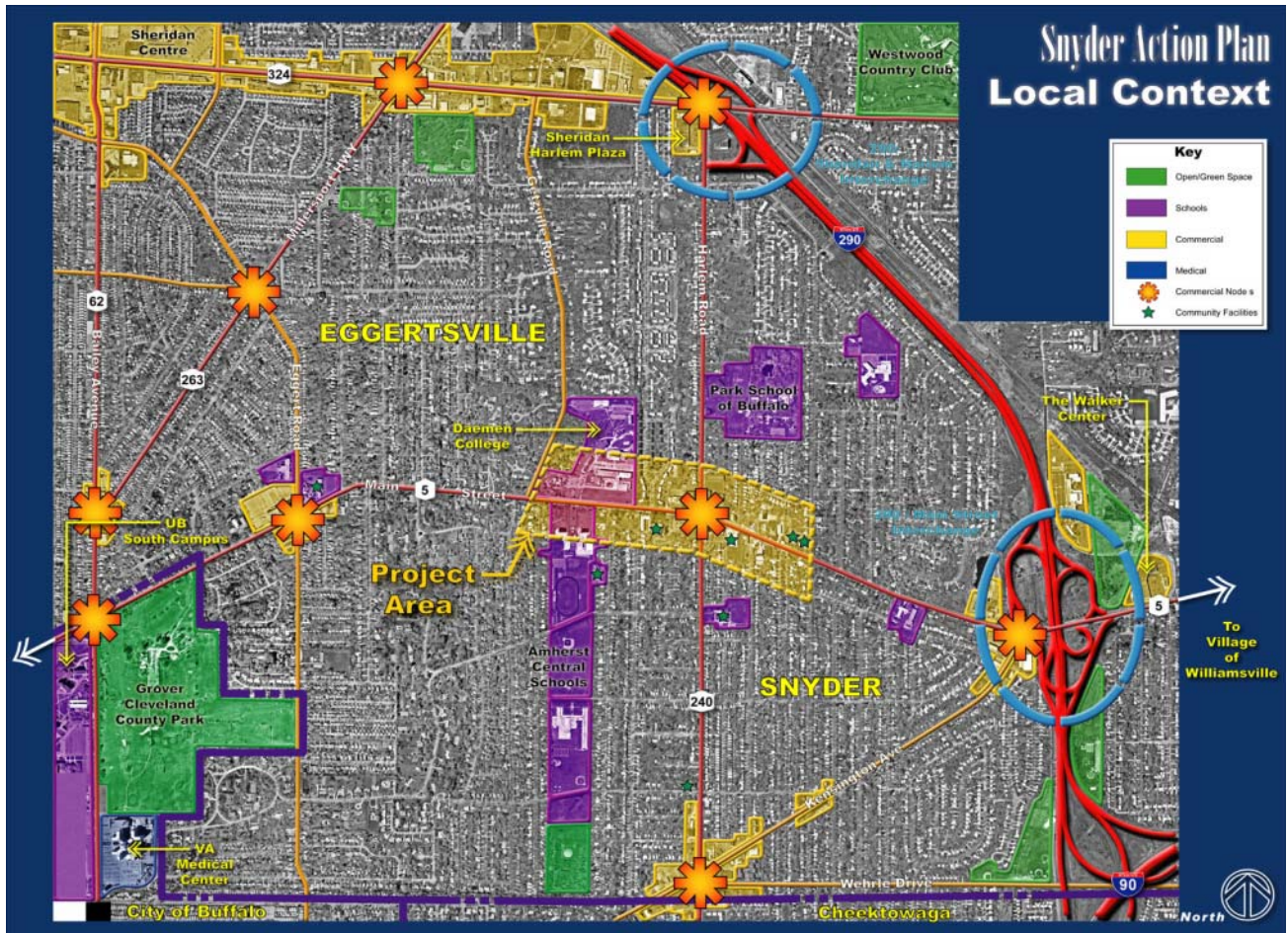


3.2 The Surrounding Community (See also Section 4 - Demographic Profile)

Snyder enjoys enviable demographics as one of the most affluent and well-educated communities in the Greater Buffalo metropolitan area. Not only do residents support their local cultural organizations, but they are also very involved in the larger Buffalo cultural scene. Many of Western New York’s largest cultural institutions and attractions are well supported by the Snyder (and also Eggertsville) communities. The disposable income, education, and cultural sophistication of the Snyder community can be harnessed to help build a strong, vibrant, neighborhood business area that will attract people from throughout the region.

Despite its being one of the most densely developed within the Town of Amherst, in the larger context, the residential population density is relatively low, consisting mostly of larger, single family homes on individual lots. Although it succeeded in the past, this neighborhood population density alone may now be too low to support the kind of business district that the community envisions, especially given the regional choices for retail shopping only a short drive away. Vibrant, successful, pedestrian-oriented business areas require a fairly dense residential population living in very close proximity. Increasing both the population density near the Snyder Business District in the future and the housing options available to area residents can be accomplished with the construction of quality townhouses, row-houses or upscale low-rise (3-4 story) condominiums.





Local Area Context



Snyder Business District



3.3 Area Image /Character

Snyder began as a rural cross-roads hamlet, surrounded by farms, and the character of the community reflected that. Later it became a district of large estates lining Main Street. By the turn of the 20th century, Snyder was a stop on the inter-urban streetcar line to Williamsville and it began to develop as a “new” upper-middle class suburb. Large frame and masonry houses, most of which still exist today, lined the side streets. The houses were a pleasing mix of “Arts-and-Crafts” influenced design, colonial revival, tudor, and other miscellaneous housing styles. During this same period, the commercial area along Main Street saw its older, 19th century frame inns and stores replaced by traditional “Main Street USA” style masonry buildings that were built up to the sidewalk, some with Art-Deco influences. Many of the area’s larger, older homes were constructed between the early 1920’s and the early 1940s.

After World War II, development styles changed and the nation was no longer building traditional walkable communities. Emphasis was shifted to smaller, more affordable homes and the automobile began to be dominant on the landscape. Some of these ideas affected Snyder, as Amherst’s new “sub-urban” town zoning codes (1950s, 60s, 70s) required new buildings to be set back from the street, and each building to have its own street access and on-site parking. Unfortunately, this worked against the traditional aspects that make Snyder a unique and attractive “walkable” community.

Large areas of paving and parking fronting on the street detract from the desired “village” character



The large undifferentiated paved area at the Mobil Station does not “anchor” the corner and detracts from the walkability of the community.



Siena is one of the region’s premier restaurants but it sits in a “less-than-elegant” setting.

The post-war architecture was less successful at promoting a walkable, village-like, atmosphere. Today the older more traditional buildings co-exist uneasily with some of the newer structures. The character of the community also suffers because significant portions of the Snyder Business District have been “hollowed out” for parking. These two trends - increased parking areas and fewer historic structures - make Snyder less coherent and “imageable” than Ellicottville, Niagara-on-the-Lake, or even the Village of East Aurora.



3.4 Community Institutions and Amenities

Although its overall visual image could be improved, the Snyder Business District is very fortunate in that it contains many institutions that contribute to its cultural and civic identity and vitality in the area. These notable institutions include Daemen College, Amherst Central School District (High School), the Park School, MusicalFare Theater, O’Connell and Company Theater, US Post Office, YMCA-Northeast



Snyder-Eggertsville Library



Amherst Central High School

Branch, Amherst Community Church, the Eggertsville-Snyder Branch Library, Ascension Lutheran Church, and Bornhava Preschool.

3.5 Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

A very common concern voiced during project meetings or interviews with key stakeholders was that of traffic speed on Main Street. The posted speed limit through the Business District is forty (40) miles per hour, however cars routinely exceed that level, beguiled by the long wide straight-away on that portion of Main Street. This speed is generally ten (10) miles per hour faster than many other business districts and “downtown” areas. Typically a thirty (30) miles per hour speed is preferred in this type of situation. The problem of speed is exacerbated by the wide (12 foot) lanes on Main Street. These wide lanes, which are similar in size to an expressway lane, tend to encourage faster speeds and serve as a detriment to local pedestrian cross-



Wide pavement at Main and Harlem create an unfriendly environment for pedestrians

ings and the “village-like” atmosphere.

The area surrounding the Main Street-Harlem Road intersection is especially problematic for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. As mentioned earlier, the width of the streets’ pavement is an obstacle for pedestrians. The worst case scenario is Main Street on the east side of Harlem where it is essentially seven lanes wide. Also, the existing continuous right-turn lane from westbound Main Street to northbound Harlem Road is rarely used and likely not needed. This free-flowing lane adds to the excessive pavement width and is unsafe for pedestrian crossing. In addition, the numerous curb cuts, parking lot entrances, and driveway aprons in the area also are very detrimental to the pedestrian experience and contribute to a lack of feeling safe.

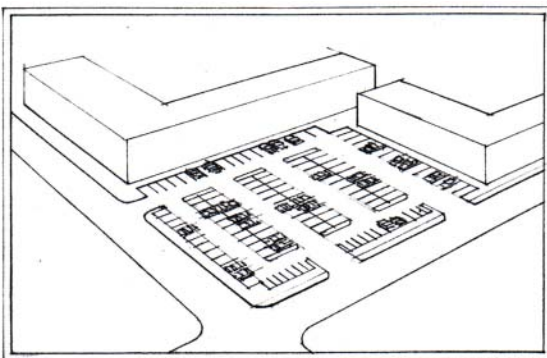
It should be noted that the signals that are present, not only at Main and Harlem but other intersections in the study area, have pedestrian crossing phases that many feel are too short to adequately cross the width Main Street, particularly for slower moving senior citizens.

3.6 Parking

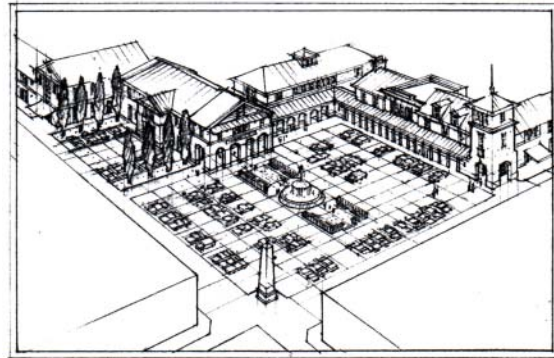
It is often stated that the downtown areas and “trendy” village districts across the country that are the most desirable to visit, are also the one’s that tend to have parking issues, or at least have “invisible” parking lots. Parking is an important issue in the Snyder Business District, as it is in virtually all successful, vibrant communities. Typically, if a place is considered a “destination,” people will be willing to park and walk a few steps. Anyplace that people want to visit, i.e. New York, Toronto, Ellicottville, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Elmwood Avenue, etc, parking is at a premium. But because the areas and businesses are attractive, walkable, and vibrant, people are willing to walk. The point is, you cannot have a walkable, vibrant community and always have lots of easy parking right at the front door of the business - - that kind of model is seen in the newer suburbs, in places like Sheridan Drive and Transit Road, but these places are anything but walkable and appear to cater to only cars and not people.

*Parking Lot Possibilities - Making Parking Lots Attractive
(Source: The New Urban News)*

Before



After



Right now, the pattern of development in Snyder is somewhere between Elmwood Avenue and Transit Road (*i.e. it has a combination of “up-to-the-sidewalk” traditional storefronts with parking on-street and behind the buildings, as well as some buildings set back from the street with parking lots in front*). The problem is that this combination does not work well under either pattern. From an “image” stand-

point, it is the mix of parking types, the large expanses of parking fronting Main Street and a lack of connectivity between the various lots that detracts from the character and “village-like” ambiance. The image below shows the

extent of parking available in the Snyder Business District - - a apparent large percentage of the surface area in the district. **Yet there are good examples of successful parking management right in Snyder.** Many buildings



Extent of Existing Parking in Business District

have ample parking *behind* the buildings, which

allows the buildings and street frontage to create the character for the district, rather than a “sea of asphalt” and cars. Rear parking is typical of numerous, traditional villages, including Williamsville, Kenmore, and Orchard Park, etc. The shared parking and access arrangement between the funeral home, library, and Lutheran Church is viewed as beneficial by all parties involved, makes it convenient for the area residents, and is exactly the sort of shared access and parking that should happen throughout Snyder. Another good example is the shared access between Loughran’s parking lot and the parking area behind the Roth building. Adequate signage is key, however, for rear parking to be successful.

It is also important to point out that under ideal access management and shared parking arrangements, that property owners can begin to share driveways (thus eliminating others), give patrons easier and safer connections between businesses, lead to potential shared maintenance and snow plowing costs, and provide additional opportunities for landscaping and beautification.

3.7 Walkability and Connectivity

As mentioned previously, Snyder retains many of the features from its initial development era that still generally make it a viable “walkable” community - - narrower neighborhood streets with continuous sidewalks, a clustering of retail/commercial uses in a relatively small area, numerous businesses fronting the sidewalk line, and a inter-connected grid of streets. However, this attribute has degraded over time. The widening of Main Street has effectively cut the community in two, making it difficult for a pedestrian to cross the wide busy thoroughfare, even at the signalized intersections. Also, newer developments such as Snyder Square, Snyder Square II, and the Palanker Building relate more to vehicular users than to pedestrian customers or the neighborhood. By offering more connectivity and comfortable access between buildings and parking lots, more customers arriving by car may be more inclined to walk to the neighboring business without the nuisance of getting back into their car.

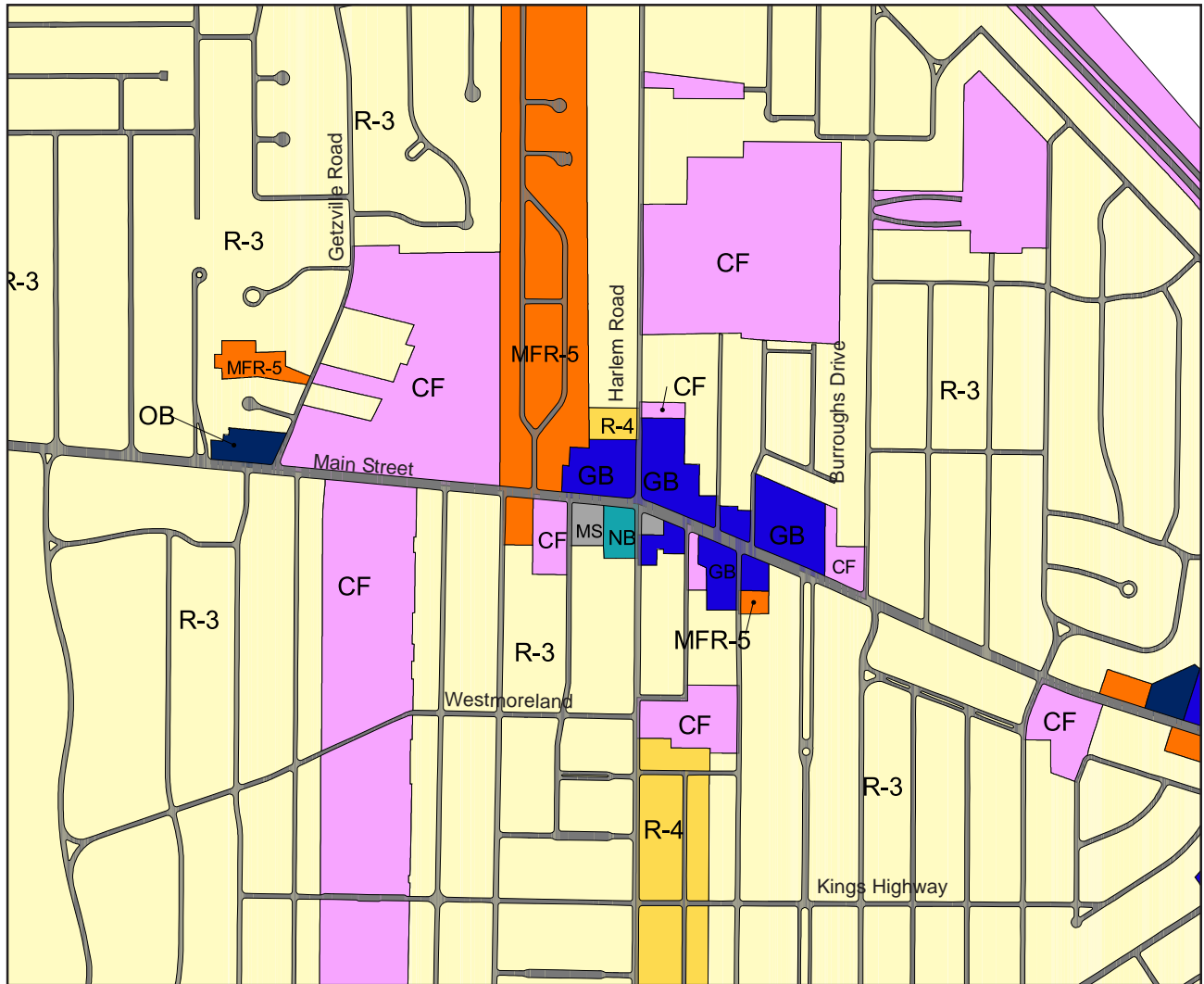


3.8 Zoning and Regulations

Many of Snyder's physical discontinuities can be traced to Post WWII "suburban" town zoning codes. Zoning regulations in the Town of Amherst, like many suburban municipalities around the country, are set up as a "one-size-fits-all" approach. The Town of Amherst's current Zoning Ordinance dates back to 1976 (See Map, page 11). The one-size-fits-all approach means that commercial areas, whether they are newer, auto-oriented plazas on Transit Road or Sheridan Drive, or traditional retail areas like Eggertsville, Snyder, and the Village of Williamsville, were given similar requirements in terms of parking, setbacks, etc. Inevitably, over the past thirty (30) years requirements that favored easy auto access won out. In many cases the Town's current zoning code creates very few opportunities for newer "mixed-use" developments, central to the health and vibrancy of most traditional neighborhoods. The code's requirements for large front setbacks has almost forced developers to bring parking up to the street edge, thus breaking down that "traditional" business district character.

Infill development, and rehabilitation of existing properties, is particularly difficult in Snyder due to the inconsistencies between the existing zoning codes and the existing character of the surrounding community. Developers find it difficult to make their projects "fit" into the district and often shy away from community conflicts. Typically a developer in the older neighborhoods would need to acquire adjacent residential properties in order to meet the current zoning requirements for setbacks, parking, and greenspace. These developers gravitate towards the northern and eastern parts of town where larger parcels and less potential community conflict exists. It also becomes less costly for developers to build in the newer parts of town, rather than expending more energies, costs and resources trying to force a project into an older, more established neighborhood. Over the past decade, however, many places are rediscovering the value in older more traditional forms of development, before the overwhelming emphasis on the automobile. Many communities across the country are re-writing their zoning codes or altering them through area specific "overlay districts." Fortunately, the Town of Amherst, as part of its Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, is undertaking this effort right now.

Refer to the map on the following page for the current Zoning designations.



Snyder's current zoning

Zoning Legend

- NB** - Neighborhood Business (local shopping needs)
- GB** - General Business (community wide shopping needs)
- OB** - Office Building
- MS** - Motor Service (gas stations, auto repair, motels, restaurants)
- R-3** - Single family residential, 3.5 units/acre
- R-4** - Attached or detached residential, 6 units/acre
- MFR 4A** - Multi-family residential, 8 units/acre
- MFR 5** - Multi-family residential, 8-12 units/acre
- CF** - Community Facilities (schools, churches, libraries etc.)



3.9 Current Development Incentives

Speaking to numerous business and property owners in Snyder, many feel that there are no current economic incentives to encourage them to stay put in this business district or any in the older parts of town. Although most love the Snyder area and Business District, they all tend to say that the Town Government doesn't do enough to help them - - this appears to be the same for the Eggertsville and Harlem/Kensington businesses as well.

Due to the demands, size and scale of many typical newer "suburban" retail developments, developers tend to "shy away" from established neighborhoods due to potential opposition from surrounding residents. Development creativity for mixed-use, traditional, smaller-scale infill projects, or the rehab of older neighborhood structures, is not typically given much economic incentive within the town, thus proliferating the "sprawl" to the greener parts of town. Therefore it is much easier, and often cheaper, for a developer to build on a vacant site in eastern or northern Amherst, or even move out to Clarence, Pendleton or Lancaster.

Current incentives through the Amherst Industrial Development Agency (AIDA) are geared toward the property owners and do little to assist small businesses. In an effort to attract new investment to Snyder's Business District, the Town has targeted this community for inclusion within the 485-B program. This is an incentive program set up to encourage commercial investment through a graduated tax-abatement system. While the concept behind the 485-B program is appropriate to encourage investment in Snyder, its incentives are more significant for "big-box" developments or new construction projects. The experienced, larger developer knows and uses the program to his or her benefit, but generally on larger office park projects. In contrast, discussions with local economic development officials indicate that the minimum investment required to even qualify for the 485-B program is often greater than the average small business enterprise can afford under most developments or it is difficult to raise the assessed value of existing properties by more than \$10,000, the minimum amount required to qualify for the program.

Fortunately, much attention is now being placed on revitalization and redevelopment of the older parts of the Town by the Supervisor and Town Board members. The Amherst Town Board has recently authorized the Amherst I.D.A. to offer other incentives to smaller businesses in designated areas. These include "jumbo" bonds, where several small projects grouped together can enjoy the same benefits as larger projects, as well as the savings on sales tax on smaller projects.



4. Demographic Profile

4.1 Definition of Market Area

The Snyder community is defined as an area roughly one mile in diameter centered on the intersection of Main Street and Harlem Road, with its general boundaries being Sheridan Drive to the north, I-290 to the east, the Cheektowaga town line to the south, and Eggert Road, LeBrun Road, Westfield Road, Longmeadow Road, and Millersport Highway to the west. For this study, the area has been subdivided into four quadrants, as shown on the map below.

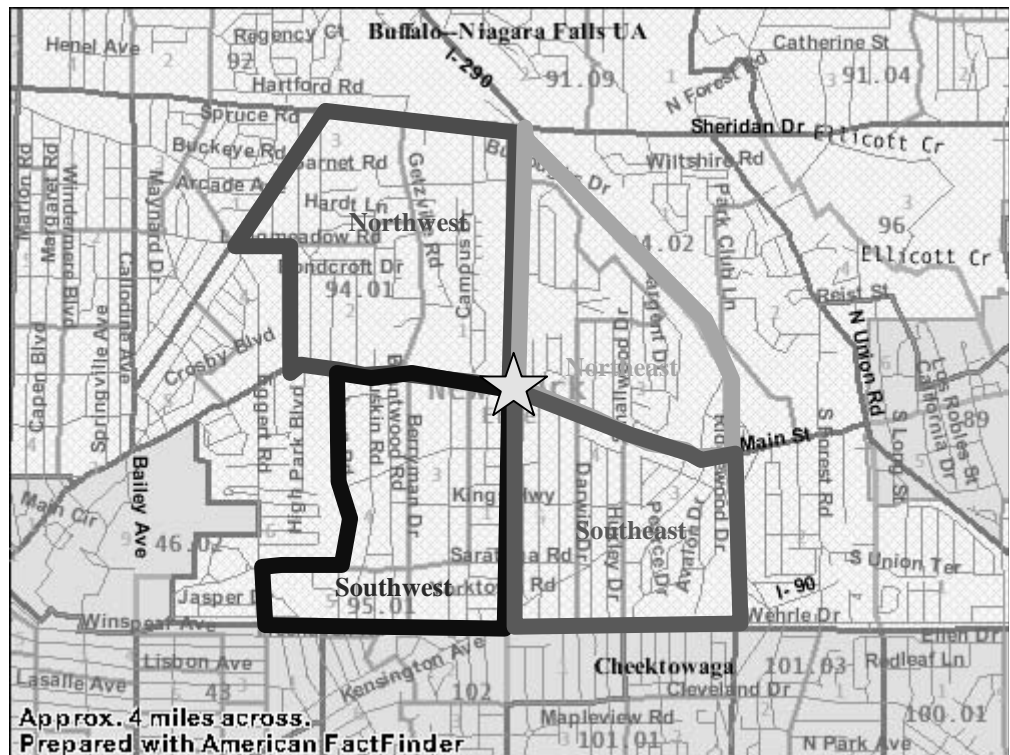
The quadrants are as follows:

Northwest – The Northwest quadrant is defined as Census block groups 1-3 from Tract 94.01. Its boundaries are Harlem Road, Main Street, Sheridan Drive, Millersport Highway, Longmeadow Road, and Westfield Road.

Northeast – This quadrant is defined as block groups 3 and 4 from Tract 94.02. It is bounded by Main Street, Harlem Road, and Interstate 290.

Southwest – The Southwest area includes block groups 1, 3, 4, and 5 from Tract 95.01. Block group 2 in this tract, which was formerly part of this area, no longer exists and was combined with block group 1 for the 2000 Census. The boundaries of this quadrant are Main Street, Harlem Road, the Cheektowaga town line, Eggert Road, Saratoga Road, and LeBrun Road.

Southeast – The Southeast quadrant represents block groups 3, 4, and 5 from Tract 95.02. Its boundaries are defined by Harlem Road, Main Street, Interstate 290 and the Cheektowaga town line.





4.2 Population and Household Data

According to the 2000 Census, the Snyder community has 13,875 residents, down from 14,294 in 1990, representing a loss of 419 people. However, the amount of households in the area actually increased during the 1990s, with the number of households growing from 5,469 to 5,574, an increase of 105 units. Not surprisingly, the average household size in Snyder was much smaller in 2000 at 2.41 persons than the 1990 average of 2.53 persons.

The Northwest quadrant is the most populous of the four quadrants, with 4,073 residents as of 2000, but its population is boosted by the presence of Daemen College, which houses about 400 students in its dormitories. The Southeast is the second largest with 4,045 residents, but it has more people in households than does the Northwest. The Southwest is the next largest with 3,283 people, and the Northeast is the smallest, with just 2,474 residents.

The loss of population was relatively uniform among the four quadrants, as all four lost some people, with the Southeast quadrant losing the most (220 people). The Southeast was the only one of the quadrants to lose households, with its household total going down from 1,703 in 1990 to 1,654 in 2000. The Northeast gained the most households (70), but its average household size fell dramatically, from 2.73 persons in 1990 to 2.49 in 2000.

Regarding age, all four quadrants saw a boom in the amount of people aged between 35 and 54, with that age cohort's share rising from 26.1 percent of the area's population in 1990 to 30.3 percent in 2000. Surprisingly, the older age cohorts did not grow, with the share of population of those over the age of 55 declining from 28.7 percent in 1990 to just 26.5 percent in 2000. There has been a marked increase in the number of children between the ages of 5 and 17, as this cohort grew by over 200 people from 1990 to 2000, increasing its share of the area's population from 14.5 percent to 17.0 percent. Snyder's population of young adults (age 18-34) declined sharply in the 1990s, losing over 450 people, and seeing its share drop from 24.3 percent to just 20.4 percent of the area's population.

As is clear from the age and household size data, Snyder is seeing an influx of younger families with fewer children than the families they are replacing. Unlike many other older suburban communities in the Buffalo area, Snyder is not seeing a boom in its senior citizen population, which may be partially caused by higher housing costs than in other nearby communities. One cause for concern is the loss of young adults, but this is likely due to the fact that "Generation X" is much smaller than the Baby Boomer generation, meaning that there are simply fewer people aged between 25 and 34 today than there were 10 years ago.



4.3 Housing Data

In 1990, the Snyder community contained 5,662 housing units; by 2000 this number had only increased to 5,739, representing a net gain of 77 housing units. Clearly, there has been little new housing construction in this older, mostly built-out community.

As of April 2002, data from the 2000 Census regarding housing units by type had not yet been released. Since so little growth has taken place, though, 1990 data regarding housing profile should still prove accurate. In 1990, 82.5 percent of Snyder’s housing units were single-family units, with the Northeast and Southwest quadrants having the highest percentages of single-family units (94 and 96 percent, respectively), the Southeast’s slightly lower (84 percent), and the Northwest’s the lowest (64 percent). Among multi-family units, the vast majority were either duplexes or small apartment buildings, with 866 of the 992 multi-family units being in buildings with fewer than five units.

The Northwest quadrant had, by far, the highest concentration of multi-family units in 1990, with over 600 duplexes or apartments, with all but 16 being in small buildings with fewer than five units. The Southeast had the next most multi-family units, with 278 in total, of which 74 were in larger buildings (five or more units). The Northeast and Southwest quadrants together account for just 112 multi-family housing units, of which just 36 were in buildings holding five or more units.

Not surprisingly, homeownership rates for each quadrant are very closely related to housing unit types. In total, Snyder’s homeownership rate held steady from 1990 to 2000 at around 83 percent, which is almost exactly equal to the percentage of single-family housing units in the area (82.5 percent). This pattern repeats in each quadrant: the Northwest quadrant’s homeownership rate is 66 percent, the Northeast and Southwest’s are both 95 percent, and the Southeast’s is 84 percent. This relationship illustrates that most of the multi-family units in Snyder are rental units, and that few single-family units are available for rent.

4.4 Income Data

Income levels in Snyder are quite high, particularly in its Southwest and Northeast quadrants. The average household income in Snyder in 2000 was \$87,700, and nearly 23 percent of its households earn more than \$100,000 annually. This compares very favorably to the Buffalo regional average household income of \$57,400. The median household income level in this area is far lower, however—around \$60,000—as about 15 percent of Snyder households earn less than \$25,000 per year and another 27 percent earn between \$25,000 and \$49,999.

The Southwest quadrant has an average household income level of \$135,000, even though 34.5 percent of its households earn more than \$100,000, and its median income level is below \$75,000. The explanation for this quirk is that this neighborhood contains some of the most expensive housing in Western New York, and has a number of very high income households which raise the average.



The Northwest quadrant, which contains the highest amount of apartment units and has many students from Daemen College and the University at Buffalo, has the lowest income levels of the four quadrants. In fact, more than 25 percent of this quadrant’s residents earn less than \$25,000 per year, and its median income level is below \$50,000. However, even this quadrant has a fairly high average household income level, at over \$71,000, as it too has many high-income households (over 17 percent earn more than \$100,000)

4.5 Potential Retail Sales

Although Snyder’s residential areas only represent a portion of the market for the Snyder business district, it does account for the core of the market area. In order to illustrate just how much impact can be had from Snyder residents alone, it is useful to examine the buying power of the residents of Snyder alone. The information presented here shows just how much impact local residents can have on the commercial district (see Table 4 for detailed calculations).

A typical household in the Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) spends about \$16,000 per year on retail goods and services, based on data adapted from the 1997 Census of Retail Trade. Since household income levels in Snyder are so much higher than the regional average, the typical Snyder household likely spends more on retail goods.

If income is directly correlated to retail spending (which may or may not be the case), the average Snyder household would spend 1.52 times as much as the average household in the region, for a total of \$24,500 in annual spending. This figure breaks down as follows:

– General, Apparel, Furniture, and Other (GAFO):	\$8,700
– Food & Drugs:	9,000
– Home Improvement:	3,400
– Eating and Drinking:	<u>3,400</u>
– Total:	\$24,500

Assuming the above spending figures to be reasonable, the 5,574 households in Snyder would spend nearly \$137 million each year on retail goods and services. Even if Snyder residents only spent at the regional average rate of \$16,000 per household, the community’s aggregate spending potential would still be a very significant \$89 million. While the Snyder business district, by its nature, cannot be expected to capture a high percentage of retail sales from nearby residents, when the magnitude of available spending is so high from just the local market, there are likely to be certain niche opportunities for retail development.

Supporting Data Tables

The following pages contain tables that support the data presented in this section of the report.



Table 1

Demographic Summary of Snyder Neighborhoods, 1990 Census

	Northwest	Northeast	Southwest	Southeast	Totals
Population					
Total Population	4,135	2,525	3,369	4,265	14,294
Household Population	3,690	2,525	3,369	4,265	13,849
Dormitory Population	434	0	0	0	434
Other Group Quarters P	11	0	0	0	11
Age					
Under 5	4.3%	5.5%	8.6%	7.1%	6.4%
5-17	11.0%	18.6%	16.7%	13.8%	14.5%
18-24	22.7%	7.3%	4.8%	6.5%	10.9%
25-34	12.8%	10.2%	13.9%	15.4%	13.4%
35-44	13.1%	15.8%	14.2%	15.9%	14.7%
45-54	10.2%	14.7%	11.7%	10.4%	11.4%
55-64	8.3%	14.9%	10.8%	11.0%	10.9%
65+	17.6%	13.0%	19.2%	19.9%	17.8%
Educational Attainment					
% High School Graduate	92.0%	95.1%	94.1%	93.8%	93.6%
% College Graduate	44.0%	58.0%	59.2%	47.9%	51.4%
Household Income					
Under \$25,000	37.4%	15.8%	18.1%	22.6%	24.8%
\$25,000-49,999	31.3%	30.2%	30.6%	44.7%	35.1%
\$50,000-74,999	16.4%	21.7%	18.5%	22.1%	19.5%
\$75,000-99,999	8.4%	17.1%	11.5%	6.6%	10.0%
\$100,000 or More	6.6%	15.2%	21.3%	3.9%	10.6%
Households					
Number of Households	1,600	925	1,241	1,703	5,469
Average Household Size	2.31	2.73	2.71	2.50	2.53
Housing Units					
Total Units	1,670	987	1,294	1,711	5,662
Occupied Units	1,616	961	1,276	1,661	5,514
% Occupied	96.8%	97.4%	98.6%	97.1%	97.4%
Owner Occupied	1,072	896	1,206	1,418	4,592
% Owner Occupied	66.3%	93.2%	94.5%	85.4%	83.3%
Units in Structure					
1, detached	1,055	920	1,233	1,433	4,641
1, attached	13	8	8	0	29
2-4	586	23	53	204	866
5 or More	16	36	0	74	126
Units in Structure					
Single-Family	64.0%	94.0%	95.9%	83.8%	82.5%
2-4 Units	35.1%	2.3%	4.1%	11.9%	15.3%
5 or More Units	1.0%	3.6%	0.0%	4.3%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990



Table 2

Demographic Summary of Snyder Neighborhoods, 1990 and 2000 Comparison

	Northwest			Northeast			Southwest			Southeast			Totals		
	1990	2000	% Chg	1990	2000	% Chg	1990	2000	% Chg	1990	2000	% Chg	1990	2000	% Chg
Population															
Total Population	4,135	4,073	-1.5%	2,525	2,474	-2.0%	3,369	3,283	-2.6%	4,265	4,045	-5.2%	14,294	13,875	-2.9%
Household Population	3,690	3,661	-0.8%	2,525	2,474	-2.0%	3,369	3,283	-2.6%	4,265	4,037	-5.3%	13,849	13,455	-2.8%
Dormitory Population	434	374	-13.8%	0	0	na	0	0	na	0	0	na	434	374	-13.8%
Other Group Qtr Pop	11	38	245.5%	0	0	na	0	0	na	0	8	na	11	46	318.2%
Age															
Under 5	4.3%	3.5%		5.5%	6.9%		8.6%	6.5%		7.1%	6.5%		6.4%	5.7%	
5-17	11.0%	13.0%		18.6%	17.8%		16.7%	19.5%		13.8%	18.7%		14.5%	17.0%	
18-24	22.7%	21.3%		7.3%	4.2%		4.8%	5.1%		6.5%	5.6%		10.9%	9.8%	
25-34	12.8%	11.1%		10.2%	8.7%		13.9%	8.5%		15.4%	12.9%		13.4%	10.6%	
35-44	13.1%	11.7%		15.8%	16.4%		14.2%	16.1%		15.9%	15.2%		14.7%	14.6%	
45-54	10.2%	13.2%		14.7%	16.8%		11.7%	17.2%		10.4%	16.5%		11.4%	15.7%	
55-64	8.3%	8.5%		14.9%	11.3%		10.8%	10.4%		11.0%	7.7%		10.9%	9.2%	
65+	17.6%	17.7%		13.0%	17.9%		19.2%	16.8%		19.9%	17.0%		17.8%	17.3%	
Households															
Number of Households	1,600	1,647	2.9%	925	995	7.6%	1,241	1,278	3.0%	1,703	1,654	-2.9%	5,469	5,574	
Average Household Size	2.31	2.22		2.73	2.49		2.71	2.57		2.50	2.44		2.53	2.41	
Housing Units															
Total Units	1,670	1,696	1.6%	987	1,019	3.2%	1,294	1,312	1.4%	1,711	1,712	0.1%	5,662	5,739	
% Occupied	96.8%	97.1%		97.4%	97.6%		98.6%	97.4%		97.1%	96.6%		97.4%	97.1%	
% Owner Occupied	66.3%	66.1%		93.2%	94.5%		94.5%	94.6%		85.4%	84.1%		83.3%	83.0%	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000



Table 3
Demographic Report for Snyder Area

	Subarea				Total
	Northwest (Tract 94.01 BG 1-3)	Northeast (Tract 94.02 BG 3-4)	Southwest (Tract 95.01 BG 1-5)	Southeast (Tract 95.02 BG 3-5)	
Population					
Population, 1990 Census	4,135	2,525	3,369	4,265	14,294
Population, 2000 Census	<u>4,073</u>	<u>2,474</u>	<u>3,283</u>	<u>4,045</u>	<u>13,875</u>
Change	-62	-51	-86	-220	-419
% Change	-1.5%	-2.0%	-2.6%	-5.2%	-2.9%
Annl % Change	-0.2%	-0.2%	-0.3%	-0.5%	-0.3%
2020 Estimate	3,952	2,375	3,118	3,638	13,083
Household Population, 2000	3,661	2,474	3,283	4,037	13,455
Employees, CACI 2000	1,085	487	657	876	3,105
Households, 2000 Census					
Households	1,647	995	1,278	1,654	5,574
Average Household Size	2.22	2.49	2.57	2.44	2.41
Income, CACI 2000					
Average Household Income	\$71,111	\$93,774	\$135,549	\$63,578	\$87,696
Per Capita Income	\$29,155	\$38,091	\$49,660	\$22,421	\$33,637
Housing Units, 2000 Census					
Total Units	1,696	1,019	1,312	1,712	5,739
% Owner-occupied	66.1%	94.5%	94.6%	84.1%	83.0%
% Renter-occupied	33.9%	5.5%	5.4%	15.9%	17.0%
Population by Age, 2000 Census					
Under 5	3.5%	6.9%	6.5%	6.5%	5.7%
5-17	13.0%	17.8%	19.5%	18.7%	17.0%
18-24	21.3%	4.2%	5.1%	5.6%	9.8%
25-34	11.1%	8.7%	8.5%	12.9%	10.6%
35-44	11.7%	16.4%	16.1%	15.2%	14.6%
45-54	13.2%	16.8%	17.2%	16.5%	15.7%
55-64	8.5%	11.3%	10.4%	7.7%	9.2%
65+	17.7%	17.9%	16.8%	17.0%	17.3%
Households with Household Income, CACI 2000					
Under \$25,000	25.1%	8.2%	9.2%	12.9%	14.8%
\$25,000-49,999	28.4%	19.9%	25.5%	31.1%	27.0%
\$50,000-74,999	18.2%	25.3%	20.1%	28.7%	23.0%
\$75,000-99,999	10.8%	12.3%	10.7%	13.9%	12.0%
\$100,000 or More	17.4%	34.3%	34.5%	12.0%	22.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census; CACI Information Systems



Table 4

Retail Sales Potential of Snyder Area

Inflation Factor, 1997-2000 1.07

Buffalo MSA Totals	Households: 468,719				
	1997 Retail Sales (\$000s)	Est. 2000 Sales (\$000s)	2000 Sales per HH	Category	
Furniture & Home Furnishings	\$ 246,433	\$ 263,683	\$ 563	GAFO	
Electronics & Appliances	219,994	235,394	502	Home Improvement	
Building Material & Garden	764,328	817,831	1,745	Home Improvement	
Food & Beverage Stores	1,861,667	1,991,984	4,250	Food & Drugs	
Health & Personal Care	721,353	771,848	1,647	Food & Drugs	
Clothing & Accessories	538,374	576,060	1,229	GAFO	
Sporting, Hobby, Book, Music	268,028	286,790	612	GAFO	
Eating & Drinking Places	980,965	1,049,633	2,239	Eating & Drinking Places	
General Merchandise	1,199,367	1,283,323	2,738	GAFO	
Miscellaneous Retail	238,163	254,834	544	GAFO	
Total	\$ 7,038,672	\$ 7,531,379	\$ 16,068		

Snyder Sales Potential	Buffalo MSA	NW Quadrant	NE Quadrant	SW Quadrant	SE Quadrant	Snyder Total
Households	468,719	1,647	995	1,278	1,654	5,574
Avg. HH Income	\$ 57,384	\$ 71,111	\$ 93,774	\$ 135,549	\$ 63,578	\$ 87,696
As % of Regional Average	100.0%	123.9%	163.4%	236.2%	110.8%	152.8%

Potential Sales per Household

GAFO	\$ 5,685	\$ 7,045	\$ 9,290	\$ 13,429	\$ 6,299	\$ 8,688
Food & Drugs	5,897	7,307	9,636	13,929	6,533	9,011
Home Improvement	2,247	2,785	3,672	5,308	2,490	3,434
Eating & Drinking Places	2,239	2,775	3,659	5,290	2,481	3,422
Total Potential Sales per HH	\$ 16,068	\$ 19,912	\$ 26,258	\$ 37,955	\$ 17,802	\$ 24,555

Total Potential Sales from Snyder Households (\$000s)

GAFO	\$ 11,603	\$ 9,244	\$ 17,162	\$ 10,418	\$ 48,427
Food & Drugs	12,035	9,588	17,801	10,806	50,229
Home Improvement	4,586	3,654	6,783	4,118	19,141
Eating & Drinking Places	4,570	3,641	6,760	4,104	19,076
Total Potential Sales	\$ 32,794	\$ 26,126	\$ 48,506	\$ 29,445	\$ 136,872

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Retail Trade, 1997*; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



5. General Recommendations

This section makes recommendations for improving the entire Snyder Business District. Each recommendation also includes ways to begin implementing the desired course of action. This provides a blueprint for the business owners and community in general to take the next step.

Please note that the recommendations for enhancement and improvement to the Snyder Business District are found in Sections 5, 6 and 7 of this report. Under the “Economic Development Strategy, Section 7,” some of the recommended actions for improvement are also listed (*in duplicate*) under the previous sections, adding to the importance of these action items.

5.1 Planning Process

The Snyder Action Plan was developed through an expedited, comprehensive process, including :

- *Review of previous studies and background materials*
- *Review of area history*
- *Coordination with Eggertsville Action Plan and Harlem/Kensington Report*
- *Numerous site visits and on-site “charettes” with the Project Team*
- *Review of the Town Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan*
- *Coversations with key community stakeholders*
- *Meetings with the Friends of Snyder and Project Steering Committee*

What follows are the actions and improvements of the plan accompanied by, where appropriate, illustrative images.

5.2 Guiding Design Principles

General design recommendations for individual properties were based on a few guiding Design Principles that, taken together, are intended to promote a lively, bustling and pedestrian friendly Main Street anchored by a reinvigorated Village Center at the Main-Harlem intersection. The plan is to reinforce the Snyder Business District as a strong neighborhood “village center” to visit rather than as a thoroughfare to pass by enroute to outlying suburbs. Most of these general design principles are reiterated over and over throughout this document.

It is also important to point out that these Design Principles were also “tested” on a few key area properties, which is described under Section 4.11, Architectural Enhancements.

Design Principles

- *Promote the Snyder Business District as a strong neighborhood-based Village Center - - reinforce the desirable traditional architectural styles and massing.*

- *Modify the Town of Amherst Zoning guidelines by reducing building setback requirements along Main Street, to promote new street-frontage development along Main Street reminiscent of earlier years.*
- *Put emphasis on architectural character and “quality” developments close to the Main Street ROW, and avoid large parking lots in highly visible locations along prime Main Street frontages*
- *Relax parking requirements to promote new concentrations of street friendly urban development. People are attracted to vibrant, beautiful places with great character, not to large, “efficient” parking lots. (In other words, most places where people are most likely to go “hang out” have difficult parking situations).*
- *Encourage inter-business sharing of parking, access (curb-cuts), and driveways as part of overall strategy which reinforces the collective rather than individual benefit- both for Main Street businesses and their customers*
- *Promote higher density near the “village” core at the Main/ Harlem intersection, and promote a mixture of traditional business district uses, including some new residential opportunities at this “Village Center”*
- *Promote physical linkages between business related properties in order to reinforce concept of a community based neighborhood.*
- *Promote “traffic calming” measures along the Main Street corridor. Improve the Harlem/ Main intersection as a neighborhood-based, pedestrian- friendly Village Center.*



Existing Aerial View of the Snyder Business District



PAGE HOLD

OVERALL MASTER PLAN (11"X17" FOLD OUT)



5.3 Business Development

As a part of a business development/redevelopment strategy, a concerted effort needs to be made on the part of the Town of Amherst to improve the “actual” and “perceived” difficulties in doing business in the older parts of town. This is especially true for small businesses and older areas of the town like Snyder. The “Friends of Snyder” will remain an informal organization at this point as revitalization initiatives move forward, however they will remain a supportive and unified voice dedicated to the future well-being of the Snyder Business District and surrounding community.

Given the small size of the Snyder Business District and the make-up of numerous smaller shops and businesses, it is recommended that Snyder consider joining forces with the adjacent business initiatives at Harlem-Kensington and in Eggertsville. This would give the potential for much more clout and unified “buying power” when it came to issues facing the older neighborhoods in town. The combined business groups could possibly be formalized to include key representation from all 3 areas, and a potential paid staff position which acts as a liaison to the Town Board and Amherst IDA, political “lobbyist” for funding, grant writer, small business advocate, representation to the Chamber of Commerce, etc.

In general, the principal of “Smart Growth,” which include redeveloping older neighborhoods, concentrating growth near existing infrastructure, preserving greenspace, and the area’s heritage, etc., should be at the top of the list for restructuring the Town’s zoning regulation and development policies. Focus also needs to be given on maintaining the “value” and tax base of the older neighborhoods, which includes the stability of the business Districts of Snyder Eggertsville and Harlem-Kensington.

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder, assisted by the Amherst IDA, initiates a meeting of business district property owners to determine any interest in forming an “official” Business Association. (The Friends of Snyder plans to remain an informal organization). Initially, the association would serve as the advocate/spokesperson for the business district to the Town. The role of the association would grow as district property owners and tenants deem necessary.*
- *The Friends of Snyder meets with representatives from both the Harlem-Kensington and Eggertsville business groups, about the possibilities of joining forces for future business development, area services, joint staffing, etc. As they say, there’s “power in numbers.”*
- *Town Planning Department and Amherst IDA define, in a Memorandum of Understanding, respective neighborhood roles and responsibilities (e.g., marketing, ombudsman, financing) in assisting neighborhood business districts in Snyder and Town-wide, subject to the review of the Town Attorney.*



Actions *(Business Development - Continued)*

- *Town Board and Amherst IDA approach major lending institutions to potentially create a revolving loan fund for the Snyder business district. The loan fund would be available for property improvements and business start-ups. The Amherst Industrial Development Agency would administer the loan fund. The Amherst IDA currently has Community Development Block Grant Funds available for potential seed money for such a revolving loan program for eligible businesses.*
- *Town or Amherst IDA explores the potential for grants, low-interest loans, or property tax abatements to property owners undertaking specific actions to better define the street edge along Main Street between Washington Highway and Burroughs Drive, consistent with the recommendations of this plan. The Town should pursue additional federal and state funds to support these programs.*

5.4 Zoning

As stated earlier, the current town zoning is a significant obstacle to the efforts of revitalization in the Snyder Business District. The current zoning is overly broad (i.e. the “one size fits all” problem) while at the same time being too inflexible. It actually is encouraging developers to treat Snyder’s Main Street corridor the same way they treat Transit Road, Sheridan or Niagara Falls Boulevard.

Actions

- *Following the lead established under the earlier Eggertsville Action Plan, and by working closely with the Town Comprehensive Plan team, the Town Planning Department and Town Law Department prepares a new “Traditional Neighborhood Business” zoning classification for application in older, traditional neighborhood business districts. General elements of this proposed zoning classification are described in **Appendix C**. Proposed additions to and modifications of the Town’s Zoning ordinance should be addressed on a larger scale as part of the Town’s comprehensive plan process. Proposed changes to area zoning must fully consider the impact of such changes on the tax base of the Town and school district. As more housing and businesses are appropriately zoned around this commercial node, new investment in the business district will follow.*



5.5 Traffic Calming

During earlier project planning discussions and interviews, most all people felt that traffic on Main Street was much too fast for the Snyder Business District setting. Although exposure to higher traffic volumes are good for the Main Street businesses, the fast speeds negate many of the positives. In order to retain some integrity to the traditional, “village-like” character, the Town of Amherst should explore options with NYSDOT to slow down or “calm” traffic on Main Street in Snyder. This initiative potentially includes:

- *Establishing appropriate transition zones to signify you are entering someplace different and “special.” This would likely occur at Darwin on the east and at Getzville Road on the west.*
- *Narrowing the travel lanes from 12 to 11 feet. The additional four or five feet of width could be allocated to a decorative “buffer” area between the on-street parking and the travel lanes, or added to the pedestrian spaces (sidewalks) on each side of the street..*
- *Re-introducing on-street parking where there currently is none. Parked cars act as a buffer between traffic and the pedestrian zone of the sidewalk. It also tends to slow down traffic.*
- *initiating short term improvements to include restriping the pavement. Longer term options include physically narrowing the pavement with curb relocation and special pavements.*
- *Reducing current speed limits from 40 mph to a more appropriate 30 mph.*
- *Providing much more bold and noticeable pedestrian crossings at key locations. These enhanced crosswalks would give more visibility to passing traffic, as well as aid in the “calming” of the business district traffic. (See also 4.6 - Pedestrian Crossings)*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder collaborates with the Town of Amherst to contact the NYSDOT about Traffic Calming initiatives along Main Street. Focus on short-term initiatives that can be done on an immediate, temporary “trial” basis.*
- *The Friends of Snyder and Town Engineering / Planning Departments work with the NYSDOT to undertake pedestrian safety and traffic calming improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- *Based on the recommendations of this plan, the Town Planning and Engineering Departments should recommend a “Preferred Plan” for the redesign of Main Street and suitable right-of-way (Streetscape enhancements) improvements to the Town Board for its adoption as a guide for future improvements to Main Street. A traffic calming consultant, or local engineering/lands architectural firm, should be hired to design specific enhancements and initiatives.*



5.6 Pedestrian Crossings

Better defined crosswalks serve to re-assure pedestrians of their safety when crossing the street, as well as to “calm” traffic by reinforcing to drivers that pedestrians are present. This initiative includes:

- *Creating definitive, well marked pedestrian crossings throughout the Snyder Business District. These crosswalks should be of an alternate paving material, such as concrete or brick pavers, to make them distinctive as well as tangible to drivers. Brick or similar crosswalks act as a sort of “rumble strip” when a car drives across them, helping to slow down traffic.*
- *Short term improvements such as restriping the pavement. Longer term options include actually constructing (“cutting in” or “overlaying”) new crosswalks of special pavement.*
- *Crosswalks can help to establish a noticeable “gateway” to the business district, including at Getzville Road and Daemen College at the west end and Burbank/Darwin at the east end. It will also help to let people know that they are entering someplace different and special.*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder, local leaders, and Town Engineering and Planning Departments to encourage the NYSDOT to undertake pedestrian safety and traffic calming improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- *Explore the option of a “Business Improvement District” to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*



Example of alternatively paved crosswalk. Local examples exist along Main Street in the University Heights district of Buffalo and in the Village of Lewiston.



5.7 Improved Sidewalks

Sidewalk paving in many areas, especially the “snow storage” areas, is in poor condition. This initiative includes:

- *Replacing the pavement in the area between the street and sidewalk with attractive, decorative concrete paving stones*

Actions

- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder work with the town engineering and planning departments to encourage the NYSDOT to undertake physical improvements in the Main Street right-of-way.*
- ➔ *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*

5.8 Street Trees

Street trees (trees within the public right-of-way) are a vital component to vibrant, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and business districts. Snyder has a number of street trees along Main Street, but these should be enhanced and added to. This initiative includes:

- *Assessing the health of existing street trees, and establishing a maintenance and monitoring system (i.e. fertilizing, pruning, and watering when needed).*
- *Planting new street trees where needed to fill in “holes” along Main Street*
- *All trees within the sidewalks should receive attractive new tree grates that harmonize with other street furniture. A second option is to place loose cobblestone or decorative pavers around the base of the urban trees.*

Actions

- *The Town Planning Department should assist the Division of Forestry in preparing a tree management plan by selecting a qualified, certified arborist to prepare the plan.*
- *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these improvements.*
- *Explore the use of volunteer labor to plant and maintain trees. This can build community spirit and can be a good opportunity to draw in Daemen students.*

5.9 Increasing Residential Density

Increasing residential density and housing “choices” is important for the continued success of Snyder. The existing, relatively low, largely single-family, residential density is an obstacle to achieving the kind of retail revitalization that many community leaders and residents would like to see. Retail works best when it has a large “captive” market, close at hand, to draw from, particularly when it is a fairly affluent residential area having lots of “spending power.” For a pedestrian-oriented, walkable community, this means having a “village” center with a slightly higher density than only single-family homes on large lots. In addition, a key aspect of traditional communities is the ability to “age-in-place.” That means providing a range of housing choices, so that when a person decides that a single family home no longer suits their needs (*i.e. children are grown, maintenance and upkeep is too much work, etc.*) they can move to other types of neighborhood housing, such as condominiums and apartments, not far away within their home community.

Although this initiative should be explored more comprehensively throughout the entire business district, a couple key areas were identified for offering this higher density housing model. This initiative includes:

- *identifying sites within Snyder, such as the current Campus Manor Apartments (Main Street frontage area) and the surface parking lots at Snyder Square II, that can be utilized for new housing types including townhouses, condominiums and/or apartments.*

Actions

- *The Town of Amherst to work with the development community to publicize the need for higher densities and to achieve community “buy in” to the idea. At the same time, a careful and deliberate education will be needed for the surrounding public. (An “out-of-the-area” developer / investor may interject new ideas and creativity into the Snyder Business District).*
- *The Town and Amherst IDA to explore potential sites, or a number of sites, for the development of mixed-use structures offering housing on upper floors, including future transition of upper level Snyder Square uses to residential.*



Potential infill housing on Campus Manor site to provide new housing option in area and potentially increase density.



Potential infill housing on Snyder Square II site behind and above the existing shops and offices



5.10 Visual Improvements/Sense of Place

The concept is to unify the Snyder Business District and to create a recognizable and memorable ‘sense of place.’ This comprehensive initiative includes:

- *Installing unified and historically appropriate light poles that include both high level (automobile) lighting and lower level (pedestrian) lighting.*
- *Installing coordinated and “themed” street furniture (benches, planters, bus shelters, trash cans, banners, etc.) These should be placed thoughtfully along the Main Street corridors, at bus stops and other places where people might gather such as a new “village square” area at Main and Harlem.*
- *Installing attractive street signage that serves to unify the community and draw attention to its unique sense of place. Draw upon the existing historic stone gateways and historic wrought iron signs along Main Street. These features are unique to the Snyder area.*
- *Installing attractive and coordinated directional (“wayfinding”) signage for rear parking areas.*
- *Maintaining the highest standards possible in terms of street cleaning, litter removal, snow removal etc.*
- *Drawing on the best of historical Snyder resources, i.e Underground Railroad site at the Park School, historic neighborhood homes, Curtiss and Rosary Halls on the Daeman College Campus, Amherst Central High School, stone gateways and historic street signs, etc.*

Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder / local leaders to work with NYSDOT, and the Town Engineering and Planning Departments, to undertake physical improvements in the Main Street right-of-way*
- *Explore the option of a business improvement district to help organize/fund these types of improvements.*
- *The Friends of Snyder convenes a committee of district property owners, Town Historian, Town Historic Preservation Commission, et al. This committee is responsible for developing an interpretive program for the business district. This could include an educational “heritage” program of interpretive plaques and markers highlighting area history through events, people, places, or architecture.*

5.11 Architectural Enhancements

From an architectural standpoint, the Snyder Business District is a eclectic collection of building styles and character, yet taken all together form a certain “critical mass” that follows a traditional neighborhood center pattern. It is this traditional form which makes Snyder unique and different within the Western New York region. There is a mix of older structures (first half of the 1900s) which sit closer to the street, along with some newer buildings (1960s through 1980s) which sit back from the street, some with parking in the front of the buildings. Fortunately, there is enough of the earlier architectural forms to give Snyder that unique “Village-like” character which has been deemed so desirable by the surrounding community.

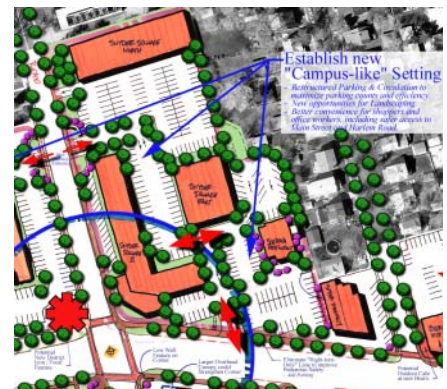
As a part of this study, it was not intended to provide architectural recommendations for each individual building, however, in a more generalized format, a series of guiding design principles (Section 4.2) were put together to begin to address future redevelopment possibilities and architectural form. As mentioned under section 4.2, these important design principles were “tested” on a few key area properties, including the Snyder Square properties at the Main-Harlem intersection, the YMCA property and the properties at Camp Lane and Main Street.

Snyder Square and Snyder Square II

- Create a comprehensive *Campus Site Plan* to improve access, parking and image
- Consolidate vehicular access to improve site access and to increase parking through better and more efficient site usage.
- Emphasize primary vehicular arrival points further away from the Main-Harlem intersection in order to preserve and enhance a pedestrian friendly walking environment. Primary access to individual buildings / properties should be consolidated to newly designed vehicular access driveways further away from the Main-Harlem intersection. Avoid vehicular access at primary corners which should be promoted as being “pedestrian friendly.” *This access management initiative, along with traffic calming improvements to Main Street such as eliminating the “right-turn only” lane at the intersection, will have a dramatic impact on restoring and preserving the traditional neighborhood business district character.*



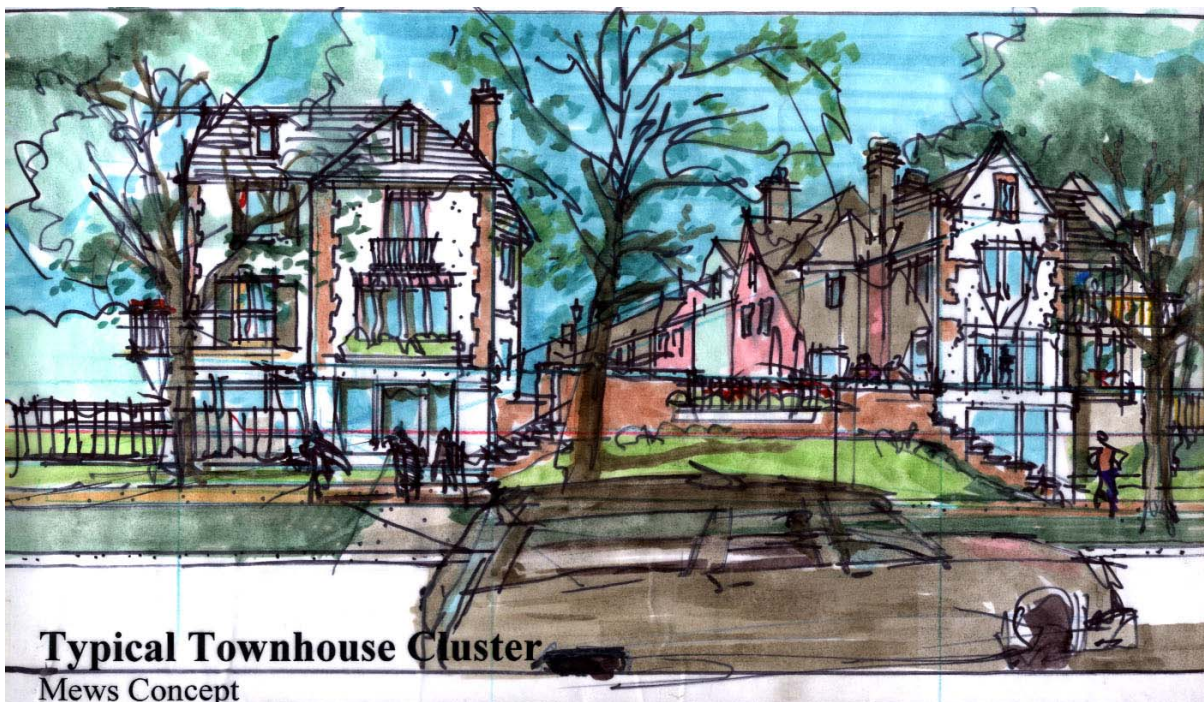
- Promote an overall “campus plan” linkage between Snyder Square and Snyder Square II by aligning and redesigning the major vehicular access drive along Harlem Road.
- Increase both quantity of parking and amount of landscaped area by improving site organization and access.
- Separate primary entry driveways from parking areas with landscaped buffers.



- Explore potential new Mixed-Use office/parking structure in NE sector of property to replace existing inefficient office building (north building) and surface parking lot.
- Expand mixed use potential of property by developing a new 4-5 Story residential component behind Snyder Square II
- Explore potential for new construction to extend to Main Street ROW at NE corner of Main/Harlem intersection. New construction would create visible icon to “anchor” village center, would add leasable space and would improve pedestrian access.

Campus Manor Redevelopment

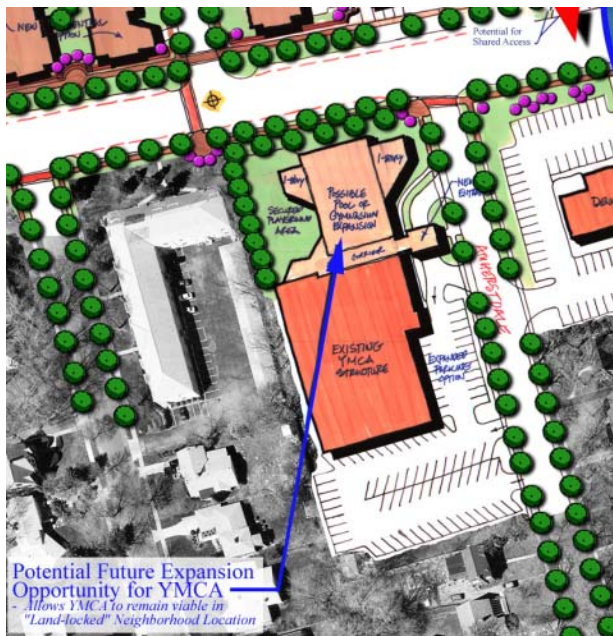
- Develop new 22-24 unit 3 1/2 Story Townhouse complex based on a mews concept to replace the 8 existing 2 story 4 unit 600 SF/Unit buildings nearest to Main Street.
- Individual Townhouses are arranged in modules of either 8 or 12 individual units oriented around a mews style courtyard perpendicular Main Street to preserve Owner privacy
- Size of each unit will range from 3200- 4000 SF with attached 2 car garages. Additional visitor parking will be provided which could be shared with Daemen College



- Development incorporates pedestrian walkway to promote linkages between Daemen College and Snyder Square through interconnected series of semi-private outdoor courtyard/mews
- Design is oriented to project front door appearance on Main Street while hiding garages and screening the visitor parking from Main Street.
- Design reinforces a higher density associated with an urban streetscape concept The proposed density of approximately 4 1/2 dwelling units/Acre would also increase economic rate of return for this strategically located real estate
- Design locates Mews level 1/2 level above Main Street in order to create privacy buffer for Owners

YMCA Expansion

- Take advantage of potential Main Street frontage by building new building addition (Swimming Pool or other function) extending outward toward Main Street from existing building
- Possibly design a new pool with retractable exterior wall to link directly with new outdoor courtyard for summertime use.
- Design new Main Entry and drive up/drop-off along Amherstdale that will be highly visible from Main Street



- Incorporate an atrium Lobby into new entry, also visible from Main Street, that will both act as central orientation space for YMCA users and will improve interior traffic flow
- Fill in existing pool and convert to other uses such as gymnasium expansion and/or multi-purpose space
- Provide additional parking and landscaping to strengthen new entry along Amherstdale frontage and consider sharing parking with existing Denny's Restaurant directly across the street from new primary building entry



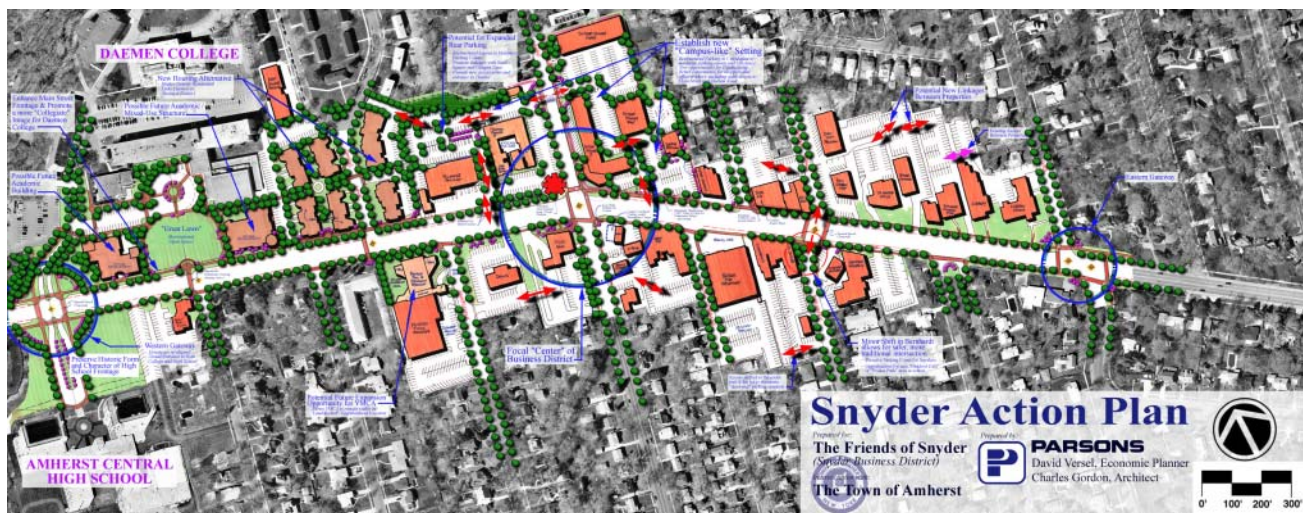
Architect's rendering of possible Expansion possibilities

6. Plan Recommendations

Specific Site Recommendations

This section makes recommendations for improving specific site in the Snyder business district. Each recommendation also includes ways to begin implementing the desired course of action. This provides a blueprint for both the business owners and community in general to take the next step.

Note: All sketches shown are conceptual in nature and are only meant to illustrate one of many possible ideas regarding the recommendations.



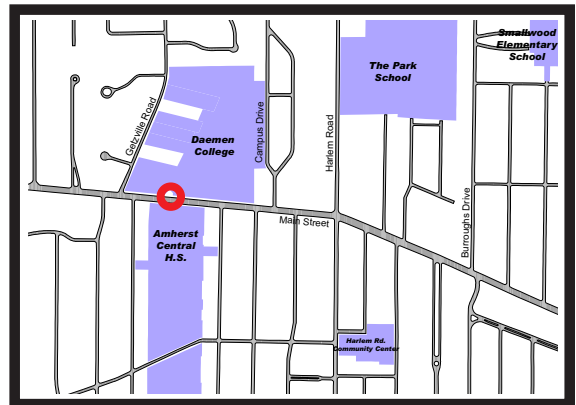
Conceptual Master Plan Recommendations

6.1 Western Gateway/Aligned Driveways

Create a western “gateway” into the Snyder community / Business District and enhance the sense of arrival by aligning the driveways of Amherst Central High School and Daemen College. This initiative would include:



- a major signalized intersection to increase pedestrian and vehicular safety, and to slow traffic speeds



- highly obvious and well-defined pedestrian crossings (decorative pavement and outer striping)
- attractively landscaped surroundings that draw on the historic Main Street gateways, including the use of indigenous stone.
- re-aligning the entrance drive - - shifting Daemen’s entrance to the west and enhancing it into a grand entrance for the college.
- preserving Amherst High School’s historic and formal main entrance, as well as preserving its bus parking facilities, although narrowing the end at Main Street to allow for a more conventional intersection scenario.



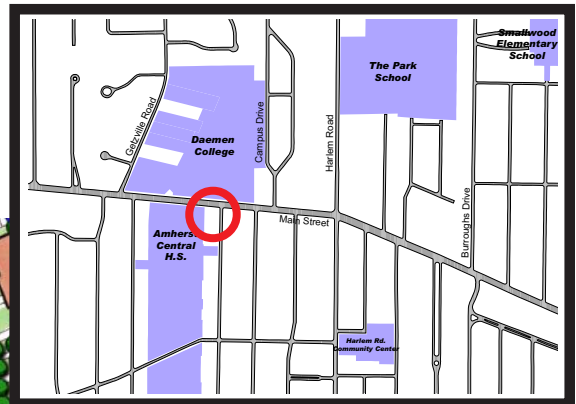
Actions

- Daemen College to coordinate their capital improvement programs with Amherst Central School District, and to work with the Town of Amherst and NYSDOT to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. The Town Engineering Department should assist Daemen in hiring a consultant to prepare detailed construction documents and move toward construction.

6.2 Potential College Expansion

Any future college expansion could help tie Daemen into the Snyder community and make better use of their Main Street frontage. This initiative would include:

- *drawing Daemen into the Snyder community by improving its Main Street edge*
- *establish street edge with formally planted trees, wrought iron fencing, and decorative walls.*
- *preserving at least half of the front lawn for recreational open/green space*
- *framing the open space with attractive new buildings*
- *create more of a “collegiate” character for Daemen*
- *highlighting the location of Musicalfare Theater on the Daemen College campus as a major community asset, i.e. establishing more dominant signage for the Theater along the Main Street frontage.*



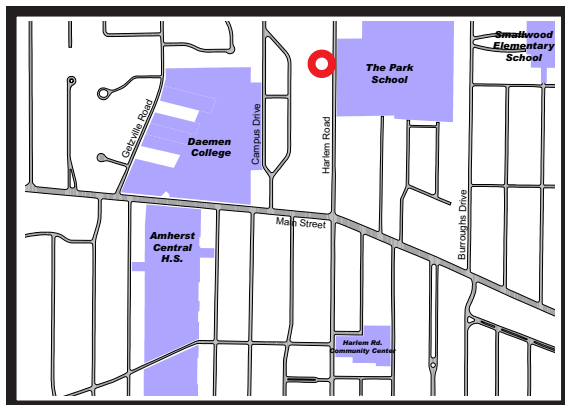
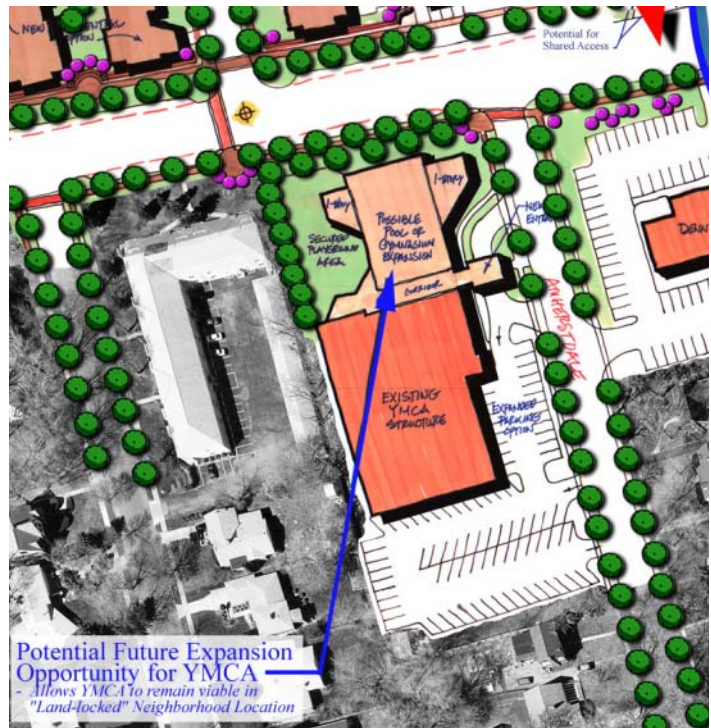
Actions

- ➔ *Daemen College identifies sites and building programs, such as a library/information center, on its long range plan that reinforces the objectives of this action plan. These include improving Daemen’s “collegiate character,” better framing the front lawn, and drawing the campus closer to Main Street and into the Business District. Also, work with Musicalfare Theater to better highlight and recognize its hidden campus location.*

6.3 Potential YMCA Expansion

With a change in zoning regulations and some creative planning, the YMCA could expand on-site, enhance its presence on Main Street and remain a vital part of the Snyder community. This initiative would include:

- remaining viable into the future -- in order to stay competitive the YMCA needs to expand
- remaining in Snyder-- every effort should be made to retain this key community institution
- new zoning that would be more conducive for the YMCA to make improvements.
- improving existing YMCA facilities
- increasing on-site parking and possibly sharing parking with Denny's Restaurant
- Exploring opportunities for "sharing" new facilities between the YMCA, Amherst Central Schools, Park School, Daemen College, and the Town of Amherst



Actions

➔ *The Town of Amherst to work with the YMCA to encourage their expansion at their current location, or very close nearby. This expansion helps bring the YMCA building into the community by establishing a greater Main Street presence.*

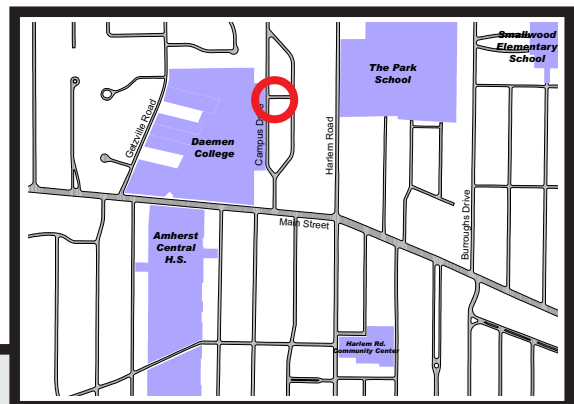
6.4 Campus Drive - Potential Housing Infill

As outlined in the General Recommendations section, increasing residential density and housing choice is important for the continued vitality of Snyder.

One key area identified for increasing housing density and/or offering a new housing option, is along Campus Drive. There are nearly 100 identical 4-unit apartment buildings in the Campus Manor development, so a new, upgraded and unique housing offering may be very desirable within the area. This initiative includes:



- building on the precedent set by Daemen College's new student housing -- opportunities exist to replace a few of the older apartments closer to Main Street with higher density and higher quality development.
- providing more housing choice, as Snyder residents may decide at certain stages of their lives that a single family home is not what they want - currently many are forced to move out to suburban "senior citizens" developments.
- increasing the community's image and prestige through well-designed development.



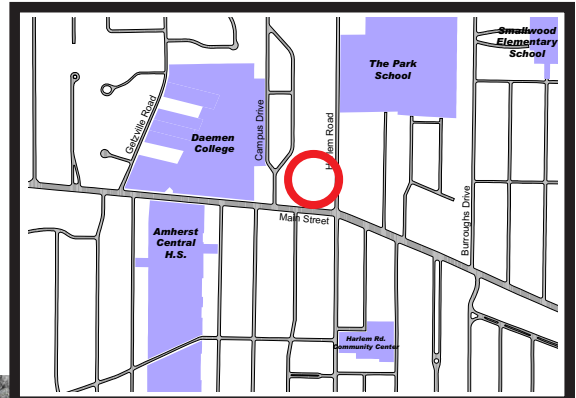
Actions

- ➔ The Friends of Snyder to solicit interest from developers and the owners of Campus Manor to move this initiative forward.
- ➔ The Town of Amherst works to change zoning ordinances to facilitate this type of development.

6.5 Palanker / Snyder Square Connections

In this area, like others throughout the business district, it is strongly encouraged that barriers between parking areas should be removed. This creates better efficiency, connectivity, and safety for the neighborhood. In this area, the initiative includes:

- using the lot behind the Palanker Building for additional parking, designated for office workers.
- reserving front parking areas for retail patrons
- establishing a single point of access between Snyder Square and the Palanker Building from Main Street and constructing a shared access drive to the rear of the property
- Construct an attractive pedestrian walkway between the Palanker Building and Snyder Square, as well as enhancing the existing pedestrian sidewalk from Snyder Square to Main Street
- Discourage “cut through” traffic by designing the parking so there is no direct route from Harlem to Main
- Consider establishing rear entrances to the Palanker Building and Snyder Square directly connecting the expanded parking lot -- this would be particularly effective for the Theater-in-the-Square (O’Connell Theater).



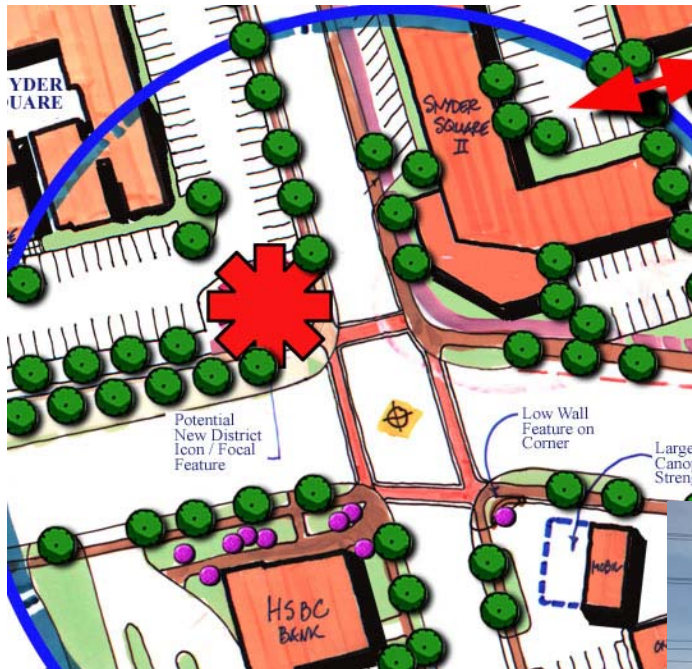
Actions

- The Friends of Snyder to work with business/property owners to promote this type of shared access.
- Explore funding availability through the Amherst IDA for shared parking and expansion proposals

6.6 Village Square / Community Landmark

Communities benefit from a strong visual landmark that can serve to orient people and show that they are in fact “somewhere.” It also helps them remember the place once they have left. Given the lack of memorable “icons” within the Snyder business district, this initiative recommends that:

- a prominent corner in the area, such as Main and Harlem, be utilized for a new, high visibility structure. This can be a gazebo, a clock tower, or possibly even a small but distinctive building such as a re-located Snyder Post Office.



- This structure should have some vertical feature (i.e. a clocktower for example) to help define the ‘Center of Snyder’ and provide a memorable landmark that people think of when they think of Snyder.

- This corner location has the advantage of long views down Main Street thanks to the bend in the road.



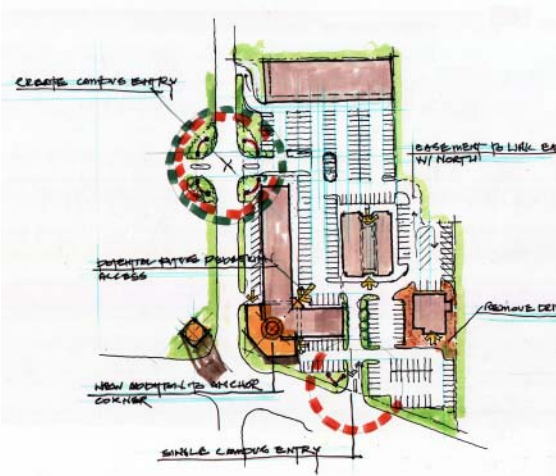
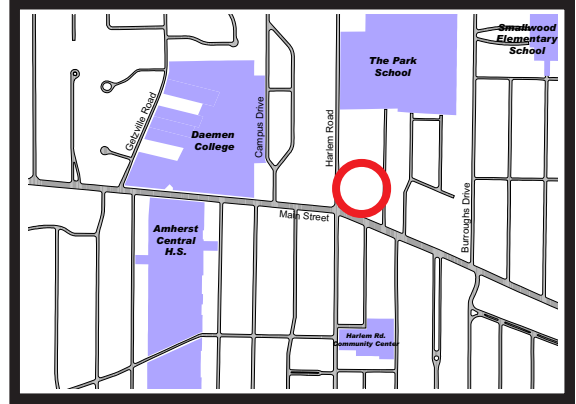
Actions

- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder to work with the Town Engineering Department and business/property owners and retain an architect to prepare plans for a ‘community icon’ structure.*

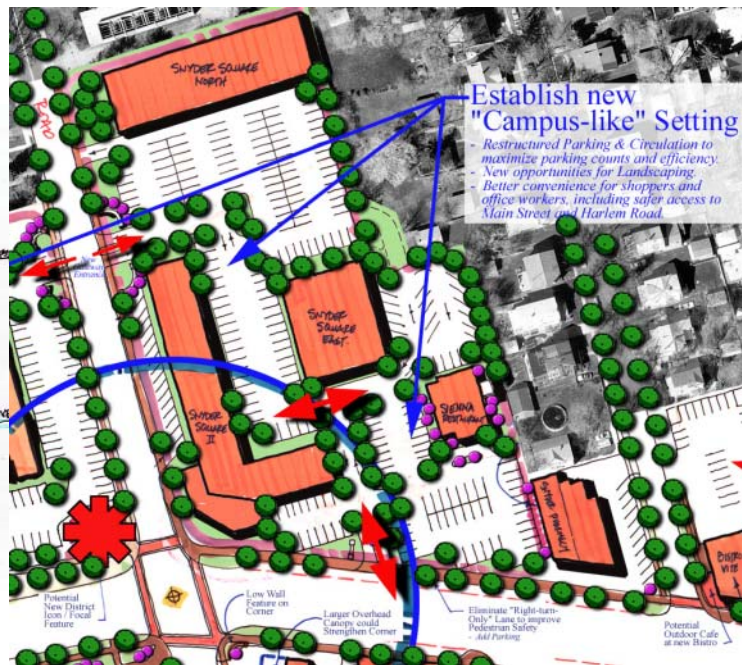
6.7 Snyder Square II Access Improvements

In this area, like others throughout the business district, it is strongly encouraged that barriers between parking areas should be removed. This creates better efficiency, connectivity, and safety for the neighborhood. In this area, the initiative includes:

- Connection of various parking lots in the area to facilitate better traffic flow and safety
- Closure of one or more curb cuts near the corner of Main and Harlem to improve pedestrian and motorist safety.
- enhancing this prominent corner with a low wall and/or plantings to help define the space and increase pedestrian comfort and walkability at this key intersection.



Earlier concept for northeast corner of Main-Harlem intersection.



Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder to work with business / property owners to promote this kind of shared access. Consider the benefits of improved access and safety from Main Street, better internal circulation between buildings, possible increased parking counts and property edge beautification opportunities.*

6.8 Mobil Station

This corner, a very prominent one, is currently a “sea of asphalt.” Examples of appropriately designed corner gas stations include ones located at Delaware Avenue and Allen Street and Main Street and Winspear , both in the City of Buffalo. This initiative includes:

- *landscaping enhancement with a low wall and/or plantings to increase pedestrian comfort and walkability, but not hinder site lines or views to the station.*



Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder to work with business/property owners to encourage landscaping improvements for this prime corner.*

6.9 Fruehauf Corner

This is another corner that currently, on the west side, is a large expanse of paving. This initiative includes:

- *landscaping enhancement with a low wall and/or plantings to increase pedestrian comfort and walkability*
- *providing/promoting an outside dining opportunity on the east side in conjunction with the new Bistro Vite (former Squire Shop) development.*



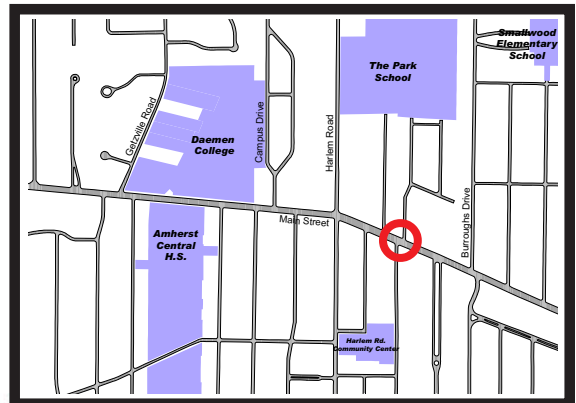
Actions

- *The Friends of Snyder works with business/property owners to encourage landscaping improvements for this corner.*
- *The Town of Amherst should develop code language that will promote outdoor restaurant seating in road rights-of-way within this district.*

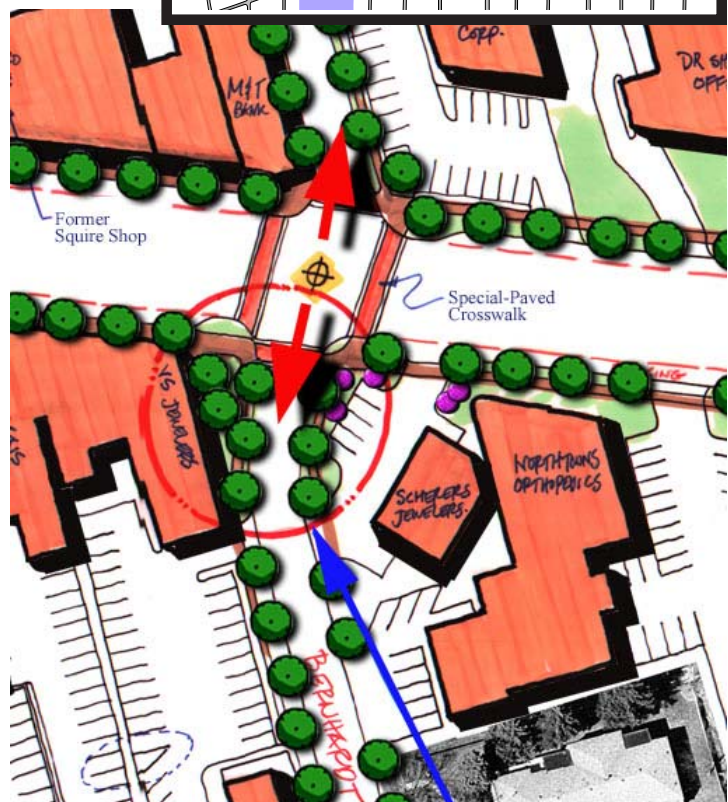
6.10 Aligned Intersection - Chateau/Bernhardt

These two streets are currently offset in their intersection with Main Street. While the intersection is signalized, the offset makes for confusing and potentially dangerous situations with vehicle turning movements and pedestrian crossings. This initiative includes:

- *shifting Bernhardt Drive to the east a few feet to more closely align the angle with Chateau Terrace*
- *maintaining the parking area for Scherer's Jewelers*
- *providing an outdoor plaza/seating area alongside the Roth Building*



Existing Intersection Configuration



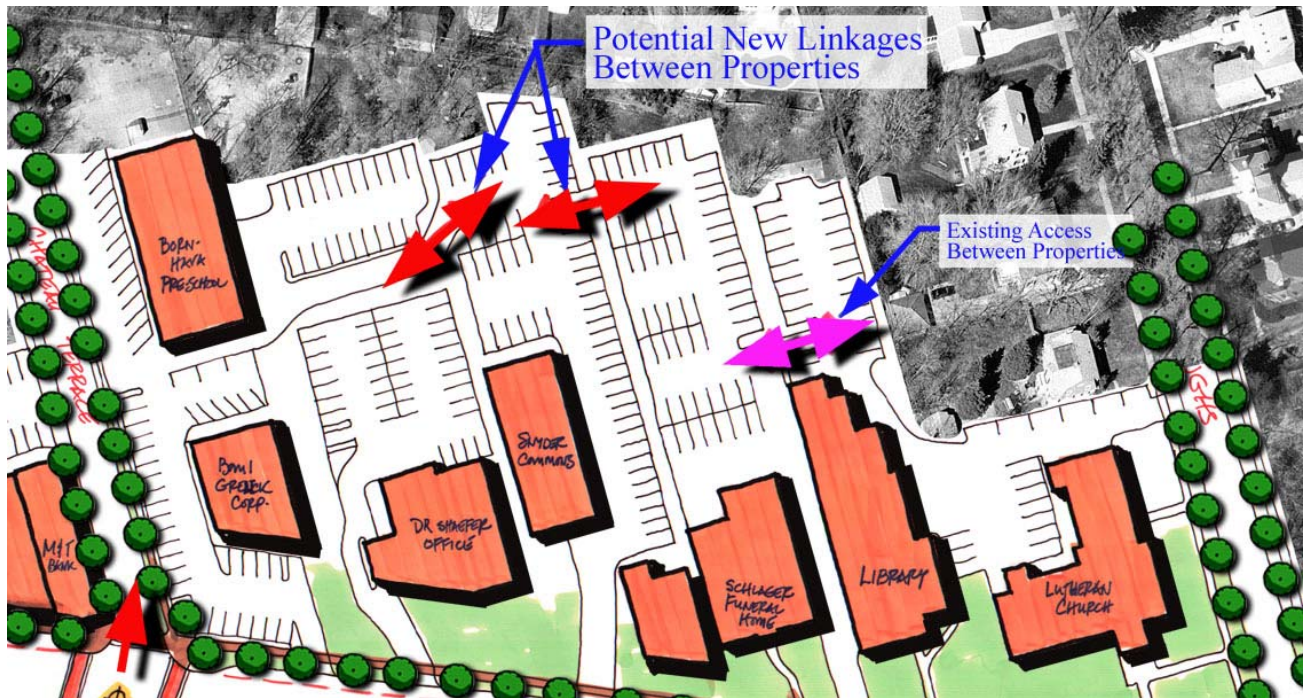
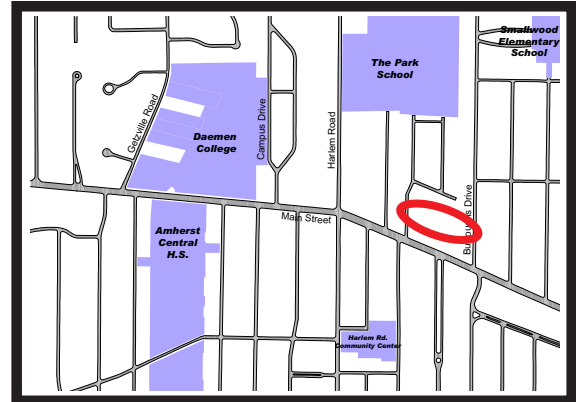
Actions

- ➔ *The Town Highway and Engineering Departments work with business/property owners and the NYSDOT to study and implement this community-enhancing safety improvement.*

6.11 North Side Shared Parking/Access Option

Bornhava, The Cosmetic Clinic, the funeral home, the library all have rear parking areas, in many cases only separated by a fence or strip of grass. Improving accessibility is a key goal of this action plan and this initiative includes:

- connecting parking areas currently separated
- improving the flow of traffic and traffic safety
- maximizing the entire parking area by allowing shared parking



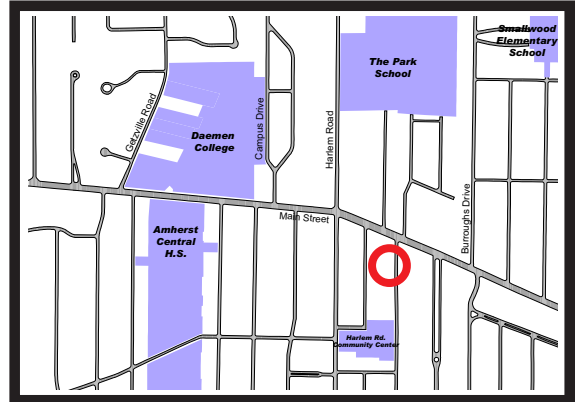
Actions

➔ The Town of Amherst, through the development review process, works with business/property owners to achieve the necessary agreements, including providing grants, to connect parking areas, and improve traffic flow and safety accessing Main Street.

6.12 South Side Rear Parking/ Access Option

Loughran’s and the apartment building on Bernhardt have adjacent parking areas. Currently, they do have a connection. This is to be commended, however, the overall traffic flow and parking access can be improved with a minor adjustment. This initiative includes:

- *shifting the current connection south to the very rear of the lots. This solves the “dead end” parking and turn around problem at the rear of Loughran’s lot.*
- *making Loughran’s Main Street access one way into the lot. All traffic would exit the lot through the new connection and onto Bernhardt. This improves the safety of the narrow Main Street driveway.*
- *maximizing the parking for the Roth Building by reconfiguring the parking lot*



Actions

- ➔ *The Town of Amherst, through the development review process, works with business/property owners to achieve the necessary agreements to maximize efficiency and connectivity between parking areas and to improve traffic flow.*



Long Range Actions

6.13 Infill sites

Building on the general recommendations for residential infill, increasing the housing options and overall density in the Snyder community should be a long range goal to keep the business district viable. In addition to the two sites previously mentioned in this report, other sites in the area could be identified as potential infill sites to increase density and provide development that frames the street and reinforces the “village” atmosphere that stakeholders identified as desirable.

Actions

- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder to assist the Town in identifying key sites, work with business/property owners, and the Town of Amherst to promote high quality infill development as these sites come up for sale.*

6.14 Main Street Reconstruction

Previously, this action plan made recommendations for short term solutions to some of Main Street’s problems, including high speed, excessive lane width etc. Longer range solutions include physically narrowing the street by moving the curbs. Typically this would not happen without a complete reconstruction of Main Street (probably not for another twenty years), however there may be more site specific areas of curb relocation that make sense in the shorter term. This would include the elimination of the right-turn only lane from Main Street onto Harlem Road, making the area much more pedestrian

Actions

- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder and/or whatever business organization is formed should maintain contact with the NYSDOT so that the scheduled reconstruction is known far in advance. At that time, the Friends of Snyder and other community groups should work closely with the NYSDOT through the design phase of the street reconstruction as has happened with other similar projects in other communities such as Rt 240/Buffalo Street in Orchard Park and Rt 62/ Main Street in Hamburg.*
- ➔ *The Friends of Snyder encourages the Town to provide funding for the preparation of a highway streetscape improvement plan, designed to guide future plans of NYSDOT.*



7. Economic Development Strategy

7.1 Overall Summary of Area

The Snyder area is a well-established commercial and residential district that remains one of the most desirable locations in Western New York. Although its population is relatively small, with roughly 14,000 people living in the area, it is an affluent and well-educated population that forms the core of the region’s resident market for upscale retailers.

In contrast to other nearby areas, the population of Snyder is getting younger, driven by a recent influx of younger families who are replacing longtime residents. As a result of these new families, residential property values in the area are going up, and enrollment in the Amherst Central School District is on the rise.

The Snyder Business District is very well situated, both in terms of proximity to residential markets and accessibility to the regional transportation network. Though it possesses a strong history and identity, it is currently facing several challenges that are threatening to weaken its competitive position. These challenges include the following:

- **Unsafe pedestrian environment** – High speed limits, wide traffic lanes, short timings at traffic lights, and the absence of visual impediments have created an environment in Snyder that favors motor vehicles over pedestrians. As a result, pedestrians find it increasingly challenging to cross Main Street and Harlem Road.
- **Competition for parking** – Although there is ample off-street parking in the Snyder district, a good deal of it is located behind buildings. Many office workers who could use these rear lots instead park in front of retail buildings, limiting access of potential retail customers to businesses. This situation has caused concern among area retailers.
- **Erosion of the historic retail base** – The critical mass of retail in the district has faded, due largely to the transformation of Snyder Square from a retail development to an office property. Snyder’s retail struggles can be mainly attributed to regional competition, as continued retail growth in outlying areas of the region give customers many more choices today than they had 30 years ago. Much of this new development is of the big-box variety, featuring stores that offer a wider range of products under one roof, making it more difficult for smaller retailers to compete.
- **Management issues** – More modern retail developments are typically run by one private entity that provides comprehensive management, including marketing, promotion, leasing, snow removal, and sanitation. In a diverse, older district like Snyder, property ownership is fragmented, and these management responsibilities are divided among many public agencies and private businesses, thus making it more difficult to administer them.
- **Limited residential options** – Snyder is primarily a community of single-family houses, many of which are very highly priced. The multi-family properties in the area are mostly older and lower-



quality, and the majority of them are aimed at fulfilling housing needs for college students and young adults. With many of Snyder’s residents approaching retirement age, they cannot remain in the area if they want to trade their houses for lower maintenance residences like apartments or townhouses.

7.2 Recommendations for Improvements

The above issues all contribute to concerns among property owners, businesspeople, and residents on Snyder. The recommendations that follow address these issues and provide future direction for dealing with them. Each recommendation is aimed at addressing one or more of the above issues, in order to improve the competitive position of Snyder in the regional real estate market.

■ **Recommendation #1:**
Introduce Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Access Measures

The traffic calming measures laid out in Point 4.3, which include narrowing travel lanes, more on-street parking, and lowering the speed limit, all would be very positive for businesses in the area. Both retail and office businesses would benefit from traffic calming. Retailers would gain both better accessibility for pedestrians, as well as more parking spaces in front of stores. Office businesses would benefit from having employees be more mobile as pedestrians during the workday.

■ **Recommendation #2:**
Strengthen Business Association

As presently constituted, the Friends of Snyder group acts as a unified voice for local businesses, but has modest resources and a limited ability to induce change in the area. In an area like Snyder, where the two main roads are state highways and property ownership is fragmented, a stronger organization is needed to provide coordinated management in the area. This organization could take a number of directions, including:

- A Business Improvement District (BID), which is a geographically specific entity that collects a small tax from property owners in the district and provides a wide range of marketing, management, and event planning functions.
- An extension of the Friends of Snyder, but one that would provide some of the functions of a BID. In order to expand the role of the Friends of Snyder, however, more funding would be needed. Funding could either come from the businesses themselves or from the Town of Amherst.
- An area-wide business association, combining Snyder businesses with the neighboring Harlem-Kensington and Eggertsville business communities. Since these three areas are so close to one another, and face many of the same issues, a larger business group for all of these areas may be able to accomplish more.

■ **Recommendation #3:**
Establish and Enforce Parking System



Although there are sufficient on and off-street parking spaces in Snyder, parking spaces are scattered among many privately-owned properties. Since individual property and business owners cannot adequately monitor who uses their parking spaces, the situation often becomes chaotic. One of the roles of the strengthened business association would be to address this situation. Its role could include encouraging office tenants to use parking spaces, promoting the use of public transit and, potentially, providing staff to enforce parking in the area.

■ **Recommendation #4:**
Improve Snow Removal System

Snow removal on Main Street and Harlem Road is conducted by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), as both roads are state highways. DOT snowplows move snow off of these roads and onto curbs and sidewalks, where snow tends to pile up. Presently, the responsibility of removing the snow from sidewalks falls to individual property owners, and property owners are cited and fined by the Town of Amherst if they do not clear off their sidewalks in a short period of time. This system, plain and simple, is inadequate, and needs to be addressed. A number of different solutions are possible:

- The Town of Amherst could also remove snow from sidewalks in Snyder.
- New York State DOT could be persuaded to remove snow from sidewalks in Snyder.
- The business association could purchase its own snow removal equipment and clear sidewalks and parking lots for its members.
- The business association could contract with a snow removal service to provide this service for the district.

■ **Recommendation #5:**
Conduct a Public Relations Campaign

A major factor in maintaining Snyder’s competitive position is public relations, as developers, retailers, and shoppers all need to be kept aware of the area and its advantages. A marketing and public relations campaign is recommended, with the business association taking responsibility. Marketing Snyder will require varied approaches in order to attract each of these audiences, but each group is important, as developers need retailers, and retailers need customers.

One aspect of this campaign will be to recapture retail spending from local-area residents, as locals are increasingly spending their dollars elsewhere. An initiative that has worked well in other locations is a “local currency,” that residents can use at businesses in the area. Such a currency can be circulated by businesses and can be used to offer discounts to people paying with it. A less radical initiative would offer cooperative discounts among patrons of multiple businesses—for example, attendees of shows at Theater in the Square would receive vouchers for discounts at nearby restaurants.

■ **Recommendation #6:**
Encourage Reinvestment and Redevelopment



There are a number of underused properties in the Snyder business district. Although the owners of many of these properties are comfortable with leaving them alone for the time being, the Town of Amherst and the business association can take steps to encourage to reinvestment and redevelopment.

The major obstacle to reinvestment is the limited return on investment, but this can be overcome by offering stronger economic incentives than the existing 485(b) loan program. The recently expanded eligibility policy of the Amherst Industrial Development Agency (IDA) now allows property tax abatements for buildings in designated redevelopment areas. The Town can help establish Snyder as a redevelopment area, and then work with the business association to administer the IDA's abatement programs.

The business association can also help encourage reinvestment by working as a liaison between property owners and potential tenants. It is possible that property owners are unaware of potential retail and office users, and may be willing to reinvest in their buildings if they have stronger tenants available.

■ **Recommendation #7:**
Plan Special Events

One of the negative consequences of regional competition is that Snyder's identity as a unique place has faded somewhat. In order to play up Snyder's identity, the business association should plan more special events throughout the year. These events should, first and foremost, be aimed at residents of the immediate area, as they provide the core of the area's retail customers. Given the recent influx of children in the area, Snyder should offer seasonal public events for local families.

7.3 Short-Term Action Steps

Many of the above recommendations may not be feasible in the immediate future, due to high cost, the limitations of the existing Friends of Snyder group, a struggling real estate market, or other factors. However, since one of the major goals of this action plan is to enact short-term solutions for Snyder, the opportunities that do exist today should be pursued.

This section lists a few short-term opportunities to enact positive changes in the Snyder district that do not require major structural changes or infusions of large sums of money.

■ **Action Step #1 – Parking Enforcement**

As mentioned earlier, the parking problems faced by Snyder-area businesses and customers are not caused by a lack of spaces, but by a lack of organization. Although physical changes in the future should help the parking situation immensely, conditions can be improved right away by simply enforcing the existing rules. The Town of Amherst should be more proactive about regulating



parking in Snyder, and business owners need to make more of an effort to enforce parking on their properties.

■ **Action Step #2 – Create Marketing Materials**

Building an effective public relations effort for Snyder will take several years, and must therefore begin immediately. The first step in this process is a relatively inexpensive one—creating marketing materials such as maps and brochures. These materials can be circulated all over Western New York so as to reach regional residents and visitors alike. If more people knew about Snyder’s offerings, it would likely see increased business activity.

■ **Action Step #3 – Organize an Informational Session for Loan Program**

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Buffalo State University is a valuable resource for businesses needing financial or technical assistance. The SBDC offers, among other things, low-interest loans to new and/or growing businesses. At an upcoming Friends of Snyder meeting, an SBDC representative should be invited to brief Snyder-area businesses and prospective entrepreneurs in the area on available programs for funding and technical assistance.

■ **Action Step #4 – Hold Quality Special Events**

While creating a menu of special events will not happen overnight, one effective event can be planned in a short amount of time—a couple of months or so. The Snyder Business District and Friends of Snyder should expand upon the successes of the annual Greater Buffalo Alumni Rally - 5k Run & Wellness Walk sponsored by Loughrans Bar & Restaurant. Also, more considerations should be given to the collaboration between the Snyder Business District and the likes of Daemen College, Park School, Amherst Central School District and the YMCA. Other event possibilities should include a collaboration between the Friends of Snyder and the Harlem-Kensington-Cleveland (HKC) Business and Community Associations, as well as the Eggertsville Community Organization.

The key is to make the events memorable, fun, and, most importantly, well-organized. If planned for the late summer or early autumn, event ideas could include a “back to school” event, a harvest festival (recalling Snyder’s beginnings), or an outdoor theater production. An autumn event could be an Oktoberfest or a Halloween festival, among other things. Regardless of the choice of festival or event, it must be done with strong commitments from all participants in order to ensure quality.

■ **Action Step #5 – Hold Joint Meetings with Other Partners**

Snyder does not exist in a vacuum. Within one mile of Snyder’s commercial core are three other historic commercial districts: Harlem-Kensington, Williamsville, and Eggertsville. Given the acknowledged limitations of a small district like Snyder to induce change on its own, active partnerships should be pursued with nearby business districts. Even a small gesture like a joint meeting of the area’s business groups would serve to build momentum for future collaborative efforts. Snyder also has several strong educational institutions, and these should be part of future dialogues.



7. Conclusion

This Action Plan is based on the collective thoughts, ideas, and concerns of the Snyder business area stakeholders, along with the professional knowledge and expertise of the planning team and economic consultant. By bringing these together in one document, it is hoped that the positive and pro-active spirit encountered in the district thus far can be maintained and enhanced.

This report makes several key recommendations and suggests ways to take the next step towards implementing them. It is hoped that the concerned business owners, residents, and others in the Snyder community will use this document as a springboard for continued neighborhood revitalization and improvement. All efforts should be done in the spirit of a “public-private partnership.” Ideally, the more private efforts and interest that are put forth, the more neighborhood support will be given, and the more public dollars will funnel towards the Snyder revitalization efforts.



Appendices



Appendix A

Ten Keys to Walkable/Livable Communities

by Dan Burden

Dan Burden is the Executive Director of Walkable Communities, Inc., a non-profit organization that helps communities become more walkable and pedestrian friendly.

- 1. Compact, lively town center.** Buildings frame streets; block lengths are short. Merchants take pride in their shops' appearances. A variety of stores offer local products and services. Significant housing is found downtown or village center sites. There is unique and distinct personality or character to the place.
- 2. Many linkages to neighborhoods (including walkways, trails and roadways).** People have choices of many routes from their homes to the center, the most direct are walking routes. All sidewalks are at least 5 feet wide and most are buffered from streets by planting strips, bike lanes or on-street parking. Well maintained sidewalks are found on both sides of most streets. Bike lanes are found on most streets. Most streets have good ADA access to and from each block in all directions.
- 3. Low speed streets.** Most motorists behave well in the downtown or village center and near public areas by yielding to pedestrians. Motorists make their turns at low speed. Few places force motorists to stop. Yield conditions are most common.
- 4. Neighborhood schools and parks.** Most children are able to walk or bicycle to school and nearby parks. There is limited or no busing of school children. Most residents live within a half-mile (preferably a quarter-mile) of small parks or other well-maintained and attractive public spaces.
- 5. Public places for all.** Many services and facilities support and attract children, teens, people with disabilities and senior citizens to most public spaces. Public restrooms, drinking fountains and sitting places are common in many parts of town.
- 6. Convenient, safe and easy street crossings.** Downtowns and village centers have frequent, convenient, well-designed street crossings.
- 7. Inspiring and well-maintained public space.** The community has many "green" streets with trees and landscaping. The town form respects the need for plenty of green and open space. Heritage trees line many streets. Development practices call for street trees and planter strips; homes are clustered to maximize green space. Trails and passageways through natural areas are featured in many parts of town. Landscaping is respectful of place, often featuring native species, drought resistant plants, colorful materials, stone treatments or other local treats. In desert and high country areas, many methods are used to minimize use of water and other precious resources.



8. **Mutually beneficial land use and transportation.** People understand and support compact development, urban infill, integral placement of mixed-use buildings, and mixed-income neighborhoods. The built environment is of human scale. Heritage buildings are respected. People support their small, local stores. Residents seek ways to include affordable homes in most neighborhoods. Transit connects centers of attraction with schedules so frequent that times need not be posted. Residents have choice of travel modes to most destinations.

9. **Celebrated public space and public life.** Streets, plazas, parks and waterfronts are fun, festive, secure, convenient, efficient, comfortable and welcoming places. Public space is tidy, well-kept, respected and loved. Many of these places are surrounded by residential properties ensuring eyes on the streets. These areas have many places to sit. Few or no buildings have large blank walls, and few or no open parking lots exist off-street. Any parking lots have great edges and greens.

10. **Many people walking.** Many diverse people are walking in most areas of town. There are no rules against loitering. Linger in public places is encouraged and celebrated. Children rarely need to ask parents for transportation.

Appendix B

Ten Principles for Reinventing America's Suburban Business Districts

Urban Land Institute

1. **Understand your position in the market**
2. **Build community support**
3. **Develop a Vision and a Plan**
4. **Stress results over regulation**
5. **Break up the superblocks and optimize connectivity**
6. **Embrace mixed use**
7. **Honor the human scale by creating a pedestrian-friendly place**
8. **Think transit-think density**
9. **Create a public/private partnership**
10. **Share and manage parking**



Appendix C

Proposed Traditional Neighborhood Business District Zoning

The purpose of this district is to recognize the special attributes of the business districts in Snyder, and to provide a legal mechanism by which to maintain their unique traditional neighborhood qualities. It allows for the development of fully integrated, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. The intent is to encourage walkability, minimize traffic confusion and congestion, minimize suburban sprawl, infrastructure costs and environmental degradation.

Its provisions adapt traditional development conventions that were normal in the United States from colonial times until the 1940s, and historically were based on the following principles:

- *All neighborhoods have identifiable centers and edges.*
- *Uses and housing types are mixed and in close proximity to one another.*
- *Streets are interconnected and blocks are small.*
- *Civic buildings are given prominent sites throughout the neighborhood.*

Highlights for recommended Design Regulations should include, but are not limited to:

- Permitted uses - similar to current Town Neighborhood Business (NB) district, but adds community facilities. Motor service related uses are permitted under special use permits.
- Minimum lot width - thirty (30) feet.
- Front yard setbacks should be eliminated in favor of allowing buildings to be set tight to the right-of-way lines.
- Side yards can be reduced to lot line, where they abut a non-residential use, and remain at 15 feet where abutting residential areas.
- Similar land uses shall generally enfront across streets. (i.e. residential fronting residential)
- Prohibited uses are to include any commercial use that encourages patrons to remain in their automobiles while receiving goods or services, except service stations. (i.e. drive-through pharmacies, restaurants, and donut shops)
- Parking
 - Parking lots shall generally be located at the rear or at the side of buildings and shall be screened from the sidewalk by low walls, fences or hedges.
 - Parking lots shall not abut street intersections or civic buildings, be adjacent to squares or parks, or occupy lots which terminate a vista.
 - The required number of parking spaces may be reduced by demonstrating the possibil-



ity of shared parking.

- Adjacent parking lots shall have vehicular connections internally.
 - Off-street parking directly enfronting shall count toward fulfilling the parking requirement of that lot.
 - There shall be one parking space per 500 square feet of building space, except office use which shall have one per 300 square feet.
- Lots and buildings
 - The character and scale of buildings shall be appropriate to the surrounding buildings and area.
 - Mixed use structures are encouraged (i.e. retail or office first floor with residential above).
 - The maximum building height shall be 35 feet
 - The minimum building height shall be 26 feet
 - Landscaping
 - Trees shall be planted within right-of-ways, wherever possible, parallel to the street.
 - Tree spacing shall be determined by species type. (i.e. large maturing trees at 40-50 feet on center, small and medium trees at 10-30 feet on center). To maintain a coherent visual pattern, like species shall be planted on a single street corridor.



Appendix D

Economic Research

Business Interview Summary

Interviews conducted by David Versel, April 2002

Market Issues

- Snyder is a great location for businesses serving a regional clientele, as it is along Main Street, and easily accessible via both Main and Harlem to the Thruway, I-290, and Route 33.
- Restaurants are definitely aided by the presence of Theater in the Square and Musical Fare Theater. Particularly on Saturday evening, restaurants in Snyder see a good deal of business from theater patrons.
- Upscale businesses in the area draw a regional clientele, but since the concentration of wealth in the region is in nearby ZIP codes like 14221 and 14226, the majority of customers are, in fact, local. Snyder's proximity to the center of wealth makes it a good location for such businesses.
- Businesses in the area tend to view one another as complementary, not competitive, and see the competition coming from other areas. Restaurateurs feel that a new restaurant tends to bring the whole area more business, and not just the new place. The theaters also feel that the presence of other theaters reinforces Snyder's identity as a cultural destination.
- Many businesses in Snyder capitalize on the morning/lunchtime/ evening rush hour traffic along both Main and Harlem. Take out restaurants report very high volume starting as early as 6:30 AM from commuters, and a bank branch in Snyder has the busiest ATM in the entire Buffalo region.
- Snyder is well established, and, as a result, people are accustomed to its quirks and limitations. Even though parking can be scarce, access is difficult for many businesses, and traffic is often heavy, customers have gotten used to it and do not complain too much.
- Snyder is a suburban alternative to urban shopping districts like Elmwood Avenue or Hertel Avenue, as many shoppers from outer suburban areas simply do not feel secure venturing into the city. Snyder has a comfortable village feel, but its location and appearance make it more appealing to a certain type of customer.

Traffic and Parking Issues

- The speed limit on Main Street of 40 MPH is way too high. It should be 30 or less, as it is through the village of Williamsville. At 40 MPH, cars are driving too fast to see the signs for businesses, and pedestrians feel very unsafe crossing the street, even at traffic lights.
- Parking is not really in short supply, but people have a perception that it is. In reality, the problem is psychological, as people are loath to park behind buildings and walk out to the streetfront. As a result, people who work in office buildings often park in front of retail buildings instead of behind the buildings in which they work, thus occupying spaces that should be for retail customers.



- Businesses say that enforcing parking rules is very difficult, and they see no easy solution to this problem. One restaurant that shares parking with a neighboring office building comments that the arrangement is extremely good for business and has helped mitigate the problem, but not all businesses have access to such arrangements.
- The idea of centralized, shared parking is not well liked. Many businesses feel that their customers are used to parking very close to stores, and do not want to make them walk further than is necessary.
- The difficulty in crossing the street is a clearly deterrent to pedestrians at lunch hour. Lunchtime is busy for restaurants in Snyder, but people working in office buildings tend to not go across Main Street for lunch anymore.
- In past years, many customers would walk along Main Street and shop in many stores during one trip. Some stores report that, particularly during the Christmas season, people used to carry around multiple shopping bags. Today, people tend to park their cars, go to one store, then drive away. Part of the problem is concern for pedestrian safety, but a larger issue is the loss of critical mass from Snyder Square.

Management Issues

- Friends of Snyder has not accomplished very much, despite its good intentions. The trolley idea was a waste of money, as it was poorly planned and hastily organized. The end result was that businesses spent money to participate but got no business benefit in return.
- Snow removal is a major concern for businesses, as the streets are plowed by the Town of Amherst, but snow often piles up on sidewalks, and businesses are held responsible for removing it. One business owner complained of being issued a citation for not removing snow, even though the Town's plows had caused it to pile up to six feet on the sidewalk. The idea to form a Business Improvement District for this purpose fell flat, due to cost concerns and the inability to find a suitable place to store snow removal equipment.
- There is a perception that the Town has done a poor job enforcing sign regulations. One business owner remarked that the Town is way too generous with issuing variances for signs, and that a new sign blocks the view of his business, as well as of a neighboring medical practice. When people cannot see signs, they keep driving, thus cutting into purchases from impulse buyers.
- The identity of Snyder has dwindled in recent years, and many customers identify more with Amherst than with Snyder. One cause is the loss of the Snyder post office. Another is bad press, particularly from the Buffalo News, which has run several unflattering stories on the area, despite the fact that it still remains attractive and convenient, and is in the middle of some of the most desirable residential areas in the region.



Appendix E

Stakeholder Meeting Notes and Comments

Snyder Action Plan Meeting 1

*January 15, 2002
Loughran's Restaurant*

The Parsons team and the charette is meant to “help the business community help ourselves.”

180 businesses identified along Main Street from the 290 to Getzville Road.

The need to tie this charette process into ongoing planning processes such as the Harlem-Kensington initiatives, the Eggertsville initiatives, and the Town of Amherst master plan. Build on what is out there.

Also tie in with what is happening in communities around the country in terms of creating safe, walkable places.

There are to be 3 charettes and it is important to focus on a small area.

The next meeting should set goals and develop a “mission statement” Homework for the attendees: what are the area’s strengths and weaknesses?

Issues: deterioration has to stop, location is key, surrounding neighborhoods are strong. Zoning in the town, like many places, is “one size fits all” For instance, same regulations for businesses along Transit Rd., Niagara Falls Blvd, as there are along Main Street. The ‘big-box’ Transit Rd. style is probably not appropriate in Snyder. Parking issues are important but should not take over everything else.

Necessary to try and get fire department involved. They were invited but sent no reps. Important not to attack the fire department.

Envisions an Elmwood village type of place, make it a destination, increase foot traffic.

The concept of a “theater district.” Thought of it jokingly at first but realized it was true. Musical Fare, O’Connell and Company, Daeman College, Amherst High School, Park School, Smallwood Players.

Visible actions, recent happenings such as the Xmas Tree lighting with performances by Amherst school children.

Looking at the issue completely economically, trees, benches, visual improvements, etc. not important. The district has no national chains, made up of ‘mom and pop’ establishments. Therefore, everything should be done to make ‘mom and pops’ more economically viable. Has huge issue with taxes, taxes that go to a town that then plants trees that block the signs....town has onerous sign permit fees. Very unhappy with current tax breaks, 485b program, response from the IDA. Wants existing buildings eligible for tax relief in targeted areas. IDA applications are not worth the money saved...legal fees, paperwork

The parking problem is more of a problem of perception, but the fact remains that people will not walk from the rear of his property to the front.

IDA is working on the issue but it is somewhat constrained by State law



Not concerned with facades, signs, flowers, etc. The area contains “marginal small retailers” and they are dying quickly. Economics is the key to making it work for small businesses and rejuvenating the area.

The real estate market for these types of stores is almost non-existent. National chains won’t go into a place like Snyder.

Existing programs, like savings on sales tax, is meaningless.

Uniland, Ciminelli get all kinds of tax breaks. Snyder cannot compete because of the freebies.

A new town board member said that Snyder should get senior housing... does not like that mentality.

Snyder is at a critical stage. Need to facilitate and keep everyone on board.

Library is a magnet. On any given Saturday, 1000 people visit the library, guessing that 80% walk.

College has a strong vested interest in the area, concerned with safety and image. Has over 2000 students, 40% not from WNY. 500 currently live on campus, many without cars. College’s goal is a 1st class liberal arts college.

Musical Fare Theater, a separate not for profit corp on Daemen College campus, but unconnected with the college. 20,000 attendees annually, white collar, grey collar, lots of disposable income. Theater has had a positive effect on local restaurants, would like to see that same positive effect on other local businesses.

Fisher-Towne started with 2 guys, now has 32. A Snyder success story, loves the area, wants to stay, should be accommodated. Almost all business is outside Buffalo, so company is bringing money into the area. Can locate anywhere, but likes Snyder, close to 290, airport. IDA people are not useful, too focused on new builds. Does not like the sterility of the true suburbs, likes the village environment of Snyder. Quality of life issues important for human resources, recruiting.

This is a business community initiative, and although it will have ripple effects on residents, it is not a residential issue. For lease signs are a problem.

Snyder Action Plan Meeting 2

January 28, 2002

Harlem Road Community Center

Reiterates the concept of Amherst’s ‘one-size-fits-all’ zoning and the problems associated with it. Stresses the reason we are here and that this particular action plan has a very localized focus. Concerns expressed at the last meeting regarding tax breaks etc. have town wide and even region wide implications and can and are being addressed with Amherst’s ongoing comprehensive planning process.

Attracted by the “Mayberry-like” feel. It’s a little pocket between Williamsville and University Plaza. Walkable, etc. Has a “county-club” feel.

Remembers when all services were available in the hamlet. Concerned now about traffic and safety, especially the light at Burroughs.

Main and Harlem intersection is a problem, takes too much effort to get across. Timing of lights is an issue. Seems to be a shorter crossing period if the light is tripped by a car as opposed to a pedestrian pushing the button.

Speaks on the 12’ wide lanes and how the road was probably planned to be 6 lanes eventually. Can re-stripe to make narrower lanes.



Best chance of success when all are supporting the efforts

Significant change happened over the past ten years. Places like Pitt Petri, Pappagallo, Crabtree and Evelyn, the Squire Shop, Bradens have closed or moved. They were anchors and made the area a destination.

Stressed issues of flow (connectivity) and a place to start would be linking the Palanker building to Snyder Square.

Wants to make sure the town does not “jerk the new businesses around” regarding signage and such.

Demographics - one of the wealthiest areas in the region. Demographics are a huge asset, lots of disposable income.

Library-church shared parking generally works well but some problems with people speeding through

Office development over the past few years has created parking problems, especially at Snyder Square. Office workers take over parking, hampering retail.

Concerned about buildings being designated without the owners consent.

The new building at 4600 Main (the Cosmetic Vein and Laser Center) is out of scale, but was most likely following town codes.

Need to advertise to get the word out to residents, businesses, students. Have to promote it from within.

There should be better connections between the college and the community.

Park School Meeting

Thursday, February 7, 2002

The area currently is neighborhood friendly

Current connections to community are strong – YMCA, Daemen, Amherst Central. Very interested in natatorium idea.

Would like some community presence. Currently neighbors use open space and are allowed to do so to be “eyes on the school.” Teenages have beer parties in the woods.

Sugar maple demonstration in spring, Stone house – underground railroad

300 students total (pre-k through 12), 130 in grades 9-12
draws from 36 school districts from Fredonia to Darien to Youngstown

Business vacancies in the area are noticeable and problematic

Traffic on Main a concern with students using metro busses - students walk down Chateau and Freuhauf

Public using campus roads as cut throughs

Reckless student driving on Freuhauf and Chateau

Master plan being finalized, dining hall is first stage

Possible theater expansion



Should tie Park School's 3 productions a year into other area theaters, restaurants, etc.

Bistro Vite Meeting

Wednesday, February 6, 2002

Demographics in Snyder are key, it's a dense residential area, wealthy, but with a good mix including students and office workers.

Town regulations are a serious problem. Cheaper and easier to go into a strip plaza than retrofit an older building. Signage criteria are particularly onerous.

IDA programs usually not set up to work for retail.

What would be more useful than tax breaks would be a coordinator or focus person to help small businesses establish themselves or grow, especially in the older areas of the town.

Would like to have outdoor seating but concerned about how difficult the Amherst regulations are regarding it.

Daemen College Student Association Meeting

Monday, February 4, 2002

Some students were attracted to Daemen because of its location and "suburban" or "small town" atmosphere. Others disliked those attributes but came in spite of them. Tended to be an issue of where the students came from.

Front lawn is well used and valuable, but not the entire lawn. Students indicated it was the west end (towards the driveway) that is more used.

Business Community

Students appreciate the business community, especially stores like the Snyder Pharmacy, Post Office, Photoshop, etc. that fulfill necessary goods and services. However, many students are unaware of what is out there. There needs to be better advertising on the part of the businesses and more of an effort to make their stores attractive (Snyder Pharmacy).

Also, students have felt there is an unwelcoming attitude at some business places.

Frequent Denny's because it is close, cheap, and open 24 hours, but not particularly good. Would like an alternative to Denny's, and also suggested:

- A pizza place
- An ice cream parlor
- A coffee house
- A video store
- An improved college bookstore.

Better advertising/student discounts

Orientation – July, Welcome Week – Sept., Springfest

Parking

Parking is an issue, especially the restrictions on parking on Campus Drive. Also, the one way configuration of Campus Drive is dangerous because many people don't follow it.



Parking lots behind Main Street stores must be safe, attractive, and well lit and well maintained.

Traffic/Walkability/Safety

Walkability is a problem, especially crossing Main Street. Pedestrian signals are not long enough. Also, driving along Main Street is frustrating because red lights are not timed. It appears that sometimes a light will be tripped for no reason.

Sidewalk snow removal is still a major problem, and even when it is removed, if the sidewalk is not down to bare pavement, people will walk in the street because invariably the street will be down to the pavement.

Sidewalk paving is an issue, especially south along Harlem towards Kensington. A number of students walk to the Harlem/Kensington business area.

Town/Gown Relations and Outreach

Enthusiastic about the mural idea

Business department/neighborhood business development

Town regulations can be a hurdle, i.e. getting permits for Springfest etc.